

Sufficiency Statement

Looked After Children Placements in the Independent Sector



Placements, Commissioning and Contracts Team

November 2016

Parents want their children to have the best start in life, to be healthy and happy and to reach their full potential. Bath and North East Somerset Council's (B&NES) aspiration is that: ***"All children and young people will enjoy childhood and be well prepared for adult life"***. Children and Young People's Plan 2014-2017, http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sitedocuments/Children-and-Young-People/ChildProtection/cypp_2014_-2017.pdf. As corporate parents, B&NES have the same high aspirations and seek to ensure that children and young people receive the care and support they need in order to thrive. B&NES seeks to find the right placement, in the right place, at the right time, for every looked after child.

Introduction

The Sufficiency Duty (under the Children Act 1989 - Section 22G) requires Local Authorities to: have 'sufficient' accommodation in terms of the number of beds provided, secure a range of accommodation through a number of providers, and have accommodation that meets the needs of its looked after children. Sufficiency Duty requires Local Authorities to improve outcomes for Looked After Children by requiring Local Authorities to take steps that secure sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of children in their care, within the authority's area.

Methodology

We have produced our Sufficiency Statement using a range of sources:

- Review of the effectiveness of the 2015/16 sufficiency statement
- Statistical analysis of current demands on services for Looked After Children
- Analysis of trends, performance and projected demand
- A systematic review of the current situation involving key stakeholders (using the standards for commissioning practice set out in the Sufficiency guidance, as a guide for this review)
- Identification of areas of concern / pressure and areas for improvement with associated recommendations for action.

Headlines

- The number of care days purchased from Independent Foster Agencies (IFA's) decreased again, down another 3.5% to 17221 from 19,011 2 years ago.
- There has been a 60% increase in the number of referrals from the previous year, reaching a five year high.
- The Placements team continued to achieve savings in 2015/16 through negotiating discounts, checking invoices, ensuring contractual discounts were applied, continued long term discounts from previous years and savings made from re-tendering resulting in total saving of over £100,000. The team save more than they cost, not including the time saved in the social work teams if the placement finding sat with them as previously.

B&NES Sufficiency Requirements:

- Foster placements in Bath city and within a reasonable travelling distance of B&NES schools.
- Foster placements for children aged 14 – 18 year with challenging needs.
- Residential step down placements within B&NES.
- Residential children's homes closer to B&NES who accommodate children with very challenging behaviour.
- Increased market capacity for 16 - 25 accommodation and support.
- Placements for unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC).

1. Commissioning Placements

1.1 The big picture – national

A total of 70,440 children were in care at the end of March 2016, the figures published by the Department for Education stated the number of looked-after children is “now higher than at any point since 1985”.

Year ending 31 March	Number of looked after children
2013	68,060
2014	68,840
2015	69,540
2016	70,440

1.2 Closer to home – B&NES

There are just over 36,000 children and young people aged 0-19 in Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) making 23% of the total population of 176,000. Males account for a slightly higher proportion of the younger population than females. With 10% of school age children being from a Black or Minority Ethnic group. (Source B&NES Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, 2015).

1.3 Number of Looked after Children (LAC) as at 31st March

	2013	2014	2015	2016
Bath and North East Somerset	141	148	144	152
Gloucestershire	486	519	519	562
South Gloucestershire	167	168	181	166
Bristol	715	695	705	698
North Somerset	250	215	234	219
Wiltshire	448	402	413	419
Swindon	250	252	252	292
Total	2457	2457	2448	2508

1.4 Commissioning Arrangements

Bath and North East Somerset Council are part of the South West Consortium for integrated commissioning: specifically commissioning preferred provider lists of:

- Independent Foster Agencies (IFA)
- Residential Children’s Homes
- Independent and Non Maintained Special Schools

