

## Looked after Children reduction update

2<sup>nd</sup> November 2020

### Looked after children population

There were 336 looked after children as at 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2020 which is a decrease of two children from the last report dated 5<sup>th</sup> October.

Ten children became looked after during October. Of these 6 are subject to interim care orders granted by the Court and 4 are voluntarily looked after under S.20. Legal advice has been provided about the suitability of S.20 for each of these children.

Eleven children left care during October. Of these, 3 turned 18 years of age, 3 were made subject of a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) and 5 had their care orders discharged following successful reunification to parents.

The reason for children coming into care and leaving care not always equating with the total number in care is because data used to produce this report is weekly whilst overall numbers entering and leaving care are produced for a calendar month.

### Edge of care team

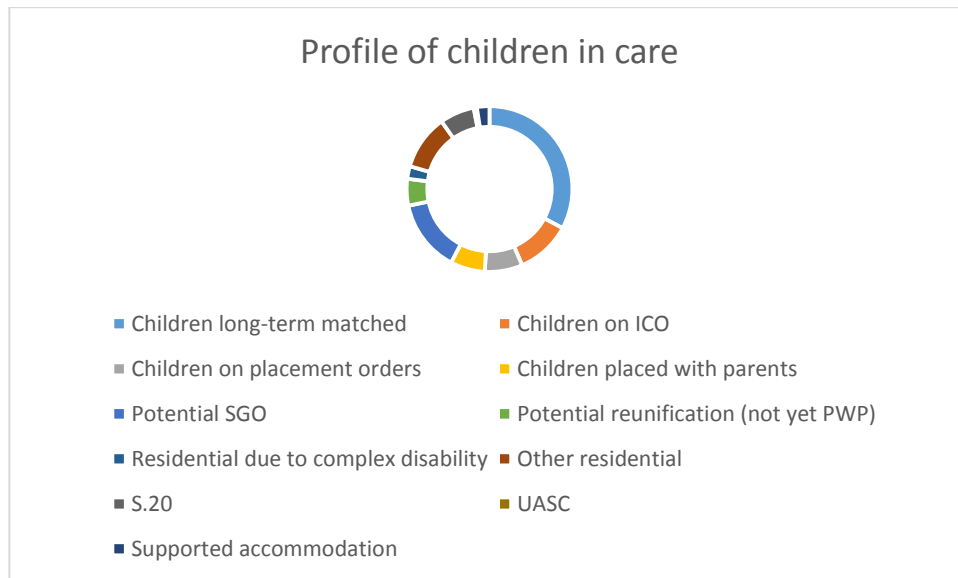
Since April the edge of care team have worked with 14 families (14 children) on the “edge of care”. To date 12 children have not come into care. One child came into care following the sudden and tragic death of his father and one child has come into care a short time after the involvement of the team ended.

Since April the edge of care team have worked with 14 families (24 children) with a care plan of reunification. So far 19 children have been supported to return to their parents care with a decision for a sibling group of 3 children that they should remain in care as parents were not able to show that they had made sufficient changes. Two children are having increased family time with a plan to return home over the next month.

### Profile of looked after children

The diagram below shows the different cohorts of children in care. Children who are on an interim care order (ICO) are subject to care proceedings and their long-term care plan has not yet been determined. Those who are placed with parents, on placement orders or on the potential for reunification or potential for SGO list can reasonably be expected to leave care via these routes. Those who are long-term matched, are asylum seekers or are placed in residential or supported accommodation can reasonably be expected to remain in care until the age of 18 although the potential to return to their parents care is kept under regular review. For children looked after under S.20 their exit from care will be varied but are subject to regular review.

## Appendix 1



### Reduction of numbers of children in care

During October the care orders for three children were discharged following the granting of a Special Guardianship Order's (SGO) and five were discharged following successful reunification to parents.

At the end of October 20 applications were filed either with court or with legal services to achieve children's exit from the care system. There were 8 SGO applications and 5 care order discharge applications filed with court. There are a further 5 SGO and 2 care order discharge applications filed with legal services.

In the last report dated 5<sup>th</sup> October 2020 it was anticipated that applications for another 10 children would be sent to legal by the end of October. Three of these applications have been completed as planned. For 2 children the applications have been delayed until January for further life story work to be completed, for 3 children the applications have been delayed by a few days and will be sent to legal in early November and for two children their care plan review meeting needs to take place and then applications will be sent to legal.

Planned applications for the next 3 months are set out in the table below.

	Application for SGO	Discharge of care order
November 2020	5	4
December 2020	0	0
January 2021	3	4

There are 17 children where assessments have been completed that recommend an SGO as the best plan for the child but foster carers are not willing to agree to an SGO at this time.

## Appendix 1

### Care proceedings

During October care proceedings concluded for 2 children (siblings), both of whom have a care plan of long term fostering.

