

Looked After Children & Care Leavers

Corporate Parenting Annual Performance Report

1st April 2016 – 31st March 2017

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Key Messages

- 9% 2016-17 increase in number of Looked After Children in 12 months (50 children per 10,000 locally, compared to 60 per 10,000 nationally)
- 6% of LAC population are children with disabilities and 9.9% are children seeking asylum

- 'No Wrong Door' model being created to give stability for families reducing the volume of children becoming LAC by better support in communities at an earlier stage
- 51% of looked after children were placed out of County (national target is 20%) but 31% of this group were out of county and 20 plus miles from home
- Cambridgeshire Fostering Service has recruited more carers in this reporting period than in previous years
- Children placed at a distance do not always experience the same equity of services as children closer to home
- Children out of county have the same access to health, education but they may not experience additional visits from professionals due to distances involved
- The highest proportion of placements made consistently is for the 11-15 and 16+ age groups
- 11.7% of the LAC population experienced 3+ placement moves. Reasons include children moving to their permanent/adoptive placement, and experiencing placement disruption
- 69% of children achieved placement stability – in placement for 2.5 years plus (national target is 70%)
- 54% of care leavers aged 17-21 were in Education, Employment or Training, compared to 30% 12 months ago
- The number of care leavers deemed to be suitable accommodation has decreased from 90% to 86%
- Cambridge Fostering have 107 fostering households approved for children aged 5 years plus
- 39 children were granted Adoption Orders during 2016/17 – an increase by 1 from the previous year

Local Context

Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) is committed to providing high quality, cost effective public services that reflect the views and wishes of the people of Cambridgeshire.

Cambridgeshire remains an identified Government Growth Area, so CCC is continuing to improve services against a backdrop of growth in housing, employment and the economy – right across the county.

This report provides information on activity in respect of Looked After Children and Care Leavers from 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017.

Performance Data Source

- 'One' (ICS database)
- Access to Resources Team placements dataset
- Business Intelligence Analytical Team

Corporate Parenting

The role of the Corporate Parenting Board is to ensure that the Council fulfils its responsibilities to

Looked After Children and Care Leavers in accordance with the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2015-2018 and the Council's Pledge to Looked After Children.

Corporate Parents including Members, Officers and Partners are to oversee the effective consultation and engagement of children and young people and carers in the planning and delivery of services.

The Corporate Parenting Board meets quarterly.

The Looked After Children and Care Leavers Performance Data is discussed at each meeting, as well as progress on the 5 distinct Outcome Areas within the **Corporate Parenting Strategy** (2015-2018). These are as follows:

Outcome 1: Looked After Children fulfil their educational potential

Outcome 2: Care leavers successfully gain employment

Outcome 3: Looked After Children have good health and wellbeing

Outcome 4: Looked After Children and care leavers are well equipped to be parents

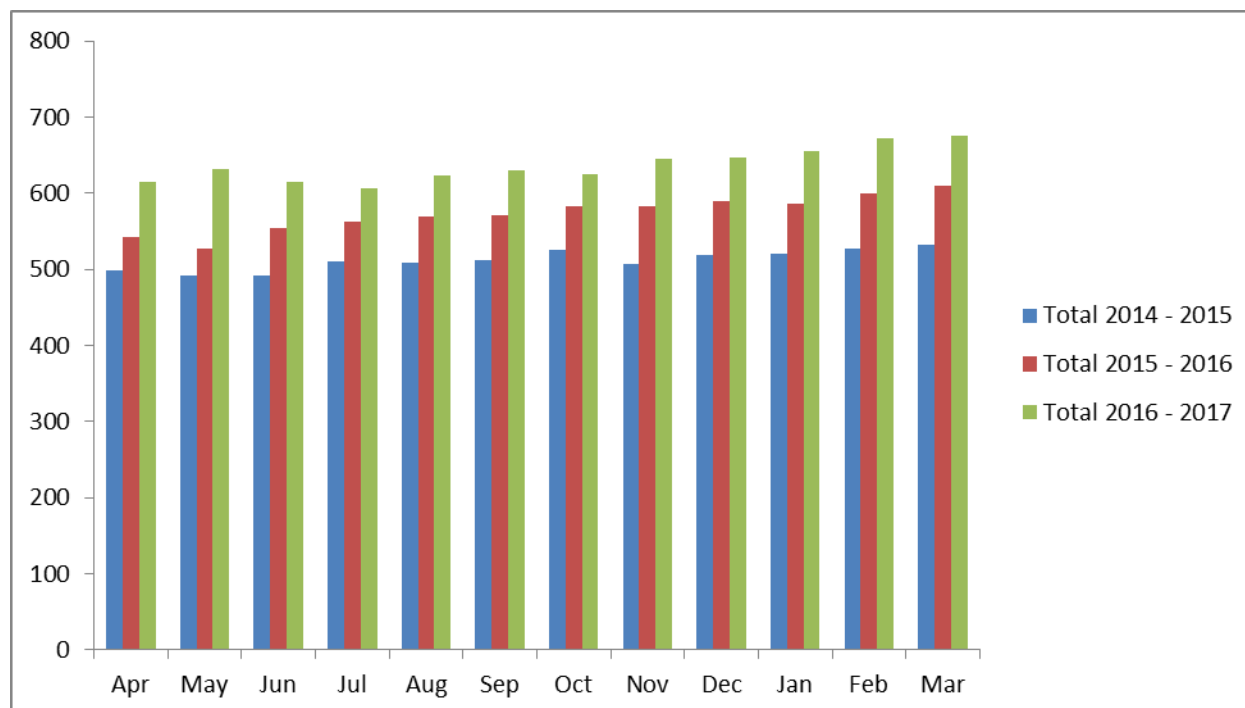
Outcome 5: Cambridgeshire Looked After Children and young people placed outside the county are not disadvantaged

Young people representatives from Voices Matter (Children in Care Council) are invited to attend part of the Board meetings to discuss their work and to provide questions and challenge to Members, Officers and Partners.

Our Commitment in The Pledge to Looked After Children and Care Leavers

"As Corporate Parents we will ensure you feel safe, supported and cared for. We will respect and listen to you and involve you wherever possible. This is our pledge and our promise to you".

Numbers of Looked After Children



There has been an increase in Cambridgeshire's Looked After Child (LAC) population 2016-17 by 9% from the previous year. In this reporting period, 50 children per 10,000 were looked after. The figures for England in 2016 show 60 children per 10,000 are looked after and our statistical neighbours are just over 42 per 10,000.

