

## **CABINET**

**7 JUNE 2016**

### **SUFFICIENCY REPORT 2016/2017**

Portfolio Holder      Councillor Mike O'Brien, Children's Services  
Report from            Barbara Peacock, Director of Children and Adults Services  
Author:                 Helen Jones, Assistant Director Partnership Commissioning

#### **Summary**

The Medway Sufficiency Report (Appendix A) sets out how Medway Council will meet the needs of Looked After Children and Care Leavers in such a way as to ensure improved outcomes. This is an updated version of the 2015/16 report.

#### **1. Budget and Policy Framework**

- 1.1 Local Authorities are required to take steps to secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for Children in Care within their local area. In 2010 the Statutory Guidance for the sufficiency duty was issued. This guidance is explicit in placing a duty on Local Authorities to act strategically to address gaps in provision by ensuring they include in relevant commissioning strategies their plans for meeting the sufficiency duty.
- 1.2 In exercising the sufficiency duty, Local Authorities should be mindful that under section 10 of the Children Act ('the 2004 Act') there is a duty upon Local Authorities to make arrangements to promote co-operation with its relevant partners with a view to improving the well being of children in the authority's area. Each of the statutory 'relevant partners' in section 10 is also required to co-operate with the Local Authority in making those arrangements. The duty on Local Authorities to secure sufficient accommodation should therefore be undertaken within the context of the planning and co-operation duties which the 2004 Act places on partners in order to improve the wellbeing of the child in the area.
- 1.3 The sufficiency duty is a measure, which is part of a broad suite of guidance, and legislative provisions introduced to improve outcomes for looked after children. Local Authorities should consider the

sufficiency duty in tandem with their duties towards children within their area under S17(1), 20, 21, 22C and 23 of the 1989 Act.

- 1.4 The Medway Sufficiency Report is attached at Appendix A to this report. This is reviewed and updated annually.
- 1.5 This report is consistent with national policy, legislation and guidance. It is linked to key local planning documents, in particular the Medway Council Looked After Children Strategy and the Council Plan.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 The Statutory Guidance states that: “securing sufficient accommodation requires a whole-system approach which includes early intervention and preventive services to support children in their families, as well as better services for children if they do become looked after”.<sup>1</sup> Local Authorities and their partners should therefore seek to secure a number of providers and a range of services, with the aim of meeting the wide-ranging needs of looked after children and young people within their local area.
- 2.2 However, the scope is not restricted to just making good quality placements; the intention is to co-ordinate the range of activity across Children’s Services, including a clear focus on supporting families to stay together, wherever it is safe to do so, thus minimising the need for children to come into care, or supporting their timely return to their families.
- 2.3 The reduction in the level of funding for Local Authorities means that the focus on efficiency and value for money will be stronger than before. The challenge for Local Authority Children’s Services will be to sustain or improve on service quality and good outcomes for service users.
- 2.4 This report addresses the needs of children and young people from birth to the age of 21, (or 25 where children’s services continue to have statutory responsibility) including children and young people with disabilities who are, or who may be, accommodated by Medway Council. It meets the requirements of the sufficiency duty by collating needs and resource information and market analysis but should be read alongside the Looked After Children Strategy which describes what needs to happen in relation to work with children in care or children at risk of coming into care.

---

1

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/273812/sufficiency\\_statutory\\_guidance\\_on\\_securing\\_sufficient\\_accommodation\\_for\\_looked\\_after\\_children.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/273812/sufficiency_statutory_guidance_on_securing_sufficient_accommodation_for_looked_after_children.pdf)

2.5 This report does not reflect the impact of current activity which is seeing a decrease in the number of LAC since April 2016. Any sustained improvement will be reflected in the 2017/18 report.

### **3. Progress**

- 3.1 The Sufficiency report identifies a number of commissioning priorities:-
- Secure sufficiency of provision for 16+ Homeless and Care Leavers
  - Continue to drive up quality standards of supported accommodation
  - To continue to address the gaps in provision around emotional well-being and behavioural support for 18+ young people
  - Drive forward improvements in performance in respect of Initial Health Assessments
  - Drive forward improvements in the number of care leavers in education, employment and training
  - Drive forward improvements in the management and support of children at risk of or exposed to CSE
  - Secure more cost effective provision for LAC
  - Improve process for assessing and monitoring placements

### **4. Advice and analysis**

4.1 In adopting the Sufficiency Report, the Council is exercising a public function and must, therefore, comply with the duties in section 149 Equality Act 2010 to have 'due regard' to the matters set out in relation to equalities. Accordingly due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality, and foster good relations between those with a protected characteristic (pregnancy and maternity, age discrimination, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it must form an integral part of the decision making process in relation to the formulation and adoption of the Strategy. A Diversity Impact Assessment screening was undertaken (attached at Appendix B) and this indicated that a fuller Diversity Impact Assessment on the strategy is not necessary.

## 5. Risk management

- 5.1 The Sufficiency Report in itself is not a Risk but failure to implement key actions could present a risk to the Council.

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Action to avoid or mitigate risk</b>	<b>Risk Rating</b>
Insufficient suitable accommodation	There is a risk that there is insufficient accommodation to ensure right child, right place, right time, right cost. This could result in expensive accommodation out of borough	Continue to strengthen the placement process and provide weekly scrutiny of appropriateness and cost  Strengthen in-house recruitment  Systematically apply the staying put policy to support care leaver remaining in placement post 16	<b>C2</b>
Insufficient identification and support of children at risk or exposed to CSE	There is insufficient support provided to children at risk of or exposed to CSE	To ensure the work of the Medway Safeguarding Children's Board and the Multi-agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) Group are delivered on during 2016/17	<b>C2</b>

## 6. Consultation

- 6.1 Children in Care Council representatives will be integral in the quality assurance process and through this medium will continue to be consulted with in order to address the quality of placements, transition, personal safety and preparation for independence.

## 7. Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 26 May 2016

- 7.1 The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered this report and the final draft of the Sufficiency Report 2016/17 at its meeting on 26 May 2016.

7.2 The Assistant Director, Partnership Commissioning introduced the report which provided the Committee with the latest Sufficiency Report, setting out how Medway Council would meet the needs of Looked After Children and Care Leavers in such a way as to ensure improved outcomes. She explained that she would liaise with Democratic Services about timetabling future Sufficiency Reports to Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet in a way that would hopefully reduce the lag of data information. She emphasised that the report demonstrated how the local authority was exercising its sufficiency responsibilities. She added that the number of looked after children (LAC) was reducing and if sustained would be reported in next year's report.

7.3 Members then raised a number of points and questions which included:

- **Information relating to LAC that are not in education, employment or training (NEET)** – A Member expressed the view that it would be helpful to see the number of LAC that were NEET when broken down into age and ethnicity groups. Officers undertook to look to include this detail in future versions of the report.
- **Learning from Care Leaver feedback** – In response to a question about what learning there had been from the feedback received from Care Leavers, officers confirmed that there was now engagement with young people in procurement processes for supported accommodation. In addition, some Care Leavers had met peers in Brighton to discuss with them their experiences of being involved in procurement. It was added that Care Leavers were very confident and able to share their opinions and help inform service development and delivery. Site visits by young people would be undertaken as part of the performance and quality monitoring regime of supported accommodation, starting in Summer 2016 and Members asked that feedback from this be included in future sufficiency reports.
- **Provision of high quality supported accommodation with intensive support** – in response to concern raised that gaps continued to exist in relation to the availability of this type of supported accommodation, officers explained that during the tender process, from an original 28 providers, only 4 could provide supported accommodation with an enhanced level of specialist support which was not sufficient to meet Medway's need. Discussions were therefore taking place with quality providers elsewhere in conjunction with work to stimulate the market locally. Support was also being provided to enable young people to stay at home where it was safe to do so.
- **Crash Pads** – In response to a question about the provision of a crash pad officers confirmed that this was expensive and difficult to provide and had therefore not been implemented in Medway but

other options to provide 'emergency' placements were being explored as well as other ways to provide support to vulnerable young people that may benefit from some time out. It was added that flexible local provision with wrap around support and intensive family work was more likely to result in a young person returning home within six weeks.

- **Recruitment of Foster Carers** – Officers confirmed that Medway was successfully recruiting foster carers but had recently had difficulty retaining them, which it was believed related to instability in the social care work force and the number of cases in proceedings. Both workforce capacity and proceedings were beginning to stabilise. Work was being undertaken to look at a buddying system for foster carers to provide peer support and analysis of feedback from foster carers was underway to develop ways to support and retain in-house foster carers.
- **Options of accommodation** – Officers explained that work was ongoing to develop a range of accommodation options that were flexible and included support. The point was made that a mind shift was needed as a 16/17 year old presenting as homeless would not necessarily be provided social housing and that other options would be explored, including the possibility for that young person to return home or to remain with a Foster Carer (Staying Put).
- **Definition of unsuitable accommodation** – in response to a request for the definition of unsuitable accommodation, officers undertook to provide this to Members.
- **Low rate of adoption of children over the age of 5 years** - in response to a question about why this was the case, officers explained that children put forward for adoption presented challenges but as a child grows older those challenges were at risk of becoming bigger and older children often came as a sibling group which also presented a challenge to match with adoptive parents.

7.4 The Committee recommended the Cabinet to approve the Sufficiency Report 2016-17.

## **8. Financial and Legal implications**

8.1 Section 22G Children Act 1989 imposes a duty on local authorities to take steps that secure, so far as reasonably practicable, that the local authority is able to provide looked after children with accommodation within the authority's area that meets the needs of those children, where circumstances are such that it would be consistent with the children's welfare for them to be provided with accommodation.

- 8.2 In taking steps to secure the provision of accommodation, the local authority must have regard to the benefit of having a sufficient number of accommodation providers in their area and a sufficient range of accommodation in their area capable of meeting different needs.
- 8.3 A failure to meet the general sufficiency duty could result in judicial review proceedings, and/or damages claims for breach of the Human Rights Act 1998, proceedings against the Council which could have huge costs implications.

## **9. Recommendation**

- 9.1 The Cabinet is requested to approve the Medway Sufficiency Report as set out at Appendix A.

## **10. Suggested reason(s) for decision**

- 10.1 Approval of the Sufficiency Report 2016-17 will enable the Council to fulfill its statutory requirement to take steps to secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for Children in Care within the local area and will enable Medway to act strategically to address gaps in provision.

### **Lead officer contact:**

Helen Jones, Assistant Director of Partnership Commissioning.

Tel (01634) 334049, Email: [helenm.jones@medway.gov.uk](mailto:helenm.jones@medway.gov.uk)

### **Appendices**

Appendix A – Sufficiency Report 2016-17

Appendix B – Diversity Impact Assessment

Appendix C – Looked After Children Strategy 2015-18

### **Background papers**

None







# Medway Council Children's Services

## Sufficiency Report 2016-17

Version	Date	Type	Author
1.0	December 2013	Final	Sue-Brunton-Reed
2.0	December 2014	Refreshed	Brian Atkins
3.0	May 2016	Refreshed	Lorraine Foster

Date Agreed by DMT	Date Agreed by Cabinet/MSCB/Improvement Board (if appropriate)	Date of Review	Person Responsible
9 December 2014	December 2013		

## Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Demographics of Medway	5
3. Children in Care population	6
3.1 New Entrants	7
3.2 Diversity of Looked After Children	8
3.3 Age range of Looked After Children	9
3.4 Legal Status of Looked After Children	9
3.5 Disabled Children and Young People	10
3.6 Parent and Child Placements	11
3.7 Children subject to Court proceedings	12
3.8 Adoption and SGO	12
3.9 Siblings	15
3.10 Young people known to Youth Offending Service	15
3.11 Young People Leaving Care – 16+	16
3.12 Care Leaver Accommodation	19
3.13 Future Care Leaver accommodation in needs	20
4. Views of Children and Young People about Choice and Sufficiency of Placement	22
5. Current Placement Provision	24
5.1 Placement Mix and Cost	24
5.2 In-House Fostering	27
5.4 Residential Provision	28
5.5 16+ Accommodation Provision	28
5.6 Other Support Services	31
6. Ongoing Commissioning Priorities (short to medium term)	33
7. Commissioning priorities (medium to long term)	36
8. Monitoring	37

## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to set out how Medway Council, working with all its partner agencies, will meet the placement needs of current and future Children in Care and Care Leavers, and improve their outcomes in light of our understanding of their needs and current provision.

This report is set within the context of national policy, legislation and guidance. It is linked to key local planning documents, in particular to the Medway Council Looked After Children Strategy (2015 – 2018) and the Looked After Children Commissioning Strategy and 16+ Homeless and Care Leavers Commissioning Action Plan (2014 – 2017).

Local Authorities are required to take steps to secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for children in care within their local area. In 2010, the Statutory Guidance for the Sufficiency Duty was issued. This guidance is explicit in placing a duty on Local Authorities to act strategically to address gaps in provision by ensuring that they include, in relevant commissioning strategies, their plans for meeting the sufficiency duty.

