

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Committee:	Children & Young People Select Committee
Date:	11 July 2023
Title:	Annual Children in Care Report 2022-23
Report From:	Director of Children's Services

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Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Select Committee with an overview of the achievements, progress and challenges of the services provided by Hampshire Children's Services to children in the care of Hampshire County Council.
2. This report will focus on the work of the statutory social work teams.

Recommendation(s)

3. The Children & Young People Select Committee support the priority areas for Children's Services, in relation to our children in care as being:
 - Strengthening the voice of the Looked After Child and impact on service delivery.
 - Promoting the effectiveness and efficiency of the CLA Health Assessment process and service so that it meets the physical and mental health needs of Children in Care (including dental and immunisations).
 - Improve the educational outcomes of Children in Care and effectiveness of the process and service, including the service provided by the Hampshire Virtual School.
 - Improve placement stability and increase placement choice for Children in Care.
 - Children in our care will be safeguarded from harm including, all aspects of exploitation.
 - Increase opportunities for Children in Care to safely live outside of the care system through Special Guardianship (SGO) assessments and reunification to family where appropriate.
 - Ensure the needs of all children seeking asylum in the UK are understood and met through new service delivery.
 - Improve the training for all social workers for Children in Care resulting in measurable impact.

Executive Summary

4. Children in the care of the local authority are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. It is vital that the care we provide to children in care is of

the highest standard and that everyone involved in supporting and providing that care is aspirational for all our children.

5. This report aims to assure the Children & Young People Select Committee that Hampshire's children in care are well supported, and the needs of our children are known, and plans are reflective of the need to achieve positive outcomes for children and young people.
6. The report will provide the Select Committee with the characteristics of Hampshire's children in care, the age and length of time in care, where children are currently living, the number of children in foster care, residential homes or other settings, the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and placement stability.
7. The report will also provide information about social worker caseloads to reassure the Select Committee that these are manageable and social workers are able to dedicate sufficient time to children, regardless of their level of need.
8. The report will provide information on children who go missing to evidence how we are safeguarding them from harm and risk of exploitation. It will also provide information on the population of UASC who are being looked after by Hampshire and how their needs are being met.
9. The report should be read alongside the Virtual School update report (Appendix 1) and the presentation, to update on the Children in Care Health Assessments in 2022 (Appendix 3). These set the context and outline the current focus to improve the timeliness of children's statutory health assessments and the transformation work to improve the quality and timeliness of the Personal Education Plans.
10. The report also needs to be read alongside the update on the Participation Action plan report presented to the Corporate Parenting Board in March 2023 (Appendix 2). It will detail how children and young people are able to express their views, wishes and feelings and how Children's Services consider this. It also includes the work to improve how we are planning to strengthen and show the impact of the voice of the child on service delivery through the Children in Care Councils and Care Experienced Adults Councils. This is an action from our recent Ofsted Focused Visit on children in care referenced in points 11-13 in this section.
11. The report also seeks to draw the attention of the Select Committee to the positive outcome of the recent Ofsted focused visit on children in care in January 2023. Following the 2 week long inspection, we received extremely strong feedback from the Inspection team. The outcome letter ([ofsted.gov.uk](https://www.ofsted.gov.uk)) made it clear that things have progressed in Hampshire despite facing the challenges that local authorities across the country have faced Ofsted acknowledged the post-pandemic environment which has included a significant increase in the volume of referrals and some increase in the numbers of looked after children. In Hampshire, we have worked hard to keep children safely at home and have seen a 1% increase in children in care (not including Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children) compared to increases of 4% in other local authorities.

12. The language Ofsted used to describe our practice was 'impressive' and 'really strong'. They did not raise any cases of concern and commended the strength of practice in respect of children in care, with Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and those children in care who face missing/exploitation risks. They were similarly overwhelmingly positive about our social workers who presented as incredibly strong, professional, knowledgeable experts, who were entirely child focused in their practice.
13. There were 3 recommendations from the focused visit that we have already begun to work on:
 - The timeliness of initial and review health assessments for children.
 - Independent reviewing officer workloads.
 - The voice of the child in the corporate parenting committee.
14. The report will outline the key areas of focus over the next twelve months.

Who are our “Children in Care”?

15. Children in the care of the local authority is any child / young person between the age of 0 -18 years that has been in the care of the local authority for more than 24 hours. This generally means any child or young person that has been unable to remain living at home and there is a need to be looked after by foster carers, in residential homes or with other relatives, this sometimes includes children living with their parents.
16. Children can become looked after because of a voluntary agreement by their parents, or because of a Care Order made by a Court.
17. Young people between the ages of 16 – 18 years old can provide their own consent to come into care and do not require the agreement from those with parental responsibility.
18. A continued significant priority for Children’s Services to improve the quality of care that is provided, and crucially, that it is the right children, in care at the right time. This is reflective of the changing needs of children and their families and in recognition to the importance of family life and home being the preferred place for children and young people to grow up in, if it is safe.

