

By: Peter Oakford, Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services
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To: Corporate Parenting Panel – 20 July 2016

Subject: **PROGRESS REPORT - SUFFICIENCY, PLACEMENTS AND COMMISSIONING STRATEGY - 2015-2018**

Classification: Unrestricted

Electoral Division: All

<p>Summary: This report provides the second update on progress of the implementation of the Sufficiency, Placements and Commissioning Strategy for the Corporate Parenting Panel.</p> <p>Recommendation: Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to CONSIDER and COMMENT ON the progress made in implementing the Sufficiency, Placements and Commissioning Strategy 2015-2018.</p>
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Sufficiency, Commissioning and Placements Strategy 2015-2018 replaces the previous Sufficiency Strategy which covered 2012-2015. This is a required document which will go into the Annex A OFSTED inspection requirements and which sets out the authority's commitment to providing sufficient high quality accommodation for Kent's Children in Care (CIC) and Care Leavers.
- 1.2 The Strategy outlines the current position in Kent, the challenges facing the authority and its response to them. The Strategy has been widely consulted on, including with Our Children and Young People's Council (OCYPC) and Virtual Schools Kent (VSK), Care Leavers and Apprentices.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 The authority makes a significant financial commitment to meet its statutory responsibilities to provide a sufficiency of accommodation for CIC and Care Leavers. In particular, the cost of residential placements and independent fostering agency placements is significant.
- 2.2 This Strategy has been informed by the 0-25 transformation programme and progress against the key challenges identified in this document will lead to cost reductions for the authority.

3. Progress to date

3.1 The Strategy outlines four challenges, delivery of which is measured by the achievement against the eight measures, as set out in table 1 below. Delivery of the Strategy will be monitored using these measures.

3.2 For each of the measures set out in the Strategy, a summary of progress, activity to date and planned activity for the coming quarter is outlined below. Monitoring delivery of the Strategy in this way enables us to have a clear understanding of achievements to date and how we are working to implement further improvements in the services children receive.

3.3 Our approach to meeting the Council's responsibilities to provide secure, safe and appropriate accommodation to CIC and Care Leavers is centred around the five strategic levers that we believe will deliver improvements to sufficiency in Kent. These are:

- Enhancing early help, prevention and partnership working
- Further developing in-house foster care services
- Continuously improving quality of care
- Market engagement
- Continuing to build organisational effectiveness

3.4 A review of the Strategy will be undertaken later in the year and will aim to ensure that we are not focused on just what is coming in through the 'front door' but also on ensuring that we report on the right areas to reflect the total number of CIC. The review will consider:

- Government recommendations regarding ensuring the sufficiency of placements
- Developments in national and local policy for both citizen and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children
- An overview of placements, taking into account an increase in the number of children in Residential Children's Homes, the throughput of Special Guardianship Orders and the increase in the rate of this type of placement
- The number of children that the authority has a responsibility for has increased, e.g. through an increase in the number of Care Orders
- The Fostering Recruitment Strategy
- The Adoption Recruitment Strategy

