

Keeping Families Together

Report

Introduction

As part of the Care Programme new arrangements have been put in place to support children and young people to remain with or return to their birth families. The programme also aims to ensure that more children and young people who have no family option are looked after within foster homes and that residential children's homes are used only where the younger person's needs are such that a children's homes is the best and most appropriate option.

To coordinate the activity and interventions Keeping Families Together is a new panel which provides robust support to children and their families. The panel is multi-disciplinary panel, which is supported by Family Matters, Youth Service, CAMHS, Education and SEND representatives.

In the first 9 months of 2024 10 children entered care and went straight into a residential children's home, since the introduction of the care programme we have only had one child who came into care straight into residential (this was a planned move due to the child's significant disabilities). This is evidence of the impact of the new approach that we have taken at Keeping Families Together utilising other services and also supporting foster carers to enable children to be placed in foster care as opposed to residential.

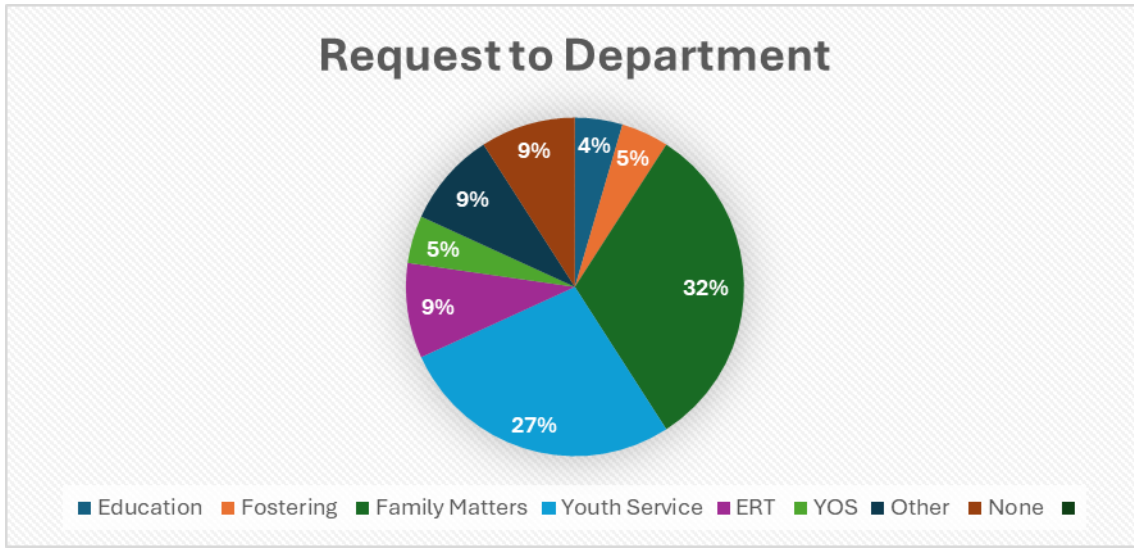
The panel has been live since September 2024, the data period of this report is 1.9.24 – 31.12.25

In addition to keeping children with their families we have programmes of work around supporting connected carers to become special guardians, ensuring that Placement With Parent arrangements are reviewed and where appropriate applications are made to discharge care orders. We continue to work on the recruitment of foster carers.

Children on the Edge of Care

A total of 33 children assessed as at risk of family breakdown have been discussed at panel. A follow up review of these young people following panel has been undertaken. Out of the 33 children presented to the panel 31 children have remained at home with their parents and 2 children have become looked after by the Local Authority.

Support to these families has been provided by the following departments:



- Education 1, Fostering 1, Family Matters 7, Youth 6, ERT 2, YOS 1, Other 2, None 2.

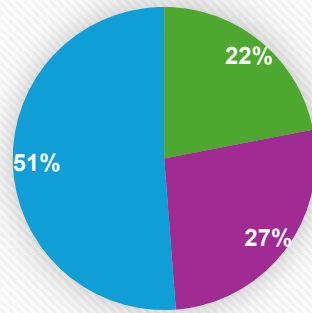
In addition to this we have increased capacity within the Emergency Response Team which provides additional support to children and families, this includes out of hours response. Since the beginning of September 2024, the team have supported 54 families in total. Within this cohort 10 families have been provided with support to prevent breakdown, 6 families for to prevent being accommodated and 1 family to support rehabilitation home.

Cared for Children – Residential

In September 2024 there were 91 children placed in residential children’s homes with a net weekly cost of £462,104 for Children Social Care. In line with the vision of Stable Homes Built on Love Strategy, we reviewed all care plans for our children placed in a residential setting. We divided this review into age cohorts.

During October/November 2024 we completed the review of 19 young people in the cohort of 17-year-olds. As part of the review, we evaluated Independent Placement Agreements to ensure that these young people were being supported appropriately towards independence, reviewed their wishes and feelings and their family circumstances. By 31.12.24 we reduced this cohort by 7 young people with the following care planning and support offered:

Move on Care Plan



■ Discharged Care Order (PWP) ■ SGO ■ Return Home (increased PWP) ■

- 2 turned 18: 3 returned to family: 2 moved to semi independent living

Total cost saving of £30,052 per week.

In addition to this cohort, we have used the opportunity where children were changing placements and reviewed the individual placement agreements for each, as a result we have reduced the cost of residential placements to £406.817 per week. A total saving of £55,287 per week. (inclusive of the above saving)

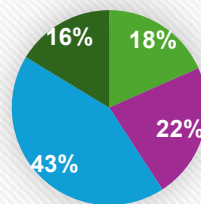
We will continue to review high-cost placements for all age range of children monthly to ensure that children are in the right placement which meets their needs but also ensures robust value for money.

Next steps: The next group of young people to be reviewed will be aged 16 years old and under 11 years in a residential setting.

Cared for Children

Since 01.09.24 we have also seen an ending of Child Looked After status in a further 63 children.

Move on Care Plan



■ PWP Discharged ■ SGO ■ Section 20 return home ■ Adoption

- 9 children PWP discharge: 11 SGO: 21 Return home: 8 adoption

This has created capacity within our cared for system which will support further identification of young people to move from residential setting into a foster family. Within the next steps for the programme a mechanism will be created for Keeping Families Together panel to also support reunification of children into their families or to prevent foster care breakdowns.

Fostering

Since 01.09.24 we have received 6 foster carer resignations.

We have recruited 3 mainstream foster carers and 16 connected carers which has increased capacity by a total of 13.