



**Medway Council  
Children's Services**

**Sufficiency Report  
2019-20**

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## 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.

Medway Council is therefore required to, and this report attempts to:

- systematically review the current situation in relation to securing accommodation and support that meets the needs of looked after children;
- identify areas for improvement;
- develop or enhance their strategic commissioning processes to ensure the needs of looked after children are met; and
- set priorities for action

### Medway context

The Public Health Outcomes Framework (PHOF<sup>1</sup>) shows that there are 277,855 people resident in Medway in 2018.

Males 137,618

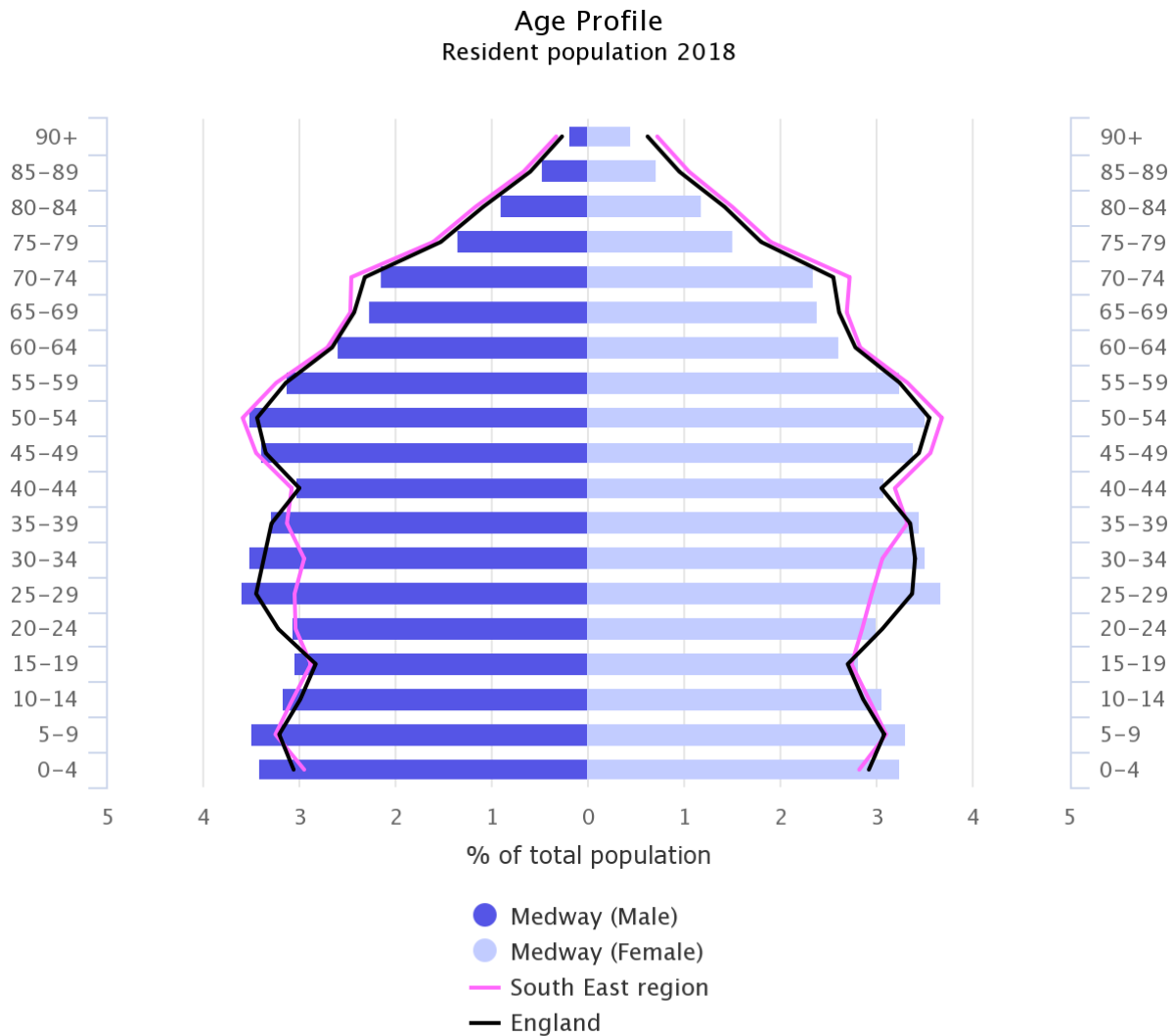
Females 140,237

From the population graph below, it can be seen that in comparison to both England and the South East region, 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

<sup>1</sup> <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/public-health-outcomes-framework>

of 0 - 24 years. The population of Medway is therefore younger than the population of England overall.

A full demographic analysis can be found at [www.medway.jsna.gov](http://www.medway.jsna.gov) .



Data taken from the Public Health Outcomes Framework shows that life expectancy at birth in Medway is significantly worse than the regional and national averages for both males and females. In addition, healthy life expectancy (years of life that can be expected to be lived in good health) is worse than the regional average.

Medway also has a greater number of children living in low income families than the south east and also than the national figure however this is showing improvement.

Specifically in relation to children in care, Medway has a high number of looked after children in the area who are affected by poor emotional wellbeing and this is an area of continuing focus for statutory partners.

### Section ONE: profile of children in care population

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. To do this we need to know the profile of that group of children and young people.

**Key points:**

- The number of children in care has stayed stable with a slight overall decrease
- The age range of the looked after cohort is increasing with 10-15 year olds and then 16-17 year olds as the two most significant groups.
- Medway continues to have a significant amount of sibling groups with the potential to enter care
- For those most complex children, it may be that Medway has a younger, more female cohort than elsewhere in the South East.

**The cohort of children in care: description**

At the end of September 2019, Medway had 415 looked after children, representing a 3% decrease from September 2018 as shown in Table 1. Medway’s September 2019 rate of 65.2 children per 10,000 is both in line with last years’ rate (66.7) and with the March 2018 national rate of 64 per 10,000.

Table 1: Number (%) of children being looked after by age range 1 Oct to 30<sup>th</sup> Sept 2016-2019

Age range	September 2016	September 2017	September 2018	September 2019
Age 0	27 (6.9%)	23 (5.9%)	35 (8.2%)	20 (4.8%)
Age 1-4	54 (13.7%)	56 (14.3%)	57 (13.3%)	46 (11.1%)
Age 5-9	92 (23.4%)	87 (22.2%)	72 (16.8%)	74 (17.8%)
Age 10-15	168 (42.7%)	163 (41.6%)	180 (42.0%)	184 (44.3%)
Age 16-17	70 (17.8%)	63 (16.1%)	85 (19.8%)	91 (21.9%)
Total	411	392	429	415

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

**Age and gender**

Table 2 shows the September 2019 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 as per the national picture. This has been consistent across the last four years with very little change in any of the age groups.

Table 2: Looked After Children by age and sex, 2019

Age range	Female	Male	Total
Under 1	9	11	20

## MEDWAY SUFFICIENCY 2019-2020

1-4	17	29	46
5-9	31	43	74
10-15	78	106	184
16+	44	47	91
<b>Total</b>	<b>179 (43%)</b>	<b>236 (57%)</b>	<b>415</b>

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 being “white” ethnicity as seen in Table 3.

