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To: The Chair and Members of the Children's  
Scrutiny Committee

County Hall  
Topsham Road  
Exeter  
Devon  
EX2 4QD

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Date: 1 November 2021

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### **CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Tuesday, 9th November, 2021

A meeting of the Children's Scrutiny Committee is to be held on the above date at 10.30 am at Committee Suite - County Hall to consider the following matters.

Phil Norrey  
Chief Executive

### **A G E N D A**

#### **PART I - OPEN COMMITTEE**

- 1 Apologies
- 2 Minutes (Pages 1 - 6)  
Minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2021 (previously circulated) and the notes from the 11 October Standing Overview Group meeting, attached.
- 3 Items Requiring Urgent Attention  
Items which in the opinion of the Chair should be considered at the meeting as matters of urgency.
- 4 Public Participation  
Members of the public may make representations/presentations on any substantive matter listed in the published agenda for this meeting, as set out hereunder, relating to a specific matter or an examination of services or facilities provided or to be provided.

## **MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION OR REVIEW**

### 5 Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

In accordance with previous practice, Scrutiny Committees are requested to review the list of forthcoming business and determine which items are to be included in the [Work Programme](#).

The Committee may also wish to review the content of the [Cabinet Forward Plan](#) and the Children's Services [Risk Register](#) to see if there are any specific items therein it might wish to explore further.

### 6 In-Year Budget Position (Pages 7 - 10)

Report of the Chief Officer for Children's Services (CS/21/17), attached.

### 7 Children's Services Performance Report (Pages 11 - 46)

Report of the Chief Officer for Children's Services covering Children's Social Care Performance and Children's Education Annual Report, attached.

### 8 Corporate Parenting Strategies (Pages 47 - 130)

Report of the Chief Officer for Children's Services covering Devon's Corporate Parenting Strategy 2022-2024 and Devon's Sufficiency Strategy 2022-2024, attached.

## **MATTERS FOR INFORMATION**

### 9 Information Previously Circulated

Below is a list of information previously circulated for Members, since the last meeting, relating to topical developments which have been or are currently being considered by this Scrutiny Committee.

- Recruitment & Retention Business Case (Children's Social Work) (10/09/21)
- SEND Written Statement of Action - Full Progress Update (13/10/21)

[Briefing notes](#)

## **PART II - ITEMS WHICH MAY BE TAKEN IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Nil

*Members are reminded that Part II Reports contain exempt information and should therefore be treated accordingly. They should not be disclosed or passed on to any other person(s). They need to be disposed of carefully and should be returned to the Democratic Services Officer at the conclusion of the meeting for disposal.*

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Members of the public may also use social media to report on proceedings.

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It is to be noted that Members of the Council must declare any interest they may have in any item to be considered at this meeting, prior to any discussion taking place on that item.

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### **Induction Loop available**





## Report of the Children's Scrutiny Committee Standing Overview Group of Monday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2021

### 1. Introduction

The Standing Overview Group of the Children's Scrutiny Committee meets regularly as an informal information sharing and member development session where issues are presented to the councillors to raise awareness and increase knowledge. The Standing Overview Group considers key updates and pertinent issues from across different services, with the aim of developing Members' knowledge, and bringing to the forefront any areas which may benefit from further scrutiny.

Any action points arising from the sessions are reported back to the next formal Committee meeting.

This report outlines the topic(s) covered at the meeting of Monday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2021, highlights the key points raised during discussion and details any agreed actions.

### 2. Recommendation

The Children's Scrutiny Committee accepts this report as an accurate record of the meeting and agrees the outlined actions raised during the discussion including any addition of the highlighted issues of concern to the future work programme.

### 3. Attendance

Children's Scrutiny Committee Members: Councillors Rob Hannaford (Chair), Philip Sanders (Vice Chair), Su Aves, Janet Bradford, Julian Brazil, Phil Bullivant, George Gribble, Linda Hellyer, Frank Letch, Lois Samuel, Margaret Squires and Mrs Christina Mabin.

Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Schools: Councillor Andrew Leadbetter.

Children's Services Officers: Melissa Caslake (Chief Officer for Children's Services), Vivien Lines (Interim Head of Children's Social Care), Dawn Stabb (Head of Education and Learning), Victoria Bendle (Senior Policy and Executive support Officer), Julia Foster (Senior Manager - SEND), Rachel Nall (Principal Social Worker), Kate Jones (Team Manager, Permanency and Transition, Southern Locality), Claire Bagnall (Newly Qualified Social Worker, North Locality) and Nicholas Crippa (Early Help Review Senior Lead).

Special Advisor: Kevin Crompton

Scrutiny Officer: Charlie Fisher

### 4. Summary of Discussion and Actions

#### 4.1 Ofsted Improvement Plan Monitoring

Melissa Caslake, Chief Officer for Children's Services, and Vivien Lines, Interim Head of Children's Social Care, updated Members on the Ofsted Improvement Plan. Officers updated Members on the next stage of the Improvement Plan, which is now in its fourth stage. This plan related to the conditions of practice to enable high quality practice

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and better outcomes for children across the social care system. The improvement plan focused on delivering systemic improvements centred on four strategic priorities:

1. Voice and Influence of children, young people and families
2. A stable, highly skilled and permanent workforce
3. Work restoratively to support families to create sustainable changes that lead to good outcomes for children.
4. Effective management and leadership creating system-wide high ambitions and expectations for all children and young people.

The Phase 4 Improvement Plan gave details on these four strategic priorities, the service's vision, their outcomes and rationale and the 109 actions that will be implemented to achieve the vision. The report gave an overview of where the service currently rates its progress, some key achievements in recent months and some of the challenges at the time of the meeting. In addition, Members were sighted on a timeline of expected improvements from August 2021 to April 2023.

Officers reiterated to Members that the child is at the heart of everything the service does, and the service is focused on making a difference to children's lives.

Members welcomed this updated Improvement Plan and discussed the following with Officers:

- Members raised concerns with the Improvement Partnership Board's rigour and challenge and challenged the overall pace of improvement. Officers acknowledged these concerns and highlighted that the Chair of the Board has revised the terms of reference and is hoping to see stronger engagement from partners on the board. Officers stated that the journey from 'Inadequate' to 'Good' is not a quick fix and is a four-year plan, considering the Council has been 'Inadequate' for most of the last decade. Officers are focused on delivering systemic change which takes time to progress and to implement. An example was the recent Recruitment and Retention Business Case which invested £4m into the service, which took months of work to create and now needs to be successfully implemented.
- Members also questioned the differences between the Improvement Challenge Board and the Improvement Partnership Board and what the Improvement Challenge Board is currently telling us. Officers responded that the Challenge Board looks on a service level to drill into performance, track key indicators and compares performance across the four localities in Devon. It sits underneath the Improvement Partnership Board. In response to a question, Members and Officers discussed the effectiveness of the Improvement Partnership Board.
- Members asked officers more about the priority of ensuring the voice of children is heard. Officers responded that there is an action plan to ensure this but shared the view of the importance of hearing from children. The Participation team regularly work with children and the service is looking at how the service engages with Children. An example of responding to feedback from children was that Independent Reviewing Officers have started writing outcomes of review meetings in a child friendly letter, sent to the child, to connect with children in a different way.
- Members shared feedback on the Bridges Service, with comments stating it is "the best thing ever" but wanted to clarify the level of support given to families after 6 months. Officers were pleased to hear the feedback and commented that some families will need continue to need support after the 6 months working with Bridges.

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- Members asked officers if the 109 actions were feasible and if the service could achieve them all. Officers accepted that it was a long list, but each action was something that needed to happen
- When asked about future Ofsted inspections, Officers responded that a future monitoring visit is expected in January 2022 and could focus on our front door arrangements. Officers appraised Members of the current pressures on the service: caseloads are too high and pressure on staff to do their job plus all the extra improvement related work is high and there is inconsistency in the quality of management oversight and supervision. While the service will not be perfect by January, the service is expecting to receive comments on where the service have made progress such as permanent leadership team appointments, recruitment and retention investment and restorative practice developments.

Members and Officers referred to a future Performance Reporting 'Roundtable' Masterclass on 17<sup>th</sup> November which will look at enabling Members to make the best use of existing data and KPIs, most of which are either statutory reports to the Department for Education, or are required for regulatory inspections.

*Action: Scrutiny Officer to work with the Senior Policy and Executive Support Officer on ensuring Members hear from Children and Young People in their future work.*

## 4.2 Eclipse

Melissa Caslake, Chief Officer for Children's Services, and Vivien Lines, Interim Head of Children's Social Care, updated Members the Eclipse case management system for Social Workers.

Vivien Lines welcomed Members interest in the service on the topic and outlined the report. The report covered the background to the item, the financial considerations, an overview of the implementation of the system, feedback from practitioners of their experience and a detailed list of the planned improvements to the system. Overall, the Council has spent just over £1.7m on the system since 2016.

Rachel Nall (the Principal Social Worker), Kate Jones (Team Manager, Permanency and Transition, Southern Locality) and Claire Bagnall (Newly Qualified Social Worker, North Locality) shared their experiences of the system with Members. It is generally regarded as "clunky", but there have been recent improvements to the system and the support given to social workers to use the system has been improved. Staff have been and want to be involved in changes and suggest improvements to be made.

Member discussion points:

- Members raised concerns about the market share of OLM (the provider) and if OLM can support our needs in the future. Officers responded that the service is expecting OLM to continue to be a viable provider. While the system is not perfect, and no case management system is perfect, Officers would work with OLM to make improvements.
- Members asked about Eclipse's integration with other systems that the service uses and if the lack of integration in some areas is impeding social workers and missing information. Officers responded that there is work ongoing to improve integration with the MASH to get the whole of a child's journey on Eclipse.
- Members asked out the commissioning process and whether the Council got the product it originally asked for. Officers responded that there is a normal process of refining

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products and working with providers during and after implementing products. One of the recent improvements is to create a Joint Governance Board to oversee Eclipse and the improvements suggested.

- Members discussed with officers the technology currently available to Social Workers and the potential for tablets or digital devices to be piloted in the future to ensure efficient working. Practitioners who gave feedback to Members highlighted the advantages of using pen and paper to make notes to keep their attention on families and being able to go back through their notes and reflect on them before inputting them into the Eclipse system.
- Members discussed with officers the merit of process mapping the system to ensure efficiency and being able to remove duplication or steps to streamline working.

Members agreed with Officers on the need to continue to make improvements to the system, and understood their concerns that changing to a different provider/system would not be beneficial due to the cost and disruption this may cause.

*Action: The Chair and Vice Chair to discuss with the Cabinet Member ways to progress improvements, work with our digital transformation team and discuss extra capacity to allow for process mapping of the Eclipse system.*

NB Councillor Sanders chaired the meeting from this item onwards

## 4.2 SEND EHCP Timeliness and WSOA Update

Dawn Stabb, Head of Education and Learning, updated Members on Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) Timeliness and progress made on the Written Statement of Action (WSOA).

The accompanying report gave Members an overview of the recent history since the 2018 joint Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection of the local area. The report gave the history of EHCP timeliness on assessments and reviews since 2018, current action to improve timeliness, information on the quality of EHCPs, capacity of the SEN team and an update on the progress made on the WSOA.

The Head of Education and Learning confirmed that there is an imminent inspection from Ofsted on the progress made in the WSOA. Since 2018, and until the start of the pandemic, significant progress has been made on the WSOA and EHCP timeliness, however in recent months, the service has been facing significant challenges and a downward trend on EHCP timeliness. This is largely due to recruitment challenges for Education Psychologist (EP) as a result of national shortages, as their advice must be included on an EHCP it is affecting overall timeliness.

The Chief Officer and the Head of Education and Learning gave an overview of how Ofsted may view are progress. While officers will be showing Ofsted where the service has made progress, the service is expecting them to report that the Council has not made fast enough progress in all 4 areas. Since the 2018 inspection, the Department for Education (DfE) have been in regular contact with the service to support officers.

Member discussion points:

- Members asked for an update on Educational Psychologists shortages. Officers responded that there are recruitment challenges across the education market currently. The move to remote working has meant the market is not as attractive as it once was.

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Cost of living and affordable housing in Devon is also a factor in the diminishing number of applications received for jobs.

- In addition, Members asked about how Educational Psychologists are working more efficiently to process more EHCPs. Officers responded that work is under way to look at the format of reports, the quality of reports and working with professionals at schools.
- Members noted that EHCP timeliness had made great improvements in 2019 and 2020 (rising to 73% of plans issued on time in May 2020) but there was a downward trend currently, for reasons already explained. Members asked what else could help EHCP timeliness? Officers commented that timeliness from Social Care is at 88% for this month and Health has an annual average of 57% to date so Education Psychologists continue area which is affecting timeliness the most. The Council has an Action Plan to increase productivity and clear the back log, but this depended on the number of requests for assessment stabilising. There was a high number of requests (198) over the summer, when schools were closed.
- Members asked if the quality of EHCPs were improving and Officers were confident that their Quality Assurance work has improved quality. The feedback from parents indicated this. Officers reminded Members that there needs to be an understanding of quality not quantity over the information in EHCPs.
- Officers and Members discussed staffing arrangements for additional SEN staff, particularly those newly recruited on temporary contracts.

The Head of Education and Learning and the Vice Chair requested Members to read the WSOA Full Update to get a full understanding of the progress made in anticipation of the upcoming Ofsted visit.

*Action: Scrutiny Officer to circulate the WSOA Full Update to Members once it has been uploaded to the Council's website.*

## 5. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Children's Standing Overview Group is scheduled for Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2021.

The meeting began at 2.00pm and ended at 4.03pm

Councillor Rob Hannaford  
Chair, Children's Scrutiny Committee

Electoral Divisions: All

Contact for Enquiries: Charlie Fisher - [charlie.fisher@devon.gov.uk](mailto:charlie.fisher@devon.gov.uk) / 01392 383691

### Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

Background Paper	Date	File Reference
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CS/21/17

9 November 2021

Childrens Scrutiny Committee

## **In Year Budget Position – Children’s Services**

Report of the Chief Officer for Children’s Services

Recommendation: that the Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the service update and financial forecast as at month 6 (September).

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### **1. SUMMARY**

The report sets out the key budget issues for Children’s Services, identifies risks and actions to mitigate.

#### **1.1 KEY BUDGET ISSUES 2021/22**

As at September 2021 the forecast position for Children’s Services, including Public Health Nursing is an over spend of £43.3 million which includes the Dedicated Schools Grant deficit of £36 million.

The greatest cost pressures relate to the availability of suitable provision for children coming into care, the reliance on agency staff pending impact of the Recruitment and Retention Strategy and the SEND High Needs Block.

At the time of writing, the Dedicated Schools Grant is showing a deficit overspend of just over £36 million for this financial year after £2.8 million of management actions. This is a cumulative deficit of £85 million to March 2022. The Council (and Government) recognises the national context of rapidly escalating demand and a legal framework that drives demand without the corresponding investment.

The Government is yet to announce results of the SEND review that took place pre-pandemic. The risk for the Council is that national government decision making could leave Devon County Council holding responsibility to close at least part of the deficit/funding gap.

The Council, per DfE guidance for 2021/22, has put in place a management plan to set out its strategy to reduce the demand on the High Needs Block and over future years reduce the deficit within the Dedicated Schools Grant. In August the DfE and Council met to discuss the plan and has identified that although having the 12<sup>th</sup> highest percentage deficit to overall Dedicated Schools Grant of all Local Authorities it remains outside the next tranche of Authorities to discuss ‘Safety Valve Arrangements’.

In order to bring the Dedicated Schools Grant and in particular the High Needs Block within the funding envelope the plan should improve parent’s and young

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people's lived experience of Special Educational Needs (SEN) support in Devon. The plan aims to implement an integrated service, together with families, to ensure young people receive the right support at the right time. Meeting the child's need earlier and more effectively the authority should see a reduction in the demand for EHCPs.

Some of the Management Actions within the plan were expected to commence at the start of this financial year, however with the continued impact of COVID these have not progressed as originally intended and therefore slipped. In addition, the pressures on schools during COVID has seen the resources they would have used to support various strategies being fully committed to delivering the requirements of COVID secure education. The 0-25 team are continuing to see increased demands for children with SEND with requests at a high in July of nearly 200.

School transport continues to be an area of significant pressure due to marketplace failings driving up the costs above inflation and with the current pandemic it may place more pressure on contract providers in the long term. The current predicted overspend on the school transport budget for 2021-22 is £2.5 millions This budget sits within children's services but the operational delivery sits within Planning, Transport and Environment (PTE).

At month 6 Children's Social Care is forecast to overspend by just under £5 millions.

Operationally the staffing position remains challenging. However, Cabinet approved the Recruitment and Retention Strategy in September of this year and several measures, such as more competitive salaries for experienced social workers combined with a retention payment provide an immediate incentive. Following the summer period where the service was operating with 30 less qualified social workers than posts, we have reduced this down to 13 posts unfilled. The majority of this recruitment however is with agency staff at the present time. Additional senior manager capacity has been secured to focus on improvement and transformation including Early Help system review, Commissioning capacity and Corporate Parenting. Another positive development is confirmation from the DfE that our funding bid for transformation and improvement support has been successful and we expect formal notification shortly. The grant is worth £2.2 millions and will run from November 2021 to March 2023. The focus is on restorative practice and practice innovation.

The number of children in care has slightly reduced from a high of 840 down to just over 800. The greatest areas of concern continue to be the number and cost of children's placements. The Sufficiency Strategy 2022-2024 "Finding a place to call home" sets out the plan to address these issues.



Early intervention to prevent children entering care by the newly formed “Bridges” team (formerly known as “Edge of Care”) has contributed to the sustained reduction in care numbers. Quantifying cost avoidance is not an exact science, but based on current methodology, the impact of interventions to date could result in reduced costs of over £600,000 and this will grow as the service becomes ever more embedded.

The number of children in Special Guardianship arrangements continue to grow. Whilst this presents a pressure on this budget, it is a positive outcome for children who remain in the care of their extended family. This tends to have better outcomes for the children involved and has considerably lower financial costs than providing fostering or residential care for those children.

The budget for the Public Health Nursing Service is £10.5 million, of which £10.4 million is funded from the Public Health grant. The Service is forecast to underspend by £300,000 and whilst recruitment remains a nationally challenging issue, the vacancy position will improve in January when qualifying students will be recruited into permanent positions.

## **2. OPTIONS/ALTERNATIVES**

This paper is designed to set out the issues for Children’s Overview and Scrutiny, it isn’t making firm proposals at this stage, hence options and alternatives are still under active consideration.

## **3. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The vast majority of Children’s Services are statutory and those, where the associated costs are escalating and/or projected to increase most, are the most highly regulated. Should the Council want to consider any changes to services, the legal implications and risks will need to be very clearly spelled out.

## **4. EQUALITY CONSIDERATIONS**

Children’s Services are very strongly correlated to deprivation. The public sector duty to promote equality and eliminate inequality is fundamental. Any savings will need to consider the Council’s responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.

## **5. SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS**

Children’s Services has very significant pressures in SEND and in social care in relation to increased number of children in care and a higher cost placement mix. This reflects a national context where demand for children’s social care is increasing and cost pressures rising. This has recently been reported in the national press for Cornwall, and the LGA has said ‘Soaring demand to help safeguard children and funding pressures meant councils in England had to overspend on children’s social care budgets by £832 million in 2019/20, Local Government Association analysis shows.’ This was reported in June 2021.

The Guardian reported in August 2021 the following ‘Some local authorities are expected to overspend by up to £12m on children’s services this year, and

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leaders say they are “down to brass tacks” as they struggle to deal with the increase in demand.’ Examples given included Gateshead, Birmingham, North East Lincolnshire and Liverpool, all of whom were reporting significant cost increases due to numbers of children in care rising, cost of placements increasing, and social care demand soaring.

In June 2021 the LGA reported that 130 Councils (86%) overspent their children’s services budgets in 2019-20 and Cllr Antoinette Bramble, Chair of the LGA’s Children and Young People Board, said:

“Councils stand ready to work with government to ensure no child is left behind as we recover from the pandemic.

“The demand on children’s social care services is unsustainable. Councils have increased their budgets for children’s services by diverting funds from other areas but due to spiralling demand for support they are still overspending and fear this will continue as pent-up demand due to the pandemic becomes clearer.

“Supporting and protecting vulnerable children is one of the most important roles played by councils who want to ensure all children are safe, loved and thrive. It is vital that children’s services are fully funded to give children the right help at the right time, which includes providing the early intervention and prevention support that can stop children and families reaching crisis point in the first place.”

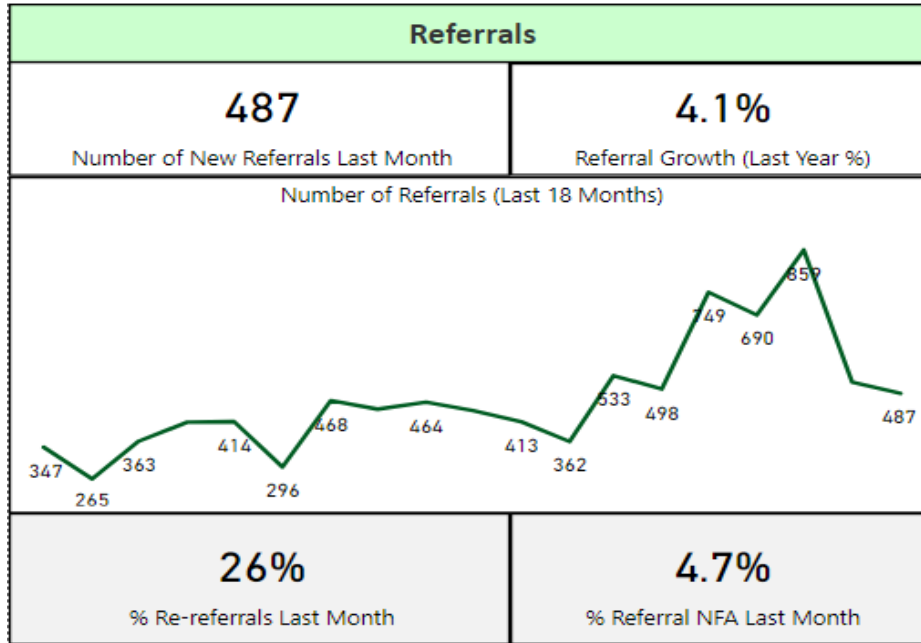
Melissa Caslake  
Chief Officer for Children’s Services

[Electoral Divisions: All]  
Cabinet Member for Children: Councillor Andrew Leadbetter  
Chief Officer for Children’s Services: Melissa Caslake

# Children's Social Care Performance

## Report for Children's Scrutiny Committee

October 2021



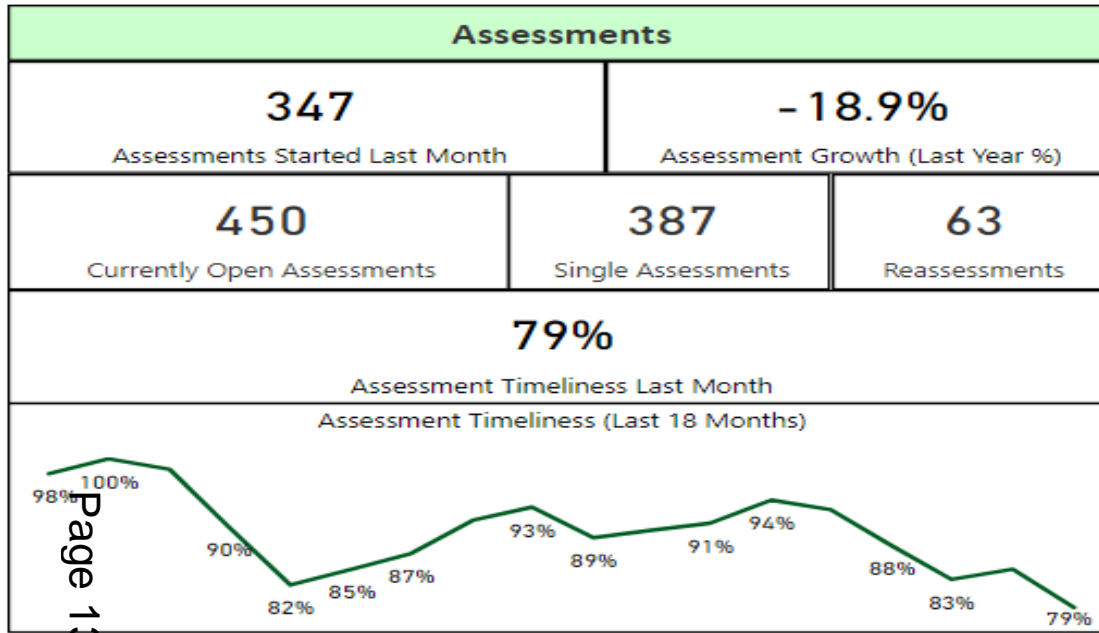
**Definition:** The majority of referrals relate to a professional contact to the MASH sharing concerns about a child, with the remainder being to the Disabled Children's Service's Single Point of Access. Members of the public can also make referrals. Referrals indicate that further information needs to be gathered to better understand the family's need for help or protection.

**Re-referrals** are the referrals we have received within 12 months of a previous referral. A re-referral could be an indication that the previous intervention did not fully address the concerns raised at that time or that support did not ensure changes were sustained.

**GOOD LAs:** have a re-referral rate of 19%

**Commentary;**

- We have seen a significant increase in the volume of referrals post pandemic, but a reduction since the start of this term
- This includes an increase in concerns relating to parental mental health, domestic violence and substance misuse
- In response, additional staffing has been agreed for the MASH
- We have established operational and strategic governance with key partners to ensure thresholds are applied correctly and appropriate services are provided in line with families needs
- Re-referrals relate to a number of factors including that the earlier help may not have been effective, partnership understanding of threshold for help and protection and previous help ending before changes were fully tested
- Work in response includes ensuring assessments are good quality to support needs being met when first identified and the early help system is effective in supporting change to be sustained.



**Definition;** Assessments are completed for children where concerns indicate they may be in need of support or protection to understand the concerns better and to inform the intervention plan if needed.

Reassessments are undertaken for children who are already open to children's social care as a minimum once every 12 months or when any significant change occurs in a child's life or to inform key decisions.

The appropriate timeframe for an assessment is agreed by the Team Manager, and assessments should usually be completed within 45 working days to ensure families needs are met in a timely way.

## Commentary;

- The increased volume of activity, workforce turnover and higher caseloads have impacted on assessment timeliness.
- Assessment timeliness and quality is a current priority for improvement, including ensuring children are seen and assessments are thorough and contain good analysis of the need for help or support.
- The number of children seen during their assessment has continued to improve
- We are working with managers to ensure their effective oversight, of a clear plan for the assessment and an effective review of the completed assessment so that all issues have been explored fully
- A high proportion of assessments do not lead to children's social care remaining involved. We are reviewing our early help offer to determine whether these needs could be better met without social care involvement.

| Type of Plan              | Children on Plan (Current Month) | Children on Plan - 18 Month Trend | Cohort Trend (Last Year %) | Current Visit Timeliness | Locality Visit Timeliness                                                                                                                                                             | Service Visit Timeliness |     |       |     |            |     |        |     |                                                                                                                                            |                           |     |                          |     |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----|-------|-----|------------|-----|--------|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----|--------------------------|-----|
| Child in Need Plan        | 686                              |                                   | 4.9%                       | 77%                      | <table border="1"> <tr><td>SOUTH</td><td>77%</td></tr> <tr><td>NORTH</td><td>59%</td></tr> <tr><td>MID &amp; EAST</td><td>58%</td></tr> <tr><td>EXETER</td><td>82%</td></tr> </table> | SOUTH                    | 77% | NORTH | 59% | MID & EAST | 58% | EXETER | 82% | <table border="1"> <tr><td>DISABLED CHILDREN SERVICE</td><td>67%</td></tr> <tr><td>SOCIAL WORKERS IN SCHOOL</td><td>74%</td></tr> </table> | DISABLED CHILDREN SERVICE | 67% | SOCIAL WORKERS IN SCHOOL | 74% |
| SOUTH                     | 77%                              |                                   |                            |                          |                                                                                                                                                                                       |                          |     |       |     |            |     |        |     |                                                                                                                                            |                           |     |                          |     |
| NORTH                     | 59%                              |                                   |                            |                          |                                                                                                                                                                                       |                          |     |       |     |            |     |        |     |                                                                                                                                            |                           |     |                          |     |
| MID & EAST                | 58%                              |                                   |                            |                          |                                                                                                                                                                                       |                          |     |       |     |            |     |        |     |                                                                                                                                            |                           |     |                          |     |
| EXETER                    | 82%                              |                                   |                            |                          |                                                                                                                                                                                       |                          |     |       |     |            |     |        |     |                                                                                                                                            |                           |     |                          |     |
| DISABLED CHILDREN SERVICE | 67%                              |                                   |                            |                          |                                                                                                                                                                                       |                          |     |       |     |            |     |        |     |                                                                                                                                            |                           |     |                          |     |
| SOCIAL WORKERS IN SCHOOL  | 74%                              |                                   |                            |                          |                                                                                                                                                                                       |                          |     |       |     |            |     |        |     |                                                                                                                                            |                           |     |                          |     |

### Definition:

A child is a 'child in need' if their health or development would be impaired without the provision of support. When a child is identified by assessment as a child in need, a plan is put together with all relevant professionals for how the family will be supported and changes made.

The child in need plan will set out how social workers will work with children & their families to achieve the outcomes needed, including how often the child will be seen, and is reviewed regularly by the Team Manager. We measure that children are seen at least every four weeks.

### Commentary:

- There has been a steady increase in the number of children in need open to a social worker adding to higher caseloads. We are currently reviewing whether some of these needs could have been better met through early help support.
- Higher caseloads and workforce turnover have impacted on the timeliness of visits and this is a current focus in all teams. This has been a particular issue in North and Mid and East where staff turnover has been greatest this summer but is now more stable in both localities.
- 18% of children currently with a CIN plan (124 children) are open to the Disabled Children's Service and more of these plans are open for longer given these children's more enduring needs.
- 12% of the children with a current CIN plan are subject to supervision orders
- 30 children have had a CIN plan for over 2 years and 66 children have had a CIN plan for between 1 & 2 years. These are monitored closely to ensure children's needs are being met.

## Child Protection Conferences (ICPC)

72

Number of ICPCs Last Month

24.1%

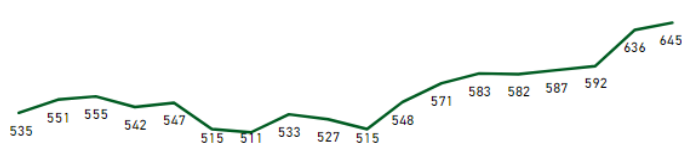
ICPC Growth (Last Year %)

85%

% ICPCs resulting in CP Plan Last Month

Child  
Protection  
Plan

645



**Definition:** Initial child protection conferences (ICPCs) are held for children judged to be experiencing or at risk of significant harm and where a multi-agency child protection plan may be needed to keep them safe. ICPCs should usually be held within 15 days of the decision to ensure partners have the opportunity to review the concerns together and the child protection plan is developed in a timely way. An ICPC brings together professionals working with the family to decide if the child is likely to suffer significant harm in the future and where needed a Child Protection Plan (CPP) is put in place. The child protection plan details the concerns that have resulted in the CPP, what needs to change for the child to make them safe and all intended outcomes.

## Commentary:

- We have seen a significant increase in child protection activity this year leading to a continued increase in the numbers of children on child protection plans.
- 85% of children subject to an Initial Child Protection Conference are made the subject of a child protection plan indicating that the threshold for holding the meeting is right and families are not being subjected to this unnecessarily.
- 50% of children are subject to a CPP for concerns about neglect, 35% for emotional abuse, 12% for physical abuse and 3% for sexual abuse.
- In the past six months, 22% of children subject to a CPP had been on a CPP before, slightly above good LAs (18%). We are ensuring support is provided to families when the plan ends to ensure changes are sustained, including from early help.
- Only 2% of child protection plans have been in place more than two years which is good practice to avoid drift for children.



| Type of Plan                         | Children on Plan (Current Month) | Cohort - 18 Month Trend                                                        | Cohort Trend (Last Year %)                  | Current Visit Timeliness | Locality Visit Timeliness                                                                                                                                                             | Service Visit Timeliness |     |            |     |       |     |       |     |                                                                                                                                                                                              |                     |     |                           |     |                          |     |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----|------------|-----|-------|-----|-------|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-----|---------------------------|-----|--------------------------|-----|
| Children in Care                     | 807                              | <p>754 777 791 802 811 826 830 841 829 816 821 813 823 821 800 808 804 807</p> | -2.3%                                       | 83%                      | <table border="1"> <tr><td>EXETER</td><td>93%</td></tr> <tr><td>MID &amp; EAST</td><td>90%</td></tr> <tr><td>NORTH</td><td>85%</td></tr> <tr><td>SOUTH</td><td>96%</td></tr> </table> | EXETER                   | 93% | MID & EAST | 90% | NORTH | 85% | SOUTH | 96% | <table border="1"> <tr><td>CORPORATE PARENTING</td><td>77%</td></tr> <tr><td>DISABLED CHILDREN SERVICE</td><td>91%</td></tr> <tr><td>SOCIAL WORKERS IN SCHOOL</td><td>91%</td></tr> </table> | CORPORATE PARENTING | 77% | DISABLED CHILDREN SERVICE | 91% | SOCIAL WORKERS IN SCHOOL | 91% |
| EXETER                               | 93%                              |                                                                                |                                             |                          |                                                                                                                                                                                       |                          |     |            |     |       |     |       |     |                                                                                                                                                                                              |                     |     |                           |     |                          |     |
| MID & EAST                           | 90%                              |                                                                                |                                             |                          |                                                                                                                                                                                       |                          |     |            |     |       |     |       |     |                                                                                                                                                                                              |                     |     |                           |     |                          |     |
| NORTH                                | 85%                              |                                                                                |                                             |                          |                                                                                                                                                                                       |                          |     |            |     |       |     |       |     |                                                                                                                                                                                              |                     |     |                           |     |                          |     |
| SOUTH                                | 96%                              |                                                                                |                                             |                          |                                                                                                                                                                                       |                          |     |            |     |       |     |       |     |                                                                                                                                                                                              |                     |     |                           |     |                          |     |
| CORPORATE PARENTING                  | 77%                              |                                                                                |                                             |                          |                                                                                                                                                                                       |                          |     |            |     |       |     |       |     |                                                                                                                                                                                              |                     |     |                           |     |                          |     |
| DISABLED CHILDREN SERVICE            | 91%                              |                                                                                |                                             |                          |                                                                                                                                                                                       |                          |     |            |     |       |     |       |     |                                                                                                                                                                                              |                     |     |                           |     |                          |     |
| SOCIAL WORKERS IN SCHOOL             | 91%                              |                                                                                |                                             |                          |                                                                                                                                                                                       |                          |     |            |     |       |     |       |     |                                                                                                                                                                                              |                     |     |                           |     |                          |     |
| Health Check Timeliness (Last Month) | 76%                              | <p>92% 91% 90% 91% 93% 92% 92% 92% 92% 93% 94% 94% 93% 90% 89% 84% 82% 76%</p> | Short Term Placement Stability (Last Month) | 12%                      | <p>12% 12% 11% 10% 11% 11% 11% 12% 13% 13% 12% 12% 12%</p>                                                                                                                            |                          |     |            |     |       |     |       |     |                                                                                                                                                                                              |                     |     |                           |     |                          |     |
| Dental Check Timeliness (Last Month) | 44%                              | <p>78% 77% 73% 68% 62% 57% 51% 48% 45% 43% 41% 45% 47% 48% 51% 50% 48% 44%</p> | Long Term Placement Stability (Last Month)  | 63%                      | <p>64% 66% 63% 61% 60% 60% 59% 61% 61% 62% 63%</p>                                                                                                                                    |                          |     |            |     |       |     |       |     |                                                                                                                                                                                              |                     |     |                           |     |                          |     |

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**Definitions:** When children come into our care, a Care Plan is developed and overseen by an Independent Reviewing Officer to ensure their stability and that their needs are met. Children in our care should be seen at a minimum of once every 6 weeks, however for children in stable, long term placements longer visit frequencies may be agreed.

All children should have an annual health assessment and dental check. Short term placement stability considers the percentage of children in care who have experienced 3 or more placements within the last 12 months. A lower percentage indicates instability for less children. Long term placement stability considers the percentage of children in care who have been looked after for at least 2 ½ years and been in the same placement for the last 2 years, a higher percentage indicates stability for more children.

