



CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

PLACEMENT SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY

DATE OF PUBLICATION: JULY 2023

DATE OF REVIEW: JULY 2024



ST HELENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL

ST HELENS SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY 2020-2024

1. Introduction:

Overarching Aims and Objectives of the Sufficiency Strategy

Focus on St Helens Children remaining in St Helens

What are our Outcomes to achieve for children and young people?

What are our standards and expectations for partnership working?

2. Governance and Accountability:

What is the agreed reporting process:
Accountable to the Corporate Parenting Board

Ratification of Strategy through cabinet

Information sharing and assurance to the Children's Improvement Board

Adherence to Safeguarding Policies and processes

Financial accountability

3. Partnership and co-production:

Links to Voice of the children and young people framework - what do children and young people tell us

Our promise to the children we look after

Links to Advocacy

Links with Regulators

Links with wider system

4. Demographics:

St Helens borough profile

Current data - numbers of Children in Care

Forecasted need and any potential risks identified

Financial impact

Comparison with statistical neighbours

Foster Carer demographics

5. Current Provision Options:

Identify current use of various provisions and what is available / gaps:

- Families Staying Together
- Foster care (In-house / Independent)
- Residential and Secure Children's Homes
- Supported and Independent Living (SaiLS)
- Unaccompanied asylum seeking children
- Health
- Education
- SEND

6. Quality Assurance:

- Quality Assurance
- Performance Monitoring
- Learning from others

7. Market Position Statement and Commissioning Priorities:

- Voice of the child
- Prevention
- Foster care
- Children's Homes
- 16+ Supported and Independent Living Services



1. INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS OUR PLACEMENT SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY

We believe in supporting all of our children and young people to have a safe place to live and thrive.

We recognise that most children and young people are best brought up within their own families, however where this is not possible, we look to find a family or a home that best meets their needs and offers access to the support and opportunities needed for success and happiness in later life.

To meet this vision, we need to have the right home, in the right place, at the right time.

OUR OBJECTIVES

The Right Home: To secure high quality provision that meets the individual needs of our Children and Young People

The Right Place: To provide St Helens Children and Young People that we look after with the appropriate provision in St Helens or the local area. Where it is in the best interests of the Child or young person the right place may be outside of our local area

The Right Time: That provision and moves are planned, and that we reduce the need for emergency placements and placement changes

WHAT DO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WE LOOK AFTER ASK US TO REMEMBER

“ WE ARE NOT A POLICY OR PROCEDURE ”

“ YOU ARE WORKING WITH PEOPLE’S LIVES ”

“ NOT JUST A NAME ON A PAGE ”

“ ASK YOURSELF, WOULD THIS BE GOOD ENOUGH FOR YOUR CHILD? ”

OUR AMBITIONS

- To support as many children and young people to be brought up in their own families where safe to do so and safely reduce overall net growth of children and young people coming into care
- Have a population of Children we Look After aligned to our statistical neighbours
- To provide early help and support, general and targeted, to vulnerable and at risk families, children and young people, to reduce the need for them to enter the care system
- To maximise the opportunity for those children and young people coming into care to remain in St Helens
- To maximise placement stability for those children and young people we look after
- To support children and young people and the local workforce to make the right choice when identifying a suitable placement
- All our children and young people achieve permanency at the earliest opportunity. Children and young people will have a clear understanding of their plan for their future



OUR AIMS

- Use of data and forecasting to inform strategic decision making
- To focus on permanence planning
- To review our internal processes and system working to ensure our Social Workers are fully informed of options for their care planning
- To use the St Helens £ wisely to ensure high-quality, cost effectiveness and enable improved matching through building better relationships with our market providers
- To provide a range of high quality provision including developing our own in-house services
- To work with our Third Sector Partners to access their specialist knowledge in advance of commissioning new services and provision
- To recruit more foster carers within St Helens

OUTCOMES WE WISH TO ACHIEVE

Children and Young People

- I am safe and I feel I belong
- I am happy
- I am doing well at school
- I am healthy and feeling positive about myself
- I am confident and resilient
- I have skills for my life but know where to get support if I need it

Local Authority

- Children placed in a family setting in their own community
- An appropriate choice of high-quality local provision
- System financial balance

STANDARDS BY WHICH WE WILL WORK

- Working in partnership, locally within St Helens Cares and also across the Liverpool City Region and Cheshire and Mersey Partnerships
- Co-production and engagement with our Children and Young People, and with our staff
- Ensure Advocacy for children and young people
- Accountability to our Children's Rights and Independent Visitors Service
- Ensuring high quality is paramount
- Work collaboratively with our regulators and inspectors (learning culture)
- Use data, information and robust analysis to inform our thinking and planning
- Adhere to corporate / council expectations relating to value for money, prevention and wellbeing

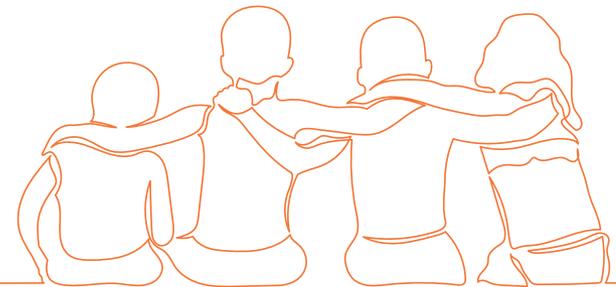
2. GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The following primary legislation governs our commissioning in relation to looked after children:

- Children Act 1989 & 2004
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Care Standards Act 2000
- Adoption and Children Act 2002 • Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Statutory Guidance on Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children 2010
- Guidance on the Provision of Accommodation for 16 & 17 year old young people who be homeless and/or require accommodation 2010
- Care Planning Review and Regulations 2010
- Promoting the Educational Achievements of Looked After Children: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities 2010
- The Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012
- Children and Family Act 2014
- The Health and Care Act 2022
- Care of unaccompanied migrant children and child victims of modern slavery
- The Supported Accommodation (England) Regulations 2023

We will ensure adherence to our statutory duties through our governance framework

- Ratification of Sufficiency Strategy through Cabinet stewardship
- Accountable to the Corporate Parenting Board
- Information sharing and assurance to the Children's Improvement Board
- Adherence to Safeguarding Policies and Processes
- Financial accountability



Equality and Diversity

- We will give due regard to our statutory duties and responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010
- We ensure our children and young people are treated fairly, giving them equal access to information, opportunities, services, and employment.
- We recognise, acknowledge and respect differences within our community, and that children and young people have different needs based on characteristics they share with others, and that each child also has a unique background and identity, as an individual. We consider the different needs of individuals and groups within our diverse community, and wherever possible we ensure that children and young people who share different protected characteristics feel they have participated fully in processes to inform the design of welcoming, safe, and inclusive services.
- We collect appropriate information and carry out sufficient analysis to assess the impact that Council decisions, policies, service, and contract delivery arrangements will have on people with characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010.

3. PARTNERSHIP AND CO-PRODUCTION

We are working with children and young people to improve their lives and the services they receive - listening to and acting on what they tell us about their everyday experiences of being looked after and how they think our services should be run.

We are doing this by:

- Giving children and young people the opportunity to hold us to account for the promise we make to them
- Equipping our workforce with the skills to enable a conversation with our children, young people and their families about what matters to them
- Commissioning a children's rights service - to hold us to account as an organisation - includes Independent Advocacy and Visitor services enabling children to speak to people who can help amplify their voice regarding their care and support
- Working co-operatively with Regulators who hold us and our Partners to account for the quality of service provided and welcoming opportunities to learn
- Linking with wider system partners e.g. Early Help, Emotional, Health and Wellbeing, Education, Youth Justice, Housing and Additional Needs who enable support for our children, young people and their families in all aspects of their lives
- Working with Local Authorities across the Liverpool City Region, Cheshire and Mersey partnership and the North West to enable best use of resources across the region.



VOICE OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FRAMEWORK

The Children and Young people's Voice Framework sets out how we listen to, and act upon the voice of our children and young people in Social Care; how we work with them, support them to take the lead and acknowledge them and their needs as individuals.

In St Helens we take our responsibilities of delivering effective services seriously; working on systems, assessments, training, multi-agency working etc. However, as we strive to continually improve services, we must ensure that our children and young people are at the heart of what we do. It is their experience, their journey, their joy, their trauma, their voice, their life.

Each quarter, officers report on components of the framework. This is then collated and analysed for themes to be shared with Senior Managers. In addition to the Framework there are Voice of the Child Champions in each Social Care team. The role here in relation to the Sufficiency Strategy is to ensure that views heard by individuals or teams are shared across the Department to influence practice and commissioning. Ongoing work will be undertaken on ensuring the participation of children and young people in influencing the direction of the Sufficiency Strategy.



OUR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TELL US THEIR THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, WISHES, NEEDS ETC.

CHILD

Children and young people share their views with their social workers, IROs, Advocacy services etc. They can also meet as part of our CWLA Council/Group monthly. In addition, activities are held across the year to engage them and seek their views. e.g. Darkstar Laser, Spaceworld. Their views and lived experience influence the care and support provided and are recorded on their case files, linked to their Plan and monitored for improvements in outcomes.

TEAM

Voice of the Child Champions and their managers consider what has been heard from their children and young people at a team and department level to influence service delivery. Management oversight and supervision focus on 'Brilliant at the Basics'

DEPARTMENT & PARTNERS

Voice of the Child Champions feed learning into the Voice of the Child Champions Forum and contribute to the Voice of the Child Framework and Quarterly managers' report from their unique area of the Department. e.g. Child in Need, Child Protection, complaints, fostering, advocacy etc.

MULTI-AGENCY

The Corporate Parenting Forum, Children's Improvement Board and Safeguarding Children's Partnership share what has been heard across agencies to drive improvements in practice

STRATEGIC

The Corporate Parenting Forum (CPF) operates outcomes working groups – Safe and Stable Homes, Be Heard, Transitions and Preparation for Adulthood, Raising Aspirations, Emotional Health and Wellbeing. Each theme has an associated staff working group and reports to the Forum on progress. There is currently a repeat of the Brightspots survey for the CWLA and this year we will re-instate the strategic listening opportunity of a Takeover day. All these work on hearing and acting upon the voices of our children and young people.

OUR PROMISE TO THE CHILDREN WE LOOK AFTER

We asked you “what do you want us to promise you to keep you happy, healthy, safe, achieving and getting involved?”

You told us and we have heard you say:

“ HELP US KEEP SAFE ON SOCIAL MEDIA. BE MY GUARDIAN ANGEL.

TEACH US HOW TO KEEP OURSELVES HEALTHY, GIVE US THE LIFELONG HEALTH SKILLS.

BE KIND TO US, HAVE OUR BEST INTERESTS AT HEART. HELP TO ENSURE YOUNG PEOPLE DO NOT GET PREGNANT AT A YOUNG AGE, WHEN THEY ARE NOT READY.

MAKE SURE WE GET FRESH AIR, ARE TAKEN OUT AND GET TO ENJOY NATURE. MAKE SURE WE HAVE CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS. GOOD MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT.

MAKE SURE I HAVE A SAFE PLACE FOR MY SPECIAL THINGS LIKE PHOTOS AND MEMORIES. TO GIVE ME A GOOD LIFE AND EXPERIENCE.

CLOTHES THAT LOOK NICE. HELP US EAT VEG. STRANGER DANGER - WE NEED TO LEARN HOW TO KEEP OURSELVES SAFE.

MAKE EVERYONE INVOLVED IN KEEPING US HAPPY, HEALTHY AND SAFE. GET US INVOLVE IN PLAYING SPORT. MAKE SURE WE HAVE A HEALTHY START IN LIFE.

GET US PLAYING. HELP US HAVE FUN AT CONTACT - FAMILY TIME. OFFER HELP WHEN WE NEED IT. KEEP DOING WHAT YOU ARE DOING.

GO TO THE DENTIST. WE NEED TO BE HAVING FUN. GET CHANCES TO WATCH SPORT. HAVE HEALTHY FOOD. TREAT ME THE SAME AS YOUR BIRTH CHILDREN.

(TO LIVE) SOMEWHERE I FEEL SAFE AND SECURE. INTRODUCE ME TO MY PERSONAL ADVISOR EARLY. WHEN I AM 18, LET ME DECIDE WITH MY CARERS HOW TO CELEBRATE.

HAVE THE RIGHT PEOPLE TO TALK TO IF I AM WORRIED. LISTEN TO MY THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS. TO BE ABLE TO TRY OUT NEW ACTIVITIES.

HAVE WORKERS WHO ARE NICE. BE INTERESTED IN HOW I AM DOING AT SCHOOL AND HELP ME WHEN I NEED IT. HELP ME GET A JOB AND KNOW WHAT TO DO IN APPLYING FOR ONE.”

OUR PROMISE TO THE CHILDREN WE LOOK AFTER

SO HAVING HEARD YOU WE PROMISE TO...

