

Shropshire Council  
Legal and Democratic Services  
Guildhall  
Frankwell Quay  
Shrewsbury  
SY3 8HQ

Date: 14<sup>th</sup> April 2026

**Committee: People Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Date: Wednesday, 22 April 2026**

**Time: 6.00 pm**

**Venue: The Council Chamber, The Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HQ**

You are requested to attend the above meeting. The Agenda is attached

There will be some access to the meeting room for members of the press and public, but this will be limited. If you wish to attend the meeting please email [democracy@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@shropshire.gov.uk) to check that a seat will be available for you.

Please click [here](#) to view the livestream of the meeting on the date and time stated on the agenda (Please note that while we strive to live stream meetings, technical issues may occasionally occur. In the event of a technical disruption, the meeting will be paused to try to resolve the issue. Should it not be possible to resume the live stream, the meeting will proceed as scheduled, and a backup recording will be made available after the meeting. Any disruption to the live stream does not affect the legality of the meeting)

The recording of the event will also be made available shortly after the meeting on the Shropshire Council Youtube Channel [Here](#)

Tim Collard  
Service Director – Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer)

**Members of People Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Andy Davis (Chairman)  
Mandy Duncan (Vice Chairman)  
Thomas Clayton  
Susan Coleman  
Jamie Daniels  
Rhys Gratton

Duncan Kerr  
Vicky Moore  
Mark Morris  
Alan Mosley  
Teri Trickett

**Co-opted Members (Voting)**

Carol Morgan - Diocese of Shrewsbury (RC)  
Gemma Martin - Diocese of Hereford

Your Committee Officer is:

**Shelley Davies** Committee Officer

Tel: 01743 257718

Email: [shelley.davies@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:shelley.davies@shropshire.gov.uk)

# AGENDA

## 1 Apologies for Absence

## 2 Disclosable Interests

Members are reminded that they must declare their disclosable pecuniary interests and other registrable or non-registrable interests in any matter being considered at the meeting as set out in Appendix B of the Members' Code of Conduct and consider if they should leave the room prior to the item being considered. Further advice can be sought from the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting.

## 3 Minutes (Pages 1 - 6)

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2026. [Minutes attached]

Contact: Shelley Davies – Committee Officer.

## 4 Public Questions

To receive any questions from members of the public of which notice has been given. The deadline for this meeting is 12.00 pm, Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2026.

## 5 Member Questions

To receive any question of which Members of the Council have given notice. The deadline for this meeting is 12.00 pm, Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2026.

## 6 Performance Monitoring Report – Quarter 4 2025/26 - Care and Wellbeing (Pages 7 - 20)

To receive the Performance Monitoring Report – Quarter 4 2025/26 - Care and Wellbeing. [Report attached]

Contact: Natalie McFall - Interim Director of Adult Social Services (DASS).

## 7 Year End 25/26 Performance Report - Children's Services (Pages 21 - 76)

To receive the Year End 25/26 Performance Report - Children's Services. [Report attached]

Contact: David Shaw - Director of Children's Services

**8 Shropshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2024/25**  
(Pages 77 - 134)

To receive an update on the Shropshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2024/25. [Report attached]

Contact: David Shaw - Director of Children's Services.

**9 Update from the SEND Transport Task and Finish Group**

To receive a verbal update on the progress of the SEND Transport Task and Finish Group

Contact: Councillor Andy Davis - Chair of the Task and Finish group

**10 Work Programme** (Pages 135 - 136)

Verbal update on the work programme of the Committee. [Work Programme attached]

Contact: Sophie Foster – Overview and Scrutiny Officer.

**11 Date of next meeting**

To note that the next meeting of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be held at 6.00 p.m. on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2026.



## Committee and Date

People Overview and Scrutiny  
Committee

22<sup>nd</sup> April 2026

## PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2026**

**In The Council Chamber, The Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HQ**

**6.00 - 8.05 pm**

**Responsible Officer:** Shelley Davies

Email: shelley.davies@shropshire.gov.uk      Tel: 01743 257718

### **Present**

Councillor Andy Davis (Chairman)

Councillors Mandy Duncan (Vice Chairman), Thomas Clayton, Susan Coleman,  
Jamie Daniels, Mark Morris and Julian Dean (substitute for Duncan Kerr).

### Other Members in Attendance:

Councillor Ruth Houghton – Portfolio Holder for Social Care

Councillor Andy Hall – Portfolio Holder for Children and Education

Councillor Roger Evans – Portfolio Holder for Finance (remotely)

Councillor Dawn Husemann – Group Leader (remotely)

### Officers in Attendance:

Sophie Foster – Overview and Scrutiny Officer

Tanya Miles – Interim Chief Executive & Executive Director DASS

David Shaw – Director Children's Services

Sonya Miller – Service Director Children's & Young People

Natasha Moody - Families First Partnership (FFP) Strategic Lead

John Rowe – Head of Education Quality and Safeguarding

Jo Kelly – Virtual Head Teacher

Michelle Williams – Service Manager Long Term Support

## 23 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillor Duncan Kerr (Substitute: Julian Dean),  
Councillor Alan Mosley, Councillor Terri Trickett and Gemma Martin, Diocesan Board  
of Education.

## 24 **Disclosable Interests**

None received.

## 25 **Minutes**

### **RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd October 2025 be confirmed as an  
accurate record.

## 26 Public Questions

A public question was received from Mr John Palmer, in relation to the Children's services reforms.

The full question and response provided can be found on: [Public Question - POSC 14.01.26.pdf](#)

As a supplementary question, Mr Palmer asked the Chairman if he would have liked to have seen even more professionals attending the meeting, excited by the positive actions being introduced in children's services reforms.

The Chairman, Councillor Andy Davis, noted his appreciation to the Officers and Portfolio Holders for their presence and acknowledged the considerable work undertaken in preparing the report.

## 27 Member Questions

There were no member questions.

The Chairman announced that item 7, Children's Services Reforms, would be taken first, followed by item 6, Quarterly Performance Monitoring Report. The remaining items would proceed as originally scheduled.

## 28 Children's Services Reforms

David Shaw, Director Children's Services presented the report which gave an overview of the recent national reforms to children's services. He referred to the wide-ranging and fundamental nature of the reforms, describing them as the most significant changes in many years and highlighted the principle of "One Council" working together to achieve the best outcomes for children, young people, and families in Shropshire.

Natasha Moody, Families First Partnership Strategic Lead gave a presentation detailing the following five key reform programmes:

- Families First Partnership
- Family Hubs/Best Start in Life
- Youth Strategy
- Private Law Proceedings Pathfinder
- SEND and Alternative Provision Reform

It was explained the reforms, which focused on early intervention and prevention in response to poorer outcomes and a rise in the number of children in care since 2010, were being integrated into a single transformation programme and delivery plan, with key personnel appointed from the local authority, police, and health.

Natasha Moody provided an overview of the progress made to date and encouraged the Committee to ensure that the partnership remains accountable for achieving its objectives and asked members to share feedback from their communities with the Impact Board.

In response to questions members were advised that:

- Existing performance data and documents such as the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment were being used to identify family needs.
- A "needs and harms analysis" was required by the Department of Education to review various indicators across local areas. It was mentioned that the results of this analysis would be presented at a future meeting.
- Schools were actively involved in the programme with a School Leader and Academy Chief Executive leading the "family help" task and finish group.
- The fire service should be included as a partner and the importance of involving other partners such as the voluntary sector to make the programme successful was also highlighted.
- Transport was a significant barrier for young people, especially in rural areas which affected access to work and services. It was emphasised that transport challenges cannot be solved by Children's Services alone and required a corporate, Council-wide approach.
- Shropshire and the West Midlands regularly share of good practice across the region although there was a recognition that needs differ across communities.
- Suitable places need to be identified to ensure that services are delivered where people actually go and feel comfortable such as community centres and family hubs.
- The strategy was to select sites based on data showing areas of deprivation and need, but it was acknowledged that there might be challenges to locate available buildings in those priority areas.
- The Council expects anyone engaging with children, including school clubs and similar roles, to have safeguarding training but a response would be provided in relation to the query about whether minibuses were required to have safeguarding training.

Officers were thanked for their report.

**RECOMMENDED:**

That the report be noted and the Committee receive an update on progress in 12 months.

## 29 Quarterly Performance Monitoring Report

Tanya Miles, Interim Chief Executive and Executive Director DASS introduced the Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 1 which gave an update on key areas of performance across Care & Wellbeing and Children and Young People services.

John Rowe, Head of Education Quality and Safeguarding outlined key areas of the report in relation to the Designated Schools Grant (DSG). It was explained that the DSG was made up of several blocks: schools, early years, high needs, and central school services and that Shropshire faced significant pressure in the high needs block, currently running a £41 million deficit.

John Rowe noted that the deficit was not on the Council's core budget sheet due to a statutory override and was driven by a 70% increase in Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) since 2019, more children in independent and special schools, and increased top-up funding for mainstream schools. Strategies to manage the deficit were outlined and it was noted that the Council was working with the Department for Education and the Schools Forum on a management plan, but the future of the statutory override and any government bailout was still uncertain.

In response to questions in relation to the DSG members were advised that:

- The team was not spending significant time modelling various hypothetical scenarios for the DSG deficit as these were uncertain and efforts were instead focused on managing the current situation and bringing the deficit back to balance using available strategies.
- The Schools Forum was advisory but also a formal committee which made recommendations on funding formulas and resource allocations. It has a specific subgroup overseeing the DSG management plan and their involvement ensured schools understand the challenges faced by the Council.
- The increase in children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) was not only in the UK but also seen across Western Europe.
- The Chairman recommended that a briefing for all Members on the DSG be arranged, as it was a complex topic involving the allocation of funds to local authorities and schools, with various categories and significant financial implications.

Jo Kelly, Virtual School Headteacher, outlined key areas of the report in relation to Elective Home Education (EHE). She explained that safeguarding was a concern since these children were less visible to authorities and that Shropshire's EHE rate, currently at 791 was slightly above the national average. It was noted that priority visits target those on child protection plans, and Shropshire was proactively preparing for new laws that will generally require children under protection plans to return to school, barring exceptional cases.

In response to questions members were advised that:

- There was a rise in EHE numbers after COVID, with figures increasing from 539 in 2022-23 to 791 at present.
- The Council tracks children eligible for free school meals who were electively home educated but does not provide meals as responsibility shifts to parents once a child is home educated. It was added that the team monitored this group in their data and encouraged a return to school if needed, but there was no direct provision or guarantee of nutrition for these children.
- EHE requests have been previously refused based on safeguarding concerns identified during multi-agency checks.
- The Council has worked with waste collection services and the postal service to encourage them to use their observations to help identify safeguarding concerns in the community.
- When mental health was cited as a reason for EHE, education welfare officers work with families and schools to explore if a return to school was appropriate and provide signposting to mental health resources. If parents proceed with EHE, they receive a welcome pack with health information.

Sonya Miller, Service Director Children's & Young People outlined key areas of the report in relation to fostering. She highlighted the national challenge of declining foster carers but noted that Shropshire was bucking the trend with increased recruitment, especially of kinship and connected carers.

In response to questions members were advised that:

- After age 18, fostering allowances end unless the young person stays under "staying put" arrangements, which provide financial support at a different rate.
- Care leavers, were supported with accommodation and other services up to age 25, including options like supported lodgings or help with independent tenancies.
- There was an aging cohort of foster carers in Shropshire, with some fostering well into their 70s. The Council was addressing this by running targeted campaigns to recruit younger families, single carers, and those interested in short breaks, as well as dispelling perceived barriers to fostering.

Michelle Williams, Service Manager Long Term Support outlined key areas of the report in relation to Adult Social Care. It was reported that Shropshire faced high demand from self-funding clients whose assets have dropped below the threshold, often due to expensive care packages. In response to this the Council was working with partners to provide better information and advice to prevent rapid depletion of assets and ensure appropriate care at reasonable rates. Members were also advised that a new policy on deferred payments (supporting people with property assets

entering care homes) was being developed and would be reported to scrutiny in due course.

All officers were thanked for their reports.

**RECOMMENDED:**

The Committee noted the report and agreed the following proposals:

- That a task and finish group on SEND transport, open to all members be set up and the Audit and Governance Committee be asked to review the cost and procurement processes for SEND transport, especially regarding taxi and minibus contracts.
- That authority to establish future task and finish groups without needing full committee approval be delegated to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

**30 Work Programme**

Sophie Foster, Overview & Scrutiny Officer noted that she had noted a number of topics that had been suggested during the meeting and she suggested that an additional meeting be arranged to discuss the priorities for the Committee.

**RECOMMENDED:**

That an additional meeting be arranged to discuss the Work Programme.

**31 Date of next meeting**

Members noted that the next meeting of the People Overview and Scrutiny Meeting will be taking place on at 6.00 p.m. on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2026.

Signed ..... (Chairman)

Date: .....



**People overview  
Scrutiny Committee  
22<sup>nd</sup> April 2026**

Performance  
Monitoring report –  
Quarter 4 25/26 Care &  
Wellbeing

Public

## Performance Monitoring Report – Quarter 4 25/26 Care and Wellbeing

<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Michelle Williams, Natalie McFall		
email	<a href="mailto:Natalie.McFall@shropshire.gov.uk">Natalie.McFall@shropshire.gov.uk</a>	Tel	01743 253719
<b>Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):</b>	Ruth Houghton		

### 1. Synopsis

1.1 Care and Wellbeing continue to operate in a complex and challenging environment, shaped by demand, increasing complexity of need and financial pressures. This report provides Members with a clear overview of how the Council is managing care package reviews, responding to the financial impact when residents' financial resources reduce, and addressing the risks associated with unpredictable demand and spend. It also clarifies the Council's role in supporting informed choice and earlier conversations with residents and families about care, housing and financial planning for later life.

### 2. Executive Summary

2.1 This report provides assurance on how Care and Wellbeing services are managing care package reviews, financial pressures arising from changes in residents' personal circumstances, and unpredictability of demand and spend within the system. It also clarifies the Council's role in supporting informed choice and earlier planning for later life.

2.2 Through this report we will:

- Review the volume and status of outstanding reviews alongside the factors contributing to delay.

- Provide an update on the financial impact to the Council in relation to self-funders and when their capital reduces below threshold.
- Set out the council's role in supporting choice in line with Care Act 2014 duties. This includes ensuring that individuals and families are aware of the full range of care and support options available, and that they understand the longer-term consequences of those choices.
- Highlight managing unpredictable spend, exploring how demand is forecast using demographic trends, public health intelligence and operational data, while acknowledging areas of unavoidable uncertainty.

### **3. Recommendations**

- 3.1 Note the contents of this report and take assurance on how Care and Wellbeing is managing care package reviews, including the use of a risk-based approach to prioritisation, performance oversight and statutory compliance.
- 3.2 Endorse the Council's current approach to managing financial pressures arising from capital reduction, self-funding transitions and unpredictable demand and spend, including the use of forecasting, scenario planning and strengthened financial and operational oversight.
- 3.3 Support the continued implementation of the revised Deferred Payment Agreement arrangements, noting the progress made in strengthening governance, consistency, customer experience and financial sustainability.
- 3.4 Support the Council's approach to meeting its duties under the Care Act 2014 in relation to information, advice, informed choice and planning for later life, in line with the new Care and Wellbeing operating model.
- 3.5 Note the completion of the Day Services public consultation and agree that officers proceed to analyse consultation feedback and bring a further report to Cabinet setting out options and recommendations in due course.

### **4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal**

- 4.1 The primary risks associated with the matters set out in this report relate to Care and Wellbeing services demand, increasing complexity of need and associated financial pressure.
- 4.2 Delays in completing care package reviews, if not effectively prioritised and overseen, could result in support arrangements that no longer fully reflect individuals' current needs or circumstances, with potential impacts on wellbeing, safeguarding and financial exposure.

4.3 Financial impacts from unpredictable demand, including capital reduction, self-funding transitions, crisis-driven care and carer breakdown, which can crystallise rapidly and place in-year pressure on budgets.

#### 4.4 Risk table

<i>Risk</i>	<i>Mitigation</i>	<i>Link to Strategic Risk</i>
Unpredictable demand and spend, can create in-year financial pressure and volatility.	Strengthened forecasting, scenario planning and close joint oversight between Care and Wellbeing and Finance. Regular monitoring of emerging pressures, active demand management and alignment with the Medium-Term Financial Strategy to identify and mitigate risks early.	Financial Sustainability; Demand Management
Increasing numbers of people moving from self-funding to Council-funded care may impact costs rapidly and increase budget pressure.	Improved tracking and analysis of capital reduction cases, clearer processes for financial assessment and earlier engagement with residents and families to support planning and informed decision-making.	Financial Sustainability; Demographic Change
Weak governance or inconsistency in Deferred Payment Agreement (DPA) arrangements could expose the Council to financial and reputational risk.	Implementation of the revised DPA policy, including clearer eligibility criteria, revised charges on a cost-recovery basis, improved end-to-end processes and stronger joint working between Care and Wellbeing, Finance and Legal Services.	Governance and Compliance; Financial Controls

## 5. Financial Implications

5.1 Shropshire Council continues to manage demand and financial pressures, and a financial emergency was declared by Cabinet on 10 September 2025. The overall financial position of the Council is set out in the monitoring position presented to Cabinet on a monthly basis. Significant management action has been instigated at all levels of the Council reducing spend to ensure the Council's financial survival. Care and Wellbeing services will develop its new operating model identifying programmes of work that deliver good outcomes for residents and value for money.

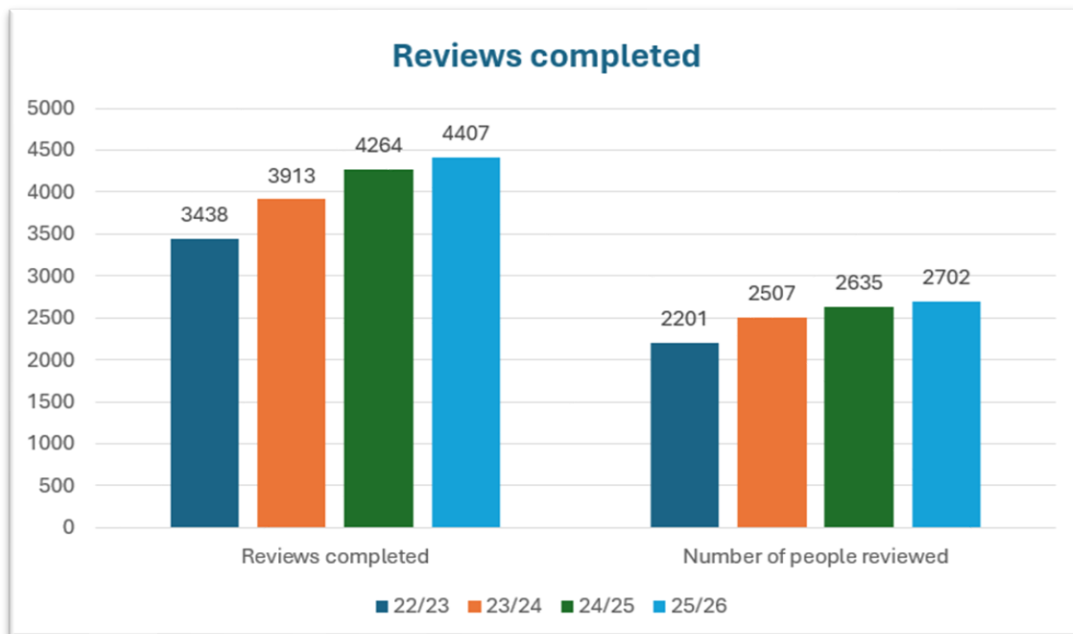
## 6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1 The matters set out in this report relate to the management, oversight and assurance of existing Care and Wellbeing services and do not involve new capital investment, physical infrastructure, or changes to service delivery that would materially affect carbon emissions. The proposals are therefore assessed as having no material impact on climate change. Any indirect effects are neutral to positive, as the emphasis on prevention, early information and advice, community-based support and digital access may reduce reliance on crisis-driven interventions and unnecessary travel. Overall, the report is consistent with the Council's climate objectives and does not give rise to adverse environmental impacts.

## 7. Background

### Care Package reviews

- 7.1 Reviews remain essential to ensuring that care packages are appropriate, proportionate and reflect current need.
- 7.2 We recognise that we continue to have overdue reviews having made significant progress over the last two years. In our last report we detailed impacts of capacity in relation to demand. We have put in place clearer oversight in relation to risk management and an action plan to reduce the backlog, with evidence of improved performance. We do this through prioritisation, with higher-risk cases, safeguarding concerns and significant changes in need progressed first. Where a formal review is delayed, professional oversight and welfare monitoring remain in place, and risks are actively managed by operational teams.
- 7.3 This year we have had maximum of 5176 residents receiving a funded service across Care and Wellbeing, this is a mixture of short and long-term services. Currently there are 3689 with a long-term service. Since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 we have completed 4407 reviews, these will be a combination of 12 week and annual reviews. You will see year on year we have continued to make progress. With some people having more than one review in year for many reasons.
- 7.4 This year over 25% of the Contacts received were for people with an existing service in place, in many cases a review would have been completed which will impact on the number of annual reviews we can achieve.



### Care Package Reviews – Controls in place

Position	Commentary	Controls / Assurance in Place
Currently 84% of people with overdue reviews remain in receipt of commissioned care	Currently 36% are recorded as overdue for review, who continue to have an active commissioned service in place. These means there is an active provider able to escalate concerns if circumstances change - see breakdown of services further in the report	Provider escalation routes; operational teams retain oversight; safeguarding pathways remain active Those without a commissioned service fall into section 117 category and will have primary care oversight
Section 117 aftercare reviews demonstrate active progress	Of 210 people in receipt of Section 117 aftercare, 60% have received a review within the year, with 82 people overdue, none exceeding two years, and a work plan in place to clear the backlog focussing on longest waiting as a priority	Dedicated work plans; monitoring through performance reporting, increase in allocations to carry out joint reviews with ICB

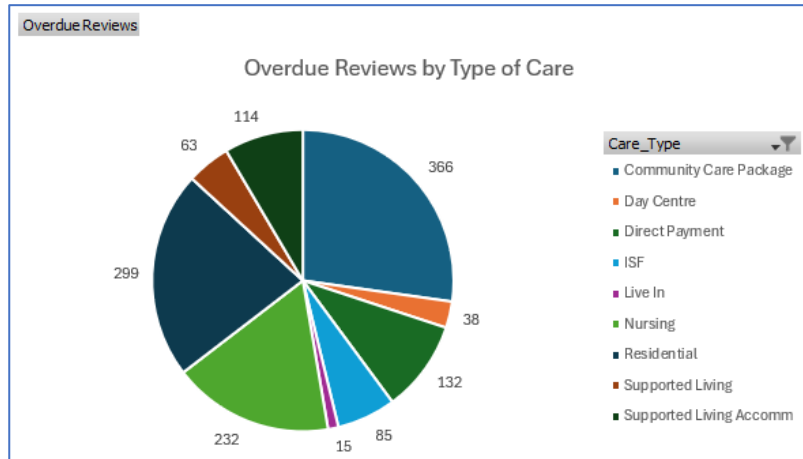
Targeted review work has reduced back logs	No outstanding reviews for people placed out of county, increased allocation of reviews reducing longest waits	Weekly monitoring of review performance, improvement plans
Demand and capacity	Performance reporting links delays to increasing demand for new Care Act assessments and rising complexity, requiring prioritisation of higher-risk cases	Risk-based prioritisation; senior management oversight; demand management activity

## Assessment of support currently provided from Review data

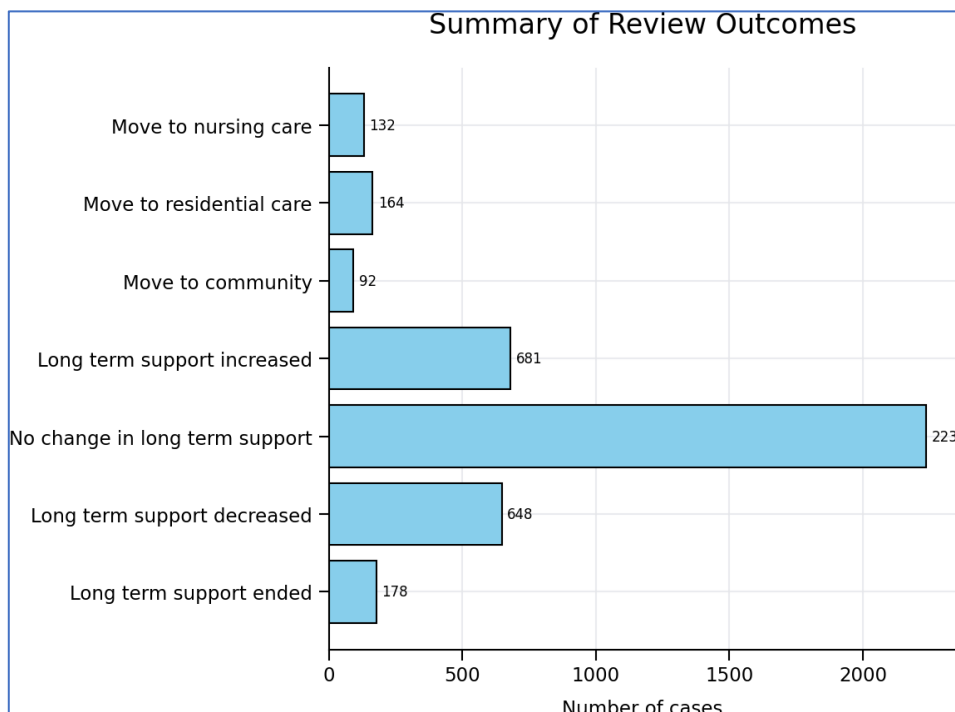
- 7.5 We recognise that when reviews are delayed, there is a risk that support plans may not accurately reflect changes in an individual's needs, circumstances or outcomes. This is particularly important when needs deteriorate or informal support arrangements change. To address this, we employ risk-based prioritisation and robust oversight. Furthermore, we work closely with providers and ask them to contact us immediately if there is any change in need, whether an increase or decrease, as a mitigation to ensure care remains relevant.
- 7.6 The current position shows a total of 1,344 overdue care package reviews, distributed across a range of service types. The largest volumes are within Community Care Packages (366), Residential Care (299) and Nursing Care (232), which together account for nearly two-thirds of all overdue reviews. This reflects the scale and complexity of long-term support arrangements within Care and Wellbeing, especially for older adults and people with higher levels of need.
- 7.7 In the year 2025/26, we have received 150 referrals from the Integrated Care Board (ICB) where health-related funding has ended or integrated funding splits have required reviews. These referrals tend to arrive in clusters rather than in a steady flow, placing additional pressures on teams. Deadlines are set for health funding to end, necessitating swift action. The individuals involved are often more complex, particularly in relation to learning disabilities and mental health.
- 7.8 Community-based support, including Community Care Packages, Direct Payments, Individual Service Funds (ISF's) and Supported Living, represents a significant proportion of the overdue reviews. This is consistent with the higher overall volume of people supported in community settings, where there is reliance on stability of need, provider escalation and practitioner oversight.
- 7.9 Overdue reviews in Residential and Nursing Care are subject to additional safeguards, such as regular provider reviews, care home oversight by Care Quality Commission (CQC) and Contract Monitoring Officers, safeguarding arrangements and, in many

cases, Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) authorisations. These measures provide interim assurance while formal reviews are scheduled. Of the 531 overdue reviews in nursing and residential placements, 239 have had a DoLS assessment in the last 12 months. To maximise efficiency and capacity, we allocate residents with an overdue review in the same care home to the same practitioners.

7.10 Smaller cohorts, such as Live-In Care and Day Centre provision, represent a relatively low proportion of the overall risk profile. Nevertheless, they still require targeted action to ensure reviews are completed and properly recorded.



7.11 The Council has a clear, risk-based and time-bound plan to reduce overdue care package reviews. Progress is being made against overdue reviews, higher-risk cases are prioritised, and leadership oversight ensures that care remains safe, appropriate and compliant with statutory duties while improvement activity continues.



7.12 The above summary is the outcomes from reviews completed, it provides assurance that the review process is largely maintaining appropriate support, making balanced adjustments where needed, and supporting independence, supporting people to remain at home and limiting moves into higher-cost residential and nursing care.

### Supporting Choice

7.13 Our duties under Section 4 of the Care Act 2014 are to ensure that adults, carers and families across the county have access to clear, timely and accessible information and advice about care and support. This duty applies to all residents, including those who fund their own care, and is central to enabling informed choice, independence and wellbeing.

7.14 We support informed choice by helping individuals understand the full range of options available to them to meet their needs. This includes preventative and community-based support, informal and voluntary sector services, short-term enabling interventions and, where necessary, longer-term statutory care. Information and advice are provided in a way that reflects the needs of a large and diverse rural county, using a mix of digital information, community-based advice and direct conversations with skilled practitioners in our Let's Talk Local hubs or at home. Our Shropshire Choices Support Finder is updated annually and provides comprehensive information about local resources and how to navigate the care market [Shropshire Choices Support Finder | Care Choices](#). This includes what is available across Shropshire's voluntary sector service, local transport provisions, information about technology and assistive gadgets, it also details what to expect if you need input from Care and Wellbeing.

7.15 Our practitioners use strengths-based approaches to ensure that people understand how different options may support their outcomes, independence and quality of life. This includes being clear about the potential consequences of different choices, such as reliance on informal support, the sustainability of care arrangements, and the impact of decisions on longer-term wellbeing and safety.

7.16 We also have a specific role in supporting people to understand the financial implications of their choices. This includes providing information and advice to self-funders about purchasing care, managing capital, understanding the local care market and accessing appropriate support at a reasonable cost. This ensures that decisions are made with a clear understanding of responsibilities and risks, reducing the likelihood of crisis or unplanned intervention. Our web page has helpful information for self-funders and directs them to relevant guidance. [Paying for your own care | Shropshire Council](#)

- 7.17 Carers are recognised as key partners in supporting choice in Shropshire. The Council works to identify carers early, ensure they are aware of their rights to assessment and support, and involve them in planning and decision-making. This includes supporting carers to understand the implications of different care options and putting contingency arrangements in place to reduce the risk of carer breakdown and to support them to sustain their caring role if this is their wish.
- 7.18 Overall, Shropshire Council's role is not to direct individuals toward a single solution, but to ensure that choices about care and support are informed, realistic and sustainable. By meeting its Section 4 duties through accessible information, advice and strengths-based practice, we enable residents to make decisions that support independence and wellbeing while ensuring statutory responsibilities are met in a fair and proportionate way.

### **Planning for later life**

- 7.19 We recognise the value in supporting our aging population to plan for later life, ensuring they have access to the right information as early as possible can help ensure they make the right choices and have contingency and emergency plans in place to prevent a crisis. We already know that Shropshire has one of the oldest populations in England, with our 75+ population projected to grow by 15-18% over the next 5 years, this can be as many as 6000 – 8000 additional older residents. This cohort is the group most likely to require care and support and already equates to almost 50% of our annual referrals.
- 7.20 Through the new proposed Care and Wellbeing operating model, Shropshire Council will provide information and advice at multiple points to support early planning and informed choice, in line with Care Act duties. For example, residents will be able to access digital information and self-assessment tools to understand housing options, community support and assistive technology before needs escalate; receive face-to-face advice through community venues and outreach sessions on issues such as remaining in their own home, have strengths-based conversations to understand options such as short-term enabling support, community services or self-funding arrangements. This ensures people and carers understand the implications of different choices for independence, wellbeing and financial sustainability before statutory intervention is required.

### **Forecast of demand and spend**

- 7.21 Key drivers of demand are an older adult growing population, supporting carers and increased complexity, self-funders falling below threshold and people being referred from health services.

- 7.22 The Council does not assume that demand itself can always be reduced. Our focus is to work with internal council services and partners to prevent late presentation, crisis-driven contact and unplanned escalation, understanding the likelihood of more costly support rather than early, planned and preventative support.
- 7.23 The new proposed Care and Wellbeing operating model will have a focus on prevention and earlier intervention providing early information and advice, prevention, community-based support and proportionate screening is expected to have an impact on managing demand for services. We also aligning the delivery model with commissioning attentions to provide flexible options to support people with complex needs.
- 7.24 System pressures can contribute to volatility. Pressures in hospitals, primary care, mental health services or housing can impact demand into Care and Wellbeing at short notice so Service Managers along with finance colleagues review the notable seasonal variations in our forecasting as well as trends that may have been unforeseen to adapt mitigating actions.
- 7.25 Market instability is another source of unpredictability. Changes in provider capacity, workforce shortages, quality concerns or sudden market exit can force the Council to respond quickly, often at increased cost, to ensure continuity of care.

#### **Demand and budget forecasting:**

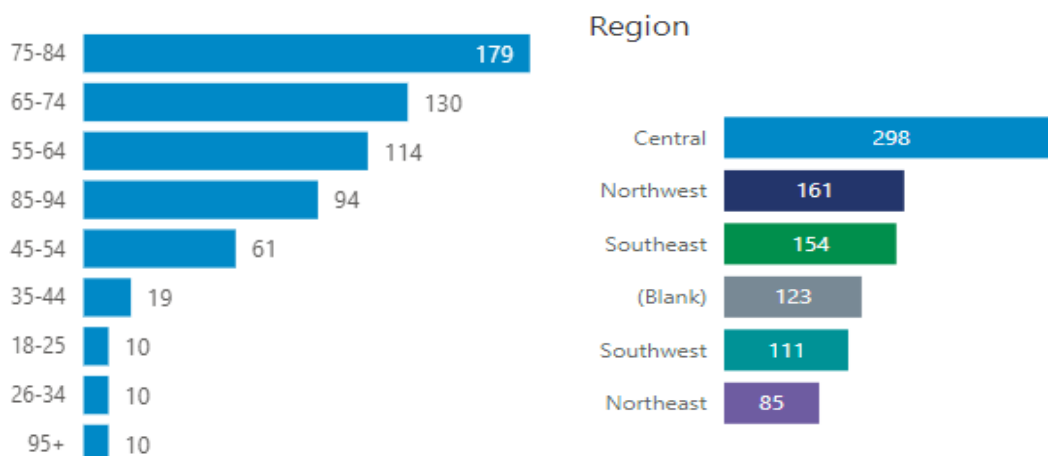
- 7.26 We work closely with our finance colleagues to monitor movement each period from existing and new spend captured via our Controcc system, this enables us to see number of people receiving all services and the average cost per person. This is analysed each month by Service Managers and anticipated demand built into projections with finance colleagues where we know of increased referrals or reviews on joint funded packages. There are monthly performance and finance Senior Management Team meetings to ensure governance in this area and collective action to understand the performance and financial position of Care and Wellbeing services.
- 7.27 A key area of unpredictable demand in the last two years is those who have been supported by our ICB through Continuing Health Care and Interim health funding, who are no longer eligible. This has seen a pressure on Care and Wellbeing demand and spend. In 24/25 this equated to £1.8m pressure, this year is looking higher and more like £2.5m. Partnership working and understanding of changes is key to working together to reflect anticipated demand and cost pressures across the system.

#### **Carer demand:**

- 7.28 We currently have 480 Carers who have agreed to be added to our Carers Register which is managed by Shropshire Carers Service. 23% are new to our service this

year. Below shows the area of the county referrals are from and the age range of those carers who have contacted us.

7.29 Almost 627 Carers have contacted us so far this year, with 437 progressing to a new referral, the teams have completed 348 Carers Assessments across the service, as part of the Care Act assessment for the cared for we will discuss the carers needs, mitigating against unpredicted carers demand.



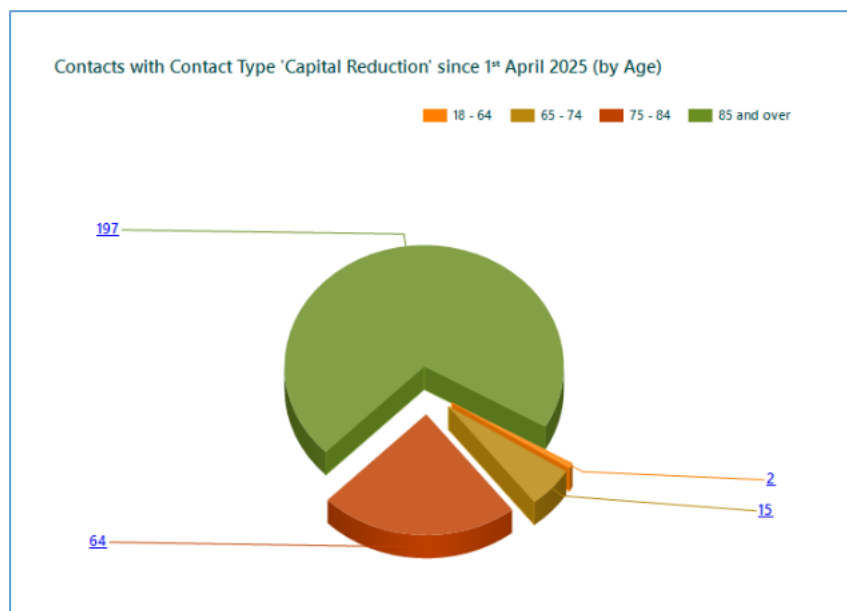
7.30 Our Carers team are working with voluntary agencies to understand and anticipate carers demand, and the service would aim to see more people on the Carers Register.

**Capital reduction pressures:**

7.31 We have detailed in previous reports that our data in relation to self-funders and those whose capital reduces below the threshold does require some development to accurately understand the true pressure and map out future demand. This is mainly because at the point of contact the reason may not be clear, and often it is not known that someone is a self-funder until they have been through the financial assessment process. We continue to work with partners across voluntary services such as Age UK and Health Watch to gather data relating to self-funders in Shropshire that may not be known to the council.

7.32 Since July 2025 we have been clearly tracking each week the new capital reduction requests into the council, this includes those whose capital have reduced receiving both care at home and in a placement setting, for 25/26 the financial cost of this is approx. £5m.

7.33 We continue to see rising capital reduction referrals year on year, with most being older population and high numbers already in care homes.



### Deferred Payments update

- 7.34 Shropshire Council is now in the process of implementing the revised approach to Deferred Payment Agreements (DPAs), following Cabinet approval. The updated arrangements will strengthen ability to meet statutory duties under the Care Act 2014 while ensuring the scheme is operationally efficient, financially sustainable, and fair to residents.
- 7.35 The new approach is underpinned by an updated Deferred Payment Policy, which provides greater clarity on eligibility, charging, and process. It reflects current legislation and national guidance and addresses the need for more robust governance, consistency and transparency following a prolonged period without policy review and recommendations from a recent audit.
- 7.36 Key features of the approach in place include:
- Clear and consistent application of eligibility criteria, ensuring DPAs are offered appropriately and in line with statutory requirements.
  - Revised charges, including an updated one-off set-up fee, an annual administration charge and legal fees, designed to reflect the actual cost of administering DPAs over their lifetime. These charges are applied on a cost-recovery basis and are reinvested as staffing resource to support capacity and oversight within the service.
  - Interest applied from the point of contract signing, providing financial protection for the Council while remaining compliant with national regulations.
  - Streamlined operational processes, with clearer ownership across Care and Wellbeing, Finance and Legal Services, reducing delays and improving throughput of applications.
  - Improved customer experience, with clearer information, standardised documentation, and more timely progression of agreements.

- 7.37 The revised process has already resulted in improved application throughput and stronger end-to-end oversight, despite ongoing external constraints such as Land Registry timescales. The approach will also reduce administrative burden on social workers, allowing them to focus on assessment and care planning rather than complex financial processes.
- 7.38 The new Deferred Payments approach supports the wider Care and Wellbeing operating model by enabling earlier, clearer conversations with self-funders, reducing financial risk to the Council, and strengthening compliance with audit and governance requirements. It provides Cabinet with assurance that DPAs are being managed in a way that balances individual choice with financial sustainability and risk management.
- 7.39 All paperwork, letters and guidance have been updated and currently with legal for final approval, updated communications have also been sent to IT to update the council website so information available to residents is up to date.
- 7.40 DPA net financial spend 25/26 £338,000. With the total budget commitment for all DPA's standing at £2.2m. This includes charges invoiced for interests and administration charges which has increased the income to the council.

### Day Services Consultation update

- 7.41 Cabinet approved a formal 8-week public consultation on the future of specific in-house day services on 21 January 2026. The consultation launched on 29 January 2026 and covered:
- the future of Helena Lane Day Service, including a potential option to close;
  - the potential transfer of Aquamira Day Service to the Abbots Wood site; and
  - wider public engagement on the reprovision and redesign of all remaining in-house day services.
- 7.42 The consultation finished on the 26 March 2026. All consultation responses are being collated and analysed by the Feedback and Insight Team. Once feedback has been analysed, a business case with an options appraisal will be completed. Then a cabinet report will be taken to cabinet to consider the recommendation. The final report and recommendation will be informed by:
- consultation feedback;
  - equality and impact considerations;
  - legal duties
  - financial and operational implications.

## 8. Conclusions

- 8.1 The report gives an overview of demand in relation to various areas of Care and Wellbeing services and the plans in place to manage advice, support offered to people and

how the service manages its budget and demand monitoring. The report highlights areas of demand pressures and the mitigations and plans to address this.

8.2 The Day Services consultation has ended; insights from the consultation will be analysed and a report will go to Cabinet.

**List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)**

None.

**Local Member:** **Ruth Houghton**

**Appendices**

No Appendices.



**Committee and Date**

Item

**People Overview  
Scrutiny Committee**

**22 April 2026**

Public



## Year End 25/26 Performance Report - Children's Services

<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	David Shaw. Director of Children's Services		
email:	David.shaw@shropshire.gov.uk	Tel:	01743 256479
<b>Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):</b>	Ruth Houghton		

### 1. Synopsis

- 1.1 This report provides the People Overview Scrutiny Committee with a comprehensive end of year performance overview for Children's Social Care covering the period March 2025 to March 2026. It sets out the key demand and activity trends across the service, highlights the principal factors driving financial pressure—particularly within the Children Looked After (CLA) service—and outlines the actions underway to manage risk, improve outcomes for children and mitigate financial impact within the current and future budget context.

### 2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The report is presented in the context of the 2025 Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) inspection outcome, ongoing national challenges relating to placement sufficiency, and the Council's declared financial emergency. It draws together performance data, operational insight and system learning to support effective Scrutiny oversight of demand management, placement usage, cost drivers, and the sustainability of improvement activity.

- 2.2 Members are asked to note that Children's Services has delivered a sustained improvement trajectory following the 2025 ILACS inspection, including a reduction in overall CLA numbers from a previous peak. This progress has been achieved whilst Shropshire has also been increasing its obligation to accommodate Unaccompanied asylum seeker children (Uasc), in need of care and support (currently 35 this can change), through the National Transfer Scheme (NTS). See Point 7.17 onwards where the detailed numbers and performance are embedded.
- 2.3 Despite this improvement the most significant cost driver remains the use of residential care, particularly externally commissioned and spot purchased provision. (pt7.24 onwards outlines the demand and usage data). Local sufficiency challenges including residential and fostering homes, combined with national market pressures and rising unit costs, have resulted in continued reliance on higher cost and out of county placements. These arrangements generate additional associated costs linked to education, transport, and professional oversight.
- 2.4 In response, the Council is delivering a coordinated improvement programme focused on strengthening care planning and decision making, increasing family-based provision, improving placement oversight, and enhancing financial control. These actions provide assurance that risks are understood, mitigations are in place, and progress will continue to be monitored closely during 2026–27.
- 2.5 Children and young people should live in their family homes and their communities when safe to do so and their needs can be met. They will be supported to access services in their communities that enable their families to thrive and children to secure good outcomes without escalating into statutory child protection or Looked After services.
- 2.6 The Council's Children's service is committed to working together with families at the earliest opportunity to enable and empower Shropshire's families and young people to achieve their best lives.
- 2.7 Our Early Help services enable families to access preventative support, reducing the numbers of referrals now coming through to the social care service and building strong partnership relationships securing positive interventions, assessments, and parenting support across Shropshire.
- 2.8 We deliver this through a culture of evidence based restorative practice and strengths-based relationships that we know can change lives. Our leadership and practice are underpinned by these behaviours and values.
- 2.9 Children and young people subject to child protection plans will experience a social work intervention and partnership approach that enables them to be safer and remain in their family homes and communities. We will make timely decisions about when their needs cannot be met in their home environment and securing their permanence plans as quickly as we can.
- 2.10 We are aspirational for the Children we look after in our care when they cannot live in their birth family. Strong corporate parenting support across the council enables us to parent and support our children as our own, encouraging them and advocating for them, to be the best version of themselves and to live their best life.

- 2.11 Children and young people should have the benefit of being able to grow up in a family, either their own or foster care. When they do have to live in a children's home for a period, we are aspirational in always working towards them moving back into a family environment when they are ready to do so.
- 2.12 Children should make excellent progress in our care. Plans are creative and in line with the wishes and feelings of the child. Long term support is provided to families where children have returned home or to connected carers through Stepping Stones.
- 2.13 Our care leavers have high quality support and ongoing relationships as we stay connected, and we ensure they are accessing education and employment opportunities at the right time for them. The care leaver ambassador is delivering a programme of work, alongside our care leavers, and securing their voices to ensure service developments are underpinned by their wishes, feelings and recommendations.

### 3 Recommendations

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

- 3.1 Note the contents of the report and the year-end performance position for Children's Social Care for April 2025 to March 2026.
- 3.2 Consider the key demand, activity, and placement trends, including the principal factors contributing to cost pressures.
- 3.3 Acknowledge the progress made in reducing CLA numbers.
- 3.4 Support the actions being taken to mitigate financial pressures and manage future demand.
- 3.5 Request continued regular performance and financial updates.

### Glossary of Terms

**ILACS:** Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services

**CLA:** Children Looked After

**NTS:** National Transfer Scheme

**LGA:** Local Government Association

**Sufficiency Strategy:** A statutory duty that demonstrates an analysis of the needs of looked after children in the area and structure the approach for delivering the services they require, including support and homes. Commissioning Services are leading on this document and its implementation.

**Special Guardianship order:** A private law order made that gives the recipient legal parental responsibility for the child.

**Child Arrangement Orders:** A private law order that determines who the child lives with and what contact will be in place.

**UASC:** Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children

**DFE:** Department for Education

**CYP:** Children Young People

**CHAT:** National Children's services Analysis Tool (ChAT) Based on Ofsted's ILACS Annex A dataset / Inspection Report.

# Report

## 4 Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

### 4.1 Risk table

<i>Risk</i>	<i>Mitigation</i>	<i>Link to Strategic Risk</i>
Numbers of children looked after increased further	<p>Strengthen the "right service at the right time," early intervention across the partnership.</p> <p>Ensure consistency in the Front Door application to referrals.</p> <p>Continue to implement and expand Stepping Stones service methodology for prevention and step-down processes.</p> <p>Further develop a culture and practice where all staff are committed to retaining children and young people safely within their families and communities while actively engaging with them. If care is required, prioritise foster placements,</p> <p>Ensure robust decision-making processes and escalate sign-off procedures to the Service Director (SD) and Director of Children's Services (DCS) as appropriate.</p> <p>We aim to reduce CLA spending from 80% to 50% of our budget. The developing improvement/action plan related to placements, sufficiency, partnership and commissioning support will underpin this intention as outlined through the paper.</p> <p><b>Our priorities include:</b></p> <p>Implementing Families First Programme and delivering the national requirements for the implementation.</p> <p>Delivering intervention models that ensure timely access to services, prevent escalation into statutory care, and support</p>	<p>Financial Sustainability.</p> <p>Demand Management</p> <p>Governance and Compliance.</p> <p>Financial Controls</p>

	<p>children and families within their communities.</p> <p>Enhancing capacity through strategic commissioning, data-driven decisions, and planning to address complex needs, including increasing fostering and residential home options.</p> <p>Achieving timely outcomes through effective assessments, child in need and protection plans, ensuring permanence and enabling swift, appropriate exits from care.</p> <p>Reducing statutory intervention and ensuring timely family support to limit budget increases.</p>	
<p>Caseloads increase contributing to drift and delay in the system</p>	<p>Robust check and challenge through management and performance oversight, quality assurance, and governance processes in place to ensure throughput and decision making are timely and effective.</p> <p>Current development of the "Thresholds document" (to be renamed), will underpin the Family First Partnership model and programme to secure a framework for working with and alongside partners to support children and families earlier with support in the community and partners settings being accessible, that results in a further reduction of referrals into social care and statutory processes.</p> <p>These developments should support partners to become increasingly proactive in relation to prevention and supporting families and children safely in their homes and the community.</p>	<p>Demand Management</p> <p>Governance and Compliance.</p>
<p>Cost avoidance potential is not delivered by the reduction of residential placements being used.</p>	<p>Further Strengthening of panels and decision-making processes.</p> <p>Leadership in decision making through development of a one child panel.</p> <p>Holding accountability and timely decision making.</p>	<p>Demand Management</p>

	<p>Further development of the practice culture and clear leadership expectations about how and when a child becomes looked after.</p> <p>Strengthening of commissioning and Brokerage activity to secure increasingly cost-effective options and hold providers to account in children's services.</p> <p>Implementation of strengthened tracking and monitoring processes being built to secure the ongoing overview of all placements for children looked after.</p>	<p>Governance and Compliance.</p> <p>Financial Controls and sustainability</p>
<p>Fostering Capacity is not increased at rates needed to meet the requirements of our children that need to be looked after for their safety and protection and to avoid use of residential homes at the point of crises</p>	<p>Sufficiency assessment is being further developed to secure clear understanding of requirements.</p> <p>Enhanced recruitment efforts have been subject to substantial improvements in marketing strategies and the implementation of a more efficient process, which includes regular check-ins with all interested applicants. Being ready to take them forward as a service when they are ready to progress.</p> <p>West Midlands <b>Regional Care Cooperative</b> application to be progressed to support commissioning approaches, pricing and care offers to become increasingly consistent.</p> <p>See Fostering paper at Appendix 2</p>	<p>Financial Sustainability.</p> <p>Demand Management</p> <p>Demographic Change</p> <p>Governance and Compliance.</p> <p>Financial Controls</p>
<p>Sufficiency Strategy drift and delay of implementation</p>	<p>Strengthened commissioning advice and application including collaborative working across the council departments</p>	<p>Financial Sustainability.</p> <p>Demand Management</p> <p>Demographic Change</p> <p>Governance and Compliance.</p> <p>Financial Controls</p>

## 5 Financial Implications

- 5.1 Shropshire Council continues to manage unprecedented financial demands, and a financial emergency was declared by Cabinet on 10 September 2025. The overall financial position of the Council is set out in the monitoring position presented to Cabinet monthly. Significant management action has been instigated at all levels of the Council reducing spend to ensure the Council's financial survival. While all

reports to Members provide the financial implications of decisions being taken, this may change as officers review the overall financial situation and make decisions aligned to financial survivability. All non-essential spend will be stopped and all essential spend challenged. These actions may involve (this is not exhaustive):

- scaling down initiatives,
- changing the scope of activities,
- delaying implementation of agreed plans, or
- extending delivery timescales.

## 6 Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1 The People's directorate is working to support people within their communities to reduce the need to travel and therefore reduce carbon emissions.
- 6.2 Climate consideration is embedded in all commissioning reviews.

