



Corporate Parenting Panel

Date **Friday 17 May 2024**
Time **9.30 am**
Venue **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham**

Business

Part A

Items which are open to the public and press

- 1 Apologies for Absence
- 2 Substitute Members
- 3 Minutes of the meeting held on 19 April 2024 (Pages 3 - 10)
- 4 Declarations of Interest
- 5 Number of Children in our Care and Care Leavers - Verbal update from Head of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children and Head of Children's Social Care
- 6 Ofsted Updates - Verbal update from Head of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children
- 7 Proud Moments - Verbal update from Strategic Managers
- 8 Children in Care Council Update - Presentation by young people from the Children in Care Council (Pages 11 - 18)
- 9 Pre-Birth Intervention Update - Report of Head of Children's Social Care (Pages 19 - 28)
- 10 Future Hope (previously Pause) - Report of Head of Children's Social Care (Pages 29 - 44)
- 11 Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.
- 12 Any resolution relating to the exclusion of the public during the discussion of items containing exempt information.

Part B

Items during which it is considered the meeting will not be open to the public (consideration of exempt or confidential information)

- 13 Regulation 44 visits, Aycliffe Secure Centre Homes - Report of Head of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children (Pages 45 - 70)
- 14 Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.

Helen Bradley

Director of Legal and Democratic Services

County Hall
Durham
9 May 2024

To: **The Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel:**

Councillor M Simmons (Chair)
Councillor M Walton (Vice-Chair)

Councillors R Adcock-Forster, J Charlton, S Deinali, J Griffiths,
T Henderson, C Hunt, B Kellett, M McGaun, L Mavin, S Quinn, A Reed,
K Robson, K Rooney, A Savory, P Sexton, S Townsend, C Varty and
M Wilson

Co-opted Members:

J Bell, C Brown, J McCarthy, E Reed, W Taylor, F Tweddle, R Woods and
Children in Care Council representatives

Contact: Jill Hogg

Tel: 03000 269 711

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Panel** held in **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham** on **Friday 19 April 2024** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor M Simmons (Chair)

Members of the Panel:

Councillors M Walton (Vice-Chair), R Adcock-Forster, S Deinali, J Griffiths, B Kellett, J Nicholson (substitute for Councillor J Charlton), S Quinn, A Reed, K Rooney and A Savory.

Co-opted Members:

J Bell, Billie-Leigh, Luke, J McCarthy and W Taylor

Also Present:

Lesley Baldry – Service Manager (accompanied by Rebecca for item 7)

Rachel Farnham – Head of Children’s Social Care

Molly Foster – Lawyer, Children, Adults and Health

Rachel Harris – Service Improvement Manager

Rob Johnson – Project Manager, Investing in Children

Claire Kenny – Team Manager

Hollie Meadows – Senior Practitioner

Lee Peacock – Participation and Engagement Officer

Mairie Pratt-White – Service Manager

Paul Rudd – Strategic Manager, Children’s Homes

Melanie Stubbs – Head of the Virtual School

Bernadette Toomey – Practice Lead, Safeguarding

Jayne Watson – Senior Partnerships Officer

Dawn Wilson – Senior Commissioning Officer

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Charlton, L Mavin and M Wilson and from officer M Stenton.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor J Nicholson attended for Councillor J Charlton.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Number of Children Looked After and Care Leavers

The Head of Children's Social Care, Rachel Farnham, informed the Panel that the number of children in our care had reduced from 1,223 in March to 1,211. The figure included 77 unaccompanied asylum seeking young people (UASC) of whom 42 were care leavers. The total number of care leavers was 332.

6 Ofsted Updates

The Head of Children's Social Care was pleased to report that the first Ofsted inspection of Maple House found the home to be outstanding. A celebration event will be arranged in due course, to which Members will be invited.

7 Know – What – When Project

Lesley Baldry, Service Manager and Rebecca, Investing in Children presented the Know What When guide (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

The Panel noted that the guide was developed as a result of discussions between young people of the Children in Care Council (CiCC), Investing in Children and Children's Services, on the benefits of knowing what to expect at different stages of the care journey. Copies of the guide were circulated at the meeting and the Panel viewed a short video produced to accompany the guide, which is available in print and online to all young people entering care. Rebecca explained that, when writing the guide, care experienced young people drew on the thoughts and feelings they had, when they entered care. Rebecca highlighted that the young people were particularly keen to include the section on young people's rights and she paid tribute to the hard work and dedication of the young people involved in the project.

Resolved:

That the recommendations be agreed.

8 Care Leavers Annual Survey

The Participation and Engagement Officer, Lee Peacock and Service Manager, Lesley Baldry, presented a report and delivered a presentation on the findings of the Care Leavers' Annual Survey (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

The officers informed the Panel that the survey, which was carried out between February and March 2024, reported care leavers' views regarding the support they receive, including what they feel is working well and areas for improvement. Young Person's Advisers (YPAs) assisted to ensure the survey reached as many young people as possible, which resulted in a 22% return of completed surveys.

Ninety-five percent of those surveyed said their YPA did what they said they would do and the results of the survey reflected the findings of the recent Ofsted inspection of the Care Leavers' Service. Areas highlighted for improvement included that some young people were unsure how to access their health summary. It was also found that some young people felt there could be more support to understand why they could not live with their family and some felt the transition from being supported by a Social Worker to being supported by a YPA requires further development.

The Vice-Chair, Councilor Walton, asked what action was being taken to improve the support for young people during the transition from Social Worker to YPA and the Service Manager replied that the offer had been extended to enable young people access to YPAs from the earlier age of sixteen.

In response to a further question from the Vice-Chair as to the support for young people to understand why it is not possible to live with their family, the Participation and Engagement Officer explained that a young person's understanding of their circumstances can be subject to a number of factors. He stressed the importance of ensuring the conversation continues throughout a young person's pathway as their ability to process information develops. The Vice-Chair pointed out that frequent changes of Social Worker may hinder the ongoing conversation and officers reassured the Panel that the service places great emphasis on life-story work and Later Life Letters may be written for young people, by their Social Workers, to help the young person to understand their past, present and future.

Luke echoed the comments on the importance of the consistent narrative, and he added that dialogue between young people and their carers to plan for the future should start as early as possible, to prepare young people for the transition.

Jo McCarthy, Deputy Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children and newly appointed Co-opted Member introduced herself to the Panel and she welcomed further discussions as to how health practitioners may assist the service with access to health summaries, for example, whether the NHS app may be utilised. She also commented that she was looking forward to sharing information on the health offer for Durham care leavers, including those care leavers who live outside the county, to ensure that any gaps in provision are addressed.

Luke suggested that it would be useful to have a breakdown on how many young people are benefiting from the support available within the local offer, to identify what support is having the most impact. The Service Manager agreed that there was more work to be done to understand not only how many care leavers are aware of the local offer but also how many are making use of the support.

The Panel noted that a similar survey is being developed for those under the age of eighteen and its progress will be reported at a future meeting.

Resolved:

That the recommendations contained in the report be agreed.

9 Care Leavers Strategy and Action Plan Progress Report

The Panel considered the Care Leavers Strategy and Action Plan presented by Lesley Baldry, Service Manager (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

The Panel noted the Children Act 1989 places a duty on local authorities for looked after and previously looked after children as they exit care system and Durham delivers services to young people up to the age of 25, who fall within the eligibility criteria which was outlined in the report. The presentation provided progress on six principal areas of focus, namely Pathway Plans, Education, Employment and Training, Suitable Accommodation, Improved Health Outcomes, Preparation for Adulthood and Co-Production and the voice of young people. The recent Ofsted inspection highlighted the strength of Durham's offer and the collaboration with young people. The offer extends to young parents, young people at University and young people not in education or training. In addition, care leavers who are not engaged with the Care Leavers' Service are contacted, in order to promote the support.

Councillor Reed was pleased to see that a number of care leavers are studying at University and she asked if data was available on how many students return to Durham following their studies.

The Service Manager replied that some graduates remain in the area where they study as they often establish networks there, however, opportunities for young people studying locally are increasing and further information will be provided on the progress of graduates in the future. A number of young people have recently studied for a degree in Social Work and have been interviewed by Durham County Council for Social Worker posts.

In response to a question from Councillor Reed on the availability of accommodation for care leavers, the Service Manager clarified that the service is currently working to identify properties that may be ringfenced for care leavers. Additionally the Staying Close project aims to locate care leavers close to their existing networks.

Resolved:

That the content of the report be noted.