**Commentary:**

- Our 'Bridges' edge of care service has helped to address rising numbers of children in care by supporting families and preventing adolescents from coming into care
- We are working to ensure children return home when changes have been made in their family, 34 children in long term care currently have a plan for reunification
- We are working closely with our Health partners to ensure dental checks are completed on time and address the backlog due to the pandemic.
- The revised Sufficiency Strategy sets out how we are developing the right provision to better provide stability for all children in care



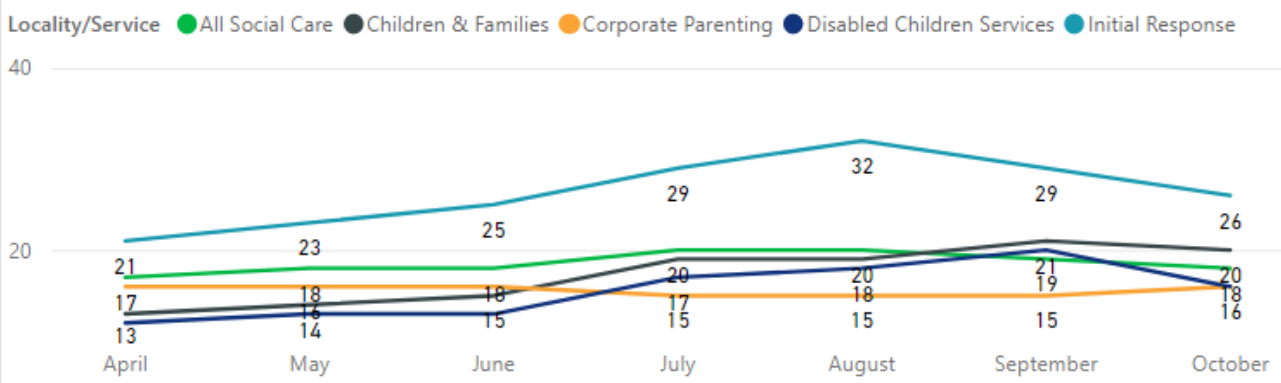
| Type of Plan                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Children on Plan (Current Month) | Cohort - 18 Month Trend                                                        | Cohort Trend (Last Year %) | Young People In Touch % | % in Education, Employment or Training                         |                                                |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Care Experienced                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 435                              | <p>438 437 443 453 462 466 462 463 457 437 424 438 439 436 433 435 438 435</p> | -6.7%                      | 92%                     | 50%<br>(Last Month)                                            | <p>47% 44% 43% 47% 44% 47% 45% 42% 50% 48%</p> |
| Number of Care Leavers currently living in Unsuitable Accommodation                                                                                                                                                            |                                  |                                                                                |                            |                         | % In Suitable Accommodation                                    |                                                |
| <p>9 7 7 5 5 3 2 1 1</p> <p>l) Emergency accommodation i) No fixed abode/homeless n) In custody a) With parents or relatives p) Other accommodation k) Independent living j) Foyers b) Community home c) Semi-independe...</p> |                                  |                                                                                |                            |                         | 81%<br>(Last Month)                                            |                                                |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                  |                                                                                |                            |                         | <p>87% 85% 83% 81% 82% 84% 82% 88% 84% 83% 81% 83% 82% 81%</p> |                                                |

**Definitions:** Children & young people who are or have been in care after their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday become 'care leavers' and are entitled to support from a Personal Advisor (PA) up to the age of 25. This support includes help with obtaining suitable accommodation and pursuing further education or training with the aim of being able to live a successful independent life. The details of how this will be achieved is set out in a Pathway plan. PAs should keep in touch with care experienced young people and remain informed with their progress. A high percentage of young people in touch with their PA's indicates that PAs are well informed of young people's current situation and are able to support them effectively. A high percentage of care experience young people in suitable accommodation and in education, employment or training is an indication of care leavers successfully making the transition to living independently.

**Commentary:**

- All eligible young people 16+ now have access to a Personal Adviser
- 80% of eligible young people have an up to date Pathway Plan
- Multi-disciplinary working has led to improved accommodation and outcomes for some young people with more complex needs
- Accommodation challenges for young people needing higher support included in the revised Sufficiency Strategy
- Access to apprenticeships and training is improving for younger care leavers.
- Four dedicated Education, Employment and Training worker are currently being appointed to improve expertise and support.

## Average Caseload by Month and Locality/Service

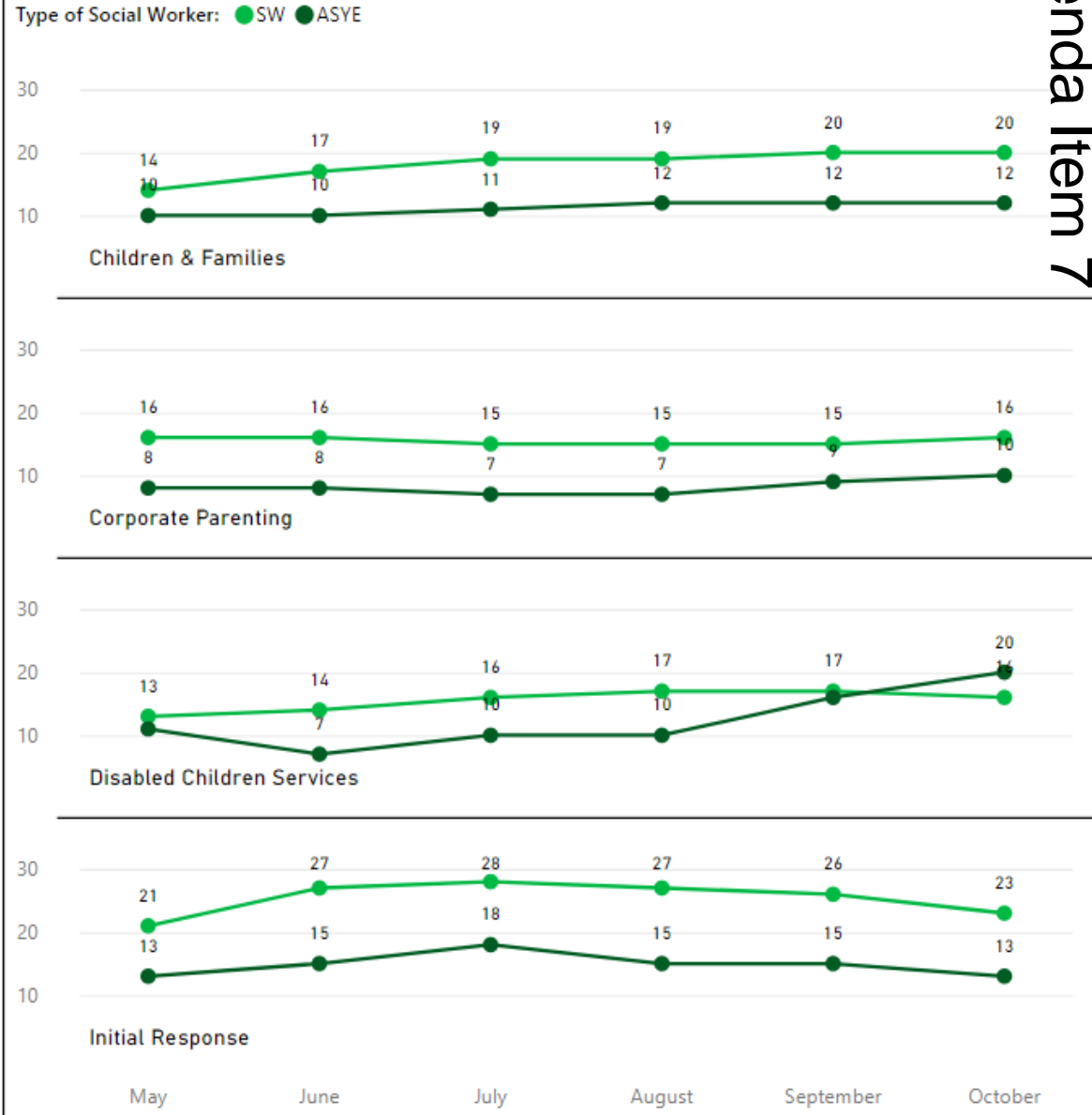


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| Month     | All Social Care | Children & Families | Corporate Parenting | Disabled Children Services | Initial Response |
|-----------|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| April     | 17              | 13                  | 16                  | 12                         | 21               |
| May       | 18              | 14                  | 16                  | 13                         | 23               |
| June      | 18              | 15                  | 16                  | 13                         | 25               |
| July      | 20              | 19                  | 15                  | 17                         | 29               |
| August    | 20              | 19                  | 15                  | 18                         | 32               |
| September | 19              | 21                  | 15                  | 20                         | 29               |
| October   | 18              | 20                  | 16                  | 16                         | 26               |

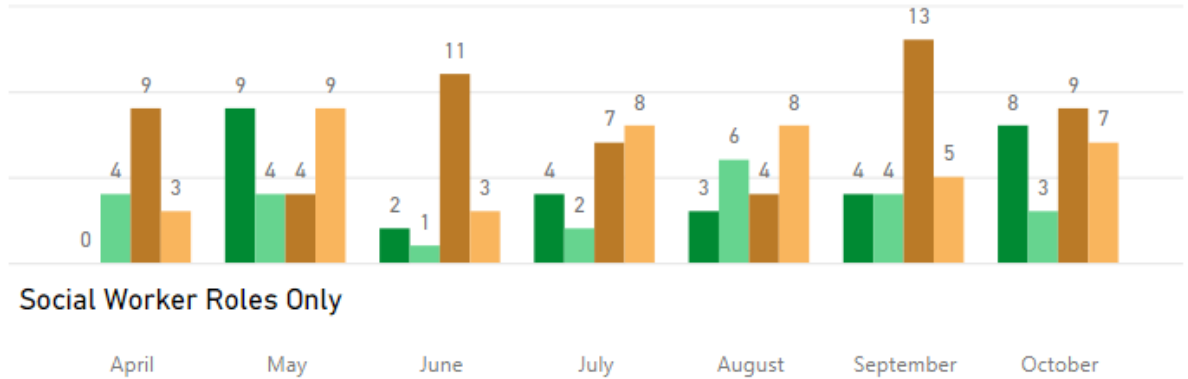
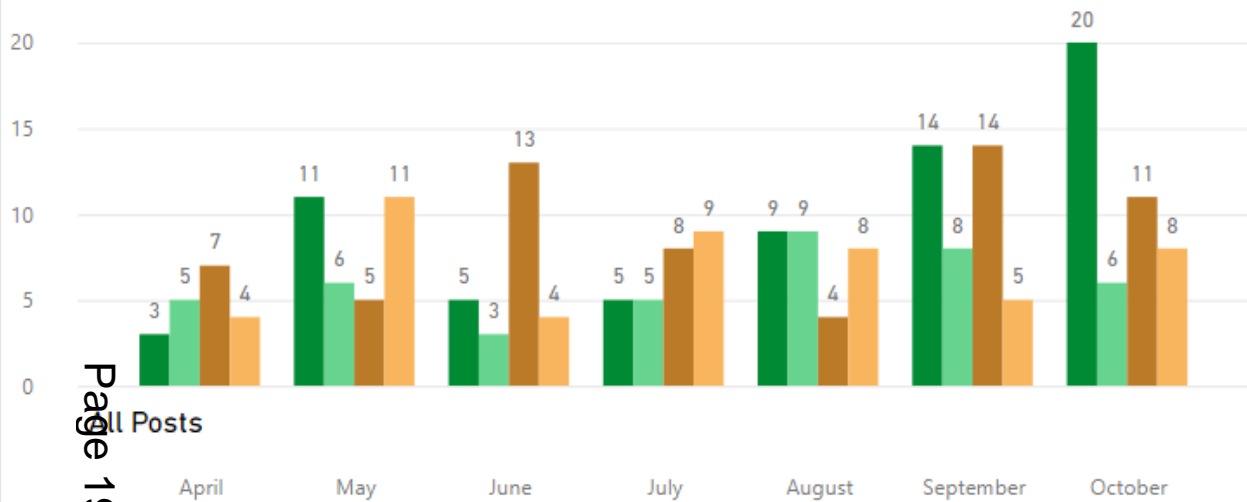
With the exception of P&T, all service areas saw an increase in average caseloads range over the summer as a result of increased demand and high SW vacancy levels and turnover in the service. As a result of improved recruitment impacting in Sept average caseloads are now beginning to reduce in our Initial Response Teams where there has been the most pressure.

## Average Caseloads by Service for Social Workers and ASYE's



## Starters & Leavers by Month

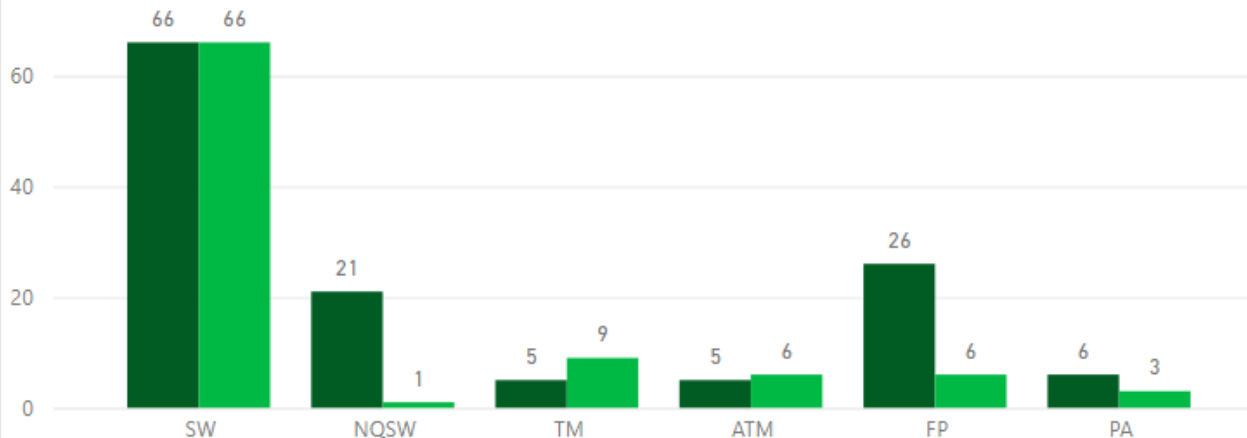
Contract Type ● Permanent Starter ● Permanent Leaver ● Agency Starter ● Agency Leaver



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## Total Starters & Leavers (Permanent & Agency)

Type ● Starter ● Leaver



| Role                            | TOTAL STAFFING SHORTFALL   |                                  |                                     | % Of staff Employment Status (in Post) |              |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|--------------|
|                                 | Budgeted FTE Establishment | Unfilled Vacancies (Perm & Temp) | % of Capacity Shortfall / Vacancies | Permanent                              | Agency       |
| Team Manager                    | 32.00                      | 2.50                             | 7.8%                                | 70.3%                                  | 40.6%        |
| Assistant Team Manager          | 14.00                      | 1.15                             | 8.2%                                | 84.6%                                  | 35.7%        |
| Social Worker (Exp & ASYE)      | 197.01                     | 36.05                            | 18.3%                               | 58.0%                                  | 36.5%        |
| Family Practitioner             | 67.81                      | 14.27                            | 21.0%                               | 91.6%                                  | 4.4%         |
| Personal Adviser (Care Leavers) | 33.81                      | 5.39                             | 15.9%                               | 88.2%                                  | 5.9%         |
| <b>GRAND TOTALS</b>             | <b>348.63</b>              | <b>63.36</b>                     | <b>18.2%</b>                        | <b>69.0%</b>                           | <b>27.2%</b> |

Agenda Item 7

## Headline findings Devon's second Practice Week took place 4-8th October

- The Chief Officer and Senior Management Team observed key meetings, shadowed practitioners in their work and audited children's records during the week
- Focus on practice at the 'Front-Door' of Children's Services
- Senior Managers reflected on the extremely high levels of complexity our practitioners are working with, and the impact of this on them
- MASH: children who are clearly at risk of harm are triaged and progressed in a timely way. However, children who require Early Help experience delay - in some examples up to three weeks. Increased workload and complex systems are contributing to this delay.
- Strategy Meetings: good practice was observed, however a clear area for improvement is for managers to provide much clearer guidance and next steps to practitioners in order to support good practice, and this includes expectations to see children and complete checks with other LAs where needed.
- Domestic abuse, working with men & safety planning: practice requires improvement
- Initial Child Protection Conferences: written reports, and the analysis and management oversight that support them require improvement.
- Meetings can be long and parents are not always supported to participate fully
- Assessments; gaps in analysis of children's experience and family history

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## Five Quick Wins;

1. Rename 'Single Assessment' to 'Child and Family Assessment' to support a holistic and professionally curious culture.
2. Immediate action to address the quality of social work assessments through 'bitesize' workshops for the Initial Response Teams to include guidance on assessments and the role of consent.
3. Provision of Business Support to Managers chairing child protection strategy meetings in assessment teams.
4. Deprivation of Liberty Training to be arranged for frontline staff.
5. MASH Guardian Access for Emergency Duty Service.

## Key findings;

- Immediate responses to children's needs of protection were decisive and timely
- Assessments are not always sufficiently thorough and completed in a timely way
- Not all children in need have an up-to-date plan that clearly sets out the support needed by different professionals
- SW reports to ICPC are not always sufficiently thorough and there is a need to ensure they contain good analysis
- There is a need to ensure that the voice of the child is always present in assessments and plans
- High caseloads and staff turnover have meant that SW visits to children have not always been completed or recorded in a timely way
- There is a need to better evidence that visits have a purpose and progress the plan
- Ensure early help becomes involved in a timely way where needed
- Assessments and Plans must always include fathers and grandparents are always included in assessment and planning
- Expectations of parental capacity to change and sustain change where children are experiencing chronic neglect and domestic abuse need to be more realistic
- Further development work is needed with staff on effective safety planning
- There is a need to ensure there is consistent evidence of good supervision and management oversight on children's records
- Practice and decision making for children voluntarily in care was found to be good

## Actions in Improvement Plan to address practice learning;

- Support from Leeds for managers on quality of supervision and practice oversight (starts Nov)
- Workshops with Initial Response Teams to clarify good practice Children in Need plans to be prioritised for improvement
- Communication of 10 key tips for engaging children and families
- Development work with CP Chairs to ensure outcome focused planning
- Implement Cabinet decisions to improve social work recruitment and retention
- Communicate messages from audit in ways which support clarity about what good practice looks like



CS/21/16

9 November 2021

Childrens Scrutiny Committee

# Education and Learning

Performance report Autumn 2021  
Based on published data to 21/10/21

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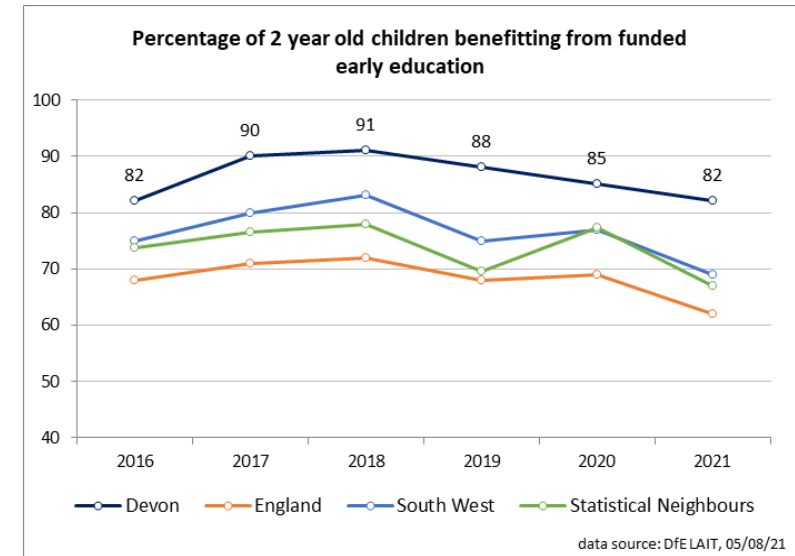




## Review of Early Years Funding for 2-year olds

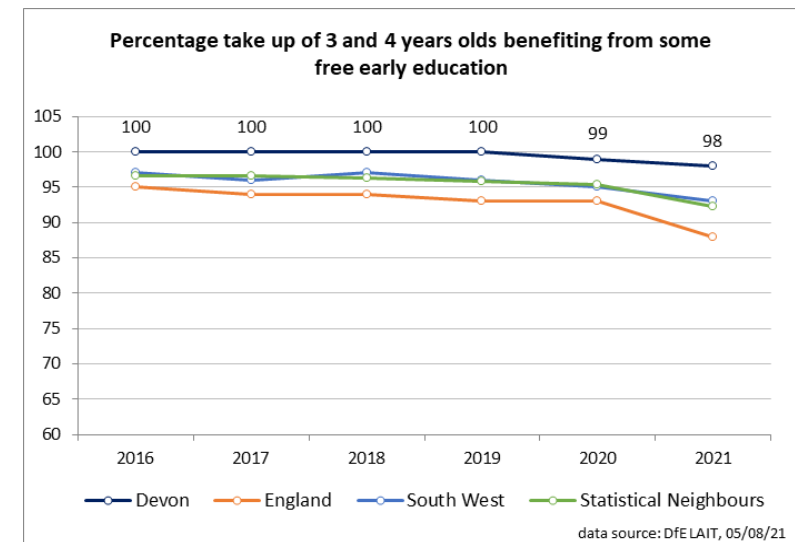
Nationally published information indicates that as of Jan 2021 there had been a slight fall in the percentage of 2-year olds benefitting from early years funded places, both nationally and in Devon (82% in Devon compared to 85% previously). Devon is still performing significantly better than nationally (62%) and is in the top performing quartile (ranked 7<sup>th</sup> of all Local Authorities).

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## Review of Early Years Funding for 3 and 4-year olds

Over the same time period the percentage of 3 and 4-year olds benefitting from early years funded places continued to be high. Devon is again performing significantly better than both the national (88%) and regional (93%) averages. Devon is in the top performing quartile and is ranked 8<sup>th</sup> of all Local Authorities.

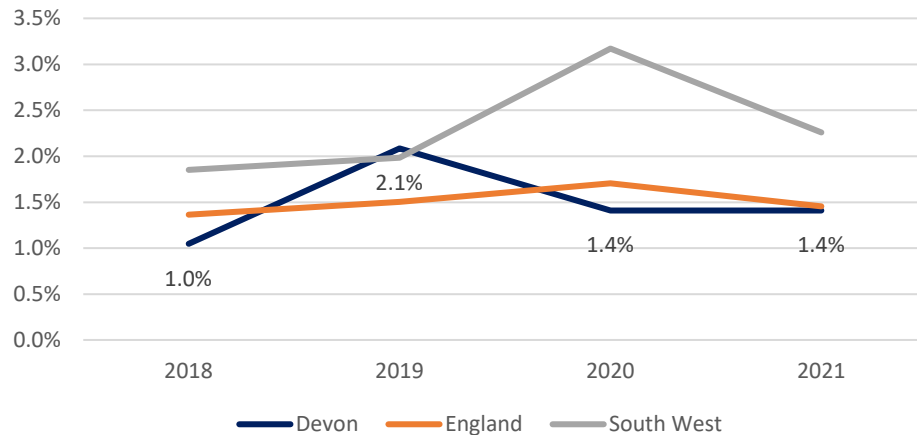




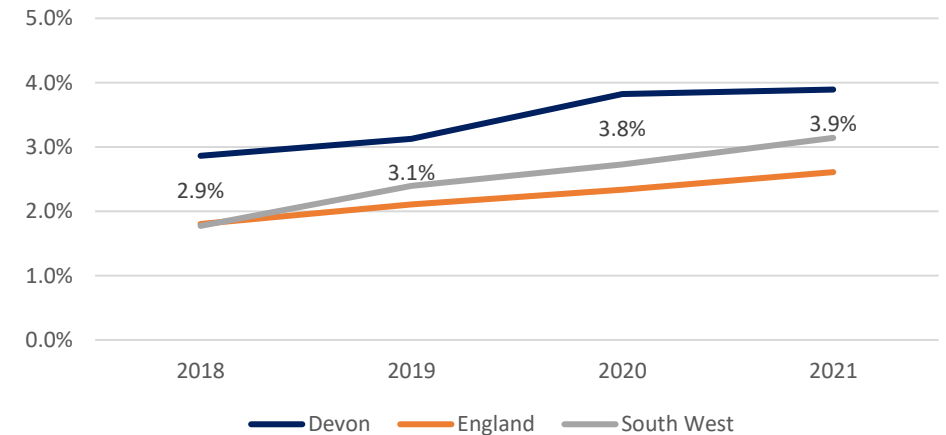
The proportion of children accessing 2-year old funding due to special educational needs has remained stable in the last year and is close to the national average (1.4% in Devon compared to 1.5% nationally).

The proportion of children accessing 2-year old funding due to care status has risen slightly in the last year. Devon has a higher rate than nationally (3.9% in Devon compared to 2.6% nationally).

proportion of children accessing two year old funding due to High Level Special Educational Needs or disability



proportion of children accessing two year old funding due to being Looked after or adopted from care

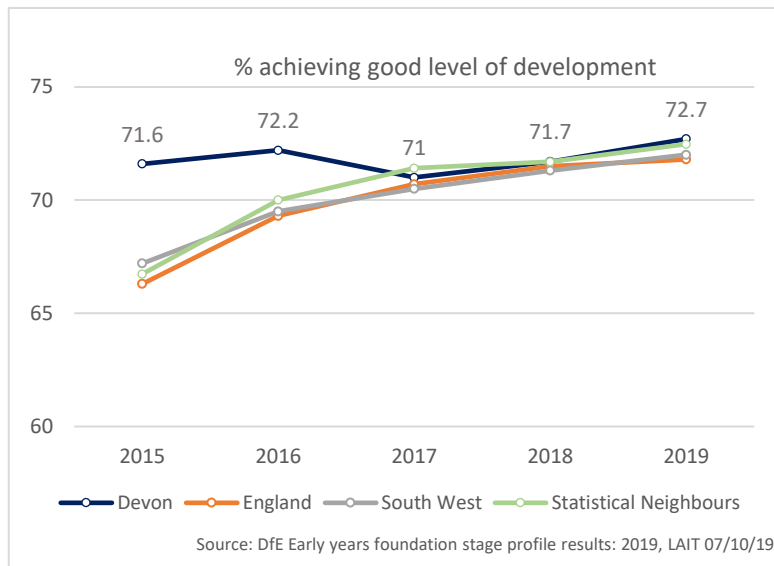


# Early Years Outcomes - 2018/19 data due to Covid

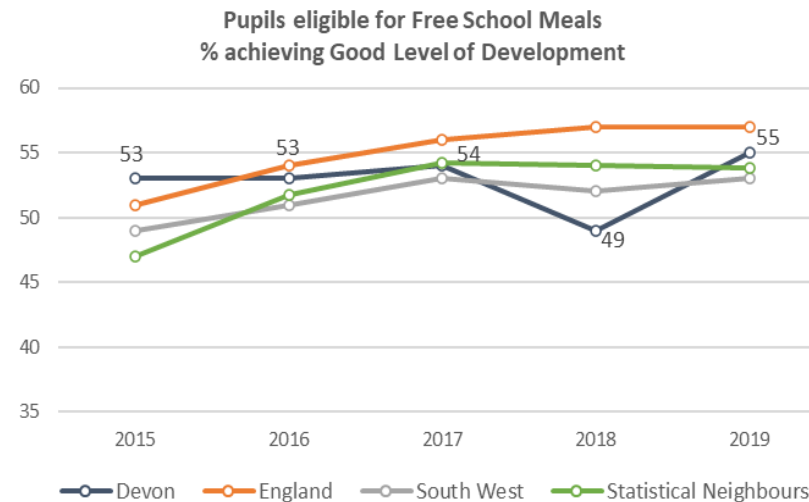
As a result of the coronavirus pandemic the Department for Education cancelled the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile for 2019/20 and for 2020/21. This means the latest available results are for 2018/19 academic year. These results have been reported on previously but are shown below for reference.

## EYFS Good Level of Development (GLD)

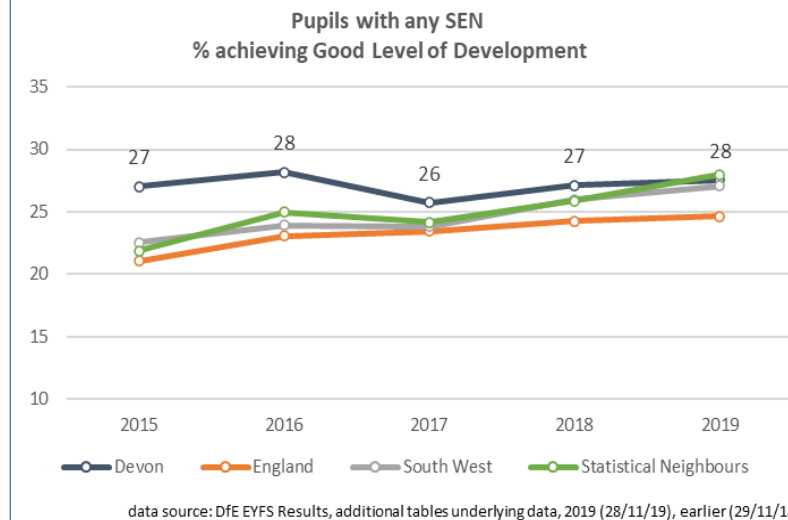
The percentage of **children** achieving a GLD in Devon rose slightly to 72.7%. Devon continued to perform better than nationally (71.8%) and regionally (72%). Devon was in the 2nd top performing quartile.



The percentage of **Free School Meals pupils** achieving a GLD rose to (55%). Devon's FSM pupils performed better than regionally (53%) and close to the national average of 57%. Devon's attainment gap between FSM pupils and all other pupils narrowed from 25% to 19%.



The percentage of **children with SEN** achieving a GLD was 28%. Devon performed better than nationally (25%) and regionally (27%). The attainment gap for SEN pupils is better in Devon than seen nationally (50% compared to 52% nationally).



## Devon Primary Schools

- Devon's performance remains significantly better than that seen nationally with 97.6% of pupils in Devon being offered a place at their first preferred school compared to 91.8% nationally<sup>1</sup>.
- **Devon is the top performing LA in the South West for meeting primary school first preferences. Devon is also in the top performing quartile of all<sup>2</sup> LAs.**

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99.6% of pupils in Devon were offered a place at one of their preferred options, again this is above the national average (98%).

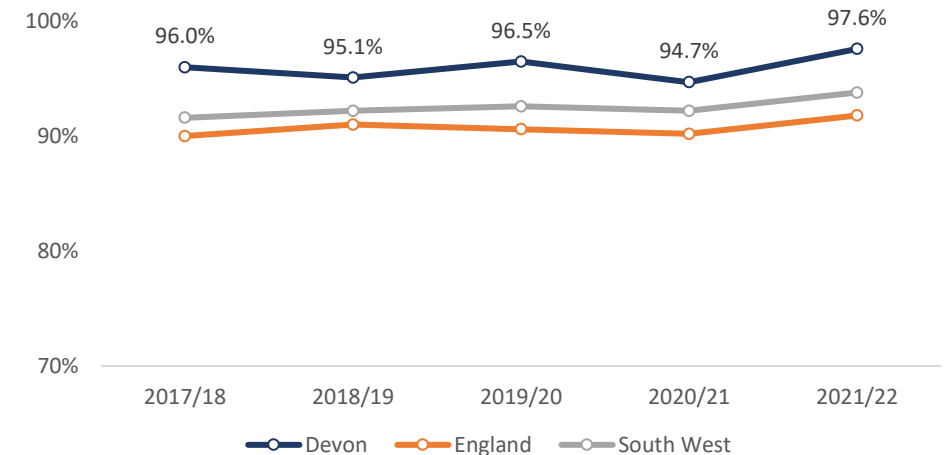
## Devon Secondary Schools

- 91.2% were offered a place at their first preferred and 97.5% were offered a place at one of their preferred options. This is similar to last year where 97.4% were offered a place at one of their preferred options.
- Devon's performance continues to be significantly better than nationally. 91.2% were offered a place at their preferred school compared to 81.1% nationally<sup>1</sup>. Devon is the sixth top performing LA in the South West for meeting secondary school first preferences. **Devon is also in the top performing quartile of all<sup>2</sup> LAs.**

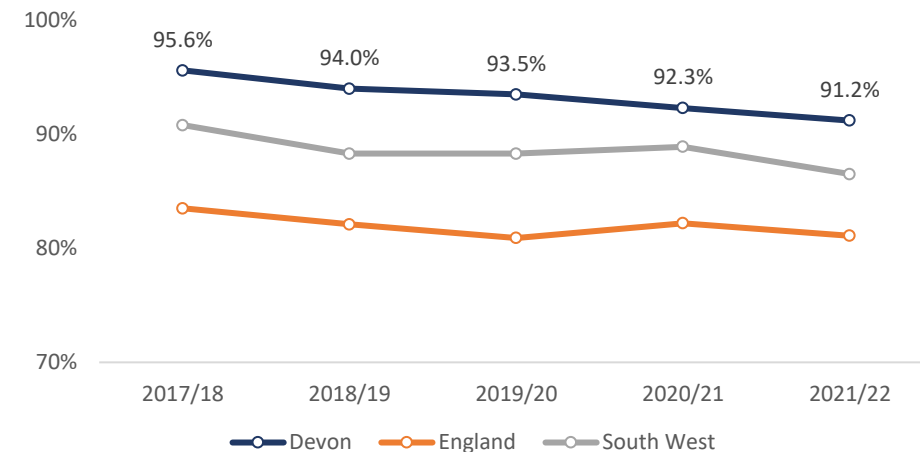
<sup>1</sup> DfE Secondary and primary school applications and offers: 2021, published 17/06/21

<sup>2</sup> excludes Isles of Scilly (one school all children attend)

First preference rate - primary school applications



First preference rate - secondary school applications

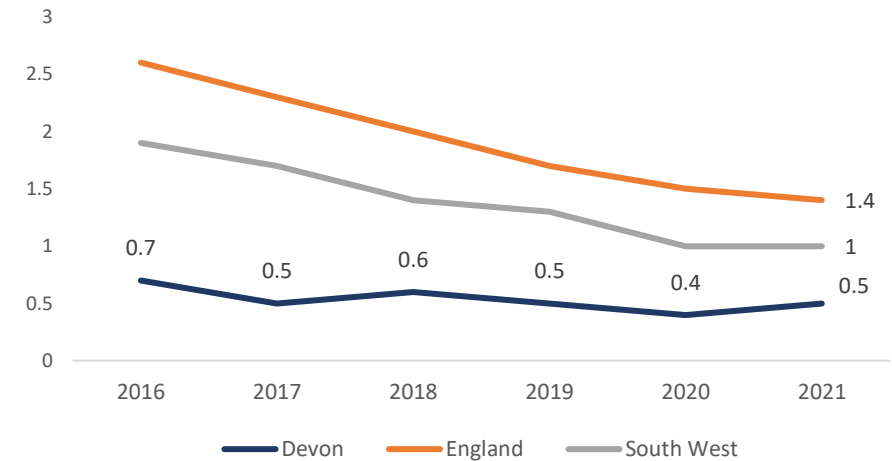


# School admission appeals for entry into 2020/21 academic year

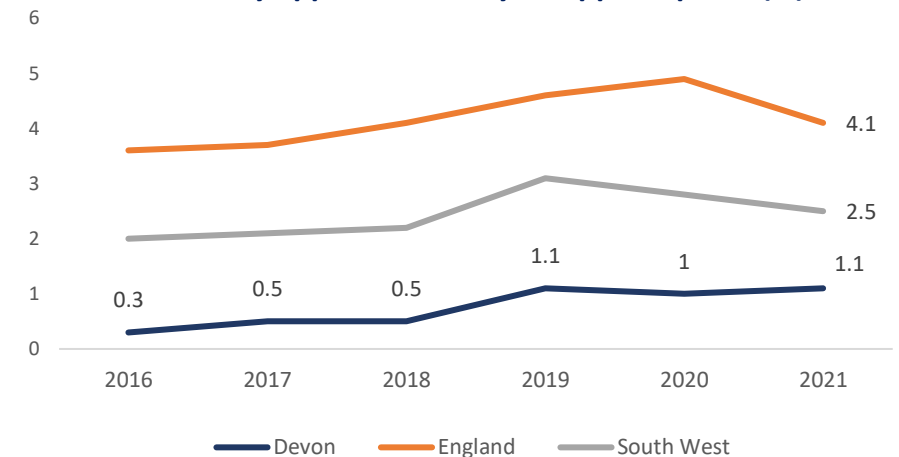
- Devon has the lowest rate of admission appeals in the South West<sup>1</sup>, with only 0.8% of admissions resulting in an appeal being heard. This is significantly better than the national picture which sees 2.7% of admissions resulting in an appeal being heard.
- Devon is in the top performing quartile for Local Authorities for its low rate of all appeals lodged and heard.
- Devon also has a low rate of appeals, where a decision is made in the parent's favour, with 16.8% of appeals heard being successful. This compares to 19% nationally and 24% in the South West.
- Devon primary schools saw fewer levels of admission appeals heard than secondary schools in 2020/21 (0.5% for primary and 1.1% for secondary). This pattern is also reflected regionally and nationally. Both Devon primary and secondary schools have significantly better appeal rates than regionally and nationally.
- Secondary school appeals heard were more likely to be successful than primary school appeals heard, with 18.7% of secondary school appeals decided in parent's favour compared to 13.5% primary school appeals.