Hampshire Demographic

19. Hampshire Public Health have published the Starting Well Summary, ([Starting well - Children and young people | Health and social care | Hampshire County Council \(hants.gov.uk\)](https://www.hants.gov.uk/starting-well-children-and-young-people-health-and-social-care)) 2019 – 2024 which looks at all children in Hampshire aged 0 -19 years and how well they do living in this area.
20. The summary highlights that there are just over 322,000 children and young people aged 0 to 19 years living in Hampshire. This makes up nearly a quarter of the County’s total population (23%) which is slightly less than in England as a whole (24%).

21. Overall, Hampshire children and young people have good health and good life chances, with low levels of infant and child mortality and good educational attainment. However, this masks some significant inequalities.
22. In Hampshire, our children are less likely to:
 - live in poverty (1 in 10 compared to 1 in 5 nationally).
 - be homeless (1 in 1,000 families compared to 1 in 500 families nationally).
 - be born with low or very low birth weight (1 in 16 compared to 1 in 13 nationally).
 - be born to teenage mothers (1 in 167 12-17 year olds compared to 1 in 110 nationally).
23. Our children are more likely to:
 - attend school regularly (lower persistent absenteeism and lower permanent exclusions: 1 in 3,300 compared to 1 in 1,500 nationally).
 - be in education, employment or training. Only 3% of 16-18 years olds in Hampshire are not in education, employment or training (compared to 4.2% nationally).
 - to be immunised against infectious diseases (most immunisations achieving 95% coverage).
24. In Hampshire, the level of educational attainment at all stages of development is good, with performance better than national comparators across all educational stages (January 2017). However, for different groups of pupils, variations in performance are evident. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged children and those with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND). Given the right support, children with SEND and vulnerable children, including those with disabilities, can thrive and develop.
25. However:
 - 1 in 10 of our dependent children under 20 years old lives in relative poverty.
 - 1 in 10 of our children under 16 years old lives in a low-income family
 - 15% of 15 year olds have a long term illness, disability or medical condition.
 - One third of Children in Care are affected by poor emotional wellbeing.
 - Increasing numbers of children have complex health and social care needs.
 - Children in care are less likely to be up to date with their immunisations.
 - It is estimated that in Hampshire between 7,864 and 14,156 children experience some form of disability and that 1 in 3 disabled children lives in poverty.
26. The main causes for concern in Hampshire are:
 - Increasing obesity and overweight in 4–5-year-olds (22.8% up from 21.1% previous year (2014/15) and more than national figure of 22.1% nationally).
 - Emotional wellbeing of our children and young people - there are higher rates of hospital admissions for self-harm (10-24 year olds) in Hampshire than nationally (590.9 per 100,000 compared to England's rate of 430.5 per 100,000,2015/16).
 - Educational attainment in disadvantaged groups including SEND.
 - Small and decreasing proportion of young children achieving the daily physical activity levels.

27. All the above is relevant when we consider the care we provide children who are looked after in Hampshire, and this is also reflected in the priority areas for children in care.
28. The Health Assessment report presented to the Corporate Parenting Board in December 2022 outlines the significant work to improve the timeliness of Health assessments, which consider the children's general health as well as their emotional wellbeing. See point 13 in this report.
29. The Virtual School annual report presented to the Corporate Parenting Board in 2022 also gave an overview of how children in care are supported around their education and including those with SEND.
30. The emotional wellbeing of children and young people is of huge importance and has become increasingly prevalent after the COVID pandemic. One of the focused interventions Hampshire are developing, is to ensure that children in care's needs are fully understood and that children and young people have access to mental health and emotional well-being services when needed. Consultations with the CAMHS specialist workers from our Specialist Intensive Worker hubs will provide support and guidance to the child, carer and worker, and help to make referrals to core CAMHS in a timely way, where necessary.

Data for Children in Care

31. As of December 2022, Hampshire had 1822 of its children in care, this being 0.56% of Hampshire's population. The following table shows the gradual increase in numbers over the last 12 month period.

Date	CLA
04-Jan-22	1,709
07-Feb-22	1,712
07-Mar-22	1,714
04-Apr-22	1,729
02-May-22	1,736
06-Jun-22	1,742
04-Jul-22	1,742
01-Aug-22	1,751
05-Sep-22	1,746
03-Oct-22	1,793
07-Nov-22	1,799
05-Dec-22	1,822

32. The number of CLA has continued to increase over the last 12 months in spite of ongoing transformation programmes to keep more children safely at home and in the community, which have slowed the increase of children coming into care.
33. There has been a significant increase in UASC in Hampshire over the last 24 months, rising from 67 in 2020/1 to 106 in 2021/22 and as of 31st March 2023 now sits at 239.

34. We have only seen a 1% increase in our children in care population which is a nominal increase (excluding our children seeking asylum where we are unable to influence the outcome of coming into care due to their circumstances). As well as this, the work to reunify children home when safe and appropriate remains a constant focus to ensure that only the right children are in public care.