Table 3: Ethnicity of CLA 2015-2019

Ethnicity	Sep 2015	Sep 2016	Sep 2017	Sep 2018	Sep 2019
Asian or Asian British	0.7%	0.7%	0.0%	1.2%	1.2%
Black or Black British	4.3%	3.5%	1.8%	1.9%	3.6%
Mixed	5.9%	7.9%	7.1%	7.8%	6.5%
Other Ethnic Groups	2.5%	1.7%	2.0%	1.2%	1.4%
White	86.6%	86.2%	89.0%	88.8%	87.2%

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

### Disability

As of 30th September 2019, there were 44 Medway looked after children who are listed as having a disability. This represents 11% of all CLA and seems to be a stable figure. This is important to know as these young people are frequently ones who remain in care for long periods of time. Medway has identified this as an area to develop our knowledge base for future planning and has initiated projects such as tracking contact with young people known to access disability services to gain greater clarity. Until this further detail is available, the most significant needs groups are detailed in Table 4 below:

Table 4: Significant Needs Groups of Looked After Children, 2015-19

Disability Type	Sep 15	Sep 16	Sep 17	Sep 18	Sep 19
Learning disability	30	26	26	23	20
Autistic spectrum	21	19	16	18	18
Behaviour disorder–Including ADHD	21	17	17	17	16
Communication	8	8	7	5	3
Physical disability	5	4	5	5	4
<b>Total with a disability</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>% of LAC</b>	<b>12.6%</b>	<b>12.1%</b>	<b>11.7%</b>	<b>11.1%</b>	<b>11.1%</b>

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

### Most Complex Children

Medway is participating in a South-East wide project to promote the understanding of those children in care with the most complex needs. Each Authority was asked to

identify the cohort of their most complex children in significant proportion to the size of the authority. In Medway 69 CLA children were provided. When comparing the profile of the overall children in care (CIC) cohort, the profile of those most complex Medway children is slightly different.

- The most complex Medway cohort is similar to the overall Medway cohort: 41% female, 59% male compared to 43%-57%. However, Medway was different from other LA's in the South East in that they found a greater amount of complex male children than Medway: 37% female to 63% male across the whole of the South East. This suggests that Medway may have a greater proportion of complex female children.
- Age also shows a slight difference for Medway in that there were more children at a younger age in the most complex cohort. Table 5 shows the percent of each cohort of most complex children for each age.

Table 5 percent of complex cohort by age

Age	% of cohort Medway	% of cohort SE
13	18.8	9.8
14	14.5	13.2
15	11.6	19.2
16	18.8	20.8
17	13.0	15.5

What is noticeable is the gradual escalation by age increase for the cohort of complex children across the South East. Interestingly, Medway does not present the same pattern. This could be as a result of a more risk-averse assessments that tend to bring children into care more rapidly. It may be a reflection of a lack of edge of care provision that provides a barrier and a pre-emptive step to coming in to care.

### Sibling groups

Of 589 children who became subject to Child Protection (CP) plans in the year ending September 2019, 80% were part of a sibling group. This is both an increase in children subject to a CP plan (373 last year) and an increase in the amount of sibling groups (71% last year) from the previous year. Table 6 shows the structure of the sibling groups by number of siblings.

In addition to the existing overall increase in children subject to a CP plan, it is likely that there will be a further increase in the numbers of children made subject to a CP plan following the Ofsted inspection of Medway's Children's Services this year which were assessed as "inadequate". Previous experience around the country suggests that this has a natural consequence of increasing the rate of children referred to Child

Protection services. A logical consequence of that could be an increase in numbers of children coming into care<sup>2</sup>.

Table 6: sibling groups placed onto a CP plan in the year ending September 2019:

Number of sibling groups	Group composition
87 groups of	2 siblings
60 groups of	3 siblings
22 groups of	4 siblings
3 groups of	5 siblings
2 groups of	6+ siblings

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

To facilitate children staying together when appropriate, placing large sibling groups 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.

## Section TWO: the cohort forecast

Key points:

- The Medway forecasting model *suggests* that next year (2020-2021) the number of children in care will continue to decrease gently.
- The number of under 5's entering care decreased greater than expected and against the trend of the national picture
- The number of 16-17 year olds entering care increased greater than expected
- The 10-15 year old group remains the largest group of children entering care
- The number of care leavers eligible for support and being supported is increasing

A mathematical model is used each year to forecast the number of Children Looked After (CLA) in the future based on:

- the profile of those currently in care,
- the rate of children leaving care
- the rate of children coming into care over the last 2 years
- and including modelling the conversion rate from Child Protection (CP) plan to CLA.
- This year, the model also includes the impact of the rise in the child population predicted in Medway.

<sup>2</sup> What happens if your children's services are judged inadequate by Ofsted?; LGA; 2019. [https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/15%2060%20must%20know%20-%20what%20happens%20if%20your%20childrens%20services%20are%20judged%20inadequate%20by%20Ofsted\\_v02%20WEB.pdf](https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/15%2060%20must%20know%20-%20what%20happens%20if%20your%20childrens%20services%20are%20judged%20inadequate%20by%20Ofsted_v02%20WEB.pdf)



The model last year forecast 410 children in care for September 2019 and we are recording 415. The difference between the forecast result and actual result was due to:

- 114 new CLA in care on the 30 September 2019 against the forecast of 108. Underlying this was:
  - 93 children coming into care during the year where their CP plan did not achieve required improvements, against a forecast of 81; and
  - 66 children coming into care during the year where no recent CP plan had been implemented, against a forecast of 82.
- 301 remained in care for another year against a forecast of 302.

The Medway model is forecasting a reduction in the number of CLA to 400 by September 2020 if the historical patterns of care persist as seen in Table 7. This includes 5 CLA due to projected population growth rate in Medway together with the rate of CLA per 10,000 per year.

Table 7: Forecasted numbers of Looked After Children by age group

	In care 30 Sep 2017	In care 30 Sep 2018	In care 30 Sep 2019	% 2018 to 2019	Prediction Sep 2020	% 2019 to 2020	Prediction Sep 2021
Under 1	23	35	20	-43%	30.8	54%	30.7
Age 1-4	56	57	46	-19%	49.5	8%	58.0
Age 5-9	87	72	74	3%	57.7	-22%	54.0
Age 10-15	163	180	184	2%	175.5	-5%	161.2
Age 16-17	63	85	91	7%	86.2	-5%	99.9
Total	392	429	415	-3%	399.6	-4%	403.8

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

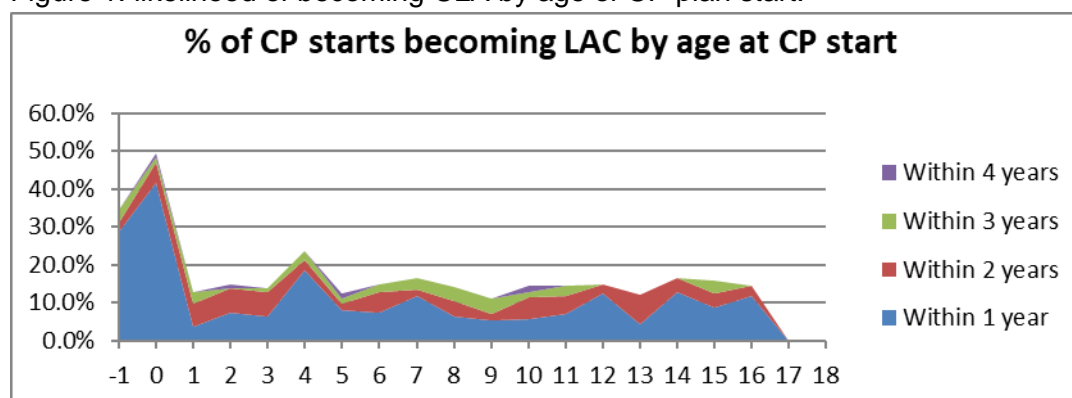
Of note is the continued dominance of the 10-15 age group. The size of the cohort of children aged 10-15 will continue to impact on care services both whilst in care and as they become care leavers.

Significant planning points are:

- As young people coming into care at a later age tend to have more entrenched and complex needs, the higher numbers of 10-15 year olds 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.
- There will be an increased need for a variety of supported accommodation options and supported lodgings over the next five years as these young people transition to independent living.

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

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



Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

### Entrants into care

Comparisons between the number of entrants into care for the years 2015 to 2019 are shown in table 8 below. There have been significant decreases in under 5s coming into care, but a significant increase and those aged 16-17.

Table 8: Entrants into care 2015-2019.

