

Cambridgeshire County Council Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee Annual Report



The role of the Corporate Parenting Sub Committee – how we do things in Cambridgeshire:

What is corporate parenting?

Corporate parenting is founded on the principle that the Local Authority, collectively with other relevant services, should have the same aspirations and provide the same kind of care that any good parent would provide for their own children

Background:

In April 2017, the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee of the Children and Young People (CYP) Committee became active following a review of the long-established Corporate Parenting Board. The new arrangements reflected the drive to strengthen arrangements for oversight and decision making in respect of corporate parenting activity with clear accountability to the CYP Committee through adopting a scheme of delegated authority and a framework for decision making.

Purpose:

The purpose of Sub-Committee is to ensure that the Council effectively discharges its role as Corporate Parent for all children and young people in its care and provides a key role in ensuring accountability. The transformation of the Sub Committee has been led by the Chair, reinvigorating it into one which is proactive in challenging service delivery and advocating strongly for Children in Care and Care Leavers resulting in a more robust constitution with stronger governance principles.

The Sub-Committee has delegated authority to exercise all the Council's functions relating to the delivery, by or on behalf of the Council, of Corporate Parentings functions with the exception of policy decisions which remains with the CYP Committee.

Delegated authority includes:

- Working with the Virtual School to raise standards of attainment and developing education, employment and training opportunities for children in care, former children in care and children leaving care.
- Ensuring mechanisms for consultation and participation are positively promoted and that the Council actively listens and responds to the views and experiences of children in care, former children in care and children leaving care.
- Receiving regular reports on the provisions of services for children in care and care leavers as required by legislation and for the purpose of monitoring and offering advice.
- Working with the Clinical Commissioning Group and health providers to ensure delivery of services to meet health needs including health assessments and plans, emotional health, sexual health, substance misuse and teenage pregnancy.

The National Care Advisory Service (NCAS) reminds us that: 'corporate parenting should seek to ensure supportive relationships where young people feel cared for, not just looked after'. Being a Good Corporate Parent involves championing the rights of Children in Care and Care Leavers, ensuring they have access to good services and support from the local authority and from other partner agencies working with them

Corporate Parenting Sub Committee meetings and focus:

Over the last year and in response to feedback received from the Ofsted Inspection in early 2020, the Sub- Committee has reviewed how it conducts its business and a creative and innovative new format to Sub- Committee meetings has been introduced. The driver behind this review was to ensure that the voice of Children and Young People in Care as well as Care Experienced Young Adults are clearly heard by Sub- Committee Members.

There are now three themed priorities for the Sub- Committee: Health, Education and Placements. These are the areas that are most pertinent to the experiences of children and young people and are aligned with the Corporate Parenting priorities, which are to ensure the physical health, emotional health and well-being and educational attainment of children so that they have the best start in life and grow up to be proud of themselves and their achievements.

To achieve this, children and young people who cannot be cared for within their families must have the benefit of being cared for in supportive, secure and loving home environments.

Sub-Committee meetings continue to be held throughout the year and are now split into three formal and three informal meetings. The Formal Sub-Committee meetings continues to develop a tight focus and the ability to hold officers to account whilst informal meetings are led by children and young people through the Children in Care Council who invite Sub-Committee Members to attend.

Through introducing a forum for members of the Sub- Committee to interact with the Children in Care Council directly this ensures that the views and opinions of the children and young adults the Council supports runs as a golden thread throughout all Sub- Committee business. Whilst the introduction of this new format is in its infancy, in part due to the Covid restrictions and informal meetings being held virtually, Lead Officers and Sub-Committee have welcomed the focus that it brings and the increased ability to link the strategic priorities identified by the Sub- Committee to those shared by the Children and Young People's Committee.

At the Formal meeting in July 2021, Sub- Committee was notified of the appointment of a new Chair and Vice Chair following Council elections. Sub- Committee welcomed a new Chair, Councillor Anna Bradnam and Vice Chair, Councillor Phillipa Slatter. Sub Committee was also notified that Councillor Mac McGuire replaced Councillor Simon Bywater as a member of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee.

Outcomes from Sub-Committee:

- Informal meetings which members of the Children in Care Council attend now in place.
- Positive feedback for workers is now shared within the Participation report.
- A training programme has been developed for members to attend.
- Activities for Children in Care and Care Leavers are shared with carers as well as in the newsletter and at the Child In Care Council meetings.

Children in Care Leaver Demographics - Who our children are:

664 children in care who Cambridgeshire were responsible for	63 Unaccompanied asylum seeking children in care in Cambridgeshire	
488 young people in the leaving care population	201 children and young people in a long-term fostering placement	
60 children in care with a recorded disability	273 female children in care	363 male children in care

Children in Care	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21
Total CIC Population	730	702	708	695	699	695	681	687	676	670	663	664
Non-Unaccompanied Children	671	644	651	640	639	634	622	630	618	608	604	607
Unaccompanied Children (UC)	68	66	65	61	61	70	68	65	66	69	66	63
Unaccompanied Children %	8.1%	8.3%	8.1%	7.9%	8.6%	8.8%	8.7%	8.3%	8.6%	9.3%	8.9%	8.6%
Rate per 10,000	52.1	50.1	50.5	49.6	49.9	49.6	48.6	49.0	48.3	47.8	47.3	47.4