10 Care Leavers Service Local Offer

The Panel received an update on changes to the local offer including the development of the Care Leavers' Covenant (for copy of report and presentation see file).

Lesley Baldry, Service Manager, explained that the Care Leavers' Service is part of the Regional Care Leavers' Board which aims to achieve parity across all local offers. The Panel noted the recent developments in Durham's local offer including that every care leaver is entitled to a £3,000 setting up home allowance, a free bus pass and exemption or support with Council Tax.

Aspirations for the future are to continue to grow the local offer as well as strengthen the offer to individual groups such as care leavers in custody and those not in education, employment and training. Luke suggested that housing which is close to the Care Leavers' Hubs could benefit care leavers who need extra support.

Resolved:

That the recommendations be agreed.

11 Children in Care Council Update

Billie Leigh and Luke provided an update on the 'Next Venture Fund' which is an allocation of £10,000 per annum from DCCs CEO to develop ideas to improve outcomes for care leavers (for copy of presentation see file of minutes).

The Panel heard that the Steering Group established a Panel of young people, representative of care leavers. The aim of the programme is to fund projects which meet key themes which include reducing loneliness; create opportunities; promote good mental wellbeing and inclusivity. The Steering Group allocates funding by applying the criteria whilst the Service Manager for Safeguarding and Professional Practice has overall responsibility for the budget. The Steering Group hold regular meetings with the Children's Services Senior Management Team to report on progress and fund beneficiaries are requested to provide examples of the impact of the funding. The vision for the future is that the project will seed other opportunities and build sustainability.

The Head of Children's Social Care congratulated the young people on their hard work to bring the project to fruition. She highlighted that the Chief Executive had requested that the young people use the opportunity to expand their governance and financial management knowledge. The young people had exceeded expectations and were demonstrating strong financial stewardship and due diligence.

12 Proud Moments

The Vice-Chair reported how proud she had been of Billie-Leigh and Luke when they delivered the Next Venture Fund presentation to the Regional Corporate Parenting Panel Chairs and Vice Chairs network meeting. Councillor Walton commented on how impressed those in attendance were at how Billie-Leigh and Luke delivered the presentation, with confidence and flair and she thanked them for being excellent ambassadors for Durham.

Bernadette Toomey, Practice Lead for Safeguarding spoke of a young person who has made her proud. In previous years the young person had coped with significant trauma. She was pleased to report that the young person was now thriving, working well with their Social Worker and had secured and part time job.

Robert Johnson, Project Manager for Investing in Children informed the Panel how he had been particularly proud of members of the Children in Care Council. One of the younger members of the CiCC wrote an article for the CiCC newsletter about the positive aspects of being in our care. Another young person had taken a big step forward and attended a CiCC meeting and shared his views.

13 Language Update

The Head of Children's Social Care referred to previous meetings during which the Panel had discussed appropriate language to use for care experienced young people.

She referred to the reforms underway as a result of the independent care review and the government's response, 'Stable Homes Built on Love'. The Head of Children's Social Care spoke of how she had observed a change in the narrative in the new policies from government, which could be attributed to care experienced young people influencing the agenda.

The Panel discussed words associated with 'Stable Homes Built on Love' and how they may be interpreted by young people. The Panel agreed that the same exercise should be carried out with the young people of the CiCC, for their interpretation of the words to be shared with the Panel.

14 Children with Disabilities

Bernadette Toomey, Practice Lead for Safeguarding, Claire Kenny, Team Manager and Mairi Pratt-White, Service Manager, presented the annual update on children with disabilities (for copy of report and presentation, see file of minutes).

It was reported that 27 of the total number of 292 young people the team cares for are children in our care. The officers explained that one of the main priorities of the work over the past year had been to reflect children's voices on their files. The Panel received information on how the young people are encouraged to participate in social opportunities through their Education, Health and Care Plans and short breaks and the provision of short breaks is an area of development, to increase the offer particularly for those young people with more complex needs.

The presentation included some examples of work done by Toni one of the young people cared for by the team which illustrated that Toni values her Social Worker who helps her to express her feelings and to see her family. The Project Manager for Investing in Children reported anecdotally on the positive impact the team is having on Toni and her family.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

15 Such other business

Councillor Quinn referred to concerns raised at a recent Governing Body meeting regarding the number of children, including children in our care, who are taken out of school, during term time, for holidays. The Head of Children's Social Care clarified that permission to take pupils out of school during term time is granted only in exceptional circumstances.

The Head of the Virtual School explained that schools are requested not to authorise holidays and when a child is taken out of school for a holiday, that it is recorded as 'unauthorised'.

The Panel noted that more stringent government regulations on school absence are due to come into effect from August 2024 and further information on the changes would be reported at a future meeting.

Councillor Reed, Chair of Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, informed the Panel that this issue had been a topic of focus at a recent meeting and Councillor Reed offered to provide further information to Councillor Quinn on the issues discussed at the meeting.

16 Exclusion of the public

Resolved:

That under Section 100(a)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely discussion of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

17 Regulation 44 Visits – External Children's Homes

The Senior Commissioning Officer, Dawn Wilson, presented an update on monitoring activity undertaken by the Integrated Commissioning Service in relation to Independent Children's Residential Homes in which Durham children and young people are placed (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

Stable Homes Built on Love Language – Durham CICC Older Group – 2/5/25 – All Words.

<u>Home</u>	<u>To Be Safe</u>
Meet Needs	Feel Respected
Foster Carers	Feel Listened To
Want To Go Back	Family
To Have A Dog	Football
Place of Stability	Mentally: Safe Physically Mentally
Family	Protected from Harm
Where You Make It	Love
Place Of Support	Trust
Where You Live At	Happy
Food On Table	Home
Is Where the Heart Is	Physically
Comfortable to Get What You Want: e.g. Getting A Glass of Water at Home vs A Friends House	Emotional + Physical Safety
Family + Parents	Able To Sleep At Night
Friends	The Opps Are Out Of Town
Somewhere You Can Trust	Not Scared Of A Change Of Situation
The People You Care About	Surrounded By People That Care
Warmth, Metaphorically + Physically	
Safe At Home	
Safe	

Stable Homes Built on Love Language – Durham CICC Older Group – 2/5/25 – All Words.

Somewhere To Live	
Family	

<u>Relationships</u>	<u>To Be Loved</u>
Not Alone	Not Alone
Trust	For You Through Good & Bad Times
In Love	Trust
Yourself	Yourself
Positive Relationship with Yourself	Vulnerable
Support Network	To Love You More Money
Happy	Not Something To Be Played About With
Loyalty	Family + Friends
Trust	To Be Listened To
Bonds with People	Don't Be Too Attached
Friendship	Cared About
Respect	
Friends + Family + Loved Ones	
Meeting New People	

<u>Stability</u>	<u>To Be Listened To</u>
Continuity	Holding Yourself to Account
Long Term	Paid Attention To



Stable Homes Built on Love Language – Durham CICC Older Group – 2/5/25 – All Words.

