



SOUTHAMPTON
CITY COUNCIL

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS

**PLACEMENT COMMISSIONING
SUFFICIENCY STATEMENT AND
STRATEGY
2020-2025**

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Southampton Looked After Children and Care Leavers Placement Commissioning Sufficiency Statement and Strategy 2020 – 2025 provides an update to the previous document dated 2017 – 2020. It includes key information regarding the profile of Southampton Looked After Children, care leavers and both the range of accommodation currently provided, and that which we plan to put in place to best meet the needs of the children and young people for whom Southampton City Council acts as a corporate parent. This Placement Commissioning Sufficiency Statement and Strategy considers the placements that will be required to enable the Council to ensure that there is sufficient provision in place to meet need locally wherever possible, with minimum disruption to the lives, education, care and health care of local children. It also aims to ensure that the provision has the flexibility in terms of quality and responsiveness to provide stable placements that meet children’s needs and aspirations and provide maximum scope for children to either experience, or move towards experiencing a safe family home environment during childhood and adolescence.
- 1.2 Constant changes in a complex market place of provision that includes Local Authority provision, intra authority adoption agencies and private and independent sector providers makes it difficult to fully analyse or predict where the shortfalls are or indeed where they may arise. This strategy includes actions to demonstrate how the city aims to increase the range and choice of accommodation to meet the presenting needs of the children in care and care leaver populations both now and over the next five years.
- 1.3 As part of a systematic review of the current structure for provision of services and in response to a wider range of challenges, an overarching Children’s Services Transformation Programme (CSTP) is in place within Southampton Children’s Services in order to focus on the development of early intervention and prevention, and for those children who need to be looked after away from home, to drive forward timely permanence.
- 1.4 The CSTP will transform and redesign services across the city in order to deliver the agreed vision as follows:

‘An Early Intervention city with a multi-agency, integrated service provision that works to ensure children’s needs are met at the earliest stage. Where possible, and children’s welfare is assured, these needs will be met within their family and community resources.’

2 OUR VISION FOR SUFFICIENCY

2.1 Our vision for placement provision is that when children cannot safely and effectively be brought up within their own families, interventions will be timely and service provision will be of a good quality and standard. We aim to provide the best placement to meet the child's needs and only for as long as necessary, progressing to timely permanence when appropriate. Providing Looked After Children and care leavers with a sense of security, continuity and commitment is crucial to their experience of care. This sense of permanence and stability can be achieved through a variety of means:

- Reunification with their birth family
- Living with extended family or friends
- Being placed with permanent foster carers until they reach adulthood
- Adoption or other legally permanent order
- Development of tenancy and living skills to enable independent living.

2.2 Our vision for placement provision as set out in the strategy is that:

- Children will be supported to stay with their families where it is safe to do so
- We will achieve permanency through adoption, special guardianship and permanent fostering in a timely manner
- Most children will live in a local, family placement
- Children with disabilities will have the same access and opportunity for placements as their non-disabled peers
- Care leavers will be able to access 'Staying Put' foster care, supported lodgings and supported accommodation
- We will improve the timeliness of care planning and utilise strategic commissioning to improve timely access to a mixed range of placements that meet our local needs

2.3 Southampton has high numbers of Looked After Children in comparison to many other cities, at a rate of 97 per 10,000 children (December 2019), compared to the national average of 64 per 10,000. We strive to ensure that only those who need to be in the care of the local authority receive accommodation, with the provision being the most appropriate, able to meet their needs and to promote a step-down approach. However the high levels of children we look after has had and continues to have a significant impact on the availability of placements in Southampton, meaning that it can often be difficult to find the right placement close to home.

3. PROGRESS SINCE THE LAST STRATEGY

3.1 Specific areas of progress include:

- Procurement of the Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) framework contract as a consortium with 14 other Local Authorities which commenced April 2017. The Framework includes 49 providers of whom 16 have carers within Southampton. The framework provides access to placements designed as a step down and alternative to residential.
- Re-procurement of the Children’s Residential Care framework contract as a consortium with 18 other Local Authorities which commenced July 2018.
- Re-procurement of Housing Related Support and commencement of 4 new contracts providing housing and floating support, hostel support and supported lodgings for young people and young parents from July 2017. The contracts provide 162 units of supported accommodation including a range of self-contained and shared accommodation. In addition, the Council has collaboratively commissioned a range of post 16 supported accommodation options for young people with more complex needs which commenced in late 2018.
- Development of the Council’s Foster Care Strategy (“Placement Strategy 2019 – 2024”) which seeks to a) increase the proportion of Southampton Looked After Children being placed with Southampton foster carers by accessing and training the best carers; b) make fostering with Southampton more attractive by developing the specialist pathway of training linked to enhanced financial rewards and c) match carers and support them to prevent placement breakdowns.
- Establishment of the Council’s own Edge of Care Service in January 2018 which works with families of children aged 8-17 years subject to Public Law Outline (PLO) or pre-proceedings meeting or child protection planning
- Adopt South, Regional Adoption Agency, formed 1st April 2019 through a partnership between Hampshire County Council, Isle of Wight Council, Portsmouth City Council and Southampton City Council, with support from voluntary sector adoption agencies, Adoption UK, Barnardos and Parents and Children Together (PACT). Adopt South began operating as a Regional Adoption Agency on 1st April 2019 and is responsible for:
 - Recruiting, assessing and approving adopters across the partnership’s region
 - Matching children in need of adoptive families
 - Supporting families post Adoption Order

4 THE LEGAL CONTEXT

Sufficiency Duty

4.1 Since the implementation of the Children Act 1989 local authorities have been required to take steps that secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for Looked After Children within their local authority area (Section 22G Children Act 1989). This section was inserted into the Children Act 1989 by Section 9 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008. This is now referred to as 'the sufficiency duty'.

