



Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for Looked After Children and Care Leavers 2018-2021

June 2019 Update

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Please note that the most up to date available data has been used in the writing of this strategy.

Issue Date	Date of Next Strategy Review	Lead Service(s)
June 2019	September 2020	Commissioning Service in partnership with CYPS
Issue Date	Date of Action Plan and Performance Indicator Review (every 6mths)	Lead Service(s)
June 2019	September 2019 March 2019	Commissioning Service in partnership with CYPS

1. INTRODUCTION – POLICY CONTEXT

The Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy sets out Durham’s strategic approach to securing sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of our looked after children. This should also be considered alongside the wider Children and Young People’s Commissioning Plan 2019-2021.

The council has a duty, as stated in section 22G of the Children Act 1989, to take steps to secure, as far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for looked after children within their local authority area. The 2010 guidance on the ‘sufficiency duty’ states that local authorities should have embedded plans, as part of their commissioning processes and through partnership working, to meet the duty.

The sufficiency duty must take account of the requirement, under section 22C (5) of the Children Act 1989, that the overriding consideration for placing a child is that the placement must be the most appropriate available to meet the child’s needs. Next, preference must be given to a placement with a friend, relative or other person connected with the child and who is a local authority foster carer. Failing that, a placement must be found, as far as is reasonably practicable in all circumstances, that:

- Is near the child's home;
- Is within the local authority's area, unless that is not reasonably practicable.
- Enables the child to live with an accommodated sibling;
- Where the child is disabled, is suitable to meet the needs of that child; and
- Does not disrupt his/her education or training;

2. BEING A CORPORATE PARENT

Looking after and protecting children and young people from harm is one of the most important jobs that a Local Authority can do. Where a child cannot remain safely at home for whatever reason and comes into the care of the Local Authority and becomes ‘Looked After’ the council becomes the ‘corporate parent’ for that child. They are also the corporate parent for any young person who is under 25 and has been looked after for at least 13 weeks after their 14th birthday.

The term ‘corporate parent’ means the collective responsibility of the council, elected members, employees and partner agencies, for providing the best possible care and safeguarding support for the children and young people who are looked after by the council. A child in the care of the council looks to the whole council to be the best parent it can be to that child. Every member and employee has a statutory responsibility to act for that child in the same way that a good parent would act for their child.

Our commitment is to all children and young people living in foster care and residential care, placed for adoption, those living in supported lodgings or at home under Placement with Parent Regulations, as well as those living in secure establishments or in custody.

3. POSITION STATEMENT

As an Authority we:

- Will work collaboratively with families and our partners to offer family support and enable children and young people to be cared for within their own families wherever possible.
- Offer a range of early help services to support children subject to a Child Protection Plan and their families and prevent entry into care. This includes Family Group Conferencing, our Supporting Solutions Service (Edge of Care service) and direct social work interventions from our One Point Service and Families First Teams.
- Will undertake robust assessment, planning and case review to ensure that we only look after children and young people for whom being in care is the only way of ensuring their safety, protection and development.
- Will continue to work with those with parental responsibility to help a child or young person in care return home safely, wherever this is possible.

When it is not possible for a child or young person to remain with their family, we will seek to provide high quality care which meets their individual needs and as near as possible to the child or young person's home to maintain links with birth parents, relatives and their communities (where appropriate).

As an Authority we:

- Will aim to secure legal and emotional permanence, preferably through adoption, Special Guardianship, Child Arrangement Orders or where this is not possible, through long-term foster care.
- Will maximise the use of internal foster care resources before using local external fostering agencies.
- Will avoid using residential care except when it is in the best interests of the child / young person and meeting their complex needs.
- Are committed to be the best parent we can be for our Looked After Children and Care Leavers and strive to ensure that we deliver support and care that is as good as every good parent.
- Are committed to ensuring that Looked After Children and Care Leavers have the best opportunities available to them to achieve their potential and that these are at least as good as the opportunities available for all other children. We recognise that many children and young people face significantly greater levels of challenging circumstances before reaching adulthood than their peers and that this may mean that they have the need for additional support.
- Are committed to ensuring that services are designed with and for Looked After Children and Care Leavers to meet their needs.

- Want all our Looked After Children to live in loving, stable and safe homes in a place that they can 'call home'.
- Want the people who are caring for them to be fun, loving, skilled, enthusiastic, ambitious and fighting their corner every step of the way.
- Want our children and young people to form good, trusting, nurturing relationships with their carers and have positive experiences.
- Want our children and young people to live in stable placements and only having to move when it is in their best interests or when they have chosen to do so.
- Are ambitious for our children and young people and want to encourage them to dream big and fulfil their potential.
- Are committed to ensuring that they receive the best education in the best schools and get additional support if they need it; that they are well prepared for independence and work through apprenticeships, high quality training, supported into higher education and into university for those who aspire to do so.
- Want our children to be well, healthy and have good emotional and mental health.
- Want to celebrate their achievements, whether big or small so that they can be proud of themselves and know that we are proud of them.
- Want them to have fun and be able to develop their own interests and hobbies so that they can develop in confidence; develop friendships and memories that they can fondly look back on in later years.
- Are committed to listening to our children and young people, hearing what they have to say and acting on it wherever possible. We will develop our services based on this feedback and regularly check with them that we have got it right. We will be open to change and challenge.
- Want our care leavers to be well prepared for adulthood and ensure that they feel that they are part of a wider extended family who will be there for them if they are needed.
- Want our care leavers to feel safe and to receive the appropriate level of support and advice to enable them to transition to adulthood. This includes young people living in staying put arrangements with their carer(s) and having access to suitable high-quality supported living or independent living provision. We recognise how big a challenge this is and that many of our young people do this at a much younger age than many other young people.
- Want our young people to be able to make mistakes and know that they will be supported to learn and that someone will be there to help them pick up the pieces.

4. LISTENING TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

As an authority we are committed to listening to children and young people and have embedded this practice across Children and Young People's Services. We work in partnership with a social enterprise called 'Investing in Children'. They deliver a range of children's participation services on our behalf and implement several schemes through a contract arrangement:

- Facilitation of young people's participation / reference groups;
- Facilitation of the eXtreme group to ensure that the voice of children and young people with disabilities are listened to and acted upon;
- Coordination of the Children in Care Council;
- Management of the Drive Project – enabling some young people to learn to drive;
- Management of the Freedom Card – enabling Looked After Children and their carers to access a range of leisure activities at a discounted price;
- Management and facilitation of the Investing in Children Membership Programme – services are reviewed annually to ensure that they meet investing in children criteria.

All teams across Children's Services have either achieved Investing in Children Membership or are working towards this. The 'Investing in Children membership', is a kite mark which demonstrates that Looked After Children and young people feel valued and are listened to by adults.

5. CHALLENGES DURING 2018

Demand on Services

Whilst the overall number of children and young people living within County Durham has remained relatively stable in recent years, demand for services has increased considerably. National austerity and welfare reforms have disproportionately affected poorer families and levels of child poverty and deprivation have increased.

The growth in the numbers of local children and young people who need local authority services to achieve or maintain a reasonable state of health or development or to prevent significant or further harm over the past 5 years is substantial.

Whilst the number of children in need has increased by 25% from 3028 in 2014 to 3787 as of 31st March 2019 and should not be overlooked, the number of children requiring a section 47 assessment, where Children and Young People's Services consider they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, more than doubled from 1072 episodes in 2014 to 2374 in 2019.

An increase in the number of Children Looked After by the Authority

The increased demand on early help services has resulted in an increase in the number of children looked after by the Local Authority which has risen by 38% from 605 in 2014 to 833 as at 31st March 2019.

Within this group, there has been a notable growth in the number of older children looked after by the Local Authority. Improved identification and understanding of risk factors have contributed to the continued, and in some cases escalating, concerns around adolescents presenting with multiple and complex needs:

- Environmental factors: attachment difficulties, parental conflict, domestic abuse, homelessness;
- Internal factors: social communication difficulties including Autism, mental ill-health, behaviours that challenge services;
- External factors: interpersonal relationships, criminal and sexual exploitation, alcohol and substance misuse, serious youth violence and bail, licence and discharge conditions.

Where living with family cannot be maintained, securing safe, local accommodation and care that can meet the often bespoke needs and requirement of this age group can be both complicated and costly and represents a particularly volatile area of demand.

This has presented many challenges for services across the Authority, ensuring that appropriate placements that meet the individual needs of children and young people can be secured.

In 2018-19 these additional pressures on the Local Authorities Children's Social Care budget linked to placements for Children Looked After, resulted in an overspend of £2.624 million.

The Transforming Care Agenda

'Transforming Care' requires Local Authorities to work in partnership with Health to secure appropriate living arrangements and placements for children and young people in the community when they are discharged from tier 4 hospital provision or to prevent them from being admitted to hospital.

Between 1st June 2018 and 1st June 2019, there were 226 incidents involving a child or young person looked after by the Authority / subject to a care order / subject to a child protection plan who presented to the CAMHS crisis team. Of these children and young people, 126 were seen in the Accident and Emergency Department at hospital and 72 were re-attendees in the last year.

The development of the 'Multi-Agency Collaborative Care' meeting (MACC), enables the service to have senior management oversight of all children and young people with learning disabilities, autism or both that live in the area and provides a coordinated and integrated approach for the risk management of these children and young people ensuring that robust support or care packages are in place at the point of hospital discharge, which will minimise hospital admission and reduce health inequalities and improve outcomes. The group brings together professionals with responsibility for commissioning, procuring, care planning and delivering services to individuals who are at risk of admission or who are inpatients in specialist hospitals.

Placement finding and matching children and young people

During 2018, CYPS rolled out signs of safety training across Social Work Teams and this is now captured within our children and young people's risk assessments. Producing strength-based information has improved the quality of information that we share with a provider when discussing a placement opportunity. This has started to result in improved placement options for children and young people.

Matching children and young people in residential provision given existing young people in the setting and their presenting risks has presented an ongoing challenge to us. Given the complexities of some of our children and young people we have a greater need for smaller regulated settings. We have been working with a Provider to develop this market and are also growing our own in-house residential offer.

To support placement finding our Integrated Placements Team within the Fostering Service now uses CCRAAG, alongside our existing procurement portal, NEPO. This on-line platform pulls together information about all regulated Children's Homes settings into one place and enables targeted searches to be undertaken in specific areas and dependent on the individual needs of children and young people.

Supporting placement stability and supporting families on the edge of care

There is an ongoing drive to support placement stability and to offer increased support and intervention to carers if there is a risk of placement breakdown, across all our placements. Those carers who work with children and young people with particularly complex and challenging behaviours often require support or respite for short periods of time.

Families on the edge of care, often require outreach support and respite to prevent children and young people from coming into care.

