

## Children Services Cabinet Update – October 2022

- We continue our commitment to early help and support for families and focus on delivery of our Children, Young People and Families Plan
- We offered almost 21,000 Holiday Activity & Food Programme places this summer across 77 venues in Dorset Council area through our Summer in Dorset programme and almost 30,000 swimming places funded for children 0-16 for the 6 weeks summer holiday period across 10 swimming pools - increasing water confidence, personal social and emotional development and physical activity at the same time. I had the opportunity to join Michael Tomlinson MP on his visit to one of these activities in his constituency, involving indoor cricket, which was great fun and I can confirm that both Michael & the young people are much better cricketers than I am!
- Children's services colleagues, working in partnership with others including schools/early years settings, Citizens' Advice in Dorset and Age UK have supported people through another round of the DWP funded Household Support Fund.
  - £130,000 paid to 650 households with children
  - £11,000 paid to Dorset Care Leavers
  - £1.1m paid to support over 11,000 pre-school and school children with meals during the school holidays
  - £750k to pensioners – with more being allocated
  - £260k to working age people receiving benefits
- With support from Public Health Dorset we have:
  - Funded almost 5,500 early education hours for children preparing to go to school this September including almost 1,000 hours for children with additional needs and, or a disability – helping them with a strong September start
  - Awarded the contract to BCHA to deliver [PAUSE](#) – a programme to support women who have had multiple children removed from their care which we know will offer them much better support but also prevent the likelihood of this happening in the future
  - Delivered a '[healthy movers](#)' project in East Dorset which has proven not only to help with physical activity but to improve wellbeing and speech and language too
- We have supported young people in many different ways:
  - to take part in local democracy through our MYP elections, youth council and in having their say in how services are run through Takeover Challenge, Corporate Parenting Board, participation in recruitment
  - Distributing over £100k in grants to local youth organisation to create activities and opportunities
- Through the creation of the Pineapple project – working with the local community in Weymouth to help girls feel more safe in their communities.
- We have secured funding for children's services through some successful national bids to help us to do more locally:
  - £875k over the next 2 years to support the development of Family Hubs
  -
- **Birth to settled adulthood progressing well.** The service re-design element is progressing with plans to identify improvements for preparation for adulthood and a seamless transition for our children and young people.

**Despite conditions for families and communities having been very difficult over recent years, and children in care populations increasing significantly elsewhere in the country, we have managed our children in care population numbers well, supporting more families to stay together where this is safe.**

Our data tells us that the children in care population in Dorset has increased by 6 between April 2021 and August 2022, from 449 children to 455. However, when we discount the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) who are children in care, for whom we have no control or ability to limit (until we reach our minimum Government defined quota of 67), we can see that the number of children in care has reduced, as follows:

Total children in care population – April 2021 = 449

Total children in care population - August 2022 = 455

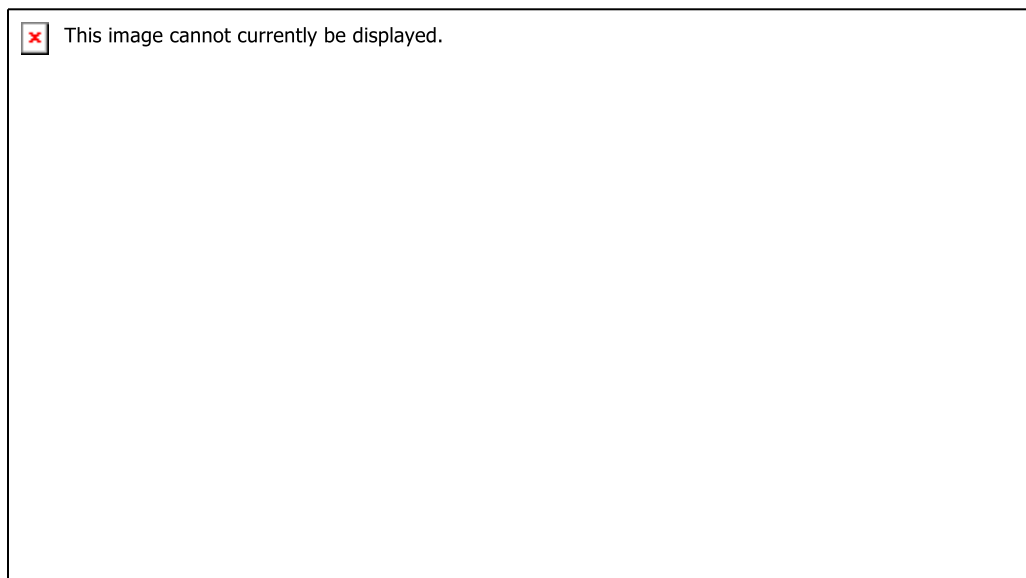
**BUT**

Children in care population minus UASC – April 2021 = 440

Children in care population minus UASC – August 2022 = 417

We have had an increase in UASC between April 2021 and August 2022 of 29 children, from 9 to 38. If our UASC numbers had remained at 9 as they were in April 2021 our total care population now would be 426, a reduction of 23 children from the 449 that were in care in April 2021.

The graph below illustrates this:



**We have succeeding in increasing the number and percentage of children in care for whom we have secured permanence, as follows:**

- Permanence fostering – At the end of August 2022, 55 % of young people who have a permanence plan for permanence fostering have achieved this compared to 39% at the same time last year.
- Special Guardianship Orders - 17% (12) of children who left care in the six months prior to August in 2022 were made subject to Special Guardianship Orders compared to 14% (9) in the six months prior to August 2021
- Adoption – 17% (12) of children who left care in the six months prior to August in 2022 were adopted compared to 11% (7) in the six months prior to August 2021r
- Return Home to Parents - The number of children who left care to return to birth family in the six months to August 2022 was 20. This compares to 13 in the six months to August 2021.

Achieving a permanent placement ensures children have a secure stable and loving family to support through childhood and beyond, to create a sense of security, continuity, commitment identity and belonging. We have continued to focus our attention in supporting our children to achieve permanence. Permanence can be achieved in a number of ways:

- We will be launching our first Mockingbird Fostering Constellation on 12<sup>th</sup> November.
- Ofsted visited 45 Dorchester Road children's home to undertake the registration visit yesterday and we are expecting a positive outcome of registration within the next ten days. Official launch 12<sup>th</sup> October 2022.
- The number of Good and Outstanding schools in Dorset has risen from 75% in 2020 to 80% today. We continue with our ambition to ensure every child is learning in a Good or Outstanding school in Dorset.