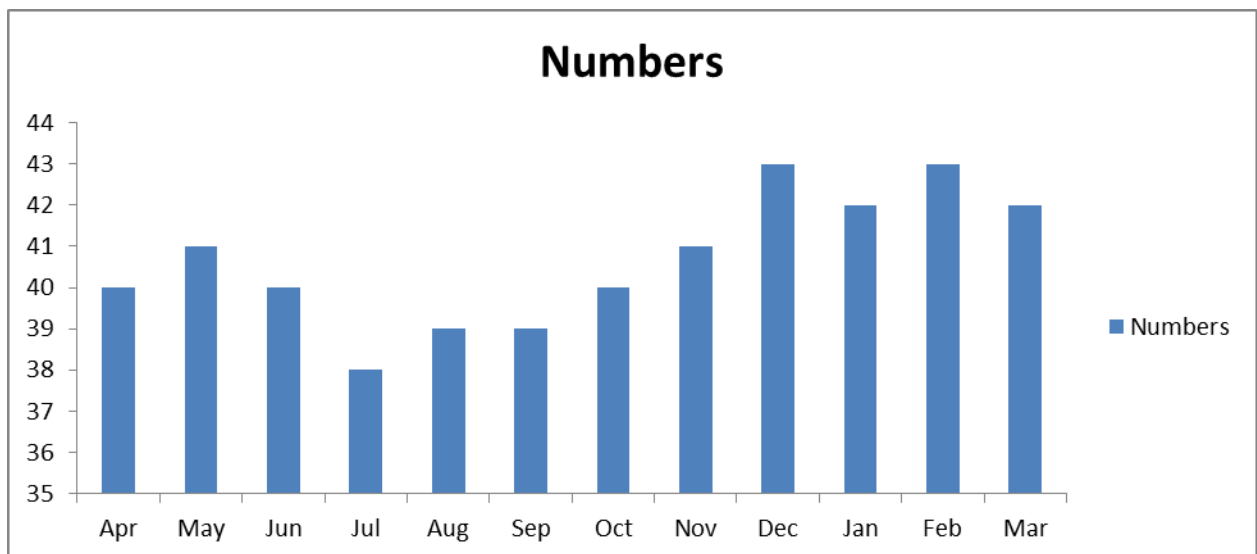
Cambridge is one of the fastest growing cities in England and whilst it is in a strong economic position*, its rate of growth does place a number of challenges which impact on children's social care. These include increased pressure on suitable and affordable housing for families and residents with low skills levels. Research* indicates that these factors are among the multitude of reasons children become looked after. Cambridgeshire therefore expects to see an increase in the looked after population year on year.

Action

The Children's Change Programme has created a 'No Wrong Door' model. This is made up of a 24/7 multi-disciplinary integrated service working with young people aged 10 and over, their families and their care providers. The service works to create stability and direction out of crisis by never stepping away. The team have access to a range of support packages that they can draw upon to support placements and young people to ensure young people's outcomes improve. Essentially by putting the work in at the front end, will improve support to families reducing the risk factors causing children to become LAC and will mean those who are looked after will experience better outcomes and stability..

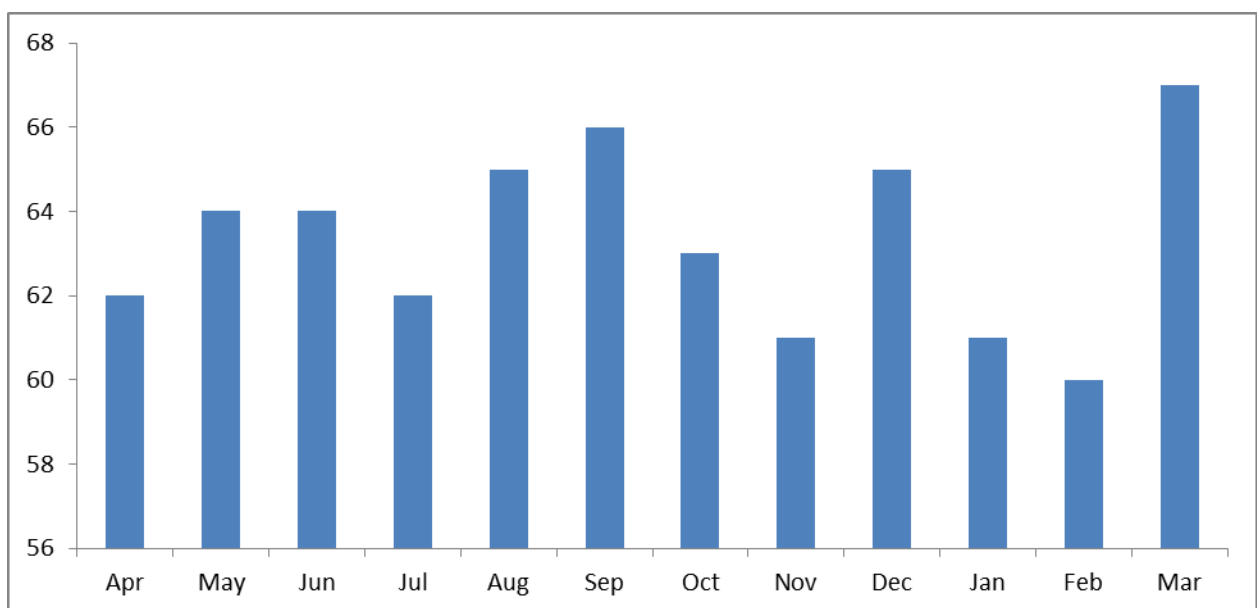
*Briefing Paper, Number 04470, 5 October 2015, By Yago Zyed and Rachel Harker, Children in Care in England Statistics: England

Children with Disabilities



The number of children with disabilities who are Looked After long-term has increased by 2 since 31 March 2016, bringing the total to 42. This is 6.2% of the LAC population. Just over half of children with disabilities are placed Out of County and are mostly in specialist residential placements. Whilst this does reflect some of the complex needs of this cohort of children, there continues to be a need to increase the number of specialist foster placements for children with disabilities. In addition, approximately 25% of the LAC population have an Education Health and Care Plan (formerly called a Statement of Special Educational Needs) for a range of reasons including learning difficulties and behavioural issues. This means that carers with a range of skills are required to meet the needs of children with a range of additional needs.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)



