

Overnight short breaks for disabled children and their families

Briefing for the Scrutiny Committee

Purpose

This briefing is to support the Scrutiny Committee's discussions around the Essex review of overnight short breaks; and consider the Petition regarding changes to Maples and Lavender. These are in house short break homes for disabled children in Harlow and Colchester respectively and mostly support children living/attending school in these areas. The petition has asked Essex County Council to "reverse plans to cut the amount of bed space in our children's respite service". This is in response to a change in use of flats in both homes. From April 2019, both homes have operated from one flat (4 beds) rather than 2, because of reduced use of both homes over time. Families currently accessing the service continue to be able to use Maples and Lavender.

Background

1. Short breaks are a statutory requirement to give families a break from caring. For the parent/carer, this may give them time with other family members, focus on every day activities or help them better care for their disabled child. For the child or young person, they can engage in activities in a safe and supported environment, learn new skills and develop friendships. Local Authorities have the scope to respond to their local needs and design the range of short breaks that best supports this. The minimum legal requirement is that children who have an assessed social care need for a short break are given them. The eligibility for short breaks and how they are accessed should be set out in the 'short breaks statement' and reviewed regularly. Essex does this through the short breaks website and brochure: <https://shortbreaks.essex.gov.uk/what-are-short-breaks/>

2. Essex County Council has been reviewing its services for disabled children and young people, including overnight short breaks. Our aim is to use our resources most effectively to support resilient children and families, prepare well for adulthood and wherever possible, help families use their own strengths and benefit from early help to manage within the community. When families do have assessed social care needs, they should benefit from a range of services that are personalised, help them make progress and achieve good outcomes for their child.

3. Essex has a wide range of support to meet different need levels and this is set out in **Appendix 1**. Overnight short breaks are offered to children who are open to social care and have an assessed need for overnight respite as part of the support package given to the family. An overnight short break may be assessed as needed where the young person has disturbed sleep patterns and the family cannot otherwise

have a break from caring. These children may have additional health needs or other needs, such as learning disabilities or complex behaviour. There are currently around 160 young people who are assessed as needing an overnight short break specifically and of these, around 70 use Maples and Lavender.

Overnight short breaks and Essex use of in-house services: current picture and basis for reducing to use of one flat in each centre

4. The review of overnight short breaks is ongoing and no long-term decisions have been made, including no decisions about the future of Maples and Lavender. However, Essex has been reviewing trends in use of overnight short breaks over time to support planning and use what we have most effectively. Our aim is to continue to grow and develop a range of options for overnight care, to support a range of needs.

5. Use of both homes has changed over time **see appendix 2: trends over time**, as the range of overnight short breaks has developed and impacted on referrals - and as children have moved on from the service. The number of children accessing Maples over the past 4 years has reduced by over 37%, from 64 in April 2015 to 40 in January 2019. The number of children using Lavender over the same period has reduced by 62%, from 86 to 32. These decreases in usage occurred prior to the block on referrals and has meant that there is over-capacity at both centres. Over the next three years, a further 31 children will age out of both homes.

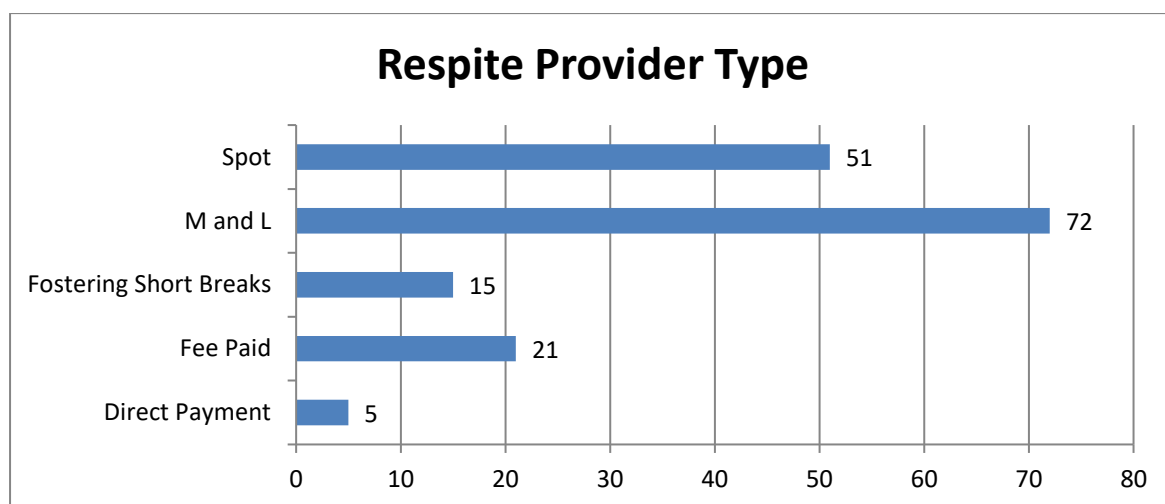
6. The operational short term decision to use one flat at each home is a result of the reduced use of both homes, which means that the existing level of use can be met through using one flat than two. It continues a pattern of managing use of the homes to meet reduced use over time and use council resources as effectively as possible. For example, Lavender had already moved from using all 3 flats to 2 flats due to reducing numbers of service users and both services have previously moved from operating 7 days a week to 5 days a week for the same reasons. Eligibility and allocation of nights for the year for existing families has not changed as a result of this decision and their assessed needs continue to be met. There is less flexibility than before about when families can use their nights, but to manage this, both centres have worked with families to plan ahead for when they want to use their nights and in general, families' preferences have been met.

