



**CHILDREN & FAMILIES SCRUTINY &
IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE**

TUESDAY, 7 MARCH 2023 AT 10.00 AM

**REDCAR & CLEVELAND CIVIC CENTRE, RIDLEY STREET, REDCAR,
TS10 1TD**

CONTACT

David Boville

01642 444617

Monday, 27 February 2023

CIRCULATION

Councillors V Rider (Chair), C Hannaway (Vice-Chair), G Cutler, D Fisher, T Gray, M Head, C Holmes, K King, D Rees, C Richardson, A Turner, G Williams and M Wilson

Councillors Barnes, Kay, and Lanigan (Cabinet Members - for information)

All Members of the Council (for information)

Executive Director for Children and Families

The Press [except for Confidential item(s)]

A G E N D A

	<u>Pages</u>
1. Apologies for Absence	
2. To confirm the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2023.	2 - 6
3. Declarations of Interest.	
4. Adoption Tees Valley Bi-Annual Report.	7 - 25
5. Quarter 3 Performance Report.	26 - 50
6. Relevant Cabinet Reports.	
Would Members please refer to their copy of the Cabinet Workbook for the meeting (these papers will follow).	
7. Action Update.	51
8. Any items the Chair certifies as urgent.	

Would Members please note that following the meeting there will be a demonstration of the Virtual Reality Headsets used by the Virtual School.

Tuesday, 24 January 2023

CHILDREN & FAMILIES SCRUTINY & IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Children & Families Scrutiny & Improvement Committee was held on Tuesday, 24 January 2023 at the Redcar & Cleveland Civic Centre, Ridley Street, Redcar, TS10 1TD.

PRESENT Councillor V Rider (Chair)
Councillors C Hannaway (Vice-Chair), M Head,
K King, D Rees, C Richardson, A Turner and
G Williams.

OFFICIALS K Boulton, J Johnson, V McLeod and D Boville.

IN ATTENDANCE Councillor A Barnes and S Kay.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors T Gray and M Wilson.

24 **TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13
DECEMBER 2022.**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Children & Families Scrutiny and Improvement Committee held on 13 December 2022 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

25 **VIRTUAL SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT.**

The Virtual School Head presented a report covering the work of the Virtual School during the academic year 2021/22, which included information on the achievement of the Council's children in care, key challenges and data on attendance and exclusions.

Areas highlighted within the report included:

- 10 pupils gained at least one GCSE pass at grade 4 or higher (or equivalent) including 4 pupils with EHCPs. A further 7 pupils gained GCSE grades 1 to 3 alongside other external accredited courses.
- Overall attendance for the year was 91.58% which compared favourably to the last pre-pandemic figure of 75.21%.
- The Virtual School had maintained its record of no permanent exclusions since 2011.
- A total of 30 pupils received at least one suspension in 2021/22. Whilst the number of children gaining these remained the same as

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the previous year, as a percentage of the Virtual School cohort, this had reduced year on year over the last 4 years.

- Significant work had been undertaken to improve the quality of Personal Education Plans (PEP), with a focus on the quality of documentation and the quality assurance of judgements.

As part of the ensuing discussion, the following points were made:

- Where a need is identified for a child, appropriate support can be put in place quickly.
- PEPs record how pupil premium funding was spent and that spending was reviewed before the start of each term to determine progress toward meeting the agreed targets.
- Comparator figures for exam results were due to be released by the end of February:-**NOTED**

26 **CQC INSPECTION REPORT.**

The Executive Director for Children & Families presented a report providing an overview of the outcomes from the unannounced inspection of the Health Visiting and School Nursing Service by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), which was due to be considered by Cabinet on 31 January 2023.

As part of the ensuing discussion, the following points were made:

- There was now a new SEND framework which focused on the lived experience of children and families.
- The Health Visiting and School Nursing Service received consistently good results from inspections:-**NOTED**

27 **SCHOOL ADMISSIONS POLICY AND ARRANGEMENTS 2024/25**

The Executive Director for Children & Families presented a report setting out the School Admissions Policy and Arrangements for Redcar & Cleveland schools where the local authority act as the admission authority for the school, namely Newcomen Primary School and Hummersea Primary School for 2024/25, which was due to be considered by Cabinet on 31 January 2023.

As part of the ensuing discussion, the following points were made:

- It was considered better for children to enter school alongside their peers, even if they were born in late August, as typically developing children would make up ground quickly. Should parents decide to defer for a year it was not guaranteed that they would be offered a place in the same school.

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- The Council had a statutory responsibility for school place planning and new housing developments were taken into account when planning for future school places. There was currently a high need for school places in areas of the Borough, however there was a dip in birth rates and so it was anticipated that this would be temporary:-**NOTED**

28 **CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ANNUAL SAFEGUARDING REPORT 2021/22**

The Executive Director for Children & Families presented a report providing an overview of the Children and Families' safeguarding activity during the period April 2021 to March 2022 and set out the priorities for 2022/23, which was due to be considered by Cabinet on 31 January 2023.

As part of the ensuing discussion, the following points were made:

- The impact of the current economic climate on families was starting to become clear.
- Certain schools appeared to be suspending SEND children without having implemented appropriate mitigation measures. Local authorities needed more power to ensure vulnerable children were cared for at school.
- Headteachers were constantly discussing how to best meet the needs of pupils without resorting to suspension or exclusion. A better gradation of response to disruptive behaviour was required. The Council was clear that more work was needed on this area:-**NOTED**

29 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT & SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN DECISION**

The Executive Director for Children & Families presented a report setting out details of the findings within a public interest report published by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO) following an investigation into the Council's handling of a difficult case regarding the provision of respite care for a disabled child, which was due to be considered by Cabinet on 31 January 2023.

It was possible the forthcoming respite centre for children with disabilities at St. Williams Church in Dormanstown could have assisted in this case had it been open. The centre was currently awaiting registration and a visit for Members would be arranged:-**NOTED**

Tuesday, 24 January 2023

30 **ACTION UPDATE.**

The Governance Manager presented an update on the progress made against outstanding actions from previous meetings of the Children & Families Scrutiny and Improvement Committee: **-NOTED**

Children and Families Scrutiny Committee

ATTENDANCE RECORD - 2022/23

Surname	First name	14.06.2 2	26.07.2 2	21.09.2 2	01.11.2 2	13.12.2 2	24.01.2 3	dd.mm. yy	dd.mm. yy	dd.mm. yy	Total Meetings Attended / total possible
Rees	Dan	Apols	✓	Apols	✓	Apols	✓				
Williams	Geraldine	✓	X	✓	Apols	Apols	✓				
Richardson	Carrie	✓	RA	✓	RA	X	✓				
Head	Malcom	✓	✓	Apols	X	Apols	✓				
King	Karen	Apols 2	✓	Apols	✓	✓	✓				
Wilson	Margaret	Apols 1	✓	✓	✓	Apols	Apols				
Turner	Andrea	✓	✓	Apols	X	✓	✓				
Holmes	Craig	Apols	Apols	X	X	Apols	X				
Thomson	Phillip	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Rider	Vera	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Gray	Tim	Apols	Apols	Apols	Apols1	Apols2	Apols				
Wells	Billy	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Hannaway	Craig	✓	Apols	✓	✓	X	✓				
Cutler	Graham	n/a	Apols	Apols	Apols2	X	X				
Fisher	Dave	n/a	n/a	Apols	X	✓	X				

Substitutes

Brook	Adam		✓		✓						

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Key	
✓	Attended
RA	Apologies Submitted (replacement attended)
Apols	Apologies Submitted (no replacement)
X	Did Not Attend (no apologies received)
C	Cancelled Meeting
n/a	Not a Member

Reason for Absence (NB Full details may not be provided for reasons of confidentiality)	
1	Personal Commitment
2	Work Commitment
3	Illness/Medical
4	Conflicting Council Commitment
5	Other
6	Civic Duties

Adoption Tees Valley

Bi-Annual Report

1.4.22-30.9.22



“Adoption Tees Valley supported us every step of the way throughout the process, and continues to support our family, now and in the future.”

Adoption Tees Valley

Bi-Annual Report 2022-23

Period- 1.4.22-30.9.22

1. Introduction

This report will provide performance information on adoption activity for the period of 1.4.22-30.9.22. Adoption Tees Valley (ATV) is the Regional Adoption Agency for the 5 Local Authorities of Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland, and Stockton.

The report will focus on an overview of performance for the first half year of 2022-23. The full year progress in all areas of the Adoption Agency was last reported in the Annual Report for 2021-22, and will be reported on again, in the full year Annual Report for this current year- 2022-23. The ATV Board has agreed that a more concise report will be presented for the bi-annual report, which will detail key performance information in relation to adoption activity, with comparisons with national performance over the same period.

The performance data is that which has been reported to the ASGLB by all 5 Local Authorities, and by Adoption Tees Valley, and is now published information. Where a different time period is reported on, this will be noted.

2. Governance

The RAA is governed by a Board, which comprises the 5 Directors for Children's Services of the 5 Local Authorities within the partnership. There are 2 non-Executive Directors, who were recruited to the Board in 2020, and who are adoptive parents who have adopted through ATV.

The Service Manager for ATV attends all Board meetings and presents information to enable oversight of the performance of the RAA, strategic direction and operational practice. The Board has a role in being assured of the quality of adoption work in Adoption Tees Valley, and receives information on quality, outcomes, and proposed improvements.

Board meetings are held quarterly. Strategy, performance, finance, and overall delivery of the adoption service are considered at each Board meeting.

The Chair of the Board during this period was Sue Butcher, DCS at Middlesbrough Children's Services. Sue has left her role, and new chair will be appointed in early 2023.

In each of the 5 LA's there is an Adoption Lead Officer who is responsible for ensuring that the RAA is delivering effective and high quality adoption services for the children in its area. Adoption Leads meet with the Service Manager and Team Managers of ATV monthly.

The Lead Elected Members of the Council with responsibility for Children's Services, for each Local Authority area meet bi-annually with the Board and Service Manager, to oversee the work of ATV, and be kept informed of key developments.

