



# Medway Council Children's Services

## Sufficiency Report 2017-18

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## 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 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 there is a strong focus on efficiency and value for money. 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 will be monitored to evidence progress on delivery.

## 2. Demographics of Medway

There were approximately 276,492 people resident in Medway in 2015, according to figures produced by the Office for National Statistics [<sup>i</sup>]. The 2015 mid-year population estimate shows an increase of 12,567 (4.8%) from the 2011 Census (263,925), and an increase of 27,004 (10.8%) since the Census in 2001 (249,488).

Compared to England the population of Medway has a smaller proportion of people over the age of 65 years (Medway 15.4% and England 17.7%). Medway has a larger proportion between the ages of 0 and 14 years than England (19.1% and 17.9% respectively) and between the ages of 15 and 24 years (10.4% and 9.7% respectively). The population of Medway is therefore younger than the population of England overall.

The Medway Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) looks in greater detail at the profile of its community. Some of its highlights are detailed below:

1. The general fertility rate (GFR) is a summary measure of fertility in women between the ages of 15 and 44 years. In Medway in 2015 the GFR was 65.2 births per 1,000. This value is higher than South East region and England averages (61.7 and 62.5 births per 1,000 respectively). Areas with a higher GFR will need more children services and interventions to ensure that children have a healthy start in life<sup>ii</sup>
- Teenage pregnancy is an important problem in Medway. The under-16 and under-18 conception rates are higher in Medway than the South East and National average, although there has been a general decrease over the past few years, both at a local and National level.
  - In 2012, inward migration to Medway exceeded outward migration, contributing to the population growth, with an estimated net inflow of 1,800 persons. This is the largest net inflow to Medway in the last ten years. The age of the migrants into Medway are slightly younger than those leaving, with those in their twenties accounting for just over half of net migration into Medway (+800).
  - The majority of the population (89.6%) in Medway are classified as White, with the next largest ethnic group being Asian or Asian British (5.2%) including Chinese<sup>iii</sup>
  - In 2014 the number of people listed as economically active (working age residents in employment or actively seeking employment) was 77.6%, which is in line with the England average (77.4%), but below that of the South East in general (79.7%). As at April 2015, the number of job seekers allowance (JSA) claimants in Medway was 3,856, accounting for 2.2% of the working-age resident population; this is a decrease of 1,224 claimants compared to 12 months prior.<sup>iv</sup>
  - There is much variation between the Medway wards in terms of population density, deprivation, and death rates. The all-age, all-cause mortality rate is higher in Medway than in England and the South East average.

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 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 86th most deprived for education, skills and training'. The next revision of the deprivation index is not expected until 2020.

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's 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's rate of teenage pregnancy is significantly greater than the England and South East averages.

- Large family size

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 percent) 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's actions towards securing better lives for its residents.

### 3. Children in Care Population

The number of children looked after nationally has increased steadily over the last nine years. At 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 there were 72,670 looked after children (LAC) nationally, an increase of 3% on 2016.

While the national rate is increasing, Medway is taking less children into care. At the end of September 2017, Medway had 393 looked after children, representing a 4% decrease from September 2016.

Medway's September 2017 rate of 62 children per 10,000 is identical to the March 2017 national rate. Comparison against other groups shows the Medway rate is between the South East average of 51 children per 10,000 and our statistical neighbour average of 73 children per 10,000.

A mathematical model is used each year to predict the number of LAC in the future based on those currently in care, the rate of children coming into care over the last 2 years (including modelling the conversion rate from Child Protection (CP) plan to LAC), and the rate of children leaving care over the last 5 years.

For Medway, this model is forecasting minimal change with 396 LAC predicted for September 2018 if the historical patterns of care persist. Last year the model had predicted 432 in care in September 2017, but a strong focus within the service on edge of care and reducing adoption timescales has achieved a significant reduction from this prediction.

It should be noted that within the 2017 prediction is a 17% increase in LAC aged 1-4. However, if Medway is able to maintain our recent excellent results for adoption timeliness, it should nevertheless translate into lower numbers of children in care in this key adoption age group.

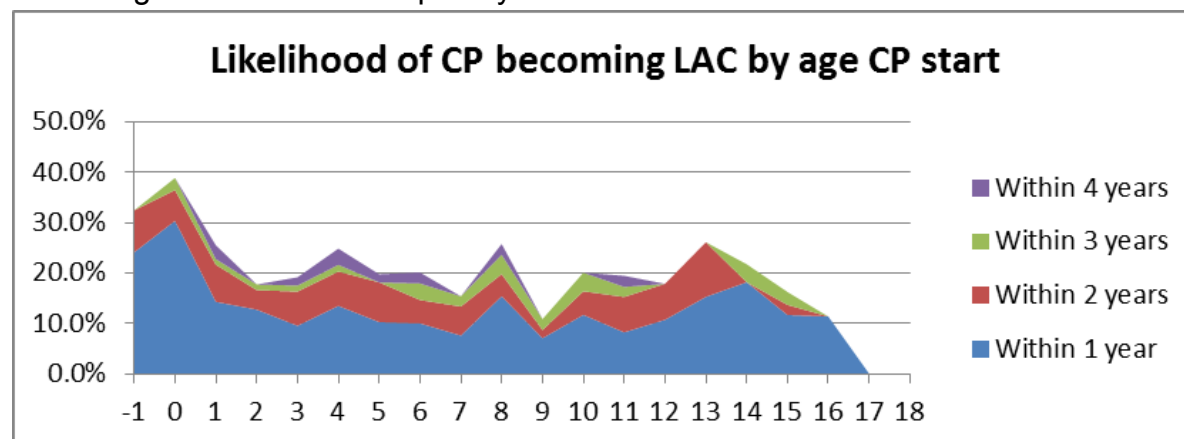
Table 1: Forecasted numbers of Looked After Children

	In care 30 Sep 2015	In care 30 Sep 2016	In care 30 Sep 2017	Prediction Sep 2018	% 2017 to 2018	Prediction Sep 2019
<b>Under 1</b>	27	27	23	25.7	+12%	25.5
<b>Age 1-4</b>	77	54	55	64.5	+17%	67.4
<b>Age 5-9</b>	100	92	87	67.3	-18%	64.1
<b>Age 10-15</b>	161	168	163	166.9	-2%	170.5
<b>Age 16-17</b>	76	70	65	71.9	+11%	64.9
<b>Total</b>	441	411	393	396.2	+1%	392.4

Data Source: Performance and Information, Medway Council

Also of note is the continued dominance of the 10-15 age group and the slight increase in 16-17 year old group. Both of these groups pose specific challenges when procuring placements that are described further on in this document.

Figure 1 below shows the likelihood of a child, subject to a child protection order, becoming LAC within subsequent years.



Data Source: Business and Intelligence, Medway Council

When viewed together, the prevention of escalating need by delivering an integrated, well-coordinated and holistic offer of service that is child centred, high quality and evidenced based remains a priority.