Emotional Health and Wellbeing	Transitions and Preparation for Adulthood	Safe and Stable Homes	Being Heard	Raising Aspirations
Teach you about online safety and share tips on how to keep yourself safe online	Ensure your school/ college and carers help you to develop lifelong health skills throughout your life	Ensure you get opportunities to get fresh air, are taken out and get to enjoy nature	Tell you regularly who the people are who can help you or you can talk to	Show you the wide range of the world of work to inspire you
Be your 'guardian angel', check you are OK and offer support when you are not	Introduce you to your Personal Advisor as early as possible	Ensure you are offered a range of activities and events for you to get involved in	Ensure your workers listen to you and involve you in decisions about your life	Be interested in how you are doing at school or college or training
Keep you at the centre of everything we do. Check that changes we make to our services do not have a negative effect on you	Plan for your transitions and future with you	Ensure you get to plan celebrations for key life events, and we will celebrate with you too	Make sure you have a safe place for your special things like photos and memories	Link you with the people who can mentor and support your individual aspirations
Involve you in planning how family time will run	Check that the people and services that help and support you treat you like they would their own children	Work hard so you have a safe and secure place to live	We will check with you that you feel you have someone to talk to when you are worried about something	Explain the process of applying for a job, including developing your interview skills
Get you access to good mental health support and seek feedback from you on the support you get	Make sure you are able to celebrate relevant cultural celebrations	Ensure you have opportunities to get involved in watching or playing sport or the arts - whatever your passion is	Check that your workers have recorded what you have said and feel, and they act on your wishes or explain why it is not possible	Encourage you to be in school or college or training and help to remove any barriers to you being there ready to learn

Emotional Health and Wellbeing	Transitions and Preparation for Adulthood	Safe and Stable Homes	Being Heard	Raising Aspirations
Check with you that you have clothes and toiletries that you need to take care of yourself and feel good about yourself	Have as few changes in workers as possible and where change is needed, that we support you to meet the new person	Make sure that you know how to keep yourself safe in different environments, school, community, etc	Involve you in planning Family Time sessions	Help to ensure young people do not get pregnant at a young age, when they are not ready
Promote all the people and places that you can get help when you need it	Explain why you are in care - this will be age appropriate and this will be re-visited during your time in care. We will develop 'Later life letters'	Skill you up to know about housing options for your future	Meet your needs communication needs - Neurodiverse, Hearing or visually impaired, SEND etc.	Enable you to participate in society and remove barriers to doing so
Ensure you have access to your family health history and your Health Passport	Support you through the transition of leaving care, both practically and emotionally	Offer support and guidance to your carers, including training	Ensure that we understand what it is like to be you, sometimes known as your lived experience. We will support staff to do this really well and to make sure that what they learn from you is captured on your records and informs the plans for you	Listen to your passions and aspirations as you enter Year 9. If you choose, we will link you up with someone in Children's services who can help you to achieve your passion or career choice
To promote who you are as an individual and ensure services across the partnership meet your individual needs	Ensure you have the knowledge and access to after care services	Ensure you get access to advocacy services and that if you live in one of our own children's homes, that they visit you there to check you are ok	Check to ensure you are visited at home and get the chance to be listened to by your social worker alone	Help you to apply for jobs, college or training
Ensure that your voice and lived life experience is sought, understood, recorded, and informs your plans and meetings	Ensure that your voice and lived life experience is sought, understood, recorded, and informs your plans and meetings	Ensure that your voice and lived life experience is sought, understood, recorded, and informs your plans and meetings	Organise group and activities to listen to you and engage with you	Ensure that your voice and lived life experience is sought, understood, recorded, and informs your plans and meetings

4. DEMOGRAPHICS

St Helens is a large and significant borough at the heart of the Northwest of England, situated in Merseyside and proud to be part of the Liverpool City Region. It is a place of great potential with many strengths and opportunities. It covers an area of 136 square kilometres. Despite its urban character over half the area is rural or semi-rural in nature. St Helens is home to over 183,000 residents and 4,985 businesses.



7.45
HAPPINESS SCORE
(7.45 ENGLAND)



181,095
PEOPLE



36,682
CHILDREN &
YOUNG PEOPLE



3.06
ANXIETY SCORE
(3.12 ENGLAND)

St Helens has the second highest rate of admissions for alcohol specific conditions (0-17 years) in England, the 7th highest <18 conception rate (showing a small improvement on the previous year) in England and the 4th highest rate of admissions for mental health conditions (0-17 years) in the Northwest. Male and female life expectancy in St Helens is 2.9 and 2.3 years respectively below the national average, and it ranks as the 8th most deprived place in terms of health in England.

There are higher rates of childhood obesity than England and our statistical neighbours - 44% of children in year 6 are either overweight or obese.

It has the highest admission rate to hospital for self-harm amongst children and young people (10-24) in England and the 6th highest rate of admissions for mental health conditions (0-17 years) in the Northwest.

29.8% of children aged 0-15 live in poverty.

St Helens has higher rates of referrals to children's social care, children in need, children subject to child protections plans and looked after children than statistical neighbours and England.

The Borough is not without challenges. In the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), St Helens is ranked as the 26th most deprived local authority in England out of 317.

Its relative position has deteriorated since the 2015 IMD. Deprivation measures are not just financial, they include unmet needs, lack of resources and opportunities, poor housing, homelessness, low educational achievement, worklessness, poor health and high levels of morbidity.



A TOTAL OF 29 LOWER SUPER OUTPUT AREAS (NEIGHBOURHOODS) ARE WITHIN THE 10% MOST DEPRIVED SMALL AREAS IN ENGLAND



ALMOST ¼ OF ST HELENS RESIDENTS LIVE IN THE 10% MOST DEPRIVED NEIGHBOURHOODS IN THE COUNTRY

**52% OF CHILDREN IN NEED
IN ST HELENS LIVE IN PLACES
WHICH ARE THE 10% MOST
DEPRIVED WARDS IN ENGLAND**

We recognise that in order to achieve our ambitions we need to consider:

- What local data is available to us and what is it telling us?
- We need to set ourselves aspirational targets
- We need to acknowledge that we 'don't have all the details' and that our journey will be incremental
- We need to view this strategy as an opportunity for continual review, development and improvement
- We need to acknowledge that the influences which will impact on our ability to model a future projection are varied and complex
- We need to acknowledge that local current and planned developments and system improvements will impact on the number of children coming into care, the availability of suitable placements and overall sufficiency planning.

We need to work collaboratively in order to succeed.

Comparator data often lags behind because of the way it is collated e.g. Placements North West data is collected and reported quarterly, and national data is collated and distributed annually.



OUR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE: DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY



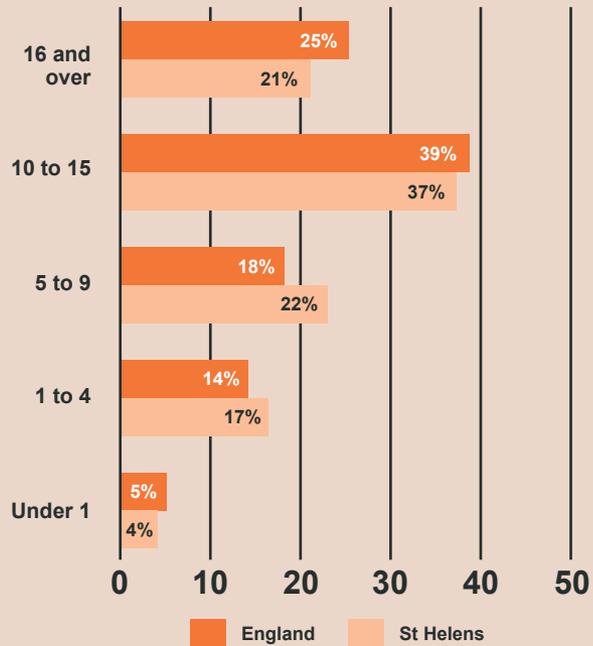
469 children and young people are cared for by St Helens Borough Council at 31st March 2023. The number of children cared for by St Helens Borough Council on the 31st March 2023 is broadly the same as the population reported on the 31st March 2022 (470) but is **6%** higher than the population reported 5 years earlier on the 31st March 2018 (442)



The number of children and young people cared for by St Helens Borough Council continues to be **well above** comparable regional and national averages



Age Profile for children cared for at 31st March 2023



St Helens Borough Council cared for a total of **618 children and young people** throughout the 22/23 year

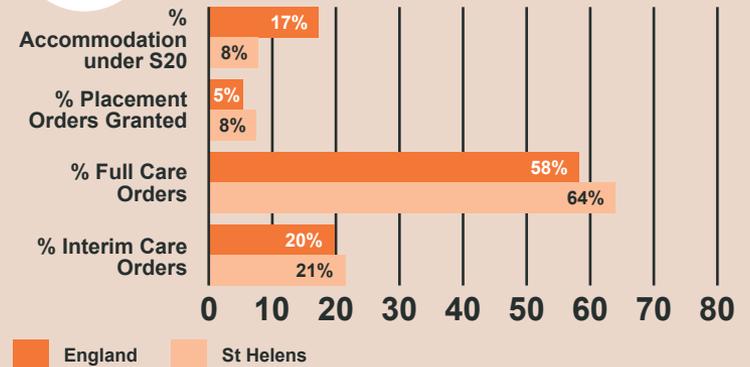
254, 54% of children cared for by St Helens at 31st March 2023 are male (56%*)

435, 92.8% of children cared for by St Helens at 31st March 2023 are of White Ethnicity (73%*)

44, 9% of children cared for by St Helens at 31st March 2023 are Disabled



Legal Status for children cared for at 31st March 2023



National average refers to 2022

Ethnicity	Number	%
White British	435	92.8%
Any other Ethnic Background	7	1%
Any other Black Background	5	1%
Any other Asian Background	4	1%
Any other Mixed Background	4	1%
White and Asian	3	1%
D2 - Black African	c	0%
White and Black Caribbean	c	0%
Asian/Asian British Indian	c	0%
White and Black African	c	0%
White Irish	c	0%
Grand Total	469	100%

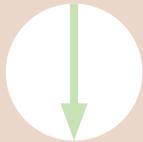
Footnote: c - number has been suppressed due to being a small number

National average refers to 2022

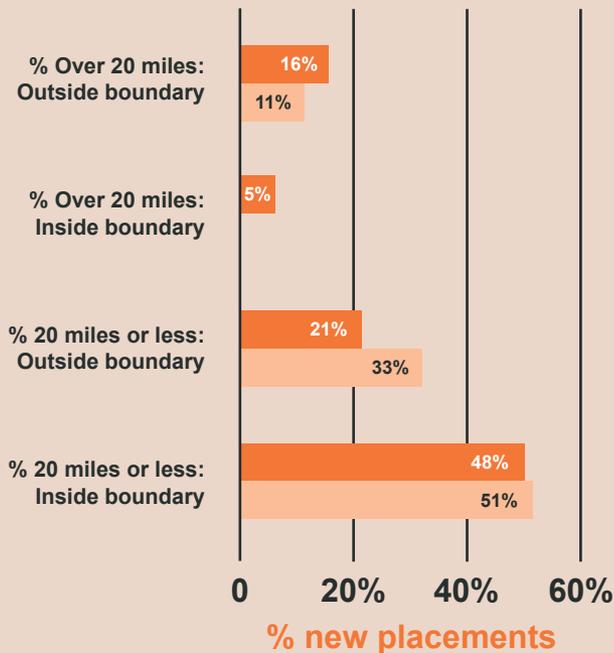
*National average

A PLACE TO LIVE, YOUR HOME

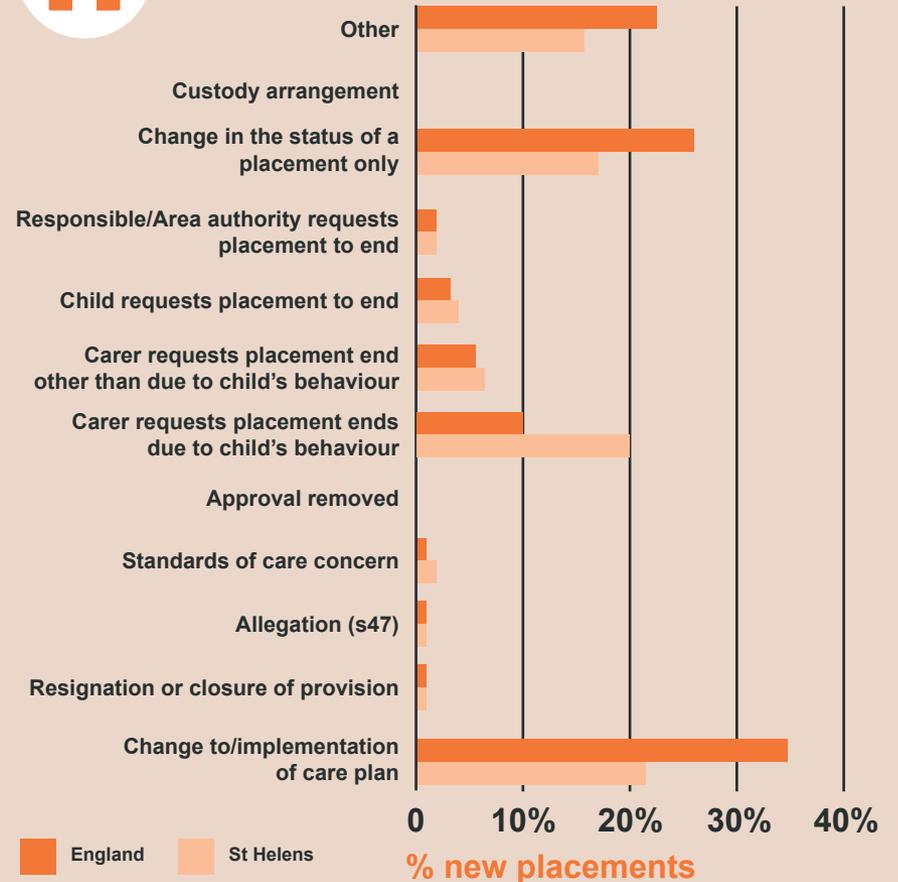
We aim for the majority of our children and young people to live within the local area or close to their home. However, we recognise that sometimes it may be in the best interest of the child or young person to live outside of the local area (for example, for their own safety or need for specialist support).