Table 1 - The age, gender, and type of placement for children in care

Sum of Clients													
Gender	Age Group	With parents	Family centre	Indep. Living (not B+B)	Foster (rel or friend)	Foster (HCC)	Foster (IFA)	Placed for Adopn.	Res home	Secure unit	YOI or prison	Other	Grand Total
Female	< 1	3	2	.	2	12	1	.	1	.	.	.	21
	1 - 4	7	.	.	21	26	8	11	.	.	.	.	73
	5 - 9	14	.	.	31	55	45	.	4	.	.	.	149
	10 - 15	22	.	.	52	131	70	.	42	1	.	.	318
	16 - 17	10	.	42	14	39	21	.	22	.	.	10	158
Female Total		56	2	42	120	263	145	11	69	1	.	10	719
Male	< 1	2	3	.	2	19	3	2	.	.	.	.	31
	1 - 4	16	3	.	19	31	15	18	.	.	.	.	102
	5 - 9	16	.	.	44	57	58	3	16	.	.	1	196
	10 - 15	21	.	1	56	116	158	.	82	.	.	3	437
	16 - 17	11	.	101	26	34	104	.	70	1	1	9	357
U/b	.	.	.	.	2	1	1	.	.	.	.	4	
Male Total		66	6	102	147	259	339	24	168	1	1	13	1,127
Grand Total		122	8	144	267	522	484	35	237	2	1	23	1,846

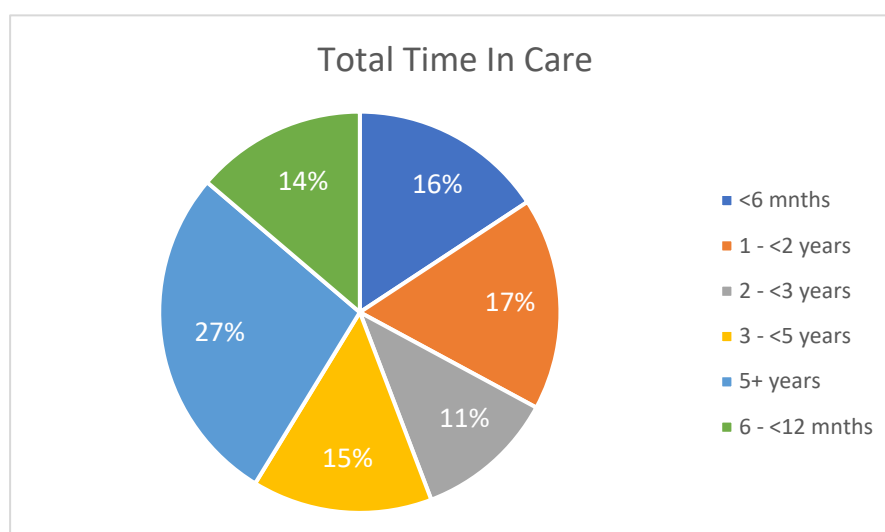
35. The above reflects where children and young people are currently placed and this shows our greatest proportion of children in care are between the ages of 10-15 years old, with significantly more males than females in care.
36. With regards to the main placement, it is positive to note that more children in care are placed with foster carers, and an increasing number being placed with Hampshire carers, currently 522, which is reflective of the work to increase the number of in house foster carers.
37. There is also an increase in the number of children who are 16 and 17 years old over the last 2 years that live in supported accommodation (rising from 88 to 144), which is reflective of the work to promote their independence and transition to adulthood.
38. What is also significant to note, is the number of children placed with parents, the data reflects 122 children which means they are children subject to a Court Order but in their parents' care. There is further information regarding this within the reunification section of this report.

39. It is also of interest to note that there is an increasing number of children, 267 who are placed with family members or friends who have been approved as Connected Carers. All of these children are identified by Children’s Services in our work to reduce this number of children in care but can continue to be supported under an alternative legal order such as a Special Guardianship Order.

How long are children in care?

Table 2 – Time in care

Time in care	Grand Total
<6 mnths	289
6 - <12 mnths	253
1 - <2 years	315
2 - <3 years	208
3 - <5 years	267
5+ years	505
Grand Total	1,837

