

## **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL**

<b>Date and Time :-</b>	<b>Tuesday 13 December 2022 at 4.30 p.m.</b>
<b>Venue:-</b>	<b>Rotherham Town Hall, Moorgate Street, Rotherham.</b>
<b>Membership:-</b>	<b>Councillors Browne, Burnett, Z. Collingham, Cusworth (Chair), and Pitchley (Vice-Chair)</b>
<b>Contact</b>	<b>Dawn Mitchell, Governance Advisor Dawn.mitchell@rotherham.gov.uk</b>

The items which will be discussed are described on the agenda below and there are reports attached which give more details.

Rotherham Council advocates openness and transparency as part of its democratic processes. Anyone wishing to record (film or audio) the public parts of the meeting should inform the Chair or Governance Advisor of their intentions prior to the meeting.

### **AGENDA**

#### **1. Apologies for absence**

To receive the apologies of any Panel Member who is unable to attend the meeting.

#### **2. Declarations of Interest**

To receive declarations of interest from Members in respect of items listed on the agenda.

#### **3. Exclusion of the press and public**

To consider whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any part of the agenda.

#### **4. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 20th September, 2022 (Pages 3 - 8)**

To consider the minutes of the previous meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 20<sup>th</sup> September, 2022, and approve them as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

#### **5. Looked After Children Council - December Update (Pages 9 - 13)**

#### **6. The Care Review**

7. **Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2023 - 2028**  
(Pages 15 - 61)
8. **Performance Monitoring Quarter 2 2022/23 (Pages 63 - 75)**
9. **Promotion of Fostering through Film**

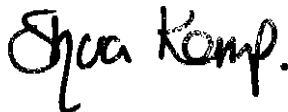
**For Information**

10. **Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report (Pages 77 - 106)**
11. **Samantha Sykes Foundation Trust**  
Presentation by Julie Warren-Sykes
12. **Urgent Business**

To determine any item which the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency.

13. **Date and time of the next meeting**

The next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel will be held on Tuesday, 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2023, commencing at 4.30 p.m. in Rotherham Town Hall.



Sharon Kemp,  
Chief Executive.

**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL**  
**Tuesday 20 September 2022**

Present:- Councillor Cusworth (in the Chair); Councillors Burnett, Z. Collingham and Pitchley.

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Browne.

**45. COUNCILLOR BURNETT**

The Chair welcomed Councillor Burnett to his first meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

The Panel's thanks were also recorded to everyone who had taken part in the Task and Finish Groups that were held to refresh the Panel.

**46. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

**47. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

There were no items to be considered that necessitated the exclusion of any members of the press or public.

**48. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 13TH MAY, 2022**

Resolved:- (1) The minutes of the previous meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> May, 2022, were agreed as a true record.

(2) That a presentation be made to the next meeting on the Josh MacAlister, Chair of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care.

Further to Minute No. 39 of the previous meeting, it was noted that the changes were still be finalised to the new Integrated Care System. Catherine Hall had made the point that a watching brief should be kept to ensure children and Looked After Children were a priority in the new way of working. The Strategy was currently being looked at to ensure their health needs were met across the system.

**49. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN COUNCIL UPDATE**

Rosie, Hope, Baron, Paul, Bella, Robert, Bobby and Emil, supported by Lisa Duvalle, gave a presentation to the Panel on the work of Rotherham's Looked After Children's Council drawing attention to:-

- LAC Panel interviews for Assistant Director
- Visit by the Ofsted Inspector on 29<sup>th</sup> June
- VIP Summer Fest 22

- Mayor's Parade
- Armed Forces Day
- 'Scarbados' – Scarborough day trip
- Queen's Platinum Jubilee
- 2022/23 Campaigns and Priorities – launch of Mental Health and Wellness Campaign on 1<sup>st</sup> April which would continue for the next 12 months

Bella also reported that she was a Coram Voice Ambassador – a national voice ambassador programme bringing care experienced young people live in England, aged 16-25, together in order to represent young people's voice nationally and develop campaigns or resources to address the issues that they identified. She had been invited to Parliament to raise awareness to MPs of the care system. They had spoken about the cost of living crisis and how it impacted children living in care. She had also attended a meeting with Nadim Zahawi (Chancellor of the Exchequer at the time of the meeting), Simon Blake and the Children's Commissioner Dame Rachel de Souza. She had also been given the opportunity to speak on BBC Radio Newsbeat.

Coram had invited the LACC to an awards night to be held in Manchester on 25th October, 2022.

A regional care councils meeting was to be held in York soon.

The Panel thanked the young people for their inspirational presentation.

## **50. LEISURE PASS - UPDATE**

Monica Green, Assistant Director, gave a verbal update on the current situation with regard to leisure passes. Work was taking place as it was recognised how important it was to young people.

The following was highlighted:-

- A further meeting to be held on 26<sup>th</sup> September to discuss the matter further
- Conversations with the Big Sister Project with regard to possible inclusion for boys for some groups
- Potential pilot for young people to access Big Sister Project
- Desire to run a 6 months' pilot to ascertain how much usage there was to help decide for the future
- Meeting to take place between the Chair and Strategic Directors of Children and Young People's Services and Regeneration and Environment to further explore the funding implications as well as a meeting with Public Health
- Independent Reviewing Officers and Social Workers to be made aware of the Big Sister Project

Resolved:- (1) That the update be noted.

(2) That a further update be provided to the December meeting.

## **51. PERFORMANCE MONITORING - JUNE, 2022 (QUARTER 1)**

Consideration was given to the Quarter 1 2022/23 Corporate Parenting performance report which provided a summary of performance for Key Performance Indicators across the Looked After Children (LAC) Services. Appendix 1 of the report submitted provided performance on a page giving an overview of the Service's performance in comparison to the same period 2020/21 and Appendix 2 provided trend data, graphical analysis and benchmarking data against national and statistical neighbour averages where possible.

The report highlighted:-

- The number of children and young people looked after had reduced to 536, a reduction of 13 since the start of the year (April 2022) and 27 below the same period in 2021/22 (563)
- 36 children became Looked After and 57 children ceased to be Looked After
- There were currently 17 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children that were looked after by the Authority. The Commissioning Team were working hard to ensure that the Authority was able to offer placements/accommodation commensurate to need
- 96.1% of all Looked After Children plans were up-to-date (+1.1%) in comparison to last year (95.0%)
- Continued consistency in the percentage of Looked After Children in a family based setting (80%)
- 120 in-house foster carer households registered at the end of the quarter in comparison to 143 (-23) continuing the reducing trend. There had been 2 approvals so far in quarter 1 creating 4 new placements, however, there had been 7 de-registrations with each foster family having one placement each equating to 3 less placements. At the end of the period there were 5 prospective foster families in the recruitment process all of which had panels scheduled between July and September
- Of the 536 children and young people looked after by Rotherham, 5 were known to the Youth Offending Team
- 8 children had been adopted since April 2022 which was a reduction of one adoption for the same period last year
- Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the number of up-to-date health and dental checks had fluctuated particularly due to the enforced closure of most dentists or emergency are only being available. An improvement was now being seen with up-to-date dental checks reaching 72.1% at the end of quarter 1 in comparison to 30.7% at the end of the same quarter last year. 27 initial Health Assessments had been completed with 17 being in time (63%). This was 2.2% below last year (65.2%), however, more had been completed this year

overall

- 93.3% of review had been completed with timescales (335/359) and at the end of the quarter 98.9% of visits were up-to-date and within timescale of the national minimum standard
- At the end of the Spring term 97.5% (397/407) LAC had a PEPE compared to 99.1% (413/421) Spring term 2020/21
- At the end of quarter 1 there were 302 young people in the care leavers cohort, a reduction of 10 compared to the same point in 2021 (312) 85% of which had an up-to-date pathway plan (3.4% improvement)
- 96.4% of care leavers were in suitable accommodation. Of the 11 in unsuitable accommodation, 5 were in custody. However, the percentage of care leavers in employment, education and training showed an 11% increase with 72.2% at the end of the quarter compared to 61.2% at the same point in 2021

Discussion ensued with the following issues raised/clarified:-

- Regular meetings were held to discuss fostering and understand the reasons for any resignations/placement breakdowns
- More could be done to show possible future foster carers what resilience was offered to foster families or celebrate the success they offered to the children of Rotherham
- The recent Ofsted inspection had rated the experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers as Good
- The arrangements put in place for dental checks during Covid were coming to an end, however, there was to be a South Yorkshire approach so that wherever a child was placed they would have the same opportunities to receive dental care. A training package was to be provided for dentists on the additional vulnerabilities of LAC and care leavers. The PAWS project had also been accepted on to the project allowing service users access. A further meeting was to be held in November with the training taking place in December
- Placement stability was a key issue
- The majority of the foster carers were approved for 0-18 year olds
- Need to promote the Fostering Service and the support that was available to prospective foster carers

Resolved:- (1) That the Quarter 1 2022/23 performance report be noted.

(2) That a report be submitted to the next meeting on fostering and fostering recruitment.

## **52. ROTHERHAM YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE MULTI-AGENCY PROTOCOL TO SUPPORT THE DECRIMINALISATION OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN**

Rebecca Wall presented the submitted Multi-Agency Protocol which had been developed in conjunction with the wider partners and agreed at the

Rotherham Youth Justice Partnership Board.

The Protocol aimed to recognise that most Looked After Children and care leavers had experienced adverse childhood experiences and trauma prior to coming into care. With placement moves and education disruption, Looked After Children were less likely to have consistent, healthy, and meaningful relationships with adults who were supportive and loving. It supported the decriminalisation of Looked After Children and had been developed by the Rotherham Youth Justice Partnership. It represented Rotherham's multi-agency partnership commitment to reducing the unnecessary criminalisation of Looked After Children and care leavers and included the contribution of relevant local agencies and staff. Although not an exclusive list, this included Children's Services; Youth Offending Services; Crown Prosecution Service; South Yorkshire Police; HMCTS; the local Youth Panel (Magistrates); Care Services (including, kinship, fostering, and Rotherham and independent sector residential children's homes); Care Leaver services; and any other private or voluntary organisations commissioned to support looked-after children locally.

It reflected the principles and ambition of the National Protocol on Reducing Criminalisation of Looked After Children and Care Leavers which described 'what' needed to happen across the country:-

*'A co-developed, whole system approach... That should include prevention, early intervention and appropriate response where children and young people do offend.'*

The local Protocol complemented this by setting out 'how' the national Protocol would be implemented locally, and reflected the local structure of services, care populations, stakeholders, governance, and decision-making arrangements. The organisations who had signed up to this Protocol had agreed to the following key principles:

- Diversion from the criminal justice system is at the heart of this protocol
- Children should be seen as children.
- supporting desistance
- Listening to and learning from children and young people
- Agencies asking, 'is this response good enough for my child?'

It was hoped that through this Protocol, agencies would be able to work better together across the Borough, reduce the number of young people who had been within the care system being criminalised and then being further drawn into crime and instead divert them instead towards a more positive future.

Discussion ensued with the following issues raised/clarified:-

- The Authority had worked on Evolve and how to incorporate it within Service support around criminal exploitation which had helped in

- terms of how to support children in care
- The Virtual School had been working hard on exclusions and with schools and were not seeing as many exclusions of LAC as previously. Work had also taken place with regard to children from BME backgrounds ensuring cultural diversity and linguistic challenges were part of the work

Resolved:- That the report be noted.

**53. URGENT BUSINESS**

Julie Warren-Sykes reported that she was a trustee of the Samantha Sykes Foundation Trust which, amongst other things, helped children and young people who were looked after by the local authority and care leavers up to the age of 25 and could help with equipment required to access further and higher education, books, course equipment, travel passes and short courses required to access higher education.

Resolved:- That the Panel receive a presentation on the work of the Samantha Sykes Foundation Trust at its next meeting.

**54. ADDITIONAL MEETING**

It was agreed not to arrange an additional meeting at the present time but arrangements be made should there be a requirement.

**55. DATE AND TIME OF THE FUTURE MEETING**

Resolved:- That a further meeting be held on Tuesday, 13<sup>th</sup> December, 2022, commencing at 4.30 p.m.



## Rotherham Looked After Children's Council December 2022 Update Corporate Parenting Panel

The numerous experiences and opportunities offered to children & young people at the LAC Council, Lil' LAC Club and the wider LAC population through Voice & Influence Campaigns, participation activities & community events are specifically designed to empower, increase social capital, raise self-awareness and self-esteem, to foster resilience and support better outcomes for our vulnerable children & young people. Here are some of the things that we have been doing over the past four months to achieve these outcomes:-

### LAC Council Voices Shaping Services & rebuilding the future

#### Amplify Event Manchester

The LAC Council promote the voice of Rotherham Looked After and Leaving Care Young people at local, regional and national Voice Events and consultations. In October the group were invited to Manchester to participate in Amplify, a national Voices Networking Event. This gave our young people the opportunity to meet other passionate Looked After Children from across the country and engage in 4 workshops that focussed on issues they had raised that featured in the Independent Review of Social Care report.



The interactive workshops talked about

- 1) Supported Accommodation with regards to what young people feel OFSTED should inspect based in their knowledge and experience of supported accommodation.
- 2) A workshop to seek to understand young people's perspectives on modern family life.
- 3) Looking at Loving relationships within the care system (DfE) asks what does children's social care need to do to achieve this?
- 4) Looking at our Rotherham LAC COUNCIL Mental health campaign and how young people may achieve good mental health.

Rotherham young people actively engaged in the debates and spoke on the mike to the national LAC Councils. The LAC Council also engaged in a video to promote Rotherham LAC Council and the benefits of engaging in a voice group and spoke about what they have been most proud of doing this year which was the VIP Summer Fest. We would also like to say a big thank you to two of our LAC Council members Bella & Ace who co-hosted the event alongside other Coram Voice Ambassadors. Well done girls!





## Consultation with Helen LAC Sufficiency Strategy

In September Helen Sweaton, Assistant Director, Commissioning, Performance & Quality was invited to the LAC Council to engage in a consultation of the Looked After Children and Care Leavers strategy that considers Sufficiency.

LAC Council members had the opportunity to directly influence the development of a strategy which will set out the Council's priorities for Looked After Children and Care Leavers and homes for looked after children and care leavers. The group agreed to support the development of a child/young person friendly document and agreed to lead the decision making for the final version and editing of the original document to create the child. They enjoyed spending time with Helen who made the young people feel good about themselves plus treated them to a bag of sweets each.

## Advocacy & Independent Visitors Consultation

The LAC Council engaged in the Independent Care Review with CORAM Voice alongside thousands of care experienced young people nationally. A number of recommendations were made in this report which the LAC Council will consider over the following months. For the Advocacy & Independent Visitors Consultation we invited Annette Marshal from Rights2Rights to come along and explain how the service supports young people in Rotherham currently. The group looked at definitions of Advocacy and Independent Visitors, then at the recommendations from the care review.

When the group were asked 'what decisions do you want to have a say in? the vast majority focussed on **family time**, here are some quotes from our young people:

*'they (IRO's) don't involve you in what you want, they choose what's best for you and try to convince you that's what you want'*

*'you should be able to choose when and how long for family time'*

*'I want to be with my family more, cos I see them every month only for 2 hours and that's not enough, I want to spend more time with them'*

*'as I'm leaving care I don't get included in family times anymore, I've repeatedly asked to be invited so I can see my siblings as they live in different placements, but the social worker says she*



*doesn't have to consider me anymore now. It's a constant fight to see my family together, it shouldn't be so hard'*

*'you should have a say in where you go for family time and which ones you see'*

Also, Placement decisions were questioned as young people felt they didn't really have a genuine choice or Voice where they lived, as they were put where there was a place rather than the area they wanted, or with a family type they preferred.

*'you should have a choice where you live not just get put with what the council has'*

## LAC Council Participation Sessions

### LACC's Halloween Celebration with Sharon our Chief Executive



In October Sharon Kemp attended the Looked After Children's Council, Día de los Muertos inspired Halloween event. Organised by the LAC Council and the children and young people who benefit from their services, the session allowed young people to come together to celebrate different cultures.

The theme of the event was **Día de los Muertos** (translation Day of the Dead) celebrates life and death where mourning is exchanged for celebration and honouring those we've lost. As part of the festivities sugar skulls represent a departed soul and reflect the folk-art style of big happy smiles, bright colours and sparkly tin and glittery adornments.

At the start of the event the young people in held a discussion about the importance of celebrating different cultures. Whilst it is also Black History

Month, the LAC Council celebrated the life and achievement of famous individuals including Marcus Rashford MBE who is well known outside of his professional football career for being a campaigner against racism, homelessness, and child hunger in United Kingdom.

*'I'd like to say a big thank you to **Lisa Duvalle**, the LAC, and the young people involved. Lisa, as always, brought her special magic to the event and it was lovely to see all the colourful mask designs'* Sharon Kemp CEX

## Community Engagement Days

### Remembrance Sunday Parade & Service

It is important for our young people to be involved with and gain positive experiences of living in Rotherham and engaging with their own communities to enhance their connectivity, belonging and support self-esteem. The LAC Council is invited annually to engage in the Remembrance Sunday Parade & Service by our Mayor, this year by our Mayor Cllr Tajamal Khan to represent Looked After

and Leaving Care young people at this important event. Two LACC members, Rosie & Baron were voted by their peers to represent the group and felt proud (albeit a little nervous too) to lay the Poppy Wreath on behalf of our care experienced young people at the cenotaph.



Children and Young people from the LAC Council and those who have engaged in LAC participation & events would like to say a BIG THANK YOU to all of our friends, volunteers and supporters over the last four months These include:-

Annette Marshal – Rights2Rights

Cllr Tajamal Khan – Mayor of Rotherham

Helen Sweighton - Assistant Director, Commissioning, Performance & Quality

LAC Voice, Influence & Participation Volunteers

Sharon Kemp – CEX

Thank You All! 😊

Merry Xmas and Happy New Year from all of our LAC Council Members



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Public Report  
Name of Committee

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**Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting**

Corporate Parenting Panel – 13<sup>th</sup> December, 2022

**Report Title**

Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2023 – 2028

**Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?**

Yes

**Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

Suzanne Joyner, Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services

**Report Author(s)**

Helen Sweaton. Assistant Director, Commissioning, Performance and Quality  
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**Ward(s) Affected**

Borough-Wide

**Report Summary**

Rotherham's Looked After Children's Sufficiency Strategy 2019-2022 was agreed by Cabinet in June 2019. As such, the period of this strategy ends this year, and the new one needs to commence in January 2023.

*This was considered by Cabinet on 17<sup>th</sup> October, 2022, and the Strategy agreed (Minute No. 57 refers).*

The Duty of 'sufficiency' requires Local Authorities (LA) to ensure that there is a range of sufficient and appropriate placements that meet the needs of children and young people that are looked after by the LA. There is also a responsibility to take steps to develop and shape service provision to meet the needs of all children and young people in care at a local level, as far as is reasonably possible. The Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2028 has been developed in line with the duty to provide or procure placements for Looked After Children (LAC) by the Local Authority.

The Strategy identifies the principles that are applied when commissioning the provision of secure, safe and appropriate accommodation and support to children in care and care leavers over the next three years. It provides the needs analysis that will inform market management work, seeking to ensure that there is the right mix of provision available to meet the needs of children and young people and that this provision mix provides positive outcomes and value for money. Whilst this Strategy is not primarily a financial one, it is expected that the commissioning and strategic intentions set out will provide significant cost avoidance and savings opportunities and which are essential to the sustainability of improved outcomes and the LA budget.

The revised Sufficiency Strategy focuses on what Rotherham Council knows about its children and young people and the information about local homes for children. It includes the voice of looked after children. The strategy provides all the latest data trends, what the priorities are and the delivery plan to achieve these.

This report provides an update on the delivery of the previous strategy and requests approval of the new Strategy.

### **Recommendations**

1. To approve the new Strategy.
2. To approve the monitoring and oversight of progress against the delivery plan, and annual review of the aspirations, be undertaken by Corporate Parenting Board.

### **List of Appendices Included**

Appendix 1 The Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2023 – 2028  
Appendix 2 Initial Equality Screening Assessment  
Appendix 3 Carbon Impact Analysis

### **Exempt from the Press and Public**

No

### **Background Papers**

1. Looked After Children's (LAC) Sufficiency Strategy 2020-22  
<https://moderngov.rotherham.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=895&MId=15429&Ver=4>

### **Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel**

Yes

Considered by Improving Lives Select Commission on 6 September 2022.

### **Council Approval Required**

No

## **Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy (including Sufficiency) 2023 – 2028**

### **1. Background**

- 1.1 The Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2023 – 2028 has been developed in line with the duty to provide and/or procure placements for Children Looked After by the Local Authority. The legislation and guidance include Children Act 1989, Sufficiency Statutory Guidance 2010, Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2011. The duty of 'sufficiency' requires Local Authorities and Children's Trust partners to ensure that there is a range of sufficient and appropriate placements which meet the needs of children and young people in care. There is also a responsibility to take steps to develop and shape service provision to meet the needs of all children and young people in care at a local level, as far as is reasonably possible.
- 1.2 The Strategy sets out how Rotherham Children and Young People's Services will fulfil its role as a Corporate Parent and meet its statutory sufficiency duty by providing good quality care, effective parenting and support to children and young people in care and leaving care. It describes the principles that are applied when seeking to commission the provision of secure, safe and appropriate accommodation and support, to children in care and care leavers over the next five years.
- 1.3 The Strategy provides the underpinning needs analysis that will inform market management, seeking to ensure that there is the right mix of provision available to meet the needs of children and young people and that this provision mix provides positive outcomes and value for money. Whilst this Strategy is not primarily a financial one, it is expected that the commissioning intentions are essential to the sustainability of improved outcomes and the Local Authority budget.
- 1.4 The previous Sufficiency Strategy was approved by Cabinet in June 2019. The key priorities of the Market Management Project were:
  - To reduce reliance on Independent Fostering Agencies by recruiting more in-house foster carers
  - To develop local residential provision and secure block-bookings for Rotherham children where this will achieve best value
  - Explore opportunities for regional collaborative working arrangements
  - Review the Rotherham Fostering Framework to ensure that it continues to deliver high quality placements and value for money
  - Implement a Dynamic Purchasing Framework to ensure that sufficiency is achieved for Rotherham care leavers; and
  - Work in partnership with Adult Care and Housing to ensure that sufficiency is achieved for vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds.

### **2. Key Issues**

2.1 Progress against all priorities in the previous sufficiency strategy has been reviewed to support the development of the new strategy.

1. To reduce reliance on Independent Fostering Agencies by recruiting more in-house foster carers

A significant programme of work has progressed to increase the number of in-house foster carers through recruitment, including significant investment in a digital marketing contract.

During the period of the strategy there have been some successes in recruitment and development of available fostering places, however in 2021 recruitment did not attract the targeted number of foster carers. A review of the digital marketing contract and mobilisation of a new specification has resulted in improved performance.

During the period of the strategy a number of Rotherham foster carers have resigned/de-registered. This means that despite the recruitment, the number of in-house foster carers has not increased. Nationally, Ofsted standards for official statistics for 2020/21 indicates the total number of IFA fostering families (and places) increased and the number of LA fostering families (and places) reduced.

The programme of work now focuses on retention in addition to recruitment.

2. To develop local residential provision and secure block-bookings for Rotherham children where this will achieve best value

The February 2020 Cabinet report agreed a proposal to develop a range of in-house residential provisions, including emergency accommodation for Rotherham looked after children. 16 residential beds and 2 emergency beds across 7 registered settings.

- 4 new children's home purchased or acquired and fitted out to meet the specification informed by young people's service and Ofsted
- Recruitment of 4 managers and 44 staff
- 60 days of induction training covering Therapeutic Crisis Intervention, evidence based therapeutic approaches, Signs of Safety and Rotherham Family Approach
- 3 children's homes opened with Ofsted registrations
- Ofsted rating of Good for all children's homes on first inspection
- 6 young people living in the homes since opening.
- Successful 'step down' from residential care into foster care settings as a direct result of the work offered by the service.

Block bookings were secured, however due to matching (identifying children who can safely live together and with the provider of a home) best value was not always achieved.

3. Explore opportunities for regional collaborative working arrangements

Children and Young People's Services continue to work with other authorities in Yorkshire and the Humber as part of the White Rose Framework. Despite a number of providers choosing to operate 'off framework' reducing the collective buying power, this remains a collaborative opportunity to explore regional working arrangements.

4. Review the Rotherham Fostering Framework to ensure that it continues to deliver high quality placements and value for money

Children and Young People's Services joined the White Rose Framework for fostering in April 2020. Despite a number of providers choosing to operate 'off framework' reducing the collective buying power, this remains a collaborative opportunity to explore regional working arrangements.

5. Implement a Dynamic Purchasing Framework to ensure that sufficiency is achieved for Rotherham care leavers

Children and Young People's Services developed a 16+ Support and Accommodation flexible purchasing systems (FPS) which went live in January 2021. The purpose of the FPS was for the Commissioning team and Social Care to continue working closely to secure good quality provision for Rotherham's young people. The FPS also allows Rotherham to develop and shape the market; build relationships with existing and new providers; monitor quality and provide a compliant route to market.

Ofsted will develop a registration and inspection framework for 16+ accommodation and begin registering providers from April 2023. In preparation for this the Commissioning Team will review the Quality Assurance Document they use to quality assure commissioned provision, to include the four national standards, to focus providers on the requirements for registration.

6. Work in partnership with Adult Care & Housing to ensure that sufficiency is achieved for vulnerable 16- and 17-year-olds

Collaborative working ensured sharing of good practice to inform the commissioning of accommodation for 16- and 17-year-olds who are homeless. Work is underway to further develop the FPS to expand it to include this cohort.

Accommodation for young people aged 16 and 17 because they are homeless not looked after children will still be relevant for Ofsted registration. CYPS are working with Adult Commissioners to understand the new developments and mirror the regulation requirements for their young people's projects.

2.2 To support the development of a new strategy, regular monthly core group meetings with key people involved in the services have taken place along with benchmarking against the 'What Works for Children's Social Care' independent review. These have helped to inform the structure, analysis, and content of the new Strategy.

