

Corporate Parenting Strategy – Needs analysis

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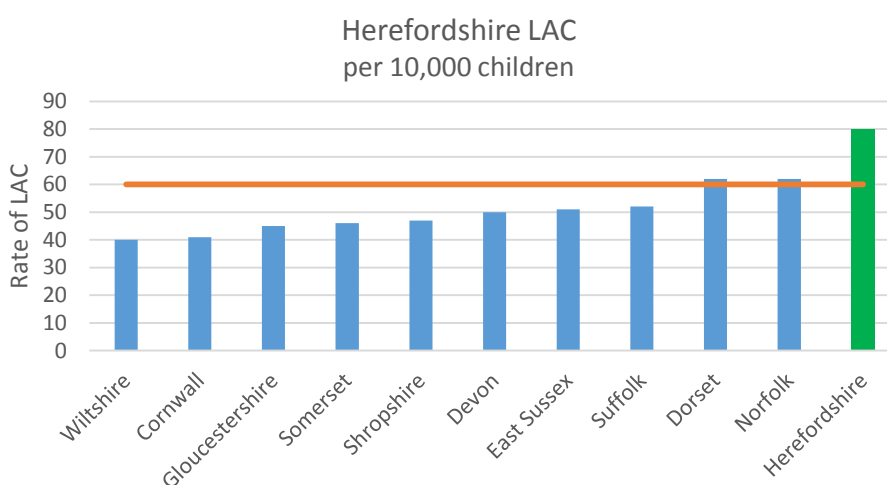
Introduction

This needs analysis has been completed with the purpose of informing the Corporate Parenting strategy. Information available from Children’s Social Care and relevant partners, including education and health, has been collated and where possible analysed in comparison with previous years and national or regional data to help understand trends, areas of good performance and areas to improve.

Looked after children population

The following information summarises Herefordshire’s LAC population, relative to similar comparator local authorities and those with similar levels of deprivation using 2015/16 data.

LAC rate relative to Comparator Authorities



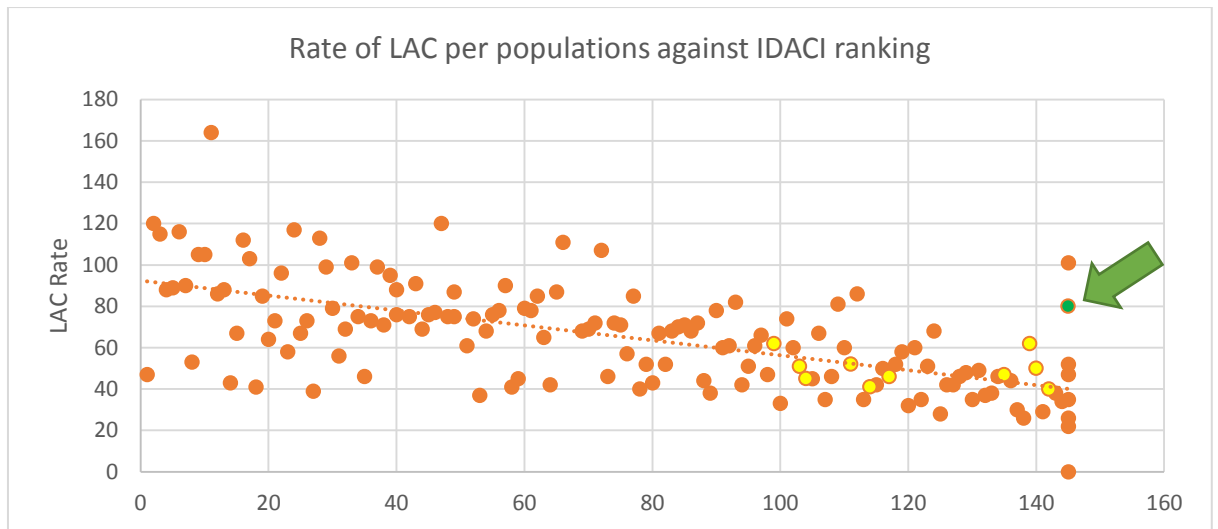
As can be seen from the graph above, Herefordshire’s LAC population is considerably higher than that of our comparator authorities. An approximate rate across our statistical neighbours is 50 LAC per 10,000 under 18 population, however Herefordshire’s rate has grown during 2015/16, for the fifth year in a row, to 80 children per 10,000 population. If Herefordshire’s rate for looked after children was consistent with our comparator authorities, this would equate to approximately 180 LAC children at any point in time.

In addition, a national average line is shown in red on the above graph, again, Herefordshire’s rate is higher than this average and if we were to be in line with the national average rate, we would need to reduce our LAC to around 217, a reduction of around 70 children

LAC rate relative to Deprivation Levels

If we were to compare Herefordshire’s rate of LAC children against authorities with similar levels of deprivation, this also shows the Authority as an outlier. There are 3 methods of calculation the IDACI (Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index) rates. Highlighted in the graph below is our LAC rate compared to the proportion of children within the most deprived 10% of LSOAs.

This chart indicates that Herefordshire (identified with the arrow), is a significant outlier. As described above, there are three differing measure of IDACI; both of the other calculations, which aren’t displayed, are consistent with the graph below.



Comparing to the trend line, Herefordshire’s LAC rate should be closer to a rate of 40 LAC per 10,000 children, half of the current level, which would mean actual LAC children numbers might need to be closer to 145.

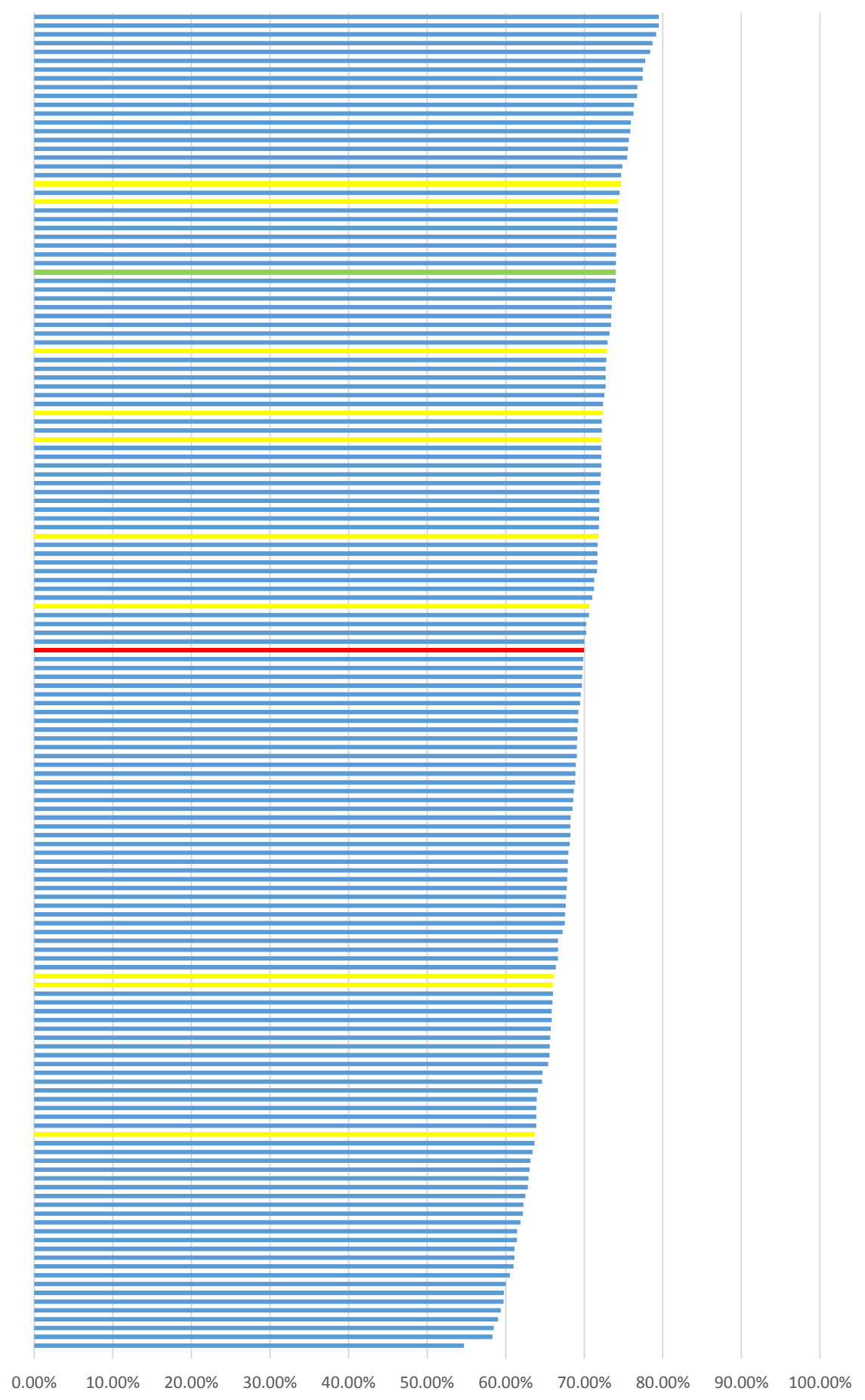
The table below shows Herefordshire’s comparator authorities, their LAC rate and where they rank for their IDACI (population living in most deprived 10% of LSOAs). Comparing these values to the national trend line, all of our comparators have LAC levels consistent with their IDACI ranking. These points are highlighted in yellow on the above chart

	LAC Rate	IDACI Ranking
Wiltshire	40	142
Cornwall	41	114
Gloucestershire	45	104
Somerset	46	117
Shropshire	47	135
Devon	50	140
East Sussex	51	103
Suffolk	52	111
Dorset	62	139
Norfolk	62	99
Herefordshire	80	145

LAC Turnover

The graph on the following page shows a rudimentary calculation of turnover of LAC for Herefordshire compared to other councils. It shows the number of LAC at 31st March 2016 as a percentage of the total number of LAC supported during the year. A higher percentage indicates that the LAC turnover is lower, potentially as a result of children remaining LAC for longer. Herefordshire sits in the highest quartile with 74% of all LAC children supported in the year open at year end, suggesting that LAC turnover is slower than the national average of 69.9%. Again, similar authorities to Herefordshire (as above) have been highlighted on the graph in yellow for comparative purposes.

