

# Southampton's Children and Young People's Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2022/23

Making a difference to children  
and their families  
September 2022



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**SOUTHAMPTON**  
CITY COUNCIL

Children & Learning  
Making a difference



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## Our vision

We want all children and young people in Southampton to get a good start in life, live safely, be healthy and happy and go on to have successful opportunities in adulthood.

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# Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2022/23

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# What is corporate parenting?

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Corporate Parenting describes the collective responsibility of the local authority to provide the best possible care and protection for children and young people who are Looked After. Effective corporate parenting requires a commitment from all Council employees and Elected Members.

This responsibility was first set out in the Children Act 1989, and encompasses other legal responsibilities set out in the Leaving Care Act 2000 and Care Planning Regulations, outlining how local authorities and multi-agency partners must work together to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children and young people in our care and those leaving care.

Councilors have a lead role in ensuring that their Council acts as an effective Corporate Parent for every child in care by actively seeking high quality outcomes that every good parent would want for their child. This is to ensure that they have a better and safer experience in our care and that they aspire, achieve, and succeed as children and as adults in our community.

Elected members in Southampton carry out their corporate parenting duty through:

- Regular meetings between the Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Social Care and the Executive Director for Children's Learning and Wellbeing Service
- Scrutiny of reports at the Corporate Parenting Committee and Children and Families Scrutiny Panel
- Engaging with Representatives from Southampton Voices Unite at relevant meetings
- Supporting engagement events and using their influence to improve the lives of children in care and care leavers

This report outlines how well we have delivered on our eight corporate parenting principles that Southampton City Council has adopted throughout 2022 /23 and outlines our plans for continual improvement as set out in the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2022 - 2027.

The role of the Corporate Parent is demanding. It requires energy, attention to detail and a willingness to engage with looked after children and care leavers in order to improve the services they use and their future outcomes. It is challenging to form a listening and learning relationship with vulnerable children but this is what we instinctively do for our own children and what we must consciously do for children entrusted to our care. As Officers of Southampton City Council, we welcome scrutiny, challenge, and collective celebration of success from Elected Members. By holding us to account we will continue to improve services and outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.



# Setting the scene

At the time of writing the Executive Director, Deputy Director and all six Heads of Service are permanent.

The year continued with substantial improvements, and we have progressed the blueprint developed over the previous year in how we have delivered services to ensure children and young people continued to feel held, supported and achieving. The council has embedded our flexible and creative approaches of care, support and guidance to children, young people and care experienced adults, enabling them to strive and achieve.

In June 2023 we were visited by Ofsted under the inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS) framework. During this visit, Ofsted inspectors found that:

*“Improvements to the quality of support provided to children in care have accelerated recently. Careful and successful workforce recruitment, a comprehensive strategy to improve children’s placement stability and an impressive level of meaningful engagement by senior leaders with children in care all provide a firm foundation for further improvements”.*

During the year from September 2022 and August 2023 we have launched and begun to embed our Building for Brilliance program, alongside focusing on the areas for improvements identified by Ofsted. The service has six priority areas for 2023:

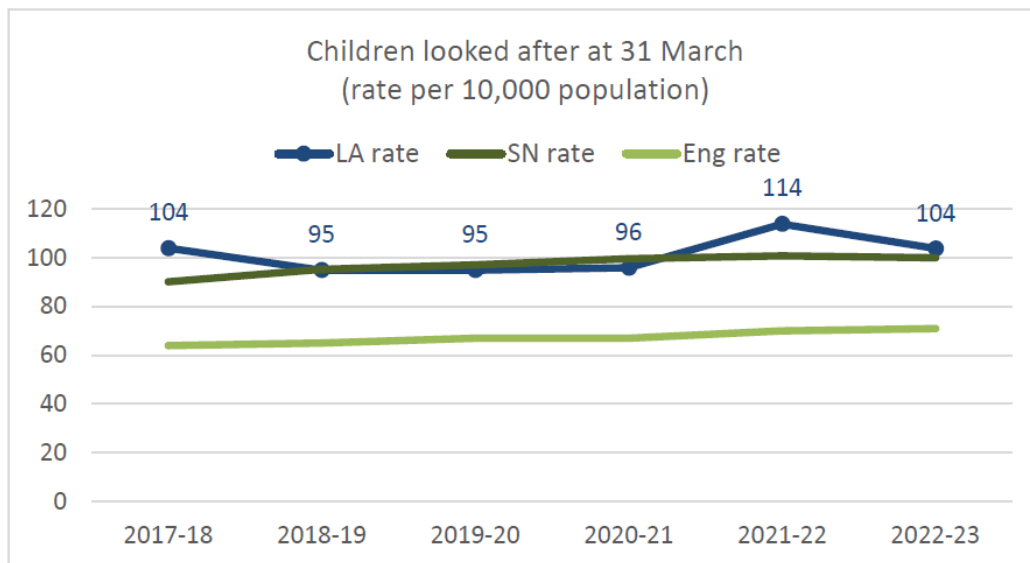


The data in this report is a combination of financial year data and school year data, to enable us to scrutinise our performance against our statistical neighbours, but also to help our understanding of children’s education progress.

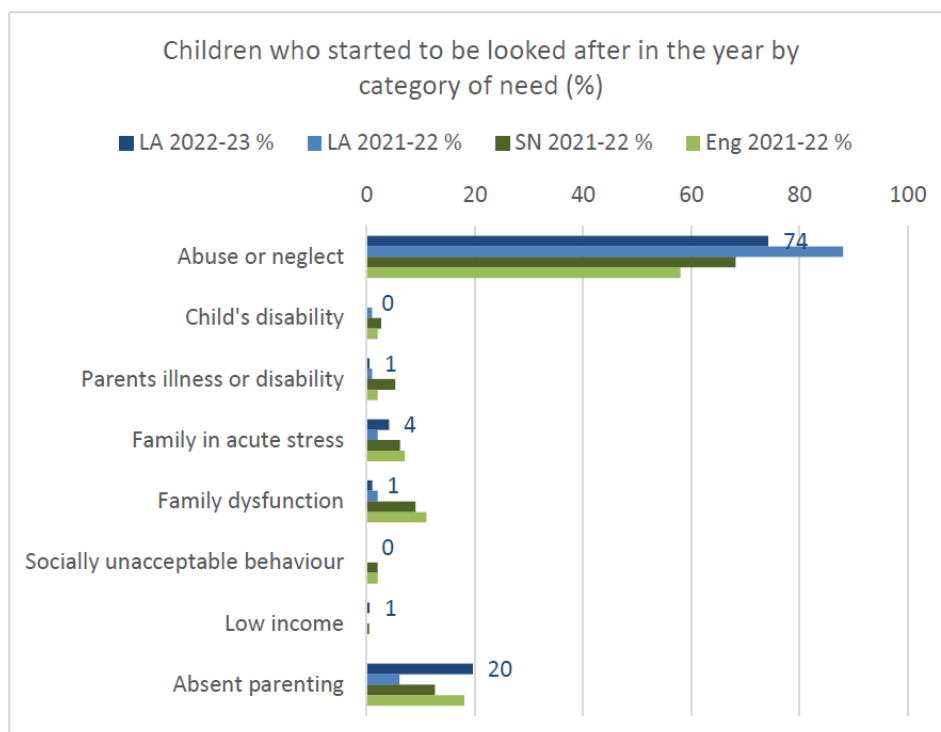
# Children in Care Profile

## Profile of children in care

On 1 September 2022 SCC cared for 552 children, dropping to 508 on 1 September 2023. Based on Financial year data (April 2022 - March 2023), the rate of children in our care per 10k was 104, which is above statistical neighbours and England.



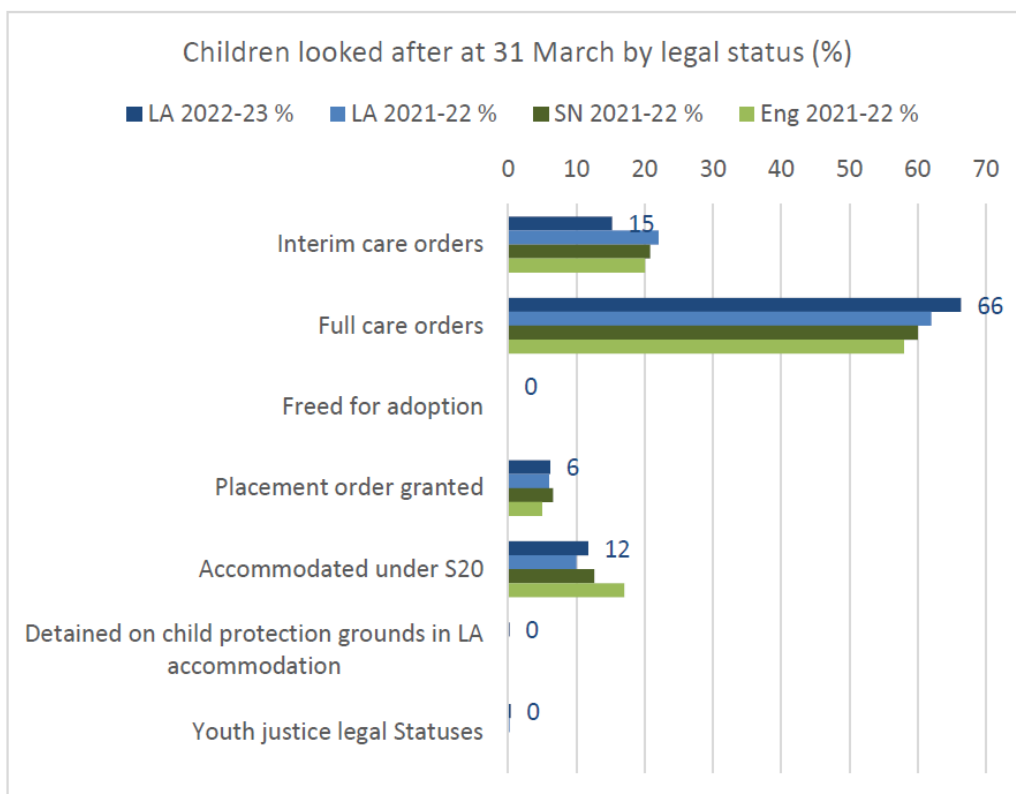
## Children who started to be looked after in 2022-23 by category of need