### 3.1 New entrants into care

Table 2: new entrants into care 2014-2017

Age range	Year ending September 2014	Year ending September 2015	Year ending September 2016	Year ending September 2017	% 2016 to 2017
Under 1	57	38	46	38	-17%
1-4	34	62	41	40	-2%
5-9	33	55	35	31	-11%
10-15	48	70	51	27	-47%
16+	12	21	20	24	+20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>-17%</b>

Data Source: Business and Intelligence, Medway Council

Comparisons between the number of new entrants into care for the years 2014 to 2017 are shown in Table 2 above. After peaking in 2015, the number of new children has reduced across all age groups bar the 16+.

When compared against national rates, as in Figure 2 below, we can see that current practice is very much in line with the national pattern with one exception. The substantial reduction seen in 10-15 year olds coming into care last year is both out of step with both our historical rates and the national rate. Where it is possible to



maintain the child's safety within the family home, research has shown that better outcomes for children in this age group are achieved by working with the families to build on their strengths rather than accepting the child into care.

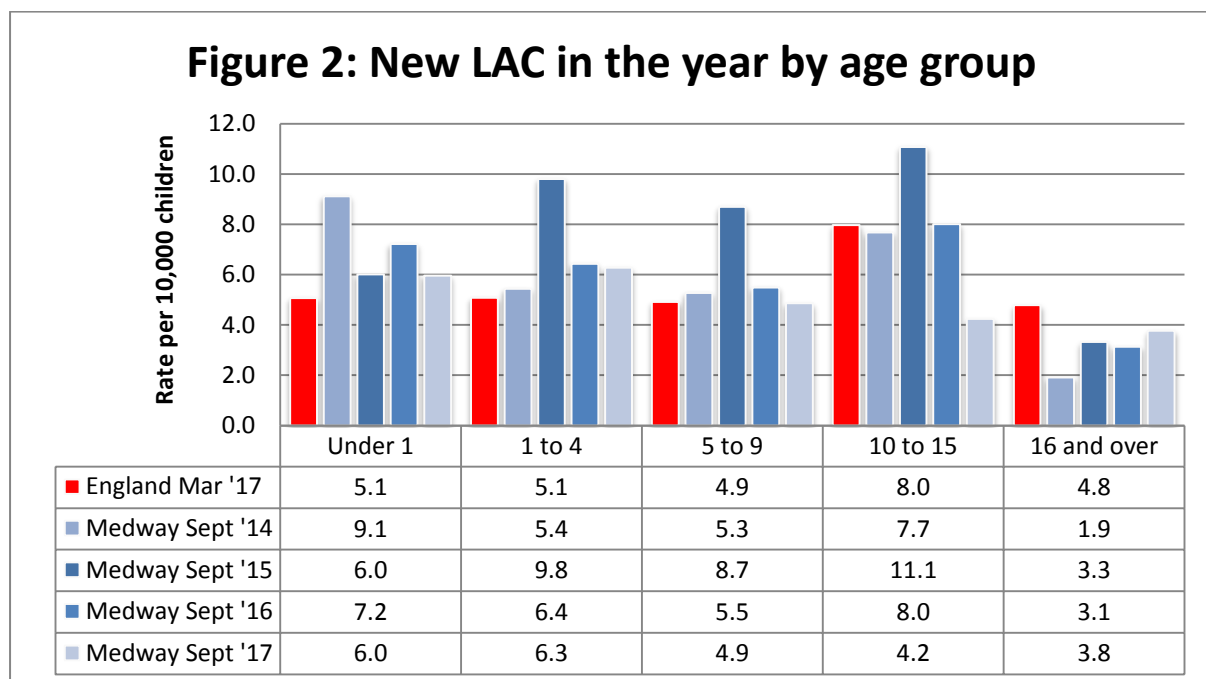


Table 3 below shows that in 2015/16 Medway brought an unusually high number of Care applications to court. The latest figures show that we came back in line with the historical and national average, with the service predicting a small increase in the current year.

Table 3: Care applications per 10,000 children

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Medway	9.2	8.6	8.0	14.5	22.6	9.5
England	9.1	9.8	9.3	9.7	11.0	12.5

Data Source Cafcass

### 3.2 Diversity of Looked After Children

Table 4: Ethnicity of LAC 2014-2017

Ethnicity	September 2014	September 2015	September 2016	September 2017
Asian or Asian British	0.5%	0.7%	0.7%	0.3%
Black or Black British	2.6%	4.3%	3.5%	2.3%
Mixed	5.9%	5.9%	7.9%	6.4%
Other Ethnic Groups	1.0%	2.5%	1.7%	1.8%
White	89.9%	86.6%	86.2%	89.3%

Data Source: Business and Intelligence, Medway Council

The increasing diversity of the Medway LAC population is reflective of the increasing ethnic diversity in Medway as detailed in the 2011 census data.

### 3.3 Age range of Looked After Children

Table 5: age range of LAC 2014-2017

Age range	September 2014	September 2015	September 2016	September 2017
Age 0	37 (8.4%)	27 (6.1%)	27 (6.6%)	23 (5.9%)
Age 1-4	65 (14.7%)	77 (17.5%)	54 (13.1%)	55 (14.0%)
Age 5-9	84 (19.0%)	100 (22.7%)	92 (22.4%)	87 (22.1%)
Age 10-15	58 (13.2%)	76 (17.2%)	70 (17.0%)	65 (16.5%)
Age 16-17	37 (8.4%)	27 (6.1%)	27 (6.6%)	23 (5.9%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>441</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>393</b>

Data Source: Business and Intelligence, Medway Council

The decreasing numbers of children across most age ranges is in part due to a changing culture across children services that has seen greater emphasis placed on early intervention and targeted family support. As anticipated in the previous Sufficiency Report this is ensuring that potential harm to children is reduced to such an extent that need for removal from the family home whilst focused interventions occur is eliminated.

Despite the reduction in numbers of children aged 10-15 coming into care, the high percentage of LAC children in that age group will continue to impact on care services. There will be an increased need for a variety of supported accommodation options and supported lodgings over the next five years as they transition to independent living.

In addition, as young people coming into care at a later age tend to have more complex and challenging needs, the higher numbers of 5-9 and 10-15 year groups also indicate an increased need for in-house fostering provision able to support children and young people with challenging behaviour, the provision of therapeutic foster placements and the need for wrap around support to reduce placement breakdowns.

Table 6 shows the September 2017 cohort of looked after children broken down by age and gender. The table shows that Medway continues to have substantially more boys in care than girls across all age groups except 5-9 years. It is significant that this is more pronounced in the teenage years as this has implications for carers able to support young males with more difficult behaviour.