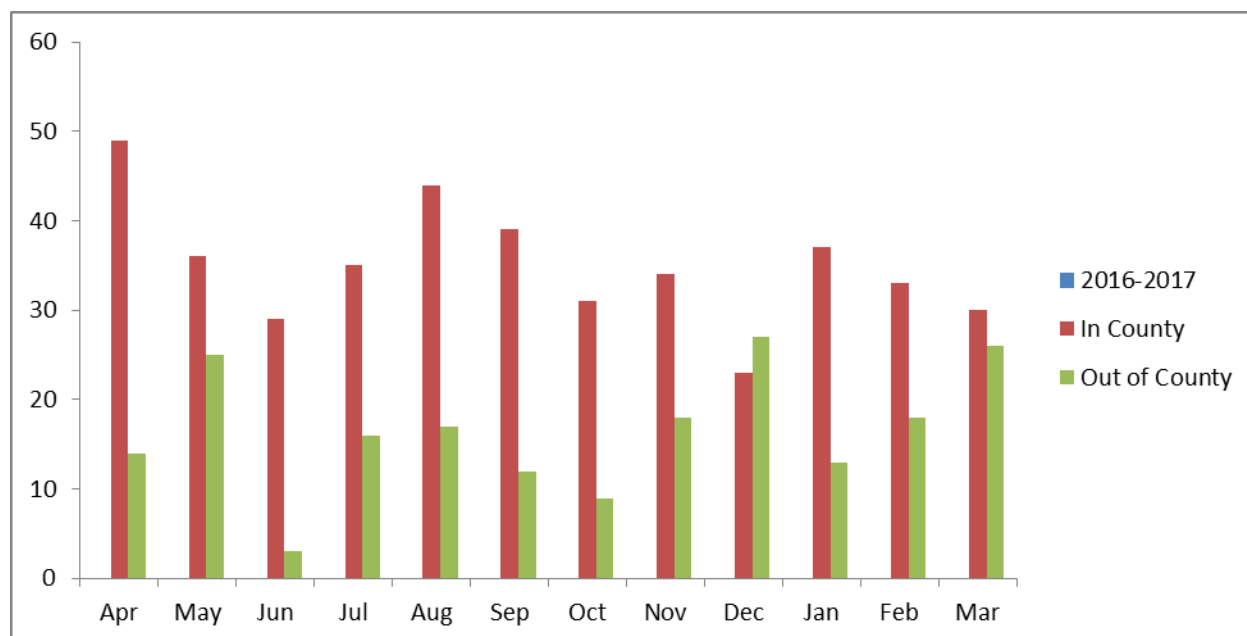
The number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) has remained fairly stable throughout 2016/17 and this group represent 9.9% of Cambridgeshire’s LAC population. Most UASC are assessed as being 16/17 years old and are placed in semi-independent accommodation in Peterborough. Monitoring visits to young people happen within statutory timescales, but these young people can experience isolation as a result of language barriers and being at distance from their home authority.

These young people are supported to access health and education services in the same way as all other LAC. However, there can be challenges in obtaining good information about their family history such as medical conditions. All children have health assessments and access treatment as needed. The Virtual School support UASC to access Education as a Second Language courses, but enrolment can take several weeks and this causes frustration for young people who are keen to learn and progress.

Action

Work is happening to improve links with local colleges and to speed up the admission process. More young people are being placed within Cambridge City. An advocacy group for UASC is being developed to offer additional support for this vulnerable group to have a voice in their care. Many UASC access faith settings and this does provide an opportunity to experience life in their communities and to remain connected to their religious beliefs.

In and out of county placements



The above table shows new placements made, Between April 2016 – March 2017 an average of 68% of placements are made to in County provisions. Whilst the trend to make in County placements has continued throughout the year, quarter 4 saw a slight increase to the proportion of placements to out of county provisions (36.32% on average across quarter 4, compared to 32% across the year). Of these out of county placements, 6 were to Residential Children’s Homes, 12 to Supported Accommodation provisions, and 39 to Foster Care (all but 1 of which was an IFA carer). This placement composition demonstrates a continued

need to increase in county capacity in respect of fostering and supported accommodation placements in particular.

The number of children placed In County year ending 31 March 2017 was 337 compared with 289 for year ending 31 March 2014, so an increase of 48 (7.3%) in a 3 year period. At the end of March 2017, 51% of looked after children were placed out of County but 31% of this group were out of county and 20 miles from home. The national target is 20%. Cambridgeshire has always has a high number of children placed out of County. Analysis into the reason for this trend concludes that as a University City, some potential foster carer candidates actually prefer to be recruited as host families to overseas students visiting for short periods. This option requires little or no training and short-term commitment which may be more appealing to families thinking of entering a fostering type role. An additional factor which influences foster carer recruitment is around the demographic of the County. There is affluence around the City, but there are areas of deprivation that cover wide parts of the area, particularly in Fenland.

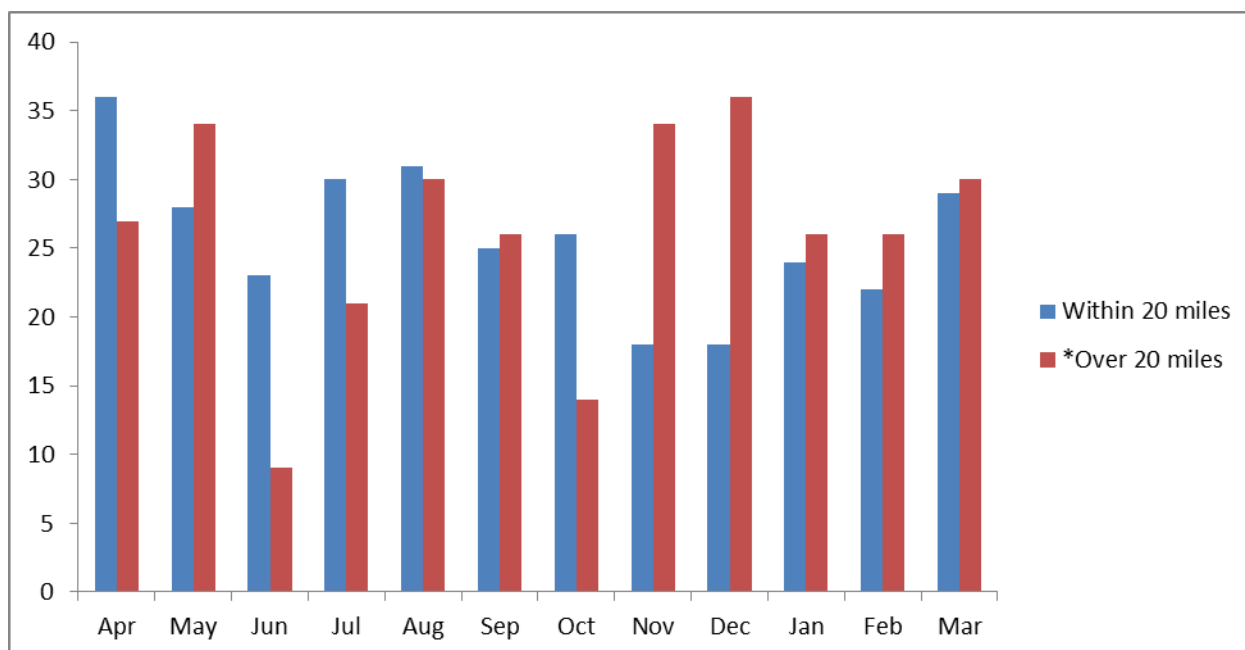
Action

There has been a decrease in the number of foster carers being recruited nationally. However, Cambridgeshire Fostering Service has had an excellent 12 months, recruiting more carers than in previous years. A number of Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) carers looking after Cambridgeshire children have chosen to move across to the County's in house provision and have in turn been able to offer their additional 'bed spaces' to Cambridgeshire children. Cambridgeshire's fostering recruitment campaign is ongoing.

The Authority is challenged by the accommodation offer to young people leaving care. The vast majority of provision accessed is in Peterborough and this is particularly significant in the availability of placements to young people seeking asylum.

Children placed at a distance do not always experience the same equity of services as children closer to home. There is a working group tasked to look at what the experience is of children out of County. It is known that this group access education and health services in the same way as children in County. However, children placed away from home do travel for their contact, but the frequency and supervision arrangements are not altered by distance. The local and national offer for children with mental health needs, where there is no diagnosis is desperately lacking and work is happening to address this, but it should be noted that this has been an issue for many years. What is different for all Cambridgeshire children however is the availability to Clinical support. Children placed away from home participate in meetings about them and are visited by staff within statutory timescales. However, drop-in visits and catch ups do not happen in the same way and this can mean that relationships with new professionals take longer to form for children out of County. These children do not have a voice in participation services in the same way as others. This again is an issue nationally.