<sup>1</sup> excludes Isle of Scilly who had minimal admissions and is therefore not used as a comparator

primary appeals heard by an appeals panel (%)



secondary appeals heard by an appeals panel (%)



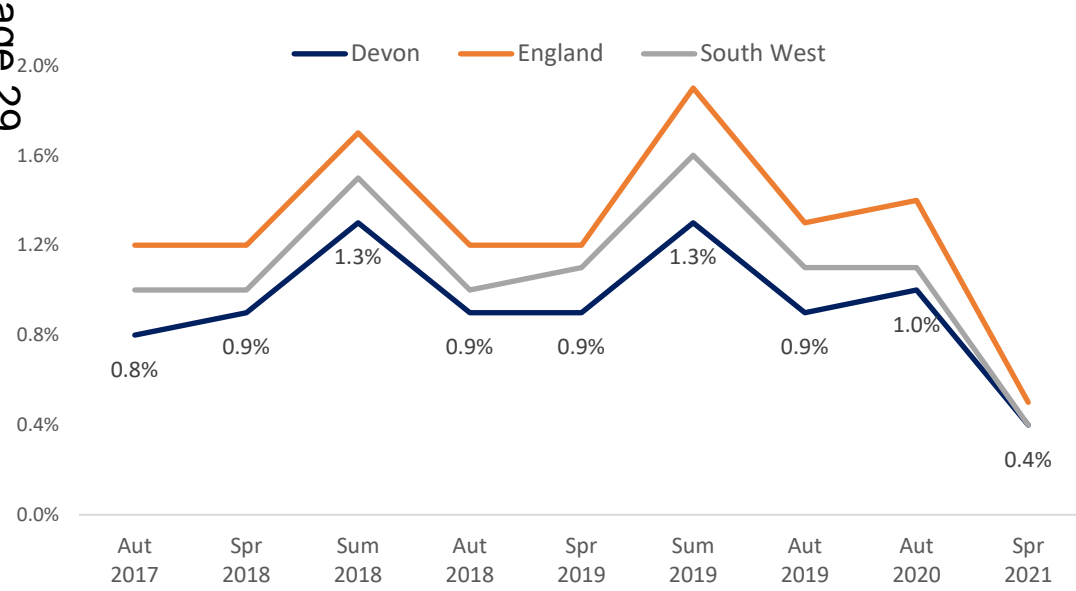
The DfE did not publish absence data for the for the 2020 spring and summer terms but we know from attendance data (see later slide) that figures in Devon were better than the national average during this time. Summer 2021 data is not yet published.

The chart on the left shows that unauthorised absence in Devon remained lower than the national average.

The chart on the right however shows a significant increase in persistent absence (>10% - roughly 6 days per term) in the spring 2021 term. This increase is due to medical and anxiety related authorised absence (for more detail see next slide).

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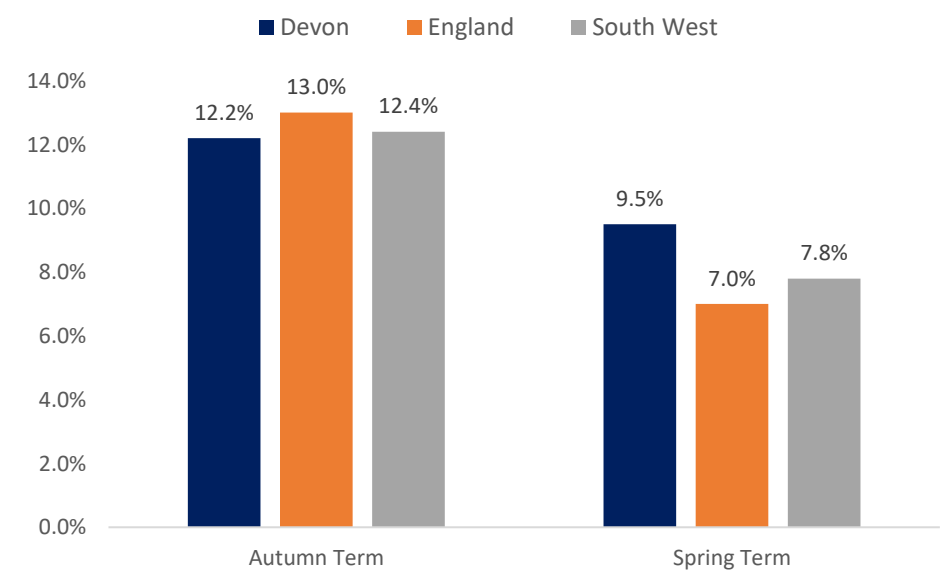
termly breakdown of unauthorised absence rates



Note: the DfE have not published absence data for the Spring and Summer 2020 terms

Data source: DfE Pupil absence in schools in England: autumn and spring terms, published 21/10/21

persistant absentee rates in 2020/21 autumn and spring terms



Note: the DfE have only published PA rates for the 2020/21 academic year, so comparisons to earlier years cannot be made.

data source: DfE Pupil absence in schools in England: autumn and spring terms, published 21/10/21

Schools have been providing a significant amount of support to reduce anxiety (child and parent) and prevent a more significant rise in persistent absence.

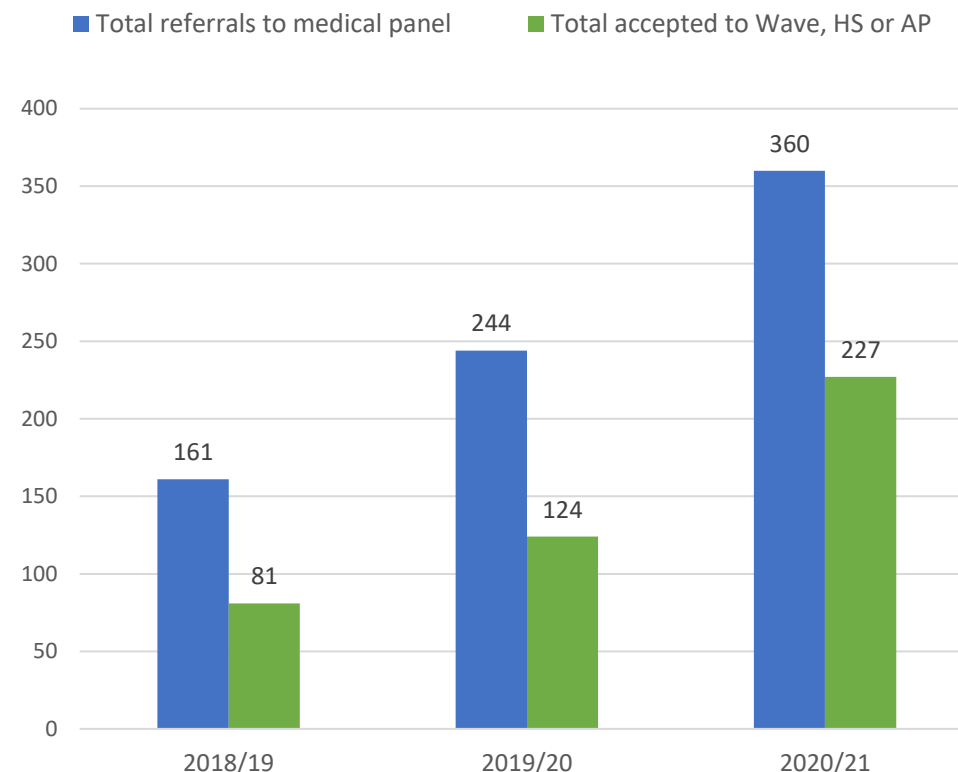
The Local Authority however also saw a significant increase in the number of children being referred for specialist educational support due to medical issues during the period of the pandemic. In the 2020/21 academic year referral more than doubled those seen in 2018/19. While the number accepted almost tripled.

The vast majority of these requests were due to anxiety related wellbeing and mental health issues.

The Council approved a bid for covid funding in the summer term to provide interventions to support the re-engagement in education and regular attendance of pupils experiencing these challenges.

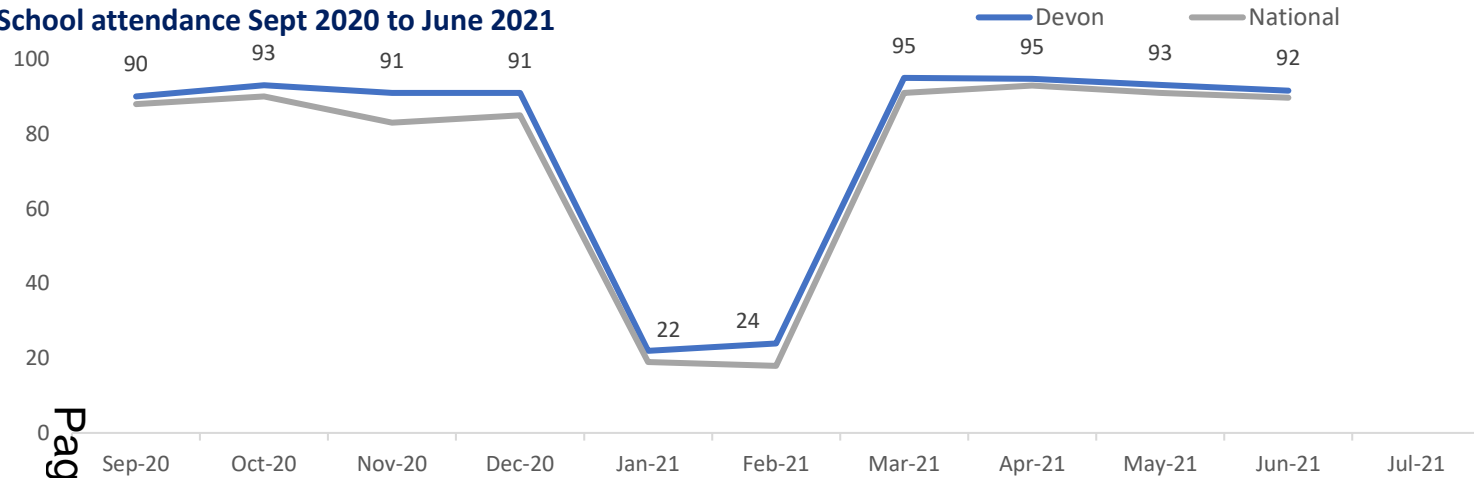
The increase in referrals has continued during the Autumn term, to date, however the earlier interventions are starting to show some impact in supporting those childrens' return to engagement in education. It is too early to provide detailed analysis in relation to this work.

### Referrals to Medical Panel and accepted cases



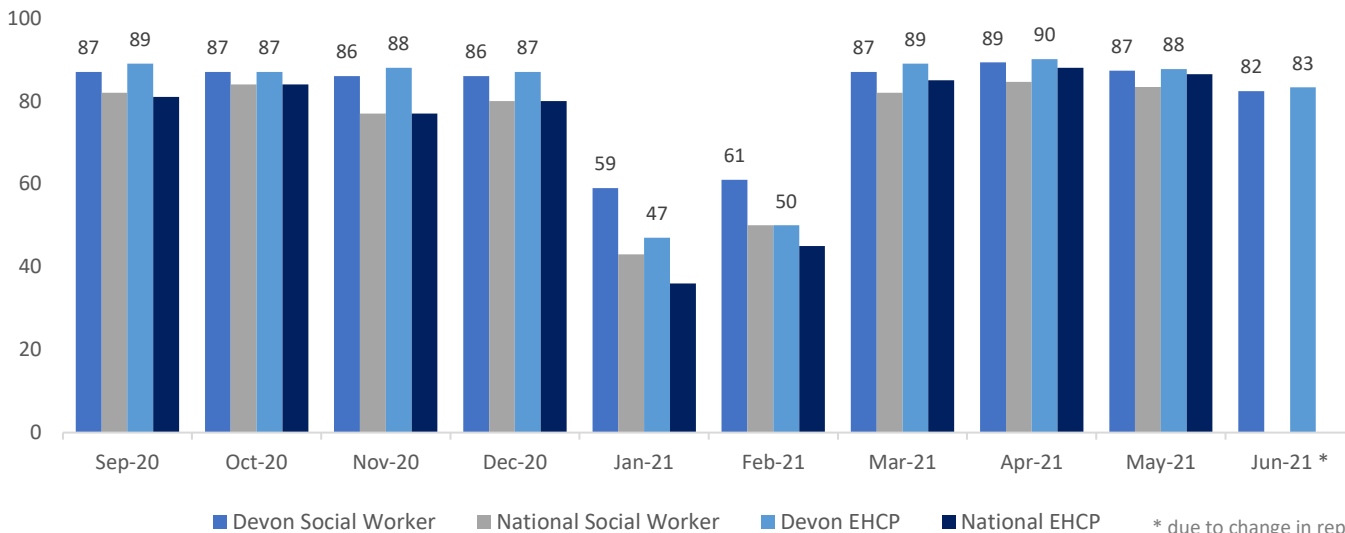
# School attendance – monthly 20/21 during Covid

School attendance Sept 2020 to June 2021



data source: Education Attendance Power BI report, national: DfE Attendance in education and early years settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

Vulnerable groups attendance from Sept 2020 to June 2021

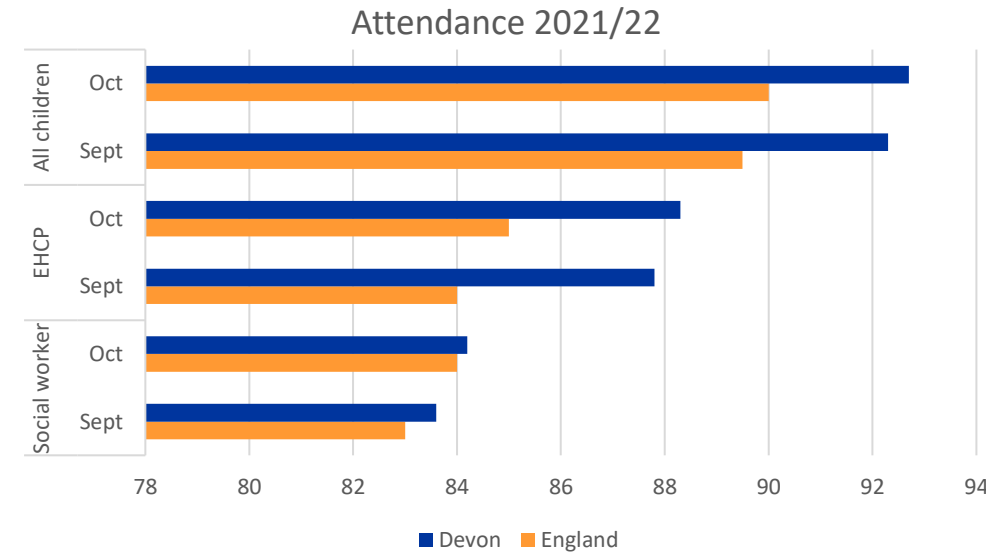


\* due to change in reporting, DfE have not published national data for all schools for June 2021

Attendance in Devon at primary, secondary and special school level remained above the National Average throughout the pandemic.

This was the case for the universal group of students (left hand top graph) and for those with a social worker or an Education Health and Care Plan (bottom left hand graph).

Autumn term initial data is shown below.



# Key Stage 2 attainment - 2018/19 latest available results

As a result of the coronavirus pandemic the Department for Education cancelled the Phonics screening checks, Key 1 and Key stage 2 teacher assessments and tests. This means the latest available attainment information is for the 2018/19 academic year. This is shown below for reference only.

**All Key Stage 2 results have been reported on previously but are shown below for reference.**

## Key Stage 2 Published Results 2018/19

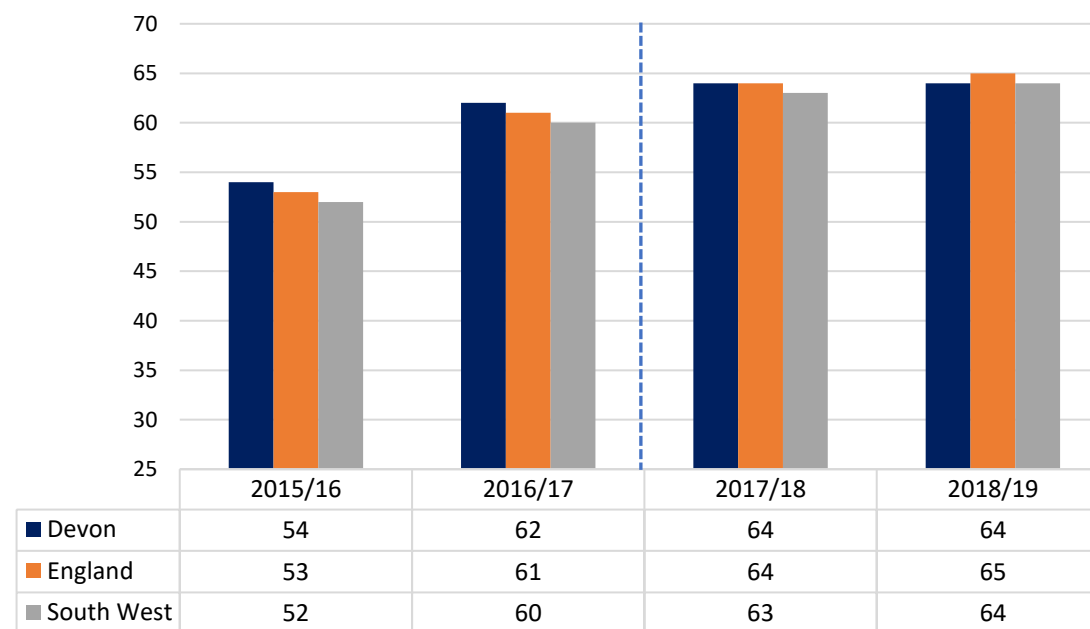
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Devon's performance in reading, writing and maths remained stable with 64% of pupils reaching the expected standard.

This was in line with the regional average and our statistical neighbours and close to the national picture (65%).

Disadvantage children however do not achieve well at Key Stage 2 and this was particularly the case in 201/19. This impacts on the overall key Stage figures as well as on the individual Children. Further information is provided on the next page

Percentage of pupils reaching expected standard in Reading, Writing and Mathematics



----- changes to the writing TA framework

data source: DfE 2018/19 Key Stage 2 revised results (13/12/19), 2017/18 and earlier, DfE LAIT (09/07/19)



## Key Stage 2 – Disadvantaged\* Pupils 2018/19

45% of Devon’s disadvantaged pupils reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics in 2018/19. Devon’s disadvantaged pupils were not achieving as well as disadvantage children nationally (45% compared to 51% nationally).

For the 2019/20 academic year the ONE Devon school improvement strategy had a focus on improving standards in literacy with specific projects being commissioned across the county in vocabulary and additionally in Torridge (a category 5 area) in Oracy. Work with our Maths Hubs aimed to further address outcomes in mathematics.

As all assessments at this key stage were stopped due to Covid it is not possible to report on impact of these measures in terms of pupils outcomes but feedback from teachers engaged in the training and pupil’s programmes reported a positive impact in pupil’s work.

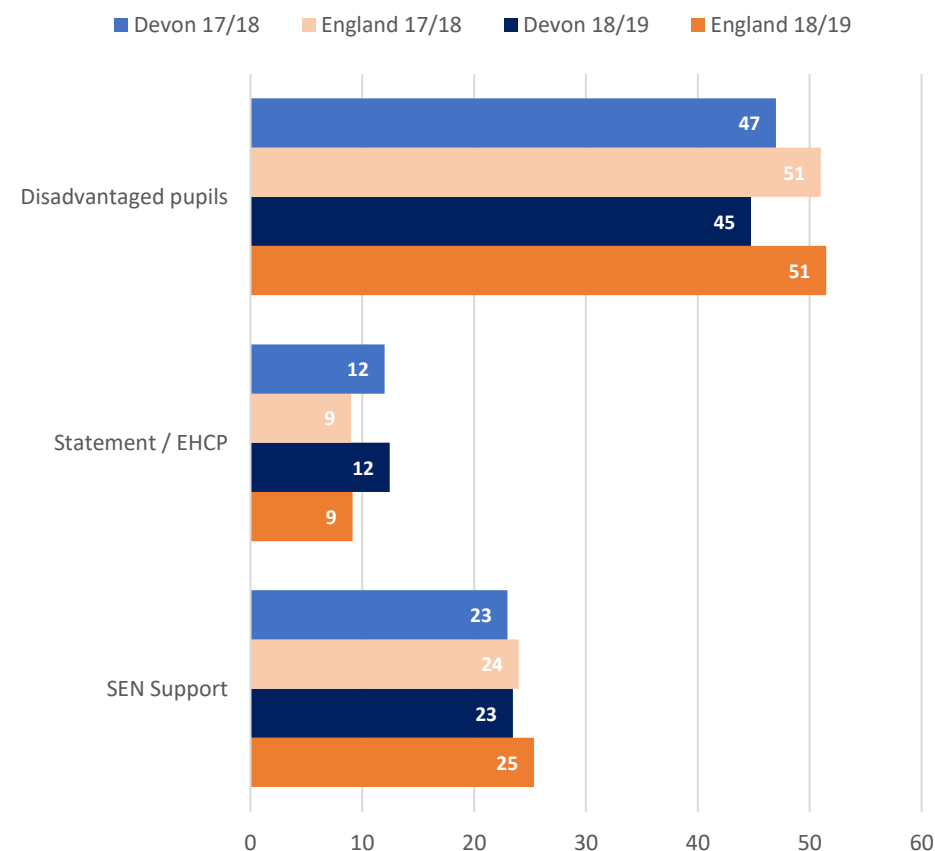
## Key Stage 2 – Special Educational Needs Pupils

The performance of Devon SEN pupils with an EHCP improved in 2019. 12% of Devon pupils with a Statement / EHCP reached the expected standard in all of reading, writing and mathematics. Devon continues to perform considerably better than nationally (9%).

The performance of Devon pupils with SEN Support has remained stable in the last year (23% achieving the expected standard). Devon’s SEN Support pupils were not achieving quite as well as nationally where 25% achieved the expected standard at Key Stage 2.

- those registered as eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years, children looked after by the LA and children who left care in England and Wales through adoption or via a Special Guardianship or Child Arrangements Order.

Percentage of pupils reaching expected standard in Reading, Writing and Mathematics (KS2)



# Key Stage 4 attainment – 2019/20 published results

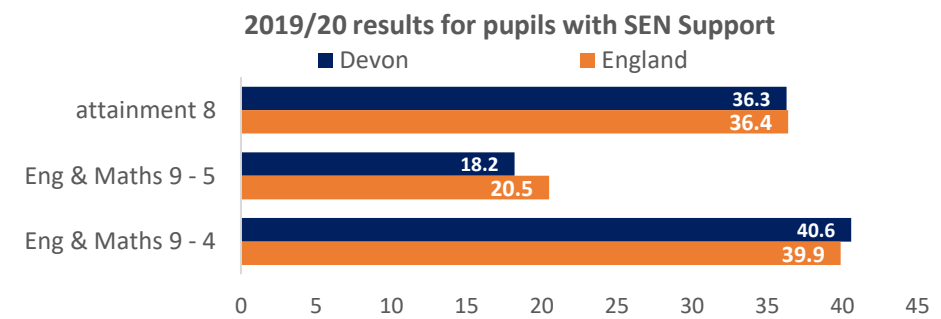
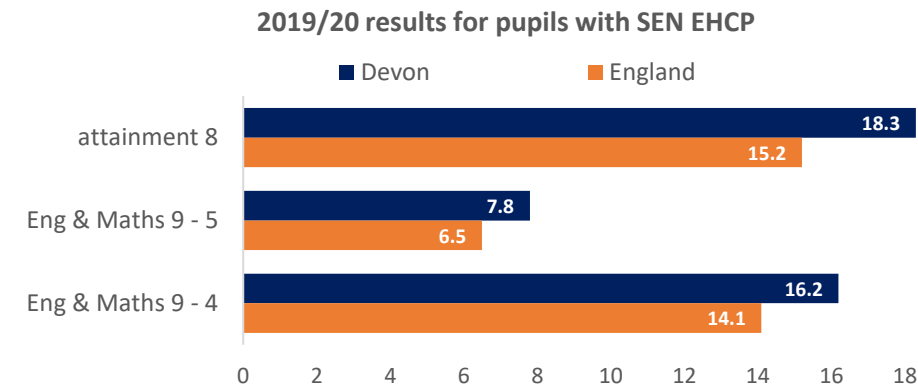
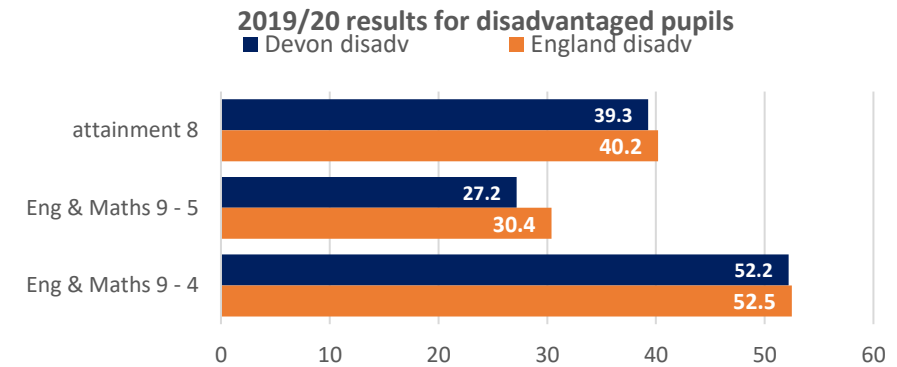
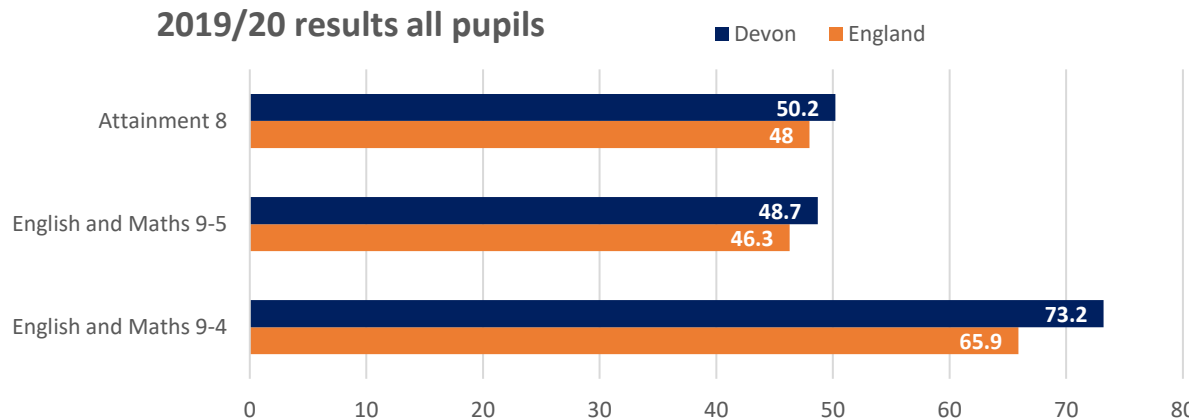
**Key Stage 4 (GCSE's etc)** did take place in 2019/20 and results were based on nationally moderated teacher assessment using examination level guidance.

Devon's results for **all pupils** (as shown in the graph below) were better than the National Average in all 3 attainment measures.

Outcomes for **disadvantaged pupils** improved by 6% from the previous year and Devon results were ranked in the top 50% of the country. This was above regional and statistical neighbours but still slightly below the national average.

Outcomes for children with an **Education Health and Care plan** remain well above the National average in all 3 attainment measures and Devon is ranked in the top 25% of all LAs.

Children with **SEN supported at school level** achieve higher grades than those with EHCP plans (due to different levels of need). Results were broadly in line with National averages with only those achieving a level 5 or above at GCSE falling below.

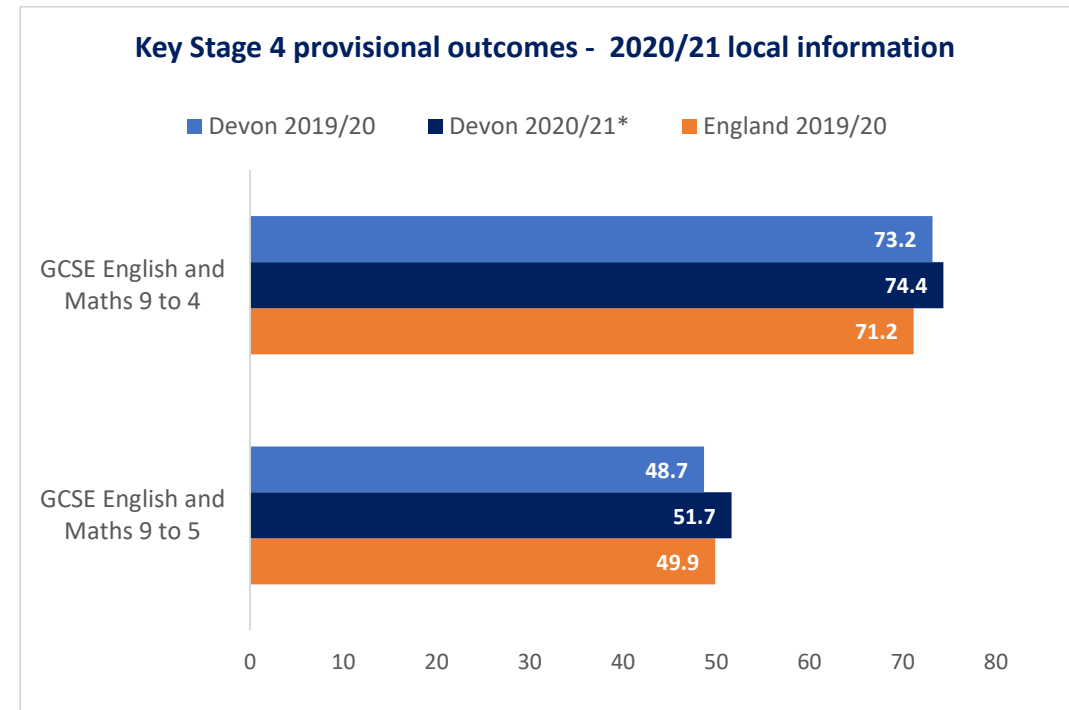


- In 2021/21 Key stage 4 school level performance tables were once again suspended. The information provided here has been gathered locally and aims to give an indication of Devon’s performance at KS4. Based on these early indicators performance has improved in 2020/21 but this is subject to change when/if national figures are produced at county level. This is usually between December and March.

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74.4% of KS4 pupils achieved a standard pass in English and Maths (9 to 4), an increase on the previous year when 73.2% achieved.

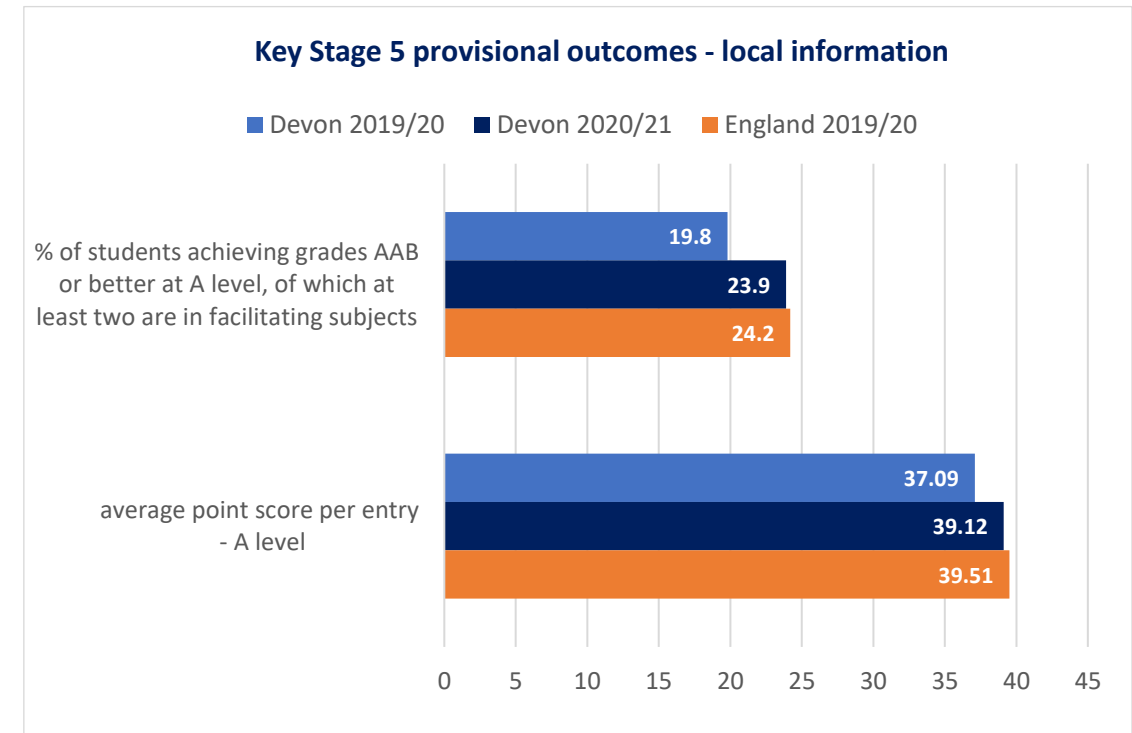
- 51.7% of pupils achieved a strong pass in English and Maths (9 to 5), an increase on the previous year (48.7%).
- Devon’s KS4 pupils are performing better than the latest available national rates in both measures.
- Attainment 8 and disadvantage data are not available locally.



\* Devon 2020/21 is based on information provided by 39 out of 42 secondary schools (3 Academies did not provide information) Data is therefore subject to change in any National tables.

- Information gathered locally from Devon **School based 6<sup>th</sup> forms** indicates that Devon's performance has improved in 2020/21.
- Nearly 24% of students in Devon achieved grades AAB or better at A level, an increase on the previous year when 19.8% achieved. Devon's students are performing close to the latest available national rate (24.2%).
- The average point score per A level entry has improved in the last year and is close to the latest available national average rate.

Please note: these figures are based on local information gathered from the schools and are therefore subject to change when the DfE publish national data in November 2021.



\* Devon 2020/21 is based on information provided by 21 out of 23 secondary schools (2 Academies chose not to provide any information)

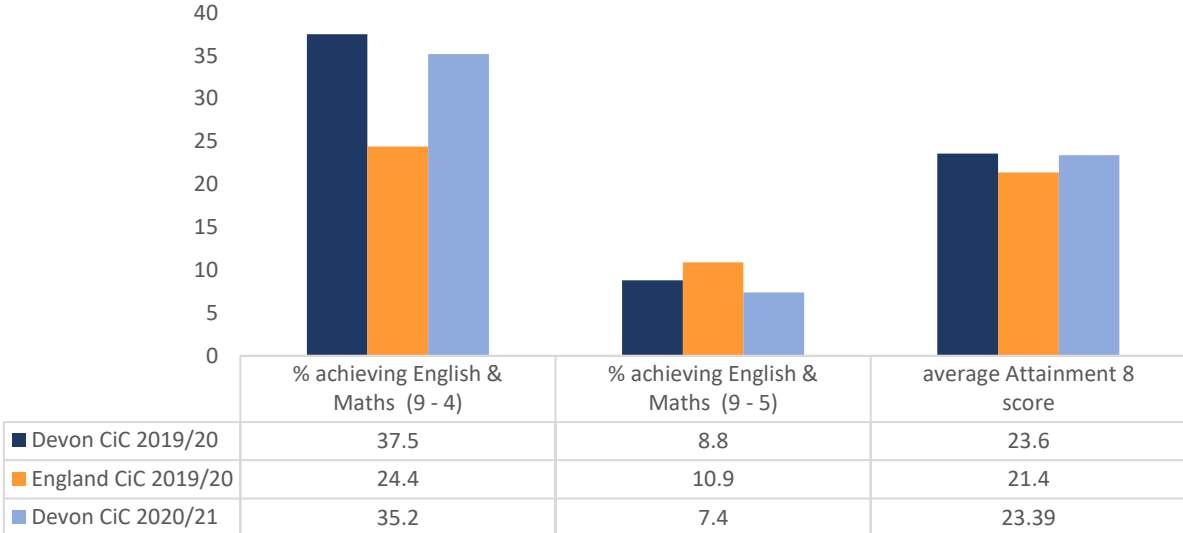
## Key Stage 4 Outcomes (local information)

In 2021, results for Devon Children in Care for 12 months or more (OC2 cohort) dropped slightly. However they still achieved better than the latest available national average in both the English and Maths grades 9 to 4 and Attainment 8 measures.

Please note: these figures are based on local information gathered from the schools and are therefore subject to change when the DfE publish national data in March 2022.

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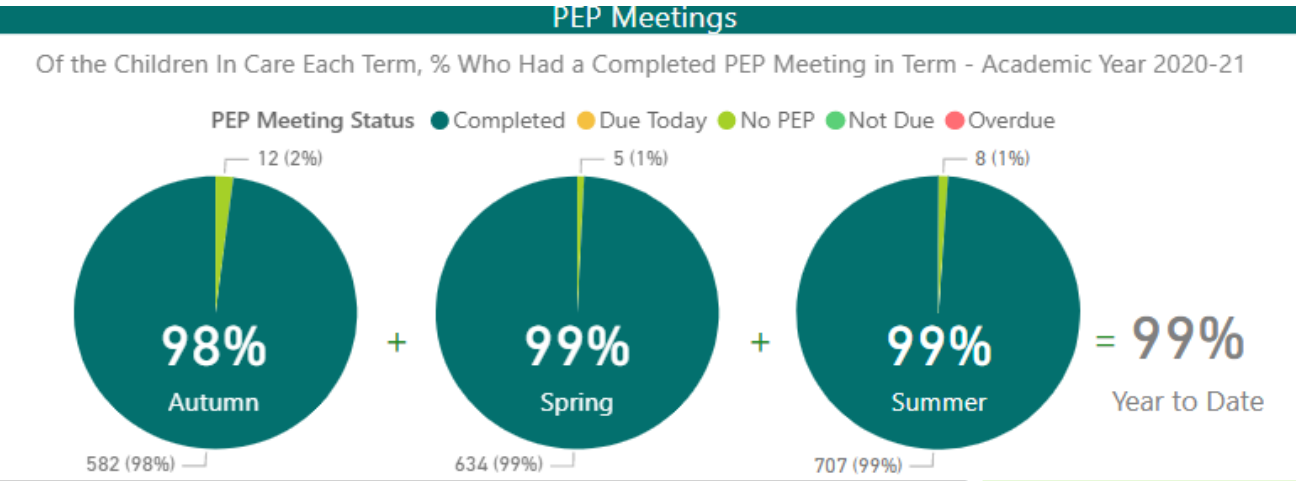
Key Stage 4 - CiC 12 months or more at 31 March



data source: 2019/20: DfE Outcomes for children looked after by LAs: 31 March 20 (25/03/21), 2020/21 Babcock LDP local data collection from schools, 06/10/21

## Personal Education Plan (PEP) Update

During the academic year 2020-2021 the Virtual School have been able to attend all PEPs virtually to offer support to young people, schools, carers and Social Workers. It has given a very clear overview of progress and interventions needed to accelerate progress for each young person.