3. Adoption Activity and Performance

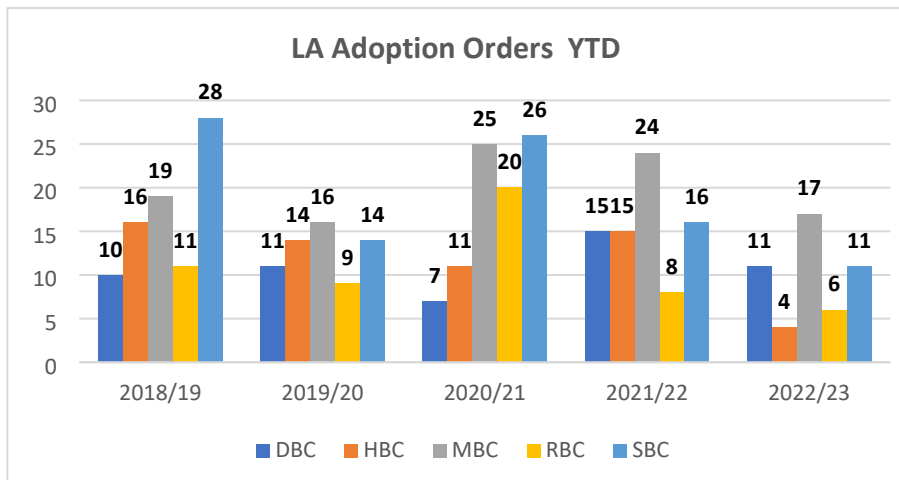
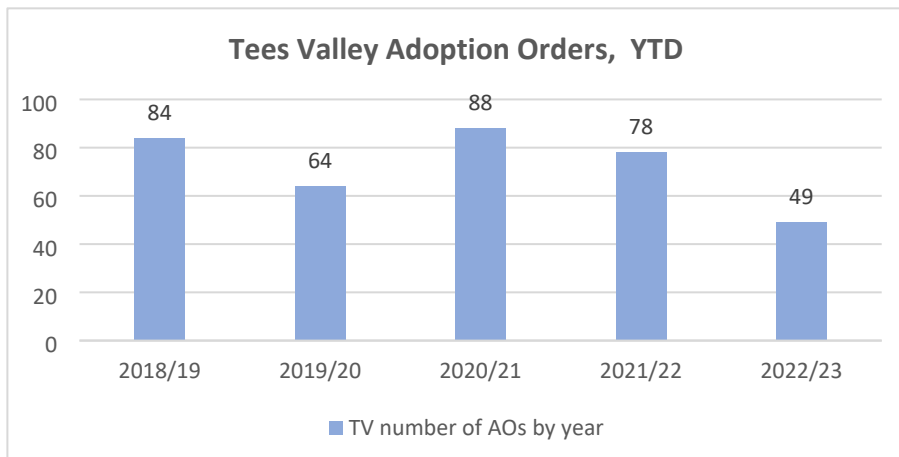
Adoption placement activity will be presented in graphical format for Tees Valley as a whole, and for each local Authority in the partnership, also in graphical format.

A short comparison against England published data will be noted.

A more detailed overview of the activity and performance for each local Authority will be offered in section 4. This is to enable each individual Local Authority to scrutinise its own adoption activity, and performance.

3.1 Overview of Adoption Tees Valley: Child's Journey, and Timescales

Adoption Orders Granted



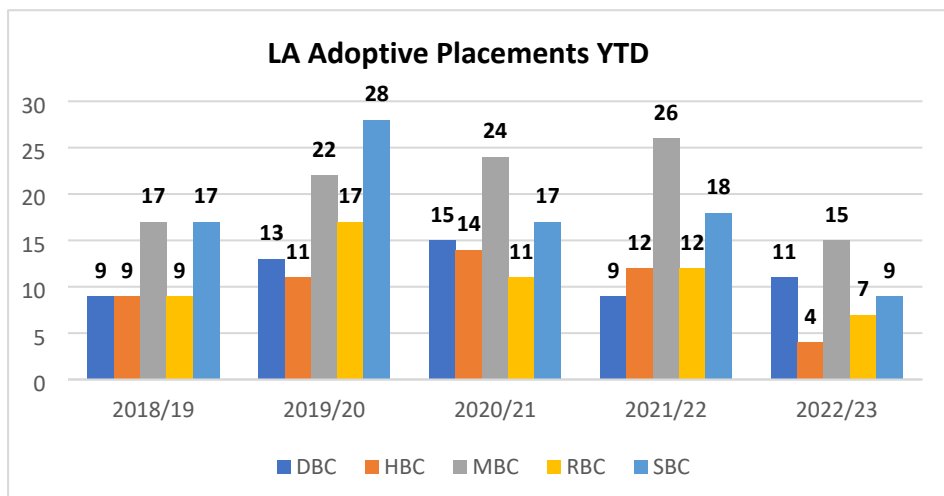
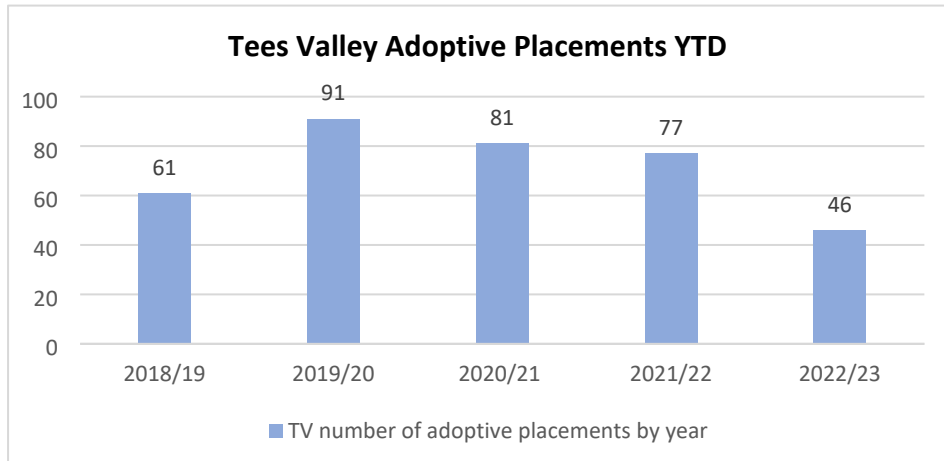
Overall rate of adoption orders granted is higher than was the case in the previous year.

49 adoptions granted in the year to date, compared with 78 in the full previous year.

At the same point in 2021-22 there had been 46 adoptions.

The Somerset ruling had an impact on adoption hearings in the final quarter (Q4) of 2021-22, and in Q1 of 2022-23. Some were held up by the Courts awaiting the outcome of the final ruling. Children are now being adopted, who were waiting.

Children Placed for Adoption

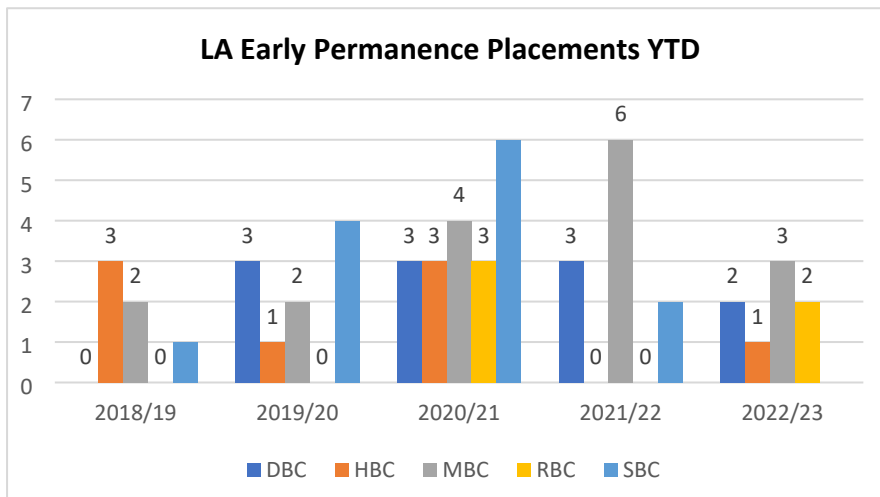
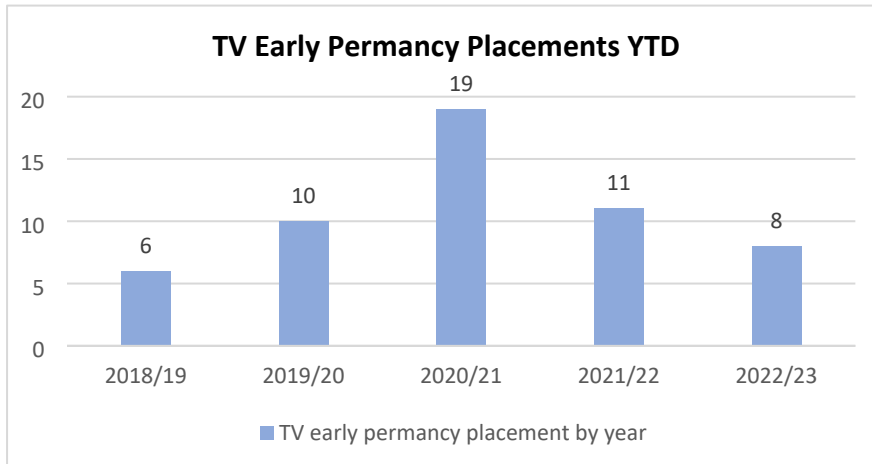


The number of children placed with adoptive parents is at a higher rate than previous year.

However, compared with the same point, end of Q2, last year, there are fewer placements, with 46 children, placed compared with 56 at the same point in 2021-22.

Somerset ruling will no longer be impacting on the numbers of children placed, as all children who had delay, or were placed on an early permanence basis, have now been matched and placed.

Early Permanence Placements



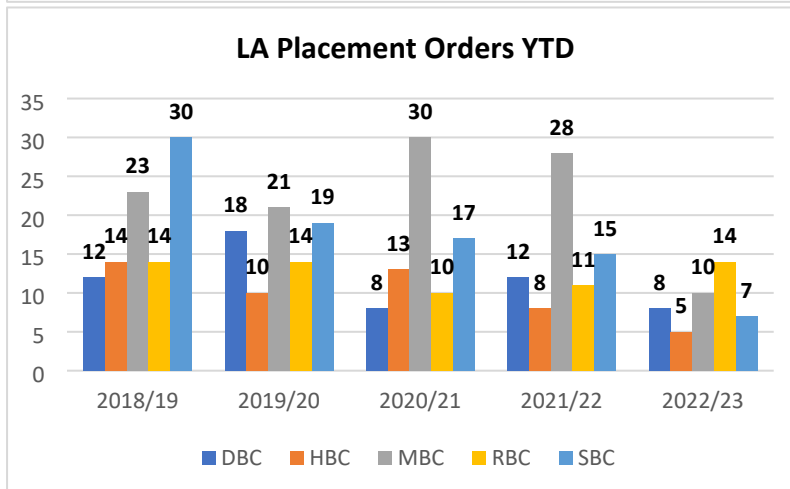
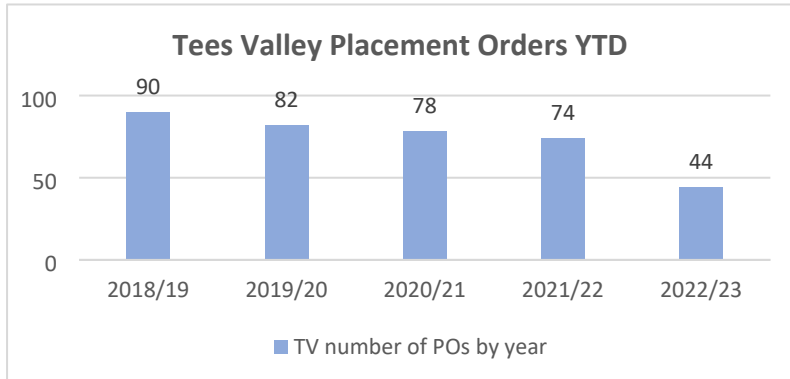
The numbers of children being placed via early permanence has increased compared with the same period in 2021-22. There are 8 children, compared with 5 at the end of Q2 in the previous year.

Early permanence is a key strategic priority for this region, and ATV is aiming for an increase in the numbers of children who can move in with foster carers, also approved to adopt, who can offer this placement, which will reduce moves for children.

There is strategic work being undertaken in the region, and nationally to increase the number of early permanence placements.