362 new placements were made during the 2022/2023 financial year



Reasons for placement changes



National average refers to 2022

National average refers to 2022

A PLACE TO LIVE, YOUR HOME

We aim for the majority of our children and young people to live within the local area or close to their home. However, we recognise that sometimes it may be in the best interest of the child or young person to live outside of the local area (for example, for their own safety or need for specialist support).



Percentage of children looked after at 31st March 2023 placed in St Helens or **within 20 miles of their home**

We want all of our children and young people to feel safe and secure at home. Our strategy focuses on finding homes that create stability. Stability remains positive in St Helens. The number of children experiencing 3 or more moves in 12 months, continues to remain below the national average of 9%.



Children looked after at 31st March 2023 with three or more placements during the year



CLA in care at least 2.5 years at 31st March 2023 living in their current placement for at least 2 years



CLA at 31 March 2023 placed outside St Helens boundary and more than 20 miles from where they used to live

A PLACE TO LIVE, YOUR HOME

Our vision is for all children in foster care to have stable lives, establish trusted relationships, to feel cared for and to benefit from high quality foster care for as long as they need it.



Percentage of children and young people cared for by St Helens Borough Council at 31st March 2023 placed with Foster Carers



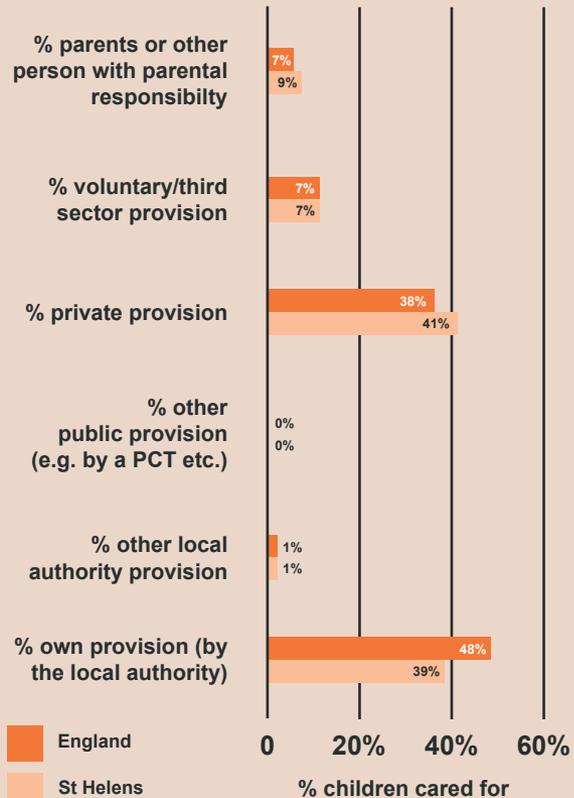
Percentage of children cared for by St Helens on the 31st March 2023 placed with parents



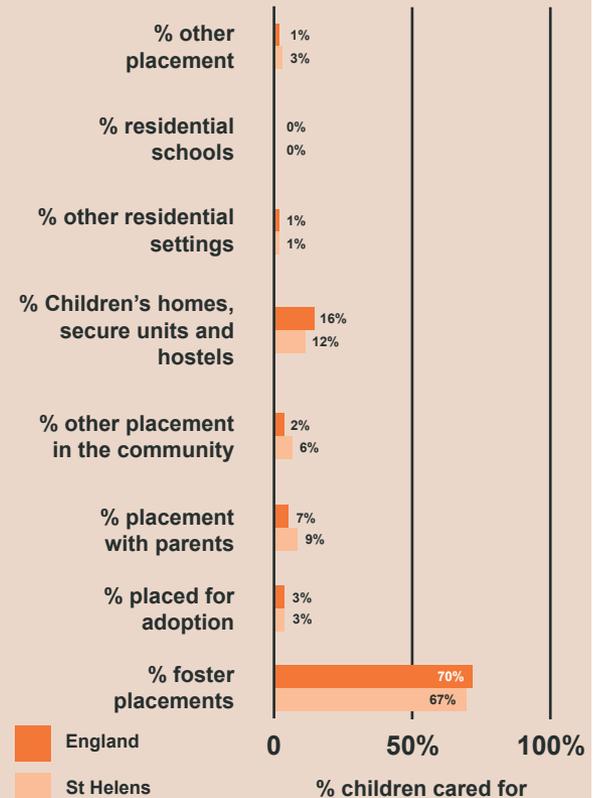
Percentage of children and young people cared for by St Helens Borough Council at 31st March 2023 placed in own provision (by the Local Authority) - lower than national (46%) and Statistical neighbour averages (57%)



Placement Providers for children cared for at 31st March 2023



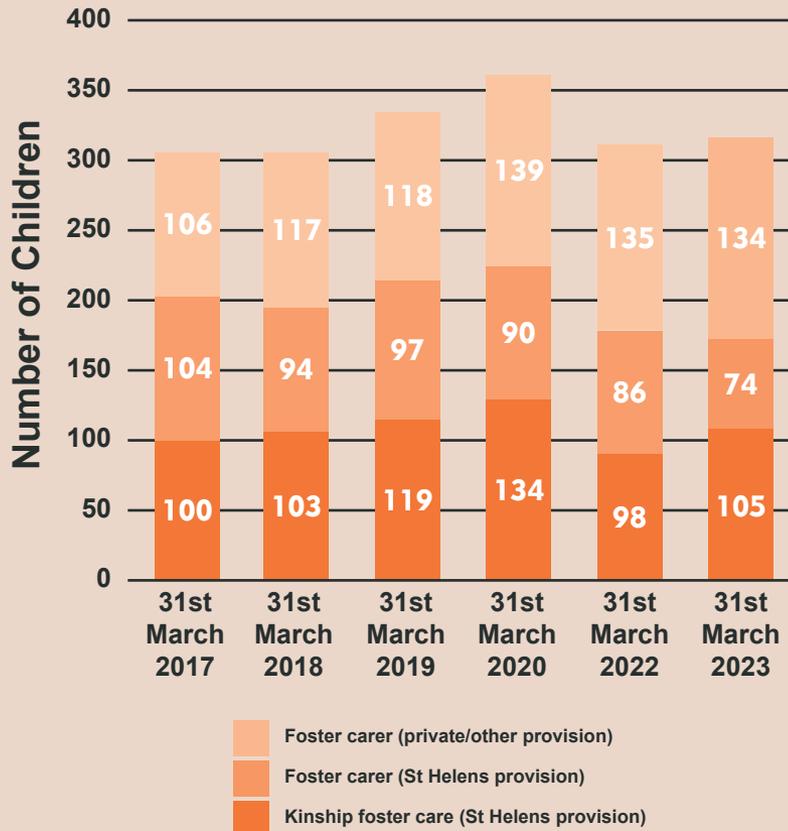
Placement Type for children cared for at 31st March 2023



A PLACE TO LIVE, YOUR HOME

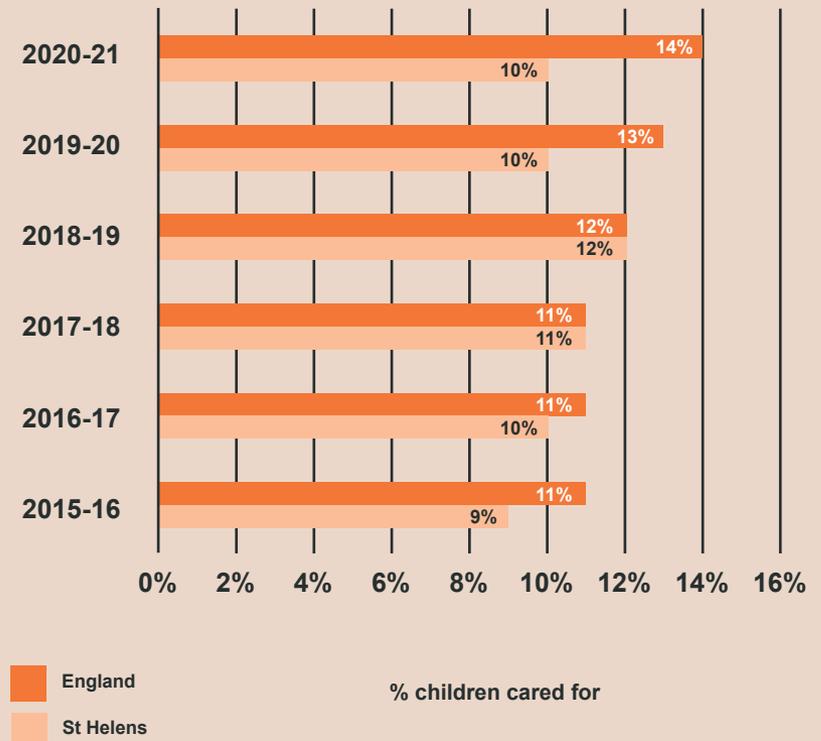
Most looked after children are accommodated in foster care placements with 67% children looked after at 31 March 2023 placed with a foster carer

Foster Care Provision



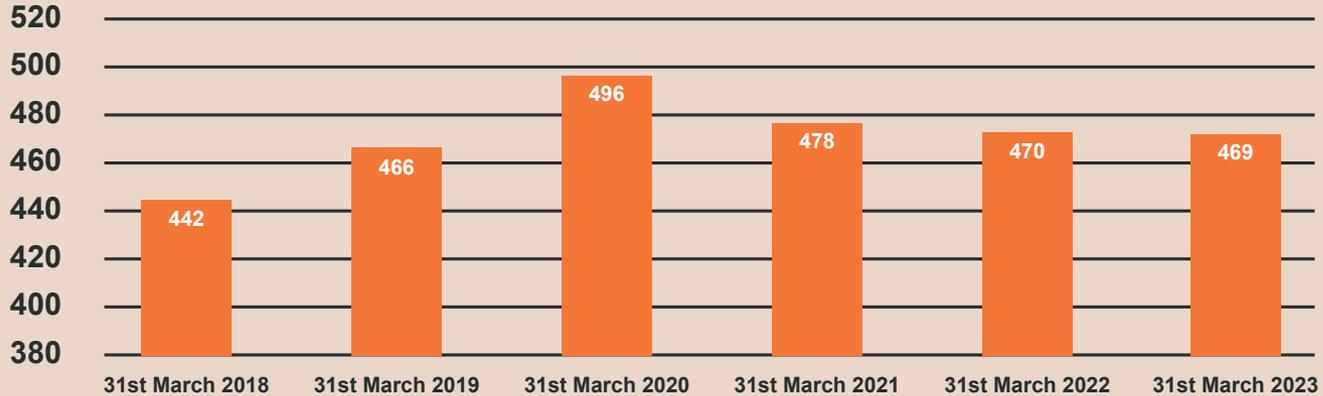
At 31st March 2021 10% of children looked after were placed in secure units, children homes and semi-independent living arrangements.

% children cared for at 31st March each year placed in Secure units, children's homes and semi-independent living accommodation

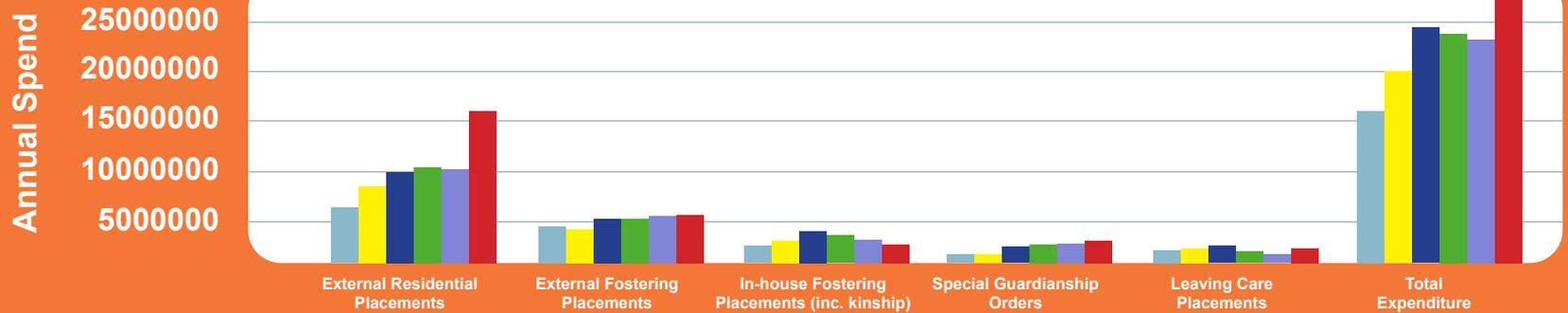


A PLACE TO LIVE, YOUR HOME

Number of Children in care at 31st March each year



COMPARISON YEAR ON YEAR SPEND



Category	Year	External Residential Placements	External Fostering Placements	In-house Fostering Placements (inc. kinship)	Special Guardianship Orders	Leaving Care Placements	Total Expenditure
Category	2017/18	6,608,066	4,882,218	2,725,530	1,439,651	1,684,323	17,339,788
	2018/19	9,202,545	4,730,377	3,129,190	1,492,842	1,795,824	20,350,778
	2019/20	10,426,649	5,552,197	4,208,305	2,037,655	2,131,914	24,356,720
	2020/21	10,936,824	5,552,021	4,072,230	2,162,932	1,542,783	24,266,790
	2021/22	10,934,677	5,667,534	3,868,567	2,341,437	957,495	23,769,710
	2022/23	15,206,127	5,690,266	3,625,791	2,766,811	1,872,838	29,161,833