## 7. Background

- 7.1 Children's Services has delivered a strong year end performance position, across the breadth of performance measures, during 2025–26, consolidating progress following the ILACS inspection and demonstrating a sustained reduction in Children Looked After numbers from a recent high. (see pt 7.17 onwards for detailed numbers re Children Looked After). This improvement reflects strengthened permanence planning, improved management oversight, and more consistent application of decision-making frameworks across the service.
- 7.2 Despite this progress, Children's Services continues to face significant financial pressure, driven primarily by the size, profile and complexity of the CLA cohort, combined with challenges in the market regionally and nationally. Demand remains historically high, with a notable proportion of very young children (pt 7.19, 7.20 and 7.21 outline the data and narrative for our youngest children), and children with complex needs requiring specialist placements.
- 7.3 The most significant cost driver remains the use of residential care, particularly externally commissioned and spot purchased provision. Local sufficiency challenges, combined with national market pressures and rising unit costs, have resulted in continued reliance on higher cost and out of county placements, with associated impacts on education, transport, and oversight costs. It should be noted though that across the residential provision, given the range of resources used, our average cost remains low and below regional and national averages. (pt 7.24 Placement Sufficiency challenges section of the report outlines the usage and challenge data).
- 7.4 Despite this progress, the service continues to operate within a context of significant financial pressure, driven primarily by the size, profile, and complexity of the needs of our Looked After children. Demand remains historically high, and while overall numbers have reduced, the proportion of children with complex needs, younger age profiles and specialist placement requirements continues to exert pressure on placement budgets.

- 7.5 In response, the Council is delivering a comprehensive and coordinated improvement programme focused on strengthening care planning and decision making, increasing internal and family-based provision, improving financial oversight, and preventing escalation into care wherever it is safe to do so. (pts 7.7 – pt 7.15 outline the core actions underway).
- 7.6 In addition, there is a Local Government Association, (LGA) review underway of the commissioning framework and priorities which aims to give further guidance re next steps.

**Key mitigation actions include:**

- 7.7 Strengthening care planning and decision-making, including consistent application of the Stable Homes process, even earlier care plan progression, and stronger challenge at Child Looked After reviews to prevent unnecessary escalation to residential care. Targeting the resource of Stepping Stones for the children who can make progress to return home or step down from residential care.
- 7.8 Streamlining decision-making structures, including development of an all-children's placement and resource allocation panel, (solutions panel), to improve consistency, timeliness, and oversight of placement decisions. Inclusive of partners, finance, and commissioning colleagues.
- 7.9 Undertaking the work to enable a child to step down from care is a complex system wide plan that needs education, health, and families to work closely together to address all aspects of a child's needs, to evidence progress from the original threshold met for removal in care proceedings.
- 7.10 Increasing internal sufficiency, through expanding and prioritising use of Shropshire's own children's homes and fostering capacity to reduce reliance on external and spot-purchased provision. Following staffing challenges 1 x 2 bed home has been closed for a while, it is due to reopen by end of May.
- 7.11 Delivering the sufficiency assessment 2025 - 2027 recommendations, currently being updated again with LGA support and service developments, through increased commissioning and challenge to providers quality and capacity to support our children.
- 7.12 Further expanding family-based permanence options, including reunification, Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) and Child Arrangement Orders (CAO), continuing to reduce the long-term population of children in care.
- 7.13 Improving multi-agency support and earlier intervention, helping more children to remain safely at home, and reducing demand entering the care system. Family First Partnership transformation work is underpinned by this principle.
- 7.14 Enhanced financial oversight, including tighter scrutiny of placement searches, funding requests, and use of transport, enabling clearer control of spend and earlier identification of pressure points.

7.15 Engagement in national programmes including a Regional Care Cooperatives application, to build capacity and sufficiency of new homes including residential provision. Exploring options regionally for collaborative working options around residential care and fostering.

7.16 These actions should provide assurance that risks are understood, mitigations are in place and progress will continue to be monitored closely throughout 2026–27.

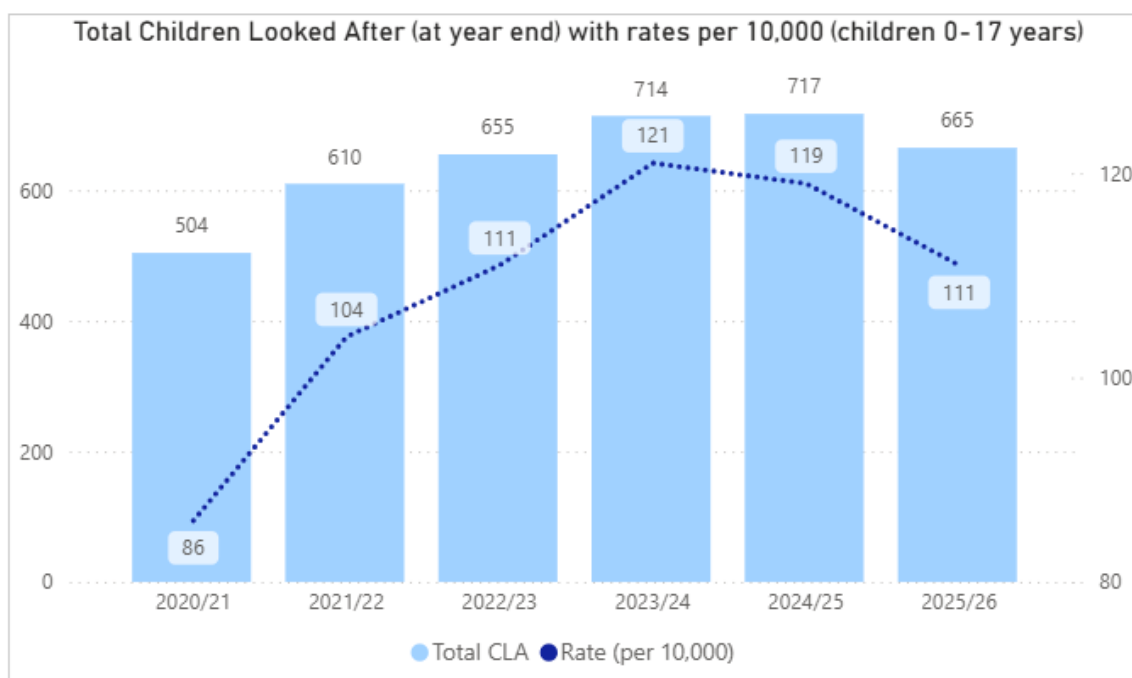
**Children's Services Year End Performance (March 2025 – March 2026)**

7.17 Children's Services continues to demonstrate sustained improvement across core performance indicators, reflecting the impact of strengthened leadership, improved governance, and more consistent application of practice standards.

7.18 As of 27 March 2026, the CLA population stands at 665 children, representing a reduction from a recent high of 717. This includes a number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASCS) under the national transfer scheme currently 35 children and likely to increase. As @27th March 2026 Total no of Looked after children (excluding UASCS) would be 630. (this does change daily).

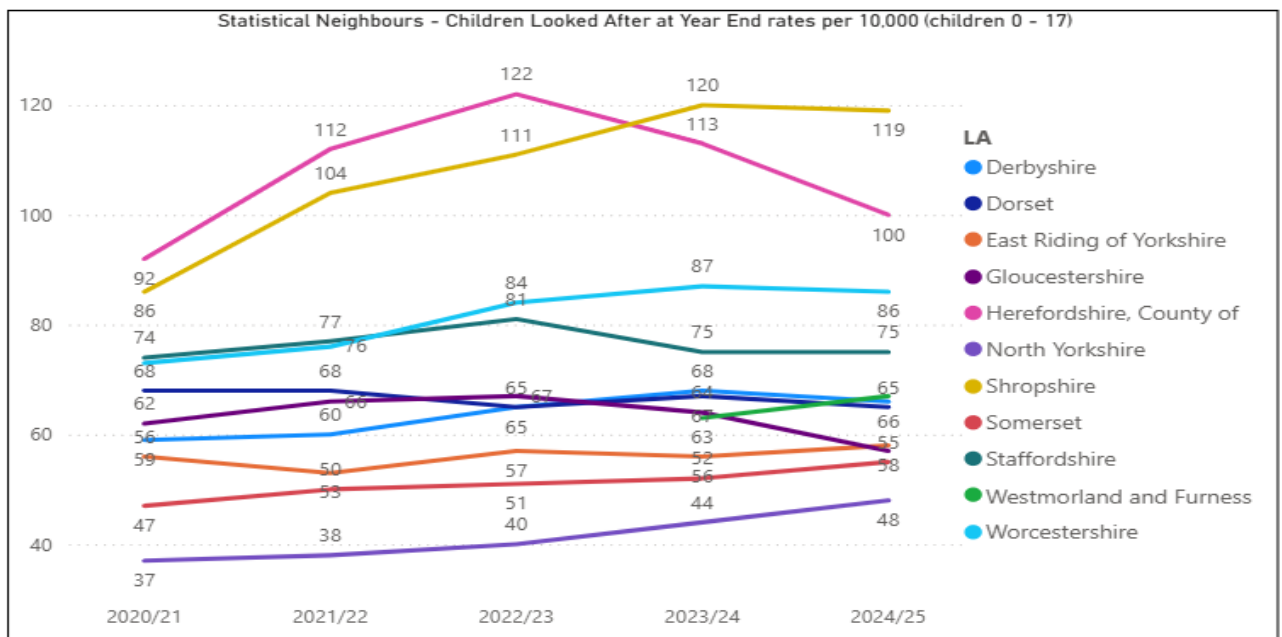
7.19 This reduction is significant in the context of the previous five-year trend, which saw a sustained rise in CLA numbers locally and nationally. The current position reflects a turning point in demand management, underpinned by improved permanence planning, reduced drift, and delay, and strengthened oversight of care pathways. The current position is back at the 2022/23 level.

\*Five-year summary: Children Looked After



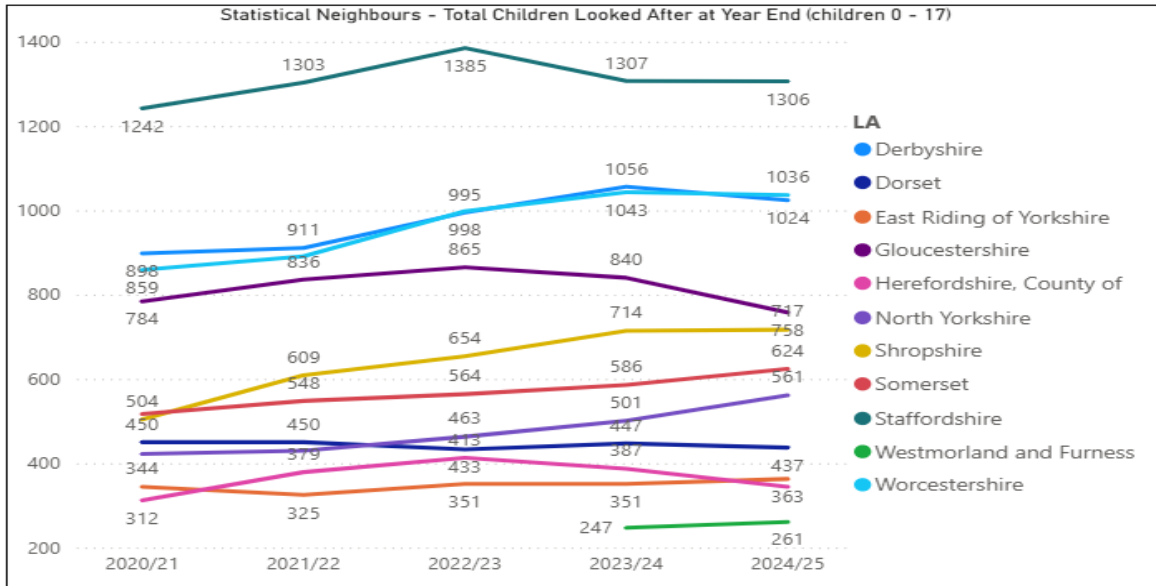
Year	CLA Number (snapshot)	Rate per 10,000 children (0–17)	Context / Inspection Milestones
2020–21	504	~86 per 10,000 (six-month rolling view)	Pre improvement baseline; national post pandemic pressure across children's services
2021–22	610	~104 per 10,000 (six-month rolling view)	Demand pressures increasing nationally; early stages of Early Help transformation
2022–23	655	~111 per 10,000 (six-month rolling view)	Continued rise in CLA numbers locally and nationally; system under sustained pressure
2023–24	714	~121 per 10,000 (six-month rolling view)	Turning point in demand management; strengthened permanence and court oversight
2024–25	717	~119 per 10,000 (six-month rolling view)	<b>ILACS inspection (June–July 2025);</b> improving trajectories evidenced
2025–26 (as at 27.03.26)	665 (down from a recent high of 717)	~111 per 10,000 (six-month rolling view)	Post inspection consolidation; sustained reduction alongside increased UASC responsibility

These charts shown the comparisons of statistical neighbours' rates per 10,000 (2020/2025) and the actual numbers of looked after children (2021/2025). 2025/2026-year end data is not published until November 2026.

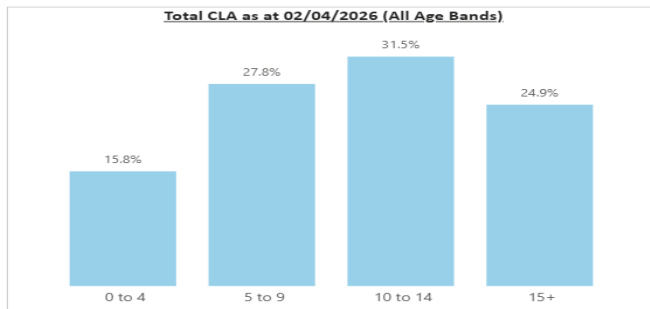


[CLA numbers and rates per 10,000 children aged under 18 years - by local authority. Data set from Children looked after in England including adoptions - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

As @ 31st March 2026 Shropshire have 666 looked after children this is a per 10,000 rate of 111.

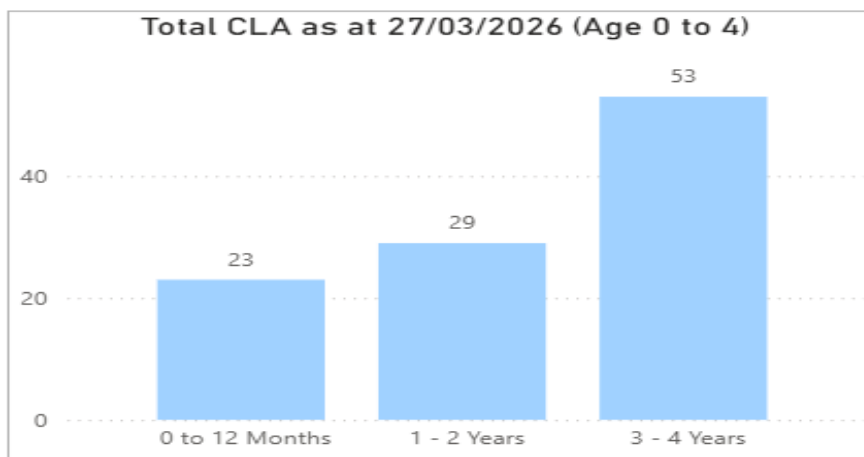


The chart below shows as @ 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2026 Total children looked after (all age bands).



7.20 The service continues to support a complex cohort of children, including those with significant trauma related needs, disabilities, and mental health needs.

7.21 The age profile of the CLA population remains a critical factor, As @ 27th March there were 105 children aged 4 and under, that is 16% of our total looked after children. DFE national statistics as at year end 2025, reported an average percentage of 12% for the 1 to 4yr age group looked after children (2025/2026 not published until November 2026)



7.22 23 of Shropshire's looked after children were under 1 as @ 27<sup>th</sup> March 2026: 3.5% of our total looked after children. These children have experienced abuse in their family home, and we have made court applications to begin Care proceedings based on this evidence. This usually results in them being placed for adoption or in other permanence arrangements outside of their direct birth family, to ensure their safety and ability to thrive into adulthood. Care proceedings for them are usually very timely and they spend the shortest time in local authority care. We know their development and well-being crucially requires formed attachments and committed long term carers/adoptive parents to enable their successful growth and development into the future.

7.23 This chart demonstrates the numbers of children 2 years and under that have been subject to care proceedings for the last 4 years.

**No of 0–2-year-olds care proceedings initiated- average weeks in court proceedings 2021 - 2025.**

\*The second chart shows their outcomes when proceedings were concluded.

YEAR	Av weeks for 0-1 yo	Av weeks for 0-2 yo	No of 0-2 yo concluded
25/26	42 weeks	42 weeks	42
24/25	44 weeks	45 weeks	65
23/24	65 weeks	64 weeks	63
22/23	52 weeks	51 weeks	53
21/22	48 weeks	50 weeks	64

**Court outcomes for 0–2-year-olds – 2021-2025**

Year	Care					Designated to OLA	SGO	CAO	Adoption Order	Total children	PWP
	Care Order	Care & PO	Sup Order	No Order	Withdrawn						
25/26	12	13	12	2	1	1	1	0	0	42	1
24/25	20	23	16	1	1	0	2	1	1	65	2
23/24	29	22	8	1	0	0	1	2	0	63	7
22/23	16	27	8	0	2	0	0	0	0	53	8
21/22	29	19	9	4	1	1	1	0	0	64	8

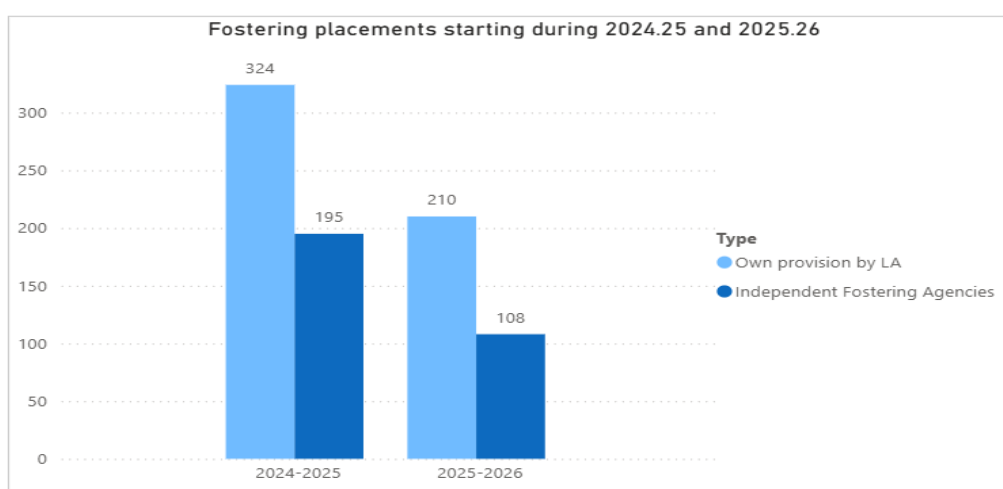
7.24 Targeted work continues to prioritise reunification, Special Guardianship Orders (SGO), and other family-based permanence options for younger children wherever it is safe and appropriate to do so. This includes strengthened assessment, review, and decision-making processes to ensure permanence planning remains timely, robust and child focused.

**Key Cost Drivers**

7.25 The principal cost pressures related to Residential Care Homes, within Children's Services arise from a combination of demand, complexity, and external market conditions.

## Placement Sufficiency Challenges

- 7.26 Local sufficiency remains constrained, particularly in relation to, specialist foster care and cost-effective residential provision in the private sector. This has increased reliance on externally commissioned and spot purchased independent foster carers and residential placements, which carry the highest unit costs. In some cases, placement searches are prolonged due to limited availability, further increasing pressure on budgets and operational teams.
- 7.27 The chart below demonstrates the numbers of foster placements accessed 2024/2026. It shows the reduction in use of PR4 Private provision e.g. Independent Fostering agencies (IFAs) and levels of use of our in-house Shropshire foster carers. We will always endeavour to identify an in house foster placement first, if family and friends are unable to offer safe care at the time it is needed for any child.



A Fostering briefing is attached as **Appendix 2** and outlines the impact and outcomes re marketing and increasing of in house foster carer capacity.

## Edge of Care

- 7.28 We will always consider how we can support the family best and ensure children are safe and having their needs met, before any consideration of them coming into care.
- 7.29 Packages of support including advice and direct work re parenting and building parents confidence continue to enable children and young people not to come into care and remain at home safely and sustainably.
- 7.30 Working together across the teams with additional support and guidance from The Stepping Stones Service, has secured the following numbers of prevention and step downs for children and young people.

Year	CYP avoided becoming CLA	CYP stepped down from residential to either foster, supported accommodation, or home	CYP stepped down from foster to home
2023/24	75	17	22
2024/25	84	18	32
2025/26	74	16	26

### Residential Care Usage

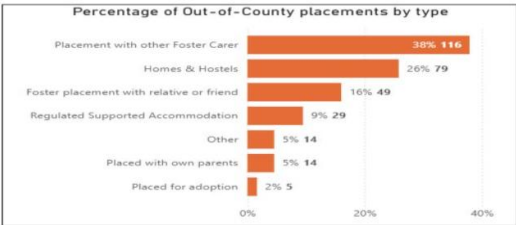
- 7.31 Residential care remains the main cost driver. Although these placements are suitable and beneficial for some children with severe trauma or complex needs, prolonged use - especially when stepdown options are delayed or unavailable—creates financial and emotional challenges.
- 7.32 Children under 12 should be considered for specialist residential homes only in exceptional circumstances, following thorough commissioning processes and comprehensive needs assessments. Research indicates that a family home environment is most conducive to children's development, particularly during their formative years as infants, toddlers, and those under 12 years of age.
- 7.33 The service is continuing to take ongoing action to address this issue and anticipate that the recommendations presented in this paper will make a meaningful contribution toward this objective.
- 7.34 It is essential that children are placed in appropriate family environments; and residential care should be identified only for children where comprehensive assessment of response to abuse and trauma, and/or specialised needs, indicates such intervention is necessary to ensure the child's safety and well-being.
- 7.35 Our internal homes are always considered if residential is required and/or fostering may not meet the child's presenting needs at that time, or there have been breakdowns or disruptions in a crises situation.
- 7.36 10 children are currently placed in our children's homes, including a sibling group. One vacancy is being held in one home to enable enhanced staffing for a child with complex needs, this is reviewed weekly, daily and will be part of the newly developed panels considerations. One 2 bed home is due to reopen in May 2026 following recruitment of staff for the team.

### Out of County Placements:


- 7.37 Approximately 30% of CLA are placed out of county, these are not all residential homes, it is all type of provision and includes those living in Telford and Wrekin, which is effectively within the Shropshire boundary.
- 7.38 The chart below is the overview of all children and young people placed in homes out of the county and the type of home arrangement they are living in out of the county as @ 27th March 2026.

## CLA currently placed at a distance (out of county)

As at 27th March 2026, of 665 children looked after, 306 are placed outside of Shropshire.  
This includes Telford and Wrekin geographically it is within our borders despite being a separate Local Authority.  
Of these, 184, 60% are placed in family settings, as below:

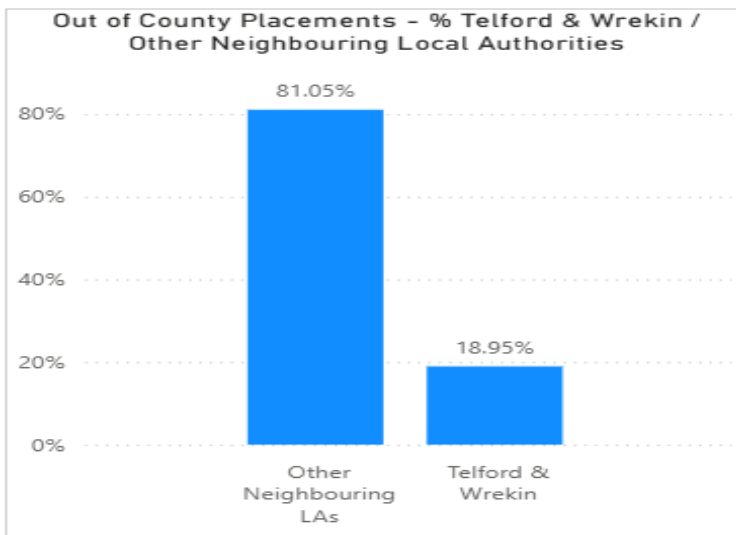


Placement Type	Percentage	Count
Placement with other Foster Carer	38%	116
Homes & Hostels	26%	79
Foster placement with relative or friend	16%	49
Regulated Supported Accommodation	9%	29
Other	5%	14
Placed with own parents	5%	14
Placed for adoption	2%	5

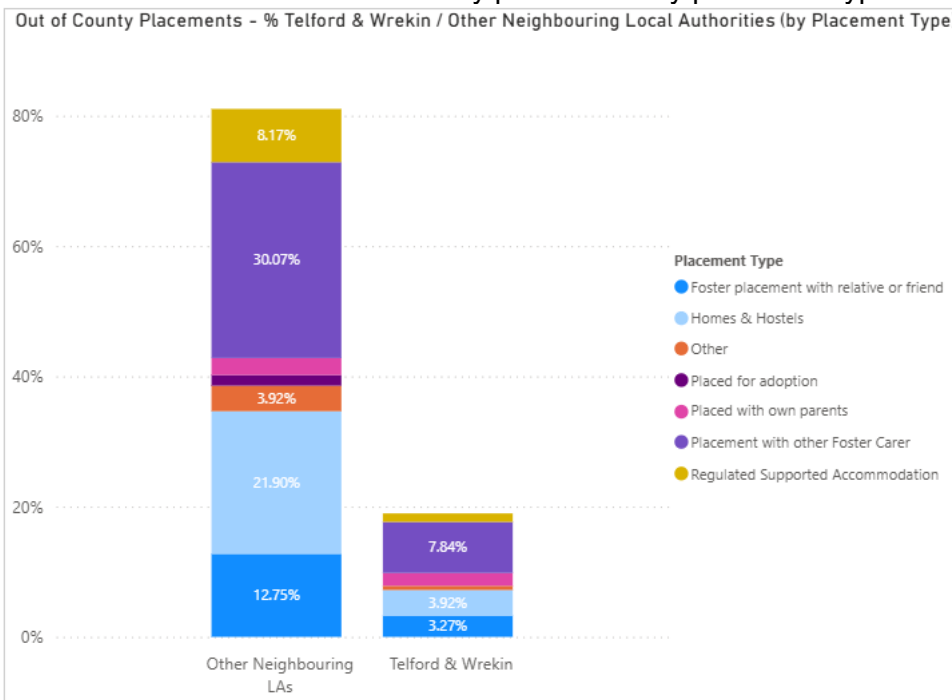


Children placed Out of County by Postcode

The chart below shows the % of Out of County placements split between Telford and Wrekin and Other Local Authorities:



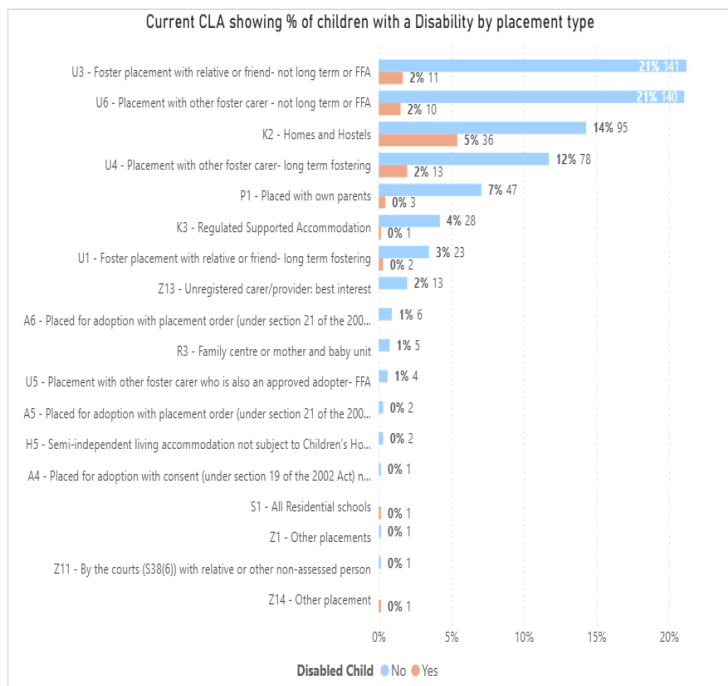
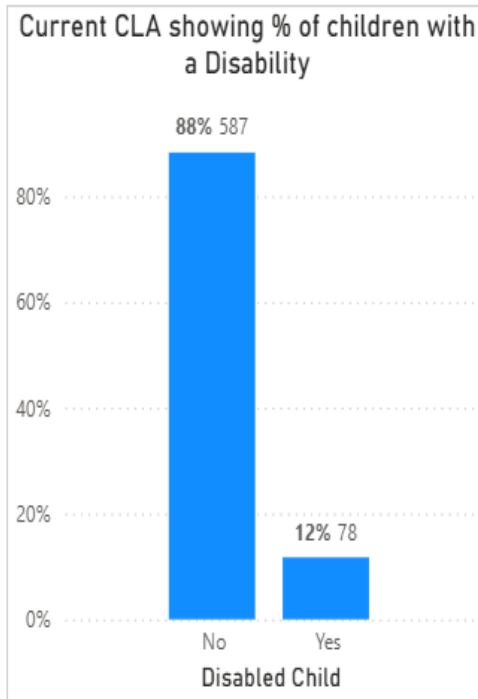
The chart below shows Out of County placements by placement type.



## Demand and Complexity

7.39 Children entering care increasingly present with complex needs, including disability, trauma, and neurodevelopmental challenges. The ongoing receipt of UASC also contributes to overall numbers and complexity.

\*The charts below shows the % of children looked after that have complex needs due to their individual disabilities and care needs and the placement types they are in.

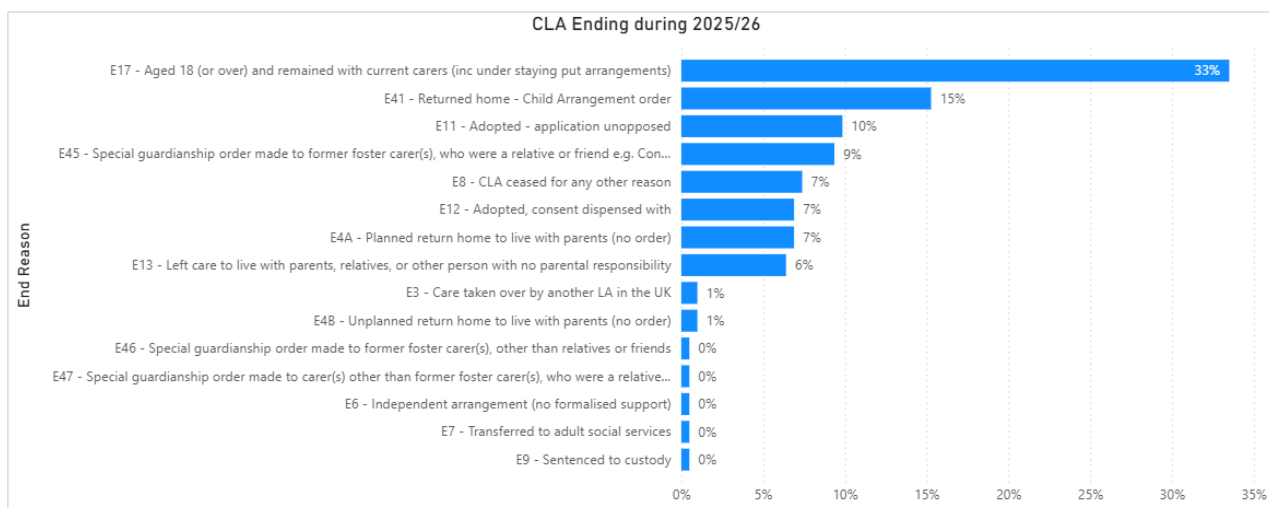


## Placement Instability and Late Planning

7.40 Evidence indicates that a range of issues contribute to the prolonged use of higher cost provision. Homes giving immediate or short notice periods when incidents happen with complex children. The commissioning team are working to support operational teams with addressing these incidents through contractual compliance. On occasion late planning or delayed escalation of placement searches and placement instability can contribute to prolonged use of higher cost provision. Work is being undertaken to learn more from placement breakdowns, to improve future planning and decision making.

## Children leaving care and their destinations 2025/2026.

7.41 The following shows the outcomes for children that leave our care by %. Of note is the high proportion that remain in family settings, including their own families and foster carers.



## Strengthening Forward Planning and Commissioning

7.42 The council is actively developing a culture of robust forward planning within its commissioning frameworks. This has included updating of the children's sufficiency assessment. This approach involves enhanced collaboration between various teams across the organisation, aiming to streamline processes and improve outcomes for children at risk. By establishing a single point of contact for oversight and decision making, the council seeks to minimise drift and delays that can occur. These improvements are particularly critical when staff are working to secure new homes for vulnerable children, ensuring that the process is efficient and responsive to their needs. The focus on proactive planning and coordinated action is expected to support better placement stability and timeliness, delivering improved care for children at risk of harm. Working within the West Midlands framework for residential provision enables regional agreements for contracts, costs, and quality standards to be agreed.

## Key Risks for Members

7.43 Members are asked to note the following key risks:

- Continued volatility in placement demand and exposure to high-cost residential provision.
- Risk of prolonged use of residential care where suitable stepdown or family-based options are delayed or unavailable.
- External market pressures, including limited specialist capacity and rising unit costs, which remain outside the Council's direct control.
- There are many private homes operating in Shropshire, many of these take children from any Local Authority in the country, often meaning beds are not available in county and we must place children out of county.

7.44 These risks will be mitigated against through strengthened governance, strengthened and developing commissioning approaches, improved decision making, maximised use of internal provision and earlier intervention. However, Members should note that financial pressure is likely to persist while national market conditions remain challenging. The Government is leading on National

changes and developments to address the issue of the private children's home market, and these measures will support the work across a national footprint.

## National Context – Residential and Foster Care Sufficiency

- 7.45 The pressures experienced locally reflect a **wider national challenge**. Across England, local authorities face sustained difficulties in recruiting and retaining foster carers alongside a constrained and increasingly expensive residential care market. Despite the national reduction in available foster carers Shropshire has bucked that trend the last 2 years with recruitment. With the investment in marketing and recruitment
- 7.46 National reforms are underway, including increased support for kinship care, national foster carer recruitment initiatives, and the development of **Regional Care Cooperatives**. These reforms aim to improve sufficiency, stability, and public sector influence over the care market. While they are expected to support longer term sustainability, progress is anticipated to be incremental.

## Plans and Mitigations to Address Cost Pressures

### A. Strengthening Care Planning and Decision Making

The service has strengthened care planning through earlier and more consistent application of the **Stable Homes** approach, looking at how support can be provided in a structured and co-ordinated way, through Stepping Stones at the start of a child living with the foster family, Independent Reviewing Officers are applying enhanced challenge within CLA reviews and clearer expectations around timely, evidence based decision making. **Financial benefit:** reduced escalation to high-cost placements.

### B. Systemic Review of Panels and Processes

Decision making structures are being streamlined, including development of an all-children's resource and allocation panel involving finance and commissioning colleagues, improving consistency and oversight. **Financial benefit:** improved control of placement spend and reduced avoidable costs.

### C. Increasing Use of Local Family Based Care

The service continues to prioritise reunification, SGO and other family-based permanence options, supported by improved assessment and review processes. **Financial benefit:** stepdown from high-cost residential provision.

### D. Enhancing Internal Residential and Fostering Capacity

Internal children's homes are prioritised wherever appropriate, with work underway to expand fostering capacity and reduce reliance on spot purchased placements. **Financial benefit:** reduced premium costs and improved predictability of spend.

## E. Strengthening Partnership Working

Multiagency support continue to play a key role in preventing escalation into care. Helping people to understand the preventative role they play and ensuring this is embedded in a consistent way remains a key priority for Families First Partnership  
**Financial benefit:** prevention of entry into care.

## 8. Additional Information

8.1 None

## 9 Conclusions

- 9.1 Children's Services has delivered a strong end of year performance position for 2025–26, consolidating post inspection improvement and achieving a sustained reduction in CLA numbers. (See Appendix 1 CHAT 30.03.26)
- 9.2 However, the service continues to operate within a challenging financial and market context. The high use of residential placements, particularly externally commissioned provision, remains the most significant cost driver.
- 9.3 The Council is responding through a coordinated improvement programme focused on stabilising demand, strengthening sufficiency, improving financial control, and delivering better outcomes for children. Working with multi agency partners, finance, and commissioning colleagues to build a "one child one place" solutions panel. Alongside the strengthening of commissioning oversight and offer for children's services placements and brokerage activities.
- 9.4 These actions should provide assurance that risks are understood, mitigations are in place and progress will continue to be closely monitored during 2026–27.

**Local Member:** *Applicable to all Members*

### Appendices

**Appendix 1** - Children's services Analysis Tool (ChAT) Based on Ofsted's ILACS Annex A dataset / Inspection Report. dated 31.03.26.

**Appendix 2** – Fostering Briefing Dated 31.03.26

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# Children's services Analysis Tool (ChAT)

Based on Ofsted's ILACS Annex A dataset / Inspection Report

## Shropshire

31 March 2026

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Headline figures

**Contacts**

Contacts in the last 6 months 6,405

**Early Help / Common / Targeted Assessments**

Early Help in the last 6 months 1,035

**Referrals**

Referrals in the last 6 months 571

**Social Care Assessments**

Total assessments in the last 6 months 1,148

Assessments completed in the last 6 months 913

Ongoing assessments 235

**Section 47 enquiries and Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCS)**

Section 47 enquiries in the last 6 months 364

ICPCs that started from an S47 in the last 6 months 116

**Children in Need (CIN)**

Total CIN in the last 6 months 1,743

CIN started in the last 6 months 467

CIN ceased in the last 6 months 404

Current children in need (snapshot) 1,335

**Child Protection Plans (CPP)**

Total CPP in the last 6 months 350

CPP started in the last 6 months 148

CPP ceased in the last 6 months 137

Current children subject of a child protection plan (snapshot) 213

**Children Looked After (CLA)**

Total CLA in the last 6 months 761

CLA started in the last 6 months 62

CLA ceased in the last 6 months 95

Current children looked after (snapshot) 666

**Care leavers**

Care leavers who have reached the threshold for receiving leaving care services 599

**Adoptions**

Children adopted, waiting to be adopted, or had an adoption decision reversed in the last 12 months 171

Children adopted in the last 12 months 32

Children waiting to be adopted (snapshot) 29

Children with decision reversed in the last 12 months 14

**Adopters**

Prospective adopters in the last 12 months 162

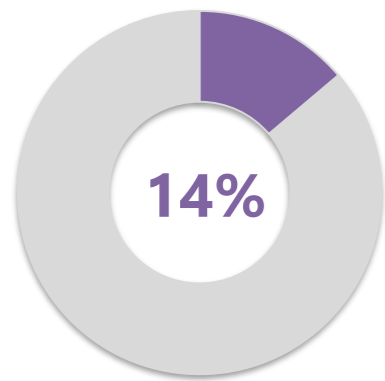
Contacts in the last 6 months

from 01/10/2025 to 31/03/2026

6405 contacts

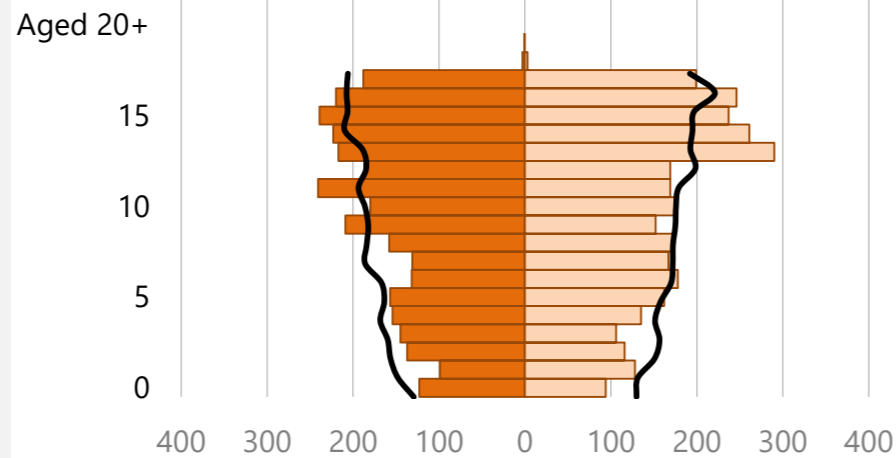
Contacts for children who also appear on Referrals list

Yes No



Age and sex

3144 Males (49%) 100 Other (not shown) (2%)  
3161 Females (49%) 0-17 population estimate



Other' includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

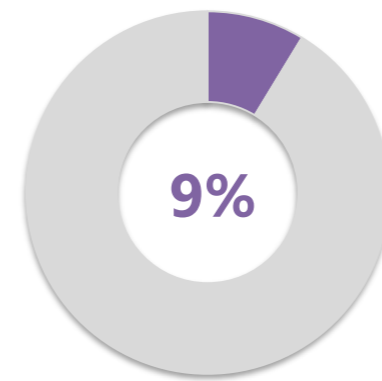
Early Help in the last 6 months

from 01/10/2025 to 31/03/2026

1035 Early Help / Common / Targeted Assessments

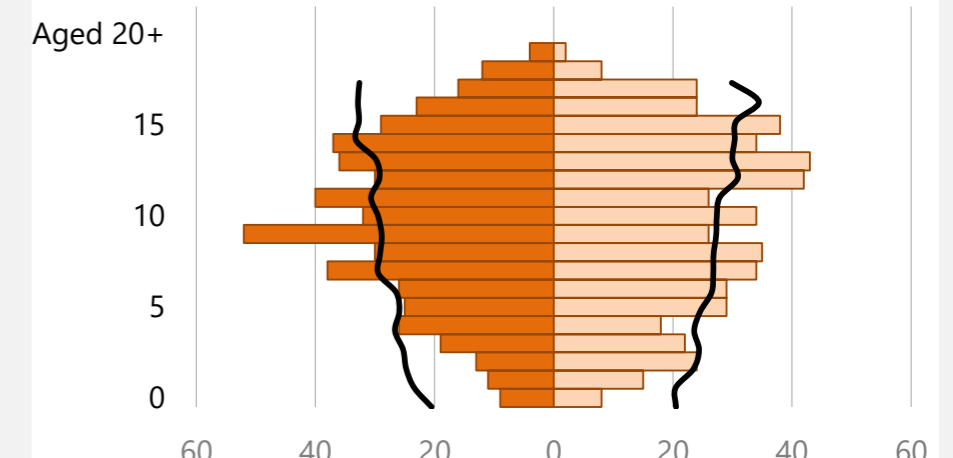
Early Help cases that also appear on the Referrals list

Yes No



Age and sex

508 Males (49%) 12 Other (not shown) (1%)  
515 Females (50%) 0-17 population estimate

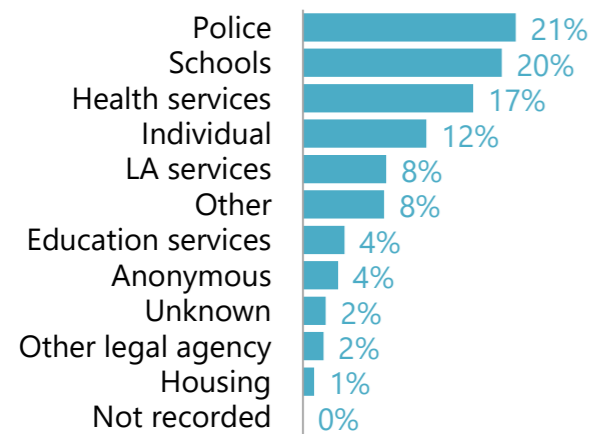


Other' includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

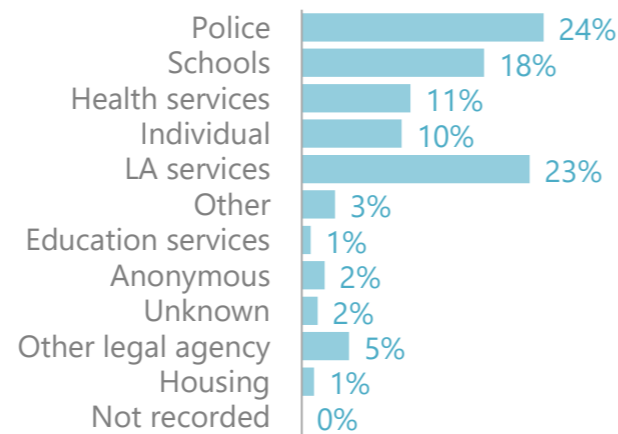
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Source of contacts compared to source of referrals

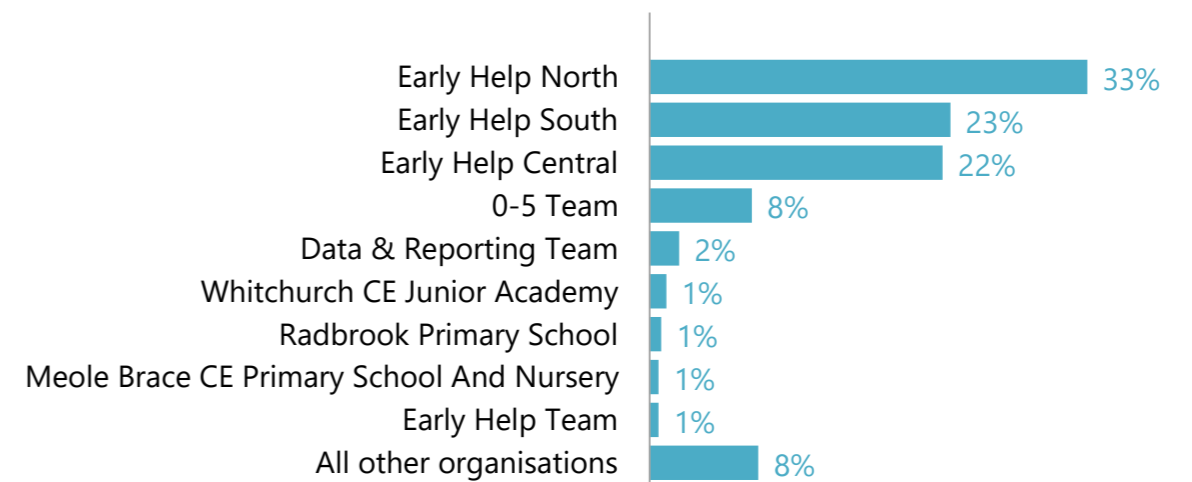
Contact source



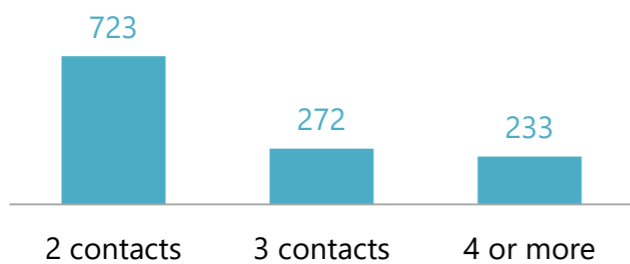
Referral source comparison



Organisation completing assessment



Children with multiple contacts in period

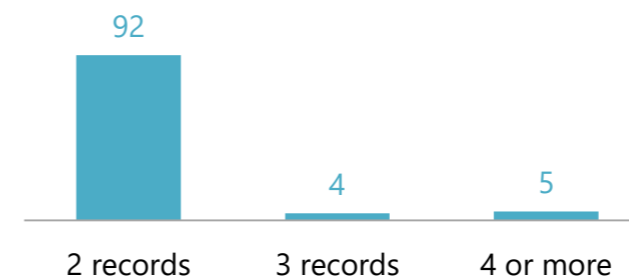


Ethnic backgrounds

White	78%
Mixed	4%
Asian or Asian British	1%
Black or black British	1%
Other ethnic group	1%
Not stated	17%
Not recorded	0%

See page 25 for comparisons

Children with multiple records in period



Ethnic backgrounds

White	92%
Mixed	2%
Asian or Asian British	0%
Black or black British	0%
Other ethnic group	0%
Not stated	5%
Not recorded	0%

See page 25 for comparisons

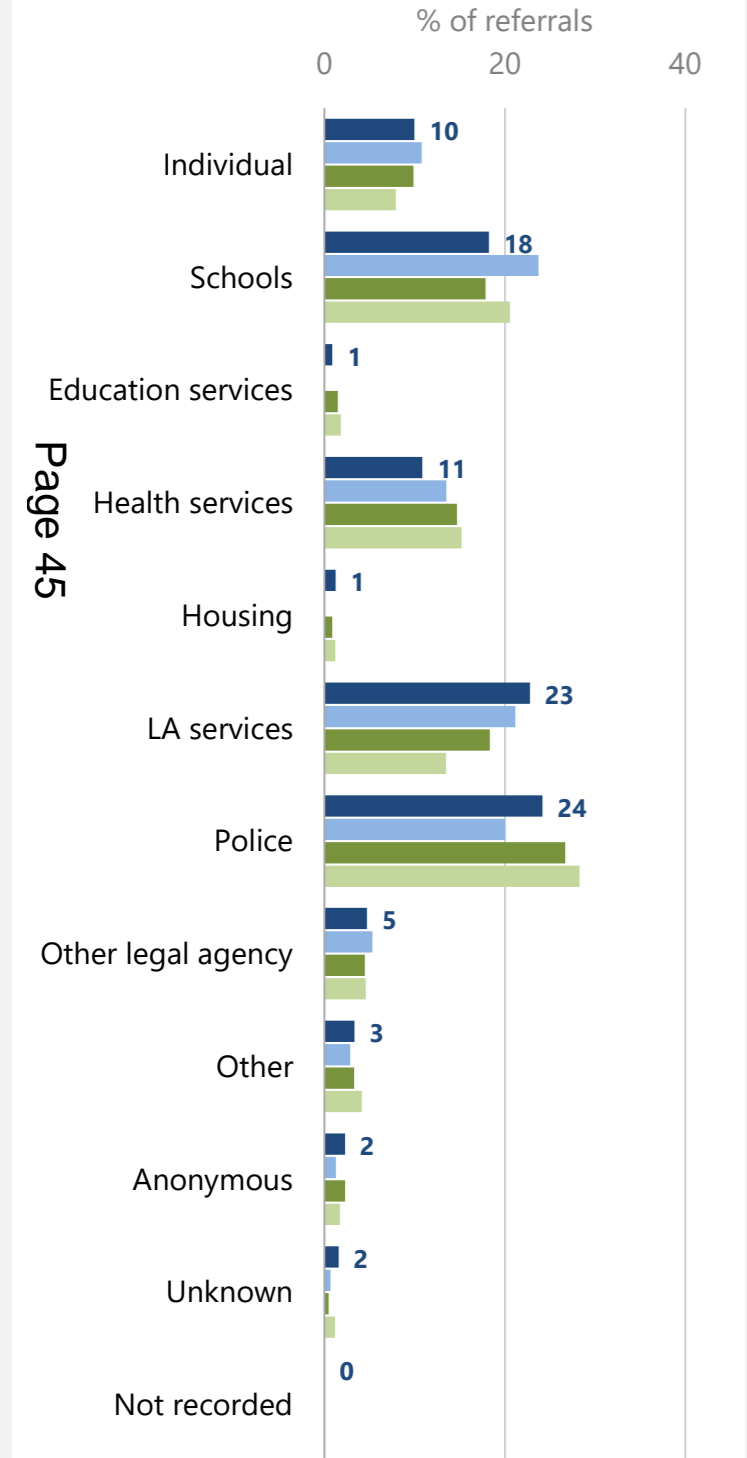
Referrals in the last 6 months

from 01/10/2025  
to 31/03/2026

571 referrals

Source of referral

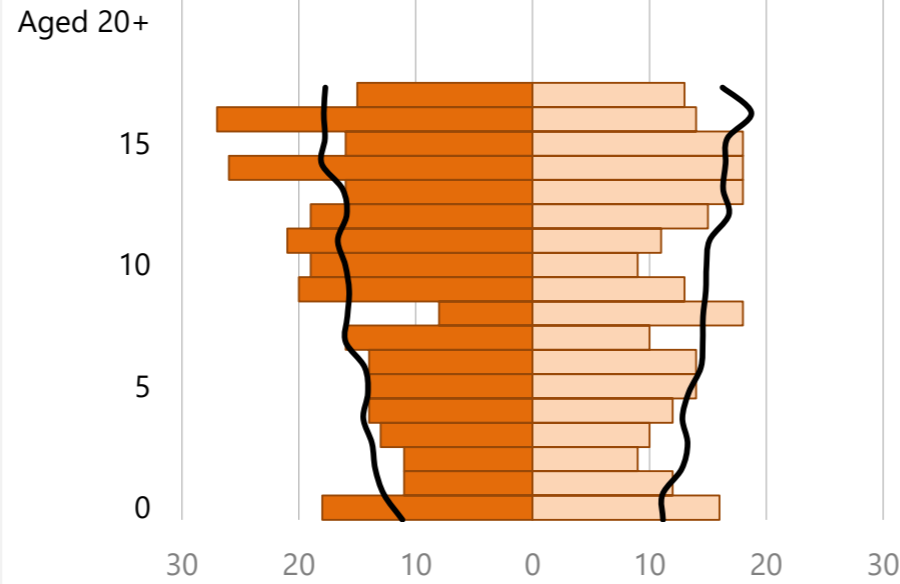
■ Last 6 months ■ LA 24-25 ■ SNs 24-25 ■ Eng 24-25



