



Hertfordshire Fostering Service

Annual Report 2021-22



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1. Purpose of this report

This is a report on the performance of the Hertfordshire County Council Fostering Service in line with National Minimum Standards and Statutory Guidance.

It provides details of the Hertfordshire County Council Fostering Service activity from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 and sets out plans for service development until 31 March 2023.

This annual report should be read in conjunction with the Fostering Statement of Purpose:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/childrens-services/fostering/fostering-statement-of-purpose-2021-2022.pdf>

2. Our Foster Carers

On 31st March 2022 we had:



632 individual Foster carers



380 mainstream Fostering house holds

252 Male foster carers

380 Female foster carers



Our foster carers came from a wide range of age groups, with our youngest carers aged between **20-30** and our oldest carers aged between **81-90**

The majority of our carers were aged between **51-60**.

In addition to this we had:

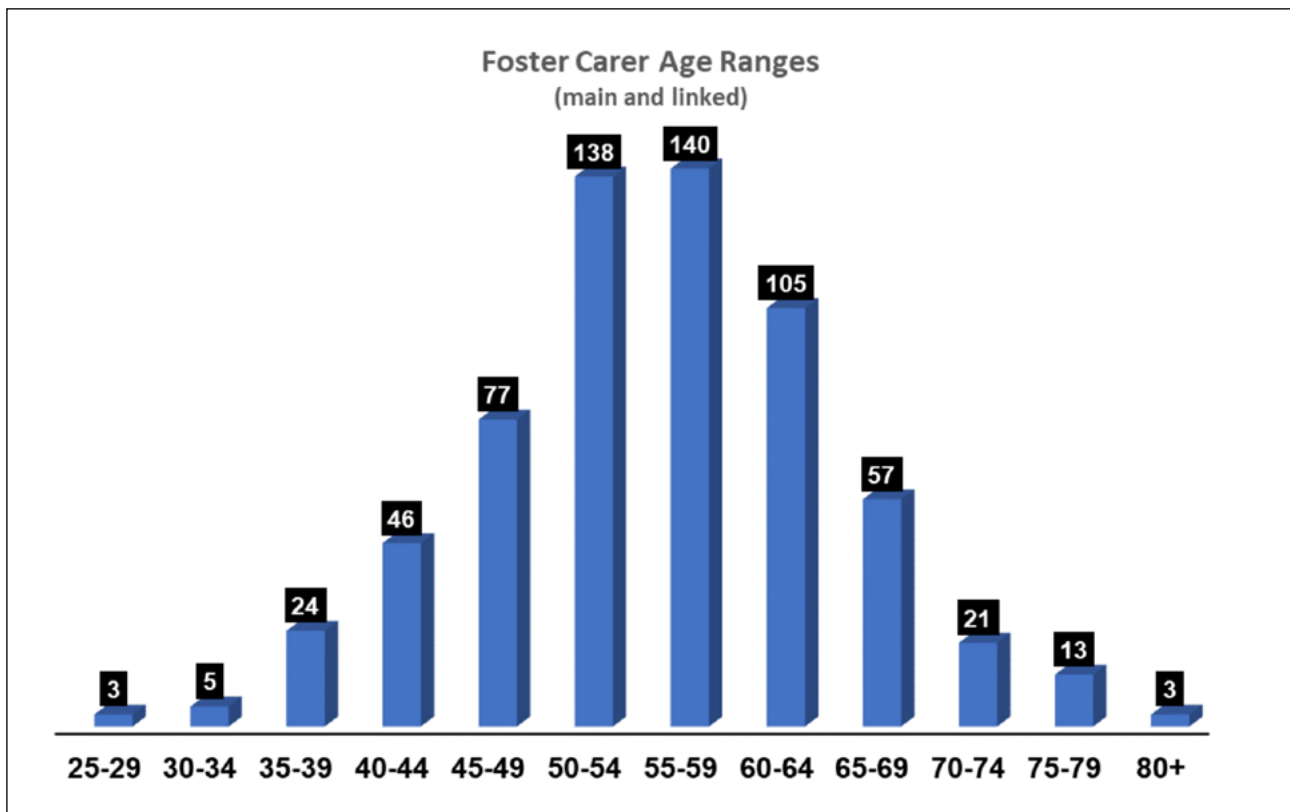


59 approved Family and Friends fostering households and also **24** supported lodgings fostering households



Our foster carers came from a wide range of age groups, with our youngest carers aged between **25-29** and our oldest carers aged between **80+**

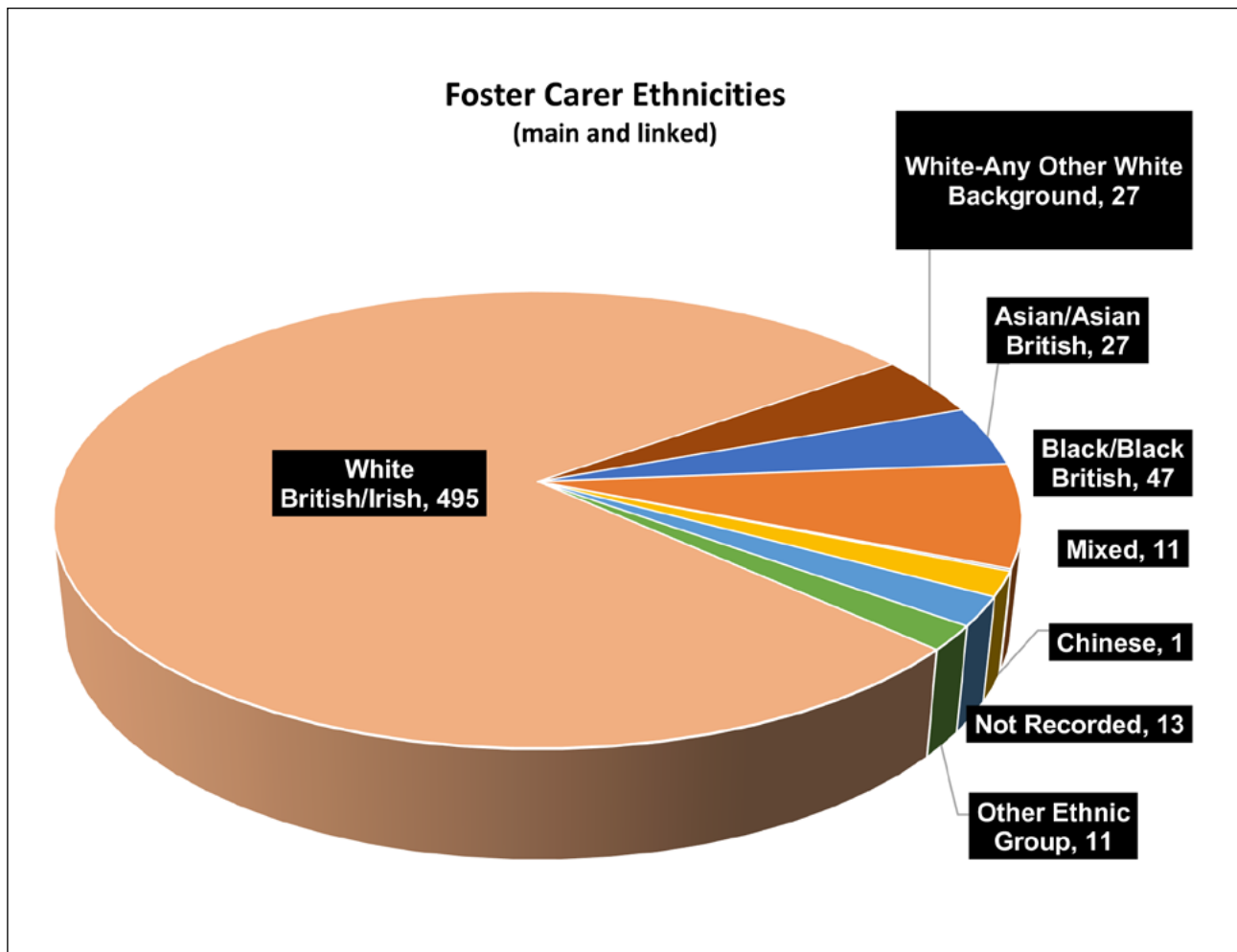
The majority of our carers were aged between **50-59**.