4.2 The Statutory Guidance on securing sufficient accommodation for Looked After Children provides examples of best practice in securing sufficiency that include the following:

- That all children are placed in appropriate placements with access to the support services they require in their local authority area, except where this is not consistent with their welfare;
- That the full range of universal, targeted and specialist services work together to meet children's needs in an integrated way in the local area, including children who are already looked after, as well as those at risk of care or custody;
- Where it is not reasonable or practical for a child to be placed within her/his local authority area, there are mechanisms in place to widen the range of provision in neighbouring areas, or region which is still within an accessible distance, while still being able to provide the full range of services to meet identified needs;
- That partners, including housing, work together to secure a range of provision to meet the needs of those who become looked after at the age of 16 and 17 years, and support the continuity of accommodation beyond the age of 18 years;
- And in addition to meeting relevant national minimum standards, services are of high quality to secure the specific outcomes identified in the care plans of Looked After Children.

4.3 The Statutory Guidance states that 'Local authorities must be able to show that at a strategic level they are taking steps to meet the sufficiency duty, so far as is 'reasonably practical'.' It further explains what is meant by 'reasonably practical', and it includes the following:

- that it is a general duty that applies to strategic arrangements, rather than to the provision of accommodation to a particular, individual child;
- it does not require local authorities to provide accommodation within their area for every child they look after;
- there may be a significant minority of children for whom it is not 'reasonably practical' to provide a certain type of accommodation within the area;
- in accordance with section 22C (5) of the 1989 Act, the overriding factor is that the placement must be the most appropriate placement available;
- after the above, the local authority must give preference to a placement with a friend, relative or other person connected with the child and who is a local authority foster parent [section 22C (7) (a)]. Failing that, the local authority must, so far as reasonably practicable, in all circumstances find a placement that:
 - is near the child's home [section 22C(8)(a)];
 - does not disrupt his education or training [section 22C(8)(b)];
 - enables the child to live with an accommodated sibling [section 22C(8)(c)];
 - where the child is disabled, is suitable to meet the needs of that child [section 22C(8)(d)]; and
 - is within the local authority's area, unless that is not reasonably practicable [section 22C(9)].

4.4 The term 'Looked After Children' as defined in the 1989 Act refers to all children and young people being 'looked after' by the local authority. Looked After Children and young people may be subject to care orders or interim care orders; placed or authorised to be placed, with prospective adopters; voluntarily accommodated under s20 of the 1989 Act, including unaccompanied asylum seeking children and finally those subject to court orders with residence requirements i.e. a secure order or remanded to local authority accommodation.

Care Leavers

4.5 The term 'care leavers' as for the purposes of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 refers to eligible, relevant and former relevant children:

- Eligible children (Schedule 2 paragraph 19B Children Act 1989) are those young people aged 16 and 17 who are still in care and have been 'looked

after' for (a total of) at least 13 weeks from the age of 14 and including their 16th birthday;

- Relevant children (s23A Children Act 1989) are those young people aged 16 and 17 who are not current looked after by the local authority, but were 'looked after' for (a total of) at least 13 weeks from the age of 14, and have been 'looked after' at some time while they were 16 or 17;
- Former relevant children (s23C Children Act 1989) are those young people aged 18, 19 or 20 who have been eligible and/or relevant.

4.6 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 has also inserted further duties into the Children Act 1989 in respect of the Local Authority's duties towards former relevant children, generally extending the Local Authority's ability to respond positively to requests for support from former relevant children aged 21 to 25 who are continuing their transition to independence and adult life. The new duties include:

- A duty to offer personal adviser support to all former relevant children that the Local Authority had duties to under s23C of Children Act 1989, up to the age of 25. This includes those who return to the Local Authority and request support at any point after the age of 21 and up to the age of 25. The Local Authority must provide the former relevant child with a personal adviser until the young person reaches the age of 25, or earlier, should the former relevant child indicate that they no longer want a personal adviser. The Local Authority must carry out an assessment in relation to the former relevant child (which may or may not include support with accommodation issues), and develop a Pathway Plan setting out the type of support the Local Authority will provide.
- A duty to publish a local care leaver Offer that sets out care leavers' legal entitlements and any additional support the Local Authority provides.

Housing

4.7 Local Authorities including Local Housing Authorities have a duty to accommodate all homeless 16 and 17 year olds and care leavers under statutory legislation (Children Act 1989, The Children Leaving Care Act 2000, Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and the Homeless (Priority Need) Order 2002). For all homeless 16-17 year olds, who are not Looked After Children the local authority must undertake a Child in Need assessment and if necessary provide interim accommodation whilst this takes place. If the housing service is the first point of contact for homeless 16-17 year olds, interim accommodation may be provided under homelessness duties (Housing Act 1996 S188) pending a Child In Need assessment by Children's Services.

- 4.8 The respective responsibilities of both the Housing Authority and Social Care Authority, when preventing homelessness or placing young people in supported housing are outlined in the Council's Joint Protocol (Children and Families and Housing Services). The protocol outlines the legal duties under The Children Act 1989 and Housing Act 1996 for 16 and 17 year old young people who are homeless and is compliant with the relevant Southwark case law. The objective of this protocol is to ensure and safeguard the wellbeing of the young person and to prevent homelessness, returning the young person home to their family only where appropriate. If a return is not possible, the council will find the most suitable accommodation for the young person and support them to remain in accommodation. All agencies involved with the care and support of a young person will work collaboratively to ensure that relevant and timely risk information is shared and that disputes about solutions are worked through together to ensure that risks are reduced, mitigated or planned for.

