

## NOTICE OF MEETING

<b>Meeting</b>	Children and Families Advisory Panel
<b>Date and Time</b>	Tuesday 12th October 2021 at 2.00pm
<b>Place</b>	Chute Room, Ell Court South, Winchester
<b>Enquiries to</b>	members.services@hants.gov.uk

Carolyn Williamson FCPFA  
Chief Executive  
The Castle, Winchester SO23 8UJ

## FILMING AND BROADCAST NOTIFICATION

This meeting may be recorded and broadcast live on the County Council's website. The meeting may also be recorded and broadcast by the press and members of the public – please see the Filming Protocol available on the County Council's website.

## AGENDA

### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To receive any apologies for absence.

### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

All Members who believe they have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting must declare that interest and, having regard to Part 3 Paragraph 1.5 of the County Council's Members' Code of Conduct, leave the meeting while the matter is discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with Paragraph 1.6 of the Code. Furthermore all Members with a Personal Interest in a matter being considered at the meeting should consider, having regard to Part 5, Paragraph 4 of the Code, whether such interest should be declared, and having regard to Part 5, Paragraph 5 of the Code, consider whether it is appropriate to leave the meeting while the matter is discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with the Code.

### 3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Pages 3 - 6)

To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting held on Tuesday 9 February 2020.

**4. DEPUTATIONS**

To receive any deputations notified under Standing Order 12.

**5. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

To receive any announcements the Chairman may wish to make.

**6. INDEPENDENT REVIEWING SERVICE CARE PLAN AUDIT (Pages 7 - 14)**

To receive a presentation from the Director of Children's Services providing an overview of the outcomes from the department's Independent Reviewing Service Care Plan Audit.

**7. CHILDREN AND FAMILIES PARTICIPATION REPORT (Pages 15 - 22)**

To receive a report from the Director of Children's Services providing an update on participation within Children's Services.

**8. ANNUAL FOSTERING REPORT (Pages 23 - 38)**

To receive a report from the Director of Children's Services providing the annual update on fostering.

**9. MODERNISING PLACEMENTS PROGRAMME (Pages 39 - 70)**

To receive a report and presentation from the Director of Children's Services providing an update on the Modernising Placements Programme.

**ABOUT THIS AGENDA:**

**On request, this agenda can be provided in alternative versions (such as large print, Braille or audio) and in alternative languages.**

**ABOUT THIS MEETING:**

**The press and public are welcome to attend the public sessions of the meeting. If you have any particular requirements, for example if you require wheelchair access, please contact [members.services@hants.gov.uk](mailto:members.services@hants.gov.uk) for assistance.**

County Councillors attending as appointed members of this Committee or by virtue of Standing Order 18.5; or with the concurrence of the Chairman in connection with their duties as members of the Council or as a local County Councillor qualify for travelling expenses.

# Agenda Item 3

AT A MEETING of the Children and Families Advisory Panel of HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL held as a remote meeting on Tuesday, 9th February, 2021

Chairman:

\* Councillor David Keast

\* Councillor Pal Hayre

Councillor Martin Boiles

\* Councillor Ann Briggs

\* Councillor Fran Carpenter

\* Councillor Peter Edgar MBE

\* Councillor Floss Mitchell

\* Councillor Jackie Porter

\* Councillor Malcolm Wade

\*Present

## 93. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies.

## 94. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were mindful that where they believed they had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any matter considered at the meeting they must declare that interest at the time of the relevant debate and, having regard to the circumstances described in Part 3, Paragraph 1.5 of the County Council's Members' Code of Conduct, leave the meeting while the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with Paragraph 1.6 of the Code. Furthermore Members were mindful that where they believed they had a Personal Interest in a matter being considered at the meeting they considered whether such interest should be declared, and having regard to Part 5, Paragraph 5 of the Code, considered whether it was appropriate to leave the meeting whilst the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with the Code.

## 95. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

## 96. **DEPUTATIONS**

There were no deputations.

## 97. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman had no announcements.

98. **PRINCIPAL SOCIAL WORKER CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

The Panel considered the report of the Director of Children's Services with an overview of the roles and responsibilities of the Hampshire Children and Families Principal Social Worker (PSW).

In response to Members' questions, it was confirmed that:

- Exit interviews with social work officers leaving the organisation were always carried out through the workforce development team and the feedback was collated. A six monthly report containing this information was reviewed by the management team.
- New social workers who have transferred to Hampshire from other Local Authorities generally observed how the 'Hampshire approach' was different and refreshing to that which they had experienced previously.
- The role of the PSW linked into Children's Services Departmental Management Team (CSDMT) through the Assistant Director for Children and Families.
- Ensuring the wellbeing of staff, whilst challenging due to different ways of working throughout the pandemic, was of utmost importance. Participating in regional and national networks to share how other Local Authorities were working and to collaborate on best practice enabled the Hampshire team to continue to review and develop their approach.

The Panel congratulated the PSW on the ever evolving role and for establishing innovative and creative practices.

RESOLVED:

That the Children and Families Advisory Panel notes the role and work of the Hampshire Children and Families Principal Social Worker.

99. **HAMPSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD 2019/20**

The Panel considered the report of the Director of Children's Services providing a summary of the Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) Annual Report 2019-20.

In response to Member's questions, it was confirmed that:

- The Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) referred to within section 8 of the report is responsible for reviewing information on all child deaths. Serious child safeguarding cases are reviewed by a separate group, the Learning and Enquiry Group, to determine if a review is appropriate to identify improvements to practice.
- GP and maternity services can refer a family to Children's Services before birth if there was a known history of child abuse or neglect.
- Children's Services provide the majority of funding to the Hampshire Safeguarding Partnership with funding also provided from partner agencies.

- Ongoing initiatives, such as Every Sleep Counts, were regularly revised and refreshed with messaging being circulated widely through GP surgeries, via newsletter, social media, the County Council's website and through the workforce.

The Panel discussed the mental health of care leavers and how they were supported through Children's Services and through CAMHS. It was noted that care leavers were more likely to experience mental health problems.

RESOLVED:

That the Children and Families Advisory Panel notes the annual report of the Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) Annual Report 2019-20.

#### 100. **INDEPENDENT REVIEWING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20**

The Panel considered the report of the Director of Children's Services providing the annual update on the work of the Independent Reviewing Service (IRS) in Hampshire.

In response to Members' questions, it was confirmed that:

- The report covered the period from 1 July 2019 to 31 July 2020 which mirrored the time period that each Local Authority submits their IRS annual update.
- Virtual meetings were proving successful although it had been recognised that not being able to hold physical meetings during the pandemic had meant that interactions were slightly different. A participation survey was due to be circulated in March 2021 to evaluate experiences and to gauge the desire to continue meeting virtually in some capacity once the pandemic had passed.
- The role of an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) was to review the Local Authority and other partner organisations ensuring that they are fully meeting the child's needs.
- An average IRO caseload was 50-70 cases, working with one child or family on average three times a year. The role was not a close liaison role such as that of a social worker hence the larger average caseload numbers.

RESOLVED:

That the Children and Families Advisory Panel notes the annual report of the Independent Reviewing Service.

#### 101. **UPDATE ON LOCKDOWN 3**

The Panel received the presentation of the Director of Children's Services with an update on the activities and ongoing work throughout the third national lockdown.

In response to Members' questions, it was confirmed that:

- Enhanced support was being offered to staff throughout the pandemic although staff absences due to mental health and stress were lower than in the previous year. Members noted that there would likely be a lasting mental health impact both locally and on a national scale once the pandemic had passed.
- The same criminal checks were carried out for volunteers as well as for employees.
- Virtual events and meetings had generally experienced higher attendance particularly from partner organisations who had found it difficult to attend some physical meetings previously.
- Children's Services as a department was fit for the next decade and transforming its practices continuously. Members noted the considerable regulations around children's social care but that the department were striving to develop new and innovative ways of working and improving. Members praised the departments reactive response to the pandemic.

RESOLVED:

That the Children and Families Advisory Panel notes the content of the presentation.



# Hampshire County Council

# Hampshire Children's Services Care Plan Audit 2020/21

Presentation to Children & Families Advisory Panel  
12 October 2021



# Independent Reviewing Service (IRS) Annual Care Plan Audit 2020/21

The Independent Reviewing Service undertakes an annual audit of the quality of children's care plans in Hampshire. The findings from the audits are used to develop and enhance practice, and to improve outcomes for children who are looked after.

The audit focused on the following areas:

- ✚ **The Care Plan** (*looking at the desired outcomes for the child, what actions and outcomes are expected from each agency, and the services and interventions that are required to meet the child's day to day and long-term needs*)
- ✚ **The Personal Education Plan (PEP)** (*looking at strengths, attendance and achievements, SMART academic targets, learning needs, and educational progress*)
- ✚ **The Health Assessment (HA)** (*looking at and ensuring every child has an individual up to date health plan, physical, emotional health and behavioural needs of children and how that is included in the care plan, how the child's wishes, and feelings have been acted upon*)
- ✚ **Needs of the child** (*looking at how the care plan takes in to account specific needs including needs relating to disability, identity, gender, culture, faith, language etc.*)
- ✚ **The Child Looked After Review** (*looking at participation, contribution, inclusion, multi-agency input*)
- ✚ **Equality and Diversity** (*looking at cultural, religious, positive identity, linguistic backgrounds, access to and provision of services etc.*)

# Methodology

- Between 30 November 2020 and 4 January 2021, 21 Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) completed a care plan audit following each Child Looked After Review.
- The audit contained 68 questions and included direct answers from children, parents and carers.
- 272 children's plans were audited, an increase from the number audited in 2019 (208).
- In the 20/2021 audits the questions were both qualitative and quantitative to establish if the Hampshire Approach is having a positive impact on care planning and contributes to achieving good outcomes for children.