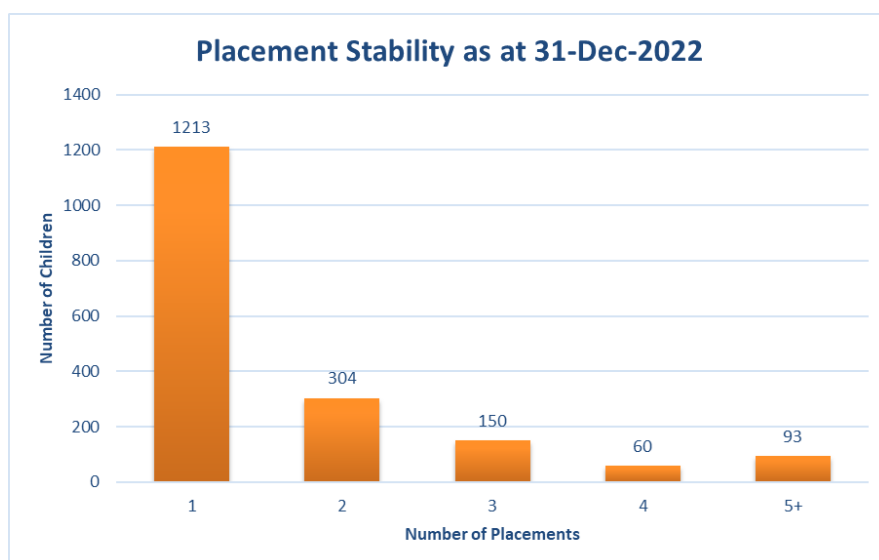


40. The data shows that most children are in care for over five years, with 27% of children being in this age bracket. The least number of children are in care are between 2-3 years at 11%. This data is similar to that of 2 years ago. However, there is a decrease from 20% to 15% (64 children) now in care between the ages 3-5 years; but an increase of 3% (107 children) now in care over 5 years.
41. This data cannot be taken in isolation, it serves to provide high level information and trends may change over time with the changes to practice meaning children are only in care for as long as needed. Within 12 months of being in care 30% of children exit the care system. This is to be expected as matters placed before the Court should be concluded within 26 weeks, by

which time a long-term plan will be identified which could be for return home, to wider family under alternative orders, or a plan for adoption.

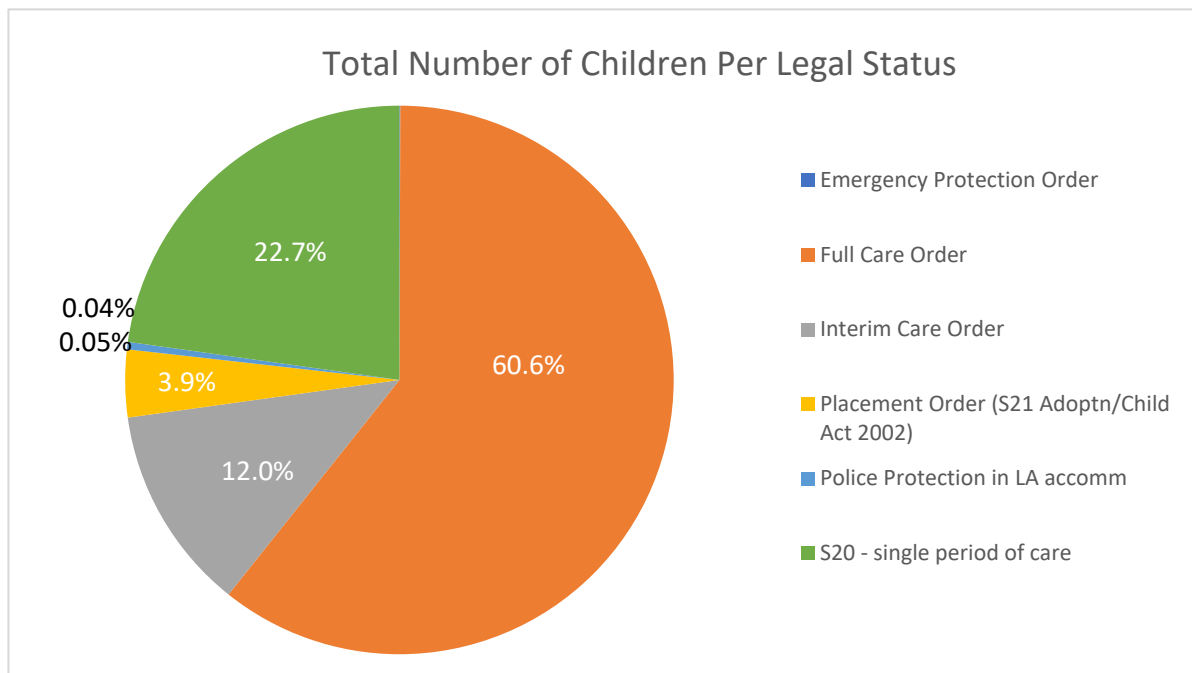
Placement Stability

42. The below chart reflects the stability of children in care over the last 12 months. Positively most children (1,213) children remain in the same placement, an additional 304 only having one move. A smaller number of children, 93 having had over 5 placement moves over the year.
43. Placement moves can be for positive reasons, that children are returned to family, that children are able to transition from residential care to foster care. Equally it can mean that children's needs are not being best met in the current placement and there is a need to move. The important factor is that we know the reasons for the move.
44. An example of a child's journey where changes of placements are for a positive outcome could be a 1-year-old placed in foster care, the matter is placed before the Court and the conclusion of Care Proceedings is that the child's needs will be best met via adoption. The child then moves to the adoptive placement but initially remains a child looked after. Another example is an 8 year old, initially being placed in a residential placement due to complex needs, but after a period of two years was moved to a foster placement and was able to live in a family environment safely. Both of these examples would mean that the child's care journey consisted of two placements.



Legal Status of Children in Care

45. The legal status of a child in care is important, it specifies who has legal parental responsibility for a child in care enabling decisions to be made. In respect of children who are in care under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989, the responsibility rests solely with the parent and when a Care Order exists, this responsibility is shared between parents and the local authority. All children who are in care, but living with a parent, will be subject to an interim or care order.



