



Corporate Parenting Panel

Date **Friday 19 April 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 8 March 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
- 6 Ofsted Updates - Verbal update from Head of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children
- 7 Know-What-When Project - Report of Head of Children's Social Care (Pages 11 - 22)
- 8 Care Leavers Annual Survey - Report of Head of Children's Social Care (Pages 23 - 44)
- 9 Care Leavers Strategy and Action Plan Progress Report - Report of Head of Children's Social Care (Pages 45 - 58)
- 10 Care Leavers Service Local Offer - Report of Head of Children's Social Care (Pages 59 - 68)
- 11 Children in Care Council Update - Presentation of young people from the Children in Care Council (Pages 69 - 74)
- 12 Proud Moments - Verbal update from Strategic Managers

- 13 Language Update - Stable Homes Built on Love - Verbal update from Head of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children
- 14 Children with Disabilities - Report of Head of Children's Social Care (Pages 75 - 94)
- 15 Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.
- 16 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)

- 17 Regulation 44 Visits - External Children's Homes - Report of Head of Integrated Commissioning (Pages 95 - 102)
- 18 Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.

Helen Bradley

Head of Legal and Democratic Services

County Hall
Durham
11 April 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 8 March 2024** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor M Simmons (Chair)

Members of the Panel:

Councillors M Walton (Vice-Chair), R Adcock-Forster, B Coult, S Deinali, J Griffiths, C Hunt, B Kellett, J Nicholson, S Quinn, K Rooney, C Varty and M Wilson

Co-opted Members:

Alex and Luke, J Gamble and W Taylor

Also Present:

L Armstrong – Professional Practice Manager
R Farnham - Head of Children’s Social Care
R Harris – Service Improvement Manager
R Johnson – Project Manager, Investing in Children
H McAloon – Strategy Team Leader
G McNulty – Lawyer, Children, Adults and Health
L Peacock - Participation and Engagement Officer
P Rudd – Strategic Manager, Children’s Homes
M Stenton – Deputy Director, Children and Young People’s Services
M Stubbs – Head of the Virtual School
B Toomey – Practice Lead, Children and Young People’s Services
J Watson – Senior Partnerships Officer

Prior to the commencement of business, the Chair reported, with regret, the death of Councillor Isabella Roberts. Attendees stood for a minute’s silence to pay their respects to Councillor Roberts.

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors J Charlton, T Henderson, L Mavin, K Robson and A Savory and from co-opted members Billie-Leigh, J Bell and C Brown.

2 Substitute Members

Councillors B Coult and J Nicholson substituted for Councillors L Mavin and J Charlton, respectively.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared.

5 Number of Children in Our Care and Care Leavers

The Deputy Director of Children and Young People's Services informed the Panel that the number of children looked after stood at 1,223, with 22 young people placed for adoption, 321 care leavers and 74 unaccompanied asylum seeking young people.

6 Ofsted Updates

The Head of Children's Social Care reported a busy period of Ofsted inspections. Initial feedback from the inspections was pleasing and the published reports will be shared in due course.

7 Proud Moments

The Head of Children's Social Care spoke of the great sense of pride she felt when a group of young people including Alex and Luke, presented an item at the recent management team meeting. During the presentation, the young people provided information on the Next Venture fund which has been made available by the Chief Executive, to develop ideas to improve outcomes for care leavers. The Chief Executive requested that the young people use the funding opportunity to expand their budget management and governance knowledge. The young people obliged by establishing a steering group, appointing a Chair, Treasurer and Secretary and an independent scrutineer. They also developed a referral process and criteria for accessing the fund which is aligned to care leavers' ambitions. The Head of Children's Social Care commended the young people on their professionalism in delivering the presentation at the high level meeting.

8 Children in Care Council Update

The Panel welcomed Alex and Luke to present the monthly Children in Care Council (CiCC) update (for copy of presentation see file of minutes). It was reported that Billie Leigh had tendered her apologies for the meeting as she was speaking at an event to celebrate International Women's Day.

The Panel noted that work is ongoing with Service Leads to align the CICC's work programme with the Children Looked After Strategic Partnership (CLASP) and Corporate Parenting Panel priority areas. Themes identified included the importance of feeling safe, creating memories, the benefits of positive role models and tailored support for young people. The importance of providing information in a way that is timely, relatable and understandable was also discussed as well as ensuring young people are listened to and are encouraged to be the best they can be.

Alex then presented a short film which she had produced, entitled 'We are more than care' which was launched on Care Day. The Panel congratulated Alex and all the young people involved in the production, saying the young people are showing great potential for the future.

The Vice-Chair referred to the theme of improving understanding and she referred to the work done to provide clear information, for example the 'Know, What, When' guide and asked whether this work is reaching all young people, or if there is a gap in communications. The Project Manager for Investing in Children clarified that the discussions had focused on building on the good work in place, to use various different techniques to provide information, based on the needs of individual young people.

9 Regional Pathfinder Project Update

Bernadette Toomey, Practice Lead for Children and Young People's Services presented a report on the regional pathfinder project 'Foster North East' (for copy of report and presentation, see file of minutes).

The Panel noted that following the independent review of children's social care, all 12 local authorities in the north east collaborated to form a regional hub for recruiting new foster carers. The project, which commenced in September 2023, had led to an increase in expressions of interest in Durham for potential new foster carers.

The Vice-Chair commented on the merits of the activity summary to understand the marketing methods which have the most impact. In response to a request from Councillor Coult, the Practice Lead agreed to arrange for the links to social media pages to be supplied to all elected members to share within their networks.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be agreed.

10 Performance Update

The Panel received the quarterly overview of performance, covering the period September to December, in relation to children in our care and care leavers presented by Helen McAloon, Strategy Team Leader. The performance management framework aligns with the Local Government Association's key lines of enquiry for Corporate Parenting Panel members (for copy of report and presentation, see file of minutes).

It was reported that the net increase in the number of children and young people in our care continues, with an increase in the number of children entering care and the number of young people leaving care remaining steady. During the quarter, the age cohorts experiencing the greatest increase were the 1-4 and 10-15 age cohorts and the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking young people in our care continues to increase.

The number of Social Workers with caseloads of more than 25 cases had reduced and it was reported that over 70% of Social Workers in the Children in Care and Care Leavers teams have fewer than 25 cases.

Performance with regard to initial and review health assessments had dipped, however the increase in the number of children in care impacted on this indicator. Placement stability continues to be an area of focus and, in response to a request made by the Panel at the previous meeting, the report included data in respect of the number of children and young people placed with friends and family.

It was reported that the colder weather was an influencing factor in the reduction in the number of young people in care with a missing episode during the quarter.

The proportion of care leavers in suitable accommodation was in line with benchmarks, however, the number of care leavers in education, employment or training (EET) had fallen below benchmarks during the quarter.

Responding to a question from the Vice-Chair as to whether any themes were emerging in relation to missing incidents, the Head of Children's Social Care explained that trend information is gathered from return to home meetings and further information will be provided when the matter is covered in more detail, at a future meeting.

The Vice-Chair commented on the support provided to care leavers to assist them to progress into post-16 education, employment and training, therefore it was surprising to see that performance had fallen below the benchmark.

The Head of Children's Social Care referred to the challenges for care leavers who can often face multiple barriers. In addition, a number of care leavers access benefits which can act as a disincentive therefore work was ongoing to incentivise further education, employment and training. Councillor Hunt asked whether there was evidence of discrimination against care leavers from employers. The Head of Children's Social Care responded that she was not aware of any direct discrimination, however, it is recognised that care leavers face barriers. The Head of Children's Social Care suggested that this may be an area of focus for further discussion, at a future meeting.

Councillor Reed referred to the young people who go missing and asked whether they do so in an effort to return to their family home. The Head of Children's Social Care replied that young people who go missing often return to their family home. Assessments may determine that the best outcome for a young person is to return home and when this is the case, intensive support will continue to be provided to the young person and their family on the return home. The Head of Children's Social Care clarified that those young people who were not offered a return to home meeting had not, in fact, gone missing as their whereabouts were known to the service.

Luke asked if further information was available as to why EET performance had dipped. The Head of the Virtual School informed the Panel that quarter three data may be subject to a lag as it can take time to gather information when young people leave statutory education and it may be the case that when all the information is available, actual performance may be better than reported. She added that the Virtual School's Post 16 Officer, together with the Progression and Learning team now track the progress of young people, from year 10, to ensure more information is available.

The Head of Children's Social Care highlighted that Durham's EET performance is broadly in line with that of statistical neighbours. She added that she would follow up the analysis of performance with the service, to identify whether a particular intervention accounted for the peak in performance during 2020-21.

Resolved:

That the content of the report and presentation be noted.

11 Corporate Parenting Panel Development Session and Action Plan Quarter 2

The Deputy Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services delivered a report and presentation on key areas highlighted for discussion at the development session held on 15 September 2023 (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Members were asked to consider additional training that may be beneficial to their role and further improvements for the development of the Panel.

The Vice-Chair commented that the previous development session had been well received and it provided members with a useful opportunity to seek clarification on specific issues and she suggested that a regular newsletter could be issued to all elected members, as corporate parents to update them on current issues.

Councillor Quinn referred to information sessions previously held after full Council meetings and suggested that these could be re-established. Councillor Nicholson, Chair of the Council, added that she would be happy for the suggestion to be considered.

Councillor Varty suggested that members of the fostering panel could be invited to a future development session, to speak about their role.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

12 Poetry Book

Rachel Harris, Service Improvement Manager, presented the Poetry Book report (for copy of report see file of minutes).

The Service Improvement Manager referred to discussions at previous meetings at which Members had requested that the young people be supported to curate their poetry work into a collection. With funding from Children's Social Care and the Virtual School and, in partnership with a local poet, Service Leads held poetry workshops and the young people were helped to create the 'Cherished' poetry book.

The Panel welcomed Melissa, Alex, Alannah and Kayden to the meeting together with their carers and the local poet who had helped with the project. The young people recited some of their favourite poems which were included in the book and the poet also shared a poem which she had written, drawing on the inspiration she had received from the young people.

The Service Improvement Manager thanked all those who assisted with the project. The book will be distributed to all schools, libraries, Beamish and Shildon Museums and Children's Social Care teams. The Panel requested that enquiries be made as to whether paper copies of the book could be obtained for circulation to all elected members. It was noted that an electronic version of the book was included in the CPP meeting papers.

The Panel congratulated all the young people who had contributed to the book and to those who had attended the meeting to share their poems.

Resolved:

That the content of the report be noted.

13 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.

14 Regulation 44 Visits

Paul Rudd, Strategic Manager for Children's Homes, delivered a presentation on the NYAS Regulation 44 recommendations for the period September 2023 to December 2023 and answered questions from the Panel (for copy of presentation see file of minutes).

The Strategic Manager undertook to contact NYAS and provide an update to Panel members who are awaiting contact from their NYAS representatives.

Resolved:

That the presentation be noted.

