



Hampshire
County Council

Annual Safeguarding Report Children's Services 2020-21

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National Developments

In this section:

- COVID19
- Child Exploitation
- UASC
- Working Together 2018

COVID19

The DfE published updated guidance to inform local authorities of the **temporary changes to regulations**. Amendments allow for **flexibility in some circumstances**, only to be used when **absolutely necessary**, with senior management oversight and consistent with overarching safeguarding principles.

Children and Families branch took a three phased approach:

Phase 1

Business as usual but doing it differently

- Statutory timescales for visits and meetings remain the same
- Using technology to ensure we see children and families through digital means i.e. WhatsApp, Teams
- Face to face visits undertaken where we know our staff can safely socially distance themselves, in relation to urgent child protection work
- Guidance provided for visits, meetings (with children and professionals), training, events etc

Phase 2

Pre-emptive planning for worse case scenario

- Expressions of interest from staff willing to work in the business-critical services
- Staff drafted in from the Residential Children's Homes to ensure a minimum staffing levels at Swanwick
- 2 homes closed meaning that in the event of an unforeseen emergency there was additional resource to be deployed
- CRT/MASH – non-essential work held back to enable prioritisation
- District teams – highest risk children and families identified

Phase 3

Managing the worse case scenario

- Redistribution of staff available to work
- Delivery of services reduced to highest risk cases
- Implementing DfE flexibility of statutory requirements

We have remained in Phase 1 throughout the pandemic

Child Exploitation

There are clear links between child exploitation and those children who are trafficked and/or that go missing.

Exploitation

- Online exploitation
- Criminal exploitation including County Lines (CCE)
- Drug related harm, knife crime and serious violence
- Radicalisation and extremism
- Forced marriage
- Female genital mutilation

HIPS Child Exploitation Group

- Strategic multi-agency group to meet legislative requirements, governmental guidance and to identify and implement best practice to protect children from all forms of exploitation.
- HIPS Child Exploitation Strategy: sets out how all agencies will work together to ensure the most effective and coordinated response to identify and protect children at risk of exploitation

Local Districts

- Senior children's social care managers lead Missing Exploited and Trafficked (MET) operational meetings
- Ensure the local identification, support, safeguarding and diversion of children who are at risk of, or being exploited

Children who go missing data

The latest available data for children who go missing in Hampshire, be that from home or for those in care, shows a continued improving position.

Each district team tracks and risk assesses their children who go missing to ensure appropriate safeguards are in place to prevent repeat occurrences. This is an important area of work and one that Ofsted gives significant scrutiny to.

County Lines

County Lines remains an increasing concern for Hampshire Children's Services and all agencies concerned with children in the area

All agencies and professionals contribute to tackling this form of exploitation:

- Pan-Hampshire Police MET team
- Hampshire Children's Services specialist Willow team

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC):

There are two groups of asylum-seeking children for whom Hampshire take responsibility. Those arriving **spontaneously**, often disembarking from the back of lorries on the M27/M3 corridor, who then legally become looked after children and are the responsibility of the Local Authority. The second group are through the **National Transfer Scheme**.

Hampshire UASC Arrivals

UASC arrivals	Jan-Mar 2018	Apr-Jun 2018	Jul-Sep 2018	Oct-Dec 2018	Jan-Mar 2019	Apr-Jun 2019	Jul-Sep 2019	Oct-Dec 2019	Jan-Mar 2020	Apr-Jun 2020	Jul-Sep 2020	Oct-Dec 2020	Jan-Mar 2021
Quarterly Data	14	29	31	17	18	7	8	3	13	0	18	4	7

As at 30 June 2021 the total number of UASC (under 18 years) looked after by Hampshire is 63

Hampshire UASC Care leavers

UASC Care Leavers	Jan-Mar 2018	Apr-Jun 2018	Jul-Sep 2018	Oct-Dec 2018	Jan-Mar 2019	Apr-Jun 2019	Jul-Sep 2019	Oct-Dec 2019	Jan-Mar 2020	Apr-Jun 2020	Jul-Sep 2020	Oct-Dec 2020	Jan-Mar 2021
Period End	246	247	270	294	308	328	329	327	334	335	341	347	363

This shows the number of UASC Care Leavers at each period end. There has been a 164% increase in the number of UASC care leavers since June 2017 (137), which is to be expected given the average age of UASC arrivals is 17.

