

SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY 2022-2027

Making sure that Kent's Children in Care, Children in Need and Care Leavers have access to sufficient, high-quality accommodation that they can call home



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Introduction

The Kent County Council Sufficiency Strategy for 2022-2027 sets out our approach to meet the statutory responsibility to provide secure, safe, and appropriate accommodation to children in care, children in need and care leavers, over the next five years.

The Sufficiency Duty² (Section 22G of the Children Act 1989³) requires Local Authorities, so far as is reasonably practicable, to ensure that there is sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of those children they have a Corporate Parenting responsibility for within their Local Authority area.

Whilst the sufficiency duty applies in respect of all Looked After Children, it recognises the importance of earlier, preventative action to support children and families so that fewer children become looked after by targeting services to those who are on the edge of care.

Kent County Council faces several challenges in delivering placement sufficiency as Kent is a large and complex county with twelve district councils and varying levels of deprivation and need. Kent has a high number of children in care, children in need and care leavers particularly unaccompanied asylum young people. We commission a high proportion of services from external providers and the services we are able to buy is significantly impacted upon by the numbers of children in care placed by other Local Authorities into Kent.

As a Corporate Parent we have a statutory responsibility to act in the same way that any good parent would act for their own child, making sure that they have a safe and happy childhood and to be given the best possible opportunities to thrive in care and have the best start in life. We want our young adults who are care experienced to grow into adulthood, equipped to lead independent lives, providing them with the highest possible level of support to recognise and meet everyone's individual needs.

We have high aspirations for children and young people and their families and are committed to achieving permanency and stability for all children and young people through our services and those of our partners. We believe it is important that this Strategy remains a live document. There will be six-monthly reviews and oversight from our Corporate Parenting Panel.

Our Vision

Kent County Council's (KCC) vision is for every child, vulnerable young person, and care leaver in Kent to view their accommodation as their home, a place of safety and comfort, until they have gained independent living skills to be able to feel confident and ready to move on to their own independent accommodation. It is recognised that not all young people will be ready to move on when they reach adulthood, and we will be flexible in making sure that these young people continue to be accommodated with good support provided from the age of 16, to develop their independence skills.

We want our approach to accommodation to follow the "Nurture Principles" as achieved by the Virtual School Kent (VSK) through the National Nurturing School Programme Award. The concept of Nurture highlights the importance of social environments – who you are with, and not who you are born to and its significant influence on social emotional skills, wellbeing, and behaviour. This Strategy forms part of the approach to deliver that ambition, working in partnership to improve outcomes for our children and young adults at every opportunity.

² [Securing sufficient accommodation for looked-after children - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/securing-sufficient-accommodation-for-looked-after-children)

³ [Children Act 1989 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/24)

Our Change for Kent Children Programme is a programme designed to look at how we are delivering our services and seeing whether this allows the best possible approach to improve the lives of all children in Kent. Integrated Children's Services have a clear focus on adolescents across services including early intervention and preventative approaches.

The Corporate Parenting principles require all KCC departments and employees, our elected members and partner agencies to recognise their role as a Corporate Parent and encourage them to look at the support and services they provide. These principles require Corporate Parents:

- To act in the best interest and promote the physical, mental health and wellbeing of children and young adults.
- To encourage children and young adults to express their views, wishes and feelings.
- To consider the views, wishes and feelings of all children and young adults.
- To help children and young adults to gain access to, and make the best use of, the services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners.
- To promote high aspirations and seek to secure the best outcomes for children and young adults.
- To ensure children and young adults are safe and have stability in their home lives, relationships, education and/or workplace.
- To prepare children and young adults for adulthood and independent living.

Nurture Principles

KCC and VSK strongly believes that the principles of Nurture are important to help children to develop, grow and become the best person they can possibly be. The National Nurturing School Programme features six principles that together can positively influence children's mental health and wellbeing. We want to drive these principles into our approach to looking after our children and young people in the place they call home. Our Apprentices employed by KCC created VSK's own Nurture Principles into words by young people, for young people.



This diagram above shows the Virtual School for Kent's six Nurture Principles which have been translated by young people as follows:

1. Children's learning is understood developmentally - **'No matter what age, everyone is at a different stage'**.
2. The classroom offers a safe base - **'the Virtual School of Kent (Kent County Council) can be your safe place'**.
3. The importance of nurture for development of wellbeing - **'Nurture makes you feel happy and healthy'**.
4. Language is a vital means of communication - **'the Virtual School of Kent (Kent County Council) can help you find your voice'**.
5. All behaviour is communication - **'How you behave tells us how you feel'**.
6. The importance of transitions in children's lives translated to **'Whatever changes you face we are here to guide you'**.

The six Nurture Principles have been adapted for the Sufficiency Strategy, to focus on children and young people having a place to call their home, as opposed to the original education focus.

Children and Young People's learning is understood developmentally – “no matter what age, everyone is at a different stage.”

To work with children, whether as a Social Worker, Youth Worker, Foster Carer or in a Children's residential home, the skills of staff and carers will adapt to the developmental stage of the child or young person making sure that their experience in finding the best living environment is tailored to their individual needs.

It is important for this to be understood, alongside the developmental stage of other children and young people where the place they call home is shared. This is called “Placement Matching” and is crucial in making sure there is a positive home environment and children, and young people are kept safe.

The 18+ Care Leavers Service helps young adults develop the skills they need to live independently, with the resilience and social support networks that they need in the communities in which they live. Not all young people will be able to move into their own independent accommodation due to their needs. For these young people they will transition into Adult Social Care services, where eligible, such as Supported Living and Shared Lives that support young adults from the age of 18 to 25.

To assist those children and young people with disabilities, our Disability teams will work with young people up to the age of 25 which helps maintain stability of Social Workers who know the young person and what they need through a longer period of transition.

The home offers a safe base – your home can be your safe space

Permanence is what is known as the long-term plan for how a child is to be cared for throughout their childhood. The child's upbringing provides an underpinning framework for all allocated workers. The objective of planning for permanence is to ensure that children have a secure, stable, and loving family to support them through childhood and beyond. The evidence tells us that the earlier permanence is considered the better the outcomes are for children in the long term. With these

principles in mind, it is important that we can evidence that we have considered the most effective route to securing permanency for a child or young person at the earliest opportunity.

Kent's placement stability continues to improve through an effective matching process:

- Allowing the child to live near his/her home wherever it is reasonably practical and safe.
- Not disrupting the child's education or training by ensuring they can remain at their named education provision.
- Enabling siblings to live together, providing the children's individual needs can be met and where it is safe to do so.
- Meeting the particular needs of disabled children through working closely with health and education partners, alongside Occupational Therapists to ensure suitable adaptations where a child has a disability.
- Providing accommodation within the county of Kent unless that is not reasonably practicable.

As a Corporate Parent, young people's safety is of utmost priority, and we will do our very best to keep young people safe where they are living. Integrated Children's Services work with other organisations to support children and young people to ensure their safety, this may include the Police, Education, Health, and Housing. If a young person does not feel safe where they live, we will work with the young person to provide guidance and advice on how to keep themselves practically and emotionally safe, which will include ensuring that they understand their neighbourhood and community and where to go for help if required.

Kent County Council with our partners, are committed to preventing homelessness. We work closely with our District and Borough Councils who have a statutory role in homelessness prevention⁴. Our aim is to prevent children in need (16/17-year-olds) from unnecessarily entering the care system, with all children in need receiving a Joint Housing Assessment to assess their needs. This will be prior to any offer of supported accommodation if this is the appropriate service.