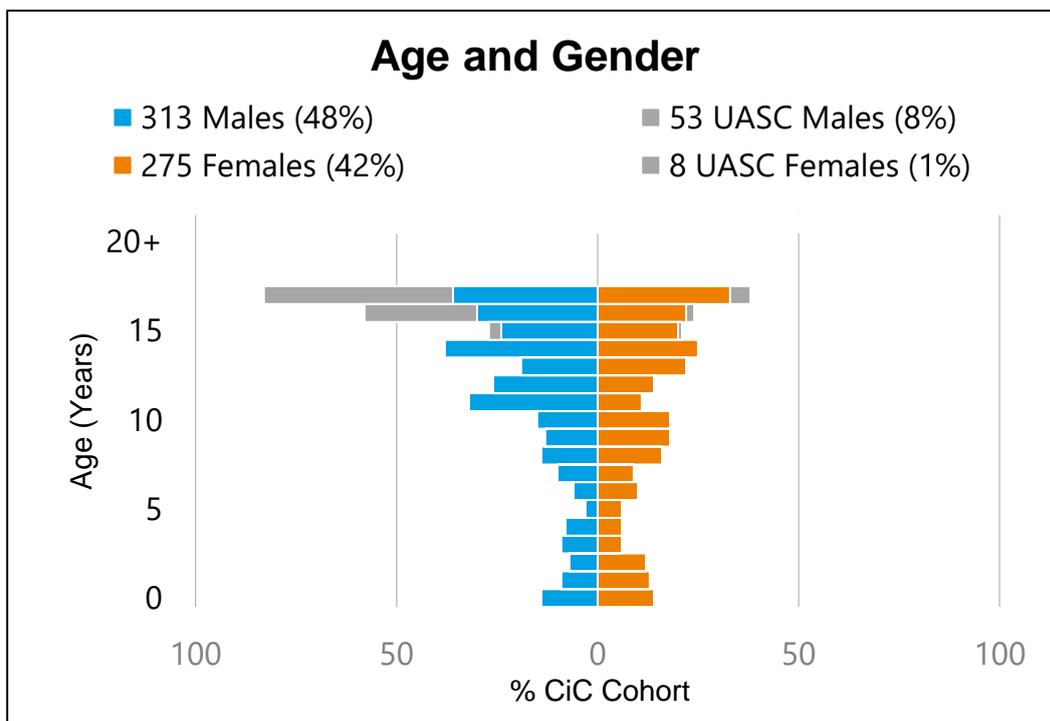
As of 31 March 2021, Cambridgeshire County Council was responsible for caring for and looking after 664 Children in Care (excluding children in respite care), a decrease when compared to the 730 children in Care at the end of March 2020.

This decreasing number of young people represents the continued focus across all services on preventing young people coming into care where appropriate. And also focusing on children in care exiting at the appropriate time for them.

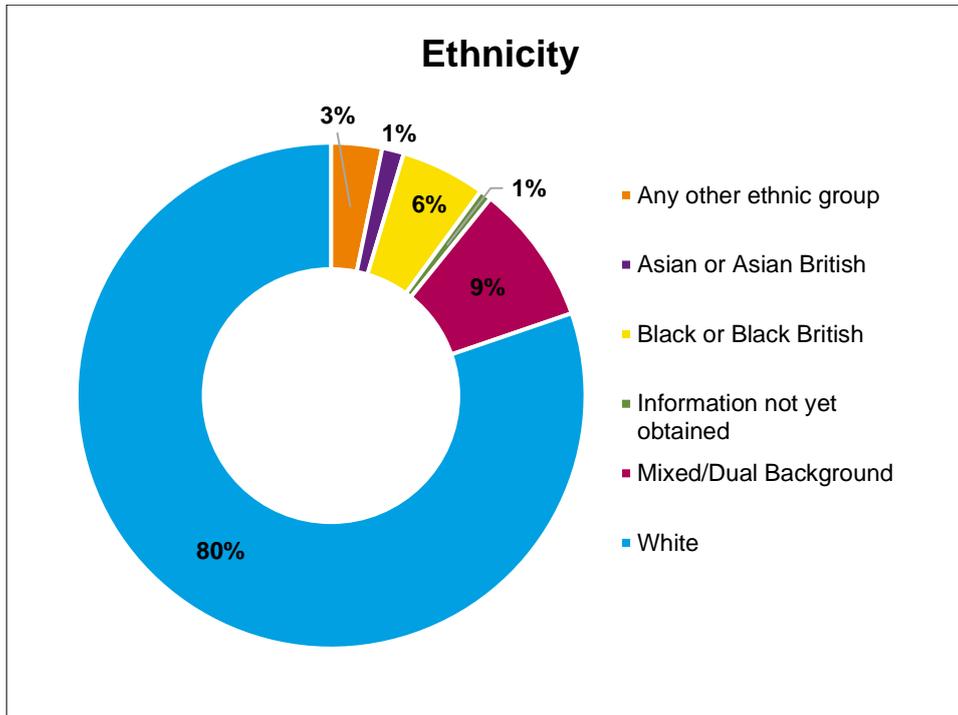
This is an extended piece of work that is ongoing and builds on the reduction of children and young people in care as per last year report where a reduction from 770 to 730 was reported.

At the end of the year there were 65 children in care with a recorded disability, representing 9% of the care population. Of these the most prominent disabilities recorded are Learning Difficulties and Autism and Asperger Syndrome.

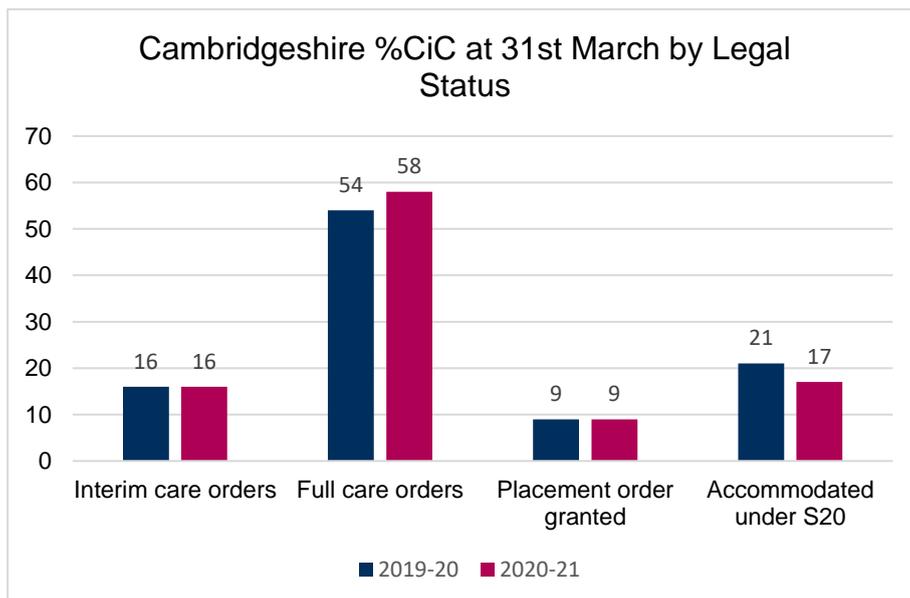
The chart below shows the age and gender of Cambridgeshire's Children in Care as of 31 March 2020. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children made up 9% of the care population and as can be seen they are represented in the older age groups.