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Corporate Parenting Panel**19 April 2024****Know, What, When Project****Report of Rachel Farnham, Head of Children's Social Care, Children and Young People's Service, DCC****Electoral division(s) affected:**

None

Purpose of the Report

- 1 This report is to provide an update on the Know, What, When Project to members of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Executive summary

- 2 The younger children from the Children in Care Council identified a need for them to be able to reassure children coming into Local Authority Care.
- 3 We wanted to use their own experiences to be able to explain to children what happens when they come into Local Authority care.
- 4 We wanted to provide reassurance recognising some of the worries children might have when they come into Local Authority Care.
- 5 We spent time during the school summer holidays with a group of eight younger children, planning and developing the Know, What and When leaflet. The young people wrote in their own words what they wanted to tell children coming into Local Authority Care and drew pictures to illustrate what happens and how this can feel.
- 6 The Service then spent time looking over a draft version of the Know, What, When Guide with the children. Staff from Investors in Children then worked on the final version of the Know, What and When Guide with the children.
- 7 The children and young people then completed a voice over of the guide.
- 8 The guide will be available in printed copy and online for all children coming into care from March 2024.

- 9 In August 2024, we will review the Know, What, When Guide, gaining the views of children coming into Local Authority Care who have been given this and adapting the guide if needed.

Recommendations

- 10 Corporate Parenting are asked to:
 - (a) Note the final copy of the Know, What, When Guide.
 - (b) Agree that this guide can be shared with children coming into Local Authority Care.

Background

- 11 Corporate Parenting saw the need for supporting children coming into Local Authority Care using the experiences of other children.
- 12 The younger group from the Children in Care Council agreed that children would benefit from their support when they came into Local Authority Care.
- 13 As a Care Leaver Service we understand the needs of children coming into Local Authority Care and how ensuring this is well supported can have an impact on outcomes for young people leaving care.

Main implications

- 14 We are able to better support children coming into Local Authority Care and the perspective of children who have already experienced this, they know how this can feel.
- 15 The additional impact of this has been allowing children to think about and process their own experiences and gain a better understanding of what has happened in their own lives.

Conclusion

- 16 The Know, What, When Guide should be a useful tool to allow children coming into Local Authority Care to understand what will initially happen from the voice and understanding of children who have already experienced this.

Author

Lesley Baldry

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications.

Finance

The only financial implication is the printing cost of the leaflets.

Consultation

Children have developed this and been consulted throughout to ensure they are happy with the finished product.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Although the guidance is targeted at younger children it can also be adapted and translated for older children and for those with English not being their first language.

Climate Change

The only impact on climate change would be the printing of the leaflets however an online copy will be used whenever possible.

Human Rights

The Right to a Family Life is supported by this guidance as it includes information relating to the child's time with their birth family and how they will be cared for within a foster family.

Crime and Disorder

We know that supporting children well when they are in care so that they understand what is happening and can emotionally manage this can reduce them being involved in criminal activity into adulthood.

Staffing

The guidance will be shared with the children by their social worker who will already be allocated.

Accommodation

No additional accommodation is required.

Risk

This guidance will only be shared with a child when their social worker has assessed this is appropriate and it does not add to their anxiety or worries.

Procurement

No implications.



Know, What, When Guide



Your guide
to the first
few weeks
in care.

- 3 Introduction
- 4 How you might be feeling
- 5 Fostering families
- 6 Seeing your family
- 7 Support for you
- 8 Health and education
- 9 My rights
- 10 Children in Care Council
- 11 Useful information/contacts
- 12 A special thank you

Introduction

This guide has been made by Durham Children in Care Council members to help you understand what your first few weeks in care could be like.



Drawn by Allana Aged 7

"Coming into care can be scary but you don't need to be scared, even though you are not living at home anymore you don't need to be worried, you have got this!"

Alanah Aged 9

How you might be feeling

When coming into care for the first time it can be really scary, but this is completely normal.

This guide has been developed to let you know that there are people who will be there for you to help you with this difficult time.



For example, any adult that will be part of your care experience such as:

- Your foster family
- Your social worker
- Someone at school, like your favourite teacher
- Your family/brothers and sisters

Fostering families

When you first come into care you will live with a foster family. You might have a lot of questions and feel scared and confused.

Your social worker will be there to answer any questions.

Sometimes you might have to move from one foster family to another. A social worker should provide you with a family booklet with lots of information to help you understand. Below is what we think you need to know about the different foster families:

- **Long Term Foster Families** are when foster families will look after a young person until they reach adulthood.
- **Short term Foster Families** are when foster families will look after a young person anywhere between 6 months and 2 years.
- **Connected Care Families** also known as kinship care are when your family members will be assessed as to whether they can look after you.
- **Children's Homes** - Some children are cared for in children's homes by staff members who are part of a team that look after children.



Seeing your family

Durham County Council should always promote positive relationships between you and your family. If for any reason you can't see your family, your social worker will give you a reason as to why you can't.

You will also get to do activities with your foster family, but it's important to remember that you will get the chance to do activities with your family, supported by your social worker.

Sometimes after seeing your family you can feel worried and upset as to why you can't go home with them. Your foster family and social worker will be there to talk with you about these feelings.



Support for you

When you come into care there are lots of different people who can help you have a voice and feel listened to. These are the ones which we think are important:

- Your social worker
- Support Workers
- An Advocate
- Counselling services e.g. Full Circle, which your social worker can tell you more about
- Your Foster Family
- Children in Care Council
- Teachers at school
- Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)



Health and education

Within the first 3 weeks when you come into care there needs to be a plan put into place around your health and education.

Personal Education Plan (PEP)

A pep meeting should include your social worker, your foster family and a teacher from the school. It is important to know that these meetings are about YOU so you can make choices!

In this meeting you will talk about what is going well at school, what isn't going as well and how the school can be made better for you. For example, if you are finding maths hard you can come up with a plan so that things can be put into place, like getting a tutor or extra books.



Health Review/Plan

This can take place in a comfortable and safe space of your choice where you will get a chance to talk alongside your Nurse/Doctor and can also choose to have your foster family there for support.

You can also talk about things like seeing the dentist, your emotional health, exercise, healthy lifestyle and diet. You can talk about your relationships with others at home and school.

Your rights

All young people have the right to:



Have somewhere to live



Be treated as an individual



Have an education



Be listened to and have a say about decisions in their life



Be safe

All rights are outlined in United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Young people in care also have the right to:



See people who are important to them (unless there's a good reason not to)



Make a complaint/ give feedback



Ask to see their file



Have pocket money

What is the Children in Care Council?

We are a group of young people who are in care and work alongside different adults from Durham County Council and Investing In Children who run the Children in Care Council to make changes for the better.

The children in care council are made up of two groups. These are known as the younger CICC which is 13 and below and the Older CICC group which is aged 13 and above. Each group meets up every month. We wanted to include the Children in Care Council because we think it is important for children and young people to know about.

If you are interested in becoming part of the Children in Care Council you can look at our website, this will include the relevant information you need to contact us about coming along to one of the meetings.

www.durhamcicc.co.uk

Useful information/contacts

If you are not happy with anything or don't agree with something then you can speak to your Independent Reviewing Officer who has responsibility for making sure that your Care Plan is reviewed, that your plan is still working for you and that your views are listened to. A review is usually a small meeting and because it is all about you, it is important that you are there to have your say. Your IRO can talk to you about your review when they meet you.



Mind Of My Own One is an app that helps young people communicate their views in a way that suits them. Young people create their own account, which can be used on any device at any time. This means that young people can use the app to say how they are feeling, what support they need and tell their worker about things that are important to them.

You can download it from the **App Store or Google Play Store** or online here: one.mindofmyown.org.uk



Childline is a free private and confidential service. You can ring them and talk to them about any issue you may be going through.

Tel no: **0800 11 11** Website: childline.org.uk



The Children's Commissioner has a duty to promote and protect the rights of all children in England with a particular focus on Children & Young People with difficulties or challenges in their life.

Name: Rachel De Souza

Address: The Office of the Children's Commissioner, Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT

Email(s): advice.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk / help.team@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

Telephone number: 0800 528 0731



National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS):

Will listen to you, support you and offer advice to make sure your views, wishes and feelings are respected and your voice is heard when decisions are being made about you.

Telephone number: 0808 808 1001

NSPCC NSPCC 24-hour helpline

If you need help/advice or you are worried that you/another child may be at risk.

Website: www.nspcc.org.uk

Telephone number: 0808 800 50000

A special thank you!

Durham County Council and Investing In Children would like to say a massive thank you to Kayden (aged 13), Alanah (aged 9), Harvey (aged 13), Evie (aged 9), Allana (aged 7), Bethany (aged 14), Emily (aged 12), Jess (aged 14), Leon (aged 18).

A big thank you to both Durham's Children in Care Council groups for their ideas and contributions to the guide!



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Corporate Parenting Panel

19 April 2024

Care Leavers Annual Survey



Report of Rachel Farnham, Head of Children’s Social Care, Children and Young People’s Services, Durham County Council

Electoral division(s) affected:

None

Purpose of the Report

- 1 This report is to inform Corporate Parenting Panel of the findings gathered from the annual feedback survey completed by our care leavers. Findings include what our care leavers think about the support they receive, what is working well and areas for further service development.
- 2 To inform the panel of how the outcomes of this survey will feed into development plans for the Care Leavers Service.
- 3 To inform the panel of changes in future surveys to help us better understand the views of individual groups of care leavers, dependant on such factors as age and cultural needs.

Executive Summary

- 4 Hearing and responding to the voice of the young person is at the centre of how we practice in Durham. Undertaking this survey and hearing from as many care leavers as possible about their experience of the service is a key way of the young person having their voice heard.
- 5 To achieve this survey, we identified a two week timeframe where the care leavers service would send the survey out to all young people and also take a targeted approach why young people’s advisors sought to gain the views of as wide a range of young people as possible including unaccompanied asylum seeking young people.
- 6 The care leavers service manager developed the questions for this survey based on key priority areas within the care leaver service, such as ensuring young people have health summaries and focussing on understanding whether there are important relationships in the young people’s lives.

- 7 The survey will be completed annually to provide us with evidence which drives further service improvement consistent with our Quality Assurance Framework. We hope to develop the next survey alongside young people as outlined in the report.

Recommendations

- 8 Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to:
 - (a) Note and consider the content of this report
 - (b) Agree with the report recommendations
 - (c) Agree that the survey be repeated annually.

Background

- 9 We are committed to an annual survey which is shared with Care Leavers to reflect the priorities of the service and to take into account learning from any previous surveys completed.
- 10 The survey was created by the Service Manager for the Care Leavers service with the support of Participation & Engagement Officer, Safeguarding and Professional Practice. The survey was created as a SNAP survey by our Consultations team allowing for both easy access and submission, as well as young people being able to complete and submit independent of their worker.
- 11 Alongside the use of the SNAP survey, Young Peoples Advisors (YPAs) contacted young people directly and recorded their feedback.

Methodology

- 12 The survey was completed during a two-week window and was launched to coincide with Celebrating Practice Week, 26th February 2024.
- 13 The survey was either completed independently with a link being sent by text or the young person was supported by their Young Person's Advisor to complete either in person or during a telephone conversation.

