

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Decision Maker/Committee/Panel:	The Corporate Parenting Board
Date:	21 June 2021
Title:	Annual Children in Care Report
Report From:	Stuart Ashley

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1. Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Corporate Parenting Board with an overview of the achievements, progress and challenges of the services provided by Hampshire Children's Services to children in the care of Hampshire County Council. This report will focus on the work of the statutory social work teams.

This report will not duplicate information already shared within reports presented to the Corporate Parenting Board this year but will refer to such reports / presentations.

2. Recommendation(s)

The Corporate Parenting Board support the priority areas for Children's Services, Children in Care Team as being:

- Improving the timeliness of all Health Assessments
- Increasing the number of children who can safely be reunified to the care of family
- Increasing the number of children who are cared for by family and friends via Special Guardianship Orders
- Having a greater understanding of the emotional and wellbeing needs of children in care and ensuring timely access to support

3. Executive Summary

Children in the care of the local authority are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. It is vital that the care we provided to children in care is of the highest standard and that everyone involved in supporting and providing that care is aspirational for all our children.

This report aims to assure the Corporate Parenting Board that Hampshire's children in care are well supported and the needs of our children are known, and plans are reflective of need to achieve positive outcomes for children and young people.

The report will provide the Board with the characteristics of Hampshire's children in care, the age and length of time in care, where children are currently living, the number of children in foster care, children's homes or other settings, the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and placement stability.

The report will also provide information about social worker caseloads to reassure the Board that these are manageable and social workers are able to dedicate sufficient time to children, regardless of their needs.

The report will detail the departments strategy around children who go missing and are at risk of child exploitation.

The report will detail how children and young people have are able to express their views, wishes and feelings and how Children's Services know this.

The report incorporates two presentations which will provide the Board with an overview of the work to improve the timeliness of children's statutory health assessments and the transformation work on the Gateway to Care project. Both significant priorities for Children's Services to improve the quality of care that is provided, and crucially, that it is the right children, in care at the right time.

The report will outline the key areas of focus over the next twelve months.

4. Who are our "Children in Care"?

Children in the care of the local authority is any child / young person between the age of 0 -18 years that have been in the care of the local authority for more than 24 hours. This generally means any child or young person that has been unable to remain living at home and there is a need to be looked after by foster carers, in residential homes or other relatives, this sometimes includes children living with their parents.

Children can become looked after because of a voluntary agreement by their parents, or because of a Care Order made by a Court.

Young people between the ages of 16 – 18 years old can provide their own consent to come into care and do not require the agreement from those with parental responsibility.

A significant change in practice has meant that children are in care for as long as needed, opposed to previously practice which saw a plan being made for long term care, this meant until they reached the age of 18 years. This is reflective of the changing needs of children and their families and in recognition to the importance of family life and living at home being the right place for children and young people, if it is safe.

5. Hampshire Demographic

Hampshire Public Health have published the starting well summary, ([Starting well - Children and young people | Health and social care | Hampshire County Council \(hants.gov.uk\)](#)) which looks at all children in Hampshire aged 0 -19 years and how well they do living in this area. The summary highlights:

There are just over 322,000 children and young people aged 0 to 19 years living in Hampshire. This makes up nearly a quarter of the County's total population (23%) which is slightly less than in England as a whole (24%).

Overall, Hampshire children and young people have good health and good life chances, with low levels of infant and child mortality and good educational attainment. However, this masks some significant inequalities.

In Hampshire, our children are less likely to:

- live in poverty (1 in 10 compared to 1 in 5 nationally)
- be homeless (1 in 1,000 families compared to 1 in 500 families nationally)
- be born with low or very low birth weight (1 in 16 compared to 1 in 13 nationally)
- be born to teenage mothers (1 in 167 12-17 year olds compared to 1 in 110 nationally)

Our children are more likely to:

- a) attend school regularly (lower persistent absenteeism and lower permanent exclusions: 1 in 3,300 compared to 1 in 1,500 nationally)

- be in education, employment or training. Only 3% of 16-18 years olds in Hampshire are not in education, employment or training (compared to 4.2% nationally)

- to be immunised against infectious diseases (most immunisations achieving 95% coverage)

In Hampshire, the level of educational attainment at all stages of development is good, with performance better than national comparators across all educational stages (January 2017). However, for different groups of pupils, variations in performance are evident. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged children and those with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND).

Given the right support, children with SEND and vulnerable children, including those with disabilities, can thrive and develop.

However:

- 1 in 10 of our dependent children under 20 years old lives in relative poverty
- 1 in 10 of our children under 16 years old lives in a low-income family
- 15% of 15 year olds have a long term illness, disability or medical condition
- One third of looked after children are affected by poor emotional wellbeing.
- Increasing numbers of children have complex health and social care needs.
- Children in care are less likely to be up to date with their immunisations
- It is estimated that in Hampshire between 7,864 and 14,156 children experience some form of disability and that 1 in 3 disabled children lives in poverty.

