

Middlesbrough Monitoring Visit

Director of Children's Services
Sue Butcher

Overview

The purpose of this document is to present an overview of the findings from the Ofsted Inspection Monitoring Visit 23rd and 24th September 2020.



MIDDLESBROUGH
CHILDREN
MATTER



**Our mission is to show
Middlesbrough children
that they matter.**

Methodology

During the (virtual) monitoring visit 2 inspectors reviewed

Progress made by the MACH, the 'front door' of our service, focusing on

- the quality and screening of referrals,
- the identification of and response to risk,
- the understanding by partner agencies of threshold decisions for social work support,

The quality of initial assessment and planning.

A significant amount of evidence was provided before and during the inspection.

The inspectors had case discussions with front line staff and interviews with members and officers involved in the improvement programme.

Not an inspection??

Overall Findings

Immediate feedback at the end of day two and in a letter

The local authority has made 'some' progress in improving:

- social work practice in their 'front door' service
- the immediate response to 16-17-year-old homeless young people
- performance monitoring, including a new quality assurance framework
- their strategic oversight of services for children and young people.

However, leaders know that there is significant work to do in improving the quality of practice for children and young people in other areas of the service which remains not good enough.

Not published

Details

Leadership

- Continuing **commitment** from the **Chief Exec and Lead Member**
- A determination and **vision** for improving the quality of interventions making a difference for children and families.
- Senior leaders have a **realistic understanding** of the endemic weakness in practice informing an **appropriately focused improvement plan**.

MACH

- **Substantially improved practice** in the quality of referrals, screening, decision-making and management oversight.
- An **exponential increase in demand** due to a necessary change in the **application of thresholds** for service, and a lack of **throughput** of children's cases.
- Most contacts by partner agencies are converted to referrals for a social work service demonstrating an **improved understanding of thresholds by referring agencies**.

Assessment team

Assessment Service

- The **quality** of some children's assessments has **improved but most are not completed within a timeframe** which supports the child's identified needs.
- **Risk is better understood,**
- The **child's voice** is heard through direct work. However, children's voices and their lived experience is not consistently seen in all casework.
- Children's **identity and diversity** needs are **narrowly understood**
- There has been a **rigorous approach to safety planning** for children **during to the COVID-19** pandemic in particular a robust multi-agency to children living with domestic abuse in lockdown.

Positive

This visit found substantially improved practice in the Middlesbrough MACH, especially in the quality of referrals and screening, and in decision-making and management oversight

Area for Improvement

High caseloads are having a demonstrative impact on the quality of social work practice for children, the throughput of children's cases, the timescales of work completed, management oversight and the ability to embed learning from audits and training to social workers.

Next Steps

- **9th - 11th November:** Visit from the Commissioner - Reports to the Minister at Department of Education on our progress
- **9th December:** Annual Engagement Conversation Ofsted
- **Now – 31st March 2021:** 3 day wider Focused Visit
- **May 2021:** Next visit and report by the Commissioner