We had **128** single carer households



Ethnicity and Cultural Heritage



Our foster carers came from a wide range of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds including Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani, African, African Caribbean, Chinese, Irish, Black British, White British, Asian British, White European and foster carers from mixed heritage backgrounds. Most of our foster carers identified as White British.

Although 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, USA, Mainland Europe and Australasia.



9 of our carer households identified as LGBTQ+



The Average time our Foster Carers have been with us is **11** years and **6** months



The current longest serving Foster Carer has been with us for **39** years and **6** months



“I’ve been really privileged over the last three years to work with some amazing carers and build fantastic relationships that I know will last forever and I know that those people will carry on supporting me through my fostering journey just as I will to them” – Tracey, Hertfordshire Foster Carer

Foster Carer

3. Our Children Looked After at 31.03.22 (total number of children looked after, not only in in-house fostering)

Gender of our Children Looked After

424



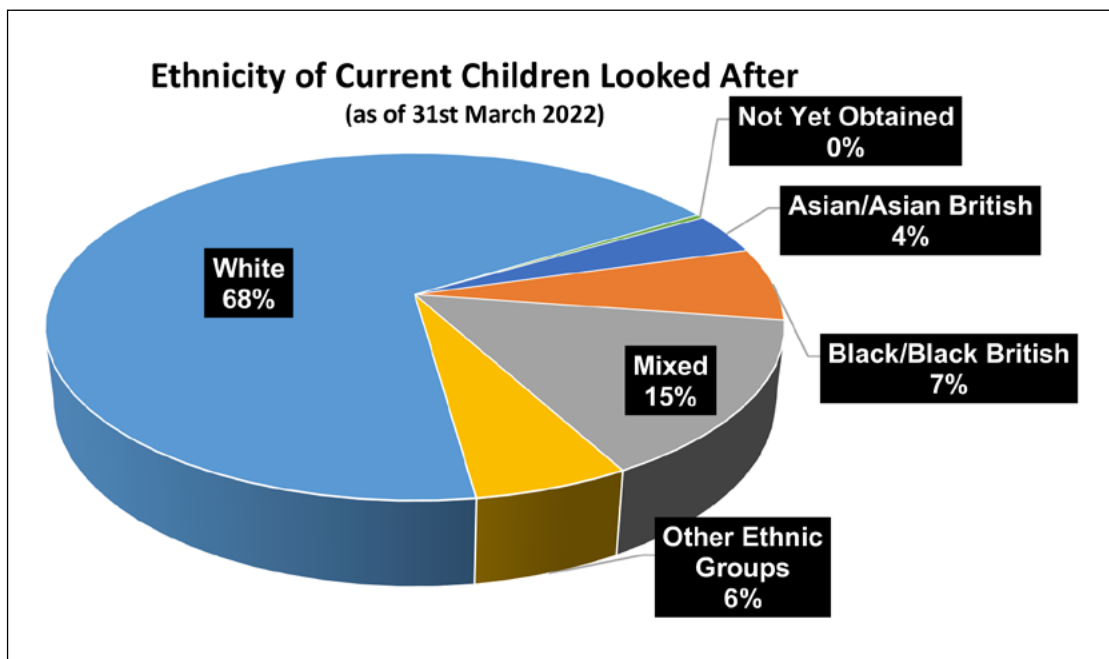
Female

604



Male

Ethnicity of our Children Looked After



Age Ranges of our Children Looked After

Under 1 year



39

1-4 years



99

5-9 years



150

10-12 years



153

13-15 years

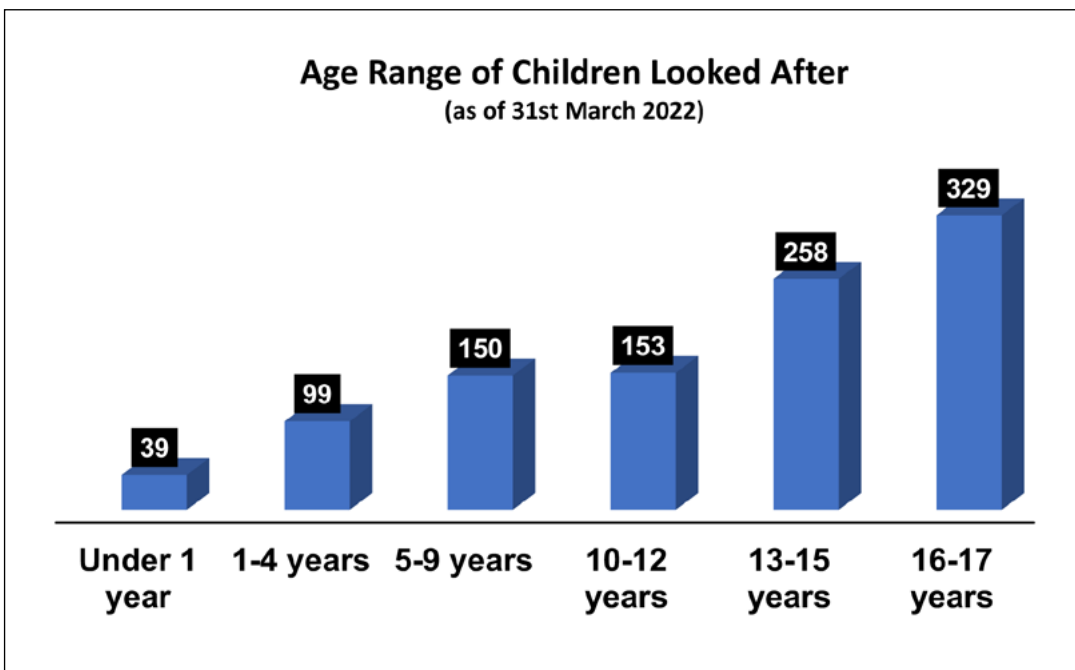


258

16-17 years



329



Children Looked After in Hertfordshire placed with inhouse foster carers



366

Children Looked After in Independent Agency Placements



190

Children Looked After in Hertfordshire placed with supported lodgings carers:



7

Children Looked After in Hertfordshire in Family and Friends Foster Placements



85

“I was bought up by an amazing woman who I literally owe everything to now” – care leaver, Hertfordshire

4. Our Service Structure and Function

The Hertfordshire Fostering Service comprises 6 teams.

A recruitment team is operated jointly with the Adoption Service, managing all recruitment activity in Fostering and Adoption. The team complete an initial enquiry, conduct initial visits and invite applicants to Skills to Foster Training which is delivered monthly.

There are 4 locality fostering teams, which are geographically based to meet the needs of their local foster carer communities. The teams are based at Farnham House (East and North Fostering teams) and Aspley (South and West Fostering teams). The teams undertake statutory functions of assessment, approval, supervision, support, training, and development, safeguarding and review of foster carers.

A dedicated ARC fostering support team supports to all foster carers and fostering teams around therapeutic parenting and trauma informed practice.



A fostering duty system operates daily to support the function of the Brokerage Accommodation Team, who are responsible for sourcing placements both internally within Hertfordshire and externally. The duty team identify internal foster placements and providing emergency support to existing carers. A duty manager provides management oversight of all placement activity.

Our Fostering Service provide an out of hours fostering support line staffed by Fostering Supervising social workers providing support out of office hours

All our fostering teams work closely in partnership with our children's social work teams in the Assessment, Family Safeguarding and Children Looked After (CLA) Services. To ensure children's care plans are progressed with minimum delay and children are provided with the best care. Fostering Supervising social workers and team managers attend placement planning meetings, permanency planning and placement support meetings, CLA reviews and all other relevant statutory and non-statutory meetings for children. The Fostering Service seeks to build positive relationships with professionals providing a 'Team around the child' approach, ensuring partners work to best meet children's needs.