Kent County Council have a commitment to delivering the PREVENT agenda (including radicalisation) and preventing Child Sexual Exploitation for all children in care. Social Workers and Personal Advisors are trained in assessing risk and vulnerabilities for children and young people, ensuring the right accommodation and support is identified, to make sure that any risks that are flagged will be minimised by working with the provider to ensure that the child/young person is safeguarded.

The importance of nurture for the development of wellbeing – “Nurture helps you feel happy and healthy”

Young people state that nurture helps you feel happy and healthy. We will introduce the principles of nurture into the agreements we have where we have to commission services. Our aim is for any provider delivering services for us to be kind and supportive, as well as knowledgeable in making sure children and young people are happy and healthy.

Our Social Workers, Personal Advisors and those working in the services we commission will promote health through a range of services including public health, mental health, and education (including Special Educational Needs).

⁴ [Joint Working Protocol for Young People - Kent Housing Group](#)

To reduce disruption to young people where they have to move to an alternative home, allocated workers are required to assess for any additional support which should be detailed in the Placement Plan. This supports the potential providers in deciding whether their service is the right match for the young person.

Language is a vital means of communication- “KCC can help you find your voice”

We value the voice of the child and seek to listen to children and young people through a variety of forums. This is further detailed in several strategies and within the Kent Pledge⁵ to children in care and the Care Leavers Local Offer⁶.

It is recognised that communication is a two-way process where we want to achieve young people listening to the advice of their allocated worker, to help them maintain their home. To support young people from different backgrounds and cultures manage and maintain their homes, we will be creating more pictorial induction packs and assessing what notices/guides need to be translated into different languages to make sure that all young people understand their responsibilities and we manage their future expectations for their accommodation, to ensure they are realistic and achievable.

In October 2021, the 18+ Care Leavers Service conducted a survey which included a section to seek views on where they live (please see extracts from the survey results at **Appendix 3**).

Engagement has also been conducted with our Children in Care Council in relation to their living environment (please see **Appendix 4**).

This is important to ensure we listen and learn to help shape future services and to make sure their voice is heard for future children and young people.

All behaviour is communication – “how you behave tells us how you feel”

Behaviour is frequently raised with Social Workers and Personal Advisors and is usually a reason why a child or young person is being asked to move from their home.

It is recognised that we need to work with young people to help them understand how their behaviour impacts on their living environment as the consequences of their actions could result in them having to move. If over 18, this could result in them becoming homeless which could also impact on them finding their own independent accommodation in adulthood. Allocated workers will work with the young people to help change their behaviours, if required, to help them understand what is deemed as acceptable, whilst recognising that young people's cultures could also be a factor that influences certain behaviours.

Newly arrived children, who are male and aged 16 or 17 years old are typically placed in one of the Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children's Reception Centres. Staff at the centres support young people to resettle, integrate and develop skills so they can live independently in communities. Each young person is assigned a key worker, who works directly with them to develop these skills, which include personal hygiene, time management, budgeting, shopping, cooking, using public transport

⁵ [The Kent Pledge](#)

⁶ [Care leavers local offer - Kent County Council](#)

and accessing community services like a GP. This is in addition to a program of education, including English language, supported by Virtual School Kent.

The importance of transitions in children and young people's lives – “whatever changes you face we are here to guide you”

Transition is a normal part of life and can provide opportunities for children and young people to develop their resilience. Whether a child or young person is starting a new school, joining a new family, moving on into adulthood or to their own independent accommodation, transition periods need to be carefully managed.

The Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Service (SUASC) works closely with children and young people who are new into the UK, to support them to transition to a new culture, which includes an eight-week programme to prepare them to move into the community. This team also support the Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) who are on the National Transfer Scheme whilst waiting to move to another Local Authority. The team manage the young people's expectations in relation to moving into the community and the options available for living in their own independent accommodation when they are ready to do so.

The Child in Care social work teams work closely with the 18+ Care Leavers service to ensure a smooth transition for young people turning 18 years old. Personal Advisors are allocated to young people at aged 17.5 years, so that young people can build a relationship with them before they become their allocated worker and to work jointly on their Pathway Plan to prepare for the transition to adulthood and independence. Young people's Pathway Plans are written in such a way that should meet their individual needs and capture their hopes and aspirations for the future, recording their views and key messages. Kent has a Care Leaver Local Offer, which sets out what the young people can expect and what help and guidance we will support them with throughout their journey from care to adulthood.

It is recognised that not all young people will be able to move on to their own independent accommodation and in these circumstances, support is provided by allocated workers to refer the young person to Adult Social Care.

We have identified the need to manage young people's expectations from an earlier age so that they understand their responsibilities when transitioning to adulthood in relation to moving on to their own independent accommodation when they are ready to do so. Guidance for Social Workers has been created outlining expectations and housing options, which is given to young people at the age of 16.

We continue to work with the twelve District and Borough Councils, neighbouring authorities, and partners, to support young people to move on into their own independent accommodation, as part of our joint Corporate Parenting responsibility. Young adults who are care leavers have presented a Challenge Card to their Corporate parents requesting that they are able to apply for housing in any of the 12 Districts in Kent, without the need to evidence a three-year local connection. This challenge card will be worked on with the 12 housing districts to see whether this can be achieved for our Kent care leavers.

Young People recognise the importance of the six Nurture Principles. With the Principles being embedded in schools, and they can see how it makes a difference, they have challenged us to make sure that all people working with Children and Young People should adopt these Principles, and we accept that challenge!

Accommodation Profile

These are the different home environments available to our children and young people, dependent on their assessed level of need.

Adoption

Description

Adoption is the legal process by which a child or a group of siblings who cannot be brought up within their birth family become full, permanent, and legal members of their new family. Adopters become the child's legal parents with the same rights and responsibilities as if the child was born to them.

Recruitment of Adopters and Eligibility

We aim to ensure we recruit enough adopters who can meet the needs of children so that the best possible matches can be made for each child who needs an adoptive family within a timescale appropriate for the child. The target number is calculated by looking at the number of children granted placement orders the year before and the number of adoptive placements made, then adding an additional 20% to this number. The targets set for the total number of Adopters to be recruited and approved during the year will be reviewed quarterly to assess if the annual target will be met.

To adopt, you must be:

- Over 21
- Legally resident in the UK, the Channel Islands, or the Isle of Man, and have been so for at least 12 months.

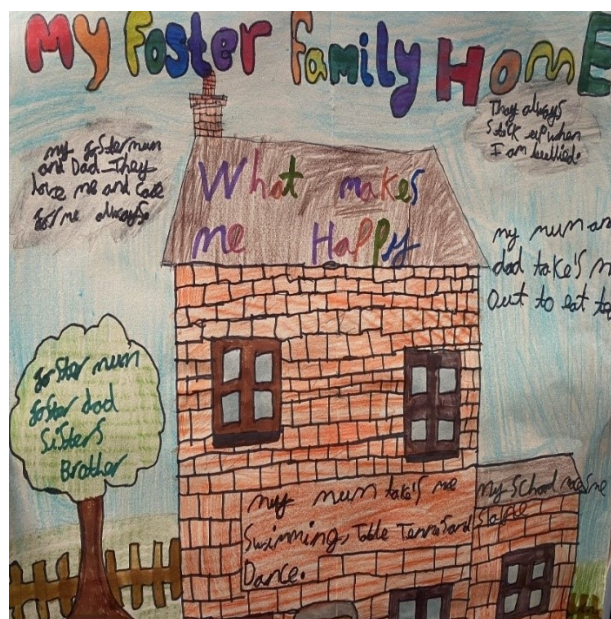
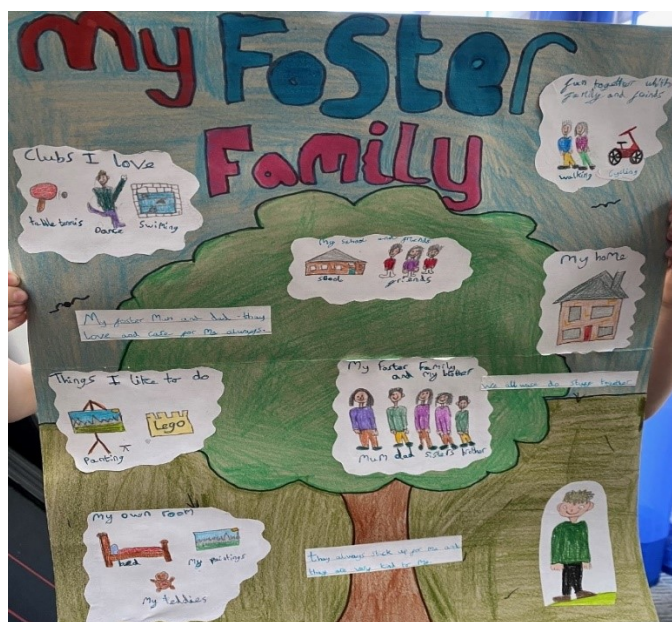
Arrangement