46. The children who are looked after under a full or interim Care Order make up the greatest number, which is to be expected. There is a decrease of 4.4% compared to 2 years ago. The number who are looked after under Section 20 agreement has increased by 5.7%, which is as a result of the increased number of children seeking asylum (UASC) now cared for by Hampshire.

Ethnicity of Children in Care – excluding UASC

47. This data has not altered significantly in the last 2 years with the majority of Hampshire's children in care being White British(87%).

Ethnicity	Total	Percentage
African	10	0.61%
Any other Asian background	8	0.49%
Any other Black background	8	0.49%
Any other ethnic group	22	1.35%
Any other Mixed background	17	1.05%
Any other White background	34	2.10%
Bangladeshi	2	0.12%
Caribbean	1	0.06%
Chinese	6	0.37%
Gypsy/Roma	4	0.24%
Indian	2	0.12%
Information not yet obtained	11	0.67%
Refused	4	0.24%
Traveller of Irish Heritage	3	0.18%
White and Asian	24	1.48%
White and Black African	20	1.23%
White and Black Caribbean	20	1.23%
White British	1422	87.80%

Total	1618
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UASC – Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

48. Hampshire currently have 228 UASC under the age of 18 years and currently in care. There has been a significant increase in UASC in Hampshire over the last few years, rising from 67 in 2020/21 to 106 in 2021/22 and 228 as of 31 March 2023. They now make up 12% of Hampshire’s looked after population. UASC are supported in specialist foster placements or in supported accommodation.

49. The majority of these continue to be 16 – 17 years old and from Afghanistan.

Table 3 – Age of UASC

Age	Count of Client name	Percentage
11	2	0.87%
12	1	0.43%
13	5	2.19%
14	12	5.26%
15	32	14.03%
16	89	39.03%
17	87	38.15%
Grand Total	228	

Table 4 – Nationality of UASC:

Nationality	Count of Client name	Percentage
Afghan	94	41.22%
Albanian	13	5.70%
Burkinabe	1	0.43%
Egyptian	5	2.19%
Eritrean	10	4.38%
Iranian	13	5.70%
Iraqi	11	4.82%
Kuwaiti	1	0.43%
Nigerian	1	0.43%
Not Recorded	36	15.78%
Pakistani	2	0.87%
South Sudanese	1	0.43%
Sudanese	20	8.77%
Syrian	6	2.63%
Turkish	6	2.63%
Ukrainian	1	0.43%
Vietnamese	7	3.07%
Grand Total	228	

50. Hampshire have created a specialist Refugee team. Since the team went live at the beginning of March 2023, all UASCs that were open to the children in care teams have been transferred.
51. This figure is made up of children who have come through the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) as well as children who have arrived spontaneously into the UK.
52. The number of UASCs has increased due to the mandatory quota moving from 0.07% to 0.1%. The Home Office is anticipating that there will be an increase in the number of people arriving in the UK via small boats and therefore the department has expanded the provision and recruitment to an additional team is being put in place in preparation.
53. There continues to be a good link with the NTS who have provided opportunities for workers to visit the Kent Intake unit to support with learning around the process.

Disabled Children:

54. There are currently 687 children open to the Disabled Children's Team, of which 63 children are in care, 37 of these children are subject to Interim/Full Care Orders with the remaining 26 children in care under a voluntary arrangement.
55. Of the 63 children, 7 children are in in-house foster care, 16 children are in IFA foster care, 1 in family and friend arrangements, 5 are in independent living and 31 are in residential care. The residential care usually incorporates the education provision specifically to meet the child's needs.

With parents	Indep. Living (not B+B)	Foster (rel or friend)	Foster (HCC)	Foster (IFA)	Res home (NCP) childn.	Res home other	School	Other	Grand Total
3	5	1	7	16	26	4	1	0	63

Children in Care Teams

56. Hampshire have 6 children in Care Teams, each having one Team Manager, one Assistant Team Manager and on average 8 social workers (slight variation reflective of case numbers). The average caseload for a CIC social worker is 20 children per full time social worker.
57. The Children in Care team used to have a stable workforce, but unfortunately several teams are now having to rely on Agency social workers. However, all those that work in the team are passionate and committed to children in care.

Outcome Based Placement Team

58. The Children in Care teams work closely with the Outcomes Based placements team, with the purpose of ensuring that children are in the right provision for their needs and that the provider is accountable for targeted support to meet the young person's needs. This ensures that focus is on promoting and meeting the needs of young people and encouraging their development. A specific Support Needs Assessment is used to ensure progression is made throughout the course of placement, identifying clear SMART goals to inform the wider objective of the long-term care plan.
59. Through the child's placement, outcome planning meetings are held with providers who are supported and monitored to remain on track with the local authority care plan, this enables children to move on at a time that is right for them.
60. The Outcomes Based Placements team also guide transitions which are required to enable children to move from residential placements back to family, connected carers or foster care. Linking closely with fostering teams and the independent fostering agencies. In 2022, the team have successfully supported 20 children to have their support reduced or move to residential provision with a reduced package of support. There have been 2 children that have stepped across to foster care and 3 to post 16 supported accommodation.

