



CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

# PLACEMENT SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY

DATE OF PUBLICATION: JUNE 2022

DATE OF REVIEW: JUNE 2023



ST HELENS  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

# ST HELENS SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY 2020-2024

## 1. Introduction:

Overarching Aims and Objectives of the Children's Improvement Plan and the aims and objectives of the Sufficiency Strategy to reflect these.

Focus on St Helens Children remaining in St Helens

What are our Outcomes to achieve for CYP?

What are our standards and expectations for CYP and 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 VOC action plan - what do CYP tell us about current provision and what they would like to see provided

Links to Advocacy

Links with regulators

Links with wider system eg youth justice, early help, EMHWP, education

## 4. Demographics:

Current need - numbers of Children in Care

Forecasted need and any potential risks identified

Priorities to achieve in reducing numbers and subsequent possible changes in provision-linked with Permanency Planning, Edge of Care, Leaving Care

Comparison with statistical neighbours

Foster Carer demographics

## 5. Current Provision Options:

Market Position Statement

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

- Foster care (in-house / Independent)

- St Helens Children's Homes

- Residential Care

- Supported living

- Secure

- Specialist

## 6. Benefit Analysis & Dependencies:

Financial Impact (costs) (Targets)

Activity Impact (impact on cohorts) (Targets)

Quality Impact (reduced placement breakdown)

Links to other strategies and how they will influence possible demand changes e.g. Early Help Strategy, Fostering Strategy, Care Leavers Strategy, Securing Permanence, Workforce development

## 7. Quality & Performance Monitoring:

- Placement Panel-function and impact

- Quality Visits - checks and relationship work

- Stability Meetings / care planning

- Monitoring number of moves / learning from stable placements

- Contract management

- Financial

## 8. Sufficiency Action Plan (Sub sections):

Permanence - Adoption, SGO Long Term Fostering

Short Term Fostering

Edge of Care

Residential provision

16+ Provision (inc. SaLS & Supported Lodgings)

Specialist - Secure, Residential Schools

Commissioning - including LCR plans

Communication- to service users and service providers

## 9. Reporting and Annual Review:

Annual report on progress on delivery of Strategy to Corporate Parenting Board

Refresh of strategy

# 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 TELL US? REMEMBER:

“ WE ARE NOT A POLICY OR PROCEDURE ”

“ YOU ARE WORKING WITH PEOPLE’S LIVES ”

“ NOT JUST A NAME ON A PAGE ”



## 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



## 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 Liverpool City Region
- 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

**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 with quarterly updates and annual report
- Information sharing and assurance to the Children's Improvement Board
- Adherence to Safeguarding Policies and Processes
- Financial accountability

### 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 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.

Further 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

with the re-establishment of the Children We Look After Council, known locally as 'The Get Together', we will engage our children and young people through monthly meetings and activity sessions. Their views 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.

### DEPARTMENT & PARTNERS

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

### MULTI-AGENCY

The Children and Young Peoples Engagement and Experience Group (CYPEEG) share what has been heard across agencies.

### STRATEGIC

Learning from the CYPEEG and the Voice of the Child Framework is shared with the Children's Forum and Commissioners to ensure views shape practice and provision. We are acting upon the feedback received from our children and young people in the Bright Spots Survey. Work on hearing and acting upon the voices of our children will be a priority for the coming year.

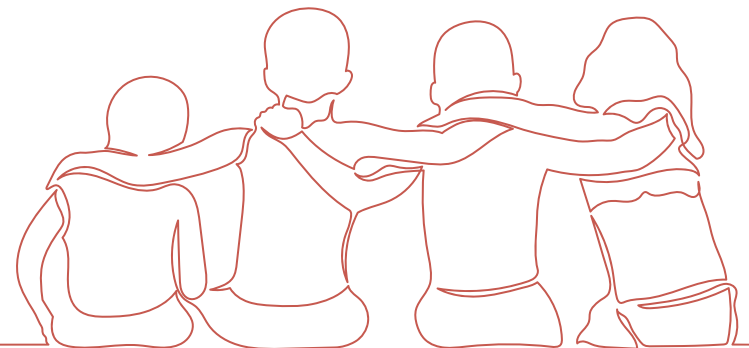
“ THEY GAVE ME THE SUPPORT WHEN I NEEDED IT WHEN I CAME INTO CARE. THEY KNEW WHAT I NEEDED WHEN I NEEDED IT. THEY TREATED ME KINDLY, IT WAS IMPORTANT ”

“ I LIKE BEING IN CARE, IT MAKES ME FEEL SAFE ”

“ GET TO KNOW THEM, THEY ARE UNIQUE, NOT JUST LIKE THE KIDS YOU HAVE WORKED WITH BEFORE. LISTEN TO UNDERSTAND THEM, NOT JUST ACT ”

“ I NEED PEOPLE TO TRUST ME ”

“ YOU NEED TO GIVE KIDS A CHANCE, IF YOU DON'T, HOW WILL THEY LEARN? ”



## 4. DEMOGRAPHICS

**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.**



# OUR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE: DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY



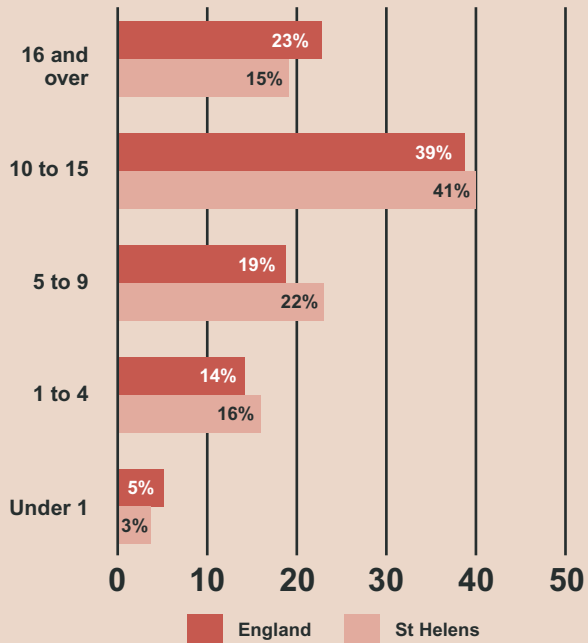
470 children and young people are cared for by St Helens Borough Council at 31st March 2022. The number of children cared for by St Helens Borough Council has decreased by 2% in the past 12 months but is 15% higher than the population reported at March 2016



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 2022



St Helens Borough Council cared for a total of **614 children and young people** throughout the 21/22 year

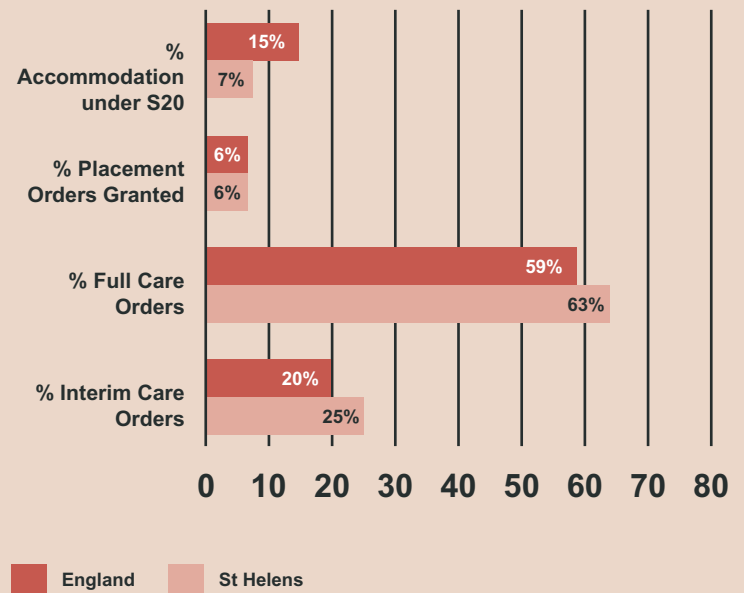
**53%** of children cared for by St Helens at 31st March 2022 are male