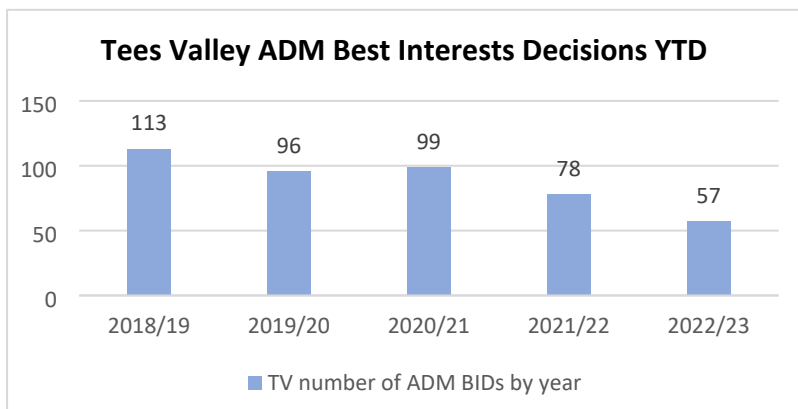
- Pan regional early permanence sufficiency project
- Pan regional Concurrent Placements project
- National EP conferences in February 2023- aimed at senior local Authority care planning managers, and LA lead solicitors
- ATV led workshops for social workers, IRO's, and team mangers in January 2023.

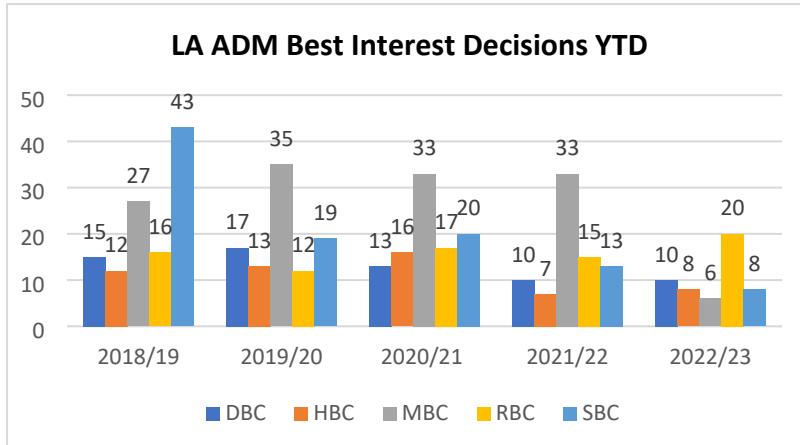
Placement Orders and Agency Decisions that Adoption is the child's plan



Placement Orders are at a higher rate than the last year, and at a higher rate than compared with the same period in the last year.

Placement Orders in the last quarter of 2021-22 were delayed due to Somerset ruling, but have now all been progressed.





Agency Decisions that adoption is the child's plan (often referred to as the best interests' decision -BID) are increased on the previous year, with 57 compared with 39 in the previous year at the same point, and 78 for the full year in previous year.

This is a significant rise on the previous year's activity, especially as one LA, Middlesbrough has an unusually low number for the half year period. The rise in rate of ADM BID is indicative of a greater number of children being progressed through to permanence via adoption. Looked after numbers across the Tees Valley have not risen significantly in this period, or in the last year, and the rise must be explained by more children progressing to permanence through adoption.

Analysis of adoption activity- Tees Valley overall

Adoption Orders are higher than at the same point in previous year and are at a higher rate compared with full year 2021-22. This may be related to the impact of the Somerset ruling. It is known that a number of children were waiting for adoption orders in Q4 2021-22 but were delayed due to the Courts temporarily ceasing adoption hearings. Also known is that Q2 2022-23 has been an active period of adoption hearings with 39 adoption orders granted for Teesside children, many of these being children delayed for adoption order, although not delayed in moving in with their adoptive families.

Adoption placements have dropped slightly compared with the same period in 2021-22 but are at a higher rate than the overall placement activity in the last full year. Again, the impact of Somerset in the final quarter, Q4, cannot be discounted. There were a number of children held back from being formally matched and placed for adoption, with more activity in Q1 and Q2 of 2022-23.

Early Permanence (EP) appears to be picking up again from a lower level in the last year. ATV had progressed an active strategy for early permanence through 2020-21 and the impact of this was to increase the awareness and planning for EP across the Tees Valley area. A difficult case led to some lack of confidence in the use of EP, during the previous year, 2021-22. There has been further action on learning, reflection and development with national developments driving Tees Valley regional practice development. There is now an upturn in EP again, with confidence that carers are being better prepared for this role, more focus on the fostering element of the role, and better dedicated support to EP carers. This placement type remains a priority focus area for ATV and partner Local Authorities moving forward. Early

permanence reduces moves for children, and also relieves pressure on fostering placements in the Local Authority. It is beneficial to children's best outcomes and is strategically and financially beneficial to pressurised fostering services.

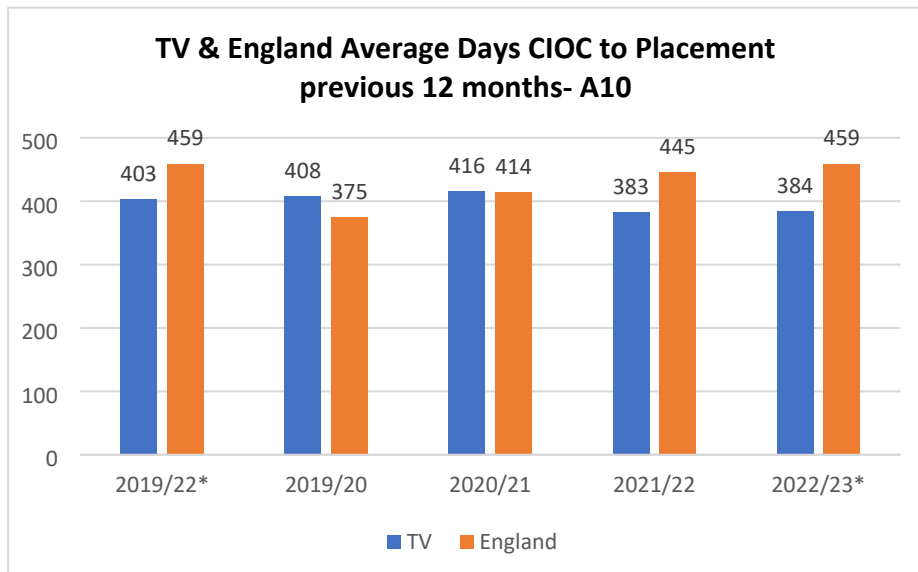
Agency Decisions that adoption is the Local Authority plan (ADM BID) and Placement Orders (PO's) are indicative of the adoption activity for children who are currently coming through care proceedings and receiving final outcome of a Court authorised plan for adoption. The number of children with an Agency Decision for adoption is significantly increased. Some children were delayed- particularly in one Local Authority, due to Somerset. However, overall, plans for adoption are rising at this time.

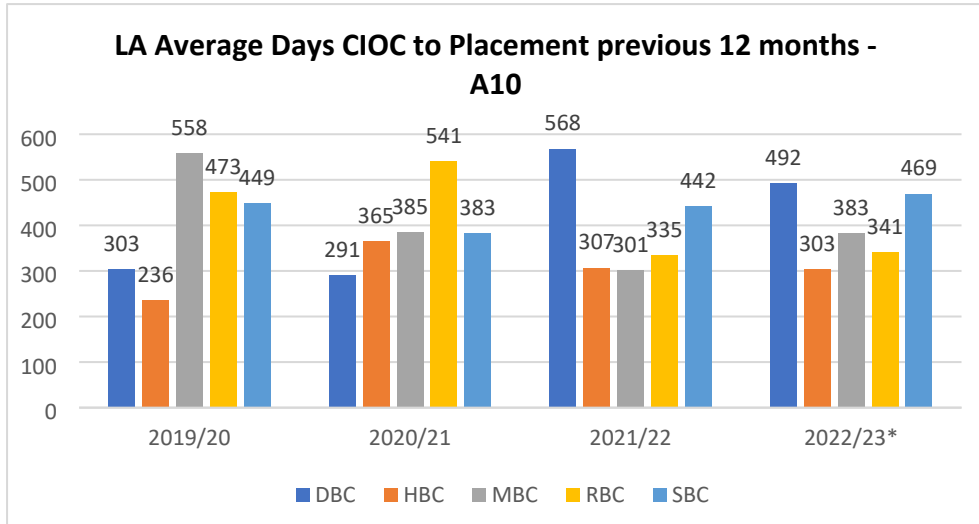
Placement Orders are also higher than the same period in the previous year.

Timeliness of Adoption for Children

Timescale data presented for the adoption scorecard indicators are based on children adopted in the previous 12 months.

Became a child in our care (CIOC) to moving in with an adoption family (Scorecard A10)



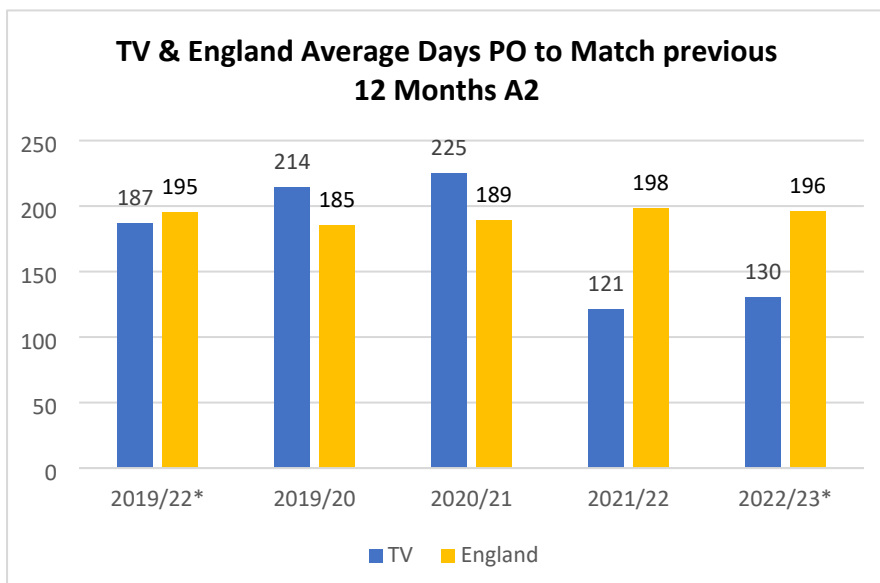


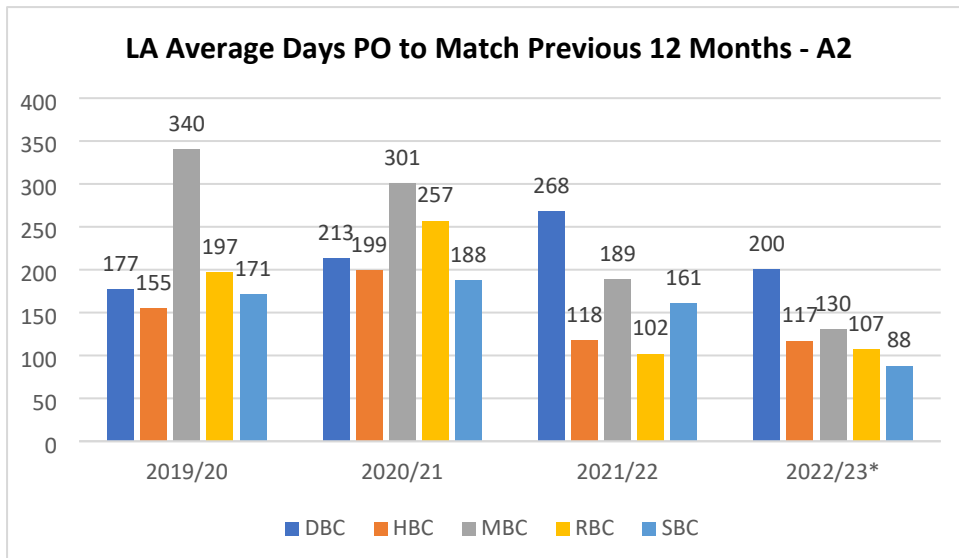
Overall, timeliness for children in Tees Valley moving into an adoptive family are comparing well against national average. Two Local Authorities have longer timescales.