At the end of October, a further 37 children were subject to care proceedings, of which 1 has a care plan of reunification; 9 have a plan of adoption; 6 have a plan of SGO at conclusion of care proceedings; 6 have a plan of kinship with a view to moving to SGO within 6-12 months; 2 have a plan of long term fostering. For the remaining 13 children it is too soon in proceedings to confirm the likely care plan.

### Long-term matching

Children who have a care plan of long-term fostering should be matched with long-term foster carers who can offer them love, stability and security growing up in a family until their independence. Long-term matches are only approved after a formal assessment. Herefordshire's performance in relation to offering stability to children and young people in care is good with 69% of children and young people having been in their placement for over 2 ½ years compared with 67% for statistical neighbours.

Since a review in April identified delay in progressing long-term matching decisions 38 children have been long-term matched with their foster carers. Systems are now established to ensure that this delay does not reoccur. One child was long-term matched during October.

### Children in residential care






There are 43 children in residential care. During October two children were placed in residential care when a suitable foster placement could not be found that would meet their needs. Two young people have moved from residential care to supported accommodation.

Of the children and young people living in residential care there are 23 who are placed because no suitable foster placement could be found. A project group to reduce the number of children placed in residential care has been established which is being led by the Director of Children's Services.




Our HIPSS scheme, which provides support to foster carers providing placements for children and young people moving from residential care, has been changed so that existing approved foster carers can offer placements when previously this was only an option for specifically approved HIPSS foster carers. It is anticipated that this change will enable more children and young people who have a care plan of foster care to be able to move to a foster placement. So far two fostering households who have current vacancies have expressed an interest and have been matched with children. HIPSS have commenced a period of training with the carers with a view to the children moving by end of November or early December.

Appendix 1




Appendix 1

Child status	Number at end of February	Number at end of August	Number at end of September	Number at end of October	Direction of travel	Commentary
Number of children in care	356	343	338	336	Decrease 	A decrease of two children during the month.
Children long term matched	84	112	110	107	Decrease 	Number has reduced because some children who were long-term matched have had their care orders discharged. Many of these children will remain looked after and will exit the care system when they reach 18. Some children will return home and some carers will apply for SGO's enabling children to leave the care system.
Children subject of interim care orders	51	38	32	35	Increase 	Proceedings have been commenced for some children. These children are subject to care proceedings, and the court has made an interim care order due to them having met a threshold of significant harm. Their care plans will be finalised during proceedings.
Children on placement orders	18	25	26	24	Decrease 	Adoption orders have been granted for 2 children. These children will not be returning to their families, a plan of adoption has been agreed, and a placement order made by the court. These children should exit the care system through being adopted.
Children placed with parents	23	24	23	22	Decrease 	Decrease as care orders have been discharged for some children and some children have returned home as part of reunification plan. 'Placement

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						with Parents' progresses when the plan is reunification to parental care and a stepping stone to children no longer being looked after.
Plan for SGO	45	51 - assessing best interests for 7 children	48 – assessing best interests for 7 children	46 – assessing best interests for 6 children	Decrease 	Decrease as some SGO's granted in October. If an assessment concludes their care may be best offered by the carers becoming special guardians, these children will exit the care system via a court process and judicial granting of a SGO. Applications for 16 children have been filed or sent to legal.
Reunification (not yet placed with parents)	20	18 - assessing best interests for 14 children	16 – assessing best interests for 10 children	17 – assessing best interests for 10 children	Increase 	These children are currently not in the care of their family. If an assessment concludes that reunification might be achieved then these children may exit the care system by returning to live with their parents, under placement with parent regulations, and if this is sustainable, via revocation of the care order.
Residential care due to complex disability	9	8	8	8	No change 	These children have such a high level of need due to disability, they require specialist residential care. These children will usually exit the care system when they reach 18 years of age.
Children without disability in residential care	30	33	35	35	No change	These children have complex needs and behaviour that often presents a risk to themselves or others and it has not been possible to place them with foster carers. 23 of these children could move to foster care if there were foster carers

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						available to care for them, but this resource is unavailable at present. It is anticipated these children will exit the care system when they reach 18 years of age.
Accommodated under S20	22	18	19	22	Increase 	Increase due to new admissions to care. Legal advice on the suitability of S.20 is sought for every child and kept under regular review.
UASC	6	1	2	2	No change 	These children are unaccompanied asylum seekers, and will exit the care system when they are 18.
Supported accommodation	10	4	4	8	Increase 	These young people are aged over 16 and require a level of support to assist them to start to live independently. They will exit the care system at 18 years of age. A decrease is good as most care experienced young people benefit most from continuing to live in a foster family to support their transition into adulthood.



On track / Good progress



Some progress / improvement



No Progress / No Change



Some slippage / worsening

Significant slippage / worsening