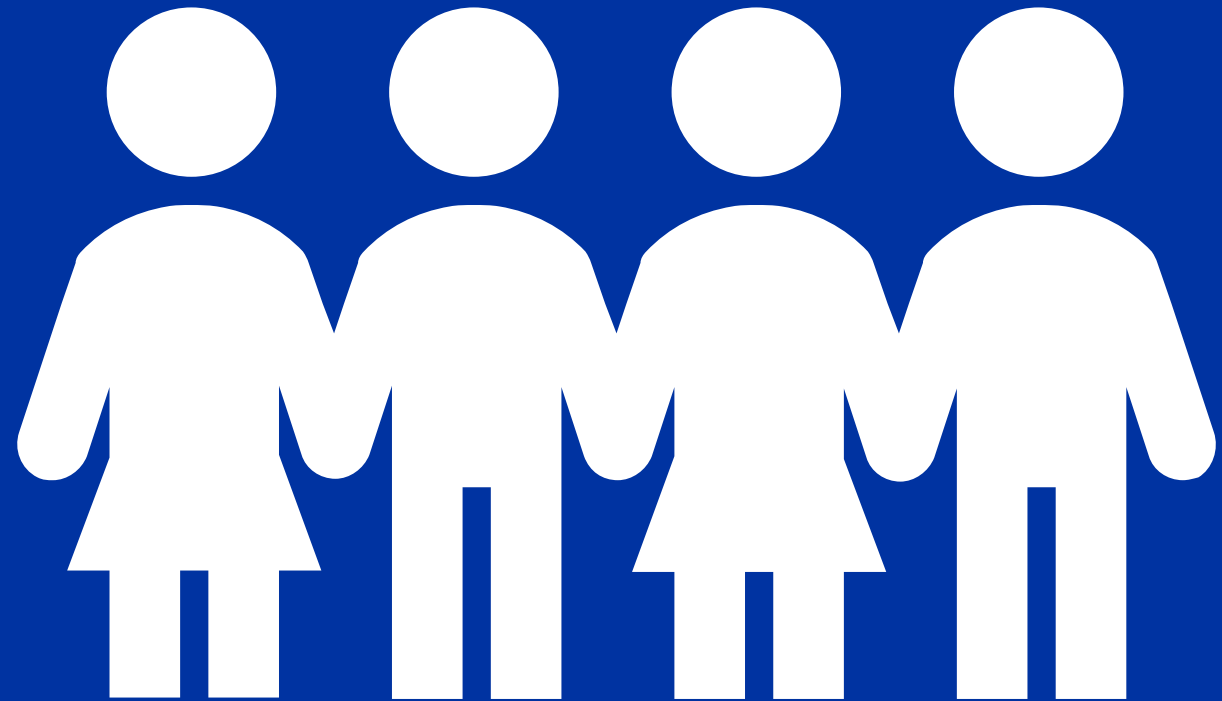


BFC Sufficiency Plan for Children Looked After and Care Leavers 2021 to 2023



Our Purpose & Approach to Sufficiency for Looked After Children & Care Leavers

Purpose

As corporate parents, we have a **duty** to ensure that we achieve the best **outcomes** for looked after children and care leavers. Therefore, we must be able to access the right **accommodation** and **support** across a range of needs, in the right **place**, at the right **time**.

Based on our understanding of need and current provision, this means:

- Ensuring that placements, when a child becomes looked after, are as close to home as possible
- Encouraging placement stability and preventing placement breakdowns
- Achieving permanence
- Focusing on the best outcomes for looked after children and care leavers

Approach

We will do this by:

- Focusing on Early Help and prevention, using the Family Safeguarding Model to keep families together where it is safe to do so
- Developing our in-house fostering offer to increase the capacity and resilience within our in house fostering workforce and to reduce our dependency on the open market
- Working in partnership with framework and local providers to develop more provision in the vicinity of Bracknell that is closely aligned to need, and works across sectors in the interests of the child or young person

These changes in approach will also drive a reduction in cost associated with the current unsustainable and growing levels of demand and complexity.

Introduction

This Sufficiency Plan will clearly set out our strategic intentions to achieve sufficiency for looked after children and care leavers' accommodation (Children & Young Person's Act, 2008).

It will include:

- An overview of the local and national context
- A summary of BFC progress so far
- A summary of the changing needs profile, and demand for placements
- Feedback from CLA and Care leavers
- A high level action plan which outlines the priorities identified in this Sufficiency Plan

Current routes to market
(31st March 2021)

146 Looked After Children

In house provision

64 in-house foster care placements

Independent provision

South Central IFA Framework (2017-2022)

52 providers across 4 Lots.

Children's Residential Placements –
Consortia Commissioning (2018-2021)
Framework

80 providers with 472 homes across 6
Lots

Post 16 Accommodation and Support
Framework (2019-2023)

18 providers across 4 Lots*

Look Ahead – Accommodation Based
Housing Related Support Service

85 beds across 4 Properties

Life – accommodation & housing support
for young single mothers, living with their
babies, and single pregnant women aged
16 to 25 years old

6 beds in one property

*Post 16 Accommodation and Support
Framework is undertaking their re-
tendering process so this will be updated

Statutory Duties and Guidance

Local authorities have a number of duties towards children within their area which are related to the sufficiency duty. In particular:

The Children's Act 1989

- 'A whole system approach which delivers early intervention and preventative work to help support children and their families where possible, as well as providing better services for children if they do become looked after. For those who are looked after, Local Authorities and their Children's Trust partners should seek to secure a number of providers and a range of services, with the aim of meeting the wide-ranging needs of looked after children and young people within their local area'

Statutory Guidance on Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children

- Requires local authorities to take steps that secure, so far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within the authority's area which meets the needs of children that the local authority are looking after, and whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation that is in the local authority's area ('the sufficiency duty')

Methodology



Various approaches were undertaken in order to gather and analyse information on CLA and Care Leavers in Bracknell Forest. This includes:



Data gathering and analysis of: Statutory Return Data on Children Looked After, CLA Data from Business Intelligence, CLA Finance Data from Children's Finance, National & Local Benchmarking Data



Joint Working: with Operational colleagues in Children Social Care and Participation to understand the narrative around data and capture the child's voice.

Bracknell Forest Vision

People at the Heart of our Services

We are here to:

- Protect you from harm if you need us
- Help you to get support so that you can be physically and emotionally healthy
- Work with you and your community to help you to be independent and resilient

We'll do this by:

- Focusing on quality practice
- Integrating services with partners
- Providing information & choice
- Focusing on what is most important

The Pledge

The Pledge is the council's promise to children and young people who are looked after and to care leavers.

The council promises to:

- be honest with you and only promise things we know we can deliver
- respect you
- listen to you
- support you and help you to achieve your best
- keep your information confidential
- recognise importance of your family and friends to you
- support you to be healthy
- support you practically, financially and emotionally to prepare for your future when you leave care
- listen and respond to any complaints

National and Local Context

National

Nationally the number of children looked after stood at 80,080 in March 2020¹ which is a 2% increase from the figure of 78,150 in 2019. The largest age group (39%) are aged 10-15 years; 24% are aged 16 years and over; 18% are aged 5-9 years, 14% are aged 1-4 years and 5% are aged under 1 year. House prices in the UK have risen by 10% between April 2020 to May 2021² and the national minimum wage has risen by £1.71 or 23% in the last 5 years.³

At any one time, there are around 1,043 children in need of social care support from Bracknell Forest Council. Among this number, two groups of children require particularly intensive support:

- **158 children were subject to child protection plans** in 2020-21, having been assessed by the Local Authority and other multi-agency partners as being at risk of significant harm.
- **146 children were looked after by the Local Authority**, as of 31st March 2021, and were in the care of the Council either voluntarily (with the agreement of their parents), or by orders of the court.

Local

Bracknell Forest is located in Berkshire, south-east England. It is a unitary authority, having the powers of a non-metropolitan county and district council combined. The administrative area of Bracknell Forest covers approximately 110 square kilometres and encounters large rural areas which can make finding placements within the authority problematic. The average property prices as of May 2021 within this ward are £353,779 which is 30% higher than the national average.⁴

The population of this local authority is around 124,165 as of mid-2020. This has grown by 1.3% between mid-2019 and mid-2020. It is important to note that the population of 17 and under for this LA is 28,834.⁵

Bracknell Forest has no areas in the most deprived 10% in England. The greatest levels of deprivation within the area are in Wildridings and Central. These neighbourhoods are amongst the 30% most deprived LSOAs in the country.⁶ In the Bracknell Forest region, approximately 2,499 children (under 16) live in families with a low income.⁷

Please see page 40 for references

BFC Progress so far

Improving outcomes for children and young people

Children Looked After

- Creation of the Life Chances Service which includes CLA Team (for long term CLA), Family Placement Team, Life Chances Service and Youth Offending Team – this reorganisation promotes joint/shared working in respect of long term CLA and care leavers
- Joint working with BFC Commissioning regarding concerns about placements, typically residential settings, to ensure robust monitoring of concerns, actions and progress
- Ensuring IPAs are clear, detailed and specific about the aims of placements and monitoring outputs
- Monthly monitoring of residential placements via panel to track progress, therapy and step-down plans
- Working with IFA providers to identify step-down foster placements for a cohort of children
- Aim to place young people at risk of Exploitation locally to ensure their professional support network is maintained
- Review of permanency/long-term matching via monthly Panel
- No permanent school exclusions in the CLA Team since its creation which demonstrates good joint working between CLA Social Workers, Virtual School and schools
- Review of PEP process with training delivered across the teams by Virtual School deputy head
- Earlier transitions planning ahead of 18th birthdays to confirm accommodation plan with contingencies

In House Fostering

- Work is underway to set up a BFC Fostering Facebook page to engage with people locally who are interested in fostering
- Due to COVID-19, digital marketing methods are mostly utilised at present
- Recent campaigns have focused around recruiting foster carers for short breaks and teenagers and also targeting people with messages about changing careers with the number of unemployed rising
- A transformation project is underway to increase the capacity and resilience within BFC's in house fostering workforce to reduce BFC's dependency on the open market

Care Leavers

- The Corporate Parenting Board and the Fostering Panel, now include a Care Leaver
- Care leavers assist with interviews for new staff
- The Leaving Care Team are developing community links with local charities and Easthampstead Church
- With the creation of the Life Chances service, all teams within the service work in the same location which has helped develop better working relationships between CLA and the FPT team which ultimately benefits our young people
- The Leaving Care team have increased the number of contacts with young people during COVID-19, offering additional emotional and practical support

Delivering value for money

- Membership of 3 Frameworks for residential, IFA and semi-independent provision.
- Creation of the Strategic Commissioning team to help strengthen the commissioning and procurement of children's services
- Creation of the Access to Resources Team (which includes a Placements Officer for Children's Services) to improve the BFC placements process
- Review of IPA policy and process to ensure that every placement has an IPA which contains clear and measurable outcomes. IPA to be reviewed regularly to ensure that as the needs of the CYP reduce, so do placement costs

Sufficiency during COVID-19

Support provided by Commissioning to Providers/CYP in placements

- Regular Provider communications – COVID-19 guidance, monthly provider forums, clear process for COVID-19 notifications, Provider contact regarding testing, PPE vaccinations
- Prioritised testing for local providers performing essential and face to face roles
- Prioritised vaccinations for local providers performing essential and face to face roles
- Collating COVID-19 data – incidents, education and IT access
- Ensuring all CYP in placements had access to IT for home learning
- Checking COVID-19 data with CSC for discrepancies
- Scenario planning with CSC – emergency placements, agreeing framework support during covid-19
- Creation of a priority children's list to identify and provide placement support to children with particularly complex behaviour/those that struggle with COVID-19 restrictions/lockdown
- Outbreak management support to local providers
- Weekly covid-19 catch ups with operational colleagues to identify COVID-19 related issues which needed addressing
- Provider management & placement support for CSC, Education & Housing.
- Review of provider BCPs, Outbreak action plans and liaised with provider around additional information/assurance requirements.
- Regular Check-ins with Therapy/Alternative Provision Providers to understand service availability and any issues.