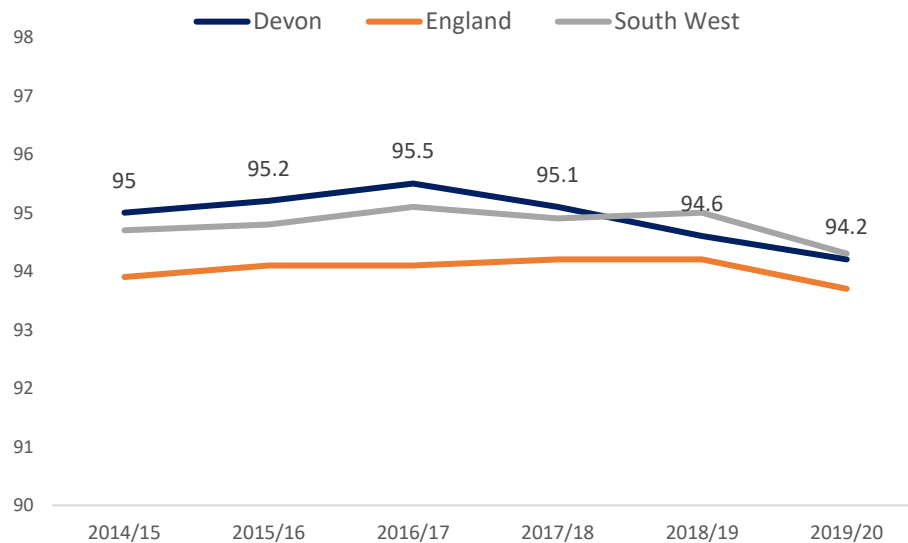


# Pupil Destinations (after completing KS4) Year 19/20 published 21/10/21

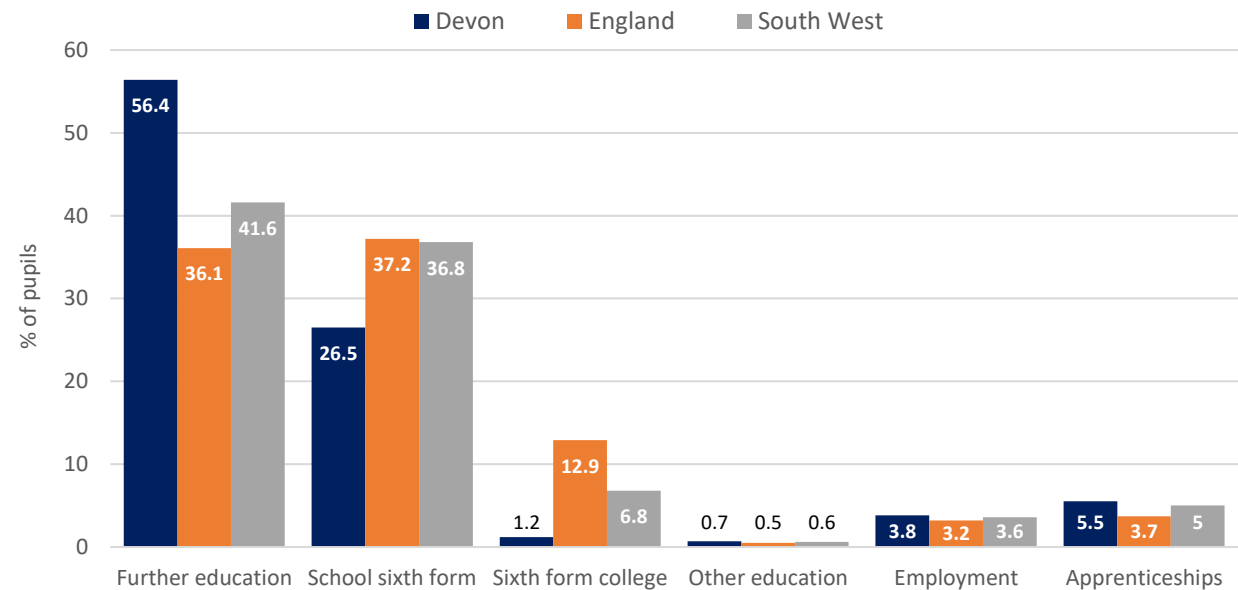
- 94.2% of Devon pupils were in sustained education, employment or apprenticeships after completing Key Stage 4. This is slightly better than nationally (93.7%).
- This is broken down as 84.8% of Devon pupils were in sustained education whilst 3.8% were in employment and 5.5% were in apprenticeships.

- Of the education destinations, 56.4% of Devon pupils were in further education and 26.5% were in school sixth forms. This differs from the national picture where 36.1% were in further education and 37.2% were in school sixth forms. The split between sixth forms and further education in Devon reflects the provision within the Local Authority.

percentage of pupils in sustained education, employment & apprenticeships after key stage 4



destinations of pupils after completing key stage 4

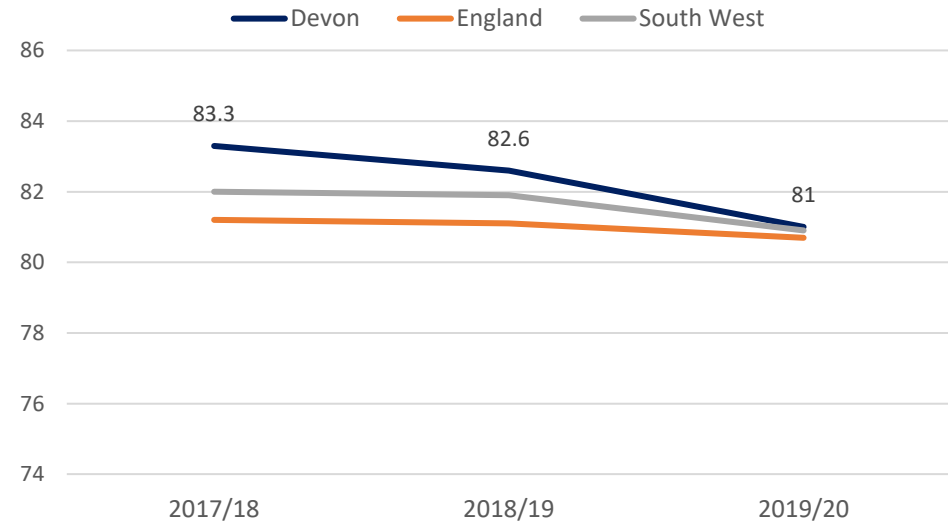


- 81% of Devon students who reached the end of their 16 to 18 study in 2018/19 were in education, employment or apprenticeships in the following year. This is slightly better than nationally (80.7%).
- 37.6% of Devon students were in education whilst 33.3% were in employment and 10% were in apprenticeships.

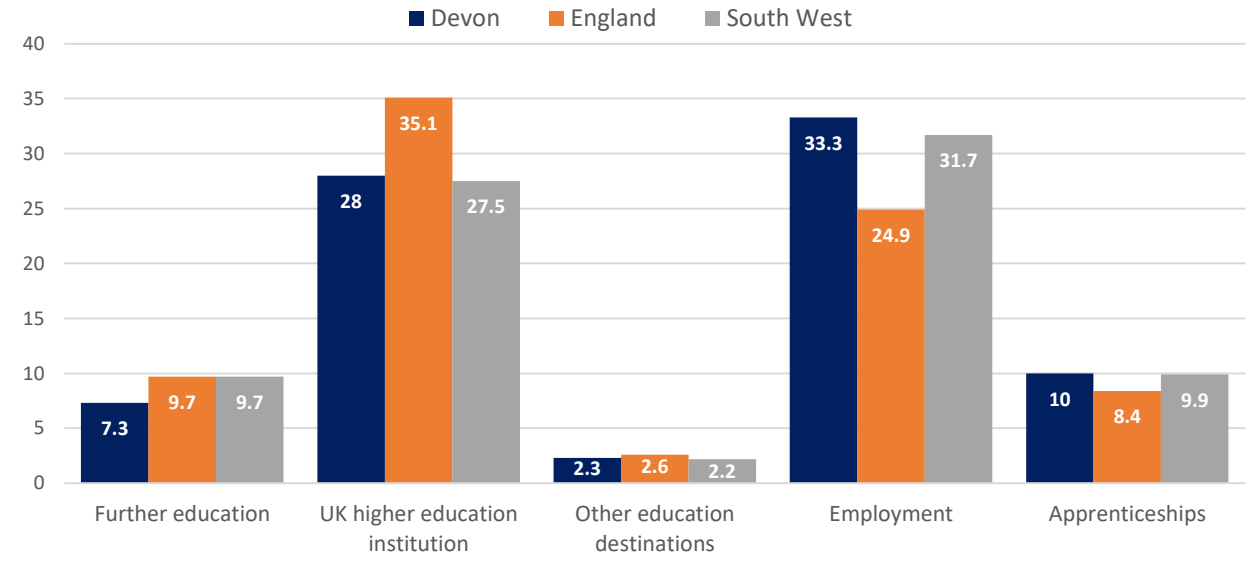
- Of the education destinations, 7.3% of Devon students were in further education and 28% were in higher education.
- Fewer Devon students were in education than nationally as more were in employment (33.3% compared to 24.9% nationally) and apprenticeships (10% compared to 8.4% nationally).

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percentage of students in sustained education, employment or apprenticeships after 16-18 study



destinations of students after completing 16-18 study



data source: 16 – 18 destination measures, academic year 2019/20, published 21/10/21

# NEETs (not in education, employment or training) local data

## July 2021 rates

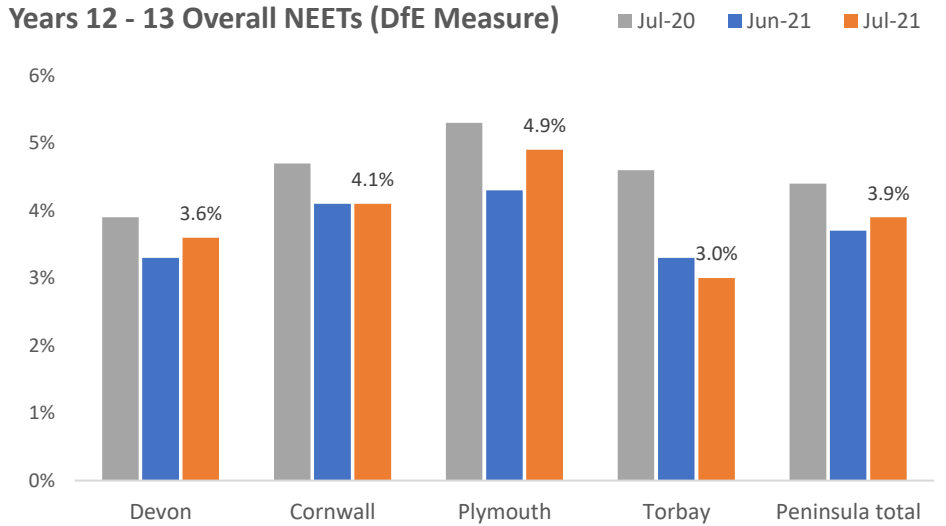
|                                 | Devon |           | SW Peninsula |           |
|---------------------------------|-------|-----------|--------------|-----------|
|                                 | NEET  | Not Known | NEET         | Not Known |
| Years 12 - 13 overall *         | 3.6%  | 1.7%      | 3.9%         | 2.0%      |
| Years 12 – 14 overall           | 4.4%  | 3.1%      | 4.7%         | 3.4%      |
| Year 12 – 14 vulnerable groups; |       |           |              |           |
| LDD                             | 10.4% | 1.7%      | 11.1%        | 2.0%      |
| Children in Care                | 14.6% | 2.2%      | 17.8%        | 2.6%      |
| BME                             | 3.0%  | 3.0%      | 3.5%         | 3.4%      |

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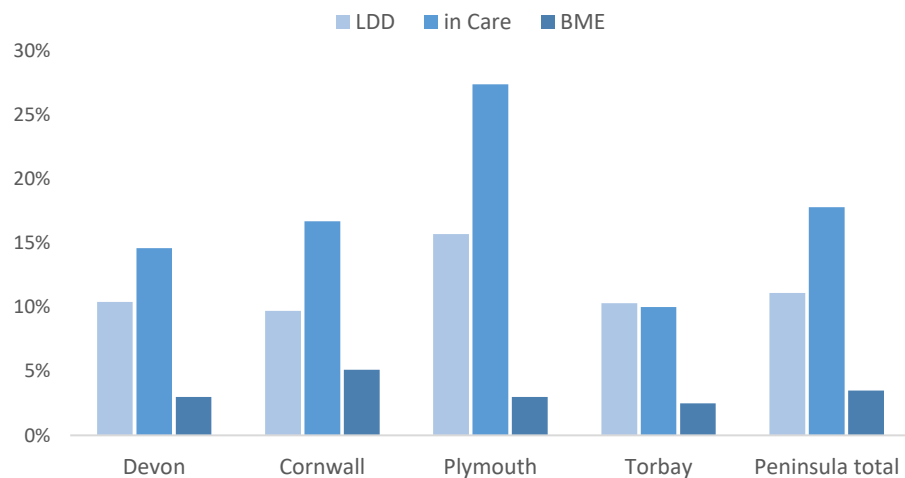
\* DfE measure

data source: CSW Group, July 2021 monthly MI package

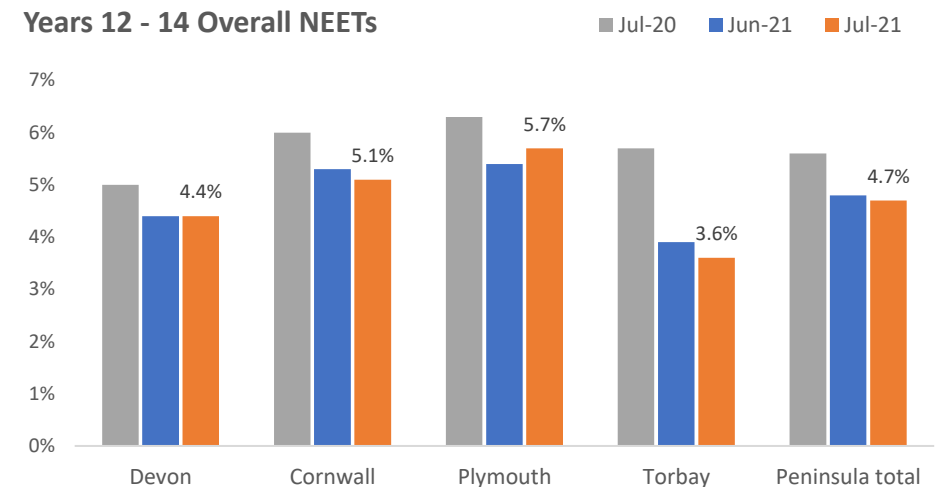
## Years 12 - 13 Overall NEETs (DfE Measure)



## Years 12 - 14 NEET % Vulnerable Groups - July 2021



## Years 12 - 14 Overall NEETs





# Permanent Exclusions

- Local information indicates that permanent exclusion numbers continue to reduce, dropping from 60 in 2019/20 to 51 in 2020/21. It is likely however that these numbers have been impacted by the Pandemic.
- Before the pandemic Devon's exclusion trend was downward and this has continued. Exclusion figures are better than the latest available national averages, with only 0.05% of Devon's pupils subject to a permanent exclusion, compared to 0.06% nationally.
- Permanent exclusions in Devon primary schools fell from 21 in 2019/20 to 7 in 2020/21. Devon's primary school exclusion rate is now 0.01%, better than the latest national rate of 0.02%.
- Permanent exclusions in Devon secondary schools rose slightly, from 38 to 42. Devon's secondary school exclusion rate is now 0.10%, also better than the latest available national rate of 0.13%.
- Permanent exclusions in Devon special schools has remained stable, with only 1 exclusion in each of the last two years.

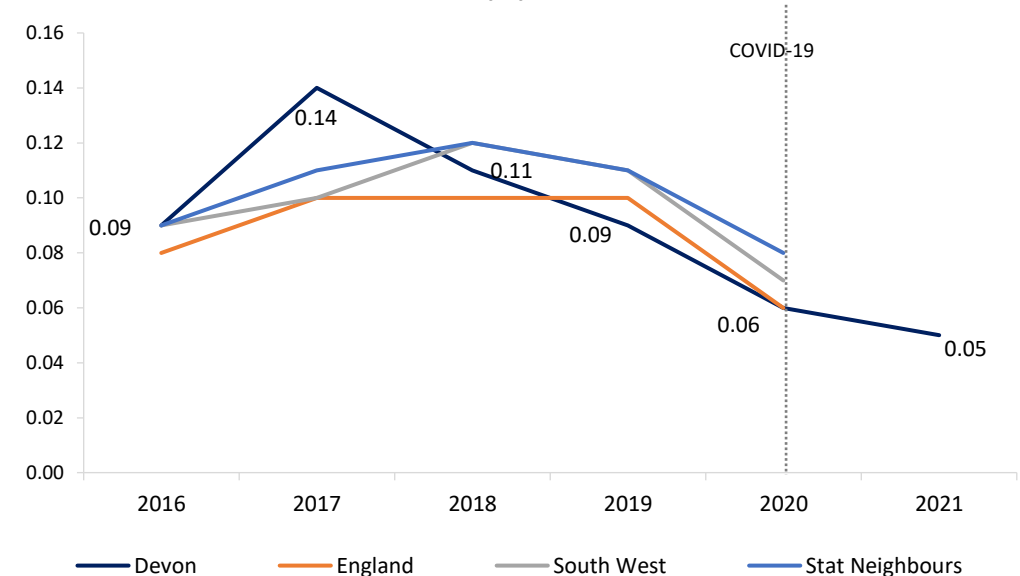
Page 4

|                                                                       | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Total Permanent Exclusions upheld in Devon Schools                    | 105     | 93      | 60      | 51        |
| Devon Exclusion Rate (exclusions as % of school pop'n) <sup>(1)</sup> | 0.11%   | 0.09%   | 0.06%   | 0.05%     |
| National Exclusion Rate <sup>(2)</sup>                                | 0.10%   | 0.10%   | 0.06%   | not avail |

<sup>1</sup> State funded primary, secondary, all-through and special schools (excludes alternative provision).

<sup>2</sup> School population figures based on numbers on roll in each Spring School Census, sole or main registrations in state funded primary, secondary, all-through and special schools (excludes alternative provision).

Permanent Exclusions as a % of the school population



# Fixed Term Exclusions

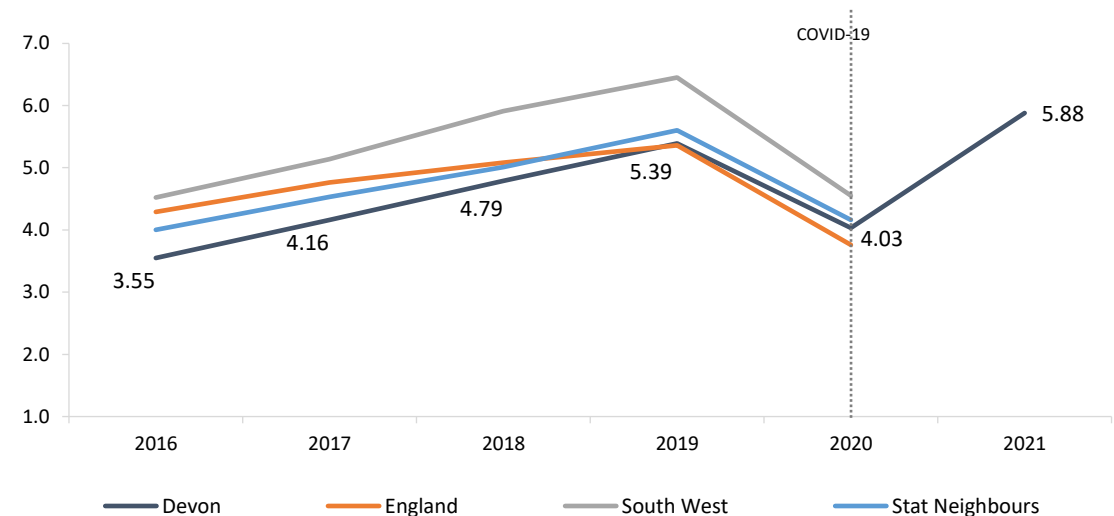
- Local information indicates that fixed period exclusions have risen in Devon in the last year. **This is however, often the case when permanent exclusions fall.**
- Additionally we have seen an increase in disruptive behaviour in school as pupils struggle to cope with the changes in routine. Analysis shows the increases directly reflect the return to school after lockdowns. Data is not yet available to see if this is reflected Nationally.
- In the latest comparative figures Devon’s exclusion rate of 4.03% compared to 3.76% nationally. 1.78% of Devon’s pupils were subject to a fixed term exclusion compared to the latest available national rate of 1.87%.
- In 2021 there were 568 fixed term exclusions in Devon primary schools this is lower than the 696 exclusions in 2019/20. Devon’s primary school exclusion rate is 0.98% and remains slightly better than the latest national rate of 1.0%.
- Devon secondary school exclusions rose from 3,235 in 2019/20 to 4,963 in 2020/21. At 12.23% this is not as good as the latest known nationally rate of 7.43%. This is a significant increase and reflects the challenges mentioned above. It may also be a reflection of new “ready to learn” policies in schools.
- Fixed term exclusions in Devon special schools rose slightly from 94 to 101 in 2020/21. Devon’s special school fixed term exclusion rate of 7.07% remains better than the latest available national rate (7.76%).

|                                                                  | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Number of fixed term exclusions in Devon <sup>(1)</sup>          | 4728    | 5363    | 4025    | 5886      |
| Devon exclusion rate (exc’ns as % of school popn) <sup>(2)</sup> | 4.79%   | 5.39%   | 4.03%   | 5.88%     |
| National exclusion rate <sup>(2)</sup>                           | 5.08%   | 5.36%   | 3.76%   | not avail |
| Devon - no of pupils subject to fixed term exclusion             | 2062    | 2256    | 1777    | 2414      |
| Devon – pupils subject to a fixed term exclusion rate            | 2.09%   | 2.27%   | 1.78%   | 2.41%     |
| National – pupils subject to a fixed term exclusion rate         | 2.33%   | 2.44%   | 1.87%   | not avail |

<sup>1</sup> State funded primary, secondary, all-through and special schools (excludes alternative provision).

<sup>2</sup> School population figures based on numbers on roll in each Spring School Census, sole or main registrations in state funded primary, secondary, all-through and special schools (excludes alternative provision).

**Fixed Period Exclusions as a % of the school population**



# Exclusions – pupil characteristics (2020/21 local data, 2019/20 national data July 21)

In Devon and nationally, children in vulnerable groups are more likely to be permanently excluded than their peers.

More boys received a permanent or fixed term exclusion than girls. This is also reflected Nationally.

## Permanent Exclusions

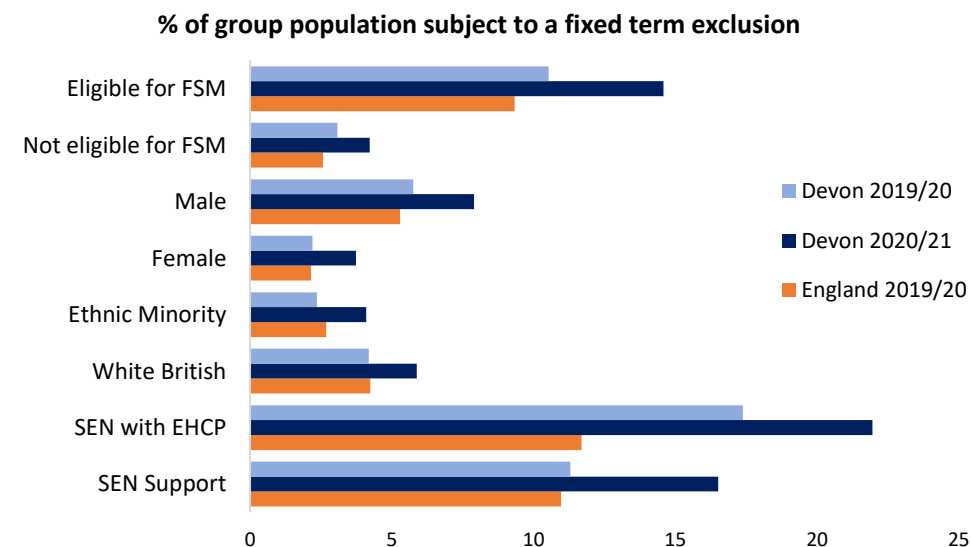
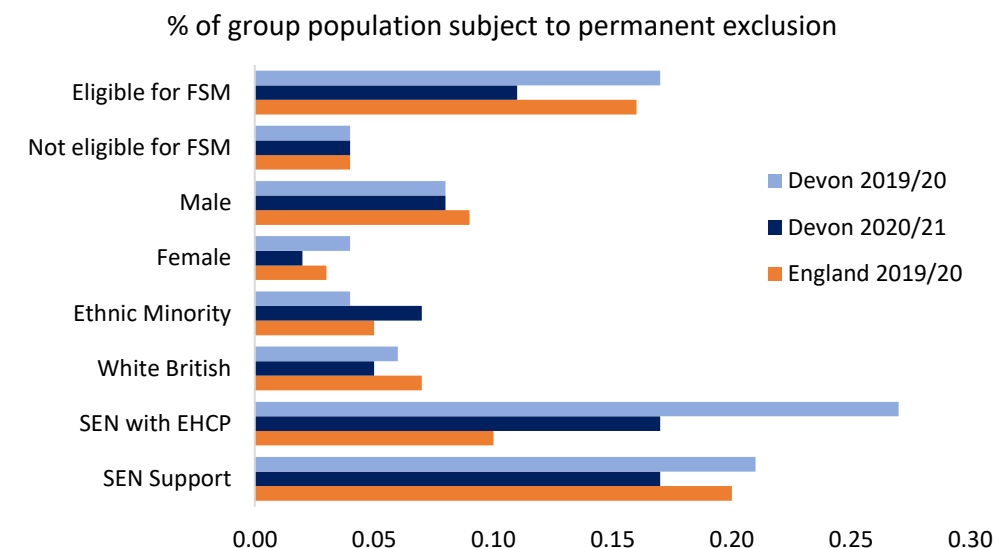
The level of permanent exclusions has reduced for both pupils eligible for FSM and those with special educational needs. Devon now has a better rate than nationally for FSM pupils and pupils with SEN Support. However Devon SEN pupils with an EHCP have a higher exclusion rate than nationally.

## Fixed Term Exclusions

The level of fixed term exclusions has risen across all pupil cohorts. Devon does not perform as well as the latest national rates for each of the groups however this is also a reflection of lower permanent exclusions.

| Permanent exclusions | 51 |
|----------------------|----|
| Eligible for FSM     | 18 |
| Not eligible for FSM | 33 |
| Male                 | 41 |
| Female               | 10 |
| Ethnic Minority      | 6  |
| White British        | 44 |
| SEN with EHCP        | 8  |
| SEN Support          | 23 |
| No SEN               | 20 |

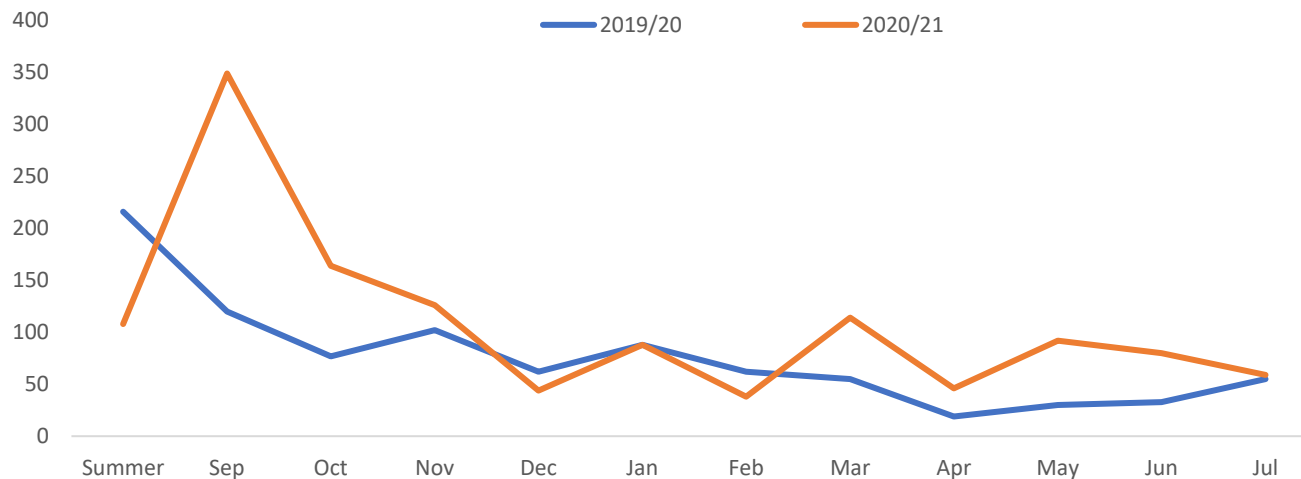
| Fixed term exclusions | 5886 |
|-----------------------|------|
| Eligible for FSM      | 2319 |
| Not eligible for FSM  | 3567 |
| Male                  | 4054 |
| Female                | 1832 |
| Ethnic Minority       | 335  |
| White British         | 5326 |
| SEN with EHCP         | 1012 |
| SEN Support           | 2218 |
| No SEN                | 2656 |



| EHE Students on Census Day                     | Oct 2018  | Oct 2019  | Oct 2020  | Jan 2021  | May 2021  | Oct 2021  |
|------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| All pupils reg and unreg inc. below school age | 1348      | 1456      | 1703      | 1897      | 1948      | 1692      |
| Number of EHE pupils registered                | 1126      | 1238      | 1508      | 1702      | 1750      | 1519      |
| Number (%) with EHCP                           | 57 (5%)   | 100 (8%)  | 110 (7%)  | 125 (7%)  | 143 (8%)  | 157 (10%) |
| Gender split (m/f)                             | 583 / 538 | 663 / 571 | 773 / 732 | 860 / 839 | 890 / 857 | 776 / 741 |

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New notifications of children being electively home educated



The number of children being Electively Home Educated rose sharply during the pandemic.

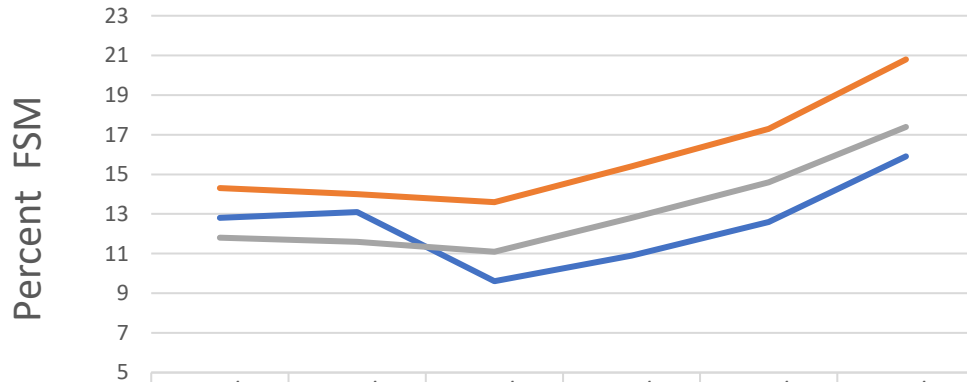
However effective monitoring by the EHE team has ensured children receive their statutory right to an education and the number of EHE children on the October 2021 census day had reduced to less than those seen on the Oct 2020 census day.

Of the 633 children who stopped being electively home educated in 2020/21;

- 80% were supported to return to school (505 cases)
- 6% became recorded as a Child Missing Education (40 cases). These children will now be supported through statutory processes which could result taking legal action with the parents.
- 2% moved abroad (15 cases)
- 12% moved out of county (73 cases)

The percentage of children returning to schools has risen when compared to the same periods in the previous year.

### Free School Meals



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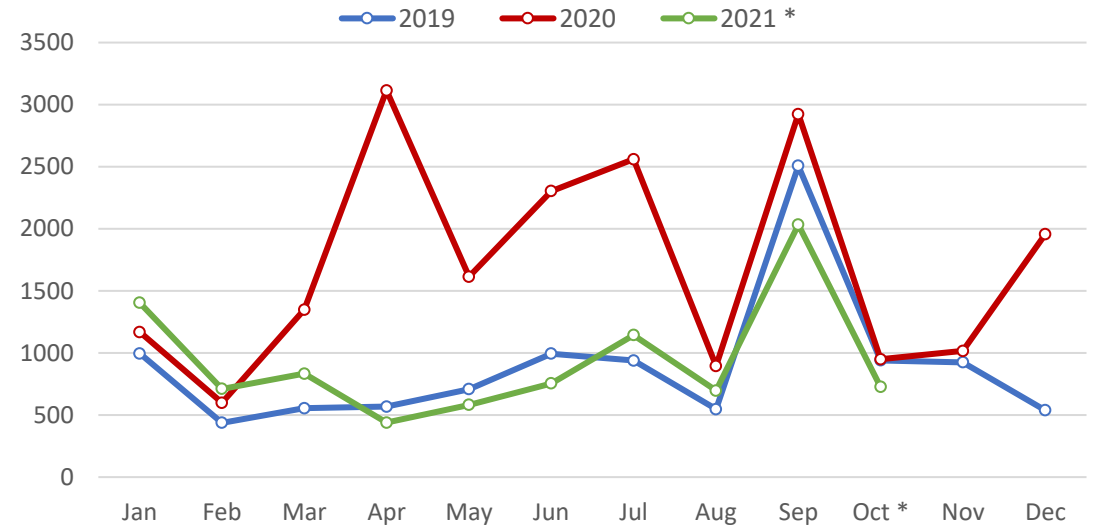
|            | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 |
|------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Devon      | 12.8    | 13.1    | 9.6     | 10.9    | 12.6    | 15.9    |
| England    | 14.3    | 14      | 13.6    | 15.4    | 17.3    | 20.8    |
| South West | 11.8    | 11.6    | 11.1    | 12.8    | 14.6    | 17.4    |

- Devon has seen a significant increase in the number of children eligible for free school meals. However as the graph on the left shows the number remains lower than the national and southwest average.
- A significant amount of funding is based on deprivation factors linked to free school meals and this is a contributing factor in why Devon receive less overall funding than seen nationally. 121/151 Local Authorities.
- The graph below shows the spike in applications during the first part of the pandemic.

### January 2021 school census

| Devon School Phase   | Number of pupils eligible for FSM | % of pupils on roll eligible for FSM |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Nursery              | 27                                | 16%                                  |
| Primary              | 9358                              | 16%                                  |
| Secondary            | 5638                              | 14%                                  |
| All Through          | 318                               | 21%                                  |
| Special              | 578                               | 40%                                  |
| Pupil Referral Units | 78                                | 31%                                  |
| <b>Grand Total</b>   | <b>15997</b>                      | <b>15.9%</b>                         |

### Total claims for Free School Meals



\* as at 21/10/21

data source: ONE database, accessed 21/10/21



CORPORATE PARENTING  
STRATEGY 2022-24

# BEING THE BEST CORPORATE PARENTS WE CAN BE

Our commitment to see children and  
young people with care-experience  
flourish and thrive in Devon

Agenda Item 8

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Appendices





## An open letter from children and young people with care experience

Dear Corporate Parents,

We are children and young people who have experience of Devon's care.

As our corporate parents, we want you to think about how you treat us. We want to be respected for who we are as individuals. This means treating us fairly and showing us that you care.

Communication is really important to us. Ask us what language we prefer, treat us how you would expect to be treated and don't be patronising. Be honest with us, listen to us, and be open-minded about how best to get to know us.

We want you to listen to our views. This might be about asking how we are and how we are feeling. Make sure you understand what we are really saying and feeling by checking back in with us. It is really important that you show how you respect us and our experience in real ways. Remember, we are all our own unique individuals, who are children and young people first and foremost. We are not defined by our care experience.

Finally, we expect our corporate parents to do what you say you will do, stick to your promises and not make excuses. We want to have good relationships with the people who work with us, where you are flexible, willing and open-minded to always try and do what is best for us.

### **Stand Up Speak Up**

Devon's Children in Care Council



# An open letter to children and young people with care experience

Dear children and young people with care experience,

We are your corporate parents, with a responsibility to keep you safe and well, and support you to get the very best out of life.

We are all passionate about making Devon a place where all children and young people have the best possible start in life and are able to access all the things that are needed to learn, grow and have fun. We want young people to go on to become well-rounded, resilient and independent young adults who are engaged and thriving members of their local communities. The whole of Devon is made stronger as a result.