Findings

- 14 In total, 71 surveys were completed by our care leavers out of a possible 327 representing a 22% return, which is a positive response for optional surveys.
- 15 The positives identified within the service were:
 - (a) 93% of our care leavers said they agreed that they found it easy to contact their worker.
 - (b) 94% said they had a good relationship with their worker. This corresponds with 97% of the responding stating that they had positive relationships with those people who are important to them.
 - (c) 92% agreed that they had someone to talk to about their worries.
 - (d) 82% were aware of how to access mental health emotional wellbeing support should they need it, with only 2% saying they didn't know. This is a reflection of how Young People's Advisors have supported our young people to facilitate this.

- (e) 89% of young people said they had the opportunity to tell the worker what they would like in their plan. Whilst being positive, it does highlight a need to understand further why and when this isn't the case and look to achieve an even higher return on this indicator at the time of the next survey. The care leaver service now uses My World, My Plan when meeting with young people to ensure their views influence their plan and there is a report going to CSCMT to ask for agreement that this can also be used as a pathway plan review tool for care leavers. We would expect the greater use of this tool to improve this feedback.
 - (f) A real highlight of the responses we received was that 95% said they agreed that their worker did what they said they would, which is fundamental to building relationships, trust and supporting positive development and change.
 - (g) 94% of respondents said their worker helped them understand things.
 - (h) Overall, 96% of those who responded said they were 'Happy' or 'Very Happy' about the service they receive. One young person told us "The service is amazing, and I couldn't ask for a better support worker. She has helped me through a lot of my problems and been there for me when no one else was."
- 16 In respect of whether care leavers were aware of their entitlements as reflected in the local offer the responses reflected strength. These being:
- (a) 83% of respondents were aware of the Care Leavers Local Offer meaning 17% were either unsure or not aware.
 - (b) 84% said they knew how to get access to support to get into Education, Training or Employment.
 - (c) 83% said they knew where to get help with finance.
 - (d) 82% said they were happy with where they lived and it met their needs well.
- 17 The aspect of The Care Leavers Offer which was less well known was in relation to how to acquire their health summary with only 58% agreeing and 16% stating that they don't know. As the survey does not break the responses down into age ranges, it is difficult to know whether the recent drive on achieving health summaries for 17 year olds who will now be care leavers is reflected within the 58% and whether older care leavers who did not receive this level of support to gain their health

summaries are within the 16%. This is an area of development for the survey next year.

- 18 Other aspects from the survey response where we feel there is learning would be related to what young people tell us about their overall experience and key transitions. 78% said that their transition from having a social worker to having a Young Person's Advisor was well managed with 7% of respondents disagreeing and stating that it was not. This is a key area of development jointly for the Children Looked After and Care Leaver Service, again we don't understand which age range was less satisfied and whether UASC were more satisfied when they do not change teams as they become care leavers.
- 19 73% of young people said their worker had helped them to understand why they were unable to live with their family and 27% saying they had not. It is not clear from the survey if those 27% wanted or needed more support to understand or not but may well be something YPA's need to check in with their young people about early on in their involvement. This is another already identified area of development, as part of the Regional Care Leavers Young People's Board, the Care Leavers Service Manager and Head of Children's Social Care are committed to working with young people to ensure when they leave care, they receive a Later Life Letter if they want this, to ensure their social worker explains their time in care including why they could not live with their family.

Conclusion

- 20 Our young people have told us, through the survey, that there are many strengths in our services for care leavers. This is consistent with audit findings, anecdotal feedback and the recent Focused Visit by Ofsted's findings in relation to our Care Leavers Service (November 2023).
- 21 We are committed to further developing this survey as an important part of our Quality Assurance process. Ensuring young people's voices are heard and this leads to positive change.
- 22 The areas young people have identified as being less strong are already priority areas for the Care Leavers Service Development Plan, these being transition planning to being a care leaver and health summaries and there will be a continued focus on these areas over this year.
- 23 For next year's survey we will work with the Connect group running every two weeks at Stanley Hub to ensure the survey is developed as below:
 - (a) Young people developing what they want to know linked to care leaver service priorities and how young people should be asked.

- (b) What groups of young people we want to understand, including their age ranges and cultural backgrounds
 - (c) What time of the year to complete the survey and how we will do this including using the participation groups we already run.
 - (d) How to ensure those young people who give less input into our service development can be reached and involved in the survey.
- 24 The Care Leavers Service will write to every care leaver ensuring they understand the results of this survey and are able to give any further views or be involved in future participation.
- 25 The results of this survey will be included in this years' Care Leavers Development Plan.

Author

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Lee Peacock

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications.

Finance

There are no budget requirements.

Consultation

A group of care leavers have been consulted and there are plans to expand and grow this consultation to ensure wider views are considered as the survey develops.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

The service continually seeks to address inequalities and the survey is designed to further support and address equality and diversity for our Care Leavers. All care leavers were given opportunities to complete the survey and support was offered to those who may have additional needs.

Climate Change

No impact.

Human Rights

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Crime and Disorder

Not affected.

Staffing

Existing staff will support the Survey.

Accommodation

No additional accommodation is required.

Risk

Safeguarding of all young people will be a priority of the group, which is supported by Children's Social Care Staff. Surveys were confidential and voluntary.

Procurement

No implications.

Appendix 2: Summary of Findings

Attached as a separate document.

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Children in Care Care Leavers 2024

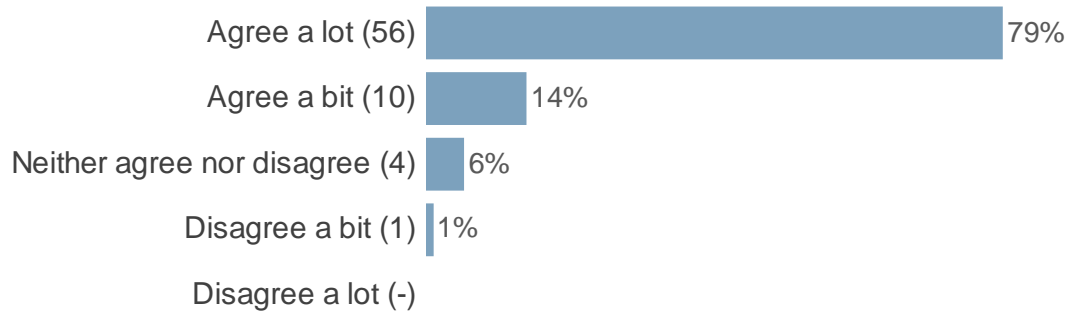
This report was generated on 13/03/24. Overall 71 respondents completed this questionnaire. The report has been filtered to show the responses for 'All Respondents'.

The following charts are restricted to the top 12 codes. Lists are restricted to the most recent 100 rows.

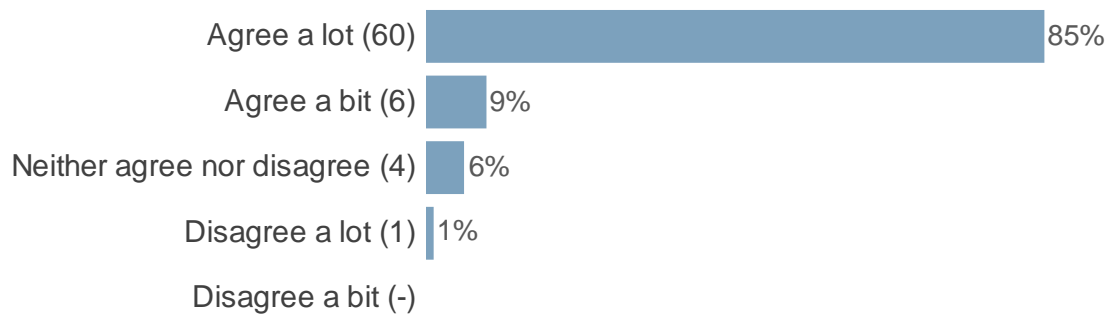
Do you know your worker's name?



How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements... (I find it easy to contact my worker)

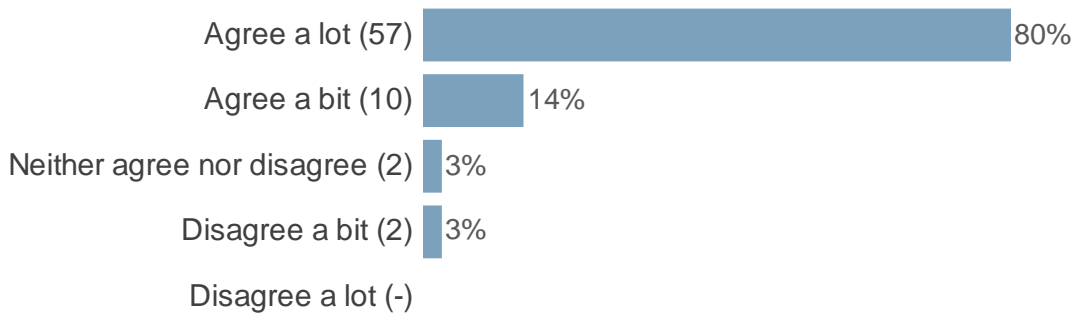


How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements... (I have a good relationship with my worker)

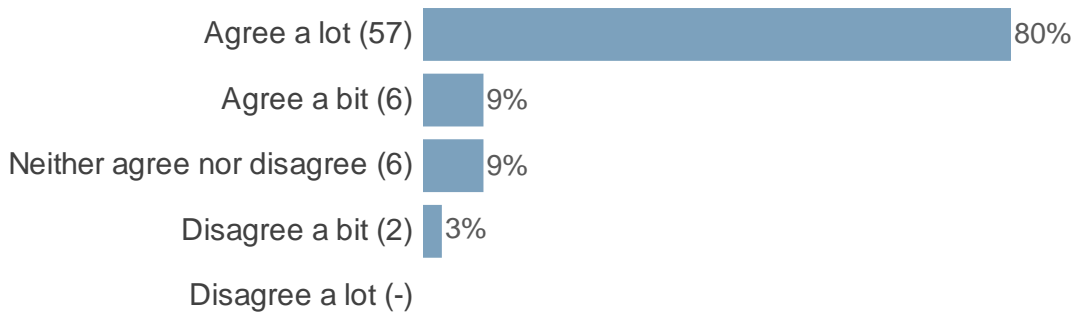


Children in Care Care Leavers 2024

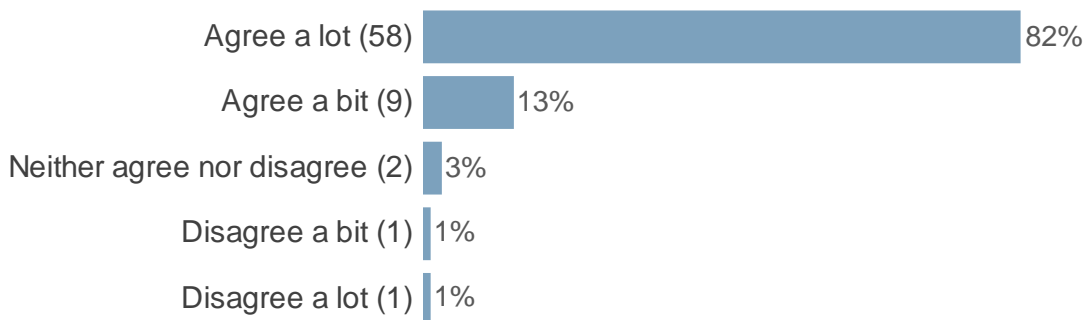
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements... (My worker helps me to understand things)