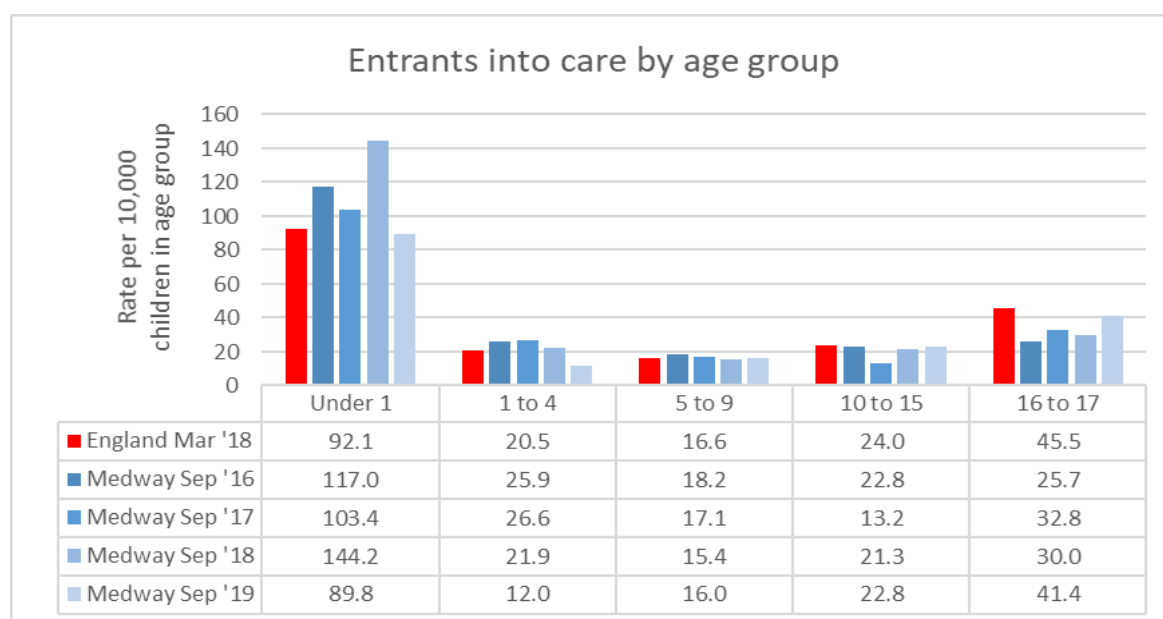
Age range	Year ending Sep-15	Year ending Sep-16	Year ending Sep-17	Year ending Sep-18	Year ending Sep 19	% 2018 to 2019
Under 1	37	44	38	53	33	<b>-38%</b>
Age 1-4	62	39	40	33	18	<b>-45%</b>
Age 5-9	54	33	31	28	29	<b>+4%</b>
Age 10-15	66	45	26	42	45	<b>+7%</b>
Age 16-17	21	18	23	21	29	<b>+38%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>-13%</b>

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, Medway is in line with the national picture as shown in Figure 2 below. The exception for Medway is for those aged 1 to 4 which was 41% lower than the latest national figure this year.

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

### Length of stay

Within the forecast is the identification that there are an increasing number of children in care for 5 or more years, shown in Table 8. On the 30 September 2017, this cohort consisted of 106 children making up 27% of our CLA. By September 2019, this had increased to 118 children (28%). The prediction for 2021, based on the trends of the last 3 years, is that this cohort will grow to 135 children in care over 5 years making up 33.4% of our CLA.

Logically, this long term CLA cohort are older children. Some 40% of our CLA aged 10 or over on the 30 September 2019 had been in care for 5 or more years.

Table 8: Length of time children have been in care

	In care 30 Sep 2017	In care 30 Sep 2018	In care 30 Sep 2019	Prediction Sep 2020	Prediction Sep 2021
Under 1 year	26.7%	29.9%	27.5%	29.9%	29.6%
1-2 years	31.6%	23.5%	25.1%	24.8%	25.5%
3-4 years	14.8%	20.7%	19.0%	12.3%	11.5%
5-9 years	22.6%	22.4%	24.1%	26.9%	24.5%
10+ years	4.3%	3.5%	4.3%	6.1%	8.9%

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

## Leaving care into independence

From the age of 16, a young person can leave care. From the age of 18 they become Care Leavers. Local Authorities have a statutory duty to provide young people 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 2017, the age at which they could approach the Local Authority for support was increased to 25 regardless of whether or not they are in education. The following charts show actual and projected numbers of young people eligible for care leavers support against those accessing it.

<b>Eligible for support</b>	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	Total
30/09/2016	31	57	46	40	49	69	80	56	64	492
30/09/2017	36	40	65	46	40	49	69	80	56	481
30/09/2018	44	48	43	65	46	40	49	69	80	484
30/09/2019	32	57	44	32	48	38	29	40	63	383
30/09/2020	44.7	51.5	61.4	44	32	48	38	29	40	388.6
30/09/2021	51.3	71.3	55.4	61.4	44	32	48	38	29	430.4
30/09/2022	46.6	81.8	76.8	55.4	61.4	44	32	48	38	484.0

<b>Being supported</b>	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	Total
30/09/2016	29	47	42	33	39	10	5	2	0	207
30/09/2017	20	28	47	40	32	15	4	3	1	190
30/09/2018	19	35	33	47	40	24	12	4	2	216
30/09/2019	21	54	44	31	44	29	12	11	3	249
% supported in 2019	66%	95%	100%	97%	92%	76%	41%	28%	5%	65%
30/09/2020	29.3	48.7	61.4	42.6	29.3	36.6	15.7	8.0	1.9	273.7
30/09/2021	33.6	67.5	55.4	59.5	40.3	24.4	19.9	10.5	1.4	312.6
30/09/2022	30.6	77.5	76.8	53.7	56.3	33.6	13.2	13.2	1.8	356.7

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council<sup>3</sup>

Figures shaded in pink are statistical projections based on the historical data shown, and hence shown as a decimal.

### <sup>3</sup> NOTES:

1) **Eligibility criteria:** the primary cohort of care leavers are those leaving care to independence aged 16 or over who have been in care for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14. As prescribed by statute, the figures also include those who are still in care, aged 16+ and have been in care for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14.

2) **Qualifying criteria:** those who have left care over 16 years and did not meet the eligibility criteria will generally qualify for support if requested. There are currently only 2 such people 18+ being supported and as such is not suitable for modelling.

The prediction uses 'transition rates', based on the ratio of historical data over the last 3 years against the number of in care in the previous year who were aged 1 year less. 3 years has been chosen as an appropriate balance between having enough years to smooth out random variance, but short enough for latest practice to be significant to the outcome.

## Section THREE: care processes

### Key points:

- Medway **currently** has a rate of care applications that is in line with the national picture.
- Medway is struggling to meet the target for completing care proceedings within 26 weeks although there are reasons for this and it is a regional issue

### 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. This reflects the national picture trends.

Table 9: snapshot of Legal status of Children Looked After, 2016-19

Legal Order	September 2016	September 2017	September 2018	September 2019
S20	99	77	87	85
Police Protection	1	0	0	0
Emergency Protection Order	0	1	1	1
Interim Care Order	49	46	65	57
Care Order	192	212	229	233
Placement Order	67	56	45	39
On Remand	0	0	2	0
PACE	0	0	0	0
Youth Rehab Order	0	0	0	0

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

Table 10 shows a more detailed breakdown of legal status of children by age between 2018 and 2019. It can be seen that the majority of very young children are being placed under interim care orders in the first instance. As the age of the child increases, the trend shows that we are securing care orders for children, but not necessarily placement orders for them. There is also increased use of S20 placements by agreement with all those with parental responsibility for the child as children move into 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 at first placement in 2018-19

Age range	Section 20		Interim Care Order		Care Order		Placement Order	
	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019
0	12	5	17	12	1	0	4	3
1 – 4	6	5	20	14	7	5	24	22
5 – 9	6	8	15	17	36	35	15	13
10 – 15	30	24	12	13	136	146	2	1
16+	33	43	1	1	49	47	0	0
Total	87	85	65	57	229	233	45	39

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

### Care Applications

Table 11 below shows that in 2015/16 Medway brought an unusually high number of Care applications to court. Following this, Medway was able to bring this rate back in line with the historical and national average.