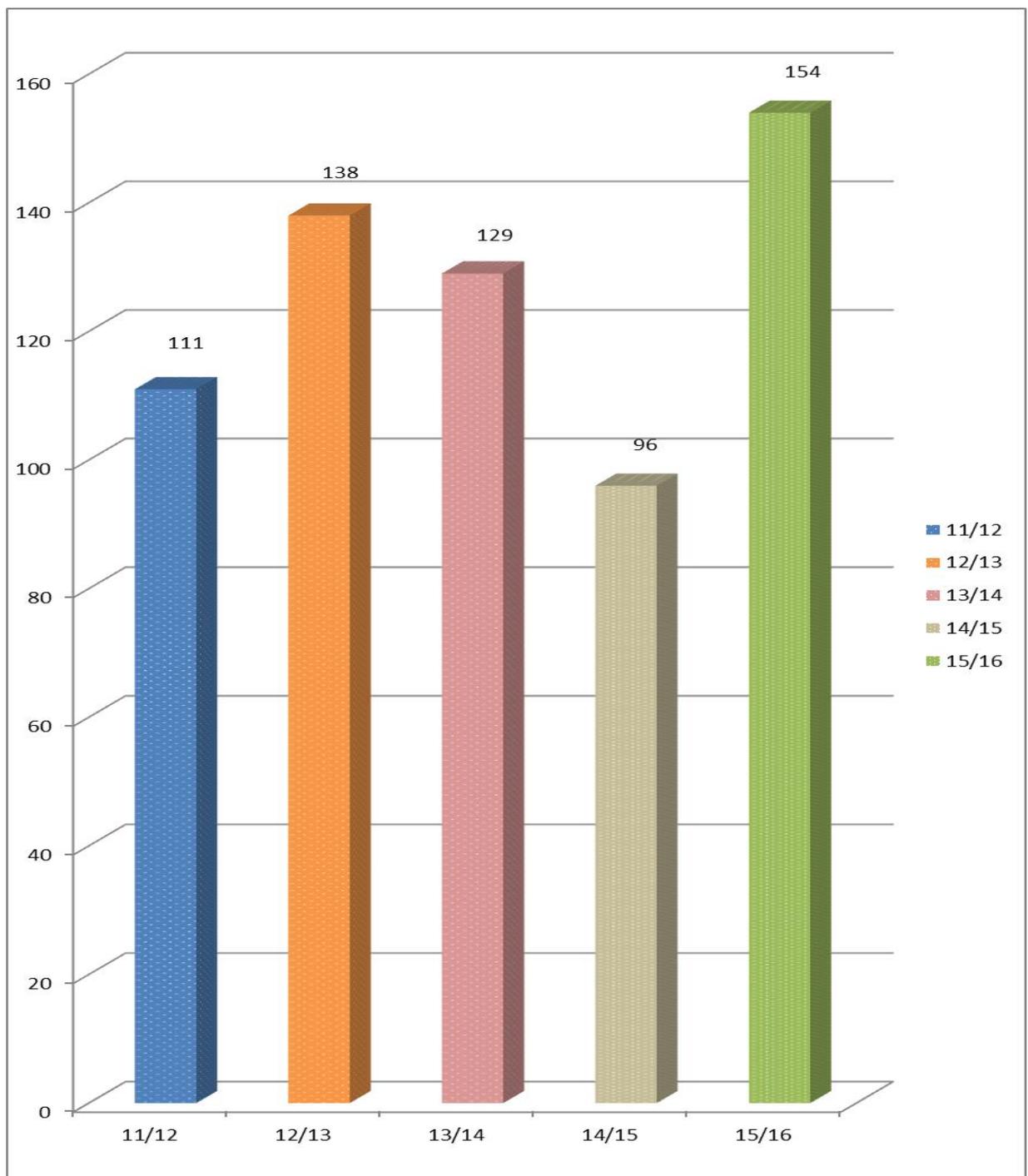
These are in the form of Dynamic Purchasing Systems (DPS) which allow new providers access to the market over the lifetime of the framework.

The consortium is made up of: Bath and North East Somerset Council, South Gloucestershire, Bristol, North Somerset, Swindon, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Dorset.

B&NES take a lead on the DPS’s for IFA’s and Residential Children’s Homes.

