



Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council

Children's Services

Strategy for Securing Sufficient Placements for Looked After Children and Care Leavers 2019 - 2022



Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council

Document Control			
Applies To	Childrens Services – Looked After Children	Intranet	Yes
Approval/Date	5 th February 2019	Issue Date	5 th February 2019
Author/Lead Officer	Richard Gerrard/Wendy Medd	Page Content	21
Council Website	No	Print Run	
Division	Children’s Services - Looked After Children	Review Date	February 2020
Document Replaces	Reviewed and updated Document	Status	Approved
Document Title	Strategy for Securing Sufficient Placements for Looked After Children and Care Leavers	Version	8
UNCONTROLLED IF PRINTED			

Table of Contents

1.	The Purpose of the Strategy	3
2.	Our Vision	3
3.	Scope of the Strategy.....	4
4.	Current Placements for Redcar and Cleveland Children	4
5.	The Need for Placements for Redcar and Cleveland Children.....	6
6.	Commissioning Priorities	8
7.	Conclusion	15
Appendix 1: Placement Sufficiency Needs Analysis.....		16

The Purpose of the Strategy

This strategy sets out how Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council intends to meet the Sufficiency Duty as laid down in Section 22G of the Children Act 1989. In preparing this document consideration has been given to the Statutory Guidance Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children 2010 (Reviewed 2013). Our Strategic Plan for Looked After Children and Care Leavers 2016-2019 describes our overarching vision for Looked After Children and our approach to improving the quality of services, support and care we offer.

1. Our Vision

For most children and young people, the best place to live and grow up is with their birth family. For many reasons, this is not possible for some children and they need to be looked after by the local authority. In our role as Corporate Parent, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council are fully committed to ensuring that Looked After Children and Young People are not only safeguarded from harm, but have a good experience in care that promotes better outcomes in all aspects of their lives. Our aspiration is for every Looked After Child and Care Leaver of Redcar and Cleveland to:

- Experience high quality care and stable relationships.
- Be nurtured and grow up with a sense of identity and belonging.
- Feel their needs are given the highest priority and that they are valued and cared about not just cared for.
- Be provided with opportunities and support to achieve their full potential.
- Achieve a successful transition to adulthood.

Securing the right placement, in the right place, at the right time is key to achieving better outcomes for our children and young people. Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council therefore need to do all that we can to ensure that children of the Borough have access to sufficient high quality and varied placements available to meet their needs. This strategy also takes into account recommendations from the OFSTED report, *From a Distance, Looked After Children living away from their home area, April 2014*.

2. Scope of the Strategy

This strategy covers the full breadth of placements that the council either provides or commissions for Looked After Children aged 0 to 18. It also covers our Staying Put arrangement which allows our young people the opportunity to remain with their foster carers in a nurturing family environment post 18.

3. Current Placements for Redcar and Cleveland Children

Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council have projected that in the 2018/19 financial year we will spend £10,883.100 on placements for children and young people who are looked after. There are a range of placement types and this is necessary to ensure sufficiency and range to meet the needs of our children.

Redcar and Cleveland Fostering Service

The Redcar and Cleveland Fostering Service provides a range of placements for Looked After Children and Care Leavers. Where placements are made outside of the Local Authority area, support and resources are provided to maintain children within their local school, support children to participate in leisure activities and socialise with their friends, when it is in the best interests of the child.

The types of placement that are offered by our in-house team include:

- Short term placements offering temporary care for children and young people. This can last from a few weeks to, possibly, many months. Children may be returned home, move on to a long-term placement, including adoption or into independent living.
- Long-term fostering placements for children and young people for whom the decision has been made that they will not return to live with their own families. Long term fostering is an alternative where adoption or special guardianship is not appropriate. Foster carers will commit to care for and support children and young people on a long-term basis until they are ready to move to independence.
- Support Care for families at times of particular stress so their parents and young people can have 'time out' from the pressures at home. Support carers work closely with parents and young people to help them resolve the difficulties they are experiencing. Support care can be offered for day-care, weekends or overnights during the week but this is flexible and is tailored around the needs of the young person and their family.

- Short-Break Care for families with children and young people who have a disability. Children are given opportunities to become more independent and to have new experiences. It gives them the chance to form new friendships outside of their family and, at the same time, their families get a break from caring and a chance to recharge their batteries.
- Family and Friends (Connected Persons) Care – the provision of care by a relative other than a birth parent, or by a friend or other person connected to the child. Family and Friends Care provides stability, continuity of experience, shared culture and maintenance of relationships, providing a sense of emotional security to young people when they cannot live with their birth parents.

Independent Fostering Agencies

Where the needs of a child or young person cannot be met within our own in-house fostering service, or where we lack the capacity, we will commission placements from Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA).