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC):

Financial Year	Total UASC for the year	No. of transfers through NTS	Spontaneous Arrivals
2016-17	73	53	20
2017-18	81	17	64
2018-19	101	12	89
2019-20	34	4	30
2020-21	30	19	11
2021-22	15	4	11
Total	334	109	225

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC):

National Transfer Scheme (NTS)

- Hampshire has been accepting children through the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) since 2016.
- Previously been supportive with the closure of the Calais camp and more recently with the large influx of children arriving through Dover.
- Between August and October 2020 Hampshire took children direct from the Port of Dover as Kent County Council were unable to support more arrivals.
- Commitment to take one child per month from the scheme.

Placements

- The majority of the children are placed in independent fostering agency (IFA) placements and a significant number are placed outside of Hampshire, in order that we can better meet their cultural and individual needs.
- The age range is from 11 years old and the significant majority are males.
- They will need to be looked after by the local authority until they reach 18 years and will then have care leaver status with continuing support from the local authority until they are 25 years of age.
- There is still a UASC funding shortfall, particularly for those over the age of 18.
- 30% of UASC will not be given leave to remain in the UK and as such will have 'no recourse to public funds' requiring the local authority to entirely fund all of their living costs until they reach 25 years of age.

Working Together 2018

The **Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP)** is a mature, robust and effective multi-agency partnership. Drawing on the reflective, proactive and innovative practice of the children's workforce across Hampshire, we continue to develop and improve our services through effective safeguarding, learning and development.

The three safeguarding partners are:

- Hampshire County Council Children's Services
 - Hampshire Constabulary
 - Five CCGs
- All partners hold a strategic role within their organisations and are able to speak with authority, commit to matters of policy and hold their organisation to account.
- Strong strategic leadership during the pandemic ensured rapid and decisive action to safeguard Hampshire's children and young people at risk of harm or abuse and ensured access to the most appropriate support services to keep them safe.

The HSCP has a clear commitment from senior leaders, building on strengths within the strong partnership relationships that exist.

Our vision: *To protect children from harm and prevent them from the risk of being harmed and support their recovery from harmful situations.*

Key to our success has been a focus on the different safeguarding contexts that exist across Hampshire, with emphasis being placed on children and young people being safeguarded in their lives:

- at home,
- in their friendship circles,
- in health,
- in education
- in the public spaces that they occupy both offline and online.

Performance and Activity levels

In this section:

- Contacts and Referrals
- Assessments and Child Protection Investigations (S47)
- Child Protection Plans
- Full Time Children Looked After

Performance and Activity levels

Contacts and Referrals

Workloads, as evidenced in contacts, referrals and safeguarding activity, continue to be high with **8,978 cases open to Children's Social Care** at the time of writing this report.

Contact and Referrals	2016-17		2017-18		2018-19		2019-20		2021-21	
	Denom	Value	Denom	Value	Denom	Value	Denom	Value	Denom	Value
Number of initial contacts		87235		106010		117188		125413		126153
Number of referrals		37831		35953		40014		44434		48826
Referral source: Individual	2165	11.10%	1908	11.50%	1906	10.40%	2303	11.39%	2484	11.41%
Education	4559	23.50%	3862	23.30%	4432	24.10%	5007	24.76%	4230	19.43%
Health Services	2603	13.40%	2251	13.60%	3063	16.60%	3656	18.08%	4259	19.57%
Housing	233	1.20%	174	1.00%	188	1.00%	248	1.23%	181	0.83%
Local Authority Services	1606	8.30%	1704	10.30%	1661	9.00%	1600	7.91%	1856	8.53%
Police	5360	27.60%	4265	25.70%	4559	24.80%	4585	22.68%	5803	26.66%
Other legal agency	447	2.30%	388	2.30%	593	3.20%	696	3.44%	884	4.06%
Other	1765	9.10%	1194	7.20%	1248	6.80%	1262	6.24%	1166	5.36%
Anonymous	478	2.50%	384	2.30%	495	2.70%	531	2.63%	643	2.95%
Unknown	219	1.00%	466	2.80%	263	1.40%	332	1.64%	2	0.01%
Not recorded	0	0%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	258	1.19%

The total number of contacts as at 31 March 2021 (126,153) is **7.6% higher than the total received at 31 March 2019** (117,188), which was 11% higher than the previous year (77,934).

The **2020-21** is a **62% increase on the 2015-16 number**. This is indicative of the continuing pressures across the child protection system which is reflected nationally.