**94%** of children cared for by St Helens at 31st March 2022 are of White British Ethnicity

**9%** of children cared for by St Helens at 31st March 2022 are Disabled



## Legal Status for children cared for at 31st March 2022



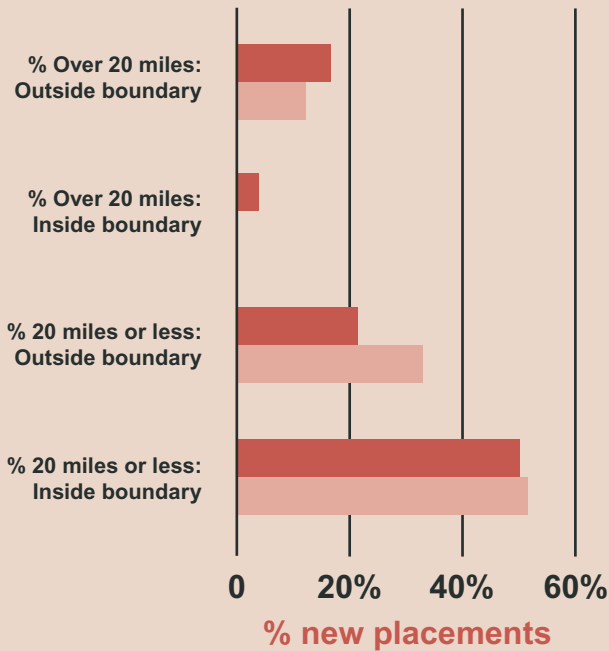


# A PLACE TO LIVE, YOUR HOME

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).



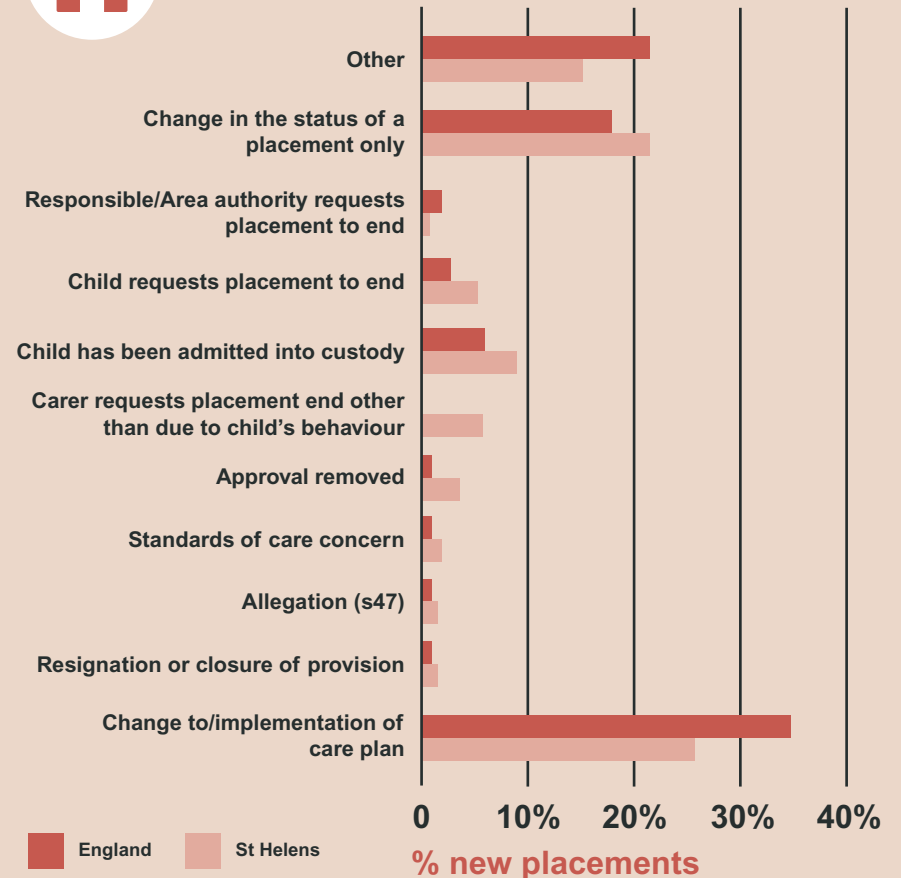
**372** new placements were made during the 2021/2022 financial year



England St Helens



## Reasons for placement changes



England St Helens

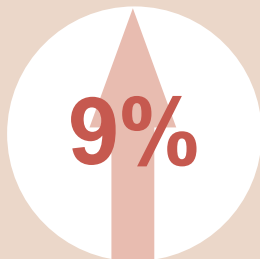
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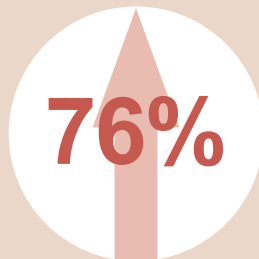


**Percentage of children looked after at 31st March 2022 placed in St Helens or within 20 miles of their home**

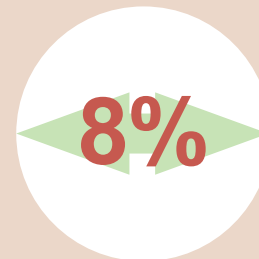
We want all of our children and young people to feel safe and secure at home. Our strategy focuses on finding homes that create stability. Stability remains positive in St Helens. The number of children experiencing 3 or more moves in 12 months, continues to remain below the national average of 9%.



**Children looked after at 31st March 2022 with three or more placements during the year**



**CLA in care at least 2.5 years at 31st March 2022 living in their current placement for at least 2 years**



**CLA at 31 March 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 2022 placed with Foster Carers



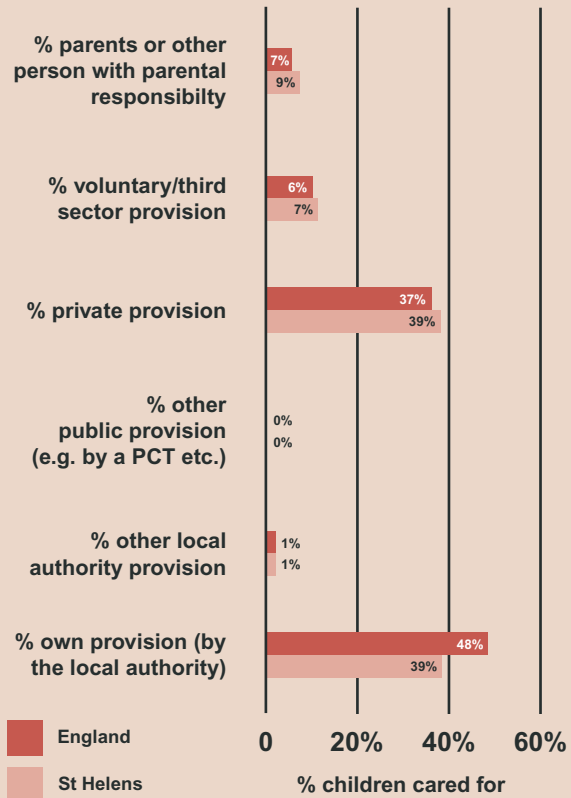
Percentage of children cared for by St Helens on the 31st March 2022 placed with parents