2. Statistics

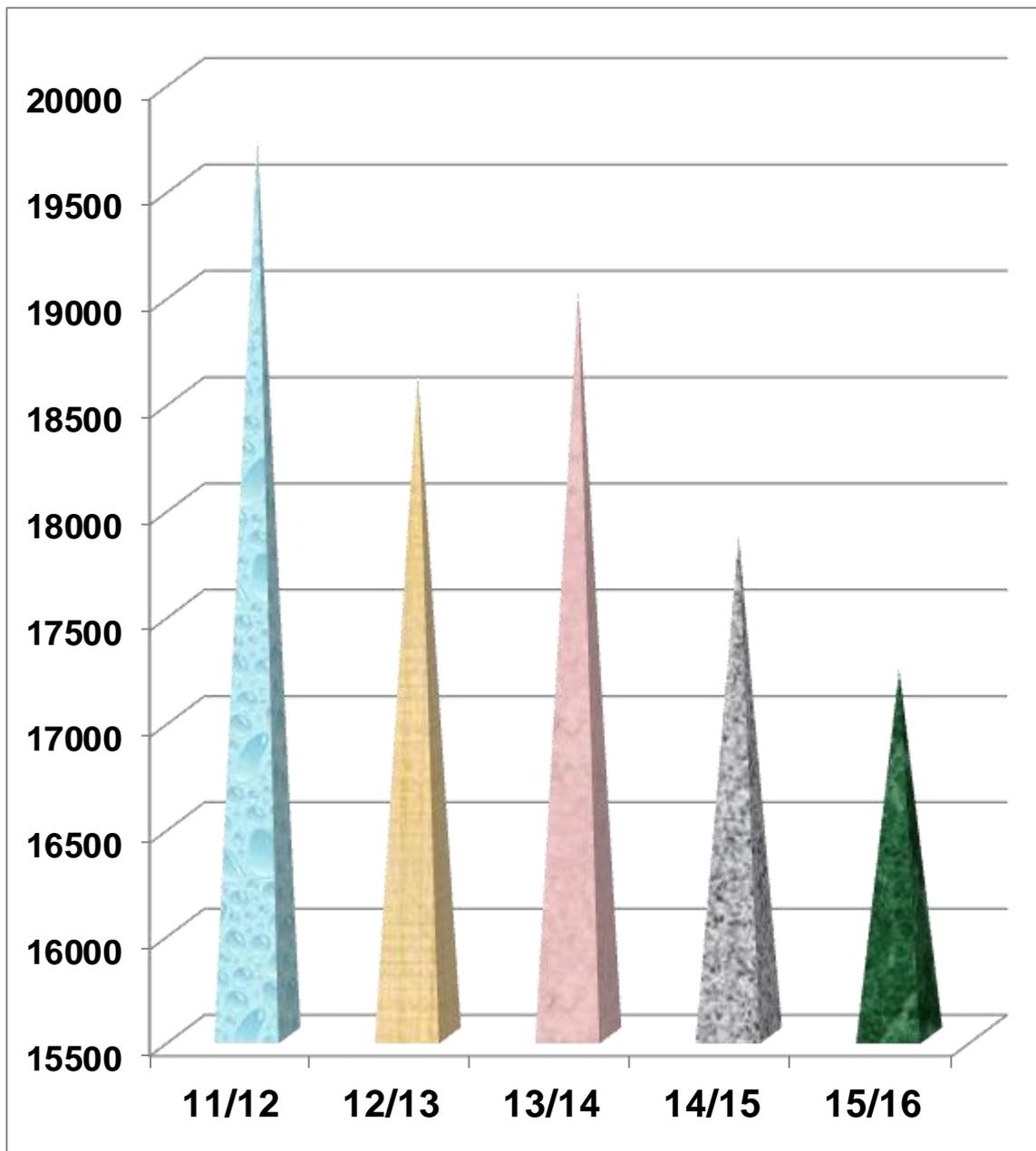
2.1 Referrals per year



There was a sharp 60% increase in the number of referrals from the previous year, reaching a five year high. However, the number of actual placements was only 23% higher. The previous year was the lowest on record.