2.3 The Strategy has been developed in line with the principles of the Rotherham Charter (Four Cornerstones):

1. Welcome and care

2. Value and include
3. Communicate
4. Work in partnership

- 2.4 This is reflective of the work undertaken by the Genuine Partnerships team which involves an equal partnership between Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC), facilitated by the Education Psychology Service (EPS), and Rotherham Parent Carer's Forum.
- 2.5 Corporate Parenting is the term used in law to describe the collective responsibility to care for, love and champion children in care and care leavers and ensure they have every opportunity to reach their full potential as they grow up in the Rotherham family.
- 2.6 This Strategy has been developed in line with the Looked After Children and Care Leaver promises. The promises were created by Rotherham's Looked After Children and Care Leavers and agreed in Corporate Parenting Panel.
- 2.7 Internal Audit were commissioned to undertake an audit to provide assurance that the originally agreed intentions of the LAC Sufficiency Strategy have been achieved. Based upon the results of the audit, internal audit was able to provide Substantial Assurance that the controls are operating effectively.
- 2.8 Based on the analysis of local need; the following aspirations are identified for the period of the Strategy.

The aspirations over the next five years are to:

- More Young People aged 10+ are able to be cared for safely in their families and communities
- Children and young people have access to a range of homes (internal and external options) that meet their needs and improve their outcomes
- All services take the Rotherham Family Approach to ensure all Rotherham children and young people are "resilient, successful and safe", evidenced by Quality Assurance activity
- Children and young people are able to access the support they need when they need it because Health, Education and Care Services share a joint understanding of the needs of children and young people in Rotherham and use this to inform commissioning and service delivery
- Children and Young People and their families and carers are able to access CAMHs assessment and intervention when needed
- Children, young people, families, and carers benefit from additional social value in Rotherham e.g., more employment opportunities
- More children, young people and families benefit from additional support to improve outcomes and access employment.

- 2.9 Cabinet have maintained oversight of the key priorities identified in the LAC Sufficiency Strategy 2019-22 through reports to Cabinet on fostering recruitment and development of residential provision, this has focused on in-house services.
- 2.10 It is proposed the delivery plan for the Looked After Children and Care Leaver's Sufficiency Strategy 2023 - 2028 will be developed with key milestones for each of the objectives, and outcome measures documented. Progress against the delivery plan will be reported to the Corporate Parenting Board. The aspirations will be reviewed annually by the Corporate Parenting Board based on updated annual sufficiency data and local / national drivers.

### **3. Options considered and recommended proposal**

#### **3.1 Option 1:**

1. To approve the new Strategy.
2. To approve the monitoring and oversight of progress against the delivery plan, and annual review of the aspirations, be undertaken by Corporate Parenting Board.

Approval of the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2028 will ensure the Council has set out its commitment in line with its duty to ensure that there is a range of sufficient placements which meet the needs of children and young people in care.

Approval of Corporate Parenting Board to undertake the monitoring and oversight of progress against the delivery plan, and annual review of the aspirations, will ensure consistent oversight of the delivery of the strategy and escalation as appropriate if issues arise.

#### **3.2 Option 2:**

Do not approve the new Strategy.

This will mean the Council does not have an accurate and up to date strategy to set out its commitment in line with its sufficiency duty.

Governance of the delivery of the strategy will not be articulated and understood and may result in failure to escalate issues as they arise.

#### **3.3 Option 1 is the recommended option.**

### **4. Consultation on proposal**

- 4.1 The development of the revised Strategy has involved collaborative working across Rotherham, including Looked After Children and Care Leavers, First Response, Locality Social Work, Commissioning, Performance, Early Help, Legal Services and Finance.

- 4.2 Internal Audit were commissioned to undertake an audit to provide assurance that the originally agreed intentions of the LAC sufficiency strategy have been achieved.
- 4.3 Two recommendations for the development of the future strategy were made.

- The LAC Sufficiency Strategy 2023-28 does not clearly show in tabular form the aims and objectives of the previous strategy, the actions taken, and any outstanding actions included in this strategy. **Recommendation 1**
- Also, the Aspirations Section of the LAC Sufficiency Strategy 2023-28 does not include details of how these actions are to be monitored. This Aspirations Section can be interpreted as a formal Action Plan. **Recommendation 2**

These have been incorporated into the development of the strategy and associated governance arrangements.

- 4.4 Further engagement has also influenced the document including Public Health, the Integrated Care Board Rotherham Place, TRFT, RDaSH, Residential and Independent Fostering providers, In-house fostering, Rotherham Therapeutic Team, Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership and LAC Council.
- 4.5 The draft strategy was considered at Improving Lives Select Commission on 6th September. The recommendations made have been incorporated into the development of the strategy and associated governance arrangements.
- 4.6 The Looked After Children Council considered the strategy at their meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> September. They provided specific guidance on the presentation and design of the strategy, the relevance of the graphs (including whether any contain identifiable information that may make them feel uncomfortable), feedback on what they feel the strategy should be for, what is important about it and their voice to supplement the LAC promises. The Looked After Children Council also requested Care Leavers were more robustly considered in the strategy, suggesting some amends in section 5 and an additional data set in section 6. This is reflected in the final draft Strategy.

## **5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

- 5.1 The Strategy focuses on what Rotherham Council knows about its children and young people, including their voices, and the information about local homes for children. The Strategy also provides all the latest data trends, what the aspirations are and the delivery plan to achieve these over the next five years 2023 – 2028.

## **6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications**

- 6.1 Where there is a need for the Council to commission services from third party organisations to deliver the Strategy, this must be done in compliance with the Council's own Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (as amended). Early consideration needs to be given in the development of any commissioned services to ensure the chosen delivery vehicle includes the flexibility to meet the requirements of the Strategy.

## **7. Legal Advice and Implications**

- 7.1 The legislation which sets out the Councils sufficiency duty is contained in the body of the Report. There are no further legal implications arising from the review of the Strategy.

## **8. Human Resources Advice and Implications**

- 8.1 No direct HR implications within this report.

## **9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

- 9.1 Implications to vulnerable children and young people and vulnerable adults who are care leavers are covered within the Report and Appendices.

## **10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications**

- 10.1 An equality impact assessment checklist is attached. Equality implications for looked after children, care leavers and foster carers are reflected in the draft strategy.

## **11. Implications for CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions and Climate Change**

- 11.1 N/A

## **12. Implications for Partners**

- 12.1 Implications for partners are reflected in the draft strategy.

## **13. Risks and Mitigation**

- 13.1 These are referred to in the draft strategy and associated delivery plan.

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	<b>Named Officer</b>	<b>Date</b>
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp	03/10/2022
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	29/09/2022
Assistant Director, Legal Services	Phil Horsfield	29/09/2022

(Monitoring Officer)		
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This report is published on the Council's [website](#).

***“Our Children,  
Resilient ★ Successful ★ Safe”***

**Looked After Children and Care Leavers  
Sufficiency Strategy**

**2023 – 2028**



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## 1. Forward

This strategy is about making sure all looked after children and care leavers have a safe place to live. It will help workers understand where the right place is for children to live and who the right people to look after them are. This is about supporting us for our futures.



Looked After Children Council Members

Our Vision is simple, we are working with Rotherham's children, young people and families to be resilient, successful and safe. We constantly ask ourselves, 'would this be good enough for my child' and are committed to keeping our Looked after Children and Care Leaver promises. This strategy sets out what we are doing to keep these promises, especially; Promise 1 - We will help you to live in a safe place where you are protected from harm.



Cllr Victoria Cusworth, Lead Member,  
Children and Young People



Suzanne Joyner,  
Director of Children's Services

## 2. Introduction

The purpose of this Strategy is to set out the vision for achieving Rotherham Council's commitment to improving the outcomes and life chances of the children and young people who are in our care and providing sufficient, safe, secure, and appropriate placements for looked after children and Care Leavers over the next 4 years.

An important element of planning sufficient accommodation is to take early, preventative action to support children and families so that more children can remain with their families and networks.

This Strategy considers information we know about our children, including their voices, and the information we know about local homes for children. This informs the activity we need to undertake and supports the delivery of Rotherham Council's Looked after Children promises.

### 2.1 Vision

We have a strong clear vision for children and young people's services - "Working with Rotherham's children, young people and families to be resilient, successful and safe", which aligns to the Council Plan: Council Plan 2022-25 – Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council.

### 2.2 Principles

Activity to support children and families is underpinned by the Rotherham Charter (Four Cornerstones):

1. Welcome and care
2. Value and include
3. Communicate
4. Work in partnership

At the heart of these is trust.



#### 1. Welcome and care

Our Rotherham Family Approach is informed by respectful, collaborative relationships and a stance of critical enquiry and "locating grand aspirations in everyday practice where the experience of the child is at the centre".

#### 2. Value and include

Whilst the local authority is the lead agency in developing and implementing this strategy, it has been developed in collaboration with a wide range of partners and will be owned and implemented by all professionals working with children, young people, their parents, and carers.

### 3. Communicate

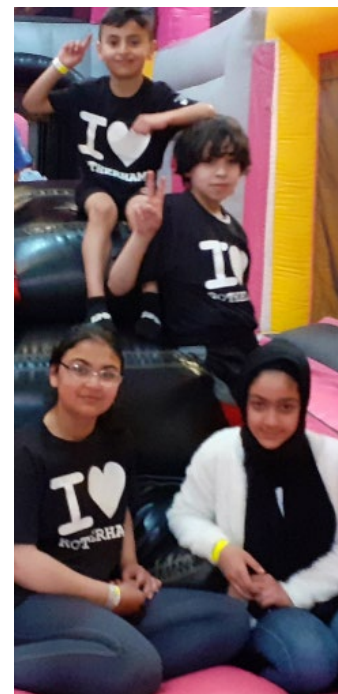
Rotherham Council are committed corporate parents, we use language that reflects this, we want everything to be the best that parents want for their children:

- That they are happy and healthy both physically and emotionally.
- That we keep them safe and protected from harm and exploitation.
- That we support them into adulthood and that we prepare them for independence.
- We are ambitious for our children; we want them to achieve their potential and participate in decisions which affect their lives.

### 4. Work in partnership

We want our children and young people to work with us and, along with parents and carers, shape the services we offer to them.

We value our children and young people and parents and carers as equal partners; this strategy is underpinned by our commitment to deliver the promises developed with our Looked After Children and Care Leavers.



## 2.3 Looked After Children and Care Leaver Promises

Corporate Parenting is the term used in law to describe our collective responsibility to care for, love and champion our children in care and our care leavers and ensure they have every opportunity to reach their full potential as they grow up in our family.

Rotherham Corporate Parents take our **Rotherham Family Approach** ethos of: '*would this be good enough for my child*' and have made the following promises, which came from our Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

**Promise 1** - We will help you to live in a safe place where you are protected from harm

**Promise 2** - We will listen to what you have to say and make sure it makes a difference

**Promise 3** - We will help you to learn and do your best at school and college

**Promise 4** - We will fully involve you in plans and decisions about you and your future

**Promise 5** - We will help you to learn new skills as you grown up and become an adult

**Promise 6** - We will help you take part in activities that you enjoy/are interested in

**Promise 7** - We will help you to be proud of yourself and celebrate your individual beliefs

**Promise 8** - We will help you to be happy and healthy

**Promise 9** - We will help you to explore and be ready for the world of work

### 3. Policy Context

This document seeks to improve outcomes for looked after children and young people by providing guidance on the implementation of section 22G of the Children Act 1989. Section 22G requires local authorities to take steps that secure sufficient accommodation within the authority's area which meets the needs of children that the local authority are looking after ('the sufficiency duty'). Section 27 of the Children Act 1989 imposes a duty on other local authorities, local authority housing services and health bodies to assist the Children and Young People's Service in carrying out its functions under the Act. This includes assisting in the Corporate Parenting function and to provide joined up services that best meet the needs of the child.

In 2010, the Government published statutory guidance on the implementation of section 22G of the Children Act 'General Duty of Local Authority to secure sufficient accommodation for looked after children'. Since May 2014 there is a duty in the Children and Families Act (2014) for local authorities to have staying put arrangements in place to enable young adults to remain in their foster homes for children until they are 21 years old.

The Children & Social Work Act 2017 extended the duties on all local authorities to incorporate a set of corporate parenting principles when exercising their functions in relation to looked after children and care experience young people up to the age of 25

This Sufficiency Duty requires the Council to:



This strategy considers what is required by the local authority in terms of sufficient provision.

This strategy is linked to and informed by the following:

- The Joint Strategic Needs Analysis
- The Corporate Parenting Strategy.
- The Corporate Parenting Promise to Looked After Children.
- The Pledge to Looked After Children.
- The Rotherham Offer to Care Leavers.
- The Early Help Strategy
- The Local Transformation Plan
- The Joint Commissioning Strategy

It takes into the account the criteria outlined for the inspection of Local Authority Children's Services 2018 (ILACS) and follows the journey of the child, considering the range of commissioned provision required from Early Help through to specialist placement provision.

## 4. Progress Since the Last Sufficiency Strategy

The previous LAC Sufficiency Strategy was approved by Cabinet in June 2019, progress against all priorities has been reviewed to support the development of the new strategy.

### 1. To reduce reliance on Independent Fostering Agencies by recruiting more in-house foster carers

- Significant programme of work including significant investment in a digital marketing contract.
- Some successes in recruitment (at a time where this is a challenge nationally) and development of available fostering places, we have not increased the number of in-house foster carers.
- National issues impacting on retention of local authority foster carers, including the expansion of the independent fostering market, have impacted in Rotherham
- Programme of work now focuses on retention in addition to recruitment.

### 2. To develop local residential provision and secure block-bookings for Rotherham children where this will achieve best value

The February 2020 Cabinet report agreed a proposal to develop a range of in-house residential provisions, including emergency accommodation for Rotherham looked after children. 16 residential beds and 2 emergency beds across 7 registered settings.

- 4 new children's home purchased or acquired and fitted out to meet the specification informed by young people's service and Ofsted
- 3 children's homes opened with Ofsted registrations
- Ofsted rating of Good for all children's homes on first inspection

Block bookings were secured, however due to matching (identifying children who can safely live together and with the provider of a home) best value was not always achieved.

### 3. Explore opportunities for regional collaborative working arrangements.

- Rotherham continues to work with other authorities in Yorkshire and the Humber as part of the White Rose Framework regional collaborative arrangement for Fostering and Residential placements.

### 4. Review the Rotherham Fostering Framework to ensure that it continues to deliver high quality placements and value for money;

- Rotherham joined the White Rose Framework for fostering in April 2020.

### 5. Implement a Dynamic Purchasing Framework to ensure that sufficiency is achieved for Rotherham care leavers;

- Rotherham developed a 16+ Support and Accommodation flexible purchasing systems (FPS) which went live in January 2021.
- The FPS supports Rotherham to develop and shape the market; build relationships with existing and new providers; monitor quality and provide a compliant route to market.

**6. Work in partnership with Adult Care & Housing to ensure that sufficiency is achieved for vulnerable 16- and 17-year-olds**

- Collaborative working ensures sharing of good practice to inform the commissioning of accommodation for 16- and 17-year-olds who are homeless.

**Since 2019 there has also been national activity which has been considered in the development of this strategy.**

In January 2021 the terms of reference for an independent review of children's social care were published. Following consultation, the case for change was published in October highlighting "the immediate pressure of there not being enough of the right homes in the right places." The national 'market' for homes for children is described as not working due to private providers setting the terms for engagement. This means Local Authorities need to use the homes for children that are available and can't always find the right homes for children to meet their needs.

There are 80,850 children in the care system in England, an increase of 1% from 2020 and an all-time high. In 2021 62% of Looked After Children were aged 10 years and over and 71% of Looked After Children were living with a foster family.

In 2021, 78% of children's homes were run by private providers and 41% approved fostering places are provided by independent fostering agencies.

The Personal Social Services Review Unit reported average prices are £4,865 a week for a local authority place and £4,153 for a private placement. This does not reflect the variance in the cost of private placements, some cost 2 and 3 times more than the average £4,153. The Competition and Markets Authority report profit margins for the 15 largest private children's home operators average 22.6% in The State of UK Competition, April 2022.



## 5. Supporting more children to live within their families and networks

In Rotherham, help is provided at the earliest opportunity and continues to be provided to support children and families, unless there is evidence of harm.

**Help** is provided as part of universal support from someone with an established relationship with the family, the Rotherham Partnership Early Help Offer and/ or the Rotherham Council Early Help Offer.

**Harm** is assessed by social care; child protection plans are utilised to measure progress to improve children's safety. Children can become looked after when there is no other option to secure their safety.



The 'wrap-around support' in our Early Help offer, Edge of Care offer and Pause (work with women who have babies removed to avoid repeat care proceedings) form a key component to delivering outstanding services for children, young people, and families in Rotherham. Supporting children into more appropriate permanence arrangements including safely returning home, adoption, special guardianship, and child arrangements orders. A range of evidence-based services and commissioned support form part of this offer to families.

Our therapeutic team have developed a 'wrap-around trauma' informed approach to support the safe 'step-down' of children and young people from residential care to family-based care. We have successfully identified, trained, and supported our first foster carers, and are working with further foster carers in preparation for successful matching and working to identify further established and new carers. This means children in Rotherham in residential care will be able to return to family-based homes for children as soon as it is safe for them to do so.

It is recognised that support to live alongside their families and networks is equally important for care leavers. Young people are supported into their adult years by a team of 11 personal advisors (PAs). PAs support our young people find a home, jobs, training, or university place. Our offer to Care Leavers includes supporting two key relationships for Care Leavers and encouraging aspirational pathway planning for their futures. The PAs have networks across universal services who they can call on to support young people.

## 6. Children in the care of the Local Authority

### Overview of Rotherham

Rotherham has 57,453 children aged under 18 representing 21.7% of the local population (ONS, mid 2020).

23% of children live in low-income families (England 18%). The free school meal entitlement rate is above the English national average (23.8% compared to 21.6% at Primary, 21.4% compared to 18.9% at Secondary – DfE 2020/21). 19.4% of Rotherham's school age population is from a BME background (England 35.1%) (DfE 2020/21).

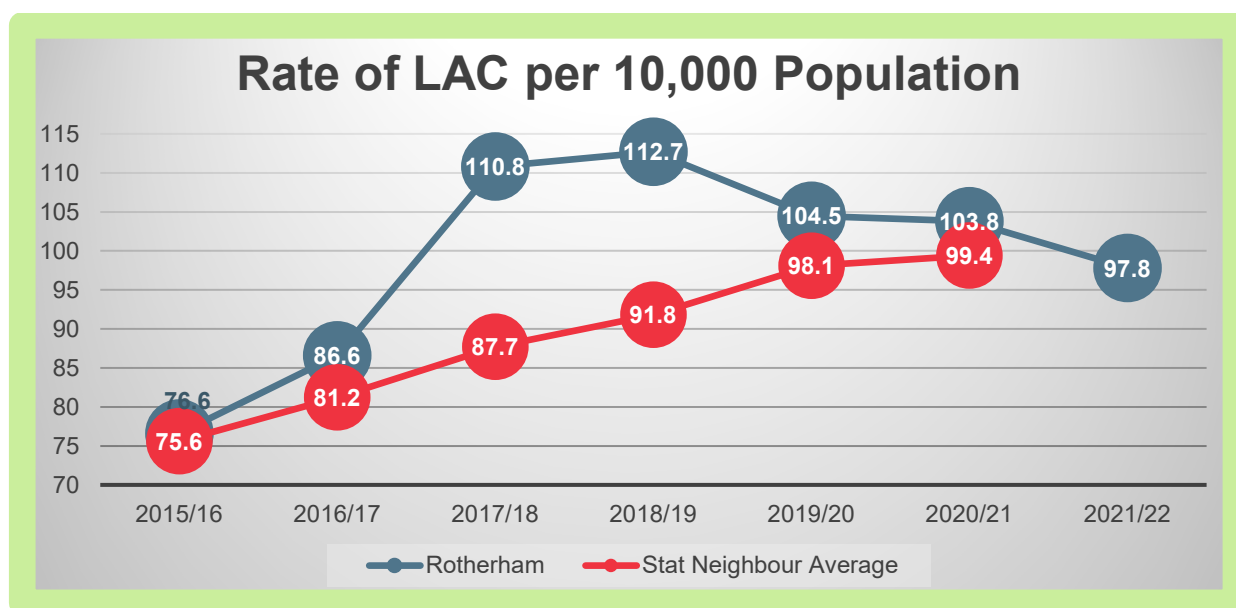
The rate of referrals for Rotherham Council in 2020/21 is 569 per 10,000 of children which was lower than the Statistical Neighbours average of 613 and higher than the national average of 494.

### Looked After Children needing homes

As of 31 March 2022, there were 563 Looked After Children and 293 Care Leavers.

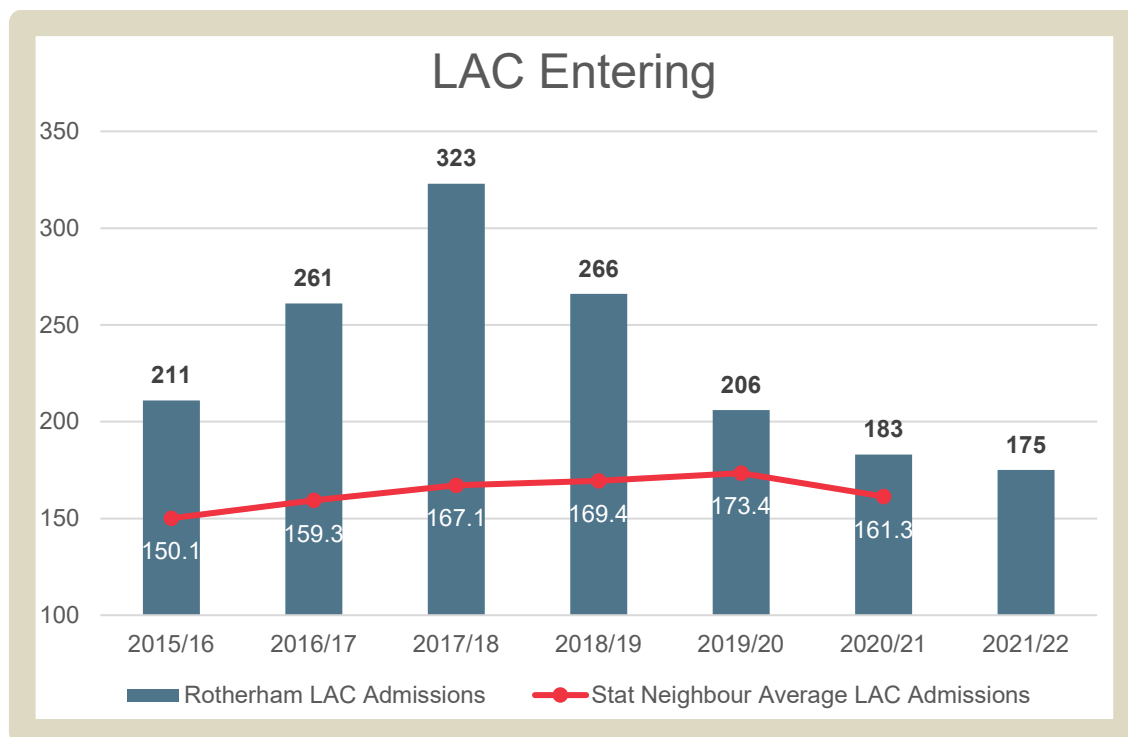
- 90% of these children are in care as a result of abuse or neglect
- 10% are in care due to family dysfunction, absent parenting, the family being in acute stress, parental disability or illness, socially unacceptable behaviour or the child's disability or illness

The rate of Looked After Children per 10,000 population has been safely reducing since 2019 from 112.7 to 97.8 per 10,000 (children under 18). This remains higher than the national rate. Over the last three years the trend has increased in Local Authorities which are Rotherham's statistical neighbours.



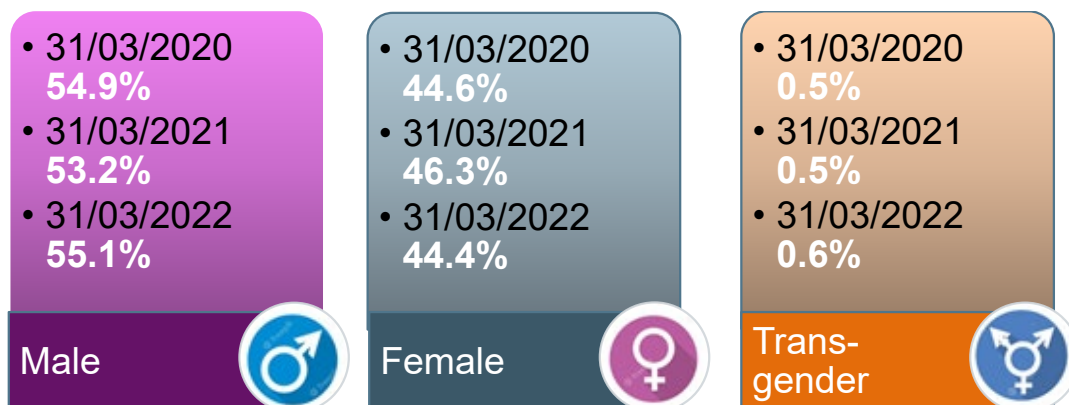
During the Covid-19 pandemic Rotherham children and young people's services maintained the help that was being provided to families through early help and child in need plans as

well as continuing to recognise and respond to keep children safe from harm. This ensured the safe continuation of the reduction in the number of children entering care. Delays in court proceeding extended the period some children needed to be cared for.



## Gender profile of Looked After Children

The number of looked after children identifying as male, female or transgender has remained relatively stable over the last three years with more than half consistently identifying as male.



