

# 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



First Published 2022 – refreshed in 2023 and again in 2024 (2023 version was not published)

**Document Reviews**

This Sufficiency Strategy was created and published in August 2022. Kent County Council (KCC) has high aspirations for children, young adults and their families/carers and are committed to achieving permanency and stability for all children and young adults through our services and those of our partners. KCC believes it is important that this Strategy remains a live document.

This document is reviewed annually with oversight and endorsement by the Corporate Parenting Panel. In 2023, there was significant impact on the Council’s responsibilities to Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking (UAS) Children giving a remit to significantly expand the Reception and Safe Care estate as a result. The impact from the High Court Judgment in July 2023, saw significant pressures on the Council’s ability to access services for all children and publishing the Sufficiency Strategy at that point would deem the document meaningless. The Corporate Parenting Panel supported the view to have more of an understanding of the impact and therefore this version takes into account the learning of a year where all new arrivals are children in Kent’s care and subject to the current National Transfer Scheme.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Updates</b>	<b>Section/Appendix</b>
<b>2023</b>	Financial Spend 2022/2023	Appendix 3
	Data and Proposed Forecasts for 2022-2027 and 2023/2024	Appendix 7
	Summary of Actions Identified in the 2023 Update	Appendix 8
<b>2024</b>	Inhouse Short Breaks Data	Accommodation Profile
	2024 Update	2024 Update
	Accommodation Profile	Appendix 1
	Needs Assessment Key Information	Appendix 2
	Financial Spend 2023/2024	Appendix 3

## Contents

Introduction .....	4
Our Vision .....	5
Nurture Principles.....	5
<b>Children and Young Adult’s learning is understood developmentally – “no matter what age, everyone is at a different stage.”</b> .....	6
<b>The home offers a safe base – your home is your safe space.</b> .....	6
<b>The importance of nurture for the development of wellbeing – “Nurture helps you feel happy and healthy.”</b> .....	7
<b>Language is a vital means of communication- “KCC can help you find your voice.”</b> .....	8
<b>All behaviour is communication – “how you behave tells us how you feel.”</b> .....	8
<b>The importance of transitions in children and young adults’ lives – “whatever changes you face we are here to guide you.”</b> .....	9
2024 Update .....	10
Forecast Placements (2024) Against Actual Placement Data (2024) .....	10
Non-UAS Children in Care, Care Leavers, Children in Need and Child Protection.....	10
Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children and Asylum Care Leavers.....	11
Influencers and Impacts in 2024.....	13
Supported Accommodation Services.....	13
Ofsted Registration .....	14
Reception and Safe Care Services.....	15
High Court Judgement .....	15
Fostering and Residential .....	16
Kinship Strategy .....	18
Family Hubs, Early Help and Adolescent Early Help Supporting Families .....	18
Data and Forecasts 2024/2025.....	19
Methodology and Assumptions.....	19
Methodology - Non-UAS Children and Young Adults .....	20
Assumptions for 2025 - Non-UAS Children and Young Adults .....	20
Methodology - UAS Children and Asylum Care Leavers .....	21
Assumptions for 2025 - UAS Children and Asylum Care Leavers .....	22
Actions to Meet Demand.....	24
We need everyone in the Council who works with Children to play their part. ....	25
Actions and Next Steps 2024 - 2025 .....	25
Appendix 1 – Accommodation Profile .....	28
<b>Adoption</b> .....	28

<b>Fostering</b> .....	29
<b>Staying Put</b> .....	30
<b>Kent Supported Homes (Supported Lodgings)</b> .....	30
<b>Residential Children’s Homes</b> .....	31
<b>Residential Special Schools</b> .....	31
<b>Supported Accommodation (previously known as Semi-Independent)</b> .....	32
<b>Supported Accommodation On-Site Flexible Support Service for 16- and 17-year-old Children in Care</b> .....	33
<b>Shared Accommodation</b> .....	35
<b>Reception Centre and Safe Care Services</b> .....	36
<b>Supported Living (18+ only)</b> .....	36
<b>Short Break and Short Stay In-house Units</b> .....	37
<b>Shared Lives (18+ only)</b> .....	38
Appendix 2 - Needs Assessment Key Information .....	40
Appendix 3 - Accommodation Spend 2021/2022, 2022/2023 and 2023/2024.....	41
Appendix 4 - Care Leavers Survey Extract of Results - October 2021 and January 2024 .....	44
Appendix 5 - Children in Care Council Children Engagement – April 2022 .....	46
Appendix 6 - Drawings submitted by our Children from the Children in Care Council Drawing Competition – ‘What Makes a Home Happy.’ .....	48
Appendix 7 - Data and Proposed Forecasts for 2023/2024.....	49
Appendix 8 - Summary of Actions Identified in the 2023 Update .....	52

### Introduction

The Kent County Council (KCC) 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. It has been updated in 2024 to take into account the impact and learning of the High Court Judgment in July 2023 ruling that all Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking (UAS) Children are the responsibility of Kent County Council unless or until they are transferred via the National Transfer Scheme to another local authority.

The Sufficiency Duty<sup>2</sup> (Section 22G of the Children Act 1989<sup>3</sup>) 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. KCC's Family Hubs and Early Help Services (including Adolescent Early Help) take action to support a child and/or their family early in the life of challenges or as soon as difficulties emerge. KCC and the Family Hub network of partners provide services that can be accessed flexibly and in a place that suits the child and/or family.

The work within Early Help is underpinned by a whole family approach. This is a key foundation of:

- the government's Supporting Families programme
- the Family Hub Framework model
- new Department for Education attendance guidance
- our collective response to safeguarding children.

KCC 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-seeking children. KCC commission a high proportion of services from external providers and the services we are able to buy are significantly impacted upon by the numbers of children in care placed by other Local Authorities into Kent, along with the pressures of UAS Children.

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.

---

<sup>2</sup> [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)

<sup>3</sup> [Children Act 1989 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/27)

## Our Vision

Kent County Council's (KCC) vision is for every child whether in our care or not and every care leaver to have a place they call home, feel safe and loved, until they are ready to live independently. It is recognised that not all children will be ready to move on when they reach adulthood, and we will be flexible in making sure that these children 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 considerable 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.

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 Virtual School Kent (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 adults in the place they call home. Our Apprentices employed by KCC created VSK's own Nurture Principles into words by children, for children.





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

### **Children and Young Adult’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 Justice, Family Hubs or Early Help Practitioner, 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 adult 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 adults 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 where children and young adults 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 children will be able to move into their own independent accommodation due to their needs. For these children, 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.

### **The home offers a safe base – your home is 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 at the earliest opportunity.

In Kent we seek to improve the placement stability 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 are delivered.
- Providing accommodation within the county of Kent unless that is not reasonably practicable.

As a Corporate Parent, children and young adults' safety is of utmost priority, and we will do our absolute best to keep children and young adults safe where they are living. Integrated Children's Services work with partner agencies to support children and young adults to ensure their safety; this may include the Police, Education, Health, and Housing. If a child or young adult does not feel safe where they live, we will work with them 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 prevention<sup>4</sup>. Our aim is to prevent children in need (16/17-year-olds) from unnecessarily entering the care system, with all children in need, if a potential need for accommodation is identified, participating in 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 adults, 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 adult is safeguarded.

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

Children state that nurture helps them 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

---

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



provider delivering services for us to be kind and supportive, as well as knowledgeable in making sure children and young adults 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).

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

### **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 adults through a variety of forums. This is further detailed in several strategies and within the Kent Pledge<sup>5</sup> to children in care and the Care Leavers Local Offer<sup>6</sup>.

It is recognised that communication is a two-way process where we want to achieve children and young adults listening to the advice of their allocated worker, to help them maintain their home. To support children and young adults from different backgrounds and cultures to manage and maintain their homes, welcome pictorial packs were introduced and notices/guides translated into different languages. This ensures that all children and young adults 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. A further survey was conducted in 2024. The result of the 2024 survey shows 78% said they feel safe where they are living, which is marginally higher than in 2022, and 62% of Care Leavers rated their home positively, with 47% giving a five-star rating. This reflects KCC are procuring accommodation which care leavers feel safe and secure in (see extracts from the survey results at **Appendix 4**).

Engagement was conducted with our Children in Care Council in relation to their living environment (see **Appendix 5**).

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 adults.

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

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

It is recognised that we need to work with children and young adults 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

---

<sup>5</sup> [The Kent Pledge](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Care leavers local offer - Kent County Council](#)

work with the children and young adults to help change their behaviours, if required, to help them understand what is deemed as acceptable, whilst recognising that children and young adults' 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 children to resettle, integrate and develop skills so they can live independently in communities. Each child 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 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 adults' 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 adults to develop their resilience. Whether a child or young adult 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 (UAS) Children's Service works closely with children and young adults 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 (UAS) Children who are on the National Transfer Scheme whilst waiting to move to another Local Authority. The team manage their 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 children turning 18 years old. Personal Advisors are allocated to children at aged 17.5 years, so that children 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. Children's Pathway Plans 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 adult 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 children 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 adult to Adult Social Care.

We identified the need to manage children's expectations from an earlier age, so 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 children at the age of 16.

We continue to work with the 12 District and Borough Councils, neighbouring authorities, and partners, to support children to move on into their own independent accommodation, as part of our joint Corporate Parenting responsibility.

At the Labour annual conference, the Prime Minister announced on 24 September 2024 that Care Leavers will be given better access to social housing by scrapping the local connection policy for vulnerable groups.

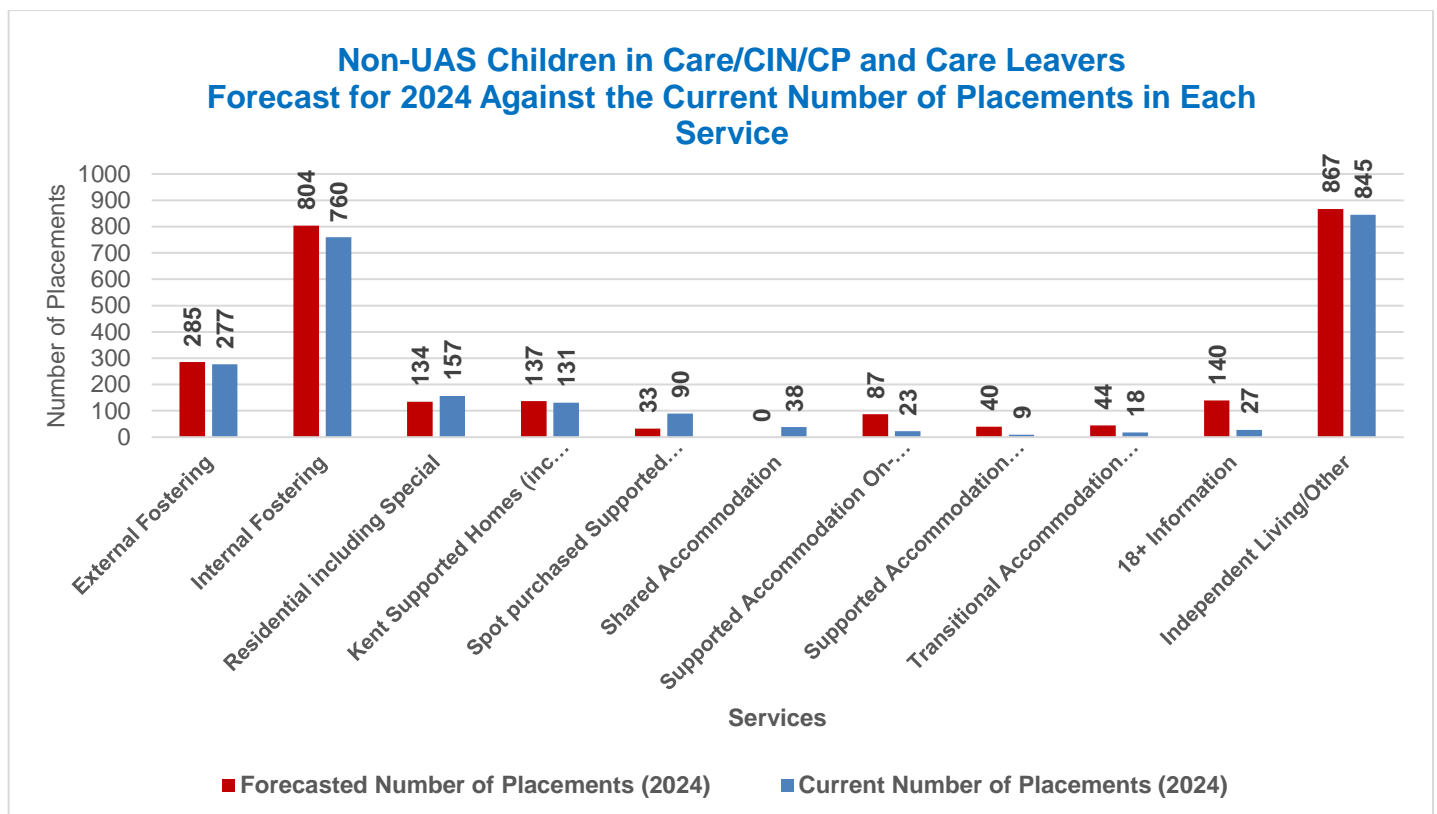
Children and Young Adults recognise the importance of the six Nurture Principles. With the Principles being embedded in schools, and they can see how it makes a difference, they have challenged us to make sure that all people working with Children and Young Adults should adopt these Principles, and we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

## 2024 Update

### Forecast Placements (2024) Against Actual Placement Data (2024)

#### Non-UAS Children in Care, Care Leavers, Children in Need and Child Protection

The following graph shows the forecast demand data for non-UAS Children and young adults for 2024, forecast in 2023, compared with the actual placement data for 2024:



The main differences for 2024 include the new Supported Accommodation services (On-Site Flexible Support, Outreach Support Service and Transitional Accommodation) and spot purchased Supported Accommodation (formerly known as semi-independent).

In 2023, it was anticipated that, following the new Supported Accommodation services being commissioned, KCC would see a reduction in the number of spot purchased Supported Accommodation placements; as 16/17-year-old Children in Care would transition over to the new Supported Accommodation On-Site Flexible Support services, along with the Children in Care aged 16/17 who were accommodated in the Young Person Supported Accommodation and Floating Support (YPSAFS) service at the time.

The number has not decreased as previously predicted as the Supported Accommodation On-Site Flexible Support services commenced on 1 April 2024, with one provider unable to accept referrals without the relevant confirmation of registration.

