

Date of issue: Tuesday 19th September 2023

MEETING	CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
DATE AND TIME:	THURSDAY, 21ST SEPTEMBER, 2023 AT 5.30 PM
VENUE:	COUNCIL CHAMBER - OBSERVATORY HOUSE, 25 WINDSOR ROAD, SL1 2EL
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER: (for all enquiries)	NADIA WILLIAMS 07749 709 961

SUPPLEMENTARY PAPERS

The following Papers have been added to the agenda for the above meeting:-

* Item 3,4.5 & 6 were not available for publication with the rest of the agenda.

PART 1

<u>AGENDA ITEM</u>	<u>REPORT TITLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>	<u>LEAD</u>
3.	Changes to the CPP Terms of Reference - Draft for Consideration	1 - 10	Kay Jones
4.	Next Steps and Forward Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Parenting Action Plan • Annual reporting/participation themes 	11 - 26	Kay Jones
5.	Revised Corporate Parenting Panel Score Card	27 - 50	Reshma Bessesar
6.	Fostering Annual report	51 - 84	Yemi Ukwenu / Saima Arif

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Corporate Parenting Panel

Slough Borough Council

Proposed Terms of Reference 2023/24

1. Corporate Parenting Panel Vision

- 1.1 When a child becomes looked after everyone at the Council, including officers, members, and our partner organisations become corporate parents for children and care experienced young people we look after. This means we have a legal and moral responsibility to improve the lives of all those we look after and who leave our care.
- 1.2 Just as we would our own children, we will prioritise their needs and create the right conditions for them to thrive and have happy and fulfilling lives; “as if, this were my child.”

2. Strategic Context

- 2.1 Slough Borough Council has a strategic and legal responsibility for children looked after and care experienced young people as documented in legislation and national and local guidance. The Children Act 1989 and Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 placed a duty on Health, Housing, Education and Social Care as a minimum, to work together to improve outcomes for children looked after. The Children Act 2004 placed a statutory duty on Local Authorities to promote the educational achievement of children looked after. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 established seven key Corporate Parenting Principles which the Council must have regard to.
- 2.2 In order to thrive, children and care experienced young people have certain key needs that good parents generally meet. The corporate parenting principles set out seven principles that local authorities must have regard to when exercising their functions in relation to children looked after and care experienced young people, as follows:
 - i. to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and care experienced young people
 - ii. to encourage those children and care experienced young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
 - iii. to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and care experienced young people

- iv. to help those children and care experienced young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
 - v. to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and care experienced young people
 - vi. for those children and care experienced young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
 - vii. to prepare those children and care experienced young people for adulthood and independent living.
- 2.3 The corporate parenting principles do not exist in a vacuum. They should shape the mind-set and culture of every part of a local authority in how it carries out all of its functions in relation to children looked-after and care experienced young people.
- 2.4 The principles intend to ensure that all councils have high ambitions for the children in their care. In doing so, the application of the principles must respond to the individual needs, vulnerabilities or disadvantages of children looked after and care experienced young people. This will assist in securing that such children and care experienced young people are not placed at significant disadvantage when compared with the support a non-looked after child may receive from their family.

3. Purpose of the Corporate Parenting Panel

- 3.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel (the 'Panel') is a private meeting of Slough Borough Council (SBC). It acts as an advisory Board to the Council, its partners and its Committees on matters related to the Council's children looked after and care experienced young people. It will report annually to the Council's People Scrutiny Panel, Cabinet and Council.
- 3.2 It ensures that **all** Councillors demonstrate their commitment to deliver better outcomes for children and young people in and leaving our care.
- 3.3 Its role is to ensure that the Council, Slough Children First, and its partner agencies is fulfilling its duties towards children looked after corporately and in partnership with other statutory agencies, and have a joint commitment to:-
- (a) Achieving improved outcomes for children looked after and care experienced young people;
 - (b) Developing and overseeing implementation of the Corporate Parenting Strategy to drive improved outcomes;
 - (c) Providing challenge to ensure that the Council's duties as Corporate Parent are carried out effectively and consistently.
- 3.4 The Panel will:-

- i) Lead on behalf of the Council and partners of the Local Authority to ensure that all services directly provided for children looked after and care experienced young people are scrutinised to deliver to a high standard and to all statutory requirements.
- ii) Raise the aspiration, ambitions and life chances of children and care leavers in care and care leavers, narrowing the gap of achievement between children in care, care leavers and their peers.
- iii) Ensure that children in care are protected and supported to develop as healthy citizens, able to participate in their community.
- iv) Ensure that all elected members are aware of their corporate parenting responsibilities and that all Council services are mindful of the needs of children in care and respond accordingly within their particular remit.

4. Responsibilities of the Corporate Parenting Panel

- 4.1 To develop, monitor and review a Corporate Parenting Strategy and work plan.
- 4.2 To assist in the development, operation, monitoring and review of the Council's policies and strategies as they affect children looked after and care experienced young people.
- 4.3 Take account of the views of children, young people and their carers and involve them in the assessment and development of services.
- 4.4 To promote a co-ordinated and partnership approach to the delivery of Council services as they affect children looked after and care experienced young people and to challenge services where this is not evidenced or effective.
- 4.5 To advise the Council and its Committees on issues relevant to children looked after and care experienced young people and to ensure that policies implemented by the Council which affect these children and young people are effective and appropriate.
- 4.6 To review and monitor outcomes for children looked after and care experienced young people, including data from the Corporate Parenting Score Card and feedback from the Standards & Complaints and Quality Assurance Framework officers in respect of children looked after and care experienced young people.
- 4.7 Ensure the needs of children and young people in care and their carers are prioritised and these are reflected in the 'promises' to Slough's children in care
- 4.8 To ensure that systems are in place which mean that the views of children and young people are represented in the development of services that affect them.

- 4.9 To ensure arrangements are made for the training and development of Councillors, all council staff and partner organisations on the Corporate Parenting role.
- 4.10 To receive reports on the discharge of the Council's functions regarding the provision of accommodation for children looked after and care experienced young people, and to make recommendations to the appropriate body of the Council.
- 4.11 Champion and provide clear strategic and political direction in relation to corporate parenting.
- 4.12 Raise the profile of the needs of children looked after and care experienced young people through a range of actions including through the organising of celebratory events for the recognition of achievement.
- 4.13 Ensure that leisure, cultural, further education and employment opportunities are offered and taken up by our children looked after and care experienced young people.
- 4.14 Promote the development of participation and ensure that the view of children looked after and care experienced young people are regularly heard via 'Reach Out' and 'Space to talk', through the Corporate Parenting Panel to improve educational, health and social outcomes to raise aspiration and attainments; working towards co-delivery.
- 4.15 Undertake meetings with children looked after and care experienced young people, frontline staff and foster carers to inform the panel of the standards of care and improvement outcomes for children looked after and care experienced young people.

5. Membership

- 5.1 There will be standing membership of the Corporate Parenting Panel to provide continuity and consistency. Councillors outside of the standing membership will be invited to discuss issues and raise questions within a standing agenda item. Membership will be reviewed annually (each municipal year) as follows:
- 5.2 In order to avoid any potential conflicts of interests, the Chair of the People Scrutiny Panel shall be prohibited from sitting on the Panel as a member.
- 5.3 All seven elected member appointments to the Panel by the Council will be made on a politically proportionate basis; identifying lead portfolio holders linked to the Councils 'promises'.
- 5.4 Councillor Hulme (Labour) is appointed as the chair of the Panel.
- 5.5 The Lead Member for Education, Childrens Service, Lifelong Skills and Governance will attend each Corporate Parenting Panel.

Non-Councillor members

5.6 Non-voting members are required to attend all meetings, or to nominate a substitute in the event of their absence.

5.7 The non-Councillor members of the Panel shall be as follows:

- Executive Director for People (Children) and Chief Executive of Slough Children First (SCF)
- Director of Childrens Services/ Chief Executive Slough Children First (SCF)
- Director of Operations (SCF)
- Head of Children Looked After and Support Service (SCF)
- Head of Quality Assurance and Safeguarding (SCF)
- Participation Officer (SCF)
- Virtual School Headteacher (SCF)
- Foster Carer representative
- Reach Out! Group representative
- Thames Valley Police representative
- Designated Nurse for Children in Care, East Berkshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
- NHS Frimley CCG
- Service lead for Strategic Housing Services (SBC)
- Service lead for Communities and Leisure (SBC)
- Service lead for Strategic Adults Services (SBC)
- Communities & Voluntary Sector representatives

6. Operation of the Panel

Meetings

6.1 The panel will meet bi-monthly preceded by an agenda setting meeting.

- 6.3 Each meeting of the Panel will be based the annual reporting/theme schedule agreed at the beginning of the municipal year; additional themed agenda items will be agreed in relation to the Corporate Parenting Strategy and Action Plan as required and agreed in advance.
- 6.4 The governance support for this Panel will be provided by a representative from the Council's Democratic Governance Service and the agenda will be dispatched a week in advance of the meeting.

Administration

- 6.5 The agenda for each meeting shall be agreed by the council's Director of Children, Learning and Skills as part of the Panel's ongoing Forward Work Plan for the municipal year.
- 6.6 Administrative support will be provided by the Council's Democratic Services team, who will arrange the meetings of the Panel; maintain the forward work plan and publish the agendas. The agreed agenda will be despatched by Democratic Services, at least five working days in advance of the meeting.
- 6.7 An officer from the Council's Democratic Services team will be responsible for the minutes of the meeting and their subsequent circulation.
- 6.8 Attendance at meetings and access to the minutes will be restricted to members of the Panel, as set out above.
- 6.9 Requests from non-members to view the minutes will be considered, based on the request fulfilling a valid 'need-to-know' requirement.

Accountability/Governance

- 6.10 The Panel will provide a child friendly response to children looked after's views, comments, priorities, and representations identified by Reach Out. This summary will be provided within 14 working days of the meeting taking place – "you said, we did, so what?".
- 6.11 The Panel will provide an annual report to the People Scrutiny Panel setting out work to deliver the Corporate Parenting Strategy. The Chair of the Panel will present this report.

Review

- 6.12 The Council's Executive Director for People (Children) and the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Lifelong Learning & Skills will review the terms of reference annually.
- 6.13 Any revisions must be endorsed by the Panel and the Member Panel on the Constitution before being approved by full council.

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL – TERMS OF REFERENCE

Purpose of the Corporate Parenting Panel

- 1.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel assists the Council to fulfil its legal obligations and responsibilities towards looked after children and care experienced young people, under the Children Act 1989 and associated legislation, including the corporate parenting principles set out in section 1 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017.
- 1.2 The Corporate Parenting Panel (the ‘Panel’) is a collaborative forum. It is not a decision-making body of Slough Borough Council. Its role is to advise the Lead Member for Children’s Services and other elected member bodies on how to deliver better outcomes for children and young people in care and care experienced young people.
- 1.3 In particular this includes ensuring the Council and its relevant partners comply with the corporate parenting principles:
 - to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people;
 - to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
 - to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
 - to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
 - to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
 - for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
 - to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

2. Responsibilities of the Corporate Parenting Panel

- 2.1 The Panel should:
 - Champion and provide clear strategic and political direction in relation to corporate parenting
 - Support the development of a corporate parenting strategy and to monitor and review its implementation.
 - Focus on improving outcomes for looked after children and care experienced young people.
 - To consider recommendations from internal and external inspections and reviews.
 - To hear the voice of looked after children and care experienced young people, including involving them in meetings.
 - To monitor the education needs of care experienced children, promoting positive engagement of education partners in corporate parenting.

- To ensure the Council actively promotes opportunities for children looked after and care experienced young people across the whole Council
- To ensure that the voice and opinions of as wide a range of care experienced children and young people, including those with disabilities, are heard and that their views are used to co-produce services, shape policy and monitor performance.
- To advise the Lead Member for Children's Services, Cabinet and other relevant member bodies on issues relating to corporate parenting.
- To advise the Slough Children First board and other partners on issues relating to corporate parenting.
- To report annually to the Council on the work of the Panel.

2.0 Membership

2.1 Membership will be reviewed annually as follows:

- (a) For the council by the relevant political groups, at the commencement of each municipal year.

2.2 All six elected member appointments to the Panel by the Council will be made on a politically proportionate basis.

2.3 Attendance at meetings

Looked after children and care experienced young people and carers will be invited to attend meetings on a topic by topic basis and provided with opportunities to facilitate their involvement, including informal meetings to allow views to be sought and represented to the panel by members. In addition the Panel members are expected to attend events to meet relevant children and young people and people associated with corporate parenting responsibilities.

Chairing the Panel

2.4 The Panel shall elect a chair at its first meeting each municipal year.

2.5 The Lead Member for Children's Services shall be entitled to attend the panel as a participating observer.

2.6 The co-opted members of the Panel shall be as follows:

- The council's Executive Director of People - Children
- Chief Executive, Slough Children First (if different to the Executive Director)
- Director of Education
- Foster carer
- The council's Service lead for strategic housing services
- Thames Valley Police representative (will attend when necessary)
- Designated Nurse for Children in Care
- Virtual School Headteacher

- The council's service lead for Communities and Leisure

The panel can elect to invite representatives of the children in care council, care experienced children and carers and other relevant representatives on a topic by topic basis or for the whole of a municipal year. Consideration should be given to a representative for specific groups of children and young people, for instance unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and children with disabilities.

3.0 Operation of the Panel

Meetings

- 3.1 The Panel will meet a minimum of four times a year.
- 3.2 Each meeting of the Panel will be based on one or more of the key corporate parenting principles set out in the Children and Social Work Act 2017.
- 3.3 Where possible the meetings should be available to view by the public, even if public attendance is not possible. Due to the nature of some of the work of the panel, some meetings are not held in public, however in these situation agenda papers and minutes should be made public where these do not disclose confidential information. The annual report must be published.
- 3.4 The Panel will provide an annual report to the Council and has the right to report to Cabinet or other elected member forums such as overview and scrutiny.