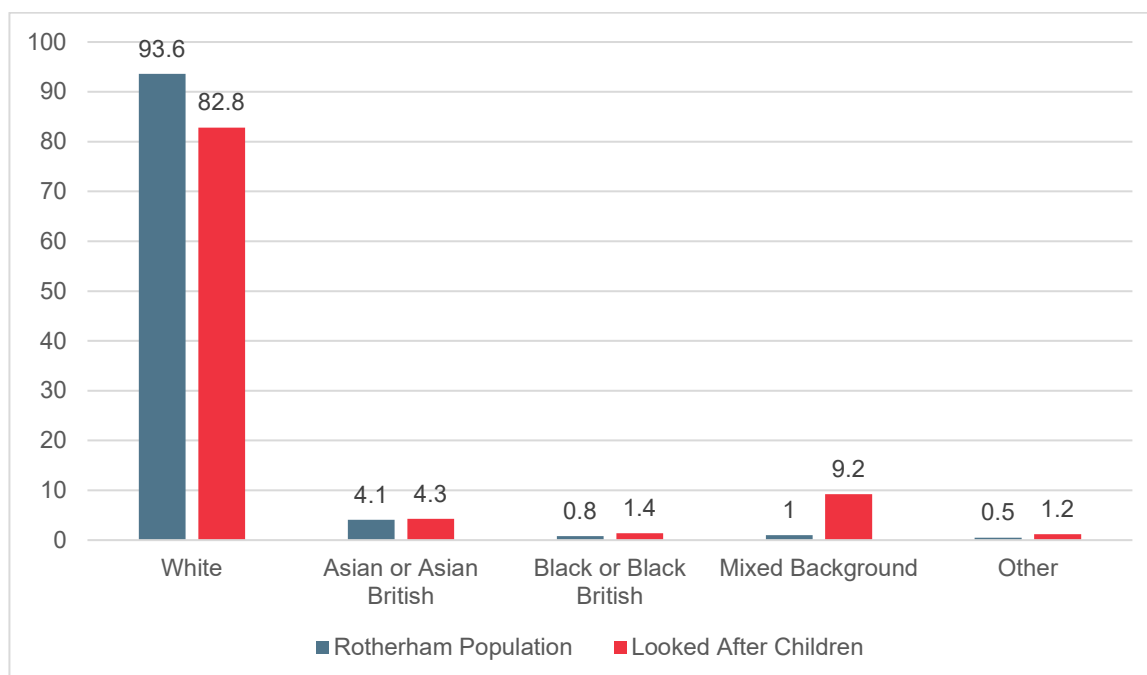
## Age profile of Looked After Children

The biggest proportion of looked after children in Rotherham are aged 10 to 15 years old, this has been consistent over the last three years at just over 40%. During 2021 there was a slight increase in the proportion of children under 1, however this has now reduced again. The proportion of children aged 1 to 4 year olds has steadily decreased over the last three years and young people who are aged 16 have seen an increase in the same period.

AGE of LAC			
	31/03/2020	31/03/2021	31/03/2022
Under 1	6.2%	7.5%	5.7%
1 to 4	15.6%	14.9%	13.1%
5 to 9	18.9%	19.1%	18.3%
10 to 15	42.7%	41.0%	42.1%
16 and over	16.6%	17.6%	20.8%

## Ethnicity of Looked After Children

The majority of looked after children are from White backgrounds, followed by children from mixed backgrounds (9%). Children from mixed backgrounds are over-represented among looked after children when compared to that of the population as a whole. At the end of March 2022 an increased number of looked after children in Rotherham are unaccompanied asylum seeker children than in previous years.



## Looked After Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

The proportion of looked after children with a disability has remained relatively stable over the last three years.

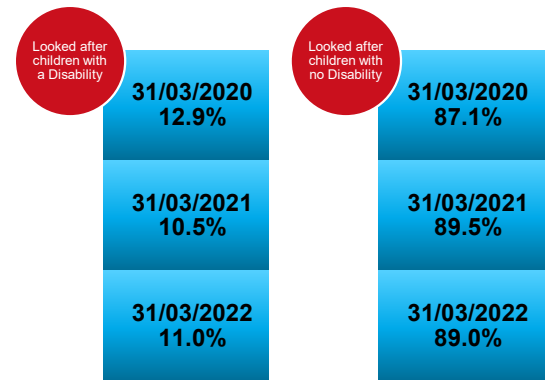
Between 31st March 2020 and 31st 2022 there was a 1.9% decrease in this cohort. Rotherham's position currently shows 11% for children

that are looked after have a disability (47 children).

Of the children identified with a disability the main need identified is learning (34%) followed by a those with a diagnosis of Autism or Asperger's syndrome (25.5%).

As of 31st March 2022, the largest proportion of looked after children in Rotherham who are identified with a disability are aged 11 and over (76.6%) which is a continuing trend from last year.

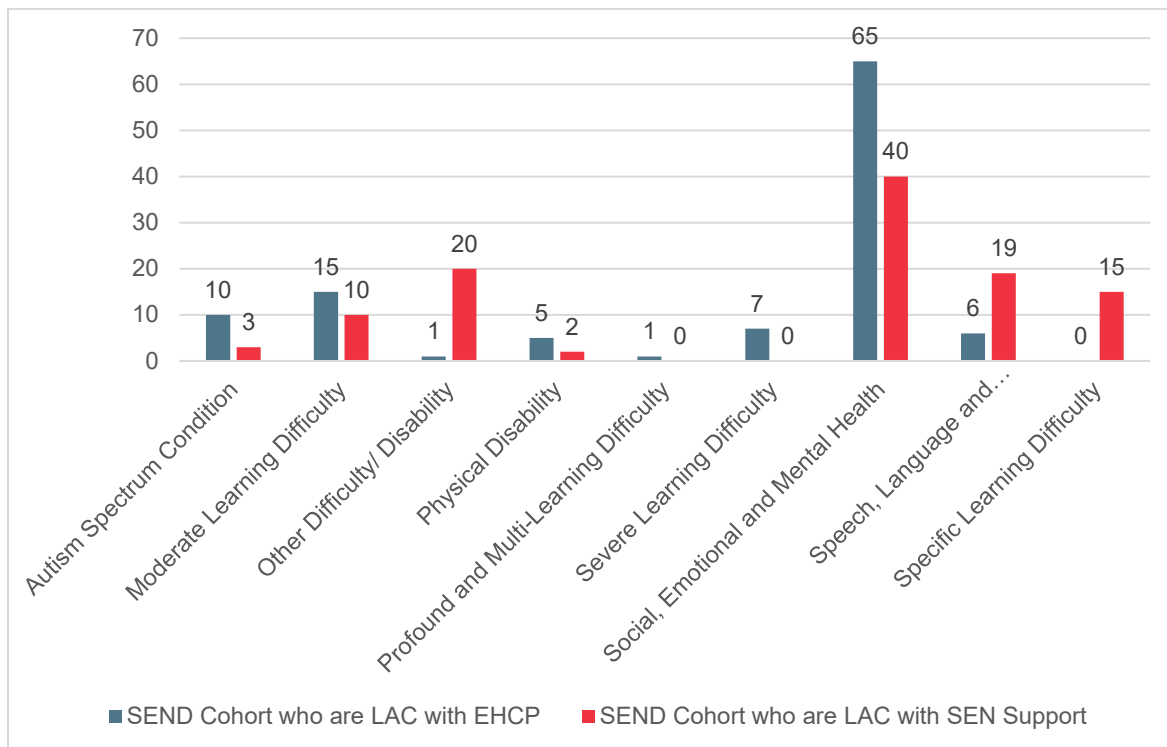
74.5% of children with a disability are White British which is slightly lower than the looked after children population as a whole (83%).



110 looked after children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) have an Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP) and an additional 110 are identified with needing Special Educational Needs (SEN) Support.

The majority of looked after children in Rotherham with an Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP) have a primary need of Social, Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH).

Most looked after children in Rotherham who are identified with needing Special Educational Needs (SEN) Support also have a high level of primary need being SEMH. Speech, Language & Communication (SLC) Difficulty and Specific Learning Difficulty are the next two highest identified needs for this cohort of children.



## Looked After Children and education

Looked after children and young people are supported to be successful in their education and employment through the Virtual School, who along with our education partners work proactively at the earliest stage possible to enable them to grow and progress. Clear, targeted and timebound Personal Education Plans (PEP) support the tracking of each child's progress and provide a clear window into their progress as they journey through care.

## Looked After Children's emotional and behavioural health

In March 2020 comparative scores for Looked After Children in Rotherham were higher than in other parts of the country, reflecting a complex level of emotional need. Rotherham showed an overall score of 14.0 where 1-13 is normal and 14-16 is borderline, this score put Rotherham into the 3rd quartile. Nationally the score was 13.7.

## Looked After Children at risk of exploitation

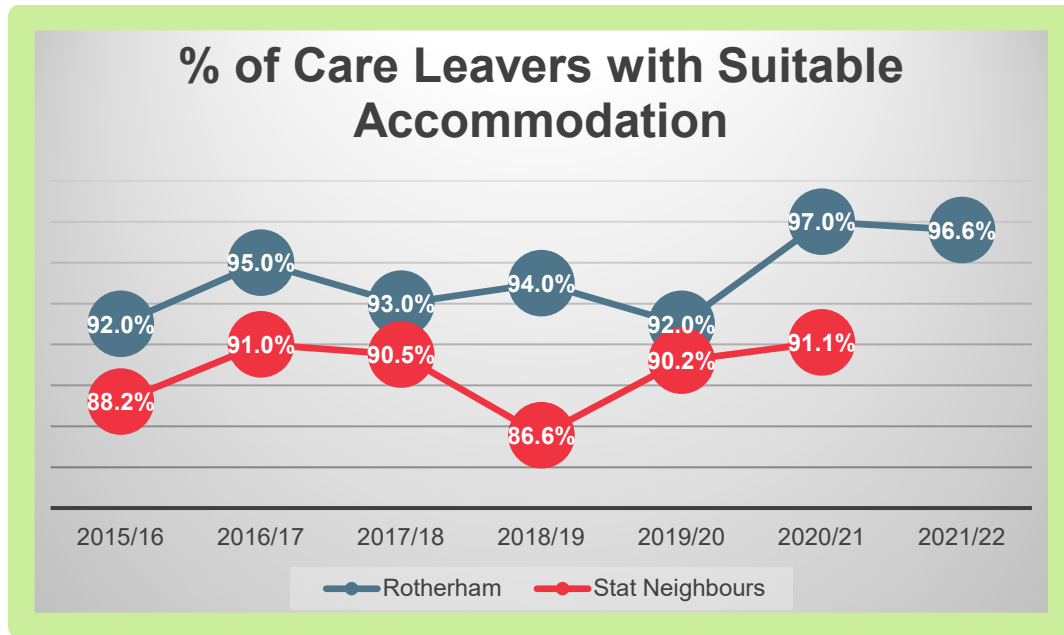
On 31 March 2022 26 looked after young people in Rotherham were assessed as being at risk of exploitation. Specialist multi-agency support is coordinated through the Evolve Service. Risk assessment informs support and decision making regarding suitable homes for children.

## Care Leavers

On 31 March 2022, there were 293 Care Leavers in Rotherham.

AGE of Care Leavers	
	31/03/2022
16 to 18	<b>56%</b>
19 to 21	<b>42.5%</b>
22 to 25	<b>1.5%</b>

The percentage with a suitable home has increased over the last three years and Rotherham continues its trend of remaining above its Statistical Neighbours.

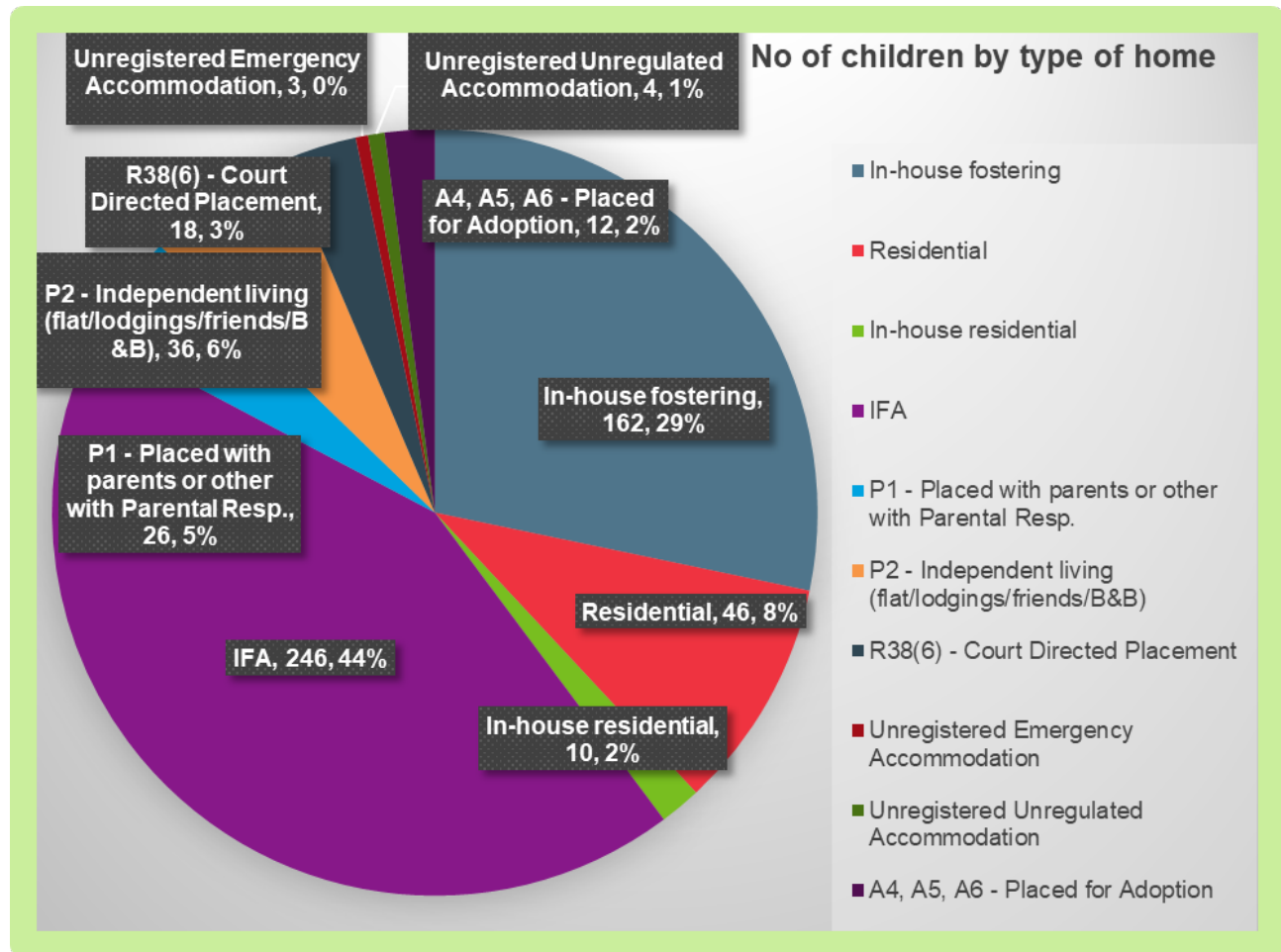


Stability of a home for young people leaving care shows the majority have had no moves or only 1 move over the last 12 months (82.9%) with 98.3% having 3 moves or less. The 3 young people with 6 moves or more are aged between 22 and 24 making up 1.7% over the overall care leavers cohort.

## 7. Homes for children in care of the Local Authority

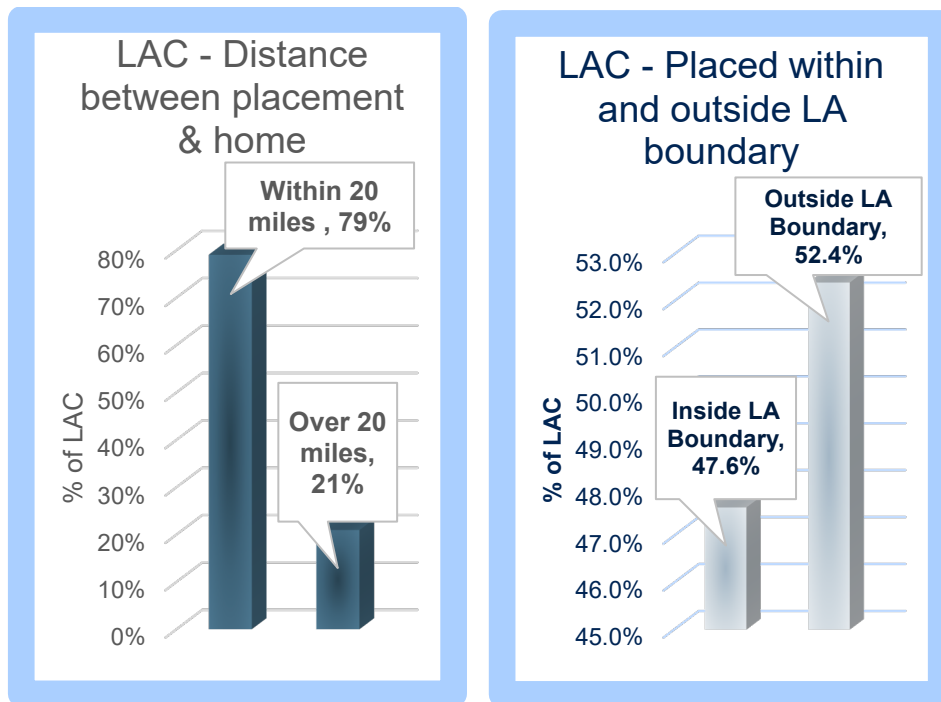
### Review of Current Provision and market analysis

Rotherham Council operates within a mixed economy of internal and external provision. Homes for children are commissioned through framework and spot purchasing arrangements, some of which are regional. Despite additional investment in recruitment, and a targeted campaign to attract in-house foster carers, In-house foster homes (162) account for 29% of the total looked after children population, compared with 65% nationally.

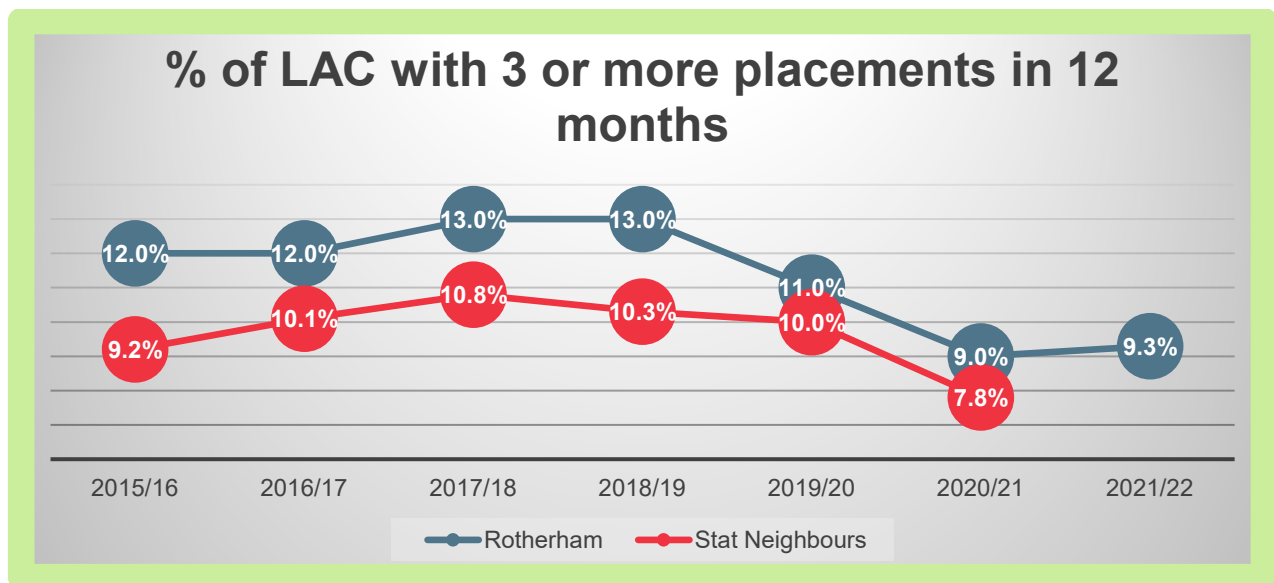


Despite work to stimulate local residential provision, there are limited private residential homes in borough, particularly when compared to local authorities across Yorkshire and Humberside.

79% of looked after children are in placements which are within 20 miles of home, with 21% of placements currently being more than 20 miles away.



Although the rate of looked after children with three or more homes within twelve months has been slowly declining over recent years and is in line with the national rate at 9%, Rotherham's rate remains higher than our statistical neighbours.



### Independent Fostering Agencies

At the end of March 2022, of the 563 looked after children, there were 408 children in fostering homes (all-types), which is 73% of the LAC population. Of the 408, 60.3% of children are placed with independent fostering agencies compared to 35% nationally.

Of the 246 children placed in an Independent Fostering Agency home at the end of March 2022, the largest cohort of children, 110 (44.7%) are aged 11 to 15, with 182 (74%) aged 5 to 15.

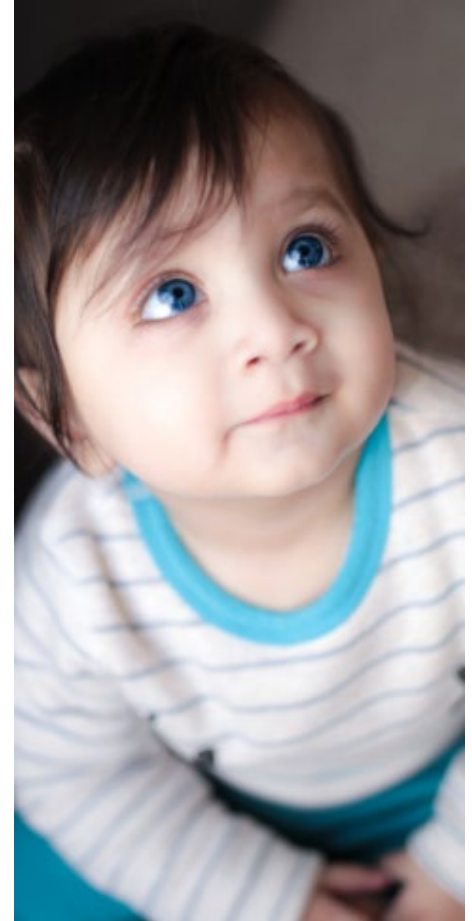
### **In-house Fostering**

Of the 408, 39.7% of children are placed with in-house foster carers compared to 65% nationally.

Of our fostering families (162), 124 of them have children who are placed with approved carers (including kinship) with a further 38 placed with family and friends (Regulation 24).

Of the 162 children placed in In-house fostering, the ages are quite evenly spread with the largest amount of 29% in the age range 11 to 15, 27.2% in the age range 5 to 10 and 19.8% in the age range of 1 to 4.

In-house foster carers benefit from a comprehensive support offer. In addition to their supervising social worker, in-house foster carers can access a dedicated fostering adviser, Support Helpline, Support groups, Mockingbird Programme, Virtual drop in sessions and Buddy Foster Carers. The Therapeutic Team provide consultation and direct intervention from psychologists and therapists without waiting lists. A robust training offer supports in-house foster carers. In-house foster carers are part of a fostering community including Foster Carer Forum, Birth Children's Support Group, Regular free community events & celebrations, Local Fostering Association, Dedicated Facebook groups, Membership to the fostering network, LGBT foster carers membership to New Family Social and Community Newsletters.



Rotherham is a member of the White Rose Fostering Framework. The framework has four lots of which placements can be called from:

- Lot 1 – Standard Costs
- Lot 2 – Standard with Additional Needs
- Lot 3 – Intensive Support
- Lot 4 - Specialist placement 1 - parent and child fostering (fee based on age of child)
- Lot 4 - Specialist Placement 2 - parent and child Assessment (fee based on age of child).

The White Rose Consortium is in the process of developing sub-regional Quality Hubs, for the purpose of delivering its quality assurance/service improvement work via these hubs. This will complement our own quality assurance framework.

## Residential homes

There are 56 children in Residential homes (In-house and OOA) which equates to 10% of the overall LAC population.

- 9 Private providers manage 12 children's homes.
- 5 Private providers manage 7 homes for young people aged 16 and above.
- Rotherham MBC manage 3 Children's homes, 1 Short Breaks home and 1 home for young people aged 16 and above.



Residential care homes (56) have most children over the age of 11 (89.3%), with 30 children aged 11 to 15 (53.6%) and 20 children aged 16 and over (35.7%). The remaining 6 are between 5 and 10 (10.7%).

293 young people are in post 16 years accommodation. The highest percentage were in independent living arrangements (32%) with the majority of them aged between 18 and 20 (86%).

Rotherham is a member of the White Rose Residential Child Care Framework which has:

1. Standard residential placements
2. Specialist residential placements
3. Specialist residential placements with education
4. Parent and child residential placements.

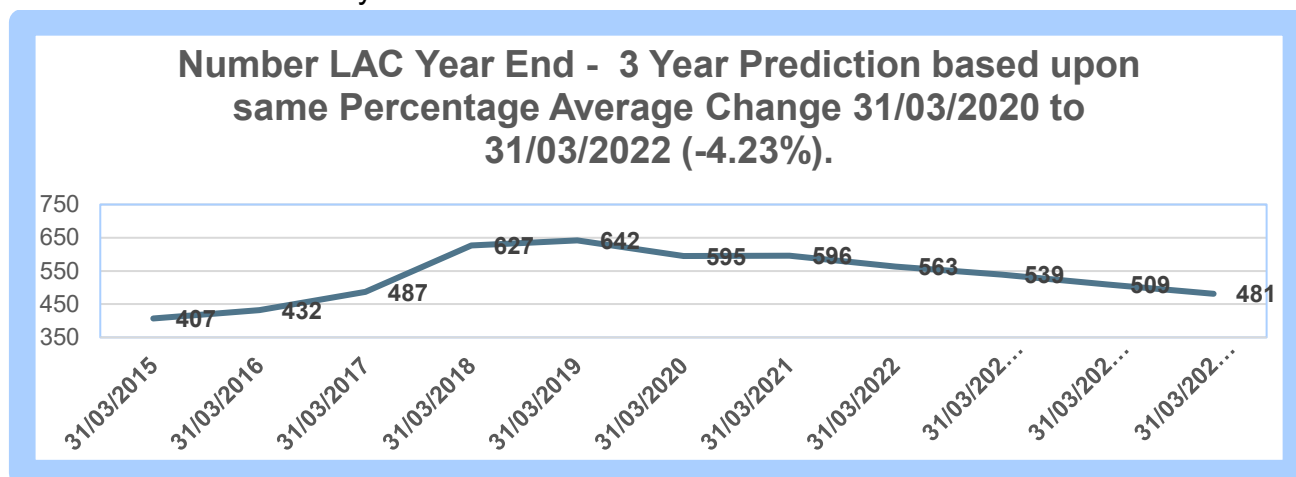
The commissioning activity is shared between the participating local authorities using shared procedures.

Rotherham has its own framework with providers of homes for young people aged 16 and above. This works well and will be supportive with regards to the planned regulation in this sector.