Placement Stability/Breakdown



MIDDLESBROUGH
CHILDREN
MATTER

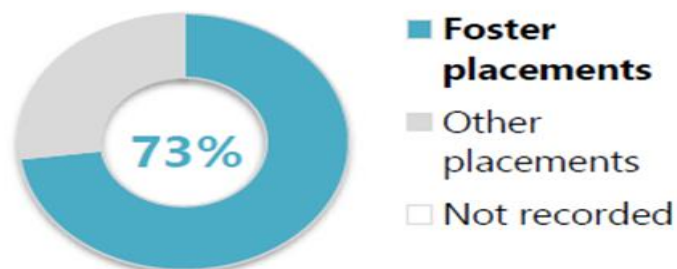


**Our mission is to show
Middlesbrough children
that they matter.**

Placement Type and Provision

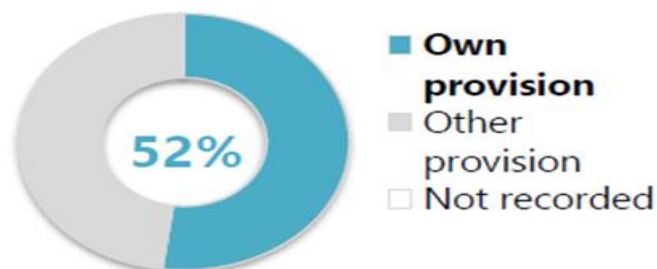
CLA placements by type and provision

Foster placements



LA 2018-19 69%
SNs 2018-19 71%
Eng 2018-19 72%

Own provision



LA 2018-19 42%
SNs 2018-19 59%
Eng 2018-19 50%

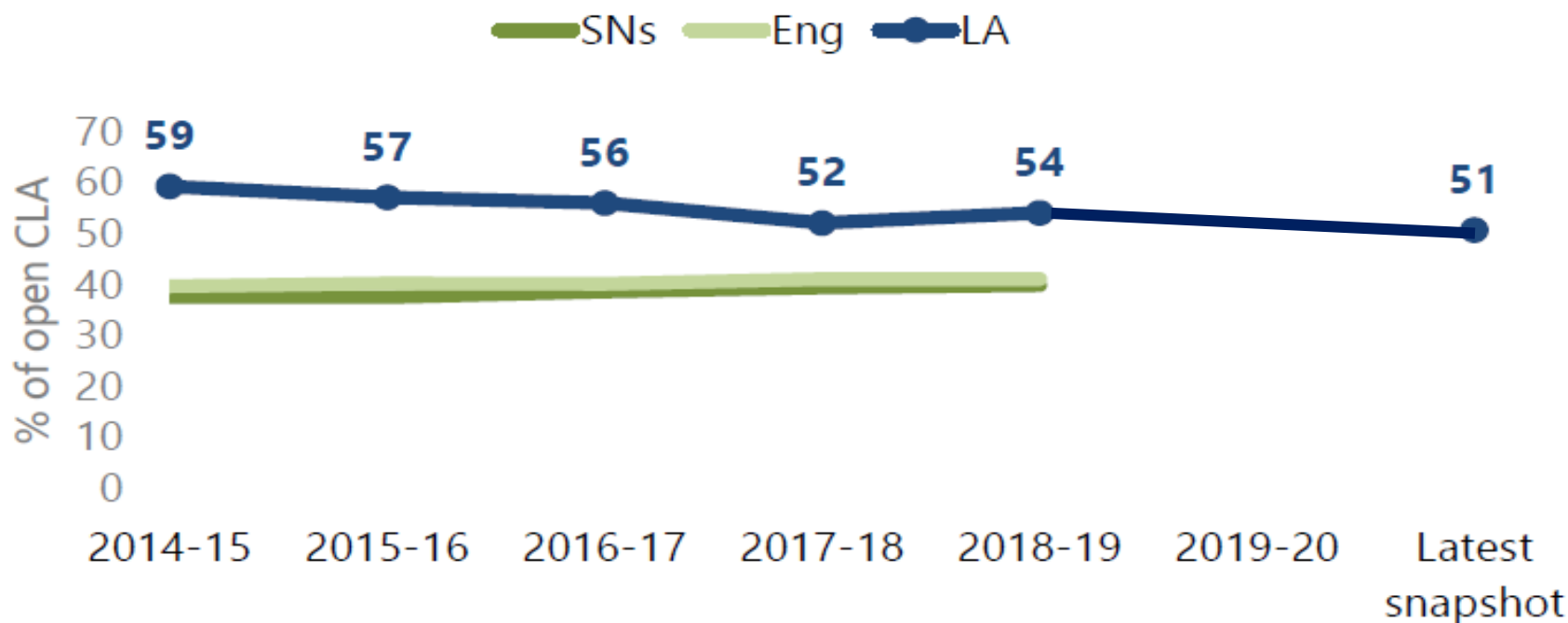
Placement type (open CLA)	Own LA	Private	Other	Total
Foster placement	343	125	30	498
Placed for adoption	2	0	12	14
Placed with parents	0	0	85	85
Independent living	0	5	0	5
Residential employment	0	0	0	0
Residential accommodation	2	15	0	17
Secure Children's Homes	0	0	0	0
Children's Homes	9	44	3	56
Residential Care Home	0	2	0	2
NHS/Health Trust	0	0	2	2
Family Centre	0	2	0	2
Young Offender Institution	0	0	1	1
Residential school	0	0	1	1
Other placements	0	0	0	0
Temporary placement	0	0	0	0
Total placements	356	193	134	683