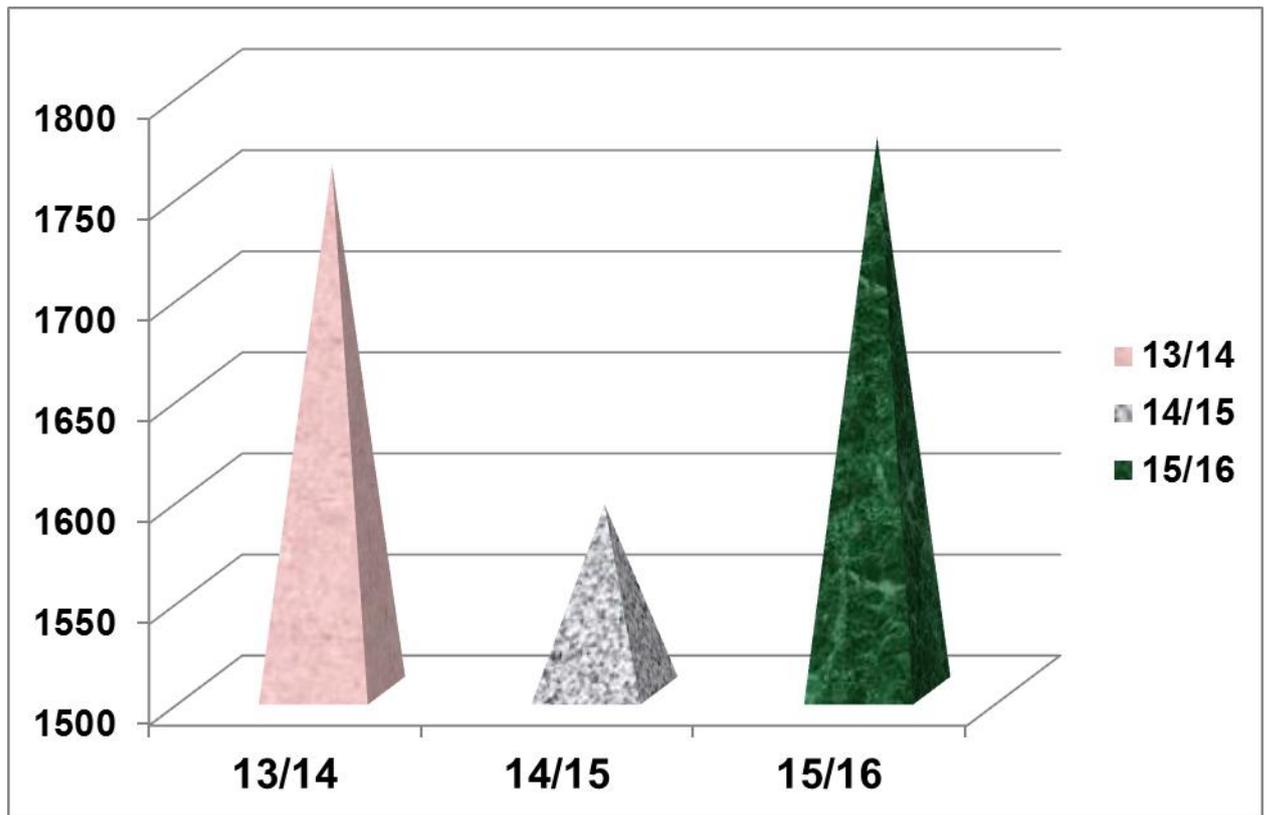
This equates to 33% of the referrals received were later deemed to be unnecessary and not needed. This is a significant increase in the workload of the Placements team, searching for placements for a variety of reasons that are subsequently not required.

