

# Public Document Pack



Monitor Officer  
**Christopher Potter**

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## Agenda

Name of meeting	<b>POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EDUCATION AND SKILLS</b>
Date	<b>THURSDAY 17 JUNE 2021</b>
Time	<b>5.00 PM</b>
Venue	<b>COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, NEWPORT, ISLE OF WIGHT</b>
Members of the committee	Cllrs R Quigley (Chairman), D Adams, V Churchman, R Downer, S Hendry, K Lucioni and P Spink
Co-opted Members (Voting)	Rob Sanders (Dioceses)
	Democratic Services Officer: Charlotte Sadler democratic.services@iow.gov.uk

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1. **Minutes** (Pages 5 - 10)

To confirm as a true record the Minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2021.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

To invite Members to declare any interest they might have in the matters on the agenda.

3. **Public Question Time**



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Questions may be asked without notice but to guarantee a full reply at the meeting, a question must be put including the name and address of the questioner by delivery in writing or by electronic mail to Democratic Services at [democratic.services@iow.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@iow.gov.uk), no later than two clear working days before the start of the meeting. Therefore the deadline for written questions will be June 14 2020.

Members of the public are invited to make representations to the Committee regarding its workplan, either in writing at any time or at a meeting under this item.

4. **Introduction, Covid update and update on Holiday Activities** (Pages 11 - 18)

To receive an introduction to new members from The Director of Children's Services, a Covid update and an update on Holiday Activities.

5. **Performance and Budget Update** (Pages 19 - 44)

To consider current performance trends and budget 2021/22, including actions being taken in response to Covid-19.

6. **Young Carers Support** (Pages 45 - 48)

To consider a report from YMCA detailing the support provided to young carers.

7. **Annual Fostering Report** (Pages 49 - 64)

To consider the Annual Fostering Report.

8. **Annual Adoption Report** (Pages 65 - 124)

To consider the Annual Fostering Report

9. **Committee's Work Plan** (Pages 125 - 126)

To consider any amendments to the committee's current workplan.

10. **Members' Question Time**

To guarantee a reply to a question, a question must be submitted in writing or by electronic mail to [democratic.services@iow.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@iow.gov.uk) no later than 5pm on Tuesday, 15 June, 2021. A question may be asked at the meeting without prior notice but in these circumstances there is no guarantee that a full reply will be given at the meeting.

CHRISTOPHER POTTER  
Monitoring Officer  
Wednesday, 9 June 2021

## Interests

If there is a matter on this agenda which may relate to an interest you or your partner or spouse has or one you have disclosed in your register of interests, you must declare your interest before the matter is discussed or when your interest becomes apparent. If the matter relates to an interest in your register of pecuniary interests then you must take no part in its consideration and you must leave the room for that item. Should you wish to participate as a member of the public to express your views where public speaking is allowed under the Council's normal procedures, then you will need to seek a dispensation to do so. Dispensations are considered by the Monitoring Officer following the submission of a written request. Dispensations may take up to 2 weeks to be granted.

Members are reminded that it is a requirement of the Code of Conduct that they should also keep their written Register of Interests up to date. Any changes to the interests recorded on that form should be made as soon as reasonably practicable, and within 28 days of the change. A change would be necessary if, for example, your employment changes, you move house or acquire any new property or land.

If you require more guidance on the Code of Conduct or are unsure whether you need to record an interest on the written register you should take advice from the Monitoring Officer – Christopher Potter on (01983) 821000, email [christopher.potter@iow.gov.uk](mailto:christopher.potter@iow.gov.uk), or Deputy Monitoring Officer - Justin Thorne on (01983) 821000, email [justin.thorne@iow.gov.uk](mailto:justin.thorne@iow.gov.uk).

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## Minutes

Name of meeting	<b>POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EDUCATION AND SKILLS</b>
Date and Time	<b>THURSDAY 4 MARCH 2021 COMMENCING AT 5.00 PM</b>
Venue	<b>VIRTUAL (MS TEAMS)</b>
Present	Cllrs V Churchman (Chairman), G Cameron, R Downer, P Fuller, S Hendry, K Love, M Price and S Arnold
Officers Present	Peter Colnutt, Steve Crocker, Karina Large, Kathy Marriot, Debbie Price, Charlotte Sadler, Paul Thistlewood, Theresa Wall
Cabinet Members	Cllrs Paul Brading
Apologies	Stuart Ashley

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### 8. **Minutes**

THAT the Minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2020 be confirmed.

### 9. **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Cameron advised that he is chairman of the Freshwater Early Years Centre.

### 10. **Public Question Time - 15 Minutes Maximum**

The IW Scrutiny Meeting Report on Elected Home Education (EHE) states that 3.1% of the total school-age population on the Isle of Wight (464 pupils) are EHE, a figure that's high compared to other local authorities. There's also a list of reasons why families have removed their children from the mainstream provision, choosing EHE (academic year 2019-20), reasons include Covid but also alarmingly:

- Behaviour/risk of exclusion, 24 children
- Bullying, 13 children
- Special Education Needs and Disabilities, 12 children

- Emotional and physical health, 60 children

My son who had undiagnosed ADHD would have been in the behaviour/risk of exclusion category. This would suggest the current education system on the Island does not cater fairly for all and this is reflected in the high number of children in EHE. What does the IWC intend to do to address this making education truly fit for all?

The chairman responded to the question. Whilst the number of parents choosing to home educate their children is proportionally low on the Island compared to those choosing to send their children to school, it is higher than the national average. Part of that difference can be attributed to better identification. There is no national registration scheme for children being home educated and therefore many authorities are challenged to accurately identify the children that are being home educated within their communities. Being an Island community, we are better sighted on families that are home educating and therefore our data is more reliable than elsewhere. In addition, we an excellent contact rate with families that are home educating. We have confidence in our data.

Whilst education is compulsory in England, schooling is not and it is the right of parents to choose to electively home educate their children. Where parents choose to send their children to school, we would want all schools on the Island to be welcoming and inclusive. When parents report to us that they have had a negative experience with a school we do challenge the school's leadership although sometimes the school's narrative is different from that expressed by parents. We are also pleased that nationally Ofsted is now focusing on schools that are not fully inclusive and have been removing pupils from their rolls to elective home education.

Evidence from Ofsted reports clearly demonstrate that schools on the Island are improving both in terms of standards and the quality of provision. There has been a considerable focus on promoting inclusive practice with seminars jointly provided by Ofsted and the Local Authority. There is also a comprehensive training programme supporting inclusion on offer to all schools.

The home educating community is particularly strong on the Island. The Council's elective home educating team is also viewed as supportive to parents. The causation for relatively high numbers of electively home educating pupils is complex and does not necessarily equate to schools being any less inclusive on the Island than elsewhere.

## 11. **COVID-19 Update**

The Deputy Director for Education and Inclusion gave an COVID-19 update from an education perspective. The committee heard how schools were open to the children of critical workers and vulnerable groups. These figures were in line with national figures.

- 25 % of primary aged pupils were in attendance.
- 7 % of secondary aged pupils in attendance.
- 30% of special school pupils in attendance.

The committee heard how part of the response to COVID-19 was the joint working around vulnerable children between social care, education services and schools ensuring as many vulnerable children are in school education as possible. Social workers when visiting have been discussing attendance with families. Risk assessments for every vulnerable child not attending school have been made. 56 % of children open to social care had been attending school, including 68 % of children in care. These numbers were high in comparison to the national figures.

Schools were focussing implementing the public health guidance to reduce transmission risk. Focus around hygiene, creating separate bubbles, one-way systems, face coverings, ventilation, social distancing where possible, staggered starts, finishes and breaks would be used to keep the spread of the virus to a minimum when children return to school. Induction activities were prepared focusing on welcoming children back to school, assessment of current learning progress and getting back into routines and learning readiness.

Primary school staff have been tested twice per week using at home lateral flow tests. Secondary school testing for staff and students has been slightly different as they have been tested three times per week, under supervision. Training students how to use the lateral flow test properly ahead of the testing being moved to at home lateral flow tests. Lateral flow tests that show a positive result will be subject to a confirmatory Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test.

The committee was told how GCSE and A-Level grades will be determined by schools and colleges instead of an algorithm. Grades would be based upon course work, mock examinations and optional tests set up by exam boards. No fixed number of students were set to be able to attain each grade. Schools showing 'interesting results' for example much higher grades than in previous years then they would be investigated by examination boards. Exam boards are also setting up optional mini tests which are offered and can be taken into account when grading students. Result day was brought forward to allow more time for the appeals process. A Level results were August 10<sup>th</sup> 2021 and GCSE results on August 12<sup>th</sup>. Schools have been asked to engage students of where they are predicted to end up to prevent it being a surprise, this would also mitigate against the number of appeals.

A question was raised asking why mock results were not used last year instead of the algorithm and why mock exams results were not being used to grade students this year. The Deputy Director for Education and Inclusion advised that some children were not in attendance at school due to outbreaks in schools so did not take the mock exam therefore their grade could not be used to produce a result. However, it was explained that mock tests grades that has been completed were taken into account by teachers grading students. The algorithm approach was discussed, and it was said that it was a particularly flawed system. A member went on to ask if it is the school's choice to take the optional mini exams and would these be used for primary school children on secondary school children or both. It was explained that the choice was with the school and the mini exam would only cover a

small part of the curriculum that has been taught and would be offered to students of GCSE age.

The Director for Children's Services presented the Children and Families Branch COVID-19 response. The committee heard how in the context 'demand' was when a member of the public calls and reports concern. A 15% increase in demand was seen over autumn. The complexity of the cases was also increasing. The demand over lockdown also increased nationally. Face to face visits by social care staff have continued to be done in person for the most vulnerable children, these visits are on a rotational basis so that eyes can be kept on all children requiring it. Contact between children in care and their families is being reviewed.

## 12. **Early Years**

The committee heard that Early Years provision covers children aged 0 to 5 years old. It was explained that although compulsory around 95 to 96 percent of children do use Early Years providers. Three key areas make up the Early Years support. Sufficiency, Learning and Development and Inclusion. The Isle of Wight was said to be a good place to be both a young child and a parent of a young child and also a young child with SEN needs.

National outcomes show that the Isle of Wight is either in line or slightly better than the national averages. The committee were reminded that seven to eight years ago the Isle of Wight was at the bottom of the pile when it came to Early Years so big improvements have been made, maintained and sustained. 96% of schools and Early Years settings on the Isle of Wight were rated good or better by Ofsted, this is also in line or better than national average. Sufficiency wise there was said to be enough childcare places on the Island to provide every child with childcare.

It was asked who picks up Childrens additional needs at the young Early Years stage. It was advised that it is a mix of people including: Health Visitors, Staff in Early Years settings, parents, Paediatricians and also pre-natal scanning. 2 year old statutory checks also check Childrens key development and this can also help identify additional needs. Another member asked if there were any areas of concern that could arise in the next few years. It was said there are always challenges ahead and one successful year does not necessarily mean the next year would be the same as it would be different group of children.

### RESOLVED:

THAT the Early Years report is noted.

## 13. **Elective Home Education**

Inclusion Support Service Manager presented the report to the committee. It was said that the Isle of Wights elective home education figures were high in comparison to other local authorities 4.7% of secondary children and 1.8% of primary children. The Isle of Wight was said to have a string tradition of home education. A contact

rate of 97% was said to be high in comparison to other authorities. Prior to COVID-19 numbers has stabilised to around 450 children per year being electively home educated. COVID-19 has seen approximately an extra 80 children now being electively home educated however it was expected a large number of these children will return to school when the COVID-19 crisis calmed down. The yearly breakdown was given, and it was raised that through the COVID-19 crisis more children of primary age have been electively home educated than in other years and less in secondary. A common theme in elective home education ss for children to be leave school, be educated at home and return to a different school. The reason for this was said to be due to adults relationships deteriorating with the school rather than the child itself having an issue.

Parental reasons for electively home education their children were, in order :

- COVID-19
- Emotional and physical health
- Cultural, religious and philosophical reasons
- Other
- Preferred school unavailable
- Behaviour and exclusion risk
- Bullying
- Special educational needs (SEN)
- Attendance

The chairman asked if emotional health and bullying could be separated. It was asked are all children being educated at home bullied or do other factors play a role? It was explained the statistics are provided by parents and other reasons included anxiety and fragility. A Member then asked if there was concerns over the number of children returning to full time education once lockdown has eased? Inclusion Support Service Manager responded by advising parents and children would be supported in returning to school.

RESOLVED:

THAT the Elective Home Education report is noted.

14. **Urgent Cabinet Member Delegated Decision - Connect4Communities - Covid Winter Grants**

The Director for children services briefly explained to the committee why the decision needed to be urgently. It was explained that the grants needed to be provided at great pace in order to get the money to the organisations within the time frame required.

RESOLVED:

THAT the Urgent Cabinet Member Delegated Decision- Connect4Communities – Covid Winter Grants is noted.

15. **Workplan 2021-21**

The Workplan was briefly discussed and it was agreed that with the upcoming elections nothing would be changed as it was not certain who would be on the committee post election period. The Director of Children Services suggested that the SEND item would fit better on the subsequent agenda due to it being a broadly educational matter and therefore would be better suited to the lighter September agenda that has a focus of education rather than social care.

RESOLVED:

THAT the Workplan 2021-22 is noted.

16. **Members' Question Time**

There were no members questions received. The Chairman used this time to thank all committee members, both Hampshire and Isle of Wight officers and the Childrens Social Care Team. It was said that there had been vast improvements made since the chairman had been on the committee and working relationships had improved. The Director of Children Services also passed on the thanks to officers and the committee.

CHAIRMAN



## Committee report

Committee	<b>POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EDUCATION AND SKILLS</b>
Date	<b>17 JUNE 2021</b>
Title	<b>HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES AND FOOD PROGRAMME – EASTER PERFORMANCE AND SUMMER PLAN</b>

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### SUMMARY

1 The purpose of this report is to update the Policy and Scrutiny Committee on delivery of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme across the Isle of Wight over the Easter break, and on planned Summer delivery.

2 The Committee is asked to note the successful delivery of the Programme over Easter and to support or comment on plans for the Summer holiday period.

### BACKGROUND

3 The Department for Education awarded funding of up to £407,660 for Isle of Wight Council to fund holiday activity schemes to include a meal for benefits-eligible FSM children and young people in the Easter, Summer and Christmas school holidays across the Island. Holiday Activity and Food schemes must run sessions of at least 4 hours in duration.

4 The Isle of Wight has c.3726 FSM eligible children and young people and the Council aims to commission 1,500 – 2,500 spaces per week over each holiday. One week at Easter has been delivered and the grant recommendations for the four weeks in the summer have been submitted to Cabinet/Leader. Following this there will be one further grant funding round for one week's provision at Christmas.

5 The DFE's HAF Programme aims are for children and young people:

- To eat more healthily over the school holidays
- To be more active during the school holidays
- To take part in engaging and enriching activities which support the development of resilience, character and well-being along with their wider education attainment
- To be safe and not to be socially isolated
- To have greater knowledge of health nutrition
- To be more engaged with school and other local services

## EASTER PROVISION

- 6 Isle of Wight Council offered three types of grant:
- Grant Type A – Adding new places – for existing activity providers to offer free places to FSM children for their regular activity programmes
  - Grant Type B – Branching out – for existing activity scheme providers who want to take their delivery model to a new area.
  - Grant Type C – Creating and Connecting – for organisations who develop new innovative programmes that connect the community, create a local legacy and engage parents and professionals.

7 Initially, by the application deadline only three providers had applied for HAF funding for Easter delivery, which would have made 480 HAF funded places available for benefits-eligible FSM children and young people.

8 The deadline for applications was extended by 3 weeks and, in this time, 5 more providers were encouraged and supported to successfully apply for funding, particularly those who would deliver in areas with higher, concentrated numbers of eligible children, bringing the number of HAF funded places available across the Island to 1,388.

9 Take up of places was very successful. Five providers were fully booked before Easter delivery and used a waiting list system for cancellations, which highlighted the need for additional provision this Summer. Of the 1,388 HAF funded places available, 1,320 were booked and 1,173 places were attended. 352 eligible children and young people participated. Surplus places could be offered to non-FSM children for a fee and 52 children attended.

10 The eight providers, who delivered over Easter, offered a diverse range of styles and types of activity: horse riding, theatre skills, yoga and team sports are just a few of the sessions that were offered, and this diversity was part of the reason for such successful take up.

11 Feedback from parents and carers and the children who attended has all been positive, with many parent/carers and young people wishing to be placed on a waiting list for Summer HAF schemes.

12 While performance was very good at Easter there are some lessons that have been learned. Once Summer HAF providers have had confirmation of funding, the Council will support them to develop effective methods to reduce the number of HAF funded places that are booked and not used.

## SUMMER DELIVERY

13 The Summer grant round opened on 25 March and closed on 23 May. The aim of the second grant funding round has been to build on the success of the Easter programme and extend the exciting and broad range of activities that had such appeal for children and young people, to run over this Summer, especially those activities which appeal more to the Secondary school age range, to ensure that all age groups are sufficiently catered for.

14 A slightly larger number of applications have been sought and past applicants have been encouraged to broaden their reach, to expand the number of places that can be offered across the Island and especially in the pockets where it is known that there was insufficient provision in the Easter round, namely Ventnor, East Cowes and the West Wight area.

15 Provision will look similar in character to the successful Easter provision, but with more places available in a greater number of areas and with more that appeals to older young people.

16 Providers have more to do to ensure programme expectations are met in relation to:

- Nutritional education - clubs must include an element of nutritional education each day aimed at improving the knowledge and awareness of healthy eating for children. These do not need to be formal learning activities and could include activities such as getting children involved in food preparation and cooking, growing fruit and vegetables, and taste tests.
- Food education for families and carers - clubs must include at least weekly training and advice sessions for parents, carers or other family members which provide advice on how to source, prepare and cook nutritious and low-cost food.
- Signposting and referrals – clubs must be able to provide information, signposting or referrals to other services and support that would benefit the children who attend their provision and their families. This could include sessions, information provided by Citizen's Advice, School Nurses, dentists or other healthcare practitioners, Family Support Services or Children's Services, Housing Support Officers, Jobcentre Plus, organisations providing financial education.

17 The Council's intention is to deliver training on each of the eight HAF standards, listed in para 5, as part of a revised Summer induction programme for providers in June and July. Each session will feature an expert-led session and additional workshop opportunities for providers to share their existing experience and expertise. In addition to the HAF standards, a wider training offer is being developed to ensure that all providers have the necessary skills embedded within their delivery teams. The effects of Covid have reduced access to training and in some areas, such as safeguarding and Paediatric First Aid, accessing courses has been difficult and potentially validation dates may have been exceeded. The Council intends to plug these gaps where it can.

18 The Hampshire team developed a HAF monitoring tool which was also used with Island providers. During the Easter delivery period all providers were monitored by calling everyone and rating them with a HAF profile. This tool is currently being reviewed in the light of Isle of Wight provider feedback and a revised version will be used for Summer.

## FINANCE

19 The Council allocated £61,150 of the DfE funding for the Easter round. Provision to the value of £43,217 was funded. This was due to a very short bidding window as a result of the DfE HAF Guidance being published with little time to commission services. The balance has been added to the Summer round. There is a 10% scheme administration allowance that is allocated to marketing activity, signposting support, training as well as programme administration and management.

## CONCLUSION

20 Despite a very short lead-in time and Covid, scheme providers were able to deliver face to face holiday activities accompanied by a meal to 404 children and young people across the Isle of Wight. In the challenging circumstances at the time this was a tremendous achievement.

## APPENDICES ATTACHED

Appendix 1 – Easter Schemes

Appendix 2 – Case Studies and Feedback

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Contact Point: Elaine Jewell, Programme Manager, ☎ 821000 e-mail [elaine.jewell@hants.gov.uk](mailto:elaine.jewell@hants.gov.uk)

STEVE CROCKER  
*Director of Children's Services*

CLLR DEBBIE ANDRE  
*Cabinet Member for Children's Services,  
Education and Skills*

## Appendix A \_ Isle of Wight Easter Providers

Name	Award	Places
Sallywags	£ 2,660	80
Sallywags 2	£ 2,660	80
Island Riding Centre	£ 6,300	160
YMCA	£ 8,215	240
Theatre Educational	£ 7,244	108
CM Sports	£ 10,340	240
Aspire	£ 4,730	320
West Wight Nursery	£ 1,044	40
Total	£ 43,193	1268

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## APPENDIX B – CASE STUDIES AND FEEDBACK

Highlights are given below of some of the very positive experiences children and families had from participating in Easter HAF schemes.

*Case Studies from Easter HAF Providers.*

- A and his two sisters attended all four days. On the morning of day one, A initially sat at the side and said that he did not want to be there and was forced by mum to come. After some positive support from the staff and some adaptations to the theme within the dance, drama element, A began to engage. By the afternoon he was fully engaged with the drama and by day two, after a small outburst of frustration due to one of his siblings, he took a lead role in the performance and read a page of script for parents and carers later that day. Mum had disclosed that he had some anger issues, but, during his time on the programme, A worked hard to control any outbursts and became a very active member of the group.
- One of the families that attended had a daughter, B, who suffered with severe anxiety and separation issues. We worked with B and mum to encourage and support gradual participation and helped B to gain the confidence to go from just walking in the door on the first day, to attending a full morning's session. Whilst she did not join in with the core group, we were able to provide her with differentiated activities that were less frightening to her and matched her interests. She was buddied with another child and had a great morning of arts and crafts. Mum picked her up at lunch time, but then B returned to watch her sibling in a short presentation outside just an hour later. Her mum said that this was a breakthrough for B and a positive step moving forward.
- We received a telephone call from S's Mum to enquire about the Easter project and she told me the, although S is in mainstream school, S has mild cerebral palsy and finds it hard to join in with some groups and activities and, although S had tried swimming and other school activities, S found it hard to fit in. Mum wanted to know if she could send S along for a trial, just to see what our sessions were like. S arrived and, from day one, loved the activities and although staff assisted S with food cutting and on some other activities, staff made sure any support offered was discreet, respectful and that S was empowered to engage with all activities. S had a wonderful time and her Mum said that she had never fitted in so well in any other places. S, as a result, has decided to join the local theatre group and I am sure we will see her confidence soar, and she will now feel part of an inclusive group.
- One child is on a reduced timetable at school (1.45 hours a day) and mum was anxious to see how her child would cope, being with us for 4 hours a day. The mum has a medical condition that causes her to have seizures and mum reported that when her child was in school, she was having around 30 seizures a day but because the child was attending our setting for 4 hours a day she only had 3. She feels it was because they both had respite from each other and both were more relaxed and happy.

### *Parental Feedback*

- “It was the first time my children had attended any form of holiday club and they were apprehensive and didn’t know what to expect. To see their faces beaming at the end of the day with happiness and enthusiasm simply tells me I made the right choice. Thank you so much for offering a fantastic and engaging schedule. The children really enjoyed their time with you and are looking forward to attending again. Thank you to all the staff for making my children’s experience a super positive memorable one. We are looking forward to returning in the summer“.
- “My daughter has benefitted so much from being able to go out somewhere and do something fun. We are not able to do that a lot due to lack of money and of late, Covid”.
- “M really enjoyed the activities during the Easter half term. At the beginning of the week M was a bit reluctant to go to fun club as he hadn’t been for a while. Each day he would come home more and more excited, telling me all about how much fun he had and all the different games he got to play. Yoga, PE being outdoors which he loves. By the end of the week he was disappointed it had finished. It would be a great idea to offer these activities or similar activities in the other holidays as well. It’s a great idea and M loved it”.
- “Thank you for everything. I suffer with anxiety and sometimes it is hard to get out and do things. This group has helped me and my son “.
- “My son and I have really needed this week to re-group and enjoy ourselves”.

### *Feedback from Children and Young People*

- “I made new friends!”
- “What I have enjoyed the most is the football, dodgeball, go – karts...well, everything!”
- “If I hadn’t come here, I would’ve been playing Xbox, watching Tik Tok or sleeping”.
- “We did balanced diet menus and sorted cards into the right food groups”.

# Children's Social Care Performance Quarter Three and Four 2020/2021

Steve Crocker, DCS

Stuart Ashley, Assistant Director

Kathy Marriott, Head of Strategy and Operations

# Overview

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- Local context
- Children and Families Branch Service Plan 2019-2021
- Key Business Activities
- Key performance indicators
- Transformation
- Areas for continued improvement
- Finance
- Covid response update

# Local context

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- Approximately 27,100 children and young people 0-19 on the Isle of Wight. This is 19.3% of the total population in the area.
- Approximately 20.4% of the local authority's children are living in poverty.
- The proportion of children entitled to free school meals:
  - in primary schools is 18% (the national average is 18%)
  - in secondary schools is 13% (the national average is 15%).
- School children from minority ethnic groups account for 8.7% of all school children compared with 34.6% in the country as a whole.
- School children with social, emotional and mental health needs 3.2%, compared with England average of 2.7%.