The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 defines Sufficiency as “a whole system approach which delivers early intervention and preventative work to help support children and their families where possible, as well as providing better services for children if they do become looked after. For those who are looked after, Local Authorities and their partners should seek to secure a number of providers and a range of services, with the aim of meeting the wide-ranging needs of looked after children and young people within their local area.”

However, the scope is not restricted to just making good quality placements; the intention is to co-ordinate the range of activity across Children’s Services, including a clear focus on supporting families to stay together, wherever it is safe to do so, thus minimising the need for children to come into care, or supporting their timely return to their families.

The reduction in the level of funding for Local Authorities means that the focus on efficiency and value for money will be stronger than ever. The challenge for Local Authority Children’s Services as well as partner agencies will be to sustain or improve on service quality and achieve excellent outcomes for children and young people.

This report addresses the needs of children and young people from birth to the age of 21, (or 25 where children’s services continue to have statutory responsibility) including children and young people with disabilities who are, or who may be,

accommodated by Medway Council. It meets the requirements of the sufficiency duty by collating needs and resource information and market analysis but should be read alongside the Looked After Children Strategy 2015-2018 which describes what needs to happen in relation to work with children in care or children at risk of coming into care.

The objectives of Medway Council's Looked After Children Strategy 2015-18 are to:

- Ensure that permanency is at the heart of all our planning and that we will work in partnership with colleagues across Children's Social Care to secure positive outcomes for children involved in care proceedings within the required timescales
- Ensure that young people in care achieve their potential academically and they have access to a range of opportunities for employment, training or further education
- Ensure young people leaving care make a successful transition to adulthood
- Ensure that children looked after and care leavers' views and experiences inform current and future service delivery
- Improve the health and well-being of looked after young people and care leavers
- Provide timely and high quality interventions with partner agencies to help children remain living or return to their families
- Ensure all looked after young people and care leavers are safeguarded through the provision of trained, supported and motivated staff who understand and are alert to the potential for exploitation and abuse of young people and who take the right action at the right time

We will ensure that the Sufficiency Strategy is consistent with these objectives, but also ensure it has a focus on reducing the numbers of children in our care where safe to do so, and using our resources in the most efficient and cost effective way. Commissioning Strategies which include impact measures which will be monitored to evidence progress on delivery.

## 2. Demographics of Medway

The 2011 Census gave Medway Council an opportunity to understand in detail its community. Some of the highlights are detailed below:

- Medway's population increased from 249,288 in 2001 to 263,925 in 2011, a 5.9% increase.
- Medway's population was found to be ageing; with a decrease in the number of people aged 0 to 18 and an increase in those aged 19-65 and 65+.
- The number of households with dependent children was found to have risen.
- Medway has become more ethnically diverse since 2001, with the Black and Minority Ethnic population now at 10.4%. White British is still the largest ethnic group, 85.5% of the population.
- There were increases in the number of people working part-time or as self employed, but a fall in the number of people working full-time. Unemployment levels have also increased since 2001.
- Medway residents are now more qualified than they were in 2001, although there are still fewer residents with the highest level qualifications.
- Levels of deprivation are higher in Medway than England average with proportionally fewer households who have no indicators of deprivation, and more who have one indicator of deprivation.

In June 2015 the Office of National Statistics reported that the population of Medway reached **274,015** in June 2014. This represents an increase of 2,910 persons (1.1%) above the 2013 mid-year figure. This growth is in line with the level of growth seen in 2013 (+2,900), above the historic average since 2002 (+1,900) and above the national level in 2014 (+0.8%), but below the peak in growth in Medway in 2012 (+3.3%).

In July 2015 Medway had a larger working age population at 65% than nationally (63%), a larger younger person's population (20%) and a smaller but rising elderly population (15%). Medway ranks in the top third of Local Authorities for annual population growth at +1.1%. Recent population growth in Medway can be attributed to both natural growth – births exceeding deaths - and inward migration, with a fairly even split between these two components of growth.

In September 2015 the national Index of Deprivation reported that Medway was relatively worse off compared to the 2010 index. Medway is ranked as the 118th most deprived Local Authority out of 326 in England. This is a relatively worse position than in the previous index in 2010, when Medway was ranked the 136th

most deprived of 325. In addition Medway is ranked the 53rd most deprived Local Authority area for crime and 86<sup>th</sup> most deprived for education, skills and training.

Child poverty is defined as “the proportion of children living in families in receipt of out-of-work benefits or in receipt of tax credits where their reported income is less than 60 per cent of median income”. Research shows that some families are at greater risk of child poverty due to:

- Non traditional family structures i.e. lone parent households in which there is at least one dependent child. Medway rate for lone families with at least one dependent child is 24.5% which is in line with the England as a whole but considerably higher than the South East region at 20.7%
- Households with dependent children where no adult is in employment. In Medway this rate stands at 4.9% which is higher than the England average of 4.2% and the South East average of 3.1%
- High rates of teenage pregnancy. Medway rate of teenage pregnancy is significantly higher than the England and South East averages
- Medway has a higher proportion of families (7.4 per cent) with three or more children compared to the national (7 per cent) and South East (6.7 per cent) averages

The prevalence of these determinant factors amongst some Medway families means that some children in Medway are at greater risk of childhood poverty and subsequently poorer outcomes into adulthood. The Child Poverty Act of 2010 commits the Government to eradicating childhood poverty by 2020 by focusing on a number of key areas. Amongst these key areas are; improving family support and children’s life chances; supporting families to achieve financial independence and improving neighbourhoods to transform lives. Medway’s vision places children at the heart of all Medway does in securing better lives for its residents.

### **3. Children in Care Population**

At the end of September 2015, Medway had an adjusted number of 441 Looked After Children, representing a 14% increase from September 2014. As of March 2015, the England national average had increased slightly to 60 children per 10,000. In March 2015 Medway had a rate of 68 per 10,000, which is above the national average and its Statistical Neighbours (64.9); and well above the South East average of 49.

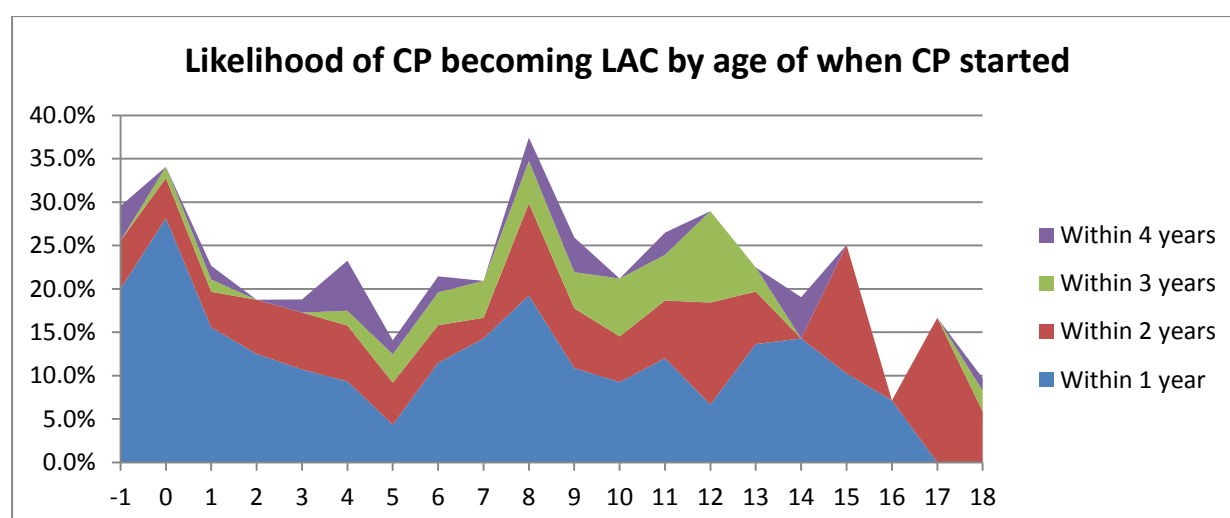
Due to pressures in the system with large numbers of children subject to Care Proceedings or Pre-Proceedings, the numbers of Looked After Children in Medway are forecast to rise as detailed in the table below. These forecasts, however are based on current activity levels and do not take account of the impact of a range of approaches, including changes to the 'front door' CADS service, Edge of Care preventative programmes, and the further development of Early Help and intensive prevention services like the SMART team. In addition the delivery of a Continuum of Care and implementation of a Social Impact Bond are both predicted to have a long term positive impact on the numbers of children coming into care. As such revised forecasting will be necessary in the near future to reflect these areas of work as reducing numbers of children entering care in Medway remains a key driver.

#### Forecasted numbers of Looked After Children

	In care 30 Sep 2012	In care 30 Sep 2013	In care 30 Sep 2014	In care 30 Sep 2015	Prediction 2016	Prediction 2017	Prediction 2018
Age 0-1	74	52	64	50	54.4	55.3	55.1
Age 2-4	66	47	39	54	56.3	54.4	55.1
Age 5-8	88	71	63	70	73.8	77.3	82.7
Age 9-10	28	30	45	60	53.6	52.4	51.1
Age 11-15	96	113	120	131	148.5	164.1	170.0
Age 16-17	82	63	58	76	78.7	76.0	80.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>434</b>	<b>376</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>441</b>	<b>465.4</b>	<b>479.4</b>	<b>494.2</b>

Data Source: Performance and Information, Medway Council

The chart below visualises the likelihood of a child, subject to a child protection order, becoming LAC within subsequent years.



Data Source: Performance and Information, Medway Council

A key priority for Children Services is the prevention of escalating need through an integrated, well-coordinated and holistic offer of service that is child centred, high quality and evidenced based.

### 3.1 New entrants

January – March 2015 saw the highest intake of Looked After Children over the last 4 years at 74 new entrants into care. However overall in 2015/16 there were 213 new entrants into care. A 12 % reduction compared to 2014/15 when there were a total of 243 new entrants into care.

Comparisons between new entrants in 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16 are shown in the table below. This shows a significant increase in overall numbers for the 1-4 and 10-15 age ranges.

Age range	April - September 2013	April - September 2014	April - September 2015	% change from April to September 2014 to 2015
Under 1	16	29	18	-37%
1-4	10	20	25	+25%
5-9	7	19	17	-11%
10-15	20	27	38	+41%
16+	15	5	11	+120%
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>+9%</b>

Data Source: Performance and Information, Medway Council

### 3.2 Diversity of Looked After Children

Age range	Sept 2012	% Sept 2012	Sept 2013	% Sept 2013	Sept 2014	% Sept 2014	Sept 2015	% Sept 2015
<b>Asian or Asian British</b>	2	0.5%	2	0.5%	2	0.5%	3	0.7%
<b>Black or Black British</b>	14	3.2%	8	2.2%	9	2.3%	19	4.3%
<b>Mixed</b>	28	6.5%	25	6.8%	22	5.7%	25	5.7%
<b>Other Ethnic Groups</b>	1	0.2%	2	0.5%	5	1.3%	12	2.7%
<b>White</b>	387	89.6%	333	90.0%	348	90.0%	382	86.6%

Data Source: Performance and Information, Medway Council



The increasing diversity of the LAC population is reflective of the increasing ethnic diversity in Medway as a whole. In the 2011 census, 10.4% of the total population was Black and Minority Ethnicity (BME) having risen from 5.4% in the 2001 census.

### 3.3 Age range of Looked After Children

Age range	Sept 2012	% Sept 2012	Sept 2013	% Sept 2013	Sept 2014	% Sept 2014	Sept 2015	% Sept 2015
0 – 2 years	103	24%	69	18%	80	21%	64	14%
3 – 4 years	37	9%	28	8%	20	5%	40	9%
5 – 10 years	114	26%	100	27%	108	28%	130	29%
11 – 15 years	96	22%	114	30%	121	31%	131	30%
16+ years	82	19%	65	17%	58	15%	76	17%
<b>Total</b>	<b>432</b>		<b>376</b>		<b>387</b>		<b>441</b>	

Data Source: Performance and Information, Medway Council

The increased numbers of children aged 11-15 coming into care will continue to impact on leaving care services over the next five years. There will be an increased need for supported accommodation and supported lodgings, increased in-house fostering provision, the provision of therapeutic foster placements and the need for wrap around support to reduce placement breakdowns. The work to further embed the Edge of Care Programme, the SMART team, social impact bond and the Continuum of Care will seek to address these issues by reducing the number of new entrants into care and the duration of placement.

### 3.4 Legal status of Looked After Children

Legal Status	September 2012	September 2013	September 2014	September 2015
<b>S 20</b>	155	139	181	158
<b>Care Order</b>	113	123	125	153
<b>Interim Care Order</b>	82	27	18	67
<b>Emergency Protection Order</b>	-	1	1	0
<b>Placement Order</b>	82	86	61	60
<b>On Remand</b>	-	-	-	0
<b>PACE</b>	-	-	1	0

<b>Secure</b>				0
<b>Police Protection</b>				1

Data Source: Performance and Information, Medway Council

There has been a large increase in the number of children accommodated under care orders and interim care orders. Care orders have increased by 22% from 125 in September 2014 to 153 in September 2015. During the same period interim care orders also saw the largest increase of 272% from 18 in September 2014 to 67 in September 2015.