5 KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

Local Context

- 5.1 Southampton is on the south coast of England and is the largest city in Hampshire. It is a diverse city with a population of 256,459 comprising 106,237 households, 60,083 children and young people aged (0-19 years), 53,000 residents who are not white British and approximately 43,000 students. The population of Southampton is predicted to rise by nearly 6.5% by 2025, with the over 65s and under 15s populations projected to increase by approximately 16% and 5% respectively.
- 5.2 Whilst the city has achieved significant growth in the last few years in line with the affluent south, the city's characteristics relating to poverty and deprivation present challenges more in common with other urban areas across the country with high levels of deprivation. The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 (IMD 2019) illustrates how Southampton has become relatively more deprived since 2015. Based on average deprivation score, Southampton is now ranked 61st (where 1 is the most deprived) out of 326 local authorities, compared to its previous position of 67th in 2015. Southampton still has 19 Lower Super Output Areas (out of 148) within the 10% most deprived in England and 1 in the 10% least deprived (previously zero).
- 5.3 The projected increased service demand in line with population growth, in the context of increased deprivation between 2015 and 2019 indicates that

the Council will need to make changes and improvements to support better outcomes for children and young people in the city.

Looked After Children

5.4 The number of Looked After Children in Southampton has reduced since 2017 from 540 to 481 in March 2019 (a reduction in the rate per 10,000 children from 108 to 95). However this is still higher than both the England and Statistical Neighbour average (65 and 87 per 10,000 respectively). Whilst the rate has fallen from the previous year (the rate was 104 per 10,000), it remains high.

Table 1 Number of Looked After Children

Number of Looked After Children at 31 Mar.		2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
All Looked After Children at 31 March	LA	580	590	540	522	481
LAC at 31 March per 10,000 population 0 to 17 yrs.	LA	120.00	120.00	108.00	104.00	95.00
	SN	75.00	75.70	79.00	83.00	87.00
	England	60.00	60.00	62.00	64.00	65.00

Latest data (source Local Authority Interactive Tool)

5.5 The number of new children entering into care during 2018/19 has fallen from the previous year from 178 to 170. The statistical neighbour rate of children who came into care in 2018-19 was 34 and the national rate was 27; Southampton's rate in the same year was 33.

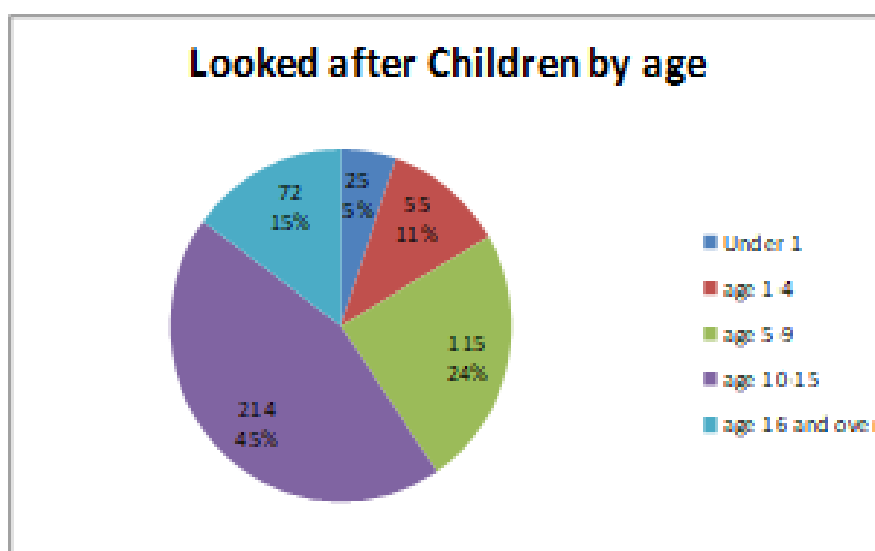
5.6 Table 2 below shows the number and rate of children ceasing to be looked after. The number of children ceasing to be looked after in 2018/19 has increased slightly from 197 the previous year to 214. The rate is high compared with statistical neighbours (42 compared to 31), but this is likely to reflect the previously high level of Looked After Children.

Table 2 Number of LAC, new and ceasing LAC

	LAC 31/03/2019		New LAC 18/19		Ceasing CLA 18/19		
	Number	Rate per 10,000	Number	Rate per 10,000	Number	Rate per 10,000	Ceasing as % of total at end of year
Southampton	481	95	170	33	214	42	44%
SN average	515	87	205	34	184	31	36%
England	78,150	65	31,680	27	29,460	25	38%

5.7 Overall, there continues to be more boys than girls looked after. At the end of 2018-19, there were 280 boys (58%), and 201 girls (42%) looked after. This is similar to the previous year, when 56% of Looked After Children were boys and 44% girls.

5.8 Analysis by age demonstrates that the largest proportion of children in care in Southampton are aged 10-15 years (214 or 45%). Children aged 5-9 account for 24% (115), over 16 year olds 15% (72), 1-4 year olds 11% (55) and under 1s 5% (25).