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Corporate Parent Action Plan

Owner:	Kay Jones
Date:	September 2023
Review Date:	Every 2 months; full review March 2024

All actions will be BRAG rated to demonstrate progress of outcomes and impact

	Outcome:	Impact:
Red	Tasks timescales have slipped and need immediate attention.	Not on target and outside of tolerances with no demonstrable improvement.
Amber	Tasks are on track/ happening, but may not yet be fully embedded into practice	Not on target but within tolerances
Green	Tasks are progressing as expected and are deemed to be on target	Outcomes is meeting or exceeding targets
Blue	Tasks have been completed fully and embedded into practice	Impact of outcomes is continually meeting or exceeding targets and is sustained
Grey	Action is not scheduled to start in this period/ action now closed	Impact not yet expected to be realised or unable to report this time



<p>Corporate Parenting Action Plan 2023/24</p> <p>The Corporate Parenting Action Plan incorporate priorities from SCF Business & Improvement Plan, Sufficiency Strategy, and incorporates recommendations from the 2023 Local Government Association Corporate Parenting peer review.</p> <p>The CP Action plan is intended to be a live and evolving document. The plan will be delivered by the CP Task & Finish Group and overseen by the Sufficiency Board and Corporate Parenting Panel.</p> <p>Priority Aims:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Corporate Parenting Panel best practice development 2. Corporate approach to Corporate Parenting 3. Further Development of our Local Offer for CEYP 4. Ensure Active Participation and Engagement with our CLA and CEYP 5. Themed activities linked to Pledges 						
<p>1. Overarching Aim – Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) best practice development</p> <p>To develop the Corporate Parenting Panel in line with National good practice and the LGA peer review recommendations; utilising the Corporate Parenting Diagnostic tool to ensure that the CPP is effective in its oversight, scrutiny, and delivery of services to children looked after (CLA) and Care Experienced Young People (CEYP).</p> <p>The aim is for CLA and CEYP to be an integral part of the CPP development and delivery, working in partnership with the Lead Member and CPP members.</p>						
	Objective	Actions	Programme Lead	Action Owner	Timescales	Progress
1.1	The Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) to have clear priorities for the forthcoming	Create a forward plan of priorities, annual reporting, and themes schedule	KJ		21 Sept 23	Annual Schedule to be shared with relevant



	year and clarity of role and purpose, in line with LGA peer review recommendations and National best practice.					colleagues for contribution 08.09.23 Draft plan and annual schedule being presented to CPP 21.09.23.
		Review the CPP TOR to ensure they are in line with National best practice and the LGA peer review recommendations	KJ		21 Sept 23	Best practice examples sought 07.09.23 Draft TOR to be presented to CPP 21.09.23
1.2	Develop the CPP membership to include all 'relevant' partners, VCS and Faith Group representatives	Identify Strategic Lead representatives to be invited to the CPP	KJ		Nov 23 – date tbc	Police, Health, Leisure, Housing rep's identified. Invite to be put together to share with Cherie from Primary, Secondary schools. Adult Services rep needed
1.3	Identify lead Cllr Champions for each of the 'Pledges' (themes)	LGA workshop will support CPP members to consider lead Champions in line with Pledges	KJ		26 Oct 23	
1.4	CPP to have clear mechanisms for effective communication with CLA and CEYP; listening, responding and acting <i>(*links to Participation Strategy/Action Plan/Section 4 CP Action Plan)</i>	Design a 'You said, we did, and so what' approach to listening and responding to young people	KM	KJ	Dec 2023	Kate to share Participation Strategy/action plan with T & F group to ensure joined up approach and avoid duplication
		Consult with CLA/CEYP on the proposed process	KM		Dec 2023	
		CPP to consider the proposed 'You said, we did,	KM		16/01/24	



		and so what' approach for implementation				
1.5	CPP to establish a clear vision for the panel and establish best practice working models, in line with LGA recommendations	LGA to co-present a CPP Vision and Best Practice workshop to the CPP members	KJ		26.10.23	
1.6	Develop an accessible and relevant CP Scorecard to inform the CPP on Key Performance Indicators for CLA/CEYP	Draft a scorecard for CPP consideration and approval	KJ		21 Sept 23	1 st draft scorecard presented to CPP 18.07.23 Simplified version in progress 09.09.23 Final draft to be presented to CPP 21.09.23
		Schedule a performance 'lesson' for CPP, led by Data officer	KJ			
1.7	CPP to meet in a user friendly/accessible and informal environment where CLA / CEYP can participate	Identify accessible and user-friendly venues for CPP to be held, where CLA/CEYP can be invited to attend/participate and lead on CPP agenda points	KM	KJ	Nov 23	
1.8	CPP to utilise the support, guidance and training on offer from the LGA to develop a CPP and model of best practice	LGA to identify CP Lead Member mentor to support/guide our new Lead Member				
		LGA to provide a facilitated discussion with CLT re: Corporate approach to CP				



1.9	CLA and CEYP will co-deliver the CPP and CLA/CEYP views will be represented in the CP	Workstream to identify CLA/CEYP who wish to be involved in the CPP	KM	KJ	Nov 23	
		CLA/CEYP representatives to receive support/training/guidance in the CPP and how they can support the Panel process	KM	KJ	Jan 24	
2.	Overarching Aim – Corporate approach to Corporate Parenting					
	Corporate parenting is everyone’s responsibility. SCB and SCF are committed to children and young people being the top priority and aim towards all SCF/SBC employees understanding and demonstrating their Corporate Parenting responsibilities and ambitions through as range of strategic actions.					
	Objective	Actions	Programme Lead	Action Owner	Timescales	Progress
2.1	Develop a new Corporate Parenting Strategy; identifying the Corporate Vision, Aims and Ambitions for our CLA and CEYP, with SBC/SCF, partner agencies and organisations	Draft strategy to be prepared, using research from best practice LA’s	KJ		29.09.23	
		Stakeholder workshops to be established to consult on draft strategy	KJ		w/c 9th Oct 23	CLA/CEYP, Internal, external partners
		Present CP Strategy to SMT/SLT – with slides	KJ		End Oct (SMT) Early Nov (SLT)	



		Present draft strategy to CPP	KJ		Nov 23 – date tbc	
2.2	Ensure all SCF and SBC staff are inducted in the role and responsibilities of Corporate Parenting and have easy access to information	Produce a 'one minute guide' for all staff on 'What is a Corporate Parent?'				
		Corporate Parenting presentation to be shared during Practice week		KJ/KM	Oct 23	KJ and KM to liaise re: audience/content required etc.
		Publish the 'One Minute Guide' on SCF and SBC intranet				
		Produce a Corporate Parenting Induction programme for all staff (mandatory)				
		Arrange and organise CP refresh/awareness raising of roles/responsibilities and duties with partner agencies				Helen to liaise with health colleagues (ICB/CCG) to identify dates/meetings etc.
		CP presentation to be delivered to SCF teams/service areas				
		Seek opportunity to add CP to the Governance Leadership training programme		KJ		
2.3	Corporate Parenting is everyone's responsibility. SCF and SBC will ensure that all	Ensure all Service and Team plans include Corporate Parenting				



	departments contribute to their role as CP to demonstrate commitment and effectiveness.	priorities/contributions, that is evidence based				
		CP branding – e.g. teams background, to be drafted				
2.4	SCF/SBC are committed to prioritising childrens education, employment, and training opportunities within the 'Family Business', providing opportunities for; mentoring, work experience, apprenticeships, and employment; interview guarantee etc.	Discussion with SLT to seek agreement in principle to approach all SBC/SCF departments to request EET opportunities for CLA/CEYP; to explore this being a policy decision and offer within the Local Offer				Consideration of CL Protected Characteristic required
3.	Overarching Aim – Further Development our Local Offer for CEYP					
	The Local Authority have a duty to provide accessible information and guidance to all care experienced young people, informing them of their rights and support available to them in all areas impacting their lives and progression to independence, through a Local Offer. SCF consider the Local Offer to be an evolving menu of support, in continuous development with ceyp, to ensure that all available support locally, regionally and nationally is identified to improve the life opportunities for ceyp.					
	Objective	Actions	Programme Lead	Action Owner	Timescales	Progress
3.1	Ensure CLA and CEYP have easy access to the Local Offer, in a format that is user friendly and accessible	Consult on proposed changes to the Local Offer; design, presentation, and access	RB	KM	September 23	A survey has been sent out to all ceyp. A range of informal sessions are taking place in September to seek the views of ceyp.



		Redesign the Local Offer following consultation and user feedback	RB			
		Launch the new Local Offer and ensure all CLA / CEYP / staff have access	RB			
3.1	The Local Offer is a live and emerging offer that continues to be developed and enhanced, identifying further support to CLA /CEYP	Identify a task group to further develop the Local Offer for CLA/CEYP	RB			There is a task and finish group in place to review the current Local Offer; the group will continue to meet to seek opportunities for further development.
		Research National & Regional Local Offers deemed best practice to benchmark against Slough				
		Work in partnership with the Care Leaver Covenant to develop regional and National offers for CLA/CEYP				
3.3	All CLA and CEYP have timely access to the Leisure Offer and staff, foster carers, providers can support the referral and membership process (Everyone Active)	Review the current Leisure offer for CLA/CEYP ensuring a clear process for referral/access	RB			Leisure Services are working on putting together process – RB to identify dates
		Disseminate Leisure access guidance to all staff, partner agencies, foster carers and providers				



4.	<p>Overarching Aim – Ensure Active Participation and Engagement with our CLA and CEYP.</p> <p>SCF/SBC and partner agencies are committed to actively involving young people in the co-production of service delivery, actively listening, and responding to children and young people’s wishes, feelings and views. The Corporate Parenting Panel are ambitious in their aim to actively involve CLA and CEYP in the development of the Corporate Parenting Panel and the development of the Corporate Parenting action plan to ensure it is responsive to their lived experiences, shaping and delivering services to meet their needs.</p> <p>*The action detailed below are aligned with SCF Participation Strategy and action plan.</p>					
	Objective	Actions	Programme Lead	Action Owner	Timescales	Progress Desired Outcome
4.1	CP Pledges to be reviewed to ensure they are in line with CLA/CEYP priorities and become ‘Promises’	Contact details of all CLA/CEYP to be established, identifying a range of mechanisms to consult and engage with CLA and CEYP.	KM		September 23	KM is currently developing contact details for all CLA and CEYP to establish direct communication strategies to consult and engage.
Organise an event/survey/consultation mechanism with CLA/CEYP to review the CP ‘Pledges’		KM		October 23	Explore survey’s – CLA/CEYP details are being gathered to communicate (Faiza involved in organising text communication)	
Consult with all CLA/CEYP on proposed revision of Pledges		KM		Dec 23		
Present proposed Promises to SMT, SLT						
Present proposed Promises to CPP						



4.2	CLA/CEYP will have a 'safe space' to meet	Dedicated/accessible and safe spaces to be identified on Slough	KM	KJ		A range of options are being explored, such as; dedicated room in Observatory House, room at the 'Yes' consortium, rooms with leisure services to be explored.
		Initial costings for refurb/furniture/equipment to be scoped	KM	KJ		
		Consultation with CLA / CEYP on safe space options	KM	KJ		
4.3	SCF will provide CLA / CEYP with the opportunity to meet regularly with their peers in participation groups/activities; Reach Out and Space to Talk	Explore additional capacity for Participation Officer support and or dedicated staff to establish regular groups	KM	KJ	Sept 23	
		Re-establish the CLA and CEYP participation groups; considering opportunities for more children to meet via social media platforms (e.g. teams, text communication), as well as in person				
		Produce an annual schedule of participation group meetings				
		Review and update invitations/literature for				



		CLA/CEYP in what the participation groups are and how to get involved				
4.4	CLA and CEYP will co-deliver the CPP and CLA/CEYP views will be represented in the CP panel (linked to 1.9)	Liaise with PA's, SW's, Virtual School to identify CLA/CEYP to be CPP participants	KM	KJ	Oct 23	
		Organise a CPP workshop for CLA/CEYP identified to consider the development opportunity and seek their views on how to actively participate				
		Scope 'Total Respect' training or alternative, to enable CLA/CEYP to train CPP members and SCF/SBC staff				
4.5	CLA/CEYP will have opportunities throughout the year to participate in fun activities/consultation/service development events	Produce an annual programme of consultation and events (calendar) to guide themed participation and engagement				Draft themed activities to be presented to CPP 21/09/23 – identify consultation events to be incorporated into the Participation Strategy for CLA/CEYP
		Plan and prepare annual participation and consultation events, such as, Have Your Say Day, Take Over Day etc.				
5.	Overarching Aim – Themed activities linked to Pledges (to become promises)					



Below are the current 'pledges' highlighting SBC and SCF commitments to CLA and CEYP. The action plan will identify specific actions relating to the pledges to ensure progress and development as required. These actions are dynamic and will evolve as priority actions are identifying in real time.

Be Healthy

- We will make sure you have access to and are provided with the right advice and support to ensure you are physically and emotional healthy.
- We will make sure you have the opportunity to take part in activities and hobbies of your choice.

Be Ambitious

- We will help you to get the best educational outcomes and support you with your education.
- We will ensure you receive the best advice and support about applying for college and university, applying for a job and for your future career.

Be Resilient

- We will listen if you have a complaint or would like to praise someone.
- We will offer you the support of an advocate or independent visitor because sometimes you may find it difficult to say what you want, and you may want some support to put your views forward.
- We will support you to maintain positive relationships with your friends and family. If this is not possible, we will tell you why.
- We will make sure your social worker spends time with you to get to know you and understand you
- We promise not to change your social worker unless it is absolutely necessary. If this happens, we will tell you why.

Be Happy

- We will help you to be involved in choosing your home and to know more about where you are moving to, including being able to visit your new carers before you move.
- We will listen to you and involve you in the decisions and plans that are made about you and your future.
- We will help you to be involved in choosing the right school or setting for you, to help you enjoy learning.

Be Independent

- We will help and support you to learn about how to budget, cook, clean and other independent living skills.

Be Safe



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will help and support you to stay safe and feel safe. • We will make sure you know who your social worker, independent reviewing officer and learning advocates are and how to contact them. 						
	Objective	Actions	Programme Lead	Action Owner	Timescales	Progress
5.1	Be Healthy – ensure CLA receive their IHA’s and RHA’s in line with statutory timeframes All SCF and SBC departments to offer mentor, work experience and/or apprenticeship opportunities to CLA/CEYP	Meeting with relevant HoS to be established to review IHA, RHA referral process	KJ	RB	Oct 23	
		Meeting with health partners to established to review process, identify issues, and seek resolution		RB	Oct 23	
		Task and Finish group to review monthly progress, using performance data				
		Progress reporting to CPP				





**Corporate Parenting Panel
Annual Reporting Schedule/Themed Topics**

CPP Dates	CPP reporting Schedule / Themed topics	CLA & CEYP Participation events
21 September 2023	Next Steps & Forward Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Parenting Action Plan • Reporting Schedule/Participation Themes Annual Fostering Report	24 – 28 October 2023; National Care Leavers Week October half term - Practice week (staff learning opportunities)
26 th October 2023 (1 off event) CPP Workshop	LGA CPP Workshop	
November 2023 – date tbc	Virtual School – Education report (Key Stage results) Sufficiency Strategy CP Strategy Annual Adoption report	
16 th January 2024	Regulation 45 report (Breakaway - short breaks provision) Annual Complaints report Quarterly fostering report	CPP to consider proposed 'You said, We did, So what' approach to hearing and acting of CLA/CEYP priorities (CPAP)
End of May 2024 – date tbc	Annual Children in Care report Quarterly fostering report	15 – 28 May 2024; National Foster Carer Fortnight May half-term – CLA celebration event and awards
End July 2024 – date tbc	Annual CEYP report Regulation 45 report (Breakaway - short breaks provision)	August 2024; Have Your Say Day (CLA/CEYP fun day event and consultation)
September 2024 – date tbc	Quarterly fostering report Quality Assurance and Reviewing Service annual report	
November 2024 – date tbc	Virtual School – Education report (Key Stage results)	November 2024; Take Over Day

		(CLA/CEYP – Take Over SCF/SBC Services)
January 2025	Annual Adoption Report	

DRAFT



Corporate Parenting Scorecard

(Data August 2023)



A hands-on approach to help children in Slough be
..... Safe, Secure and Successful

About this Scorecard...

The Corporate Parenting Panel is the forum whereby the Lead Member for Children, Councillors, Officers, and relevant partners have oversight and the ability to seek assurances regarding our collective Corporate Parenting responsibilities and achievements against the Corporate Parenting Principles (C & SW Act 2017).

Panel members will be seeking to ensure, as far as possible, secure, nurturing and positive experiences for our children looked after and care experienced young people.

In order to fulfil these responsibilities, it is important that panel members understand our cohort of children looked after and care experienced young people. To have oversight of our Key Performance Indicator outcomes, locally, and benchmarking against our statistical neighbours and the National context.

The Corporate Parenting Scorecard provides the most up to date data regarding our profile, strengths and areas that require focussed improvement to ensure scrutiny, oversight and targets to improve the lives of, and have high aspirations for our children looked after and care experienced young people.

Our Scorecard will include information relating to specific areas directly impacting our children, such as, health and wellbeing, placement stability, distance from home, fostering and adoption, and outcomes for our care leavers,


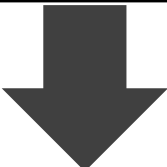
Contents

Children Looked After slides 4-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overall number of CLA• Rates per 10'000• Demographics• UASC• No. CLA entering & Leaving Care• No. of children adopted	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Health Assessments• Dental Checks• Long Term Placement Stability• Distance from Home• Visiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Change of Social Worker• Social Worker Workload
Fostering slide 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No. of Fostering households		
Care Experienced Young People slides 18-22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overall number of CEYP• Demographics• Education, Employment and Training (EET)• Accommodation suitability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Care Experienced Young People's Advisor Workload	



Children Looked After (CLA) – Number of CLA

The number of CLA can change on a daily basis, this is regularly monitored. To allow for benchmarking with comparator groups a Rate per 10,000 children aged 0-17 is used.