At present this type of support is commissioned on a case by case basis, however there is a need to develop a new 'support offer' for both children who are looked after and families on the edge of care. Plans are in place to broaden our current short break offer for children and young people with learning disabilities, to include 'all children and young people' who are assessed as needing additional intervention.

The Supporting Solutions Service was also developed during 2018. The service was developed in response to the increasing number of children looked after by the Authority and a lack of available emergency options with external providers. This service provides crisis intervention and intensive support to children and young people aged 11 to 17 who are on the edge of care due to family breakdown. The service also provides an emergency overnight bed provision. The service provides a responsive, reactive solution to children, young people and their families at crisis points and to date has been successful in delivering its overall objectives.

Supported Living for young people who challenge services

In 2018 our Young People's Services have worked with a number of young people aged 16+ who have a plan of supported accommodation but due to their risks and complex behaviours could not be supported within mainstream supported accommodation options or traditional residential provision.

This has resulted in the commissioning of individual bespoke supported living arrangements for young people.

We are currently working with the market to shape a new commissioning solution which will provide a menu of supported living provision for young people aged 16+ who challenge services and who we often struggle to accommodate in mixed settings due to the risks that the present. This will be commissioned during summer 2019 and the solution implemented later in the year.

6. IN-HOUSE FOSTERING

(i) Types of Foster Placements

Durham offers a range of in-house fostering provision. Table 8 below identifies the number of fostering household type over a 6-year period.

Table 8 – Type of Foster Placement Households

Type of Care	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Short Term Care	108	101	98	125	123	115
Both Short Term and Permanent Care	69	70	85	30	50	60
Permanent Care	42	55	51	82	71	73
TOTAL MAINSTREAM	219	226	234	237	244	248
Foster to adopt	-	-	-	-	-	7
Family & Friends Care	36	39	44	70	68	48
Family & Friends Temp Approved	45	32	28	56	40	45
TOTAL FAMILY&FRIENDS	81	71	72	126	108	93
TOTAL MAINSTREAM AND FAMILY & FRIENDS	304	297	306	363	352	345

Analysis

- Over the last year, the number of mainstream fostering households has increased by a net difference of 4 households.
- The number of family and friend households have reduced by 15. This includes fully improved as well as temporarily approved foster carers.
- Short term fostering provision has remained relatively stable over the last 6 years. Permanent fostering provision has also increased in line with the rising number of looked after children and young people with numbers starting to level out during 2017-18 and 2018-19.

(ii) Foster Carer Profile Analysis (as at 31 March 2018)

Age

- 20% of the foster carers are aged over 60year olds which creates a potential pressure on the service as carers retire over the next few years.
- 73% of foster carers are aged between 40-59year olds.

Religion

- Durham foster carers practice a range of diverse faiths including Sikh, Muslim, Roman Catholic and Protestant.

Gender

- Durham has a total of 456 foster carers, within 244 households and the gender split is shown below:
 - 214 male foster carers
 - 242 female foster carers
- The gender split between male and female foster carers is therefore balanced.

Ethnicity

- The ethnicity of Durham foster carers is predominantly White British but is shown below:
 - 3 – Any other ethnicity
 - 2 – Mixed Race African
 - 4 – Mixed Race Asian
 - 2 – Mixed race Caribbean
 - 527 – White British
 - 2 – White English
 - 1 – White Scottish
 - 8 – Other White background

Disability

- There are currently 7 Foster Carers with a disability.

Fostering Households

- Of the 244 foster carer households – 212 are couples, which includes 4 same sex couples and 32 are single carers.
- All single foster carers are female, although many main carers within fostering households which are couples, are male.

Age preference (short-term carers)

Foster carers state their preferences for the age of the children they feel able to care for based on the needs of their own families and the ages of their own children.

- 40% of short-term carers have a preference to care for 0-4year olds
- 41% of short terms carers have a preference to care for 5-10year olds
- 19% of short-term carers have a preference to care for 11+ year olds, which is significantly lower than the other age preferences.

Geographical location of foster carers

- The majority of foster carers live in the central area of County Durham particularly around Durham and Chester le Street areas, providing access to services and families across the county.
- The carers who live outside of County Durham mainly live within 10 miles of it. There is a number of carers in the Houghton-Le-Spring area which is still close to both the north and east areas.
- A number of foster carers (32) live outside the county boundaries and of these, 60% (19) offer permanent placements

Table 9 – Location of Foster Carers

Location	Numbers
North*	80
South	36
East*	59
West	37
Out of County	32

*these locations include Durham City

(iii) De-registration of mainstream foster carers

- The number of mainstream carers who have been de-registered has increased each year, however, we are still below the national average (10%) as stated in 'Foster Care in England Feb 2018' (Martin Narey/Mark Owers).

- The average foster carer’s length of service is 10 years in Durham. According to Fostering Network (2018) the national average is less than 8 years.

Table 10 – De-registration of foster carers

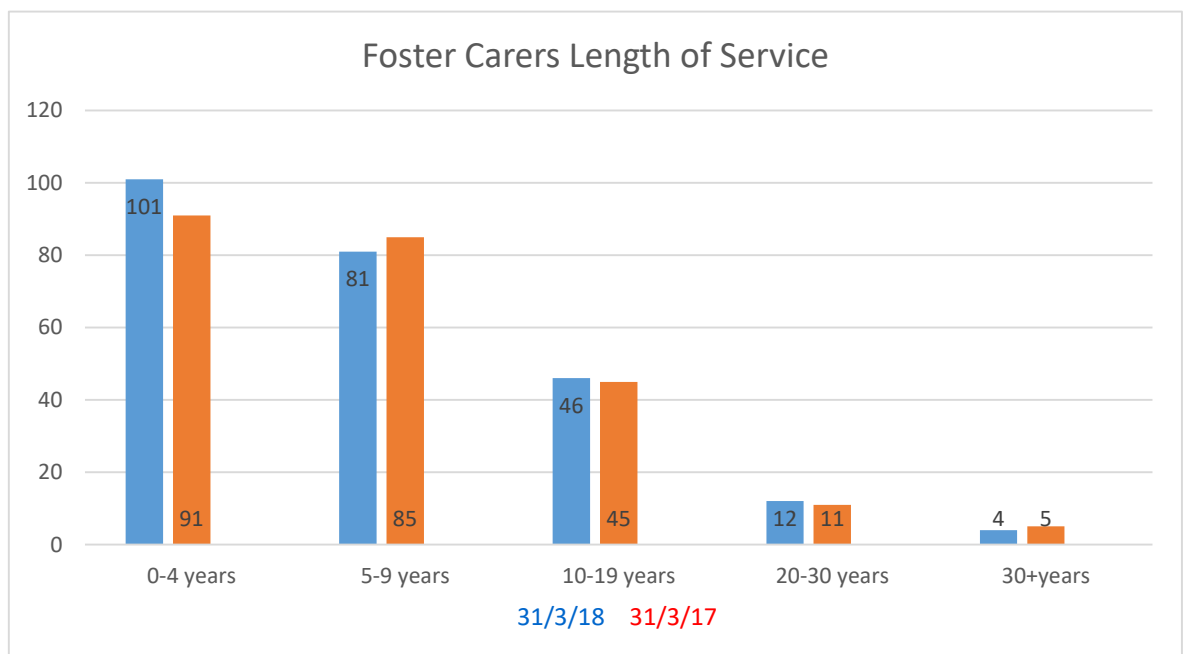
Type	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Short term and permanent carers	14	15	17	20	23	9
% of Total Number of Foster Carers	6.3	6.6	7.2	8.4	9.4	3.5

23 foster carer households were de-registered during 2017/18 and the reasons included retirement following a long career, allegations and concerns about their practice. The number of foster carers de-registering during 2018-19 has reduced significantly to 9.

(iv) Retention of Foster Carers

- 41% of foster carers (101) have been approved in the last 5 years illustrating the importance of the continued recruitment of foster carers.
- 10% increase in foster carers approved within the last 5 years.
- 26% of carers (62) have been approved for more than 10 years

Graph 11 – Retention of Foster Carers



Foster Carer Recruitment

- There have been slightly fewer initial enquiries during 2018/19 (321) in comparison to 2017/18 (329), alongside a slight reduction in the number of foster carers approved (26) in 2018/19 and (28) in 2017/18. The number of foster carers recruited has increased year on year since 2015/16 and is now starting to level out.

Table 12 – Recruitment of Foster Carers during 2018/19

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total 17/18	Total 18/19
Initial Enquiry	16	30	20	18	18	37	27	29	13	43	32	38	329	321
Attend Information Session	5	8	18	8	9	22	10	11	0	15	18	7	131	131
Expression of Interest Forms	12	13	11	14	4	13	5	12	0	10	9	13	144	116
Initial Visits completed	7	4	5	4	9	3	8	9	4	2	6	7	76	68
Attend Preparation Training	0	6	5	0	0	9	0	6	0	6	0	0	50	32
Application Forms Accepted	1	5	3	3	0	5	2	4	1	3	2	2	51	31
Total Number Approved 18/19	1	2	1	2	3	0	3	1	2	4	2	5	28	26

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total 17/18	Total 18/19
Total Number Approved 15/16	1	2	1	3	1	1	2	1	2	1	-	7	22	22
Total Number Approved 16/17	2	1	2	2	3	3	2	1	2	1	4	2	25	25
Total Number Approved 17/18	1	1	2	1	5	3	1	2	4	1	3	4	28	28

- In terms of the fostering data set 2016/17 (published 27/03/18) there has been a 1% decrease in enquiries amongst local authorities nationally.
- There are a number of triggers that result in enquiries being made to the Authority about becoming a foster carer; 41% of enquiries are as a result of the Local Authority Website; 17% are generated through word of mouth and 16% are through carers self-motivation – something foster carers often state that they have thought about for years but never took that first step to make an enquiry. Only 2% of enquiries are, as a result of promotional information on buses and 3% through radio advertising.
- The Fostering Stocktake Report by Sir Martin Narey and Mark Owers, published in February 2018 clearly states the need for Local Authorities to review their recruitment and marketing strategies. Social media and on-line marketing is often cheaper and more effective than conventional marketing activities and enables Authorities to target recruitment on those most likely to respond.