# Key Findings

- Over 98.5% of care plans reflect the needs of the child (an improvement from the 66% in 2019).
- 228 (83.82%) of children reported that their life had improved since becoming looked after which demonstrates that their care plan is meeting their needs. There are notable differences in the findings of 2020/21 audit in comparison with the previous year – the new format care plan **My life, My Future** is capturing how the child's needs are being met and making a positive difference to the child's view and understanding of their journey.
- In 89.3% of cases audited the IRO found that children's equality and diversity needs were being met, this is significantly higher than previous years, 39.9% in 2019.
- Clear evidence of how the permanence plan for the child will be achieved in 76% of cases (an 8% increase from 2019).
- When planning for children it is important to consider contingencies should 'plan A' not be possible; there was an increase of 24% in the 2020/21 results which demonstrated that 86% of care plans evidenced contingency plans.

# Key Findings contd.

- For 58% of children their attainment levels had increased since becoming looked after and 112 children had grown in confidence which impacted on their social skills, resulting in more children participating in after school activities.
- Key people, including the child (where age/understanding appropriate), had attended the PEP meeting in 93.6% of cases, a significant increase of 52.2% from the audit results reported in 2019.
- For 239 children (93%), their health had improved since becoming looked after.
- 245 children (88%) reported they have regular exercise and 245 children reported having an attachment to their primary carer and that children had a good bedtime routine and were provided with a healthy diet.
- The audit established that 64.3% of children did not require any professional emotional support and 175 of the 272 children audited are having their emotional needs met by their primary carer.
- In the 2020/21 audit findings 156 (57.4%) children attended their looked after review, an increase of 2.6% from the 2019 audit.

# Areas for development

- The new care plan has been designed to be more inclusive and should be signed by the child and parent. The audit findings show that 43 children signed their plan, and 79 parents which is an improvement from 2019. This is an area of focus for the Independent Reviewing Service (IRS) who are working with children and parents to ensure that the care plan is signed by the child and by parents following the looked after review.
- The dental and optician results have been impacted by the national lockdown as routine appointments were not offered. This area of improvement is linked to a multi-agency action plan and the Independent Reviewing Service is working with the social work teams and foster carers to ensure that regular health and dental appointments are made, and that children attend. IROs are confirming and monitoring this through the reviews and report on this through the monthly performance meetings.
- The audit findings noted an improvement in the number of children attending their review, however the focus for IRS is to increase the number of children who attend their review and participate in their care planning. Some children have told us that they prefer to attend their reviews using various platforms and an action plan is in place which is looking at developing hybrid meetings alongside face to face meetings as a way of ensuring that as many children as possible attend and contribute to their reviews.

# Summary

- The audit completed this year demonstrated that for the majority of children who are looked after by Hampshire Children's Services their life has improved, not just in the stability of care provided, for them personally but in their academic and social skills, that they feel safe, loved, and cared for and are happy.
- The audit has highlighted some positive findings which clearly show an improvement in comparison to the 2018 and 2019 audit results.
- The audits have identified some areas for development and the IRS already have plans in place to address the areas that have been highlighted through the audit process.

## HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Report

<b>Panel:</b>	Children and Families Advisory Panel
<b>Date:</b>	12 October 2021
<b>Title:</b>	Children and Families Participation Report
<b>Report From:</b>	Director of Children's Services

**Contact name:** Hannah Leat      **Email:** hannah.lead@hants.gov.uk

#### **Purpose of this Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to give the panel an overview of participation activity in 2020. The report summarises the lessons learnt and makes recommendations for the direction of participation activity in 2021.

#### **Recommendation(s)**

2. The Panel is aware of and notes the participation activity that has taken place.

#### **Executive Summary**

3. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview and summary of participation activity within the Children and Families Branch in 2020.
4. Over the past two years, the focus of participation activity has been on engaging with families to strengthen relationships and ensuring that we are listening to what young people and their families want for their lives and their plans. This is now well embedded into districts and is monitored through activity including case file audits and care plan audits.
5. The period between January 2020 and December 2020 spans the period impacted by Covid-19 which brought new challenges for engagement with children and young people. Prior to this period, participation often involved conferences, forums, and large activity-based events; however, these had to be suspended in line with government guidance. Staff have sought other ways of creatively engaging with young people, balancing this against the additional pressure that the global pandemic has placed on them in performing their

statutory responsibilities. This report refers to this shift throughout the document.

6. During the first lockdown, participation activity focused on engagement with young people through fun and connection activities, which helped to support good relationships with young people while other methods of engagement could not take place. These included virtual quizzes, competitions, and videos of staff. As lockdowns continued young people appeared less inclined to meet staff online or undertake online activities, perhaps reflecting the widely felt “Zoom fatigue” phenomenon. Staff responded by continuing to offer creative methods of engagement, but this was a challenge.
7. Moving forward, as we come out of lockdown and return to ‘normal’, there is now an opportunity to review and refresh the 2018 – 2021 Participation Strategy. There is an opportunity to consider how we build on our engagement activity towards involving children and young people meaningfully in co-designing services and shaping service delivery. There have already been a number of opportunities for this to happen at a county and national level, which are detailed below under ‘Care Ambassador activities’. Care experienced young people have made valuable contributions on these occasions, and the department should give attention to identifying other opportunities where we can include the voices of children and young people in shaping service delivery at all levels of the organisation.

### **Relevant Background and information**

8. For the purposes of this report, the participation activity overview is divided into three sections –
  - a) Care Ambassador activities
  - b) Participation Officer-led activities
  - c) Participation in the Districts.
9. Overview of participation in numbers –

• Ambassador activities	67
• County Activities (WGT and ICE <sup>1</sup> )	139
• District activities	482
10. The Participation Officer has supported with activities open to children across the County and has also co-ordinated opportunities for young people to engage with decision-makers on a national level.
  - a) Care Ambassadors’ activities

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<sup>1</sup> WGT - We've Got Talent - HCC's talent show for children in care.  
ICE Project - This ambitious, innovative programme is a collaboration between Hampshire Cultural Trust and Hampshire Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, provided by Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. We set out with the joint view that arts and cultural activities can have a positive impact on our psychological health and emotional wellbeing.



**11. Accommodation inspections**

The Care Ambassador group works with Commissioning to complete inspections of post-16 accommodation. Young people can give their own unique perspectives which are incorporated into the inspection report and fed back to the provider for action where required. Young people completed three accommodation inspections during 2020.

**12. Meeting with the Children's Commissioner for England**

In June 2020 two young people had the opportunity to meet with the Children's Commissioner for England. The purpose of this meeting was for the Commissioner to explore young people's experiences of being away from school during lockdown, and how young people felt about returning to school after lockdown. The young people's views were used to inform central government policy and planning.

**13. Interviews for the new Virtual School Head**

In June 2020, a young person was involved in the interview process for the new Virtual School head. Feedback from the panel showed that his contribution was valued and was useful in confirming their decisions.

**14. Consultation on county policies and strategy**

Care Experienced young people have been consulted on three areas of service improvement – personal allowance payments, health passports, and the review of the Independent Reviewing Service. In total eight young people were involved in these consultations.

15. In the period between January and December 2020 there were opportunities for care experienced children and young people to meet the Participation Officer and express an interest in participation activities. Young people have used these opportunities to raise queries and concerns, which have been passed on or actioned as appropriate. In total, 28 young people attended Care Ambassador meetings during 2020.

16. The Care Ambassadors' meetings have continued throughout 2020, moving to online platforms in response to Covid-19 regulations. This group has previously operated as a 'closed' group of young people who have made a longer term commitment to the role, but the impact of Covid-19 has led to some changes in this. Over the lockdown period, several Care Ambassadors have paused or ended their involvement, reporting that other pressures such as exams, accommodation, and employment issues have taken priority. In response, the Participation Officer has continued to hold Care Ambassador meetings, and, where possible, offered participation opportunities as one-off commitments. Moving forward, it could be that the Care Ambassador group includes a mix of young people who wish to make a longer-term commitment and develop in the role, and those who want to participate in shorter term projects. This may allow more young people to get involved in participation work and could allow a broader range of voices to be heard. The roles and

remit of the Care Ambassadors group will need to be reviewed as part of the 2022 – 2025 Participation Strategy.

b) Participation officer led activities

17. The Participation Officer has continued to work with district participation leads to support and promote engagement activity. This has mostly happened through regular meetings with the district leads, to provide support, and discuss ideas.

**18. ICE project**

The ICE project ran for 10 weeks between January and March 2020. This project is part of a wider county initiative by Hampshire CAMHS and Hampshire Cultural Trust. All ICE projects seek to enable young people to express feelings through the creative arts and improve their mental health and wellbeing. For 2020 we had the opportunity to work with Winnall rock school at their studios in Winchester. Six of our young people attended once a week over the 10-week period. In that time, they met with professional musicians and artists involved in the music industry. They wrote and produced a song which they presented at the celebration evening in December 2020 (which was attended by the Director of Childrens Services). As well as creating and producing a song, young people in care were able to meet others who have had similar experiences, which is something often requested by care experienced young people.

**19. Legends of Lockdown podcast**

The first lockdown offered the chance for us to explore online broadcasting methods and as a result the first podcast was produced. The idea for the podcast came from a meeting with the North West Care Ambassador group in March 2020. The podcast was split into three sections - interviews with the Corporate Parenting Board, Voices from lockdown – where 13 young people shared their thoughts and feelings on lockdown, and it finished up with a brief interview with a young person involved with the ICE project and clip of the song. This was largely an engagement activity, at a time when staff and children were exploring new ways of keeping in touch and maintaining effective relationships. The podcast was created between March and June 2020.

**20. Voices Library**

Building on the success of the podcast we decided to invest further in capturing this voice of the child. Between June and August 2020, 13 young people were recorded speaking about their reflections on what a good home, or carer looks and feels like. These audio recordings are used in GETS training, available for staff to hear, and for use in training events.

**21. We've Got Talent**

We've Got Talent took place between May and August 2020. The first round was district based – children and young people were invited to submit entries (by video, photograph, or other media) and districts chose local winners in each category to progress to the final. The winners of the final were selected by a panel comprising Corporate Parenting Board representatives, young people,

and a foster carer, with prizes available. This event was inspired by an art competition held locally within a district, which received good feedback from care experienced young people who took part.

22. Feedback from young people on We've Got Talent shows that they enjoyed the event because it was fun and gave them an opportunity showcase their talents. The competition concluded with a celebration event, which was attended by the Director of Children's Services. We've Got Talent will be run again in 2021.