CHILDREN STARTING TO BECOME LOOKED AFTER



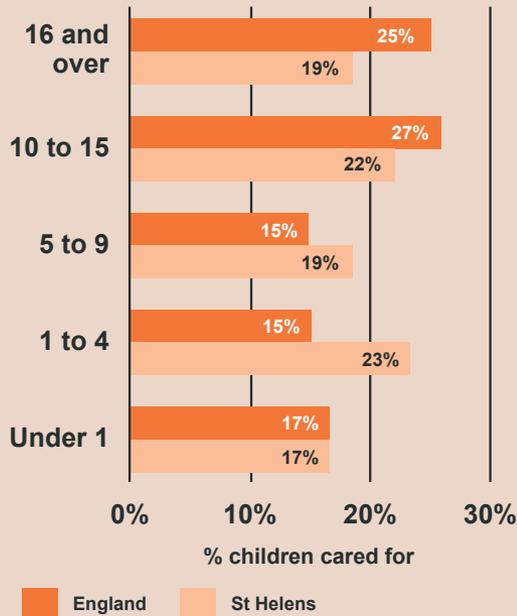
150 children and young people started to be looked after by St Helens Borough Council during the 2022/23 financial year



The number of children and young people becoming cared for by St Helens Borough Council in 22/23 is well above comparable regional and national averages



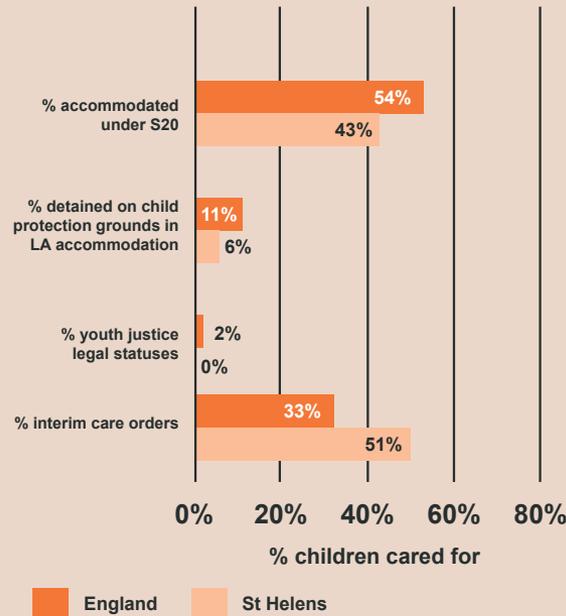
Age Profile for children becoming cared for in the 22/23 year



National average refers to 2022



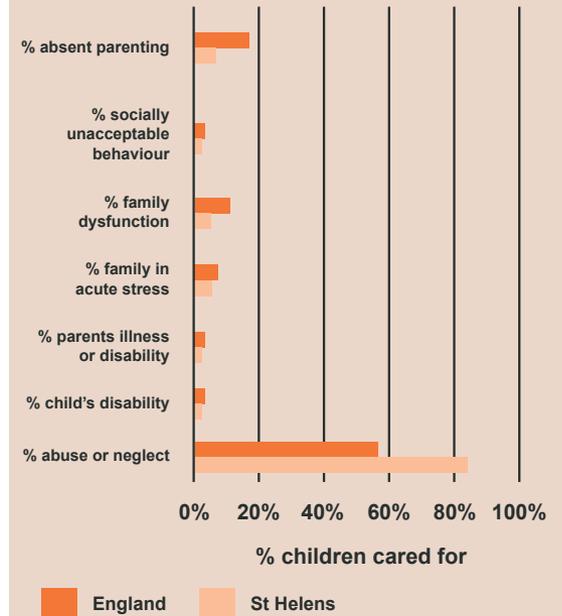
First Legal Status for children becoming CLA in the 22/23 year



National average refers to 2022



Children starting a LAC episode by category of need in the 22/23 year



National average refers to 2022

CHILDREN CEASING TO BECOME LOOKED AFTER



151 children ceased to be cared for by St Helens during the 22/23 year



The percentage of children and young people that ceased to be cared during the 22/23 year who were adopted



The percentage of children and young people that ceased to be cared for during the 22/23 year who were discharged with a Special Guardianship Order



The percentage of children ceasing to be looked after that returned home to live with parents or relatives as part of care planning process



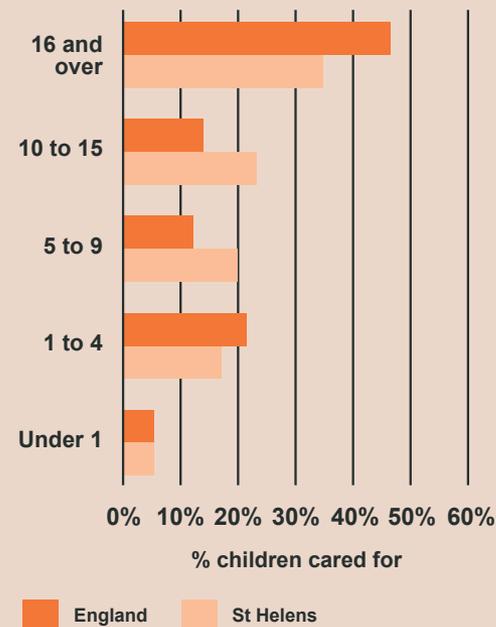
Reason for leaving care (2022/23 financial year)



National average refers to 2022



Age profile for children who ceased to be cared for in 22/23



The percentage of children ceasing to be looked after that left care on their 18th birthday

28%

A PLACE TO LIVE, YOUR HOME

RATES FOR THE CHILD POPULATION AND COMPARATOR DATA

Number and rate of children looked after

		31st March Each Year				
		2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
St Helens	Number	466	496	478	470	469
	Rate per 100,000	127	135	130	128	127
Stat neighbours	Rate per 100,000	94	101	102	107	TBC
England	Rate per 100,000	65	67	67	70	TBC

NET INCREASES IN EACH OF THE LAST 5 YEARS SINCE 2017

Number of children becoming looked after alongside the number of children discharged from care

	Actual Numbers of children starting/discharged from care					
	2017/18 (Full Year)	2018/19 (Full Year)	2019/20 (Full Year)	2020/21 (Full Year)	2021/22 (Full Year)	2022/23 (Full Year)
Children becoming Looked After	114	127	193	115	136	150
Children ceasing to be Looked After	99	103	163	134	144	151
Net CLA population increase/decrease	+15	+24	+30	-19	-8	-1

DATA ANALYSIS

Data Analysis

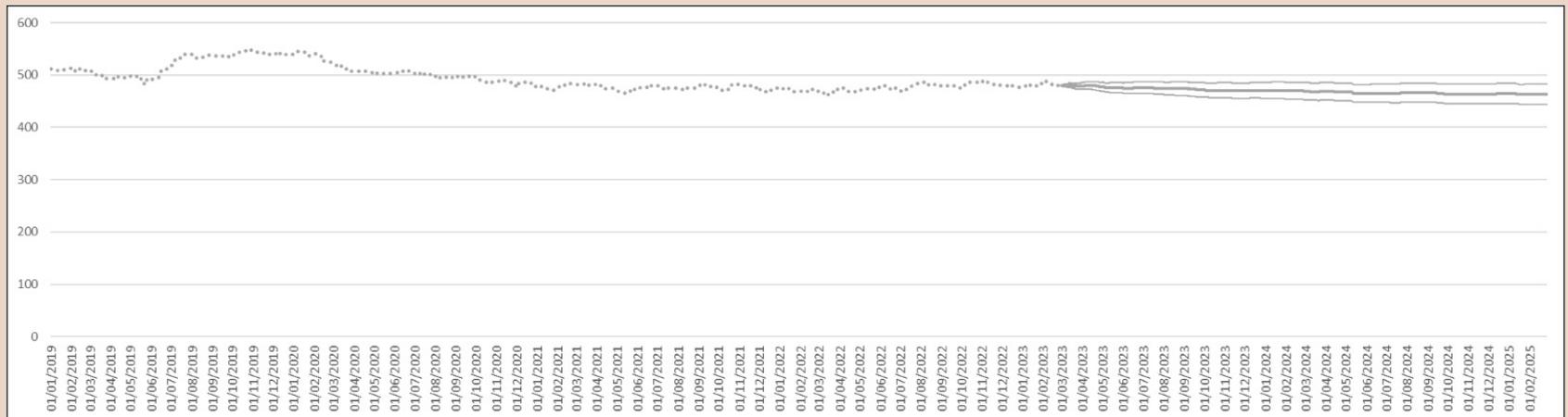
The data below has been produced using the Data to Insight Modelling tool. The Data to Insight modelling tool has been created with the support of DfE and Ofsted to assist Local Authorities to generate visualisations of our placement data to help inform Sufficiency planning. Data used within the models below have been drawn from our 903 returns from April 2016 to March 2023. The modelling tool enables projections to inform planning for future capacity.

There will always be a tension with estimates relying on past data which can't easily assess future changes in thresholds and impact of new programmes of work. However, as a starting point it can inform from a 'do nothing' position.

The impact of the pandemic particularly in 2020/21 can be seen in the data and for this reason we have produced a longer-term view and a view based on 2021/22 as the results show a differing picture and we will be working to determine the most likely scenarios on an ongoing basis.

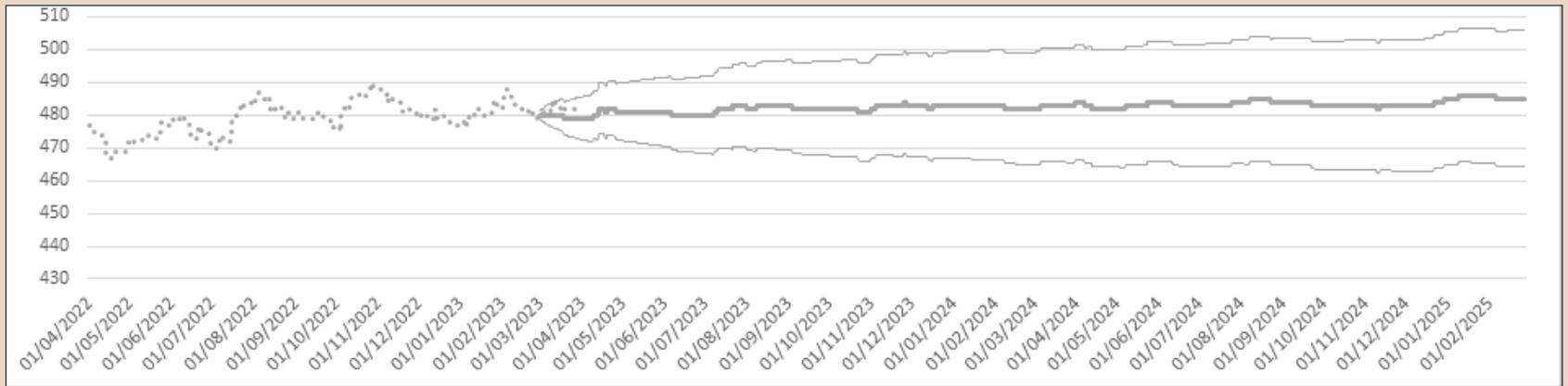
LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN - HOW MANY CARED FOR CHILDREN CAN ST HELENS EXPECT TO HAVE?