(v) In-House Fostering – Key Findings

- 49% of our looked after children and young people are accommodated within in-house foster placements (as of 29 March 2019).
- The use of in-house foster placements has increased during 2017/18 reaching a maximum of 400 placements with mainstream carers.
- The majority of our foster carers live within County Durham (87%) with the remaining 13% living in neighbouring authorities. This means that there is less disruption to services for children and young people living in foster care provision i.e. fewer changes required to their education or health provision, children and young people are able to maintain contact with their families (where possible). All these factors support placement stability.
- There has been a significant reduction in the number of foster carer de-registrations, with 23 in 2017-18 and only 9 during 2018-19.
- A total of 26 new foster carer households have been recruited during 2018/19, however when this is off-set against the number of de-registrations (9), this provides a net number of 17 new foster carer households during 2018/19.
- A total of 101 foster carers have been recruited between 2015/16 and 2018/19, with 69 carers de-registering during this period. The number of carers de-registering in 2018/19 has reduced to 9 throughout the year. Support, including financial support available to foster carers is critical to their recruitment and retention. This is evident in the feedback received for both new and long-time serving foster carers.
- 19% of short-term carers have a preference to care for children aged 11+.
- There is a shortfall in available permanent placements to meet the current demand. The fostering service is promoting permanence arrangements for all new foster carers and ensures dual approval for both short term and permanent arrangements.
- 40% of foster carers have a preference for caring for children aged 0-4 years old and this represents the largest group of children entering care.
- 73% of our foster carers are aged between 40-59 years old, with 20% aged 60+.

- During 2017/18, 19% of children entering care were aged over 11 years (67 in total), however, the total number of foster carers with this age preference was 26 (19% of the foster carer cohort). This identifies a shortfall of in-house carers with a preference of caring for children aged 11+ which also results in older children and young people requiring independent fostering agency provision (currently 133 placements made with IFAs).
- 15% of looked after children have an EHCP and a further 15% with SEN provision.
- Staying Put arrangements are set out in the Care Leavers section of this Strategy and it should be recognised that foster carers play an integral role in supporting Staying Put arrangements. Whilst this does have a direct impact on the numbers of foster carers, it is important that foster carers continue to support these arrangements which often result in positive outcomes for young people.
- At present our Fostering Service has limited respite carer provision to support our edge of care service (Supporting Solutions) and to support placement stability.

(vi) Actions we will take

- We will develop a robust Fostering Marketing & Recruitment Strategy, working closely with the Marketing Team, to identify both new and proven methods of recruitment and use information/data captured within this Strategy to determine future target audiences and marketing needs. A focus will be placed on recruitment of foster carers for primarily teenagers, dealing with complex needs and challenging behaviour and providing permanency.
- As 20% of our foster carers are aged 60+ and we have a growing number of young people remaining with their carer's in staying put arrangements, we will continue to increase our pool of existing foster carers by recruiting 25-30 new foster carer households in 2018/19 (net target). This will also reduce the dependency on IFA provision which shows a total of 54 short-term placements currently placed with IFAs.
- We will continue to strengthen the support offered to our foster carers, which is critical to our recruitment and retention of foster carers going forward, by developing foster carer focus groups and listening to the needs of foster carers and provide exit interviews, to fully understand the reasons why foster carers leave the authority.
- We will analyse and evaluate current offer of professional development and training with the potential to provide further support to foster carers to manage young people with challenging behaviour and complex needs, which will support placement stability and result

in fewer placement breakdowns. (At present 30% of looked after children have either an EHCP or SEN provision.)

- We will evaluate the Mockingbird Model used successfully in a number of local authorities which is critical to stabilising fostering placements and offering support to foster carers and children. Following a benchmarking exercise a visit to Leeds local authority has been arranged who have already successfully implemented a robust support network for foster carers.
- We will increase our pool of foster carers who have a preference to care for children and young people age 10/11+ and sibling groups through targeted recruitment and marketing.
- We will continue to promote and support permanency to both new and existing foster carers at both panel and review stages.
- We will continue to maximise the use of our in-house foster placements for our children and young people by collaborative working across the fostering service and the development of a new placement team.
- As part of the annual review process for foster carers, we will continue to ensure that we have carers with as wide an approval range as possible to provide flexibility and opportunities for placement finding.
- We will develop respite carer provision which will support our edge of care service (Supporting Solutions) and support the stability of our placements.

7. INDEPENDENT FOSTERING PROVISION (IFAs)

(i) Usage

Table 13 – Usage – Independent Fostering Agencies

	Number of IFA Placements	% of LAC Cohort
March 2015	78	12.6%
March 2016	96	14.2%
March 2017	118	14.5%
March 2018	133	16.6%
March 2019	120	14%

Analysis

- Whilst the number of IFA placements has reduced during 2018-19, the overall number of foster placements with independent providers remains high, with 120 placements as of 29th March 2019 and 14% of all children looked after being accommodated in this type of provision.

- The demand for IFA placements is high across the region, with local authorities describing the market as ‘saturated’.
- Durham continues to struggle to identify placements for older young people and those with more challenging and complex needs. This is often due to matching considerations alongside other children and young people already in the household.
- High demand for placements allows providers to be more selective.

(ii) Commissioning Arrangements

- Durham play an active role in the current NE7 IFA Consortia Framework, which enables independent foster placements to be purchased from providers. This is an established framework in its second phase which has received positive feedback in national reports.
- The current framework has been extended until 30 September 2019. A new commissioning solution has been developed following a period of consultation with providers and will be taken to the market during summer 2019. The new solution will offer a greater level of flexibility, enabling new IFAs to join (following relevant checks) throughout the term of the contract.
- There is an intention to move towards regional IFA commissioning over the next 2-3 years. This approach will result in greater control of the market and bargaining power and standardised pricing for placements (whereby not distorting market competition).

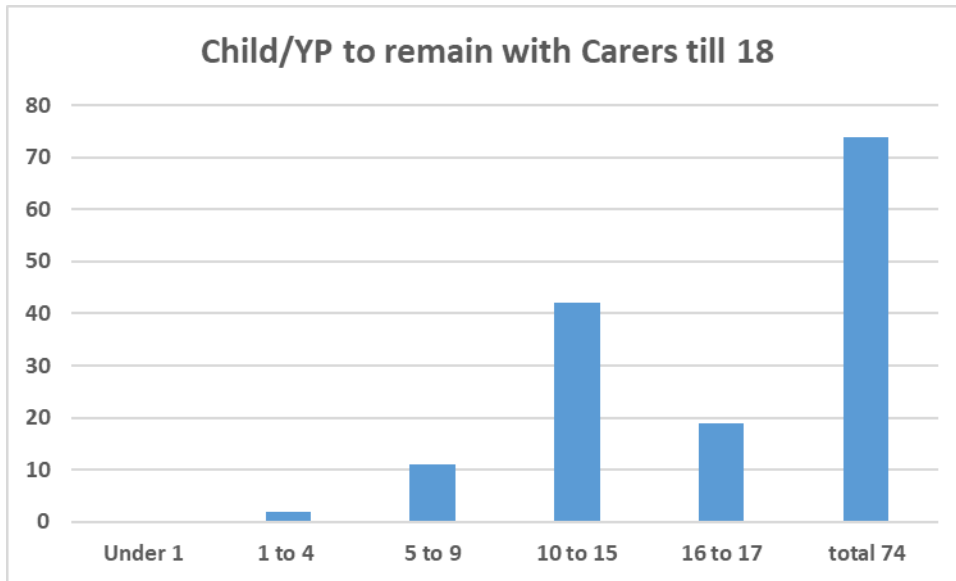
The benefits of a regionally commissioned framework are outlined in a statement below from the ‘Fostering Stocktake Report – February 2018’ (Sir Martin Narey/Mark Owers).

“Quite a lot could be achieved immediately were local authorities to share their framework contracts with one another. The secrecy and the variation in prices negotiated by different local authority’s benefits providers, but not councils. They need to come together to create about ten large commissioning consortia with critical mass, better able to understand commissioning requirements, concentrate expertise, discourage local authority versus local authority competition and negotiate new agreements with IFAs to provide placements at significantly reduced cost, almost certainly through guaranteeing particular IFAs a certain level of business”.

- When a placement cannot be made with an IFA provider on the framework, off-framework providers are approached. There are currently 16 framework providers and 8 off framework providers.

(iii) Permanence

Graph 14 - Permanent IFA Placements (March 2018)

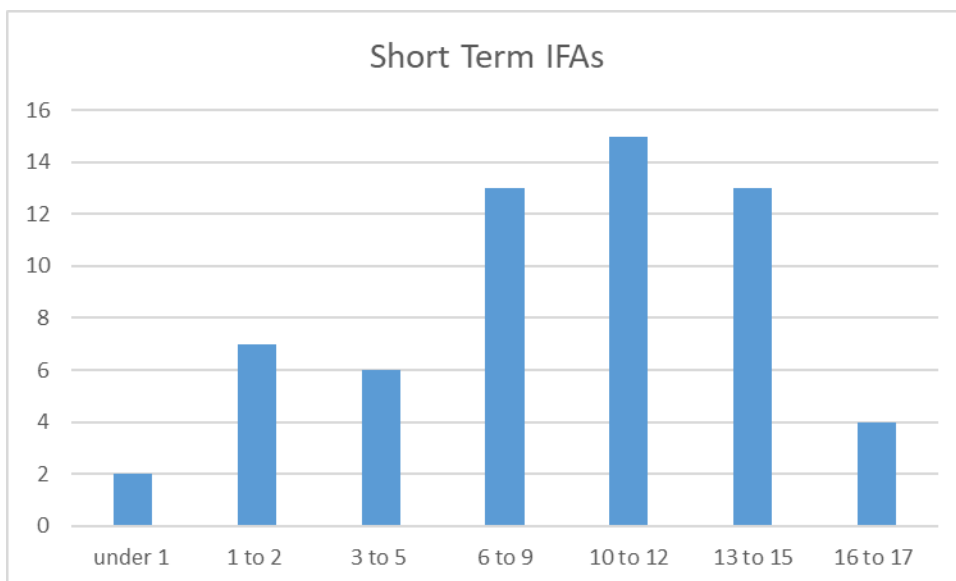


Analysis

- Of the 133 children and young people placed in IFAs on the 31st March 2018, 74 are matched permanently to their carer(s).
- The largest number of placements with IFAs are for children and young people aged 10-15 (57% of all permanent placements) and the second largest group is for 16-17 year olds (26% of all permanent placements).

(iv) Short-term IFA Placements (March 2018)

Graph 15 - Short Term IFA Placements (in months)



Analysis

- Of the 133 children and young people in IFAs on the 31st March 2018, 59 were in short-term placements.
- 47% of all short-term placements are for children and young people aged 10-15.
- 22% are for 6-9year olds
- 25% of children placed with IFAs are aged 0-5 years.

