



**Medway Council  
Children's Services**

**Sufficiency Report  
2018-19**

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## Contents

<b>1. INTRODUCTION AND POLICY CONTEXT .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. BACKGROUND.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3. SECTION ONE: 2017/18 COMMISSIONING PRIORITIES .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>4. SECTION TWO: HOW SUFFICIENCY HAS BEEN MET .....</b>	<b>7</b>
4.1 THE COHORT OF CHILDREN IN CARE: DESCRIPTION .....	7
4.2 THE COHORT: FORECAST .....	9
4.2.1 The cohort: entrants into care .....	11
4.2.2 The cohort: length of stay.....	12
4.3 THE COHORT: PROCESSES.....	12
4.3.1 Legal status.....	12
4.3.2 Care Applications .....	13
4.3.3 Children subject to court proceedings .....	13
4.4 ENTERING AND EXITING CARE.....	14
4.4.1 Parent and child placements .....	14
4.4.2 Adoption and Special Guardianship Order (SGO).....	15
4.4.3 Young People Known to Youth Offending Service .....	17
4.4.4 Leaving care into independence .....	17
4.4.4.1 Needs of Young People Leaving Care .....	19
4.4.4.2 Monitoring Care Leaver accommodation.....	20
4.4.4.3 Youth homelessness .....	21
4.5 PLACEMENT PROVISION DURING 2017/2018 .....	23
4.5.1 Placement Mix.....	23
4.5.2 Placement Cost.....	24
4.5.3 In-House Fostering.....	24
4.5.4 Independent fostering provision .....	25
4.5.5 Residential Provision.....	25
4.5.6 EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING (EET).....	26
4.5.6 Transforming Care .....	28
4.5.7 Accommodation for young people over the age of 16 .....	29
<b>5. SECTION THREE – PARTNERSHIP WORK .....</b>	<b>30</b>
VIEWS OF OUR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE .....	30
INDEPENDENT ACCOMMODATION AND GENERAL HOUSING .....	30
MEDWAY’S YOUNG PEOPLE’S WELLBEING SERVICE (MYPWS) .....	31
HEALTH.....	32
<b>6. SECTION FOUR - ACTION PLAN 2019 .....</b>	<b>33</b>

## 1. Introduction and Policy Context

The purpose of this document is a refreshed look at how Medway Council, working with all its partner agencies, has and 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 \(2018-21\)](#).

Section 22G of the Children Act 1989 ('the 1989 Act') requires Local Authorities to take steps to secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for children in care within their local area. In addition, under section 10 of the Children Act ('the 2004 Act') Local Authorities have a duty to make arrangements to promote co-operation with relevant partners (CCG and NHS trusts, police, youth offending, etc.) to improve the wellbeing 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 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.

This document will therefore look at how Medway fulfils its Sufficiency Duty through four lenses. Firstly, how has Medway Council met its Sufficiency Duty over the last year. Secondly, a look at the data and the trends that are informing future intentions. Thirdly, how are partners across Medway contributing towards ensuring the Sufficiency Duty towards Medway's children in care. Finally, what action and opportunities lie ahead in 2019.

## 2. Background

There are 277,600 people resident in Medway as of 2017<sup>1</sup>. From the 2016 mid-year population estimates, it can be seen that compared to England the population of Medway has a smaller proportion of people over the age of 65 years and a larger proportion of people between the ages of 0 - 24 years. The population of Medway is therefore younger than the population of England overall.<sup>2</sup>

A full demographic analysis can be found at [www.medway.jsna.gov](http://www.medway.jsna.gov). Key points from the JSNA to note include:

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<sup>1</sup> NOMIS website <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157282/report.aspx?town=medway>

<sup>2</sup> Medway JSNA Summary Demographics [www.medway.jsna.gov](http://www.medway.jsna.gov)

## MEDWAY SUFFICIENCY 2018-19

- Teenage pregnancy remains a key issue for Medway.
- There is substantial variation between the Medway wards in terms of population density, deprivation, and death rates.
- In Medway the rate of households with dependent children where no adult is in employment stands at 4.9% which is higher than the England average of 4.2% and the South East average of 3.1%.
- Medway has a higher proportion of families (7.4%) with three or more children compared to the national (7%) and South East (6.7%) averages.

### 3. Section ONE: 2017/18 commissioning priorities

In the previous publication of Medway's Sufficiency report (2017/18), the priorities that were outlined were to:

- 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

#### How we achieved this

To procure and embed a Framework to deliver a revised model of flexible and qualitative procurement of independent fostering placements	This has been accomplished and the Framework went live in February 2018.
To secure economies of scale through working in partnership with fewer providers to meet Medway's needs and requirements	The new Joint IFA Framework with Kent CC has two layers of Providers. There is an initial layer of Providers to ensure a broad scope of placement requirements are able to be satisfied. Then there is a second restricted layer of three Partner Providers where we are working towards more flexible solutions through demand management and more direct contact and information sharing.
To reduce the level of competition and duplication between in-house fostering and IFA's in recruiting foster carers in the Medway area	We continue to work collaboratively with our IFA Partner Providers and other IFAs to ensure Medway children have access to Medway carers.
To secure sufficient carers in Medway to meet the needs of Medway's children and adolescents locally, so enabling	

## MEDWAY SUFFICIENCY 2018-19

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	Following an options appraisal, the selected course of action to join into a regional consortium of Local Authorities was adopted and has now been procured. Further activity for other specified cohorts such as children with special educational needs is ongoing.
To ensure that there is greater integration between care planning, placement decision making, matching and placement finding and quality assurance	Work has been undertaken to develop this with both internal and external partners. We will continue to progress this and aim to publish our Quality Assurance Framework during 2019.
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	All the performance monitoring of the new contracts works towards this objective in addition to the work going on internally.
To drive forward a culture that is focused on achieving positive impact and outcomes for children	Children's Partnership Commissioning team continues to ask the "so what?" question in all we commission.
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.	Steps have been taken over the last year to embed the integrated pathway to independence primarily by the Leaving Care team. An objective for the next year will be to develop this further in tandem with the general Housing team.
Secure a sufficient range of good quality Supported Accommodation and floating support that is tailored to meet the individual needs of young people.	Research and consultation has been undertaken and a tender has been published for a Medway Framework for Supported Accommodation. The contract is expected to go live in April 2019.
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.	Significant work has been and will continue to be taken forward through the publication of the Local Offer to Care Leavers.  LINK

## MEDWAY SUFFICIENCY 2018-19

<p>Ensure funding is spent efficiently and effectively in securing sufficient provision.</p>	<p>This has been achieved through ensuring we obtain value for money and making full use of contractual levers to improve quality. A key focus of 2019 will be to monitor and evidence that these changes are resulting in improved outcomes for our young people.</p>
<p>Involve young people in informing the commissioning approach</p>	<p>Young people have been consulted on each individual commissioned project. The Supported Accommodation Framework for example consulted with young people with regards to the specification and will also involve a small group of young people in evaluating tenders through a video submission. In addition, the Medway Children and Young People's Council have been encouraged to greater involvement in Council business and the KPI's for that contract have been re-drafted to reflect this. Nevertheless, there is still scope to engage young people in the overall commissioning approach and this will be taken forward in 2019.</p>
<p>Improve communication, information sharing and more joined up working across partner agencies to achieve better outcomes for Care Leavers</p>	<p>A multi-agency information sharing group has been set up to address this and also specifically to address issues and problems occurring within Supported Accommodation or in the community. This will be strengthened in the next year.</p>

#### 4. SECTION TWO: How sufficiency has been met

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.