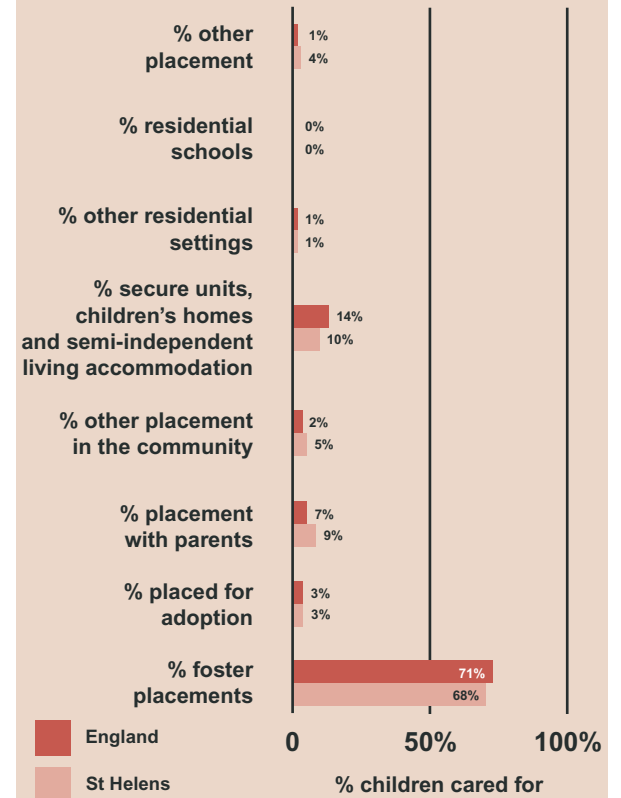
Percentage of children and young people cared for by St Helens Borough Council at 31st March 2022 placed in own provision (by the Local Authority) - lower than national (48%) and Statistical neighbour averages (57%)



## Placement Providers for children cared for at 31st March 2022



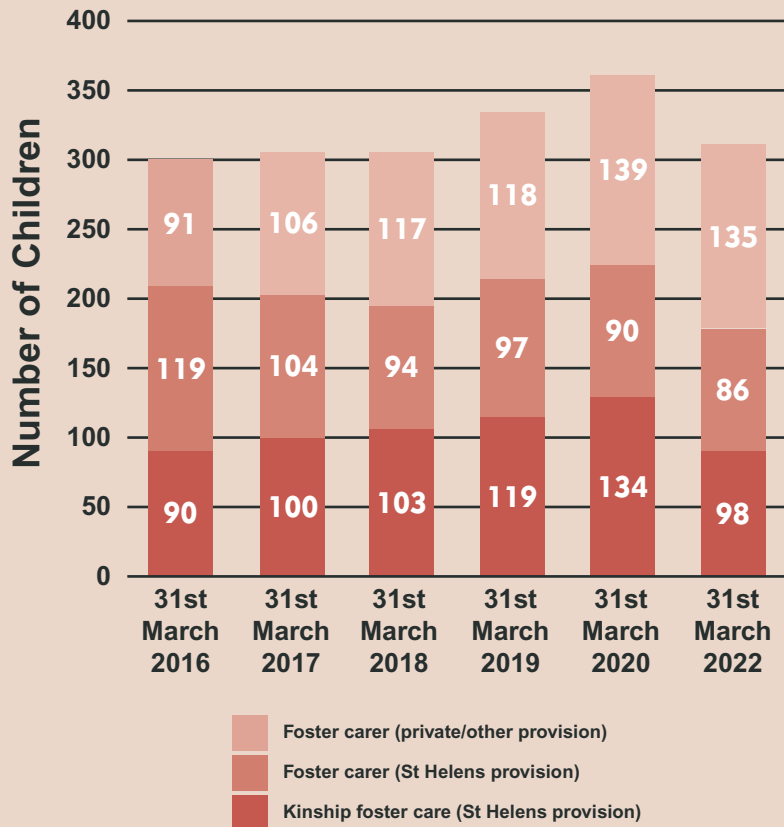
## Placement Type for children cared for at 31st March 2022



# A PLACE TO LIVE, YOUR HOME

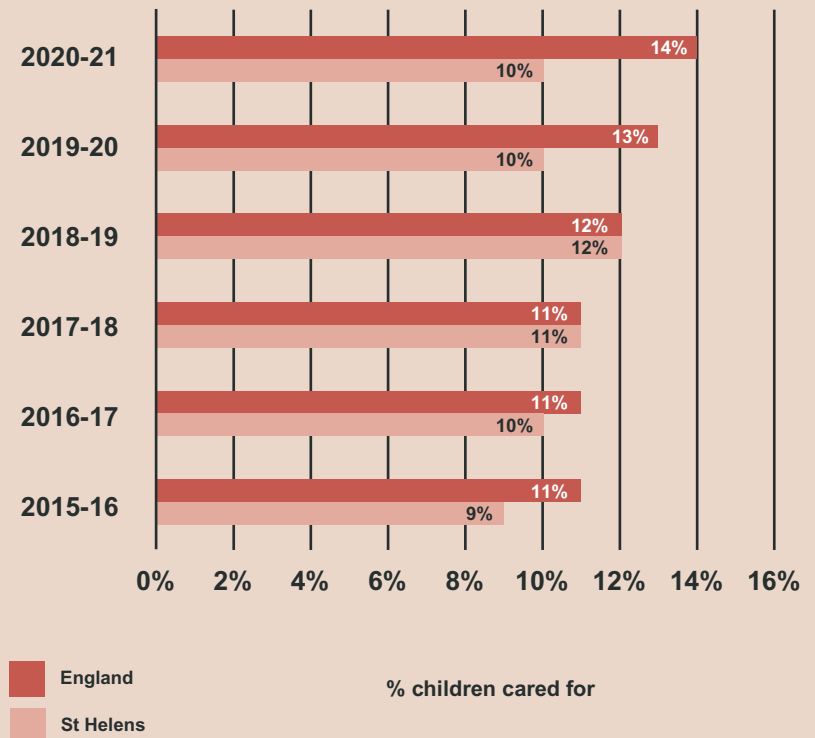
68% most looked after children are accommodated in foster placements with 71% children looked after at 31 March 2022 placed with a foster carer.

## Foster Care Provision



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

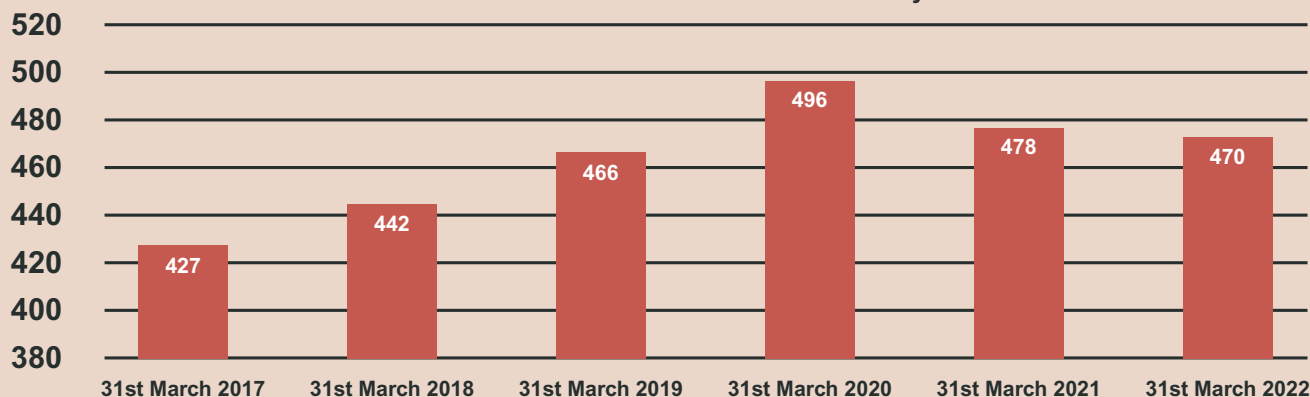
## % children cared for at 31st March each year placed in Secure units, children's homes and semi-independent living accommodation