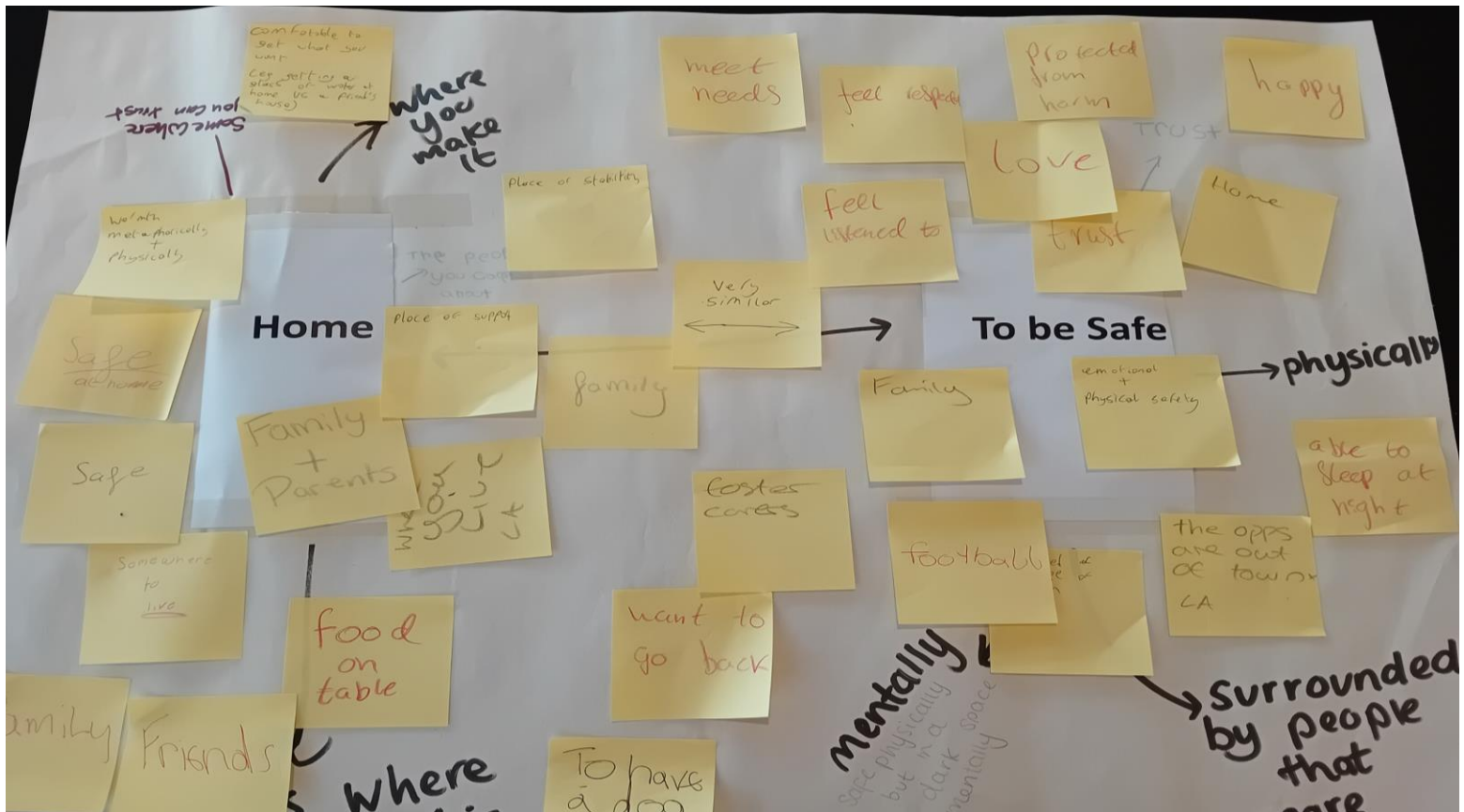
Safety	Not Ignored + Paid Incentives
Know What to Expect	Actions Speak Louder Than Words
Mommy	Listen to Your Opinions
Relationships	For Your Views to Be Acted On
Set In Stone	Promises
Stepping Stones	Kind + Positive
Routine	Views
Protective	Eye Contact
Good Community	Body Language
Social Worker Doesn't Change Every 5 Minutes	Listen to People When They Talk

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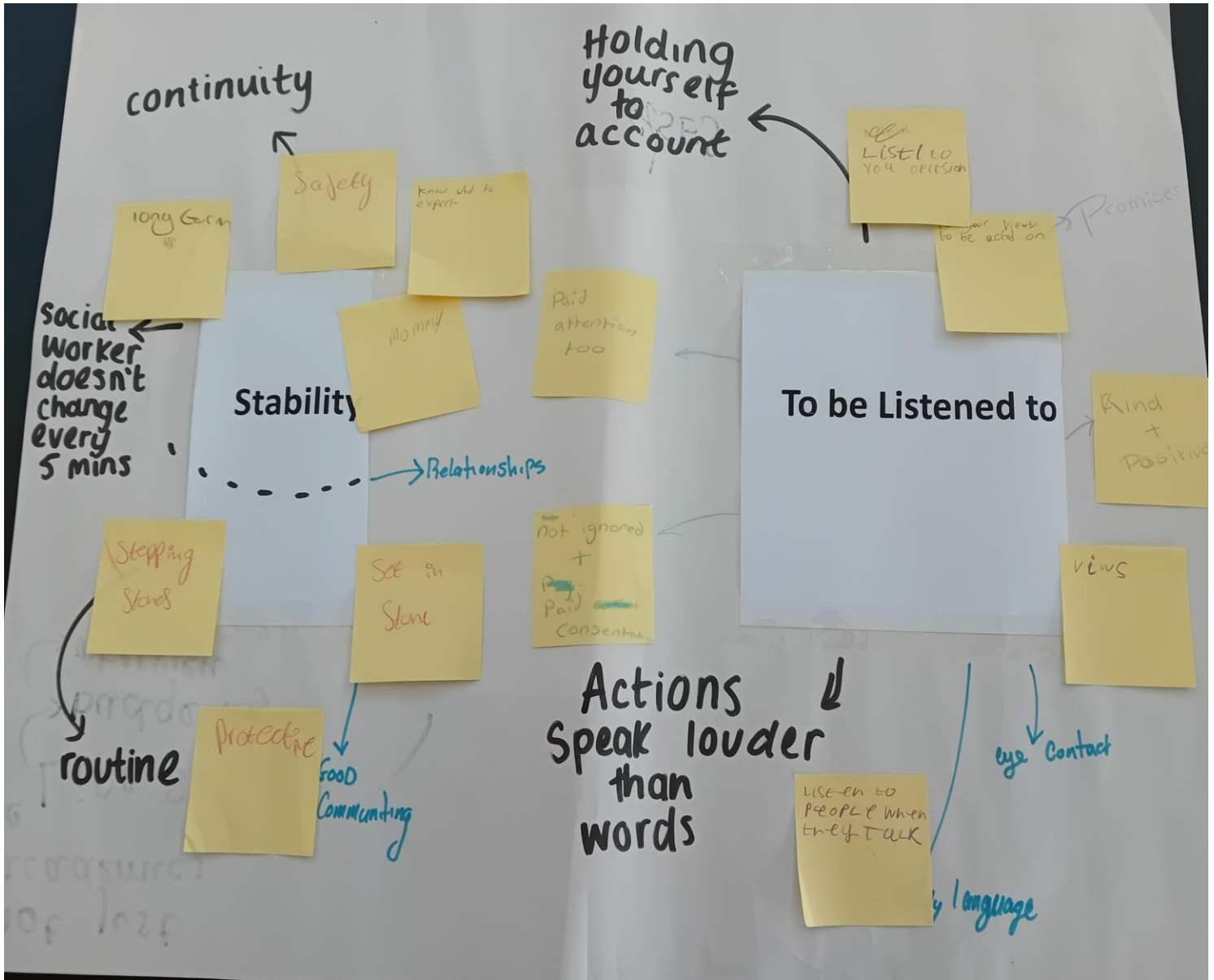
Durham Children in Care Council (CiCC) – May Update

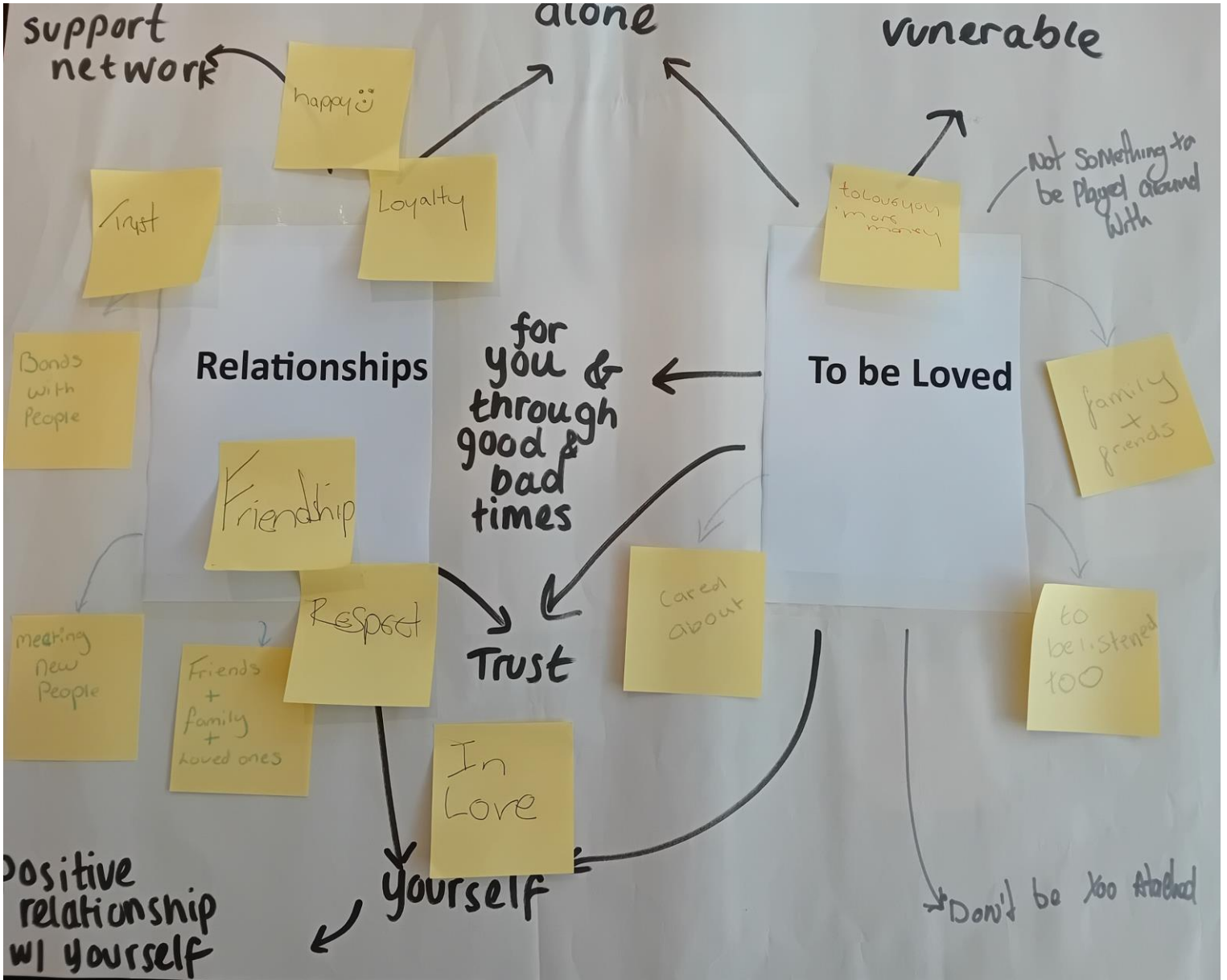
Presentation by Luke and Billie-Leigh, CiCC/ CPP co-opted representatives and Robert Johnson, Project Manager, Investing in Children