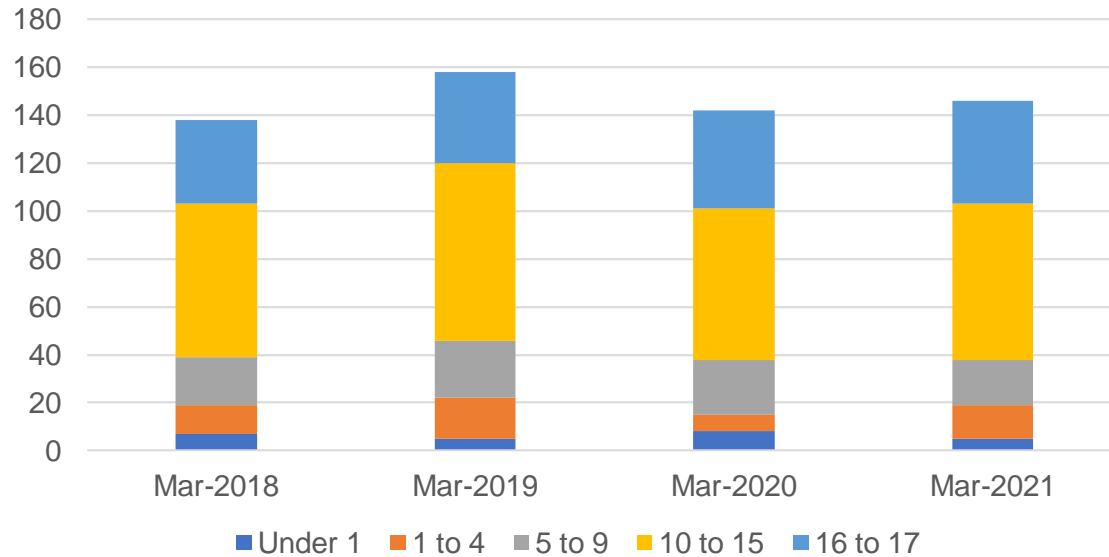
Impact on Placements

- Placements have mostly been unaffected during COVID-19 as carers and providers have continued to consider and accept placements during this time.
- During the beginning of the first national lock down, some carers were not accepting placements due to shielding. However, the government policy was not to move CLA, so placement requests were fewer than they normally would be.
- Some CYP had to go into isolation when entering residential placements before they could integrate with the other members of the household.
- There were some placement breakdowns following CYP not following lockdown rules, so carers / providers gave notice as they couldn't protect others in the household from COVID-19.
- Once Foster Carers had received both vaccinations, many of them seemed more willing and positive to consider new placements.

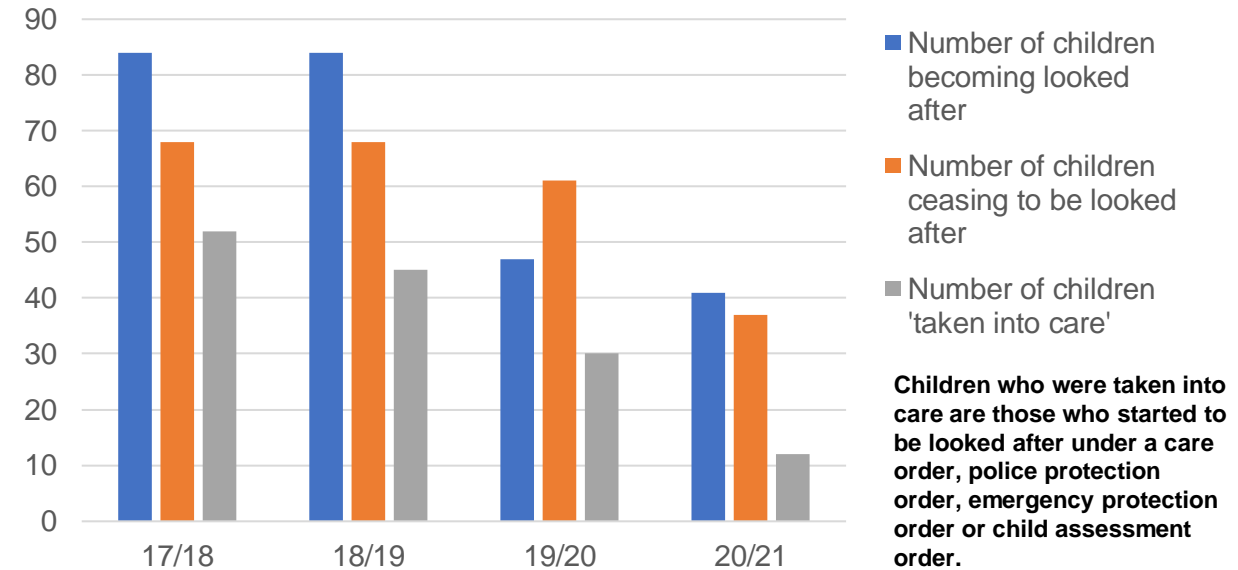
Needs Analysis

Numbers of Children Looked After

Growth of Children Looked After in Bracknell Forest (as of 31 March)



Number of children becoming Looked After and ceasing to be Looked After



Headlines

As of 31st March 2021, there was a total of 146 Children Looked After in Bracknell Forest. In 2020-2021, there was a total of 183 CLA cumulatively across the year. Since 2018, the largest percentage of CLA in Bracknell Forest have been aged 10-15, followed by CLA aged 16 to 17. These have consistently been the largest proportion of CLA.

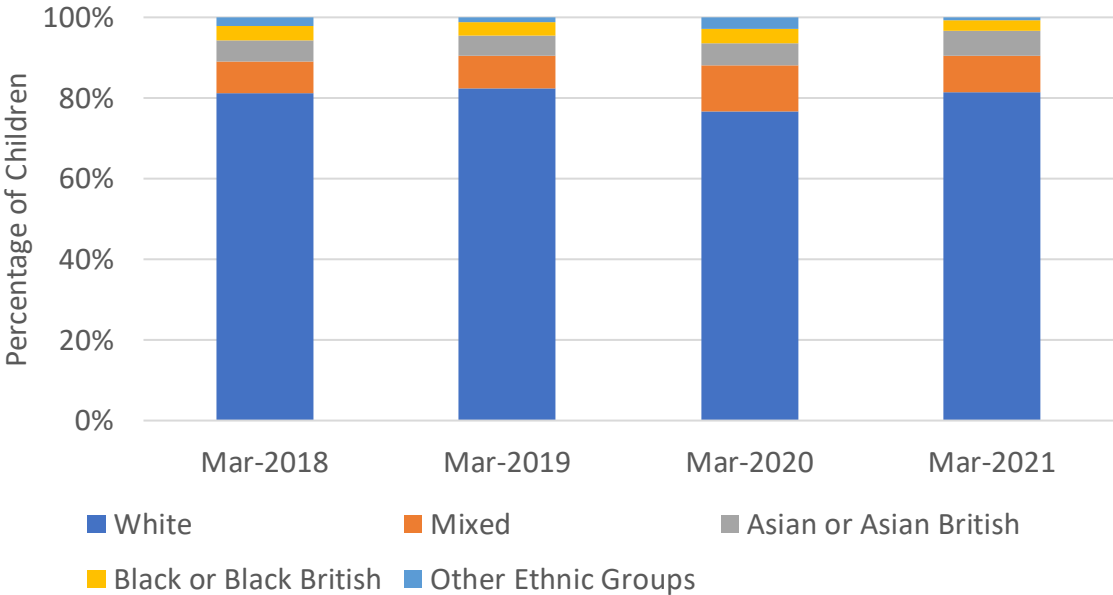
As of 31st March 2021, 53 CLA have EHCPs – which is around 36% of CLA.

- The number of Children Looked After in Bracknell Forest has been fairly consistent over the last three years. There was a slight increase of CLA in 2019, however the numbers decreased slightly again in 2020.

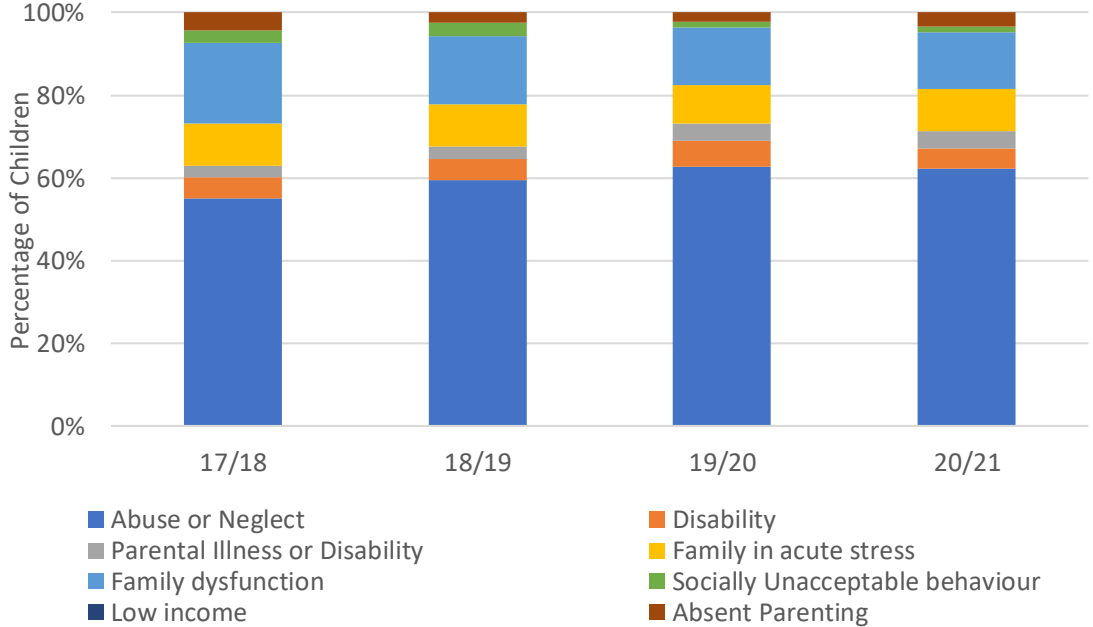
- The decrease of CLA in 2021 could be because of multiple factors; the impact of FSM, the decrease of children on CIN Plans in recent years, better multi-agency working & partnership working between the care leavers team and Adults workers.
- There has been a decrease of Children becoming looked after, ceasing to be looked after and 'taken into care' since 2018/19.
- The number of children on CIN Plans has been decreasing year on year, there were 303 Children on CIN Plans as of 31st March 2021. This was a 3% increase compared to the previous year.
- There were 158 Children on CP Plans as of 31st March 2021, which is a 25% increase compared to the previous year.

Needs of children looked after

Ethnicity as of 31st March



Category of need



Headlines

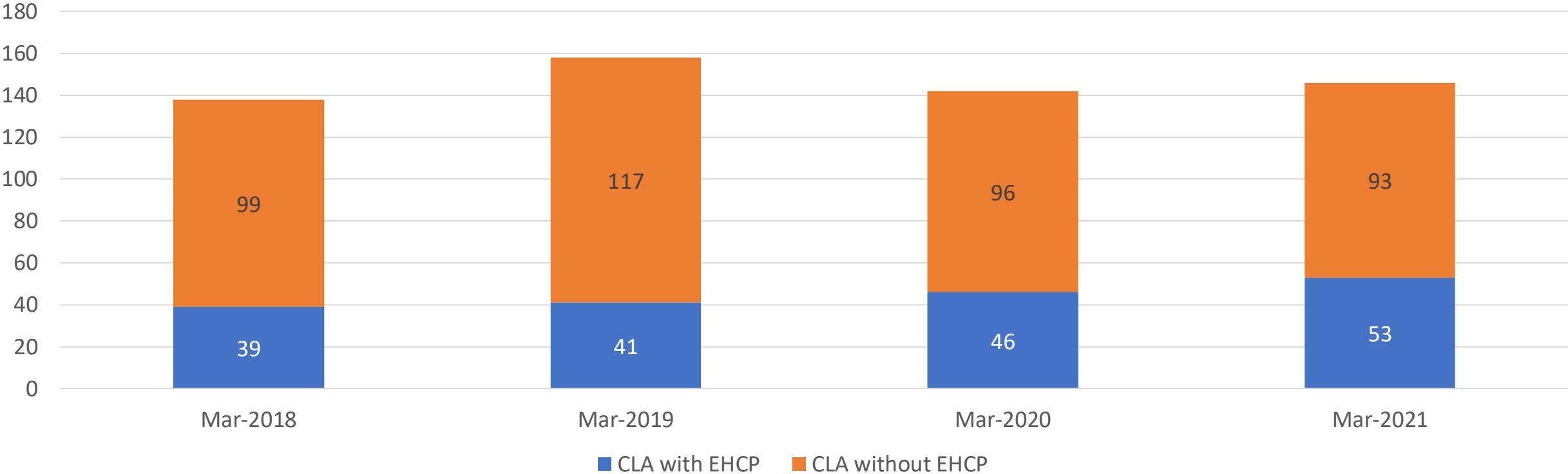
The largest percentage of Children Looked After in Bracknell Forest are White, which has been around 80% for the last 4 years. There is an increase of CLA that have been brought into care due to Abuse or Neglect, and there has been a decrease of CLA brought into care due to Family Dysfunction.