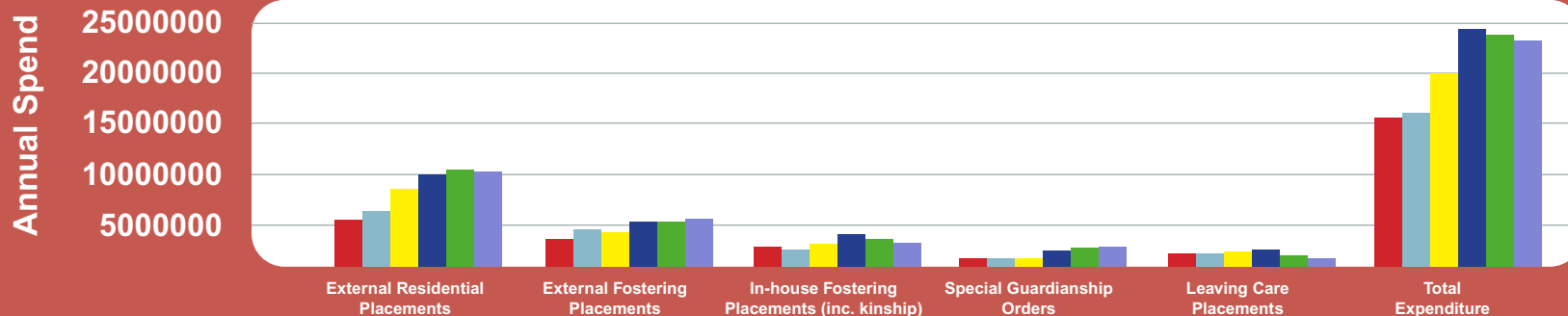


# A PLACE TO LIVE, YOUR HOME

Number of Children in care at 31st March each year



## COMPARISON YEAR ON YEAR SPEND



Category	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
External Residential Placements	5,997,974	6,608,066	9,202,545	10,426,649	10,936,824	10,934,677
External Fostering Placements	4,140,922	4,882,218	4,730,377	5,552,197	5,552,021	5,667,534
In-house Fostering Placements (inc. kinship)	2,909,780	2,725,530	3,129,190	4,208,305	4,072,230	3,868,567
Special Guardianship Orders	1,435,398	1,439,651	1,492,842	2,037,655	2,162,932	2,341,437
Leaving Care Placements	1,694,365	1,684,323	1,795,824	2,131,914	1,542,783	957,495
Total Expenditure	16,178,439	17,339,788	20,350,778	24,356,720	24,266,790	23,769,710

# CHILDREN STARTING TO BECOME LOOKED AFTER



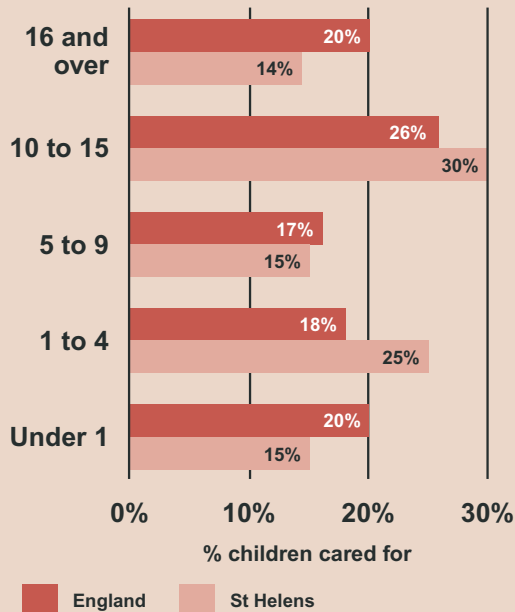
**136** children and young people started to be looked after by St Helens Borough Council during the 2021/22 financial year



The number of children and young people becoming cared for by St Helens Borough Council in 21/22 is well above comparable regional and national averages



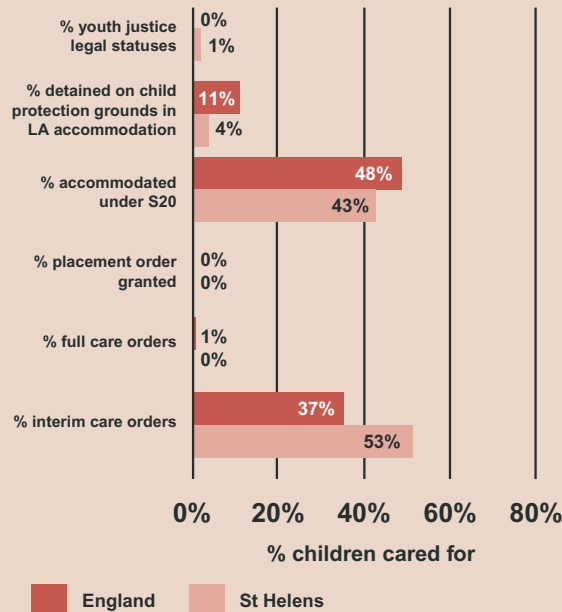
**Age Profile for children becoming cared for in the 21/22 year**



National average refers to 2021



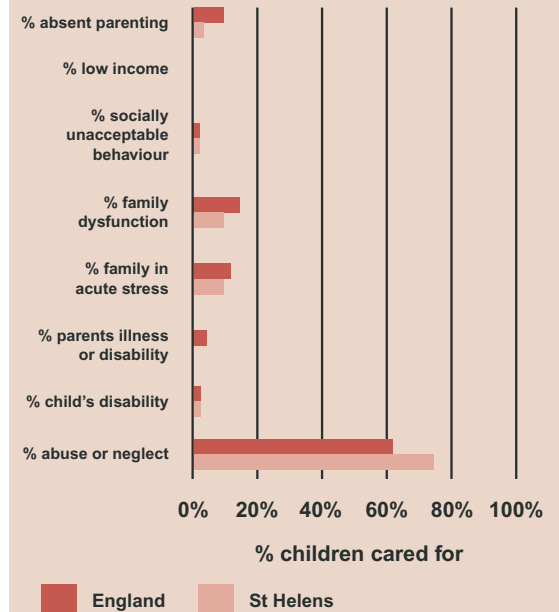
**First Legal Status for children becoming CLA in the 21/22 year**



National average refers to 2021



**Children starting a LAC episode by category of need in the 21/22 year**



National average refers to 2021

# CHILDREN CEASING TO BECOME LOOKED AFTER



**144** children ceased to be cared for by St Helens during the 21/22 year



The percentage of children and young people that ceased to be cared during the 21/22 year who were adopted, a decrease in the number of children adopted when compared to the previous year