The chart below shows the ethnicity of Children in Care as of the 31 March 2021.



The chart below provides a breakdown of the legal status of children as of the 31 March 2021. The numbers in brackets represent the numbers of children.



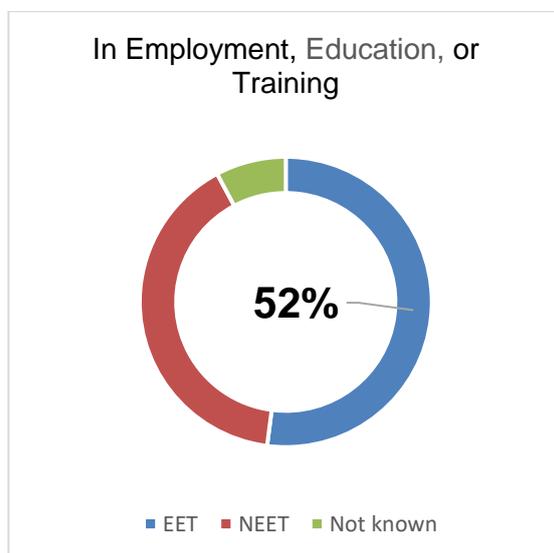
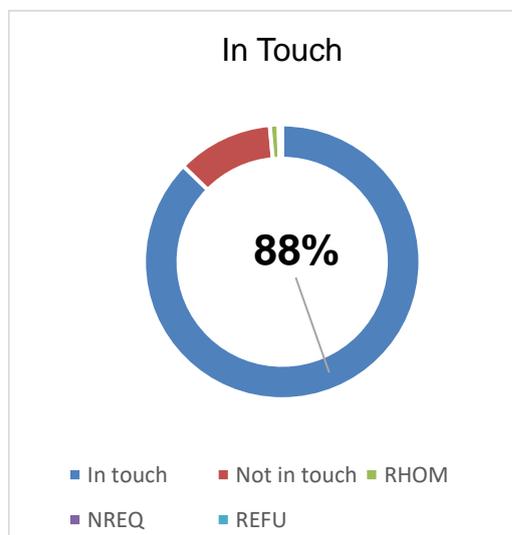
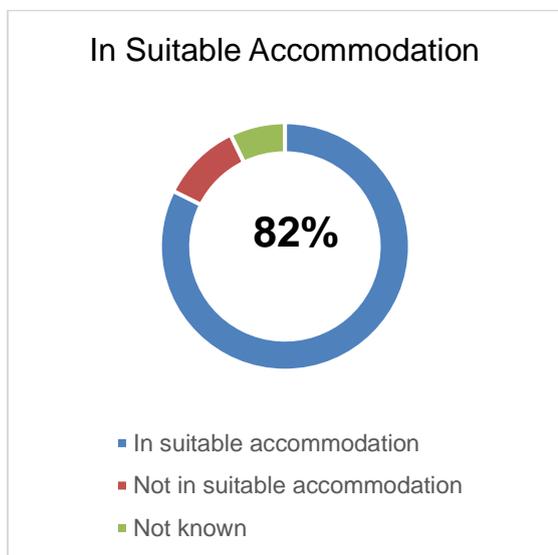
Care Leavers:

As of the 31 March 2021 the leaving care population consists of 488 young people, compared to 416 children at the end of 2020 and when compared to the 2019 figure of 360 which is an increase of 35% in two years.

We do recognise that the care leaving cohort will continue to rise in the coming years as a result of legislation extending the support of Personal Advisors to all care leavers up to the age of 25 years (Children and Social Work Act 2017) which is something the service is actively future planning for.

To support our care leavers, specialist posts have also been created: a Local Offer Personal Advisor, an Education, Employment and Training Coordinator and a Homelessness Reduction Personal Advisor.

26 Care Leavers (6.3%) have a recorded disability and of these the most common conditions recorded are Autism or Asperger Syndrome (46%), Behavioural Difficulties (23%), and Learning Difficulties (19%).



Priorities – performance:

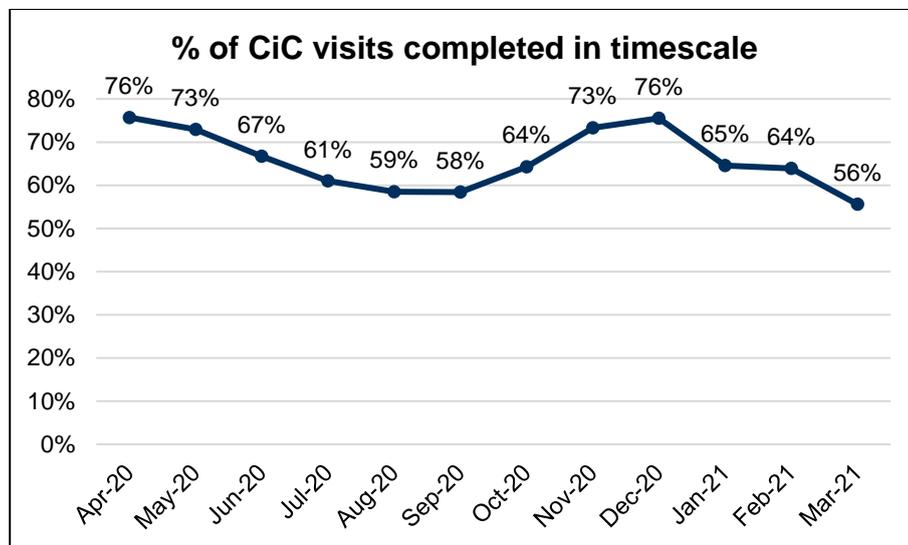
Statutory visits

One of the key indicators is the percentage of children in care receiving regular visits from their social worker.

