Placement Sufficiency Strategy

for Children in Care

Stoke-on-Trent

2019-2022

The Right Service, For the Right Child, At the Right time

Revised: February 2019

Contents

1. Introduction

This strategy sets out how Stoke-on-Trent City Council intends to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, that there is sufficient accommodation of all types available for Children in Care and how it will meet its Sufficiency Duty, as outlined in Section 22G of the Children Act 1989. It is set within the context of national policy, legislation and guidance and addresses the needs of children and young people from birth to the age of 21 (or 25 where statutory responsibility applies).

What is the Sufficiency Duty?

All Local Authorities that provide Children's Services must take steps that secure, so far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within its area to meet the needs of children that it is looking after and children whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation in the local authority area. This is referred to as 'the sufficiency duty'. (*Statutory Guidance on securing sufficient accommodation for looked after children, 2010*)

The sufficiency duty applies in respect of all children who are Looked After by the Local Authority and Children in Need who are on the' edge of care'. It acknowledges the importance of improving outcomes for children and in having sufficient accommodation to meet their needs, along with early intervention and preventive action to support children and families, so that fewer children become in need of care.

Purpose of this Strategy

1. To ensure there is sufficient accommodation for Children in Care and that the placements are the most appropriate available, including a placement with a friend, relative or other person connected with the child. In all circumstances a placement should, where reasonably practicable –
❖ Be near to the child's home, where appropriate;
❖ Minimise disruption to his or her education or training and to enable the continuation of friendship and community links;
❖ Enable the child to live with his/her sibling(s), if the child has a sibling who is also looked after by the local authority;
❖ Meet the needs of children and young people from ethnic minority background;
❖ Be suitable to meet the needs of disabled children and young people;
❖ Be within the local authority's area, unless that is not reasonably practicable;

2. To understand and manage the market – looking at trends and developing new provision to meet these demands, including provision to facilitate access to standby accommodation for emergency placements. (*Children's act 1989: Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review 2015*)

2. Principles

In line with the Children Act (1989) Stoke-on-Trent Early Intervention and Children's Social Care Service is committed to ensuring that children and young people are able to remain safely within their own families wherever possible. The decision to bring a child into care should only be considered when all other strategies to ensure a child's welfare and safety have been exhausted and/or are not viable to safeguard the child.

This strategy is driven by a number of key principles:

- *To help to maintain children within their family environment wherever it is safe to do so*
- *To endeavour to safely reconcile families where there has been a breakdown in relationships or trust*
- *To secure permanency at the earliest opportunity for children who become accommodated by the Local Authority*

Where care is required, Stoke-on-Trent Early Intervention and Children's Social Care Service is committed to providing high quality placements in a timely manner. Careful consideration will be given to matching need, placement and locality to ensure, as far as reasonably possible, the optimum outcomes for Stoke-on-Trent Children in Care. This is in line with our commitment to providing the *right service, for the right child, at the right time* for our children and young people*.*

The Stoke-on-Trent Corporate Parenting Pledge reinforces and emphasises the City Council's commitment and responsibilities as a corporate parent, to ensure the best possible care and protection for children and young people in care is provided, as any good parent would their own child. Children in care should be *cared about* and not just *cared for*. This commitment is shared across our partner agencies who play a full part in our Corporate Parenting Panel.

Stoke-on-Trent Early Intervention and Children's Social Care is committed to ensure that the Voice of the Child is heard and that they influence and guide all decisions that affect them (*Stoke-on-Trent Corporate Parenting Strategy for Children in Care 2014 – 2016).*

3. Demographic Context

Stoke-on-Trent Demographics

As per the Mid-2016 Population Estimates for Stoke-on-Trent, 24% of the entire Stoke-on-Trent population is aged 0-18. Of the 24% 0-18 age group, 49% (29,260) are female and 51% (30,383) are male, with the largest proportion falling in the 5-10 age group. The ethnicity of Stoke-on-Trent's population is predominantly White British, with Asian and Asian British as the most populous of the Minority Ethnic Group. The smallest ethnic minority groups being that of Black African Caribbean/ Black British and other undisclosed ethnic groups.
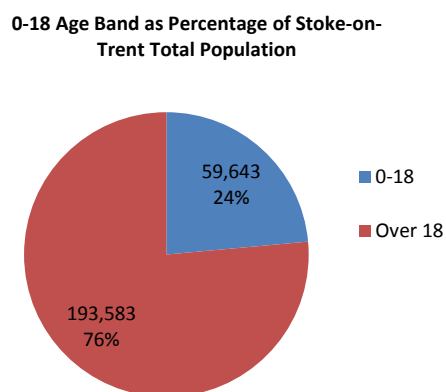
Figure 1

Figure 2

0-18 Age Band as Percentage of Stoke-on-Trent Total Population

- 0-18: 59,643 — 24%
- Over 18: 193,583 — 76%

Ethnicity Breakdown of Stoke-on-Trent Population

- White British — 86.4%
- White Other
- Mixed/multiple ethnic groups
- Asian/Asian British — 7.4%
- Black/African/Caribbean/Black British
- Other ethnic group

1.8% 2.2% 1.5% 0.7%

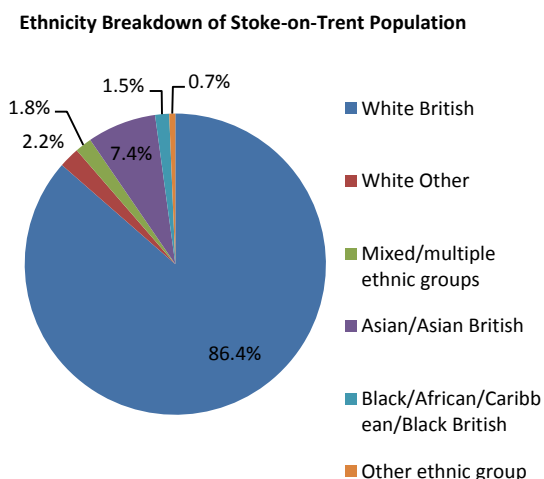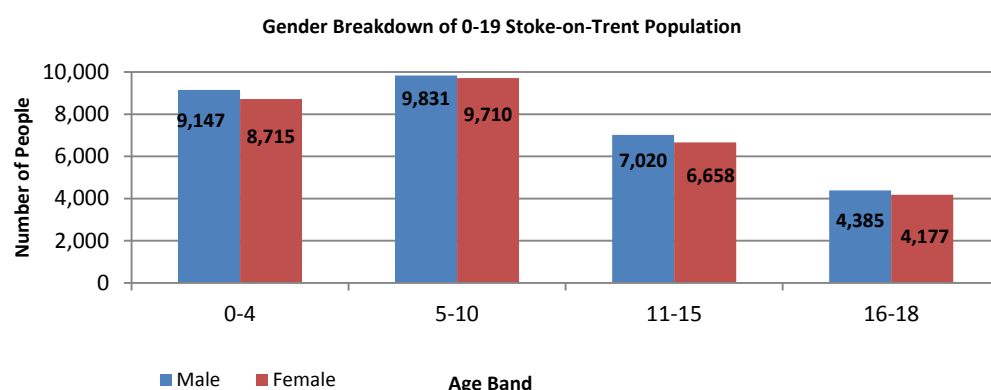**Figure 3**

Gender Breakdown of 0-19 Stoke-on-Trent Population

The breakdown of those aged 0-18 in Stoke-on-Trent for the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index, shows that 50% of the 0-18 population of Stoke-on-Trent live in the 0-20% most deprived areas in the UK. *(English Indices of Deprivation 2015).*

Figure 4

Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index Breakdown of 0-18 Stoke-on-Trent Population
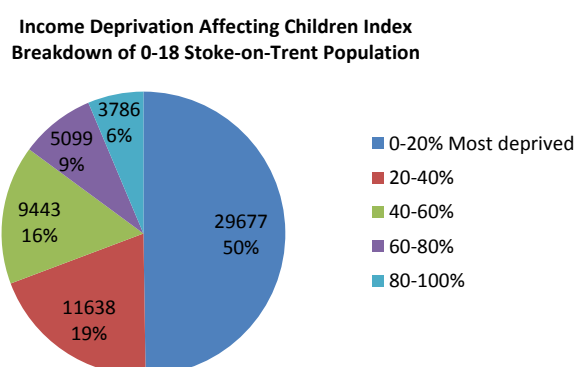
Children open to Social Care

The number of children open to Children's Social Care in Stoke-on-Trent has reduced over the last three years, however, the number of Children in Care has seen a substantial increase between March 2017 and 2018 from 653 to 740. This figure is continuing to rise and the increase in the number of children is a national trend as shown in the table below:

Year end	England Looked after Children	Stoke Looked after Children
2015	69,470	609
2016	70,400	654
2017	72,590	653
2018	75,420	740

(Source: DfE Looked after Children Statistics)

Stoke-on-Trent Trends for Child in Care

The overall trends for both the number of Children in Care, and admissions and discharges over recent years enables the City Council to identify pressure points in the system and predict future demand based on the trends that develop over time.

The Children in Care rate (per 10'000 children aged under 18) for Stoke-on-Trent has been consistently higher over the last 3 years from March 2016 to March 2018, than that seen on a national, regional and statistical neighbour basis as illustrated in the chart below.

Children in care rate per 10,000	Mar-16	Mar-17	Mar-18	% Change from previous year
Stoke-on-Trent	117	115	130	12%
Statistical Neighbours	102	112	121	8%
West Midlands	73	75	78	4%
England	60	62	64	3%

Statistical Neighbour Looked after Children in Care at 31 March				
Local Authority	Ranks (Rate per 10,000)			
	2016	2017	2018	Average
Hartlepool	13	3	2	12.6
Middlesbrough	3	2	3	4.4
Blackpool	1	1	1	1
Rochdale	19	29	24	19.4
Tameside	27	13	8	20.6
Doncaster	49	48	41	46.6
Kingston Upon Hull, City of	4	4	4	4.6
North East Lincolnshire	30	32	18	33.4
Rotherham	43	34	11	41.8
Stoke-on-Trent	4	7	5	9
Walsall	18	17	26	19.2
Average of Stat Neighbours	19.2	17.3	13	19.3

(Statistical data reference:www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2017-to-2018)(www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-interactive-tool-lait)

Where the Children in Care rate per 10,000 performance ranking is low, this equates to having a higher proportion of Children in Care.

The rate of Children in Care increased at a higher rate than statistical neighbours, West Midland and England from March 2017-March 2018.

The Statistical Neighbour data shows that as of 31 March 2018 Stoke-on-Trent was 5th in the country for the highest rate of children in care. Over the last 3 years, Stoke-on-Trent has consistently been in the top 10 for a local authority

with a high proportion of children in care, along with 3 other statistical neighbour local authorities. All bar two of the statistical neighbours has seen an increase in the proportion of children in care.

4. Reasons for Children Coming into Care and Duration

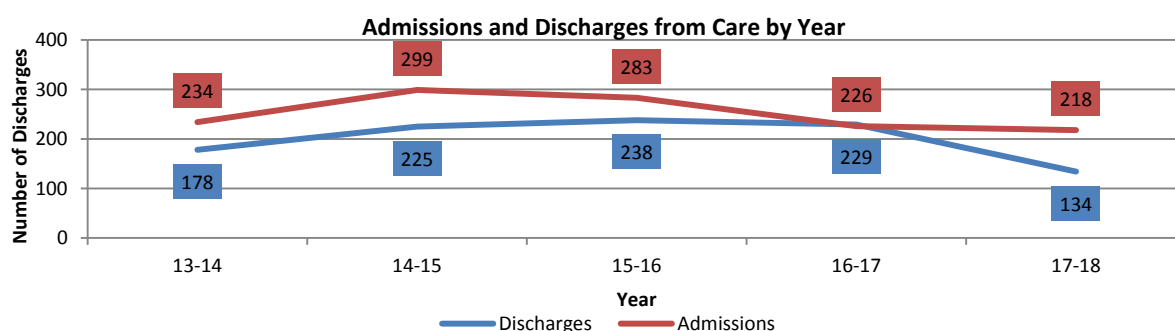### Children in Care Admissions and Discharge by age group.

The number of Children in Care for Stoke-on-Trent has seen an increase since March 2014, rising from a total of 536 Children in Care to 740 children in care in March 2018.

Figure 5

|	Total CIC Figure	Increase (Number)	% Increase
Mar 14	536	-	-
Mar 15	609	73	13.6%
Mar 16	655	46	7.6%
Mar 17	653	-2	-0.3%
Mar 18	740	87	13.3%
	Average	51	8.5%

There were 234 new admissions in 2013-2014 for children in care in Stoke-on-Trent, which was offset against 178 discharges, a gain of 56 additional children in care. Whilst the new admissions for children in care for 2017-2018 was less at 218, the discharge rate of children in care was only 134, resulting in a gain of 84 children in care.

Figure 6

The number of discharges from care in 2017-2018 was significantly less than in the previous 5 years, a 41.5% reduction on the previous year. This has seen a significant rise in the children in care population despite the rate of admissions decreasing. The average duration of period of care for discharges is currently at its lowest level since 2014-2015.