Table 6: Looked After Children by age and sex, 2017

<b>Age range</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Total</b>
Under 1	9	14	23
1-4	22	33	55
5-9	47	40	87
10-15	74	89	163
16+	29	36	65
<b>Total</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>393</b>

Data Source: Business and Intelligence, Medway Council

### 3.4 Legal status of Looked After Children

Table 7: Legal status of Looked After Children, 2014-17

<b>Legal Order</b>	<b>September 2014</b>	<b>September 2015</b>	<b>September 2016</b>	<b>September 2017</b>
<b>S20</b>	176	158	106	82
<b>Police Protection</b>	0	1	1	0
<b>Emergency Protection Order</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Interim Care Order</b>	23	64	61	51
<b>Care Order</b>	124	155	182	203
<b>Placement Order</b>	63	63	61	56
<b>On Remand</b>	0	0	0	1
<b>PACE</b>	1	0	0	0
<b>Youth Rehab Order</b>	0	0	0	0

Data Source: Business and Intelligence, Medway Council

In September 2016, children accommodated under care orders made up over 44% of all legal status for looked after children in Medway. Over time care orders have increased and in September 2017 children under care orders make up 51.6% of all LAC.

Over the same period Section 20 cases (parental agreement for the child to be looked after) have decreased. This decline in Section 20 cases has been facilitated and maintained by reviewing Section 20 cases and developing clear plans for permanency. Table 8 shows a more detailed breakdown of legal status by age on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2016 and 2017. The comparison of the 2016 figures in brackets again shows the decline in Section 20 and the rise in care orders and interim care orders in most categories.

Table 8: Legal status of Looked After Children by age band, 2017  
(2016 figures in brackets)

Age range	Section 20	Interim Care Order	Care Order	Placement / Freeing Order
0	8 (10)	15 (13)	0 (0)	1 (4)
1 – 4	12 (9)	17 (15)	5 (2)	21 (27)
5 – 9	11 (14)	12 (10)	36 (37)	28 (26)
10 – 15	21 (25)	7 (11)	130 (118)	5 (9)
16+	31 (36)	0 (0)	32 (26)	1 (1)
<b>Total</b>	83 (94)	51 (49)	203 (183)	56 (67)

Data Source: Business and Intelligence, Medway Council

### 3.5 Disabled children and young people

At 30 September 2017; there were 30 LAC who have a disability. This represents 7.6% of all LAC and is the same as September 2015. The most significant needs groups are detailed in the table below:

Table 9: Significant Needs Groups of Looked After Children, 2014-17

Disability Type	September 2014	September 2015	September 2016	September 2017
Learning Disability	29	23	19	18
Autism or Asperger Syndrome	18	15	14	13
Behaviour Disorder – Including ADHD	11	10	9	9
Communication	6	7	7	6
Physical disability	5	5	4	5
Total with a disability	44	35	32	30
% of LAC	11.4	7.9	7.7	7.6

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

Data Source: Business and Intelligence, Medway Council

### 3.6 Transforming care

Transforming Care is a national programme which aims to reduce reliance on specialist inpatient beds and improve community based provision for people of all ages with a learning disability and/or autism, as well as a mental health condition and behaviour that challenges. The three year programme ends in March 2019 and Medway is delivering Transforming Care in partnership with Kent. Building the Right Support<sup>[1]</sup>, published in October 2015, provides the national strategy to support its

<sup>[1]</sup> *Building the Right Support*, NHSE, ADASS & LGA, October 2015

delivery. A supplement<sup>[2]</sup> to provide additional guidance and a service model specifically relating to children and young people was published in September 2017. The service model is structured around 9 Core Principles, including Core Principle 9, 'I have a choice about where I live and who I live with'.

The service model includes the following vision statement:

*Children, young people and adults with a learning disability and/or autism who display behaviour that challenges, including those with a mental health condition have the right to the same opportunities as anyone else to live satisfying and valued lives and, to be treated with the same dignity and respect. They should have a home within their community, be able to develop and maintain relationships and get the support they need to live a healthy, safe and fulfilling life.*

Children and young people are deemed to be part of the Transforming Care cohort if they have a diagnosis of a learning disability and/or autism and if they are admitted to a Tier 4 CAMHS bed, commissioned by NHS England Specialised Commissioning, or they are living in the community and are at risk of hospital admission.

The cohort is small; Medway currently has 2 children who are under the Transforming Care programme and has also discharged two patients from Tier 4 CAMHS hospital beds back to the community since 1st April 2017. However, each individual has presented with complex needs, and safe and sustained discharge from hospital requires person centred planning bespoke packages of support which can be costly.

Key to successful and sustainable discharge of Transforming Care patients back into the community is advance planning and coordination. A discharge process for young people in Medway has been developed and agreed to ensure discharges are not delayed and that costs are anticipated with as much notice as possible. The Kent and Medway Transforming Care Programme has developed a high level Housing Plan as requested by NHS England to outline how it will address the housing and accommodation needs of this cohort. The Transforming Care Programme is actively engaging a range of new providers to expand the specialist support market whose model of care includes supported living.

## **4. Placements and proceedings**

### **4.1 Parent and child placements**

As at 30 September 2017, Medway had a total of 11 children in parent and child (P&C) placements. At £896 per week, parent and child placements with internal foster carers are the most cost effective and are utilised whenever these placements are available. Four of the 11 placements above were with the 9 internal foster carers approved for P&C placements. The number of internally approved P&C carers is the

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<sup>[2]</sup> *Developing Support and Services for Children and Young People with a Learning Disability, Autism, or Both*, NHSE & LGA, September 2017

same as in September 2016, as the 2 new approvals in the year were offset by the resignation of 2 carers.

The other 7 September P&C placements were with external foster carers at an average cost of £1,448 per week. There were an additional 10 P&C placements made with external fostering agencies during the year. The average cost across all 17 external placements was £1,853 per week, showing a rise in cost over the last year when the average cost was £1,197 per week.

The average length of stay across all 17 external P&C placements is 13 weeks with the majority completing in under 12 weeks. Two exceptional cases have raised the overall average. This shows continued efforts to focus parent and child placements on assessing parental capabilities within a 12 week period with a view to supporting the parent and child back home where safe to do so. Where possible, community assessments of a parent and child at home are now a first option.

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 a number of children and families to stay together where it is safe to do so after having received support and instruction around parenting skills.

#### 4.2 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. Although Medway's performance against the timescale from application to completion of proceedings had been in line with national figures in 2014/15 and 2015/16, performance in the last year has dropped significantly to 40 weeks.

Table 10: Time from application to the completion of proceedings (CAFCASS)

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Medway	44 weeks	30 weeks	31 weeks	40 weeks
National	37 weeks	30 weeks	30 weeks	29 weeks

Data Source: Business and Intelligence, Medway Council

Although the target for completing court proceedings is 26 weeks, the figures are such that even one complex case can impact hugely on the figure shown. Medway has significant numbers of sibling groups and it may be this that is impacting on the slower performance. A recent study conducted around Medway women who have children repeatedly removed into care found it

"...noteworthy that 41.4% of Medway women [in the cohort of women with children removed into care] have had more than three children removed. This is also slightly higher than the majority of other areas...."

PAUSE Medway Scoping report 2017.

Following 2 years of significantly higher than national rates of care proceedings being initiated, the 59 care applications made in Medway in 2016/17 was 9.5 per 10,000 children against a national rate that had increased to 12.5 per 10,000 children. Figures are shown in Table 11 below.

