

**Children's Services
Placements and
Sufficiency Strategy for
Children Looked After and
Care Experienced Young
People
2020 - 2024**

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1. Introduction

Our vision is for Solihull to be a place where everyone has an equal chance to be healthier, happier, safer and more prosperous through growth that creates opportunities for all. This means making Solihull a place where all children and young people (CYP) thrive and have a good quality of life, learn, are safe and secure, and get support at the earliest point, regardless of where they live in the Borough. In delivering this vision we will be ambitious, open, honest and keep our promises.

This strategy sets out how Solihull Council seeks to ensure we have a sufficiency of the right placements for those children in our care and our care experienced young people. It also sets out how our strategic intentions will be realised and the actions that will be taken to ensure that we achieve the best possible outcomes for all the children and young people for whom we have responsibility.

Whilst we refer to ‘placements’ we recognise that for our children and young people this is where they live, this is about their home while they are in our care and getting that right for each and every one of our children and young person is a priority for us.

We know from views captured through our Viewpoint surveys that our children and young people feel safe within their placements and feel able to talk to carers. Young people want their views to be heard and responded to by their carers and their social workers.

Children and young people say that they want to feel a sense of belonging and for where they live to be their “home”. Children and young people want to be able to have friends visit them in their homes and to take part in activities, in the same way that their peers can. Children and young people want to be able to remain with their carers until they feel ready for independence and the work on securing permanency for young people always includes the discussion with carers about Staying Put options post 18, as well as developing other ways for young people to choose how they might best be supported into adulthood.

In Solihull we are clear that corporate parenting is about how we will be the best parents we can be for the children and young people in our care and when they have left care and as they become independent adults. This strategy is part of a whole-system approach that includes early intervention and preventative services to support children within their families, as well as the range of support services for children who become looked after.

This strategy is informed by what our children and young people tell us individually and collectively through OVOS (Our Voice Our Services), our promises as corporate parents, our statutory duties and what we know from our data including the analysis of our children looked after population in Solihull between 2014/15 and 2021/22.

The impact of Covid –19 and opportunities to learn for the future:

During the Covid-19 pandemic, we had to do things differently, including having to adapt to working virtually. Sometimes this worked better for our children, young people and families and also created some additional challenges. We continue to take stock, reflect, listen to our children and young people and be mindful of our learning in future planning.

We need to be sure when developing services, that they support and enhance access and participation for our children and young people in services that meet their health and education needs through alternative ways. For example, access to virtual support services for children that are placed away from Solihull means that they may be able to maintain the therapeutic relationship they have developed with their local mental health clinician.

2. Sufficiency Duty

Section 22G of the Children Act 1989¹ seeks to improve outcomes for children and young people who are looked after, by requiring local authorities to take steps that secure, so far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within the authority's area which meets the needs of children that the local authority are looking after, and whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation that is in the local authority's area ('the sufficiency duty'). This strategy outlines how we deliver our sufficiency duty, ensuring that there is sufficient accommodation of different types for our children looked after and care experienced young people.

In complying with this duty, the Council seeks to do more than simply ensure that accommodation is 'sufficient' in terms of the number of beds provided. We will have regard to the benefits of securing a range of accommodation through a number of providers to ensure the accommodation meets the child or young person's needs. We recognise these needs can be wide-ranging and can require a holistic approach.

As a local authority, the Council is subject to a range of duties towards children within our area which are related to the sufficiency duty. In particular:

- Section 17(1) of the 1989 Act provides that it is the general duty of a local authority to provide a range and level of services to children in need (as defined in section 17(10) of the 1989 Act) and their families in the local area which are appropriate to their needs.
- Section 20 of that Act requires local authorities to provide accommodation for children in need within their area who appear to them to require accommodation in accordance with the provisions of that section.
- Section 21 requires a local authority to accommodate certain children who are either removed or kept away from home under Part V of the 1989 Act or who are subject to a criminal court order under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE, 1984)
- Section 22C (5) requires local authorities to place children in the most appropriate placement available. In determining the most appropriate placement for a child, section 22C (7) requires local authorities to take into account a number of factors (such as the duties to safeguard and promote welfare; promote educational achievement; ascertain the wishes of the child and family; and give due consideration to religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural background).
- In determining the most appropriate placement for a child, section 22C(7)(a) also requires the local authority to give preference to a placement with a relative, friend or other person connected with the child and who is also a local authority foster parent.
- Section 22C sets out the additional factors (in no order of priority) which the local authority must take into consideration when deciding the most appropriate placement:
 - allowing the child to live near his/her home;
 - not disrupting the child's education or training;
 - enabling the child and a looked after sibling to live together;
 - meeting the particular needs of disabled children; and
 - Providing accommodation within the local authority's area, unless that is not reasonably practicable.
- Section 23(1) (a) requires a local authority to provide accommodation for a child who is in their care (by virtue of a care order).
- The Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders (LASPO) Act 2012, defines all children aged 10 to 17 years old who have been refused bail as a Looked After Child under section 21 of the Children Act 1989 for the duration of the remand.
- Legislation to prohibit placing vulnerable children under the age of 16 in unregulated accommodation came into force in September 2021

¹ Children's Act 1989 c41 and Children's and Young Person's Act 2008 c28

3. Our Corporate Parenting Vision

This strategy is underpinned by our responsibilities as Corporate Parents. Our vision for the Solihull children and young people we look after is simply to;²

Work in partnership to deliver services for children, young people and families so that they receive the right support at the right time and are enabled to thrive in their communities.

Do our best as corporate parents for children and young people in our care.

Want our children and young people to be happy and healthy, both physically and emotionally, to be safe and protected from harm and exploitation, and to be supported each step of the way to adult life.

Want children to live as close to home as possible and to experience “ordinary family life.”