4. Key Challenges and Supporting Measures

4.1 Table 1: Sufficiency Strategy

Challenge 1: The need for effective support and practice to ensure that as many children as possible are able to remain living at home	Measure 1: We will expect to see a reduction in the number of children and young people in Care
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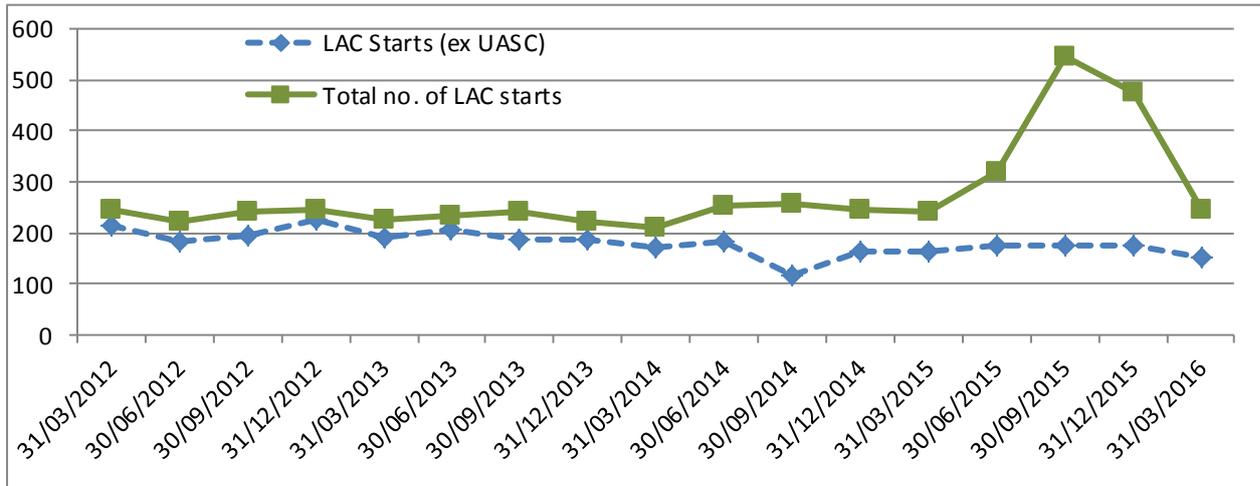
with their families	
<p>Challenge 2: Provision of effective support and availability of suitable accommodation to meet the needs of Care Leavers</p>	<p>Measure 2: We expect to see an increase in the percentage of Care Leavers who are living in suitable accommodation</p>
<p>Challenge 3: Access to high quality placements that support Children in Care to have stability and to achieve positive outcomes</p>	<p>Measure 3: We expect to see an increase in the number of children placed within 20 miles of their originating address for children with Disabilities and those in the West of the county</p> <p>Measure 4: We expect to see the percentage of children in the same placement for two years remaining stable</p> <p>Measure 5: We expect to grow and diversify the skill, capability and capacity of our in-house foster carers</p>
<p>Challenge 4: Quality of practice and support to meet the needs of Children in Care , improving their experience of care and achieving permanence</p>	<p>Measure 6: We expect to see a reduction in the number of Children in Care that have three or more placement moves per year</p> <p>Measure 7: We expect to see a continued reduction in the length of time it takes between entering the care of the Local Authority and an Adoption Order being granted.</p> <p>Measure 8: An increase in the number of children in permanent long-term fostering placements</p>

5. Sufficiency Strategy – Reporting on the Measures

Challenge 1: The need for effective support and practice to ensure that as many children as possible are able to remain living at home with their families

Measure 1: We will expect to see a reduction in the number of children and young people in Care

Table 2: Total number of children entering care at the end of each quarter (March 2012 to end March 2016)



Analysis of progress

- There has been a reduction in the total number of children entering care in Kent, as the numbers of UASC arriving into Kent has fallen.
- There had been a slight increase in the numbers of citizen children entering care in Kent, but this too has stabilised and decreased slightly in the last six months.

Activity to deliver

- The Early Help Commissioning Intentions Programme is in progress and aims to deliver new services which will focus on the journey of a child and family, rather than addressing incidents and issues in isolation. Commissioned services will build on family strengths and ensure both support and challenge to families to build family resilience and reduce dependency on interventions.
- Adolescent Support Teams are now reconfigured, and the Safer, Stronger Families service has been extended to deliver family-focused interventions to support a reduction in the number of children entering care in Kent, while a longer-term commissioning strategy is devised.
- Also within Specialist Children's Services (SCS), the continued integration of the Signs of Safety practice methodology is supporting Social Workers to deliver positive outcomes for children and their families by ensuring they receive the right level of support, in a timely way.