**Source:** Public Health England, Child Health Profile 2021  
[2825-PHE-Child-Health-Profile-2021-Isle-of-Wight.pdf \(iow.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/94425/2825-PHE-Child-Health-Profile-2021-Isle-of-Wight.pdf)



# Local context

Indicator (2020)	Isle of Wight	*SN	SE	England
Child Poverty 2019 (0 to 15)	20.4%	17.9%	12%	18.4%
Referrals (per 10,000)	1097.3	511.58	581.1	534.8
Section 47 enquiries (per 10,000)	259.1	175.87	179.1	167.2
Children in need (per 10,000)	472.1	330.04	304.4	323.7
Child protection (per 10,000)	50.9	48.5	41.2	42.8
Children looked after (per 10,000)	107	78.5	53	67
Care leavers (NEET)	34%	38.8%	34%	39%

\*SN Statistical Neighbours. Data is latest published data for 2020



# Children and Families Branch

## Service Plan 2019 to 2021

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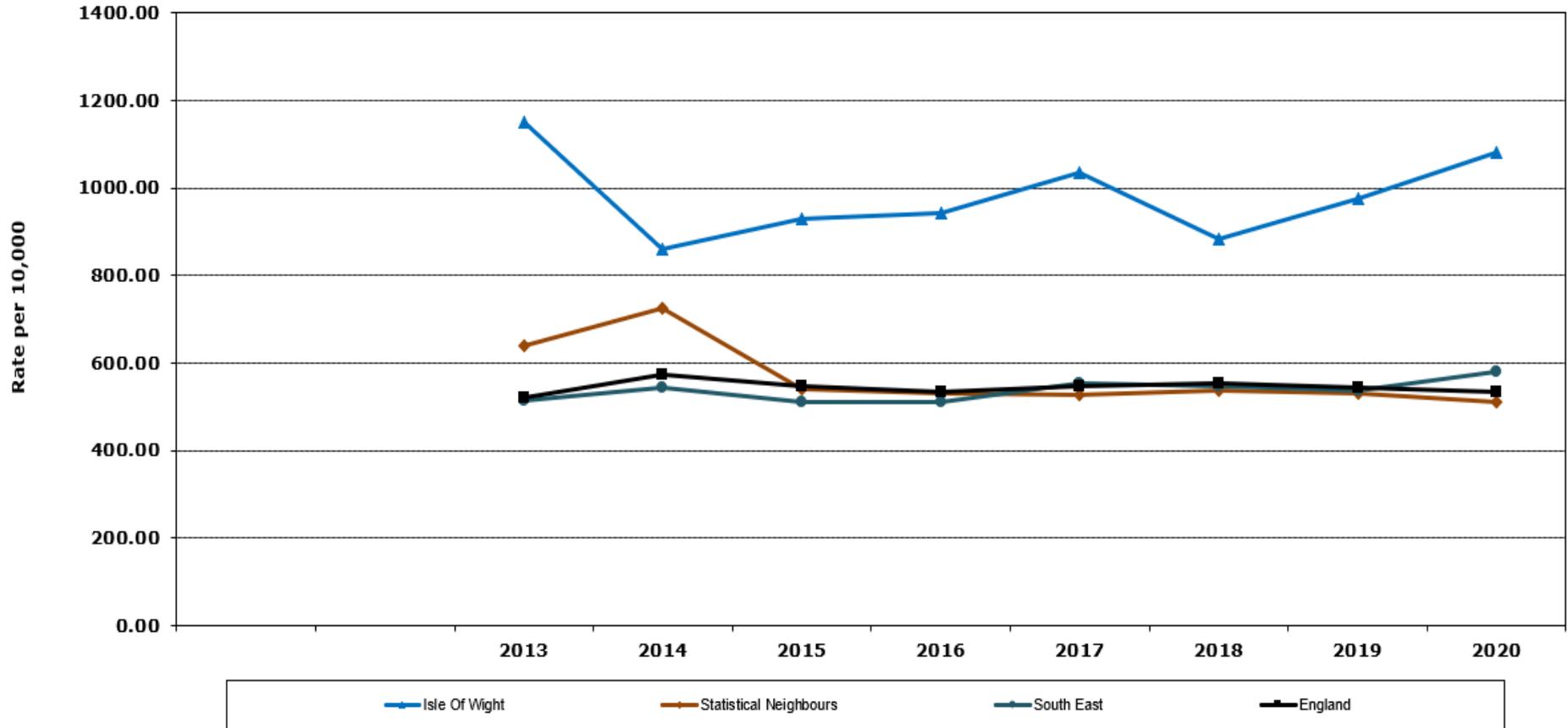
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The Children and Families branch of Children's Services is responsible for delivering a wide range of support and statutory services for children and families. As a service we have three main functions:

- **To support families to help them to look after their children, preventing escalation into statutory services.**
- **To lead the work to keep children safe and protect them from harm, abuse and neglect, responding to child protection concerns and addressing significant harm and abuse.**
- **Where children cannot safely stay at home, provide permanence through a range of other alternatives.**

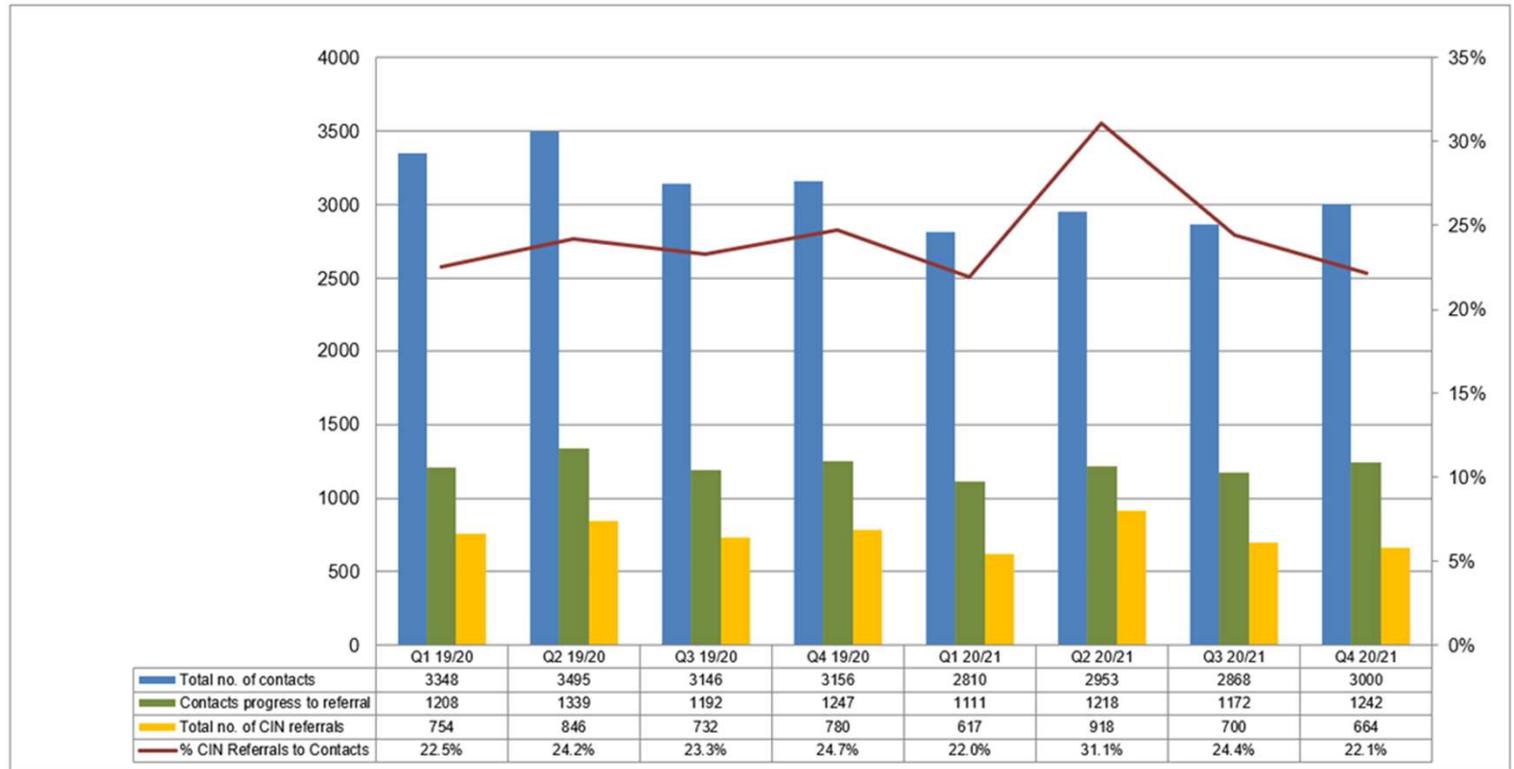
# Referral data

Rates per 10,000 of referrals to Children's Social Services



# Performance – Contacts and Referrals

**Measure :** **Contacts and referrals to IOW**  
Please note percentages shown 0% - 35%



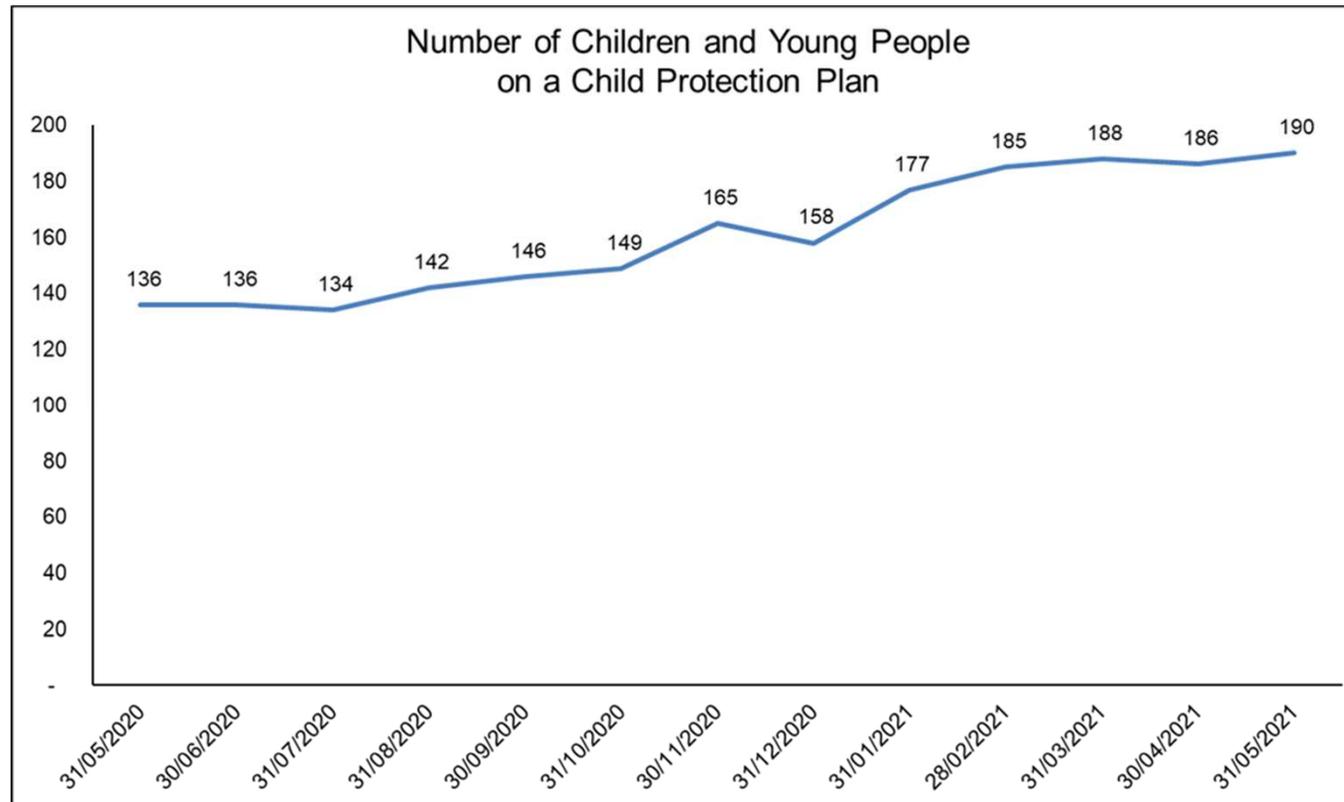
# Performance- timely response

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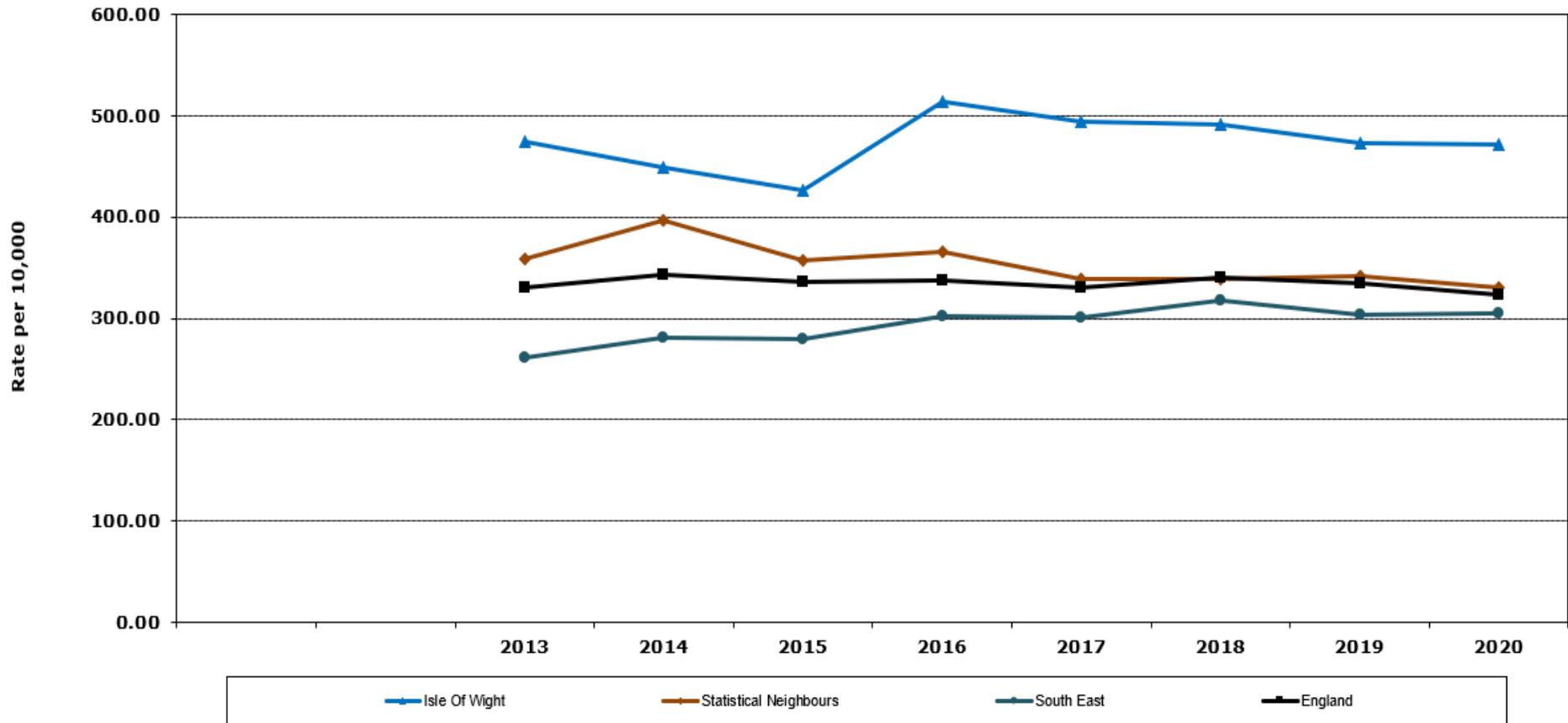
Assessment completed within timescales		ICPC's in timescales	
Q1	94%	Q1	91%
Q2	93%	Q2	90%
Q3	93%	Q3	79%
Q4	90%	Q4	70%

# Children subject to child protection planning



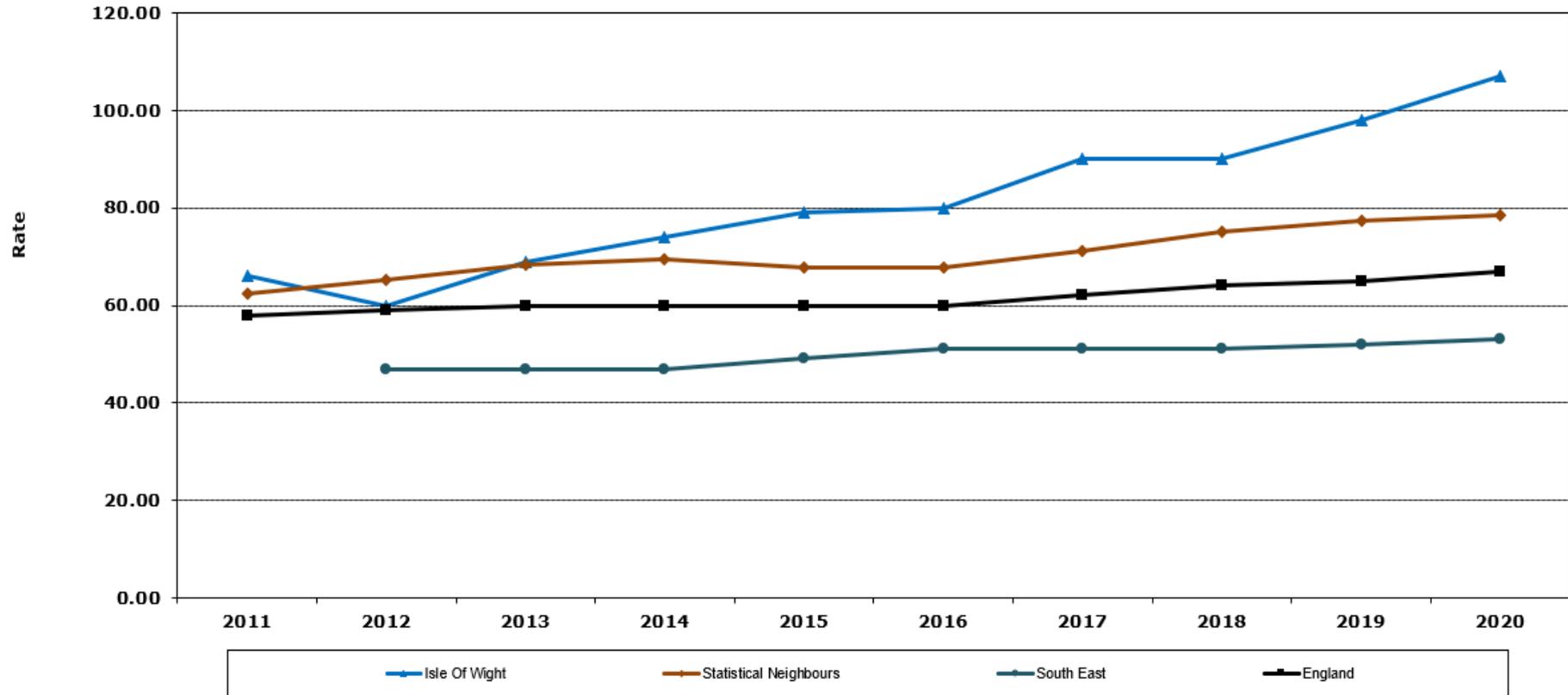
# Children in need

Children in Need rate per 10,000

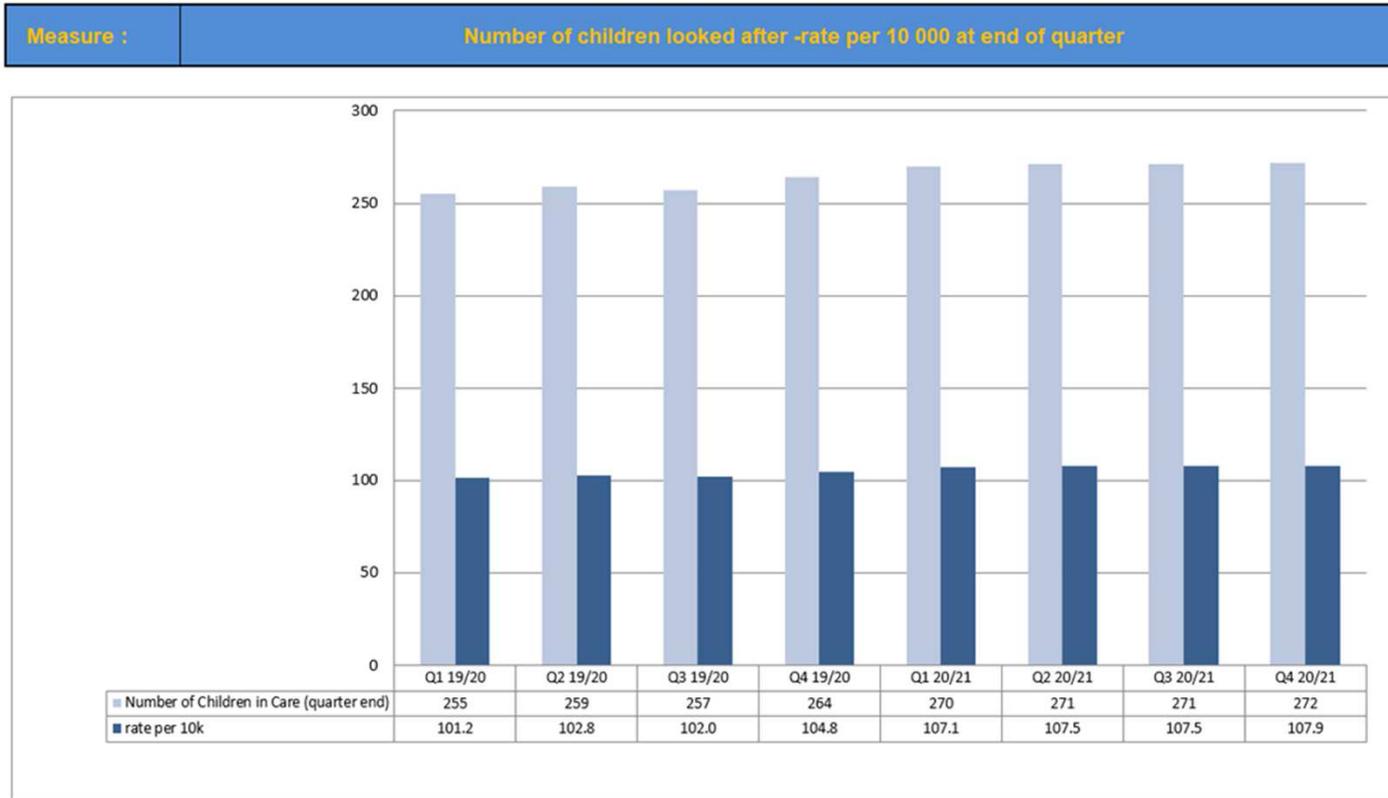


# Looked After Children (LAC)

Children looked after rate, per 10,000 children aged under 18



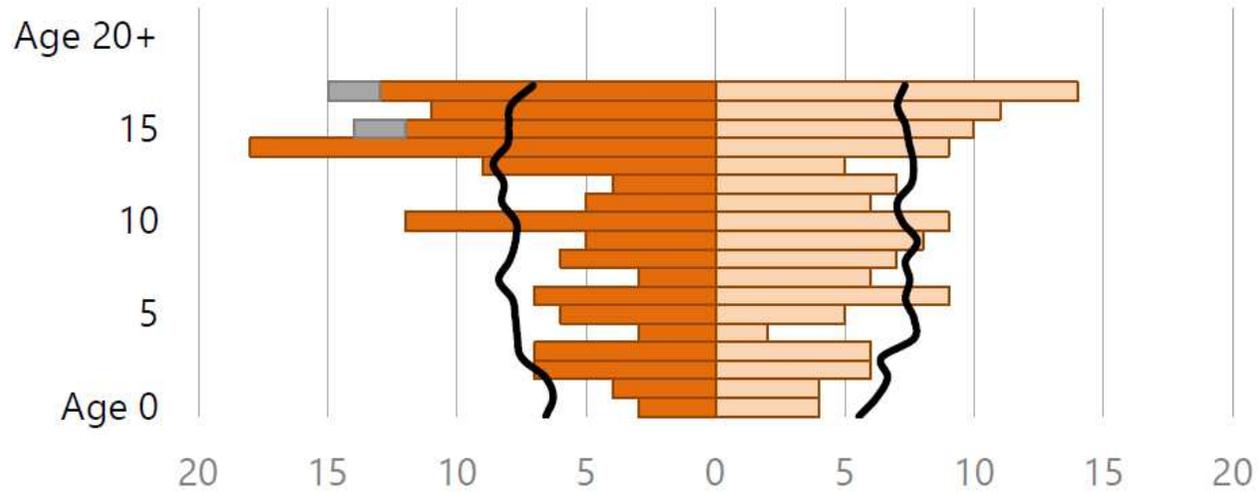
# Performance – Looked After Children



# Age Profile Looked After Children

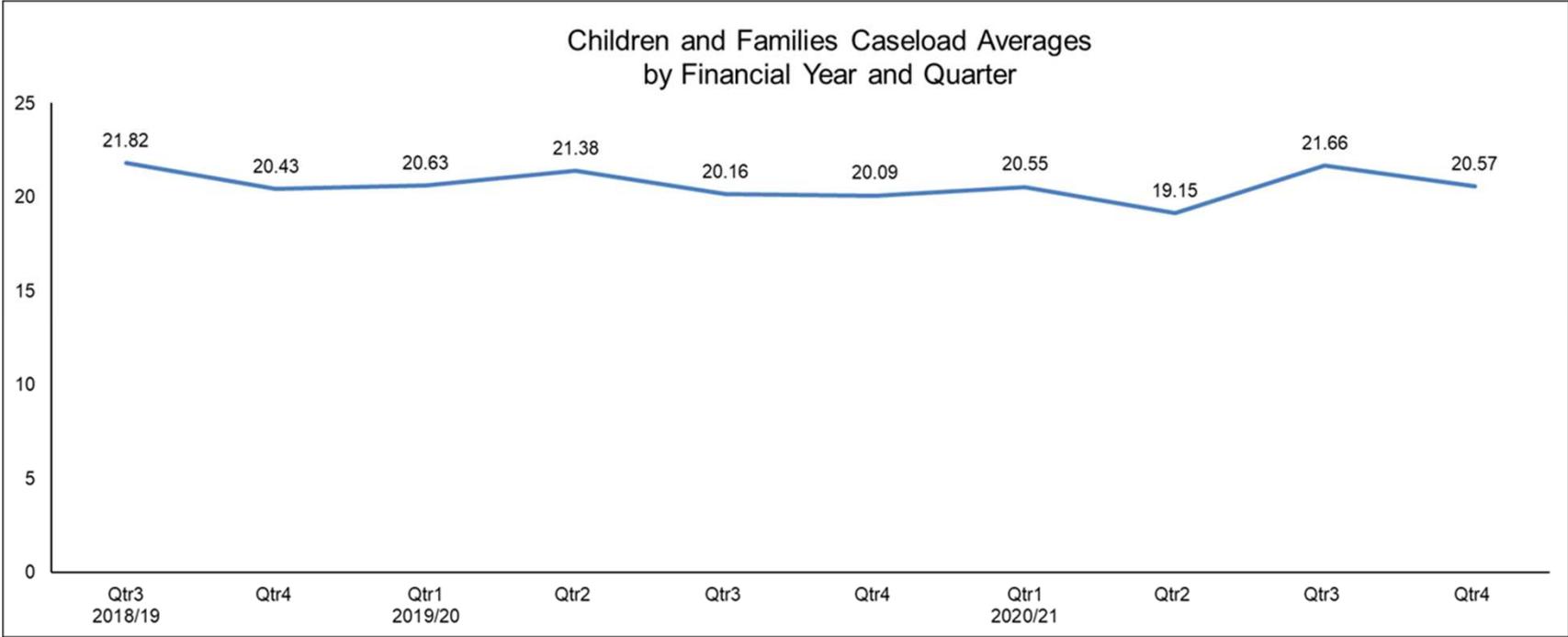
Age and gender

■ 135 Males (51%)
 ■ 128 Females (48%)
 ■ 4 UASC Males (1%)
 ■ 0 UASC Females (0%)
 — 0 Other (not shown) (0%)
 — 0-17 population estimate



*Other' includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F*

# Performance - Caseloads



# Performance: Workforce

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- Maintained vacancy rate at 12% below England average of 16%.
- Maintained turnover rate at 7.1% below England average of 16%.
- Maintained agency worker rate at 12%, below the England average of 16.4%.

# Quality Assurance

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- Case file auditing undertaken every month by ATMs, TMs, SMs and CFMT
- In 2020 **188** case audits undertaken
- **95%** of files audited evidenced the intervention had positively improved the child or young person's circumstances and that outcomes for the child had improved. This evidences the consistent positive impact of front-line practice. This compares to 90% in 2019.
- **95%** of files audited included evidence of practitioner analysis influencing decision making, similar to 93% in 2019.
- **94%** evidence multi-agency involvement compared to 91% in 2019
- **80%** found that the plan was SMART similar to 78% in 2019
- **70%** evidenced that ethnicity and culture was considered in assessments and plans and influencing interventions compared to 80% in 2019.

Other audits include;

- IWSCP multi-agency audits
- MASH audits
- Section 11 audit
- JTAI dry run audit

# Transformation

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In order to achieve outstanding services for our children and families and to ensure we have a fit for purpose service for the future, Children's Services are implementing a number of transformation programmes within the service over the next 3 years

- **Hampshire and Isle of Wight Approach**-strengths based, family focused way to empower families and support resilience
- **Multi-disciplinary team (RAFT)** delivering targeted support and interventions to enable more children to stay safely at home and to support reunification.
- A new **case management system**, to reduce bureaucracy and maximise the time social workers can spend supporting children and families
- **Modernising placements** to improve choice for children, quality of care, the cost and stability of placements.
- Improving access to **performance and quality data** to ensure deliver more effective and efficient services



# Areas for continued improvement

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Through our annual self assessment we have identified a number of key areas for continued improvement, these include;

- Further embed the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Approach to **produce plans that are strength based, and co-produced with families, that are SMART, and are easy to understand**, particularly in relation to what needs to be completed, and what progress is being made.
- Support families to **enable children to stay safely at home** and ensure that if children do become looked after, where appropriate **reunification is a consideration**.
- Ensure enhanced partnership working with schools to promote attendance and attainment for the most vulnerable children.
- Ensure that **supervision frequency** is met and supervision of social workers is of **high quality**, including reflection on practice.
- Further **increase the number of in house foster** carers and placements and ensure that a revised training pathway supports our foster carers to support children with complex needs.
- Further develop the **pathways to independence** for care experienced young people, including deposit schemes.

# Our approach through Covid-19:

As part of our contingency planning we developed a phased approach, with each phase based on having fewer staff available to work should the situation worsen

## Phase 1

*Business as usual but doing it differently*

- Statutory timescales for visits and meetings remain the same
- Using technology to ensure we see children and families through digital means i.e. Skype, Teams
- Face to face visits undertaken where we know our staff can safely socially distance themselves, in relation to urgent child protection work
- Guidance provided for visits, meetings (with children and professionals), training, events etc



## Phase 2

*Pre-emptive planning for worse case scenario*

- Expressions of interest from staff willing to work in the business-critical services
- CRT/MASH – no essential work held back to enable prioritisation
- District teams – highest risk children and families identified
- Short breaks incrementally reduced and then ceased to ensure capacity to manage residential provision and in the event of unforeseen emergency additional resource to be deployed.
- Identification of appropriate staff and volunteers from the directorate to support placement stability-particularly for adolescents.



## Phase 3

*Managing the worse case scenario*

- Redistribution of staff available to work
- Delivery of services reduced to highest risk cases
- Implementing DfE flexibility of statutory requirements

**We remained in Phase 1 throughout all lockdowns**



# Covid: Vulnerable children attending school

**A feature of our response to Covid 19 has been the excellent joint working between children's social care and education, schools and colleges to ensure as many vulnerable children as possible were able to attend school.**

- We have maintained a constant dialogue with our schools.
- Our schools remained opened throughout lockdowns for children of key workers and those classed as vulnerable
- We have monitored attendance closely for our vulnerable children, and will continue to do so.
- We undertook risk assessments on each vulnerable child who did not attend school
- We have worked with Education and schools to provide laptops to eligible vulnerable children
- Since the Autumn term schools have been able to raise concerns over non-attendance of vulnerable children directly with senior managers to ensure a swift response to absence
- We have worked with our Education & Inclusion branch in close collaboration to achieve some of the highest school attendance rates for vulnerable children nationally



# Covid: Partners

We are continuing with constant dialogue with our partners

- Business as usual meetings have been unchanged.
- Daily contact between Assistant Director and Head of Public Protection (the police) if needed.
- We are proactively sharing our important updates.
- Shared high risk cases with police and vice versa to focus on right children.
- We are sharing updates from partners with our staff.
- Bi-weekly meetings with health partners.
- Bi-weekly joint meetings with IWSCP and HSCP

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**Coronavirus**  
Latest NHS Guidelines  
Translated into 23 languages

Children's guide to coronavirus

Global Email  
Daily COVID-19 update

Colleagues,  
Line managers and supervisors are encouraged to use the content of the 'Daily COVID-19 Update' to brief their teams.