			Slough Performance			Benchmarking (as at 31/03/2022)		
Measure	Good to be	Target	Aug 2022	Aug 2023	Trend last 12 months	Statistical Neighbours	South East	England
No. of CLA	n/a	n/a	244	231		n/a	n/a	n/a
Rate of CLA per 10,000 children aged 0-17	n/a	n/a	55.9	52.9		58.7	56.0	70.0

The decrease in the number of CLA is a result of a decrease in a unaccompanied asylum seeking children over the last 12 months. A number of these children have either turned 18 since last year or have been age assessed to be over 18 and returned to the care of the Home Office.



Children Looked After (CLA) – Demographics

CLA: 235



Females

Males

94
(40%)

141
(60%)

CWD

CWD

4
(3%)

23
(10%)

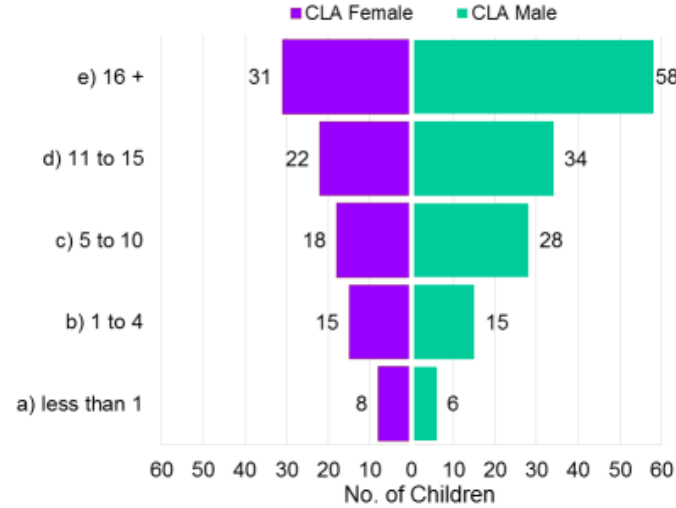
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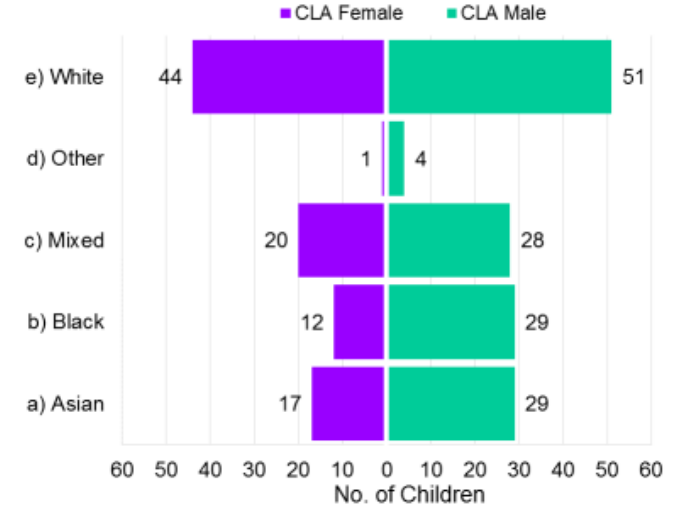
1
(<1%)

3
(1%)

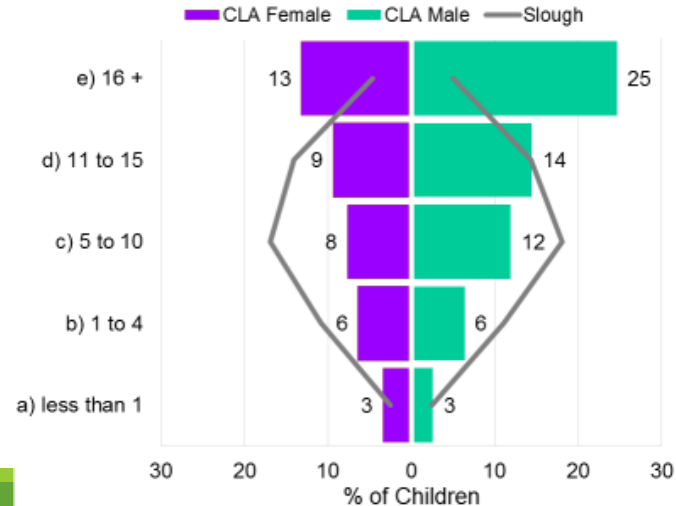
No. of Slough CLA by Age and Gender



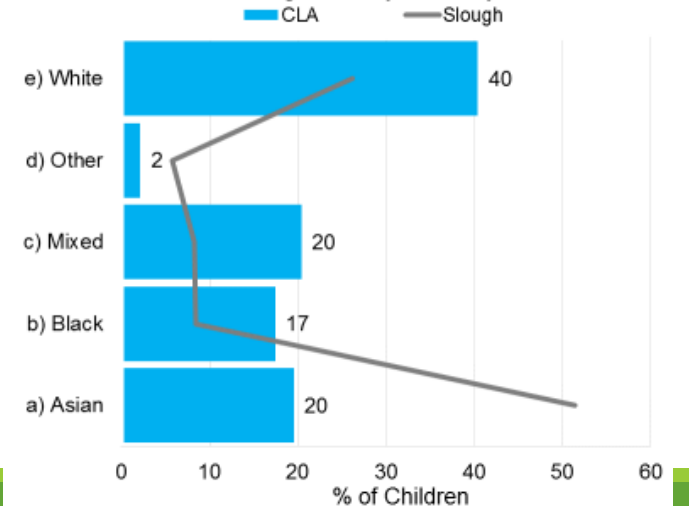
No. of Slough CLA by Ethnicity and Gender



% of Slough CLA by Age and Gender



% of Slough CLA by Ethnicity





Children Looked After (CLA) – Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

These are CLA who are seeking asylum in the UK but who have been separated from their parents or carers. LAs are expected to exercise the same Corporate Parenting responsibilities for these children until they turn 18.

Measure	Good to be	Target	Slough Performance			Benchmarking (as at 31/03/2022)		
			Aug 2022	Aug 2023	Trend last 12 months	Statistical Neighbours	South East	England
No. of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children	n/a	n/a	21	28	↑	n/a	n/a	n/a
% of CLA that are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children	n/a	n/a	9%	12%	↑	15%	10%	7%

Although there has been an increase of those in care compared to the same time last year, the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children coming into care has decreased.



Children Looked After (CLA) – Entries into Care

The number of children coming into care can vary on a day to day basis and for a variety of reasons, including where they have experienced significant harm, abandonment or are unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

			Slough Performance			Benchmarking (as at 31/03/2022)		
Measure	Good to be	Target	Aug 2022	Aug 2023	Trend last 12 months	Statistical Neighbours	South East	England
No. of children entering care (Year to Date)	n/a	n/a	65 (64)	32 (32)		n/a	n/a	n/a
Rate of children entering care per 10,000 children aged 0-17 (Year to Date)	n/a	n/a	36	18		27	26	26

The decrease in entries into care has been impacted by the increased focus and resourcing on managing risk to enable children to remain in the care of their parents. The legal gateway process has been reviewed together with the threshold to issue court proceedings. And there has been a decrease in the number of UASCs that have entered care.



Children Looked After (CLA) – Exits from Care

Children can leave for a number of reasons such as being adopted, returning to their immediate or extended family or as a result of turning 18.

			Slough Performance			Benchmarking (as at 31/03/2022)		
Measure	Good to be	Target	Aug 2022	Aug 2023	Trend last 12 months	Statistical Neighbours	South East	England
No. of Children Exiting from care	n/a	n/a	55 (53)	52 (52)		n/a	n/a	n/a
Rate of children exiting care per 10,000 children aged 0-17	n/a	n/a	15	14		25	25	26

The most prevalent reasons for children exiting from care in 2023-24 include Returning Home (13), Age Assessed to be over 18 (13), Staying Put Arrangements (7), Special Guardianship Orders (6) and children moving into Independent Living Arrangements (6). 68% of exits from care were for positive reasons.



Children Looked After (CLA) – Adoptions

Whilst the intention is to always try to rehabilitate children back home to their families, for some children this is not always possible. For some of these children adoption maybe a more appropriate option to provide them with permanency in a forever family.

			Slough Performance			Benchmarking (as at 31/03/2022)		
Measure	Good to be	Target	Aug 2022	Aug 2023	Trend last 12 months	Statistical Neighbours	South East	England
No. of children exiting care as a result of adoption (Year to Date)	n/a	n/a	9	2		n/a	n/a	n/a
% of children exiting care as a result of adoption (Year to Date)	n/a	n/a	16%	4%		12%	8%	10%

Although performance has decreased over the last 12 months, performance remains above targeted. Challenges experienced in July include out of area assessments and delays in reports received from health.



Children Looked After (CLA) – Health Assessments

CLA have many of the same health related issues as their peers, however the extent of these is greater because of their past experiences. Health assessments are undertaken to promote and monitor children's physical and mental health.


Measure	Good to be	Target	Slough Performance			Benchmarking (as at 31/03/2022)		
			Aug 2022	Aug 2023	Trend last 12 months	Statistical Neighbours	South East	England
% of CLA (in care for 12 months+) with a Review Health Assessment within timescales	High	90%	93% (148)	90% (147)		92%	85%	89%

Although performance has decreased slightly over the last 12 months, it remains on target and in line with comparator groups. Challenges include delays in referrals to health, out of area health assessments and some young people refusing to attend.



Children Looked After (CLA) – Dental Checks

Healthy teeth and gums are important for all children and are also particularly important for children in care. As a Corporate Parent we need to ensure that the children in our care, maintain good dental hygiene.

Measure	Good to be	Target	Slough Performance			Benchmarking (as at 31/03/2022)		
			Aug 2022	Aug 2023	Trend last 12 months	Statistical Neighbours	South East	England
% of CLA (in care for 12 months+) with a Dental Check within timescales	High	90%	73% (116)	81% (132)		70%	74%	70%

Post COVID there continues to be national challenges in obtaining access to Dentists, with appointments with NHS Dentists in high demand particularly for those children placed outside of Slough. Performance in Slough continues to improve and is above that of comparator groups.



Children Looked After (CLA) – Long Term Stability

Remaining in a long term stable placement can have a number of benefits for children looked after. These include benefitting from a consistent relationship with their carers, improvements in educational attainment, physical and mental health and their own sense of belonging to a family as well as their wellbeing and happiness.

Measure	Good to be	Target	Slough Performance			Benchmarking (as at 31/03/2022)		
			Aug 2022	Aug 2023	Trend last 12 months	Statistical Neighbours	South East	England
% of CLA (aged under 16 and in care for 2.5 years or more) in a stable placement (2 years or more)	High	65%	61% (38)	56% (29)		92%	85%	89%

It is a DfE requirement that this measure only takes into account children until the age of 16 – this is in order to measure the stability experienced by children looked after prior to their formative years. A number of Slough children have remained in long term stable placements over the age of 16. This measure does not always factor in reasons as to why placements have ended. Some of the reasons why long term stable placements in Slough have ended over the last 12 months (other than due to the children turning 16) include children returning home, being adopted, foster carers giving notice due to children’s behaviour or family circumstances.



Children Looked After (CLA) – Distance from Home

It is important that children looked after remain close to home, so that they can maintain their family networks and friendships. It also allows the LA and Partner Agencies to work together to ensure that their needs are being met locally.



Measure	Good to be	Target	Slough Performance			Benchmarking (as at 31/03/2022)		
			Aug 2022	Aug 2023	Trend last 12 months	Statistical Neighbours	South East	England
% of CLA placed more than 20 miles away from home	Low	20%	26% (55)	26% (53)		19%	28%	21%

74% of children looked after were placed within 20 miles of their homes – this involves 144 children. Although every effort is made to place children as close to home as possible sometimes as part of the children’s care plan it may be appropriate to place them at a distance. The availability of placements that can meet the complex needs of children also means that children may be placed away from their homes.



Children Looked After (CLA) – Visiting

We visit children for various reasons including to see whether they are well, developing as expected, that the placement is meeting their needs and to ensure that actions from their care plan are being progressed.

Measure	Good to be	Target	Slough Performance			Benchmarking (as at 31/03/2022)		
			Aug 2022	Aug 2023	Trend last 12 months	Statistical Neighbours	South East	England
% of CLA seen within timescales	High	90%	89% (219)	95% (224)		n/a	n/a	n/a
% of CLA seen alone within timescales	High	90%	76% (187)	90% (213)		n/a	n/a	n/a

Performance remains high with 95% of children having been seen within timescales. Where children have not been seen within timescales it is because children, carers or social workers not being available. In some instances we are unable to see children alone due to the additional needs that they have. Visits are tracked weekly to understand which children have not yet been seen and the reasons why and when the next visit is going to occur.



Children Looked After (CLA) – Change of Social Worker

It is important for a child’s social worker to remain consistent to allow a relationship to be formed between them and the child. This also helps to ensure that actions from the child’s care plan are completed in a timely way.


Measure	Good to be	Target	Slough Performance			Benchmarking (as at 31/03/2022)		
			Aug 2022	Aug 2023	Trend last 12 months	Statistical Neighbours	South East	England
% of CLA (in care for 12 months or more) with 2 or more changes in social worker in the last 12 months	Low	n/a	51% (88)	32% (53)		n/a	n/a	n/a

Staff turnover has reduced which means that children are experiencing fewer changes in social worker. Changes in a social worker can occur when children are transferred to different services (within children’s social care) which specialise in the progression of key aspects of their plan.



Children Looked After (CLA) – Social Worker Workload

To enable social workers to progress children's plans and build relationships with the child in a meaningful way their workloads need to allow them the time to do that.


Measure	Good to be	Target	Slough Performance			Benchmarking (as at 31/03/2022)		
			Aug 2022	Aug 2023	Trend last 12 months	Statistical Neighbours	South East	England
Average no. of children allocated to Social Workers in CLA & Support Services	Low	18	16.9	15.5		n/a	n/a	n/a

Currently social worker workloads are below target as the teams are fully staffed and turnover has remained at it's lowest for quite some time.



Fostering (IFA) – Fostering Households

Foster carers provide homes for children and enable them to remain within a family environment. It is crucial for LAs to have their own in house foster carers when children need to be placed, allowing children to be placed locally and allows for LAs to keep placement costs manageable.

			Slough Performance			Benchmarking (as at 31/03/2022)		
Measure	Good to be	Target	Aug 2022	Aug 2023	Trend last 12 months	Statistical Neighbours	South East	England
No. of in house fostering households	High	60	47	48		n/a	n/a	n/a

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Currently the numbers of in house foster carers has remained stable and there are 7 households currently going through the recruitment process.

It should be noted that there is a national shortage of foster carers, with many carers retiring and feeling the impacts of a post COVID fallout and the cost of living crisis making it ever more challenging to recruit and retain carers.



Care Experienced Young People (CEYP) – No. of CEYP

These are young people who have spent time in care – specifically they will have been in care for at least 13 weeks spanning their 16th birthday. A personal advisor is allocated to support them from the age of 16th up until the age of 25 (if required) to help them develop their independent skills as they transition into adulthood.

			Slough Performance			Benchmarking (as at 31/03/2022)		
Measure	Good to be	Target	Aug 2022	Aug 2023	Trend last 12 months	Statistical Neighbours	South East	England
No. of CEYP eligible for services	n/a	n/a	228	249		n/a	n/a	n/a

The number of young people who meet this criteria continues to rise. Over the last 12 months there has been a 9% increase due to older children coming into care and as a result of the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children.