Be ambitious and aspirational for our children. We want them to achieve their potential, especially at school, to make the most of the learning opportunities they are offered and to participate in the decisions affecting their care and their lives. This includes making the transition to adulthood with continuity of support, access to good jobs and higher education, while living in good housing and being financially secure.

Have our children looked after and care experienced young people to work with us, along with their parents and carers, in shaping how we manage and organise the planning, resources and services that support and care for them.

Be proud of our children and young people and take every opportunity to celebrate their achievements.

We will achieve this vision through

- Strong and robust leadership.
- Maintaining the engagement of service users in developing and implementing the strategy.
- Working in partnership across Solihull Council’s services.

Our priorities to make sure we are good Corporate Parents

This strategy has three main priorities.

- **To champion** the interests of children looked after and care experienced young people. We want elected members, senior Council officers, other Council staff and senior leaders in partner organisations to know what our children and young people need and can offer so that they can contribute to improving their lives.
- To ensure that all parts of the Council and its partners in the public, third and business sectors take **practical steps** that will enable our children looked after and care experienced young people to lead safe, fulfilling and ultimately economically independent lives.
- To provide a **good governance** framework for elected members and children looked after and care experienced young people to evaluate the impact of our services, influence their development and hold officers to account.

² Taken from SMBC’s Corporate Parenting Strategy: Corporate Parenting in Solihull 2019 - 2021

4. Priority Areas

The sufficiency strategy forms part of the Council's overall approach to commissioning services for children, young people and families and is a key priority area within our Council Plan.³ This strategy seeks to address the sufficiency, quality and sustainability of appropriate placement provision, which will support the best possible outcomes for our children and young people, by ensuring that we have a range of provision that supports cultural diversity and meets the individual needs of each child or young person, as well as seeking value for money within the available resources.

The types of placements that this strategy considers include:

- i. Fostering: this includes connected person arrangements, in-house foster carers and independent fostering agencies (IFAs)
- ii. Independent residential children's homes or residential schools
- iii. In-house supported lodgings / staying put arrangements for 16+ children who are looked after and care experienced young people
- iv. Independent supported accommodation for 16+ children who are looked after and care experienced young people

To ensure that we have a sufficiency of placements we will continue to;

- Support children and young people to remain within a family setting (right help at the right time)
- Ensure that children and young people that are looked after are placed in local (Solihull or immediate neighbouring LA's) and family-based placements whenever this is their plan.
- Review and challenge all residential placements and placements a long way from home to ensure that children and young people can return to local family-based placements whenever possible
- Ensure continuous improvement in outcomes for our children and young people.
- Deliver value for money – which is more than just the financial cost, it's about making sure that our children and young people feel safe, are really cared about and are supported to achieve good outcomes.
- Promote our permanency offer to ensure timely achievement of permanent placements and secure placement stability – through adoptions, special guardianship, child arrangement orders and permanent and long-term foster care
- Maintain stable placements, as stability is the basis for improving outcomes so that continuity of relationships, community links, education and health provision provides the right conditions for maximising potential
- Support children who are looked after and care experienced young people to make a successful transition into adulthood through the provision of good quality education, training and employment and suitable accommodation and support

To ensure there is a sufficiency of placements we have identified four key areas of work:

- Support more children who are cared for by connected carers, and mainstream carers where appropriate, to move to permanent arrangements in a timely way,
- Increase the availability of local foster carers to offer more local family-based placements.
- To increase the availability of local residential placements for those children and young people who need a residential placement for a period of time.
- Clarify the housing options for our care experienced young people, working in partnership with Solihull Community Housing and Adult Care and Support Directorate.

³ [Solihull Council Plan 2020 - 2025: 2022/2023 Update](#)

5. Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2020-2024



Children and Young People

What we know

- The number of children and young people looked after by Solihull Council has continued to grow year on year. There were 193 more children and young people looked after on the 31 March 2022 than on the 31 March 2015.
- (As at 31 March 2015 a total of 335 children were looked after (289 local children and 46 unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people) increasing to 528 (local 478/50 UASC) as at 31 March 2022)
- The rate of children looked after per 10,000 under 18 population is 110, (31 March 2022) the national rate was 67 per 10,000 under 18 population (31 March 2021).
- Numbers of children and young people (CYP) entering care had been higher each year than the number leaving care, however in 2021/22 there were slightly lower numbers entering care than the number leaving care.
- 9% of children and young people were in placements more than 20 miles from home (March 2020) this has increased to 11% as at 31 March 2022.
- Solihull has a high proportion of children in connected carer placements 24% in March 2022 compared with 15% nationally (March 2020)
- As at 31 March 2020 we had 70 looked after UASC young people this was 15% of our total children looked after population, this had decreased to 50 unaccompanied young people as 31 March 2022 (9.8%)
- Typically, children looked after are overrepresented in the youth justice system.
- Local Placements spend in 2021/22 was £20.568m, and for UASC placements £3.284m (an overall increase of circa £8.5m from 2018/19)

What we are doing

- A Childrens Service Improvement Plan has been developed that includes actions to improve the early help offer and the experience of children, young people, and families.
- Family Group Conferencing and the Missing and Exploitation Team are in place and developing their service offer.
- Practice development training programme established for the children's services workforce.
- Considering the further development of edge of care, prevention, and early interventions services.
- Increased focus on promoting permanency through Special Guardianship Orders (SGO), Child Arrangement and Adoption, as well as Long Term Fostering
- Reviewing our SGO policy to ensure clarity of financial support and training opportunities for carers

What we expect to achieve

- Children and young people are only in care when this is the best option for them, with improved early help support we would expect lower numbers of children and young people starting to become looked after and increasing numbers leaving care, though reunification and children moving into permanency arrangements
- We will ensure that CYP have security of permanency through proactive planning, this will include an increase in the number of SGOs through the development of the Permanency Hub.