The target time set for a child starting care, to moving in with their adoptive family is 426 days.

Overall average for ATV is 384 days for the children adopted in the previous 12 months. This is 42 days better than the Government target and 75 days better than all England current average number of days.

Placement Order to Match (Scorecard A2)

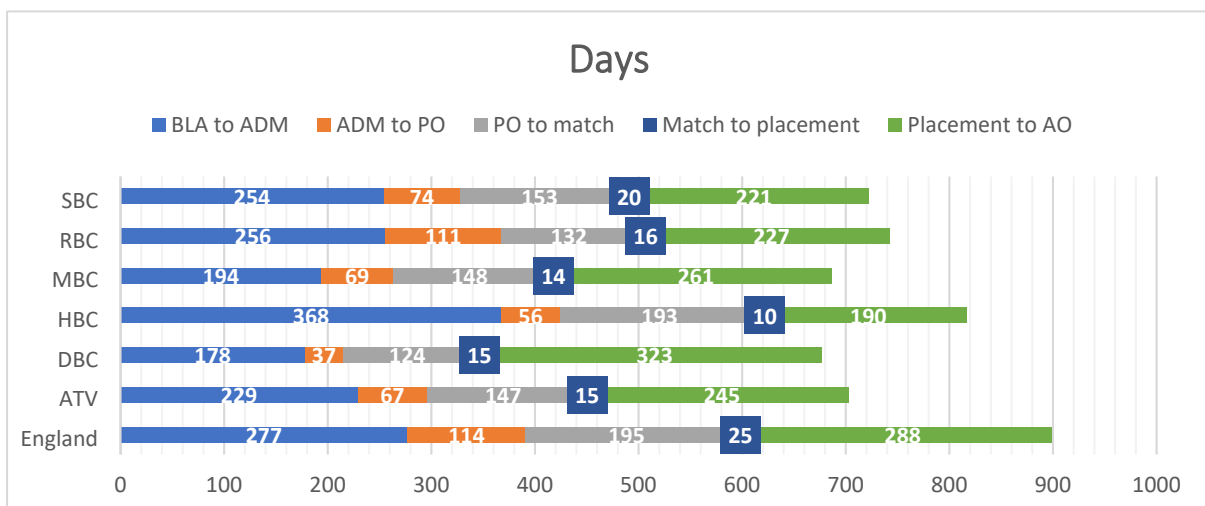




Placement order to match timescales for Tees valley overall have improved significantly in the last 18 months. This is reflective of the maturing of the RAA, and now embedded processes and practice for early identification of a family and matching of children. The average timescale has slightly increased in ATV from 121 days in the period 2021-22, to 130 days for the 12 month period ending 30.9.22.

The Government target is 121 days. ATV is slightly over this target currently, however is performing significantly better than England average of 196 days, being 66 days lower than the national average.

The Child's Journey – children who have completed key phases of the child's journey- last 12 months



This chart shows the comparative whole journey timescales for children who have achieved key phases of the child's journey in the last 12 months. These children may not have been adopted, but are children who have

completed that phase, in the last 12 month period. It is a current picture of timeliness and timescales for children going through the adoption journey.

Match to placement typically a short timescale and is shown in dark blue.

All Tees Valley local Authorities have an average lower than the England average, for the complete Child's Journey to Adoption Order, in the same period, and ATV as a whole has a shorter timescale.

Why are timescales improving for children in Tees Valley?

- Good processes for referring children to ATV who may have an adoption plan, at the early stages of care planning
- Good processes for partnership working and information sharing between ATV and the LA's – from the point of referral
- Early permanence considerations for more children
- Tight overview of families who may be a suitable link from internal resources, and early information sharing and linking activity
- Good and timely work between the LA child's social worker, and ATV family finder, to make decisions on whether a family is suitable
- Tight timescale and process for seeking an external family, where no internal family is available
- Good links with regional VAA's to create sufficiency
- Willingness to book additional panels for matching
- Some "Legacy" children with very long timescales are no longer within the reporting period of data count.

Factors which may hinder good timeliness for children moving in with adoptive parents:

- Delays in referring children
- Delays in issuing proceedings once a child is in our care.
- Not providing adequate information in a timely way on which to family find for the child
- Not keeping ATV up to date with changes in plans
- Lack of clarity on assessment of needs, and what type of family is being sought- for example, whether siblings are to be placed together.
- Changes in the plan, which are outside of the control of the LA, for example, a return to birth parent on a care order, then return into care, with plan of adoption.
- Changes of social worker in either LA or ATV.

4. Individual Local Authority performance data- numbers of children at key milestones, and timeliness

4.1 Darlington

	Q2 2022-23 (YTD)	Full year 2021-22	Q2 2021-22
AO's	11	15	10
Placements for Adoption	11	9	5
Early Permanence	2	3	1
PO	8	12	6
ADM	10	10	5
A10	492	568	500
A2	200	268	276

Overall, there more children who have adoption plans. There are 10 children in the first half of 2022-23 which is the same number for the full year 2021-22. Darlington had progressed all children who had a potential delay due to Somerset through their ADM best interest's decision by the end of 2021-22 and no children were waiting for the ADM, at the end of that year.

There is a higher rate of children placed for adoption, and more adoption orders than at the same stage in the previous year.

Adoption activity is increasing in Darlington, with more children progressing at all stages of the journey.

Darlington has 21% of children who ceased to be CIOC leaving care via adoption, year to date 22-23. This is a high rate, and a positive figure, compared with a national average of 10%. The last full year, 21-22, for Darlington was 15%.

Timescales for moving in with an adoptive family are higher for Darlington than any other Tees Valley Local Authority and than the England average. This is based on children adopted in the previous 12 months, which is 16 children for Darlington. The average timescale is impacted by 3 children with extended timescales. The children subject to this data have been analysed with the LA, to understand the factors.

4.2 Hartlepool

	Q2 2022-23 (YTD)	Full year 2021-22	Q2 2021-22
AO's	4	15	6
Placements for Adoption	4	12	15
Early Permanence	1	0	0
PO	5	8	5
ADM	8	7	6
A10	303	307	282
A2	117	118	87

Overall, there are fewer children being placed for adoption, and fewer children adopted than at the same time last year. Numbers are lower in Hartlepool, and small changes impact on overall percentage figures quite dramatically.

ADM decisions that adoption is the child's plan slowed considerably in the second half of 2021-22, with just one new ADM decision in the second half of the year although Hartlepool was not significantly impacted by the Somerset ruling. Therefore, for there to be 8 new ADM's in the first half of 2022-23 is a significant increase in rate of adoption plans again.

There has been 1 early permanence placement, compared with 0 in the previous year.

Timescales for children moving in with adoptive families remain consistently good in Hartlepool. Government target for A10 is 426, against which Hartlepool performs well at 303 days. The government target for PO to match is 121 days and Hartlepool is better than this target, at 117 days currently.

To note is that timescales for current children going through the journey (not yet adopted) are higher than other regional LA's and are impacted by one child's timescales.

Hartlepool has 14% of all CIOC leaving care via adoption, year to date, which is a positive percentage against a national average of 10%. The last full year figure for Hartlepool, 21-22, was 11%.

4.3 Middlesbrough

	Q2 2022-23 (YTD)	Full year 2021-22	Q2 2021-22
AO's	17	24	15
Placements for Adoption	15	26	16
Early Permanence	3	6	3
PO	10	28	14
ADM	6	33	17
A10	383	301	342
A2	130	189	236

Adoption Orders are at a similar rate as the previous year, as are placements for children moving in with adoptive parents.

Placement orders are slightly down on the previous year, however, ADM best interests' decisions are at a very low rate, compared with usual activity, and the previous year. It is known that there are a high number of children progressing to and awaiting ADM.

Middlesbrough is the Local Authority most impacted by the Somerset ruling. Many children's plans were held up during the latter period of 21-22, and into 22-23, with ADM's being suspended, and some children being held back from moving into placement. Middlesbrough has also been impacted by delays in Medical Advisor appointments, which is a further factor affecting progress for children. There has been a lot of activity between senior managers to address the progress for children, to enable the right plan to be presented to Court within the Court timetable for Final hearings.

Middlesbrough continues to make use of early permanence and is the Local Authority with highest use of EP in the region.

Timescales for children have improved significantly over the last 12 months. The government target for CIOC moving in with adopters is 426 days and Middlesbrough is currently performing at an average of 383 days, which is 43 days below the Government target.

Current PO to Match timescales have reduced considerably, now being 130 days, against a government target of 121 days, however having reduced from 236 days at the same period in the previous year.

16% of all Middlesbrough children who left care, in 2022-23 were adopted, which is a positive figure, against a national average of 10%.

The last full year, 2021-22, figure for Middlesbrough was 9%

4.4 Redcar and Cleveland

	Q2 2022-23 (YTD)	Full year 2021-22	Q2 2021-22
AO's	6	8	4
Placements for Adoption	7	12	9
Early Permanence	2	0	0
PO	14	11	7
ADM	20	15	5
A10	341	335	328
A2	107	102	95

Redcar and Cleveland's rate of adoptions has increased on the previous year. Numbers of children moving into adoptive families has increased slightly on previous year, although there are fewer at the same period of time than last year. It is positive to see more use of early permanence by the Local Authority. It is clear that there has been a marked increase this year in children with an ADM decision that adoption is the Local Authority plan with 20 ADM's in the year to date, compared with 5 in the previous year, at the same time, and 15 for the full year 2021-22. There are 14 children with a Placement Order, compared with 7 in the previous year at the same time, and 11 for the full year.

Children's timescales in Redcar and Cleveland remain good, with the start of becoming a CIOC to moving in with adopters (A10) being 341 days, against a government target of 426 days.

The PO to match timescale (A2) is 107 days which is under the government target of 121 days.

Redcar has a 10% rate for children leaving care via an adoption order, year to date in 2022-23, with a rate of 6% in the last full year- 21-22. The national average is 10%.

4.5 Stockton

	Q2 2022-23 (YTD)	Full year 2021-22	Q2 2021-22
AO's	11	16	11
Placements for Adoption	9	18	14
Early Permanence	0	2	1
PO	7	15	9
ADM	8	13	6
A10	469	442	548
A2	88	161	210

Stockton's rate of Adoption orders remains stable, compared with the previous year. Placements of children for adoption is at 9, year to date, with 18 children having been placed in the full year 21-22. There have been 0 Early Permanence placements in the year.