### **23. Introduction to Care**

Introduction to Care is an animation aimed at 7–12-year-olds, to help them understand what has happened to them when they first come into care. The idea came from conversation between the Corporate Parenting Board and care experienced young people, who explained how hard it was to understand the information that was given to them at the point they come into the care of Hampshire County Council. The video was produced in consultation with more than 50 care experienced young people, and co-ordinated by the Participation Officer. The video is now available on the County's corporate YouTube channel.

[Hampshire Children and Families - Introduction to Care - YouTube](#)

### **c) Participation in the Districts**

24. Participation is considered well embedded in social work practice with families. As a department we are confident that we are seeking children's views, talking to families about what they want, and incorporating this into our assessments and plans. This will be further strengthened as the Family Plan and Family Meeting Model are further embedded into practice.
25. Wider participation in districts has focused primarily on engagement, particularly throughout the lockdown period. Districts have been creative, in maintaining good relationship with young people, and boosting morale during a time that has been unsettling for many young people. Activity logs show that most of these events generated feedback, that districts were able to take away and action as required. Districts report their activity through the district and county PAG.
26. Below is a summary of some of the engagement activities that have been run by districts –
- Big Art Awards – this was an art competition which was judged by other young people (East Hants). This event inspired We've Got Talent, which was run later in the year
  - Weekly challenges for Children in Care and Care Leavers, which were added to a running PowerPoint presentation (Eastleigh/Winchester CIC and CL teams)
  - Children in Care online choir (Eastleigh/Winchester)
  - Care Leavers' Lockdown club. This was held weekly and included fun activities such as quizzes, baking, quizzes, 'keepy uppy' videos, meaningful photographs, and other activities suggested by young

people. These happened weekly throughout lockdown and young people decided that it was no longer needed as lockdown eased (Hart & Rushmoor)

- Direct work event organised which sought feedback from children about their relationship with their social worker (Basingstoke, New Forest).
- Fun and Feedback sessions where staff organised activities for children (e.g. mini beauty treatments, making pizzas, 'themed' events including Halloween) and consulted them on practice issues (New Forest)

## Conclusions

27. Participation work during 2020 has focussed mainly on engagement, which has been necessary due to the circumstances created by the global pandemic. This has been to make sure that staff remain visible to children and young people, and to maintain supportive relationships through fun activities. While opportunities for participation (i.e. influencing creation and delivery of services) have been available, it has been harder to engage young people in these. This has been due to a combination of factors including pressures on young people and families/foster carers, the challenges of maintaining virtual engagement over an extended period of time, and the pressures on staff that have led them to focus on other priorities during Covid. Nonetheless, there are many examples of highly creative means of engagement, that have evolved over time. Some activities may not continue beyond the lockdown periods, however, there have been valuable lessons learnt about engagement which can be taken forward to complement methods that have been used previously.

28. Moving forward, these are the priorities agreed for participation activity.

- i) the Participation Strategy is being refreshed, to provide a framework and direction for participation activity for the 2022-2025 period. Recent participation work has sought to ensure that children and young people are fully consulted and included in the plans for themselves and their families, and on ensuring that engagement activity is promoted within districts. This activity is now well embedded, meaning that we can develop our participation activity further by focusing on ensuring that children, young people and their families are given opportunities to contribute to service shaping and delivery. The strategy will consider the future of the Care Ambassadors' group, and will look to ensure that the membership, configuration and purpose support the aims of the refreshed strategy.
- ii) improve communication with children and young people, and access to participation activity. We are considering the communication methods available to us, including social media, and we will build on the lessons learnt during the pandemic about use of different platforms to engage a wider range of children and young people in participation activity.

**REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:**

**Links to the Strategic Plan**

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	no
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	yes
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	yes
<b>OR</b>	
<p><b>This proposal does not link to the Strategic Plan but, nevertheless, requires a decision because:</b></p> <p><i>NB: Only complete this section if you have not completed any of the Strategic Plan tick boxes above. Whichever section is not applicable, please delete.</i></p>	

*NB: If the 'Other significant links' section below is not applicable, please delete it.*

**Other Significant Links**

<b>Links to previous Member decisions:</b>	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
<b>Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives</b>	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>

<b>Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents</b>	
<p>The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)</p>	
<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

## **EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:**

### **1. Equality Duty**

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

### **2. Equalities Impact Assessment:**

See guidance at <https://hants.sharepoint.com/sites/ID/SitePages/Equality-Impact-Assessments.aspx?web=1>

### **Equalities Impact Assessment:**

This is a report informing/updating the Panel on the work of the Hampshire Children and Families Principal Social Worker and as such has no impact on groups with protected characteristics.

## HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Report

<b>Committee:</b>	Children and Young People Advisory Panel
<b>Date:</b>	12 October 2021
<b>Title:</b>	Fostering Annual Report 2020/21
<b>Report From:</b>	Director of Children's Services

**Contact name:** Kieran Lyons

**Tel:** 0370 779 3502

**Email:** Kieran.lyons@hants.gov.uk

### Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Children and Young People Advisory Panel on Hampshire County Council's Fostering Service.

### Recommendation

2. That the contents of this report are noted by the Children and Families Advisory Panel.

### Executive Summary

3. The Fostering Annual Report 2020/21 provides an overview of Hampshire County Council's fostering activity, detailing statistical performance data and highlighting areas of focus for the year ahead.

### Introduction

4. This report provides an update on Hampshire County Council's Fostering Service in line with fostering services statutory regulations and guidance.
5. During 2020/2021 the service successfully we recruited and approved 29 new fostering households.
6. At the end of March 2021 there were 470 registered Foster Carers in Hampshire.

7. Registered Foster Carers are provided ongoing support, supervision and training from the Fostering Support Teams. The 470 registered Foster Carers are made up of:
8. Made up of 345 County Carers. These are stranger Foster Carers who are assessed to look after unknown/unrelated children. Once approved they will be considered to care for any child that requires a placement.
9. 113 Connected Foster Carers. These are family and friends carers that have been assessed to care for a specific child or children. These family members or close family friends are often put forward to be assessed by birth parents during care proceedings.
10. 12 Home from Home carers. These are carers assessed to provide respite care for disabled children.
11. The Fostering Service has a marketing strategy for 2020/2021 with a target to provide 187 additional fostering placements by 31 March 2023. The marketing strategy has been compiled using recommendations provided by research completed by the Insight and Engagement team as part of our Modernising Placements Programme which is focussing on increasing the number of fostering households.

### **The Fostering Service**

12. During 2020/2021 Hampshire Fostering Service was comprised of four teams.
13. The **Recruitment and Assessment Team** is a team of social workers, support worker, a marketing officer, and a panel co-ordinator. The team is responsible for marketing activity to recruit new Foster Carers to meet the needs of Hampshire children, visiting potential foster carers, completing fostering assessments and supporting applicants through to fostering panel.
14. There are two **Fostering Support teams, East and West**. The teams support approved foster carers, providing supervision and training to ensure foster carers' practice continues to meet the National Minimum Standards.
15. The **Connected Carers' Assessment Team** carries out assessments for fostering applicants who have a pre-existing relationship with a specific child and supports these applicants through to fostering panel.



## Recruitment of Foster Carers

16. In 2020/2021, Fostering Hampshire Children utilised informative and invaluable research such as MOSAIC personal and census data to create specific audience profiles to design targeted marketing activity with the aim of increasing the recruitment of Foster Carers.
17. COVID-19 meant an event strategy reconsideration was a necessity. Informative drop-in and celebration events were transitioned online while scheduled community events or public space recruitment stands were scaled back with more of a focus instead on targeted digital marketing activity such as social media, search, radio, Spotify and television broadcasting.
18. During 20/21, we launched the all-year round “You Can” campaign to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions regarding fostering using real and authentic stories and testimonials directly related to our regional audience. These operated alongside our annual Foster Care Fortnight and Foster Focus Week initiatives to raise awareness, recognition, and inspiration towards fostering children in the county.
19. We have continued to invest in our digital channels and continue to see engagement growth with potential Foster Carers. Compared to 2019/2020, we have increased our website page views by 106.84% on comparison.
20. Recruitment Data for 2020/21
  - a. 256  
Number of enquiries
  - b. 143  
Number of Initial Home Visits
  - c. 93  
Number of assessments initiated
  - d. 29  
Number of approvals
  - e. 11.3%  
Conversion rate from enquiry to approval

## Fostering Support

21. The service is constantly developing to ensure that we have Foster Carers available to meet the needs of Hampshire children.

22. This year we have had to change a number of training courses to be available online. We have also reviewed the foster carer training pathway and opened up further courses to Foster Carers, encouraging them to participate in training alongside residential staff.
23. Each year we undertake a fostering survey to gather the views and experiences of our Foster Carers to support and improve our service. The annual Foster Carer Survey of June 2021 provided the following results:
24. 20% of Foster Carers responded to the survey this year in comparison with 29% in 2020. This is a marked decrease, and we will be working with our Foster Carers to explore alternative ways to gather their feedback.
25. 13.5% of carers felt that they had a placement where they were not equipped to meet the child's care needs. This is a decrease from 24% in 2020 which is positive and suggested more informed matching.
26. 61% of Foster Carers also reported that they felt empowered or able to change their approval to take a wider range of children, this compares to 56% in 2020.
27. Around 37% of carers have experienced a child leaving their care through reunification (a return home or to wider family), this has increased from 30% last year.
28. 62% of Foster Carers felt satisfied or very satisfied with the support from the Fostering Service, compared to 74% in 19/20 which shows an unfortunate decrease which may have been influenced by our need to change the way we support carers during Covid 19. The impact of Covid 19 resulted in much of the fostering service support being offered virtually which is likely have impacted upon this satisfaction level.
29. 61% of Foster Carers felt satisfied or very satisfied with children's Social Workers, this is a slight increase on 60% in 2020.
30. The most significant change in satisfaction level related to foster carers satisfaction with the recruitment process, increasing from 46% of respondents being satisfied or very satisfied in 2020 to 62% in 2021. Fostering Recruitment and Assessment has been a focus of the Modernising Placements Programme over the last year implementing changes to improve the applicant's experience which was a likely contributing factor to this increased satisfaction.
31. Another area of improvement was with foster carers satisfaction with the work of the Placement Commissioning Service, increasing from 55% of respondents being satisfied or very satisfied in 2020 to 61% in 2021.