Foster care

What we know

- As at 31 March 2022 75.8% of children and young people who were looked after were in foster care, of which 50% were in the care of internal foster carers (18% with mainstream foster carers, 32% with connected foster carers) and 50% with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) foster carers.
- Children and young people in a foster placement are more likely to be placed closer to home than in residential care
- In 2020/21 internal fostering average weekly rate was £396 per week; external fostering average weekly rate was £812 per week.
- As at March 2022 there were 199 Internal foster carer placements with 127 being connected carer placements and 72 mainstream foster carer placements
- Connected carer placements have increased from 79 as at 31 March 2017 to 127 as at 31 March 2022
- Very limited short break placement availability through internal foster carers, including short break care for disabled children and young people
- It is increasingly more difficult to place teenagers and those children who have more complex needs with foster carers
- There are limited placements available to keep larger sibling group together.
- Foster care placements are sometimes required at short notice or out of hours due to difficult family situations, more availability of these placements is required.

What we are doing

- Improving the support available for connected carers to manage alternative permanency arrangements i.e., Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs)
- Improving long-term fostering matching process to ensure permanency is secured
- Implementing a robust internal fostering service Action Plan and Marketing campaign to increase recruitment and retention of foster carers
- A step down from residential to specialist fostering programme has been developed
- Plan to recruit foster carers to provide placements for young people under section 38 Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984/ Remand to local authority care
- Maintaining strong relationships with IFAs to secure external foster placements when required
- Utilising the West Midlands regional framework agreement for the purchase of IFA placements
- Exploring the potential to increase our Parent and Child foster placement options

What we expect to achieve

- Increase the proportion of children in foster care that are cared for by internal mainstream foster carers from 18% to 40% by 30 September 2024.
- Children will not be placed in residential care because there was no suitable fostering placement available
- An out of hours foster care placement will always be available should the Emergency Duty Team need to place children or young people out of hours.
- A greater range of placement type to be offered by internal carers, to include Short Breaks, PACE, Remand, Residential step down and parent and child placements.
- Increase in number of SGOs through the development of the Permanency Hub



Residential Care

What we know

- Solihull has no Local Authority residential children's homes
- All residential placements are currently purchased from external providers
- 67% of children in residential children's home placements on 31 March 2022 were located more than 20 miles away from Solihull.
- This includes provision for Children looked after with a range of needs, including children who have disabilities or who have to deal with complex issues and difficulties in their lives
- 58% of our children in residential children's care as at 31 March 2022 have a special educational need and/or disability 46% have a diagnosis of autism.
- Children and young people within residential placements with a long-term plan of fostering will be supported through the step-down programme
- There are a small number of children and young people who experience more placement moves in residential placements as providers are unable to meet their needs
- As at 31 March 2022 79% of residential children's homes placements were commissioned through framework agreements, there has been an increased need to use spot purchase provision to secure placements that can meet needs
- There has been an increase in the use of short-term activity provision and on occasions use of unregulated provision for children under 16
- 1 young person was in welfare secure accommodation as at 31 March 2022
- 4.5% of all our children looked after were placed in residential children's homes on 31 March 2022, the England average in March 2021 was 9%
- There is no commissioned PACE provision.
- Total spend on residential placements in 2021/22 was £8m.

What we are doing

- Strengthening strategic relationships with residential providers to support access to placements for our children and young people who need support with the difficulties and complex issues they are experiencing.
- Utilising regional framework agreements for the purchase of residential placements wherever possible
- Regularly challenging ourselves that children and young people are in the right placement for them and that they are achieving agreed outcomes, with a view to them being cared for in a family environment at the earliest opportunity.
- Develop internal fostering provision to provide placements for children and young people as part of the step-down programme from residential.
- Successfully applied for a DFE capital grant funding to establish three Local Authority residential children's home, with a plan to open the homes in 2023, when fully open 9 children or young people could be cared for in our own homes.

What we expect to achieve

- Three local authority residential children's homes established by the end of 2023/24.
- Improved placement stability for children who present with complex needs in residential care with a reduced reliance on crisis placements.
- Higher numbers of children and young people stepping down into internal fostering placements from residential provision, to ensure children live in ordinary families.
- Clear process for securing PACE beds if residential care is required.
- More local placements for those children and young people whose needs are best met by residential care.



16+ Supporting Independence

What we know

- On 31 March 2022 we were supporting 342 care experienced young people of which 75 were 18 years old or younger, 175 were aged 19-21 and 92 over 21.
- 44 children and young people who were looked after were placed in Supported Accommodation on 31 March 2022.
- Supported accommodation placements are commissioned via a Regional Framework agreement
- 24 care experienced young people were in internal supported lodgings / staying put arrangements as at August 2019, this has increased to 39 on 31 March 2022 (During 2021/22 a total of 56 young people were living in staying put or supported lodgings arrangements)
- Around 40 young people a year transfer to Adult Social Care or are assessed as being eligible for Continuing Health Care for their on-going support and care. These young people are assessed as having eligible needs because of disability or mental health problems, some of these will be children who are looked after.

What we are doing

- Working with partners to further develop the local offer for 16 to 25-year-olds who are care experienced to ensure the right support at the right time is available for them as they become independent young adults.
- Working to increase access to education, employment, or training.
- Working in partnership with other West Midlands local Authority's to ensure that provision is secured via the new regional framework agreement for supported accommodation placements.
- Starting to develop relationships with providers to develop more local provision
- Exploring options for increased support including 'Staying Close'.
- Developing a plan to increase recruitment of carers that offer 'staying put'.
- Robust quality assurance framework to assess quality of supported accommodation provision, supporting providers to be ready for the introduction of new minimum standards for supported accommodation.