Activity for children coming through the early stages of the adoption journey remain relatively stable with 7 PO's year to date, and 8 ADM decisions that adoption is the Local Authority plan for the child, compared with 13 in the full year 21-22.

Timeliness for children from becoming a CIOC to moving in with their adoptive family is higher at 469 days, than the government target of 426 days. The timescale for Stockton has improved on the same point in the last year, by 79 days, however, remains over 40 days above government target. The timescales are based on 16 children adopted in the previous year. Of these children 5 had significant timescales associated with care planning and court factors. Once the PO was granted, the children progressed quickly, as is seen by a lower average than government target timescale, of 88 days, which is positive for Stockton. It should be noted that the average figure of 469 days masks exceptionally good timescales for 4 of the children who moved into their adoptive family within 100 days of commencing care.

Stockton has a rate of 13% for children leaving care via adoption, for the year to date 22-23, against a national average of 10%. The last full year figure for Stockton was 9%.

5. Adoption Tees Valley- Adopter Recruitment, Assessment and Approvals

5.1 Adopters in Process of Recruitment, Assessment, Approval

For the first half of the year, ATV had the following numbers of adopters through to each stage of the process:

	Total 2021-22	Q1 2022-23	Q2 2022-23	Total 2022-23 YTD
Approved	46	14	13	27
Starting Stage 1	46	13	15	28
Starting Stage 2 (Fast Track)	13	2	6	8
Starting Stage 2 (Excluding Fast Track)	39	6	17	23
Marketing Enquiries	287	86	85	171
% Enquiries Converted to ROI	23%	19%	24%	21%
Snapshot of the "adopter pipeline"	End Q4	End Q1	End Q2	
Waiting to be matched	29	30	26	
Not yet approved, numbers in assessment	39	37	42	

Approvals are at a higher rate than at the same point in 2021-22. This is positive however, the rate of approval remains lower than the planned for 70 new adoptive families within the year, which is ATV target.

One factor is the numbers who have come forward but have now left the process they were not ready to adopt, or their circumstances meant they would not be suitable. ATV saw a rise in numbers withdrawing or leaving the process, in the second period of lockdown, and this is a finding seen across some of the regional fostering services also.

ATV has undertaken some work to improve enquiries, conversion from enquiry to approval, approvals, and numbers within the process.

- Improved digital marketing campaigns and overall profiling
- ATV have recently dedicated time and internal resource to monitor all enquirers who are not yet ready to progress. Follow up is planned, and this practice is beginning to bring benefits, with more families coming back into the process, having decided to wait, than was previously the case.
- 2 new SW posts are now filled as of December 2022. Vacancies, coupled with staff absence has impacted on delivery.

The numbers of prospective adopters starting stage 1, and stage 2 has increased on the numbers in the previous year, and the numbers in the assessment process has also increased with 42 prospective adopters in assessment at the end of September 2022, compared with 39 at the end of March 2022.

5.2 Adoption Placements with ATV Adopters/External Adopters

The agency of adopters for ATV placements made is as follows:

Placements with Adopters	Total 2021-22	Q1 2022-23	Q2 2022-23	Total 2022-23 YTD
ATV adopters	58	16	15	31
EXT LA/RAA adopters	7	1	0	1
EXT VAA adopters	12	4	10	14
Non TV children placed with ATV adopters	0	0	0	0

Of the 46 children placed in the period, 31 have been placed with ATV adopters, and 15 with external families, most of whom are VAA approved adopters.

The data presented shows 26 families approved and waiting to be matched at the end of the period, which is a lower number than the previous year end (30). It should be noted that a high number of the families waiting to be matched will be linked and progressing to match, or will be EP carers with a placement, or will be foster carers who are not yet formally matched with the child. A figure of 26 families waiting does not reflect the reality of available “pool” of adopters.

At the end of the period, there were 11 children with a Placement Order who did not have an identified prospective adopter family.

This number is a higher than usual number for ATV, and includes a sibling group of 4, a sibling group of 3, a sibling group of 2, and 2 single children.

This cohort of children are in the main children with more needs, and although ATV has approved adopters, there is not a “fit” with the needs of the children waiting.

ATV continues at this point to have a sufficiency demand, which is being addressed through:

- Dedicated focus on adopter recruitment, preparation, and approvals.
- Work with regional VAA's to meet sufficiency.

6. Summary Actions arising from performance analysis

1. Each Local Authority will maintain a focus on adoption activity, timely assessment and monitor the progress of the child's care plan. Early referral to ATV enables timely family finding. Similarly, prompt notification that a plan will not be adoption enables best use of ATV family finding time, and of families available.

2. Medical Advisor capacity, especially in South Tees, should continue to be a point of monitoring, and focus.
3. Early Permanence practice continues to be a priority in the region. LA's are encouraged to work with ATV and pan regional projects to promote EP.
4. ATV to continue to focus on marketing, enquirer focus, and conversion of enquirers to Registration of Interest.
5. ATV recruitment campaigns and preparation of adopters to continue to be targeted at the needs of ATV children, encouraging more sibling adopters, more EP carers, and more families for older children.

V. Davidson Boyd 3.1.22



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Children and Families Scrutiny and Improvement Committee

Children & Families Performance Summary

October - December 2022



Executive Director's Opening Statement



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Corporate Plan Action Updates



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Action	Update	Next Steps
Develop a Social Work Academy to secure high quality, skilled social work students into permanent positions within the children and families service.	<p>The academy went live as of the 21st Nov 2022 with a first small cohort of ASYE's.</p> <p>The next cohort will start in September 2023, and interviews have already taken place (7 appointed so far for the 2nd cohort).</p> <p>Recruitment work remains ongoing, with buy in from regional colleges, universities and external agencies.</p>	An official Launch date for the Children's Social Work Academy (CSWA) is the 31st January for agency's, Lead Members, internal staff, Education providers to attend to celebrate the CSWA launch.
Redesign youth service assets to ensure community-based provision for young people.	The original plan to submit a Cabinet report summarising the recommendations of the independent review of the working and financial relationships between the existing Voluntary Management Committees (MCs) and the Youth and Community Centres was changed due to a new requirement to find substantial savings across the council, including from children's services. Some elements of the report and recommendations by ERS Consultancy services were included in 3 options considered by EMT in December 2022 with an overall proposal going to Cabinet in Feb 2023.	A plan for consultation with members of the public, young people and staff needs to be developed in line with advice from legal services and will need to replicate the approach being taken for the Family Hubs consultation too.



Action	Update	Next Steps
<p>Working with partners, further develop our Family Hubs to provide universal and targeted services for those 0-19 years, in line with the newly published DfE Framework.</p>	<p>A local needs assessment is underway in conjunction with Public Health, including ward level data around needs, mapping out existing provision for families available through existing Family Hubs and elsewhere and identify any gaps in provision. Consultation with key stakeholders has been ongoing about gaps in services and across the system of support for families with children aged 0-2 years in particular and a delivery plan has been co-produced with the ICB, Maternity services, Public Health, Health Visiting, VCS key partners, to agree our collective outcomes and actions we need to achieve these as well as the minimum expectations of the Start for Life and Family Hubs transformation programme. There has been really good engagement around this. The Delivery Plan has been submitted to DfE in line with specified deadlines and we await approval. The first tranche of year 1 funding has been received.</p> <p>A Transformation Coordinator has been recruited to support the Service Manager and Family Hubs Manager to deliver the plan and other key posts are out for recruitment.</p>	<p>Next steps include commissioning some key services; publishing our Start for Life Offer; developing SLAs and data sharing agreements with key partners; re-launching the Family Hubs across Redcar and Cleveland. Decisions will need to be made by summer 2023 at the latest, about which of the 11 family hubs will close in order to consolidate buildings and only keep 6 main Family Hubs and 2 spoke centres to provide the 'gold standard' offer in line with the DfE vision. Therefore a key and pressing next step is to develop a robust consultation plan in line with advice from legal services, in order to ensure we are acting according to statutory guidance about proposed changes to children's centres (Childcare Act 2006) and mitigate against any potential negative feedback from the community or potential legal action. Consultation will need to involve members of the public, families who use the hubs and our staff and other stakeholders. Proposals for consultation will be determined by the local needs assessment which will be completed by 31st March 2023.</p>

Action	Update	Next Steps
<p>Develop a multi-agency model of care to support adolescents in or on the edge of care to remain safely at home, thus improving their long-term life chances.</p>	<p>Our NWD Hub opened in September 2021 and has since supported children on the cusp of care whilst we await Ofsted registration to open the residential element of the provision. We have our Ofsted visit scheduled on 26.01.23.</p>	<p>To support c&yp residentially to enable the right care setting for c&yp at the right time and transition into suitable long term settings; be that within their network or alternative care arrangements. Reducing the cost of out of area placements for c&Yyp.</p>
<p>Now that we have excellent data about young people's education, employment and training status, strengthen partnerships working with education and training providers around individual young people to support their progress to further education, employment or training.</p>	<p>Continue to work with partners to improve post-16 transition for young people and support their retention in education and training. The Risk of NEET Indicator is now fully embedded across all schools for Year 11s and this academic year we will work with schools and academies to ensure they are using it for year 10s. Schools have been encouraged and supported to complete a transition plan for all young people identified as high / very high risk of becoming NEET. Transition guidance has been updated, and circulated to schools, with training provided. Those young people who are NEET have been picked up and supported quickly by Careers Advisers. Our Transition Mentor continues to work with college and training provider partners to provide additional support for those young people who are at risk of disengagement. Regular meetings are held with Redcar and Cleveland College and Middlesbrough College to discuss any concerns in relation to our most vulnerable young people and implement additional support where required.</p>	<p>Expand use of Year 10 Risk of NEET Indicator. Further support and training for schools / academies to complete transition plans. Work with Head of Inclusion, Schools, Education Psychologist and wider partners to strengthen KS4 / 5 transition further. Use findings from young people leaving education / training questionnaire to feed into measures to improve post-16 retention.</p>

Early Help, Safeguarding and Children in our Care

What's Working Well



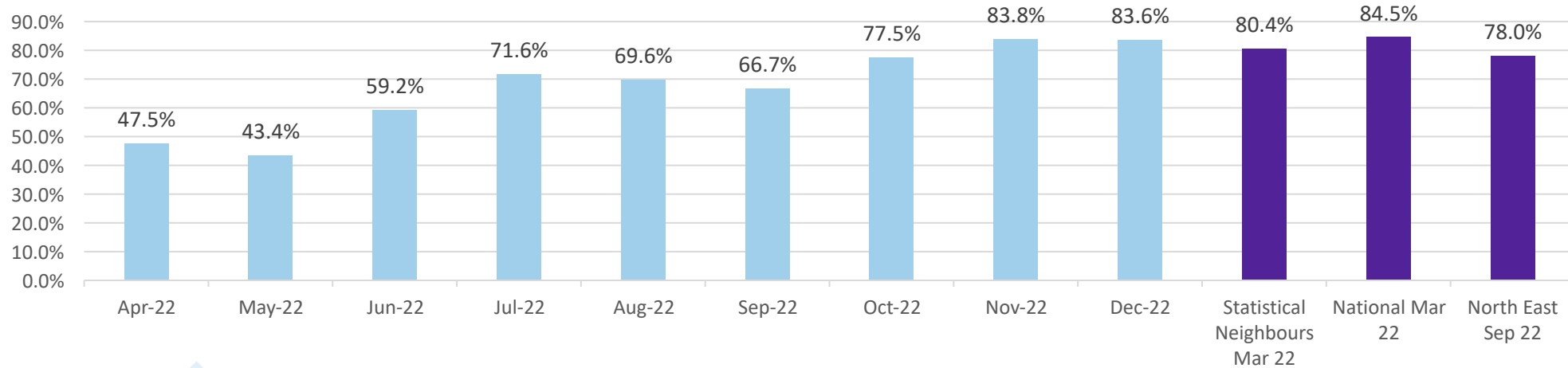
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Improvement in the Assessment Teams

As a result of the Assessment Teams being fully staffed, we have continued to see an increase in the number of Assessments completed within statutory timescales.