Family and Friends Fostering Carers

Family and Friends or Kinship foster carers are people who have been approved by the local authority to foster children within their family or friendship network who are unable to live at home with their parents. We have two dedicated Family and Friends Fostering teams based in Apsley and Farnham House. These teams assess and support all family members, friends and other people caring for children within their family and social networks.

“We foster carers are the most important people in the lives of those we foster. I love being a foster carer, it is the most rewarding work that I have ever been involved in” – Pat, Hertfordshire Foster Carer

5. Our Fostering Strategy 'One Team Built Around the Child'



In November 2020, following extensive consultation with foster carers, multi-agency partners and fostering staff, we launched our Fostering Strategy 'One Team Built Around the Child.' The strategy seeks to improve our recruitment and retention of foster carers.

A range of working groups were established in focussing on improvement on specific areas of the service. The task and finish groups included foster carers, fostering staff, professionals from other services, senior managers, multi-agency partners and elected members.

This resulted in improved performance in recruitment and retention over 2020-2021 with over double the number of foster carers being recruited compared to the previous year and we have sustained strong recruitment performance since. The strategy has been continually reviewed as work has been completed and priorities have changed.

Under our strategy groups have been working on following priority areas:

- Continuing to educate partners both internally in Children's Services and externally to understand the
- crucial role our foster carers play in helping children looked after meet the best possible outcomes
- as a central member of the team around the child.
- Reviewing the way in which we support foster carers who are subject to allegations during
- investigations.
- Streamlining our forms and written documents
- Working with Children's Teams and Brokerage to effectively match our children with foster families.
- Developing a specialist Emergency Foster Carer Scheme
- Developing a hub of supervising social workers who specialise in undertaking assessments.

The Fostering Strategy is overseen by the One Team Board. Key Performance Indicators and the progress of each of the groups working to the above priorities is scrutinised within the board bi-monthly.

“It's really lovely to have older kids, they'll talk to you, and you can watch stuff together. They want nothing different than younger kids” – Michele, Hertfordshire Foster Carer

6. Our Recruitment Strategy and Campaigns

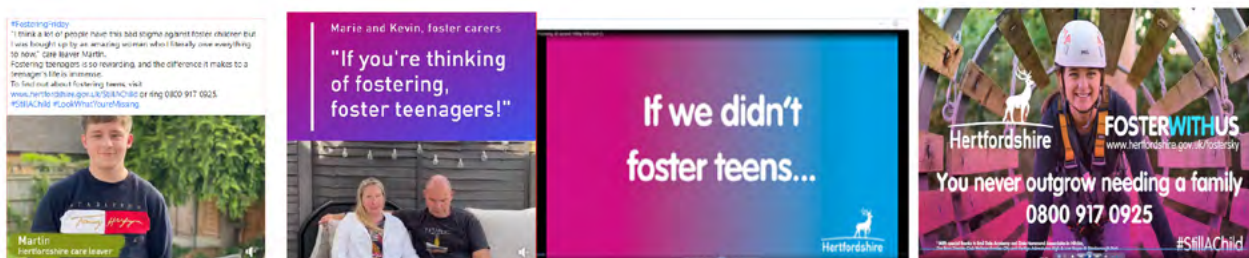
It's been a great year in which we have received national recognition for impact our campaigns are having. We were one of only three authorities to have our campaign work highlighted for excellent practice by the Children and Young People Magazine. Our Recruiting Now Campaign, developed last year, won silver in the Local Government Public Service Communications Awards

Our campaigns continued to be affected by COVID-19 restrictions, but we successfully used socially distanced filming and interviewing to help us to produce high quality case-study led campaigns. Putting emphasis on online advertising trialling new initiatives to tie in with a changing world by creating bespoke digital advertising and specially-tailored webinars.

Look What You're Missing teenager campaign

'Look What You're Missing' was created to attract more carers for older children. Following research and focus groups with foster carers and teenagers, we used the hashtag #StillAChild, focusing on the fact that children of all ages need the support and love of a family.

Developing a series of written and video case studies, an uplifting campaign video and posters for featuring our foster carers and teenagers. Our video was run on Sky TV and reached 18,219 households and we received 10,453 visits to the campaign web page between October and December



Parent and Child campaign

We launched a two week Parent and Child campaign aiming to recruit carers to look after parents and their young children using one of our Hertfordshire parent and child carers. We were delighted to secure a great interview on BBC Three Counties Radio.



Supported Lodgings campaign

We created a series of images, case study quotes and videos to promote Supported Lodgings week-long campaign which resulted in a 25% increase in website hits



Mockingbird

We to secure great coverage on BBC Look East showing a film featuring foster carers, care leavers and our executive member Cllr Teresa Heritage.



Chance To Thrive campaign

We ran a second phase of our 'Chance To Thrive campaign', focused on recruiting foster carers for babies with additional needs.

Facebook Live events

We held two Facebook Live sessions during Foster Care Fortnight 2021, led by fostering team staff. We had great engagement during the evenings, and the videos are then saved onto our Facebook page enabling people to view the video Q&A at a later date too. The videos had about 1,000 views and reached 1,700 people.



Awareness weeks and events

We continued to mark national awareness weeks and days with a range of campaigns including Foster Care Fortnight, Sons and Daughters Month, #YouCanAdopt Brothers and Sisters campaign and LGBTQ+ Week. Our campaigns were successful in attracting 759 contacts to the fostering recruitment team during 2021/22.

Feedback from prospective foster carers

Our Fostering ambassadors are experienced foster carers who support our prospective foster carers while they undergo assessment. Feedback this year from 16 newly approved foster carers through our ambassadors regarding our recruitment process revealed:

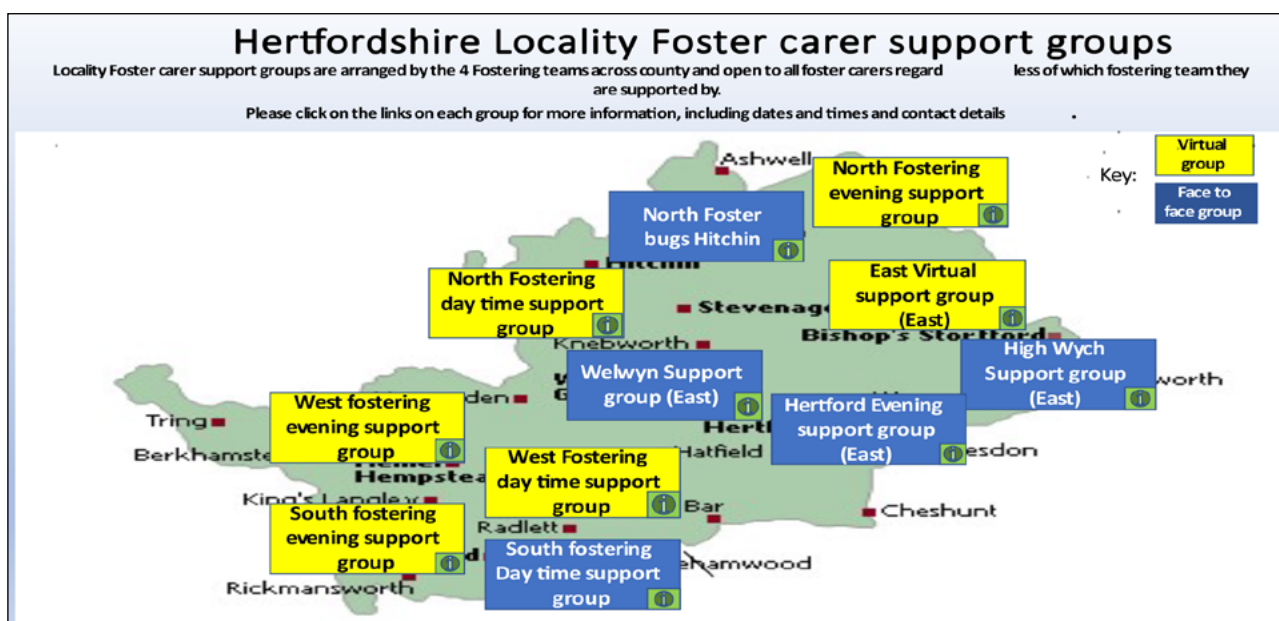
- ✓ 100% of applicants were very happy with our responsiveness to their enquiry.
- ✓ 100% of applicants had a positive experience of Skills to Foster training
- ✓ Of those who attended an information event and/or pre-assessment workshop, 100% found it helpful and informative.
- ✓ Applicants thought the level of contact was about right and found the process to be explained clearly.
- ✓ Applicants felt valued and appreciated