Main Reasons for Children/Young People Placed in IFAs:

- Sibling Groups – diverse age range within a sibling group
- Matching
- Lack of Availability – primarily for young people aged 6+ years
- Complex needs/challenging behaviour of children/young people

(v) Consortia Placement Information

Table 16 - Number of Placements made by NE7 IFA Consortia – 2015 to 2019

Year	Number of new placements
2015-16	231
2016-17	284 (22.9% increase)
2017-18	337 (18.7% increase)
2018-19	207 (Q1-3 only)
Total	1,059

Analysis

IFA placements are based on 1-3 banding levels with a set cost for each different band level which is dependent upon the level of needs and the complexity of the child/young person being placed. Of the 1,059 placements made over the last 3 years across the 7 North East Local Authorities:

- The majority (823, 77.7%) of placements are Band 1.
- Most placements in 2015-16 were aged 14, 15 and 16-year old. In 2016-17 the majority were 15, 14 and 13-year old. During 2017-18 the majority were 15-year old followed by 11 and 14-year old. The majority up to Q3 2018-19 have been for aged 1, 5 and 14.
- During 2018-19 there have been slightly more IFA placements for males than females and this is consistent with 2017-18.
- Only 117 (11%) out of the total 1,059 placements were made out of hours or as an emergency placement. There are few IFAs that offer this service.
- 567 placements (53.5%) have been made on a “short term (longer than 28 days)” basis. Only 49 (4.6%) are designated “long term” placements.
- Placements are made for a wide variety of reasons, but “Neglect” is by far the most common.
- 419 sibling groups were placed with their sibling, but 111 were placed apart. Sibling groups are most commonly made up of 2 individuals.

(vi) Independent Fostering Placement – Key Findings

- Whilst the number of IFA placements had increased year on year, with 78 placements at the end of March 2015 and 120 placements at the end of March 2019, the number of IFA placements has gradually reduced throughout 2018-19. Currently 14% of Children Looked After by the Authority as cared for in this type of provision.
- Durham are part of the NE7 IFA Consortia, a group of 7 Local Authorities which enables us to purchase fostering placements from independent providers. A new regional commissioning solution will be in place from October 2019.
- It is difficult to assess if an increased number of placements have been made across the consortia framework during 2018-19 as Q4 data has not yet been released. The majority of IFA placements were for 1, 5 and 14-year old children. It is therefore evident that there is a growing need for placing younger children in IFA provision, particularly when there is limited availability within in-house fostering provision.
- The majority of Durham's placements sought with IFAs are Level 1 (mainstream placements). We struggle to find appropriate placement provision for children and young people with more complex needs and challenging behavior. This is reflective in the much smaller number of Level 2 (mainstream with additional needs) and Level 3 placements (complex needs) that we have.

(vii) Actions we will take

- We will work regionally with other Local Authorities to develop a new flexible commissioning solution for purchasing independent fostering placements. This will be operational from October 2019.
- We will work closely with Independent Fostering Agencies and share relevant information to inform targeted recruitment strategies to ensure our placement needs are met both now and in the future.
- Through the new solution we will develop the IFA market to be able to take more complex young people. This will take time to develop, however we would like to see a shift in the type of placements that IFAs are able to provide over the next 3-5 years.
- We will review the type of information that is provided to IFAs and adopt a process which quality assures the contents of referrals prior to sending to IFAs. Whilst the most up to date signs of safety risk assessment will be shared, this needs to be balanced, capturing the positive aspects of a young person and relevant contextual information. Sharing poor quality information results in limited placement options for children and young people.
- We will seek to reduce the dependency on IFA provision by developing and implementing robust marketing strategies to recruit in-house, local foster carers and maximise current in-house provision.

8. ADOPTION

(i) Performance and trend information

- Adoption gives vulnerable children, including many with complex needs and a history of ill-treatment, the greatest possible stability, in a permanent home with a permanent family.
- The Adoption Service continues to focus on achieving the best outcomes for children and to prevent delay in achieving permanence for the child with a plan of adoption ensuring children remain the focus and the centre of the service in all areas.
- The adoption team continues to ensure that only adopters who have the necessary skills to meet the needs of children with a plan of adoption, are presented to panel for approval.
- In line with national trends, the Adoption service has seen a reduction in the number of available adopters, and this has significantly impacted on the work of the team and made family finding more difficult.
- Whilst we continue to ensure that placements are sought at the earliest opportunity for the child, this has involved seeking approved adopters from all over the country in order to meet the individual needs of the children. Although this is in line with the government agenda to reduce delay, it does mean that children are being more often placed outside the north east region.

Table 17a - Initial Enquiries 2018 – 2019

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	18/19 Total	17/18 Total
Initial Contact	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	1	2	0	0	6	13	157
Information Events	3	0	0	0	0	0	9	2	4	0	0	10	28	48
Number of Enquiry Forms	1	2	5	0	7	11	18	14	6	19	19	20	122	78
Number of Adoptions	5	3	1	8	9	4	3	3	2	3	2	4	47	43

Table 17b – Number of children in adoption process and sibling groups

2016-17		2017-18		2018-19	
Number of children in adoption process	Of which: Number that are part of a sibling group	Number of children in adoption process	Of which: Number that are part of a sibling group	Number of children in adoption process	Of which: Number that are part of a sibling group
137	57	136	64	81	Awaiting data

Analysis

- In line with national trends, the number of adoption enquiries has significantly declined over recent years. In 2018/19, Durham received 13 initial enquiries, in comparison to 157 received in 2017/18 and 165 in 2016/17.
- There has been a slight increase in the number of Placement Orders being granted to Durham. In 2018/19 there were 55 and in 2017/18 there were 54.
- In 2018/19 Durham placed 47 children for adoption. This number is slightly higher than 2017/18 where Durham placed 43 children for adoption.
- Children placed for adoption in inter-agency and out of county adoptive placements have increased with the likelihood of having complex needs, being part of a sibling group and being older children.

(ii) Regionalisation

As a response to the published white paper 'Adoption – a vision for change', Durham has committed to be part of a Regional Adoption Agency which will be called 'Coast to Coast'. The model will involve Together for Children (Sunderland), Durham County Council and will be hosted by Cumbria County Council. It is anticipated that the new delivery model will be operational from April 2020.

(iii) Fostering for Adoption

Fostering for Adoption aims to increase early planning, increase placement stability, reduce the number of moves for children and ultimately achieve permanence as early as possible. This has formed a significant part of Durham's new Early Permanency Strategy and a detailed implementation plan for 2018/19 has been produced, which includes training and development for staff across the service, including Adoption, the Looked After Teams and the Council's Pre-Birth Service. Significant progress has been made in placing children under fostering to adopt arrangements and this remains a key priority. During 2018/19 the Authority successfully placed 7 children in foster to adopt arrangements.

(iv) Adoption – Key Findings

- Inter-agency Placements total 25% of adoption placements during 2017/18 and this may mean that children are placed outside of the north east region. These arrangements are also costly to the Authority.
- Fostering to Adopt is now part of Durham's Permanency Strategy which seeks to reduce the number of moves for children and achieve permanency as early as possible. During 2018/19, a total of 7 children were placed in fostering to adopt placements.

(v) Action we will take

- Fostering for Adoption is a strategic priority for Durham and we will continue to promote Fostering to Adopt and discuss with all prospective adopters during training and assessment and actively promote during information sessions and events. We will also provide training and development to staff across the service including the Adoption Team, Looked After Teams and the new Pre-Birth Service.
- We will develop a marketing strategy to recruit prospective adopters, which targets adopters for children with complex needs, sibling groups and older children. At present this cohort of children tend to be accommodated in inter-agency provision often outside of the north east region and are costly.
- We will continue to be part of the regional adoption agency development, 'Coast to Coast', involving two other local authorities alongside voluntary adoption agency involvement.

9. RESIDENTIAL CARE

Durham recognises that group living in residential homes is a positive choice for some young people and is the best way to meet their assessed needs. A recent statement from Eleanor Schooling (Social Care Commentary 9 January 2018) outlined that *'1 in 12 Looked After Children currently live in children's homes, which is a positive option, however, often residential homes do not receive the recognition they deserve for the significant role they play in children's lives.'*

Durham is committed to looking after as many of its own children as possible as we believe this enables children to be close to home and their family. This offers the best opportunity of achieving good outcomes and placement stability for children and young people. This approach also ensures that resources are used as effectively and efficiently as possible.

9a. In-house Residential Provision

(i) Feedback

- Durham continues to deliver an in-house residential home offer to children and young people. Two of Durham's children's homes are rated by Ofsted

to be 'Good' with 'Outstanding' features. 6 are recognised to be 'Good' overall. We are awaiting a full inspection on the remaining home following a programme of remedial works being carried out.

(ii) **In-House Residential Home Provision**

Table 18 – In-house residential home provision

Children's Home	Type of Provision	Number of Beds	Age Group
West Rainton	Medium - Long-Term Therapeutic	3	7-12 years*
New Lea House,	Long Term	4	12-17 years
High Etherley	Long Term	3	12-17 years
Cedar Drive	Long Term	4	12-17 years
Framwellgate Moor	Long Term	5	12-17 years
Moorside	Long Term	5	12-17 years
Coxhoe	Long Term	3	12-17 years
Tow Law	Long Term	5	12-17 years
Park House	Short Break/Respite for disabled children/ young people	6 + 1 emergency bed	7-17 years
Edge of Care Provision	Emergency Overnight	2 x emergency beds	11 – 17 years

Analysis

- Most of our in-house residential placement provision (29 placements) are long term and meet the needs of older children/young people aged 12yrs+.
- West Rainton provides a small number of placements (3) for younger children aged 8-11, providing intensive therapeutic intervention with the intention of facilitating a transition into fostering or returning home.
- At present there are no other short-term placements for any age group other than West Rainton.
- Park House provides respite provision for disabled children/young people who meet the required eligibility criteria.
- In total the service is currently made up of 32 beds for medium to long-term placements. At the time of completing this report (June 2019) occupancy stands at 24 children, (75%). This is due to the complexities of some of our young people and the need to limit occupancy.