The data and feedback from CSC suggests that BFC are supporting CYP with increasingly complex needs. For example, several CYP that step down from residential continue to need additional support when they move to post 16 accommodation.

- There have been an increase of CLA who are of Mixed Ethnicity and this has been steadily increasing over since 2018, as of 2021 this is around 10% of CLA in Bracknell Forest.
- The needs of the CLA in Bracknell have shifted slightly year on year. The increase in abuse or neglect could be because of changes to thresholds or Front Door management (e.g. there is now greater clarity and guidance). Strengthened Edge of Care Support could have contributed to the reduction of Family Dysfunction.

CLA with an EHCP

% of Children Looked After with an EHCP



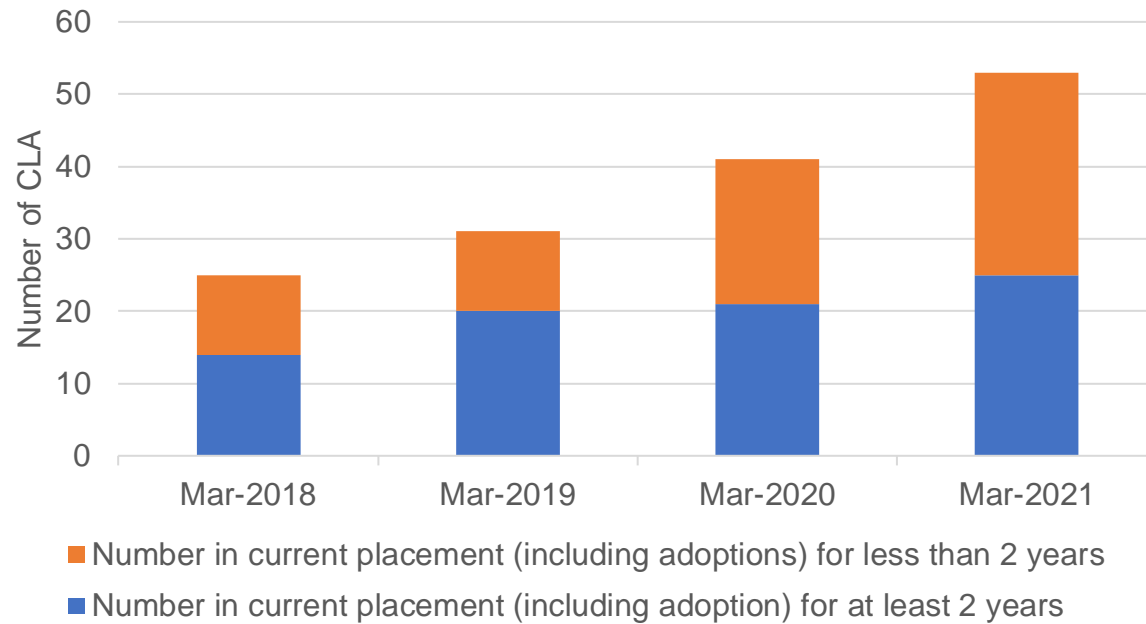
Headlines

Year on year there has been an increase of CLA with an Education, Health and Care Plan. In March 2021, 36% of CLA had an EHCP, the increase has been growing exponentially since 2018 and suggests that there may be an increase in more complex placements moving forwards.

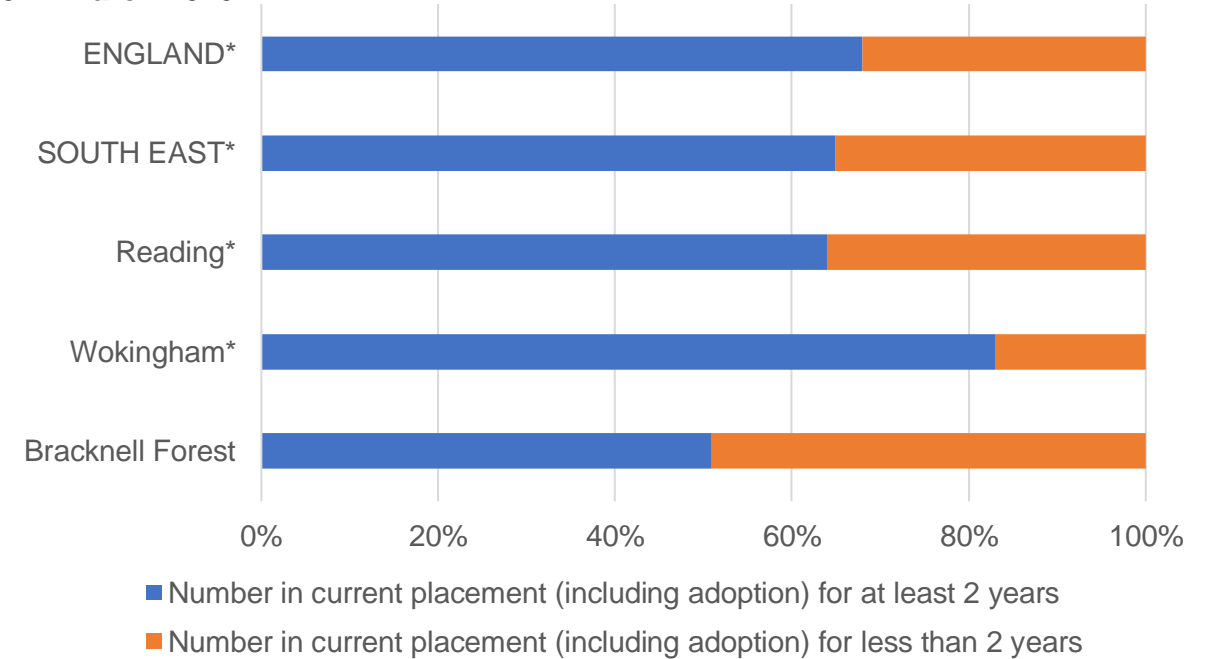
- The increase of CLA with an EHCP is in line with the current trend of Children in Bracknell Forest with an EHCP. The number of Bracknell Forest Children with an EHCP has been increasing exponentially since 2018, based on previous years data it is anticipated that there will be an increase in these numbers as the trend continues.

Placement Stability – Continuously in Care

Bracknell Forest Children who have been continuously in care for 2.5 years as of 31st March



Children who have been continuously in care for 2.5 years as of 31st March 2020



Headlines

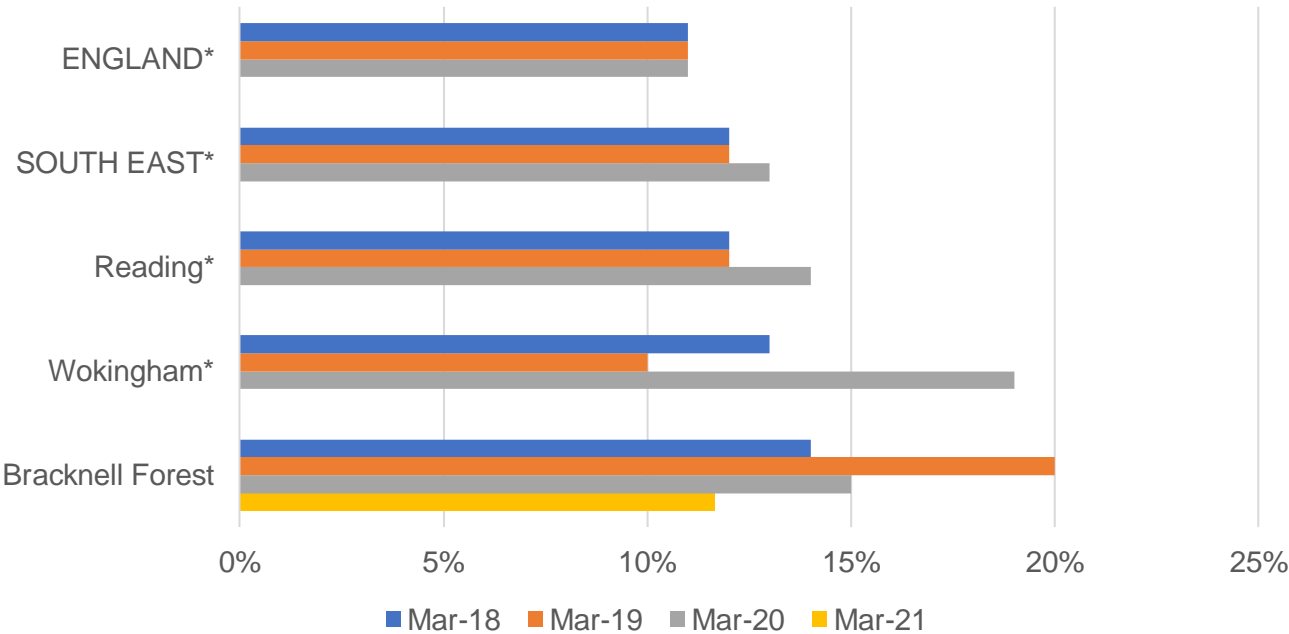
Since 2017/18, there has been an increase of CLA in placement for at least 2 years or placed for adoption as at 31st March each year.

- In 2020, 47% of children under the age of 16 who have been looked after for two and a half years have been in the same placement for two years, this has been increasing year on year.

- Some of the reasons for children not remaining in the same placement is through placing children for adoption, changing status to long term foster care and children stepping down from residential homes to live with foster carers in a family environment as their needs have become less complex as a result of good quality care and support. In addition, gang activity, missing episodes and county lines impact on the stability of placements as these children may need to move placements to manage the risk factors.

Placement Stability – Multiple Placements

Percentage of CLA with 3+ Separate Placements



Year	Placement Types that contribute to 3+ Separate Placements
2017-18	For 16 CYP, the majority of placements were Fostering For 3 CYP, the majority of their placements were Residential
2018-19	For 28 CYP, the majority of placements were Fostering For 3 CYP, the majority of their placements were Residential
2019-20	For 19 CYP, the majority of placements were Fostering For 2 CYP, the majority of their placements were Semi Independent
2020-21	For 6 CYP, the majority of placements were Fostering For 4 CYP, the majority of placements were Semi Independent For 1 CYP, the majority of placement were Residential

Headlines

In comparison with National statistics, Bracknell had a higher percentage of CLA with 3 or more placements since March 2018, however in March 2021 Bracknell was more in line with national figures.

- There was a sudden increase of CLA with 3 or more separate placements in March 2019, with 31 CLA (20%) with 3 or more separate placements. However, there was a decrease again in March 2020 with 21 CLA (15%). This is in line with the decrease of CLA numbers in 2019/20.

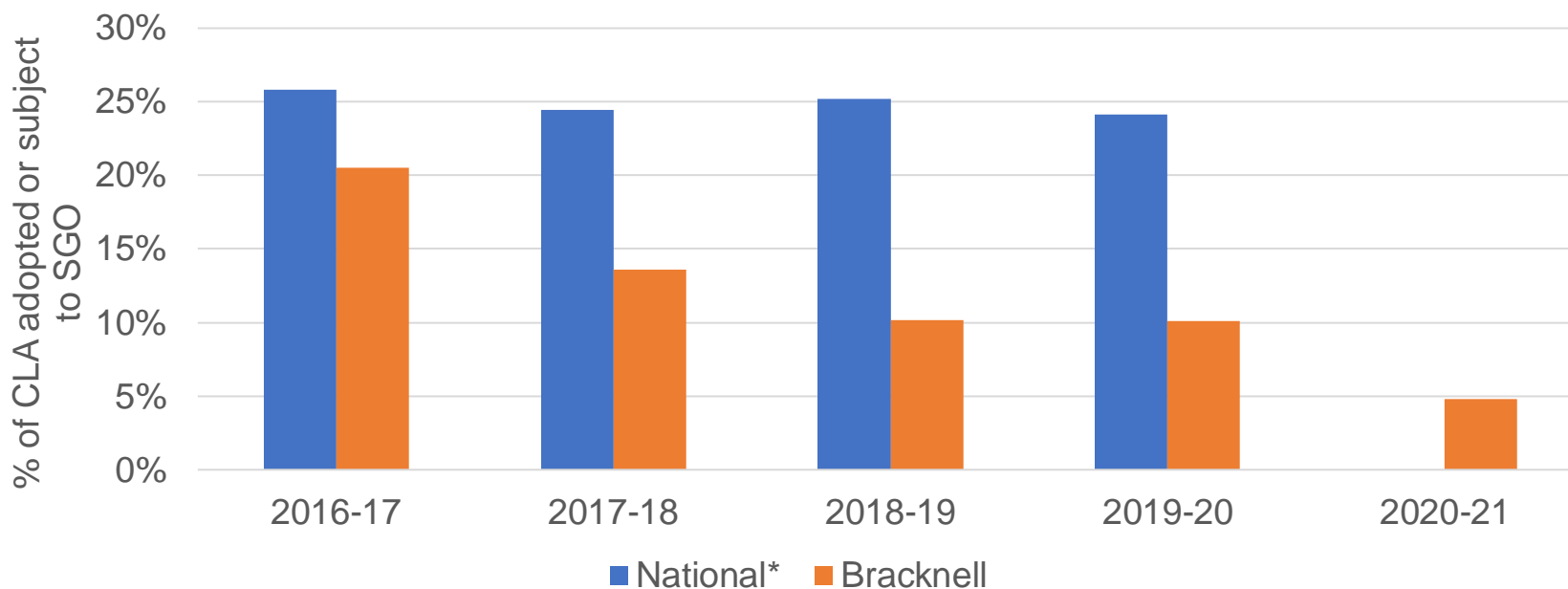
Children with 3 or more placements in a financial year were usually in foster placements, either In House or in IFA. The majority of the foster placements were In House, this is the trend over the three years.