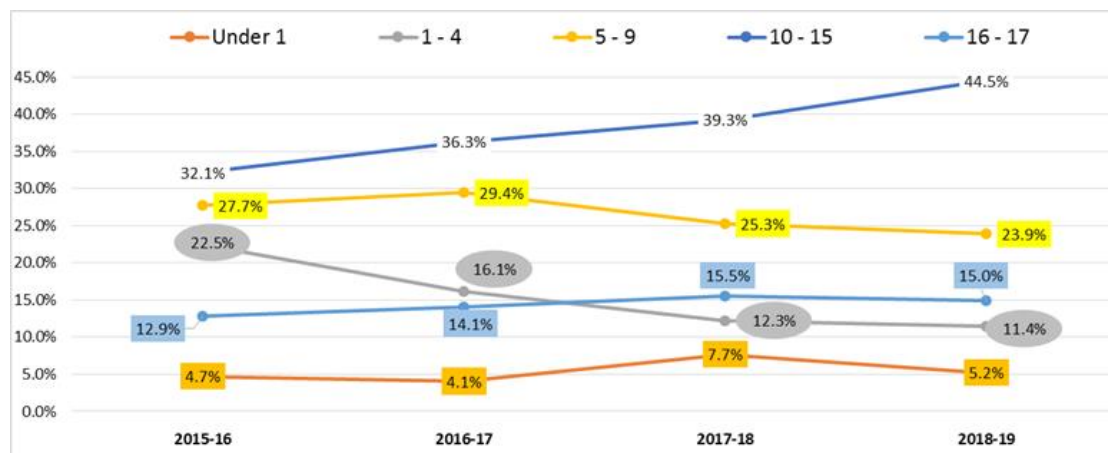
5.9 Table 3 below shows the breakdown in age for each year, since 2015/16. Compared to previous years, there has been a significant reduction in both the absolute number and the proportion of 1-4 year olds in care (from 22.5% in 15/16 to 11.4% in 18/19), a reduction in the absolute number and proportion of 5-9 year olds in care (27.7% in 15/16 compared to 23.9% in 18/19) but a significant increase in both the number and proportion of 10-

15 year olds (32.1% in 15/16 compared to 44.5% in 18/19 – 190 in 15/16 and 214 in 18/19).

Table 3 age breakdown of LAC

Age	March 2016	%	March 2017	%	March 2018	%	March 2019	%
Under 1	28	4.7	22	4.1	40	7.7	25	5.2
1-4	133	22.5	87	16.1	64	12.3	55	11.4
5-9	164	27.7	159	29.4	132	25.3	115	23.9
10-15	190	32.1	196	36.3	205	39.3	214	44.5
16 and over	76	12.9	76	14.1	81	15.5	72	15.0
Total	591		540		522		481	

The chart below shows how the proportion of Looked After Children in each age group has changed over the last 4 years.



Ethnicity

5.10 In 2018-19, white children continued to represent the largest cohort of Looked After Children at 81.1%. This is in line with national figures for 2019, with 73.9% of Looked After Children being white in England. 10.8% of Southampton Looked After Children are recorded as mixed race (compared to 9.7% for England), 2.9% as Asian (compared to 4.5% for England) and 2.7% as black (compared to 7.6% for England).

Placement stability

5.11 Research highlights the importance of stability, security and lasting relationships as fundamental for the healthy development of children. The percentage of Looked After Children who had had three or more placements as at the end of the financial year 2018-2019 was 12%, compared to Statistical Neighbour average (10%) and England (10%).

5.12 As at 2018-2019, 21% of Looked After Children were placed within 20 miles from their home compared to 20% (England) and 18% (SN). Generally, being placed close to home (e.g. within the city boundaries, and / or within 20 miles from home) is seen as a factor supporting children to maintain networks and stability.

Placements Type

5.13 Table 4 below shows placements broken down by placement type. As at the end of March 2019, of the Looked After Children in Southampton, 74.6% (354) were in foster care (excluding those placed for adoption with current foster carers) which comprises 35.4% (168) with in-house mainstream carers, 9.1% (43) with parents, and 30.1% (143) placed with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs). 6.5% (31) of children were placed in residential care.

Table 4 Placement type

	Mar-17		Mar-18		Mar-19	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
In House Fostering	175	32.3	201	38.4	168	35.4
IFAs	142	26.2	140	26.8	143	30.1
Inter-Agency	35	6.5	15	2.9	13	2.7
With Parents	53	9.8	46	8.8	43	9.1
Residential - Independent Sector	29	5.4	37	7.1	31	6.5
Supported Placements or Rent	10	1.8	8	1.5	6	1.3
UASC	10	1.8	14	2.7	14	2.9
Friends and Family fostering	88	16.2	62	11.8	57	12.0
Total	542	100.0	523	100	475	100

Data source: Finance

- 5.14 Wherever possible, the Council will seek to place children in family based settings and is looking to expand the range of foster care placements to achieve this; however there are always some children who will need residential.

Care Leavers

- 5.15 At the end of March 2019, 82% of care leavers aged 17 and 18 and 83% of care leavers aged 19-21 were in contact and in suitable accommodation. The statistical neighbour average was 88% and 83% respectively and the England average was 88% and 85% respectively. This represented an upward trend in performance since March 2014, when the percentage was 70%; however demonstrates that there is still a long way to go to improve housing options for care leavers in line with statistical neighbour and England averages.
- 5.16 In terms of education and employment, 57% of Southampton care leavers aged 17 and 18 and 45% of care leavers aged 19-21 were in employment, education or training in 2018/19. This compares to 61% and 45% respectively for our statistical neighbours and 64% and 52% respectively for England, demonstrating that Southampton needs to do more to ensure that its care leavers are supported to remain in education/training or gain employment.

6 Participation and engagement of children and young people

- 6.1 The active participation of children and young people is a key priority for Children's Services and its partners. Southampton is working towards establishing an offer to meaningfully engage and participate young people via the dedicated Looked After Children / Care Leaver Participation Worker to work with the teams to increase participation opportunities, including the engagement of the Children in Care Councils and Care Leavers Forum. Consultation with young people and other feedback from the Children in Care Councils and Care Leavers Forum will feed into service development and inform the Council's Corporate Parenting Board. Engagement of the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum should take place in relation to the emerging internal strategies and plans that the Council has for developing its approach to securing the best placements for children and young people.
- 6.2 The application of this Strategy will be reviewed with children who have experience of being in care on an annual basis to ensure that there is purposeful and meaningful feedback from children regards the quality of their experiences.

