

Looked After Children & Complex Needs

Placement Needs Analysis

October 2018

***Keeping children and young people safe
and giving them a great start in life***

Contents

- 1 [Commissioning Principles](#)
- 2 [Needs Analysis Summary](#)
- 3 [LAC population planning assumptions 2019-2024](#)
- 4 [Placements Overview](#)
- 5 [Fostering Placements](#)
 - 5.4 [In-house foster carers](#)
 - 5.27 [Independent foster agency care \(IFA\)](#)
- 6 [LAC Residential placements](#)
- 7 [The Complex Needs Population](#)
- 8 [16+ LAC Population](#)
- 9 [Non-accommodation Services](#)

1. Commissioning Principles

- 1.1 In meeting the needs of the looked after child (LAC) and complex needs funding (CNF) population, the following principles will drive Herefordshire's sufficiency planning:
- i. placements will be needs led and should enable looked after children to achieve positive outcomes as they grow-up
 - ii. most looked after children should achieve permanence, whether that be through reunification, special guardianship orders, or adoption
 - iii. children and young people are usually best placed in an appropriate and well-matched family environment, and the use of residential accommodation should be rare at less than ten placements
 - iv. looked after children and young people should normally be placed within 20-miles of their home in order to maintain contact with their family, education and community, unless it is not in their best interests to do so
 - v. placements will be stable, of good quality and cost effective

2. Needs Analysis Summary

- 2.1 The analysis of the LAC & CNF populations, service capacity and capabilities has shown that there are capacity pressures in Herefordshire's provision of:
- i. growing use and higher cost of independent fostering agency placements
 - ii. increased use of residential accommodation due to insufficient capacity in both general and specialist in-house and independent fostering provision
 - iii. too many children and young people placed away from home/Herefordshire when their needs do not require distant accommodation
 - iv. insufficient local provision of supported living arrangements for young people with higher needs
 - v. robust commissioning of non-accommodation support services for children in need (CIN), children subject to child protection (CP), looked after children (LAC) and those with complex needs (CNF)

3. LAC population planning assumptions 2019-2024

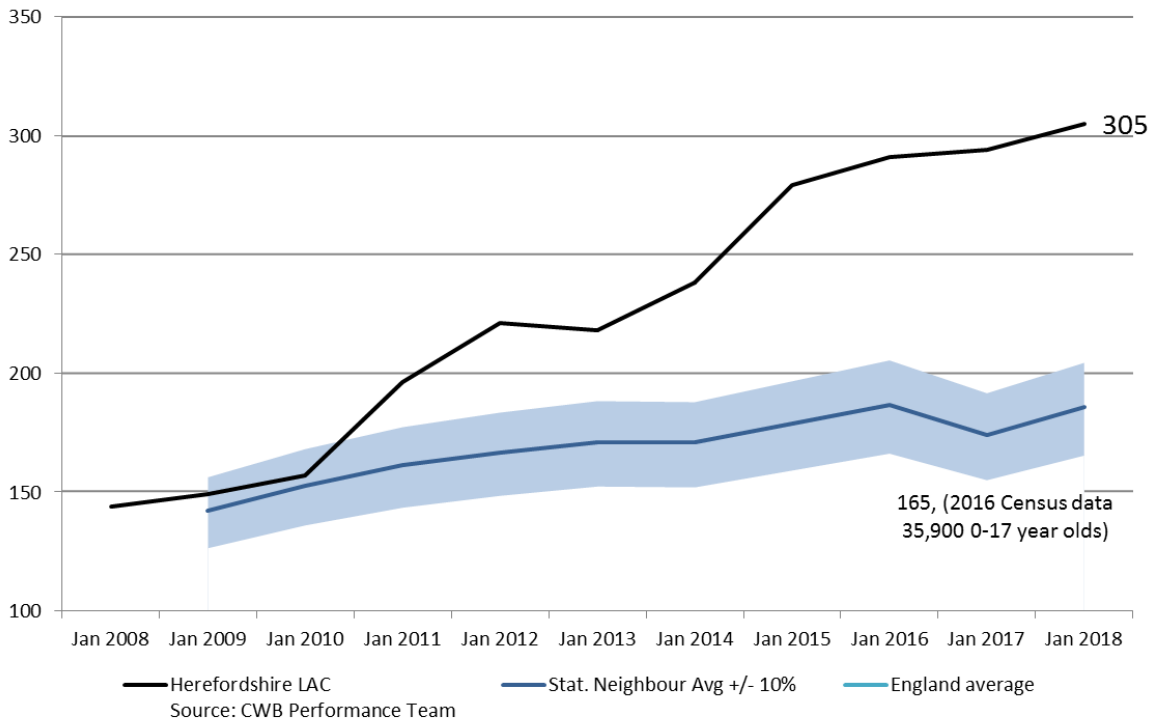
3.1 Why is population planning important?

- Tests and informs organisational assumptions and expectations by being based on what can realistically be achieved, rather than what is desired
- Considers potential impact of acting/not acting
- Are we doing enough of the right things and fast enough?
- Informs commissioning, operational delivery & workforce planning
- Helps drive change and improvement
-

- Helps to monitor the direction of travel

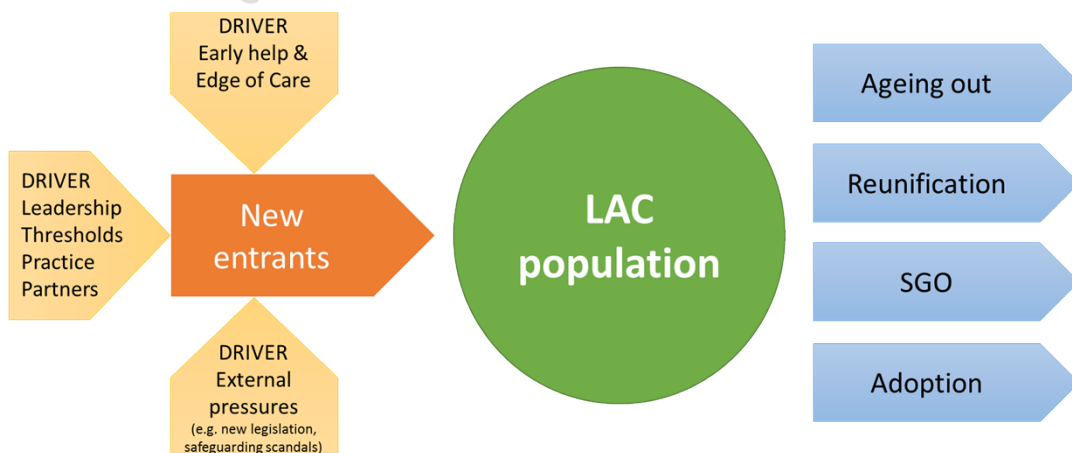
3.2 There continues to be a significant difference between the size of Herefordshire’s LAC population and the average of statistical neighbours. Based on the last published national LAC data (November 2018, below), Herefordshire could expect to have 160 – 200 LAC. For planning purposes, it has been assumed that a population of 180 – 220 would bring Herefordshire closer to its statistical neighbours.

Actual Herefordshire LAC numbers compared to estimates based on Statistical Neighbour averages



3.3 To bring Herefordshire’s LAC population closer to the size of its statistical neighbours by March 2024, it is estimated that an annual average reduction of 9% would be needed to achieve a population of 180, or 6.5% to achieve a population of 220.

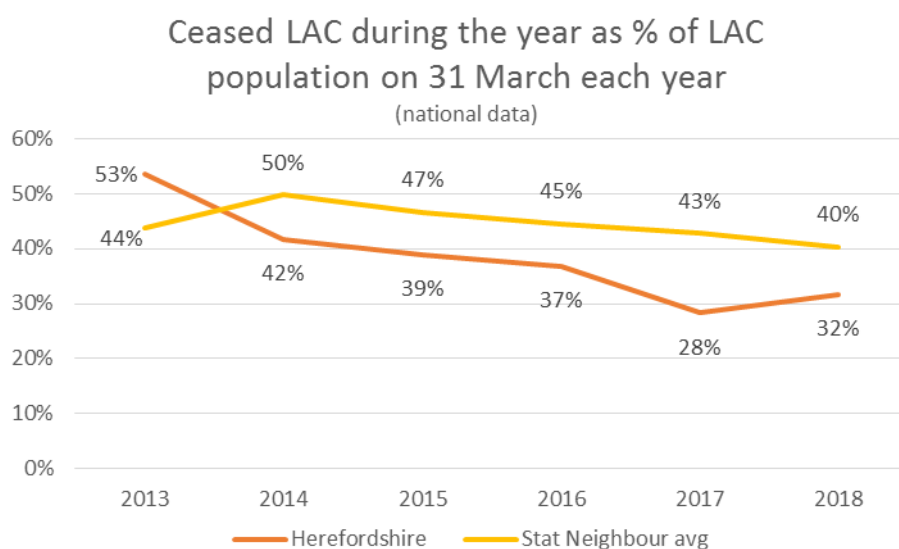
3.4 There are multiple factors that can influence the size and shape of Herefordshire’s LAC population (below). The approach to Early Help and edge of care continues to develop locally, with the intention of preventing a child’s needs escalating and therefore slowing the rate of new entrants to the LAC system.



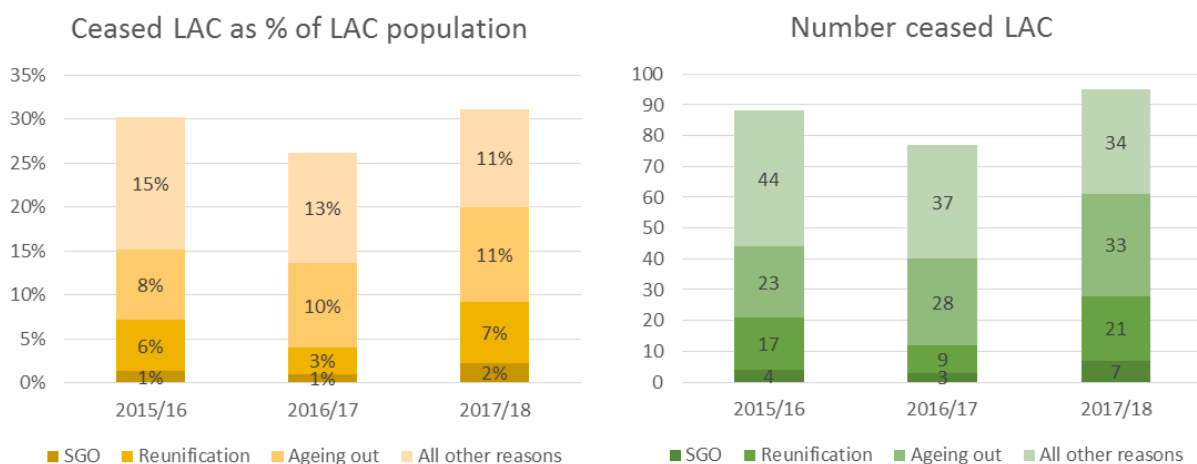
3.5 The Council, working with its partners, is able to determine the effectiveness of the Early Help and edge of care responses. There are other external factors that are beyond the control of the Council and its partners that can influence LAC numbers, such as changes to legislation, regulation or government policy, or the potential fall-out from a safeguarding scandal in another area. Some children will need to remain looked after until their 18th birthday. However, once a child does become looked after, an improving social care response will mean that more children are able to successfully exit the LAC population through reunification with their family, special guardianship orders (SGO) or adoptions.