7. A pause was made to new referrals to Maples and Lavender in December 2018, to give time to review use and the range of support available. All new referrals for any kind of respite have been tracked since this time, to provide assurance that assessed needs continue to be met and understand the ongoing pattern of demand. Social care has not changed any thresholds or practice in how they meet assessed needs for overnight short breaks and where there is a need, families continue to have access to a range of options, which still includes residential short breaks in a care home environment, similar to the service provided by Maples and Lavender. Since December 2018 there have been 17 cases where either a new need for overnight care

or an increased package has been assessed. Of these, 8 have required a residential short break home environment and provision has been found for all 8, including 3 where numbers of nights at Maples and Lavender have been increased. Of the remainder, a number are recent referrals to short break foster care made in May/June and enquiries are still being made into availability/matching.

Overnight short breaks: the range of services in Essex

8. There is not a 'one size fits all' for overnight short breaks as they need to be responsive to an individual child and family's needs and bear in mind that a child's needs may change over time. There is already a choice of overnight short breaks in Essex which families are using and which has contributed to a reduction in the use of Maples and Lavender. Our aim is to continue to develop this range of support to meet individual needs. As at January 2019, the overall pattern of use for overnight respite is shown below. You will note that a lot more work needs to be done to further develop our wider offer of respite options. The vast majority of children are in overnight residential placements (whether in Maples/Lavender or spot purchased provision). This is why Maples and Lavender are so important as they provide a vital part of the service and we need to consider not just concept but capacity to deliver an alternative.



9. **Residential short breaks** This kind of short break is offered in a residential short break care home regulated by Ofsted, with trained care staff able to meet the child's needs. Essex uses both spot-purchased provision (places purchased from external providers) and Maples and Lavender as in house provision. A range of other residential homes in addition to Maples and Lavender has always been used, to meet individual needs and be accessible to families. For example, a number of families in South Essex access St Christopher's overnight respite home because it is more accessible to them and is recognised as good quality; some families use Seaside Cottages in North Essex because it offers trained nursing staff if their child has additional health needs.

It costs between £1000 - £1200 a night (See appendix 3) to place children at Maples and Lavender. The other options mentioned are significantly cheaper, whilst also catering for a range of needs and choices. Not all families want to use residential respite, which is why we need to further build our respite offer and options for families.

EXAMPLE OF RESIDENTIAL OVERNIGHT SHORT BREAK

W is a 13-year-old girl who is subject to a Care Order and is placed in an in-house foster placement. Due to the nature of her disabilities the carers require regular overnight respite. There are no other in-house carers able to meet her complex needs. Respite is being provided by Achieving Aspirations, a provision in Suffolk at £350 per night.

10. **Family based overnight short breaks.** These overnight short breaks are offered in a family home environment rather than a care home environment, through specially trained and supported foster carers. Fee paid foster carers are specifically recruited, trained and supported to support overnight short breaks in their home and are paid retainers to ensure they have the capacity to take children. Specialist healthcare task training is available if required, for example to support children with additional health needs. This scheme has slowly developed over time, because it is essential the right carers are found, but there are currently 5 approved households.

We are continuing to recruit more families to join this scheme through our recruitment team and continue to advertise in our short break's brochure.