(iii) Profile of children and young people (May 2019)

Table 19 - Profile of Children/Young People – In-house residential provision

Gender	Female		Male	
	10 (41.7%)		14 (58.3%)	
Duration of time spent in In-house Provision	Less than 12 months	13mths - 3 years	Over 3 years	
	3 (12.5%)	16 (66.7%)	5 (20.8%)	
Age Cohort	10 Years and under	11 - 15 years	16 -17 years	18+
	2 (8.3%)	11 (45.8%)	11 (45.8%)	0 (0%)
Entered In-house Provision From	Fostering (in-house/external)	External Residential	Home	
	19 (79.1%)	2 (8.3%)	3 (12.5%)	
Placement Demographics	No. of Children Young People	No. of Placements	% of Placements	
EHC Plan	16	24	(66.6%)	
Social, Emotional, Mental Health Needs	17	24	(70.8%)	
Autistic Spectrum Disorder	1	24	(4.2%)	
Moderate Learning Difficulty	4	24	(16.6%)	
Specific Learning Difficulty	1	24	(4.2%)	
Speech, Language & Communication Needs	7	24	(29.1%)	
Visual Impairment	0	24	0%	

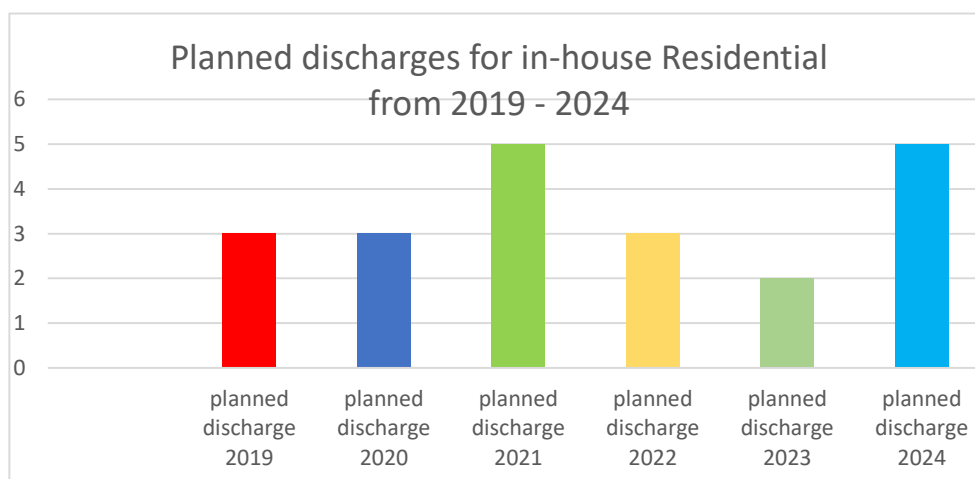
Analysis

- Most young people currently within in-house residential placements are male although this has reduced over the past year (58%).
- 45.8% of children and young people living in in-house residential provision are aged 11-15 years.
- 66.7% of children and young people currently accommodated within in-house residential provision have been residing there for between 13 months and 3 years.
- Many young people come into residential care after a foster placement has broken down, sometimes multiple foster care breakdowns, and the trend is that they will then remain in a residential setting until moving on to independence.
- Given the long-term nature of placements, there is limited in-house provision. The appropriate matching with current young people already living in the homes is an overriding factor in determining the suitability of in-house provision when vacancies do become available.
- 16 young people currently in placement have an education, health and care plan (66.6%).
- 70.8% of young people have social, emotional, mental health needs (SEMH), which is the over-riding presenting need across the whole cohort.
- 1 young person (4.2%) has a specific learning difficulty and 4 young people (16.6%) have a moderate learning difficulty.
- 7 young people have speech, language and communication needs (29.1%).
- One young person has a clinical diagnosis of autism.

(iv) Future capacity within in-house residential provision

Graph 20 - Planned Discharge for current young people within in-house residential provision

Children who live at West Rainton are not included as the length that they will stay depends on their readiness to live within a family. This is usually between 6 – 18 months.



The table above provides an assumption that each young person will remain within in-house residential until they reach 18 years, however, work is ongoing to ensure that the young person's pathway plan is in place to support each young person into independence prior to reaching 18 years, when their assessed needs determine that they can step down into supported or semi-independent living provision.

Analysis

- All young people within in-house residential provision (excluding West Rainton, Park House and the Edge of Care provision) have a Pathway Plan from at least 16yrs which will identify a transition plan and the timescale for this.
- 41.6% of young people are aged 16 and 17. A total of 3 young people will turn 18 during 2019 and will exit their provision, moving into alternative living arrangements. This will create further vacancies for other young people who require residential care.
- A total of 3 young people have plans to leave the service during 2019, which will provide capacity within the service.
- Demand is dependent upon future looked after numbers, the complexities of these children and having the capacity to move young people who are in expensive external provision, back into Durham's own children's homes when it is in their interests to do so, in a planned way.
- Given the long-term nature of the placements and the limitations in utilising all available placements due to the complexity of some young people, this provides little opportunity to accommodate further young people within in-house provision and offers limited flexibility to move children to another home if a situation arises.

(v) Gaps in provision

Respite / Assessment - Residential Offer

An increasing number of children and young people who are on the edge of care are presenting on an emergency basis as their family struggle to manage their complex, challenging and risk-taking behaviours.

There is currently no in-house provision which offers planned and short-term residential respite to children and young people, which enables children to continue being cared for by their families, offers a much-needed break to families when this is needed and undertakes planned direct work with families, offering support and advice.

Whilst our edge of care service is able to offer overnight emergency accommodation and care to a child or young person, with a view to supporting the family to enable the child to return home, this does not offer ongoing, planned respite to a child or young person and their family, who is assessed as needing this type of intervention.

New service development in this area would help to prevent children and young people entering looked after services on a long-term basis, provide an improved offer for children requiring a short-term bridging arrangement and would significantly reduce the likelihood of the Authority having to make a

temporary unregulated placement, at short notice, given the limited emergency placement options available within the provider market.

A review of in-house residential provision, alongside external provision, is planned to take place between July – November 2019. This will consider the current model of provision, take into account national best practice, consider gaps in the service where needs are not being met, identify service development and implement this to address gaps and understand how the BERRI tool will provide an evidence based platform for capturing the progress of children and young people which will result in improved outcomes for complex children and young people.

Enhancing our offer for children and young people with complex behaviours

Given the increasing number of children and young people with complex behaviours and the challenges we face in securing regulated provision in smaller settings from the external market, we are in the process of developing a new home in the east of the county. This will be registered for up to 3 young people, however given the needs of some young people and the risks they present, may support fewer young people at a time. This will provide greater capacity within the Residential Service and the ability to meet our sufficiency needs for our most complex young people.

Given the apparent gap in the market for smaller, regulated provision (particularly for those young people that we have difficulties matching alongside other young people) we are also working with an external provider to develop small children's homes for up to 2 young people. One home opened in April 2019 and a further home is planned to open later in the 2019. This provision is an extension of our in-house service which will be offered exclusively to Durham children and young people, through a contracted arrangement.

Re-provision of our home located in Aycliffe (Cedar Home)

There is a need to relocate our Cedar House Home (4 beds) in Aycliffe. The site has been earmarked for development. The intention is to re-provide 2 x 3 bedded homes within the county (rather than one home), whereby creating two further beds.

9b. External Residential Provision

(i) Usage and Commissioning Arrangements

During 2017/18 a total of 28 externally commissioned residential placements (including residential schools) were made, in comparison to 45 placements made in 2018/19 where the needs of these young people could not be met by in-house residential provision which may be due to their age, level of needs, required education provision, matching requirements, level of risk or lack of in-house capacity. Of the 28 placements, 22 were made within a mixed setting i.e. more than one child within the establishment in 2017/18, in comparison to 45 placements in 2018/19 of which 30 were made in a mixed setting and 15 were made as a solo placement. This highlights the increasing demand for

solo or smaller homes for children and young people whose complex behaviours and level of risk make it difficult to be accommodated in a mixed setting.

Durham's agreed route to seek external residential provision is through the new regional flexible solution called the NE12 Consortia Framework which commenced on the 1st February 2018. This enables the Authority to purchase non-maintained special school placements, children's residential home placements and short break overnight provision for children and young people from independent providers.

Given demand for children's residential home provision across the region, availability within the external market continues to be unpredictable. When a placement cannot be secured through the Framework, off-framework residential providers are approached.

NE12 Local Authority's across the region are working collaboratively at a senior level to consider the following areas and the wider impact on commissioning residential placements:

- Edge of care services and prevention
- Practice and placement arrangements
- Work with residential providers – placements, costs and consideration of BERRI

(ii) Profile of young people

Table 21 - Profile of young people in external residential provision and 52-week education and residential provision in 2017-18 and 2018-19

Gender	End of Year Position	Female		Male	
	2017-18	6 (21%)		22 (79%)	
	2018-19	11 (27%)		30 (73%)	
Duration of time spent in External Provision	End of Year Position	Less than 12 months	13mths - 3 years	Over 3 years	
	2017-18	14 (50%)	10 (35%)	4 (15%)	
	2018-19	19 (54%)	11 (31%)	5 (15%)	
Age Cohort	End of Year Position	10 Years and under	11 - 15 years	16 - 17 years	18+
	2017-18	4 (14%)	17 (60%)	6 (21%)	1 (5%)
	2018-19	4 (10%)	19 (46%)	12 (29%)	6 (15%)
Type of provision	End of Year Position	52-week education and residential placements	Residential placements only		
	2017-18	20 (71%)	8 (29%)		
	2018-19	17 (41%)	24 (59%)		

Analysis

- During 2018-19, there has been an increase in demand for residential placements with external providers, with 28 external placements made in 2017-18 and 45 placements made in 2018-19.
- There continues to be a higher proportion of males (73%) in external provision in 2018/19, in comparison to females (27%), indicating that we have a greater need for this provision in-house.
- We have an increasing number of young people aged 16+ in external residential provision, with 29% aged 16 and 17 and 15% aged 18+ at the end of 2018-19. It should be noted that those aged 18+ attend 52-week education and residential provision and have specialist educational needs.
- Whilst the number of children and young people attending 52-week education and residential provision has remained relatively stable across 2017-18 and 2018-19, the number of residential only placements has increased quite significantly from 8 to 24. These children and young people could not be accommodated within in-house provision either due to their presentation / matching requirements or limited in-house capacity at the time at which the placement was required.
- There is limited in-house special school capacity within Durham to accommodate children and young people who have additional needs. This results in placements being made with independent 52-week special school providers.
- The inclusion, education and accommodation of children and young people with a learning disability and/or autism who have a mental health condition or display behaviour that challenges remain a key area of focus for Durham County Council and the broader Transforming Care Partnership.
- Children and young people displaying challenging behaviours are often at greater risk of social exclusion, institutionalisation, deprivation, physical harm, abuse, misdiagnosis, exposure to ineffective interventions, and failure to access evidence-based interventions. Poor outcomes are experienced not just by children themselves but also by their families. Families face an increased risk of physical and mental-ill health, physical injury, increased financial burdens, and reduced quality of life. This results in placements being made with independent 52-week special school providers.
- An increasing number of young people have sexual offences / behaviour / allegations made against them. Due to the risk these young people present they can on occasion require solo provision to minimise risk to themselves and other young people. This is often difficult to secure as there are a limited number of providers that offer this type of provision across the region. It is evident that there is a significant gap in the market for solo residential provision/smaller residential homes.

(iii) Location of Residential Placements

- 24% of external residential placements are located in County Durham; 61% are located in the North East and 39% are located outside of the North East.

(iv) Residential Provision – Findings

- Residential accommodation meets the needs of some of our children and young people with more complex needs and challenging behaviour who cannot live within fostering provision, but there are emerging gaps in provision and further need for service development.
- 70% of young people within in-house residential provision have social, emotional, mental health needs (SEMH). Given the complex behaviours of some of our young people and the need to operate with vacancies there is little flexibility to move children to another home should a situation arise.
- Given the emerging gaps in our residential provision and some of the challenges we have experienced as an Authority during 2018 in relation to securing appropriate regulated placements, it is now timely to review our in-house service, its functionality and to develop / reconfigure services to meet our changing needs.
- Demand for placements in the external market remains volatile with regional authorities all seeking similar placements. The Authority made 28 external residential placements in 2017/18, of which 71% were joint packages for care and education. In 2018-19 we made 45 external residential placements, of which 41% were joint packages of care and education.
- At the end of 2017-18 we had 8 residential only placements, at the same point in 2018-19 we had 24 residential only placements, clearly demonstrating a greater demand for residential provision during the year and the increasing complexities of our children and young people, who cannot be accommodated within foster care.
- The likelihood is if in-house residential provision had been available at least 50% of the young people currently placed in external provision would have been placed within in-house provision.