## 8. Future Need Projections

### Number of Looked After Children

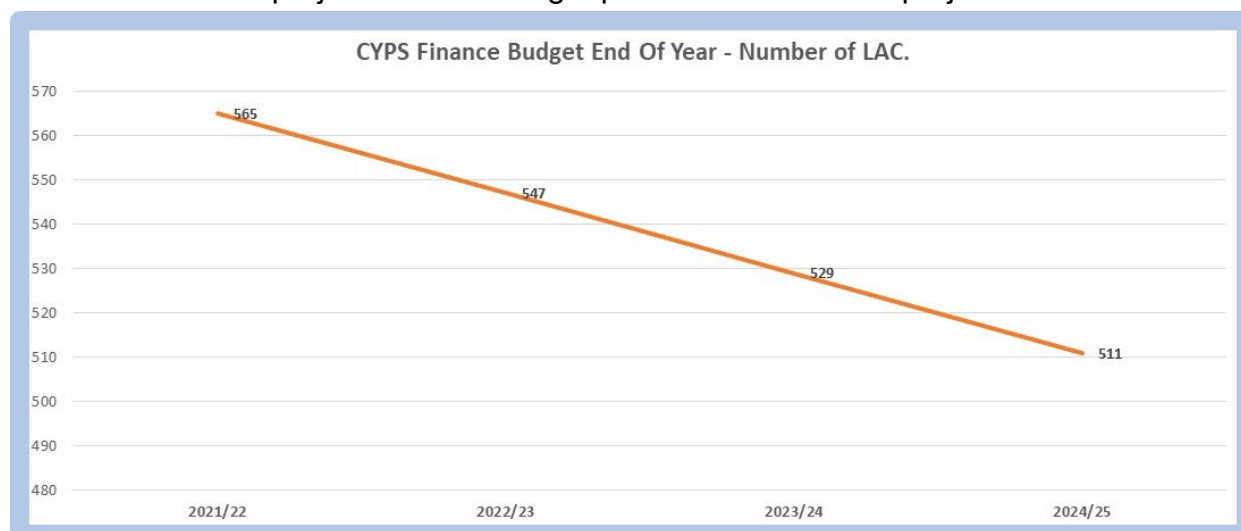
Based upon the average percentage change (taken from the numbers over the last seven years) the three-year prediction is a continued reduction in the number of Looked After Children in Rotherham by -4.23%.



The safe continuation of the reduction in the number of children entering care is reflective of the support that has continued to be provided to families, regardless to the covid-19 pandemic. This needs to be considered in the context of an increasing population. Rotherham has a greater proportion of under 15s than the national average (17.7% compared to 17% respectively): and the number of young people increased from 46,000 in 2011 to 47,100 in 2021 (a 2.4% increase). Implementation of the national transfer scheme has seen Rotherham receive an increased number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Children are remaining in care for longer.

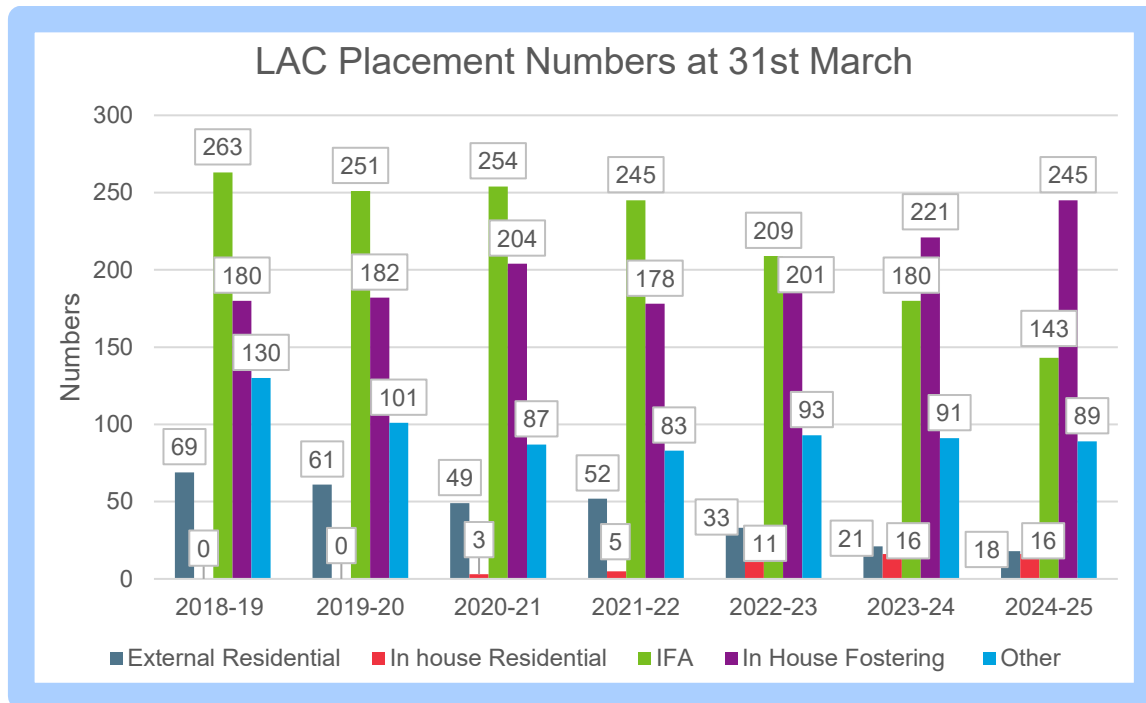
### Looked After Children Projection

Based upon the prediction above a safe continued reduction in the number of looked after children has been projected. The budget plan is based on this projection.



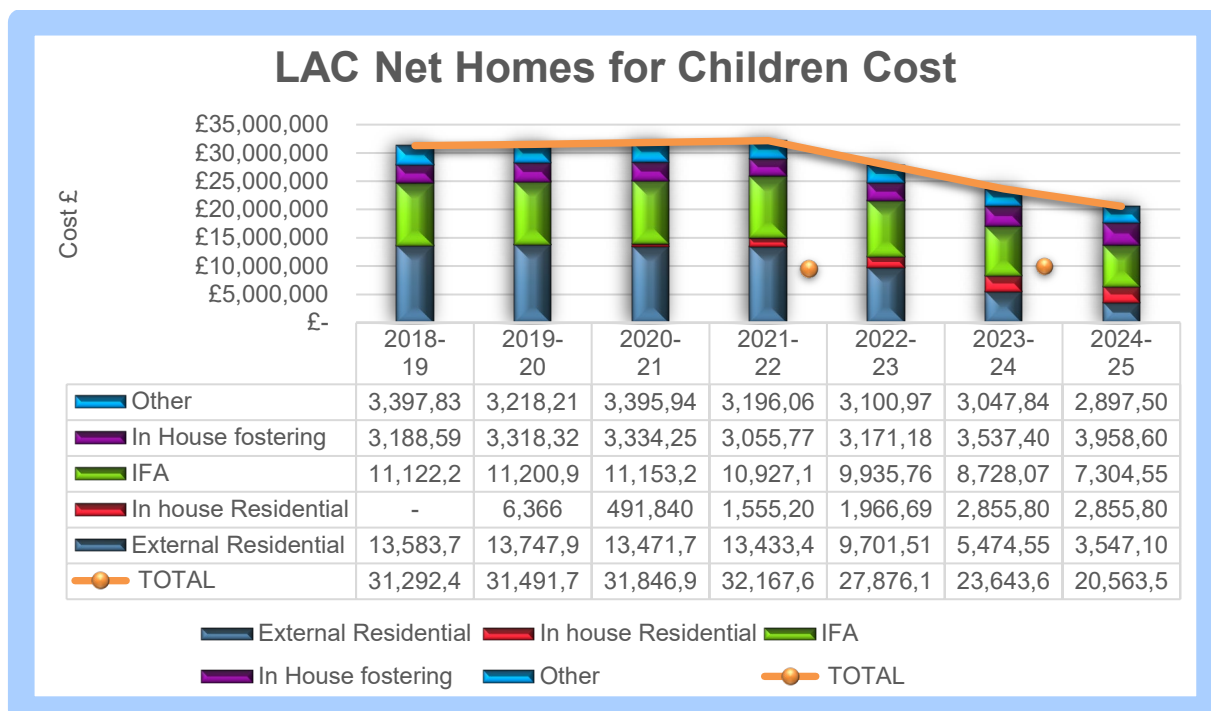
## Homes for children Projection

Based upon a linear projection (taken from the numbers over the last three years) the three year prediction sees a continued reduction in the use of external residential homes, an increase in the use of in-house residential homes and a reduction in the use of Independent Fostering Agency fostering families and increase in the use of in-house fostering families.



## Annual Expenditure Projection (2025)

Based upon the linear projection of homes for children above the three-year prediction sees a continued reduction in the expenditure on homes for Looked After Children.



## 9. Aspirations

Based on the analysis of local need and in line with the promises we have made to looked after children and care leavers; we have identified the following aspirations for the period of strategy. The delivery plan will be developed with key milestones for each of the objectives and outcome measures documented. Progress against the delivery plan will be reported to the Corporate Parenting Board. The aspirations will be reviewed annually by the Corporate Parenting Board based on updated annual sufficiency data and local / national drivers.

Our aspirations over the next five years are to:

- More Young People aged 10+ are able to be cared for safely in their families and communities.
- Children and young people have access to a range of homes (internal and external options) that meet their needs and support them to achieve their potential.
- All services take the Rotherham Family Approach to ensure all Rotherham children and young people are “resilient, successful and safe”, evidenced by Quality Assurance activity.
- Children and young people are able to access the support they need when they need it because Health, Education and Care Services share a joint understanding of the needs of children and young people in Rotherham and use this to inform commissioning and service delivery.
- Children and Young People and their families and carers are able to access CAMHs assessment and intervention when needed.
- Children, young people, families, and carers benefit from additional social value in Rotherham e.g., more employment opportunities.
- More children, young people and families benefit from additional support to improve outcomes and access employment.

## 10. Measures of Success

Aspiration	Outcome Measure (How will we know when we have done it)
More Young People aged 10+ are able to be cared for safely in their families and communities.	Reduction in the number of LAC Increased number of diversions from care - edge of care - duty – locality Increased number of children re-unified with parents / family members (PWP)
Children and young people have access to a range of homes (internal and external options) that meet their needs and support them to achieve their potential.	Reduction in the additionality of support within a child's placement (reduction in costs) Increased number of LAC in homes for children in Rotherham or within a 20-mile radius  Increased number of approved in-house foster carers / homes for children Increased number of children living with an in-house foster carer Increased % of children in a family-based setting (reg 24/38(6)/PWP) Increased % of our LAC who are in foster homes for children within a 20-mile radius  Increased number of children / young people in in-house residential provision (at capacity) Increased number of residential beds available in planned timescales A reduction in the number of LAC placed in out of authority residential provision Zero CYP in an unregistered / unregulated placement  Stabilise the number of children who have had 3 homes for children or more in 12 months  An improvement in the timeliness of review Pathway Plans to support transition planning Increased number of young people supported through the House project
All services take the Rotherham Family Approach to ensure all Rotherham children and young people are "resilient, successful and safe", evidenced by Quality Assurance activity.	Quality Assurance Framework in place.
Children and young people are able to access the support they need when they need it because Health, Education and Care Services share a joint understanding of the needs of children and young people in Rotherham and use this to inform commissioning and service delivery.	Updated Joint Commissioning Strategy
Children and Young People and their families and carers are able to access CAMHs assessment and intervention when needed.	LAC CAMHs pathway established.
Children, young people, families and carers benefit from additional social value in Rotherham e.g. more employment opportunities.	Number of commissioned contracts achieving social value
More children, young people and families benefit from additional support to improve outcomes and access employment.	Increased Number of families achieving significant and sustained progress through the supporting families programme.

## 11. Delivery Plan

Looked After Children and Care Leaver Promise	Aspiration	Objective (What do we want to do)	Action Owner (Who will be responsible)	Timescale (When will it be done by)	Outcome Measure (How will we know when we have done it)
All Promises	All services take the Rotherham Family Approach - "would this be good enough for my child?" to ensure all Rotherham children and young people are "resilient, successful and safe", evidenced by Quality Assurance activity.	Promote the Rotherham Family Approach to commissioned services.	William Shaw	2023-2028	Quality Assurance Framework in place.
		Develop and deliver the Quality Assurance Framework to measure the use and impact of the Rotherham Family Approach with children and young people.	William Shaw	March 2023	
Promise 1 - We will help you to live in a safe place where you are protected from harm	Children and young people have access to a range of homes (internal and external options) that meet their needs and support them to achieve their potential.	Commission homes, interventions, and services that are high quality, compliant, regulated and deliver best value.	William Shaw	2023-2028	Reduction in the additionality of support within a child's placement (reduction in costs) Increased number of LAC in homes for children in Rotherham or within a 20-mile radius
		Transform the offer to Rotherham Council foster carers to ensure all children, young people and families receive the help they need	Rebecca Wall	December 2022	Increased number of approved in-house foster carers / homes for children Increased number of children living with an in-house foster carer
		Continued development and delivery of in-house residential children's homes, promoting residential care as an intervention not a destination	Rebecca Wall	March 2024	Increased % of children in a family-based setting (reg 24/38(6)/PWP) Increased % of our LAC who are in foster homes for children within a 20-mile radius
		Work collaboratively with external residential and fostering providers to	William Shaw	June 2023	Increased number of children / young people in in-house residential provision (at capacity)

		ensure all homes for children meet the required regulatory requirements and provide assurance of the quality outcomes delivered			Increased number of residential beds available in planned timescales A reduction in the number of LAC placed in out of authority residential provision Zero CYP in an unregistered / unregulated placement
		Ensure all homes for children meet the required regulatory requirements and provide assurance of the quality outcomes delivered by the Council.	Rebecca Wall	2023-2028	Stabilise the number of children who have had 3 homes for children or more in 12 months
		Contribute to the delivery of the foster carer recruitment programme in line with development within the Independent Review of Children's Social Care.	William Shaw	March 2023	An improvement in the timeliness of review Pathway Plans to support transition planning Increased number of young people supported through the House project
		Contribute to the delivery of collaborative approaches, frameworks, and bodies to manage the market effectively in line with development within the Independent Review of Children's Social Care.	Helen Sweatton	2023-2028	
Promise 8 - We will help you to be happy and healthy	Health, Education and Care Services share a joint understanding of the needs of children and young people in Rotherham and use this to inform commissioning and service delivery to ensure children and young people are able to access the support	Develop joint strategic needs analysis, commissioning processes and funding arrangements alongside partners.	Helen Sweatton	December 2023	Updated Joint Commissioning Strategy

	they need when they need it				
	Children and Young People and their families and carers can access CAMHs assessment and intervention when needed..	Develop a CAMHs pathway to improve access to assessment and intervention for looked after children.	Helen Sweaton	June 2023	LAC CAMHs pathway established.
Promise 9 - We will help you to explore and be ready for the world of work	Children, young people, families and carers benefit from additional social value in Rotherham e.g. more employment opportunities.	Enable social value principles and outcomes to be integrated into the whole commissioning cycle for services for children and young people.	William Shaw	2023-2028	Number of commissioned contracts achieving social value
Promise 1 - We will help you to live in a safe place where you are protected from harm	More Young People aged 10+ are able to be cared for safely in their families and communities.	Develop and Deliver the Early Help Strategy	David McWilliams	December 2022	Reduction in the number of LAC Increased number of diversions from care - edge of care - duty – locality Increased number of children re-unified with parents / family members (PWP)
		Increase capacity in Family Group Conferencing	David McWilliams	April 2023	
		Develop 'Wrap around' Edge of Care Services for families with young people aged 13+	Monica Green	January 2023	
Promise 9 - We will help you to explore and be ready for the world of work	More children, young people and families benefit from additional support to improve outcomes and access employment.	Expand the Supporting Families program.	David McWilliams	April 2023	Increased Number of families achieving significant and sustained progress through the supporting families' programme.

END

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## PART A - Initial Equality Screening Assessment

As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality and diversity.

A **screening** process can help judge relevance and provide a record of both the process and decision. Screening should be a short, sharp exercise that determines relevance for all new and revised strategies, policies, services and functions.

Completed at the earliest opportunity it will help to determine:

- the relevance of proposals and decisions to equality and diversity
- whether or not equality and diversity is being/has already been considered, and
- whether or not it is necessary to carry out an Equality Analysis (Part B).

Further information is available in the Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance – see page 9.

### 1. Title

**Title: LAC Sufficiency Strategy**

**Directorate: Children and Young People's Services**

**Service area: Looked After Children**

**Lead person:  
Helen Sweaton**

**Contact number:  
07554436546**

Is this a:

☒

**Strategy / Policy**

☐

**Service / Function**

☐

**Other**

**If other, please specify**

### 2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening

The Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy sets out how Rotherham Children and Young People's Services will fulfil its role as a Corporate Parent and meet its statutory sufficiency duty by providing good quality care, effective parenting and support to children and young people in and leaving care.

It describes the principles that are applied when seeking to commission the provision of secure, safe and appropriate accommodation and support, to children in care and care leavers over the next three years.

The Strategy provides the underpinning needs analysis that will inform market

management, seeking to ensure that there is the right mix of provision available to meet the needs of children and young people and that this provision mix provides positive outcomes and value for money.

### 3. Relevance to equality and diversity

All the Council's strategies/policies, services/functions affect service users, employees or the wider community – borough wide or more local. These will also have a greater/lesser relevance to equality and diversity.

The following questions will help you to identify how relevant your proposals are.

When considering these questions think about age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, civil partnerships and marriage, pregnancy and maternity and other socio-economic groups e.g. parents, single parents and guardians, carers, looked after children, unemployed and people on low incomes, ex-offenders, victims of domestic violence, homeless people etc.

Questions	Yes	No
Could the proposal have implications regarding the accessibility of services to the whole or wider community? <i>(Be mindful that this is not just about numbers. A potential to affect a small number of people in a significant way is as important)</i>	x	
Could the proposal affect service users? <i>(Be mindful that this is not just about numbers. A potential to affect a small number of people in a significant way is as important)</i>	x	
Has there been or is there likely to be an impact on an individual or group with protected characteristics? <i>(Consider potential discrimination, harassment or victimisation of individuals with protected characteristics)</i>	x	
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns regarding the proposal? <i>(It is important that the Council is transparent and consultation is carried out with members of the public to help mitigate future challenge)</i>	x	
Could the proposal affect how the Council's services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom? <i>(If the answer is yes you may wish to seek advice from commissioning or procurement)</i>	x	
Could the proposal affect the Council's workforce or employment practices? <i>(If the answer is yes you may wish to seek advice from your HR business partner)</i>	x	
If you have answered no to all the questions above, please explain the reason		

If you have answered **no** to **all** the questions above please complete **sections 5 and 6**.

If you have answered **yes** to any of the above please complete **section 4**.

#### 4. Considering the impact on equality and diversity

If you have not already done so, the impact on equality and diversity should be considered within your proposals before decisions are made.

Considering equality and diversity will help to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and take active steps to create a discrimination free society by meeting a group or individual's needs and encouraging participation.

Please provide specific details for all three areas below using the prompts for guidance and complete an Equality Analysis (Part B).

- **How have you considered equality and diversity?**

As at 31 March 2022, there were 563 Looked After Children and 293 Care Experienced Young People.

- 90% of these children are in care as a result of abuse or neglect
- 10% are in care due to family dysfunction, absent parenting, the family being in acute stress, parental disability or illness, socially unacceptable behaviour or the child's disability or illness

29% (162) Looked After Children live in in-house fostering homes, 44% (246) live in independent fostering agency homes, 8% (46) live in residential homes and 2% (10) live in in-house residential homes.

See Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2023 - 24 for further demographic detail and information.

Rotherham's Looked After Children will have protected characteristics. All care planning will take account of the needs of the individual child and seek to match their needs with an appropriate placement. Issues around race, disability, maternity, belief, gender and sexual orientation are carefully considered in the referral matching process when deciding where looked after children and young people are placed.

The Looked After Children's Council meets regularly. The LAC Council have influenced the development of this strategy, the priorities and delivery plan.

Information regarding ethnicity, age, disability and SEN and gender will inform service development and commissioning intentions to secure homes for children that will best meet their individual needs.

Based on this information our priority areas over the next three years are to:

- More Young People aged 10+ are able to be cared for safely in their families and communities.
- Children and young people have access to a range of homes (internal and external options) that meet their needs and improve their outcomes.
- All services take the Rotherham Family Approach to ensure all Rotherham children and young people are "resilient, successful and safe", evidenced by Quality Assurance activity.

- Children and young people are able to access the support they need when they need it because Health, Education and Care Services share a joint understanding of the needs of children and young people in Rotherham and use this to inform commissioning and service delivery.
- Children and Young People and their families and carers are able to access CAMHs assessment and intervention when needed.
- Children, young people, families and carers benefit from additional social value in Rotherham e.g. more employment opportunities.
- More children, young people and families benefit from additional support to improve outcomes and access employment.

In addition to Looked After Children delivery of the Strategy may impact on other groups:

Rotherham has an existing community of Foster Carers. RMBC meet with this group regularly to ensure that their voice can inform future planning for new recruitment initiatives as well as support package that is available to Foster Carers. Becoming a Foster Carer provides an employment opportunity to Rotherham residents. All initiatives to recruit more Foster Carers should aim to increase the diversity of the Foster Carer profile across all protected characteristics; this will support children and young people to achieve positive outcomes as placements that are a good match will be available.

Rotherham currently works with a number of Independent Fostering Agencies and engages with this group via a Provider Forum.

Plans to open new residential provision within the borough may have an impact on the wider community. Robust arrangements to consult with the community will be considered as part of the commissioning process with new providers in the borough.

#### • **Key findings**

Looked after children are some of Rotherham's most vulnerable children. This proposal will seek to improve the health, social care and education outcomes and address inequalities for these children.

The updated LAC Sufficiency Strategy 2023 - 2027 sets out a clear need analysis that helps to support work to meet the needs of Looked After Children in the borough. The work will have a positive impact in terms of addressing the diversity of this cohort through a broader range of placement options.

Work to open new residential provision in the borough may be perceived negatively by local communities. Consultation and engagement work will need to be implemented carefully and sensitively. The Local Authority will maintain oversight of this through the commissioning process and ensure that Elected Members are included in the process.

#### • **Actions**

A range of approaches will be used to ensure that looked after children play a key part in delivery of the strategy. The LAC Council have been involved with the development of the strategy and influence decision making and delivery.

Frontline staff, partner agencies, foster carers and parents / carers have been and will

also be consulted and be able inform the development and implementation.

In summary, these are:

- To continue engagement with the Looked After Children's Council
- To continue to engage with Rotherham Foster Carers
- To continue to engage with the Independent Foster Carer Forum
- To ensure that consultation and engagement with the public is embedded in all plans to open new residential provision in the borough.

Further Equality Impact Analysis will be completed as required as part of the delivery associated with the Strategy.

Date to scope and plan your Equality Analysis:	Completed
Date to complete your Equality Analysis:	September 2022
Lead person for your Equality Analysis (Include name and job title):	William Shaw CYPS Head of Commissioning

## 5. Governance, ownership and approval

Please state here who has approved the actions and outcomes of the screening:

Name	Job title	Date
Helen Sweatton	Assistant Director Commissioning and Performance	Updated and agreed 19/08/22

## 6. Publishing

This screening document will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given.

If this screening relates to a **Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision** a copy of the completed document should be attached as an appendix and published alongside the relevant report.

A copy of **all** screenings should also be sent to [equality@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:equality@rotherham.gov.uk) For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file and also published on the Council's Equality and Diversity Internet page.

Date screening completed	25 August 2022
Report title and date	<b>Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy</b>
If relates to a Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision – report date and date sent for publication	17 October 2022
Date screening sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement	25 August, 2022

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#### User guidance:

- The first section of this form guides users through considering major areas where emissions are likely to occur. If emissions are impacted in a way not covered by these categories, please identify this at the bottom of the section
- The first section should be filled as such:
  - **Impact:** identify, in relation to each area, whether the decision of the proposal does the following: *reduces emissions*, *increases emissions*, or has *no impact on emissions*. If it is uncertain this section can be labelled *impact unknown*
  - If **no impact on emissions** is identified: no further detail is needed for this area, but can be added if relevant (e.g. if efforts have been made to mitigate emissions in this area.)
  - **Describe impacts or potential impacts on emissions:** two sections deal respectively with emissions from the Council (including those of contractors), and emissions across Rotherham as a whole. In both sections please explain any factors that are likely to reduce or increase emissions. If **impact unknown** has been selected, then identify the area of uncertainty and outline known variables that may affect impacts.
  - In most cases there is no need to quantify the emission impact of an area after outlining the factors that may reduce or increase emissions. In some cases, however, this may be desirable if factors can be reduced to a small number of known variables (e.g. if an emission impact is attached to a known or estimated quantity of fuel consumed).
  - **Describe any measures to mitigate emission impact:** regardless of the emission impact, in many cases steps should be taken in order to reduce mitigate all emissions associated with each area as far as possible; these steps can be outlined here (For example: if a proposal is likely to increase emissions but practices or materials have been adopted in order to reduce this overall impact, this would be described here).
  - **Outline any monitoring of emission impacts that will be carried out:** in this section outline any steps taken to monitor emission levels, or steps taken to monitor the factors that are expected to increase or reduce emission levels (for example, if waste or transport levels are being monitored this would be described here)
- A **summary paragraph** outlining the likely overall impacts of the proposal/decision on emissions should then be completed - this is not required if the proposal/decision has no impact across all areas.
- The supporting information section should be filled as followed:
  - Author/completing officer
  - **Research, data, or information** may refer to datasets, background documents, literature, consultations, or other data-gathering exercise. These should also be added to the **supporting documents** section of the cabinet report

- 
- Carbon Impact Assessments are to be appended to the associated cabinet reports
  - Prior to publishing reports, Carbon Impact Assessments should be sent to [climate@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:climate@rotherham.gov.uk) for feedback
  - Report authors may also use the above email address to direct any further queries or to access further support regarding completing the assessment

Will the decision/proposal impact...	Impact	If an impact or potential impacts are identified			
		Describe impacts or potential impacts on emissions from the Council and its contractors.	Describe impact or potential impacts on emissions across Rotherham as a whole.	Describe any measures to mitigate emission impacts	Outline any monitoring of emission impacts that will be carried out
Emissions from non-domestic buildings?	N/A				
Emissions from transport?	N/A				
Emissions from waste, or the quantity of waste itself?	Impact unknown	Potential increase in domestic refuse from the Council owned children's homes.	Potential increase in domestic waste if bringing additional children into Rotherham; unknown at this time.	Each home will have access to recycling bins.	
Emissions from housing and domestic buildings?	Impact unknown	Potential increase in emissions from housing if bringing additional children into Rotherham; unknown at this time.		For new residential homes, any replacements required (e.g. heating) will be future-proofed for triple-A rating.	
Emissions from construction and/or development?	Increase in emissions	Emissions associated with renovating new residential homes.	Minimal increase relative to overall emissions from construction across Rotherham.		
Carbon capture (e.g. through trees)?	Impact unknown			Attempts will be made to maximise planting trees on any new residential homes; feasibility to be determined	

Identify any emission impacts associated with this decision that have not been covered by the above fields:  
N/A

Please provide a summary of all impacts and mitigation/monitoring measures:

The Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy sets out how Rotherham Children and Young People's Services will fulfil its role as a Corporate Parent and meet its statutory sufficiency duty by providing good quality care, effective parenting and support to children and young people in and leaving care.