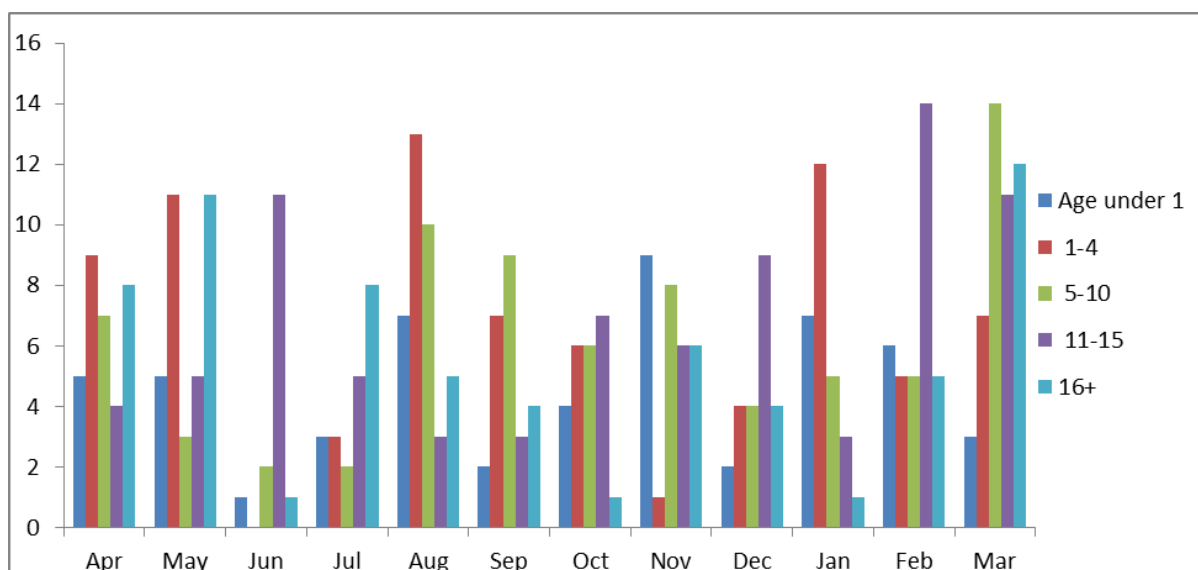
Distance from home



*Placements over 20 miles from home can still be in-county while placements within 20 miles from home may just be over the border in a neighbouring authority.

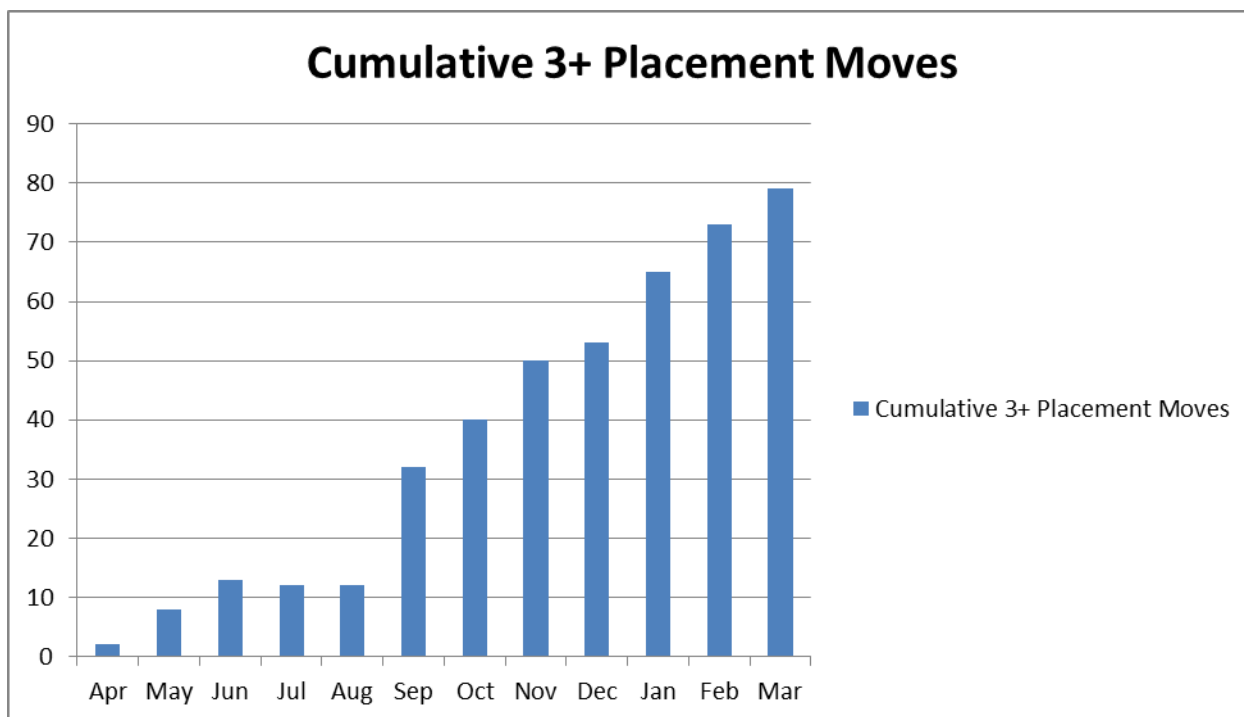
At 31/03/2017 there were 575 placements that Access to Resources made (this number is not the LAC number and does not include young people in kinship / pre-adoptive placements). Of these 575 placements, 157 were out of county and over 20 miles from the young person's home. As such 27.78% of young people were placed more than 20 miles from their home, outside the local authority boundary.

Age



The highest proportion of placements made consistently is for the 11-15 and 16+ age groups. This is a common pattern across the Eastern region. Placements for 11- 16 year olds, especially the older teenagers, are some of the more difficult to find placements, particularly foster placements because of their age, levels of need and behavioural issues. Comparisons to previous years has seen the percentage of young people within the 16+ age group increase. This is in part a reflection of the increased number of UASC placements. The vast majority of UASC fall within the 16+ age group. In the months of Apr - June 2016 placements were made for 18 UASC; 16 of these were aged 16+.