As corporate parents, we want this to be true for you, as children and young people with experience of care. This means doing our very best for you to help you flourish and thrive. We want you to feel safe, loved and cared for in our County. We want you to feel accepted for who you are, as unique individuals. We want you to be listened to, heard and understood in all that we do. We agree with you that having strong relationships with us, which are built on trust and respect, is fundamental to this.

As senior leaders in Devon County Council, alongside all our hard-working and dedicated staff and carers, we are committed to being the best possible corporate parents we can be. This is our plan of how we aim to do this together.

**Phil Norrey**

Chief Executive, Devon County Council



**Melissa Caslake**

Chief Officer for Children's Services, Devon County Council



**Lisa Bursill**

Head of Service - Children's Social Care, Devon County Council



**Councillor John Hart**

Elected Leader of Devon County Council



**Councillor Andrew Leadbetter**

Elected Cabinet Member for Children's Services



## What is corporate parenting?

Corporate Parenting is our responsibility to be loving, caring and aspirational for all children and young people who are in our care, or who have recently left our care as adults.

Above all else, this means protecting children and young people from harm and keeping them safe. But, importantly, it is about always striving for their best interests, nurturing their ambitions and helping our children and young people get the most out of life. Ultimately, it means they become independent and thriving young adults.

At its heart, Corporate Parenting means always asking ourselves **“would this be good enough for my child?”**

## Our vision for all children and young people

**We believe that every child and young person in Devon should have the best possible start in life and the opportunity to thrive. We want to ensure children and young people receive the right support, at the right time, and in the right place.**

For children and young people with care experience, our vision is no different.

We recognise that children and young people, who have care-experience, can face additional challenges that others their age may not. As their corporate parents, and in spite of these obstacles, we want them to achieve good outcomes in all aspects of their lives.

For this reason, our ambition to be good corporate parents goes far beyond any laws. Instead, we have a moral, social and economic responsibility, as public services, civil society, local communities and wider society, to work together to equip and empower our care-experienced children and young people to succeed and thrive.





## Our promise to children and young people

This is our promise to children and young people in our care. It has been developed by our young people, and is rooted in their lived experience. While the Promise includes a range specific commitments, these five principles underpin how we, as corporate parents, want to act in all that we do and every interaction we have with children and young people.

### Support you

To be happy, healthy and achieve your goals.

### Inform you

To know what your background is, why you are in care, and understand all you need to know while you're in our care.

### Involve you

To be included in conversations about you, get your voice heard, and help you be in control of your own lives as much as possible.

### Respect you

To have your own space, be confident in who you are, and be treated fairly.

### Celebrate you

To make happy memories, know your strengths as an individual and understand what you are capable of achieving.



## The Devon approach to corporate parenting

The Devon approach describes what our corporate parenting looks like in practice and how it feels. Children and young people have told us that feeling secure in who they are, their identity, and what they want to achieve in life is so important. As a result, we want our approach to corporate parenting to be about building relationships with each other which always have trust, respect and care at the centre. We will be aspirational for our children and young people and encourage them to be ambitious for themselves too. Our care and support will be there for them both in the good times and the bad. It will be unconditional and fair – regardless of background, experiences or personal choices in life.

As corporate parents in Devon, we will work together, work restoratively and put the views and experiences of children and young people at the heart of what we do.

### Working together

Corporate parenting is a joint effort. Achieving the best possible outcomes for care-experienced children and young people cannot be done alone. That is why our plan for corporate parenting is agreed alongside children and young people, and by all partners of the Devon Children and Families Partnership (DCFP). The Partnership includes Devon County Council, NHS, the Police, schools, the voluntary sector and all of the District Councils across Devon.

Together, as corporate parents, we will work collaboratively and constructively to be the best possible parents we can be. In practice, that means sharing knowledge, resources and expertise between us, wherever possible, to make sure we provide support in the most effective and consistent ways.



## Working restoratively

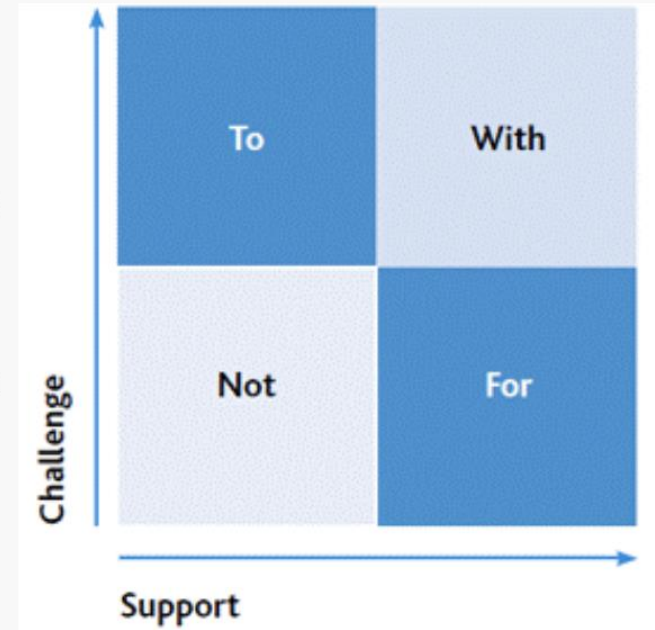
'Restorative Practice' is a term used to describe the behaviours, interactions and approaches which help build positive, healthy relationships, find ways to get through difficulties and repair harm where there has been conflict. Working in restorative ways helps us get to know the children and young people we support better, build on their strengths as individuals and find solutions to problems together. An important part of this is identifying and understanding the impact of trauma so we can support recovery and resilience.

This approach will become **who we are as corporate parents** in Devon, rather than a specific, conscious and time-limited thing that we do.

We will work with children and young people, to empower them to make positive decisions about their lives for themselves. Rather than us, the adults in positions of authority, doing things *to* them or *for* them.

We will expect everyone who works with children and young people, to know what it means to work restoratively and how to put this into practice. We are rolling out restorative practice over time by running training sessions for staff across the Devon Children and Families Partnership and developing our approach through mutual support and challenge in our meetings together.

As a result of this, we hope that children, young people, and their families, will have trust in us, feel that they have better relationships with the people who support them, and , ultimately, that they are able to achieve better outcomes in their lives.





## Hearing the voice of children and young people

All children and young people have the right to be listened to and have their views considered when adults make decisions which affect them. This is one of the United Nations Rights of a Child.

Our ambition in Devon is to create a culture of engagement, which is shared across organisations and services, which put the views and interests of care-experienced children and young people at the heart of all that we do. This ambition is built on the belief that truly hearing the voice of the child means co-designing services with them and is far more than one-off pieces of consultation. We believe that our services will be fairer, more effective, and more sustainable as a result.

Our intentions for developing participation and engagement in Devon are set out in our Children and Young People's Plan and Social Care Engagement Strategy.

### **Who helps us hear the voice of children and young people?**

Making sure care-experienced children and young people are fully represented, and are able to make their voice heard is everyone's responsibility. However, the following teams are just some of those who work directly with care-experienced children young people and play a key role in delivering on our ambition to be the best corporate parents we can be by putting young people at the heart of all we do.



## The Participation Team

The Participation Team work with children and young people to help them have their voice heard and make sure their lived experiences inform the design and delivery of local services. They run lots of groups, events and activities for young people where they can express themselves, meet others and have fun. Their purpose is to work with children and young people to ultimately effect positive change.

## The health team for children and young people in care in Devon

The Children in Care Health team are a mix of Nurses, Mental Health Practitioners and Doctors. They are a dedicated service for children and young people in care, and carry out all of the regular health assessments.



## Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs)

IROs make sure care plans meet the individual needs of children and young people in care and take into account their views, interests and experiences. As the guardian of care plans, IROs often make suggestions about what will make the plan better and can challenge professionals if promises are not being kept. The role of IROs is also to check regularly if plans are clear, updated and being followed-up on. They also praise and celebrate when things go well.

## The Virtual School

Devon's Virtual School aims to make sure all children in care enjoy their education, have access to the highest quality learning environments and achieve the best possible outcomes. Although it is not a real school, with buildings and classrooms, the Virtual School is much like any school in helping every child fulfil their potential and thrive throughout their educational journey. The Virtual School works with lots of different people to make sure we have the highest possible aspirations for children and young people's education and learning.



# National corporate parenting principles

To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people

To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes for children and young people

For children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work

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To help children and young people gain access to, and make best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners

To encourage children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings

To prepare children and young people for adulthood and independent living

To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of children and young people

## Our plan of action

We have a plan for how Devon can be the best possible corporate parents we can be. We want to be clear about what is expected of us, what we want to achieve and how we aim to do that.

Essentially, the strategy is about one thing: making the lives and prospects of all care-experienced children and young people in Devon better. It sounds simple, but it will take time, hard work and involve challenges along the way. But, by working together, holding each other to account, and delivering on our plan, we believe we can turn our words into positive outcomes in the lives of care-experienced children and young people across Devon.

### **The lived experience of care**

What we say in the strategy comes out of the conversations we've had, both with children and young people who are currently in care, and those who have recently left our care. Not only are they the people who know first-hand what it is like to live in our care, but they are also the people who are most affected by what we say and do. Understanding and acting on their views, interests and lived experiences is fundamental to being a good corporate parent. All children and young people in care are different. We recognise that they all have their own individual strengths, needs and interests.

Over the last year, we have heard from children and young people with care experience in Devon about the different parts of their lives. Under each part of our plan, we summarise what they have told us.

### **Outcomes for children and young people**

We have split the plan into seven outcomes, which cover every aspect of the lives and experiences of children and young people. If we make good progress against each of these, we will know we are doing what we set out to do. While, we want every child or young person with care experience to achieve each of these outcomes, the specific things that we plan to do, to help us achieve each outcome, won't always apply to every child or young person. This will be based on their individual needs and circumstances.



GETTING THE MOST OUT OF LIFE

Independence

Safe, stable and caring places to live and call home

Emotionally, physically and mentally healthy and well

Learning, developing, having fun and achieving

Trusted relationships, and a strong sense of identity and belonging

Making their voice heard and influencing decision-making

Safe and protected at home, online and in the community

# So, what's the plan?

## Homes and housing

- **Build bridges** to support more children and young people to remain safely with their families and avoid coming into care
- Enable more children in care to **find a place to call home** with families in Devon
- **Promote stability** for children in care by meeting their individual needs in the right place at the right time
- Help young people develop their independence and **step forward** successfully into early adulthood

## Health and wellbeing

- Promote good holistic health, wellbeing and resilience
- Improve our understanding of health and wellbeing needs among professionals, carers, and young people
- Design and deliver services as child-centred, trauma-informed and rooted in the lived experience
- Support smooth transitions within and between services
- Provide timely and effective support for additional health needs

## Learning, developing and having fun

- Be aspirational for children and young people's education and learning
- Provide extra support for babies, children and young people with additional needs
- Support children to remain in school by avoiding exclusions and absences
- Make sure nurseries, schools and colleges are inclusive spaces for care-experienced pupils
- Encourage young people to get involved in extra-curricular activities

## Relationships, identity and belonging

- Help children and young people understand their life story, and maintain strong connections with their birth families
- Support children and young people to build trusted relationships and support networks
- Provide wrap-around support for care-experienced young people who are new parents
- Respect children and young people's identity and support them to be proud of who they are

## Listening, hearing and understanding

- Put the voice of children and young people at the centre of all levels of decision-making
- Provide opportunities so that young people co-produce more services and strategic plans with us
- Let children and young people know the outcomes of decisions, what is possible to do, what is not, and why

## Being safe and protected

- Work together to understand risks, vulnerabilities and needs in the home, in communities and online
- Respond together to harm, abuse and exploitation early, effectively and in child-centred and trauma-informed ways
- Work holistically with young people to avoid criminal behaviour and activity

## Independence

- Prepare early for adulthood and independence
- Offer financial, practical and emotional support for young people who need it in early adulthood
- Support young people to take up further education, employment and training opportunities



# Homes and housing: children and young people have safe, stable and caring places to live and call home

What children and young people say to us..

Having stable and consistent placements means we can call those places home and be able to spread our wings

Finding suitable places to live, where we can stay as a young family after leaving care, means that we can be truly independent and better parents ourselves

Staying Put allows us to keep our relationships with foster carers after we turn 18

The guarantor scheme is good, but is not known about enough

Social housing can be hard to get, and private rental properties are very expensive at the moment

We would like to live as close as possible to friends, family and the things we rely on in our lives



**We will:**

- Work restoratively, and as early as possible, with families and communities so that more children and young people remain safely at home and avoid coming into care in the first place
- Continue to support family members and friends to care for children when it is right and appropriate for them to do so.
- Support more children to be adopted into local family homes, through our regional adoption agency
- Find loving, lasting and stable family homes in Devon for children and young people in care, where they feel safe, able to be themselves, and close to local family and community links.
- Recruit, train and support more carers to provide homes for children and young people with additional needs, older young people and sibling groups so they can be safe, well, and cared for
- Provide high-quality, registered support, care and accommodation for children and young people if they are in a crisis, with the aim of achieving stability and safety in their lives, and a smooth, swift, and lasting return home.
- Plan and prepare early for when young people leave care and help them understand what their housing options are in adulthood
- Work together to find suitable housing options for young people leaving care, especially if they have a young family.
- Support young people to continue living with their foster family beyond the age of 18 if they, and their former foster carers, would like to. We will explore opportunities to extend this beyond the age of 21 too.

**How we will know we are making a difference:**

- Children and young people tell us that they are feeling safer, more stable and more cared for where they are living.
- Young people tell us that, where they are living – the type of place and who they are living with - is helping them be ready to live independently as they get older.
- Fewer children are coming into our care
- More children and young people are living locally in Devon with foster carers.
- Children and young people are moving between homes much less.
- More children and young people are living in suitable houses after they leave our care.
- More young people remain living with their former foster carers after leaving care, if everyone involved wants that.

## Health and wellbeing: children and young people are emotionally, physically and mentally healthy

What children and young people say to us..

We need easier access to mental health services and emotional wellbeing support when we need it

To us, resilience is about being able to bounce forwards after something difficult happens, and maybe also about learning from our mistakes

It needs to be easier to carry on getting the right support after we turn 18

There should be some more advice, guidance and general support to help us be physically, mentally and emotionally healthy, well and resilient

Being healthy, to me, is about being able to function normally and do anything

Mental health and wellbeing support should take into account childhood trauma and what it's like to live in care

Being healthy can be about your physical, emotional and mental health: they are all connected

Mental health support during pregnancy and early parenthood is really important

Going to counselling and having therapy can be quite scary



**We will:**

- Promote good health and wellbeing in all aspects of children and young people's lives
- Support young people to have good self-care and make healthy life choices for themselves and the people around them.
- Offer wellbeing and resilience advice, guidance and support, including online and some face-to-face support. Social workers, PAs and health professionals will help young people access the right service at the right time.
- Equip and empower young people to have the flexibility, wherever possible, to decide the health and wellbeing support they receive.
- Give young people a health passport after their 16th birthday, which outlines their health history and how they can access health care.
- Offer children and young people the opportunity to have an individual health review annually up to the age of 18.
- Make sure that young people turning 18, who no longer require an annual health assessment, are registered with a GP and a dentist, have their eyesight checked regularly, and understand how they can continue to be supported as a young adult
- Support young people, wherever possible, to access dental care, eye care, mental health services, sexual health and drug and alcohol services.
- Advocate for improved access to health services, including dental and eye care, and mental health, that takes into account the lived experience of young people.
- Help young people, and their foster carers and PAs, understand mental health and wellbeing.
- Give children and young people time to get to know the adult working with them, so getting support is less scary.
- Make sure mental health support continues when young people become an adult if they need it, with clear transition plans so that the right referrals can be made at the right time.
- Support children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) early, so they can be healthy, well and achieve good health and education outcomes.
- Make sure education, health care plans (EHCPs) are up to date, aspirational and represent the voice of the child



**We will:**

- If a young person is becoming a parent, we will help them access the support they and their baby need. We want to be the best possible 'corporate grandparents' we can be.
- Join up pregnancy support services, and enhance the targeted health visiting offer, so that young people are supported during pregnancy and early parenthood.
- Make sure, as new parents, young people have opportunities to make their voice heard during pregnancy. This includes opportunities for mutual peer support with other young parents
- Make sure, wherever possible and appropriate, help and support for health and wellbeing is consistent, wherever young people are living, and that it is provided either at home, within the community or at school or college.
- Make sure that, if support is being transferred within and between health services, this will be smooth, and that young people will still get the right level of support at the right time.

**How we will know we are making a difference:**

- Children and young people tell us that they feel more emotionally, physically and mentally healthy and well.
- Children and young people tell us that they don't feel as held back by their emotional or mental health needs and that they know what to do if they are feeling unwell.
- Children and young people tell us that they do not feel judged if they choose to have a baby and become a parent.
- Children and young people tell us that the health care and support they receive is more joined-up, consistent and is more tailored to their needs as an individual.
- Children and young people know who to turn to for support with their health and wellbeing, and that they trust that we will listen and care.
- More children and young people are registered with a GP and a dentist.
- All children and young people are fully up-to-date with all of their immunisations.
- More children and young people have health assessments which are up-to-date and on time.
- Children and young people have better emotional wellbeing and mental health.
- Fewer children and young people require inpatient care.

# Learning, developing, having fun and achieving: children and young people have inclusive and enriching environments to learn, develop, have fun and achieve

What children and young people say to us..

Our mental health is often what stops us from fully engaging with education

We like to do fun things with our friends outside of school

Having stability in the rest of our lives helps us to keep engaging with our education

Some of us don't like going to school because of bullying

Some of us need some extra support to access our education and groups and activities in the community





**We will:**

- Be ambitious for children and young people's education and learning. This means keeping an up-to-date Personal Education Plan (PEP), which we will develop with the young person, that has their personal interests and ambitions represented throughout.
- Be aspirational for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities and support them to achieve highly through high-quality, up-to-date and ambitious Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) and additional support provided by schools.
- Help children and young people feel safe, happy and well at school by working closely with schools. This includes supporting them if they are bullied, as well as working together to prevent bullying in the first place.
- Work with schools to make sure exclusions only happen as a last resort.
- Make sure children and young people have the technology they need to access any online learning.
- Support children and young people with transitions from one school to another to ensure their learning is continuous.
- Help children and young people take part in sport and leisure activities, as well as extra-curricular skills-building awards.
- Support babies and young children to grow and develop well in early life. This includes identifying and supporting any additional needs as early as possible when they first come into our care.

**How we will know we are making a difference:**

- Children and young people tell us that they are enjoying learning and being at school more and feel able to do the best they possibly can.
- Children and young people tell us that they have times where they can have fun and take part in activities that they want to do.
- Children and young people are changing schools less and are less likely to be excluded or be absent from school.
- Children and young people are achieving highly at school.
- Young children and babies, who are in our care, are developing well and are more likely to reach key development goals.
- Outcomes for our children and young people are the same as children who are not in care.

# Relationships, identity and belonging: children and young people build trusted relationships with the people in their lives, are able to be themselves and are free from stigma

What children and young people say to us..

Changing placements and workers regularly makes it harder to get to know and trust them

Sometimes we can feel singled out as someone who is in care

It would be good to have some more advice and support about healthy sex and relationships

It's often hard to talk to foster carers about sex and relationships

We want to be able to contact our PA or social worker easily when we really need them

Some of us would like to know who our birth families are and be supported to see them on our own terms



**We will:**

- Help children and young people know their life-story and understand why they are living in care if they would like to
- Support children and young people to build and maintain good relationships with birth and extended families, wherever possible, to make sure they have strong support networks outside of our care.
- Develop relationships with children and young people, which are built on trust and respect.
- Celebrate achievements, events and key milestones.
- Reduce the stigma that children and young people often face because they are living or have lived in care. This includes the language that we use ourselves, the actions we take, and the way that services work to support them.
- Make sure all communication is understood, especially if English is not a young person's first language and/or if they have any speech, language or communication needs.
- Make sure everyone working with children and young people has an improved understanding of gender identity and sexual orientation, so that young people feel respected, supported and empowered to be themselves.
- Take steps to make sure we have a consistent workforce so that there are fewer changes in Personal Advisors, Social Workers and other professionals. Where a change needs to happen, we will tell children and young people about this as soon as possible, and before any change happens.
- Keep in touch with children and young people, through PAs, after they leave care, if they would like this. Even if a young person moves away from Devon for any reason, we will still check in with them if they would like that.
- Understand the links between young people's sense of identity and belonging, and their mental health and wellbeing.



**We will:**

- Help children and young people learn about healthy sex and relationships.
- Support foster carers, through their training and inductions, to help young people find it easier to talk to them about sex, relationships, identity and belonging.
- Support young people to develop wider networks and good relationships with the key adults in their lives.

**How we will know we are making a difference:**

- Children and young people tell us that they have stronger and more trustworthy relationships with the adults in their life.
- Children and young people tell us that they have supportive friendships and healthy romantic relationships (if they are in one).
- Social workers and personal advisors change much less, meaning children and young people are able to build better relationships with them over time.
- Children and young people are more likely to keep in touch with us after they leave care, so we can best help and support them if they need and want it.
- More young people benefit from Family Group Conferences, with the aim of developing strong links with family, friends, and their communities.



# Listening, hearing and understanding: children and young people make their voice heard and shape how services are designed and delivered

What children and young people say to us..

We want to make our voice heard about the things that affect us

We should be listened to whenever a decision is being made about our lives

We would like more opportunities to meet up with other care-experienced young people and support each other

We don't want to be spoken about as if we weren't there or as if we were just a statistic





**We will:**

- Put the views, interests and lived experience of young people at the heart of how services are designed and delivered
- Introduce children and young people to the Participation Team when they come into our care and let them know how they can make their voice heard.
- Continue to expand the use of the Mind Of My Own (MOMO) app.
- Set up opportunities for children and young people to meet other care-experienced young people.
- Enable care-experienced young people to play an active role in staff recruitment.
- Organise opportunities for children and young people to make their voice heard directly with the people who help make the decisions.
- Be honest with children and young people about what is possible to do and what is not, and why that is.
- Support children and young people to access independent visiting and advocacy services to make sure they are fully represented in the decisions affecting their lives.
- Make sure the views, interests and lived experiences of children and young people are listened to and taken into account in all individual plans and reviews.
- Proactively seek the views and experiences of children and young people who we may not hear from as much. For example, through the Youth Offending Service, Police, Youth Services and mental health services. We will make sure all services are informed and shaped by children and young people.
- Support children and young people to be active and engaged members of their community and wider society.

**How we will know we are making a difference:**

- Children and young people tell us that they are able to make their voice heard and feel that they have a say in the decisions which affect their life.
- What children and young people tell us about their lives and experiences in care, wherever possible, leads directly to positive changes, and we always let them know when and how that happens.
- We show that the views and interests of children and young people, are at the heart all levels of decision-making.
- We are held to account for the things that we agree we will do.
- More children and young people are making use of independent visiting and advocacy services while in care.
- More children and young people are regularly involved with participation groups, events and activities



## **Safe and protected: children and young people are safe and protected from harm, abuse and exploitation**

What children and young people say to us..



**We will:**

- Work together to protect children and young people from harm, abuse and exploitation, whether it happens inside or outside the home, or online.
- Make sure where children and young people live, study, work or have fun are safe and inclusive spaces.
- Support children and young people early to avoid criminal activity and risky behaviours.
- Continue to support children and young people and strive for their best outcomes unconditionally if they are in the youth or criminal justice system.
- Recognise young people ‘as a young person first’ in all interactions with the criminal justice system and police.
- Work restoratively with children and young people, if they come into contact with police officers and criminal justice system, making sure we build on their strengths, are child-centred, trauma-informed and have their voice at the heart.
- Work together to understand the risks and vulnerabilities that children and young people may experience in life, making sure we take every step possible to avoid them being criminalised unnecessarily.
- Communicate and work closely between different agencies, at all levels, to share intelligence, knowledge and understanding of the issues affecting children and young people. Wherever possible, we will work together as partner agencies to achieve solutions to complex and multi-faceted harms.
- Improve our skill, knowledge and confidence in identifying and responding to child sexual abuse and sexually harmful behaviour to better support children and young people.
- Develop our understanding of exploitation and children who go missing from home, in order that our response to risks is effective and that we work with young people as early as possible to prevent contextual safeguarding risks and vulnerabilities.

**How we will know we are making a difference:**

- Children and young people tell us that they feel safer and more protected in their homes and communities.
- Children and young people are better protected from harm, abuse and exploitation.
- Children and young people are less likely to be involved in any criminal activity, either as a victim of crime or as an offender.



# Independence: young people leave care and become independent and thriving adults

What children and young people say to us..

We would like work and training opportunities to link in more with our own skills, interests and circumstances

We should be made aware of what support we are entitled to when we turn 18

We would like some advice, guidance and support about managing money, including setting up bank accounts and renting

Financial and practical support is really important in helping us live independently

Mental health needs and instability in the rest of our lives might be why we are struggling to access work and training opportunities

Apprenticeships and work experience are really valuable in helping us take the first step in our working lives





**We will:**

- Support young people to prepare, as early as possible, for adulthood and independence through practical, emotional and some financial support, advice and guidance.
- Help young people save some money regularly while they're in care to set them up for later in life.
- Help young people learn about managing money and living independently through a Tenancy-ready course.
- Support young people practically, emotionally and financially, if they are in Further or Higher Education, and link them into other forms of funding to make sure there are no barriers to being able to continue learning.
- Provide more apprenticeships, traineeships, work experience and internships, which cover a broader range of organisations and roles.
- Help young people take up education, employment and training opportunities by helping them get support for their mental health and wellbeing and overcome any logistical barriers like transport.
- Work with young people, from an early age, to build up their skills and confidence so that they are ready to take advantage of work and training opportunities.

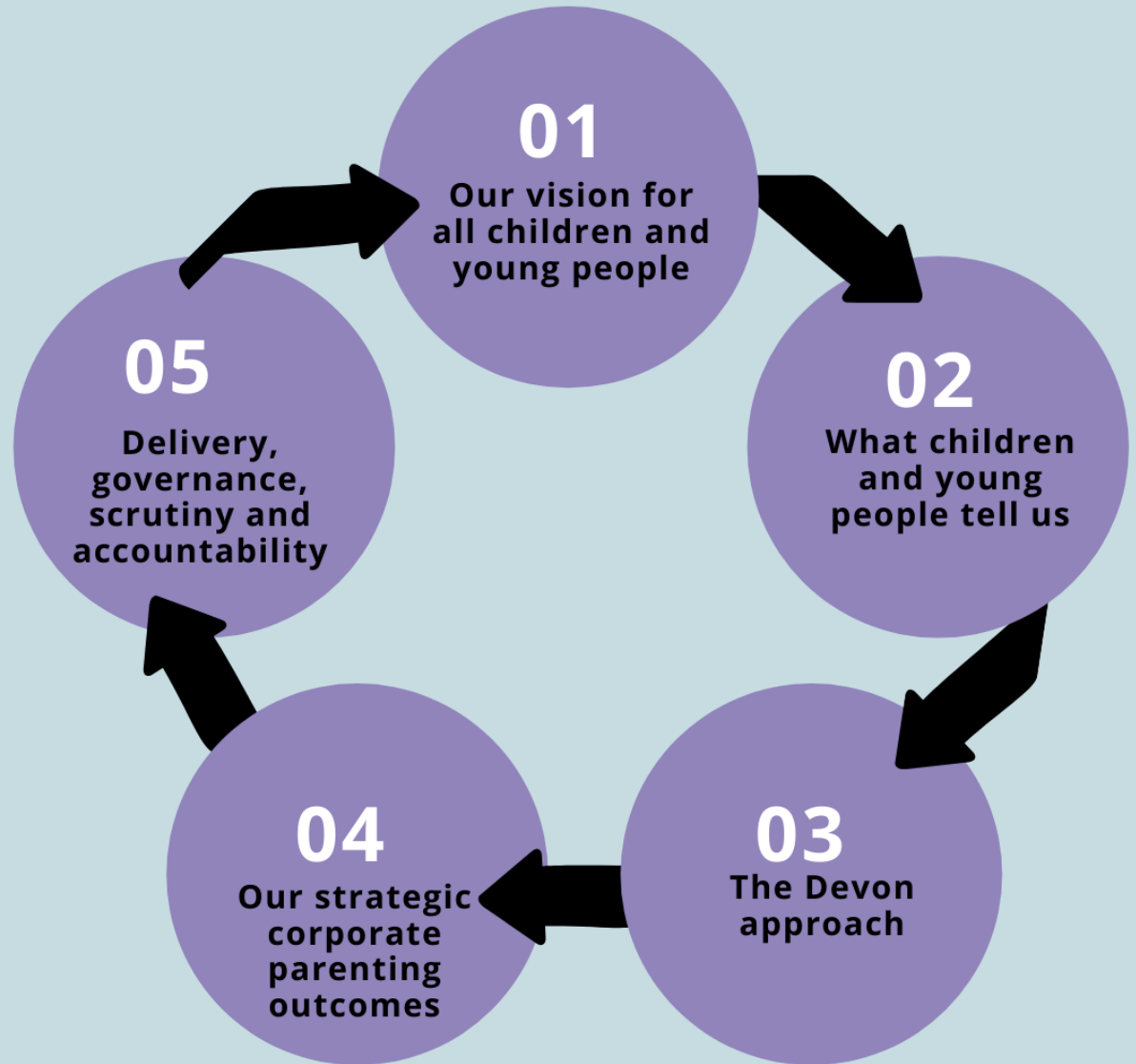
**How we will know we are making a difference:**

- Young people tell us that they feel more able to live independently as a young adult and sort out things like budgeting, paying rent and bills, and claiming financial support.
- Young people tell us that their ambitions for life - like jobs, homes, families, and education - feel more achievable and that they are more motivated to reach them.
- More young people have an up-to-date Pathway Plan (meaning it has been reviewed with the young person in the last 6 months) after they turn 16.
- More young people are either studying, working, or on a training scheme or apprenticeship.
- More young people are learning to drive, so that they can be more independent in adult life.
- More young people are attending University.





# Strategy Cycle



## Delivering on our aims, making a difference and improving lives

This strategy is about improving the lives of children and young people who experience care. The key to this is turning words on a page into actions and outcomes.

### **Putting our plans into practice**

We will work together to deliver a set of strategic actions, which will be outlined in the Corporate Parenting Actions Plan and delivered through multi-agency groups.

### **Engagement and co-production**

We will continue to engage closely with care-experienced children and young people to understand their experiences, identify where more work still needs to be done and co-develop shared solutions. They will hold us accountable to what we commit to doing.

### **Checking on progress**

Checking on our progress is a vital part of the process. This is how we will know and understand what difference we are making. By doing this, it enables us to get to the bottom of why something might not be happening quite the way it should, allowing us to put it right. Checking on progress will require a combination of quantitative measures, and hearing the voice and lived experience of children and young people.

### **Being accountable**

To make sure we do what we say we will, we will be accountable to children and young people with care experience, to the public (through our elected members), and to each other.

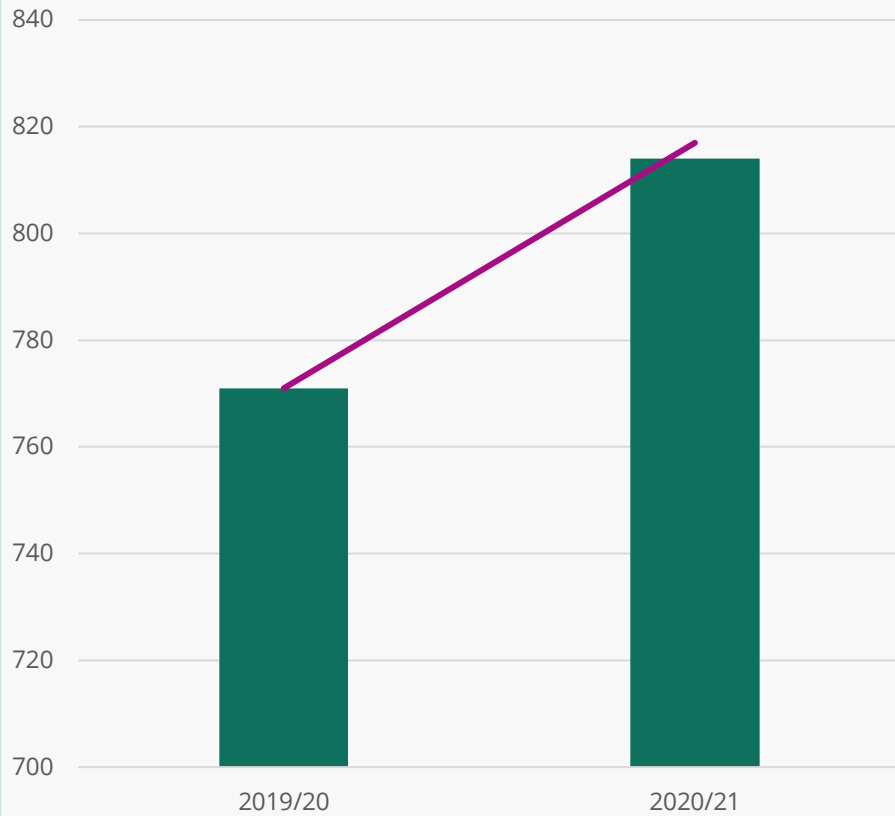
# Appendices

1. At a glance: care experience in Devon
2. Strategy summaries
2. Legislative context
3. Needs profile
4. Local strategic context
5. Using language that cares
6. Participation and engagement
7. The Promise in full
8. How we will check on progress and make a difference
9. Scrutiny

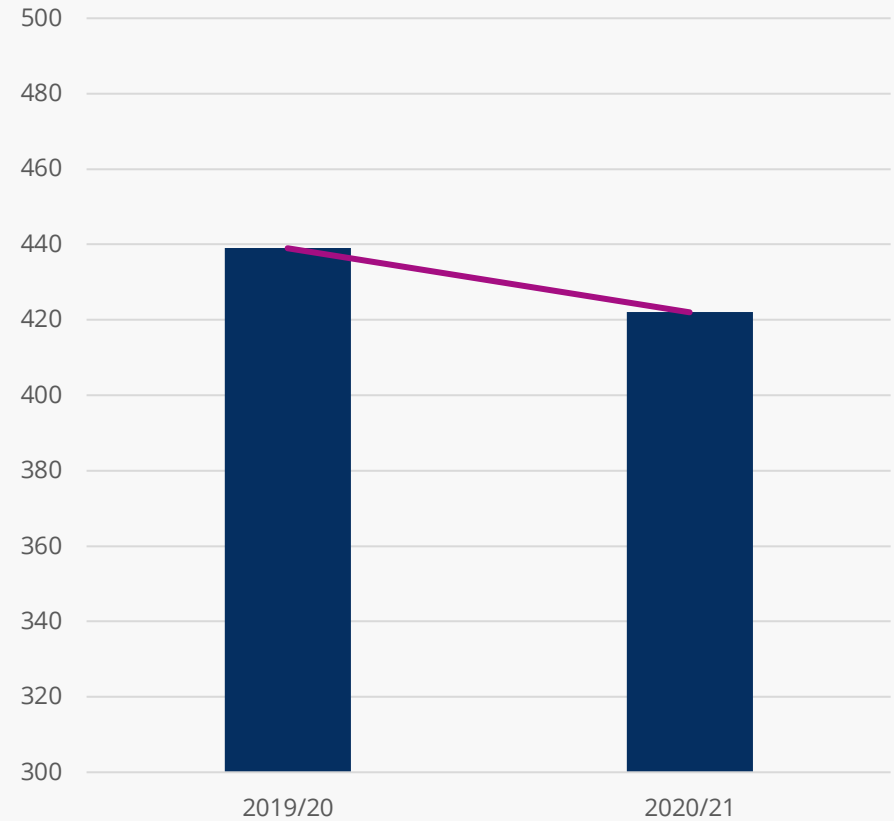
## At a glance: care experience in Devon

The number of children and young people in our care has risen in recent years. Between April 2020 and April 2021, there was a 6% increase. 56 in every 10,000 under 18 year-olds in Devon are now in our care.