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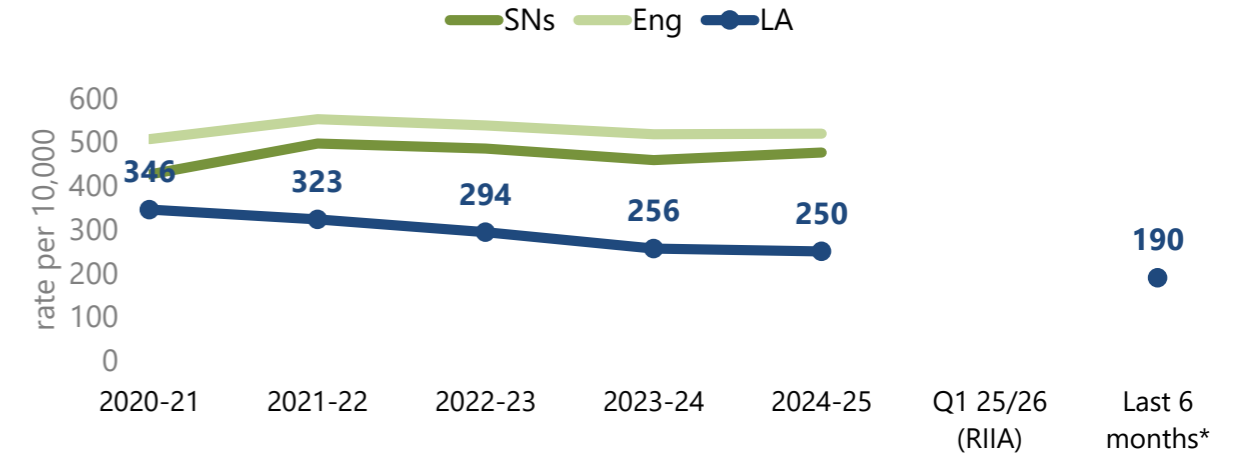
Age and sex

■ 298 Males (52%) ■ 244 Females (43%) ■ 29 Other (not shown) (5%)  
— 0-17 population estimate



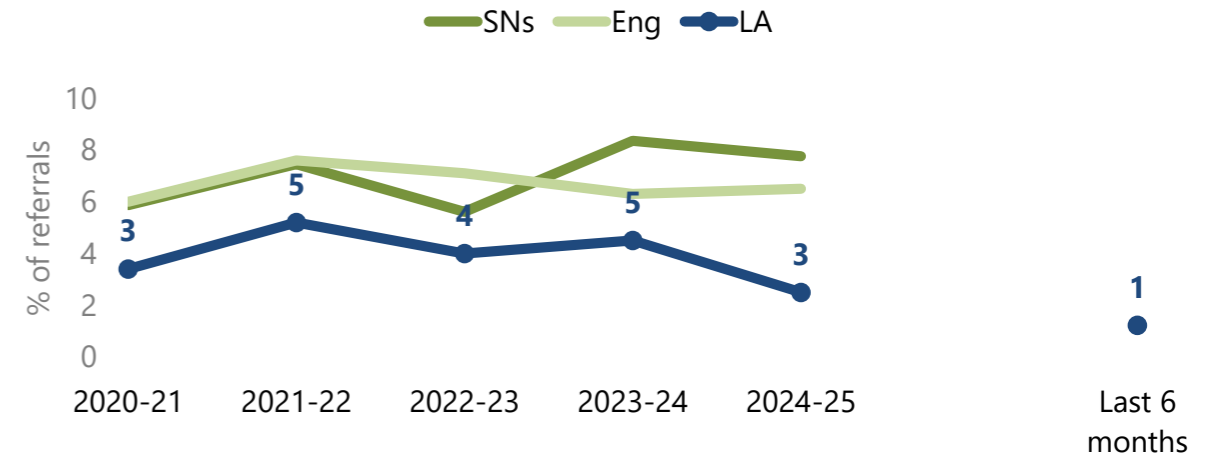
Other' includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

Rate of referrals per 10,000 children aged 0-17



\*Annualised rate for comparison purposes

Referrals with No Further Action (NFA)



Ethnic backgrounds

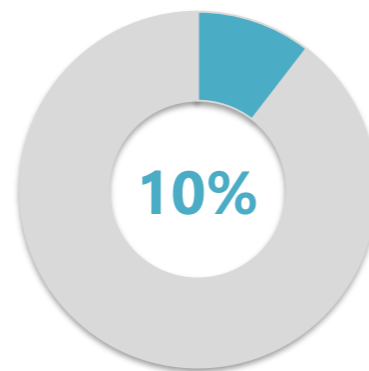
White	83%
Mixed	4%
Asian or Asian British	2%
Black or black British	1%
Other ethnic group	2%
Not stated	8%
Not recorded	0%

See page 25 for comparisons

Re-referrals: children with a previous referral within 12 months of their latest referral

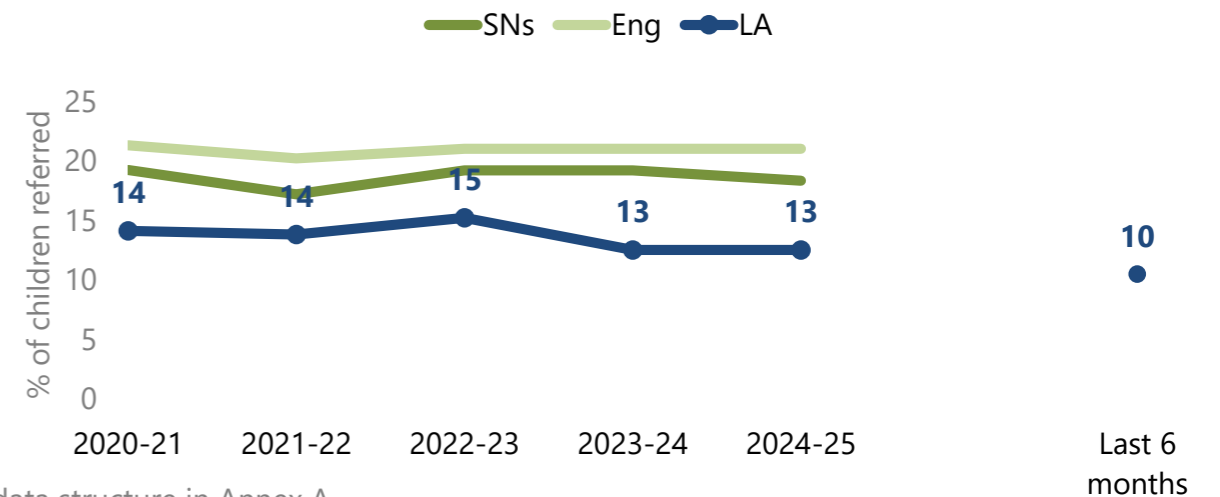
58 children with previous referrals within 12 months of latest referral

■ Re-referral ■ First referral ■ Not recorded



First referral	497
1 prev referral	56
2 prev referrals	2
3 prev referrals	0
4+ prev referrals	0
Not recorded	0

\*"Last 6 months" calculation differs slightly from national statistics, due to data structure in Annex A



Assessments in the last 6 months

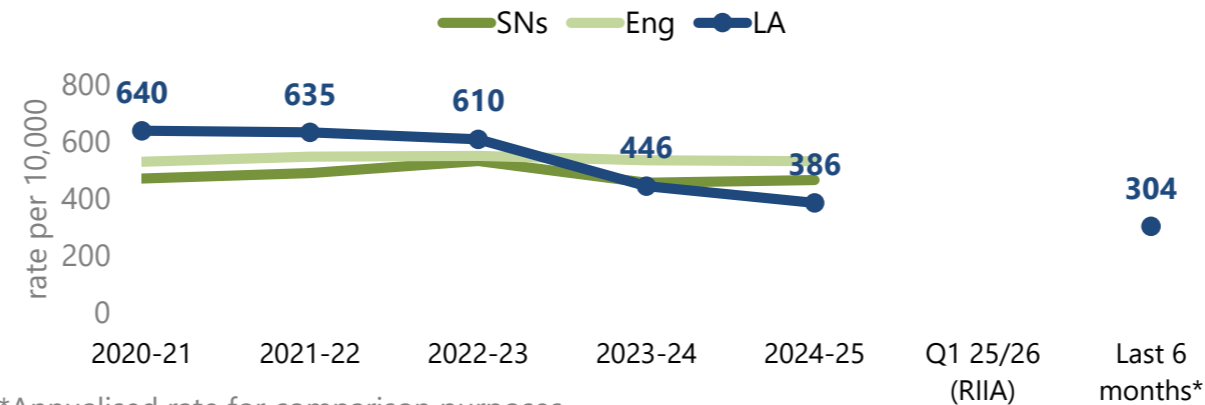
from 01/10/2025  
to 31/03/2026

1148 total assessments

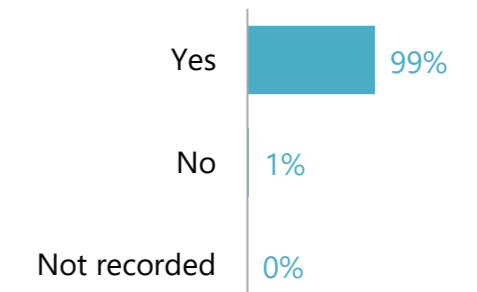
235 open assessments

**913 completed assessments**

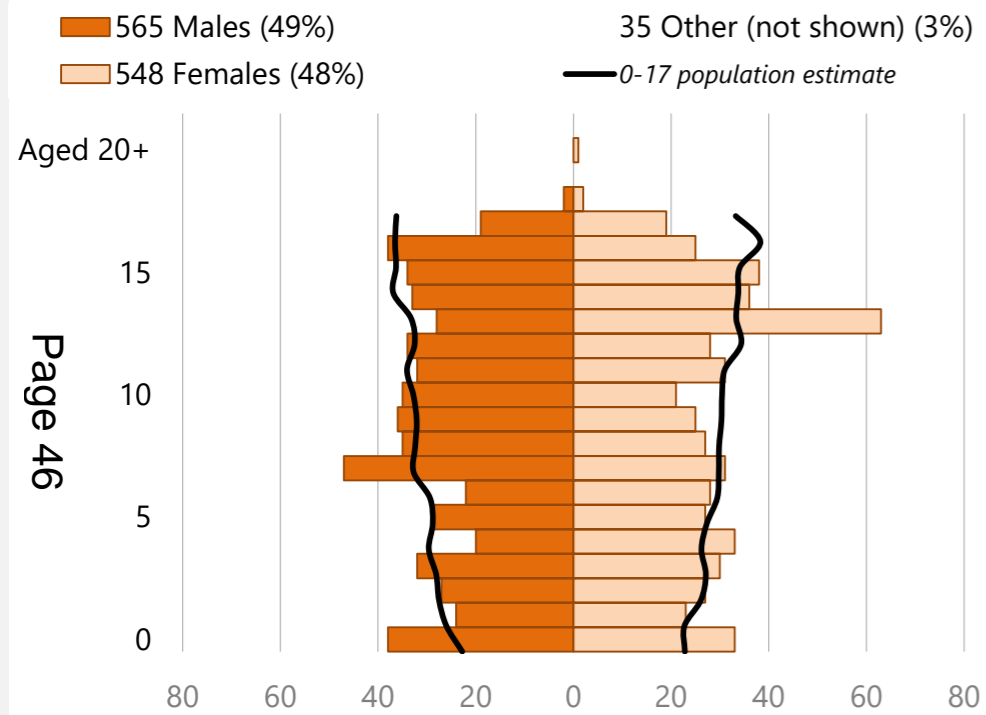
Rate of completed assessments per 10,000 children aged 0-17



Child assessed as requiring LA children's social care support

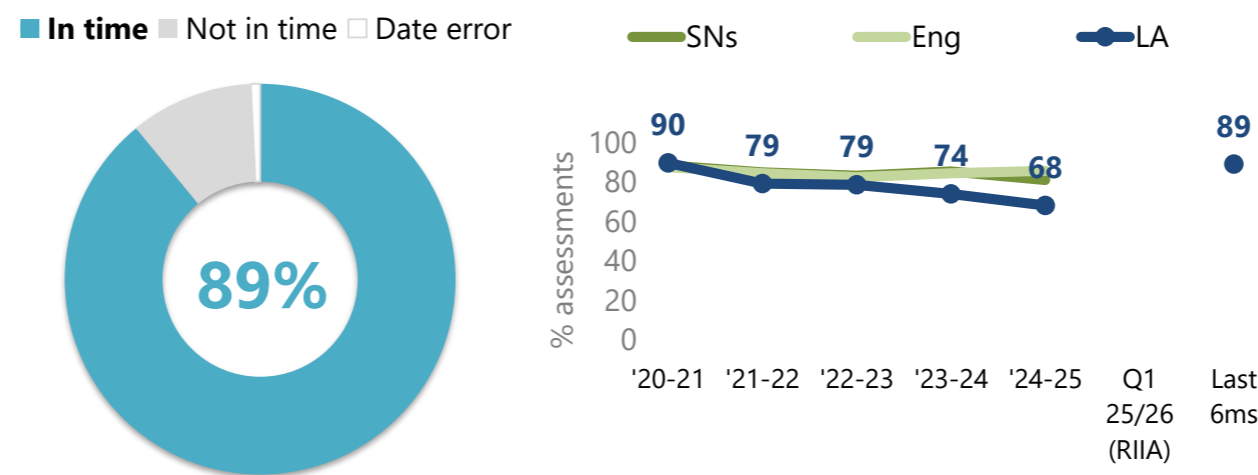


Age and sex of all assessments

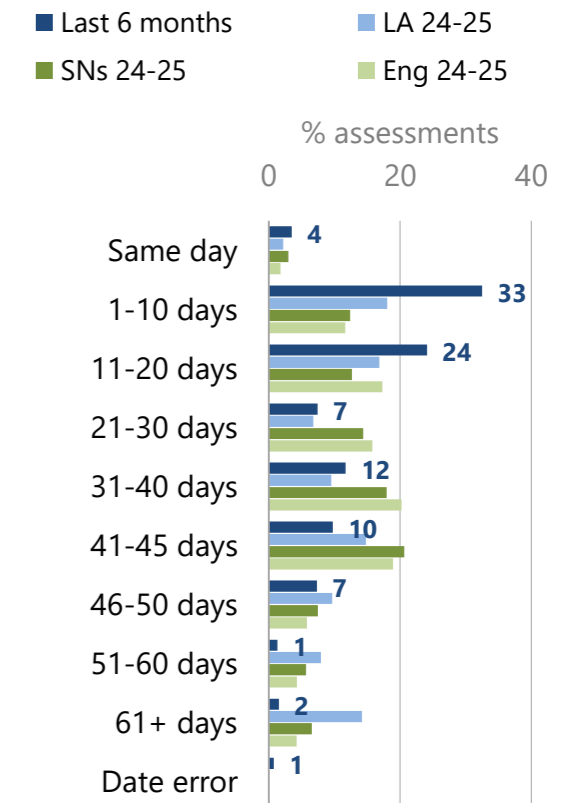


Other includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

Assessments completed in 45 working days

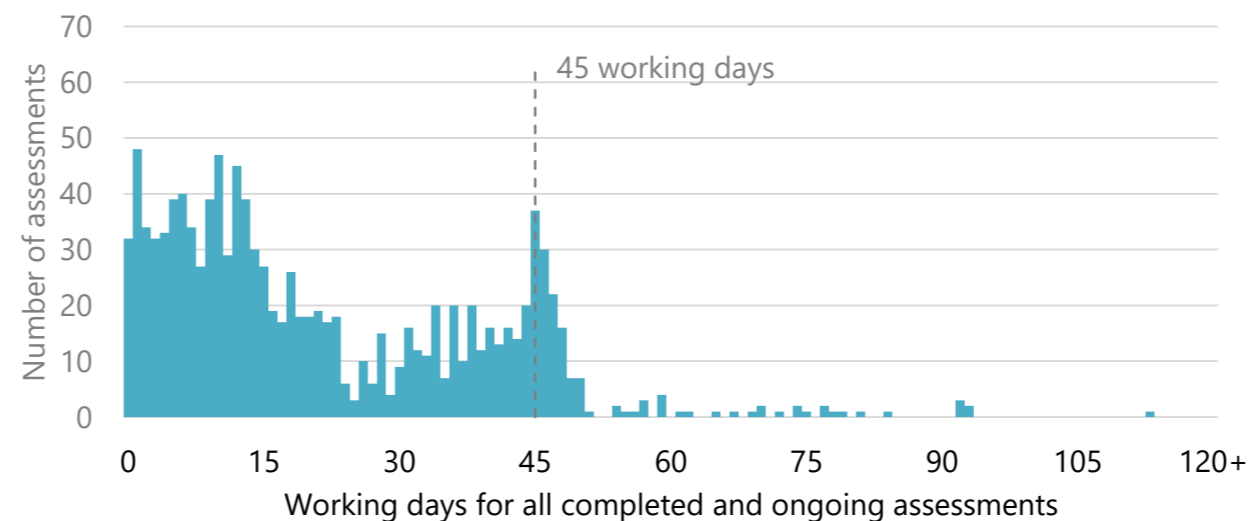


Comparing timeliness



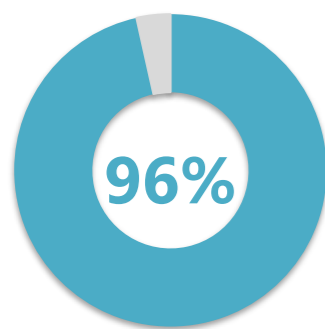
Durations for all completed and open assessments

Average duration of completed assessments was 21 working days



Assessments completed where child

Child seen (96%)  
Not seen  
Unknown



Ethnic background

White	90%
Mixed	5%
Asian or Asian British	1%
Black or black British	1%
Other ethnic group	1%
Not stated	2%
Not recorded	0%

See page 25 for comparisons

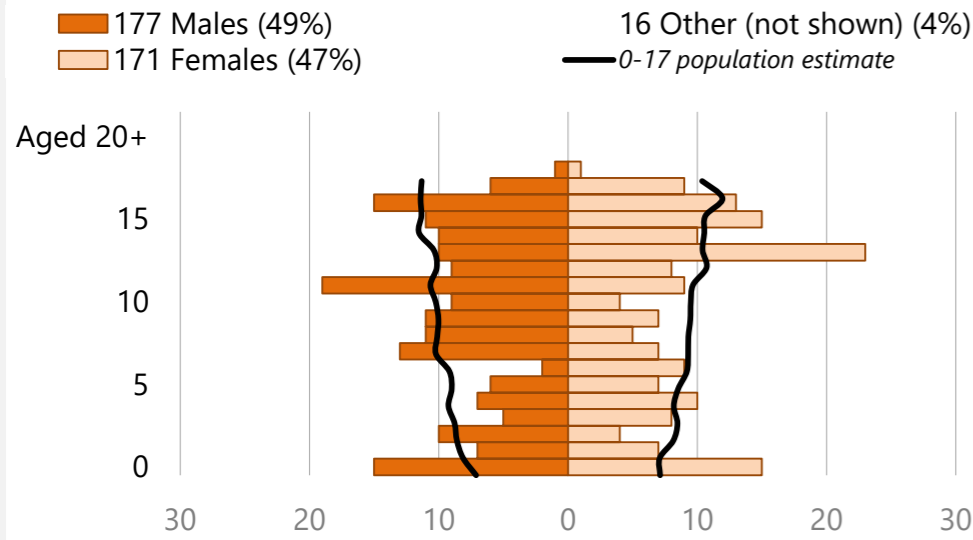
136 assessments (12%) for children with a disability

Section 47 enquiries in the last 6 months

from 01/10/2025 to 31/03/2026

### 364 Section 47 enquiries

#### Age and sex

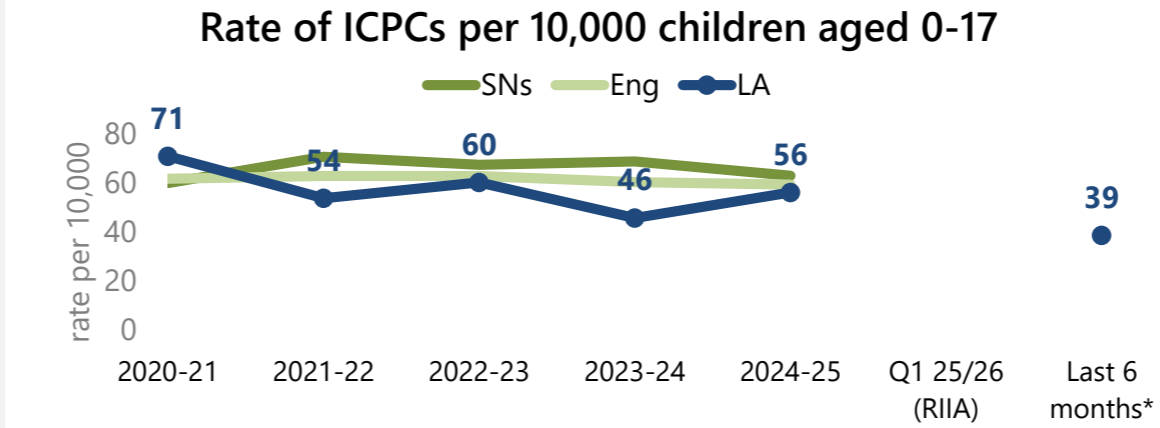


Other includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

### 116 Initial Child Protection Conferences (from S47 in period)

**58%** of completed S47s **did not require an ICPC**

ICPC not required may include S47s for open CPP where ICPC was not required, and may exclude children where an ICPC was required but has not yet occurred

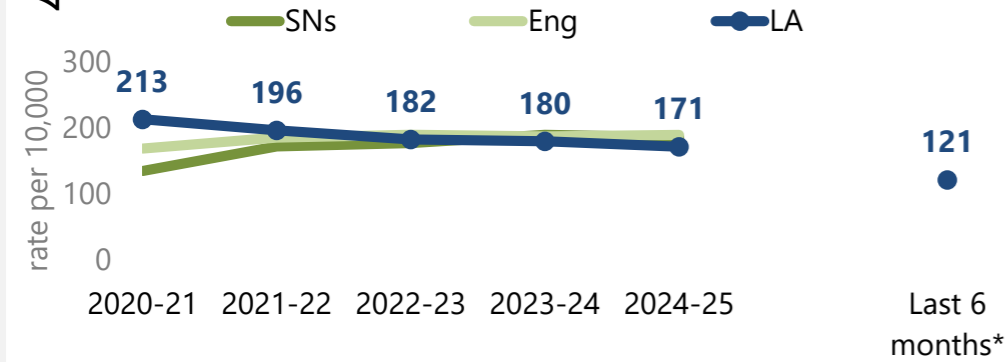


\*Annualised rate for comparison purposes

63 child(ren) with an ICPC in the 12 months preceding the latest S47\*  
\*Including where latest S47 did not result in ICPC

**89%** of ICPCs resulted in a child protection plan

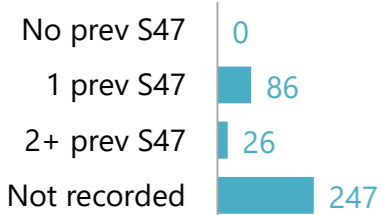
### Rate of S47 enquiries per 10,000 children aged 0-17



\*Annualised rate for comparison purposes

25 S47s (7%) for children with a disability

### Children with a S47 in the 12 months preceding the latest

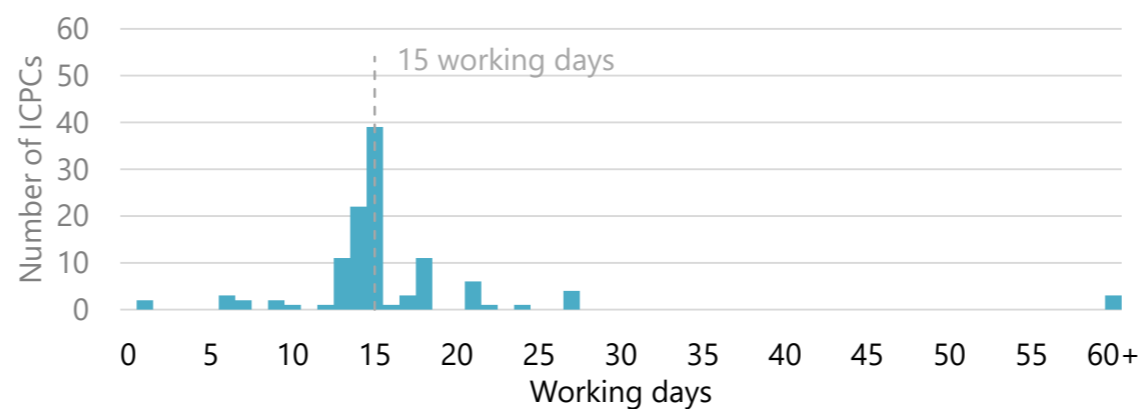


### Ethnic background

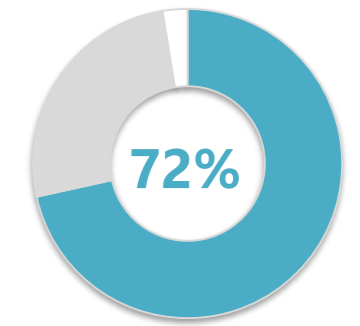
White	86%
Mixed	7%
Asian or Asian British	2%
Black or black British	2%
Other ethnic group	1%
Not stated	2%
Not recorded	0%

See page 25 for comparisons

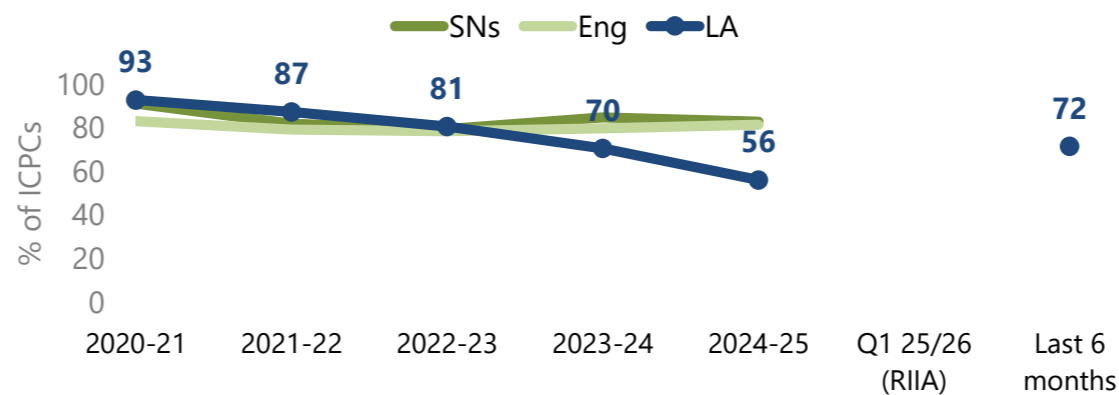
### ICPCs occurred within 15 working days of the strategy discussion date



In time  
Not in time  
Date error

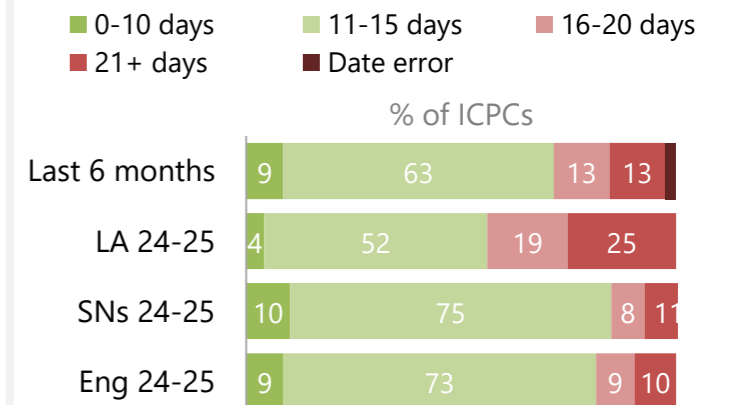


### Trend of ICPC timeliness (within 15 days of S47 start)



\* Published comparator data includes transfer-in conferences

### Comparing ICPC durations



Children in Need (CIN) - total, started, and ceased in the last 6 months

from 01/10/2025  
to 31/03/2026

### 1743 total CIN in 6 months\*

\*Note: the numbers of children in need reported in ChAT are not directly comparable to published CIN census statistics due to an undercount of referrals and care leavers.

The children in need census includes any child referred to children's social care services in the year as well as any open case for whom the local authority was providing services. Ofsted's Annex A List 6 largely covers this cohort, with the exception of those with only an open referral and care leavers.

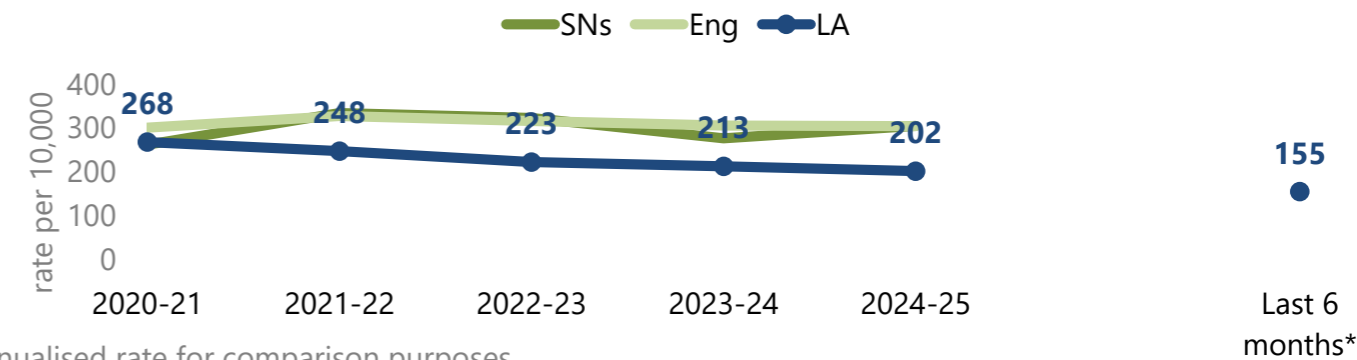
Page 18  
For this reason the published children in need census statistics are not directly comparable to ChAT, however there is considerable overlap with ChAT undercounting the true value as it excludes open referrals and care leavers. Additionally the CiN Census only include RC1-7 codes where here LAs may include additional codes i.e. RC8 (see FAQ row 14).

#### Cases included in Annex A / ChAT

Case status of children on CIN list	Number	Percentage
Looked after child	666	38%
Child protection plan	213	12%
Child in need plan	341	20%
Open assessment	115	7%
Closed episode	408	23%
Case status not recorded	0	0%
<b>Total (excluding case status unknown)</b>	<b>1,743</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 467 CIN started in 6 months

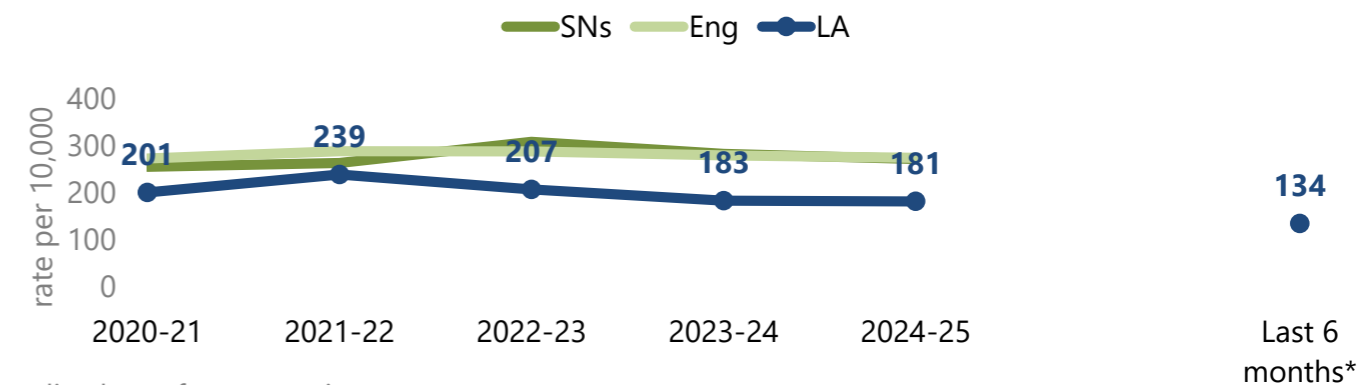
Rate of children who started an episode of need per 10,000 children aged 0-17



\*Annualised rate for comparison purposes

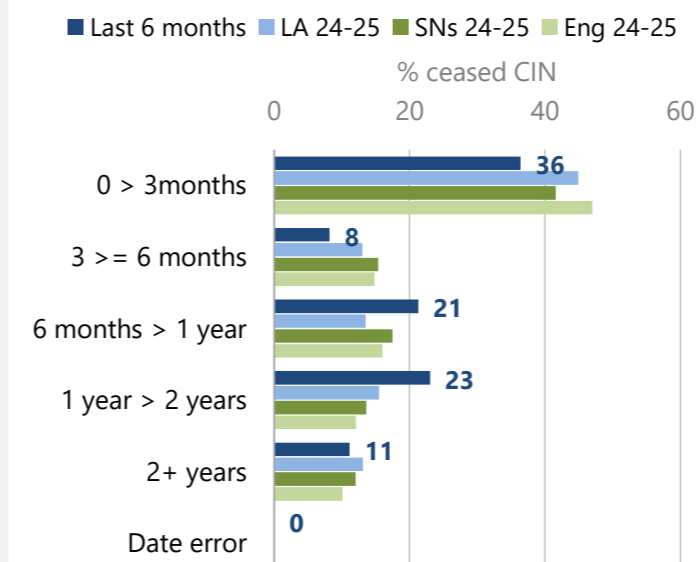
### 404 CIN ceased in 6 months

Rate of children who ended an episode of need per 10,000 children aged 0-17

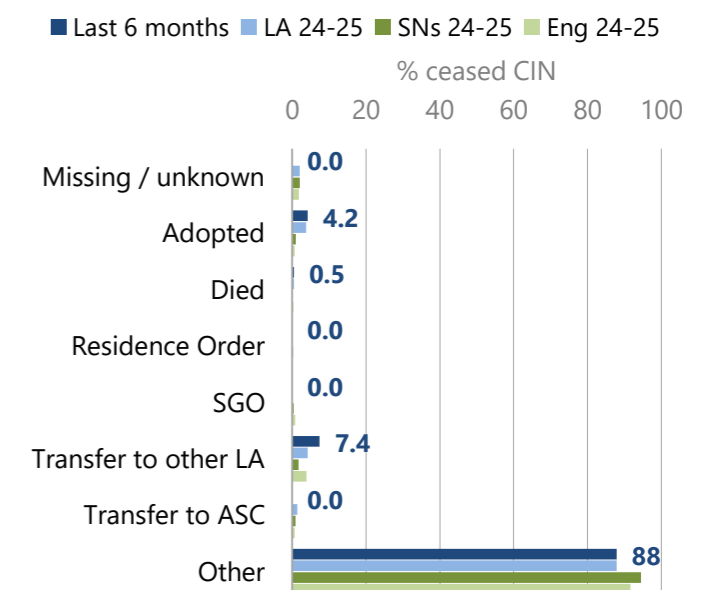


\*Annualised rate for comparison purposes

#### Comparing CIN ceased durations



#### Comparing CIN ceased reasons

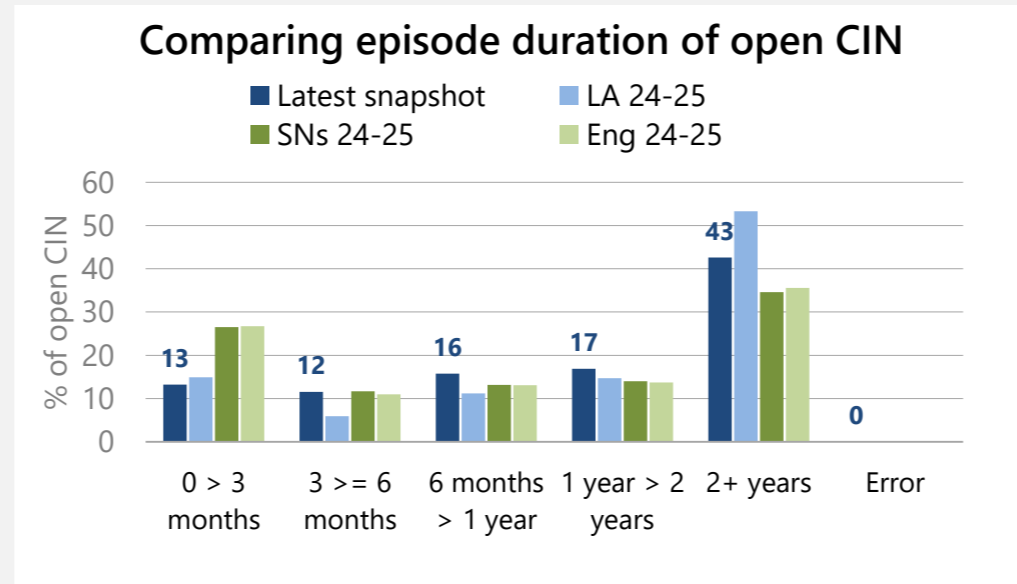
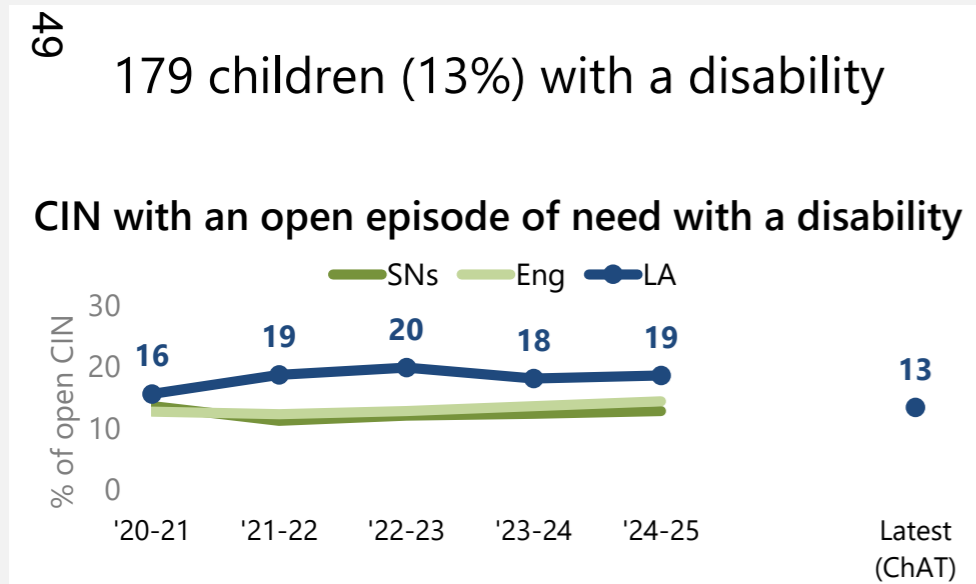
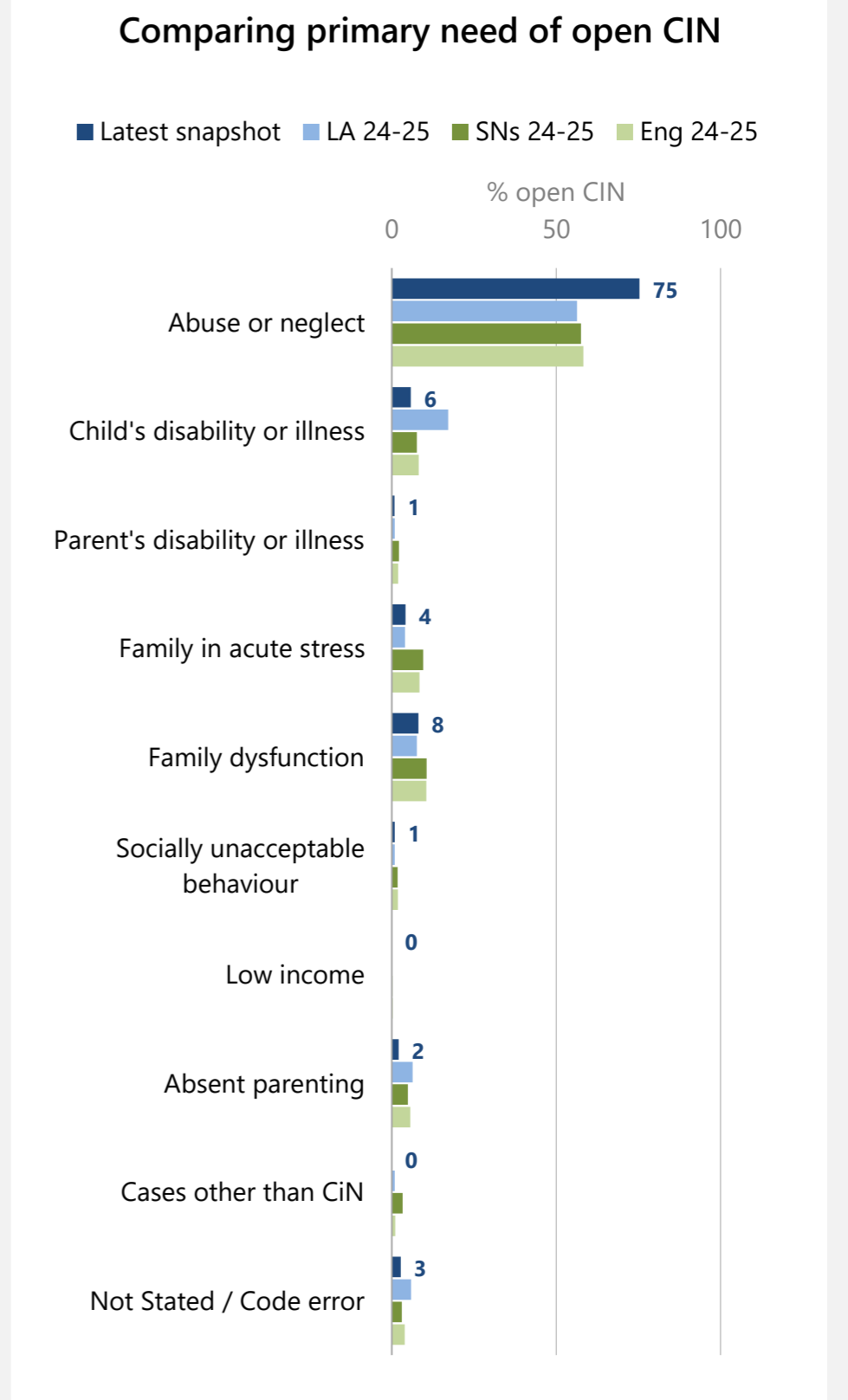
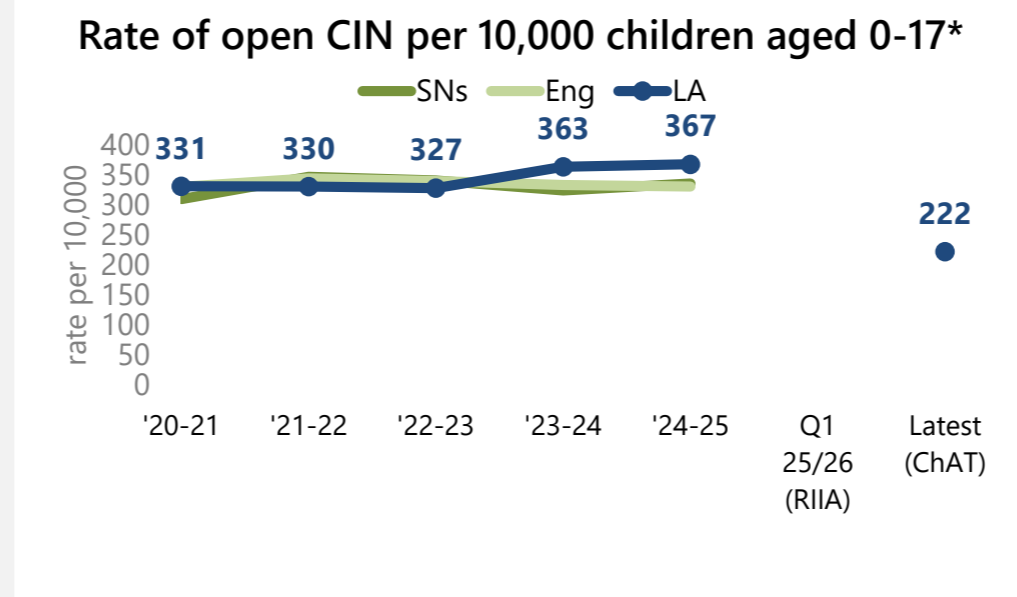
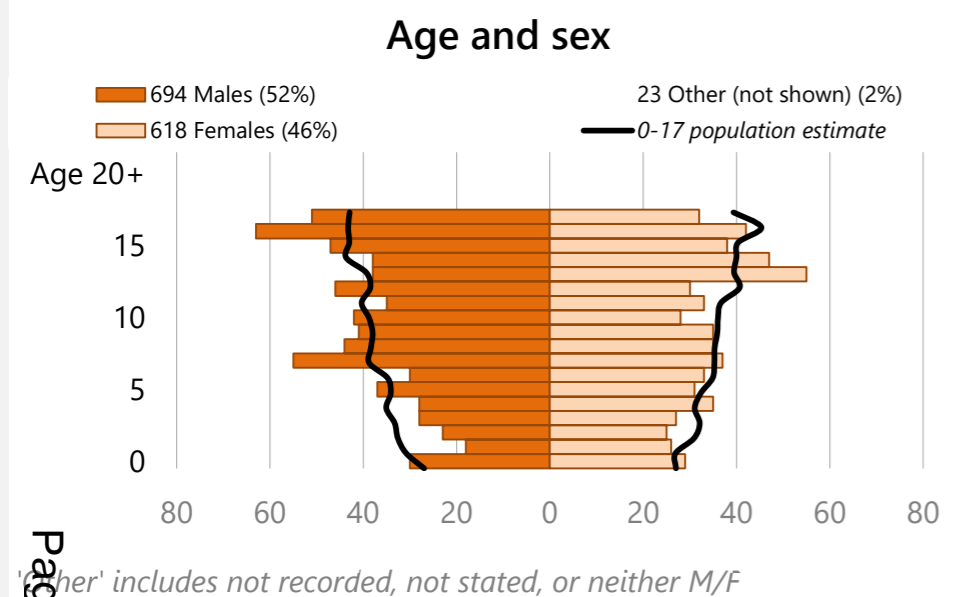


Children in Need (CIN) with an open episode of need

Snapshot 31/03/2026

# 1335 Children in Need with an open episode of need\*

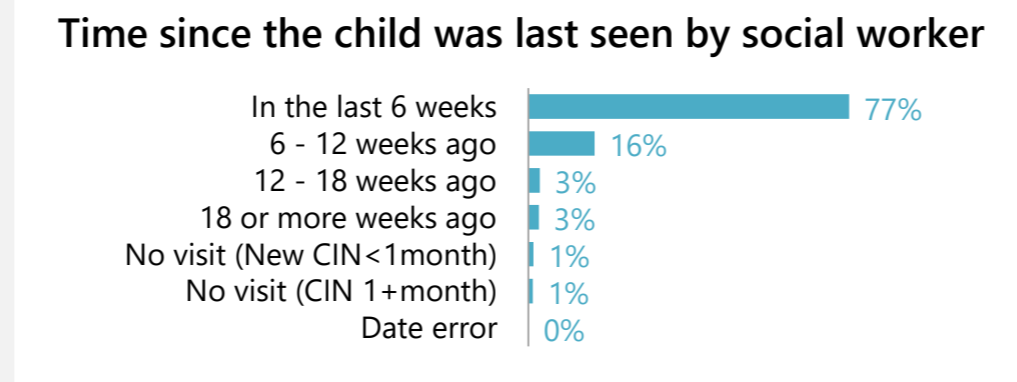
\*Note: Annex A figures in this section are not directly comparable to the published Children in need census statistics (see note on page 8)



### Ethnic background

White	89%
Mixed	5%
Asian or Asian British	1%
Black or black British	2%
Other ethnic group	2%
Not stated	1%
Not recorded	0%

See page 25 for comparisons



Child Protection Plans (CPP) started and ceased in the last 6 months

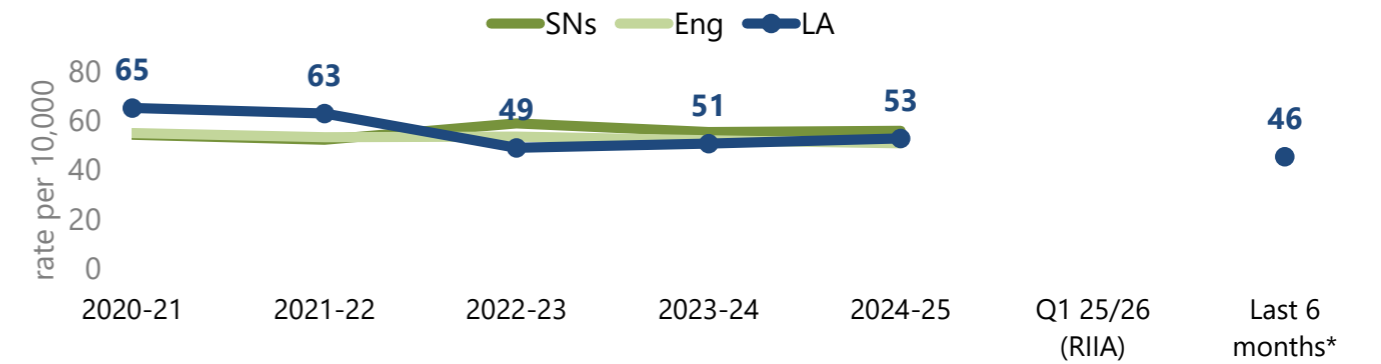
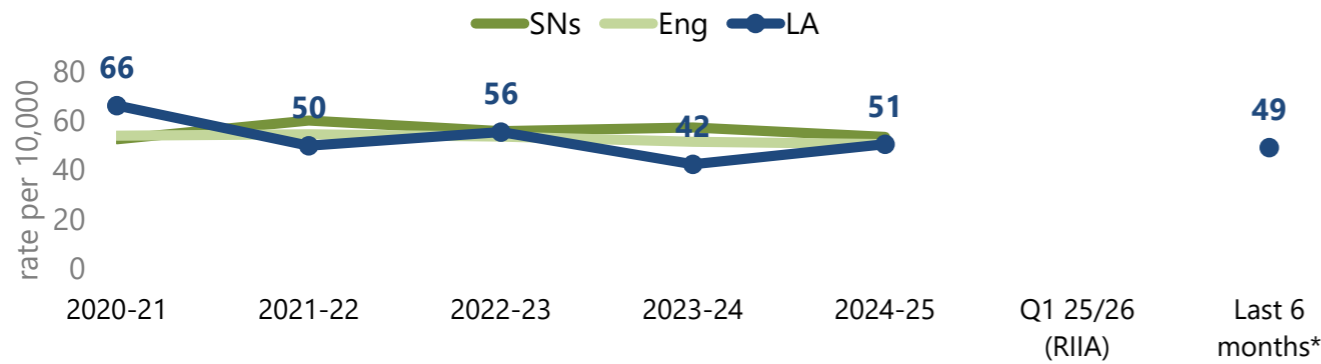
from 01/10/2025  
to 31/03/2026