However, 28 children successfully transitioned to the new services, prior to Ofsted advising the services were not considered registered. This process is ongoing, and it is anticipated that, once KCC is able to use the newly commissioned services to their full potential, the reliance on spot purchased Supported Accommodation will be limited to exceptional circumstances only.

The increase in the use of spot purchased supported accommodation is also attributed to unregistered placements in this provision. KCC aims to place children aged 16 and 17 in registered placements, however, due to delays in Ofsted registration and lack of capacity in regulated services, KCC needed to use unregistered providers. There are currently 154 unregistered placements across the Councils portfolio of supported accommodation. All steps are being taken by KCC to source regulated provision.

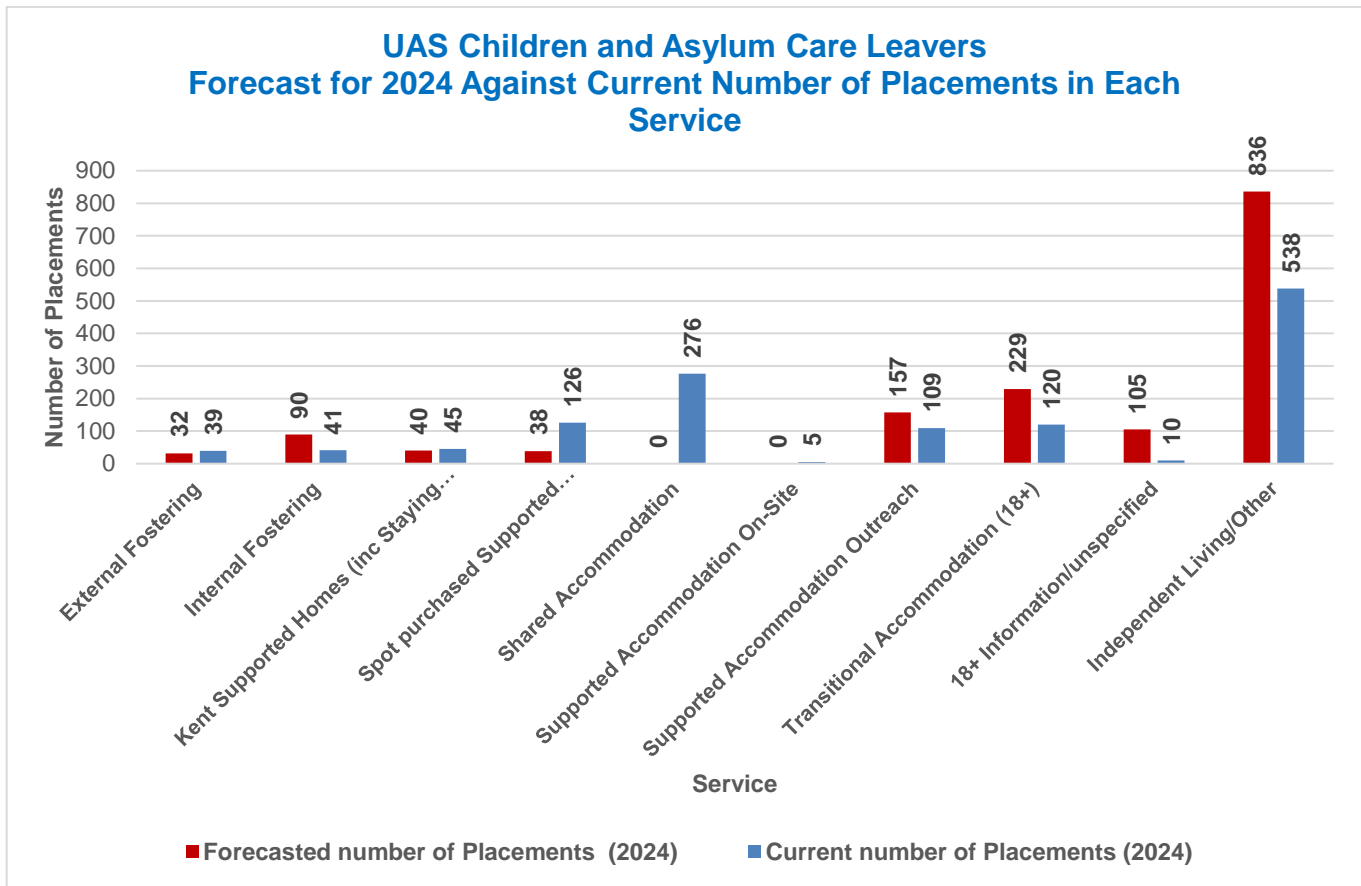
Unregistered provision is different to unregulated provision in that children under the age of 16 would be in unlawful placements, solo and bespoke accommodation is needed with care services. KCC used this type of accommodation for a small proportion of children where no other options exist. Where this is the case, Ofsted are notified and increased oversight is provided by KCC, along with risk assessments.

The number of Residential placements increased against the proposed forecast, and this is due to a number of factors including:

- A national shortage of Foster Carers.
- Limited regulated provisions for under 16's.
- Increase in complexities of children.
- Increase prevalence of contextual safeguarding factors.
- Illegality of unregulated accommodation for under 16's.
- Older children in care with a history of violence being unable to be placed in Fostering.

### Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children and Asylum Care Leavers

The following graph shows the forecast demand data for UAS Children and asylum care leavers for 2024, forecasted in 2023, compared with the actual placement data for 2024:



The main differences from the previous position include Shared Accommodation, Transitional Accommodation for 18-year-old Care Leavers, Spot Purchased Supported Accommodation, Independent Living/Other and 18+ Information only.

In 2023, before the decision was taken to agree a contract to effectively extend the Shared Accommodation service, it was assumed that all 19+ young adults will have moved on from the service in a planned way by the 31 March 2024, which would have increased the Independent Living/Other category and 18+ Information category. In order for the new contracts to be mobilised, resources were focused on establishing the new processes required and allowing the young adults aged 18+ to remain in the Shared Accommodation contract as of 31 March 2024. Therefore, the Independent Living/Other and 18+ Information categories had not increased as forecast. Due to this decision, the Shared Accommodation category has not decreased to zero, as previously predicted.

It was anticipated in 2023, that all 18 year olds accommodated in Shared Accommodation would transition to the new Transitional Accommodation for 18 year old Care Leavers, however, the new contract was agreed for those 18+ with all new referrals aged 18 years old, from 13 November 2023, to be placed in the Transitional Accommodation service.

To ensure Children in Care aged 16/17 are receiving support in-line with the new Ofsted Regulations, those accommodated in the Shared Accommodation service or YPSAFS were planned to transition over to the new Supported Accommodation Outreach Support Service or On-Site Flexible Support services. All 16/17-year-old UAS Children accommodated in Shared Accommodation as of 13 November 2023 transitioned to the new Supported Accommodation Outreach Support Service. No UAS Children transitioned to the new Supported Accommodation On-Site Flexible Support Service as the contract did not commence until 1 April 2024.



There was an increase in spot purchased Supported Accommodation placements against the forecast for 2024. This is due to newly arrived UAS Children identified as transitioning to a Children in Care team, to be looked after by KCC, being placed in a spot purchased Supported Accommodation setting (formerly known as Semi-Independent) to support them to transition to a new culture, which includes an eight-week programme to prepare them to move into the community, as an extension of the Reception and Safe Care Service. All female UAS Children identified as children transitioning to a Children in Care Team were placed in a spot purchased Supported Accommodation setting.

Following the eight-week programme, the UAS Children would then transition into the Supported Accommodation Outreach Support Service but, due to the provider not yet being Ofsted registered, KCC are unable to place them in this provision. This led to an increase in the use of spot purchased supported accommodation. All steps are being taken by KCC and the provider to ensure Ofsted are aware of the acute need and pressures, as no new referrals for 16/17-year-olds can be accepted into this service until the provider is registered.

### Influencers and Impacts in 2024

The review of the Sufficiency Strategy in 2024 takes into account the delivery of new Supported Accommodation services, changes to demand, changes in relevant legislation and government strategies and the impact of the High Court ruling in relation to UAS Children.

### Supported Accommodation Services

Ofsted announced, in March 2023, that the new Supported Accommodation Ofsted regulations will come into force on 28 October 2023, with providers being able to submit their applications from April 2023.

In September 2023, Commissioning commenced the procurement of the following three services to ensure compliance with the new Ofsted regulations and meet future demand:

- Supported Accommodation On-Site Flexible Support services for 16- and 17-year-old Children in Care - fixed number of units.
- Supported Accommodation Outreach Support Service for 16- and 17-year-old Children in care and Children in Need – based on demand.
- Transitional Accommodation for 18-year-old Care Leavers – based on demand.

Supported Accommodation Outreach Support Service contract and Transitional Accommodation for 18-year-old Care Leavers contract commenced on the 13 November 2023. Supported Accommodation On-Site Flexible Support services commenced on the 1 April 2024.

Prior to the new Supported Accommodation services being procured, a Key Decision was taken to restrict Supported Accommodation services for young adults up to the age of 19 (except for young adults that do not have immigration status), for those new entrants aged 16/17. To support the move on of young adults aged 18+ from the Shared Accommodation service, a contract was agreed, to allow a phased move-on programme for those young adults in the service and allow KCC sufficient time to work with District Council colleagues to minimise reputational damage and build relationships.

In the 2023 Annual Review, it was anticipated that all 18-year-old Care Leavers who were accommodated under the YPSAFS or Shared Accommodation service would transition to the new

Transitional Accommodation for 18-year-old Care Leavers once the service was commissioned. However, the Key Decision outlined above, resulted in all young adults aged 18+, that were accommodated in the Shared Accommodation service as of 13 November 2023, remaining in the Shared Accommodation service under a new contract. The 18-year-old Care Leavers in YPSAF transitioned to the new Transitional Accommodation for 18-year-old Care Leavers.

All Children in Care aged 16/17 who were accommodated in the Shared Accommodation service transitioned over to the new Supported Accommodation Outreach Support Service, on 13 November 2023, to ensure that these children were receiving support in-line with the new Ofsted Regulations. Children aged 16/17 who were accommodated in the YPSAF service transitioned over to the new Supported Accommodation On-Site Flexible Support services on 1 April 2024.

Within the 2023 Review it was assumed that 49 children aged 16/17 would move to the newly commissioned Supported Accommodation services from spot purchased Supported Accommodation (formerly known as Semi-Independent). The data shows that 28 children have successfully transitioned to the new services. This process is ongoing, and it is anticipated that once KCC can use the newly commissioned services to their full potential, the reliance on spot purchased Supported Accommodation (formerly known as semi-independent) will be limited to exceptional circumstances only.

For more details on the new services see description and eligibility under the Accommodation Profile section.

### Ofsted Registration

As of 28 November 2023, the new Supported Accommodation Regulation required that any providers offering housing and support to 16- and 17-year-olds (Supported Accommodation), across England, must be registered with Ofsted to operate lawfully. To do so, providers had to undergo an application, inspection, and interview process to comply with the new regulation requirements.

Since this date, the number of Kent based spot purchased Supported Accommodation (formerly known as semi-independent) that have successfully registered is 12. KCC continues to support Supported Accommodation providers to become regulated by Ofsted.

One of the two commissioned providers of Supported Accommodation On-Site Flexible Support service is registered, with confirmation received on 21 August 2024. The other provider is waiting upon inspection and interview; however, this provider is part of the Ofsted approved list for Supported Accommodation.

The provider for the Supported Accommodation Outreach Support Service is still waiting for the Ofsted registration, inspection, and interview to take place. It is imperative this process is undertaken by Ofsted as soon as possible as there are 107 unregistered placements with this provider as of September 2024. All steps are being taken by KCC and the provider to ensure Ofsted are aware of the scenario, as no new referrals for 16/17-year-olds can be accepted into this service until the provider is registered.

The impact of this delay in registration is a significant increase in the use of spot purchased Supported Accommodation for 16- and 17-year-olds.

The risk to KCC is that if the provider is not successful in seeking registration, the 107 children currently accommodated in this service will need to transition to an alternative provision. To mitigate

this potential impact, Commissioning would work with existing regulated contracted providers to increase, where possible, bedspace capacity. Alternative regulated spot purchased Supported Accommodation would have to be sourced, which is more expensive for the Council to purchase.

The registration of these services is key to ensuring KCC meet the demand for 16- and 17-year-old Supported Accommodation placements.

## Reception and Safe Care Services

### High Court Judgement

The UAS Children's Service is responsible for the care and accommodation of all newly arrived UAS Children in Kent. This is provided under Section 20 of The Children Act 1989 and the child's eligibility is the same as for non-UAS Children. It is provided until the child is transferred to another Local Authority under the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) or to Kent's mainstream Child in Care or 18+ Services, where support continues until they reach an age where they are no longer eligible, voluntarily leaves Local Authority care or is advised by the Home Office they must return to their country of birth.

In July 2023, the High Court ruled Kent County Council (KCC) must take "every possible step" to increase its capacity to accommodate and look after all UAS Children arriving in Kent. Since the ruling, over 2000 UAS Children were referred to KCC. KCC and Home Office data indicates referrals of UAS Children into KCC's care will escalate significantly going forward so we must expand our accommodation and services at pace.

Kent currently has an agreement under the National Transfer Scheme that a maximum of 0.1% of the 0–18-year-old population in Kent are cared for by the Local Authority with any additional UAS Children being temporarily accommodated before being transferred to another Local Authority. The forecast demand that is included within this update incorporates all cohorts except for UAS Children who are transferred under the NTS.

The NTS must ensure timely and fair distribution of UAS Children across the UK and is key to KCC having sufficient accommodation for newly arriving children. The mandated timescale for transfers to complete is 10 working days, however this does not consistently happen.

The Reception and Safe Care Centres provide temporary homes for newly arriving UAS Children before they move to more permanent homes across the UK. They are welcoming and safe places where children are supported by empathetic and skilled staff to begin to recover and resettle across the UK.

Following the judgement in 2023, it was unclear to the Council what the impact would be in relation to numbers of UAS Children arriving in Kent and whether the existing accommodation provision would be adequate. However, in 2024, it is now clear to the Council what capacity is required to meet demand. KCC receive incentivised funding from the Home Office to support KCCs ability to meet the demand. KCC will continue to work with the Home Office to ensure sufficient accommodation, going forward, to achieve capacity.