Looking back

3.6 Herefordshire’s annual rate of the population that cease LAC declined to less than 30% in 2016-2017, with a slight increase during 2017-18 to 32%, compared to a cessation rate of over 40% among statistical neighbours. Herefordshire’s cessation rate has been lower than its statistical neighbours since 2014:

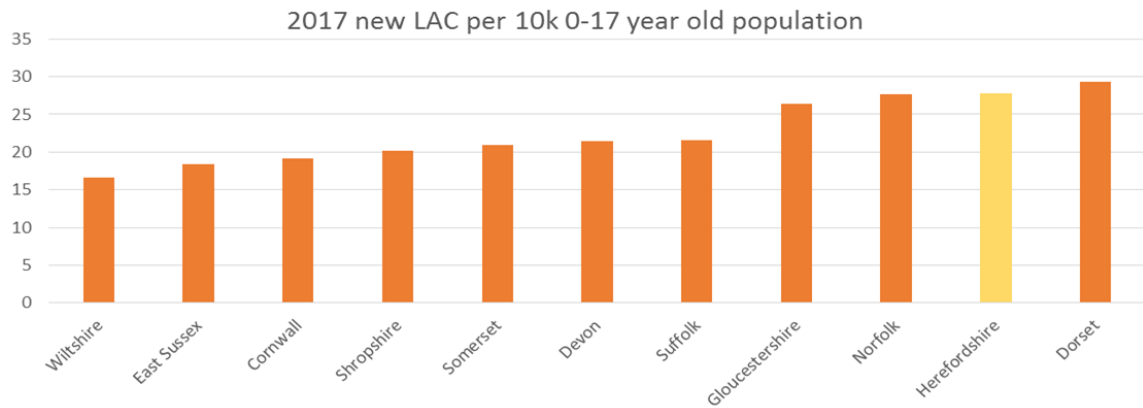


3.7 Children ceasing to be LAC as a result of SGOs has been low, and is now being improved. The combined ‘business as usual’ rate of cessations as a result of reunification or SGO has been 7% of the LAC population, which is expected to gradually increase in future as a result of the action being taken to pursue SGO arrangements when appropriate.

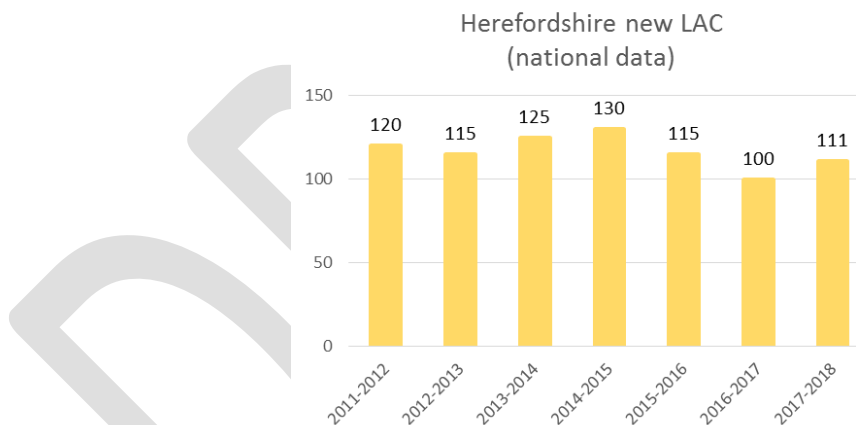


3.8 Outside of children ageing out, or moving to SGO or reunification, a further 13% of the population cease to be LAC each year for a variety of other reasons. This rate of cessation can be expected to continue for the foreseeable future.

3.9 In 2017/18, Herefordshire's new entrant rate rose to 31 per 10,000 0-17 year olds compared to 2016/17 statistical neighbour rate of 22 (below). The statistical neighbour rate will be updated with the release of new national data, although the neighbour rate is expected to increase it is not expected to rise to near Herefordshire levels. Based on the available data, Herefordshire could expect to receive c.80 children per year into the care system if it were in line with statistical neighbours.



3.10 On average, Herefordshire has had 117 entrants to the looked after system each year since 2015 (below). 18% of new entrants were aged 16/17, which is anticipated to reduce below 15% as a result of improving edge of care arrangements.



3.11 By the end of September 2018, there had already been 54 new entries since April, which is a similar position to the same point in the previous year. It can therefore be expected that there will be a further c.45-50 entries by the end of March 2019, although this figure could reduce as a result of improvements already being made in edge of care support.

3.12 During 2018/19, the council implemented a LAC reduction plan to focus on a cohort of LAC, that had built-up over several years and who could achieve permanence through SGO or reunification within the year. The plan highlighted that up to 80 LAC could be supported in this way. At the time that the plan was initiated, there were approximately 313 looked after children, however, the number has increased to 333 by September 2018. As at September 2018, it is expected that between 26 and 41 LAC could move to reunification or SGOs by March 2019.

Looking forward

3.13 Based on previous trends, comparison with statistical neighbours and the expected impact of operational actions being taken to manage the LAC population, the LAC planning assumptions for 2019-2024 are:

Estimated Population by April 2019

- i. of the 333 children and young people already known to be in the LAC system at September 2018, there are 17 who will cease to be LAC by April 2019 as a result of reaching their 18th birthday
- ii. targeted LAC reduction plans in 2018-2019 expect that 15-30 additional children will move to SGO or reunification by April 2019
- iii. based on historic trends, a further 22 can expect to cease being LAC for 'other reasons', including adoption, custody etc.
- iv. based on historic trends, a further 45-50 children can be expected to become LAC between 1 October 2018 and 31 March 2019
- v. therefore a LAC population in the range of 309-329 LAC can be expected in April 2019

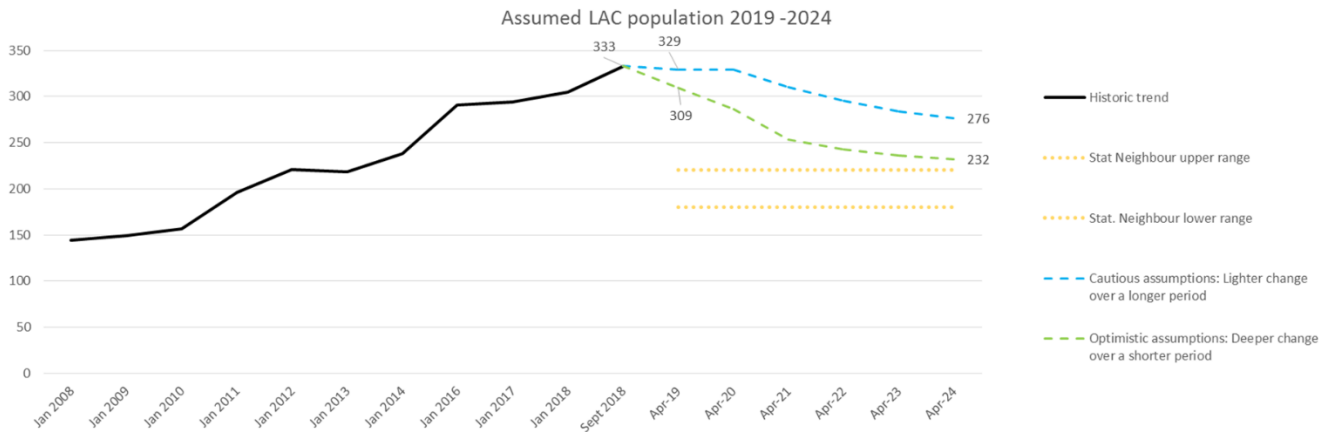
Estimated Population April 2019 – March 2024

- i. A further 118 existing children and young people will cease to be LAC by the end of March 2024 as they become 18 years old. Some possibly sooner as a result of achieving permanency through ongoing LAC reduction planning
- ii. LAC ceasing each year for 'other reasons' (including adoption, custody etc. but excluding ageing out, SGO, reunification) continues at 13% of the LAC population

Then either/or:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>iii. Cautious assumptions: lighter change over longer time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Lower initial success of targeted LAC reduction/SGO work, followed further light success for two years▪ Continued 7% of population ceasing through reunification and SGO, based on historic trends▪ Overall cessations reach c.30% of LAC by 2024▪ Annual new entrant rate achieves parity with stat neighbours (c.80 CYP) by 2022▪ 15% of new entrants are aged 16/17 at the time of entry and cease to be LAC within 2 years | <p>iii. Optimistic assumptions: deeper change sooner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Higher initial success of targeted LAC reduction/SGO work, followed further good success for two years as business as usual is consistently improved▪ 8% of population ceasing through reunification and SGO in 2019/20, rising to 10% by 2024,▪ Overall cessations reach c.37% of LAC by 2024, much closer to statistical neighbour rate of 40%▪ Annual new entrant rate achieved parity with stat neighbours (c.80 CYP) by 2020▪ 15% of new entrants are aged 16/17 at the time of entry and cease to be LAC within 1 year |
|---|--|

3.14 Based on these assumptions, the LAC population in 2024 would be c.232-276:



3.15 Risks to the size of the LAC population

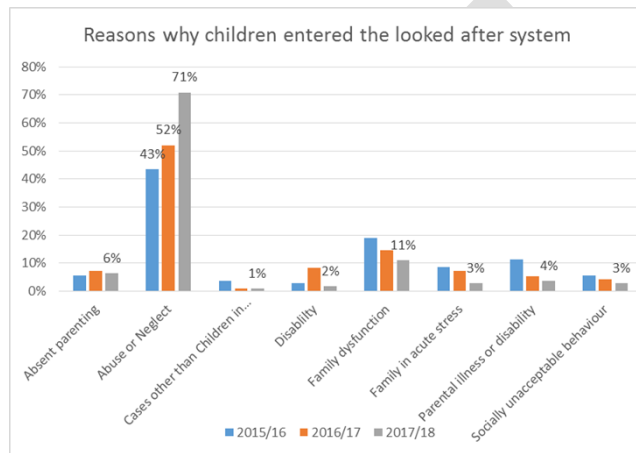
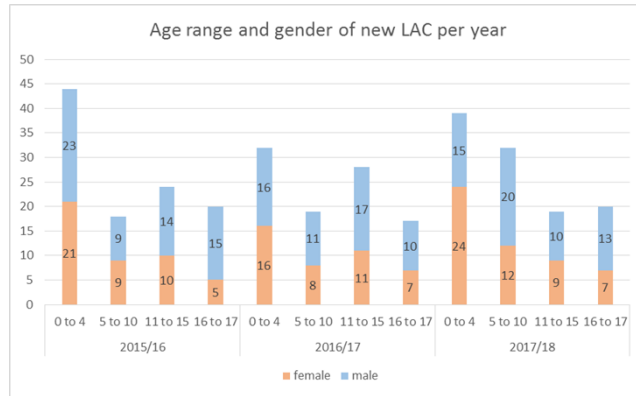
- the planning assumptions could become seen as targets that have an unintended influence of decision-making for individual children
- demand to take additional UASC is unclear
- a national safeguarding scandal could dramatically influence the rate of new LAC
- changes in legislation, regulation or national policy could also influence the size of the LAC population

3.16 Herefordshire has a relatively small, but growing Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) population; 6.4 per cent compared with 19.5 per cent nationally (census 2011). As of May 2018, the majority (97% of recorded) of LAC are either White British or any other white background. As the table below shows, there has been an increase in the LAC population of minority ethnic groups; partly due Herefordshire being part of Government’s national transfer scheme, where the Council has agreed to accept responsibility for up to 25 unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASCs).