Minute's silence for key workers

Tomorrow (Tuesday 28 April) at 11am a minute's silence will be maintained across the UK as a mark of respect for key workers who have lost their lives during the coronavirus pandemic.

Hamptons Constabulary will be taking part with the support of Chief Constable Chris Pinkney and officers and staff will be encouraged – if operational duties allow – to take 60 seconds to reflect.

**HELPLINE**  
0808 800 5000  
heln@nscc.nrn.uk

**Concerned for a child**

The Government has asked parents to keep their children at home wherever possible, and to subject to certain open only for children who are vulnerable and for those children who are unable to be contacted.

Where in lockdown, there is the potential that children could be at an increased risk of harm relating to:

- Self-harm and wellbeing
- Online exploitation
- Abuse and neglect by parents/carers

Signs to look out for:

- Drooping in mood
- EYE MOODS
- Unusual weight loss
- Irritability, unusual
- Unusually violent
- Unusually angry
- Unusually angry
- Unusually angry

Top Tips During COVID-19

IF YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT YOURSELF OR SOMEONE ELSE:

- TALK TO A FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER
- SEEK HELP AND SUPPORT
- KEEP IN TOUCH WITH YOUR FRIENDS & FAMILY
- LOOK OUT FOR YOUR FRIENDS - IF YOU'RE CONCERNED TELL SOMEONE

WHERE CAN I FIND SUPPORT?

There are lots of different ways you can get help if you are worried about yourself, your friends or your family:

- The Young Minds Clinic
- Mind
- NHS 247
- Support Direct
- The NSPCC

Hamptons & Wilt Const Line for Young People

Hamptons and Wilt Const Line (H&W Mind) are excited to share with you the use of our Hamptons & Wilt Const Line for Young People (aged 11-17 years old) being to Hamptons & Wilt Const Line.

This service will be available Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday 9am - 5pm.

Freephone 0800 343 7500

Immediate access to help, support and advice for young people experiencing difficulties with their mental health.



# What next :

As lock down eases we must continue working in an agile and responsive way

We are:

- Reviewing building use-incremental increase based on maintaining social distancing, consideration of rotas for staff
- Managing increasing demand: referrals, assessments and for placements
- Constantly assessing risk for face to face visits & contact
- Reporting and monitoring to continue daily/weekly. This will play an important role in assessing impact and analysing areas of need so we can continue to deploy resources effectively
- Ensuring that staff and foster carers are accessing testing swiftly and appropriately and that vaccination opportunities are prompted to all



# Finance – Quarter 4 20/21 Outturn Position

Service Area	Budget £000	Forecast £000	Variance £000	%
Access, Resources & Business Development	4,351	3,977	-374	-8.6
Strategic Development	245	189	-56	-22.9
Education & Inclusion	1,808	1,658	-150	-8.3
Children & Families	21,218	21,195	-23	-0.1
<b>CHILDRENS SERVICES (NON-SCHOOLS)</b>	<b>27,622</b>	<b>27,018</b>	<b>-603</b>	<b>-2.2</b>

- **Underspend overall 2020/21 budget position.**
- **Some pressure from CLA growth, offset by home to school transport summer cost reduction.**
- **But, COVID related pressures over £1.07million through areas such as rising CLA & agency social worker costs funded through COVID Emergency Grant.**

# Conclusion

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- Child focused in all we do.
- Ofsted Inspection in November 2018 rated Children's Services as **Good in all domains**, we are expecting an inspection and are ambitious to be outstanding.
- Annual self-evaluation and annual conversation held March 2021. We know ourselves, know what is working, agile where improvements required, we know the next steps to improve.
- Continued multiple layers of management oversight-robust management grip.
- Robust Covid response to safeguard children.
- Effective case management
- Motivated workforce
- Strong partnership working
- Focus on quality of practice and services as well as performance with Key Performance Indicators (KPI's).
- Culture change for transformation.





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Purpose: For Noting

## Committee report

Committee	<b>POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EDUCATION AND SKILLS</b>
Date	<b>17 JUNE 2021</b>
Title	<b>YOUNG CARERS SUPPORT</b>
Report of	<b>KATHY MARRIOTT, HEAD OF STRATEGY AND OPERATIONS, CHILDREN'S SERVICES.</b>

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The report provides a summary of the Isle of Wight Council's commissioned Young Carers Programme. The recommendation is for the Committee to note this report, the progress made, and the further services planned as outlined in 2021-2
2. Young carers and their families continue to receive the help and support they need, as part of the Council's Young Carer Strategy.

### BACKGROUND

3. The Isle of Wight Council commissions a support service for young carers through the YMCA. This provides support for approximately 300 young carers across the Isle of Wight.
4. Young carers often put aside their own needs so they can provide support and care for someone close to them. The average age for a young carer is 12 years old. The YMCA Young Carers Programme helps these children navigate their way through this important stage in their lives. Young carers may be responsible for contributing to the care of a family member who may have a disability, long term illness, mental health issues and drug or alcohol related problems. Aged under 18, young carers often have to juggle education, social life, and time to relax with responsibilities around the home such as shopping, housework, helping with personal care, administering medicines, and looking after siblings.

The Young Carers Programme of support includes:

- 1:1 support for higher needs young carers at home or in school
- Meeting up with other young carers in a safe space

- Welcoming and friendly staff always willing to listen
- Information and guidance to support carers and their families

Alongside valuable support, the service also co-ordinates respite for young carers, enabling them to participate in activities with their peer group. They can meet and talk to other young people in a similar situation, take trips to an amusement park, the local cinema, or the annual Young Carers Festival at YMCA Fairthorne Manor every summer.

Due to the COVID pandemic and following the government guidelines, the majority of support during the last year has been provided virtually through emails, texts, and phone call. The team have worked hard through this difficult period to offer support to the young carers. Due to the restrictions in place the team have been unable to meet with some children within the school setting but have spent a lot more time speaking to and supporting parents over the phone and directly with the young carers.

Additional funding for young carers has been made available by the local authority as part of the governments Winter Grant scheme. A total of £8400 was provided to the YMCA, which resulted in 104 families receiving support in the form of food vouchers, essential items and support towards gas/electricity and water bills. In addition, the local authority has worked with The Getaway Foundation to enable ten families to have a holiday in 2021. For many families this is the first chance they have had to take a break, which is particularly welcome after the confines of the last year.

305 young carers have engaged with the project in the last quarter. Facebook has been used to promote virtual activities such as their popular Art Club. Support has continued for 1:1 sessions virtually via zoom. Some face to face activities have continued following guidance on safety precautions. The YMCA contacted all families to see who would be happy for their child to attend an activity and gauged which activities would be feasible within the COVID guidelines.

The Young Carers Programme was incorporated into the Family Centres tender specification in 2020. This followed consultation with children and families, including young carers. Barnardo's were awarded the Family Centres contract in late 2020, with the new contract starting in April 2021. The Young carers Programme has been subcontracted to the YMCA, this will ensure continuity of support, however, builds in an integration to the wider early support being delivered through Family Centres which will be further developed in 2021-22.

## STRATEGIC CONTEXT

5. The key strategic planning document is the Isle of Wight Young Carers Strategy and contributes to the Corporate Plan's priorities of Opportunity and Wellbeing.

## FINANCIAL / BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

6. The whole life costs are £51 000 per year for five years.
7. There are no further financial implications as the funding is set out in the budget for the commissioned service.

## CARBON EMISSIONS

8. The commissioned provider considers carbon emissions when planning visits to schools and co-ordinate visits to locally areas within the same day to reduce their carbon footprint. Pickups or activities are usually arranged via area to further reduce this. Carbon emissions has also been dramatically decreased due to working from home and face to face 1:1s being suspended due to COVID.

## LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9. The responsibility to meet the assessed needs of young carers is covered by the Children and Families Act 2014. Young carers have the right to a 'carer's assessment', which is the duty of the local authority. This assesses the effect on the young carers' wellbeing, health, education, or friendships – and whether they should continue carrying out that level of care.

## EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

10. An equality impact assessment has been undertaken in relation to the commissioned services and no negative impacts were identified or mitigating actions required. The service has a positive impact in supporting children who are young carers and their families with health needs that they are supporting.

## PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

11. There are no property implications because the provider has use of their own buildings from which to provide this service.

## EVALUATION

12. The commissioned Young Carers Programme meets the duty placed upon local authorities and delivers the Isle of Wight Council's Young Carer Strategy.

## RECOMMENDATION

13. The recommendation is for the Committee to note this report, the progress made, and the further services planned.

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

14. The Isle of Wight Young Carers Strategy is due for review and is available on <https://www.iow.gov.uk/Residents/Care-and-Support/SEND-Reforms/Support-and-Advice-for-Families/Isle-of-Wight-Young-Carers-Strategy-2017-2020>

Contact Point: Simon Dear, Service Manager for Strategic Development and Commissioning 📞 821000 e-mail [simon.dear@iow.gov.uk](mailto:simon.dear@iow.gov.uk)

Steve Crocker  
*Director of Children's Services*

(CLLR) Debbie Andre  
*Lead Member for Children*

## **Fostering Annual Report 2020/2021**

**Date 22.04.2021**

**Author: Berni Farmer**

**Service Manager: Debbie Price**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report provides an update on The Isle of Wight Council's fostering service in line with fostering services statutory regulations and guidance.

Fostering Services work within the Fostering Regulations and the National Minimum Standards for Foster carers as well as the Children Act and Care Standards Act.

Foster carers can be approved by independent fostering agencies or the Local Authority. When the local authority do not have enough foster carers or the right foster carers to meet a child's needs they purchase placements from Independent fostering agencies.

Local Authority fostering services are inspected by Ofsted as part of the overall inspection of Children's Services.

During 2020/2021 the service successfully recruited and approved 9 new General fostering households.

At the end of March 2021 there were 114 registered and approved foster carer households in the isle of Wight.

There is a target to recruit 10 fostering households in 2021/22.

## **1. Marketing**

- 1.1 Marketing activities have continued where possible, and processes have adapted to provide a consistent service. Virtual drop-in events have enabled the service to interact with audiences, who they would ordinarily meet face to face. Virtual drop-ins have a higher level of convenience for attendees as they can engage from their home or on the move. Timings have been less of an issue as events can be played back at a later date, location even more so.
- 1.2 Participation activities have been celebrated in the local media, via press release. Good news stories such as this have gained positive attention. Foster carers have given praise to the service for their work in this area. It is intended that the programme will influence positive word of mouth referrals.
- 1.3 Radio scripts were written in response to the changing situation with covid. Lockdown messages were circulated when audiences were most responsive to community led content. Radio has been a significant platform for lead generation in the past year, possibly due to increased listenership – influenced by ‘stay at home’ culture.
- 1.4 Billboard adverts were commissioned on two separate occasions with targeted messages to key workers; thanking council foster carers for the high level of care they have continued to provide for looked after children. Such statements have highlighted the importance of the role among the community and show that the service gives value to their carers, recognising their work and commitment.
- 1.5 Word of Mouth referrals peaked during the final quarter, suggesting that individuals are making lifestyle choices under influence of their peers, which is possibly an outcome of lockdown, restlessness, and a desire to give back to their community.
- 1.6 The service engaged with national campaigns on social media, including clap for carers and fostering fortnight.
- 1.7 Due to reallocation of corporate resources the launch of the new website has been delayed until 2021. Work on video content is now resuming following a lift on lockdown restrictions.

## **2. The Fostering Service**

- 2.1 The team restructured on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 during the first wave of the Corona Virus pandemic. The Permanence Team is formed of three hubs who each focus on one area of activity. Recruitment and Assessment of Foster carers, support to foster carers and all aspects of Adoption.
- 2.2 The two Isle of Wight Fostering hubs are comprised of the following:
- 1 Team Manager,
  - 2 Assistant Team Managers,
  - 6.59 FTE Social Workers
  - 1 ASYE
  - 2 Fostering Practitioners
  - 1 Marketing Officer
  - 1 FTE Social Work Personal Assistant
  - 1 FTE Team Administrator.
- 2.3 The recruitment and assessment hub includes the marketing officer who has a focus on all aspects of marketing to ensure we are attracting applicants who can meet the needs of our children. The social workers undertake joint viabilities with the childcare teams and assess and support all general and connected applicants through to Panel and approval.
- 2.4 The Assistant team manager of the support hub attends the placement meetings held three times a week with the commissioning team to ensure appropriate matching and placement stability. The support hub provides a focussed team of social workers to promote stability and development of our approved carers.
- 2.5 This has enabled each hub to focus on their specialisms of work and has enabled a more focused approach and improvement to timescales, compliance, and quality assurance.

### **3. Recruitment of Foster Carers**

- 3.1 Recruitment stats were lower than the previous year. The fall in numbers and conversions could be attributed to the pandemic and periods of uncertainty.
- 3.2 As mentioned previously - all face-to-face processes have been virtual, from information events, pre-assessments, and assessment visits.
- 3.3 While community events were cancelled and lockdown measures in affect, there were very few opportunities to meet people in person. Events have

previously been one of the strongest leads of enquiries, so the outcome was not un-expected.

- 3.4 Despite a fall in enquiries the approval number has equalled to the previous year, resulting in a higher conversion rate of 3.1%. This would indicate we are attracting less people that do not go on to foster.
- 3.5 There are two parts to the general fostering assessment – part one where we gather initial checks and references and part two which is the assessment itself. We are now completing these concurrently to reduce the time applicants are in assessment. The restructure has enabled dedicated assessment social workers to focus on timescales and to streamline processes to reduce any delay within assessments.

3.6 Recruitment Data for 2020/21

- Number of enquiries 65
- Number of Initial Home Visits 22
- Number of assessments initiated. 6
- Number of approvals 9
- Conversion rate form enquiry to approval 3.1%

**4. Fostering support**

- 4.1 It continues to be the aim of the service to ensure that we have foster carers available to meet the needs of Isle of Wight children.
- 4.2 The Fostering support hub continue to provide support and supervision to all approved foster carers and carers who remain caring for children under staying put (continue to care for children after they turn 18). We continue to provide numerous support groups including monthly lunch and learn/ lite bite sessions, connected carers group, men’s group and deliver training which includes Skills to Foster, Fostering Changes, Attachment, Safeguarding/ Safer Caring and Supervised Contact etc. We will also be starting a group for birth children of foster carers which is due to go live in the first quarter of next year.
- 4.3 On the 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020 all groups were suspended due to the coronavirus and the government request to comply to social distancing, no group activities and to socially isolate if experiencing symptoms. The support hub offered

regular telephone supervision and support, and face to face supervision if requested and appropriately risk assessed. This has been adapted as local and government guidance has changed over the year.

- 4.4 The support hub has worked hard to move all training and support online to increase the opportunity for carers to feel supported and part of the fostering community. This has been especially welcomed by carers who do not reside on the island as they have been able to feel more included and able to access all aspects of Fostering virtually. The support hub has worked with our work force development colleagues to enable carers have access to the e learning courses available to the wider workforce. The team have ensured that bespoke training has been recorded and uploaded to the Learning hub so that this is available to carers.

## **5. Annual Fostering Survey**

- 5.1 In 2020 / 21 the Annual Fostering Survey was sent electronically with expectation that it would increase participation and drive more responses. However, the outcome was very similar to the previous year whereby only a small percentage of carers responded (33.3%).
- 5.2 Due to a low number of responses the findings were hard to generalise as the sample was not representative of the population. The findings from those who participated in the survey (27 General / 5 Connected), revealed the following key stats:
- None (0%) of the respondents felt that they had, in the past year, taken a placement that they did not feel equipped to care for.
  - 61.5% of respondents feel that they benefit from attending the support groups that are provided by the service.
  - 80.7% of the survey's respondents said that they were able to access the training that they needed.
  - 19.2% of respondents don't feel that they are kept well informed. We have asked our supervising social workers to ask foster carers about this and get there views as to ho this can be improved.
  - When asked how fostering has impacted their family, one respondent stated that 'It has brought us more together as we work as a team.'
  - When commenting on allowances, one respondent wrote 'as a new carer my skills are not being rewarded or utilised 'officially' based on being a new carer and 'lack of experience'

- 5.3 In a recent focus group, IW foster carers showed a preference for electronic surveys over paper formats and suggested that time was a barrier to completing the survey.
- 5.4 The focus group provided insight into how carers feel about sharing feedback, and so work will be undertaken to ensure higher levels of engagement in the following year.

## **6. Placements**

- 6.1 Based on findings from the Foster Carer Survey, just 15% of carers felt as if they had children placed with them outside of their approval. Despite this, none of the respondents felt that they had a child in placement who they were un-equipped to care for.
- 6.2 The Assistant Team Manager or Team Manager attends placement meetings three times per week to discuss and plan potential placements with the commissioning team and the childcare teams. This was instigated following the need to work from home to ensure that placement stability and careful matching was maintained throughout the lockdowns.
- 6.3 The supervising social worker ensures that placement planning meetings are held within 72 hours of placement and that the Personal Development Plan provides carers with training to support caring for the child. This is overseen by the Assistant team Manager.
- 6.4 The limited evidence from the Foster carer's survey would suggest that this is having a positive impact and will be continued.

## **7. Placement Endings**

- 7.1 26.9% of Foster Carers say that they have experienced a child leave their care. 85% of whom, felt that they were able to support the child during this time and in turn felt supported by the Team.
- 7.2 Respondents who did not feel supported during their end of placement said that "the child's needs were not listened to." and the carer's did not understand the reason why the child was moved and did not have chance to say goodbye. They felt this caused unnecessary Trauma."

7.3 End of placement reports and disruption meetings are called when a placement ends. The Child's Social Worker, the child and the foster carer are requested to write an end of placement report which identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the placement. This information is used to inform and improve practice and to support carers who have experienced an unexpected ending to a placement.

## **8. Training:**

8.1 IOW Fostering will continue to offer a variety of training as restrictions and new ways of working become the norm. This will include guest speakers, peer led discussions, group programmes and online training platforms via the Learning hub.

8.2 Supervising Social Workers will help to identify new training opportunities that will support the Carer's Personal development record. Any specific requirements can be discussed and commissioned with approval from the Team Manager and Service manager. This may include 121 training from home. Training will be provided weekdays, weekends and evenings to facilitate attendance.

8.3 The Foster carers training pathway has been revised to include wider training courses now available and we will continue to work with Work Force Development to enhance and refine this over the next year. Personal development records are now maintained within the learning hub so that these are routinely updated each time a course is completed. The Support hub are also exploring how 'lite Bites', our Lunch and Learn sessions, could also be recorded to enable carers to have a wider access to these at a time that suits them and also to be able to revisit the topics.

## **9. Improving the Service: the main themes**

- Foster Carers want to be more involved in supporting recruitment and the service with different activities.
- Foster carers to have access to support and training to maximise the use of IT to engage with learning and the virtual world.
- Foster Carers want to see improvements to allowances.
- To return to face-to-face training and social events
- Continue to focus on compliance and quality of reporting by the social workers.

9.1 The main issue that has impacted on all of us is Covid, the limitations of the lockdowns and the move to more virtual working, meetings etc. It has been

particularly difficult this year in matching children to placements whilst maintaining the safety of the foster carers and their own households. This being said the Fostering community has risen to the challenge and have been flexible in their approach to ensure children are cared for. The service has ensured that higher levels of contact as agreed with the foster carers has been maintained to ensure individual households receive the support they need. This has been regularly reviewed with them as circumstances have changed.

- 9.2 This is also against a background of a service restructure, change of management structure and the loss of a colleague suddenly which affected the whole fostering community.
- 9.3 The Fostering hubs are exploring with carers which activities they would be happy to support. We intend to develop this into a spreadsheet so that we can approach identified carers for each area e.g., training. We are also planning to establish a focus group to engage foster carers in future developments of the service to ensure we are continuing to meet their needs.
- 9.4 The Support hub are working with the inhouse volunteers to gain support and training providing individual IT support for carers who are less confident with using computers as this is a potential barrier for them going forwards. We also need our carers to be able to monitor and safeguard our young people online.
- 9.5 Mainland carers and carers in France have been able to access the IOW fostering training and community and are pleased with the support they have been able to access in this new way of working that was not previously achievable.
- 9.6 Some foster carers have requested that allowances and payment structures are reviewed. The IOW service is currently engaging in the Modernising Placements programme with Hampshire to not only review allowances but to review the whole service delivery to ensure we are prepared for the future.
- 9.7 The service is returning to more face-to-face visits and events as it is safe to do so, as we have all missed that personal and social interaction. However, we also want to maintain the positive gains experienced over the last year. We envisage having a more agile approach that can be more responsive to individual needs to promote stability and foster carers feeling supported. We will need to work with our carers to achieve this as it is unlikely that we will return fully to the previous ways of working and some may struggle with this.

- 9.8 The service will maintain the focus on performance and quality of reporting to ensure that prospective applicants and carers receive a high-quality service. This will assist in promoting a positive image of IOW fostering to the wider community.

## **10. Fostering Panel**

- 10.1 The service has 12 fostering panels per year which are held monthly. Each panel will hear a maximum of 6 cases. The Panel Chair and all panel members receive an appraisal annually.
- 10.2 Panel feedback from applicants is routinely sought, however limited feedback is received despite creating an online survey designed to encourage greater participation.
- 10.3 The Service Manager and the Team Manager meet with the panel chair on a quarterly basis to discuss any themes in panel, policy or process issues, and training & development needs.
- 10.4 Now national lockdown restrictions are easing two training days are being arranged for panel members, to include in part meeting with the Fostering Service Hubs, to update knowledge of policy, thresholds, good practice and to encourage a more coherent way of working.
- 10.5 The team manager is also in the process of recruiting and interviewing three new panel members to increase the skills, knowledge and experience available to the panel.

## **11. Statistics**

### **In House Fostering**

- 11.1 There are different types of foster placement as below. This includes registered carers, Staying Put placements, Supported Lodgings providers and the addition of Connected assessments with children in placement.
- 11.2 This is an increase from the previous year. These households can be broken down into their different registrations as follows:

<b>Registration</b>	<b>Households March 2020</b>	<b>Households March 2021</b>
<b>General Foster Carer</b> (a person assessed to be a foster carer for any child needing care)	48	49
<b>Connected Foster Carer</b> (a person known to the child who is assessed as a foster carer and specifically approved for this child only)	30	51
<b>Supported Lodgings</b> (carers for children 16+ only)	4	3
<b>Family Link</b> (families providing short breaks to children with disabilities)	0	1
<b>Connected Assessments with Child in Placement</b> (a person who is known to the child who has had a short assessment to ensure that they are safe and has had the child placed with them whilst a fuller assessment is completed to enable a child to continue to be cared for by someone they know).	4	6
<b>Staying Put</b> (An arrangement to allow a young person to remain living with their foster carer after they have turned 18)	4	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>114</b>

i) *Data Source: Data Provided by Isle of Wight Fostering Service.*

ii) *Date Period: Snapshot as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.*

11.3 A previous challenge for the team was the timely return of application forms impacting on the timeliness of checks and references being requested. To address this application packs are now sent out with a 2 week deadline for completion and return. The Fostering Practitioner attached to the Assessment hub will also contact the applicant if the form has not been returned within this time frame to offer support.

11.4 This is a particular concern for connected carers with children placed as these are usually within the court arena.

11.5 A further challenge for the team remains obtaining sections 4 and 5 of the connected assessment from the Child/ren's Social Worker in a timely manner. To address this when a connected application pack is posted out, the admin worker will also email the section 4 & 5 templates to CSW involved with a

request these are completed and returned within 10 working days and the Fostering Practitioner will continue to chase and monitor to ensure this is completed.

- 11.6 This has encouraged some improvement in the time taken to receive the documents back but requires ongoing monitoring and oversight to ensure it continues to improve.

Foster carers on hold

- 11.7 The average number of general foster carer households on hold at the end of the year is 2 households. This is 4.08% of the available households. These have been for a variety of reasons, including foster carers choosing to take a break, and other family or work commitments.

Timeliness of household reviews

Overdue HHR's (2020 - 2021)											
APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR
20	19	22	22	12	17	20	17	17	1	4	6

- 11.8 This has been identified as a focus for the hub to address during the remainder of this year to bring reviews into a more timely and planned order to ensure compliance. Due to the sudden change in the support hubs staffing there has been a delay in review completion in March 21 this is being addressed to bring this back on track.

Timeliness of supervision visits

% of foster carers with supervision recorded in time	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year average
	94.5%	92.6%	92.8%	98.2%	94.54%

- 11.9 This is a good area of performance and evidences that the supervision of foster carers has remained a high priority despite the challenges faced due to

the pandemic This is an area that has benefitted from a dedicated support hub.

Timeliness of unannounced visits

Number of foster carers with unannounced visits in time	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	number on time in the Year a
completed	1	9	8	4	22
overdue	21	39	54	61	61

11.10 Face to Face unannounced visits have proved a challenge during the lockdown periods of Covid. However, as restrictions were lifted this was a target for the hub. The hub also explored creative ways to achieve this and to focus on visiting all households. This continues to be an area for development and improvement. This has been impacted in quarter 4 by the loss of a colleague which meant that the plan to address this has been delayed. This will continue to be a main focus for the hub in the coming year.

Medicals

<b>Overdue health assessments</b>											
<b>APR</b>	<b>MAY</b>	<b>JUN</b>	<b>JUL</b>	<b>AUG</b>	<b>SEP</b>	<b>OCT</b>	<b>NOV</b>	<b>DEC</b>	<b>JAN</b>	<b>FEB</b>	<b>MAR</b>
26	12	4	3	6	4	4	5	6	11	5	6

11.11 In line with policy Hampshire and the isle of Wight complete review health medicals every 3 years. Progress has been made with health assessments utilising the covid self-reporting format.

11.12 The carers have been informed that they need to book face to face health assessments once the surgeries are facilitating these to ensure that performance is maintained. The supervising social workers continue to promote this. The carers have received a communication to try and start booking their medicals again and to alert the service if this is refused so that we can escalate this as a priority. Health issues are discussed in supervisions to ensure carers are not neglecting their health during the pandemic.

## DBS checks

<b>Overdue DBS</b>											
<b>APR</b>	<b>MAY</b>	<b>JUN</b>	<b>JUL</b>	<b>AUG</b>	<b>SEP</b>	<b>OCT</b>	<b>NOV</b>	<b>DEC</b>	<b>JAN</b>	<b>FEB</b>	<b>MAR</b>
18	10	2	1	1	2	3	2	2	2	2	1

11.13 This continues to be an area of improved performance. However, it is a requirement that all carers have a valid and in date DBS check. This is monitored via a spreadsheet and reviewed monthly in advance. This is an improving picture, but the target needs to be nil and this will continue to be the standard to be achieved.

## Deregistration

	Q1 2020/21	Q2 2020/21	Q3 2020/21	Q4 2020/21
General carers	1	3	2	2
Connected Carers	1	2	2	2
Total	2	5	4	4

Over 20/21 there have been 15 fostering household that have been de-registered: 8 general households and 7 connected households.

11.14 Of the Connected carers deregistered, the reasons were:

<b>Reasons for deregistration</b>	
SGO Granted	1
Returned to parents/ more permanent connected placement	3
Allegation upheld	1
Expected death of LAC child	1
Impact on birth children	1

11.15 Of the General Foster carers deregistered, the reasons were:

<b>Reasons for deregistration</b>	
Change of circumstances	3
Retired	4
Heath grounds	1

11.16 Of those where a change of circumstances was provided as a reason for deregistration, some of the following themes have been noted.

- Moved out of area
- Change in work commitments or family situation

## **12. Complaints and allegations against foster carers**

12.1 The Council has a Complaints and Allegations against Foster Carers procedure as required by the Fostering Services Regulations 2011.

12.2 In total there have been 2 complaints & allegations initiated within the 2020-21 period.

12.3 These were concluded as the following

Complaint	Allegation
	2

12.4 Of these complaints and allegations, the outcomes were.

Ongoing case, not concluded	1
De Registered	1

## **13. Conclusion**

13.1 The team have continued to work well and have been able to demonstrate a greater level of compliance across all areas of work with the exception of the unannounced visits. This has been a challenge and when able to, we have been visiting. The team had a plan in place for the new worker to undertake these to address the issue and to use this as part of her induction to get to know/introduce herself to carers. Unfortunately, due to the demise of a colleague we had to redeploy her immediately to focus on supporting foster carers. This is an outstanding area for the next year which will be addressed.