Whilst KCC used Reception Centres as initial accommodation and support for UAS Children since 2008, existing provision is not sufficient to provide placements for all UAS Children who arrive to

Kent. The UAS Children's Service is using this experience to expand its estate of Reception and Safe Care Centres.

KCC and Home Office data, for the potential numbers of UAS Children arriving against NTS performance, helped model the number and designation of centres needed. KCC has a scheduled works programme with KCC Infrastructure to bring online eight of its own in-house UAS Children's Residential Homes and Supported Accommodation. The first of these opened in September 2024 and it is anticipated the remaining services will be operational by the end of 2024 and into 2025. If further capacity is required, the Council will procure additional accommodation, in agreement with the Home Office, from the private sector.

The Reception and Safe Care Centres are subject to Ofsted's Supported Accommodation and Children Homes Regulations. The Sufficiency Strategy review in 2025 will detail where the new Reception and Safe Care Services, along with the Children's Home provision, the numbers, and the success of accommodating all UAS Children arriving as part of the NTS transfer.

The registration of these services is key to ensuring KCC meet the demand for 16- and 17-year-old Supported Accommodation placements.

### Fostering and Residential

The Kent and Medway Framework Agreement with Independent Fostering Providers (IFP), together with our in-house fostering provision, provides a complementary relationship which facilitates KCC fulfilling its sufficiency duty. Following a competitive tender process in April 2022, a total of 41 providers passed the tender evaluation process and became part to the Kent and Medway Framework Agreement.

A key aim of the commissioning strategy was to give the Councils flexibility in terms of responding to changes in the market and any emerging needs in our children in care. One of the mechanisms to provide this flexibility was to publish in the original Invitation to Tender the following clause:

"The Council(s) may exercise their flexibility to periodically "open" this flexible framework for providers to submit applications to join. Suppliers need to note that the Council(s) who have complete discretion, may add in new suppliers into the Framework at every second anniversary of the Commencement Date or any other date it may decide."

KCC, upon reaching the two-year anniversary of the Framework in 2024, reopened the contract which resulted in nine new IFA entrants to join the Framework.

The difficulties in finding suitable placements with children with the most complex needs is a significant challenge for KCC and nationally for most Local Authorities. Placement search data shows that there is an extremely limited 'good value' provision for children with multiple complex needs, such as risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE), risk of gang involvement, substance misuse, risk of going missing, neurodiverse needs and those with learning difficulties. Whilst these needs are eventually met through a combination of factors, it can result in very substantial costs because of high market premiums and usage of secure units.

Spending on residential placements for children in care has been increasing since 2022. This is not unique to Kent. The increase has been driven by regulation changes, increasing numbers of Looked after Children, risk and complexity of children's needs, limited availability of suitable foster placements, as well as a higher requirement for expensive secure units and family assessment

centres along with other local authorities placing in Kent in high numbers, usually paying more than KCC.

The current Residential market structure operates on a spot purchasing basis due to unpredictable demand and risk or complexity of needs which has resulted in KCC's market power being limited. This is partly due to competition for high quality placements from other local authorities who make placements in Kent. Providers have become more risk averse to accepting complex children due to anecdotal fears of potentially impacting their Ofsted rating. This is also compounded by being able to secure higher prices from other local authorities for less complex children who will not "jeopardise" their Ofsted registration. Most providers in the residential market are private companies with commercial objectives to make money as well as to provide high-quality care in line with their Ofsted regulatory requirements.

KCC is seeking to have a mutual relationship with Kent based residential providers who have indicated they would welcome this approach. Securing the best possible value and outcomes from this expenditure should therefore be a priority for KCC. Effective residential care has the potential to:

- Improve placement stability.
- Reduce missing incidents.
- Improve educational attainment.
- Support transition to adulthood.
- Contribute to the achievement of savings.

There may also be an opportunity to use residential care for younger children experiencing complex issues, to prevent escalation of problems, which could be part of a step-down approach and potentially using as research into impact of earlier intervention approaches - such as family centres.

KCC's figures demonstrate the number of Children in Care decreased by 50 in 2024 from 2023, however, the cost of placements increased due to a number of factors:

- Declining number of Foster Carers.
- Children having to remain in residential children's homes even though their support and care needs do not require this.
- Reliance on spot purchased placements.

This shows a shift in the type of placements used. This will be addressed as part of the following actions identified below in the section Actions and Next Steps 2024 - 2025.

There are several inhouse and external Foster Carers who provide care to UAS Children awaiting transfer on the National Transfer Scheme (NTS), which impacts on Foster Carers available for non-UAS Children. At times, there are a considerable number of carers on hold required to meet demand of potential new arrivals in Kent. This then has an impact on KCC's ability to place local children within 20 miles of their community and increased use of other provisions.



### Kinship Strategy

As KCC progresses with implementing the government's Kinship strategy, the aim is to adapt our current practices to build a children's social care system where more children who cannot live with their parents are supported to live with people who are known to them and love them. Kinship care will be the first consideration for a child who can no longer live with their parents. By receiving the right support at the right time, kinship carers will be empowered to provide care for children to allow them to thrive.

With the current national challenge in the reduction of the numbers of foster carers, kinship care provides a safe and stable alternative for children to be cared for. By strengthening the kinship support provided, the aim is to encourage more family and friends within the child's network, to put themselves forward as a carer with the confidence they will be provided ongoing support. This will also protect the numbers of our mainstream foster carers to be available to care for children who are unable to live with a kinship carer.

The fostering service was redesigned to include Kinship Assessment and Kinship Support teams. The service was divided into two specific areas, kinship care and mainstream foster care and this went live on 1 April 2024.

KCC continues to have a good reputation and can attract good Foster Carers to its In-house service, however, to meet our Sufficiency Duty there remains a need to search externally with Independent Fostering Agencies for approximately 28% (8% increase from last year) of our fostering placements. By increasing the numbers of children being cared for through kinship arrangements, the aim would be to reduce the need to use the current amount of external placement provision and to reduce the associated financial placement costs.

### Family Hubs, Early Help and Adolescent Early Help Supporting Families

KCC knows that to keep more children safely in their families and prevent escalation, we must provide interventions that create meaningful change and offer support for families. The Family Hub Network reaches beyond KCC's direct delivery and engages partners to ensure wrap around holistic support for family needs including Mental Health, substance misuse and domestic abuse.

KCC's practice framework guides practitioners to provide evidence-based interventions (trauma informed, solutions focussed, restorative, holistic) that aim to build resilience within families and prevent entry into care.

KCC works in partnership with partners to reduce serious youth violence including child sexual exploitation (CSE) and criminal exploitation (CCE). We know nationally 45%<sup>7</sup> of serious violence is committed by those aged 10 to 24 years old (gangs and county lines, knife and weapon crime, robbery, and violence with injury). The Council aims to ensure Kent is an environment where adolescents grow up, with healthy relationships, in a safe place free from adverse situations.

---

<sup>7</sup> Source data – Office of National Statistics year ending March 2020

Kent's preventative delivery mechanism for the Supporting Families programme is predominantly through Early Help (including Adolescent) Units, identifying underlying challenges and working holistically to support the family to create sustainable change.

The programme operates a model with a 'lead worker' supporting the whole family around a single agreed plan and co-ordinating local support services. The core principles of the programme are:

- Whole family working.
- Multi-agency working.
- Intervening earlier.
- Focusing on outcomes and data.

We all recognise financial pressures can have repercussions for families beyond hardship, including impacting on emotional wellbeing, mental health and creating conflict within relationships.

As part of the Supporting Families Programme, we have a team of Supporting Families Employment Advisers (SFEAs), seconded from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), to work alongside our integrated children's workforce. The SFEAs have expert knowledge in out of work benefits and a network of support within DWP to help ensure families are accessing all eligible benefits and are supported to move towards and into work, where appropriate. They can provide specialist input and support where a whole family assessment was undertaken, and support meeting needs around financial stability when these were identified within the family plan.

KCC implemented a Supported Families Outcome Plan for Kent, which provides clarity about which outcomes are measured using hard and soft data, and which apply to adults, children, or the whole family. The plan also sets out the sources of evidence that should be within the case record to demonstrate the positive, sustained change achieved for each family against identified outcomes.

By delivering the Supporting Families Programme, and achieving outcomes for children and families, it is anticipated the number of children needing to come into KCCs care will be reduced.

## Data and Forecasts 2024/2025<sup>8</sup>

### Methodology and Assumptions

Kent Analytics carried out demand modelling for 2025 for UAS Children and non-UAS Children to consider recent changes in the accommodation types and how children and young adults are accommodated by the Local Authority. The changes are as listed below:

- Young Persons Supported Accommodation and Floating Support Service (YPSAFS) ended in March 2024.
- Shared Accommodation only accommodates 18+ from November 2023 with no new referrals moving into this service.
- Transitional Accommodation for 18-year-old care leavers went live in November 2023.
- Supported Accommodation Outreach Support Service for 16/17-year-olds went live in November 2023.

---

<sup>8</sup> Source Data: Kent County Councils Analytics Department

- Supported Accommodation On-Site Flexible Support service went live in April 2024. This service replaces the YPSAFS service for 16- and 17-year-olds.

### Methodology - Non-UAS Children and Young Adults

To calculate the demand for accommodation for Non-UASC Children in Care, the number of children in care for each year of age was divided by the total population to calculate a rate per 1,000 population for each year of age. This rate was then applied to the KCC Housing Led Population Forecast in 2025. The breakdown of placement types in at the end of July 2024 for each year of age was then applied to the total number of forecast children in care for 2025 to arrive at the number of placements required by type for non-UAS Children in care. However, as outlined above, there had been significant change to the services.

The data does not forecast a change in the levels of deprivation across the county that could potentially impact the number of children coming in care in the long term and it also does not take into account that the population increases per head, will be subject to other factors such as the average length of time a child is in care.

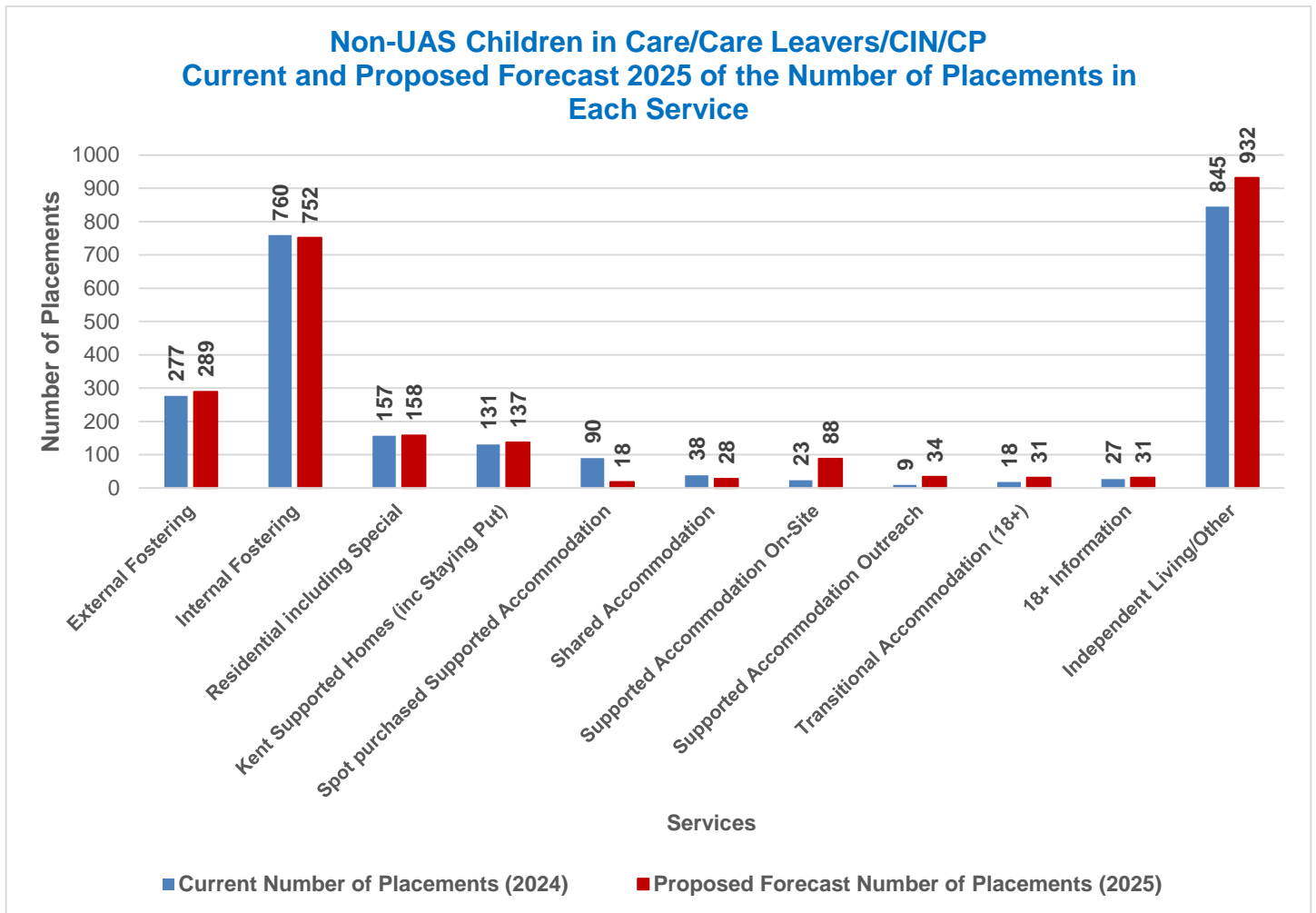
### Assumptions for 2025 - Non-UAS Children and Young Adults

As the new Supported Accommodation services were in a transitional period with regards to the new accommodation types becoming available and being used, there was a requirement to make some assumptions about the demand for the new services based on the previous update of different accommodation types.