Table 11: Care applications per 10,000 children

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Medway	8.0	14.5	22.8	9.4	13.5	Tbc
England	9.2	9.7	11.0	12.5	12.2	11.4

Data Source: Cafcass

Although rates for this are not currently available, national data compiled by Cafcass shows that between April 2018 and March 2019 Cafcass received a total of 13,569 applications. This figure is 4.6% lower when compared with the previous financial year.

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 children and families. Table 12 shows the average duration in weeks from application to completion. Although the national figure shows as consistently better there is significant regional variation within that with the south east and many other regions showing over 30 weeks.

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

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Medway	31 weeks	40 weeks	33 weeks	36 weeks
National	29 weeks	28 weeks	29 weeks	31 weeks

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

Although Medway is not achieving the target average level of 26 weeks for completing court proceedings, there continues to be families with large numbers of children going through proceedings which can slow proceedings down. The majority of cases conclude within 26 weeks. However cases with complex issues, multiple siblings, and/or delay in outcomes of assessments required that cause delay to the 26 week timetable and thereby increase the overall average time taken to complete proceedings.

## Section FOUR: placement provision in care

### Key points:

- There continues to be a shortage of adoptive families nationally
- Although there is currently sufficiency of placement provision there are both threats and risks to this as well as a small cohort of young people with very challenging needs where there is a gap in appropriate provision.
- There is an increased need of additional support to stabilise placements
- Overall placement costs continue to rise

### 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 2018 to September 2019, 16 children have been placed for adoption. The age breakdown of children placed for adoption between 2015 and 2019 is shown below in Table 13.

Table 13: Children placed for adoption 2015-2019

Age at placement	Year ending September 2015	Year ending September 2016	Year ending September 2017	Year ending September 2018	Year ending September 2019
0 - 1	19	17	15	12	9
2 - 4	6	12	11	3	4
5+	1	7	8	2	3
Total	26	36	34	17	16

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

Not all those children with adoption as the plan end up with a placement order for an adoptive family. Often because family members come forward late in proceedings and are able to take the children following positive assessment.

Some of the children placed have presented challenges such as big sibling groups or children requiring complex support. One large sibling group of four children were adopted by their foster carers and another sibling group of 2, twins of 5 years, who suffered “criminal neglect” with their birth parents have been successfully placed. Their younger sibling, aged 3 years, is placed separately.

Table 14 also shows that in the same 12 month period there have been 16 new families approved to adopt in Medway. This is a positive increase on the previous 2 years.

Taken together, tables 13 and 14 show a decrease in the numbers of matches and adoption placements but relatively stable numbers of children with adoption as the plan. Finding an appropriate match is increasingly challenging for all children and is especially the case for children with complex developmental and trauma related needs and for sibling groups.

Table 14: Adoption panel decisions for the years 2016-2018

Panel decisions	Year ending September 2017	Year ending September 2018	Year ending September 2019
Decision that adoption is the plan for the child	38	33	34
Adoptive families approved	13	12	16
Matches	31	17	13

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

As of October 2019, nationally there are over 1000 children on Linkmaker looking for adoptive families and 700 adopters. This is a more encouraging figure reflecting twice the numbers of adopters compared to recent months, but it still reflects a shortage of sufficient adopters nationally for all the children needing placement.

Changes of plan from adoption to long term fostering have recently been agreed for 12 children for whom it was not possible to identify adoptive families and there are a further 6 children who may potentially also need a change of plan. This has long term implications as each of these children will remain in foster care throughout their minority.

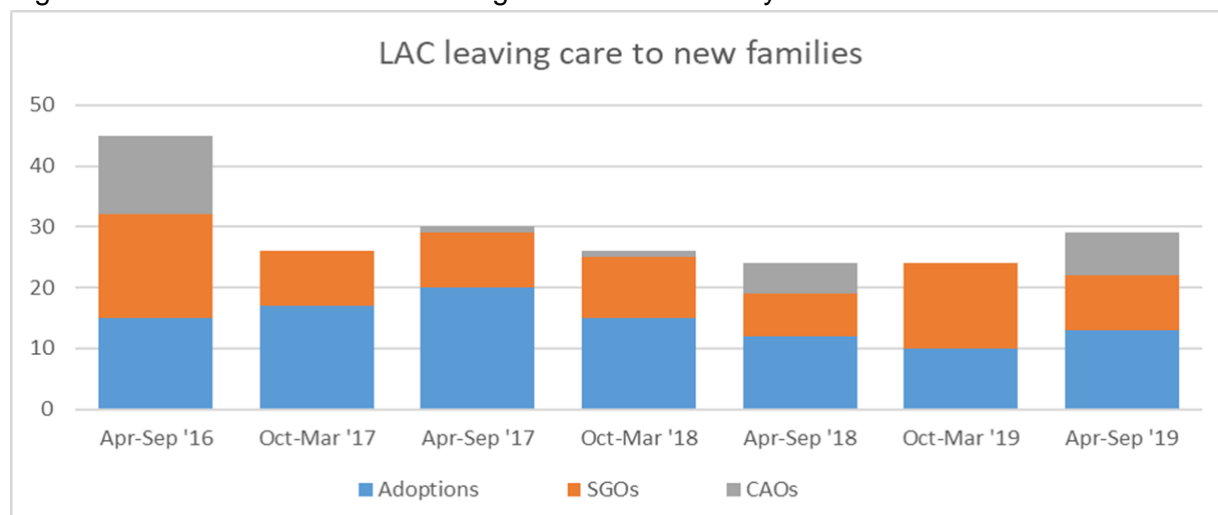
To help address some of these challenges and in line with Government expectations, Medway Council is moving forward with Kent County Council and London Borough of Bexley to form a Regional Adoption Agency. This will enable Medway children to access a much larger pool of adopters and enable more Medway children to be placed for adoption in a timely manner.

In addition, 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.



Figure 3 below 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 in different years, although yearly rates for SGOs have remained fairly constant.

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



Data Source: Children Services, Medway Council

### Placement Mix

Table 15 shows the trend over the past 4 years by placement type. It shows an increase in the use of independent fostering agencies and residential children’s homes with a corresponding decrease in the usage of in house foster carers. This is reflective of the continuing predominance of the 10-15 age category in the care cohort.

There has also been a rise in the number of placements in semi-independent accommodation visible in the “Independent Living: supported or unsupported” category. This reflects the increased numbers of young people entering the care system at a later stage and requiring additional ongoing support to prepare them for independence.

Table 15: snapshot of active placements of Children Looked After by category type

Placement type	Number in placement on 30 <sup>th</sup> Sept				
	Sep 15	Sep 16	Sep 17	Sep 18	Sep 19
Placed with parents	6	4	3	7	1
Placed for adoption	23	26	26	18	8
Fostered by family or connected person	55	35	36	38	33
Medway in house foster carer	186	195	196	208	189
External agency foster carer	116	93	95	110	130
In-house Residential	6	6	7	6	3
Private and voluntary residential home/school	35	30	16	16	24
Family assessment unit	0	0	0	2	0
Secure accommodation	1	1	0	0	0
YOI or prison	0	0	1	1	1
Independent Living (Supported and unsupported)	13	20	14	18	24
NHS	1	0	2	1	1

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

### Placement Distance

Of the 142 external fostering placements active on the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2019, there were 63 children and young people placed inside the Medway boundary and 79 in placements outside of Medway. Of the out of borough placements, 68 were placed in Kent some within 20 miles of Medway. Other placements were made in London (4), Brighton (3), Essex (2), Bournemouth (1) and Doncaster (1). Medway continues to place an emphasis on placements being available within Medway however competition for local foster placements is fierce and this remains a challenge.