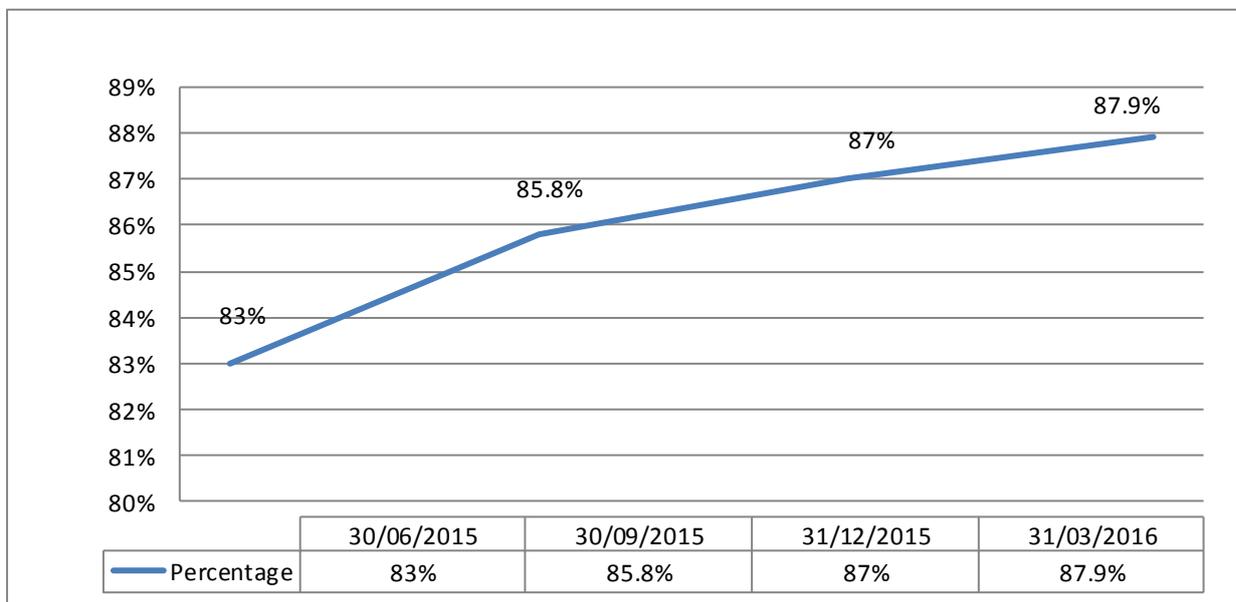
Actions for next quarter

- Implementation of key services within Early Help and Preventative Services (EHPS) including a family support and Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) Programme.
- EHPS grants are being aligned to Local Children's Services Partnership Groups to ensure that services reflect the need on the most localised level.

- A diagnostic of the needs for Edge of Care Services is being undertaken to ensure that any future services (currently the Safer Stronger Families Service), meet the needs of the children and families who require these kinds of services.
- As part of the 0-25 Unified Programme, work has been ongoing to develop the adolescent support teams, with all teams now fully operational. As a result we have succeeded in keeping 35 adolescents, who would have previously entered our care, at home, and have also prevented a further 21 young people from remaining in long-term care by reuniting them with their families.

Challenge 2: Provision of effective support and availability of suitable accommodation to meet the needs of Care Leavers
Measure 2: We expect to see an increase in the percentage of Care Leavers who are living in suitable accommodation

Table 3: Percentage of Care Leavers living in suitable accommodation



Analysis of progress

- The percentage of young people contacted who deem their accommodation to be suitable is at 87.9%. This represents a positive upwards improvement over the previous nine months¹.

Activity to deliver

- The 16-25 Accommodation and Support Programme continues. Work stream two will establish a consistent County Council commissioning approach to high quality accommodation and additional support for vulnerable 16-25 year olds.

¹It is expected that DfE will no longer be requiring data on those Care Leavers with whom we are not “In Touch”.

- The quality of both accommodation and support is being addressed as part of future commissioning intentions, and service specifications are currently being drafted for both.
- The 18+ Care Leavers service is prioritising contacts with young people to gather their view on suitability of their accommodation in line with the requirements of the DfE indicator.