13.2 Placement stability has been good with proactive support being offered and close links via the placement meetings to ensure better matching with foster carers skills sets. This has also enabled a closer working relationship with the child in care team to provide a holistic approach to supporting children and placements.

- 13.3 Assessment timeliness has improved with the new focused hub. Dropout rates due to Covid has impacted on the number of approvals. This is being monitored and a new marketing strategy will enable us to target more effectively applicants that are able to meet the needs of our children.
- 13.4 The use of IT has been a steep learning curve for both staff and carers however again this is being successfully managed. The team have developed strategies to move activities to the virtual world to ensure continuity of service. The foster carers now have access to the wider workforce learning hub and training pathways agreed to support them to achieve training in a more flexible way. Face to face training will return however we envisage this continuing to be a hybrid approach to meet the needs of carers who find attending training more of a challenge due to work etc. Fostering recruitment and assessment continues to be a major focus of activity and Fostering Panels are now held virtually to ensure there is no delay to applicants.
- 13.5 The staff team have been stable and we have also been able to recruit substantive admin which has supported the team and enabled the work flow to be both reviewed and streamlined in preparation for a new IT system due to come on line in November 2021.
- 13.6 This has been a difficult year for the service for all the reasons outlined earlier however performance has continued to steadily improve. Continuity of service has been maintained and stability for foster carers has been at the heart of our practice. This will continue as we develop the service further over the next year. On reflection, the team have shown dedication and commitment to the service and the needs of our children, and I commend them for their resilience. This has been a successful year despite all the obstacles put in our way.

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**Isle of Wight Annual Adoption Report  
April 2020 - March 2021**

**1. Recruitment Activity.**

All Marketing Activity, enquiries, pre-stage visits, Registration of Interest Forms and Adopter assessment activity is reported in the Adopt South report. This includes Panel Activity and Available Adopters.

Any interagency placements are considered by Adopt South.

Children's Post Adoption support is also within the remit of Adopt South

**2. Interagency.**

Since we have been part of the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA), Adopt South in April 2019 we have needed to fund one interagency placement. This was for a child with very specific needs who had been considered hard to place. This child had waited some time for the right adopters and was the subject of a targeted media campaign in order to identify adopters who would be able to meet his needs. All other adopters have been from within the RAA.

**3. Complaints and Allegations**

There has been one complaint received. This was in respect of a challenge to Looked After Child (LAC) status and the impact of not having LAC status on the Special Guardian Order (SGO) allowance. This has been resolved. There have been no other complaints or allegations received in this year.

**4. Stepparent Adoption**

The team have received 8 enquiries during this year, with none being received during the first quarter. This is lower than for the same period last year when we had received 11 enquiries. However, this is the same figure as for the previous year so this might indicate that last year was the outlier.

The team still have one Assessment in progress. This has been delayed by the applicants wishing to have more time to consider their position and to contact the absent parent. The worker stays in regular contact to ascertain whether this is still a service that they require.

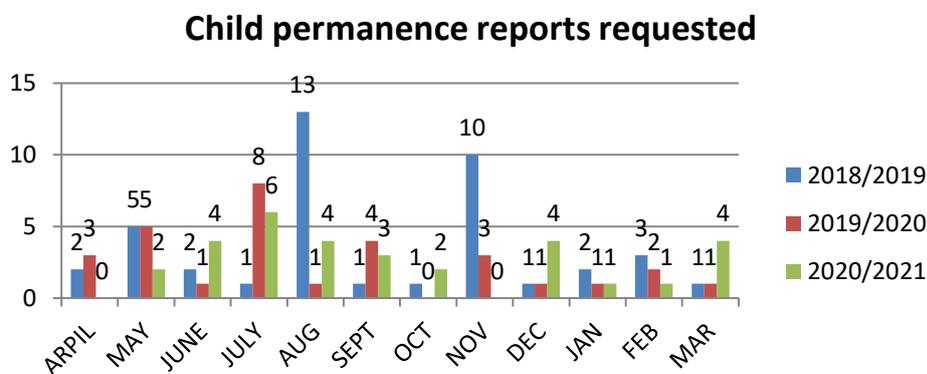
# CHANGE A CHILD'S LIFE

The team continue to actively support families at point of contact to positively explore alternatives (lesser orders). This is in line with the advice and guidance being issued through the courts. This would evidence that the team continue to take a robust approach to this area of work.

## 5. Special Guardianship

The team have received 10 SGO referrals and 25 joint applications with Fostering. This represents a significant increase of work in this area on the previous year, from 6 and 11 respectively.

## 6. Child Permanence Reports (CPR) / Parallel Planning



**APRIL 2019 – MARCH 2020 Total: 30**

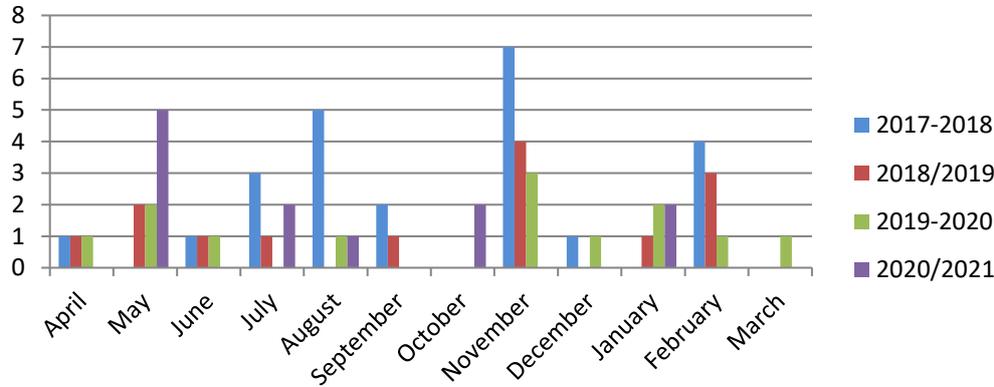
**APRIL 2020 – MARCH 2021 Total: 32**

The work in this area has been consistent with the same period last year. Referrals for child permanence reports have totalled 32 for this year, representing a slight increase, by 2, from the same period last year. There was an initial drop in April that can be linked to the Covid-19 pandemic. This has gradually increased, to now representing 2 more than the previous year.

All referrals require an element of work and there are very few where limited work is required. This is not fully reflected in the number of agency decisions completed as indicated below this has increased this year.

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## 7. Number of New Children's Plans for Adoption



**APRIL 2019 – MARCH 2020 Total: 12**

**APRIL 2020 – MARCH 2021 Total: 12**

### Summary:

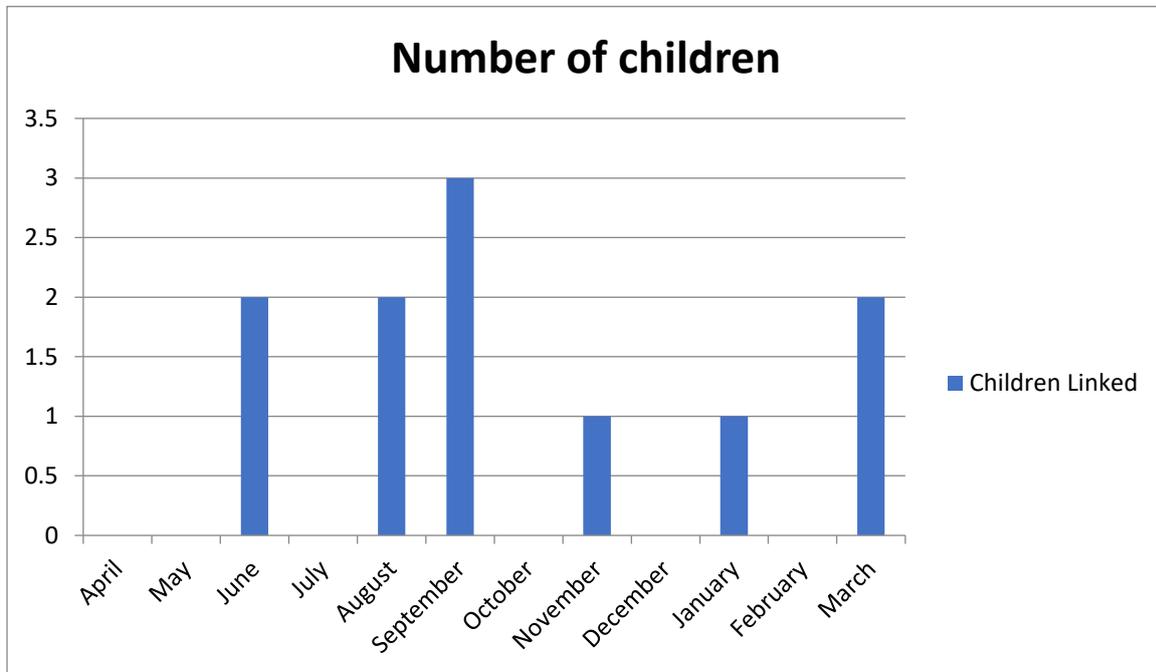
The team have progressed 12 children's plans to the agency decision maker during this year. This is the same as last year. As noted above the number of agency decisions is not a reflection of the level of work within the team as the referrals for child permanence reports have remained constant.

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## 8. Number of Children Linked.

APRIL 2019 – MARCH 2020 TOTAL: 7

APRIL 2020 – MARCH 2021 TOTAL: 12



### Summary:

Adopt South undertake all family finding for IOW children with a placement order in conjunction with the IOW children's adoption social workers.

This is working well, and we are collectively working on early family finding to prevent drift and ensure early permanence for all the children within our region.

During this period, we have linked and placed 12 children with Adopt South adopters. The one child in a Fostering for Adoption placement, progressed to one of adoption following the Placement Order being made.

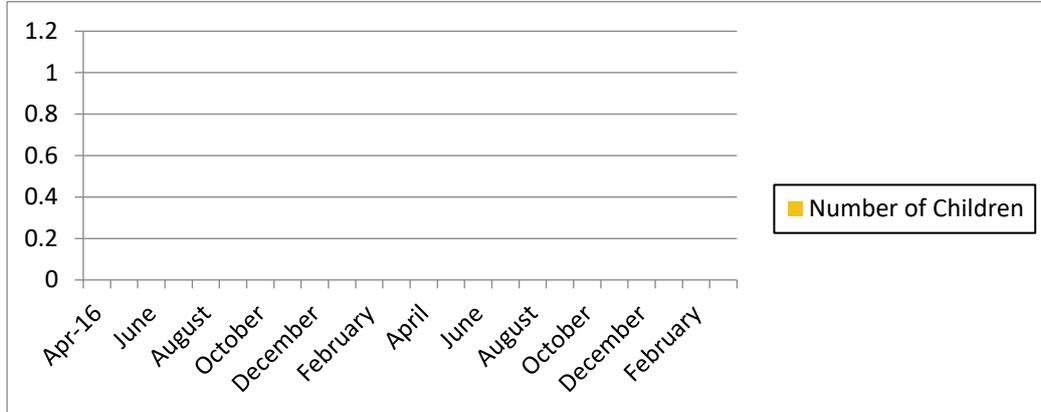
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## 9. Number of Disruptions (Pre-Order)

Number of Children:

April 2016 – March 2020: 0

April 2020 – March 2021: 0



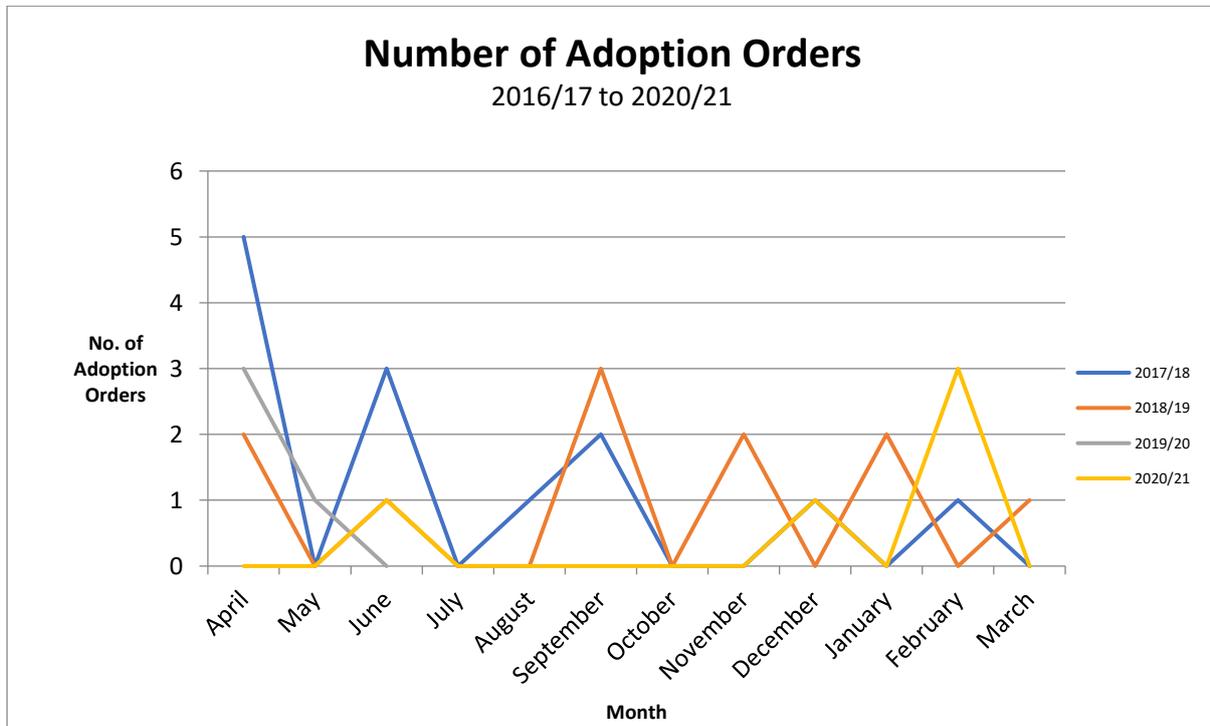
### Summary:

There have been no disruptions this year.

## 10. Number of Adoption Orders

APRIL 2019 – MARCH 2020 Total: 9

APRIL 2020 – MARCH 2021 Total: 5



# CHANGE A CHILD'S LIFE

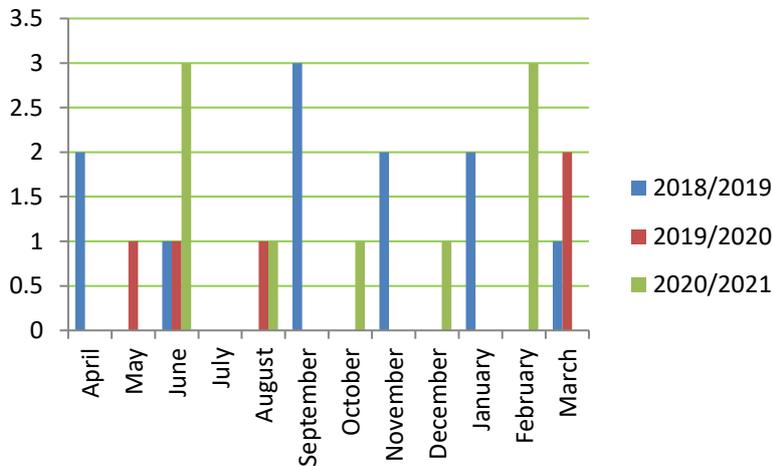
## Summary:

The team have achieved 5 Adoption Orders during this year. This is a decrease, from 9, achieved in the last year.

One placement was delayed enabling the adopters to have more medical information prior to lodging their application. This was monitored and has now progressed to the Adoption Order being made in the third quarter. One placement is currently delayed so that the adopters to access additional support, during the placement stage. This relates to an older child whose adoptive parents are experiencing some challenges in developing a robust understanding of the child's needs. This is being monitored within the adoption review process and by the team manager to ensure this is progressed as soon as the required information is available. The application is now being lodged with the courts. All other applications are within timescales.

The team are monitored to ensure that applications are filed at the appropriate time to ensure timeliness.

## 11. Number of Placement Orders



**APRIL 2019 – MARCH 2020 TOTAL = 5**

**APRIL 2020 – MARCH 2021 TOTAL = 11**

# CHANGE A CHILD'S LIFE

## **Summary:**

The number of placement orders granted during this period is 11 which represents an increase when compared to last year. However, this is a reduction when compared to the previous year which may indicate that last year was the outlier.

## **12. Adoption Scorecards.**

### **Scorecard 1 – Average time between a child entering Care and moving in with their adoptive family.**

For the 5 children adopted between April 2020 and March 2021, the average time in days between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family was 320 days which is within the government's threshold of 426 days. This represents a decrease in the average number of days, from 395 days for the same period last year to 320 days.

### **Scorecard 2 – Average time between the Local Authority receiving Court Authority and the Local Authority identifying a match.**

For the 5 children adopted between April 2020 and March 2021, the average time between Placement Order and the Local Authority identifying a match was 85 days which is within the government's threshold of 121 days. This compares to 225 days in the same period last year.

### **Scorecard 3 – % of children who wait less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with an adoptive family.**

For the 5 children adopted between April 2020 and March 2021, 100% waited less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with an adoptive family. This compares to 88.8% (8 out of 9) in the same period last year.

## **13. Life story books and later life letters.**

For the five children adopted during this period, the Life story book was completed and with Adopters prior to the order being granted.

For the five children adopted during this period the later life letter was finalised and was with adopters prior to the three-month deadline.

# CHANGE A CHILD'S LIFE

This activity is monitored by the Team Manager, the Assistant Team Manager and within the adoption LAC spreadsheet which is reviewed at every team meeting. This is also reviewed within the LAC Review process by the independent reviewing officers.

## 14. Adoption Support

### Summary:

Post adoption support is divided between Adopt South and the IOW Adoption Service. Adopt South are responsible for post adoption support referrals for children, adoption support needs assessments and post adoption training.

During the second quarter we recruited a social worker to the Adopt South post-adoption Support post. The social worker undertakes this work across the region and all cases are allocated via Adopt South.

The IOW service remains responsible for adult post adoption work, access to birth records and managing the letterbox exchange. Adopt South are co-ordinating the process of the finance for the Adoption Support Fund when we have a unified ICT system this will fully transfer however in the interim, the IOW will continue to manage this activity locally.

- We have not received any requests for birth parent counselling this quarter. This is the same as last year.
- The team made a successful bid for additional monies to support SGO carers during Covid.19. The team purchased 2 packages of direct work and access to online webinars to support our carers. This generated an income of £8,750.00.
- The team have received 5 referrals for support to Access to Birth Records during this period. This is a significant reduction when compared to the same period last year when 11 referrals were received. However, the previous year saw 5 referrals which might indicate that last year was the outlier. There may be some impact on referrals due to the COVID.19 pandemic but will need to monitor going forwards.
- The team also hold post-SGO support cases and currently have 9 of these requiring active support, including ASNAs and ASF applications. This represents a total of 12 children. The team is also responsible for undertaking the annual financial reviews for all guardians receiving an allowance.

# CHANGE A CHILD'S LIFE

## 15. Family Finding

The Team, alongside Adopt South Family Finders are currently family finding for 2 children although potential adopters have been identified and are exploring this match. This is a sibling group of 2 children, 1 is 8 months and the other child is 20 months old.

## 16. Overall Summary and Actions

The activity within the team has remained high. The Team have experienced a restructure at the same time as coping with the COVID.19 Pandemic which has affected and changed how we deliver all aspects of work. The adoption team are now a 'hub' within the wider Permanence team which encompasses all aspects of Adoption and Fostering.

The hub comprises of an Assistant Team Manager, a fulltime Adopt South assessment social worker, a full time Adopt South Post adoption social worker. These posts are linked into the wider regional teams. Two fulltime equivalent IOW adoption social workers undertake all the Children's and adult work including the letterbox exchange. The Team have also undertaken a private adoption assessment as this work sits with the IOW. The team also hold post-SGO support cases and currently have 12 children requiring active support, including Assessment of Support Needs Assessments (ASNAs) and Adoption Support Fund (ASF) applications.

Due to both the Adopt South posts being vacant for some time following the restructure the team continued to support the adopters that they were previously working with. This comprised 5 adoptive households. The team also undertook a stage 2 assessment to approval and are providing ongoing support. This has been an effort to ensure that families are not adversely impacted by our internal changes and to provide support to Adopt South. In the same way, the post adoption support families were held by the assistant team manager until the post was filled. I believe these are examples of both good practice, creative and collaborative working by the Isle of Wight social workers and their colleagues in Adopt South.

During this period the IOW team have received 8 stepparent adoption enquiries, 35 special guardianship referrals, 32 child permanence referrals, 0 birth counselling referrals, 5 requests for access to birth records support.

During this period 5 adoption orders have been granted. 11 children have been linked, and the child who was in a fostering for adoption placement, was formally placed for Adoption and the Order was made during the final quarter.

Of the 11 Looked After Children currently held by the Team, 9 are placed, 2 are subject to family finding. There have been no disruptions either pre or post order during this period.

# CHANGE A CHILD'S LIFE

## ACTIONS:

- To continue to contribute, promote and participate in the Regional Adoption Agency, Adopt South.
- To continue to monitor and maintain performance across all areas of the hub, both Adopt South and IOW work, to ensure standards are fully met.
- To continue monitoring the numbers of SGO referrals and the impact of any sustained increase on caseload numbers.
- The designated Adopt South workers to contribute to the delivery of training across the regional agency.
- Continue to improve the consistency and performance management of recording in Adoption using IOW and Adopt South Proformas.
- To support and participate in Adopt South Regional panels
- Continue to monitor and address the timeliness of Scorecard targets 1, 2 and 3.
- Promote the Regional Adoption Agency with the IOW childcare teams to ensure they understand the changes to working practices. This will be assisted by the two dedicated social workers who undertake the Adopt south work.
- The assistant team manager to promote knowledge and understanding of the regional agency with the children's teams.
- To maintain the reduction in the number of stepparent adoption assessments in line with the Courts' view and offer families alternatives to achieving permanence.
- To develop and refine the service within the new permanence team to integrate and maximise on skills, resources and delivery across both services.
- To establish and embed performance and compliance targets across the wider team.
- To promote the Family Action Special Guardian Support Service (FASGS) with all existing Special Guardians known to the team.
- To provide information regarding access to FASGS to all new applicants at the point of assessment and or referral for post-SGO support.
- To collaborate with work force development to achieve access to a training pathway in the learning hub for special guardians pre and post order.

Children & Families Management Team (CFMT)

Report

**Hampshire County Council (and Isle of Wight Council)**

**Date: 17<sup>th</sup> June 2021**

**Report Author: Rachel Reynolds, Head of Adopt South**

**CFMT Sponsor: Stuart Ashley**

**Title of Report: Adopt South – Summary Report – Year 2 2020/2021**

**Confidential: Yes**

**Report of the Assistant Director of Children's Services**

Contact name: Rachel Reynolds  
Tel: 07732271544  
Email: [Rachel.reynolds@hants.gov.uk](mailto:Rachel.reynolds@hants.gov.uk)

**Purpose of this Report**

This report provides members with information on Adopt South's performance in its second year (2020/2021) and makes comparisons to Pre-Adopt South and Adopt South's Year 1 performance. The report includes detailed information on the Adopter Journey and Children's Information across the four local authority partnerships including the Isle of Wight.

**Summary Report**

**Adopt South Year 2**

**Financial Year 2020/2021**

Presented by  
Rachel Reynolds  
Head of Adopt South

June 2021



## Since we started in April 2019:

- 298 children have had families identified
- 106 of these children have been Hard to Place
- 226 children formally linked
- 238 families approved
- 3,918 enquiries to the Adoption Support Team
- Stage 1 timescales reduced by 24% (under Government threshold)
- Stage 2 timescales are 3.8 months (under Government threshold)
- All 4 LAs Scorecard 1 under Government threshold
- Post Adoption Disruption Rate <81% (National Average)
- 554 children and young people accessed an Adoption Support Plan in 2020/21



## Executive Summary

This report outlines Adopt South's performance in its second year during the Covid-19 Pandemic and makes comparisons to Pre-Adopt South and Adopt South's Year 1 performance. Despite the challenges of lockdown and severe limited social mobility, the partnership Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) of Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton local authorities, achieved another excellent year, resulting in 117 adopters being approved and 108 children being formally matched. 62 children who had families identified were Hard to Place.

***Adopt South is only one of 4 RAAs that placed more than 100+ Children with their Adoptive Families (ASGLB Data – October 2019-September 2020)***

Since launching in April 2019, Adopt South has delivered a range of benefits, notably:

- Speed → Reduced approval times of adopters by 24% since Pre-Adopt South
- Choice → 57% increase on the number of approved adopters since Pre-Adopt South
- Value → Only 2 children with no links compared to Pre-Adopt South of 39  
→ £891k less spent on interagency placements since Pre-Adopt South  
→ 90% less interagency spend on average against all RAAs/VAs nationally
- Service → 3,918 Adoption Support enquiries (+402% in Year 2 on Year 1)  
→ 82% lower disruption rate than the national average.

The quality and volume of enquiries which has resulted in 244 families returning our detailed forms to start the assessment process (Registration of Interest Forms) in Year 2, is due to the highly targeted and creative approach, with a shift into digital marketing to secure the interest of people discovering adoption and engagement using mainly mobile phones to call or to link to our online response form.

The specialist Stage 1 assessment team, continued to fuel the adoption journey process for over 236 applicants in Year 2, resulting in 117 households being approved by an independent Panel and an Agency Decision Maker. This is a 16% conversion rate from enquiry to approval, 27% more than pre-Adopt South. However, this could have been higher if it wasn't for the delays of seeking checks and medicals on applicants delayed by lockdowns during the pandemic.

Turning to the Isle of Wight, the benefits of the partnership agency has resulted in 11 children being placed internally, with no children in Year 2 without a link. Only one external placement was made compared to 7 Pre-Adopt South, which previously totalled £203,000. Two children previously to Adopt South had no links.



Compared to Pre-Adopt South, the RAA's strength improved the Isle of Wight's Scorecard 1 (the time children enter care and move in with their adoptive family) by a reduction in Adopt South's Year 2 by 5.3%, and Scorecard 2 (LA receiving the Placement Order and a match being identified) in Year 2 by 16%, which is also 31% less than the Government threshold of 121 days.

There is no doubt that the partnership's strengths include:

- A centralized marketing budget and strategy which reduces media buying duplicity and boosts reach of target audience across the region
- Synchronization of the adoption journey speeding up the applicant process
- Specialist Family Finding team creating quicker and more effective matching opportunities as well as reducing the time Hard to Place children are waiting
- Greater collaboration between teams breaking Government timescale targets and significantly improving scorecard performance.

Within two years of launch and the need for the public to recognize us as a new organization, alongside the challenges presented by the pandemic, Adopt South achieved a 29% increase of approved adopters resulting in a 123% increase in available adopters.

Greater choice, speedier matching, less time children spend in care has benefitted the Isle of Wight's objective to improve the chances of children to find a forever family when they cannot live with their birth parents. It has also made it quicker for individuals and couples on the island who unconditionally wish to care and love children as their own, and finally, provided a vast offer of adoption support choices which has aided the substantial low level of disruptions.

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**Finding Forever Families**

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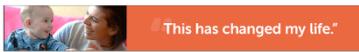


Within two years of launch and the need for the public to recognize us as a new organization, alongside the challenges presented by the pandemic, Adopt South achieved a 29% increase of approved adopters resulting in a 123% increase in available adopters.

## Marketing & Communications

From April 2020, Adopt South had already made considerable adjustments including a heavier use of digital advertising and radio across the whole of the Adopt South region.

Within the first quarter of the year, the strategy was to myth bust old fashioned facts as well as introduce other engagement methods with our target audience, who were looking to find out more on adoption. *Speak to an Adopter* was launched, giving people the opportunity of talking to adopters rather than our Duty team.



Facebook carousel - Option 1 - Speak to an adopter



Advertising in regional press, provided our audience groups with very clear facts about who can adopt by taking simple strip ads at the bottom of printed regional newspapers as well as digital spaces.

Also promoted was Adopt South’s first year anniversary which was featured in the majority of regional newspapers promoting the agency across the region.



On the 8th September 2020, the DfE launched their #YouCanAdopt campaign with the slogan ‘Adoption is easier than you think’ using a whole raft of stories including interviews with well known celebrities such as *Sinitta*, *Harry Derbidge* amongst others. The campaign increased visits to our website and achieved an uplift driven by curiosity and people who had been nervous about making a decision to call an adoption agency.



Activity was also propelled by the launch of our two-year sponsorship with Hampshire FA, which would reach individuals, couples and families who would engender the value of family, linked to adopting children who deserve a forever loving family. Lots of activity and promotion around the launch again increased awareness across the region.

The campaign was linked to National Adoption Week (12-18 October 2020) and was covered again by many regional press outlets as well as heavily promoted by Hampshire FA and ourselves on our social media channels including Twitter and Facebook.