Medway continues to see a shortage of residential children’s homes in the local area. Only one independent provision is currently registered within 20 miles of the Medway boundary. A key priority for commissioners is to continue to work with the market to develop appropriate small units of residential accommodation offering different specialisms in the local area.

### Placement stability

In addition to the placement mix, outcomes for the children must be considered. One measure is whether the placements are stable. As can be seen in Table 16, placement stability is improving in Medway. Three quarters of our children have seen no placement moves over the last few years and there has been a decrease in the amount of children who have seen one placement move this year. There remains a minority of children for whom placement stability has not been achieved. It is likely that these are our more complex children. In the Most Complex Children project, social workers were asked whether they felt that the placement their complex children were in was meeting their needs. In Medway 78% felt that they “completely” or “mostly” did. However, one fifth (22%) felt only moderately or less. This was higher than for the region overall where only 68% felt the placements were mostly or completely meeting the needs of the children.

Table 16: Number (%) of children looked after by number of placement moves in the last year

	September 2017	September 2018	September 2019
No moves	278 (70.9%)	318 (71.1%)	319 (76.9%)
1 move	89 (22.7%)	80 (18.6%)	71 (17.1%)
2 moves	16 (4.1%)	18 (4.2%)	15 (3.6%)
3 moves	5 (1.3%)	7 (1.6%)	8 (1.9%)
4+ moves	4 (1.0%)	5 (1.4%)	2 (0.4%)
Total	392	429	415

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

Looking at the reasons given for closing placements, 68% of placement closures were not moves but were as a result of the child leaving care or as per the care plan for the child. Three percent were at the child’s request. The most frequent reason for closing a placement was at the request of the carer as a consequence of challenging

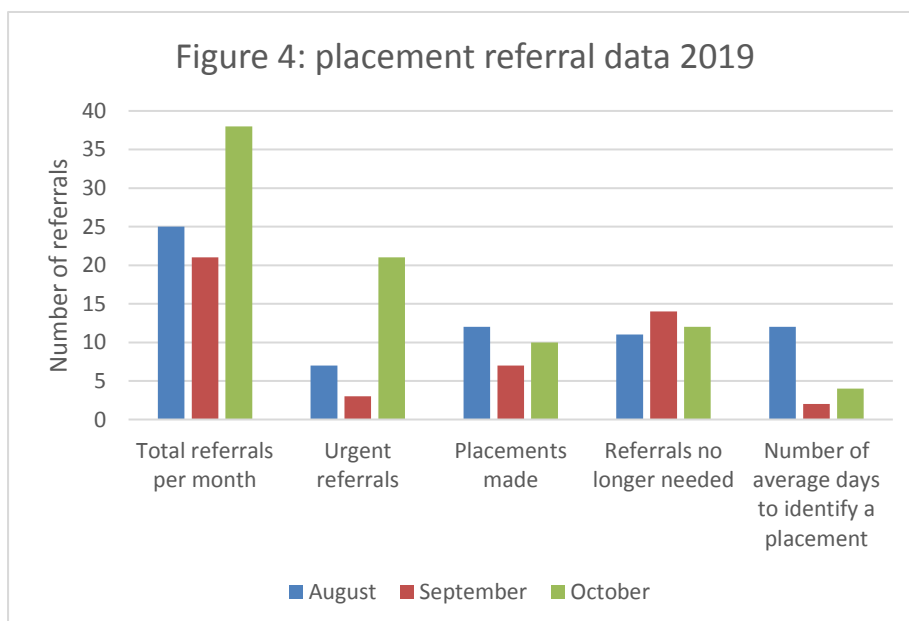
behaviour from the child (16%). As these rates were higher with independent agencies than in house foster carers, this is in line with expectations as that is where our most challenging children are being placed.

What is noticeable however, is that the highest rates in this category (placement closure as a result of challenging behaviour) were seen from residential children’s homes. While there is an additional challenge in homes which have 4 or 5 young people and need to ensure that other residents are not destabilised by disruptive behaviour, the consequence of this is that it creates an increasing cohort of young people who cannot find stability in either fostering or residential settings due to the challenging presentation of their behaviour. These are precisely the young people who most need stability in order to be able to access the services that do exist to support them. A key priority for commissioners up and down the country is how to work with the market to address this gap.

The shift towards older age groups entering into care has already been described elsewhere in this document. By the time these young people are needing a placement, the causative trauma and other factors have had time to embed and the support that the young person will need is that much greater. Furthermore, it can mean that there are some children coming in to care about whom not much is known and thus the needs assessment undertaken to build the care plan for that young person may not accurately reflect what is really needed. These are additional complications that can make it difficult to find the right placement for a young person especially in emergency situations when placements are needed urgently.

Figure 4 below shows that there are months when there are a high number of urgent placement referrals. “Urgent” means that the placement is needed the same or the next day. The reasons for this are varied and include: police protection, Court ordered, to safeguard the child, challenging behaviour from the child resulting in immediate notice given, and sometimes poor planning.

This figure also shows the difficulties faced over the summer in finding placements in a timely manner. Nationally, the pool of available foster carers is dwindling. Less and



less families are finding fostering to be an acceptable choice and there is high competition between agencies for foster carers. It also means that there is very little resilience or leeway within the system. During the summer months when many carers are on holiday,

that resilience is removed and placement finding becomes more difficult. Building system resilience remains a key priority for commissioners. Placing young people in the appropriate provision to ensure that the placement does not break down at a later stage and cause further distress to the young person and escalate costs of supporting them.

Figure 4 shows that outside of holiday season there is very little delay in finding placements for children, however this is not necessarily the case for those children who present with challenging behaviour or who have repeated placements that have broken down across both fostering and residential homes. This group of young people will be the focus of commissioning priorities for the next year.

Table 17 below describes placement searches for three real world case studies and quite clearly demonstrates how much more work is required for a young person with complex needs in or out of holiday season.

Table 17: placement search case studies

Young person	15 year old male with EHCP	7 year old female with no EHCP	2 year old female with no EHCP
Presenting with	Challenging behaviour / Absconding behaviour/ multiple placements in short period of time	Challenging behaviour / Absconding behaviour	Challenging behaviour
Search request	Residential Children's Home	Residential Children's Home	Independent Fostering Agency
Date search started	July 2019	August 2018	Sept 2019
Date placement made	October 2019	August 2018	October 2019
Number of days taken to secure a placement	96	18	20
Number of weeks taken to secure a placement	13.7	2.5	2.8
Number of providers approached by email	1840	86	206
Number of providers approached by phone	933	4	17

## **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 a handful of placements tending to be available at any one time offering a limited mixture of placement suitability.

Recent analysis of the data shows that about 60% of Medway's looked after children in foster care are placed with in-house carers and about 40% are placed with independent fostering agencies. Around 70% of those placed with IFAs are over the age of 11 years. This demonstrates that generally in-house fostering households can meet the needs of the majority of the younger looked after population. However, the challenge is to assess, approve and retain sufficient carers to manage the complex and more challenging needs of the adolescent population.

Investing in a more resilient, well-trained and very well supported cohort of foster carers would enable more of these older children to be placed in-house. It will also crucially enable the in house service to remain a competitive option with regard to both recruiting and retaining foster carers – a nationally recognised and significant risk to all fostering providers.

We are seeing Adverse Childhood experiences as a growing area of risk. Both in placement internally and as a whole.. All carers are being trained in Reflective Fostering techniques and positive behaviour support, TIP, and RJ to enable more resilience and understanding in foster families leading to increased placement stability and more positive outcomes for young people.

In addition, the Fostering Service is about to launch its first Community Hub, (based on the Mockingbird Model) which will provide additional support to a group of children currently under the age of 11 years but with behaviours that are indicative of future challenges such that might lead to multiple disruptions and placement moves. The extra support afforded by this model aims to encourage better attachments within the foster family and better understanding of the child's behaviour leading to more stable placements.