We have seen a gradual increase over the last quarter and in the last two months, the percentage of assessments completed within timescale was above our Statistical Neighbours at 80.4% and only slightly below the National figure of 84.5% (both at March 2022).

% of Assessments Completed within 45 working days (Assessment Teams)



Family Hubs

We are working to further develop our Family Hubs to provide universal and targeted services for 0-19 year olds, in line with the newly published DfE Framework.

We are currently undertaking a Local Needs Assessment in conjunction with Public Health to identify any gaps in provision.

Consultation with key stakeholders is ongoing and a delivery plan has been co-produced with Integrated Care Board, Maternity services, Public Health, Health Visiting and VCS key partners, to agree our collective outcomes and the actions we need to achieve.

A Transformation Coordinator has been recruited to support in delivering the plan.

Recruitment to other key posts is underway.

Next Steps

- Commissioning some key services;
- Publishing our Start for Life Offer;
- Developing Service Level Agreements and data sharing agreements with key partners;
- Consulting with staff and families about which of the 11 family hubs will close in order to consolidate buildings and have 6 main Family Hubs and 2 spoke centres to deliver the DfE vision;
- Re-launching the Family Hubs across Redcar and Cleveland.

Consultation needs to be robust and in line with advice from legal services to ensure we are meeting statutory guidance around changes to children's centres (Childcare Act 2006).

Risk Outside of the Family Home (ROTH) Pathway

In November 2022, R&C were selected as one of only 3 Local Authorities to participate in the ROTH Pilot alongside Durham University & the DfE.

The new approach supports how social workers and Independent Reviewing Officers can coordinate plans and work with families and partner agencies to keep young people safe who are at risk of significant harm outside of their family home, which can often be known as extra-familial harm.

Project planning commenced in November 2022 and workshops have been delivered across the social work teams and with partners. We have started to implement the pathway in our conferences and children, young people and their families have engaged in the project.

In a recent observation of ROTH Practice, our Lead Member noted:

“There were a wide range of agencies at the meeting – including the police, the anti-social behaviour officer for Eston, teachers, CAMHS, the Exploitation Team and We are with You”

“it was clear that the risks were outside of the home and that home was a safe place for the young person.”

No Wrong Door

Ofsted undertook their visit of Church View / No Wrong Door in January 2023 and have approved the Residential Base.

We are now able to accept young people into No Wrong Door Residential Home with referrals being accepted from the service.

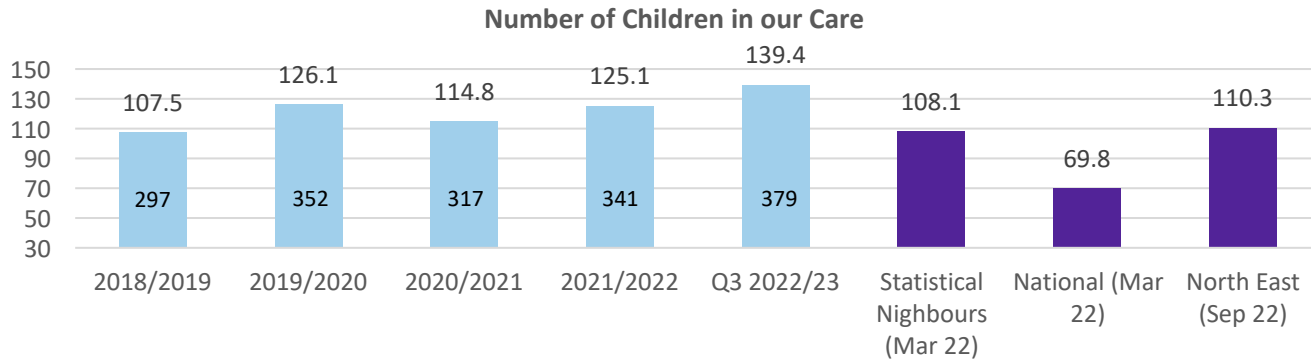
Early Help, Safeguarding and CIOC

What We Are Worried About



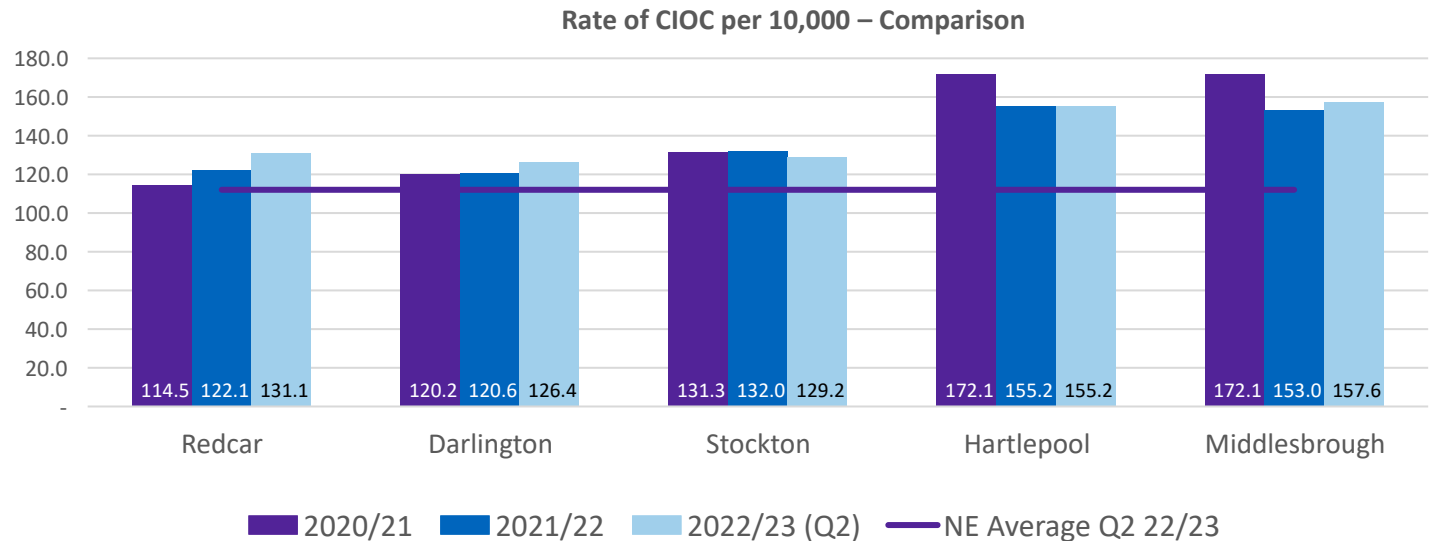
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Increase in demand and complexity

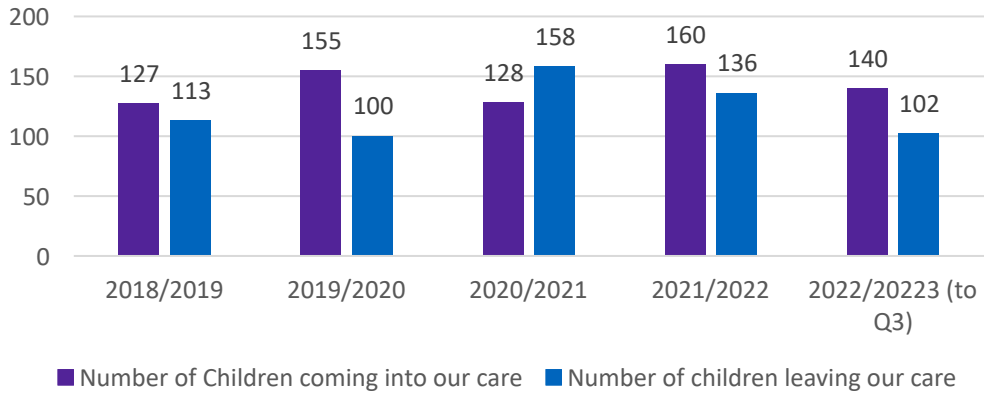


Following a dip in the number of children in our care in 2020/2021, the number has increased to 379 children at the end of December 2022. A rate of 139.4 per 10,000.

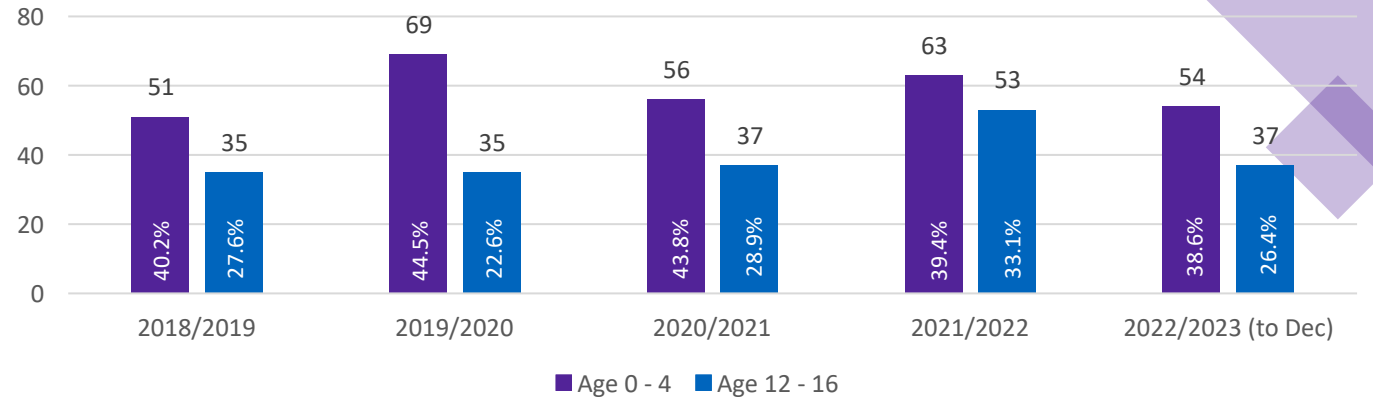
When reviewing this rate alongside our North East Comparators, it can be seen that Redcar and Cleveland have remained fairly static with a slight increase per year from 2020/21 to Q2 2022/23.