Care Experienced Young People (CEYP) – Demographics

CEYP: 249



Females

Males

92
(37%)

157
(63%)

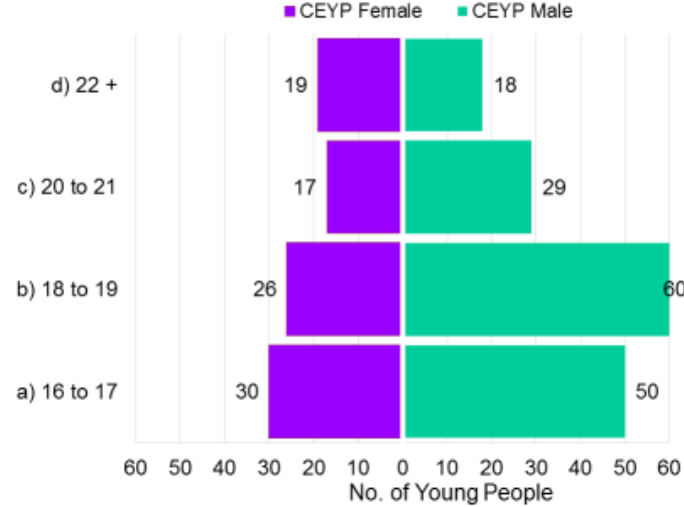
CWD

CWD

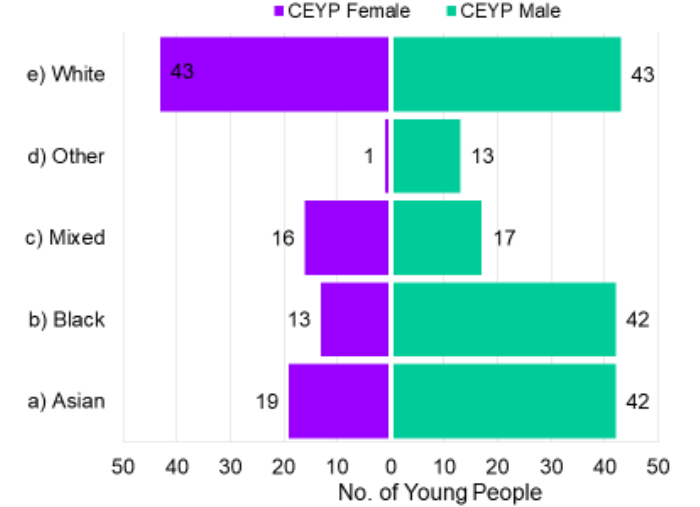
6
(2%)

27
(11%)

No. of Slough CEYP by Age and Gender



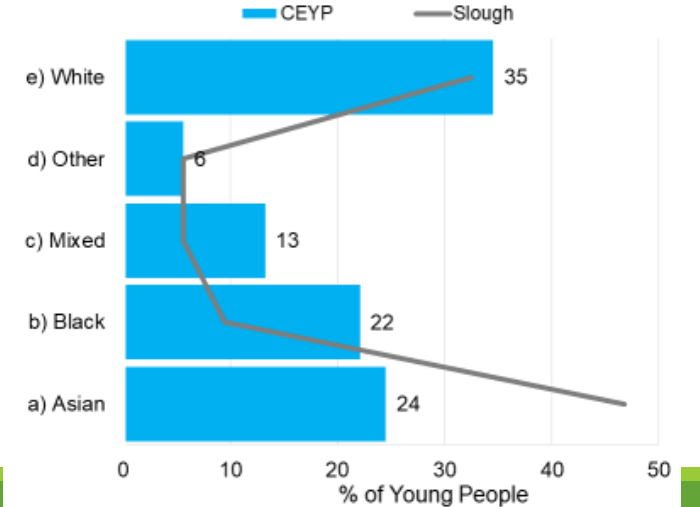
No. of Slough CEYP by Ethnicity and Gender



% of Slough CEYP by Age and Gender



% of Slough CEYP by Ethnicity





Care Experienced Young People (CEYP) – EET Status



We want positive outcomes for young people and therefore monitoring whether they are in Education, Employment or Training (EET) allows us to facilitate them becoming contributing members of the communities that they live in.

Measure	Good to be	Target	Slough Performance			Benchmarking (as at 31/03/2022)		
			Aug 2022	Aug 2023	Trend last 12 months	Statistical Neighbours	South East	England
% of CEYP (aged 19-21) that are in Education, Employment or Training	High	52%	50% (35)	47% (42)		56%	57%	55%

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Challenges for young people getting into and staying in EET include child care responsibilities, their mental health and wellbeing, disruption to their accommodation, lack of work experience, developing the resilience to remain in EET, being in custody, awaiting the outcome of their asylum claim and criminal exploitation concerns.



Care Experienced Young People – Accommodation



We need to ensure that young people are in safe and suitable accommodation that is appropriate for their for their age and development.

			Slough Performance			Benchmarking (as at 31/03/2022)		
Measure	Good to be	Target	Aug 2022	Aug 2023	Trend last 12 months	Statistical Neighbours	South East	England
% of CEYP (aged 19-21) that are in Suitable Accommodation	High	85%	91% (64)	90% (80)		89%	88%	85%

Page 47

Most young people are in suitable accommodation. However there are 11 young people in unsuitable accommodation, this includes 9 young people in prison and 2 in temporary housing (i.e. Bed and Breakfasts) which have been placed their by housing departments.



To enable personal advisors to progress young people's plans and build relationships with the young people in a meaningful way their workloads need to allow them the time to do that.

Measure	Good to be	Target	Slough Performance			Benchmarking (as at 31/03/2022)		
			Aug 2022	Aug 2023	Trend last 12 months	Statistical Neighbours	South East	England
Average no. of young people allocated to CEYP Advisors	Low	18	25.2	28.4		n/a	n/a	n/a

This measure is a combination of the work that personal advisors do with different cohorts (aged 16-25). Due to the increases in young people that meet the criteria for care leaving support workloads for PAs are increasing.



Thank you for listening

Contact details go here

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SCF Independent Fostering Agency

(SCF IFA)

Annual Report 2022-23

Report Summary

This report details our activity throughout the year to provide safe and secure foster care placements to our children looked after, as well as measures taken to increase the recruitment and retention of our in-house foster carers.

Report Author: Yemi Ukwenu
Service Manager, Slough Children First , Independent Fostering Agency

Version: 1.1

Date: May 2023

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25 Windsor Road , Slough, Berkshire SL1 2EL

Registered Company: England and Wales:
9487106

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Purpose of the Report

This report informs Slough Children First (SCF) Board Members, Elected Members, Senior Managers, and the Fostering Panel about the crucial role that our foster carers play in providing high quality care for children who are looked after. Following on from reports in previous years, it provides further details of trends regarding the number and characteristics of children looked after by foster carers as well as a profile of our foster care resource which is managed and provided by the Slough Children First (SCF) as an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA). The report includes an update regarding ongoing developments in the IFA which recruits, assesses and supports foster carers. The report provides information about the activity and outcomes achieved in 2022 by the service and plans for the year 2023/24.

The Fostering service remains child-focused, and the vision aligns with SCF emerging corporate parenting priorities. The strategic priorities for our children in care are shaped and influenced by local and national priorities and we will focus our sufficiency approach through the lens of:

1. Supporting engagement and achievement in education, training, and employment.
2. Ensuring that our children in care and care leavers have stable homes and the right help.
3. We will listen and respond to the voice of our children, young people, and care leavers. They will help to develop and shape our strategic plans and delivery of services.
4. Ensuring that our children, young people, and care leavers are healthy. We will help our children and care leavers to have access to help for their physical needs and emotional wellbeing.
5. Developing a highly effective Care Leavers partnership to provide ongoing help in a variety of ways for them.
6. Supporting children, young people and care leavers to have fun and have new experiences to develop their own interests.

The Annual Fostering Service Report meets the requirements of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 (Regulation 35) and Fostering Services: National Minimum standard 25.7.

Our Commitment

The Independent Fostering Agency within the Company is committed to:

- Providing a range of safe and secure foster placements to meet the assessed needs of children and young people in care and to promote and safeguard their welfare.

- Providing placements that promote stability and positive outcomes for children and young people by working in partnership with children and young people, carers, birth families, other professionals and the community.
- Ensuring Foster Carers and their families receive professional guidance, support and training as appropriate to help them fulfil their roles as effectively as possible.

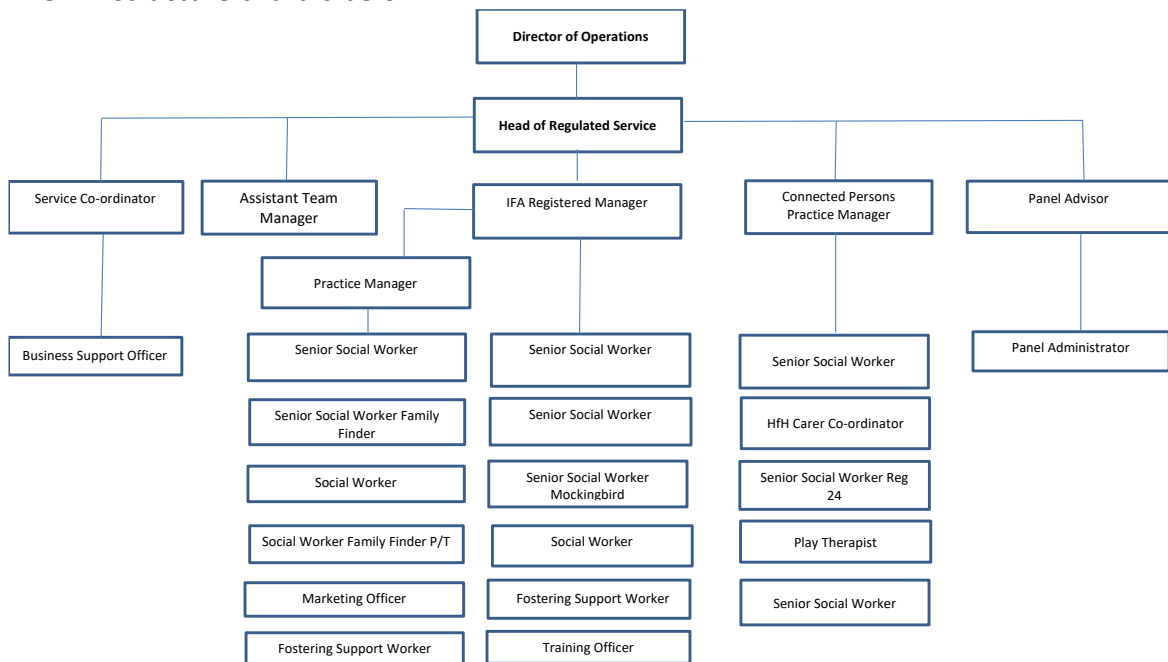
The IFA delivers the following services to meet the needs of children:

- The recruitment, assessment, approval, supervision, support, training, and development of prospective and approved foster careers, including approved family and friends' carers.
- A duty referral service for identifying suitable placement matches with in-house fostering families for short breaks, respite, short term, and long-term placements.
- Family finding and matching for children permanently with carers internally and with external providers if there is no in-house resource available.
- A Fostering Panel, with an Independent Chair make recommendations on the suitability of foster carers. The panel is supported by a Panel Advisor and a Panel Administrator.
- A comprehensive learning and development programme for foster carers with a range of topics.
- A dedicated Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) to undertake annual and three yearly independent reviews of foster carers.
- Out of Hours support to our fostering families.

The day-to-day management of the work of the Independent Fostering Agency is undertaken by the Registered Manager and Fostering Practice Manager in consultation with the Head of Service for the Independent Fostering Agency (IFA). The responsibility for fostering approvals and permanent match decisions rests with the Director of Operations who is the Agency's Decision Maker. The IFA Head of Service who is also the Responsible Individual is the Agency Decision Maker for all foster carer reviews. The SCF Strategic Leadership Team receives regular information on the management and outcomes of the service to update them about carrying out their responsibilities as corporate parents.

Service Structure

The IFA structure chart is below.



Promoting Equality and Diversity

SCF has an Equal Opportunity Policy which outlines the general position on the protected characteristics as defined within the Equality Act 2020. These policies apply to the recruitment and retention of foster carers and to the care of looked after children. In April 2023, Slough Borough Council (SBC) and SCF approved Care Leaver's (care experienced young people) as a Protected Characteristic. The IFA wholeheartedly supports the principle of equality of opportunity and opposes all forms of discrimination on the grounds of race, creed, nationality, ethnicity or national origin, religion, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, medical condition, disability and age. It is in both the service's best interest and those who work with the service to ensure that the attributes, talents, and skills available throughout the community are recognised and utilised in the interests of children looked after. To this end, the overriding principle is that the foster carers recruited and approved are those best able to provide a stable and safe home for children in care.

Inspection

The Fostering Service is independently inspected and was graded as **'Good'** in the July 2021 Ofsted inspection. The Ofsted grading of 'Good' is a positive demonstration of the progress the service has made over the years and the improved service we offer children, young people, and families in Slough. The IFA continues to strive for excellence and working towards continuous improvement, alongside SCF's Improvement and Business Plan ambitions, as we move to the next stage of our improvement journey.

Our Foster Carers Profile and Fostering Placement statistics and analysis.

- On 31st March 2023 we had:



45 mainstream Fostering Households



81 individual foster carers

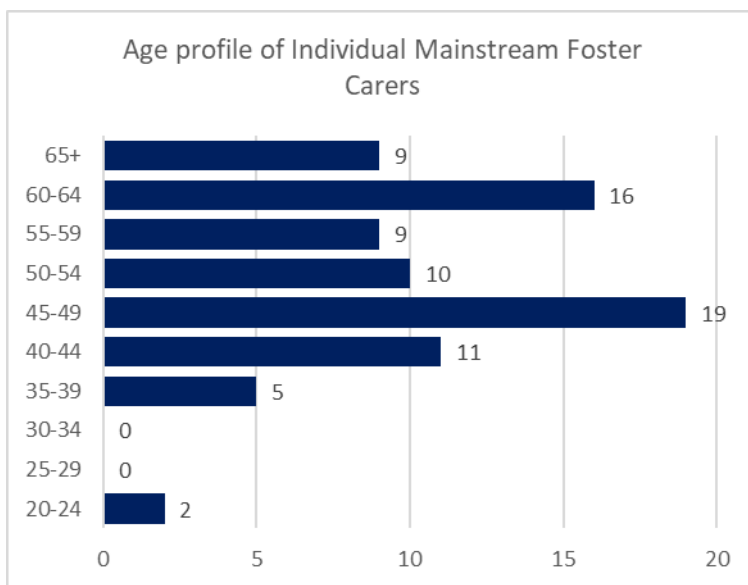


36 Male foster carers

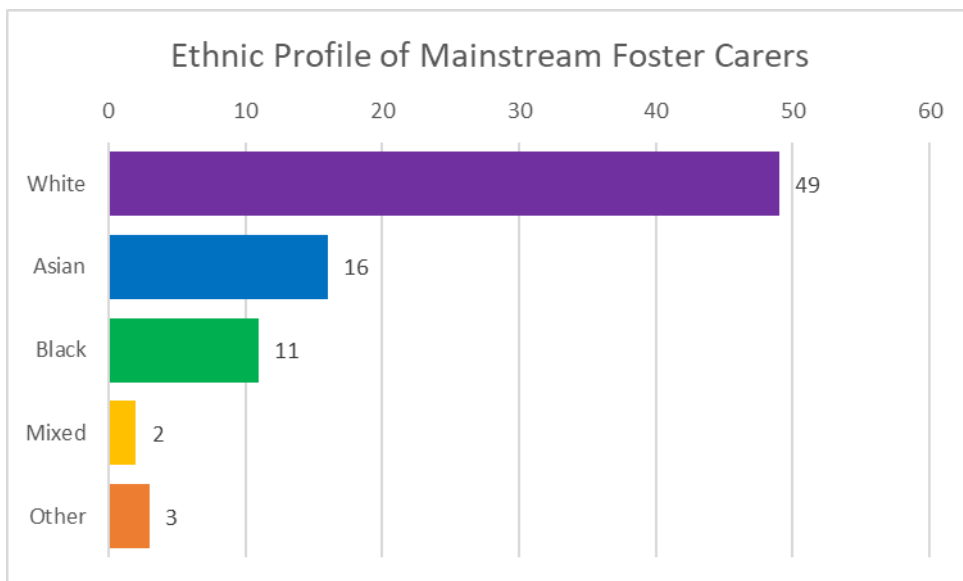


45 Female foster carers

Our foster carers are representative of wide range of age groups, with our youngest carers aged between 20-24 and our oldest carers aged between 60 – 65. Most carers are aged between 40 and 49.