Over recent years there has been a steady increase in the number of IFA placements purchased. Due to the high cost and often the IFA placements being out of borough, our aim is to reverse the trend by implementing targeted recruitment campaigns for in-house foster carers that can meet a variety of need.

The Tees Valley Fostering Consortium, comprising five local authorities, is responsible for the commissioning of independent provision of placements within the Tees Valley region. Placements may therefore be made within any of the Tees Valley authority areas or indeed outside these areas as long as the placement is suitable and identified as being in the best interests of the child. IFA providers are expected to ensure that, as with in-house providers, children are enabled and supported to access their local schools and maintain their social networks.

Redcar and Cleveland council are working in collaboration with the other 11 north east councils to procure a regional solution from April 2019 for IFA providers.

Residential Placements

In 2011, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council ceased to offer internally run residential care. Since then, all of our residential placements have been commissioned from the independent sector. These placements are only commissioned after extensive multi-agency collaboration and it is agreed that no suitable cost effective internal provision is available.

With other Tees Valley authorities, we have commissioned a framework of providers and we are actively supporting the market to increase local capacity. In February 2018 the Council entered into a regional solution (NE12 Framework) which includes

Childrens Residential Placements, this framework is in collaboration with the other 11 local authorities and health counterparts within the North east to work jointly with providers to develop the market and increase sufficiency.

However, for those children who require residential care and education, there is very low density of provision within the North East. Some local authorities are entering into partnership with independent providers to commission residential care with education and Redcar & Cleveland will capitalise on any opportunity this may offer. Currently the local authority commissions placements in residential schools on a needs basis agreed with partners through the Commissioned Placements Panel.

Placements are first advertised through the NE12 Framework which includes, as part of the framework, Special Educational Needs placements. Once a child or young person has been matched with the most appropriate provision an individual award is made to the provider. This approach ensures that individual children's needs are at the forefront of the commissioning process. The framework will also allow for parental preference to be taken into account. Where no match can be found through the framework, the Council must then look at spot purchase arrangements with providers outside of the NE12 Framework.

The authority works collaboratively with providers to maximise any cost and volume opportunities, but only when completely satisfied about the quality of the provision. As a consequence, the authority has a small number of preferred providers of residential education and care, however, these establishments are at some distance from Redcar & Cleveland.

4. The Need for Placements for Redcar and Cleveland Children

In order to understand whether we have sufficient placements to meet local need, we have undertaken a needs analysis that has helped us to forecast demand and identify commissioning priorities for the future. The needs analysis considered a broad range of data, including:

- Numbers and profile of Looked After Children
- Types of placement
- Reasons for becoming Looked After
- Placement breakdowns
- Current provision

This analysis highlighted a number of strategic issues that we need to address when planning, delivering and commissioning services for children who are Looked After, and those with additional emotional and behavioural needs.

The numbers of Looked After children has steadily increased and at 30th September 2018 there were 279 looked after children. In 2013/14 there were 174.

Abuse and neglect, family dysfunction and family in acute stress are the main reasons for children coming into care.

Within Redcar & Cleveland there have been 2 young people in a secure unit or young offender institute/prison in 2018/19 to date.

28% of the children who came into care between April and September 2018 are aged 0-2, and we are able to meet the high demand for placements predominantly through in-house foster provision

4.6% of children who have become looked after this year are from a black and ethnic minority background but all of our in-house foster carers are of white European origin.

53% of placements for young people aged over 11 year and over were provided by the independent sector (either IFAs or residential placements) at 30th September 2018.

At 30th September 2018 12.2% of looked after children are in residential placements, with 82% of the 12.2% living out of borough due to a lack of local provision that meets the specific needs of the child.

As of the end of September 2018, 5 children were awaiting adoption. (i.e. in adoptive placement. Eight Adoption Orders had been made between April 1st 2017 and 31st January 2018. The number of Adoption Orders has decreased from 22 orders made in 2015 to eight orders made between 1st April 2017 and 31st January 2018, which is a national trend.

Unaccompanied asylum seeking children

Despite placement sufficiency challenges we are fully committed to supporting the National Transfer Scheme with the resettlement of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC). We initially made a pledge to accommodate and Look After up to 6 UASC and have experienced the successful transition of UASC from LAC Services through to Leaving Care.

We currently have 10 UASC that are Looked After and we provide Leaving Care services to 7 Care Leavers. We will continue to work closely with the North East Migration Partnership to deliver on the pledge to resettle children from the National Transfer scheme into the borough.