FEEDBACK FROM FEE PAID FOSTER CARER SCHEME

The profile of children who use the fee paid foster carer scheme is broad and includes children who may have additional health needs as well as learning disabilities, autism, and/or physical disabilities.

Fee paid foster carers are people who have experience of caring for disabled children in health, education, or other agencies, such as the voluntary sector and care agencies. They care for children 3 nights (part time) or 5 nights (full time) a week and have extensive training and support, tailored to the needs of the individual children they care for.

Sally and Barry have been approved for a number of years now, and in that time have been matched with a number of children and young people.

Although there have been challenges and the needs of the young people have been complex, Sally and Barry enjoy the role immensely. They are approved full time with

the scheme and Barry has now retired from work, so that they can both be available to care for more of the time.

Feedback from foster carers:

“Being a short breaks carer is so rewarding, we support not just the child but their whole family. We provide a home from home experience for the child and the opportunity to try new experiences - we took one child to an evening carnival which she loved and hadn’t previously experienced. We support the families with a break from sleepless nights, meals out and holidays to recharge batteries.”

“My role not only provides support and care to the child, but also to parents and siblings. The children receive care in a family home, have individual attention and get to experience everyday family life, with similar routines to those in their own home”.

11. Care in the child’s home. A small number of families use direct payments or a package sourced through the council to find carers who will stay overnight in their own home, enabling the child to be in a familiar environment and the family to go out/take a short break.

CASE STUDY, USE OF DIRECT PAYMENTS

O is a young girl with autism, anxiety and sensory delay. O has a part time timetable at school therefore she spends much of her time with her mother as her father works full-time. She has two siblings both with autism. The parents find it challenging to care for three children with additional needs. Sleep deprivation is an issue for both parents so a need for overnight short breaks was assessed. The parents already had a package of support for day time including carers who regularly supported O.

The parents felt that O was not ready for a transition outside the family home and wanted O to be cared for by people she was already familiar with. The parents were given additional direct payments so that they could use carers already working with O to provide overnight support in their home 24 hours a month whilst they went away. Parents were given the option to use their hours flexibly to suit their needs.

Benefits

- O can remain in her own home.
- Sibling can remain in the home at the same time.
- Parents can have a rest to continue to care for three children all with disabilities.

Parent’s response: *“It’s such a relief to know that the option now exist for regular breaks for E & I from the very intensive caring we do for O, and importantly that the breaks do not jeopardise O’s wellbeing. Things are slowly improving for O and our family as a whole and I feel very optimistic for the future of all three children. This time*

last year, we were in a very, very difficult place and our family felt very much at risk of falling apart so I'm personally grateful for all the support we have had and continue to receive. We take none of it for granted and are very thankful."

Appendix 1: Essex short breaks across the range of needs

Need	Our offer
<p>High level need, open to social care, child may have disrupted sleep which means that parents cannot get a break without overnight support, may have additional health needs and/or complex behaviour and learning disabilities</p>	<p>Range of overnight short breaks available, depending on needs. Around 160 families access overnight, including: Maples and Lavender in house residential homes; overnight residential short breaks purchased from external providers, family-based care including foster carers and specialist foster carers and use of direct payments or agency carers so that families can make their own arrangements.</p>
<p>Open to social care with assessed needs but child and family are coping at night and need additional support before/after school or during holidays, e.g. their child may need 1:1 carer to access a holiday club</p>	<p>Additional support available through use of direct payment or directly sourced additional package from club or activity.</p>
<p>Children have a confirmed disability and families need a lower level of respite but over and above what can be found within universal services. Most are not open to social care because their needs can be met within the community.</p>	<p>There are over 2000 families now registered for Essex short breaks and eligibility criteria is broad (confirmed disability, in line with equalities act). The offer to families includes: a wide range of clubs and activities available from 28 different providers; short break carers, adapted beach huts and caravans, tickets to attractions/events, capital investment in changing places (adapted toilets and changing facilities) and adapted play spaces.</p>