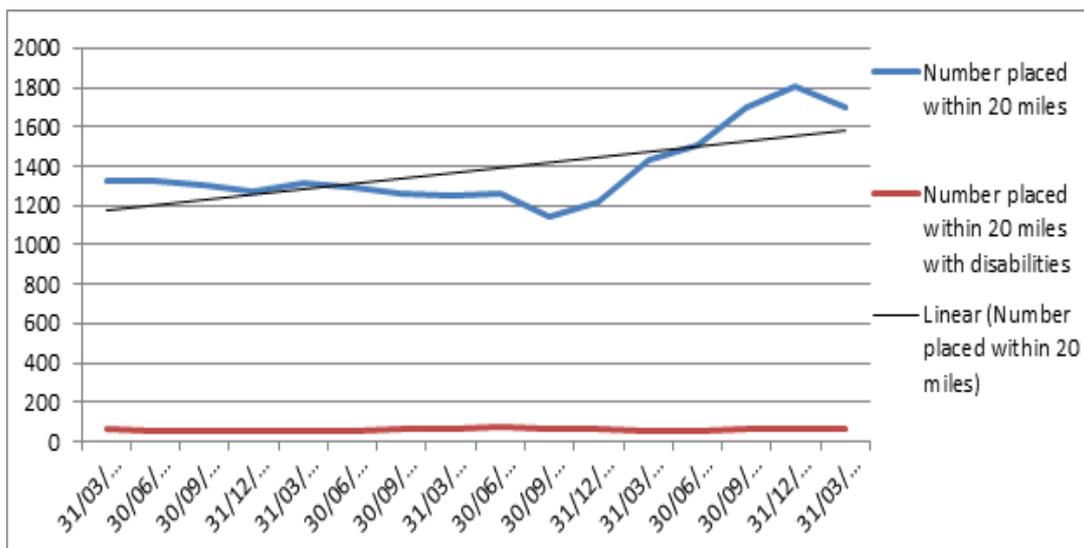
Actions for next quarter

- Further progress with plans to procure new 16-25 accommodation and support services.

Challenge 3: Access to high quality placements that support Children in Care to have stability and to achieve positive outcomes

Measure 3: We expect to see an increase in the number of children placed within 20 miles of their originating address for children with Disabilities and those in the West of the county

Table 4: Number of Children in Care placed within 20 miles of home



Analysis of progress

- There has been a reduction in the number of children placed within 20 miles of their originating address. This is due in part to the increase in UASC requiring placements in foster care in the county, which means that we have had to look further afield for places in order to find foster carers with availability.
- Performance has been increasing since 2014 and continues to improve at a significant rate, however the most recent downward trend is representative of the additional pressures a sharp increase in CIC has had on SCS.
- There remain variations across the county and further work is needed to ensure that performance in West and North continues to improve.

Activity to deliver

- The Access to Resources Team (ART) undertakes searches within a 20 mile radius of a child's home and/or within the boundary of Kent wherever possible. Social Workers work collaboratively with ART to find the most suitable placement for a child; placements are made outside of the county where they are the best match and will achieve the best possible outcomes.
- The 0-25 Transformation Programme for Fostering has now concluded and the changes to the service are fully embedded, and we continue to maintain the use of in-house foster placements wherever possible, meaning that placements will be local. Performance as at May 2016 shows a 90.5% in-house placement rate, up from 86.3% in March 2015.

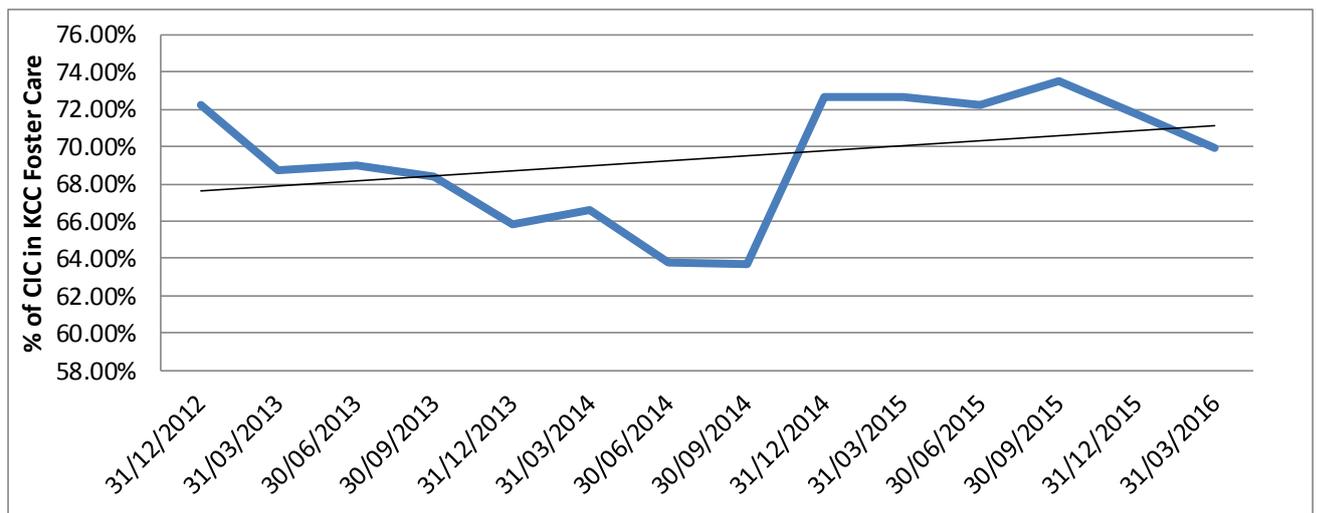
Activity for the next quarter

- The in-house fostering service continues actively to seek in-house foster care placements, where appropriate for the child.
- An Out of Area Placement Officer has been appointed and is undertaking additional work alongside the ART team to ensure that children being placed out of county have access to services to meet their needs and will be safeguarded sufficiently prior to a placement commencing.