LAC Turnover



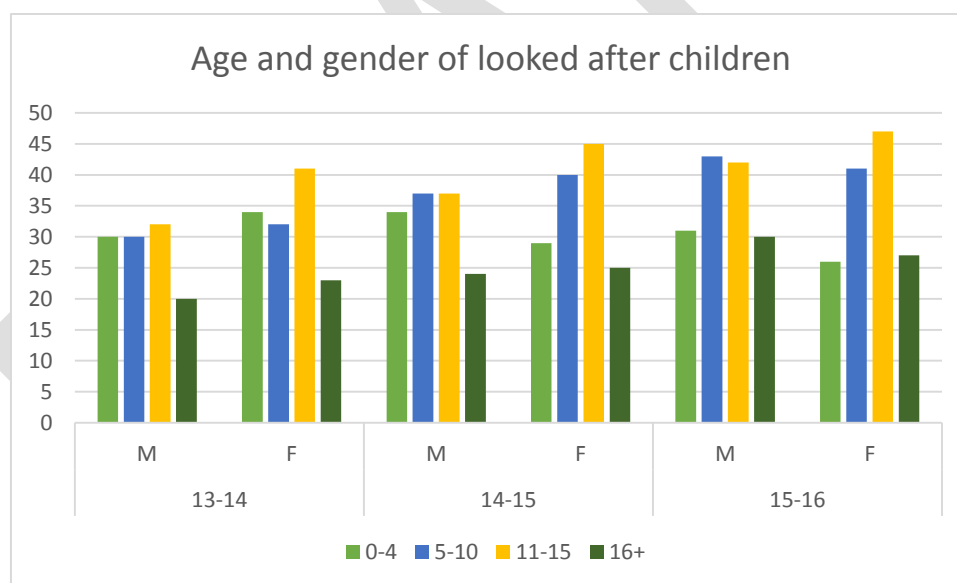
Age and gender

National data reports that on 31 March 2016, 56% of children looked after were male, 44% female and these proportions have varied little over recent years. In Herefordshire 51% of looked after children were male and 49% were female.

The age profile nationally has changed over the last four years, with a steady increase in the number and proportion of older children. 62% of children looked after were aged 10 years and over in 2016 compared with 56% in 2012. There has been a reduction in the number and proportion of children aged 1-4 years (from 18% of the looked after population in 2012 to 13% in 2016), and a slight decrease in the number and proportion of children aged under 1 year (from 6% in 2012 to 5% in 2016).

In Herefordshire the numbers of looked after children aged 0-4 and aged 16+ have remained relatively stable since 2013/14. There have been significant increases in the age groups 5-10 and 11-15 with total numbers rising from 64 and 73 in 2013/14 up to 84 and 89 respectively in 2015/16. In view of the ages of these children they are more likely to remain in care long term than those admitted to care at a younger age.

The care planning for children in these middle age brackets is different to those in the youngest and oldest age brackets. As a Service more attention is required on achieving permanence for children within these age groups.



Ethnicity

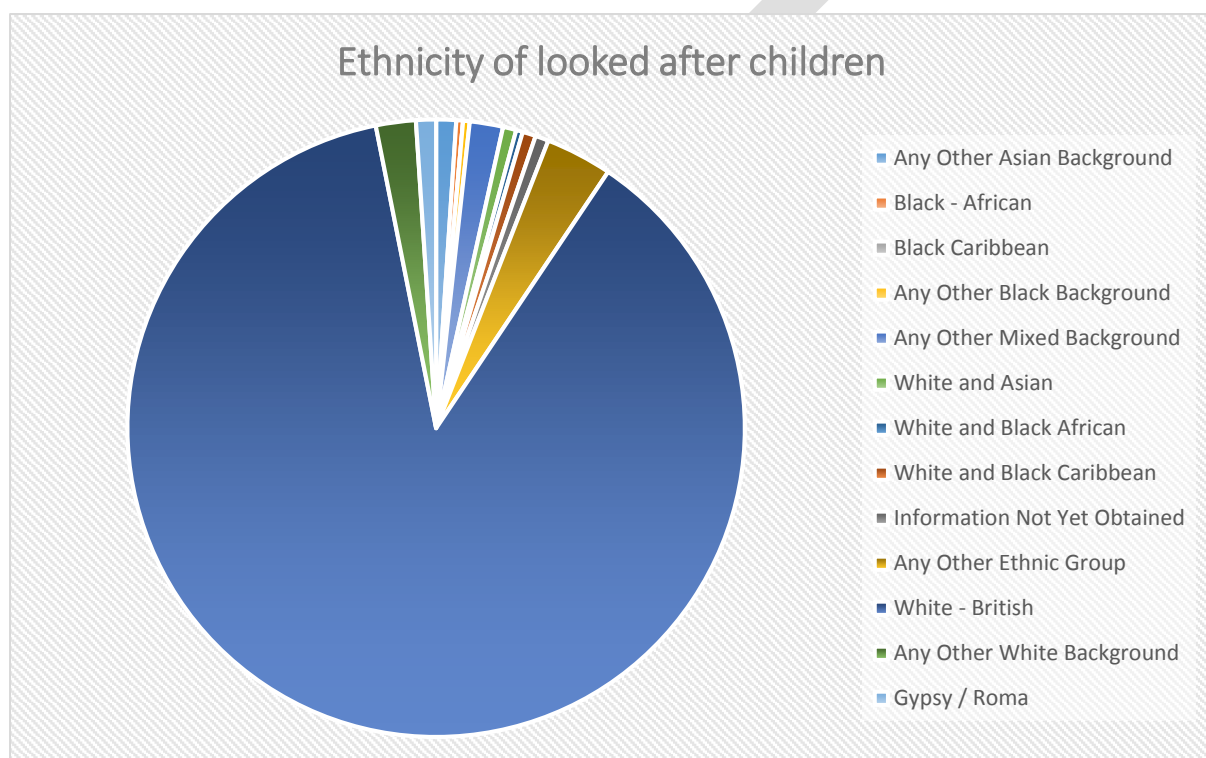
As the chart below demonstrates looked after children are overwhelmingly White British with only very small numbers of children from other ethnic backgrounds. In 2011 94% of the population within Herefordshire was White British with 4% White: Other. This group was growing at the fastest rate and represented the increased number of migrants from Eastern Europe. The number of children from this background within the LAC population was 3% and so it is reasonable to expect these numbers to increase.

The data indicates that 3 children are from a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller background. However those who know families were able to identify 18 looked after children whose families would identify themselves as Gypsy, Roma or Travellers. It seems likely that children and families ethnicity is being

recorded on the basis of their appearance to professionals rather than by being asked how they identify themselves and therefore there is a risk that needs arising from cultural identity are being missed.

The LAC population includes 5 children who were unaccompanied asylum seeking children and this number is set to rise during the next couple of years. This will impact upon the ethnic mix of the looked after population as a whole.

Herefordshire is not well placed to meet the demands of a diverse looked after children population. Social Care staff have often have very limited experience of working with children and families from diverse backgrounds and this is true of other services within the community.



Children with a disability

There are 31 looked after children allocated within the Children with Disabilities team. However data on children with a disability is currently not consistently recorded on Mosaic meaning that analysing the numbers and needs of those children with a disability is quite difficult.

The Report of the Designated Doctor for looked after children reported on the 14th March 2017 that she was aware of:

- 11 children of primary school age attending Blackmarston School
- 11 children of secondary school age attending Barrs Court School
- 2 children in Herefordshire residential placement
- 2 children in out of County specialist residential placements.

Further work to understand the profile of our looked after children in relation to disability is required.

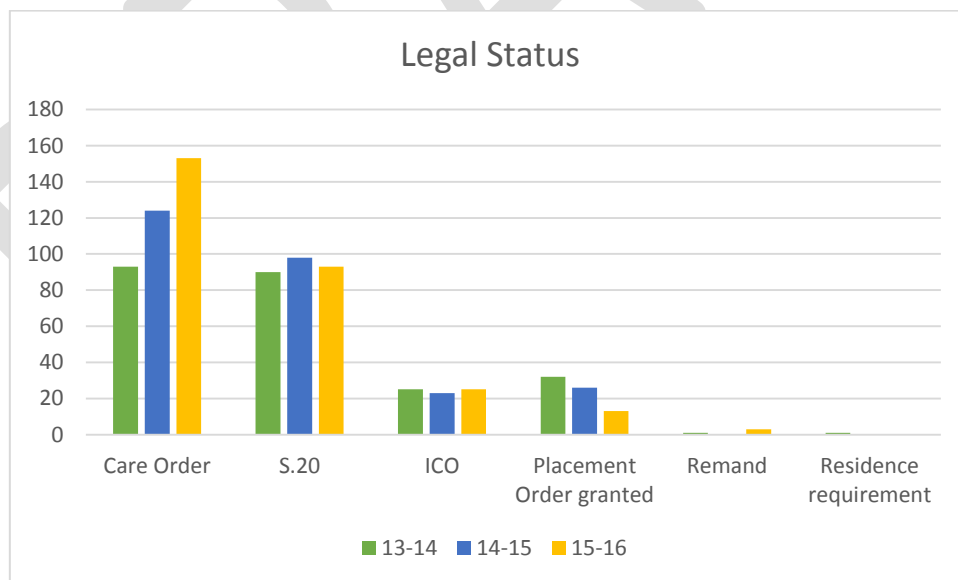
Legal status

Nationally the numbers and proportion of children looked after on a care order have continued to increase. In 2016, 65% of children looked after at 31 March were looked after under a care order, up from 61% in 2015 and up from 59% in 2012. Voluntary agreements under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989, which have fluctuated slightly over recent years, have dipped slightly during 2016 from 28% in 2015 to 27%.

In Herefordshire 53% of children were looked after under a care order and 32% of children were looked after under voluntary agreements in 2016. A review of children looked after under voluntary agreements was completed during Summer 2016 which identified 24 children out of 95 who required their care plans to be progressed or reviewed to ensure that they were being cared for under the correct legal framework. This work is now almost complete and the Local Authority has initiated care proceedings for a number of these children. Clearer systems are now in place to ensure an early review of legal status when a child is admitted to care and so it is likely that the proportions of children looked after under a Care Order will rise over the next few years.

Nationally Placement orders have shown some growth over the same time period with a decline more recently, from 12% in 2012 up to a high of 14% in 2013 and 2014 before falling to 8% in 2016. The National Adoption Leadership Board has linked this trend to the impact of two relevant court judgments, known as Re B and Re B-S. Herefordshire can observe a similar trend with just 5% of looked after children the subject of a Placement Order in 2016 which has reduced from 13% in 2014.

The graph below shows the changing trends in legal status of children who are looked after in Herefordshire. Although the number of children looked after voluntarily (Section 20) has remained relatively stable the number of children subject to a full care order has increased significantly and consequently the proportion of children looked after under Section 20 has reduced.