Adoption Partnership *South East* (APSE) is a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) comprising of the London Borough of Bexley, Kent County Council and Medway Council, and it launched on 1st November 2020 and delivers adoption services on behalf of the three local Authorities. Our priority is to secure permanence for children living within our region who need a permanent family who are unable to live within their birth families and for whom adoption is agreed as the best alternative.

Fostering

Description

Foster care is a way of offering children and young people a home while their own family are unable to look after them. This can be for a variety of reasons. Foster carers are childcare experts working alongside a team of professionals providing children with the highest standard of foster care.



'I definitely feel safe and happy. You can go and tell someone something without feeling nervous or scared. They listen and act upon it straight away. Its not' I will get hold of your social worker next week', 'I'm treated more as a family member and not so much as a job. I'm included in everything and its better like that' – quotes from young people.

Eligibility

Fostering services are available to children and young people aged 0-18. This will include Parent and Child placements where the parent is over 18. Foster carers also provide "Staying Put" arrangements for young adults from the age of 18 years. Kent has a range of fostering families including caring for siblings, adolescents, Step Across from residential care, emergency bed scheme, permanency, short breaks for disabled children and respite care.

Arrangement

Kent has both an in-house service where we directly recruit Foster Carers and Independent Fostering Agencies who are contracted to us and manage the recruitment of their foster carers. If we are unable to find a good match with our in-house carers, we will approach the Independent Fostering Agencies.

These services are regulated by Ofsted.

⁷ Children in Care Council Drawing Competition Entries – 'What Makes a Home Happy'

Staying Put



Description

Staying with foster carers past the age of 18 is referred to as 'Staying Put' where young people can stay with their foster carer until the age of 21, if agreed. The young person will be a lodger in their home, in that they will be renting a room from them, and the young person will be expected to pay a contribution for their keep. The young person will be supported to develop their independent living skills further with their carer.

Eligibility

This service is available to young people aged 18 that are Staying Put with their Foster Carer.

Arrangement

To facilitate this arrangement, foster carers become Hosts when the young person turns 18 under Kent Supported Homes inhouse service.

Kent Supported Homes (Supported Lodgings)



Description

Kent Supported Homes is a form of temporary supported accommodation for older children in care and care leavers who are not yet ready to live independently for a variety of reasons. Young people placed in this service will have their own bedroom in a family home. The young person will be given

support and guidance as appropriate, to help them on their pathway to independence by the adult or adults that live in the home (Host/s).

Eligibility

Kent Supported Homes is available to young people/adults aged 16-21, and up to 25 if in further education.

Arrangement

In-house recruitment of Hosts. This service is currently not subject to regulation, however, from April 2023 there will be a requirement by Ofsted for all 16/17-year-old accommodation to be regulated.

Residential Children's Homes**Description**

Residential Children's Homes can usually have up to five children living together in single bedrooms, with shared communal living areas.

Eligibility

Residential Children's Homes are available to children and young people aged 5-18. Kent also make a small number of residential Parent and Child arrangements.

Arrangement

Spot Purchased. These services are regulated by Ofsted.

Residential Special Schools**Description**

Residential Special Schools provide care for children with physical disabilities, learning disabilities or emotional difficulties. These schools focus on education and provide teaching on-site. In some cases, they are homes for children offer transitioning support for young people until they reach their early 20's.

Eligibility

Residential Special Schools are available to children and young people aged 5-18.

Semi-Independent Accommodation



“I like it here as its close to my college and friends. I like my room – I want a bigger TV in my room” – quote from a young person

Description

This is a house where a number of young people will live with their own bedroom and shared living space. A support worker will be on-site as required; the length of time and frequency will vary depending on the levels of need the young people have and provide life and independent skills support.

Eligibility

This service is available to young people aged 16+.

Arrangement

Spot Purchased.

This service is currently not subject to regulation, however, from April 2023 there will be a requirement by Ofsted for all accommodation for 16/17-year-olds to be regulated.

Arrangement

Spot Purchased. These services are regulated by Ofsted.

Young Persons Supported Accommodation and Floating Support Service (YPSAFS)



'It's a good location and quiet at night which is nice,' 'Garden and communal area is nice but not important as no one uses it', 'Without a place like here I would have ended up in prison', 'Staff – they do their job. They go out of their way to help you' - quotes from young people.

Description

This service provides an accommodation and support package with a support worker being on hand to support and guide young people. Support is tailored to each individual young person to support them to maintain their tenancy and positively participate in their local community. In Kent there is a range of housing with support, so accommodation might be in shared houses or single flats. There is also a floating support service for those young people moving into their own independent accommodation.

Eligibility

YPSAFS is available to children and young people aged 16-21, up to 25 if in education or working and it is also available to 16/17-year-olds children in need who are homeless and have additional needs. All children in need will require a Joint Housing Assessment to be able to access this service.

Arrangement

Contracted until March 2023.

This service is currently not subject to regulation, however, from April 2023 there will be a requirement by Ofsted for all accommodation for 16/17-year-olds to be regulated.

Shared Accommodation



'I like the area I live, close to Town,' 'Things get fixed when asked, things get fixed when broken,' 'I struggle with other young people not cleaning,' 'I would like to be able to bring in my own furniture' – quotes from young people.

Description/Purpose

Shared Accommodation is similar to semi-independent accommodation, although this is for young people with independence skills and who require minimum support.

Eligibility

This service is available to young people aged between 16 and 21.

Arrangement

Contracted until March 2023.

This service is currently not subject to regulation, however, from April 2023 there will be a requirement by Ofsted for all accommodation for 16/17-year-olds to be regulated.

Reception Centre and Safe Care Service**Description**

The Reception Centre provides accommodation and support for male Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) entering Kent aged 16-18. Other new arrivals of young people, who are under the age of 16 years, female, or those with clear safeguarding concerns, are placed in Foster Care. The Reception Centre currently provides the hosting facility for the National Transfer Scheme (NTS), as it has been able to manage large numbers of UASC on site and support the implementation of the transfer scheme.

Arrangement

The Reception Centre and certain staff are commissioned with KCC staff supporting UASC in the Reception Centre.

Supported Living (18+ only)**Description**

Supported Living Services are care and support services that are usually delivered through self-contained flats or shared housing occupied by more than one tenant, with a combination of individual one to one support and shared support.

Eligibility

This service is available to 18+ adults only. This includes adults who have assessed care and support needs associated with sensory impairment, learning disability, physical disability, physical ill health, substance misuse and mental illness.

Arrangement

Framework contract.