Challenge 3: Access to high quality placements that support children in care to have stability and to achieve positive outcomes

Measure 4: We expect to see the percentage of children in long term care in the same placement for two years remaining stable

Table 5: Percentage of Children who have been LAC for the last 2.5 years and in the same placement for 2 years



Analysis of progress

- The percentage of children in the same placement for more than two years has fallen over the last six months but remains in line with agreed performance targets.

- Performance declined in 2013/14 but then increased towards the end of 2014, remaining stable up until October 2015.

Activity to deliver

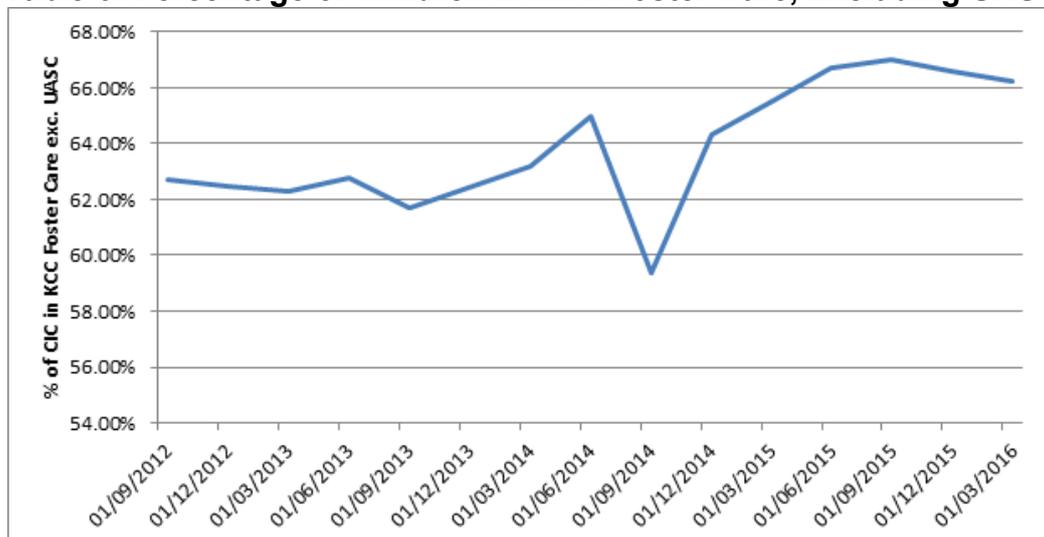
- Practice Development Officers (PDO) from SCS are supporting Social Workers to identify appropriate foster placements for permanence.
- The Fostering element of the 0-25 Transformation Programme supports rigorous focus on placement matches, leading to more sustainable placements in the future.

Activity for the next quarter

- Work will continue on embedding the quality practice which was developed through the 0-25 Transformation Programme and more widely through the work of the practice development team in SCS.
- VSK is to work closely with the fostering service to ensure the education support offer is integrated and co-ordinated with the other resources supporting the team around the vulnerable looked after child, particularly those who are not in full-time education, as this creates a pressure on a placement.
- The DfE has been inviting bids to be considered for their innovation programme since 2013, and Kent is leading a bid with partner agencies – Kent Foster Care Association (KFCA), Guiding Forces and Early Help and Youth Services etc - to increase placement stability, to support looked after children and Kent foster carers to maintain placements and to transition young people positively into adulthood. The key objective of this bid is to create a multi-faceted offer of support to Kent foster carers.

Challenge 3: Access to high quality placements that support children in care to have stability and to achieve positive outcomes
Measure 5: We expect to grow and diversify the skill, capability and capacity of our in-house foster carers

Table 6: Percentage of Children in KCC Foster Care, Excluding UASC



Analysis of progress

- The proportion of children in County Council foster care has remained stable, overall, in the last six months. There have been some slight changes in the numbers of children requiring an independent fostering placement, but improved processes mean that this is much less likely to happen than prior to the implementation of the in-house fostering transformation programme.
- The percentage of children in County Council foster care has increased since 2013, and is now above 2012 levels.