The CiCC older group discussed Stable Homes Built On Love Language. Which was discussed at the last meeting CPP meeting- this is the feedback.



Promoting the Rights of Children and Young People





CICC members reviewed DCC's Children Looked After Strategic Partnership's (CLASP) priorities and presented them to CPP in January.

At the last older CICC meeting, members graded them in order of what was important to them, which was 1 ,2 and 3.

The ask of CPP is that a meeting can be arranged to discuss the following theme like previous CICC / CPP joint meetings:-

#1 Emotional and Physical Wellbeing - It was felt that emotional and physical support tailored and provided by the right people at the right time.

#2 Feeling Safe - A stable home that creates positive memories and promotes good times growing up was seen as important.

Two themes were joint third:

#3 Positive People in Your Life – Having people around you that are positive and who you can turn to for advice/support/friendship was significant – Everyone needs a Friend! Alongside being part of the local community in different ways.

#3 Being Listened to – Having the chance to share your view on life in different ways was seen as important.



Corporate Parenting Panel

17 May 2024

Pre-Birth Intervention Update**Report of Rachel Farnham, Head of Children's Social Care, DCC****Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 This report provides an update on the progress for the Pre-birth Intervention Service (PBIS).

Executive summary

- 2 The Pre-birth Intervention Service (PBIS) was re-established in Durham's Families First (FF) Service in May 2018. The model and ambition are to enable babies to remain with their parents, or at least within the birth family where it is safe to do so. This is achieved by completing as much work as possible before the baby is born and by ensuring that the parents receive intensive support to help them to achieve sustainable change. Where this is not in the best interests of the child, then the ambition is to ensure that the baby is permanently placed with alternative carers as soon as is possible after birth and to reduce the number of carers the child experiences.
- 3 Latest Office for National Statistics data identifies that just under 1% of the County Durham population are aged under 1. More than 9% of the total children open to Durham Children Social Care (DCSC) are under one. 22% of all children that come into our care are under 1, the next largest group is 16-year-olds at 9%.
- 4 Of contacts into First Contact between the period of April 2023 and March 2024, it is noted that 40% of unborn babies and 34% of under ones go straight to a statutory referral. This is in comparison to 21% of the overall contacts of other age groups. A higher proportion of unborn and under one contacts are also triaged in the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) than for other age groups.
- 5 A higher proportion of children who are and become children in our care (CiC) in Durham are aged under one than in comparators. In 2020/21, Durham had the 5th highest under one CiC starts in the country with 29% of all CiC starts in Durham. In 2021/22, Durham dropped to 23rd

highest CiC under ones in the country, which was 24% of all CiC starts in Durham. This has reduced again in 2022/23 to 29th highest in the country, which is 21% of all CiC starts in Durham. However, this was still higher than statistical neighbour (19%), regional (18%) and national (17%) comparators.

Recommendations

- 6 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are requested to note the context of this report.

Background

- 7 A review of the PBIS criteria was undertaken in 2020, it became clear that it was difficult to implement the intervention due to the level of complexities of parents' needs and circumstances. A high proportion of the cases resulted in care proceedings and babies being placed permanently outside of parental care. The review demonstrated the need to amend the criteria, which enabled the team to have a renewed focus and to target their intervention towards those parents who would benefit from intensive support and intervention.
- 8 The criteria is as follows:
 - (a) Teenage mothers under 16 who are still in full time education;
 - (b) All active care leavers up to the age of 25, who are currently permanently resident in Durham, and where the unborn meets the requirement for a statutory pre-birth assessment;
 - (c) Parents who have had a previous child removed through care proceedings, where there is evidence of some positive change of circumstances.
- 9 For a referral to be accepted into the team, the referral must be made prior to 21 weeks gestation, and meaningful consent must have been given by the parents.
- 10 Social Workers work alongside Early Help practitioners from the One Point Service. Together they deliver intensive assessment and support, with the aim of enabling parents to safely care for their children or gather evidence to make timely decisions in relation to permanence plans. Where children remain in the care of their parents, they have established relationships with professionals based within local Children's Centres to ensure that support can be sustained and readily accessible to parents.
- 11 In the last year, the team have worked hard to develop new pathways so that individual assessments are tailored to the needs of the family rather than a one size fits all assessment. The pathways are tailored to meet learning needs, young parents and one for previous proceedings.

Outcomes for Children

- 12 The team have worked with a total of 96 unborn/ children within the last year. This is an increase from the previous year due to the expansion of the team. There were 7 families which did not meet the criteria however were accepted due to level of complexity. There were 10 families where parents were under the age of 18, some of which were under 16 of these 5 were young people in our care. There were 27 care experienced

young people and living in Durham. There were 44 families who had had a child permanently removed from their care following care proceedings, 3 of those were care experienced parents under the age of 25.

- 13 Of the 96 unborn/ children, 41 had at some point been subject to care proceedings. Of those that have concluded within the last year, 9 children have plans of adoption, 8 were made subject to subject Care Orders, 8 subject to Supervision Orders and 4 children subject to Special Guardianship Orders. There are currently 19 children subject to care proceedings ongoing.
- 14 There were 14 children that were supported under child protection plans and Public Law Outline, which did not progress to care proceedings. There were twelve unborn/ children were subject to child in need plans. One moved out of area. The remainder of children are unborn with assessments still ongoing.
- 15 Of the children with care experienced parents who had no previous children removed, 10 children (90.9%) are currently in the care of one or both parents. Of the children with young parents, 77.78 % were supported to remain in the care of parents, 1 child is currently subject to care proceedings with assessments ongoing, 1 child was placed for adoption after all potential alternatives were explored and there are 2 more unborn.
- 16 The team have also worked with 3 very poorly children over the course of the last year which has at times taken a considerable emotional impact on not only the families, but the workers involved. The team have shown absolute dedication to these children and to ensuring their needs are met even when this has meant working weekends or outside of working hours.

Two children's story

- 17 Below describes the events of two families' journeys through the PBIS. This demonstrates the commitment and dedication of the practitioners within the team. It also demonstrates the inter-face with other parts of children's services.

Baby T and Baby K

18. Baby T's family were referred to the PBIS due to his mum being under the age of 16 when she became pregnant. She had been known to Children Services throughout her own childhood and was herself subject to care proceedings when she was a toddler. The baby's father was also under the age of 18 and known difficulties with substance

misuse. There were also concerns that Mum's living arrangements were unstable and that extended family members could pose a risk to her.