It describes the principles that are applied when seeking to commission the provision of secure, safe and appropriate accommodation and support, to children in care and care leavers over the next three years.

The Strategy provides the underpinning needs analysis that will inform market management, seeking to ensure that there is the right mix of provision available to meet the needs of children and young people and that this provision mix provides positive outcomes and value for money.

The development of residential settings is a priority within the strategy, this means there will be some low level impact in terms of car use for staff getting to the home/ their place of work and transporting children. There will also be an increase in refuse from the individual homes as they support children and staff potentially.

In order to monitor and mitigate the impact the distances travelled will be monitored and the settings will access electric vehicles.

Supporting information:

Completed by: (Name, title, and service area/directorate).	William Shaw Head of CYPS Commissioning
---	--

Please outline any research, data, or information used to complete this [form].	
---	--

If quantities of emissions are relevant to and have been used in this form please identify which conversion factors have been used to quantify impacts.	
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Tracking [to be completed by Policy Support / Climate Champions]	
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Public Report  
Corporate Parenting Panel

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**Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting**

Corporate Parenting Panel – 13 December 2022

**Report Title**

Corporate Parenting Performance Report – Q2 2022/23

**Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?**

No

**Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

Suzanne Joyner, Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services

**Report Author(s)**

Rebecca Wall, Head of Children in Care

[rebecca.wall@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:rebecca.wall@rotherham.gov.uk)

Rebecca Harrison, Performance Officer

[rebecca.harrison@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:rebecca.harrison@rotherham.gov.uk)

**Ward(s) Affected**

Borough-Wide

**Report Summary**

This report provides a summary of performance for key performance indicators across the Looked After Children (LAC) services. It should be read in conjunction with the accompanying performance data reports, Appendix 1 which provides performance on a page giving an overview of the services performance in comparison to the same period 2021-22 and Appendix 2 which provides trend data, graphical analysis, and benchmarking data against national and statistical neighbour averages where possible.

**Recommendations**

1. The panel is asked to receive this report with the accompanying dataset (Appendix 2) and consider any issues arising.

**List of Appendices Included**

Appendix 1 Performance on a page

Appendix 2 Looked after children quarterly performance – September 22 (Q2)

**Background Papers**

Children's Social Care Monthly Performance Report – September 22 (Q2)

**Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel**

No

**Council Approval Required**

No

**Exempt from the Press and Public**

No

## Corporate Parenting Performance Report – Q2 2022/23

**1. Background**

- 1.1** This report provides evidence to the council's commitment to continuous improvement and providing performance information to enable scrutiny of the impact on the outcomes for children and young people in care. It should be read in conjunction with the accompanying performance data report which provides trend data, graphical analysis, and benchmarking data against national and statistical neighbour averages.
- 1.2** Targets, including associated 'RAG' (red, amber, green rating) tolerances, are included. These have been set in consideration of available national and statistical neighbour benchmarking data, recent performance levels and, importantly, Rotherham's local service context.
- 1.3** All benchmarking data is as at the latest data release by the DfE and relates to 2020/21 outturn.
- 1.4** The narrative supplied within the report has been informed by the Assistant Director for Children's Services and the Head of Service – Children in Care.

**2. Key Issues**

- 2.1 Looked After Children** – At the end of quarter 2 we saw the number of children and young people we look after increase by 6 to 541 when compared to the end of Q1 (535), however, it is 29 below the same period in 2021/22 when there were 570 LAC. A key area of increase over this time period has been linked to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children arriving via the National Transfer Scheme but also being placed as adults by the home office in hotels, who after accessing legal advice seek support a children. This is a regional and national trend and pressure.

During Q2 54 children became looked after equating to 89 year-to-date, compared to 52 in Q2 2021/22 (80 ytd). 46 children ceased to be looked after (105 ytd), compared to 43 (106 ytd) in the same quarter last year.

The benchmark measure of 10k population rate of children looked after has reduced to 94.2 at the end of Q2 compared to 99.2 last year. This is now below our statistical neighbour's average of 99.4 but remains significantly higher than the national average of 67.0.

There are currently 33 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) that are looked after by the local authority (LA). The commissioning team are working to ensure we are able to offer placements and accommodation commensurate to need. We know this is a potential ongoing pressure due to the growing need to support more UASC, and impact on local placement sufficiency is being monitored. The service has also received training from Solihull and ENTRAIID to support confidence building and understanding of the asylum process. Pathways into service have been agreed as well as an approach to commissioning age assessments.

**2.2 Plans** – the end of the quarter, 90.2% of eligible LAC had an up-to-date plan, which is a decrease (-1.9%) in comparison to last year when it was 92.1% at the same point.

**2.3 Placements** – The percentage of LAC in a family-based setting has decreased during Q2 reaching 76.5% when compared to 79.8% at the end of Q1 and 80.2% at the end of the Q2 last year. 62.9% of long-term LAC had been in a stable placement for at least 2 years at the end of Q2 showing a reduction of 9.0% when compared to the same period last year (71.9%). Placement stability is an area of focus that the fostering service, responsible Team manager and IRO have been engaged with to review what works and what their roles are in working to prevent placement breakdowns. The fostering service has sought to strengthen placement stability via completing the mapping assessment to identify support needs and ensure these are met via the service. The fostering service is expanding their support offer recruiting additional Family Support workers and an extended on-call support offering after hours and weekend contact, as these have been highlighted as best practice. Team Around the Child meetings are in place to support all placements, with a particular focus at linking in support from the agency or Rotherham Therapeutic Team earlier, to prevent disruption.

The percentage of children having had 3 or more placements in the last rolling 12 months has risen to 11.4% which is above the latest statistical neighbour (7.8%) and national averages (9.0%). This is also a 1.2% increase on the same period in 2021/22 when there was 10.2% of children at the end of the quarter. The work linked to the team around the child will support strengthening placement stability. Additional support packages to grow foster carers for older children, have also been proposed and piloted, to improve local sufficiency.

**2.4 In-house fostering** – There were 119 in-house foster carer households registered at the end of the quarter in comparison to 133 (-14) last year. There were 4 foster family approvals in Q2, making 6 approvals year-to-date. However, 4 families also ceased to be foster carers in the quarter bringing the year-to-date total to 11, therefore equating to 5 less foster families at the end of the quarter. At the end of the period there was a total of 9 prospective foster families in the recruitment process, 7 of which have panels scheduled between October 22 and January 23.

Placement sufficiency remains a key focus and Brightsparks continue to support us with fostering recruitment work. After a slower start there has been an increase in potential foster carers progressing to assessment this quarter.

**2.5 Youth Offending** – Of the 541 children and young people looked after by Rotherham at the end of the quarter, 6 were also known to the youth offending team.

**2.6 Adoptions** – 13 children have been adopted since April 2022 which is a decrease (-4) when compared to the same period last year when there had been 17 adoptions.

At the end of Q2, the A10 measure (Average number of days between a child becoming LAC and having an adoption placement) was 475.7 days (490.2 days Q2 2021/22) and the A2 measure (Average number of days between placement order and being matched with adoptive family) was 197.8 days (231.4 days Q2 2021/22). This continues the positive reduction and the A2 figure from placement

order to adoptive match indicates that we are matching children and placing with adoptive families sooner. There has been less reduction in the A1, which is linked to the court delays caused by the recent Covid-19 pandemic, but we are starting to see an improvement this year (2022/23).

- 2.7 Health** – Following the Covid-19 pandemic we are now starting to see an improvement in the percentage of up-to-date health and dental checks with 68.5% (36.9% - 21/22) of dental assessments and 83.1% (80.3% - 21/22) of health assessments being up to date at the end of the quarter.

The percentage of LAC having an initial health assessment (IHA) within timescale has also improved in 2022/23 with 77.2% of IHA's being in time year-to-date, compared to 64.8% in 2021/22.

- 2.8 Reviews and visits** – 92.8% of reviews during 2022/23 were completed within the timescales set, which equates to 706 reviews in time out of 761 that were completed April to September 22 (91.7% (341/372) in Q2).

At the end of the quarter, 97.8% of visits were up-to-date and within timescale of the national minimum standard. At the end of the same period in 2021 91.8% were in time, showing a 6.0% increase this year.

- 2.9 Education** – At the end of the summer term 2021/22, 97.5% of school age LAC had a PEP compared to 98.3% summer term 2020/21. Rotherham's local standard which ensures that each PEP is refreshed every term (rather than the annual minimum standard) was 95.0% at the end of the summer term 2021/22, compared to 94.0% summer term 2020/21.

The virtual school continues to develop their PEP to support designated teachers (DTs) in completing the PEP in advance of and during PEP meetings. Clear quality assurance (QA) guidance has been provided to DTs that requires timely completion of PEPs to ensure good or better QA ratings.

- 2.10 Care Leavers** – At the end of Q2 there were 311 young people in the care leavers cohort which shows an increase of 27 when compared to the same point in 2021 (284). 78.1% of these care leavers had an up-to-date pathway plan at the end of the quarter which is a 2.0% improvement when compared to the same period last year (76.1%).

97.4% of care leavers were in suitable accommodation compared to 95.8% at the end of Q2 last year. Of the 8 young people in unsuitable accommodation 4 are in custody. However, the percentage of care leavers in employment, education, and training (EET) shows a 9.6% increase with 71.2% at the end of this quarter compared to 61.6% at the same point in 2021.

### **3. Options considered and recommended proposal**

- 3.1** The full corporate parenting performance report attached at Appendix 2 represents a summary of performance across a range of key national and local indicators. Corporate Parenting Panel members are therefore recommended to consider and review this information.

**4. Consultation on proposal**

4.1 Not applicable

**5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

5.1 Not applicable

**6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications (to be written by the relevant Head of Finance and the Head of Procurement on behalf of s151 Officer)**

6.1 There are no direct financial implications to this report. The relevant Assistant Director and Budget Holder will identify any implications arising from associated improvement actions and Members and Commissioners will be consulted where appropriate.

**7. Legal Advice and Implications (to be written by Legal Officer on behalf of Assistant Director Legal Services)**

7.1 There are no legal implications to this report.

**8. Human Resources Advice and Implications**

8.1 There are no direct human resource implications to this report. The relevant Assistant Director and Heads of Service will identify any implications arising from associated improvement actions and Members and Commissioners will be consulted where appropriate.

**9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

9.1 The performance report relates to services and outcomes for children in care.

**10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications**

10.1 There are no direct implications from this report.

**11. Implications for CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions and Climate Change**

11.1 There are no direct implications within this report.

**12. Implications for Partners**

- 12.1** The Partners and other directorates are engaged in improving the performance and quality of services to children, young people, and their families via the Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership (RSCP). The RSCP Performance and Quality Assurance Subgroup receive this performance report within the wider social care performance report on a regular basis.

### **13. Risks and Mitigation**

- 13.1** Inability and lack of engagement in performance management arrangements by managers and staff could lead to poor and deteriorating services for children and young people. Strong management oversight by Directorship Leadership Team and the ongoing weekly performance meetings mitigates this risk by holding managers and workers to account for any dips in performance both at a team and at an individual child level.

### **14. Accountable Officer(s)**

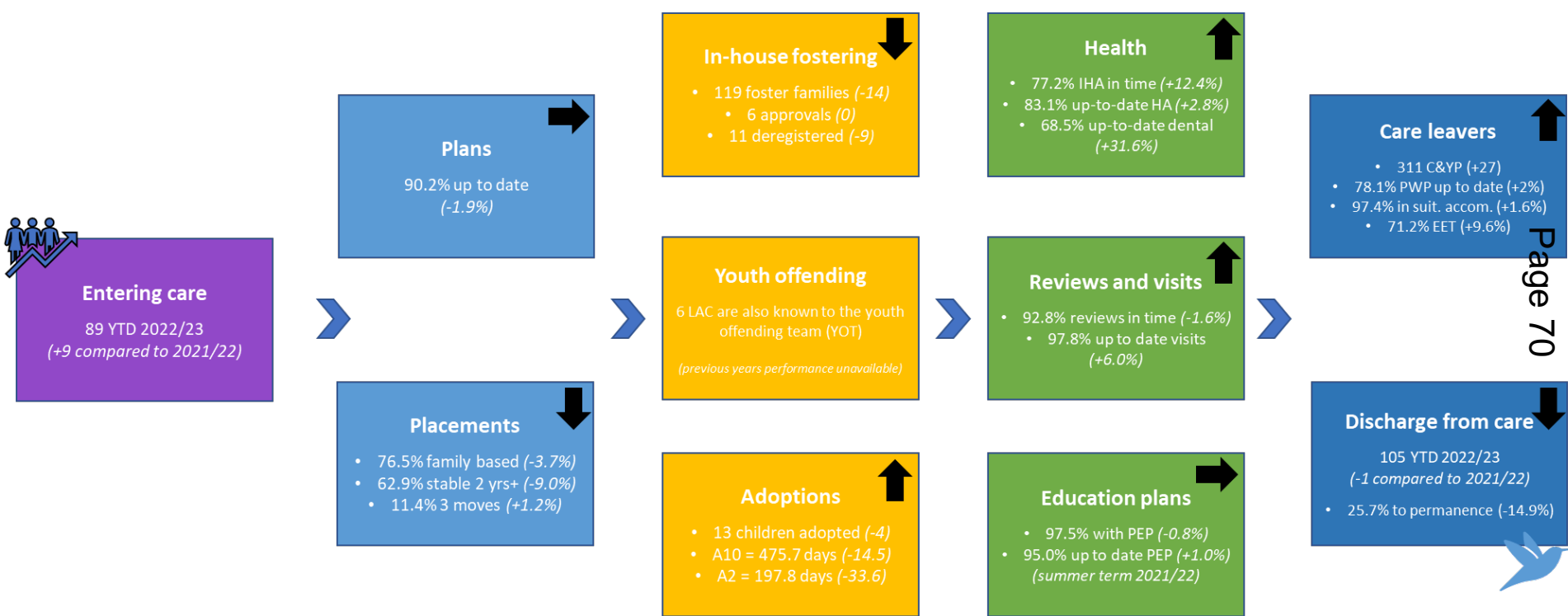
Rebecca Wall, Head of Children in Care,  
[rebecca.wall@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:rebecca.wall@rotherham.gov.uk)

Monica Green, Assistant Director Safeguarding Children  
[monica.green@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:monica.green@rotherham.gov.uk)

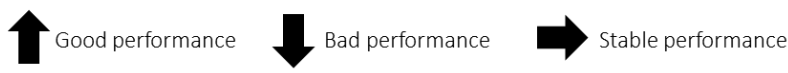
*This report is published on the Council's [website](#).*

# Performance on a Page

## As of 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022 (Q2 - 2022/23)



All performance is year to date cumulative or as at the end of September 2022 (end of quarter 2) unless otherwise stated. Figures in brackets show the difference compared to the same period in the previous financial year (2021/22).



# Children's and Young People Services Corporate Parenting Performance Report

**As at month end: September 2022 (Q2)**

## Document details

Status: Issue 1

Date created: 01/11/2022

Created by: Performance & Quality Team

Contact: [cyps-performance@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:cyps-performance@rotherham.gov.uk)

**Please note:** Data reports are not dynamic. Although care is taken to ensure data is as accurate as possible every month, delays in data input can result in changes in figures when reports are re-run retrospectively. To combat this at least two individual months data is rerun for each indicator where necessary.

## Our Vision

*“Working with Rotherham’s children, young people and families to be resilient, successful and safe”*

# Looked After Children Performance Summary

As at month end: September 2022 (Q2)

\*DOT - Direction of travel represents the direction of 'performance' since the previous month showing if the number or percentage has gone up or down. Colours have been added to help distinguish better and worse performance with the exceptions of measures that are for information only. Key Below:-

- ↑ - increase/decrease in number/percentage = improvement in performance
- ↓ - increase/decrease in number/percentage = decline in performance
- - number/percentage remained same as previous month

- ↑ - increase in number/percentage (info measures)
- ↓ - remained same as previous month (info measures)
- - decrease in number/percentage (info measures)

REF NO.	INDICATOR	Success Measures Council Plan Measures	TIMELINE	DATA NOTE	2022 / 23					TARGET & TOLERANCES			YR ON YR PERFORMANCE		LATEST BENCHMARKING									
					Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	2022/23 YTD	Good perf is	DOT* (month)	RAG (month)	Red	Amber	Green (target)	2021/22	Yr on Yr trend	Stat neigh av.	Best stat neigh	Nat av.	Top qtile threshold	RIA 2020/21			
LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN	4.1	No. of looked after children	TB5		monthly	Count	549	545	541	-		info	↓				562							
	4.2	Rate of looked after children per 10,000 population aged 0-17		CH04	monthly	Rate per 10,000	95.6	94.9	94.2	-		low	↓		95.2+	-	<95.2	97.8		99.4	58.0	67.0	-	78.0
	4.3	No. of admissions of looked after children	TB4		monthly	Count	30	12	12	89		info	→				175							
	4.4	No. of looked after unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC)			monthly	Count	29	30	33	-		info	↑					New measure 2022/23						
	4.5	% of eligible looked after children with an up to date plan			monthly	%	92.9%	92.6%	90.2%	-		high	↓		<87%	87%+	95%+	96.6%						
	4.6	% of looked after children visits up to date & completed within timescale of national minimum standard			monthly	%	97.3%	96.5%	97.8%	-		high	↑		<90%	90%+	98%+	96.8%						
	4.7	% of looked after children care plans reviewed within timescales			monthly	%	98.6%	82.4%	91.3%	92.8%		high	↑		<87%	87%+	95%+	94.3%						
	4.8	% of looked after children having an initial health assessment within timescale			monthly	%	88.9%	93.8%	100.0%	77.2%		high	↑				68.5%							
	4.9	% of looked after children with a up to date health assessments			monthly	%	92.2%	89.5%	83.1%	-		high	↓		<87%	87%+	95%+	71.0%						
	4.10	% of looked after children with a up to date dental assessments			monthly	%	74.3%	73.0%	68.5%	-		high	↓		<87%	87%+	95%+	44.0%						
	4.11	No. of looked after children who are known to the youth offending team (YOT)			monthly	Count	6	6	6	-		info	→					New measure 2022/23						
	4.12	No. of children with an Education Health & Care plan in the looked after children cohort			monthly	Count	103	102	100	-		info	↓					New measure 2022/23						
	4.13	No. of looked after children having at least one missing episode within the period			monthly	Count	14	14	13	41		info	↓				64	New measure 2021/22						
	4.14	No. of children who have ceased to be looked after children			monthly	Count	15	17	14	105		high	↓				212							
	4.15	No. of special guardianship orders (SGO) or child arrangement orders (CAO) granted after a period of being looked after children (Legal Status)			monthly	Count	5	3	4	32		info	↑				85	New measure 2021/22						
	4.16	No. of looked after children who have ceased to be looked after due to a special guardianship orders(SGO) or hild arrangement orders (CAO)	TB5		monthly	Count	0	2	2	14		info	→				42	New measure 2021/22						
	4.17	% of looked after children who have ceased to be looked after due to permanence (SGO, CAO, Adoption)			monthly	%	26.7%	17.6%	14.3%	25.7%		high	↓		<27%	27%+	35%+	34.8%						
	4.18	% of long term looked after children in placements which have been stable for at least 2 years			monthly	%	63.9%	62.7%	62.9%	-		high	↑		<62%	62%+	70%+	70.2%		67.1%	71.0%	70.0%	74.0%	-
	4.19	% of looked after children who have had 3 or more placements - rolling 12 months	OLD		monthly	%	10.9%	11.8%	11.4%	-		low	↓		16%+	8%+	<8%	9.3%		7.8%	5.0%	9.0%	7.0%	-
	4.20	% of looked after children in a family based setting		OLD	monthly	%	77.8%	77.2%	76.5%	-		high	↓		<77%	77%+	85%+	79.4%						
	4.21	% of looked after children placed with parents or other with parental responsibility (P1)	TB4		monthly	%	4.6%	4.0%	3.9%	-		low	↓				4.6%							
	4.22	% of looked after children in kinship care			monthly	%	8.2%	7.7%	7.2%	-		high	↓		<8%	8%+	12%+	10.5%	New measure 2021/22					
	4.23	No. of placements that have been created for children via foster care (approvals)			monthly	Count	1	1	5	11		high	↑				13	New measure 2021/22						
	4.24	No. of adoptions completed within 12 months of SHOBA			monthly	Count	2	0	0	6		high	→				4							
	4.25	Av. days between a child becoming looked after and having a adoption placement (A10)			monthly	YTD Average	456.3	475.7	475.7	-		low	→		487+	-	<487	418.9		350.1	274.0	367.0	317.5	348.0
	4.26	Av. days between a placement order and being matched with an adoptive family (A2)			monthly	YTD Average	182.2	197.8	197.8	-		low	→		121+	-	<121	292.2		160.4	90.0	175.0	135.5	168.0
	4.27	No. of care leavers			monthly	Count	314	313	311	-		info	↓				292							
	4.28	% of eligible looked after children & Care Leavers with an up to date pathway plan			monthly	%	83.1%	76.0%	78.1%	-		high	↑				82.8%							
	4.29	% of care leavers in suitable accommodation			monthly	%	96.5%	96.2%	97.4%	-		high	↑		<88%	88%+	96%+	96.6%		91.1%	97.0%	88.0%	94.0%	-
	4.30	% of care leavers in employment, education or training			monthly	%	72.6%	73.2%	71.2%	-		high	↓		<58%	58%+	66%+	71.6%		53.1%	73.0%	52.0%	58.0%	-
	4.31	No. of care leavers who are former unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC)			monthly	Count	17	17	17	-		info	→					New measure 2022/23						

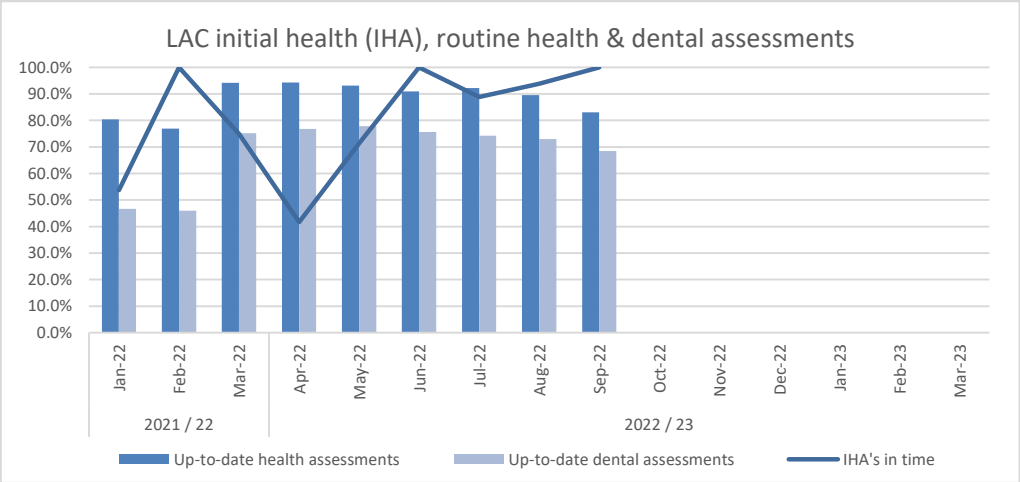
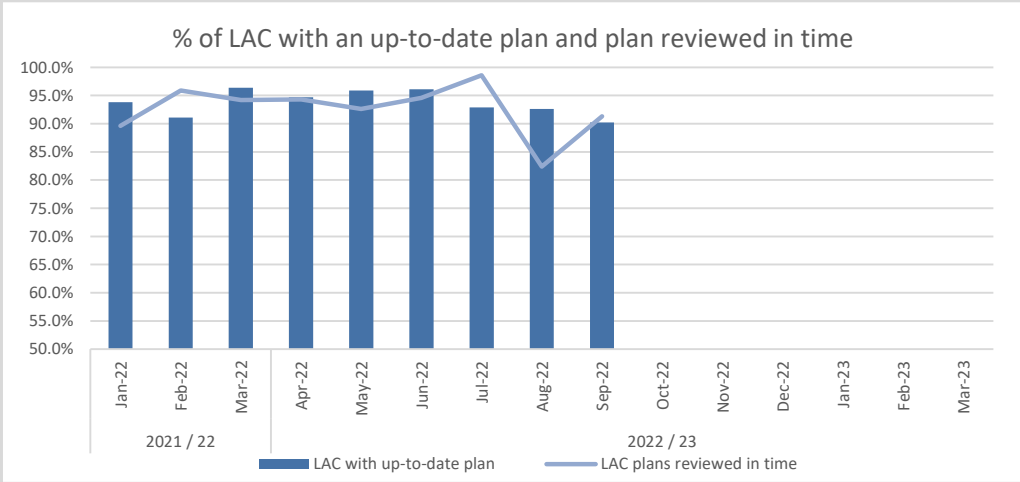
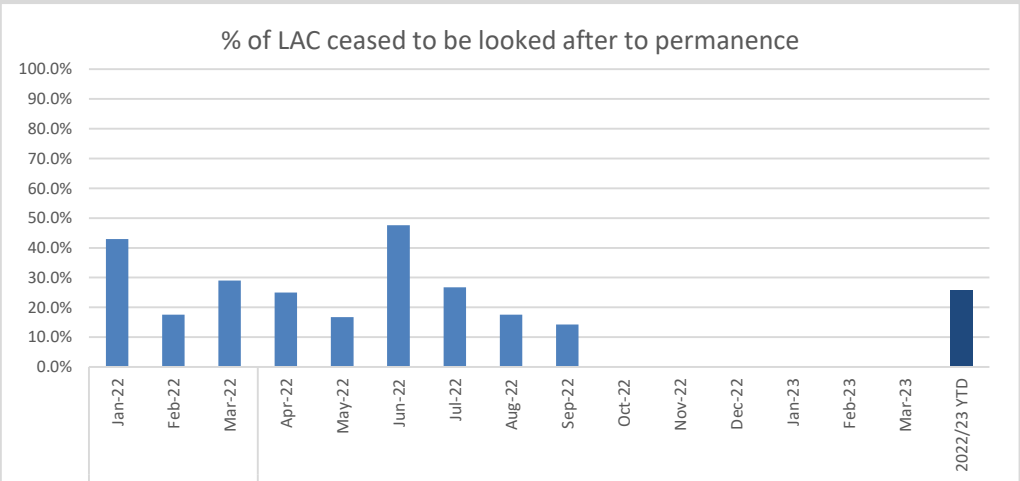
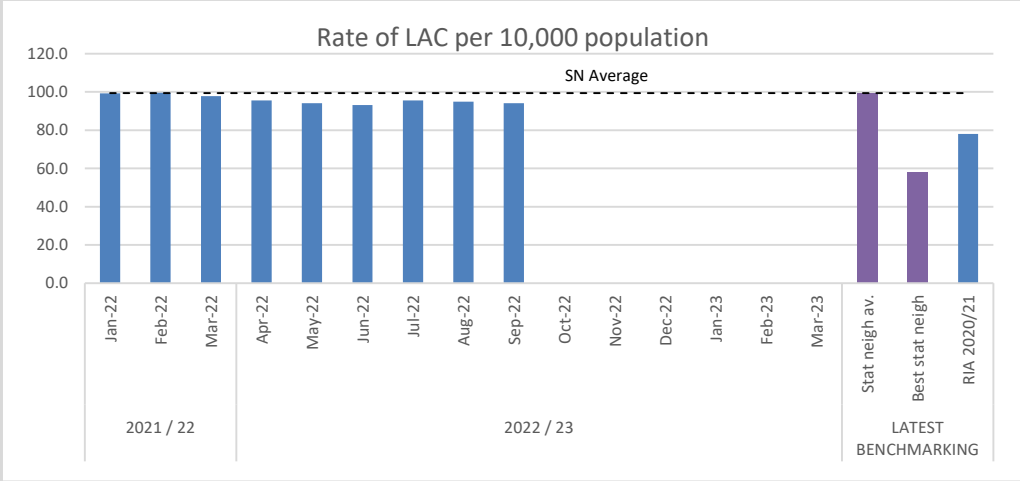
Looked After Children (LAC)

Children in care are children who have become the responsibility of the local authority either voluntarily by parents struggling to cope or through an intervention by children's services because a child is at risk of significant harm. LAC review meetings are convened to consider the plan for the welfare of LAC and how to achieve permanence for them within a timescale that meets their needs. The LA is responsible for visiting LAC wherever they are living to ensure his/her welfare continues to be safeguarded and promoted and the LA should ensure that every LAC has his/her health needs fully assessed and a health plan clearly set out.