Activity to deliver

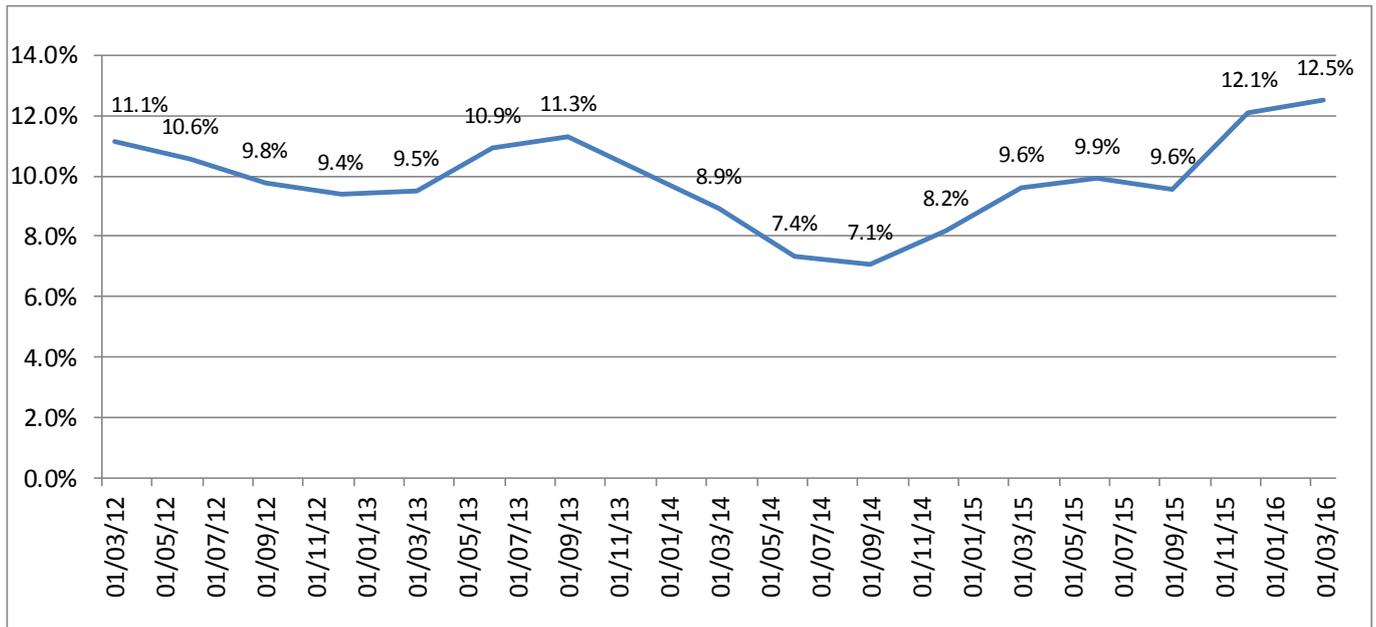
- Increasing the support to fostering households is in development. To provide support and an offer to current County Council carers, consideration has been given to providing an increased offer of support to carers. This should also provide incentive for potential foster carers to work with the County Council as opposed to considering an Independent Fostering Provider placement.
- In the coming months, focus will be placed on the recruitment and retention of foster carers, and with work to increase placement stability. The offer to foster carers for those children and young people who are the most challenging is subject to an innovation bid. There has also been a pilot in East Kent of wrap-around support to foster carers, where a dedicated respite carer is available to offer day care and respite support.

Actions for the next quarter

- Implementation of the Fostering Recruitment Strategy will seek to deliver 150 new foster families with a focus on those who can provide stable placements for adolescents and children with disabilities.

Challenge 4: Quality of practice and support to meet the needs of Children in Care, improving their experience of care and achieving permanence
Measure 6: We expect to see a reduction in the number of Children in Care that have three or more placement moves per year

Table 7: Percentage of Children in Care who had 3+ placements in the last 12 months



Analysis of progress

- The placement stability rates are different across age ranges, with increased placement changes for those young people who are older and in their teens.
- There has been deterioration in the placement stability indicator for Kent looked after children. In April 2015/16, the indicator reflected that 9.7% of looked after children had had 3+ placement moves; in April 2016/7 this had increased to 12.8% children having had 3+ placement moves, it is reduced to 11.7% when the UASC are removed from the calculation.
- There is also an impact on placement stability as UASC do have placement moves; this includes the reception centre and their first placement.
- Good placement stability is apparent in the disabled children’s service. The social work undertaken with the placement of children who have disabilities is reflected in the positive placement stability indicators.