7. Supporting Our Foster Carers

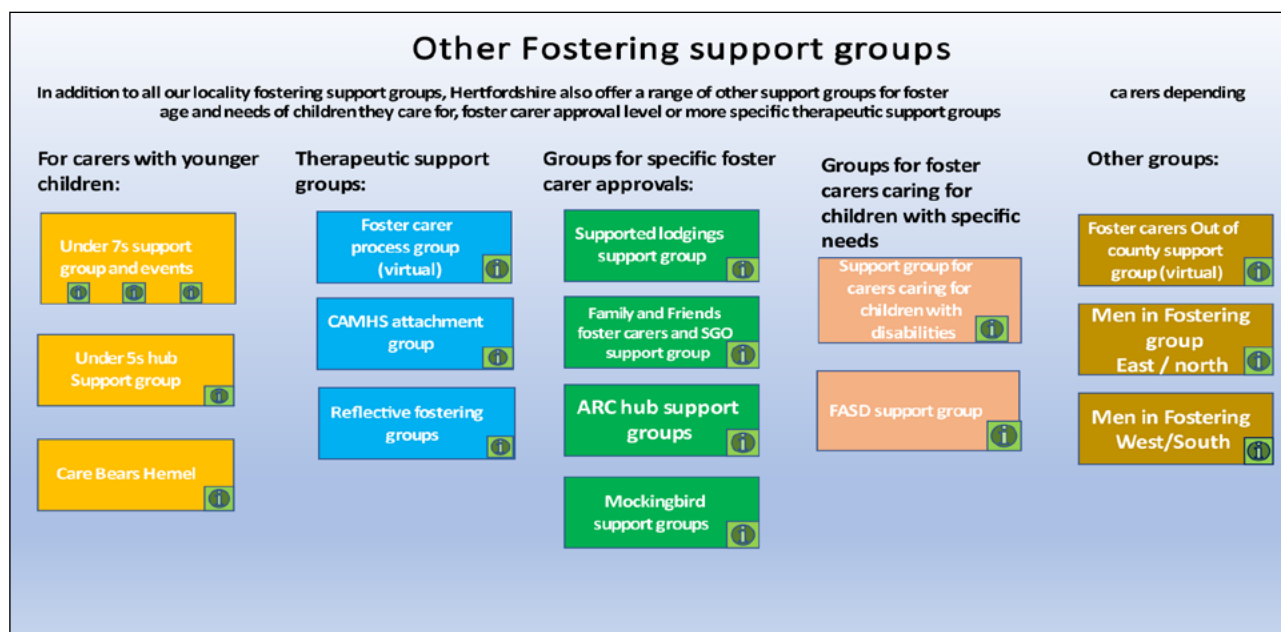
All Hertfordshire foster carers have an allocated supervising social worker and receive monthly supervision and to support them as needed. Since 2021 all visits have been in person. We continue to run locality based support groups and more specialist support groups for foster carers. Since the pandemic, we have adapted our support group offer to include both face to face and virtual support group meetings, this blended approach has been our foster carers preferred approach and fits best with foster carers availability.

In 2021, we reviewed our existing support group offer to ensure consistency in delivery and offer to all our foster carers. As a result, new support groups have been developed to meet the needs of carers caring for children with disabilities and out of county foster carers.

The below chart shows our locally based support groups.



The below charts depicts our additional and more specialist support groups.



The ARC (Attachment Regulation Competency) fostering support team

Our ARC Fostering Team offer support to foster carers and other adults significant in foster children’s lives to help them to understand children’s behaviour in the context of trauma they may have experienced and to ask the “what need is being met by this behaviour and what danger is being avoided?” The team deliver training on developmental trauma and the ARC Framework and provide consultations for foster carers and other professionals working with the child. The team also offer monthly trauma focussed workshops for foster carers and seminars for fostering staff exploring different topics.

The ARC (Attachment, Regulation and Competency) Framework was created in Boston, US, by Kristine Kinniburgh and Margaret Blaustein, 2005, 2010 as an approach to support children and young people who have experienced complex trauma. For more information see: <https://arcframework.org/what-is-arc/>

The ARC team work closely with the Child Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Targeted Team and are exploring options for closer joint working to improve outcomes for children living in foster care in Hertfordshire.

In 2021-2022, the ARC Fostering Support Team completed 131 ARC consultations and follow ups to support foster carers and social workers.

Reflective Fostering Research

Over 2021-2022 ARC Fostering Support Team have led our involvement in a Reflective Fostering Research Study. The Reflective Fostering Programme has been developed by the Anna Freud Centre and aims to help foster carers build strong, supportive relationships with children. This study aims to find out whether the programme helps to improve foster carer and child wellbeing and placement stability.

Within Hertfordshire we have successfully recruited 41 foster carers over 4 waves of the study. The study participants are divided into a trial group and a control group.

The study has not yet concluded; however we already have received some positive feedback from foster carers involved who believe feel the study has given them a wider support network and improved tools and techniques to support them in the caring role.

Updates and further information can be found on the Anna Freud website here:

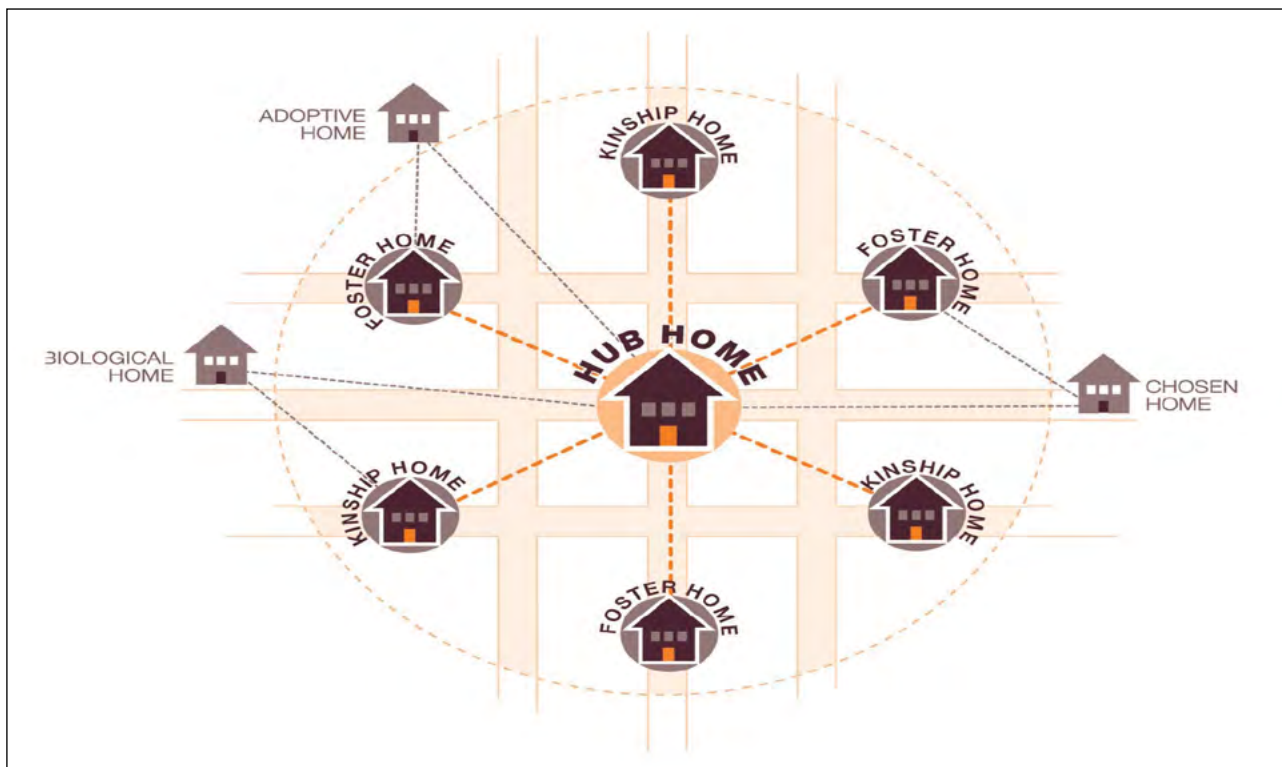
[The Reflective Fostering Study \(annafreud.org\)](https://annafreud.org)