3+ Plus Moves



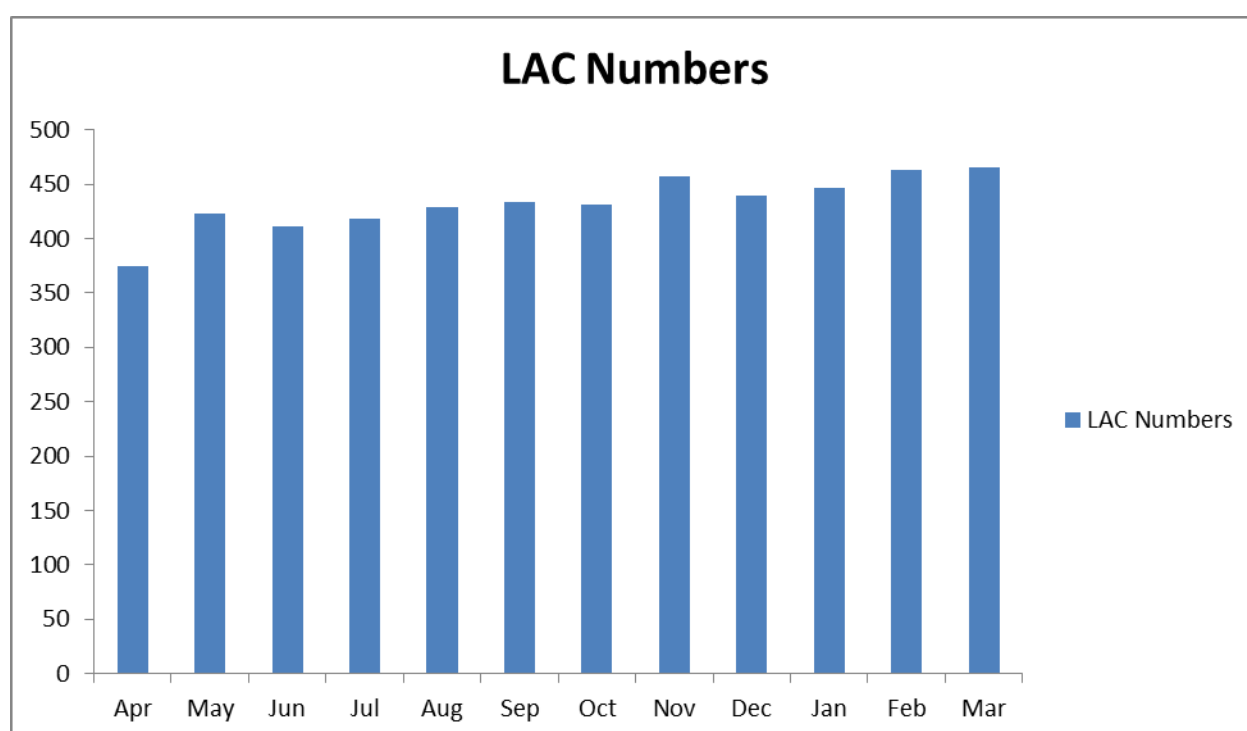
At the end of March 2017, 79 children had experienced 3 or more placement moves in the 12 month period. This equates to 11.7% of the LAC population. At the end of 2016, our statistical neighbours were at 9.7 and the figures for England were 10%. Figures for 2017 are not yet available.

It is important to identify moves beyond simply counting the number of placements children experience. Planned moves may occur on the basis that a child ceases to be looked after, Court Care plan for permanence is ratified and a child requires a long-term placement (for example when reunification has been assessed not to be a viable option), insufficient placement choice and/or emergency admission which may mean that children are moved to more appropriate placements when they become available. Our data suggests that moves are most likely amongst children and young people who had been looked after for less than twelve months. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the first 12 months is a critical time when social workers continue to work with families and Courts to assess and determine the long term needs of children. After this time, the long term plan is known and actioned.

To fully understand patterns of placement stability and instability, it is important to distinguish between purposive and beneficial moves, including rehabilitation home or placement with

adoptive carers and reactive and detrimental changes such as the breakdown of a long term placement. Children who experience 3 or more placement moves largely do so for positive reasons. However, there are a small but not insignificant number of children whom move around within the looked after system far beyond the first 12 months. Local audits tell us that these young people are in the older age range, 13 + and are well known to Children’s Social Care. These children tend to be accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act. The question as to ‘why’ seems in part to be that some of these children exit care on a relatively frequent basis when family crisis have abated and in an unplanned way. Consequently the return home unsustainable, causing the young person to experience a further care episode in a short space of time. Cambridgeshire has invested in the NSPCC’s reunification programme which is currently being delivered to staff. It is envisaged that the impact will lead to improved quality assessments and managed returns home where it is safe for children to do so. This should help with a reduction in children experiencing multiple placement moves.

Placement Stability

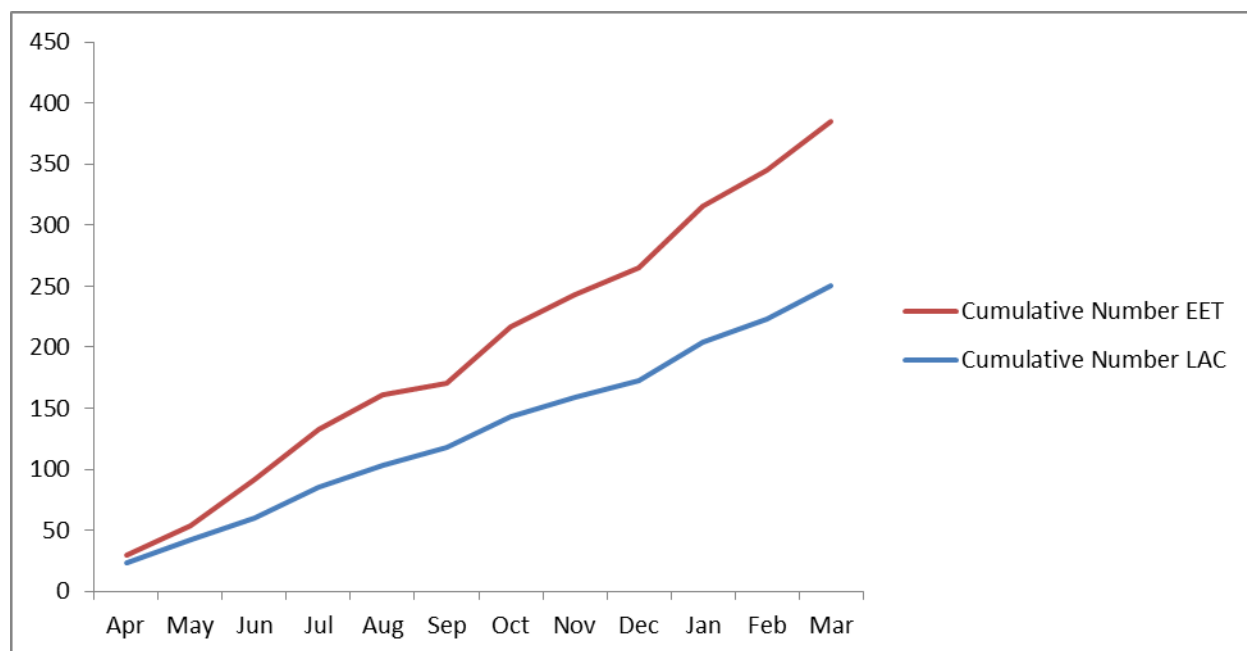


In the year April 2015 to March 2016 on average 60% of all Cambridgeshire Looked After Children achieved placement stability using the indicator of 2.5 years or more being in the same placement. In this reporting period, this figure rose to on average 69% month on month. The national target for England is 70%. Analysis of the data suggests that Cambridgeshire has improved the assessment and matching of children and carers. Other indicators are that there are improved support mechanisms for children and carers in placement, particularly when difficulties arise. Foster carer skills, quality and willingness to work with the care plan, family characteristics, and geographical location are all relevant in determining the success of placements. So, in Cambridgeshire although a high proportion of looked after children are placed out of county (and a significant number are in Peterborough) the target for children being in safe and stable placements has been achieved in 2016-2017. The proximity to children’s placement to their families and home communities is an important factor in helping children to stabilise within their placements.