## Connected Carers

32. Connected Carers are family and friends carers that have been assessed to care for a specific child or children. Often, birth parents request that the department assesses these family members or close family friends during care proceedings. In 2019, Connected Carers' Assessing Social Workers moved under the structure of the District Social Work teams to promote improved joint working. There were a number of benefits seen as a result of this change of structure but also some challenges. Co-locating children's Social Workers and assessing Social Workers has improved joint working and sharing of fostering knowledge, however there were some challenges in ensuring consistency across the county and difficulty with no central oversight. As part of a piece of work looking at children coming into care, this structure has been reviewed and from August 2021 the Social Workers within the team will come back under one manager. They will remain co-located to maintain the working relationships that have been built. The team will be renamed as the 'Family Connections Service' and will have a wider focus that will include supporting carers of children under Special Guardianship Orders. We have changed where they sit in our structure to improve the links with SW teams and renaming the team to 'Family Connections Service'

### 33. Connected Carers' Team Referrals & Assessments 20/21

Number of referrals for the year

a. 484

Number allocated for assessment

b. 484

Number of positive assessments

c. 131

## Fostering Panel

34. A fostering panel is a meeting held to consider an applicant's:

- request to become a foster carer or,
- continued approval after their first year of fostering, or where there are practice issues or,
- de-registration if there are concerns about their practice

35. Fostering panels are governed by fostering legislation and guidance. The fostering panel's primary legal function is to make a recommendation about a person's suitability to be a foster carer

36. Hampshire Children's Services has six Fostering Panels that are held each month. Each panel will hear a maximum of five cases.

37. Since March 2020 all Fostering Panels have been held virtually. Whilst initially challenging, this has worked well, and panel members have adapted well to this change. Panel members are looking forward to being able to return to face-to-face panels in the near future.
38. Panel chairs appraisals took place in June 2021 which included an observation of practice.
39. The Service Manager meets with panel chairs on a quarterly basis to discuss any themes in panel, issues, training and development needs. Due to the pandemic, our usual full day panel training was not thought to be successful virtually, instead the service delivered four, two-hour online workshops to foster panel members. The feedback from this was positive and we will plan a mixture of face to face and virtual training for panel members in 2021/2022.

## Statistics and Performance

40. At the end of March 2021 there were 470 registered Foster Carers in Hampshire. This does not include those carers only offering Staying Put as they are no longer registered Foster Carers. Staying Put is the term used for when young people remain living with their foster carers after they have turned 18.

41. These households can be broken down into their different registrations.

**Table 1: Types of Household Registration**

Registration (by household)	March 2020
County Foster Carer	345
Connected Foster carer	113
Specialist Respite Care	12
Staying Put only (not approved Foster Carers so not included in the 470 figure of registered foster carer above)	14
Total	484

**Table 2: Foster Carers on Hold**

	June 2020	September 2020	December 2020	March 2021	Year Average
East	11	9	14	9	12
West	13	13	12	19	20

Total	24	22	26	28	25
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35. The average number of foster carer households on hold at any one time is 25. These have been for a variety of reasons, including Foster Carers choosing to take a break, other family or work commitments, and a small number due to complaint or allegation. The most significant reason for being on hold during 2020 was due to self-isolating due to a vulnerability in the household.

#### Timeliness of Household Reviews

36. It is required that foster carers have a household review completed annually to review the foster carer's approval and to determine whether the foster carer and their household continue to be suitable to foster. It also considers the ages and numbers of children that can be placed with specific carers and whether these needs altering or continue to be appropriate.

**Table 3: Timeliness of Household Reviews**

% of Foster Carers with HHR's recorded in time	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year average
	89%	91%	93%	91%	91%

37. The number of foster carer households with a timely household review has remained above 90% in the past three quarters. Foster Carers on hold contribute to those households that have an overdue household review.

#### Timeliness of Supervision Visits

38. Foster carers should receive supervision from a supervising social worker every six weeks.

**Table 4: Timeliness of Supervision Visits**

% of Foster Carers with supervision recorded in time	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year average
	94%	82%	93%	89%	90%

39. There was a dip in performance in Q2, however this was picked up by Q3. Q2 (Jul/Aug/Sept) was a time when UK holidays were allowed, and a number of foster carer households made last minute plans to travel within the UK during the school holidays therefore were unavailable.

#### Timeliness of Unannounced Visits

40. Foster carers should have an annual unannounced visit from a supervising social worker.

**Table 5: Timeliness of Unannounced Visits**

% of Foster Carers with unannounced visits in time	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year average
	89%	93%	98%	98%	95%

41. The service has continued to ensure a high level of compliance in completing and timely recording of unannounced visits.

### Foster Carer Medicals

42. Foster carers are required to have a medical review every 3 years. The timescales for these medical reviews are always a challenge for the department because parts of the process sit with the foster carers own GP and other parts with specialist medical advisors. Therefore, where there is a delay, we are sometimes not clear where the process has got stuck.

**Table 6: Foster Carer Medicals**

% of Foster Carers with medical rechecks in time	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year average
	79%	76%	72%	76%	76%

43. Overdue medicals checks are a continuing area of focus for the department. There is a reporting process in place that provides the supervising social workers with a weekly report of those checks that are due in the next three months so these can be initiated three months before they are due.

44. We had hoped to have explored solutions to streamlining our medical recheck process with possible IT support, however progress on this halted during 20/21 due to the pandemic. At one stage GPs were unable to offer any medical rechecks and medical information was self-disclosed. Towards the end of 20/21, some GPs had started to offer fostering medicals again although some of them remain virtual appointments. Where there was a concern for a foster carer's health, we escalated cases to our health colleagues and made specific requests for a consultation which was a helpful intervention. This remains an area of focus for 2021/22.

## DBS Checks

**Table 7: DBS Checks**

% of Foster Carers and adult household members with DBS checks in timescales	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year average
	88%	90%	92%	89%	90%

45. There is a tracking spreadsheet for all DBS checks that evidence DBS checks are being initiated in a timely way. There have been occasions of Foster Carers not responding to the electronic link they are sent in a timely way and this step needing to be repeated. There will always be a number of DBS checks that are outstanding due to young people turning 18 years whilst in the foster placement, we are unable to initiate a DBS check until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday which causes an outstanding check whilst we await it being returned, however this number is very low.

## Foster carer deregistration's

**Table 8: Numbers of Carers Deregistered**

	Q1 2020/21	Q2 2020/21	Q3 2020/21	Q4 2020/21
County carers	17	11	16	6
Connected carers	22	11	15	11
Specialist respite care	0	0	1	0
	<b>39</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>17</b>

46. Over 20/21 there have been 110 fostering households that have been de-registered, 59 of these households were Connected Carers of which 44 were a result of positive outcomes for the children through Adoption, Special Guardianship, moving on to independent living and reunification.

47. Of the remaining Carers deregistered, 6 were Fostering to Adopt arrangements and 1 Family Link Household.

48. Of the 44 County Carer deregistration's:

49. Three households were a result of carer separation, in two cases one carer continued as a single carer
50. Four households continued to provide care under Special Guardianship, Adoption or Staying Put.
51. Of the remaining 37 county carer fostering households that de-registered the most predominant reason provided was a change in Foster Carers' circumstances including changes of employment or family caring commitments. Five fostering households cited Covid 19 as impacting their decision, for example needing to cease fostering to protect vulnerable family members or the impact of lockdown on their own or family members emotional wellbeing. Whilst support was provided to Foster Carers during lockdown including increased social worker contact, provision of virtual support groups and training, time in lockdown also prompted many people to re-evaluate their circumstances and make life changing decisions. There were a number of Foster Carers who decided the time was right for them to retire, resign or move to be near family members and care for grandchildren. Whilst these decisions may or may not have been a direct result of the pandemic, it is certainly true that a significant change in the way we live, provided a time of reflection for many people.

Complaints and Allegations against Foster Carers

52. The Council has a Complaints and Allegations against Foster Carers procedure as required by the Fostering Services Regulations 2011.
53. In total there have been 68 concerns/complaints/allegations initiated within the 2020/21 period.
54. These were concluded as the following

**Table 9: Number of Concerns, Complaints & Allegations**

Concern	Complaint	Allegation
25	25	18

55. Of these concerns, complaints and allegations, the outcomes were:

**Table 10: Outcomes of Concerns, Complaints & Allegations**

Continued fostering	61
De-registration	7

56. No cases were presented to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) in 20/21.



## **Modernising Placements Programme (MPP)**

57. The Modernising Placements Programme is a substantial transformation programme that commenced in November 2019 with the aim of ensuring that Hampshire's children in care are provided with the right support at the right time. The needs of our children have increased over recent years, and with the success of our Transforming Social Care programme ensuring that children can remain at home wherever it is safe to do so, those children who are in our care have the most complex needs. Corporate funding was approved by Cabinet in February 2021 with funding secured against the MPP business case. Since this approval, work has focussed on progressing the new developments which has included recruitment to roles and further detailed planning.

58. We need to ensure that our Foster Carers have the skills, support and capability to respond to our children's needs and MPP is focussed on all aspects of the journey for a Foster Carer from enquiry right through to approval and support.

59. The developments within this programme in 20/21 are:

### The Hampshire Hive

60. MPP has developed a local community for HCC fostering families that is based around an extended family model for children in care. The aim of the fostering network is to increase the support available to Foster Carers resulting in increased placement stability, and an increase in Foster Carers' confidence to support children. This model has been developed with the support of Hampshire Foster Carers and will bring together 6 – 8 fostering households offering mutual support in a natural extended family environment. Each Hive of fostering families will be supported by a Hive Carer Support Worker (an experienced Foster Carer) who in conjunction with support from the fostering service social workers, will provide coaching, training, social events, flexible telephone support and sleepovers.