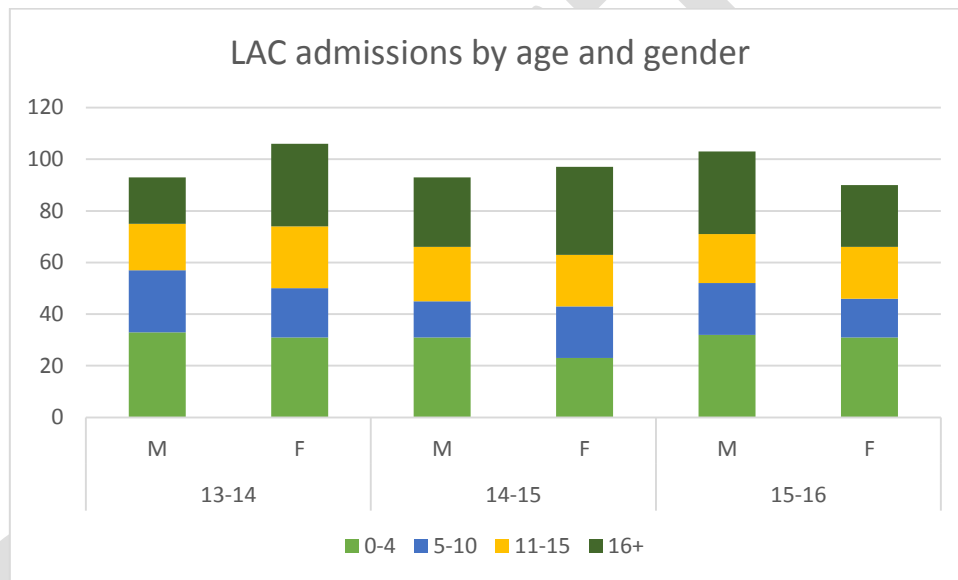
Admissions to care by age and gender

Nationally the percentage of children starting to be looked after aged 10 to 15 has remained constant at 29% over the last four years whilst the proportion aged 16 and over has increased steadily, from 12% in 2012 to 18% in 2016. In both cases this means the actual numbers have been increasing. The increase in admissions to care for those aged over 16 is due to the increased

numbers of unaccompanied asylum seeking children within the UK. Over the same period, the proportion aged under 1 has fallen from 21% in 2012 to 18% in 2016; the proportion aged 1 to 4 years has fallen from 20% in 2012 to 18% in 2016, whilst the proportion aged 5 to 9 years has remained stable at 17%.

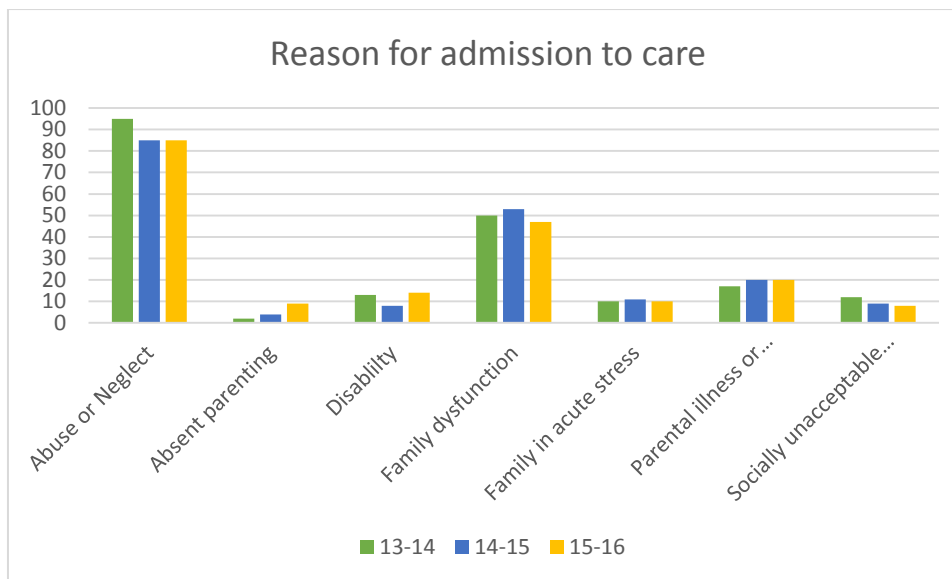
In Herefordshire the number of children admitted to care each year has remained relatively consistent with 126 admissions in 2013/14, 124 in 2014/15 and 121 in 2015/16. In 2016 the proportions of children admitted to care at different age groups do not differ significantly to those reflected nationally.

If the first 3 quarters of 2016/17 are used as a predictor to forecast admissions during quarter 4 then a total of 96 children would be admitted to care during the year which is a significant reduction on previous years. As overall numbers of children in care have not decreased this would indicate that fewer children are leaving care proportionately and so further focus on permanency planning for children is required to ensure that children do not remain in care longer than is necessary.



Reason for admission to care

As would be expected the principal reason for admissions to care are abuse or neglect. There is no evidence of any change in patterns to reasons for admission to care except in the increase of children admitted to care due to absent parents. This primarily relates to the increasing numbers of unaccompanied asylum seeking children and is expected to continue to rise over the next couple of years.



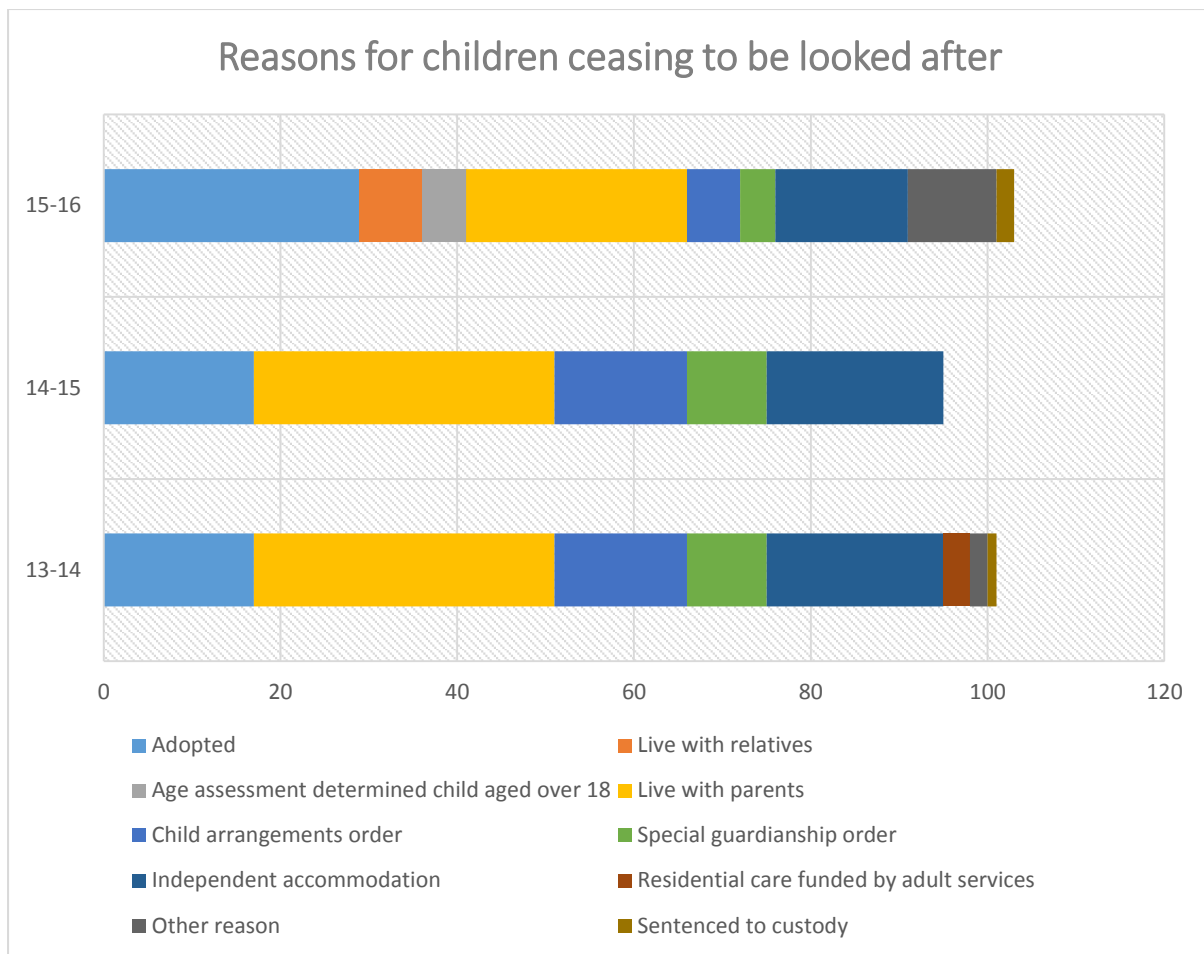
Reason for children ceasing to be looked after

Nationally in 2016, 2,480 children aged under 1 year ceased to be looked after. The percentage of under 1's ceasing to be looked after has increased from 5% in 2012 to 8% in 2014 where it remained stable to 2016. The proportion of children aged 1 to 4 ceasing to be looked after increased from 25% in 2012 to 28% in 2014, likely to reflect the large rise in adoptions during this period, but has since fallen steadily, back to 25% in 2016. In Herefordshire 28% of children ceased to be looked after due to having been adopted in 2016 which was higher than 17% in 2014 and 18% in 2015.

7,970 (25%) children ceased to be looked after on their 18th birthday which compares with just 10% in Herefordshire.

Of the 31,710 children ceasing to be looked after in 2016, 10,880 (34%) returned home to their parents or relatives. This compares with 31% who returned to live with parents or relatives in Herefordshire.

Nationally 3,830 children ceased care due to a special guardianship order (12%). This is an increase of 8% on 2015 and an increase of 78% on 2012. This compares with 4% of children who ceased care due to a special guardianship order in Herefordshire in 2016 which had decreased from 9% in 2014 and 2015. Further work is required to encourage and support carers who are long-term matched with children to pursue an application for a Special Guardianship Order where this is in the best interests of children.



Placements

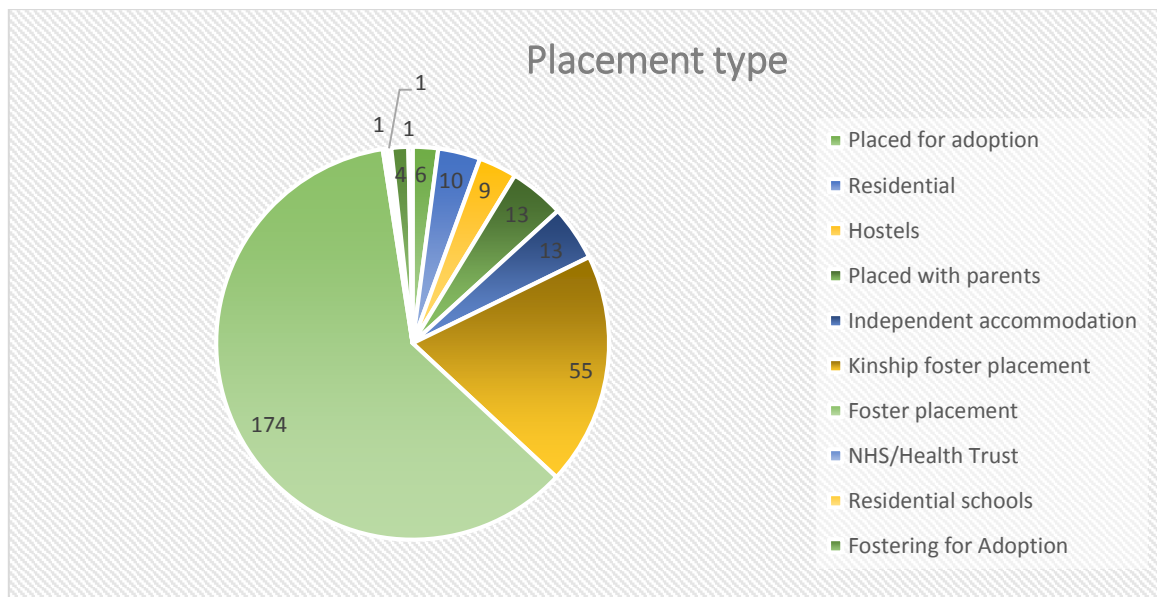
Placement type

Nationally 74% of looked after children were cared for in foster placements in 2016. This compares with 81% in Herefordshire. Of the looked after children who were in a foster placement nationally almost one in six (16%) were being fostered by a relative or friend as compared to 24% in Herefordshire. This demonstrates that Herefordshire is performing well in enabling children to live with families and with their own family where this is possible. The high numbers of children placed with relatives in comparison to national data is likely to relate to the low numbers of SGO's in comparison with other areas.