Ethnicity of young people who entered the looked after system			
	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
White British	89	81	97
Any other White background	6	6	5
African	0	2	4
Indian	0	1	0
White and Black African	0	0	1
White and Black Caribbean	0	1	1
Any other Mixed background	2	1	0
Any other ethnic group	4	1	1
Any other Black background	1	2	0
Any other Asian background	1		0
Not recorded	3	1	1

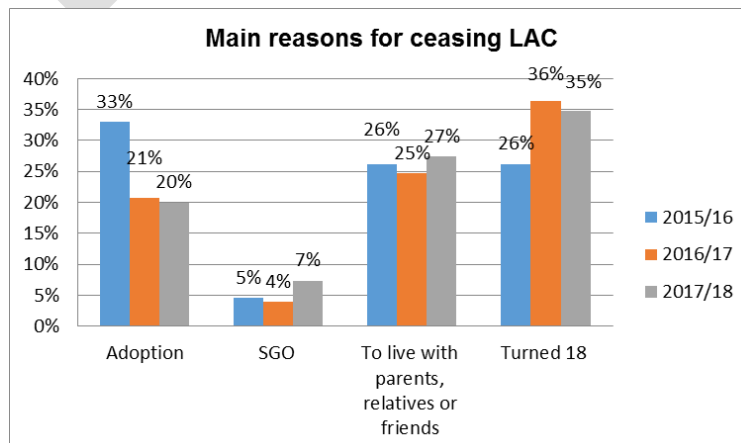
3.17 As of March 2018, Herefordshire was supporting 10 UASCs, 8 through the scheme and 2 who arrived independently. It is recommended the recruitment and retention plan also targets potential foster carers from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) group.

3.18 Comparing the LAC population by age and gender as of March 2014, to March 2018, shows an increase in all age ranges, with the exception of 0-4, which reduced from 64 to 54. With age ranges 4- 10 and 11-15 increasing by 45 and 38 young people respectively. In regards to gender, the male female split in 2018 was 50/50, compared to 52%/ 48% female to male split in 2014. However there is an increase in males in the 5-10 and 16+ age ranges, with more females aged 11 -15 age range.



3.19 Children and young people will have differing needs which will result in having to enter the looked after system. Abuse or neglect has consistently been the predominant reason, accounting for 71% in 2017/18. However it is important to recognise it could be due to a combination of the different reasons. The reason recorded against UASC is absent parenting, which is anticipated to increase as Herefordshire has agreed to be part of Government's national transfer scheme

3.20 There continues to be various reasons why children and young people cease being LAC. Since 2016, turning 18 and therefore aging out of the system is the predominant reason, with adoption being the main reason for under 5 year olds. A key indicator for the adoption service is the average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family. Herefordshire's three year average was 251 days which is 130 days above the target of 120 days and compares with a national average of 226 days. This figure has been affected by success in placing older children for adoption.



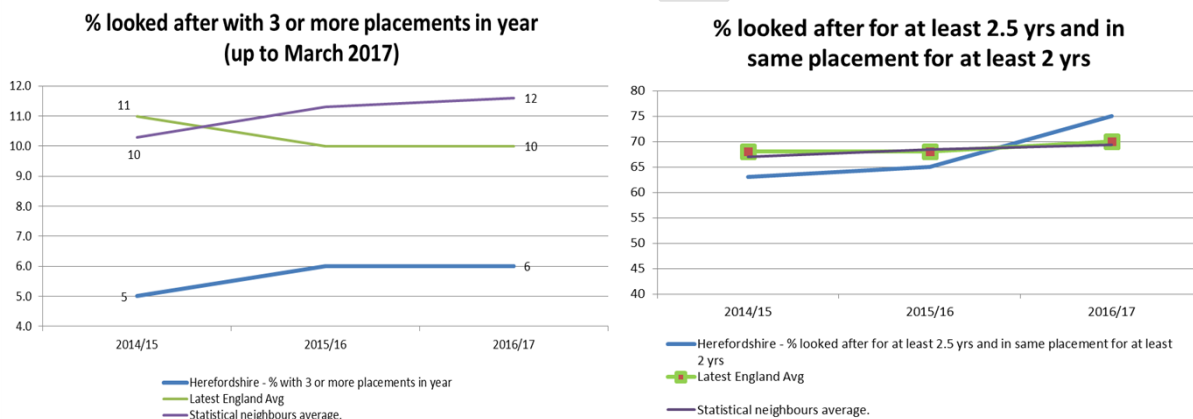
4. Placements Overview

4.1 The types of placement covered by the sufficiency strategy are provided either by the in-house fostering service or and external independent agencies, including:

- i. Fostering: kinship arrangements, general or specialist in-house foster carers and independent fostering agencies (IFAs)
- ii. Independent residential children's homes or schools for looked after children and those with complex needs. The Council does not operate any in-house residential provision.
- iii. In-house supported lodgings for 16+ looked after children and care leavers
- iv. Independent supported accommodation for 16+ looked after children

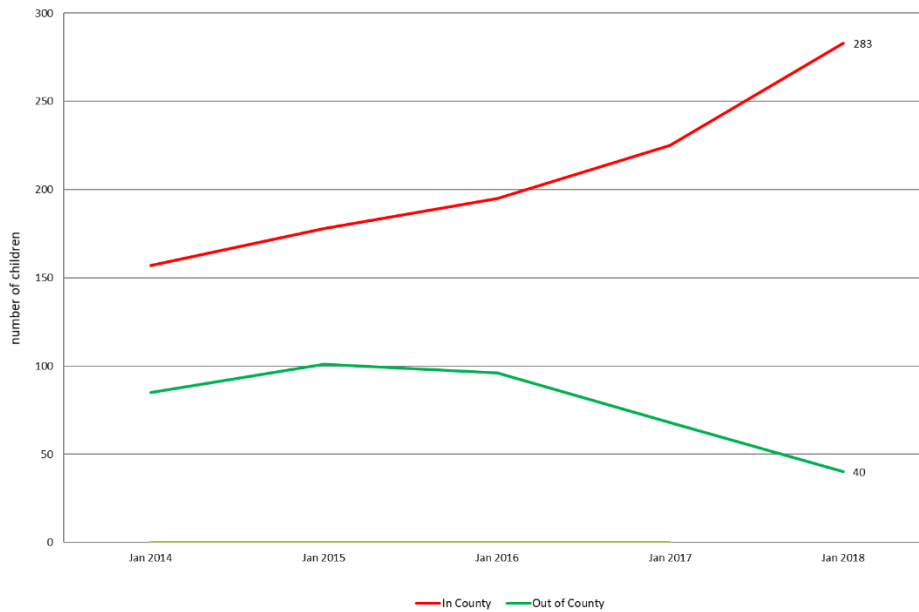
4.2 Some LAC will be placed into other arrangements that are not a part of the sufficiency strategy including pre-adoption, placements with parents, and kinship placements.

4.3 Since 2014, there has been a slight increase (5% to 6%) in the number of children and young people who have had 3 or more placement moves during a 12 month period. This is significantly less than the average for both statistical neighbours (12%) and nationally (10%). In contrast, Herefordshire has more children and young people who have in been placement for at least 2 years, 75% compared to 70% nationally. This could be partly attributed not identifying opportunities for them to return home, wherever possible or alternative permanency options being identified.

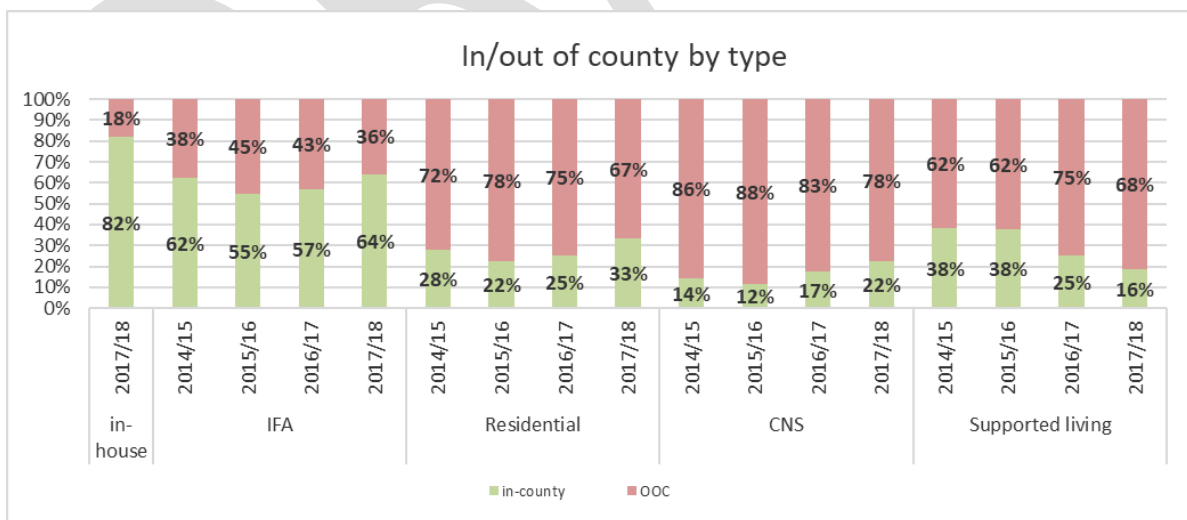


4.4 Statutory guidance makes it clear that children should live in the local authority area, with access to local services and close to their friends and family, when it is safe to do so. The guidance emphasises that 'having the right placement in the right place, at the right time', with the necessary support services such as education and health in place, is crucial in improving placement stability, which leads to better outcomes for looked after children. Herefordshire strives to place it's looked after children within 20 miles from their home wherever appropriate, and has made good improvements in reducing the number of children placed outside Herefordshire since 2015 (below).