In January 2020, Cambridgeshire Children's Services moved its case management system to a new system (Liquidlogic). As part of this move there were a number of changes to reporting which included a change in the definition of how visits were reported.

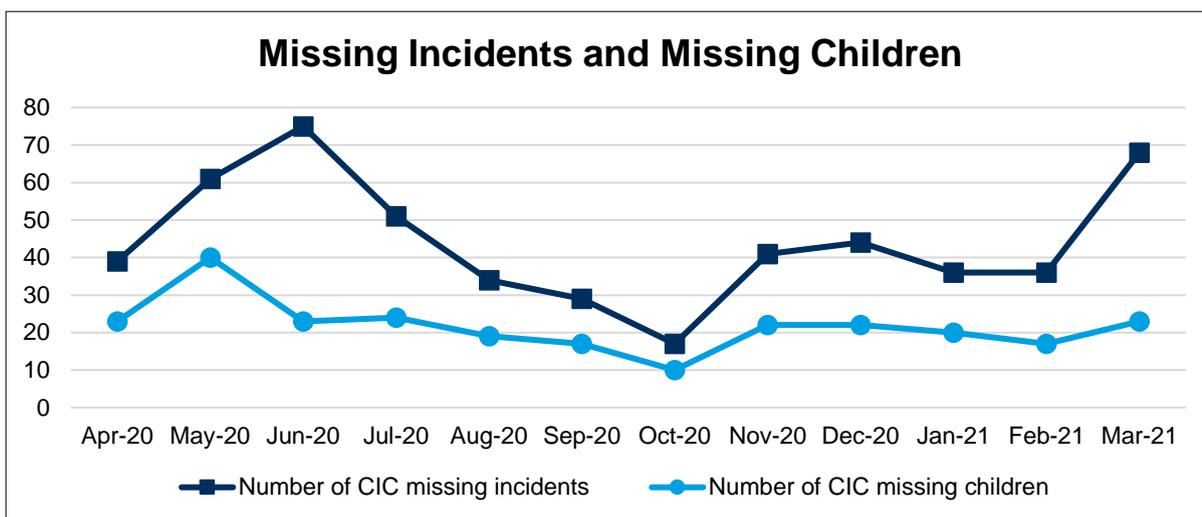
This graph shows the percentage of visits completed in each month that were in timescale. Unfortunately the recording system is unable to show virtual visits which were undertaken during the Covid19 Pandemic which is why the percentage show as low.

In March 2021 from the 570 visits due 322 were seen face to face with 209 virtually, this equates to 93% seen within timescale

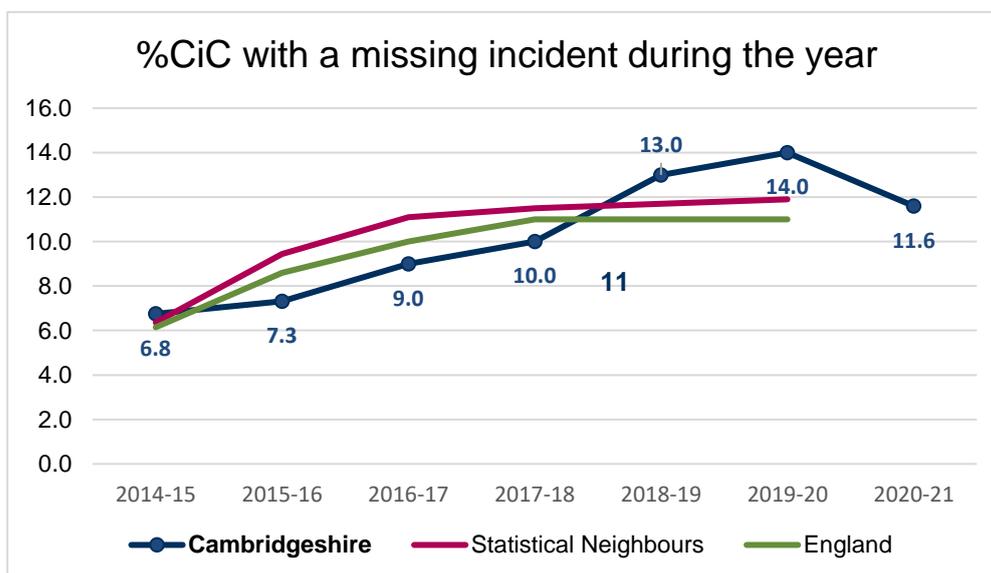


Children in Care Missing:

Another key indicator relating to this priority is the number of children who are reported missing and how many times they have been reported as missing. The graph below captures these figures and show that a small number of children will have been reported missing on a number of occasions. These children and their plans are monitored carefully with increased oversight from the social work teams alongside our partner agencies such as the police.



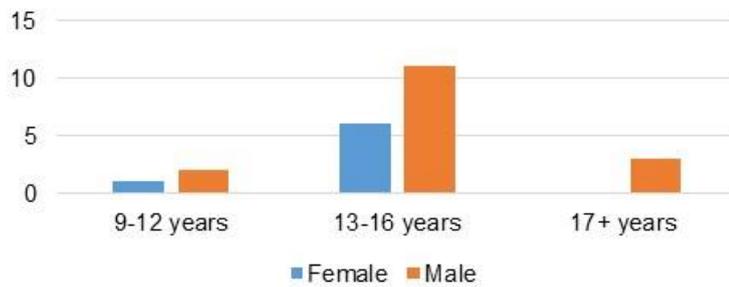
The graph below details the comparative data showed that Cambridgeshire has previously reported more children missing than other local authorities but this has now reduced to a similar percentage again.