### 148 CPP started in 6 months

### 137 CPP ended in 6 months

Rate of children who started a CP plan per 10,000 children

Rate of children who ended a CP plan per 10,000 children



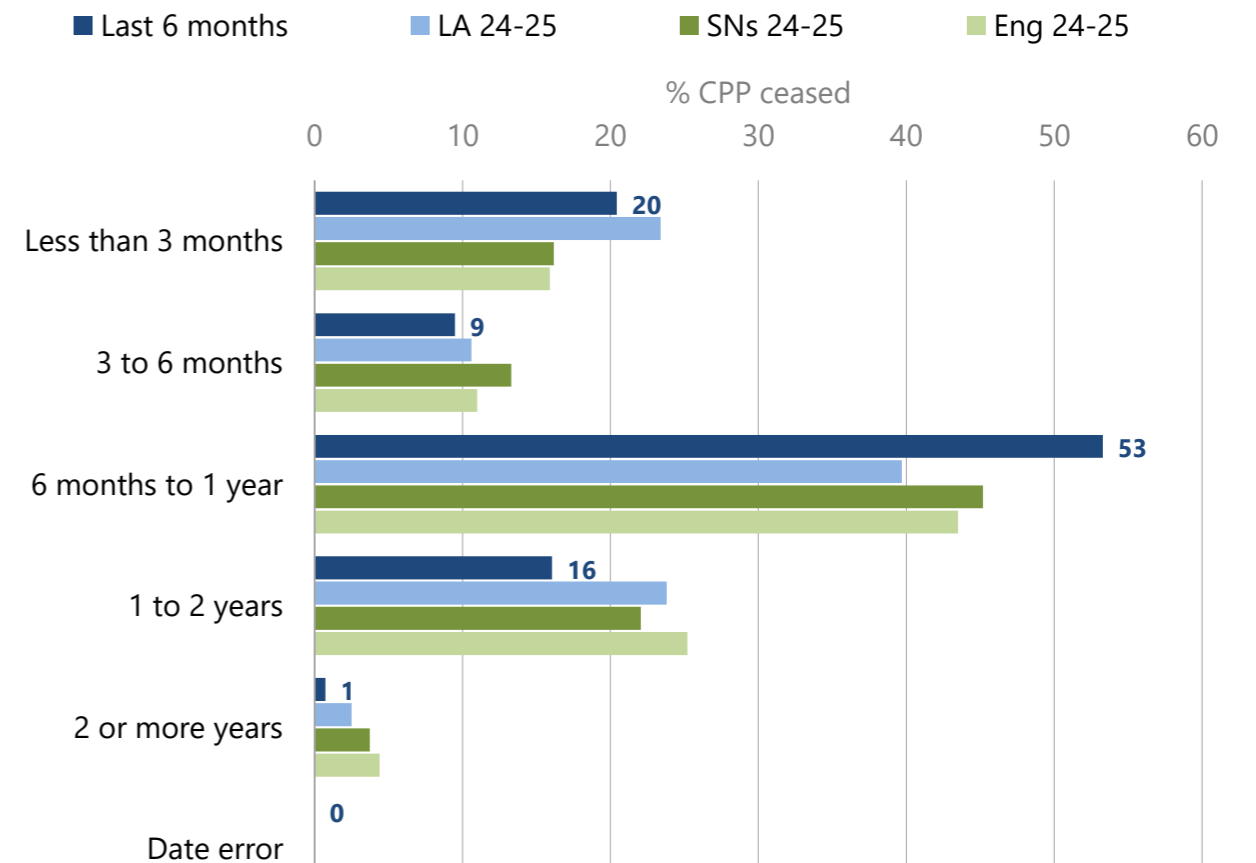
\*Annualised rate for comparison purposes

\*Annualised rate for comparison purposes

#### "Re-registrations" for children who started on a CP plan (ever)



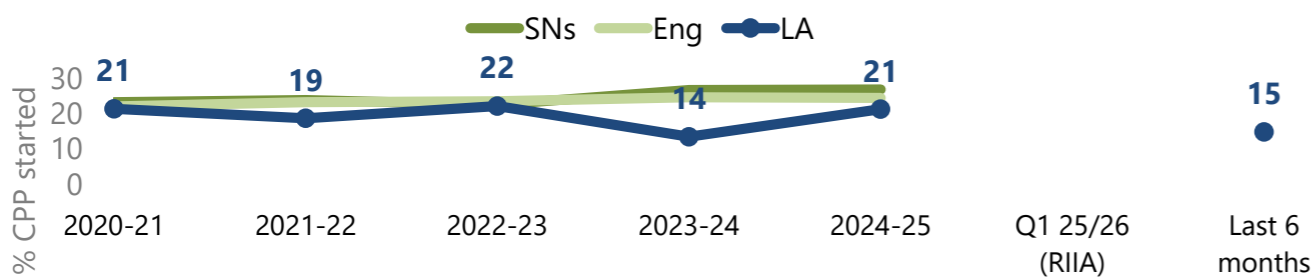
#### Comparing plan durations for CPP ended



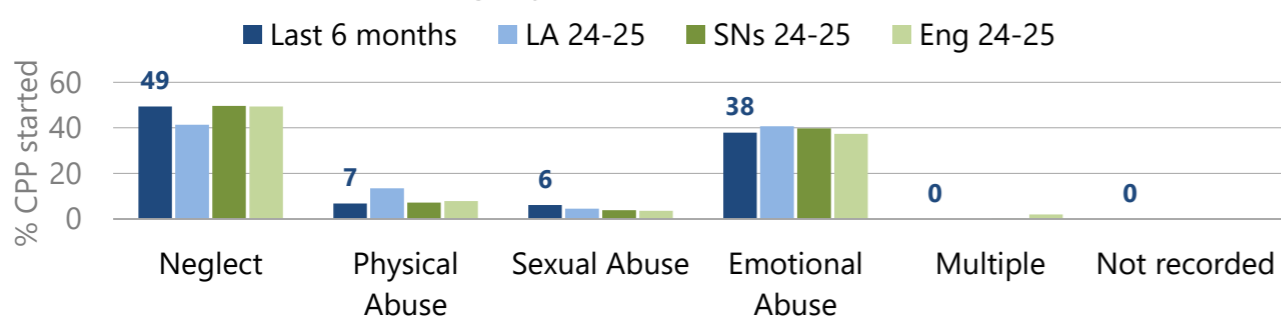
1 of 137 children ended a CP plan after 2 years or more

Page 50

#### Comparing "re-registrations" for CPP started



#### Initial category of abuse for CPP started

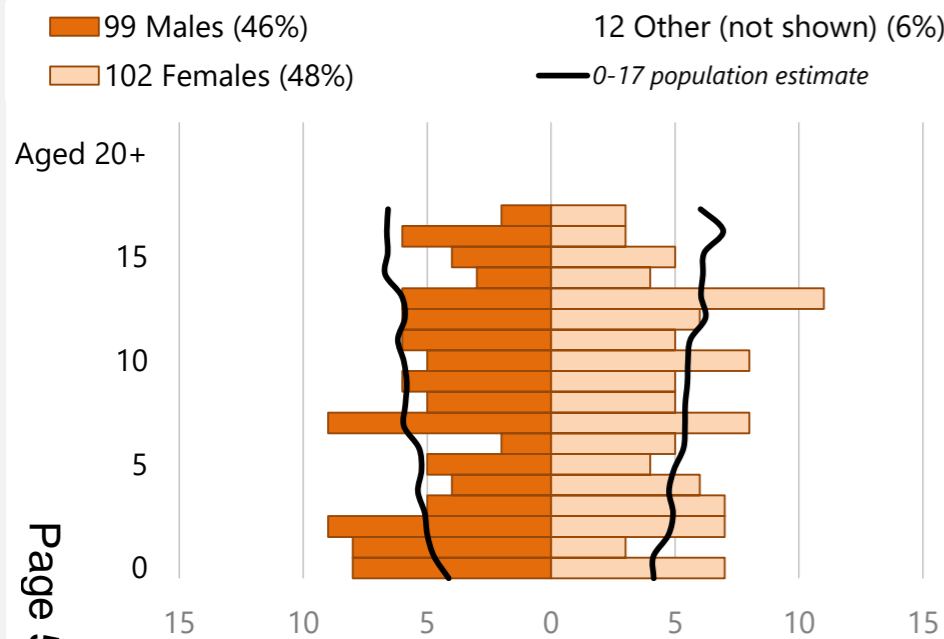


Child Protection Plans (CPP) currently open

Snapshot 31/03/2026

## 213 children currently subject of a Child Protection Plan (CPP)

### Age and sex



Page 51

Other includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

### Ethnic background

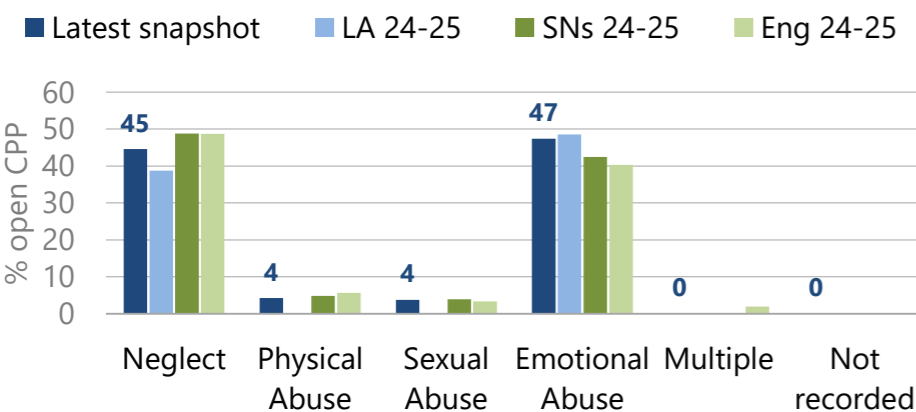
White	89%
Mixed	6%
Asian or Asian British	1%
Black or black British	0%
Other ethnic group	1%
Not stated	2%
Not recorded	0%

See page 20 for comparisons

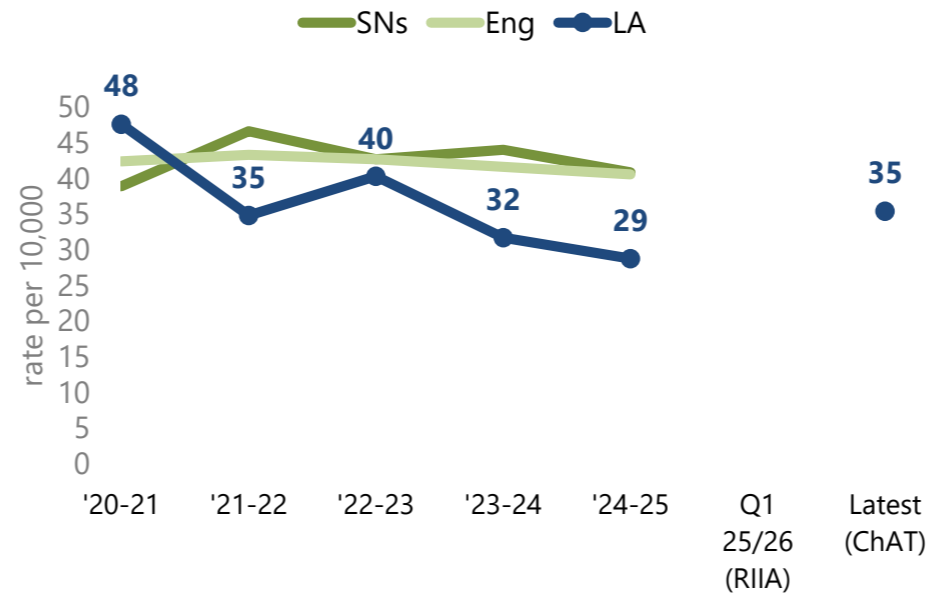
10 children (5%)  
with a disability

3 open CP subject to  
Emergency Protection Order  
or Protected Under Police  
Powers in last 6 months

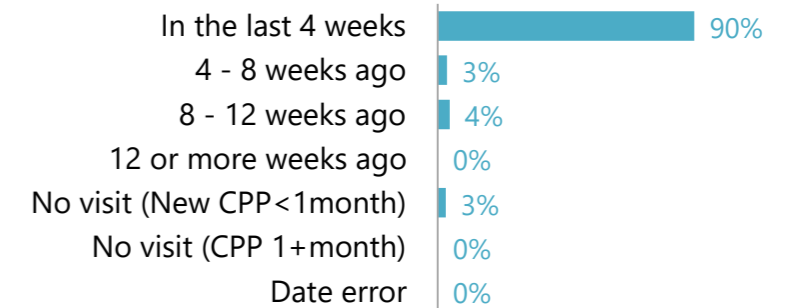
### Latest category of abuse for current CP plans



### Rate of CPP per 10,000 children aged 0-17

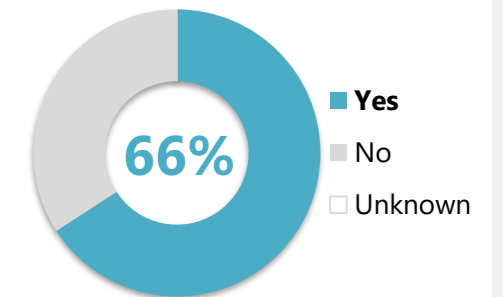


### Time since the child was last seen

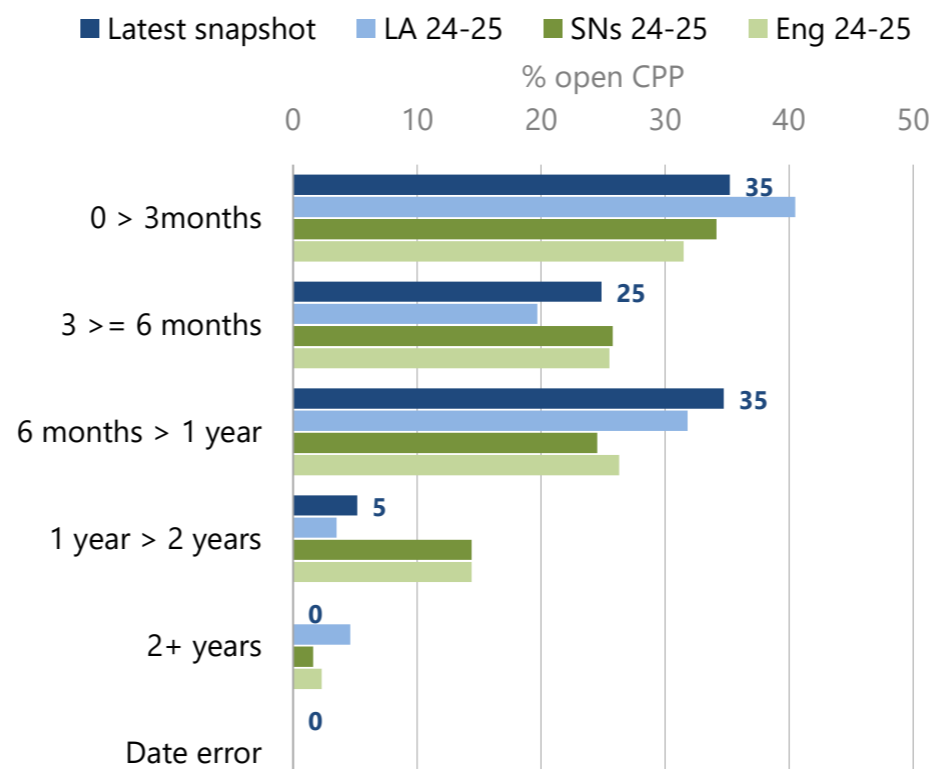


Open CPP **seen alone** at their last social work visit

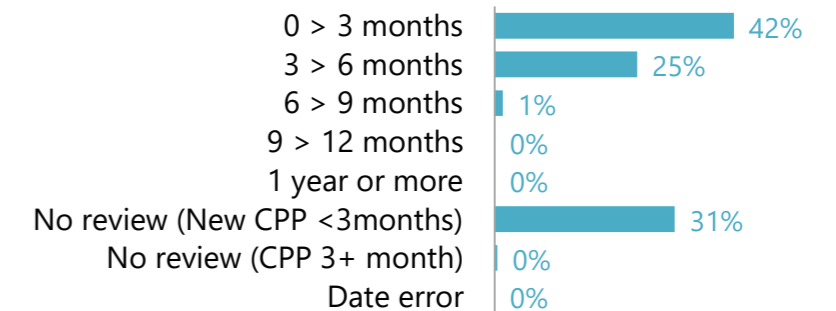
(excludes Not recorded or N/A)



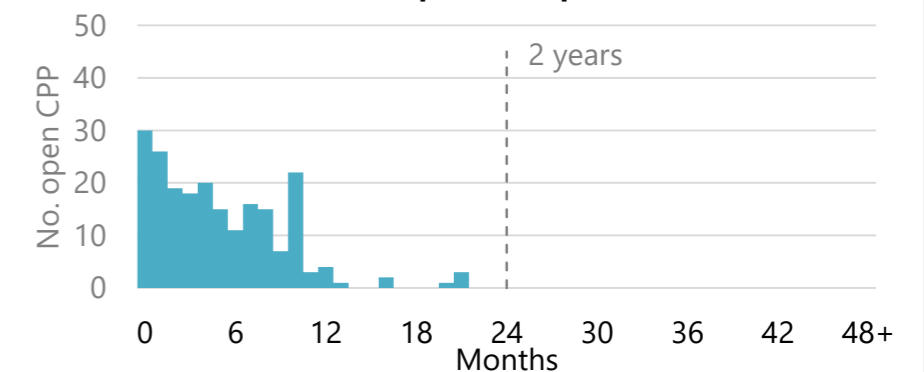
### Comparing duration of open CP plans



### Time since the child's latest review



### Duration of current open CP plans (in months)

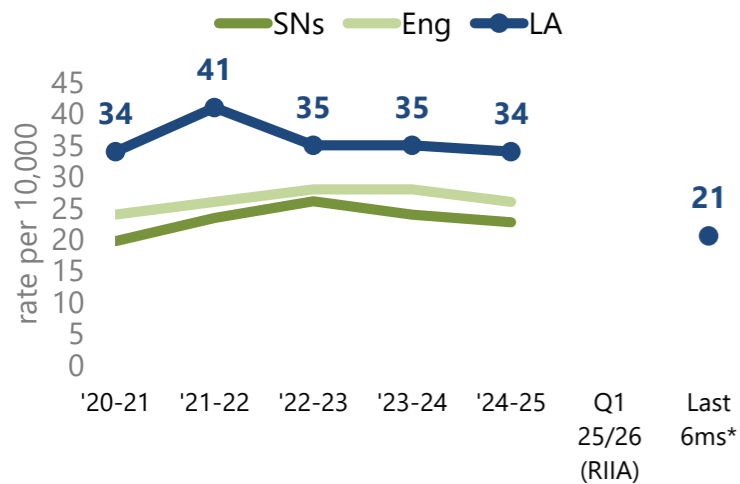


Children Looked After (CLA) started and ceased in the last 6 months

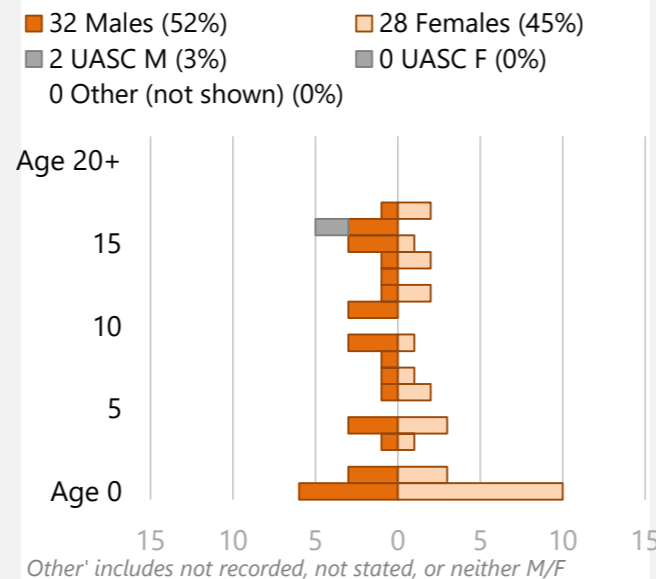
from 01/10/2025  
to 31/03/2026

### 62 CLA started in the last 6 months

Rate of CLA started per 10,000 children

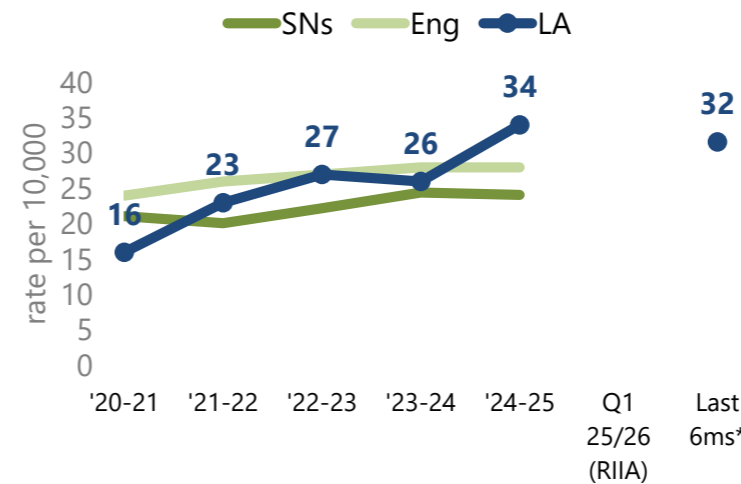


Age and sex

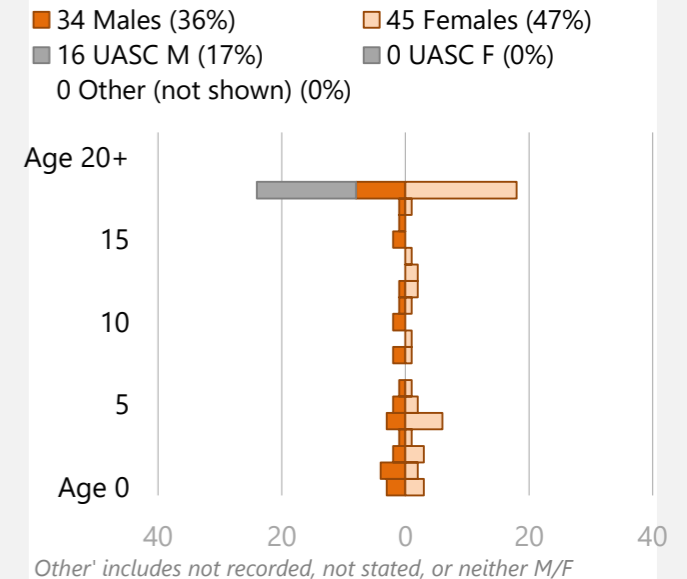


### 95 CLA ceased in the last 6 months

Rate of CLA ceased per 10,000 children



Age and sex



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Annualised rate for comparison purposes

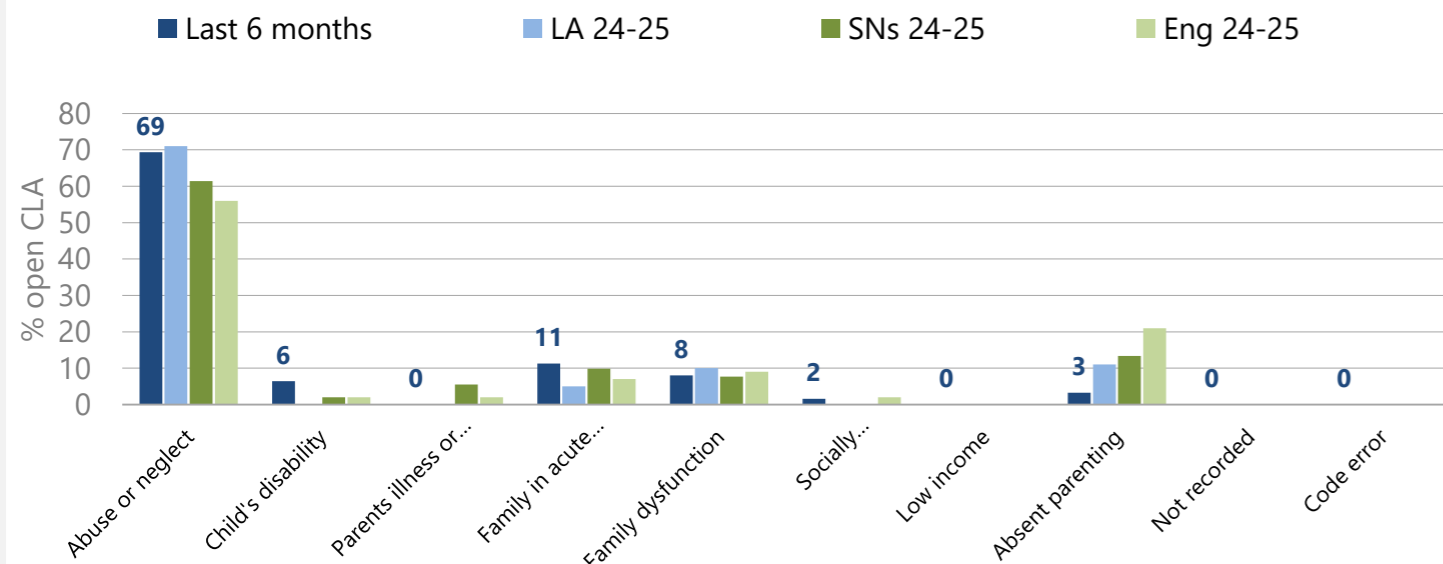
3%

2 of the 62 CLA starters were unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UAS)

3%

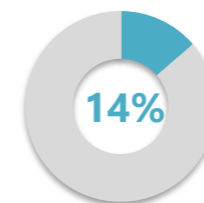
2 of the 62 CLA starters have previously been looked after

### Comparing the primary need of CLA starters



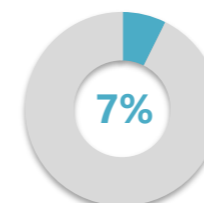
### Reason episode of care ceased

Adopted



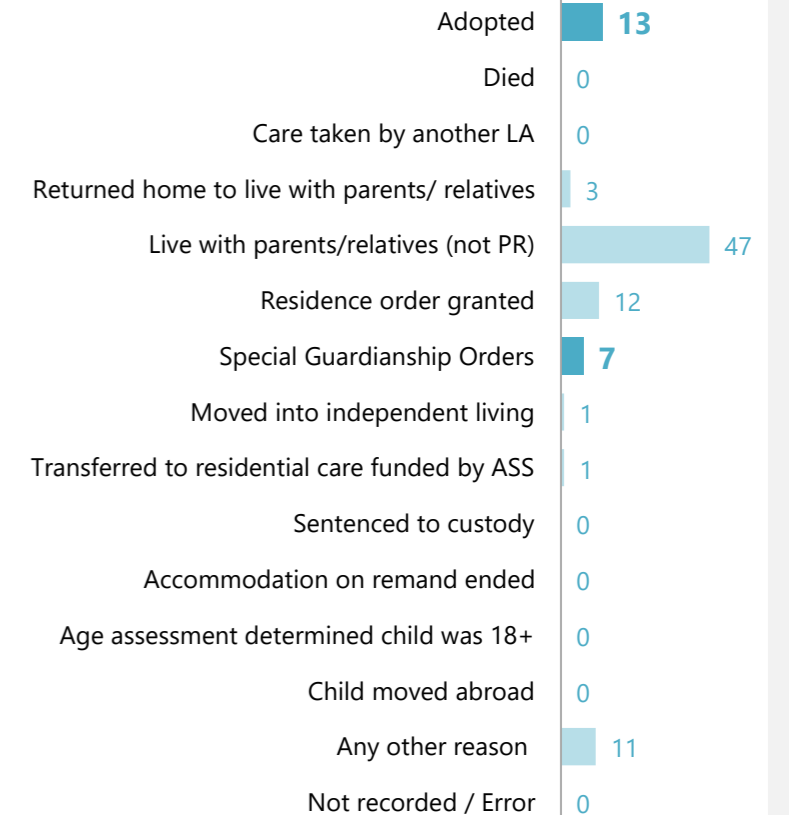
Last 6 months 14%

Special Guardianship Order



Last 6 months 7%

### Number of CLA ceased by reason in the period

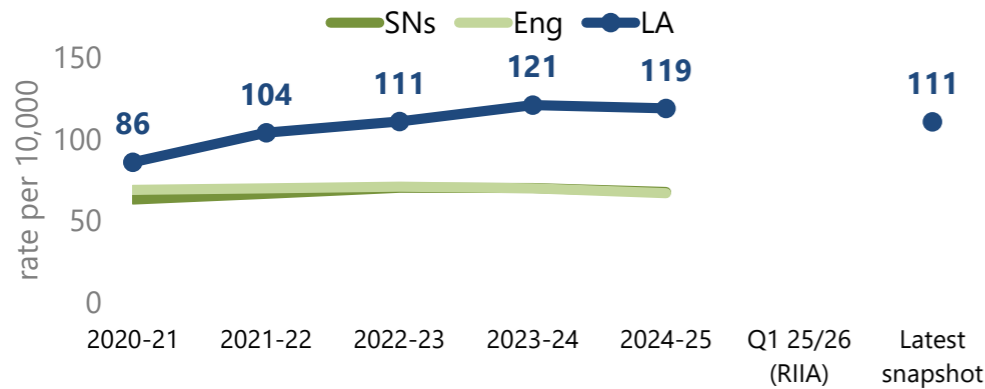


Children Looked After (CLA) with an open episode of care

Snapshot 31/03/2026

# 666 Children Looked After (CLA) with an open episode of care

Rate of CLA per 10,000 children (snapshot)



Ethnic background

	All CLA	Not UASC	UASC
White	88%	91%	0%
Mixed	6%	6%	0%
Asian or Asian British	0%	0%	8%
Black or black British	3%	1%	44%
Other ethnic group	3%	1%	48%
Not stated	0%	0%	0%
Not recorded	0%	0%	0%

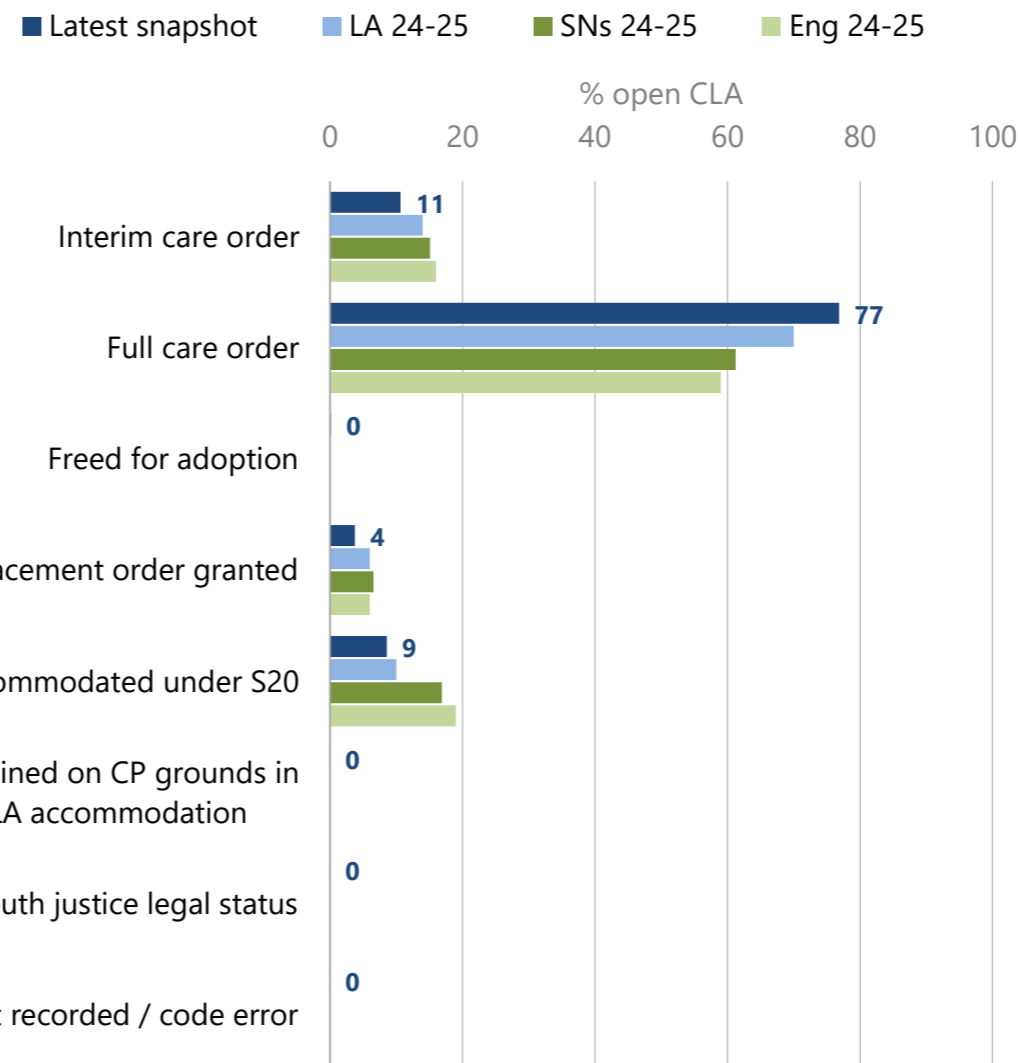
78 children (12%) with a disability

Permanence plan

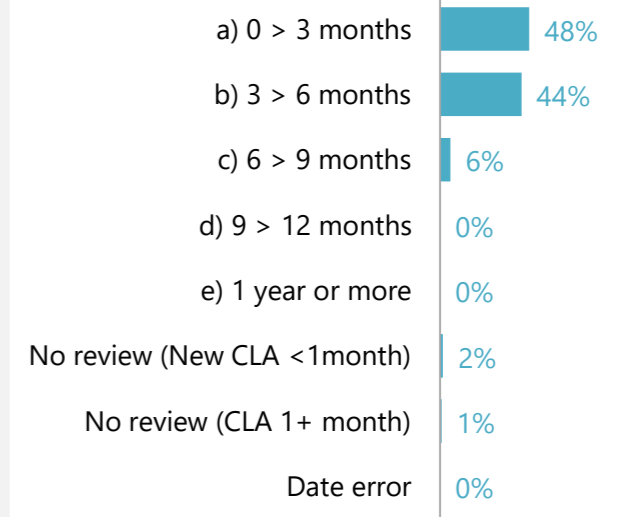
	Number	%
Return to family	109	16%
Adoption	22	3%
SGO/CAO	33	5%
Supported living	27	4%
L/T residential	84	13%
L/T fostering	356	53%
Other	30	5%
Not recorded	5	1%

See page 25 for comparisons

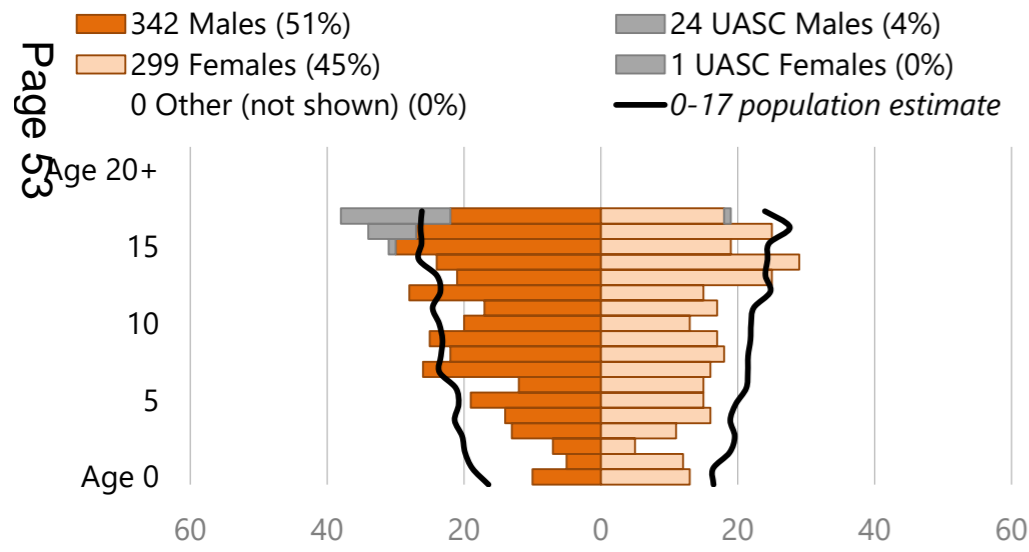
Comparing legal status of open CLA (snapshot)



Time since latest review



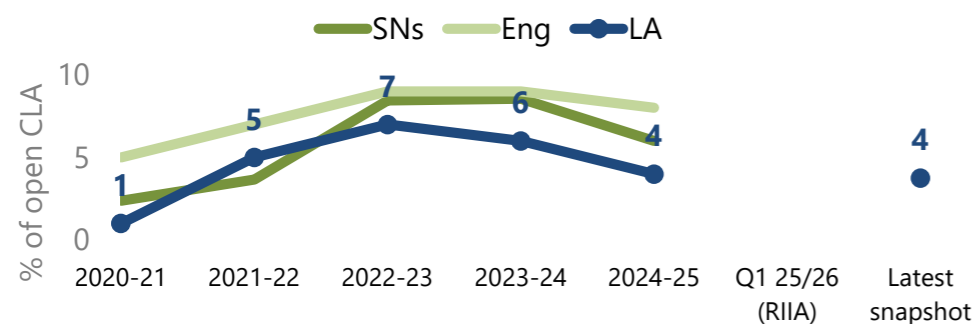
Age and sex



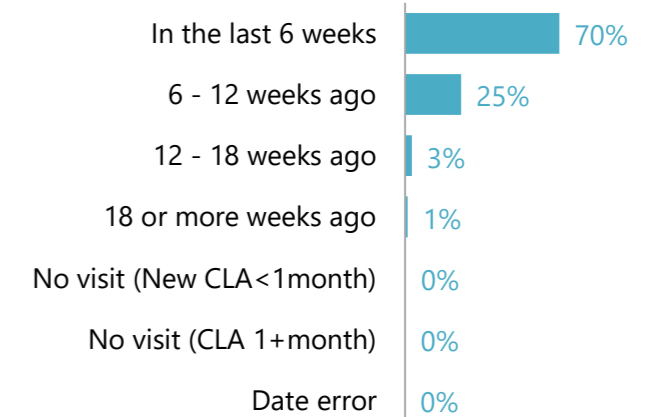
Other' includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

25 open unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UAS)

UAS Children as a percentage of CLA (snapshot)



Time since the child was last seen

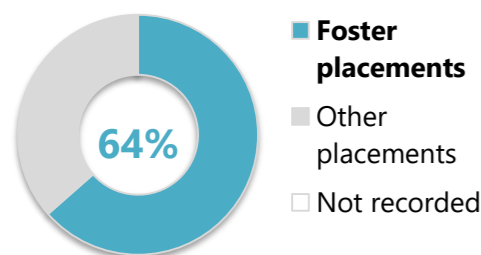


Children Looked After (CLA) placements

Snapshot 31/03/2026

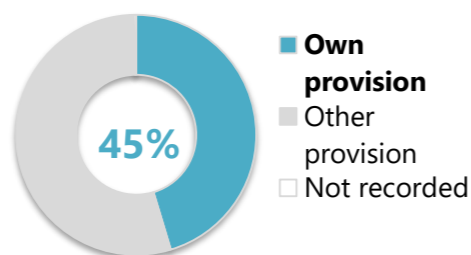
CLA placements by type and provision

Foster placements



LA 2024-25 64%  
SNs 2024-25 69%  
Eng 2024-25 67%

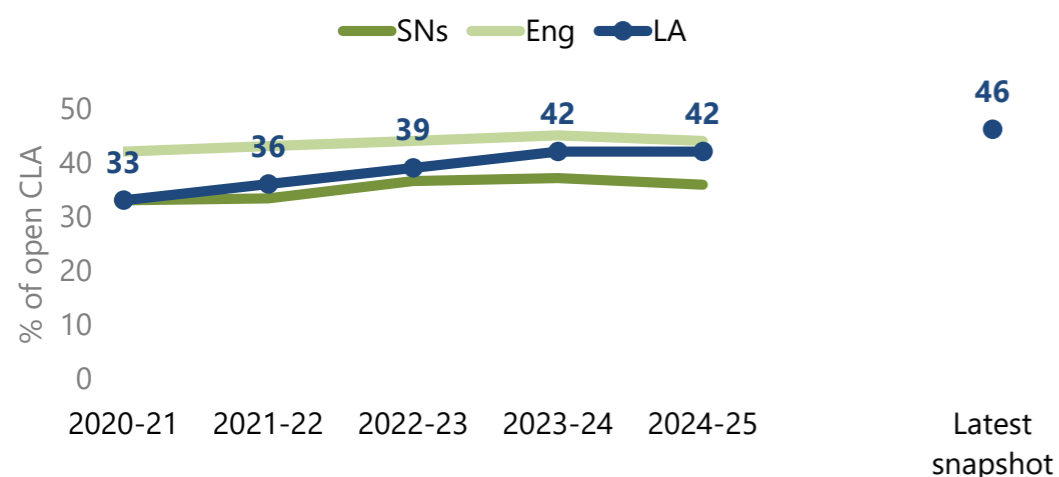
Own provision



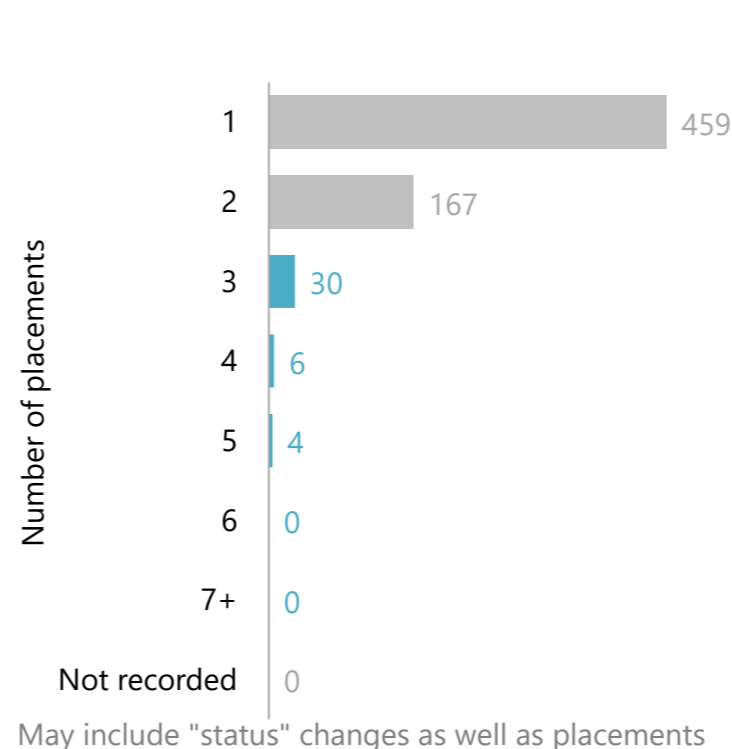
LA 2024-25 45%  
SNs 2024-25 48%  
Eng 2024-25 43%

Placement type (open CLA)	Own LA	Private	Other	Total
Foster placement	277	137	9	423
Placed for adoption	7	0	2	9
Placed with parents	0	0	50	50
Independent living	0	0	0	0
Residential employment	0	0	0	0
Residential accommodation	2	29	0	31
Secure Children's Homes	0	0	0	0
Children's Homes	10	119	3	132
Residential Care Home	0	0	0	0
NHS/Health Trust	0	0	0	0
Family Centre	0	5	0	5
Young Offender Institution	0	0	0	0
Residential school	0	1	0	1
Other placements	6	1	7	14
Temporary placement	0	0	0	0
Total placements	302	292	71	665

CLA placements out of borough

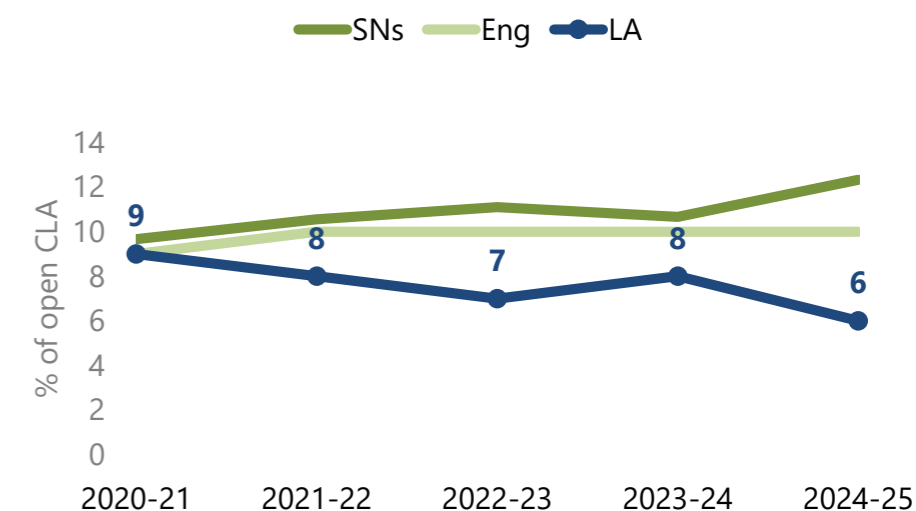


Number of placements in the last 12 months



May include "status" changes as well as placements

Comparing short term placement stability



Due to limited data in the Annex A dataset, ChAT does not present short-term stability alongside published statistics

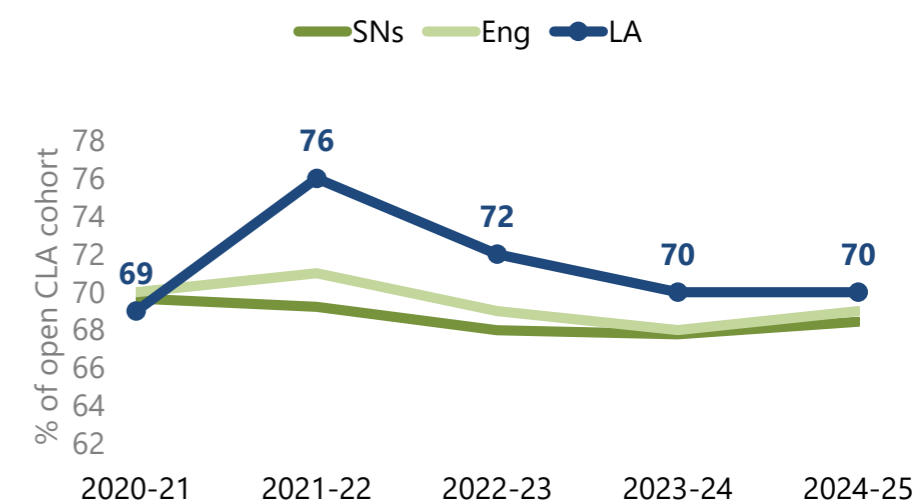
Duration of placements

Duration of latest placement for each current CLA aged under 16 who have been looked after for 2½ years or more



May include "status" changes as well as placements

Comparing long term placement stability



Due to limited data in the Annex A dataset, ChAT does not present long-term stability alongside published statistics

Children Looked After (CLA) health and missing/absent from placement

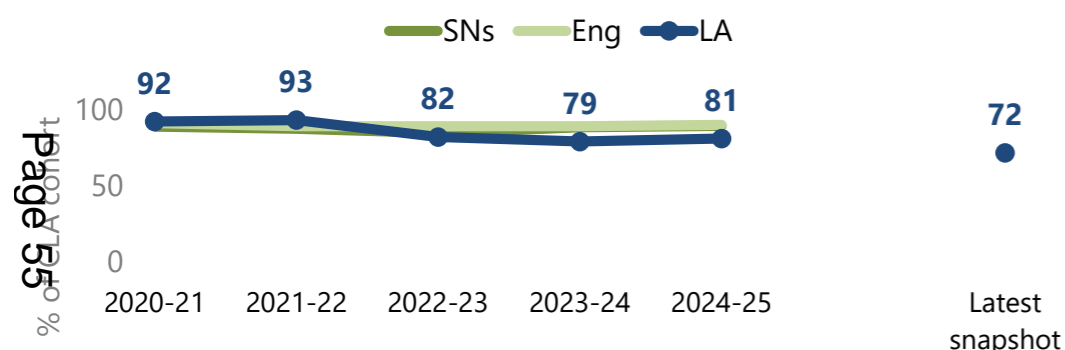
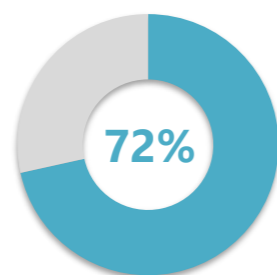
Snapshot 31/03/2026

### Health

548 current open CLA looked after for at least 12 months

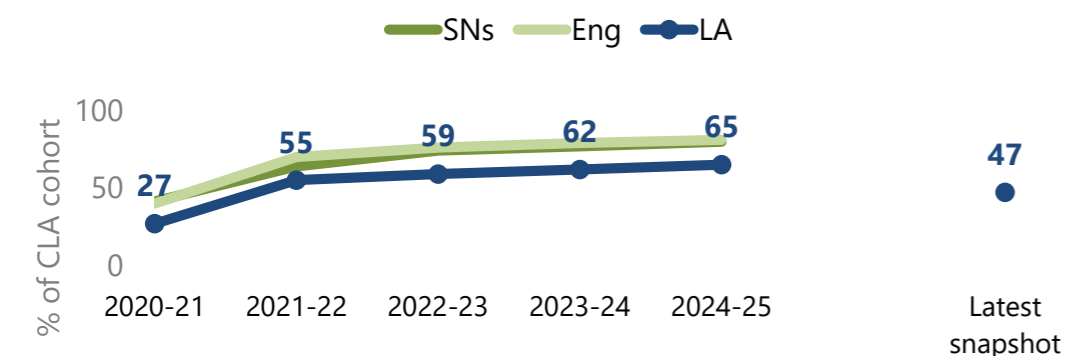
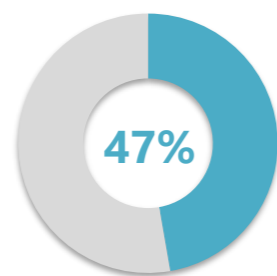
#### Health assessments

Current open CLA who have been looked after for at least 12 months with an up to date health assessment (in the last 6 months for CLA aged under 5, and in the last 12 months for CLA aged 5-plus)



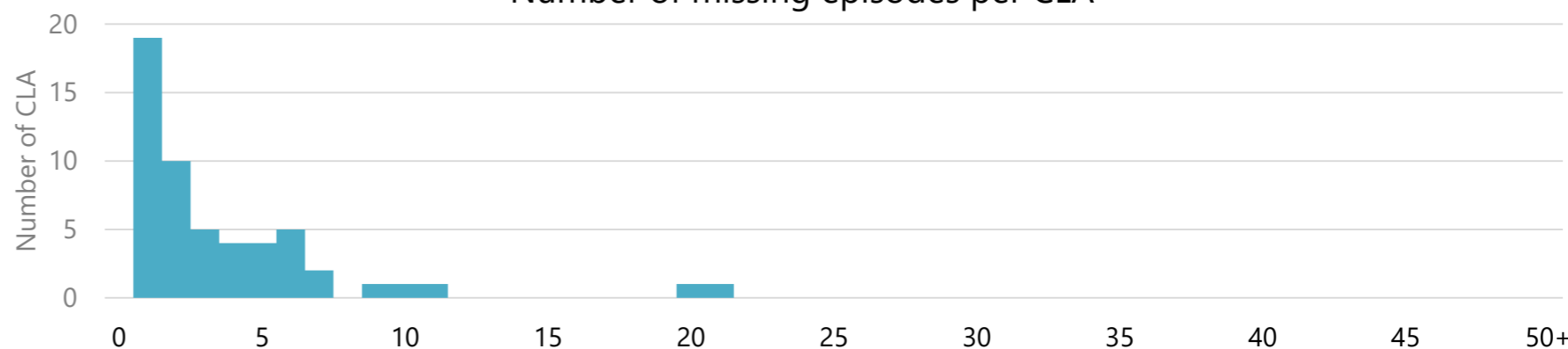
#### Dental checks

Current open CLA who have been looked after for at least 12 months who have had a dental check in the last 12 months.