Short Break and Short Stay In-house Units



Description

To support families, our short break units are registered children's homes that provide overnight short breaks to disabled children who meet the eligibility criteria. The children continue to attend their school whilst accessing these units. The units work with health colleagues to provide a social care model that supports children's physical and health needs. The units are open over a 24-hour period.

Eligibility

Short Break units are available to children and young people aged 5-18.

Arrangement

Internal provision. These services are regulated by Ofsted.

In-House Short Breaks Data for 2021-2022

	BLUEBELLS	FAIRLAWN	SUNRISE	TREETOPS	WINDCHIMES	SERVICE TOTALS
Number of beds in scheme	4	7	6	6	6	29
Number of admissions to the scheme for the year	201	544	535	574	412	2266
Number of young people accessing the scheme	25	55	50	48	54	232
Number of young people on a waiting list for the scheme	13	22	5	4	20	64

Shared Lives (18+ only)



Description

If a young person is disabled and/or needs more support than can be offered through Staying Put, then Shared Lives might be a possible option, either with the current carers if they apply to become Shared Lives carers or an alternative carer.

Eligibility

Shared Lives can only be accessed through the Disabled Young People's Team or one of the Adult Social Care Teams in Kent County Council and will be considered by the Children in Care or the Young People's teams before the young person turns 18 years of age.

Arrangement

This is an in-house service.

Positive Behaviour Service

Description

The Positive Behavioural Support Contract provides bespoke placements for people with complex needs. Services from the Framework will develop and deliver bespoke and personalised care and support for people with learning disabilities and mental health issues, and/or autism who are aged 14 years and over, and who are currently in-patients, or at risk of admission to secure in-patient facilities. This service is commissioned to provide support for people who are from Kent & Medway. Providers on this Framework will be expected to contribute toward delivery of the Transforming Care Programme, ensuring the aims are sustainable beyond the end date of the national programme.

Eligibility

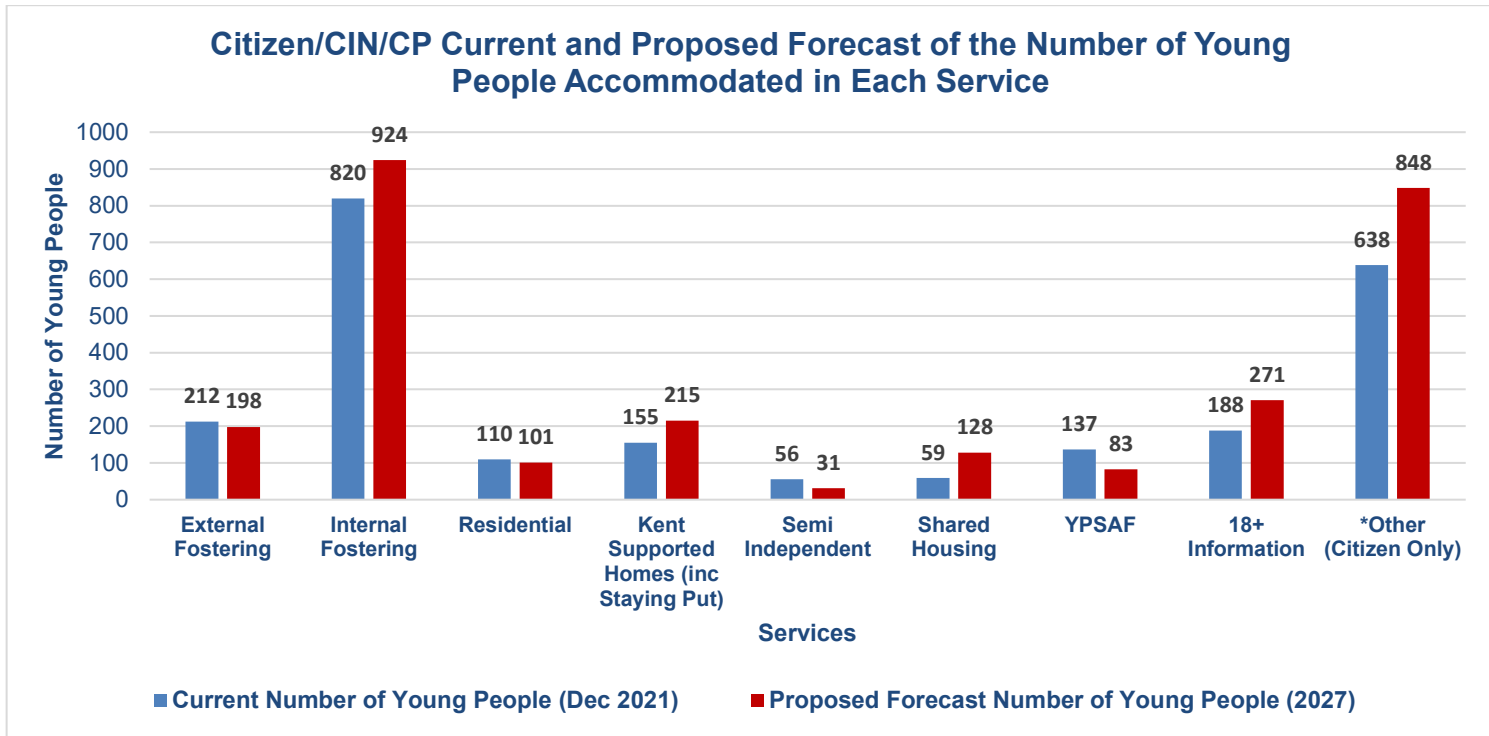
This service is available to young people 14 + who have either a learning disability and/or Autism.

Arrangement

This is a Framework contract contracted to October 2022.

Data and Forecasts⁸

Citizen Children in Care, Care Leavers, Children in Need and Child Protection



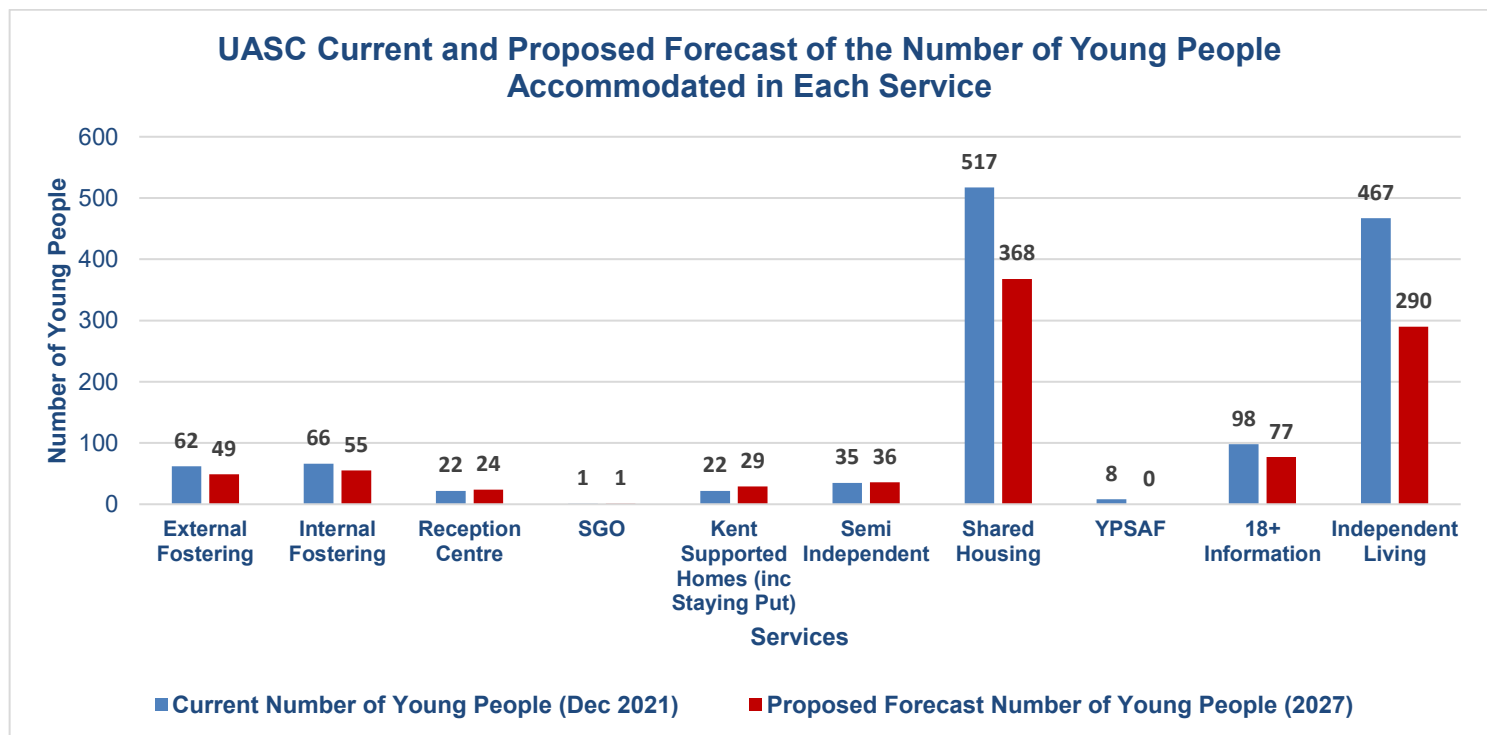
**Other' excludes CP/CIN that are living with family as this is not relevant to the Accommodation Strategy.