The main causes for concern in Hampshire are:

- Increasing obesity and overweight in 4–5-year-olds (22.8% up from 21.1% previous year (2014/15) and more than national figure of 22.1% nationally)
- Emotional wellbeing of our children and young people - there are [higher rates of hospital admissions](#) for self harm (10-24 year olds) in Hampshire than nationally (590.9 per 100,000 compared to England's rate of 430.5 per 100,000, 2015/16)
- Educational attainment in disadvantaged groups including SEND
- Small and decreasing proportion of young children achieving the daily physical activity levels

All the above is relevant when we consider the care we provide our children in care and this has also reflected on the priority areas for children in care.

There has been a significant project to improve the timeliness of Health Assessments for children such assessments consider the children's general

health as well as their emotional wellbeing. A presentation will follow this report on what has happened and the progress to date.

The emotional wellbeing of children and young people is of huge importance and this report will outline the research projects Hampshire are engaging with to support in the understanding of those needs better.

The Virtual School Annual report will provide the Board with an overview of how children in care are supported around their education and including those with SEND.

6. Data for Children in Care:

As of 31 March 2021, Hampshire had 1649 of its children in care, this being 0.51% of Hampshire's population.

The age, gender, and time of placement for children in care:

		Latest type of main placement											
Gender	Age Group	With parents	Family centre	Indep. Living (not B+B)	Foster (rel or friend)	Foster (HCC)	Foster (IFA)	Placed for Adopn.	Res home	Sec ure unit	YOI or prison	other	Grand Total
Female	< 1	2	.	.	3	11	.	4	.	.	.		20
	1 - 4	15	.	.	19	28	6	6	.	.	.		74
	5 - 9	11	.	.	30	42	53	2	1	.	.		139
	10 - 15	22	.	.	49	121	82	.	42	3	.		320
	16 - 17	6	.	39	12	29	33	.	22	.	.	1	142
	U/b	.	.	.	1	
Female Total		56	.	39	114	231	174	12	65	3	.		696
Male	< 1	2	4	.	3	16	5	2	.	.	.		32
	1 - 4	16	1	.	17	35	13	6	1	.	.		89
	5 - 9	22	.	.	50	60	75	3	3	.	.		213
	10 - 15	17	.	1	54	101	121	.	85	1	.	1	381
	16 - 17	13	.	47	18	39	74	.	38	1	4	1	235
	18	.	.	1	
Male Total		70	5	48	142	251	288	11	128	2	4		951
Unknown		.	.	1	.	.	1		2
Grand Total		126	5	88	256	482	463	23	193	5	4		1,649

The above reflects where children and young people are currently placed and this shows our greatest proportion of children in care are between the ages of 10-15 years old, with significantly more males than females in care.

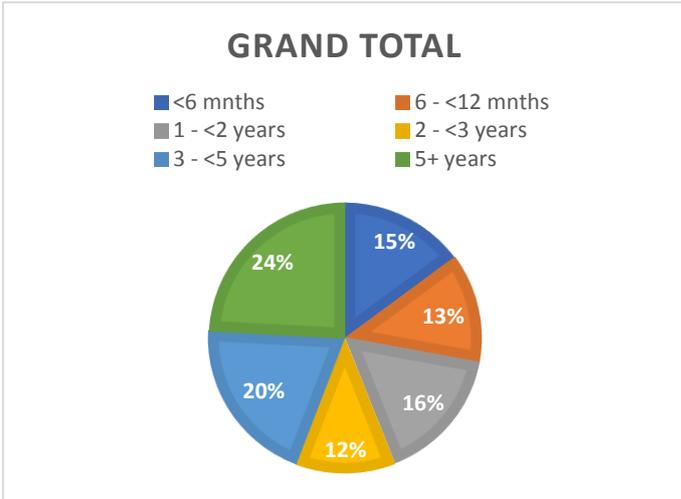
With regards to the main placement, it is positive to note that most children in care are placed with foster carers, with just over 50% being placed with Hampshire carers. The annual fostering report presented in January 2021 details the plans in respect of the ambitious targets to increase the number of in house foster carers.

What is also significant to note, is the number of children placed with parents, the data reflects 126 children which means they are children subject to a Court Order but in their parents care. There is further information regarding this within the reunification section of this report.

It is also of interested to note that 256 children are placed with family members or friends who have been approved as Connected Carers, the Gateway to Care presentation sets out the plans for Children's Services to reduce this number of children in care but continue to support the placement under an alternative legal order such as a Special Guardianship Order.