Figure 7

Children in Care Admissions by Age Group
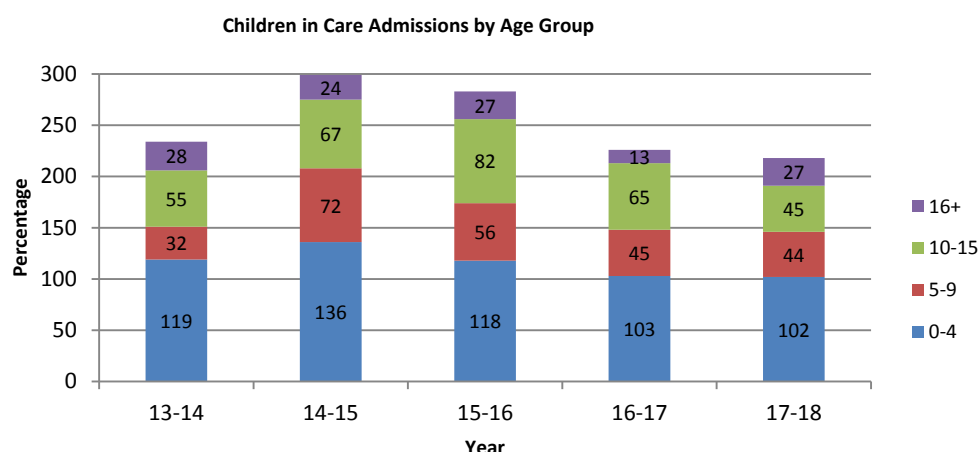
Over the last five years on average 0-4 year olds made up 46.1% of admissions and 38.6% of discharges. This indicates permanence is secured early for young children.

The 5-9 and 10-15 year old admissions made up 44.4% of all admission but equates to only 29% of discharges.

Young people age 16+ years old make up only 9.5% of overall admission numbers but also account for 32.4% of discharges. This indicates that a proportion of those admissions age 16+ stay in care for a significantly longer period of time. The 5 to 15 year age range equates to nearly 60% of the overall children in care population.

Age 0-12 Months

In Stoke-on-Trent over the last five years, on average 59.6 babies per year, aged 0-12months were admitted into care.

Figure 8

Admissions & Discharges from Care - Children Aged 0-12 Months
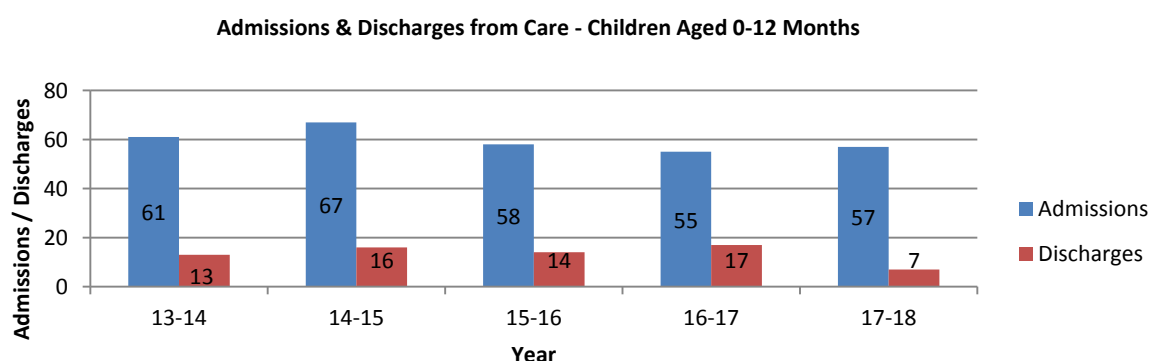
2014-2015 saw the highest intake with 67 (22.4%) of the 299 admissions for that year being babies aged 0-12months. The numbers reduced in 2017-2018 with 57 (26.1%) of the 218 admissions into care being babies ages 0-12months. Despite the actual number of babies admitted in 2017-2018 being lower than 2014-2015, the actual proportion was higher in relation to the total number of children being admitted into care that year.

Discharges for babies has remained low over the last five years in Stoke-on-Trent. 2017-18 saw the lowest discharge rate with 7 (5.2%) of the 134 discharges being for babies aged 0-12months. This is likely to be influenced by the rate of Adoption for this age group.

Figure 9

Discharges by Age Group
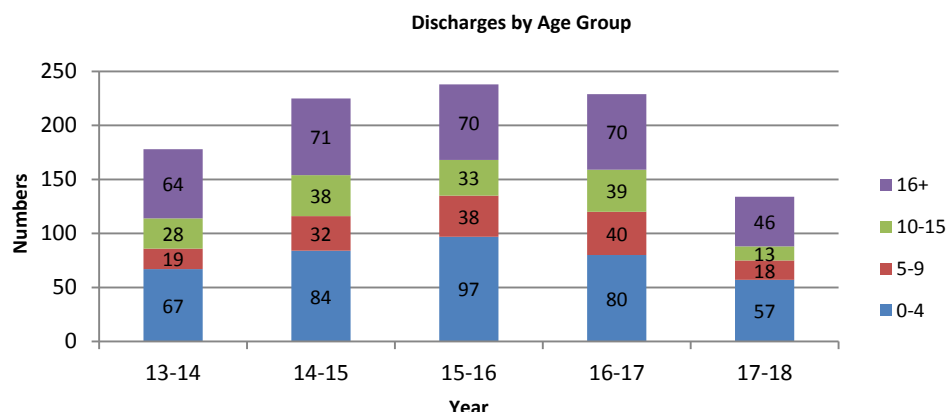
In 2017-2018 there were significantly less discharges in any age group than the previous 4 years. In 2017-2018 of the 134 discharges 57 (42.5%) were in the 0-4 age group and of this age group 11 (19.3%) returned home. A third of all discharges home each year were for the 0-4 age group.

Figure 10

Children leaving care via Return Home - Age Band on Discharge
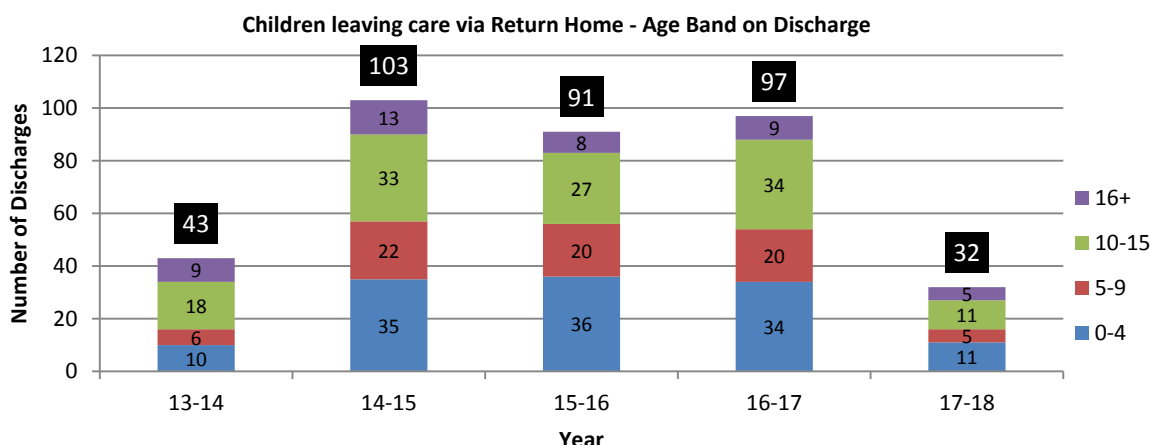
Statistical Neighbour Comparison for Admissions and Discharges by Age group

The Statistical Neighbour data highlights that the average percentage of Admissions for Children in Care across all age groups from 2013-2018 is consistent with that of Stoke-on-Trent, apart from the 5-9 year age group, with Stoke-on-Trent having an average of 19.8% admissions, against 25.6% for the Statistical Neighbours.

Between 2013-2018 the average percent discharge rate for the Statistical Neighbours is higher in the Under 1 age group, 5-9 age groups and 10-15 age groups, whilst Stoke-on-Trent had a higher average percent discharge rate for 1-4 age group and 16+ age group.

Statistical Neighbour Comparison – Children in Care Average Admissions and Discharges by Age Group between 2013-2018			
Age Group	**Local Authority**	**% Average number of Admissions (2013-2018)**	**% Average number of Discharges (2013-2018)**
Under 1	**Stoke-on Trent**	**24.6**	**6.6**
Under 1	Statistical Neighbours	22.4	8.4
1-4	**Stoke-on Trent**	**22.4**	**32.2**
1-4	Statistical Neighbours	22.6	30
5-9	**Stoke-on Trent**	**19.8**	**14.4**
5-9	Statistical Neighbours	25.6	17
10-15	**Stoke-on Trent**	**24.2**	**14.2**
10-15	Statistical Neighbours	25.6	15.6
16+	**Stoke-on Trent**	**9.6**	**32.4**
16+	Statistical Neighbours	9.2	30.4

(Statistical data reference: Children's Social Care Benchmarking Tool V2.8)

Statistical Neighbour Comparison for Children in Care Cohort by Age group

Between 2013-2018 Stoke-on-Trent had a higher average percentage of Children in Care Cohort for the Under 1 age group,1-4 age group and 5-9 age group compared to the Statistical Neighbours, but a lower average percentage for the 10-15 and 16+ age groups in comparison to the Statistical Neighbours.

Statistical Neighbour Comparison – End of Year Children in Care Average Cohort by Age Group between 2013-2018		
Age Group	**Local Authority**	**% Average Total number of Children in Care Cohort (2013-2018)**
Under 1	**Stoke-on Trent**	**6.8**
Under 1	Statistical Neighbours	6.2
1-4	**Stoke-on Trent**	**23.2**
1-4	Statistical Neighbours	17
5-9	**Stoke-on Trent**	**24.8**
5-9	Statistical Neighbours	22.6
10-15	**Stoke-on Trent**	**31.4**
10-15	Statistical Neighbours	37.4
16+	**Stoke-on Trent**	**14**
16+	Statistical Neighbours	16.8

(Statistical data reference: Children's Social Care Benchmarking Tool V2.8)
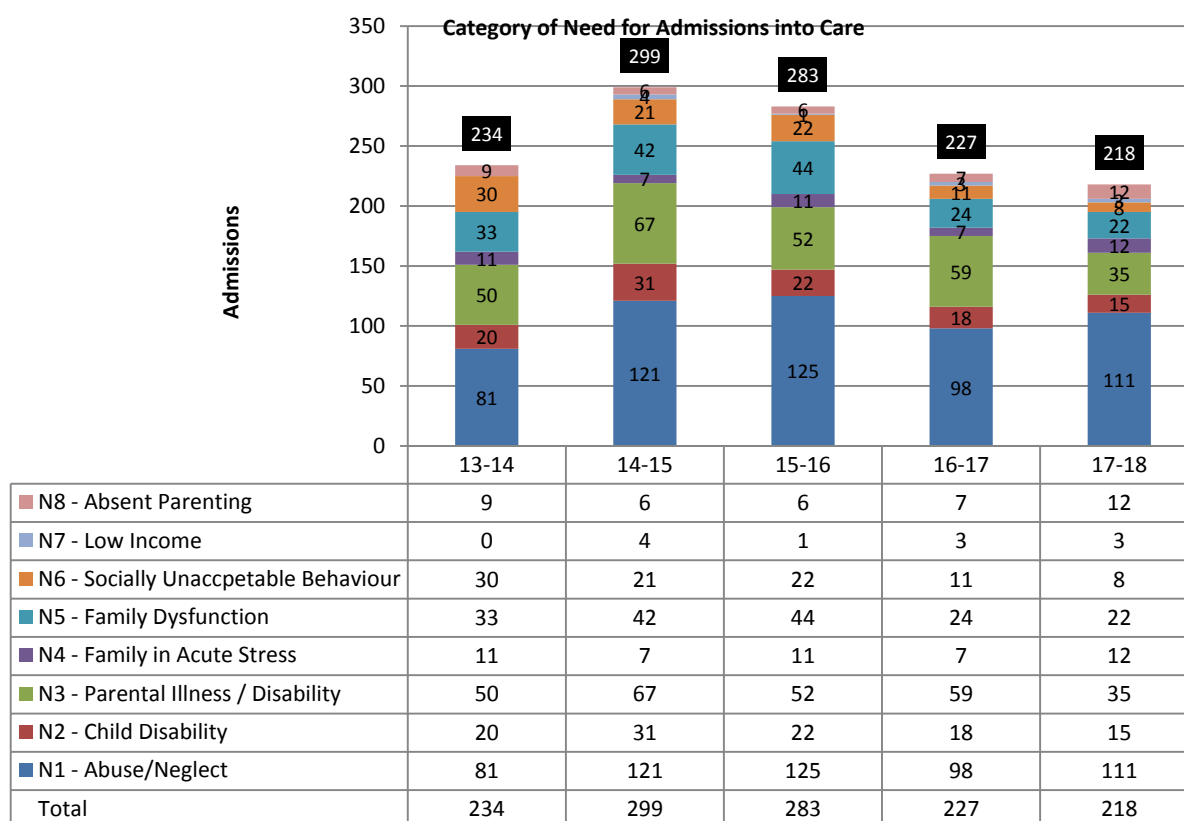
Reasons for Children in Care Admissions and Discharge

Admissions

Over the last five years, the reason for the highest proportion of children being admitted into care within Stoke-on-Trent is recorded as abuse and/or neglect. In 2013-2014, 81 (34.6%) of the 234 admissions were recorded as abuse/neglect. 2015-2016 saw the highest increase, with 125 (44.2%) of the 283 admissions being recorded as abuse/neglect. Despite the total number of Children in Care increasing in 2017-2018 to 740, the actual number of admissions was at its lowest in five years, at 218. However, of the 218 admissions 111 (50.9%) were recorded as abuse/neglect.