19. Baby T and his parents were referred to Young Parents supported accommodation which they moved into just after his birth and a significant amount of parenting work was completed around basic care. The family were supported under a child protection plan and Public Law Outline, this was to ensure that there was a structured level of support in place and that Baby T's welfare remained the primary consideration.
20. Following some difficulties within parent's relationship Baby T's father moved out. Mum continued to have intensive support and she provide Baby T with good enough care. Around this time Mum fell pregnant and was supported to prepare for the birth of Baby K.
21. Having had the extended support from the PBIS for around 2 years, Baby T and Baby K were stepped down from child protection and the family were supported under child in need for a further period before being stepped down to early help.

Baby D

22. Baby D's mum has had previous children removed due to concerns around neglect, domestic abuse and substance misuse. Mum built a good relationship with the unborn baby's social worker during pregnancy. Given the previous worries it was necessary for the courts oversight and care proceedings were issued. Baby D remained in the mother's care throughout and proceedings concluded with no order. The judge noted that whilst proceedings had been necessary, this was a positive outcome for all.
23. Baby D remained open to the team for support and there was a brief decline which led to baby D being placed on a Child Protection Plan. However, with good relationship-based practice, Baby D's mum was supported to return to her previous levels of care and Baby D has been stepped down from a child protection for some time.
24. Baby D is now open as a child in need and has been receiving consistent care for some time. Baby D has remained open for some emotional support to mother who has a limited support network. The care remains of a good standard, and it is hoped that the Baby D will close to children's services shortly and stepping down to early help.

Hope Boxes

- 25 Hope Boxes are provided to mothers when the plan is removal at birth to start early life story work and to provide the mothers with some comfort/hope during the early stages of separation.
- 26 The boxes are provided to both the mother and child. It has two comforters within it so the smell of the mother and baby can be added to the smell of one comforter each and then exchanged. A handprint kit and wooden milestones to record birth weight, time etc are also included to allow early milestones to be recorded and memories to be created at an early stage. Life story worksheets designed by the life story coordinator are also included to allow this to start at the earliest opportunity.
- 27 Feedback from the parents has been largely positive. Some parents have provided feedback regarding the design of the box and the team are looking for something a little more suitable.
- 28 Hope boxes are now being increasingly used Families First teams to ensure early child removed from their parent's care from birth.

Real Care babies

- 29 It is recognised that one of the difficulties of completing pre-birth assessments, is that it is challenging to assess the ability of a parent to meet a child's need when the child is not born. It is also hard to demonstrate to parents, particularly first-time and young parents, the needs of such young children in a way that gives them a realistic expectation of the challenges.
- 30 We introduced 'real care' babies some time ago and these have been used to assist in completing assessments looking at parents' ability to meet the needs of their baby. The recordings tell us about parents' timeliness of responses, the ability of the parent to meet the needs, if any abusive behaviour such as shaking occurred and also if the doll was left for too long without stimulation or in inappropriate temperatures.
- 31 Real care babies have been used with a number of families and the information has then been used to inform parenting interventions. For example, some parents have had difficulties with consistent head support which has led to an increased focus on this during parenting work. They have been of particular use for younger parents or parents with additional learning needs, as a way to practice prior to the arrival of the baby.

Skills and partnership working

- 32 The Nuffield Foundation has launched a number of recent research documents which outlined a number of recommendations and guidance for social work practice when working with expecting mothers and parents with learning disabilities. The team have used the guidance developed by the Nuffield alongside the Good Practice Guidance to develop new assessment pathways which will be submitted for approval soon and hopefully implemented across all the Families First social work teams. The team have worked with early help colleagues to develop the parenting intervention and parenting workers are now in the process of being trained.
- 33 There are 8 social workers, the SWC and the Team Manager who are trained in PAMS or/ and ParentAssess which are tools to take into account parents who have some level of learning difficulties or a learning disability, which mean that they can be assessed and supported by using practical demonstrations and visual aids. There have been 23 PAMS/ ParentAssess assessments completed within the team, which if commissioned would have been a cost to the council in excess of £69,000.
- 34 There continues to be a dedicated worker from the Family Group Conference (FGC) service aligned to the PBIS. This helps to increase the parent's sense of control and ensures that family networks are central to the safety plan from an early stage. The FGC also identify alternative carers to be identified and assessed when it is not safe for a child be in parents' care following birth.
- 35 The PBIS works closely with Future Hope who work with women which have had a child permanently removed from their care. The team proactively work with Future Hope to ensure that the most vulnerable mothers are prioritised.
- 36 The PBIS are a key agency within the Pre-Birth and Under One Delivery group. The purpose of the group is to provide strategic and operational oversight of integrated pathways of support across universal, targeted safeguarding and specialist services to ensure their safety and wellbeing. The vision is for vulnerable unborn babies and babies under 1 year old to be identified at the earliest opportunity and their parents/carers provided with the best possible coordinated help and support to care for their babies safely. Where they are unable to, a timely and robust safeguarding response is in place.
- 37 The PBIS have a lead role in the regional pre-birth group and a regional group on working with parents with additional needs This provides an opportunity to share good practice and consistency across the service.

What others think

Parents views:

38 *It means so much. I can't thank all of you enough for actually giving me the chance. It's been the longest hardest journey of my life, but everything I've been through has totally been worth it. I will take very good care of M, provide her with all her needs, keep her safe, and I guarantee she will always have love, and appropriate love, from appropriate & responsible adults. And I will always reach out for help too. Thank-You for all the support you've shown us both in all the different ways you have. Will you also thank (TM) and all the other faces we've seen over these last couple of years too please.*

39 Some professionals:

Barrister: 'H (social worker) was called to give evidence and she gave very compelling evidence, an excellent witness.

Foster Carer: 'I'd like to thank you for all your hard work and concern for both R and C - and for sending us the lovely N (social worker)! We feel the transition home has been an easy process from our point of view, the amount of supervision and support I know their parents have had over this time has taken away the responsibility that J and I would otherwise have felt so heavily (and have in a past situation). So a big thank you to you and your team.

Guardian: Mammy also worked really well with your Social Worker, called B. B was a really wonderful social worker to you and to your mammy. I really think he made a big difference to mammy too."

What's next

40 The team are embedding and testing the new pathways within their own practice to ensure that they are ready for roll out across Families First

41 The team are continuing to work to develop the pre and post birth parenting work that will be completed by early help as well as family workers within Families First.

42 There will be an increased focus on encouraging engagement with the Family Hubs.

43 Work is being completed to design a new pre-birth and post-birth assessment which will allow for holistic and well-rounded assessment and timely care planning using the Signs of Safety model.

- 44 The PBIS are supporting the role of pre-birth training across families first team, this will have a particular focus on the Nuffield recommendations and Good Practice Guidance.
- 45 The PBIS are compiling a pre-birth tool kit, this will provide assessment guidance, worksheets and tools for practitioners across families first.

Conclusion

- 46 The families that the pre-birth teamwork with is high in complexity and require a significant amount of work and adaptation around the families. This can often include weekend and out of hours visits and support, adaptation of work completed and out of the box thinking. The experience of the last few years has been pulled together along with the more recent guidance to pull together the pre birth pathways to try and improve planning within the team and across children's service.
- 47 The team continues to have a number of highly experienced and dedicated social workers who have dealt with a significant number of emotional situations but dealt with it with resilience. To try and build further resilience links have been made with the Full Circle team to manage the stresses of working with such vulnerable and at times unwell children. The team has been largely stable and works well together to manage the needs of the children we oversee.
- 48 The report reflects a great deal of positive and effective working. The team are passionate and committed about achieving good outcomes for children.

Author

Jac Tyler

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The Children Act 1989 sets out the legal requirement on the local authority to support children in need and to carry out safeguarding investigations and where necessary, issue care proceedings to ensure that children are protected from harm.

Finance

No implications.

Consultation

No implications.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

No implications.

Climate Change

No implications.

Human Rights

No implications.

Crime and Disorder

No implications.

Staffing

No implications.

Accommodation

No implications.

Risk

No implications.

Procurement

No implications.

Corporate Parenting Panel

17 May 2024

Future Hope

**Report Rachel Farnham, Head of Children's Social Care, DCC****Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on Future Hope, formally known as Pause Durham.

Executive summary

- 2 Future Hope aims to reduce the number of children being taken into care and improve the lives of women who have had one or more children permanently removed from their care. Future Hope provides intensive, ongoing practical and emotional support. It is unique in targeting adults who have had engagement with children's social care as mothers but are no longer eligible for support due to their children being permanently removed from their care.
- 3 The women who are eligible have some of the most significant and complex needs in our population. Findings from Pause national evidence qualitative and quantitative data suggest that Pause/ Future Hope, or similar service generally had a positive and significant impact on the women engaging with the programme, many of whom had complex, multiple, and mutually reinforcing needs.
- 4 In order to participate, women must agree to take effective contraception. Future Hope offers them an intensive, flexible programme of support, to tackle destructive patterns, develop new skills and avoid further trauma in order to build a more positive future for themselves. The Future Hope programme is delivered with each woman over a period of 18 months.