What we expect to achieve

- Young people have choice about where they live and how they are supported with a range of available options.
- To secure placements with providers that support young people to be confident, resilient, and independent young people
- That placements support each individual young person to achieve their aspirations, be that further education, employment or training.
- Clear framework for assuring the quality of our external placements,
- Increase internal supported lodgings places available for care experienced young people from 24 to 35 placements, with an increase if demand is higher.

5. Commissioning Intentions 2020-2024

Key sufficiency pressures that have been identified are:

- Increasing numbers of children and young people in care
- Significant demand for independent fostering agency (IFA) placements (these are at a higher cost to the Local Authority than internal foster care)
- Insufficient local placements to meet demand, across residential, fostering, Supported Accommodation, and Supported Living
- Limited choice of placements for children and young people with more complex needs, and for teenagers and sibling groups
- Need for more robust contract management of external placements
- Transition between children's services and adult social care services for those young people with eligible needs is more complicated than it should be for young people to navigate.

Our commissioning intentions are to:

- Work with regional colleagues, to ensure that the regional procurement frameworks have the breadth of providers to meet the needs of Solihull children and young people
- Whenever possible source placements via our regional procurement frameworks
- Work collaboratively with regional commissioning colleagues, SMBC commissioners of adult care and support and external providers to ensure availability and choice of local provision for Solihull children, young people and young adults (market shaping).
- Support the development of Local Authority residential children's home provision.
- Ensure we are clearly communicating the strengths and needs of our children and young people to providers when we are sourcing placement options for them.
- Work collaboratively with identified providers and our health and education partners to design creative and innovative packages of care to support our children and young people to thrive and achieve agreed outcomes (bespoke packages of support, including step-down)
- Work with social work colleagues to identify when there is likely to be a need for an external placement earlier in the process to reduce the number of urgent placement searches, supporting a planned move for children and young people.
- Fulfil our duty to ensure best value through effective commissioning (robust contract management)
- Ensuring the voice of the child or young person is included through the whole placement commissioning process
- Be good Corporate Parents.

6. Review Process

We are committed to ensuring that we deliver against our priorities in a timely way and document our progress. The review of the delivery plan will take account of the performance indicators across all areas that impact on placement sufficiency and will be updated as necessary to include areas where further input or focus is required.

The detailed delivery plan will be monitored by the Childrens Services Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and progress will be reported through our Directorate Leadership Team (DLT) and wider Council Governance processes, as this is identified as a key priority within the Council Plan.

For the most up-to-date version of our delivery plan please contact childrenscommissioning@solihull.gov.uk

Appendix A:

Local Context & Data

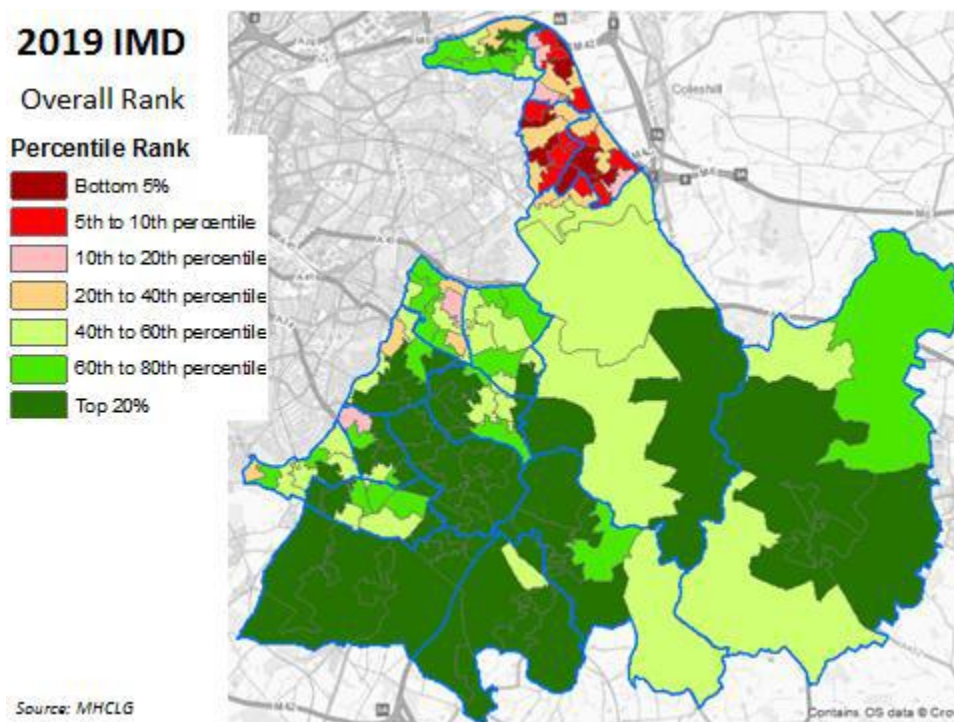
The Council's vision is for Solihull to be a place where everyone has an equal chance to be healthier, happier, safer and more prosperous; where all children and young people are loved and valued by their families and communities and thrive and succeed.

Solihull is located in the West Midlands, to the south of Birmingham. It has a population of approximately 210,000. The ONS population estimates for mid-2015 there are 62,600 children and young people aged 0-19 years in Solihull, proportionally in line with the England average (30% of population). It also suggests the population for the North Solihull regeneration area is much younger than the rest of the borough (29% aged 0-19 years compared to 23% in rest of borough), with a high proportion of children aged 0-4 years being a notable feature.

Solihull is a broadly affluent place but continues to have a prosperity gap for the Regeneration area (this includes the wards of Chelmsley Wood, Smith's Wood and Kingshurst & Fordbridge) characterised by below average income levels, higher population density and more social rented housing.

Solihull has 20 Local Super Output Areas (LSOA) neighbourhoods in the bottom 10% nationally in respect of Income Deprivation Affecting Children (2019 IMD), with 9 in the most deprived 5% of neighbourhoods.