Activity to deliver

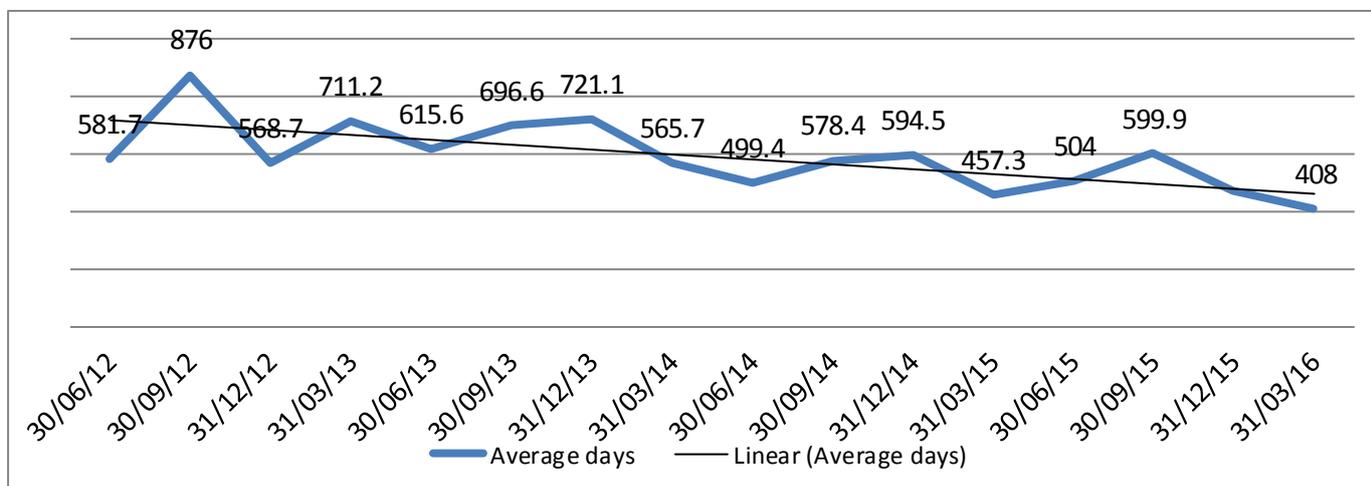
- Social work practice has been audited in relation to placement preparation and planning. There are key areas that have been identified where SCS can improve and develop. There is statutory guidance that informs good social work practice and this is being re-launched with clear standards and expectations being outlined for social workers.
- The impact upon the children and young people who have reduced access to education has also been evaluated to identify what impact this has on disrupting placements. This is an area where resources can be targeted to improve practical support to carers so that they can care for children. Bespoke educational input can reduce the pressure on a carer who has a young person at home for significantly more time than if they were attending full- time school.

Activity for the next quarter

- Implementation of the recommendations made as a result of the case audit, including training sessions, will be rolled out.
- A detailed paper on placement stability is being presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel on 20 July 2016, alongside this paper.

Challenge 4: Quality of practice and support to meet the needs of Children in Care, improving their experience of care and achieving permanence
Measure 7: We expect to see a continued reduction in the length of time it takes between entering the care of the Local Authority and an Adoption Order being granted

Table 8: Average days between becoming looked after and being placed for adoption



Analysis of progress

- The length of time between becoming a looked after child and being placed for adoption has steadily decreased since 2012, and continues to do so.
- The National Indicator is a three-year average, and Kent has a number of recently-adopted children who became looked after in 2011/12, and this 'legacy' masks recent improvement in its timeliness.
- Coram's management of the Adoption Service until January 2016 helped to achieve this improved performance, and children waiting with Placement Orders were placed with adopters after renewed efforts to recruit adopters and new family finding initiatives.