Recommendation

- 5 Members of the Corporate Parenting panel are requested to note the contents of the report.

Background

- 6 The latest Office for National Statistics data identifies that just under 1% of the County Durham population are aged under 1. More than 9% of the total children open to Durham Children Social Care (DCSC) are under one. 22% of all children that come into our care are under 1, the next largest group is 16-year-olds at 9%.
- 7 Of contacts into First Contact between the period of April 2023 and March 2024, it is noted that 40% of unborn babies and 34% of under ones go straight to a statutory referral. This is in comparison to 21% of the overall contacts of other age groups. A higher proportion of unborn and under one contacts are also triaged in the MASH than for other age groups.
- 8 A higher proportion of children who are and become children in our care (CiC) in Durham are aged under one than in comparators. In 2020/21, Durham had the 5th highest under one CiC starts in the country with 29% of all CiC starts in Durham. In 2021/22, Durham dropped to 23rd highest CiC under ones in the country, which was 24% of all CiC starts in Durham. This has reduced again in 2022/23 to 29th highest in the country, which is 21% of all CiC starts in Durham. However, this was still higher than statistical neighbour (19%), regional (18%) and national (17%) comparators.
- 9 A reduction in the under one CiC starts continues to be a strategic priority and led to implementation of the Pre-birth and Under One development group.
- 10 Barnardo's were initially commissioned to deliver a Pause programme to the East of the county which ended April 2020. During this period the scope was limited to women who lived in the east of county. Barnardo's were then recommissioned to deliver a county wide Pause model in November 2020. The agreement was that Pause would deliver one cohort of women and at the end of that period Pause would support DCC to bring the model inhouse.
- 11 The staff team moved to DCC on 1st August 2022 and the service became known as Pause Durham. Pause agreed to fund the licence cost for 20 months, this provided an opportunity to develop a tailored programme to meet the needs of women in Durham.
- 12 The team worked alongside the women to coproduce a new name and branding for the service. On 1st April Durham Pause became 'Future Hope', with the tag line 'Stepping Forward Together'.

- 13 To enable the women, assess the support and intervention they need, pathways have been established with sexual health, domestic abuse services, housing and mental health.

Cohort of women

- 14 The annual report, appendix 2, provides details of the needs and progress of the women who have worked with Future Hope over the past 12 months. It also provides details of the current cohort of women.
- 15 Over the past 12 months Future Hope have reached out to 53 women, who between them have had 174 children removed from their care. This is an average of 3.2 per women. The average age of women was 29.4 years and 45% were care experienced.
- 16 At present, there have been no further sets of care proceedings or further children removed from the women that have graduated from Future Hope. Although not the primary aim, due to the positive, sustained changes some women have made there have been 4 children return to their mother's care, with a further 4 children are now enjoying unsupervised family time with their mothers.
- 17 Future Hope are currently working with 24 women, 3 in the engagement stage and 21 on the programme. The total number of children removed from the 21 open women is 46, which is an average of 2.2 children per women. The age range of the current cohort is 21-39 years, with an average of 29.8 years. Of the current cohort, 57% are care experienced.
- 18 There are currently 22 women on the waiting list.

Conclusion

- 19 The team are passionate and committed to achieving good outcomes for women who no longer have children in their care. The vision is of a society where no family experiences the removal of a child more than once. That women who experience, or are at risk of, the removal of children into care are given the best possible support.
- 20 There is strong evidence from national data that those issues addressed through Pause and Pause type programme's results in harm reduction in areas such as domestic abuse, substance & alcohol misuse, mental health, housing etc. It is important to note that the research mirrors the outcomes of the women who have graduated from the Durham programme. Intervention in Durham has resulted in improvements in the women's confidence and self-esteem which has led to secure homes and engaging in education and employment, which would not likely have been achieved if it was not for Future Hope.

Authors

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Future Hope assists the authority to comply with the duty in Schedule 2 Paragraph 7 Children Act 1989 to take reasonable steps to reduce the need to issue care proceedings in respect of children in this area.

Finance

Future Hope is funded by children social care, a request has been made to Health for a financial contribution.

Consultation

None.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

None.

Climate Change

None.

Human Rights

None.

Crime and Disorder

None.

Staffing

None.

Accommodation

None.

Risk

None.

Procurement

None.

Appendix 2: Annual Report

Attached as a separate document.

Future Hope (formerly known as Pause) is a project based in Durham that works with women who have children who don't currently live in their care. We know how difficult it is when families can't stay together. We are here to equip women with the tools they need to move forward. Our goal is to support women in building their confidence and self esteem, addressing the root issues, and finding the stability to make positive changes.

We work with women who have experienced, or are at risk of, repeated pregnancies that result in children needing to be removed from their care. We aim to give women the opportunity to take a break, reflect and take control of their lives, breaking a painful cycle that causes both them and their children deep trauma. To ensure that the women are able to take a break from pregnancy, we ask them to choose from the most effective forms of reversible contraception.

Our practitioners form long-term relationships with the women, helping them in all areas of their lives to achieve their goals and attain stability. We work with women regardless of circumstances, we are assertive in our outreach, working to build their trust and engagement. Our practice is trauma informed, strength based and woman focussed.

In England over 13,000 are involved in care proceedings and many women will lose their children permanently from their care. Studies have shown at least one in four of these mothers will return to court again to further sets of care proceedings. This figure is closer to one in three for women aged under 23. (Broadhurst et al., 2015, 2017b)(1). In Durham we are prioritising young mothers with the goal of intervening earlier so removals don't happen more than once.

(1)Reference Broadhurst K, Mason C, Bedston S, et al. (2017b) Vulnerable Birth Mothers and Recurrent Care Proceedings. Final Main Report. Lancaster: Centre for Child and Family Justice Research.

Eligibility criteria

- Must live in the County Durham area and have had one or more child/ren removed from their care.
 - Women will be prioritised based on age, level of need and care experience.
 - Their last pregnancy needs to be within the last 5 years.
 - We do not work with women who are currently pregnant or who have children in their care.
-

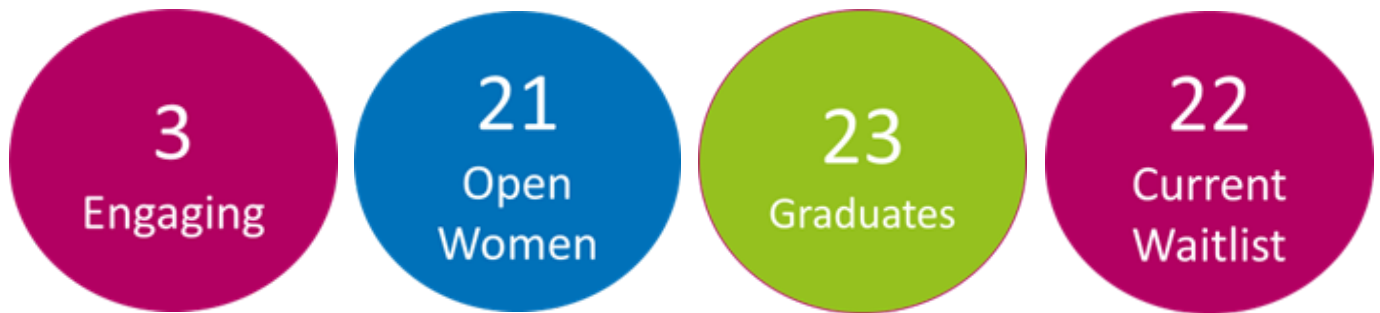
Future Hope

From April 2024 we will no longer be part of the Pause network, but will take the learning and experience from the past three years and launch our own service, bespoke to County Durham. Our new name 'Future Hope' and tag line 'Stepping Forward Together' have been coproduced by Durham women.



Stepping forward together

Our Current Community



Stage of program current women are at



We are currently working with 24 women, 3 in the Engagement stage and 21 in the Open stage of the programme. The total number of children removed from Open women is 46 which is an average of 2.2 children per woman. The current age range of our cohort is 21-39 years old with an average age of 29.8 years. 57% of the women have care experience.