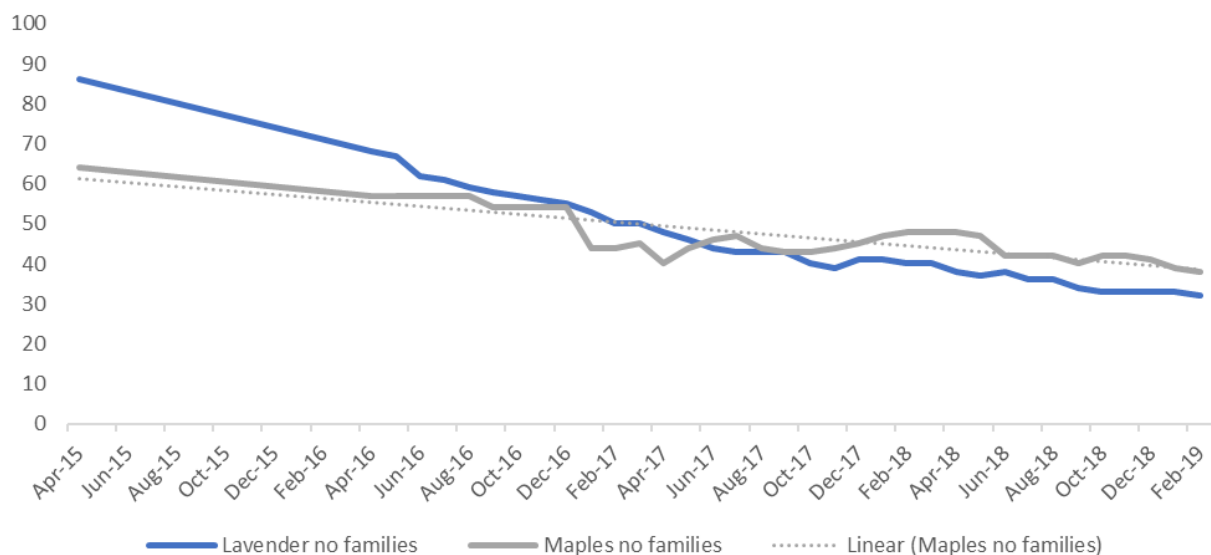
Appendix 2: use of overnight respite at Maples and Lavender over time

In-house provision:

The analysis indicates a decrease over time in children using inhouse provision and a decrease in referrals. This is reflected with a decrease in the number of nights used.

The charts below show the total number of children recorded per month accessing in house provision and the total number of nights recorded from 2015. The number of children using Lavender for respite since 2015 shows a pattern of decreasing and directly correlates with the number of nights being used. The number of children using respite at Maples has also declined, however this appears to fluctuate, possible due to use of emergency additional children using this resource when required which may result in more intensive hours being required for those individuals on a short-term basis.

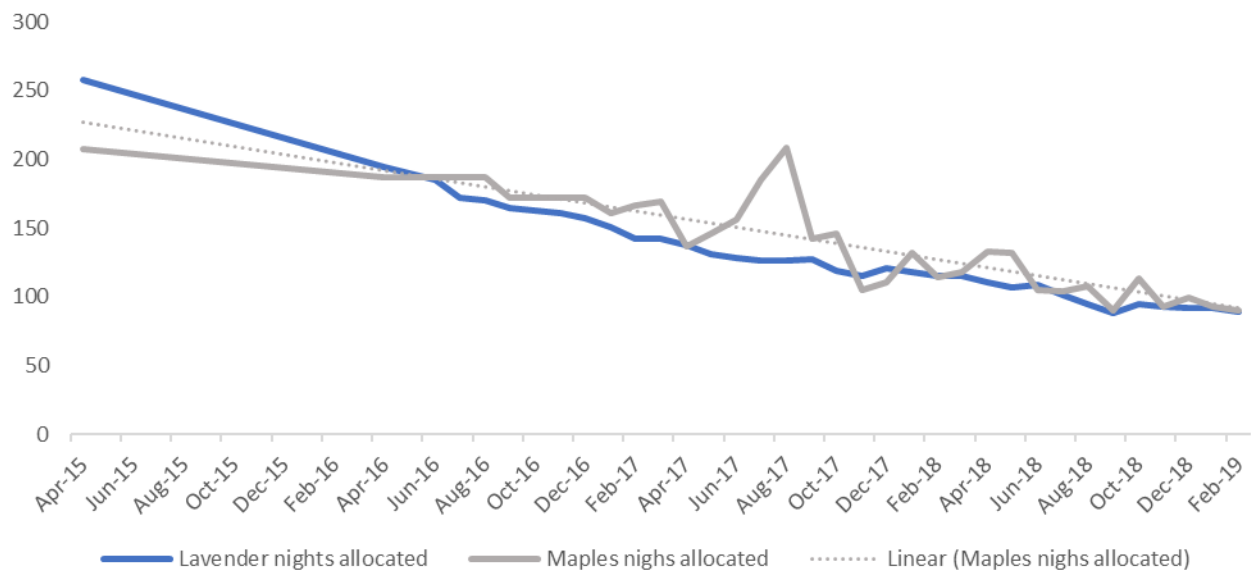
Chart Title: Number of Children Per Month In Respite at Lavender or Maples