We are prone to the spontaneous arrival of UASC into our Borough not least because Teesport is situated within our geographical boundary. We must be in a position to respond and discharge our statutory duties to bring these children and young people and provide accommodation and support services, as appropriate. There are a number of challenges in to the resettlement in terms of care planning due to the unplanned

arrivals which means the identification of appropriate accommodation difficult to achieve. The impact of the arrivals of UASC into the Borough be it through the National Transfer Scheme or by another means has a significantly impact on an already overstretched demand for foster placement, supported lodgings hosts or supported tenancies. It is difficult to plan with accuracy future placement needs but what we can be sure of though is that the demand for all types of accommodation is likely to increase.

5. Commissioning Priorities

Through our needs analysis we have systematically reviewed current placements for looked after children as well as carried out analysis of current and future demand to identify strengths and potential gaps in provision. This in turn has enabled us to identify 5 commissioning priorities that we need to focus on to ensure that we secure sufficient accommodation that meets the needs of, and improves outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. These are:

1. Development of preventative and early interventions to stop children needing to be looked after.
2. Development of our own Fostering Service to increase the volume and range of in-house fostering placements available.
3. Develop a Strategic Market Development Plan so we fully understand placement demand. We need to ensure we commission high quality care to meet the difficulties of our increasing looked after population. To do this we will work with providers on the Tees Valley IFA and Tees Valley Residential Frameworks and providers commissioned to deliver placements on the NE12 Framework. This is in relation to Specialist Education Placements , Residential Homes and Short Breaks provision.
4. Focus on maintaining placement stability to ensure the following is considered within the planning process:
 - Permanency and stability to be reached at the earliest opportunity
 - Children are involved in the decision-making process in relation to their care
 - Placement moves to be kept to a minimum
 - Attachment to carers is important to support the child's emotional health and wellbeing.
5. Ensure support continues for Care Leavers to become independent adults through the transition process.

Priority 1:

Development of preventative and edge of care services to stop children needing to be looked after

Why this is important

Wherever possible, we want to support families to stay together.

In July 2018, following a restructure we established the Resources Team, which has been integrated into the LAC and Resources Service. The Resources Team play a critical role in de-escalating family problems and keeping children out of the care system. The Resources Team provides a range of support services and interventions to Looked After Children and their families. It can also support children who are on the Edge of Care and their families through specialist support services and therapeutic interventions.

Service Overview

The Beach House provides a homely venue where children and young people who do not live with their parents can spend quality time with their family in a safe environment. The Beach House has 12 private rooms and has a variety of facilities to suit the needs of families using the venue. There is also a communal kitchen and dining/lounge area so that family members can prepare and eat a meal with their children, alongside undertaking other family activities.

Leighton Road is supported accommodation for young people aged 16 and 17 years with complex needs. The property has 8 individual units of accommodation via individual or shared apartments and is owned and managed by Thirteen Group Housing Association. Redcar and Cleveland Council have contracted with Thirteen Group for this provision and have established close working relationships, including the Council providing additional Key Worker support for the young people.

What we will provide

- Support to children and families to access local services and resources to reduce risk to children.
- Outreach Support to Looked after Children and their carers who are experiencing placement instability or who have returned to live with their parents or family members.
- Outreach Support/Rapid Response to children on the Edge of Care and their family, to prevent children from becoming looked after.
- Floating support to young people aged 16/17 who are residing in homeless accommodation.
- Outreach Support to Looked after Children and their carers who are experiencing placement instability.
- High quality supervision of Family Time at various levels, depending on the circumstances of the family and the risks involved.
- A range of events throughout the year to enable families to celebrate key events

together, such as Easter, Halloween and Christmas activities.

- Provide support to enable young people to develop independent living skills

How we will measure success

- An increase in the number of children and families accessing Edge of Care services.
- An increase in the number of Children, Young People and their carers accessing Therapeutic Services which meets their individual needs.
- A reduction in the numbers of children becoming Looked After.
- An improvement in the quality and accessibility of Family Time between Looked After Children and their parents and extended family members, ensuring that key events are celebrated throughout the year.
- The use feedback to shape and develop the service further.
- Providing accommodation both planned and in crisis to children and young people on the Edge of care or who are homeless.

Priority 2:

Development of our own Fostering Service to increase the volume and range of in-house fostering placements available

Why this is important

By placing children and young people within the borough, we can ensure that looked after children are cared for within or close to their community and have continuity of education, health care and relationships with family and friends. This is a recommendation from the OFSTED report, *From a Distance, April 2014*. The Redcar and Cleveland Fostering Service recruits and supports local foster carers to meet the needs of looked after children, and if we can continue to increase the number of in-house foster carers, we can care for more children and young people within the boundaries of the borough.

What we will do

Recruit and retain more in-house foster carers:

- Use our needs analysis to inform marketing and recruitment campaigns.
- Deliver targeted recruitment campaign to increase placement choice, particularly for older children, children with disabilities and siblings.
- Ensure every foster carer has a personal development plan.
- Ensure that all appropriate options for kinship care are explored for children coming into care.