A) Data modelled forecast from 2019 - 2025



LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

B) Data modelled forecast from 2022 - 2025

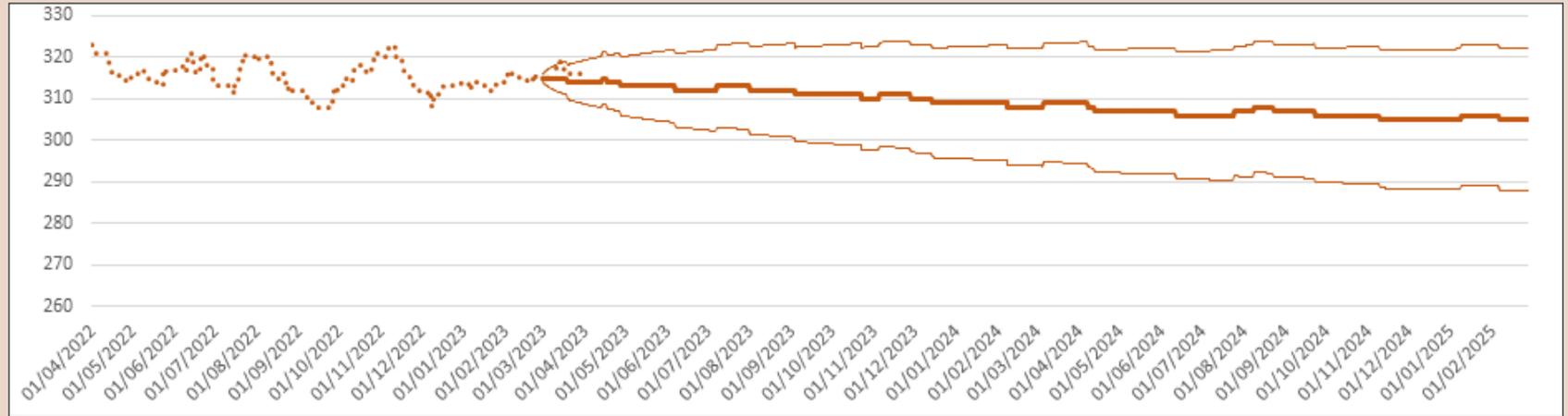


FOSTER PLACEMENTS

C) Data modelled forecast from 2016 - 2025

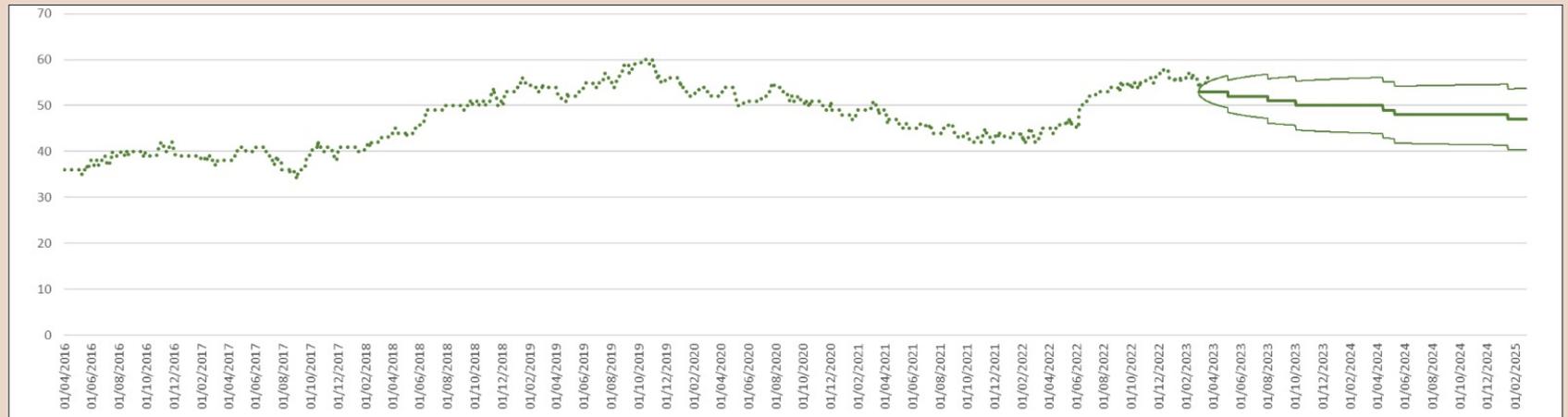


D) Data modelled forecast from 2022 - 2025

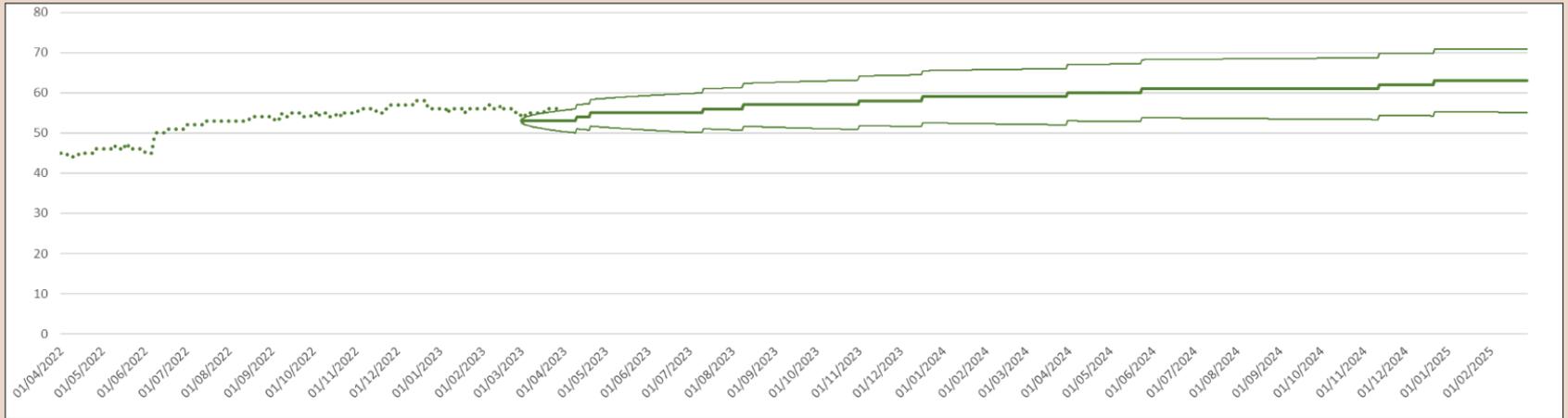


CHILDRENS HOMES

E) Data modelled forecast from 2016 - 2025

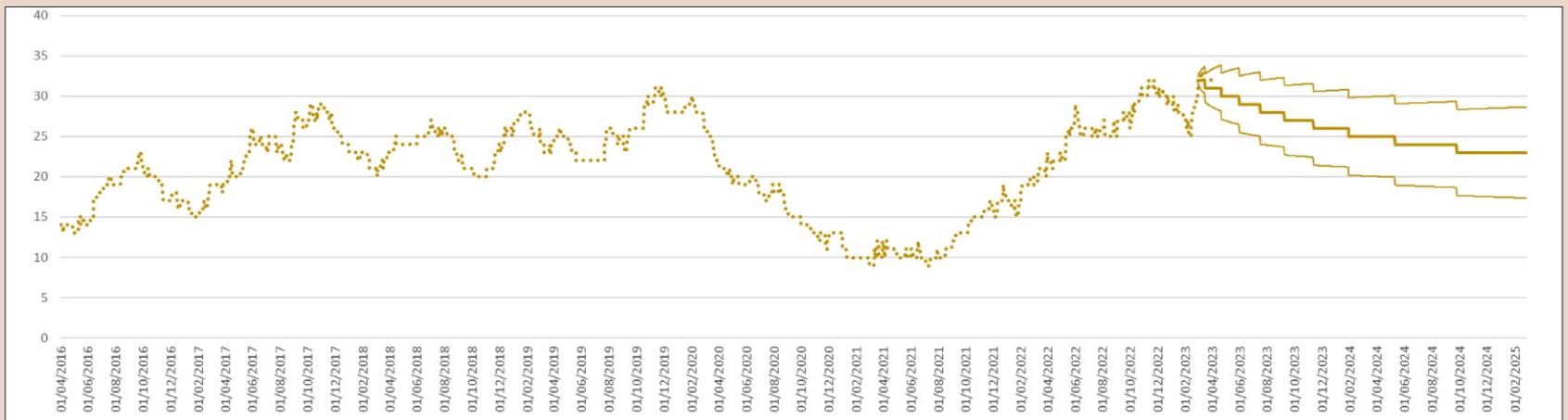


F) Data modelled forecast from 2022 – 2025

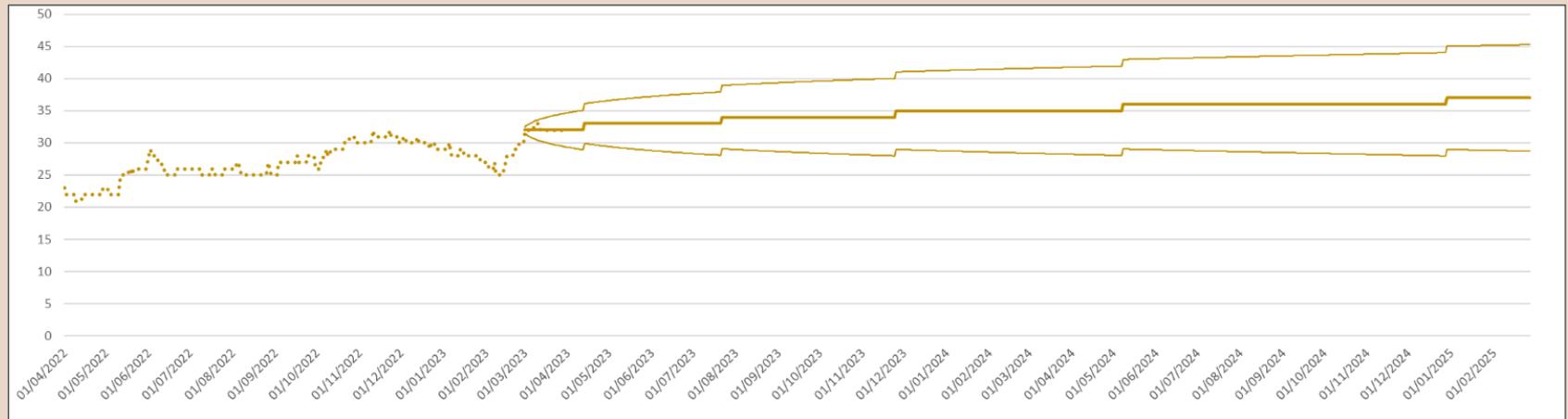


SUPPORTED AND INDEPENDENT LIVING

G) Data modelled forecast from 2016 - 2025



H) Data modelled forecast from 2022 – 2025



How many cared for children can St Helens expect to have?

Long-term trend data concerning the rates of children entering and ceasing care (Scenario A), indicates that St Helens might expect a slight decrease over the next 2 years. As Scenario A is a forecast of the long-term trend, it would only be wise to consider it the 'best case' outcome. However, Scenario B is based on more recent data and, as a result, is likely to be the most accurate prediction. There are several current factors that will likely contribute to increased levels of entries into care, i.e. A global pandemic, the conflict in Eastern Europe and the subsequent inflationary macroeconomic environment and cost of living crisis.

How many Foster placements are we likely to need?

Based on the data modelled the requirement for foster families will continue at a high level. The trend data in the short term shows a decline in the number of foster placements needed but the data doesn't consider that the trend for fewer placements is based on a lack of availability in the data period rather than a planned reduction in use.

How many Childrens' home are we likely to need?

The requirement for children's home places is likely to continue at the same or slightly higher level however this will be influenced by the success of our fostering partnership work.

How many Supported and Independent Living placements are we likely to need?

The longer term data clearly identifies the pandemic period where children were not moved into semi-independent living. Using the short term data shows we are returning to previous levels with a slight increasing trend. It is likely we will require more supported accommodation for children leaving care locally and work with providers (who will be going through Ofsted registration in 2023) and our housing partners will be key to ensure appropriate accommodation will be available for this cohort of children and young adults transitioning to independence.

5. CURRENT PROVISION

Families Staying Together

Following a successful pilot, the Edge of Care model was adopted and embedded, aimed at children 0-17 years with a target set at diverting 80% of children open to the service from becoming a child we look after. In October 2022, the edge of care model changed to adopt an intensive intervention model to reach a wider cohort of children and families. The service comprises of: 1 Service Lead, 1 Edge of Care Specialist Senior Social Worker, 2 Reunification Senior Social Workers, Family Intervention Team and Family Group Conferencing Team.

The new offer comprises of a case discussion following receipt of a support request and individual plan of intervention of support with reviews every 8 weeks. Specialist Social Worker supporting with systemic practice, such as genogram's, trauma/nurture timelines, social graces, and reflexive discussions. Reunification Social Workers provide consultation and analytical summaries, support, and recommendations for a wide range of children's plans to support placement moves, reunification home and prevent placement breakdowns.

Future developments for Edge of Care, building on the intensive support provided to children and families, include a Head of Service post for FaST, which will provide strategic oversight of the service and implementation of effective plans, with close partnership working to ensure there is a holistic plan in place. The development of an Edge of Care Hub, which will seek to assess, support, and provide respite to children and families in crisis. In creating further developments, the edge of care offer in St Helens will continue to build interventions and targeted support which seeks to reduce the gaps in support, respite and understanding of our children and families to ensure we have the right plans and interventions in place for positive outcomes to be achieved.

We are working with the police to create an emergency "child appropriate " response base for out of hours provision in the event that there are no suitable homes or family members initially identified to avoid any children needing to be supported at police stations.

Care Proceedings

The ongoing delays in the conclusion of care proceedings impacts on achieving permanence for children within the PLO (Public Law Outline) timescales of 26 weeks. The refocus by the President of the Family Division on PLO will hopefully achieve a timely impact. The Local Authority maintains a focus on children remaining within their extended family at all times where possible and safe to do so. Assessment of connected carers is an integral element of both pre-proceedings and care proceedings and is part of early permanence planning for children at CIN and Child Protection. Family Group Conferences, genograms, viability assessments all continue to support this work.

FOSTER CARE - ST HELENS LA

Wherever possible we always seek to enable Children We Look After to live with their own family or family and friends (connected carers) when possible. Where this is not possible, we would like to offer our children the opportunity to live with a foster family.

St Helens is committed to enabling all children and carers who want to remain together post the 18th birthday of the child to do so. We have robust arrangements in place with associated support to carers and children. Whilst this potentially reduces the pool of foster care availability for younger children. Currently 10% of our care experienced adults, aged 19-21, are living in a Staying Put arrangement.

Children living in stable, long-term foster care can have similar outcomes to adopted children and this is a positive permanency option for those children who still identify with, and wish to maintain links to, their birth families. It can also be a positive option for children with complex care needs or those who are harder to place for adoption, such as sibling groups or older children, providing them with long-term stability and ongoing care and support.