The second highest attributing factor for Children in Care admissions within Stoke-on-Trent is due to parental illness/disability (includes mental health and substance misuse). 2014-2015 had the largest admission rate for this category with 67 (22.4%) of the 299 admissions, with 2017-2018 having the lowest, 35 (16.1%) of the 218 admissions.

Figure 11

Category of Need for Admissions into Care

	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18
■ N8 - Absent Parenting	9	6	6	7	12
■ N7 - Low Income	0	4	1	3	3
■ N6 - Socially Unaccpetable Behaviour	30	21	22	11	8
■ N5 - Family Dysfunction	33	42	44	24	22
■ N4 - Family in Acute Stress	11	7	11	7	12
■ N3 - Parental Illness / Disability	50	67	52	59	35
■ N2 - Child Disability	20	31	22	18	15
■ N1 - Abuse/Neglect	81	121	125	98	111
Total	234	299	283	227	218

Statistical Neighbour Comparison for Admission by Category of Need

The Statistical Neighbour data highlights that the highest percentage of admissions into care is recorded as Abuse/Neglect, as for Stoke-on-Trent, with an average of 65.6% over the period 2013-2018 compared to 43% for Stoke-on-Trent over the same period.

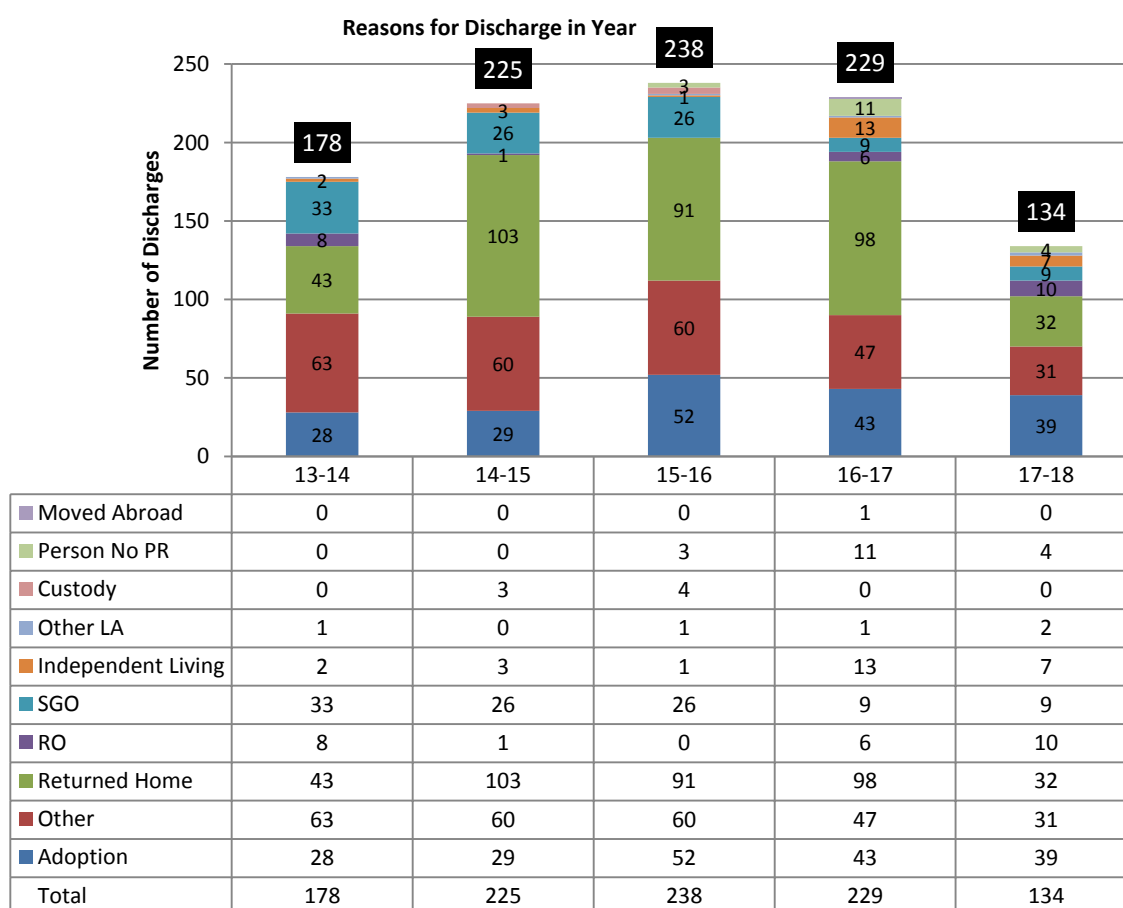| Statistical Neighbour Comparison – Admissions by Category of Need between 2013-2018		
Category of Need	Local Authority	% Average (2013-2018)
Abuse/Neglect	**Stoke-on Trent**	**43**
Abuse/Neglect	Statistical Neighbours	65.6
Child Disability	**Stoke-on Trent**	**8.8**
Child Disability	Statistical Neighbours	1.6
Parental Illness/Disability	**Stoke-on Trent**	**20.4**
Parental Illness/Disability	Statistical Neighbours	4.6
Family in Acute Stress	**Stoke-on Trent**	**3.8**
Family in Acute Stress	Statistical Neighbours	9.2
Family Dysfunction	**Stoke-on Trent**	**12.8**
Family Dysfunction	Statistical Neighbours	17
Socially Unacceptable Behaviour	**Stoke-on Trent**	**7.4**
Socially Unacceptable Behaviour	Statistical Neighbours	5.4
Low Income	**Stoke-on Trent**	**0.8**
Low Income	Statistical Neighbours	0
Absent Parenting	**Stoke-on Trent**	**3.2**
Absent Parenting	Statistical Neighbours	3

Discharges

The percentage of discharges as a result of adoption in Stoke-on-Trent increased from 28 (15.7%) in 2013/2014 to 52 (21.8%) in 2015/2016. Although the total number reduced to 39 by year-end 2018 the actual percentage against all discharges had increased to 29.1%.

'Care Ceased for Other Reason' discharges, shown as 'Other' in the chart below, are children turning 18, which have shown a decline since 2013-2014 from 63 (35.4%) to 31(23.1%) in 2017-2018.

Children returning home saw an increase between 2014-2017 with a low of 43 and a high of 103, an average of 42.3%. This declined to 32 (23.9%) in 2017-2018 indicating either a change in practice and approach or a greater complexity of need and risk impacting upon the ability to return young people home safely.

At their peak in 2013-2014, Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) accounted for 33 (18.5%) of all discharges but in 2017-2018 this was down to 9 (6.7%).This is despite the number of children in connected placements (family/friends) increasing significantly over the same period.

Figure 12

Reasons for Discharge in Year

	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18
Moved Abroad	0	0	0	1	0
Person No PR	0	0	3	11	4
Custody	0	3	4	0	0
Other LA	1	0	1	1	2
Independent Living	2	3	1	13	7
SGO	33	26	26	9	9
RO	8	1	0	6	10
Returned Home	43	103	91	98	32
Other	63	60	60	47	31
Adoption	28	29	52	43	39
Total	178	225	238	229	134

Duration of Children in Care

The average number of days in care for the Children in Care population has increased by 144 days since 2015-2016. This means the average child has been in care nearly 5 months longer in 2017-2018 than in 2015-2016. In 2015-2016 58.8% of children had been in care less than 2 years, by 2017-2018 this had decreased to 42.4%.
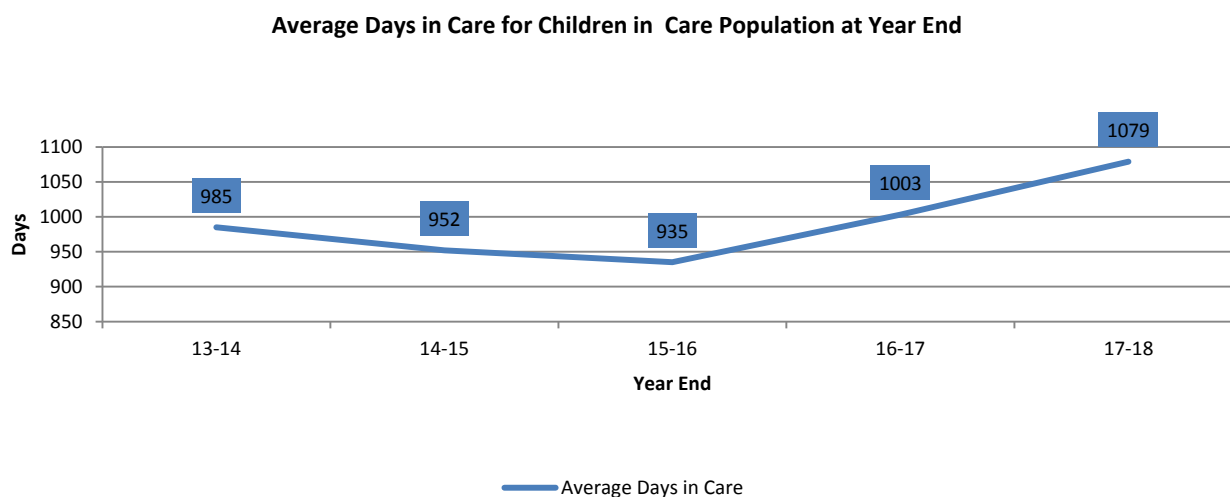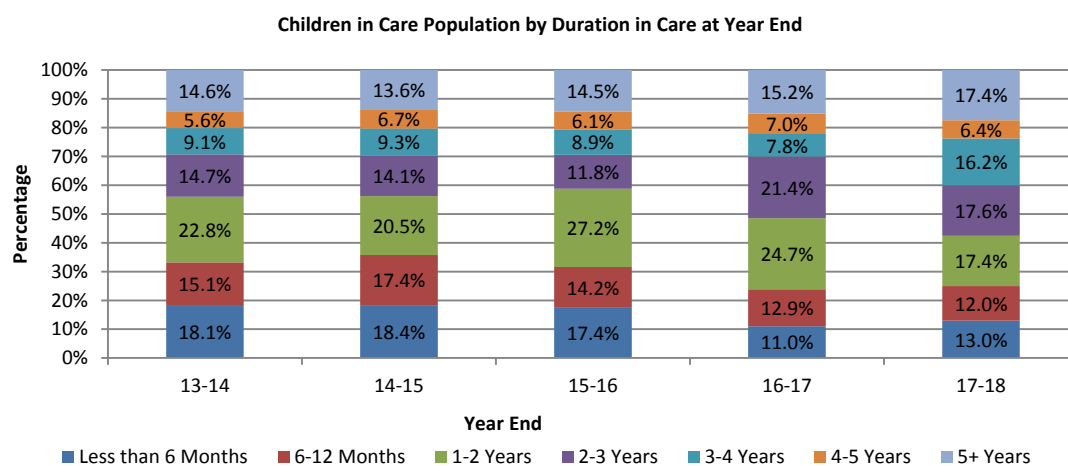
Figure 13

Average Days in Care for Children in Care Population at Year End

Year End	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18
Average Days in Care	985	952	935	1003	1079

Figure 14

Children in Care Population by Duration in Care at Year End

Year End	Less than 6 Months	6-12 Months	1-2 Years	2-3 Years	3-4 Years	4-5 Years	5+ Years
13-14	18.1%	15.1%	22.8%	14.7%	9.1%	5.6%	14.6%
14-15	18.4%	17.4%	20.5%	14.1%	9.3%	6.7%	13.6%
15-16	17.4%	14.2%	27.2%	11.8%	8.9%	6.1%	14.5%
16-17	11.0%	12.9%	24.7%	21.4%	7.8%	7.0%	15.2%
17-18	13.0%	12.0%	17.4%	17.6%	16.2%	6.4%	17.4%

Age and Gender of Children in Care

There has been a significant increase in children in care aged 5-15 years and 16+ with this group of young people remaining in care longer until independence.

The percentage ratio between male and female children in care has remained consistent, as the total number of children in care has increased.

In addition, there has been an increase in the number of 16+ UASC from 5 in 2015 to 2017, to 11 in 2017-2018,see figure 21 below.