- 9 CYP have 3 or more placements that have taken place over 2 financial years.
- It should be noted that sometimes multiple moves could indicate positive change such as stepping down. Hospital moves are included in BFC numbers but these may not be included in other LA numbers.

* Statistics: Children looked after in England including adoption: 2017 to 2018, 2018 to 2019, 2019 to 2020 - Department for Education, GOV.UK

Placement Permanence

Adoptions and Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs)



A **Special Guardianship Order** (often known as an SGO) is a legal order where the court appoints a carer – usually a relative – as the ‘Special Guardian’ of a child until they turn 18.

The Special Guardian then shares parental responsibility for the child with the parents, and can make nearly all the major decisions about the child without having to consult them.

Headlines

In recent years the percentage of CLA adopted or subject to SGOs has decreased and is currently under 5% as 2020-21.

- Nationally, 3,440 children looked after were adopted during the year ending 31 March 2020. 3,700 children ceased to be looked after due to the granting of Special Guardianship Orders during the year ending 31 March 2020.

- Due to the small numbers for CLA, numbers for Adoptions and Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) are quite low in Bracknell Forest. In comparison to National data, Bracknell has a lower percentage of Adoptions and SGOs.
- Bracknell Forest Council continues to work in partnership with Adopt Thames Valley to identify adopters for children at an early stage.
- In recent years, many BFC SGO applicants have not passed the viability stage for applications. Although this is disappointing, this should at least minimise future SGO breakdowns.

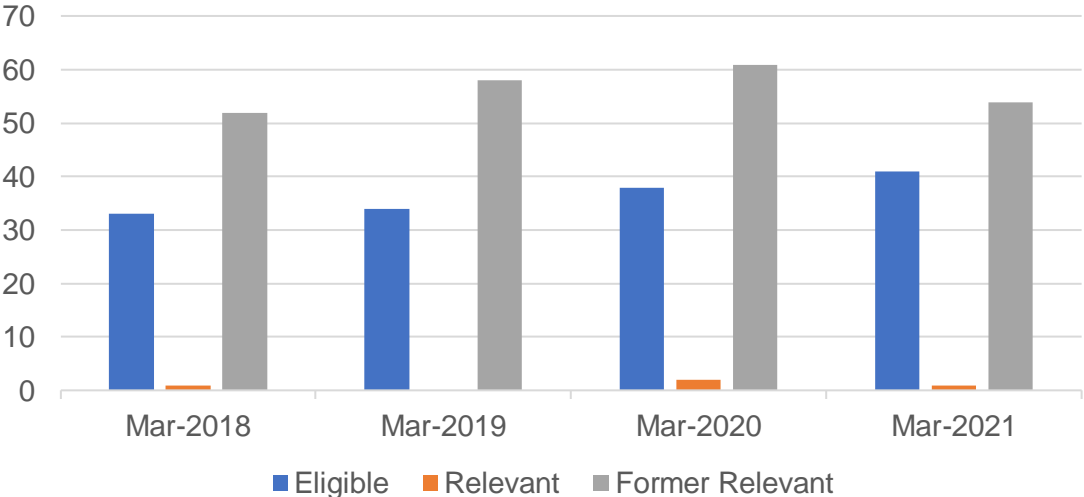
Care Leavers

Eligible child is a child aged 16 and 17 who has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who is still being looked after

Relevant child is a child aged 16 and 17 who has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who has left care.

Former relevant child is a young person over 18 who was previously 'eligible' or 'relevant'. Councils support this group until aged 21, or longer if they are in education or training

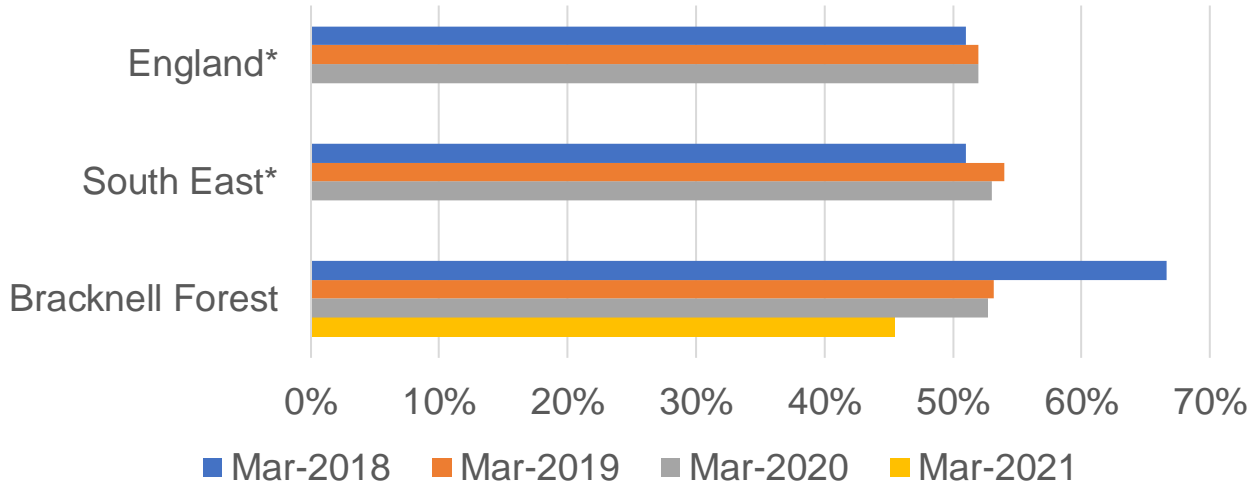
Number of Care Leavers



Headlines

- There has been a small increase of both Eligible Care Leavers and Former and Relevant Care Leavers since 2017/18. The number of Relevant Care Leavers has remained low over the years. The majority of Care Leavers remain looked after until they are 18. This could be related to the increased number of CLA.
- Across England and the South East, the percentage of Care Leavers aged 19, 20 and 21 in Education, Employment or Training is around 51%-54%. In 2017 and 2018, Bracknell had a high percentage of Care Leavers in Education, Employment or Training, this was at 66% for both years. However the percentage has reduced since 2019 and is currently lower than the national and regional figures. Since 2017, there has been less than 50 Care Leavers aged 19, 20 and 21 in Bracknell each year.

Care Leavers Aged 19, 20, 21 in Education, Employment or Training as of 31st March

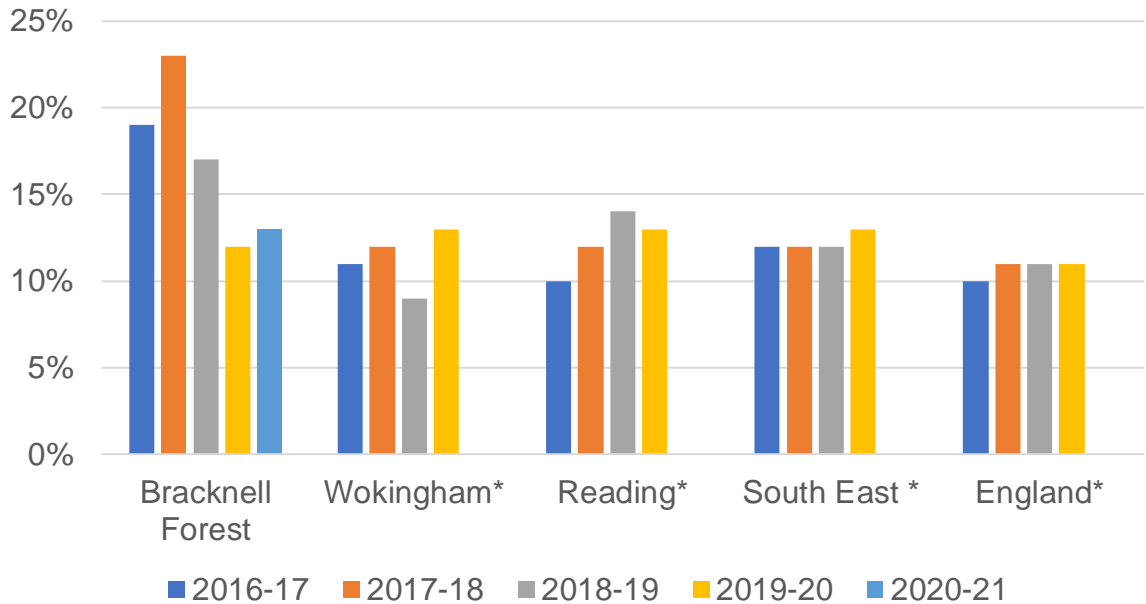


- For Care Leavers aged 17 and 18 the national figures for Care Leavers in Education, Employment or Education has been around 65% between 2018 and 2020. In March 2021, the percentage of Care Leavers aged 17 and 18 in Education, Employment or Training in Bracknell (78%.) was higher than the national percentage. However, since 2017 the percentage has decreased and is lower than the national average. There have been around 20 Care Leavers aged 17 and 18 in Bracknell per year since 2017.
- Since the COVID-19 pandemic, education, employment and training opportunities have been impacted which could explain the decrease in March 2021 for Bracknell Forest Care Leavers EET Aged 19, 20, 21.

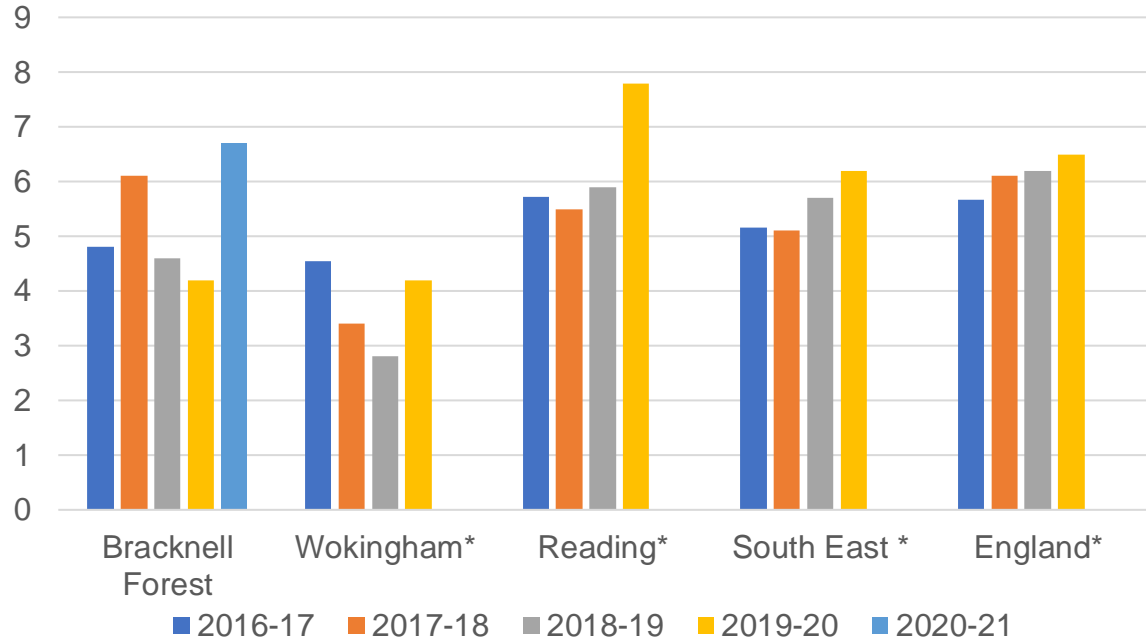
* Statistics: Children looked after in England including adoption: 2016 to 2017, 2017 to 2018, 2018 to 2019, 2019 to 2020 - Department for Education, GOV.UK

Missing Children Looked After

% of CLA who went Missing



Average Number of Missing Incidents per Missing CLA



Headlines

- The number of CLA going missing has decreased since 2016-17. At its highest in 2017-18, there were 46 CLA in Bracknell who went missing. In 2019-20, the number of CLA that went missing during the year was 24, this has reduced by almost half within the two years. Compared to the National, South East and neighbouring LAs, Bracknell Forest has had a higher percentage of CLA go missing over the years, however in 2019-20 this has been more in line with National, South East and other neighbouring LAs.
- In Bracknell Forest, the percentage of CLA who went missing and the average number of Missing Incidents per Missing CLA were at its highest in 2017-18, however this decreased from 2018-19.