7. How long are children in care?

Time in care	Grand Total
<6 mnths	245
6 - <12 mnths	215
1 - <2 years	266
2 - <3 years	194
3 - <5 years	331
5+ years	398
Grand Total	1,649



The data shows that most children are in care for over five years, with 24% of children, the least number of children are in care between 2-3 years at 12%. This data cannot be taken in isolation, it serves to provide high level information and trends may change over time with the changes to practice meaning children are only in care for as long as needed, this should be seeing a reduction in the numbers of children in care over 5 years.

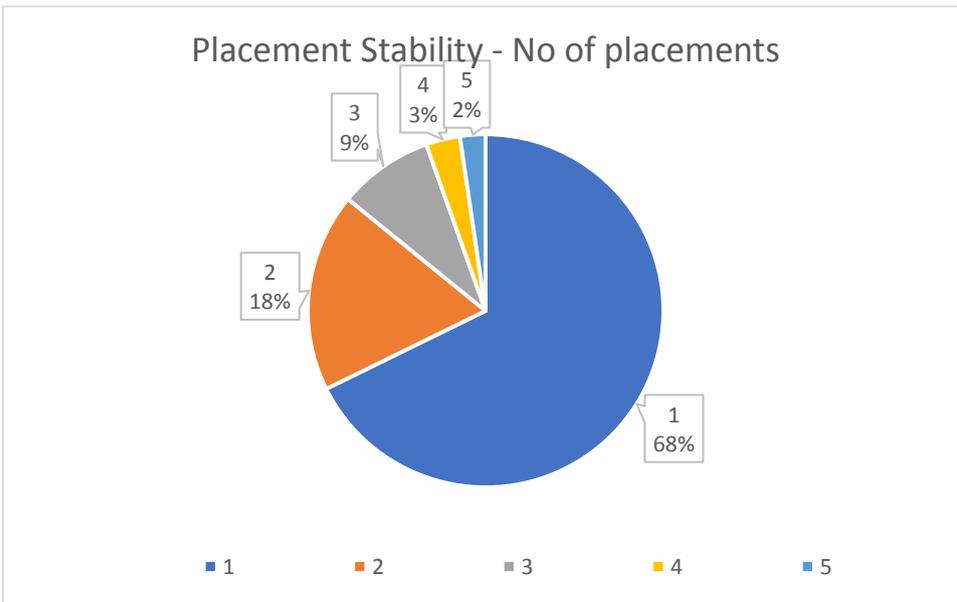
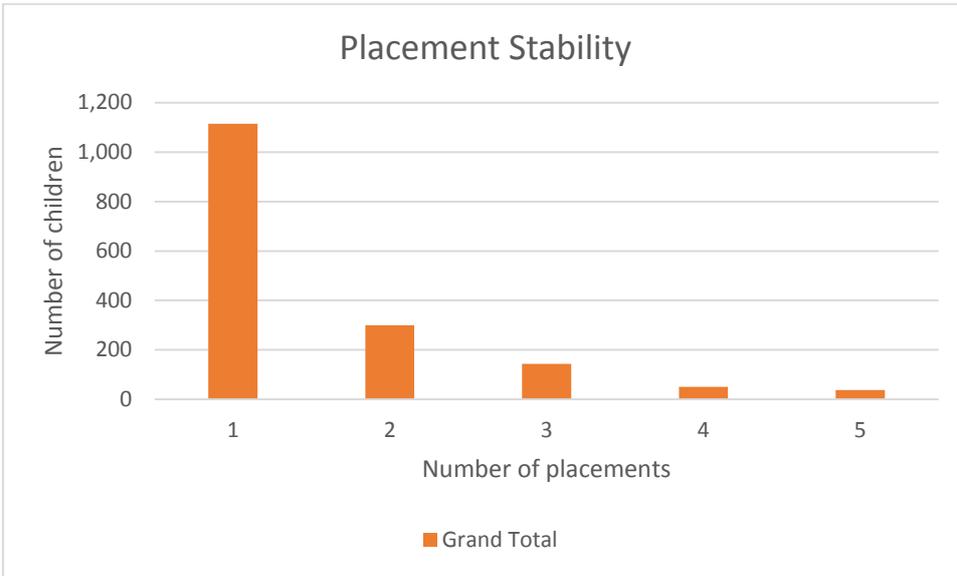
Within 12 months of being in care 28% of children exit the care system. This is to be expected as matters placed before the Court should be concluded within 26 weeks, by which time a long-term plan will be identified which could be for return home, to wider family under alternative orders, or a plan for adoption.

8. Placement Stability:

The below chart reflects the stability of children in care over the last 12 months. Positively most children remain in the same placement, 1115 children, with a very small number of children, 38 having had over 5 placement moves over the year.

Placement moves can be for positive reasons, that children are returned to family, that children are able to transition from residential care to foster care. Equally it can mean that children's needs are not being best met in the current placement and there is a need to move. The important factor is that we know the reasons for the move.