Mockingbird Hubs





Hertfordshire fostering has supported children looked after and their foster carers via the Mockingbird family model since 2018. The Mockingbird programme is an innovative method of delivering foster care using an extended family model where mockingbird hub carers are specially trained to offer sleepovers, peer support, emergency support, joint planning and social activities to fostering homes. Mockingbird supports children and foster carers by creating extended communities of support around the child and their fostering family. The role of the Mockingbird hub carer is crucial to the success of the programme and can be very rewarding as it improves the stability of fostering placements and strengthens the relationship between carers, children and young people, fostering services and birth families.


“I really value the Mockingbird scheme, it’s great for both the foster carer and the child. I’ve been a foster carer for over 20 years, so I know the difference it has made to fostering” – Gloria, Hertfordshire Foster Carer



The below diagram demonstrates how the model works with a central supporting hub carer home providing support to a number of fostering family households.



Mockingbird in Hertfordshire

 5 Mockingbird hubs	 30 Satellite families
 60 Children looked after	 1 Mockingbird hubs in the making (awaiting launch)



We currently have 5 Mockingbird hubs in Hertfordshire:

- Hemel hub
- Hoddesdon hub
- Acorn hub (Watford)
- Langley hub (Abbots Langley)
- Rainbow hub (Stevenage)

In a recent survey completed with families who are supported by the hubs, 95% of foster carers rated the support they receive as 'excellent' with comments such as:

“Mockingbird makes us feel as part of a big family”

And

“Hub Carers understand the challenges and frustrations of being a foster carer in a way that the social workers do not so can provide real support for wellbeing”.

Our vision is to continue to grow Mockingbird in Hertfordshire by developing further Mockingbird hubs in all areas in Hertfordshire. Further information about the Mockingbird Model can be seen here:

<https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/policy-practice/projects-and-programmes/mockingbird-programme>

Developing other fostering hubs

In the last year we have continued to develop other fostering hub models to meet specific support needs such as the Under 7s Hub supporting approximately 25 fostering families, the Under 5s Hub and the ARC Hub for our specialist foster carers.

A new support hub for carers who care for children with disabilities is currently in development.

“Mockingbird is as much about the carers as the children because the carers need support as well, and that leads to happy children” – Jools and Ed, Hertfordshire Foster Carers

8. Working in partnership with our foster carers and our children

The title for our fostering strategy 'One Team Built Around the Child' was chosen by our foster carers and reflects our vision to work as one team together with children and their foster carers at the centre of everything we do. We work strongly in partnership with our foster carers who are involved in all our service developments. Foster Carers participate in each action group working under the Fostering Strategy and are members of our One Team Board, overseeing all the work being undertaken under the strategy and the future development for the service. We rely very strongly on our foster carers within these groups to help guide all our service development.

Foster carers chair and run our Fostering Forum which consists of foster carers, senior managers, the deputy executive member for children, representatives from children's social work services, multi-agency partner professionals and the fostering service. The Forum is convened quarterly and has a significant influence on fostering practice, service development and policy.

In 2021, together with foster carers we developed Carer's Voice meetings facilitated by foster carers with the purpose of ensuring foster carers are able to voice their views on support and services offered to them by the fostering service. Within these meetings carers also bring feedback from fostering support groups and other forums for discussion. Key issues and feedback is provided to the Fostering Forum where further discussion will be held and actions agreed.

We use online anonymous surveys as a way of capturing foster carers views about the service and fostering and in the last year this has been very helpful to help us capture carers views on developments needed. Surveys this year have been conducted in relation to how we host annual events and foster carers IT needs.

Over this past year we have resumed 'café conversations' regular, informal meetings where carers are given the opportunity to provide feedback and suggestions of service improvements. These are facilitated by the fostering team manager in each local area and a Children Looked After Team manager. Feedback from café conversations is provided to the Fostering forum.

We continue to work closely with the Children in Care Council (CHICC) to ensure that we are listening to the views of young people in care. The outcome of the annual Bright Spots survey is circulated to foster carers and feedback from the survey helps us think about how we can improve our support offer to children placed with Hertfordshire Foster carers.

“By fostering, you will be helping a young person who has been living in some difficulty and you will be also be finding out about yourself. Fostering is the most life-enhancing job I have ever done” – Pat, Hertfordshire Foster Carer



9. Our Training Offer



Over 2021-2022 we have continued to provide a combination of virtual training via MS teams and face to face training. Feedback from foster carers has indicated that many found the virtual training very helpful because it enabled them to attend training, they would otherwise have been busy. It was positive to see the uptake of training from carers who are placed out of county who would normally struggle to attend face to face training due to distance.

A Foster Carer Learning, and Development Programme is produced annually and updated quarterly and can be seen here:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/childrens-services/fostering/2-foster-carer-learning-and-development-offer.pdf>

All Foster Carers have their own eLearning accounts through which they can view their training records and book places on classroom and virtual training sessions.

The mandatory training programme includes:

- First Aid
- Safeguarding
- Safer Caring
- Delegated Authority
- Men in fostering (for male carers)
- Record keeping
- ARC training
- Prevent

In addition to the mandatory training, we also offer a range of other training courses including:

- Managing Contact
- Drug and Alcohol Training
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Autism
- Special Educational Needs and Disability

In 2021-22, we reviewed our foster carer training offer adding Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) training, Equality and Diversity workshops, Life story work for foster carers and Mental health training and re-instating Training Support and Development workshops to ensure support is offered to carers to complete their training, support and development (TSD) standards within 12 months of approval.

In addition to the formal classroom training Foster Carers have access to a wide range of resources to support them to develop which are available through the online subscription platforms - Research in Practice and Community Care Inform.

Over 2021-2022 our fostering handbook was developed into an online document and all our fostering procedures were reviewed and updated. The online format is easier for foster carers to access and contains regular policy updates supported by the company Triex who update online social care procedure manuals.

We continue to monitor the compliance with our Learning and Development Department and review the training offer to ensure the offer is as relevant as possible to foster carers to improve compliance

“The support in Hertfordshire is very good for foster carers in general but particularly for those who foster teenagers” – Erica, Hertfordshire Foster Carer



10. Staying Put and Supported Lodgings

Staying Put arrangements enable our children looked after to remain living within their fostering families with their foster carers after they turn 18. Provided it is the young persons choice and their foster carers can continue to care for them, carers can be approved as staying put carers. We continue to promote Staying Put as a positive option for young people, providing them with ongoing stability and continuity of care in a stable family environment that they have become part of.

On 31 March 2022, **63** care leavers over the age of 18 were in Staying Put arrangements

Supported lodgings carers are specially recruited and trained to be able to care for children aged 16 and above who are already relatively independent and require less day to day supervision and care, but who still need a secure, stable, loving base as they transition into adulthood.