# Children in Care Profile

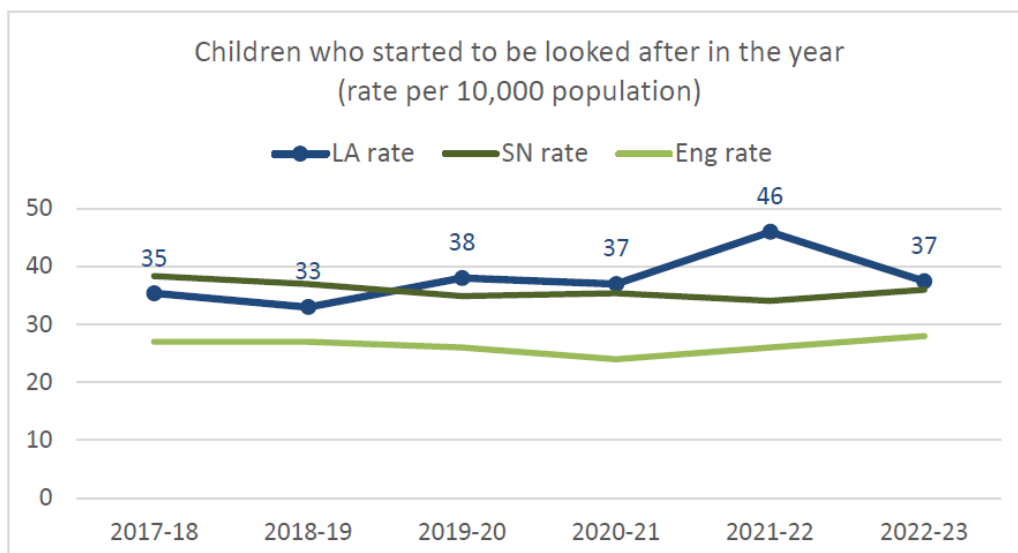
## Children looked after by legal status in the financial year 2022-2023:

- 66% on full care orders
- 15% interim care orders
- 12% sec 20
- 6% granted a placement order



## Children who started to be looked after in the year (rate per 10,000 population)

This is a higher rate per 10k of children compared to statistical neighbours, England, and previous years.

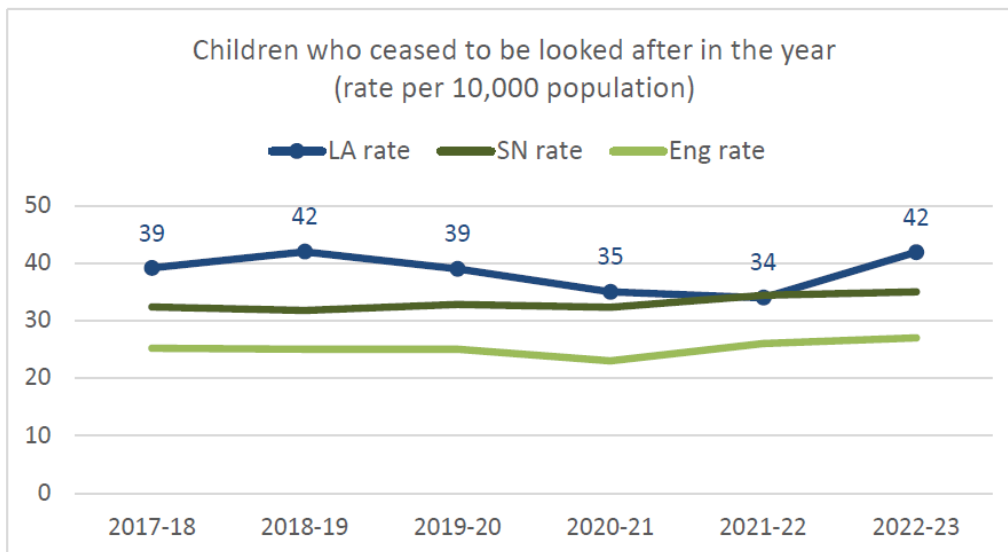




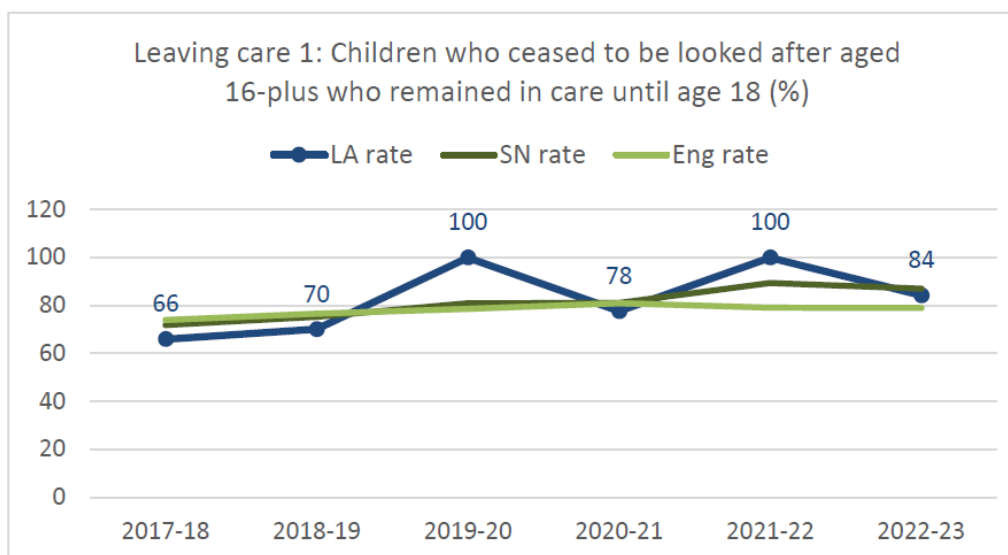
# Children in Care Profile

## Children who ceased to be looked after in the year (rate per 10,000 population):

163 children (rate 42 per 10k) ceased to be looked after during 2022-23 slightly lower figure than in previous years and continuing a downward trend from previous years.



## Leaving care 1: Children who ceased to be looked after aged 16-plus who remained in care until age 18 (%)



Children Looked After on 31st March 2023 by Gender: 57% of males and 43% of females. The percentage of children and young people in our care by gender remains relatively unchanged for the past four years. The following graph shows the proportion of children and young people in our care by gender. This is done by their gender identity at birth and not by how they may identify now or those who identify as non-binary.

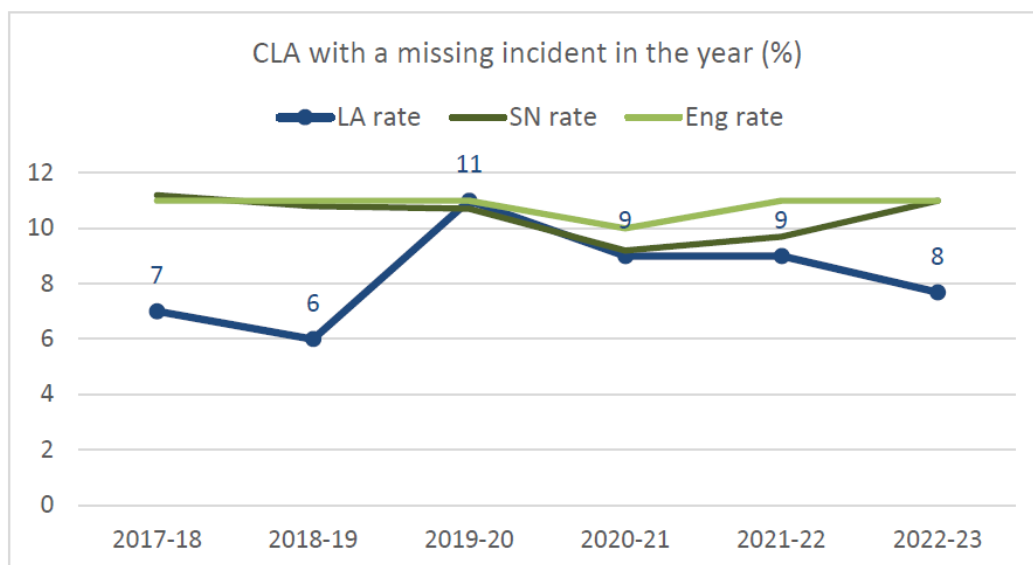
Children Looked after by Ethnicity:

- 79% White
- 10% Mixed heritage
- 5% Other ethnicity groups
- 3% Black or Black British
- 3% Asian or Asian British
- 1% Other

Children looked After on 31st March 2023 by age:

- 43% ten to fifteen years old
- 20% Sixteen plus
- 18% five to nine years old
- 14% one to four years old
- 5% under one

### Children and young people who go missing from our care



Our data shows that during 2022-23, there has been a slight reduction on the previous year, which is promising, however it is still showing an upward trend over previous years when compared to overall numbers of children and young people in our care during those same reporting years. We do know that some individual children and young people have many missing episodes during the year, whilst others have none or very few.

The Missing Exploited Trafficked (MET) Hub co-ordinates the work with children and young people who are missing from our care, with other multi-agency professionals, to explore how we can

## Children in Care Profile

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reduce the incidences and risk factors for why they go missing. The MET Hub shares information, coordinates how to best work together to help keep our children and young people safer, and works closely with multi-agency colleagues to find ways to disrupt those who seek to abuse and exploit them sexually or criminally.

Our local response is strengthened through having specialist MET workers completing the majority of RHI's. This sets us apart from other local authorities in the region and contributes to us continuing to achieve high success rates for RHI's, ensuring children and their parent or carers experiences of missing episodes are analysed to inform further support, learning, and safety planning.

Southampton's Children and Learning Service Young People's Service continues to grow from strength to strength, offering a more targeted response to the issues primarily affecting young people, notably contextual safeguarding issues. This is alongside locality teams offering support at an early help level and within social care.

There is also increased partnership engagement with our Hampshire Police Team colleagues who work specifically to disrupt county lines drug networks: this has seen quicker identification of children at potential risk of harm within these contexts, and more effective joined up working to safeguard them.