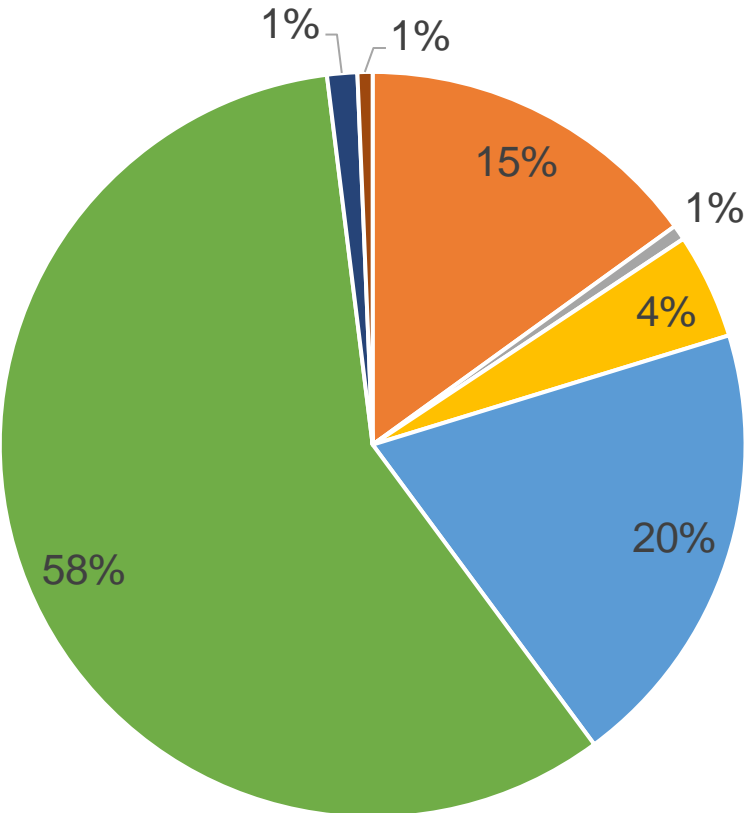
- The average number of missing incidents per missing CLA sits between the South East average and Wokingham. In 2017-18 there was sudden increase of missing episodes per Missing CLA, this also mirrors the increase of Missing CLA numbers for the same year.
- There is now more awareness on the difference between Missing episodes and Absence, and better tracking and analysis of missing episodes. Both of these factors may have impacted on the reduction of Missing numbers.

In summary, less CLA are going missing, however CLA that are going missing are having more missing episodes.

* Statistics: Children looked after in England including adoption: 2016 to 2017, 2017 to 2018, 2018 to 2019, 2019 to 2020 - Department for Education, GOV.UK

Location of Missing Incidents

CLA Missing Incidents in 2020-21



153 Missing Episodes
23 Children Looked After

- Placed with Parents
- LA Foster Placement
- Foster Placement - Supported Lodgings
- IFA Placement
- Residential Children's Home
- Semi Independent
- Independent Living
- Other

Headlines

- In 2020-21, there were a total of 153 missing episodes for a total of 23 CLA. The types of placements that the CLA went missing from range from being LA Foster Placement to staying in a Residential Children's Home.
- The most common placement type that CLA went missing from were from Semi-Independent Placements, followed by Residential placements and when placed with LA Foster Placements.
- The Makesafe Team was created in April 2018 which increased the resources directed towards missing and exploitation. The work the Makesafe Team has done to reduce these numbers is wide-ranging and includes:
 - A switch towards an approach that prioritises building relationships over short-term "direct work"
 - The introduction of Missing Prevention meetings with children who have repeat episodes
 - More focus on targeting and disrupting sources of harm
 - Increased partnership work with the police
 - Travelling to undertake Return Home Interviews with CLA placed out of area (this helps to maintain consistency for the child – a better understanding of their situation has helped the Makesafe team to address pull/push factors associated with missing).

Forecasting future need

Looking ahead

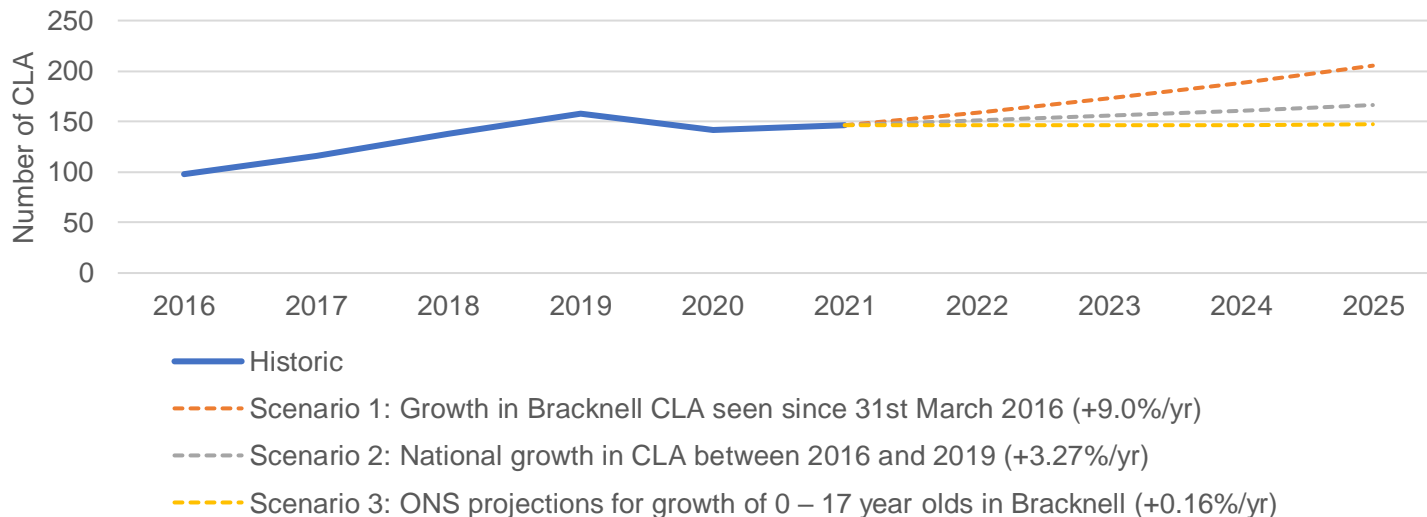
In planning for the future we need to take a view on how we expect numbers of looked after children to evolve over time – and therefore the demand for different types of placements. We will need to review these assumptions over time, and update them as appropriate. For the 2021/22 Sufficiency Plan update, Bracknell Forest Council is exploring how to best ensure that need forecasting also reflects what CSC predicts future need will be based on their knowledge as well as data.

Our approach to developing a forward view – 2021-2025

For looked after children (excluding UASC), we have looked at the numbers implied if future annual growth were to be equivalent to:

- **Scenario 1:** Growth in Bracknell CLA seen since March 2016 (+9.0%/yr)
- **Scenario 2:** National growth in CLA between 2016 and 2020 (+3.27%/yr)
- **Scenario 3:** ONS projections for growth of 0 – 17 year olds in Bracknell (+0.16%/yr)

Growth scenarios for looked after children



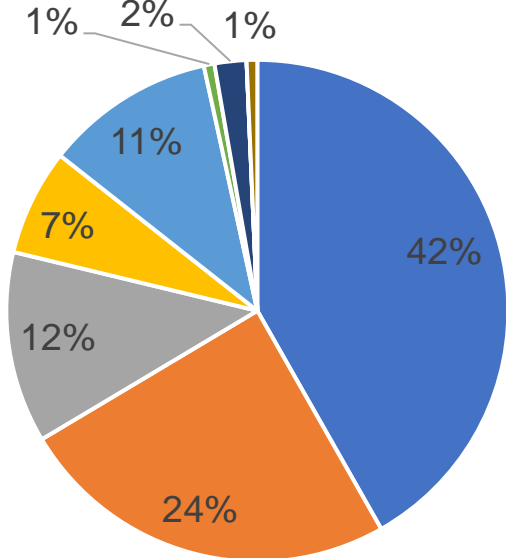
Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

- The number of UASC in Bracknell Forest has been steady for the last 4 years, Bracknell Forest have not accommodated a high number of UASC over the last few years. There has been a total of 13 UASC over the last 4 years. If Bracknell Forest were to accommodate the 0.07% this would be a total of 20 UASC. It is anticipated that BFC will meet the target of 0.07% by 2025.
- The 0.07% threshold ('Higher Rate Threshold', HRT) is an indication of the availability of UASC places that Local Authorities may have for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children based on their child population. It is calculated by finding 0.07% of the child population according to the ONS Mid-year population estimate.

Sufficiency

Summary of Placement Types

Placement Types as of 31st March 2021



- Foster Placements - in House and IFA (In Borough)
- Foster Placement - in House and IFA (Out of Borough)
- Residential Home including Residential Schools
- Placed with own parents (under a care order – try to return them home)
- Semi Independent
- Mother and Baby Residential
- Placed for adoption (including placed with former foster carer)
- In lodgings, residential employment or living independently (Flats with no support)
- Secure Unit
- Other placement

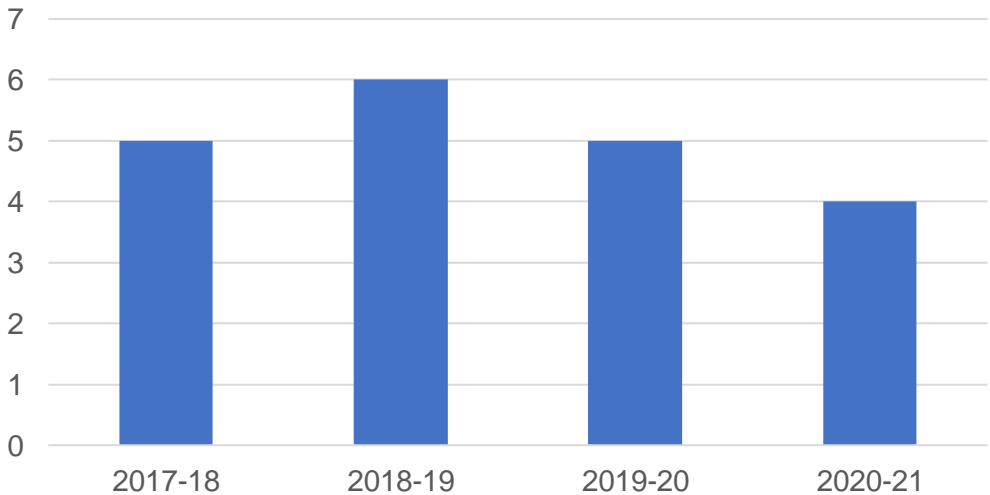
Headlines

In 2021, 66% of placements for Bracknell Forest CLA were Foster Placements including In-House and IFA. 42% of these were in borough, and 24% were out of borough.

- In 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 there were more CLA placed with Foster Placements in borough, than out of borough.
- In 2021, 12% of placements were with Residential Homes and Residential Schools. There has been a steady increase in these types of placements since 2017, however there was a significant decrease in 2021.
- In 2021, 6% of CLA were placed with their own parents. Although the numbers are low, there has been an increase in numbers over the years. This could be because of multiple factors; thresholds may have changed, progress with reunification plans & some older Children are also positive and promote wanting to return home.

