

Homes for Children We Care For and Care Experienced Adults

Placements sufficiency strategy 2024/25 - 2027/28



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1. Introduction

1.1 Portsmouth's last 'homes for children we care¹ for and care experienced adults² sufficiency strategy' was updated in February 2023 and went through to 31/03/24. This new sufficiency strategy will provide us with focus for the next three years, through to 2027. The aims of the strategy are to:

- Provide the right number and type of homes for children we care for and care experienced adults.
- Provide local homes in or as close to Portsmouth, to enable children we care for and care experienced adults to maintain links to those people that are important to them and have good professional support near to them.
- Improve the outcomes for children we care for and care experienced adults by providing a range of high quality homes.
- Strive to achieve best value for money.

Sufficiency

1.2 Sufficiency means having enough homes locally that give our children we care for and care experienced adults the right place to live. Our focus for sufficiency aims to keep children with their families whenever it is safe. When this isn't possible, we strive to provide the appropriate number and variety of quality homes for children and care-experienced adults in Portsmouth. We want every child, no matter where they live, to feel that their home is truly a home - a place of nurture, safety, and comfort. Additionally, we seek to offer children and care-experienced adults' choices about their living arrangements, ensuring value for money whenever possible.

Legislation

1.3 The "sufficiency duty" was introduced in Section 22G of the Children Act 1989. It mandates local authorities to ensure, as far as reasonably possible, that they have sufficient accommodation within their area to meet the needs of children under their care, provided that such accommodation is consistent with the children's welfare.

1.4 The Children Act 2008 expands on this, defining sufficiency as a comprehensive approach that includes early children's social care intervention and preventative measures to support children and their families when possible. It also aims to enhance services for children who become cared for. For children in care, local authorities and their partners should seek to secure a variety of homes and services to address the diverse needs of children and young people in their local area.

1.5 In 2010, the Statutory Guidance for the Sufficiency Duty was published. This guidance is explicit in placing a duty on all local authorities and children's trusts to act strategically to address gaps in provision by ensuring that they include plans for meeting the sufficiency duty in their commissioning strategies.

¹ Statutorily known as Looked After Children, and also referred to as Children Looked After

² Statutorily known as care leavers

- 1.6 The Children and Social Work Act 2017, extends the duties on all local authorities to have regard to a set of Corporate Parenting Principles when exercising their functions in relation to children in care and care leavers up to the age of 25.

2. National context

- 2.1 Over the last decade, the number of children we care for in England has risen from 68,078 (2013) to 83,840 in 2023. The rise in numbers is partly due to an increase in complexity of needs among children, such as those related to mental health, emotional trauma, and special educational needs, as well as socioeconomic factors, including rising poverty, domestic abuse, and parental substance abuse. The steady rise mirrors the number of care experienced adults (18-21), from 25,900 in 2013, to 32,830 in 2023.
- 2.2 The increasing numbers of children we care for has placed additional strain on local authority services, resulting in placement shortages, budgetary consequences, and impact on children. There is a shortage of foster carers, especially those able to care for children with higher needs, teenagers and sibling groups. The availability of children's homes is also limited, especially for children with more severe emotional and behavioural challenges.
- 2.3 The shortage has meant that local authorities are increasingly reliant on private providers for both fostering and children's homes, resulting in higher costs, with placement availability often driven by market forces rather than need, making it harder for local authorities to secure appropriate and affordable placements. As a result, a minority of placements are unregulated and extremely costly, with local authorities having to make such placements, faced with no alternative options.

National Ofsted Findings (children with complex needs report 17/01/2024)

- 2.4 The report found that more than nine out of ten local authorities struggled to find homes for children with complex needs due to a lack of suitable homes nationally. The report noted that needs of children have changed over recent years with children coming into care with increasing complex needs, often as teenagers, and local authorities are faced with growing difficulties in accessing the right support and homes for them. The report commented on that fact that private providers 'pick and choose' which referrals to accept, and some providers are reluctant to take children with very complex needs as they worry this could detrimentally impact on their Ofsted rating.
- 2.5 Recent national initiatives in the UK have been published regarding Children's Social Care placement sufficiency, including several key strategies and reforms aimed at improving outcomes for children and care experienced adults:

Independent Review of Children's Social Care (2022)

- 2.6 Led by Josh MacAlister, this review highlighted the fragmented nature of the current care system and recommended a focus on strong, supportive relationships and family-like placements. The review's recommendations include improving the recruitment and training of foster carers, supporting kinship carers, and enhancing early intervention services.

Stable Homes, Built on Love Strategy (2023)

- 2.7 Early Help and Intervention: Investing £45 million in 12 local authorities to embed a best practice model for early help, focusing on issues like addiction, domestic abuse, and mental health to help families stay together.
- 2.8 Kinship Care: Prioritising kinship care by simplifying the process and providing additional support and training for kinship carers. This includes a £9 million investment in kinship care training and support.
- 2.9 Regional Care Cooperative:
The Department for Education (DfE) launched an initiative to create Regional Care Cooperatives (RCCs) as part of a broader reform to improve the children's social care system. The aim is to address some of the placement challenges, particularly in foster care and residential sectors. The South East region was successful in bidding for pathfinder pilots.
- 2.10 **Foster Care** - Increasing foster care allowances above inflation and investing £25 million in recruitment and retention of foster carers, particularly targeting areas with shortages. Portsmouth are part of the South East Fostering Hub focused on this area of work with a view to reducing the reliance on private care providers and out of county placements which can disrupt a child's sense of stability.
- 2.11 **Residential** - Portsmouth are part of work to support the maintenance of children's home capacity, along with collective expansion of children's homes.

3. Our sufficiency principles

- 3.1 Delivering good outcomes for children we care for and care experienced adults which are sustained over the long term requires a whole systems approach. We will do this in a trauma informed, strength based and relational way, helping children, young people, young adults, and their families to build resilience. Over the next three years, our sufficiency principles will be as follows:
- I. Whenever it is safe, children will live with their birth parents. If children become a child we care for, we will aim to reunite them with their birth parents as soon as possible whenever it is safe to do so.
 - II. If children cannot live with their birth parents, we will diligently seek out safe and nurturing carers within the child's existing network (kinship carers).
 - III. If children cannot live safely with birth parents or kinship carers, if right for the child, we will place them in safe and nurturing family-based care, such as foster care or adoption, as close to Portsmouth as possible.
 - IV. If family-based care is not an option or appropriate, children will reside in high-quality children's homes and/or supported accommodation in or as near to Portsmouth that meet their specific needs.
 - V. For all care experienced adults are provided with sufficient, safe and stable accommodation into adulthood.

4. Data profile³

Snapshot of our children we care for and care experienced adults



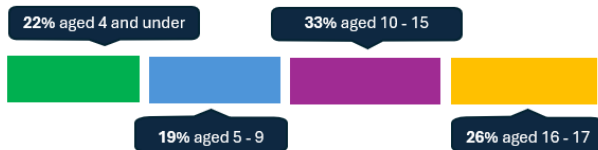
We currently have **402 children in our care** and **368 care experienced adults**



Race



Age

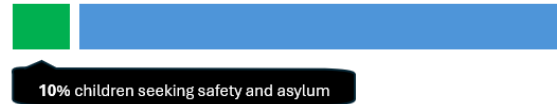


Gender

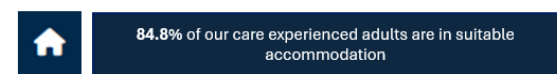


Portsmouth has **38,000 children under 18** representing **17.7% of the local population**

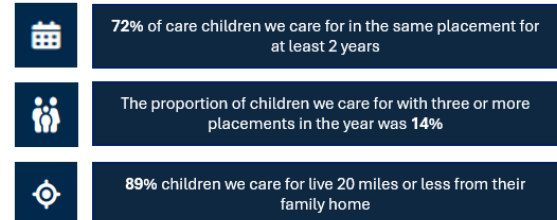
Children seeking safety & asylum



Care experienced adults



Living arrangements



Needs analysis

- 4.1 The comparator data in the needs analysis is based on the 903 statutory DfE returns. This information is gathered and then cleansed by every local authority and then submitted to the Department for Education in July every year. Once the data from all local authorities is validated and analysed, the department publishes the findings in November as a statistical release containing aggregated figures for a variety of indicators.

Statistical Neighbours (DfE)

- 4.2 The term "statistical neighbours" refers to the Department for Education's (DfE) system for identifying and benchmarking local authorities in England that have similar characteristics. This statistical neighbour benchmarking tool is part of the Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT), which is used to compare data across various indicators related to children and young people's services.
- 4.3 The statistical neighbours are calculated based on a range of socio-economic and demographic factors, which ensure that comparisons are made between local authorities with similar profiles. This allows for more meaningful comparisons and benchmarking in areas such as educational attainment, child health, special educational needs, and children we care for by local authorities.

³ Note: 903 comparable data is up to 2022 - 2023 and therefore not current. The strategy will be updated once the 2023 - 2024 data is released.

4.4 Portsmouth's statistical neighbours are:

Local Authority	CSC Ofsted Rating	Closeness Statistically
Portsmouth	Good	-
Southampton	Good	Very close
Plymouth	Requires Improvement	Very Close
Sheffield	Good (Outstanding for children in our care)	Very Close
Derby	Outstanding	Very Close
Peterborough	Inadequate	Very Close
Bristol	Requires Improvement	Very Close
Telford & Wrekin	Outstanding	Close
Southend-on-Sea	Requires Improvement	Close
Coventry	Good	Close
Salford	Good	Close

Deprivation

Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)

- 4.5 Portsmouth is the second most densely populated local authority outside London, and even before the cost of living crisis, parts of Portsmouth were in the highest 10% nationally for the proportion of children living in absolute low income families, with between three and four out of ten children affected. Portsmouth faces significant challenges in terms of deprivation.
- 4.6 The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 (IMD) is a comprehensive measure that assesses the relative deprivation of different areas and provides a relative ranking of areas across England according to their level of deprivation. Portsmouth is ranked 46th of 142 upper tier local authorities, where 1 is the most deprived in terms of average score across each of the domains of deprivation.
- 4.7 It is also of note that the educational outcomes of children in the city of Portsmouth are below the national average in a number of areas. The intersection of deprivation, trauma, and disrupted schooling forms a cycle that contributes to poor attainment, and collectively this can increase child offending and there is also a correlation of with increased risk of children becoming cared for by the local authority.

Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI)

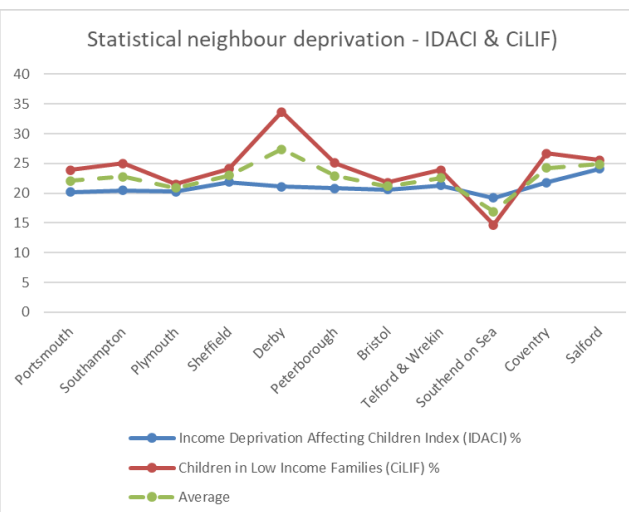
- 4.8 The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index 2019 (IDACI) is a statistical tool used to measure the proportion of children living in income-deprived families within a given area. It specifically considers children aged 0 to 15 and assesses both out-of-work families and those in work but with low earnings, who meet certain means tests.
- 4.9 This index is a part of a broader set of data called the Income Deprivation Domain, which is itself part of the wider Indices of Multiple Deprivation. The IDACI is used by a number of Children Social Care regions including the South East.

Percentage of children in low income families (CiLIF)

- 4.10 The Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT) provided by the Department for Education (DfE) has a measure of deprivation as a percentage of children (0-15) in low income families. This measure is related to the broader concept of deprivation but is not a direct part of the IMD.