### Placement Sufficiency

Placement sufficiency nationally and locally continued to be a concern throughout the year. Finding the right care option for each child first time is our aim however it was not always possible to do so for sibling groups and adolescents with complex behaviours. The social work teams together with the Fostering and Placements Team worked consistently to find creative solutions for children and families.

Foster care remains the best alternative care option for most children in care, those that are unable to live with our Southampton Carers live with independent foster carers, registered with independent fostering agencies. We are seeing a larger number of children being placed with independent foster carers since 2020/21. This reflects the changes in the children in care cohort with less younger children and more UASC and complex adolescents entering care during 2022.

This year Southampton received 147 enquiries from potential foster carers. This is a decline from the previous year where we received 189 enquires. The average number of initial enquiries for the previous three years prior to this were 213 per year.

There continues to be a shortage of foster carers nationally and although recruitment has continued, we have not been able to increase the number of foster care placements available for our children which at times limits the placement choice for each child. Despite the ongoing challenges our recruitment drive has remained strong. With a number of outreach pop up events to using social media platforms such as Facebook, local advertising campaigns and teaming up with the Saints Foundation to promote fostering on a wider platform. This has been a beneficial and flexible approach that has provided effective and aspirational high-quality campaigns.

The refreshed recruitment strategy is balanced and credible, containing achievable carer growth targets. Smarter digital and social media recruitment initiatives are prominent and reflected in a small growth in carer approvals in 2022/23. The conversion rate has increased from initial enquiries to approvals of 14%. On the retention front, more fostering support groups for carers, including a therapeutic group, indicates that their concerns are being heard and acted upon.

As of the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, there were 190 approved fostering households which was 312 individual carers comprising:

- 174 Mainstream Foster Carers
- 16 Connected Foster Carers
- 13 singles carers
- 161 two carer households.

Between March 2022 and March 2023, Southampton Fostering approved 14 mainstream foster carers.

### Connected Carers

These are children who live with extended family members such as grandparents, aunts and uncles or family friend under a Connected Carer arrangement. The carers are assessed to be appropriate carers for a named child and are supported by the Fostering Support Team. They are provided with the same level of training opportunities and social work intervention as an approved registered foster carer. This is an opportunity for a child to safely remain in the care of their family with the support and monitoring of the local authority. In the long term these arrangements are often converted to Special Guardianship.

Between 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 the connected carers team completed the following:

- Received 181 referrals
- Completed 68 Viability Assessments
- Completed 32 Regulation 24 assessments
- Completed 34 Regulation 25 assessments
- Completed 30 Connected Carer Fostering assessments
- Completed 45 SGO assessments
- Completed 54 court statements

They presented the following at Fostering Panel:

- 28 Connected Carer assessments were fully approved
- 2 Connected Carers were not approved
- 33 Reg 25's were approved
- 1 Reg 25 was not approved

## Fostering Transformation

As part of the national reform program Stable Homes Built on Love, the Department for Education (DfE) is investing more than £27 million via the Fostering Recruitment and Retention Programme over the next two years.

We have been successful in obtaining funding from the DfE to be part of the South East Region.

The Programme is made up of three parts, regional marketing campaign, regional recruitment hub and implementation of Mockingbird.

The Mockingbird Family Model (MFM) is an approach to supporting foster carers and children and young people placed with them.

It brings together clusters of between 6 and 10 fostering households (referred to as 'satellite homes') grouped together to form a 'constellation'. The constellation is supported by a 'hub' home inhabited by experienced foster carers who provide a range of support.

# Children in Care Profile

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## Fostering Summary

Southampton Fostering Service has worked hard to establish, develop and maintain partnership working, to ensure that the children who need to be looked after are provided with the highest standard of care from foster carers who have been robustly assessed, continually supervised and trained in order that they can meet the needs of every child in their care. Children and young people are at the heart of what we do.

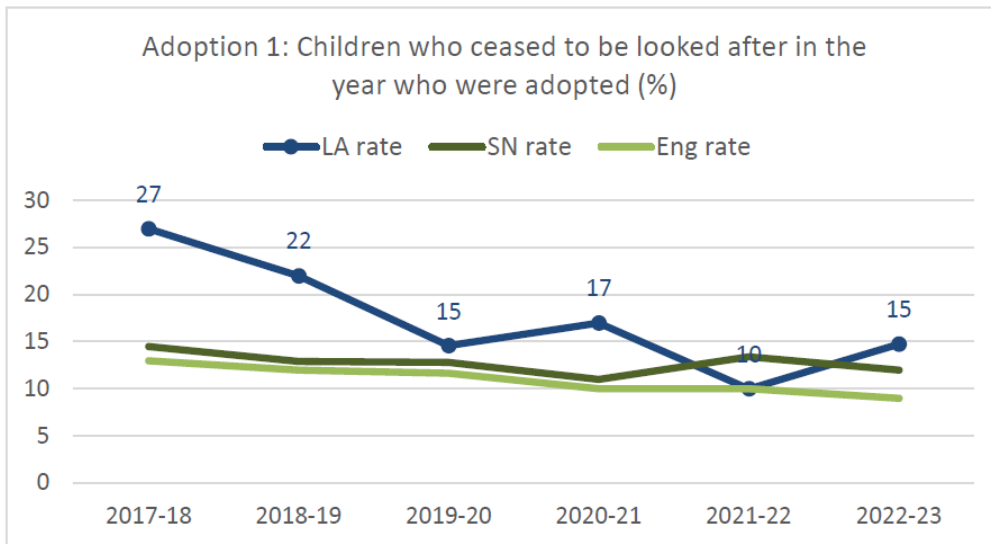
This year has seen a difficult year in fostering with the implementation of a new record system, significant changes in structure and management, low morale and a feeling of not being heard. We are however, moving forward with resilience, commitment and motivation to reform our fostering service into a rejuvenated and vibrant team who are committed to our fostering community and to the children that we care for.



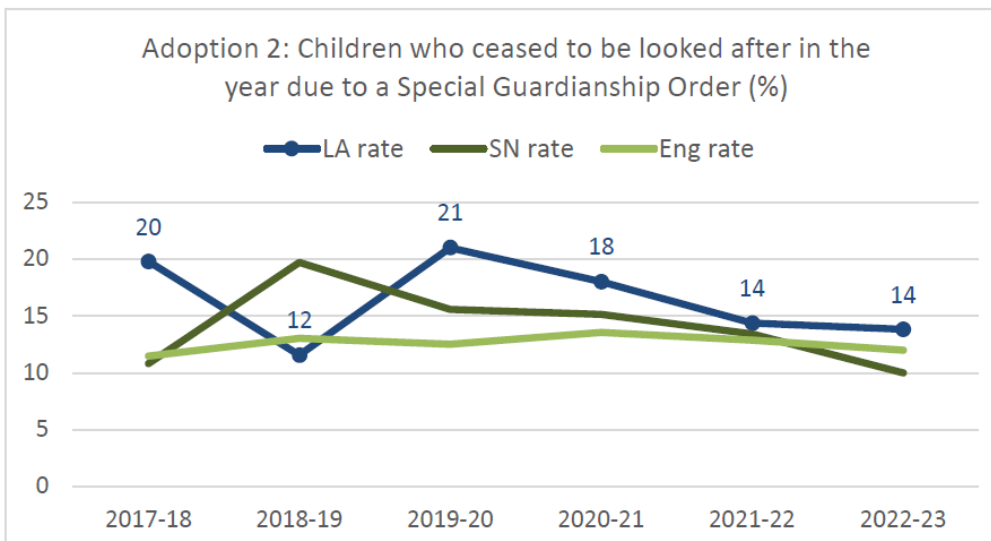
## Permanence

For some children and young people, permanence is achieved by remaining in our care. For others, permanence is achieved by being adopted into a new family, by another closely connected person obtaining a Special Guardianship Order (SGO), or by returning home to their parents when this is right for them.

The following table shows a further breakdown of how many children we have found adoptive families for compared to our regional neighbours, statistical neighbours, and across the country:



27 Special Guardianship Orders (SGO's) were granted in 2022-2023.





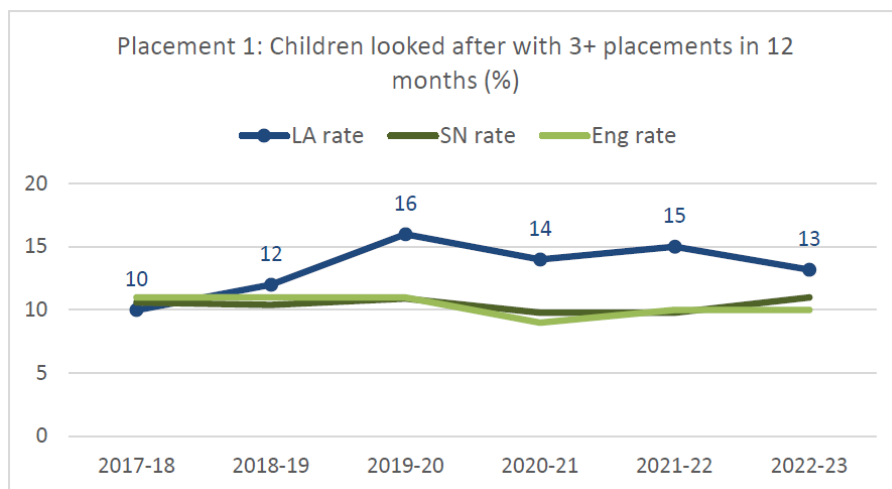




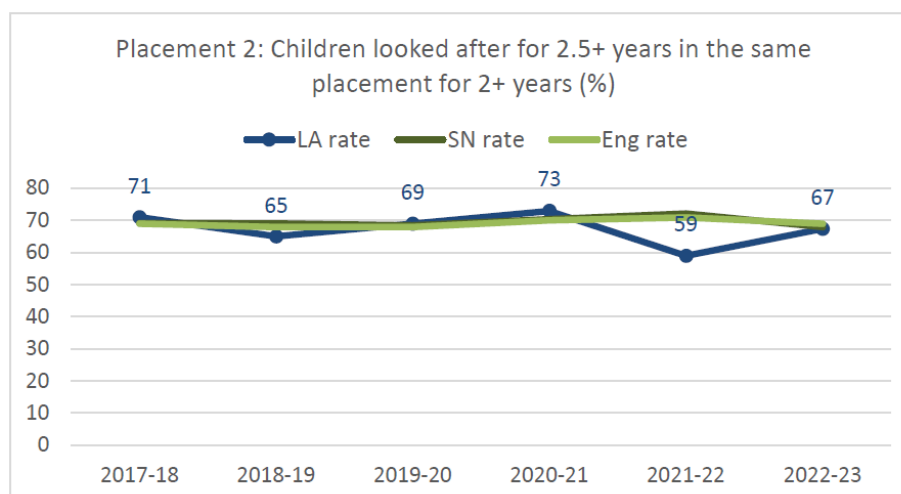
## Placement Stability

We recognise that children and young people need stability and permanency in their lives and to know their care arrangement is the right home for them. All children and young people who move placements are routinely reviewed within our permanency tracking meeting to ensure their next move, as far as possible, is their final destination. Some moves continue to be undertaken in order to ensure a child or young person's needs are best met and where they are safeguarded effectively. Older young people, those 15 years and over and who have come into care as an adolescent continue to be more likely to experience 3 or more placements, as their needs change in line with their shifting neurodevelopment and behaviours.