Number of Parent and Child Placements

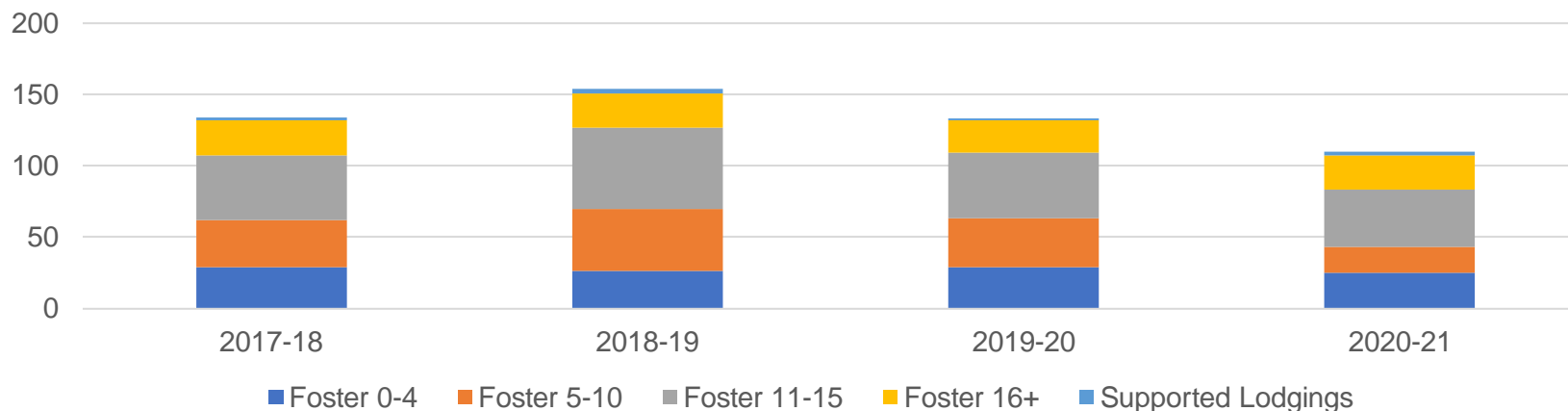
Connected Person - A family member or friend, assessed in line with statutory guidance may become an approved foster carer in order to look after the child.



- In total there have been 20 parent and child placements during 1st April 2017 - 31st March 2021. All the IFA Parent and Child Placements since April 2017 have been with Framework providers.
- There are a limited number of parent and child providers nationally and it can be difficult to find local providers which are often required at short notice. Bracknell Forest currently do not have any in-house provision for Parent and Child Placements.
- The average duration of Parent and Child Placements are around 11 Weeks, however they have ranged from 1 Week – 30 Weeks.

In House Fostering

Number of Children placed in-House



Supported Lodgings- Supported lodgings carers provide a safe and supportive environment where young people aged 16 to 18 years can develop the skills needed to live independently as young adults. The young person is usually in full time education, employment or training.

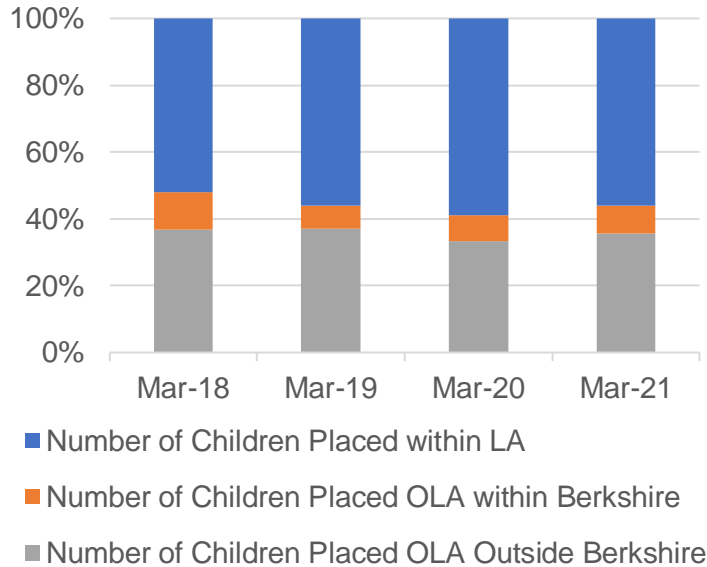
Short term fostering – generally is for placements around 2 years. Most foster carers are approved under this category initially.

Headlines

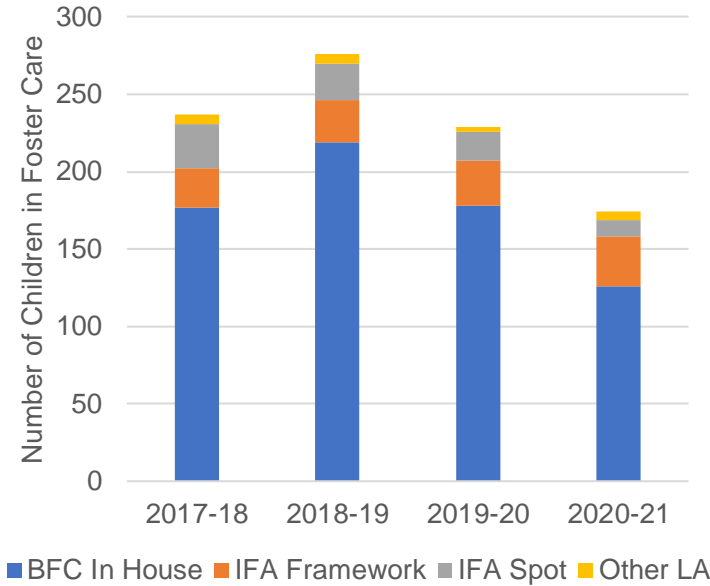
- Bracknell Forest has an in-house fostering provision. **The majority of CLA in Bracknell Forest are placed in-house.** In 2020-21 there were a total of 106 children that were placed in-House out of 166 CLA. Since 2018-19, the number of CYP placed in in-house foster care has been decreasing.
- **The highest proportion of CLA with in-House foster carers are 11-15 Years old**, the lowest proportion of CLA placed in-House are CLA aged 16+, which does not include those in Supported Lodgings. **In 2020-21, the number of CYP who are aged 5-10 placed in in-House Foster Care has reduced by almost half.** There is a very small number of CLA with in-House Supported Lodgings.
- At March 2019, the number of Bracknell Forest fostering households was 68 including friends and family foster carers. This is up from 61 in the previous year representing an 11% increase. The largest growth has been in non-permanent/short term carers which accounts for 50% of carers. The other types of placement offered is permanent (21%), family and friends (25%) and other (4%). BFC has more non-permanent and family and friends carers than the national average but fewer permanent as no permanent carers have been recruited in the past three years.
- BFC Family Placement Team reported that in 2019-20, out of 128 enquiries for Foster Carers, there were only three mainstream approvals for short term fostering. The average age of the people approved in 2019-20 was 48 years old. In the BFC Fostering Recruitment Strategy for 2020-23 there was a target of 10 new fostering households per year and a target of 100 enquiries.
- Similar to Bracknell Forest's CLA and local resident ethnicity as noted in the 2011 census, the majority of in-house carers are White (94%). The ethnicity of the remaining 7% carers was split as follows: 3% Black, 2% Asian, 1% mixed. Whilst there is a lower number of Asian carers than in the resident population (5%) there is also a lower percentage of Asian CLA.
- There has been an increase in applications during the COVID-19 pandemic and this is in part due to people being furloughed, made redundant and working from home – it has been a time for people to reevaluate what they want to do and take the leap when previously work or other commitments stopped them.

Placements for children looked after

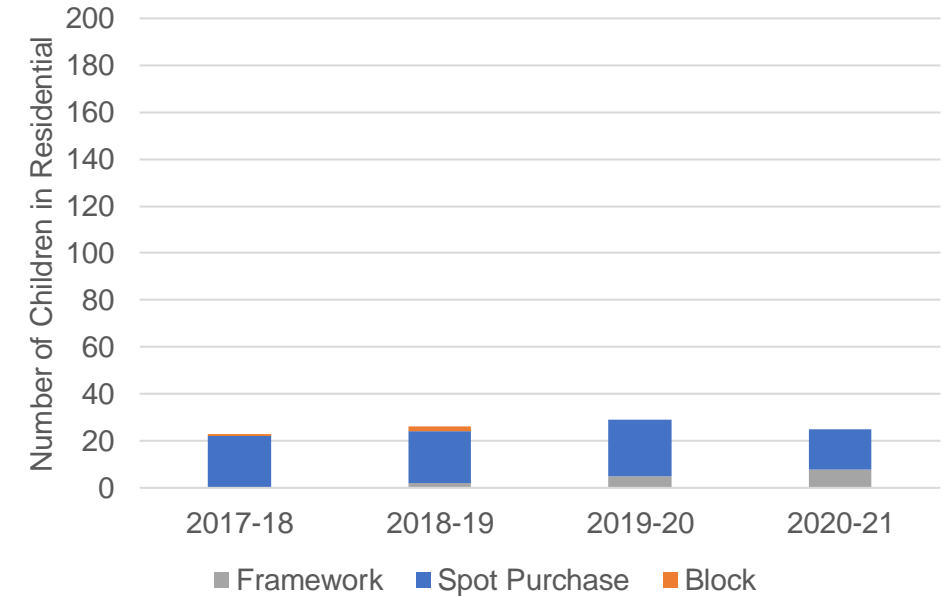
Location of placement
(excluding placed for adoption)



Children in foster care



Children in residential provision including Residential Schools



Headlines

Most Bracknell Forest CLA are placed within the LA or within Berkshire, on average this has been around 64% of placements from March 2017 – March 2021. Bracknell's figures are in line with the National figures for Children being placed at distance.

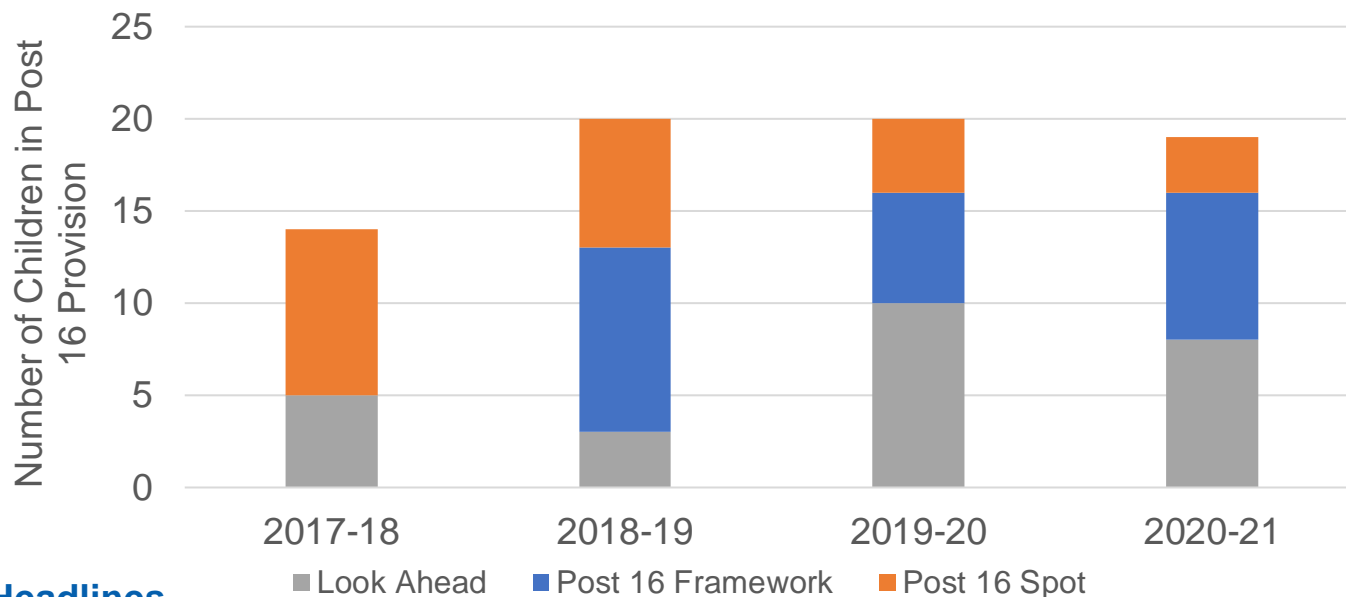
- Children in BFC In House Foster Care increased in 2018/19, but has been decreasing since.
- The number of CLA placed with Independent Fostering Agencies (both Framework and Spot) has been gradually decreasing, this is in line with the overall decrease of CYP in Foster Care. In particular use of IFA Spot placements has decreased significantly since 2017-18.

The majority of residential placements until March 2021 have been with Spot Purchase Providers, with a small number that were placed at Framework rates. The Residential Framework was introduced in September 2018, and there has slowly been an increase in usage of the framework.

- Framework Providers are preferred, however BFC has to place with the Providers that respond to referrals and that offer the best match for our CYP. BFC have occasionally placed at homes not on the framework which are owned by Framework Providers (this is something the Framework Manager is trying to address).
- Entry to Care Panel was introduced in July 2020. This panel ensures better scrutiny of placement matching and the use of framework providers is encouraged.

Post 16 Placements and Staying Put

Number of CLA at Post 16 Provisions (not including Care Leavers)



Headlines

In 2020-21, there were a total of 19 CLA in Post 16 Provision out of the 166 CLA. The majority of CYP were placed with Framework Providers or Look Ahead.