- There has been a greater demand for solo or smaller residential homes during 2018-19. Identifying appropriate placements for these young people has been difficult and has sometimes resulted in unregulated provision being made as a last resort, as there was no in-house residential provision and there was a significant gap within the external market, which also requires further development.
- There is insufficient residential provision both in-house and externally that meets the current and future needs of our looked after children and young people. As the demand for residential provision remains high, there is an urgent need to develop capacity to provide a broader and more flexible and accessible range of good quality residential provision, which ensures that the needs of some of our most challenging and complex children/young people are met.

(v) Action we will take

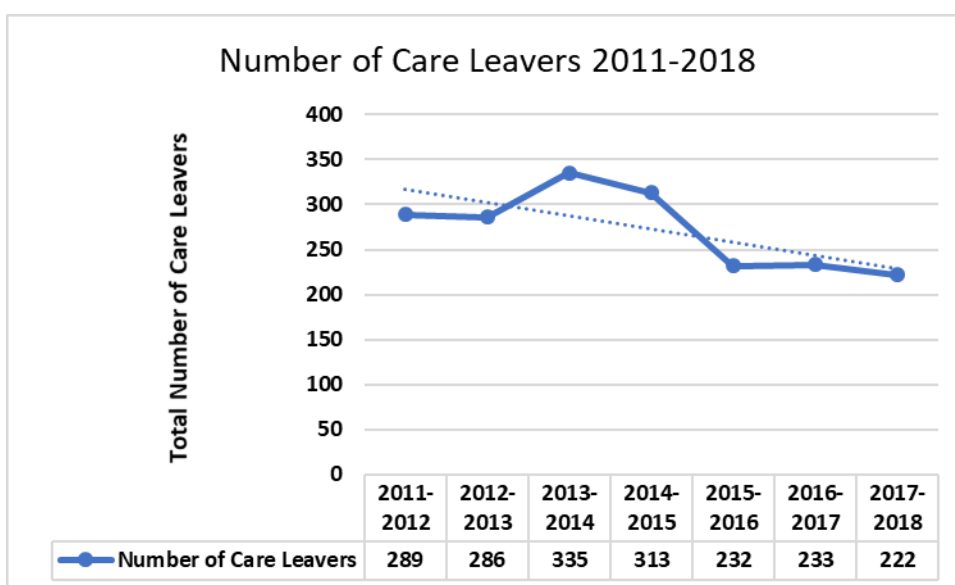
- We will review our in-house and external residential provision, identify gaps in provision, reconfigure services to meet need and create additional capacity where required to meet the needs of our children and young people now and in the future.
- We will re-provide our home based in Aycliffe.
- We will continue to develop a new smaller home in the east of the county and will continue to work with providers to develop improved options for solo residential provision / 2 bedded homes, which are both affordable and will meet our future needs.
- We will continue to work with residential providers through the NE12 Consortium.
- We will meet with providers prior to any planning applications, to ensure that their planned services are appropriate, will address our gaps in provision and will be accessible for Durham children and young people.
- We will develop more enhanced mainstream educational provision with an emphasis on early identification and the delivery of high-quality integrated interventions and support to both children, young people and families.
- In line with NICE guidance parents will be offered practical and emotional support and training targeted to their specific needs.
- Promote access to short breaks (when there is a need) and option to access direct payments to support children and young people and their families and to support family stability.

10. CARE LEAVERS

(i) Care Leaver Numbers

Between 2011-12 and 2017-18 Durham has seen a decrease in the number of care leavers that it supports. This downward trend is reflected in Graph 22.

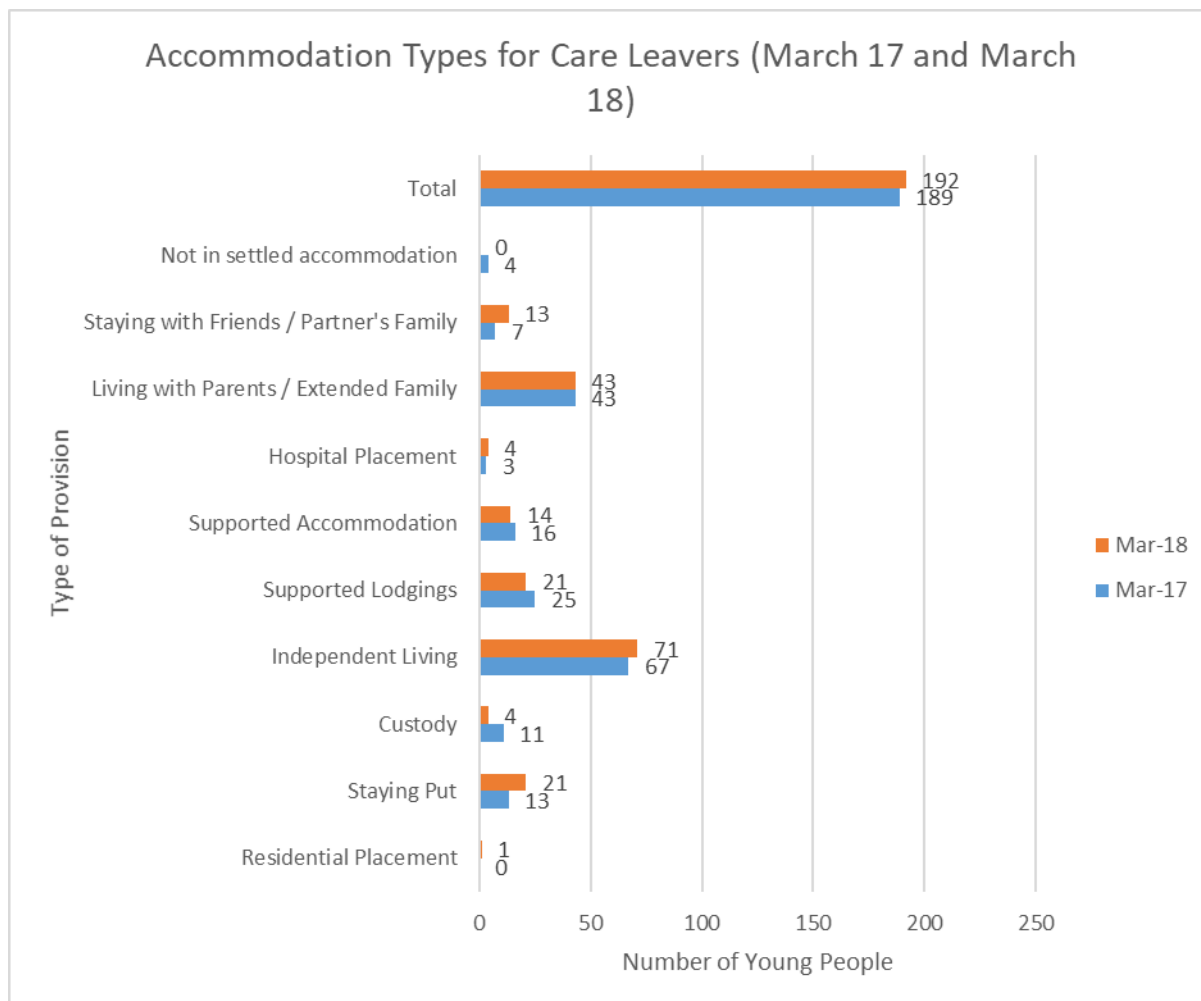
Graph 22 – Number of care leavers between 2011-12 and 2017-18



(ii) Accommodation Options

The Authority provides a range of 16+ accommodation options for care leavers. Accommodation and support options provided during 2017-18 are outlined in table 23. Information in relation to 2018-19 is not yet available due to the transfer of data to Liquid Logic.

Table 23 – Accommodation Options for care leavers



Analysis

- As of the 31st March 2018, Durham had 192 care leavers aged 16-25 with active cases, in comparison to 189 active cases in March 2017, which demonstrates that this cohort has been stable over the last 2 years.
- Care Leavers are able to access a variety of accommodation and support options dependent on their individual needs, with the majority of care leavers living in their own tenancy (37%).
- The second largest group of care leavers have returned home to live with their parents or extended family (22%).
- There are a growing number of young people moving into Staying Put arrangements when they reach 18 years old (11%) and fewer young people requiring accommodation following a period in custody in 2017/8 (2%), in comparison to 2016/17 (6%).
- There are 21 former relevant young people living in Supported Lodging provision. The number of young people living in this type of provision has steadily increased during 2017/18 and there is an ongoing recruitment campaign to attract new Supported Lodging providers.

(iii) Care Leaver Profiles

Analysis

- Of the 192 young people receiving active support in March 2018, the largest cohort are aged between 18 and 20 (66.6%). Only 2% are aged between 23 and 25 years old, suggesting that only a small number of care leavers feel the need to continue accessing support from the Authority after the age of 22 years at present. It is however, anticipated that this will change and increase, as awareness of the new legislation and authority's statutory responsibility to continue to offer support and services to care leavers post 21 up until 25 years old. This could result in a greater demand for accommodation support from Care Leavers and a direct financial impact on the Authority i.e. Care Leavers aged 22-25 years old who wish to access University.
- 49.4% of care leavers receiving support from the Authority are female and 50.6% are male.
- 43 care leavers accessing support live outside of County Durham (22%), with 78% of care leavers living in Durham. Care Leavers are able to access a range of accommodation and support options in County Durham. Those that live outside of the County is usually a choice that they have made, so they live closer to family or friends.

(iv) Suitability of Accommodation for Care Leavers

Table 23 – Percentage of Care Leavers in suitable accommodation

	Durham 2017-18	England Average 2017-18	Statistical Neighbour 2017-18
Aged 17-18	96%	84%	89%
Aged 19-21	87%	84%	89%

Analysis

- The Authority continues to work hard to ensure young people are accessing appropriate accommodation that is safe and suitable to their needs. The accommodation needs of care leavers are routinely monitored and recorded. Durham continues to have a high percentage of Care Leavers aged 17-18 (96%) in suitable accommodation, in comparison to both the England average and the statistical neighbour average.
- During 2017/18 48 emergency placements were accessed by Care Leavers (29 – unplanned supported lodgings; 16 – bed and breakfast; 3 – supported living).
- As an Authority we continue to adopt a zero-tolerance approach to the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for young people, however it has been necessary to access bed and breakfast provision on an emergency basis on 16 occasions during 2017/18. In the majority of cases, young people are placed into bed and breakfast provision due to their eviction from a previous placement or asked to leave by family at short notice. Bed and breakfast provision is only used as a stop-gap until alternative accommodation is secured.

- Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Protocol (CLASP) provide a multi-agency partnership to support a planned transition to independence. This protocol is designed to ensure the Young People's Service, the Housing Solutions Service and housing providers within County Durham work together to ensure that the accommodation and support needs of care leavers are met.

The benefits of the protocol lead to:

- early identification of accommodation and support needs
- clearer understanding of roles and responsibilities for workers, wider agencies and clients
- better working relationships between agencies
- best use of limited resources and time
- smoother transitions to independence
- young people accessing the most appropriate accommodation
- increased tenancy sustainability
- reduced homelessness presentations
- reduced repeat homelessness
- reduced risk of young people falling through the net.

It also outlines each agency's respective role and responsibilities to achieve successful transition to independence among this group of young people and aims to:

- ensure the effective discharge of corporate and statutory responsibilities between the Service, Strategic Housing Authorities and housing providers by jointly addressing the diverse accommodation and support needs of young people leaving care
- Support care leavers to achieve independent living

(v) Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

The Authority currently accommodates 11 UASC. The majority of young people are male and aged between 16-18 years. Many have experienced good parenting and a secure upbringing but require an intensive level of support initially. One-to-one tutoring is provided if their English is not at a level to allow them to access education. The majority of our UASC are accommodated and supported within in-house Supported Lodging provision and in IFA placements in neighbouring local authorities, where facilities and services are more able to meet their cultural and religious needs.

(vi) Young People with needs that challenge service

During 2018-19 the Young People's Service has worked with an increasing number of young people whose needs cannot be met by universal supported living services. Bespoke packages of accommodation and support have been commissioned which are often very costly. Young people who have required this type of provision, often require single occupancy living due to the risks that they present to other young people. This cohort of young people have a mixture of the following presentations:

- Bail conditions / License Conditions / Remand
- Levels of high risk within their risk assessment
- Sexualised behaviour
- Repeat placement breakdowns
- Step down from Youth Offending Institute / Secure Home
- Substance misuse
- Continual damage to property
- Limited engagement or buy-in to support services
- High number of missing episodes
- Violence and aggression towards staff and peers
- Manipulative and bullying behaviour
- Self-harm / poor mental health / transgender
- SEND – learning disability, autism

To enable the Authority to provide a menu of supported living provision that will meet the needs of young people aged 16+ who challenge services, a commissioning solution is being developed and will be operational at the end of September 2019.

(vii) Mental health

Children and young people who are looked after or who have been looked after, are more likely to have suffered trauma, adverse childhood experiences and attachment disorders, which contributes to poor emotional wellbeing and mental health.

During 2018 there has been an increasing number of young people aged 16+ who have been admitted to Tier 4 CAMHS hospital provision due to complex mental health needs and the risk that they present to themselves. Between 1st June 2018 and 1st June 2019 there were 226 incidents involving a child or young person (looked after, care order, or child protection plan) that presented to the CAMHS crisis team. Of these children and young people, 126 were seen in Accident and Emergency Departments at hospital and 72 were re-attendees in the last year.

To prevent young people with complex mental health needs from being admitted to Tier 4 hospital provision and to support the timely discharge of young people from hospital into the community, an improved accommodation and support offer needs to be available. Whilst there are a range of providers in Durham that are able to support adults with complex mental health needs, in a supported living arrangement, there is a limited offer for young people aged 16 and 17. Work is therefore ongoing with the CCG to explore service development to address this gap in provision.

(viii) Care Leavers – Findings

- Durham continues to have a high percentage of Care Leavers aged 17-18 (96%) in suitable accommodation, in comparison to both the England average and the statistical neighbour average.
- We have a range of universal accommodation and support options for Care Leavers, dependent on their individual needs.
- During 2018 we have been working with a number of other providers to improve our accommodation and support options for young people aged 16+ who have needs that challenge services. We want to standardise our approach to purchasing this type of provision and offer an improved menu of provision for young people.
- We want to improve our supported living offer, particularly for young people who have complex mental health needs.
- New legislation in April 2018 meaning that all Local Authorities have a responsibility to continue offering support and accommodation to Care Leavers post 21 to 25 years, could result in greater demand for accommodation and support and this is factored in to recruitment activity and commissioning plans.

(ix) Action we will take

- We will develop a robust marketing strategy to recruit Supported Lodging providers, setting a target of an additional 10 providers during 2018/19; In addition, working alongside North East Migration Partnership, a targeted recruitment campaign is being developed to recruit carers to place unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC).
- We will develop a menu of supported living provision that will meet the needs of young people aged 16+ who challenge services. A new commissioning solution will provide a consistent approach to securing services and will be operational at the end of September 2019.
- Develop a business case which results in an improved support and accommodation offer for young people with complex mental health needs aged 16, 17 and through transitions.

11. CONCLUSION

The aim of this Strategy is to ensure that children and young people in care live in stable, high quality settings, where their needs can be met and their outcomes improved, enabling them to return home where this is in their best interests.

As corporate parent, the whole Council has a role to play to improve the outcomes for Durham's looked after children and care leavers. This Strategy and the delivery of its outcomes form just one part of our overall approach to supporting looked after children and care leavers and those on the edge of care and should be read in conjunction with other local strategies for children and families in need of support and protection.

12. OBJECTIVES

Based on the analysis of the needs of looked after children and care leavers, an understanding of the market locally and a range of research, six main objectives have been identified within this Strategy to contribute to achieving the authority's sufficiency duty and meeting the best possible outcomes for children and young people.

The six objectives set out in Appendix 2 of the Strategy and will shape the activities, we as an authority believe will best deliver this outcome. As we make progress with these objectives, we will achieve the quality, sufficiency and value for money we need in order to achieve the best for children and young people in County Durham.

13. INDICATORS

A range of 'Indicators' have been identified and will be reviewed on a 6-monthly basis, to help inform and assess the Authority's effectiveness in delivering its overall sufficiency duty.

These are set out in the table below.

1.	Number of unplanned placement endings
2.	Percentage of CLA with 3 or more placements during the year
3.	Percentage of CLA continuously for 2.5 years or more aged under 16 who were living in the same placement for at least 2 years
4.	Percentage of care leavers living in suitable accommodation
5.	Number of unregulated placements made
6.	Number of out of county placements made
7.	Number of children adopted
8.	Percentage of children and young people with a plan of permanence
9.	Number of children and young people living with their family that are in receipt of respite
10.	Number of children and young people in IFA placements
11.	Number of children and young people in external residential and education placements
12.	Number of delayed discharges from a tier 4 hospital setting

APPENDIX 1

STRATEGIC NEEDS ANALYSIS

STRATEGIC NEEDS ANALYSIS

Durham's Population

Between 2016-2026, the county's population is predicted to increase by 4.2% (rising to 544,000), and by 7.5% (rising to 561,600) over the next twenty years (2016-2036). The number of children aged 0 to 15 is also predicted to rise by 5.5% (to 94,100 children) over the next ten years (increase by 6.8% over the next twenty years/rising to 95,300).

Historically, the county has had a low ethnic population which increased slowly from 1.0% (5,100 people) in 2001 to 1.8% (9,500 people) in 2011. Work around using administrative data to support the 2021 Census suggests that the ethnic population in the county has fallen slightly and may in part be due to economic change and uncertainty around Brexit. However, the main contributing factor to changes in the ethnic population of the county is due to the expansion of Durham University as the majority of people from ethnic minority populations are students.

Since 2010 the number of births in the county has steadily fallen from 5,846 to 5,320. This trend may continue as recent ONS population estimates have indicated a fall in the number of children aged under 18 between 2001 and 2016 (a fall of 5.8% / 6,200 fewer children) which will feed into a lower number of women of child bearing age.

Durham's Looked After Population

Durham County Council has seen a 20.3% increase in the number of looked after children between March 2016 and March 2019. This has presented many challenges for services across the Authority, particularly in relation to ensuring a sufficient number and range of placement types to meet the individual needs of children and young people.

Table 1 below identifies the increasing trend of children and young people being cared for by the Authority. Whilst the looked after population has stabilised in terms of the overall number throughout 2018-19, the total number continues to remain high.

Table 1 – Looked After Numbers between 2016-2019

	March 2016	March 2017	March 2018	March 2019
LAC rate per 10,000 population	66.6	80.8	79.3	82.9
Number of LAC	668	810	795	839

Durham's number of looked after children (as at 31 March 2019) remains below the regional and statistical neighbour rates (as of 31 March 2017), but higher than the national average and this is outlined in table 2 below. (Further comparisons with will be undertaken following submission of national data for 2017/18.) need update info, so analysis statement can be made.

Table 2 – Looked After Numbers - Comparative Data

Benchmark data - nearest statistical neighbour average	Benchmark data - north east average	Benchmark data - England average	Durham - Quarter 4 (Actual)	Quarter 4 Actual Source Date
87.5 (31 March 2017)	92 (31 March 2017)	62 (31 March 2017)	79.6 (31 March 2017)	At 31st March 2018
90 (31 March 2018)	95 (31 March 2018)	64 (31 March 2018)	82.9 (31 March 2018)	At 31 March 2019

Table 3 – Number of child in need episodes / sections 47s / children subject to a CP plan and trend position

	Durham						% Change 13-14 to 18-19
	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19*	
Children in need episodes at 31 March	3028	3745	3523	4097	3570	3787	20%
Number of Section 47s in the year	1072	934	930	1382	2102	Not available Not	
Children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31 March	453	377	350	498	496	431	-5%

*Provisional data

- Between 2013-14 and 2018-19 there has been a 20% in the number of children in need episodes.
- Durham has experienced a 49% increase in the number of section 47 assessments carried out, which is an extensive and comprehensive enquiry into a children or young person's welfare, over the last 6 years.
- Whilst the number of children subject of a child protection plan peaked in 2016-17 at 498, this has gradually reduced to 431 in 2018-19.

Table 4a – Number of Children Looked After Age Profile (31 March 2019)

CLA Age	Length of time in care					Grand Total
	0-6 months	6-12 months	1-2 years	2-5 years	5+ years	
under 1	25%	25%	0%	0%	0%	7%
1-4	28%	28%	50%	11%	0%	20%
5-9	20%	21%	25%	32%	8%	21%
10-15	18%	21%	20%	41%	64%	37%
16-17	8%	5%	6%	15%	28%	14%
Grand Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 4b - % of Children Looked After Age Profile (31 March 2019)

CLA Age	Length of time in care					Grand Total
	0-6 months	6-12 months	1-2 years	2-5 years	5+ years	
under 1	34	27	0	0	0	61
1-4	38	30	78	24	0	170
5-9	27	23	39	68	18	175
10-15	24	23	31	86	142	306
16-17	11	5	9	32	63	120
Grand Total	134	108	157	210	223	832

Analysis

- The largest group of looked after children are aged between 10-15 years (37%), with 64% of 10-15 year olds being looked after for 5+ years.
- Further analysis of the 10-15 year old age group highlights that there is a larger number of 10-12 year olds who are remaining within looked after services.
- 9% of the overall LAC cohort are aged under 1 year which is higher than statistical and England averages.