Children under 10 in foster care or placed for adoption

At 31st March 2017, 221 out of the 262 LAC under the age of 10 were placed in foster care or placed for adoption. This equates to 84% of that cohort of children. The national target is 82%. It's encouraging to report that Cambridgeshire exceed national targets for this group. Performance is very slightly down on last year.

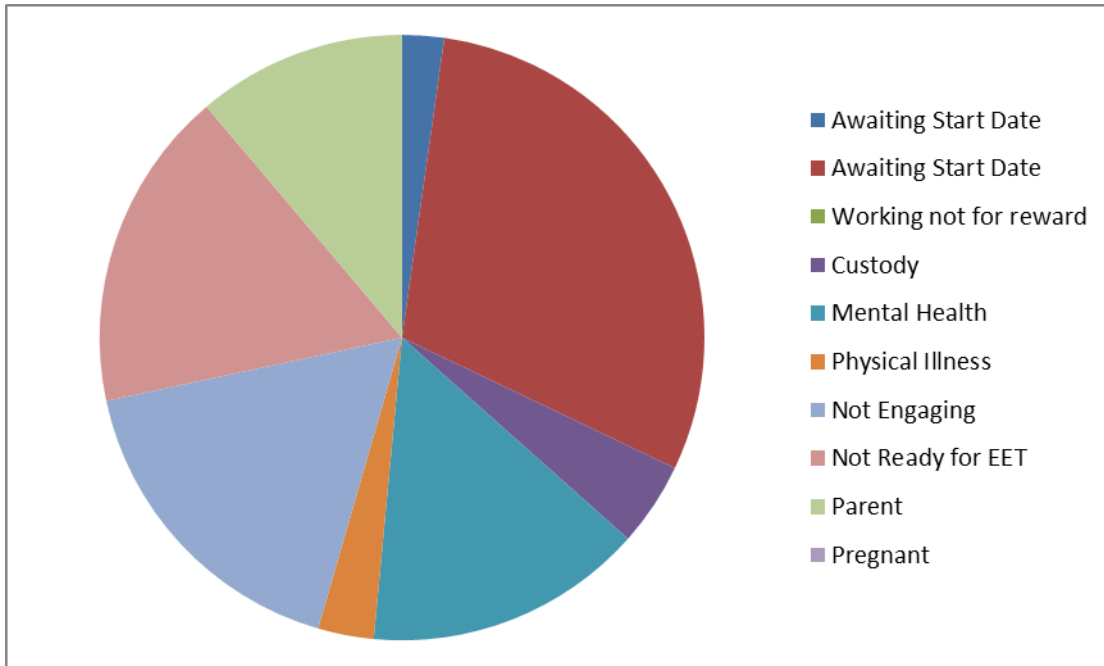
Care Leavers Engaged in Education, Employment or Training



In April 2016, 30% of young people aged 17-21 were engaged in education, employment or Training (EET) compared to 54% in March 2017. Key Performance Indicators for care leavers aged 17-21 accessing EET shows that targets set are progressively improving. At the end of March 2017, forty young people were ready and actively seeking employment or training. Almost 50% of these young people came late into the care system as young people who were homeless and additionally in need of social care support. 75% of these young people are supported by the 14-25 service ETE Co-ordinator. This group are the most likely to access EET within the short term. Of the young people not engaged in education employment or training (NEET), up to 14% of this group experience mental illness which makes them unable to progress with school or work and this is a worrying figure. See table below for further details.

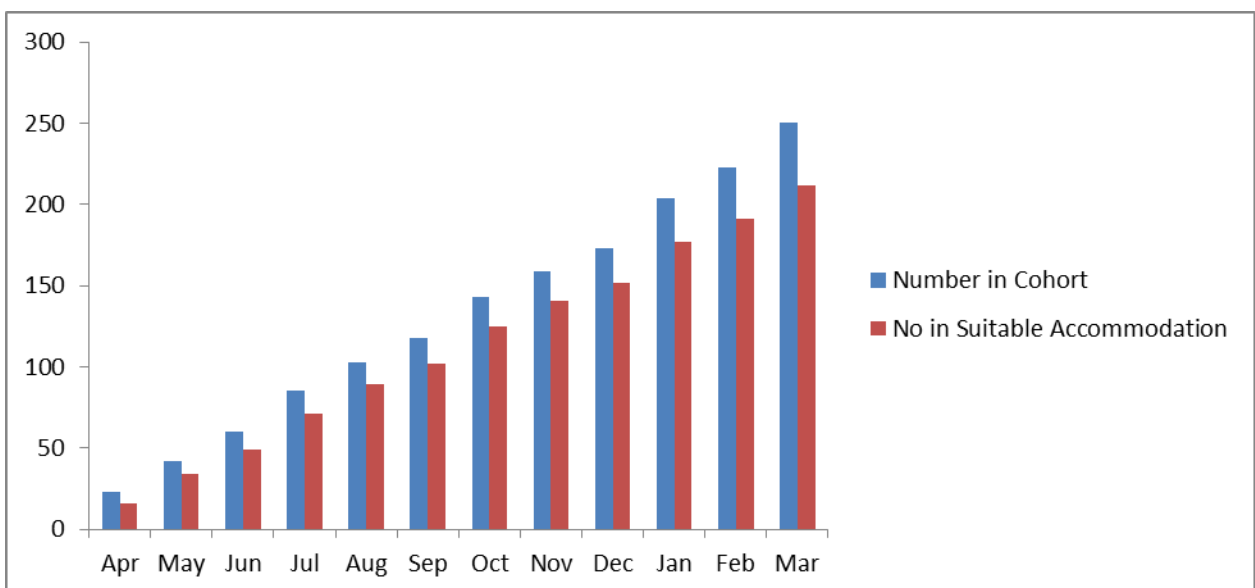
Care Leavers engaged in Education, Employment and Training (EET) and Not Engaged in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

There are a total of 385 Care Leavers. 248 of these are in Education, Employment or Training. 139 are NEET and the following table indicates the reasons why.



Some Care Leavers not engaging with the service are uncontactable, although efforts continue to develop these relationships. There are a variety of reasons as to why some care leavers are not 'work ready' including not currently having the social skills to engage with EET opportunities. Personal advisors and social workers support this group to develop their skills, but this remains an area of challenge. All young people in custody have access to EET opportunities but may choose not to engage. Some young people in this cohort will be receiving support from the National Asylum Support Service (NAAS). Although ETE opportunities are available to this group, they may not be their priority.