If long-term foster care is the plan for a child, it is important that work begins early to prepare the child for this, and to ensure that the 'match' between the child and the foster family is right, along with putting in place long-term support for the placement. We can offer this support from within our in-house fostering team and wider partners.

We aim:

- To provide a safe caring environment with foster carers who will enable children and young people to develop their full potential throughout their childhood and into independence
- To provide a Fostering Service that recognises the diverse nature of the community within St Helens in terms of gender, ethnicity, culture, social class, disability and sexual orientation
- To provide a Fostering Service which is conducted and managed by professionals with appropriate skills and experience
- To recruit, support and train a diverse range of foster carers including specialist foster carers and carers who can offer short breaks, support for existing foster families, family parent and child placements and carers for unaccompanied children seeking asylum
- To provide supervision, support including therapeutic support, and a full range of training for foster carers

FOSTER CARE - ST HELENS LA

Our own, valued carers are able to offer long term fostering, short term fostering, short-term and short breaks care. The majority of our current foster carers have a preference for offering placements to younger children (under the age of five years) and to single children or small groups of brothers and sisters. This is different to the profile of some of the children coming into care which includes older children with more complex needs and those in larger family groups.

Given the significant number of children in care within St Helens and the competitive market in which fostering services operate, the aim now is to be more targeted in terms of the recruitment of specialist foster carers. It is envisaged that these carers will have experience of working with children who require a greater level of support such as residential support workers, teaching assistants, teachers, and social workers. These foster carers will be matched with those children and young people who are either initially identified as harder to place or those who wish to move from a residential placement to a fostering household. However, in addition to these specialist carers we continue to require carers for children of all ages including very young children.

We aim:

- To retain our existing foster carers
- To increase the number of local authority foster carers so we can reduce the number of our children placed within external placements so they can live in their own community supported by our local services.
- To recruit and develop specialist foster carers for those children and young people with additional or complex needs.
- To increase the number of long-term foster carers who will care for children into adulthood.
- To increase the number of foster carers for children aged 10 and above.
- To increase the number of foster carers for sibling groups particularly carers for larger sibling groups of three or more children
- To increase the number of foster carers who can offer short breaks and support for other carers on a short term basis.
- To increase the number of carers who can care for unaccompanied children seeking asylum.

FOSTER CARE - INDEPENDENT FOSTERING AGENCIES - NORTH WEST

There was a 1.3%pt decrease in the number of children in external fostering provision to 2,851 across the North West, continuing a decrease in the previous quarter.

There has been a loss of 5% external fostering households across the North West.

2,472 fostering placements (87%) were made through the NW Fostering FPS

The number of fostering placements made at distance decreased by 0.7% pt to 5% of all placements

Average cost of fostering placements has risen by 3% since September 2021.

Local Authorities are working with over 100 Fostering brands across the North West including internal services. 61% of providers said their capacity was decreasing compared to 75% of internal services.

Commissioners are reporting a shortage of foster placements across the North West and increasing use of residential provision where the plan is for fostering. 100% of internal services and 94% of external providers said it was more difficult to find places for children in fostering households compared to September 2019.

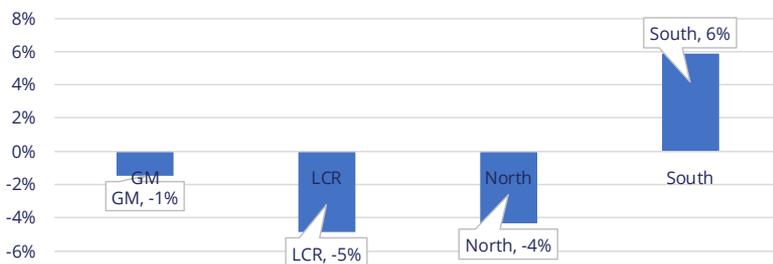
There has been an increase across the North West from June 2019 when 10 Local Authorities were insufficient to 14 Local Authorities.

St Helens had 53 IFA Households (PNW Data Dec 20) - there has been approx. 6% loss of households since that date. Not all agencies returned their data to Placements North West but even accounting for a best case scenario St Helens remains insufficient in fostering households. As St Helens is insufficient in local foster placements, we rely heavily on placing our children into our neighbouring boroughs.

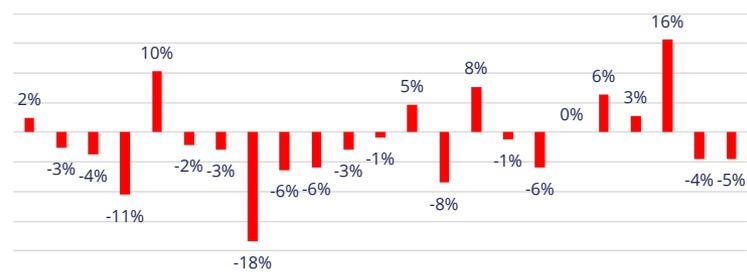
Increasingly fostering placements are becoming harder-to-find (i.e., required 3 or more searches or a targeted 'ring round') due to a lack of offers from the referral.

Collaborative working is in place to try and retain and maximise use of fostering households through improved and more detailed referrals improving matching and acknowledgement of societal impact including cost of living increases on fostering households and prospective carers. Additional training for enhanced carers to meet additional needs and complexities with multi-agency approaches to support for carers is being encouraged.

Change in fostering households by sub region 2021 to 2022

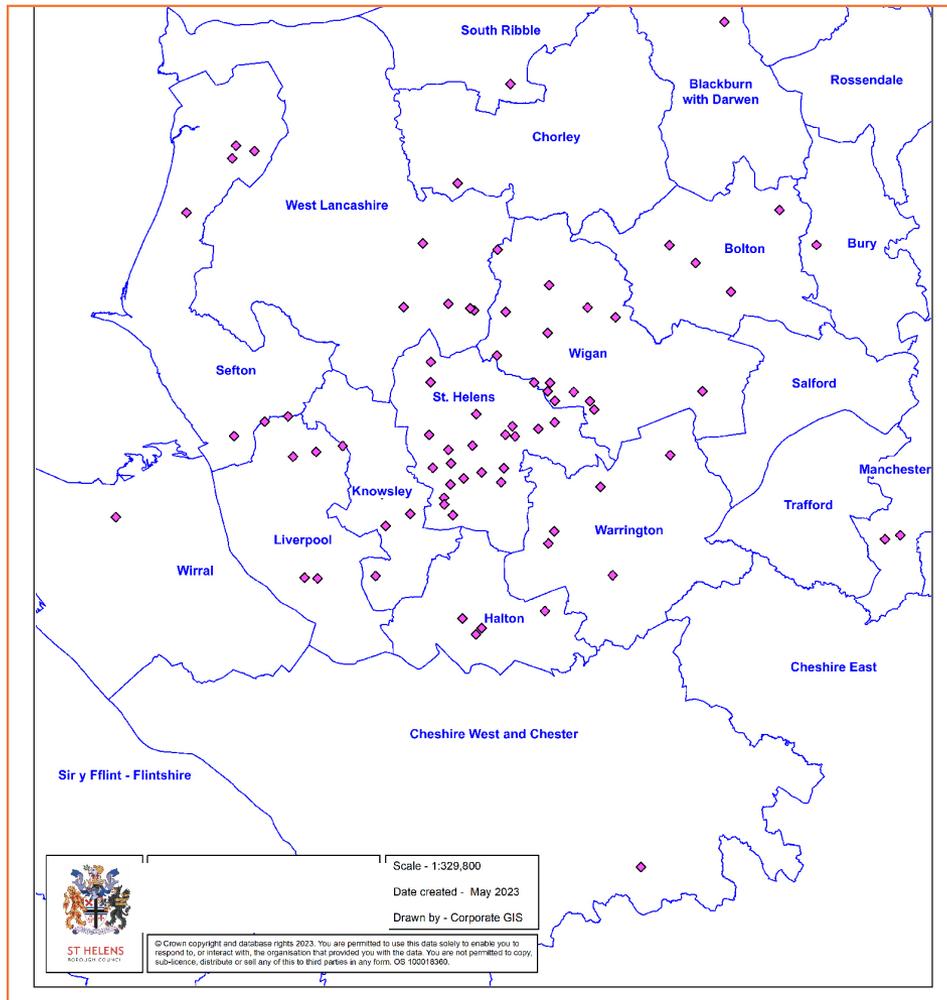


Change in fostering households Across the North West



FOSTER CARE - OUT OF BOROUGH

As at April 23 we are working with 22 Independent Foster Agency and 1 other Local Authority.
The majority of our Independent Foster Placements are within St Helens and surrounding areas.



RESIDENTIAL CHILDREN'S HOMES - NORTH WEST

In September 2022 there were 758 Registered Childrens Homes in the North West, 85% (644) of these are run by private providers, 10% (78) were local authority run and 5% (36) were run by voluntary organisations.

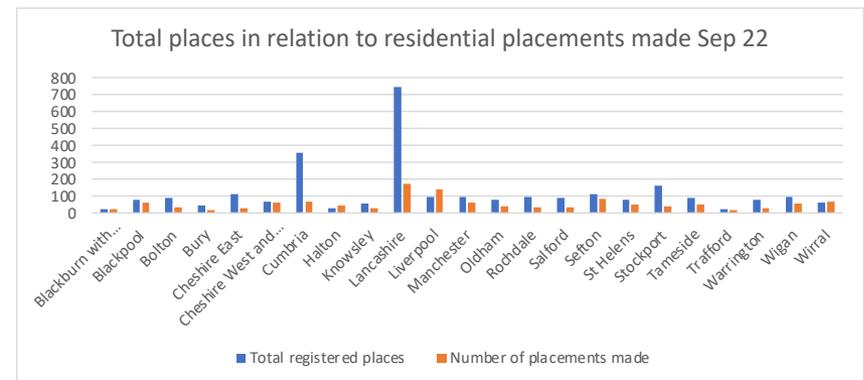
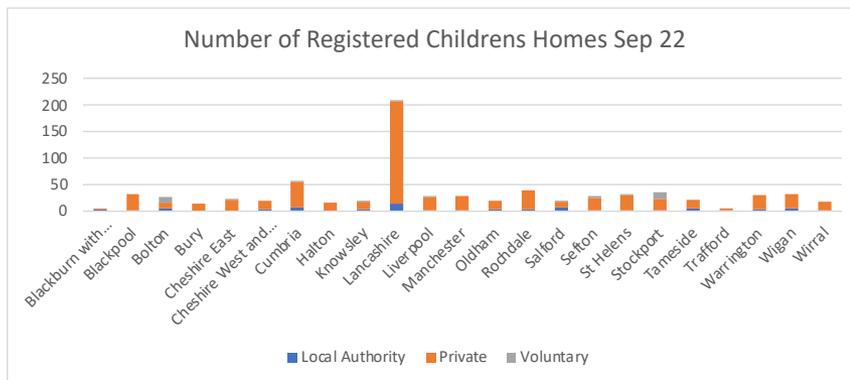
Across all homes there were 2793 registered places, more than double the number of placements made by the North West authorities. However, this is an increasingly national market and there are significant numbers of children from other regions living in the North West. This linked with challenges around matching and meeting more complex needs means the apparent 'theoretical sufficiency' is not reflective of the experiences of placement teams who continue to regularly struggle to find appropriate local placements for children as children's homes are not distributed evenly across the country.

From September 2021 to November 2022 the total number of children in external residential placements rose by 6%. This reflects the drop in children in external fostering households.

The average weekly cost for residential increased by 9% 2021 to 2022

As at December 2022 the number of children in external residential provision decreased slightly by 0.8%pt to 1,269. There was a 1.9%pt increase in the number of residential placements made within the home authority.

780 placements were made through the NW Residential FPS, 61% of all placements.



Data source: Placements North West

RESIDENTIAL CHILDREN'S HOMES - ST HELENS

As at April 23 there are 34 Registered Children's Homes in St Helens run by 14 Providers. This is an increase of 4 homes since Oct 2021. 2 homes are Local Authority run, 2 Voluntary Sector and the rest Private provision. There are 16 solo homes; the remainder are a mix of 2,3, 4 and 5 bed homes. There is one 12 bed Secure Children's Home and one Short Breaks Respite Unit. There are a number of new homes in the planning process for both the Local Authority and Private Providers at the time of writing.

Homes cater mainly for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties with a small number offering services for social and emotional mental health and/or learning disability.

22 homes (65%) were good or outstanding with 1 home rated inadequate. This is slight increase in overall ratings since 2022.