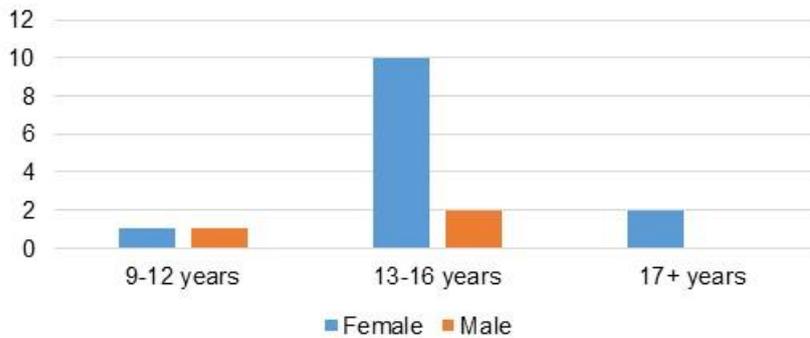
The number and timeliness of Return Home interviews (RHI's) with children and young people who have been reported missing is another key indicator relating to this priority. In Cambridgeshire the RHI's are conducted by specialist staff within the Missing, Exploited and Trafficked HUB (MET HUB). The MET HUB sits within the Integrated Front Door which enables timely access to key information about children and families from across partner agencies.

The following two graphs show the number of children assessed as at risk and under what category at the end of March 2021.

CIC Criminal Exploitation by Age & Gender

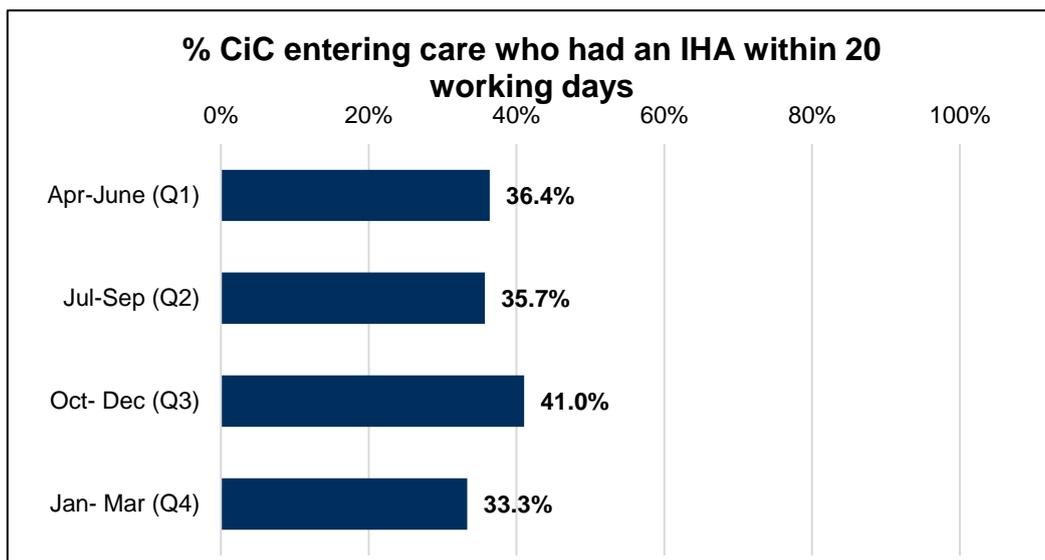


CIC CSE by Age & Gender



Health of children in care:

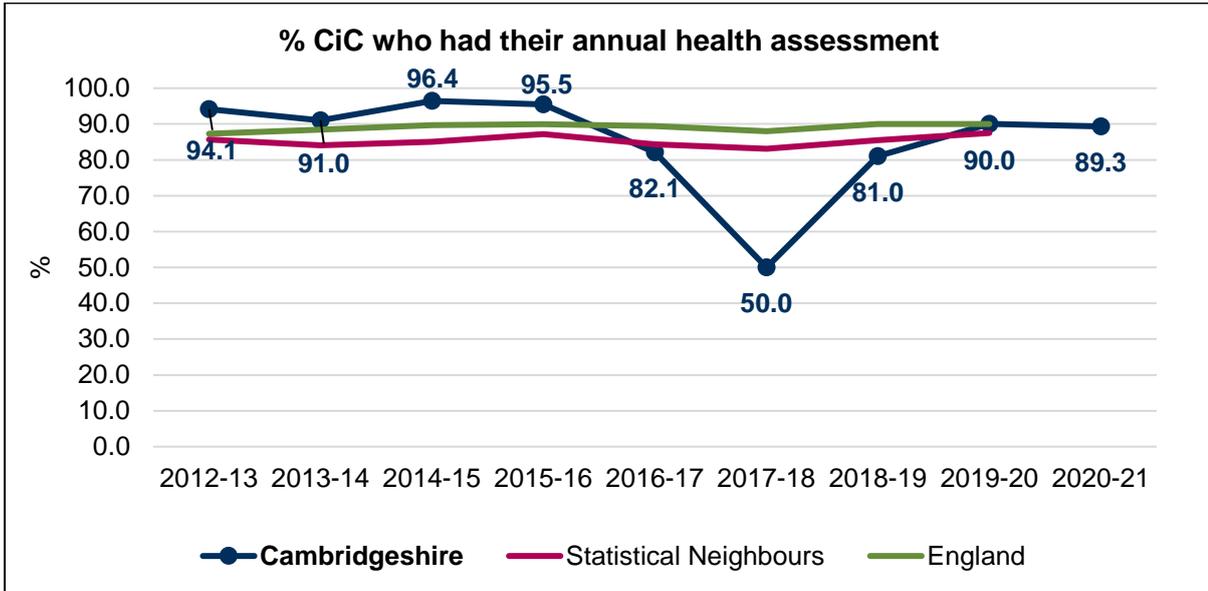
The graph below shows that whilst we have seen steady improvement throughout the year, we still need to significant improve on our performance to make sure that the initial health needs of children in care are responded to in a timely way. Initial Health Assessments can be delayed for a number of reasons such as obtaining consent which allows referrals to be made to health, delayed clinic appointments and non-attendance at clinic appointments. There are also different arrangements that apply to children who live in Cambridgeshire and those who live outside of Cambridgeshire that affect how other health authorities priorities Cambridgeshire children.