Green Hill (Shirley East ward, 14th percentile) and Hobs Moat North (Lyndon, 13th percentile) are the only LSOAs outside of the regeneration area in the most deprived 20% of neighbourhoods in England.



More information can be found at:
[The story of Solihull](#)

Number of children looked after (CLA) and care experienced young people

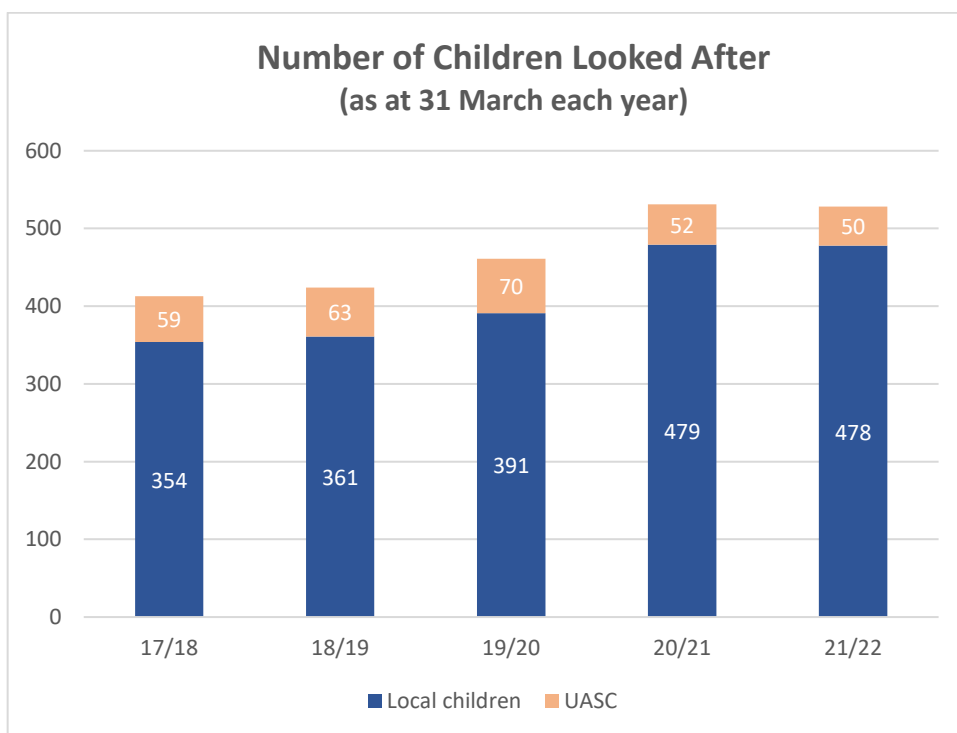
As at 31 March 2022 Solihull had 525 children who were looked after (CLA), a CLA population of 111 per 10,000 (Local CLA 100.5 per 10,000), this is higher than the national (2021) average of 67 per 10,000, and also higher than our statistical neighbours. If the national rate for the number of CLA was applied to the Solihull under 18 population then we would expect the number of children looked after to be 321.

The number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people (UASC) arriving in Solihull is outside of local authority control, when under 18 years old the Local Authority has a statutory duty under the Children Act 1989 to look after these children. Nationally the rate of UASC is 5% of children who are looked after (March 2020), so Solihull, at 9.5% the rate is significantly higher. The main reason for this is the location of the immigration office is based in central Solihull.

However, even accounting for the higher rate of UASC, the rate per 10,000 under 18 population is higher than would be expected from benchmarking data.

During the Covid pandemic there were higher numbers of children starting to be looked after and less children leaving care, in part due to delayed court processes.

The table below shows the year on year increased in the number of Solihull local children who are looked after, there was a notable increase in the first year of the Covid pandemic.



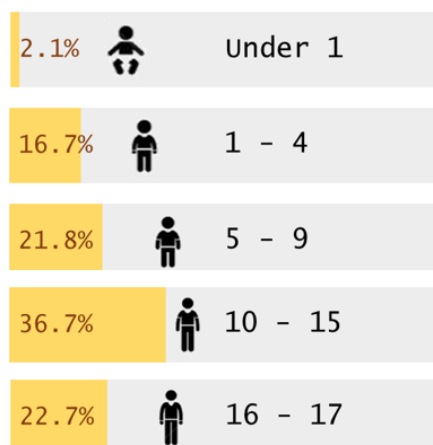
In 2021/22, 132 children and young people started to be looked after (100 local 32 UASC) and 135 ceased being looked after (99 local 36 UASC), however in 2020/21 there were 170 children who started to be looked after and 104 who ceased being looked after. As can be seen in the following tables, fewer UASC young people started to be looked after in 2020/21, in part because the immigration office in Solihull was closed due to the Covid 19 Pandemic.

2021/22	All children	Local children	UASC
Number of Children Looked After At 31/3/2022	528	478	50
Number of children starting to be looked after in year ending 31/3	132	100	32
Number of children ceasing to be looked after in year ending 31/3	135	99	36

2020/21	All children	Local children	UASC
Number of Children Looked After At 31/3/2021	531	479	52
Number of children starting to be looked after in year ending 31/3	170	161	9
Number of children ceasing to be looked after in year ending 31/3	104	77	27

The age profile of children looked after on the 31 March 2022 is shown below

March 2022



The age profile is reflective of the 2020 national data, which showed that 10-15-year-olds account for 39% of children looked after. (National data shows 23% were aged 16+ years, 19% aged 5-9 years, 14% aged 1-4 years and 5% aged less than 1 year.)

The following tables provide a more detailed analysis of our children looked after, by gender, age, ethnicity and category of need when they became looked after.