The following assumptions were made to forecast the demand for each placement type in 2025 for non-UAS Children in Care:

- The majority of 16- and 17-year-olds who would have previously been accommodated in spot purchased Supported Accommodation (formerly known Semi-Independent) settings will be in Supported Accommodation On-Site Flexible Support services.
- 16- and 17-year-olds who would have previously been accommodated in Shared Accommodation will be in Supported Accommodation Outreach Support Service.
- 18-year-olds who previously would have been accommodated in Shared Accommodation will be in Transitional Accommodation for Care Leavers.
- Young adults currently in Shared Accommodation will age out of the accommodation with no new young adults receiving this service.
- 24 Children in Need have been added to the demand for Support Accommodation Outreach Support Service based on a forecast from the number of referrals and placements made that have been received since 1 March 2024 from the Adolescent service.
- It is assumed that the proportion of children and young people in Independent Fostering will continue to increase between 2024 and 2025 as between 2023 and 2024. The rate of non-UAS Children is forecast to be 27.9% compared to 26.7% in July 2024.
- 16- & 17-year-olds who would have previously been accommodated in Spot Purchased Supported Accommodation placements will be placed in Supported Accommodation – On-Site Flexible Support services need until the overall capacity is reached (including UAS Children). At that point Spot Purchased Supported Accommodation placements will be utilised.

The graph below shows the breakdown of forecast placement types for 2025 for non-UAS Children and young adults against the current placements for 2024:



It is anticipated spot purchased Supported Accommodation will decrease once KCC is able to use the newly commissioned services to their full potential allowing children aged 16/17 to transition into the appropriate new Supported Accommodation setting depending on their level of need. It is recognised that KCC will still need to place children in a spot purchased Supported Accommodation service, however, this will be in exceptional circumstances.

No additional referrals are being made to the Shared Accommodation service so it is anticipated young adults will be moving on from this service in a planned way over a two-year period, reflecting a decrease from 2024 to 2025. This will also result in an increase in the Independent Living/Other category.

The new Supported Accommodation On-Site Flexible Support service is currently not at full capacity. KCC need to ensure this service will be used at full capacity to make certain children whose needs might be flexible are receiving the level of support required to meet Ofsted Regulations or adjust the contract accordingly to meet demand.

### Methodology - UAS Children and Asylum Care Leavers

KCC currently has an agreement under the National Transfer Scheme that a maximum of 0.1% (346), of the 0–17-year-old population in Kent, are UAS Children and are cared for by the Local Authority with any additional UAS Children temporarily accommodated before being transferred to another Local Authority via the National Transfer Scheme (NTS). This forecast assumes there will be a maximum of 346 UAS Children in care aged 0-17 in 2025.

As with the forecast for non-UAS Children, the total number of UAS Children is then distributed to accommodation types based on July 2024 data.

This model does not consider the potential impact of the Illegal Migration Act 2023 however if it were, it would be expected to see a decrease in asylum Care Leavers if applications for status are expedited under the proposed changes of the new government.

The current number of UAS Children, who will come into KCC's care and not transfer under the NTS will be accommodated in Supported Accommodation (formerly known as semi-independent) for an eight-week period as part of their transition into the community, or will be accommodated in the expanding Reception and Safe Care Service, depending on capacity. The data reflects a proportion of this cohort under this accommodation type. Following the eight-week period this cohort will transition into Supported Accommodation Outreach Support Service.

The forecast figures for UAS Children do not include the cohort of children that fall under the NTS.

### Assumptions for 2025 - UAS Children and Asylum Care Leavers

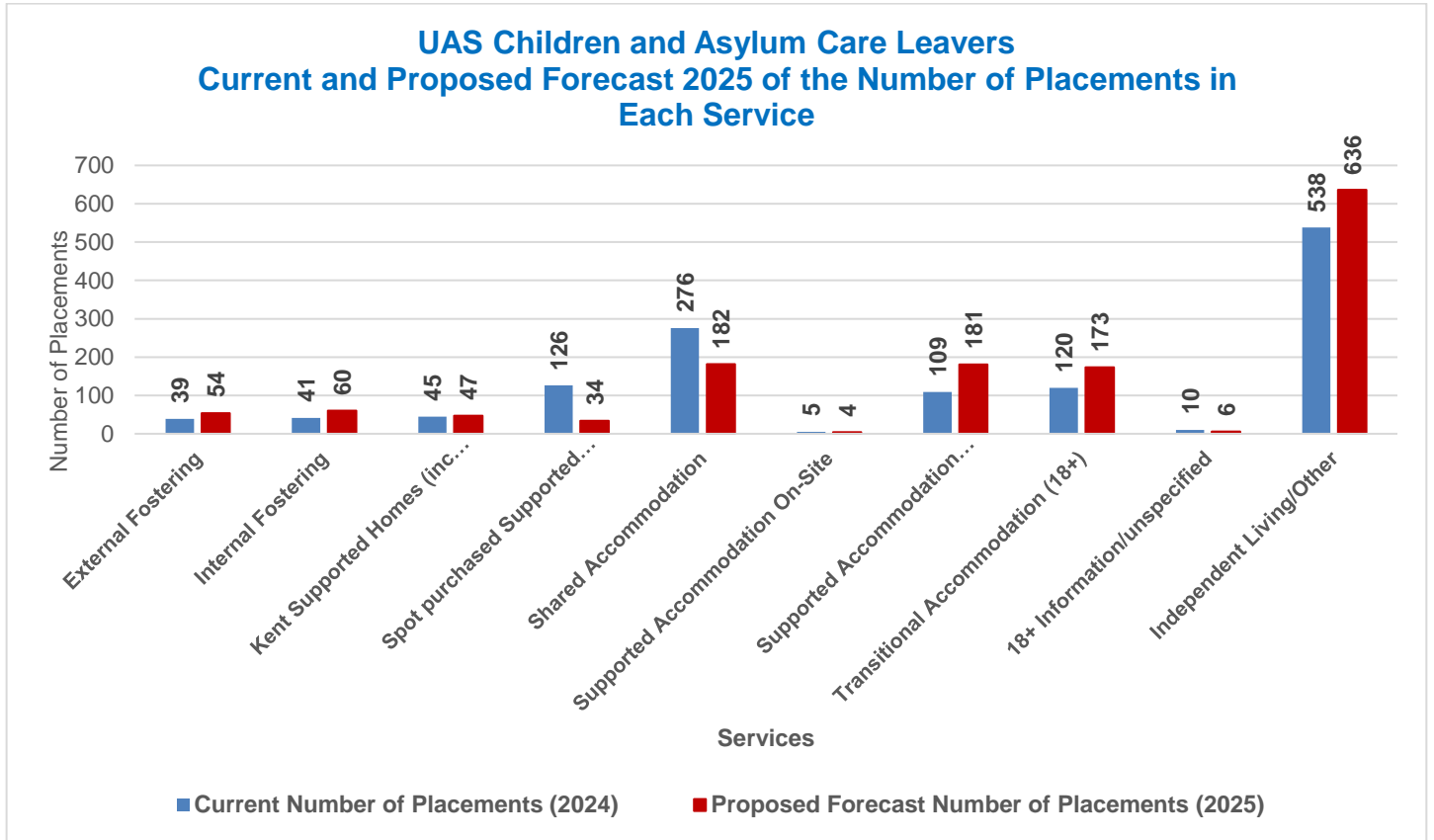
To take account of the new accommodation services that have been made available over the last few months, the following assumptions were made in the forecast:

- 18-year-old Asylum Care Leavers who would have entered Shared Accommodation previously will be accommodated in Transitional Accommodation for 18-year-old Care Leavers.
- 16- and 17-year-old UAS Children who would have previously been accommodated in spot purchased Supported Accommodation (formerly known as Semi-Independent accommodation) or Shared Housing will be in Supported Accommodation Outreach Support Service.
- 12.4% of 19+ year old Asylum Care Leavers will not have their status confirmed so will be accommodated in Transitional Accommodation for 18-year-old care leavers.
- No new UAS Children will enter Shared Accommodation. Young adults who are currently aged 18,19 and 20 who are currently in Shared Accommodation will continue in this placement in 2025. Those aged 21+ in Shared Accommodation will be moved into alternative non-KCC funded independent accommodation between now and July 2025.
- Spot purchased Supported Accommodation placements refer to week periods that UAS Children are placed before moving into other accommodation types, principally Support Accommodation Outreach Support Service.
- UAS Children on the NTS were not included in the data. Newly arrived children that are identified as transitioning to a Children in Care team, to be looked after by KCC, will be placed in a spot purchased Supported Accommodation setting (formerly known as Semi-Independent) to support them to transition to a new culture, which includes an eight-week programme to prepare them to move into the community. All female new arrivals will also be placed in spot purchased Supported Accommodation setting; should any of the female new arrivals be identified as children transitioning to a Children in Care team, then following the eight-week programme they will transition to Supported Accommodation Outreach Support Service, based on the provider securing Ofsted Registration. All other female new arrivals will be subject to the National Transfer Scheme.
- All other new arrivals will be placed in the Reception and Safe Care Centres to transition on the NTS.
- Whilst the plan for 16/17-year-olds with low support needs would be accommodated in the Supported Accommodation Outreach Support Service, due to the provider not being registered to date, there has been a significant increase in the use of spot purchased Supported Accommodation. However, it is anticipated that as soon as the provider is registered, all children



in spot purchased Supported Accommodation will transition to the Supported Accommodation Outreach Support Service so by 2025 the number of placements in spot purchased will be significantly reduced.

The graph below shows the breakdown of forecast placement types for 2025 for UAS Children against the current placements for 2024:



No additional referrals are being made to the Shared Accommodation service so it is anticipated that young adults will be moving on from this service in a planned way over a two-year period, reflecting a decrease from 2024 to 2025. This will also result in an increase in the Independent Living/Other category.

## 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:



How?	
Statutory Obligations	We must fulfil our statutory obligations to Children in Care, Children in Need and Care Leavers to ensure our children and young adults live in safe accommodation with care and support.
Service Improvement	<p>Make sure we always deliver the best value for money, and we can support providers in developing innovation in services to meet the needs of our children and young adults.</p> <p>We need to include social value in our contracts along with enabling providers to think 'green' and reducing their carbon footprint for investment.</p> <p>We need to support providers to focus on community integration, making best use of the services available locally such as youth provision etc.</p>
Manage risk effectively	Management of demand and the increasingly complex needs of our children through allocation into the appropriate schemes, supported with a robust safeguarding approach.
Manage the budget	Deliver best value and maximise resources to improve outcomes for children and young adults, in line with Kent County Council's vision.

Improve outcomes	The main outcome of our services is to ensure children and young adults can live independently by achieving self-supporting independence when they reach adulthood.
Listen, learn, act	Make sure opportunities are explored to enable children and young adults to make their voices heard.

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



### Actions and Next Steps 2024 - 2025

**There are a number of actions and next steps to be taken over the next 12 months:**

1. To work with an external organisation to help collectively co-design and support transformation by attempting to control children's placement costs.
2. Explore gaps in Kent provision to include secure, parent and child and solo placements making sure commissioning gaps are reported back through appropriate channels.

3. Children are placed in a Residential Children's Home when complexities are at their highest and other services have failed. Foster placement breakdown accounts for the highest frequency of event, leading to placement in a residential home. Work to be undertaken to identify and work with Fostering and practitioners to better understand the reasons for placement breakdown at an earlier stage.
4. Support the analysis of developing KCC's own provision of residential care and/or better relationships with the market to work with us through block contracting or other route to see KCC as both a provider and commissioner of residential care.
5. Work with the Commercial and Procurement Division in developing strategies for understanding costs, particularly for annual price reviews to understand where costs are changing (increasing and decreasing).
6. Following a failed procurement of registered provision for Children with Complex Lives in 2023, develop opportunities to increase access to local provision for our most complex children.
7. Demand for placements is increasing and therefore we must manage placement matching well, buying services from providers that can expand in capacity and deliver value for money and good outcomes.
8. Spot Purchased Supported Accommodation is being used to place more children 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 was welcomed, however, Commissioning need to continue to work with providers to achieve registration.
9. Overall, providers worked with KCC to deliver services and accept greater risk, which is above what we initially said we would purchase. Good effective relationships were developed which allows open and transparent conversations about services and an understanding of the challenges faced. These relationships need to continue to develop to provide services and better outcomes for children and young adults.
10. Continue to seek the voice of the child in relation to services being delivered to ensure continuous improvement of services.
11. Progress the Total Placement Service (TPS) and Commissioning Planned Activities as detailed in the update above.
12. Actively contribute to the development of the pilot Regional Care Cooperative for the South East and seek out opportunities for collaborative contracting with other local authorities.
13. Seek opportunities to support TPS in understanding placement costs and achieving value for money.
14. Work with others to develop processes to understand service delivery including quality provision and good outcomes for children and young people.
15. Work with the Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board to ensure children's needs are being met and funded appropriately.

16. Develop pricing schedules for spot purchased activity with greater transparency and identify costs that could be reduced when more children are placed.
17. Strengthen family networks and the ability for families to support themselves, actively involving families in preventing a child entering care and in the permanency planning for children from the point a child is identified as being at risk of coming into care. This will be achieved through the increase of Family Group Conferencing skills and resources.
18. Improve wrap around support for our adolescent children - for those going missing and subject to exploitation to keep them in their communities, helping families to cope.
19. To continue efforts on early intervention programmes, to ensure only children that need care enter care.
20. Support selected providers of semi-independent/supported accommodation to develop a scheme to become registered.
21. Continue to access appropriate joint funding from the NHS for Children and Young People with complex needs.



## Appendix 1 – Accommodation Profile

These are the different home environments available to our children and young adults, 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 were born to them.

#### Recruitment of Adopters and Eligibility

We aim to 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.

Our aim is to recruit and approve the right people who can meet the often-complex needs of our children who have a plan for adoption. We aim to ensure we have enough adopters for the 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. To ensure there is a sufficient pool of adopters in the region, adoption forecasts the number of adopters needed each financial year. This is done 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 priority is to recruit families able to parent sibling groups, children with complex needs or disabilities, older children, children from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic groups and Early Permanence carers. In cases when sibling groups cannot be adopted by one family due to the children's individual needs, we seek adoptive families committed to maintain contact between the children on a regular basis. This requires careful matching of adopters for the whole sibling group.

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.