##### 4.1 The cohort of children in care: description

The number of children looked after nationally has increased steadily over the last ten years. At 31 March 2018, there were 75,420 looked after children in England, up 4% on 31 March 2017<sup>3</sup>.

This is also the trend in Medway. At the end of September 2018, Medway had 425 looked after children, representing an 8% increase from September 2017 as shown in Table 1. Medway's September 2018 rate of 66.7 children per 10,000 is in line with the March 2018 national rate of 64.

Table 1: Number (%) of children being looked after by age range 2016-2018

Age range	September 2016	September 2017	September 2018
Age 0	27 (6.9%)	23 (5.9%)	33 (7.8%)
Age 1-4	54 (13.7%)	55 (14.0%)	59 (13.9%)
Age 5-9	92 (23.4%)	87 (22.1%)	72 (16.9%)
Age 10-15	168 (42.7%)	163 (41.5%)	177 (41.6%)
Age 16-17	70 (17.8%)	65 (16.5%)	84 (19.8%)
Total	411	393	425

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

##### AGE and GENDER

Table 2 shows the September 2018 cohort of looked after children broken down by age and gender. The table shows that Medway continues to have substantially more boys (57%) in care than girls (43%) across all age groups almost identical to the national picture. 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 challenging behaviour.

<sup>3</sup> Children looked after in England (including adoption), year ending 31 March 2018, DfE, 15 Nov 2018  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2017-to-2018>

## MEDWAY SUFFICIENCY 2018-19

Table 2: Looked After Children by age and sex, 2018

Age range	Female	Male	Total
Under 1	12	21	33
1-4	27	32	59
5-9	29	43	72
10-15	78	99	177
16+	37	47	84
Total	183	242	425

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

**ETHNICITY**

The Medway looked after population reflects the ethnic diversity in Medway as detailed in the 2011 census data with the largest group “white” ethnicity.

Table 3: Ethnicity of LAC 2015-2018

Ethnicity	September 2015	September 2016	September 2017	September 2018
Asian or Asian British	0.7%	0.7%	0.3%	0.9%
Black or Black British	4.3%	3.5%	2.3%	1.9%
Mixed	5.9%	7.9%	6.4%	6.8%
Other Ethnic Groups	2.5%	1.7%	1.8%	1.4%
White	86.6%	86.2%	89.3%	88.9%

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

**DISABILITY**

As of 30th September 2018, there were 47 Medway looked after children who are listed as having a disability. This represents 11% of all LAC and seems to be a stable figure. This is, however, an area where greater investigation is required and a priority area to develop for future planning. The most significant needs groups are detailed in the table below:

Table 4: Significant Needs Groups of Looked After Children, 2015-18

Disability Type	September 2015	September 2016	September 2017	September 2018
Learning Disability	30	26	26	23
Autism or Asperger Syndrome	21	19	16	18
Behaviour Disorder—including ADHD	21	17	17	17
Communication	8	8	7	5
Physical disability	5	4	5	5
Total with a disability	56	50	46	47
% of LAC	12.6%	12.1%	11.7%	11.1%

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

NOTE: children may have more than one disability and as such are represented in more than one needs group



## SIBLING GROUPS

Of 373 children who became subject to Child Protection (CP) plans in the year ending September 2018, 71% were part of a sibling group.

Table 5: sibling groups placed onto a CP plan in the year ending September 2018:

Number of sibling groups	Group composition
43 groups of	2 siblings
24 groups of	3 siblings
18 groups of	4 siblings
6 groups of	5 siblings
1 groups of	6+ siblings

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

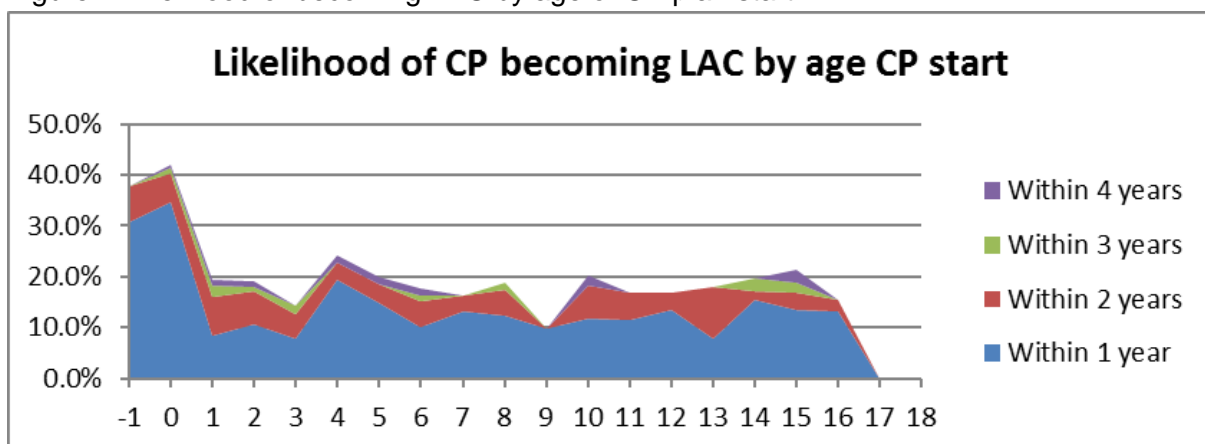
The placement of large sibling groups in order to facilitate children staying together when appropriate, remains a key pressure point for Medway. Recruiting more carers able to keep siblings together where that is in their interests is a priority. Carers can be approved for up to 3 children, with an extension required whenever more than 3 are to be placed.

### 4.2 The cohort: forecast

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

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

Figure 1: likelihood of becoming LAC by age of CP plan start.



Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

The model last year forecast 396 children in care for September 2018. The difference between the forecast result and actual result was due to:

## MEDWAY SUFFICIENCY 2018-19

- 127 new LAC in care on the 30 September 2018 against the forecast of 111. Underlying this was:
  - 92 children coming into care during the year where their CP plan did not achieve required improvements, against a forecast of 95; and
  - 85 children coming into care during the year where no recent CP plan had been implemented, against a forecast of 74. This is an area for auditing to understand whether opportunities for early support have been missed.
- 298 remained in care for another year against a forecast of 285.

The Medway model is forecasting a reduction in the number of LAC to 410 by September 2019 if the historical patterns of care persist. This figure will be driven by:

- A forecast of 108 new LAC in care on the 30 September 2019. Underlying this is:
  - 81 children to come into care where their CP plan did not achieve required improvements. This is a reduction from last year's forecast in line with the reduced number of CP in place over last 2 years.
  - 82 children to come into care having no recent CP plan. This is the average over the last 2 years. Note that last year's result showed how unpredictable this cohort is.
- 302 to continue to be in care for another year.