On 31st March 2022 we had **7** children aged 18 years and under and **7** young people aged 18 and over in Supported Lodgings placements.

“My parent and child placement changed my life. I got my family when I turned 18, not just my son but a whole support network. It’s quite amazing really”

– Hertfordshire care leaver



11. Our Fostering Panel

Hertfordshire Fostering Panel has one independent panel chair and two independent panel vice chairs and is supported by a panel advisor.

Fostering Panels are held bi-weekly to:

- Consider assessments of prospective foster carers and family & friend's carers, supported lodgings and shared carers.
- Recommend the terms on which an approval is made.
- Recommend whether a person remains suitable to foster or whether the terms of approval remain appropriate following a review.
- Consider the matching of children for long term fostering.
- Consider the de-registration of approved foster carers following an investigation.
- Consider all first reviews and any subsequent reviews due to changes of approval or circumstances.

The final decision – 'qualifying determination' is made by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM), a senior manager within Children's Services with substantial children's social work experience.

Foster Carers can appeal the ADM decision internally within Hertfordshire's Fostering Service or by appeal to the Independent Reviewing Mechanism (IRM England). IRM England reviews the qualifying determination and makes recommendations having considered relevant information. For the period 2021-2022, 1 appeal was made to IRM 14England.

The Panel Advisor provides regular updates on policy and practice to maintain panel member's knowledge and issues relating to practice are discussed on a weekly basis following each panel.

The Fostering Service meets quarterly with panel members and panel members are also invited to participate in Fostering Service-learning events. Bespoke panel training is provided twice yearly.

Hertfordshire Fostering Panel is now paperless, and work continues to streamline panel processes. Since the first COVID-19 lock down panel has operated virtually using Microsoft Teams.

Between 2021-2022:

- **43** assessments for mainstream foster carers went to panel in 2021-2022 with a positive recommendation of approval.
- **5** Supported Lodgings carers were approved
- **34** carer households were approved by our Fostering Panel as Family and friends foster carers
- **124** cases were presented to our Fostering Panel for Review
- There were **40** de-registrations, and these were all in respect of mainstream foster carers

“When we thought about fostering, we wanted to start with young children. I’m glad we didn’t. I’ve learned so much through fostering teenagers. They’re amazing. We’ve loved it.” – Marie and Kevin, Hertfordshire Foster Carers



12. Allegations, Quality of Care Concerns

As procedurally required allegations made by children against foster carers these cases are referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for Safeguarding Investigation and Review. Information gathered in a LADO investigation is used to determine whether there is a quality of care concern. Alongside a LADO Investigation, reviews are also completed by both the Supervising Social Worker and an Independent Reviewing Officer, who make formal recommendations to the Fostering Panel, regarding the foster carer's ongoing registration. The case is then reviewed by the fostering panel.

Between 2021-2022, **14** allegations were made against foster carers which were referred to LADO with the following outcome:

- 5 allegations did not meet LADO threshold
- 1 allegation was substantiated
- 8 allegations were unsubstantiated

In addition to this, **8** Standard of care concerns were referred to the Independent Review Officer service separately for an independent review with the following outcomes:

- 5 Fostering households continued fostering under the same approval terms
- 1 Fostering household approval was terminated
- 2 IRO investigations were still in progress at the time of publication.

“If we can break the cycle of generational children coming into care by teaching these young parents how to parent, we can keep them together as a family”

– Maggie, Hertfordshire Foster Carer (speaking about Parent and Child fostering)

13. Complaints

Wherever possible we try to satisfactorily address all concerns directly with our foster carers. However, Foster carers can make complaints directly to Hertfordshire Children's Services Complaints Department

For the period 2021-2022, **2** formal complaints were received and were resolved as Stage 1 complaints.

“Fostering teenagers has had a great impact on my life. Life is certainly a lot busier with teenagers in the house and it’s great fun as well. Fostering teenagers has some challenges, as with any child, but it’s incredibly rewarding” – Karen, Hertfordshire Foster Carer



14. Performance

Headline Data

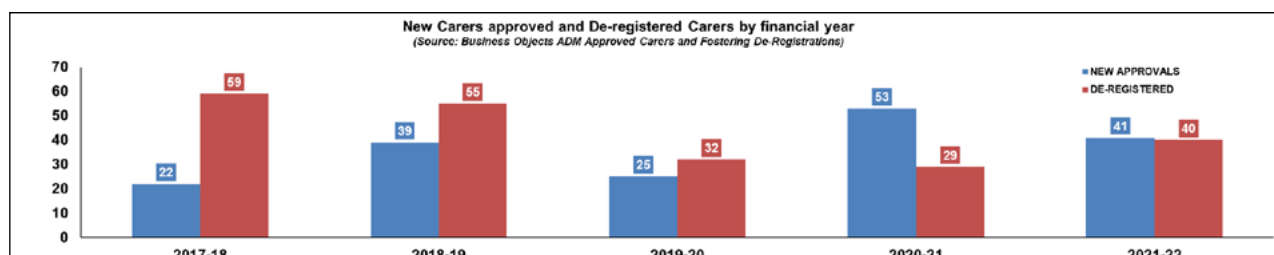
Over 2021-2022:

- **43** new foster carers were approved
- **15** new Early Permanence foster carers were approved
- **5** new supported lodgings carers were approved

“Fostering is really rewarding and enhances your life”

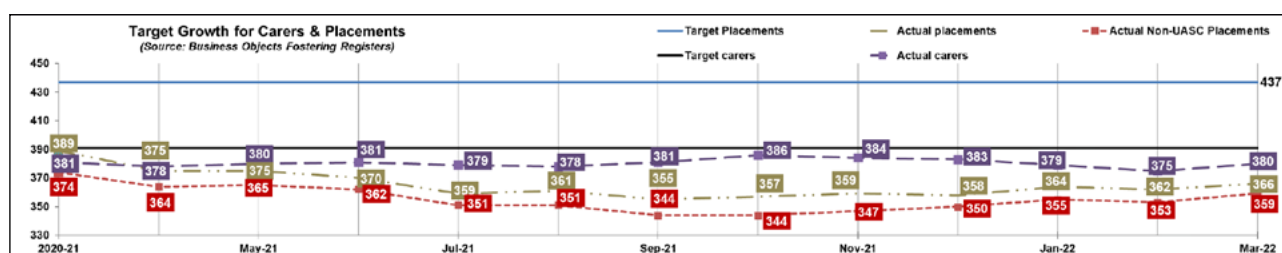
– Louise and Tim, Hertfordshire Foster Carers

New Carers and De-Registrations by financial year (excluding Early permanence, Family and Friends and Supported lodgings)



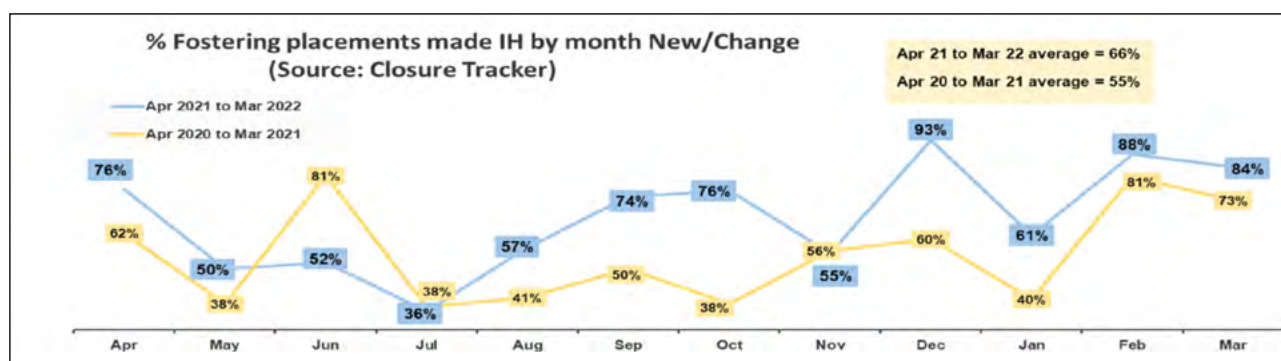
In 2021-2022, 43 fostering households were approved compared to the 53 fostering households recruited in 2020-2021, this was a decrease however the number is significantly higher than 2017-2018, 2018-2019 and 2019-2020.