Table 11: Care applications (CAFCASS):

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Medway care applications		90	142	59
Number of children on care applications		171	250	93
Medway rate per 10,000	8	14.5	22.6	9.5
National rate per 10,000	9.2	9.7	11.0	12.5

Data Source: Business and Intelligence, Medway Council

### 4.3 Adoption and Special Guardianship Order (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 Parental Responsibility but where the carer has made a long term commitment to the child”.*

During the period from October 2016 to September 2017, 34 children have been placed for adoption. This represents a decrease of 6% on 2015/16 figures. This includes six sibling groups of 2 children and one sibling group of 3 children. The age breakdown of children placed for adoption is shown below in Table 12.

Table 12: Adoption placements 2013-2017

Age at placement	Year ending September 2013	Year ending September 2014	Year ending September 2015	Year ending September 2016	Year ending September 2017
0 - 1	17	29	19	17	15
2 - 4	15	18	6	12	11
5+	8	8	1	7	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>34</b>

Data Source: Business and Intelligence, Medway Council

During this latest year, 8 children aged 5+ years have been successfully placed for adoption. These children are traditionally “harder to place” and this reflects considerable work by the team, in particular as 7 of these children are part of sibling

groups and successful placements have enabled them to stay with their younger siblings in their new families.

Table 13: Adoption panel decisions by month 2016-17

Panel decisions	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Year
Matches	7	1	1	4	1	6	3	3	2	1	1	1	31
Decision that adoption is the plan for the child	3	3	5	2	5	5	1	0	6	3	2	3	38
Adoptive families approved	1	1	3	2	1	1	0	0	0	1	2	1	13

Data Source: Business and Intelligence, Medway Council

Table 14: Adoption panel decisions for the years 2015-2017

Panel decisions	Year ending September 2015	Year ending September 2016	Year ending September 2017
Matches	29	36	31
Decision that adoption is the plan for the child	48	57	38
Adoptive families approved	19	23	13

Data Source: Business and Intelligence, Medway Council

Taken together Table 13 and 14 highlight a number of issues.

Table 14 shows that the number of children in Medway for whom adoption is the identified care plan at the point that final evidence is lodged with the court has significantly fallen between 2015 and 2017. This is connected with the overall decrease in the number of care applications being made which reduced from 250 children in 2015/16 to 93 in 2016/17. It is not however unusual for family members to come forward at the point of the final hearing; and as such not all the children identified with adoption as the plan will be made subject to a placement order.

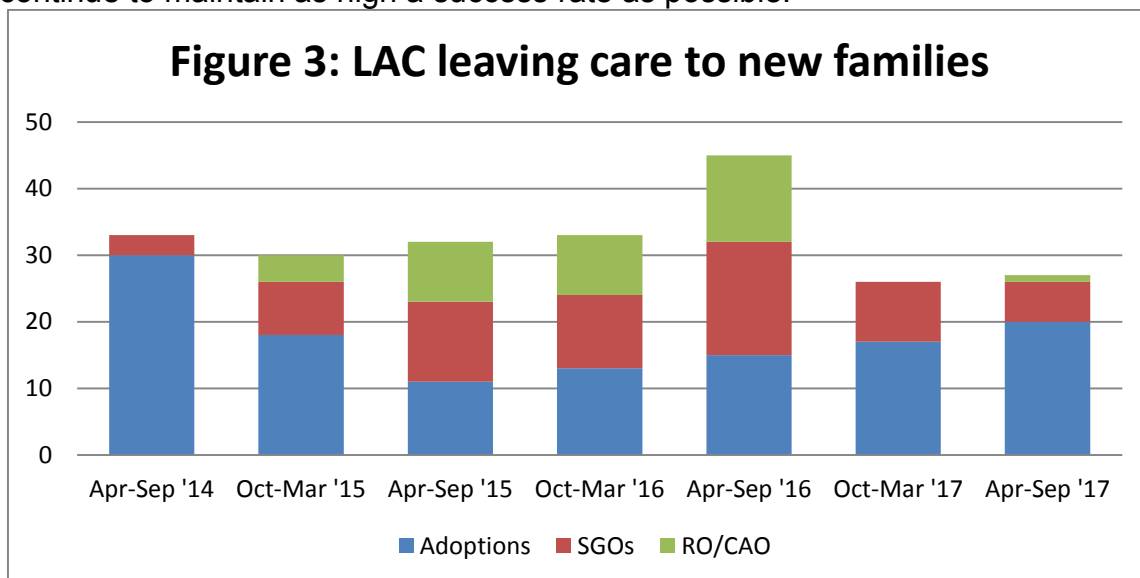
During the period October 2016 to September 2017 there were 31 matches as detailed in Table 13 - that is children who were matched and successfully placed with their prospective adoptive parents. When children are placed for adoption the full legal process has not yet been completed and prospective adopters still need to apply to the court to become the child's legal parent.

In the same 12 month period there have been 13 new families approved to adopt. This figure includes one family who were fostering the children prior to their application to adopt them. These tables reflect the national shortage of available adoptive families that has been highlighted as a major concern by the Adoption Leadership Board.

Considerable work goes into identifying the right match for a child as well as providing additional support to adopters if they are struggling to cope with the demands of their new family. Nevertheless, one adoption placement was disrupted during the year ended September 2017. To ensure that these events remain as



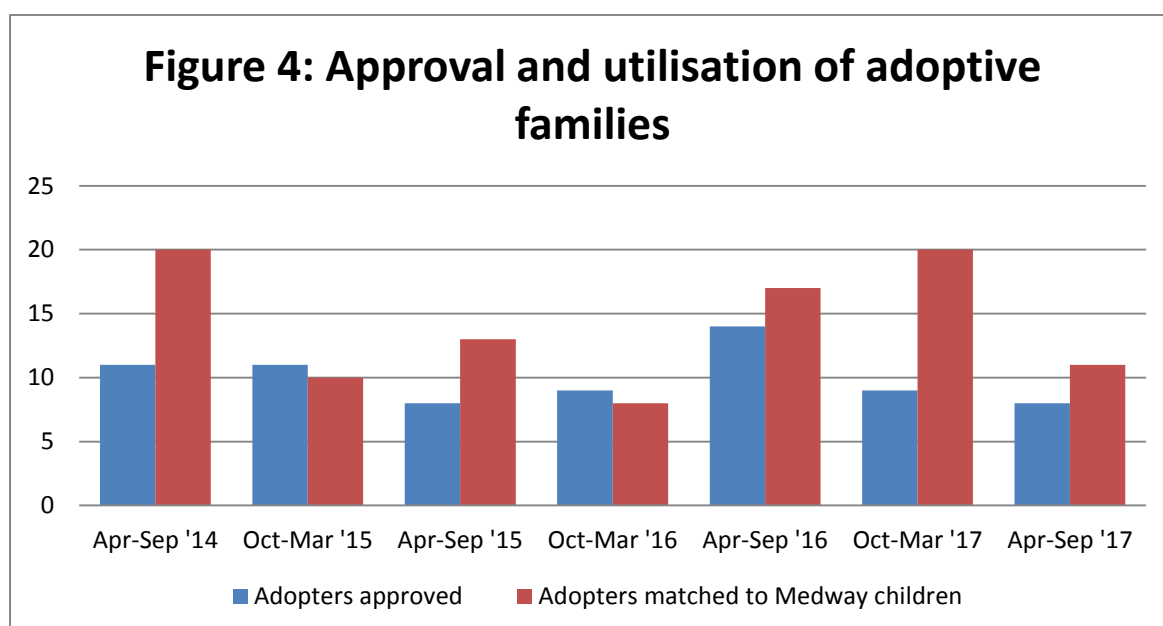
unlikely as possible, a Lessons Learned exercise was undertaken to ensure that we continue to maintain as high a success rate as possible.