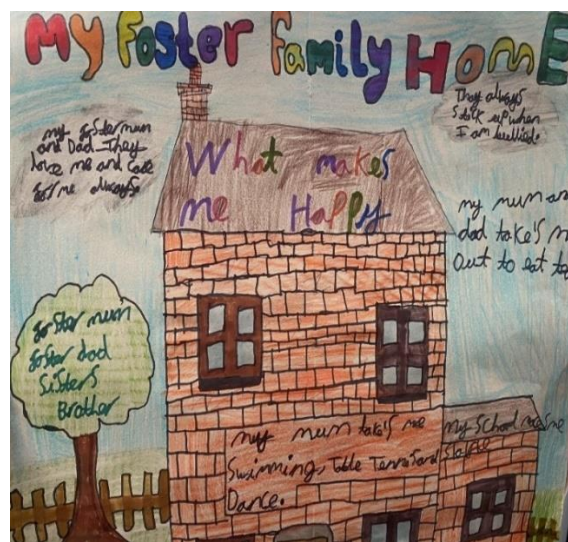
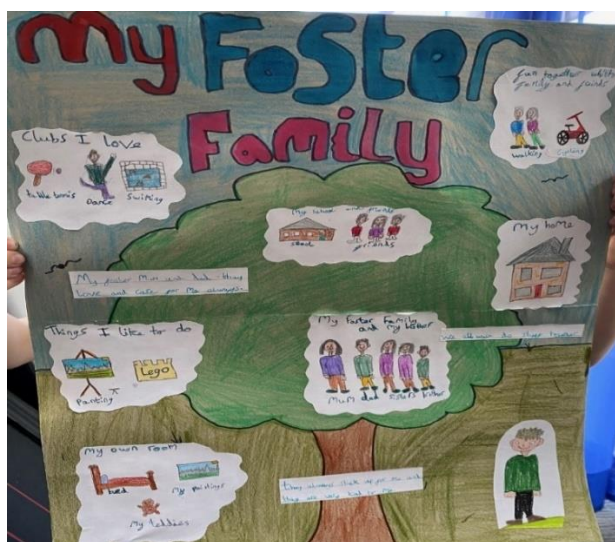
#### Arrangement

Adoption Partnership *Southeast* (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. Adoption Partnership *Southeast* 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 adults a home whilst 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. It's 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 and children.

### Eligibility

Fostering services are available to children and young people aged 0-18. This will include Parent and Child arrangements where the parent can be either under or over 18. Foster carers also provide "Staying Put" arrangements for young adults from the age of 18 years. These are not fostering arrangements and are there so that young adults can continue to receive the support they need from their carers through to full independence. Kent has a range of fostering families who offer homes to siblings, adolescents, children stepping down from residential care and those children needing an emergency placement, a permanent family home, a short break particularly for disabled children and respite care.

### Arrangement

Kent has an in-house service where we directly recruit foster carers, and commission Independent Fostering Agencies who manage the recruitment of their own 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.

## Staying Put



### Description

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

### Eligibility

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

### Arrangement

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

## Kent Supported Homes (Supported Lodgings)



### Description

Kent Supported Homes is a form of time limited supported accommodation for older children in care and care leavers who are not yet ready to live independently for a variety of reasons. Children and young adults living in this service will have their own bedroom in a family home. The child/young

adult 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 children/young adults aged 16-21, and up to 25 if in further education.

### **Arrangement**

In-house recruitment of Hosts.

This service is subject to Ofsted Supported Accommodation Regulations.

## **Residential Children's Homes**



### **Description**

Residential Children's Homes 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 aged under 18. Kent also makes a small number of residential Parent and Child arrangements.

### **Arrangement**

Spot Purchased.

These services are regulated by Ofsted and sometimes CQC.

## **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 adults until they reach their early 20's.

### **Eligibility**

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

### **Arrangement**

This service is subject to Ofsted regulation.

## **Supported Accommodation (previously known as Semi-Independent)**



*“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 child.*

### **Description**

This is a house where several children 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 children have and provide life and independent skills support.

### **Eligibility**

This service is available to children in care aged 16 and 17.

### **Arrangement**

Spot Purchased.

This service is subject to Ofsted Supported Accommodation Regulations.

## Supported Accommodation On-Site Flexible Support Service for 16- and 17-year-old Children in Care

(previously known as Young Persons Supported Accommodation and Floating Support Service which ended on 31 March 2024)



*'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 children.

### Description

This service provides an accommodation and support package with flexible hours of support per week with a support worker being on site to support and guide children. Support is tailored to each individual child to support them to gain independent living skills, as outlined under the new Ofsted Regulations for Supported Accommodation. In Kent there is a range of housing with support, so accommodation might be in shared houses or single flats. Accommodation is available in Dartford, Swale, Canterbury, Folkestone, Hythe, and Tunbridge Wells.

### Eligibility

Supported Accommodation On-Site Flexible Support Service is available to children in care aged 16 and 17. This service also has four emergency beds (extra available if needed) for children in care and children in need.

### Arrangement

Contracted until March 2028.

This service is subject to the Supported Accommodation Ofsted Regulations.



## Supported Accommodation Outreach Support Service for 16- & 17-year-old Children in Care and Children in Need



### Description

This service provides an accommodation and support package of five hours per week being delivered by outreach support workers. Support is tailored to each individual child to support them to gain independent living skills, as outlined under the new Ofsted Regulations for Supported Accommodation. This accommodation is typically four bedroom shared residential properties, Countywide.

### Eligibility

Supported Accommodation Outreach Support Service is available to children in care aged 16 and 17, 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 November 2028.

This service is subject to the Supported Accommodation Ofsted Regulations.

## Transitional Accommodation for 18-year-old Care Leavers



## Description

This service provides accommodation only, as a stepping stone to care leavers identifying and sourcing their own independent accommodation. This accommodation is typically four bedroom shared residential properties, Countywide.

## Eligibility

18-year-old care leavers (over 19-year-olds with no immigration status).

## Arrangement

Contracted until November 2028.

## Shared Accommodation

**This service accommodates 18+ Care Leavers subject to a previous contract for a period for them to move on.**



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

## Description/Purpose

Shared Accommodation is an accommodation only model with no support. This is for young adults with independent living skills.

## Eligibility

This service is only available to young adults aged between 18 and 21 that were accommodated in Shared Accommodation prior to the 13 November 2023. **No new referrals are being accepted into this service.**

## Arrangement

Contracted until March 2026.

## Reception Centre and Safe Care Services

### Description

The Service's Reception and Safe Care Centres provide temporary homes for newly arriving UAS Children before they move to more permanent homes across the UK under the National Transfer Scheme. They are welcoming and safe places where children are supported by empathetic and skilled staff to begin to recover and resettle across the UK.

The Reception Centre provides accommodation and support for male Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking (UAS) Children entering Kent aged 16-18. UAS Children, who are under the age of 16 years, female, or those where there are concerns for their immediate safety and wellbeing, are currently placed in Foster Care. However, by the end of 2024, these UAS Children under 16 could also be accommodated in the new Children's Homes that KCC are currently bringing on-line as part of the Reception Centre estate.

### Arrangement

The Reception Centre and Safe Care Services have been developed, following the High Court Judgment, which consist of Supported Accommodation and Children's Homes settings with support staff on-site.

This service is subject to the Supported Accommodation Ofsted Regulations and Children's Homes Regulations.

## 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, neurodiversity, physical disability, physical ill health, substance misuse and mental health needs.

### Arrangement

Framework contract. These services are CQC Registered.

## 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 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



**In-House Short Breaks Data for 2023-2024**

	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	348	556	576	561	531	2572
Number of young people accessing the scheme	27	72	52	49	69	269
Number of young people on a waiting list for the scheme	14	12	8	6	25	65

The number of admissions to the scheme has increased from 2021-2022 to 2023-2024 by 306. There are contributing factors as to why KCC have seen an increase on admissions and number of children accessing the service.

In 2021-2022 KCC was still seeing the effect of Covid, and as a service did not operate to the full dependency/capacity for part of that year. Also, many parents made the choice to suspend sending their children in for short breaks at this time - this would have impacted the admissions and the number of children accessing services.

The 2023-2024 data reflects that the services were back to operating at full capacity/dependency as the Statement of Purpose allows for unplanned admissions. During this time, the service accepted an unprecedented number of emergency placements across the short break units. This meant that the units often have to cancel and reschedule stays which resulted in often shorter more frequent stays to ensure the allocation of nights were met.

In general, KCC has also seen an increase in the number of referrals into the service which means our waiting lists are longer. Where there are longer waiting lists, it would be expected to see more admissions, as the service introduces the children, they have shorter more frequent breaks until they are settled and comfortable staying longer.

**Shared Lives (18+ only)**



## **Description**

If a young adult has eligible care and support under the Care Act, then Shared Lives is a possibility, either with the current Carers if they apply to be assessed for Shared Lives or with an alternative Carer.

## **Eligibility**

A referral can be made via Mosaic, or a link sent from the service. A referral to an Adult Social Care and Health team is required with an up-to-date Care and Support plan.

## **Arrangement**

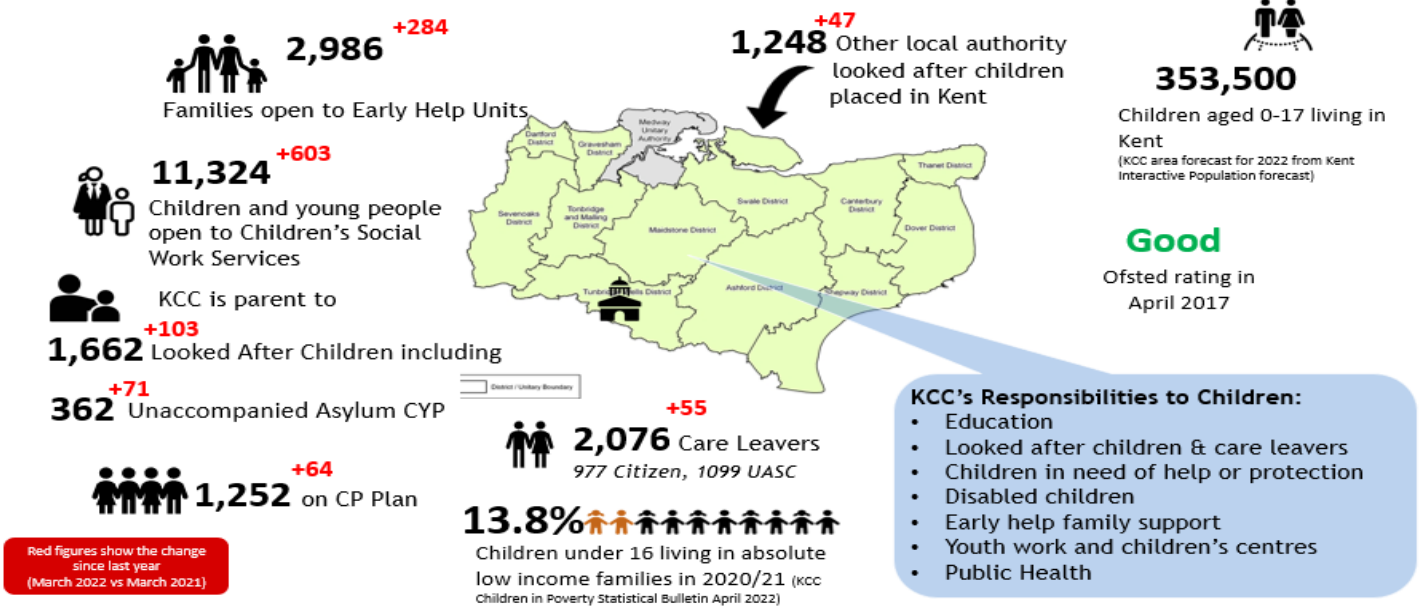
Shared Lives is an in-house provider service.

This service is subject to CQC Regulation if personal care is offered.



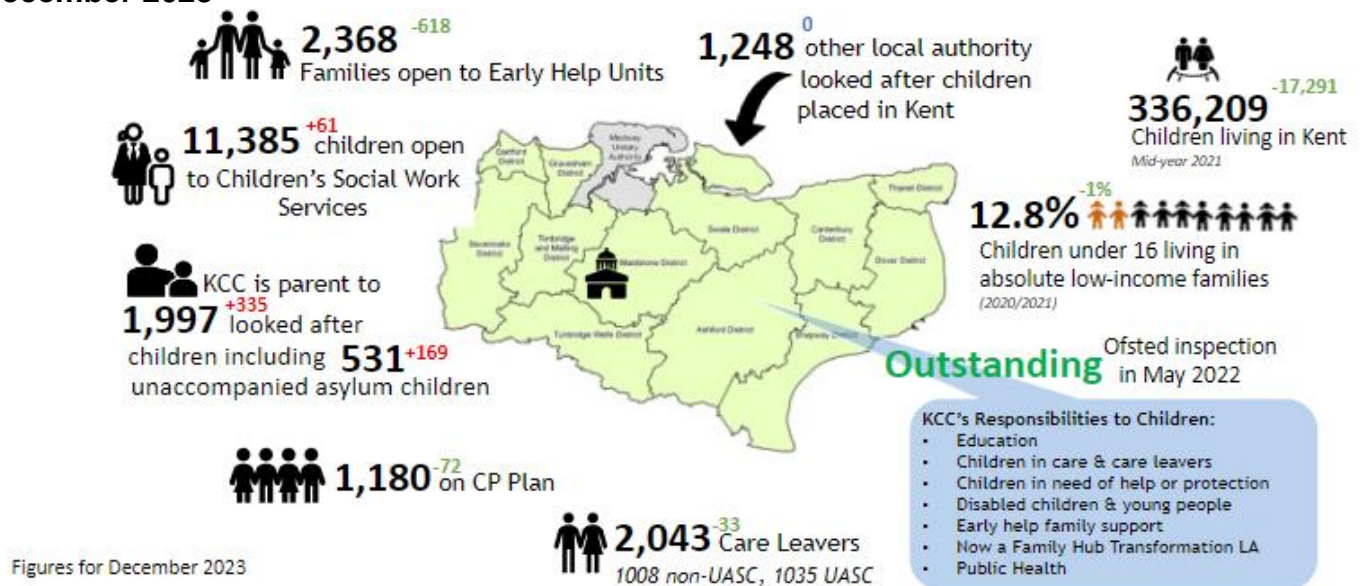
## Appendix 2 - Needs Assessment Key Information

March 2022



9

## December 2023



10

The number of families open to Early help Units has decreased quite significantly and the number of looked after children including Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children has increased significantly from 2022 to 2023. There has been a 1% decrease in children under 16 living in low-income families and a significant decrease in the number of children living in Kent (based on KCC area forecast from Kent interactive Population Forecast).