Deprivation compared to statistical neighbours⁴

Local Authority	Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) %	Children in Low Income Families (CiLIF) %	Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) ranking
Portsmouth	20.2	23.9	46
Southampton	20.5	25	47
Plymouth	20.3	21.5	50
Sheffield	21.9	24.1	44
Derby	21.1	33.7	53
Peterborough	20.8	25.1	40
Bristol	20.6	21.8	51
Telford & Wrekin	21.3	23.9	65
Southend on Sea	19.2	14.7	77
Coventry	21.8	26.7	60
Salford	24.1	25.6	15



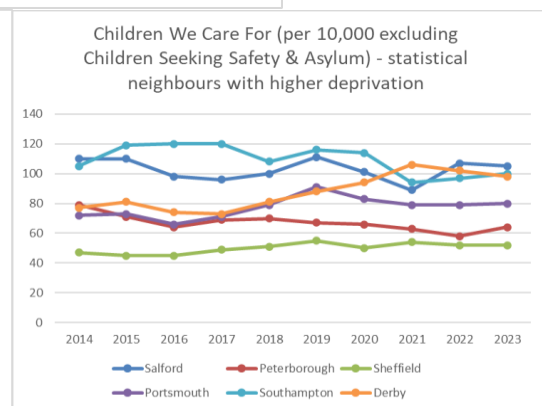
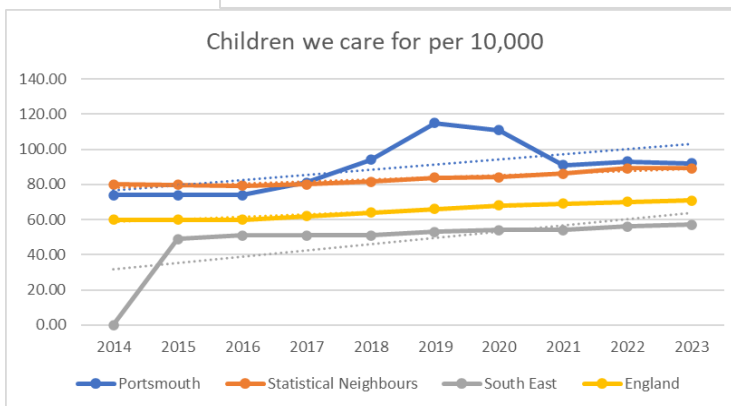
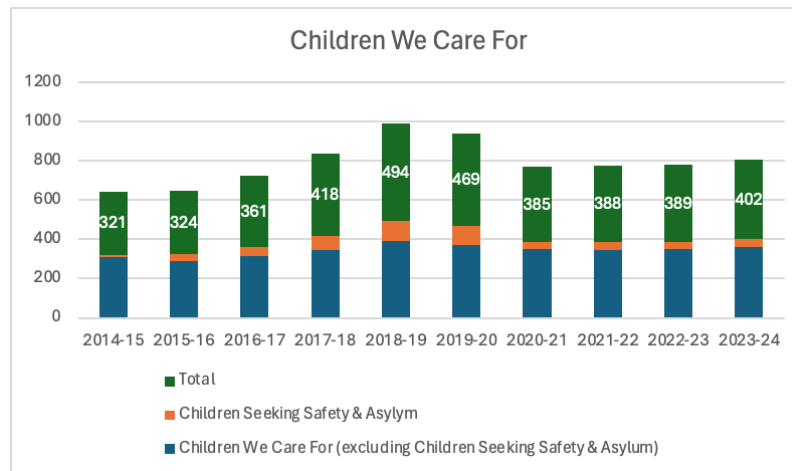
- 4.11 The table and graph above show the level deprivation for Portsmouth and its comparator statistical neighbours. The IDACI data is from 2019, whilst the CiLIF statistics are more current and year on year (2022/23). Generally, there is a noticeable correlation (apart from Derby) with the two child related indicators generally align with the overall IMD ranking.
- 4.12 The data shows that for both child related indicators, Derby, Coventry, Salford, Peterborough, Southampton, and Sheffield rank higher in terms of deprivation. On the IMD rankings, only Salford, Peterborough and Sheffield have higher levels of deprivation.

Children We Care For

- 4.13 When comparing our children we care for, not including children seeking safety & asylum⁵ with our statistical neighbours who rank higher in terms of deprivation, we are middle of the range. Of note, Sheffield who were graded Outstanding by Ofsted for their children we care for offer, have higher levels of deprivation that Portsmouth, and fewer children we care for (not including children seeking safety and asylum). Whilst we are not an outlier for the number of children we care for, it would be preferable for our numbers to be lower.

⁴ Levels of deprivation: IMD - the lower the number, the higher level of deprivation. IDACI/CiLIF - the higher the number, the higher level of deprivation.

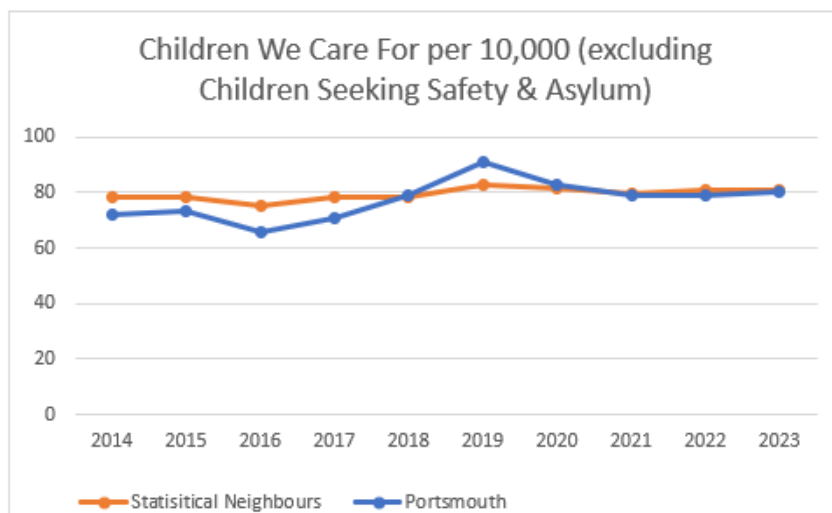
⁵ Nationally referred as Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children or Unaccompanied Minors.



Children seeking safety and asylum

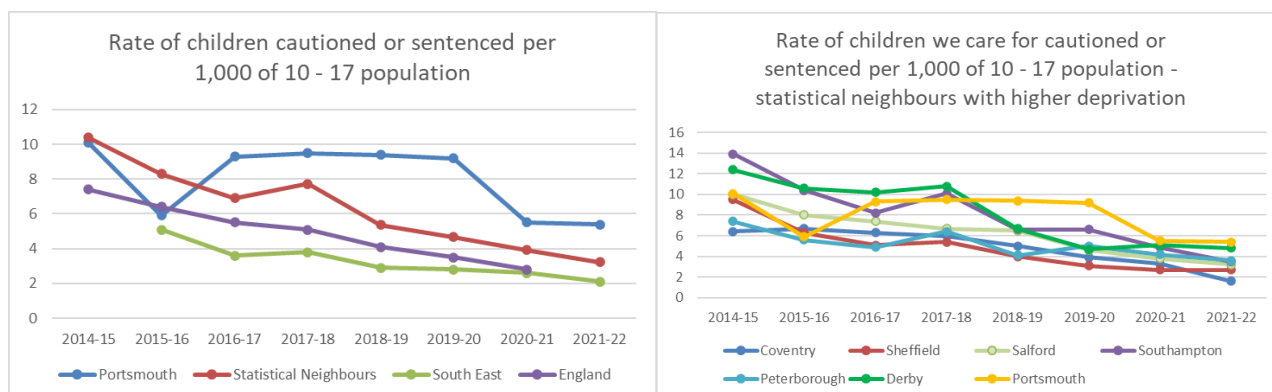
- 4.14 Overall, the total number of children we care for in Portsmouth increased from 2014-15 (321 children) to 2023-24 (402 children). Between 2017-18 and 2018-19, there was a noticeable increase which was primarily due to a significant increase in children seeking safety & asylum. Children seeking safety & asylum numbers reduced after this time following the review of the National Transfer Scheme (NTS)⁶ which ensured a more even distribution of these children across all local authorities.
- 4.15 In comparison with statistical neighbours, Portsmouth's total children we care for population per 10,000 has been above the statistical neighbour average since 2017. However, if you exclude the children seeking safety & asylum cohort, Portsmouth is on a par, and since 2020 has been lower. The rate per 10,000 in 2024 is 95.6, up from 92.5 in 2023.

⁶ National Transfer Scheme (NTS): A system to the responsibility for caring for children seeking safety & asylum more evenly across local authorities.



Children we care for cautioned or sentenced⁷

- 4.16 Over the last eight years, Portsmouth (along with other local authorities) has significantly reduced the number of our children we care for who are cautioned or sentenced. However, Portsmouth's rate of reduction has been slower, with the exception of 2019/20 to 2020/21 where Portsmouth experienced a sharp reduction. Despite the decline, Portsmouth has had a higher rate since 2018/19 compared to averages of England, the South East region, and statistical neighbours (including those with higher levels of deprivation). In terms of the whole of England, Portsmouth (5.40) has the fourth highest rate, only behind Hackney (5.5), Calderdale (5.8) and Nottingham (6). Whilst not directly linked to sufficiency, we need to understand this more.

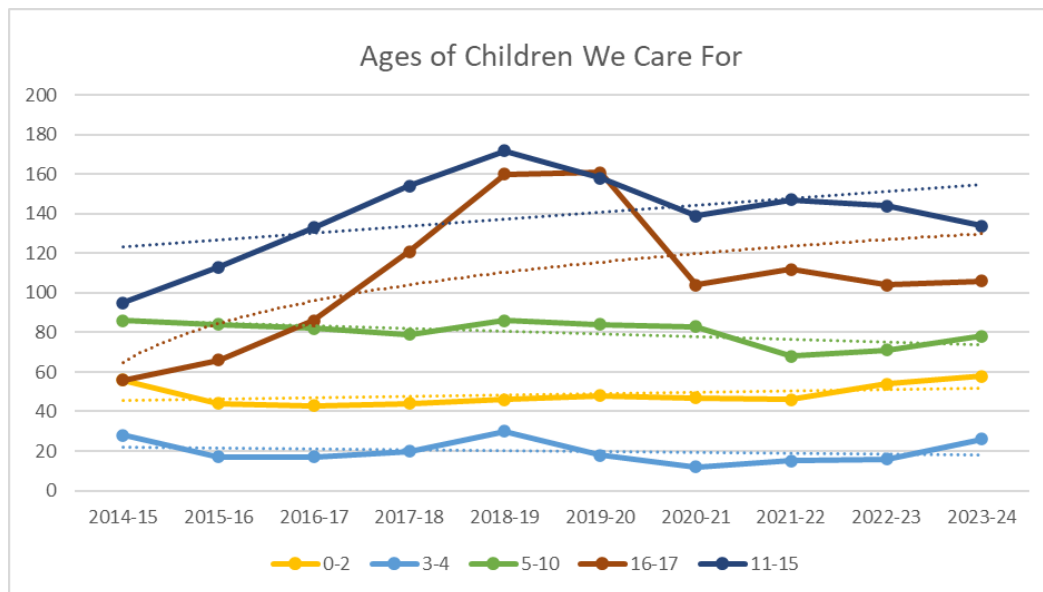


Age of children we care for

- 4.17 Over the ten years, the number of children in the 11-15 and 16-17 age groups initially saw significant growth, peaking around 2018-19, before experiencing declines in more recent years. The 16-17 group dropped sharply after 2020, while the 11-15 group has seen a more gradual reduction. The 0-4, and 5-10 age groups remained relatively stable, with minor fluctuations over time, and a slight increase in the 0-4 age range over the last few years.