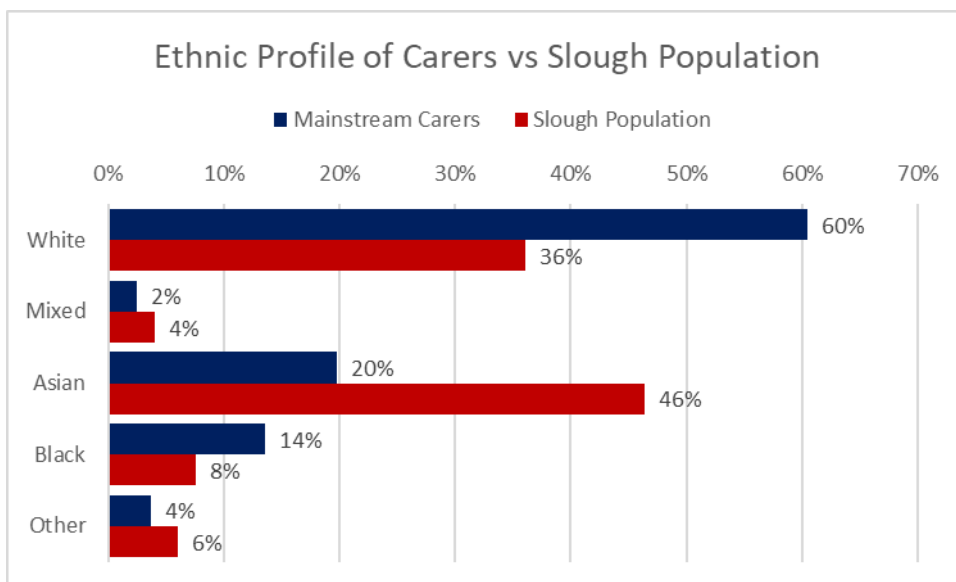


There were 9 single carer households



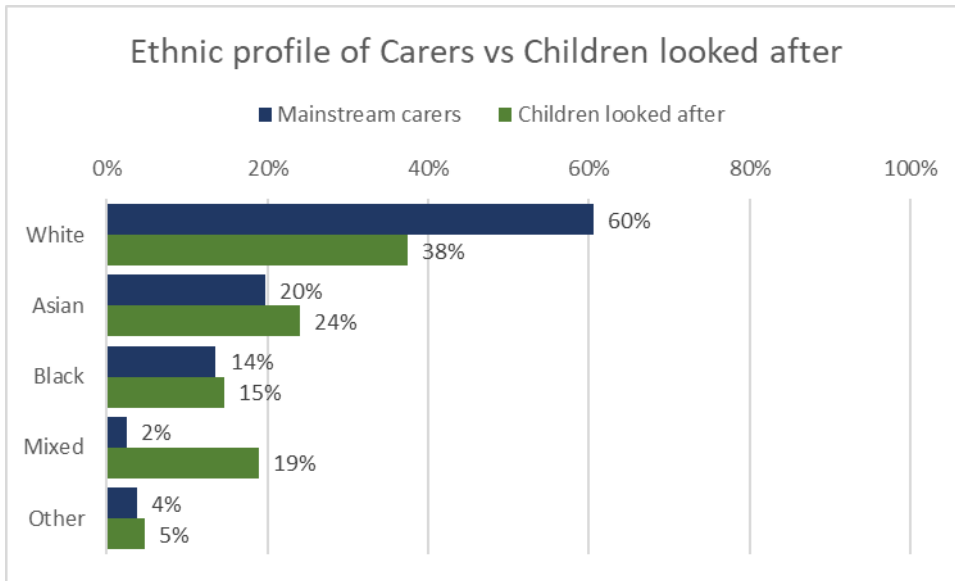
Although the majority of carers (60%) are from a white background, there is representation from other communities, with 20% of carers from the Asian community, 14% from the black community, 2% from a mixed background (dual heritage) and 4% from other backgrounds.

When compared to the Slough population, there is over-representation of carers from a White and Black community. Carers from an Asian background are significantly underrepresented.



Similar comparisons can be drawn when comparing the profile of carers against children looked after. There is an overrepresentation of carers from the White community and under representation of those from the Asian community. Of note is the significant under representation of carers from a mixed background (2%) with 19% of Slough children looked after being from a mixed background. A key focus of revised recruitment strategy and action plan is to provide targeted recruitment activity to seek foster carers from

diverse backgrounds that are representative of children looked after population and reflective of the different needs of the children we look after.



The majority of our foster carers are from the UK, we have foster carers from all over the world including the Caribbean, Africa, South East Asia, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Mainland Europe.



The average time that a mainstream fostering household has been approved for is 7 years, demonstrating long term stability and support for our children looked after.

The longest serving foster carer has been with Slough for 19 years and 10 months.



Fostering Placement statistics and analysis - April 2022 to March 2023 of Children Looked After in SCF.

Gender of our Children Looked After

98

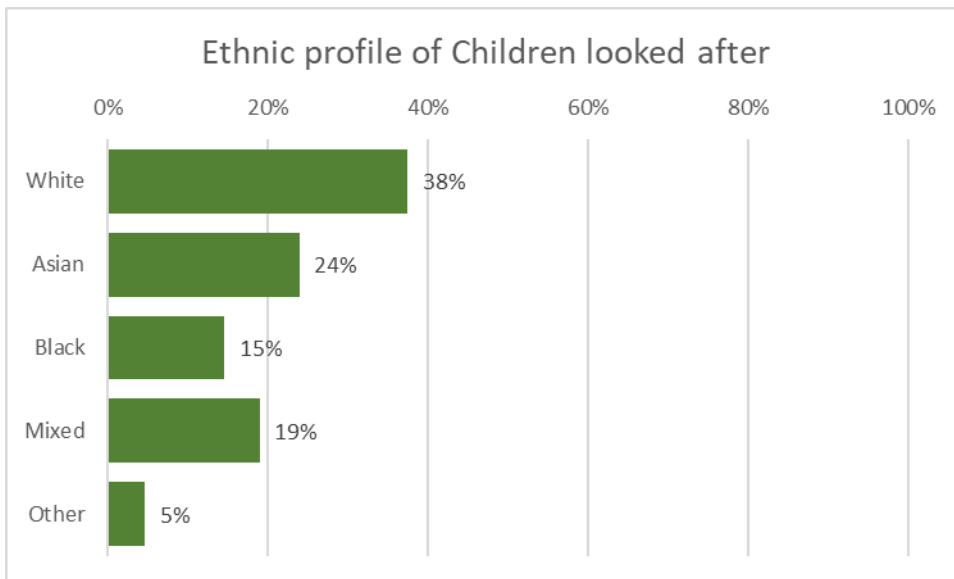


Are female

155



Are male



Under 1 year



18

Aged 1-4



31

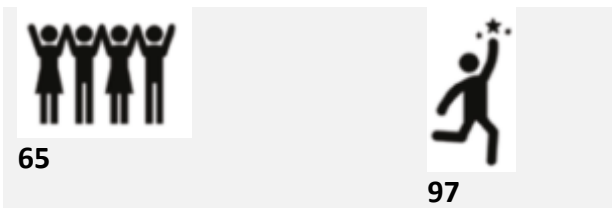
Aged 5 to 10



44

Aged 11-15

Aged 16-17



Slough Children looked after placed with mainstream in house foster carers

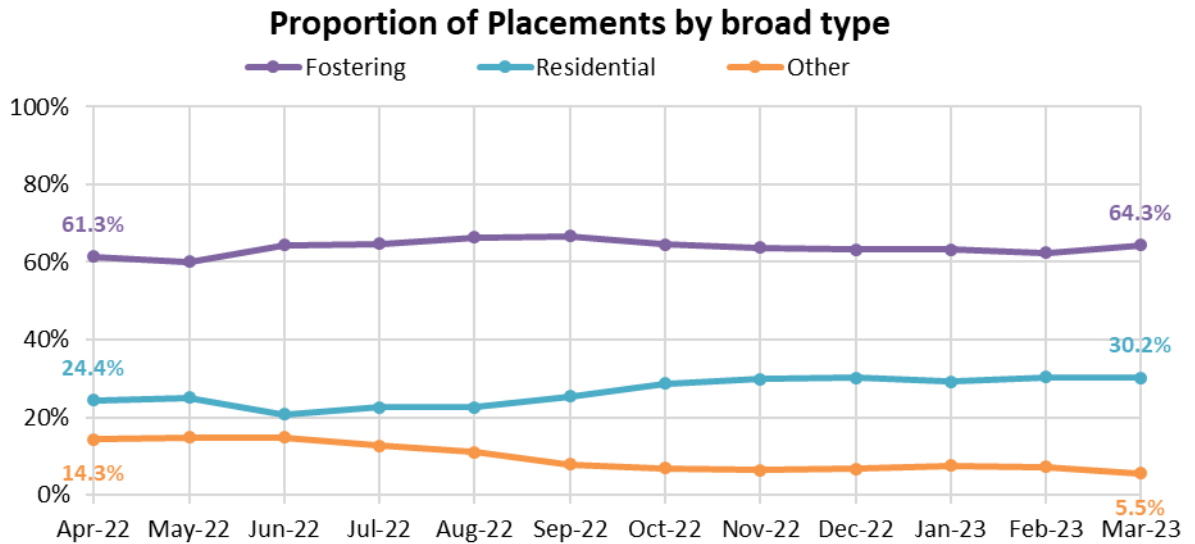
Slough Children looked after placed with External Independent Fostering Agencies



Slough Children looked after placed with Friends and Family foster carers.



The proportion of children looked after in SCF and placed in any type of foster placement has increased in the last 12 months, from 61.3 % at the end of April 2022 to 64.3% at the end of March 2023. Residential type placements (this includes semi-independent, children’s homes, mother and baby placements etc.) saw the largest increase in the last 12 months; this is due to an increase in unaccompanied asylum-seeking children requiring our support and services due to absent parenting, over this 12-month period who are placed in semi-independent accommodation outside of the Fostering Service.



Between April 2022 and March 2023, the overall number of foster placements increased from 146 to 164 children. There was an ‘in year high’ of 164 fostering placements and a low of 146 whilst residential placements (including semi-independent placements) rose from 58 children in (April -2022) to 77 in (March-2023).

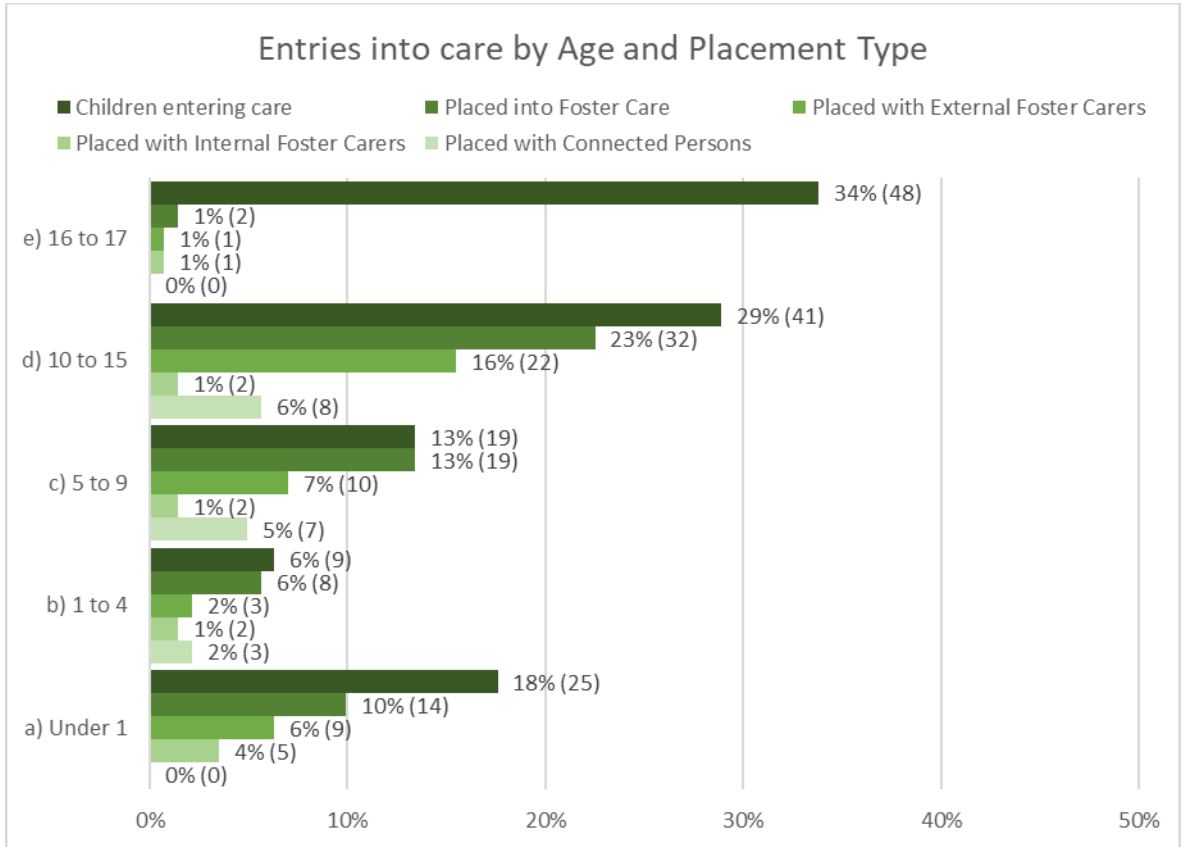
External Fostering placements increased to a high of 98 (Oct-22, 58% of fostering placements at the time), whilst the high for the In-house Fostering placements was 44 (Mar 2023, 17% of fostering placements at the time). The highest number of children in Connected Carer (Friends and Family) placements in year was 34 (Jul-22, 24.7% of all fostering placements at the time).

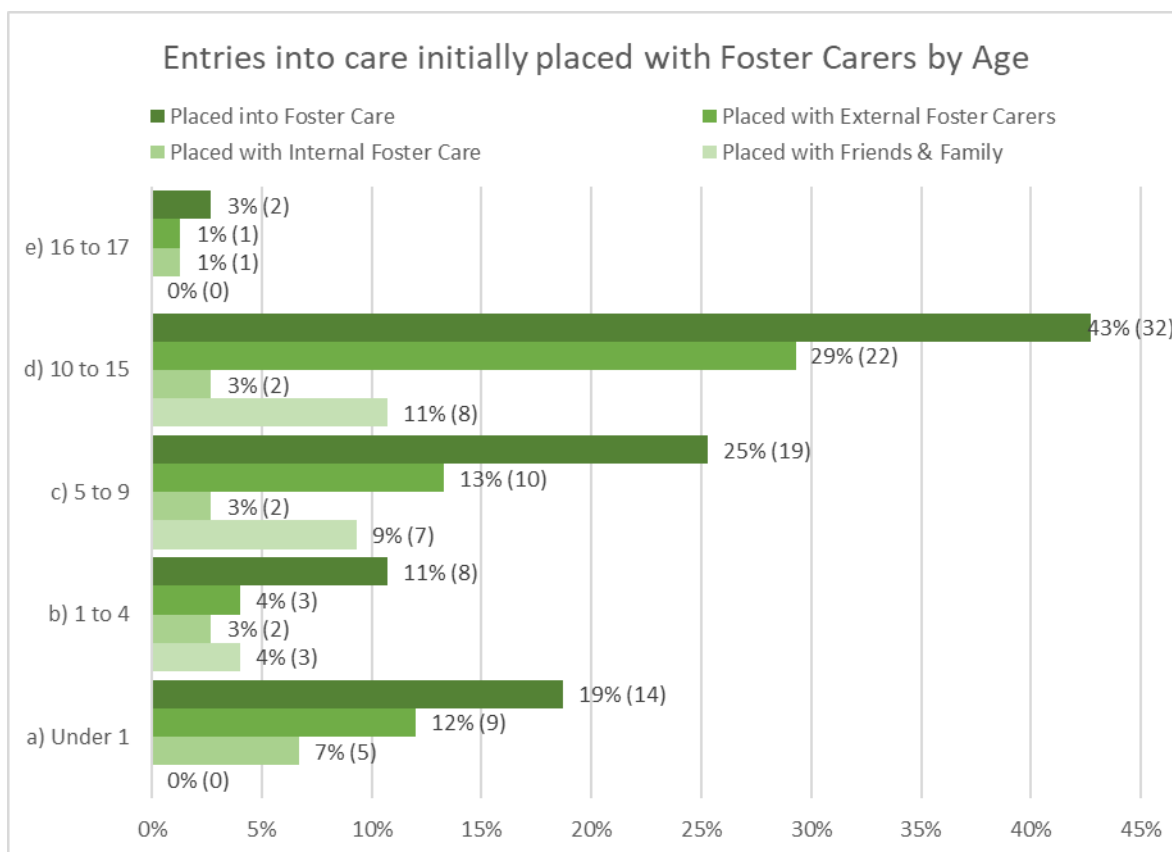
In terms of age of children entering care, proportionally most of the children that came into care in 2022-23 were aged 10 and over (63%) , with a third aged 16-17. Of all the children entering care in the year, 52.8% were initially placed in fostering placements. This consisted of 45 children (31.7%) placed with external foster carers, whilst 12 children (8.5%) were initially placed with in-house carers, and 18 children (12.7%) were initially placed with Connected Carers (friends and family) carers.