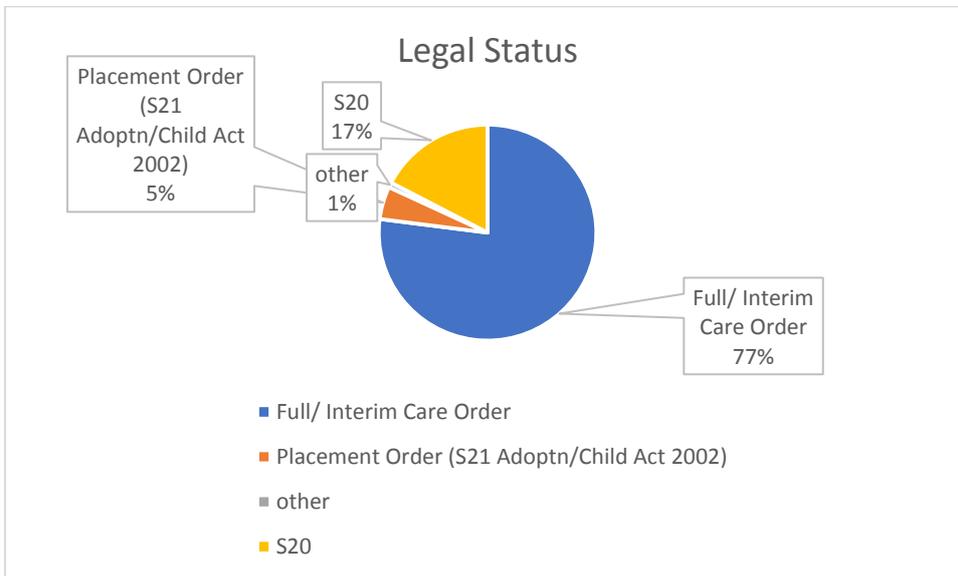
An example of a child's journey where changes of placements are for a positive outcome could be a 1-year-old placed in foster care, the matter is placed before the Court and the conclusion of Care Proceedings is that the child's needs will be best met via adoption. The child then moves to the adoptive placement but initially remains a child looked after. This would mean that the child's care journey consisted of two placements.



9. Legal Status of Children in Care

The legal status of a child in care is important, it specifies who has legal parental responsibility for a child in care enabling decisions to be made. In respect of children who are in care under S20 of the Children Act 1989, the responsibility rests solely with the parent and when a Care Order exists, this responsibility is shared between parents and the local authority.

All children who are in care, but living with a parent, will be subject to an interim or care order.