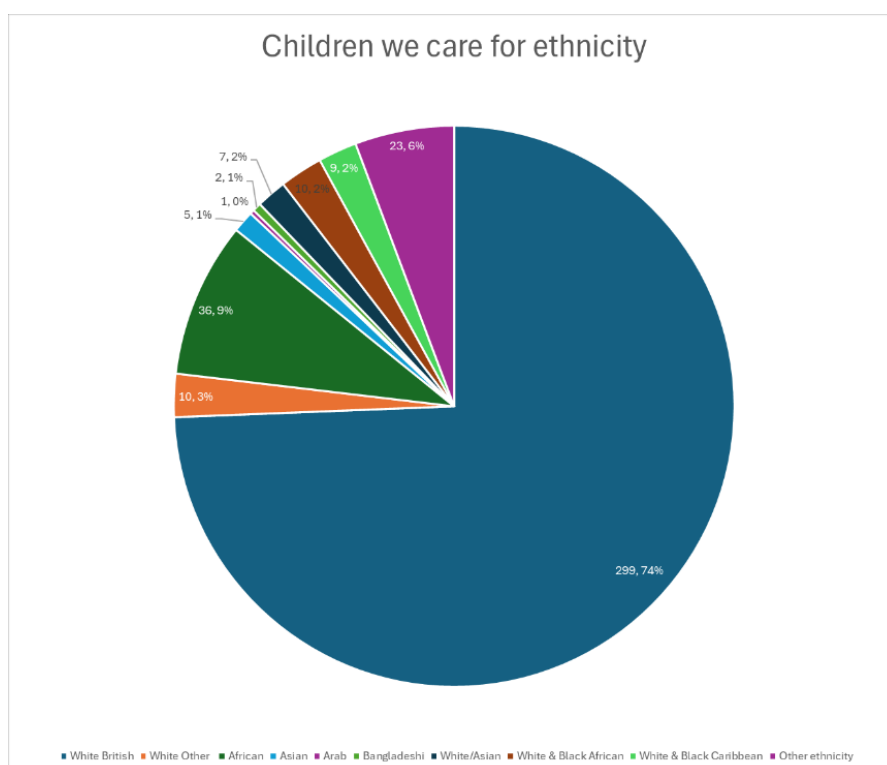
⁷ Rate of children cautioned or sentenced: These figures relate to the number of individual children who received a youth caution or sentence and not the number of offences or disposals. This is for incidents that occur whilst the child is cared for.

- 4.18 The decline in the older cohort is positive as it can be harder to make meaningful changes by bringing these children into care due to their increased independent and autonomy, established habits, complex social and emotional needs as they enter adolescence and peer influence.



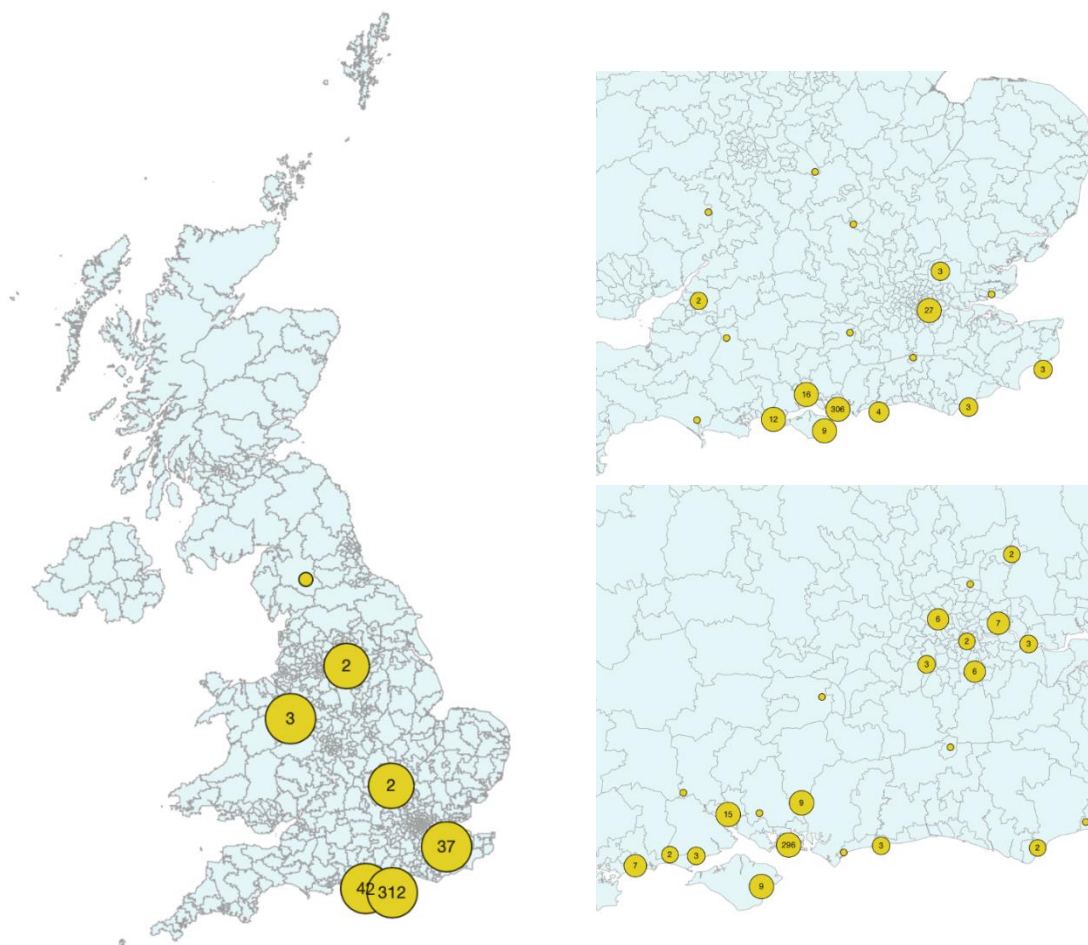
Ethnicity

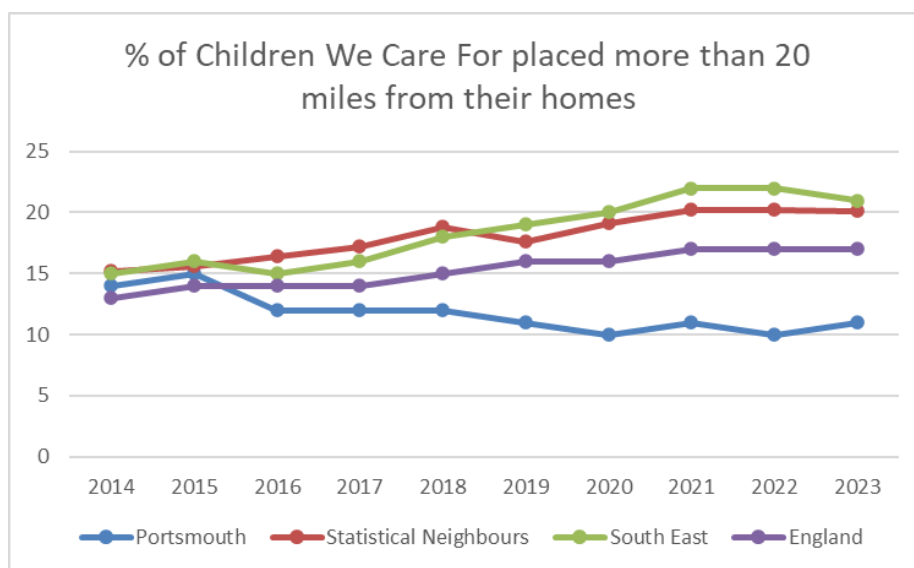
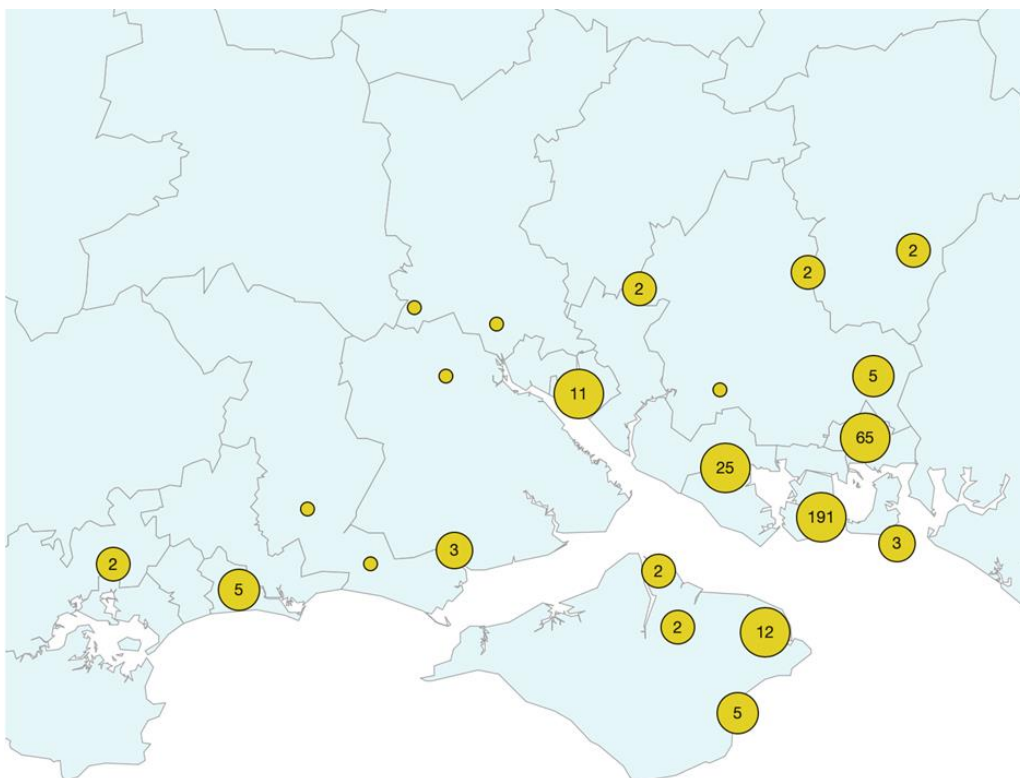
- 4.19 In 2021, Portsmouth City's recorded Black and Global Majority population was 15%. You will see from the pie chart below that as at 31/03/24, the majority of our children we care for were White (77%) and 23% Black and Global Majority. Taking our children seeking safety & asylum out of the equation, leaves us with 15% who are Black and Global Majority, which is proportionate with the local population, noting that Portsmouth population was last recorded in 2021.



Location of homes for Children We Care For

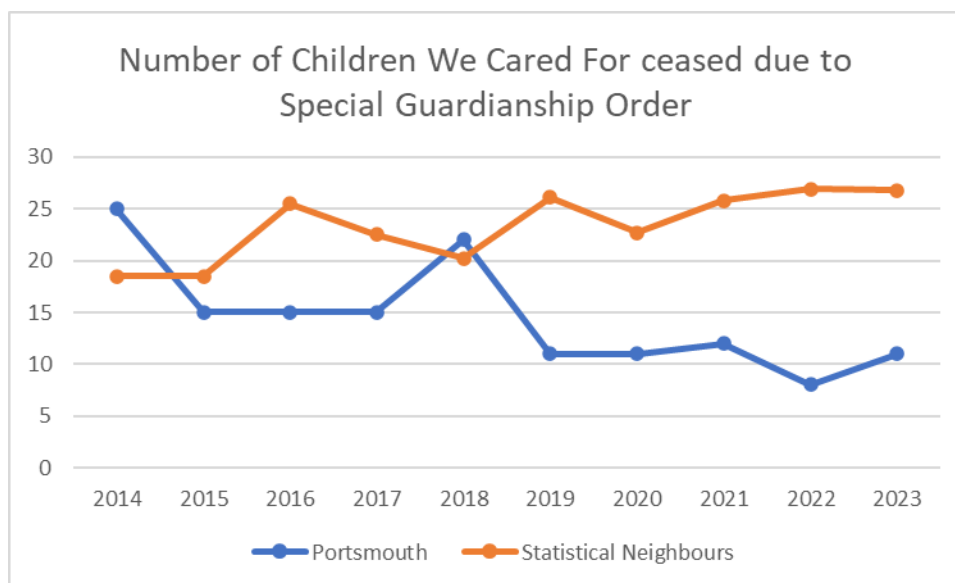
4.20 You will see from the maps below, that the majority of children we care for are placed in or around Portsmouth. This is confirmed by the 'children placed 20 miles from home' indicator. In 2023/24, only 10.75% of children were placed more than 20 miles from their home. Between 2014 and 2023, Portsmouth had the lowest percentages compared to others throughout the period, indicating better performance in keeping children closer to their homes compared to the other local authorities. Approximately 60% of our children seeking safety and asylum live in London and we would like to have more local sufficiency for this cohort of children moving forward.