Age group of children in care	Mar-16	Mar-17	Mar-18	Gender of children in care	Mar-16	Mar-17	Mar-18
0-4 years	193	179	197	Female	308 (47%)	313(48%)	349(47%)
5-10 years	203	212	231	Male	346(53%)	340(52%)	391(53%)
11-15 years	181	185	210				
16 years and over	77	77	102				
Total number of children in care	654	653	740				

Sibling Groups

In 2014-2015, 55.9% (167) of all children taken into care were part of a sibling group. In 2017-2018 this number has reduced to 44.5% (97). For the last 3 years the average sibling group was made up of 2.7 children.

Figure 15
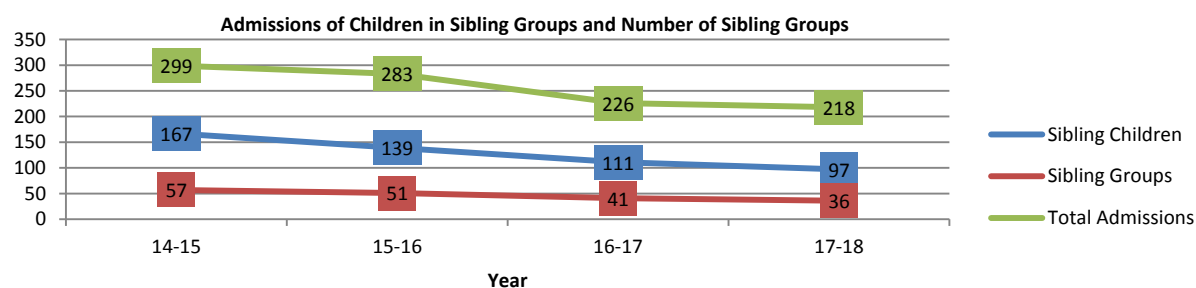
The age ranges of Children in Sibling Groups taken into care have remained consistent each year. For the last 2 years there have been no 16+ year olds taken into care who were part of a sibling group.

Figure 16

Age Group of Children Admitted to Care in a Sibling Group
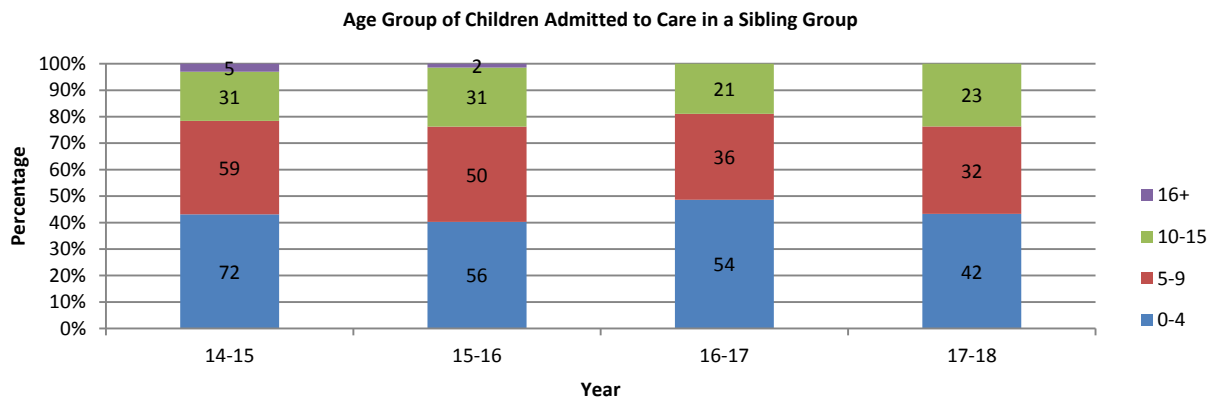
Where a child is placed in care with all their siblings, 72% of the sibling groups consisted of 2 children. Children from larger sibling groups are less likely to be placed with all of their siblings. Of the 173 children in care from sibling groups where the entire group is placed together, 49% (85) were in foster placement and 24% (41) were placed with parents.
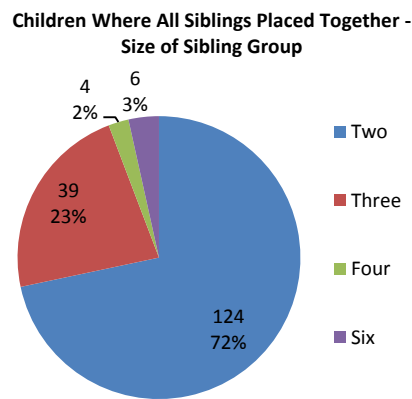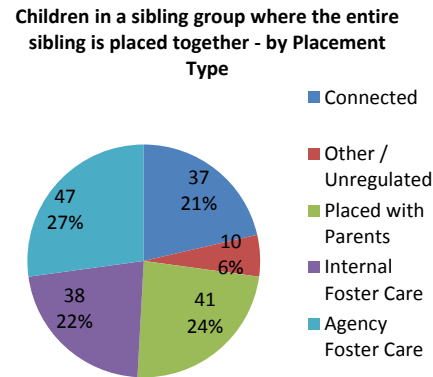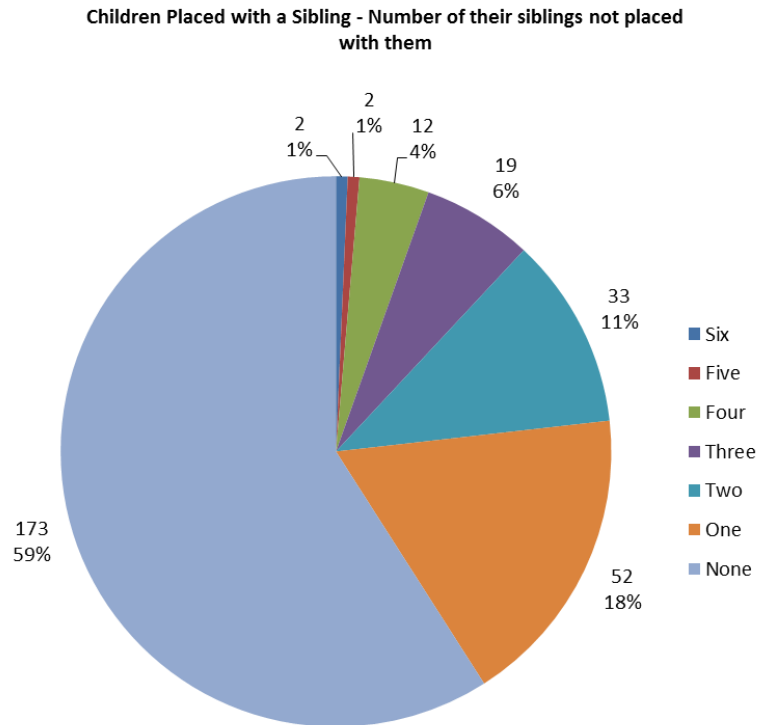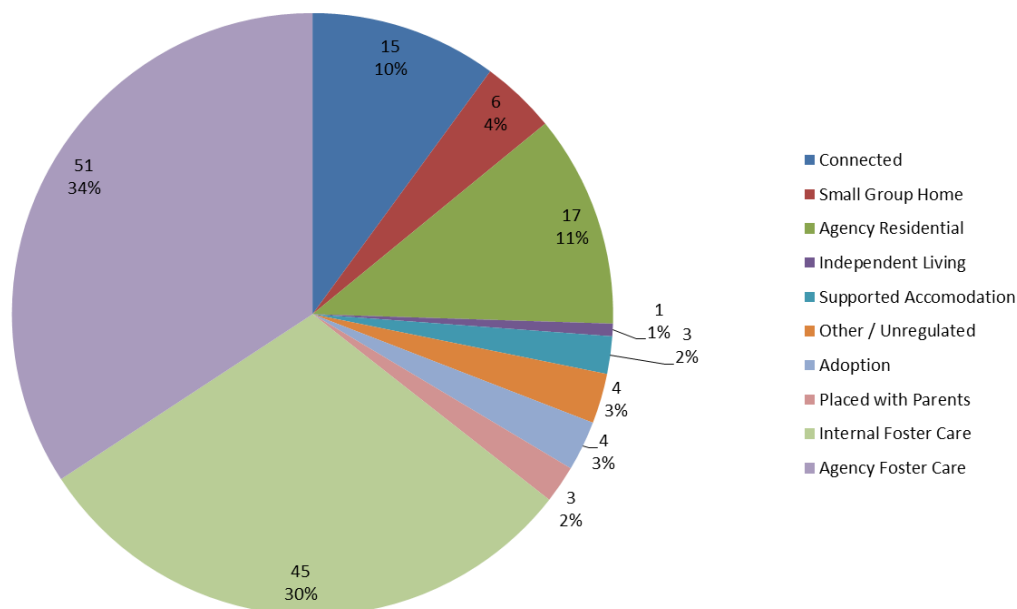
Figure 17

Children Where All Siblings Placed Together - Size of Sibling Group

- Two
- Three
- Four
- Six

(124, 72%; 39, 23%; 4, 2%; 6, 3%)

Figure 18

Children in a sibling group where the entire sibling is placed together - by Placement Type

- Connected
- Other / Unregulated
- Placed with Parents
- Internal Foster Care
- Agency Foster Care

(37, 21%; 10, 6%; 41, 24%; 38, 22%; 47, 27%)

Figure 19

Children Placed with a Sibling - Number of their siblings not placed with them

- Six
- Five
- Four
- Three
- Two
- One
- None

(2, 1%; 2, 1%; 12, 4%; 19, 6%; 33, 11%; 52, 18%; 173, 59%)

Restrictions apply to the number of placements for foster carers, reducing the amount of larger sibling groups that can be placed together in these settings.

Figure 20

Children in a sibling group but not placed with one of their siblings - by Placement Type

Legend:
- Connected
- Small Group Home
- Agency Residential
- Independent Living
- Supported Accomodation
- Other / Unregulated
- Adoption
- Placed with Parents
- Internal Foster Care
- Agency Foster Care

Of the children in a sibling group but not placed with a sibling there are a number of placement types that didn't have any sibling groups placed in them – Small Group Homes, Agency Residential and Supported Accommodation / Independent Living.

Ethnicity of Children in Care

Where a child in care's ethnicity is known, it is noted that there has been an increase in the number of children from an ethnic background other than white British, increasing from 18% (120) in 2016/2017 to 22% (161) in 2018.

Ethnicity	Mar-16	Mar-17	Mar-18
Any other Asian background	8	7	12
Any other Black background	0	0	1
Any other ethnic group	4	6	4
Any other Mixed background	6	8	14
Any Other White Background	6	6	6
Asian / Brit - Indian	2	1	0
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	2	3	3
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	20	20	22
Black African or Black British - African	10	9	13

Black Caribbean or Black British - Caribbean	4	4	4
Chinese	0	0	1
Declined to say	8	8	4
Gypsy / Roma	9	15	21
Information not yet obtained	1	1	11
Mixed - White and Asian	13	15	18
Mixed - White and Black African	7	5	9
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	29	26	33
Not Known	1	0	0
NULL	4	1	0
White British	520	518	564
Total children in care	654	653	740

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

The Number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children in care within Stoke-on-Trent has increased over the last 3 years. The largest increase is for those aged 16-17, with the cohort being predominantly male.

Figure 21

Looked After Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children - by Age
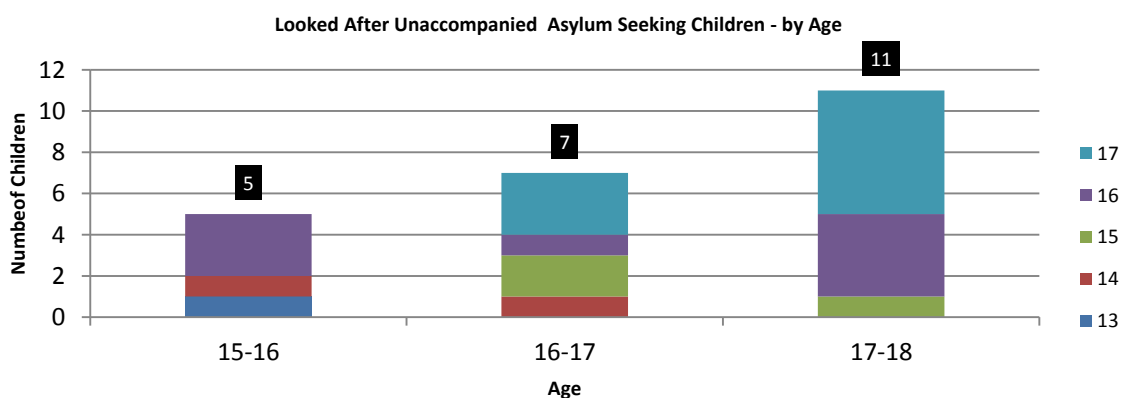
The largest proportion of unaccompanied asylum seeking children were placed in Foster care within Stoke-on-Trent.