Source: In House Data analysed by Data and Analytics

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Chart Title: Number of Nights Allocated per Month at Lavender and Maples

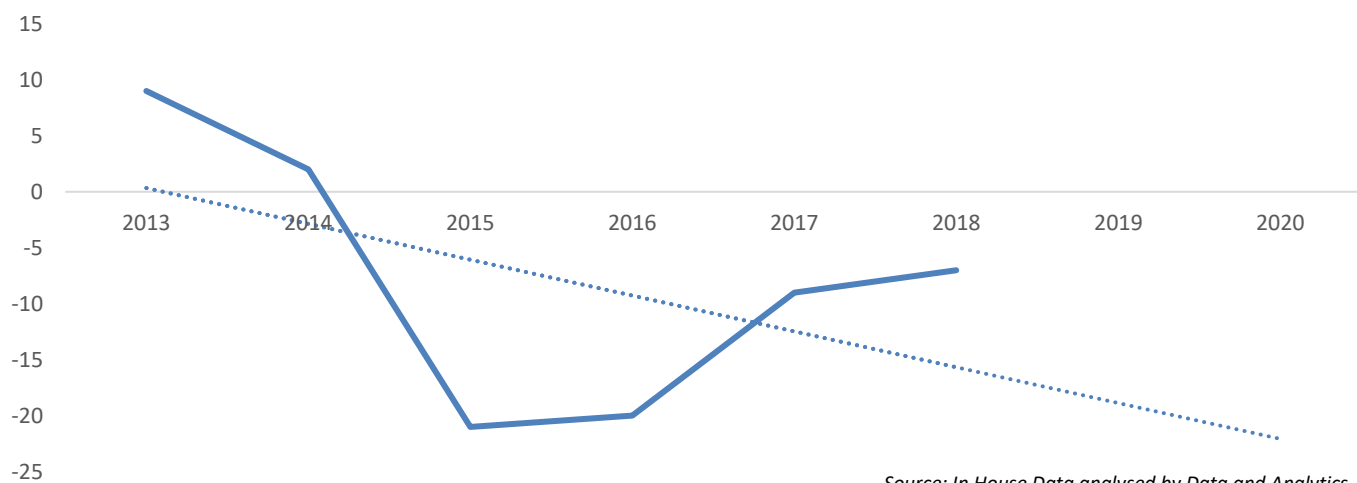


Source: In House Data analysed by Data and Analytics

The charts below shows the net movement in the number of children accessing Lavender each year (chart 1) and the subsequent allocated number of nights (Chart 2).

This graph (chart 1) displays the number of new referrals for each year minus the number of children who left the service within the same year. From 2015 onwards, there were more children leaving Lavender than starting (new referrals) each year.

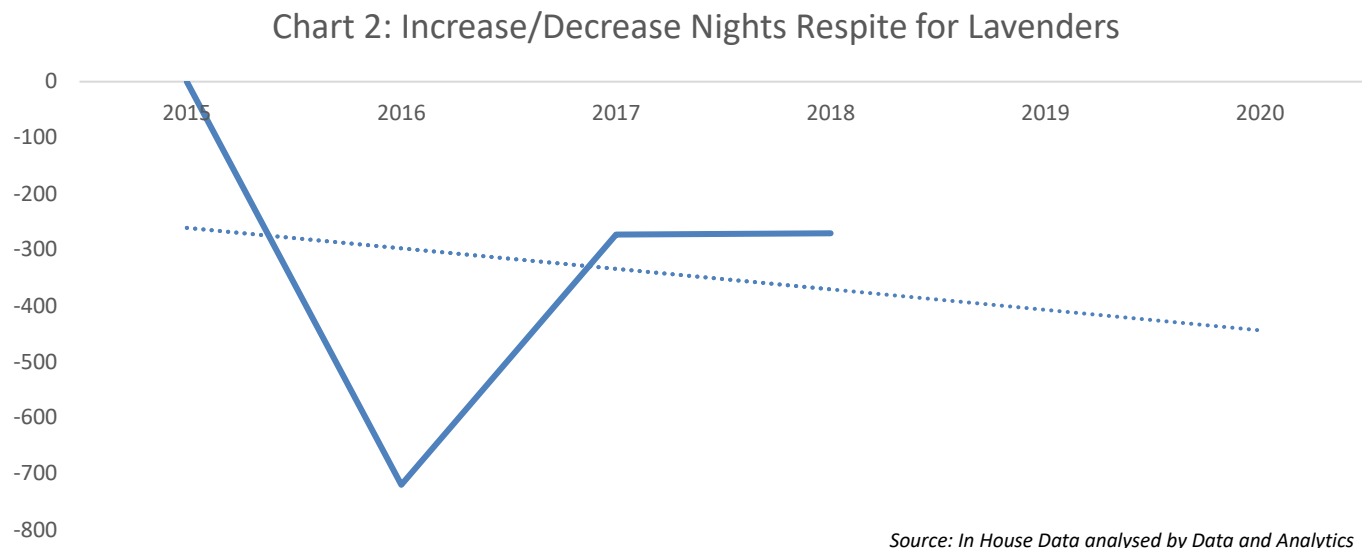
Chart 1: Increase/Decrease Number of Children Accessing Lavender