541 LAC as at period end

89 Admissions (ytd)

105 Discharges (ytd)



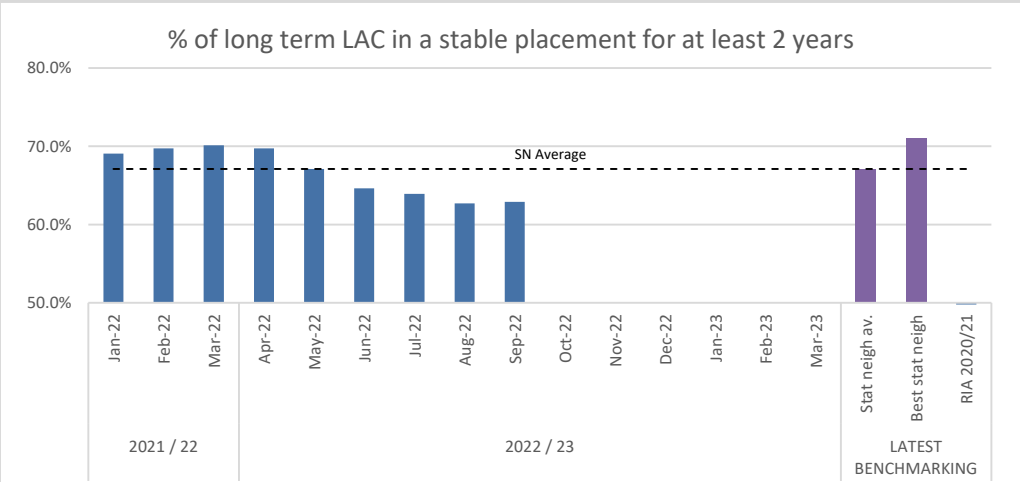
97.8% of LAC visits are up-to-date & complete (NMS)  
(National minimum standard is within 1wk of placement, then 6wkly till in placement for 1yr, then 12wkly after.)

77.2% of IHA's completed in time (ytd)

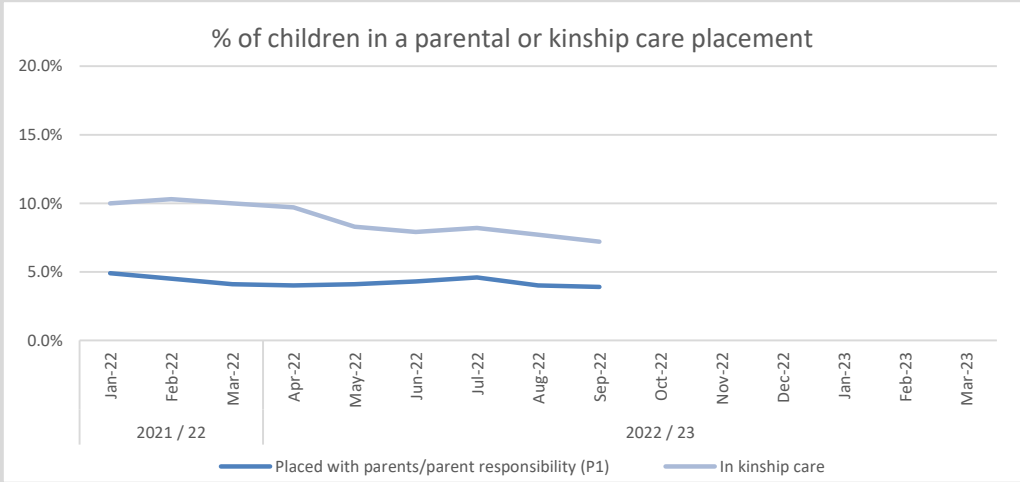
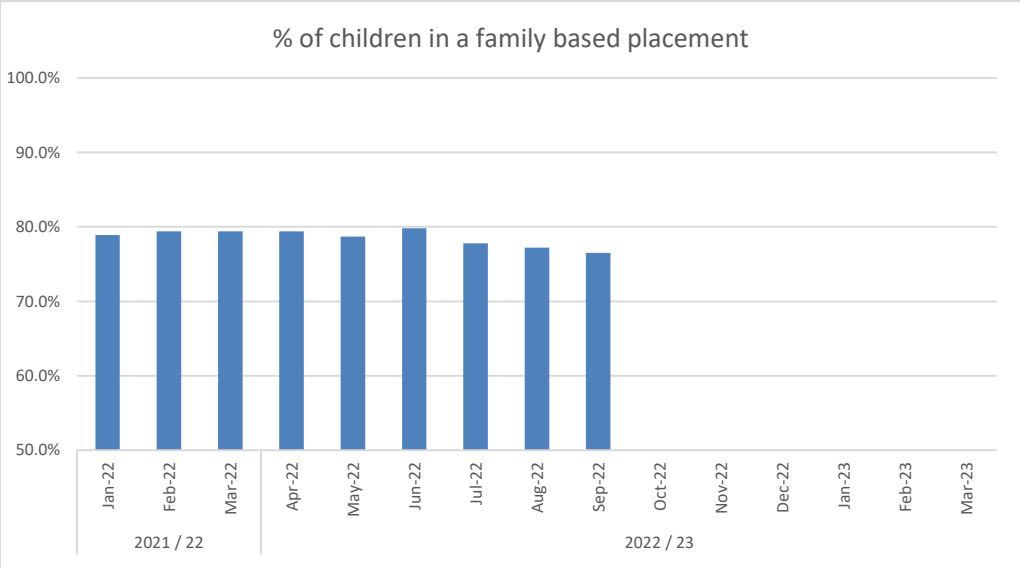
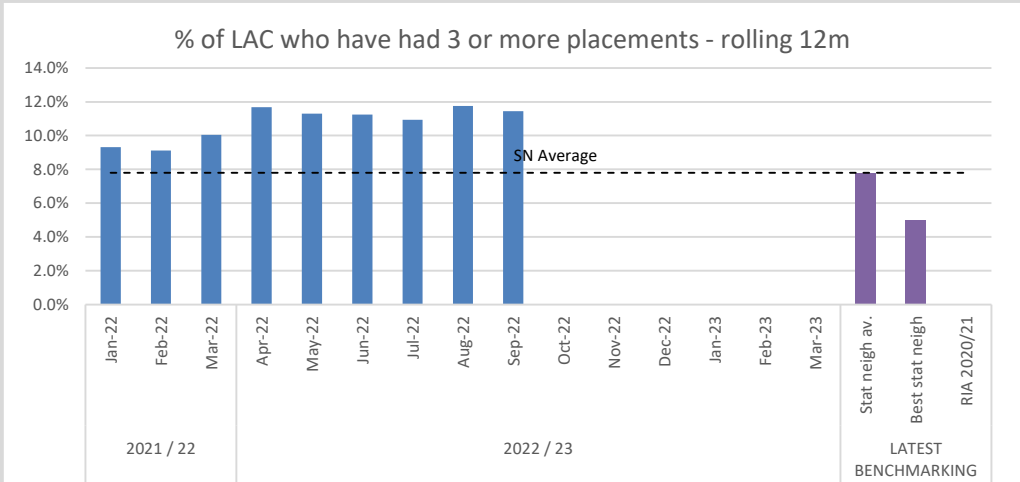
Placements

A LAC placement is where a child has become the responsibility of the local authority (LAC) and is placed with foster carers, in residential homes or with parents or other relatives. A foster care family provide the best form of care for most looked after children. Rotherham would like most of its children to be looked after by its own carers so that they remain part of their families and community.

62.9% of long term LAC in a stable placement for 2 years+



11.4% of LAC have had 3+ placements as at period end



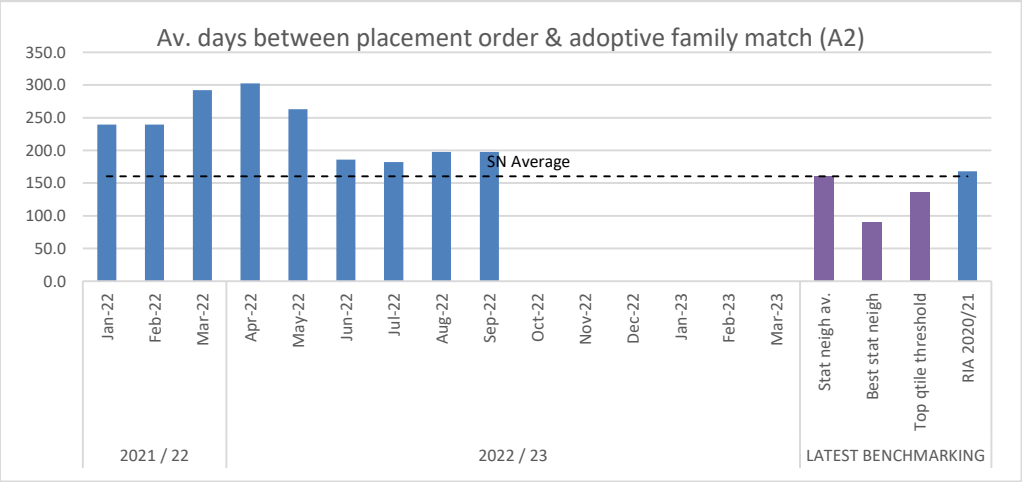
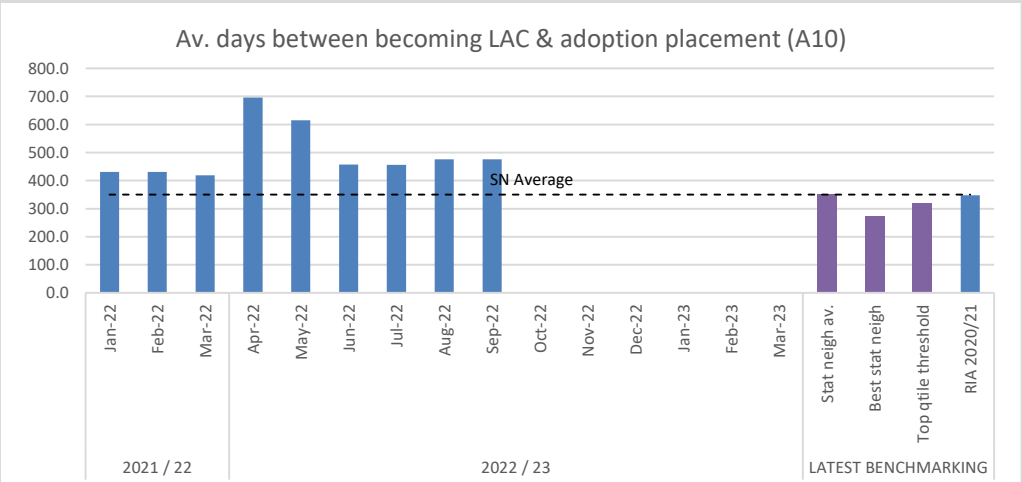
11 placements created via foster carer approvals (ytd)

Adoptions & Care Leavers

Following a child becoming looked after, it may be deemed suitable for a child to become adopted which is a legal process of becoming a non-biological parent. The date this is agreed to be in the best interests of the child is known as their 'SHOBPA'. Following this a family finding process is undertaken to find a suitable match based on the child's needs, followed by placement with their adopter(s). Placement are monitored and assessed before the final adoption order is granted.

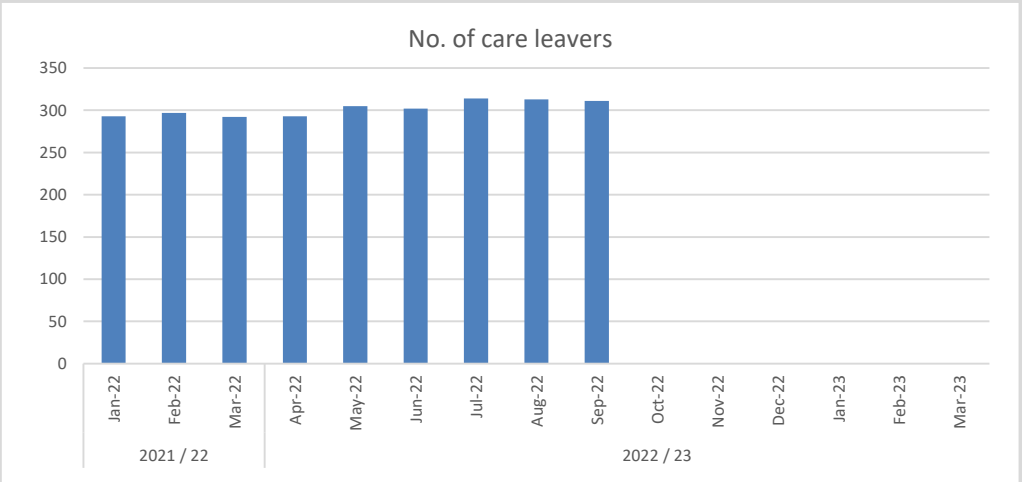
A care leaver is, a person 25yrs or under; has been looked after by a LA for 13wks+ since 14yrs; and has been looked after by a LA at school-leaving age or after.

Adoptions



6 adoptions completed within 12 months of SHOBPA (ytd)

Care Leavers



311 care leavers as at the period end

78.1% of eligible LAC & care leavers had an up to date pathway plan at the period end

97.4% of care leavers were in suitable accommodation at the period end

71.2% of care leavers were in employment, education or training at the period end

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**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S  
SERVICES**

**Independent Reviewing Service**

**ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2020/21

The Independent Reviewing Service has provided a high standard of service to children in our care throughout 2021/22, with performance remaining relatively stable despite the ongoing challenges of Covid 19.

The service has moved towards returning to a similar model to pre-pandemic, however we have learnt that for some children the online approach has been beneficial for their engagement and attendance at the meeting and with professionals in the process.

In summary the findings are:

### What's working well?

- Review meetings held within statutory times scales maintained at above 94%, and the 6% out of time rearranged in the shortest time frame
- The offer of virtual reviews for some children has provided flexibility in the service to meet the needs of individual children
- IROs have continued to prioritise quality and compliance, utilising the challenge and resolution process, and with significant impact
- IROs use the informal resolution process effectively which prevents delay in resolution and reduces the need to then progress to formal challenge

### What are we worried about?

- We need to work with children and young people on how they want to participate in their reviews, virtual or in person
- There is a need to improve the timeliness and challenge around adoption timescales
- We need to improve performance and challenge around the timeliness of social work reports for the meeting, and whether these are shared with children, families and carers in advance of the meeting

## 1. Purpose and Focus of the Report

The IRO Handbook provides the statutory guidance for Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) and their employers on their functions in relation to the case management and reviews for looked after children. The statutory guidance states that the IRO Manager should be responsible for the production of an annual report for the scrutiny of the members of the Corporate Parenting Panel and the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership.

This report provides:

- The purpose of the service and legal context
- Governance arrangements
- The responsibilities of the IRO
- The development and make-up of the IRO service
- Information relating to performance and children and young people's participation
- Information in relation to disputes and IRO challenge
- Resources
- Areas for development

This report highlights key activity and performance undertaken in 2021/22 and in respect of 775 children. It draws from quantitative and qualitative information from the Insight reporting system and service reporting mechanisms.

The IRO handbook (Statutory Guidance) states:

**'The IRO's primary focus is to quality assure the care planning and review process for each child and to ensure that his/her current wishes and feelings are given full consideration. To be successful, the role must be valued by senior managers and operate within a supportive service culture and environment. An effective IRO service should enable the local authority to achieve improved outcomes for children'.**

## 2. Purpose of the service and legal context

The Children Act (1989) and the Adoption and Children's Act (2002) (Home Office) make it a legal requirement for the local authority to appoint an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) to each child in care, to participate in case reviews. The IRO has the authority, independent of their employing local authority, to refer cases to the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (CAFCASS) should they believe the local authority's plan for the child is not in their best interests.

The Children and Young Persons Act (2008) extends the IRO's responsibilities from monitoring the performance of the local authority on their functions in relation to a child's review to monitoring the performance by the local authority of their functions in relation to a child's case.

The intention is that these changes will enable the IRO to have an effective independent oversight of the child's case and ensure that the child's interests are protected throughout the care planning process.

Together, the amended Children Act (1989) and the regulations specify:

- The duty to appoint an IRO
- The circumstances in which the children's social care department must consult with the IRO
- The functions of the IRO both in relation to the reviewing and monitoring of each child's case
- The actions that the IRO must take if the social care department is failing to comply with the regulations or is in breach of its duties to the child in any material way

The IRO's primary focus is to quality assure the care planning and review process for each child in care and to ensure that their current wishes and feelings are given full consideration. It is not the responsibility of the IRO to manage the case, nor supervise the social worker or devise the care plan. Although it is important for the IRO to develop a consistent relationship with the child, this should not undermine or replace the relationship between the social worker and the child.

There are now two clear and separate aspects to the function of the IRO, namely:

- Chairing the child's review meetings
- Monitoring the child's case on an ongoing basis

As part of the monitoring function, the IRO also has a duty to identify any areas of poor practice, including general concerns around service delivery (not solely around individual children). The IRO should immediately alert senior managers if any such areas are identified. Equally important, the IRO should recognise and report on good practice.

In March 2014, the National Children's Bureau published an important piece of research entitled 'The Role of the Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) in England'. The foreword was written by Mr Justice Peter Jackson who made the following comment:

**"The Independent Reviewing Officer must be the visible embodiment of our commitment to meet our legal obligations to this special group of children. The health and effectiveness of the IRO service is a direct reflection of whether we are meeting that commitment or whether we are failing".**

### 3. The Core Responsibilities of the IRO

The National Independent Reviewing Officer's manager's Partnership (NIROMP) offers practice standards for all IROs, namely that the IRO will:

- Ensure the child is central to all planning and decision making
- Ensure the child's wishes, views and feelings are given full consideration
- Be satisfied that each child's care arrangement is meeting their needs
- Ensure that each child knows how to contact you between reviews
- Make sure each review process results in clear, robust and informed judgements about the progress of the care plan
- Make sure care plans and decisions have a realistic timescale attached in keeping with the child's needs and a named person to implement them
- Challenge where there is drift in care planning and where necessary escalate to formal dispute resolution
- Be satisfied that plans for permanency have been identified by the second review
- Be satisfied that the corporate parent is meeting the requirements of the care planning regulations
- Pro-actively chase progress of the child's care plan and the implementation of review decisions
- Determine whether a review needs to be convened when there is a significant change/event in the child's life
- Champion the rights and entitlements of children living in care including their right to advocacy, legal support and redress through complaints and challenges
- Engage with the child's guardian in line with the Cafcass and IRO good practice protocol, to ensure effective communication about the child's care plan
- Provide both positive and constructive feedback to all the stakeholders to actively
- Promote good outcomes for children

## Mission Statement

RMBC's Independent Reviewing Service exists to ensure that when Children and Young People are looked after by the Local Authority that they receive the highest possible level of care, support and planning. We will do this by adopting an unwavering and steadfast commitment to the following 'Pillars of Practice', with the understanding that we work for the child first and foremost. This mission statement sits alongside RMBC's commitment to all of the children in the borough, that they will be:

### Resilient, Successful and Safe

#### ***Why am I here – What's going to happen? (Building Resilience)***

- The child will always have a positive, sensitive and accurate understanding of why they are in care and what the plan is for them, they will have homes which are stable and supportive
- Moreover, the child will be an active, informed, and powerful participant in the planning and decision-making process

#### ***I want to be the best version of myself I can be. (Building Success)***

- The IRO will ensure there is a clear vision of success for the child, we will always be aspirational for children in RMBC's care and will hold the Local Authority to account in meeting the child's goals
- The child's achievements will be celebrated within the review process and we will build upon the strengths demonstrated

#### ***How will you deliver for me? (Ensuring Safety)***

- We will robustly monitor and review the standard of care and planning that every Looked After child is entitled to and will rigorously challenge areas of concern
- The review will be an inclusive and supportive forum for open and honest discussion between participants, where the contributions of all are valued. The focus will first and foremost be on maximising and developing the child's strength and wellbeing and ensuring that they have a strong and supportive network throughout their childhood and beyond
- The IRO service will work supportively, proactively, and positively with professional colleagues across the review spectrum, recognising that we will achieve the best results for the children we work for when we demonstrate honesty, integrity and respect

## 4. Extended Functions of an IRO

The statutory guidance makes clear that the social worker must inform the IRO of significant changes in the child's life. Examples of this being:

- Proposed change of care plan, for example arising at short notice in the course of proceedings following directions from the court
- Major change to family time arrangements
- Changes of allocated social worker
- Any safeguarding concerns involving the child, which may lead to enquiries being made under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 ('child protection enquiries') and outcomes of child protection conferences, or other meetings not attended by the IRO
- Where the child is excluded from school
- Where the child is running away or missing

- Significant health, medical events, diagnoses, illnesses, hospitalisations, serious accidents
- Agency Decision Maker decisions in relation to permanence

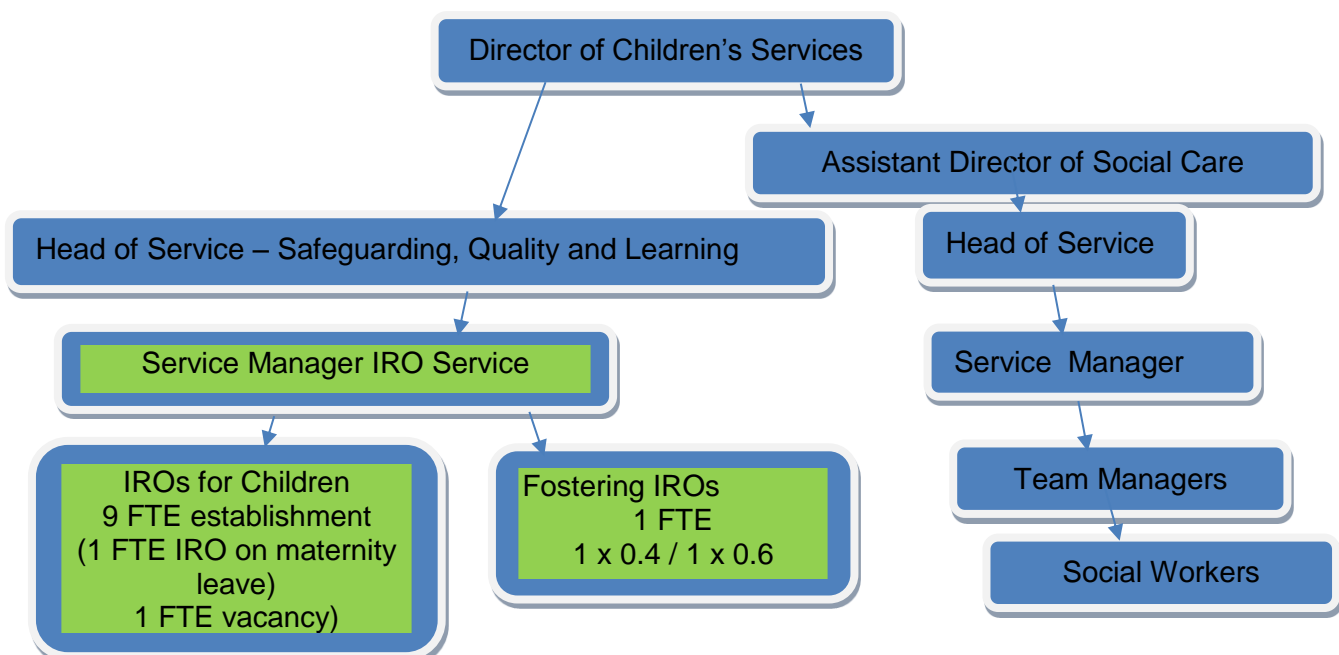
Furthermore, the statutory guidance sets out when an additional review must be convened prior to any of the following changes being implemented:

- Whenever there is a proposal for a child to leave care before the age of 18, i.e., for the child to become a relevant child, rather than an eligible child
- Wherever there is a proposal for the child to move from foster care, a children's home or other placement, to supported lodgings, or to other kinds of 'semi-independent' or 'independent living' before the age of 18 (i.e., from accommodation regulated under the Care Standards Act to unregulated accommodation)
- Prior to children subject to care orders being discharged from custody
- Wherever any unplanned change is proposed to a child's accommodation that would have the effect of disrupting his/her education or training
- Where a change of placement is proposed that would interrupt the arrangements for the education of a child in Key Stage 4
- When a change of placement is proposed for a child who has remained settled and established with the same carer for a significant period of time

In Rotherham like many other authorities, a small number of children are at times accommodated in unregistered settings for short periods, for these children reviews take place on a monthly basis, this is to ensure safety and quality of care provision for those children, and to drive the plan and provision for the child to be cared for within a registered setting as soon as possible. These settings and the review process for the children placed is discussed in this report.