Data Source: Children Services, Medway Council

Figure 3 above details the numbers of children leaving care to Adoption, Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) and Child Arrangement Orders (CAO) and demonstrates the changing use of these orders. The significant rise in children staying in family arrangements under alternative orders, rather than being adopted outside the family, has waned with increased rates of adoption being seen in the last 12 months.

Medway actively promotes the use of Special Guardianship Orders to secure permanency for children, where appropriate. As well as the use of Special Guardianship Orders for family members and connected carers, they are often used for foster carers who develop a bond with a child and wish to formalise that child's place within the family.



Data Source: Children Services, Medway Council

At the end of September 2017, there were 24 children where a Placement Order has been granted, and adoption is the plan for the child, but they are yet to be matched to adoptive families at panel. For 15 of these children, the adoption service is in the process of finding an adoptive family, and for 8 children the family has already been identified and will be presented to the next adoption panel for matches to be considered.

The graph above indicates the numbers of adopters approved over time and the numbers subsequently matched with Medway children. There is no cost to the Local Authority when Medway children are placed with Medway approved adopters. In contrast placing children with adopters approved by any other Local Authority or voluntary agency incurs a considerable cost, which is agreed nationally. It is therefore beneficial to the Council to approve sufficient adopters and enable and support them to take Medway children, whenever appropriate.

In addition, Medway continues to explore the Government's proposals for Regional Adoption Agencies with neighbouring authorities so that recruitment, assessment and support of adopters can be shared locally with benefits for Medway children seeking adoptive families.

When adoption or SGOs are 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.

#### 4.4 Sibling Groups

Of 365 children who became subject to Child Protection (CP) plans in the year ending September 2017, 72% were part of a sibling group.

Table 14: sibling groups placed onto a CP plan in the year ending September 2017:

<b>Number of sibling groups</b>	<b>Group composition</b>
38 groups of	2 siblings
26 groups of	3 siblings
13 groups of	4 siblings
9 groups of	5 siblings
2 groups of	6+ siblings

Data Source: Business and Intelligence, Medway Council

The placement of large sibling groups in order to facilitate children staying together when appropriate, remains a key pressure point for Medway. Recruiting more carers able to keep siblings together where that is in their interests is a priority. Carers can only normally be approved for 3 children, and an application for an exemption is required to be put in place for more than that figure.

#### 4.5 Young People Known to Youth Offending Service

The table below shows the percentage of children looked after for 12 months or more and aged 10 or above who have been subject to a conviction, final warning or reprimand during the period 2013 – 2016.

Table 15: percent of LAC subject to conviction, final warning or reprimand

	2013	2014	2015	2016
Medway	7%	7%	8%	3%
South East	8%	6%	6%	5%
Statistical neighbours	6%	6%	7%	6%
England	6%	6%	5%	5%

Data Source: Local Area Interactive Tool

The data shows that Medway has made substantial efforts to support children and young people in remaining with their families by developing the abilities of families to cope with adversity with effective support. This is shown in the reduced numbers of children coming into care and also in a reduction in numbers of children known to youth offending services.

#### 5. Leaving care into independence

Until recently, when a young person left care into independence after having spent at least 13 weeks in care since the age of 14, Local Authorities had a statutory duty to provide them with support and assistance until the age of 21 (up to 25 while in education). These young people are generically referred to as “care leavers”. In the Children and Social Care Act 2017, an additional role was placed on Local Authorities to provide them with support (but not assistance) if needed until the age of 25 regardless of whether they are in education.

The current projected numbers of care leavers shown in Table 16 indicates that the number of care leavers eligible for “assistance” is expected to remain relatively stable for the next few years.

Table 16: projected numbers of care leavers eligible for assistance by age

Date	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	Total
31/09/2015	4	5	36	46	66					
31/09/2016	2	11	40	36	46	10	5	2	0	152
31/09/2017	1	5	55	40	36	15	4	3	1	160
31/09/2018	2.2	7.4	36.2	55	40	8.0	5.0	2.3	0.7	156.7
31/09/2019	1.5	8.3	42.6	36.2	55	8.9	2.7	2.9	0.5	158.6
31/09/2020	2.4	5.9	48.0	42.6	36.2	12.3	3.0	1.5	0.6	152.5

Data Source: Business and Intelligence, Medway Council

- Figures shaded in pink are statistical projections based on the historical data shown, and hence 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 was not sufficiently accurate to use.

### 5.1 Statutory Changes

The projected number of care leavers in the table below shows the number of care leavers eligible for support in line with the added responsibilities enacted in the Children and Social Care Act 2017. This shows the number eligible for support is more than double the number eligible for assistance.

Table 17: projected additional numbers of care leavers eligible for support by age

Date	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	Total
31/09/2015	4	5	36	46	66					
31/09/2016	2	11	40	36	46	10	5	2	0	152
31/09/2017	1	5	55	40	36	46	66	77	50	376
31/09/2018	2.2	7.4	36.2	55	40	36	46	66	77	365.8
31/09/2019	1.5	8.3	42.6	36.2	55	40	36	46	66	331.7
31/09/2020	2.4	5.9	48.0	42.6	36.2	55	40	36	46	312.1

Data Source: Business and Intelligence, Medway Council

Duties and responsibilities for these young people are outlined in the statutory guidance and regulations associated with the Children Act 2000 and subsequent updates including the Care Leavers Regulations 2010. An update to the statutory guidance is yet to be published following the enactment of the Children and Social Care Act 2017. The legislation does however differentiate support from assistance.

- “Support” includes providing the young person with a personal advisor along with the creation and maintenance of a pathway plan for the young person to assist them into successful independence.
- “Assistance” is as required to ensure that the welfare of the young person is protected and includes the provision of accommodation and financial assistance.

## 5.2 Needs of Young People Leaving Care

The table below provides a high level description of the support and accommodation services that will be required against the level of need.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 sets out a new requirement for local authorities to consult on and publish a local offer setting out the support available for care leavers in that area, and to ensure that all care leavers have access to a Personal Adviser up to age 25.

<b>Needs of Young People</b>	<b>Services required</b>
<p><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</p>	<p>Staying Put Supported Lodgings Outreach Shared tenancies Floating support</p>
<p><b>Enhanced level of support needs</b> Young people may be transitioning from fostering /residential into Supported Accommodation</p>	<p>Staying Put Supported lodgings Supported accommodation</p>
<p><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</p>	<p>24 hour support</p>

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. In September 2017 there were 13 care leavers who continued to live with their foster carer.