Accessible alternative format of this graph showing the Citizen/CIN/CP current and forecast of the number of young people accommodated in each service is below:

SERVICE	CURRENT NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE (December 2021)	PROPOSED FORECAST NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE (2027)
External Fostering	212	198
Internal Fostering	820	924
Residential	110	101
Kent Supported Homes (including Staying Put)	155	215
Semi-independent	56	31
Shared Housing	59	128
YPSAFS	137	83
18+ Information	188	271
Other (Citizen Only)	638	848

⁸ Source Data: Kent County Councils Analytics Department

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children and Asylum Care Leavers



Accessible alternative format of this graph showing the UASC current and proposed forecast of the number of young people accommodated in each service is below:

SERVICE	CURRENT NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE (December 2021)	PROPOSED FORECAST NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE (2027)
External Fostering	62	49
Internal Fostering	66	55
Reception Centre	22	24
SGO	1	1
Kent Supported Homes (including Staying Put)	22	29
Semi-independent	35	36
Shared Housing	517	368
YPSAFS	8	0
18+ Information	98	77
Independent Living	467	290

We have modelled UASC forecasts based on the 0.07% that Local Authorities should take into their care, but we understand that due to demand, the number of young unaccompanied asylum-seeking children is likely to increase. Under these circumstances, we could flex our model for the possibility of the minimum level of 0.07% being increased.

Actions to Meet Demand

With the County so large and with its own complexities mentioned, to meet the demand for Kent's Children there are a number of strands of work we need to observe, action, and bring together. These can be summarised as follows:



For an accessible alternative format of this diagram please see **Appendix 6**.

How?	
Statutory Obligations	We must fulfil our statutory obligations to Children in Care, Children in Need and Care Leavers to ensure that our children and young people live in safe accommodation with care and support.
Service Improvement	Make sure that we always deliver the best value for money and that we can support providers in developing innovation in services to meet the needs of our children and young people. We need to include social value in our contracts along with enabling providers to think 'green' and reducing their carbon footprint for investment.

	We need to support providers to focus on community integration, making best use of the services available locally such as youth provision etc.
Manage risk effectively	Management of demand and the increasingly complex needs of our young people through allocation into the appropriate schemes, supported with a robust safeguarding approach.
Manage the budget	Offer best value and maximise resources to improve outcomes for young people, in line with Kent County Council's vision.
Improve outcomes	The main outcome of our Services is to ensure young people have the ability to live independently by achieving self-supporting independence when they reach adulthood.
Listen, learn, act	Make sure that opportunities are explored to enable children and young people to make their voices heard.

We also need to continuously talk with, and listen to, those we buy services from and from practitioners supporting the young people

Through contract management and preparing to let new contracts, we will identify areas that are challenging, new areas of development and ways we can improve services, and therefore outcomes, for our children and young people. More recently, we have heard:

- **Demand for placements** is increasing and therefore we must manage placement matching well, buy services from providers that can expand in capacity and deliver value for money and good outcomes.
- All services are seeing **young people with more complex lives** and as such require **different approaches and models of support**.
- In Shared Accommodation, **the nature of the provision has shifted** from the initial focus of accommodating Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children moving on from the Reception Centre to accommodating citizen 16/17-year-old young people and citizen 18+ Care Leavers.
- Practitioners feel that **young people require support in Shared Accommodation**.
- **Semi-independent Accommodation** is being used to place more children and young people with complex backgrounds, multiple issues and often a history of breakdown in foster care or residential care. The changes in regulating this accommodation in April 2023 is welcomed, however without clarity and the need to set up new services at that time will be challenging without the detail.
- Overall, both **Shared Accommodation and YPSAFS** providers have worked with KCC to deliver services and accept greater risk which is above what we initially said we would purchase. Good effective relationships have been developed which allows open and transparent conversations about services and an understanding of the challenges faced.
- Each service has **different eligibility criteria**. Children in need only have access to YPSAFS provision and once they turn 18, they remain in placements as non-eligible with continued support needs until alternative provision can be found.