A joint working group completed a great deal of activity around health assessments during this reporting year and now that the new case management system is in place, requests for assessments are triggered automatically when children come into care and a health questionnaire within the system pre-populates information to ensure that health colleagues have all the information they need in order to be able to carry out effective medicals. Whilst there has been an understandable delay due to the Covid-19 pandemic, these new processes are now live within the Liquid Logic system. Ensuring improvement and scrutinising this activity will remain a priority for the Sub- Committee next year.

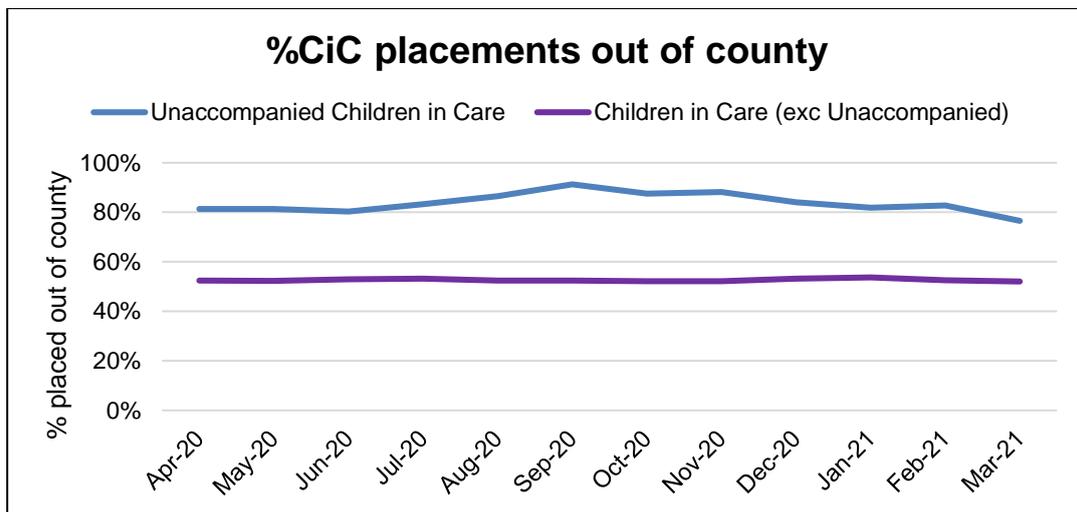
The chart below shows the percentage of children who received their annual health assessment, this is the cohort of children on the 31 March who have been in care continuously for over 12 months and received their health assessment within the last 12 months (or 6 months for under 5 year olds).