### 3.4.1 Legal status by age band - September 2015 (figures in brackets show September 2014 for comparison)

Age range	Section 20	Care Order	Interim Care Order	Police Protection	Placement / Freeing Order	PACE
<b>0 – 2 years</b>	(40) 16	(0) 0	(9) 25		(30) 21	
<b>3 – 4 years</b>	(11) 16	(2) 2	(0) 11		(7) 12	
<b>5 – 10 years</b>	(30) 24	(51) 47	(6) 19		(21) 22	
<b>11 – 15 years</b>	(62) 50	(52) 84	(3) 12	1	(5) 7	(1) 0
<b>16+ years</b>	(38) 42	(20) 20				
<b>Total</b>	<b>(181) 158</b>	<b>(125) 153</b>	<b>(18) 67</b>	1	<b>(63) 62</b>	(1) 0

Data Source: Performance and Information, Medway Council

In September 2015, 220 (49%) of all looked after children were subject to Interim Care Orders or Care Orders. Section 20s showed a significant reduction of 13 % from 181 at the end of September 2014 to 158 at the end of September 2015. This change is due in part to the large numbers of children where permanency is being sought at an earlier stage than would have been previously.

### 3.5 Disabled children and young people

At 30 September 2015; there were 39 LAC who had a disability. This represents just under 9% of all LAC (this compares to 40 children (10%) in September 2014). The most significant needs groups are detailed in the table below:

<b>Disability Type</b>	<b>September 2013</b>	<b>September 2014</b>	<b>September 2015</b>
Learning Disability	17	24	25
Autism or Asperger Syndrome	12	18	18
Behaviour Disorder – Including ADHD	5	11	11
Communication	4	4	7

N.B children may have more than one disability and as such are represented in more than one needs group

The numbers of children in each significant needs group has remained static in the main apart from communication which saw a 75% increase from September 2014 to September 2015. Further analysis of the data has shown that 71% of children of children had 2 or more disabilities. The known association between Autism, Learning Disability (LD) and Behaviour Disorders is reflected in the data as 13 out of the 18 children who had a diagnosis of Autism also had a diagnosis of LD. Similarly 7 children who had a diagnosis of Behaviour Disorder also had a diagnosis of LD. These multiple disabilities inevitably increase the complexity and level of need of the child.

A recent analysis of 51 Medway LAC who had been randomly selected found that 60% of Looked after Children living in a residential home had a disability. 11 of these children were in residential special schools and a further 9 children were in residential homes.

### **3.6 Parent and child placements**

As at 30 September 2015, Medway had a total of 6 Parent and Child placements at an average cost of £1984 per week. Two placements were in supported accommodation; two with Independent Fostering Agencies and two were with a specialist mother and baby assessment unit. This compares favourably to the situation as of the 30 October 2014 when there were 12 parent and child placements and the average length of stay in an IFA was 21 weeks. Of the 2 placements in the specialist assessment unit; which has the highest average cost (£3,494), neither exceeded 12 weeks. This type of provision has been increasingly utilised to undertake a parental assessment with a view to supporting the parent and child back home where safe to do so. Where it is safe to do so, community assessments of a parent and child which take place at home are now a first option.

The average cost of the 2 placements in supported accommodation was £1,200 and this provision is being utilised to support parents into independence where they are unable or unwilling to return home. This approach and a process of ongoing scrutiny has also enabled the use of Elizabeth Court, a social housing provider for LAC parent and child placements, to be significantly reduced.

### 3.7 Children subject to court proceedings

Children's and Legal Services are working together to meet the requirements of the Family Justice Review and achieve more speedy resolution of court proceedings, aiming for 26 weeks.

For the three years ending February 2016, Medway's performance of 689 days for 'average time between a child entering care and moving in with the family (A1)' was behind the national performance of 628 days and well outside the target of 596 days which was set in line with government ambitions. However, as a 3 year rolling average, it is not reflective of the significant progress that has been made in addressing timescales. In the year ending February 2016, Medway performance has been 543 days.

Medway's performance against the timescale from application to completion of proceedings was below national figures in 2013-14 but was in line with the national average in 2014-15 and in the first two quarters of 15/16 (see below).

Time from application to the completion of proceedings (CAFCASS):

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16 (1st 6 months)
Medway	44 weeks	30 weeks	30 weeks
National	36 weeks	30 weeks	29 weeks

Data Source: Children Services, Medway Council

### 3.8 Adoption and SGO in support of achieving permanency

The DfE describes permanence as:

*The framework of emotional permanence (attachment), physical permanence (stability) and legal permanence (the carer has parental responsibility for the child) which gives a child a sense of security, continuity, commitment and identity. The objective of permanence is to ensure that children have a secure, stable and loving family to support them through childhood and beyond. Permanence provides an underpinning framework for all social work with children and their families; from family support through to adoption. This can include situations where the Local authority and birth parents share PR but where the carer has made a long term commitment to the child".*

A total of 29 children were placed for adoption during 2015-16, compared with 30 in the previous year and 50 in 2013-14.

The age breakdown of children placed for adoption is below:

Age at placement date	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
0 – 2 years	8	14	26	21	17
2 - 4 years	9	13	15	8	10
5 years and over	1	5	9	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>29</b>

Data Source: Performance and Information, Medway Council

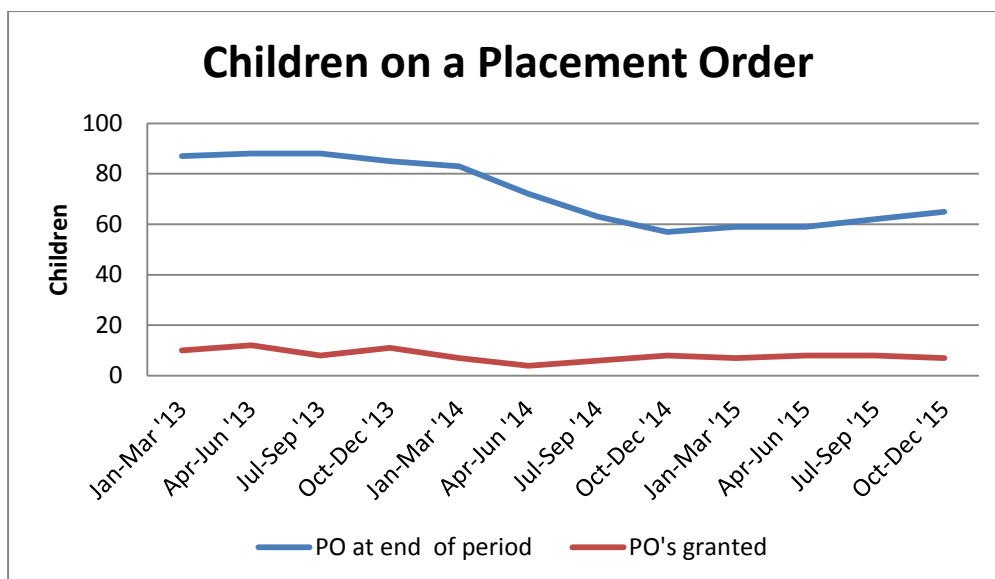
A detailed analysis undertaken in February 2016 determined that:

- Medway has above the average number when compared to the Southeast average, of children waiting for adoption but is below the average number for those waiting 18 months or more
- The average days waiting are below the south east average but above the national average, with a downward trend over the past year
- Medway has children waiting for adoption, who are under 5 as well as those in some of the “harder to place” groups (e.g children with multiple disabilities). There are lower than average children waiting over 5 years old when compared nationally. For those who are part of a sibling group there are higher than national average waiting times
- The rate of LAC children adopted is around the national average with a decreasing trend over the past year
- Medway has a below average rate of adopter recruitment with a decreasing trend over the past year

The tables below provide further details on adoption for the period April 2015 to March 2016. During the period April 2015 to March 2016 there were 29 matches as detailed in the table below i.e. children were matched with prospective adoptive parents. In the same period there were 16 new families approved for adoption.

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	YTD
Matches	1	-	3	4	3	7	1	0	3	2	2	3	29
SHOPFA	3	9	9	-	5	4	2	7	4	1	2	14	60
Adoptive Families Approved	1	2	1	-	3	1	2	1	1	1	-	3	16

Data Source: Performance and Information, Medway Council



Data Source: Children Services, Medway Council

The graph above details the number of placement orders and placement orders granted during the period January 2013 and December 2015. Placement orders granted have remained fairly static over the period, however placement orders declined sharply (fall 26) during the period January to December 2014 and have been increasing at a slow rate since then. With the current large numbers of young children entering care on statutory orders, the focus on adoption as a means to meet children's need for permanency must be sustained.

During the period April 2015 to March 2016 there were 28 children placed with adopters as detailed in the table below. When children are placed for adoption the full legal process has not yet been completed and prospective adopters still need to apply to the court to become the child's legal parent. At the end of the same period there were a total of 15 children with a placement order but not matched.

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	YTD
Children placed with adopters	2	-	3	4	3	2	4	2	0	3	3	2	28
Children with placement order but not match at end of period	15	19	18	18	17	13	13	20	20	19	17	15	

Data Source: Performance and Information, Medway Council

Medway actively promotes the use of special guardianship orders to secure permanency for children. Special guardianship orders are often granted to former foster carers who develop a bond with a child and wish to formalise that child's place within the family. The fostering team also undertakes carer assessments on other applicants who wish to secure a special guardianship order on a child to ensure that they can provide the level of care and support that the child needs. 13 Special

Guardianship Orders were granted between April 2015 and March 2016. This number is lower than in any of the past 4 years.

When adoption or SGO is not a viable option, Medway actively recruits carers to support placing children in long term care through its in-house fostering service and with Independent Fostering agencies.

### 3.9 Sibling Groups

Of 236 children who became subject to CP plans during the period July to mid December 2015, 82% were part of a sibling group. From January 2015 to December 2016, there were a total of 45 referrals for placements for sibling groups.

The table below denotes the number of sibling groups as of the 30 September 2015:

Number of sibling groups	Group composition
23 groups of	2 siblings
14 groups of	3 siblings
4 groups of	4 siblings
2 groups of	5 siblings
1 group of	7 siblings
1 group of	8 siblings

Data Source: Performance and Information, Medway Council

The placement of large sibling groups in order to facilitate children staying together where appropriate remains a key pressure point for Medway. Recruiting more carers able to keep siblings together where that is in their best interest is a priority.

### 3.10 Young People Known to Youth Offending Service

The table below shows the percentage of Looked After Children subject to conviction, final warning or reprimand during the period 2013 – 2015.

	2013	2014	2015
Medway	6.7	7.0	8
South East	7.6	6.10	6
Statistical neighbours	6.46	6.48	7
England	6.2	5.6	5.6

Data Source: Local Area Interactive Tool

The data suggests that Medway has in the last 3 years been above its statistical neighbours, the South East and England; with the gap widening. A possible reason for this is the increasing numbers of children with complex needs coming into care in Medway.

### 3.11 Young People Leaving Care - 16+

In September 2015, there were 95 young people aged 16+ in care. This is a significant increase on September 2014 when there were 58 young people aged 16+ in care. In addition, there are also a significant number of young people eligible for leaving care services. The Children (Leaving Care) Act defines eligible children as aged 16 and 17 who have been looked after for at least 13 weeks since aged 14 and have been looked after at some time while 16 or 17, and who have left care.

Projected number of care leavers in the table below shows that there will be an increased demand for leaving care services over the next 3 years.

Date	Care Leavers by age									Total
	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
31/03/2014	0	6	51	75	68					
31/03/2015	3	4	41	51	75					
31/03/2016	2	7	38	41	51	7	2	1	0	147
31/03/2017	1.7	7.2	49.8	38	41	5.6	1.6	0.8	0.0	146
31/03/2018	2.3	6.3	54.9	49.8	38	5.2	1.5	0.7	0.0	159
31/03/2019	1.8	8.7	47.8	54.9	49.8	6.8	2.0	1.0	0.0	173

Data Source: Performance and Information, Medway Council

- Figures shaded in pink are statistical projections based on the historical data shown, and hence are shown as a decimal.
- Care leavers aged 16 to 20 are defined by eligibility – not by the case being open to the 18+ team.
- Care leavers aged 21+ are identified by being still open to the 18+ team. Data prior to 2016 did not appear to be sufficiently accurate to use.

Duties and responsibilities for young people leaving care are outlined in the statutory guidance and regulations associated with the Children Act 2000 and subsequent updates including The Care Leavers Regulations 2010. The Southwark Judgement 2009 clarified the responsibility of Local Authorities to assess the needs of a young person who presents as homeless and to provide accommodation under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 if that young person is assessed as a 'Child in Need'. In all but the most exceptional cases, 16 and 17 year olds who present as homeless are, by nature of their homeless status, Children in Need. An assessment must determine whether they need to be accommodated under S20 of the Children Act 1989. Where this is not appropriate or the young person refuses, they will be considered a child in need and offered services and support as required.

The table below shows the number of young people (16-24) accepted as homeless, eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need – i.e. those that the local authority has a duty to accommodate.