Gender	15-16	16-17	17-18
Male	5	7	10
Female	0	0	1
Total	5	7	11

Placement Type	15-16	16-17	17-18
Foster Care	3	4	6
Supported Accommodation	1	1	2
Independent Living	1	2	3
Total	5	7	11

| Nationality	15-16	16-17	17-18
Afghani	3	3	2
Albanian	1	1	0
Iraqi	1	3	3
Ethiopian	0	0	2
Iranian	0	0	1
Sudanese	0	0	1
Vietnamese	0	0	2
Total	5	7	11

| Location of Placement for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children	15-16	16-17	17-18
Stoke	3	4	5
Walsall	1	1	1
Leicester	1	1	1
Northwich	0	1	0
Bradford	0	0	1
Nottingham	0	0	1
Coventry	0	0	1
Birmingham	0	0	1
Total	5	7	11

Disabilities

The number of Children in Care with a disability has increased by 19 children between March 2015 and March 2018; this falls in line with the increased Children in Care Population during that same period.

Figure 22

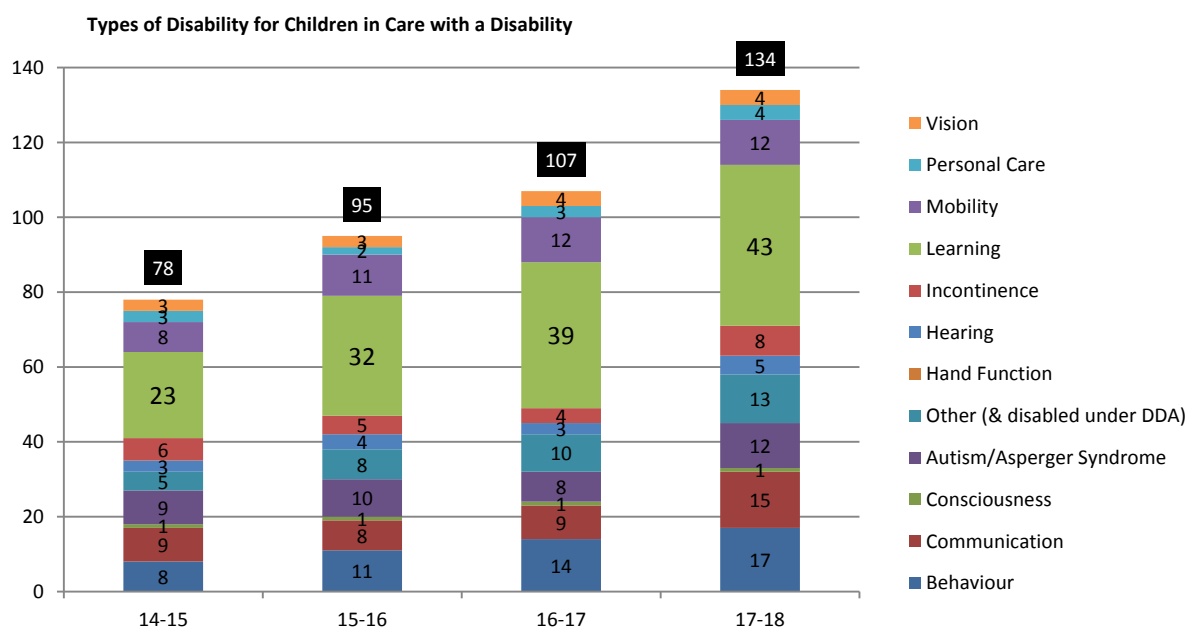**Children in Care With Disability at Year End**
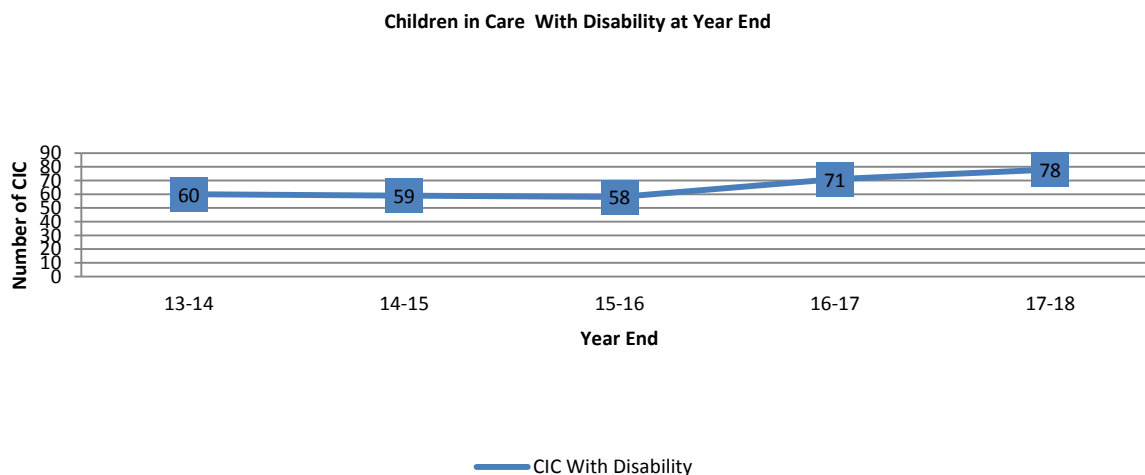
At year end 2013-2014 of the 536 children in care within Stoke-on-Trent, 60 (11.2%) had a registered disability. This increased by 2017-2018 and 78 (10.5%) of the 740 children in care were registered with a disability. Although the actual numbers of children in care with a registered disability has risen, the overall percentage against the total cohort of children in care has reduced slightly from 11.2% to 10.5% between 2013-2014 and 2017-2018.

Figure 23


CIC with a Disability at Year End
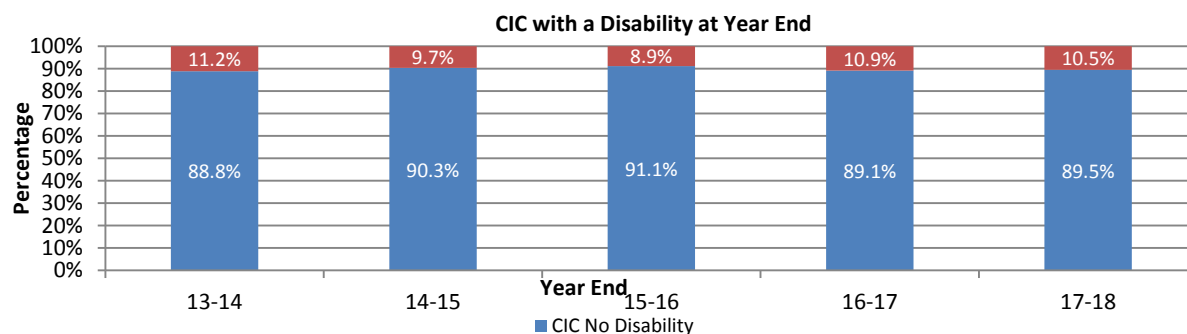
Learning Disabilities have consistently accounted for around a third of the disabilities recorded against Children in Care with Disabilities

Figure 24

Types of Disability for Children in Care with a Disability

The largest proportion of children in care with disabilities are placed within foster care with 34 of the 60 children (56.7%) in 2013-2014. In 2017-2018 this figure increased and 40 of the 78 children in care with disabilities were placed within foster care, however this was only 51.3% due to the total increased cohort of children in care.

Figure 25

Children in Care with Disabilities by Placement Type at Year End
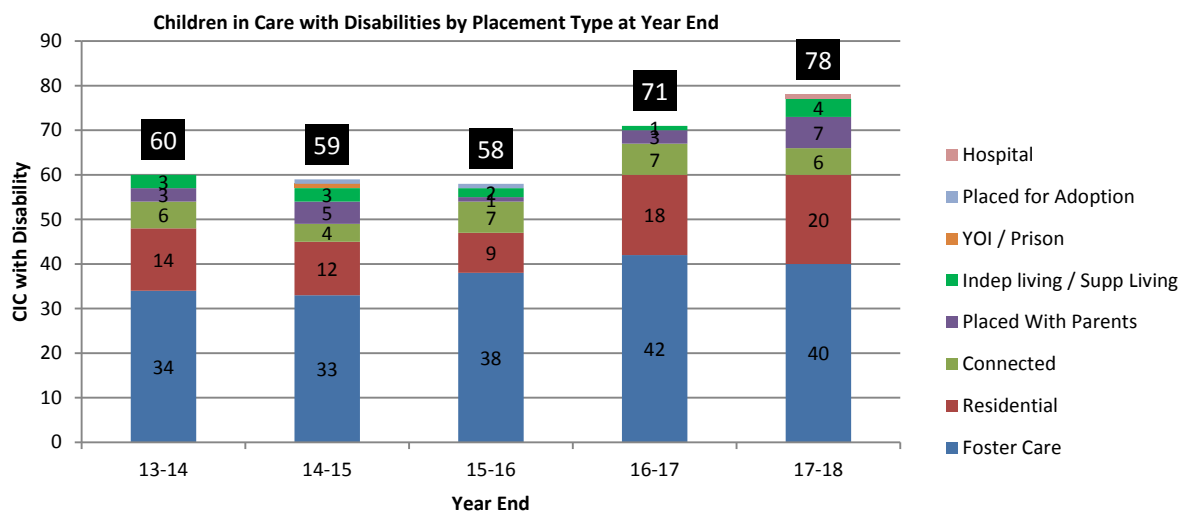
In 2017-2018, 35 (44.9%) of the 78 Stoke-on-Trent Children in Care with a disability were placed within the Stoke-on-Trent Boundary in comparison to 32 (53.3%) of the 60 Children in Care with a disability in 2013-2014, an overall reduction of 8.4% since 2013-2014.

Figure 26

CIC with Disability Placed Out of Area at Year End
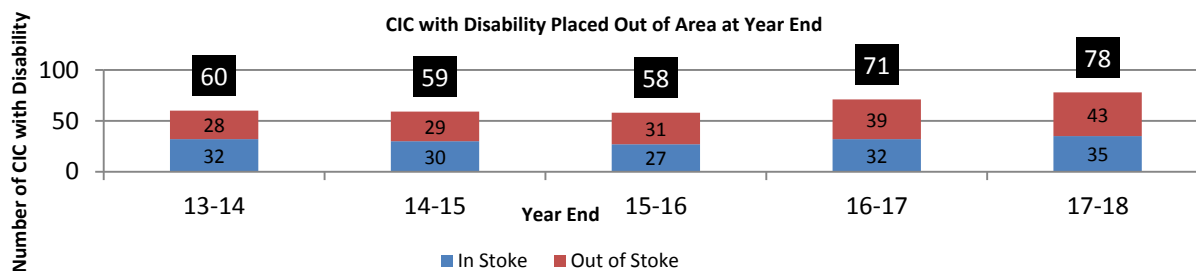
5. Placement Profile and Needs Analysis

Placement Location

In September 2018 there were 791 Children in Care within Stoke-on-Trent. See figure 27

- 51% (407) are placed within the Stoke-on-Trent boundaries
- 30% (236) are located within a 20-mile radius of the city
- 19% of the Stoke-on-Trent Children in Care are placed more than 20 miles from the City boundary
- 6% of these being placed in excess of 50 miles of Stoke-on-Trent.
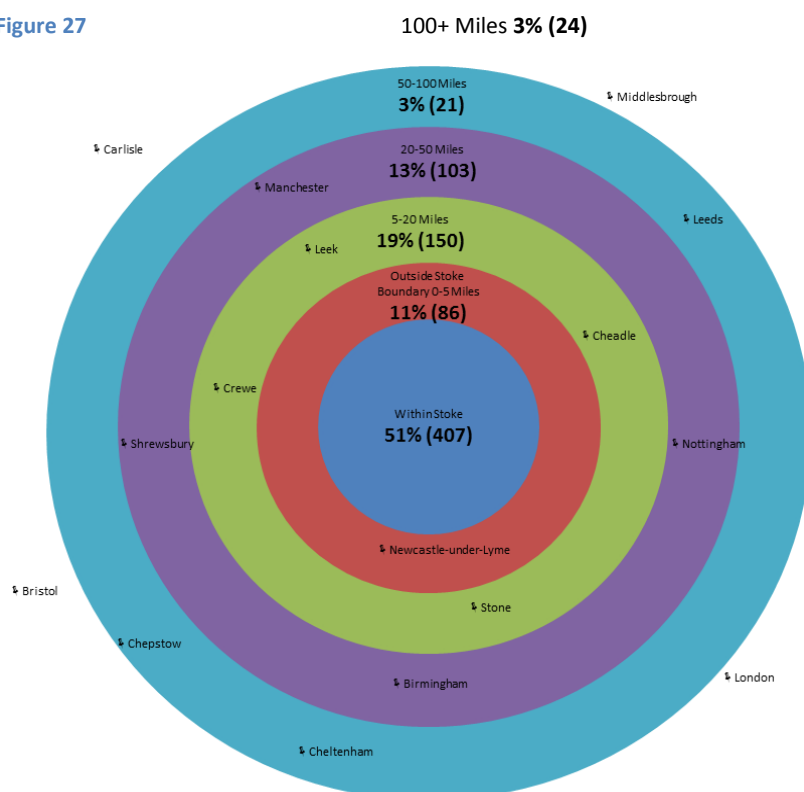
Year End Data	Mar-16	Mar-17	Mar-18	Sept -18
Number of children placed out of city	292	286	307	384
% of children placed out of city	45%	44%	41%	49%

The analysis shows the breakdown of placement types as of September 2018, with 43%, 175 of the 407 children within Stoke-on-Trent placed in foster care; this is 22% of the overall 791 children in care within Stoke-on-Trent.