Analysis of Looked After Children by gender and age group

Age at 31 March	Male 2020	Female 2020	Total 2020	Male 2021	Female 2021	Total 2021	Male 2022	Female 2022	Total 2022
Under 1:	7	7	14	9	11	20	7	4	11
1 - 4:	34	21	55	49	34	83	43	45	88
5 - 9:	62	41	103	65	55	120	64	51	115
10 - 15:	107	76	183	112	76	188	112	82	194
16 - 17:	76	30	106	78	42	120	83	37	120
Total	286	175	461	313	218	531	309	219	528

Ethnic Origin of Children Looked After at 31 March	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
White	275	280	312	362	357
Mixed	50	57	58	75	76
Asian or Asian British	48	46	36	30	27
Black or Black British	13	9	21	29	21
Other ethnic groups	27	32	34	35	47
Total	413	424	461	531	528

Category Of Need of Looked After Children at 31 March	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Abuse or neglect	127	146	149	214	213
Disability	12	11	9	9	8
Parental illness or disability	48	39	48	48	46
Family in acute stress	128	130	139	154	141
Family dysfunction	20	16	21	26	50
Socially unacceptable behaviour	19	17	23	24	17
Low income	1	1	0	1	0
Absent parenting	58	64	72	55	53
Total	413	424	461	531	528

Care Experienced Young People

The table below shows the number of care experienced young people supported during 2021/22

Care experienced young people whose 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd or 24th birthday fell between April 2021 and March 2022:
Snapshot of status on or around birthday

Care experienced cohort			
	All	Local	UASC
Total	342	206	136
18 and under	75	44	31
19 to 21	175	106	69
over 21 and open to team	92	56	36

Placements for Children Looked After

The table below shows a snapshot of the placements in which children looked after were being cared for on the 31 March each year from 2016 to 2022.

Placements for children looked after as at the 31 March each year.

Placement Type	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Foster placement with relative or friend	55	79	102	104	120	125	128
Placement with internal foster carer:	113	98	94	85	76	69	72
Placement with external (IFA) foster carer:	95	107	127	147	166	200	200
Children's Homes subject to Children's Homes Regulations	18	28	19	19	25	33	24
Hostels and other supportive residential placements	28	29	33	34	32	26	44
Placed for adoption (including placed with former foster carer)	11	6	4	3	5	5	8
Placed with own parents	34	34	32	28	36	60	40
Secure unit	0	0	0	2	1	3	2
Other	7	2	2	2	0	10	10
Grand Total	361	383	413	424	461	531	528

40 children who were looked after on the 31 March 2022 were placed with their parents. This is 7.6% of the total number of Children who were looked after, broadly in line with the national 2020 average of 7%. This number did increase significantly during 2022/21 due to the limited court capacity to discharge care orders.

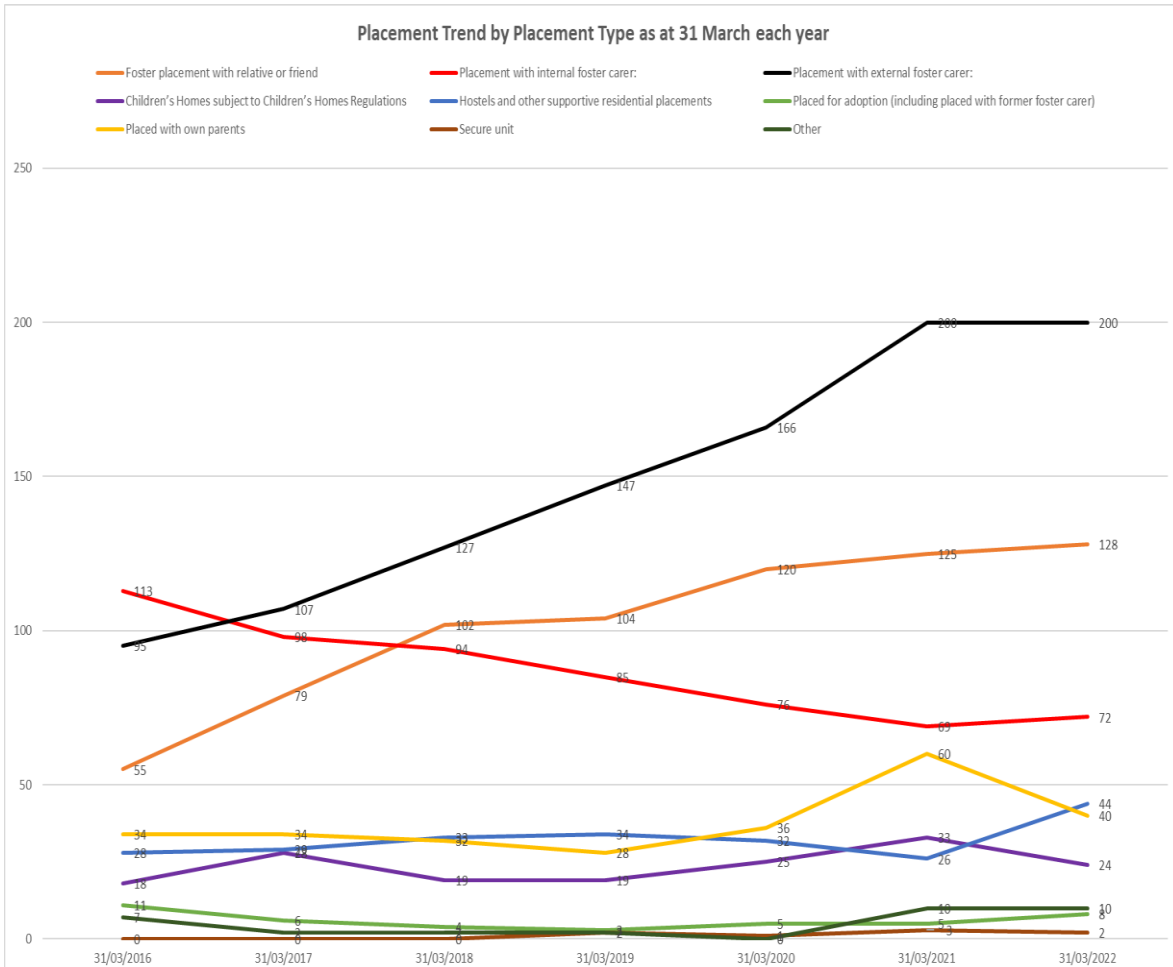
On 31 March 2022, 400 of our children looked after were living in foster care, (including 128 connected persons placements) which means 75.8% of all our children looked after were living in foster care. This is above the national 2021 average of 71%.