Young people who are placed with Independent Fostering Agencies or in Residential Care will make the transition into Staying Put, Supported Accommodation or adult services as defined by their needs.

## 5.3 Youth homelessness

The Southwark Judgement 2009 clarified that it is the responsibility of Local Authorities to both 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.

Table 18 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.

Table 18: numbers of homeless 16 -24 year olds eligible for assistance

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Quarter 1	26	58	47	26	23
Quarter 2	28	38	31	15	34
Quarter 3	50	42	26	23	
Quarter 4	35	31	21	25	
TOTAL	139	169	125	89	

Data Source: Housing Department, Medway Council

Table 19 shows the number of Joint Housing Needs Assessments (JHAs) completed during the period October 2016 and September 2017. The service only became available in Medway from July 2015.

Table 19: JHA's from October 2016 to September 2017

Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
6	3	2	2	0	1	1	5	4	0	2	5

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. 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 young person'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.

#### 5.4 Care Leaver accommodation

There is a national requirement to monitor care leaver activity on their 17<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> birthdays, with the primary national indicator focused on their activity on their 19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> birthdays. As the period for contact extends beyond their birthday, the latest quarter available is Apr-Jun 2017.

Tables 20-22 below show the number of Care Leavers aged 19 to 21 who were in suitable accommodation on their birthday. The total figure of 91% for the year ending June 2017 is an improvement from the 89% seen in the previous 12 months. In comparison, 84% of care leavers nationally aged 19-21 were in suitable accommodation in the year end March 2016.

Table 20: Care leavers in suitable accommodation on their birthday  
(19th to 21st birthday)

	<b>Jul-Sep 2016</b>	<b>Oct-Dec 2016</b>	<b>Jan-Mar 2017</b>	<b>Apr-Jun 2017</b>	<b>Year</b>
Total suitable accommodation	27	23	26	25	101
Total care leavers with a birthday	32	23	31	25	111
Total (%)	84%	100%	84%	100%	91%

Data Source: Business and Intelligence, Medway Council

Table 21: percent of care leavers in suitable accommodation on their birthday

	<b>Number in suitable accommodation</b>	<b>Care Leavers</b>	<b>% suitable</b>
17 <sup>th</sup> birthday	2	2	100%
18 <sup>th</sup> birthday	42	45	93%
19 <sup>th</sup> birthday	34	37	92%
20 <sup>th</sup> birthday	31	34	91%
21 <sup>st</sup> birthday	36	40	90%

Data Source: Business and Intelligence, Medway Council

The table below shows how many care leavers were in unsuitable accommodation during the same period.

Table 22: percent of care leavers in unsuitable accommodation on their birthday

	<b>Number year ending Jun 2016</b>	<b>Number year ending Jun 2017</b>
Bed and breakfast	2	
In custody	13	5
No fixed abode / homeless	1	5
Residence not known	1	2
With parents or relatives		1

Data Source: Business and Intelligence, Medway Council

## 5.5 Needs for care leaver accommodation

- At present Staying Put can only provide care leaver support to those who were in fostering and connected carer placements. Staying Put provision remains an area of work for Medway in order to be a real option for care leavers
- 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.

- The development of therapeutic foster carers can aid in providing step down from residential or rehabilitation back home
- Developing supported lodgings and other innovative options must be considered as part of the improvements to the local Care Leaver offer
- It is important that Medway seek to identify local and cost effective accommodation and we will be seeking solutions to this, for example reprovisioning services using existing stock – for instance Aut Even. We will seek to maximise the use of the resources we currently have, both our own, such as The Old Vicarage children’s home, and those of our partners for example looking at local housing stock to see where under utilised properties can be brought into our pool of options.
- The provision of temporary accommodation to provide a cooling off period; may help to prevent placement breakdown
- Shared Carers and parallel parenting can facilitate young people returning home where safe to do so.
- Affordable, quality social housing and increased support in order to secure privately rented housing is needed. This and the Local Offer need to be accompanied by a stepped programme of floating support available to all care leavers as they transition between accommodation.

## 6. Views of Children and Young People

The Children in Care Council (CICC) provides the central platform for young people in care to bring collective issues and concerns to the Council via the Corporate Parenting Group. 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 Group enable further consideration and evaluation of some of the issues raised by the CICC.

In April 2017, Medway’s Leaving Care Team undertook a survey of its care leavers to establish their views on the current service and their suggestions for future development of the service. The conclusions of the survey were:

- The importance and value care leavers place upon supportive and enduring relationships with professionals who are supporting them in their journey into independent living. Young people stated clearly that they felt heard by professionals supporting them.
- The importance of actively engaging young people in the process of developing their pathway plan and having options available readily explained so they can make informed choices.



- Young people also clearly expressed the need for the development of an independence programme they can engage with which prepares them both practically and emotionally for independence.
- Health provision was rated highly and young people expressed the need for continued support in accessing health service and appointments.
- A final suggestion was for a care experienced young person to have the opportunity to work in the Leaving Care Team, maybe as an apprentice.

This is consistent with feedback received in previous years. Feedback from our young people serves to inform service development but also feeds in to commissioning intentions and the quality assurance function.

As a result of feedback, young people were supported in 2015 to be involved in the tender for supported accommodation providers. As this Framework is due for renewal during 2018, our LAC and Care Leavers will again be brought in to contribute to the procurement of the new Framework.