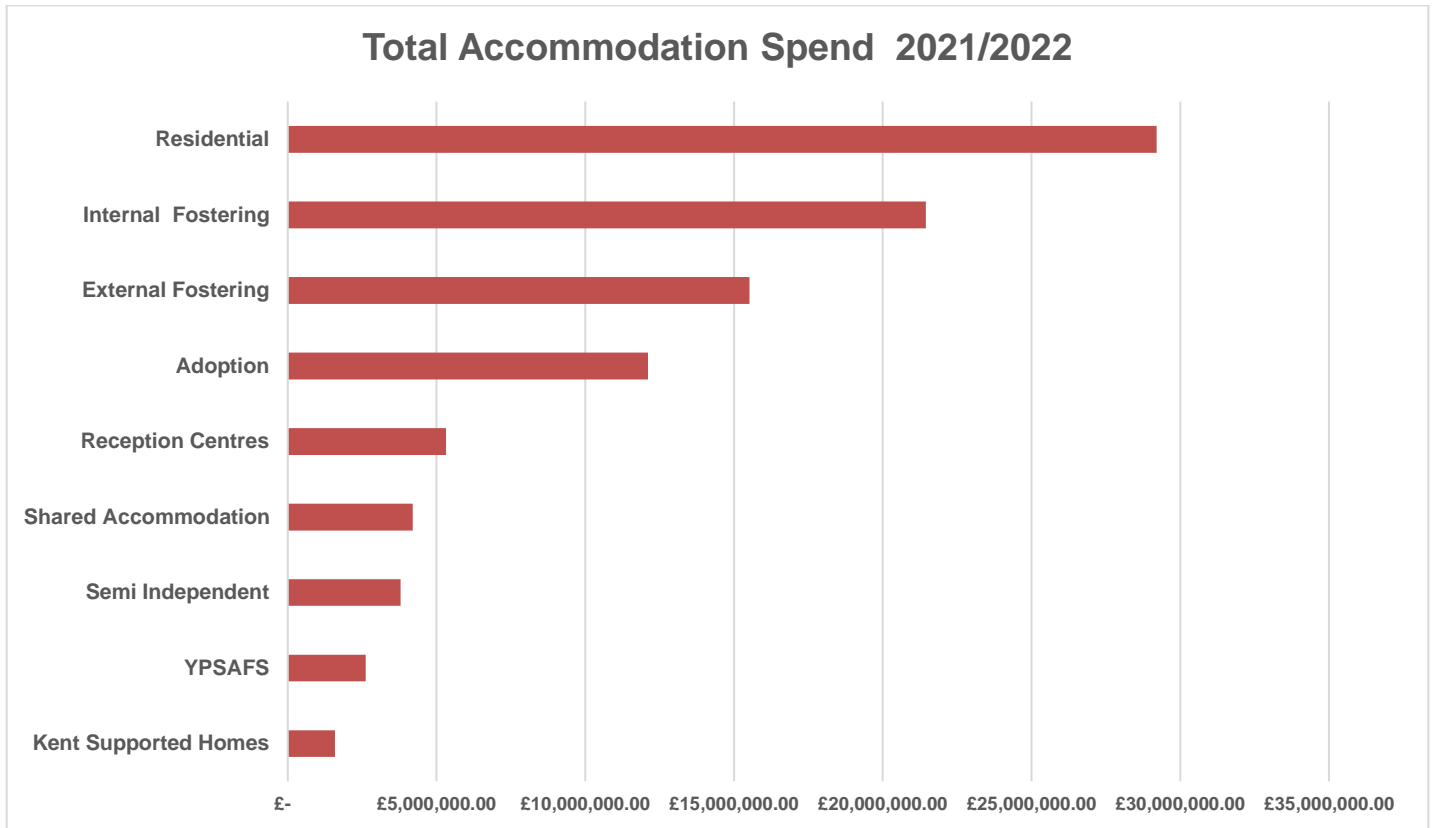
<sup>9</sup> Source data: Kent County Councils CYPE Management Information & Intelligence Department

<sup>10</sup> Source data: Kent County Councils CYPE Management Information & Intelligence Department

**Appendix 3 - Accommodation Spend 2021/2022, 2022/2023 and 2023/2024**

**Accommodation Spend 2021/2022**

Children in Care, Care Leavers, and vulnerable children aged 0-25 total accommodation spend in 2021/2022 was £96m. The breakdown summarised below shows that fostering is the highest spend area at £37m, split £16m on external fostering and £21m on internal fostering, followed by Residential settings at £29m.<sup>11</sup>



<sup>11</sup> Source Data – Kent County Councils Revenue Finance Department May 2022

### Accommodation Spend 2022/2023

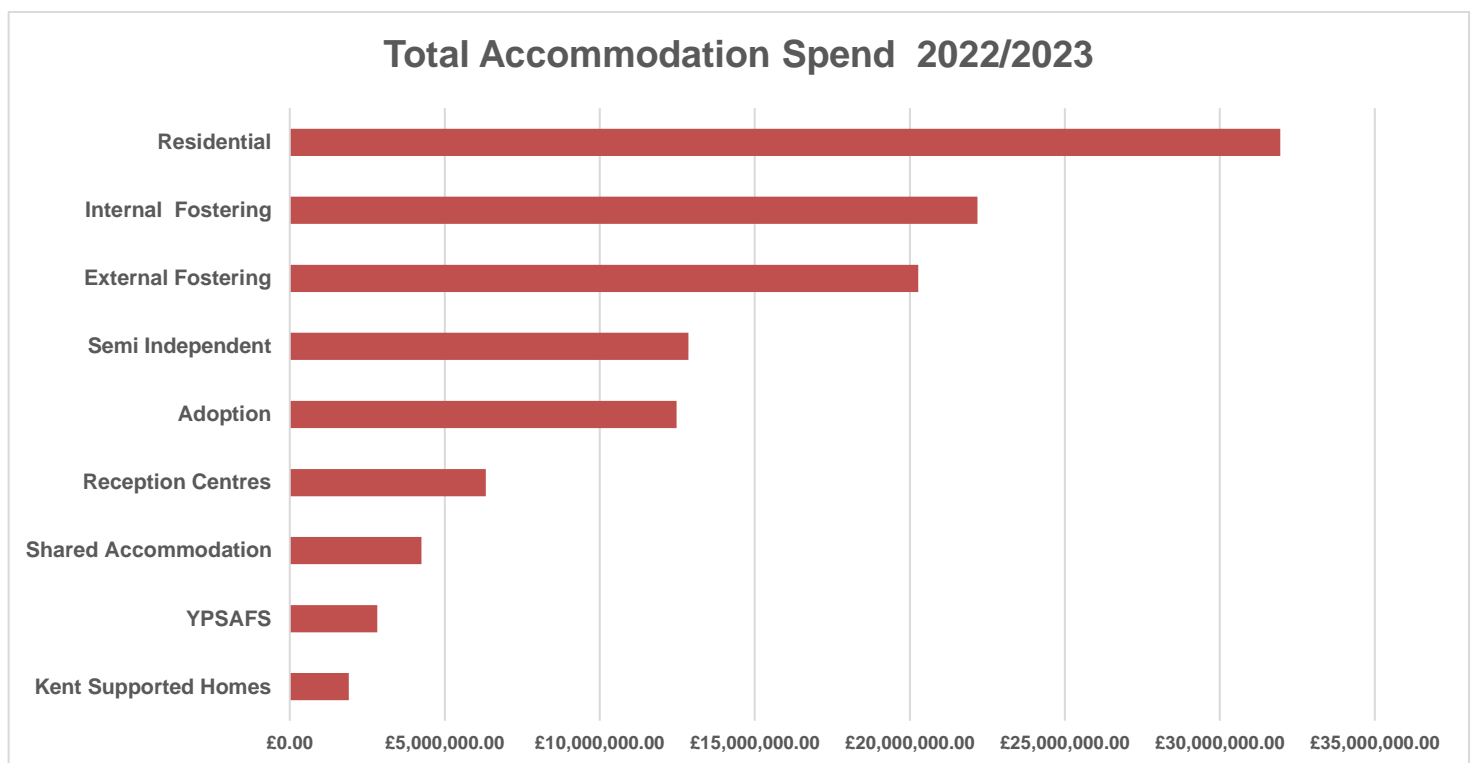
Children in Care, Care Leavers, and vulnerable children aged 0-25 total accommodation spend in 2022/2023 was over £ £115m, this is an increase of £19m compared to 2021/2022 spend.<sup>12</sup>

The breakdown summarised below shows that fostering is the highest spend area at £42m, split £20m on external fostering and £22m on internal fostering (£5m increase from 2021/2022), followed by Residential settings at £32m.

Spot purchased Supported Accommodation (formerly known as semi-independent) has increased by £9m compared to 2021/2022 spend. This driver of this increase is due to the inclusion of unregistered placement costs in this provision.

There has been a 20% increase in the total accommodation spend from 2021/2022 to 2022/2023. The total number of placements that were open between 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, compared to the total number of placements open between 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, has increased by 12%.<sup>13</sup>

This evidences that there is an 8% difference in placement costs against demand for placements, reflecting that costs have outpaced placement demand, resulting in a higher placement cost spend.



<sup>12</sup> Source Data – Kent County Councils Revenue Finance Department September 2024

<sup>13</sup> Source Data – Kent County Councils Children’s Commissioning Placements Data PowerBi Report– September 2024

### Accommodation Spend 2023/2024

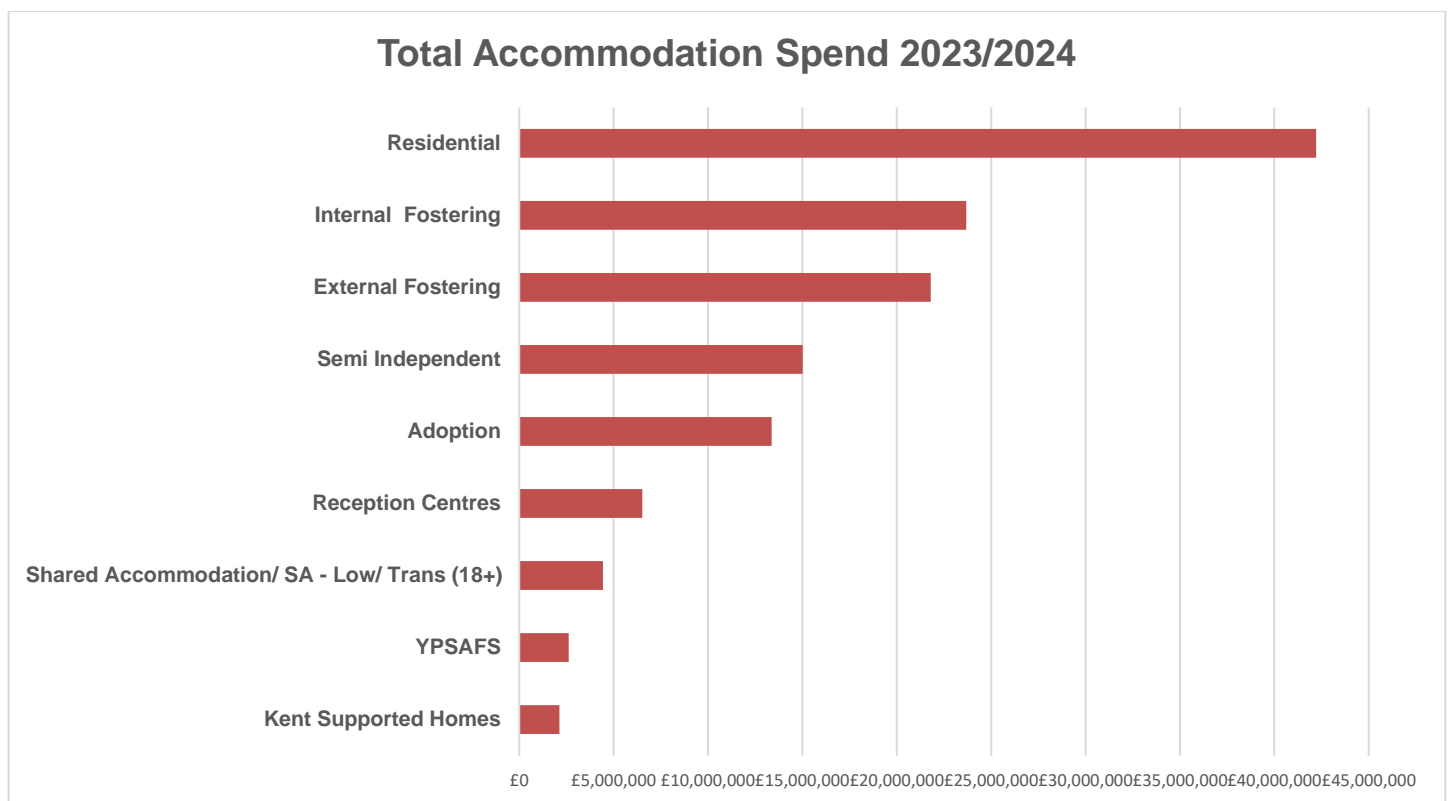
Children in Care, Care Leavers, and vulnerable children aged 0-25 total accommodation spend in 2023/2024 was over £132m, this is an increase of £17m compared to 2022/2023 spend.<sup>14</sup>

The breakdown summarised below shows that fostering is the highest spend area at £45m split £22m on external fostering and £24m on internal fostering, followed by Residential settings at £42m.

Spot purchased Supported Accommodation (formerly known as semi-independent) has increased by £2m compared to 2022/2023 spend. This driver of this increase is due to the inclusion of unregistered placement costs in this provision and an increase in placements being made.

There has been a 15% increase in the total accommodation spend from 2022/2023 to 2023/2024. The total number of placements open between 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, compared to the total number of placements open between 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, has increased by 6%<sup>15</sup>.

This evidences that there is a 9% difference in placement costs against demand for placements, reflecting that costs have continued to outpace placement demand, resulting in a higher placement cost spend.