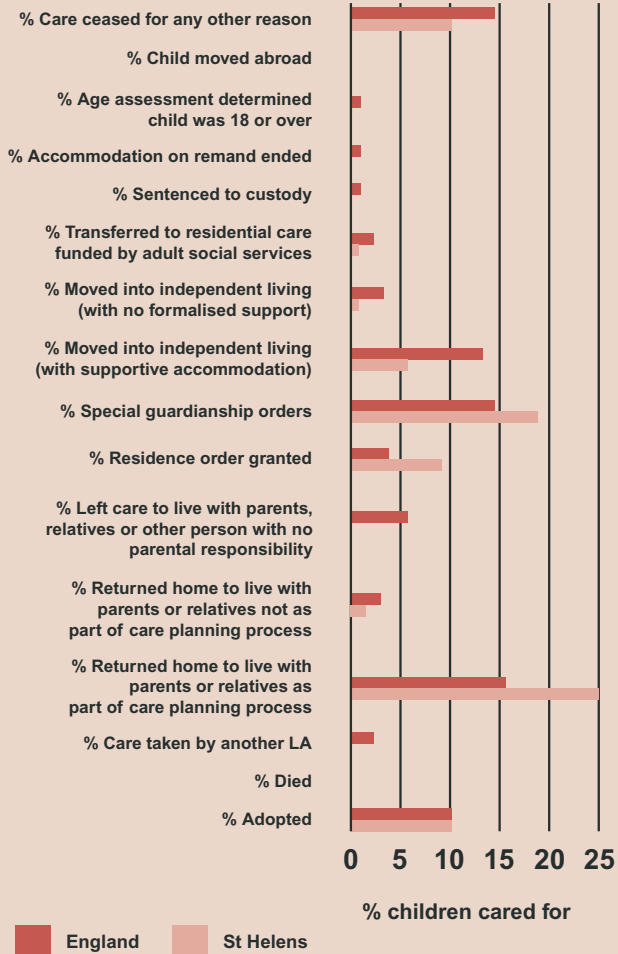
The percentage of children and young people that ceased to be cared for during the 21/22 year who were discharged with a Special Guardianship Order, an increase on the previous year



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



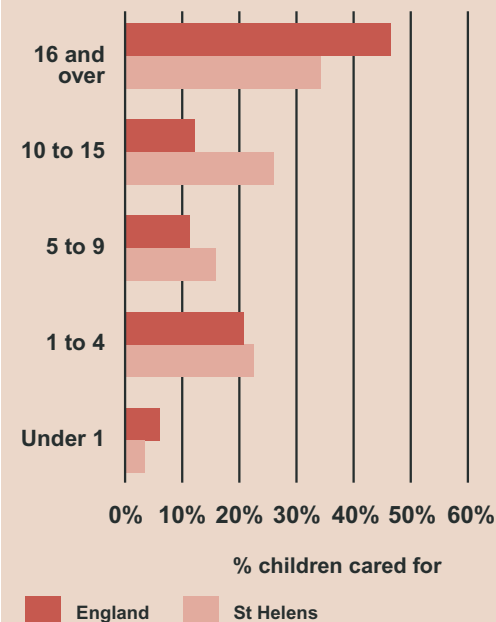
## Reason for leaving care (2021/22 financial year)



National average refers to 2021



## Age profile for children who ceased to be cared for in 21/22



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				
		2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
St Helens	Number	442	466	496	478	470
	Rate per 100,000	120.8	126.6	135.0	130.0	127.0
Stat neighbours	Rate per 100,000	88.8	93.5	100.5	101.7	Not available
England	Rate per 100,000	64	65	67	67	Not available

## NET INCREASES IN EACH OF THE LAST 4 YEARS SINCE 2016

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

	Actual Numbers of children starting/discharged from care					
	2016/17 (Full Year)	2017/18 (Full Year)	2018/19 (Full Year)	2019/20 (Full Year)	2020/21 (Full Year)	2021/22 (Full Year)
Children becoming Looked After	139	114	127	193	115	136
Children ceasing to be Looked After	122	99	103	163	134	144
Net CLA population increase/decrease	+17	+15	+24	+30	-19	-8



# MARKET POSITION STATEMENT

**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 pro-actively 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 placements 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 placements 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 in the child's interest

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

**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.

## 5. CURRENT PROVISION

### Foster Care - St Helens LA

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.

### Aims

- 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 across St Helens
- To provide supervision, support and training for Foster Carers



# 5. CURRENT PROVISION

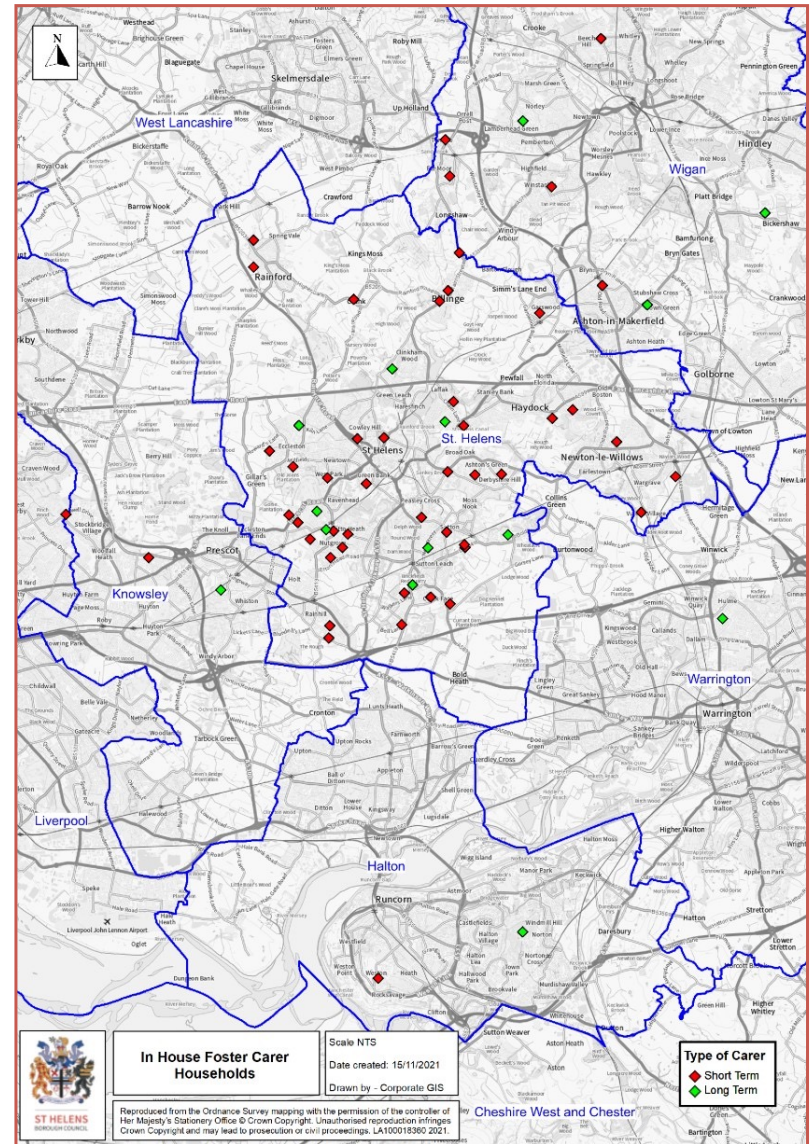
## FOSTER CARE - ST HELENS LA: KEY THEMES

Our own recruited carers are able to offer long term fostering, short term fostering, respite and short breaks care.

The majority of our foster carers have a preference for offering placements to younger children (under the age of five years) and to single children or small sibling groups.

This is different to the profile of children coming into care which is generally older children with more complex needs and those in larger sibling 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 ambitious in terms of the recruitment of foster carers.



# FOSTER CARE - OUT OF BOROUGH

In 2019 Household data from external fostering providers indicates that there were 3,384 available places in the North West. In total 2,964 external fostering placements were made by North West authorities leaving a theoretical surplus of external places available.

However, the availability of external fostering places varied from authority to authority, and in some Local Authorities there were more external placements made than places available.

Data received by Placements North West in 2020 indicates that St Helens continues to have insufficient Foster Care placements to meet our needs. 13 Local Authorities did not have sufficient external foster care placements in their area. This has increased since June 2019 when 10 Local Authorities were not sufficient.