At present, no care proceedings have been initiated for graduates from Pause and although this is not our primary aim, we are aware of four children being returned to their mother's care. Additionally, four women have made enough changes and been reassessed to have unsupervised contact with their children. Improving relationships between mothers and their children is a key aim of the program and is consistently in the top 3 needs that women identify when working with us.

Women who have had their children removed often have complex needs. The diagram below illustrates the key support needs identified in our community. The data shows that engagement with Pause has a significant impact on women's abilities to have these needs met.

Profile of Needs for Current Women



65% have housing needs
Of these 80% are receiving support and 7% have moved into more suitable accommodation



48% have substance misuse needs
Of these 45% are receiving support



100% are accessing a GP



52% are care experienced



96% have mental health needs
Of these 91% are receiving support



96% have experienced domestic abuse and 22% have disclosed current domestic abuse
Of these 100% are receiving support



48% need support around debt and/or benefits
Of these 73% are receiving support



61% asked for support around family time/letterbox contact
Of these, 79% are receiving support

Statistics of Women 2023-24



53
women reached

Who have had a total of
146
Children removed
(2.8 per woman avg.)

20
new women opened to Pause

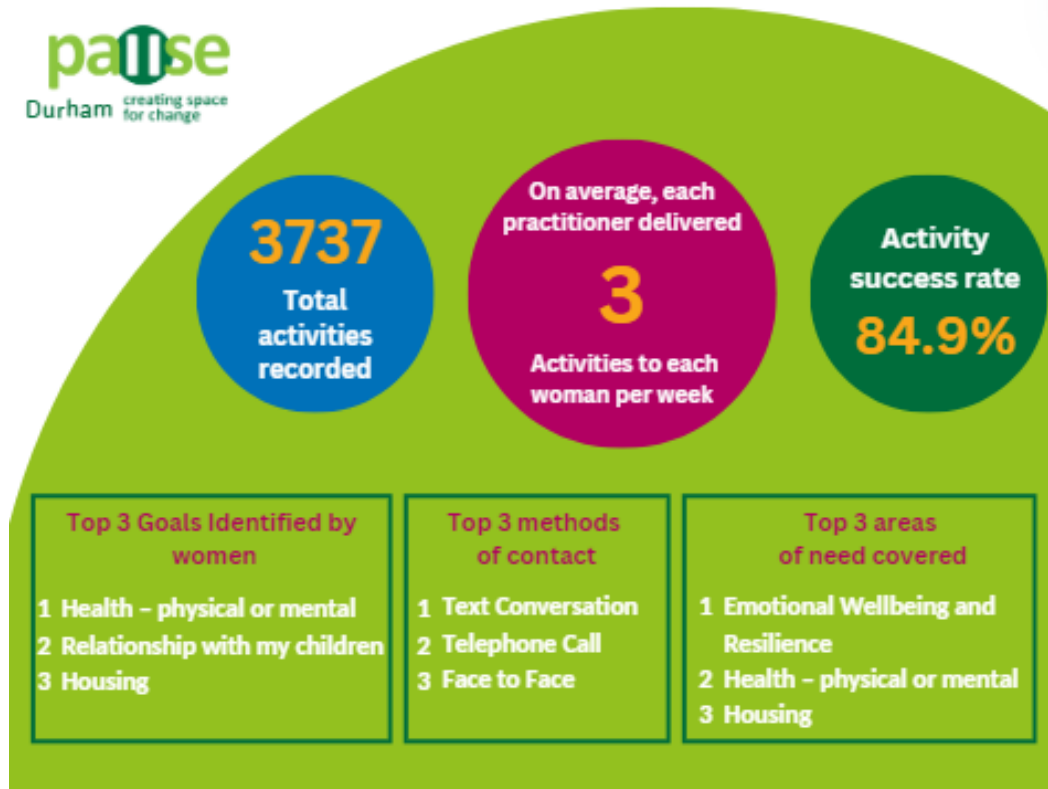
Pause Durham currently has **21** women open on the programme

6 women are in North Durham

9 women are in South Durham

6 women are in East Durham

Annual Activity Data (2023-24)



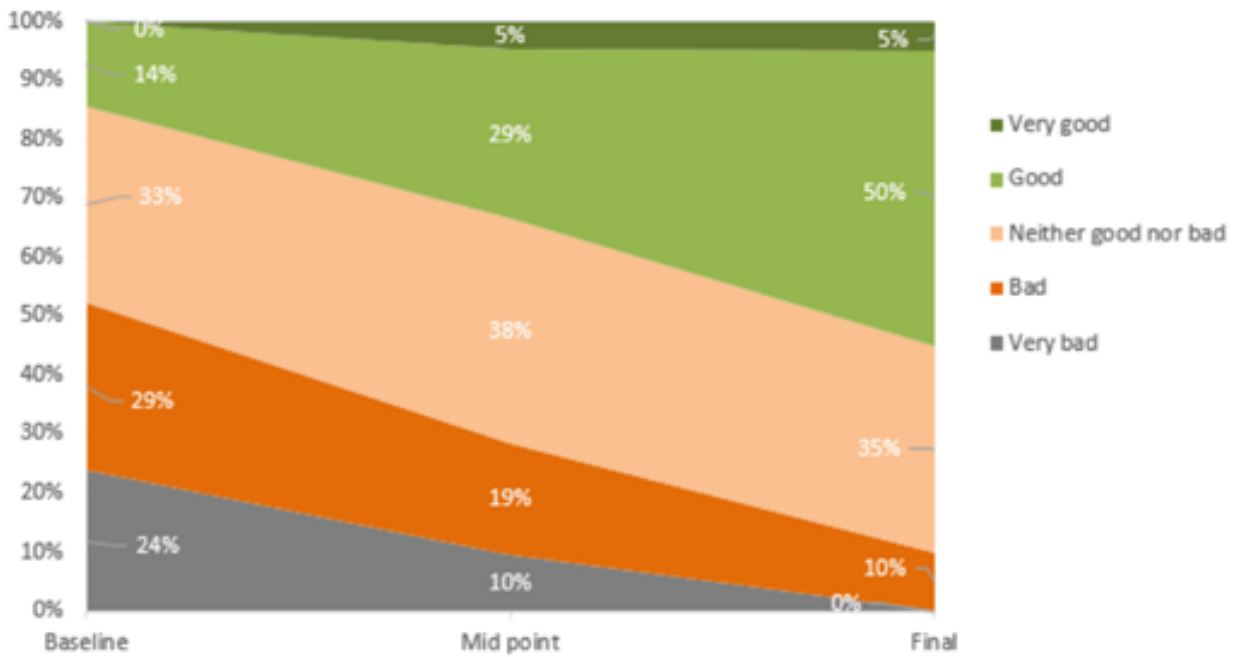
Reported Improvements Over 6 Months



Mental Health and Psychological distress charts

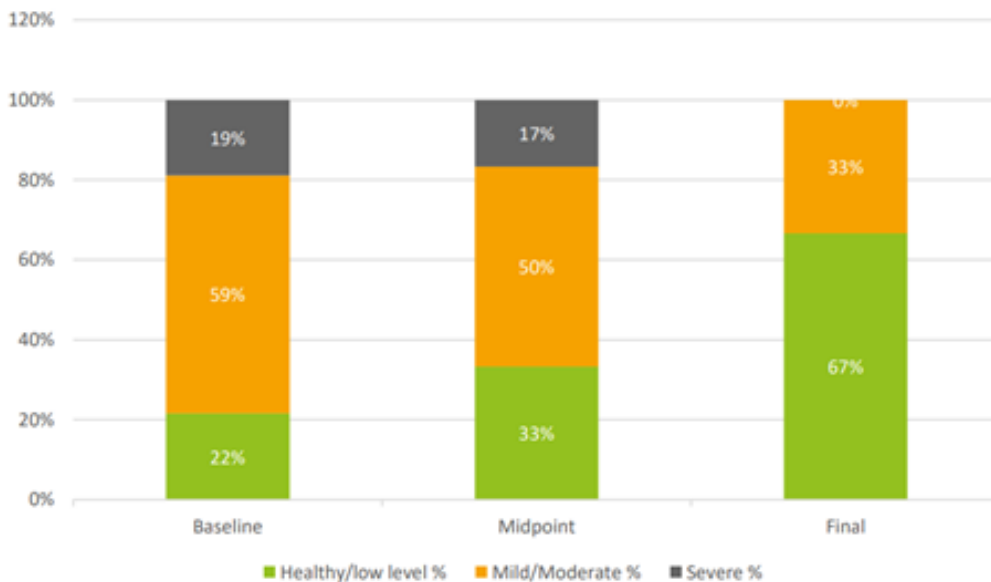
The impact of the program can be seen by comparing women's responses to the question 'How would you describe your mental and emotional health?' at the start of the program and the end. The data shows a significant increase in women describing their mental and emotional health as either 'very good' or 'good' (from 14% to 55%) and a decrease in women describing their mental and emotional health as 'very bad' or 'bad' (from 33% to 10%) through the course of the Programme. **24% of women described their mental health as 'very bad' at the start of their Pause Programme. This reduced to 0% by the end.**

How would you describe your mental and emotional health?