Placements Outside of Borough

Placement stability is higher than the national average and higher than our statistical neighbours

64% of children who have been looked after for 2.5 years or more have remained in the same placement for 2 or more years

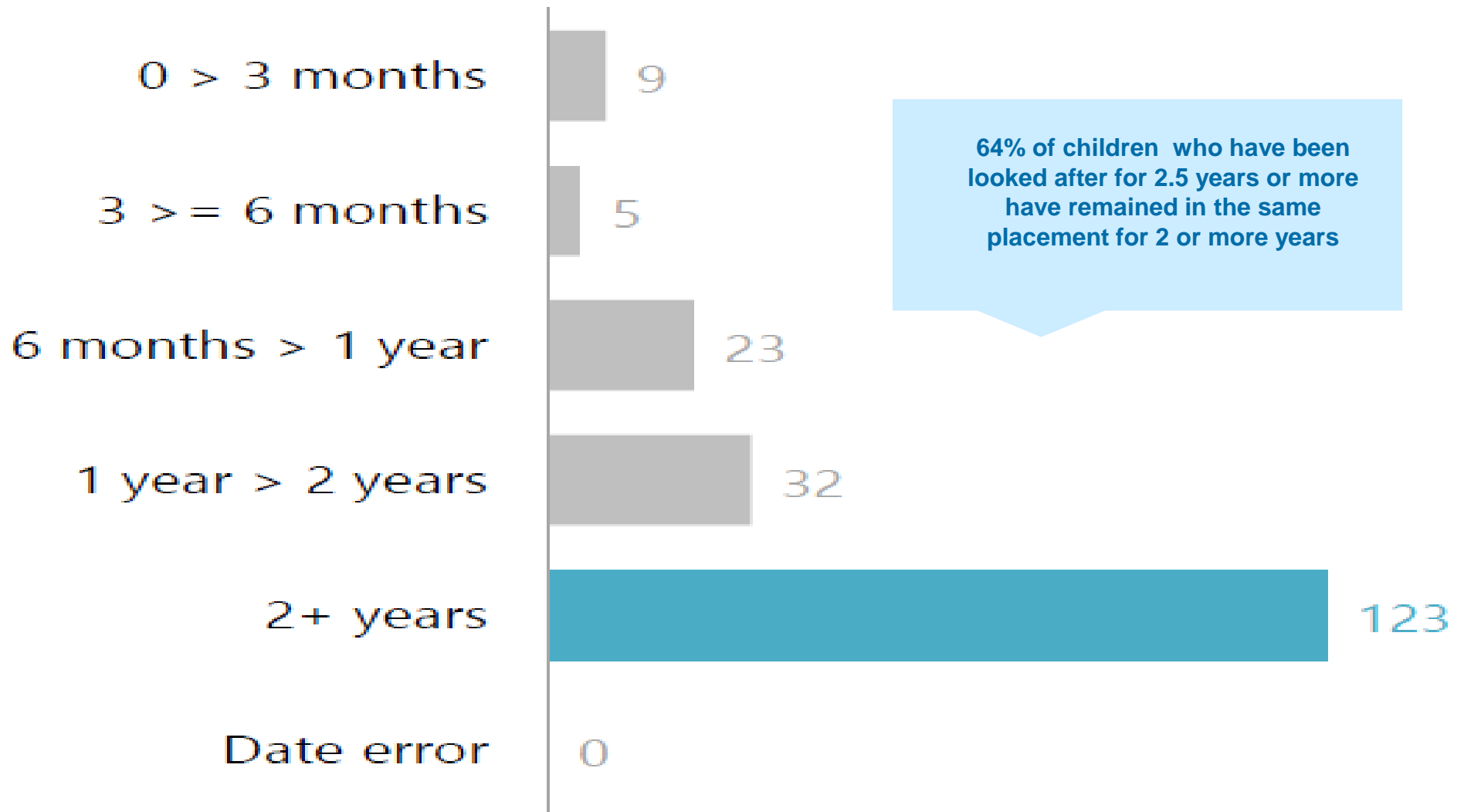
CLA placements out of borough



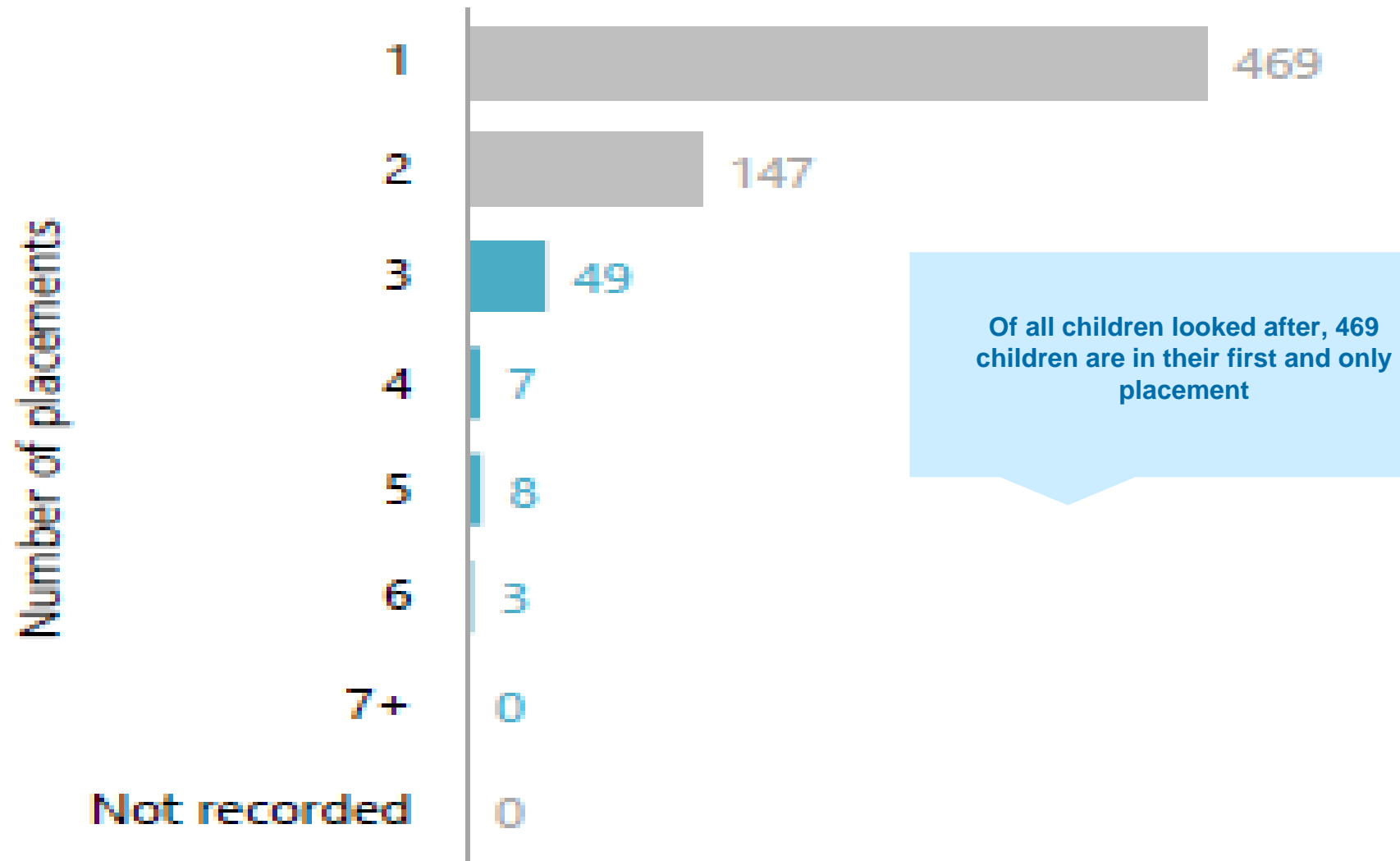