Reunification

61. Hampshire introduced the Hampshire Approach in 2018 as a method of social work intervention, this is a strengths-based approach focusing on building positive relationships with families, identifying strengths and using this to support change in other areas. For children in care, this has a significant impact around their plan, which aims to ensure that they are in care for as long as needed. Previously a permanence decision would be made for a child to be placed in care and it would be the plan until they reached the age of 18 years.
62. In recognition that family situations can change, there has been significant progress around working with children and their families to enable children to be safely reunified to the care of family over time. This is carefully considered and uses the adapted NSPCC Framework for Reunification to provide a robust assessment to progress plans.
63. Hampshire saw 277 children reunified to the care of their parents in 2022. All were previously in care: for 160 children previous placement was fostering and 66 previous placement was residential.

Special Guardianship Orders

64. It is recognised that children who remain placed within their family or with friends do better, they continue to remain within their family environment where their sense of belonging is maintained within the family.

65. There are currently 868 children living with their Special Guardians in Hampshire. In the period June 2022 to May 2023, 68 children who had been in care for 12 months or more, stopped being looked after as their carers became Special Guardians.
66. There are currently 271 children who are living with their wider family or friends, but due to various reasons, the carers are Connected Carers and the children remain looked after. The children in care teams continue to review these regularly to see how we can increase the number of connected carers offering this vital support as a Special Guardian, this meaning that the child would no longer be looked after and provide the carers with parental responsibility to enable them to make decisions for the child.
67. The post SGO support team was launched in January 2023, and this new team will provide advice and support to Special Guardians. Connected Carers have told us that if they move to become Special Guardians they are worried about not receiving practical support with some challenges e.g. family time, not receiving the same financial support and also not being able to access training. The Post SGO support team has worked closely with the national charity, Kinship Care, and are developing a service that will ensure Special Guardians are receiving the support and guidance that they require. It is anticipated that the number of Special Guardianship Orders being made will increase.

Children who go missing from care

68. It is vital that we know the whereabouts of all children in care, this is closely tracked as it is known that children who go missing from care are at increased risk of child exploitation.
69. Child exploitation includes:
 - Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
 - Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)
 - Modern Slavery
 - Trafficking
 - County Lines (drug running)
70. When a child is looked after and is missing, Children's Services will show the same concern as any good parent by taking the necessary steps to understand where children are going and why.
71. Over the past 12 months there have been 695 children being reported missing. There will be several and repeated instances for some children. We are aware in each district which children frequently go missing and there is close monitoring of these. A risk assessment/safety plan will inform what support services and actions are required to prevent children and young people from going missing, and to judge when it is appropriate to report them missing to the police. These are determined by individual needs and risks - for some high-risk young people, this would be immediately when out of visual sight of staff, for others this would be if they have failed to return home by 10pm.

Month	Missing Episodes	Missing Children
Jun-22	148	65
Jul-22	180	74
Aug-22	184	57
Sep-22	150	55
Oct-22	135	60
Nov-22	150	55
Dec-22	110	36
Jan-23	115	64
Feb-23	117	49
Mar-23	125	56
Apr-23	125	56
May-23	156	68
Grand Total	1695	695

72. There is a close working relationship with the Willow/MET teams who work with young people at risk of exploitation. This work is also supported by the 4LSCP (Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership). There is a need for all agencies to work together to tackle exploitation to ensure that there is an effective response to the changing needs within the County.
73. For children who go missing from care they are offered a return from missing conversation and leaflets are provided to both children and their carers to provide further information which they read to increase their understanding of why we are worried when they are not where they are supposed to be.
74. There are a number of different strategies in place to ensure that children in care have effective plans and support with issues around exploitation, below is an indication of just some of the work in place:
- Training – There is access for staff to attend training to increase their understanding around current issues regarding child exploitation, the Willow Team are responsive and will deliver district sessions where the needs arise.
 - There is a separate HIPS (Hampshire, IOW, Portsmouth, Southampton) Missing training set, managed by the Willow Team.
 - There are two missing coordinators employed in Willow whose task is to work with children who go missing frequently, Willow also review the daily missing data as a duty task.
 - There is currently a targeted piece of work by police under Child Centred Policing work where there is a review of all the 'safe and wells' interviews as there is a difference between the work that the police do when meeting children once returned, to that of social workers but to equally consider how the two agencies can effectively work together to support vulnerable children.
 - The Missing People charity have just reviewed the HIOW Constabulary Safe and Well process and are embedded in the HIOWC training and we are able to use their services to report missing children.

- Op Salvus – is a Police project around High-Risk missing children who get an upgraded response from the police where MET issues are a concern.
- Op METs – Willow TM & Police Sergeants meet monthly to review high risk cases where missing and exploitation are issues and quality assure the risk level.
- There is a HIPS Strategic & Operational MET meeting process looking at best practice across the county.
- District Op MET – local multi-agency meeting to consider the high and medium risk young people, looking at emerging risk and disruption planning at a local level.
- CERAF (risk assessment tool used by professional to determine a risk level) – upgraded to review and score risk around all forms of exploitation including Missing.
- UASC Collaboration – A multi-agency pan Hampshire review of UASC children including long-term missing and trafficked children.
- NRM – (National Referral Mechanism) - Training has been set up and Hampshire is a pilot area for local NRM decisions.