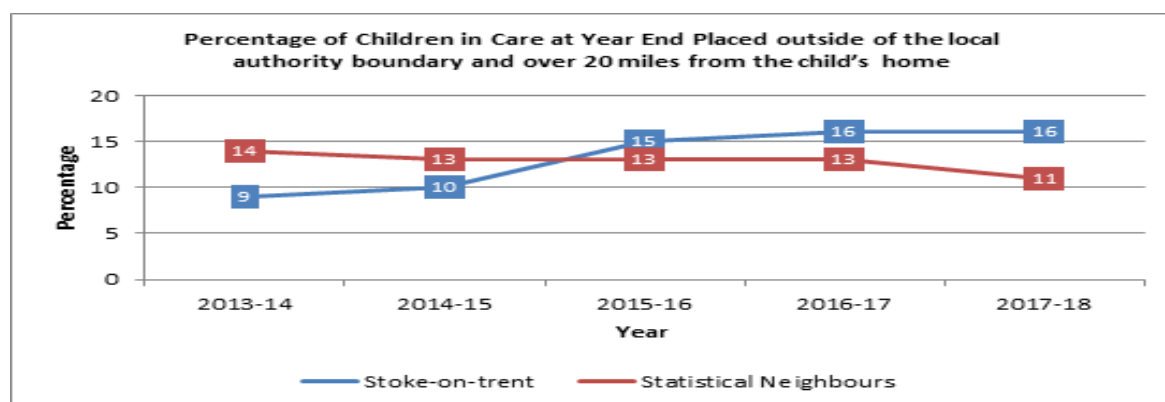| Distance from Stoke-on-Trent / Placement Type	In Stoke	0-5 miles from Stoke-on-Trent	5-20 miles from Stoke-on-Trent	20-50 miles from Stoke-on-Trent	50-100 miles from Stoke-on-Trent	100+ miles from Stoke-on-Trent
Secure /YOI/Prison	1	0	0	0	2	1
Residential	28	2	24	16	5	3
Placed with Parents	66	0	2	3	0	1
Placed for Adoption	2	0	4	2	2	6
Unregulated	24	0	2	0	2	0
Indep Living/Supported Accommodation	15	5	1	5	1	0
Hospital/NHS	2	0	0	0	0	0
Foster to Adopt	1	1	0	0	0	0
Foster Care	175	72	99	66	8	2
Connected	93	6	18	11	1	11

Proportion of Children in Care by Distance

Figure 27

100+ Miles **3% (24)**

50-100 Miles
3% (21)

20-50 Miles
13% (103)

5-20 Miles
19% (150)

Outside Stoke
Boundary 0-5 Miles
11% (86)

Within Stoke
51% (407)

⇞ Middlesbrough

⇞ Carlisle

⇞ Manchester

⇞ Leeds

⇞ Leek

⇞ Cheadle

⇞ Crewe

⇞ Shrewsbury

⇞ Nottingham

⇞ Bristol

⇞ Newcastle-under-Lyme

⇞ Stone

⇞ Chepstow

⇞ Birmingham

⇞ London

⇞ Cheltenham

Statistical Neighbour Comparison for placement outside the Local Authority Boundary

Between yearend 2013-2014 and 2017-2018 Stoke-on-Trent saw an increase in children placed outside the Local Authority boundary, from 9% (48) to 16% (103) of the total cohort of children in care. In comparison, the statistical neighbour's placements outside the local authority boundary for children in care reduced between the same period with 14% at yearend 2013-2014 and 11% by 2017-2018. 94% of our children are placed within 50 miles with 81% within 20 miles.

Figure 28

Percentage of Children in Care at Year End Placed outside of the local authority boundary and over 20 miles from the child's home

Year	Stoke-on-trent	Statistical Neighbours
2013-14	9	14
2014-15	10	13
2015-16	15	13
2016-17	16	13
2017-18	16	11

(Statistical data reference: Children's Social Care Benchmarking Tool V2.8)

Placement Type

At year-end 2017-2018, of the 740 children in care 188 (25%) of these were in Internal fostering placements.

- Internal Fostering used to account for 34.5% (185) of all placements making it the main placement type during 2013-2014. It has reduced to 25.4% (188) over 5 years.
- Agency Foster Care over the same time has become the main placement type increasing from 20.5% (110) to 28.1%(208).
- Connected placements has seen a 4.5% increase in the 5 years.
- There has been a 2.7% increase in other placements types of which unregulated placements with family members makes up the vast majority.
- The number of children placed with parents has seen a slight decrease of around 1%.
- The number of children placed for adoption has decreased by 3.8% (17).
- Placements in the Small Groups Homes have decreased by around 1%.
- Placements in agency residential have increased by around 1%, this is likely due to Small Group Home capacity staying static in that time period.

Figure 29
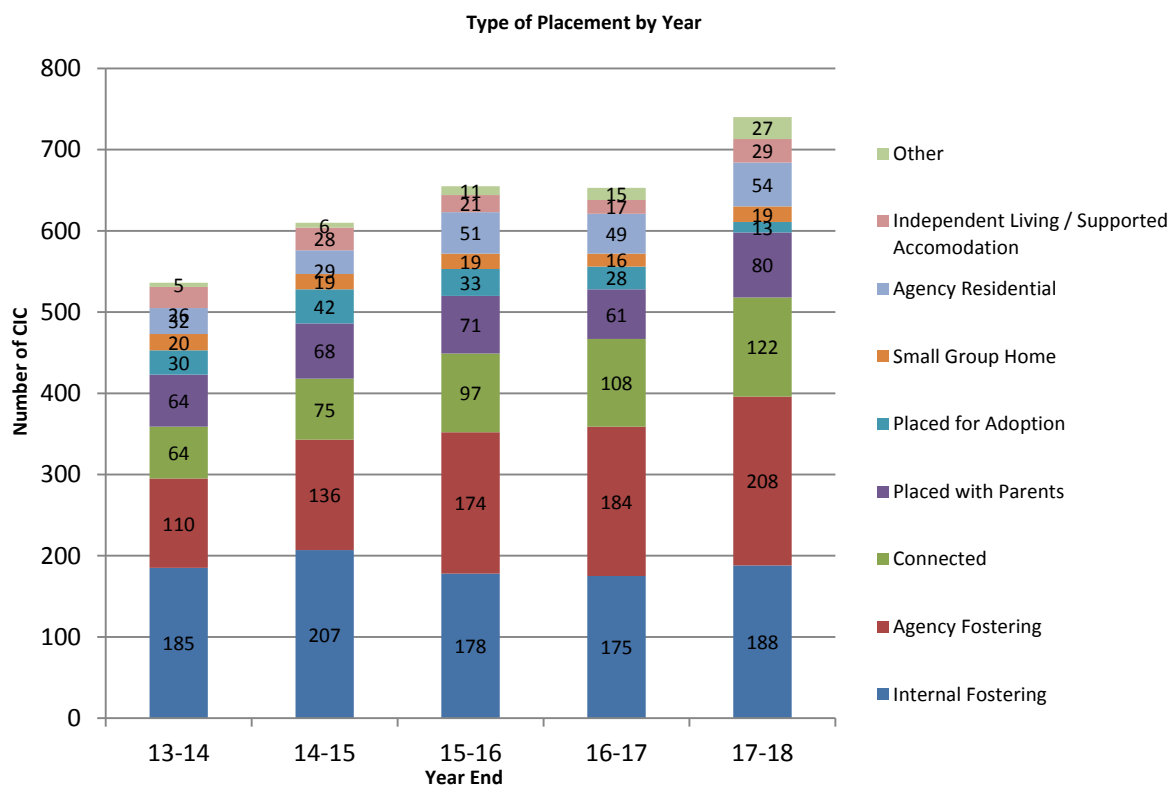
ADOPTION

The number of children who have been adopted over the last 6 years is highlighted in the table below.

2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
42	42	45	36	22	30

There was a rise in the number of children adopted last year. During 2017/18 there was a reduction in children placed for adoption, however more 'harder to place' children were able to be adopted, including 4 children over the age of 5 years, including a little boy aged 8 years, which has been a real success for him. The table below gives a further breakdown:

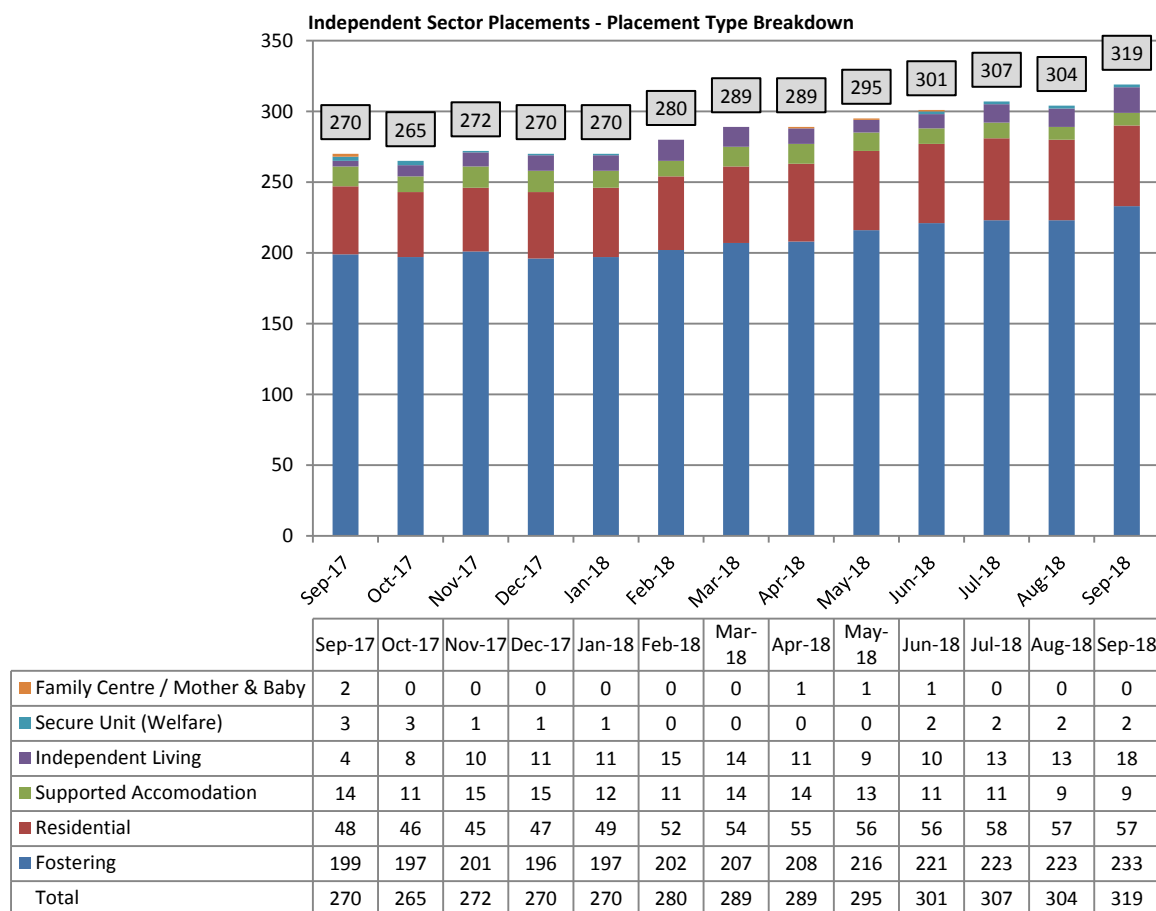|	Single Child	Sibling Group 2	Sibling Group 3	Sibling Group 4+	Aged 5 year+	Child with Disability	BME Child
2016 – 2017	28	4 (8)	0	0	1	0	5
2017 - 2018	18	2(4)	0	1	4	0	3
2018 - 2019	19	4 (8)	1 (3)	0	2	0	3

To meet Stoke-on-Trent's vision for children by providing support so that children can grow up within their family or remain in a home environment where possible the city council has 82% of children within such family-based settings.

- 188 Internal Fostering (25%)
- 208 Agency Fostering (28%)
- 122 Connected individuals (16%)
- 80 Placed with parents (11%)
- 13 Placed for adoption (2%)

The number of in-house carers has not increased with the number of children in care meaning there is a direct correlation between the increase in children in care and the numbers of children in independent fostering arrangement placements.