Towards the end of the year, new digital creatives were also introduced which homed in on our different audience groups that were largely 30-45 years. More images of a range of different family types were to drive the success of the year by illustrating ‘no families look the same’.



We continued to promote adoption using mobile phone advertising, and towards the end of the year we sent out special messages on radio across the networks to thank people for thinking about children waiting for their forever families.



Thoughtful messaging over Christmas, encouraged the need to speak to us in the new year.

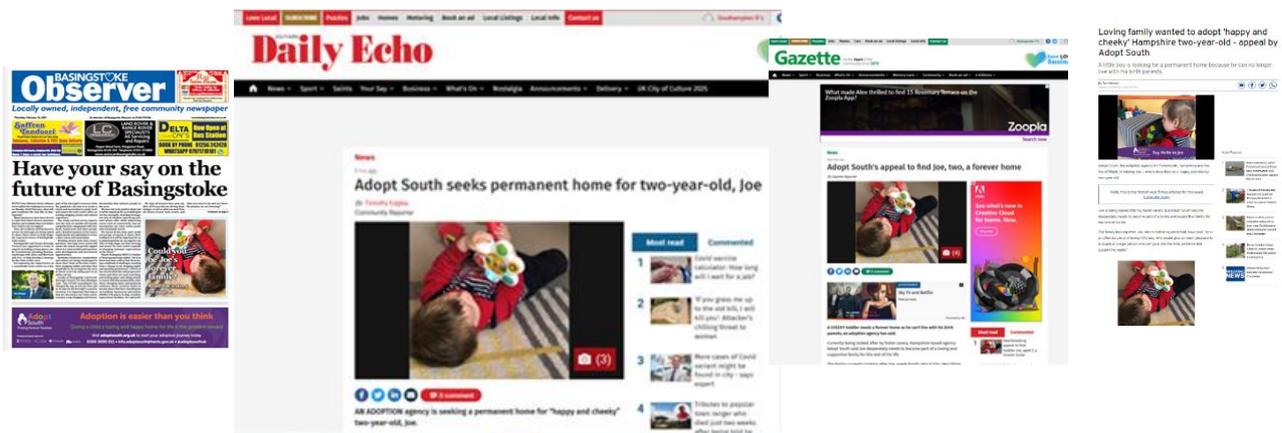


Lockdown was now in place in January 2021, and therefore we ended the year with having to stay inside for what seemed like eternity. Nevertheless, this didn't stop the interest in adoption, and we continued to have open discussions and clear explanations on our social media channels on various adoption insights.

The start of the year continued with our range of radio ads using *Lisa Faulkner's* voice which had produced ongoing good enquiry levels with placement of our advertising in localized publications.



The financial year came to a close with a campaign for a little boy who we'd found difficult to place both in-house and externally. On the back of the successful campaign of Oscar and William in Year 1, we launched 'Say Hello to Joe', a very thought-provoking campaign which produced an unprecedented level of interest all around the region and beyond, with over 1,000 views on regional newspaper websites.



There is no doubt that people have been reflective about their lives but Adopt South's targeted recruitment strategy using the latest digital tools and clear messaging, successfully delivered 719 enquiries in a very challenging period.



## The assessment process to Panel

Despite the increase in volume, adoption journey timescales in Stage 1 and 2 of the adoption process, have been reduced by 24%. Coupled with an increase of 11% of in-house placements, 17% more siblings were matched reducing the number of children with no potential links by 82%.

The wider choice of adopters has also resulted in a substantial reduction of 89% of external placements which has significantly reduced interagency spend, in comparison to spend pre-adopt south. In addition, there have been clear advantages of placing children locally.

The increase of Fostering for Adoption placements by 31%, indirectly reduced the need for placement of children in foster care by £209,651 and potential foster care savings for the respective local authorities of £903,279 relating to the 39 Hard to Place children who had no links at the end of 2018/2019.

## COVID-19 has affected the service in several ways

Firstly, the reduction in the applicants who could not proceed on their Stage 1, and Stage 2 to Panel journey, as a result of delays with medicals, health and safety adjustments and not being able to further their childcare experience as a result of the lockdowns. Based on the level of applicants who were passed to Stage 1, conversion rate from enquiry to approval was on track to be the same or above the increase of 31% of 2019/2020 approvals. We expect many of these applicants to complete their journey in Year 3.

The service has also been affected by court delays of Placement Orders and an increase of birth parents being granted leave to oppose. An upward trend is now starting to appear. We already have indicators such as 12 sibling groups referred to Adopt South since April 2021 and we are aware there is a sharp increase in parallel planning and Children's plans for adoption.

## Adoption Support

The cost of the pandemic on post adoptive families has been significant, as parents have attempted to support their children's increased anxiety and emotional dysregulation alongside the increase in financial pressures and their efforts to home school children. The impact has resulted in a considerable increase in adoption support enquiries. Referrals and enquiries to the Adoption Support Advice and Support Line increased by 40% in Year 1 of Adopt South when compared to the previous year's activity, and subsequently increased by 402% in Year 2.



Finding Forever Families

Improvements have been made to the efficiency of the adoption support offer by reviewing the partners' individual offers and developing an Adopt South Adoption Support offer to the region.

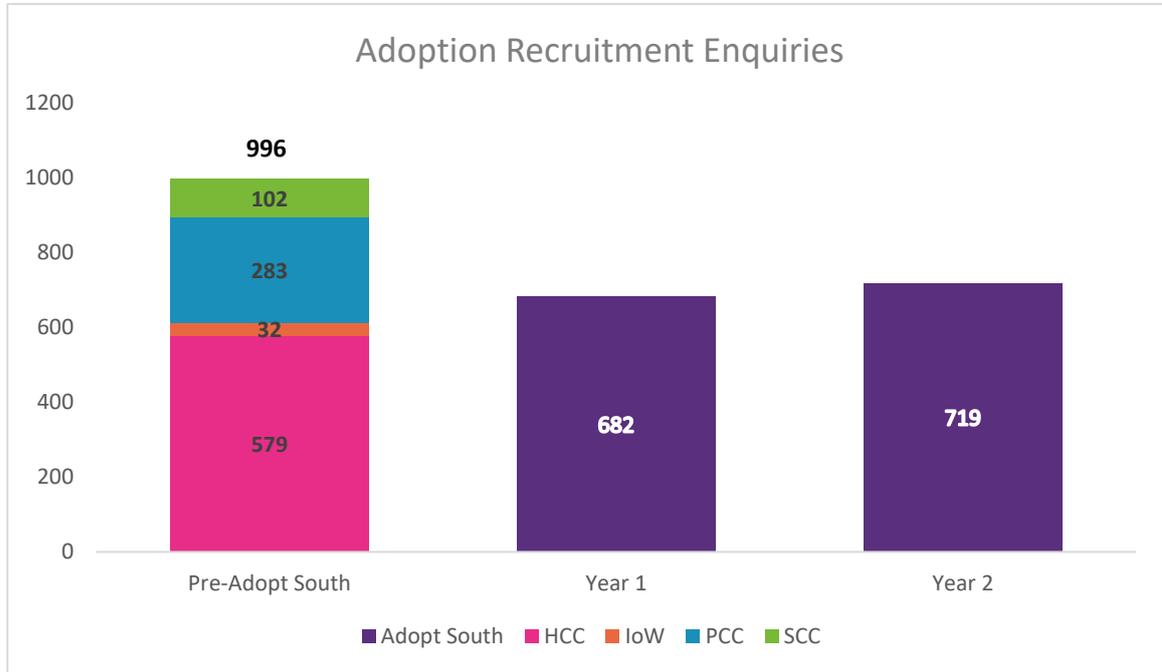
The comprehensive Adoption Support offer has resulted in 554 children and young people accessing a support plan from a social worker in Year 2, with further families accessing universal and targeted support such as workshops and consultations. The primary objective of an adoption support service is to avoid adoptive families breaking down at any point after the Adoption Order. It is a testament to the success of the Adoption Support Service that based on our best information, there has only been a 0.6% disruption rate of post order adoptions in Year 2 which is 81% below the National Disruption Rate. There is no doubt that the risk of disruptions increased during the pandemic. Had the numbers in the region reached the National Disruption Rate of 3.2%, this would have been 32 children who would have re-entered care at a cost of over £407,000 per year if 16 were placed in foster care, and as much as £3.3m per year if 16 children were placed in inhouse residential care.

Although the data is somewhat limited, due to Year 1 being Adopt South's first year of operating and Year 2 being impacted by the pandemic, the report highlights where Adopt South's strengths lie; greater choice of in-house adopters leading to speedier placements, resulting in indirect and direct savings.



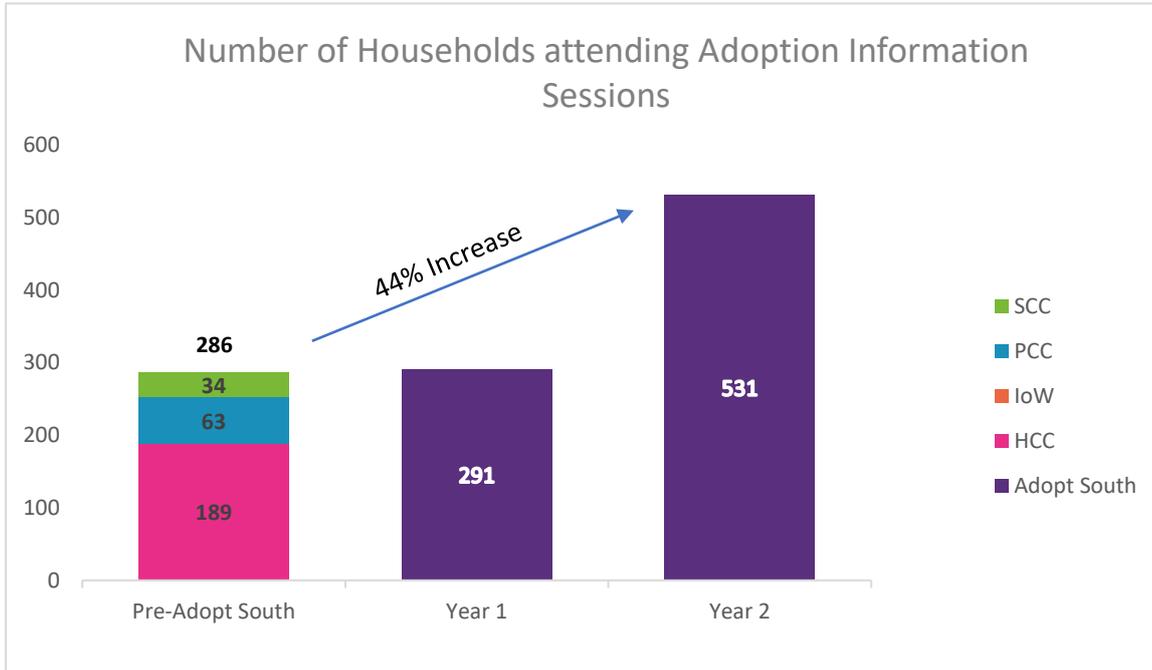
## Adopters' Journey: Enquiry to Approval

### Enquiries



### Commentary:

- Although enquiries have reduced since the inception of Adopt South, targeted advertising has led to a significantly improved conversion rate.
- Pre-Adopt South conversion to approval was at 9%; with Adopt South the conversion has averaged 17%.
- Average conversion rate based on Adopt South's two years = **29% increase** on Pre-Adopt South Enquiry to Approval Rate.



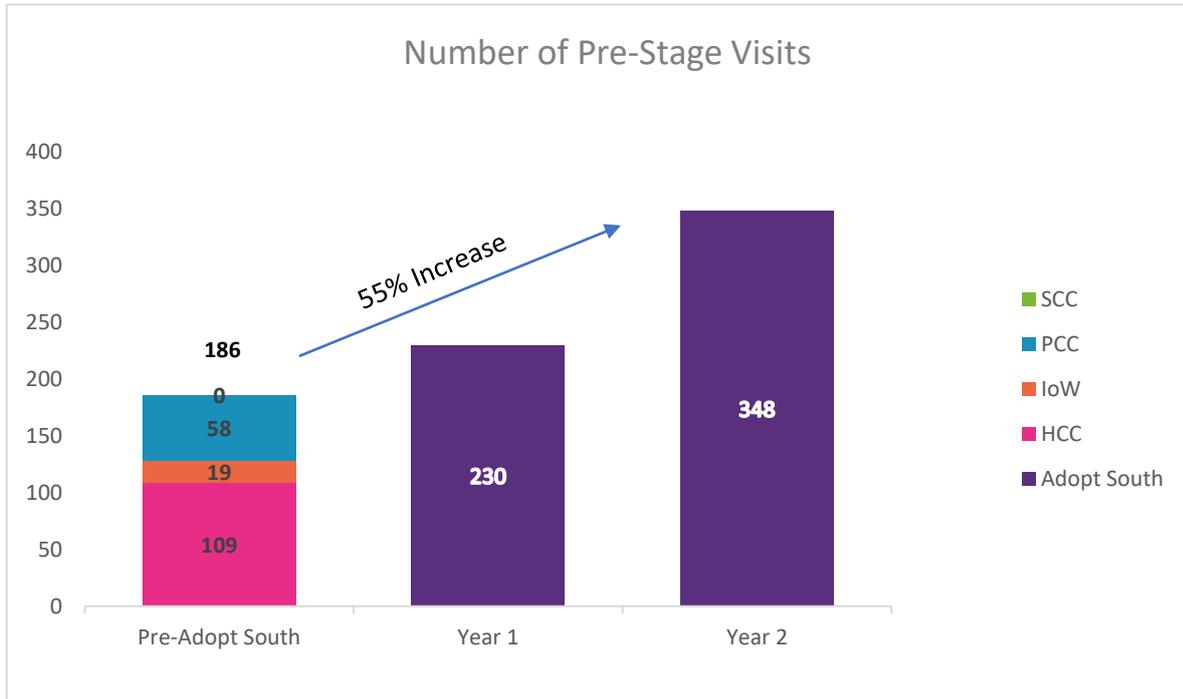
Year 1 - <b>↑+1.7%</b> on Pre Adopt	Year 2 - <b>↑+106%</b> on Pre Adopt
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**↑Adoption Information Sessions on average is 54% increase on Pre-Adopt South**

Commentary:

- The number of households attending Adoption Information Sessions has increased by an average of 44%. ( $(291+531)/2 = 411$  AIS)





Please note: There is no data for SCC pre-Adopt South.

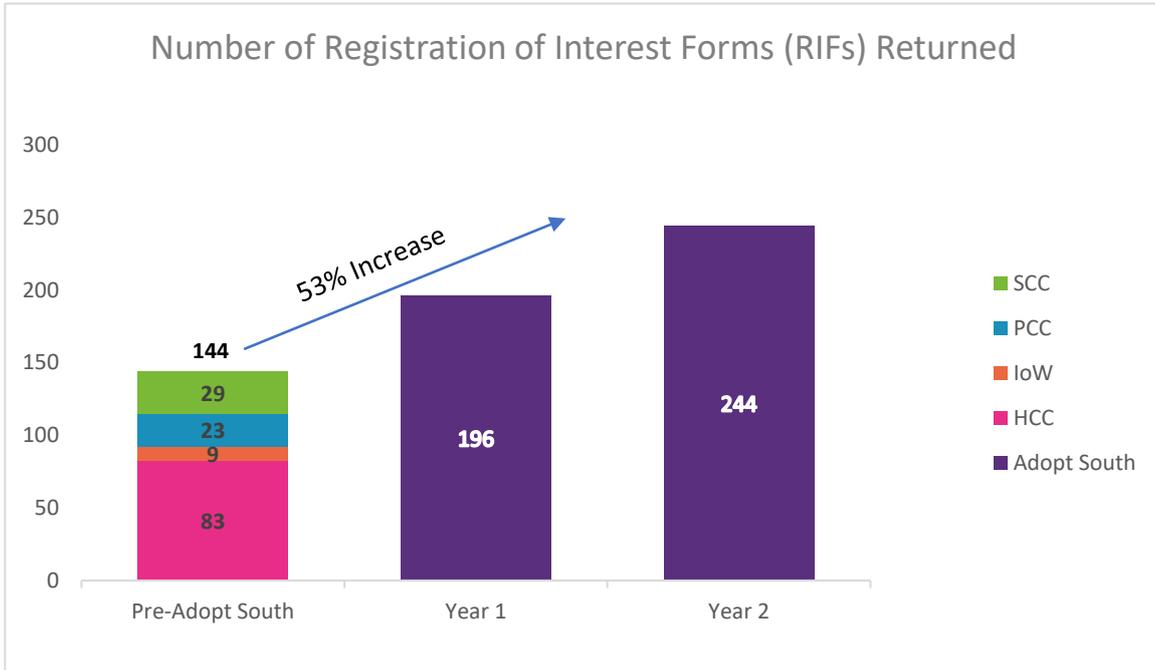
Year 1 - <b>↑+23%</b> on Pre Adopt	Year 2 - <b>↑+87%</b> on Pre Adopt
------------------------------------	------------------------------------

**↑Pre-Stage Visits on average is 55% increase on Pre-Adopt South**

**Commentary:**

- Pre-Stage Visits have increased from Year 1 to Year 2 by 55% (A total of 230 in Year 1 for Adopt South, compared to 348 households in Year 2).
- In Year 2, these have been held virtually which has saved costs in time and travel. This has allowed further investment in Independent Social Workers to undertake assessments.





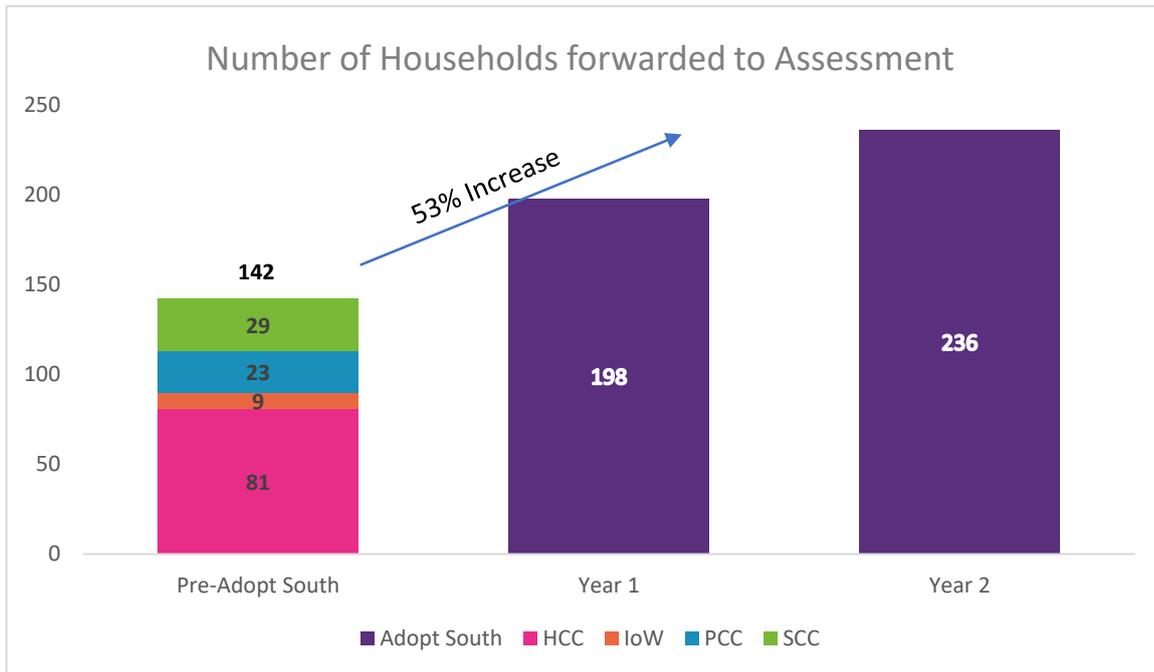
Year 1 - ↑+36% on Pre-Adopt      Year 2 - ↑+69% on Pre-Adopt

↑Registration of Interest Forms Returned on average is 53% increase on Pre-Adopt South

Commentary:

- The number of Registration of Interest Forms returned have increased by 36% in Year 1 and 69% in Year 2. (A total of 144 were returned Pre-Adopt South, compared to 196 in Year 1 and 244 in Year 2).





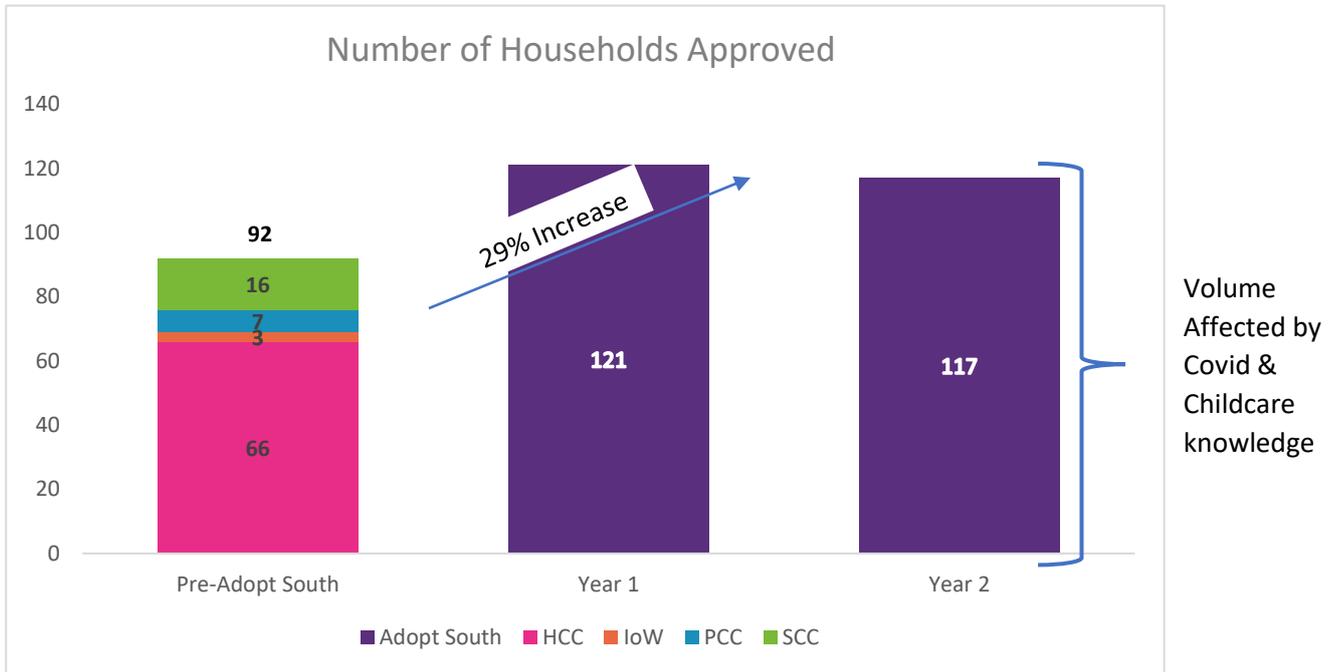
Year 1 - ↑+39% on Pre-Adopt South	Year 2 - ↑+66% on Pre-Adopt South
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↑ Number of Households forwarded to Assessment on average is +53% increase on pre-Adopt South

Commentary:

- The number of households forwarded to assessment have increased by 53% on average. (A total of 142 households progressed Pre-Adopt South, compared to 236 households in Year 2).
- Pre-Adopt South conversion from enquiry to assessment was 14%; with Adopt South the conversion has averaged 31%.
- Enquiry to assessment conversion rate as a percentage difference has, therefore, increased by 121%.





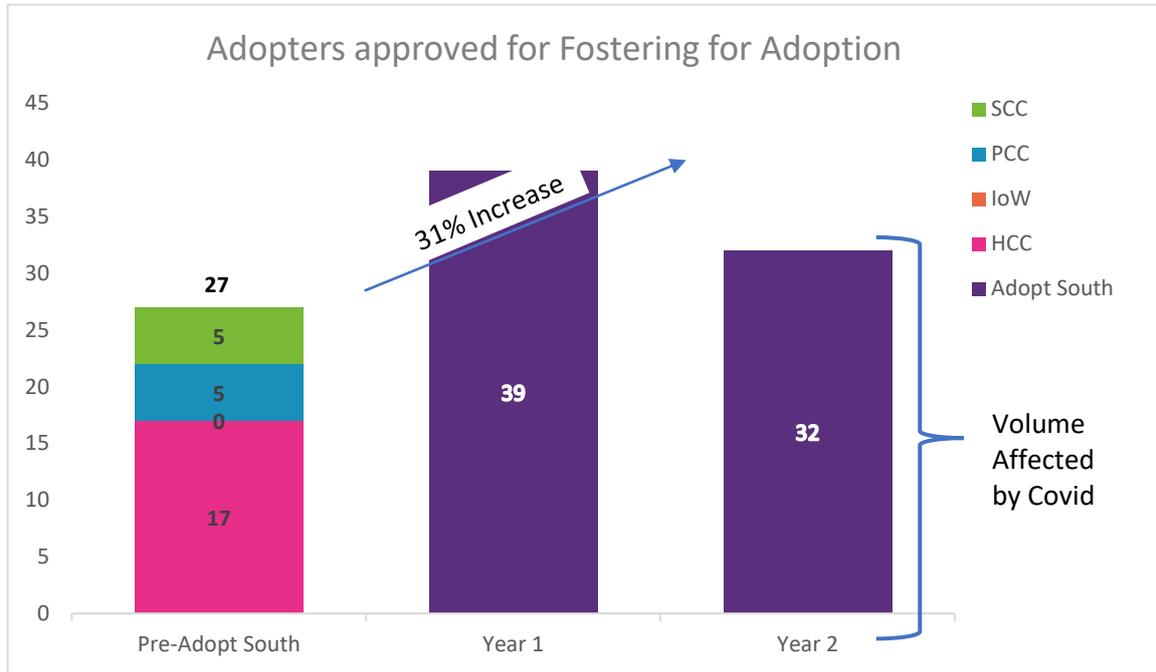
Year 1 - ↑+31% on Pre-Adopt South

Year 2 - ↑+27% on Pre-Adopt South

↑Adoptive Households Approved on average is 29% increase on pre-Adopt South

**Commentary:**

- The number of adopters approved have increased by an average of 29%. (A total of 92 adoptive households were approved Pre-Adopt South, compared to 121 in Year 1 and 117 in Year 2).
- ASGLB data shows a national average reduction of 13% for approvals, whereas Adopt South has averaged an increase of 29%.
- ASGLB data shows that Adopt South approved the highest number of adopters during 2019/2020 out of all the 31 RAA's.
- 238 adopters have been approved over the last 2 years, providing greater choice of matching.



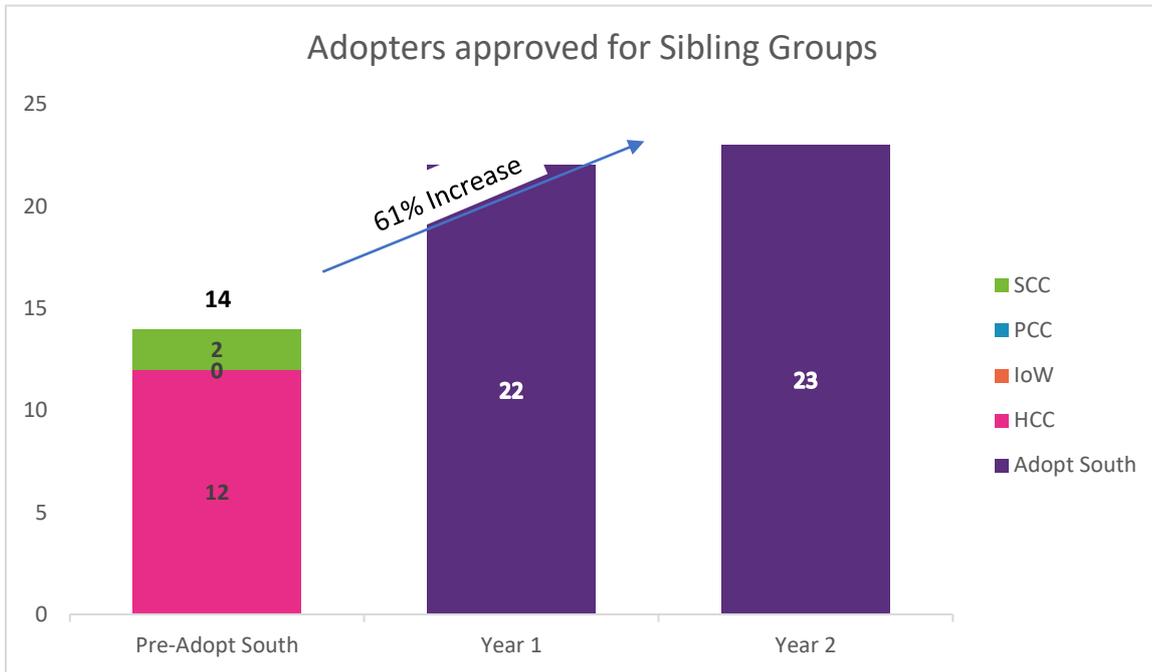
Year 1 - ↑+44% on Pre-Adopt South	Year 2 - ↑+19% on Pre-Adopt
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↑Average Adopters Approved for FfA is a 31% increase on pre-Adopt South

**Commentary:**

- 39 adopters were approved for FfA in Year 1 and 32 in Year 2, compared to 27 Pre-Adopt South, an average increase of 31%.
- The IOW did not approve any for FfA before the inception of Adopt South.
- In addition to increased stability and reduced number of placements for an adoptive child, there is a reduction of costs.