<sup>14</sup> Source Data – Kent County Councils Revenue Finance Department September 2024 (please note the Shared Accommodation spend category also covers the new Supported Accommodation Outreach Support Service and the new Transitional Accommodation for 18-year-olds care leavers from 13 November 2023 due to the system limitations)

<sup>15</sup> Source Data – Kent County Councils Children’s Commissioning Placements Data PowerBi Report– September 2024

## Appendix 4 - Care Leavers Survey Extract of Results - October 2021 and January 2024

### October 2021

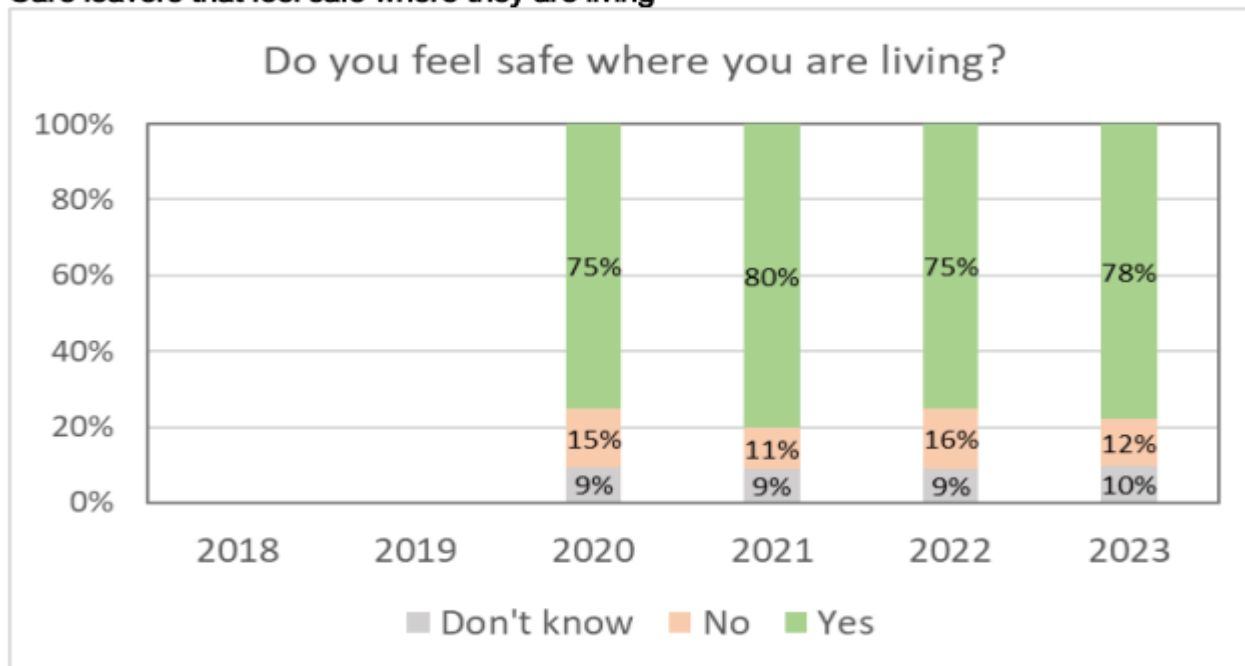
In October 2021, a Care Leavers Survey was conducted where they were asked how satisfied they were with their current home in 2021 compared with 2018, 2019 and 2020. There are no statistically significant changes between 2020 and 2021 in how the young adults scored their current home. However, for all respondents there has been a significant positive change in score between 2018 and 2021, from 3.3 to 3.7.

Care Leavers were also asked to score their current home (one-five stars). A proportion of Care Leavers rated their current accommodation positively scoring four or five stars. Respondents who live with Foster Carers ('Staying Put') were significantly more likely to rate their home four or five stars (86.5%) compared to those living with family/friends (62.0%), shared accommodation (57.0%), supported lodgings (Kent Supported Homes) (54.2%) and "Other (47.9%)." Those living independently were significantly more likely to rate their home four or five stars (67.3%) compared to those who selected 'Other.'

### January 2024<sup>16</sup>

The chart below shows the proportion of Care Leavers that feel safe where they are living. 78% said that they feel safe, marginally higher (+3ppt) than in 2022. The percentage of 'Yes' answers appear to have fluctuated around this level since 2020. The proportion of respondents that answered 'No' in 2023 was 12%, -4ppt lower than 2022 (16%). The 'No' percentage also appears to have fluctuated around this level since 2020.

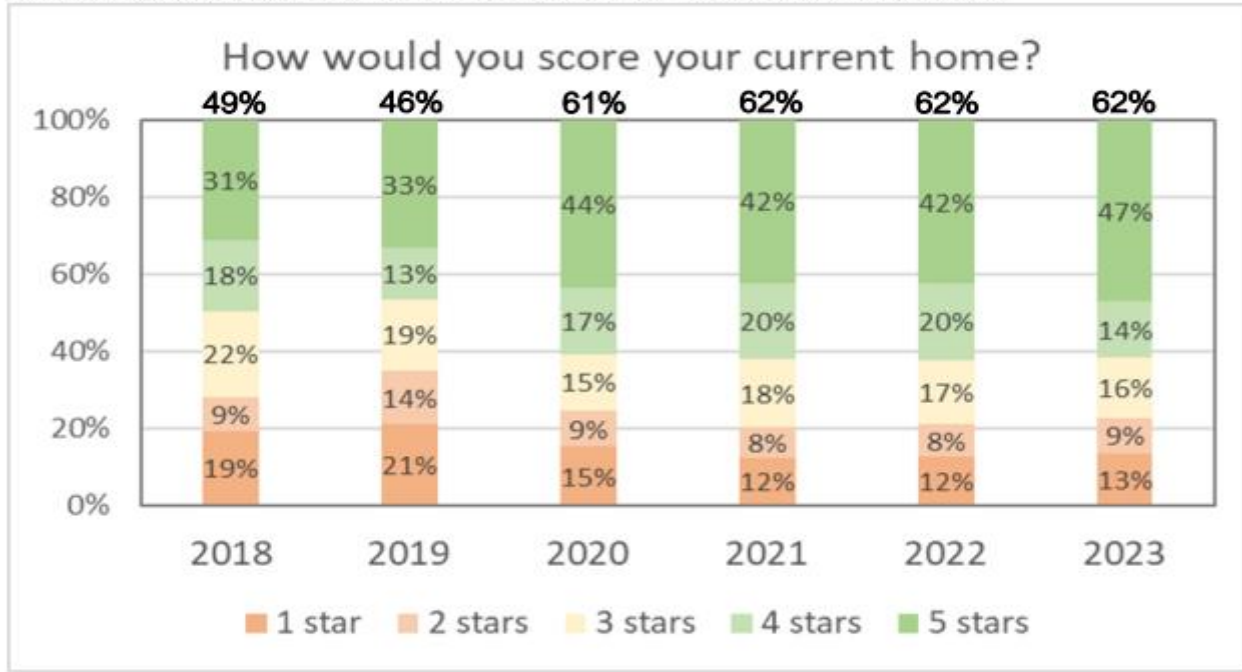
Care leavers that feel safe where they are living



<sup>16</sup> Source data – KCC Analytics - Care leavers Survey 2024

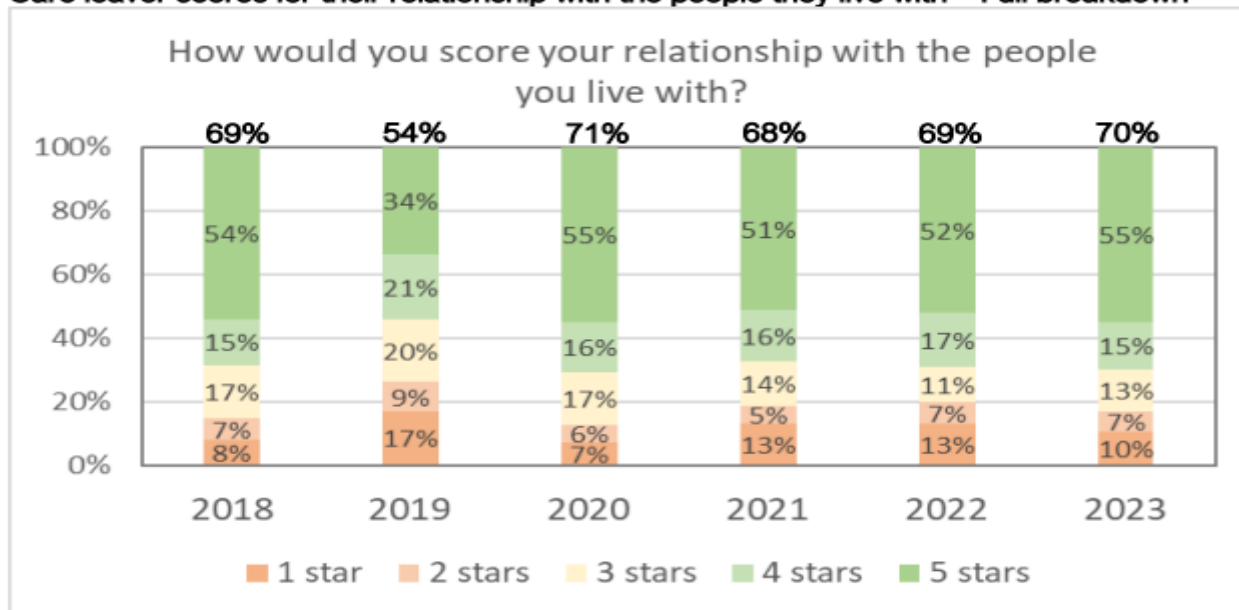
The chart below shows how the full breakdown of how satisfied Care Leavers are with their current home. This shows that 62% of Care Leavers rated their home positively, with 47% giving a five-star rating, +5ppt versus 2022 (not a statistically significant difference, however close to being significant). A further 14% gave a four-star rating and 16% gave a three-star rating. 22% of respondents rated their home negatively, with 13% giving a one-star rating and 9% giving a two-star rating.

Care leaver satisfaction with their current home – Full answer breakdown



The chart below shows the full breakdown of responses to how the Care Leavers score their relationship with the people they live with. 2023 saw 55% of respondent give five stars, a +3ppt increase in five-star ratings versus 2022.

Care leaver scores for their relationship with the people they live with – Full breakdown





Appendix 5 - Children in Care Council Children Engagement – April 2022

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



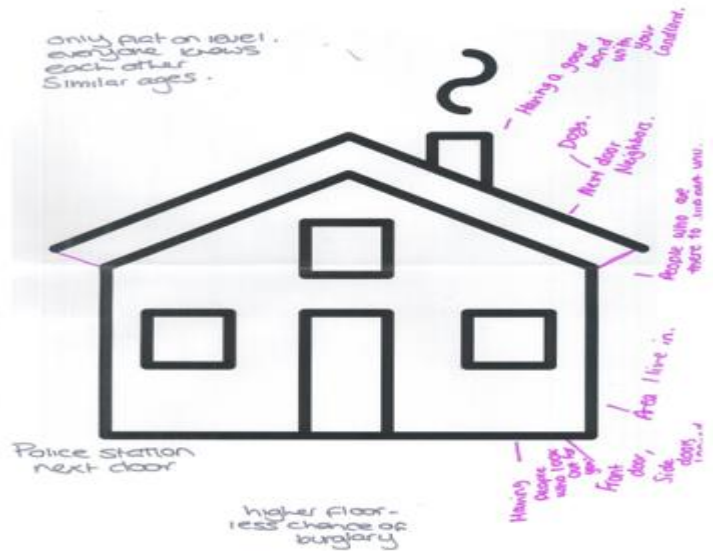
What is the most important thing for you in relation to where you live and your home?



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



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

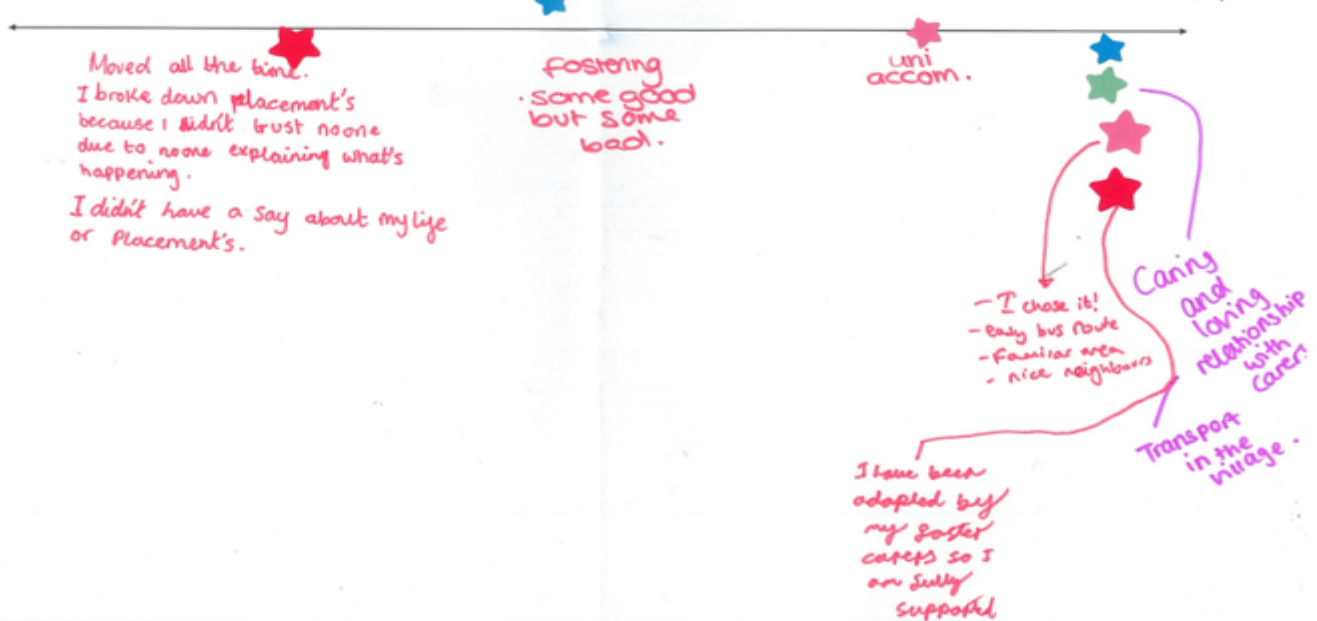
Others suggested locks both externally and internally on bedroom doors. The latter seemed to the group to be inconsistent and didn't always match what young people would prefer themselves.

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?

Didn't meet my needs at all

Met them fully



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 as shown in the image, 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 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.