- The largest proportion of CLA were placed in Spot Placements in 2017-18, however there was a decrease of Spot Placements since the introduction of the Post 16 Framework.
- In 2019-20 there was also a large increase of CYP being placed at Look Ahead, who Bracknell Forest commission to provide support for Post 16 CYP.
- The numbers of CYP historically placed at Look Ahead was quite low, however the increase in placements with Look Ahead has been because there has been a drive to better utilise BFC's already commissioned provision. However, as Look Ahead is being better utilised by BFC's CLA, this can mean that there are less places for BFC Care Leavers.

Staying Put Placements

A **Staying Put** arrangement is where a Former Relevant child, after ceasing to be Looked After, remains in the former foster home where they were placed immediately before they ceased to be Looked After, beyond the age of 18.

- As of 31st March 2021, the majority of Care Leavers are in Independent Living, Supported Accommodation or Semi Independent Accommodation. Those who are living in Semi-Independent accommodation are either staying at Look Ahead or with Framework Semi-Independent providers.
- Around 10% of Care Leavers have stayed with their former Foster Carers (Staying Put).
- The number of Staying Put is also increasing year on year, however the numbers remain low. Every year there has been an increase of one child Staying Put.
- In recent years there has been a drive to increase awareness of Staying Put as an option for our CYP. Social workers and Carers have received training for Staying Put and the associated policy and process has been shared more widely. If a young person and their foster carer are in agreement, BFC will do everything possible to establish a 'Staying Put' agreement. BFC's Staying Put policy is designed to enable young people to remain with their current carer up to the age of 21 years before moving into independent living.

Feedback from CLA and Care Leavers

Methodology and summary of CYP

A key part of this Sufficiency plan is understanding the needs and views of our CLA and Care Leavers. The BFC Participation Officer spoke to 16 CYP (of varying ages and in different types of placement), using a variety of approaches:

- Due to Covid-19, no face to face groups were taking place so online sessions were offered. A SiLSiP (Say it Loud Say it Proud) online meeting invited regular members (8yrs+) and also invited other young people in care who may not usually attend.
- CYP were also offered a 1-1 phone call or video call if they preferred.
- A flyer was sent out to foster carers of those who have attended or expressed an interest in attending SiLSiP. CLA Social Workers and IRO's were asked to suggest young people who might be interested in attending. The Participation Officer followed up suggestions.
- Five young people attended the SiLSiP Session, the other young people were spoken to individually by phone or video call.
- Leaving Care service were asked to suggest individual young people to take part. Individual phone calls were then made to those young people.

The things that our children looked after and care leavers value most in a carer and in their accommodation should be reasonably straightforward to achieve – their wish list contains only simple and modest requests.

What makes a good carer? – Feedback from CLA Part 1



Someone who is loving and kind

“They have to be kind”

“I need to feel like I belong and I am loved”

“Don’t forget my huggles and kisses at bedtime”



Have a laugh

“Likes to joke about”

“Fun”



Treat me like part of the family

“Treat me the same as other children”

“Don’t put us in respite – take us on family holidays”

“Introduce me to and involve me with extended family like grandparents”



Someone who won’t give up on me and will be on my side

“Be on my side and there for me no matter what”

“Have my best interests at heart”

“Perseveres – you won’t give up on me at the first hurdle”



Someone who listens to me

Someone I can talk to and listens to me”

“Someone who is interested in me and wants to have a conversation with me”



Trust us

“If something is wrong we will tell you”

“We have to be able to trust you”



Family and Friends

“Help us keep in touch with family and friends”

“Help us keep in touch online”

What makes a good carer? – Feedback from CLA Part 2



Helps me when I'm sad and lonely

"Nice to have a pet we can look after"

"Nice to have a teddy"



Be patient, sympathetic and forgiving

"Be there for me if I've had a bad day"

"Have an open mind and be understanding"

"Be patient and empathetic"



Give me different opportunities

"Takes me to nice places"

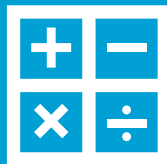
"Be able to do activities you want even if you have to travel to them"



Share similar interests with me, or share your interests with me

"Open person to new things"

"Do stuff that the child likes doing – cooking, karaoke"



Help me sort out problems

"Knows what to do if there's a problem"

"Be able to compromise"



Help me to achieve my best

"Help me to achieve my potential and organise my time"

"Sometimes you might need to encourage children to do what's best for them, not what the child wants to do"



Help me to learn to live on my own

"Make sure you make us do chores so we are prepared for living on our own"

"Give me an allowance – teach me how to save money"

What makes a good place to live? – Feedback from CLA



Able to decorate my own room

“Have my own space and be able to change things around and decorate it”



Safe

“Safe place”

“I feel safe”



Comfy place to sit

“Somewhere I can have a timeout”

“Somewhere I feel comfortable”



Be able to do things locally

“Have nice places to visit”

“Be able to meet other children locally”

“Have fun stuff to do near”



House rules

“Have rules in place so everyone gets along and keeps to the same rules but have consequences in place”

“We can learn from our mistakes”



Clean

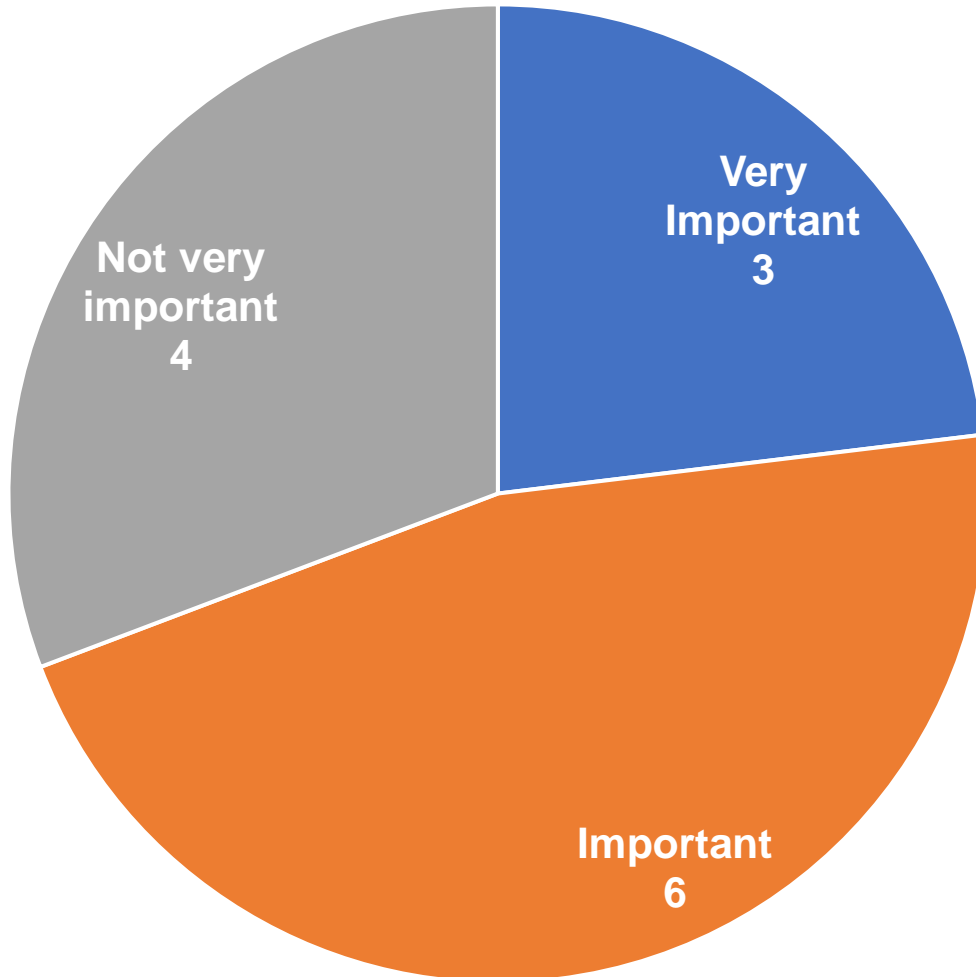
“Clean kitchen”

“Hygienic”

“No dirty dishes”

How important is it to be close to your hometown? – Feedback from CLA

There were 13 CLA who responded to this question.



Very Important

- “It is very important for me, but does depend on the individual and depends on your age and your history with your parents”
- “Better living near your friends and near mum and dad because you might forget about them”
- “Might be difficult to have no familiarity to move away from friends”

Important

- “Nice to be able to see your siblings if you want to”
- “Want to be close to friends”
- “I know Bracknell and it would have been difficult moving somewhere else”
- “Some people would cope better than others”

Not very important

- If you’re happy with the carers, then it doesn’t matter.
- You can still have contact with your parents if you’re far away
- You might bump into your parents if you’re local
- Nice to have a fresh start

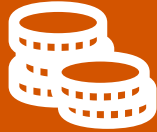
What makes good accommodation? – Feedback from Care Leavers



Good communication

“Trust and good communication between you and your PA”

“Good communication between the landlord and young people”



Affordable

“Good to have help from the Leaving Care Service with the deposit and rent in advance, this really helped me”

“I was in a private rented, but I needed cheaper accommodation, so I signed up to get a council tenancy”



Place of my own

“Just wanted a 1 bed flat”

“I’d like more space than where I live now”



Make sure things work

“Help with any repairs before you move me in”

“It’s stressful living on your own, you want it to be comfortable and happy but it’s stressful and when I needed something done it took forever”



Help with life skills

“My PA has helped me, they taught me basic life skills, budgeting money and buying food”



Able to decorate

“Being able to decorate before you move in”

“It’s good because I get to decorate it how I want”

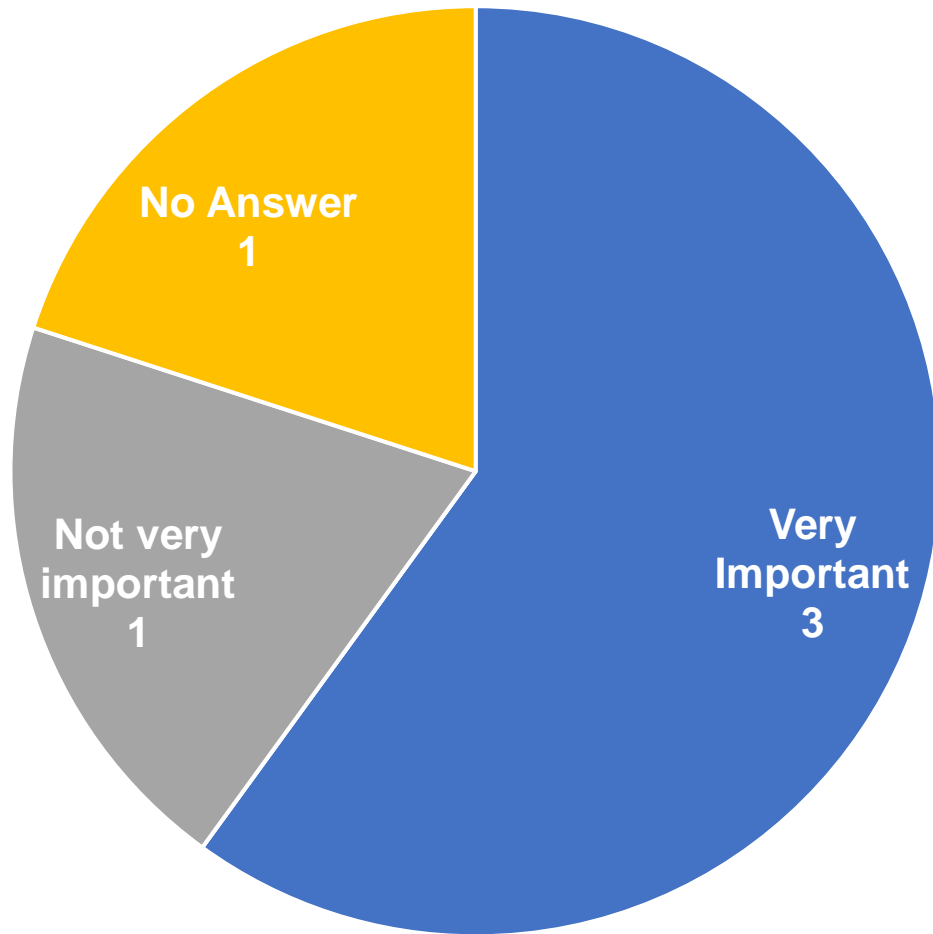


WIFI

“When I first moved out, I was in a studio flat and internet was included in my rent. When I had to get my own internet it took ages to get it”

How important is it to live close to home? – Feedback from Care Leavers

There were 5 Care Leavers who were asked this question.