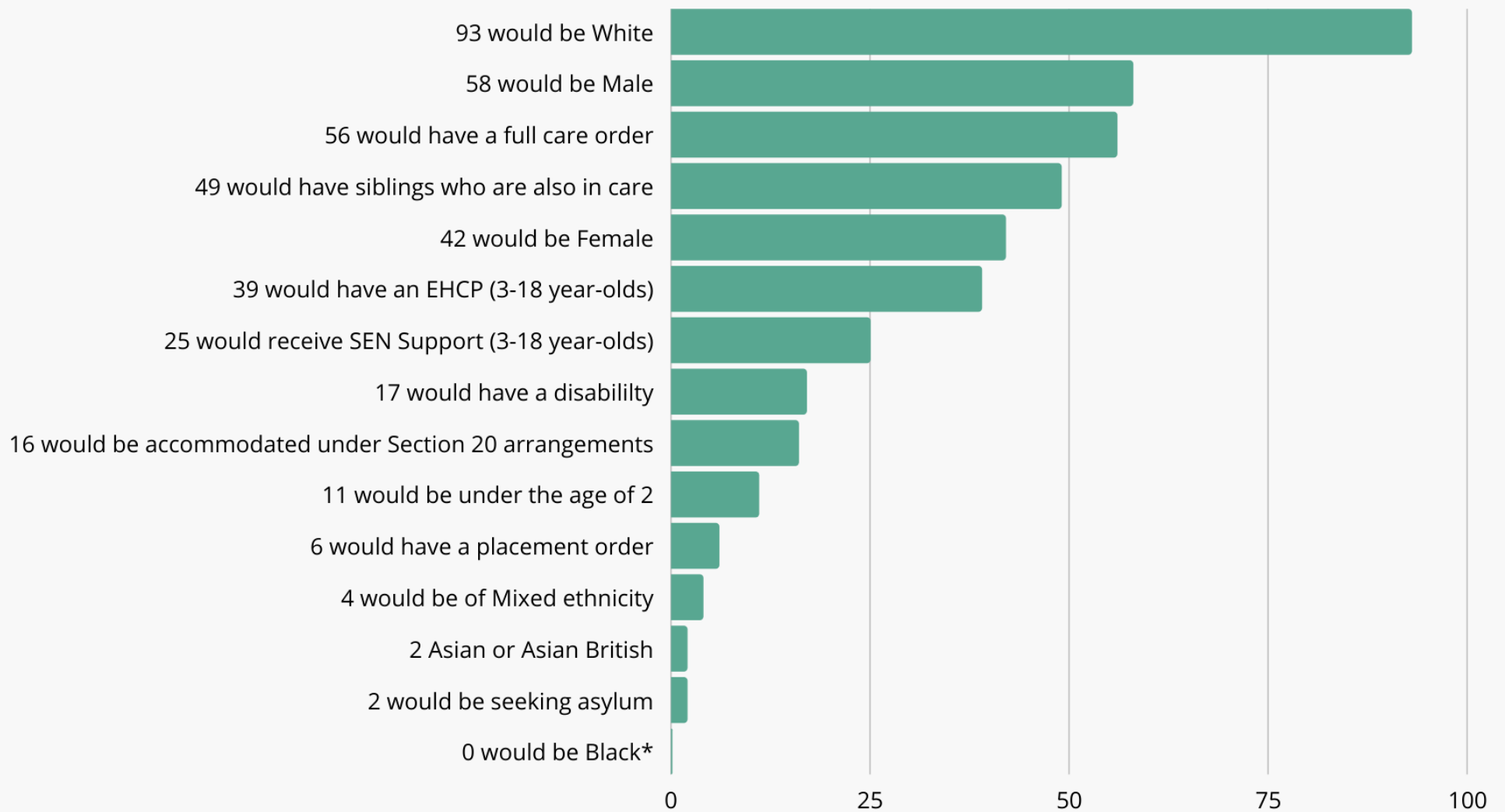
Number of children in the care of Devon County Council at financial year-end



Number of young people, 17-25, in receipt of leaving care services from Devon County Council at financial year-end



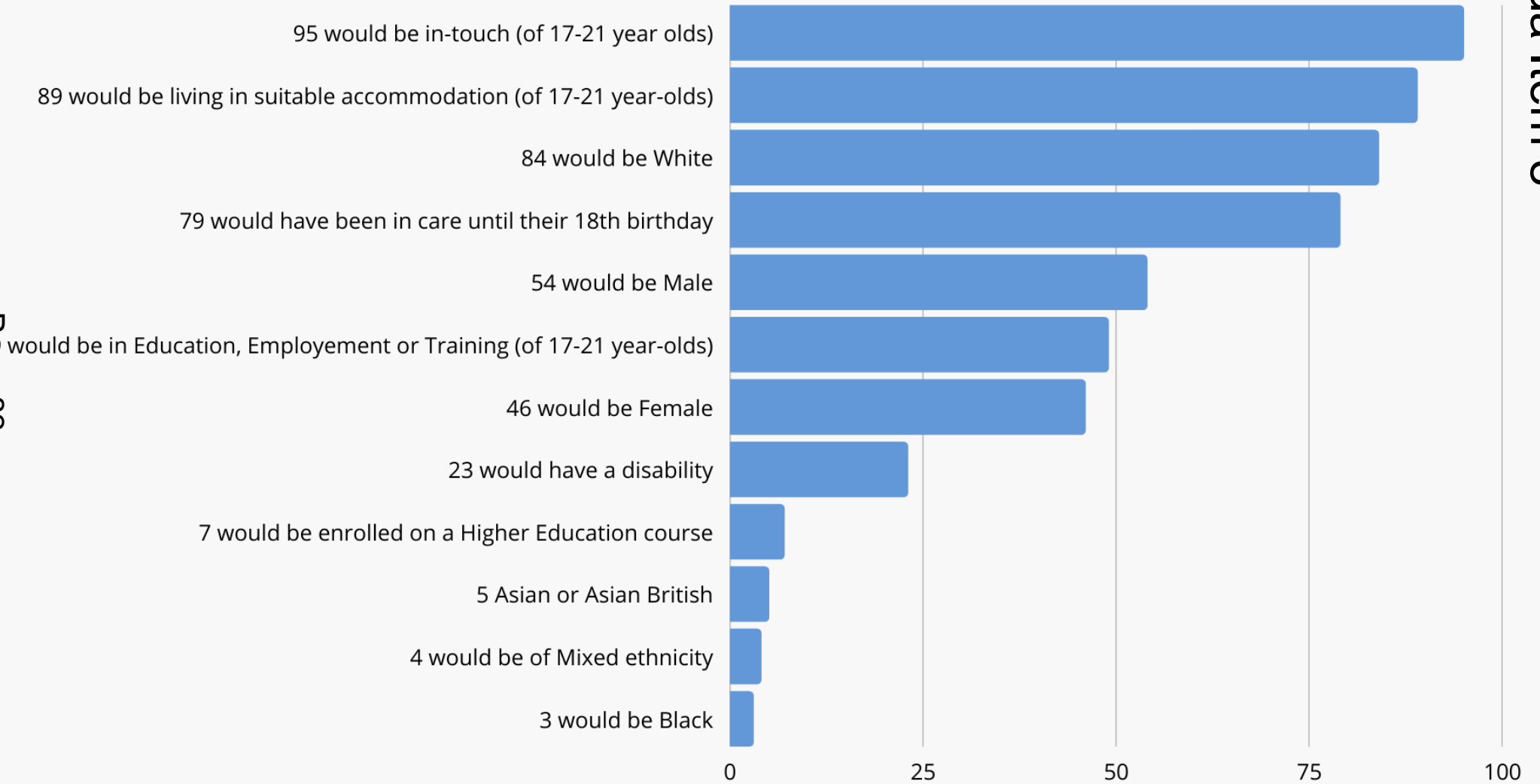
# If there were 100 children and young people in our care..



\*0.1% of children and young people in our care are Black



# If there were 100 young people receiving leaving care services in Devon..



## Strategy summaries

- [Young People's version](#)
- [Easy-read version](#)

## Legislative context

### Legislation

- [Children Act 1989](#)
- [Children \(Leaving Care\) Act 2000](#)
- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Children and Families Act 2014](#)
- [Children and Social Work Act 2017](#)

### Statutory guidance

- [Applying Corporate Parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers](#)
- [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018](#)

### National strategies and reviews

- [Keep on Caring: supporting young people from care to independence](#)
- [The Independent Review of Children's Social Care \(The Case for Change\)](#)
- [National Implementation Advisor for Care Leavers: Second Report](#)

## Needs profile

- [Devon Corporate Parenting Needs Profile](#)

## Local strategic context

- [Children and Young People's Plan 2019-2023](#)
- [SEND Strategy](#)
- Sufficiency Strategy
- [Integrated Care System for Devon](#)

## Using language that cares

Check out this [Video](#) to find out more from our young people about the importance of using language that cares. We are working with young people and professionals to make sure we are communicating in the best ways.

## Jargon buster

We've put together a useful guide on the [SUSU website](#), explaining what a lot of the different words and phrases we use mean.

## Participation and engagement

Our Social care Engagement Strategy sets out how we will listen, hear, and understand the children and young people we care for. We want principles and approaches of participation, engagement and co-production to be a part of all that we do in Devon. This means all adults, who work with care-experienced children and young people, are skilled, knowledgeable and committed to putting their voice at the heart of both individual and strategic decision-making.

### Children and young people’s toolkit

The image (below right) is a toolkit for children and young people to use to make sure they are getting their voice heard and are involved in the decision-making process.

## HOW TO GET YOUR VOICE HEARD

|                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>WHAT TO ASK OF ADULTS</b></p> | <p><b>LISTEN</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where are my views &amp; opinions in my plan?</li> <li>Have you considered my views in your organisations plans?</li> <li>Where am I in your strategic plans?</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                              | <p><b>HEAR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do you know whose voice you are hearing?</li> <li>Can you listen to me in lots of different ways?</li> <li>When did you ask me?</li> <li>Have things changed?</li> <li>How do you know I am involved?</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                      | <p><b>UNDERSTAND</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How will you use what I say to change what you do?</li> <li>What difference will it make to me?</li> <li>Who will check that it has?</li> <li>Who will tell me and how?</li> <li>How will you know how well you're doing for me?</li> <li>Show me, tell me, prove it!</li> </ul>                                                                                            |
| <p><b>WHAT TO EXPECT</b></p>        | <p><b>To be asked first</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To be given a choice of when, how &amp; who you share your views, opinions and experiences with.</li> <li>To be asked in lots of different ways by workers, surveys, online &amp; in groups</li> <li>To be offered support in expressing your views &amp; opinions e.g. Mind of my Own, Advocacy &amp; Stand Up Speak Up Groups</li> </ul> | <p><b>To be listened to &amp; for adults to act on what you say</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To be given opportunities to discuss your views, opinions &amp; experiences through Stand Up Speak Up groups</li> <li>Skilled workers who are committed to listening to you &amp; know what to do with what you say</li> <li>To be considered an equal partner in developing plans that leads to a better service for you</li> </ul> | <p><b>To be told how your views have affected decision making</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workers to explain to you why decisions are made &amp; how your views were used.</li> <li>To be told about your rights &amp; democracy &amp; how to have a say.</li> <li>Your views &amp; feedback to inform staff development &amp; training.</li> <li>Changes to be made and we will make sure you know are told.</li> </ul> |

Check out The Promise in full below..

## Inform me!

### We will..

- Talk to you about why you are in care and help you understand more about your family.
- Help you understand what happens when you become an adult and leave care.
- Make sure you know a person you trust who you can speak to for support.
- Let you know all you need to know.
- Speak to you in ways you understand and that are caring.
- Let you know personally if we are no longer going to be able to work with you or are leaving.

## Involve me!

### We will..

- Include you and listen to you in meetings.
- Use positive language if we are talking about you.
- Ask you about which possessions you want to keep and who you want to stay in touch with.
- Try to let you stay overnight at your new place, to test it out, if you need to move home.
- Try to give you choices about things, based on your views and wishes.
- Help you get your voice heard.
- Do what we say we're going to do. We won't make a promise if we can't keep it.
- Protect your confidentiality by not telling your foster carers what you tell us unless you are at risk of serious harm. If we need to tell other people, we will explain that to you.

## Celebrate me!

### We will..

- Celebrate your achievements - we will have high ambitions and aspirations for you.
- Celebrate religious festivals with you, or help you celebrate them with others.
- Celebrate your 'moving in to foster-family day' each year if you would like that.

## Respect me!

### We will..

- Check your bedroom sensitively and ask your consent. We will respect your personal space and belongings.
- Not make you stand out as being in care. We will have a conversation with you to find out what you prefer.
- Treat you fairly and equally in the family so that you feel at home.
- Try to make sure that if you stay over with other people, that you know them and enjoy being with them.
- Understand what it means to be a teenager and the need to take some controlled risks in life.
- Understand and respect your identity, including your religion or beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity, disabilities or health needs and ethnicity.
- Help you keep hold of your birth language and culture.

## Support me!

### We will..

- Help you make happy memories.
- Support you to make friends and stay in touch with all the people who are important to you.
- Support you to build your confidence and overcome your fears.
- Support you to do your best in school – especially if you're having difficulties at school, like with bullying.
- Help you find work experience opportunities related to what you're interested in.
- Support you where possible to have a mobile phone and use it safely from age 11.
- Support you to have a healthy lifestyle in body and mind.
- Support you with opportunities to try new things and explore your interests, ambitions and aspirations.

If you feel that a Promise is not being followed, please talk this through with your foster carer, social worker or IRO.

Occasionally there are very particular reasons why something might not be possible. This should be explained to you in a way you understand.



# Corporate parenting

# Governance structure

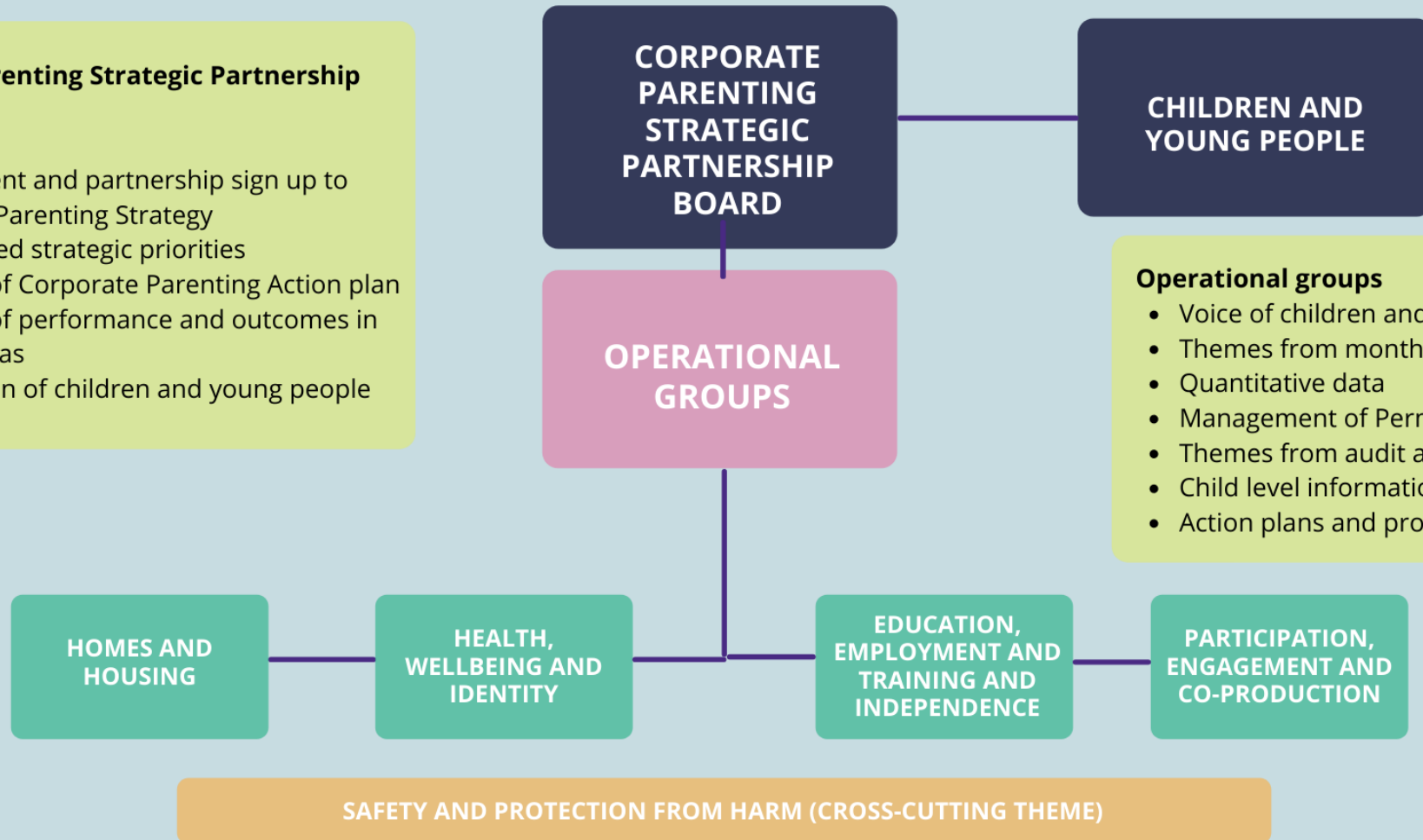
## Governance, accountability and scrutiny arrangements

These are the groups and reporting structures through which we will deliver our strategy, be accountable to what we say we will do, and ultimately make sure we are achieving positive outcomes for care-experienced children and young people in Devon.

### Corporate Parenting Strategic Partnership Board

- Development and partnership sign up to Corporate Parenting Strategy
- Agree shared strategic priorities
- Oversight of Corporate Parenting Action plan
- Oversight of performance and outcomes in priority areas
- Participation of children and young people

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### Operational groups

- Voice of children and young people
- Themes from monthly challenge forum
- Quantitative data
- Management of Permanence Tracker
- Themes from audit and IRO challenge
- Child level information
- Action plans and progress updates

## Scrutiny

### **The role of Elected Members**

Councillors play a fundamental role in protecting and supporting care-experienced children and young people by advocating for improved services for care-experienced young people, as well as scrutinising and challenging services to achieve optimal outcomes.

Elected members will scrutinise the delivery of our aims and principles as set out in this strategy, through the Corporate Parenting Strategic Partnership Board. Working with children and young people, to act as a 'critical friend', they will check on progress to make sure children and young people with care-experience are seeing improved outcomes in their lives.

### **Corporate Parenting guide**

The Local Government Association (LGA) have produced a resource pack to support Elected Members to be effective corporate parents and 'critical friends'. The pack contains information on the relevant legislation and policy reviews, local case studies, as well as a set of key lines of enquiry.

Scan the QR code on the right to download the guide.



# FINDING A PLACE CALLED HOME

Providing  
permanence,  
stability and loving  
care for children  
and young people  
with care  
experience



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Finding a place called home ..... 18

Promoting stability ..... 22

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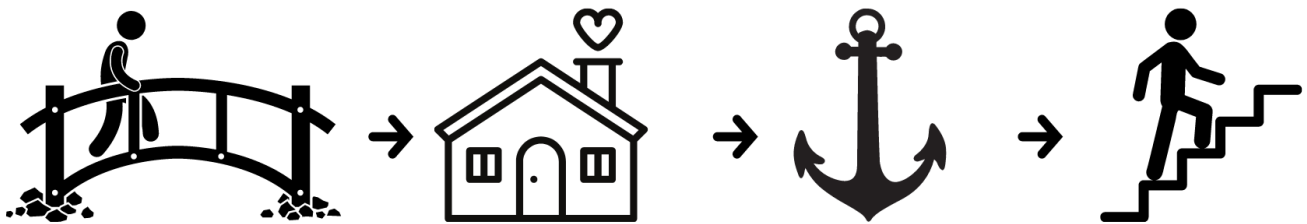
**Appendices..... 31**

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## Strategy on a page

Delivering sufficiency across children's social care is about meeting the individual needs of children and young people, and promoting good outcomes for them, at important points throughout their childhood and early adulthood.

Our strategic priorities for sufficiency in Devon are split into four key outcomes, which cover the experience of children and young people at different points in their interaction with children's social care. While each is distinct in the actions it represents, they do not work in isolation. Rather, our progress against each outcome is dependent on the others.



1

### **BUILDING BRIDGES**

Protecting children and young people, and strengthening families, so they can live safely at home

**Outcome:**  
Fewer children and young people are coming into care

2

### **FINDING A PLACE CALLED HOME**

Providing caring family homes in Devon for children and young people in care

**Outcome:**  
More children, while in our care, live in family homes in Devon

3

### **PROMOTING STABILITY**

Offering safe, stable and caring places to live, so children and young people can get the most out of life

**Outcome:**  
Children and young people in care have their individual needs supported at the right time in a safe, stable and caring environment

4

### **STEPPING FORWARD**

Supporting young people to be where they need to be in life so they can thrive and be independent

**Outcome:**  
More children move to homes which are most suited to them, and young people find suitable and affordable places to live after leaving care



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## Duties, responsibilities and principles

We have a responsibility, by law, to provide sufficient accommodation and support which meets the needs of children and young people in care, and those who have recently left our care at the age of 18.

Our Sufficiency Strategy sets out how we will deliver on our duty to be good corporate parents for children and young people with care experience. Our strategic aims come in the context of the impacts of the pandemic on the lives and prospects of children and young people, as well as resulting pressures on the local market and workforce. The strategy should also be considered alongside the priorities of the Corporate Parenting Strategy, [Integrated Care System for Devon](#) and the [Devon Children and Families Partnership \(DCFP\)](#).

### The Sufficiency Duty

The ‘sufficiency duty’ requires Local Authorities and children’s safeguarding partners to ensure that there is sufficient local accommodation and support to meet the needs of all children and young people in care, or that there is a plan in place to move towards that position. We are required to produce a strategy that describes how we, working with our local partners, intend to meet this duty for the children and young people in our care. Commissioning standards on securing sufficient accommodation and support for children in care, also apply to children in need who are at risk of entering care or custody.

This duty is set out in law through the Children Act 1989. It has since been strengthened by the introduction of [Sufficiency Statutory Guidance \(2010\)](#) and the [Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations \(implementation April 2011\)](#).

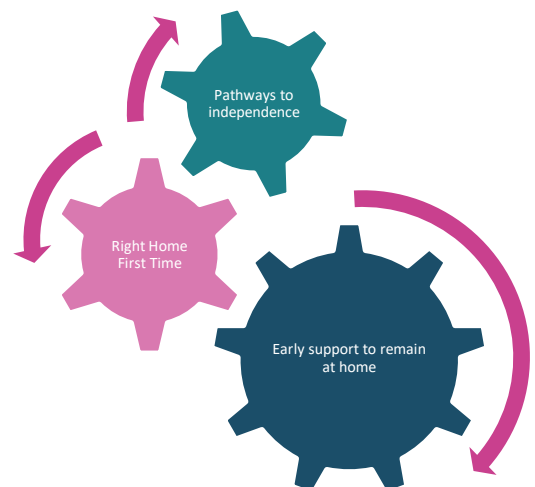
### Our approach to Sufficiency

We are committed to supporting families to remain safely together and, if children and young people come into our care, we will do all we can to help them return safely and swiftly back to their families. Our approach to sufficiency is built on the principle that children are best brought up in families.

Like all local authorities, Devon has faced increasing demand for its services in a climate of challenging budgets, and increasingly costly accommodation for children who need our care. In this context, to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and families and provide stability and sustainability to the care system as a whole, we are focused on providing the right help at the right time in order to prevent risks and needs escalating.

For children and young people in our care, where living within their birth family and wider network is not a viable option, we want them to find the right home first time round. Wherever possible, we want this to be with a fostering family in Devon.

Our responsibilities as corporate parents also extend to those young people leaving our care who are approaching, or who have reached, adulthood. We are committed to equipping young people leaving care to thrive as independent young adults. This involves supporting their access to affordable housing which meets their individual needs, circumstances and aspirations.



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## Guiding principles

1. Children and young people are best brought up in families
2. Children and young people have a right to have their voice heard in all decision-making about their lives
3. Children and young people in Devon's care should be able to live and grow up in Devon wherever possible
4. Building trusted relationships with children, young people, and their families, and working *with* them restoratively and in trauma-informed ways, leads to better outcomes

## Corporate Parenting

Corporate Parenting is the responsibility of Devon County Council, working with our partners, to be loving, caring and aspirational for all children and young people who are in our care, or who have recently left our care as adults. Our Corporate Parenting Strategy 2022-24 sets out our vision for all care-experienced children and young people, the principles which underpin our approach to corporate parenting, and the outcomes we will work together to achieve.

Our vision is the same for all children and young people in Devon. Regardless of whether or not they have experience of living in care:

**Every** child and young person in Devon should have the best possible start in life and the opportunity to thrive. We want to ensure children and young people receive the right support, at the right time, and in the right place.

Being responsible and effective corporate parents, above all else, means protecting children and young people from harm and keeping them safe. But, importantly, it is about always striving for their best interests, nurturing their ambitions and helping our children and young people get the most out of life. Ultimately, it means they grow into independent and thriving young adults. At its heart, Corporate Parenting means always asking ourselves “**would this be good enough for my child?**”<sup>1</sup>.

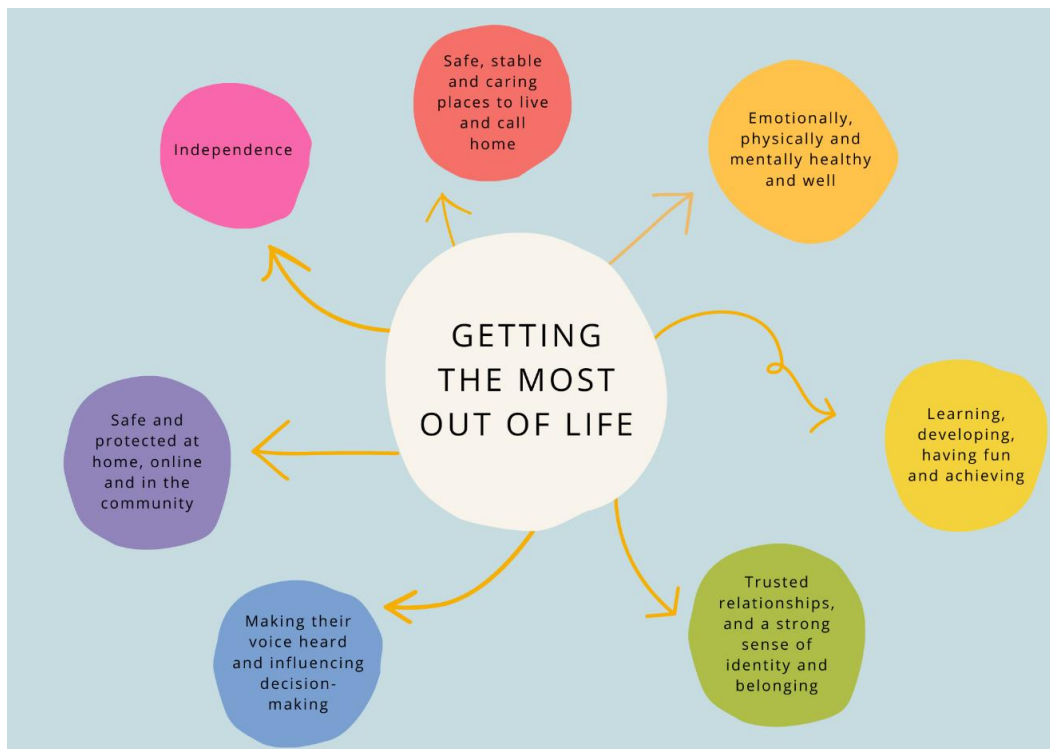
### Our corporate parenting outcomes

Our strategy is built on seven corporate parenting outcomes which, together, enable care-experienced children and young people to get the most out of life. One of these is that children and young people have safe, stable and caring places to live and call home. We recognise the importance of the places that children and young people live in enabling them to be mentally and physically healthy and well, remain safe and protected and go on to learn, develop and achieve. The Sufficiency Strategy is the vehicle through which we aim to deliver on this.

Having the right place to live, and the right support at the right time, is fundamental to achieving our vision for children and young people with care-experience. As corporate parents, it is our responsibility to make sure that children in Devon, who cannot live with their birth families, live in homes where they are safe, nurtured, can have fun and are supported to get the most out of life. To do this, we have to have enough of the right kinds of homes: emergency homes, foster families, residential homes, kinship carers, adopters, and a range of suitable and affordable accommodation for care experienced young people.

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<sup>1</sup> [Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)



## Delivering on our aims and making a difference

We are committed to delivering what we say we will do in this strategy in order to make a positive difference for children and young people and help them achieve good outcomes in their lives. To do this, we will turn our words into action, by putting in place the necessary resource and ambition, tracking our progress over time and holding each other to account against what we set out to achieve.

Below this strategy, sit our plans which cover the commitments we make in this document and include more detail on what we will do. These will be delivered by the relevant services. Governance for the Sufficiency Strategy will come through the Place Called Home Programme Board, which will report to our Corporate Parenting Partnership Board. This ensures our ambitions for securing safe, stable and caring homes for children and young people, are aligned and connected with our strategic aims for the other areas of children and young people’s lives, including their education, health and wellbeing and independence. This is where we will be accountable to children and young people, elected members (representing the general public) and each other.

The Corporate Parenting governance structure can be found in the [appendices](#).

## What our children and young people tell us about where they live

Over the last 18 months, through meetings with senior leaders, regular engagement groups and events, as well as surveys and polls online, we have heard directly from children and young people about their lives and experiences living in care in Devon. A key part of this has been about hearing from them about what life has been like for them during the pandemic, and what some of the specific impacts have been on those with care experience. What we say in this strategy comes out of these conversations with our young people. On the following page, are the key themes of what they tell us about where they live and how they are supported to get the most out of life.

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**“We don’t like moving lots, and we don’t like being with people we don’t really know and who don’t like the same things as us. If we stay in the same place for a while, we are more likely to be able to call it home.”**

**“Our individual needs should be considered so you can support us in the ways we need it. We want you to always see our strengths, not just the things we’re not so good at.”**

**“Foster carers and professionals need the right support to be able to help children and young people.”**

**“Residential homes can sometimes be inclusive and supportive communities, but other times they feel scary and threatening.”**

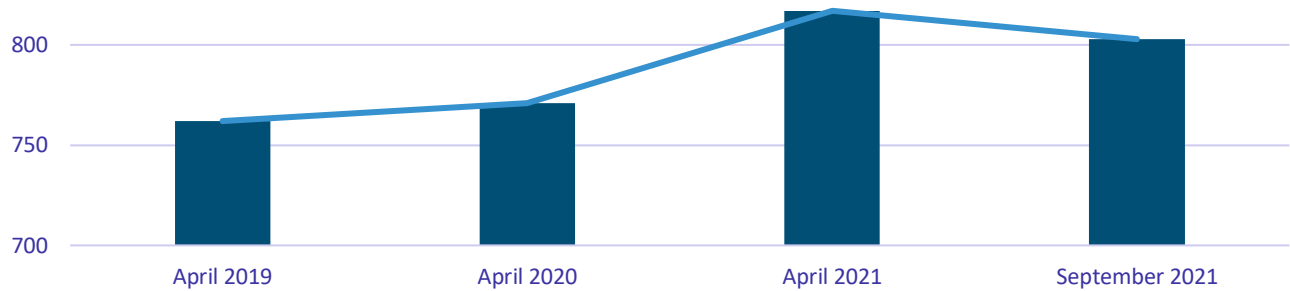
**“We don’t want to live in places that are a long way from family and friends.”**

# The Devon context

## Children in our care and our care experienced young people

The number of children and young people in our care rose by 4% between April 2020 and September 2021. 56 in every 10,000 under 18s in Devon are now in our care. Since April 2021, the total care population has fallen slightly.

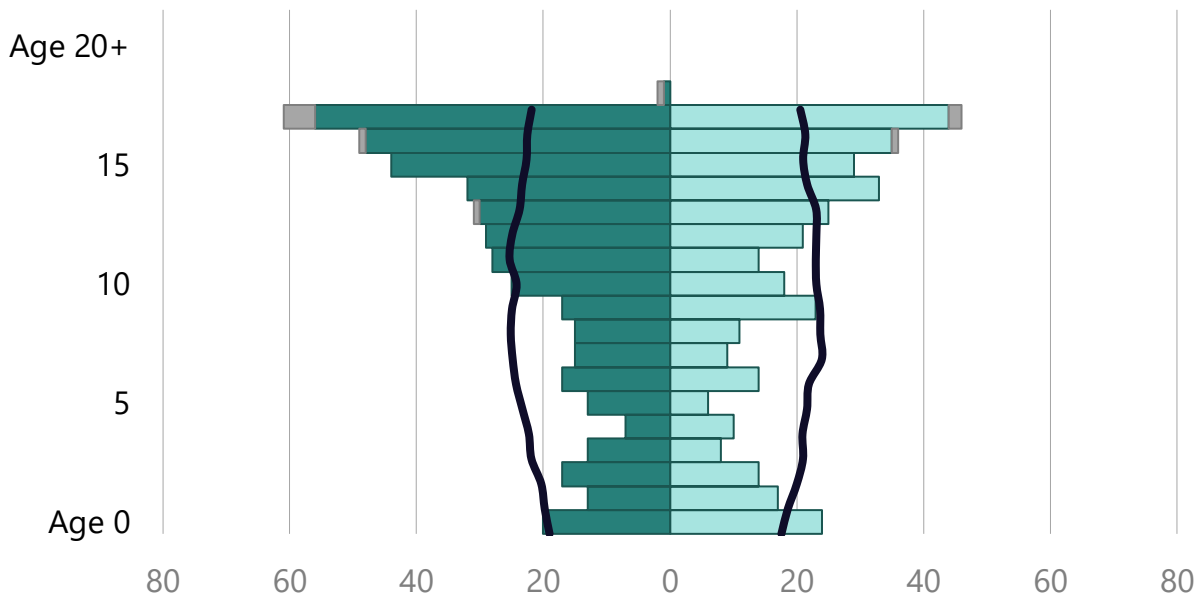
Number of children in the care of Devon County Council



## Age and gender profile of children and young people in our care (September 2021)

The majority of children and young people in our care are over 12 years of age, and almost a quarter are within 2 years of becoming adults. As of April 2021, 23% of children and young people in our care were aged 16+, down from 25% in April 2020. This compares to a national rate of 24% in 2019 and 2020.

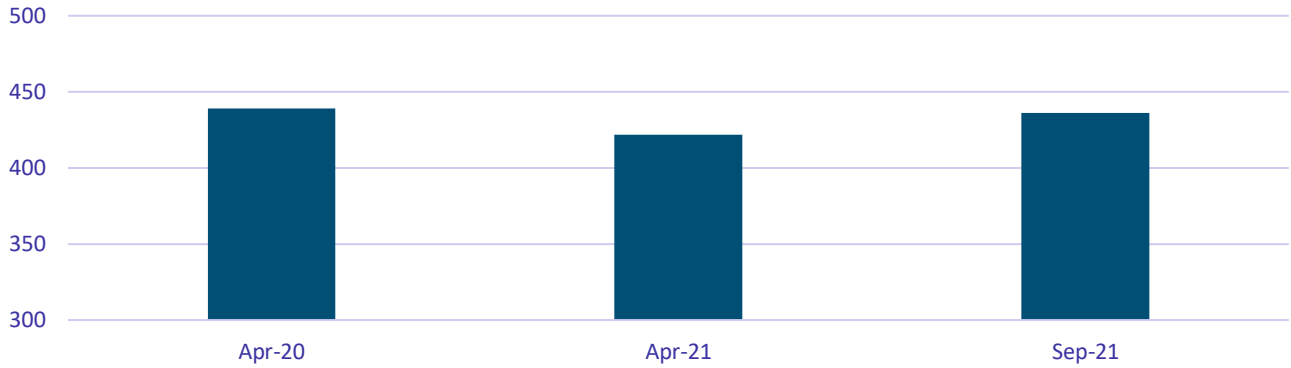
- 440 Males (55%)      ■ 8 UASC Males (1%)      ■ 355 Females (44%)
- 3 UASC Females (0%)      1 Other (not shown) (0%)      — 0-17 population estimate





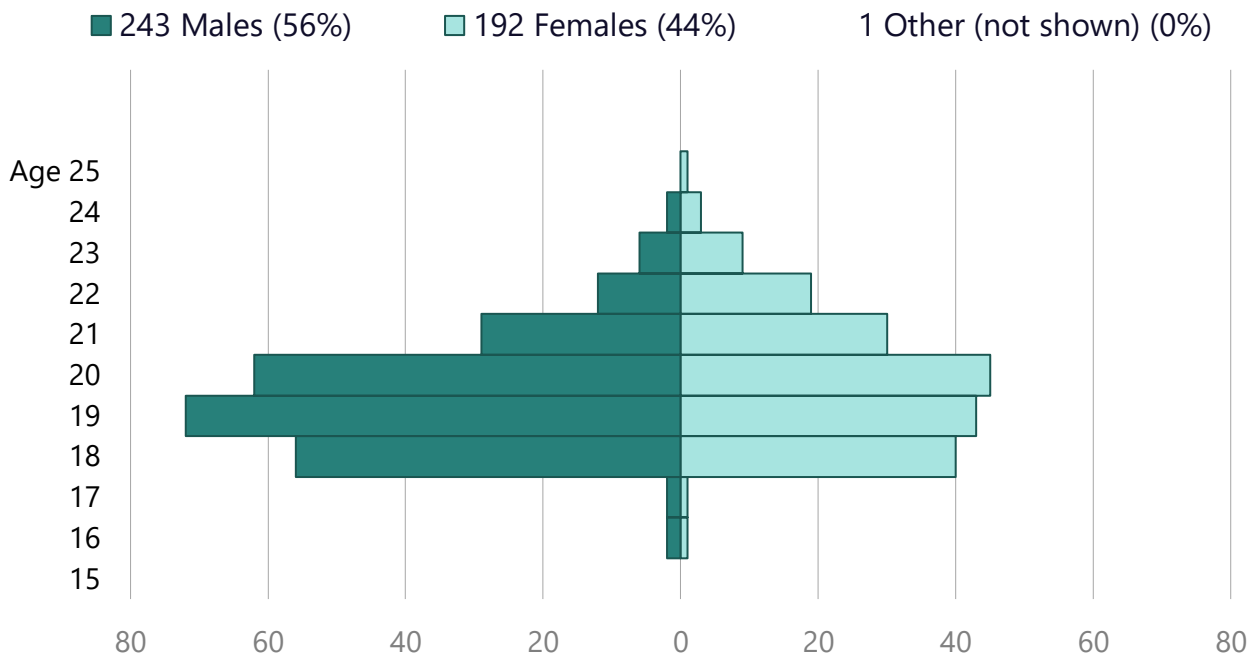
The number of young people receiving leaving care services from us has dropped since 2018. However, we expect this trend to reverse over the coming years, with the high proportion of young people, aged 16+, in our care turning 18. There are now 436 young people receiving leaving care services from us.