How we will measure success

- An increase in the number of children placed with in house carers.
- A reduction in the number of children in an IFA placement.
- An increase in the number of disabled children receiving short breaks with in-house carers as opposed to residential/out of borough placements.

Priority 3:

Market shaping to increase the quality and range of placements available outside of our own fostering service

Why this is important

Although we want our in-house fostering service to be the placement of choice, there will always be circumstances where alternative placements are more suitable, for example because of specialist needs, or where it is not consistent with the child's welfare to be placed within the local area.

It is important therefore that alternative provision, whether in or out of borough, specialist residential or independent fostering placements, are of high quality and meet need.

What we will do

We will continue to build capacity within our in-house service by recruiting and ensuring high quality training and support for carers.

Residential placements are only commissioned following extensive multi-agency assessment and after it has been agreed that all other options have been exhausted. It is also a recommendation of the OFSTED report, *From a Distance*, that "Local Authorities should discharge their responsibilities as corporate parents properly, ensuring that they give high priority to the needs of looked after children living out of area, and closely monitor the quality and impact of the care and support they receive." Key activities include:

- Working with existing and potential providers to ensure quality of residential care through stringent compliance and quality improvement.
- Working with local partners, including neighbouring local authorities and clinical commissioning groups to secure value for money and sufficiency.
- Ensuring that a process is identified to explore all alternatives.
- Commissioning of placements via NE12 and Tees Valley Residential & IFA frameworks and working with providers on the framework to shape the market and increase sufficiency for hard to place groups.
- Working collaboratively with all North East councils and IFA providers to explore a regional solution to increase sufficiency in the market place.
- We will continue to commission Independent Fostering Agency placements only when it is agreed that needs cannot be met through internal, local provision.
- Where placements are out of borough, every effort will be made to support the child to maintain links with home networks.

How we will measure success

- An increase in the number and diversity of providers available to cater for the range of needs.
- A reduction of the number of children placed in out of borough placements.
- An increase in the number of children placed in in-house and in-borough placements
- An increase in the sufficiency of placements for hard to place groups to find a match within reduced timescales.

Priority 4:

Focus on maintaining placement stability

Why is this important

The stability of a child or young person's placement can be one of the most important influencing factors in achieving positive outcomes for looked after children and young people leaving care. If looked after children are to thrive in their placement, they need to feel attached and experience a sense of belonging in their placement and in the wider community.

Many children within the care system have had poor early life experiences and a careful assessment of their individual placement needs is required. The importance of maintaining sibling relationships is a significant element of this assessment process. A robust assessment, preparation and matching process is required of possible carers to ensure they have the skills, time and commitment to care and to meet the individual needs of each child. This will also be supported the Resources Team.

What we will do

- Use commissioning approaches that adopt incentives/penalties to promote longevity of placements.
- Identify more capacity with carers for sibling placements.
- Use the Resources Team to support stability of placements with foster carers.

How we will measure success

- An increase in the number of long/term placements.
- An increase in the number of sibling fostering placements
- An increase in the number of families accessing the Resource Team interventions.

Priority 5:

Ensure support continues for Care Leavers to become independent adults

Why this is a priority

In 2017/18, 17 young people aged between 16 and 18 years old left care. Of these, 11 were 18 years of age when they left.

Unlike their peers who normally remain in the family home, care leavers will often choose to live independently. Nationally, evidence tells us that “the quality of support care leavers receive is patchy and that their journey through the first decade of adult life is often disrupted, unstable and troubled. They often struggle to cope and this can lead to social exclusion, long term unemployment or involvement in crime” (HM Government, 2013 ‘Care Leaver Strategy’). Furthermore, it is likely that care leavers who are living independently will be particularly affected by Welfare Reform.

Our data tells us that in 17/18 74% of 19 year old leaving care young people in Redcar and Cleveland were in some form of education, employment or training. (14 out of 19 young people)

We need to ensure that care leavers have access to the support they need to successfully transition into adulthood and improve their life chances. Stability in their home environment is key to achieving this and we need to ensure that we have adequate, high quality accommodation available for young people. This applies equally to young people living in the borough, as well as those living in out of borough placements who may have developed strong links with the area in which they have been placed. Where this is the case, we have developed partnerships within other local authority areas to ensure that they have a choice over where they live.

What we will do

- Support young people with the transition into adulthood and independent living in order for them to reach their full potential.
- Every care Leaver will have a Personal Adviser.
- Regularly review the Joint Protocol with Coast and Country Housing.
- Through Staying Put arrangements, give more young people the opportunity to remain with their foster carers in a nurturing family environment post 18.
- Develop the market for alternative accommodation with private landlords to secure range and volume of housing provision required.
- Provide housing related support to care leavers who choose to enter into a tenancy agreement for housing of their own choice with private landlords.
- Develop a Joint Protocol with Local FE providers.