7 PRIORITIES FOR DEVELOPING PLACEMENT SUFFICIENCY 2020-2025

A) Local Authority Foster Carers (further detail can be found in the Council's Placement Strategy 2019 – 2024)

Objective

- To provide a range of high quality and specialist foster care placements which reflect need and the diversity of the population

Current Position

7.1 As at 31 December 2019, there were 164 in house foster carers registered with the authority, looking after 173 children. At any one time approximately 5% of registered in house foster carers are not available to foster due to personal circumstances or concerns around their suitability to foster. On the 31 December 2019 seven foster carers were not available to foster. The vacancy rate at any one time is approximately 10% and this mainly relates to carers who are approved for children aged 0-4 years. 37 foster carers are offering long term homes to children.

In addition to this there were a further 47 carers who are caring for specific children as 'connected' carers – family, friend or adults known to the child, looking after 54 children. These tend to be long term arrangements.

7.2 During the last 12 months there has been a net loss of 4 in house carers. The aspiration to recruit more foster carers to achieve a target of 200 by 2020 has not as yet been achieved. A number of well-resourced marketing campaigns over the last three years have generated limited enquiries and alternative strategies to recruit foster carers are being piloted.

7.3 The data in table 4 above shows that the Council is still very reliant on IFAs, many of whom will be outside the city. There is therefore a need to continue to grow the Council's own local foster carers to reflect local need and demographics of its Looked After Children population. Analysis of placement requirements indicates that demand for placements relates to infants, 10 year olds, and teenagers. There is a small but significant demand for placements relating to same day demand, sibling groups and children who present with complex needs and behaviours.

Priorities: what do we need to focus on?

- Increase the number of local authority foster carers and retain existing carers.
- Promote kinship and 'connected' care at the earlier opportunity to keep children within their families and communities.
- Increase the range of placements offered by local authority foster carers, with a focus on those children with complex needs and behaviours (Tier 4 foster carers).

Actions: What are we going to do?

- Enhance traditional recruitment and marketing activities whilst piloting innovative strategies to attract carers through engagement with local communities, employers and partnerships.
- Enhance the support offer to foster carers with a focus on retention and supporting our carers.
- Align our recruitment and retention strategy with learning and recommendations arising from the SE Sector Led Improvement Project on the recruitment and retention of local authority foster carers.
- Establish a specialist foster care scheme offering placements to children with complex needs and behaviours and those children requiring a step down from a residential placement (Tier 4 foster carers).

How will we measure success?

- Increase in the number of in house foster carers
- A specialist foster care scheme in place (Tier 4 foster care scheme).
- Reduction in avoidable use of residential placements
- The annual foster carer feedback survey indicating the proportion of foster carers feeling valued and supported
- Placement stability – reduction in % of children who have 2 or more placement moves

B) Independent Fostering Placements

Objective

- To increase access to local high quality, value for money placements which meet the diversity of local need and ensure that all placements promote the overall safety and care of the children and young people placed.

Current Position

- 7.4 Southampton relies on a mixed economy of provision to meet the capacity and range of needs. In terms of commissioning placements externally from the independent sector, i.e. Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs), Southampton is one of 14 authorities in the south coast region who have commissioned IFA placements via a Framework Contract. The IFA framework sets out clear guidance on the type, volume, and locality of IFA placements required, helping to shape the market. Providers are also required to submit detailed costs, which enable participating authorities to have a clear understanding of what they are purchasing.
- 7.5 Following the procurement process, Providers were selected to join one or more of four Lots within the framework contract. The framework replaced the previous Framework and provides a significant number of new providers offering placements. There are 12 providers on the IFA consortium who have carers within Southampton and 50 providers on the new contract. The framework provides access to placements designed as a step down and alternative to residential, though the numbers are limited. Table 5 below shows the number of providers on each of the Lots within the Framework and how this compares to the number of providers available prior to the Framework (NB. Some providers will be on more than one Lot).

Table 5 IFA Providers

Number of Providers	Old	New	Increase
Lot 1 General	41	47	15%
Lot 2 Disabled Children	34	42	24%
Lot 3 Parent and Child	17	43	153%
Lot 4 Alternative to Residential	0	10	N/A

- 7.6 The contract was implemented in April 2017 and spans a period of four years. Southampton City Council is leading the procurement of a new contract from April 2021.

7.7 Usage of the framework continues to increase across the Local Authority Consortium. As at 2019, there was a maximum capacity of 1244 placements across the whole Framework of which 1163 were in use, equating to a usage rate of 93%. This compares to a usage rate in 2018 of 93% and in 2017 of 86%. However there is still a shortfall in sufficiency for specific types of placement within the market with local Authorities (including Southampton) highlighting difficulties in placing teenagers, particularly those with challenging behaviour.

Tables 6 and 7 below show Southampton’s usage of the Framework for the last 3 years.