For 2020-21, education (19.43%) have been overtaken as the highest referrer with **police increasing to highest referrer (26.66%)** which is to be expected in a period which saw **school closures due to lockdowns**. These contact percentages have remained fairly consistent over the last three years.

Performance and Activity levels

Assessments and Child Protection Investigations (S47)

Section 47 and Assessments	2016-17		2017-18		2018-19		2019-20		2020-21	
% of S47 going to initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC)	4,211	43.70%	3926	44.90%	4317	40.60%	5035	31.40%	4747	34.70%
Child & Family Assessment (C&FA) Timeliness	19841	89.60%	18496	87.90%	18003	90.90%	19712	92.61%	15924	95.30%

The percentage of child protection investigations (section 47 investigations) which progress to an initial child protection conference over a year, has remained at around the **same level compared to previous years**.

This continues to reinforce the fact that thresholds are being consistently applied by social workers and managers.

The timeliness of completing a Child and Family Assessment (C&FA) since their introduction in 2014-15, is a **very positive** picture given the large number of assessments undertaken over the last year.

This has not fallen from the **high 80s for the last three years and is higher than the majority of other local authorities** in the region.

Performance and Activity levels

Child Protection Plans (CPP)

Child Protection Plans (CPP)	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
No of children on CPP	1263	1293	1097	938	1000

Child Protection planning process remains robust, numbers declining from the end of March 2017, but a recent increase due to Covid.

More children who were subject to a child protection investigation and were then presented at a child protection conference, were deemed to warrant being made subject to a child protection plan because of the risk of significant harm. **The increase is as a result of additional pressures on families as a result of Covid 19**

The number of children subject to a **plan for neglect remains in the 60-70 percent**. HSCB launched its Neglect Strategy in October 2016 and this continues to help professionals better identify neglect.

A low percentage of child protection plans are lasting beyond two years (which is good as it indicates proactive work) and relatively few require a repeat plan within two years. The number of timely visits made within the required dates remains a significant strength of the service

Performance and Activity levels

Full Time Children Looked After (CLA)

Full Time Children Looked After (CLA)	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
No of full time CLA	1339	1305	1440	1592	1664	1602	1656

The number of children in care has increased by 54 (3%) over the last 12 Covid months.

Although 2019/20 and 2020/21 have been volatile, the trend over the two years is downwards and this points to the success of our transformation programme.

There is of course significant churn throughout the year of the children in care population.

Additionally, changes in court practices are **placing more children at home whilst on a Care Order** (and thus 'in care') whilst previously such children would probably have remained the subject of support in the community without entering the court (and care) arena.

Nationally the picture of **demand continues to outstrip the supply** of placements for children in care, and the costs of placements are rising significantly.

Significant work is carried out by our Placement Commissioning team (such as working through framework contracts and contract specification) to ensure that Hampshire achieves the best value that it can in what is an 'overheated' market.

Our Modernising Placements Programme is **aiming to significantly increase the numbers of HCC carers** by offering a wider range of support to those carers, thus enabling them to care for children with more complex needs.

Local Developments

In this section:

- Recruitment & Retention
- Transforming Social Care (TSC) in Hampshire
- Youth Offending Service
- Sector Led Improvement Work

Recruitment & Retention

The recruitment and retention of children's social workers continues to be a key issue. This is a national problem which is particularly acute in the South East region.

In 2018 there was an investment by HCC of **£6.5m and over 100 new social work posts** to deliver effective sustained change in vulnerable families.

Maximising other routes to bringing in Social Workers such as **apprenticeships** and a **national training programme** (Step Up to Social Work)

Since this investment, **300 Qualified social workers recruited** into HCC's Childrens Services. **Including 250 newly qualified social workers** who have joined our Graduate Entry Training Scheme.

Permanent Vacancy Rates **remain at 13%**

To cover vacancies and with rising demand upon services, the **number of agency SW has increased.**

Pay benchmarking work undertaken and Social Worker **pay is currently under review.**

Social Worker turnover **stabilised at 13% during COVID**, although this is now starting to increase as restrictions are lifted.