Table 6: Forecasted numbers of Looked After Children by age group

	In care 30 Sep 2016	In care 30 Sep 2017	In care 30 Sep 2018	% 2017 to 2018	Prediction Sep 2019	% 2018 to 2019	Prediction Sep 2020
Under 1	27	23	33	+43%	27	-20%	27
Age 1-4	54	55	59	+7%	65	+9%	67
Age 5-9	92	87	72	-17%	69	-5%	59
Age 10-15	168	163	177	+9%	174	-2%	163
Age 16-17	70	65	84	+29%	77	-8%	73
Total	411	393	425	+8%	410	-3%	388

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

Of note is the continued dominance of the 10-15 age group and the increase in 16-17 year old group. Both of these groups pose specific challenges. The size of the cohort of children aged 10-15 will continue to impact on care services both whilst in care and as they become care leavers. 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 entrenched and complex needs, the higher numbers of 5-9 and 10-15 year groups also indicate an increased need for 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.

## MEDWAY SUFFICIENCY 2018-19

#### 4.2.1 The cohort: entrants into care

Comparisons between the number of entrants into care for the years 2015 to 2018 are shown in table 7 below. There have been significant increases in both the under 1 year olds coming into care as well as those aged 10-15, however the overall level remains below the peak seen in year ending September 2015.

Table 7: Entrants into care 2015-2018.

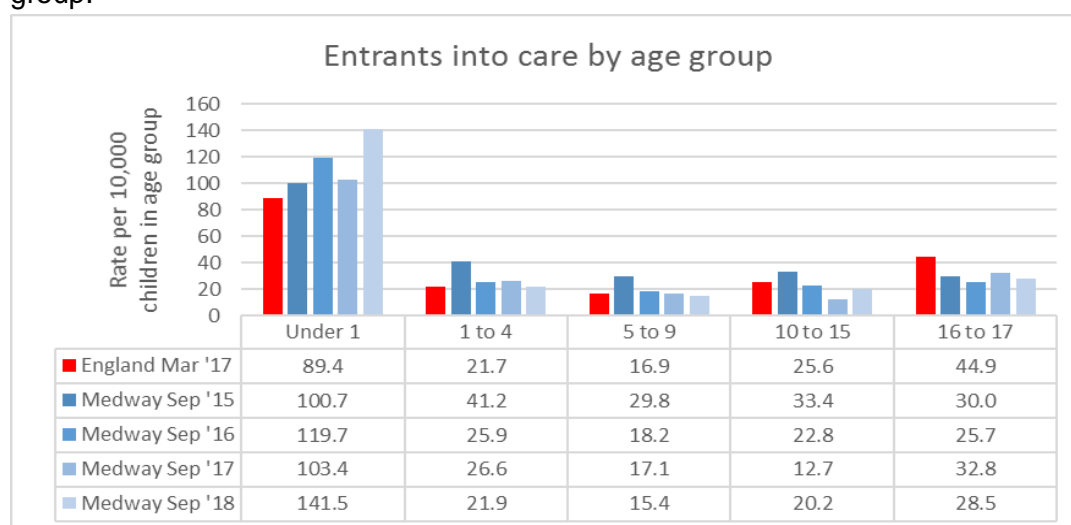
Age range	Year ending Sep-15	Year ending Sep-16	Year ending Sep-17	Year ending Sep-18	% 2017 to 2018
Under 1	37	44	38	52	+37%
Age 1-4	62	39	40	33	-18%
Age 5-9	54	33	31	28	-10%
Age 10-15	66	45	25	40	+60%
Age 16-17	21	18	23	20	-13%
Total	240	179	157	173	+10%

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

NOTE: To ensure compatibility with National figures, and to avoid double counting only a child's last entry into care within in a year is included.

Although the rate at which children come into care varies according to age group, this is in line with the national picture as shown in Figure 2 below. Compared against national rates, we can see that current Medway rates are either at or below the national pattern with the notable exception of the Medway rate for under 1s which was 58% higher than the latest national figure.

Figure 2: Comparison of the rate of children coming into care per 10,000 children in the age group.



Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

## MEDWAY SUFFICIENCY 2018-19

**4.2.2 The cohort: length of stay**

The forecast indicates that there are an increasing number of children in care for *five years or more*. On the 30 September 2015, 19% of children had been in care for five years or more (86 children). In 2018, this has increased to 26% (110 children) and the prediction for 2020 is 132 children making up 35% of our children in care shown in Table 8. Logically, this long term cohort are older children. Roughly half (48%) of our children in care aged 10 or over on the 30 September 2018 had been in care for 5 or more years.

Table 8: Percent of children in care by duration of stay in care (as at September 2018)

	In care 30 Sep 2016	In care 30 Sep 2017	In care 30 Sep 2018	Prediction Sep 2019	Prediction Sep 2020
Under 1 year	27%	27%	30%	26%	28%
1-2 years	35%	32%	24%	26%	26%
3-4 years	15%	15%	21%	19%	12%
5-9 years	18%	23%	22%	24%	28%
10+ years	5%	4%	4%	5%	7%

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

**4.3 The cohort: processes****4.3.1 Legal status**

Historically, Medway had relied very heavily on Section 20 legal status of their children in care which created uncertainty for the children and families and planning difficulties for services. Over time care orders have increased and now make up the majority of all legal status of looked after children as shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Legal status of Looked After Children, 2015-18

Legal Order	September 2015	September 2016	September 2017	September 2018
S20	176	158	106	86
Police Protection	0	1	1	0
Emergency Protection Order	0	0	0	0
Interim Care Order	23	64	61	72
Care Order	124	155	182	223
Placement Order	63	63	61	43
On Remand	0	0	0	1
PACE	1	0	0	0
Youth Rehab Order	0	0	0	0

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

Section 20 cases (parental agreement for the child to be looked after) continue to decrease in use. A key objective of Medway's LAC Strategy is to "Promote timely permanence planning for all children to ensure they have the opportunity of a stable,

## MEDWAY SUFFICIENCY 2018-19

permanent home and long term relationships in a placement appropriate to their needs” The decline in Section 20 cases has been facilitated and maintained by reviewing Section 20 cases and developing clear plans for permanency.

Table 10 shows a more detailed breakdown of legal status by age. It can be seen that very young children are still coming in through Section 20 (S20) or Interim Care Orders (ICO) while attempts are made to return the child to the care of its family. As the age of the child increases, greater use is being made of the Care Orders (CO) and Placement Orders (PO) to move the child into a more permanent and appropriate familial setting. There will always be some use of S20 orders however, as children move in to their teenage years and levels of challenging behaviour become harder for families to cope with.

Table 10: Legal status of Looked After Children by age band in 2017-8

Age range	Section 20		Interim Care Order		Care Order		Placement Order	
	2017	2018	2017	2018	2017	2018	2017	2018
0	8	11	15	19	0	1	1	2
1 – 4	12	8	17	21	5	6	21	24
5 – 9	11	6	12	17	36	34	28	15
10 – 15	21	28	7	14	130	133	5	2
16+	31	33	0	1	32	49	1	.
<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>43</b>

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

### 4.3.2 Care Applications

Table 11 below shows that in 2015/16 Medway brought an unusually high number of Care applications to court. The latest figures show that Medway is now back in line with the historical and national average, with the service predicting a small increase in the current year.