Target Growth



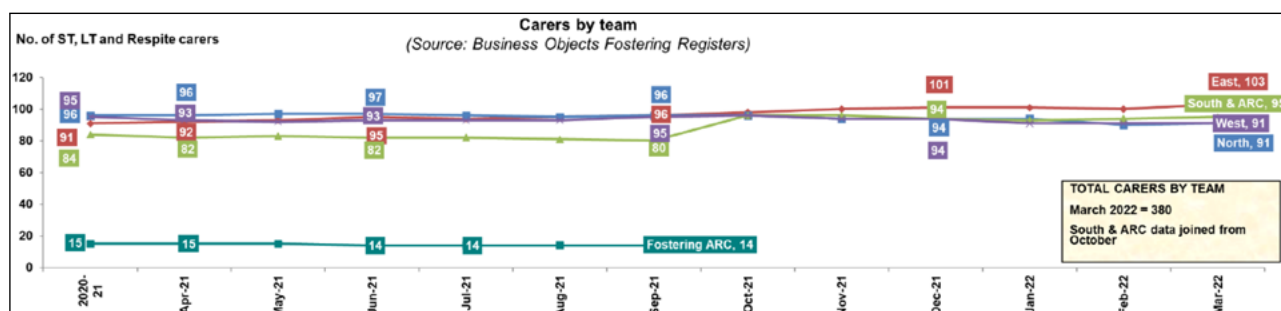
Number of children placed with in house foster carers have decreased since April 2021.

In house fostering placements made by month



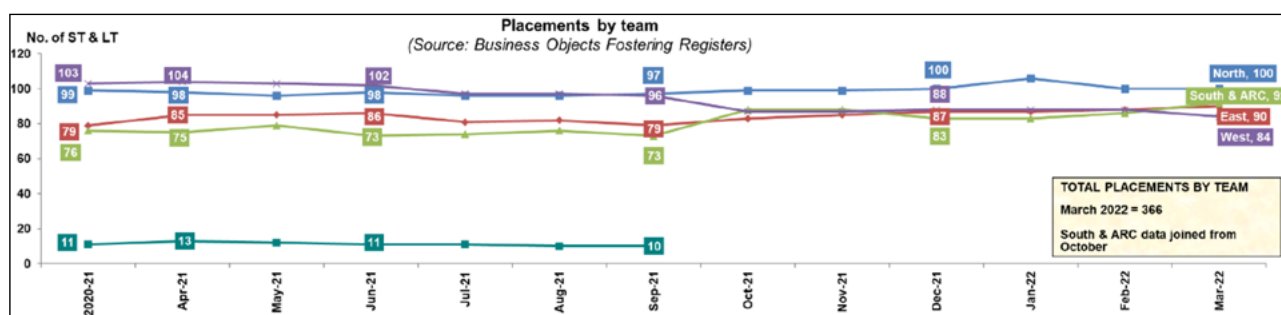
In 2021-2022, we placed more children in in-house fostering placements than we placed in independent fostering arrangements over previous years. The average monthly figure for in-house placements in 2021-2022 was 66% compared to 55 % the previous year.

Fostering households by team



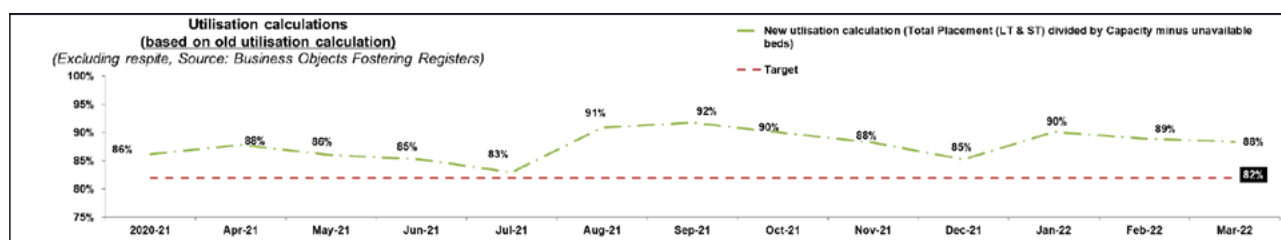
In 2021-2022, the East Fostering team had the majority of assessments and new approvals as well as a lower number of de-registrations which has seen an increase in carers numbers for this team compared to other teams.

Children placed by team



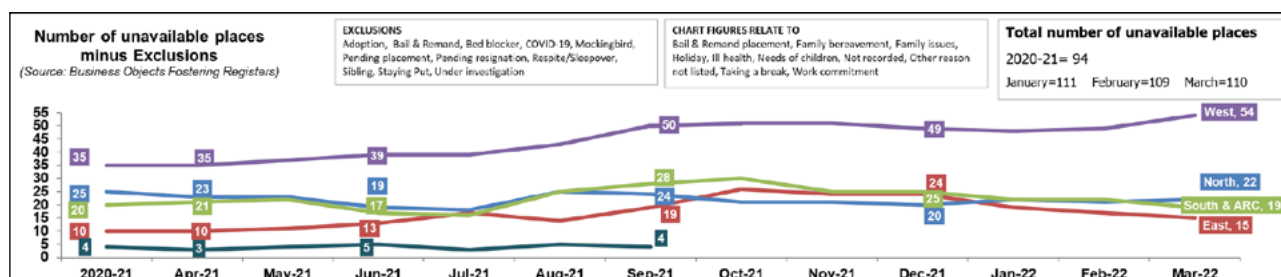
Despite having a lower number of fostering households, North Fostering had a higher amount of children placed with foster carers than the other teams, West has the least amount of children placed.

Utilisation



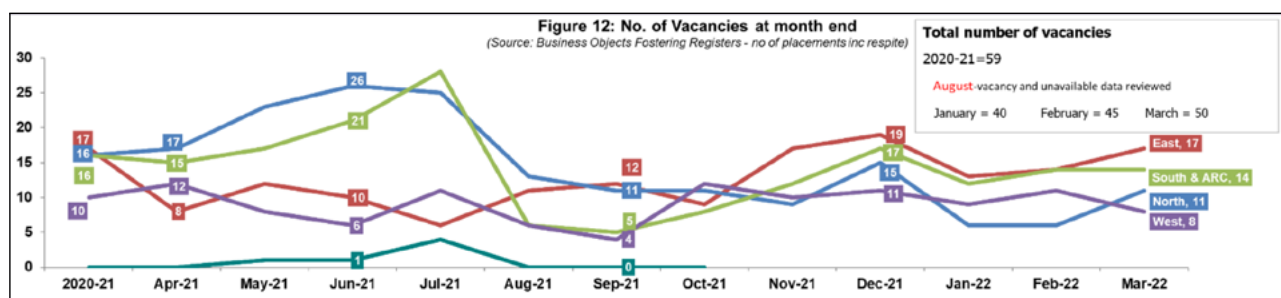
The utilisation rate shows the percentage of children placed in current available foster placements. The utilisation rate has consistently been above target throughout 2021-22 which is positive because it has increased from last year.