## 5. RMBC Children's Services IRO Service

The IRO Team consists of the following staff (in green) as at 31 March 2022:



- The team consists of nine female and two male staff who are all White British, the service manager is male and white British
- Seven IROs were in work on a FTE basis with one IRO on maternity leave, this was supported by a 0.8 agency worker during some of 2021/22
- All IRO's receive monthly supervision and a yearly PDR which is reviewed at six months
- Team meetings are held twice monthly to provide updates to the team and focus on performance and service development
- All IROs have link teams across CYPS social care, they attend team meetings throughout the year and are the point of contact for any general issues raised and support
- The service manager and an IRO attend the Regional IRO Managers and IRO Group respectively. The IRO manager has taken up a position as regional representative at the National IRO Managers partnership (NIROMP)
- The IRO manager attends quarterly meetings with CAFCASS partners

The IRO handbook recommends an optimum caseload of 50-70 children per IRO in order to ensure adequate performance. IRO caseloads are impacted upon by several factors including:

- Whether the child is in On-going Court proceedings: Reviews are held more regularly within Care proceedings as a consequence of a new LAC status and reviews being required to ratify the final care plan.
- Children placed in unregistered accommodation: These children receive monthly reviews to monitor their progress and address the need for a registered setting.
- Placement moves: A placement move for a child requires a restart of the review process with reviews at 1, 3 and 9 months
- Children placed out of borough: At 31 March 2022 there were 122 children placed out of the RMBC area
- If children, carers or parents request an early review, or if the IRO feels this is necessary
- The number of siblings placed together on caseload: As larger sibling groups often require less separate review meetings to arrange.

## 6. Progress on the 2021/22 action plan

Area for development	Actions	Progress
Key performance objectives will be met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minutes within 15 days = 90%</li> <li>• Midway Reviews = 90%</li> <li>• Quality and Compliance (Q and C) check completion in all reviews</li> <li>• Quarterly performance report by the IRO service Manager</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achieved</li> <li>• Midways and Q and Cs at 70% frustrated by capacity and sickness</li> <li>• Achieved</li> </ul>
Attendance and Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Signs of Safety (SofS) review minutes template will be embedded into Liquid Logic (LCS) by year end 2022</li> <li>• IRO visits to children to resume where possible on a</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is now part of the wider LCS update being led by the IRO SM. Completion date end September 2022</li> <li>• 113 children have not received a face to face or</li> </ul>

	<p>face to face basis, all children to have had at least a virtual visit within the previous 12 months</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new report to be generated to capture IRO visiting data</li> <li>• New children's consultation form to be launched.</li> <li>• Participation figures for 'attended and spoke for self' to increase to at least 35% by the end of the year 2021/22.</li> <li>• IROs to support broader attendance by those in the child's network and to encourage SWs to consider this in their invitations.</li> <li>• A new data set and analysis to be generated regarding professional attendance at reviews, IROs to record this in all instances</li> <li>• New guidance, setting out the expectations and focus of LAC reviews will be shared with all social work teams.</li> </ul>	<p>virtual visit in the 12 months to 31 March 2022</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achieved</li> <li>• Achieved</li> <li>• Achieved, currently at 36.9%</li> <li>• Achieved and Continuing</li> <li>• Achieved but requiring further refining</li> <li>• Achieved</li> </ul>
<b>Impact and Influence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Escalation figures have dropped for the year. All IROs have been requested to review their caseload and ensure they are satisfied that the LA is offering good or outstanding care to those children. The Q and C data will support whether formal challenges should be issued. This is also discussed in every supervision session.</li> <li>• IROs will be supported and encouraged to seek clear and time limited trajectories for children in the review process. The intent is that the provision of care for the child is always purposeful and rooted in the aspirations for that child. The review process should always result in a clear endorsement that the child should remain in care, or alternatively what specific action is required.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Escalations have increased this year.</li> <li>• Continues</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manager to manager discussions have improved over the year, with the creation of the IRO/TM meetings also acting as a helpful touch point. This will continue into 2021-22.</li> <li>• The new Quality and Compliance Form is now added to LCS in order to support data analysis – this will inform the quarterly performance report.</li> <li>• The section 20 report will continue on a bi-monthly basis. In addition, the IRO service manager will complete a bi-monthly report regarding children subject of placements with parents regulations, this report will provide a similar analysis and action plan.</li> <li>• Where social work reports are not received in a timely manner the IRO will raise an informal challenge in all cases and hold a discussion with the Team manager. If the report is then not completed within 2 working days, the challenge will be made formal and sent to the manager for resolution.</li> <li>• Where the Fostering IRO identifies inadequate practice, this will be formally escalated through the existing challenge and resolution process.</li> <li>• IROs will be expected to report on delayed adoption and 3+ placement moves and to raise challenge where necessary.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continues</li> <li>• Complete</li> <li>• Complete, although the PWP report is quarterly given relative stability of these arrangements</li> <li>• This continues although formal challenges are not often lodged when they should be</li> <li>• This is now in place.</li> <li>• Continues</li> </ul>
<b>Looked After Children will have access to Health support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IROs will ensure dental checks are discussed at every review and escalations raised where required. The IRO manager will seek clarification as to the plan to address the backlog via the AC (Physical &amp; Emotional Health) Workstream.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work has been completed regarding this area, see report under Health.</li> </ul>

## 7. Feedback from Children, Young people, professional and carers

Consultation and feedback is essential in order to know that the service we are delivering fits with our aims and has a positive impact on the lives of children and young people. As this reports demonstrates, involving children in their reviews is a central tenet of our practice. The feedback below has been offered via the various adults present in reviews. This is positive to read and reaffirms the consistency and impact that an IRO can bring to the lives of looked after children. The aim going forward is to devise a more structured feedback system for professionals cares and children.

**“You are the best IRO In have ever had and this has been the best review”**

Child felt listened to, there was space for a joke or two.

**“The structure of the review really gave me a good insight into the young person’s care and his circumstances- the scaling helped my understand where he was on the various aspects of his care plan in preparation for his pathway plan”**

Personal Advisor

**(He) is a brilliant IRO because he gets ‘stuff’ done!**

Young Person in care

**“I like the way each area of the care plan is broken down and discussed in detail as this helps me to think about what scale to give and to think about what I think needs to happen next...I feel like included in discussions and that my voice is being heard”**

A parent reflecting on how Signs of Safety has helped in reviews

**Young person who chaired his own review.**

*"I like the structure (of Signs of Safety LAC reviews) because of the what's working well and what we are worried about. This is because it helps us work out next steps to address the worries. I really like scaling each part of the care plan separately because it gives others a good insight as to how I feel about different aspects of my plan when I scale and sometime leads to further discussion about more actions that can be added to next steps- hearing other people's scale also helps me to know what other people feel about how I am doing in the different areas of my life and because we scale it at each review I can see when things are getting worse or better."*

**Foster carer feedback**

*"I find the review process quite straightforward and a good opportunity to discuss issues arising since the last review. I consider I have a good relationship with my IRO. I feel I am listened to, treated fairly and appreciated. Whilst the virtual review has its place, let's face it we all have such busy lives, however the face to face is much better and I do miss it."*

*The fostering IRO has helped me deal with a very proactive parent. Handled legal issues and general disputes. All of it done in a firm, respectful manner. She has always been available to me for advice which I have found very useful."*

*I am extremely happy with my IRO"*

## **8. Consistency offered by the IRO**

One of the significant benefits of the IRO role is the consistency that this offers to the child. IROs often have over 10 years post qualification experience. They tend to remain an IRO for some considerable time, as the role draws on multiple skills and turnover is low within RMBC with the newest IRO having been with the service for 3 years. Some children have experienced the same IRO for over 5 years, this is invaluable for children that often experience multiple changes in social worker and placement moves.

## **9. The Profile of children in care**

On 01 April 2021 596 children and young people were looked after by RMBC. This represents an increase of 2 children at the same point the year before. This figure equates to 106.1 children per 10,000 of the population and sits in comparison to a statistical neighbour average of 92.0 and a national average of 65.0. By 31 March 2022 there were 551 children looked after indicating a reduction of roughly 7.5% throughout the year.

### **9.1 Children ceasing care**

216 children ceased to be looked after in the reporting period, compared with 186 in the previous year. A high of 31 Children ceased care in March 2022, compared with a low of 12 children in June. Last year it was identified in this report that more children ceased to be looked after in the second half of the year. 110 children ceased care in the first half of 2021-22, compared to 108 in the second half of the year. This suggests that the upward trend in children being discharged from our care had continued. Notable figures from the table below are

- Despite the cessation of care for an additional 32 children in 2021/22 compared to the previous year. There is no increase in those aged over 18, thus the discharges were achieved through practice rather than purely the child's age.

- There was 100% increase in relation to children ceasing to be looked after due to moving to 'somebody without previous parental responsibility'. On interrogation this appears to be due to the award of Child Arrangement Orders (CAO) – often in interim Court proceedings. This may have converted to Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) in due course. In addition 12 ICOs, 9 Full care orders, 10 on s20, 1 Placement Order granted (appears to have been incorrectly recorded).
- There has been an increase in SGOs compared to the previous year with 27 being made in this year.
- Roughly the same amount of children have returned home on a planned basis. This suggests that reunification is an area that could reduce strain on the service and that children could have the opportunity to live within their families where safe.
- 48 children have ceased care for 'any other reason'. (24 of these are aged 18)

Reason Ceased LAC	Number Ceased LAC	
	2020/ 21	2021/ 22
Aged 18 (or over) and remained with current carers (inc. under staying put arrangements)	23	20
Adopted - application unopposed	29	26
Adopted, consent dispensed with	5	6
Left care to live with parents, relatives, or other person with no parental responsibility (CAO)	16	32
Moved abroad	1	0
Died	2	0
Care taken over by another LA in the UK	5	5
Returned home - Residence order	7	9
SGO made to former foster carer(s), who were a relative or friend	19	27
SGO made to former foster carer(s), other than relatives or friend	1	2
SGO made to former foster carer(s), other than former foster carer(s) who were a relative or friend	2	2
SGO made to carer(s) other than former foster carer(s), other than relatives or friends	0	2
Planned return home to live with parents (no order)	31	29
Unplanned return home to live with parents (no order)	1	4
Independent arrangement with formalised support	5	0
Transferred to adult social services	2	3
CLA ceased for any other reason	36	48
Sentenced to custody	1	0
Accommodation on remand ended	0	1
Age assessment, age determined to be over 18	0	2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>216</b>

## 9.2 Children entering care

In 2021/22 176 children became looked after on 180 separate occasions (meaning that a small number of children became looked after more than once). Admissions are spread without any clear pattern throughout the year with a high of 26 in August 2021 and a low of 6 admissions in May the same year. Notable areas are the 39 children placed within their families; this constitutes nearly 22% of all placements made. In addition to these the Court made orders under section 38(6) for another 20 (11%) of children placed within their networks and requiring assessment.

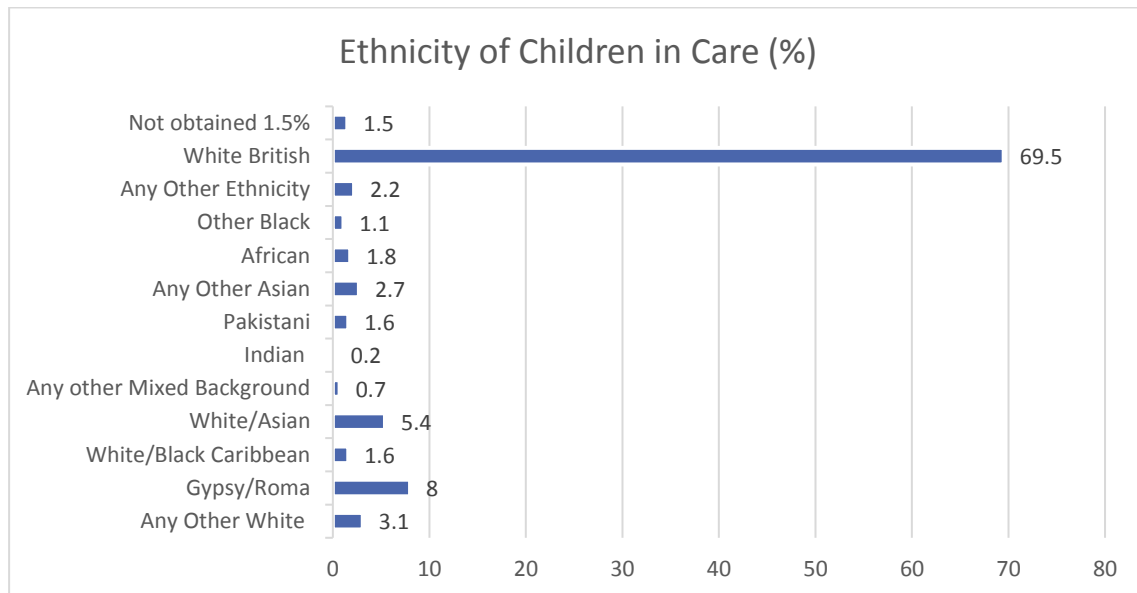
Placement Type made on admission	No of Episodes	No of Children
Children's Homes	3	3
Placed with parents or other with Parental Resp.	3	3
Independent living (flat/lodgings/friends/B&B)	21	20
Residential Care Home	1	1
NHS / Health Trust or other Establishment	2	2
R38(6) - Court Directed Placement	20	20
Foster placement with relative or friend- not long term or FFA	39	39
Placement with other foster carer- long term fostering	6	6
Placement with other foster carer who is also an approved adopter- FFA	2	2
Placement with other foster carer - not long term or FFA	65	64
Unregistered Emergency Accommodation	8	7
Unregistered Unregulated Accommodation	7	7
Z1 - Other Placement	3	3
Total	180	176

It is also notable that out of the 180 admissions to care, 50% (90) were as a consequence of section 20 (s20). The IRO service manager checks and reports on s20 admissions on a bi-monthly basis and these reports offer assurance that the majority of these placements are appropriate, and that delay in issuing proceedings, where warranted, is minimised. The majority of s20 admissions convert to care orders or return home within a satisfactory timeframe. The IROs have a core role in ensuring delay for all children looked after is minimised. They achieve this through monitoring of the plan and any legal proceedings, scrutiny of information and plans, check and challenge and dispute resolution process. In addition, children were admitted to our care as a consequence of:

- 72 Interim Care Orders
- 1 remand to LA care
- 12 Police Protection events
- 2 Emergency Protection Orders
- 3 short breaks

## 9.3. Ethnicity and age of children in care

Current (as of 19.08.22) data shows the distribution of the ethnic backgrounds of RMBC's children in care as demonstrated below.



The 2011 Census (detail on Ethnicity from the 2021 census will be released October 2022) revealed that Rotherham has a White British Population of 91.9%, with the largest other communities coming from the Pakistani population (3%) and White Other (1.4% and recorded for people of Eastern European backgrounds). The Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) population in Rotherham in 2011 was recorded as 8.1%. At present Looked After Children from BME backgrounds represent 29% of all children in care. This is an increase of 2.6% from the previous year. This is disproportionate to the demographics in Rotherham, with for example people from a Gypsy/Irish Traveller background being representing 0.049% of the population of the borough, but with 8% of children in our care from a solely Gypsy/Roma background. Similarly, children from a Black African background are at least twice as likely to be in care, the population of people from this background constituting roughly 0.65% of the borough but 1.8% of those children in our care.

## 10. IRO Activity and Performance

There were 1753 LAC reviews held in 2021/22, a reduction of 38 reviews from the previous year, with full time IROs holding 216 reviews in the year on average. IROs completed an average of 210 reviews each this year with the highest number being 230 and the lowest being 185 for a full time IRO over the course of the whole year. This disparity is explained by changes to plans for children after allocation, such as placement moves, unregistered provision or IROs adding in additional reviews to track progress. In addition to covering reviews for colleagues.

Over the course of the year 94.4% of reviews were held in time, equating to 1687 reviews undertaken. This is a reduction from 96.2% in the previous reporting year. Review timeliness was impacted upon by IROs covering reviews for colleagues and changes of agency worker, with gaps in between new appointees.

## 11. Review Reports

All professionals attending the child's review are expected to provide a written report, constituting either a LAC review or Pathway review report. These will be collated prior to the review and sent to IRO to prepare for the meeting. The 'key' report is completed by the social worker for the child. It is expected that this report will clearly set the scene, detailing

the successes and worries over the preceding period and how the plans made for the child have progressed. The report should also set a clear vision for the continued care of the child. It is expected that this report is shared with attendees, including the child where possible, in advance of the meeting in order to support collaboration

Pre-meeting Report Timeliness	No.	%	No.	%
	2020-21		2021-22	
5+ days before	414	23.6%	333	26.1%
1-4 days prior	613	35.0%	346	33.6%
Same day	353	20.1%	440	19.8%
After Review	373	21.3%	567	20.5%

As can be seen from the table above, 26.1% of social work reports were received 'in time' for the review. Whilst this is an improvement from last year non-completion remains an issue and impacts on the quality of reviews, this also leads to reviews being cancelled.

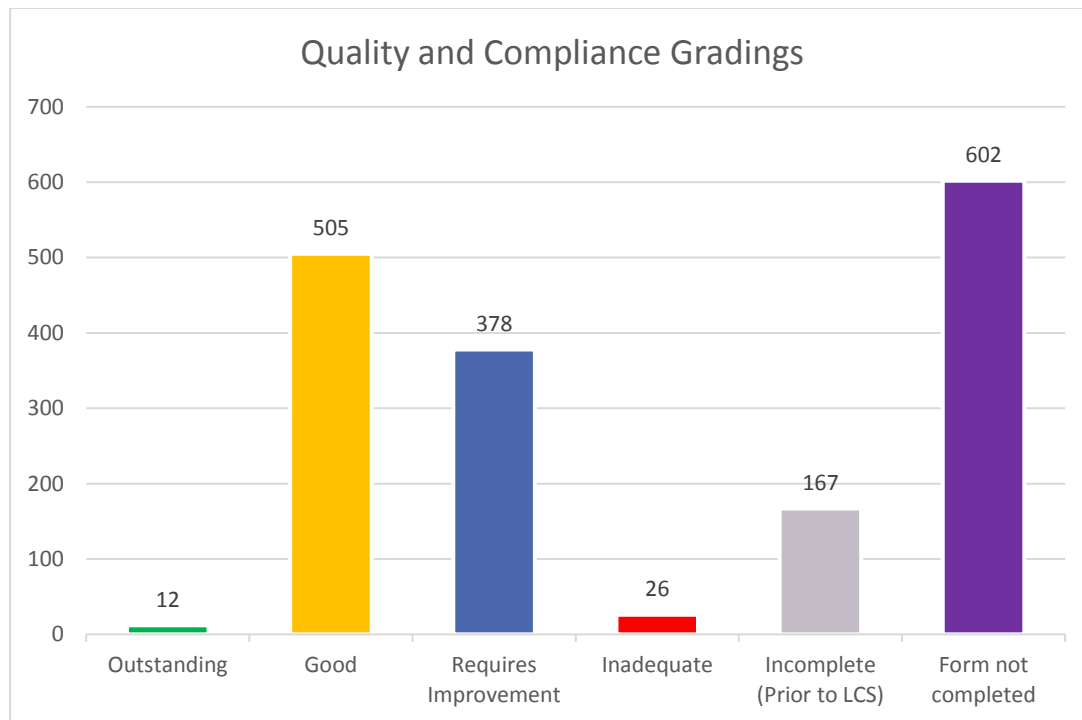
Statutory Guidance states that review recommendations are produced within 24 hours of the review held and distributed within 5 working days. The data suggests that this is achieved. In addition, review minutes should be distributed to all parties within 20 working days of the review meeting. IROs record and complete their own minutes, business support is responsible for distributing such via email and postal services.

## 12. Quality Assurance

Central to the IRO role is the quality assurance function. The review itself provides ample opportunity to ensure that the Local Authority is carrying out its duties to those children that it looks after. In the vast majority of these cases, the Local Authority acts as corporate parent, and IROs, with their 'arm's length' independence are key to holding the Local Authority to account.

In preparing for reviews IROs complete a 'Quality and Compliance' Form on LCS. One of the key achievements this year has been the redesign of this form in order to provide a more detailed view of the child's circumstances and the work of the LA, to include scaling. In addition, in devising a 'feedback loop' to the IRO in order to check any actions required or views from the receiving team manager. The form was devised and tested as a word document word prior to embedding it as an LCS form, as such the cohort figures for the year are impacted.

## Quality and Assurance Grading Outcome



As the chart above demonstrates, of the 1753 reviews completed in 2021-22, quality and compliance forms were completed on LCS for roughly 64% of reviews since the LCS form was adopted. This low figure is due to many reviews requiring short-notice IRO cover due to staff absence and as a consequence of general capacity issues within the service. Where the form was completed, it was found that 46% of situations for children were reviewed at good or outstanding, with twelve Q and C checks graded at outstanding. A finding of requires improvement was found in 33% of reviews with an inadequate finding made in 2% of reviews (26 Occasions) there were no findings of critically inadequate practice, scaled at either 1 or 0.

The intent of the new LCS report is to generate thematic information in relation to outstanding and inadequate practice, with the aim that this information will support managers to address practice issues and to create opportunities for learning and this data is shared with the LAC service manager in a monthly keep in touch meeting. In relation to inadequate findings IROs found that this was in relation to;

- Assessment and planning on 5 occasions
- Outcome and Impact on 5 occasions
- Child's views on 2 occasions

In addition, Team Managers are supported through the form to respond to the issues raised and detail any actions needed, the IRO then reviews this response before closing the form down. The aim being to encourage a dialogue a restorative resolution.

## 13. Formal Challenge and Escalation

Challenge and escalation is a cornerstone of effective IRO practice, with IROs having the ability to escalate to CAF/CASS in the most serious of situations, for independent oversight and resolution. Fortunately, this has not been required.

IROs have several avenues for progressing plans and ensuring oversight, this is termed the 'IRO footprint'. Where there are concerns that a child's care journey is drifting, or there are serious concerns about the standard of care and social work intervention, the IRO will most commonly revert to a formal escalation.

In 2021-22 20 Escalations were initiated with all resolved at stages 1-2. This is an increase of 3 from the previous year. Formal Challenge Themes were as below:

Key theme	Drift and Delay	Management Oversight	Quality of Provision	Quality of Plan
Specific Issue	No Pre-Meeting Report (7)	Placements with Parents Regulations (5)	Safeguarding Concerns (1)	Changes to family time/plan (1)
Specific Issue	SGO planning drifting (4)			
Specific Issue	Lifestory work (1)			
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>

Drift and delay remains the most common theme for concern, with specific factors leading to the challenges made. These challenges led to resolution in relation to SGO plans drifting, although a lack of SW reports was also seen within this category. For 2022-23 this issue will be separated out from drift and delay as this is a more common theme. Management oversight was also an area for challenge with the majority of these issues being linked to outstanding 'sign off' of Placement with Parents regulations. IROs were instrumental in supporting the Local Authority to resolve outstanding regulations for many children. There were no imminent concerns about these placements however the interventions of IROs yielded formal approval and supported clarity regarding the longer term plans. As a consequence of this work the IRO service manager completed a report in 2021/22 and updates this on a twice-yearly basis. Informal challenge remains the preferred route to resolution for IROs with 96 informal challenges and resolutions being recorded this year.

#### 14. Lifestory Work

It is essential for children to have a clear sense of identity, if for example they have been adopted, or for children in care to understand their plan and how this relates to their history. As such 'life story work' has a series of flexible definitions, dependent on what is required for the child concerned, this is discussed and agreed at the review and IROs make recommendations in respect of lifestory work completion.

The extent to which this lifestory work is completed has been captured in the IRO quality and compliance form since November 2021 and to date this indicates that 31.9% of all children looked after have completed lifestory work as required by their circumstances and wishes.

IROs are encouraged to escalate such matters if drift is felt to be unacceptable. This year, only one such formal escalation was recorded, suggesting that IROs accepted the plan to complete this work, or indeed the necessary escalations have not been made. It is expected that all review recommendations address any outstanding explanations for children and if not completed by the agreed timeframe, that a formal escalation is made.

#### 15. Midway Reviews

Midway reviews provide an essential checkpoint for the IRO to measure the progress of the recommendations, this helps to avoid delay and also should allow the opportunity for the IRO and social worker to plan ahead for the next meeting. In 2021/22 898 Midway reviews were completed by IROs. Some children will have had several midway reviews due to their complex circumstances whilst others may not have had a midway review.

At 31 March 2022 midway review performance was at 65% for the service. This has steadily decreased in 2022 as the impact of vacancies within the service has gained momentum.

## 16. Broader Impact

The IRO service manager continues to complete a review of all children placed under section 20 on a bi-monthly basis, this report gives a qualitative insight into the status and plans for those children looked after under section 20. There has been a steady increase in children looked after under section 20 from 36 children in March 2021 to 49 children in April 2022. A review of these reports has found that:

- Children aged under 5 do not 'drift' in section 20, Care Orders are sought where required without undue delay
- Section 20 is used effectively for those children seeking asylum in our area
- Consent is largely gained and recorded on file when children are placed – the report advises where this has not occurred and as a consequence managers have been informed
- Management oversight on section 20 arrangements and for children returning home is strong
- The IRO footprint and quality assurance for children subject of section 20 is also generally robust
- Children placed under section 20 are often in Public Law Outline (PLO) processes alongside, where drift is identified the IRO service manager is well placed to follow this up as line manager of the PLO case manager.
- The bi-monthly section 20 report is circulated at Senior Management Team (SMT) and distributed to all senior managers in social care

In addition, the IRO service manager produced a report on PLO and Court outcomes in January 2022, alongside the PLO case manager. This report is intended to be completed on a 6 monthly basis. Findings from this report have been revealing and suggest that there is an increased use of PLO and an enhanced understanding of threshold. These factors, alongside the application of the PLO panel appear to have contributed to a reduction in Court proceedings and ultimately 'Care' applications. Timeliness of PLO processes continues to be an area for internal check and challenge. The IRO service manager has collaborated with the Principal Social Worker (PSW) in completing a revised parenting assessment.