Through our own employment agency (Connect to Hampshire) the number of off contract workers has been **substantially reduced.**

Continue to invest in a comprehensive marketing strategy to support recruitment, such as the delivery of **Social Work in the South.**

Transforming Social Care

The Transforming Social Care Programme is now in its second phase and continues to deliver innovative whole system change and continuous improvement to our social work practice. The 2020 Annual Safeguarding Report gave an overview of Phase 1 projects and what had begun to be delivered under Phase 2. **This report summarises those projects which have concluded or are ongoing during 2021.**

Ongoing projects

- Implementation of Family Connections Service – assessment, preparation and support for Family and Friends Carers
- Continuing to embed Intensive and Specialist workers to work with priority families and keep/return more children safely home
- Right Time Right Place – family life isn't 9-5 and so this project is considering how our service could adapt to flexibly meet the demands of families and potentially attract new social workers who wish to work different hours/patterns
- Implementing improvements to the Independent Reviewing Service
- Implementing improvements to the Family Time Service (previously Contact Service)
- Working with health partners to implement Health Assessment improvements
- Trial of virtual reality headsets to increase understanding of the impact of trauma and harmful parental behaviours

Completed projects

- Improvements to Early Help and Group Work delivery
- Improvements to Volunteer Service
- Applying the Hampshire Approach to family meetings and plans
- Care Leavers projects (housing, emotional and mental health, health passport)
- Introduced the Challenging Behaviour programme 'Great Behaviour Breakdown'

Youth Offending Service

During the last year Hampshire Youth Offending team (HYOT) has continued to deliver youth justice and youth crime prevention to the children whilst managing the peaks of the pandemic.

HYOT has used the period to continue to drive up the quality of delivery and associated outcomes for children. To achieve this, it has focused on the areas for development identified by a self-assessment and improving its key performance indicators:

- Reducing the numbers of children who are first time entrants (FTE) into the criminal justice system.
- Reducing the numbers of children who reoffended whilst under our supervision.
- Reducing the numbers of children in custody.

HYOTs priorities for 2021 / 22

- Improving assessments including understanding children's diverse needs and taking a trauma informed approach.
- Implement the improvements identified following the National Standards Self-assessment. In particular, the work done with children who are experiencing a transition.
- Reducing FTE by working together with the other Hampshire YOTs and Hampshire police to develop a youth diversion programme.
- Ensuring that HYOT has the correct interventions to meet the needs of children, parents/carers, and harmed people.
- Develop and improve communication across the YOT to support effective implementation of policies, procedures, and practice to improve outcome for children.

Sector Led Improvement

Hampshire has been a Partner in Practice (PiP) with the Department for Education since 2016, and as such, has provided social work improvement support and advice to other local authorities across the region and more widely as requested nationally. This improvement work under PiP came to an end in March 2021 when Hampshire, jointly with the Isle of Wight, was successful in bidding to deliver improvement support in the DfE's new programme, the Sector Led Improvement Programme (SLIP).

2020/21

Our work over the past year has supported improvement in several authorities including **Buckinghamshire, West Sussex, Southampton** and packages of support for **Reading and Slough**.

In addition to the work in 2020/21 under the PiP programme, Hampshire has worked with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) to undertake some specific improvement support with the British Overseas Territories. Currently this work is ongoing with **St Helena** and we are in negotiations to provide some advice and support to **Pitcairn Island**

Sector Led Improvement Programme (SLIP)

- Started in July 2021
- Indicative funding for three years
- Hampshire to deliver circa 1350 days of support a year.

Members can be assured that, even with the work of the Director of Children's Services and some of his senior managers in these authorities, there is no detriment to the oversight and management of Hampshire Children's Services.

Future Challenges and Operational Priorities

Future Challenges and Priorities

The future challenges and priorities can be summarised as follows (this is not an exhaustive list and the history of this type of work is that new priorities will emerge such as child exploitation and domestic abuse have done)

COVID19

The full long-term impact of the pandemic is not yet known. Since March 2021, albeit post the time frame for this annual safeguarding report, children's social care have seen a sustained increase in demand of over 20% above pre-pandemic levels.

Transformation Programmes

Given that the number of children entering the care system remains a challenge, as does the cost (price) of their placements, it is essential that the transformation work becomes fully embedded to keep more children at home.

Child Exploitation

Child exploitation, in all its forms, continues to be an increasing area of work, particularly the 'County Lines' issues.

Recruitment & Retention

The recruitment and retention of social workers will continue to need to be addressed.

New IT System

A new social care IT system will be implemented in 2022. The new system must allow social workers to work in a modern digital environment, which will free up their capacity and reduce administration.