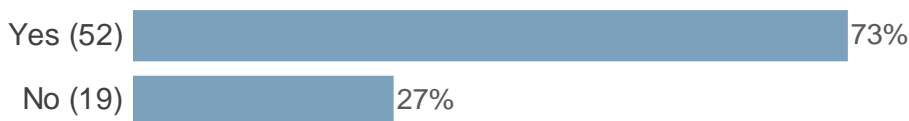
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements... (I have the opportunity to tell my worker what I want in my plan)



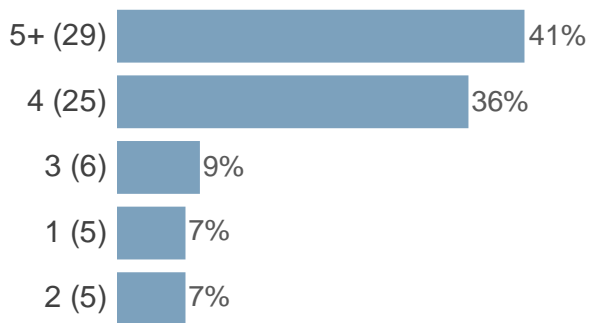
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements... (My worker did what they said they would do)



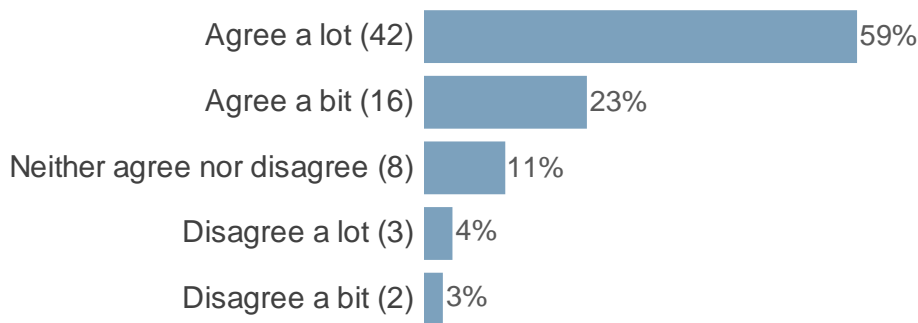
Has anyone helped you understand why you couldn't live with your family?



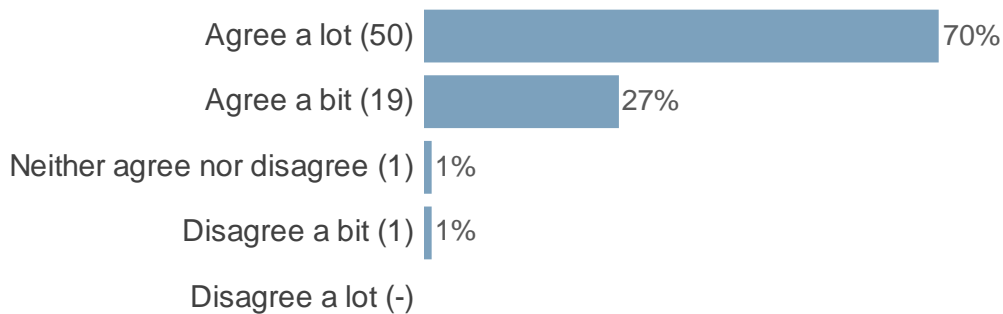
How many social workers have you had since being in care?



How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements... (I am happy where I live and it meets my needs well)

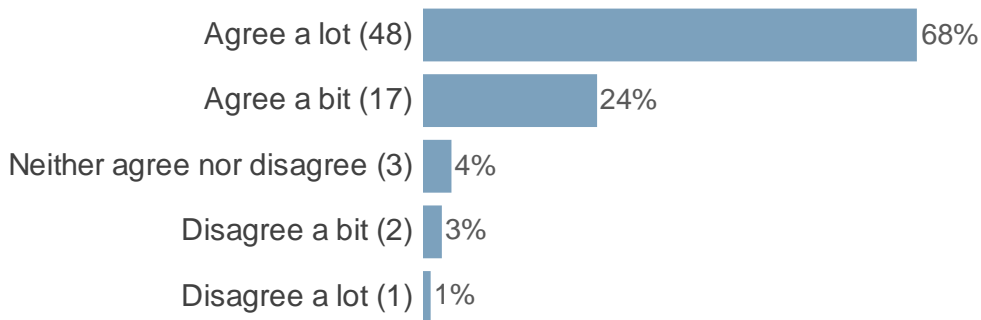


How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements... (I have positive relationships with people who are important to me)

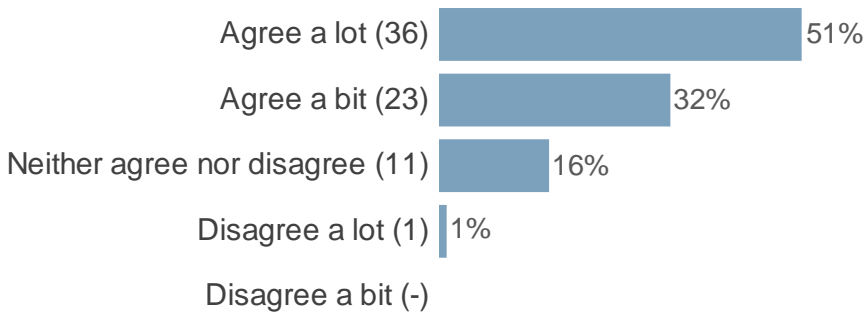


Children in Care Care Leavers 2024

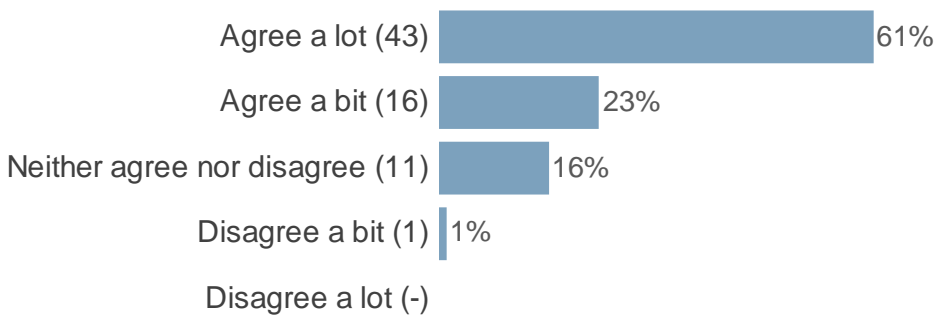
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements... (I have someone I can talk with about any worries that I have)



How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements... (I know what support I can get with finance)

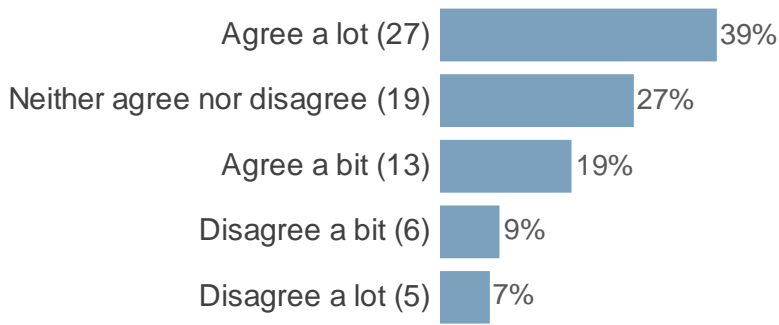


How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements... (I know how to get help to access education, training or employment)

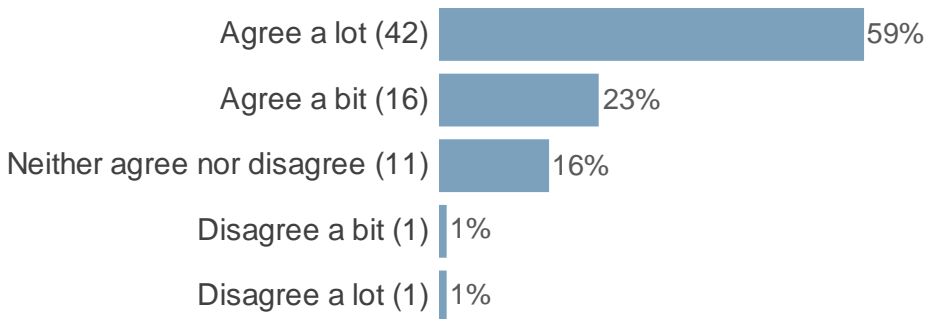


Children in Care Care Leavers 2024

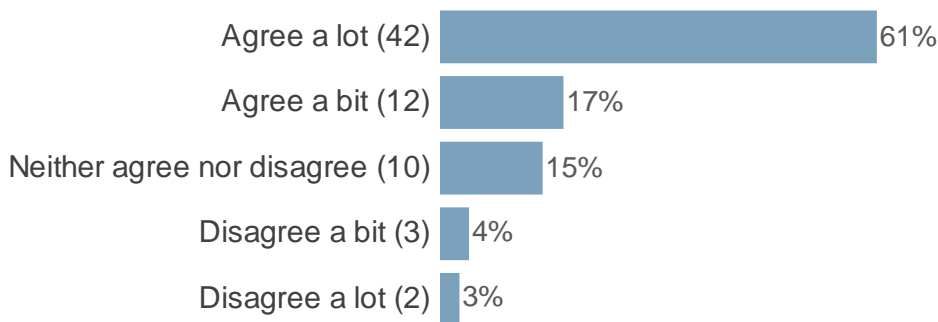
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements... (I know how to get my health summary)



How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements... (Should I need it, I know how to access support for my own mental and emotional wellbeing)

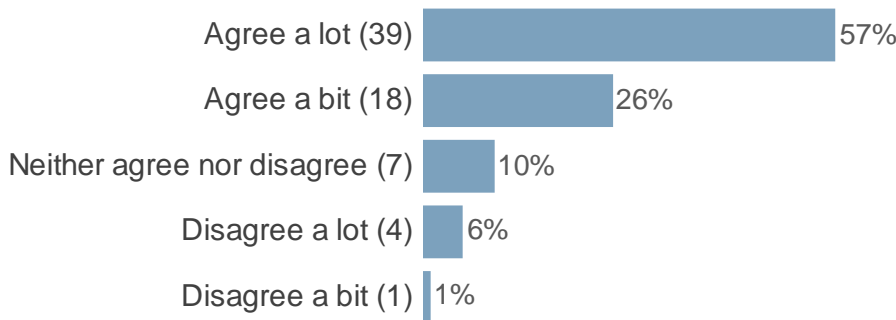


How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements... (The transition between me having a social worker and a young person's adviser was well managed)

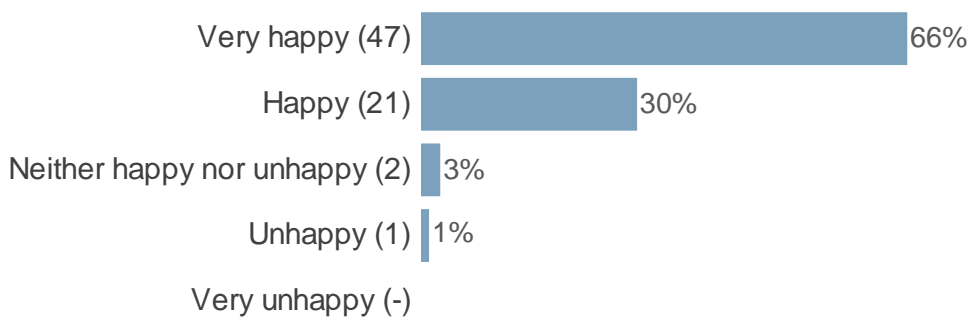


Children in Care Care Leavers 2024

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements... (I am aware of the care leaver's local offer and my entitlements as a care leaver)



Overall, how happy or unhappy are you with the support that you receive?