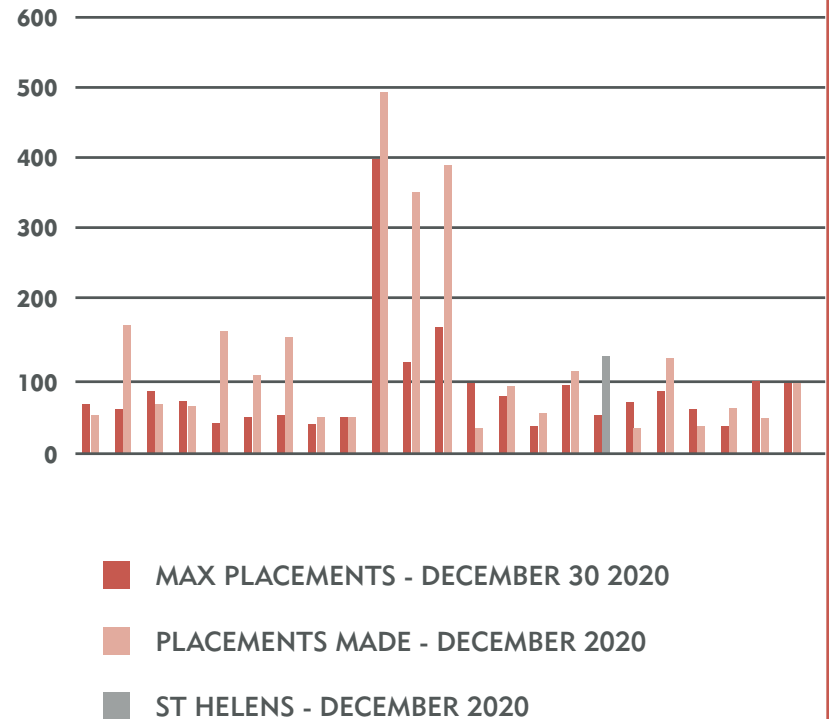
Unfortunately, St Helens is one of the 13 Local Authorities which makes more external placements than have Independent Foster placements available in our Borough. We rely heavily on excess capacity in neighbouring LAs. As changes to demographics in other Boroughs change so does availability of local Carers for our children.

Not all agencies returned their figures to Placements North West however despite adjusting figures into a 'best case scenario' to account for this St Helens remains insufficient for all types of foster placements including short term, long term and parent and child.

We welcome enquiries from anyone who is considering being a Foster Carer in St Helens.

Source PNW

## MAX PLACEMENT FIGURES REPORTED BY IFA VS PLACEMENTS MADE BY EACH LA



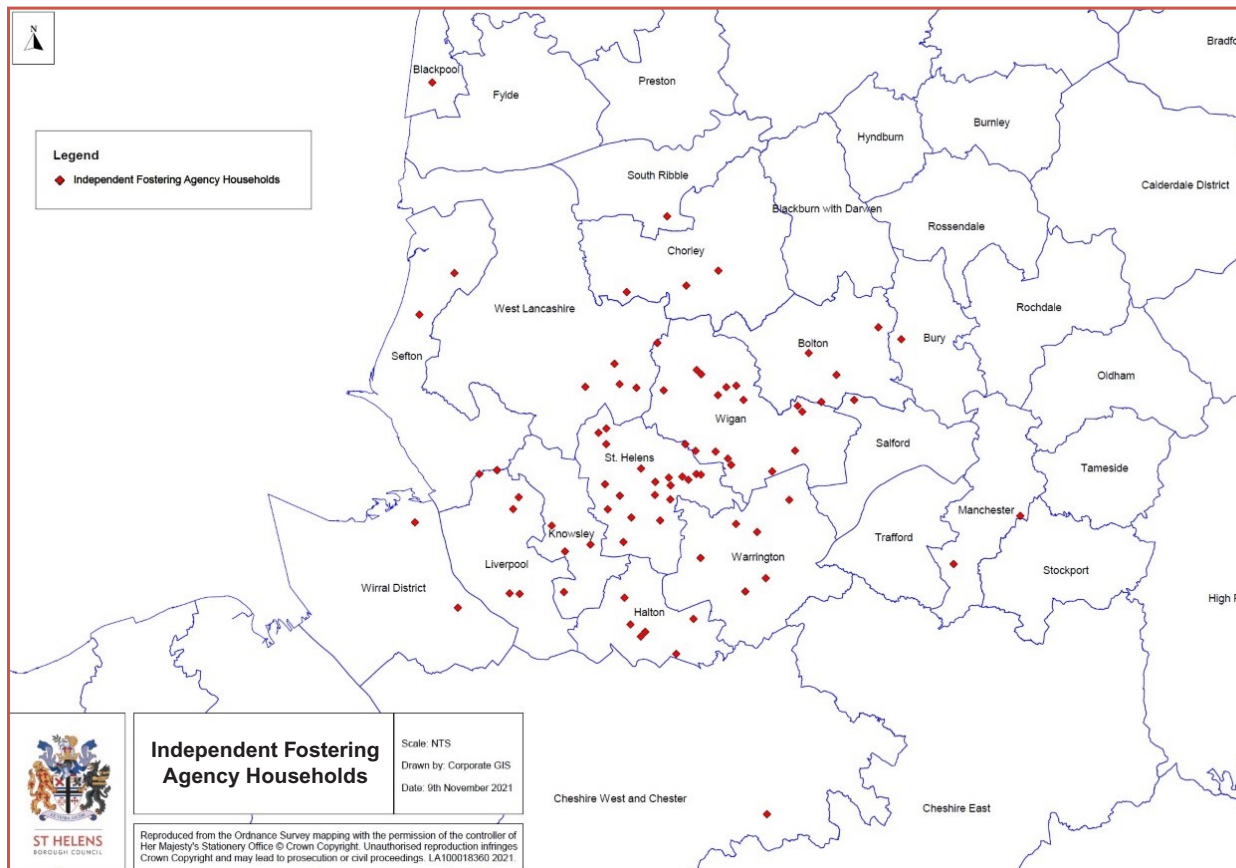


# FOSTER CARE - OUT OF BOROUGH

As at October 21 we are working with 24 Independent Fostering Agencies. All are part of the Liverpool City Region Partner Provider Agreement or North West Regional Framework Contract.

Fostering Solutions are the only agency with an office in St Helens. They are part of the National Fostering Group and together with their sister companies provide over a third of our Independent Foster placements.

The majority of our Independent Foster Placements are within St Helens and surrounding areas.



## RESIDENTIAL CHILDREN'S HOMES - ST HELENS

As at October 21 there are 29 Registered Children's Homes in St Helens run by 13 Providers. This is a reduction of 4 homes since 2020 2 homes are Local Authority run, 2 Voluntary Sector and the rest Private provision

There are 13 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

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.

As at October 21 19 homes (62%) were good or outstanding with 3 homes rated inadequate. This is slight drop in overall ratings however several new homes are yet to be inspected and some homes have not had a full inspection since 2019.