The Fostering Service has a detailed Recruitment Strategy to increase the numbers of in-house carers, with targeted publicity at different times to attract carers for different ages of children, sibling groups and parent and child. A recent campaign for Supported Lodgings has been very successful and should result in a significantly increased pool of Lodgings providers for those young people making the transition into independence.

As of September 2019, there were a total of 148 standard fostering households which represents a decrease 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
- A suitable match between the existing young person in placement and the prospective one.

### **Independent fostering provision**

Medway's external fostering requirements are serviced by a Framework contract operated jointly with Kent County Council. As of September 2019, of the externally commissioned placements, 61 predate the two year old Framework and only three were spot purchased. Spot purchases are now used largely for when a young person needs to be in a given location not covered by the Framework. Framework placements are made with providers where there is a managed relationship that contributes positively towards the quality assurance of the placements and overall contract management.

The contract is in place for a further two years but commissioners are already working towards managing the risks outlined in previous sections i.e. servicing the needs of our complex young people, addressing issues of demand & capacity of foster carers in partnership with national colleagues, looking at the relationship between fostering and residential settings and also managing financial risks around increases to contracted prices.

There is currently significant concern over the level of risk that competing tenders and potential price increases may present to Medway. There is a risk that these may adversely affect the availability of placements for Medway children and potentially may even lead to a negative impact on availability of carers to the in house fostering service. Work is ongoing to understand the implications of all of the above and a full diagnostic will begin next year to ensure that commissioning priorities are identified in time to begin market engagement and the recommissioning process to be ready for the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> Framework year in 2021.

### **Residential Provision**

Medway's Residential sufficiency is met again largely through a Framework of providers who overall have a bed capacity in the region of 1,560. Medway is part of the Local Authorities of the Southern Region (LASR) Framework. Of the 20 active placements in September 2019, only two were spot purchases. One predates the Framework and one was driven by the complexity of the needs of the child and the need to be out of area.

The challenge for Medway in the residential market is around placing children locally. Commissioners are working to support local organisations interested in registering smaller homes of 2-4 bed capacity which will improve the ability to match the children



and work better for those with complex support needs; children who need higher levels of attention and bespoke packages of care. Undertaking joint visits between both commissioners on a quality assurance visit and social workers visiting the children has proved to be an effective use of time and contributed towards placement quality, placement stability and positive outcomes for the child. Greater provision locally will facilitate this and the ability of social workers to visit their children and young people in general.

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

Sufficiency for those young people over the age of 16 is enhanced through the provision of semi-independent accommodation. Medway has a local Framework of providers that went live in June 2019. This has given Medway's young people access to more quality assured providers who have a combined bed capacity of 505 across the local area in and surrounding Medway.

Crucially, this contract also contains provision for improved flexible floating support – support that can be brought in to any setting to stabilise the placement or provide additional targeted support for the young person. The new contract has increased the number of providers in this area, raised the skill mix and levels of expertise of support staff and instigated a more formal process with robust objectives and progress towards outcomes for young people.

### **Parent and child placements**

This provision is used to undertake an assessment on parental ability to safeguard and promote the welfare of their children. The provision aims to support the move to independent family life 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 remain together after having received support 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 an initial twelve weeks however the legal proceedings cycle described elsewhere in the report can request additional information at any time. The detailed supervision reports provided by the Centre or the foster carers is then used to inform the court process.

Not all foster carers are trained or qualified to provide parent and child placements. The placements are also subject to delays to the expected end date for example because further assessments have been requested by the courts or for example a lack of immediate housing options for the family to return to. This can then cause problems in sourcing new placements of this kind and sometime result in distant placements which can drive up cost.



Table 17: Parent and Children provision data

	Sep 2017- 2018	Sep 2018 -2019
Total in house P&C placements	16	18
Average length of stay in placement	16 weeks	17 weeks
Number of placements exceeding 12 weeks	5	7
<b>Total External P&amp;C Placements</b>		
Total External P&C Placements	22	22
Average length of stay in placement	19	28
Number of placements exceeding 12 weeks	16	10
Number of placements exceeding 16 weeks	15	6

It is noticeable that average length of external assessment placements has increased compared with last year. . Several placements have had multiple restarts such as a parent leaving that have significantly increased the time taken for these placements to come to a close. An area for greater scrutiny this year will be to understand how to reduce this timeframe going forwards.

Utilising internal specialist fostering placements is the most cost effective for the local authority, this will also assist in keeping placements local to the Medway area and accessible for increased supervision and scrutiny.

### Placement Cost

Average weekly placements costs continue to rise as shown in Table 18. Although Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) and Residential homes prices are held within a contract, the needs of the young people have necessitated an increased use of enhanced placements over standard which raises the average cost.

There is also an increase in the number of young people in placement requiring the use of 1:1 support as part of their placement which will increase overall costs. This is particularly noticeable in the Supported Accommodation contract. For the most complex cohort of young people this additional flexible support is required in order to stabilise a placement while a more appropriate setting is sourced. Commissioners are in the analysis stage of the commissioning process around emergency accommodation for complex young people to understand how best to deliver sufficiency going forwards.

Table 18: average placement costs by type 2017-19

Accommodation Type	Average weekly cost 2017	Average weekly cost 2018	Average weekly cost 2019
IFA (standard and complex placements taken together)	£ 938	£952	£1016
In house fostering*	£ 450	£ 450	£ 450
External Parent & Child	£ 1,533 – fostering £3,582 - residential	£1,769 – fostering £3,950 - residential	£1,738 - fostering £3,950 - residential
External Residential	£ 2,997	£3,151.11	£4,234
Supported Accommodation	£ 762	£998.36	£1,752
Supported Lodging* (Internal)	£ 194	£200	£200

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

\* this does not include the cost of running these services

When looking at the Most Complex Children project data shown in table 19, it can be seen that Medway has been operating at the lower end of the price spectrum. It is unlikely that this will continue indefinitely. Since this data was compiled earlier in the year, Medway has seen an increase in the number of children with extremely complex needs who have required very bespoke packages. Frequently, inappropriate earlier placements can lead to young people not having their needs met and entering a negative spiral of increasing support (and cost) required.

Table 19: comparison between costs for Medway’s complex placements against those for the South East region

Weekly Cost	Medway % of placements for complex children	South East % of placements for complex children
under £1000	18.8	20.8
£1000-£1999	49.3	19.0
£2000-£2999	13.0	9.0
£3000-£3999	13.0	21.1
£4000-£4999	4.3	19.2
£5000-£5999	1.4	5.7
£6000-£6999	n/a	2.9
£7000-£7999	n/a	1.5
£8000-£8999	n/a	0.2
£9000-£9999	n/a	0.2
£10000 +	n/a	0.2

## Section FIVE: education, employment or training (EET)

### Key points:

- 35% of all arrivals in care are in school years 9 to 13 creating significant challenges to maintaining levels of engagement with education
- 50% of the new arrivals in years 9-13 were over the statutory school age and facing significant challenges to their education provision
- There is a gap in the provision of education for CLA who have moved placement and prior to admission to their next school for children that do not have an EHCP nor have received a permanent exclusion.
- Levels of care leavers who are in employment, education or training (EET) remain low

### Schools

Children in care have a statutory right to appropriate full time education. This schooling could be delivered in a mainstream, independent, or special school or through alternative provision including Pupil Referral Units (PRU).

As children move in to care or into a different placement, their school place needs to keep up with them and this poses challenges. The young person may have been previously home educated and then have to wait for a school place to be allocated. They may have been moved geographically and can no longer access their existing school (or alternatively have to commute long distances to access it). They may have moved geographically and there is not the right kind of school for their needs in that area.

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
- There is an accessible school place for the child but they are refusing to go
- The child is moved during the process of applying for an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). For this process the lead authority is the authority where the young person is resident therefore if that changes then the entire process needs to be restarted even if the education provision remains the same. Until the EHCP is in place the child cannot access the school.