Is there anything about the service that you're unhappy with?

Nope

No

No

I think social workers get changed too often, I think when you go into care you should have the same social worker all the way through, as long as the young person and SW is a good match. That way they can build a better relationship. I've found it frustrating when I got a new worker and they had to learn my case and my history, my personality all over again from scratch. I also think social workers often have way to many young people on their case loads which it turn makes there workload often more then they can handle which is massively a negative effect on the young people. For example I have had a couple of workers where I would ask for something and they would keep forgetting to do it or get back to me with an update, most probably due to their massive work load.

Nothing I can think of.

There was a time my YPA wasn't here (on sick leave), and i felt like i didn't get enough support or who i should contact when my YPA isn't at work

A YPA should be able to help a care leaver with housing in a different county as well as County Durham.

Nothing

At the end I. Was told that my last lac was a well done for getting through foster care but why because youse are all about not being a foster child

No

No

No

Is there anything about the service that you're unhappy with?

No

Not really I think there should be a better way to inform careleavers of support and events that take place and how to get involved in activities and where the hibs are etc

Home office make work impossible- no LTR

no

No, the service is amazing and I couldn't ask for a better support worker who is Becky! She has helped me through a lot of my problems and been there for me when no one else was. She deserves a raise
♥

Give me a few hundred quid to get going ;)

No

Not happy with support from baby's social worker.

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Care Leavers Annual Survey

(Undertaken 26 February to 11 March 2024)

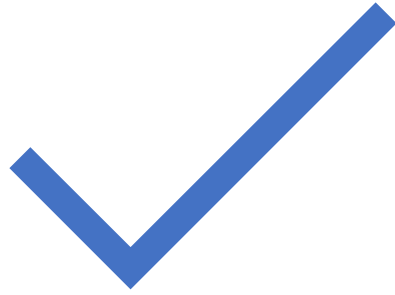
Lesley Baldry

Service Manager Care Leavers, UASC, permanence and adoption

Lee Peacock

Participation Officer





Survey Outcomes include

- 71 surveys were completed by our care leavers representing a 22% return
- 96% said they were happy or very happy with the service
- 93% said they found it easy to contact their worker
- 92% said they had someone to talk to about their worries.
- 83% were aware of the local offer.
- 95% said they feel their worker does what they said they would do
- 97% said they had a positive relationship with those important to them

Things to develop

Key points

Understanding of health summaries and supporting young people to get them

Improve how we gather information in the survey.

Young people's understanding of why they don't live at home.

Need to understand transitions

How we will do this

Continue to work with health to ensure these are achieved in a timely way and that YPA's request these for 17 year olds when they want them.

Work with the Children Looked After Service to improve transitions using our Staying Close Team, our Peer Mentor Coordinator and our Emotional/Mental Health Worker.

Work with young people to develop a Later Life Letter for all care leavers written by their social worker, if they want this.

Make next year's survey better, develop with young people and understand individual group's needs.

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Corporate Parenting Panel

19 April 2024

Care Leavers Strategy and Action Plan Progress Report



Report of Rachel Farnham, Head of Children's Social Care, Children and Young People's Service, DCC

Electoral division(s) affected:

None.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 This report outlines the progress of the Care Leavers Service Action Plan and Strategy.

Executive summary

- 2 The Children Act 1989 places duties on Local Authorities towards 'looked after' and previously 'looked after' children as they exit the care system. The service to young people who have been in the care of Durham Children's services is delivered to all young people aged between 16 and 25 who fall within the eligibility criteria. This criterion includes:
 - (a) eligible child, who is a child aged 16 or 17 and is currently Looked After or has been looked after by the Local Authority for 13 weeks since the age of 14;
 - (b) relevant child, who is a child aged 16 or 17 who has been Looked After for 13 weeks since the aged of 14 or who has been looked after since the age of 16 but is no longer Looked After;
 - (c) former relevant child, who is a young person aged 18-25 who has been an eligible or relevant child prior to becoming 18;
 - (d) **Or other qualifying care leavers**, who is young person who was Looked After for a period of less than 13 weeks since the age of 14 or was Looked After since the age of 16.

Recommendation

- 3 Members of Corporate Parenting Panel are recommended to:
 - (a) Note the content of this report.

Background

- 4 The offer from the leaving Care service is published in the Local Offer to Care Leavers which provides details of how support will be provided to young people with regards to:
 - (a) Where young people live; this includes all options, staying put, supporting lodgings, supported accommodation, living alone and university accommodation as well as advice to avoid homelessness and support for any housing issues;
 - (b) Money: help with managing money, help with benefits, setting up home money, and all other types of financial advice;
 - (c) Looking After themselves; Physical and emotional health advice and support, sexual health, drug and alcohol support, domestic abuse and healthy relationship advice, someone to talk to, smoking cessation and opportunities to get involved in things;
 - (d) Education employment and training; advice when thinking about leaving school, sixth form or college, work experience and part time jobs, learning to drive, apprenticeships or traineeships, going to university, getting a job.

Care Leavers Action Plan

- 5 Co-production of the Care Leavers action plan was identified as an essential aspect of the planning and a group of young people met to assess the Durham County Council Local Offer to Care Leavers against national Local Offers and to develop the renewed action plan for 2023/2024.
- 6 The action plan produced includes several areas of focus. The progress of these is recorded in detail in the plan but include:
 - (a) Pathway Plans and pathway plans needs assessments;
 - (b) Education, Employment, and training;
 - (c) Suitable accommodation;
 - (d) Improved health outcomes;
 - (e) Preparation for adulthood;
 - (f) Co-production.

The attached presentation (Appendix 2) provides a summary of progress in all key areas and next steps to continue to develop the service.

It is of note, a focussed visit was undertaken by OFSTED to assess the effectiveness of Durham County Council's services to Care Experienced Young People in November 2023. In respect of the above areas, OFSTED summarised:

'The local authority's offer to care-experienced young people is clear and accessible. Care-experienced young people contributed to the development of the offer and fully understand what support is available to them.'

Leaders have a commitment to revisiting the offer regularly to ensure that all care leavers have access to the support they need regardless of their personal circumstances.'

As a corporate parent, the local authority is diligent in its efforts to ensure that care experienced young people are given the opportunity to achieve their goals and they are ambitious for their futures'.

Continued Learning

- 7 Durham County Council care leavers service is now an established member of the regional board for care leavers and we are committed to working with our partners to ensure that all care experienced young people have parity across the region and explore all areas of best practice. In addition, the Care Leavers service is represented nationally on forums to develop the service further and the work from this will be shared in future updates.
- 8 The service has fulfilled the commitment to the development of a Care experienced scrutiny group. The Experts through Experience Group has undertaken their first scrutiny area and will report the findings to Corporate Parenting Panel as a group.

Conclusion

- 9 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel will have an oversight and understanding of the Care Leaver Service and will be aware of the continuous developments within the service to ensure we strive to meet the needs of young people.

Author

Bernadette Toomey

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

We are bound by duties under the Children & Social Work Act / Children's Act to act in the best interests of children and young people.

Finance

Any future development within the care leavers offer will require appropriate financial scrutiny the current report does not have any financial implications.

Consultation and Engagement

The strategy was developed with young people and they were engaged appropriately to ensure the priorities were representative of the needs and priorities for care experienced young people.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

The Young People's Service provides care and support to young people who identify as transgender, this forms 1% of the overall service group.

Climate Change

No implications.

Human Rights

Children and young people have access to the Durham County Council complaints process.

Crime and Disorder

No implications.

Staffing

The authority has a statutory duty to provide personal advisors to care experienced young people.

Accommodation

Should children and young people come into the care of the Local Authority, there is a need to ensure there is sufficient suitable placements.

Risk

The Local Authority has a statutory duty to provide support to care experienced young people up to the age of 25. Non-compliance with this would result in the Local Authority not meeting its legislative requirements and risk young people being exposed to harm without appropriate assessment and support.

Procurement.

None.

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Care Leavers Action Plan Update

Summary of Priorities



Pathway Plans



Accommodation



Preparation for
Adulthood



Health



Education,
Employment and
Training



Co-Production and
Voice of our Young
People

Pathway Plans

What we have done

- All children of 16+ have a Pathway Plan.
- We have carried out an audit to look at the quality for consistency. (This is repeated quarterly.)
- Reviewed the Care V's Support Tool included in the Pathway Plan.
- Care Vs Support also as a stand along document.
- EET group chaired by Service Manager introduced.

Next Steps.....

- Ensure that young people understand their rights and entitlements.
- Young people to create bespoke training around what pathway planning means to them.

Education, Employment and Training

What we have done

- Work within the core offer regional board to develop a joint response to EET.
- Continue to work with Durham Works through attendance at training session for the full service, creation of strategic working group.
- Include Virtual School in SGO Panel.
- Include Virtual school in Fostering Workshops.
- Established a Strategic Working Group to focus on NEET (Monthly).
- Established an Operations Working Group chaired by service managers (Fortnightly).
- Continue to expand our family business with apprenticeships.
- Co-ordinated support regarding university and high education, Local offer includes financial and support via YPA.

Next Steps.....

- Develop links with care leavers covenant to expand opportunities with employers within Durham.
- Continue to work with agencies to develop skills regrading work, training and interviewing.

Accommodation

What we have done

- Undertake audits of intentionally homelessness and developed plans to address this.
- Worked closely with external agencies to develop packages of support for young people.
- Developed our staying close offer and now based at the Care Leavers Hub.
- Continue to support young people through the local offer, which includes SUHA and support regarding benefits.
- Hedley House contract updated.

Next Steps.....