61. Six Hive Carer Support Workers were recruited in April 2021 and the Hives were launched in May. These are current Foster Carers with significant experience who have been employed alongside their fostering role. Supporting Hive Carer Support Workers will be Hive Link Carers who will be available for sleepovers and day care. Feedback from those carers and children who are part of a Hive has been very positive so far.

### Paying Foster Carers

62. The processes we use to pay Foster Carers have been reviewed following foster carer feedback. Foster Carers now have access to an online form

which they can submit reducing delay that was sometimes experienced through the previous paper-based system.

63. The programme continues to consider fostering payments. A survey was conducted in June 2021 asking Foster Carers from all agencies to express their views about the support that is important to them, including finance. The findings of this survey will contribute to progressing our development work in this area.

#### Training Pathway

64. The foster carer training pathway has been revised and refreshed. Hampshire Approach training will shortly be rolled out to all Foster Carers in September 2021. The training pathway has identified and made available shared learning with children's home staff that will bring benefits to all.

#### Foster Carer Approvals

65. The marketing strategy has been updated and developed using the learning from the discovery phase of the programme. New recruitment strategies were trialled including Sky TV Ad smart which targets specific household demographics in our chosen areas and will play our ad in place of a national advert.
66. Significant work has been carried out by the Fostering Recruitment and Assessment Team to streamline their processes and ensure that the customer experience they offer is high quality and engaging. A recent mystery shopper survey which was undertaken as part of the South East Sector Led Improvement Partnership (SESLIP) with a group of south east local authority fostering services, judged Hampshire to be the top performing authority.
67. Investment has also brought additional roles and skills to the team including a dedicated Head of Service for two years to establish new approaches and developments to support the required increased recruitment of new Foster Carers.

#### The Psychological Service and Trauma Informed Care

68. A new psychological service, led by a clinical psychologist, will enhance how looked after children are parented by Foster Carers and residential care staff. It will support the implementation of trauma informed and therapeutically minded parenting and will provide a consultation service to those involved in caring for children. This will lead to an increase in staff and carers' resilience, confidence and capability to support children with more challenging behaviour.

69. We were unsuccessful in recruiting to this role in the first two rounds of interviews but are working with our partners in Health to progress this as a shared priority.
70. There are further developments in the pipeline including a new vacancy management app which will support the service to maintain up to date vacancy records and inform children's matching with fostering families and informative support groups for Foster Carer applicants within the assessment process, so they are better equipped at the point of approval.

### **Hampshire Fostering Network (HFN)**

71. The service continues to work closely with Hampshire Fostering Network. The service attends the monthly committee meetings and facilitates monthly operational meetings with the Fostering Service Manager, the CIC lead and HFN chair and vice chair. In the past year these meetings have been held virtually. The service continues to communicate information to HFN and work closely with members when reviewing practice and policies.

### **Conclusions**

72. The Fostering Service has continued in its efforts to provide a high level of support and supervision to Hampshire foster carers.
73. 29 new foster carer households were approved in 20/21, however 42 county foster carer households also deregistered (excluding the 9 households who continued to care for the children under different orders). The focus for 21/22 will be on recruitment and retention in order to increase our overall foster carer household numbers. Work within the Modernising Placements Programme has supported the service to introduce new focus to the Recruitment and Assessment teams with additional recruitment and marketing managers to oversee and drive this work forward.
74. The foster carer training pathway has been reviewed to support Foster Carers to meet the changing needs of our looked after children. Further training courses are being explored with an aim to provide some learning opportunities for carers looking after children with higher needs and more complex behaviours.
75. There remains a need to improve the process for ensuring that Foster Carers have medical and DBS rechecks, and this remains a focus for 20/21.
76. Overall satisfaction levels remained similar to previous years with improvements in some areas and some deterioration in others that will need further understanding. The feedback from the Foster Carers survey

represented a smaller group this year and we will be working with Foster Carers to review how we gather feedback in the future and if a survey is the best method.

77. This has been a challenging year to maintain a high level of support and service delivery. The service has adapted very quickly to provide additional support when needed and to transfer events and training to online forums. There have been a number of successful developments including a new foster carer training pathway, a new online Foster Carers claims form and the introduction of our new support system for Foster Carers, the Hampshire Hives. There are many new developments planned that seek to ensure our looked after children have the right support at the right time with Foster Carers that are equipped to meet their needs. Resulting in improved Foster Carer satisfaction, retention, and recruitment.

**REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:**

**Links to the Strategic Plan**

<b>Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:</b>	no
<b>People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:</b>	yes
<b>People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:</b>	no
<b>People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:</b>	yes

**Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents**

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

Document

Location

None

## **EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:**

### **1. Equality Duty**

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

### **2. Equalities Impact Assessment:**

This report is an information update for the Children and Families Advisory Panel and therefore no impact has been identified.

## HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Report

<b>Committee:</b>	Children and Families Advisory Panel
<b>Date:</b>	12 October 2021
<b>Title:</b>	Modernising Placements Programme
<b>Report From:</b>	Steve Crocker

**Contact name:** Amber James

**Tel:** 07595 495728

**Email:** amber.james@hants.gov.uk

### Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to introduce the Children & Families Advisory Panel to the Modernising Placements Programme (MPP) and give an update on its current progress.

### Recommendations

2. That Panel notes the progress of the programme.
3. That Panel notes the work proposed to expand the wider understanding of shared partnerships, companies, businesses and communities of children in care and the foster carer role, and considers the contribution that Councillors could make in this area.

### Executive Summary

4. This report seeks to provide the Panel with an overview and update on the progress of the key developments of the Modernising Placements Programme since corporate funding was agreed in February 2021 and describe the next steps in the timeline.

## Contextual information

5. The Modernising Placements Programme is part of the transformation journey for Children's social care, building on and complementing the work completed in Transforming Social Care. Its aim is to ensure that when children come into the care of Hampshire County Council, they are provided with the most appropriate placement and support that will meet their needs and have the same life changes as every other child.
6. The following issues that MPP has been structured to focus on are:
  - Meeting the care needs of children with complex needs.
  - Increasing the number of Hampshire County Council foster carers.
  - Increasing the number of children placed in our residential children's homes.
  - The need to make improvements for staff recruitment and retention in our residential homes.
  - Improving placement stability.
  - Responding to the needs of children who require urgent placements.
7. Corporate funding was approved by Cabinet in February 2021 with funding secured against the MPP business case.
8. Since this approval, work has focussed on progressing the new developments which has included recruitment to roles and further detailed planning.
9. **The Hampshire Hives**



- 9.1. MPP has developed a support network for HCC fostering families that is based around an extended family model for children in care. The aim of the fostering network is to increase the support available to foster carers resulting in increased placement stability, and an increase in foster carers' confidence to support children.

This model has been developed with the support of Hampshire foster carers and brings together 6 – 8 fostering households offering mutual support in a natural extended family environment. Each Hive of fostering families is supported by a Hive Carer Support Worker (an experienced foster carer) who in conjunction with support from the fostering service social workers, provides coaching, training, social events, flexible telephone support and sleepovers.



Six Hive Carer Support Workers were recruited in April 2021 and cohort one of the Hives was launched in May. These are current foster carers with significant experience who have been employed alongside their fostering role. Supporting Hive Carer Support Workers are Hive Link Carers who are available for sleepovers and day care.

The six Hives are currently supporting 80 children in care, 56 fostering families and 23 birth children of foster carers. The Hive Carer Support Workers have been providing a high level of 1:1 support and feedback is overwhelmingly positive. The Hives are also attracting interest for prospective foster carers wanting to foster for Hampshire so to date the objectives that the Hives set out to achieve, are being met.

In response to this success and need from prospective foster carers in assessment, two additional Hives have been agreed in year. Cohort 2 of a further 4 Hives will commence shortly also with the aim of these being in place for April 2022.

#### **10. Paying Foster Carers**

The processes the Council use to pay foster carers have been reviewed following foster carer feedback. Foster carers now have access to an online form which they can submit reducing delay that was sometimes experienced through the previous paper-based system. Feedback has been positive from foster carers.

The skills criteria that are applied to the payment that a foster carer receives in addition to the fostering allowance for the child, is being reviewed currently to ensure that foster carers are rewarded for the skills, knowledge, and experience that they have in caring for Hampshire's children. Foster carers will be invited to give their views on this, and it is anticipated that this will be in place before the end of the calendar year.

#### **11. Training Pathway**

The foster carer training pathway has been revised and refreshed. Hampshire Approach training will shortly be rolled out to all foster carers. The training pathway has identified and made available shared learning with children's home staff that will bring benefits to all.

#### **12. Foster Carer Approvals**

Hampshire needs to grow the number of foster carers approved by the Council to ensure that children are cared for locally and able to maintain relationships with their families and friends and remain at the same school.

The Fostering Hampshire Children marketing strategy has been updated and developed using the learning from the discovery phase of the programme that looked at learning from other agencies and local authorities.

Significant work has been carried out by the Fostering Recruitment and Assessment Team to streamline their processes and ensure that the

customer experience they offer is high quality and engaging. A recent mystery shopper survey which was undertaken as part of the South East Sector Led Improvement Partnership (SESLIP) with a group of south east local authority fostering services, judged Hampshire to be the top performing authority.

The Fostering Recruitment and Assessment Team has received additional investment to bring additional roles and skills including a dedicated Head of Service for two years to establish new approaches and developments to support the required increased recruitment of new foster carers. The new Head of Service started in role on 9 August 2021.

One focus of the work will be on expanding our reach internally through Hampshire County Council and our shared partnerships, with companies and businesses and in the community to expand understanding of the needs of children in care, the role of foster carers and how businesses can support Hampshire Fostering Children and contribute to their corporate social responsibilities.

The Children and Families Advisory Panel are asked to consider what contribution and impact they can make to this area of work?

### **13. The Psychological Service and Trauma Informed Approach**

A new psychological service, led by a clinical psychologist, will enhance how looked after children are parented by foster carers and residential care staff. It will support the implementation of trauma informed and therapeutically minded parenting and will provide a consultation service to those involved in caring for children. This will lead to an increase in staff and carers' resilience, confidence and capability to support children with more challenging behaviour.