The chart below outlines the number of moves children and young people experienced during 2021/2022: Short term placement stability has dropped from 15 to 13%.



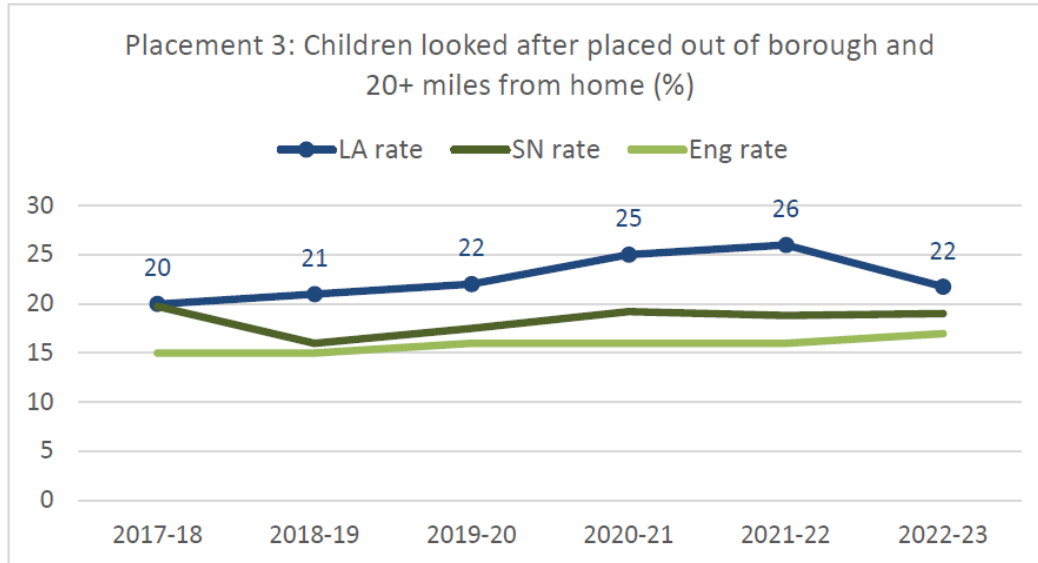
The stability of placements for children who have been in care continuously for 2.5 years has increased from 59% in 2021/22 to 67% in 2022/23. There are a number of factors that have contributed to this shift, such as children who have been in residential placements for a period of intervention remained there longer than planned, have been carefully considered currently under the 'Step Across' initiative to be moved to foster care or back to parents or connected carers. During this last year a focus has also been on ensuring the children in long term foster care are permanently matched to carers.





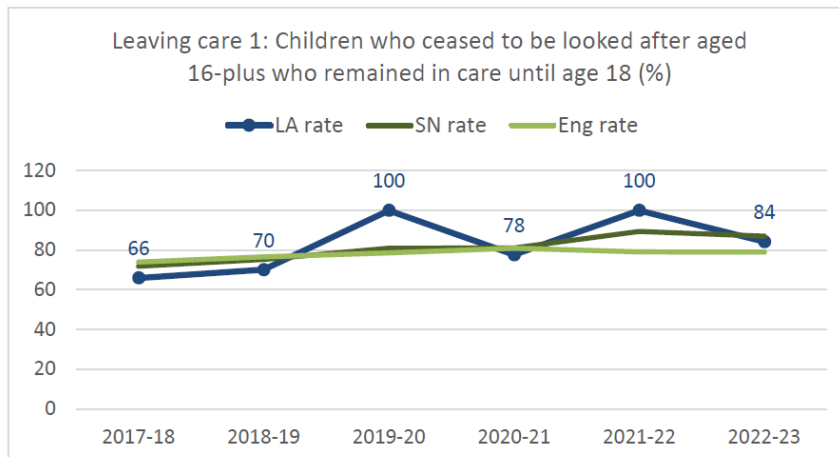
## Placement distance

In 2022-23 there was a 4% reduction in our children in care living 20 and more miles from home.



## Care Leaver Profile

In 2022-23 there was a 16% reduction of children aged 16+ who ceased to be looked after.

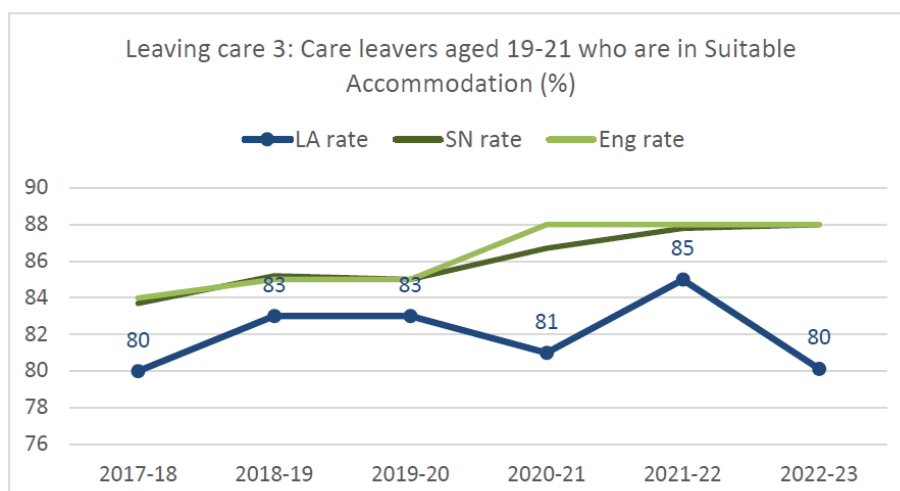


Our data for 2022-23 shows that at year end the percentage of our care leavers who are in touch with the service and in suitable accommodation remains quite strong.

During 2022/23 the number of care leavers continued to increase, and this is a steadily rising figure for the coming year. A growing number of these are former unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, having turned 18 and becoming asylum seeking adults.

The concerns noted for care experienced young adults in 2022/2023 living through a cost-of-living crisis and a shortage of affordable accommodation in the City, remains a worry as they continue to grapple with this. A greater number of young adults accessing the service which reflects the incredibly difficult last two years young people aged 18 - 25 have experienced across the UK, leaving them in need of additional supports and services.

These shifts also continue to be attributable in-part to the increased former UASC cohort, who continue to need support from the Leaving Care service for accommodation and subsistence until their asylum application has been resolved.



Care experienced young adults have sometimes experienced poverty, financial hardship, loneliness, anxiety and fear, with many care experienced young people having few people within their networks they could reliably turn to for support. Personal Advisors were for some, their only form of connection to the wider world. Care experienced adults who previously would have been independent and self-sufficient enough to manage with the prospect of a job, employment, education or an active social life struggled to progress to living independently without their backup of the leaving care service.

A small number of young people continue to remain living in their child in care arrangement post 18, reflecting both their level of need and the reduced availability of suitable properties in the housing market. As a direct consequence of the global pandemic, there has been, in some instances, a lack of appropriate housing for young people assessed as ready to move into their independent property. Social Workers and Personal Advisors continue to advocate for these young people.

Semi-independent accommodation continues to be our main offer of transition accommodation for 16+ year olds, however we have continued to promote Staying Put arrangements for 18-21 year olds living with their former foster carer.

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## Suitability of Accommodation for Care Leavers

Our partnership work with Southampton Housing Team, including the recent review of the Care Leaver Housing Protocol in May 2023, resulted in an improved recognition of the additional pressures placed on vulnerable care experienced young people and their need for security and stability in the face of a changing world. They were able to offer permanent accommodation to our care experienced adults throughout the year.

The need for additional housing units earmarked for care experienced young adults was agreed of up to 10 units and we are continuing to work with the Housing Team to identify young people who are specifically assessed to ensure they meet set age and tenancy readiness criteria, can be supported to achieve their own permanent tenancies in local authority housing, ensuring young people can move into their own properties when they are ready for independent living, and avoid the unnecessary time living in temporary accommodation. In addition, we consulted with children and young people throughout the year and developed the 'Independent Life Skills Program' which includes modules in supporting young people to maintain a tenancy, bills and budgeting and taking care of your home with general repairs and maintenance.

The weekly multi-agency housing panel is chaired by the Homelessness Manager, with regular attendance by the Pathways Through Care service. The panel has been extended but needs to be reviewed further in 2024, in the context of a need to ensure that all care leavers are supported to live in the right accommodation for them. This includes, for most, a decreasing tariff of support and increasing opportunities for independence.

Placing a care leaver in bed and breakfast accommodation is always a last resort, when absolutely all other options have been considered and found not to be viable. On the rare occasion that it is deemed necessary, their personal advisor would complete a risk assessment to be signed off by the Deputy Director. The period of unsuitable accommodation is kept to the absolute minimum. The young person is presented to the subsequent housing panel for consideration.