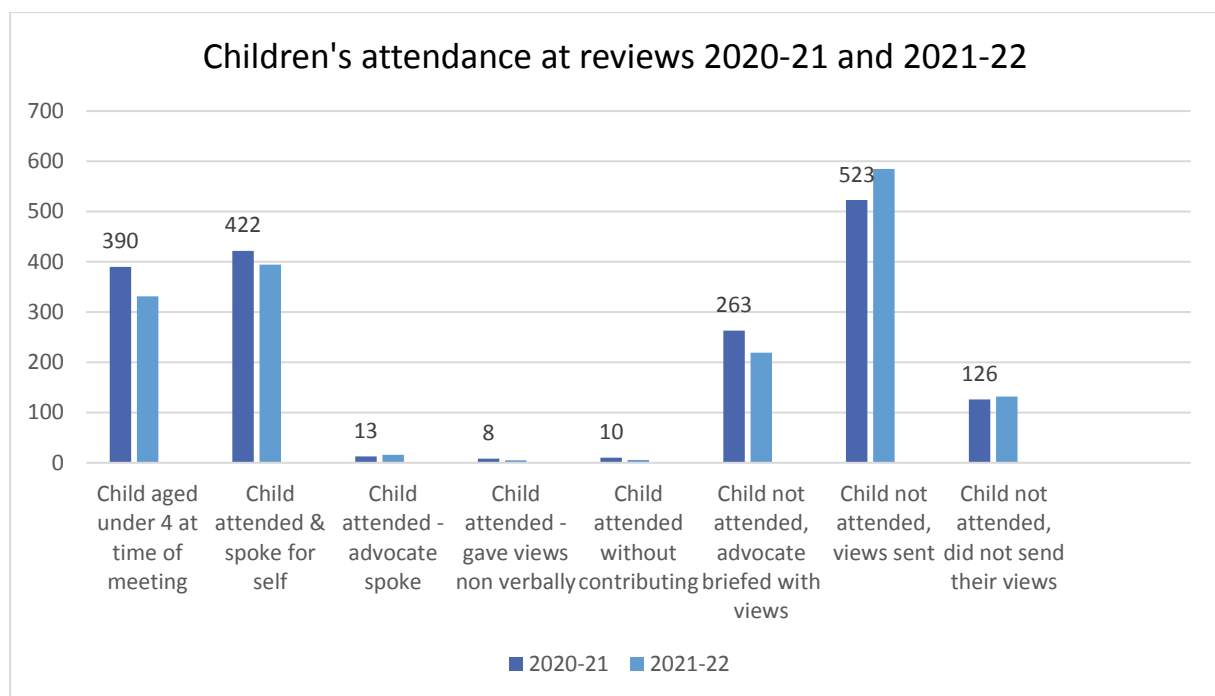
The IROs completed 47 case file audits in 2021/22. This supported the broader learning for the department, and in line with audit practices, offered assurance or challenge with regards to social work practice for those children. The outcomes of these audits is subject to reporting via the Quality and Learning Service and supports system wide learning.

## 17. Signs of Safety and Success

Rotherham operates under the Signs of Safety (SofS) practice model, which is incorporated in the LAC review process. This model assists IROs to simplify reviews for children and carers and focus upon ‘what’s working well, what are we worried about and what needs to happen?’ This approach supports IROs to meaningfully include strengths in the review process, asking about the positives for children and how this translates to planning– for example in relation to family time, career and educational aspirations, and relationships with others, whilst not missing what needs to change to develop smart focused plans.

## 18. Participation in Reviews

The majority reviews held in 2021/22 were held on a virtual basis due to continuing restrictions related to the Covid pandemic. Restrictions started to be lifted in the latter part of the year and IROs increased face to face visits to the children on their caseload. Feedback from children and young people suggests that for some of them, virtual reviews work well – sitting in a room with professionals can be daunting and a hybrid approach, where the child can be supported by their carer is preferable. In 2021/22 91.4% of children either attended or gave their views to the review process. In 2022/23 consultation will take place with children and young people on how we can support them to meaningfully participate in their review as we emerge from the pandemic and learn from the experience.



The table above shows that children either attend or share their views in over 90% of reviews. The IROs support children to take an active role in planning and leading their review, where able and appropriate. For example, child A chairs her own reviews and directs care planning – she is supported in preparing for these meetings and formulates her own worry statements and success goals.

The use of virtual reviews has had some success. For example, one child has attended all of their reviews, they enjoys the use of technology, having struggled with larger face to face meetings and rarely attending these. This child is now increasing in confidence and the IRO is looking forward to supporting them to their own meetings.

The newly amended review minutes on LCS will have the facility to record attendance in professional groups, this will support monitoring and reporting on these figures in a more

efficient manner. At present professional attendees have to be created on LCS which is not always possible. In addition, the attendance is ascribed to job role, therefore grouping by profession is challenging.

## **19. Visits to Children by the IRO**

In recent previous years COVID-19 restrictions had a significant impact on the visits IROs made to children in care, the issues linked to the pandemic continued throughout much of 2021/22, lessening in the final quarter of the year. Virtual visits, using WhatsApp or Microsoft Teams became the norm in the context of lockdown, with 94 Virtual visits being recorded. In early 2022, face to face visits resumed as much as possible, targeting those felt to be most vulnerable first of all – children in residential settings including and specifically those out of area, those with additional risk factors risk such as missing or child exploitation risk and or out of education and where there may be other concerns.

Face to face visits to 116 children were completed in the year, with 79 or 68% of visits undertaken in the last quarter of 2021/22.

## **20. The Health of Looked After Children**

IROs monitor the extent to which the health of Children Looked After is checked and any issues addressed. The child's health is a standing agenda item for reviews.

### **Initial Health Assessments (IHA)**

At 31 March 2022, 403 or 94% of children had an up to date health assessment.

137 Initial Health Assessments were completed over the year, with 69.3% being completed within the prescribed 4 week timeframe. The reporting figures have oscillated throughout the year, revealing no particular trend. IROs are expected to escalate undue delay in relation to Initial Health Assessments (IHAs), however no formal escalations on this matter have been raised. The IRO service manager attends the LAC Physical & Emotional Health sub-group and the health check performance is monitored and discussed there with all relevant managers present.

### **Strengths and Difficulties**

The IRO ensures that each eligible child (Aged over 5 and Looked After for 12 months +) has an appropriate strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) which is used to assess the child's emotional and psychological health needs. In 2021/22 274 SDQs were completed meaning that 60% of eligible children had an SDQ undertaken. Further analysis is needed to understand why 40% of Looked After Children do not have up to date SDQs. In Rotherham the Local Indicator gives a larger cohort of children i.e., those aged 3+ and Looked After for 12 months or more. As a consequence, for these children the performance drops to a completion rate of 49%. This performance has dropped from last year by roughly 10%.

### **Dental Checks**

As at 31 March 2022 Dental checks were completed on 78% of children, this is a significant increase compared to the 32% of checks completed in time throughout in 2020/21 and the 59% reported at the same point in 2021. The IRO service was pro-active in addressing these outstanding checks as IROs felt that the figures were not an accurate representation of what was being reported by social workers in reviews. As a consequence, IROs agreed to contact allocated social workers and encouraged them to update the child's case file.

This had in an improvement in the performance reporting with a jump of over 20% or 86 children from 30 September 2021 to 31 March 2022.

The IRO service manager has also engaged with the Oral Health Lead for RMBC, attending the Local Dental Council for the region. This has enabled discussion in ensuring Looked After Children have access to dental care in the wake of COVID restrictions and IROs have been briefed to share information with social workers and carers for any children with these problems, and will signpost to the 'SMILE foundation' if required.

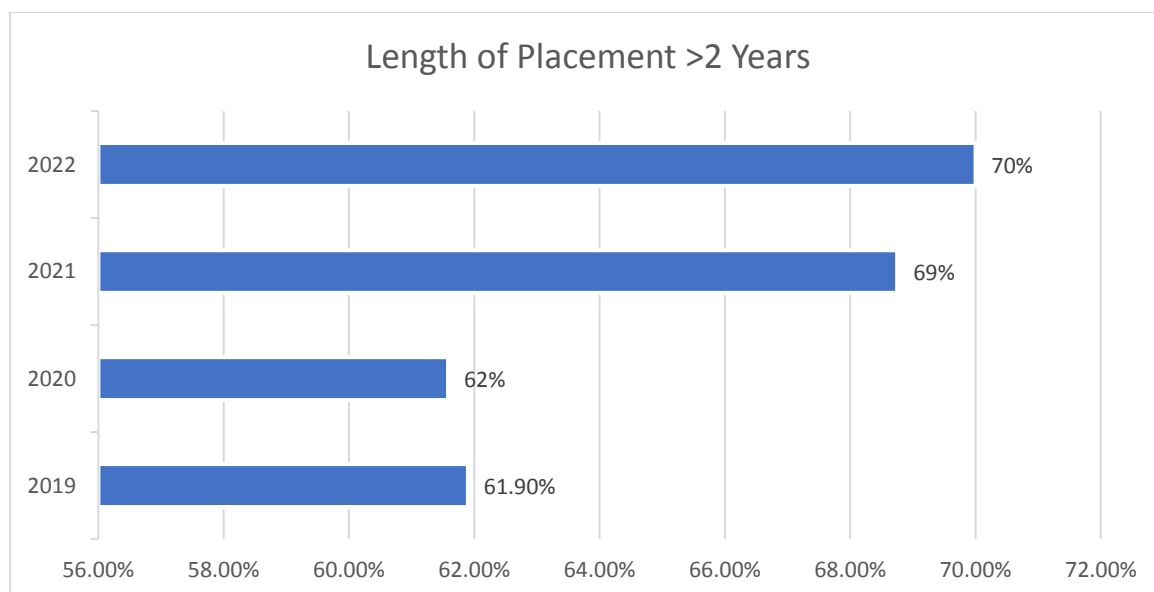
## 21. Education for Looked After Children

The IRO is responsible for reviewing the personal education plan as part of the statutory review ensuring the child is being provided with the support they need to reach their maximum potential. Within the review process the IRO is responsible for ensuring the PEP (personal education plan) is up to date and is sets clear aspirations, which are reflected in the care plan. At 31 March 2022 93.7% of PEPs were completed within timescales and is consistent with throughout the year prior, recorded at 94.6%.

The IRO monitors the extent to which the child has 25 hours education and will escalate any concerns as part of the child's review process. The IRO quality assures that the pupil premium has been utilised to support the educational outcomes for the individual child. Any concerns are raised with the individual school and the virtual school, via the Virtual Head for Looked After Children. Educational provision is overseen for children placed within residential care or complex settings as part of the 'Residential Panel' attended by the IRO service manager.

## 22. Placement Stability

RMBC is committed to ensuring stability for all children looked after, where this is not possible and children move on an unplanned basis, disruption meetings are held and attended by the IRO, the meeting is chaired by the Supervising Social Work Manager.



As can be seen above, placement stability has remained consistent over the course of 2021/22, improving slightly against last year's figure. Out of a cohort of 241 children (looked after for more than 2.5 years) 169 have been in the same placement for 2 years or more. IROs are encouraged to consider escalation processes if placement moves are considered

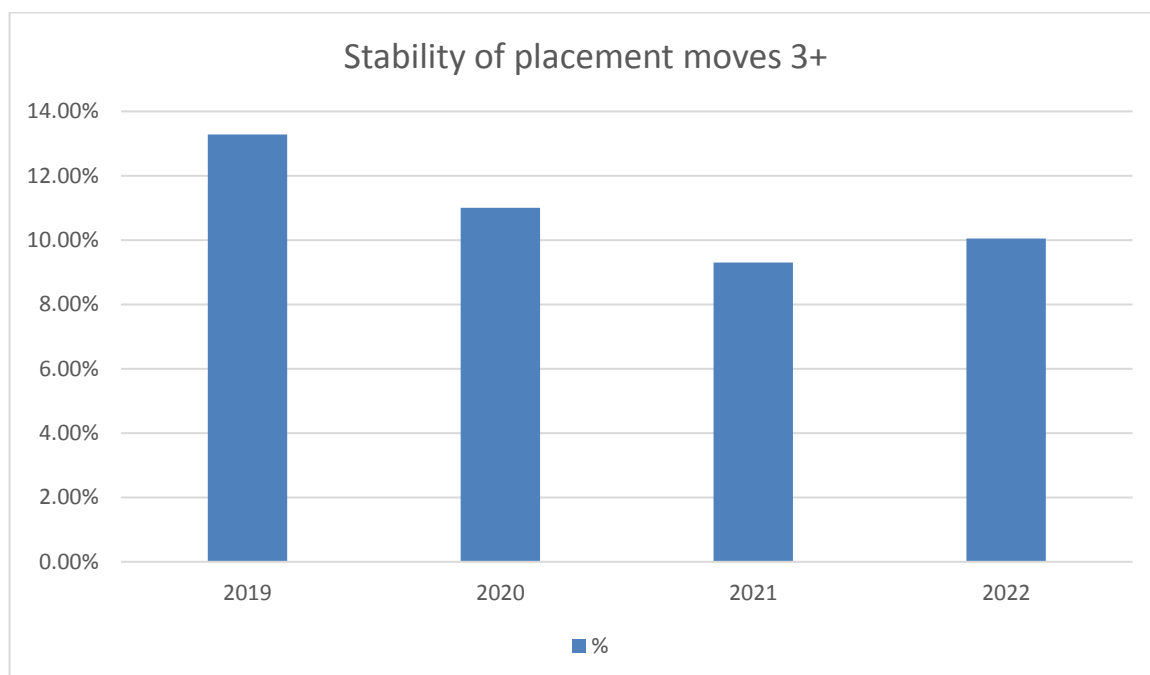
to cause any detriment to the child. During the year, 542 new placements were commenced in total, with 362 of these being placement moves, i.e., for children already in local authority care. This a slight increase on the figure from 2020/21.

Placements end for various reasons, planned and unplanned. Clearly unplanned moves are less supportive for the child and potentially introduce complications and risks. The table below gives some insight into common causes of the placement ending on an unplanned basis.

Reason given for placement ending	Number of children
Carer requests placement end due to placement becoming unmanageable	56
Carer requests placement end other than due to other than due to placement becoming unmanageable	20
Allegation (s47)	9
Child requests placement end	16
Standards of Care concern	10
Responsible/Area authority requests placement end	7
Adoption	21

The information above shows that 76 children had their placement end at the carer's request, and IROs are expected to address any issues where they view the Local Authority has not adequately supported the placement to continue if this is in the child's interests, this could be linked to fostering social work support for example.

The proportion of children experiencing three or more placement moves has decreased by 1.7% from last year and by 4% from 2018. As illustrated in the table below, 56 children had 3 or more moves in 2021/22, an increase of 2 children. IROs will hold a review within 28 days of a placement move and are responsible for ensuring that the move is in the child's interest and that children achieve stability as far as possible.



### 23. Unregistered Care

In 2021/22, 14 children were placed in either unregistered emergency accommodation or unregistered unregulated accommodation. This is accommodation which is not subject to OFSTED inspection, yet is providing 'care' to children.

Children placed in these settings have an enhanced offer of monthly LAC reviews in order to monitor quality, provide additional safeguards, and to track placement moves. This year has been challenging in terms due to limited placement options, which can be seen in many other authorities.

Unregistered family settings also fall into this category, whereby family members are awaiting assessment or would not meet fostering regulations. However, in these circumstances the arrangement were in the child's best interest.

Since June 2022, regular meetings have taken place to monitor the provision of children in registered and unregistered residential care settings. These meetings include representation by the IRO Service Manager and colleagues from Commissioning and Residential services. These meetings promote IRO oversight and feedback in terms of the standards of care provided to children and ensure that these children receive a high level of additional scrutiny.

### 24. Regulation 44 Visits

Regulation 44 visits (The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015) are completed by an independent visitor, in order to ensure that registered provision such as children's home are well managed and to report on the standard of care provided. These visits take place on a monthly basis and the independent visitors completes a report, detailing their findings.

RMBC commissions regulation 44 visits to its own children's homes from an independent agency, these reports are distributed to the allocated IRO for child resident and allocated. IROs share any views regarding the standard of care in RMBC or private homes and their feedback is sought within the meeting referred to in the section above. The R44 reports are

provided to the IRO for consideration as part of the review process. IROs do communicate with Regulation 44 visitors and OFSTED inspectors in order to share their views regarding the provision, this supports OFSTED to make rounded findings in relation to their inspection of children's homes.

## 25. Children Placed Out of Authority

As of 31 March 2022, 316 children were placed out of the Rotherham area, this is a slight decrease from 333 as at March 2021, and from 345 at the same point in 2020, as such there is assurance that these figures are gradually reducing.

At 31 March 2022 114 children were placed over 20 miles from their family home, in the following provision:

Number of Children	Type of Provision
26	Residential Children's Home
6	Placed for Adoption
6	Independent Living
1	Court Directed Placement
1	Residential School
2	Family Placements
71	Foster Care
2	Unregistered Emergency or Unregulated Accommodation

Several of these arrangements are to enable adoption or to remain within their birth family. Long-term fostering arrangements and Residential care constitutes placements for 97 of those children placed over 20 miles away. For these children it is key that their long-term future is considered in terms of the benefits of being closer to Rotherham – this could lead to greater support from their birth network and familiarity as they leave care, conversely for some children a return would increase risk or be against their stated wishes. IROs are expected to monitor, scrutinise and challenge these placement locations if needed in order to ensure that they are in the best interests of the child, for example, a specifically required resource not available in our area. IROs take a firm and clear view about whether these arrangements should be maintained or whether a return to the RMBC area is required and this is visibly endorsed in the review record.

## 26. Fostering

RMBC employs one full time equivalent fostering IRO (FIRO), in 2021-22, this role was split between 2 part time workers. This has been beneficial in that the two FIROs are able to have flexibility in allocation.

As at 31 March 2022, RMBC employs 125 foster carers. In 2021-22 115 Fostering Reviews were completed, with 70% of these recorded as being in timescale. The review process supports the information needed to approve foster carers. The FIROs have been developed the challenge and resolution process, bringing this in line with their children's counterparts. A culture of open discussion between FIROs and team managers has been in place over time and has supported working relationships, whilst the escalation process has been embedded.

## 27. Adoption

In 2021/22 32 children were adopted, a reduction of 2 from the previous year, with 15% adopted within 12 months of the SHOBPA (Should Be Placed for Adoption) decision, a drop of 8%, this drop is due to various factors in individual circumstances, such as Court reporting and timescales and some complex adoption matters for particular children. IROs chair reviews for children in the adoption process:

- No later than 3 months after authority to place the child for adoption has been obtained;
- At least every 6 months thereafter until an adoptive placement is made.

The IRO monitors the progress in making an adoptive placement for the child, if this is not achieved by the first 6 month review after the placement order was made, the IRO confirms that adoption remains the best plan for the child via the review process.

Where the child has been placed for adoption, arrangements must be made so that an Adoption Review is held:

- Within 4 weeks of the placement;
- Not more than 3 months after the first review unless an application for an adoption order has been made;
- At least every 6 months thereafter until an adoption order has been made or the adoptive placement ends.

Where a child has been placed for adoption but not adopted within 12 months, the child's social worker must present a further report to the Adoption Panel identifying the length of the delay, the reasons and the steps being taken to address any difficulties. The IRO ensures that these steps are taken and raises any concerns that they have regarding this through the challenge and resolution process. In 2021-22 there were no challenges regarding the adoption process. However, it can be seen that 5 children were adopted outside this timescale. For all of the children, the IRO remained informed and sought reassurance that the Local Authority was taking the appropriate steps in relation to progressing the Adoption Order. The issues involved were:

- Complex assessment as siblings had to be separated
- High level of need, with adoption remaining the best plan for the child
- Court delays caused by further expert assessment and hearing availability

Adoption Performance for the past 2 years		
<b><u>2020/21</u></b>		
Days between Placement Order and Matching	Days between Becoming Looked After and Adoptive Placement Commencing	Adopted within 12 Months of a SHOBPA decision
Target of 121 days Average of 183 days Within Timescale 58.8%	Target of 426 days Average of 470 days Within Timescale 47.1%	23.5%
<b><u>2021/22</u></b>		
Days between Placement Order and Matching	Days between Becoming Looked After and Adoptive Placement Commencing	Adopted within 12 Months of a SHOBPA decision

Target of 121 days Average of 305 days Within Timescale 62.5%	Target of 426 days Average of 613 days Within Timescale 28%	15.6%
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The table above is slightly misleading as one child was the subject of complex Court proceedings from July 2017 to September 2021.

## **28. Children Missing from Care and subject to Child Exploitation concerns**

In 2021/22 64 children looked after by RMBC went missing from their placement, with 370 missing episodes in total for those children. There were 24 occurrences of children missing on more than three occasions in the year.

Of the children looked after that were missing in the year 70 were felt to be at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation and 26 Child Criminal Exploitation. Strategy discussions were held on 232 occasions for the children in the missing cohort, although this does not necessarily mean that these were held due to them being missing, all children missing for over 24 hours had a strategy discussion within the year and 22 children in the cohort were without 'Find Me Plans'. In addition, 184 Return home interviews were completed, with 162 return home interviews declined by young people.

IROs are invited to all consequent strategy discussions and ensure that LAC reviews address the current safety plans and required responses and offer challenge if these are felt to be sufficiently robust. IROs are mindful of risks associated with child exploitation and contextual safeguarding – and ensure that review decisions reflect any protective action required. An IRO attends regular focused meetings to discuss practice in these areas.

## **29. Children looked after and subject to child protection plans**

For children subject to Child Protection Plans, the IRO will usually cease the plan at the first LAC review, provided there is clarity about the placement, progress and legal status. For some children looked after under section 20 and in a PLO process it may be that the IRO maintains the plan, if for example it is anticipated that the child will return home shortly.

At 31 March 2022 16 children were subject of joint CP and LAC plans, all of these plans except one was ended within the subsequent three month initial review period. The outstanding CP plan remains in place due to care arrangements made by the Court.

The IRO and CP service managers meet on a quarterly basis adding additional reassurance to the evidence that delay is minimised, as many children on CP plans are looked after under section 20, the IRO SM's section 20 report offers a further layer of scrutiny. This liaison ensures that communication between the two services is effective and supports the 'birds eye view' that IROs and Child Protection Chairs have as part of their role.

## **30. Working with Children's Guardians**

The IRO and Children's Guardian (CG) share a focus for the child in Court proceedings, the CG and IRO communicate at the beginning and end of proceedings and at any other point during the process. The IRO provides valuable insight for the CG in respect of their independent view on the child's circumstances. At times this may be in contrast to the views of the local authority and the IRO can convey this view, subject to all efforts to resolve any issues, via the CG. Similarly, the CG should keep the IRO briefed on the Court progress and any reason for delay.

Regular meetings between the IRO service and CAFCASS were arranged up until around 2020, these were impacted upon by the pandemic and are being reinstated. The IRO and CAFCASS service manager meet within the PLO panel process and on a quarterly basis. A joint audit completed between CAFCASS and RMBC Social Care was completed in March 2022, this revealed good working relationships and communication between the CG and IRO at the time of the proceedings and until the completion of these.

### 31. Concluding comments and areas for development

Throughout 2021/22 the IRO service maintained a good level of performance in review timescales. This had a beneficial impact in ensuring the plans for RMBC's looked after children were carried out. In addition, the evidence offered in the report in respect of children looked after under section 20, on Care orders or in the Adoption process suggests that these children receive a timely and effective level of oversight and engagement from the IRO service. Children played a meaningful role in their review and the IRO supported them to contribute.

IROs have also demonstrated the impact of the review process and their oversight on the health of children looked after, in increasing the uptake and evidence of dental checks.

### 32. Key Actions for 2022/23

Issue	Action
Key performance objectives will be met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minutes within 15 days = 90%</li> <li>Midway Reviews = 90%</li> <li>Quality and Compliance completion in all reviews</li> <li>Quarterly performance report and monthly highlight report to be completed by the IRO service Manager and shared with the Head of Service</li> </ul>
Attendance and Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attendance data to be embedded into LCS by December 2022</li> <li>IRO visits to return to face to face for all children. The IROs will ensure each child is seen in placement in 2022/23</li> <li>Participation figures for 'attended and spoke for self' to increase to at least 35% by the end of the financial year 2023.</li> <li>IROs to support broader attendance by those in the child's network and to encourage SWs to consider this in their invitations.</li> </ul>
Impact and Influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All children in unregistered care settings will be closely monitored and will be subject to formal challenge if delay occurs</li> <li>IROs will seek to confirm and clarify aspirations for all children with pathway plans, to include their educational plans, employment hopes, the vision regarding their supportive networks and housing and any other areas felt important to that young person. IROs will discuss these with the young</li> </ul>

	<p>person and ensure their views are central to the review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IROs and Team managers will meet on a monthly basis to discuss thematic issues and agree plans going forward</li> <li>• The section 20 report will continue on a bi-monthly basis. In addition, deep dive activity regarding children placed with parents is planned for 2022/23, to be supported by the IROs service</li> <li>• The IRO Service Manager and PLO manager will produce a 6 monthly PLO and Court practice report, ensuring IROs receive relevant information to inform their oversight</li> <li>• IROs will ask in each review process as to the Local authority care plan and the rationale for the child remaining in LA care. This includes the plan for family time and what the vision is for this in the longer term.</li> </ul>
<b>Children placed in unregistered private care settings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regulation (reg) 44 reports for RMBC provision will be shared with IROs, they will ensure that any concerns are taken account of in respect of the child they are allocated to. IROs will ensure that they have sight of Reg 44 reports for any children in private provision</li> <li>• All children placed away from the Rotherham area in private settings will be seen by their IRO in that setting prior to their review and a view conveyed in the review process as to the quality of the care provided</li> </ul>
<b>Children at risk from exploitation/significant harm</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IROs will attend the 'Operational Missing Meeting' on a monthly basis to ensure that children looked after receive a swift and proportionate response and that plans (such as find me plans) are sufficient and up to date. Thematic information and feedback to individual IROs will be gathered</li> <li>• The IRO and CP service managers will continue to meet on a monthly basis to monitor to discuss shared activities and performance</li> </ul>
<b>Looked After Children will have access to Health support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IROs will continue to ensure dental checks are discussed and updated at every review and escalations raised where required.</li> <li>• All children without a health check in time should be discussed with the LAC nurse and an action retabled in the review recommendations</li> </ul>

**Lee Durrant**  
**IRO Service Manager**  
**Rotherham MBC Children's Services**

**14 October 2022**