Whilst the overall numbers of children looked after placed within internal fostering has increased, this is due to the number of children placed with connected carers which has increased from 55 in 2016 to 128 in 2022. The proportion of Solihull CLA placed with connected carers on 31 March 2022 is 24% compared to 15% nationally as at 31 March 2021.

The level of resources required to assess and support connected carer placements has impacted on the ability of the internal fostering service to be able to dedicate time and capacity to offer and develop mainstream internal foster placements, which has resulted in the need to source more external foster care placements.

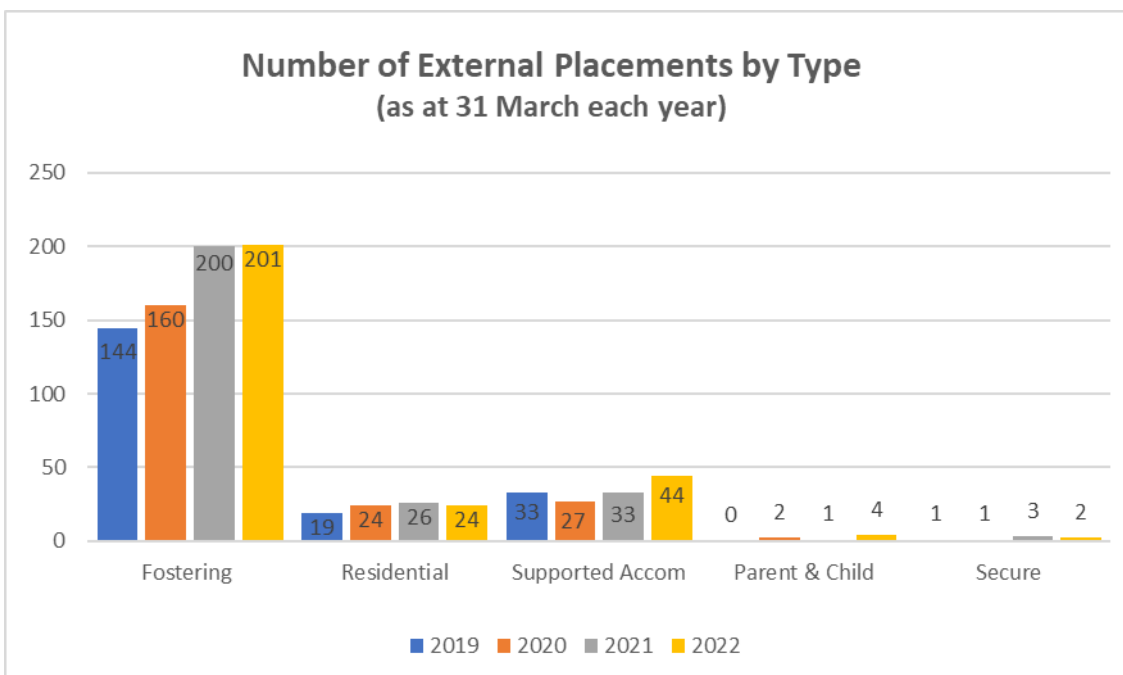
The graph below shows that since 31st March 2016, the number of children in mainstream internal foster placements has been reducing, resulting in the numbers of children in external, Independent Fostering Agency placements to increase.

Whilst the plan is to increase the number of local authority mainstream foster carers to ensure there is sufficiency of local family-based placements, it will be some time before there is a reduced reliance on independent fostering agencies.



External Placements

The graph below shows how many children/young people were in an externally commissioned placement as at 31 March, from 2019 to 2022. 276 (52.3%) of the 528 CLA were in external commissioned placements as at 31 March, 2022,