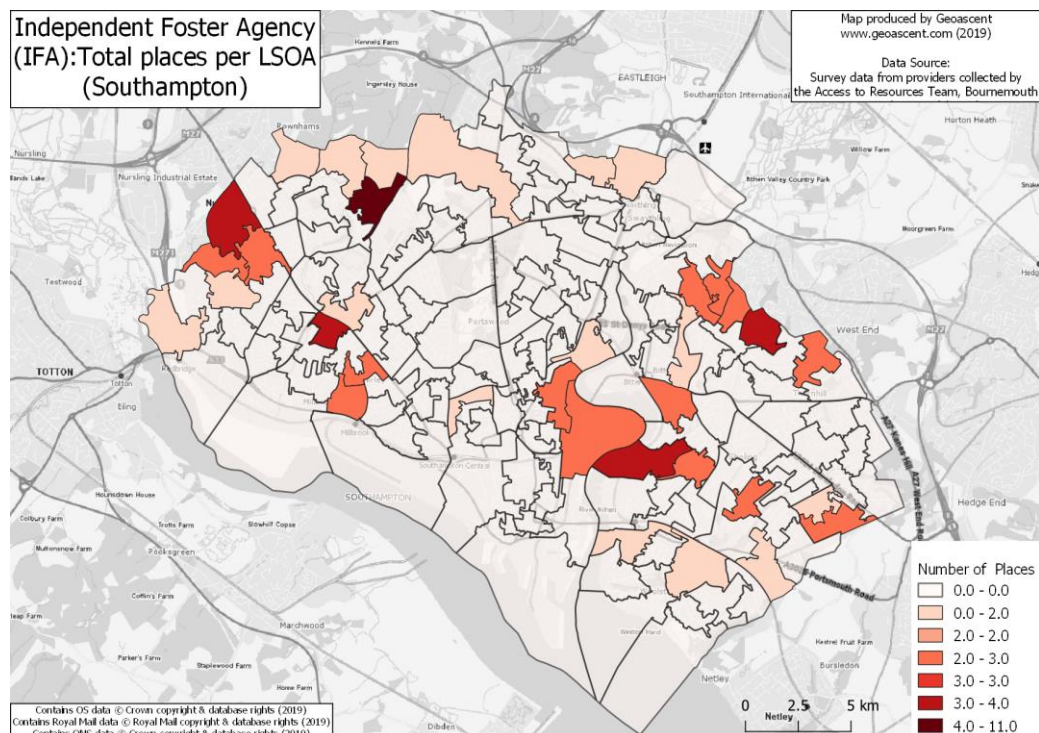
Table 6 Southampton IFA Placements by Age

0-4			5-10			11+		
2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019
28	25	26	43	39	41	40	38	43

Table 7 Southampton IFA Placements by Lot

Lot 1			Lot 2			Lot 3			Lot 4		
2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019
46	45	42	4	2	6	6	7	5	2	2	4

The chart below shows IFA placements within the City:



- 7.8 Over time, the Council is seeking to reduce its reliance on IFAs in favour of its own local Foster Carer provision; however there will remain a need to increase the proportion of IFA placements that are available within or close to Southampton and those that are able to support young people with more complex needs as an alternative to residential provision, thereby reducing reliance on residential care.

Priorities going forward: what do we need to focus on?

- Continue to monitor the contract and ensure that we are using the contract effectively.
- Ensure all placements continue to meet the needs
- Explore options for increasing access to local placements to bring children and young people closer to home where they can access local services and support networks.
- Re-procurement of the contract for 2021 onwards, with a specific focus on strengthening provision in those areas which have been historically difficult to source, in particular same day placements, sibling groups and children who present with complex needs and behaviours.

Actions: What are we going to do?

- Use monitoring information to ensure providers are meeting our needs.
- Review and develop service specification for new 2021 contract with a specific focus on strengthening provision in those areas which have been historically difficult to source, in particular same day placements, sibling groups and children who present with complex needs and behaviours.
- Continue to explore opportunities for block purchasing local placements, including collaborative arrangements with other authorities to make this more attractive to the market

How will we measure success?

- % of children placed with IFAs
- Reduction in use of residential placements
- % of children placed within 20 miles

- Placement stability – reduction in % of children who have 2 or more placement moves

C) Residential Children’s Homes

Objective

- To ensure that all provision with independent residential children’s homes is safe, stable and good quality.
- To achieve better access to affordable high quality residential children’s home placements within or close to Southampton.

Current Position

- 7.9 Residential provision is only utilised when family placements have either ceased to be successful or are not considered to be appropriate for the child’s needs or behaviours at the point of placement.
- 7.10 Southampton currently has no residential beds provided in-house. All residential placements are therefore currently purchased from the external market.
- 7.11 The Council is party to a Children’s Residential Care Framework Agreement which is commissioned via a collaboration of 18 Local Authorities across the South led by Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council, and established in July 2018. The contract is designed to unify purchasing processes across local authorities to ensure quality standards and outcomes for children as well as enabling the achievement of best value.
- 7.12 Over time, the Council is looking to reduce its reliance, where possible, on residential provision, in favour of placing children in family based settings; but, recognising that there will always be some children whose needs are best met in a residential care environment, the Council is looking to increase access to residential provision that is located within the city. In response to the need to place children closer to home, Southampton City Council approved in November 2019 a proposal to commission a call off from the Children’s Residential Care Framework for Block contract arrangements with local residential providers.

- 7.13 In addition, the Council is also considering establishing its own in-house residential provision within the City, framed around a model of smaller Council run Children’s Residential homes, each for two children and young people, alongside a separate assessment/respite provision.

Priorities going forward: what do we need to focus on?

- Ensure that all provision with independent residential children’s homes is focussed on providing safe, stable and good quality care, with a view for the children and young people placed with them to be returned back to a family and friends network wherever possible.
- Continue to explore and progress options for increasing access to local placements to bring children and young people closer to home where they can access local services and support networks.

Actions: What are we going to do?

- Continue to monitor the quality of the residential provision within which Southampton children are placed
- Continue to explore and progress options for securing access to residential provision within the local area, including seeking block contract arrangements with local providers on the Children’s Residential Care Framework and seeking to develop local council run residential care provision within the city

How will we measure success?