Number of Children coming into our care & leaving our care



Children becoming CIOC by age

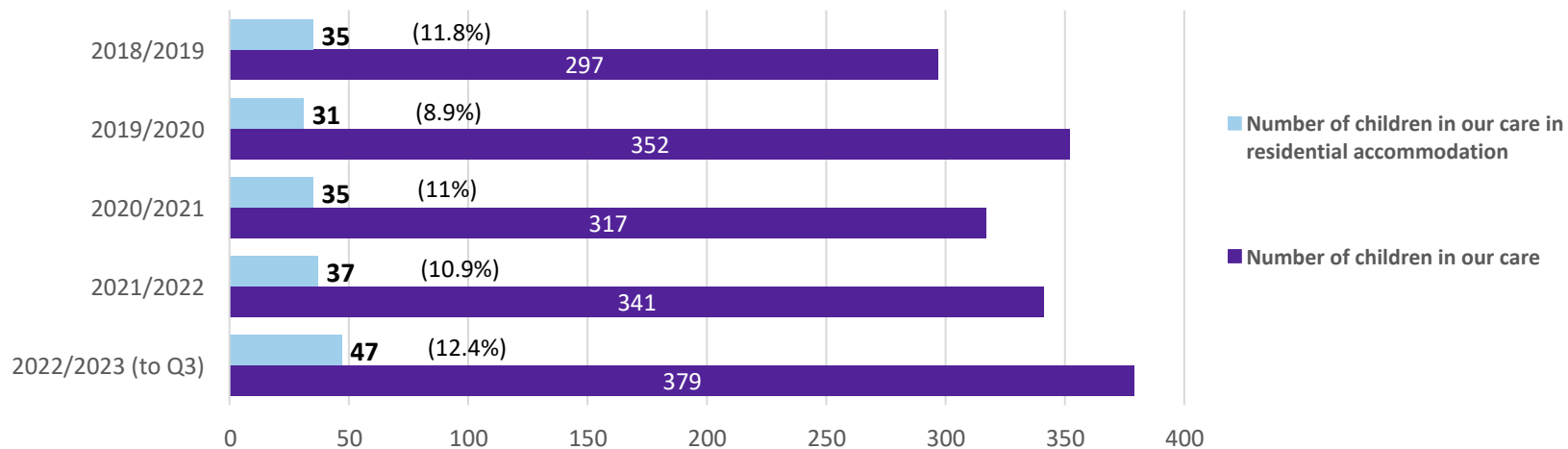


Despite a slight decrease in 2020/2021, which is likely a result of Covid 19, we have seen an increase in the number of children who have become children in our care with 140 at the end of Quarter 3 2022/23.

Although, younger children (aged between 0-4) continue to be our highest age bracket into care, since 2021 we have seen an increase in those aged between 12 and 16 years. At the end of Quarter 3 2022/23, 37 (26.4%) of those that came into care were aged between 12 and 16.



% of children in our care in residential accommodation

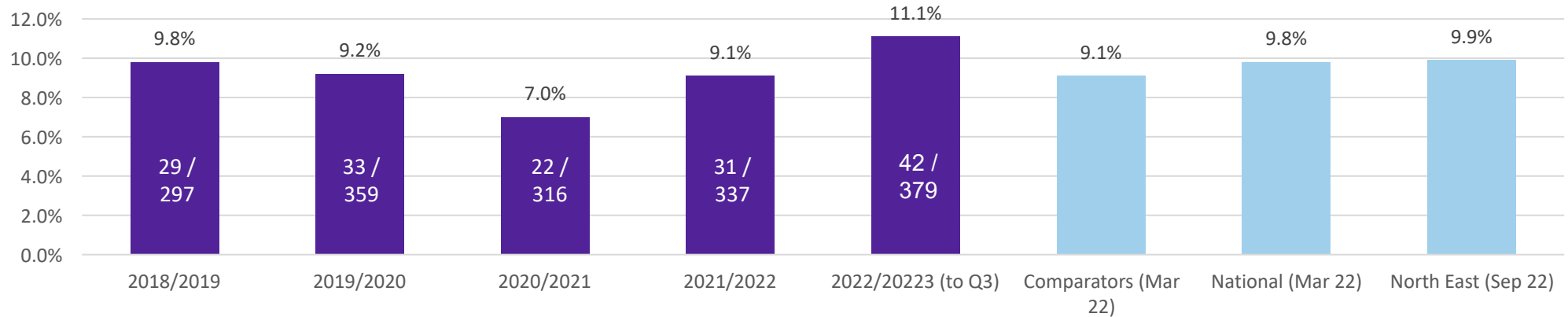


In addition to the increase in children aged between 12 and 15 years entering our care, we are seeing an increase in the complexities that children are presenting such as early trauma and exploitation.

Complexity of need is having an impact on the number of young people who are placed in more specialist homes.

The number of children in Residential Placements has increased from 37 in March 2022 to 47 in December 2022.

% of children in our care with 3 or more placements



In line with the increase in children in our care and those presenting increased complexities, we have seen a rise in the number of children who have had three or more placements.



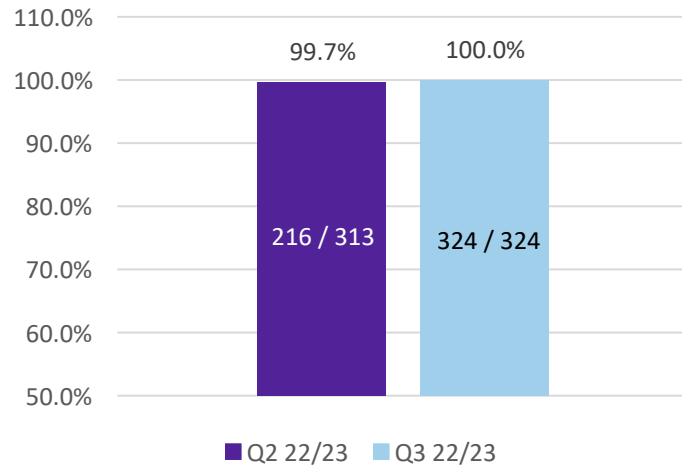
Virtual School, SEND, Careers & NEETs and Inclusion

What's Working Well



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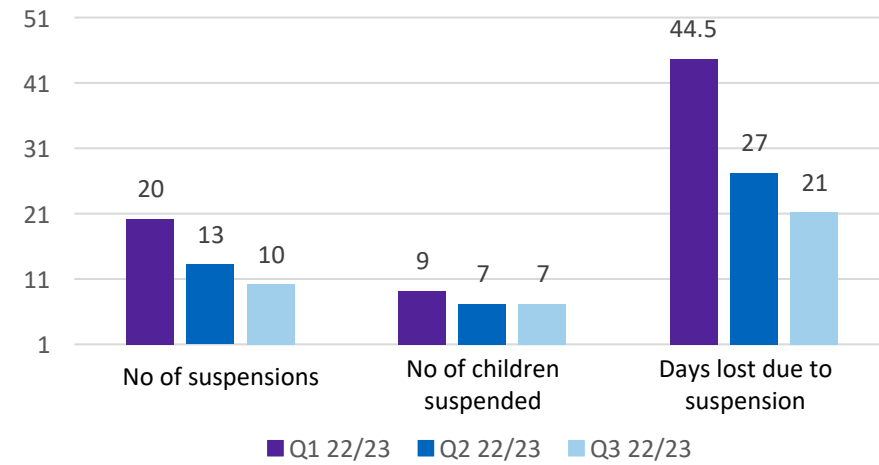
% of PEPs completed within timescale



We continue to see a high number of PEPs completed within timescales.

Quality Assurance continues to be undertaken on PEPs and of the 338 which have been reviewed 307 (90.8%) were graded either Green or Gold.

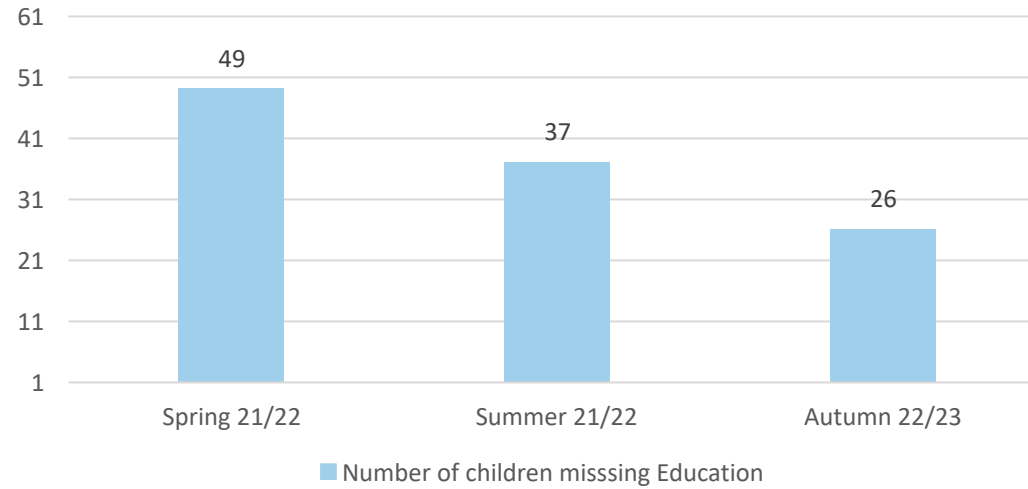
Number of CIOC Suspensions



We have seen a further decrease in the number of suspensions and the number of days lost due to suspensions in the last quarter.



Reduction in the number of children missing education



Over the last three terms we have seen a reduction in the number of Children Missing Education from 49 in Spring 21/22 to 26 in Autumn 22/23.

Children Not In Full Time School Meeting is working well and embedded. The Protocol is now taking shape and schools are responding much quicker.

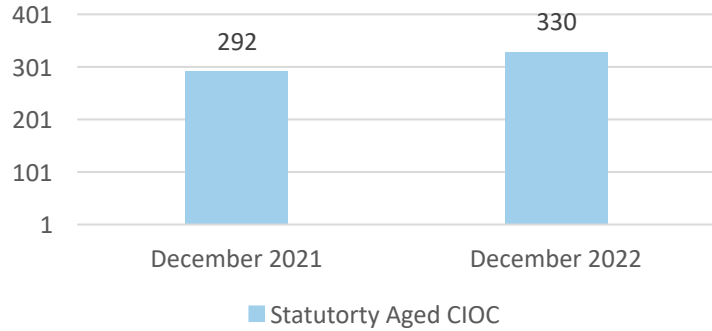
Virtual School, SEND, Careers & NEETs and Inclusion

What We Are Worried About



Thriving children, fulfilling their dreams.

Increase in the number of CIOC in the Virtual School



Page 46

We are continuing to see an increase in the number of CIOC in the Virtual School from 292 in December 2021 to 330 in December 2022 (13% increase).

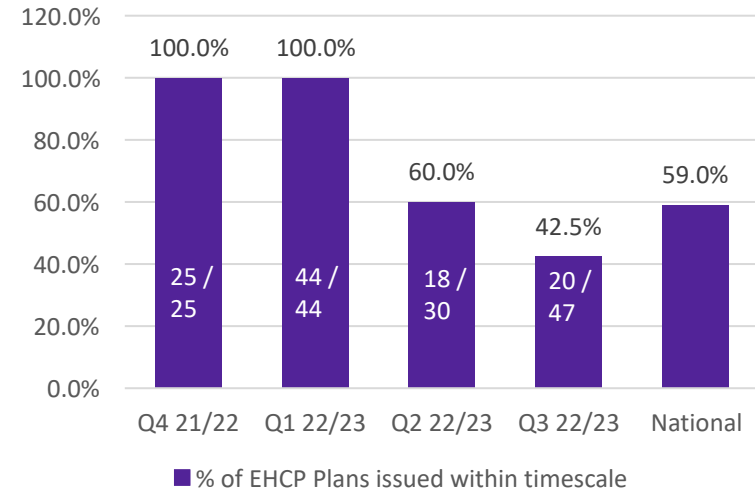
Throughout the Autumn Term we have seen 51 new Statutory Aged children into the Virtual School in comparison to 35 at the same point in the last academic year.