**In/Out of County Placements
(data from performance team)**

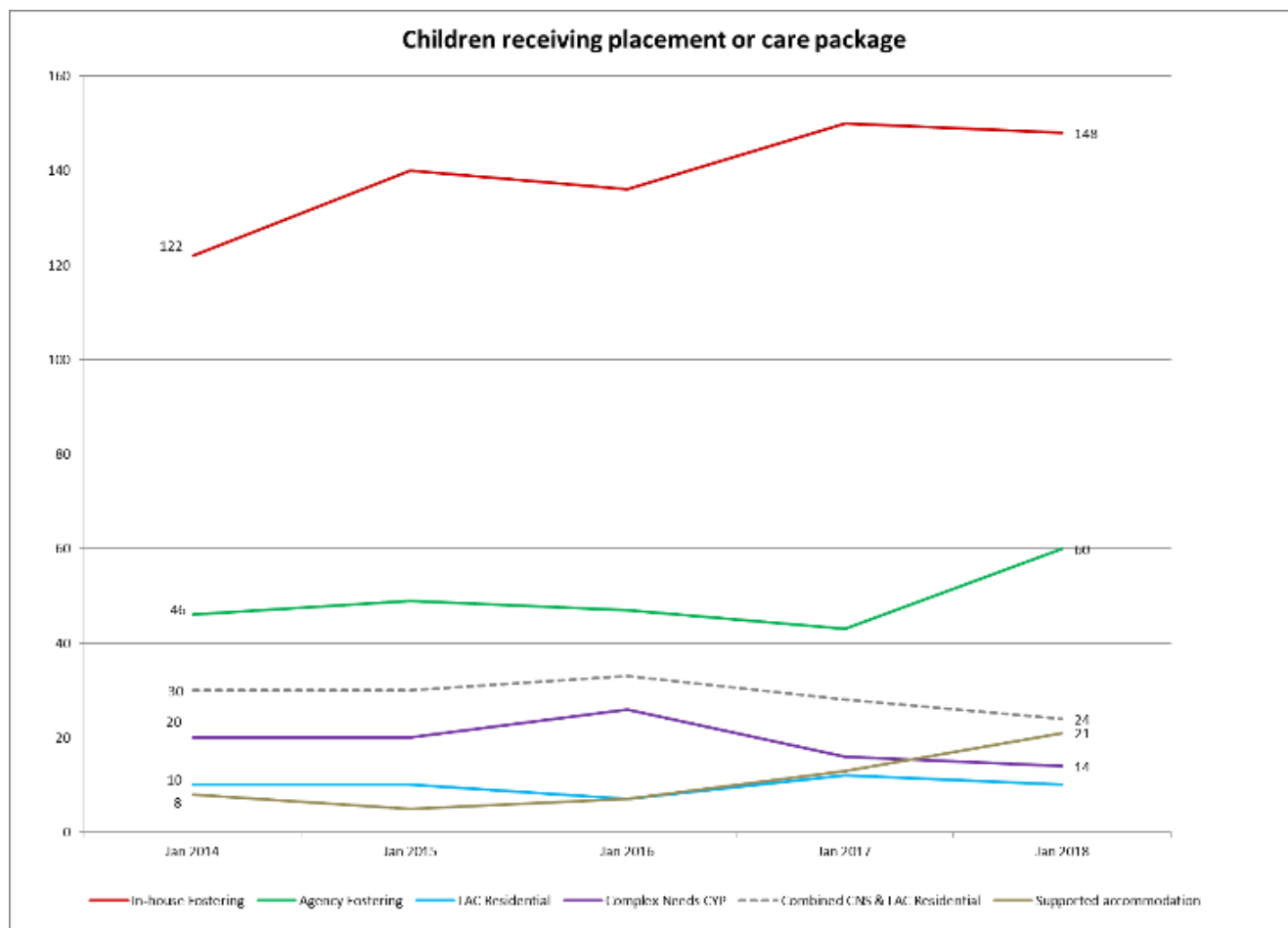


- 4.5 However, while almost 90% of all LAC were placed within 20 miles from home in March 2018, the rate falls to 84% for those that were placed in general in-house fostering or with independent agencies.
- 4.6 Out of county placement data, rather than distance from home data has been analysed in previous years. Since 2014, there has been a slight reduction in the number of agency placements (IFA, residential & CNS) being made out county. However there has been a slight reduction in proportion of supported accommodation placements made in-county; this is against an increase in placement numbers. Further sufficiency and performance management work will enable trends to be presented on a distance from home basis.



- 4.7 In March 2018, 90% of general in-house foster care placements were within Herefordshire; compared to 82% in 2016. For some children being a significant distance from Herefordshire is a positive outcome, if it means they are placed with family and friends.
- 4.8 Comparing the types of placements made in January 2014 to January 2018 (below), shows that in-house fostering placements have increased by 21% and IFA placements increased by 30%. There has been a recent sharp increase in the use of IFA placements, which has mainly been due to insufficient capacity of in-house fostering.

- 4.9 Whilst LAC residential has remained the same at 10 placements, this has varied throughout the year. There has been a 30% reduction in CNF placements and although the future trend is not clear, some increase may be anticipated as a result of children living longer with complex disabilities and health needs. Most residential and CNF placements are made out of county.
- 4.10 Whilst there has been a 160% (8 to 21) increase in supported accommodation, use and availability of this provision for 16+ has been promoted since 2013.



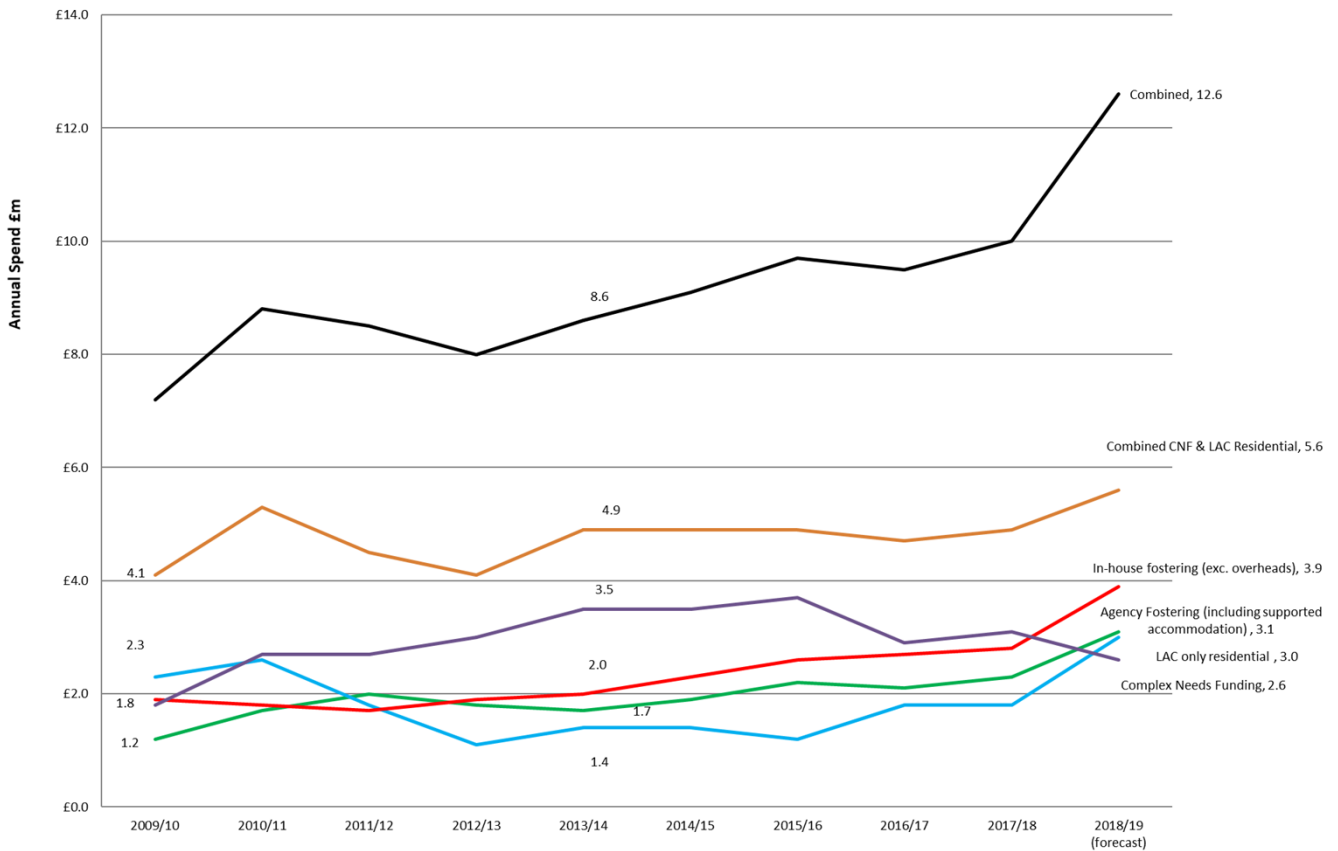
4.11 Spend (chart below) on LAC residential placements has increased each year since 2014/15. This is mainly attributed to:

- needing to make residential placements when no fostering placements are identified for children who could be fostered and
- not having sufficient specialist carers to enable the Herefordshire Intensive Placement Support Service (HIPSS) to support step down, or preventing step up to residential.

4.12 Spend on complex needs packages has reduced, which reflects decline in demand. However due to relatively small number of in this cohort, even a small change in the CNF population can have a significant impact on costs.

4.13 Spend on IFA placements continues to increase each year; this reflects increased demand, which is attributed to the rise in the LAC population and insufficient in-house capacity. To date IFA spend also includes supported accommodation provision. From March 2018, they are being costed against separate budgets enabling more accurate financial analysis.

Placement & Support Package Spend
(source: Children's Finance - December 2018)



4.14 The overall spend on in-house fostering has increased by £1.9m since 2014 and will continue to rise as capacity increases to enable more children to be placed with in-house carers. A cost analysis exercise has been undertaken based on April 2018 data to calculate a unit cost of a 'general' in-house foster care placement. The exercise considered all front and back office costs on a like-for-like basis in order to draw comparisons with the IFA market. The in-house fostering service continues to provide best value, with the average weekly cost for general foster care placement is £550, compared to £780 for placements made via the West Midlands Regional Foster Care Framework agreement and £920 for placements on spot purchase agreements.

5. Fostering Placements

5.1 Foster care provision includes:

General foster care – child has no pre-existing connection with carer. Foster carers can be registered with, and supported by their local authority (in-house) or independent foster agency (IFA)

Specialist foster carers - full time carers recruited by Herefordshire's fostering service specifically to support Herefordshire intensive Placement Support Service (HIPSS)

Kinship foster care - in-house carer who is a relative, friend or relevant other with a pre-existing connection to child.