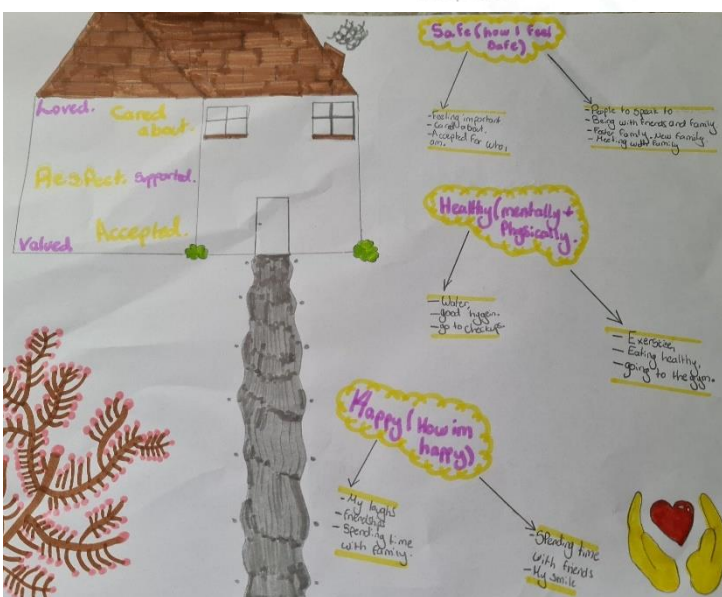
One young person suggested that poor information and support from social workers and the 18+ service can make living on your own more difficult.

When do you think you would be ready to have conversations, with KCCs 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 6 - Drawings submitted by our Children from the Children in Care Council Drawing Competition – ‘What Makes a Home Happy.’



## Appendix 7 - Data and Proposed Forecasts for 2023/2024

### Data and Proposed Forecast 2023/2024

**The following data is in relation to the 2023 update which was not published.**

As part of the review process, we wanted to ascertain if KCC has met the proposed sufficiency over the past 12 months. However, it has been identified that our vision, in relation to sufficiency of accommodation, is based on where we would like to be in 2027. As part of this update, we will now be basing the forecast data year on year to allow us to ascertain if we are meeting our Sufficiency Strategy year on year as we are unable to provide an accurate account of where we are with a five-year aspiration of where we need to be.

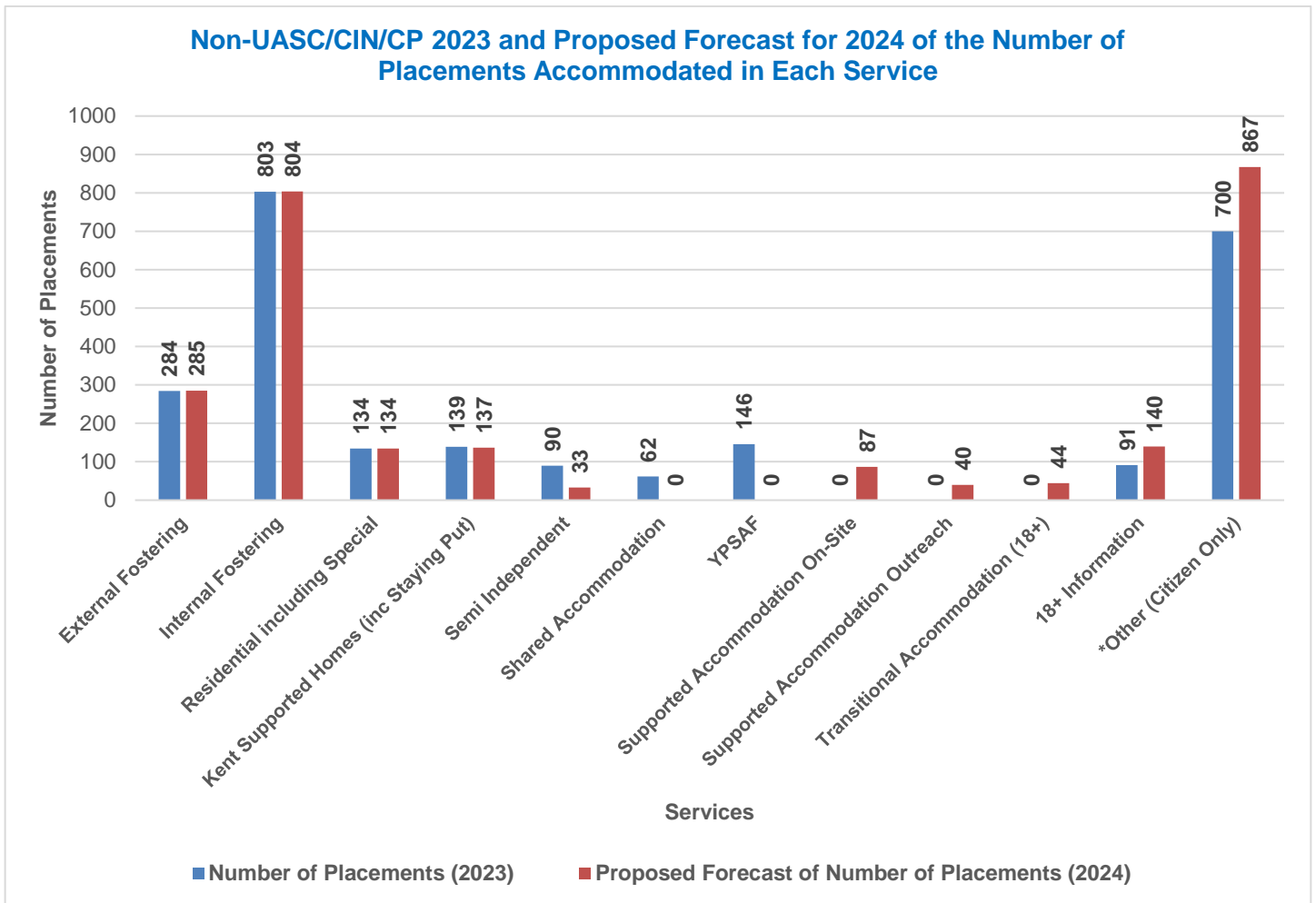
Based on the proposed new services, the Kent Analytics Team have been ascertaining current and future demand for these services where data has been rebased as of April 2023 (for non-UAS Children) December 2022 (for UAS Children), forecasting year on year to 2028 to clearly reflect the changes to these services. However, for the purposes of this update, we have reflected the 2023 demand and 2024 proposed forecast demand as this Strategy will be reviewed in 2025 to ascertain if the Council has met the sufficiency against the forecast.

#### Methodology for all cohorts

- The data is based on population increases per head; this will be subject to other factors such as the average length of time a child is in care which are not taken into consideration as part of this update.
- These models do not consider any other mitigating factors such as areas of deprivation. It does not provide the distribution of looked after children across the County. If there is a change in population in an area of deprivation this could lead to more children coming into care.
- These models do not take into account the possible impact of appetite to risk of placing children using a different consideration in relation to them coming into care i.e., Kinship arrangements.
- These models do not take into account the impending Illegal Migration Act 2023 as the impact is unknown at this time.

#### Non-UAS Children in Care, Care Leavers (CL), Children in Need (CIN), Child Protection (CP)

The graph below shows the breakdown of forecast placement types for 2024 for non-UAS Children and young adults against the 2023 placements:



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

This graph shows that forecast demand is quite static for external and internal fostering, residential settings, and Kent Supported Homes.

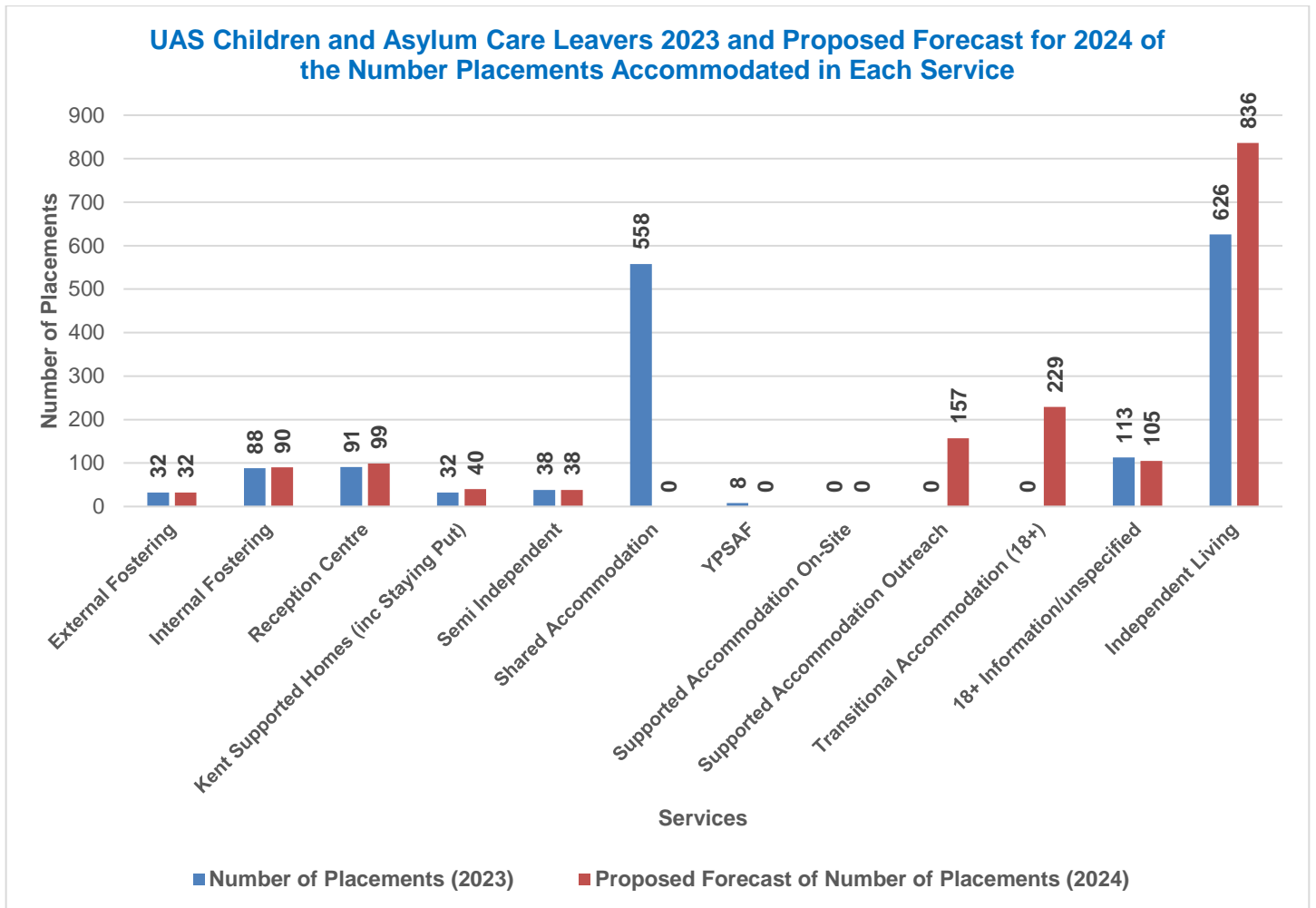
Due to the commissioning of the new services, there will be a reduction in the number of semi-independent placements, as 16/17-year-old Children in Care will transition over to the new Supported Accommodation On-Site Flexible Support services, once commissioned, along with the Children in Care aged 16/17 who are currently accommodated in the YPSAF service. This will ensure that these children are receiving support in-line with the new Ofsted Regulations.

Children in Need aged 16/17, that are currently accommodated in YPSAFS, will transition to the new Supported Accommodation Outreach Support Service, once commissioned. In order to comply with the Ofsted Regulations, all 16/17-year-old Children in Care who are currently accommodated in the YPSAFS or Shared Accommodation service will transition over to this service.

18-year-old Care Leavers who are currently accommodated under the YPSAFS or Shared Accommodation service will transition to the new Transitional Accommodation for 18-year-old Care Leavers. This will result in an increase in 18+ Information and Other categories as young adults over 19, that are currently accommodated in the YPSAFS or Shared Accommodation, will be moving on into their own independent accommodation in a planned and phased way.

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children and Asylum Care Leavers

The graph below shows the breakdown of forecast placement types for 2024 for UAS Children and asylum care leavers against the current placements:



This graph shows that forecast demand is quite static for external and internal fostering, residential settings, Kent Supported Homes, and semi-independent provision.

Children in Care aged 16/17 who are currently accommodated in the Shared Accommodation service or YPSAFS will transition over to the new Supported Accommodation Outreach Support Service, once commissioned, to ensure that these children are receiving support in-line with the new Ofsted Regulations.

18-year-old Care Leavers who are currently accommodated under the YPSAFS or Shared Accommodation service will transition to the new Transitional Accommodation for 18-year-old Care Leavers, once commissioned. This will result in an increase in the independent living category as young adults over 19, that are currently accommodated in the YPSAFS or Shared Accommodation, will be moving on into their own independent accommodation in a planned and phased way.



## Appendix 8 - Summary of Actions Identified in the 2023 Update

Some of the actions set out below have been addressed and/or completed and are reflected in the 2024 update section:

- KCC is collaborating with Providers to source stable and high-quality residential children's home 0-18 years old, promoting their health and general well-being, and ensuring educational achievement of Children in Care, working with KCC in raising their academic attainment.
- Ofsted introduced regulations for current unregulated accommodation from 28 October 2023. Through 2021, following a full review of the Shared Accommodation Service and Young Persons Supported Accommodation and Floating Support Service, where the contracts expire on 31 March 2024. The outcome of this work was to recommend that the services be aligned, categorised into levels of need, and expanded to reduce the reliance on spot purchased semi-independent accommodation and have one clear accommodation pathway.
- KCC developed and procured a revised structured Supported Accommodation offer enabling progression through services until the young adult is ready to move on. This new service will replace the current YPSAFS and Shared Accommodation services and will ensure KCC are compliant with the new Ofsted Regulations, and that all 16/17-year-old children receive support to ensure they live independently by achieving self-supporting independence at 19, with the exception of those waiting for status.
- Work with Adult Social Care colleagues to identify a pathway into adult accommodation services for those who need accommodation and care post 18, such as the Supporting Independence Service or Supported Living Services. To maximise our options for homes for young adults within these provisions especially for those with a learning disability or mental health needs.
- Continue to talk to children and young adults through commissioning activity and established groups and events to gain their views as to whether the actions implemented make a real difference to children and young adults.
- Support Providers delivering unregulated provision will be encouraged to take steps to become regulated Providers by Ofsted. Ofsted began registering providers from April 2023 ahead of the new National Standards becoming mandatory for all Providers from October 2023, at which point all Providers will need to be registered with the first full inspections expected to begin from April 2024.