2.2 Number of children in Independent Fostering Agencies by nights



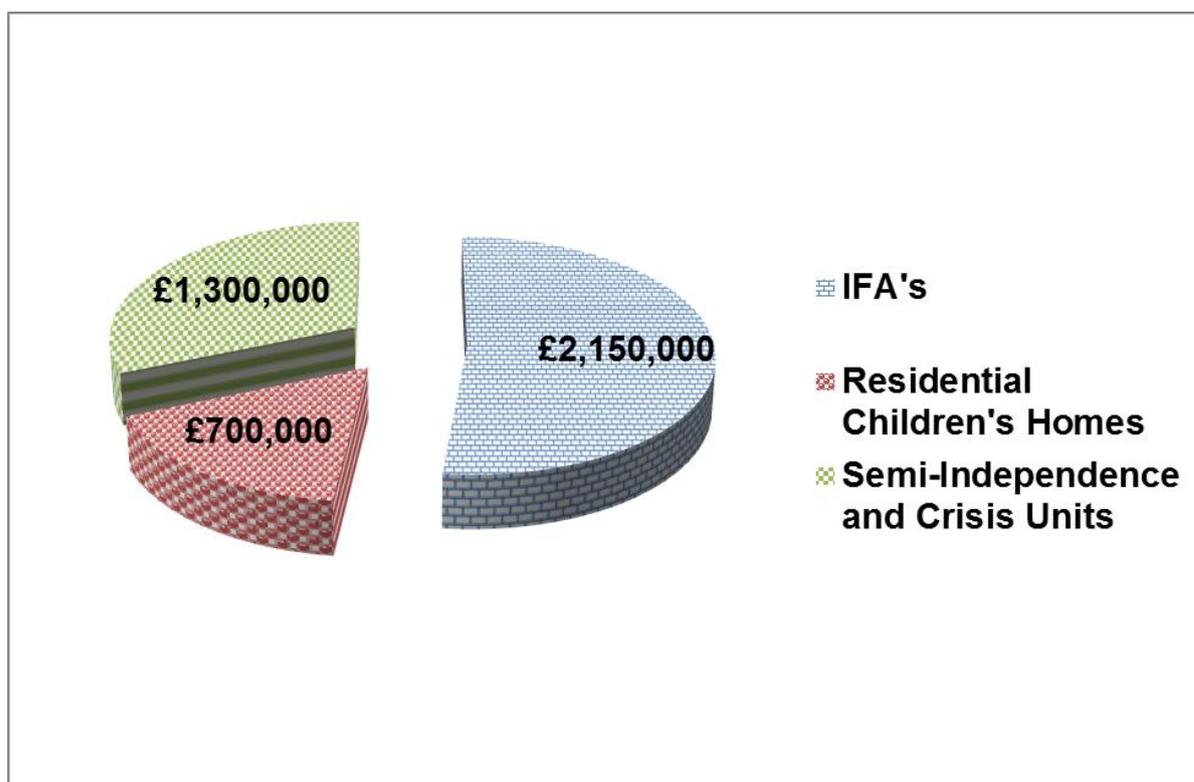
The number of nights purchased from IFA's this year decreased 3.5% to 17221. This is accounted for in children spending less time in placements.

2.3 Number of children in Residential Children's Homes by days



Although there was an increase of 11.5% in the number of days children spent in Residential Children's Homes, the overall spend on placements was lower this year due to average cost of a placement being lower.