320 children (1%) were in placements where the carer is also an approved adopter (fostering to adopt) or where they were subject to concurrent planning and Herefordshire also had 1% of looked after children in foster to adopt placements.

In 2016, 5% of looked after children were placed with parents and this has remained stable over the last five years. Herefordshire also had 5% of looked after children placed with their parents.

Nationally 14% of children were living more than 20 miles from their local authority boundary. In Herefordshire this percentage has reduced from 23% in 2014 to 11% in 2016.



Placement stability

Nationally of all looked after children at 31 March 2016, 68% (48,200) had one placement during the year, 21% had two placements and 10% had three or more placements. In Herefordshire the number of children with three or more placements has reduced from 6% in 2014 to 3% in 2016.

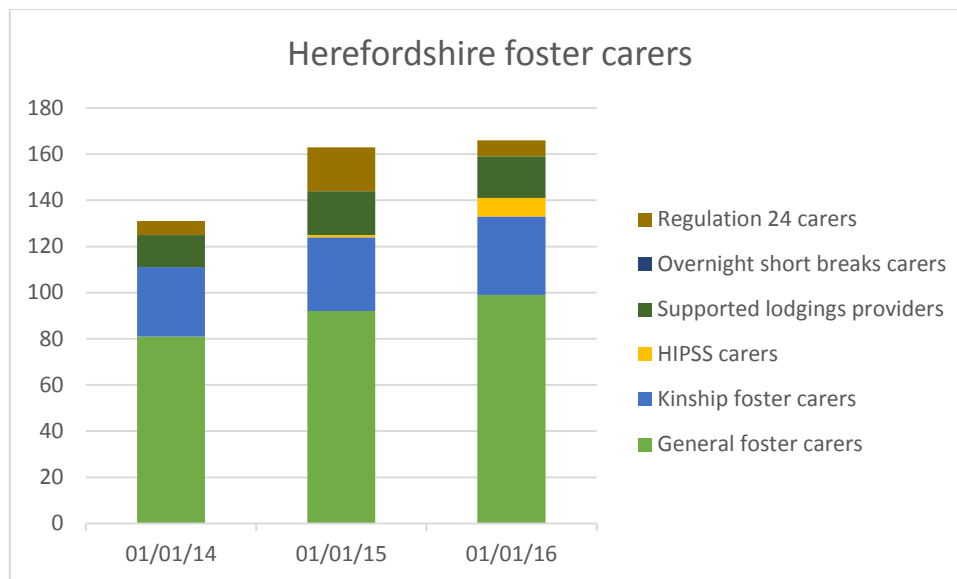
Children in stable placements of at least 2.5 years has improved significantly from 35% in 2013/14 to 70% in 2015/16. This compares with a national average in 2015/16 of 68%.

Approved foster carers

The number of Herefordshire foster carers and supported lodging providers has increased from 131 to 166 between 2014 and 2016. There has been a particular growth in the number of general foster carers from 81 to 99 during the period with the number of kinship carers remaining relatively stable. The number of Regulation 24 carers increased during 2014 but reduced again during 2015 indicating that a more planned approach to placements with family and friends is being achieved.

The Herefordshire Intensive Placement Support Service (HIPSS) commenced in September 2014 to provide placements for children and young people with the most complex needs as an alternative to residential care. The model supports carers and children and young people to help achieve long term placement stability within Herefordshire.

The overnight short break service was brought in-house from the 1st April 2016 and has been successful in recruiting carers.



HIPSS and TISS

Herefordshire Intensive Placement Support Service (HIPSS) and the Therapeutic Intervention and Support Service (TISS) were commissioned in 2014 to work jointly with our fostering service to recruit and support specific foster carers to provide placements as an alternative to residential care; to provide consultations for staff and foster carers and direct work services for children and young people. Since April 2015 HIPSS have worked with a total of 22 young people. Of these 5 have been supported to return to live with their birth family; 3 to live independently; 6 stepped down to foster placements of which 2 were kinship placements; 2 are in residential care and 5 young people are placed with HIPSS carers currently.

TISS has provided 74 consultations during 2016 regarding individual children, 35 consultations to the Edge of Care team and 1 to the 16+ team. A programme of regular consultations for 16+ team has been planned to continue into 2017. Evaluation forms completed by those attending consultations indicate that the service is highly valued by professionals particularly in understanding the behaviour of children and young people and planning approaches to support and manage their behaviour. TISS has also delivered training on a wide range of topics to Social Workers, foster carers, family support workers, independent reviewing officers, a training provider and SENCO team. Again evaluation shows this training to be highly valued by participants.

Children's views

As part of the LAC review process children are asked to complete a consultation form and/or participate in the review meeting. Although this enables children's views to be understood and responded to on an individual basis at the moment this information is not collected in a way that enables it to be collated or reported upon across our looked after population.

The Children in Care Council repeatedly state that they dislike consultation forms and so more effective methods of consultation that children and young people like need to be developed.

Currently very few children contribute to reviews of their foster carers.

Disruption of foster, SGO, adoption, re-admissions to care

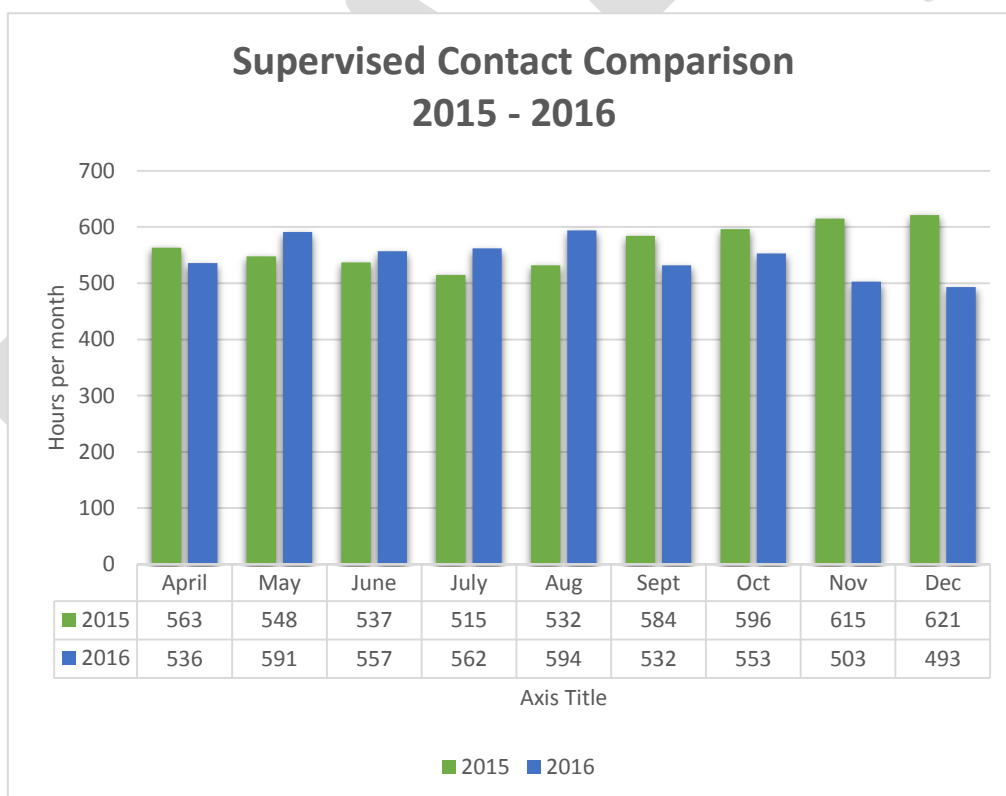
Herefordshire is performing well in relation to placement stability but more needs to be done to embed the process of consolidation meetings into practice to minimise the risk of placement disruptions.

During 2015 and 2016 there were 7 children from 4 families who were admitted to care due to a disruption in their SGO. The children varied in age at which the SGO's were made and ages that they disrupted.

No children experienced an adoption disruption during 2015/16 or in 2016/17 to date.

Contact

The bar chart below shows the contact figures for a 9 month period in 2015 compared with 2016. There has been a decrease in the number of contact hours provided compared with 2015, averaging out at 21 hours less contact per month in 2016. However, the service is a flexible one with obvious peaks and dips in referrals when the service has to respond to requests, especially when cases are in proceedings. The reduction in contact hours has been achieved through active challenge by the contact team in relation to ensuring that contact is at levels that are in the best interests of children; several long term cases coming to an end in 2016 and non-LAC cases being directed to private organisations if they need support in managing family contact.



In 2015 there were 12.5 FTE staff providing supervised contact within the service, this has now reduced to 8.4 FTE staff so the service is now working more efficiently. Transporting of children to and from contact sessions has drastically reduced as this was taking up valuable time when staff were not available to be supervising contacts. Also administrative processes have been reviewed and amended to ensure efficient use of time.

Views of service users

The Contact service regularly seeks feedback from children, young people, birth families, foster carers and social workers regarding the quality of the service provided. Feedback from children and young people is very mixed reflecting the emotional impact that contact has for them whilst feedback from adults is generally quite positive.

Workforce in Children's Social Care

Five teams are principally responsible for supporting looked after children: two Child Protection and court teams; the Looked after Children Team; the 16+ Team and the Safeguarding & Review Service. The Child Protection and Court teams have 23 full-time equivalent (FTE) social workers; LAC team has 9.8 FTE social workers; the 16+ Team has 5 FTE social workers and 7 personal advisors; the Safeguarding and Review Unit has 6.8 FTE Independent Reviewing Officers. The Child Protection and Court teams have experienced a lot of instability over the last couple of years with high numbers of agency staff and a high number of relatively newly qualified permanent Social Workers. Recruitment and retention is gradually improving. There are no vacancies in any of the other teams. Looked after Children can also be supported by the Children with Disability team. There are vacancies in this team which are currently the subject of an ongoing recruitment exercise. Across the social work workforce we have 80% of our posts filled with permanent staff, 11% occupied by agency staff and 9% unfilled.