Year 1 - ↑+57% on Pre-Adopt South	Year 2 - ↑+64% on Pre-Adopt
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↑Average Adopters Approved for Sibling Groups is a 61% increase on Pre-Adopt South

Commentary:

- 22 adopters were approved for Sibling Groups in Year 1 and 23 in Year 2, compared to 14 Pre-Adopt South, an average increase of 61%.
- The IOW and PCC did not approve any for Sibling Groups in 2018/19.



Enquiry to approval – Pre-Adopt South – 2018/2019



Enquiry to approval – 2019/20 - Year 1



Enquiry to approval – 2020/21 - Year 2



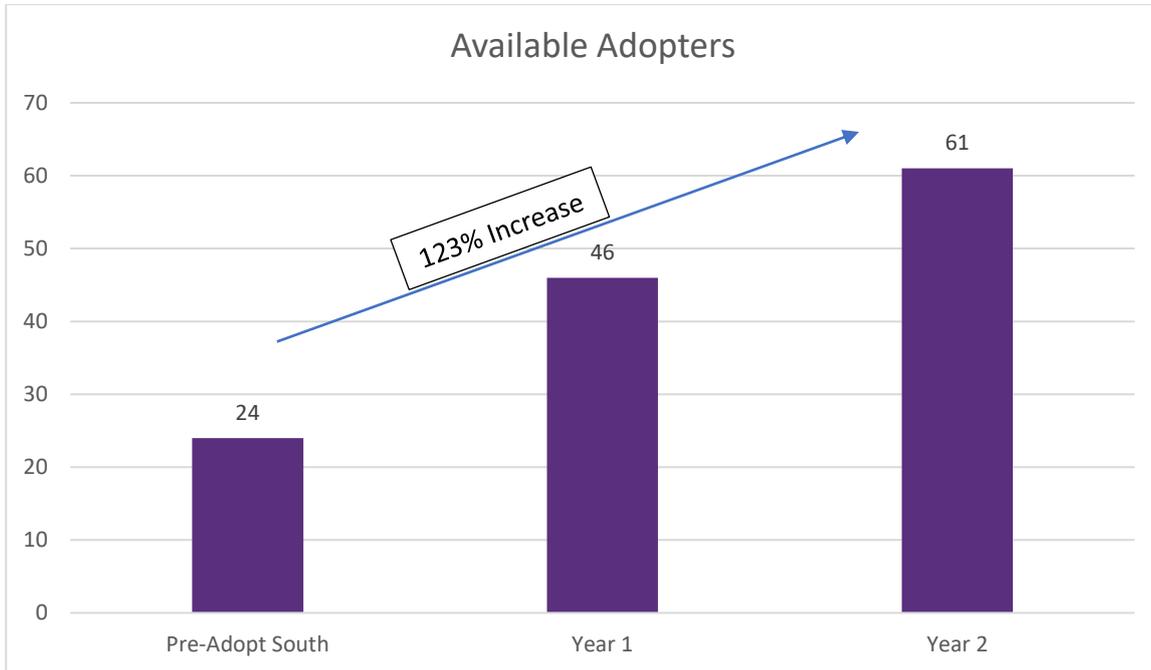
Pre-Adopt South	HCC	IoW	PCC	SCC	Total
No. Enquiries	579	32	283	102	996
Approvals	66	3	7	16	92
Conversion rate	11%	9%	2%	16%	9%
Adopt South Year 1 – 682 Enquiries & Year 2 – 719 Enquiries = 1401/2 =av.					700
<b>Adopt South Average Conversion Rate – 17% - 2 years 700/119 approvals</b>					<b>119</b>
Adopt South Conversion rate	17%	17%	17%	17%	17%
<b>% Difference</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>750%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>29%</b>

↑ Average Enquiry to Approval is a 29% increase on Pre-Adopt South

Commentary:

- Average Approvals for Adopt South over two years = 119 equating to Enquiry Average at 700/119 = 17%.





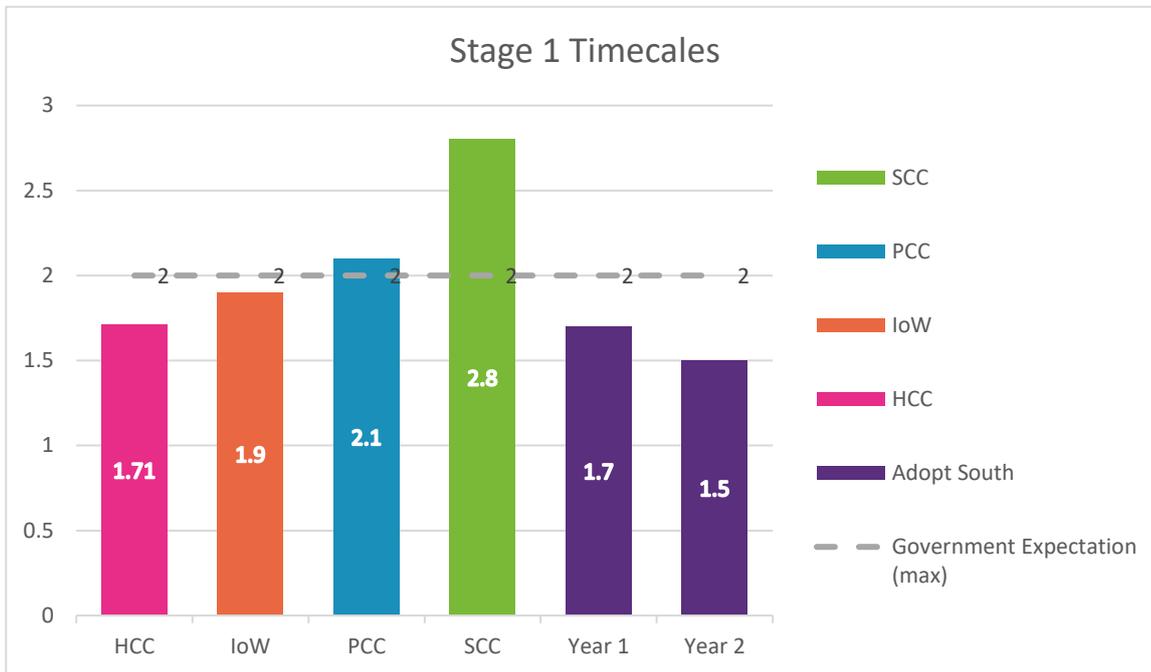
Year 1 - ↑+92% on Pre-Adopt South	Year 2 - ↑+154% on Pre-Adopt South
-----------------------------------	------------------------------------

↑ Average Available Adopters is a 123% increase on Pre-Adopt South

### Commentary

- At the end of Year 2, there were 61 adopters available compared to 24 at the inception of Adopt South, an average increase of 123%.
- A larger pool of adopters has increased choice and has led to better matches for children, reducing the need to purchase adopters externally.





**Based on an average across the four LAs of 2.12 Months**

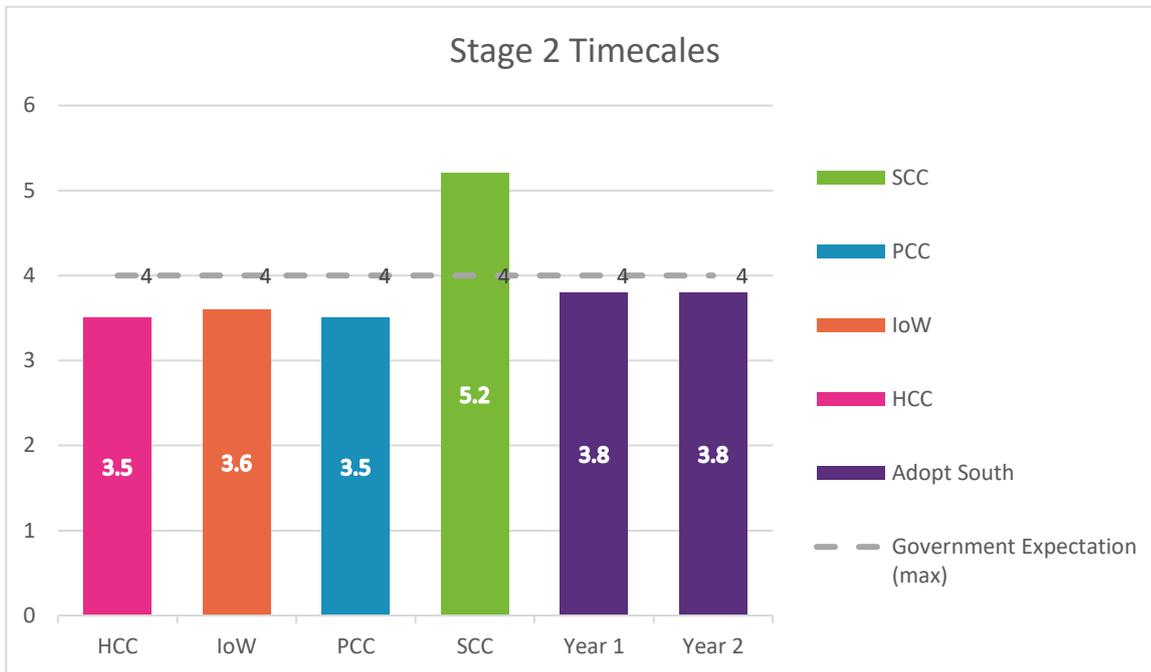
Year 1 - ↓+19% change on Pre-Adopt South	Year 2 - ↓+29% change on Pre-Adopt South
--	--

**↓Average Stage 1 Timescale is a 24% decrease on Pre-Adopt South**

**Commentary:**

- Stage 1 timescales have averaged well within government timescales during Year 1 and 2.
- PCC and SCC averaged outside of timescales Pre-Adopt South.
- The comparison data (published by the ASGLB) for the period October 2019 - September 2020, shows that out of the 31 Regional Adoption Agencies, Adopt South was the only RAA who averaged Stage 1 in timescales.





**Based on an average across the four LAs of 3.95 Months**

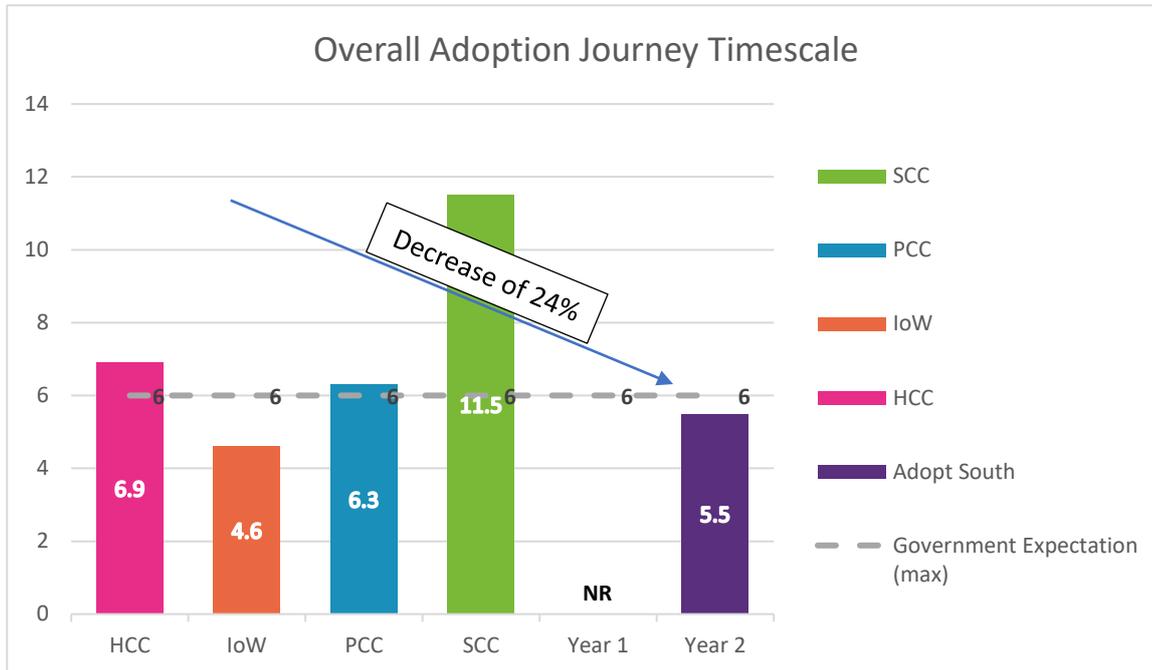
Year 1 - ↓+3.8% change on Pre-Adopt South	Year 2 - ↓+3.8% change on Pre-Adopt South
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↓Average Stage 2 Timescale is a 3.8% decrease on Pre-Adopt South

**Commentary:**

- Stage 2 timescales have averaged well within government timescales during Year 1 and 2.
- SCC averaged outside of timescales Pre-Adopt South.
- The comparison data shows that out of the 31 Regional Adoption Agencies, Adopt South was the only RAA who averaged Stage 2 in timescales.





Based on an average across the four LAs of 7.33 Months

Year 1 – No Recorded Data

Year 2 - ↓+24% change on Pre-Adopt South

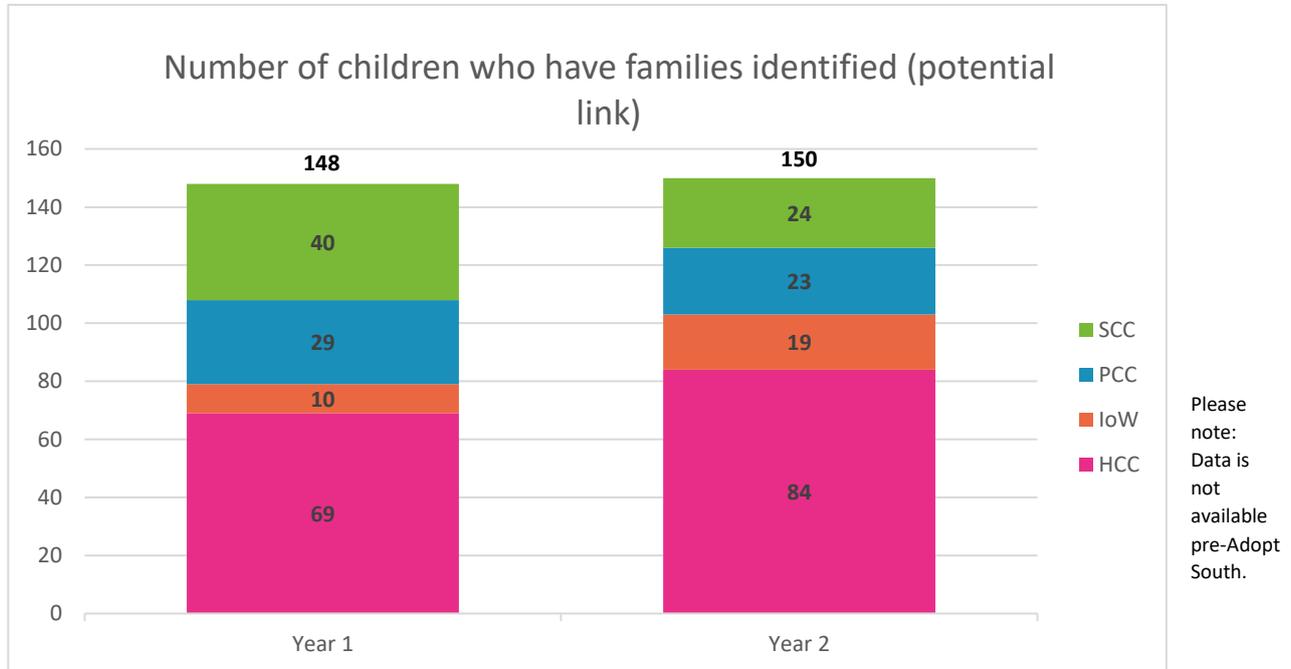
↓Average Stage 2 Timescale is a 24% decrease on Pre-Adopt South

Commentary:

- The overall adoption journey averaged 5.5 months, well within the government’s target of 6 months in Adopt South’s Year 2.
- The IoW was the only Local Authority where the average overall adoption journey was within government timescales Pre-Adopt South.
- SCC had an overall timescale of almost double at 11.5 months Pre-Adopt South and timescales have, therefore, been reduced by 52%.
- Adopt South’s adopters spent less time than any other RAA from Enquiry to Stage 1. (Data published by the ASGLB for the period October 2019 - September 2020).

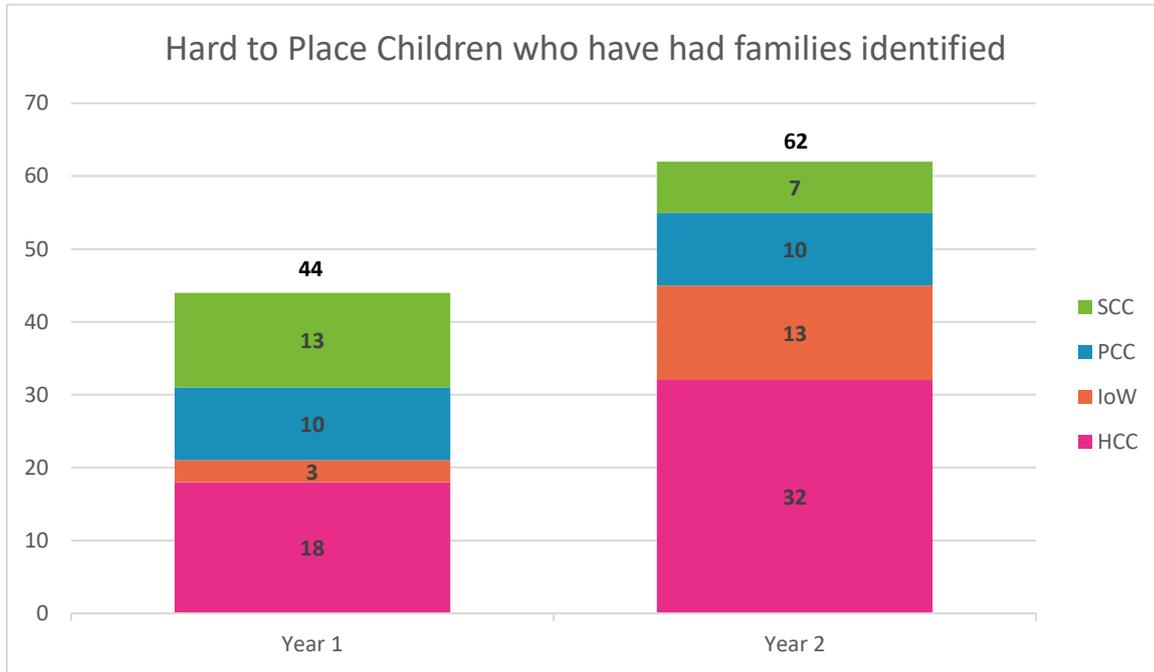
## Family Finding

### Children who have had families identified



#### Commentary:

- 150 children had families identified during Year 2, an almost identical number to Year 1.



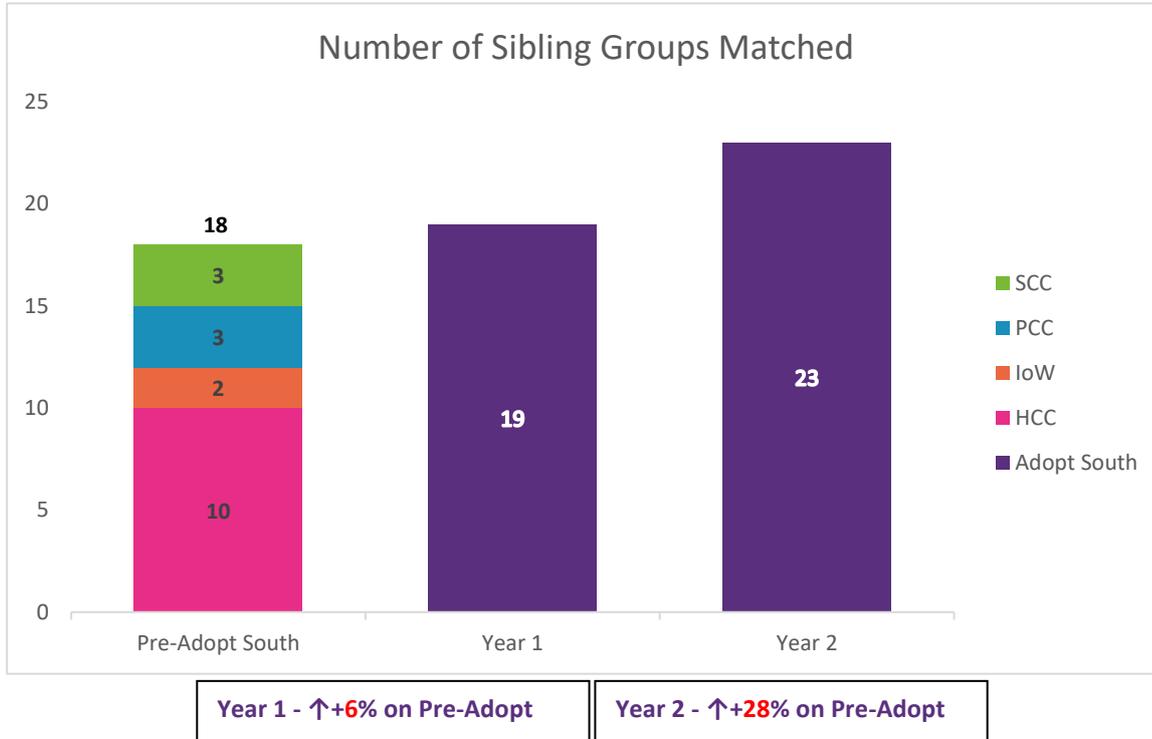
Please note: No data is available pre-Adopt South

Commentary:

- Of the 148 children who had families identified in Year 1, **44** were Hard to Place and of the 150 children in Year 2, **62** were Hard to Place.



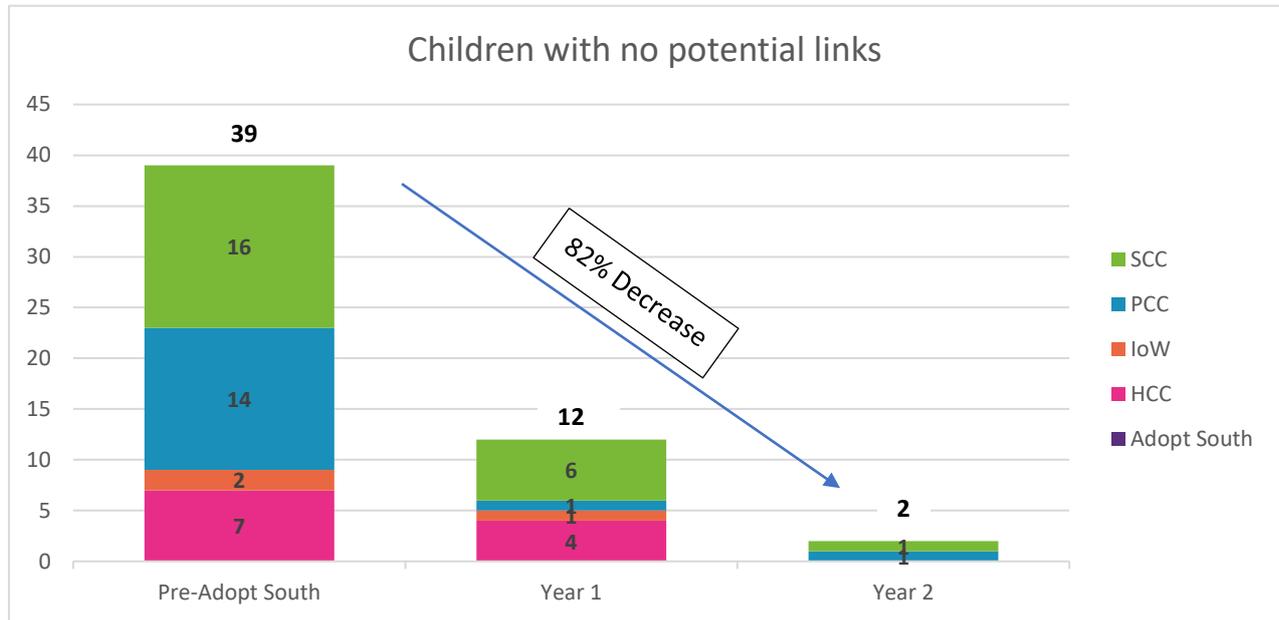
## Number of Sibling Groups Matched



↑Average Sibling Groups Matched is a 17% increase on pre-Adopt South

### Commentary:

- There is a steady trend of increasing sibling groups, which has continued in Year 3 with 12 sibling groups being referred to Adopt South for a family since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021.
- There is a significant challenge nationally to recruit adopters for siblings.
- Additional costs include a higher need for Adoption Support.



Year 1 - ↓+69% change on Pre-Adopt South

Year 2 - ↓+95% change on Pre-Adopt South

↓Average Children with no potential links is a 82% decrease on Pre-Adopt South

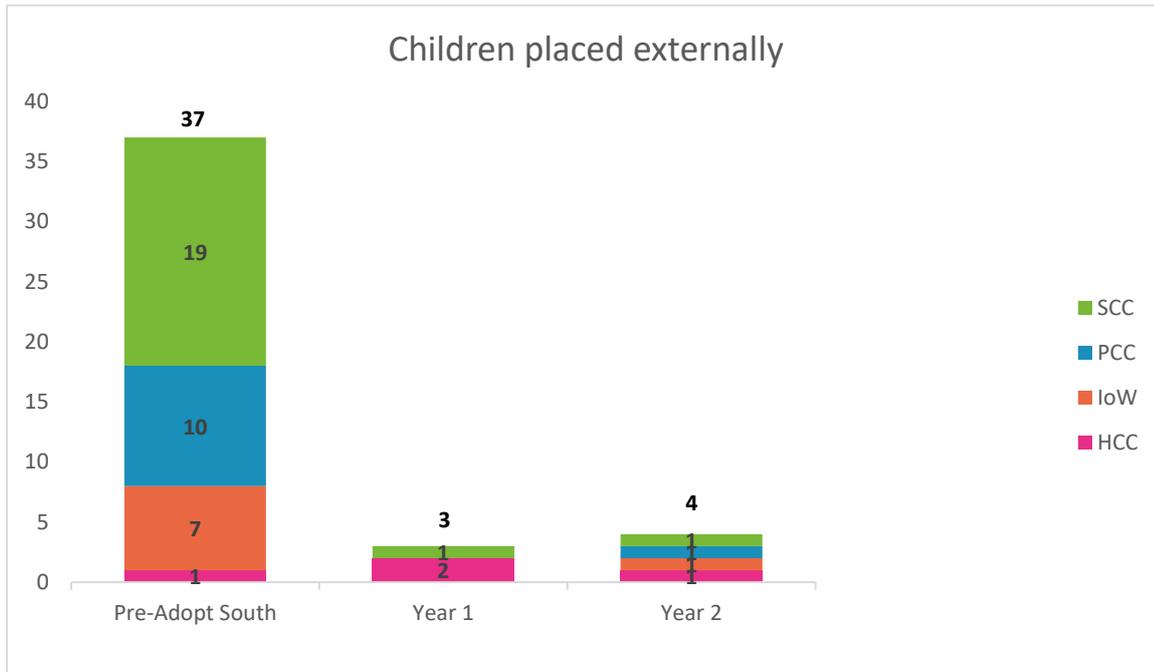
Commentary:

- At the inception of Adopt South, there were 39 children who had no potential matches. This reduced to 12 at the end of Year 1 and to just 2 at the end of Year 2, an average reduction of 82%.
- The ASGLB data (October 2019-September 2020) showed that Adopt South had the lowest number of children waiting out of all 31 RAA's.