We continue to be concerned over the rising caseloads and the lack of available placements at registered Education Provisions.

What we are doing:

Continue to monitor caseloads. Officers to prioritise PEP completion and quality assurance processes.

% of EHCP Plans issued within 20 weeks

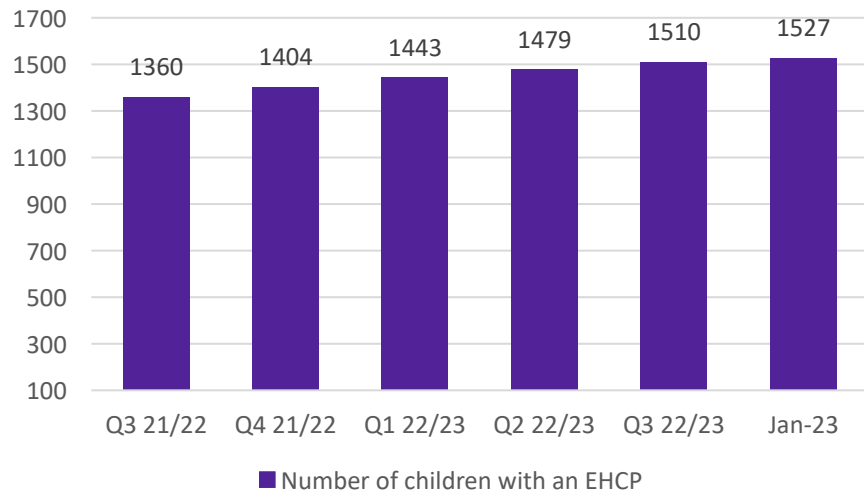


We have seen a further reduction in the number of EHCP Plan issued within the 20 week timescale. The significant delay in completion is due to lack of capacity within Education Psychology Service.

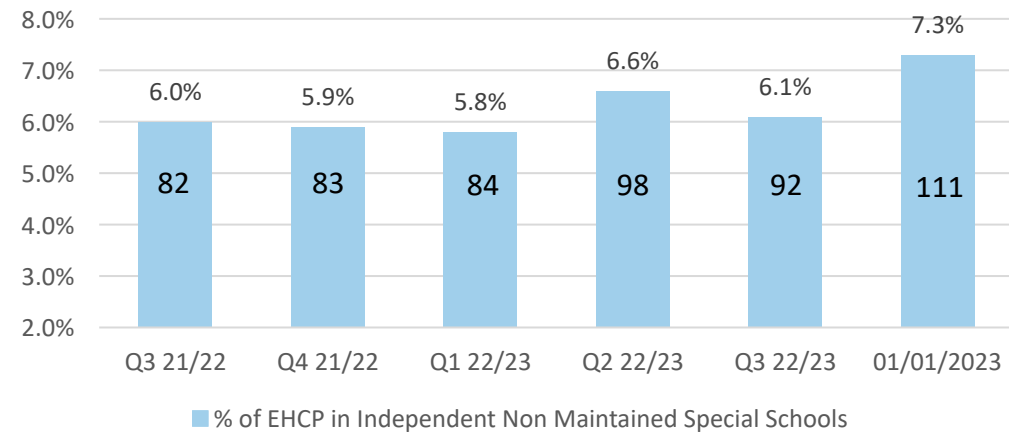
What are we doing:

Interviews are scheduled for 1st March 2022 for Education Psychologists.

Increase in the number of children with an EHCP



Increase in the number of children with an EHCP in Independent Non-Maintained Special Schools



We are continuing to see an increase in the number of children with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) from 1360 in December 2021 to 1498 in December 2022. This is having an impact on the number of children with an EHCP in Non-Maintained Special Schools.

There are currently 56% (858/1528) of children with an EHCP educated in Mainstream Schools.

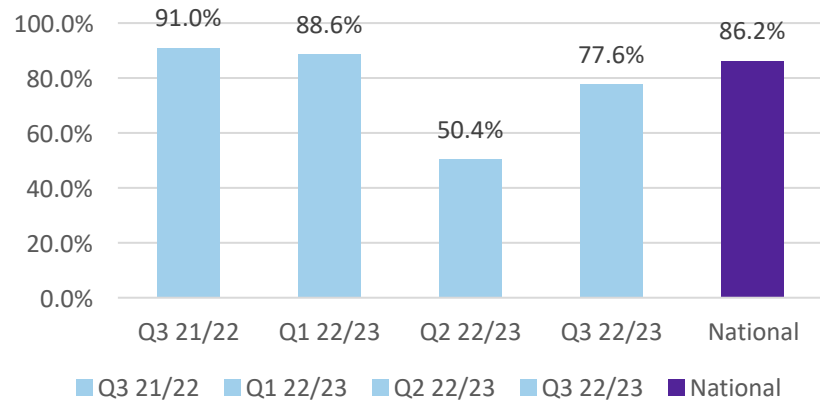
There are 7 children who are in receipt of a personal budget, 0.4%.

What we are doing:

We have a robust panel system in place, which is rigorous in determining whether an EHCP will be issued, following a multi-professional assessment. In addition, we are ceasing EHCPs for some of the older cohort (19-25s) and working with the NEET reduction team.



% of year 12/13 SEND children who are in Education, Employment or Training



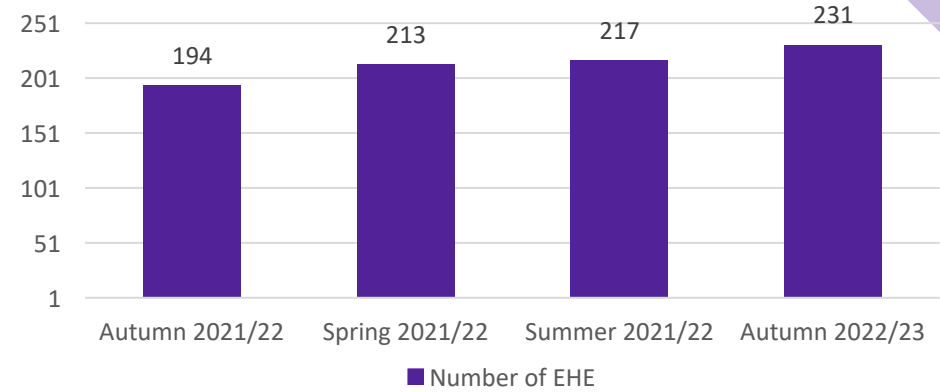
We have seen a reduction in the percentage of Year 12/13 SEND Young People who are in Education, Employment or Training. Our SEND Young People are finding it particularly hard to sustain education and training.

Although we have seen an increase since September 2022, the December figure of 77.6% is below both our figure in December 2021 and our comparators at 80.2%.

What we are doing:

We continue to work with our partners in post-16 to identify support that can be put in place for our most vulnerable young people and to support them through our Transition Mentor.

Increase in the number of children Electively Home Educated

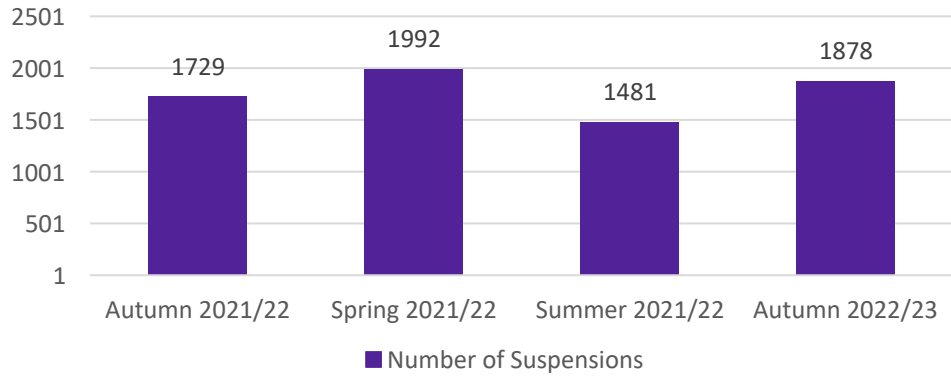


We have seen a 19% increase in the number of children who are Electively Home Educated between Autumn 2021/22 term and Autumn 2022/23 term (from 194 to 231 children).

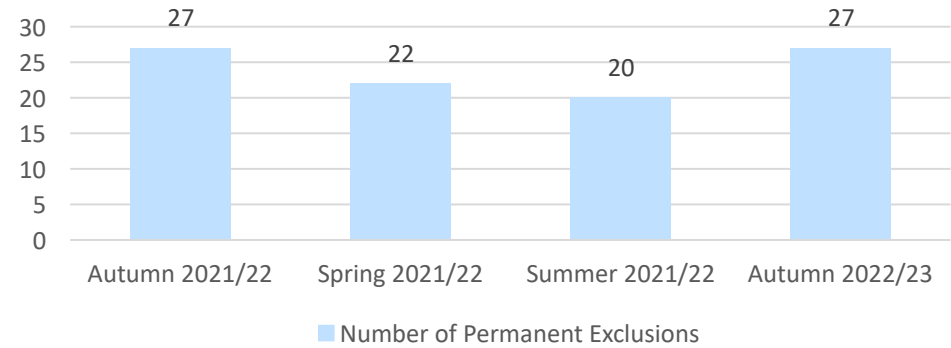
What we are doing:

We have developed a parental forum for EHE to improve communication, hear directly from the parents and best support those who want to return to School.

Number of Suspensions



Number of Permanent Exclusions



In Term 2 of Autumn 2022/23, we seen a large increase in the number of Suspensions and Permanent Exclusions, although it is worth noting that Permanent Exclusions are similar to those in Autumn 2021/22.

What we are doing:

We are now sharing live updates on Suspensions and Permanent Exclusions in Education Improvement Partnership and Strategic Education Board.

Strategy meetings are being scheduled with individual Head Teachers and we are undertaking discussions on individual pupils including peer support and challenge.

We are discussing an additional SEMH Provision with providers for 15-20 children.

We have applied for an Alterative Provision Free School with 50 places.



Thank you

Any questions?



Children & Families Scrutiny and Improvement Committee – Action List

Actions from 1 November 2022		
Action:	Responsible Officer:	Comment:
<p>Principal Social Worker Annual Update</p> <p>Members to be given the opportunity to experience the Virtual Reality Headsets.</p>	LB	Item to take place at the close of the current meeting.
Actions from 24 January 2023		
Action:	Responsible Officer:	Comment:
<p>Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman Decision</p> <p>Members to be given the opportunity to visit the respite centre for children with disabilities at St. Williams Church in Dormanstown.</p>	AH	A number of potential dates for a visit have been offered. Members to be contacted in due course to determine which is most suitable.