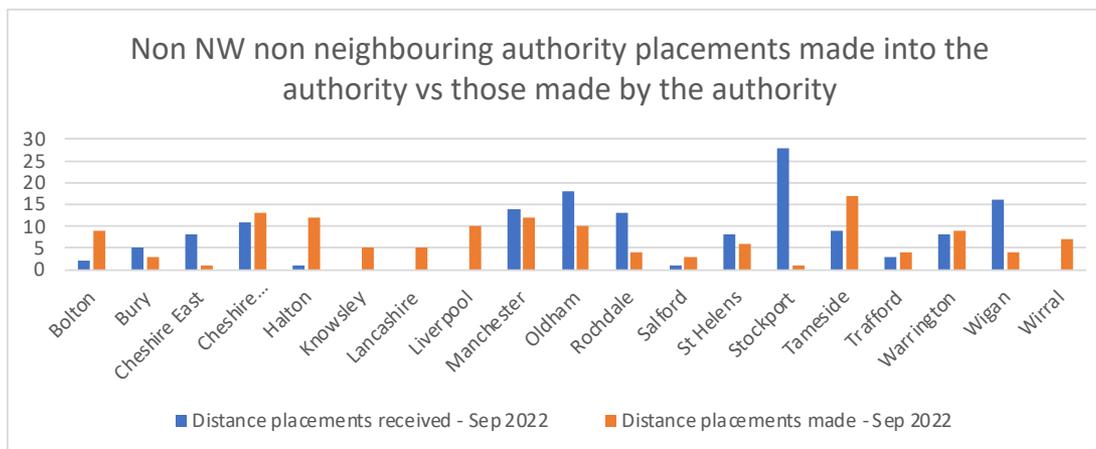
St Helens is in the top 5 Local Authorities for demand per 10000 population for residential placements in the North West. Our aim is to reduce this over time. (Source PNW Q2 report Nov 22)

St Helens has sufficient general children's home capacity however availability when we need it can be an issue due to wider market demand.

There is insufficient local Residential capacity for children who require therapeutic mental health care, care for very complex needs/ ASD/ physical disability/medical needs and homes who are skilled in working with children at significant risk of exploitation. There has been an increase in the proportion of children's home placement searches that are considered to be 'hard-to-find'.

We have a Secure Unit in our borough, but we do not have any priority for allocation of beds. Secure welfare placements are likely to be at a distance from St Helens with only two out of the 15 secure homes in England and Wales based in the North West and only one of these accepting welfare placements.

St Helens receives more children into the borough into residential placements than St Helens makes outside the borough.



RESIDENTIAL CHILDREN'S HOMES - ST HELENS

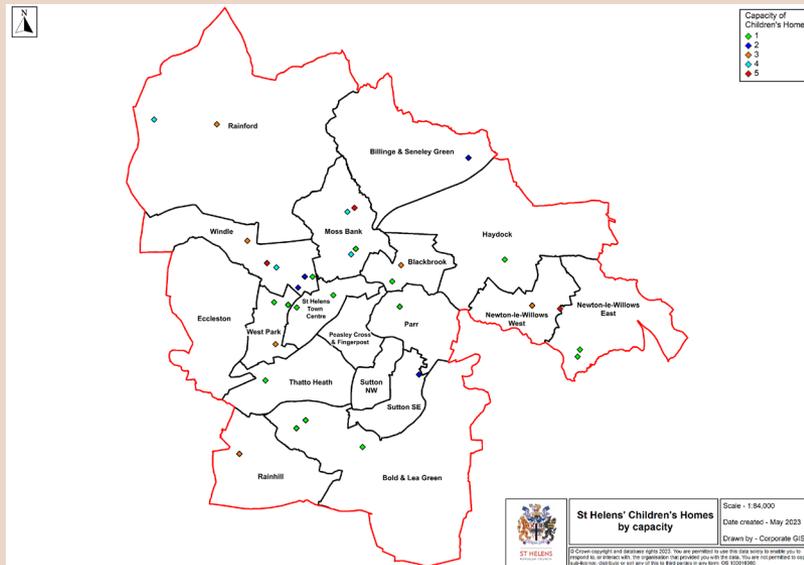
There are homes situated in all wards across the borough. We are often approached by Providers stating they want to set up homes in St Helens.

These approaches are often without any location risk assessment or prior discussion of whether capacity/ specialism is needed and would strongly encourage any providers to contact us before progressing any plans.

In St Helens most Providers prefer to work with St Helens LA and our neighbouring LAs with just a few actively seeking placements from elsewhere, but some do work with Local Authorities placing children at considerable distance and the Secure Unit is a national resource. Where Providers located in St Helens are unable to fill a placement with a St Helens child, we would like consideration to be given to children from our neighbouring boroughs in the first instance so children can remain close to their homes.

St Helens Borough Council Children's Homes - building capacity in St Helens

Based on demand, the Local Authority will be increasing our internal children's homes over the next 4 years with a phased increase. We have approval to open 6 new homes catering for a range of needs. The council will purchase homes for our children which will be a combination of sizes, from small homes for one child up to a larger home for four children to live. To create these new homes, work is underway to obtain the properties for the council. A tender to operate and manage the homes will be undertaken and the council will work in close partnership with the successful provider(s). This arrangement will ensure that as many children remain in their home borough as possible and that pooling resources and working together improves both the quantity and quality of homes for our children.



RESIDENTIAL CHILDREN'S HOMES - OUT OF BOROUGH

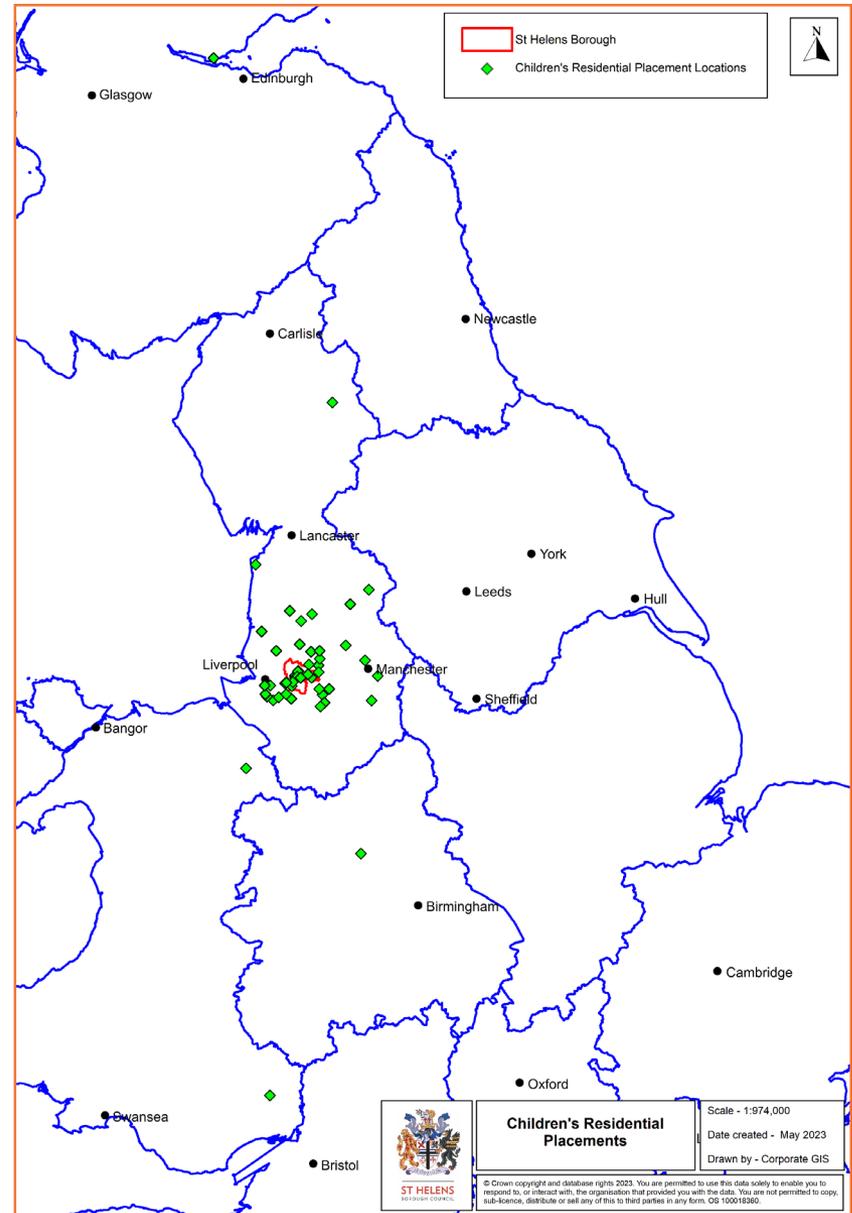
In 22/23 we made 60 placements within children's homes. 65% of these placements were within 20 miles of St Helens which was slight increase on the previous year.

When placing outside St Helens the top locations locally were Liverpool, Warrington and at distance Cumbria and Wales

We have placed some children at distance to reduce risks to them in the local area.

46% of our children home placements were within Liverpool City Region

Our continued strategy is to increase the number of children placed within St Helens, reduce the number of children placed at distance outside of St Helens and to maximise use of resource within the Cheshire and Mersey footprint to support local placements.



16+ SUPPORTED AND INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES (SaiLS)

NORTH WEST

Across the North West the total number of children placed in SaiLS provision has increased 4% since September 2021 a continuing of an overall trend over several years. Regulation of this sector in 2023 is welcomed and will provide greater oversight of the sector and will raise overall standards. To meet the requirements set out by regulation, the North West Local Authorities are also setting up a new purchasing system to replace the current contract.

Ofsted have had an increased focus on ensuring that this sector are not operating unregistered children's home. There has been an increased number of Ofsted notifications in relation to 16+ providers who are delivering care and therefore need to be registered with Ofsted.



16+ SUPPORTED AND INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES (SaILS) - ST HELENS

Our key priority is to provide affordable, sustainable housing for Care Leavers. The majority of our children leaving care remain in St Helens. Where children are placed outside St Helens this can be to remain near family members, former foster carers or through their choice due to a preference for city living for family or cultural reasons.

We have a range of options of accommodation and support in Group living settings and Supported Lodgings as well as bespoke services. The regional Flexible Purchasing System (FPS) is utilised to commission on a spot purchase basis. This enables us to access smaller group living, floating support with accommodation (visiting support), and more bespoke solo arrangements for young people.

We also access housing block contracted accommodation for our 16+ care leavers and 16-17 year old homeless young people. A young person who accesses a block-commissioned service at 16 or 17 can remain within the same or alternative block commissioned service - for up to two years. This approach seeks to ensure that when young people leave a service, they are more tenancy-ready and able to go on to live successful independent lives. It removes the "cliff-edge" that is often experienced by young people who are accommodated in private provider services, where young people are typically expected to move on within just weeks of their 18th birthday.

Following a successful bid to DfE, the Council is implementing the plan to develop a service which will offer wrap around support for those 17- and 18-year-olds leaving children's homes, SaILs and other non-fostering homes. This will see a multi-agency team including support workers, psychological therapeutic support, Education and employment support as well as a wide range of agency drop-in services operated both from a hub and outreach basis. This is in addition to the provision of 6 trainer flats which will be registered provision for our young people leaving residential care opening before April 2024

Our strategy is to support our children into independence at 18 and beyond by promoting Staying Put, increasing access to Supported Lodgings Placements where young people can stay within family/carer households and working with our Registered Housing providers, Housing Department and Adult Services to deliver sustainable housing options.

Utilisation of our Supported Lodgings Service has been lower than anticipated and we need to recruit more hosts and to promote the positive outcomes that can be achieved for young people accessing this service. The number of young people staying put in Foster Care has increased incrementally which is positive but also has the effect of reducing capacity for foster placements.

The increasing number of young people who are presenting with more complex needs, requiring greater levels of support is in turn, increasing our average cost of spot-commissioned Supported and Independent Living placements.

In the coming year there will be a strategic review of local services who accommodate and support young people and adults who present as homeless and together with increased regulation of the sector and rising numbers of children who are looked after this may impact on sufficiency. The Local Authority led Youth Homelessness board will actively work to ensure joint protocols are embedded to reduce youth homelessness.

Young people leaving custody

The Local Authority seeks to work with providers who have a trauma informed approach and can offer a positive experience for young people leaving custody. By working together good pre-release planning can enable this cohort of young people to transition successfully back into their community.

Our Care Leavers local offer can be found at: <https://new.sthelens.gov.uk/careleavers/>

UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM-SEEKING CHILDREN

An asylum seeker is a person who has left their country of origin and formally applied for asylum in another country but whose application has not yet been concluded. A person is officially a refugee when they have their claim for asylum accepted by the government. The Local Authority care for a number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. The children either become looked after either through the managed National Transfer Scheme or in some cases spontaneous arrival, e.g. via the local motorway network. Asylum seekers come from all around the world and are often from countries affected most severely by war and political instability. Although in recent years the number of asylum seeking young people has been low, providers of homes for these children need to take into account the risk of them being exploited and a heightened risk of going missing as well as the trauma many of them have faced both in their home country and on the perilous journey many have undertaken to reach St Helens. In some cases, it may be more appropriate for children who have been trafficked to be placed outside the area. The full range of children's placements will be considered for these children dependent on their presenting needs, personal autonomy and what will make them feel safe. The number of Unaccompanied Asylum-seeking Children presenting (spontaneous arrivals or through National Transfer Scheme) has been consistent in recent years but an increase is anticipated now that the National Transfer Scheme continues to amend the allocation numbers based on arrivals to the country as a whole. We therefore need a range of options available including foster carers, residential children's homes, supported and independent living including supported lodgings and also access to housing post 18 with community services available to support their individual needs. We are experiencing and anticipate a worsening delay in decisions regarding leave to remain which may require support and accommodation to remain available post 18.

We seek to support unaccompanied asylum seeking children by:

- Increasing the awareness about the circumstances of asylum seekers and refugees by helping to foster positive relationships with the local community.
- Supporting asylum seekers and refugees by treating them with respect and dignity so that they receive the same care and access to opportunities as any other person in the community.
- Empowering asylum seekers and refugees to be self-sufficient so that they can be recognised as valuable contributors to the community and the economy.
- Seeking to address the service gaps in support networks by quickly addressing unmet and emerging needs.