- Offer a comprehensive support package for care leavers going to university.
- Ensure care leavers access relevant benefits and the roll out of universal credit benefit has minimal or no impact on Care leavers claiming benefits.
- Develop a post 16 Personal Education plan for all Looked after young people and Care leavers.
- Offer ring fenced apprenticeships for Young people looked after and care leavers.
- Provide independent living skills preparation groups.
- Increase our own Supported Lodgings placements by recruiting and assessing appropriate supported lodgings hosts who can provide accommodation and support to care leavers who do not have the opportunity to stay put and are not ready for independence.

How we will measure success

- An increase in the number of young people who are accessing staying put and supported lodgings arrangements.
- A reduction in the number of young people becoming intentionally homeless.
- Monthly EET / NEET monitoring meetings – Tracking 16 – 25 year old EET progress
- Review NEET/EET data on a monthly basis to reduce the number of Care Leavers that are NEET.
- An increase in the number of foster carers in borough and in house to cope with capacity for staying put.
- An increase in the availability of single person accommodation for care leavers.

7. Conclusion

Providing sufficient placements for Looked after Children and Care Leavers is a challenge for many local authorities. We recognise the need to increase the range of fostering and residential placements available in the borough. We also aim to ensure high quality services with a variety of specialist skills that meet the diverse needs of Looked after Children in our borough. The local authority is committed to investing in Early Help services to prevent the need for children and young people to become Looked After. There is an understanding within departments that we have to work together to achieve our vision for more effective early intervention and prevention services leading to a decrease in children coming into care.

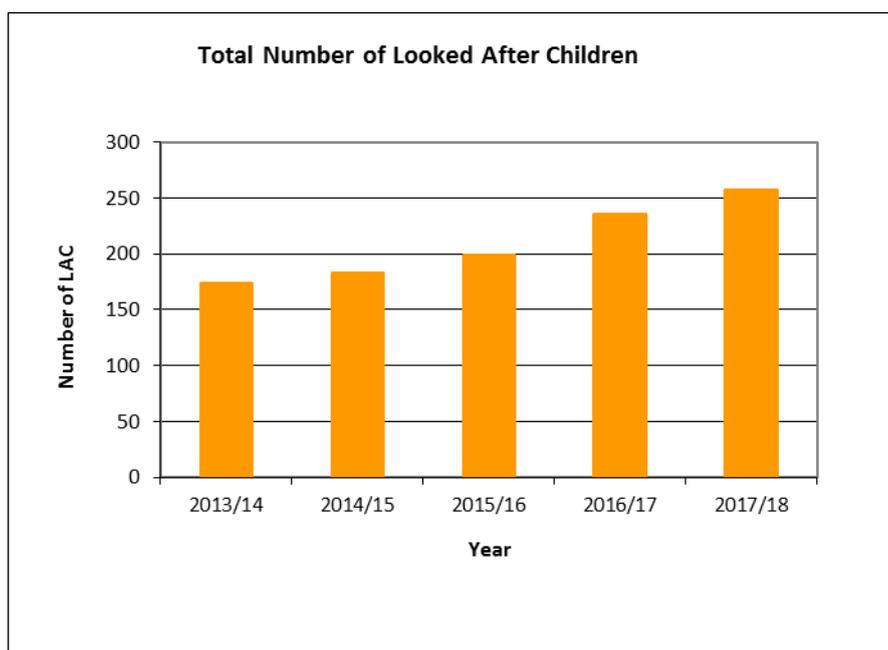
Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council is working collaboratively with neighbouring councils to increase capacity and improve quality within the Tees Valley area for fostering placements and residential care provision using preferred provider frameworks. We are striving to increase the number of in house foster carers and we are working towards children and young people being placed as close to their home as possible. The stability of a placement is critical to a child or young person achieving positive outcomes.

Appendix 1: Placement Sufficiency Needs Analysis

In order to understand whether we have sufficient placements to meet local need, we have undertaken a comprehensive needs analysis that has helped us to forecast demand and identify commissioning priorities for the future.