- UASC assessment centre/home to review the needs of young people and match to suitable accommodation to meet their needs. (work with children's homes).
- Review joint housing protocol.
- Joint reflective meeting with Housing, EDT ,Care Leavers to review when things may be a challenge (e.g. Young person A) To strengthen working relationships.

Health

What we have done

- Work closely with the ICB around the needs of care experienced young people including GP pilot (through CLASP, Strategic Health Needs Sub Group).
- Identify health needs as a priority and ensure that young people have bespoke support around them.
- Emotional/mental health support for care experience young people in Durham through staying put and wellbeing officer.
- Looked after nurse attend the care leavers hub to offer support.
- Ensured that our UASC have their health reviews and access to services and that they have the support in place.
- Working group established and concluded to set up reporting for all young people to have access to their health passport.
- Tracking of Health Passports and RHA in CLASP.

Next Steps.....

- Review to ensure the systems in place works for all young people having access to their health passport.
- Training with health partners regarding care experienced young people and parents.

Preparation for Adulthood

Further work is needed and training with the CIC Service for smoother transition planning.

Need to refocus more on aspirations for leaving care and preparation at a much earlier stage.

Session with IRO Service regarding the review of Care Planning prior to 16 years of age was carried out, however, more work has commenced on CIC Review process and planning for adulthood.

Care Leavers train our new foster carers and share their lived experiences.

Co-Production & voice of young people



- Completed a review of the local offer with care leavers.
- Set up a second Care Leaver Hub.
- Establishing a Scrutiny Committee.
- Created the Know What When Guide.
- Created the My World My Plan.
- Entry to Care Packs being designed by young people.
- Exit from Care Packs being designed by young people.

Work still to do

- Working with the Care Leavers covenant on new opportunities.
- Establishing 1 more Care Leavers Hubs.
- IIC Membership to be reviewed in all teams

Corporate Parenting Panel

19 March 2024

Care Leavers Service Local Offer**Report of Rachel Farnham, Head of Children's Social Care, Children and Young People's Services, DCC****Electoral division(s) affected:**

None

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide an update to Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) on changes to the Local Offer.
- 2 To ensure members of the CPP are aware of developments with the Care Leavers Covenant and the Regional Care Leavers Board.

Executive summary

- 3 The Care Leavers Service feed into the Regional Care Leavers Board. The Board's vision is to develop a regional approach and consistency of offer for all Care Leavers across the North East twelve Local Authorities. The work currently is to drive learning and opportunities for outstanding services and support from all young people regardless of where they live in the region.
- 4 The Care Leavers Service take an active role in the National Benchmarking Forum and the Care Leavers Covenant to learn and continually develop the care leavers offer in Durham.
- 5 Durham County Council have a strong Local Offer and there have been a number of changes to improve this over the past year which are highlighted in the body of the report.

Recommendations

- 6 Corporate Parenting Panel are recommended to:
 - (a) note the updated changes to the Local Offer; *and*
 - (b) be aware of future aspirations.

Background

- 7 The Care Leavers Service attend national benchmarking and are therefore aware of national initiatives and we strive to build these into developing our Local Offer. An example of this which Corporate Parenting Panel will be aware of is the Positive Tree initiative where we are asking local businesses to support our care leaver offer.

- 8 As noted previously, the Care Leavers Service is part of the Regional Care Leaver Board, and the Care Leavers Service Manager sits on the Regional Care Leaver Board. At the most recent Board meeting - 18 March 2024 - the following regional priorities were set:
 - (a) The possible development of a regional care leavers app.
 - (b) Ensuring council tax exemption for all care leavers in every Local Authority regardless of which authority the young person accesses support from.
 - (c) Agreed regional support for any young person wishing to take driving lessons.
 - (d) Ensuring that no care leaver is intentionally homeless.
 - (e) A consistent offer for all care leavers attending further education or university.
 - (f) Leisure passes plus 1 for all care leavers.
 - (g) Developing a more proactive mental health support offer for young people to ensure support is available at any point up to crisis.
 - (h) To ensure young people have access to dental care regardless of which Local Authority they reside in.

- 9 The Care Leavers Service seeks to keep abreast of any developments with the Care Leavers Covenant. The most recent work has focused on the education and training offer and opportunities. Developments since the last update to Corporate Parenting Panel within the covenant include:
 - (a) Pure Gym access.
 - (b) Free driving theory tests with the AA.
 - (c) Some Local Authority's health trusts have adopted Care Leavers Employment Pathways. This has not yet progressed in County Durham.

Developments in relation to the Durham Care Leaver Offer

- 10 The Care Leavers Service listens to the views of young people, taking into account the needs of young people as reflected within their Pathway Plans and does internal audits where we look at issues for particular groups of young people, recent examples being young people in custody and young parents. The recent OFSTED inspection which focussed on the experiences of Care Leavers reflected the strengths of the offer and the development of this in collaboration with young people.
- 11 The service has developed an offer for young people in custody where sessions with a Care Leavers Team Manager and YPA take place in Durham prison. This support is accessed by care leavers from outside of County Durham and collaboration is ongoing to extend this with other Local Authorities and to the wider secure estate to ensure our care leavers have the support they need in preparing to return to the community.
- 12 The service is building the offer to care leavers who are parents and now run groups at our Stanley Hub. This includes organising events such as an Easter party to engage young people and promote the support within the hubs.
- 13 The service now ensure that every care leaver has £3,000 setting up home allowance. The guidance for this is in line with all other Regional Authorities.
- 14 Every Care Leaver in Durham now has a free bus pass.
- 15 Care Leavers in Durham are entitled to either exemption from council tax or support with this.
- 16 The service has extended the offer to young people at university and will now consider providing support to care leavers undertaking a master's degree.
- 17 The service have extending the offer to young people not in education or training; this includes working to improve our apprenticeship offer and planning a summer event with local employers.
- 18 The Local Offer on the Durham County Council website has been updated.
- 19 We now have pocket cards for all care leavers which have a link to the Local Offer.
- 20 We have a text alert system where we ensure care leavers are informed of any changes to the Local Offer.

- 21 All Care Leaver who are not currently engaging with the Care Leavers Service receive all communication on the Local Offer and are contacted throughout the year to promote the support on offer and keep in touch with them to ensure they are aware of how to access support should they wish to access this.

Conclusion

- 22 The Care Leavers Service has high aspirations to continue to grow and deliver a strong Local Offer to Care Leavers in County Durham and will continue to work with partners such as other regional Local Authorities to develop this in the coming year.
- 23 The Care Leavers Service will continue to work alongside young people to develop the Local Offer, including the Children in Care Council, the Connect group and our experts' group. We are also taking into account the outcome of the recent Care Leavers survey we have completed to learn from this from continued service improvement.

Author

Lesley Baldry

Tel: 03000 265 363

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

None.

Finance

This increase of Setting up home allowance has been awarded Nationally and is funded from government finances.

Consultation and Engagement

Young People are consulted by our Young People Advisors regally

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

There is equal access for all care leavers.

Climate Change

None.

Human Rights

The increase in Local Offer promotes human rights and ensures that any young person who need support receives it.

Crime and Disorder

The development of the support into the secure estate has an aim of engaging and establishing support for young people with an aim of reducing reoffending.

Staffing

None.

Accommodation

There is no impact on accommodation.

Risk

There is no risk to young people and staff.

Procurement

No implications.

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Care Leavers Service Local Offer

Lesley Baldry, Service Manager Care Leavers, UASC,
Permanence and Adoption.



How we develop the offer

- With the regional board to ensure parity across regions, this includes current developments around:
 - Council tax
 - Setting up Home Allowance
 - Bus passes
 - Access to health services
- Part of the Care Leaver Covenant developments
- Attend National Benchmarking.
- Work with young people including the Children in Care Council, the Experts group and the Connect group.
- Listen to what young people tell us within their Pathway Planning and via any surveys we complete with them.



Update on the offer, recent developments include:

- Setting up Home Allowance is now £3,000
- All Care Leavers can have a free bus pass
- All Care Leavers have either exemption or support with council tax.
- Offer extended for young people who are not in education, employment or training including care leavers being entitled to an interview for any vacancy they apply for with DCC.
- Offer extended for young people who are in custody.
- Extended offer for young people who are parents.
- Young people who study a master's degree can now receive support.

We don't sit still,
future
developments
include:

| | |
|----------|--|
| Part | As part of the regional group, work with health to improve access to support, we now employ an emotional/mental health worker within the Care Leavers Service. |
| Continue | Continue to work on cross regional priorities. |
| Continue | Continue to be an active part of benchmarking and involve our young people further in this. |
| Build | Build further on our offer for individual groups of young people such as care leavers with children and those in custody. |
| Extend | Further extend our offer to young people who are NEET. |
| Work | Work with housing to ensure care leavers have their own and complex young people do not become homeless. |

NEXT
VENTURE
FUND



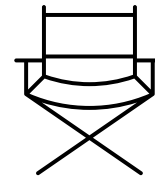


OUR STRUCTURE

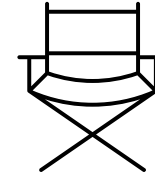
 Steering group-

three key members-

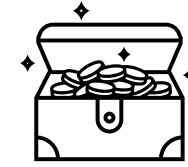
VICE CHAIR · CHAIR · TREASURER



Alex
Moore



Billie
Tasker



Luke
Joseph

This group will make major decisions on how we operate and take feedback from the panel.

The Panel

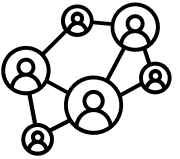
The panel is a group of 6-8 young people that represents care leavers from different communities. This includes; young parent, an unaccompanied asylum seeker, 25+, not in education, employment or training, etc.

This groups main responsibility is to read through the applications and be able to approve, decline or ask more questions where appropriate with explanations to justify their decision.