Children's wishes and views:

75. Hampshire has a strong history of weaving the voice of children and young people into all that we do. As part of the Hampshire Approach the department now have all the recording in relation to children, including visits, assessments, plans are written to the child using strengths-based language that it appropriate to the understanding of the child. We moved away from standalone 'Participation Case Notes' and instead practitioners integrate the voice of children and young people across all recording including supervision notes. Strength based direct work tools like the 'what's working, what's not' ensures all voices are captured and inform the social worker analysis.
76. Children are involved in developing their My Life My Future plans, they do this directly with their social worker, their carer and some write it themselves. The child's perspective is embedded throughout the document and features age-appropriate scaling as both a direct work tool and also to demonstrate change over time. This has seen improved engagement from children around their care plan as they feel very much part of it.
77. Children are spoken to alone by their social worker on visits and their Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) also ensures their wishes are understood in meeting with them alone and as part of their 6 monthly reviews.
78. Review participation performance for the whole county remains above 90% throughout the last 12 months. This evidences that a high percentage of young people have their opportunity to participate in their reviews and decisions being made about their future. IROs have continued to seek children's views however following the Ofsted focused inspection, it was agreed for all children to be visited 3 weeks before their review to ensure that we capture their views independently on how they want their review to be undertaken and seek their views on what they want discussed within their meeting and what their expectations are.

79. In reference to point 13 in this report and in response to the area for improvement from the Ofsted focused visit on children in care, work has commenced to review the Independent Reviewing Service so that the work of IROs is strengthened in gaining the voice of the child and providing robust and independent scrutiny to care plans.

Findings from 2022 Bright Spots Survey

80. Bright Spots is a national survey run by the charity Coram Voice which collates the voice of the child and their experience in care. This is a biannual survey, which was again completed in 2022.
81. An initial review of the findings for the *Children In Care* survey has highlighted:
- Overwhelmingly **our young people have a high level of trust in their carers**, with 100% of respondents aged 4-11 responding positively and 95% of those aged 11-18.
 - **The level of trust in social workers was also high** ranging from 89 – 100% across the age ranges.
 - 54% of Hampshire's 11-18 year olds had the same social worker over the year which is **higher than other local authorities at 34%**.
 - Positively the vast majority of our young people responded that their lives are improving with 83 – 92% across the age range describing their lives as 'a bit better or much better'.
82. Areas from the review which identify potential areas for improvement include:
- Whilst there are a number of positive responses about contact with social works, 2 in 10 of 11-18 year olds had 3 or more social workers in the past year.
 - 1 in 10 11-18 year olds described 'hardly ever' having a chance to practice life skills.
 - 1 in 10 8-18 year olds hardly ever felt included in decisions about them.
83. We note that there was a relatively low response rate of 17%. This has been considered to identify learning and opportunities for improvement. The full analysis is still being completed and the findings will inform service planning, transformation and service improvement projects.

Participation

84. In recent years the responsibility for Participation has moved from a standalone role sat centrally, to every district and service. The rationale for this shift is the recognition that participation is everyone's responsibility and that we should incorporate it in business-as-usual activity.
85. Local teams have continued to deliver a broad and varied range of participation events and activities throughout 2022. Please refer to the 'Update on Participation report' submitted on 28 March 2023. This report aims to give a flavour of the breadth and impact of these events.
86. Hampshire Children and Young People's Plan, 2022 – 2025. Focus groups were carried out with 120 children and young people in Hampshire: • 77.5%

were aged 11-15 years old • 14% were from ethnic minority backgrounds • 16% were identified as having Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND). In addition, feedback from 479 children and young people was collated by the Hampshire Members of Youth Parliament.

87. Big Activity Week - this ran from the 1 - 5 August 2022 where 77 Children in Care in school years 3-9 and in Hampshire County Council Local Authority Care, took part in 6 activity weeks. From the New Forest to the Brecon Beacons in Wales, these young people made lifelong memories and created friendships with young people in similar situations to themselves. The week was run by Hampshire Outdoors staff along with other staff within Children Services. The week was free for all young people with the cost partly funded by National Lottery Community Fund with most of the cost coming from Hampshire Outdoors, a part of Skills and Participation.

88. Care Leavers week

Care Leavers Week in Hampshire is going from strength to strength with the largest attendance across the week that we have ever had. Our teams across Hampshire arranged a series of events in collaboration with our care experienced adults.