Education

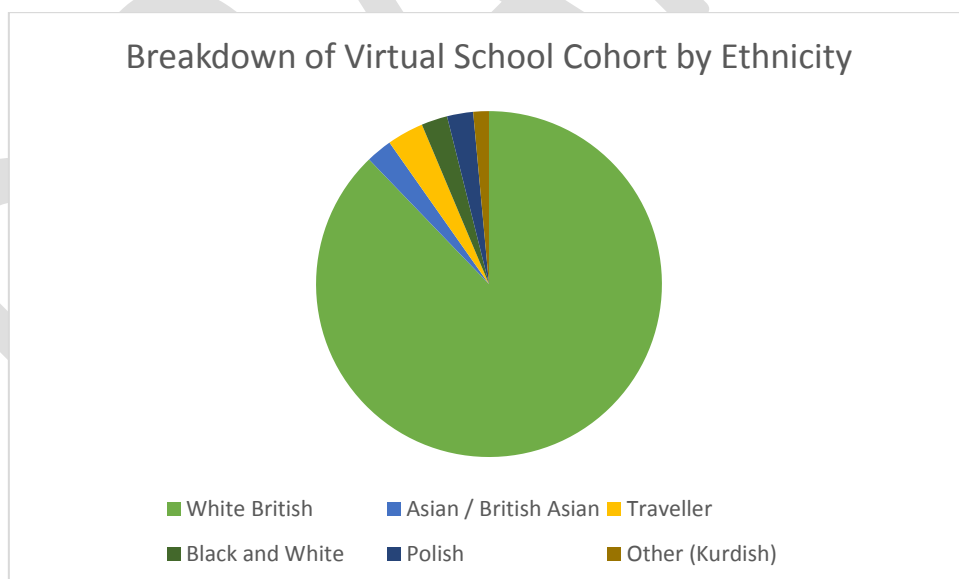
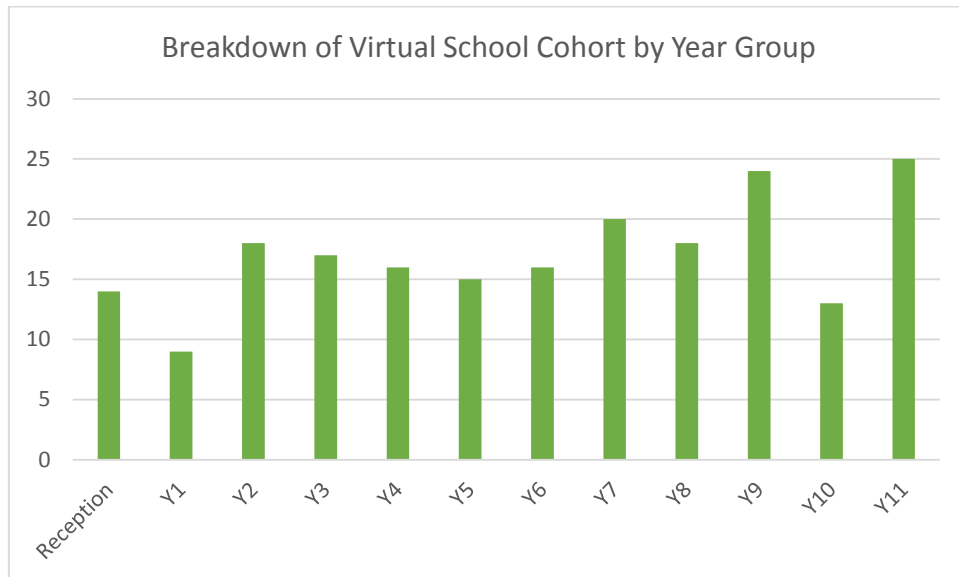
Virtual School roll and characteristics

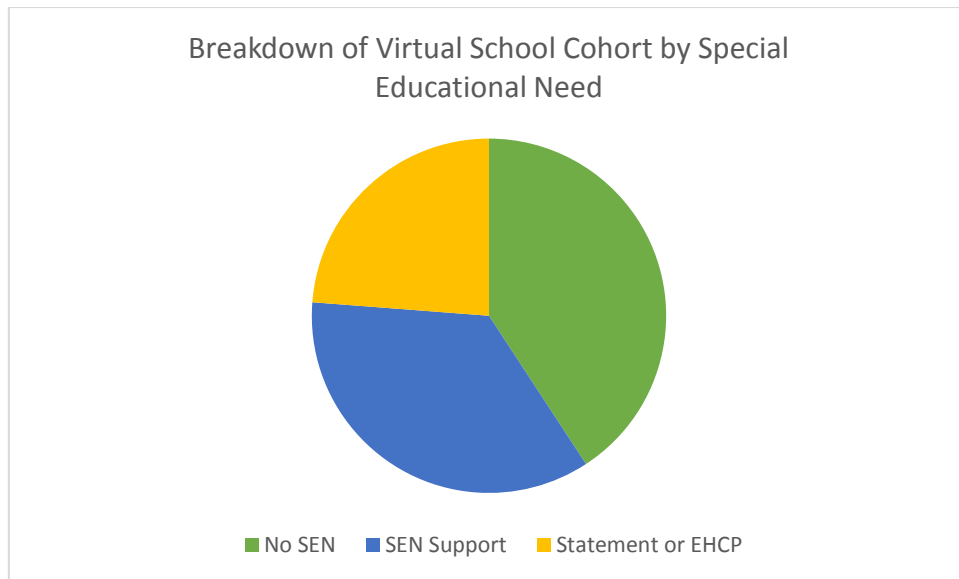
During 2015/16 there were 205 children supported by the Virtual School in Reception Year to Year 11. This is the highest number of children the Virtual School has ever supported. The number of pupils forming the cohort of having been looked after for 12 months as at 31 March in line with the Outcomes for Looked after Children Statistical First Release published each December was 124. A further 39 children in young people were supported by the Virtual school in either Early Years settings (19) or further education / training (20). There were 15 young people who were attending education in alternative provision.

Research completed by the Rees Centre regarding the key factors contributing to the low educational outcomes of young people in care in secondary schools in England reveals that controlling for all factors, the following contribute to the educational progress of young people in care:

- Time in care. Young people who have been in longer-term care do better than those 'in need' but not in care, and better than those who have only been in short term care – so it appears that care may protect them educationally.
- Placement changes. Each additional change of care placement after age 11 is associated with one-third of a grade less at GCSE.
- School changes. Young people in care who changed school in Years 10 or 11 scored over five grades less than those who did not.
- School absence. For every 5% of possible school sessions missed due to unauthorised school absences, young people in care scored over two grades less at GCSE.
- School exclusions. For every additional day of school missed due to fixed-term exclusions, young people in care scored one-sixth of a grade less at GCSE.
- Placement type. Young people living in residential or another form of care at age 16 scored over six grades less than those who were in kinship or foster care.

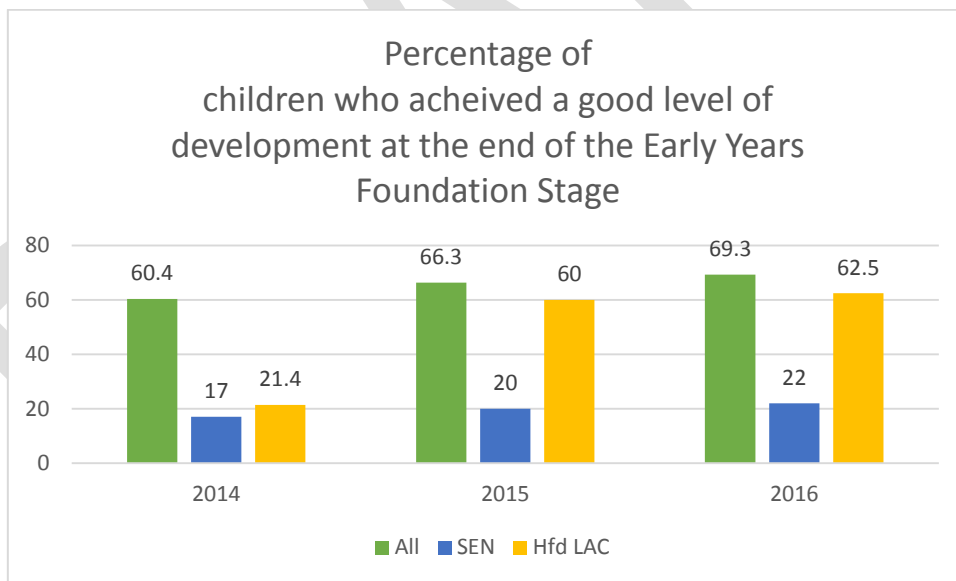
- School type. Young people who were in special schools at age 16 scored over 14 grades lower in their GCSEs compared to those with the same characteristics who were in mainstream schools. Those in pupil referral units with the same characteristics scored almost 14 grades lower.
- Educational support. Young people report that teachers provide the most significant educational support for them but teachers suggest that they need more training to do this effectively.