- 5.2 During 2017/18, approximately 85% of the Herefordshire's LAC population were in some form of foster care placement, with 72% requiring general foster care, which excludes kinship placements. This resulted in over 59,000 general foster care bed nights being provided, c.40,000 delivered by the in-house service and 19,500 purchased from the IFA sector.
- 5.3 Assuming that at least 72% of the LAC population continue to require general foster care, it is estimated that c70,000 general foster care bed nights will be provided in 2018/19 by the in-house service and IFAs. As the size of the LAC population is expected to reduce, the number of bed nights required will also decline with 50-60,000 being required by 2024.

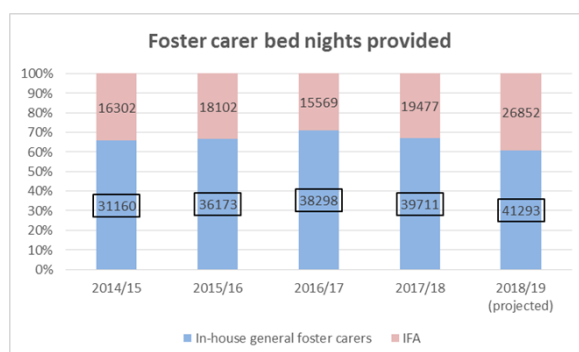
Herefordshire Council's in-house foster carers

In-house value

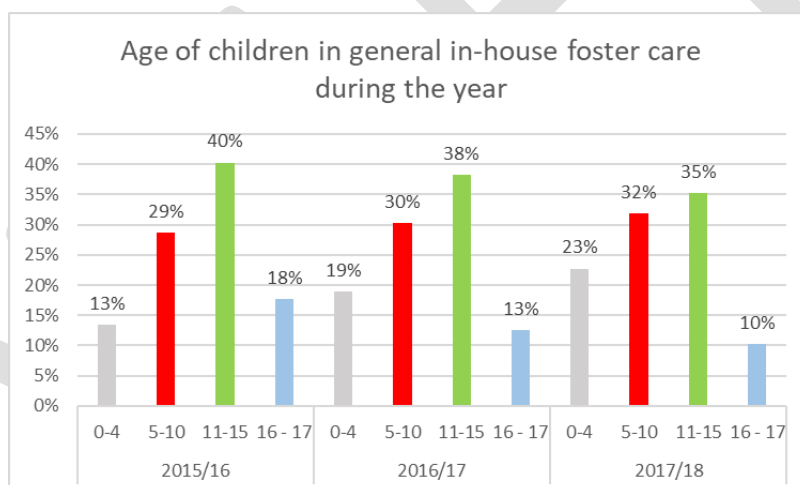
- 5.4 It is recognised there will be a need to place some children with agency foster carers, however preference should be to place with in-house carers wherever possible, which has the benefits of in-county carers, easy liaison between social care and other teams, and sustainable costs.
- 5.5 As the majority of general in-house foster carers live within Herefordshire, this helps to keep children close to their home and school, and maintain contact with the family and local community. Being placed in-county or a neighbouring county also supports social care to ensure robust assessments are in place to fully identify how to meet the child's needs holistically and enable children to influence service planning in meaningful ways.
- 5.6 In-house foster care continues to provide best value. The Council's finance team undertook a bench-marking exercise in early 2018, comparing the costs of the in-house service to those of IFAs. The average weekly price for a general in-house foster carer is £550, compared £780 for placements made via the West Midlands Regional Foster Care Framework agreement and £920 for placements on a spot purchase agreements. It should be noted however, that the higher IFA cost can be partly driven by the more challenging needs of some of the young people being placed, which the in-house service may not have previously been able to match to its available carers.
- 5.7 Whilst sufficiency planning focusses on in-house general foster carers, the role of kinship care is important as it releases in-house general foster carer capacity. In 2017/18 kinship carers provided 9100 bed nights.

In-house nights

- 5.8 The 2014-19 sufficiency strategy had the aim of achieving 90%/ 10% split for in-house/IFA bed nights by 2019 from a baseline of 68%/32%. In 2017/18 the split had deteriorated to 67%/33%. It is anticipated that the local position will worsen further by the end of 2018-19, with a split of 63%/37% being expected. This is a result of increasing LAC numbers and a slow growth rate in in-house carer capacity.



- 5.9 While the total foster bed nights is expected to decline as a result of a reducing LAC population by 2024, achieving the intended 90% in-house to 10% agency split will mean increasing the number of bed nights provided by the in-house service from c.42,000 in 2019-20 to up to c.53,000 in 2024.
- 5.10 However, because of the projected population profile and starting position of the in-house/IFA split, the trajectory to c.53,000 nights in 2024 will not be a smooth one (see 5.17 Fostering Capacity Table). As the annual population projections are within a range, so too are the projected number of in-house bed nights within a lower and upper range. While realising the lower end of the annual bed night range will be a significant achievement, it should be seen as minimum provision, rather than a target to be attained. Exceeding the minimum provision will help the Council to more quickly achieve the intention of placing children closer to home and ensure costs are sustainable.
- 5.11 As of 31 March 2018, there were 135 children placed with general in-house foster carers of which 72 (53%) have been in placement for more than 12 months.
- 5.12 Of the children in general foster care placements during the year, the majority are aged 5 to 15 years. Whilst the number of 5 – 10 year olds has remained fairly stable at around 30%, there has been a slight annual reduction in 11 to 15 year olds, from 40% in 2015/16 to 35% last year. Annually there have been more 0 – 4 year olds placed, which is not unexpected given it is understood carers tend to have preference for this age range.



In-house carer pool

- 5.13 As of November 2018, there were 107 approved general in-house foster carer households, including HIPSS. Compared to other areas, the in-house service has performed relatively well in recruiting new carers. Since 2014, a net increase of 15 general in-house foster carers has been achieved, however the 2014-2019 sufficiency strategy target of 21-30 additional carers by 2019 is not expected to be achieved. The slower than expected rate of improvement may be partly attributed to the fostering service not having a robust recruitment and retention plan informed by projected sufficiency requirements.
- 5.14 Whilst carers have been recruited, others have resigned. In 2017/18 there was an increase in the number of resignations with 17 general foster carers resigning, compared to 12 during 2016/17. There have been various reasons for resignation including carers transferring to an IFA, age retirement and changes to personal circumstances. As of May 2018, the in-house cohort of main carers were 91% female. Their ages range from 30 to 77, with the average being 54 years. Of this, 16 are aged 65 and over, 11 are aged 70 and over. It can be anticipated that a significant proportion of the current carer pool may retire within the next couple of years.
- 5.15 It is accepted that most children are best placed with other children in a supportive family environment. However, of the 107 general in-house fostering households

(inc. HIPSS) in November 2018, most 42% (45) were supporting only one child, with 20% supporting two children, and 13% supporting 3 or more children. Furthermore, 26% of households had no active placements; although some of these may be a result of recent place moves and preparations being made for planned introductions.

- 5.16 Carer households will be registered to provide accommodation for a specified number of children, often up to three, although the number of children usually placed with a carer is frequently less than their registration number. In March 2018, there were 119 general foster carers, 31 of which had no child in placement, suggesting a vacancy rate of 26%. At that time however, Herefordshire's in-house carer households were registered, on average, to accommodate 2.3 children each, but the average number of placements being provided was 1.2 children per carer household, suggesting an occupancy rate of around 50%. Whilst this rate may appear low, it is likely to be a reflection of good levels stability among in-house placements
- 5.17 The fostering capacity table below shows the estimated number of fostering nights required each year, based on projected changes in the LAC population and the desired move to a 90/10 in-house/IFA split. For example, it is estimated that c.45-51,500 in-house nights will be required in 2019/20 equating to 143 to 164 beds, including a nationally benchmarked 16% vacancy rate.

Fostering Capacity Table

	2019-20		2020-21		2021-22		2022-23		2023-24	
	Lower Estimate	Upper Estimate	Lower Estimate	Upper Estimate	Lower Estimate	Upper Estimate	Lower Estimate	Upper Estimate	Lower Estimate	Upper Estimate
LAC population	286	329	254	310	243	296	236	283	232	276
# LAC fostered (c.72%)	206	237	183	223	175	213	170	204	167	199
Fostering nights required	61423	70658	54551	66578	52188	63571	50685	60779	49826	59275
Target IFA proportion	32%	32%	26%	26%	21%	21%	15%	15%	10%	10%
IFA nights	19410	22328	14292	17443	10855	13223	7805	9360	4983	5928
Target in-house proportion	68%	68%	74%	74%	79%	79%	85%	85%	90%	90%
# In-house nights	42013	48330	40258	49134	41333	50348	42879	51419	44843	53348
# general foster beds	115	132	110	135	113	138	117	141	123	146
# general beds with 16% vacancy	134	154	128	156	131	160	136	163	143	170
# carers based on avg 1.2 placements per household	111	128	107	130	109	133	114	136	119	141

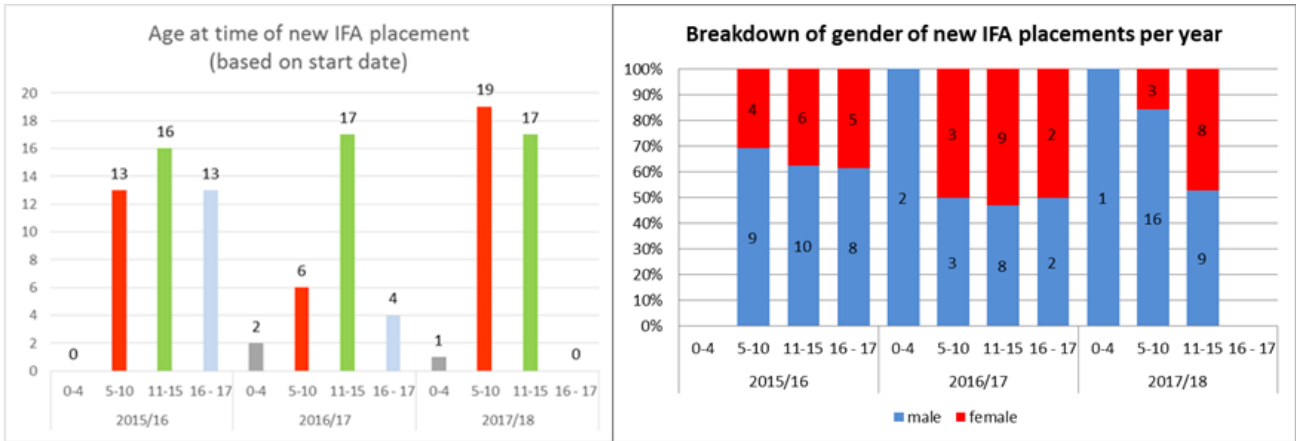
- 5.18 Assuming that the in-house service maintains an average occupancy rate of 1.2 children per carer household, the service will need to increase to a pool of 119-137 households in 2019-2020, and a similar level for 2023-24. This will mean an increase from the latest position of 107 carer households (November 2018). However, assuming that the occupancy rate could be improved, for example increasing to the average registration rate of 2.3 children per household, c.60-75 households would be sufficient each year 2019-2024, which is fewer carers than are currently available and could reduce back-office pressure in terms of carer recruitment, training and supervision.
- 5.19 Further work will be completed to break down the number of nights and carer household needed each year to consider gender, age groups and solo/shared placement requirements.
- 5.20 Based on this assessment, and the intention to provide sufficient general in-house carer households, the key areas of focus for the in-house recruitment and retention plan should include:

- i. Monitor occupancy rates against other areas**
- ii. Maximising opportunities kinship**
- iii. approving additional carer households, in particular those that can support older children and/or multiple placements**

- 5.21 Since September 2014, HIPSS has provided wrap-around intensive therapeutic support packages around the child or young person and their carers targeted by the service, to step-down from or at risk of requiring residential care. The service has capacity to support 8-10 specialist carers, with the foster care service having responsibility for recruiting and supervising the carers. With the exception of a few months, the HIPSS service has been operating below capacity; although they continue to support non-specialist carers.
- 5.22 Although 2 new HIPSS carers were approved in early 2018 increasing the number of carers to 7, this reduced back down to 5 by August 2018 following resignations. A focused recruitment programme is required with the target of recruiting 2 full time approved HIPSS carers by August 2019 and a further 2 by March 2020. This will need to be revised in line with resignations to ensure a minimum cohort of 8 is maintained.