Activity to deliver sustained improvement

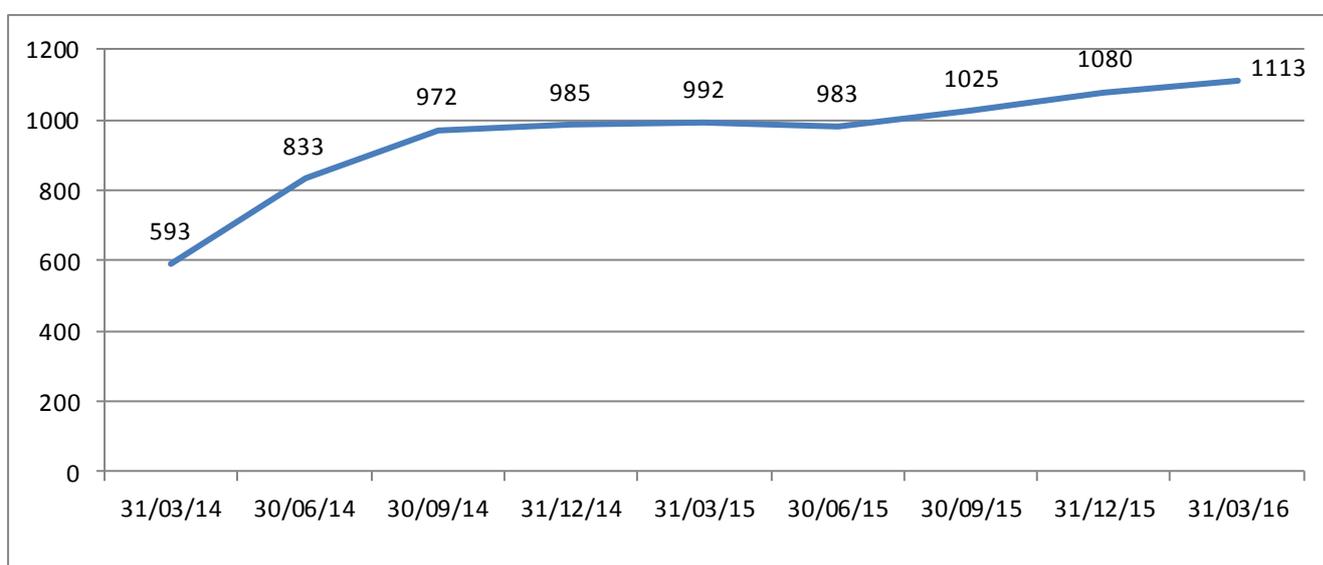
- Children not yet adopted are discussed at Performance Surgeries with the allocated Social Workers within the Adoption Service, and with the CIC Service Managers at monthly Joint Tracking Meetings.
- Whilst continuing to support approved and waiting adopters, we have (in March 2016) begun recruiting adopters again and aim to have up to 40 new

approved adoptive households within 12 months, with more to follow. There are now regular Information Events for prospective applicants.

- Our Foster to Adopt scheme – which allows us to place children early with approved adopters (temporarily approved as foster carers) has seen some successful placements leading to adoption orders within six months, and the scheme will grow (with more Foster to Adopt placements being made) over the next 12 months.

Challenge 4: Quality of practice and support to meet the needs of Children in Care, improving their experience of care and achieving permanence
Measure 8: An increase in the number of children in permanent long-term fostering placements.

Table 9: Number of children placed permanently with Foster Carers



Analysis of progress

- There have been moderate increases in the numbers of children placed in long-term fostering arrangements since 2014, with a further increase in the last six months.
- We will continue to track increases, and work is ongoing to identify placements for permanency.

Activity to deliver

- SCS have developed a whole-service approach to thinking more creatively about achieving permanence for children.
- The SCS Practice Development Team is leading work to expand the learning for Social Workers regarding permanency.
- A range of 'procedure in a nutshell' documents has been produced to support in identifying the best permanence option for children, and these are now being used by Social Work Teams.

Activity for the next quarter

- Continued roll-out of workshop activity to increase learning on permanency planning.
- Permanency Days similar to the existing Adoption Activity Days are being rolled out.

4. Personnel and Training Implications

- 4.1. The review of progress against priorities identified will form an ongoing self-assessment and will be the subject of scrutiny at the Corporate Parenting Panel. A further progress report will be made available to the Corporate Parenting Panel in six months' time, setting out work done to address the identified priorities.

5. Implementation Proposals

- 5.1. The Strategy was implemented in July 2015, and the Corporate Parenting Panel will receive regular updates regarding delivery of the four 'challenges' as set out in the strategy and associated action plan.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Recommendation: Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to **CONSIDER** and **COMMENT ON** the progress made in implementing the Sufficiency, Placements and Commissioning Strategy 2015-2018.

7. Background Documents

Kent County Council's Sufficiency, Placement and Commissioning Strategy, 2015-2018: <http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/childrens-social-care-and-families-policies/children-in-care-sufficiency-strategy>

8. Contact Details

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