Children in kinship homes

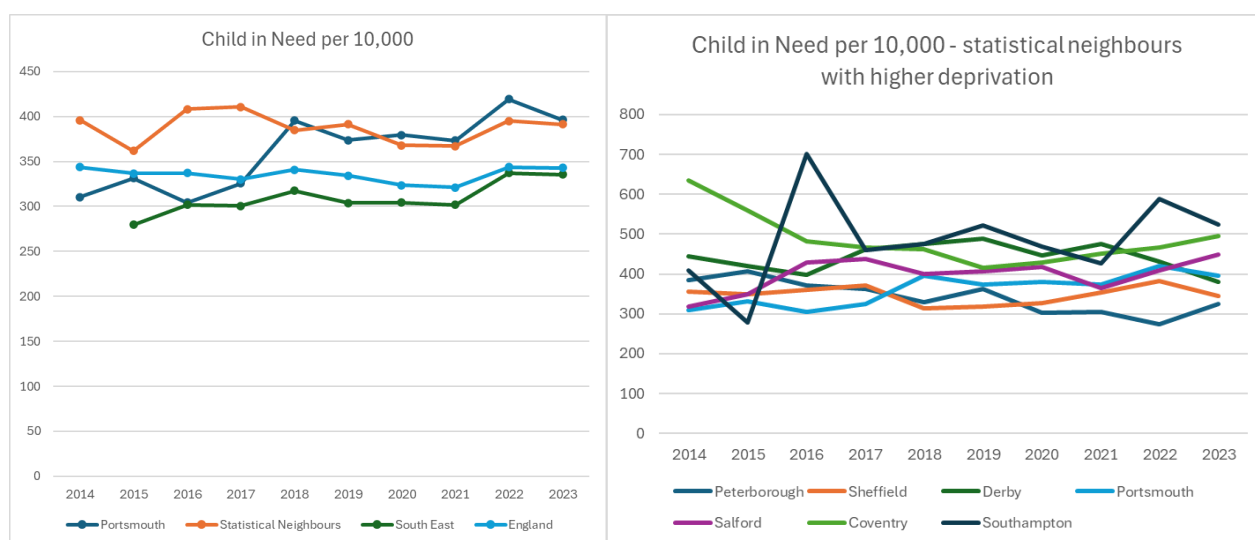
4.21 The graph below shows the number of children who ceased to be cared for due to Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) in Portsmouth, compared to statistical neighbours from 2014 to 2023. There was a noticeable decline from 2018, though a slight upturn in 2022/23. The statistical neighbours trend is relatively stable with an upward trend. The trend warrants a review of the SGO processes in Portsmouth to understand the causes of lower SGO conversion rates from foster carer and address any barriers. Of note and probably relevant to the trend, up until a recent change in policy, the financial offer for foster carers considering an SGO did not encourage a shift from fostering.



Child in Need and Protection

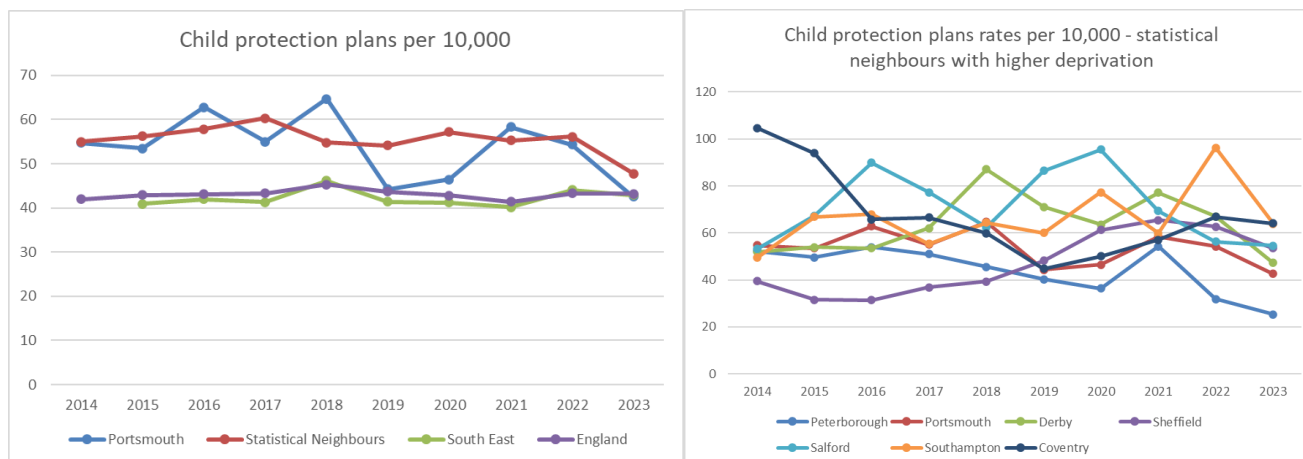
Child in Need

- 4.22 These two charts below display the rate of Children in Need (CIN) per 10,000 children over time (from 2014 to 2023). The first chart shows that Portsmouth's CIN rate has a rising trend from around 2017 onwards, stabilising over recent years, moving more in line with statistical neighbours over the last year. The second chart shows the rate of Children in Need per 10,000, comparing Portsmouth's statistical neighbours with higher levels of deprivation. Portsmouth's CIN rate is lower than cities like Peterborough, Salford, and Coventry, whom experience more volatility and higher peaks.



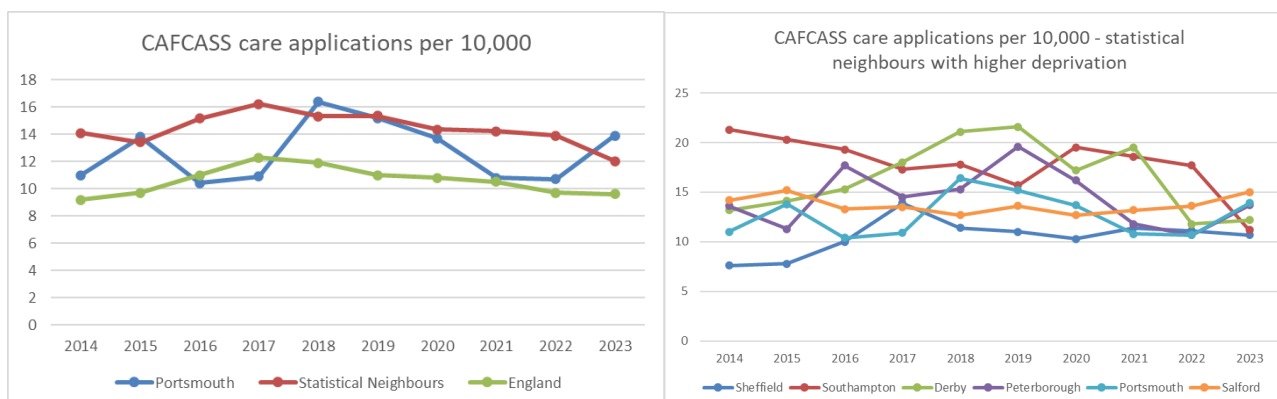
Child protection

- 4.23 The graphs below show that between 2022 and 2023, Portsmouth's rate of children on a Child protection plan fell sharply to around South East and national levels, and below statistical neighbours. In comparison with statistical neighbours with higher levels of deprivation, Portsmouth was in the middle and moderate.



Children subject to care proceedings

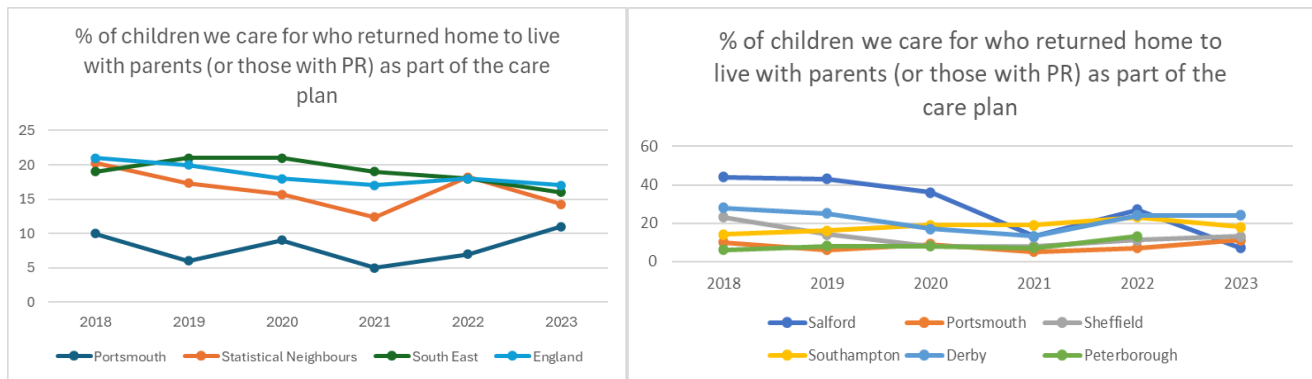
- 4.24 Graphs below show the number of CAFCASS care applications per 10,000 (population of children). The data shows that from 2022 to 2023, Portsmouth rate significantly increased when compared to statistical neighbours, including those with higher levels of deprivation. In 2023, of our statistical neighbours, only Salford had instigated more care applications, and Salford have the highest level of deprivation of the statistical neighbours. As at 31/03/24, Portsmouth had issued more care applications (per 10,000) than any other local authority in the South East. Whilst it is acknowledged that the data from CAFCASS is limited in detail⁸, this needs further exploration.



Children returning to parents (no including those on care orders)

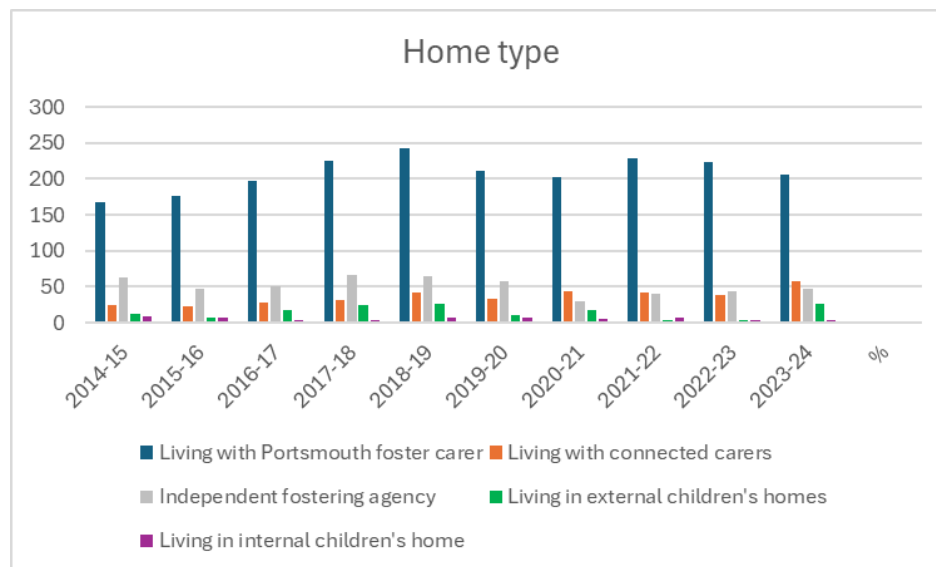
- 4.25 Portsmouth is in line with national, south east and statistical neighbours in relation to children who return to parents in an unplanned way, but the graphs below show that they are outliers where children return in a planned way.

⁸ It has not been possible to establish age profile or order sought at application.



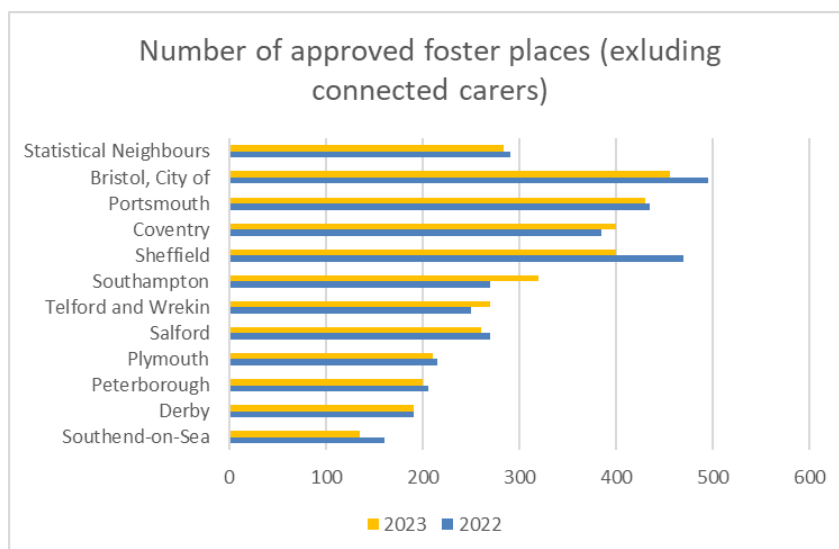
Homes for children we care for

- 4.26 The graph below shows the number of children we care for in Portsmouth in different home types over the years from 2014/15 to 2023/24. You will see from the graph that the majority of our children have consistently lived with Portsmouth foster carers, and as a result are generally local. Whilst the number has been relatively consistent during that time, numbers have fallen over the last three years. Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) are the second most common home type, and whilst this has fluctuated, there has been a slight increase over the last three years. Children living with connected carers shows an increasing trend, especially over the last three years which is positive, and in line with our family first approach. The number of children in children's homes both externally and in Portsmouth's own provision is relatively low but increased in the last year. Rather than complexity of need, this is probably due to a reduction in the number of foster placements available.