Table 11: Care applications per 10,000 children

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Medway	8.6	8.0	14.5	22.8	9.4	13.5
England	9.7	9.2	9.7	11.0	12.5	12.2

Data Source: Cafcass

### 4.3.3 Children subject to court proceedings

Children’s and Legal Services work together to meet the requirements of the Family Justice Review and achieve more speedy resolution of court proceedings in the interest of Medway’s children and families. Following a drop in performance in 2016/17, the services have been able to bring the rate of completion of proceedings back in line with national figures.

## MEDWAY SUFFICIENCY 2018-19

Table 12: Time from application to the completion of proceedings (CAFCASS)

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Medway	30 weeks	31 weeks	40 weeks	33 weeks
National	30 weeks	30 weeks	30 weeks	31 weeks

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

Although this is still not at the target level of 26 weeks for completing court proceedings, it shows substantial improvement especially as Medway continues to have families with large numbers of children. It must also be seen against the backdrop of a greater number of cases being taken to proceedings as Medway also still has higher rates of care proceedings being initiated. While Medway rates had dropped below national levels last year, there has been a slight resurgence again this year as shown in Table 13 below. The length of time a case takes can be significantly increased with sibling groups of which Medway has many (See table 5).

Table 13: rate of care applications per 10,000:

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Number of Medway care applications	90	142	59	85
Medway rate	14.5	22.8	9.4	13.5
National rate	9.7	11.0	12.5	12.2

Data Source: CAFCASS

#### 4.4 Entering and exiting care

##### 4.4.1 Parent and child placements

This provision is used to assess parental ability to care for their children and support them into independence where this has been agreed by the courts. This approach and a process of ongoing scrutiny has 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.

Families can be placed either in residential family assessment centres or within a specialised fostering placement. In most cases, the assessment period is twelve weeks. The report provided by the Centre or the foster carers is then used to determine the next course of action. Common barriers to releasing families from these placements are around requests for further assessment by the courts, a lack of immediate housing options for the family to return to, or a lack of parent and child specialised carers for a family to be stepped down to.

Parent and child placements with internal foster carers are the most cost effective and are utilised whenever these placements are available. At 30<sup>th</sup> September 2018, there were six ongoing placements with internal foster carers. Another 10 parent & child placements ended during the year ending Sept 2018 and averaged 16 weeks in

## MEDWAY SUFFICIENCY 2018-19

placement. Of the ended placements, 5 were longer than 12 weeks. The in-house service currently has 15 foster carers approved for parent and child provision of which 9 were utilised during the year.

At 14<sup>th</sup> November 2018, Medway had a total of 9 children in externally commissioned parent and child (P&C) placements. Of these, six were in IFA fostering assessment places and three in residential assessment places. The average length of stay across all ended external P&C placements is 19 weeks which is an increase from last year's average of 13 weeks.

#### 4.4.2 Adoption and Special Guardianship Order (SGO)

In line with Medway's Looked After Children strategic objective of promoting timely permanence for our children, a key aspect of this is working to increase the numbers of children achieving permanence through adoption or Special Guardianship Orders (SGO). During the period from October 2017 to September 2018, 17 children were placed for adoption. The age breakdown of children placed for adoption is shown below in Table 14.

Table 14: Adoption placements 2014-2018

Age at placement	Year ending September 2014	Year ending September 2015	Year ending September 2016	Year ending September 2017	Year ending September 2018
0 - 1	29	19	17	15	12
2 - 4	18	6	12	11	3
5+	8	1	7	8	2
Total	55	26	36	34	17

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

During this latest year, 2 children aged 5+ years have been successfully placed for adoption. These children are traditionally "harder to place" and usually are part of sibling groups. Successful placements have enabled them to stay with their younger siblings in their new families.

Table 15: Adoption panel decisions for the years 2016-2018

Panel decisions	Year ending September 2016	Year ending September 2017	Year ending September 2018
Matches	36	31	17
Decision that adoption is the plan for the child	57	38	33
Adoptive families approved	23	13	12

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

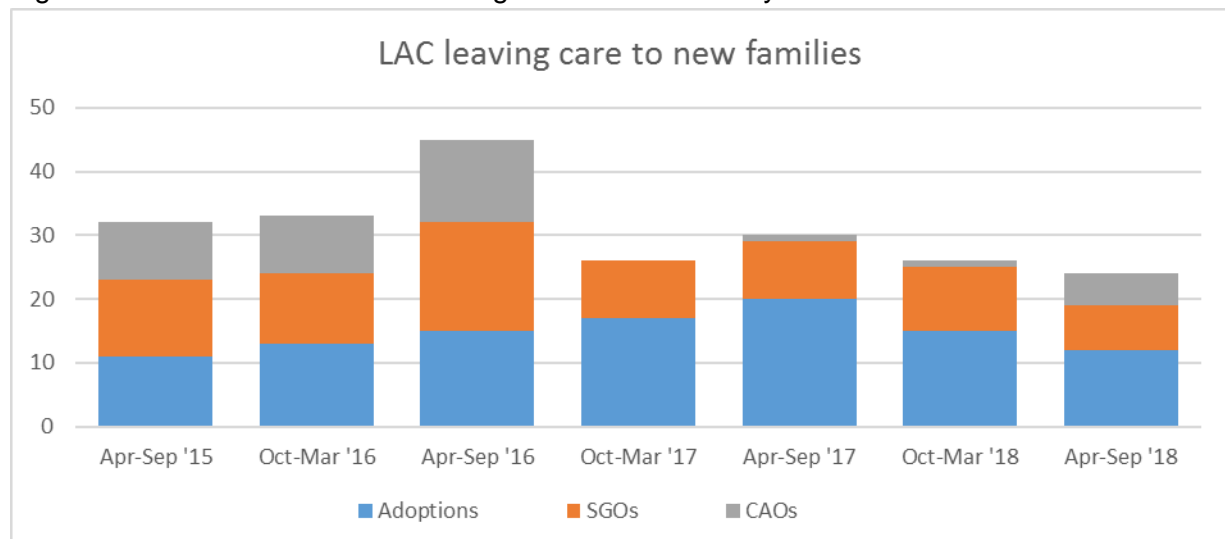
## MEDWAY SUFFICIENCY 2018-19

Table 15 shows that between 2016 and 2018 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 fallen from 57 to 33. While this is connected with the overall decrease in the number of care applications being made (see table 13), it is also the case that family members come forward at the point of the final hearing. Hence, not all the children identified with adoption as their plan will be made subject to a placement order.

The tables also show that during the period October 2017 to September 2018 there were 17 matches - 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 only 12 new families approved to adopt. This continues to reflect the national shortage of available adoptive families that has been highlighted as a major concern by the Adoption Leadership Board.

Figure 3: Looked after children leaving care to a new family



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 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 over 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.



As of 19<sup>th</sup> November, there are 10 children where a Placement Order has been granted and family finding is ongoing. These children all have complex needs as a result of severe neglect and/or medical and developmental needs and some are also part of a sibling group, including one group of 3 children.

Nationally there is a severe shortage of adopters (around 1100 children and only 370 adopters). Most young and “straightforward” children are placed very quickly but those with more complex needs are very difficult to place. Medway has recently changed the plans from adoption to long term fostering for nine children because it has not been possible to identify an adoption placement. This puts pressure on internal placements and budgets.