### Missing from placement

Number of missing episodes per CLA

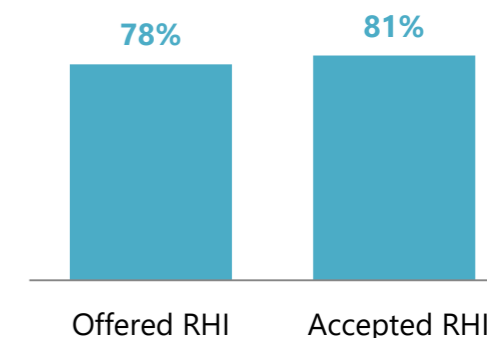


54 of 761 looked after children had a missing incident in the last 12 months

	Latest data	LA 24-25	SNs 24-25	Eng 24-25
Number of all CLA with a missing incident	54 of 761	53		
Percentage of all CLA with a missing incident	7%	6%	9%	11%
Total number of missing incidents for all CLA	205	165		
Average number of incidents per CLA who went missing	3.8	3.1	4.3	6.8

#### Missing incidents - return home interviews

	Latest data	
Missing children offered return interview	42 of 54	78%
Missing children not offered return interview	0 of 54	0%
Missing children return interview offer not recorded	12 of 54	22%
Missing children where return interview was n/a	0 of 54	0%



	Latest data	
Missing children accepted return interview	34 of 42	81%
Missing children not accepted return interview	8 of 42	19%
Missing children return interview acceptance not recorded	0 of 42	0%

### Absent from placement

2 of 761 looked after children had an absent incident in the last 12 months

	Latest data	LA 24-25	SNs 24-25	Eng 24-25
Number of all CLA with an absent incident	2 of 761	0		
Percentage of all CLA with an absent incident	0%	0%	1%	3%
Total number of absent incidents for all CLA	2	0		
Average number of incidents per CLA who were absent	1.0	0.0	0.6	4.5

Care leavers - Demographics and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking (UAS) Children

Snapshot 31/03/2026

# 599 care leavers who have reached the threshold for receiving leaving care services

## Care leavers by age and eligibility

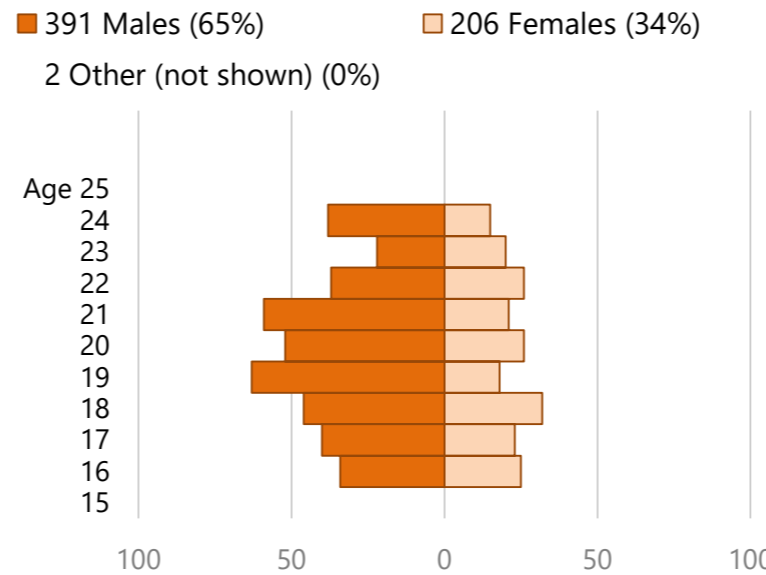
(where highlighted, please check eligibility/age criteria)

	Eligible	Relevant	Former Relevant	Qualifying	Other	Total
16	56	1	0	2	0	59
17	56	6	0	1	0	63
18	0	0	76	2	0	78
19	0	0	80	1	0	81
20	0	0	76	2	0	78
21	0	0	80	0	0	80
22	0	0	61	2	0	63
23	0	0	41	1	0	42
24	0	0	51	2	0	53
25	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	2	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>599</b>

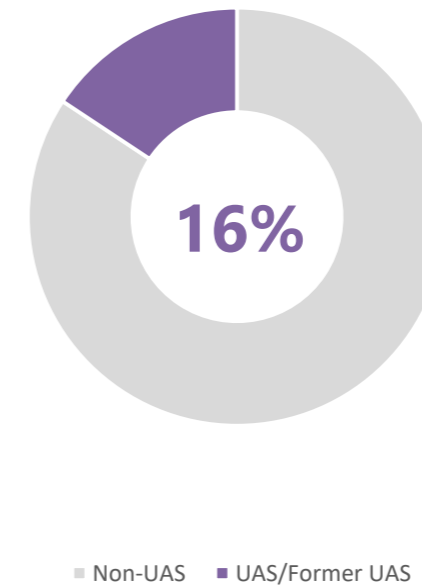
## Care leaver eligibility summary (please refer to DfE guidance for full eligibility criteria)

Eligible	~ Age 16 or 17 ~ Has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since age 14 (can be multiple periods) ~ Currently looked after
Relevant	~ Age 16 or 17 ~ Has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since age 14 (can be multiple periods) ~ Looked after on or after their 16th birthday ~ No longer looked after
Former Relevant	~ Aged between 18 and 25 ~ Previously an eligible or relevant child (see above definitions)
Qualifying (Annex A requires only those requesting and receiving a service)	~ Aged between 16 and 21 (or 25 if in education) ~ Looked after on or after their 16th birthday ~ <b>Not</b> looked after for at least 13 weeks since age 14 or ~ privately fostered after the age of 16 but before the age of 18 or ~ were looked after prior to becoming subject to a SGO

## Age and sex



## All Care Leavers by UAS/Former UAS Status



## Ethnic background

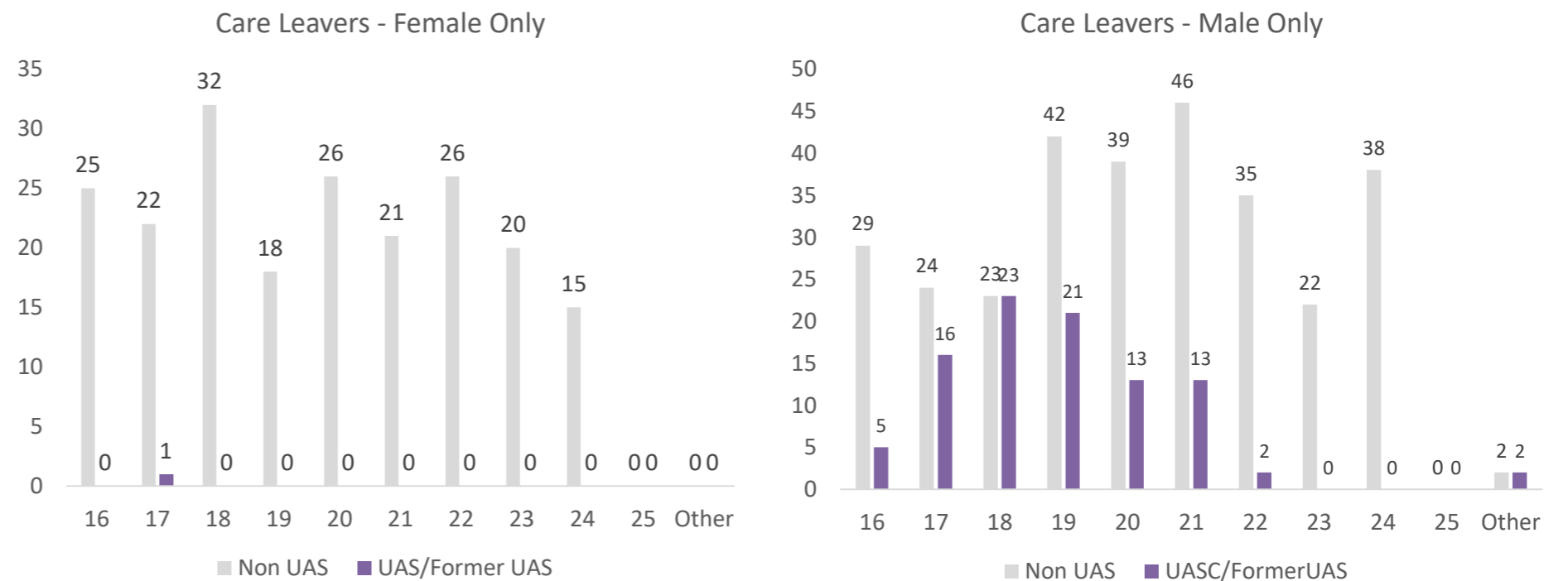
White	63%
Mixed	5%
Asian or Asian British	4%
Black or black British	7%
Other ethnic group	20%
Not stated	0%
Not recorded	0%

See page 25 for comparisons

65 (11%) care leavers with a disability

Other' includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

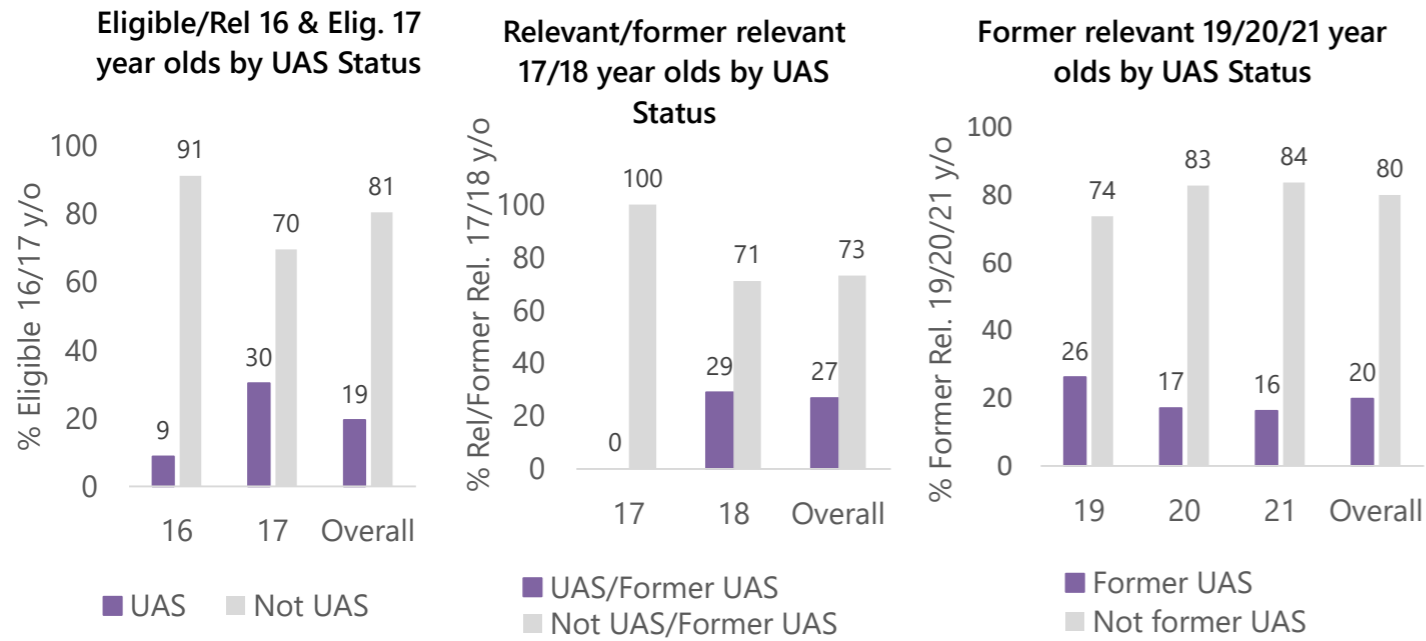
## Care Leavers, by Age, Sex and UAS/Former UAS Status



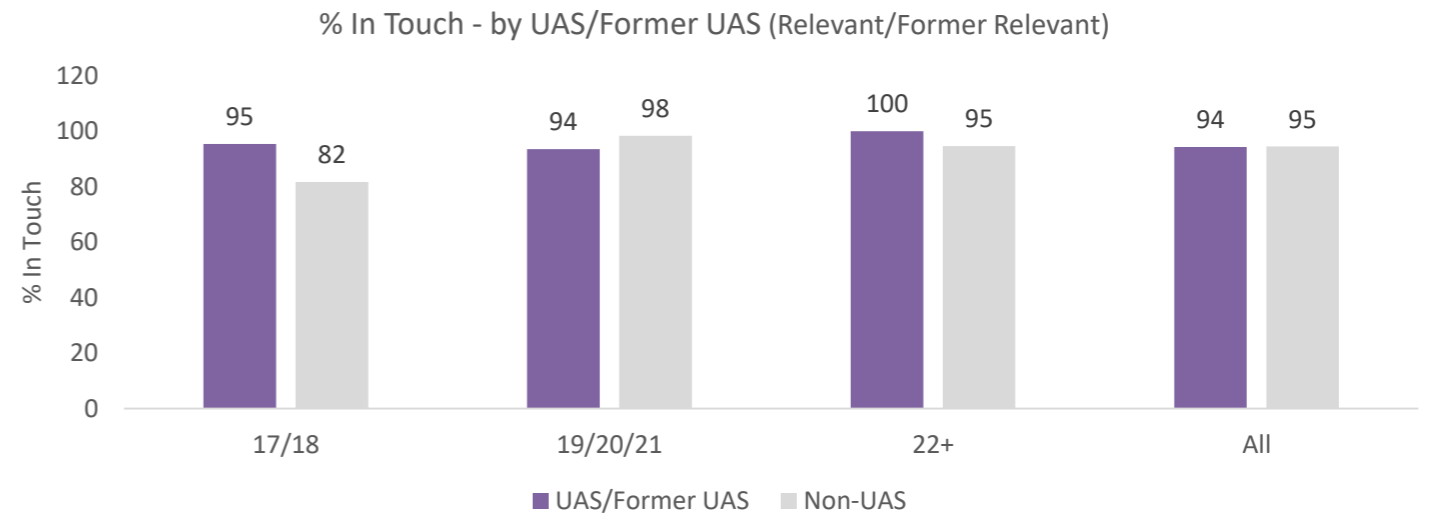
Care leavers demographics and UAS Children continued.

Snapshot 31/03/2026

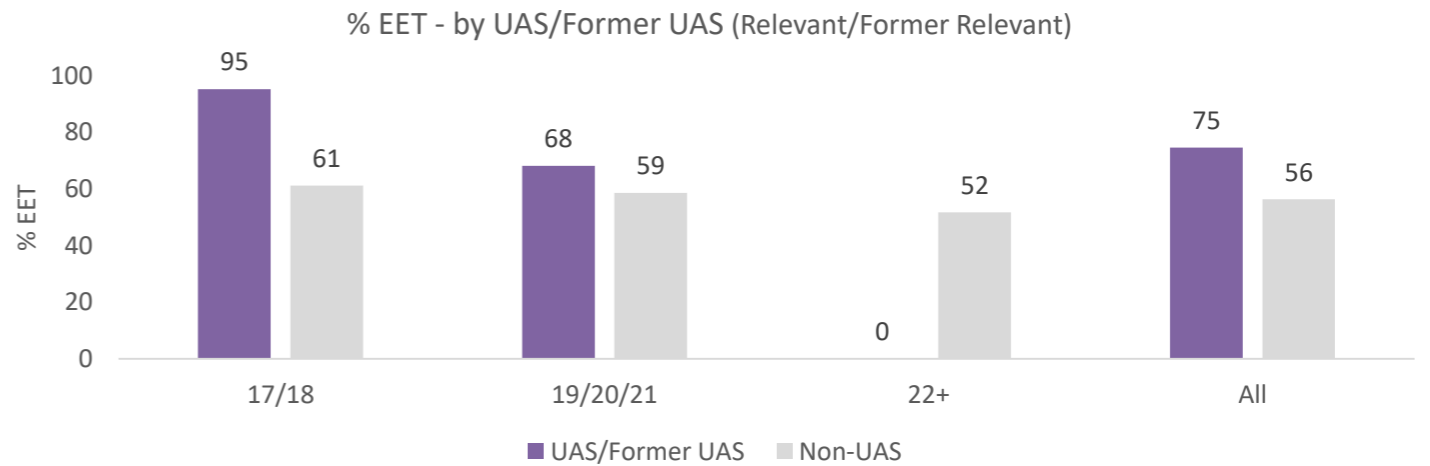
**% Care Leavers UAS/Former UAS by Eligibility**



**Care Leavers in Touch by UAS/Non-UAS**

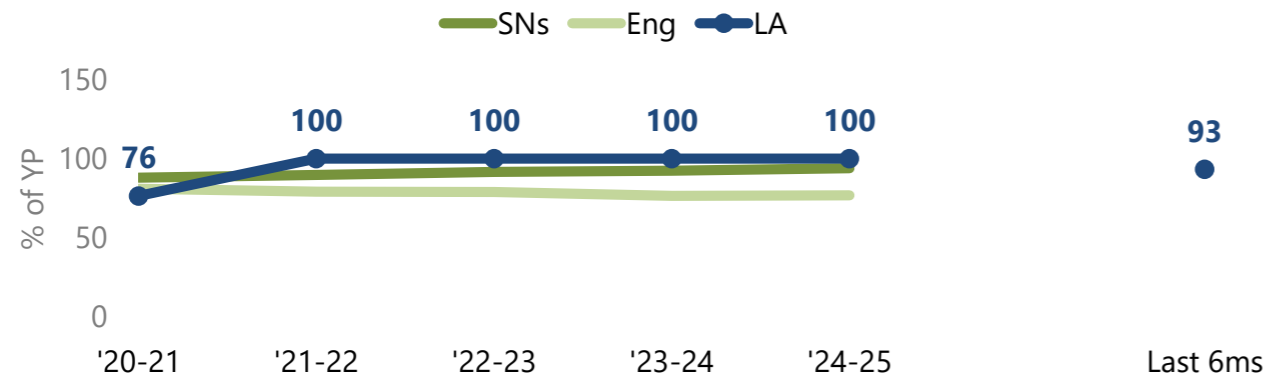


**Care Leavers EET by UAS/Non-UAS**

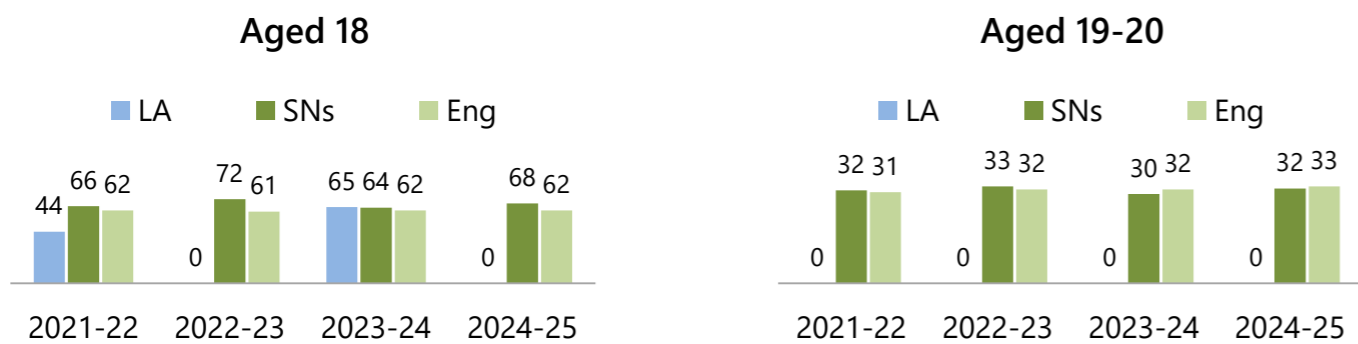


**Remained in care until aged 18**

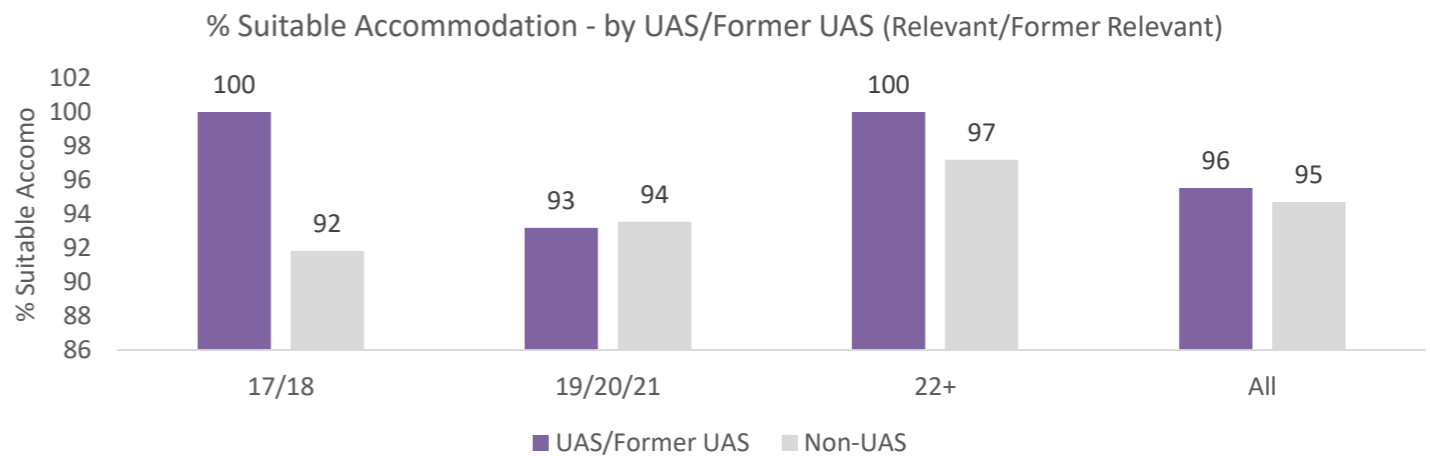
YP who ceased to be looked after aged 16-plus who were looked after until their 18th birthday



**Remain with former foster carer**



**Care Leavers in Suitable Accommodation by UAS/Non-UAS**

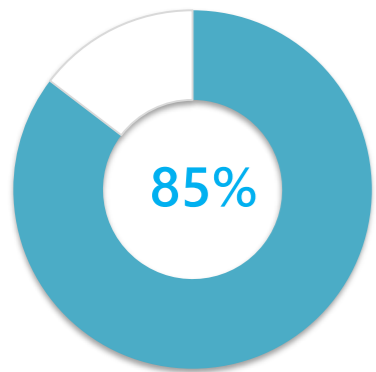


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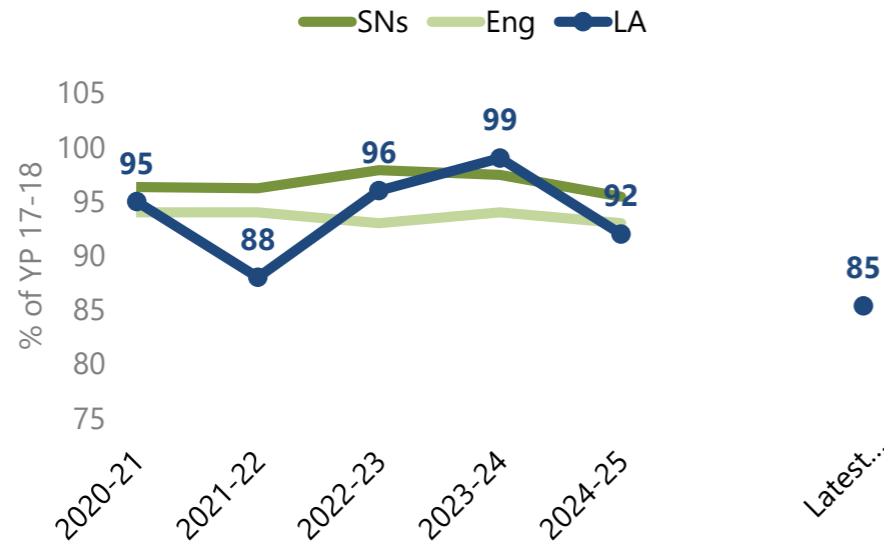
Care Leavers in touch and contact timescales

Snapshot 31/03/2026

LA in touch with 17-18 year olds (relevant/former relevant)

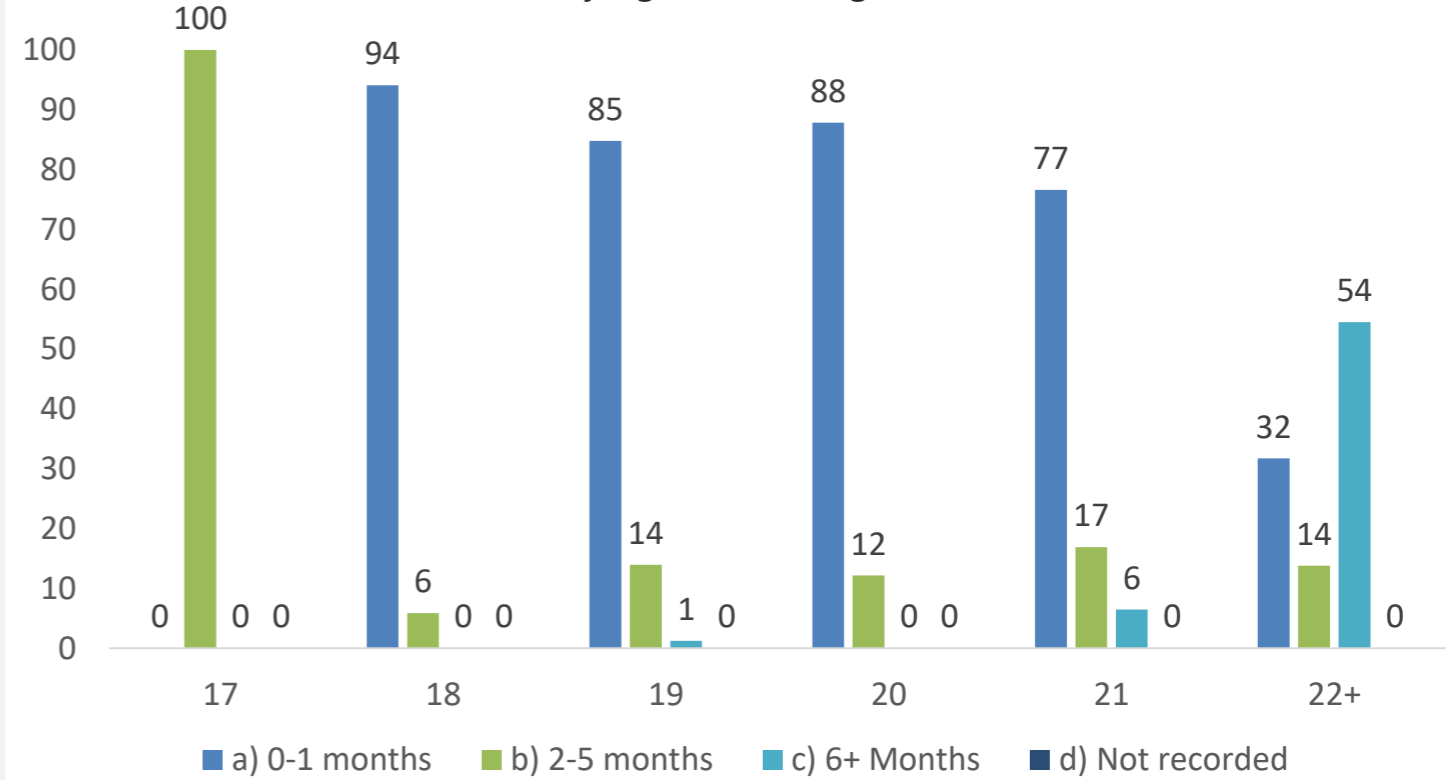


ChAT	Aged 17	Aged 18	Total
Numbers in cohort	6	76	82
LA in touch with YP	33%	89%	85%



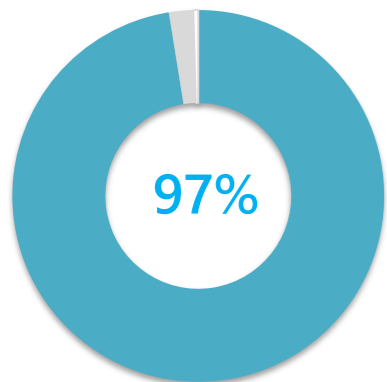
- In touch
- Not in touch
- Not recorded

Time Since Last Contact by Age - Percentage (Relevant/Former Relevant)

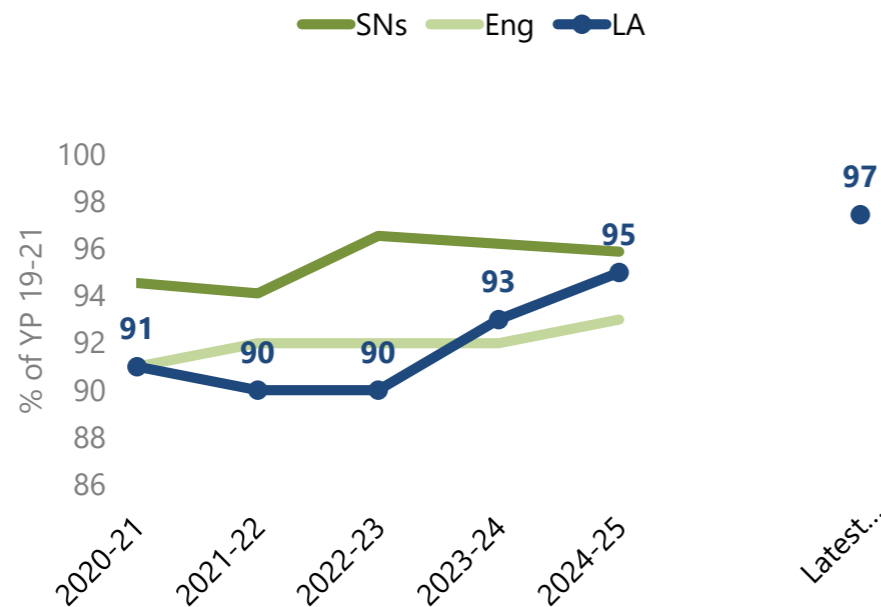


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LA in touch with 19-21 year olds (former relevant)

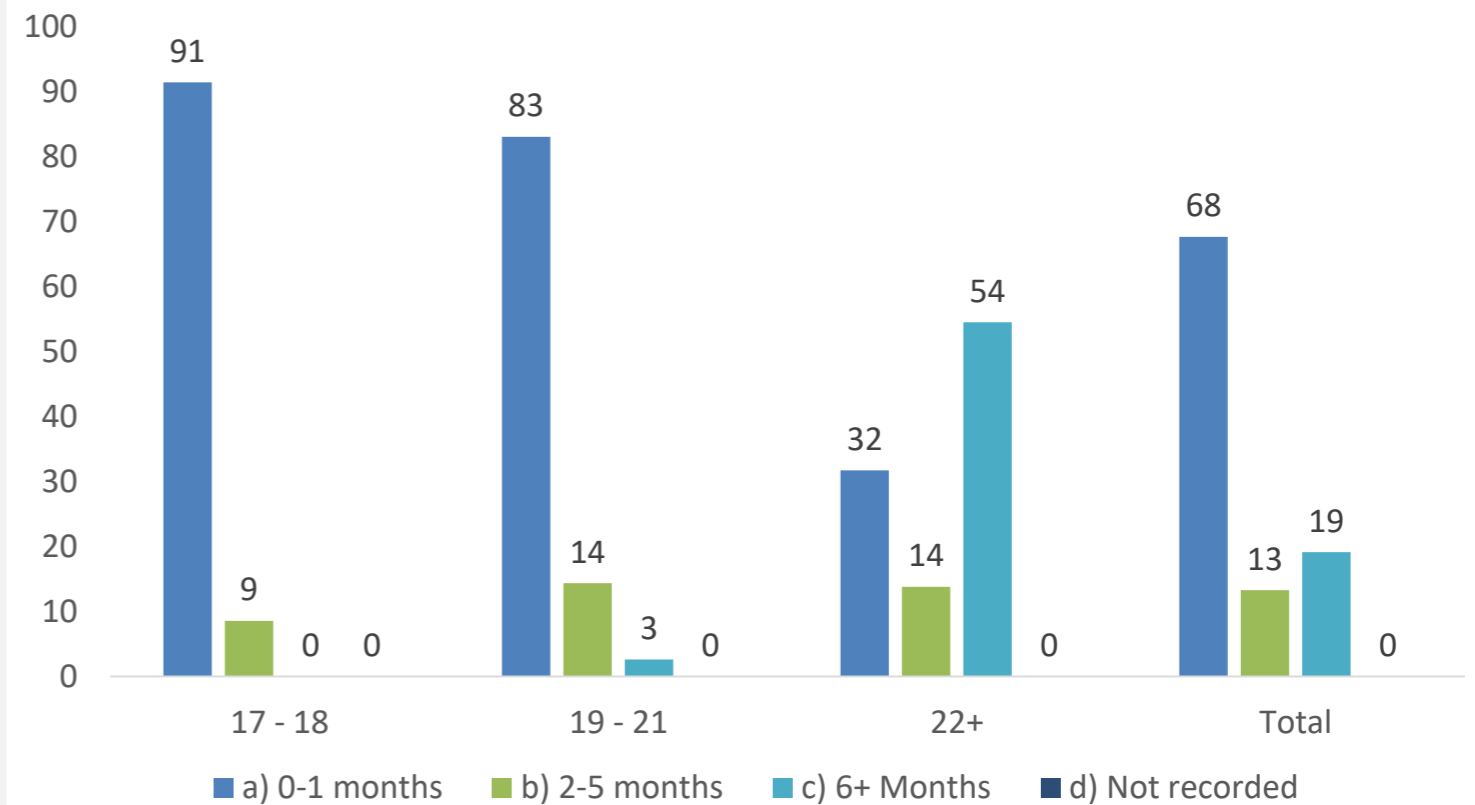


ChAT	Aged 19	Aged 20	Aged 21	Total
Numbers in cohort	80	76	80	236
LA in touch with YP	99%	97%	96%	97%



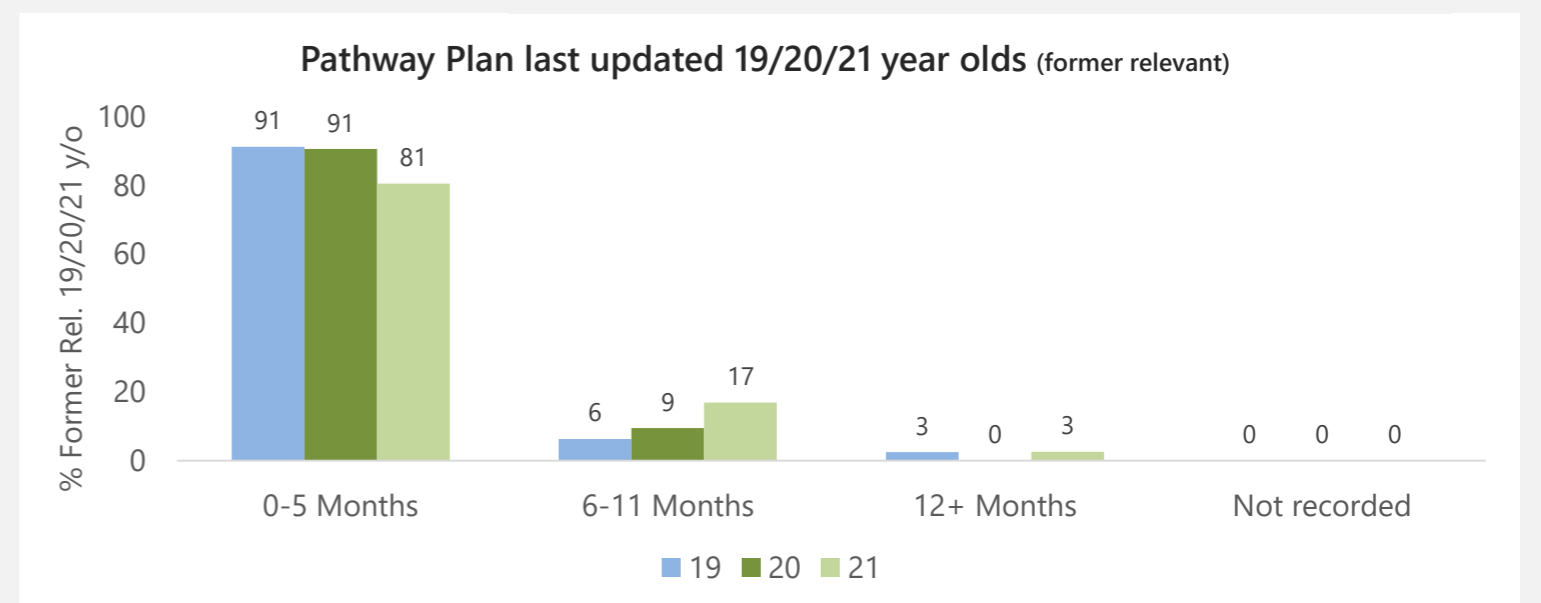
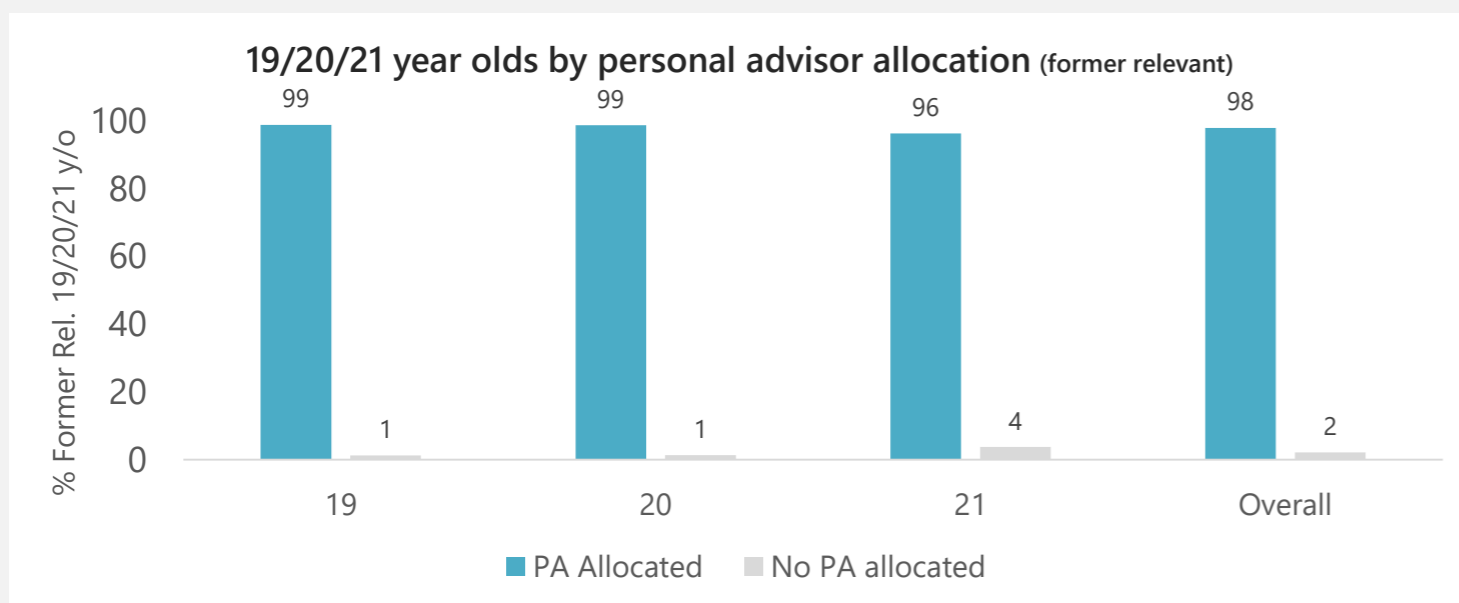
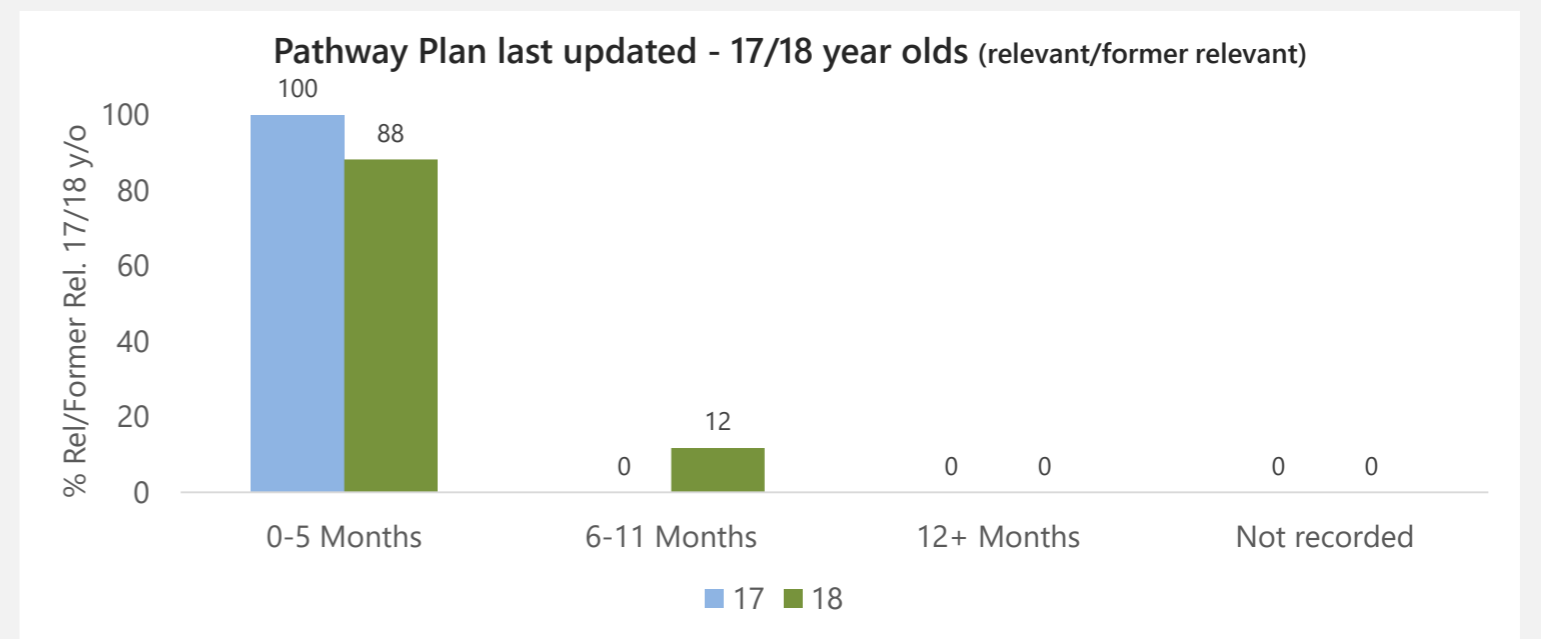
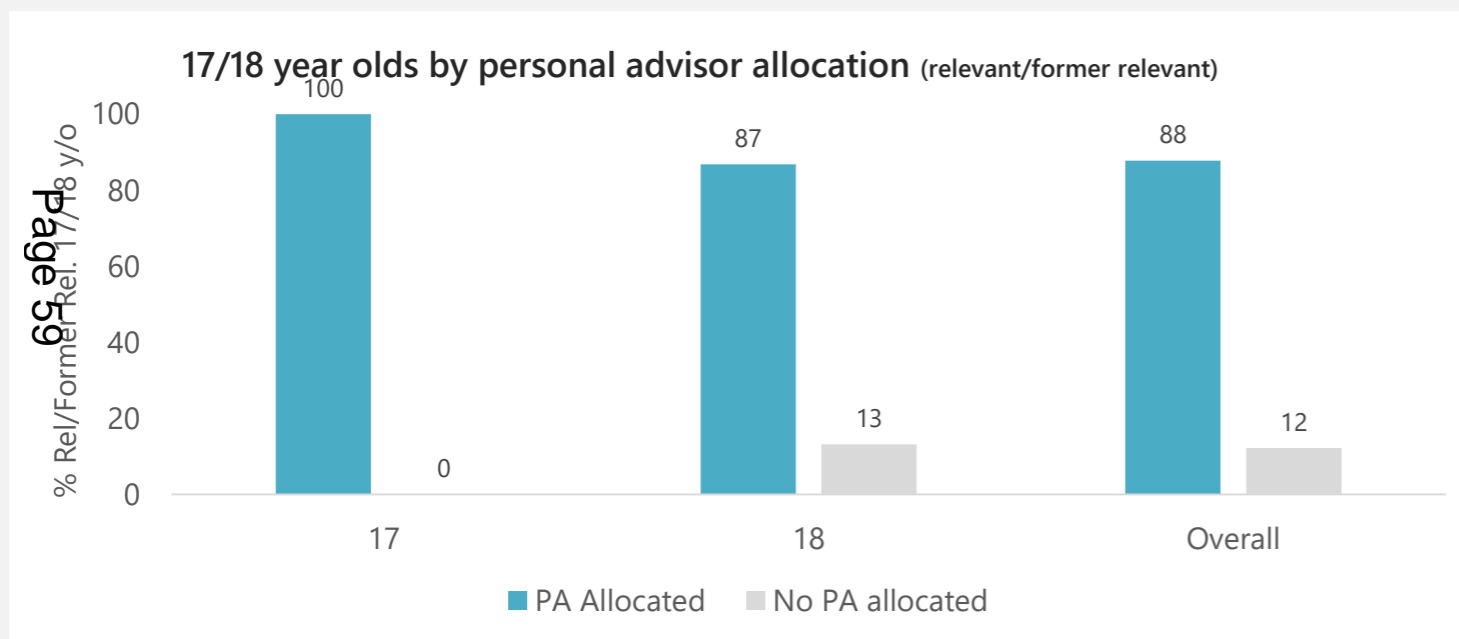
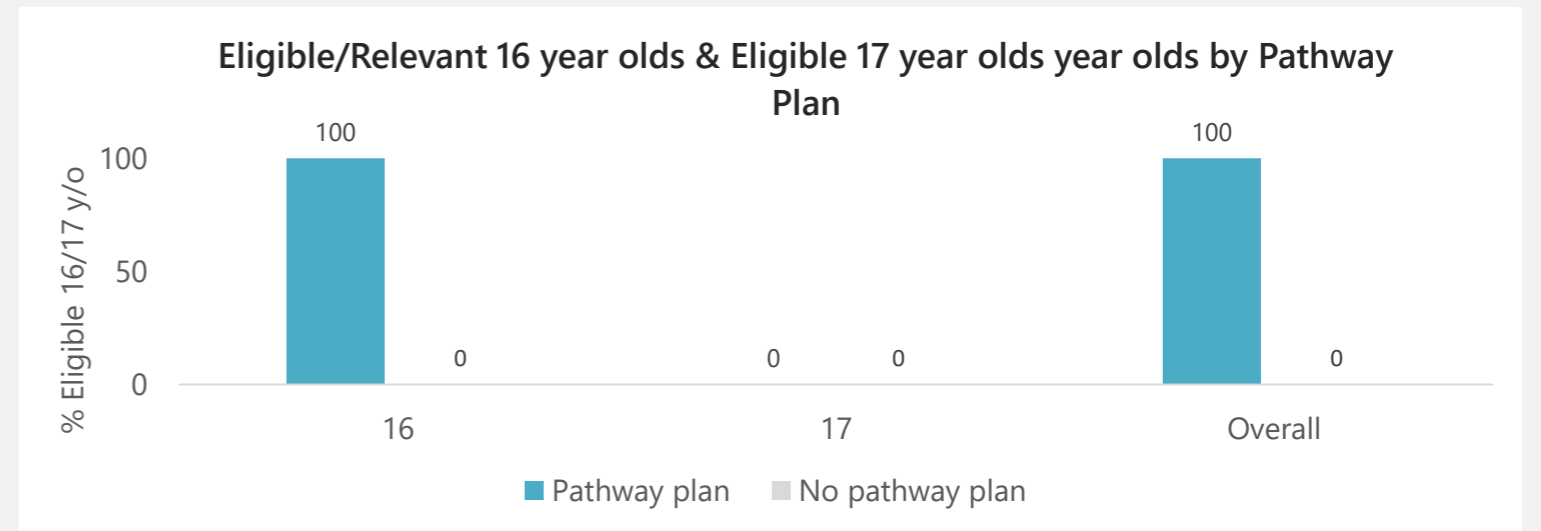
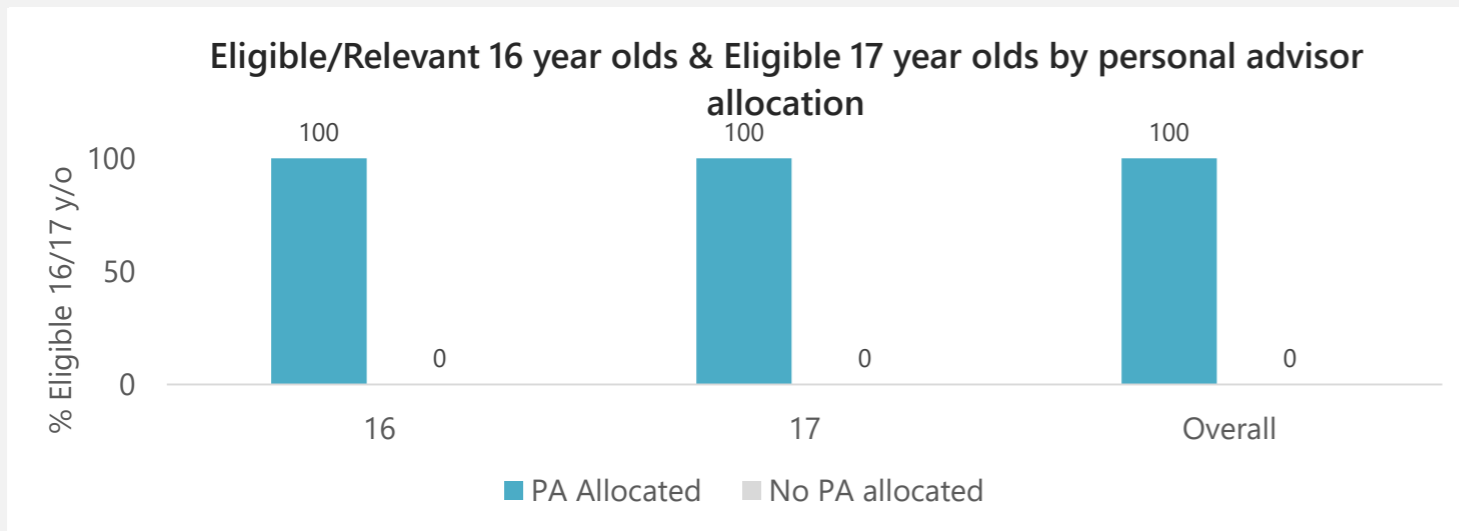
- In touch
- Not in touch
- Not recorded