Source: In House Data analysed by Data and Analytics

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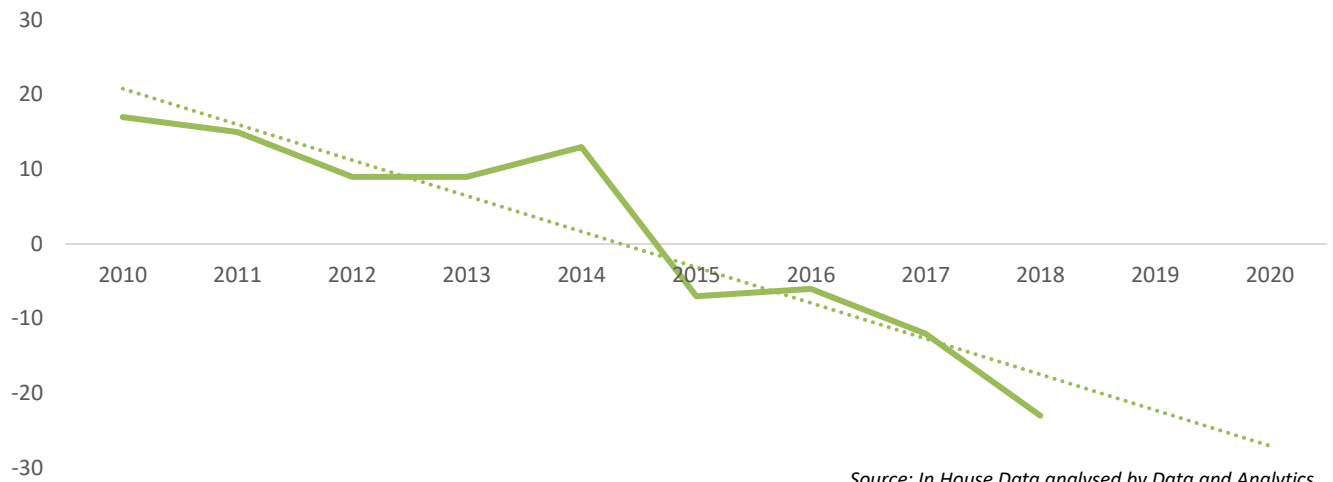
This graph (chart 2) displays the total number of allocated nights for new referrals each year, minus the total number of allocated nights for the children leaving the service within the same year. From 2016 onwards, there were fewer nights being allocated to new referrals than were becoming available through children leaving Lavender.



The charts below shows the net movement in the number of children accessing Maples each year (chart 1) and the subsequent allocated number of nights (Chart 2).