#### **4.4.3 Young People Known to Youth Offending Service**

This cohort includes young people and children remanded in custody even when they are not already looked after by Medway Children’s Services. Local authorities have duties towards these children as long as they are remanded in custody. This therefore also includes Looked After Children and young people placed in Medway by other local authorities (known as POLA).

Both the Police and the Local Authority have statutory duties in relation to the care of children in police stations and custody suites. Section 38 of the Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) Act 1984 places a duty on the police to transfer children who have been refused bail to Local Authority accommodation rather than keeping them in the police station overnight. Initial analysis suggests that during the period January to September 2018, there were 324 visits to the Medway custody suite by young people between the ages of 11 and 17 years old. Analysis is currently being undertaken to get a clearer picture of the numbers that fit the criteria and to ensure that sufficient resources are in place.

In 2017, the percentage of the cohort of young people referred to the Youth Offending team (YOT) who were in care was 26%. To date in 2018 that has risen to 28%. Furthermore, recent monitoring reports for the Youth Justice Board have determined that “Over half of Community Orders given are being given to individuals that have been identified as being part of the troubled families programme with nearly a quarter being individuals who are LAC/POLA.

Over the last year, the majority of quarterly reports to the Youth Justice Partnership show that 100% of individuals referred to YOT have been offered suitable Employment Education and Training (EET). However the proportion who engage in the provided EET fluctuates from 63% in Q2 to 100% in Q4.

#### **4.4.4 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

## MEDWAY SUFFICIENCY 2018-19

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.

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. The legislation differentiates 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.

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	Age									Total
	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
30/09/2016	2	11	40	36	46	10	5	2	0	152
30/09/2017	1	5	56	40	36	15	4	3	1	161
30/09/2018	0	4	37	56	40	24	13	4	2	180
30/09/2019	1	8	43	37	56	27	21	13	3	208
30/09/2020	2	6	55	43	37	37	23	21	9	232
30/09/2021	2	8	40	55	43	25	32	23	14	241

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

### NOTES:

- 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.

The projected number of care leavers in table 17 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.

## MEDWAY SUFFICIENCY 2018-19

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

Date	Age									Total
	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
30/09/2016	2	11	40	36	46	10	5	2	0	152
30/09/2017	1	5	55	40	36	46	66	77	50	376
30/09/2018	0	4	37	55	40	36	46	66	77	361
30/09/2019	1	8	43	37	55	40	36	46	66	332
30/09/2020	2	6	55	43	37	55	40	36	46	320
30/09/2021	2	8	40	55	43	37	55	40	36	316

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

#### 4.4.4.1 Needs of Young People Leaving Care

From the age of 16, a young person can leave care. From the age of 18 they become Care Leavers. The table below provides a high level description of the support and accommodation services that will be required against the level of need. Young people who are placed with foster carers or in residential care will make the transition into independence, Supported Accommodation or adult services as defined by their needs.

Needs of Young People	Services available
<p>Standard level of support / low level needs</p> <p>Young people may not have complex and challenging behaviours but require ongoing support and further preparation for independence</p>	<p>Staying Put</p> <p>Supported Lodgings</p> <p>Outreach support</p> <p>Shared tenancies</p> <p>Foyer provision</p> <p>Housing Related Support</p>
<p>Enhanced level of support needs</p> <p>Young people may be transitioning from fostering or residential care into Supported Accommodation. They may have a greater need to develop their skills for independent living.</p>	<p>Staying Put</p> <p>Supported lodgings</p> <p>Supported accommodation</p> <p>Foyer provision</p>
<p>Intensive level of support needs</p> <p>Young people who require more intensive support for example due to multiple or profound disabilities or because they display behaviour that makes it dangerous for them to live independently and who require intensive intervention to allow them to progress towards independence.</p>	<p>24 hour supported accommodation</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 2018 there were 13 care leavers

## MEDWAY SUFFICIENCY 2018-19

who continued to live with their foster carer. 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. Staying Put provision remains an area of work for Medway in order to develop as a real option for more care leavers

Young people accommodated in Children's Homes and other residential placements also have the need for post-18 accommodation and 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.

Strategic Housing services meet bi-monthly with partners including housing providers, youth services, housing services to review and progress actions target at preventing youth homelessness and identifying measures to support those at risk of homelessness. Sample outcomes include review of the referral process, information about supported housing, information, advice and guidance such as a leaflet outlining practical issues young people should consider when deciding to live independently for the first time.

### 4.4.4.2 Monitoring Care Leaver accommodation

There is a national requirement for Local Authorities 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. The latest quarter available is Apr-Jun 2018.

Tables 18-20 below show the number of Care Leavers aged 19 to 21 who were in suitable accommodation on their birthday. The total of 92% for the year ending June 2018 is an improvement from previous years. In comparison, 84% of care leavers nationally aged 19-21 were in suitable accommodation in the year end March 2018.

Table 18: Care leavers in suitable accommodation on their birthday  
(19th to 21st birthday) July 2017 to June 2018

	Jul-Sep 2017	Oct-Dec 2017	Jan-Mar 2018	Apr-Jun 2018	Year
Total suitable accommodation	26	25	28	28	107
Total care leavers with a birthday	29	26	32	29	116
Total (%)	90%	96%	88%	97%	92%

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

## MEDWAY SUFFICIENCY 2018-19

Table 19: percent of care leavers in suitable accommodation on their birthday from 17 to 21 years, 2018.

	Number in suitable accommodation	Care Leavers	% suitable
17 <sup>th</sup> birthday	1	1	100%
18 <sup>th</sup> birthday	38	39	97%
19 <sup>th</sup> birthday	41	45	91%
20 <sup>th</sup> birthday	35	37	95%
21 <sup>st</sup> birthday	31	34	91%

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

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

Table 20: care leavers in unsuitable accommodation on their birthday

	Number year ending June 2017	Number year ending June 2018
Unknown as not in touch		3
In custody	5	4
No fixed abode / homeless	5	2
Residence not known	2	1
With parents or relatives	1	.

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

#### 4.4.4.3 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 21 shows the number of young people aged 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. Improved joint working between the Care Leaving team and Housing Services has resulted in a reduction in the numbers of young people that have been accepted as homeless, eligible, unintentionally homeless or as having a priority need for accommodation.

## MEDWAY SUFFICIENCY 2018-19

Table 21: 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	18
Quarter 4	35	31	21	25	9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>84</b>

Data Source: Housing Department, Medway Council

Since July 2015, Medway's Children's and Housing Services have been jointly assessing young people and their housing needs to ensure that young people do not bounce between or slip through services when they present as being homeless. Table 22 shows the number of Joint Housing Needs Assessments (JHAs) completed during the period September 2017 to September 2018.

Table 22: JHA's from September 2017 to September 2018

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

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 as well as enable the Local Authority to ascertain the young person's wishes and feelings regarding the provision of accommodation and help to ensure that they receive appropriate services as close as possible to the point of need.

## MEDWAY SUFFICIENCY 2018-19

**4.5 Placement Provision during 2017/2018****4.5.1 Placement Mix**

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. In September 2018, 208 children were placed with Medway in-house carers. This is an increase of 12 children from September 2017 (196). The in-house fostering service continues to develop its provision for meeting the needs of complex young people. 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 is in response to the increasing needs of the large cohort of 10-15 year olds.