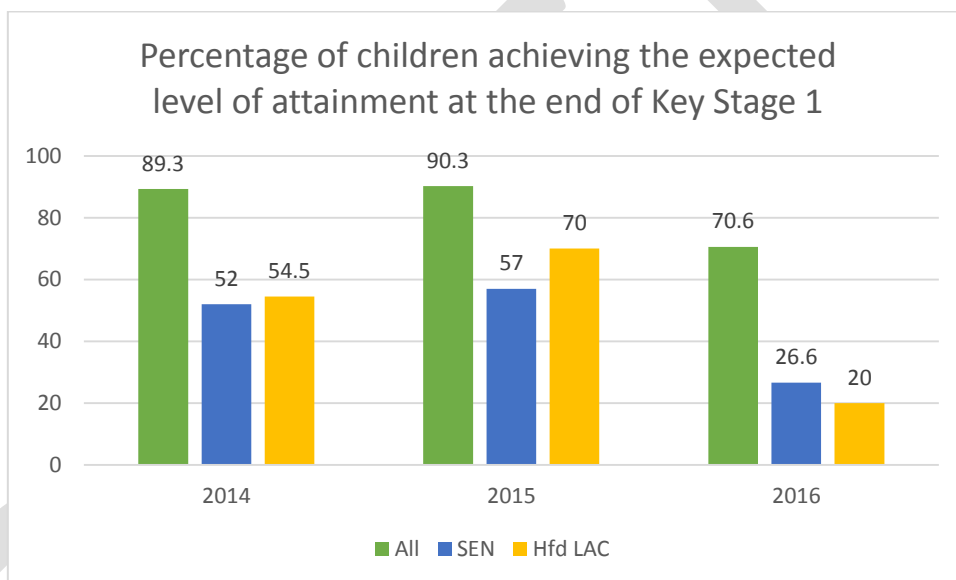
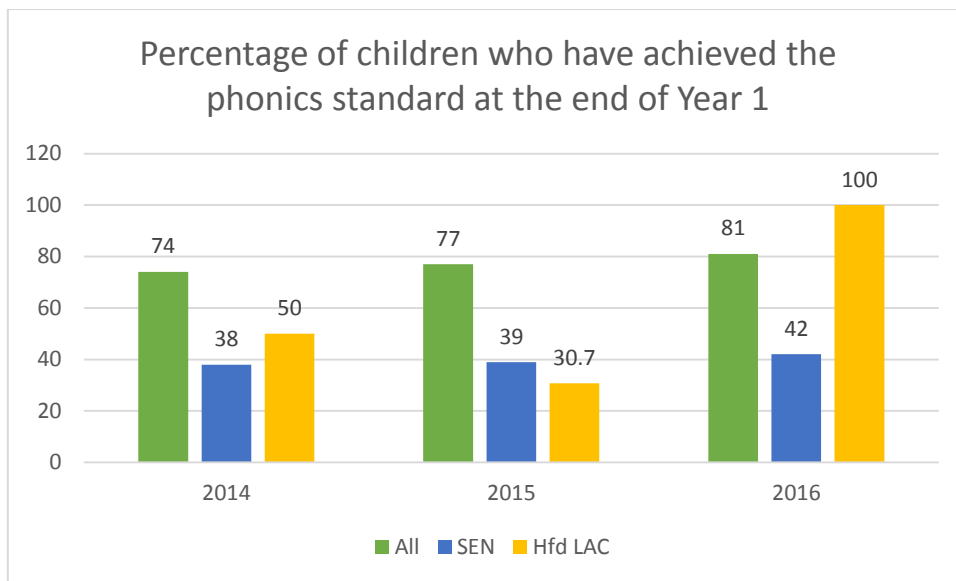


Educational achievement

There remains a significant gap in achievement between looked after children in Herefordshire and the general population. The graphs below indicate that although progress is narrowing across most key stages there is still a large gap. Achievements at Key Stage 4 are only slightly above those children with Special Educational Needs.



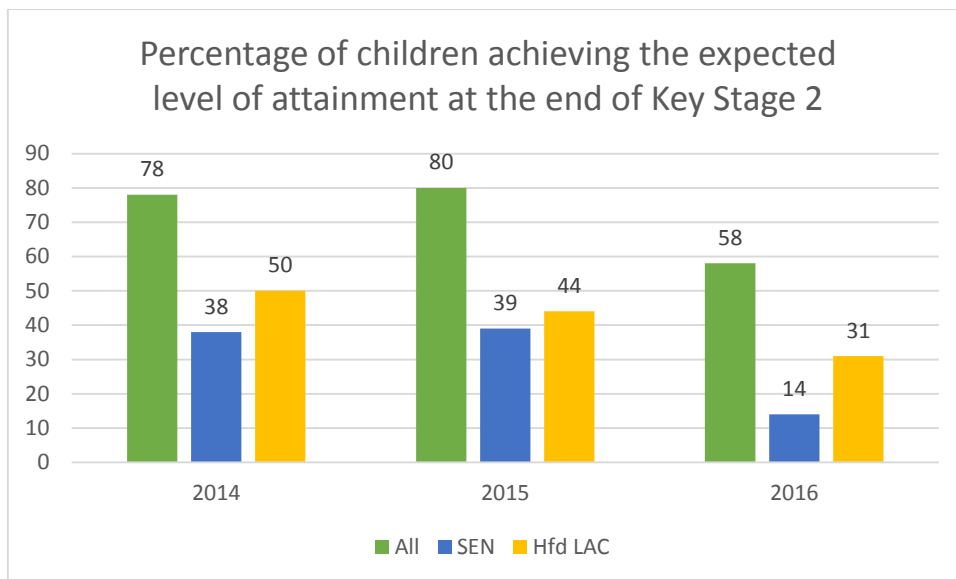
It is encouraging to see that looked after children out performed their peers in achieving the phonic standard at the end of Year 1 in 2016 although in levels of attainment they were significantly poorer.



At Key Stage 2 the 2016 cohort contained 13 children who had been looked after for 12 months at the 31st March 2016. Measures for 2 of these children was unavailable as they were educated in Wales. These children still count in our data as outlined below.

Table showing percentage of children achieving expected level in reading, writing and maths at the end of KS2

	Herefordshire LAC cohort size	All non-LAC (England)	All non-LAC Herefordshire pupils	Herefordshire LAC	Gap nationally (% points)	Gap locally (% points)
2015	14	80%	80%	44%	36	36
2016	13	53%	52%	31%	22	21



At Key Stage 4 the difference between Herefordshire LAC and all non-LAC nationally has reduced from 38.4 percentage points to 29.8 percentage points.

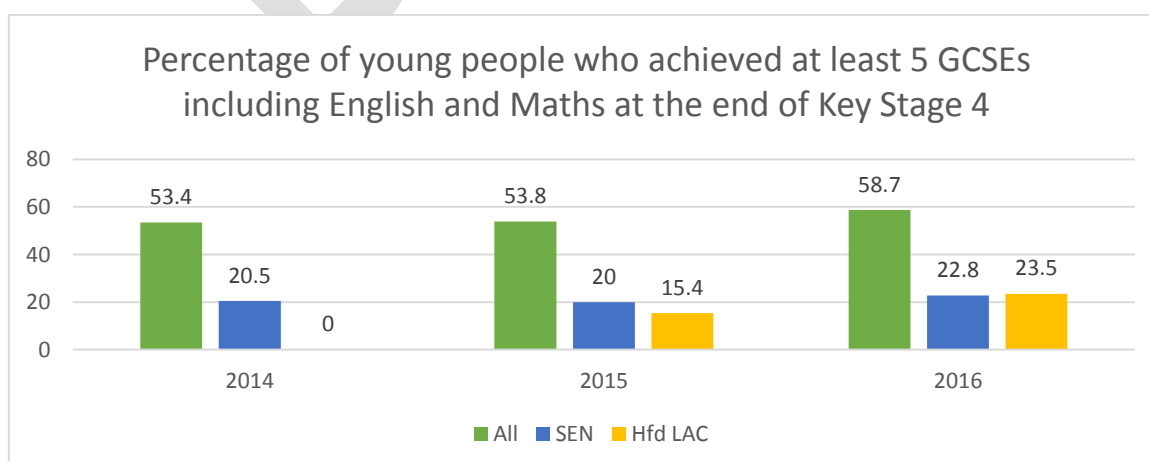
The difference between Herefordshire LAC and Herefordshire non-LAC is larger than the gap between Herefordshire LAC and non-LAC children nationally.

This may be accounted for as 8 (47.1%) of the cohort were not educated in Herefordshire schools.

This would indicate that Herefordshire's looked after children have diminished the gap this year.

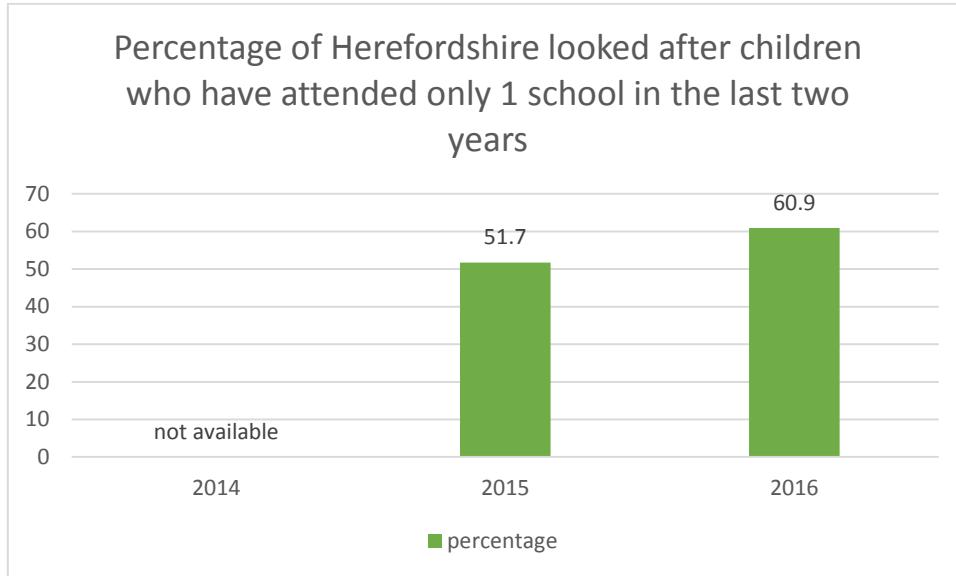
Table showing percentage of children achieving 5 GCSES grade C or above including English and maths at the end of KS4

	Herefordshire LAC Cohort Size	All non-LAC (England)	All non-LAC Herefordshire children	Herefordshire LAC	Gap nationally (% points)	Gap locally (% points)
2015	18	53.2%	57.5%	15.4%	38.4	42.1
2016	17	52.8%	57%	23%	29.8	34