## 16 -24 homeless eligible for assistance

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Quarter 1	26	58	47
Quarter 2	28	38	31
Quarter 3	50	42	26
Quarter 4	35	31	21
TOTAL	139	169	125

Data Source: Housing Department, Medway Council

The table below shows the number of Joint Housing Needs Assessments (JHAs) completed during the period July 2015 and March 2016. Prior to this period this service was not available in Medway.

## JHAs July 2015 to March 2016

July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March
2	3	6	2	3	3	3	1	4

Data Source: Housing Department, Medway Council

JHAs provide a consistent approach to assessing the housing needs of a young person regardless of which service they present to. The JHAs stop young people 'bouncing' between services when they present as being homeless and also reduce the number of young people who slip between services. The JHA process enables the Local Authority to ascertain the child's wishes and feelings regarding the provision of accommodation and helps to ensure that they receive appropriate services as close as possible to the point of need.

### 3.11.1 Needs of Young People Leaving Care

As part of Medway's Staying Put Policy, a number of young people will stay on with their foster carers after the age of 18. Some young people who are placed with Independent Fostering Agencies or in Residential Care will make the transition into Supported Accommodation or adult services as defined by their needs.

In September 2014 a desk based needs analysis was undertaken of young people aged 15-17 years who were in care. At that time it was anticipated that 26% would require an enhanced or intensive level of support when moving into semi independence.

In May 2016 the same desk based needs analysis methodology was utilised to determine what level of support would be required for young people aged 15 -18 who were currently in care. It is anticipated that 35% percent will require an enhanced or intensive level of support package when moving into more semi independent provision.

The table below is a summary of both the September 2014 snapshot (written in black) and the May 2016 snapshot (written in red). As detailed in the Sufficiency Report 2015/16 the escalating need for enhanced and intensive support is being seen.

**Snap shot of the needs of young people age 15+ who are currently in care at September 2014 & May 2016.** *Data extract was taken from Frameworki in August 2014 & May 2016.*

Total No. in care	Age	M	F	Ethnicity	Numbers children who came into care due to reasons of:	Estimated numbers of young people who will need an enhanced/or intensive support package (Based on SDQ score above 18+)
33 31	15 15	15 6	18 2	29 (white) 2 (Black) 2 (not known) 8 (white)	19 (2) Abuse & Neglect 3 (2) Disability 2 Family in Acute Stress 7 (1) Family dysfunction 2 Other 1 Emotional abuse 1 Physical abuse 2 Neglect	Estimate of 5 young people.  Estimate of 13 young people
28 41	16 16	14 6	14 7	25 (White) 2 (mixed race) 1 (other) 1 (mixed) 1 (black) 11 (white)	13 (3) Abuse & Neglect 3 (2) Disability 2 Family in Acute distress 9 (7) Family dysfunction 1 Other 1 Neglect 1 Unsafe sex 1 Absent parent	Estimate of 11 young people Young people reported to have drug abuse/risk taking behaviours, self harming behaviours and severe emotional & behaviour difficulties and vulnerable to child sexual exploitation. Estimate of 13 young people
34 (2 left care) 42	17 14	15 4	19 10	32 (White) 1 (Black) 1 (other) 2 (mixed) 12 (white)	15 (3) Abuse & Neglect 2 (4) Disability 1 Parental Illness/ Disability 1 Family in Acute distress 11 (7) Family dysfunction 2 Socially unacceptable behaviour 2 Other	Estimate of 8 young people with self-harming behaviours, drug abuse and emotional & behavioural difficulties. Estimate of 14 young people
2	18		2	2 (white)	1 Family dysfunction 1 Abuse & Neglect	One young person.
95 (114)		44	53			25 (40)

Of the 40 young people identified in May 2016 as requiring an enhanced and intensive support service, there are a growing number of young women who are identified as being at risk of child sexual exploitation.

The table below details the support and accommodation services that will be required against the level of need.

<b>Needs of Young People</b>	<b>Services required</b>
<b>Standard level of support/low level needs</b> Young people may not have complex and challenging behaviours but require ongoing support and further preparation for independence	Staying Put Supported Lodgings Outreach Shared tenancies Floating support
<b>Enhanced level of support needs</b> Young people may be transitioning from fostering/residential into Supported Accommodation	Staying Put Supported lodgings Supported accommodation
<b>Intensive level of support needs</b> Young people who require more intensive support either due to multiple or profound disabilities and require high level interventions	24 hour support

### 3.12 Care Leaver accommodation

The table below shows that almost all Medway Care Leavers during 2015/16 were in suitable accommodation. However the second table shows that securing and maintain long term accommodation can be challenging and that a significant proportion of Care Leavers struggle to do this in subsequent years whilst, their peers frequently have the option to stay at home.

#### 19<sup>th</sup> Birthday Suitable Accommodation

NI147	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep t	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
Total Number	5	2	2	5	3	4	2	1	3	1	6	4	38
Number in Suitable Accom	5	2	2	4	3	4	1	1	3	1	5	0	31
%	100%	100%	100%	80%	100%	100%	50%	100%	100%	100%	83%	0%	82%

Data Source: Performance and Information, LAC digest 2015/16 Medway Council

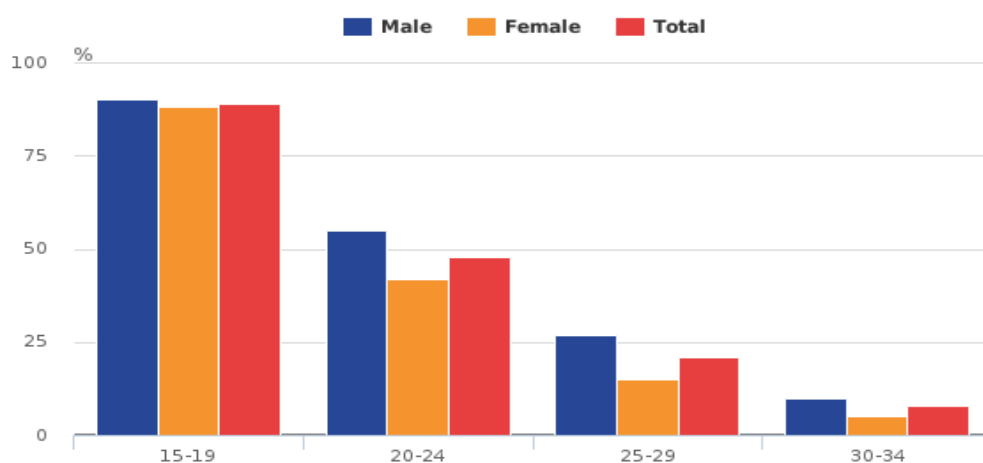
### 19/20/21<sup>st</sup> Birthday Suitable Accommodation

NI147	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep t	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
Total Number	19	9	11	14	16	15	13	10	9	12	17	11	156
Number in Suitable Accom	18	9	8	11	15	14	11	10	9	9	16	10	140
%	95%	100%	73%	67%	94%	93%	85%	100%	100%	75%	94%	91%	90%

Data Source: Performance and Information, LAC digest 2015/16 Medway Council

In 2015 the Office of National Statistics reported that 48% of all 20 to 24 year olds live at home with parents.

#### Percentage of young adults living at home



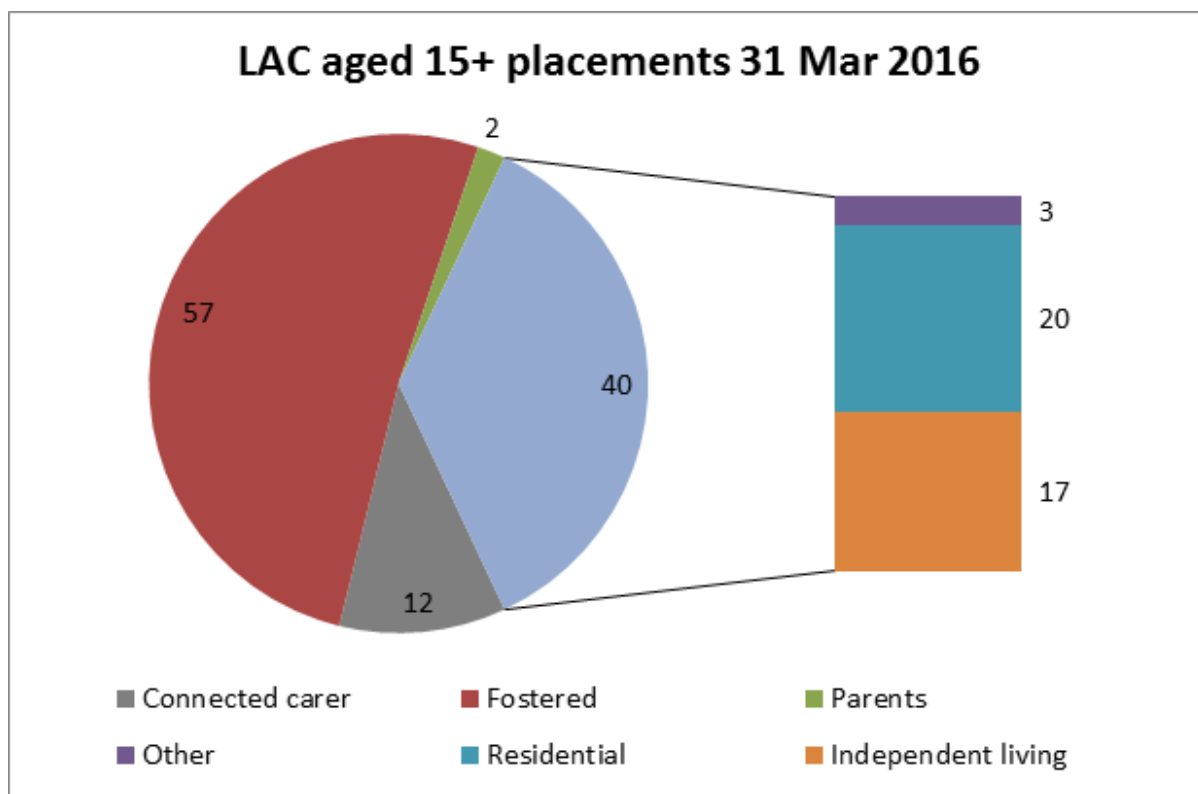
Data Source: Office of National Statistics

### 3.13 Future Care Leaver accommodation needs

At present Staying Put can only provide care leaver support to those who were in fostering and connected carer placements, and primarily to those in Medway Council provision. Young people accommodated in Children's Homes and other residential placements also have the need for post accommodation support, but the option of staying on in a placement past their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday is rarely available and requires specific dispensation from Ofsted.

In October 2015 a needs analysis was undertaken to inform the continued development of the Continuum of Care. It has helped to identify that:

- Staying Put provision needs to be enhanced and understood by all in order to be a real option for care leavers
- The development of supported lodgings must be a priority
- Supported Accommodation that focuses consistently on developing independence skills is very much needed even in those services that continue to be spot purchased
- The development of therapeutic foster carers can aid in providing step down from residential or rehabilitation back home
- That preventing placement breakdown could be supported by Medway fostering and residential staff in order to deliver outreach
- The provision of a “crash pad” to provide a cooling off period; may help to prevent placement breakdown
- Shared Carers and parallel parenting can facilitate young people return home where safe to do so
- The recruitment of specialist foster carers to support young people with disabilities is needed
- Affordable, quality social housing and increased support in order to secure privately rented housing is needed. As well as access to floating support



Data Source: Performance and Information

The table above shows as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 where Looked After Children 15+ are currently placed. The greatest number of LAC 15+ being fostered.

#### **4. Views of Children and Young People about Choice and Sufficiency of Placement**

Medway has a strong history of appropriate and effective engagement with its Looked After Children. The Children in Care Council (CICC) provides the platform for young people in care to bring collective issues and concerns to the Council via the Corporate Parenting Board. Through this forum, the Children in Care Council aim to hold the Council and its partners to account for the services each provide. Other participative structures such as Medway Youth Parliament and Care Leavers and Disability Groups enable further consideration and evaluation of some of the issues raised by the CICC.

In 2015 The Children's Commissioner published her first 'State of the Nation' report. The report is an analysis of the views of looked after children and care leavers. The main findings are listed below:

- 81% of children and young people reported that they were currently living in the right place for them
- Of the 46% of children who said they sometimes don't feel good about the future, a key theme for this was placement stability and a sense of not knowing "I will be happy if my placement becomes permanent"
- When asked what would make life better for children and young people in care a key theme that was highlighted was support – for as long as they need it
- Just over half (54%) of care leavers stated that they felt they left care at the right time
- Of those who felt they did not leave at the right time the two main reasons for this were; feeling settled in their placement and being forced to leave. "I wanted to stay put but because my carer would not receive funding they said I could not stay with them"

Children also highlighted not having a choice in placement type as a key issue.

Looked After Children over the past 3 years through the CICC, Care Leavers and Disability Groups have raised a number of issues relating to the choice and quality of placements, transition, personal safety and preparation for independence. In particular young people felt that they were offered a limited choice of options of a similar nature. They suggested that there needed to be more 'supported lodgings' placements in Medway.