We need everyone in the Council who works with Children to play their part

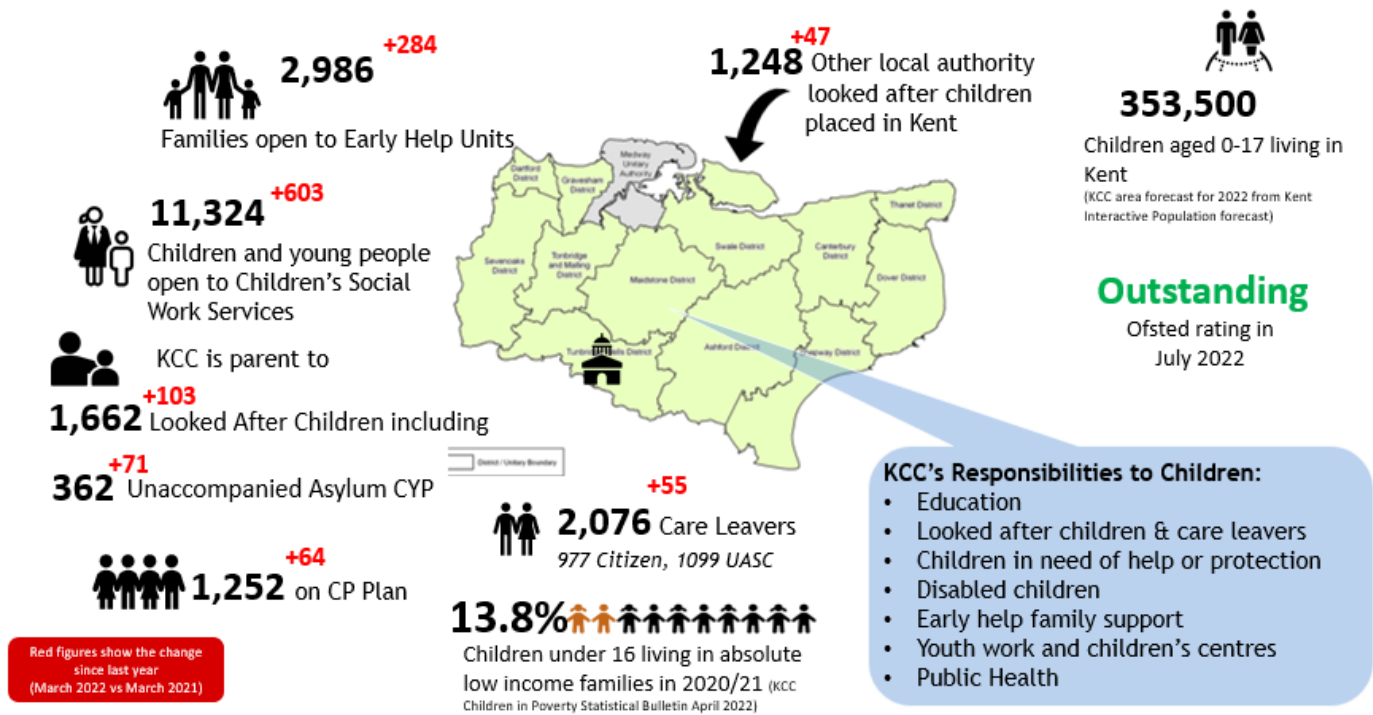


For an accessible alternative format of this diagram please see **Appendix 6**.

Appendix 1

Needs Assessment Key Information

Needs Assessment Key Information



Accessible Alternative Format of the diagram above the outlines the Needs Assessment Key Information is below:

Outstanding Ofsted rating in July 2022.
There are 2,986 Families open to Early Help Units (+284 from March 2021 to March 2022).
There are 11,324 children and young people are open to children's social work services (+603 from March 2021 to March 2022).
There are 1,662 looked after children (+103 from March 2021 to March 2022) including 362 unaccompanied asylum children and young people (+71 from March 2021 to March 2022).
There are 1,252 children are on a child protection plan (+64 from March 2021 to March 2022).
There are 2,076 care leavers, 977 citizen and 1099 asylum care leavers (+55 from March 2021 to March 2022).
There are 1,248 other local authority looked after children placed in Kent (+47 from March 2021 to March 2022).
13.8% of children under the age of 16 were living in absolute low income families in 2020/21.
There are 353,500 children aged 0-17 living in Kent (KCC Area Forecast for 2022).

Kent County Councils Responsibility to Children include:

- Education.
- Looked after children and care leavers.
- Children in need of help or protection.
- Disabled children.
- Early Help family support.
- Youth work and childrens centres.
- Public Health.

Appendix 2

Accommodation Spend

Children in Care, Care Leavers, and vulnerable young people aged 0-25 total accommodation spend in 2021/22 was over £95m. ⁹The breakdown summarised below shows that fostering is the highest spend area at £36.9m, split £15.5m on external fostering and £21.4m on internal fostering, followed by Residential settings at £29.2m.



Accessible alternative format of this graph showing the total accommodation spend for 2021/22 is below:

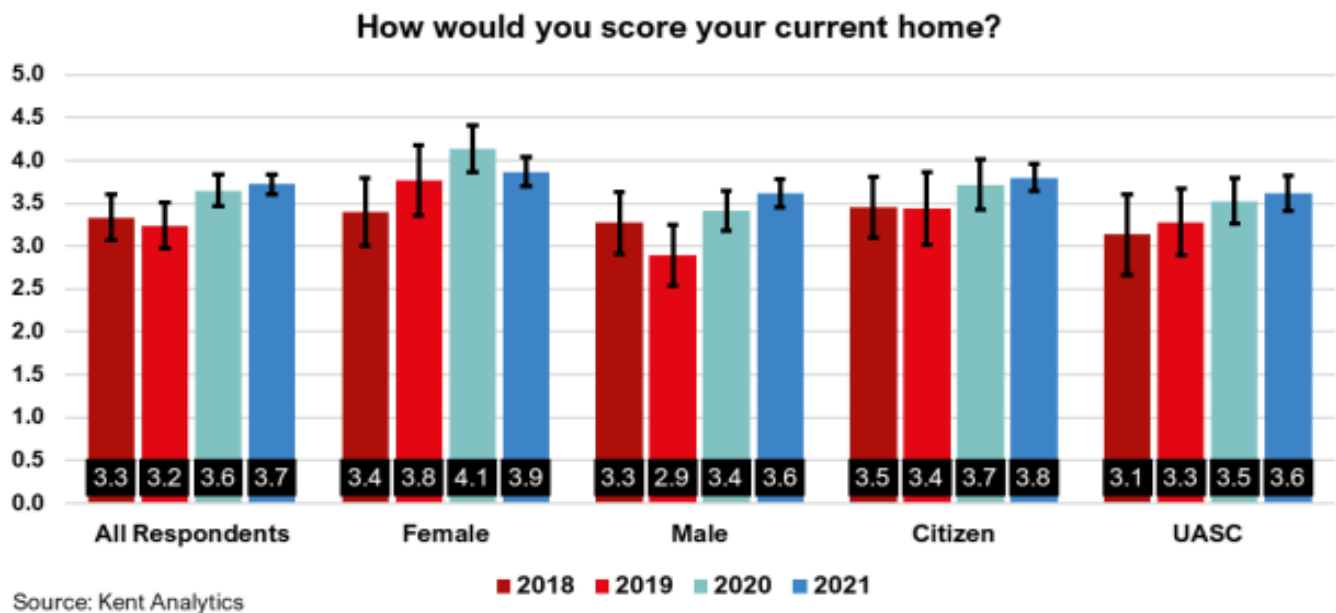
SERVICE	TOTAL SPEND 2021/22
Residential	£29,209,532
Internal Fostering	£21,446,819
External Fostering	£15,519,301
Adoption	£12,109,059
Reception Centre	£5,316,089
Shared Housing	£4,199,978
Semi-independent	£3,795,627
YPSAFS	£2,619,397
Kent Supported Homes	£1,582,180

⁹ Source Data – Kent County Councils Revenue Finance Department May 2022

Appendix 3

Care Leavers Survey Extract of Results - October 2021

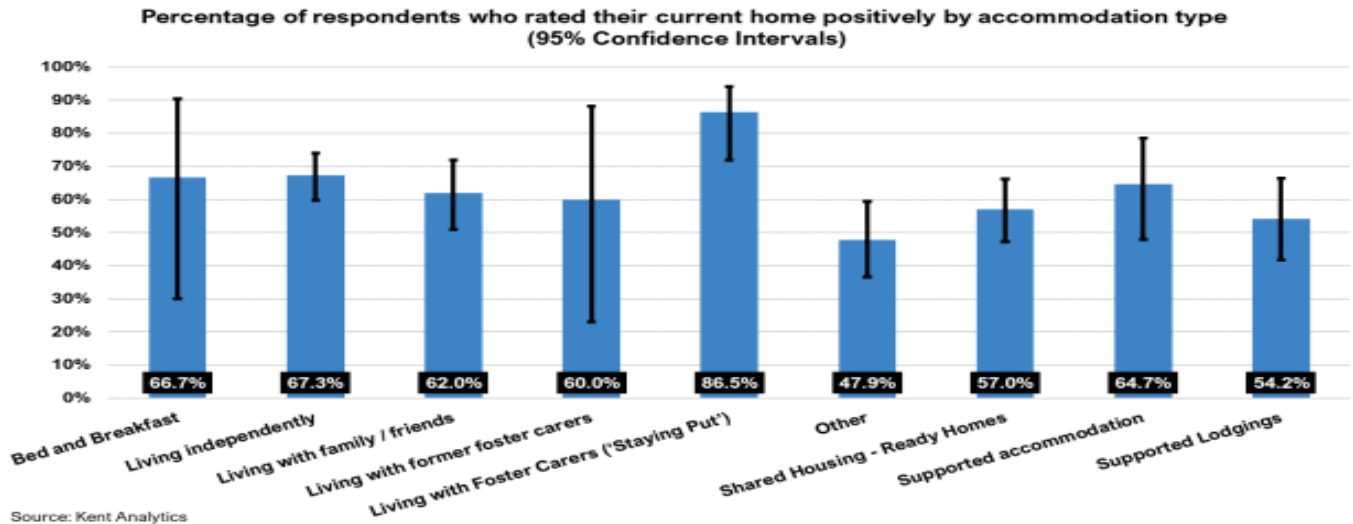
The graph below compares how satisfied Care Leavers were with their current home in 2021 with 2018, 2019 and 2020. There are no statistically significant changes between 2020 and 2021 in how the young adults scored their current home. However, for all respondents there has been a significant positive change in score between 2018 and 2021, from 3.3 to 3.7.