Independent foster agency care (IFA)

- 5.23 Priority is to place with in-house carers wherever possible. However due to no in-house options being available for some children, the number of IFA bed-nights purchased per year has grown by more than 10,000 during the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2018.
- 5.24 Many local authorities are experiencing challenges making IFA placements due to insufficient supply to meet demand within the sector. In some cases, this has led to children entering residential accommodation when a fostering placement would be appropriate to their needs.
- 5.25 Local data shows there are 2 registered foster care agencies with head offices in Herefordshire and a further 11 fostering agencies with carers within the county. As of September 2018, of the 72 children in IFA placements, 46 (64%) children are placed in Herefordshire.
- 5.26 Whilst it is positive that during 2017/18, 64% of children in IFA placements were within 20 miles of their home, additional work is required to reduce the number placed further away. This includes improving relationships with IFAs with carers in Herefordshire, by developing more effective communication through facilitating at least one provider event each year and introducing processes to ensure 4 weekly contact with each provider. This will ensure regular updates on current and planned vacancies are acquired, so these could be considered for Herefordshire young people, where applicable.
- 5.27 The average length of IFA placements has remained fairly consistent at 28 weeks. As of 31 March 2018, there were 64 children placed with independent foster carers (IFAs), of which 36 (56%) have been in placement for more than 12 months.
- 5.28 The graphs below shows that the age ranges of all new standard agency foster care placements made each year. Generally children aged 0-4 years are not placed with agency carers. Whilst the number of 11 to 15 year olds has remained fairly constant at 17; in 2017/18, there has been more fluctuation and a recent significant increase in the number 5 to 10 year olds being placed with IFAs, 85% being male. It is likely that the preference of in-house carers to take baby and solo placements has contributed to the more frequent use of IFAs for the 5-15 age group.



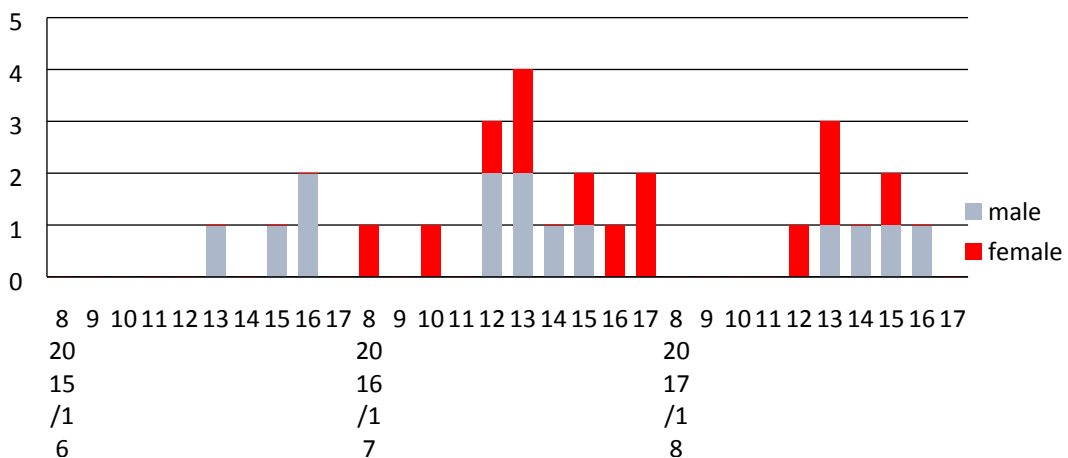
5.29 Initial analysis of IFA placements shows a demand for services to support children who present with challenging needs and behaviours, including children at risk of sexual exploitation. Whilst HIPSS is meeting some of the highest needs, further development of the capacity and capability of general in-house foster carers would support children with the challenging behaviour needs, reducing the need for IFA, residential and distant placements.

6. Mainstream LAC Residential placements

Recent Demand

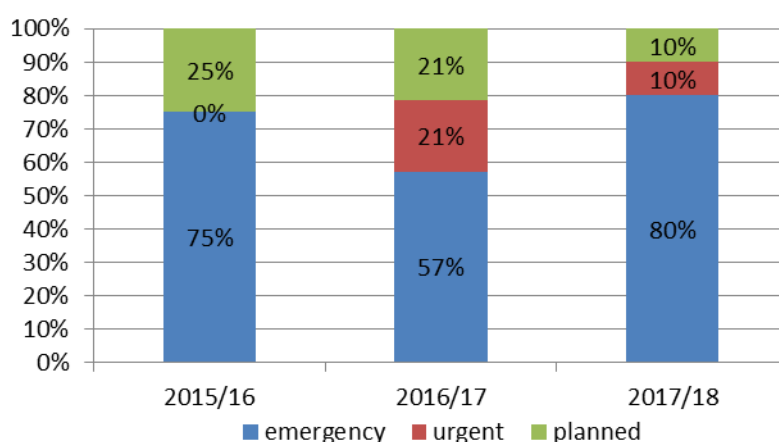
6.1 Spend on LAC residential placements has increased each year since 2015/16. The increase is predominantly a result of a number of children and young people having to step up to residential due to fostering placement breakdowns and a restricted in-house and IFA fostering market. Many regional local authorities are experiencing a lack of capacity in the IFA market, which is also contributing to their use of the residential sector.

Residential placements per during the year due to no foster care options - by gender and age at placement start date



6.2 During the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2018, 28 residential placements were made for 5518 bed nights at a cost of almost £2.4m, where the child could have been supported by appropriate fostering accommodation. The majority of these residential placements were made on an urgent or emergency basis (below), and after possible fostering options had been exhausted.

Initial Ireferral type of residential placements due to no foster care options



6.3 The impact of more children entering residential care because of insufficient fostering capacity was an additional cost pressure of £1.87m (below) over the three years. The pressure could have been further reduced had there been appropriate additional in-house fostering capacity.

Cost of children that could be fostered but were placed into residential care 2015-2018

Residential		Standard IFA		additional budget pressure
Bed nights purchased	5518	Bed nights purchased	5518	
total cost of placements	£ 2,495,607	total cost	£ 618,016	£ 1,877,591
average bed night	£ 452.27	average bed night	£ 112.00	
average weekly price	£ 3,165.87	average weekly price	£ 784.00	

6.4 In addition to the overall increase in number of young people in residential care, the average length of stay across all placements has increased each year since 2015/16; although it remains lower than 2014/15. It is understood that restricted fostering capacity, which has delayed some placement step-downs, is the main contributing factor to longer than desired periods of stay, rather than any practice or procedural drift.

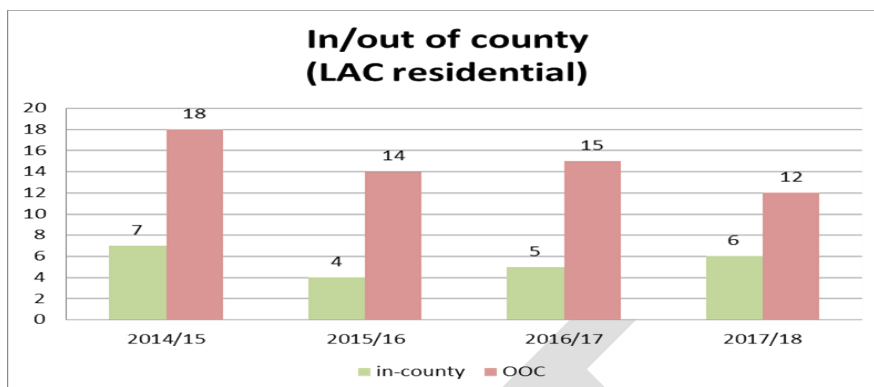
6.5 The table below shows resulting destination of step downs from residential placements during the last two years:

2016/17	step down to HIPSS	3
	step down to fostering	3
	returned home	2
	step-down to supported accommodation	1
2017/18	step down to HIPSS	2
	step down to fostering	1
	step-down to supported accommodation	3

6.6 The number of step downs to HIPSS is disappointing, and can be attributed to the pool of specialist carers not being at full capacity. However the service also supported young people and their carers, to prevent step up to residential. In addition to this, 5 HIPSS placements stepped down to non-specialist placements in 2016/17 and 3 in 2017/18.

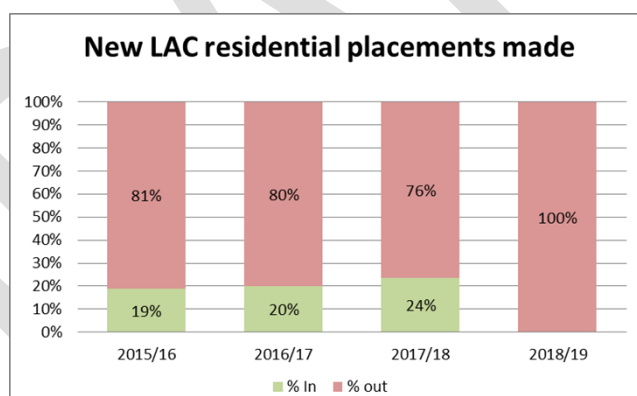
6.7 Since 2014 almost 15,000 LAC residential bed nights have been purchased (see chart 6.16). With the exception of 2015/16, annually approx. 4k bed nights have been required. It is anticipated the reduction in bed nights required during 2015/16 was attributed to the work

being undertaken to reduce the number of new residential placements. However progress has not been maintained, partly due to increased need for residential owing to unavailable foster care, and a reduction in number of HIPSS carers.



6.8 Most LAC residential placements continue to be made outside Herefordshire (above). In 2015/16, 7 out of 25 (28%) of LAC residential placements were in-county. However as of October 2018, only 1 out of 14 (7%) placements were in-county.