With regard to independent housing, they felt that they were given limited choices. They suggested that more options and styles of accommodation should be offered to cater for different needs and levels of independence; that a choice of where the placement is can be helpful as young people are likely to feel more comfortable in an area they are familiar with and where they have an existing support network.

Young people felt that the standard of some of the supported placements was poor. They suggested that all housing for young people should meet approved standards and should be more regularly monitored, similar to the ways foster carers and some semi-independent accommodation are inspected.

They reported that support offered to young people following a move to new accommodation was not adequate. They required more intensive support, sometimes daily, whilst adjusting to semi-independence or independence. A key message was that support should be offered consistently and should be long term by

somebody trusted and known to the young person, rather than short term and reactive to when there are issues.

Many young people have suggested they would find it helpful to have more opportunities to prepare for independence whilst in their foster placement and to be offered 'trial' sessions to go and live independently for a period of time *"to see how it feels, but if it does not work out your foster placement is still open for you...like a natural family would be"*.

As a result of this feedback young people were supported in 2015 to be involved in the tender for supported accommodation providers. This process ensured that children and young people visited potential provider premises, were able to speak to staff and young people in placement and then score providers against a rating scale that they had developed. The successful providers are now delivering the service and have signed up as part of the contracting process to having annual site visits undertaken by young people as apart of the performance and quality monitoring regime. The first site visits by young people are due to be undertaken during Summer 2016.

## **5. Current Placement Provision**

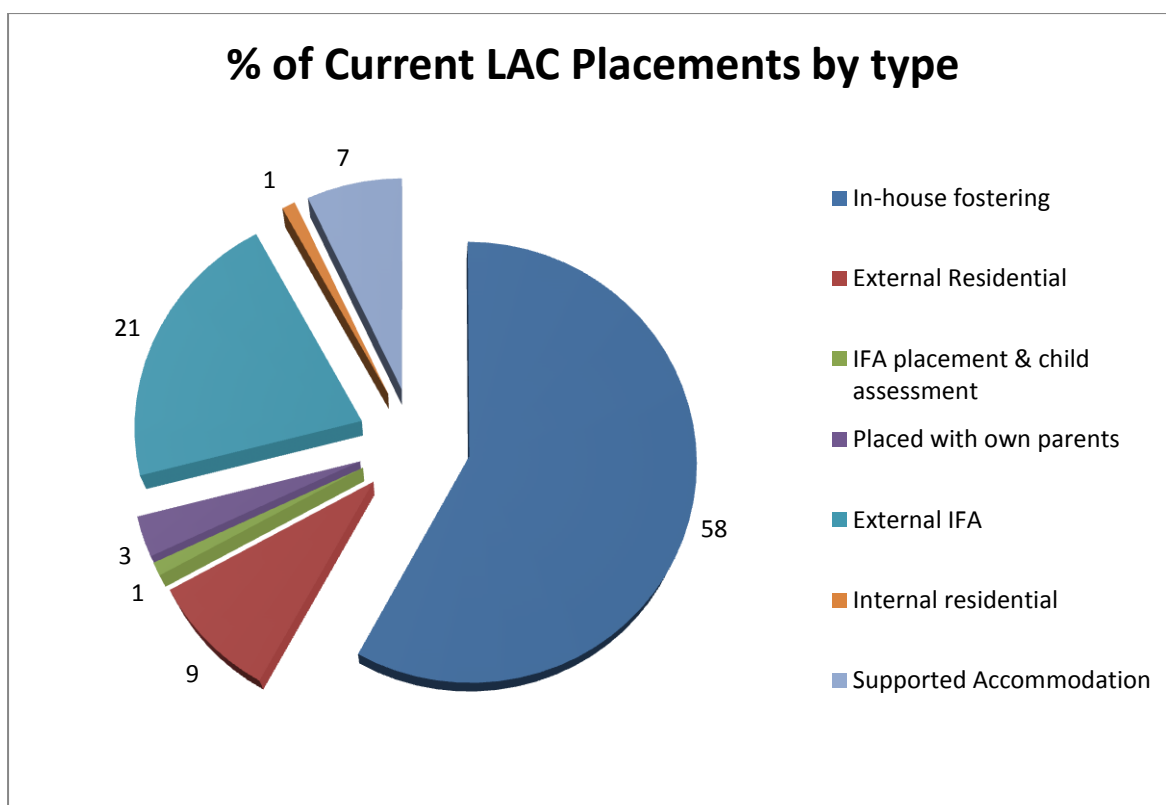
### **5.1 Placement Mix and Cost**

In September 2015, 186 children had been placed with Medway in-house carers. This is an increase of 3 children from November 2014 (183).

55 children were placed with approved connected persons, and 116 placed in external foster agency placements. External fostering is primarily through independent fostering agencies (IFAs), but also includes provision by other local authorities and charities providing fostering services.

The number of young people placed in external residential provision has increased from 29 to 31 (7% increase).





Data Source: Performance and Information, Medway Council

The table below shows the trend over the past 4 years by placement type. It also demonstrates well the increasing reliance on external foster care and residential services.

Placement type	September 2012	September 2013	November 2014	September 2015	Direction of travel
Medway foster carer	222	191	183	186	↑
Fostered by family or connected person	33	30	41	55	↑
External foster carer	77	65	95	116	↑
Placed with parents	13	12	10	6	↓
Placed for Adoption	28	25	25	23	↓
In-house Residential	8	8	6	6	↔

Placement type	September 2012	September 2013	November 2014	September 2015	Direction of travel
Private and voluntary residential home	12	23	29	31	↑
Residential school	5	6	1	4	↑
Secure accommodation	1	0	0	1	↑
YOI or prison	1	0	0	0	↔
Supported accommodation	13	18	10	13	↑
NHS	0	0	1	1	↔

Data Source: Performance and Information, Medway Council

There are currently 43 children and young people placed inside the Medway boundary in external foster placements. 73 children and young people are placed in external foster placements outside of Medway.

### 5.1.1 Placement Cost

Accommodation Type	Average Weekly cost	Numbers of children in Placement November 2015
Supported Accommodation	£ 778	37
Supported Lodging (Internal)	£ 222	25
IFA (net)	£ 860	110
In house fostering	£475	186
Mother & Baby	£ 1,726	6
Residential SEN	£3,260	8
Residential (net)	£2,989	26

Data Source: Access to Resources and Performance and Information, Medway Council

Increasing numbers of children coming into care in the period proceeding November 2015 has had a significant impact on the overall spend in a number of areas, with increased spend being seen in, in-house fostering carer payments, IFA placements, SGOs and residential care. A number of factors may have impacted on this including:

- Increases in children coming into care beyond what was forecast
- Capacity within in-house fostering not being able to meet demand
- The impact of large sibling groups and children staying longer in care
- The use of high cost placements like secure welfare and mother and baby
- Increasingly complex needs of children entering care, particularly late entrants to care who may require 24 hour staffed supported accommodation provision.

In this case the average cost has increased from £520 in September 2014 to £778 in November 2015

The contract for the IFA provider framework with Kent is due to end in June 2017 and Medway is currently looking at other options on a Medway only footprint as well as regional arrangements for more specialist placements.

## 5.2 In-House Fostering

Medway has its own in-house fostering service responsible for the recruitment, assessment and support of foster carers. Our fostering data is currently being prepared for the completion of the annual fostering return to Ofsted and the information below is draft data from that submission.

As of March 2016, there were a total of 126 standard fostering households (a decrease of 10 from the previous year) approved for **305** placements. However many of these placements were not available for use as a foster placement due to being otherwise utilised. Common reasons why a placement is not available are:

- Placements only available to siblings able to share a room
- Placement is being utilised by a fostered child who “stayed put” when they turned 18
- Placement is being utilised by child who is now living with the carer as an adopted child or under a special guardianship order
- If multiple placements are available, placements not to be used for a period of time to allow a newly placed child to settle in
- Foster carer is not taking new placements as they have personal commitments

The internal fostering service is utilised to almost maximum capacity, with between 5 and 10 placements tending to be available at any one time offering a mixture of placement suitability.

Between April 2015 and March 2016 there were 170 new enquiries to become a foster carer, 58 of which proceeded to the statutory check / assessment stage. In this period, 12 new households were approved and 22 had their registrations terminated, leaving the overall number of approved households reduced by 10. The 22 carers left for the reasons below:

Reason	Number leaving
Approval withdrawn	3
Resigned - left area	1
Resigned - move to IFA	1
Resigned – other	9
Withdrawn from fostering	8

Data Source: Performance and Information, Medway Council

The Fostering Network has indicated that, in the main, there is a national shortage of carers and carers resign when they have reached retirement. However, within the recent period, they have noticed a trend where carers have given financial reasons for ending their fostering roles.

The fostering service has developed a recruitment strategy which will respond to the needs identified in this document and target recruitment at known gaps in localities and needs groups.

#### **5.4 Residential Provision**

Medway has a shortage of local residential provision to accommodate children and young people including young people, with special educational needs.

Medway Council owns a six bed residential unit for young people with complex and challenging behaviours. The management of this unit has recently come back in-house after a period of being outsourced.

There are currently an additional 26 children and young people who are in external residential care placements, who are placed out of area.

#### **5.5 16+ Accommodation Provision**

Statutory guidance associated with the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 places responsibilities on local authorities to prepare young people for leaving care, and supporting young people who have left care. It states that: 'It will therefore be good practice for local authorities to commission a range of semi-independent and independent living options with appropriate support.....'

This should include:

- Staying on in foster care
- Supported Lodgings
- Supported Housing
- Specialist Supported Accommodation
- Independent accommodation – with floating support as required

As at September 2014, Medway was supporting 62% of young people aged 16+ in Supported Lodgings and 38% in Supported Accommodation. Supported Accommodation services are spot purchased in Medway.

The following table gives a breakdown of the type of provision that is in place in Medway, where the number is left blank this is because the numbers routinely vary :

Category of Need/ Level of Support Required.	Provision	Provider	Location	Age Range	No. of beds/ places
<b>STANDARD LEVEL OF SUPPORT</b>	<b>Supported Accommodation</b>	F1	Medway	16-24	
	<b>Supported Acc.</b>	DS2	Medway	16-24	
	<b>Mother &amp; Baby</b>	EC3	Medway		12 beds
	<b>Homeless</b>	RH4	Medway	16 - 65	
	<b>Homeless</b>	M5	Medway	16 - 17	
	<b>Foyer</b>	EH6	Medway	16 - 25	27 places
	<b>Supported Acc.</b>	BG7	Medway	16-25	8 bed Supported Accommodation with Parent & Child unit in separate house next door.
	<b>Supported Acc.</b>	FH8	Medway / Maidstone	16-24	7 units, based on 2 people sharing with live in tenant.
	<b>Foyer</b>	SB9	Medway	16-25	6 places for NEET young people.
	<b>Supported Acc. &amp; Mother /baby</b>	T10	Medway	16-24	
<b>ENHANCED LEVEL OF SUPPORT</b>	There are a number of Providers who have trained and appropriately qualified staff able to offer the level of support required to meet the needs of Medway children and young people. However, they currently do not have the capacity to meet the demand at points when required. In addition many of these providers' unit costs are significantly above industry averages. The 2015 Tender has not ensured sufficiency of this type of provision as had been expected.				
<b>INTENSIVE LEVEL OF SUPPORT</b>	<b>Supported Acc.</b>	A11	Thanet / Kent	16-24	

Despite the completion of the Supported Accommodation Tender in 2015 a gap in provision of high quality Supported Accommodation for Care Leavers in Medway, especially to support young people requiring a more enhanced and intensive level of support still exists.

There are numerous challenges in obtaining sufficient social housing for care leavers to assist them step down and move on to independence in Medway.

Some are outlined below:

- Medway only has 13% of social housing stock and hence is reliant on private landlord accommodation
- The Welfare Reforms, requiring a subsidy for under occupancy has increased the demand of one bedroom flats however there is insufficient supply to meet demand. This makes single care leavers one of the hardest groups to find accommodation for
- Social housing can now charge rent up to 80% of the market rate which is increasing the cost of social housing. Social housing under the 'Allocations guidance 2012 and 2013' has the ability of offer more flexible and responsive tenancies to a wider population e.g. low earners and key workers which is impacting on the availability of social housing for care leavers nationally
- The bidding process for housing can take time and young people are all bidding against one another in an increasing limited pool of provision
- In some cases private landlord accommodation is of poor quality and does not always provide long term stability for young people, as most tenancies are for a period of 12 months. This presents a particular pressure in finding suitable accommodation for young people 18+ who have Autism/ADHD and other disabilities that do require long term social housing
- As of February 2015, Universal Credit for under 35 year olds has been paid directly to the young person. This represents a significant risk for private landlords who fear rent arrears and who may choose not to accept tenants using Universal Credit
- Young people who have been evicted due to rent arrears, anti-social behaviour and other reasons which housing may deem deliberate, result in young people being considered 'intentionally homeless' and hence are no longer eligible to for housing. In these cases they become the responsibility of Social Care to fund temporary accommodation and to provide support to secure alternative accommodation. If alternative privately rented accommodation is found, a guarantor is required but it is not Medway Council's policy to act in this capacity. Often the rental of these properties exceeds Housing benefit and hence here is often an expectation that Social Care services will pay the top up amount of rent not covered by housing benefit

## 5.6 Other Support Services

Medway Children's Services have invested in a range of services to support children, and these services are available to all LAC in order to support placements and improve placement stability.