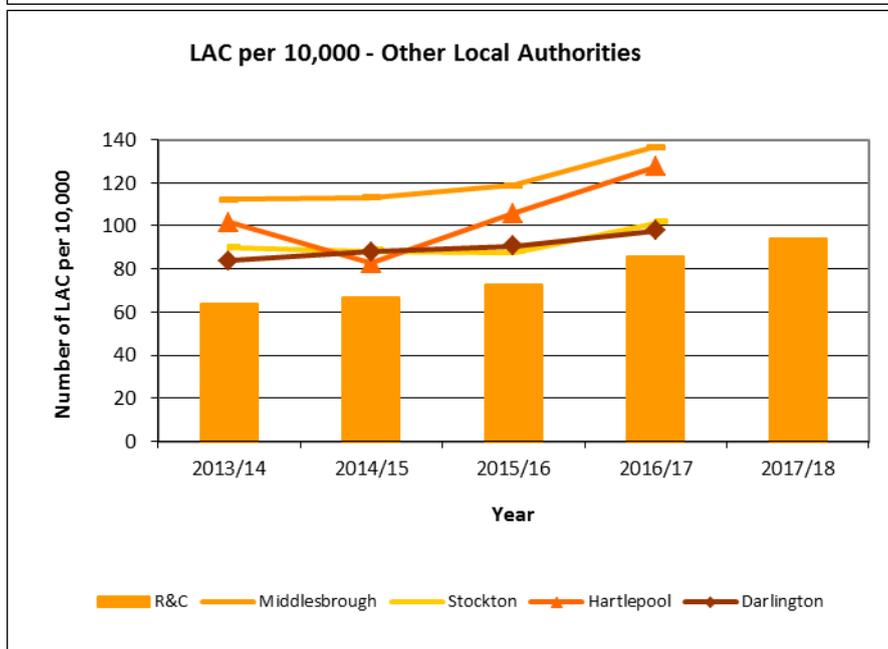
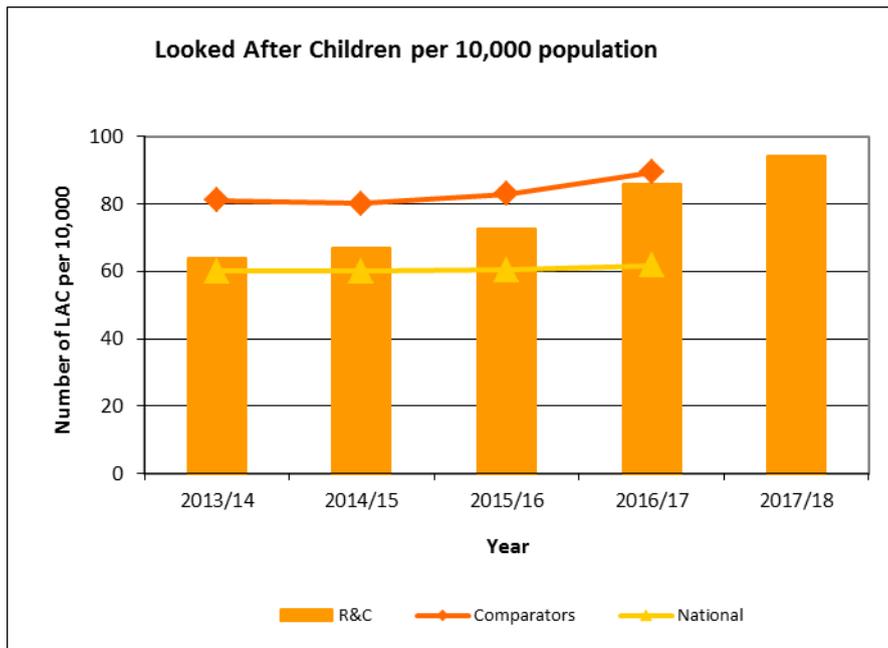
1. Profile of Looked After Children

1.1 Number and rate of Looked After Children



Whilst there have been peaks and troughs, the number of children in care in Redcar & Cleveland has risen steadily over recent years. At the end of March 2016 there were 199 looked after children compared with 279 at the end of September 2018.

The increase in the number of looked after children reflects a national trend, as demonstrated in the below chart.



The increase in the numbers of children looked after in Redcar & Cleveland reflects an overall increase in demand for social care services. An increasing demand for children's social care services, including LAC is not unique to Redcar and Cleveland. It is consistent with the rising trend being seen across the country. This has been attributed to a range of factors that include increased awareness of the needs of vulnerable children, the pressures on families associated with poverty and earlier identification of need as a result of better assessment and more families being supported through early help.

1.2 Age and gender of Looked After Children

Breakdown for 01/04/18 to 30/09/18:

	Female	% of Gender	Male	% of Gender	Total	%
Under 1	7	21.9%	3	14.3%	10	18.9%
1 - 4	11	34.4%	3	14.3%	14	26.4%
5 - 9	4	12.5%	6	28.6%	10	18.9%
10 - 15	10	31.3%	7	33.3%	17	32.1%
16+	0	0.0%	2	9.5%	2	3.8%
Total:	32	100.0%	21	100.0%	53	100.0%

1.3 Ethnicity of Looked After Children

11.3% of children becoming looked after in Redcar and Cleveland in 18/19 to date are from a Black or Ethnic Minority background.