10. Ethnicity of Children in Care – excluding UASC

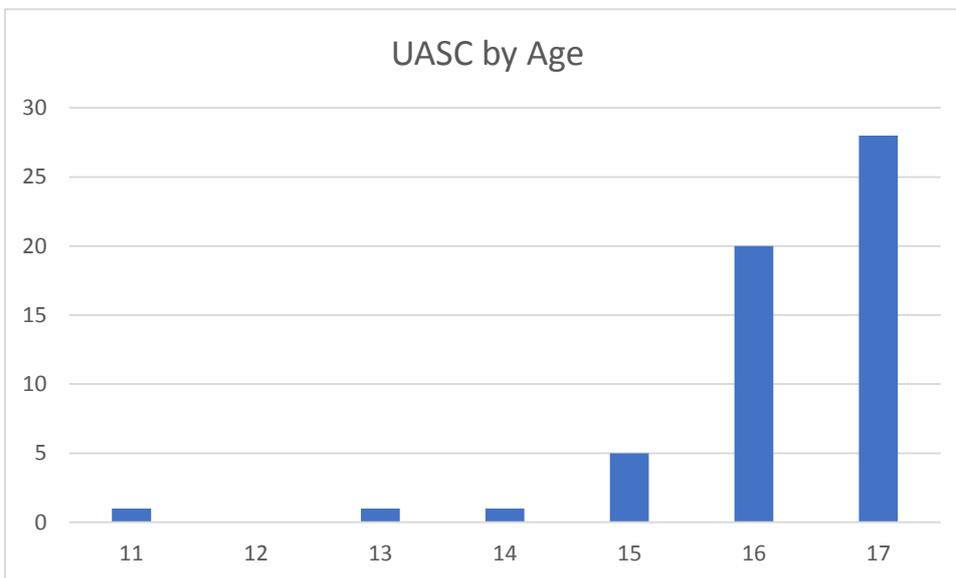
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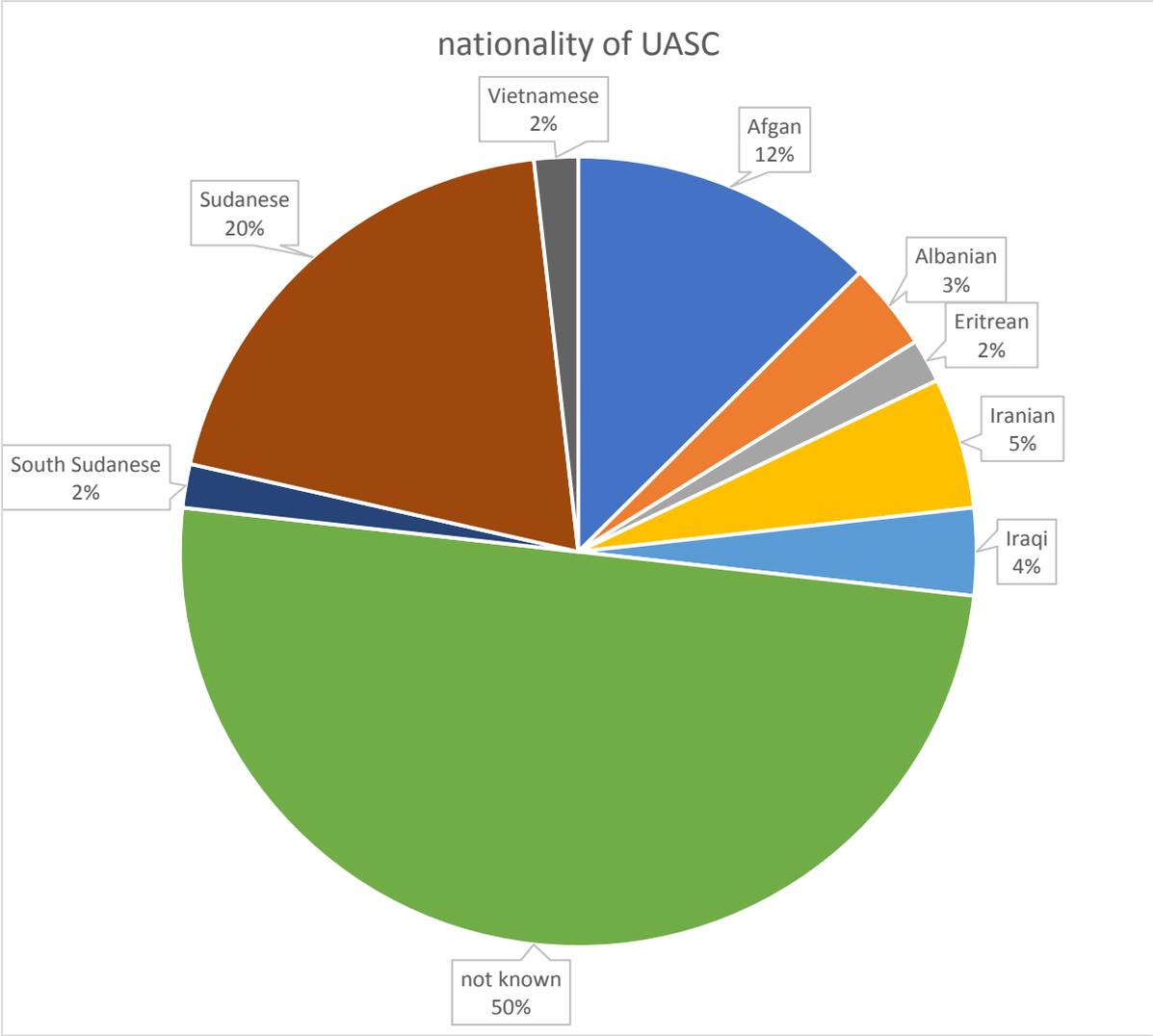
	%
White British	86.26%
Mixed: White & Black African	1.52%
White Other	1.52%
Was Not Asked - Temporary Option Only	1.39%
Mixed: White And Asian	1.20%
Mixed: White & Black Caribbean	0.95%
Mixed: Other	0.82%
Arab	0.76%
Black African	0.70%
Other Ethnic Group	0.63%
White East European	0.57%
Black British African	0.51%
Asian Other	0.38%
Req & Unable To Prov	0.38%
Gypsy/Romany	0.32%
Refused Information	0.32%
Black British Other	0.25%
Black Other	0.25%
Asian British Other	0.19%
Black British Caribbean	0.19%
Traveller Of Irish Heritage	0.19%
Asian Bangladeshi	0.13%