% CiC who had their annual health assessment

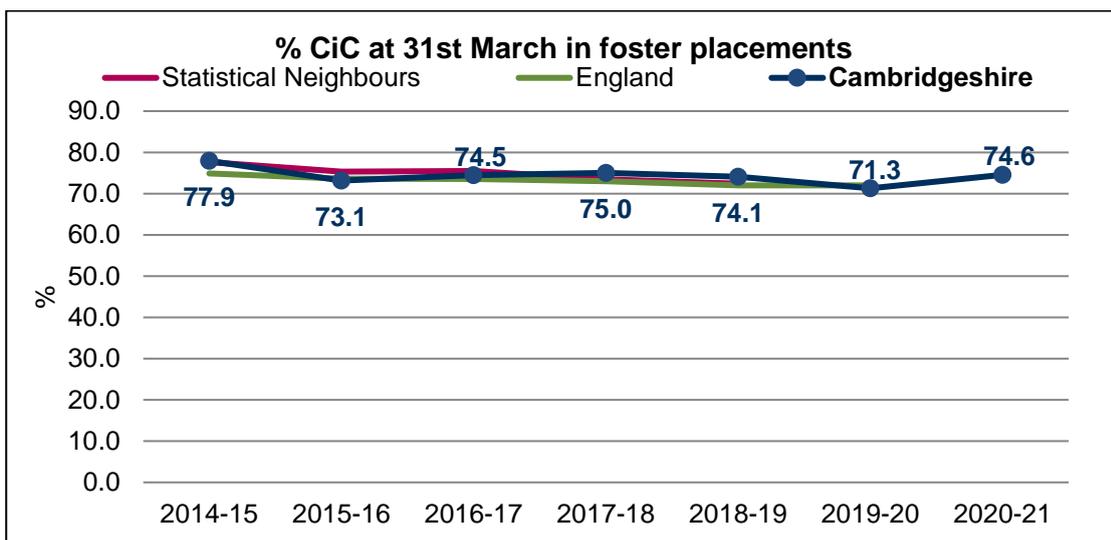


Placements for children in care

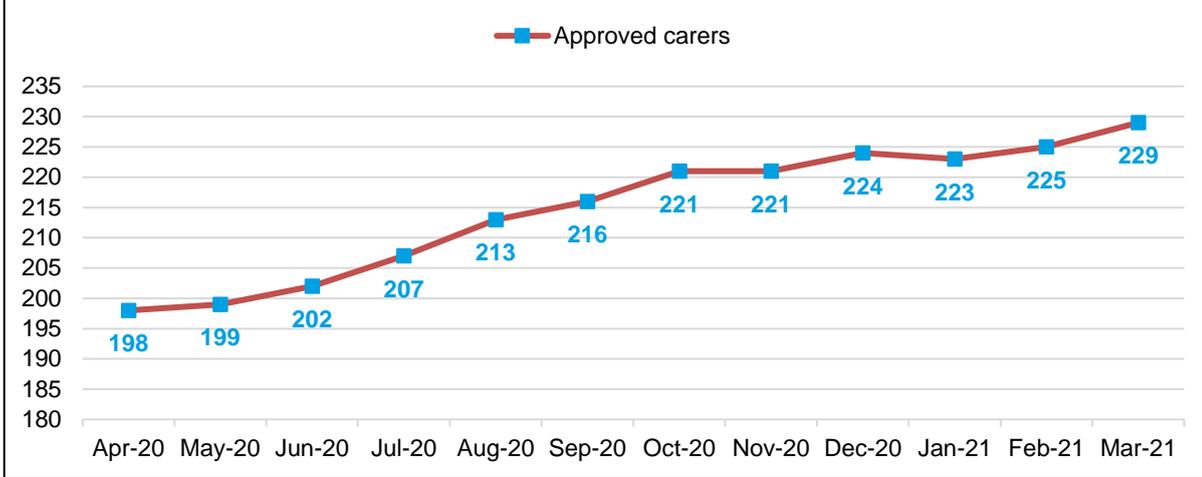
The graphs below show the percentage of children living out of county and those living out of county and over 20 miles from their home with 35% of the total children in care cohort living further than 20 miles outside of Cambridgeshire's borders. The number of children living outside of Cambridgeshire (excluding unaccompanied children) rose by 9.0% by November 2019 before decreasing to 85% in March 2020, the same as at the start of the year. It must be noted that unaccompanied young people are often supported to live in communities outside of Cambridgeshire that better meet their religious and cultural needs.



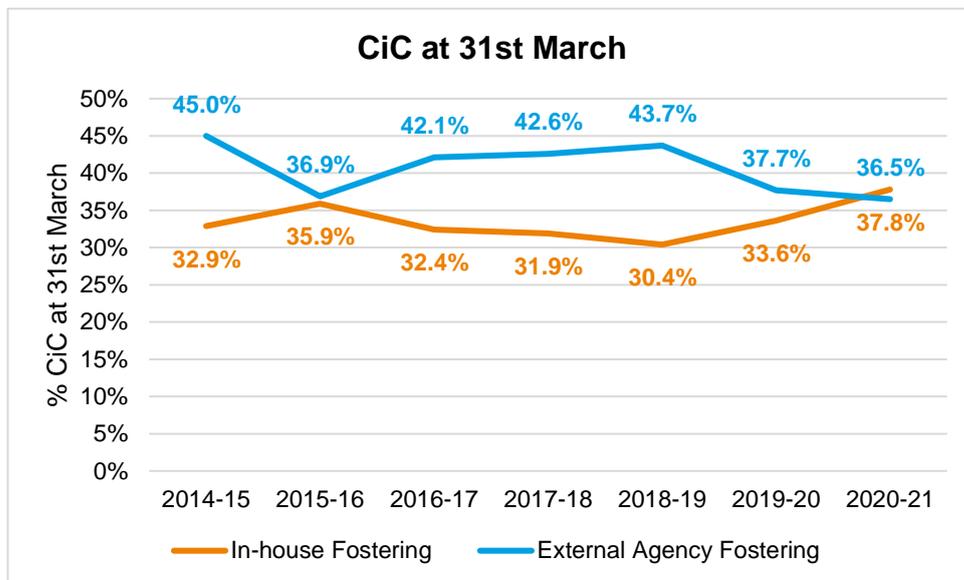
The graph below shows the % of CiC placed in foster placements compared to statistical neighbour's and nationally.



Number of In-house fostering carers

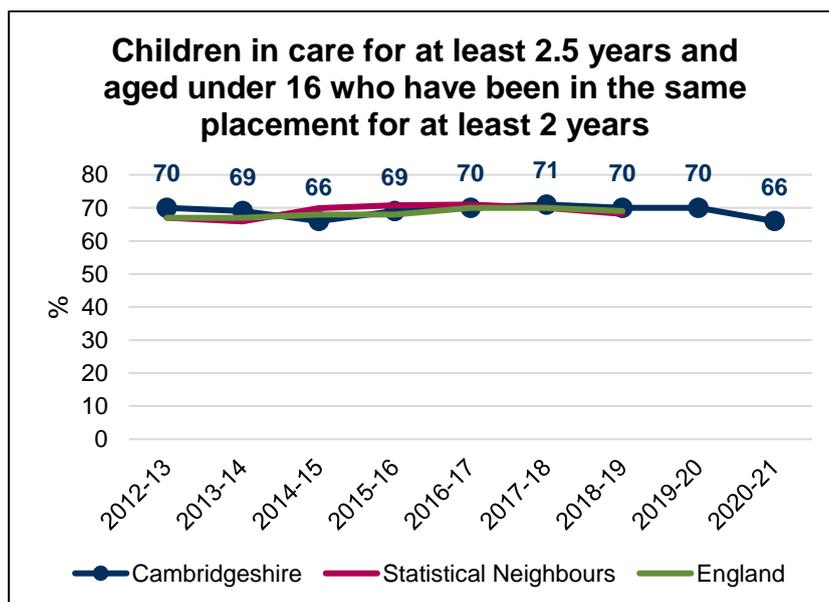
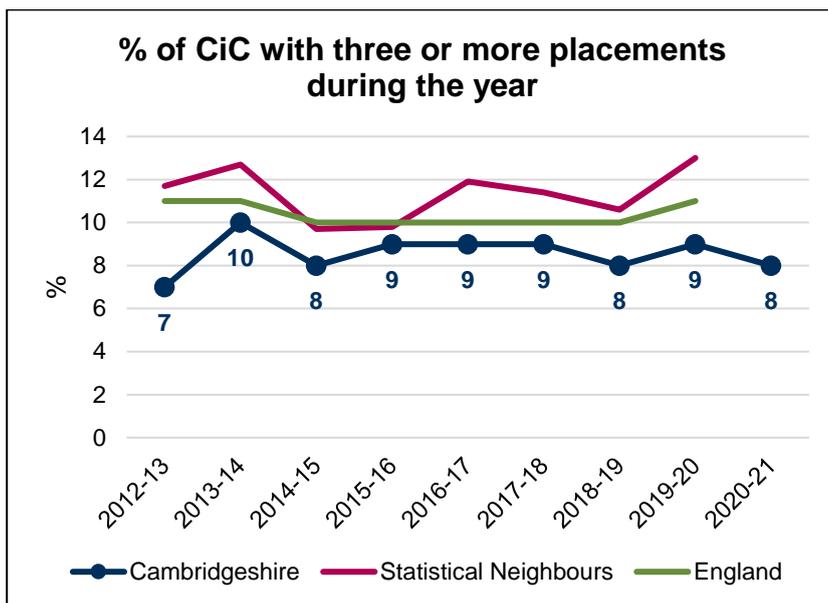