These services include:

- Community CAMHS which are contractually required to prioritise LAC, and who provide Tier 3 and 4 services
- Tier 2 CAMHS provided by an in-house service but managed by Tier 3 CAMHS provider
- Psychological services for care leavers up to the age of 21
- Specialist post abuse and post sexual abuse service
- Virtual School – a service to work with LAC and support them to achieve the best possible educational outcomes
- Outreach services

### 5.6.1. Emotional Well-being and Mental Health Support Needs of Young People:

Children often enter the care system with a poorer level of physical and mental health than their peers. Two thirds of looked after children have at least one physical health complaint, and nearly half have a mental health disorder. The recent report of the National Children and Young People's Mental Health Taskforce 'Future in Mind', establishes a clear and powerful consensus about how to make it easier for children and young people to access high quality mental health care when they need it. In response to this, Medway CCG, in partnership with Medway Council, has developed a Local Transformation Plan (LTP) to drive forward improvements in mental health services for all children and young people.

A significant focus has been placed on improving mental health outcomes for LAC and Care Leavers including:

- In 2015 additional funding was secured via Parity of Esteem monies to increase the availability of emotional health and welfare services for Children in Care. This has enabled the Oakfield Psychology Service to increase its provision from a case load of 30 to 80 at anyone time. The service now provides in addition to one to one consultations, group sessions, training and support for foster carers and residential staff as well as the production of court assessments in order to support permanency for children. This service is now Medway's main provider of emotional health and welfare services for Children in Care. There are currently no waiting times for this service.
- The Oakfield Psychology service has transferred from Medway Foundation Trust to being provided from a range of community settings around Medway.

This is enabling ease of access for children and their carers as services can now be accessed closer to home.

- In September 2015 renewed funding was secured to ensure that the All Saints Children Centre continued to provide a post abuse and post sexual abuse service. In order to secure sufficient and appropriate referrals the service is now attending weekly meetings within the Tier 2 Single Point of Access. This is enabling multi-agency review of all new referrals to ensure that children receive the most appropriate service in a timely manner.
- Throughout 2015 monthly meetings were held with Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust who provide Medway's specialist Children in Care CAMHS service. This has enabled the council and the provider to resolve a number of issues related to performance and outcomes for Children in Care. Work is planned to continue in this area through the usual contract management processes.
- During 2015 Joint Commissioners have led on the development of a Local Transformation Plan (LTP) for Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing. As the proposed changes represent a substantial variation to health care NHS Medway CCG recommended that a draft service model goes out to public consultation during April to June/July 2016. This approach was endorsed by Medway Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 3 March 2016. As such a 90 day consultation period will begin on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> April 2016.
- In line with Medway's Children and Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Local Transformation Plan (2015), in the future Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health support services will be designed to:
  - Promote good mental health and emotional wellbeing in ante-natal services, pre-school settings and schools and colleges
  - Establish Early Help and ensure clear pathways to that help are known about by the people who need it
  - Ensure there is accessible information and support that is easier to find by children, young people, and families
  - Ensure all schools and services take a "Whole Family" approach in working with children and young people, also having regard to the impact on parents, siblings and family life
  - Work closely with staff in primary and community health services, and wider children's services including schools and children's social work teams to ensure effective and holistic multi-agency team working
  - Support and sometimes take the lead in specialist or 'contract' fostering placement schemes to maintain and support the child or young person within a family placement and within area where possible, and to achieve better outcomes for those children and young people
  - Provide effective support for recovery following treatment; the development of the resilience skills of every child and young person, and stronger attention given to effective transition at key life stages



The expected outcome is of a whole systems pathway designed to meet the emotional wellbeing and mental health needs of children and young people within the context of their family.

## 5.6.2 In education, training and employment:

### 19<sup>th</sup> Birthday EET 2015/16

NI148	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
Total Number	5	2	2	5	3	4	2	1	3	1	6	4	38
Number in EET	3	0	2	2	1	0	1	1	1	1	4	0	16
%	60%	0%	100%	40%	33%	0%	50%	100%	33%	50%	67%	0%	42%

Data Source: Performance and Information, Medway Council

The table above shows the number of Care Leavers in Education, Employment or Training during 2015/16.

### 19/20/21<sup>st</sup> Birthday

EET	2014	2015
Medway	44%	48%
Statistical Neighbours	39%	47%
South East	38%	47%
England	45%	48%

Data Source: Performance and Information, Medway Council

The table above also shows the combined percentage of Care Leavers on their 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, and 21<sup>st</sup> birthdays were in Education, Employment or Training during 2014/15 against the averages. Medway performance is now in line with across all groups.

## 6. Ongoing commissioning priorities (short to medium term)

### 6.1 16+ Homeless Young People and Care Leavers

Partnership Commissioning, will continue working with Social Care, Housing, Youth Services, Health and Education, to deliver on the Medway 16+ Homelessness and Care Leavers Commissioning Action Plan 2014 – 2017, six objectives for homeless young people aged 16+ and Care Leavers aged 16 to 25 years:

- To embed an integrated pathway to support the smooth transition for young people moving into independence, when they are ready and are prepared to do so
- To secure a sufficient range of good quality Supported Accommodation and floating support that is tailored to meet the individual needs of young people

- To support young people to access the best possible health, education, training and employment opportunities so that they can achieve their potential, and for these services to be delivered in a more joined up way
- To ensure funding is spent efficiently and effectively in securing sufficient provision
- To involve young people in informing the commissioning approach
- To improve communication, information sharing and more joined up working across partner agencies to achieve better outcomes for Care Leavers

We will achieve the following objectives by:

- Robustly monitoring the outcomes of 16+ homeless and care leavers to determine if the integrated pathway to independence is effective in preventing young people entering care, and that Care Leavers and those 16+ homeless who are accommodated, follow a clear pathway into independence and are supported by all partner agencies to do so.

#### **6.1.1 Secure Sufficiency of Provision:**

- To spot purchase cost effective and quality supported accommodation and floating support when framework providers are unable to meet the needs of young people
- To develop relationships with supported accommodation providers in such a way that the market is further stimulated to meet the needs of Medway 16+ homeless and care leavers
- To robustly monitor performance and quality of provision against key performance indicators as set out in the contract
- To support the Staying Put scheme being extended to IFAs who are currently caring for some of our young people with complex and challenging behaviours
- To put in place revised Individual Placement Agreements including updated Pathway Plans as to expectations and outcomes to be achieved for the young people, including strong focus on educational attainment, employment and training
- To support the use of the two semi independent units on the site of Medway Council's Old Vicarage Residential Children's Home.

### **6.1.2 Drive up quality standards of existing Support Accommodation**

#### **Providers:**

- To monitor to the Supported Accommodation providers' standards through the application of the quality assurance and performance framework
- To put in place performance improvement plans with providers, where necessary, and regularly review provider's progress in achieving performance targets
- To host provider forums on areas such as CSE, Missing and Emotional Health and Welfare in order to share information, knowledge and training to providers working with young people

### **6.1.3 Address the gaps in provision around emotional well-being and behavioural support Looked After Children and Care Leavers**

- To support the development and delivery of a new service model for Children and Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing as a part of the Local Transformation Programme
- To take forward a process of robust contract management across all providers of services for Looked After Children and Care Leavers
- To support the implementation of routine, multi agency clinical review of all children receiving Tier 2 and Tier 3 services via the Single Point of Access. This approach will assist the Local Authority in determining the impact of therapeutic interventions on children's and young peoples lives

### **6.1.4 Drive forward improvements in performance in respect of Initial Health Assessments:**

- Increase capacity within the clinical team to drive up performance standards to achieve the target of Initial Health Assessments being carried out within the 28 day timescale

### **6.1.5 Drive forward improvements in number of Care Leavers in Education, Employment and Training:**

- To work across partner agencies and providers to ensure a joined up approach is taken to supporting Care Leavers enter education, training and employment. The objective across all agencies will be to achieve the annual performance measure of improving EET numbers by 5-10% each year. Support provided will include increased sharing of information and, where possible, preventing placement breakdown and finding innovative ways to overcome barriers and obstacles preventing young people access EET

### **6.1.6 Drive forward improvements in the management and support of children at risk of or exposed CSE**

- To ensure we have the right services in place to prevent CSE and support young people at risk or victims of abuse
- To ensure providers of accommodation and support have routine CSE training and awareness
- To ensure that children and young people identified as at risk of CSE are referred for emotional health and welfare support

## **7 Commissioning Priorities (medium to longer term)**

### **7.1 Commissioning priorities for the LAC Continuum of care**

Medway is ambitious for its looked after children and care leavers and seeks to give each child the best opportunity to succeed in life. Placing the needs of children at the heart of all that Medway does is the key driver for transforming the way care and accommodation is currently commissioned.

Medway's vision is to offer children an integrated continuum of care that is tailored to meeting the individual needs of children at each stage of their journey in care. Each provider will work as part of a whole service, to maximise the use of share resources, to achieve the long term outcomes for the child and getting it right first time so to prevent the escalation of need.

We aim to prevent the escalation of need by delivering an integrated, well-coordinated and a holistic offer of service that is child centered high quality and grounded in evidence based practice that stretches across our Edge of Care and LAC Service.

We seek to secure the right intervention, at the right time and try to get it right first time so to enable effective step down and rehabilitation home and secure far more cost effective sufficiency of local provision to meet core need groups.

Medway is developing a commissioning strategy that seeks to engage a lead provider or consortia to work in partnership with the council to deliver more integrated pathways of care for our LAC. The key priorities of the strategy will be to:

- Prevent the escalation of need by delivering an integrated, well-coordinated and a holistic offer of service that is child centered and maximizes the use of resources across the care continuum
- Secure high quality and evidence based intervention and care that makes a positive and sustained impact in improving the lives and outcomes for children and young people

- Secure sufficiency of local provision ensuring the right care and intervention is delivered at the right time, so we get it right first time so to enable effective step down, rehabilitation home and permanency
- Secure more cost effective sufficiency of local provision to meet core need groups and achieve sustainable cost savings

## **8 Monitoring progress on the Looked After Children strategy and Sufficiency Report**

Detailed commissioning action plans have been developed to support the implementation of the Looked After Children Strategy and the Sufficiency Strategy over the next three years.

Progress on achieving the LAC Strategy performance targets will be reported to the Children in Care Council and the Corporate Parenting Board to ensure it continues to reflect changing needs and priorities of our children.

As part of the ongoing Performance Monitoring function, Children's Services Management Team and CADMT regularly receive performance reports which include indicators for LAC.

The Sufficiency report will be updated on an annual basis to reflect changes in needs or supply information, and respond to emerging policy initiatives.

All partners will be encouraged to recognise their role in implementation through leadership, communication, supervision to promote good care planning practice, and clear accountability frameworks.

### Key Impact Measures for Care Leavers and 16+ Homeless:

The following impact measures have been identified as the key indicators of the success of the strategy and will be closely monitored and reported on formally for the duration of the strategy.

Activity	Quality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall Number of CIC</li> <li>• Increase in numbers of CIC placed for adoption and made subject of SGO</li> <li>• Increase in the level of capacity, referrals to and actual placements made in in-house foster service</li> <li>• Net gain of foster placements by locality and placement type</li> <li>• Reduction in 16 - 24 year olds presenting as homeless</li> <li>• Reduction in homeless acceptances of 16-24 year olds</li> <li>• Reduction in number of young people aged 16+ becoming looked after</li> <li>• Reduction of babies becoming looked after through use of mother and baby placements where appropriate</li> <li>• % of 16-17 years who left care</li> <li>• Increase in number of LAC 16+ with pathway plans</li> <li>• Reduction in the number and % of LAC over 16 NEET</li> <li>• Increase in % of young people looked after 19 years in EET</li> <li>• Increase in % of care leavers in suitable accommodation</li> <li>• Increase in the number of LAC in higher education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in out of authority placements</li> <li>• Increase in the maintenance of tenancies</li> <li>• Satisfaction of service users including those living in supported accommodation (qualitative indicator)</li> <li>• Young people agree accommodation is suitable and meets needs</li> <li>• Young people are satisfied with the accommodation process and outcome of intervention</li> <li>• Children in Care and Care Leaver's success in EET in line with their peers</li> </ul>

# Diversity Impact Assessment

<b>TITLE</b> <i>Name/description of the issue being assessed</i>	Sufficiency Report 2016/17
<b>DATE</b> <i>Date the DIA is completed</i>	16th March 2016
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b> <i>Name and title of person responsible for carrying out the DIA.</i>	Lorraine Foster, Programme Lead, Looked After Children.

## 1 Summary description of the proposed change

- *What is the change to policy/service/new project that is being proposed?*
- *How does it compare with the current situation?*

This Diversity Impact Assessment addresses the implications of the Sufficiency Report 2016/17 for Medway Council.