Children can also be permanently excluded from school either before coming in to care or whilst in care. In these cases, the Local Authority has a legal responsibility to place the young person in “alternative provision” from the 6<sup>th</sup> day. A priority for Medway will be to put “alternative provision” under increased scrutiny to establish whether it meets the needs of young people.

Table 20 shows the school year distribution of the CLA cohort for the month of September 2019. It can be seen that in that month, ten children and young people

## MEDWAY SUFFICIENCY 2019-2020

arrived into care. Finding school (nursery) places for the youngest children will not be difficult. However, of the ten, eight school places had to be found for teenagers, three were over the statutory school year 11.

Table 20: Pupil profile and distribution for the month of September 2019

<b>MVS* 1 Oct 19</b>	<b>Below N1</b>	<b>N1</b>	<b>N2</b>	<b>YR</b>	<b>Y1</b>	<b>Y2</b>	<b>Y3</b>	<b>Y4</b>	<b>Y5</b>	<b>Y6</b>	<b>Y7</b>	<b>Y8</b>	<b>Y9</b>	<b>Y10</b>	<b>Y11</b>	<b>Y12</b>	<b>Y13</b>	<b>count</b>
<b>All looked after children</b>		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	
<b>cohort</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>417</b>
<b>SEN* support</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>EHCP</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>no SEN support</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>137</b>
<b>SEN need unknown</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>Total number leaving in academic year group for Sep</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Total number arriving in academic year group for Sep</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>

\*Special Educational Needs (SEN) / Medway Virtual School (MVS)

During the academic year 2018-19 (between September 2018 to end of June 2019) 132 children and young people from 0-17 years old were placed in care, 46 of them were young people in the school years of Y9-Y13. See chart below.

<b>MVS 1 Jul 19</b>	<b>Below N1</b>	<b>N1</b>	<b>N2</b>	<b>YR</b>	<b>Y1</b>	<b>Y2</b>	<b>Y3</b>	<b>Y4</b>	<b>Y5</b>	<b>Y6</b>	<b>Y7</b>	<b>Y8</b>	<b>Y9</b>	<b>Y10</b>	<b>Y11</b>	<b>Y12</b>	<b>Y13</b>	<b>count</b>
<b>School age</b>		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	
<b>Total number arriving in year</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>132</b>

This equates to 35% of the arrivals for this time period. Young people that arrive in care at this stage of their life often have already disengaged with learning and school attendance is low. As mentioned previously, this is further compounded if the care placement is at a distance from their current school and therefore a new school place is required. Admission arrangements are local to an authority and there is always time taken to consider preferred school, apply and await school decision. This has a negative impact on a young person's engagement and increases gaps in learning whilst decreasing the options they have for undertaking accredited subjects at GCSE.

It also puts undue pressure on the care placement as the young person is not attending school each day.

This means that although pupils are not formally 'CME' (child missing education) they are nevertheless not accessing a mainstream or specialist school as appropriate and are not receiving their entitlement to education. The Case Study illustrates how this can happen.

In this same time period (academic year 18/19), 22 of those 46 teenage arrivals were above the statutory school year 11 – this was almost 50% of the cohort detailed above.

There is currently no specific provision for UASC of any age in terms of readiness for accessing mainstream education provision in Medway.

**Case Study:**

*Pupil M, Y9, came into care during November 2018 and was placed out of area although on roll at a school in Chatham.*

*Application was made to a new school near the placements; the school was issued a direction to admit by Medway but although the school agreed to admit the pupil there were no responses to repeated requests for start date. Pupil M finally attended the new school on the start of term 1 2019-20 totalling 8 months during which this pupil did not attend school despite having a school place.*

**Post-school**

If a young person has left school without accreditation of any kind, then at 18 years old, once they have made an application for Universal Credit and are seeking work, they can access functional skills accreditation (English and maths) through a Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) work coach.

For these 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.

Table 21 below shows the number of Medway care leavers 19 to 21 years old who were in education, employment and training on their birthday. In comparison, 51% of care leavers nationally aged 19-21 were EET in the year end ending March 2018.

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

	Jul-Sep 2018	Oct-Dec 2018	Jan-Mar 2019	Apr-Jun 2019	Jul-Sep 2019
Total EET	14	19	11	14	13
Total care leavers with a birthday	29	30	26	34	30
Total (%)	48%	63%	42%	41%	43%

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 2019 was 82. Employment of our care leavers remains an area of concern that requires concerted effort. Skills &

Employability in Medway Council is being overseen by the Medway Skills Boards, and Care Leavers are listed as requiring support in the Skills & Employability Plan for Medway. Some progress has been made in this area, with a pilot work experience programme being run by Medway Council and partners for 7 care leavers. The programme was successful with 5 Care Leavers completing the programme, and all demonstrating improved employability.

This work requires upscaling to create a bigger impact, and effort must be made to educate and equip Medway businesses to support Care Leavers into employment. The extent of this work and the level of success will depend on the resources that can be made available. Table 22 shows that the rate varies with age. Many care leavers find it difficult to sustain employment and need additional support from employers to be able to do so.

Table 22: % of care leavers aged 17-21 in education, employment or training on their birthday in the year ending June 2019.

	Number in EET	Care Leavers	% EET
17 <sup>th</sup> birthday	1	1	100%
18 <sup>th</sup> birthday	20	39	51%
19 <sup>th</sup> birthday	24	39	62%
20 <sup>th</sup> birthday	21	44	48%
21 <sup>st</sup> birthday	12	37	32%

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

For those who are not in employment, education or training potential reasons for this are shown in Table 23.

Table 23: Not in education, training or employment on their birthday.

	Number year ending Jun 2017	Number year ending Jun 2018	Number year ending Jun 2019
Because of illness/disability	21	21	19
Due to pregnancy or parenting	16	14	19
Other reason	30	41	43
Unknown as not in contact		3	1

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

## Section SIX: Care Leavers accommodation

### Key points:

- Rates of suitable care leaver accommodation remain good
- This must be weighed against the continued lack of affordable accommodation in the private sector for young people in general
- There has been an increase in the numbers of care leavers in custody

There is a national requirement for Local Authorities to monitor care leaver accommodation 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 2019.

Tables 24-26 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 2019 shows continued good performance from previous years. In comparison, 84% of care leavers nationally aged 19-21 were in suitable accommodation in the year end March 2018.

Table 24: Care leavers in suitable accommodation on their birthday  
(19th to 21st birthday)

	Jul-Sep 2018	Oct-Dec 2018	Jan-Mar 2019	Apr-Jun 2019	Year
Total suitable accommodation	28	24	28	30	110
Total care leavers with a birthday	30	26	34	30	120
Total (%)	93%	92%	82%	100%	92%

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

Table 25: percent of care leavers in suitable accommodation on their birthday  
(17th to 21<sup>st</sup> birthday for the year ending June 2019).

	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	35	39	90%
20 <sup>th</sup> birthday	40	44	91%
21 <sup>st</sup> birthday	35	37	95%

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council



Table 26 below shows how many care leavers were in unsuitable accommodation during the same period.

Table 26: care leavers in unsuitable accommodation on their birthday

	Number year ending June 2018	Number year ending June 2019
Unknown as not in touch	3	1
In custody	4	7
No fixed abode / homeless	2	1
Residence not known	1	1
Independent living	0	1

Data Source: Business & Intelligence, Medway Council

## Section SEVEN: special groups

### 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.

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 27 shows the number of Joint Housing Needs Assessments (JHAs) completed during the period June 2018 to March 2019.

Table 27: Number of JHA's undertaken against number of 16/17 year olds initially presenting

Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
2/5	5/5	4/6	2/4	4/7	2/3	1/2	2/4	2/6	3/4

Data Source: Housing Department, Medway Council

Not all young people require a JHA, some require some support from Housing colleagues to resolve their situation and don't need to progress to a JHA.

In addition to accommodation commissioned for care leavers, Medway has an additional 60 units of low level supported accommodation commissioned by Housing Services for any young person in Medway at risk of homelessness.