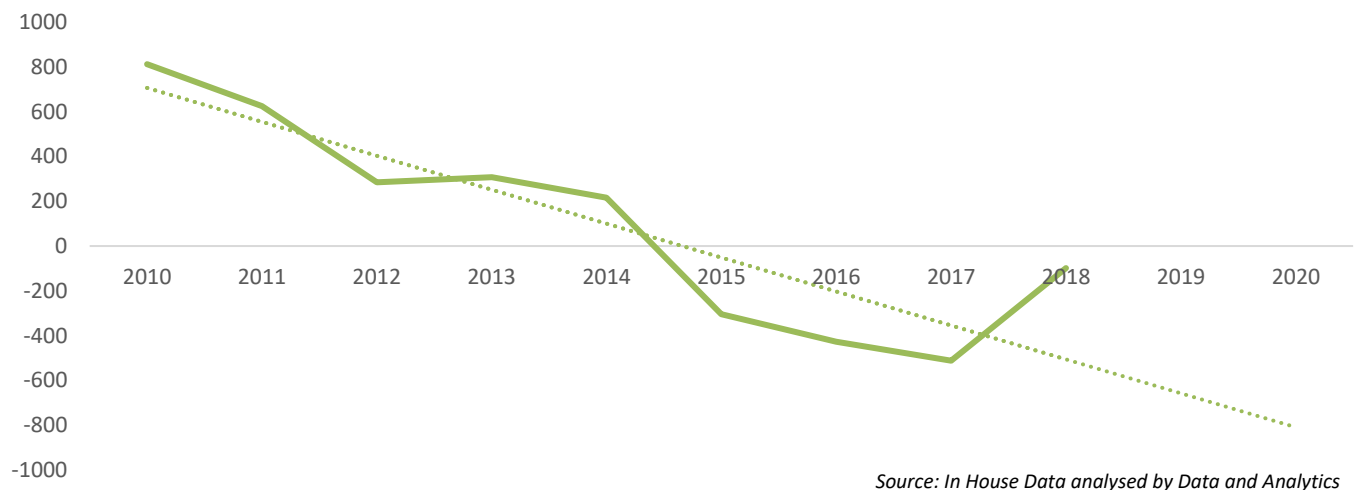
This graph (chart 1) displays the number of new referrals for each year minus the number of children who left the service within the same year. From 2015 onwards, there were more children leaving Maples than starting (new referrals) each year. This gap has increased in 2017 and 2018