6.9 In 2015/16, 3 out of 16 (19%) of all new LAC residential placements were in-county (below). Only 20% of new placements were made in-county during 2016/17, whereas in 2017/18 24% were made in-county. However of the 18 new placements made in 2018/19 up to Oct 18, none have been in-county. This demonstrates further effort is required to source placements close to home.



6.10 There are 19 registered children’s homes in Herefordshire, of which 11 are registered to support emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, with capacity to provide 49 beds that are usually occupied by children placed from other areas. However as of September 2018, only 1 of 16 LAC residential placements were in Herefordshire. To address this, relationships with local providers will be improved, through facilitating a minimum of one provider event each year and introduce processes to ensure 4 weekly contact with each provider. This will ensure we acquire regularly updates on current and planned vacancies, so local places could be considered for our young people, where applicable. We will also work with our Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) to explore re-instating children’s homes managers’ forums, which were previously well attended and valued by providers.

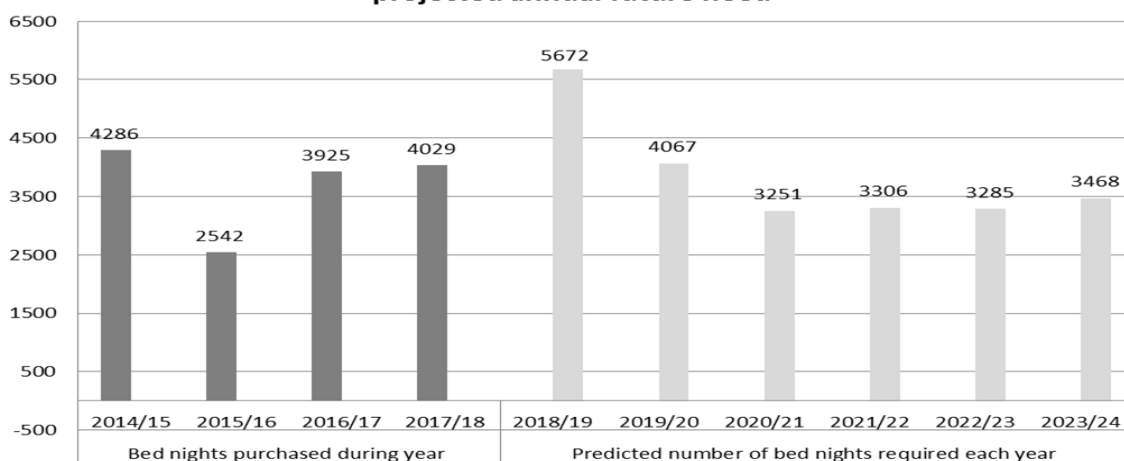
Future Demand

6.11 The recent demand for residential care has been more closely influenced by the capacity of the fostering sector than by changes in the LAC population. It is anticipated no more than 10 LAC should normally require residential accommodation due to their assessed needs. This

assumption does not include LAC with complex needs, covered by chapter 7.

- 6.12 In the short-medium term and whilst the local fostering capacity is developed, there will be a continued need for short-term residential placements for some children. It is anticipated these placements would be short-term placements of up to six-months while fostering options are identified and children are moved in a planned way. There is also potential to explore how short-term residential care may be utilised in other areas to provide support and space that enables children to avoid a family or fostering breakdown, and successfully return to the family/carers after a short time in residential care.
- 6.13 Of the 16 known children in a LAC residential placement in September 2018, it is anticipated 5 will require residential accommodation until they turn 18, and of the remaining 11 children it is expected that 8 will step down to alternative provision in 2018/19 and 2 in 2019/20. Whilst acknowledging it can take up to 12 months to recruit new carers, it is anticipated the need for short term LAC residential places will reduce during 2019/20. This will be supported by other work being undertaken by social care, including reducing the LAC population, which will also release general in-house foster care capacity. The average length of stay of those who do not require residential care to meet their needs, will also reduce as more step down options become available.
- 6.14 It is assumed that 7 new placements will be required in 2019/20, reducing to 3 by 2023/24. Based on this assumption it is anticipated there will be 9 residential placements required in 2024, and these will only be for those who require residential accommodation due to their assessed needs.
- 6.15 Based on the above assumptions, it is estimated that the number of LAC residential bed nights purchased will reduce from c5,700 in 2018/19 to c.3,600 in 2023/24 (below). This equates to an estimated cost avoidance of £1.8m in 2023/24, based on an average weekly fee of £3,600 for all residential placements purchased in 2017/18.

Actual residential bed nights purchased up to 31 March 2018 and projected annual future need



7. Complex needs population (CNF).

- 7.1 The CNF population in Herefordshire is supported by a tri-partite Section 75 funding arrangement that includes resources provided by Education, Children’s Social Care and Health. The population is small but it incurs some of the highest placement costs for any child due to the complexity of their individual needs. There tends to be little turn-over within the CNF population, as once a child is admitted to the population, they very rarely step-down from it and often remain within it until transitioning to adulthood. Due to the wide-range and

complexity of needs involved, it would not be possible to design a single placement model that could be commissioned for the CNF population.

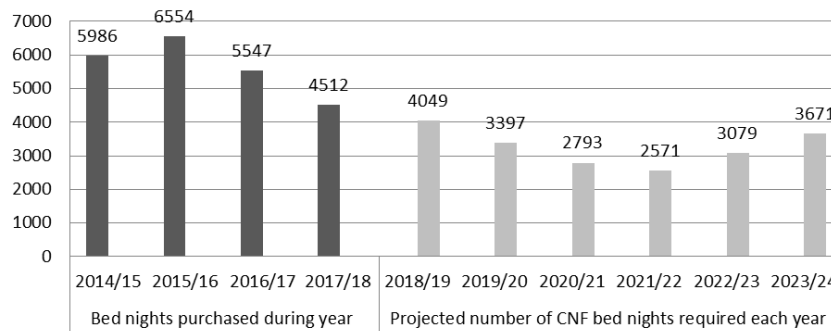
Recent CNF Demand

- 7.2 The size of the CNF population has decreased since 2014, when there were 20 CNF cases to a cohort of 14 by January 2018. There are several potential reasons for the decrease including some young people ageing-out as well as a slower rate of entry arising from an improved short breaks offer, stable children with disabilities social care team, multiagency education, health and care planning, and the introduction of continuing care for children's health provision.
- 7.3 A priority in the 2014-19 strategy was to enable more children with complex needs to be accommodated closer to home, which has resulted in 33% being placed in-county, as of March 2018, which is an improvement compared to 14% during 2014/15. Of those in placement on March 2018, 42% of CNF placements were within 20 miles of home. Of the 7 children placed more than 20 miles from home, 4 were within 60 miles and the furthest placement was under 160 miles.
- 7.4 Since 2014 a total of almost 23,000 CNF residential bed nights have been purchased. The trend has been a year on year reduction of c.500 bed nights being required from 6,500 in 2015/16, to a projected 4,000 in 2018/19.
- 7.5 There are three children's homes in Herefordshire that can support children with complex needs. Between them they are registered to provide 56 places; of which one provider is registered for 30 places. As of September 2018, only three of these places were used for Herefordshire's children. To maximise the opportunities to place locally, we will improve communication with providers, which will include acquiring 4 weekly updates regarding vacancies.

Future CNF Demand

- 7.6 Most children with complex needs, who require accommodation, will do so until the end of their education. In March 2018, the CNF population consisted of 13 residential and 1 non-residential support packages. The age ranges from 14 to 18 years, with 11 male and 3 female. Of these 92% (12 young people) have been in a CNF placement for more than 12 months. Planning is currently being undertaken to support 4 young people with their transfer to adult care during 2018/19, with a further 7 transferring by 2023.
- 7.7 Of the young people currently supported by the Children with Disability team (CWD), it is assumed that two children will enter the CNF population and require accommodation each year. It should be noted, however, that this assumption could be influenced by any potential future change to the tri-partite agreed CNF eligibility criteria.
- 7.8 Informed by the expected numbers of children exiting and entering the CNF population, it is estimated that c.4,000 bed nights will be required in 2018/19, reducing to c.3,700 bed nights by 2023/24 (below).

Actual bed nights purchased up to March 2018 and predicted future CNS bed nights required each year



8. 16+ LAC Population

8.1 The 16+ population includes:

- Young people who are looked after by the local authority, including those that may become homeless after age 16 or who may have been remanded into the care of the local authority by the Court
- care leavers aged 18-25

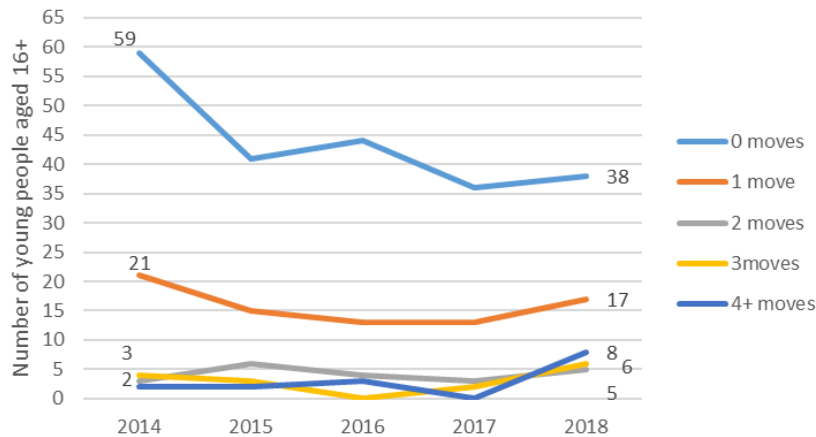
8.2 Securing sufficient supported living provision for complex cases within Herefordshire continues to be a pressure. Supported living is for young people aged 16/17 and care leavers where support, with no element of care, is provided with the aim of achieving independent living. Provision includes supported lodgings provision (SLP) where a young person lives with a host family, in their home or an annex, and the family provide appropriate support. It can also involve professional supported accommodation delivered by organisations that offer accommodation, with staffed on-site support services, provided in commercial properties, including commercial tenancies for individual young people and homes of multiple occupation.

Recent 16+ demand

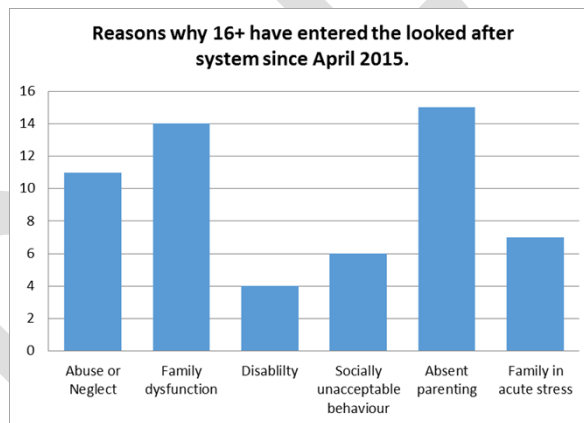
8.3 In recent years, 16+ placements have been commissioned by both the 16+ service and the council's placements teams, with each service having different approaches to placement recording. More robust processes have been in place since 2016, which require all agency placements to be commissioned by the Placements team. It is recognised however that there are some weaknesses in the placements data provided by the 16+ team for 2015/16, which have made this assessment of recent demand and projection of future demand more challenging.