Finding affordable independent accommodation for any young person in Medway -not only Care Leavers- is difficult. In 2018/2019 there were 518 applicants aged 18-24 that approached Medway's homeless service because they were homeless or threatened



with homelessness. Of these young people Housing colleagues were able to assist 164 with long term solutions and provide another 106 with emergency accommodation.

Where young people are at risk of homelessness, Housing Services are committed to working across agencies at the earliest possible stage before the situation escalates and results in homelessness. Housing Services are reviewing current practice and will seek further opportunities to target resources to work with young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

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

Medway is working hard to progress the non-criminalisation of young people in and leaving care. In Medway and Kent there is a joint decision-making process between the police and the Youth Offending Teams regarding the most appropriate out of court disposal that should be administered to a child or young person. This decision-making process involves a weekly panel chaired by police and attended by both Medway and Kent Youth Offending Services. The terms of reference for this panel require all cases that involve young people in care to be discussed. One of the stated aims of the panel is to treat young people as child first, rather than solely as offenders. The effect of this is that specific attention is given to avoid the criminalisation of looked after young people so that they are dealt with at the lowest possible level in the criminal justice system.

This is done through the administration of community resolutions which are non-statutory disposals and do not feature on criminal record bureau checks, rather than youth cautions and youth conditional cautions that do. Particular attention is given to avoiding criminal sanctions for offences committed within foster placements and children's homes. The overall purpose and effect of these measures is to avoid the criminalisation of looked after young people who are over-represented in the Criminal Justice system.

### **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.

In April 2017 when the programme started, Medway had a cohort of 5 young people qualifying for Transforming Care. As of September 2018, this had reduced to 3 females. One young person has since been discharged back into the community and the remaining young people both have discharge plans on track to be achieved by March 2020.

Medway delivers Transforming Care in partnership with Kent and continues to work on two units for young people who present with Autism, Learning Disabilities, Mental health support needs and challenging behaviour. The NEST One 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 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 also 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.

Medway is also working with Kent to develop a NEST Two provision, 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.

Work will need to continue to develop residential provision for providers to work with Medway's most complex children with behaviour that challenges to enable them to be supported close to home.

Furthermore, plans are being pursued to develop a bespoke children's 136 suite in Kent. In addition, the local provider for CAMHS in both Kent and Medway, Nelft, has recently been awarded the contract for Kent and Medway Tier 4 inpatient mental health beds for children and young people. The standalone unit situated at Woodland House in Staplehurst Kent is currently run by the SLaM Trust and will transfer to NELFT on 1 April 2020. This is a great opportunity, enabling the complete management of a mental health pathway for children and young people in Kent and Medway.

## **Section EIGHT: views of our children and young people**

Commissioners ensure that the views of children and young people through the following mechanisms:

- All providers are expected to gain and evidence impact of the views of young people accessing their services. This is automatically included as part of any tender exercise as well as evidenced during contract management.
  - Independent Fostering Agencies have ongoing engagement activities and social activities for young people where they are encouraged to express their views
  - Young people in semi-independent and residential accommodation are asked to complete questionnaires and also attend house meetings etc.
- An independent Advocacy service is commissioned for children and young people so their views and wishes are heard, their rights are respected, and they are assisted if they wish to give feedback or make a complaint. This is for children who are looked after, a Child In Need if they are making a complaint under the Children's Act, a care leaver still receiving support, involved in Child Protection, or going through a secure panel review. For the Quarter July-Sept 2019 there were 35 referrals to the Advocacy service – an increase of 21% from the previous quarter. To date the service has been used only by children under the age of 18. The overwhelming majority of referrals that have come into the service have been around support at Child Protection meetings – 27 referrals.

The next category has been Housing with 6 referrals this quarter, then Education with 5. Other issues that have been raised include: requested change of social worker, young parent issues, and early closure of social services support.

- A Council for children in care is also commissioned: the Medway Children and Young People's Council (MCYPC). This exists to ensure that Children in and leaving care have a voice in the development of Council policies and procedures and a platform from which to influence and improve them. It also is there to provide a way to deliver enjoyable activities so that young people can make friends and build support networks.

## **Section NINE: commissioning priorities**

Priorities that have been identified in this year's Sufficiency report are listed below.

1. A continued focus on improving the emotional health and wellbeing of our looked after population
2. Continue to develop our knowledge base for children in care with disabilities
3. Continue to participate in the Complex Children project with national and regional colleagues
4. Continue to explore ways in which edge of care can be addressed to increase the number of children able to stay in their family home where appropriate
5. To take a long term strategic look at whether the current care system in Medway is best adapted to deliver positive outcomes for a changing cohort of young people coming in to care
6. Continue to work towards recruiting adoptive and foster families for Medway's children
7. Continue to work with the market to develop appropriate small units of residential accommodation offering different specialisms in the local area
8. Work with the market to deliver robust and timely placements for highly complex children
9. Analyse and understand the need for the commissioning of emergency and assessment placements
10. Work with existing providers and other partners to ensure system resilience
11. Continue to review timeliness for parent and child placements
12. Increase the focus on educational sufficiency especially for year groups 9-13
13. Continue to improve the support for Care Leavers through the Skills & Employability Plan
14. Work in partnership with Housing colleagues to identify requirements for young people and care leavers

15. Continue to implement the NEST units for young people

Last year, Medway's Sufficiency report (2018/19), contained the objectives listed in Table 28 below where an update on their status has been provided.

CLA Strategic Objectives	UPDATE
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	This is ongoing
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.	Staff are currently exploring new pathways to coordinating resource deployment potentially through a panel application process
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 educational or short term residential step up and step down options.	b) Work in this area has begun but is still in the analyse phase. Meetings with commissioners from other areas are looking at opportunities for working together. Different models are being explored. Commissioners are discussing with existing providers around what kind of provision/intervention could be offered in Medway.
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.	This was done and found that rates across the last ten years had steadily decreased. No additional opportunities were identified.
Explore opportunities for supporting step up and step down to parent and child assessment placements.	This is not currently prioritised.

<p>Provide and commission the right mix of placements</p>	<p>Two areas are being explored to identify need and potential gaps in service provision: crisis care placements and respite care placements</p>
<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>	<p>This is scheduled for 2020</p> <p>This has been actioned and is included in the commissioning of emergency and crisis accommodation</p> <p>To be included in SEN placements audit</p> <p>Scheduled for delivery 2020</p> <p>This is now occurring</p> <p>This is now occurring</p>
<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</p>	<p>Permanency panel in place</p>
<p>Work with Children's Services to more accurately monitor placement objectives, duration and outcomes.</p>	<p>Ongoing with QA team</p>

<p>Ensure that looked after children and young people achieve their full potential and can access suitable education, employment or training</p>	<p>Ongoing through multiple projects</p>
<p>Support the Virtual Head in conducting an aspirations audit</p> <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>	<p>Will be taken forward alongside the Skills and Employability plan and improved pathway planning</p> <p>Two year pilot underway</p> <p>Will be progressed through SEN placement audit</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Improve the health and well-being of looked after children, young people and care leavers</p>	<p>Ongoing with health care partners</p>
<p>Continue to work with the new CLA 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>	<p>Ongoing with Designated Consultant Nurse for LAC and with LAC Nursing team</p> <p>Not yet actioned</p>

<p>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>	<p>Ongoing. QA Framework to ensure this is in place across commissioned placements.</p> <p>Training matrix for identified cohorts of people working with or caring for children in development</p>
<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>	<p>Done March 2019</p> <p>Medway Task Force now in place so removed need for this.</p> <p>Currently in development</p>
<p>Prepare young people for a successful transition to adulthood</p>	<p>Two year pilot in place</p> <p>All commissioned services work to this agenda</p>



<p>Continue to support safeguarding and care leaving teams in identifying Pathway Planning from 14 years old to inform appropriate commissioning of 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>Ongoing</p> <p>Floating support in place. Work with Housing ongoing.</p> <p>Care Leaving service ongoing</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>	<p>Currently scoping how to improve this in robust manner</p>