Age Breakdown

	Age 15	Age 16	Age 17	Totals
2018-19	2	3	0	5
2019-20	2	3	0	5
2020-21	0	2	1	3
2021-22	0	0	6	6
2022-23	1	5	7	13
Overall Total	5	13	14	32

Gender Breakdown

	Male	Female	Totals
2018-19	5	0	5
2019-20	5	0	5
2020-21	1	2	3
2021-22	5	1	6
2022-23	11	2	13
Overall Total	27	5	32

National Transfer Scheme

	Yes	No	Totals
2018-19	0	5	5
2019-20	0	5	5
2020-21	0	3	3
2021-22	4	2	6
2022-23	8	5	13
Overall Total	12	20	32

Country of Birth

	Afghanistan	Chad	Egypt	Pakistan	Albania	Eritrea	Iran	Iraq	Sudan	Vietnam	Turkey	Totals
2018-19	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	0	0	0	5
2019-20	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	1	0	5
2020-21	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	3
2021-22	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	1	1	0	6
2022-23	4	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	2	1	1	13
Overall Total	4	1	1	1	1	2	9	4	3	5	1	32

RESIDENTIAL FAMILY ASSESSMENT

As at April 23 there are:

- 78 registered Family Assessment Centres in England this is an increase since 2021
- 19 in the North West which is also an increase
- 8 in Liverpool City Region
- 2 in St Helens

The increase in local provision means more of our families are being assessed in their home area.

- 79% of North West provision is Ofsted Good including the homes in St Helens. 1 provider is Inadequate in 2 homes. 2 homes have not not been inspected yet.

Use of Family Assessment Centres can be determined by court direction or as part of the LA plan

St Helens use has varied from 12 placements in 18/19, 16 placements in 19/20, 21 placements in 20/21 and 9 during 22/23

88% of placements have been made in Liverpool City Region.

There are some specialist Providers of family services which are not regulated by Ofsted but by CQC as they offer rehabilitation for drug and alcohol issues however there are no services of this type in the North West.

The Local Authority can offer community-based assessment so families can be assessed and supported within their own community where this is the best option for them.

HEALTH

St Helens offers a range of universal, targeted and specialist health services for children who are Looked After.

There is a dedicated Looked after Children's health team led by a Named Nurse for Looked after Children who have responsibility for ensuring the co-ordination and completion of timely statutory health assessments. The team will retain children and young people who are new into care and placed within a 20 mile radius on their caseload. This supports continuity and a consistent approach.

The Looked after Children's health Nurse ensures that the child receives the highest standard of care by co-ordinating and referring the child into relevant local services as required. The Looked after Children's health nurse is also part of the child's care planning process and receives regular supervision on each child from an appropriate professional.

All children and young people new into care will be offered an initial health assessment. The aim is to complete and return this to the Local Authority within 20 working days. If this is declined by the young person the nurse will offer (with consent) a nurse led health assessment and collate a health plan.

Review health assessments are undertaken 6 monthly if under 5 and annually for the over 5's. The review is written to the child and a copy of the health plan is provided. Visits will be undertaken as determined by the RAG rating which is reviewed at each contact.

A health passport is provided to the young person prior to their 18th birthday. A copy of this is shared with the GP and the local authority.

Prescription exemption certificates can be funded (if appropriate) for care leavers up to the age of 25.

St Helens children can be referred to the Dental Project for Looked after Children (if required) to ensure they receive annual reviews with a dentist as part of their health review.

Following the review health assessment, the Looked after Children's Nurse ensures that the child receives the highest standard of care by co-ordinating and referring the child into relevant local services as required. The Looked after Children's health nurse is also part of the child's care planning process and receives regular supervision on each child from an appropriate professional.

The Healthy Child Program will be offered to all St Helens children and young people by a public health nurse dependant on appropriate residence and school attendance.

Wellbeing services available in St Helens can be found here:

https://i.emlfiles4.com/cmpdoc/4/2/6/4/4/files/1011782_st-h-cyp-ews-offer-thrive-v4.pdf?dm_t=0,0,0,0,0

Children In Care Of Another Local Authority (Cicola)

If the child or young person is registered with a St Helens GP and the originating ICB Place area request a health assessment review Health Assessments will be offered in line with national statutory guidance and will be conducted by the child's named health professional. Within St Helens this will be a nurse from the Looked after Children's health team. All review health assessments are quality assured to maintain a high standard of assessment. As part of the assessment the strengths and difficulties questionnaire will be completed (if requested).

The placing area are requested to complete a transfer of care document to ensure appropriate information is shared.

EDUCATION AND LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Supporting the education of our Looked After Children is integral in ensuring positive outcomes. However, there are certain circumstances and complexities that can create additional challenges when it comes to securing or maintaining school placements. In most cases, professionals will work to ensure a child or young person can remain on their school roll and are within a commutable distance. However, there are some circumstances where this is not possible and subsequent issues can arise. These can include:

- Placement moves – when a child moves placement, there can be times when the current school placement cannot be maintained, due to distance or capacity in local schools for example. However, if a child or young person moves placement and a new school is not identified, this can create issues around education. As a result of not having an identified school place, there may be periods where the child is not in education which can create gaps in learning. Similarly, if professionals do not know the destination school, this makes it difficult to complete essential transition work.
- Specialist settings and alternative provision – if a child or young person is not, or has not been attending a mainstream setting, and they require alternative provision, it can be difficult to source placements and funding within other Local Authorities. This is particularly difficult when a child does not have an Education health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities – where there is a child with an Education Health and Care Plan who is moving out of borough, it is imperative that St Helens SEND team is consulted, as well as the team from the area the child is moving to. There will need to be a robust transition process, including the reassignment of the EHCP and the commencement of the consultation process. There can also be additional financial implications depending on the provision identified for the child or young person, and so these need to be taken into consideration.

It is therefore essential that all schools, education settings, social workers and key partners consult with the Virtual School around any educational placement of a Looked After Child.

SEND (SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES)

For our children with additional needs we want to ensure we have local provision that can:

- Keep our children and young people close to their families and support networks .
- Ensure that our children are happy and enjoy their childhood.
- Ensure that our children are visible and feel valued by having the opportunity to grow up in their local communities.
- For our children and young people to fulfil their potential
- Ensure that our children and young people are well prepared for their next steps, and achieve strong outcomes. Supported by services that meet their needs.

We want families to be confident their children are receiving the best possible care. In order to identify the most appropriate placements social care, health and education colleagues work together to identify provision that can meet the needs of individual children.

We have excellent resources in the borough; all three of our maintained special schools are rated either Ofsted Outstanding or Good and our Residential Short Breaks Unit for children with complex needs is consistently rated Ofsted Outstanding. We rarely have the need to utilise residential special schools. Our schools and home have high demand and as a result they are not always able to meet the needs of all children and some children attend external schools or live in homes identified specifically for them, within the borough or neighbouring boroughs.

Our greatest area of need for children with additional needs is for specialist foster carers who are able to care for children with disabilities both full time or for short breaks and for residential homes who can work with the most complex children who require specialist care including severe ASD, high levels of aggression and self-harm. We will ensure that the needs of disabled children and young people we look after are considered within decisions about provision. We will identify suitable provision to meet the needs of disabled children and young people we look after, ensuring that reasonable adjustments are made where required to provide homes that meet their needs.

Our local offer can be viewed at SEND (<https://new.sthelens.gov.uk/SEND>)



6. QUALITY ASSURANCE

FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE WE WILL:

Keep our focus on the needs of the child/young person

Listen to and learn from the experiences of:

Children and Young People • Staff • Providers

Utilise a Signs of Safety approach to capture for 'reflection on placement':

- What worked well
- What didn't work so well
- What could be better?

Develop and link to outcomes we want to achieve for Children and Young People from their homes as part of their care plan.

PERFORMANCE MONITORING:

We will:

- Report via the Safe and Stable Homes workstream to the Corporate Parenting Board as one of our five key priorities.
- Utilise a Sufficiency Dashboard that will centralise all information from relevant interdependencies further developing and gathering key data in relation to internal and external placement provision. Our aim is to further develop the model to drive and inform a dynamic Placement Sufficiency Strategy keeping the strategy relevant, timely and adaptable.

LEARNING FROM OTHERS:

We will:

- Benchmark against statistical neighbours
- Learn from peers - what is working well and what is not working as well

7. MARKET POSITION STATEMENT AND COMMISSIONING PRIORITIES

Our market position statement utilises the information contained within this placement sufficiency strategy alongside other relevant local Strategies and Action Plans so that existing and potential providers are aware of the demand and priorities within St Helens.

As part of the placement sufficiency strategy and service improvement we understand that our relationship with providers is crucial to the ongoing shaping and development of high-quality services.

A major challenge for the council and our providers is to deliver an increased quality of service, improving outcomes for children and young people within budget.

We wish to work with providers delivering locally to co-produce creative, collaborative solutions with us and will therefore seek to proactively engage with the provider market locally and will continue to build relationships with the clear purpose of shaping local solutions to meet local need.

The quality of a child or young person's placement is a significant factor in improving the outcomes and future prospects for a child or young person who is looked after. We want to partner with a range of outstanding, innovative and flexible providers of homes for our children that are able and willing to be a vital member of the team around our most vulnerable children and young people with the aim of improving their outcomes.

In addition, a focus will also be on homes for our children and services that assist the council to reduce the length of time children spend in our care or help us return children to family settings from residential care, if this is in the child's interest.



MARKET POSITION STATEMENT

St Helens Borough Council works collaboratively with regional partners to shape the market for services for children looked after and secure quality provision.

We will:

- maintain a clear focus on Permanence and embed Permanence Planning throughout our approach
- ensure quality of referrals, care planning and social care work
- support transition from residential to family placement where this is in the best interests of the child
- increase momentum for achieving long term fostering for children by continuing with dedicated matching panels
- work with partners and providers to safely protect those young people with a pattern of missing and / or at risk of exploitation and harm
- work collaboratively across internal departments and with external partners to offer a range of targeted, universal and specialist services to respond to the needs of children when they need them
- work tirelessly to identify homes for children within St Helens where it is safe to do so.

Additional St Helens priorities for existing and potential providers to recognise are:

- All children looked after will be, where appropriate, supported to maintain family contact
- All children looked after will be prepared for independence and a healthy adulthood
- All children looked after will be supported to access quality education services
- All children looked after will be supported to access quality health services
- All children looked after will receive services that are of high quality to secure the specific outcomes identified in their care plans.

WE ALL NEED TO KEEP OUR FOCUS ON THE NEEDS OF THE CHILD/YOUNG PERSON.

COMMISSIONING PRIORITIES

Voice of the child

We will work with children and young people to better understand their views about their homes and use this information to both raise standards and to inform the sufficiency strategy.

We will do this by:

- Using a range of communication methods to gather views including surveys, recording and sharing children's feedback from visits and reviews.
- Involving young people in quality monitoring activities. This will place young people at the heart of quality assuring services and ensure that the views and experiences of care experienced young people will inform future commissioning activity.

Prevention

We will reduce the number of children who are looked after, by providing the means for families to become more resilient and stay together or by reunifying families where it is safe and, in the child's, best interests to do so.

We will do this by:

- Implementing 'Families Staying Together' to ensure a robust approach to edge of care and family support, family group conferences, reunification and risk management.

Foster Care

We will continue to increase the number of fostering placements provided locally .

We will do this by:

- Developing our in-house fostering service in a way that ensures a range of carers including specialist carers to meet the complexity and diverse needs of the children we look after.
- Implementing a targeted marketing strategy to address gaps in provision, including in underserved areas e.g., short breaks and respite, placements for older children and young people, children with additional needs, sibling groups and parent and child placements.
- Continuing to work collaboratively with fostering providers to increase the number of local children placed with local Independent Agency carers particularly for children coming into care and needing a local placement, children who have initially been placed out of the local area and for children with complex needs who may be ready to live in a family.

Children's Homes

We will reduce the proportion of children in residential children's home provision

We will do this by:

- Tracking and regularly reviewing young people placed in children's home provision through placement panels.
- Further refine referral and placement finding processes.
- Developing step down provision to support appropriate children and young people to move into foster care and supported accommodation provision when they are ready.

We will ensure appropriate children's home placements are available for our children in care, particularly those who require additional support and resources.

We will do this by:

- Developing short-term in-house placements to de-escalate and assess behaviours and support the sourcing of the right placement to meet need.
- Developing smaller capacity in-house children's homes.
- Continue to work with local and partner providers to maximise the use of local placements for local children and encourage development of providers who can work with children with complex needs.
- Working with external providers in St Helens to address gaps in provision ensure local homes are delivering services which meet the needs of the children and young people we look after to reduce use of 'at a distance placements'.

16+ Supported Accommodation/ Independent Living (SAILs) Provision

We will ensure appropriate supported accommodation placements are available for children leaving our care

We will do this by:

- Fully understanding the impact that regulation of the sector and the introduction of National Standards will have on the supported accommodation market
- Develop internal leaving care provision and work closely with the private and registered provider market to increase provision and choice to meet forecasted increase in demand
- Participate in strategic planning with our Housing partners, with the objective of ensuring that young people can secure supported accommodation general needs housing through Under One Roof or private landlord accommodation at the right time
- Work closely with adult social care to ensure an appropriate range of accommodation options are available for young people in transition that secures continuity into adulthood wherever possible
- Commission tailored services for our Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children locally
- Further develop and promote our Supported Lodgings offer.