Number of young people receiving leaving care services from Devon County Council at financial year-end



### Age and gender profile of young people receiving leaving care services (September 2021)

The male care-experienced population in Devon currently outnumber the female population. However, with a recent rise in the number of teenage girl care entrants, we expect this trend to reverse.



## Where children in care and care-experienced young people are living

Children and young people in care (figures current at 31 August 2021)

| Accommodation type (children in care)                     | Internal   | Private    | Other     | Total      | Percentage  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|-------------|
| Foster home                                               | 398        | 179        | 0         | 577        | 71.3%       |
| For adoption                                              | -          | -          | 30        | 30         | 3.7%        |
| Living with parents / person with parental responsibility | -          | -          | 24        | 24         | 2.9%        |
| Supported living                                          | 0          | 43         | 0         | 43         | 5.3%        |
| Independent living                                        | 0          | 0          | 0         | 0          | 0%          |
| Residential children's home                               | 0          | 89         | 0         | 89         | 11%         |
| Secure Children's Homes                                   | 0          | 1          | 0         | 1          | 0.12%       |
| NHS/Health Trust                                          | 0          | 0          | 1         | 1          | 0.12%       |
| Family Centre                                             | 1          | 2          | 1         | 4          | 0.5%        |
| Young Offender Institution                                | 0          | 0          | 0         | 0          | 0%          |
| Internal residential special school                       | 4          | 0          | 0         | 4          | 0.5%        |
| Other accommodation (incl. friends and family carers)     | 0          | 0          | 7         | 7          | 0.86%       |
| Internal residential respite home                         | 5          | 0          | 0         | 5          | 0.62%       |
| Short Breaks                                              | 21         | 0          | 0         | 21         | 2.6%        |
| Exceptional arrangements                                  | -          | 3          | -         | 3          | 0.37%       |
| <b>Total accommodation</b>                                | <b>429</b> | <b>314</b> | <b>63</b> | <b>809</b> | <b>100%</b> |

### Care-experienced young people

- 15% of 17-21 -year-olds continue to live with their former foster carers after leaving care
- Of the 67 young people living with former foster carers, under staying put arrangements, 15% are supported by IFAs and 85% through our in-house fostering service
- 19 young people live in commissioned supported lodgings after leaving care. These are houses where we commission both the accommodation and support.
- 84% of 19-21 -year-olds are living in suitable accommodation after leaving care, compared to 67% in 2019/20

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## Sufficiency trends and challenges

1. **More children are coming into our care** - the number of children in our care is now up 4% in the last 18 months during the pandemic. A notable proportion of children entering our care are adolescent girls.
2. **Insufficient Devon-based emergency foster carers has increased our reliance on residential care** - although the Bridges (Edge of Care) service is beginning to have a positive impact on reducing the number of children who come into care, from time-to-time children will need additional support and care in an emergency. The use of residential care has increased from 8% in 2015/16 to 10% and children coming into care in crisis has contributed to this in recent months.
3. **More children and young people in care are living outside Devon** – 26% of children and young people in care are living outside of the Devon local authority area, up from 22% during 2019/20. Children and young people living with foster carers are more likely to be in Devon, compared to residential settings.
4. **More children, who are coming into our care, have additional support needs** – Currently, 39% of all children and young people in care now have an Education, Health and Care Plans and a further 24% receive SEN support in school. There are currently insufficient Devon-based foster carers who are able to care for children with complex needs, including younger children, to ensure they can live in a family home while in care.
5. **More children now live with family members under kinship care arrangements** - this is a positive trend, allowing more children in care to maintain strong links with their families. However, we want to ensure those children avoid the need to come into our care in the first place.
6. **Fewer children are being placed for adoption** - the number of children being placed for adoption has decreased by almost 30% in the last 5 years.
7. **The use of ‘exceptional arrangements’, with children living in unregistered care arrangements, has increased** - this is as a result of the national shortage of secure children’s home beds, and homes that can meet the needs of children with complex mental health needs
8. **There are increasing pressures on the local housing market, impacting on the availability and cost of one-bedroom accommodation in Devon** – this trend has been worsened by the pandemic and places challenges on our ability to support care-experienced young people live independently in suitable accommodation after leaving care

## Our response to emerging trends and challenges

|    | <b>Our aim</b>                                                                                                               | <b>What we will do</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>What we will see</b>                                                                                                                        |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. | Safely reduce the number of children who need to come into our care                                                          | Provide effective multi-agency services to support children to live with their families or to return home from our care when it is possible to do so.                                                                                                                  | Fewer children come into our care and, when they need to, they do so in a planned way, and return home as quickly as it is safe to do so.      |
| 2. | Find suitable foster homes for children who need to come into our care in an emergency which can meet their individual needs | Expand our emergency fostering offer – using homes from both our internal service and external provider market.                                                                                                                                                        | Fewer children who come into care move into a residential home when it is not in their best interests to do so.                                |
| 3. | Provide more foster homes which are based locally in Devon                                                                   | Increase the number of Devon-based foster homes available for Devon's children.                                                                                                                                                                                        | More children live with Devon-based foster families, close to their homes and communities                                                      |
| 4. | Recruit, train, and support more foster carers to care for children with additional support needs                            | Through our in-house fostering service, and our provider market, target our recruitment on foster carers who are approved to provide homes to children and young people with additional needs.<br><br>Provide ongoing training and support to ensure homes are stable. | Fewer children and young people are living in residential settings, especially younger children, and more are living in Devon                  |
| 5. | Continue to support more family members and friends to care for children when it is right and appropriate for them to do so. | Develop bespoke training and support for kinship carers.                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Children live in stable homes with their families who can meet their needs.                                                                    |
| 6. | Support children to be adopted where it is the best option for them                                                          | Through Adopt South West, find and approve more local adopters for Devon's children and ensure a swift, effective and robust approving process                                                                                                                         | Children find loving adoptive families to grow up in. High-quality and effective care planning is in place when children first come into care. |
| 7. | Children and young people are living in suitable registered homes that meet their individual needs.                          | Increase available homes by working with our local provider market, for children with the most complex needs.                                                                                                                                                          | No children live in exceptional arrangements.                                                                                                  |
| 8. | Young people leaving care will be equipped to live independently and thrive in the community that they choose.               | Support more young people to continue living with their foster carers in staying put arrangements and work with all young people from as early as possible to develop the skills to be independent.                                                                    | Young people live independently in the community with the right skills and develop long term resilience                                        |

# Sufficiency Priorities

## Building bridges: Protecting children and young people, and strengthening families, so they can live safely at home

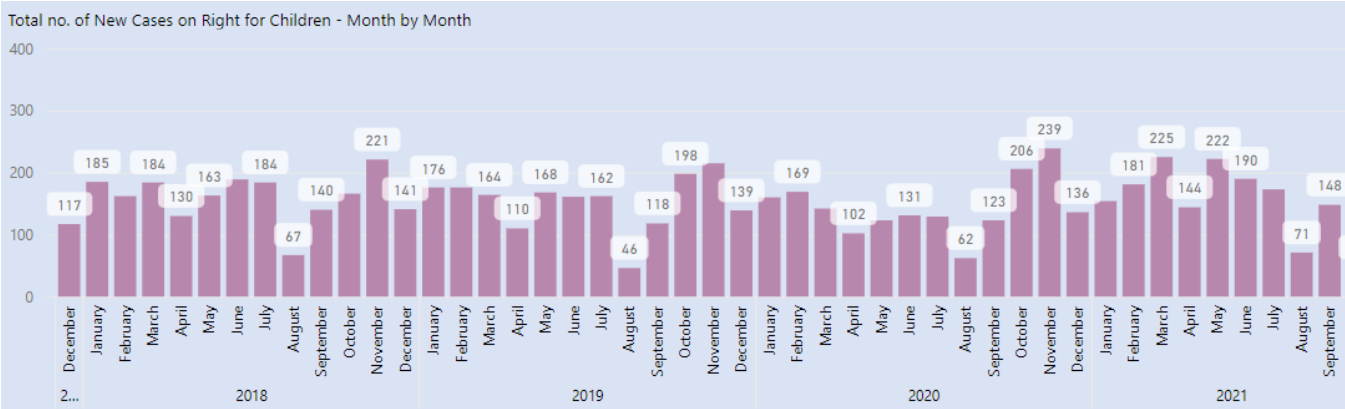
Building bridges is all about restoring otherwise damaged or disconnected links and relationships, starting afresh when things may not have previously worked well, and taking advantage of the mutually-beneficial opportunities on offer. For children and young people, this means they live with their families in safe, loving and nurturing environments which give them the foundations to get the most out of their childhood and adolescence.

Our values are about working *with* children and families. This means placing their best interests at the heart of all that we do, building on their strengths and empowering them, through developing resilience and independence, to be in full control of their own lives and outcomes. We want to support children and families with their holistic needs and circumstances at the earliest opportunity, and in so doing, minimise the use of statutory thresholds wherever possible.

### Early help

Working across the Devon Children and Families Partnership (DCFP), our multi-agency Early Help system ensures children and families get the right help at the earliest opportunity. As a result, children and families avoid the need to receive more intensive support from statutory safeguarding services. Strengthening and developing our early help support is one of our key priorities. Ultimately, the effectiveness of these services will have an impact in reducing the number of children and young people coming into our care and support us to achieve sufficiency, ensuring that the right children and young people come into our care at the right time.

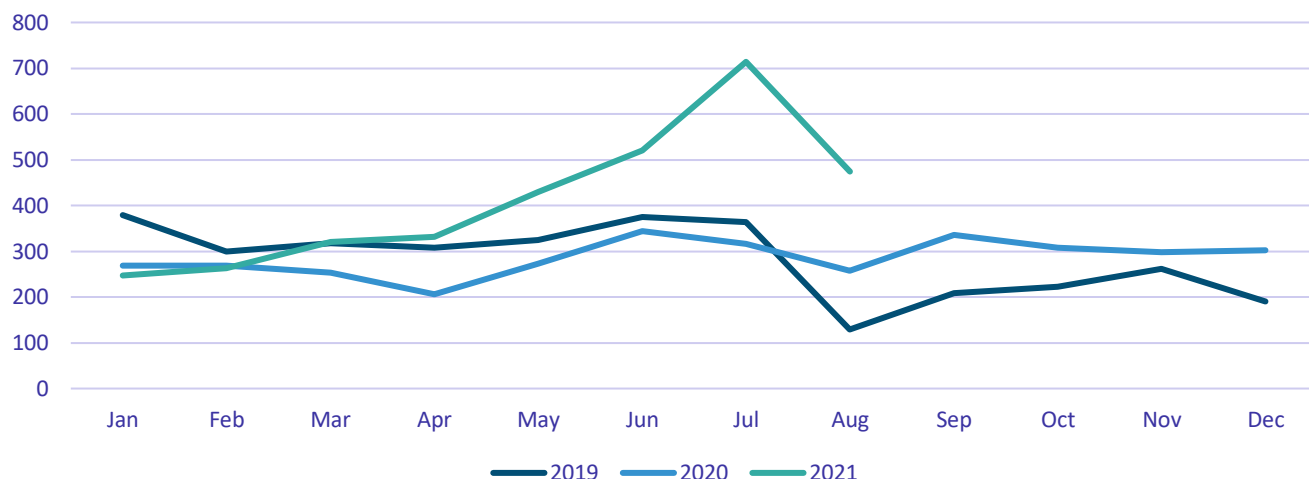
The number of new children and families supported through Early Help each month, during the pandemic, has been consistently above previous years' levels during 2021 (see bar graph below).





Alongside this, since April 2021, as pandemic restrictions eased and more children returned to school, enquires into MASH have begun to exceed the previous two years

Total MASH Enquiries 2019-2021



### What we will do

- Review our Early Help system to ensure it is comprehensive and effective in delivering multi-agency support for children and families at the earliest opportunity as need arises.
- Shape Early Help in ways that develop trusted relationships with families and that build on their strengths. We want to identify and co-develop shared solutions with them to the challenges they may face.
- Roll out and embed restorative practice across children's services, and our partner agencies, through training, workshops, and supervision, so that we work better *with* families rather than *to* or *for* them. By working restoratively, we will build on the strengths and resilience of families.

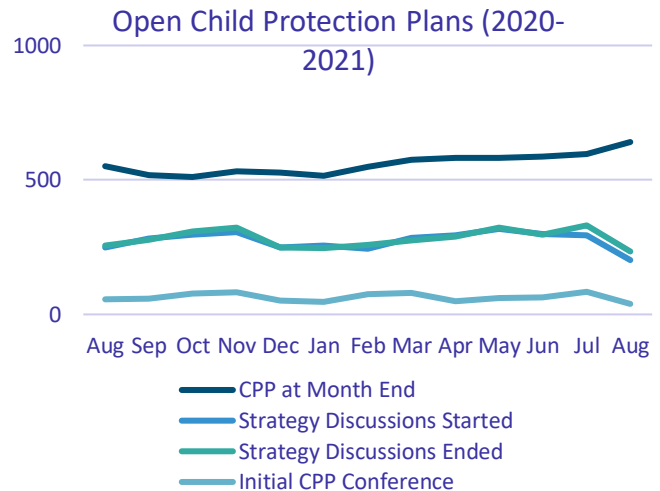
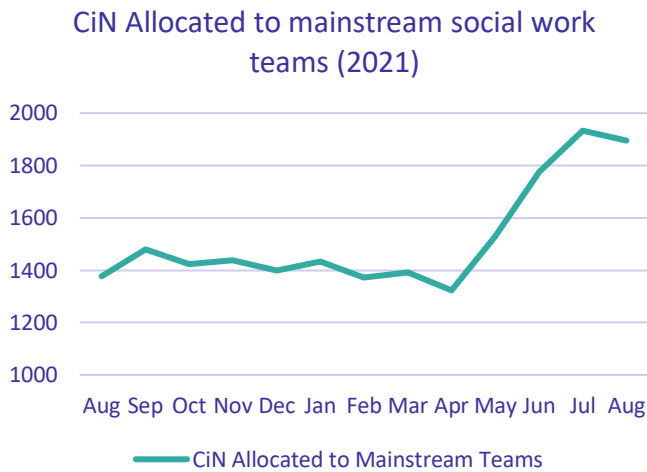
### Statutory social work services

Improving the quality and consistency of our social work practice is essential to improving children and young people's circumstances. Early, thorough, and effective intervention reduces the likelihood of risks increasing and children being unable to remain living at home with their families.

In response to recruitment and retention pressures in social work teams working with children in need and children on Child Protection Plans, Devon County Council has made a significant financial investment to recruit and retain a stable, well-qualified workforce. Increasing the number of permanent qualified social workers and other staff, is the foundation for our ambitions to improve how we work with families and support good outcomes for them.

Built on this, a comprehensive and detailed improvement plan is in place to ensure social workers, and other staff, are supported to do the best work possible. As well as supporting children, young people and their families, getting our work right the first time reduces pressures in the system, as a whole, by reducing the numbers of re-referrals and repeated assessments.

The number of Children in Need (CiN) and Child Protection Plans have increased in recent months, as we have emerged out of the pandemic. The number of children with a Child Protection Plan is now 16.6% up compared to August 2020.



### What we will do

- Recruit and retain the best staff, by ensuring they are trained, supported and professionally challenged to provide effective and consistent services to children. We will do this through our Recruitment and Retention Strategy.

### Bridges: our service supporting children and young people at risk of coming into our care

By focusing on the children and young people, who are most at risk of needing our care, we can successfully support them to safely remain with their families. Bridges is our service which works with these children and young people, and their families, to help them stay safely and sustainably together. Although in its early stages, the service is already demonstrably improving children and young people’s lives and helping them avoid the need to come into our care. Bridges will play a key role in achieving sufficiency in Devon’s Children’s Social Care. Our intention is for the service to be fully self-financed through savings resulting from reduced care entry.

**Through Bridges, we want to reduce the number of children who otherwise would have needed our care by:**

| 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 |
|---------|---------|---------|
| 12      | 23      | 25      |

More information on Bridges, and the outcomes for families it is supporting, can be found in the [appendices](#).

### What we will do

- Continue to monitor the development and outcomes of Bridges, including by hearing the lived experiences of children, young people, and their families.
- Expand the evidence-based, therapeutic and trauma-informed support to build on the strengths of families and develop their resilience

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## Protecting children and young people from exploitation

Alongside our partners, we recognise the risks children and young people face from all kinds of exploitation. Children and young people who experience forms of exploitation, often need to come into care, and too frequently end up living a long way from their homes, friends and families.

Through our Adolescent Safety Framework 'Safer Me', we are working together, under an established and evidence-based approach, to identify and reduce the contextual risks that children and young people face in their lives. In this way, we want children and young people, who have been at risk of exploitation, to instead live safely with their families and in their local communities. More information on Safer Me can be found on the [DCFP website](#).

### Local Context

A single snapshot of need shows 98 children receiving coordinated multi-agency support through a 'Safer Me' assessment (March 2021). Of those young people:

- **48%** were at risk of criminal exploitation
- **27%** sexual exploitation
- **19%** multiple forms
- **3%** modern slavery
- **1%** gangs
- **12%** are still in assessment.

### What we will do

- Increase the use of Safer Me, across all safeguarding partners, as a tool to assess and disrupt risks to children, improving their lives, and their likelihood of needing our care
- Implement a multi-agency strategic approach to reducing forms of exploitation and improving outcomes for children and young people, based on the 'Critical Moments' in a child's life

## Understanding risk, contingency planning and assertive outreach

To support children and young people who may need our care, together with our partners, we will seek to understand the risks and vulnerabilities in their lives. From a position of understanding the circumstances and needs of children and families, we will make sure effective and outcomes-focused contingency plans are in place. These plans will focus on improving outcomes for children and young people, enabling them to have stability and be able to remain living safely in their homes and communities.

### What we will do

- Develop our risk assessment, contingency planning and wrap around to support children and young people with additional, complex and/or challenging needs
- Assess and understand local needs, before developing a framework contract for intensive family support providers.
- Alongside our partners, develop assertive community intervention and outreach for young people with autism and complex needs, as set out in our [Joint SEND Commissioning Plan](#).

- 
- Expand the use of the Dynamic Support Register (DSR), alongside our health partners, to assess the needs of children with learning disabilities or autism, who are at risk of a mental health crisis, review stability and develop a multi-agency plan of action to reduce the risk of crisis.
  - Progress the transformation of SEND services in Devon to join up multi-agency teams and services. We want to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND, and their families, earlier, more consistently and more effectively.
  - Roll out a pilot of [Pause](#) in Devon to work with care-experienced women restoratively to support them to keep their young families together safely and avoid the need for children to come into care
  - Review our pre-proceedings pathway to ensure it is as effective as possible in making sure care entry is the last resort and that all viable alternatives have been explored with families

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# Finding a place called home: Providing loving and caring family homes in Devon for children and young people in care

## Fostering

For children and young people in care, where family reunification, adoption or special guardianship is not an viable option, we want them to live in loving and caring fostering homes, where they are safe, protected and able to be themselves. We want to meet the individual needs of the children and young people living with fostering families, including their racial and cultural needs, learning style, age and stage of development and abilities. In this way, they are homes that, not only provide a roof over their heads, but instead they equip and enable young people to thrive in all aspects of their lives.

## What we want to achieve

Our target is for over 80% of our children in care to be living in a family home. We have sustained performance at 72% for the last three years, but we are ambitious to increase this. Currently 69% of our foster homes are with our in-house service.

To achieve 80%, we will need expanded capacity in both our in-house fostering service and our IFA market.

## Context

Fostering Devon, our in-house fostering service, has a total of 306 fostering households registered, supporting an additional 145 Friends and Family homes. Friends and Family fostering arrangements have provided the largest proportion of growth in the last year in our locally-available fostering homes.

Of the 306 households, 16 are for parent and child homes and 14 for short breaks and respite. The remaining 276 households have capacity for 493 children. By September 2021, 398 children were living in a fostering home with our internal service. This left homes with capacity for a total of 95 children which were unavailable, 63 of which were vacancies.

Recruitment between 2018 and 2021 has been between 20 and 25 households each year, however, this is offset by losses in the same years of between 17 and 33 households. For 2020/21, we predict the recruitment of 30 households during 2021/22, with a further 20 anticipated to retire or leave in 2021/2022. Therefore, recruitment has only been able to maintain existing levels of permanent carers over the previous 4 years.

## What we will do

- Ensure we have a consistent approach to recruiting and supporting foster carers across the whole of Devon
- Carry out targeted recruitment and marketing activity to expand overall numbers of foster carers and dedicated capacity for specific cohorts (outlined below)

We will deliver these through our Fostering Service Improvement Plan.

## Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs)

Our Peninsula Framework agreement (2018-2022) continues to provide increasing volumes of family-based care. 97% of our external fostering homes are sourced from the Framework. There are currently 15 IFA's on the Framework, 13 of which provide homes locally. The total potential capacity is 498 fostering

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households offering homes for 1,036 young people. Of these, 185 households are in Devon. 93% of IFA homes used, have been located in Devon or a neighbouring authority.

### **What we will do**

- Re-commission the Framework agreement for a new contract in April 2022.
- Develop strong relationships with our providers, so that they best meet the needs of our children and young people. We will look creatively at all options with them in order to navigate emerging local challenges in the market.

### **Taking focused action**

To support more children and young people to live in family homes, rather than residential homes, we need to take focused action to support the individual needs of different groups. Through both our in-house fostering service, and our provider market, we need to do more to ensure there are suitable and appropriate fostering homes for the following cohorts:

#### **Older young people**

There are only 19 fostering households registered with Fostering Devon for the 13+ age range – this represents 6% of all registered households and is not sufficient to meet needs of our children in care population.

#### **Children and young people with additional needs**

A high proportion of young people in residential children's homes have complex and additional support needs, who are often unable to be sufficiently supported in a fostering home due to the level of care they require.

#### **Brothers and sisters**

There are only 10 groups of brothers and sisters, of 3 children or more, who are living together in a fostering home. This is out of a total of 58 – representing a proportion of 17%. We know how important it is for siblings to grow up together while they are in our care, so we need to do more to ensure as many sibling groups as possible stay together. Currently, 194 households are registered to support more than 2 places, and so could take a sibling group. We want foster carers to be fully supported and remunerated for their roles, so they are able to provide homes for groups of siblings together.



## Residential Children's Homes

When children need to live in residential homes, they should receive high-quality care in safe and enriching environments, where they are supported by skilled adults who understand their individual needs. In residential homes, we want to deliver outcomes-focused and child-centred care. We will do this, by supporting their return to family homes (fostering or reunification), building their independence for early adulthood, and always having high aspirations for them.

### What we will do

- Reduce the number of children living outside Devon or our neighbouring authorities, from 33 to 25 in 2021/2022. We will do this by:
  - Developing local emergency children's home and IFA provision. We will review the impact of this in April 2022 to inform the further development of an in-house crisis offer.
  - Securing additional children's home capacity by working with our local market to encourage new investment to grow the market capacity by a further 25 places in mainstream residential homes by April 2022. This will result in a total capacity of 160 children's home beds, with 4 of these being for the purpose of emergency crisis assessment and 20 having a specialism in autism and/or learning disability.
  - Strengthening matching processes, focusing on the individual needs, interests and circumstances of children and young people
  - Re-launching the bed retention programme, for a limited period of time, in advance of the market launch of a children's home block contract opportunity by January 2023.
- Revisit the business case to develop in house emergency crisis assessment provision, after plans were put on hold as demand reduced and earlier intervention was effective.
- Develop a multi-disciplinary model of residential assessment provision for children in crisis by November 2022. The service will focus on meeting the needs of children with complex needs particularly Autism. This will operate to support the emergency children's home provision
- Develop new models of care through preventative community services, with Provider Collaboratives, in order to prevent escalation to Tier 4 or local authority secure accommodation.
- Re-commission the children's home sub-regional framework agreement, by February 2023.
- Strengthen shared training and recruitment opportunities with providers. By April 2022, we aim to achieve 75% of providers being rated good or outstanding, up from 69% in January 2021.
- Deliver robust quality assurance and monitoring of residential children's homes to support them to achieve good or outstanding Ofsted ratings. We want at least 75% of homes to be rated good or outstanding.

### Headlines

- Of children living in a residential children's home, 9 are under 12, and 2 of whom are living outside of Devon or a neighbouring authority.
- Almost half (47%) of children living in a residential children's home, moved into their current home during 2021 so far.
- 49% of children living in a residential children's home are in Devon, 21% in a neighbouring authority, and 30% outside of Devon or a neighbouring authority (at distance).
- The majority (62%) of young people living 'at distance' are between 15 and 17 years of age.
- Half of all young people living in residential homes, whose living costs are part-funded by Health, moved into their current accommodation between January and May 2021. A further 4 are part-funded by Education.

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# Promoting stability: safe, stable and caring places to live so children and young people can get the most out of life

## Fostering

We are committed to helping our foster carers support their children and young people to get the most out of life. We know that, from what children and young people tell us, as well as local and national evidence, the importance of a stable home life for being healthy and well, achieving highly at school, being safe, and going on to be independent and thriving adults, cannot be understated. This is all part of the human experience of needing people and places that we can rely on in life.

The following principles and values underpin our approach to promoting safe, stable and caring fostering homes in Devon:

- Children in care are part of their foster family and will not be treated differently to the foster carer's own children
- Carers should have the necessary skills to meet the child's needs and be committed to supporting their individual interests and aspirations
- Foster carers, and their home environment, should be conducive to children and young people doing the best they can in their education, learning and development
- Foster carers should be fully supported, and treated as key partners in delivering our vision for corporate parenting in Devon, in order to support children and young people to the best of their ability

To support stability, Fostering Devon has an in-house dedicated Promoting Stability Team. The team offer therapeutic support and guidance 7 days a week, including during unsocial hours, to families where there are risks to the stability of home life.

We are also beginning a pilot of [Mockingbird](#) - an extended family approach to foster care. Foster carers will benefit from a peer network and increased wrap-around support. Nationally, the approach has built resilience within families and led to better outcomes for children and young people.

## What we will do

- Develop a dedicated support offer to former foster carers when young people remain at home after they turn 18 through staying put arrangements
- Equip and support foster carers to help young people with independent living skills and the transition to adulthood
- Conduct life-story work to help young people understand their own journeys, feel safe and secure where they are living, and develop their resilience
- Provide early, wrap-around support for young people, and their foster carers to maintain stability at home
- Roll-out the Mockingbird model in Devon to promote support between foster carers and stability and positive outcomes for children and young people
- Review our service delivery design for our Promoting Stability team, with a view to extending the reach of the team
- Review our Promoting Stability strategy to focus on early intervention and reviews of the effectiveness of interventions
- Ensure staff understand and are aware of the offer from the Promoting Stability team

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- Understand the skills and capacity of our current approved foster carers so we can offer the best possible matches for children and young people, and they can live with people who share common interests and can meet their individual needs
  - Support foster carers to be trauma-informed and work restoratively

## Providing the right care and support for children and young people with additional needs

The availability of locally-based specialist care for children and young people with additional physical and/or neurodevelopmental needs remains a key challenge. In recent months, compounded by the closure of a large provider in Devon, there are significant pressures on the number of available homes in specialist care settings locally.

Ensuring children and young people who have a learning disability and/or autism, and who display challenging and complex behaviours, have appropriate and effective care and accommodation when they need it is particularly important to get right. Coming into care in crisis can be an extremely distressing and traumatic time for the young person and their family alike. Both locally and nationally, securing suitable accommodation, and delivering effective, evidence-based interventions, for children and young people in these circumstances is a significant challenge.

The Integrated Care System for Devon (ICSD), in their delivery of the NHS Long Term Plan on a local level, have a key strategic priority to deliver a preventative approach to escalating neurodevelopmental needs among children and young people leading to crisis. This will be done through an expansion of integrated community-based support, using early preventative models of care, and developing alternative mental health crisis pathways to avoid inpatient or care entry.

### What we will do

- Consider, review and consult on local options, including the use of in-house short breaks provision, to increase the availability of 52-week care for disabled children
- Run workshops for providers, alongside our community health provider, to increase market capability to develop specialisms within the market
- Work with Health partners, through the ICSD, to review and further develop preventative, integrated and community-based approaches to supporting children and young people with neurodevelopmental and mental health needs to avoid the need for crisis care

## Unregistered accommodation

Due to national pressures on provision for children with the most complex needs, during the last year 10 children have spent periods of time in unregistered accommodation. This only occurs when no other alternative is possible, close management oversight ensures the accommodation is suitable and that the child only stays there for the minimum amount of time possible. The aim of the sufficiency strategy is to ensure a suitable range of accommodation is available for Devon's children to prevent the need to use unregistered provision.

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## **Stepping forward: Supporting children and young people to be where they need to be in life so they can thrive and be independent**

### **Family reunification**

When children and young people come into our care our priority is securing their protection from harm. However, wherever possible, we are committed to ensuring they are able to leave our care and be reunited with their families where it is safe and appropriate to do so. Early and robust care planning and IRO-led reviews ensures we work with families proactively and explore options for children and young people's safe return home. In addition, the Bridges service works with children in our care where family reunification has been identified as a viable option. Professionals within Bridges work more intensively with the child and their families to secure a safe and lasting reunification.

Currently, of the 139 children and young people coming into our care in the 6 months to September, 6% had been in care previously. This is down from 14% of the 146 children and young people coming into our care during the 6 months to April 2019, and 11% to April 2020.

### **Residential to fostering**

Wherever possible, we want children and young people in our care, to live with foster carers, rather than in a residential home. While for some, depending on their individual needs and circumstances at any given time, it may be best for young people to live in a residential children's home. However, we believe that everyone has the right to grow up in a family environment, and that, in principle, this is best for them and their life chances. The sufficiency of suitable foster carers should never be a reason why any young person is not benefitting from a supportive family environment.

In this context, we want to support more young people to be able to move from residential to fostering homes safely and sustainably. Overall, we want to see the number of young people living in a residential home decrease by at least 10%, from 89 to 80 young people, by April 2024.

### **What we will do**

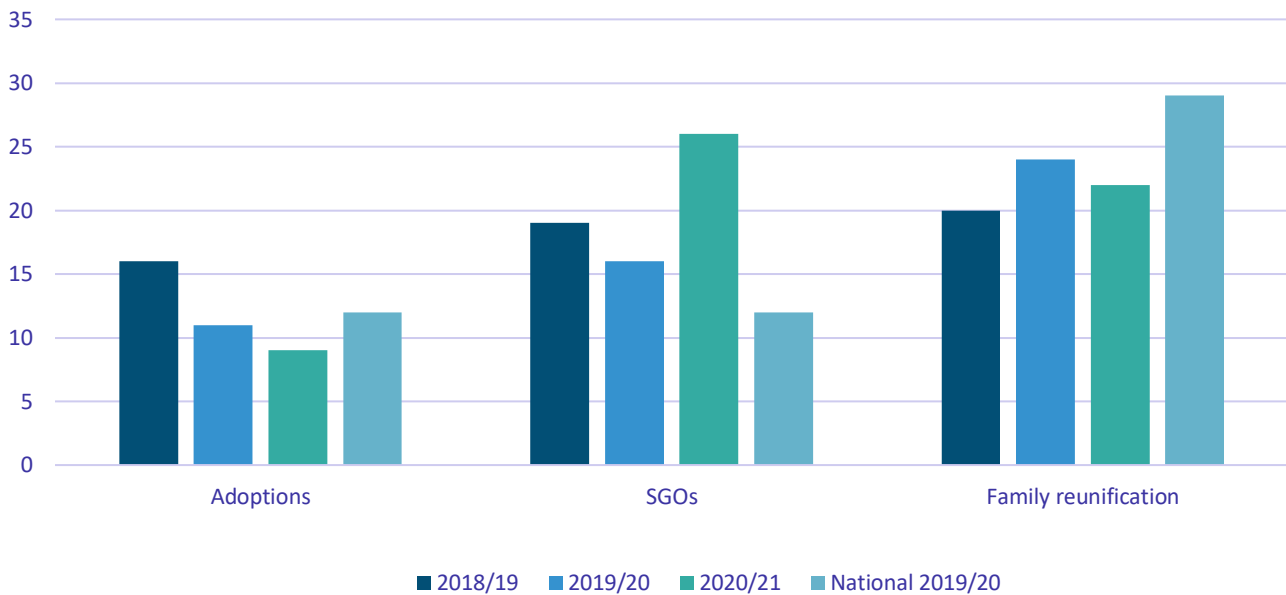
- We will keep under review the needs and interests of all children and young people living in residential settings to ensure that this continues to be the most appropriate place for them to live.

### **Adoptions and Special Guardianship Orders**

Where it is not appropriate for a child or young person to return home to their birth family, adoption or a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) may be a good option for them. Adoption allows the adoptive families to have sole parental responsibility. In this context, there is often no, or limited, contact with the birth family. SGOs are a Family Court arrangement which allows a child or young person to live with someone, other than their parent(s) – often an extended family member, friend or long-term foster carer – on a long-term basis. While special guardians have day-to-day parental responsibility, SGOs are designed to be a longer-term option which maintains links with the birth family.

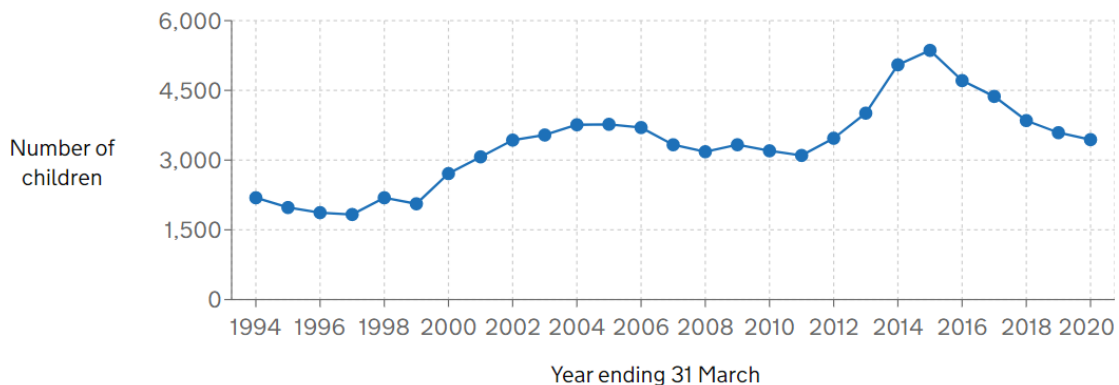
In the last three years, we have seen a drop in the numbers of children leaving our care to be adopted. However, this coincides with a significant rise in the number of special guardianship orders (SGOs) being granted. Compared nationally, more children are leaving care through SGOs, while fewer children are being reunited with their families when leaving care. In future, we want more children to be able to safely reunite with their families, however, where family reunification is not possible, we recognise SGOs as providing a positive alternative route out of care for many children and young people.

Care exit destinations in second half of financial year (%)



Across England, since 2015, the number of children who were adopted has been dropping each year. Rates of adoption are now in line with levels last seen in 2012. This comes in the context of a **7% rise in SGOs** between 2018 and 2020<sup>2</sup>.

Children looked after who were adopted, in England, 1994 to 2020



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## Adoption

### Context

For those children, for whom returning to their family is not a viable option, adoption is the most effective way for children to find a loving, caring, and lasting place to call home.

[Adopt South West](#) (ASW) is the regional adoption agency, covering four local authorities, for which Devon County Council is the host. This creates a larger pool of potential adopters and enables each local authority to identify better matches for individual children. Adopt South West's [Annual Report 2019/20](#) sets out the agency's activity, performance, as well as future ambitions in more detail.

During 2019/20, in Devon, we increased our annual performance. This increase in Devon also came in the context of the number of children being adopted across the ASW region, as a whole, dropping by 10%. While, proportionally, the number of children in Devon being adopted remains below that of our regional and statistical neighbours, it was in line with the national average.

During the pandemic, we have seen a drop in the number of children being adopted to 29. The latest national data (Q3 2020/21) also shows a 26% drop in the number of adoption orders being granted<sup>3</sup>. This is likely a result of court delays due to COVID – something experienced right across the country.

There are currently 243 prospective adopters, who make up a total of 130 families. We have approved a third more adoptive families in 2020-21 than during 2019-20. This is allowing us to consider more matches for our children in care. Of the children who came into care in the 6 months up to October 2020, 16 children (11%) have been placed for adoption, all of whom are under 5 years old.

More information on the current context of adoption in Devon can be found in the [appendices](#).

### What we will do, with Adopt South West

- Ensure children have an effective permanence plan as soon as possible when coming into our care
- Ensure more children are adopted, where effective permanence planning and social work practice shows that is the best option for the child's long-term interests
- Increase the number of prospective adopters available regionally through targeted recruitment and assessment campaigns and action, focusing on recruiting adopters to adopt older children and children in sibling groups.
- Ensure timely assessment processes for prospective adopters and children.
- Increase the number of providers and variety of therapeutic support available to adoptive families through our Framework Agreement to support the stability of adoptions.

### Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs)

For many children and young people in care, SGOs are a positive way to leave care into a loving and caring home. They often support closer links to their birth families, siblings and wider family and friend networks. Wherever possible, we want children and young people to maintain and strengthen their support networks and relationships with family and friends, that will likely remain with them for much of

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<sup>3</sup> National data from the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board: [Coram-i - ASGLB Data \(coram-i.org.uk\)](#)



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their lives and help them grow into independent young adults. We recognise SGOs as good practice and, where this is right for the child or young person, we will support this to happen.