- % of children placed within 20 miles
- Placement stability – reduction in % of children who have 2 or more placement moves

D) Supported Accommodation

Objective

- The purpose of supported accommodation is to ensure that all vulnerable young people have safe, suitable, accommodation that meets their needs and

enables them to achieve timely move-on and move towards a productive, independent adulthood.

Current Position

7.14 Care leavers have the choice to “Stay Put” (SP) with their carers where it is their wish to do so and the carer is able to offer this resource. Southampton currently has 34 (23% of total) care leavers using the SP option. This applies to those placed with in-house foster carers and those placed with IFAs. ‘Staying Put’ enables young people to stay with their foster carers until the age of 21 years, regardless of whether they are in employment, education or training.

7.15 For those care leavers who do not remain with carers, the most common route to independence in Southampton (after those who return to live with their families) is to enter our commissioned supported accommodation provision. In 2016, Southampton reviewed its housing related services and retendered services in order to improve placement choice and quality for young people. The services were split into the following Lots which form four contracts:

- Lot 1 - Housing and Flexible Floating Support for Young People
- Lot 2 - Housing Support for Young People, Young Parents and a Flexible Floating Support service
- Lot 3 - Hostel Support to Young People
- Lot 4 - Supported Lodgings Service

7.16 The four new contracts started in July 2017 and provide 162 units of supported accommodation with additional floating support for 50 young people. The provision includes a range of self-contained and shared accommodation and supported lodgings. It is an expectation that all residents are engaged in education, employment or training.

7.17 The 2016 housing related support review highlighted that for some groups of young people there was a need for more intensive levels of support and tailored accommodation. In response to this need the Council joined up with 6 other local authorities (Hampshire, Bournemouth/Christchurch/Poole, Dorset, Portsmouth, Wokingham and Bracknell Forest) to commission a framework with a range of post 16 supported accommodation options to support young people with more complex needs. The Framework provides alternatives to more expensive support options including Independent Foster Agencies (IFA) or residential provision and provides a range of

accommodation and support, from buildings based supported accommodation with staff on site, to supported lodgings within the homes of trained hosts, through to flexible outreach support. There are four Lots:

- Looked After Children, including separated children seeking asylum (16-25 years)
- Care leavers (16-25 years)
- Young people with complex needs (16-25), including those diagnosed with mental health conditions, step down from residential care and those leaving secure accommodation or being released from a custodial sentence or those repeatedly evicted from other provision
- Parent and child (16-25)

7.18 Table 8 below shows the number of young people currently supported by each of the provisions.

Table 8: Number of young people placed over last 12 months in Supported Accommodation

Provision	No. Southampton young people
Contract for Housing and Flexible Floating Support for Young People	59
Contract for Housing Support for Young People, Young Parents and a Flexible Floating Support service	52
Contract for Hostel Support to Young People	66
Contract for Supported Lodgings Service	13

7.19 Whilst data shows that there has been an improvement in the proportion of care leavers in suitable accommodation since 2014 (see Section 5.15), comparison with Southampton’s statistical neighbours and England average shows that the city still has a long way to go to improve outcomes for care leavers (82% 17-18 year olds in suitable accommodation compared to 88% for our statistical neighbours and nationally) and so there is a need to increase the range and number of accommodation options for care leavers, particularly for those with more complex needs. There is also a need to further develop the support available to improve employment, education and training outcomes for this group – only 57% of Southampton care leavers aged 17 and 18 and 45% of care leavers aged 19-21 are in employment, education or training compared to 61% and 45% respectively for our statistical neighbours and 64% and 52% respectively for England.

Priorities: what do we need to focus on?

- To ensure, in collaboration with the council housing services and supported housing landlords, that the range of 16+ supported accommodation is suitable for young people, young parents and their children
- Continue to develop the range of commissioned supported and specialist accommodation provision for young people and young parents aged 16+ with complex needs.
- Provide sufficient emergency supported accommodation to young people and parents in urgent need.

Actions: What are we going to do?

- Continue to prioritise the needs of young people, including care leavers, 16-17 year olds at risk of homelessness to access the range of housing provision in the city.
- Undertake a review of the types and range of Post 16 supported accommodation required. This review will inform future decisions in respect of:
 - The contract extension of existing provision.
 - The commissioning of future supported service provision based on identified need and priorities.

How will we measure success?

- % use of available supported accommodation
- % of care leavers accessing suitable accommodation
- % of care leavers in EET
- % of care leavers moving on from supported housing in a planned way

E) Adoption Placements

Objective

- Children whose permanence is to be achieved through adoption have access to a range of adoptive families who are supported to meet their long term needs.

Current Position

- 7.20 Adoption remains a suitable option for achieving a permanent home for a small cohort of children. At the year-end 48 children were adopted during 2018/19.
- 7.21 As at the end of financial year 2018/19, there were a total of 17 new adopters approved in Southampton, an average of four per quarter.
- 7.22 From April 2019 the provision of adoptive placements has been provided by Adopt South. In its first quarter (1 April 2019 – 30 June 2019) Adopt South approved 29 adopters. This has resulted in Southampton children having access to a greater pool of prospective adopters. At the end of December 2019, 10 children had an adopted family identified, with 11 waiting for an adoptive family to be found.
- 7.23 Support to adopters is available through Adopt South who provide a range of support services to support adopters in meeting the long term needs of children. The Adoption Support Fund remains available to assist with accessing specialist support to adopters.
- 7.24 Adopt South collates and monitors performance data and a quarterly performance report is provided to partners. This report is scrutinised by the governance board, the senior operational managers group and reported to various forums for information and scrutiny as required i.e. Corporate Parenting Board.