The number of unregulated placements has increased. An unregulated placement is one where an immediate placement with a Connected Person (a relative, friend or other person connected with the child) is deemed the most appropriate immediate placement for a child with relatives and friends who have not previously been approved as foster carers.

Figure 30

Independent Sector Placements - Placement Type Breakdown

	Sep-17	Oct-17	Nov-17	Dec-17	Jan-18	Feb-18	Mar-18	Apr-18	May-18	Jun-18	Jul-18	Aug-18	Sep-18
■ Family Centre / Mother & Baby	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0
■ Secure Unit (Welfare)	3	3	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	2
■ Independent Living	4	8	10	11	11	15	14	11	9	10	13	13	18
■ Supported Accomodation	14	11	15	15	12	11	14	14	13	11	11	9	9
■ Residential	48	46	45	47	49	52	54	55	56	56	58	57	57
■ Fostering	199	197	201	196	197	202	207	208	216	221	223	223	233
Total	270	265	272	270	270	280	289	289	295	301	307	304	319

In April 2018, 289 (39%) of the 740 children in care within Stoke-on-Trent, were placed in the independent sector, by September 2018 this had risen to 319 (40%). The Independent sector placements have risen in Stoke-on-Trent in line with the increase in the number of children in care.

The number of children who experience a placement breakdown or placement disruption adoption is very low. This is due to thorough prospective adopter assessments and careful matching.

Year	No of Children placed for adoption	No of adoption disruptions	No of adoption breakdowns
2016-2017	36	1	
2017-2018	22	1	1
2018-2019	30	1	

The majority of children are placed for adoption with in-house adopters. The table below illustrates the numbers placed in house, with regional neighbours, and those placed inter-agency with other LA's or VAA's. We tend to place 'harder to place' children with VAA approved adopters, as they are often skilled to meet the needs of these children.

The table also shows the children placed on a fostering to adopt and concurrency basis which is an area for development.

	Children Placed in-house	Children Placed in -Region	Children Placed Inter-Agency	Placed FFA/ Concurrency (Early Perm)
2016 - 2017	21	2	13	1/0
2017 - 2018	15	1	6	0/0
2018 - 2019	20	3	7	2/0

Approved adopters

	Applicants approved to adopt	LGBT Applicants approved to adopt	Total approved
2016 - 2017	17	2	19
2017 - 2018	15	2	17
2018 - 2019	7	8	15

There has been a gradual decrease in approved adopters over the last three years. There is a national shortage of adopters. In the past, Stoke on Trent adoption service has not had to actively recruit, as there has been a consistent flow of enquiries, many via word of mouth or through referrals from other Local Authorities, for example, applicants wanting to adopt babies were often referred via neighbouring Authorities. In recognition of the need to increase the number of adopters, a new recruitment campaign has been developed.

Regional Adoption

From April 2020, Stoke on Trent adoption service will be functioning as a regional adoption agency, together with Staffordshire, Shropshire and Telford, with a focus, not just on adoption, but on permanency as a whole. A regional sufficiency and recruitment strategy is being developed as well as new branding.
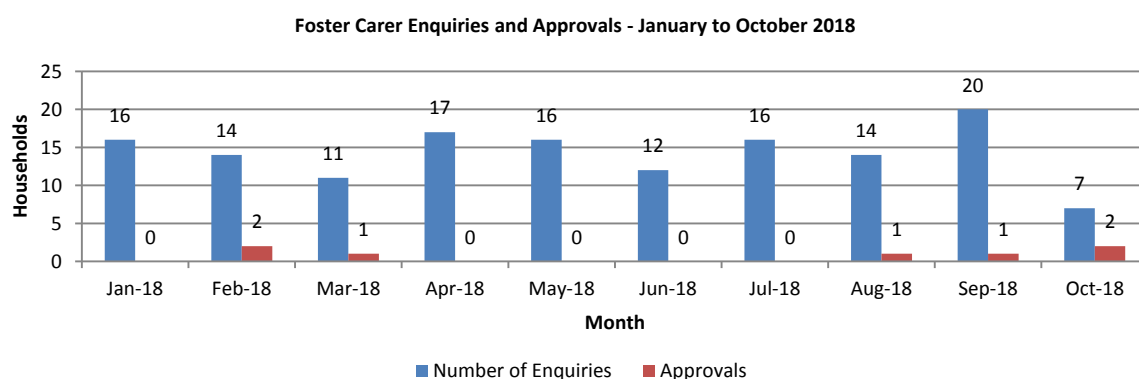
In-House Fostering

Between 2015 and 2018 the difference between Stoke-on-Trent Foster Carer approvals and deregistration has seen the net number of carers reduce by 11.

Figure 31
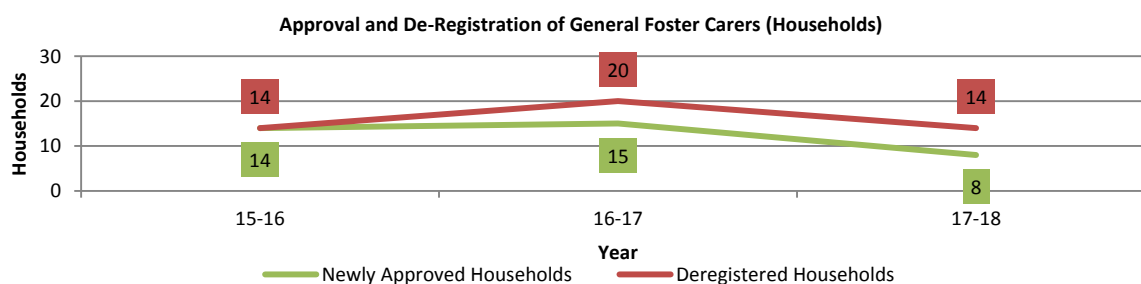
Since January 2018 Stoke-on-Trent have received 143 fostering enquiries, an average of 14.3 per month. If this were to continue until the year end we would expect 171.6 enquires per year. Of the 143 Enquiries there have been 32 applications representing a 22.4% conversion rate from enquiry to application. At the end October 2018 there were 23 Households in the process of being assessed/approved. This process is aimed to be completed within 16 weeks. If 22.4% of the 171.6 enquires were converted to an application this would be 38.4 households.

Figure 32

Foster Carer Enquiries and Approvals - January to October 2018

In the financial year 2018-19 there have been 4 fostering households approved. Since January 2018 for Stoke-on-Trent, 7 households have been approved.

Figure 33

Fostering Household Approvals and Planned Approvals 2018-19
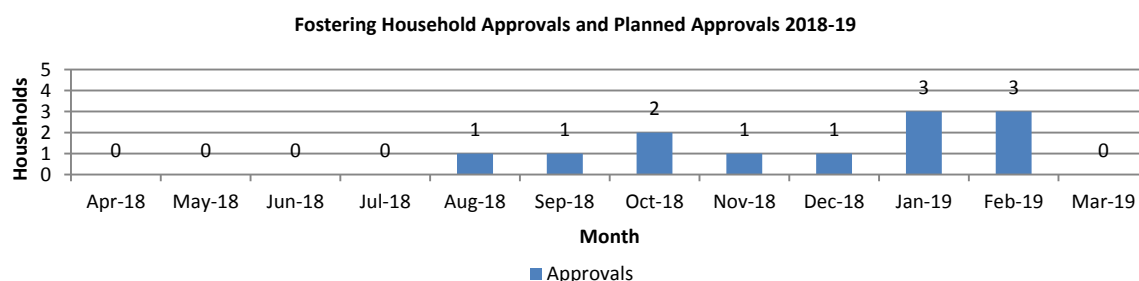
As of November 2018 the Local Authority's Fostering Panel has a further 8 households awaiting approval at panel, this would give 12 newly approved households in the year if all are approved. During the year 2018-2019 there have been 6 deregistration of households.

**Current Foster Care Profile**

Ethnicity of Foster Carers

Household Ethnicity Type	Households	%

All White British	148	94.3%
All Pakistani	3	1.9%
All Mixed White/Black Caribbean	1	0.6%
Mixed	2	1.3%
No Ethnicity Recorded	3	1.9%

Ethnicity	Individuals	%
White British	260	91.9
White Irish	1	0.4%
White / Black Caribbean	1	0.4%
Other Mixed	1	0.4%
Pakistani	6	2.1%
Black Caribbean	1	0.4%
No Ethnicity Recorded	13	4.6%

76.4% of children in care are White British and 94.3% of foster carer households in the City are White British. Stoke on Trent has a rich and diverse community and children in care need ethnically and faith matched placements to meet their needs. The Fostering service is planning to target faith and community leaders to support us with the recruitment of foster carer households from across the City

Age of Foster Carers
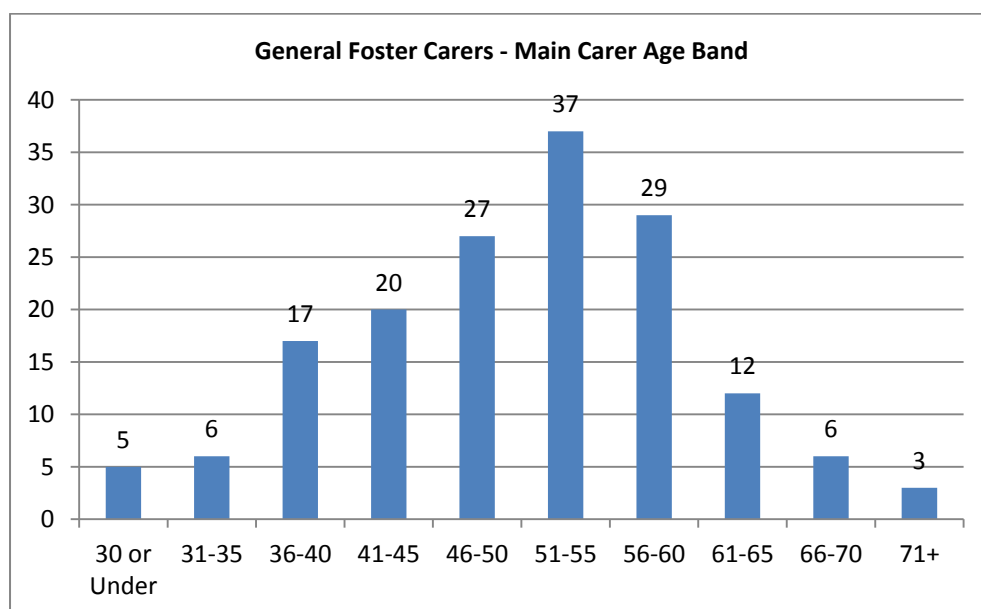
Foster Carer Approval Preferences

Foster Carer approved age range	%
0-4	43%
5-10	33%
11+	15%
0-17	9%
Total	100%

Current approvals do not meet the needs of Stoke children and young people with a high proportion of carers offering placements to children aged 0-10. As a result of the nearly 73% of 13+ young people are placed with Independent Fostering Agencies. The focus of the foster care recruitment strategy is to target the recruitment, approval and training of foster carers who are willing to offer placements to teenagers while maintaining and expanding the capacity of existing foster carers. A range of communications are being developed to focus on the skills and needs of potential foster carers required to match the needs of all children and young people in the City. This will target specific professions to develop specialist fostering services in line with children's needs

- Residential care workers
- NHS/health workers
- Police/Probation
- Educational workers
- Social care workers

Length of Service

General Foster Carer years approved	Number	%
Under 1 Year	12	7.6%
1 year	9	5.7%
2 years	15	9.6%
3 years	9	5.7%
4 years	23	14.6%
5 years +	76	48.4%
10 years +	8	5.1%
15 years +	4	2.5%
20 years +	1	0.6%
25 years +	0	0.0%

There is a significant drop in retention of carers after year 5. The frequency and quality of communications needs to be improved as part of the recruitment and retention strategy which includes:

- Quarterly Catch Ups service updates
- Fostering Newsletter
- FCA communications

- Exit interviews to develop a learning

Small Group Homes

Stoke on Trent has 12 Small Group Homes that are rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted. The maximum occupancy level is 2 children. The Service is currently in the process of expanding the number of Homes to 14.

SMALL GROUP HOME	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
	% Occupancy	% Occupancy	% Occupancy
BBCH	53.3%	97.8%	86.0%
BVCH	56.7%	83.7%	98.6%
DAFHCH	78.1%	97.1%	83.7%
DAIHCH	100.0%	96.7%	89.5%
PHCH	88.9%	95.1%	98.6%
RTH	97.5%	94.8%	49.2%(solo placement)
TBCH	98.1%	99.0%	100.0%
TECH	84.9%	98.8%	88.9%
TOCH	100.0%	81.4%	84.9%
TWCH	93.6%	98.5%	92.3%
Average	85.1%	94.3%	87.2%

Small Group Homes saw an average occupancy of 87.2% in 2017-2018, a reduction from 2016-2017. Occupancy levels can be affected by acceptance of children with complex and challenging needs and the importance of matching the needs of the child with the placement and those of the other resident.

Adoption

The averages presented here are simple averages for the authorities listed (excluding the LA selected). They provide a simple comparator of the performance indicators without placing too much emphasis on any one Local Authority. Where data does not exist for an LA it is excluded from the mean calculation.