Graph 5 – Placement Mix (29 March 2019)

Care Provider Classification	Number	%
In House Foster Care	408	49%
Friends and Family	137	16%
IFA	120	14%
Placed with Parents	64	8%
In House Residential (incl. Children's homes)	33	4%
External Residential (incl. children's homes and res school)	27	3%
Placed for Adoption	26	3%
Independent Living (incl. Supported Lodgings)	23	3%
Secure (incl. YOI and prisons)	1	0%
TOTAL	839	100%

Analysis

The table above identifies the range of placement types that Durham's children looked after and young people are placed in:

- The majority of our looked after children and young people are in foster care (63%), a total of 49% with in-house foster carers and 14% with independent fostering agencies (in comparison to 17% in IFAs in March 2019).
- The second largest group of children and young people (16%) live with family and friends.
- 7% of our children and young people are in residential care, which is an identical position in the previous year (3% external provision and 4% in-house provision).

Table 6 – Placement Stability

<i>Measure</i>	<i>2016/17</i>	<i>2017/18</i>	<i>2018/19 PROVISIONAL</i>	<i>England</i>	<i>North East</i>	<i>Stat Neighbour</i>
Percentage of CLA with 3 or more placements during the year	6.1% [50 of 814]	8.3% [66 of 800]	6.9% [58 of 839]	10%	9%	10%
Percentage of CLA continuously for 2.5 years or more aged under 16 who were living in the same placement for at least 2 years	72.6	69.3% [187 of 270]	86.6% [297 of 342]	70%	73%	71%

Analysis

- As of 31 March 2019, 6.9% of children looked after and young people experienced 3 or more placement moves. This is a reduction from the previous year, with 8.3% of children looked after with 3 or more placement moves during the year. We recognise that placement sufficiency and placement choice are key factors in supporting and improving placement stability.
- The number of children looked after continuously for 2.5 years or more, aged under 16 and who were living in the same placement for at least 2 years has also increased in 2018/19 to 86.6%, in comparison to 69.3% in 2017/18.
- Placement instability causes disruption to the young person, results in poor outcomes and the tendency to require expensive placements to be sourced at short notice. The comparative data set out in the above suggests that Durham is performing better than other regional local authorities, statistical neighbours and the England average.

Table 7a - Age of Children/Young people entering care between 2013-14 and 2017-18 (numbers)

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Age: under 1	87	84	75	100	118
Age: 1 -4	59	61	76	116	83
Age: 5-9	43	55	70	109	67
Age: 10-15	48	41	71	96	65
Age: 16+	16	17	15	19	22

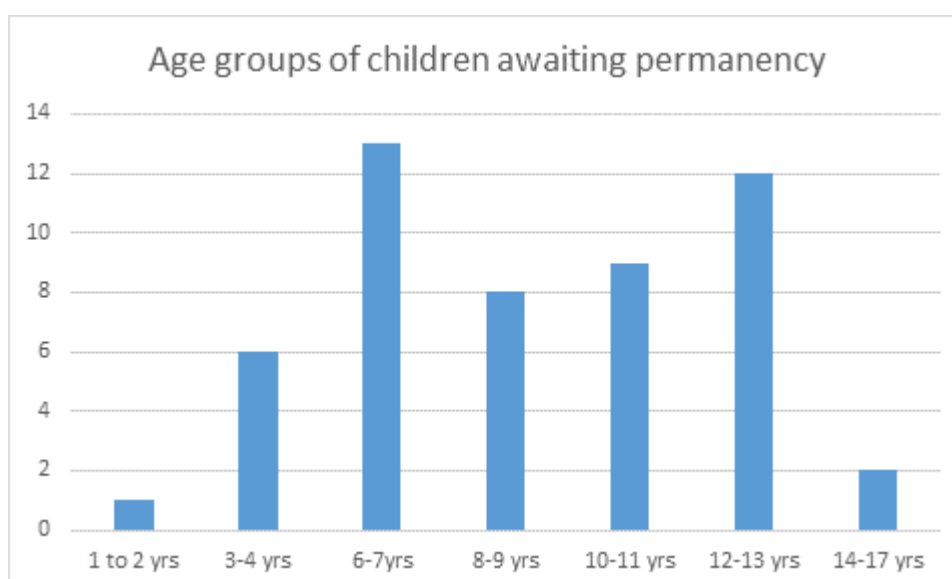
Table 7b - Age of Children/Young people entering care between 2013-14 and 2017-18 (%)

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
% Age: under 1	23%	31%	25%	23%	33%
% Age: 1-4	23%	23%	25%	26%	23%
% Age: 5-9	17%	20%	23%	25%	19%
% Age 10-15	17%	20%	23%	25%	19%
% Age: 16+	18%	15%	23%	22%	18%

Analysis

- During 2017/18, 355 children and young people became looked after by the Authority.
- The largest group of children entering the care of the Authority were the under 1's, equating to 33% of all children entering care.
- 23% of children entering care are aged 1-4 years
- 19% of children entering care are aged 5-9 years
- At the age of 12 years there is a slight increase in the number of children entering the care of the Authority, which then stabilises and peaks again at the age of 16 years.

Table 8 - Profile of Children/Young People Awaiting Permanent Placements as of 31 March 2018 (awaiting 2018/19 DFE data)



Analysis

- 6.5% (51) of looked after children/young people are awaiting permanent placements as of 31st March 2018
- 14 % of children are aged under 4 years
- 41 % of children are aged 5-10 years
- 41 % of children are aged 11-13 years
- 4 % of children are aged 14+ years

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

- 15% (117) of looked after children/young people have an EHCP, of which 87 are in Durham Schools
- 15% (119) of looked after children/young people have SEN support, of which 99 are in Durham Schools
- Primary Needs are:
 - Social/Emotional/Mental Health (SEMH)
 - Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD)
 - Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD)

Table 8 – Reasons for children and young people coming into care during 2017/18 (awaiting 2018/19 DFE data)

Category	% accommodated
Absent Parenting	3.7%
Abuse or Neglect	82.5%
Childs Disability	0.8%
Family Dysfunction	4.5%
Family in Acute Stress	3.1%
Parental illness or disability	2%
Socially unacceptable behaviour	3.4%

- The overarching reason why children and young people were taken into the care of the Authority during 2017/18 was due to abuse or neglect (in 82.5% of cases).

Table 9 – Location of Children Looked After

		Durham	Statistical Neighbours	England	North East
		2017-18	2017-18	2017-18	2017-18
% Placed within 20 miles of the child's home	%	90	88	74	87
% Placed over 20 miles from the child's home	%	10	10	19	11
% where the distance from the child's home is not known or not recorded	%	x	3	7	2
% Placed within the local authority boundary	%	74	63	59	62

% Placed outside of the local authority boundary	%	26	37	41	38
% Placed within the local authority boundary and within 20 miles of the child's home	%	71	61	52	59
% Placed outside of the local authority boundary and within 20 miles of the child's home	%	19	25	22	28
% Placed within the local authority boundary and over 20 miles from the child's home	%	3	0	4	2
% Placed outside of the local authority boundary and over 20 miles from the child's home	%	7	8	15	9
% Placed within LA boundary where the distance from the child's home is not known or not recorded	%	x	0	3	1
% Placed outside LA boundary where the distance from the child's home is not known or not recorded	%	x	3	4	1
% Placed within LA boundary who were the responsibility of the internal local authority	%	57	59	60	63
% Placed within LA boundary who were the responsibility of an external local authority	%	43	41	40	37

Overarching Key Objectives

APPENDIX 2

The table below captures the ‘key’ overarching actions as outlined in the body of the strategy.

No	Objective	Actions	Completed by
1	Support and strengthen Edge of Care provision/support offer	<p>To support young people to remain at home wherever possible and provide support to children, young people and their families at risk of entering care through our Supporting Solution Service.</p> <p>To commission and implement a new ‘support, outreach, respite’ offer which can be accessed by families on the edge of care when there is an identified need.</p> <p>As part of the Residential Review, consider how children, young people and their families can be further supported through the development of a new service which offers planned respite in a regulated home setting and prevents children and young people from becoming looked after.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>October 2019</p> <p>November 2019</p>
2	Grow Number of In-house Foster Carers	<p>To develop a robust Marketing & Recruitment Strategy, setting a net target to recruit 25/30 foster carers to reduce the dependency on IFA provision and provide greater choice of in-house foster care provision.</p> <p>To focus on targeted recruit campaigns to recruit foster carers with a preference for the older age group 11-17 years, managing children/young people with complex needs and challenging behaviour and offering permanent placements.</p>	<p>August 2019</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

3	Increase Number of Adopters	<p>To develop a robust marketing and recruitment plan with a key focus on seeking adopters for older children, sibling groups and children with disabilities to increase the number of adopters and reduce the need for inter-agency adopters.</p> <p>To work in partnership with Together for Children and Cumbria Council to develop and roll out the 'Coast to Coast' regional adoption agency which will be hosted by Cumbria County Council.</p>	<p>August 2019</p> <p>April 2020</p>
4	Develop In-House/External Residential Capacity	<p>To review our residential offer, considering both in-house and external provision, gaps in provision and how gaps can be addressed by reconfiguring services and creating additional capacity to meet the needs of our children and young people.</p> <p>Continue to develop a new home in the east of the County.</p> <p>Re-provide our home currently located in Aycliffe.</p>	<p>November 2019</p> <p>November 2019</p> <p>November 2019</p>
5	Improve how we commission placements from the market	<p>To work in partnership with external providers to develop and shape the market to ensure the most appropriate and value for money placements are accessible.</p> <p>To continue to play an integral role in both the continued development of the IFA and Residential Frameworks, with a view to creating additional capacity within the market.</p> <p>Consider the BERRI model for capturing progress and outcomes for all residential placements, as part of a regional piece of work and the Residential Review.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>November 2019</p>
6	Develop access to a diverse range of appropriate	<p>To develop a new commissioning solution which enables us to purchase a range of accommodation and support options for our most complex young people aged 16+.</p>	<p>October 2019</p>

	accommodation for Care Leavers	Develop a business case which results in an improved support and accommodation offer for young people with complex mental health needs aged 16, 17 and through transitions.	October 2019
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For further information contact:

AHS.Commissioning@durham.gov.uk

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altformat.CAS@durham.gov.uk
03000 261 381