When looking exclusively at the 75 children in year that were initially placed with foster carers on their entry into care, we can see from their ages that 24% of the cohort of children were aged 10 and over, whilst 29% of the cohort were aged 5 and under. This highlights the need for targeted recruitment of foster carers to support children age 10+ and for teenagers. Our Sufficiency Strategy for 2023/26 highlights the sufficiency gaps for children by age, informing our Fostering Recruitment & Retention action planning for the forthcoming year in regard to targeted recruitment.

67% of children over 10 were placed with foster carers from external IFA’s, further highlighting the sufficiency gap with our internal IFA for this age group. It is important to highlight that 24% of these children were placed with Connected (friends and family)

carers, which are family or friends with an existing relationship with a child, who are assessed to care for that child only. 3 children over the age of 10 were placed with in-house carers. In year there were a total of 12 children that were initially accommodated within in house fostering placements (8.5%).





2022-23, saw an increase in the duration of time that children are in care. Proportionately, the largest increase related to children requiring care for a period between 1-6 months (this increased by 38%) and those requiring care for a period between 7-12 months (increased by 39%). This demonstrates that children are remaining in our care for longer periods of time, and therefore increasing demand on the provision of foster care placements able to provide care for children over extended periods of time.

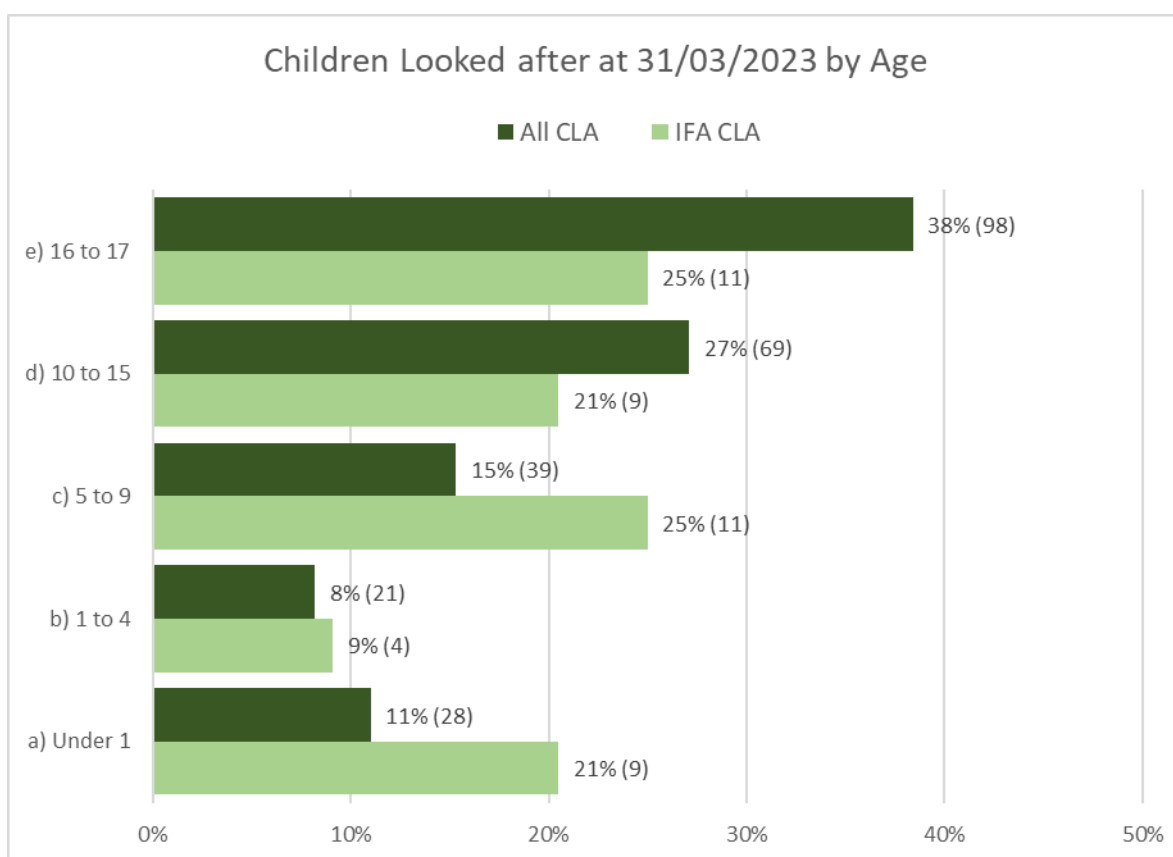
34 of these children (31%) were our unaccompanied asylum seeking children; and whilst these young people are predominantly aged between 16/17 years, this demonstrates the sufficiency demand for semi-independent provision.

The number of children looked after for 10 or more years increased from 4 to 8 children over the course of the year. This means that those children placed with IFA foster carers, of this age, are staying longer due to the stability of the placements and requiring long term care arrangements.

Duration in care	Apr-22	Mar-23	Numerical Change	% Change
under one month	7	6	-1	-14.3%
1-6 months	42	58	+16	+38.1%
7-12 months	36	50	+14	+38.9%
1-2 years	48	39	-9	-18.8%

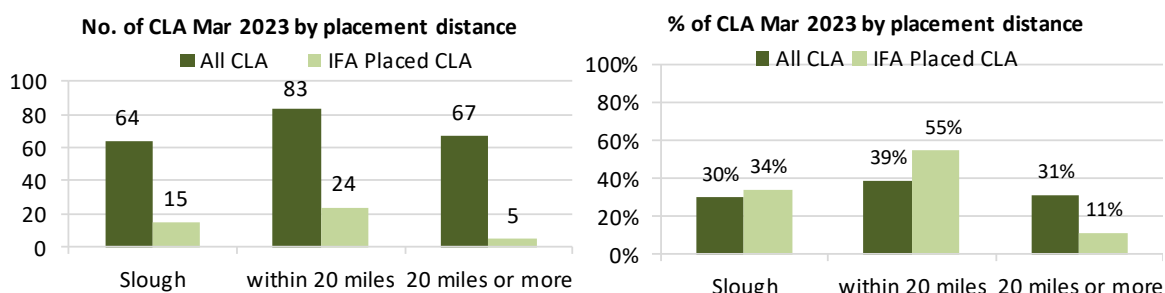
2-5 years	64	61	-3	-4.7%
5-10 years	37	33	-4	-10.8%
over 10 years	4	8	+4	+100.0%
Total	238	255	+17	+7.1%

Similarly when looking at the CLA age population at the end of March 2023. We can see that proportionally more children aged under 10 (55%) are placed within the IFA. The largest cohort of which are those aged 5 to 9 years. 20 children (45.5%) aged 10 and over are placed within the IFA and are in stable placements. Also, some of the older children placed in the IFA moved to independent living through semi-supported accommodation, going to university or moving to independent accommodation evidencing good outcomes for the care experienced children who have become young adults. Young people also remained with their foster carers through Staying Put arrangements (2022/23).



Slough is a small unitary authority with a condensed population. There are many bordering authorities with a 20-mile radius of Slough. When finding a home for a child looked after a priority is for children to remain in Slough or within at least a 20-mile radius, to maintain schools, community, family and friend networks wherever possible. A number of our children looked after (39%) are placed within the 20-mile radius due to limited provision within the Borough. However, 69% are placed in Slough or within this radius. The 31% of children placed outside of the 20-mile radius indicates the sufficiency planning work required to create more homes, in and around Slough.

Due to our demographic profile many of our internal Foster Carers (IFA) are not located within the borough of Slough but in neighbouring boroughs and Local Authorities. 89% of children placed with IFA foster carers are placed in Slough (34%) or less than 20 miles away (55%).



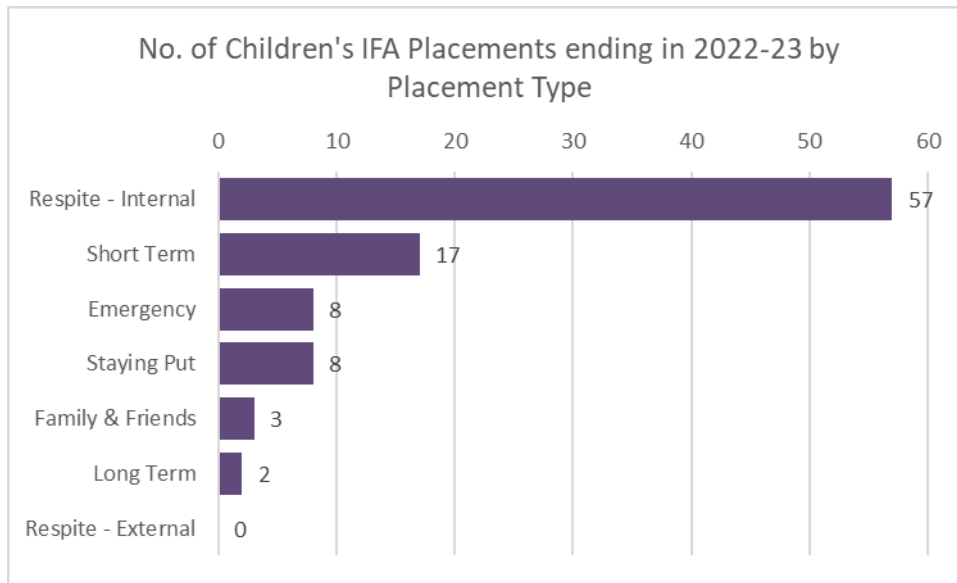
As demonstrated in the table below, during 2022/23 the IFA has identified 10 foster care homes for children in an emergency; and 21 for children requiring short term foster care. A significant area of activity in the IFA is to identify 'respite' foster care, which is another foster care family that provides extended foster care support to the child's main foster care home; during this year 57 'respite' homes were providing wrap around and extended foster care support.

Placement Type	No. of Children Placed in month												Total
	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	
Emergency	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	2	0	1	0	3	10
Family & Friends	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Long Term	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Respite - External	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Respite - Internal	3	2	2	6	4	4	6	5	9	4	8	4	57
Short Term	0	2	2	4	2	1	0	4	1	1	2	2	21
Staying Put	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	5
Total (exc Staying put)	3	4	6	10	6	7	6	11	10	6	10	9	88
Total (inc Staying put)	3	6	6	11	6	7	6	12	10	7	10	9	93

Over the year, the number of children in long term placements (including those with friends and family) has decreased because of these children reaching 18. The number of short-term placements increased from 26 to 31.

8 young people (18-21y) who remained with their foster care family on a Staying Put arrangement ended. For example, as young people progressed to University or to independent accomodation.

During this period 1 Connected Carer resigned as the young person turned 18 but had remained via a staying put arrangement.



Comparing 2021/2022 to 2022/2023 placements offered.

In 2021/22 financial year there were 69 children accommodated by the IFA as compared to 93 children in the 2022/23 financial year, thus evidencing a 16.6% increase in the number of placements offered by SCF IFA in the current financial year.

Recruitment of carers for SCF Independent Fostering Agency

Fostering recruitment and retention is a key priority for SCF IFA. The service continues to conduct recruitment campaigns that are informed by current research into 'what works' even though the national shortage of foster carers is a complicating factor and working with a finite budget for marketing activity. However, the IFA utilises internal resources to best effect and efficiency and is creative in the approach to marketing responding to the current climate. This has meant we currently have a higher number of assessments in progress (7) when compared to last financial year of (2). There were 4 approvals during this time, which is in line with national trends associated with a shortage in recruiting carers. The IFA's goal is to continue to strive to increase the numbers of fostering households to meet the sufficiency targets and strategy; aiming for an additional 6 to 12 foster care households in 2024/25.

Also, post covid impact such as people going back into work, dealing with post lockdown stress/anxieties and the increase in cost of living has impacted recruitment. The service has also had to deal with low staffing numbers (including not having a marketing officer in post) which increased the pressures on existing staff to manage and assist with assessments and recruitment.

Be that as it may, the IFA continues to prioritise the recruitment of foster carers to meet the ongoing demand for in-house foster placements. Because Slough is a small Borough,

the IFA marketing plan includes reaching beyond the perimeters of Slough and this has yielded results in approved carers and ongoing assessments within this year.

The onus on increasing the skill base of our current and new carers to take on a more diverse and specialist placement for children with increased and complex needs remain part of our recruitment strategy and a tier payment system in our finance policy supports the IFA in implementing this aim.

All enquiries from prospective foster carers are welcomed without prejudice and are responded to promptly and impartially. The SCF IFA microsite within the SCF website includes information about fostering, the different types of fostering, the recruitment, preparation, assessment, approval process and subsequent matching and placing processes. There is a skilled Recruitment Advisor available to answer all queries and provide guidance and advice in respect of the fostering application and assessment process.

Applicants also continue to give positive feedback on the recruitment process at panel and the IFA is committed to improving recruitment and is persistently exploring and developing new ideas to increase the number of foster carers in the service. This helps to gauge effectiveness, understand the market, and compete with other agencies.

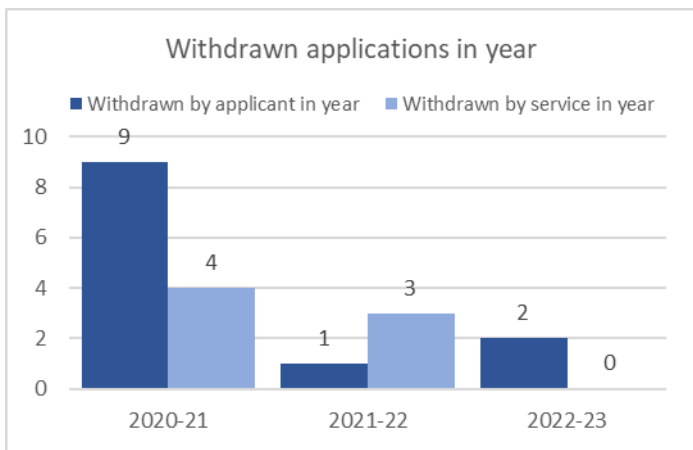
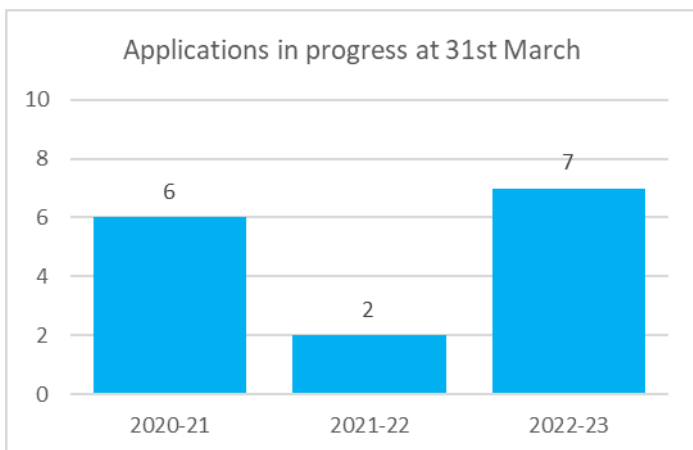
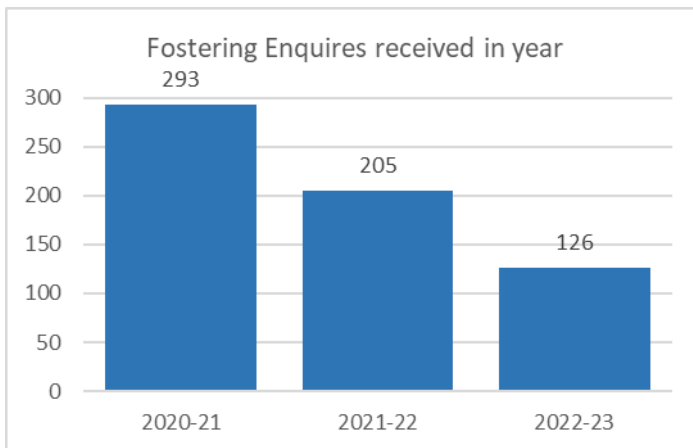
We have been holding face to face marketing activities and recruitment campaigns in the community and this has increased at a steady pace in the review period. Advertising banners have remained at various sites in Slough including roundabouts; outside the office; places of worship, shops, GP surgeries and at local schools just to mention but a few. These have been monitored and relocated during the year to achieve optimum visibility in varying locations within Slough.