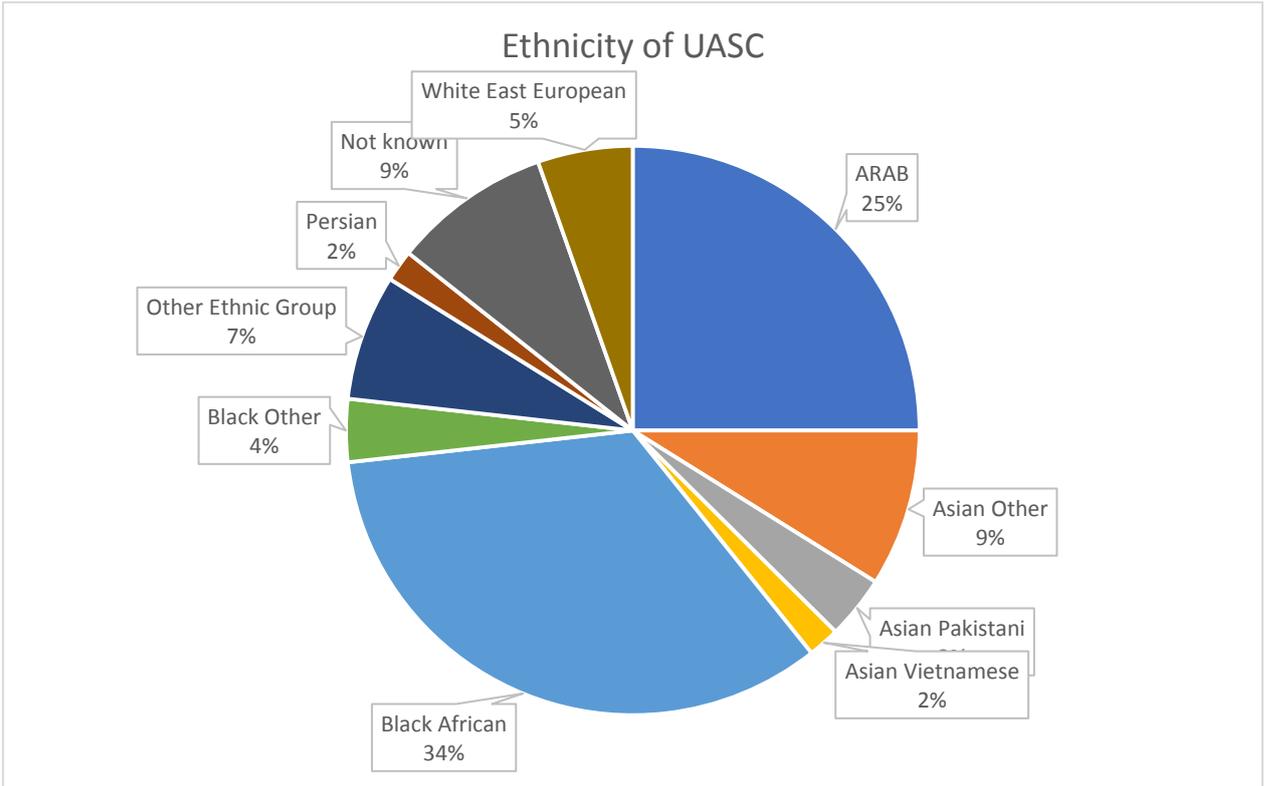
Asian British Bangladeshi	0.13%
Asian British Indian	0.13%
Asian Vietnamese	0.13%
Asian British Chinese	0.06%
Asian British Vietnamese	0.06%
Black Caribbean	0.06%

12. UASC – Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

Hampshire currently have 56 UASC, 5 are female and 51 are male.







UASC are supported in specialist foster placement or in supported accommodation.

13.Disabled Children:

There are currently 603 children open to the Disabled Children’s Team, of which 56 children are in care, 30 of these children are subject to Interim/Care Orders with the remaining 26 children in care under a voluntary arrangement.

Of the 56 children, 10 children are in in-house foster care, 13 children are in IFA foster care, 2 in family and friend arrangements, 1 is in independent living and 30 are in Residential Care. The residential care usually incorporates the education provision specifically to meet the child’s needs

14.Children in Care Teams:

Hampshire have 6 children in Care Teams, each having one Team Manager, one Assistant Team Manager and on average 9 social workers (slight variation reflective of case numbers). The average caseload for a CIC social worker is 19 children per full time social worker.

The Children in Care team has a stable workforce, those that work in the team are passionate and committed to children in care.

15. Outcome Based Placement Team:

The Children in Care teams work closely with Outcomes Based placements team, with the purpose of ensuring that children are in the right provision for their needs and that the provider is accountable for targeted support to meet the young person's needs, this ensuring that focus is on promoting the needs of young people and encouraging their development. A specific Support Needs Assessment is used to ensure progression is made throughout the course of placement, identifying clear SMART goals to inform the wider objective of the long-term care plan.

Through the child's placement, outcome planning meetings are held with providers who are supported and monitored to remain on track with the local authority care plan, this enables children to move on at a time that is right for them.

The Outcomes Based Placements team also guide transitions which are required to enable children to move from residential placements back to family, connected carers or foster care. Linking closely with fostering teams and the independent fostering agencies. Over the last year, the team have successfully supported 18 children to transition from residential placements to either post 16 accommodation or foster care. There was also an additional 7 young people reunified with family from residential care over the same period.