The report sets out how Medway Council will meet the placement needs of current and future Looked After Children and Care Leavers and improve outcomes for them in light of our understanding of their needs and current provision.

The report discusses how Medway Council will meet the requirement on the Local Authority to take steps to secure sufficient accommodation and support our children in care within their local area in accordance with the Statutory Guidance for the Sufficiency Duty issued in 2010. Taking account of this duty is a requirement of Local Authorities and their partners.

## 2 Summary of evidence used to support this assessment

- *Eg: Feedback from consultation, performance information, service user records etc.*
- *Eg: Comparison of service user profile with Medway Community Profile*

Comparison of progress against the 2015/16 Sufficiency Report as detailed in Appendix A demonstrates progress against previously agreed targets. The data utilised for this comparison has come from a range of sources including the LAC Digest 2015/16, the Local Area Interactive Tool produced by the Department for Education, as well as data from The Office of National Statistics and sources internal to Medway Council.

In addition the report provides evidence for further work that needs to be done to ensure that an appropriate range and choice of placements and support is available to meet the identified needs of Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

# Diversity Impact Assessment

### 3 What is the likely impact of the proposed change?

Is it likely to :

- Adversely impact on one or more of the protected characteristic groups?
- Advance equality of opportunity for one or more of the protected characteristic groups?
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't?

(insert ✓ in one or more boxes)

Protected characteristic groups	Adverse impact	Advance equality	Foster good relations
Age			
Disability		✓	
Gender reassignment			
Marriage/civil partnership			
Pregnancy/maternity			
Race			
Religion/belief			
Sex			
Sexual orientation			
Other (eg low income groups)		✓	

### 4 Summary of the likely impacts

- Who will be affected?
- How will they be affected?
- Placements for Looked After Children and Care Leavers are provided and commissioned to meet identified needs
- Processes for accessing and monitoring placements achieve maximum efficiency and effectiveness
- Management and support provided to children at risk of or exposed to CSE is successful in preventing abuse and protecting vulnerable children from further abuse.

### 5 What actions can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impacts, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations?

- Are there alternative providers?



# Diversity Impact Assessment

- *What alternative ways can the Council provide the service?*
- *Can demand for services be managed differently?*

Accommodation and support commissioned by Medway Council is expected to meet the individual needs of a child and this includes all of the protected characteristics.

Looked After Children and Care Leavers who are eligible for accommodation and support services will continue to have a choice of quality placement and support.

Medway Council will continue to provide statutory services to the most vulnerable and will commission services in line with its core values and priorities.

## 6 Action plan

- *Actions to mitigate adverse impact, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations and/or obtain new evidence*

Action	Lead	Deadline or review date
Inform the Council of progress against previous updates and proposed changes related to the Continuum of Care	Lorraine Foster	15 May 2017

## 7 Recommendation

*The recommendation by the lead officer should be stated below. This may be:*

- *to proceed with the change, implementing action plan if appropriate*
- *consider alternatives*
- *gather further evidence*

*If the recommendation is to proceed with the change and there are no actions that can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impact, it is important to state why.*

To proceed with the changes outlined in the Sufficiency Report 2016/17.

## 8 Authorisation

*The authorising officer is consenting that:*

- *the recommendation can be implemented*
- *sufficient evidence has been obtained and appropriate mitigation is planned*
- *the Action Plan will be incorporated into service plan and monitored*

**Assistant Director**

**Helen Jones**

# Diversity Impact Assessment

---

Date

16<sup>th</sup> May 2016

Contact your Performance and Intelligence hub for advice on completing this assessment

RCC: phone 2443 email: [annamarie.lawrence@medway.gov.uk](mailto:annamarie.lawrence@medway.gov.uk)

C&A: (Children's Social Care) contact your normal P&I contact

C&A (all other areas): phone 1481 email: [paddy.cahill@medway.gov.uk](mailto:paddy.cahill@medway.gov.uk)

BSD: phone 2472/1490 email: [corppi@medway.gov.uk](mailto:corppi@medway.gov.uk)

PH: phone 2636 email: [david.whiting@medway.gov.uk](mailto:david.whiting@medway.gov.uk)

Send completed assessment to the Corporate Performance & Intelligence Hub (CPI) for web publication  
([corppi@medway.gov.uk](mailto:corppi@medway.gov.uk))



## Medway Council

# Looked After Children Strategy 2015-2018

Version	Date	Type	Author
1.0	December 2014	Refreshed	Jo Cross
2.0	January 2015	Refreshed	Sue Brunton-Reed

Date Agreed by DMT	Date Agreed by Cabinet/MSCB/Improvement Board (if appropriate)	Date of Review	Person Responsible
20 <sup>th</sup> January 2015		January 2016	Phil Watson

## INDEX

	Vision for Children's Services	3
	Statement from Children in Care Council	4
1	Introduction	5
2	Values and Principles	6
3	Key Objectives	7
4	Making the Strategy Work	15
5	Monitoring Progress on the Strategy	16
6	Engaging with Children and Young People	17

## **Our Vision for Children's Services in Medway**

Medway Council is ambitious for all its children and strives to support our children to have the best start in life. We want our children to be confident and resilient individuals, successful learners, effective contributors and responsible citizens.

Children are best supported to achieve this through resilient families, who in turn contribute to thriving communities. We want all our children to grow up in circumstances where parents or carers provide safe and effective care.

Safeguarding children is everybody's responsibility and Medway Council is clear that it has a unique role in the leadership and co-ordination of this locally. All our work will be child centred and we will listen to the views of children, ensuring we balance the rights of parents whilst maintaining a focus on the child.

Universal services have an important role in enabling children to thrive and we will work closely with all our partner agencies to improve outcomes through outstanding health services, schools and children's centres. Our local Early Help offer will focus on supporting children and families in Medway to overcome challenges in their lives, and where necessary seek to prevent a further escalation of concerns.

Our specialist children's services will provide responsive support and intervention for the minority of children who will need to be directly protected from harm and abuse, recognising that children of different ages or with special needs will need a differentiated approach. We will seek to ensure all professionals are clear about their roles and accountabilities so we can in turn be clear to children and their families.

We will support our social workers to be confident and capable professionals, proud of their work and proud to be working in Medway.

We will seek to build an open culture across professional boundaries, where there is an acknowledgement about the uncertainties and risks inherent in safeguarding children, and an absolute commitment to sharing information and to learning together.

**Cllr Mike O'Brien**  
**Lead Portfolio Holder for Children's Services**

**Barbara Peacock**  
**Director of Children and Adults Services**

## **Statement from Children in Care Council – January 2015**

The Children in Care Council (CiCC) continue to support this LAC strategy. Our main objectives are:

- Additional and ongoing support for parents/families when children remain living or return to living with them.
- A commitment to young people being kept in the same school to reduce disruption to their education.
- Help young people access social and leisure opportunities and to ensure these are affordable.
- Standard of social workers must improve and they must be motivated and trained to an acceptable standard
- There must be a certain standard that social workers are measured against and young people should be involved in spot checks and appraisals.

The CiCC are committed to monitoring the progress of this strategy and are keen to be proactively involved in future opportunities to do so.

## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to set out how Medway Council will fulfil its role as a Corporate Parent and provide good and effective parenting to children in care and care leavers, which helps them to develop permanent and caring relationships, achieve their potential and improve their outcomes.

This includes doing everything possible to ensure that their time in care is a positive experience, with access to stable placements, good health and education provision, and that they are given every opportunity to develop strong, supportive relationships that extend well in to their adult life.

We are ambitious for our services and for our looked after children and young people and we believe that they deserve the best opportunities we can provide. Over the life of this strategy we will be striving to provide them with the best possible care and support, in placements that are as close as possible to their home, which prepare them to be independent and succeed in their adult lives.

Achieving this goal requires the collective engagement of all parts of the local authority and its partners to work together, under the oversight and governance of our Corporate Parenting Board. It also requires involving children and young people in the decisions being made about them.

This strategy document sets out the values and principles that underpin our work with looked after children and the key objectives that we will need to address in order to achieve this.

It is based on eight objectives, which reflect the key issues impacting on the lives of looked after children and care leavers in Medway:

1. Provide timely and high quality intervention to help children remain with or return to their families, as long as it is safe to do so
2. Provide and commission the right mix of placements
3. Promote timely permanence planning for all children to ensure they have the opportunity of a stable, permanent home and long term relationships in a placement appropriate to their needs
4. Ensure that looked after children and young people achieve their full potential and can access suitable education, employment or training
5. Improve the health and emotional well-being of looked after children and young people and care leavers
6. Aim to keep looked after young people and care leavers safe through the provision of trained, supported and motivated staff who understand and are alert to the potential for exploitation and abuse of young people and who take the right action at the right time
7. Prepare young people for a successful transition to adulthood

8. Ensure that looked after children and care leavers' views and experiences inform current and future service delivery.

This strategy is set within the context of national policy, legislation and guidance. It is linked to key local planning documents, in particular to the Children's Improvement Plan, the Sufficiency Report and the Pledge. The objectives have been developed using:

- the needs data which is included in the Sufficiency Strategy 2014-6 and accompanying LAC Commissioning Plan, including the profile of our current children in care population
- consultation with the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and our multi agency partners
- the stated commissioning priorities<sup>1</sup>.

They reflect our ambitions outlined in the Improvement Plan to provide high quality services to the right children at the right time.

The strategy addresses the needs of children and young people from birth to the age of 21, (or 25 where children's services continue to have statutory responsibility) who are, or who may be, looked after by Medway Council.

The service will develop an annual action plan with clearly stated tasks, timescales and specific targets for improvement relating to the objective in this strategy and the stated success criteria. This will be overseen by the service and the Corporate Parenting Board sub-groups.

## **2. Values and Principles**

- We will work honestly and openly with families, involve them in decisions about their children and recognise when they need support
- In most circumstances, children's needs are best met by being cared for within their families. We will actively promote family contact unless there are clear reasons why this is not in their interests
- We will promote the cultural inheritance, religion and racial identity of children in care and challenge racism and discrimination
- Children should only be in care for the minimum amount of time that is required to make permanent and sustainable plans for them. Permanency planning starts from the decision that a child needs to come into care and continues until the child's future is secure

---

<sup>1</sup> Medway LAC Sufficiency Strategy 2014-16 and LAC Commissioning Plan 2014



- Children are entitled to protection from harm through abuse, neglect or exploitation. We will investigate and assess thoroughly all situations where child abuse is suspected or alleged
- Children are entitled to be listened to and respected as individuals. We will ensure that children's views and individual needs are considered when making decisions that affect their lives
- We will aim to reduce the involvement of children and young people in criminal activities and to ensure children are not deprived of their liberty except in exceptional circumstances, and in accordance with legal and departmental processes
- Young people leaving care should receive positive preparation and support so that they are enabled to participate fully as active citizens once they reach adulthood
- Disabled children should have the same rights as all other children and the principles above will apply equally to them
- All social work staff and carers should be appropriately qualified, skilled and supported to do their work

### **3. Key Objectives**

#### **3.1 Provide timely and high quality intervention to help children remain with or return to their families**

Children's needs are best served in their own families if this can be safely supported. Helping families stay together must therefore be a key focus for all Children's Services. Early identification of need and effective early intervention is essential. Early intervention and prevention services can reduce the number of children and young people needing to become looked after, avoid repeat entry into care or support them to return safely to their families in a timely manner.

In order to support this we will:

- Develop services in conjunction with our Early Help service to support parents and develop their parenting skills, both to prevent the need for care and to support restoration of children to their families
- Make more effective and consistent use of Family Group Conferences to help prevent unnecessary admissions

- Develop a crisis intervention response to prevent unnecessary admission of adolescents
- Improve accountability of professionals, including IROs, social workers and partner agency staff, to support safe return to families
- Build skills of foster carers to work with natural parents and family members if the objective is return to family

### **Key success criteria**

- Reduction in the number of children looked after
- Reduction in the number of days spent in care
- Increase in numbers of children with a children in need plan.
- Families report being better supported through earlier interventions

### **3.2 Provide and commission the right mix of placements**

We need to be sure that we have the right range of placements to meet the assessed needs of our looked after children as outlined in the Sufficiency Strategy, and offer placement choice. We want to ensure that placements provide quality services and good value for money.

In order to support this we will:

- Increase the number of good quality foster placements close to Medway through targeted recruitment
- Complete our Fostering review to ensure that the service maximises the use of in house placements, especially for young people with complex and challenging needs, sibling groups, long term care, parent & child and disabled children placements
- Continue to work with other providers to develop appropriate external placements at lower cost and higher quality
- Ensure that all placements more than 20 miles away have the required Director approval
- Analyse information to better understand the reasons for placement breakdown and plan to reduce frequency
- Improve sufficiency data and use in planning to meet demand

### **Key Success Criteria**

- Increase in the number of in house foster placements, particularly those able to meet complex needs.
- Improved performance in relation to the distance of placements from the child's home area.
- Reduction in placement breakdowns
- Lower unit costs of placements
- Increase in availability of supported accommodation

### **3.3 Promote timely permanence planning for all children to ensure they have opportunity of a stable, permanent home and long term relationships in a placement appropriate to their needs**

Having a clear Care Plan in place is essential for children and young people in care, not only to ensure that they come into and exit care at the right times, but to meet our statutory obligations under the Care Planning Regulations. We need to ensure that children do not 'drift' through care, but have clearly-planned processes which allow them to be reunited with family and friends where possible, have stable, supported and well matched placements with alternative carers, decisions are made in a timely way relevant to their age and development and they exit the care system in a timely and positive way at whatever age this happens. When we work with families to provide care with their agreement under S20 of the Children Act, we will ensure these cases are closely monitored and either progress to permanence in a timely way using legal processes appropriately, or that children are supported to return to their families.