Chart 1: Increase/Decrease Children Accessing Maples



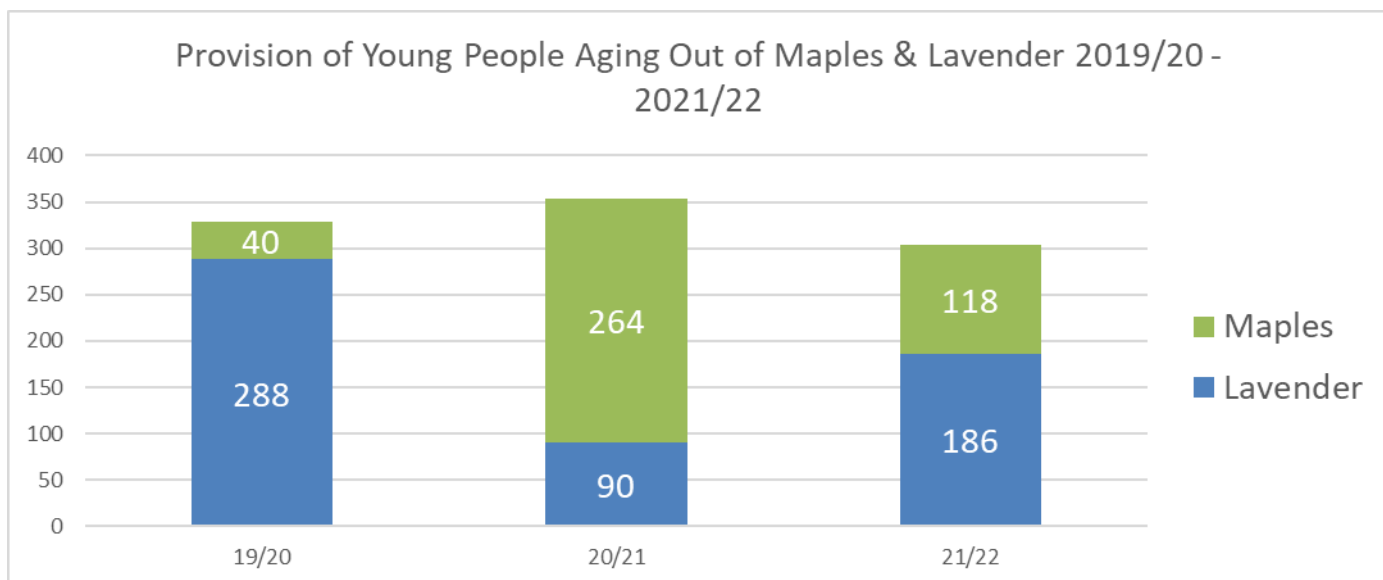
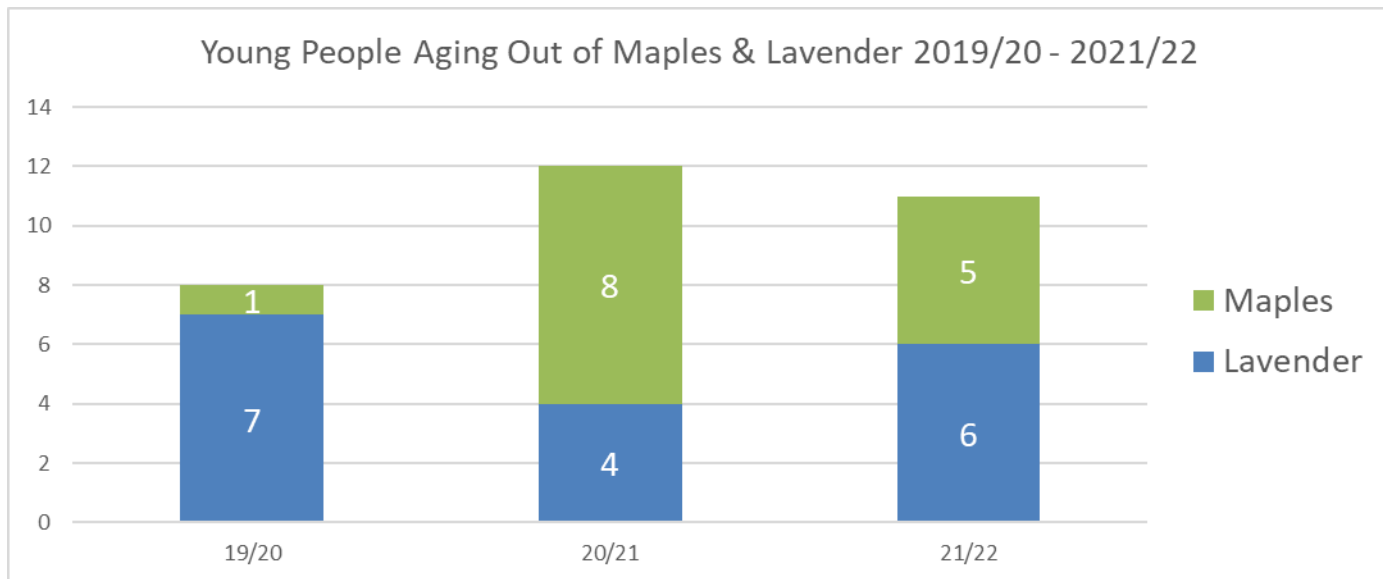
This graph (chart 2) displays the total number of allocated nights for new referrals each year, minus the total number of allocated nights for the children who left the service within the same year. From 2016 onwards, there were fewer nights being allocated to new referrals than were becoming available through children leaving Maples.

Chart: Increase/Derease Nights Respite for Maples



The charts below show the number of children who are due to turn 18 for each of the next three years (by financial year) and their allocated nights. There are in total 31 YP using a combined 986 number of nights.

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Source: In House Data analysed by Data and Analytics

Appendix 3 – This shows the costs associated with the different provisions

Type of provision	Range of standard nightly costs	Notes
DP overnight (nb early stages of offering more flexibility re use of DPs – no existing take up of this offer)	£168 based on est of 16 hours on existing DP rate of £10.50 p/h	Likely to be more as DP rate to be reviewed and may be necessary to offer higher rate for nights/waking nights etc
Fee paid Foster Carer	c.£185	Will vary according to how many nights are utilised but as current number of FPFC's are low we expect high uptake. Retainer fee for a FT FPFC is approx. £25k/yr plus a nightly allowance.
Registered overnight provision	£370 - £550, up to £760 for 2:1	£550 for seaside cottages, which is staffed by nurses and therefore more expensive
Agency carer overnight	£400 – £480 based on est of 16 hour shift	May be more depending on agency as most provision is spot purchased
Maples or Lavender overnight respite	£1,000 - £1,200 depending on occupancy level	Cost of running one flat at both locations approx £2m/year regardless of occupancy rate

There is a perception that Maples and Lavender House provision is more cost effective than the alternate spot provision being sourced.

This shows that the comparable average unit cost per night for Maples and Lavender House is significantly more expensive than some of the alternate provision options.