## Spending and Potential Saving Comparisons

### Children Placed Externally



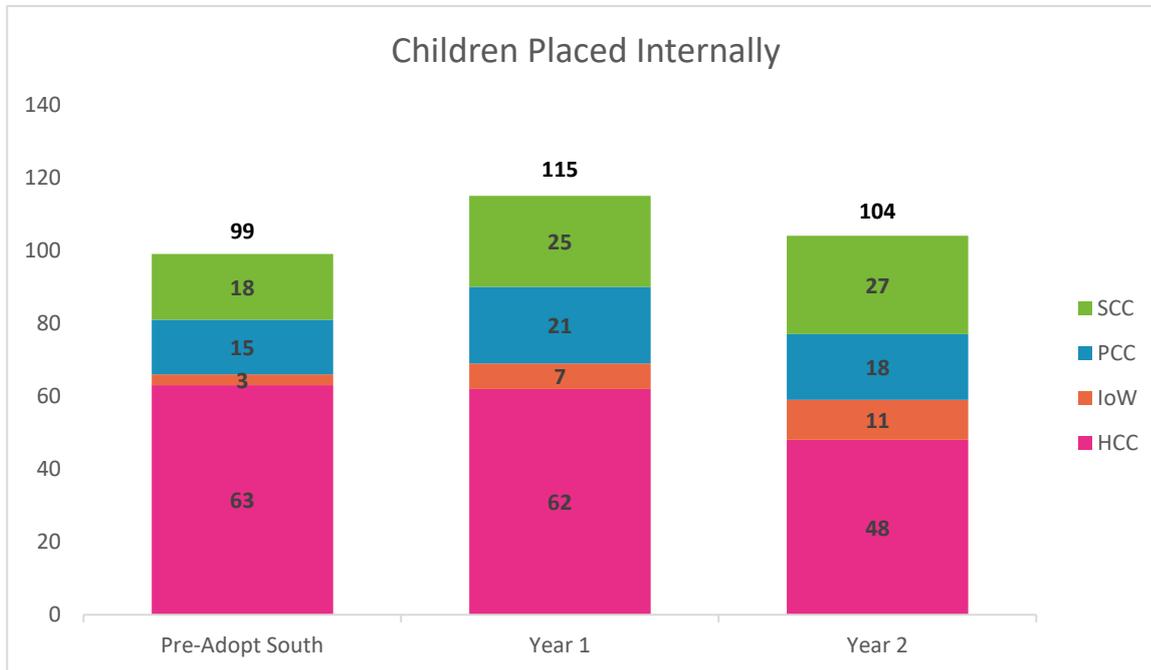
Year 1 - ↓+92% on Pre-Adopt      Year 2 - ↓+89% on Pre-Adopt

↑Average number of children placed externally is a 89% decrease on pre-Adopt South

Commentary:

- 37 children were placed externally Pre-Adopt South (out of a total of 136), compared to 3 (out of a total of 118) in Year 1 and 4 (out of a total of 108) in Year 2.





Year 1 - **↑+16%** on Pre-Adopt      Year 2 - **↑+5.6%** on Pre-Adopt

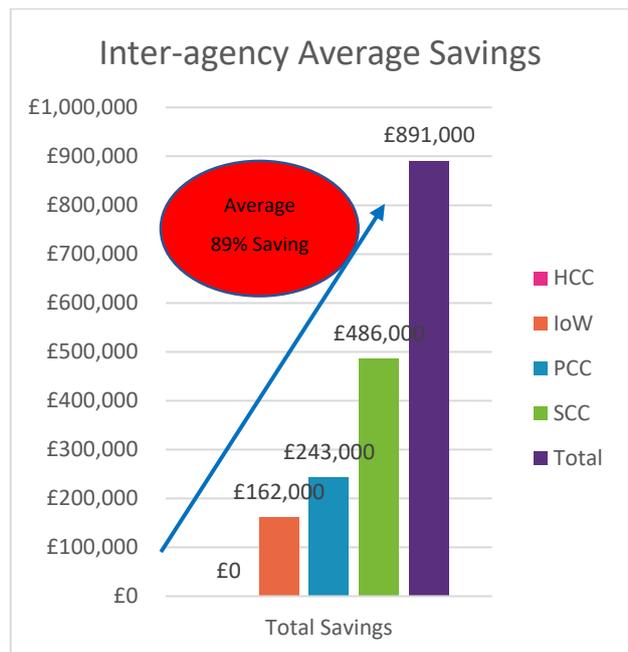
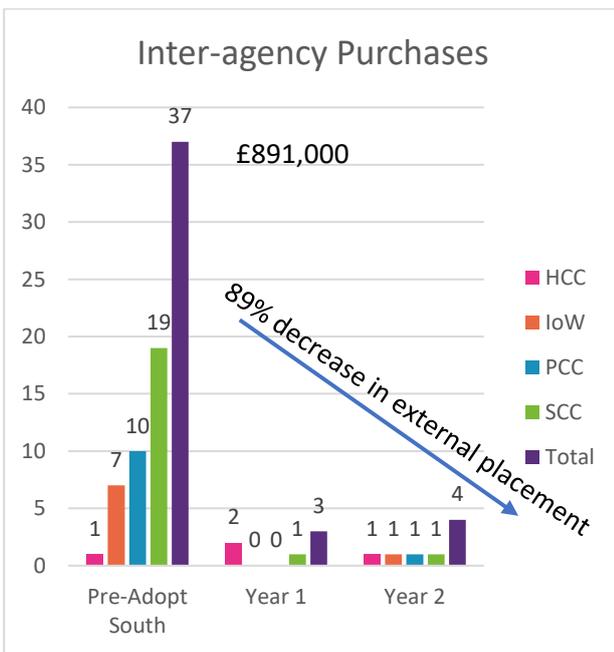
**↑Average number of children placed internally is a 11% increase on pre-Adopt South**

Commentary:

- 99 children (out of a total of 136) were placed internally Pre-Adopt South, compared to 115 (out of a total of 118) in Year 1 and 104 (out of a total of 108) in Year 2.



	HCC	IoW	PCC	SCC	Total
Year 1	2	0	0	1	3
Year 2	1	1	1	1	4
Pre- Adopt South	1	7	10	19	37
Reduction in purchases	0	(6)	(9)	(18)	(33)
Average Savings	£0	£162,000	£243,000	£486,000	£891,000

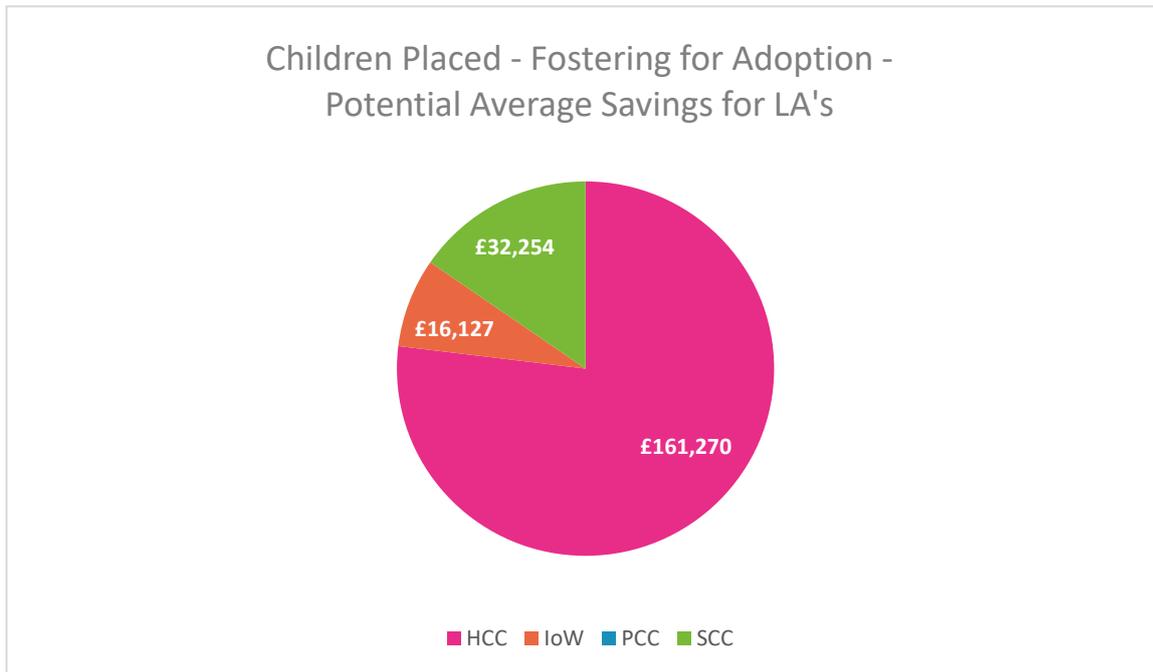


↓ Average number of children placed is an 89% decrease on pre-Adopt South

**Commentary:**

- 37 interagency placements were purchased Pre-Adopt South, at a cost of £999,000 for RAA's or £1,147,000 for VAA's. (Interagency fees for 1 child - £27, 000 (RAA) and £31, 000 (VAA) at 2018/19 rates).
- 4 interagency placements were purchased in Year 2 at a cost of £121,783 which is a mix of RAA & VAA placements. Just 3 interagency placements were purchased in Year 1.
- Additional benefits of placing more locally, includes reduced staff travel and time, alongside adoptive families being able to access more local adoption support.
- Adopt South placed more children with in-house adopters than any other RAA, spending less on interagency adoptions. (ASGLB data - October 2019-September 2020)





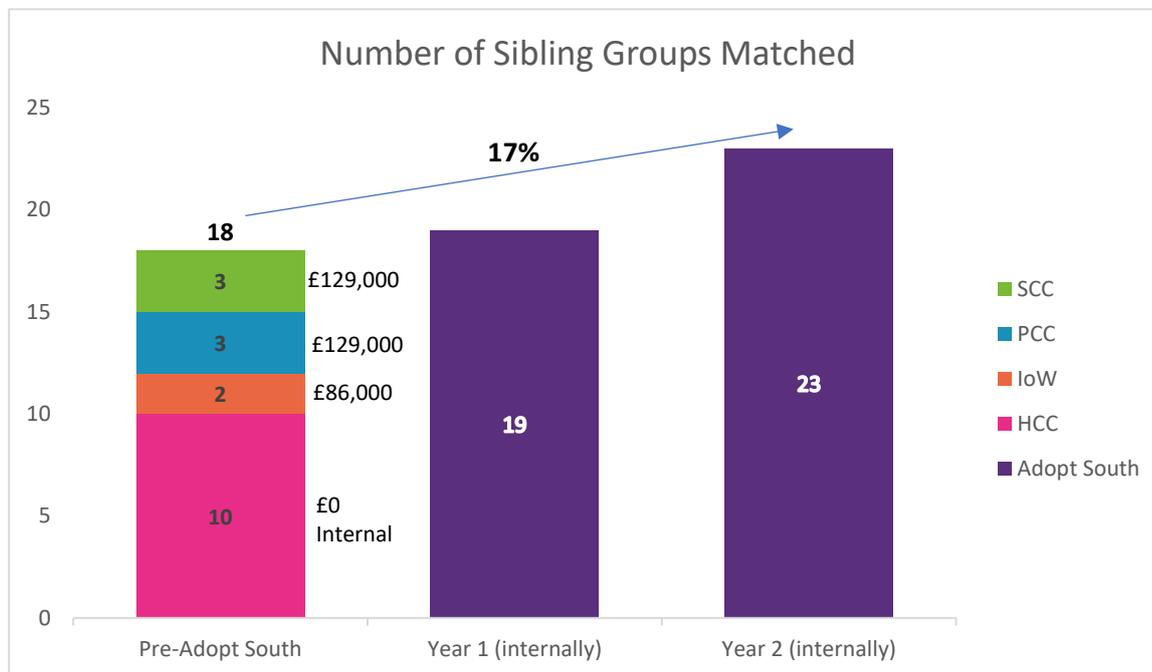
Please note not applicable for PCC.

**Commentary:**

- 27 children were placed in FfA's in Year 2, an increase pre-Adopt South of 93%.
- It is estimated that the cost of an FfA is 70% less than the cost of an inhouse foster carer and 84% less than an IFA.
- Average cost of fostering per annum based on HCC for under 5's is £23,161.
- FfA average cost is £7,034, which does not include any skills payment or fostering team overheads.
- Savings illustrate reduction in cost between LA in-house fostering placement and FfA costs.
- A potential average saving of £16,127 per placement.



## Number of Sibling Groups Matched



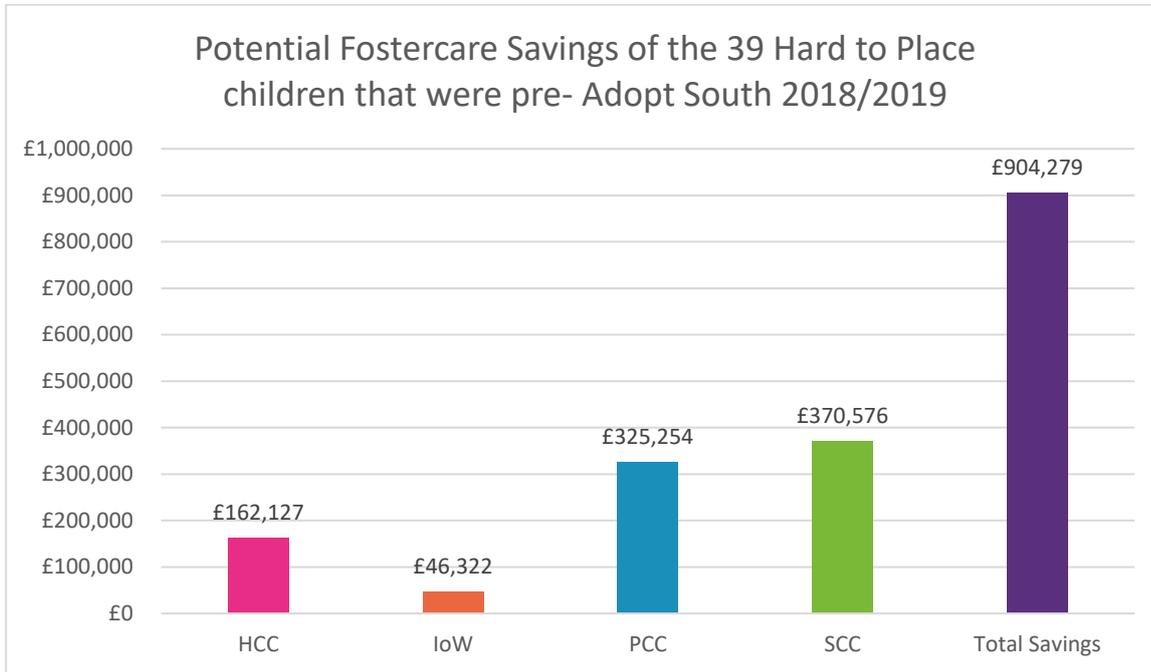
Year 1 - **↑+5%** on Pre-Adopt

Year 2 - **↑+28%** on Pre-Adopt

**↑Average Sibling Groups Matched is a 17% increase on pre-Adopt South**

### Commentary:

- Pre-Adopt South, the IoW placed 2 sibling groups externally at a cost of £86,000 and both PCC and SCC placed 3 sibling groups externally at a cost of £129,000.
- All sibling groups have been placed in-house during Year 1 and Year 2.

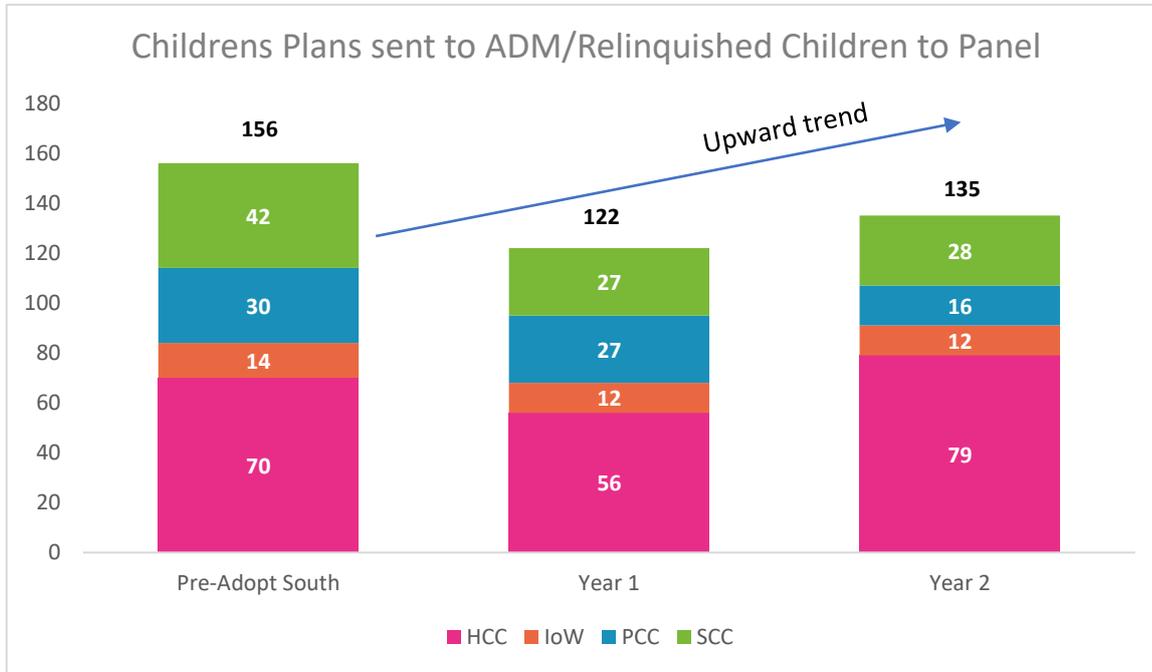


Commentary:

- This graph gives an example of fostering costs for those children who were waiting for an adoptive family, Pre-Adopt South.
- The average cost of an In-house fostering placement per annum is £23,161 based on HCC rates for under 5's. The cost for an equivalent IFA is £44,194.
- If all placements were through IFA, the potential savings would be £1,723,566.



Childrens Plans sent to ADM/Relinquished Children to Panel



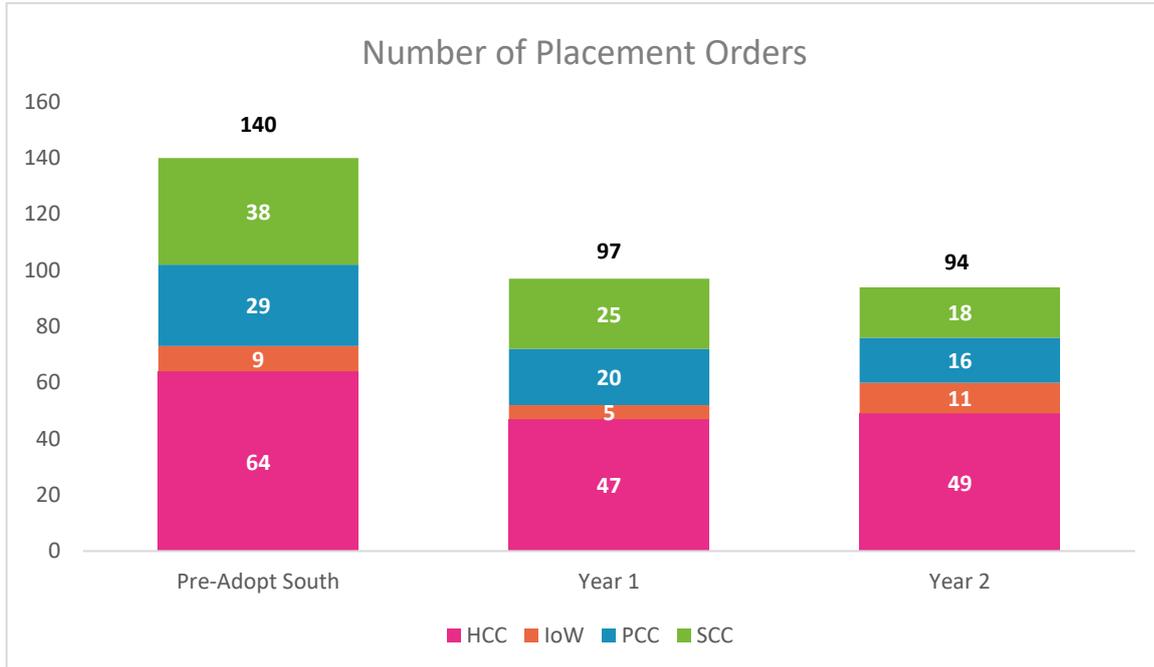
Year 1 - ↓+21% on Pre-Adopt	Year 2 - ↓+13% on Pre-Adopt
-----------------------------	-----------------------------

↑Average Children's Plans sent to ADM is a 17% decrease on pre-Adopt South

Commentary:

- Although there was a reduction in Children's Plans in Year 1 as was the national trend, Year 2 saw a rise.
- The LA Children's Adoption Teams reported an increase in Parallel Planning at the end of Year 2/start of Year 3, and a further increase in Children's Plans is likely to follow.
- Year 2 saw a steep increase particularly for Hampshire from Year 1 to Year 2 of 41%, whereas Southampton saw a slight increase and numbers for the IOW remained constant. Portsmouth numbers, however, have fallen.





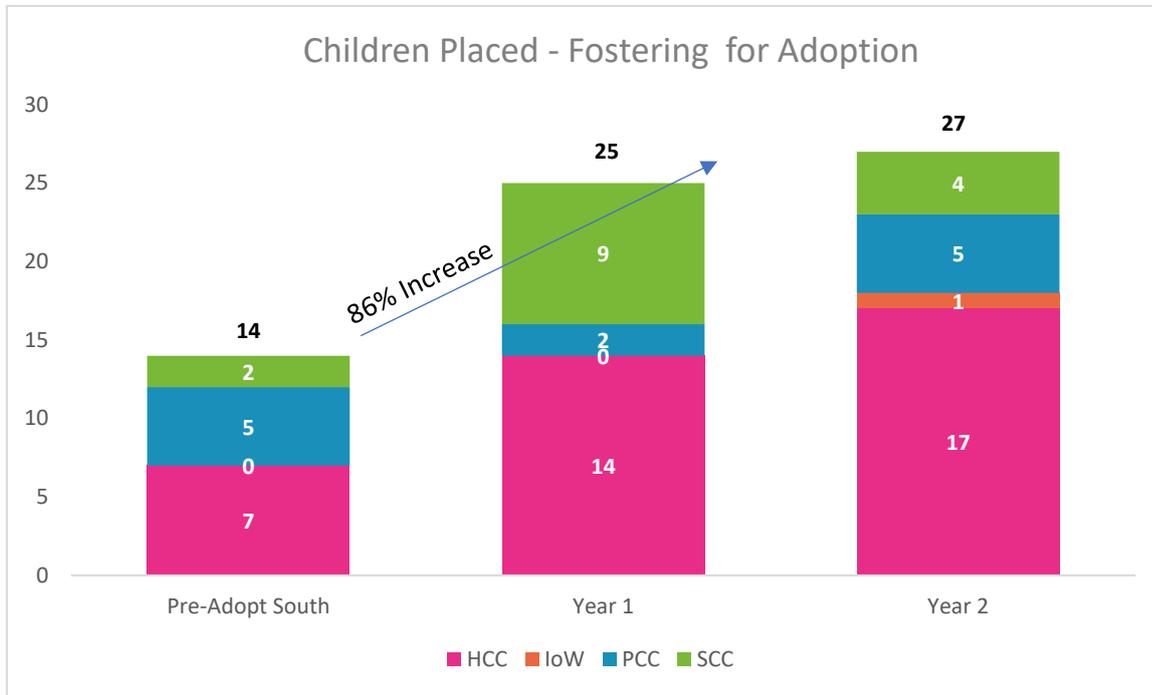
Year 1 - ↓+31% on Pre-Adopt      Year 2 - ↓+33% on Pre-Adopt

↓Average number of Placement Orders is a 32% on pre-Adopt South

Commentary:

- Placement Orders decreased in Year 1 in line with the national trend.
- COVID has impacted on the courts and cases have been delayed, leading to Placement Orders not yet increasing in line with the rise in Children’s Plans. The LA Children's Adoption Teams are expecting a sharp rise.
- There has also been an increase in birth parents being granted leave to oppose, further impacting on delays.
- A number of adopters have been pre-linked with children as Placement Orders are expected, to enable plans to progress as soon as the Order is granted.





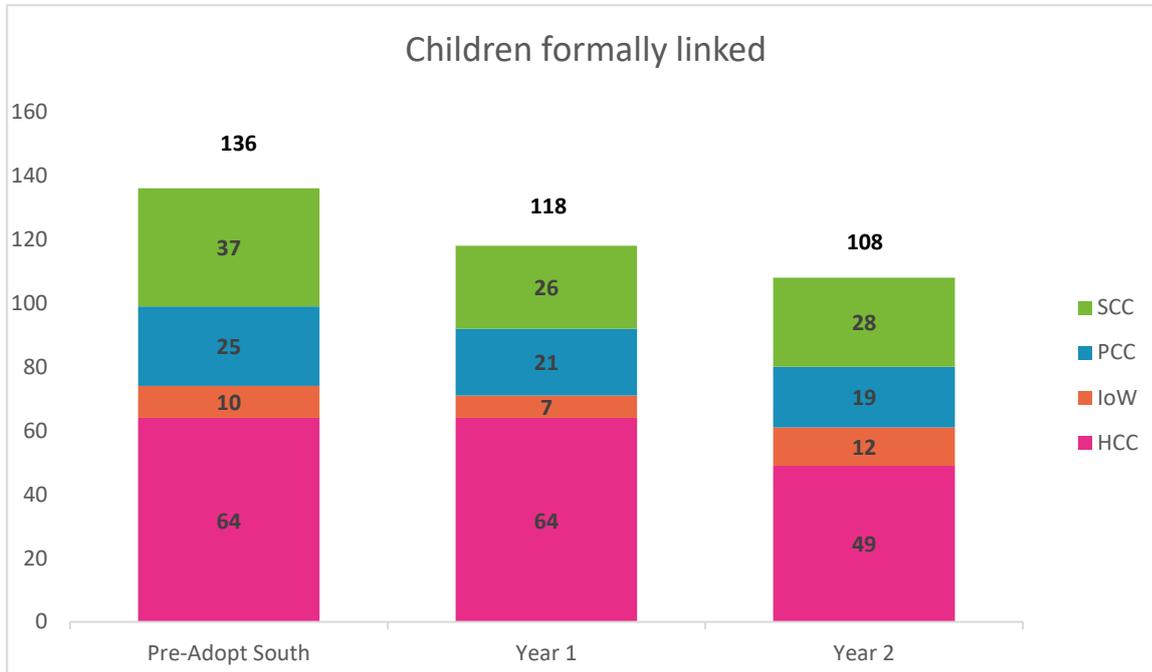
Year 1 - ↑+79% on Pre-Adopt      Year 2 - ↑+93% on Pre-Adopt

↑Average number of Children Placed FfA is a 86% on pre-Adopt South

Commentary:

- There has been a continued rise in children being placed in Fostering for Adoption placements.
- The impact for the LA is a freeing up of fostering placements and a reduced cost. (IFA £44,194, in-house £23,161)
- HCC increased their use of FfA’s at the end of Year 2 by an average of 10 extra placements. This is a forecast saving of £161,270 in cost of placing children in FfA placements rather than in-house foster care. This cost saving could be as much as £371,600 if IFA’s had been used.





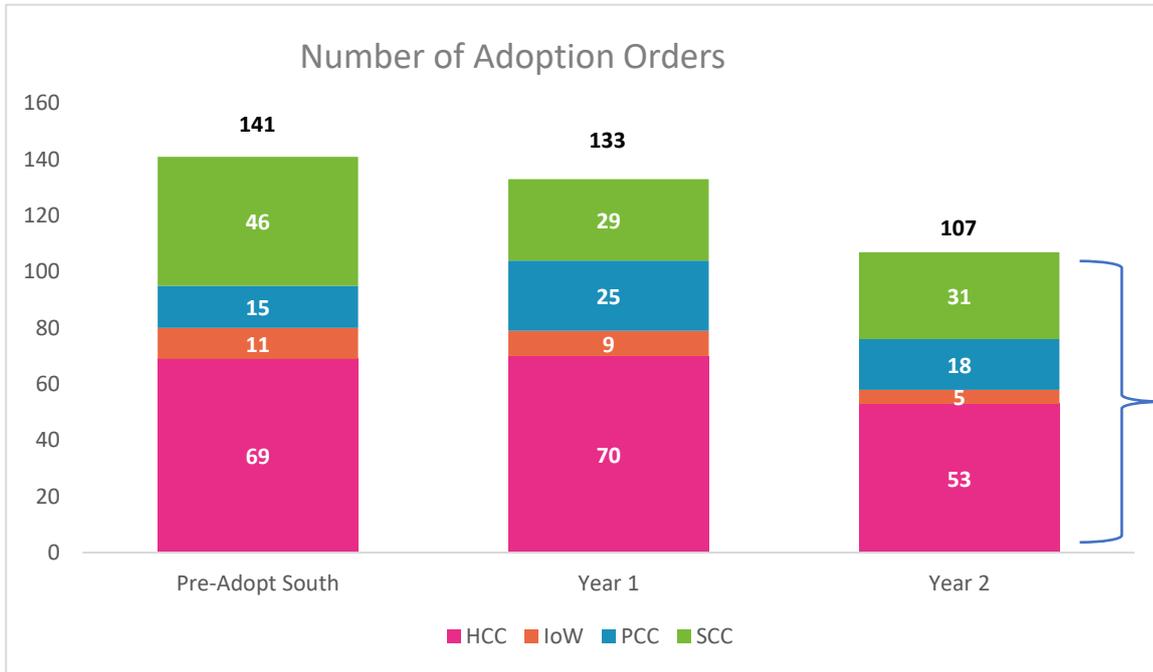
Year 1 – ↓+13% change on Pre-Adopt South

Year 2 - ↓+21% change on Pre-Adopt South

**Commentary:**

- The reduction in children formally linked in Year 1 reflects the reduction in Children’s Plans/Placement Orders.
- Year 2 has seen a rise in Children’s Plans, however. The LA Children’s Adoption Teams have reported an increase in Parallel Planning at the end of Year 2/start of Year 3 and are expecting a further increase in children needing an adoptive family.
- COVID has impacted on the courts and cases have been delayed.
- Adopt South is one of 4 RAA’s who placed more than 100+ children with their adoptive families. (ASGLB data, October 2019-September 2020).