2.4 Cost of children in IFA's and Residential Children's Homes

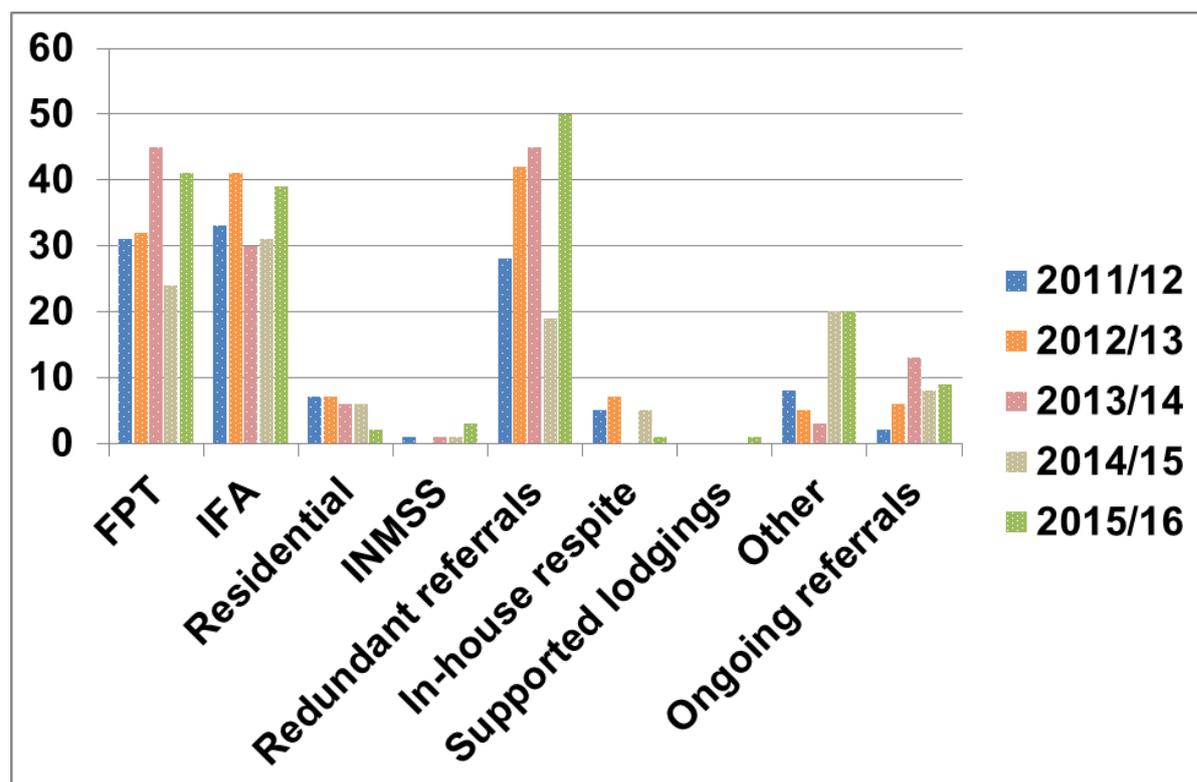


The Placements, Contracts and Commissioning Team, (PCCT) have been creative in looking at alternative provisions to offer short term placements whilst longer term plans are considered. This has enabled children to remain closer to B&NES and not be placed in residential homes around the country.

Nationally, at any point in time almost 6,000 looked after children live in children's homes in England. Children are placed in homes by local authorities from around the country and whilst some local authorities continue to operate their own homes, the majority (70%) of places in homes are now in the private sector. This is a critical part of local authority expenditure on children's services.

Locally there are no residential children's homes (independent or run by the local authority) within B&NES. This means children have to be placed outside the geographic boundaries of the authority. In this respect B&NES is one of only 3 local authorities in the country that do not have their own provision or independent provision. There are plans for one of the providers who have homes in Wiltshire to open a home in B&NES which is likely to come on stream in the next financial year.

2.5 Outcome of referrals



The 'Number of Placements' data includes some young people who have had more than one referral or placement.

The above chart indicates the spread of provision linked to referral activity.

More children were placed with our in-house Family Placement Team (FPT) than with Independent Fostering Agencies. The number of redundant referrals increased from 19 to 50, reaching a 5 year high.

2.5 Out of Authority / Sufficiency

There are various ways of considering what constitutes living away from home that is at a distance. To some degree the definition 20 miles from the child's home is a good way of thinking about placements. This would mean the child could be placed in the child's local authority or outside the boundary.

Many local authorities have been drawing a 20 mile radius using this as a measure. This could mean in the case of some counties that the child could be placed over 80 miles away from their home.

This report takes the definition from:

'From a distance: Looked after children living away from their home area', published April 2014