16. Reunification:

Hampshire introduced the Hampshire Approach in 2018 as a method of social work intervention, this is a strengths-based approach focusing on building positives relationships with families, identifying strengths and using this to support change in other areas. For children in care, this has a significant impact around their plans, as children in care, are in care for as long as needed. Previously a permanence decision would be made for a child to be placed in care and it would be the plan until they reached the age of 18 years.

In recognition that family situations can change, there has been significant progress around working with children and their families to enable children to be safely reunified to the care of family over time. This is carefully considered and uses the NSPCC Framework for Reunification to provide a robust assessment to progress plans.

Hampshire saw 355 children reunified to the care of their parent/s in 2020/2021 and aim to increase this to 400 children in 2021/2021.

17. Special Guardianship Orders:

It is recognised that children who remain placed within their family or with friends do better, they continue to remain within their family environment where their sense of belonging is maintained within the family.

There are currently 256 children who are living with their wider family or friends, but due to various reasons, the carers are seen to be Connected Carers and the children remain looked after.

Our transforming social care team have undertaken a significant review of the gateway into care process and how we can seek to increase the number of connected carers offering this vital support as a Special Guardian, this meaning that the child would no longer be looked after and provide the carers with parental responsibility to enable them to make decisions for the child.

A new team is being set up to support such type of arrangement with the introduction of a support team with the hope of increasing the number of Special Guardianship. In 2020/2021, 79 children who had been in care for 12 months or more, stopped being looked after as their carers become Special Guardians, it is hoped that this number will increase, with the additional support being offered to the carers. Carers have told us that they remain Connected Carers due to the level of support they receive, the allocation of a social worker to the carer and the child and access to training so this will all be considered as the new team is developed.

18. Children who go missing from care:

It is vital that we know the whereabouts of all children in care, this is closely tracked as it is known that children who go missing from care are at increased risk of child exploitation.

Exploitation includes.

- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
- Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)
- Modern Slavery
- Trafficking
- County Lines (drug running)

When a child is looked after and is missing, Children's Services will show the same concern as any good parent by taking the necessary steps to understand where children are going and why.

A risk assessment/safety plan will inform what support services and actions are required to prevent children and young people from running away, and to judge when it is appropriate to report them missing to the police, for some high-risk

young people, this would be immediately when out of visual sight of staff, for other's this would be if they have failed to return home by 10pm. For the month of March 2021, 54 children were reported as missing to the police, this equated to 102 episodes of missing.

There is a close working relationship with the Willow/MET teams who work with young people at risk of exploitation. This work is also supported by the 4LSCP (Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership). There is a need for all agencies to work together around exploitation to ensure that there is an effective response to the changing needs within the County.

For children who go missing from care they are offered a return from missing conversation and leaflets are provided to both children and their carers to provide further information which they read to increase their understanding of why we are worried when they are not where they are supposed to be.

There are a number of different strategies in place to ensure that children in care have effective plans and support with issues around exploitation, below is an indication of just some of the work in place:

- Training – There is access for staff to attend training to increase their understanding around current issues regarding child exploitation, the Willow Team are responsive and will deliver district sessions where the needs arise.
- There is currently a targeted piece of work by police under Child Centred Policing work where there is a review of all the 'safe and wells' interviews as there is a difference between the work that the police do when meeting children once returned, to that of social workers but to equally how the two agencies can effectively work together to support vulnerable children.
- The Missing People charity have just reviewed the Constabulary Safe and Well process and are embedded in their training and we are able to use their services to report missing children.
- Op Salvus – Is a Police project around High-Risk missing children who get an upgraded response from the police where MET issues are a concern.
- Op METs – County multi-agency meeting to looking at high risk missing as part of the overall review of each case and grading. Looks at emerging risk and disruption planning.
- District MET – local multi-agency meeting to consider the high and medium risk young people, looking at emerging risk and disruption planning at a local level.
- CERAF (risk assessment tool used by professional to determine a risk level) – upgraded to review and score risk around all forms of exploitation including Missing.

- UASC Collaboration – A multi-agency pan Hampshire review of UASC children including long-term missing and trafficked children.
- NRM – (National Review Mechanism) - Training about to be rolled out and we have Pan Hampshire response and upgrade to our NRM process.

19. Children’s wishes and views:

As part of the Hampshire Approach the department have revised all recording in relation to children, all visits, assessments, plans are written to the child using strengths-based language that is appropriate to the understanding of the child.

Children are involved in developing their care plans, they do this directly with their social worker, some write it themselves. This has seen improved engagement from children around their care plan as they feel very much part of it. 94.9% of children in care participated in their review meeting in March 2021.

Children are spoken to alone by their social worker on visits and their Independent Review Officer also ensures their wishes are understood.