Alternative accessible format of the graph above showing how care leavers score their current home is in the table below:

COHORT	2018	2019	2020	2021
All Respondents	3.3	3.2	3.6	3.7
Female	3.4	3.8	4.1	3.9
Male	3.3	2.9	3.4	3.6
Citizen	3.5	3.4	3.7	3.8
UASC	3.1	3.3	3.5	3.6

The graph below shows the proportion of Care Leavers who gave a positive response (four or five stars) to their home by the type of accommodation they are currently in. Respondents who live with Foster Carers ('Staying Put') were significantly more likely to rate their home four or five stars compared to those living with family/friends, shared accommodation, supported lodgings (Kent Supported Homes) and "Other." Those living independently were significantly more likely to rate their home four or five stars compared to those who selected 'Other.'



Alternative accessible format of the graph above for the percentage of respondents who rated their current home positively by accommodation type is in the table below:

ACCOMMODATION TYPE	PERCENTAGE
Bed and Breakfast	66.7
Living Independently	67.3
Living with Family and Friends	62.0
Living with Former Foster Carers	60.0
Living with Foster Carers (Staying Put)	86.5
Other	47.9
Shared Housing	57.0
Supported Accommodation	64.7
Supported Lodgings	54.2

Appendix 4

Children in Care Council Young People Engagement – April 2022

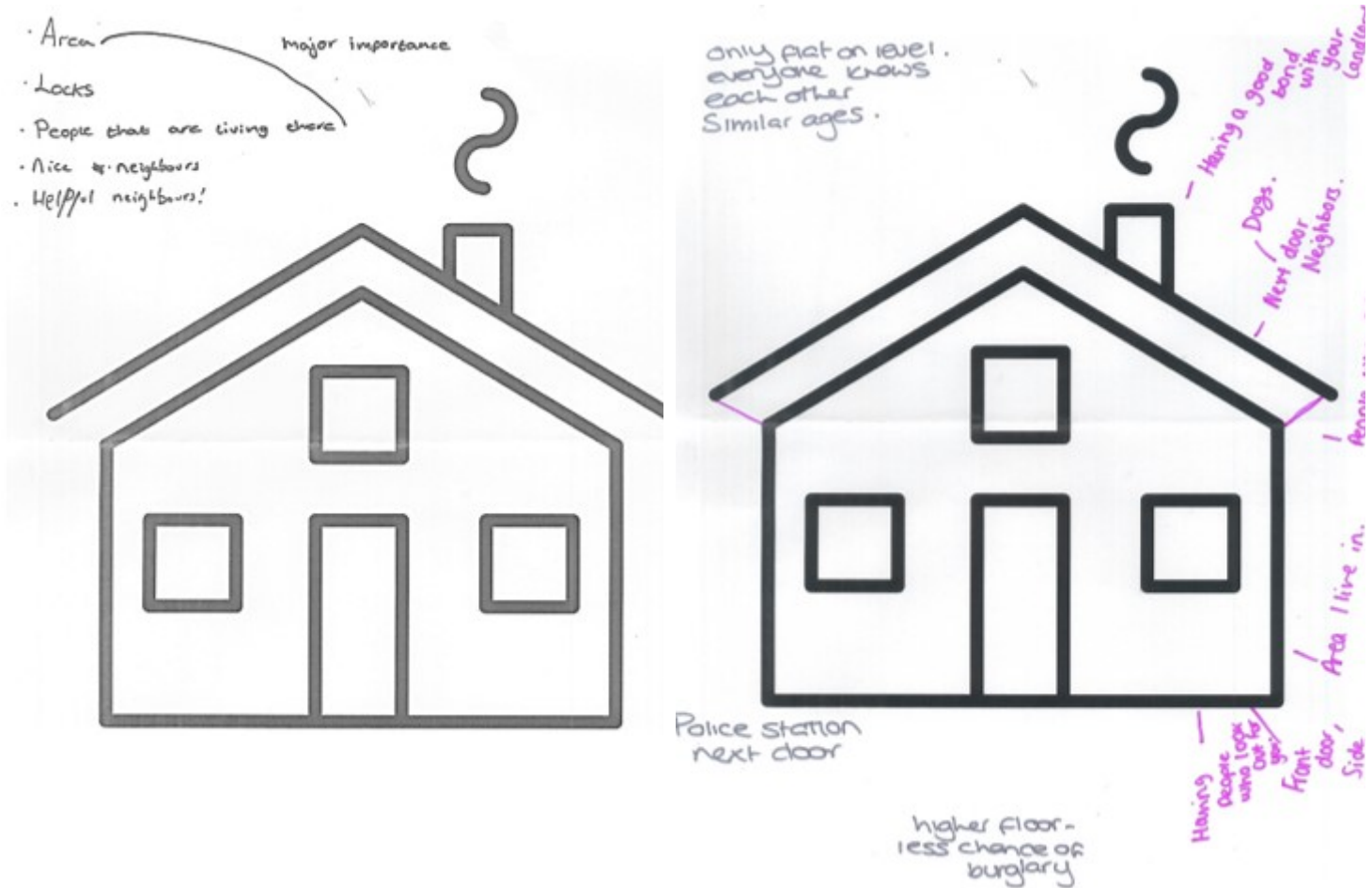
What is the most important thing in relation to where you live and your home?



The group had lots of ideas as shown in the images, but they considered the most important things to be a safe place to live, cleanliness and Wi-Fi.

They also suggested that more needs to be done to introduce young people to their new homes e.g. pre visits, meetings with the people they would be living with.

What helps you to feel safe and secure in your home?