Number of unavailable placements



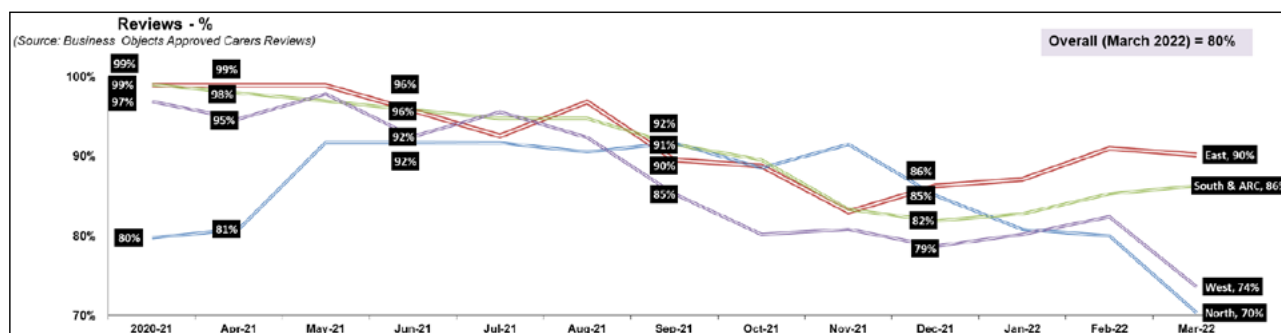
The number of unavailable placements has been consistent with 2020-2021 numbers, reflecting fostering households have for various reasons been unable to offer placements according to their approval levels. The main reasons for carers being unavailable to have children placed with them are medical reasons, carers taking a break and change in family and work commitments.

Number of vacancies by month end



The number of vacancies by year end is very similar to end of year 2020-2021. Vacancy data accuracy on LCS is being monitored by the teams weekly.

Reviews



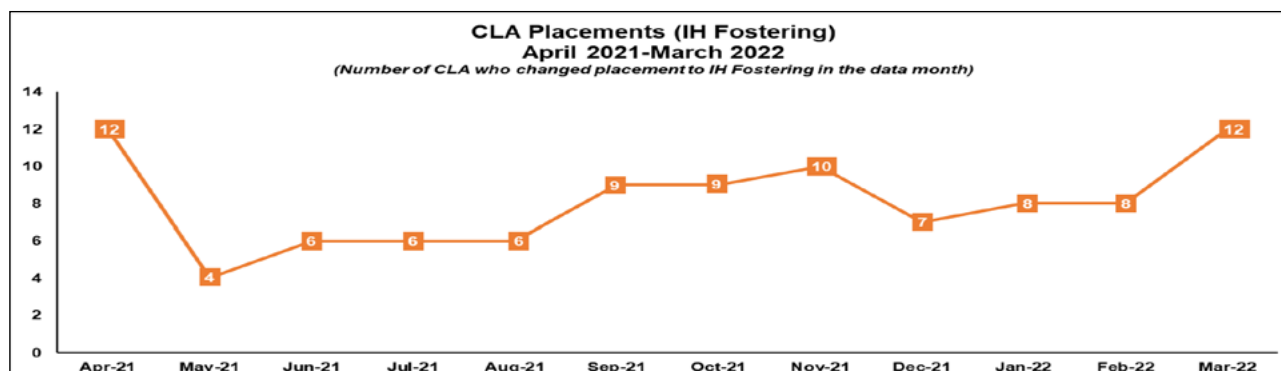
Throughout 2021-2022, the percentage of reviews completed on time has been higher than previous years, however we have seen a drop in performance in the latter part of the year, which is mainly due to some staff shortages due to COVID-19 throughout the service.

18+ placements

			UAM		Total placements
	U18	O18	U18	O18	
Fostering	354	1	6	0	361
Family & Friends	118	0	0	0	118
Supported Lodgings	6	6	1	1	14
Staying Put (Lodgings)	0	24	0	4	28
Staying Put (Supported)	0	32	0	3	35
Foster 2 Adopt	9	0	0	0	9
Total placements	487	63	15		565

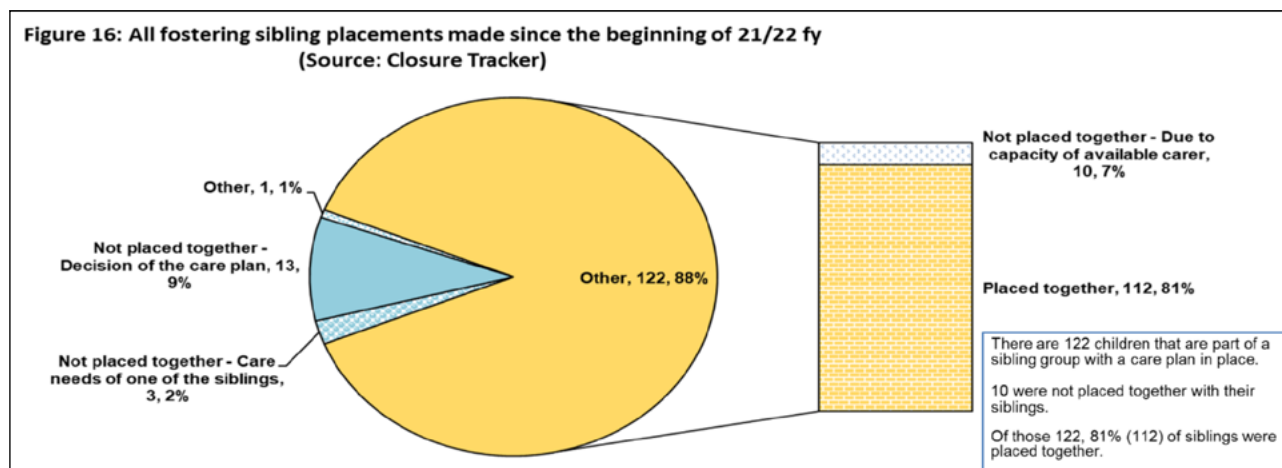
In total the Fostering Service supported 71 young people beyond the age of 18, to either remain with their foster family under staying put arrangements or live in supporting lodgings arrangements.

Placement Stability



The number of children being placed with in-house foster carers varies from month to month, however the number has consistently been rising in the last few months of the year.

Sibling Placements



Throughout 2021-2022, 81% of children in sibling groups have been able to be placed together with our in-house foster carers.

“I really enjoy caring for teenagers, yes there are lots of challenges but at this age, they are also quite independent. Even though I am caring for them, they also show me warmth and ask how I am, it is a very rewarding role” – Wahida, Hertfordshire Foster Carer

15. Financial Implications

The 2021-22 approved budget for Hertfordshire Fostering Service direct spend was £11.605m. The final outturn was £11.478m, resulting in an underspend of £0.127m. This underspend was a result of foster placement vacancies.

Allowances and payments made available to all Hertfordshire foster carers are reviewed annually with any uplift, where applicable, being made in the April of each financial year.

16. Equalities Implications

Our CLA are amongst the most vulnerable in our community. Our work in Fostering is driven by the need to provide excellent in house Hertfordshire fostering placements in order to give our CLA the care and support they need to achieve the best possible outcomes in their lives and to.

We constantly strive to recruit carers from diverse backgrounds who mirror our CLA population.

The Foster Carer Diversity and Inclusion chaired by one of our supported lodgings carers and attended by foster carers and fostering staff has developed further in 2021-2022 and has:

- Developed a foster carer diversity ILearn hub.
- Developed Hair and Skin care guidance for foster carers who care for children from Black and Asian Ethnic minority backgrounds.
- Held a range of Diversity Workshops delivered by foster carers.

“Fostering is my life and passion, and I never want to give it up” – Daphne, Hertfordshire Foster Carer



17. **Key Priorities 2022-2023**

18. Continue our focus on recruitment of foster carers, our target is to recruit 60 new carers.
19. Improve the quality of matching and increase the number of children placed with inhouse foster carers, our target is to place 400 children with our in house foster carers.
20. Develop an Emergency Foster carers scheme jointly with Residential Services.
21. Trial specialist fostering assessment workers for our assessments of new foster carers.
22. Launch 2 further Mockingbird Hubs.
23. Continue to develop our peer support offer by increasing our pool of foster carers offering peer support.

“When I moved to Helen and Dave’s, it was the first time in my life that I felt safe, and they helped me change my life. Having supportive foster carers has helped me through college, and also helped me to get a job, so that I can achieve my dream of becoming a social worker”

– Hertfordshire care leaver