1.4 Looked After Children with a disability

Of the 53 children that became looked after in Redcar and Cleveland in 18/19 to date, 0% were recorded to have a disability or health need.

2. Placement Types

2.1 Placement Types

The following are recorded as placement types in Redcar & Cleveland.

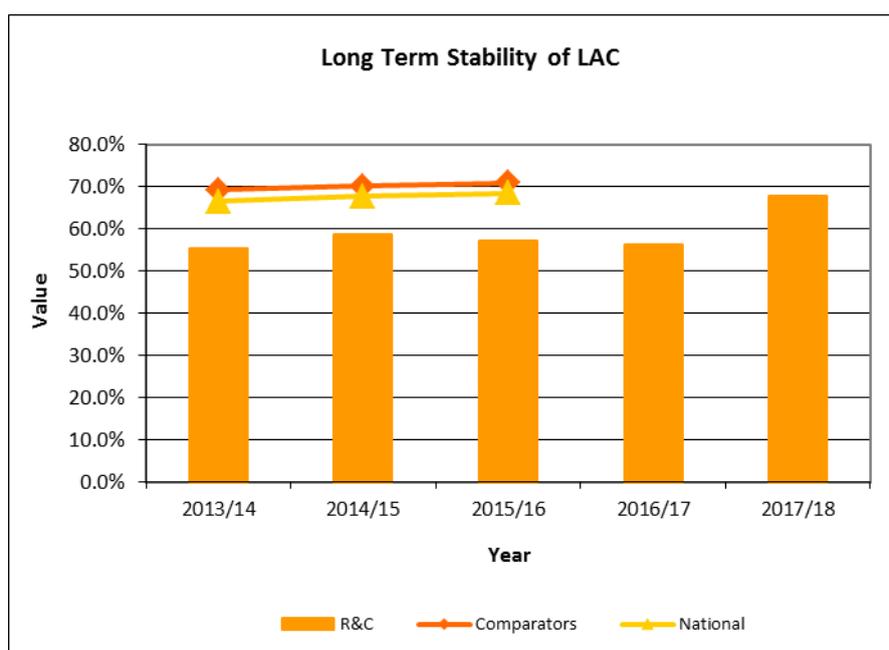
- Placed for adoption with consent (under section 19 of the 2002 Act) with current foster carer
- Placed for adoption with consent (under section 19 of the 2002 Act) not with current foster carer
- Placed for adoption with placement order (under section 21 of the 2002 Act) with current foster carer
- Placed for adoption with placement order (under section 21 of the 2002 Act) not with current foster carer
- Residential accommodation
- Secure unit

- Homes and Hostels
- Placed with own parents
- Independent living
- Residential employment
- Foster placement with relative or friend
- Placement with other foster carer
- Residential care home
- NHS/Health Trust
- Family centre or mother and baby unit
- Young Offender Institution or prison
- All Residential schools

2.2 Placement Stability

Placement Stability is the key to achieving better outcomes for looked after children. Some planned placement changes may be made in a child's best interests, but placements break down because they are not sufficiently well-matched to children's needs, or of sufficient quality, or because they are not well supported. Placement breakdown has a significant impact on children's wellbeing and their friendships, as well as disrupting their education and the continuity of access to other key services.

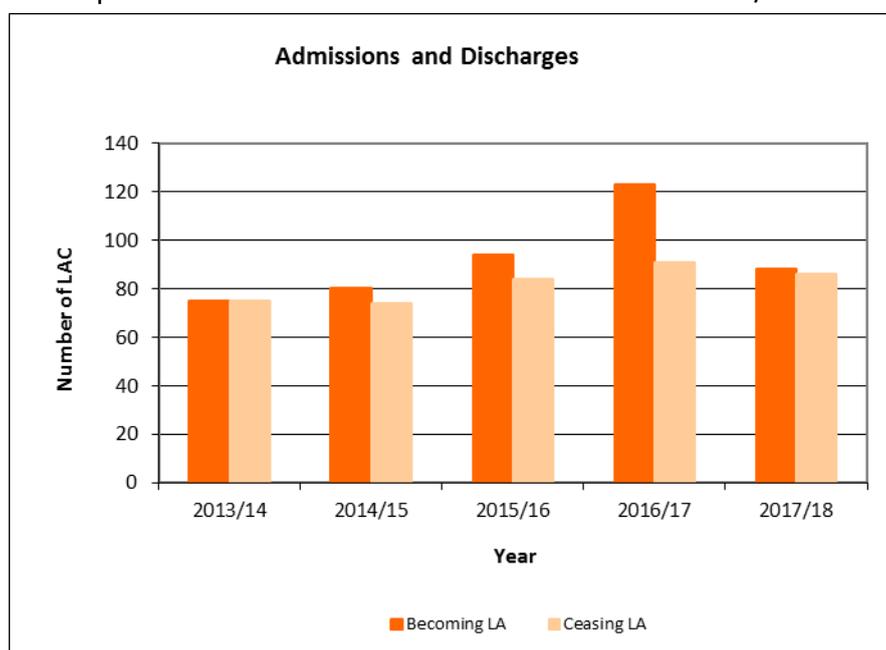
The placement stability measure is of the percentage of looked after children aged under 16 who had been looked after continuously for at least 2.5 years who were living in the same placement for at least 2 years, or are placed for adoption and their adoptive placement together with their previous placement together last for at least 2 years. In Redcar and Cleveland, placement stability is significantly lower than in our comparator authorities, and the national average. However, we are improving steadily.