In 2023 we reviewed our provisions and began developing alternative accommodation offers for young people. In 2023, we opened the first of our two Staying Close provisions, a 3-bedroom shared living space, and a 2-bedroom step down home with some targeted outreach support where young people can develop the necessary independence skills to allow them to successfully move into their own accommodation and maintain their tenancy.



# Happy and Healthy

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## Promote the emotional and physical health and wellbeing of the children and young people in our care

The NHS Hampshire, Southampton, and Isle of Wight Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Solent NHS Trust have provided an update on their efforts to provide for the health and wellbeing of children and young people in our care.

Over the past year we have reinstated the joint operational meetings with health and social care and have set a clear action plan:

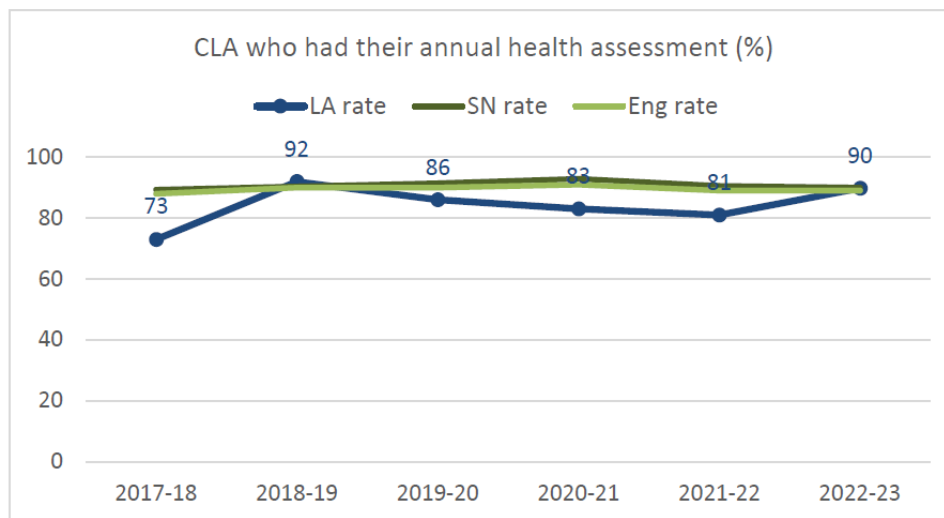
- Realistic health care plans to be co-produced with children and young people
- Interpreter to be used to support all health assessments for those seeking safety and asylum.
- Literature explaining health assessments to be co-produced with children and young people
- Understanding of non-engagement with health assessments to be improved
- Alignments of Datasets and Reporting
- Mental Health - Offer for children seeking safety and asylum and care experienced young adults who have fled persecution
- Establish and map the undertaking and triangulation of SDQs across all services and how they are meaningfully utilised.
- Mapping of knowledge and understanding of mental health pathways
- LAC and Care Leaver Specific Offer to be explored and developed in respect to substance misuse
- Intelligence sharing to be improved about services provision and access
- Promote ED youth worker and detached youth worker offer
- Current commissioned dental offer to be established and monitored
- Involvement of YOT



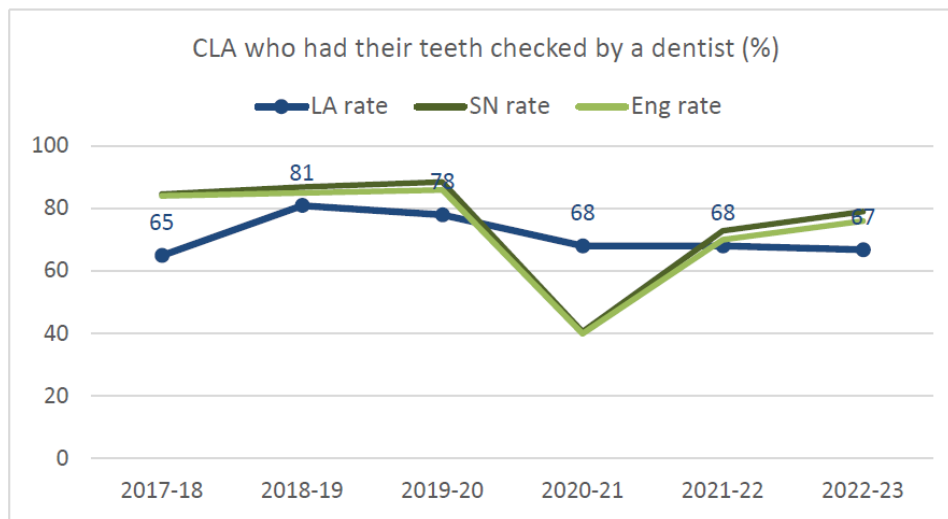


The following table shows how many of these assessments have been completed and within timescale:

- Health assessments of children in our care
- CLA who had their annual health assessment
- An increase from last three previous years and in line with statistical neighbours and England



### Dental checks

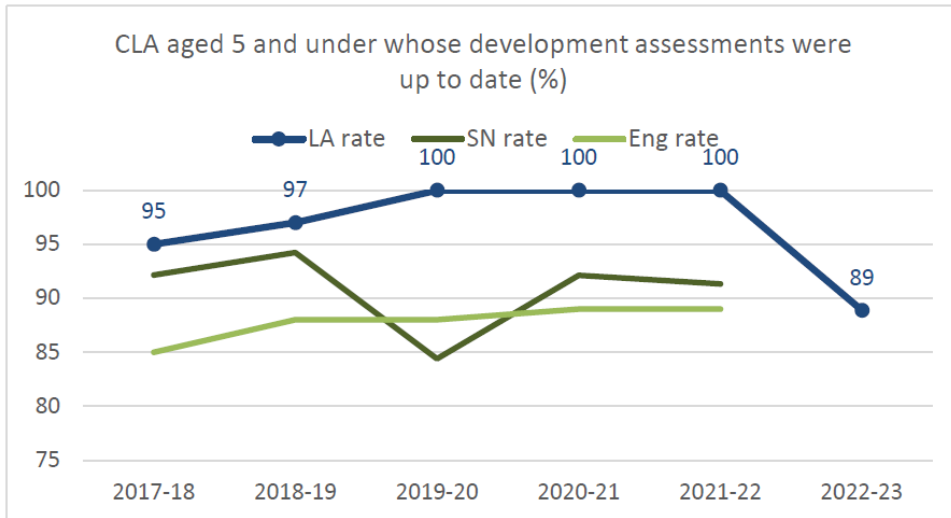


At every health assessment dental care is always discussed and where children and young people in care need a referral for a local dentist this information will be provided to them.

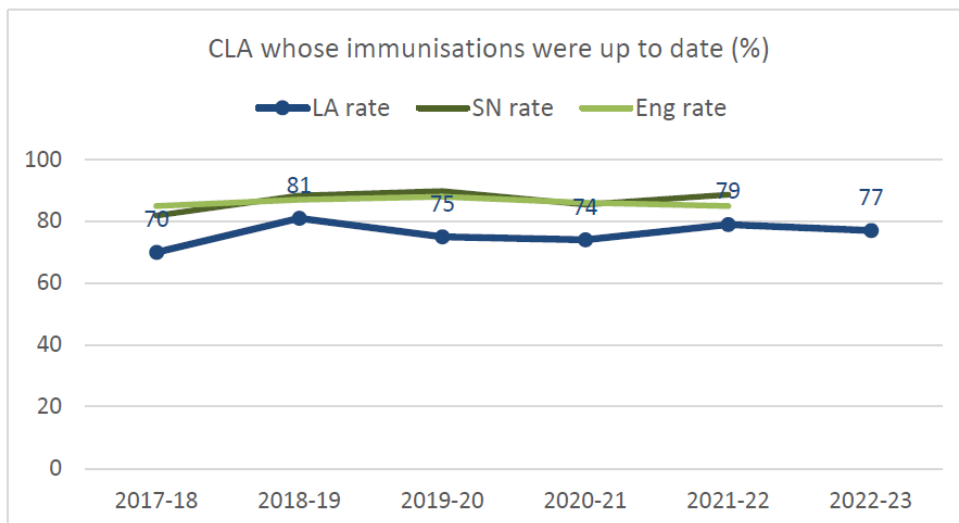


## CLA under 5 with developmental assessments

We have seen a 11% drop in performance with developmental assessments for under 5s, which has taken us below statistical neighbours and England.

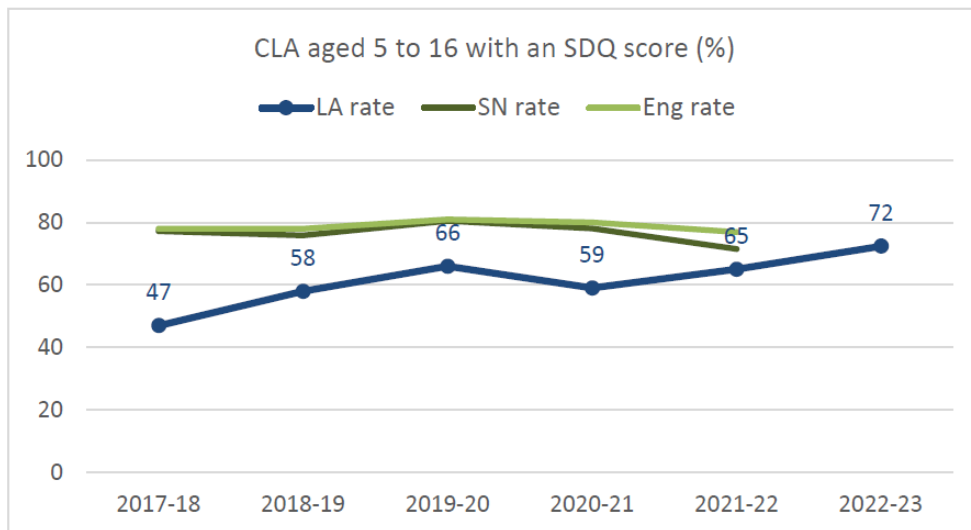


## Immunisations

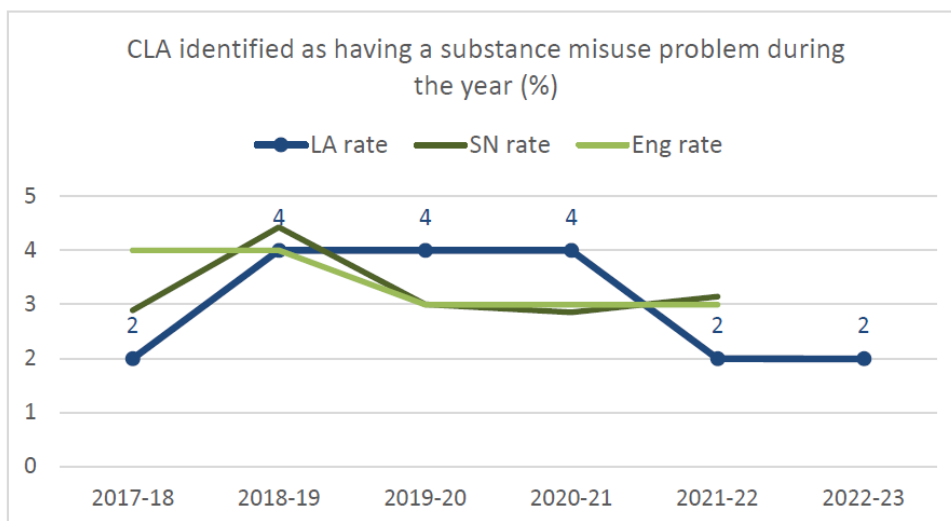


Many children and young people enter our care without having complete immunisation histories. This is identified at their initial health assessment, and these are followed up and provided where necessary.