Percentage of Looked After Children adopted in year
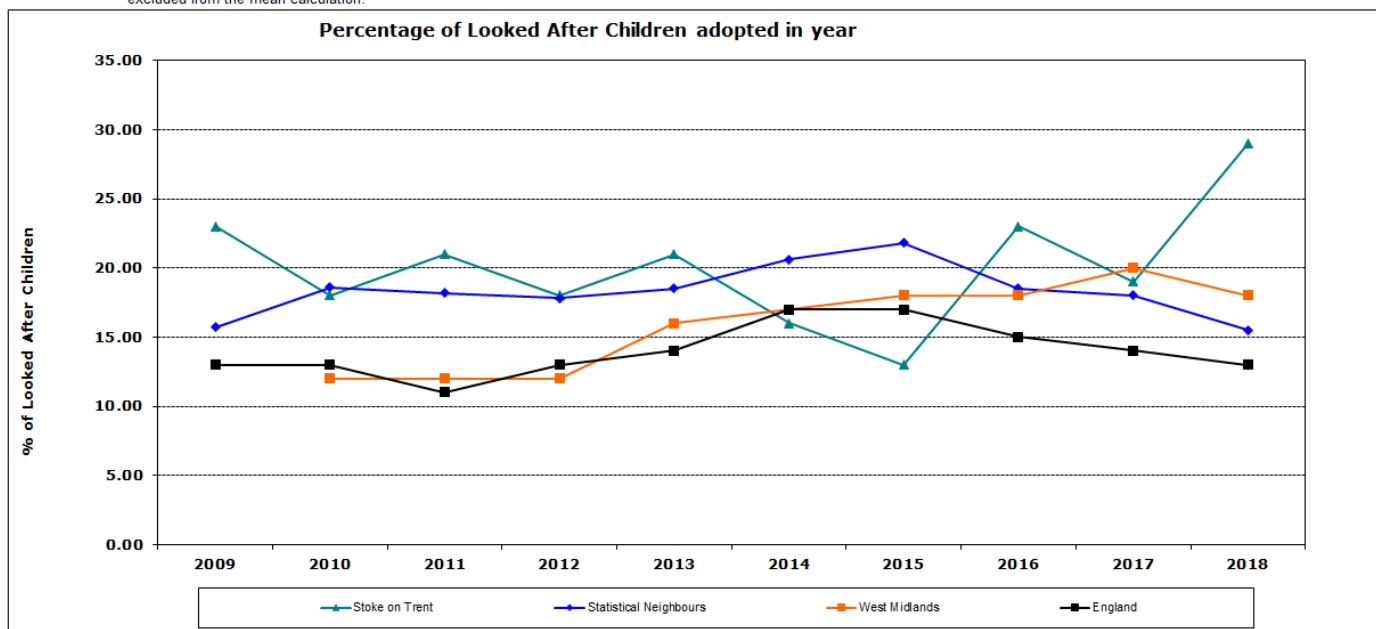
Placement Stability

The ambition is that the child should be placed in the most suitable and stable placement. This is measured by the number of placement moves a child experiences. There were an additional 66 placement moves in 2017-2018. This represents a 19.8% increase in the year and is on average an extra 5.5 placement moves per month.

Figure 34

Placement stability measures as at 31st March

	Mar-16	Mar-17	Mar-18
Short term stability - % of CIC with 3+ placements in year Please note this column is the internal measure. Figures below are the official stats.	7.9%	8.3%	9.6%
Stoke-on-Trent	8%	8%	Not yet available
Statistical Neighbours	8.8%	8.3%	Not yet available
West Midlands	10%	11%	Not yet available
England	10%	10%	Not yet available
Long term stability - % of CIC for 2.5yrs in placement for 2yrs+	76.6%	75.9%	74.6%

Stoke-on-Trent ranked 24th nationally at March 17 for Short Term Stability. A high rank is good for this measure.

6. Edge of Care Services

A robust Edge of Care Strategy is being developed which will put in place a range of responses to support families to stay together where it is safe to do so. Currently there are three key services which can provide this type of support:

Family Support Teams

Each of the 6 Towns has a Family Support Team in operation which focusses on receiving referrals from partner agencies where there is escalating, but not safeguarding, concerns about a family. The teams are trained in delivering family support to avoid escalation of problems and family breakdown.

Family Group Conferencing

Family group conferencing is a decision-making meeting to help sort out family problems. This offers family members, including children and young people, a chance to get together to agree a solution.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council has been engaging with Family Group Conferencing since May 2017 on a call-off framework, which is in place until March 2020. Initially Stoke-on-Trent anticipated around 50 family group conferences a year. Between May 2017 and September 2018 a total of 99 referrals to family group conference were made of which 64 were completed.

Family Adolescent Support Team (FAST)

Stoke-on-Trent City Council's Family Adolescent Support Team works with children and parents on the edge of care to provide support to help prevent where possible the need for children entering care. The Family Adolescent Support Team also supports foster carers who are at the point of breakdown.

7. Destination of Care Leavers and Pathways out of Care

Stoke-on-Trent eligible care leavers increased from 64 in 2016 to 97 in 2018 (2016 was an anomaly as there are usually around 100 eligible care leavers at any one time), a gain of 33 young persons. Relevant care leavers increased from 10 to 15 between 2016-2018, however former relevant care leavers decreased from its peak in 2017 of 171 to 162 in 2018.

Number of Care Leavers by type	Mar-16	Mar-17	Mar-18
Eligible - *a young person who is 16 or 17 and who has been looked after by the local authority/Health and Social Care Trust for at least a period of 13 weeks since the age of 14, and who is still looked after.*	64	91	97

Relevant - *a young person who is 16 or 17 who has left care after their 16th birthday and before leaving care was an eligible child.*	10	8	15
Former Relevant - *a young person who is aged between 18 and 25 who, before turning 18 was either an eligible or a relevant child, or both.*	165	171	162

Destination of Young People leaving care

At year end 2016-2017 there were 653 children and young people in care within Stoke-on-Trent and 740 at year end 2017-2018.

- 61 young people left care aged 16+ during 2016 – 2017 in comparison to 33 in 2017-2018.
- Around 30% of young people returned home to parents or with former foster carers in 2016-2017 (18) and 2017-2018 (10).

Destination of young people leaving care during 2016-17 and 2017-2018

Type of Accommodation	Number of care Leavers 2016-2017		Number of care Leavers 2017-2018	
College/University Accommodation	1	1.6%	0	0.0%
Foyers/Training	0	0.0%	1	3.0%
Friends	0	0.0%	2	6.1%
NHS Establishment	1	1.6%	0	0.0%
No Fixed Abode	2	3.3%	0	0.0%
Other	0	0.0%	3	9.1%
Other Accommodation- The Housing Project	5	8.2%	0	0.0%
Parents	9	14.8%	4	12.1%
Relatives	1	1.6%	2	6.1%

Residential Care	4	6.6%	1	3.0%
Self-Contained accommodation and Floating Support	10	16.4%	5	15.2%
Self-Contained accommodation and Specialist Support	2	3.3%	1	3.0%
Supported Accommodation/Education	1	1.6%	0	0.0%
Supported Accommodation/Training	3	4.9%	2	6.1%
Supported Lodgings	2	3.3%	1	3.0%
Tenancy of House/Flat/Bedsit	11	18.0%	5	15.2%
With Former Foster Carers	9	14.8%	6	18.2%
Total	**61**	**100.0%**	**33**	**100.0%**

(Stoke-on-Trent Housing and Support for young People aged 16-25 Needs assessment 2017)

8. Finance

Over the past 3 years Stoke-on-Trent's expenditure on placements for looked after children has grown. This is attributed to the increase in the number of children in care, and therefore an increase in spend, on the core categories of placement – independent, residential and foster care.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council will continue to focus on the unit cost and quality of placements, whilst ensuring these placements meet the needs of the children in care cohort.

Average Unit Cost	2017/8 £ per week	2018/9 £ per week (Forecast)	Budget/Spend	Year	Actual Spend £000s	Budget £000s	Variance £000s
ISP Residential	3,336.56	3,557.76	Actual	2015/16	22,109	16,448	5,661
Small Group Homes (SGH)	3,587.39	*3,613.64*	Actual	2016/17	25,228	21,292	3,936
ISP Fostering	667.00	741.32	Actual	2017/18	25,954	23,611	2,343
Internal	426.38	426.05	Forecast	2018/19	30,145	23,612	6,533

fostering								
Ind/sup accommodation	630.67	683.85						

9. Strategy

Stoke-on-Trent has seen a 13% increase in demand for children in care placements since 2014/15. Should this demand continue, commissioners need to plan for a continued increase in demand for future years against provision.

The needs analysis in this strategy has indicated a number of actions that are required to be undertaken as part of our Strategy to ensure sufficient placements for our young people.

These are bracketed into 3 key areas:

Edge of Care:

- Review and develop the Edge of Care Strategy to focus on supporting children to live safely at home where possible and developing an enhanced offer of support to families, which will include a whole council approach.
- Review and develop support services for parents in conjunction with the Adults Learning Disability and Mental Health Teams, as Parental illness, and in particular disability or mental health concerns, are a key factor in some children becoming looked after.
- Improve and develop work with Health and Education to ensure sufficient support for children with Learning Disabilities, Autism and Challenging Behaviour through the multi-agency Transforming Care Agenda.
- Implement the 'Family Finding Bootcamp' to all front line workers as part of the Signs of Safety approach.
- Strengthen the Pre-birth pathway to give new mothers every opportunity to continue to care for their child at home.

Service Provision for Children in Care

- Increase the number of In-House Foster Carers through recruitment drives and regional work force building on the current offer whilst we continue to identify best practice nationally.
- Work alongside Health to develop Specialist Small Group homes for those with more challenging needs.
- Develop Supported Accommodation for Emergency and Crisis placements.

- Develop alternative ways to provide residential accommodation for disabled children and to ensure commissioning is joined up with Health and Education.
- Continue with West Midlands Framework where it meets the needs and consider Block Contracting where it offers good quality placements for a more efficient price.
- To support applications for Special Guardianship Orders where appropriate
- Build on the new West Midlands Regional Residential flexible contact, by developing relationships with providers, which will increase the number of placements that can be offered.
- Ensure that all residential placements are made on the basis that the provider will work with the young person to support them back into family based care, where possible.
- Continue to develop Step Down from Residential arrangements.
- Establish a Stoke-on-Trent/Staffordshire Provider Forum to build relationships and to keep placements within an acceptable radius.

Leaving Care

- Increase the pool of potential adopters by continuing to develop the regional adoption agency as part of the government's regionalisation plan.
- Improve the monitoring process of those children placed at home, to ensure that support is put in place, and orders can be discharged in a timely manner.
- Increase the use of Special Guardianship Orders for those children that have been placed with connected carers.
- To improve the Care Leaver Offer, expand the capacity of the Next Steps Team and the role of Personal Advisers to support young people leaving our care.

10. Conclusion

The rise in the numbers of Children in Care within Stoke-on-Trent has in turn increased the demand for placements. The Council acknowledges the shortfall of In-House Foster placements, which has impacted on the increase of placements into the Independent sector. This in turn has seen an increase in spend.

This strategy outlines the level and demand and profile of Children in Care and the priority areas that have been identified for action. As a next step, a delivery plan will be put in place to implement the identified areas for action.

The delivery of this plan will be monitored by the Corporate Parenting Board for Stoke-on-Trent supported by the Director of Children's Services and the Children's Services Senior Management Team.

References and Data source

Legislative Framework

The following primary legislation governs our commissioning in relation to Looked After Children (LAC):

- *Children Act 1989 & 2004*
- *Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000*
- *Care Standards Act 2000*

- *Children and Young Persons Act 2008*
- *Adoption and Children Act 2002*
- *Statutory Guidance on Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children2010*
- *Homeless Reduction Act 2017*
- *Guidance on the Provision of Accommodation for 16 & 17 year old young people who may be homeless and/or require accommodation (2010)*
- *Promoting the Educational Achievements of Looked After Children: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities 2010*
- *Children and Family Act 2014*
- *Children and Social Work Act 2017*
- *Care Act 2014 (Transition from Children's to Adults services)*

References and Data source

- *Stoke-on-Trent Children and Families Directorate data*
- *Stoke-on-Trent Corporate Parenting Strategy for children in care 2014 – 2016*
- *Stoke-on-Trent Children, Young People and Family Plan 2016-2020*
- *Signs of Safety Chid Protection Framework 2011, 2nd edition*
- *Statutory Guidance on securing sufficient accommodation for looked after children, 2010*
- *Stoke-on-Trent Review of accommodation for care leavers and young people 2016*
- *Stoke-on-Trent Housing and Support for young People aged 16-25 Needs assessment 2017*
- *Stoke-on-Trent Allocations Policy Housing Revenue Account Services 2018*
- *Children's Social Care Benchmarking Tool V2.8*
- *Department of Education Looked after Children Statistics*