Very Important

- “Feels nice to know that if you have a problem you can go to your family easily, but this does depend on your situation”
- “I can see my family when I want to.”
- “I wanted to be close to where I lived so if I ever needed them there were close by.”
- “When I first moved back I wanted to be in Bracknell to be near my family, but I moved outside of Bracknell for first for 7 months so I could get used to it again in case things went wrong. Then I moved more local, I didn’t choose the area, but it was nice where I ended up. When you have past issues, and you don’t want to live in a particular area – you should be able to choose your area.”

Not very important

- “I didn’t think about location I just bid for whatever was available through the housing association.”

Summary - Headlines

Sufficiency Headlines:

The most used type of placement has been Foster. Almost double the amount of Foster Placements were in-borough, compared to the number out of borough.

Since 2018-19, the number of CYP in Foster Placements has been decreasing (both in-house and IFA). Use of IFA Spot placements has decreased significantly since 2017-18.

The cost of placements are increasing significantly. Residential placements are the most expensive type of placement. The majority of Residential placements for BFC CYP are with Spot Providers, however in 2020-21 the number of placements with Framework Providers increased.

Although the cost of placements has continued to increase, the number of placements has reduced in 2020-21.

Residential CSST placements costs increased in 2018-19, but costs have stabilised since then.

Most Bracknell Forest CLA are placed within the LA or within Berkshire, on average this has been around 66% of placements from March 2017 – March 2020.

The numbers of CYP historically placed at Look Ahead was quite low, however in 2019-20 there was a significant increase in placements with Look Ahead.

Parent and child and specialist placements are difficult to find and are very expensive. There is currently no in-house provision for parent and child placements.

CLA numbers increased in 2018-19, however since then the numbers have been decreasing. The highest proportion of CLA at BFC are aged 10-15. Over a third of CLA have EHCPs.

Summary – What works well and key considerations



What works well

- Where there are sufficiency shortfalls, there is already awareness and work ongoing to address many of the areas that need improving.
- The majority of our placements are within Berkshire, however work is underway to increase the amount of local provision, particularly for residential placements.
- Usage of the IFA and post 16 frameworks continues to be high, supporting BFC's continued membership of these frameworks. All fostering Parent & Child placements were made on the IFA Framework.
- The percentage of CLA who go missing became more in line with national averages in the year 2019/20 (previously it was higher than average), which can be partly attributed to the work by the Makesafe team.



Key areas for considerations

- Feedback provided by our CLA and CLs needs to be incorporated into placement/foster carer searching & contract monitoring.
- Review whether the Life service could include parent and child assessments/placements in the future.
- Explore the reasons for the decrease in CLA being adopted/subject to a SGO.
- To increase the capacity and resilience within BFC's in house fostering workforce and to reduce BFC's dependency on the open market. This additional capacity will also be used to step down children from high cost placements into BFC foster care.
- Work with the Framework and residential providers to increase the number of local residential placements and to increase usage of the residential framework.
- Identify more specialist placements to reduce the number of CYP unable to leave hospital

Themes to achieve intended outcomes

Our approach to achieving the intended outcomes can be split into four main themes, which are summarised below. Further detail is included in the Sufficiency Action Plan.

Implement new models of practice

Family Safeguarding, to better understand the contextual risks facing children and their families, and reunify children with their birth families safely.

Transformation fostering workstream, aims to increase the capacity and resilience within BFC's in house fostering workforce.

Edge of Care, to prevent the number of adolescent children entering care due to parental and family breakdown, by working with the whole family to addresses any problems and prevent further crisis

Early Help Family Hub model, ensuring that family relationships are strengthened to improve their life chances.

Grow our in-house capacity and flexibility to meet the more complex needs of some children and young people

Develop our approach to **CLA who are SEND / CSST** and improve transitions to adulthood.

Recruit and retain more skilled & resilient in-house foster carers, to enable more children to stay in family-settings within Bracknell.

Increase access to short breaks to improve **placement stability** so children do not experience the 'spiral' that leads to residential care.

Reduce the number of children in children's homes, particularly focusing on stepping-down and reunifying teenagers, helping to prepare them for adulthood and independence.

Collaborate with the market and develop innovative plans to commission differently

Develop relationships with external providers based in, or close to Bracknell, to **shape the market**.

In partnership with providers across the system, develop **innovative approaches** to delivering provision for children and young people.

Co-design **flexible provision** for children and young people that works across different levels of need with the market.

Maintain quality of provision through regular monitoring of external placements.

Increase management oversight

Improve consistency in practice between operational teams and commissioning teams.

Further develop and embed **contract management & learning** from QA and complaints.

Regularly **review the most expensive** placements to ensure they are meeting the needs of the children placed in them.

Develop a set of statements using feedback from CLA/CL to use for contract monitoring and foster carer recruitment.

Principles and Partnership working with Providers

We know we can't achieve placement and accommodation sufficiency for children and young people alone. By sharing our future direction, identifying gaps in provision, and different ways of providing support, we would like the Sufficiency Plan to help kick-start a more collaborative way of working with external providers who already work with us, as well as those who are interested in expanding their offer into Bracknell. We intend to continually build on and develop our Sufficiency Plan to achieve intended outcomes for our children and young people.

Over-arching principles for in-house and external provision

- Support our 'Pledge' to children and young people, and uphold our principles for working with children and young people
- Work in partnership to step children down
- More children placed in a family setting, within the Bracknell area
- Understanding of contextual safeguarding
- Preparation for adulthood and independence
- Consideration of all aspects of education, health and social care needs in all placements
- Clear breakdown of costs linked to weekly fees

Fostering

We are looking for providers who can:

Increase the availability of placements for specific groups of children that are commissioned through the South Central IFA Framework, and located in or close to Bracknell, specifically:

- Intensive therapeutic placements
- Placements for children with autism and special educational needs
- Dedicated foster carers for teenagers
- Parent and child placements

Work collaboratively with Bracknell Forest Council and other partners to:

- Create partnerships with residential care providers to enable a clearly identified step-down pathway for children
- Pipeline plan for new carers to help achieve permanency
- Develop emergency short-term provision

Principles:

- Foster carers have, where needed, a break from their caring responsibilities

Children's Homes

We are looking for providers who can:

Create local to Bracknell residential provision, particularly for:

- Parent and child residential parenting assessments
- Children with complex behaviours, with a focus on stepping children down to foster care when appropriate

Continue membership of the Children's Residential Care Framework.

Work collaboratively with Bracknell Forest Council and other partners to:

- Develop flexible packages of support that can be reduced or increased depending on need
- Reduce the risk of CSE and criminal exploitation
- Develop emergency, short-term provision

Principles:

- It is our intention to place as many children as possible in a family setting. Children who need to be placed in a residential home should only be placed for a short, defined period of time.
- Every child's permanency plan should consider a step-down to foster care, or reunification with family, wherever possible

16+ Provision

We are looking for providers who can:

Increase the availability of accommodation in the Bracknell area for young people aged 16+, specifically:

- Complex needs, including special educational needs
- Near education provision and within local communities
- Low, medium and high support options

Work collaboratively with Bracknell Forest Council and other partners to:

- Plan from the age of 16 to step children down from residential homes
- Identify properties and secure moves into permanent tenancies
- Develop shared housing solutions

Principles:

- Young people will be prepared for independence and adulthood

Sufficiency Action Plan – Part 1

Priority	Action	Owner	Timescale
Explore how residential placement costs can be reduced/consider alternatives to Residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue participation in IFA framework development work to replace LOT 4 Alternative to Residential with a bespoke fostering offer. 	CSC/ Strategic Commissioning	Ongoing
Better understand BFC need, spend and usage of residential placements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete an Analysis of BFC Residential placements to better understand need, activity and how to reduce costs 	CSC/ Strategic Commissioning	March 2022
To continue to increase the number of placements within 20 miles of Bracknell.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For IFA placements sufficiency is one of the areas of focus for the new Framework in 2022. 	IFA Framework Manager	April 2021 – April 2022
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For Residential framework placements, the Framework Manager is leading a group of 5 West of London LA's (inc. BFC) to encourage 1 or 2 large residential providers to open new homes in their vicinity. 	Residential Framework Manager & Strategic Commissioning	March 2022
Utilise feedback from CLA and Care Leavers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback to be shared with FPT. When the FPT are checking prospective new foster carers accommodation, these requirements should be considered. Feedback to also be shared with Social Workers – again, when they visit prospective new placements these are features that they should check whether are in place. Feedback to be shared with the care leavers team. When PA's visit prospective new accommodation these are features that they should check whether are in place. Strategic Commissioning to use this feedback to develop sets of statements which will be used for Contract monitoring. 	Strategic Commissioning to work with the Participation Officer	December 2021

Sufficiency Action Plan – Part 2

Priority	Action	Owner	Timescale
Work with 16+ providers to reduce missing episodes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children Social Care to liaise with Nick Young to arrange a 16+ Provider forum to discuss missing episodes. 	CSC	December 2021
Continue to maximise utilisation of Look Ahead whilst ensuring that there is space for care leavers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Look Ahead project and procurement will include a needs analysis to ensure that this provision meets the needs of both CLA and Care Leavers. 	Strategic Commissioning/ Housing/CSC	July 2020 - August 2022
Explore reasons for the decrease in CLA being adopted/subject to SGO's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FPT to review whether there has been an increase in unsuccessful adoption/SGO requests. 	Family Placement Team	December 2021
Address areas of improvement raised by the Wokingham audit of the BFC foster service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FPT to produce an action plan to address the areas of concern raised. 	Family Placement Team	December 2021
Identify more specialist placements to reduce the number of CYP unable to leave hospital.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Commissioning, CSC and health to work together as part of the unregulated provision working group. 	Strategic Commissioning, CSC, Health	December 2021
Prepare for regulation changes to 16+ Provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioning & CSC to work together as part of the unregulated provision working group 	Commissioning/CSC	December 2021
Continue to try to identify more external parent and child providers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the end of 2020, Strategic Commissioning created an Approved provider list for parent and child placements. Strategic Commissioning will continue to highlight that more IFA and residential providers of this type are needed on both frameworks. 	Strategic Commissioning	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Commissioning and Housing will complete a review of Life to assess whether there is any scope for Life to offer parent and child assessments at their provision in Bracknell. 	Strategic Commissioning / Housing	March 2022

Sufficiency Action Plan – Part 3

Priority	Action	Owner	Timescale
To focus on identifying placement provision that can support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10-15 year olds - CYP with SEN needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SEND action plan aims to review and improve BFC SEN placements. 	Strategic Commissioning & Education/SEN	2020 - 2022
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Commissioning is working with the Residential Framework Manager to increase local residential provision (including provision for CYP with SEN). 	Strategic Commissioning, Health, SEN & the Residential Framework Manager	March 2022
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Commissioning will continue to communicate the needs of BFC CLA with the 3 Frameworks. 	Strategic Commissioning	Ongoing
Utilise the Residential Framework wherever possible. Ensure BFC's residential needs are communicated with the Framework.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Residential framework manager is actively trying to onboard more providers (the framework didn't reopen in 2020 due to COVID-19). 	Residential Framework Manger	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For Residential framework placements, the Framework Manager is leading a group of 5 West of London LA's (inc. BFC) to encourage 1 or 2 large residential providers to open new homes in their vicinity. 	Residential Framework Manager & Strategic Commissioning	March 2022

Sufficiency Action Plan – Part 4

Priority	Action	Owner	Timescale
Review usage of Post 16 Semi Independent Placements and agree whether to continue membership of the Post 16 Semi Independent Framework in 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review usage and spend of Post 16 Semi Independent Framework and Non-Framework Placements 	CSC/Strategic Commissioning	March 2022
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand new format and influence the direction of the 2023 Post 16 Semi Independent Framework 	Strategic Commissioning	March 2022
Maintain an up to date Sufficiency Plan for CLA and Care Leavers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual refresh of Sufficiency Plan data 	CSC/Strategic Commissioning	Summer 2022
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full review of Sufficiency Plan 	CSC/Strategic Commissioning	Summer 2023

References and Sources

References for Page 5 – National and Local Context

- ¹ National Statistics 'Children looked after in England including adoption: 2019 to 2020'
- ^{2, 4} UK House Price Index May 2021
- ³ House of Commons National Minimum Wage Statistics briefing paper
- ⁵ Estimates of the population for the UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (mid 2012 - mid 2020) - ONS
- ⁶ English indices of deprivation 2019: technical report - GOV.UK (Indices of Deprivation 2015 and 2019 - GOV.UK)
- ⁷ Children in Low Income Families 2018/19 - The Department for Work and Pensions, GOV.UK

Data Sources:

National Statistics: Children looked after in England including adoption: 2017 to 2018, 2018 to 2019, 2019 to 2020 - Department for Education, GOV.UK
Bracknell Forest Children's Business Intelligence Team
Bracknell Forest Children's Finance Team
Bracknell Forest Youth Offending Team