3. Children entering and leaving care

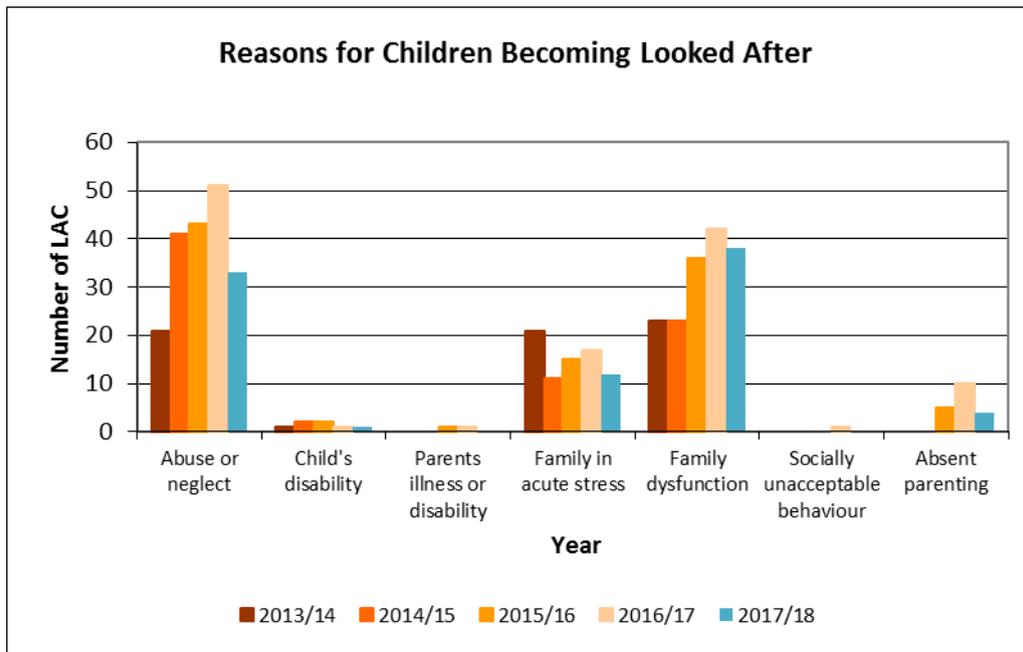
3.1 Admissions and discharges from care

Despite the overall rise in numbers of children looked after, the number of children who *become* looked after fluctuates. In 2018/19 to date, a total of 53 children became looked after compared with 75 children in at the same time in 2013/14



3.2 Reasons for becoming Looked After

Previously, family dysfunction has been the primary reason why children have become looked after followed by family in acute stress and abuse and neglect. In 2018/19 to date, 43.4% of children came into care under the category of family dysfunction; 30.2% abuse and neglect; 24.5% family in acute distress; and 1.9% absent parent. When taken in the context of the age profile detailed below, with 28% of children becoming looked after being aged between 0 and 2 years, this highlights the vulnerability of this very young age group and their need for care and protection.



3.3 Profile of Children Becoming Looked After

In 2018/19 to date 28% of the children who become looked after were aged 0-2 years with those under the age of 1 being the highest proportion at 22.7%. The need to become looked after at the younger end of the age range reflects the increase in the numbers of children subject to child protection plans and care proceedings in the past year. The high demand for looked after placements for the younger age group is met effectively - generally within in house fostering provision although external placements may also be used.

There has been an increase in the proportion of children in the age range 1-4 becoming looked after. Of those in the 11-14 age range, a high proportion are placed with Independent Fostering Agencies. We have a small number of teenage placements in-house and are actively recruiting to increase this number by enhancing our fostering fee for those who take teenage placement. Placements for this age group are also provided by the independent sector, be that fostering or residential care.