Of our top 5 local area providers in terms of spend and occupancy over the last year, 4 of these are privately owned, 1 is private equity

- St Helens has the 4th highest demand per 10000 population for residential placements in the North West. Our aim is to reduce this over time. (Source PNW Q3 report Jul 21)
- Cost of standard individual placements range from £2575 per week to £4985 (additional fees may be charged for extra staffing)
- Prices are generally lower in St Helens for standard placements than the North West average
- 3 Providers can offer school places as part of their service
- 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 need care including therapeutic mental health care, complex needs/ ASD, physical disability/medical needs and exploitation with higher staffing levels.
- Placement stability for children with lower-level needs is generally good
- Providers generalise rather than specialise in child exploitation and/or mental health
- We have a Secure Unit in our borough, but we do not have any priority for allocation of beds

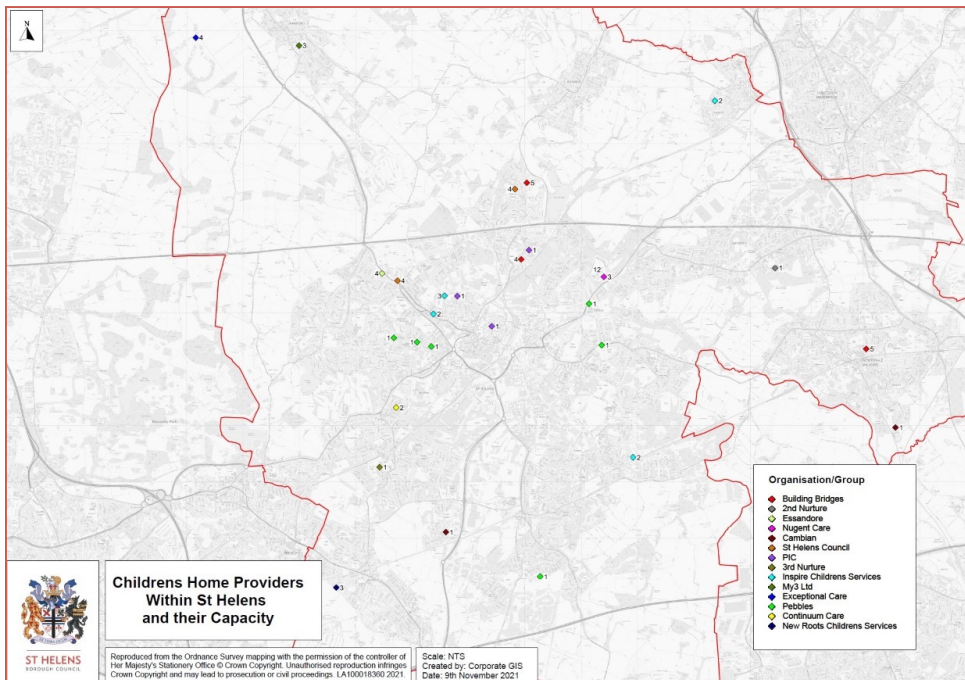
# RESIDENTIAL CHILDREN'S HOMES - ST HELENS

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 due to the value of properties that can be purchased in the town. 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 work with local authorities from St Helens and neighbouring boroughs with just a few actively seeking placements from elsewhere. 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 LCR boroughs in the first instance.

The Local Authority will be looking to increase our internal children's homes over the next 4 years with a phased increase in line with the Sufficiency Strategy.



# RESIDENTIAL CHILDREN'S HOMES - OUT OF BOROUGH

Nationally there were 2,706 children's homes of all types as at 31 March 2021, a 10% increase (246 homes) from the previous year (2,460). This year saw a greater increase in children's homes than the previous year, when there was a 7% increase. These homes were registered for 12,732 places, a 5% increase from 12,175 as at 31 March 2020.

As with previous years, children's homes are not distributed evenly across the country. As at 31 March 2021, just over a quarter of all children's homes (636), and almost a quarter of all places (2223), were in the North West region. This region also saw the biggest increase in the number of children's homes (73) and places (206). (Source Ofsted)

Despite this increase in the North West there has been a decrease in children's homes in St Helens with the closure of several homes however there are a number of new developments recently opened and in the pipeline which will help towards diversifying the local offer. Anecdotally LAs locally including ourselves are finding a decrease in the number of offers for children with complex needs. Ofsted are reporting a trend for smaller homes being registered in response to this. We need Provider's who are able and willing to work with St Helens children with complex needs in our borough.





# RESIDENTIAL CHILDREN'S HOMES - OUT OF BOROUGH

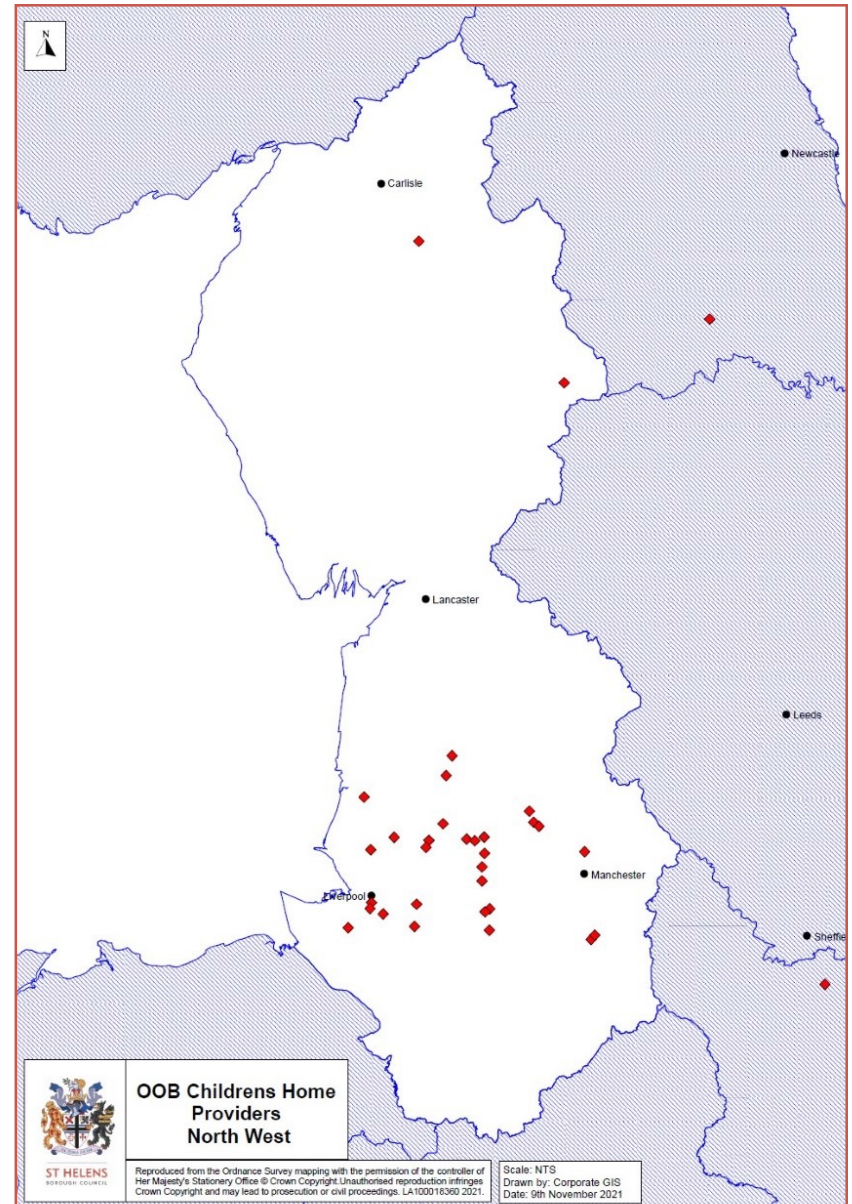
In 20/22 we made 91 placements within children's homes, 63% of these placements were within 20 miles of St Helens.

When placing outside St Helens the top 3 locations were Wigan, Lancashire and Knowsley

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

49% of our children home placements (45 out of 91) were within Liverpool City Region which was an increase from last year (23%)

Our future 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 resource within the Liverpool City Region to support local placements.





# LIVERPOOL CITY REGION MARKET REFORM PROGRAMME

The LCR Market Reform Programme was launched in Apr 19. The aim is to achieve strategic reform throughout the children's social care placements sector across the Liverpool City Region. This will ensure there is a diverse range of organisations committed to closer working with LAs and which would be best equipped to deliver high quality services and outcomes to our children and young people, sustainable long-term pricing and a greater social value contribution to our local communities.