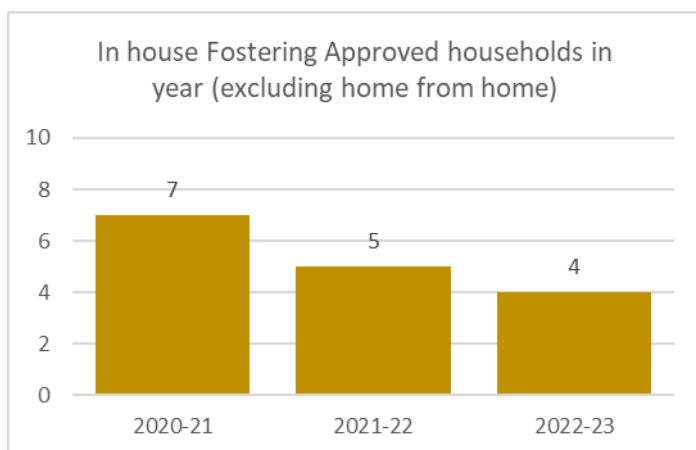
Social media is currently the most prevalent form of attracting new applicants in the IFA. There is a strong presence on the SCF IFA platforms such as Facebook and Instagram which consistently increases interest and generates new leads.

The IFA approved foster carers support recruitment, advertising, and skills to foster training for new applicants. They are committed to supporting and encouraging new applicants to foster for Slough. The refer a friend's scheme remains in place and is used by staff and foster carers to earn additional income through the recruitment process.

Recruitment Statistics

Recruitment campaigns aim to reach all groups within the community in order to facilitate placements that reflect the ethnic, cultural and religious needs of children and young people looked after by Slough Children First.





When comparing last year to this year, though there was a decrease in the approved foster care households from 5 to 4, as of 31st March 2023, however 3 new approvals were agreed by the ADM in April 2023 which increased the overall 45 households to 48 households. Though there is a decline in initial enquiries, the conversion rate shows an increase (250%) in the applications in progress which evidences a higher conversion rate despite the low enquiries. Equally, this demonstrates effective screening of applicants at the point of enquiry.

The IFA Key Target and Priority Areas (As identified in the Sufficiency Strategy 2023/26)

Following the analysis of fostering placements in the previous and current review period, we will increase the numbers and capability of our own foster carers and review our existing carers to develop and match their skills to the needs of our children. We will revise our communication and marketing strategy for the recruitment of foster carers and adopt an ambitious and targeted approach to increase the number of in-house carers. This will also include the development of a therapeutic fostering model and expansion of our Mockingbird constellation, and the creative use of media, work that will be taken forward by a nominated manager. By implementing a targeted and engaging marketing strategy, we will attract more potential foster carers to Slough and help to address the ongoing need for foster carers in the local community. This will be achieved by:

- **Review and refresh our Fostering Agency brand.** To stand out in a competitive market we will review our fostering brand to ensure it reflects our vision, values and intentions, to promote fostering for children in Slough.
- **Develop a comprehensive marketing strategy.** Our marketing strategy will be reviewed to ensure best use of social media, advertising campaigns, word of mouth and community activities to promote and recruit foster carers in Slough and bordering authorities.

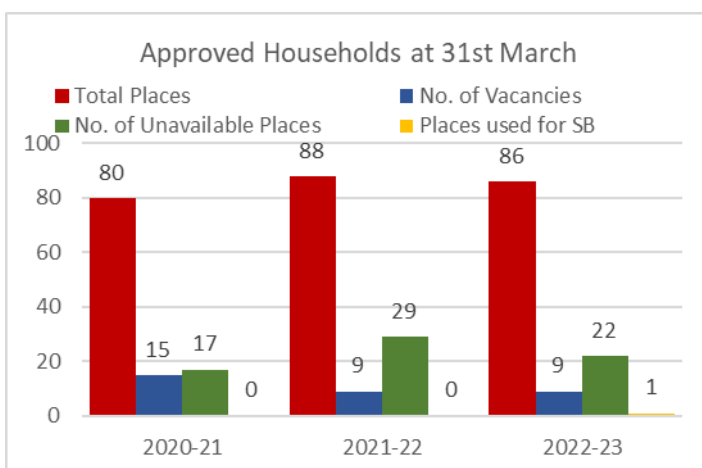
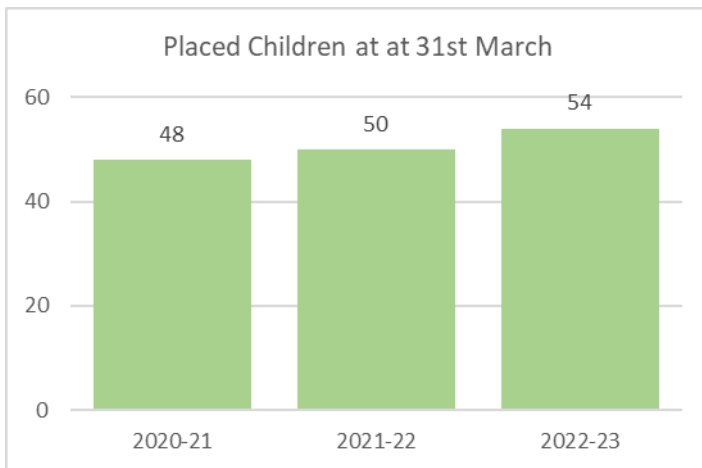
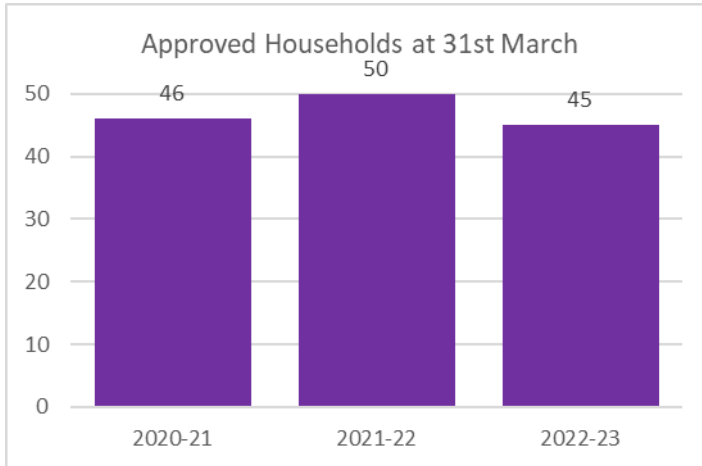
- **Working in partnership to develop fostering opportunities.** We will work closely with schools, community and faith groups, and other organisations to raise awareness and promote fostering opportunities in Slough.
- **Building a strong online presence.** We will make best use of our fostering website to ensure all contacts, enquiries into the service have easy access to the right information and contact details to explore fostering in Slough, standing out amongst a crowded market.
- **Targeted recruitment and creating the right foster homes for our children.** We intend to provide targeted recruitment activity to ensure we have the right homes for all of our children, recognising their individual needs. We will also seek to recruit specific therapeutic foster families for our children with more complex need.
- **To review our in-house foster care support package.** To recruit and retain foster carers we recognise the need to ensure we celebrate our robust package of support and enhance this further to support foster care families in the important care they provide to our children. This will include a review of further support opportunities and a review of our foster care pay structure to ensure competitive rates.

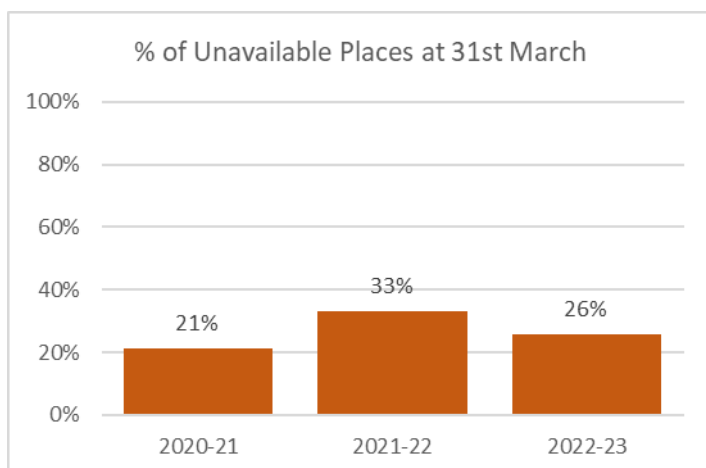
The IFA will also continue to place more emphasis on targeted marketing by:

- Targeting foster carers specifically for sibling groups
- Targeting foster carers specifically for children aged 10+
- Targeting foster carers from a Black, Asian, Mixed and other backgrounds, including LGBTQI+?
- Targeting foster carers specifically for children with disabilities
- Targeting foster carers specifically for parent and child placements
- Targeting foster carers specifically for children with challenging behaviour and high emotional needs.
- Targeting foster carers that can offer emergency placements.

Fostering Households

As of 31st March 2023, there were 45 fostering households, but this increased to 48 households by 30th April 2023.





Communications

The IFA hopes to continue to promote communication in all of the following ways:

Foster Carers Feedback

Regular communication and support are provided to all foster carers as below.

In addition to this, In April 2022, the participation officer met with our children in the IFA and made an animation video) which includes some positive messages about foster care and their experiences. 'My Foster Story' animation was made by the children looked after (cared for by Slough IFA carers) explaining their story of being in foster care. This can be viewed on [My Foster Story - YouTube](#)

Newsletter

This continues to be sent to foster carers to share information and give an update on the service. Due to the impact of the current cost of living crises on carers, the IFA shares money saving tips with the carers and has recurring sections on training, book recommendations and strategies on keeping safe.

Coffee Morning Support Groups

This progressed to face to face monthly coffee mornings at St Mary's Church Hall Wexham after the covid restrictions were lifted. This enables foster carers to network/support each other in a safe environment. Carers learn from each other and exchange tips, techniques/strategies and have a general catch up. There is also a male support group and general support available to male carers as well.

Bi-Monthly Forums

Bi- Monthly Forums continue but were changed to a drop-in session with the management team. These provide carers with updated information about the IFA and afford carers the opportunity to discuss issues, make enquiries and provide feedback about the service.

Slough Foster Carers Association

The SFA is supported to fund activities for children and several activities to GO Ape, Jump in and the Zoo were organized and attended by children placed in eth IFA. An IFA staff also attends to support carers with activities. The leadership of the SFA meet regularly with the IFA management team as part of open communication.

Annual Awards Ceremony

The IFA staff worked hard to raise money for the foster carers awards ceremony that took place on 16th October 2022. This was held at the Stoke Place Hotel Slough and all carers were appreciated with flowers and certificates; the carers that had achieved milestones in their fostering careers also had additional gifts.

Retention of Foster Carers

Retention is another primary focus within the IFA as it competes with neighbouring Local Authority fostering services and other Independent Fostering Agencies. The IFA therefore ensures that all foster carers are provided with a good standard of service which consists of:

- Access to the Foster Carers handbook for all carers, through the fostering microsite.
- Phone check in
- A family support worker who offers one to one work with carers and the children when needed.
- Buddy/Informal Mentor support
- 4 – 6 weekly visits from a supervising social worker to offer advice and support to foster carers, children and their families.
- Fostering out-of-hours telephone advice and support and Regional Out of Hours/Emergency Duty Service for weekends and through the night Competitive fostering fees and allowances.
- £200 per annum reward payment for completion of a successful annual review.
- A birthday and festival allowance paid per annum per child.
- Access to the In - house play therapist and hub clinician support
- 2 weeks holiday allowance
- Membership of Slough's Fostering Association (SFA).
- Fostering Network membership.
- IFA service newsletter that contains news/updates about the service, current guidance and research.
- A full training package for mandatory, supplementary and bespoke training courses.
- Thank you, brunch at Christmas, and during Foster Carers Fortnight in May
- Increased carer mileage payment and also paid a one-off cost of living payment to all carers in March 2023.
- Annual Carer Award Ceremony took place on 16th October 2023
- Carers conference (planned for 8th July 2023)
- Placement stability meetings

Annual Reviews

The Fostering Services Regulations 2011 (amended 2013) require that formal reviews of foster carers take place at least annually, and foster carers first review must be presented to the fostering panel. Reviews will take place more frequently in the event of a significant change in circumstances for foster carer for example where there are concerns about the care provided by the foster carer as a result of a complaint or allegation or where there is a change in approval sought. All foster carer reviews are presented to the panel every

three years or more frequently if there are any concerns which need to be addressed. After a successful review foster carers are awarded a retention payment of £200.

100%

All foster carer reviews were completed within timescale from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023 so were at a 100%.

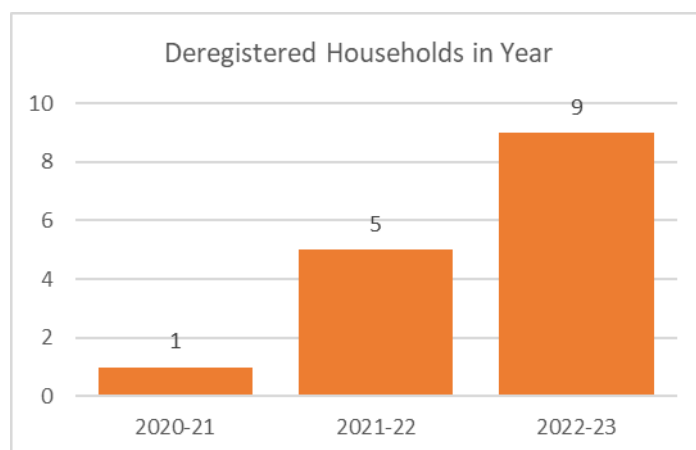
Foster Carer Agreements

All our Foster Carers Agreements are on our Charms system and are shared/signed electronically on the system. This is renewed annually and are all in date.

Termination / De- registration of foster carers

Foster carer resignations and terminations of approval are presented to the Fostering Panel. Carers have the right to appeal to the Independent Reviewing Mechanism (IRM) if they believe that the IFA has not acted appropriately within its decision making.

There has been a slight increase in the number of deregistration's through resignations that have taken place in year compared to the previous financial year. These are for the reason listed below.



- Two fostering households - connected person's carers retired on children turning 18.
- One connected person resigned after relocating to Wales and following a standard of care concern.
- One household adopted the child in placement and resigned.
- One household resigned following safeguarding concerns.
- One household resigned following the death of a spouse and the young person turned 18
- One household resigned – newly approved carer informed fostering is not for them, wants more flexibility to do things in their personal life.
- One household returned to work post covid.
- One household resigned as they felt they needed more time for themselves post Covid and post-retirement. They felt they were not able to dedicate the time to fostering as they had anticipated.

Complaints/Allegations

An allegation involves circumstances when a child or young person alleges to have been physically, sexually or emotionally abused or neglected by a foster carer or a member of their household or family. It can also be defined as an unproven assertion of abuse or neglect that has yet to be proved or supported by evidence.

A standard of care concern arises where no allegations of abuse or neglect have been identified but where there is serious concern that the foster carer is not meeting agreed standards of practice in respect of their care of the child. Or in circumstances when criminal or safeguarding risks have been alleged in regards to a foster carer.

3 allegations were made against 3 carer households and 2 were investigated with an unsubstantiated outcome against 2 carer households and the third carer resigned immediately after they were informed of the safeguarding concern and made a formal complaint against the agency.