8.4 It continues to be difficult to identify the right placement for a small cohort of young people who present with higher end challenging needs. Whilst the numbers are relatively low, this has resulted in some young people having 2 or more placement moves a year. Further work is required to identify why placements were unable to meet need and if there is a relationship between placement stability and the type of initial referrals (e.g. planned, urgent or emergency). The overall number of young people who have had no or one placement move within the year has declined from 90% in 2014 to 74% in 2018.

Placement stability for cases open to 16+
(as of March)



- 8.5 Since 2015, 57 young people aged 16+ have entered the looked after system with one third of being female. Annually 18% of new LAC are aged 16+. The main reasons they require accommodating are absent parenting and family dysfunction (below).

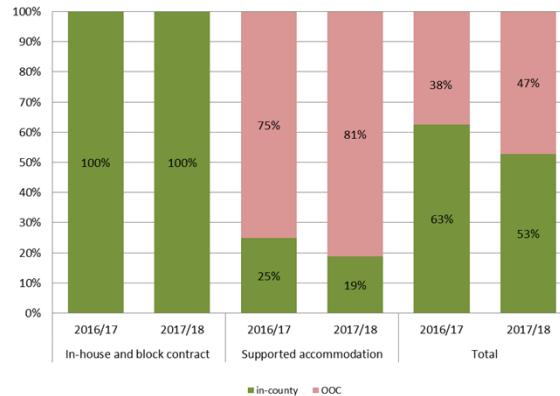


- 8.6 Herefordshire also supports unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC), some of whom have arrived through authorised routes and others independently. On arriving in Herefordshire, they become part of the council's LAC population.
- 8.7 Based on data from April 2015 to September 2018, 8.5% of the LAC population (i.e. aged 16/17) requires supported living provision each year.
- 8.8 Since 2015, there has been a year on year increase in number of LAC supported living provision. This can be attributed to various factors, including
- Improved recording
 - insufficient in-house capacity,
 - supported living provision being considered as a suitable option when a young person aged 16+ foster care placement breaks down and
 - where a UASC has requested a move to a more cosmopolitan location, and therefore no longer accommodated in the local provision developed to support this cohort as part of the national transfer scheme.

16+ provider market

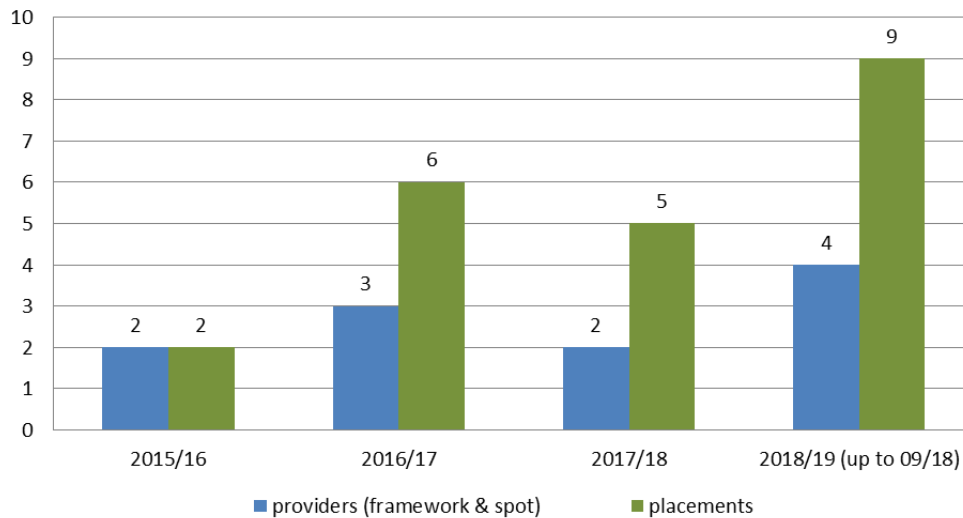
8.9 Placements are made via in-house supported lodgings provision (SLP), or supported accommodation block contract and framework agreements. Spot purchase arrangements when no other options available. The majority (82%) of placements from April 2015 to September 2018 for 16/17 and care leavers were sourced with mainly out of county independent providers with in-house supported living hosts providing 18%.

LAC supported living in/out of county by type



- 8.10 Since 2015, the number of in-house SLP hosts available to support 16/17 year olds or care leavers had remained fairly static at around 20; with some hosts having dual registration as foster carers, so able to support either placement type. In March 2018, there were 32 registered in-house supported lodging beds (excluding those with dual registration), 18 (56%) of which were occupied either by a LAC aged 16/17 or a care leavers. Further investigation is required to identify the reasons for the apparently low occupancy rate.
- 8.11 The council has a block contract arrangement with a local housing association to provide semi-independent supported accommodation for young people who are looked after or care leavers with moderate needs. Since 2017, 50% (15 places) of the capacity over three foyer sites (Hereford, Leominster and Ross-on-Wye) has been reserved specifically for LAC and care leavers and subject to direct nomination by Children’s and Families Directorate. As of March 2018, the occupancy was 87%.
- 8.12 The housing association is also commissioned to deliver a “moving on” service consisting of 6 properties, predominately for 18+ care leavers to support them with developing skills required to take on a tenancy. Further needs analysis is on-going to inform how the two services will be re-procured when the current arrangement come to an end.
- 8.13 When either the in-house or commissioned supported accommodation services are unable to offer a placement for a young person, the Council can spot-purchase bed nights within the independent sector.
- 8.14 Since 2015 there has been an increase in the number of independent supported accommodation providers operating in Herefordshire, although this tends to fluctuate. In 2018/19 this has increased to 4. As of September 2018, five out ten 16+ LAC agency placements in Herefordshire, were with three spot-purchase providers.

LAC supported accomodation agency placements in county



8.15 There continue to be challenges in providing suitable supported living placements for young people who present with more challenging needs, including those that are remanded to the care of the local authority by the court. These places have tended to be made out of county.

Future 16+ demand for looked after children

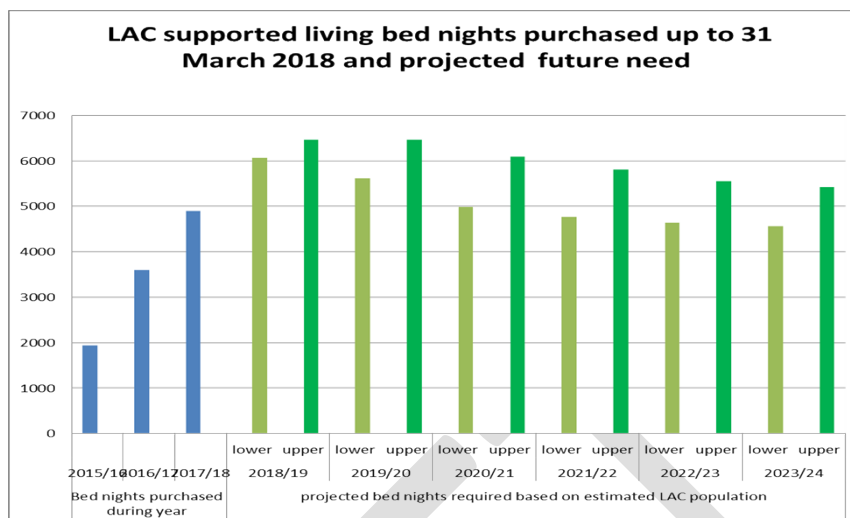
8.16 Based on data since 2015, on average 18% of children who enter the looked after system each year are aged 16 and 17, with 66% being male. Whilst some young people aged 16+ will continue to be supported by other social care teams, as of March 2018, the council's 16+ service were supporting 56 looked after children and 117 care leavers were allocated personal advisors (PAs). It is anticipated a further 23 young people will transfer into the service from LAC team by March 2019. Based on the known LAC cohort (September 2018), it is also expected that a further 104 LAC will transfer to the 16+ service by 2024. Cases that are supported by the children with disabilities team will continue to be supported by that service post-16, rather than transfer to the 16+ service.

8.17 Of the LAC population as of March 2018, 118 will become turn 18 and become care leavers by 2024. The majority of looked after children aged 16+ will require some degree of care and therefore supported accommodation would not be suitable to meet their needs.

8.18 Based on data from 2015 to 2018, it is assumed for 8.5% of the LAC population may require some form of supported living arrangement. It is therefore projected 26 -28 young people aged 16/17 will require supported living provision in 2018/19 and this will reduce to 20 -23 by 2024. There could be some fluctuation in this projection depending on the number of additional UASCs that Herefordshire may support in future. The projected demand for supported living placements for care leavers is an area that requires additional analysis.

8.19 Based on most young people being aged 17 when placement starts, and the average lengths of stay being 231 nights (average from 2015 to Oct 2018), it is estimated between 6.0k to 6.5k LAC supported living bed nights will be required in 2018/19. This will reduce to between 4.5k and 5.5k in 2023/24. This is subject to achieving a reduction in the LAC population and individual's assessed needs meeting the criteria for supported living i.e. no element of care required. Alternative registered provision will be required if supported lodgings is not suitable.

8.20 Although Herefordshire has agreed to support up to 25 UASC's (excluding care leavers), as part of the national transfer scheme, as of 30/09/18, Herefordshire has 5 UASC's who are included in the council's LAC population.



8.21 The above projections have been based current cohort as demand to take additional UASC is unclear.

8.22 Children and families are working in partnership with the Council's Adult and communities directorate Housing department and contracted providers to commission a range of suitable 16+ accommodation. Early discussions have taken place with housing providers to begin developing service models and good practice examples of similar projects in different local authority areas have been highlighted. Further analysis is required to identify gaps in provision for 16+ looked after children and care leavers to inform commissioning activity.

9. Non-accommodation services (NAS)

9.1 Non-Accommodation Services support children, young people and families to work on their emotional and behavioural difficulties by providing a safe and nurturing place where trained practitioners help bring about change or enhance well-being. Services include but are not limited to providing therapy, psychological assessments, parenting assessments, contact, family group conferencing, mediation and life story work. It is anticipated these services will be delivered in-house, however where there is insufficient capacity, inexperience to undertake specific assessment or an independent assessment is required, and services will need to be commissioned.

9.2 Since 2015, in the region of 320 individual assessments have been commissioned, with cost ranging from £25 to £5000, with an average of £750. This equates to a total spend of almost £250k. Initial investigations indicate social care team managers are commissioning these direct and lack of reporting has resulted in a breakdown of assessment type not being currently available. Further work is required to analysis need, which will inform a commissioning plan.

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Psychological Assessment	26,233	26,803	31,043
SEN Mediation	4,800	2,880	3,360
Assessments - other	38,586	21,726	12,272
Therapy	12,360	37,648	25,717
Total	81,979	89,057	72,392