Key to this is re-establishing a level of control to the independent residential and foster care markets which have become increasingly dysfunctional due to decreasing competition and choice linked to growth by acquisition models of the largest Provider groups.

In recent years the residential children's home and independent foster market has not been sufficient to meet the needs of children brought into care in the Liverpool City Region.

IMPROVE VALUE FOR MONEY ACROSS RESIDENTIAL CARE COMMISSIONING

REDUCE PROPORTION OF CHILDREN PLACED IN RESIDENTIAL CARE

INCREASE USAGE OF A BIGGER AND MORE DIVERSE LCR VOLUNTARY  
SECTOR PROVIDER MARKET

INCREASE PROPORTION OF CHILDREN PLACED WITHIN 20 MILES

## 16+ SUPPORTED AND INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES (SaiLS)

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.

We have a range of options of accommodation and support in Group living settings and Supported Lodgings. We have a North West Regional Framework contract where bespoke packages of accommodation and support can be procured. We are also developing a setting in St Helens in order to offer training flats for our children and young people.

Our strategy is to support our children into independence at 18 and beyond by promoting Staying Put, increasing access to Supported Lodgings Placements and working with our Registered Housing providers and Adult Services to deliver sustainable housing options.



# UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM-SEEKING CHILDREN

The Local Authority care for a number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children at any one time either becoming looked after through children being found in the borough having arrived usually on one of the local motorway networks, through being trafficked or through government approved relocation schemes.

Homes for these children need to take into account the risk of them being exploited and a heightened risk of going missing. 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.

We therefore need a range of options available 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.

## Age Breakdown

	Age 15	Age 16	Age 17	Totals
2017-18	1	0	0	1
2018-19	2	3	0	5
2019-20	2	3	0	5
2020-21	0	2	1	3
2021-22	0	0	6	6
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>20</b>

## Gender Breakdown

	Male	Female	Totals
2017-18	1	0	1
2018-19	5	0	5
2019-20	5	0	5
2020-21	1	2	3
2021-22	5	1	6
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>20</b>

## National Transfer Scheme

	Yes	No	Totals
2017-18	0	1	1
2018-19	0	5	5
2019-20	0	5	5
2020-21	0	3	3
2021-22	4	2	6
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>20</b>

## Country of Birth

	Albania	Eritrea	Iran	Iraq	Sudan	Vietnam	Totals
2017-18	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
2018-19	0	1	2	2	0	0	5
2019-20	0	0	3	1	0	1	5
2020-21	0	0	1	0	0	2	3
2021-22	1	1	2	0	1	1	6
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>20</b>

# RESIDENTIAL FAMILY ASSESSMENT

As at Oct 21 there are:

- 64 registered Family Assessment Centres in England this is an increase since 2020
- 16 in the North West (2 in the pipeline) run by 12 Providers
- 7 in Liverpool City Region
- 1 in St Helens (2 beds) 1 in pipeline
- 68% of North West provision is Ofsted Good. 1 provider is Inadequate. 25% has not been inspected yet

St Helens use has increased from 12 placements in 18/19, 16 placements in 19/20 to 21 placements in 20/21 Just over half of placements have been made in Liverpool City Region (11)

There have been a couple of placements at distance due to availability or specialism

Spend in the last 2 years has been circa £1M

Prices range for £2950 to £5500 per week for families with intermittent CCTV/Monitoring (Full monitoring can cost extra)

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

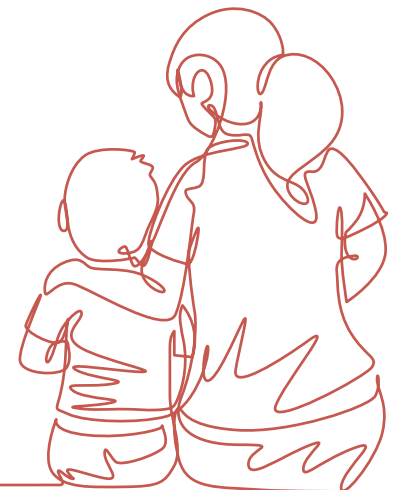
There are some specialist Providers of family services which are not regulated by Ofsted but by CQC as they offer rehabilitation for drug and alcohol issues. There are no services of this type in the North West.

The Local Authority are looking to further develop community-based assessment so families can be assessed and supported within their own community.

## TO ACHIEVE QUALITY PROVISION WE NEED TO:

- maintain a clear focus on Permanence and embed Permanence Planning throughout our approach
- ensure quality of care planning
- be able to offer quality family placements within St Helens
- be able to offer quality, permanent placements for those children and young people who have complex social, emotional and behavioural issues and provide them with the appropriate additional support
- be able to support transition from residential to family placement
- be able to safely protect those young people with a pattern of missing and / or at risk of exploitation and harm
- be able to offer quality, permanent placements for larger sibling groups
- increase momentum for achieving long term fostering for children by continuing with dedicated matching panels
- work collaboratively across internal departments and with external partners

KEEP OUR FOCUS ON THE NEEDS OF THE CHILD/YOUNG PERSON



## 6. BENEFIT ANALYSIS AND DEPENDENCIES - FUTURE MODELLING:

### Edge of Care

The partnership between St Helens Borough Council and Innovate CYPS ceased in June 2021.

Since this time model has been embedded within Children's Services but the age of the cohort of children has been extended to reflect the needs of children and families in St Helens from an age range of 7 to 16, to 0 to 17. The overall aim of the service is to divert a minimum of 80% of children open to the service from entering care remains unchanged. The serviced aims to work with 56 children at any one time.

The service comprises of a team of a service lead, 4 social workers and 2 reunification workers, supported by a Family Intervention Workers and the Family Group Conference Service. Plans remain in place to provide therapeutic support to the family's open to the service.

The wider edge of care offer of Family Group Conferencing and intensive Family Support remains in place across statutory services.





## FOSTER CARE

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 ambitious in terms of the recruitment of foster carers. The foster carers recruited should be able to meet the needs of the children coming into care.

Aims of our local improvement plans include:

To increase the number of in-house foster carers and therefore reduce the number of children placed within external placements in order to reduce the cost to the authority of the provision of care for children in our care:

- To increase the number of long-term foster carers for older children
- To specifically increase the number of foster carers for children aged 10 and above and sibling groups
- To retain the existing base of foster carers
- To increase the number of foster carers for short breaks
- To develop 'specialist' foster carers for those children and young people with additional complex needs
- The target is to increase the number of foster carers by 10 each year and to retain levels of current provision.



## WHAT WE WILL DO

We have brought together all data and information relating to the children we look after into one collective dashboard.

This will enable us to more accurately predict changing demand and availability of provision which are both influenced by the identified inter-dependencies within this strategy.

Using the data dashboard will enable robust data analysis of the service delivery projects that aim to reduce the number of children coming into care and provide additional local sufficiency and will include:

- Early Help
- Edge of Care
- Foster Carer Strategy
- In-house and LCR residential options

Our aim is to further develop the model with aspirational measurable targets to achieve which will drive and inform our Placement Sufficiency Strategy and keep the strategy relevant, timely and adaptable.

## 7. QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING

### FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE WE WILL:

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 implement scaling questions and link to outcomes we want to achieve for Children and Young People from placements as part of their care plan.

### PERFORMANCE MONITORING:

We will:

- Report at least annually to the Corporate Parenting Board
- Include performance information that includes demand, capacity /availability and usage
- Include the use of a Sufficiency Dashboard that will centralise all information from relevant interdependencies
- Report on the delivery of Action Plans contained within this Strategy
- Provide an annual report summary that includes a reviewed and refreshed Placement Sufficiency Strategy.

### LEARNING FROM OTHERS:

We will:

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