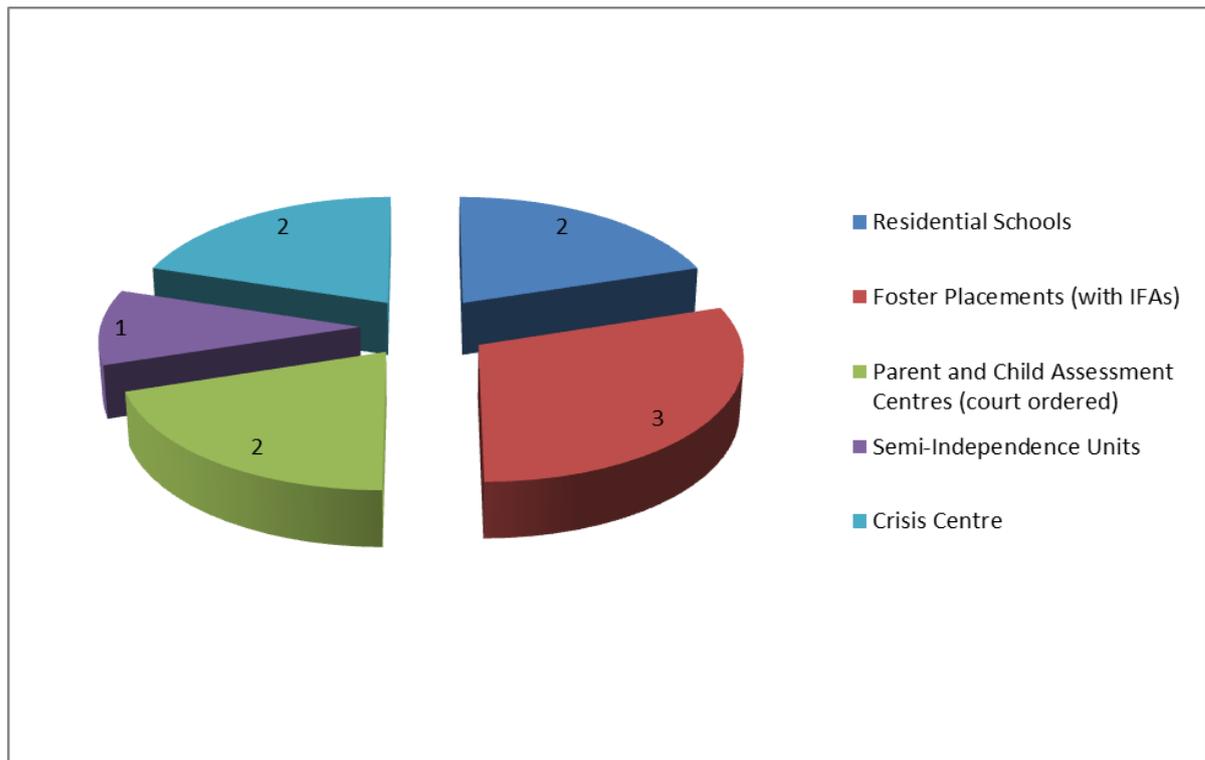
Children who live out of area but in an adjacent authority often benefit from pre-existing close collaboration between agencies, or from continuing services from the home authority. Those placements can reasonably be considered to be 'local'. The

nearer a child was living to home, the more likely it was that direct support from 'home' services, especially from education or health professionals could be offered or sustained.

B&NES have therefore counted children who were placed outside our adjacent local authorities – Wiltshire, South Gloucestershire, Bristol, North Somerset and Somerset.