Affected by  
Delays due to Covid

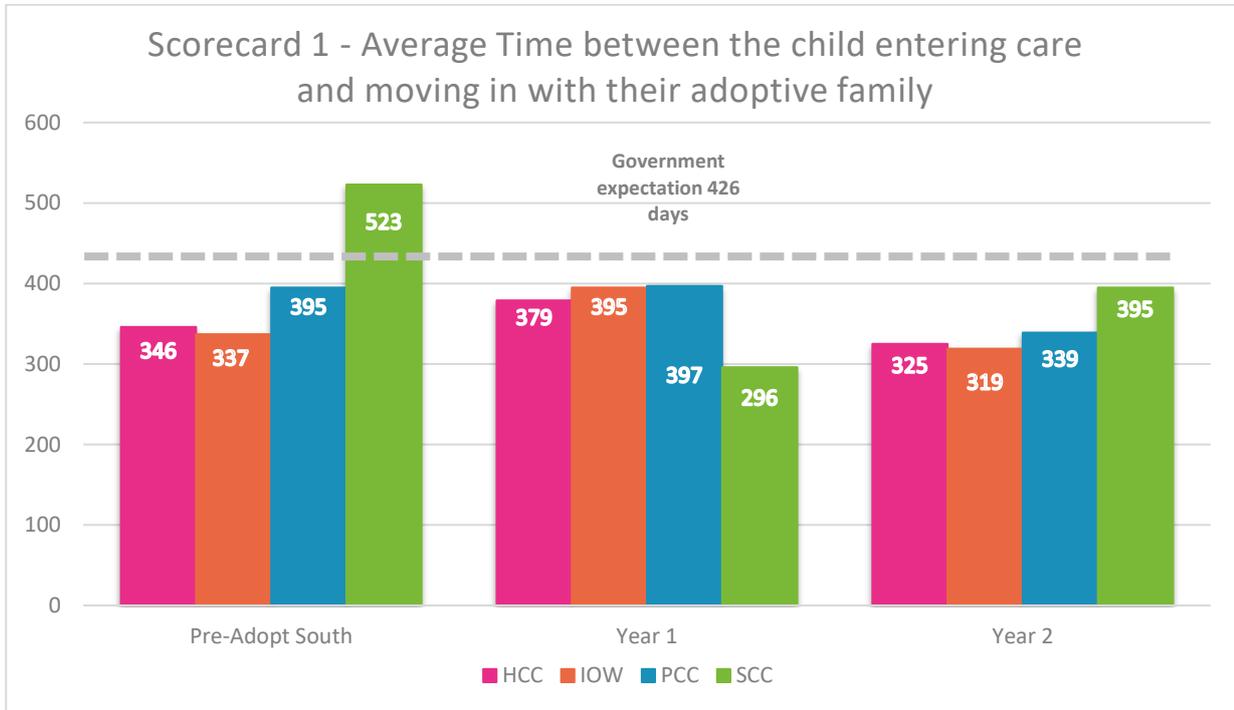
Year 1 - ↓-5.7% on Pre-Adopt      Year 2 - ↓-24% on Pre-Adopt

↓Average number of Adoption Orders is a -15% on pre-Adopt South

Commentary:

- Although there has been a significant reduction in Adoption Orders during Year 2, this is due to the impact of COVID and the courts only holding hearings bi- monthly.

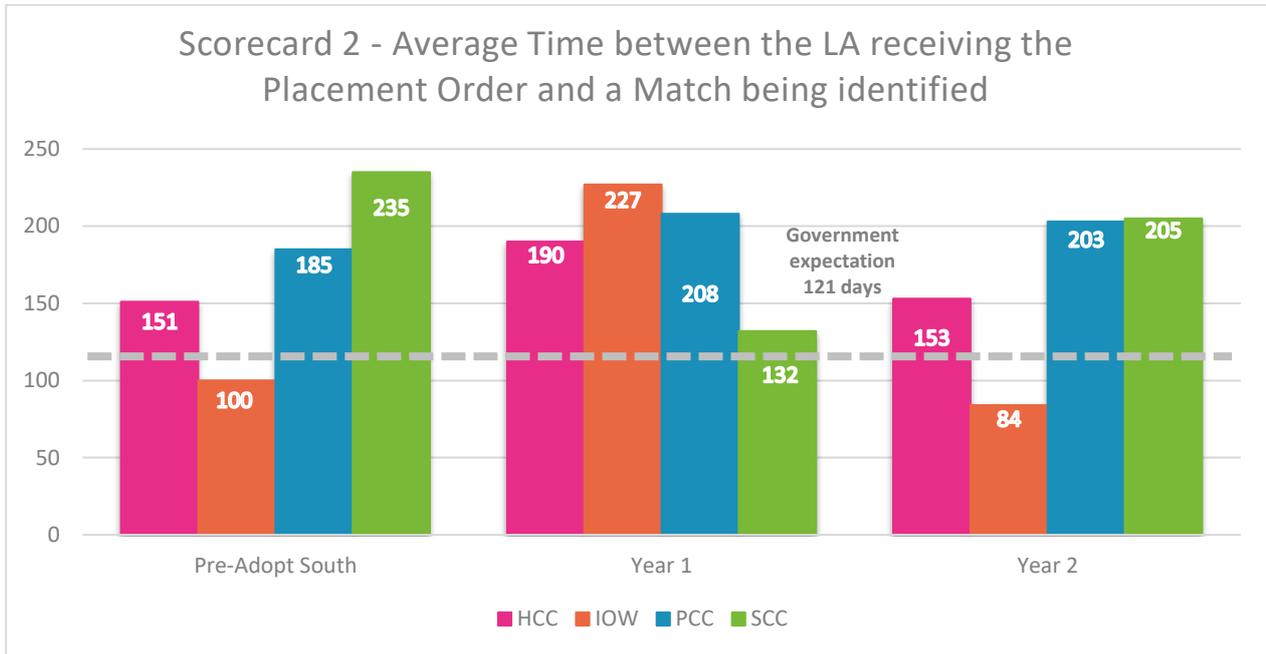




Commentary:

- Average timescales for Scorecard 1 were within the government expectation of 426 days for all 4 LA's during both Year 1 and 2.
- SCC averaged timescales outside of the government expectation Pre-Adopt South.
- Out of the 31 Regional Adoption Agencies, Adopt South is one of just 8 who had Scorecard 1 under government thresholds for the period October 2019 – September 2020.





Commentary:

- Although the IOW was the only LA to be under the government threshold (84) of 121 days (Year 2), the timescales for HCC, PCC and SCC reflect the hard to place children who although it took longer, families were found.



Isle of Wight Council

Children's Plans (ADMs)	Pre-Adopt South	Adopt South Year 1	% Diff	Adopt South Year 2	% Diff
	14	12	-14%	12	-14%

Placement Orders	Pre-Adopt South	Adopt South Year 1	% Diff	Adopt South Year 2	% Diff
	9	5	-44%	11	+22%

Children Formally Linked	Pre-Adopt South	Adopt South Year 1	% Diff	Adopt South Year 2	% Diff
	10	7	-30%	12	+20%

Children with No potential links	Pre-Adopt South	Adopt South Year 1	% Diff	Adopt South Year 2	% Diff
	2	1	-50%	0	-100%

Adoption Orders	Pre-Adopt South	Adopt South Year 1	% Diff	Adopt South Year 2	% Diff
	11	9	-18%	5	-55%

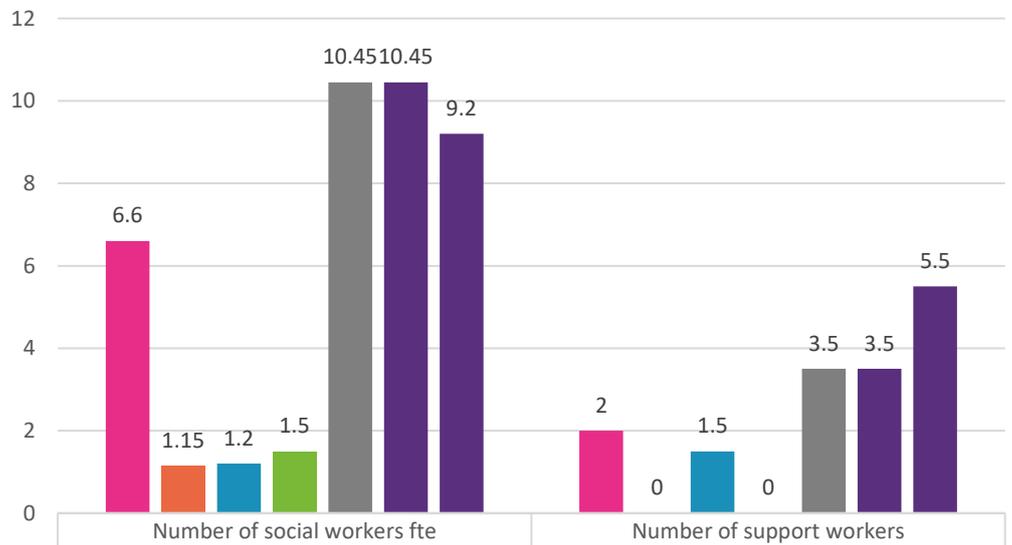
**IoW Highlights**

- ↑1 FfA placement Saving £16,127
- ↓-14% Childrens Plans/ADMs
- ↑+22% Placement Orders
- ↑+20% Children formally linked
- ↓-36% Adoption Orders
- ↓2 no matches, Saving £46,322
- ↓Interagency Saving £162,000
- ↓Scorecard 1 under threshold
- ↓Scorecard 2 under threshold

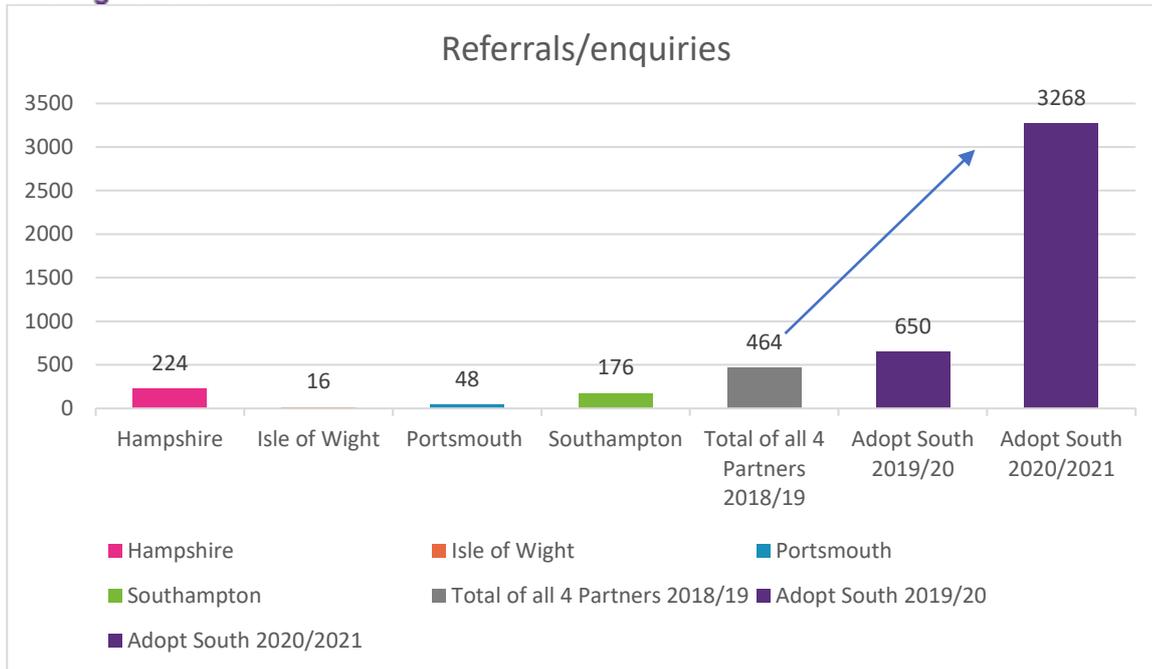


## Adoption Support- Activity

Number of Social Workers FTE vs Number of Support Workers



	Number of social workers fte	Number of support workers
■ Hampshire 2018/19	6.6	2
■ Isle of Wight 2018/19	1.15	0
■ Portsmouth 2018/19	1.2	1.5
■ Southampton 2018/19	1.5	0
■ Total of all 4 Partners 2018/19	10.45	3.5
■ Adopt South 2019/20	10.45	3.5
■ Adopt South 2020/21	9.2	5.5

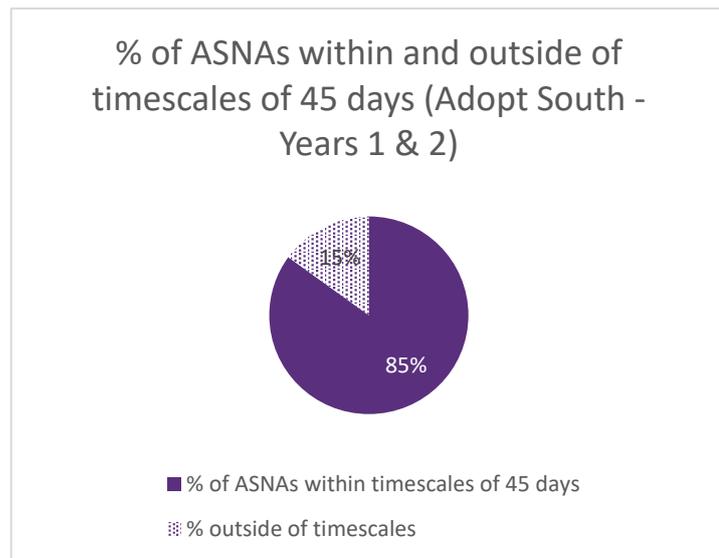
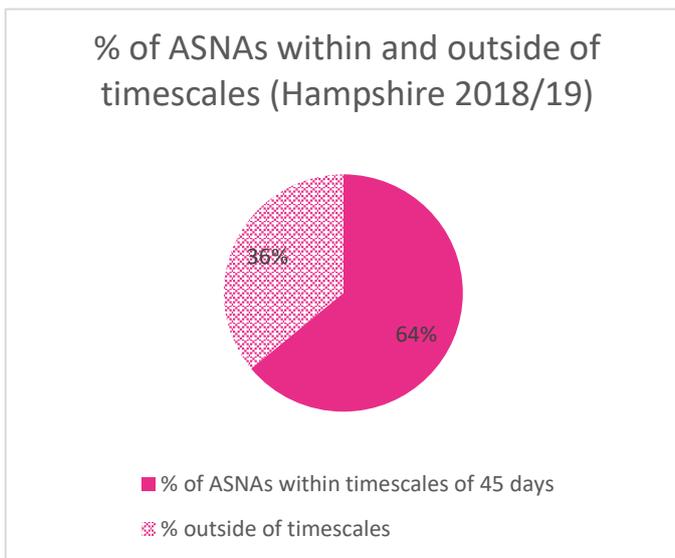
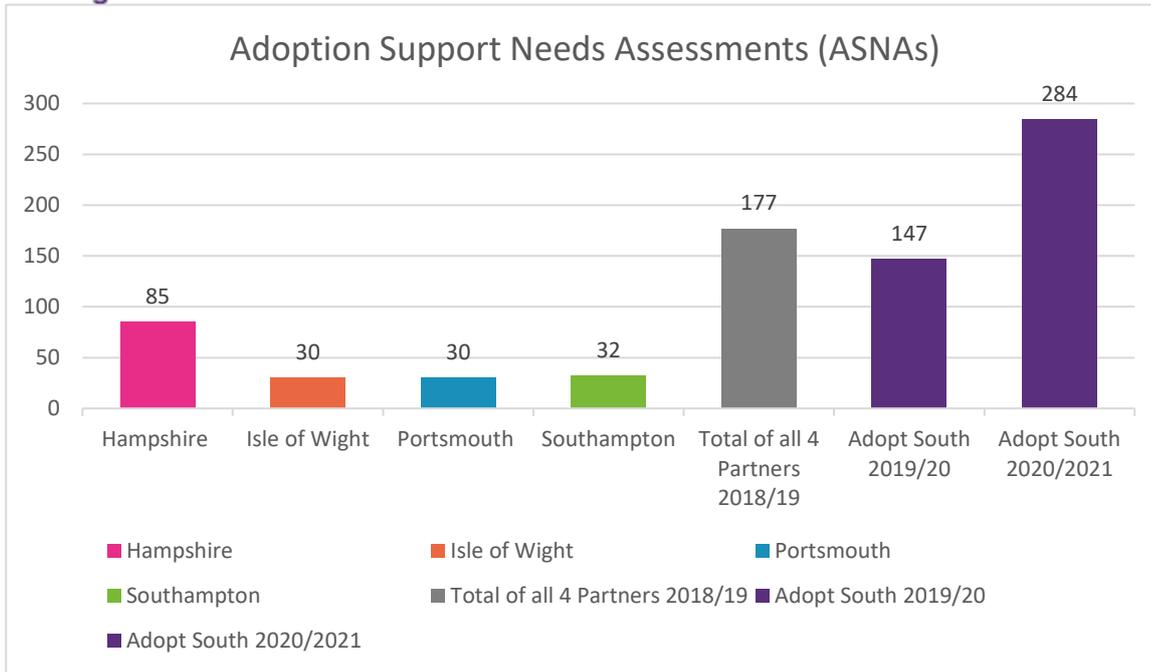


**Commentary:**

Referrals and enquiries increased by 40% in Year 1 of Adopt South when compared to the previous year’s activity, and subsequently increased by 402% in Year 2.

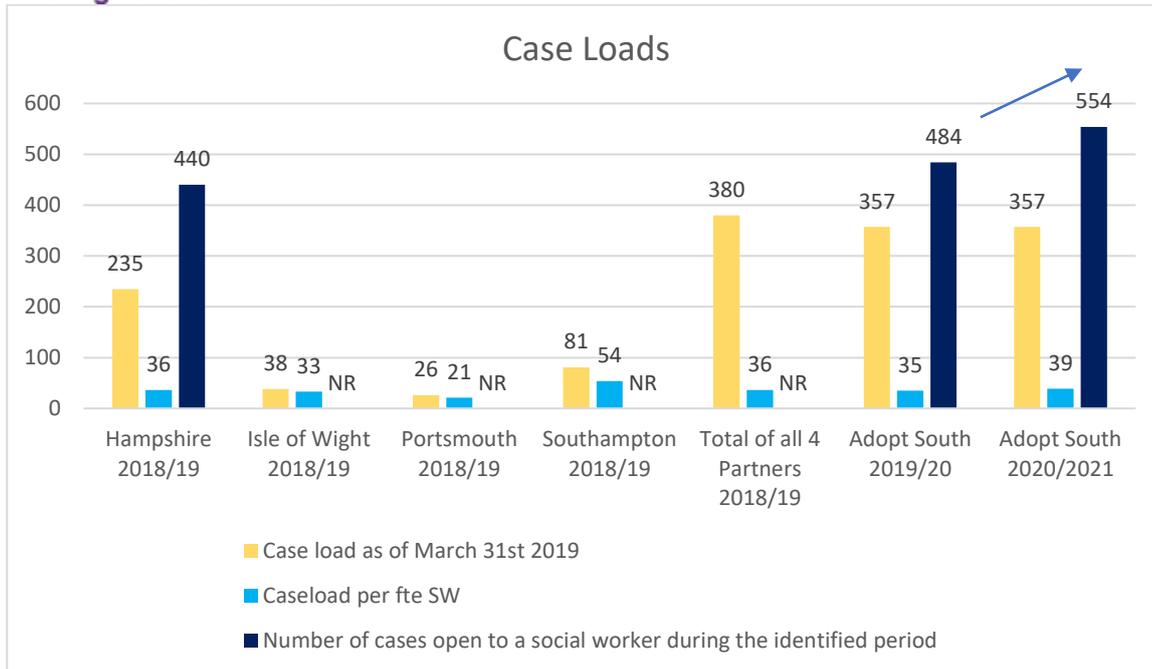
- Increased demand on services due to COVID-19 and lockdowns.
- Increased awareness of Adopt South as a Regional Adoption Support Provider to both families and professionals.
- Increased preventative offer (universal services) and the COVID-19 ASF Scheme has resulted in additional enquiries.
- Decision to appoint dedicated Advice and Support line workers was appropriate to meet this demand.
- The ongoing impact of COVID-19 and the interruption of families being able to progress, is likely to result in the demand for services remaining high in Year 3.





- Hampshire was the only local authority measuring timescales prior to Adopt South.





#### Commentary:

- In Year 1, the demand for Adoption Support Needs Assessments (ASNA's) was lower than predicted, which is believed to be due to the increase in universal adoption support services.
- The increase in demand for ASNA's in Year 2, is attributed to COVID-19; Q1 had 17 requests during the first national lockdown, and Q4 had 40.
- Timescales for ASNA's averaged 85% over both years, despite a reduction in social workers and increased average caseloads.
- Only HCC measured ASNA timescales prior to Adopt South, and these have improved from 64% within timescales to 85% in timescales.
- Caseloads per FTE social workers reduced for SCC, HCC and IOW in Year 1.
- A reduction in posts in Year 2 resulted in increased caseloads.
- Whilst the number of open cases within each quarter has remained relatively stable, the overall number of cases within one year has increased 15% between Year 1 and 2.

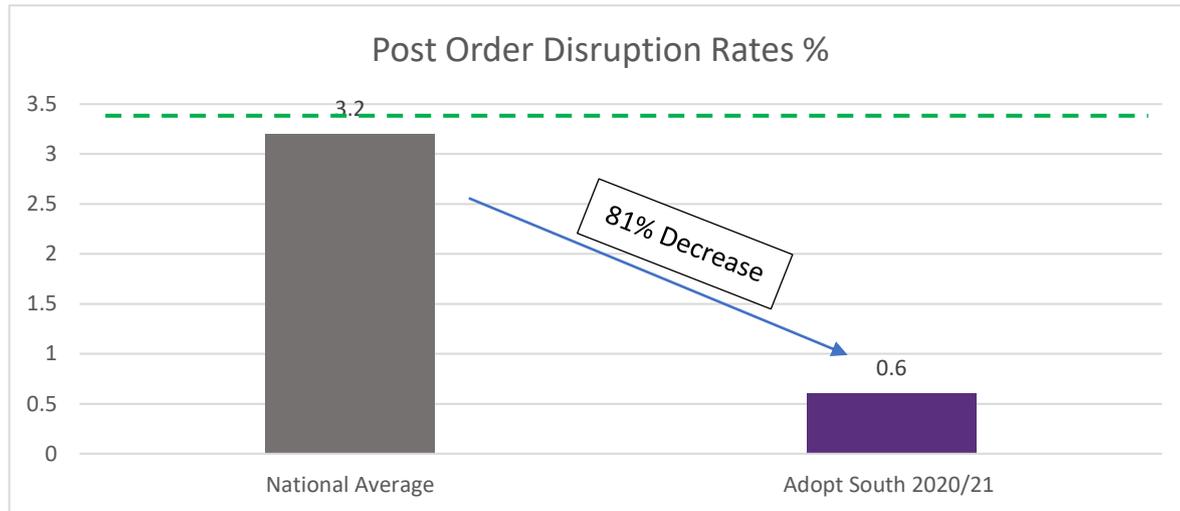


	HCC	IOW	PCC	SCC	Adopt South
Dedicated adoption support duty line during office hours	✓				✓
Mentor system for post adoption parents	✓				✓
Virtual Reality	✓				✓
One off consultations- 36 across the county/region	✓				✓
Video Interaction Guidance	✓				✓
Educational Psychologist Consultation	✓	✓			✓
Support Groups	✓	✓	✓		✓
Adolescence 2 session programme -3 hours each				✓	✓
Understanding your child's world through play				✓	✓
Life story workshop	✓		✓	✓	✓
Managing challenging behaviour (bite size)				✓	✓
Therapeutic Parenting (bite size)				✓	✓
FASD Workshop (bite size)				✓	✓
Education Matters (bite size)				✓	✓
Feelings Workshop			✓		✓
Attachment and Trauma Bite Size				✓	✓
Talking about Adoption (bite size)			✓		✓
Internet safety (bite size)				✓	✓
Secondary Trauma (bite size)				✓	✓
Sensory Workshops			✓		✓
Theraplay workshop	✓				✓
Stay and Play sessions	✓				✓
Soft Play exclusive use	✓				✓
Social events for adoptive families	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Groundworks Fusion activities for young people - on average 3 a month	✓				✓
Parenting Programmes					
<i>Adopting Changes</i>	✓				✓
<i>Trauma Course</i>	✓				✓
<i>Knowing Me, Knowing You</i>	✓				✓



Commentary:

- Economies of scale have resulted in an increased offer across the region. This has been particularly beneficial for therapeutic parenting programmes.
- In Year 1, all partners extended their workshops and support groups to the region, whilst the work was undertaken to turn these into Adopt South workshops for Year 2.
- Any specific service that was removed from any LA offer was replaced with an alternative way of meeting that need.
- The universal and targeted offers have been increased to improve preventative services and this has resulted in a number of families accessing support without the need for an ASNA.
- The offer has been developed with the consideration as to sustainability beyond the Adoption Support Fund. This has included creating revenue from therapeutic parenting programmes to invest in the training of additional facilitators.
- The provision of more local placements for LA's does mean there will be more families to support. There will be a reduction in the number of children placed in other areas meaning our responsibility to support these families will continue beyond three years.



- The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on adoptive families has resulted in a significant increase in requests for a service from the Adoption Support Team. The rapid response to this from the service has meant that families who were ‘on the edge’ were able to access support, and this has minimized adoption breakdowns.
- Adopt South’s combined rate of post adoption breakdowns in Year 2 was **0.6%**, which is **81%** lower than the national average of **3.2 %**.
- The 0.6% is 6 children and young people.
- If 3 children were placed in residential, the estimated cost would be **£647,936** per year based on two in- house residential placements and one private residential.
- If 3 children/young people were placed in foster care, the estimated cost would be **£88,388** per year based on two in- house foster care placements and one IFA.
- If Adopt South’s post- order adoption disruption rate reached the national average, this would equate to 32 children and young people experiencing post adoption breakdown annually, rather than the **6** identified in Year 2.
- If disruptions reached the national average and half (**16**) were placed within in- house foster care, the estimated costs would be **£370,576** per year for the region.
- If disruptions reached the national average and half (**16**) were placed within in- house residential care, the estimated costs would be **£3, 376,000** per year for the region.
- The low number of disruptions is a considerable achievement, particularly with the challenges all families have faced during the last year. However, an intact adoption is not the only outcome for which we strive. The comprehensive adoption support offer aims to ensure that the quality of the relationships within adoptive families are strengthened and maintained. Adopt South doesn’t only ‘find forever families’ but ‘supports forever families’ far beyond the adoption order.



# Agenda Item 9

## Policy and Scrutiny Committee for Children’s Services, Education and Skills Workplan 2021 – 2022

Date of meeting	Item	Background
<b>17 June 2021</b>		
	Young carers	To consider a report on support provided to young carers.
	Performance and budget	Performance trends and budget outturn 2020/21
	Annual fostering report	To consider the annual report
	Annual adoption report	To consider the annual report
<b>2 September 2021</b>		
	SACRE annual report	To consider the annual report
	Performance and budget	Current performance trends and budget 2021/22
	Annual complaints report – Children’s Social Work	To consider the annual report in accordance with best practice advice from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman to ensure that lessons learnt are being implemented.
<b>9 December 2021</b>		
	IW Safeguarding Children’s Board annual report	To consider the annual report and ensure the key activity within the Corporate Plan of maintaining a focus on children’s safeguarding practice to ensure a high quality of service with effective systems to protect children and keep them safe.
	Performance and budget	Current performance trends and budget 2021/22
<b>3 March 2022</b>		
	School attainment	To consider the annual report on attainment
	Performance and budget	Current performance trends and budget 2021/22

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