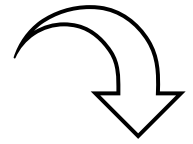
The Mission-
for projects that impact most young people, key themes of
projects include-



strengthen
relationships



build
connections



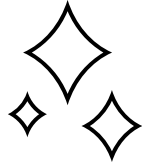
Reduce
loneliness



Promote
good mental
well-being



Be
inclusive



Create new
opportunities

Our aims



IMMEDIATE
GOALS & SET
UP THAT'S
AGREED

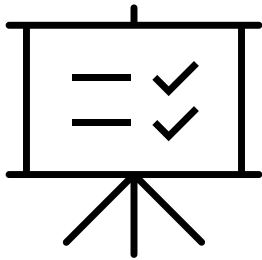
Immediate Objectives-

- i. Creating an appropriate application form
- ii. Communication/Marketing of the funding
 - o How to apply
 - o Benefits from the projects

.....
Expectations-

We all agreed-

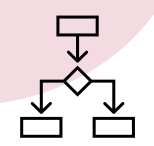
- i. Budget sits with Service Manager for Safeguarding and Professional Practice and will act as the **budget holder**
- ii. Service Manager will meet regularly with the treasurer and nominated person within the Finance team
- iii. Roles of professionals on the panel will act as '**critical friends**' and are there to provide guidance to the young people's panel and hold them accountable to why decisions were made
- iv. Funds will be subject to audit to ensure responsible stewardship





TASKS GOING FORWARD

To agree how requests are made and the process for making decisions at panel



To have an input into managing spend and the overall budget

To develop and make decisions about the fund on the basis of the criteria



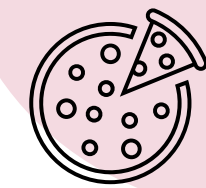
To request from beneficiaries evidence of impact



To monitor, scrutinise and evaluate the project's successes twice yearly



To feed into Children's Services Senior Management team our learning twice yearly



OUR ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

- * 9 YOUNG PEOPLE SIGNED UP FOR THE PANEL**
- DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE AGREED**
- 2 FUNDING PANEL MEETINGS HAVE MET**
- FINANCE COMMITTEE HAVE MET**
- £1600 WORTH OF SPENDING COMMITTED OVER 3 PROJECTS**
- SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS COMMITTED TO FEEDING BACK AND CELEBRATING ACHIEVEMENTS**

Corporate Parenting Panel**19 April 2024****Children with Disabilities
Annual Update****Report of Rachel Farnham, Head of Children's Social Care, CYPS,
DCC****Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 This report provides an update on the progress of the Children with Disabilities Team within the last 12 months and vision of how to continue moving forward.

Executive summary

- 2 Any child or young person with additional need is entitled to an assessment of need as set out under S17 of the Children Act 1989. The children's parents and carers are also considered as part of the assessment. The child or young person's level of need will determine which team is responsible for completing this assessment.
- 3 The Children with Disabilities Team (CwD) undertake assessments with the purpose of meeting the needs of children and young people, who have a permanent or severe disability. The team are a specialist service targeted at those children and young people who are aged 0 to 18.
- 4 Durham aspires to support families to care for their own children, and we do this by promoting the local offer, www.durham.gov.uk/localoffer.
- 5 The local offer is designed to help families find the very best support for children and young person, from 0 to 25 years with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). It provides information, advice and guidance about the types of services and support available.
- 6 Our children are some of the most vulnerable children therefore strong multi-agency working is critical ensuring children are safe and there is good evidence of this in the work of the service.
- 7 We believe that young people should always be able to participate fully in their lives and to share their views when decisions about them are

being made. The Children with Disabilities team strive to ensure our children's voices are heard using a range of direct work tools.

- 8 The Children with Disabilities team have designed a leaflet for the children and young with disabilities who are open to their service. The development of the leaflet involved hearing directly from children and young people and how they have a voice and contribute to changes in the work of the Children with Disabilities team.

Recommendation

- 9 Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to:
 - (a) note the contents of this report.


Background

- 10 The Children with Disabilities Team has an eligibility criteria that means they support the most complex of children and young people whose needs are so specialist they cannot access the targeted provision within the Local Offer.
- 11 As of the 21 March 2023, there are a total of 293 children open to the Children with Disabilities Team of which 27 are Children in Our Care. There are 3 children subject to child protection plans and the remaining children receive social work support and services under Section 17 (Children Act 1989). Many children receive packages of short breaks support to enable them to meet and socialise with other young people in the community and to enable their parents/carers to have a break from their caring responsibilities.
- 12 The Navigation team no longer have case responsibility for children 0 -18. The Children with Disabilities team and the Navigation Team work closely together to ensure effective joint working to support young people to transition into independence in a planned way for our children and young people.
- 13 Over the last 12 months there has been a focus to better evidence the involvement of the Navigation team. There is now a navigation forum, which enables an opportunity to discuss children and young people who would require a Care Act Assessment and added to the Navigation team's allocation of work.
- 14 Work is underway to ensure this is accurately reflected within children's case recording system.

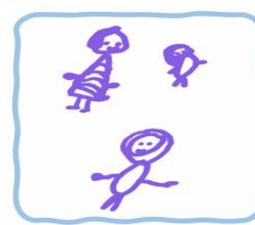
Communication with children and young people with disabilities


- 15 The Children with Disabilities team continue to seek innovative and creative ways of communicating with children who have complex needs and this is something that continually can improve and is the vision of the service.
- 16 A great number of the children within the Children with Disabilities team do not use words to communicate, therefore it is essential that staff have a vast range of skills to enable them to communicate with children effectively and seek their views. Staff have undertaken specialist training including British Sign Language (BSL), we have a communication champion and monthly communication sessions to share best practice and any skills gained or good examples of direct work.

17 Figure 1 below is a leaflet that has been created by the family support workers and children and young people. This is a visual aid to help families better understand a bit more about the Children with Disabilities Team and what they may do to support them.




Children with Disabilities
1665 TEAM 018 YEARS







 children with disabilities team

Through the voice of the children,
young people, parents, Carers &
professionals



 services we can offer



Short Breaks


A child / young person can benefit from development of new interests, keeping fit, social networks with peers and taking part in hobbies.

The frequency and duration of short breaks can vary, such as:

- A virtual activity
- Family days out
- Attending a leisure facility for a few hours per week
- Attending after school clubs

Telephone: 03000 260 270
 Email: shortbreaksolutions@durham.gov.uk
 County Durham Local Offer - Durham County Council




Park House

Park House offers young disabled people, between 9 and 18 years, a short break service that is not available through family-based care services. A short break is defined as one, two or three overnight stays. We provide short break care for young people who have a learning disability and:


- *complex physical needs requiring specialist equipment
- *specific communication needs
- *a sensory impairment.

Grove House

Grove House offers specialist overnight short break service for children aged from six to seventeen years of age who have physical and/or learning disabilities or autism.



+
Visits and





 Team around the family meetings

Your Social Worker will visit you every 4 weeks and have a team around the family meeting, until a care package is set up and working well.

When everything is going well and you have a care package in place.



You will move into Monitor and Review and your family Worker will then visit you every 3 months to see how you are doing.






 Direct Work wishes and feelings

Sometimes, when your social worker and family worker come to see you at home or school, they may do some direct work with you. This means doing some activities together.



 spending time with my social worker and family worker

"I like it when my social worker and Family Worker visit me at home and sometimes at school".

"I like going out and doing lots of activities with the workers".

daisy,
 kind
 Lovely
 caring
 helpful

Logical
 Helpful
 listening

"I like spending time with my social worker because we get to go out for tea and get to listen to music in the car".

Figure 1

- 18 The Children with Disabilities team ensure our children's voices are heard using a range of direct work tools. We have done this is by investing in digital technology this is call Mind of My Own, using picture exchange communication and widget technology (a symbol-based software).
- 19 We believe that young people should always be able to participate fully in their lives and it should be easy for them to speak up anytime they want. We work with the most complex children and young people who do not often have words and we have to make use of a range of skills to understand their experiences and reflect this in their assessments of need.

One Child's story

- 20 Below describes how Emily's social worker helped her to understand what was happening when she moved to her new home to be closer to her family. Emily is a 14 year old child in our care. She was living in a residential home in London and it took her family a full day of travelling to visit her. The plan was to find a residential home closer to the family home, this took us time to find the right home for Emily.
- 21 Emily has communication difficulties and uses visual aids to help her communicate and understand what is happening. The social worker recognised that the move would be confusing for Emily and may cause her some upset. The social worker prepared a social story (figure 2) to explain what was happening when she met the staff from her new home.
- 22 The social worker then brought a transitional football mascot soft toy who featured in photos throughout pictures of her new home and visiting the new staff. This football mascot was left with the young person so it could be a transitional toy as part of the move. Symbols like this below can help us tell children stories that are visual and often are used to these from school and can support in embedding words when we share them with young people.
- 23 This demonstrates the commitment and dedication of the practitioners within the team. (It is noted that Emily and her parents gave permission to share her story and picture board.).

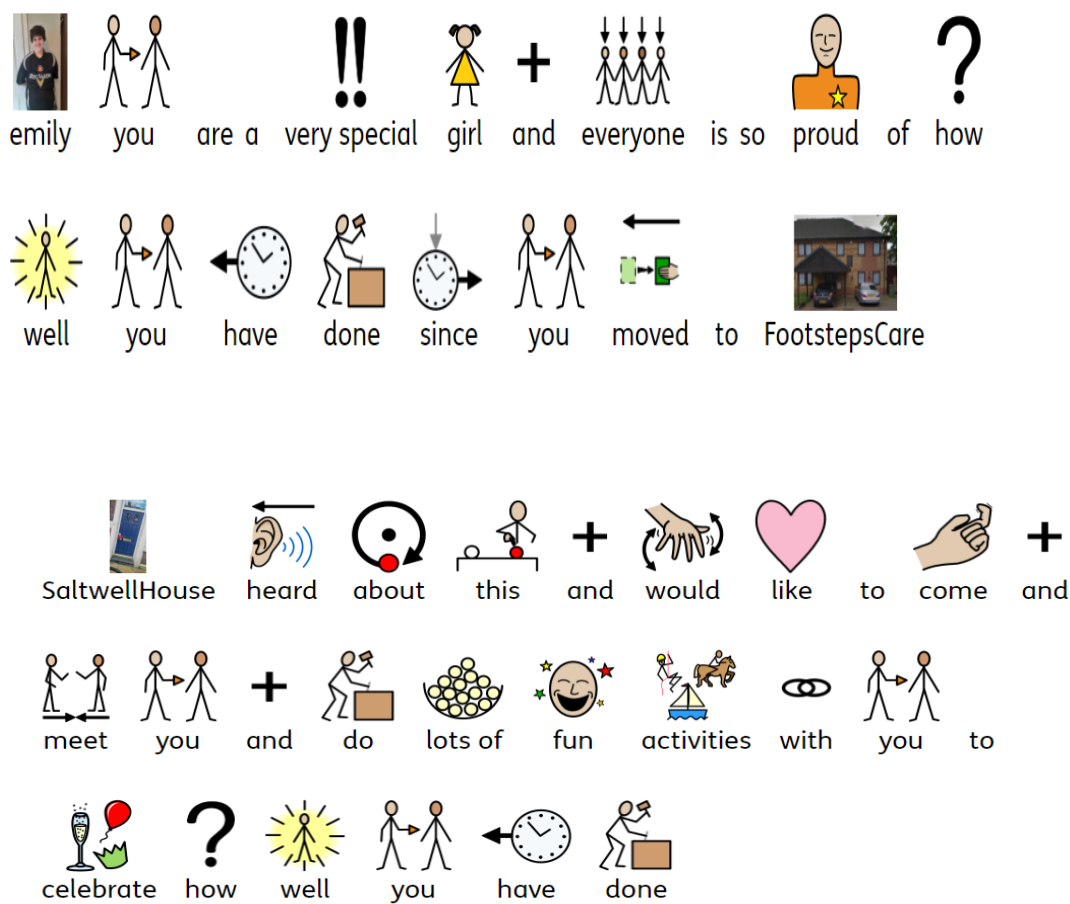


Figure 2

Education Health and Care Plans

- 24 The Children with Disabilities team have undergone some significant improvements in how we ensure social care advice is clearly evident and updated annually. We have always been a part of Education Health and Care Plans and provided advice upon request, however there were times when these were not provided in the review process. Processes are now in place to ensure full social care advice is provided at every annual updated assessment and this then is shared with our specialist schools where our children attend.
- 25 There was some recent audit activity that identified some very positive feedback about quality of social care advice and reflected the child's voice.