In order to support this we will:

- Plan to increase the number of looked after children who achieve permanence through adoption, special guardianship orders or placement with family and friends (connected carers)
- Plan to extend placements to care for young people up to age 21 and beyond in appropriate cases, fully implementing the 'Staying Put' scheme
- Hold monthly Permanence Panels to monitor and track permanence plans and provide staff briefings on our Permanence Policy so all staff are aware of our aims and aspirations for the children we look after
- Provide practical support for permanence, including training for staff on attachment and life story work which will be undertaken with all children and young people at an age, pace and time that is appropriate for them.
- Explore peer-mentoring schemes using care leavers for other children and looked after young people to support young people where their placements may be challenged, to support placement stability.

#### **Key Success Criteria**

- Percentage increase of children looked after in permanent placements including SGOs
- Improved performance in adoption
- Reduction in the time spent in care by children aged under 10 years
- Reduction in proportion of children cared for under S20

### **3.4 Ensure that looked after young people achieve their full potential and can access suitable education, employment or training**

Children in Care are amongst the most vulnerable in our society and are at risk of achieving poor outcomes and failing to meet their potential. Our aim is to narrow the gap between children and young people in care and all children in educational achievement, health outcomes, criminal behaviours, and employability.

We have a Virtual Head Teacher and a Board of Governors to support the Medway Virtual School. Their role is to champion the attainment of young people and the provision of high quality support according to assessed needs. All Medway schools have a Designated Teacher responsible for meeting the needs of looked after young people in their school and the VHT has established excellent links with every Designated Teacher.

To assist children and young people to understand the importance of savings and money management, we will ensure all looked after children are supported to have individual savings accounts.

To support the educational attainment of looked after young people we will:

- Provide additional tuition to support attainment where required and identified in the child's PEP, fully utilising the Pupil Premium
- Ensure the right educational setting is chosen for each young person, according to their individual assessed needs maintaining as far as possible the child's current school placement. We will ensure young people are placed in schools rated by Ofsted as good or better depending on their assessed needs and in accordance with the recommendation of the VHT. Where the grade of a school changes we will record on file whether the VHT recommends a change of school or not, and how the young person can be supported to achieve at that school
- Promote joint working between all schools, colleges and academies in Medway and ensure each child has clear and realistic progress targets. Foster carers will be supported to create a suitable environment to learn and to engage proactively with schools to secure the young person's attainment
- Ensure that looked after young people and care leavers are supported to achieve their full potential at any age and that they maintain comparable results and progress to their non-looked after peers. Each young person aged 16-18 will have a PEP regardless of their educational setting and we will continue with our engagement with the Care2Work scheme to increase internal and external apprenticeships, traineeship and work opportunities for young people
- Ensure all children in care are supported to set up savings accounts, including those in externally commissioning placements

## Key Success Criteria

- Higher percentage of children and young people in schools or educational facilities graded as good or above
- Reduction in persistent absence and overall absence
- Reduction in the number of children changing school when they become looked after or following a change of placement
- Numbers of children with compliant and good quality PEP
- Improvement in the percentage of children leaving care who are in education, employment or training
- Increase in the percentage of young people achieving 5A\*-C including English and Maths at GCSE in all placements
- Ensure that all children receive a minimum of 25 hours education
- Reduction in the number of fixed term exclusions.

### 3.5 Improve the health and well-being of looked after young people and care leavers

Evidence shows that children and young people entering and leaving care have poorer health outcomes than their peers. Medway is ambitious for our young people and we believe that a key aspect of our Corporate Parenting duties is to ensure that these inequalities are reversed. We will support children and young people to have a healthy lifestyle and access to good quality health and emotional care when needed, in a location and format that best suits their assessed needs.

We believe that supporting a child or young person's well-being takes many forms, including supporting them to end their offending behaviour or diverting them from the criminal justice system when they do.

To achieve these objectives we will:

- Ensure that health assessments are completed in a timely manner and in ways that engage young people, and that all care leavers have an up to health history and health plan
- Improve young people's awareness of the importance of good health and ensure that physical and emotional health are key areas for review in LAC reviews and monthly audits:
- Support young people to make positive choices about the use of contraception and sexual health services.
- Promote positive emotional and mental health amongst looked after children, young people and care leavers.

- Review our CAMHS services to ensure that it provides timely access to emotional health services for children and young people in a manner that meets their assessed need.
- Implement an all age Emotional Well-Being Strategy working jointly with Kent County Council and Kent's Clinical Commissioning Groups – commissioned services to be in place from September 2015
- Re-launch the Access to Leisure scheme and strengthen our links with the Youth Service to ensure that young people access positive community resources.
- Provide support for young people in partnership with police and youth justice colleagues to divert them from criminal activity

### **Key Success Criteria**

- Increase the timeliness of initial and annual health assessments
- Increase in take up of CAMHS services at all tiers
- Reduction in waiting times for CAMHS and monitoring of improved access to CAMHS
- Reduction in incidence of self-harming behaviours in LAC
- Reduction of teenage pregnancy in children looked after
- Feedback from foster carers and children and young people about the timeliness and quality of health assessments and interventions
- Reduction in number of young people with a criminal conviction

### **3.6 Keep looked after children, young people and care leavers safe through the provision of trained, supported and motivated staff who understand and are alert to the potential for exploitation and abuse of young people and who take the right action at the right time**

Children's Social Care places the safety and well-being of its young people at the forefront of everything we do. We want nothing but the best for our young people and that includes keeping them safe from those who would exploit or abuse them. We have clear safeguarding policies and a Child Sexual exploitation (CSE) strategy and toolkit, which has been introduced to staff from across all service areas and partner agencies.

To ensure that we continue to develop and expand our services and expertise to keep young people safe we will:

- Ensure only those IFAs and residential placement providers judged as good or above are utilised. Where the grading of a placement changes whilst a Medway young person is placed therein the case will be presented within one week to

the Access to Resource Panel with the Head of Service in attendance and an appropriate plan agreed and signed off by the Assistant Director.

- Ensure that all staff are supported and trained to recognise young people who are being sexually exploited or who are vulnerable to being exploited:
- Establish the multi-agency CSE Champions group which will meet quarterly to ensure that robust planning, mapping and training is in place to safeguard young people from CSE.
- Work with partner agencies to ensure that they have in place good safeguarding policies which encompass sexual exploitation and which ensures that where there are known risks about specific young people these risks are shared in a timely manner with the appropriate action taken.

### **Key Success Criteria**

- Reduction in the number of young people known to be at risk of sexual exploitation
- Increase in the number of children and young people who report feeling safe in their placement
- Increase in the number of carers (including those from commissioned services) who have attended relevant training

### **3.7 Promote a successful transition to adulthood**

All young people need to be able to develop practical, social and emotional skills in order to live independently. Young people in care are particularly vulnerable and will need additional support to make this move. Important requirements of successful transition are access to suitable accommodation, and engagement in education, training and employment. We do this through the provision of a trained and motivated staff team, training and development to other social care staff, the planned transfer of cases to the Leaving Care service and support to young people to develop independence skills at their own pace and with the required support. We believe that like their no- looked after peers, care leavers should be provided with a safety net when they fail or make mistakes and they should be equipped with the necessary social skills, emotional resilience and practical skills to make a successful transition into adulthood and independent living.

To support young people make a successful transition to adulthood and independence we will:

- Ensure young people have access to the good quality accommodation with support and assistance according to their assessed needs.

- Work with partners including Commissioning to ensure that there is a range of semi-independent accommodation with appropriate support packages available
- Re-launch the Staying Put Policy to social workers, PA's, SSW's, IROs and foster carers.
- Support our care leavers to access employment, traineeships and apprenticeships within the Council and with partner agencies.
- Develop peer mentoring for care leavers
- Support foster carers to teach independent living skills and see this as an integral part of their role.
- Improve support for placement transition including "taster" periods in semi-independent provision.

### **Key Success Criteria**

- Increase in percentage of care leavers aged up to 21 in suitable accommodation
- Increase in percentage of care leavers aged up to 21 in employment, education or training
- Increase in capacity of supported accommodation
- Increase in opportunities for apprenticeships across council departments

### **3.7 Ensure that children looked after and care leaver's views and experiences inform current and future service delivery**

Listening to the views of children and young people, and involving them in decisions about their lives is an important part of the work of all professionals involved in caring for children and young people.

We actively seek input from our young people and this is evidenced through a range of opportunities including attendance at the Corporate Parenting Board, an invitation to the Chair of the Children in Care Council (CiCC) to address full Council, senior officer attendance at the CiCC and a range of workshops with young people.

Our ambition is to ensure that not just the voice of young people but their experiences are captured in our assessments, plans and audits and that all staff within Children's Social Care and our partner agencies actively consider the voice and experience of young people within all aspects of their work.

To achieve this we will:

- Develop a range of young person friendly mechanisms using social media where possible to enable young people, including younger children and those with



disabilities, to provide feedback about their experience of being looked after by Medway and their wishes and feelings about their future

- Ensure that the voice and experience of young people is explored during supervision and that this is a key part of all case audits. Feedback from these audits will be reviewed at a management level to ensure that training and development opportunities are developed as required
- Develop a Facebook page for the Fostering service which not only enables us to promote our service to potential carers but which provides an opportunity for young people to contribute to service development
- Ensure that the information provided to young people when they become LAC, at their first LAC review and at subsequent LAC reviews actively addresses their rights including how to obtain support and how to make a complaint
- Utilise the information from complaints and representations and feedback from parents to support service development and improvement. We will ensure that feedback and outcomes from complaints is on the agenda of every team meeting across the LAC service and that the service records how it will address the issues raised. We will review on a quarterly basis the outcome of complaints received across CSC to ensure that learning is shared across the service
- Consult more with the parents of looked after young people
- Develop a participation strategy in partnership with young people
- Work with our partners in Commissioning to ensure that the Advocacy service reaches looked after young people and care leavers as required, and develop peer-mentoring services for looked after young people and care leavers.

### **Key Success Criteria**

- Increase in the percentage of children and young people who actively contribute to their reviews
- Evidence that children and young people are aware of and know how to use the complaints process
- Monitoring of complaints made by children and young people
- Increase in percentage of audits that are judged good or better in relation to the recording of the views of children and young people

## **4. Making the strategy work**

Making the strategy work will require not only the development or improvement of services but also ensuring that planning is based on good, accurate information, professionals are held to account, and that the governance and oversight by the

Corporate Parenting Board is effective in maintaining and improving standards. The strategy should be clearly communicated to all who have an interest, and who it affects.

The key elements which will need to be in place to make the strategy work are:

- Good management information about the current use of care placements and the current and predicted levels of demand. This information can be used to develop and update the required Sufficiency Strategy, and drive the LAC Commissioning Strategy and 16+ Homelessness and Leaving Care Commissioning Action Plan.
- Effective structures for engaging with the views of young people in care, including those in younger age groups, and those with specific needs and disabilities. This will include Children in Care Council, consultation processes and involvement in the Corporate Parenting Board
- Effective oversight and governance: This will include:
  - Review of the strategy and action plan at the internal LAC Improvement Board and at Children's Social Care Management Team annually to ensure compliance with targets. Where there is slippage, corporate and service based resources can be utilised to ensure service improvement is sustained.
  - The Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) chaired by the Lead Portfolio holder for Children's Social Care, has reviewed and agreed this 3-year strategy.
  - The Sub-groups of the CPB will take responsibility for monitoring and driving forward this strategy and overseeing progress on the action plan. The relevant groups are: Education, Health, Housing and Accommodation, Youth Justice, Children in Care Council. The CPB will review progress annually.
  - Progress against this 3-year Strategy and the Action Plan, and on the work of the CPB sub-groups, will be presented annually to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee/Cabinet.

## **5. Monitoring progress on the strategy**

The strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis as outlined above and the Action Plan updated annually to reflect changes in needs or supply information, and respond to emerging policy initiatives.

All partners should be supported to recognise their role in implementation, through leadership, communication, and supervision to promote good care planning practice, and clear accountability frameworks.

## **6. Engaging with looked after young people**

Ongoing engagement with children and young people is key to ensuring that our strategies and policies are child-centred. As well as agreeing the Strategy with our Children in Care Council, progress against this Strategy will be reviewed by the CiCC annually.

.....

Councillor Mike O'Brien: Lead Portfolio Holder for Children's Services

.....

Barbara Peacock: Director Children & Adult Services