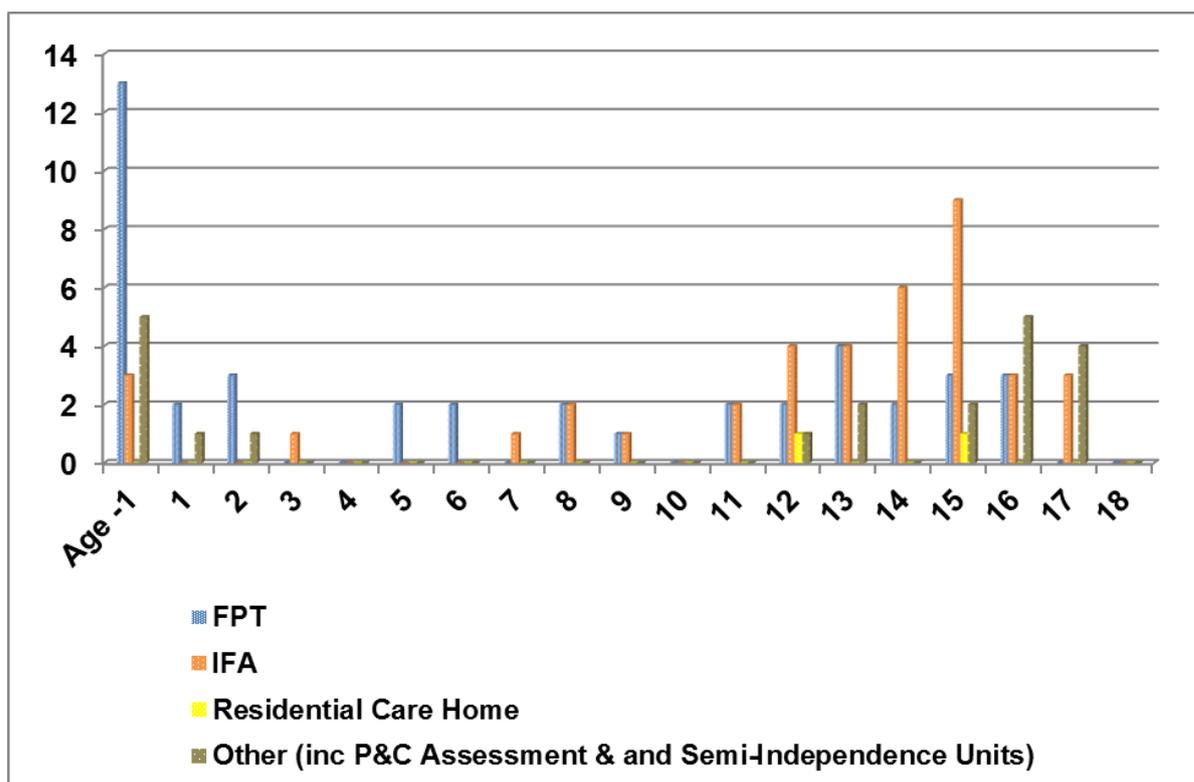
Only 10 placements were places at a distance this represented 9% of placements

Total number of placements 'at a distance' in 2015/16



The Placements, Commissioning and Contracts Team (PCCT) strive continually to find placements as near to the young person's home as possible.

2.7 Ages of children



FPT continues to care for the majority of our younger in-care population, whilst IFA's look after the larger group of age 11+ young people.

2.8 Parent and child placements

During 2015/16, we had 8 children in court-directed parent and child placements.

2.9 Impact on the children and young people

Placement Stability figures: look at 'young people who had 3 different placements within a 12 month period' who were placed with independent providers. This measures how effective services are in keeping children in the same placement.

The PCCT strive to reduce placement breakdowns by attending 'disruption meetings' and working closely with children's Social Care to ensure there is the necessary support commissioned for children to meet their needs and maintain stability.

2.10 Unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC)

There were 4 children placed during the year and this is an area which is going to increase with government targets on the number of UASC each local authority will need to place. This is likely to have an overall effect on our looked after population. There is potentially a need for a recruitment drive specifically for these children.

We also placed 2 females from Vietnam who were considered to be being trafficked.

3. Where Next...

Forthcoming work includes:

- Finalising the Independent Fostering Providers Dynamic Purchasing System. A tender led by B&NES on behalf of 8 local authorities, worth £35 million per year.
- Adoption advice service
- Adoption Support Funding Framework
- Ongoing work around the SEND agenda
- Continue our work with the South West Consortium Regional Strategic Commissioning project to increase our range of placements from external providers and opportunities to develop the provider markets.
- The care leaver's provision which constitutes accommodation and support has no recognised national standards or inspection to regulate the market. There is a need to develop south west quality standards and a DPS of providers with a view to managing the market and creating minimum standards. This work will begin with South Gloucestershire taking a lead.
- The PCCT will continue to provide a core service in supporting social care teams. Searching for placements, appraising offers made, negotiating costs with agencies, drawing up and then monitoring contracts. Each of the above stages is considered thoroughly, alongside the placing social worker, which has led to successful, stable placements and excellent Placement Stability Figures.

**For further information, please call Ian Tomlinson on: 01225 477878
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