### What we will do

- Provide training and support for special guardians to equip them to meet the needs of the child or young person and maintain stability at home
- Expand the number of providers and variety of therapeutic support available to special guardians through our Framework Agreement to support the stability of SGOs.
- We will review our SGO Policy, including the allowances we offer Special Guardians

### Leaving our care as a care leaver

We want all care-experienced young people to have safe, stable, affordable, and suitable places to live, which provide the foundations for independent life as adults. As corporate parents, we are responsible, alongside District Council Housing authorities, for taking steps to help all care experienced young adults to have access to safe, affordable and suitable places to live and call home.

#### Headlines

- During 2020/21, just under 80% of care experienced young people were living in suitable accommodation after leaving care
- This compares to 2019/20 published figures of 90% for 17-18 year-olds & 85% for 19-21 year-olds nationally and our comparator benchmark group is 86% for 17-18 year-olds and 88% for 19-21 year-olds in 2019/20
- While lower than the benchmarked data, we have seen an improvement on previous year's performance of 68.2% and 74.2 % for 2019/20 and 2018/19
- Since 2019, we have supported 31 young people to privately rent by acting as their guarantor
- Of the young people approaching district councils in Devon for housing support in 2019/20, 29% were care-experienced young adults who were in receipt of leaving care services from Devon

### Where we are now

As a result of a shortage in housing due to growing demand for properties in the South West, exacerbated by the pandemic, there are significant pressures accessing one-bedroom properties of suitable quality. Linked to this, there have been growing numbers of care-experienced young adults approaching the housing authorities for housing support. As we emerge out of the pandemic, there is uncertainty about the future challenges for young people in the local housing market. We know that young people with care-experience are generally at a disadvantage compared to their peers.

Our Joint Care Leavers Protocol with District Councils sets out our commitment to work together to ensure young people have access to the right accommodation for them; whether that is supported lodgings, semi-independent supported accommodation, or their own home with or without floating support. Through the Protocol, we will aim to prioritise care-experienced young people for available housing, wherever possible, and make sure that no young person is in a vulnerable position with their housing needs.

## What we will do

- The Care Leavers Protocol will be implemented with District Council housing authorities from Autumn 2021 to support care-experienced young people with their housing options as they become adults
- Work with housing authorities and planning teams to improve access to housing for care-experienced young adults and, through the Protocol, prioritise them for available housing.
- By April 2022, develop an offer for young people approaching adulthood to support their preparation for independence by learning key life skills
- Set development plans and targets within contracts to expand employment and training opportunities for care-experienced young people and have high aspirations for them to achieve

## Supporting young people with complex needs in their own homes

A pilot project, for a small number of care-experienced young people with complex needs, is offering a more suitable alternative to temporary accommodation. The project is similar to a 'housing first' model, where young people are allocated a property on a temporary basis with wrap-around support, and this can then be converted to a full tenancy if the initial period is successful. The project can be resource-intensive however, so it is designed as an option for the young people whose needs are unable to be suitably supported through other options. Young people are not referred into the project itself, and instead, we identify young people who would benefit most from the homes..

## What we will do

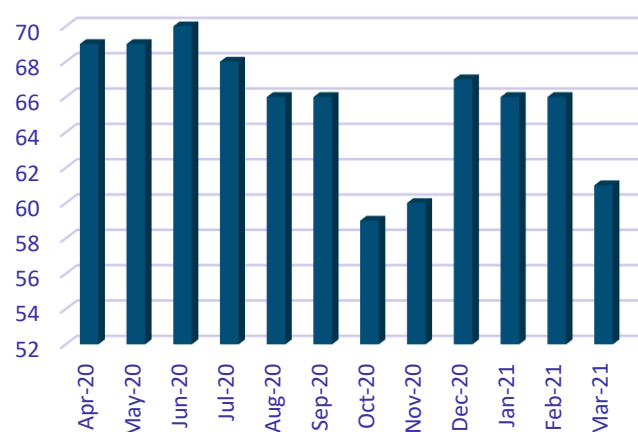
- Commission additional accommodation and support, working in partnership with District Councils, to stabilise and meet the needs of young people with complex needs.
- Evaluate impact and outcomes, and consider the development of a joint business case for continuation and expansion of the pilot

## Staying put

65 young people continue to be supported through a 'staying put' arrangement with their former foster carers, beyond their 18<sup>th</sup> Birthday. Staying put arrangements are supported by both our in-house fostering service and our Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs).

IFA's remain committed to supporting long-term homes, including 'staying put', however, this has yet not materialised into a consistent increase. By March 2021, 62% of IFA's were supporting a 'Staying Put' arrangement. This dropped from 68% at the beginning of 2020/21. The overall reduction correlates with a reduction in the total number of care-experienced young people.

Staying Put arrangements



Given the recent increase in adolescent care entry, we plan to increase our Staying Put offer for 2022/23 and ensure it continues to be routinely planned for with young people and their foster carers.

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Our ambition is to increase the take-up of staying put arrangements by 3% year on year through effective, outcomes-focused, and individualised permanence-planning and further increasing the availability of carers.

### What we will do

- Develop options with IFA providers for carers to move to become Shared Lives Carers or to support transition to Shared Lives for disabled children.
- Review our internal Staying Put policy, including hearing from young people and foster carers about their Staying Put experiences
- Have a dedicated Staying Put worker, in our internal fostering service, to work alongside former foster carers and support them to provide homes for young people leaving care at 18
- Work with our corporate parenting service to increase the awareness and understanding of staying put among PAs and foster carers

### Supported and semi-independent living options

#### Headlines

- There are 43 young people living in semi-independent accommodation or supported lodgings with independent sector providers at the beginning of September 2021
- Of these young people 72% were living in Devon and 76% were living in accommodation or lodgings operating on the Framework Agreement

We know that semi-independent living options can be beneficial and in the interests of some young people where they gain a supported transition to independence and adulthood. However, for most young people, living in family homes which actively support young people's independence, is the most appropriate option. In this context, our strategic intention is for more young people stay in family-based care until, and beyond, 18 through staying put arrangements to support successful transition to adulthood.

### Current commissioning

Accommodation options for young people who need extra support are commissioned through the Supported Living Options Framework Agreement. This contract is with 14 providers who offer accommodation to a potential of 148 young people. This covers supported lodgings and/ or semi-independent supported accommodation. 78 (53%) of the potential accommodation options are located within Devon (including Plymouth), with the remaining 70 potential options in neighbouring authorities. The framework will be re-commissioned in June 2023.

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## Reducing the risk of homelessness for young people

### The current offer

Devon County Council holds shared responsibility with District Council Housing authorities across the county to accommodate and support eligible young people aged 16 and 17 years old, or any care-experienced young people who are at risk of becoming homeless.

We work with the District Councils through a Joint Homelessness Protocol to fulfil our shared responsibilities. The accommodation is funded through housing benefit or rent contributions from the young people. The Council commissions 845 support hours per quarter from five providers, supporting young people at risk of homelessness, including care leavers, to remain in accommodation. This

equates to a maximum of 134 beds, depending on the support needs of young people placed. In 2020/21 we used an average of 91% of our contracted hours.

Floating support is commissioned to support move on to other accommodation or return to family and friends as part of homelessness prevention. Services are available across Devon based on 3 locality hubs (North, East, South). We also we also work with District Councils to commission a Homelessness Prevention Worker function for 16/17 year olds and care leavers across all Districts in Devon. In addition, we have in place a Homelessness Prevention Co-Ordinator working with Devon's Corporate Parenting team. The co-ordinator works with care-experienced young people who have complex support needs and are at risk of homelessness, with the aim of preventing rough sleeping.

More information on the outcomes of our homelessness prevention work can be found in the [appendices](#).

### What we will do

- Review and revise the homelessness protocol for launch in November 2021. The Protocol will be reviewed every six months from December 2021 through the Housing Options Group.
- Expand our commissioned supported accommodation for young people with more complex needs or in more challenging circumstances to up to 8 young people by April 2022.
- Alongside Adult Social Care, support young adults with Autism, who are displaying challenging behaviour, to develop their independence and enable them to continue living in their local community wherever possible
- We will help young people, who are leaving care, with evidence based training and support, which will include budgeting, going into employment, and paying bills
- The Care Leavers Multi-agency forum, working with the homelessness prevention workers, will develop the multi-agency support to young people to maintain stability at home and reduce the risk of homelessness. The MDT will also support the PA with creating an effective plan for the young person and a team to support.

### Local needs

- 169 eligible young people were supported by our homelessness prevention offer in 2020/21
- 63% of whom were 16/17-year-olds and 37% were care leavers
- An average of 89 young people are supported at any one time
- The average length of stay was 277 days for 16-17- year-olds, with the longest being 890 days
- For care-experienced young people, the average length of stay was 419 days, with the longest being 1651 days

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## Welfare Secure Children's Home

The Atkinson Welfare Secure Children's Home is one of 7 welfare-only secure homes in the country. The home has 12 beds available (only 8 beds throughout COVID-19) for young people in an environment that offers therapeutic support informed by dyadic developmental psychotherapy and therapeutic parenting model PACE, as well as schooling provided within the home. The operation of the Atkinson Children's Home is overseen by Devon County Council however, referrals made through a national referral hub.

NHS England currently funds health services for children and young people placed in the home through a Section 10 agreement with Devon County Council. This funding provides CAMHS, a psychologist, a psychiatrist, a school nurse, young people's substance misuse services (Y-SMART) and sessions from a GP.

### What we will do:

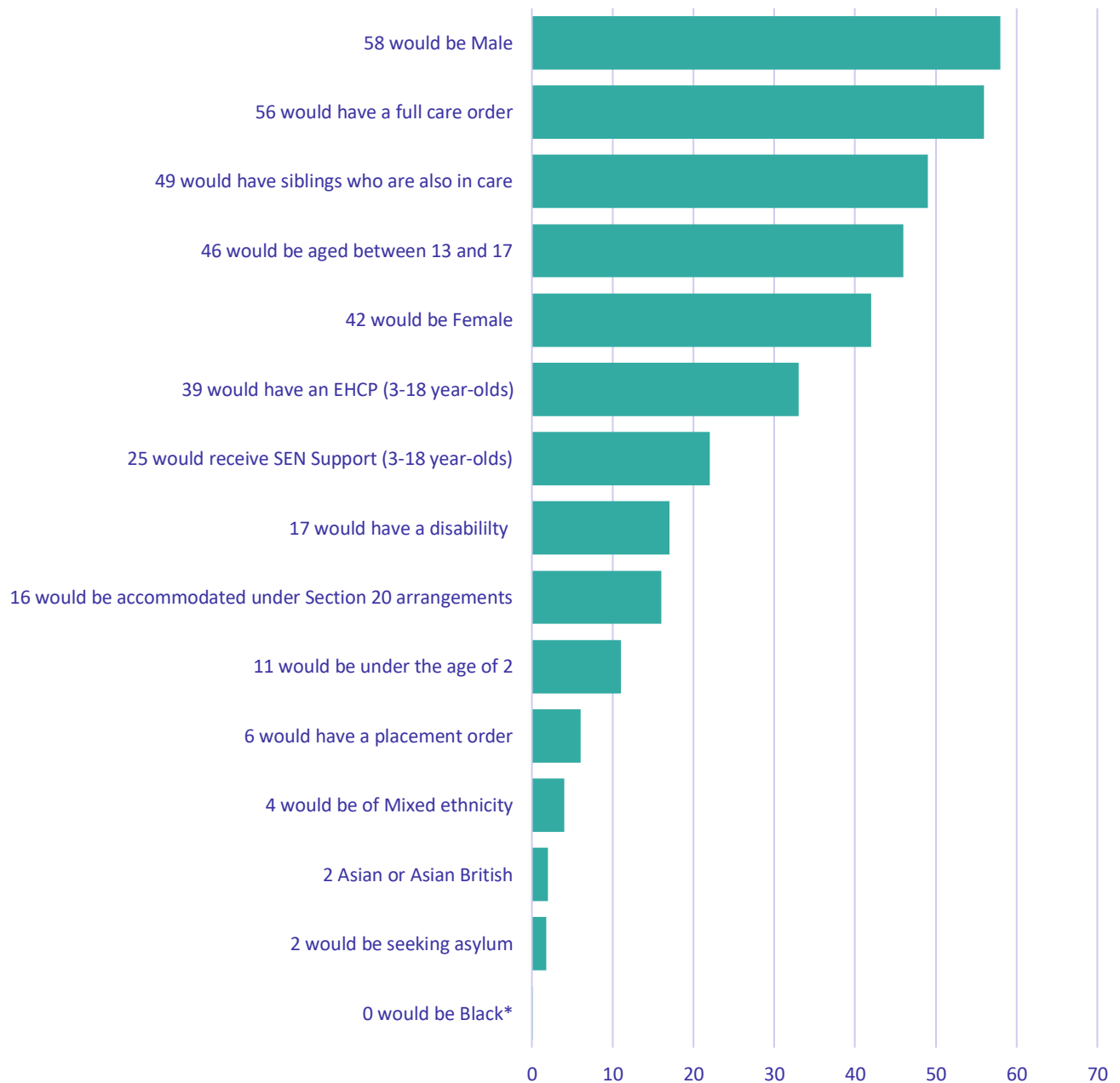
- Maintain the active recruitment and retention of key staff
- Review the service and develop a business plan to support any emerging changes
- Review the statement of purpose to ensure it is in line with the current available staffing levels
- Strengthen the health offer including nursing and CAMHS support through the contract with Children and Families Health Devon and the GP provision as part of a Section 10 agreement with NHS England

# Appendices

## 1. Care in Devon

### Care population characteristics

If there were 100 children in our care..

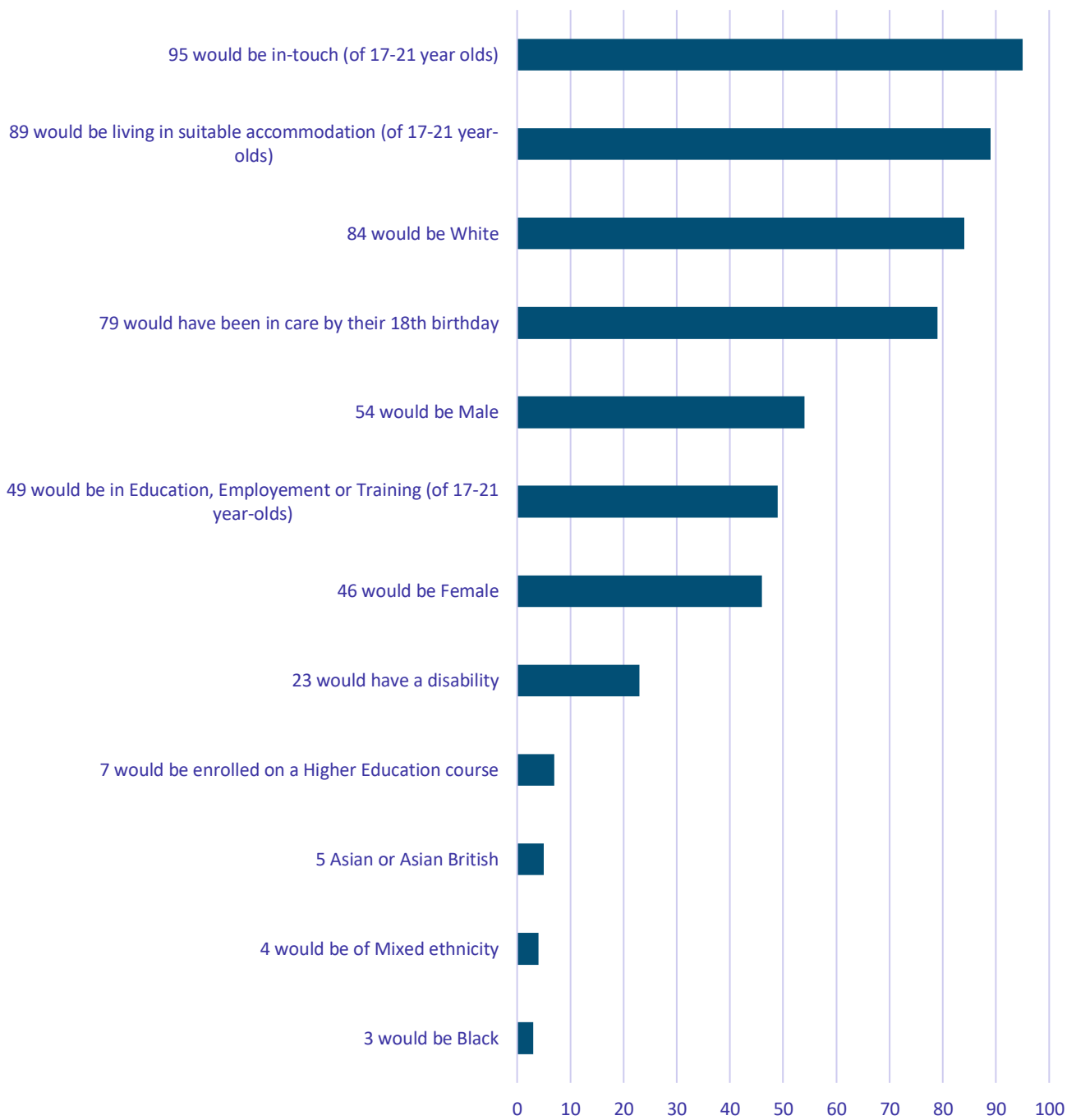


\*0.1% of children and young people in our care are Black



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**If there were 100 young people receiving leaving care services from  
US..**

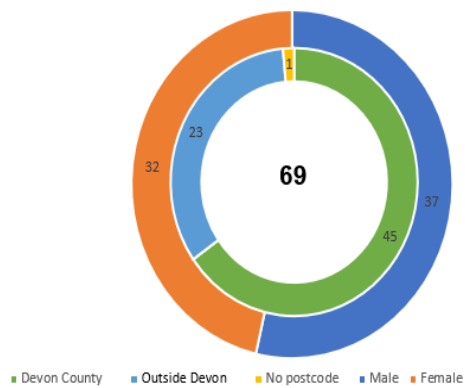


## Where children in care are living

### Location by age group

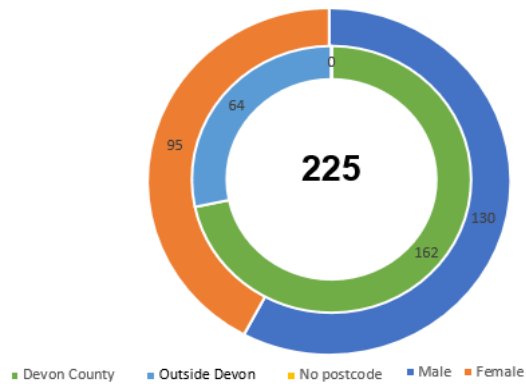
#### 2-4 years:

Children Looked After: Gender & Location Breakdown (2-4)



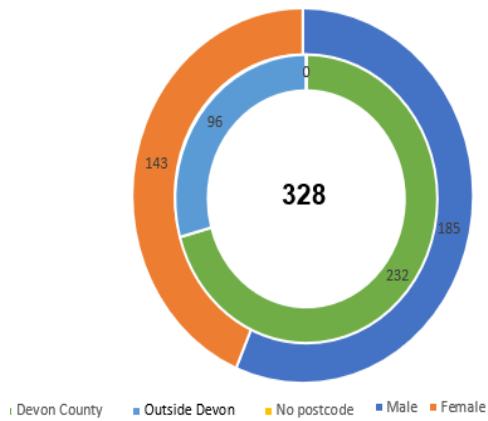
#### 5-11 years:

Children Looked After: Gender & Location Breakdown (5-11)



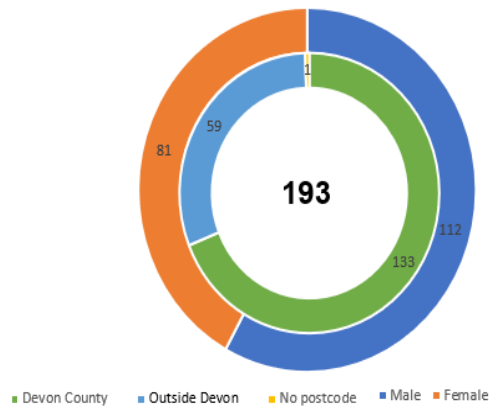
#### 12-16 years:

Children Looked After: Gender & Location Breakdown (12-16)



#### 16-18 years:

Children Looked After: Gender & Location Breakdown (16-18)



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## 2. Local services

### Bridges

Bridges, our Edge of Care Service in Devon, supports children and young people to live safely with their families at home. This is either through preventing the need for care entry or enabling children to return home safely and smoothly out of our care. To be eligible for the service, children and families should be:

- Living in Devon
- Aged 11-17 at point of referral
- Have an allocated Social Worker, are a Child in Need or have a Child Protection Plan, and are deemed to be at risk of coming into care; or
- Have an allocated Social Worker, have recently come into care, and are deemed to have the potential of returning home to their families safely

Young people are referred by their Social Worker, either under **Prevention** or **Reunification**.

Following the Manager's 'screening' process, eligible young people are allocated an Adolescent Worker and Family Worker, who arrange to contact the young person and their family as a 'Rapid Response' (within 24 hours), or as a 'Planned Response' (within 5 working days). An initial Support Agreement is then agreed with the young person and appropriate family members within 10 working days.

Following the completion of an Initial Support Agreement, a review of the plan is carried out every 6 weeks to monitor progress. This review continues until such time that planned outcomes have been achieved and the service is able to end their involvement, with the ultimate aim of the young person having stepped down from being a 'child in care', or a child remaining with their family and no longer needing a social care service.

#### **Of the 92 young people Bridges has worked with so far:**

- 47 have remained at home
- 14 no longer need any social care support
- 31 remained in, or came into, our care

### Adoption

- Of the 163 children, for those aged 5 or over, 2.9% were adopted. This is less than half our average between 2013 and 2016
- During 2019/20, 39 children were adopted in Devon, up slightly on the previous year – the number of adoptions across the Adopt South West region dropped by 10% overall
- During 2019/20, 39 children were adopted in Devon, up slightly on the previous year – the number of adoptions across the Adopt South West region dropped by 10% overall
- In the last 12 months, children in care are being placed for adoption more quickly: 42 days compared to 67 days from first entering our care.
- In 2020/21, we approved a third more adoptive families than during 2019-20
- The average length of time spent in care by older young people (14-15 year-olds) is increasing, whereas for those under 1, it is decreasing
- The increases in the child in care population, during 2020/21, are largely under 5 years of age.
- 7% children in care have adoption listed on their permanence plan (April 2021). This is up from 3% in April 2020.

- 
- 11% children in care have a return to family listed on their permanence plan (April 2021). This is down from 16% in April 2020.

## Minimising the use of unregulated accommodation

### Providing early multi-agency wrap-around support for families

Following a rise in the use of unregulated accommodation as an emergency option, the Devon Children and Families Partnership (DCFP) undertook a multi-agency review, in May 2021, to understand any lessons learned from 5 of these situations. The review found the need for children and families to receive earlier multi-disciplinary help and support to ensure better decision-making and planning. This is informing multi-agency practice development including the development of:

- Access to earlier support
- A community intensive support offer and crisis support offer for children with Autism
- Family-based care for children with Autism and complex needs
- Emergency IFA and children's home provision
- A Crisis Care business case.

### Ensuring high-quality support for young people, living in unregulated accommodation, to develop their independence in early adulthood

In the unregulated market, quality assurance is conducted through commissioning and contracting activity, visits, and monitoring. We undertake this for all accommodation, however additional focus is taken to quality assure providers outside of our supported living framework agreement.

A recent analysis of our quality assurance activity has shown some ongoing challenges and a lack of preparation for young people to support the move to adulthood. In some cases, this has resulted in an increase in support for young people ahead of their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, rather than a decrease.

Prior to COVID-19, provider development activity centred on better information sharing about criminal exploitation, as part of the recovery planning, we will re-start the provider development work to focus on missing, criminal exploitation including County Lines, supporting care experienced young people with additional needs into adulthood.

Good sufficiency, within the framework, is providing young people with a high-level of choice and varied options to support their journey to adulthood. However, there remains a use of non-framework accommodation.

### What we are doing

- Where 16 and 17-year-olds are living in semi-independent accommodation, we maintain close management oversight, through monthly panel reviews, and risk assessment monitoring.
- Increasing the numbers of young people who are living in accommodation which forms part of our quality assured Supported Living Options Framework Agreement. This is currently 76% and we will increase this to 80% by April 2022 and 90% by September 2022.

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## Outcomes for young people at risk of homelessness

### **A sample of young people, at risk of homelessness, accessing accommodation support showed the following outcomes:**

- 53% had successful outcomes (return home, goes to live with family/friends or becomes independent)
- 21% had unsuccessful outcomes (evicted or abandoned dwelling) – these were all followed up to check that warnings procedures had been followed and second chances given where possible
- 55% were accessing employment, education or training
- 50% improved social networks and relationships
- 30% were able to manage a tenancy and accommodation – this included all but 2 of those moving to independent accommodation
- 65% had self-care and living skills
- 45% had positive/improved emotional and mental health

### **Outcomes for all young people receiving accommodation-based support were as follows:**

- 100% of young people have an individual support plan and an outcomes star (or equivalent) to identify appropriate support and map their progress while they are receiving support.
- 11% had been in supported accommodation for more than 2 years at the end of Q1
- 57% of those identified as needing mental health support were accessing support
- 46% of those identified as needing substance misuse support were accessing support.

### **Outcomes for young people working with the Homelessness Prevention Co-ordinator:**

- 63% of young people supported to remain in existing accommodation preventing homelessness
- 13% supported into emergency/ temporary accommodation
- 25% supported to engage with services such as mental health service or substance misuse

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## Supporting children and young people in care with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)

### Local needs

- Almost two-thirds of care-experienced children and young people in Devon have SEND
- Children in care in Devon have worse mental health and wellbeing than children in care nationally
- The majority (63%) of children and young people in care, who have an EHCP, have a primary need of Social , Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH)
- 11% of EHCPs have a primary need of speech, Language and Communication needs (SLCN), and a further 13% have a secondary need of SLCN

### **Our vision is for all children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities to dream, believe and achieve, and fulfil their potential.**

To achieve this vision, our care and support should be close to home, linked to local communities, and personalised wherever possible.

We want to support children and young people with SEND to meet their individual health, care, and education needs, build individual, family and community resilience and equip young people to become independent and thriving adults.

A significant proportion of children in our care and care-experienced young people have SEND. Based on identified needs, we will hold a particular focus on ensuring we provide the right support at the right time for Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, Autism and speech language and communication needs (SLCN).

### Where we are now

A transformation of SEND services in Devon is currently in progress, with a new strategy in place and a re-design of SEND services in development. In this context, the [Joint SEND Commissioning Plan](#), developed during 2021, now sets out our commissioning priorities for the next four years. The views and experiences of young people with SEND and their families, as well as professionals from all agencies, have informed these strategic developments to local SEND services throughout.

Key developments to support this work, as set out in the Joint Commissioning plan, are the NHS Learning Disability and Autism Programme (LDAP) - which aims to support more young people with autism and/or learning disabilities to receive care in their community - and the Community Mental Health Framework - which will create a clearer offer for young people aged 18-25, including a priority focus on care-experienced young people.



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## Meeting the Health needs of children in care and care-experienced young people

Meeting the health needs of Children in Care and Care Experienced young people is a joint responsibility between the Local Authority and the NHS commissioners and providers<sup>4</sup>.

***“Children in care have a higher incidence of many physical, behavioural, emotional and mental health issues such as speech & language difficulties, sensory issues and developmental delay. In addition, due to frequent moves, they can experience difficulties in accessing health services and may not have their health needs met, leading to further detrimental health and social outcomes both in the short and long-term.”***

### Promoting the Health of Looked After Children, 2015

#### The current offer

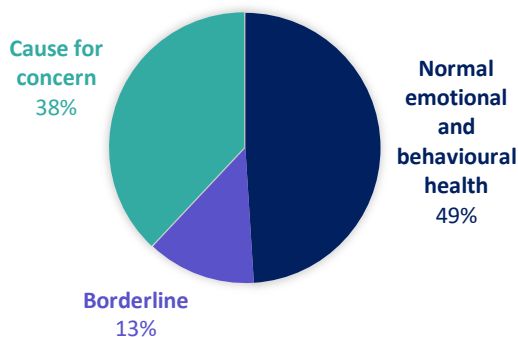
To support the health and wellbeing of children in care and care-experienced young people, NHS Devon CCG commission, from Children and Families Health Devon (CFHD), a range of Community Health Services. CFHD provides a range of services that are accessible to all children in care including: Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Early Help for Mental Health, on-line counselling service (Kooth), Speech and Language Therapy Services (SALT), Occupational Therapy (OT), Physiotherapy, Autism Spectrum Diagnosis (ASD), Learning Disabilities Teams (LD), Children’s Community Nursing, Specialist Child Development services.

CFHD has two dedicated services, which are commissioned specifically to support the physical and mental health needs of children and young people in care: CFHD CIC Nursing Service,

#### Mental health and emotional wellbeing

Nationally, for all children in care aged 5-16 years, a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) score was recorded for 81% of them.<sup>5</sup> The national score of 14.1 for 2020 is marginally below that of 2019 and 2018.

**NATIONAL AVERAGE SDQ SCORE OF 14.1 (2020)**



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<sup>4</sup> [sufficiency - statutory guidance on securing sufficient accommodation for looked after children.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/91111/sufficiency_-_statutory_guidance_on_securing_sufficient_accommodation_for_looked_after_children.pdf)

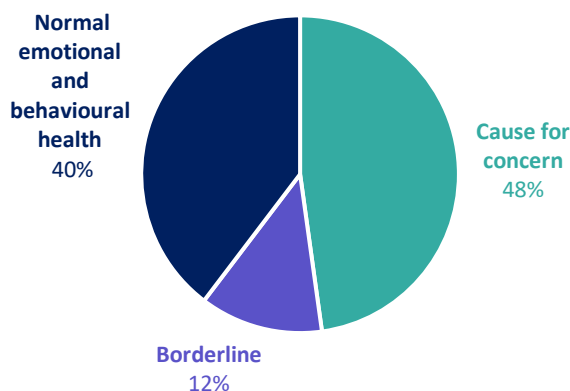
<sup>5</sup> National SDQ is reported on an annual basis by the ONS. The latest figure is for the year to 31 March 2020 and is available online at: [Children looked after in England including adoptions, Reporting Year 2020 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

The average SDQ score for children in care in Devon is currently 16.1. Locally, the score has remained high despite review and implementation of the Children in Care (CIC) pathway into CAMHS in 2017 and again in 2019. A score is currently recorded for 84% of our children in care in the relevant age group.

249 children in care are open to CAMHS as of February 2021, with all children entering care being screened by a mental health professional. As part of this, attachment disorder, impact of trauma and neglect is considered. Within the CAMHS service there is a specialist provision for Child Sexual Abuse (CSA). This service in addition to the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) and CVS Services which offer therapeutic support to children who are victims of sexual assault and abuse.

We will be reviewing our SDQ triage process during Summer 2021 to ensure we are prioritising the right children for support. We are also developing additional mental health support services for Care Leavers which will be outlined later in this Strategy.

**DEVON AVERAGE SDQ SCORE OF 16.1  
(2020/21)**



## CAMHS

The aim of the CAMHS CIC team is to provide support, care and treatment which promotes the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children in care in Devon. In addition to direct clinical care for CYP, the service provides training for foster carers through the Nurturing Attachments 18-week training programme, as well as running regular supervision groups for staff working with the fostering support team and offering consultation to local authority colleagues. The CAMHS CIC Team is a well-established, experienced team, providing assessment, treatment, and specialist consultation to the wider CAMHS service, social care colleagues and other agencies.

CAMHS CIC interventions can range from 6-12 in-depth sessions with assessment, report writing and multi-agency working which is adapted and designed according to the needs of each individual child, carer, and professional team. When indicated, some children and young people are offered further treatment, for example, in relation to sexual abuse and trauma.

The service has continued to be offered through COVID. During the initial COVID response period of March-August 2020 the team experienced reduced workforce capacity and higher demand. The number of children and young people entering local authority care increased over this period. As an example, in July 2020 there was a 28% increase in referrals compared to July 2019.

The average waiting times for start of treatment in CAMHS is currently 11.2 weeks. All referrals are screened and triaged within 24 hours and personalised referral responses sent to children/ young people, their parents, carers and referrers. Young people can self-refer or be referred by a parent, carer or professional. Whilst waiting, the service keeps in touch with children and their carer's and monitors their risks to keep them safe. Furthermore, care is prioritised based on vulnerability and clinical risk, with support being available 24/7 if needed through duty and crisis lines.

## Mental health offer post-18

For care-experienced young people, over the age of 18, mental health support is offered from Devon Partnership Trust and ranges from Talk works to community mental health support teams including

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support on admission and discharge from acute settings. There have been 6 young people admitted to an adult mental health inpatient setting during 2020. Review work identified there is more to do to support their needs prior to admission, during admission and during planning for discharge.

## Children in Care Nursing Service

The Children in Care (CiC) Nursing service covers children in care in Devon and Torbay, with a Named Nurse providing senior clinical leadership and a Lead Nurse, based in North Devon. The team was brought together in September 2020, having previously been two teams serving Torbay and Devon local authorities respectively.

The CFHD CiC Nurse team work specifically with children and young people who are care experienced. They provide support, health advice and signposting to appropriate health services. The Nurses also work alongside other professionals such as Personal Advisors, Participation teams and voluntary organisations.

All children in care require statutory Review Health Assessments (RHAs) every 6 months for 0-5 years and annually for children aged over 5 years. This is a significant and key function of the service. Generally, all children in care are offered a face-to-face visit for their RHA unless a COVID risk assessment indicates that this is not advisable or if the young person chooses a virtual contact by phone or Attend Anywhere (NHS virtual platform). RHAs provide an important opportunity for children and young people to have a skilled Nurse identify and address any physical and emotional/mental health needs or issues to ensure their individual optimum well-being and health outcomes.

In addition to RHAs, the CiC nurses also offer a rolling programme of training for newly qualified SWs, Health Matters training for foster carers four times a year, The Named Nurse assists the DCC Fostering team with arranging training for Carers to address topical health issues, including forthcoming online training on dental health, development of a 2-hour health awareness training for all DCC SWs/Personal Advisors and IROs, in conjunction with the CiC CAMHS team manager and is expected to be rolled out in Spring 2021. It was delayed from 2020 due to COVID-19. An initial session has been provided to the Social Work Team in December 2020 and received good feedback.

## Pregnancy and Early Years

The commissioning of Public Health nursing services and Childrens Centres both set out the priority of supporting care-experienced young people when becoming parents. This is an offer for both young women and young men. We plan to roll out the Helping Us Grow Supported (HUGS) programme during 2022. The programme has the aim of meeting the needs of young first-time parents who have low-to-moderate mental health challenges, low-level learning disabilities, potential poor parental modelling from their parents, or are young parents receiving an intensive support offer.

## Substance misuse

The offer for children in care who need support to address substance misuse is provided by Y-SMART, which is a commissioned substance misuse service for children and young people under the age of 18. It is funded by Public Health Devon, alongside national funding. Between April and December 2020, almost one in five referrals were for young people in care. This compares to 13% nationally.

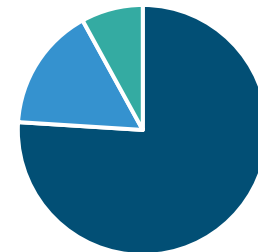
Tier 3 interventions include community-based specialist assessments, planned treatments, and specialist liaison. During 2020/21, 16% of Tier 3 interventions were for young people in care – a total of 23 individuals. The vast majority of whom – 19 of 23 – were referred between the ages of 16-18 years.

During the same period of time, 8% of Tier 2 interventions – involving an initial professional assessment and identification of support needs – were for young people in care. This amounts to 10 individual young people across the year. A total of 3 care-experienced young people received Tier 2 interventions.

For all young people, whose cases closed during 2020/21 – not only young people in care – 98% met the goals in their care plan and had successful and planned step-downs from treatment.

Y-SMART have been developing joint working arrangements with the Adult Substance Misuse service 'Together'. They are ensuring that care-experienced young people receive cohesive and continued support, in the right setting, to best meet the individual needs of each young adult. This has meant that Y-SMART are working with more 18-21 year-olds.

Tier 3 Y-SMART Interventions  
by care status



■ No care status ■ Child in care  
■ Child in Need

## Child sexual abuse and sexually-harmful behaviour

Within the CAMHS service there is a specialist provision for Child Sexual Abuse (CSA). This service in addition to the SARC and CVS Services offer therapeutic support to children who are victims of sexual assault and abuse.

We have had several children enter care during the Summer of 2020 where sexually harmful behaviour (SHB) behaviour and the risk they posed to others was the cause for care entry. After reviewing the circumstances of these children, we are up-skilling the Youth Intervention

Team (YIT) to complete Aim 3 assessments and offer therapeutic interventions. The Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) also provide support and advice for children with sexually harmful behaviours. Increased training and resources for Social Workers and partnership staff. We are working with the CSA Centre of Expertise to run CSA and SHB training for all social work staff.

The Journey After Child Abuse Team works specifically with children and young people who have experienced sexual abuse.

Sexual abuse includes engaging young people in sexual activities including sexual assault, as well as non-contact abuse such as involving young people in looking at pornographic material and sending sexually inappropriate messages (including social media).

### 3. Corporate Parenting governance structure