The Lead Clinical Psychologist will design, deliver and embed Trauma informed parenting across Children's Services and develop the consultation approach. The first two rounds of interviews for this post were unsuccessful but partners in Health are supporting the programme to progress this. In the meantime, recruitment has commenced to a Psychologist role and a Mental Health Coordinator for the residential service (including Urgent Care as described in the next paragraph). The Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is supporting this service financially and also through clinical supervision arrangements.

### **14. Urgent Care Service**

The Urgent Care Service has been designed to support young people with very complex needs. The service will deliver urgent care in the form of a 12-week assessment placement, repurposing a Hampshire children's home, seeking to stabilise children through providing the opportunity to effectively assess their needs and plan a move to a permanent placement. This will be a multi-agency resource. The Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) has agreed funding to embed practitioners from Health

disciplines into the home. Police have been very positive with a clear commitment to support the development and educational pathways will also be established to ensure that children in the home have access to meaningful educational activities.

Recruitment continues to fill the additional roles that the service has created. The service needs to be registered with Ofsted before it can go live as the purpose it will be used for differs from the current registration.

## 15. **Extended Care Service**

Extended Care will be delivered as an outreach service which will support the transition for children living in the Urgent Care setting to a permanent placement - including transition back to family (where appropriate) and time-unlimited support to prevent the placement breaking down. Moving between placements can often be an unsettling time for children so continuity of care and additional support will support a higher chance of a child feeling less anxious and parents, carers and staff understanding and being able to support a child in a familiar way to the previous setting.

The Extended Care Service will also provide support to HCC's other children's homes to prevent placements breaking down, and transition to fostering or supporting living placements where appropriate.

A Deputy Manager and the first Extended Care Worker for the service have been appointed. The focus of the work will begin within our existing children's homes.

## 16. **Voice of the Child**

The views of children are paramount to the development of the services the programme are creating and in determining further work that needs to be undertaken in the service as a whole. A survey was co-produced with children aged 14 to 20 years who have experience of being in care to understand what is important to them. This survey was live between 26 April and 31 May 2021 and was sent out to all social workers and foster carers to encourage completion, also supported by the Independent Reviewing Service.

68 responses were received, 18 from children aged 4 to 7 years and 50 from children aged 8 to 18 years.

The key findings from the survey were:

- Most children in care see their social worker often enough with a preference for face-to-face meetings.
- Children want to understand why they are in care and to be told the truth, using language they can understand.
- Most children wanted the place where they live to stay the same. When things change, such as moving home or changing school,

children would like to have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the new setting before the move happens.

- Children experience a range of negative and positive emotions when coming into care. Just over half received an explanation of why they were coming into care and most of them could understand this information.
- Children aged 16 and over had mixed feelings about moving out of care and living independently, with some feeling that they had sufficient support and some who felt they hadn't.

These findings are now being shared with senior managers and every team to agree the actions that will be taken. A letter has been sent to children thanking them for their response and advising them of the next steps. When actions are agreed, these will also be shared with the children as well as communicated more widely.

## **17. Voice of the Family**

In addition to the views of children, the discovery phase of the programme found little research of what is important to families when their children are in care. The Modernising Placements Programme commissioned research through The Rees Centre, University of Oxford, to undertake a literature review and then engage families of children in Hampshire's care in interviews to understand Hampshire's current practice and support future developments. Interviews were undertaken in July and August 2021 with 17 parents of 16 families. The researchers have advised that some valuable information has been gained for Hampshire within these interviews.

This information is now being analysed with a report anticipated in October 2021.

## **Finance**

18. A business case was approved by Cabinet in February 2021 for the work of the Modernising Placements Programme.
19. Additional funding is also available through the DfE Partners in Practice Understanding Excellence grant.

## **Performance**

20. A full set of key performance indicators have been established to measure each aspect of the programme. These are being monitored and reviewed with the support of a dashboard. Governance is through the monthly MPP Steering Group, Children & Families Management Team,

the Children & Families Departmental Management Team (CSDMT) and the Children & Families financial resilience meetings.

### **Consultation and Equalities**

21. *No consultation has been required for the developments to date.*

### **Conclusions**

22. The Modernising Placements Programme is a substantial three-year transformation programme of change building on positive changes already achieved and embedded through the Hampshire Approach and is based on evidence and research. Its aim is to improve the choice and sufficiency of placements available to children in Hampshire's care through increasing the capability and skills of staff and carers, thus creating better stability and outcomes locally.
23. Following the approval of funding, progress has been made to take forward the new service developments with the launch of the Hampshire Hive and significant recruitment activity in the other areas. The voice of children in care is informing the work both of the programme and wider Children & Families work and analysis of families' voices should be available in October.

**REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:**

**Links to the Strategic Plan**

<b>Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:</b>	yes
<b>People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:</b>	yes
<b>People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:</b>	yes
<b>People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:</b>	yes

## EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

### 0. Equality Duty

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

### 1. Equalities Impact Assessment:

See guidance at <http://intranet.hants.gov.uk/equality/equality-assessments.htm>

Insert in full your **Equality Statement** which will either state:

- why you consider that the project/proposal will have a low or no impact on groups with protected characteristics or*
- will give details of the identified impacts and potential mitigating actions*

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# Children & Families Advisory Panel

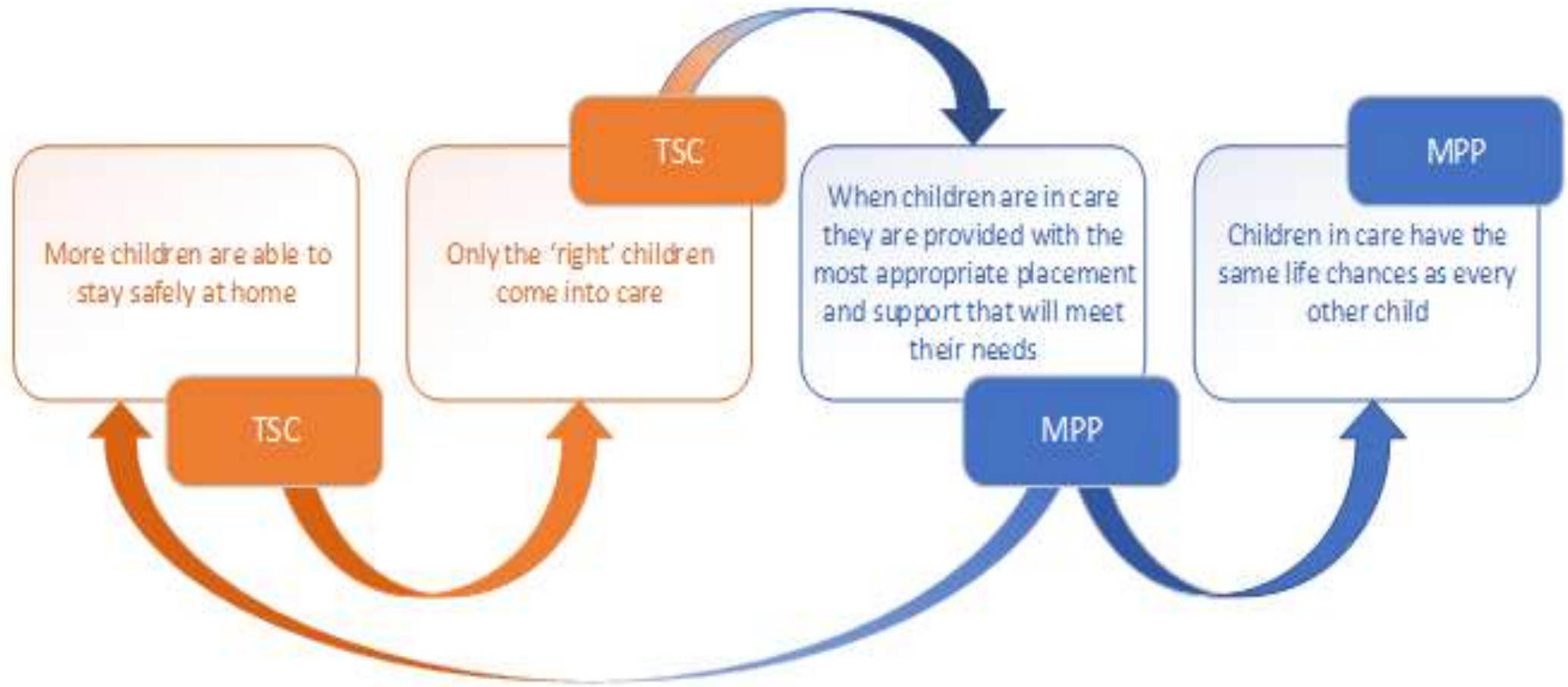
## Modernising Placements Programme

### 12 October 2021

**MODERNISING  
PLACEMENTS  
PROGRAMME**



1. Context of the Modernising Placements Programme (MPP)
2. The Hampshire Hives
3. Payments to foster carers
4. Training pathways for foster carers
5. Foster carer recruitment
6. The Psychological Service and Trauma Informed Approach
7. Urgent Care Service
8. Extended Care Service
9. Voice of the Child
10. Voice of the Family
11. Recommendations



The aim of the Modernising Placements Programme is to develop a continuum of care which can provide the right accommodation and support at the right time for our children in care in Hampshire.

Our children in care need:

1. Us all to understand how to support them with the trauma they have experienced to achieve their best life chances
2. More Hampshire foster carers so they can stay local to friends and family and still attend their school
3. Hampshire children's homes to offer the full number of beds that they have so they can stay local to family and friends and still attend school
4. Us all to work together for them, valuing every person who is involved with them equally for the skills and experience they bring
5. Us to invest in our foster carers and all staff to be the best they can in supporting, nurturing and caring about them. They need foster carers and children's homes staff to be supported by everyone around them so they can stay living in their home for as long as they need it
6. Us to do everything we can to support them in overcoming diversity and having the same opportunities for positive health, wellbeing and lifestyle as children who are not in care
7. Us to have settings available where staff and the environment keep them safe when this is at short notice, and they are experiencing immediate distress
8. Us to put their needs first when making decisions about where they live

# The Hampshire Hives

The fundamental elements that the Hampshire Hives will provide are:

- To facilitate regular support groups and social activities for Foster Carers in the Hive.
- To provide flexible day care and sleepovers to children in placement for Foster Carers in the Hive.
- To offer needs led, one to one support and advice in a befriending/mentoring capacity to Foster Carers in the Hive.
- To work alongside a range of professionals in supporting the child/ren in placement with Foster Carers in the Hive.