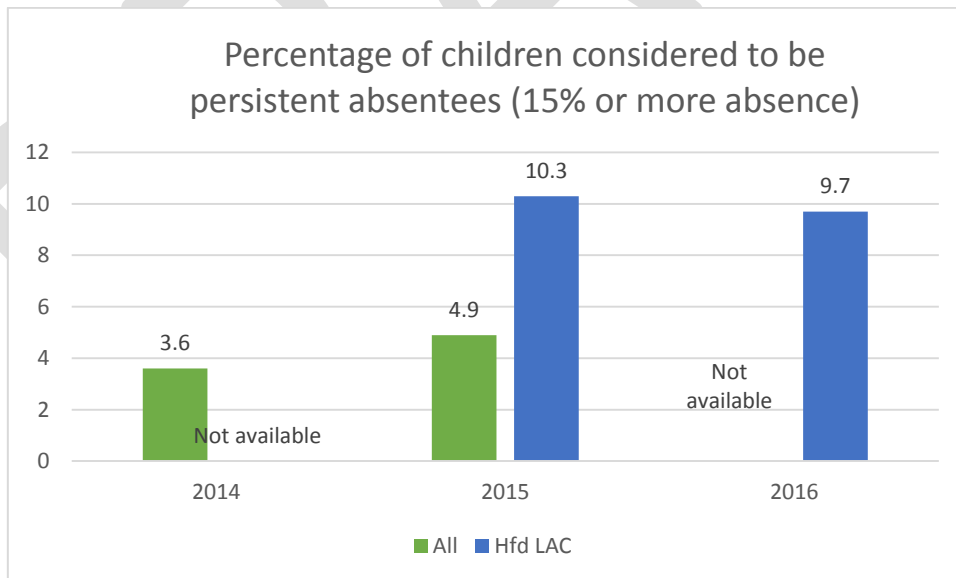


School moves

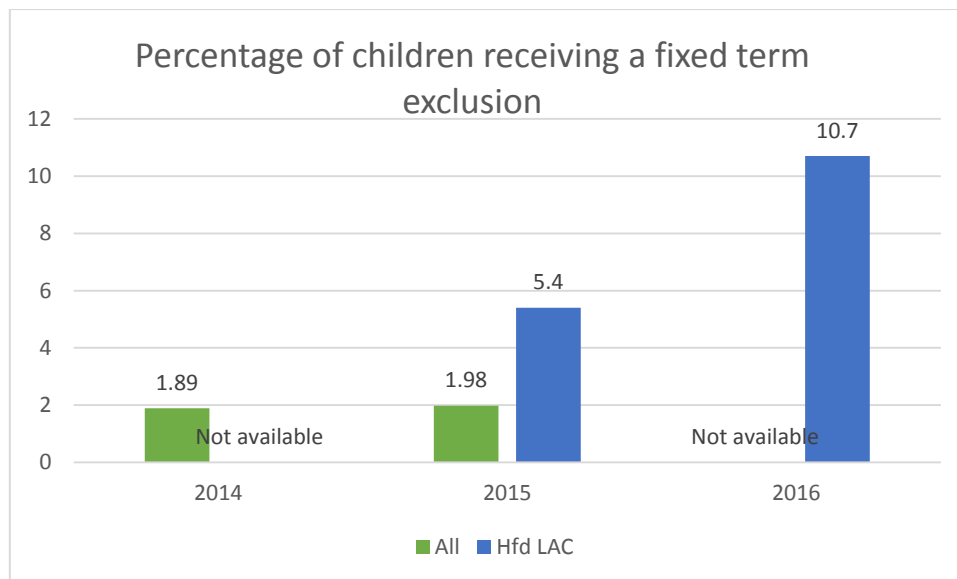
The number of looked after children who had a school move in the last two years has reduced. School moves are almost always as a direct result of a placement move. Therefore if placement stability improves the number of school moves will decrease. Stability in education is directly related to an improvement in attainment.



School attendance & exclusion data



Although this data is incomplete there is evidence of a significant rise in fixed term exclusions for looked after children during 2016 although this is thought to be due to having more accurate data.



Health

Health assessments and routine health care

The LAC health team commit to completing health assessments for children placed in neighbouring local authorities wherever possible to ensure continuity. Compliance with timescales for completion of health assessments is poor whether children are placed in our outside of County. For Initial Health Assessments this is largely due to delays in notification by Social Care. Additionally there are inaccuracies in the quality of the data reporting which has been prioritised for improvement.

The numbers of children registered at GP's, having all relevant immunisations and dental checks increases between the initial and review health assessments indicating an improved attention to healthcare of children once they become looked after.

Targeted work to improve access to 'hard to reach- high risk' young people, particularly those in the 16+ age group has been effective, with a substantial reduction in the numbers of young people declining a health assessment.

Health issues

During 2015/16 there were 23 young people who were identified as abusing alcohol, tobacco and/or other substances. Health promotion work is undertaken during each Health Assessment as appropriate, with referral or signposting to relevant agencies when needed.

Nationally 4% of looked after children were identified as having a substance misuse problem during the year.

A snapshot survey of young people open to the 16+ team was completed in July 2016. Out of the 136 young people there were 25 who were pregnant and/or parents.

Currently systems do not enable us to have an understanding of the interventions offered or the impact that they have across our looked after children population.

The LAC health team has targeted completion of SDQs in 2015-16 resulting in an improvement in return rate for SDQs from 66% in 2014-15 to 77% in 2015-16. Although focus to date has been on improving completion there is little evidence of the SDQ's being used effectively to inform care planning.

On 31st March 2016 one looked after child was placed in a hospital.

A report prepared by CAMHS in March 2017 stated that the total number of LAC on CAMHS caseload was 31 including 5 with Learning Disabilities. CAMHS were unable to differentiate the data between Herefordshire looked after children and those placed from out of County although about 25% were placed by other local authorities. The data does not include Herefordshire children placed out of County.

- The caseload has an even split between male and female
- Most LAC (26) are White British or White other background
- 79% of the LAC caseload has been with CAMHS for a year or less
- The 13% who have been on caseload for more than 3 years are likely to be for regular medication reviews
- Of the discharges between April 2016 and February 2017 (74) most LAC had been on the caseload for 7 – 12 months
- The pattern of referrals for LAC is unpredictable with 10 in April 2016, 12 in July 2016 and 6 in February 2017; there are fewer referrals in September (3) and December 2016 (1).
- 85.5% of LAC initial referrals are seen within 4 weeks (CAMHS KPI); there can be delays as social workers cannot always provide essential information or attend key appointments
- 96% of LAC waiting for treatment are seen within 18 weeks (CAMHS KPI) with 74% seen within 8 weeks.

Health Key Performance Indicators 2015-16

Children in Care Team WVT	2015-16
Total Statutory Health Assessments Completed on Herefordshire CYP	288
Refused Medical	2
SHA all Hfd Children including those placed OOC done elsewhere	331
SHA Hfd Children placed OOC completed by Hfd	6
SHA Hfd Children placed OOC completed externally	35
IHA's Attended	92
IHA's in timescale	24 (26%)
RHA's Attended	196
RHA within timescales	60 (31%)
DNA Rate Overall	Not available
Immunisation up to date total	247 (86%)
Immunisation up to date IHA	71

Immunisation up to date RHA	176
Compliant dental KPI total	211 (73%)
dental compliant IHA	52
Dental compliant RHA	159
Compliant Registered with G.P. Total	268 (93%)
GP Registration IHA	80
GP registration RHA	188
Substance misuse identified in over 9 years	23
SDQ recorded (RHA only)	108 / 140 77%
Need for CAMHS identified	Not available
Developmental delay identified in under 5 year old	15
Abbreviations:-	
SHA - Statutory Health Assessment	DNA - Did not Attend
IHA - Initial Health Assessment	KPI - Key Performance Indicators
RHA - Review Health Assessment	SDQ's - Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire
OOO - Out of County	

Offending

"In Care, Out of Trouble" an independent review chaired by Lord Laming published in 2016 found that 94% of looked after children in England and Wales do not get into trouble with the law. However children in care are significantly over-represented within the criminal justice system.

Nationally 5% of looked after children (aged 10+) were convicted or subject to a final warning or reprimand during 2015/16.

The Youth Offending Team monitor and report on the numbers of looked after children that are on orders to them within their performance reports. This data includes children who are placed by other Local Authorities in Herefordshire and Herefordshire's looked after children placed in County. It does not include Herefordshire looked after children who are placed outside of the County. On the 31st March 2016 there were 3 Herefordshire looked after children who were open to the Youth Offending team which when reviewed again in January 2017 had risen to 8.

Children's social care do not currently have a system that enables monitoring and reporting of looked after children who offend.

It has been agreed that the Youth Offending team will complete a more detailed analysis of offending within this small group so that an understanding of how a child's care status and offending behaviour are linked for our own children. It is planned that this will be presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel early in 2017.

A regional protocol to reduce offending and criminalisation of children in care has recently been agreed based on restorative justice principles. The impact of this protocol will need to be monitored and will require training for foster carers and children's social care staff if the full potential of the protocol is to be realised.

Participation

In Herefordshire 60% of children and young people participated in their reviews during 2015/2016. Participation includes children and young people attending and/or contributing to their review, either themselves and/or with the support of an advocate. Of the 40% who did not participate in their review, 23% were aged under 4. The remaining cohort of 17% are reported not to have attended or contributed to their review, however it is not possible from data reporting to understand the age range of this group or the reasons for their non-participation.

A part-time participation worker is employed to support all children and young people's participation across Herefordshire. This worker facilitates the Children in Care Council (CICC) that meets monthly and is regularly attended by a committed group of children and young people. The CICC is regularly attended by 10 young people which represents approximately 3% of the LAC population. The CICC is represented at the Corporate Parenting panel.

The CICC have completed a self-assessment of the effectiveness of themselves and have an action plan to address areas that they would like to improve upon.

A survey of views of all looked after children is planned to take place during March 2017. The findings will help inform priorities for the Corporate Parenting strategy.

Complaints and compliments

Children's Social Care received a total of 36 complaints between April 2015 and December 2016 that related to the LAC team or 16+ team. Currently it's not possible to analyse data based on children's legal status so it is likely that other complaints regarding looked after children were received by other teams. Of the complaints received 11 were directly from children or young people. The main themes within complaints were about the quality of service received and/or poor communication.

Compliments have only been collated since July 2016 and again do not include looked after children who are allocated to teams other than LAC and 16+. In this period 22 compliments were received – 19 relating to the 16+ team.

Advocacy and Independent Visitor service

NYAS are commissioned to provide issue based advocacy, support with complaints and an independent visitor service for looked after children.

Their 2015/16 report stated that 21 children and young people supported by them were looked after and 17 were care leavers. Since July 2016 quarterly reports from NYAS includes specific reporting on looked after children which will enable a better understanding of any themes or learning arising from the input of NYAS. Based on the one quarter's data available the main issues that looked after children and young people requested support with were regarding contact with family, issues with their placement, concerns about support for leaving care, concerns about the relationship with their Social Worker and promotion of their general views and feelings.

In the last quarter 20 children and young people had the support of an independent visitor. Five of these were children and young people living out of County. Feedback from children and young people using this service is very positive.

Safeguarding

A monthly audit programme is completed by managers in Children's Social care. During 2015/16 case file audits were completed for 44 looked after children. The audit format used for looked after children not in the 16+ team specifically asks if the child is safe. 33 of these audits were completed during the year and in 30 the child was assessed to be safe, in 1 case this section had not been completed and in a further 2 the young people were presenting with high risk behaviours but carers were assessed to be managing risks well with support from the professional network.

A further 11 case file audits were completed during the period on young people within the 16+ service. This audit tool does not specifically ask about safety. General comments within the audits indicate the difficulties of working with this age group who often make decisions that place themselves at risk. It is evident that the lack of a coherent risk management tool is impacting upon the team's ability to consistently assess and manage risky behaviours.

Children who go missing

Nationally there were 8,670 children who were recorded as missing at least once in 2016. This corresponds to 9% of the cohort of 100,810 children who were looked after at some point during the year. These children had 43,000 missing incidents which is an average of 5 missing incidents per child who went missing. 4,430 children were away from their placement without authorisation in the year. There were 17,560 incidents of children being away without authorisation, an average of 4 per child.

Most missing incidents were short, 89% lasted two days or less and the median number of days per missing incident was 1 day. However we need to be cautious interpreting this figure as the duration of missing incidents is collected in days so a child who went missing for a short period late one evening, but was found early the next morning would be counted as being missing for 1 day even if they were only missing for a few hours. Half of missing incidents were by children who were placed in children's homes or hostels, and a further 35% of incidents were by children in foster placements.