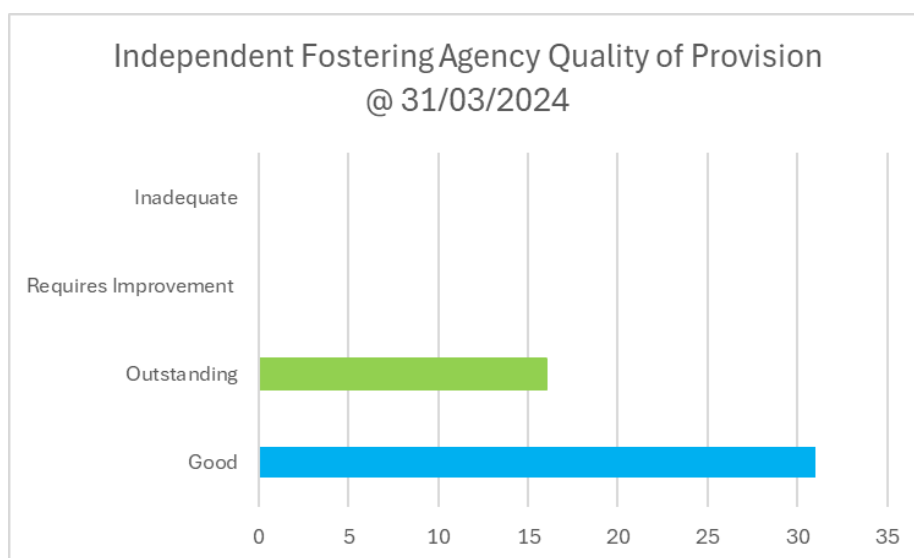
Foster places (excluding connected carers)

- 4.27 The graph below shows that Portsmouth's number of foster homes (excluding connected carers) is strong compared to statistical neighbours though we still need to do more to meet demand. It also shows that the majority of local authorities struggled to increase their number of foster places compared to the previous year with the exception of a few. Portsmouth made a slight gain.



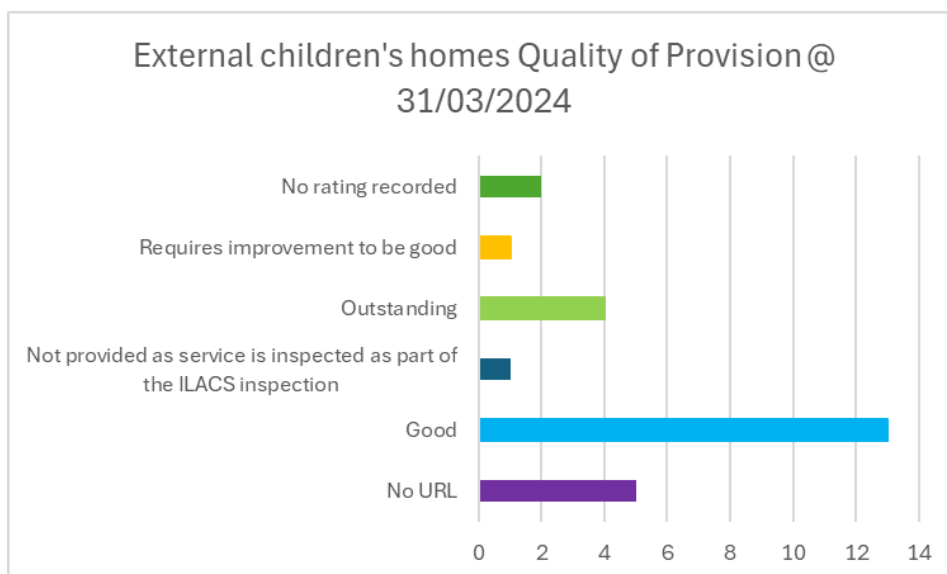
Independent Fostering Agency

- 4.28 The graph below shows that the children in foster homes with Independent Fostering Agencies are placed with agencies that are graded Good or Outstanding with Ofsted. None of the agencies were Requires Improvement or Inadequate.



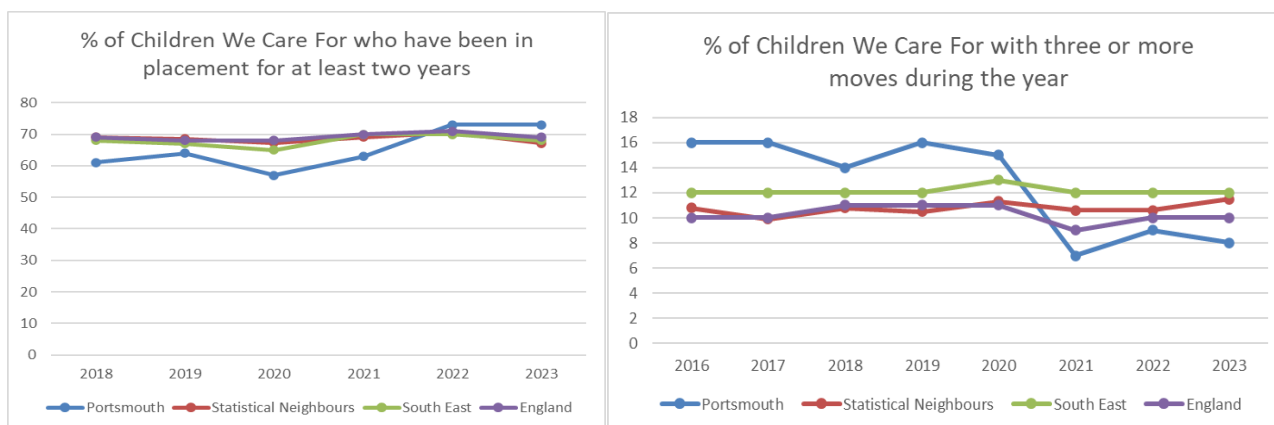
Children's homes

- 4.29 The majority of the independent children's homes that care for our children are graded Good or Outstanding. Our own children's homes are The White House and Tangier Road. The White House has an Ofsted rating of Outstanding, and Tangier Road is rated as Good. Five children's home did not have an URL, waiting for Ofsted registration.



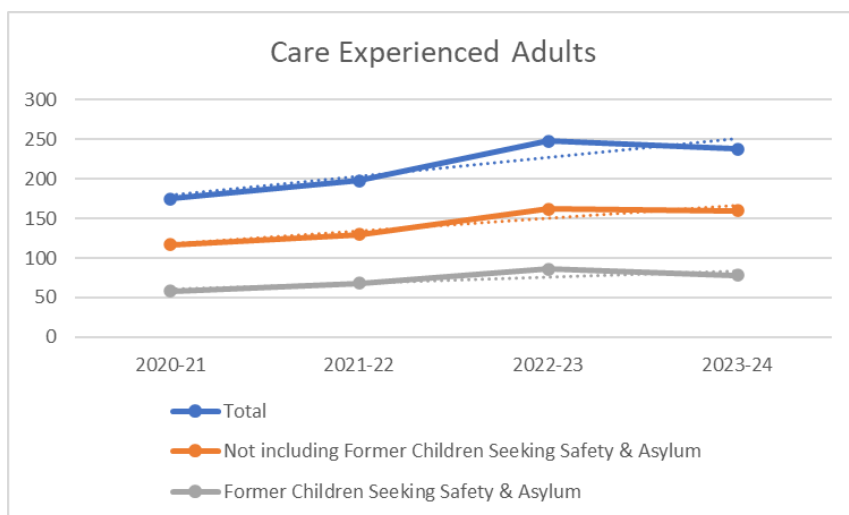
Home stability

- 4.30 Our long term home stability remains a strength, and we continue to work hard to ensure that children in our care receive consistent and stable care. In 2023/24, 70.25% of our children have been living in the same home for more than 2.5 years, and this performance has been above the national, regional and statistical neighbour average for the last few years.
- 4.31 Since 2021, Portsmouth has out-performed national, regional, and statistical neighbour averages in terms of short term stability (graph below). However, the % for 2023/24 rose to 11.39%, a trend other local authorities in the South East region have also experienced.



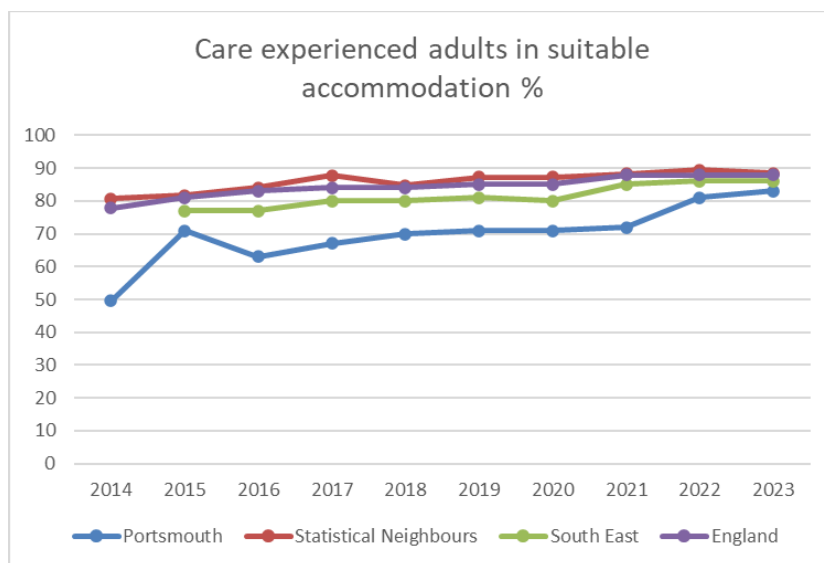
Care Experienced Adults

- 4.32 As anticipated, we are starting to see a decrease in our number of care experienced adults (following the reduction of children seeking safety and asylum in our care through an improved NTS response). We currently have 368 care experienced young people in our service, 160 (44%) are young adults who were in our care and seeking asylum.



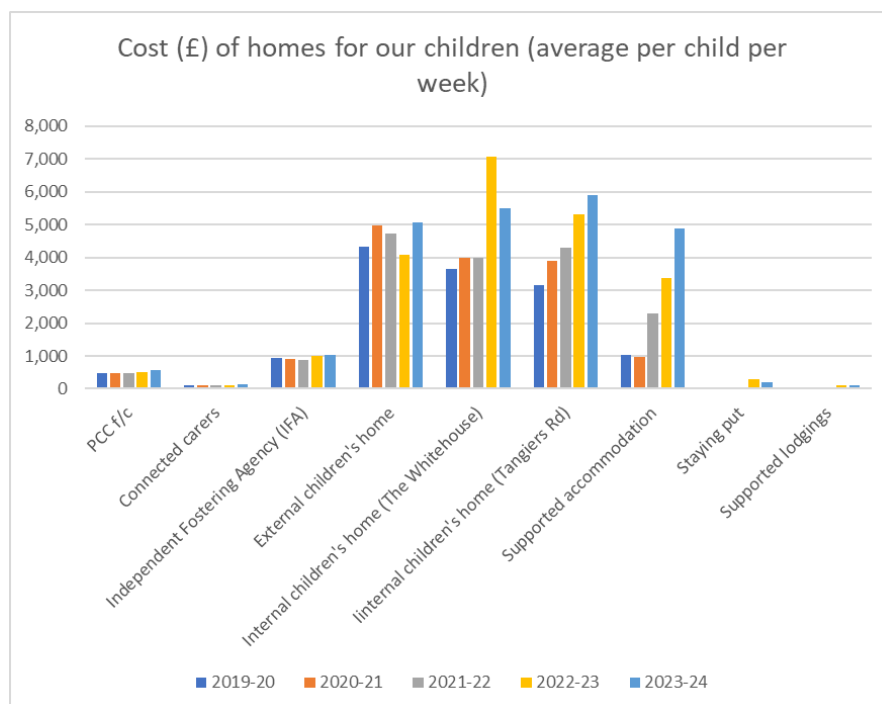
Care experienced adults in suitable accommodation

- 4.33 The graph below shows that Portsmouth have made significant progress over the years in ensuring care experienced adults are in suitable accommodation. In 2014, only 49.6% of care leavers were in suitable accommodation, which was notably poor performance compared to other statistical neighbours and national/regional averages. By 2023, this figure improved significantly to 83%, marking an increase of 33.4% over nine years. This suggests a strong effort to address the issue over time, with an upward trajectory starting from 2015.