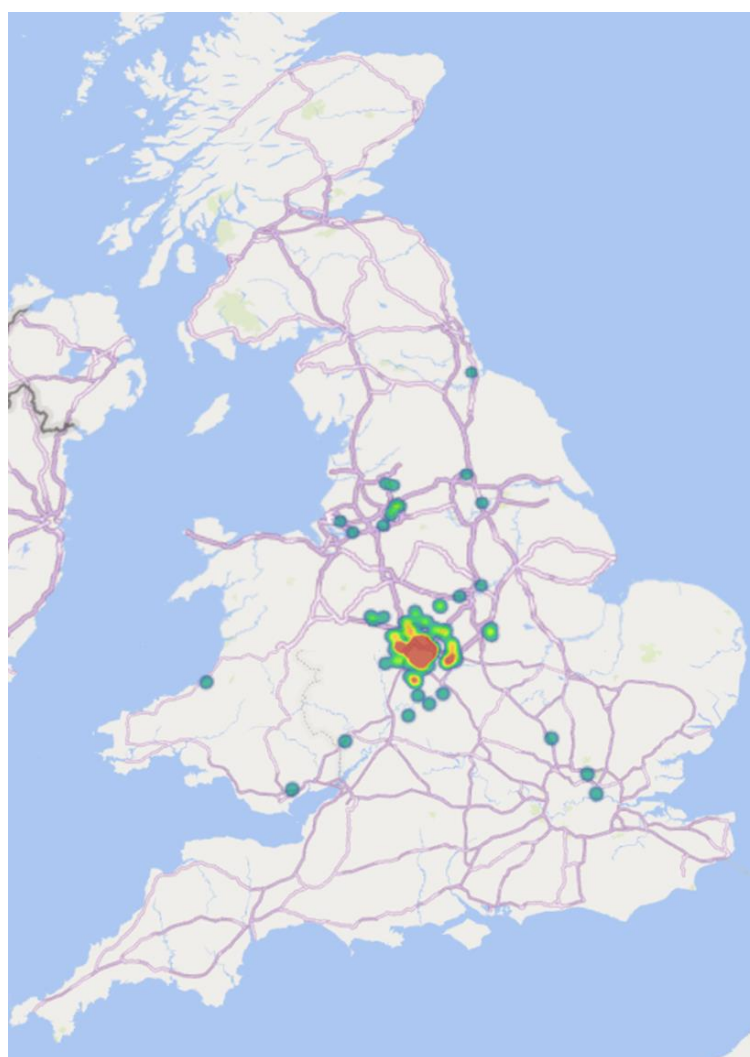


On 31 March 2022, 201 children were cared for by Independent Fostering Agency foster carers, 45 of these are long term foster care placements.

Whilst the proportion of children looked after in residential care remains small, all of these placements are commissioned from external providers, and it is increasingly difficult to place children in local placements. Around two thirds of children in residential care are more than 20 miles from Solihull, and although Solihull is part of a regional framework for residential care, these are increasingly placements with spot purchased providers.

Placements for teenagers and children and young people who needs require more specialist support are most difficult to secure.

The map below shows geographical areas where CLA were placed in external commissioned placement as at 31 March 2022 Placements.



It should be noted that for some children and young people a placement at distance from Solihull this will be the most appropriate placement, this may be related to the risk of ongoing exploitation if they remain in a local placement.

There are no welfare secure placements in the West Midlands, so these types of placements are more likely to be distant from Solihull.

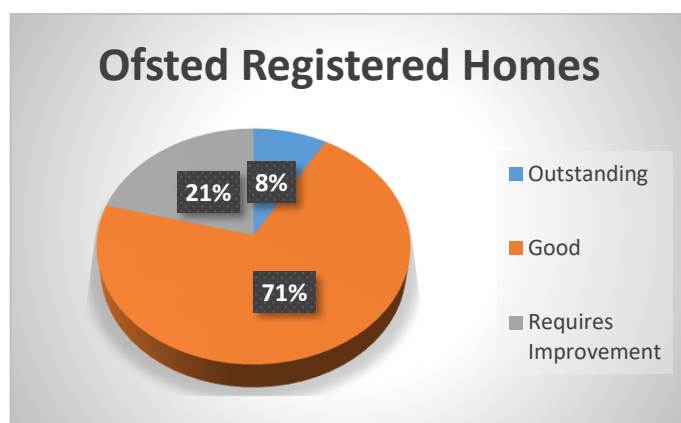
The table below shows the total number of external placements that were started by placement type each year, again the impact of the Covid pandemic on the need for external placements is very evident.

No of placements started each year by category of provision	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Fostering	66	90	106	134	82
Residential	5	16	28	31	13
Supported Accommodation	31	44	36	29	35
Parent and Child	0	0	5	8	5
Secure	0	3	2	7	3
Total	102	153	177	209	138

Ofsted Ratings of External Placement Providers

All placements which are subject to regulatory inspections are monitored each quarter. Checks conducted in the last quarter of 2021/22 are detailed below.

Residential Placements



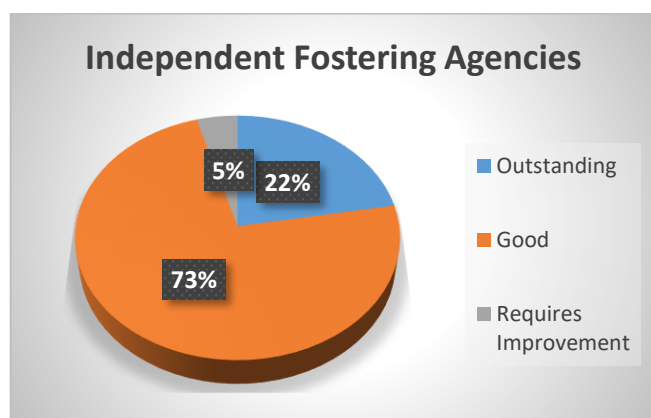
Outstanding	2
Good	17
Requires Improvement	5
Inadequate	0

In addition to the above

- 1 home was inspected by Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) – Estyn
- 1 home was registered with CQC – ‘Requires Improvement’

All of the newly registered homes we had placements in have now been inspected by Ofsted.

Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs)



Outstanding	10
Good	33
Requires Improvement	2
Inadequate	0

Parent and Child Assessment Centres

- 1 was rated as Good by Ofsted
- 1 was a newly registered assessment centre and not yet been inspected by Ofsted

Secure Units

- 2 were rated by Ofsted as being Good
- 1 was rated by Ofsted as Requires Improvement to be Good

Care Experienced Young People

The table below shows the key indicators for care experienced young people, including those that were in suitable accommodation on their 18th, 19th and 21st birthdays.

	2019/20			2021/22		
	All Care Experienced Young People			All Care Experienced Young People		
DEFINITION	Numerator	Denominator	OUTTURN	Numerator	Denominator	OUTTURN
Leaving Care 1: The percentage of children leaving care aged 16 or over who remained looked after until their 18th birthday	63	67	94%	74	83	89%
Leaving Care 2 [was NI 148 / A4]: Care leavers on 19th, 20th or 21st birthday in education, training or employment	83	156	53%	89	175	51%
Leaving Care 3 [was NI 147]: Care leavers on 19th, 20th or 21st birthday in suitable accommodation	128	156	82%	152	175	87%
Leaving Care 4: Care leavers on 19th, 20th or 21st birthday in higher education	8	156	5%	5	175	3%