Table 23: placement category type 2015-2018 as of September 2018

Placement type	Sep-15	Sep-16	Sep-17	Sep-18	Direction of travel
Medway foster carer	186	195	196	208	↑
Fostered by family or connected person	55	35	36	38	↑
External foster carer	116	93	95	110	↑
Placed with parents	6	4	3	7	↑
Placed for Adoption	23	26	26	18	↓
In-house Residential	6	6	7	6	↔
Private and voluntary residential home/school	35	30	16	16	↔
Secure accommodation	1	1	0	0	
YOI or prison	0	0	1	1	↔
Independent Living (Supported and unsupported)	13	20	14	18	↑
NHS	1	0	2	1	↓
Family assessment unit	0	0	0	2	↑

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

There is also an increase in the use of external foster care provision. External fostering is primarily through Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs), but can also include provision by other Local Authorities and charities providing fostering services.

Of the 108 external fostering placements in place as of 14<sup>th</sup> November 2018, there were 31 children and young people placed inside the Medway boundary and 76 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 54 and these were in Kent, London, Essex, Sussex and Hampshire. Medway continues to place an emphasis on placements being available within

## MEDWAY SUFFICIENCY 2018-19

Medway however competition for local foster placements is fierce and this remains a challenge.

### 4.5.2 Placement Cost

Average weekly placements costs continue to rise as shown in Table 24.

Table 24: average placement costs by type 2017 and 2018

Accommodation Type	Average weekly cost 2017	Average weekly cost 2018
IFA (standard and complex placements taken together)	£ 938	£952
In house fostering	£ 450	£ 450
External Parent & Child	£ 1,533 – fostering £3,582 - residential	£1,769 – fostering £3,950 - residential
External Residential	£ 2,997	£3,151.11
Supported Accommodation	£ 762	£998.36
Supported Lodging (Internal)	£ 194	£200

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

A number of factors may be impacting on this including:

- The limited capacity of local foster carers especially those qualified to support parent and child placements
- The impact of large sibling groups
- Children staying longer in care
- Parent and child assessment placements taking substantially longer to complete the assessment
- Increasingly numbers of late entrants into care who frequently require higher levels of support at least initially
- Increasing competition with other LA's in securing placements, particularly in emergency situations

### 4.5.3 In-House Fostering

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

As of October 2018, there were a total of 151 standard fostering households which represents an increase of 3 from the previous year. These deliver approximately 300 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.

Between April 2017 and March 2018 there were 118 new enquiries to become a Medway foster carer which is a significant improvement on the 74 from the previous year. Of these, 114 registered their interest. The net gain in foster carers to the service however was 7 as per the year before. The fostering service continues to implement their recruitment strategy in response to the needs identified in this document and target recruitment at known gaps in localities and needs groups.

#### **4.5.4 Independent fostering provision**

The new joint Kent and Medway IFA provider Framework has come into force from February 2018. Opportunities for improving quality and value for money have been built into the new Framework where possible and providers are working closely with commissioners to deliver the scope of good quality placements required.

The new performance matrix designed around promoting positive outcomes for children and young people will begin reporting in 2019. This will allow providers to evidence how they are supporting young people and hold them to account if not. In addition, substantial work is being undertaken in partnership with social workers to ensure that placements do not drift and that information sharing is maximised to ensure good quality of support and accommodation is provided to Medway’s young people.

#### **4.5.5 Residential Provision**

Medway Council owns and operates a six bed residential unit for young people with complex and challenging behaviours. The unit now operates at full capacity. The last Ofsted inspection delivered a rating of outstanding.

However, Medway has a shortage of **local** residential provision to accommodate children and young people including for young people with special educational needs. Of the 14 young people who were in external residential care placements on the 19 November 2018, all except one were placed out of Medway and 16 of these are over 20 miles away.

A 2016 independent review into children’s Residential Care in England found that “It is difficult for individual local authorities to commission residential care effectively,

## MEDWAY SUFFICIENCY 2018-19

given the relatively small numbers of children needing it in each authority area.”<sup>4</sup> Further, it recommended that the “DfE must require local authorities to come together into large consortia for the purpose of obtaining significant discounts from private and voluntary sector providers”. Medway has now done this and this year entered into partnership with the 21 Local Authorities of the Southern Region (LASR) to procure children’s residential services and now has a Framework of 366 providers. Two of the key objectives of the procurement were to deliver an:

- Increased ability to make residential placements at short notice.

Although the Framework includes both opportunity for “Same Day” residential care and “Crisis Care”, the national shortage of places mean that in practical terms these are still extremely difficult to obtain. As the full weight of the 21 LA’s comes to bear on the contract, it is hoped that this will develop.

- Increased transparency in the progress and outcomes of our young people in therapeutic care

To enter on to the Framework providers were required to be more transparent over what services are being delivered as therapeutic care, and to identify what additional services are being offered by providers.

### 4.5.6 Education, employment or training (EET)

Children in care need to receive appropriate full time education. This could be in a mainstream, independent, special or alternative provision, including Pupil Referral Units (PRU). Children or young people could be

- i. Not permanently excluded
  - a. In full time school provision
  - b. Previously home educated and now waiting for a school place
  - c. A placement has changed and current provision can no longer be accessed
  - d. A placement has changed and there is no appropriate education provision in that area.
- ii. Permanently excluded
  - a. Excluded whilst in care
  - b. Excluded prior to coming into care

Additional factors that can impact on education provision are:

- Unknown gaps in learning prior to coming into care due to limited or no school attendance
- Provision is available but the child or young person is refusing to go to school
- The LA has a legal responsibility to place any permanently excluded pupil in provision from 6<sup>th</sup> day. This is often very costly alternative provision.
- When the young person’s placement is changed whilst undergoing an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) assessment. For this process the lead authority is the authority where the young person is resident therefore if

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<sup>4</sup> Report of Sir Martin Narey’s independent review of children’s residential care, July 2016  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/534560/Residential-Care-in-England-Sir-Martin-Narey-July-2016.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/534560/Residential-Care-in-England-Sir-Martin-Narey-July-2016.pdf)

### MEDWAY SUFFICIENCY 2018-19

that changes the whole, fairly lengthy process needs to be restarted even if the education provision remains the same.

*It is also important to note that behaviour issues are not a criteria for EHCP. For some this is perhaps attributable to undiagnosed mental health, for others family situation is a significant factor.*

Table 25: Pupil profile and distribution as of October 2018

MVS 1 Nov 2018	School year group																		count
	Below N1	N1	N2	YR	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Y14	
All looked after children		age 2-3	age 3-4	age 4-5	age 5-6	age 6-7	age 7-8	age 8-9	age 9- 10	age 10- 11	age 11- 12	age 12- 13	age 13- 14	age 14- 15	age 15- 16	age 16- 17	age 17- 18	age 18- 19	
CIC cohort	54	14	6	18	6	15	14	18	17	30	21	36	36	29	33	45	34	1	427
SEN support	0	0	0	0	2	8	4	7	6	10	10	13	10	7	11	7	9	0	104
EHCP	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	2	3	5	5	7	7	5	9	15	8	1	71
no SEN support	0	0	1	9	1	6	7	9	8	13	5	13	17	14	10	16	10	0	139
Unknown SEN status	54	14	5	9	2	0	1	0	0	2	1	3	2	3	3	5	7	0	111
No pupils leaving (this month)	4	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	3	0	12
No pupils arriving (this month)	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	4	0	8
Total number leaving in year	6	1	0	1	1	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	3	0	20
Total number arriving in year	6	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	3	1	1	1	4	0	21

#### Special Educational Needs (SEN)

For older children and young people, 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 26: Care leavers in education, employment or training on their birthday (19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> birthday)

	Jul-Sep 2016	Oct-Dec 2016	Jan-Mar 2017	Apr-Jun 2017	Jul-Sep 2018
Total EET	11	10	15	14	50
Total care leavers with a birthday	29	26	32	29	116
Total (%)	38%	38%	47%	48%	43%

## MEDWAY SUFFICIENCY 2018-19

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, 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 27: percent of care leavers in education, employment or training on their birthday.