## SDQ's



## Substance misuse



The NHS have experienced unprecedented challenges. Despite this, Solent NHS Trust has prioritised health services for children and young people in care.

The KPI reporting data reflects the challenges that this has created with Initial Health Assessments (IHAs) being completed in timescales from April 2022 to March 2023. The four main areas of challenge in relation to IHAs being completed within timescales are:

- Delays in all relevant information, including consent, being provided to Solent by Children's Services
- Children placed out of area
- Solent Children Looked After team capacity
- UASC, where the child is technically in our care before arriving in Southampton

The monthly joint operational meetings ensures close monitoring and reviewing of these KPI's, ensuring that effective measures are taken to address the challenges across NHS and social care.

A number of steps have been taken by SCC in response to the challenges:

- A Service Lead has taken the lead role on IHAs
- The new Pathways into care process has been shared with the workforce (comms, individual team meetings, whole service meetings) alongside mandatory training for all practitioners working with children
- The new process has been included in the induction program of all new starters
- Flowchart demonstrating tasks to be completed when a child first becomes looked after including the IHA process
- Better communication and liaison between Health, CCG and Social Care including weekly meetings to track IHAs with safeguarding SL - and monthly operational meetings with HOS and SL to consider all health needs for looked after children and Care leavers
- Development of an IHA tracker
- Implementation of a new internal system whereby the Team Standards Coordinators (TSC) are being notified of any new child who enters care; the TSC will complete the PART A with the information already available on Care Director on the same day and send it to the social worker - this provides additional admin support to the social workers
- A Part A Director form is under development.
- Part A will be translated into different languages, important for consent purposes.

Sexual health is discussed where appropriate in health assessments and referrals to additional services are made where required. The looked after health team have all received sexual exploitation training to help risk assessments in line with Barnardo's 'Spotting the Signs' tool. Where risk factors are identified these are discussed with the young person before a referral is made to their social worker and the sexual health outreach team.

For unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) there have been additional challenges due to the higher numbers coming into Southampton's care. This is because of the local hotel in Southampton where many children have been placed by the Home Office alongside adults. Solent NHS Trust have developed a specialist pack and revised operating procedures to help improve our health provision for these children and young people.

# Participation and Engagement

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## Listen to our views, wishes and feelings and understand what life is like for me

### Access to Advocacy and Independent Visiting

We have made sure that children and young people feel included in decisions about their life. Child in Care reviews continued within timescales providing consistent oversight from the Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO). Care Plans and Pathway Plans continued to be reviewed when circumstances changed and captured the lived experience of those they reflect.

Throughout 2022-23, the IRO Service has consulted with children and young people about the Care Plan Review consultation forms to ensure that the questions are relevant to them and understood. Also, The Lead IRO periodically attends a meeting with Southampton Voices Unite to gain their feedback on their experiences of participating in Reviews.

Southampton commissions The Advocacy Project (TAP) to provide advocacy and independent visiting services to children and young people in its care. Through their needs based and person-centered approach, TAP helps support and enable them to express their views on what they would like to see happen and to have someone else keep in touch with them on how life is for them.

In June 2023 we were visited by Ofsted under the inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS) framework. During this visit, Ofsted inspectors found that:

*“Children have good access to advocacy and independent visiting services and this has provided some children with valuable and meaningful support from trusted adults who have known them over long periods of time. Children in care are proud that their voices are heard, including through Southampton Voices Unite and the executive board. Senior leaders are impressively visible and accessible to children and care leavers.”*

*“Senior leaders are visible and accessible to the children and families they support, as well as to their workforce. They are meaningfully engaged with children and families, and they act on what children and families say about how support could be improved. The creation of the Hub, and work with parents who have experienced child protection processes, are examples of this”.*

We have continued to meet with children, young people and care experienced adults in person and when required, virtually, ensuring the significant relationship with social worker and/or personal advisors remained strong and supportive to those who needed it most throughout the year.

Southampton has continued to run celebration activities both online and in person, including Foster Carer awards, forums, love our children week, EID celebrations and Care Leavers events. Out Learning and development team provided training program supporting all staff and managers to develop the skills to have confident conversations and undertake meaningful direct work with children and young people.

# Achieving and Aspiring

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## My education, training, and employment

Every local authority must have designated head teacher of a virtual school who has overall responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of children and young people in the care of the local authority, from the time they first enter education until they reach statutory school leaving age. The Virtual School acts as a champion for Children in Care by fulfilling the responsibilities of being a highly ambitious, proactive, and effective Corporate Parent. There is a clear emphasis on the need to raise aspirations and improve rates of progress and to close the attainment gap between looked after children and their peers.

The Virtual School plays a key role in developing collaborative working with colleagues locally as well as Virtual Schools and local authorities across the country, to ensure swift communication and prompt action to support our young people.

In our recent Ofsted Inspection in June 2023, inspectors found:

*“A lean and effective virtual school provides significant input that helps children to do their best in education. Children’s personal education plans are robustly quality assured. Staff at the virtual school have embraced the increasing numbers of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, taking into account their individual needs, as opposed to viewing them as a separate cohort”.*

The following is a summary of the education achievement for children and young people in our care provided by the virtual head teacher, Maria Anderson.

The Virtual School action plan for academic year 2022-2023 had the following objectives

- Support implementation of white paper for all children and young people
- Promote the virtual school advisory service for children who have ever had a social worker.
- Secure Attainment and Progress
- Raise Attendance
- Inclusion: Reduce Exclusions and Monitoring of Provision
- Participation
- Post-16 Transition and Progress
- Targeted Groups of Children
- SEND Support
- Training and Professional Development

## Virtual School overview of the Academic Year 2022-2023

### Summary of outcomes

- Our children and young people
- Our social workers, independent reviewing officers and parents/carers who continue to promote education
- Our school colleagues who work tirelessly to support our children and young people
- Phonics benchmarks: screen, Year 1 working at standard is above national looked after children (+10.4%)
- Year 2 working at standard is above national looked after children (+6.3%)
- KS1 attainment, is on an upward trajectory in Reading
- KS2 average attainment better than national looked after children (+8.4%)
- KS4 % 9-4 English measure better than national 2019 and 2022 comparator (+5.0 and +7.1%). We have seen an improvement of 0.2% from last year.

- Move of participation into the Virtual School with increased opportunities for our children and young people
- The Virtual School advisory service for children who have (or have ever had) a social worker
- Increased national presence of Virtual school in education policy
- Our relationship with the Children's Commissioner

## Attainment

### EYFS

% Good level of development 25%

### KS1

Strand	% on/above target
Reading	43.8
Writing	18.8
Maths	37.5
RWM	33.4

### KS2

Strand	% on/above target
RWM	44.4

### KS4

Measure	% of 1yr+ pupils	% of all pupils
%9-5 English	14.3	14.0
%9-5 Maths	4.8	4.0
%9-4 English	38.1	34.0
%9-4 Maths	14,3	12.0
% 9-5 English and Maths	2.4	2.0
%9-4 English and Maths	11.9	10.0

### KS5 news

#### *Number of Pupils 67*

Destination	Number
Education	40
Employment	8
NEET	19 (Pregnancy, EOTAS)

### Qualifications received

- Health and social care Triple Distinction
- Level 3 Sports
- Level 2 and 3 Health & Social Care
- Level 3 Childcare
- A levels: History, Criminology, Sociology,
- ESOL/Functional skills/plumbing/interior design/other vocational

### University Destinations



- 1 x – Sociology, Chichester
- 1 x – Textiles, Bournemouth

**Pupil Numbers as of August 2023**

Year Group	No of children	% of children with an EHCP
R	22	9.1
1	10	10.0
2	25	20.0
3	20	5.0
4	21	23.8
5	22	27.3
6	35	20.0
7	34	35.3
8	36	41.7
9	44	36.4
10	48	43.8
11	65	20.0

Pupil numbers on the roll of the Virtual School fluctuated considerably during the year. At the time of writing this report (Aug 2023) the roll stood at 382 pupils, aged between 4 and 16. This is a decrease of 2.3% from the previous year.