Cost of homes

- 4.34 The graph below shows that the average cost per child per week has steadily increase over the last five years. Portsmouth fostering and connected carers show relatively low and stable costs over time and typically less expensive placements when compared with others. Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) saw increased costs in the last few years, along with external children's homes. The steepest increases year on year have been supported accommodation, and our own children's homes (cost where there has been under-occupancy and training requirements meaning more costly casual staff required).

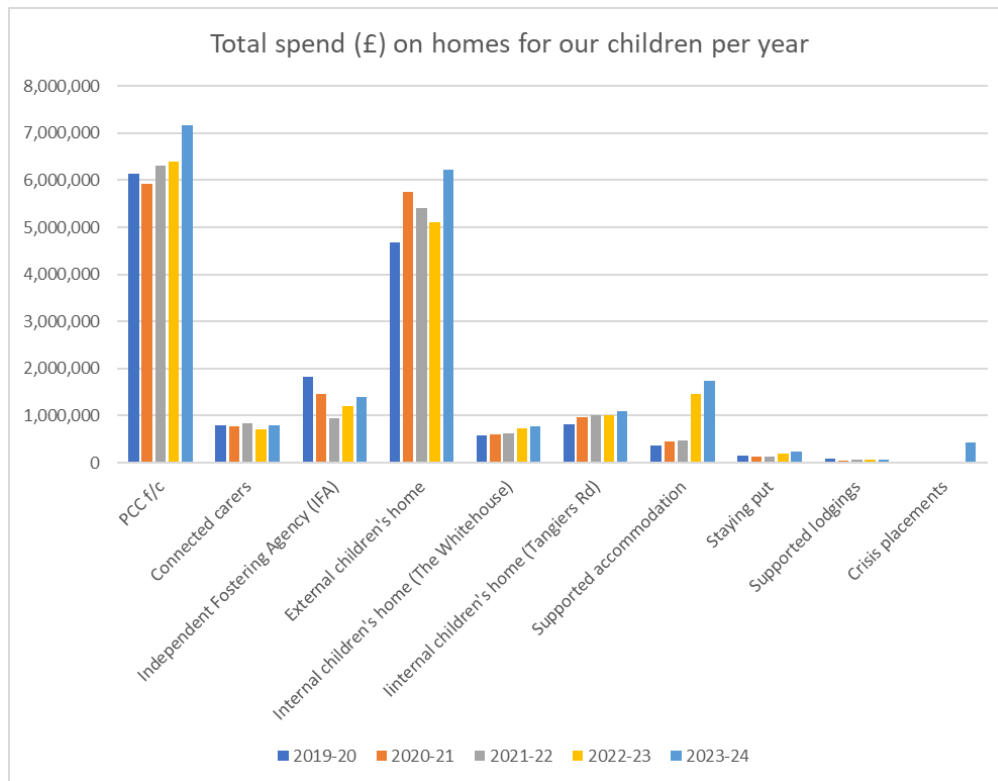


Average cost per week for 2023/24

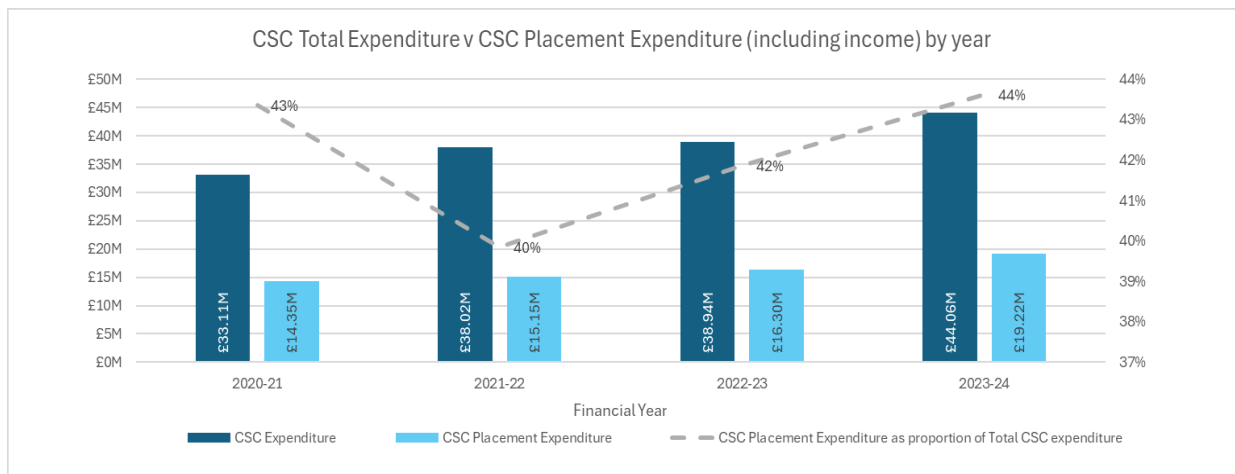
- Supported lodgings – **£95**
- SGO carer - **£123**
- Staying put - **£207**
- PCC foster carer - **£569**
- Independent fostering agency - **£1,030**
- PCC children's home - **£5,697** (costs not budgeted for means higher than expected for 23/24). Forecast for 24/25 is **£4,654**
- External children's home - **£5,076**
- Bespoke placement - **£9,954**

4.35 On rare occasions and faced with no alternative options, Portsmouth has needed to arrange a bespoke arrangement for a child in the absence of any internal or external placement identified to meet the child's needs. These placements are unregulated and costly. In 2023/24, seven children lived in such arrangement for a combined total of 44 weeks at a total cost of £435,942. The highest weekly fee for one child was £17,655.

4.36 For care experienced adults, costs vary greatly, depending on the home. For multiple occupancy homes, this can be £550 per week with one hours support, up to £2,500 where complexity of needs requires 24/7 assistance.



4.37 The chart below titled "CSC Total Expenditure vs CSC Placement Expenditure (including income) by year" compares the overall Children's Social Care (CSC) expenditure to the expenditure specifically on placements for children we care for. The chart shows that the total expenditure on Children's Social Care is increasing each year, with a notable jump between 2022-23 and 2023-24. Inline with this, the expenditure on placements has risen each year. Whilst there is no direct comparable data with other local authorities, this is a national trend. The sharpest increase was between 2022-23 and 2023-24. The proportion of placement costs as part of total CSC expenditure slightly decreased from 2020-21 (43%) to 2021-22 (40%). However, it rose again in subsequent years, reaching 44% in 2023-24. This trend of increasing expenditure, especially for placements, reflects growing pressure on the local authority to meet the needs of children we care for, as well as the rising cost of placements over time.



Summary & conclusion

4.38 The needs analysis shows that:

- Portsmouth faces significant challenges related to child poverty. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) ranks Portsmouth 46th out of 142 local authorities in terms of deprivation. The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) further highlights that around 20.2% of Portsmouth's children live in low-income families, which is closely aligned with its statistical neighbours. Research⁹ consistently shows a correlation between deprivation, and child welfare interventions, including an increased risk of a child becoming cared for.
- The number of children Portsmouth cares for has increased steadily since 2014. However, when excluding children seeking safety & asylum, Portsmouth's numbers are comparable to its statistical neighbours. There has been a recent decline in the number of children cared for who are aged 11- 17 years old.
- Despite a decrease since 2014, Portsmouth has been consistently higher than England, the South East region, and statistical neighbours in relation to children we care for who are cautioned or sentenced.
- The majority of our children are placed locally and within 20 miles of home. Placement stability (long-term and short-term) is good compared to England, South East and statistical neighbours.
- Whilst this is an area of increasing struggle, Portsmouth has historically performed well in placing children in foster homes, particularly with local foster carers, and has maintained relatively low placement costs.
- Portsmouth needs to do more to increase the number of children we care for who move into Special Guardianship arrangements.
- While Portsmouth's child protection rates fell between 2022 and 2023, the number of children subject to care proceedings has increased significantly, surpassing most statistical neighbours. Portsmouth is also an outlier in terms of returning children home in a planned way (not including those children on care orders).
- Acknowledging there is more to be done, significant progress has been made over the years in providing suitable accommodation for care leavers. By 2023, 83% of care-experienced adults were in suitable accommodation, a notable increase from 49.6% in 2014.
- The cost of placements has increased substantially. The most significant rises have been in supported accommodation and bespoke placements, with some individual placements costing over £17,000 per week.

4.38 In conclusion, Portsmouth is performing relatively well given its socio-economic challenges. While the city struggles with high levels of child poverty and a growing demand for children's services, it has been able to maintain high standards in areas such as local and stable placements. There are a number of opportunities for Portsmouth to make improvements in certain areas which will be addressed later in this report.

⁹ The Child Welfare Inequalities Project: Final Report (2020).

5 Review of current provision

Children We Care For

- 5.1 If children cannot live with their parents and adoption is not appropriate, there are a number of different home environments available to our children and care experienced adults, dependent on their assessed level of need.

Homes with kinship carers

- 5.2 Family first is our primary principle, and if children cannot return to the care of their parents, then we will do all we can to provide our children with homes within their existing network of friends and family. Over recent years we have seen an increase in the number of connected carers which positive. However, the ongoing involvement of Children's Social Care in family life is not usually beneficial if it can be avoided, and less intervention makes life more 'normal' for children and their families. Whilst appreciating challenges within the court area, we need to ensure that we do all we can increase the number of family-based orders, such as Special Guardianship Orders and Child Arrangements Orders without the local authority needing to become legally involved.

Homes with Portsmouth foster carers

- 5.3 Portsmouth's fostering service is dedicated to ensuring the children and young people that we care for receive the highest quality of care, support, and opportunities to reach their full potential. Our aim is to recruit, support and train foster carers who can provide caring and nurturing homes for our children. There are also a number of children who have remained with their foster carers in staying put arrangements.
- 5.4 Portsmouth has a strong and thriving fostering community (Including Mockingbird) which in the last year has attracted carers new to fostering, as well as experienced foster carers who have felt lost and isolated in larger nationwide independent fostering agencies. In a national context of fostering shortage, Portsmouth has been able to recruit and retain foster cares consistently, though we need to do much more as demand increases.

Foster homes with Independent Fostering Agency (IFA)

- 5.5 Portsmouth is part of South Central consortia, which is a collaboration of 16 local authorities who commission IFA accommodation via a contractual framework. The framework has been in existence since 2017. More IFAs are opting out of local authority consortia frameworks due to perceived inefficiencies of working within consortium frameworks, as well as an opportunity to be more flexible in pricing, where demand outstrips supply.

Portsmouth Children's Homes

- 5.6 The White House cares for planned admissions of up to three children between the ages of 8 and 18. The team use a Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy approach and follow these principles in their daily care of child focused practice. This means that they work consistently, using the same emotional attitude to form good relationships and connections. These connections are widespread between the children and adults including their parents, when appropriate and possible.

- 5.7 Tangier Rd provides medium to long term placements for up to four children between 8 and 18 years old. The team are dedicated to delivering high quality care that is tailored to the needs of each child. The team also work collaboratively with parents and other professionals.
- 5.8 Beechside is a short break children's home, that provides respite for children and young people who have complex needs, a physical and/or learning disability. In many cases the children and young people who access Beechside require personal care, medication, behavioural support and support with learning. Beechside short break service provides families with the opportunity to re-charge and spend quality time together, safe in the knowledge their child is being well cared for and enjoying a positive stay away from home.

External Children's homes

- 5.9 A small number of our children live in external children's homes. Some are signed up to the South Central consortia. Between 2022/23 and 2023/24, the number fell from 454 (1779 beds) to 384 (1779 beds), a decrease of 15.4% of available placements. Within the 20 mile boundary of Portsmouth there were 32 homes with 156 vacancies. As with IFAs, a number of external children's homes are going off framework, leading to increased cost to the local authority.

External semi-supported accommodation (16 - 17 year olds)

- 5.10 There has been a growing demand for semi-supported accommodation for this age group. Whilst semi-supported accommodation is designed to provide a bridge between full-time care and independent living, some children who require care, end up in support provision as the only placement option. The cost of these placements can be high, especially when additional support is required. New regulatory frameworks for semi-supported accommodation¹⁰ has come into force in response to concerns over inconsistent quality of services. This includes oversight by Ofsted to ensure standards are met.
- 5.11 This national picture highlights a mix of progress and challenges, with ongoing debates about the balance between regulation, quality of care, and the availability of support for care leavers in semi-supported accommodation.