Time Since Last Contact by Age Group - Percentage (Relevant/Former Relevant)



Care leavers PA allocation and Pathway Plans

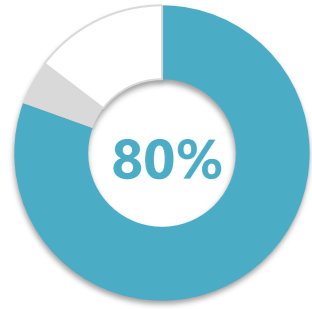
Snapshot 31/03/2026



Care leavers accommodation suitability and type

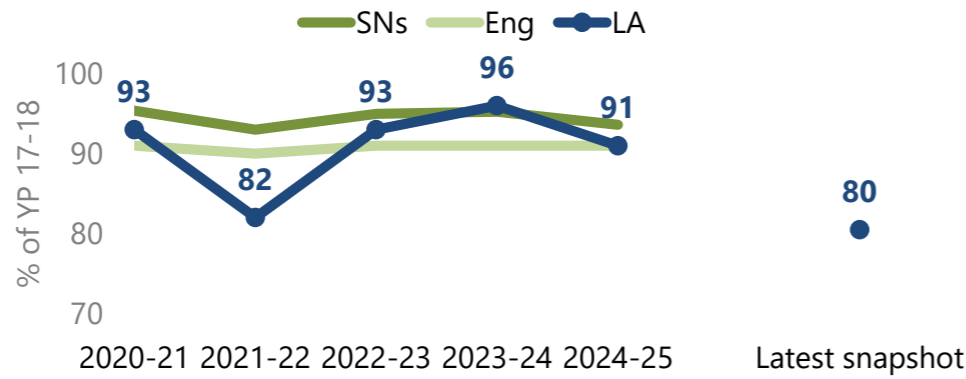
Snapshot 31/03/2026

Accommodation suitability of 17-18 year olds (relevant/former relevant)

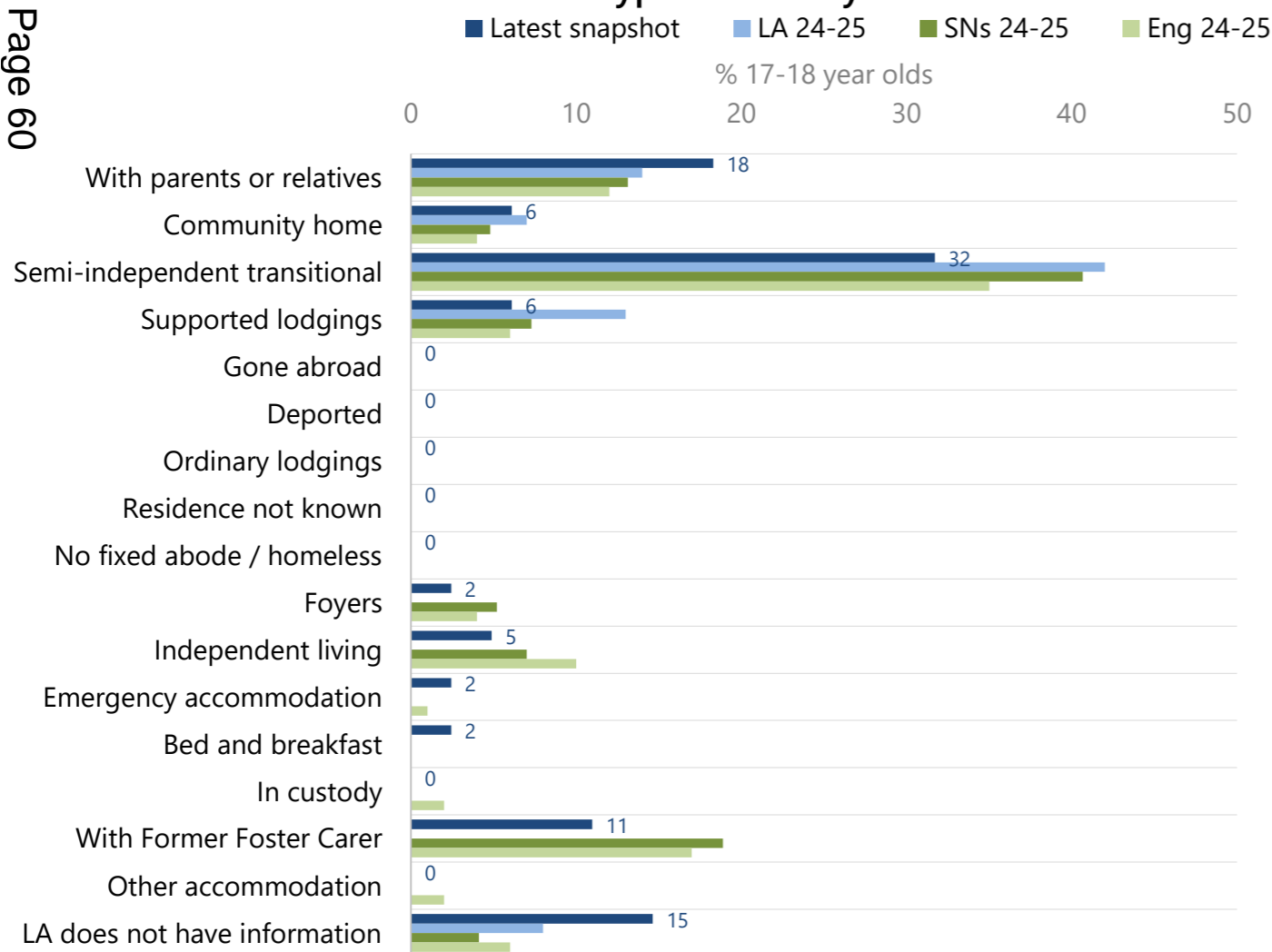


■ Suitable accom  
■ Not suitable  
□ No information

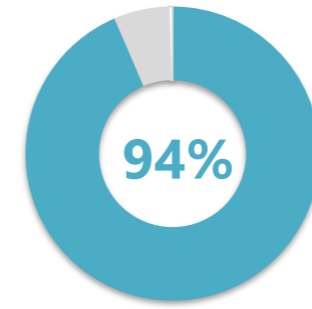
ChAT	Aged 17	Aged 18	Total
Numbers in cohort	6	76	82
In suitable accommodation	33%	84%	80%
In suit accomm (In touch only)	100%	94%	94%



Accommodation types of 17-18 year olds

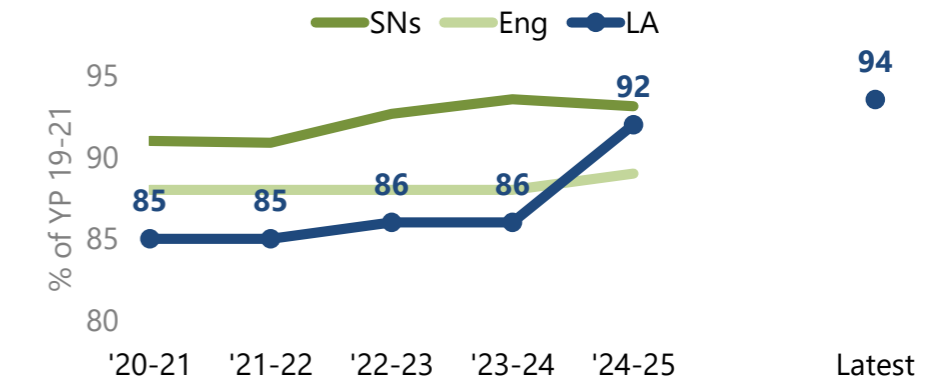


Accommodation suitability of 19-21 year olds (former relevant)

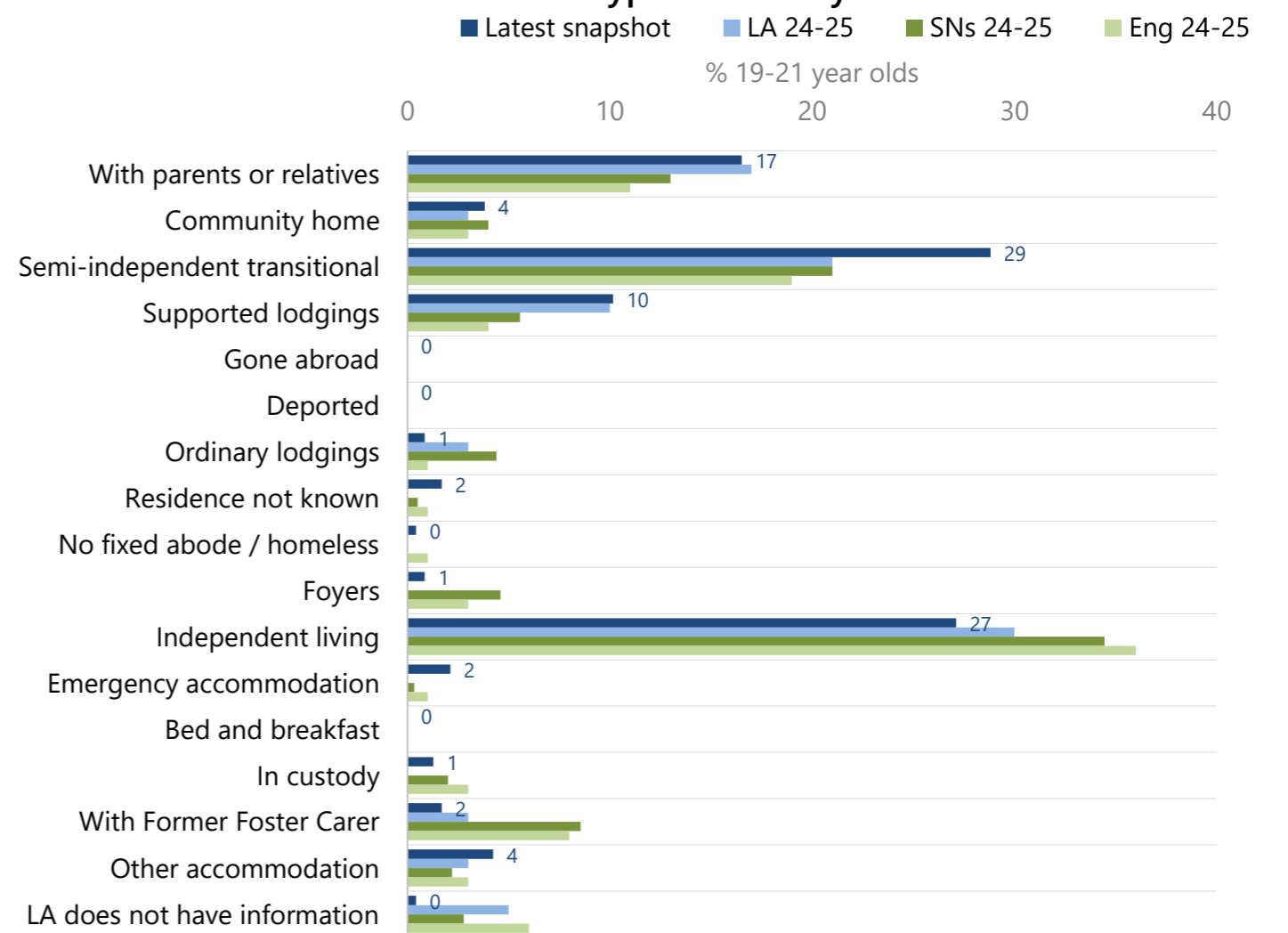


■ Suitable accom  
■ Not suitable  
□ No information

ChAT	Aged 19	Aged 20	Aged 21	Total
Numbers in cohort	80	75	77	232
In suitable accommodation	94%	93%	94%	94%
In suit accomm (In touch only)	94%	93%	95%	93%



Accommodation types of 19-21 year olds

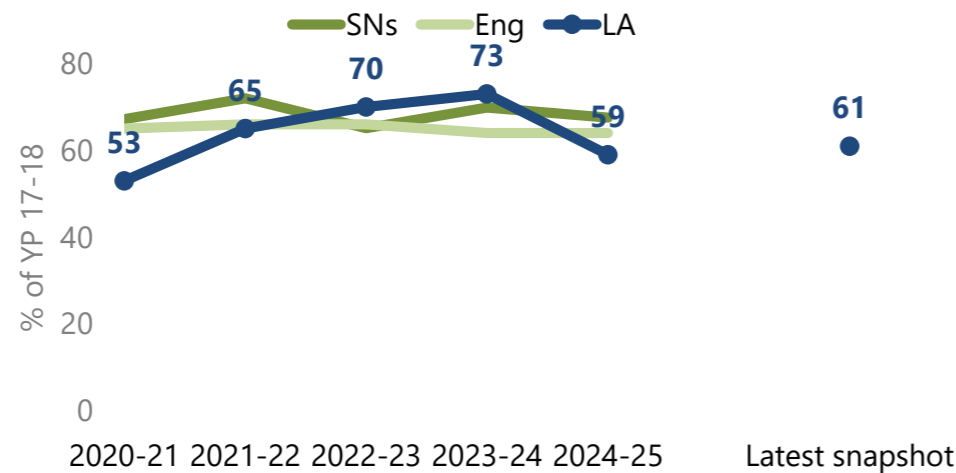
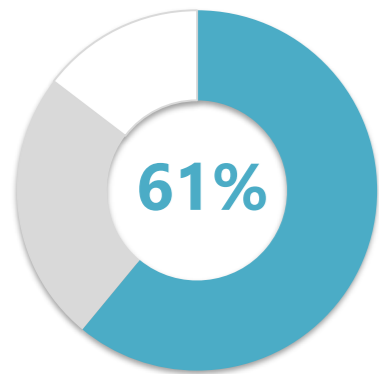


Care leavers activity (Education, Employment, or Training)

Snapshot 31/03/2026

Education, Employment, or Training (EET) of 17-18 year olds (relevant/former relevant)

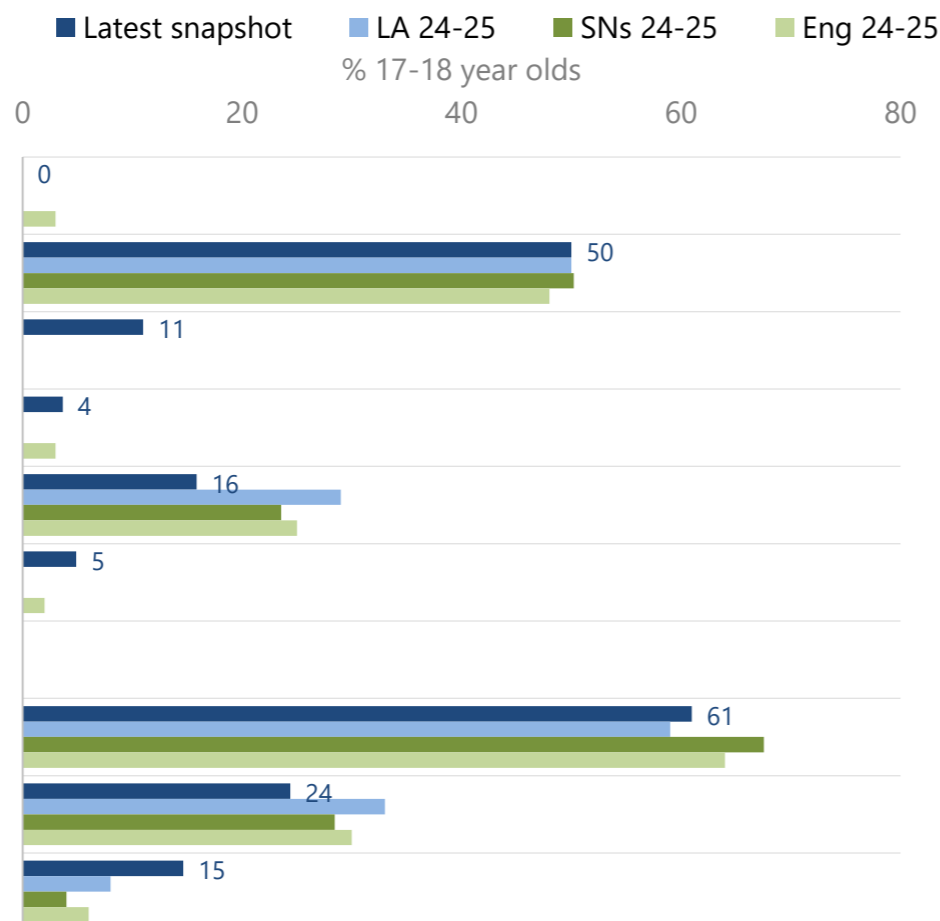
ChAT	Aged 17	Aged 18	Total
Numbers in cohort	6	76	82
In EET	33%	63%	61%
In EET (In Touch Only)	100%	71%	71%



■ YP in EET ■ NEET

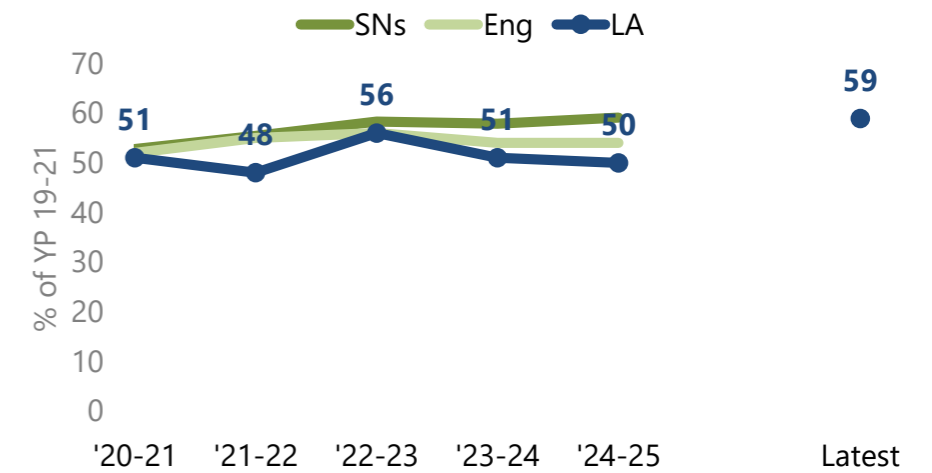
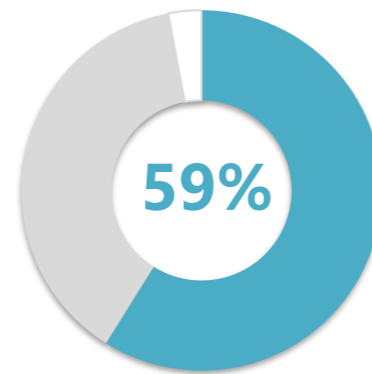
□ No info

Activity types of 17-18 year olds (relevant/former relevant)



Education, Employment, or Training (EET) of 19-21 year olds (former relevant)

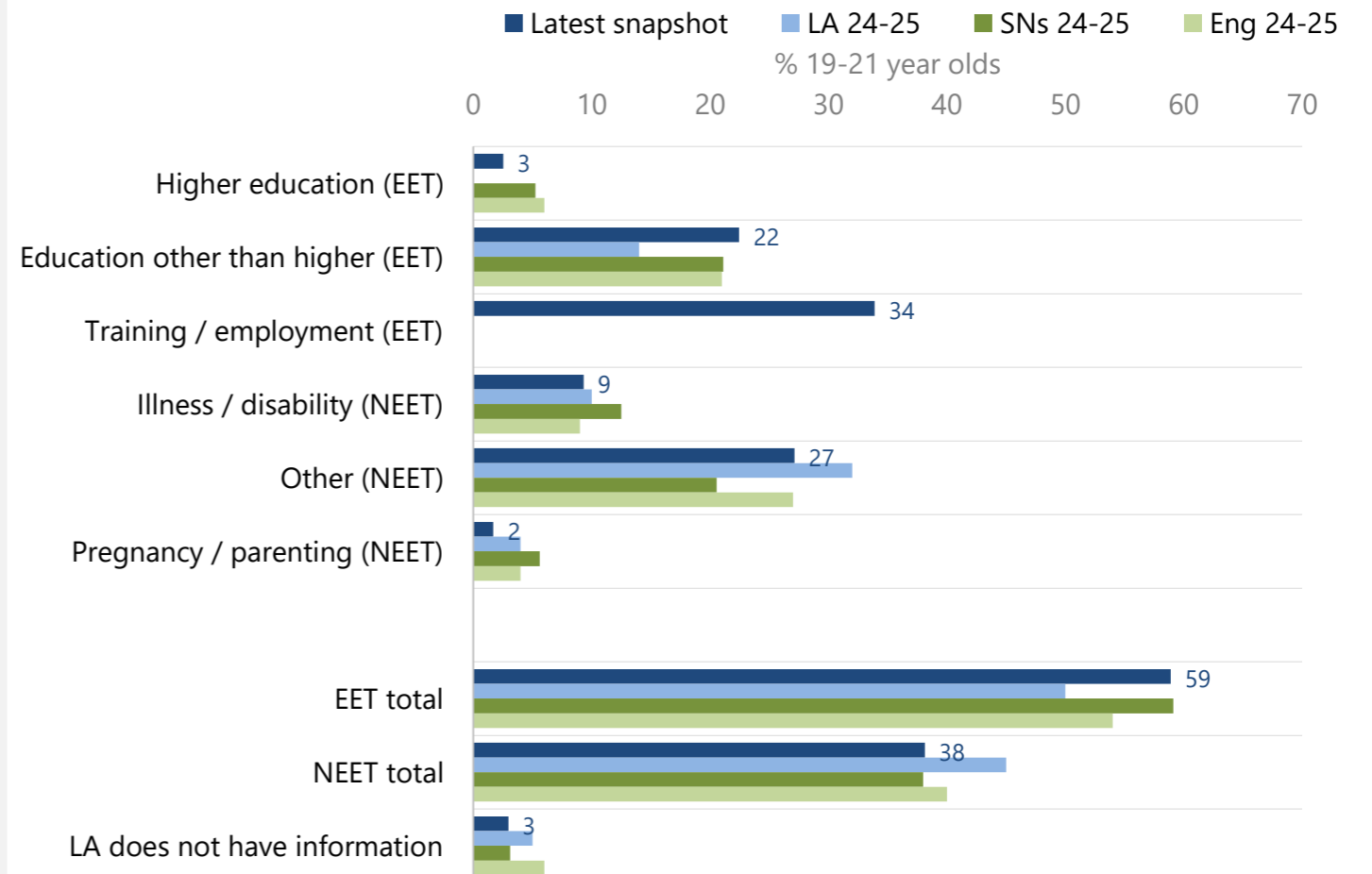
ChAT	Aged 19	Aged 20	Aged 21	Total
Numbers in cohort	80	76	80	236
In EET	66%	63%	48%	59%
In EET (In Touch Only)	67%	65%	49%	60%



■ YP in EET ■ NEET

□ No info

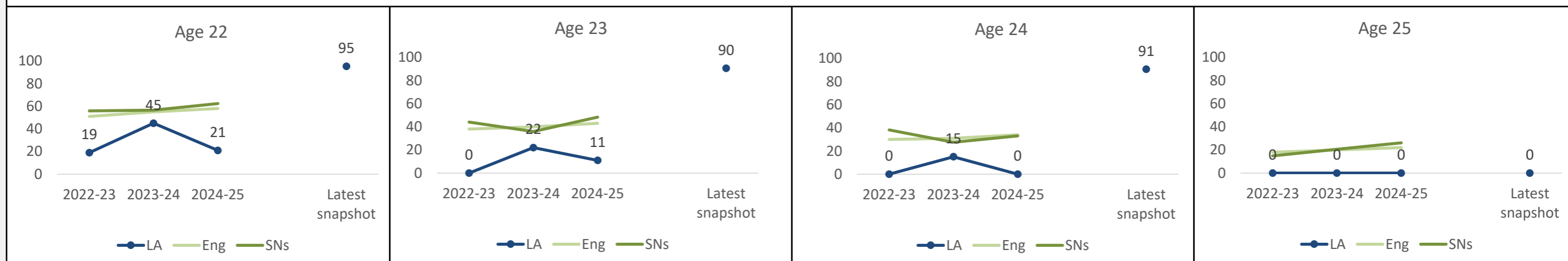
Activity types of 19-21 year olds (former relevant)



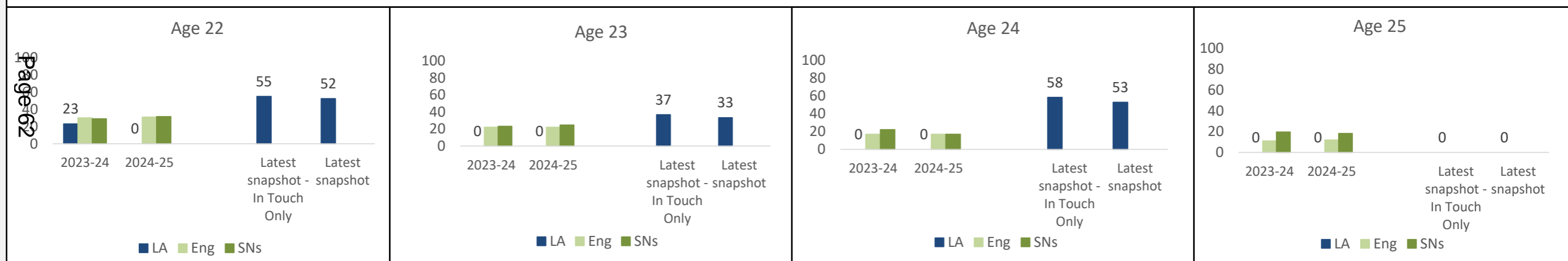
are leavers 22-25 In Touch, Activity and Suitable Accommodatic

Snapshot 31/03/2026

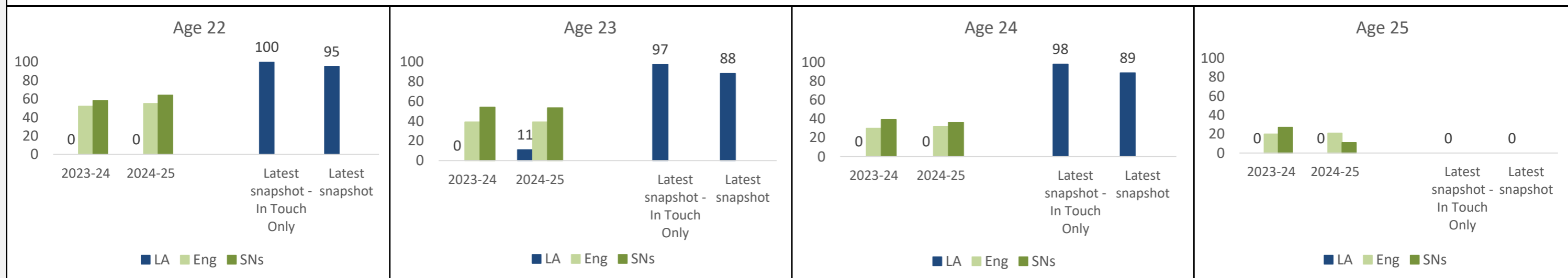
**Care Leavers 22-25 - % In Touch** (benchmarking for this measure uses 'Young person has requested and received support' from *Children looked after in England including adoptions*)



**Care Leavers 22-25 - % EET** (In touch snapshot uses list 9 definition)



**Care Leaver 22-25 - % Suitable Accommodation** (In touch snapshot uses list 9 definition)



Children adopted, waiting to be adopted, or had an adoption decision reversed in the last 12 month from 01/04/2025 to 31/03/2026

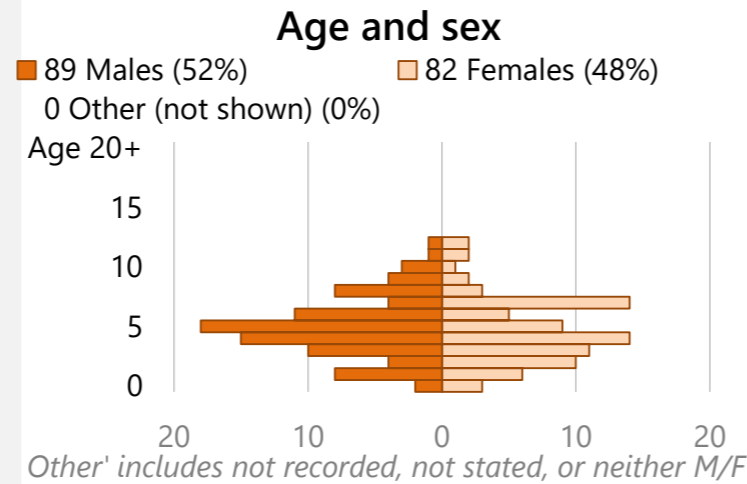
# 171 children

- 32 Child/ren adopted last 12 months
- 29 Child/ren waiting to be adopted
- (24 Child/ren waiting with placement order)
- 14 Child/ren with decision reversed

## Ethnic background

White	92%
Mixed	6%
Asian or Asian British	0%
Black or black British	1%
Other ethnic group	1%
Not stated	0%
Not recorded	0%

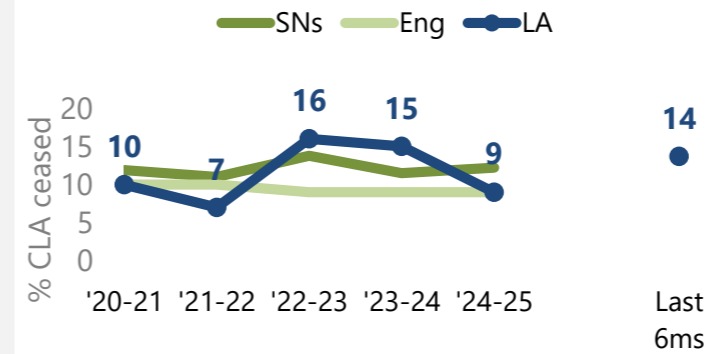
See page 25 for comparisons



5 children (3%) with a disability

## Of the 95 children who ceased to be looked after in the last 6 months, 13 was/were adopted (14%)

### Children ceased who were adopted



### Children aged 5-plus who were adopted

3%

2 of the 67 children aged 5-plus who ceased to be looked after in the last 6 months were adopted

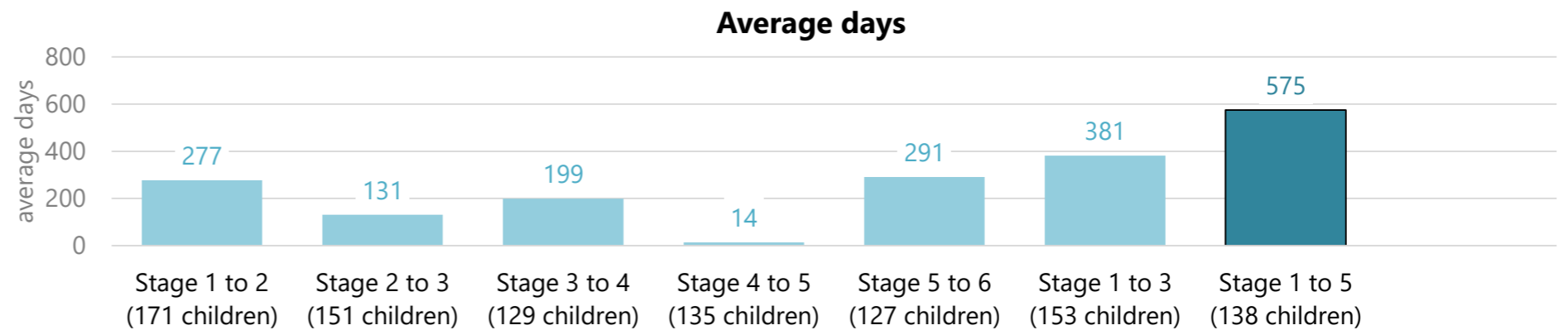
### Comparing 5-plus adoptions

LA last 6 months	3.0%
LA 2024-25	c
SNs 2024-25	16.7%
Eng 2024-25	16.6%

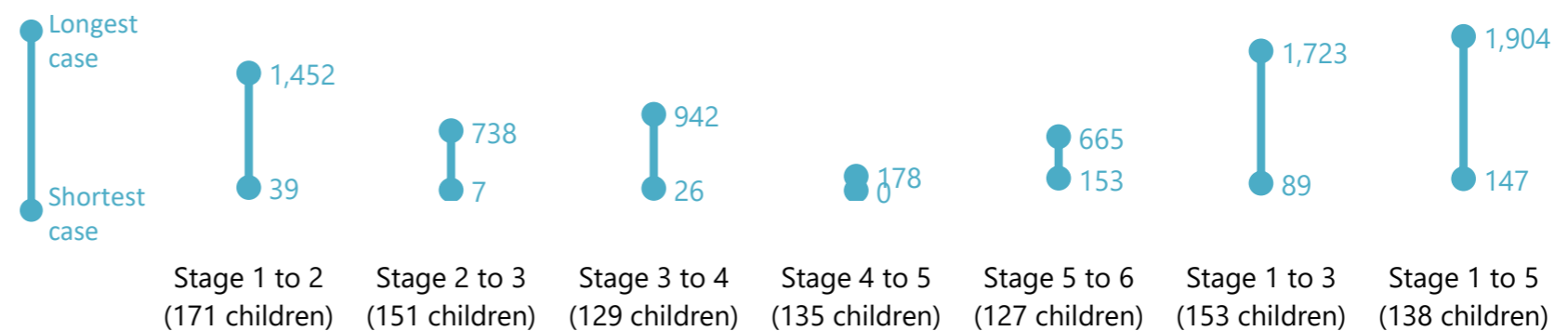
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## Timeliness of each stage of the adoption process

Average duration of each stage (number of days)



Range in days between shortest and longest cases at each stage

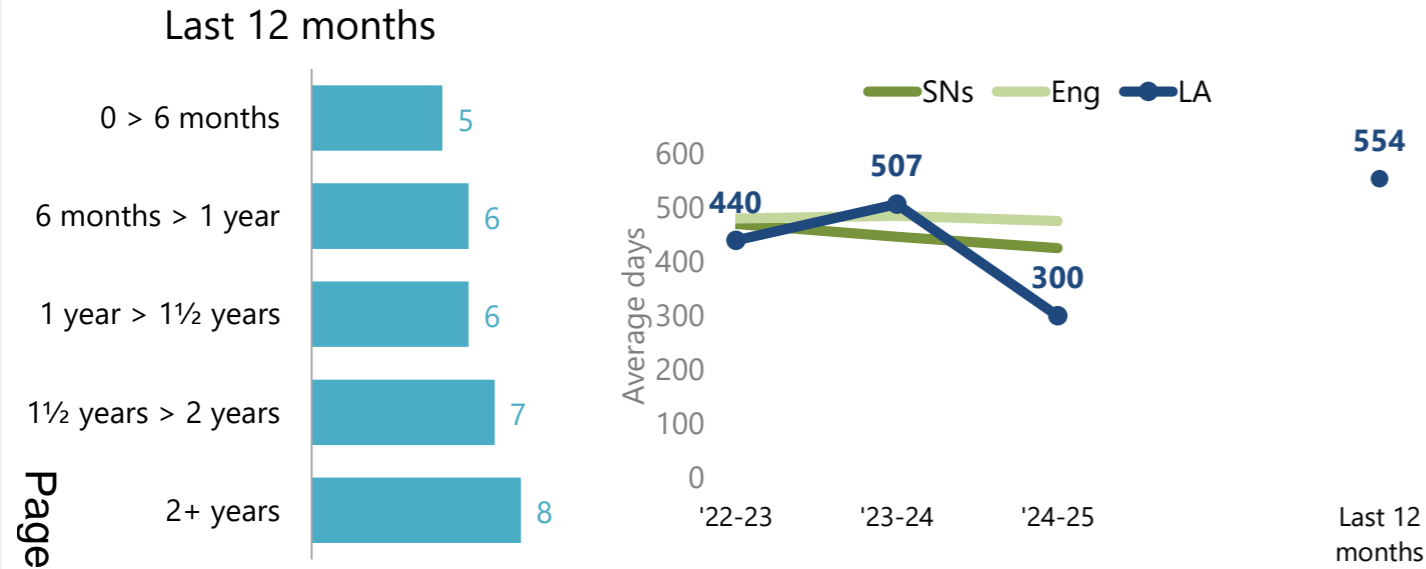


Adoption benchmarking

from 01/04/2025  
to 31/03/2026

(A10) Time between entering care and placed with family for adopted children

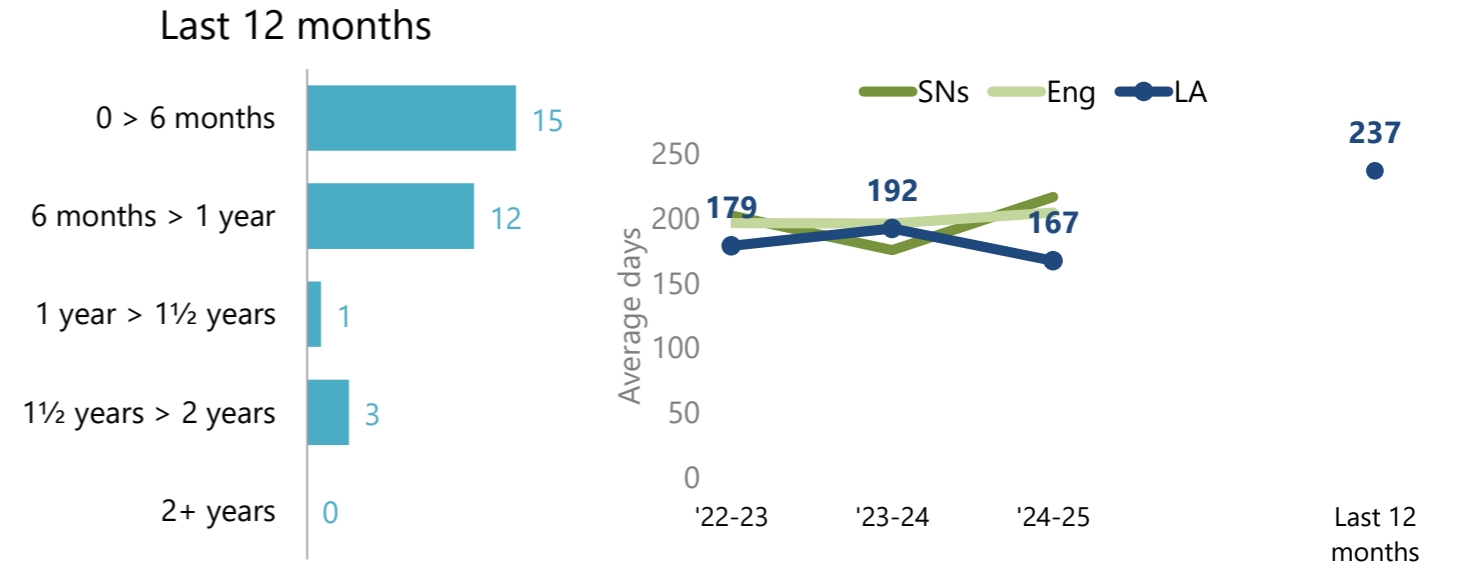
**554 days** Average number of days between entering care and moving in with adoptive family for adopted children (adjusted for foster carer adoptions)  
**32 children**



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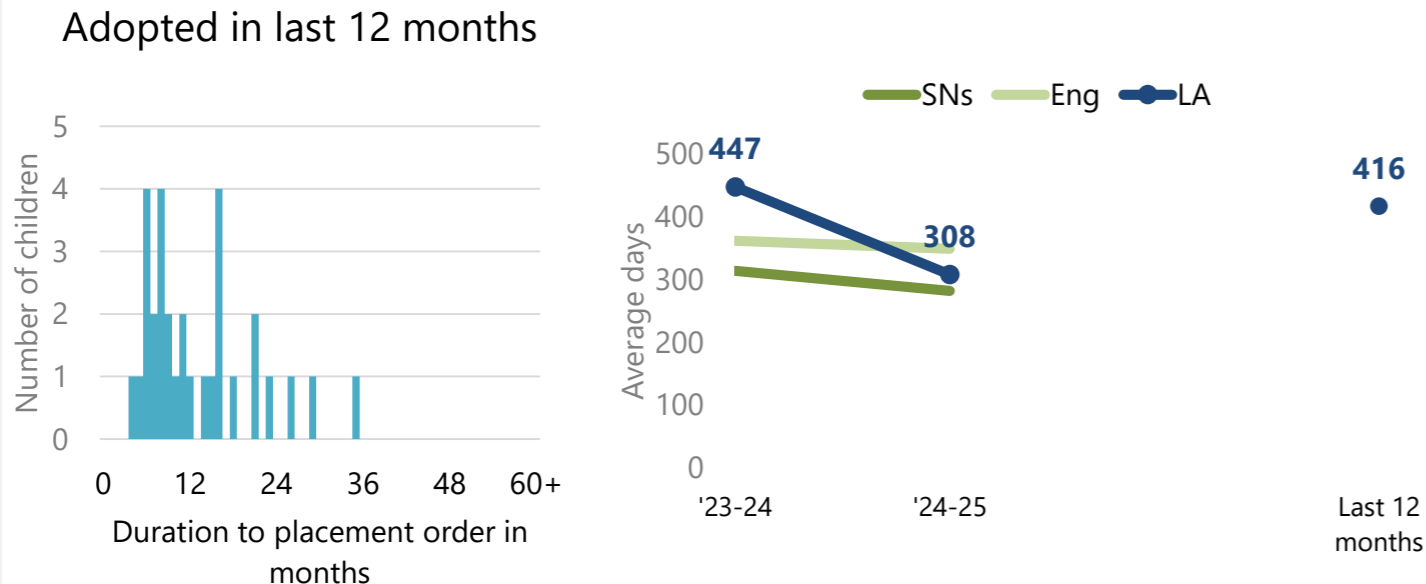
(A2) Time between placement order and deciding on a match

**237 days** The average number of days from the date of the placement order to the date the child was matched to prospective adopters  
**31 children**



(A20) Time between entering care and placement order

**416 days** Average time between a child entering care and a local authority receiving court authority to place a child, for children who have been adopted (days)  
**31 children**



Permanence decision changed away from adoption

**8%** Children where there was a decision that the child should no longer be placed for adoption  
**14/171 children**



Adoption Benchmarking

Adoption benchmarking has been imported from the CORAM ASG dataset. The full dataset, which contains more detailed LA and RAA data is available at [www.coram.org.uk](http://www.coram.org.uk)

Prospective adopters in the last 12 months

from 01/04/2025  
to 31/03/2026

## 162 prospective adopters (83 families)

### Prospective adopter current status

	Adults	Families
Child adopted	65	33
Child placed	24	12
Child matched	0	0
Application	59	31
Enquiry	0	0
Withdrawn	14	7

### Ethnic breakdown

	Adults %	Children %
White	96%	92%
Mixed	1%	6%
Asian or Asian British	3%	0%
Black or black British	0%	1%
Other ethnic group	0%	1%
Not stated	0%	0%
Not recorded	0%	0%

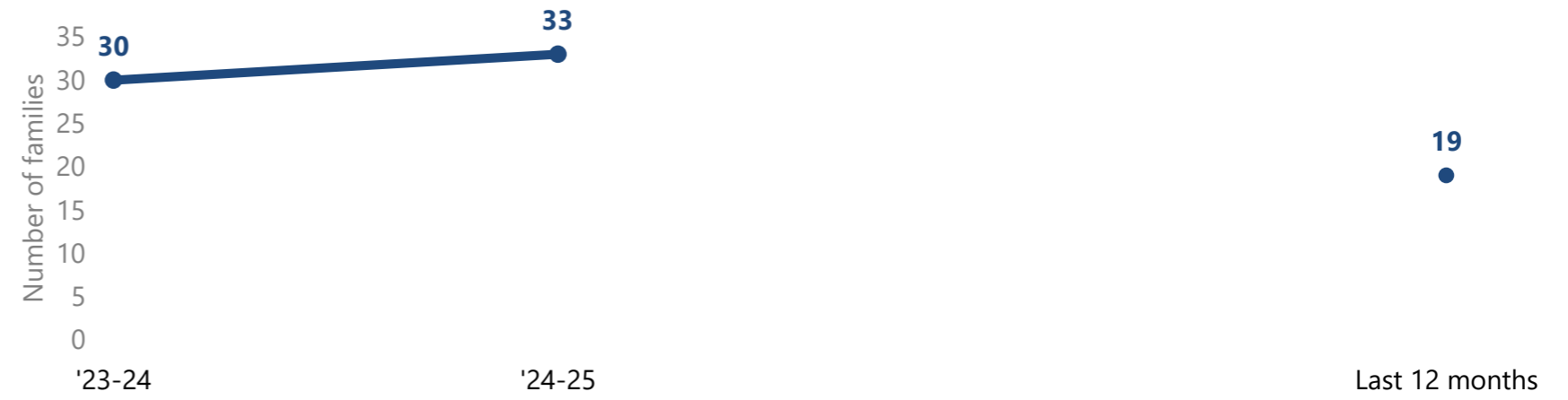
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### New two-stage adoption process

- Stage 1 start** Registration of interest
- Stage 1 end** Decision of suitability to adopt
- Stage 2 start** Adopter's wish to proceed
- Stage 2 end** Agency Decision-Maker (ADM decision)
- Matched** Family matched with child(ren)
- Placed** Child(ren) placed with family
- Adopted** Adoption order granted

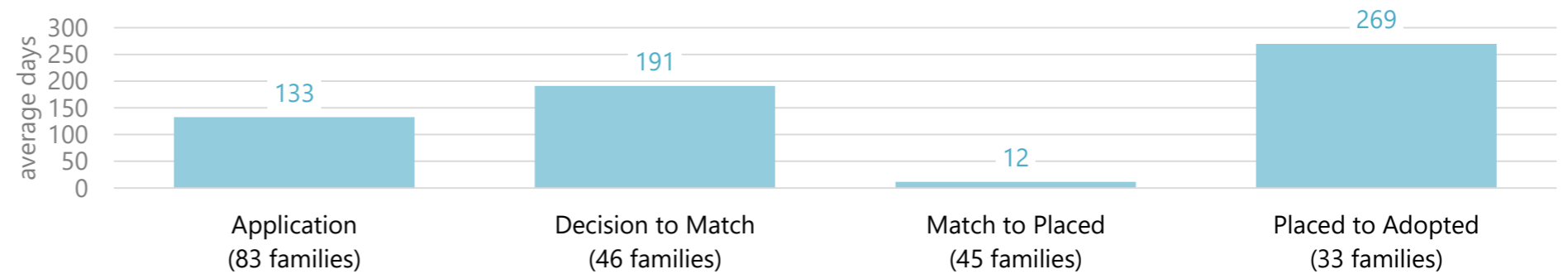
### Adoption Scorecard A15 - new ADM decisions

Number of new ADM decisions for children in the year  
(ADM = Agency Decision-Maker)

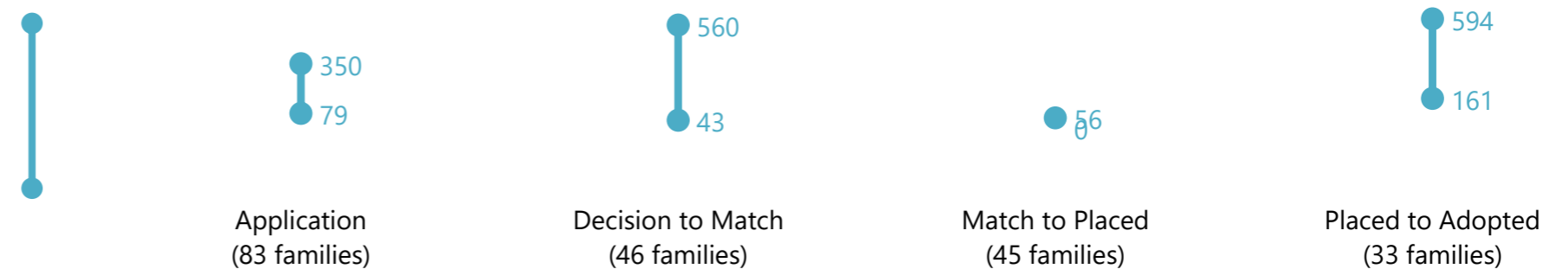


### Duration of each stage of the adoption process

Average duration of each stage (number of days)



### Range in days between shortest and longest cases at each stage



Demographics of children across all areas of children's social care

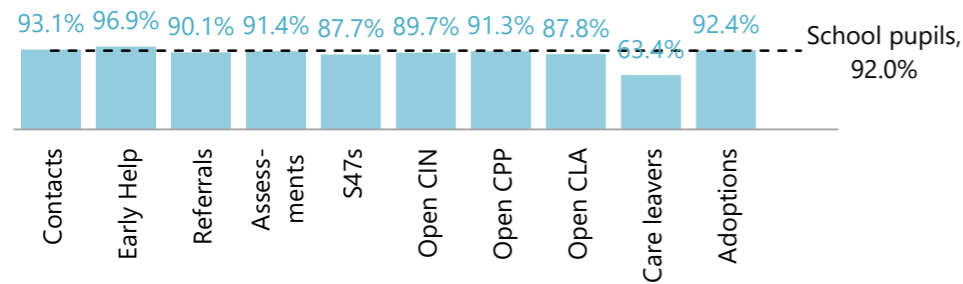
Snapshot 31/03/2026

**Ethnicity**

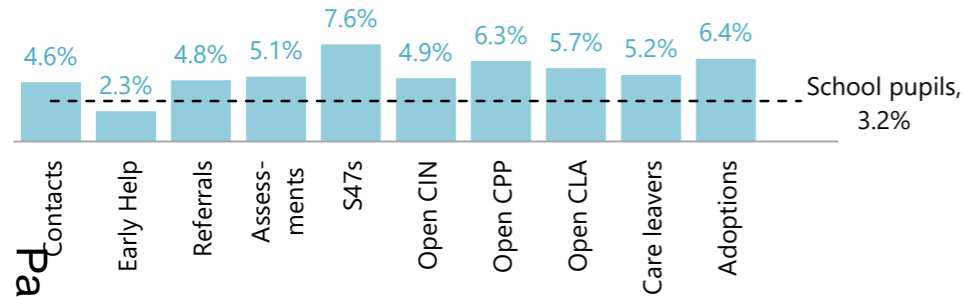
ChAT\* compared to pupils in the LA schools (Jan-25)