Priorities going forward: what do we need to focus on?

- Work with partners to contribute to the implementation and governance of Adopt South to ensure sufficiency of adoptive placements and adoption support.

Actions: What are we going to do?

- Take an active role on Adopt South's governance board and operational group to ensure that the needs of Southampton children are met.
- Contribute staff to the Adopt South workforce.

- Monitor and review Adopt South’s performance in finding adoptive families for Southampton children, holding Adopt South to account via governance arrangements.

How will we measure success?

- Increase in the numbers of adoptive families available through Adopt South (less reliance on external agencies)
- Decrease in the average days taken to match a child to adoptive family

7.25 To summarise, the table below sets out again the numbers of Southampton Looked After Children by type of placement as at March 2019 and the intended direction of travel:

	Mar-19	Direction of travel
	No.	
In House Fostering	168	Increase overall and specifically increase the numbers of carers able to meet the needs of more complex children/young people (Tier 4 scheme)
IFAs	143	Reduce proportion of children placed with IFAs in favour of in house foster care Increase proportion of IFA placements that are available within or close to Southampton and that are able to meet the needs of more complex children, as an alternative to residential care
Residential - Independent Sector	31	Increase the proportion of placements that are available within or close to Southampton
Supported Placements or Rent	6	Increase the range of accommodation options within the city and strengthen the support available, particularly for young people with more complex needs, e.g. those diagnosed with mental health conditions, those stepping down from residential care and those leaving secure accommodation or being released from a custodial sentence or those repeatedly evicted from other provision

8 SUMMARY OF SUFFICIENCY PRIORITIES 2020-2025

Theme	Priorities	Actions	Measures
Local Authority Foster Carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of local authority foster carers and retain existing carers. • Promote kinship and ‘connected’ care at the earlier opportunity to keep children within their families and communities. • Increase the range of placements offered by local authority foster carers, with a focus on those children with complex needs and behaviours (Tier 4 Foster Carers). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance traditional recruitment and marketing activities whilst piloting innovative strategies to attract carers through engagement with local communities, employers and partnerships. • Enhance the support offer to foster carers with a focus on retention and supporting our carers. • Align our recruitment and retention strategy with learning and recommendations arising from the SE Sector Led Improvement Project on the recruitment and retention of local authority foster carers. • Establish a specialist foster care scheme (Tier 4) offering placements to children with complex needs and behaviours and those children requiring a step down from a residential placements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in the number of in house foster carers • A specialist foster care scheme in place (Tier 4 scheme). • Reduction in use of residential placements • The annual foster carer feedback survey indicating the proportion of foster carers feeling valued and supported • Placement stability – reduction in % of children who have 2 or more placement moves

Theme	Priorities	Actions	Measures
Independent Fostering Placements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring the contract and ensuring that we are using the contract effectively – ensuring all placements continue to meet the needs To explore options for increasing access to local placements to bring children and young people closer to home where they can access, local services and support networks. Re-procurement of the contract for 2021 onwards, with a specific focus on strengthening provision in those areas which have been historically difficult to source, in particular same day placements, sibling groups and children who present with complex needs and behaviours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use monitoring information to ensure providers are meeting our needs. Re-commission new 2021 contract with a specific focus on strengthening provision in those areas which have been historically difficult to source, in particular same day placements, sibling groups and children who present with complex needs and behaviours. Continue to explore opportunities for block purchasing local placements, including collaborative arrangements with other authorities to make this more attractive to the market. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of children placed with IFAs % of children placed within 20 miles Reduction in use of residential placements Placement stability – reduction in % of children who have 2 or more placement moves
Residential Children's Homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that all provision with independent residential children's homes is focussed on providing safe, stable and good quality care, with a view for the children and young people placed with them to be 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to monitor the quality of the residential provision within which Southampton children are placed Continue to explore and progress options for securing access to residential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of children placed within 20 miles Placement stability – reduction in % of children who have 2

Theme	Priorities	Actions	Measures
	<p>returned back to a family and friends network wherever possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to explore and progress options for increasing access to local placements to bring children and young people closer to home where they can access local services and support networks. 	<p>provision within the local area, including seeking block contract arrangements with local providers on the Children’s Residential Care Framework and seeking to develop local council run residential care provision within the city</p>	<p>or more placement moves</p>
Supported Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure, in collaboration with the council Housing Services and supported housing landlords, that the range of 16+ supported accommodation is suitable for young people, young parents and their children Continue to develop the range of commissioned supported and specialist accommodation provision for young people and young parents aged 16+ with complex needs. Provide sufficient emergency supported accommodation to young people and parents in urgent need. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to prioritise the needs of young people, including care leavers, 16-17 year olds at risk of homelessness to access the range of housing provision in the city. Undertake a review of the types and range of Post 16 supported accommodation required to inform future decisions regarding contract extension and the commissioning of future service provision based on identified need and priorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % use of available supported accommodation % of care leavers in suitable accommodation % of care leavers in EET % of care leavers sustaining their accommodation % of care leavers moving on from supported housing in a planned way

Theme	Priorities	Actions	Measures
Adoption Placements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with partners to contribute to the implementation and governance of Adopt South to ensure sufficiency of adoptive placements and adoption support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take an active role on Adopt South’s governance board and operational group to ensure that the needs of Southampton children are met. • Contribute staff to the Adopt South workforce. • Monitor and review Adopt South’s performance in finding adoptive families for Southampton children, holding Adopt South to account via governance arrangements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in the numbers of adoptive families available through Adopt South (less reliance on external agencies) • Decrease in the average days taken to match a child to adoptive family