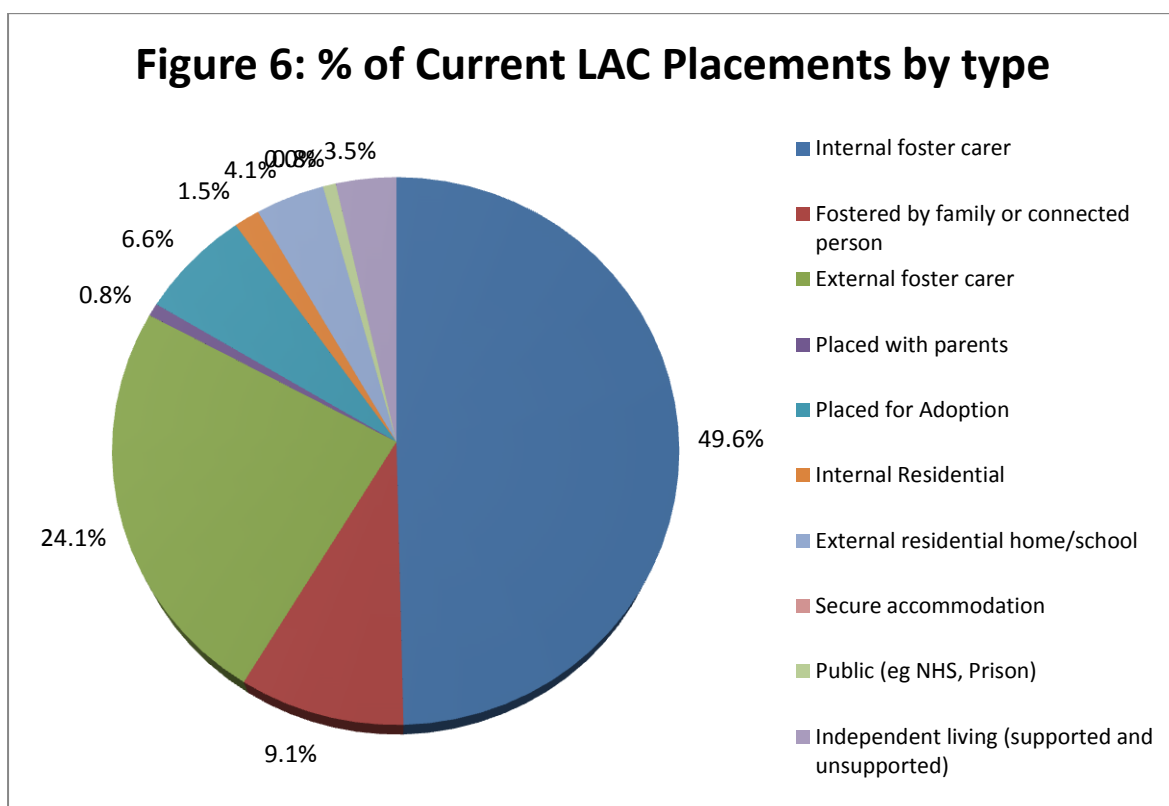
Furthermore, during July-August 2016 and again during October-November 2017 young people have undertaken site visits of all supported accommodation providers, including those who have been spot purchased. Young people have assessed the providers' accommodation and support and have added their voice to council officers' assessments and provider self assessments. Their comments feed into the overall quality assurance of our Supported Accommodation provision and have previously led to, for example, the cessation of further placements and the withdrawal of current placements from one spot purchase provider.

## Current Placement Provision

### 7.1 Placement Mix

In September 2017, 196 children were placed with Medway in-house carers. This is an increase of 1 child from September 2016 (195).

Figure 6 shows the breakdown of LAC placements by type. Thirty six (36) children were placed with approved connected persons, and 95 were 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.



Data Source: Business and Intelligence, Medway Council

Table 23 shows the trend over the past 4 years by placement type. It indicates the desired direction of travel for in-house provision of foster care, albeit very slight. The in-house fostering service is currently developing provision in meeting complex needs. A wider range of training courses are being delivered, alongside support and practice groups for carers who wish to develop specialisms in areas such as adolescence, parent and child placements, therapeutic parenting, sibling groups and disabilities. Although the service will always have placements for all children, developing carers in this way allows us to reach, support and care for a larger group of Medway's children in the most appropriate and local way.

The direction of travel for fostering by connected carers and the continued decrease in the requirement for external residential services is also positive.

We can also see a slight increase in the use of external foster carers which reflects the increasingly complex and challenging nature of the children coming into care. The decrease in requirement of independent living –supported or unsupported- is likely to be temporary as there are still large numbers of 10-15 year olds in care.

Table 23: placement category type 2014-2017

Placement type	September 2014	September 2015	September 2016	September 2017	Direction of travel
Medway foster carer	183	186	195	196	↑
Fostered by family or connected person	41	55	35	36	↑
External foster carer	95	116	93	95	↑
Placed with parents	10	6	4	3	↓
Placed for Adoption	25	23	26	26	↔
In-house Residential	6	6	6	6	↔
Private and voluntary residential home/school	30	35	30	16	↓
Secure accommodation	0	1	1	0	↓
YOI or prison	0	0	0	1	↑
Independent Living (Supported and unsupported)	10	13	20	14	↓
NHS	1	1	0	2	↑

Data Source: Business and Intelligence, Medway Council

Of the 95 external fostering placements, as at October 2017, there were 32 children and young people placed inside the Medway boundary and 65 in placements outside of Medway. Of the out of borough placements, 22 were placed in Kent but within 20 miles of Medway. The total placements that were placed over 20 miles away were 41

and these were in Kent, London, Essex, Norfolk and Hampshire. Recent procurement efforts have placed an emphasis on placements being available within Medway so it is anticipated that there will be an increase in local placements.

## 7.2 Placement Cost

Table 24: average placement costs by type 2017

Accommodation Type	Average Weekly cost	Numbers of children in placement September 2017
Supported Accommodation	£ 762	35
Supported Lodging (Internal)	£ 194	16
IFA (net)	£ 938	95
In house fostering	£ 450	196
External Parent & Child	£ 1,597	7
External Residential	£ 2,997	16

Data Source: Access to Resources and Business and Intelligence, Medway Council

Average weekly placements costs in most external accommodation types continue to rise. A number of factors may be impacting on this including:

- The limited capacity of local foster carers
- The impact of large sibling groups and children staying longer in care
- Increasingly complex needs of children entering care, particularly those late entrants to care who may require 24 hour staffed supported accommodation provision
- Increasing competition in securing placements, particularly in emergency situations

The current joint IFA provider framework with Kent is limited in what it can achieve for Medway. The contract will end in January 2018 and a re-tendering exercise is ongoing. Although opportunities for keeping costs down have been built into the new tender where possible, it is likely that costs will increase as Framework providers bring their costs in line with inflation.

## 7.3 In-House Fostering

Medway has its own in-house fostering service responsible for the recruitment, assessment and support of foster carers.

As of September 2017, there were a total of 138 standard fostering households (an increase of 3 from the previous year) approved for 305 placements. However some of these placements were not available for use as a foster placement due to being otherwise utilised. Common reasons why a placement may not be available are:

- Multiple 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.
- Foster carer is not taking new placements as they are planning to retire.

The internal fostering service is utilised to almost maximum capacity, with between 10 and 20 placements tending to be available at any one time offering a mixture of placement suitability.

Between April 2016 and March 2017 there were 72 new enquiries to become a foster carer, 37 of which proceeded to the statutory check / assessment stage. In this period, 17 new households were approved and 14 households were deregistered leaving the overall number of households increased by 3. In the previous year, the number of foster carers had increased by 2. The 14 carers left for the reasons below:

Reason	Number leaving
Approval withdrawn	1
Resigned - left area	1
Resigned - move to IFA	3
Resigned – retired	3
Resigned – other	6

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.

#### **7.4 Residential Provision**

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

Medway Council owns a six bed residential unit for young people with complex and challenging behaviours. This unit is managed directly by Medway Council after a period of being outsourced. The unit is now operates at full capacity most of the time.

Of the 16 young people who were in external residential care placements on the 30 September 2017, all bar 1 were placed out of Medway and all of these are over 20

miles away. There is a lack of residential provision within a 20 mile radius of Medway.

## **7.5 16+ Accommodation Provision**

### Supported Lodgings

As at the end of September 2017, Medway was supporting 16 young people in Supported Lodging provision as a care leaver, of which 13 were “staying put” with their former foster carer. There were also 35 young people in Supported Accommodation. Supported Accommodation services are both purchased from framework providers and spot purchased.