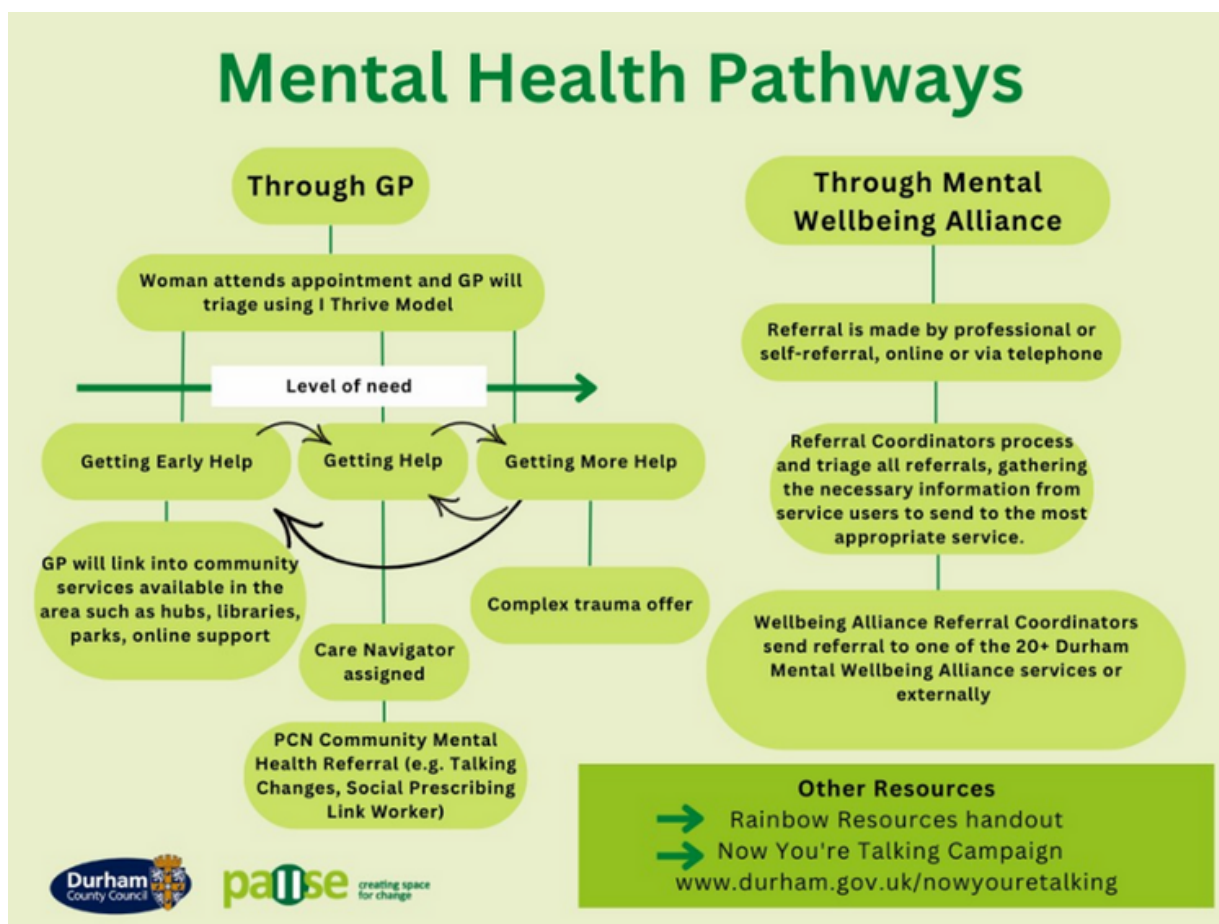
Pause Durham Levels of psychological distress (CORE-10)[2] scores also show significant positive improvements with healthy / low psychological distress levels increasing from 22% to 67% over the duration of the program. Women with severe psychological distress scores reduce from 19% to 0%.

Pause Durham Levels of Psychological distress



[2] The CORE-10 is a standardised measure of psychological distress, in which the respondent considers 10 statements and notes how frequently each has occurred for them over the past week. Each statement has an attributed score which sum to create a total CORE 10 score, with higher scores indicating higher psychological distress.

Mental Health Pathways



Research has shown that 51% of women in recurrent care proceedings have experience of mental health issues (Broadhurst, K. and Mason, C. 2017)(3). 96% of the women we currently work with, have experienced issues with their mental health.

This year has seen us create and implement a clear mental health pathway, working alongside Public Health. This is working well and Practitioners are clear on what support is available to women and can give clear options for accessing it. We continue to work on options for therapeutic pathways, as women often have challenges accessing the interventions recommended in court as the don't meet the required thresholds. (Mason et al. 2022: 21)(4) or it is not offered in a form that sufficiently meet the complex needs of these mothers.(Mason et al. 2020)(5)

(3) Broadhurst, K. and Mason, C. (2017). "Vulnerable Birth Mothers and Recurrent Care Proceedings". Lancaster University

(4) Mason C, Broadhurst K, Ward H, et al. (2022) Born into Care: Developing Best Practice Guidelines for when the State Intervenes at Birth. Nuffield Family Justice Observatory.

(5) Mason C., Taggart D. and Broadhurst K. (2020) Parental non-engagement within Child Protection Service - How can understandings of complex trauma and epistemic trust help? Societies 10(4): 93.

Graduate Story

K's Story

- She is a care experienced young woman who met the father of her children at the age of 16 while living in a hostel
- She had two children removed from her care, and had recently experienced pregnancy loss with her third child
- She was in a domestically abusive relationship and struggling with drug misuse and at risk of homelessness
- She was extremely isolated and had very poor mental health
- She completed a full Pause programme and was supported to move to safe accommodation and access services to address her needs
- She is now working part-time, seeing a counsellor and more hopeful for the future

“ Tell them my kids will know who saved there mammy!! Because Pause saved my life and ill say that for the rest of my life because yous did you brought the colour back into the world for me when everything was just so dark and horrible ill never forget pause or anyone in it both ... I'd never forget anything you did for me and I keep going cause I can hear your calming voice in my head telling me I can do it!! You always say it's me that did the work I agree I did but you got me there.’ ”

– Pause Graduate

K shares her honest reflections on Pause Durham

“ What Pause has given me is a group of girls that are not really judgemental. I used to love it, I used to love waking up on a Wednesday and know that I was going to group. You helped us get away from an abusive relationship, you helped us move away from the toxic traits I had and I've learned to say no. I learned that my boundaries are my boundaries. You can be yourself around Pause and you can be vulnerable and angry and they'd still not walk away from you. Id of give me a slap basically! But they stood by us. If it wasnt for Pause, I probably would've killed myself and that's me being honest.- K ”

We are passionate about amplifying the voices of the women we work with, we are always looking to refocus and improve upon our practice. Please see the feedback collected from women we have worked with this past year.

“
My practitioner goes above and beyond for me. She either supports me or finds the right people who can. She got me out to the farm and now I'd like to keep going to group activities”

“
The groups give me a couple of hours doing something different and socialising. I enjoy all of the programme If I didn't have Pause support I don't where I would be now to be honest. I can always get through to XXX, she helps me to get to my appointments”

“
She's helped me through a lot actually. she's a good lass, I really like her. In the past when I've gone to mental health workers, you open up to them and then they change who you are seeing and it's hard to trust them. I can tell her my problems and not be judged. when I'm having an off day I can ring her and let it all out My trust issues towards people are very bad but I trust her 100% I always keep her updated on what's going on in my life. There's nothing you can do better”

“
I don't think anything has to be changed activities are my favourite part of Pause”

“
Pause is fine the way it is, it's on my time so I know if I don't want to go out I can just call instead. XXX goes at my own pace. I like being able to speak my own mind knowing I'm not being judged for things.”

As our growing wait list shows, the need for relational, trauma informed and woman centred post care proceedings support is great. Our team currently has 3 Practitioners and can work with up to 24 women at one time. This year we are hoping to expand our team so more mothers across County Durham can access this support.

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