Accommodation for care experienced adults

Staying put

- 5.12 Staying Put allows care experienced adults who have been in foster care to remain with their foster carers after they turn 18, usually until they are 21. The idea is to provide a more gradual transition to independence, recognising that many young people benefit from ongoing support beyond the age of 18. This is clearly a great initiative for some care experienced adults, though creates fostering pressures as the stay put bed cannot be used for children we care for needing a placement.

Supported lodgings

- 5.13 Supported lodgings hosts provide a young person with a room of their own in a private home, where they are a member of the household. The carer provides a safe and supportive environment, working alongside professional services to help and support the young person in gaining skills for independent adult life. This is not a fostering role or assessed under the Fostering Regulations.

¹⁰ Supported Accommodation (England) Regulations 2021

- 5.14 In Portsmouth, our supported lodgings provision has decreased over recent years with an expectation that they would only be available for care experienced (18+), primarily due to such accommodation being unregulated for 16 and 17 year olds. It has become increasingly difficult to recruit new supported lodgings hosts and feedback suggests that this has been due to a low financial offer; and prospective hosts wanting to support under 18s primarily. As part of the new carers allowances and fees policy, we have improved the financial offer for supported lodgings, and it is anticipated that we will register with Ofsted to enable supported lodgings accommodation to be regulated for 16 and 17 year old children we care for. As well as meeting the needs of more children locally, this should appeal to more prospective hosts.

Aspiration/Staying Close

- 5.15 The Staying Close provides 10 units and was formally a pilot to support young people leaving residential care and provides support for ten care experienced adults each year in shared housing. It is now core funded, but continues to receive a grant from the DfE. The learning from the Staying Close project was that Care Experienced adults have been adversely affected by their past traumas and are developmentally 4 -5 years behind their non-cared for peers and indeed those young people whose care experience has been a stable foster placement. Aspiration is our own in-house accommodation and has 24 units.

Private rented

- 5.16 Portsmouth has a Rent Deposit Scheme in place to assist young people who can manage their own tenancy to rent from the private sector.

Shared properties

- 5.19 We currently lease a number of properties in partnership with Portsmouth housing department. There are currently 29 beds (12 additional bedspaces since last year), across 5 properties which are supported by staff from the Staying Close team. The support model of Staying Close has been adopted and adapted to these houses.

Shared lives

- 5.18 Some care experienced adults with additional needs are eligible for supported accommodation through the Shared Lives scheme. This involves living in a carers home where additional support is provided to help the care experienced adult to live independently.

Supported Housing

- 5.19 In Portsmouth we have a variety of different supported housing services. They vary in size and levels of support. All Saints run a twelve flat sublet service with floating support. Once a young person demonstrates that they can manage their tenancy, they are signed over as a full council tenant.

Council tenancy

- 5.20 There are currently ten direct nominations per year for care experienced adults.

External semi-supported accommodation

- 5.21 There are a number of external semi-supported accommodation providers for our care experience adults cohort in and around the Portsmouth area. Semi-supported accommodation is designed to provide a bridge between full-time care and independent living, offering varying levels of support depending on individual needs. The cost of these placements can be high, especially when additional support is required.

6 Hearing the voices of children and staff

Corporate parenting strategy

- 6.1 In 2023/24 we launched our new Corporate Parenting Strategy for 2023 - 2026 which was co-designed by our children that we care for and care experienced adults. Our Corporate Parenting Strategy sets out the key priorities and actions required to ensure that we are providing our children we care for and care experienced adults with the best start in life so that they can achieve their full potential. We know that if our children and care experienced adults are in or as close to Portsmouth as possible, helping them to achieve this will be optimised.
- 6.2 The six priorities are:
- I. Hearing your voice
 - II. To promote and develop relationships with the people that are important to you
 - III. Provide a trusted, safe and stable home for you
 - IV. To support your emotional and physical health and wellbeing
 - V. Develop skills for your life ahead
- 6.3 We have set our promises to the children we care for in the Portsmouth Pledge:

1

We promise to make sure that you have the love and affection that everyone needs.

6

We will never give up supporting and encouraging you to do the best you can in school, college, university, work and your life.

2

We promise to always respect your individuality.

7

We promise that we will still be here for you, up to and beyond 25. You are as much a part of our lives as we are yours.

3

We promise to make sure your relationships are always at the heart of everything we do.

8

We promise we will always respect your identity and you, and we promise to help you to connect with your heritage and history.

4

We promise to give you the stable and consistent experience in care.

9

We promise that your voice will always be at the centre of our decisions.

5

We promise that your mental health and wellbeing will be looked after whilst you are in our care.

10

We promise to make sure you know what your rights are and how to access them.

11

We promise to always respect and value your experiences as you are the only people that know what it is like accessing our services.



What our children and care experienced adults tell us

Children We Care For

6.4 Some of the children we care for provided feedback in February 2024¹¹, and in the month of August 2024 the Children in Care Council considered what was important to them in terms of placement sufficiency.

Feedback was that:

- The term placement sufficiency was not helpful for them in terms of understanding.
- It is important for them to move as little as possible when first coming into care, but sometimes it is necessary to find the right foster care placement.
- They felt that they could be more actively involved in the selection of long term foster homes, if they had more information about foster carers like location, number of carers, pets and so on they could help choose.
- They felt that more things like activities should be run so that foster carers can have short breaks and recuperate.
- A number of the children felt that there was not enough home variety of that they were not informed about the process.
- 80% of children felt that family time with friends and family was well-supported.
- 68% of children said that they would appreciate support in reconnecting with friends and family they've lost contact with.

Care Experienced Adults

6.5 Some care experienced adults provided feedback in February 2024¹², and in the month of August 2024, the Care Experienced Voice Group also met to consider placement sufficiency. Feedback was that:

- It was important not to assume what type of home is best for them, and that listening and taking their views seriously is important.
- Variety of choice may not always be possible, but it is good to share choices.
- Housing when you turn 18 feels really intimidating and limited, and more supportive options like supportive lodgings will help support this difficult period of life when living on your own and supporting yourself may not be right.
- 86% of care experienced adults felt supported with their house.
- 63% felt that there was enough housing options to support them (27% didn't).

What our staff tell us

6.6 In June and July 2024, a number of workshops took place to get feedback in relation to placement sufficiency. This is what staff said:

¹¹ Feedback February - 34% of children we care for participated in the survey

¹² Feedback February - 45% of care experienced adults participated in the survey

Working well

- Going Home project in Building Your Futures is seen as a success with a number of children being supported to return home to their parent(s).
- The life long links project has going well so far and providing benefit for children and young people.
- Family Safeguarding model has had positive feedback.
- The adult workers attached to Family Safeguarding Support Teams and Building Your futures provide added value.
- South East Recruitment and Retention Hub will hopefully provide foster carer benefits.
- Mockingbird is seen as a real strength by children, foster carers and staff, promoting placement stability.
- We have previously done a 'learning from success' in terms of placements that have gone really well for children, maybe where other placements have failed to meet needs. We need to do more of this.
- Stability meetings are now taking place monthly and review all children we care for in fostering.
- The pay review and revised recruitment and retention arrangements will hopefully help with stability of social worker and that should be positive for placement stability.
- Aspirations and Staying Close accommodation is felt to be good and more needed.

Areas to focus on

Birth family

- We need to have returning children home to birth families (and other step down options) always on our minds and in our conversations, from the moment they come into care and building relationships.
- We need to do more to make sure that at the point of CSC involvement with a family, we have good information about who is in the support network, who can support and in what way, and actively involve them where appropriate in key meetings.
- We need to be using Family Group Conferences (FGC) at an early stage of children coming into care, and if needs be, hold family network meetings in the absence of an FGC.
- We could do more to help families build networks of support around them that doesn't include the need for CSC.
- In our care planning, throughout the child's journey, we always need to articulate what needs to happen for it to be safe enough for a child to return to a parent/extended family member's care - safety goal.
- There is a gap in terms of repeat pregnancies where children are then removed from parents.

- When parents are having difficulties managing their children at home, approaches such as having a stability meeting could be beneficial to look at what support would help to keep children within their family at home.
- We know that our interventions with adolescents have impact and promote relationships within the family home. It would be positive to develop this work further to provide additional support for our older children to remain in their family homes.

Kinship

- We need to do more to support our special guardianship carers, as it is better to have children in their care than cared for by Portsmouth. The team needs to grow with demand.
- Data regarding special guardianship carers needs to improve to give us a clearer picture of this particular cohort of carers.
- We need to increase the number of children cared for under Special Guardianship Orders rather than cared for by Portsmouth.

Fostering

- We need more foster carers for children with complex needs, sibling groups and children seeking safety & asylum.
- There is a worry that more independent providers are moving away from contractual frameworks and charging local authorities more.
- We could increase fostering capacity if we support our foster carers to make adaptations to their homes.
- We could consider other incentives for foster carers, for example council tax exemptions.
- We need to make sure we have good up to date child profiles through the journey of the child that show the child at their best.
- Could we do more with our marketing and digital media approach, and in there more that colleagues in the council could do to recruit more foster carers.
- If all our foster carers were trauma informed, this is likely to provide additional emotional attunement which would add to placement stability.
- We could review our connected foster carers to see if any have the capacity for mainstream fostering.
- We need to ensure that we are differentiating ourselves from other fostering agencies to give us an edge in the market.
- There is a lack of step down from fostering/alternatives for 16/17 year olds. Supported lodgings is an identified gap. Supported lodgings 'plus' would be good for some children with more complex needs.
- We need to have more suitable accommodation for our children seeking safety and asylum in Portsmouth.

Children's Homes

- Worry that Portsmouth's children's home provision is insufficient in number and does not cater for emergency short term arrangements or children with more complex needs.
- There is an increasing number of children who are remanded into local authority care at significant cost.
- Tangier Rd is too big and not very homely for the children there. It is registered for five children and research suggests that smaller homes deliver better outcomes.

Care Experienced Adults

- More work could be done to make sure that our foster carers are equipping children from an early age for independence.
- There are not enough housing nominations for care experienced.
- There is a lack of accommodation options for 18 years plus. Could Portsmouth be the landlord for some of them in council housing, and are there opportunities to work closer with the private sector in terms of HMOs.
- To many children are living in London. A lack of local connection makes it difficult for care experienced adults to get accommodation in London.

7 What we have achieved recently

7.1 Homes with parents and kinship arrangements

- The Family Safeguarding model with adult practitioners is well established (domestic abuse, substance misuse recover, and mental health recovery workers). Mult-disciplinary supervision is now standard across the service and has been well received and teams are well engaged. The adult practitioners are embedded in Building Your Futures and work with families on the Going Home pathway.
- Our adult practitioners are trained at level 2 of Dyadic Development Psychotherapy (DDP) along with other members of staff.
- Work has been achieved in Legal Gateway Meetings to strengthen permanence discussions. A permanency tracker has been developed and permanency overview meetings introduced to ensure that there is clear focus on permanence planning for our children.
- A revised Special Guardianship Order (SGO) policy was launched in October 2023. Work is underway to contact special guardian carers where changes to the policy means that they may have been entitled to a further financial means assessment to determine whether they are eligible for any further support. It is positive that over the year, the number of connected carer homes significantly increased from 30 through to 44 at 31/03/24.
- We have recruited an additional support worker to link in with our Special Guardianship carers.

7.2 Children we care for

- We are proud of our 'going home & strengthening families' work in Building Your Futures which aims to support and enable children and young people to return home, when it is in their

interests to do so. As at 31/03/24, Building Your Futures was working with 16 children with a plan to go home in the next 12 months or less, and 10 of those children have already returned home. In addition, the team are supporting a further 12 children with a going home plan (12 months and over), focusing on improving the quality of family time. The Family Safeguarding approach is now embedded in the team with adult workers repairing and restoring relationships with parents and extended family members as we recognise that these can become fractured during the court process or during children's period in care.