### Supported Accommodation

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.

### Independent Accommodation

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.
- 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.

## **7.6 Emotional Well-being and Mental Health Support Needs of Young People**

The new Medway Young Person's Wellbeing Service has been designed to be in line with Medway's Children and Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Local Transformation Plan (2015).

In April 2017, following a rigorous competitive tender process, NHS Medway CCG and Medway Council awarded a contract to deliver the Medway Young Persons' Wellbeing Service (MYPWS) to NELFT (formerly known as North East London NHS Foundation Trust). The new service encompasses Tier 2 and Tier 3 CAMHS together with young people's substance misuse services and specialist pathways of support for Looked After Children/Care Leavers and post abuse/post sexual abuse.

The MYPWS will be dedicated to improving the outcomes of LAC, adopted children and care leavers and will work proactively with Medway Council and other relevant agencies to aid and inform:

- Assessment, planning and review of therapeutic care needs
- Planning and preparation for transitions
- The impact of moves upon children's well-being

In order to deliver individual and systematic therapeutic interventions, MYPWS will work closely with foster parents, special guardians, connected carers, residential workers and adoptive parents. Treatment within defined care pathways will be creative and flexible, with clinical staff trained in attachment related interventions and with a comprehensive understanding of complex trauma. Multi-agency working will be the norm with MYPWS clinical staff offering consultation, supervision, support and training to colleagues and carers. The maintenance of therapeutic and stable home environments will be crucial. MYPWS will reach out to LAC to offer support and help as they try to overcome the challenges they face. It's recognized that flexible and evidence-based services are needed especially for those aged 11-21. Young people in this group will often present with a wide range of attachment difficulties, low mood, self-harm, anxiety and post-traumatic/abuse stress. Access to behavioural support programmes will be provided that involve and include foster carers, residential care workers, family support workers, social workers, LAC nurses and health visitors.

## 7.7 In education, employment or training (EET)

There is a national requirement to monitor care leaver activity on their 17<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> birthdays, with the primary national indicator focused on their activity on their 19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> birthdays. As the period for contact extends beyond their birthday, the latest quarter available is Apr-Jun 2017.

The table below shows the number of care leavers 19 to 21 years old who were in education, employment and training on their birthday. The total figure of 50% for the year ending Jun 2017 is an improvement from the 47% seen in the previous 12 months. In comparison, 50% of care leavers nationally aged 19-21 were EET in the year end ending Mar 2016.

**Table 25: Care leavers in education, employment or training on their birthday (19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> birthday)**

	<b>Jul-Sep 2016</b>	<b>Oct-Dec 2016</b>	<b>Jan-Mar 2017</b>	<b>Apr-Jun 2017</b>	<b>Year</b>
Total EET	15	10	16	14	55
Total care leavers with a birthday	32	23	31	25	111
Total (%)	47%	43%	52%	56%	50%

Data Source: Performance and Information, Medway Council

The total numbers of care leavers aged 17 to 21 who were not in education, training or employment (NEET) in the year ending June 2017 was 67 and is a significant reduction from the 93 in the year ending June 2016. Although this 28% reduction is good progress it must be taken in the context of the 9% reduction in the cohort. Employment of our care leavers remains an area of concern that requires concerted effort. Medway is now looking to pull all areas of work together through the wider Skills Agenda which will incorporate and build on the 14-19 Strategy.

**Table 26: Not in education, training or employment on their birthday.**

	<b>Number year ending Jun 2016</b>	<b>Number year ending Jun 2017</b>
Because of illness/disability	28	21
Due to pregnancy or parenting	21	16
Other reason	44	30

Data Source: Business and Intelligence, Medway Council

Table 27 gives a breakdown by age and is reflective of national figures. Current research attributes this not just to the well known characteristics of NEET but also to the current difficult economic climate that makes it difficult for any young person to secure employment that pays a living wage.



**Table 27: Percent of Care leavers in education, employment or training on their birthday by age**

	Number in EET	Care Leavers	% in EET
17 <sup>th</sup> birthday	2	2	100%
18 <sup>th</sup> birthday	32	45	71%
19 <sup>th</sup> birthday	21	37	57%
20 <sup>th</sup> birthday	15	34	44%
21 <sup>st</sup> birthday	19	40	48%

Data Source: Business and Intelligence, Medway Council

## 7. Commissioning priorities

### Vision

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 early help and safeguarding services.

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.

We seek to embed in all our services the support and resilience needed to bring our Looked After Children to a full, rewarding and independent future.

### Priorities

- Secure high quality and evidence based interventions 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.

### Key requirements for Commissioning for Looked After Children

- To secure economies of scale through working in partnership with fewer providers to meet Medway's needs and requirements
- To procure and embed a Framework to deliver a revised model of flexible and qualitative procurement of independent fostering placements
- To reduce the level of competition and duplication between in-house fostering and IFA's in recruiting foster carers in the Medway area

- To secure sufficient carers in Medway to meet the needs of Medway's children and adolescents locally, so enabling them to have access to local schools and full range of support services to meet their needs
- To explore all available options for working with partners to commission placements for children's residential accommodation
- To ensure that there is greater integration between care planning, placement decision making, matching and placement finding and quality assurance
- To ensure that there is greater integration across social work teams and commissioned providers to prevent placement drift and that pro-active care planning is taken forward
- To drive forward a culture that is focused on achieving positive impact and outcomes for children

### **Key requirements for Commissioning for 16+ Young People and Care Leavers**

#### **Homeless young people**

Partnership Commissioning will continue working with Children's Services, Housing, Health and Education, to deliver on the 2014 six objectives for homeless young people aged 16+ and Care Leavers aged 16 to 25:

- 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.
- Secure a sufficient range of good quality Supported Accommodation and floating support that is tailored to meet the individual needs of young people.
- 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.
- Ensure funding is spent efficiently and effectively in securing sufficient provision.
- Involve young people in informing the commissioning approach
- Improve communication, information sharing and more joined up working across partner agencies to achieve better outcomes for Care Leavers

#### **Securing Sufficiency of Provision:**

- To identify the Local Offer to Care Leavers and develop and go to market to procure a wider and innovative menu of accommodation options for young people leaving care
- 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, care leavers and those with disabilities

- To robustly monitor performance and quality of provision against key performance indicators
- Host provider forums such as that seek to raise aspirations and achievements of looked after children and care leavers

### **Monitoring impact**

Detailed commissioning action plans will be developed to support the implementation of the Sufficiency Strategy and incorporated into the Children's Commissioning Action Plan 2018/19.

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

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<sup>i</sup> Office for National Statistics. Mid-2015 population estimate 2016;

<sup>ii</sup> Medway Public Health Intelligence team. Public Health Births File Analysis

<sup>iii</sup> Office for National Statistics. Table KS201EW: 2011 Census: Ethnic group, local authorities in England and Wales 2012;

<sup>iv</sup> Medway Council. Unemployment 2014; Medway Council.

<http://www.medway.gov.uk/pdf/Info%20bulletin%20Unemployment%20Jan%202014.pdf>.