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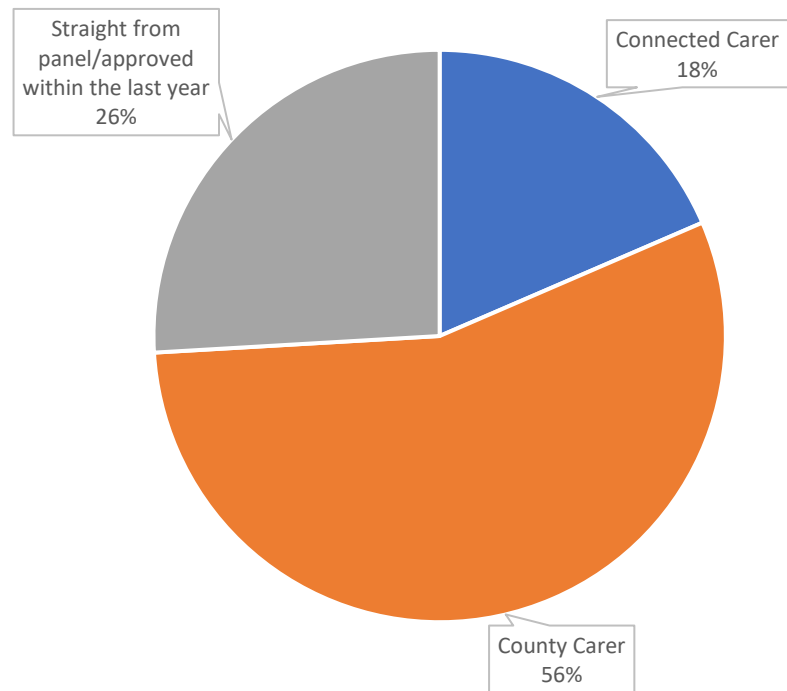
## Locations of the 6 Hives



Page 54

- 📍 Basingstoke
- 📍 Andover
- 📍 Waterlooville
- 📍 Eastleigh
- 📍 Bitterne/ Hedge End, Southampton
- 📍 Gosport

## Composition of the Hives



The Hampshire Hive is currently supporting...



- 80 Children in Care
- 100 Foster carers / 56 Fostering families
- 23 Birth children (13 under the age of 12)

# Achievements of the Hive

Success	Evidence
<b>The Hives are in high demand</b>	The Hampshire Hive has been positively received by key stakeholders. We only have <b>4 spaces remaining</b> across the Hives. We currently have <b>26 fostering families on our waiting list</b> who wish to join a Hive, but are unable to due to lack of availability in their area. <b>9 of these carers are IFA transfers.</b>
<b>Success in providing foster carers with needs led support</b>	The HCSWs have been providing a <b>high level of 1:1 support</b> to their Hive families as a listening ear but also for general advice. Foster families report a high level of satisfaction with this unique support. <b>HCSWs and HLCs are working well together</b> , proactively identifying and organising <b>sleepovers and day care</b> when the members of their Hive need it.
<b>Success of HCSW role within Fostering</b>	There was <b>unprecedented interest in the role</b> ; a sign that we are valuing foster carer's skills. The HCSWs are <b>highly motivated to support the wider fostering service</b> and have been able to support in recruitment, other aspects of MPP and BAU fostering service development.
<b>Foster Carer Retention</b>	The Hive has seen only 1 foster carer of the 56 families in the Hives de-register in the first 3 months (April- June).
<b>Placement stability</b>	The Hive has seen 2 children's placements end due to the foster carer giving notice, amongst a total of 78 Children in Care in the 6 Hives.
<b>Improved Foster Carer and Children's well-being</b>	Foster Families and children they care for are reporting that they are making lots of friends which they had not been able to do previously.
<b>Successful Marketing Campaigns</b>	These have raised awareness of the Hive and attracted interest in Fostering Hampshire Children. Hive Carer Support Workers have been <b>writing a <a href="#">monthly blog</a></b> for the Fostering Facebook site. Hampshire Hive <b>promotional video</b> has been recorded and will be a part of the next marketing campaign. A <b>leaflet</b> has been produced which can be used for prospective carers.
<b>Attracting IFA foster carers to Hampshire</b>	Since March 2021 we have had 9 transfer requests from IFA Foster Carers. Of these foster carers the support offered by the Hampshire Hive contributed to 3 carers decision to choosing Hampshire Fostering Children. These foster carers have moved to us from Blue Sky and are in the Waterlooville/Eastleigh/Southampton area, there may be further referrals from the same agency in the future.
<b>Fostering Hampshire Children Media coverage</b>	A <a href="#">press release</a> was sent out as part of fostering fortnight and was picked up by three local newspapers and two local radio stations.



# Hampshire Hives and Foster Carers







“I was incredibly excited to join a Hive because for many years I have had an interest in The Mockingbird Project , particularly the extended family aspect. I followed children’s stories of how they had a sense of belonging, feeling special and surrounding them with safe adults and children with shared experience of not living with birth parents, thereby reducing their sense of bewilderment of being in the care system. I joined because I wanted any children who came to live with us to have this opportunity.” – Foster Carer

“My expectations have been surpassed because not only do my children feel all of the above but I have experienced a sense of contentment and reduced anxiety knowing that any issue or frustration that I would benefit from unloading will be met by friendly understanding ears.” – Foster Carer

“The Hive members have a wealth of fostering experience to draw from and it is great to know that they are out there. The peer to peer support is invaluable to me allowing me to step back from the issue and hear honest balanced information - and not letting things fester.” – Foster Carer

“I don’t think they have dwelled on the fact they are in care, just loving that sense of belonging and extended family which is precisely all I hoped for for these special young people.” – Foster Carer

“My hopes and expectations have been surpassed by this initiative.” – Foster Carer



“In one particular case, the input from the Hampshire Hive has prevented us from potentially losing a fostering family. Its input has given a young person the opportunity to stay at school until a suitable placement has been found.” –  
Supervising Social Worker

“Our foster carer has felt supported and valued and I have built a good Hive relationship with her.”- Hive Carer Support Worker

"Since joining the Hive my optimism has raised. It has help me manage my fears and feelings around reunification. Since speaking to others, I have much more knowledge around the process of reunification which helps me to explain it to family members, so they also understand what is involved in the process.“  
– Foster Carer



# Hampshire Hives and Children





“I have seen growing friendship groups formed amongst the younger children and a strong friendship between children in the Hive, with older kids have spent a lot of time in each other’s company over the summer holidays. Both children had no significant long-term friend in their life prior to the Hive and being looked after.”

“I have seen the sleep over facility stabilise a placement that was strained over the summer holidays.”

“Child D was all alone and had no access to children with similar stories due to living in a rural location. She has come along to multiple events and realised that she is not alone in being looked after or somehow different.”

# Payments to foster carers

In the 2020 foster carer survey, 55% of respondents said they had experienced payment issues.

We have launched a new online claim form for claiming expenses. This has improved the timeliness of payments being received, and has removed a number of steps from the process by creating an electronic solution, removing the need for paper forms to be handed supervising social workers.

We are starting a piece of work to look at our skills level criteria and appraisal processes to ensure that foster carers are rewarded and valued for the skills, knowledge and experience they have in caring for Hampshire's children in care. Foster carers will be invited to get involved and give their views on this piece of work. We hope that this will be completed by the end of the calendar year.



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We have reviewed our training pathway to be clearer about the training courses on offer and when they should be completed. We have broadened the training topics available to increase foster carers' confidence in managing complex issues, linking with some training that was already available to residential staff.



We have also created an electronic training brochure so that foster carers can view the training courses on offer, know how to book and where to access resources.



We have also rolled out Hampshire Approach training to further support how foster carers care for children in a strengths based way.



Last September, we introduced FosterTalk which provides 24 hour helplines, tax and accountancy advice, workshops, support groups and more.

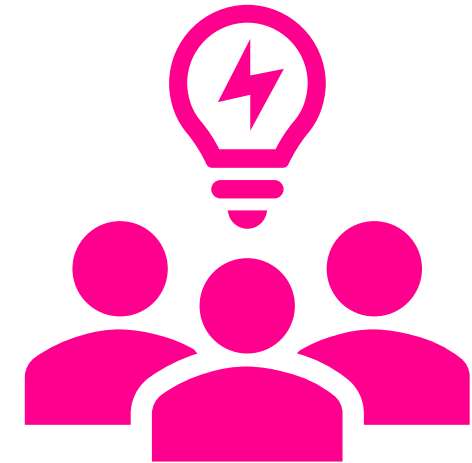


We will be introducing a new secure area for foster carers to access key policies, procedures and information