- In April 2024, Portsmouth launched a new skills fee and allowance policy which increased the remuneration for foster carers (and supported lodgings hosts).
- Mockingbird is a fostering model based on the extended family concept and involves foster carers being part of a support group with other foster carers. Having launched our 5th constellation in March 2023, the model continues to be well received by children and foster carers alike. The arrangement enables children to experience more normalised care as they are able to build relationships with other children within the group, and home stability is improved within the constellations and there is better retention of carers.
- We are part of the South East Fostering Recruitment Hub which is part of the national reform programme 'Stable Homes Built on Love'. The programme aims recruit and retain more foster carers with the region working in a collaborative way to achieve this. Our approach to foster carer mentoring has been chosen to be the model for the subcluster.
- Our fostering website was one of the highest rated (top five out of twenty six) following a mystery shopping report undertaken by foster carers in the South East.
- Our children's homes continue to be supported by a wide range of partners. The White House has been graded by Ofsted as 'Outstanding', and Tangier Road 'Good'.
- The CAMHS STaRT (Specialist Trauma & Relational Therapies) team continue to provide a dedicated mental health service for Portsmouth children we care for, and care experienced. CAMHS STaRT complete assessments and provide consultations to staff and carers with the aim of providing an early intervention preventative response for the network around the child/young person. They also provide training to social workers and foster carers.
- Portsmouth Missing Exploitation and Trafficking (MET) weekly meeting is fully embedded and well attended across the partnership. In the period July 2023 (when the meeting was established) to March 2024 115 children were discussed, and we held 98 reviews to ensure robust plans are in place to disrupt the exploitation of our children.
- We have focused on and strengthened our processes and practice to respond when children are missing from their home. We have updated our return conversation paperwork in line with what children and young people told us, supporting a conversation with each child and young person. As a result of this we have seen an improvement in the timeliness and quality of return home conversations informing care planning and risk management.
- We have completed our 'Safer Me' pilot. With this the plan is completed with the child and their network and is designed and a jointly owned intervention, travelling with the child and shared across key agencies. We have embedded the Safer Me plan within Mosaic and continue to drive the use of this for children who go missing and/or are risk of exploitation/being exploited.
- Our Child Safety and Asylum Team is now fully established and we are proud of the strong relational practice delivered by our committed staff team. Our lived experience mentor

apprentice supports with meeting new children at the port, helping to highlight issues that may be impacting and affecting our children and young people, and helping to develop front line practice.

7.3 **Care experienced adults**

- We have improved our transition to adults' services where young people have physical conditions. We ensure that young people with complex health needs are supported in their transition to adult services from 14 years of age and are brought to the High Support Needs Panel for oversight.
- We have extended the offer of the drug and alcohol support service up to the age of 24 including the use of the DASS building.
- We have provided learning and development to practitioners in respect of mental capacity assessments and improved our 16-25 mental health pathways catering for all care experienced young adults supported by three new posts which have been recruited to.
- We have developed an internal employment academy for care experienced young people and the offer includes the 'I Can' programme, careers support, work experience, training and apprenticeships. We are currently developing our employee offer to enhance sustainability of work placements.
- We have continued to strengthen our work with Housing and this has led to an improved strategic response and improved outcomes for individuals. There is a weekly Housing Panel to review any young adult at risk of homelessness or requiring a move on plan, including those in B&B or temporary accommodation.
- We have reviewed and launched our Joint Housing Protocol and jointly trained Personal Advisors and Housing Officers. No young adults have been found intentionally homeless since our new process was agreed.
- Our numbers of care experienced young adults in suitable housing is improving. Increasing the offer as well as ensuring accuracy of our information has been a focus, so this fully reflects where our young adults are living.
- Aspiration Staying Close provision works well but demand outstrips capacity. We need a Staying Close available for those leaving foster care where Staying Put is not an option.

8. **Homes forecasting**

Children We Care For

Overview

- 8.1 For the years 2025, 2026, and 2027, we anticipate that the total number of children we care for will remain relatively stable. Whilst national trends predict a year on year increase, and our historical trend would expect this as well for Portsmouth, we would hope to counterbalance this rise with increased focus and resource in our 'edge of care' and early years provision. We will also aim to optimise home types for children to better support children and young people locally, whilst reducing our reliance on external provision. The forecasting assumptions below would result in a reduction in the spend on homes for our children.

Forecasting assumptions

- 8.2 Overall stability: The total number of children we care for will remain steady and consistent with 2023-24 levels (based on 371 children in home types listed below).
- 8.3 Portsmouth foster homes: A year-on-year increase in Portsmouth foster homes, particularly for the 11-17 age cohort.
- 8.4 Connected carers: An increase in the number of children placed with connected carers, (supporting those family members to be caring under Special Guardianship arrangements).
- 8.5 Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) homes: to remain unchanged.
- 8.6 External children's homes: A significant reduction in children placed in external children's homes to enhance stability and cost-effectiveness.
- 8.7 Portsmouth children's homes: The number of children in our children's homes will remain at the current numbers but will increase if there are opportunity for expansion ie more homes.
- 8.8 Supported accommodation and Supported lodgings:
- Supported accommodation placements will see a slight decrease each year with more children in foster homes and supported lodgings.
 - Once Ofsted regulated, supported lodgings will increase to counterbalance the reduction in supported accommodation.
- 8.9 Reduction in older cared for children: Efforts will be made to reduce the proportion of older children in care, supporting children to remain with their parents/families.

Projected home trends (2025-2027)¹³

Home type	2025 projection		2026 projection		2027 projection	
Portsmouth foster carers	Increase	205	Increase	215	Increase	225
Connected carers	Unchanged	45	Unchanged	48	Unchanged	50
Independent Fostering Agency (IFA)	Unchanged	60	Decrease	50	Decrease	46
External children's homes	Decrease	30	Decrease	24	Decrease	17
Portsmouth children's homes	Unchanged	6	Increase	7	Unchanged	7
Supported accommodation	Unchanged	15	Decrease	12	Decrease	10
Supported lodgings	Unchanged	10	Increase	15	Increase	19

Care Experienced Adults

Overview

- 8.10 For the years 2025, 2026, and 2027, we anticipate that the total number of care experienced adults will gradually fall to around 300 in 2027, primarily due to a reducing number of former children seeking safety & asylum, following the high numbers of that cohort being cared for in 2018/2019. We have too many children seeking safety & asylum in London, and this leads to housing difficulties when they turn eighteen. We would look to bring more of these children back to Portsmouth so that we can provide them with improved housing options when they become care experienced adults. Between 2025 - 2027, we would expect to see Portsmouth City Council only paying for accommodation for those over twenty one years old, who have an identified need, and then this cost should be shared with adults social care and those young people who have no recourse to public funds and are in education. This approach and improved commissioning arrangements will result in year on savings.

Forecasting assumptions

- 8.11 Parents/family: With an increased focus in the 'Going Home' workstream for 16/17 year olds, we would anticipate supporting more children to return to the care of parents/family when they become care experienced adults.
- 8.12 Community home/Residential care: We do not anticipate a change in the trend for this cohort of children with complex needs. However, we will be better at ensuring robust commissioning arrangements, with transition planning commencing at a much earlier stage.
- 8.13 Supported lodgings: We anticipate a year-on-year increase in our supported lodgings for care experienced adults, once our provision becomes regulated with Ofsted.
- 8.14 Aspirations homes (shared houses): We have put in a capital bid to increase our number of Aspiration beds by five in 25. If this is successful, we will look for further increases in 26 and 27.
- 8.15 Staying close: We have put in a capital bid to increase our number of Staying close beds by four in 25. If this is successful, we will look for further increases in 26 and 27.
- 8.16 All Saints/Foyer: We do not anticipate a change in our use of these provision.
- 8.17 Independent living: The majority of our children live independently. We would hope that we see an increased trend over the three years.
- 8.18 Staying put: As we anticipate the number of children we care for remaining stable, we do not forecast changes in the numbers of children in staying put arrangements

¹³ Number of beds rather than carers.

Projected home trends (2025-2027)

Home type	2025 projection	2026 projection	2027 projection
With parents/family	Increase	Increase	Increase
Community home/Residential care	Unchanged	Unchanged	Unchanged
Supported Lodgings	Unchanged	Increase	Increase
Aspiration Houses	Increase	Increase	Increase
Staying Close	Increase	Unchanged	Unchanged
All Saints & Foyer	Unchanged	Unchanged	Unchanged
Independent living	Increase	Increase	Increase
Staying put/Shared lives	Unchanged	Unchanged	Unchanged

9. Next steps

9.1 Based on the information in this report, the following is what we will do over the next three years to address placement sufficiency for Portsmouth.

9.2 Enable more children to live with their birth parents or within their existing family/friends network

We will:

- Review our permanence approach, ensuring there is a clear 'Family First' focus.
- Increase therapeutic parenting support for parents who have had children previously removed from their care.
- Increase the support for Special Guardianship carers to encourage more kinship placements, reducing the reliance on foster care and residential placements.
- Support wider birth family network members to secure Special Guardianship Orders for children in the family early on, once it becomes apparent that this is in the child's best interests.
- Increase the use of family group conferences (FGC) and family network meetings early in children's social care involvement, to ensure family and kinship options are clear in the event that the child can no longer live with their parents.
- Track the impact of the family group conferencing service to ensure it is effective in supporting children to stay at home or with their extended family whenever possible.
- Develop provision to provide suitable local resource for complex teenagers both on the edge of care and in care who are at risk of exploitation.

9.3 Expand our care provision for children who require alternative family based care, ensuring quality of care and value for money

We will:

- Review our marketing and recruitment for fostering, to ensure it effectively targets a diverse range of potential carers, promotes inclusivity, and highlights the unique benefits of fostering, while utilising digital and employer/community outreach strategies to maximise engagement.
- Continue to work with the South East Fostering Hub to increase efficiencies with the Isle of Wight, Southampton and Hampshire.

- Expand our trauma informed care training for foster carers to enhance their ability to support children and ensure placement stability.
- Explore additional incentives for foster carers, such as home adaptations for foster carers to increase capacity.
- Review our models of foster care to include consideration of short term bridging placements,, same day care, and 'time out' foster care (14 day support for families whilst support provided for young person and their family).
- Work with Independent Fostering Agencies off framework, to build relationships with a view to brokering value for money agreements. Understand those foster placements in and around Portsmouth and make direct contact to consider opportunities for first refusal of their vacancies.
- Develop supported lodgings for 16 and 17 year old children we care for, some with complex needs.

9.4 Ensure that we have sufficient children's home provision, as close to Portsmouth as possible, which provides good quality care and value for money

We will:

- Continue to closely monitor and reduce the use of unregulated and high cost bespoke placements.
- Review our existing children's home offer to ensure that it meets the needs for our children.
- Explore the expansion of local children's homes, to include three bedded and short term solo placements for children with complex needs, reducing the reliance on distant, high-cost providers. Explore whether there are opportunities to work with known children's home providers with a proven track record of delivering outcomes, to run potential new children's homes on behalf of Portsmouth using current Portsmouth properties.
- Improve the monitoring of placements and the connectivity between commissioning, the provider and social worker to ensure outcomes are appropriate and met.
- Work with children's homes off framework, to build relationships with a view to brokering improved value for money agreements. Understand those homes in and around Portsmouth and make direct contact to consider opportunities for first refusal of their vacancies.

9.5 Expand our local accommodation offer for care experienced adults

We will:

- Increase housing options by working alongside Portsmouth Housing Department.
- Develop more sublets.
- Increase the number of our own Aspiration houses.
- Develop partnerships with private landlords and housing providers to offer more local accommodation.
- Expand the 'going home' approach to consider children who are 16 and 17.
- Expand supported lodgings for care experienced adults.

- Improve commissioning arrangements with post 18 semi-supported accommodation providers, especially considering those care experienced adults with complex needs.

10. Impact measures – How we know we have been successful

1. Children We Care For:

- We will see a reduction in the number of Children We Care For (per 10,000), especially the 11 years plus age range.

2. Placement Stability:

- We will improve our long term and short term placement stability.

3. Kinship and Special Guardianship Placements:

- We will increase the number of children placed with kinship carers.
- We will increase the number of Special Guardianship carers who were connected foster carers.

4. Local Placement Rate:

- We will increase the number of our children placed within 20 miles of their home, aiming to keep this number high to support local connections and stability.
- We will place more children seeking safety & asylum within 20 miles of Portsmouth.

5. Foster Homes:

- We will increase the number of foster care beds and reduce our reliance on Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs).
- We will increase the number of IFA beds available within 20 miles of the child's home.

6. Children's Homes:

- We will increase the number of Children's home bed available within 20 miles of the child's home.

7. Supported Lodgings:

- We will increase the number of supported lodgings hosts.

8. Care Experienced Adults in Suitable Accommodation:

- We will increase the number of care experienced in suitable housing.
- We will increase the number of suitable high quality 18 plus accommodation.

9. Reduction in Unregulated/Unregistered Placements:

- We will strive to place our children with providers rated 'Good' or better and reduce the number of our children in unregulated/unregistered placements.

10. Financial Efficiency:

- We will reduce the financial burden of external placements and ensuring best value for money in local provision.