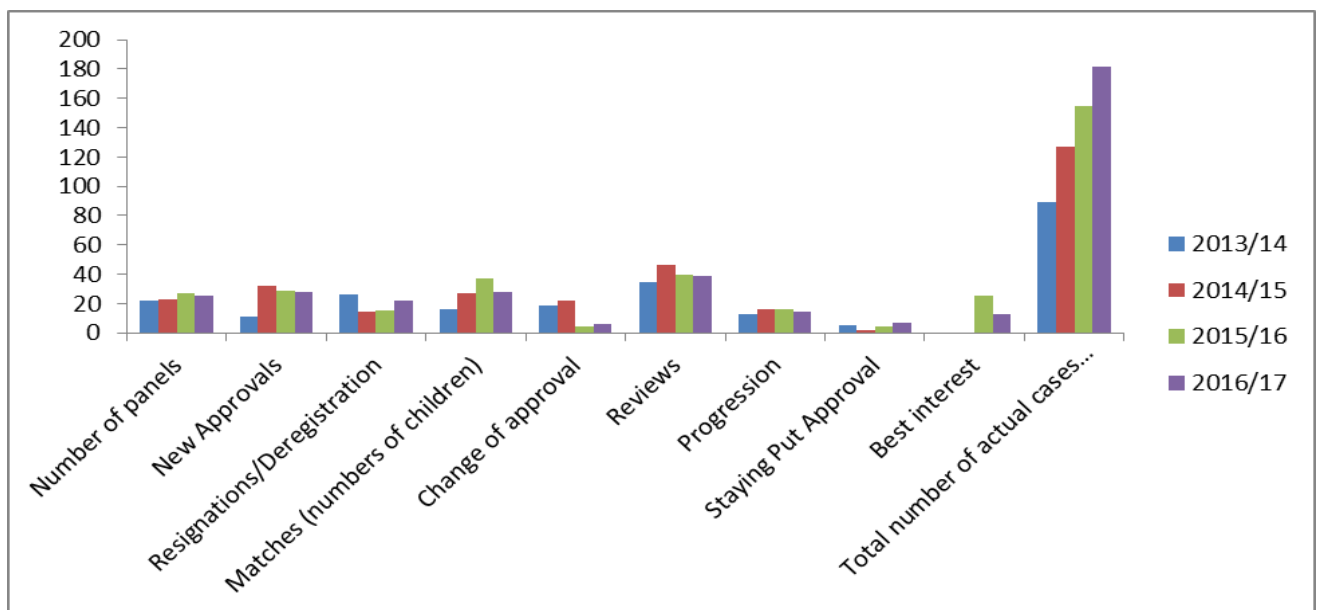
Care Leavers Age 17 to 21 in Suitable Accommodation



In the year April 2015 to March 2016 on average 90% of all Cambridgeshire Care Leavers were deemed to be in suitable accommodation. In this reporting period, the figure decreased slightly to on average 86% throughout the year. The national target for England is 83%. The majority of the placements identified as unsuitable relate to young people who are 'sofa surfing' between friends, in custody, where their residences are unknown or they have no fixed abode. Several Care Leavers do return live with their family, but this can be unsuitable, for example where the property is overcrowded. Aside from Care Leavers who have absconded, those remaining as identified in unsuitable/insecure accommodation are over the age of 18, and therefore, making informed decisions about their accommodation.

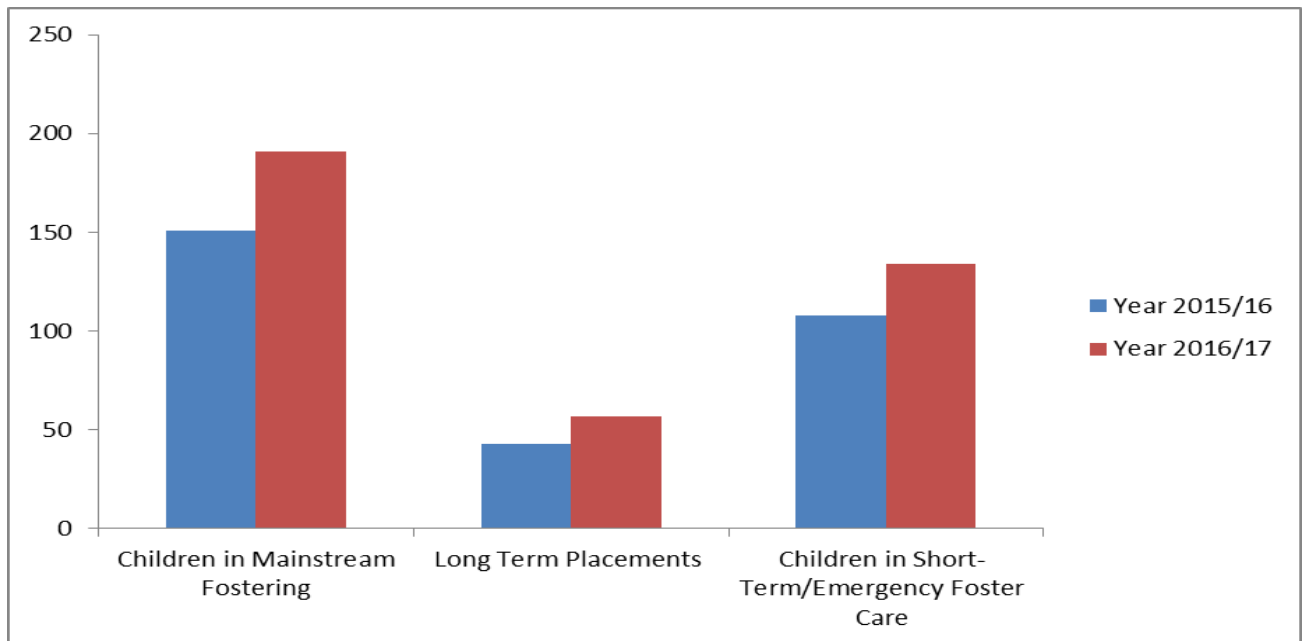
Fostering

Foster Panel Recommendations



255 fostering enquiries were received in 2016/17, with 28 approvals of new carers and 18 assessments ongoing at 31st March 2017.