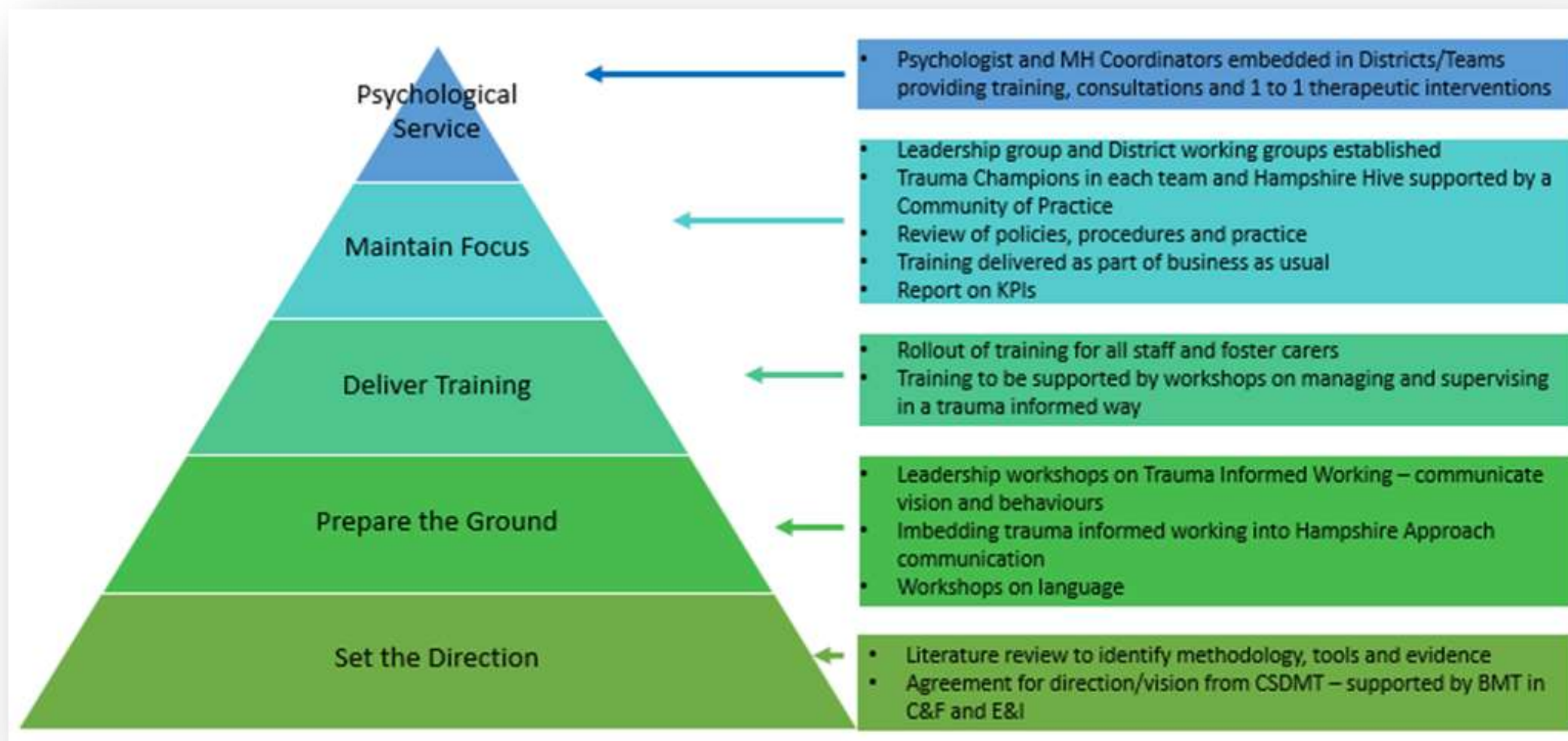
## We need to grow the number of foster carers in Hampshire

We are doing this by:

- Investing in and growing the team
- Increasing and targeting marketing
- Improving the journey for our prospective foster carers
- Creating partnerships within the Council, external companies and businesses, and communities
- Strengthening our training and support

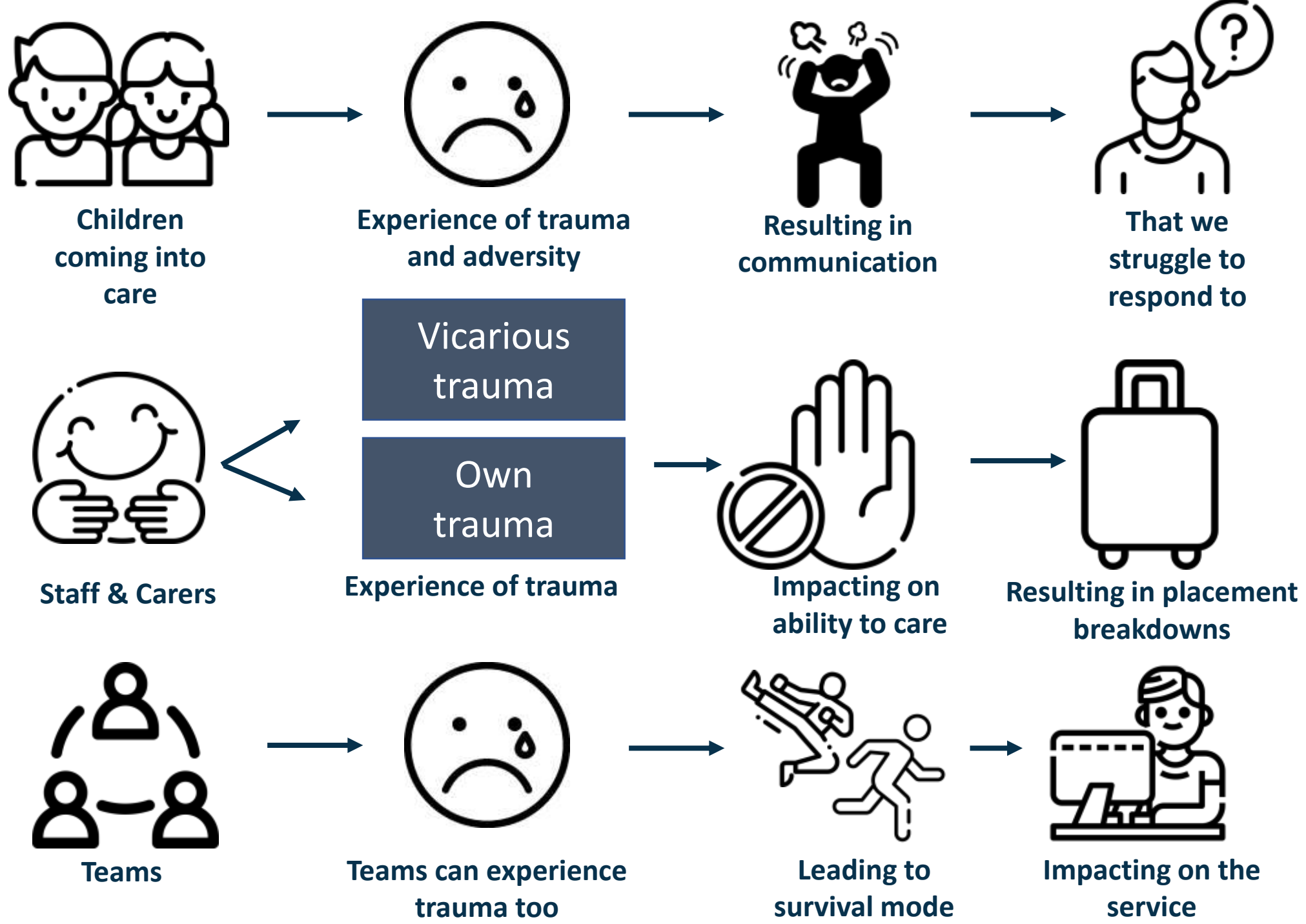


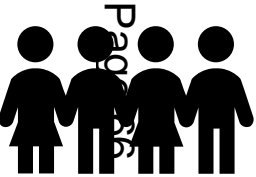
**What contribution and impact can the Corporate Parenting Board make to this area of work?**





Why Trauma Informed Working is Important





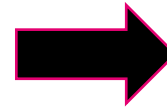
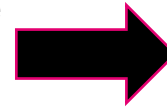
Children in short-term (or emergency) care settings where:

- i) We are unsure which care setting would best suit the child, and/or
- ii) The child requires urgent support to settle into a longer term care setting

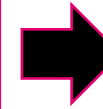
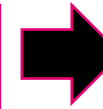
Children needing support to transition from secure settings

Children based in Hampshire residential care who:

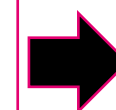
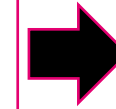
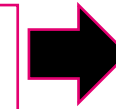
- i) Require additional support to remain in current setting
- ii) Are moving care setting
- iii) Are leaving care
- iv) Are leaving a secure unit
- v) Young people (up to 19 years) who have left Hampshire residential care in the last year and require intensive support in their post-16 accommodation



Urgent  
care  
service



Extended  
care  
service  
(providing  
multi-agency  
outreach to  
children and  
their carer(s))

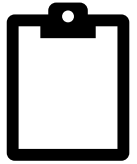


Child is  
extensively  
supported to  
settle into  
long-term  
care setting

Child is  
supported to  
remain in  
residential  
care setting,  
transition to  
new setting,  
or leave care



Understanding the ‘voice of care experienced young people’ is integral to the work of the Modernising Placements Programme



We created a survey for young people who have experienced being in care to gain an insight into what is important about the care and support that they receive



Page 7

The survey was co-designed and supported by Experts by Experience (EbEs) – young people aged 14 to 20 years old, from Hampshire who have experienced being in care



The survey ran for a five-week period between April and May 2021

68 responses were received:

- 18 from children aged 4 to 7
- 50 from children aged 8 to 18.

# Key Findings



Most care experienced children see their social worker often enough.

There is a preference for face-to-face in-person meetings with social workers.



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Children and young people experience a range of both negative and positive emotions when coming in to care.

Just over half of respondents received an explanation of why they were going in to care and most of them could understand this information.

Over half of care experienced children and young people understand the information that is shared with them.

Care experienced children and young people want to understand why they are in care and be told the truth, using simple language.

Most respondents want the place where they live to stay the same, with school, friends and people they live with also featuring.

When things change in their lives (such as moving home or changing school), they would like to have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the new place before the move actually happens.

Respondents aged 16+ have mixed feelings about moving out of care and living independently, with some feeling that they have received sufficient support and some that they haven't.

Prior warning of the move into care, as well as consideration about the timing of the move and a full explanation of the reason would facilitate the move.





In addition to the views of children, the programme has commissioned The Rees Centre, University of Oxford, to undertake a literature review and interview families of children in Hampshire's care.

Interviews were undertaken in July and August 2021. 17 parents in 16 families were interviewed.

Page 69 The results of these interviews are being analysed. The report should be available in October 2021 and will be used to inform future developments.

1. Children & Families Advisory Panel notes the progress of the programme.
2. The Panel notes the work proposed to expand the wider understanding of shared partnerships, companies, businesses and communities of children in care and the foster carer role, and considers the contribution councillors can make.