	Number in EET	Care Leavers	% EET
17 <sup>th</sup> birthday	1	1	100%
18 <sup>th</sup> birthday	26	39	67%
19 <sup>th</sup> birthday	24	45	53%
20 <sup>th</sup> birthday	13	37	35%
21 <sup>st</sup> birthday	13	34	38%

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

Table 28: Not in education, training or employment on their birthday.

	Number year ending Jun 2016	Number year ending Jun 2017	Number year ending Jun 2018
Because of illness/disability	28	21	21
Due to pregnancy or parenting	21	16	14
Other reason	44	30	41
Unknown as not in contact			3

Data Source: Business & 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.

#### 4.5.7 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.

The following developments have been seen in 2017/18.

- The NEST unit – this is a 3 bedded unit in Kent for Kent and Medway children and young people who present with Autism, Learning Disabilities, Mental health

## MEDWAY SUFFICIENCY 2018-19

support needs and challenging behaviour. It is a step-up and step-down provision from Tier 4 inpatient accommodation and will accommodate 12 week placements for children aged 14 to 18, but has had Ofsted approval to accommodate one young person at a time up to the age of 24. All children admitted will need to have had a Care Education and Treatment Review (CETR) and a plan for discharge before admission. The provision is being staffed by KCC staff who have had specialist training including in Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) and an ability to conduct full Functional Assessments. It will be open from late January 2019.

Medway is working with Kent to develop a NEST 2 provision, potentially a 6 to 8 bedded unit that will focus on providing step-up and step-down provision from Tier 4 inpatient accommodation for children and young people with Autism.

- A Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) provider framework is now in place. On behalf of the Kent and Medway Transforming Care Partnership, Kent have commissioned a framework of specialist providers to support our most complex children. The framework will come on line officially from November 2018. It is expected that these providers will enable our most complex children to be supported close to home in specialist provisions rather than placed far away from home in secure hospitals.
- PBS training & PBS specialist team – Medway will be providing level 1 and level 2 PBS training in conjunction with the British Institute of Learning Disabilities during October to March 2019. This training has been funded by Health Education England. Level 1 training has commenced and 240 places were on offer to parents and carers and professionals across Medway including the voluntary sector. Over 500 applications were received. Level 2 training is due to commence in January 2019. In addition a specialist PBS team is being developed with MCH as a pilot. During the pilot phase, 10 MCH staff will be trained to provide PBS interventions and support direct to families. An evaluation process undertaken with the University of Kent will ensure that the benefits of this approach can be captured prior to any further roll out. However as this is an evidenced based approach for supporting complex children with support from both national and international leaders in this area, it is hoped that further adoption across Medway will occur.

#### **4.5.8 Accommodation for young people over the age of 16**

As at the end of September 2018, Medway was supporting 17 young people in Supported Lodging provision as a care leaver, of which 13 were “staying put” with their former foster carer.

## MEDWAY SUFFICIENCY 2018-19

As of November 2018, there were also 32 young people in Supported Accommodation. Supported Accommodation (SA) services are both purchased from framework providers and spot purchased. There is much greater provision of Supported Accommodation locally. Of the 32 SA placements 19 are in Medway, 4 in Essex, 8 in Kent and one in London.

There is currently a wide range of SA placement costs reflecting low, medium and high needs of the young people as described in point 4.4.4.1. However, the majority of the placements are being spot purchased. Medway is currently out to tender for a Framework of SA providers that will deliver high quality placements with both low and more complex levels of support in addition to Floating Support that can be used to deploy packages of additional support to young people wherever they may be.

### **5. SECTION THREE – partnership work**

#### **Views of our children and young people**

To ensure that looked after children and care leavers' views and experiences inform current service delivery, young people have been consulted on each individual commissioned project undertaken. In developing the specification for the Supported Accommodation Framework for example we consulted with young people as to their priorities and requirements. Furthermore, a small group of young people will be involved in evaluating tenders submitted through a video submission.

Going forwards it will be rewarding to work more closely with the Medway Children and Young People's Council and other Forums around how to engage many different groups of young people in overall commissioning priorities.

#### **Independent accommodation and general housing**

There are numerous challenges in obtaining sufficient social housing for care leavers to assist them to step down and move on to independence in Medway. Both Housing and Social Care commissioners work closely to try to address these issues. Some are outlined below:

- The bidding process for social housing can take time and young people are all bidding against one another in an increasing limited pool of provision. Care Leavers have been given a priority rating for Social Housing.
- 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

## MEDWAY SUFFICIENCY 2018-19

landlords who fear rent arrears and who may choose not to accept tenants using Universal Credit. Housing services have worked alongside the DWP and Jobcentre Plus to ensure that this risk is minimised.

- Following amendments to governmental policy, supported housing is still retained within the Housing Benefit system. This produces challenges where circumstances change e.g. a care leaver attaining employment and then becoming liable for a greater proportion of the rent and service charge (higher in supported housing than a standard tenancy). Housing services continue to work with all stakeholders to address this issue.
- Young people leaving care who have been evicted due to rent arrears, anti-social behaviour and other reasons which may be considered deliberate, can result in young people being considered 'intentionally homeless' and hence no longer eligible for social housing. In these cases they become the responsibility of Social Care to support or assist in securing suitable accommodation.
- If a Care Leaver secures privately rented accommodation, a guarantor is often required but it is not Medway Council's policy to act in this capacity. Often the rental of these properties exceeds the local Housing Allowance which is the maximum payable by Housing Benefit. Young people are able to apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) to cover the difference but this can only be used as a temporary measure.

### **Medway's Young People's Wellbeing Service (MYPWS)**

The Medway Local Transformation Plan (LTP) 2015/16 set out our shared commitment and priorities towards achieving a brighter future for children and young people's emotional and mental health and wellbeing, regardless of their circumstances. It proposed a radical rethink of how services are commissioned and delivered locally, ensuring that all services and agencies are working together to make the best use of the resources at our disposal. The focus of all services needs to be on early intervention and support and where enduring problems do emerge, to focus on supporting recovery in partnership with the young person and their family

In Medway the service is now delivered by NELFT. There is a focus on the families of children and young people in NELFT's care and on scheduling appointments at times and places that suit children and their families/carers that is already producing higher attendance rates and low rates of re-referral to the service.