In Herefordshire during the 12 month period October 2015 to October 2016 there were a total of 412 missing episodes recorded of which 106 related to Herefordshire looked after children. Of these, 67 return from missing interviews were completed for Herefordshire's looked after children. During the early part of the year interviews were only offered on "eligible" children. The approach has now changed and all children are offered a return interview. On some occasions a child may refuse an interview or be missing so regularly that interviews are not completed prior to them being missing again. One looked after child accounted for 16 missing episodes between April and July 2016.

This data does not include Herefordshire's looked after children placed out of County. The numbers of children placed out of County that go missing is likely to be significantly under reported as we are reliant upon the host Local Authority informing us. Although the child's Social Worker would be informed the methods of recording this information are inconsistent. In these cases the child's Social Worker is responsible for completing the return from missing interview. The system does not yet enable collation and analysis of data for this cohort of looked after children.

Further work is required to develop consistent recording practices for children placed out of County so that reliable data can be collated and themes addressed. Reducing the number of children placed out of County would further reduce the risk.

Children at risk of sexual exploitation

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) risk assessments were completed on a total of 85 children between October 2015 and October 2016. Of these children 20 were looked after. In addition to these the CSE co-ordinator is aware of 3 looked after children placed out of County who are at medium or high risk of CSE. However, similarly to the data on missing episodes for children placed out of County this data is unreliable.

There is a need for further work to develop data collection so that it is possible to reliably report on the extent to which children in care are at risk of CSE and to ensure appropriate action is taken regarding the particular needs of looked after children.

Children subject to child protection processes

In the last 12 months 31 looked after children were the subject of a strategy meeting after their admission to care. Of these a Section 47 investigation was completed for 11 children. 10 of the strategy meetings took place within a few days of the child being admitted to care. This is a likely indicator that the reason for the strategy discussion was in response to events prior to their admission to care rather than due to events after they became looked after. Of the 11 children who were the subject of a Section 47 investigation 4 were completed within a few days of their admission to care.

Preparing for independence

Keeping In Touch

Nationally 23,000 (87%) of 19, 20 and 21 year old care leavers were in touch with the local authority, up from 86% in 2015 and up from 82% in 2014. A further 8% were not in touch, for 3% the young person no longer required services and for 2% the young person refused contact. The percentage 'in touch' varies by age; 90% of 19 year olds were in touch, compared to 88% of 20 year olds and 83% of 21 year olds.

In Herefordshire 69% of care leavers were "in touch" at the age of 19. This data was reported manually as data was not recorded in a way that enabled it to be extracted from Mosaic at that time. Clearly this is significantly below that achieved nationally. At this point it is difficult to be certain whether this is an accurate reflection of performance or not.

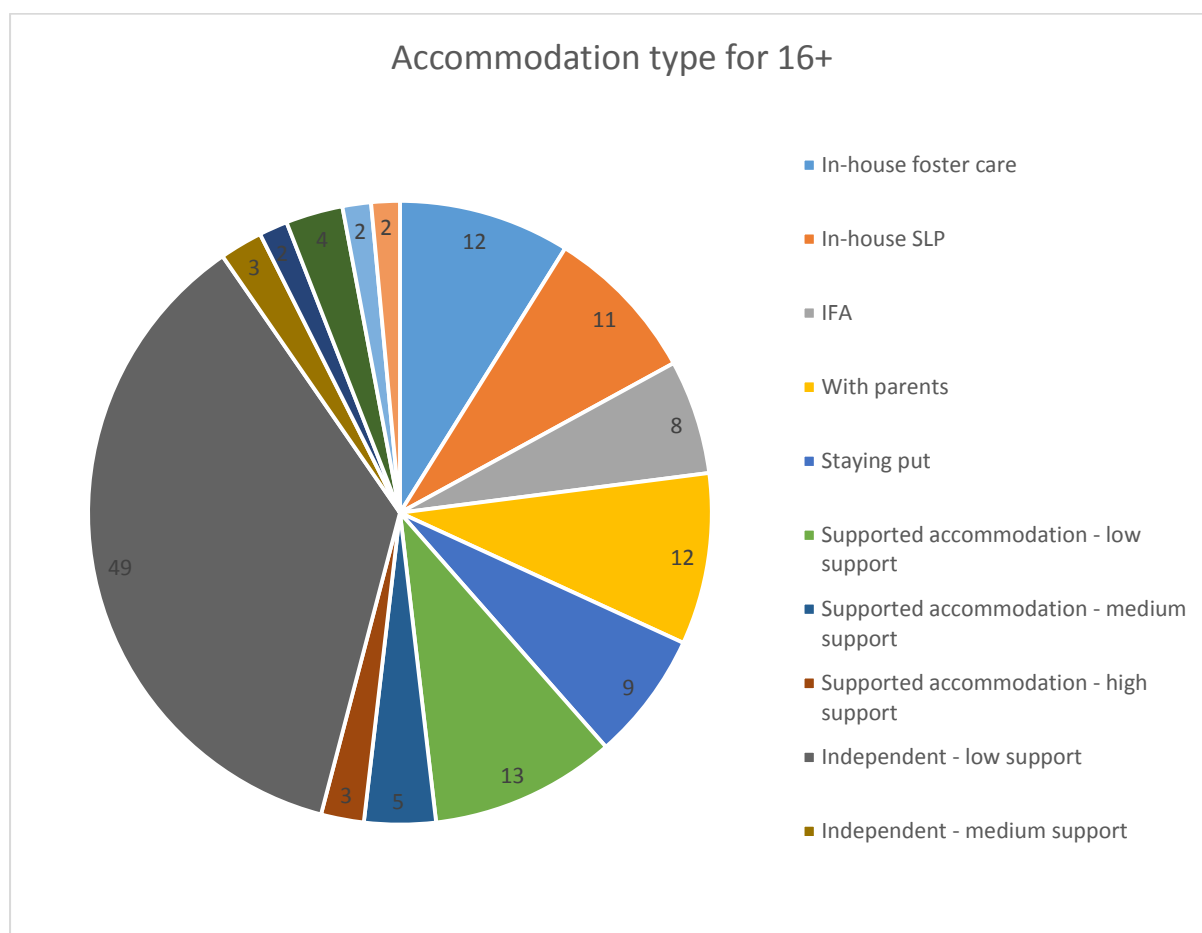
At the end of 2016 90% of care leavers had a Pathway plan in Herefordshire which was the same as 2015.

Accommodation

Nationally 21,500 of former care leavers (83%) aged 19, 20 or 21 years were in accommodation considered suitable, a further 1,780 (7%) were in accommodation considered unsuitable and for 2,770 (11%) the accommodation suitability wasn't known. The most common type of accommodation was living independently – 9,830 (37%) were living independently in 2016, down from 10,310 (39%) in 2015 and down from 10,640 (40%) in 2014. Over the same time period the proportion living with parents or relatives increased from 10% to 12%, the proportion living with former foster carers increased from 4% to 6% and the proportion in semi-independent transitional accommodation rose slightly from 9% to 10%. Based on data collected for the first time in 2016 and released as experimental statistics, 10% of 17 year old care leavers were recorded as being in custody, higher than for older care leavers where the figure was 3% for 18 year olds, and 4% for 19, 20 and 21 year olds.

A snapshot survey of need was completed in July 2016 for all cases open within Herefordshire’s 16+ team. Of the 136 young people being supported at the time it was assessed that their current accommodation provision was not meeting the need for 26 young people. However none of these young people required a higher level of support than what they were already receiving, except for two young people who were of no fixed abode.

The diagram below shows the type of accommodation young people were currently living in.



Of the 136 young people:

- 32 were assessed to have mental health needs
- 31 were assessed to have substance misuse problems
- 18 were assessed to have difficulties due to domestic abuse
- 28 were at risk of offending and/or anti-social behaviour
- 25 were pregnant and/or parents
- 62 were NEET
- 34 were assessed to be socially isolated
- 17 had some form of disability or disorder e.g. ADHD

16+ education, training and employment

Based on 2016 national data, of the 26,340 former care leavers aged 19, 20 and 21 years old 40% were not in employment, education or training (NEET), compared with 14% of all 19 to 21 year olds. The percentage of care leavers who are NEET has risen by one percentage point in each of the last 2

years. The increase is seen in the categories for NEET due to illness or disability, and NEET due to pregnancy or parenting. NEET due to other reasons has decreased, from 27% in 2014, to 25% in 2015, to 23% in 2016.

However, as well as an increase in the percentage of 19 to 21 year old care leavers who are NEET, there has also been a rise in the percentage of those who are in training and employment. The rise in both categories is a result of having information about a greater proportion of the population. In 2016 24% of former care leavers aged 19 to 21 years old were in training and employment, an increase from 23% in 2015 and up from 20% in 2014.

In Herefordshire data relating to whether care leavers are NEET has been recorded manually last year and prior to that was not recorded or reported accurately at all. At the end of March 2016 there were 50% of care leavers who were NEET – significantly higher than the national average.

Currently Herefordshire has 167 Eligible, Relevant, Former Relevant and Qualifying care leavers.

60.5% are in education, employment or training. 39.5% of the total number of care leavers are attending further education, the remaining 21% of care leavers are in training or employment

The general NEET figure for Herefordshire is 3.3%.

University

Thirteen care leavers are attending University. This is a higher number than has previously been achieved.

Apprenticeships

It is not known how many young people who hold an apprenticeship are looked after or care leavers. This is a gap in our knowledge and will be addressed in the strategy.

Care leavers who are parents

There are 25 care leavers who are also parents. Of these:

- 3 have children currently on child protection plans
- 5 have had children accommodated and subsequently adopted
- 1 has had a S47 investigation that was concluded with no further action
- 5 have children who were historically on child protection plans
- 10 have had social care involvement at a child in need level
- 1 has a child with no Social Care involvement at all

Leadership

In 2003 the DfES published 'If this were my child... A councillor's guide to being a good corporate parent' and all elected members in Herefordshire should receive a copy. An e-learning module regarding corporate parenting was available and completion was expected by all Councillors following the last elections however feedback indicates that the training was poor.

There is an established Corporate Parenting Panel which meets bi-monthly. The Panel is well attended by a committed group of Councillors, Officers and relevant partners. However the Panel does not have a Terms of Reference and has tended to focus upon receiving reports and information relating to Corporate Parenting responsibilities. The Panel is not able to evidence its impact in driving change and improvement.

As a broader Council there is good will and support for Corporate Parenting however it is difficult to see how this translates into action that delivers change and there are no initiatives in place currently that demonstrate commitment to supporting looked after children and care leavers e.g. work experience, apprenticeships or employment schemes.

References

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Local Authority Data Matrix 2016

The Educational Progress of Looked After Children in England: Linking Care and Educational Data
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