\*percentage of known ethnicity only

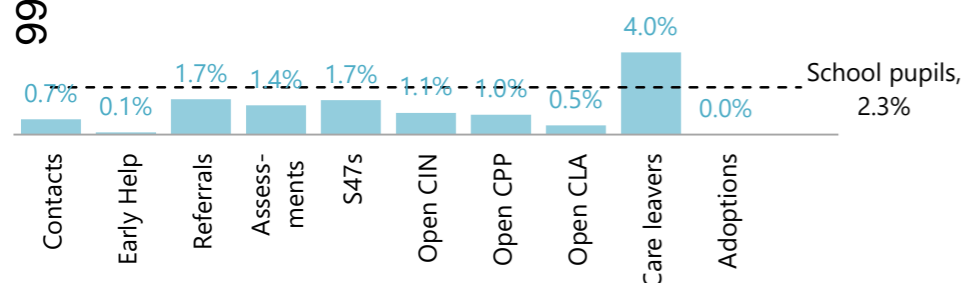
**White**



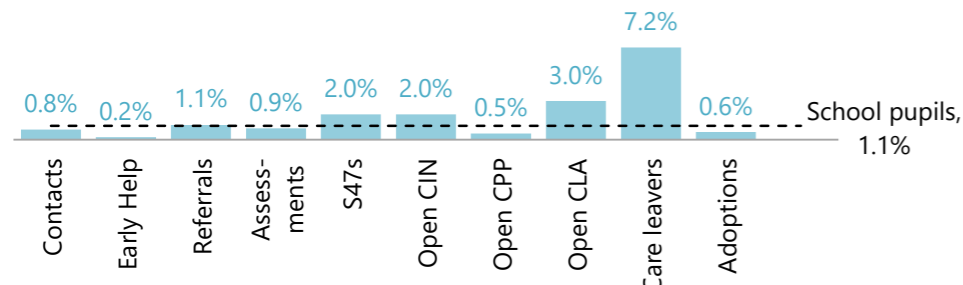
**Mixed**



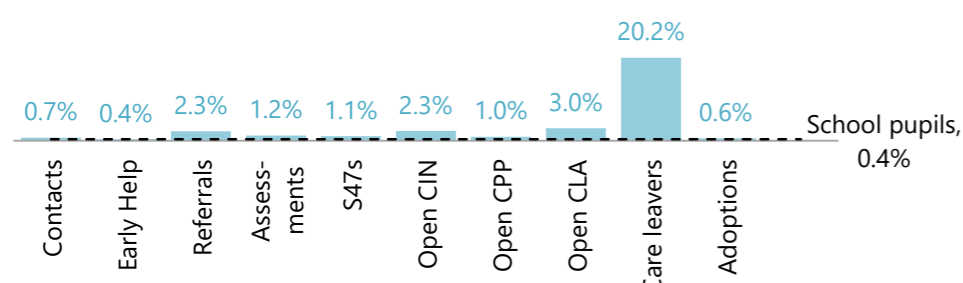
**Asian**



**Black**



**Other**

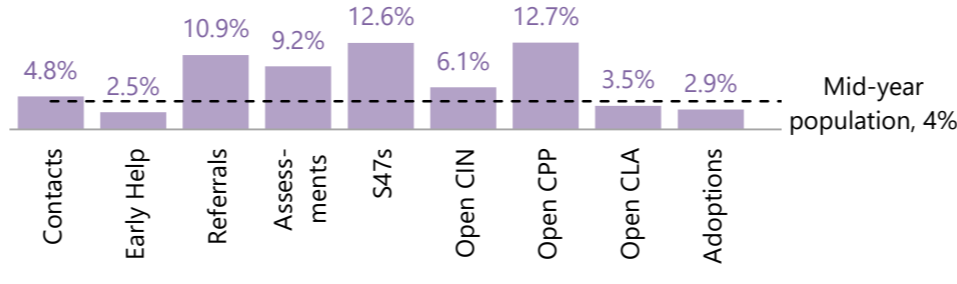


**Age**

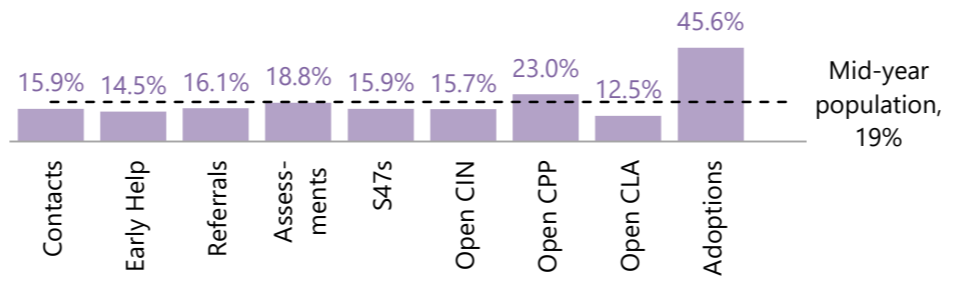
ChAT\* compared to mid-year (2024) population estimates (ONS)

\*percentage of known age only

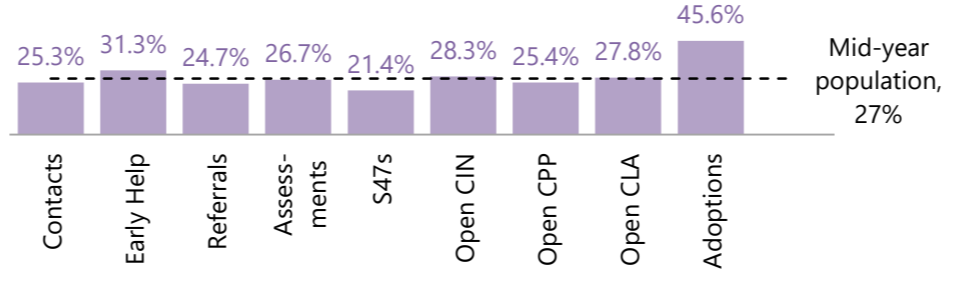
**Under 1**



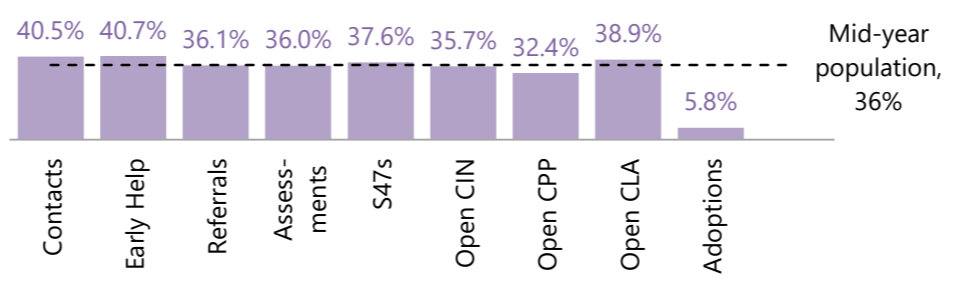
**1 to 4**



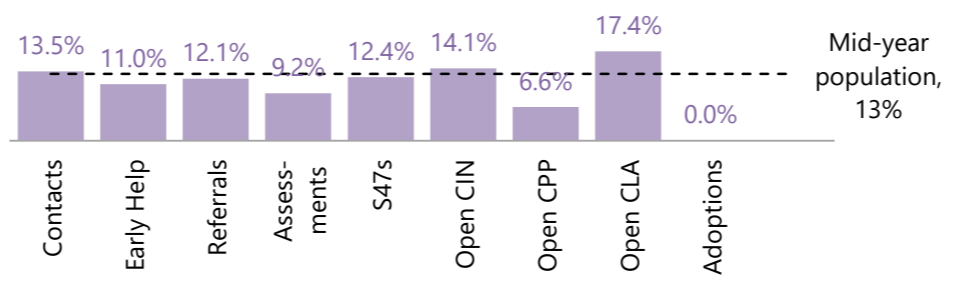
**5 to 9**



**10 to 15**



**16 and over**

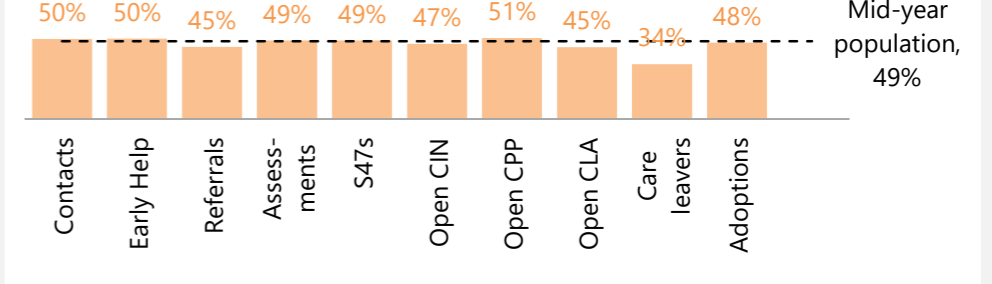


**sex**

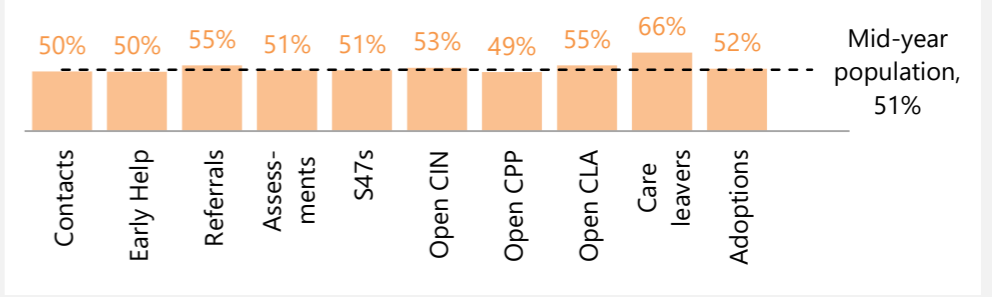
ChAT\* compared to mid-year (2024) population estimates (ONS)

\*percentage of Male / Female only, excludes Other

**Female**



**Male**



**Comparing CLA demographics**

CLA figures compared to published population statistics

**Ethnicity**

\* compared to school census

	LA Latest snapshot			LA 2025			Eng 2025		
	CLA	Pop	% difference	CLA	Pop	% difference	CLA	Pop	% difference
White	88	92	lower -5%	87	92	lower -5%	71	68	higher 4%
Mixed	6	3	higher 81%	6	3	higher 90%	11	7	higher 53%
Asian	0	2	lower -80%	1	2	lower -57%	5	14	lower -64%
Black	3	1	higher 179%	3	1	higher 722%	8	7	higher 16%
Other	3	0	higher 723%	3	0	higher 722%	4	3	higher 59%

**Age**

\* Comparator is ONS mid-year population estimates

	LA Latest snapshot			LA 2024			Eng 2024		
	CLA	Pop	% difference	CLA	Pop	% difference	CLA	Pop	% difference
Under 1	3	4	lower -16%	3	4	lower -27%	4	5	lower -15%
1 to 4	12	19	lower -35%	17	19	lower -12%	12	21	lower -41%
5 to 9	28	27	higher 2%	27	27	lower -1%	18	28	lower -36%
10 to 15	39	36	higher 7%	38	36	higher 5%	38	35	higher 8%
16-plus	17	13	higher 34%	16	13	higher 23%	27	12	higher 133%




**sex**




\* Comparator is ONS mid-year population estimates















































	LA Latest snapshot			LA 2024			Eng 2024		
	CLA	Pop	% difference	CLA	Pop	% difference	CLA	Pop	% difference
Male	55	51	higher 7%	54	51	higher 5%	56	51	higher 9%
Female	45	49	lower -8%	46	49	lower -6%	44	49	lower -10%

Comparisons of headline figures and performance data to published statistics

The table below shows the Local Authority's latest data for each indicator as calculated in ChAT, and the direction of travel since the latest published statistics (where available).

Decreasing, low is good   
 Increasing, high is good   
 No change, not RAG rated 

Lowest 25% quartile, low is good   
 Highest 25% quartile, high is good   
 Mid 50% range, not RAG-rated 

Indicator	Latest data (ChAT)			Latest published statistics for all local authorities					Date
	LA	Direction of travel		LA	SNs	Eng	LA compared to mid-50% range of all LAs		
Referrals received (annual rate per 10,000 of children)	190	Decrease		250	477	519	Lower		2024-25
Referrals to social care that were within 12 months of a previous referral (%)	10	Decrease		13	18	21	Lower		2024-25
Assessments completed (annual rate per 10,000 of children)	304	Decrease		386	466	533	Lower		2024-25
Assessments completed within 45 working days (%)	89	Increase		68	81	86	Lower		2024-25
Children subject to section 47 enquiries (annual rate per 10,000 of children)	121	Decrease		171	186	189	In range		2024-25
Children subject of an initial child protection conference (annual rate per 10,000 of children)	39	Decrease		56	63	59	In range		2024-25
Initial Child Protection Conferences held within 15 working days of the start of the section 47 enquiry (%)	72	Increase		56	83	81	Lower		2024-25
Children in need (snapshot rate per 10,000 children)	222	Decrease		367	335	330	In range		2024-25
Children who are the subject of a child protection plan (snapshot rate per 10,000 children)	35	Increase		29	41	41	Lower		2024-25
Children who became the subject of a CP plan for a second or subsequent time (%)	15	Decrease		21	27	25	In range		2024-25
Children who ceased to be on a CP plan whose plan lasted 2 years or more (%)	1	Decrease		3	4	4	Lower		2024-25
Children who are looked after (snapshot rate per 10,000 children)	111	Decrease		119	68	67	Higher		2024-25
Children looked after who had a missing incident in the period (%)	7	Increase		6	9	11	Lower		2024-25
Children looked after who were away without authorisation in the period (%)	0	Increase		0	1	3	In range		2024-25
Children looked after who had their teeth checked by a dentist in the last 12 months (%)	47	Decrease		65	80	81	Lower		2024-25
Children looked after who had their annual health assessment (%)	72	Decrease		81	89	90	Lower		2024-25
Children who ceased to be looked after in the period who were adopted (%)	14	Increase		9	12	9	In range		2024-25
Children who ceased to be looked after in the period due to a Special Guardianship Order (%)	7	Decrease		11	13	12	In range		2024-25
Children leaving care over the age of 16 who remained looked after until their 18th birthday (%)	93	Decrease		100	94	77	In range		2024-25
Care leavers aged 19-21 in suitable accommodation (%)	94	Increase		92	93	89	In range		2024-25
Care leavers aged 19-21 in education, employment, or training (%)	59	Increase		50	59	54	In range		2024-25
A10 - Time between entering care and placed with family for adopted children	554	Increase		300	425	475	Lower		2024-25
A2 - Time between placement order and deciding on a match	237	Increase		167	217	205	In range		2024-25

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## Fostering Briefing Update March 2026

Service Manager: Erika Ower

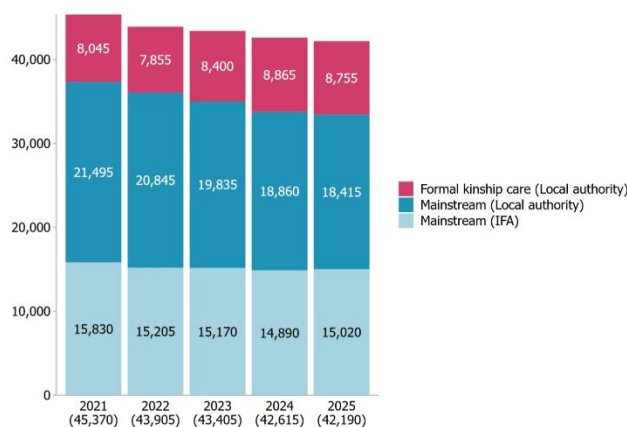
### National Picture

Full information that reflects the national challenge within Fostering Recruitment has been presented to scrutiny panel in December 2025 (Please see full briefing). This picture remains the same. There continues to be a national challenge with fostering recruitment. The government has introduced the biggest national reforms of the fostering service. [Renewing fostering: homes for 10,000 more children - GOV.UK](#)

Statistics released by government November 2025 shows the following:

#### During the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025:

- At the end of March 2025, there were 42,190 fostering households in England. The number of households has decreased steadily since 2021, and the make-up has changed. Formal kinship care fostering is the preferred route in many cases, and it is increasingly common for this type of foster care to be used to meet the needs of individual children. The largest subset of fostering households is mainstream local authority households (18,415). These currently account for 44% of total fostering households (Figure 1).
- **Figure 1: Number of fostering households by type and sector as at 31 March, over the last 5 years**

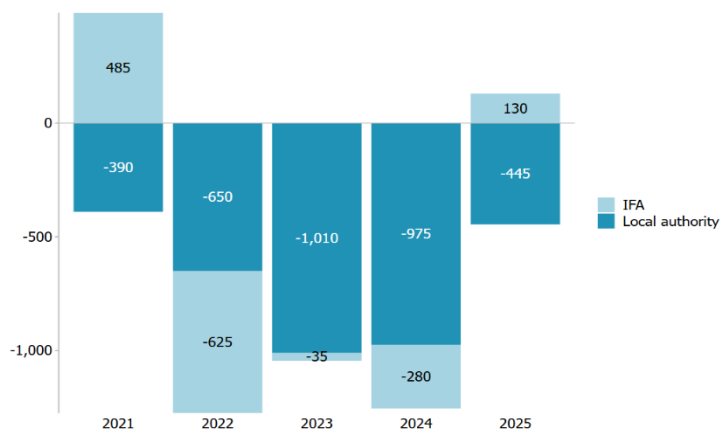


#### Mainstream Fostering (National Picture):

The number of local authority mainstream households nationally is still decreasing. Between 2021 and 2025, the number of approved or newly approved mainstream local authority

households has fallen by 14%. The rate of decline in the last year (2024 - 2025) is slower than in the previous 3 years. For the first time since 2021 there has been a net increase in the number of IFA households. **(Figure 2).**

**Figure 2: Year-on-year net change in mainstream fostering households by sector over the last 5 years**



**Data for Figure 3: Percentage change in number of approved mainstream fostering households by region between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025**

Region	IFA	Local authority
East Midlands	8%	-5%
East of England	0%	-2%
London	1%	0%
North East, Yorkshire and Humber	-2%	-3%
North West	-2%	-2%
South East	-2%	-1%

Region	IFA	Local authority
South West	-4%	-4%
West Midlands	8%	-2%

[Main findings: fostering in England 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 - GOV.UK](#)

**Shropshire Fostering Service update:**

**Overview:**

The demand for foster placements remains high and far outstrips the sufficiency available.

The recruitment of foster carers is a competitive market with aggressive marketing of Independent Fostering Agencies impacting recruitment. Larger independent agencies spend a significant amount on marketing and retention events, subsequently impacting recruitment figures.

Development of the service has been required to compete with the external market and support carers to understand the value of fostering for their local authority.

The focus continues to be on strengthening the quality of enquiries, keeping warm enquirers who do not progress at the first point of contact to aid conversion at a later stage and successfully supporting potential foster carers through the training, assessment, approval and matching process.

In the last 3 years we have worked hard to increase our internal fostering recruitment.

Transformation has focused on:

- Developing marketing and recruitment, with increased focus on a digital approach to recruitment, development of the 'Shropshire Fostering' brand, greater visibility
- Refreshed website and further update in progress for 26/27
- Increased recruitment events – rise in engagement with our virtual events leading to more enquiries
- Streamlined communication channels
- Increased Quality Assurance mechanisms
- Increased support offer for foster carers with the aim to ensure foster carers feel valued, well supported and Shropshire retains foster carers

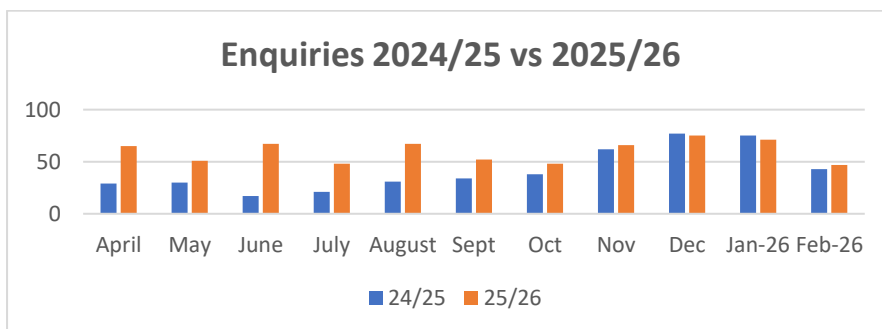
The Fostering Service has been through a recent restructure implemented from 01/01/26; this seeks to address the competing practice demands between Kinship Fostering and Mainstream Fostering recruitment.

**Marketing and recruitment:**

**Digital Marketing:** Digital marketing remains our primary activity. We maintain close contact with our digital ads agency, to ensure clear expectations to optimise our Facebook Ads and Google Ads; this digital marketing is responsible for 80% of our enquiries (combination of direct lead generation and webinar registrations with all copy produced internally). We have traffic ad campaigns running for the website and event bookings. Increased digital exposure is in place via Shropshire Live, who have a high traffic news website and online radio station. Shropshire Fostering has website banners and radio ads, with the offer to feature radio interviews regularly. This activity is positively impacting enquiry figures.

**Communication channel and data insight:** The service utilises Mailchimp communications system to allow for easier, more automated ongoing communications with both enquirers and existing carers. The Fostering Service have developed strong tracking of enquiry data, ensuring people who register for information but do not attend our webinars receive follow up communications and contact in line with our strategy to increase sufficiency. There are currently over 800 people in Mailchimp’s ‘enquiries’ audience and they receive communication from us once a fortnight: sharing news and encouraging prospective foster carers to get in touch. From the data held we understand that it can take an average of 10 months from someone considering Fostering to actually making a decision to progress with an agency.

Overall enquiries increased from **509** 2024/25 to **677** 2025/26, supported by increasing digital marketing and implementation of a strong communications system.



**Website and Branding:** Shropshire Fostering now has strong branding, this includes marketing collateral for councillor meetings and public visibility, including banners, leaflets,

postcards and branded merchandise for events. Banners are now on display at numerous high footfall county venues. Website has had an uplift and further work is being further developed to enhance the platform used. Stronger participation for recruitment events is via online engagement, leading onto more conversations from enquiry to Expression of Interest to Initial Home Visit.

**A referral scheme** was also launched for Shropshire Council employees and Shropshire Fostering Carers, this resulted in 2 foster carer approvals in 25/26.

**Partner Organisations:** Marketing Manager is working with local businesses. Partner organisations are supporting our goals as a fostering service for the benefit of our Shropshire children. Shrewsbury football club have supported the development of a weekly Wellbeing Hub and children have been invited to join their 'Kicks' program.

### **Foster Carer Enquiries – Approval – De-registrations**

Overall enquiries and approvals over the last 3 years for Mainstream Fostering increased as follows:

The fostering service has **81 Approved Mainstream Foster Carers**. With a target to approve a further 30 Foster Carers in 26/27.

	<b>23/24</b>	<b>24/25</b>	<b>25/26</b>
<b>Enquiries (personal details provided via web form)</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>509</b>	<b>677</b>
<b>EOI's (Expression Of Interest)</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Approvals</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17 (+ 1 awaiting approval on 31/03/26)</b>
<b>De registration</b>	<b>6 (+ 3 transferred to Supported Living)</b>	<b>7 (1 transfer to Supported Living)</b>	<b>8 (Foster Carer retirements / De- registrations)</b>

**Mainstream Fostering recruitment** has continued to show positive progress. We saw 100% increase on mainstream recruitment figures between 23/24 and 24/25. There has been a slight increase in 25/26. Approval figures have been impacted by delays in statutory checks including DBS and Medicals that are mandatory for the recruitment process. **As of 31/03/26** there are **a further 11 Mainstream Fostering Households** in assessment who are due to be approved by August 2026.

We continue to monitor and learn from de-registrations to support retention and to ensure the right support at the right time to address instability within care arrangements. In 2025 - 2026, 8 Mainstream Foster Carers have been de-registered due to 3 retiring and 1 due to ill health, 1 no longer wishing to foster, 2 due to change in family circumstances, 1 due to safeguarding concern. Understanding of the demographic of our carers, including age and reasons for resignations supports strategic planning, learning and opportunities for development within our service plans, recruitment and retention strategy.

#### **Context to placement demands:**

Recruitment of Mainstream Foster Carers is integral to increasing sufficiency and decreasing the number of children placed in IFA and high-cost residential placements.

It is important to understand the demand for internal placements within the wider context of demand for services within children services. Children Services aims to support children to remain within their families where possible. Alternatively, where this is not possible a fostering family arrangement will be sought, and external provision will only be sought where there is no internal resources.

Work is being completed with Stepping Stones to support stability of care arrangements and prevent family breakdowns within fostering arrangements.

Increasing sufficiency of foster placements whilst also addressing early support for children to remain within their families will reduce demand. Increasing the capacity of social care practitioners to provide support to children within different care arrangements will also aid stability and drive forward permanence plans, in turn driving down both demand and cost.

#### **Key areas of focus in the next 6 months for marketing and recruitment:**

- Work with DFE and region on Fostering Reforms for 2026 / 2027
- Marketing Strategy for 2026 / 2027. Continue to increase sufficiency, recruiting more mainstream foster carers and retaining existing. Increase conversion rate of enquiries to EOI to approval

- Commissioning and procurement for medicals in assessment – increase timeliness of approvals
- DBS – HR to embed digital ID checks for DBS and streamline support and timeliness. This will have a positive impact and reduce delays within the recruitment process.
- Refreshed website to be launched, this will aim to increase the number of enquiries and reduce any barriers.
- Development of Power BI further assist data and insights that inform strategic planning.
- Networking with local business leaders to raise the profile and support for fostering and the children in our care

**Key areas of focus in the next 6 months for Foster Carer retention:**

- Work with DFE on National Fostering Reform, strengthen efficiencies and stronger joint service delivery.
- Development of the therapeutic training offer. Progressive approach to training and development to ensure children’s stability within care arrangements and prevent escalation to high cost placements.
- Increase participation opportunities allowing foster carers and children to shape the service they receive
- Increase benefits available to foster carers through wider council services and engagement with local businesses
- Full roll out of Foster Carer portal to increase self service functions
- The Mockingbird programme delivers the Mockingbird Family Model. This centres on a constellation where one foster home acts as a hub, offering planned and emergency respite, advice, training and support. We have a well-established Mockingbird constellation in Shropshire with 1 hub carer supporting 9 families within the constellation. Plans have been submitted to grow this model further by developing 2 more constellations with the support of the Fostering Network.

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**Committee and Date**

Item

**People Overview and Scrutiny**

**22<sup>nd</sup> April 2026**

Public



## Shropshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2024/25

<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Jane Rose		
email:	<a href="mailto:jane.rose@shropshire.gov.uk">jane.rose@shropshire.gov.uk</a>	Tel:	01743 253948
<b>Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):</b>	Ruth Houghton and Andy Hall		

### 1. Synopsis

- 1.1 The annual report fulfils the statutory requirement under Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 for Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships to publish an annual report outlining how safeguarding partners (integrated care board, local authority, and Police) have worked together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in Shropshire.
- 1.2 The report summarises key activity, progress and impact for 2024/25, including governance changes, implementation of national reforms, learning from case reviews, performance trends, and multi-agency improvement work. It also sets out the Partnership’s priorities and planned focus for 2025/26 (Appendix A).

## 2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The annual report provides an overview of how safeguarding partners have delivered their statutory responsibilities, strengthened multi-agency arrangements, and improved outcomes for children and families across Shropshire.
- 2.2. The report provides an opportunity to highlight decisions made and actions taken by the Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs) and Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSPs), and provides transparency to children, families, practitioners and elected members.
- 2.3. This year has been the beginning of a transition for the Safeguarding Children Partnership in Shropshire. In July 2024, the Partnership separated from being a joined one with Adult Safeguarding and Community Safety. During 2024/25 the Partnership focused on:
  - Implementing Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 reforms including updating our multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASA)
  - Strengthening the role of education partners with representation now at all levels of the Partnership structure
  - Improving arrangements for performance and quality assurance, including independent scrutiny
  - Delivering multi-agency learning and improvements as a result of learning from child safeguarding practice reviews (CSPRs)
  - Delivering against our priority areas (neglect; child sexual abuse and exploitation)
  - Shifting focus to early help, prevention and support for children and families
- 2.4. Some of our key achievements and impact include:
  - Establishment of new governance structures (including sub-group structure) and strengthened LSP/DSP arrangements (July 2024 onwards).
  - A comprehensive Independent Case Review Diagnostic, leading to streamlining CSPRs and improved learning and decision-making processes.
  - Delivery of multi-agency case file audits on children looked after aged 0-5, pregnancy, and children who live in families where parental mental health needs, substance misuse and domestic abuse (known as the toxic trio) are present.
  - Updated policies, procedures and training aligned to Working Together 2023.
  - Continued developments to our multi-agency dataset such as the inclusion of health visiting data and development of geographical heat-mapping as well as focussing on the child's journey through the safeguarding system.
  - Held 'Turning the Curve' workshops, with both system leaders and practitioners to create whole system change.
  - Focusing on earlier intervention which has seen a reduction in the number of referrals to the front door and children entering care.

- 2.5. Looking ahead, the Partnership will focus on embedding national reforms (including the guidance published in March 2026 such as Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026, Families First Partnership Programme, and Children Social Care National Framework), strengthening early help and prevention, improving multi-agency data and quality assurance, and ensuring learning from reviews is fully embedded into practice.
- 2.6. A review of the threshold document is currently underway to ensure alignment with the Families First Partnership Programme. In March 2026, updated guidance was published which includes all safeguarding partnerships to remove the distinction between Targeted Early Help and Child in Need. This is an important shift and aligns with the national direction of travel towards a more seamless, needs led Family Help system. Whilst we have made substantial progress on our updated document, this late change in national guidance means that additional work is required to ensure the revised version is:
- fully aligned with the new expectations
  - practically meaningful for frontline practitioners
  - consistent with our wider partnership approach to Family Help and early intervention
  - clear, accessible, and supported across all agencies
- 2.7. Given the significance of these changes, we believe it is important not to publish the document prematurely. Instead, we are proposing time to allow the partnership to strengthen the updated version and reflect the new guidance comprehensively. We will aim to publish at the beginning of June 2026, in line with national expectations, and will ensure partners are fully involved in shaping the final version. In the meantime, our existing threshold document remains in place, and statutory processes continue unchanged.

### 3. Recommendations

- 3.1. That the committee considers and notes the content of the report.
- 3.2. That the committee considers and notes the priorities for 2025/26 and how these will positively impact the lives of children and families in Shropshire.

## Report

## 4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1. **Capacity to deliver statutory safeguarding functions.** The Business Unit supports the Safeguarding Children Partnership, Adult Safeguarding Board and Community Safety Partnership. Current capacity is stretched, and resourcing arrangements are under review to ensure statutory duties can be met.
- 4.2. **Implementation of national reforms.** The reforms require significant system change, including strengthened early help, revised thresholds, enhanced scrutiny, and improved data sharing. This presents both risk and opportunity.

Risk	Mitigation
Delivery of statutory safeguarding functions	The SSCP is currently funded through a multi-agency budget detailed within the annual report. Resourcing is currently under review
Implementation of national reforms including Working Together 2026	Delivery plan, governance changes, strengthened LSP/DSP arrangements

## 5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. The Safeguarding Children Partnership is funded through a multi-agency budget, to which the local authority contributes. Additional contributions (financial or resource in kind) may be required to ensure statutory responsibilities continue to be delivered.

## 6. Background

- 6.1. Under Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026, safeguarding partners must publish an annual report outlining how they have worked together effectively to safeguard children including: governance and partnership arrangements; learning from child safeguarding practice reviews; multi-agency training; performance and quality assurance; progress against priorities; challenges and future plans.

## 7. Additional Information

- 7.1. [Shropshire Safeguarding Children Partnership's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements \(MASA\)](#)
- 7.2. [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026](#)

## 8. Conclusions

- 8.1. 2024/25 was a year of significant change and improvement for the Safeguarding Children Partnership with strengthened governance arrangements and enhanced multi-agency collaboration and have continued to drive forward activity and meet statutory duties.

- 8.2. The Partnership now has a clearer partnership structure, stronger scrutiny arrangements, a more robust approach to performance, quality assurance and system learning, and increased focus on early help and prevention.
- 8.3. Priorities for 2025/26 are based on local intelligence, national reforms, and learning from reviews, ensuring the Partnership continues to improve outcomes for children and families.

## Appendices

Appendix A - Shropshire Safeguarding Annual Report 2024/25

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Shropshire Safeguarding  
Community Partnership

# Children's Safeguarding

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# Partnership Annual Report 2024-2025



# Foreword

As the Lead Safeguarding Partners of the Shropshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership, we are pleased to present the Annual Report for the period April 2024 to March 2025. This report is published in line with the statutory responsibilities under the requirements in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 (WT23).

As Lead Safeguarding Partners we are committed to leading the Partnership to continually improve outcomes for children and their families in Shropshire. We have taken this opportunity to reflect on our progress in delivering our priorities, assess our training activities and consider how agencies can best work together to safeguard children in Shropshire.

During 2024-2025 we commissioned an Independent Case Review Diagnostic, held a 'Turning the Curve' event and planning is well underway for a number of multi-agency 'Spotlight Sessions' in the next year. All of these areas of work were driven by what our data and other assurance activity tells us, and what we know from the families we work with. These opportunities have been invaluable to the partnership, not only have they gathered large numbers of multi-agency professionals in one place to discuss system changes, they have also garnered their support and enthusiasm and captured their ideas which will be used to inform the ongoing transformational work Shropshire needs to complete.

Lastly, we would like to thank the Partnership staff, for their continued support in the smooth functioning and promotion of the Partnership. We would also like to thank our Stakeholders from across the partnership and all the frontline practitioners and managers for their commitment, hard work, and effort in safeguarding children in Shropshire.

**Tanya Miles**  
Interim Chief Executive  
Shropshire Council

**Simon Whitehouse**  
Chief Executive  
Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin  
Integrated Care Board

**Richard Cooper**  
Chief Constable  
West Mercia Police

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## 4. Leadership and Management Arrangements

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- Funding 2024-2025

## 5. Implementation of National Reforms

- Enhancing Scrutiny and Accountability Arrangements

## 6. The Effectiveness of Our Partnership Arrangements

- Case Review Diagnostic
- Quality Assurance and Performance
- Multi-Agency Case File Audits (MACFAs)
- Performance data
- Sub-group Activity

## 7. Partnership Highlights

## 8. Learning from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

## 9. Multi-Agency Training

## 10. Priority Setting

## 11. Partnership Focus for 2025-2026

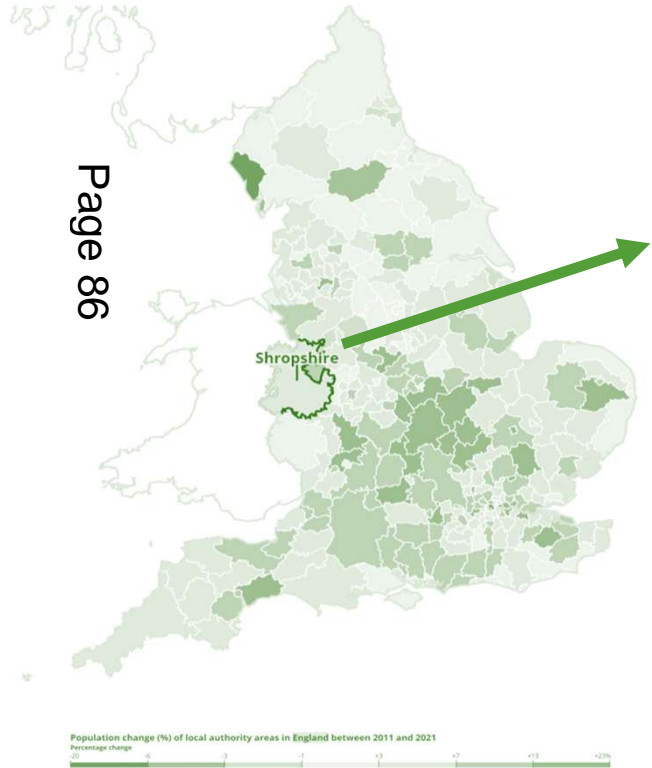
## 12. Partnership Membership 2024-2025



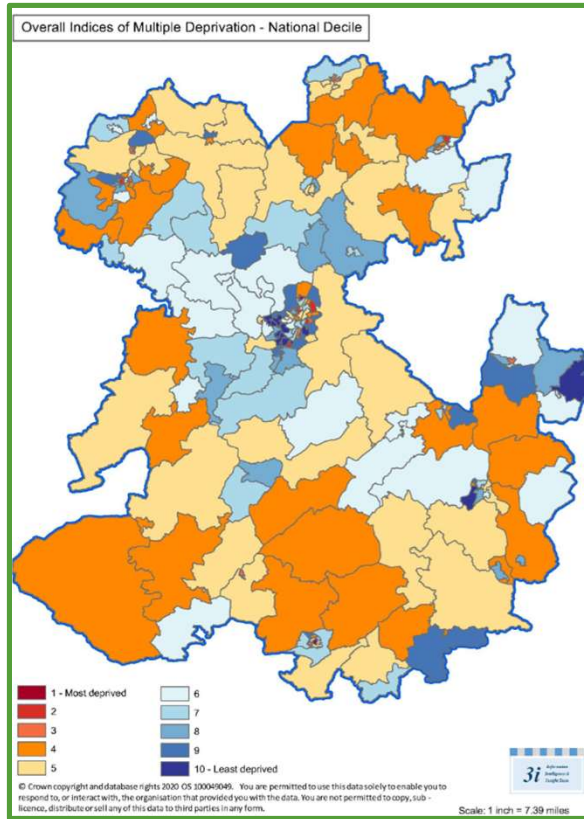
# Life in Shropshire as at 11/2/2025

2<sup>nd</sup> largest Inland Council in England

1,235 square miles



**Overall deprivation is low.** Ludlow East and Harlescott fall within the 10% most deprived areas in England.



## Population size of

**329,260**

(Mid-year estimate 2023)

## Population Density

**Shropshire**  
1 person

per hectare

**England**  
4.3 people

per hectare



**26.2% aged 65+**  
compared to 18.7% in  
England (2023 MYE)



**59,393 aged 0-17 or**  
**18.1%, England**  
20.8% (2023 MYE)



183 schools of  
which 13 are  
independent and  
19 are special  
independent (Jan  
2025)



93.0% from white  
background, 94.4%  
with English as first  
language



37,289 pupils in  
state schools (Jan  
2025)



19.1% of pupils eligible  
for free school meals,  
including nursery, 25.7%  
England (Jan 2025). 19.6%  
excluding nursery in Shropshire.



Smallest state  
primary school –  
18 pupils



Employment rate of  
78.6%, West Midlands  
74.1% (Dec 2024)



Smallest state  
secondary school –  
526 pupils



13.9% self employment  
rate in Shropshire, 8.6%  
West Midlands (Dec 2024)

# Life in Shropshire

## Challenges of Rurality

Shropshire is a diverse, large, predominately rural inland county with a wide range of land use, economic activities, employment and social conditions. The population has been increasing at a slightly slower rate than England. Much of the growth has been due to people moving to Shropshire due to its rurality. Shropshire has a relatively high concentration of people in the older age groups.

Unlike many rural areas the population of Shropshire is distributed across the county making Shropshire one of the most deprived counties for access to services

6,100 pupils transported to school each day

Using 140 operators

At a cost of £18,000,000 per year



98% of land is rural



3,240 miles of road.

91% rural roads



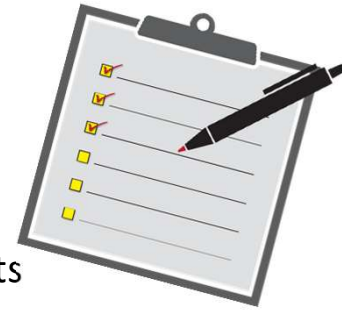
57.2% live in rural areas

# About the Shropshire Safeguarding Children Partnership

## Our shared vision

We started 2024-2025 with a shared vision for the Shropshire Safeguarding Community Partnership (SSCP) under its tri-partite arrangements which include the safeguarding of children, safeguarding adults and community safety.

***The SSCP is committed to increasing the safety and resilience of people in Shropshire (including children and adults with care and support needs) and their communities; in order to reduce harm caused by abuse, neglect and other crime.***



## What we do

**Shropshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership is a range of partners coming together to safeguard children from abuse and neglect in Shropshire**

Providing the foundation for the partnership are:

- our children and young people and their families, and;
- staff and volunteers working across social care, health and the criminal justice system.

The Partnership acts to seek assurance, scrutinise, challenge and ensure agencies are enabled to work together to achieve its vision

## Priorities

From April to February the Partnership had 3 strategic priority groups set up to oversee the work. They were identified as joint priorities across the Partnership due to the impact on children, adults with care and support needs and our communities. They were the:

- **Local Domestic Abuse Partnership Board** (reported on in the Community Safety Partnership Annual Report 2024-2025)
- **Tacking Drug and Alcohol Misuse Group** (reported on in the Community Safety Partnership Annual Report 2024-2025)
- **Tackling Exploitation Group**

**These priorities were revised in February 2025 – more on this later in the report.**

# Leadership and Management Arrangements

## Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs) and Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSPs)

In implementing Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 the Partnership is working closely with the Telford & Wrekin Safeguarding Partnership to embed the Lead Safeguarding Partner (LSP) arrangements. Our LSP meetings bring together the LSPs from both local authorities along with the LSPs in the Police and Health, who have a footprint across both geographical areas.

Our Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSPs) meet as a Safeguarding Executive Group. Both the Lead Safeguarding Partners and the Delegated Safeguarding Partners meet twice yearly. Membership of both groups along with the membership of the Children's Safeguarding Partnership can be found at the end of this report.

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## Our Structure

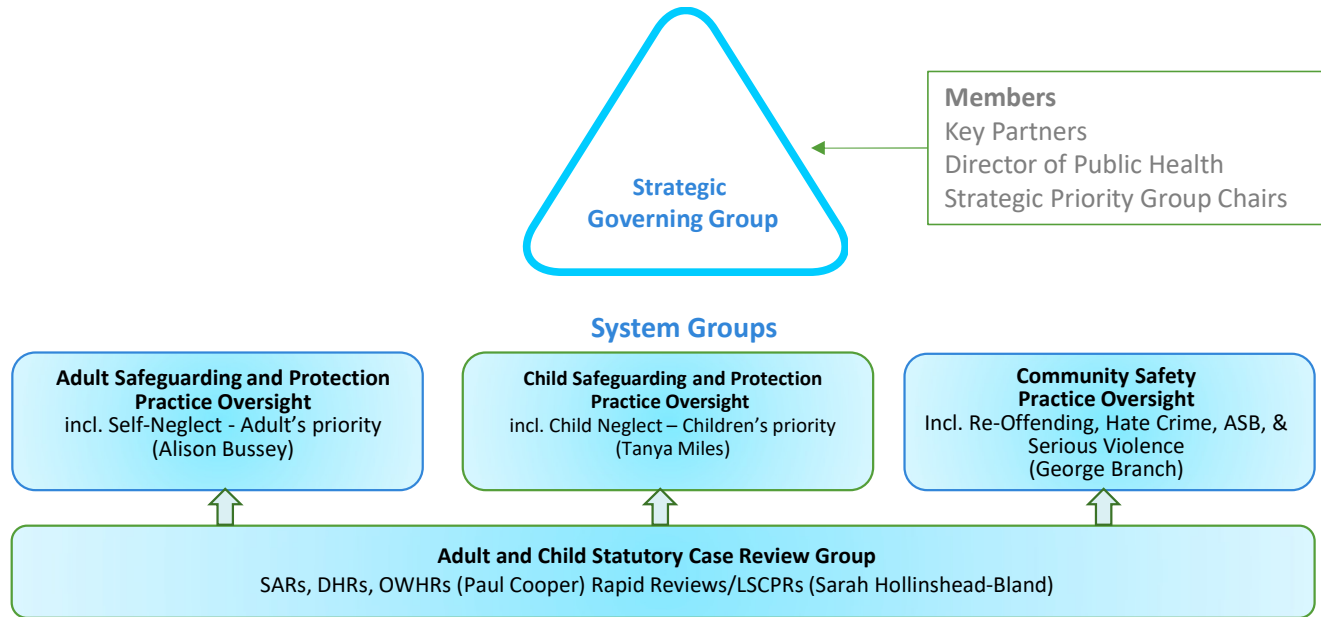
During 2024-2025 the Partnership reviewed its effectiveness and arrangements to enable a stronger focus on child safeguarding. A Children's Safeguarding Partnership began operating from July 2024 and replaced the previous SSCP Strategic Governing Group that oversaw the tri-partite arrangements. The Children's Safeguarding Partnership continues to work collaboratively with the Safeguarding Adults Board and Community Safety Partnership Board under the auspices of the SSCP. Our structure charts can be found on the next slide.

## Business Unit

The Partnership is supported by a Business Unit which consists of:

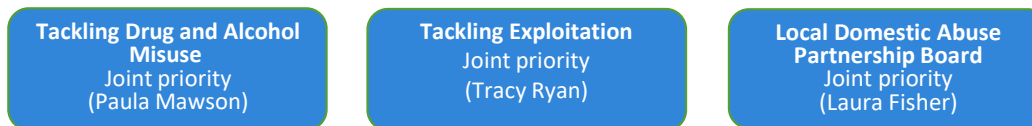
- Business Manager
- 2 x Development Officers
- Learning and Development Co-Ordinator
- 3 x Administrative Support (2 x 0.6 FTE, 1 x 0.8 FTE)

Shropshire Safeguarding Community Partnership Structure  
 April 2024 – July 2024



NB. Everything below the dotted line to be set up and managed by the lead agency

Strategic Priority Groups





Shropshire Safeguarding  
Community Partnership

**Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSP) Group**  
Childrens Executive Level  
ST&W Bi-annual meetings

**Safeguarding Executive Group**  
(oversight, cross cutting priorities, assurance)  
Bi-annual meetings

**Children's Safeguarding Partnership**  
Delegated Safeguarding Partner (DSP) Level  
Bi-monthly Board meetings

**Safeguarding Adults Board**  
Bi-monthly Board meetings

**Community Safety Partnership**  
Bi-monthly Board Meetings

**Early Help  
Partnership**

**Children's  
Case Review Group**

**Tackling  
Exploitation  
Group**

**Safeguarding Adult  
Reviews (SAR) &  
Domestic Homicide  
Reviews (DHR)  
Case Review Group**

**Drugs & Alcohol  
Misuse Group**

**Hate Crime**

**Domestic Abuse  
Partnership Board**

**Prevent Board**

**Anti-social  
Behaviour Group**

Community Safeguarding Structure from July 2024 – April 2025

# Funding for 2024/2025

Contributor	2024/25 % of expected income	2024/25
Shropshire Council	61.62%	£266,680
West Mercia Police	14.68%	£63,543
Integrated Care Board	22.28%	£96,420
West Mercia Youth Justice Board	0.51%	£2,190
Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service	0.71%	£3,070
Probation Service	0.20%	£869.33
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>£432,772.33</b>

The budget which funds the Children's Safeguarding Partnership is shared with the Adult Safeguarding Board and the Community Safety Partnership.

Other sources of income include contributions from local colleges and dedicated school grants, bringing in an additional £6,350.

# Implementation of National Reforms

## Governance

The partnership has undertaken the necessary work to develop a delivery plan and framework to implement Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, including the necessary leadership through the identification of lead and designated safeguarding partners and the engagement with education representatives. We have reviewed and revised our governance structures to create a Children's Safeguarding Partnership and have moved back to meeting in person.



## Strengthening role and representation of education and voluntary sector partners in safeguarding systems

There is growing recognition of importance of the educational sector involvement in our Partnership arrangements.

- ❖ The sector is now represented across all levels of the Partnership structure
- ❖ At a strategic level representatives sit on the Executive Group and have a voice in setting the direction and priorities of the Partnership
- ❖ There are strong links with the Education Partnership and specifically the Education Safeguarding Sub-group which enables Designated Safeguarding Leads to actively participate in partnership workstreams, contribute to practice and shape the safeguarding agenda
- ❖ The educational sector is also fully involved in the development and implementation of strategies, plans and priorities

The Partnership recognises the need to engage the voluntary sector in it's work and will work towards strengthening these arrangements in 2025-2026.

# Enhancing scrutiny and accountability arrangements



## The Independent Scrutineer role

- Evaluates and contributes to the revision of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and the annual report
- Provides oversight, challenge and assurance regarding the functioning of our arrangements
- Engages with a wide range of activities e.g. attends board meetings, observes sub-groups, review policies and procedures, scrutinises data and quality assurance processes, conducts deep dive investigations and provides recommendations for improvement
- Provides critical challenge to statutory partners and support
- Identifies areas for development and drives continuous improvement
- Supports the development of more robust data analysis and performance monitoring
- Encourages a culture of openness, challenge and reflection among safeguarding partners

**Scrutiny arrangements form part of robust performance and quality assurance arrangements for the partnership.** The partnership has developed a framework for the delivery of future independent scrutiny and is actively working on:

- Development of a Quality Assurance and Performance subgroup focussed on quality assurance, performance monitoring and the embedding of learning into practice
- A multi-agency case file audit framework
- Strengthening multi-agency data sharing and analysis
- S11 and S175 compliance audits
- Regulatory reports and inspections
- Independent scrutiny and accountability within single agency governance arrangements

# Implementation of National Reforms

## Shifting focus to early help, prevention and support for families

- ❖ In October 2024 a Health Workshop was held around Early Help which included the Local Authority and provider presentations.
- ❖ The Early Help transformation programme has worked at pace and delivered significant system change, without national funding or involvement in national change programmes.
- ❖ We are combining best practice in public health prevention in services to families to ensure that interventions are evidence based, and services are integrated.
- ❖ We are planning a Spotlight Session on Early Help and Prevention for 2025.