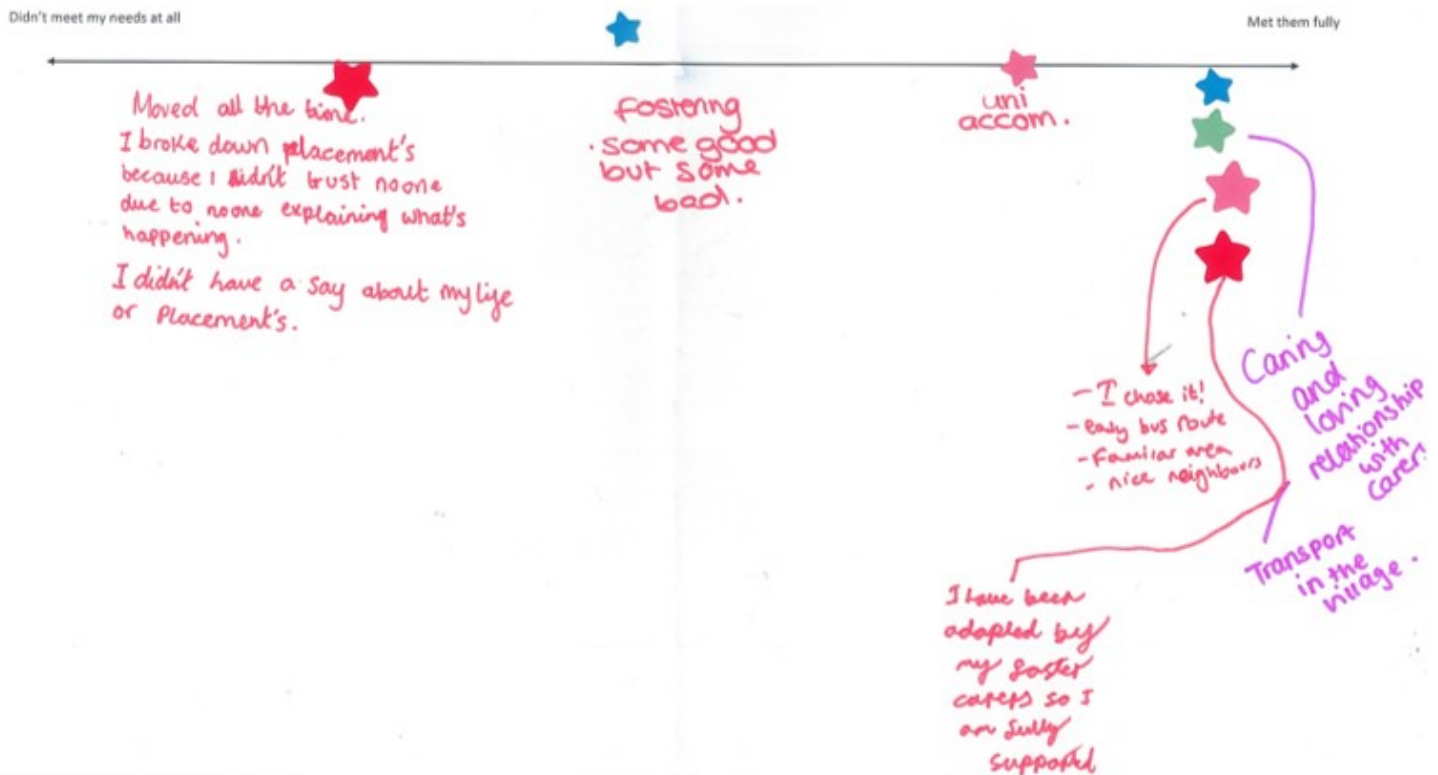


One young person suggested that having good neighbour made him feel safe and secure.

Others suggested locks both externally and internally on bedroom doors. The latter seemed to the group to be inconsistent and didn't always match what young people would prefer themselves.

One young person spoke about the number of cameras in her previous placement. She said that they could make her feel uncomfortable, but they also added a protective element against false accusations or stealing. She also explained that knives were locked away and the kitchen was locked at 11.00pm. Although this could sometimes be annoying, she thought that having a strict set of rules in shared properties was important in helping young people stay safe.

Did/does your accommodation meet your needs? If not, why not?



Everybody in the group, other than one young person, is still in foster care or remained in foster care until they were at least 18. All felt that this met their needs well, although one young person explained that foster care placements do vary and that her previous placement was not as successful as her last one.

One young person felt that her accommodation did not always meet her needs, although she had one successful foster placement which ended because her carers retired.

What does good quality support look like to help you to be able to live on your own i.e. budgeting, cooking?

One young person said a good cookbook.

One young person suggested support to learn independent living skills, time management and money management.

One young person suggested support in how to use public transport.

All the group thought more information about medical services, such as securing a doctor, or a dentist should be shared. They thought that this was especially important as seeing a doctor now after covid can be very difficult, but also because often care leavers may not know all of their medical history.

They thought it was important that they understood their entitlements as care leavers and how this changes as they get older.

One young person thought it was important to have someone in your life to give you support and be there for you.

Is there anything that you feel prevents you from being able to live on your own?

One young person said that a young person's emotional and mental health is important and that not everyone is able to cope on their own.

One young person said that a lack of independent living skills might prevent someone living on their own.

One young person suggested that poor information and support from social workers and the 18+ service can make living on your own more difficult.

When do you think you would be ready to have conversations, with Kent County Council's support, in relation to moving on to live on your own in independent accommodation?

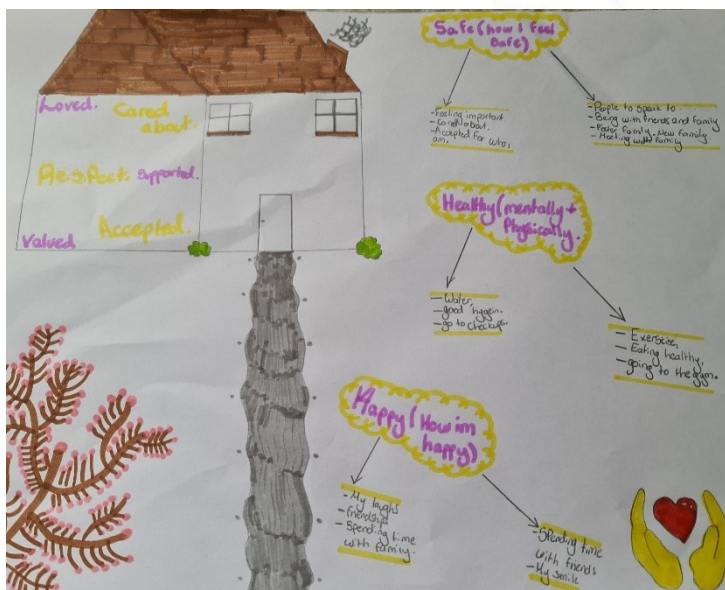
All of the group felt that it was important to have conversations about accommodation early, at about the age of 16, so young people could plan further ahead. However, some members of the group thought that some young people would like to speak about accommodation even earlier and when it is discussed should depend on the young person themselves and when they feel ready rather than when the social worker thinks you are.

One young person added that a young person's mental health may also be a factor in when these conversations happened.

Appendix 5

Drawings submitted by our Young People from the Children in Care Council

Drawing Competition – ‘What Makes a Home Happy’



Appendix 6

Accessible Alternative format of the Diagrams Outlining Actions to Meet Demand and What We Need Everyone in The Council to Do to Ensure We Have Sufficient, Safe, Quality Accommodation (page 22 and 24)

Actions to Meet Demand

The different strands of work that we need to observe, action and bring together to ensure that we have sufficient, safe, quality accommodation which children and young people call home are:

- Work with partners to commission residential care for different cohorts.
- Work with partners to successfully implement the National Transfer Scheme.
- Work with Kent-based providers to show that KCC is a proactive and supportive Local Authority and one that providers want to work with.
- Do what we say we will do – work in line with the Strategies and Policies in place. Listen to our children and work to the Principles of Nurture.
- Develop a range of regulated services that can accommodate the children and young people that have very complex lives.
- Implement the findings of the Care Review, including adapting to what is found in the review of the provider markets.

We need everyone in the Council who works with Children to play their part

What we need everyone in the Council to do, who works with children, to ensure there is sufficient, safe, quality accommodation which children and young people call home are:

- Continuously recruiting for Foster Carers, adoptive families and Host families.
- Continuous review of the offer to Care Leavers and championing their rights into adulthood.
- Sharing knowledge between departments within the council to assist transition and different assessments (Children's Services to Adult Services).
- Introducing the Nurture Principles into Social Work and Early Help functions.
- Improving Inclusion in mainstream schools – allows children with complex needs to not experience so much change.
- Continuous Professional Development of our whole staff team so they are alert to changing practice and service developments.