

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.

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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.