Placement Stability

Duration of placements

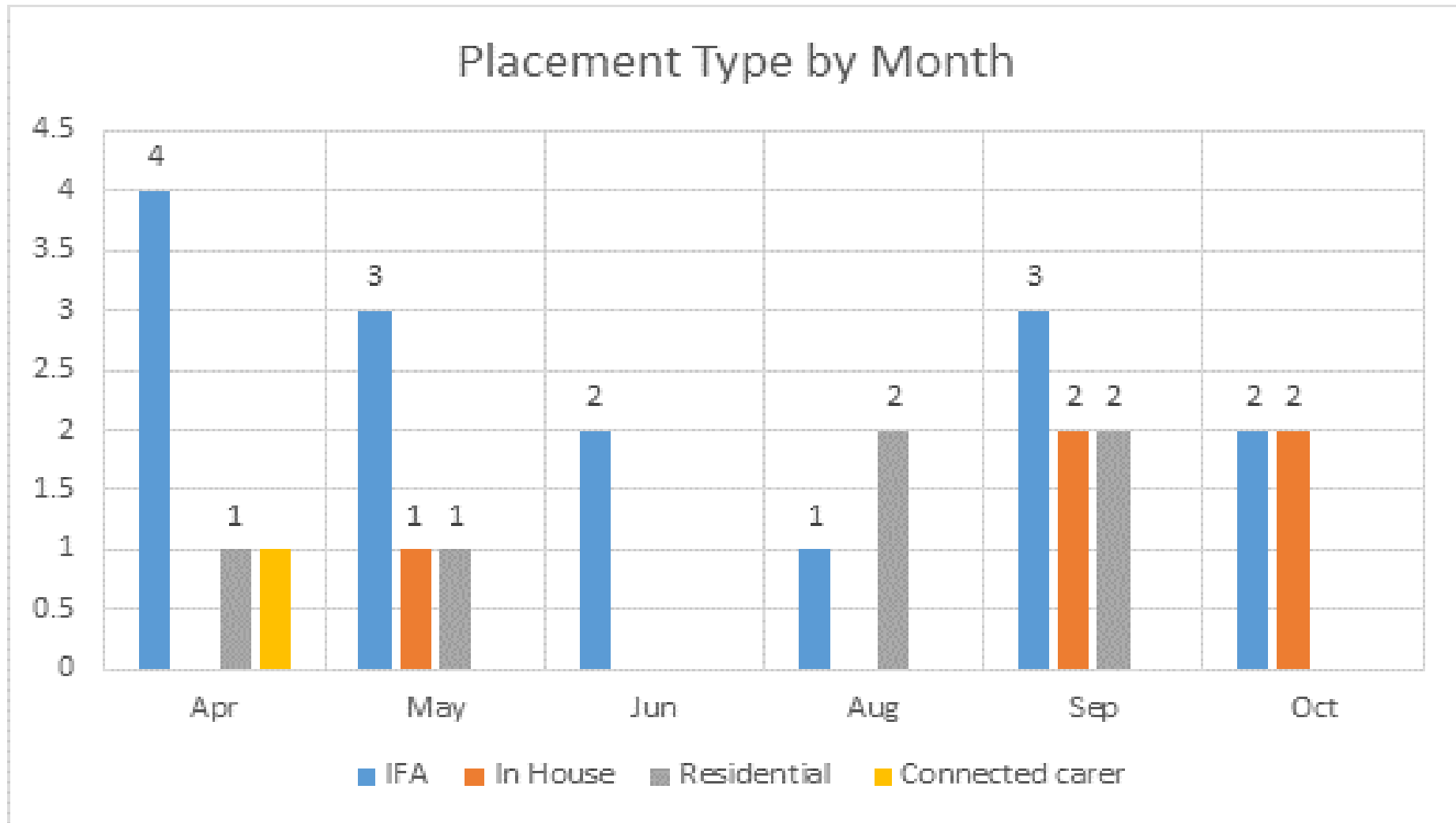
Duration of latest placement for each current CLA aged under 16 who have been looked after for 2½ years or more



Number of placements in the last 12 months



Placement Breakdown



Preventing Placement Breakdowns, Improving Stability

- Corporate Parenting Strategy
- Innovate Social Work Team
- Futures for Families
- LCS Transformation will support improved social work practice and performance reporting
- Returning children to placements in Middlesbrough
- Data Analysis - Understanding the reasons why placements have ended
- Introduction of a placement disruption procedure
- Support offer to fragile placements