Three standards of care investigations relating to the conduct of carers were completed and one formal complaint against the IFA by a carer who resigned due to safeguarding concern was undertaken. The complaint was not upheld.

Fostering panel

The Fostering Panel continues to take place on a four-weekly basis with extra panel requested when needed. The Panel is exclusively used by Slough Children First (SCF) Independent Fostering Agency for Approvals of Foster Carers, Regulation 24/25 Carers, Foster Carer reviews and Long-Term Matches etc. Panel continue to be held virtually post covid and the plan is for this to be done through a mixture of face to face and virtual panels in the next financial year.

The staffing of the panel remains stable with many panel members having been on the Central List for many years. In April 2022, the long-standing Panel Chair resigned from the role, and this is currently being covered by the two Vice Chairs. The panel chair role has been recruited into with start date of July 2023. The panel is fortunate to have these two experienced and competent Vice Chairs, who are independent of SCF IFA and remain in post. We have an interim Panel Advisor who was appointed in October 2021 and remains in post thus offering a level of consistency within this review period. A new panel advisor has been recruited and also has a start date of July 2023.

There is a good level of diversity in terms of gender, age, religion, culture, and experience within the Central List which is reflective of the local population of Slough. The panel consists of an adult care leaver, an elected member, foster carers for other agencies, an adopter, independent social workers and members who have experience in education, youth work, housing and semi-independent living. A new health representative has been recruited as well.

Panel members are also annually appraised by the Panel Chair and Panel Advisor. A dedicated Panel Administrator has been in post since 2017, this gives panel a good level of consistency.

At each Panel, feedback is sought on how applicants have found the process and their experience at Panel. Generally, positive feedback is received from applicants and professionals who feel that the Panel is welcoming and enables them to discuss difficult issues.

As reported in the 2021/2022 annual report, there was an Ofsted requirement in relation panel in the July 2021 Ofsted inspection. In addition to the actions and steps taken to address this in last year's report, the following actions have been taken to meet this requirement.

- Full day Panel training on the role and function of Panel including legislation that underpins Panel's role and function held in May 2022.
- Another Joint panel training on learning from serious case review was held 27th January 2023. This was joint learning for panel members and the fostering service.
- On 22nd March 2023, a refresher training on the National Minimum Standards (NMS) was delivered as joint training to panel members and the team. New panel members on the central list also attended to support their learning on the application of the NMS in considering approvals and reapprovals.
- The panel advisor continues to have discussions on the role and functions of panel. The advisor does targeted pieces of work with panel members at panel business meetings before and after panel sittings.

Placement Stability Meeting/Disruption Meetings

Placement stability meetings are held to support placements to prevent breakdowns and disruption meetings are held where a placement has broken down. Themes from these meetings continue to inform the IFA learning and improvements.

Training

Training continues to be a priority and a comprehensive training programme is available to carers. The programme continues to assist in developing foster carers to meet the needs of children and young people placed with them. Training is enhanced through a mixture of in-house and external training. Training is offered to carers in a hybrid manner through face to face and virtual learning. Carers can also access different online courses through the SCF Learning database.

The total number of mandatory training topics is now seven and the frequency for this is three yearly. The seven mandatory training are Safeguarding, Safer Foster Care, Managing Behaviour, Managing Allegations, Record Keeping, Paediatric First Aid and Prevent.

Other training offered to carers within this review period are Equality and diversity, Data protection. Display Screen Equipment – DSE, Gender Identity Awareness, Children coming to care - perspective of assessment team, Carer fatigue /blocked care, Communicating with Children and Young People, Mental Health – Understanding children and young people, Self-Harm, Unconscious Bias, CHARMS Carer Training, Emotional Literacy, Life

Story Work, Moving and Positioning of Individuals, Peer on Peer Abuse, Substance and Alcohol Misuse, Trauma and the Impact on Brain Development, Working with CLA 16 Leaving Care and Pathway Planning, Attachment and loss, Working with children with Disabilities, 'Attachment, Trauma and Resilience' Five to Thrive, County Lines, Female Genital Mutilation, Health & Safety, Healthy Relationships and Online Safety, Having Constructive Conversations with Distressed Young People, Self-Harm and Suicide Prevention training Level 2: Intermediate and Understanding Trauma and its Impact.

As part of foster carers recruitment, applicants are encouraged to complete safeguarding training, as well as safer foster care and/or managing challenging behaviour.

In the reporting period mainstream foster carers completed:

391 TRAINING



Fostering Network

Every foster carer is automatically provided with membership of the fostering network. The Fostering Network offers a unique package of membership benefits for foster carers, including Independent Advice and support, 24-hour dedicated helplines, Practical advice and guidance on all fostering issues, Expert legal assistance, financial advice on tax, national insurance, benefits, mortgages and pensions.

Supporting and recognising foster carers own children

The fostering service provides opportunities for carer's children to meet on a regular basis as part of Kids Care 2! Sessions offer them support and recognize the role that they play in the fostering household.

Financial report

Slough Borough Council issued a section 114 notice which continues to have serious financial implications for SCF including the IFA. This remains in place with spending subject to a high level of scrutiny. The internal fostering budget for 2022/2023 was £2.73M and outturn in the financial year has seen an underspend of £150k. The budget increased by £76k at the 2021/22 budget due to anticipated growth in in-house foster placements following initiatives around carer allowances to recruit more carers and encourage more carers to care for more challenging young children and teenagers. There were also some income contributions from other Local Authorities placements within the IFA. This underspend has been partly offset by overspends in staffing due to previous reliance on agency staff to cover vacant posts. The service continues to work actively on recruiting into the vacant posts regardless of the status report on the national shortage of health and social care workers. Two permanent supervising social workers are starting in June and July 2023 respectively.

Charms

The service moved from the use of ICS to a charms data base system which is a more suitable data base for a fostering service. This has supported carers to be able to log their recording for children directly on the database and supervising social workers read the logs. Where needed, supervising social workers request amendments or updates to the logs to ensure it captures the child's lived experience.

The Mockingbird Family Model (MFM)



There are currently 7 families (including the hub home) and 10 children involved in this constellation. The constellation has supported a number of children's moves to adoptive placements, rehabilitation home etc.

The MFM offers a method of delivering foster care that has improved placement stability, safety and permanency for children and young people and support for, and retention of, foster carers. The MFM uses the concept of a 'hub' and 'satellite' approach, forming a 'constellation' of fostering families providing peer support, respite care and activities for all those including training to equip members of the service to maintain, support and replicate the constellation in subsequent years.

If the children in the constellation stay within the hub home, this is regarded as a sleep over, and not respite. The scheme continues to evidence good outcomes with regards to placement stability and we have received positive feedback from carers and children. Some of the positive impact on children and young people looked after, who are part of the MFM are:

- Improved confidence and resilience in children and young people
- Stronger relationships that support CLA and fostering families
- A network of strong and authentic relationships able to replicate the support offered by an extended family.
- Improved placement stability and reduced placement breakdown. There are two examples of a placement that would have broken down in the year under review, but the robust support offered by the hub carers went a long way in preventing this.
- Improved experience of peer support

- Strengthening/maintaining sibling relationships
- Improved sibling contact
- Better and improved experience of birth family contact
- Improved process and experience of respite care
- Improved skills, confidence and role satisfaction for foster carers
- A strong, robust and resilient structure able to support children, young people and fostering families through times of crisis and transition.
- Supervision of family contact in the community negating the need for contact center/supervisors, reducing costs and providing more natural and meaningful interactions.
- Provision of social activities and creating a sense of community and belonging for all involved. This has been very successful in the current pandemic as virtual social activities have continued online.
- SCF is part of a national evaluation project to provide some data and information as to the difference to children being a part of a constellation makes, and the impact on placement stability.

Highlights from the year which illustrate some of the success of the model within the SCF IFA includes: -

- A MFM Financial Awareness event for young people hosted and facilitated by the Hub Home Carers. The aim of the event was to help young people to gain a better understanding and awareness of financial matters, for example, the average salaries for different professions; tax; national insurance; housing costs, including rental costs and utility bills. Ultimately, the aim was to better equip young people in regard to budgeting, saving and to think about how they can achieve their financial goals.
- The Mockingbird Hub Home carers have facilitated contact for siblings placed in different IFA's who lived some distance away from one another. The eldest sibling had voiced that she was desperate to see her siblings, and this was making her sad. Sleepovers have enabled the children to quality spend time with one another in a relaxed home environment.
- The Mockingbird support provides deep friendships. This was demonstrated when one young person was anxious that no one would attend her 16th birthday party. She asked if the first person she could invite was a young person from another Mockingbird household. This was because her friendship with this person had grown as a result of getting to know one another through Mockingbird events. The young person felt this friend would attend and this reduced her anxiety around no one attending her party and also increased her confidence.

Slough IFA Constellation families are looking forward to attending an event hosted by the Fostering Network in August 2023. This event will provide an opportunity for the constellation to bond together and support one another, as well as meeting people from other constellations throughout the UK. It aims to develop resilience, confidence, and communication skills through adults, children and young people participating in a range of practical and physical challenges such as high ropes, problem solving and nature-based activities.

Family Finding (permanent fostering)

The aim of the Family Finding Team is to secure permanency for looked after children within nurturing, loving and stable foster placements. What is best for each child or young person will depend on individual factors. Children should be cared for in long-term foster care when this is deemed to be in their best interests and is set out clearly in their care plan. The child's views, wishes and feelings must be at the centre of all decision-making concerning long-term foster care.

The family finding team has received referrals for 33 looked-after children. One child was matched with the current carers in March 2023, and the plan is for 9 of the children. to be matched with their current carers in the next 6 months. Two children will be transitioning to long-term foster placements from residential provision once they have received therapeutic interventions. From these placements, 6 are with carers for the internal Slough IFA and 24 are with carers from external IFAs.

From April 2022 to March 2023) ,1 child was matched with internal IFA carers. Two cases have been deferred as parenting assessments needed to be undertaken. There has been a delay in taking some of the matches to the panel due to the following reasons:

1. Care Order not yet granted
2. Parenting assessments being undertaken.
3. Breakdown in potential long-term placements in external IFA's
4. Assessments on the child and therapeutic support not finalised.
5. Change in social workers and, therefore, a delay in the CPR being completed
6. PPM's not being held regularly for some children.

There has now been a full review of the forms, reports and processes within the family finding team to ensure the process is robust and timely for children requiring long-term foster care. This has been done in consultation with the Panel Advisor. Furthermore, the long-term matching policy was updated in January 2023 to reflect the changes.

The family finding social worker and Manager continue to challenge the frontline Team and escalating to their managers and IRO's where there is delay in permanency planning for children.

As previously reported, there continues to be a focus on increasing ways to elicit the voice of the child to make this evident during the process and at panel where matches are agreed to include:

A rigorous process for permanency planning is needed to promote good decision making, and to ensure that the plan is pursued in a timely way and that drift is avoided.

Family, Friends and Connected Persons (Regulation 24/SGO)

Since March 2020, the Connected Persons Team became independent of the IFA but the data is included in this annual report for the purposes of our senior leadership team having

a general oversight of all aspects of fostering in one report. Maryke McCarty is the team manager responsible for the connected person and SGO team and her report is as follows:

The dedicated team completes joint initial viability assessments, Reg 24 placements and Special Guardianship assessments and supporting carers with Family and Friend's Foster carers/SGO.

Whilst the Reg 24 carers are undergoing their assessment, they are supported by a supervising social worker as per the Fostering Regulations, attend specialist foster carers training such as Skills to Foster and have access to the Fostering Network, as well as the Out of Hours Duty phonenumber. The assessment has to be presented to the Fostering Panel within 16 weeks either recommending to approve as connected persons foster carers, not to be approved as connected persons foster carers or for a further 8 week extension. This panel decision is then sent to the ADM for review and for a final decision to be made.

There are currently **177** children placed with **186** carers/**128** household on a Special Guardianship Order (SGO).

186 SGO Carers
(128 households)



177 children

Summary Statistics

- During the year **9** families were **granted** SGO orders
- **95** joint viability assessments have been completed
- **8** families were assessed under Reg 24/25
- **8** families approved under Regulation 24
- **24** SGO assessments were undertaken, **9** ended early due to applicants withdrawing or children being moved
- **20** concurrent Regulation 24 and SGO assessments completed

Joint viability assessments:

During the year, there were **95** joint viability assessment referrals completed for prospective placements with Family, Friends or Connected persons/ SGO. All referrals received were completed jointly between the child's social worker and an assessing social worker from the Connected Persons team.

Disruption:

We have had no SGO revoked and no placement breakdowns.

Support to SGO carers:

The Connected Persons team offer telephone advice and support to our carers as well as specific training for SGO carers, which covers topics such as attachment, managing contact, life story and memoirs, managing difficult behavior, safeguarding, healthy living, education and CSE. If there is a specific training need, carers are also invited to attend training available to foster carers. There is good engagement from carers at training. However, due to the Covid19 pandemic, we were unable to offer training to SGO carers since March 2020 face to face and training was moved online. We are currently planning to commence face to face training again as from 2023, but due to long term staff illness we have not yet launched face to face training. A training program has been devised and as soon as capacity in the team allows, this will be offered.

Ongoing support is offered to our SGO carers, including visits for new placements as agreed within the support plan; financial support until a child is 18 years (if eligible) subject to means test; advice and support by team and signposting to Slough Family Information Services, support from Virtual School on education and applications to the adoption support fund for therapeutic needs.

There are also SGO forums 6 times a year, where carers can share their experiences, offer advice, seek advice and work in partnership with carers in order to further develop our services. There are also fun days planned twice a year and newsletters sent twice a year. Unfortunately, due to the Covid19 pandemic, the SGO forums moved online and has continued to be online for the duration of 2021 and 2022. We are now alternating face to face and online SGO forums as some carers prefer online meetings whilst others prefer face to face. We have reintroduced Fun Days, which were well attended by SGO carers and children.

Support to Family and Friends Reg 24 carers:

Whilst the Reg 24 carers are undergoing their assessment and once approved, they are supported by a supervising social worker as per the Fostering Regulations, attend specialist foster carers training, including Skills to Foster, and have access to the Fostering Network.

During the assessment process and once approved, Family and Friends Connected Persons Foster Carers are treated as foster carers and have the same expectations and support as per the Fostering Regulations.

We are currently consulting with Reg24 carers to introduce a support group.

Home from Home family based care

Home from home carers are able to offer:

- Volunteer carers looking after children with disabilities up to their 18th birthday in their own home or in the family home, depending on the needs of the child.
- This is for a few hours per day/ per week, depending on the child's needs and agreed arrangement
- Working as part of a team - with professionals and other Home from Home carers
- To use and develop caring skills.
- To enable others, develop life skills and broaden their horizons, to allow parents/main carers a respite break and maintain children remaining at home with their family
- Home from Home carers also support approved foster carers with transport to and from contact, as and when needed.

Home from Home carers receive support and 6 weekly visits by their supervising link worker and have access to foster carers training and additional specialist training to children with disabilities, when necessary and dependent on their linked children's needs, for example epi-pen training.

Currently there are **10** Home from Home carers (7 families) approved under this scheme. During the year they have supported 16 children, 6 of whom were to support IFA foster carers with school runs and/or contact.

Non-Agency Adoption assessments

- During the year **1** adoption order was granted
- During the year 3 non-agency adoption assessments were completed, 1 is still awaiting a court date
- 4 non-agency adoption assessments are currently ongoing

Conclusion

The Fostering Service will continue to provide high quality care in a family setting for those children and young people, who, for whatever reason, cannot be brought up by their parents or other relatives.

SCF Fostering Service will strive to achieve the sufficiency recruitment targets and to ensure a range of provision is in place to provide secure and loving homes for our children to develop and reach their full potential, and to maintain the improved Ofsted judgement of 'good' or become outstanding during our next inspection.

References:

- Fostering National Minimum Standards - https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/192705/NMS_Fostering_Services.pdf
- Fostering Network Research and Statistics - www.fostering.net

- SCF Foster Carers' Charter is available at: <http://www.scstrust.co.uk/publications-and-reports/>
- Statutory Guidance for fostering services - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-fostering-services>