20. Research:

Hampshire are keen to fully understand the needs of its children and young people, as such there are important research studies in which we are participating in. This will influence and shape our services and support moving forward.

- Evidenced Based Research – The Modernising Placement Programme report presented in January 2021 has shared the important role of having care experienced young people, engaging children to support with the development of the programme.
- We have linked in with Bristol University to participate in a research study on the Long-Term Mental Health of Children in Care in England. This project aims to contribute to our understanding of how mental health of children in care varies over time. It also aims to explore how these patterns of mental health are influenced by children’s care experiences, individual and school related factors. This study will seek information directly from children in care, the data will be obtained in three waves taking just over a year. We are currently in wave two with 150 completed surveys from Hampshire, which is a great response rate.
- The Virtual School have linked in and are participating in research with the University of Oxford and the Department of Education on Shared Training and Assessment for Well-Being (STRAWB). This study works with foster carers, social workers, young people, and mental health experts to develop a package, which aims to help the key adults in looked-after children’s lives to support their well-being.

- The Voice of the Family is a research programme that the Rees Centre, Department of Education, University of Oxford are undertaking with Hampshire families to understand their experience of working with Hampshire and having a child removed from their care. It is recognised that parents are likely to have experienced adversity and the research aims to understand the parents' experience.
- Bright Spots is a national survey run by the charity Coram Voice which collates the voice of the child and their experience in care. This is a bi-annual survey, which in view of COVID, has been postponed from 2020 until this year. An evaluation of the 2018 survey completed in 2020 saw an evaluation highlight the positive response to children feeling bullied in school through the production of a video by children in care about their experience.

The 2018 survey identified that children did not understand their plans, the evaluation highlighted the positive change to the care plan which is written with the child and has increased children's understanding of why they are in care. This is positive feedback which has been published nationally.

21. Participation:

- Overview of participation in numbers –
("Engagements" refers to the cumulative total number of children/young people who engaged with each activity)

▪ Ambassador activities engagement	67
▪ County Activities (WGT and ICE ^[1])	139
▪ District activities engagement	482

- **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.

- **Meeting with the Children's Commissioner for England**

^[1] 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.

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.

- **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.

- **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 IRS. In total eight young people were involved in these consultations.

- **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). You can see an interview with one of the young people and [listen to the song here](#). If you look closely at the video, you will see a photo of Hannah Williams who went on to the semi-finals in The Voice 2021. 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.

- **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 around 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, and you can [Listen to the podcast here](#)

- **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 social worker training, available for staff to hear, and for use in training events. [You can listen to sample from the library here.](#)

- **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.

- 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.
- Samples of the We've Got Talent competition
 - [Turning tables - Ruby - singing](#)
 - [Anthony - Octopus - cake sculpture](#)
 - [Jamie - Tik Tok](#)
 - [Layne - Bits n Bobs -](#)
- **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](#)

Examples of district-based activities –

- 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)
- CIC 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)

22.COVID

March 2020 saw the nation in unprecedented times, the country was in lockdown, schools were closed, and social work responded to the changes remarkably quickly to ensure we maintained a service and children were safeguarded.

Children in care were a priority area, foster carers and residential homes all a key focus for the department. Business continued as usual but with a difference. Virtual ways of working have been introduced, visits, meetings, reviews, and schooling all taking place via conference calls. Children continued to be seen and spoken to, for some, there was better engagement, for other's it was not their preferred way to talk to people. On the whole children have adapted well to virtual social work.

Family time was reviewed and in line with Government guidelines, most of this was adapted to virtual contact which was then eased as guidance changed.

Everyone involved has been extremely accommodating and understanding, the Hampshire schools remained open to all children in care, some took up this offer, other's remained at home.

Responses have been positive and there is great learning to take from the past year around effective working in a virtual way which needs to be considered for the future.

As the lockdown eased, in person visits resumed, the long term impact of the last 12 months is yet to be seen, but it is hoped that the engagement in the Bristol research study will assist the department in planning for the coming 12-18 months and beyond.

23. Conclusions

This last 12 months has been extremely busy for children in care, the work has been completed through unprecedented times with children continuing to be seen.

There is a proactive transformation programme for children in care, the introduction of the Hampshire Approach and the strengths-based working has shifted social work practice for children in care significantly. Children are only in care for as long as needed, in recognition that families change.

The recording and development of children's plans is more engaging for children, they are part of this plan and understand what is happening as language is used that they understand.

There is a significant project on the health of children in care to improve the timeliness of the annual assessments which will ensure that children have appropriate health plans.

The Gateway to Care project has demonstrated how the department are supporting children living with family and friends without the need for them to be in care to do this.

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	yes
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
OR	
<p>This proposal does not link to the Strategic Plan but, nevertheless, requires a decision because:</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

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

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents	
<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 <http://intranet.hants.gov.uk/equality/equality-assessments.htm>

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

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