The chart below details the percentage of children living with Cambridgeshire County Council foster placement and those children living with carers from an independent fostering agency.



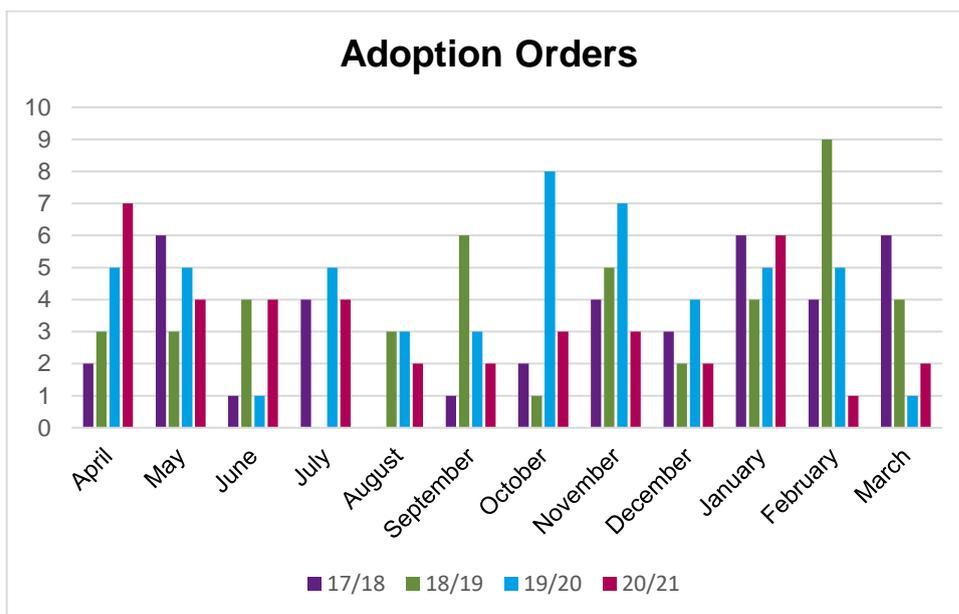
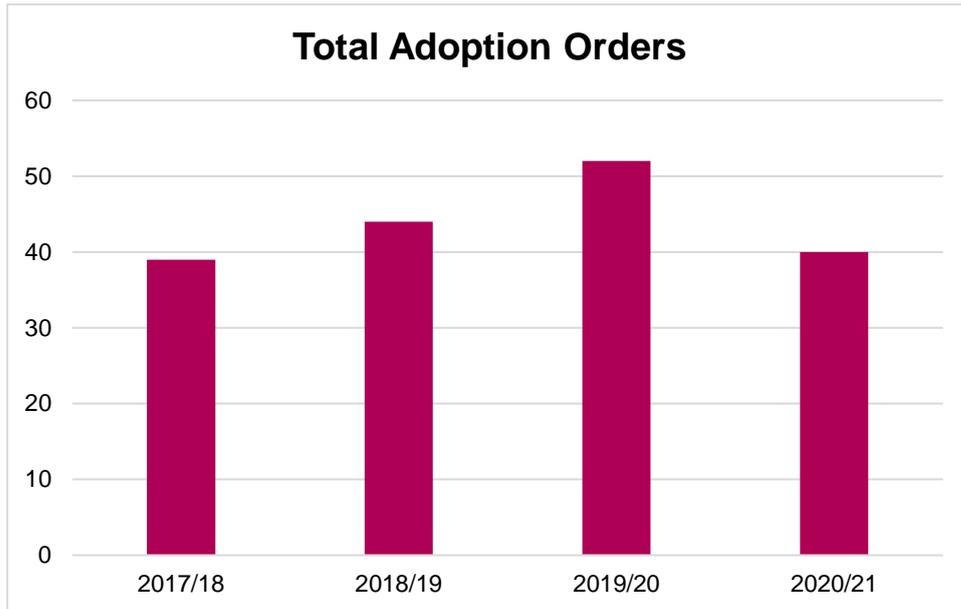
Placement Stability:

Performance in relation to the stability of care arrangements for Cambridgeshire's children in care remains better than our statistical neighbors reported last year, with less children experiencing three or more moves during the year and more children being cared for by the same carers for at least 2 years.



Adoption:

The graph below shows a steady increase in the number of Cambridgeshire children who have been adopted although this has dropped this year which would be expected given the Covid19 pandemic. 40 Adoption Orders were granted in Court during 2020/21 which is high as the court were prioritising other orders for large part of the year.



The graph below shows the age range of children at the point their Adoption Orders were granted, ages ranged from 10 months to over 12 years. The average age for children moving in with their pre adoptive families was 3 years and 3 months in 2019/20.