Significant work has been put into embedding the service with partners. Positive feedback has been received from colleagues working in the paediatric wards of Medway Maritime Hospital for example. Both the primary and secondary head teachers' associations have a standing item on emotional and mental health at their termly meetings, indicating that emotional health and wellbeing is now seen as core to schools' business, rather than the responsibility of certain members of staff. This has provided real impetus to incorporating mental health themes into schools'

## MEDWAY SUFFICIENCY 2018-19

curriculum and consideration of what services best meet their pupils needs. There is a lot of demand from the local workforce for additional training and development around emotional and mental health.

With the new service in place and embedded, and jointly with NELFT, commissioners are moving on to the transformational elements of the Action Plan, turning ambitions into concrete agreements. Between April and September 2018:

- NELFT workers began operating from Medway's 4 family hubs on a regular basis. Running group sessions at these sites and participating in team meetings and case conferences is greatly increasing the accessibility of MYPWS and practitioners' ability to seek advice and provide a smoother, swifter and better service for our families.
- Further work has taken place to develop and enhance the required extended age range offer of 0-25
- Effective integration with Medway's Youth Offending Team (YOT) has been established to ensure improved access and pathways of support. The Behaviour & Conduct pathway lead will represent the service at the Youth Justice Board
- Work has commenced to build capacity in schools by providing consultation and training to support staff regarding lower levels of emotional wellbeing need. This has been developed with the two head teacher groupings; and includes delivery of a twilight session to a head teacher leadership programme in October 2018.
- Roll out of the MINDFRESH APP (currently in pilot form) to provide additional information and support to children and young people as well as supporting and complimenting therapeutic interventions. The App will be linked to the RiO patient records system which provides greater opportunities to safeguard and assure any clinical application of the APP
- Introduction of the new forensic CAMHS service provided by Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (on behalf of NHS England), across Kent, Surrey and Sussex, working alongside NELFT staff to enhance the support offered to children and young people with high level and complex presentations

### **Health**

In monitoring and supporting the health of Looked After Children and Care Leavers in Medway, Medway Council works closely with the CCG who have Designated Nurses for LAC, SEN Disabilities (SEND) and Safeguarding. A Designated Doctor role is in the process of being recruited to.

The LAC Health service forms part of the 0-19 Children's Community Health contract recently won by a new provider. There is a core team responsible for coordinating the specialist care and interventions that are required for Looked After Children, as determined by their individual health and care plans, and delivered by appropriately skilled colleagues from the range of provision elsewhere in the 0-19 Children's Community Health service. The team conduct Health Assessments within a 20 mile radius of a Medway geographical boundary.



## MEDWAY SUFFICIENCY 2018-19

The service will lead on the promotion of optimum health, development and well-being of this group of children and young people and must contribute to and be involved in care planning and review meetings in order to ensure health needs are met and facilitate timely, consistent access to health services.

The service will also perform health assessments for other Local Authorities upon request for the health of those children placed in Medway (POLA).

Children and young people placed outside of the local authority further than twenty miles receive their health assessments and health service from local looked after children's nursing teams or other health professionals. This can be an inconsistent service compared to the service offered to children and young people placed within borough. Work is currently being scoped out with the CCG to improve the consistency and quality of the services provided to children placed out of area.

The LAC Health team have identified the following issues as being key to address in the near future to improve the health of our population:

- mental and emotional issues
- oral health neglect
- vulnerability to exploitation both CSE and criminal exploitation (CCE) and gangs
- speech and language therapy
- cognitive development issues
- furthermore, an identified need around attachment disorders and trauma will need to be fully understood and scoped out

### 6. SECTION FOUR - ACTION PLAN 2019

Medway's Looked After Children's Strategy 2018-2021 contains the objectives listed below. These provide the structure for delivering the required actions to ensure Sufficiency is maintained.

LAC Strategic Objectives	Sufficiency actions for 2019
Provide timely and high quality interventions to help children remain with or return to their families, as long as it is safe to do so	<p>Ensure that interventions delivered to children in care dovetail with Early Help Strategy and assess potential for coordinating resource management to prevent children and young people coming in to care.</p> <p>Explore opportunities for developing the area of overlap at the Edge of Care for example in developing packages of care for young people who are NEET or other</p>

## MEDWAY SUFFICIENCY 2018-19

	<p>educational or short term residential step up and step down options.</p> <p>Undertake an audit of 10-15 year old children who come into care without going through the Child Protection route to evaluate whether any opportunities for early help were missed.</p> <p>Ensure models of practice are evidence based meeting the needs of the child and family.</p> <p>Explore opportunities for supporting step up and step down to parent and child assessment placements.</p>
Provide and commission the right mix of placements	<p>Ensure an audit of placements for SEN children and young people including education and transportation is performed</p> <p>Conduct full needs assessment of PACE requirements</p> <p>Explore options to improve the commissioning of SEN placements</p> <p>Establish the level of need and identify innovative solutions to providing a family environment for children with disabilities</p> <p>Deliver a business case for Accommodation and Support for young mothers</p> <p>Embed YOT involvement in placement process.</p> <p>Work with Virtual School to ensure placement process contributes positively to educational outcomes of CIC</p>
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	Work with Children's Services to more accurately monitor placement objectives, duration and outcomes.
Ensure that looked after children and young people achieve their full potential	Support the Virtual Head in conducting an aspirations audit

## MEDWAY SUFFICIENCY 2018-19

and can access suitable education, employment or training	<p>Pilot an independence training scheme for young people in fostering care.</p> <p>Assess need and identify semi-independent accommodation and support options for young people with ASD</p> <p>Link this work through the skills and employability plan.</p> <p>Also ensure young people have access to digital platform to create access to ETE.</p>
Improve the health and well-being of looked after children, young people and care leavers	<p>Continue to work with the new LAC Health provider to ensure health needs are assessed and met for children in and leaving care. Ensure that trends are identified and used to ensure appropriate services are in place.</p> <p>Ensure there is a named contact for all children needing health services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- NELFT</li> <li>- Substance misuse</li> <li>- Etc.</li> </ul>
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	<p>Publish the Placements Quality Assurance Framework.</p> <p>Progress the multi-agency information sharing group that has been set up to improve partner communication and also specifically to address issues and problems occurring within Supported Accommodation or in the community.</p> <p>To develop a plan of action around liaison with young people placed in Medway by other Local Authorities and Communication with their home authorities.</p>
Prepare young people for a successful transition to adulthood	<p>Continue to work with all providers and partners to ensure this.</p> <p>Continue to support safeguarding and care leaving teams in identifying Pathway Planning from 14 years old to inform appropriate commissioning of</p>

## MEDWAY SUFFICIENCY 2018-19

	<p>accommodation and support through to independence.</p> <p>Continue to work with Housing colleagues to deliver affordable, quality social housing and increased support in order to secure privately rented housing is needed. This <u>and</u> the Local Offer need to be accompanied by a stepped programme of floating support available to all care leavers as they transition between accommodation.</p> <p>Including embedding an integrated pathway to support the smooth transition for young people moving into independence, when they are ready and are prepared to do so.</p>
<p>Ensure that looked after children, young people and care leavers' views and experiences inform current and future service delivery</p>	<p>Identify mechanism for young people including younger children to contribute to overall commissioning intentions.</p> <p>Improve tracking and dashboard to inform decision making.</p>