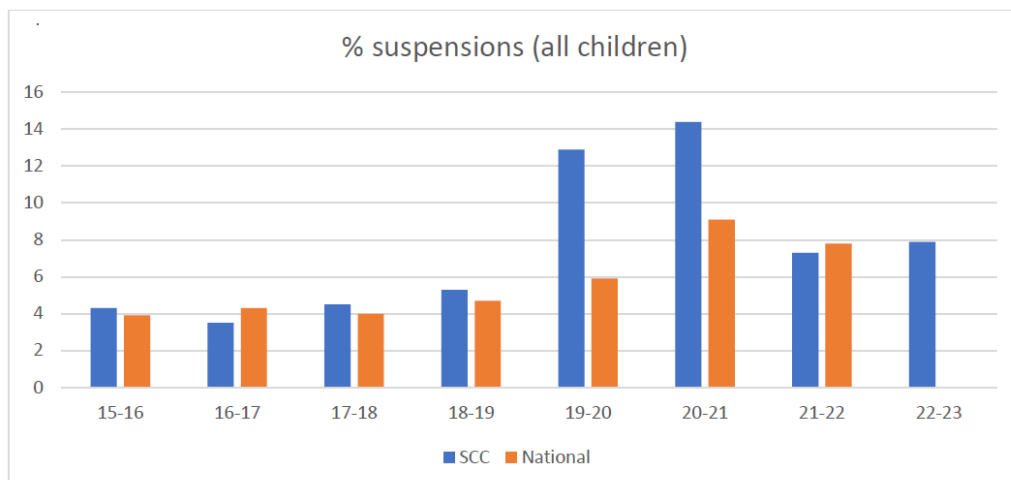
For the year 2022/2023, the VS successfully prevented the permanent exclusion of 6 pupils.

No of pupils receiving FTE	Incidents	No of days
In area	20	61
Out of area	32	91
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>152</b>

	No of days
In area	151.5 (+114.0)
Out of area	146(+11.0)
<b>Total</b>	<b>172.5(+125)</b>

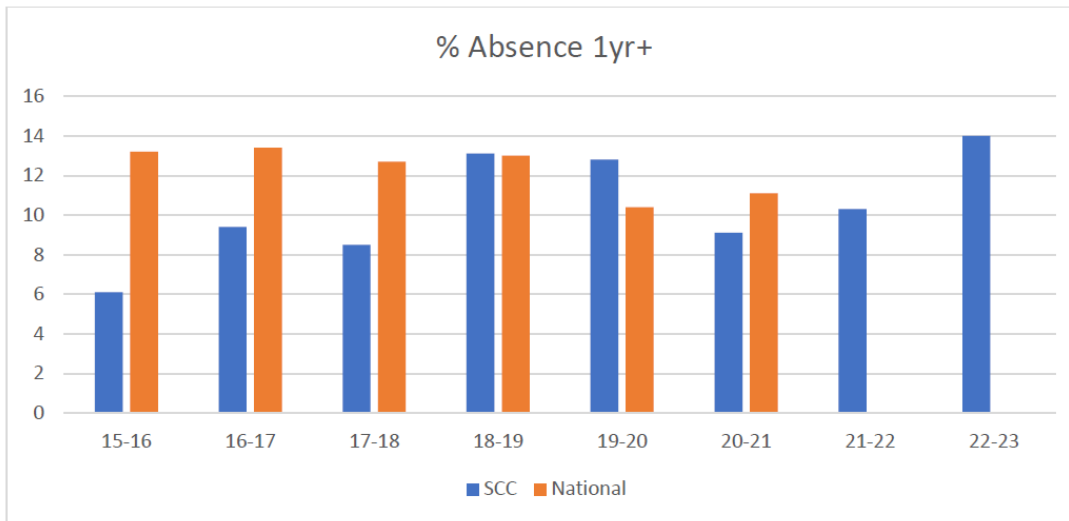
14.0% of children on the school roll were subject to a fixed term exclusion. This is 3.7% higher than the previous year.



Attendance is a key issue in working to close the attainment gap. Attendance is checked weekly to ensure it is correctly coded. Abnormal recording or absence is followed up by the Virtual School with the social worker, carer and IRO. The attendance figures are analysed monthly, supported by the Senior Education Welfare Officer. Patterns of absence are followed up directly through phone calls and emails with carers, social workers, schools and IROs.

**% Absence 1yr+**

Year	SCC	National
2015-2016	4.3	3.9
2016-2017	3.5	4.3
2017-2018	4.5	4.0
2018-2019	5.3	4.7
2019-2020	12.9	5.9
2020-2021	14.4	9.1
2021-2022	7.3	7.8
2022-2023	7.9	TBC



## Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP)

Education, health and care plans (EHCP) are for children and young people who have additional learning needs and require additional support to help them meet their full learning potential.

The virtual school head teacher has responsibility and accountability for making sure that there are effective arrangements in place for allocating pupil premium plus funding to benefit our children. The funding is £2530 per pupil, of which £800 is dedicated to the Virtual School service with the remainder paid termly, in arrears, to schools to support children and young people in care.

The grant must be managed by the virtual school and used to improve outcomes and “diminish the difference” as identified in the child’s personal education plan in consultation with the designated teacher for the school. How funding is to be spent is discussed during the child’s PEP meeting and must be used efficiently and effectively. Due to the global pandemic, discretion was given to schools to use their allocations more broadly and allocations were allowed to be carried over.

- A PEP tracker is in place with oversight from the VSH and DHT to weekly dip sample PP+ spend.
- Social care team managers and IROs will be updated monthly with any concerns related to inappropriate PP+ use.
- Designated teachers will be contacted individually by the VS and Head teachers will be contacted to confirm that pupil premium plus will be withheld if PEPs are not completed. This will also be communicated in the autumn term mailing sent to all designated teachers.
- Additional recovery funding has been passported to schools in line with conditions of grant: Recovery premium funding - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)).
- Additional tutoring support has been put in place identified children and young people through VS specific funding: School-led tutoring for looked-after children: guidance for local authorities and virtual school heads - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)).

## Pupil Premium

The VSH has responsibility and accountability for making sure that there are effective arrangements in place for allocating Pupil Premium Plus funding to benefit children looked after by the Authority. The funding is £2530, of which the Virtual School top slices £800. It is paid termly, in arrears to schools.

The grant must be managed by the Virtual School and used to improve outcomes and “diminish the difference” as identified in the Personal Education Plan (PEP) in consultation with the Designated Teacher for the school. How funding is to be spent is discussed during the child’s Personal Education Planning meeting and must be used efficiently and effectively. Due to the global pandemic discretion was given to schools to use their allocations more broadly and allocations were allowed to be carried over.

The VSH has no financial oversight of pupil premium plus for PLAC - this is paid directly to schools by central government. Schools should publish an overview of their pupil premium strategy on their website and update this annually.



## Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

Personal education plans are the core means by which schools in the person of the designated teacher, social workers, carers, the young person and the Virtual School work together to ensure that they develop a PEP that reviews a pupil's progress, identifies ongoing needs, develops targets to meet those needs and identifies the support that will be needed. Electronic PEPs were introduced in September 2017 and full training continues to be provided through the virtual school training menu of opportunity. Any school requesting additional support will have a bespoke offer tailored to their needs.

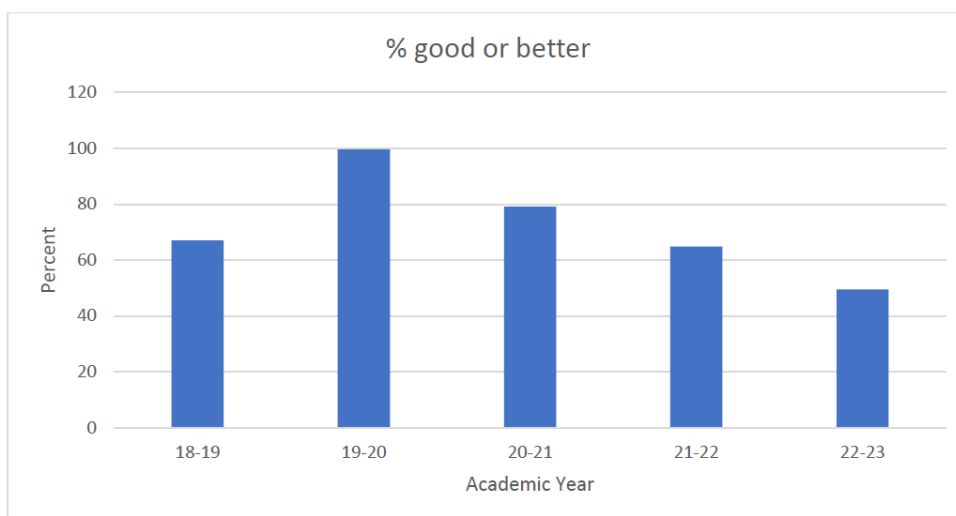
Post 16 ½ termly paper based PEPs have also been introduced to complement pathway planning. As a virtual school we have also developed a previously looked after child's education (PLACE) plan.

PEPs are mandatory and must be completed termly and recorded on Care Director. It is the expectation of the VS that the PEP is reviewed by the IRO in advance of the LAC review. During academic year 2022/2023 PEPs were completed as follows:

Term	% Completion
Autumn	95.8 (some pupils left care after a short period)
Spring	100
Summer	100
Total	98.6

This represents a decrease of 0.4% from the previous academic year.

While completion of PEPs remains high, quality remains a priority, the fulltime appointment of the PEP officer has enabled robust scrutiny and increased training capacity.