- Open Mic Night Hosted by Step-by-Step - Aldershot.
- Wessex Dance Academy Day Event
- Money works course - Via teams.
- Meet the Southwest Care leaver Team – Totton
- Thinking of going to Uni? Support in higher education for Care experienced Young people via Teams.
- London Meet Up
- Winchester Uni tour – Winchester
- Crate Stack - Aldershot
- Halloween Spooktacular – Gosport

89. Developing Child Exploitation Resources for schools across Hampshire. In 2022 Hampshire County Council's Willow Team, a multi-agency team supporting children at risk of exploitation, launched a series of short films and accompanying teaching packs for schools across Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Portsmouth, and Southampton. The films highlight the dangers of criminal and sexual exploitation, with a particular focus on the grooming process.

90. The characters in the films were played by local young actors from The Young Creatives. The scripts were written in collaboration with young people being supported by the Willow Team to ensure their authenticity. The resources have been trialled with school groups by Willow and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

91. C&F Awards 2022 – A young people's judging panel shortlisted the final three for the 'Above and Beyond' award. This is a way for us to involve young people in decision making about activity in the branch (assigned but informed approach).

92. East Hants Youth Conference – The East Hants Family Support Service supported the annual Youth Conference which focused on young carers in 2022. The event provided activities and facilitated discussion for young people to understand their needs and what support should be offered.
93. Disabled Children’s Team (DCT) Audit tool for children
A SNAP audit tool has been developed for use by children, to capture the child’s voice. The tool includes video clip questions using Makaton with various options to return answers via video or boxes for use with switches.
94. Creating a multi-disciplinary residential home. Throughout 2022 we have been planning the opening of a new multi-agency health and social care residential home for young people with complex needs. The home has been renamed by young people as 'Hockley House' in honour of local artist John Hockley. Young People form part of the working group who can share their views and ideas, on everything from interior design to how residents will have their voices heard, as we work towards the opening of the home in Autumn 2023.
95. Family Fun Day – Havant Disabled Children’s Team had two family fun days in April and July 2022 in order to show support to their families, and to provide an opportunity for networking between families and professionals. The events were attended by over 40 children and their parents/carers and feedback confirmed the events were inclusive of their children’s needs.
96. Spring to spring – Test Valley, Family Support Service (FSS) held an event which included bulb planting, pictures, games, crafting, and teddy tombola. Positive feedback was received about the support offered to children and families by Family support workers.
97. Circus skills workshop – this took place over May/June 2022 half term; it a two-hour circus skills activity for children subject to Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) and their carers to attend. Carers felt it was good to meet other carers in their situation and it made them feel less alone. Staff signposted carers to community support available and encouraged attendance at the monthly SGO support group and parenting programmes where needed.
98. Theatre backstage experience at Chesil theatre, Winchester – this experience was offered to care experienced children to provide a backstage experience for 20 young people who reside in foster care or residential care locally. The activity was offered after young people had requested an activity that did not involve being onstage, singing or dancing. This evidences that staff had listened to the needs of the young people prior to providing the activity.
99. Art therapy pilot project age (8 - 12) - New Forest FSS co-delivered a 6-week art therapy programme with Hart art therapists. The activity had positive outcomes in that 70% of parents saw an improvement in their child’s overall emotional wellbeing. 85% of parents report feeling closer and more connected with their children. 85% of parents have seen an improvement in their child’s confidence and self-esteem.
100. The Big Conversation at Swanwick Lodge – The Youth Commission visited Swanwick Lodge to ensure these young people could contribute to the Big Conversation. Their report at the end of the visit fed back: “*Overall, the major*

points we will be taking forward centre around better training and changing attitudes to mental health and neurodivergence, as well as greater access to support. Before leaving, we were treated to a performance of a twenty-minute play that the children had been rehearsing for, which we enjoyed immensely”

101. Using Arts across the Youth Offending Service – YOT and YCP offer a range of creative interventions, with Easter and Summer focused activities taking place in 2022. These events provide an opportunity for young people to express themselves through poetry and photography and also gain an Arts Award.

Conclusions

102. 2022 was an extremely busy for the Children in Care teams, the work has been completed whilst coming out of unprecedented times with COVID. It is a credit to all social workers that they have continued to fully engage children and young people in a way that they can participate, in all visits and planning, to ensure that their voice is heard, they understand what is happening to them and a positive impact can be seen.
103. The department has continued to support children living with family and friends under alternative arrangements and without the need for them to be in care, where possible. For those children where care is necessary, the proactive modernising placements programme (MPP), continues to develop new and improved ways of working. We have seen the continued growth of the Hampshire Hives, Placement Stability workers, the development of The Great Behaviour Breakdown training to foster carers, alongside the continuation of the Hampshire Approach in all direct work. This strengths-based way of working aims to improve outcomes for children by developing a continuum of care which can provide the right accommodation and support at the right time for our children in care, and to ensure that children in care have the same life chances as every other child; and they supported to achieve their goals.

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	Yes
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	Yes

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:	
<u>Title</u> <u>Date</u>	
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

Document
None

Location

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

1. Equality Duty

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

See guidance at <http://intranet.hants.gov.uk/equality/equality-assessments.htm>

Insert in full your **Equality Statement** which will either state:

- why you consider that the project/proposal will have a low or no impact on groups with protected characteristics or*
- will give details of the identified impacts and potential mitigating actions*