Type of Placement In-House Provision

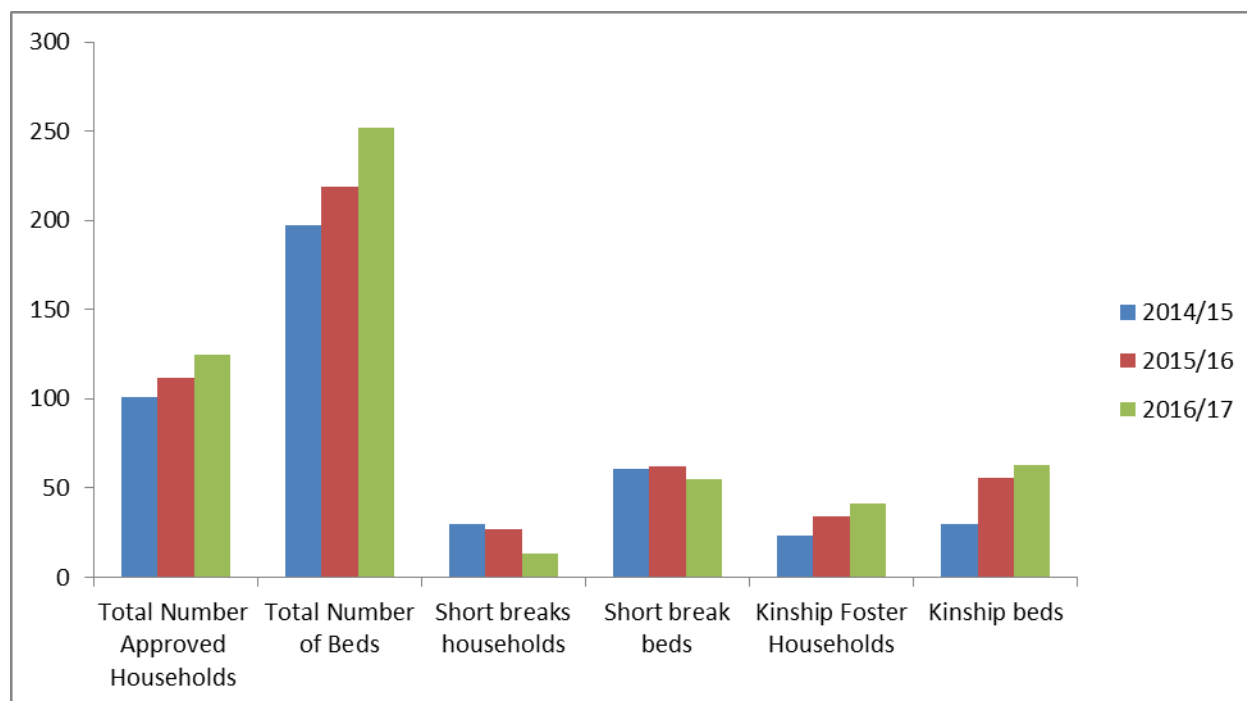


The successful recruitment of new carers has brought challenges to the fostering service – a third of new recruits this year are new to fostering and have required high levels of support during their placements and throughout their first year of fostering. 16 of the 28 new carers transferred in from Independent Fostering Agencies, bringing Cambridgeshire children with them. This has resulted in significant saving from the placement budget spend.

Action

Carer recruitment is going and marketing objectives for 2017/18 include further development of Information Sessions, increasing CCC fostering presence in Peterborough and work in communities where there is a shortage of carers.

Fostering Accommodation Breakdown



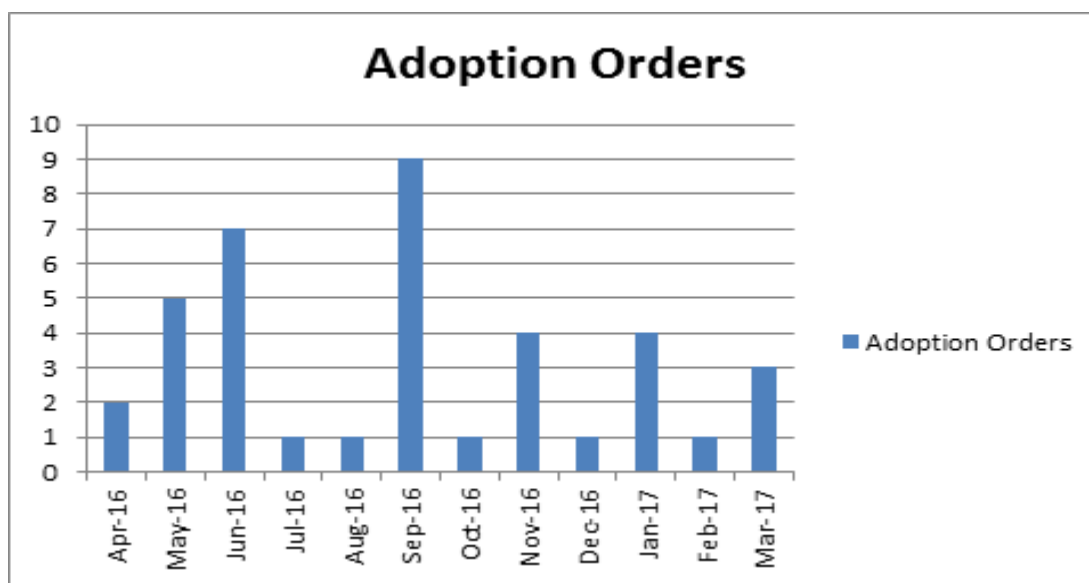
There are 107 fostering households are approved for children aged 5 years plus. 38 approved fostering households offering 70 beds live in Cambridge. 59 households offering 126 placements are based in the Fenland area 28 households offering 52 placements are based in the Huntingdon area. Fostering households are often approved for one, or two/three in the case of a sibling group due to bedroom space available. Cambridgeshire's policy only allows to share bedrooms, where appropriate. Where the carers are not used to their full approval, this is mainly due to a single child having been placed thus restricting the use of the shared bed. On 31st March 2017 a total of 6 beds were vacant and a further 5 were available for respite and short term emergencies only.

Action

The fostering service will develop carers to link into The Hub as part of the No Wrong Door model. In addition a target of 40 new fostering and 10 Supportive Lodging Settings has been set for the whole service and a Senior Social Worker has been recruited to lead on this area of work. In terms of increasing new carers, marketing will be increased as well as web presence and carer presence at events. The creation of a 'wrap around service' to include further therapeutic input and an improved 'out of hours' provision is being developed as well as working towards establishing the Mocking Bird Model*

*The Mockingbird programme is an alternative method of delivering foster care through the simple provision of an extended network of family support in which 6 to 10 'satellite' families of foster and kinship carers live in close proximity to a dedicated hub home of specially recruited and trained carers offering respite care, peer support, regular joint planning and social activities.

Adoption Orders



39 children were granted Adoption Orders during the year. This was 1 more than in the previous year. There continues to be an increase in the timeliness of Orders being granted with 23 (59%) being achieved for children aged 2 or under. 11 children (28%) adopted had been placed via early permanence. Early permanence is where children are placed the earliest opportunity with adopters who are also approved as foster carers, who initially foster the child and may become their adopters once the court proceedings have been concluded. 12 children (31%) were part of a sibling group at the point that Adoption Orders were made and all were placed as part of a sibling groups of 2.

The oldest child in this cohort adopted was 9 years 6 months at the time that the order was made the youngest was 7 months. Cambridgeshire's adoption scorecard 2016 (3 year average) confirms that we are in line with the national average for the number of children aged 5 years or over placed for adoption. However this is less than the 7% previously reported and may be an area for further review. Last year Cambridgeshire children adopted waited an average of 277 days between entering care and moving in with their adoptive families and 104 days between their placement order being made and being matched with their adoptive families. Available figures for England for the period 2013-2016 show that nationally, children waited 558 days between entering care and moving in their adoptive family. 92% of children move into their adoptive families within 14 months of becoming looked after and 100% were placed within 12 months of their Agency Decision Maker decision that adoption should be their plan. The progress of placements and those of children in pre-adoptive placements continue to be tracked through to order via statutory LAC Reviews, and monthly Permanence Monitoring Group Meetings (PMG).