## Updating policies, procedures, thresholds, practice standards and training to reflect new guidance

- ❖ We held a 'Turning the Curve' event in March 2025 focussing on practice and have delivered briefings for strategic leaders
- ❖ We have engaged with national facilitators and advisors to support the change process
- ❖ We have updated to procedures and training to reflect these changes
- ❖ We have developed comprehensive action plans
- ❖ We are currently undertaking a review of thresholds



# The Effectiveness of Our Partnership Arrangements – Case Review Diagnostic

The Partnership commissioned an independent diagnostic review to conduct a deep-dive of a select number of statutory case reviews, aiming to identify broader patterns. The review sought to address the following key points:

- Investigate why recurring themes continue to emerge in case reviews;
- Determine, based on best practice evidence, local insights, and current measures, what changes are necessary to prevent these recurring issues in Shropshire, including additional actions required to fill existing gaps;
- Explore alternative approaches to effectively share and embed learning throughout the system;
- Identify the barriers to learning from statutory case reviews for practitioners and their managers



# Case Review Diagnostic – Findings in Relation to LCSPRs

Findings	Action we have taken
<p><b>Outstanding reviews:</b> A significant number of reviews and action plans remain incomplete, some for a lengthy period of time, which impacts on the subjects of case reviews as well as professionals. Implementation of learning is hampered by these delays</p>	<p>We have commissioned 2 themed reviews for children's cases, rather than 8 individual CSPR's - neglect and sexual abuse; a 3rd review will be carried out by partners, looking at cross-border working.</p> <p>We had 17 action plans open, and we have since been able to close 5 of these.</p>
<p><b>Leadership and culture:</b> Leadership within the partnership and individual partners including challenge, support and escalation, is not always effective. Resourcing limitations contribute to delays and issues re: application of learning.</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 97</p>	<p>We held a workshop for all review panel and subgroup members which gave agencies the opportunity to share their views of how the review processes and pathways could be improved, including how the partnership can scrutinise and be assured on an ongoing basis that the system is working as it should and take to remedial action as required and ensuring appropriate partner engagement.</p> <p>We have commenced the use of the child practice review log with a front sheet which gives an overview of the data, learning and headlines.</p> <p>The Partnership will reconsider an appropriate budget to conduct statutory reviews in 2025-2026.</p>
<p><b>The case review system:</b> A core process for reviews is in place but needs development as it does not always work as effectively as it should. Some documentation, practice in reviews and decision making, and action plans needs to be improved. Opportunities for extracting learning at Rapid Reviews can be strengthened to avoid CSPRs where appropriate.</p>	<p>We have strengthened the process for decision-making and record keeping at the point of a serious incident notification.</p> <p>We have also revised the scoping form which agencies are asked to complete for Rapid Reviews, simplifying it and ensuring that the voice of the child and family is captured.</p> <p>A proposal to improve Rapid Reviews by statutory partners agreeing the themes to be discussed in the meeting has been considered and will be piloted in 2025-2026.</p>

# Case Review Diagnostic – Findings in Relation to LCSPRs

Findings	Action we have taken
<p><b>Learning and development offer:</b> There has been some strong learning events and materials produced. However, learning from reviews is impacted by the delay in conducting reviews, and systemic root causes or themes are not always identified. Application of learning is also hampered by some superficial actions in action plans, which the SSCP is aware of and is addressing.</p>	<p>We set up a multi-agency learning and development task and finish group to review aggregated themes and actions, map learning and development offers already in place across Shropshire. The group has planned learning and communications for the coming year, including different methods and resources for doing so.</p> <p>We have agreed how learning and development will include identifying need from case reviews and other evidence; and how we will evaluate impact.</p> <p>We have developed and delivered a series of webinars on learning from case reviews, and we continue to produce learning briefings.</p>
<p><b>Case reviews as a window on systemic approaches and themes and ‘stem the tide’ of reviews including earlier intervention and prevention:</b> There are common themes from reviews that may suggest a systemic review of strategy and practice would be useful to improve practice and stop further referrals for statutory case reviews. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Think Family</li> <li>Neglect</li> <li>Information Sharing</li> <li>Thresholds</li> </ul> <p>Earlier intervention and consistency of effective safeguarding pre-social care. From the evidence and case reviews audited, the culture of safeguarding and prevention in some universal services appears to require greater attention so that issues are picked up earlier.</p>	<p>We have developed a learning log to capture learning and common themes from case reviews. This ensures that the right activities are in place where appropriate, to tackle any identified thematic learning from reviews, so that prevention and earlier intervention are more effective and consider all aspects of the systems framework (systems and processes; practice and practice knowledge; wide service context; leadership and culture).</p> <p>Planning is underway for a multi-agency Spotlight Session on Childhood Neglect for practitioners and managers.</p> <p>The Partnership thresholds document is currently under review.</p>

# The Effectiveness of Our Partnership Arrangements - Performance

We are continuing to develop our multi-agency dataset under our new arrangements with a focus on the following improvements:

- Inclusion of Health Visiting data
- Inclusion of number of referrals received from Adult Services into Children’s Social Care
- The development of heat maps showing the geographical location of child safeguarding referrals to inform targeted interventions
- Assurance of the correct application of CSE and CSA markers
- The need to build a picture of the child's journey

## Performance highlights:

What do we know	What have we done
<p>We have seen a high number of children 0-5years coming into Children’s Social Care</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Since the Children’s Summit in 2024 which explored this issue with multi-agency professionals, we have seen an increase in health referrals, which has allowed for earlier support</li> <li>✓ MACFA Children Looked After 0-5 years</li> <li>✓ Transformation of Early Help Services and positive outcomes for children</li> </ul>
<p>For the first time since 2021 the number of children entering care is reducing and more children are being returned to their families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ This is positive and will be kept under review</li> </ul>
<p>Police referrals to Children’s Social Care are still high which is concerning, and they spike during the school holiday periods</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Early Help Partnership to analyse two spikes in contacts from the police and do a dip sample audit for deeper examination.</li> <li>✓ The Partnership to identify what youth provision is available in the community and what schools are doing effectively in term time, so that consideration can be given to replicating it in school holidays</li> </ul>
<p>Referrals resulting in No Further Action (NFA) are coming down, demonstrating a better understanding across the workforce of how to make an appropriate safeguarding referral and/or more appropriate use of Early Help services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ This is positive and will be kept under review</li> </ul>
<p>We have identified higher numbers of missing children. Lower numbers of Shropshire Children who are looked After go missing, however, a high number of residential children's homes are located in Shropshire and therefore other Local Authorities are responsible for children who go missing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The Partnership will continue to monitor missing children's data as we move into 2025 and will consider appropriate action</li> </ul>

# The Effectiveness of Our Partnership Arrangements



## Quality Assurance and Performance Activity

The Partnership has carried out the following activity and will be convening a Quality Assurance & Performance Sub-group during 25/26, to review and assess multi agency safeguarding practice on the front and to support the embedding of local and national learning across the Partnership. The group will be key to further develop and support our continuous improvement journey.

### Audit Activity

**Section 11 Audits** take place bi-annually so this year we have worked with the region to focus on planning for the 2025 audit.

We have undertaken 3 **Multi-Agency Case File Audits (MACFAs)** this year on:

- ❖ Children Looked After 0-5 years
- ❖ Pregnancy
- ❖ Children of Parents where Trigger Trio is Present

### Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel Reports

The Partnership has considered its response to each of the National Panel reports that have recently been published. Areas for improvement are actioned through the relevant sub-group with oversight of the Quality Assurance and Performance sub-group.

- ❖ Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel Annual Report 2023-2024 - responses will inform future planning, including the Families First programme, and will be incorporated into the Partnership's single improvement plan.
- ❖ "I wanted them all to notice" - has led to planning for a MACFA on Child Sexual Abuse in 2025 to seek assurance that learning is embedded.
- ❖ Safeguarding Children in Elective Home Education – led to revisions of Shropshire's Elective Home Education Policy 2025

# Multi-Agency Case File Audits (MACFAs) – CLA 0-5yrs

We saw a rise in children under 5 years coming into the care of the local authority, (Children Looked After - CLA), with no previous social care involvement. We wanted to identify if Early Help had been considered or offered to the families.

A dip sample audit was undertaken on 8 children and their families.



## Good practice

- Some areas offered Early Help
- Joint visits between agencies took place
- Referrals completed appropriately
- Home visits from non-statutory agencies who were recognising concerns

## Challenges identified

- Little evidence of early help support for parents when an unborn has a Child Protection Plan
- Agencies not recognising themselves as being part of Early Help
- Agencies not always recognising that a family may benefit from Early Help support
- Little exploration as to why families may not want to work with Early Help

## Learning identified

- Ensure parents records are included in audit request; many agencies have little or no involvement with the baby
- Need to strengthen the audit template
- Audit did not appreciate wider agency involvement, (for example housing/probation)
- Unclear whether practitioners utilised the Threshold document

# MACFA - Children of Parents where Trigger Trio is Present

A multi-agency case file audit was conducted on 10 children and their families where there were parental mental health needs, substance misuse and domestic abuse present (the Trigger Trio). All cases had reached the stage of pre-proceedings for a Care Order to be granted by the Court.

## Learning identified

- Reminder that all agencies can refer to MARAC
- Rationale for down-grading Domestic Abuse Risk Assessments (DARA) by the Domestic Abuse Reduction Officer (DARO) was not clearly recorded
- Clinical supervision forms in MPFT amended to ask direct question about the men in a child's life
  - Too much reliance on parental self-reporting and information not being triangulated
  - How do we support women who have no choice but to go back to a relationship due to coercive control?
- How are people informed and supported to access the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS), also known as Clare's Law?
- Conversations need to take place with fathers who are domestic abuse perpetrators, about their joint responsibility to safeguard the child, so not all the responsibility is placed on the victim, the non-abusing parent
- Chronologies are not used effectively to inform decision-making
- There is not a clear pathway for Education Welfare Officers to follow when a child becomes Looked After
- PITSTOP is not always aware of the mental health needs of families, as MPFT are not a member
- PITSTOP outcomes are not always recorded on agency records
- Escalation is not always timely



## Good Practice

- Good use of announced and unannounced visits by both MPFT and EAS
- Good single-agency working to support parents
- Some parents working with With You were able to abstain from substances
- Good continuity of care in one case with only 2 MPFT Care Co-ordinators for father
- Agencies were able to identify single and multi-agency learning

## Overall Grades:

All audits were rated **Good** with some areas of **Requires Improvement**

# Multi-Agency Case File Audits (MACFAs) – Pregnancy Audit

We identified a potential risk of pregnant women not being referred to the appropriate services within a timely way, to ensure the right support is offered to mothers, fathers and unborn children.

4 women were identified and the details shared with agencies to identify their involvement, including when their current pregnancy was disclosed.



## Good practice

- Local authority contacting the midwifery team within SaTh for information sharing
- Housing shared information to Children's Social Care when a pregnancy was disclosed
- Checks carried out with health teams
- Appropriate referrals for mother completed once referred to maternity services
- Father's records reviewed to confirm no disclosure made by him, when being seen by a professional

## Challenges identified

- When pregnancy disclosed, no apparent professional curiosity or checks made to ascertain if this is correct.
- Unclear if background checks were made of unborn siblings to identify any concerns or risks
- When professional is aware of the pregnancy, did they review their records to ascertain any risks or vulnerabilities
- Lack of a whole family approach, therefore risks were not identified

## Learning identified

- To ensure when a child/children are placed in the care of the local authority, that information is shared with the parents GP, so information can be added to their medical records.

# A Focus on Early Help and Prevention



## Why?

- An independent review of Early Help in 2023, indicated that significant change was needed in Early Help services to prevent children needing services.
- Rising numbers of children aged 0-4 years coming into the care of the Local Authority.

## What?

- Full transformation of Early Help Services, with a new structure implemented June 2024.
- Creation of integrated Community and Family Hubs across the county with no additional national funding, developed collaboratively with public health.
- A new Early Help Strategy, launched in July 2024 developed with partners, both statutory and in the voluntary sector.
- A new 0-4 team and pathway developed with public health nursing services and midwifery – Focus on the first 1001 days.
- Focused 12-week intervention model in working with families.
- Embedding of EHAAT (Early Help & Support Team) working with families to provide early advice and guidance reducing NFAs.
- Whole system multi-agency summit on 0-4 years, resulting in earlier referrals to Early Help and Children's Social Care
- 'Turning the Curve' workshops, with both system leaders and practitioners to create whole system change.

## Outcomes

- Significant transformation of services.
- Reduction of demand into the front door diverting families away from a social work intervention. Only 4% of children open to Targeted Early Help (TEH) were escalated for a Social Work Assessment in Q4.
- 365% increase in families attending local Hubs in the last 12 months, from 249 families in April 2024, to 1159 families by end of March 2025.
- Early Help Contacts have significantly increased and have remained at over 100 children per quarter.
- EHAAT have worked with 667 families of which 25 stepped up to TEH, which is only 3.75% of the cohort, with an average intervention of 9 days.
- Potential grant funding for the year 2024-2025, we exceeded the target of 456 and managed to achieve a total of 536, so an achievement of 118% of the funded target.
- Over 2000 young people replied to our Youth Survey and have been heard, with their views represented in our Youth Strategy

## Future Planning

- Implementation of the Families First Programme, to ensure that all families have access to integrated services at the earliest opportunities, with seamless localised support.
- Phase 2 of the Community and Family Hubs, including outreach and alignment with neighbourhoods, is continuing with change the curve.

## Community and Family Hubs

Working collaboratively with Public Health, we have increased the Early Help Offer, from Universal to Targeted through the Community and Family Hubs. A hub and spoke approach with co-located services, ensures that rural and isolated children, young people and families are supported.

## Early Help Impact and outcomes

- The average length of Targeted Early Help interventions has reduced slightly, averaging out at 134 days per intervention over the year 2024-25.
- There has been a 31% increase in families worked within Targeted Early Help, compared to the previous years' increase of 83%. We believe this increase is due to process changes following transformation and we expect the figure to level out over the coming years.
- 81% of parents rate the services at 9 or 10 on a 10 scale, which is a big increase from the previous year's 73% in 2023/24 and 57% from 2022/23.



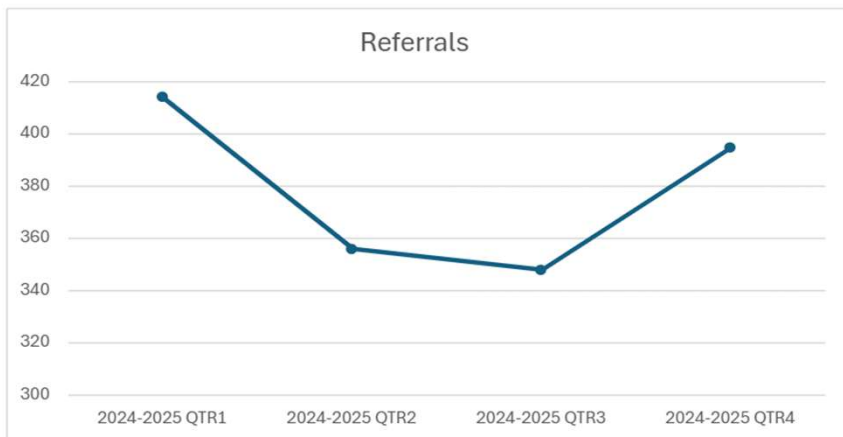
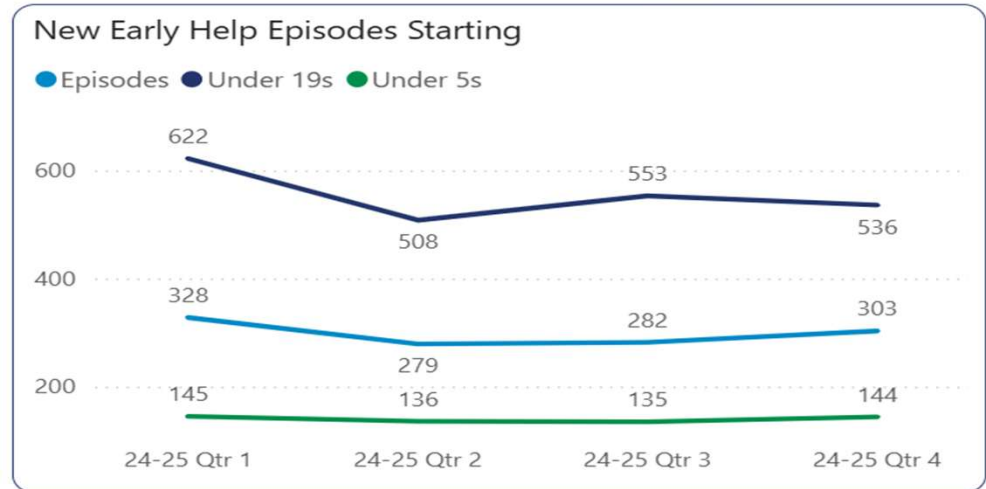
# Benchmark for Success – Impact of Early Help



Following our investment in Early Help Transformation, we are seeing the impact for children and their families through trends in our data.

This includes:

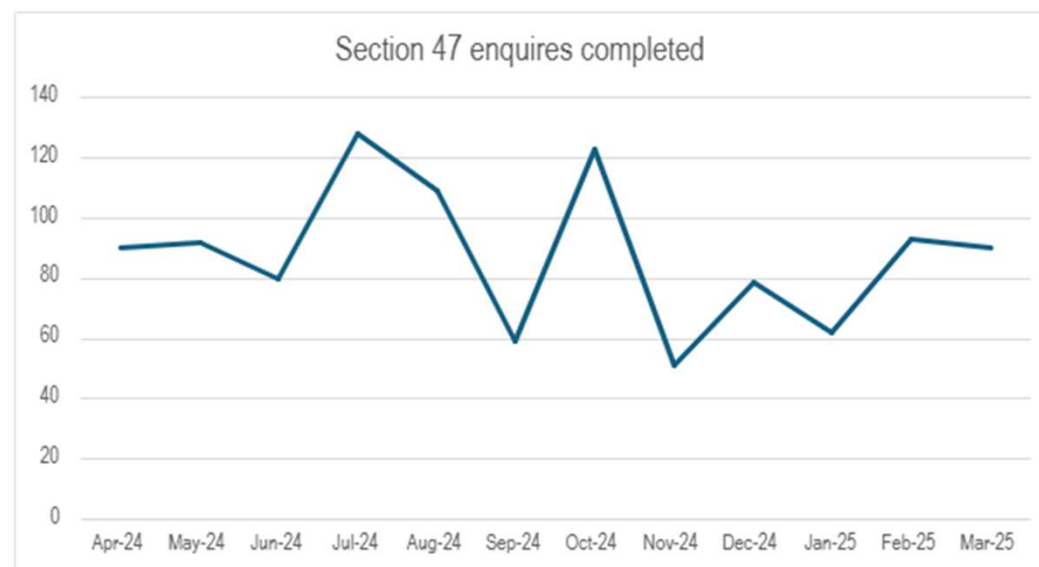
- An increase in the number of Early Help interventions commencing.
- An overall reduction in the number of referrals into children's social care as early help services, universal services and the community become even more engaged in supporting families with the right service at the right time.



## Section 47 Investigations

Section 47 Investigations take place following a Multi-agency Strategy discussion, where all relevant information about a child or young person that could be at risk of significant harm is considered.

The graph to the right shows that we continue to see variation in demand, with spikes often around the time of school holidays. This is an expected variation in demand nationally and evidences the importance of the relationship's children have in schools and how they act as a protective factor for them.



# Children Looked After Overview 2024 – 2025



## Demand

- Children looked after (CLA) numbers had been on an increased trajectory since 2017, with a notable increase at the start of the Covid-19 Pandemic coupled with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children under the National Transfer Scheme (NTS).
- "Last 50 CLA" audits are undertaken periodically throughout the year, to review decision making and assure ourselves that the 'right' children are becoming looked after. We are assured that all the children becoming looked after are doing so appropriately and, over 2024/25 our QA work has highlighted a reduction in incidents of drift and delay, prior to becoming CLA, with robust management decision making and effective escalation.

## Families

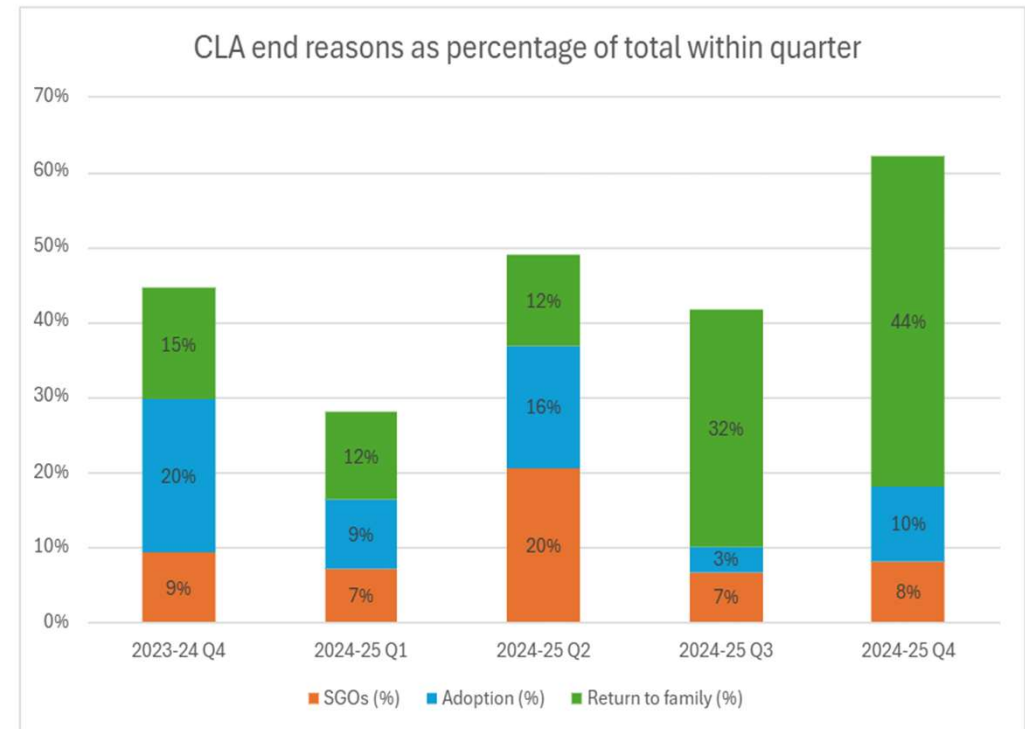
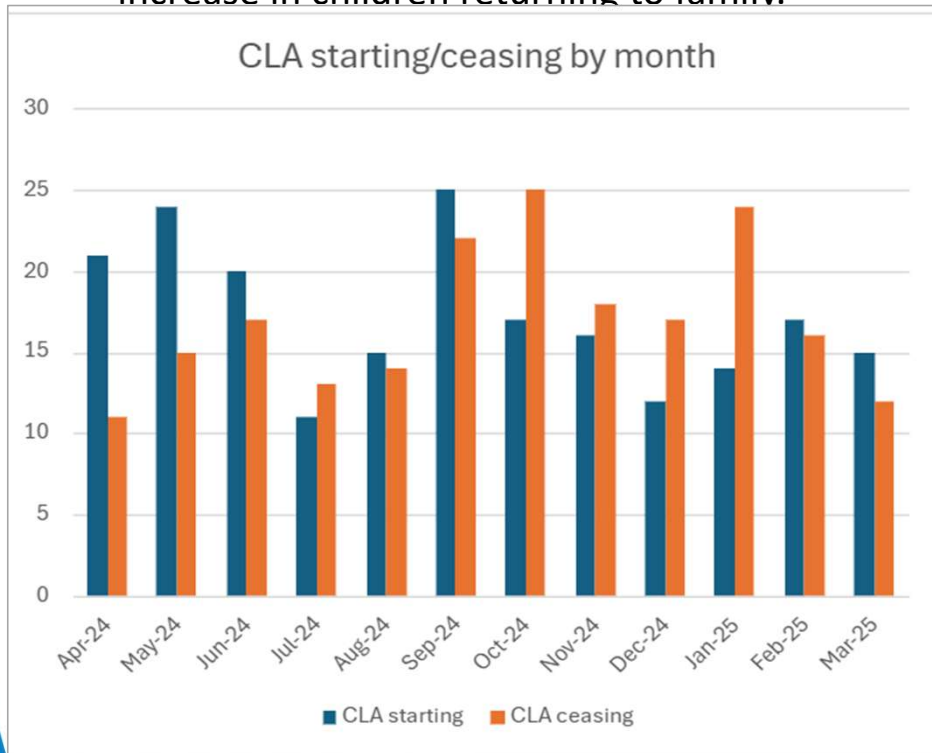
- We will always look to maintain or reunify children with their birth families where this is safe to do so implementing the [Stepping Stones](#) and [PATHS](#) interventions that deliver direct work to support families being successful in these circumstances and securing children back with their families.
- We will always seek to reduce state intervention in family life whilst maintaining support for them. For example, revised Special Guardianship Order (SGO) offers.
- We work hard to keep siblings together and maintain lifelong links where this is not possible
- Always try to create a family environment wherever child is living and maintain links with family



# Children Looked After outcomes

In the last 12 months, we have seen a gradual change in children and young people becoming looked after and those existing local authority care with a focus on positive outcomes, such as the increase in children returning to family.

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# Police Protection

## What do we know

- Shropshire's rate of children being taken into Police Protection was higher than the West Midlands as a whole. West Mercia Police advised it was approximately 30% higher (as of January 2025).
- A joint audit (Police, CSC supported by the DfE) was undertaken in January 2025 to further understand the practice in this area.
- We dip sampled 6 children, scrutinising each agency record held on each child and viewed the police body cam footage, where available.

## What are we doing to improve

- Developing a summary of key issues around using police protection for police notebooks. (West Mercia Police);
- Collaborating with police on warrants and ensure social work support is available;
- Ensuring police contact children social care before using police protection, especially during the day. (West Mercia Police);
- Updating the police protection protocol;
- Briefing Emergency Social Work Team (completed 31/03/25);
- Improving communication with police to ensure they understand that children are the responsibility of children social care, not the police. (West Mercia Police, Children Social Care)

## How do we know it

The audit highlighted the following key learning:

- ✓ The joint protocol was not being consistently applied;
- ✓ The police station was being utilised inappropriately as a place of safety following the PP, for most children;
- ✓ Missed opportunities to explore with parents/carers their wider family/friend's network, as an alternative to the PP;
- ✓ Inconsistencies between CSC response of core hour teams and ESWT;
- ✓ Lack of joint decision making between CSC and Police

## Impact and Outcomes

Following the joint audit there has been a significant decrease in the use of PPO and we are now in line with the other West Mercia regions. Where PPO has been used, this has been appropriate.

West Mercia Police advise that the numbers continue to be in line with other policing areas, which shows the positive impact following the joint audit undertaken in January 2025.

We are demonstrating restorative practice with families and working in partnership with them – doing 'with' rather than 'to'. We are keeping children within their families and/or family networks, where is it safe, appropriate and proportionate to do so.

# The Effectiveness of Our Partnership Arrangements – Sub-Groups

## Neglect

We have reconvened our Neglect sub-group who have implemented the following:

- ✓ Planning for the **Spotlight Session** in 2025 on Childhood Neglect
- ✓ Considered **multi-agency performance indicators for the dashboard**
- ✓ Established a task and finish group to **review the neglect guidance, screening tool and use of Graded Care Profile 2**
- ✓ **Sharing of good practice and case studies**

Sharing of the [Educational Neglect guidance](#)

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## Impact summary – Case Study

Following concerns for a child's welfare a request for consultation was made to the Integration Consultation Panel (ICP), and the family were allocated a Targeted Early Help worker. The intervention has achieved positive outcomes for the child and family, and their feedback is detailed to the right.



# The Effectiveness of Our Arrangements – Sub-Groups

## Child Sexual Abuse

We convened a Child Sexual Abuse task and finish group who have implemented the following:

- ✓ Considered our response to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review's Report "I wanted them all to notice"
- ✓ Resolved operation issues with the **Child Sex Offender Disclosure Scheme**
- ✓ Raised awareness of the importance of **collaboration and information sharing** among professionals
- ✓ Contributed to the development of a regional Child Sexual Abuse Response Pathway, which will include recognition, response, and strategy elements around sexual abuse

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The future of the Child Sexual Abuse task and finish group will be considered by the Partnership in 2025 following the roll out of the Child Sexual Abuse Response Pathway



# The Effectiveness of Our Arrangements – Sub-Groups

## Tackling Exploitation

The sub-group has implemented the following in 2024-2025:

- ✓ Consideration of the [Independent Inquiry into Telford and Wrekin Child Sexual Exploitation \(IITCSE\)](#) to help inform areas of focus, as a bordering Partnership area and learning of national interest
- ✓ **West Mercia Police conducted a test purchasing operation** in Shropshire hotels as part of a national operation. National feedback is awaited on actions to be taken
- ✓ Consideration of establishing a task and finish group across Adult's and Children's Services to explore **transitional safeguarding**
- ✓ **Exploitation triage** continues to meet twice weekly to consider all Child Exploitation Risk Assessments and police intelligence regarding exploitation.
- ✓ **Child Exploitation Panel** is held once a month. Actions for the Partnership are identified, focusing on developing the work force and disrupting exploitation within Shropshire

## Impact summary

The Trees Team (Together Reducing and Ending Exploitation in Shropshire) reports the following impact:

- ✓ Fewer children coming into care as police now have a shared understanding that removing children from their families does not decrease risks (it can often increase risks). We therefore, no longer have children subject to police powers of protection (unless this is used as a disruption to safeguard the child);
- ✓ Where children and families do need to relocate, we have excellent relationships with housing and through their support can put in place safeguards that are needed and move families quickly;
- ✓ We have prevented children from becoming permanently excluded from school/college, as we know this can increase risks to children and young people;
- ✓ We have kept children at home and avoided them having to come into local authority care, where often this would mean residential care, given the complexities around risk. We have worked with well over 100 children and less than 10% have needed alternative accommodation



## Partnership Highlights – Turning the Curve

In November 2024 the Partnership Board considered the current system challenges facing Shropshire as a 'place' for children and families who require help and support to achieve good outcomes. It acknowledged the ever-increasing complexity of need, higher demand for services and critical resource challenges, facing the whole partnership. It was agreed that two initiatives would be rolled out:

A '**Turning the Curve**' event took place in March 2025, working with the DfE National Facilitators for Health and the Police, to work with us on sharing our ambition and vision for a truly integrated system for helping to safeguard and protect children. Senior, middle and operational managers from a wide cross section of agencies actively engaged in the event, sharing their views on what needs to be done, in an open and honest way. We shared real examples of practice that is outstanding and examples of what we know is getting in the way of this being the norm for all children and families.

Collectively we reaffirmed our shared ambition to:

- have a single integrated system
- support the well-being of and protect all children from significant harm inside and outside of the home
- have a system with children and families at the heart
- for our work to be influenced by children and families' voices, and
- for Shropshire to be the best place for children and families to live and grow.

# Partnership Highlights – Turning the Curve

We agreed our transformed system will:

- deliver a child friendly Shropshire
- with consistent ‘good and outstanding’ outcomes for children and families
- receive positive HMI / Ofsted / CQC ratings
- see service responses influenced by accurate shared data and analysis
- see more children able to live with their families
- see more suitable family placements - foster or kinship care
- include a skills mix within multi-agency teams
- deliver effective Early Help with evidence-based practice and partnerships with families
- effectively deploy resources across the partnership, and
- embed a restorative, strengths-based practice model

An action plan from the ‘Turning the Curve’ event has been developed with some quick wins and longer-term strategic actions for the Partnership to consider and implement as part of the Children’s reform work during 25/26.

# Spotlight Sessions

The Partnership commissioned a safeguarding consultant to work with us to develop and implement four half day sessions for a range of relevant partners, including strategic leaders. These events, planned for 2025-2026, will focus on obtaining a better understanding and scrutiny of what the current provision is around key themes identified from the diagnostic review of statutory case reviews and will implement a plan of improvement.

The first event will be on **Childhood Neglect** with the purpose of:

- ❖ providing information about childhood neglect and Shropshire's evidence base
- ❖ gathering information from attendees about what they think is working well, could be better, and map interventions/services we have to tackle neglect and
- ❖ agreeing what needs to happen next to improve our leadership and practice in tackling neglect and to inform revisions to our Neglect Strategy.

The 3 further Spotlight sessions will focus on the following:

- ❖ **Hidden Harm**
- ❖ **Modern Day Risks**
- ❖ **Prevention and Early Intervention**

The outcome of these events will be reported in next years' annual report.

# Learning from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR)

In 2024-2025 the Partnership received **5 Rapid Reviews referrals, involving 15 children.**

**All 5 Rapid Reviews led to a decision to undertake a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review.**

LCSPR	LCSPR	LCSPR
<p><b>Ivy</b> Ivy is a 4-month-old baby. Whilst seeing her GP the doctor noticed a lump on the left side of her rib cage and noted that her mother smelt of alcohol. A Child Protection medical confirmed a number of non-accidental injuries.</p>	<p><b>Family 1 (Formerly known as Powell)</b> The children's father/stepfather was arrested under the Obscene Publications Communications Act 2003. The Police found the family home in a poor state; overcrowded, dirty and cluttered. There were concerns the children weren't being appropriately educated at home. There were concerns that the children have been exposed to significant emotional harm, neglect and have suffered physical and sexual harm, over a prolonged period.</p>	<p><b>A Shropshire School</b> Children's Social Care were contacted by the Designated Safeguarding Lead at the school who shared information regarding peer bullying and abuse.</p>

**These reviews are on-going and the learning will be published in next years' report.**

## **Joint Family Reviews - combined CSPRs and Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs) commissioned due to the vulnerabilities of both adults and children in these families**

### **Joint LCSPR and SARs**

#### **Family A (previously known as Family Pugh)**

This referral was received in December 2022, following the death of the children's mother. Concerns were raised about significant self-neglect by the mother and then the impact of this on her two children, who were caring for her.

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#### **Family B (previously known as Family Jones)**

Mid May 2023, West Mercia Police were contacted by a member of the public reporting a young boy running in the street naked. Police attended and located the child. He was identified as Mrs Jones's 11-year-old son.

He was taken back to his home address. On arrival, officers discovered his mother had been taken seriously ill and she later died. Officers recorded that the property was in an abysmal state.

**These reviews remain on-going and the learning will be published in next years' report.**

**Jasmine**

A referral was received at the end of the financial year 2022 for a 16-year-old child who was looked after and at risk of exploitation.

**Darren**

On collecting Darren from his father's home his mother noticed some bruising under his chin and bruising on both of his legs. During a Child protection medical the consultant paediatrician noted multiple, suspected non-accidental injuries.

**LCSPR  
Cross-Border  
Working  
Thematic**

**Child U**

A referral was received in August 2022, for a four-week-old baby with a head injury, which was suspected to be non-accidental. The statutory partners felt that all learning had been identified during the rapid review, however after discussion with the Child Safeguarding Review Panel, it was agreed that a LCSPR should be undertaken.

This thematic review includes the 3 children outlined and remains on-going. The learning will be published in next year's report.

**Family 1 (previously known as The Powell children)**

The children's father/stepfather was arrested under the Obscene Publications Communications Act 2003. The Police found the family home in a poor state; overcrowded, dirty and cluttered. There were concerns the children weren't being appropriately educated at home. There were concerns that the children have been exposed to significant emotional harm, neglect and have suffered physical and sexual harm, over a prolonged period.

**Family 2**

A referral for a Rapid Review was made in June 2024 for a 2-year-old with a burn to her foot. Her parents had not sought any medical attention.

**LCSPR  
Neglect Thematic**

**Family 3 (previously known as Peter)**

The Police made a referral for a Rapid Review, after a visit to his home following reports of shouting and screaming coming from the house. Police witnessed Peter's mother letting him out of a wardrobe; he had visible injuries. Peter was asked how he got the injuries, and he said he had fallen off his bike.

This thematic review includes the 3 families outlined and remains on-going. The learning will be published in next year's report.

### 1. What happened

The review explored agency involvement with siblings M and N. M was in Secondary School and N was in Primary School.

M, the older sibling, had learning difficulties and died from Septicaemia.

Following M's death it was found that conditions within the home identified neglect towards the children and N the younger sibling went to live with foster carers.

### 2. Consider historical information

When agencies hold historical information about circumstances or events that indicate a risk to a child the information should be:

- made available to professionals working with the family
- actively sought out by those involved
- considered if new information or concerns arise
- used to inform assessments including risk assessments

### 3. Listen to concerns from the public

When agencies receive information from **members of the public** about children who may be at risk of harm then this should be given **appropriate weight** of importance as information provided by professionals.

Information from members of the public should be **followed up** and **further information sought**. Information **gathering** is different to sharing information.

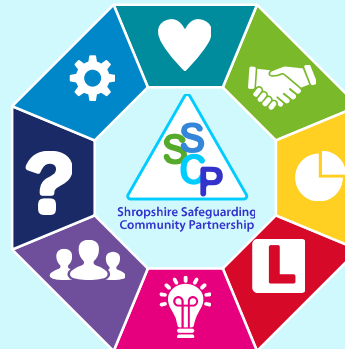
Support and signpost the public to other services that can help if needed.

### 8. Keeping contact during COVID 19

Neither child was considered to be a vulnerable child who needed to be in school during Lockdown according to their school's risk rating.

If a child is not in school due to COVID 19 restrictions schools should work with other involved agencies to agree their risk rating. The **rationale** for this rating must be clear and reviewed.

Ensure there is **direct contact with the child** and do not rely on pre-recorded information from parents. Use the [Assessment Practice learning resource](#) for good assessment practice guidance.



### 4. Safeguarding Lead Competence

The person who has the responsibility for overseeing Safeguarding within a team or agency should have the **appropriate knowledge and skills** to fulfil this role.

The Safeguarding Lead should also ensure their role is understood by the staff team.

Safeguarding Leads should receive regular management oversight to ensure they that they are **supervised and supported by the agency** and not working alone.

### 7. Use Neglect screening tool & GCP2

Practitioners should use the [Neglect Screening Tool](#) as soon as there are early indicators of Child Neglect.

The Graded Care Profile (**GCP2**) helps practitioners identify when poor parenting has become neglectful. It is a licensed tool so only those trained in using it can do so.

### 6. Use Education, Health and Care Plans

When a child has an Education, Health and Care Plan they must be **updated annually** with relevant information about the child's educational aspirations, their health and social care status including any concerns that are being investigated.

Plans should also show how agencies **will work together** to support a child to achieve their potential.

If a child regularly misses school then [professional curiosity](#) should be applied. The Plan should inform how absences will be addressed.

### 5. Ensure good safeguarding practice

All staff should have access to **up to date** safeguarding training, this will help to build confidence in raising concerns.

The [chronology guidance](#) should be followed. All safeguarding concerns should be **made in writing** and information shared with the Safeguarding Lead. Decisions about information sharing and taking action relating to safeguarding concerns should be **taken with Management oversight**. Decision making rationale and action should be **recorded** at each stage.

## Children M & N

Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review  
Practitioner's Learning Briefing




# Multi-Agency Training

The SSCP Business Unit deliver multiagency learning from case reviews and have an overview of delivery of SSCP Raising Awareness in Safeguarding and Protecting Children training across Shropshire.

All multiagency learning includes local safeguarding arrangements and is informed by the findings of local and national reviews, emerging themes, trends and guidance, and workforce needs.

## Delivery of the Learning from Case Reviews

Staff and volunteers who work with children, adults and community roles across our safeguarding and community safety system, attended the following learning events during this financial year.

Title of learning event	Webinars	Attendees	Length
Understanding Intrafamilial Abuse	3	153	
Domestic Abuse Homicide and Suicide	2	87	
Why don't men come forward	3	113	
Voice of the person	1	33	

## SSCP Training Delivery

Title of learning event	MSTeams meeting Sept-Dec	Attendees	Length
Training pool meetings	8	160 (approx.)	1 hour
Raising Awareness	2	32	3 hours
Title of learning event	In Person	Attendees	Length
Train the Trainer	3	18	2 days
Training Pool meeting	1	22	1 day
Raising Awareness	2	15	3 hours

Training	Sessions	Attendees	Length
Raising Awareness in Safeguarding and Protecting Children	221	3243	2-4 hours

# Learning from Case Reviews - Multi-agency Reflections

<p>Remembering about professional curiosity always! Timely information sharing and not being scared to share information and act upon it.</p> <p><b>Voice of the Person</b></p>	<p>That we should never make assumptions, always speak appropriately to families and be mindful how easily people can lose trust in services</p> <p><b>Voice of the Person</b></p>	<p>the importance of checking in with other professionals and asking for advice and guidance from their knowledge and experience</p> <p><b>Voice of the Person</b></p>
<p>No matter which agency is involved, challenges and the want to make a positive influence remains the same theme</p> <p><b>Voice of the Person</b></p>	<p>That having conversations with families and victims can be difficult and that this is familiar to all professionals.</p> <p><b>Understanding Intrafamilial Abuse</b></p>	<p>There are various aspects to D.A that some survivors don't even recognise as abuse and a lot of barriers to reporting</p> <p><b>Understanding Intrafamilial Abuse</b></p>
<p>Professional curiosity perhaps isn't curious enough</p> <p><b>Understanding Intrafamilial Abuse</b></p>	<p>being aware and not being closed minded about my role. Being curious. and being knowledgeable.</p> <p><b>Domestic Abuse – Homicide and Suicide</b></p>	<p>Understanding our own bias. Importance of working together with other agencies</p> <p><b>Domestic Abuse – Homicide and Suicide</b></p>
<p>Professional curiosity around presentation, demeanour, mental health and or substance misuse</p> <p><b>Why don't men come forward</b></p>	<p>To challenge unconscious bias and not to make assumptions</p> <p><b>Why don't men come forward</b></p>	<p>To be more aware of and delve deeper (invisible) men and their lived experience</p> <p><b>Why don't men come forward</b></p>

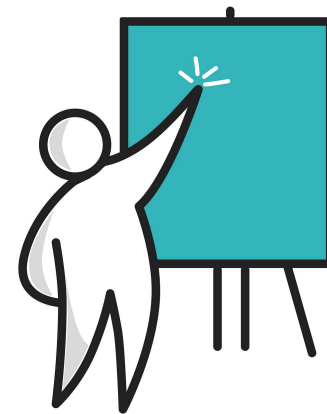
# SSCP Multi-Agency Training Pool

SSCP Training Pool members are Designated Safeguarding Leads and experienced safeguarding trainers from a wide range of agencies throughout Shropshire. There are currently 76 trainers within 46 organisations, representing diverse agencies from statutory, voluntary and independent organisations throughout Shropshire.

The SSCP Learning and Development Co-ordinator plans a programme of Training Pool meetings to ensure that regular safeguarding updates are received. All trainers receive training resources to deliver within their agencies including Raising Awareness in Safeguarding and Protecting Children presentation, lesson plan, certificate, evaluation template, and information about local safeguarding arrangements to share with each learner.

The impact and reach of the Partnership to raise awareness about Safeguarding and Child Protection Training across Shropshire is only possible because of the dedication and enthusiasm of the professionals who make up the Training Pool.

33 trainers delivered training in 2024-2025. 133 sessions were delivered face-to-face, and 88 training sessions were delivered either face-to-face or virtually.



## Impact Summary

Attendees consistently feedback to both training delivered by training pool members, and the Learning and Development Coordinator, that they appreciate the knowledge of trainers and the interactive methods used to engage them with the content. Resources that include local safeguarding arrangements are well received.

Leaders can be assured that safeguarding messages through training and learning events are consistent across Shropshire, highlighting local issues and supporting staff in responding effectively to children and their families.

# Reflections from Multi-Agency Learners

<p><i>What to look for when working with young people. How to report concerns.</i></p>	<p><i>Enhanced awareness of the different categories of abuse and how best to identify them.</i></p>	<p><i>Specifically wanted training related to our local area and the information given was exactly what was needed.</i></p>	<p><i>Padlet was really useful I am going to go away and read the handouts and make notes. Thank you for the knowledge and insights provided</i></p>	<p><i>I will now know how to respond when a child discloses something of concern. I will be on the alert for possible signs of abuse</i></p>	<p><i>Found the training useful. Especially the updates to County lines and how it can impact a family and the signs to look out for</i></p>
<p><i>Made it relevant to me as a professional and as a parent/grandparent</i></p>	<p><i>Videos were informative although hard to watch but gave real context to it all</i></p>	<p><i>Have more of a critical 'it could happen here' approach to safeguarding.</i></p>	<p><i>With colleagues we looked up the urban dictionary and it made us really think about the language we used</i></p>	<p><i>Approach my work with more of a questioning mind when coming into contact with the young people I see</i></p>	<p><i>Clear on threshold doc, that Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, how to record a disclosure and helped raise awareness with regards affluent neglect</i></p>
<p><i>Really good informative, engaging and strangely enjoyable</i></p>	<p><i>Listening to real life stories so that topics were extremely relatable</i></p>	<p><i>Thinking of ways to rework our own safeguarding policy to be more robust.</i></p>	<p><i>Refreshed knowledge and updated info for Shropshire specifically</i></p>	<p><i>Terminology and local statistics, information that I was not aware of</i></p>	<p><i>The different types of neglect a child can experience and how they can all relate</i></p>
<p><i>The course leader allowed us to discuss issues which were relevant to our particular setting. These were interesting because we had examples of practical application of the knowledge and learning</i></p>	<p><i>I will now know who to contact if I have concerns about a child. This is so important when working with children. I was shocked that so many children are receiving help in Shropshire because of neglect</i></p>	<p><i>The concept of disguised compliance was new to me. I have found it extraordinary the variety of forms of abuse and signs to watch out for. I will be more vigilant as a result</i></p>	<p><i>All of this was an eye opener as I'm new to working with children</i></p>	<p><i>AI was a strong discussion topic</i></p>	<p><i>Excellent delivered concise detailed and engrossing</i></p>

# Priority Setting

The Partnership held a Priority Setting Workshop in February 2025 to agree the strategic plan for the next 3 years.

**The Partnership Priority for 2025-2028 is:**



## Improving Multi-Agency Practice

Working in partnership to embed the National Reforms, to include a focus on embedding good practice around professional curiosity and the lived experience of children and families.

The following areas of work for the Partnership will also continue into 2025/26:

- Child Sexual Abuse
- Neglect
- Exploitation

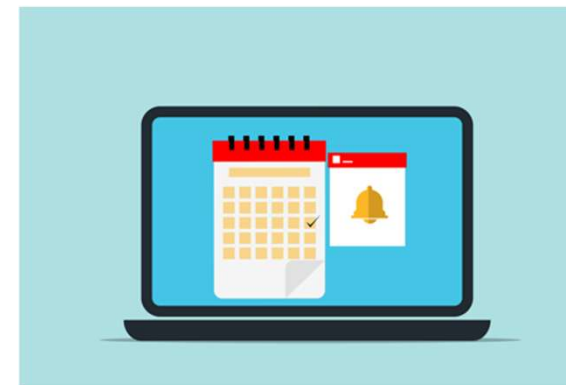
## Partnership Focus for 2025-2026

As we move into 2025-2026 the Partnership will keep the momentum going around its transformation work under its new priority of **Improving Multi-Agency Practice**.

Learning and challenges outlined in this report will shape our plans for the coming year. We will continue to embed learning from the Independent Case Review Diagnostic and our other assurance activity.

We look forward to bringing multi-agency partners together at the planned Spotlight Sessions in 2025 and know that there will be further development areas from these events to improve outcomes for children and their families.

Our focus will remain on our priority area of improving multi-agency practice throughout the implementation of National Reforms and the Families First Programme, with children and their families at the centre of all we do.



# Partnership Membership 2024-2025

<b>Lead Safeguarding Partners</b>	
<b>Agency</b>	<b>Job Title</b>
Shropshire Council	Chief Executive
Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Integrated Care Board	Chief Executive
West Mercia Police	Chief Constable

<b>Delegated Safeguarding Partners</b>	
<b>Agency</b>	<b>Job Title</b>
Shropshire Council	Director Children's Services
Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Integrated Care Board	Chief Nursing Officer
West Mercia Police	Shropshire Local Commander

# Partnership Membership 2024-2025

<b>Children's Safeguarding Partnership Membership</b>	
<b>Agency</b>	<b>Job Title</b>
<b>Shropshire Local Authority Departments</b>	
Shropshire Council – Public Health	Operational Lead Health Protection
Shropshire Council – Children's Services	Service Manager Early Help
Shropshire Council – Children's Services	Assistant Director Children's Services
Shropshire Council - Education	Head of the Virtual School and Access to Education
Shropshire Council – Education	Head of Education Quality and Safeguarding
Shropshire Council – Education	Assistant Director – Education and Achievement
Shropshire Council – Housing	Head of Service - Housing, Resettlement & Independent Living
Shropshire Council	Performance Analyst
<b>Shropshire NHS Trusts and Services</b>	
Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin ICB	Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children
Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital Trust	Named Nurse for Safeguarding Children
Midlands Partnership NHS University Foundation Trust	Head of Operational Safeguarding
Shropshire Recovery Partnership	Team Manager
Shropshire Community Health Trust	Head of Children's Safeguarding
Shrewsbury, Telford & Wrekin Hospital Trust	Safeguarding Lead for Children
Shrewsbury, Telford & Wrekin Hospital Trust	Lead Safeguarding Midwife

# Partnership Membership 2024-2025

<b>Children's Safeguarding Partnership Membership contd.</b>	
<b>Agency</b>	<b>Job Title</b>
<b>West Mercia Police and Youth Justice</b>	
West Mercia Police	Detective Superintendent
West Mercia Youth Justice Service	Head of Service
<b>Probation Service</b>	
National Probation Service	Head of Service
<b>Other Services</b>	
Shropshire Fire & Rescue Service	Temporary Area Manager
<b>Independent Scrutiny</b>	
Shropshire Council Cabinet Member	Portfolio Holder
	Independent Scrutineer

## In Summary

2024/25 has been a year of changes across the partnership, including revisions to governance, implementation of revised national guidance and changes across our workforce.

Despite this, the partnership has strengthened its resolve and activity to work together to safeguarding children and young people through a range of innovative approaches.

This activity has laid a firm foundation to build upon during 2025/26 as we look forward to engaging in our planned 'Spotlight' sessions across the partnership and prepare for our collective focus to improve multi-agency practice in preparation for the national Families First Partnership (FFP) reforms.

We would like to thank all partners for their collective energy, focus and dedication to safeguarding children and young people in Shropshire.

# Our Priorities for 2025/26 onwards

The Partnership held a Priority Setting Workshop in February 2025 to agree the strategic plan for the next 3 years.

**The Partnership Priority for 2025-2028 is:**

## Improving Multi-Agency Practice

Working in partnership to embed the National Reforms, to include a focus on embedding good practice around professional curiosity and the lived experience of children and families.

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The following areas of work for the Partnership will also continue into 2025/26:

- Child Sexual Abuse
- Neglect
- Exploitation

# If you have concerns or need help



First Point of  
Contact  
**0345 678 9021**

To report  
safeguarding  
concerns for  
adult and  
children

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Emergency  
Social Work  
Team  
**0345 678 9040**  
For out of  
hours  
safeguarding  
concerns

Action Counters  
Terrorism (ACT)  
**0800 011 3764**  
For concerns  
about someone  
being drawn into  
radicalisation

NSPCC:  
**0800 800 5000**

Public  
Protection  
Unit (West  
Mercia  
Police):  
**0300 333 3000**

Childline:  
**0800 1111**

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Date	Topic	Responsible Officer	Notes	All Member Briefing	Task and Finish Group	Report to committee	Previous topic to review
April 2026	Stepping Stones	SM	All Member Briefing to build committee's knowledge ahead of the public meeting	✓			
22/04/26	Quarterly Performance Report Adults	NM	Standing item to provide assurance and identify areas for further consideration			✓	
22/04/26	Quarterly Performance Report Children	DS	Standing item to provide assurance and identify areas for further consideration			✓	
22/04/26	Children's Safeguarding Annual Report 2024/2025	DS/LG	To receive an update on the Children's Safeguarding Annual Report 2024/2025			✓	
March 2026-TBC	Task and Finish Group SEND Transport	DS/KK/AE/RD			✓		
April-May	Dedicated Schools Grant deficit recovery plan	DS/JR	Statutory recommendation from external auditors and the Improvement Plan	✓			
TBC	ASC-Capital Reduction	NM/MW				✓	
TBC	Children's Safeguarding Annual Report and Business Plan 25/26	DS/LG	To provide assurance and identify areas for further consideration				
TBC	Adults Safeguarding Annual Report and Business Plan 25/26	NM/LG	To provide assurance and identify areas for further consideration			✓	
TBC	Statutory minimum service level	TM/DS	Recommended by Audit Committee			✓	
TBC	Children Looked After Numbers	DS/SM	Why is Shropshire an outlier compared to statistical neighbours and West Midlands?			✓	
TBC	Continuing Health Care	TM/NM	Possible T&F Group led by HOSC to explore this topic, hearing from officers, public and health partners		✓		
TBC	Prevention and Adult Social Care (ASC)	NM/LT Including PH	What are Shropshire Council doing and what should be done to prevent and delay the requirement for ASC?			✓	
July 2026	All Member-Children's Social Care Annual Reports and Ofsted Inspection	DS	To develop awareness, understanding and provide assurance	✓			

Date	Topic	Responsible Officer	Notes	All Member Briefing	Task and Finish Group	Report to committee	Previous topic to review
	Outcome/Action Plan						
TBC	Care Leavers	DS/SM	To develop awareness, understanding of the local offer and provide assurance	✓			
TBC	Impact of T4C on Adoption	DS/SM	To develop awareness, understanding and provide assurance	✓			
July 2026	Youth Strategy	DS	6-month review follow up on progress				✓
Latter 2026	All Age Autism Strategy 2025-2030	DS	12-month review following Cabinet decision				✓
Latter 2026	Telecare	LT	12-month review following Cabinet decision and call in				✓
Early 2027	Children's Reforms	DS/NM	Follow up on progress from 14/01/2026				✓
Early 2027	Child Exploitation	DS	Update/review following T & W enquiry				✓

Other identified areas of interest from Committee discussions, including topics for briefings:

- Education Place Planning and Sufficiency
- SEND Accelerated progress Plan (APP) Update Briefing
- Sensory Impairment Briefing
- Complaint trends and outcomes as discussed at Cabinet 09/07/2025
- Best Start in Life (BSiL) -Briefing
- multi-agency child protection teams (MACPT's)-Briefing