The DfE's view is that:

*“Many children from the groups described above will have experienced grief and loss and will have had traumatic experiences in their early lives. 72% of those adopted in 2013-14 entered care due to abuse or neglect. Their needs do not change overnight and they do not stop being vulnerable just because they are in a loving home. Their experiences in early life can have a lasting impact which can affect the child many years after adoption. We therefore believe that teachers and schools have a vital role to play in helping these children emotionally, socially and educationally by providing specific support, to raise their attainment and address their wider needs”.*

## Education, employment, and training (EET) for care leavers

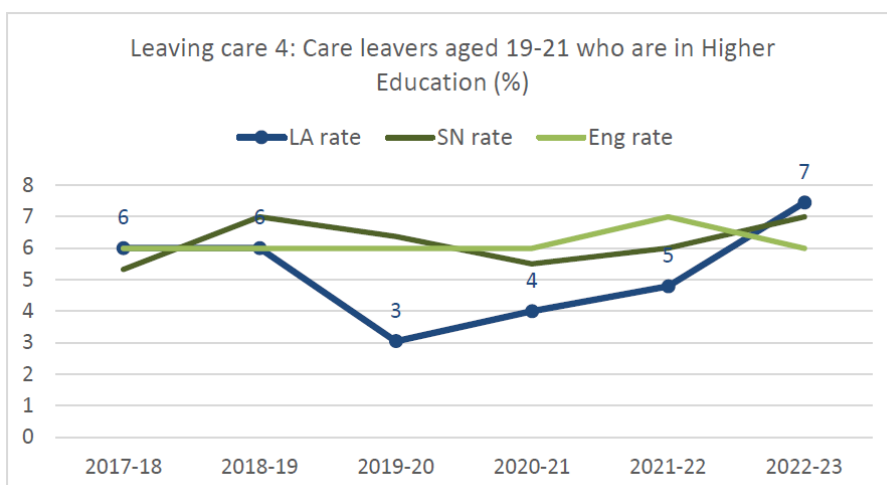
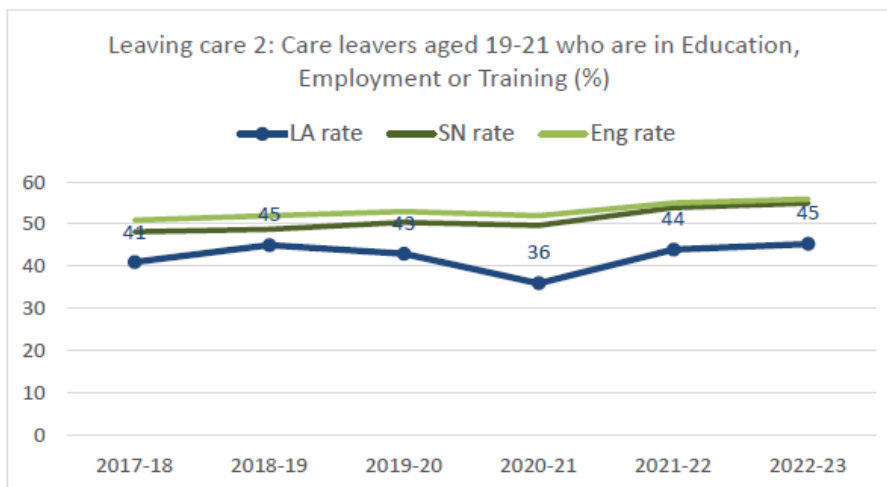
Figures for financial year 2022-2023 show that 45% of our care leavers were in education, employment, or training (EET). That is a 1% increase compared to 2021-2022.

There is a significant number of our care leavers who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) due to officially being too unwell to be available for work. The majority of this illness relates to their emotional/mental health, which appears to be a contributing factor to care leavers being NEET.

We have worked collaboratively with education colleagues to produce a not in education, employment or training prevention plan, to refocus attention on preventing young people aged 14 and older from becoming NEET. This is a change of emphasis from the current arrangements which have been to try to support our young people who are already NEET back into meaningful education, employment or training opportunities.

Southampton's performance for EET is shown below, together with our regional and statistical neighbours and the country:

### Care leavers 19-21 EET



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We continue to underperform in our numbers of care leavers who are in employment, education, or training on a national, regional, and statistical neighbour level. This is an area of improvement also recognised in our most recent findings. As such, employment, training and education remains a key priority improvement area, and a range of focused activities are in place to secure better outcomes and performance:

- Improved monitoring and evaluation of personal education plans (PEPs) for our young people in year 10 and 11 transitioning towards independence to look at the timeliness and quality for preparing young people in care for independence.
- Continued to co-fund the placement of a dedicated member of the STEP Team (until the end of September 2021) to work directly with our children and care leavers. The scheme ceasing at the end of September 2021, sees the introduction of a NEET prevention worker to support young people and care leavers obtain and stay in employment, education, and/or training.
- Ensured that all 'in-house' Southampton City Council Apprenticeships are advertised early for one week within the Pathways Team, prior to being advertised elsewhere. In the coming year we are going to build on this with what we refer to as the Care Leaver Guarantee, which now has executive members sign off, and which we will develop to ensure that across the whole of the Council care leavers become a priority for apprenticeship opportunities that we offer.
- We have maintained the increase in number of personal advisors to ensure more targeted support to individual care leavers and to adapt to the increased workload from supporting care leavers up to the age of 25 years old.



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## Independent Reviewing Service

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The Independent Reviewing Service ensures that the Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO's) input and contribution to social work practice and care planning for children and young people is distinct from case holding service areas. The Head of Service has a direct line of accountability to the Executive Director of Children's Services, and they meet regularly to review any practice concerns independently.

IROs play an important role in ensuring that the local authority fulfils its responsibilities as Corporate Parents for the children in our care by ensuring that they receive a good service that meets their range of needs and are provided with safe, stable care that enables them to flourish and achieve. IROs provide quality assurance of children and young people's care plans by monitoring the effectiveness and progress of care planning, alongside providing challenge to the professional systems responsible for supporting children and young people in care as necessary.

The IRO's core functions, tasks and responsibilities are set in statutory guidance within the Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations Volume 2: care planning, placement and case review (June 2015) and the IRO Handbook: Statutory Guidance for Independent Reviewing Officers and local authorities, which sets out their functions in relation to case management and review for Looked After Children (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2010).

The role of the IRO is to improve care planning and secure better outcomes for children in care. They do this by chairing children's reviews and monitoring the child's journey in care on an ongoing basis with particular attention to:

- Monitoring the performance by the local authority of their functions in relation to the child in care journey.
- Alerting senior managers of identified areas of poor practice or patterns of concern.
- Recognising and reporting on good practice.
- Participating in any review relating to the child.
- Promoting the voice of the child and ensuring that any ascertained wishes and feelings of the child are given due consideration by the appropriate authority.
- Ensuring the care plan for the child is informed by an up-to-date assessment and fully reflects the child's current needs and that actions are set out in the plan are consistent with the local authority's legal responsibilities towards the child.
- Preventing drift in care planning and delivery of services to children.
- Making sure that children's care plans give proper consideration and weight to the child or young person's wishes and feelings, and that they understand the implications of any changes made to his/her care plan.
- Ensuring children understand how an advocate can help.



# Priorities for the Service in 2023/24

## Target priorities for 2023/24

- Improve children and young people’s participation giving them a stronger voice in all aspects of their care, pathway planning, and service delivery.
- Placement sufficiency, including short-breaks provision for disabled children
- Promote the stability of placements through proactive and timely support of children and carers.
- Ensure that the physical and emotional health of all our children and young people is well assessed, understood, and properly supported. Develop a more targeted emotional wellbeing offer.
- Timeliness of initial health assessments and dental checks for children in care
- Assertively pursue permanence plans for all children. Regularly review the possibility of reunification, assertively assessing and supporting to make it possible for children to live permanently within their own families where this is the right plan for them.
- Continue to reduce the number of children who live in a residential children’s home, supporting most to live within a family instead.
- Ensuring a clear savings policy and process is in place to ensure all our children and young people in care have enough money to put towards additional things they wish to purchase or to support them with independence as they leave our care.
- Increase the number of our young adults leaving our care receive education, training, and employment opportunities.
- Increase the opportunities across the council for our care leavers to obtain important work training experience by becoming an apprentice with us.
- Help young people to build their skills and confidence at the right pace, supporting them to live independently and with pride in their ability to support themselves.
- The quality and effectiveness of support to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, as well as housing, education, employment and training for all care leavers
- In negotiation with local supported accommodation providers and landlords to develop stronger commissioning accommodation arrangements with a focus on partnership and quality

## Pathways Through Care & Resources – Service delivery plans - additional information

Priorities	Action	Additional detail
Priority 1: Right Service, Right Time	Development of a UASC Service to ensure specialised provisions in place. Delivery of bespoke training to develop team confidence to assess vulnerabilities, undertake age assessments, & understand C&YP’s health & therapeutic needs.	PTC will have an established UASC team who are specialised in working with this cohort of YP to achieve positive outcomes & stability in their life. Measure - Reduced number of judicial challenge on age assessments.
Priority 2: Localities	Develop & improve relationships with support organisations. Implement drop in hubs for care leavers, support groups for foster carers & provide consistent approaches to our practice.	Collaborative joint working with partner agencies. Proactive participation service that provides opportunities for our C&YP to share their experiences in order to improve service delivery. Clear & consistent approaches within the fostering service. Carers feel well supported & are provided with opportunities to develop their knowledge & skills. YP & Foster Carers feedback & increased FC participation at FC forums.
Priority 3: Reunification	Permanency planning & tracking to be reviewed monthly; consider reunification for all children as part of this process with an aim to assess family members & other naturally connected people known to the child.	Children’s permanence plans are regularly reviewed to consider possibilities of children returning to their family or naturally connected people. Where these are identified, clear plans to be developed & timescales for assessment & reunification. Reunification tracker to identify number of children successfully returning to the care of their wider network.
Priority 4: Permanence & stability	Implement a recruitment & retention strategy for foster carers, review finance packages & skill level expectations. Weekly placement stability meetings to reduce placement breakdowns, stabilise placements by providing early intervention to support carers & reducing the number of placement moves. Review children’s referral forms to ensure appropriate identification & matching. Work collaboratively across PTC, Fostering & Placement team.	Increase number of Foster carers households, create bespoke advertising campaigns & update fostering policies to ensure financial packages & fostering support are implemented as part of the retention strategy. We will have active fostering households, placement sufficiency, standardised payment structure & skill levels. Carers are provided with a bespoke package of support & early intervention to stabilise the placement. Embedded practise around learning from placement breakdown to inform future stability for the child. Measure - Improved data on initial enquiries, applications & assessments.
Priority 5: Recruitment & Retention	Development of practice & policies, to support the workforce in their day-to-day work. Develop a performance management culture with shared vision & goals.	Embed annual team away days to support staff stability & a learning environment; providing training to develop confidence in workforce, to deliver direct work & intervention to children & their carer to promote positive outcomes. Alongside, improving quality of care plans, life story work & supervision recording. Measure - Improved KPI’s, improved outcomes & feedback from YP.
Priority 6: Practice Framework	Reflective teams to be widely embedded to build on practice, ensuring a consistent approach is delivered across the services.	Embedded use of reflective teams to develop knowledge & skills. Opportunities for collaborative thinking & learning. Measure - Feedback from C&YP & team around them & feedback from FC Annual reviews.

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152.25 (Nov 2021)