Short Breaks for Disabled Children

- 26 Short Breaks for children and young people with disabilities can be sometimes the only social opportunity for children to engage with their peers. This not only provides the children to have social opportunities but allows parents and carers to have much needed respite. Having

regular periods of respite often means that children can remain to be cared for at home by their parents, carers, or foster carers.

- 27 We now have a dedicated commissioner who works alongside the Children with Disabilities team to understand the needs of children with disabilities and their families. This is to ensure there are services that can be accessed to allow 'short breaks' from caring when needed to improve outcomes and prevent family breakdown.
- 28 Commissioning have reached out to local providers with a view of improving and widening the pool of much needed services for children and young people with disabilities. This has been a huge task which will hopefully result in better outcomes for the children and young people who we support.
- 29 The short breaks statement continues to work well with an emphasis on a graduated response and made this clearer for families including introduction of visual short break offer and an animation clip. The short breaks statement outlines what Durham's short breaks offer is, what type of support is provided within the short breaks offer and how it can be accessed. It includes details around advice, signposting, additional support and specialist support that is available within Durham.
- 30 The 'SEND Empowering Inclusive Communities – SENDEIC is now working well to grow capacity and increase access to universal community activities, expand the offer and remove any barriers to access. This is Durham's local offer around providing better access for disabled children to mainstream services. If a disabled child would like to access a community group, our empowering inclusive communities co-ordinator will support to overcome these barriers, this may be providing a changing table, or additional support within the service, if there is a barrier preventing access, the purpose of SENDEIC is to remove this.
- 31 We have worked jointly with Adult Commissioners to re-commission an all-age Domiciliary Care Support Framework. Feedback to date has been positive.
- 32 The Children with Disabilities Team continue to believe that children and families are the expert in their care and strive to support in provided person centred care and where there are assessed needs that can be met through a direct payment, we will support this to be utilised. Where a child lives with parents, meets our eligibility criteria and has assessed needs for short breaks, a direct payment can be offered for them to recruit a support worker on their own behalf, this allows families to also be more creative in how their support needs can be met and also provides more flexibility.

Working alongside partner agencies

- 33 Many children with disabilities, have complex health needs and their care packages are often co-ordinated jointly with the Children with Disabilities team and Children's Continuing Care. The packages of support can be jointly funded and supported by a social worker alongside a continuing care nurse. This can include a specialist trained professional coming into the home for overnights and specialist hospice care. Like short breaks, this provides the same opportunities with specialist trained staff on hand to keep our children and young people safe.
- 34 There is close joint working between the Children with Disabilities team and the Families First safeguarding teams, Navigation team, Countywide services, and First Contact colleagues. The Children with Disabilities team provide valuable support and guidance to other teams when a child or young person does not meet the criteria for the Children with Disabilities team.
- 35 We have established good and effective working relationships with our partners in Education – special schools, Health i.e., Occupational Therapy services, Continuing Care Services, Police, Local Authority Commissioning Teams, Health Commissioners, Early Help colleagues and the voluntary services, Advocacy service and the Carers centre.
- 36 We work closely with the Durham Virtual School Head, and she describes that her team works closely with the Children with Disabilities team to support Children in Care into the best provision to meet the child's needs. They provide advice to social workers and attend meetings to ensure the education provision the child attends are the right one. In consultation with the SEND caseworker, they are part of discussions when a child's care arrangements change, and a school placement is required. The Post 16 Children in Care Personal Education Plan caseworker supports the young person into Post 16 and thinking about supporting young people into adulthood, many of our children and young people will access education post 18 and their Education Health Care Plan can remain in place and reviewed annually as needed until 25.

What others think

- 37 As a team we encourage feedback from other's experiences This enables us to assess the quality of our working relationships between children, families and practitioners. It also enables the team to celebrate good practice, build on strengths and take steps to make improvements where needed.

- 38 Feedback from a parent who we jointly with health commission a short break for in St Oswald's hospice:

"St Oswald's has been a lifeline for us, helping to cope through some incredibly difficult times. The staff are extremely well trained, professional and caring. Our daughter gets a huge amount of enjoyment out of her stays there and it helps us to relax knowing she is safe and well looked after"

- 39 Feedback from a child about their social worker

"My social worker helps to make sure I am safe, looked after and help me go to activities. My social worker comes to see me at my house or at school to see how I am doing"

- 40 Feedback from a specialist foster carer:

"The social workers in the disabilities team have supported a number of children in our care and our experience of the team has been very positive in the last few years and I speak very highly of them"

What is next

- 41 The Children with Disabilities continue to strive to make improvements to ensure good outcomes for children and young people with disabilities, the priority for the next 12 months are:

- (a) Preparation for Adulthood to be a focus on every child and family assessment for 14 plus and focussed, in all plans for disabled children;
- (b) Social Care advice to be completed alongside every annual reassessment and shared with education provisions;
- (c) Continue to develop new and creative ways of communicating and getting the voice of our most vulnerable disabled children who do not have words to communicate;
- (d) Continue to develop opportunities for disabled children for short breaks through our commissioned services and personalised pots of funding to support specialist creative packages;
- (e) Continue to work closely with our home finder team around identifying specialist homes for our disabled children close to home.

Conclusion

42 The report reflects a great deal of positive and effective working. The team are passionate and committed about achieving good outcomes for children and young people with disabilities.

Authors

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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.

The Children Act 2004, requires that all higher education institutions do not discriminate against disabled students and prospective students. The Act establishes clear standards for promoting the health and wellbeing of children and young people and for providing high quality services that meet their needs.

The Equality Act 2010 for disabled children covers disabled children and young people whether or not they have SEN. For the purpose of avoiding discrimination, anticipating and making reasonable adjustments, and meeting wider responsibilities, schools need to know who their disabled pupils are

The Children and family Act 2014, Part 3, sets out how local authorities work with children and young people with disabilities and special educational needs.

Finance

No implications.

Consultation and Engagement

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

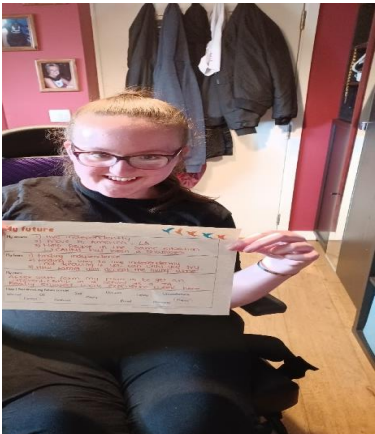
No implications.

Children with Disabilities Team

What our children and their families tell us we need to do more of

Children With Disabilities Team 2024 - Capture Our Voice

- Social workers are using new communication tools to tell us things about our life, like social stories and what fun activities we like to do.
- Use Mind of My Own Express when we can access this.
- Social workers are using more creative ways to gather our wishes and feelings including photos, social stories, picture exchange communication, signed supported English, Makaton and commissioned specialist signs when needed.



Ensure our needs are understood and regularly discussed by people who know us best



- We are visited regularly by our named social worker.
- Annual assessments focusing on what is working well for us and our families/carers, what we are worried about and what needs to happen to meet our needs.
- Ensuring we have a robust plan to meet our needs and/or keep us safe. That these are reviewed and updated regularly by us, our families and our carers.
- When we are ready to think about preparing for adulthood, we get an adult's social worker who works closely with our social worker to make sure that we get services that we need as adults, this means sometimes we stay living with our carers who can become shared lives carers until we are ready to move on. This can mean we have support to move into supported living as an adult and it often means we can keep having short breaks with adults who can help keep us safe.
- If we are children in care, when we leave care, we also can access the care leavers local offer and if we would benefit from this, we can have a young persons leaving care advisor.

That you know us well. When you can't help you help us to find someone who can

Page 90

- The managers in the service have worked really hard with commissioning and providers to make sure we are looking for the right support for disabled children.
- We are seeking new providers to become part of a larger project that will give all disabled children accessible opportunities for social activities through the local offer and when this is not possible, we have a number of providers and person centered led support options to offer social opportunities for our most complex children and young people.
- If children can access our none assessed route social workers make sure that they know about this.



Educational Health And Care Plans

- All of the children who are supported by the Children With Disabilities Team have an Education Health and Care Plan.
- This incorporates social care alongside health and education.
- Our social workers make sure we talk about these in all of their assessments and our care plans and all the meetings about us.
- Our social workers visit us in school, and they write all about the important things about us in the annual Education Health Care Plan reviews, we know its important to get this right, so everyone knows how to best meet our needs.

Investing in Children **Durham County Council**

Children with Disabilities Team

CWP **sportworks**

Overnight Stays

Park House
Park House offers young disabled people, between 9 and 18 years, a short break service that is not available through family-based care services. A short break is defined as one, two or three overnight stays. We provide short break care for young people who have a learning disability and:
-complex physical needs requiring specialist equipment
-specific communication needs
-a sensory impairment.

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Grove House offers specialist overnight short break service for children aged from six to seventeen years of age who have physical and/or learning disabilities or autism.

Through the voice of the children, young people, parents, Carers & professionals

Integrating Children "Positive about Inclusion"

Jadig

Direct Work wishes and feelings

Sometimes, when your social worker and family worker come to see you at home or school, they may do some direct work with you. This means doing some activities together.

Team around the family meetings

Your Social Worker will visit you every 4 weeks and have a team around the family meeting, until a care package is set up and working well.

When everything is going well and you have a care package in place. You will move into Monitor and Review and your family Worker will then visit you every 3 months to see how you are doing.

our Feelings

"I like it when my social worker and Family Worker visit me at home and sometimes at school".

"I like going out and doing lots of activities with the workers".

daisy, kind, lovely, caring, newfful, Legal, Mansby, listening

"I like spending time with my social worker because we get to go out for tea and get to listen to music in the car".

spending time with my social worker and family worker

WE HAVE ASKED ONE OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE TONI TO HELP US TELL CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL WHAT SHE THINKS ABOUT THE CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES TEAM

THIS IS WHAT SHE HAS CREATED FOR US TO SHOW YOU...





Toni doesn't want to be filmed or come and talk in person but she has spent the afternoon doing this lovely picture with her social worker to tell you about the CWD team.

The happy umbrellas – Toni describes her social worker as kind and a good listener, Toni has said that they can help her if she has a problem. Toni has said that the social workers help her see her family and they ask how she is feeling.

The Dark Cloud (what we can do better) Toni's local youth club has stopped running and she has asked for some help to find a new one (we will help with this!) Toni would like to spend more time with her social worker.

TONI LIVES WITH HER FOSTER CARERS, SHE HAS AN EHCP, LEARNING NEEDS AND IS SUPPORTED BY A SOCIAL WORKER FROM CWD

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