



Corporate Parenting Panel

Date Friday 18 December 2020

Time 9.30 am

Venue Remote Meeting - This meeting is being held remotely via Microsoft Teams

Business

Part A

Items which are open to the press and public

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Substitute Members
3. Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 23 October 2020
(Pages 5 - 14)
4. Declarations of Interest
5. Number of Looked After Children - Verbal update from Head of Children's Social Care
6. Investing in Children / Children in Care Council update - Presentation of Project Officer, Investing in Children
(Pages 15 - 18)
7. Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for Children Looked After and Care Leavers - Report and Presentation of Corporate Director, Children and Young People's Services, Durham County Council and Joint Head of Integrated Strategic Commissioning for County Durham CCG and Durham County Council
(Pages 19 - 66)
 - a) Presentation - Sufficiency Strategy (Pages 67 - 72)
8. Aycliffe Secure Centre Update: Presentation of Aycliffe Secure Services Centre Manager
 - a) Presentation - ASC Update - Covid-19 (Pages 73 - 76)
 - b) Presentation - ASC Update - Transitions Home
(Pages 77 - 80)

9. Update on Regional Adoption Agency - Adopt Coast to Coast - Report of Head of Children's Social Care (Pages 81 - 86)
10. Adoption Report April 2020 - September 2020 - Report of Head of Children's Social Care (Pages 87 - 92)
 - a) Adoption Presentation (Pages 93 - 96)
11. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.
12. Any resolution relating to the exclusion of the public during the discussion of items containing exempt information.

Part B

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

13. Regulation 44 visits and Regulatory Body Ratings of Children's Residential Homes - Report of Head of Children's Social Care and Head of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children (Pages 97 - 102)
14. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.

Helen Lynch

Head of Legal and Democratic Services

County Hall
Durham
10 December 2020

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

Councillor I Jewell (Chair)
Councillor H Smith (Vice-Chair)

Councillors B Bainbridge, H Bennett, J Carr, J Charlton,
J Considine, P Crathorne, P Jopling, M McKeon, J Makepeace,
O Milburn, C Potts, S Quinn, A Reed, G Richardson, E Scott,
M Simmons, T Tucker, C Wilson.

Co-opted Members

C Baines,
A Ferguson
W Taylor

Young person representative of the Children in Care Council
(CiCC)

Contact: Jill Hogg

Tel: 03000 269 711

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DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a remote meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Panel** held on
Friday 23 October 2020 at 10.00 am

Present:

Councillor I Jewell in the Chair

Panel Members:

Councillors B Bainbridge, J Charlton, J Considine, P Crathorne, P Jopling, M McKeon, J Makepeace, O Milburn, C Potts, S Quinn, A Reed, E Scott, M Simmons, H Smith, T Tucker and C Wilson

Co-opted Member:

C Baines

Also in attendance:

Kelsey Clayton - Legal Services Manager

Helen Fergusson - Head of Children's Social Care

Robert Johnson - Project Manager, Investing in Children

Heather McFarlane - Designated Nurse Safeguarding and Looked After Children

Selwyn Morgans – Centre Manager, Aycliffe Secure Centre

Claire Morris - Strategic Manager, Children Looked After Resources

Martyn Stenton - Head of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children

Melanie Stubbs - Head of the Virtual School

Stephen Tracey – Corporate Equalities and Strategy Manager

Jayne Watson - Senior Partnerships Officer

Dawn Wilson - Senior Commissioning Officer

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor G Richardson.

2. Substitute Members

No substitute members were in attendance.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Friday 28 February 2020 were agreed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chair.

The Chair thanked officers for the regular updates which had been circulated to the Panel, during the suspension of meetings throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

4. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5. Number of Looked After Children

The Head of Children's Social Care provided an update on the number of children looked after which stood at 955, an increase of approximately 50 on the figure reported in February. Members noted that the COVID-19 pandemic had delayed plans for some young people who were ready to leave the looked after system, the increase therefore did not represent 50 new cases. The increase mirrors the regional and national trend.

Councillor A Reed asked if the increase had impacted on foster care capacity. The Head of Children's Social Care responded that, over recent months, there had been an increase in the number of children living in kinship care arrangements, and in these circumstances, a family member or friend is approved as their foster carer. In addition to this, the foster carer recruitment campaign continues to ensure sufficiency.

6. Investing in Children / Children in Care Council Update

Robert Johnson, Project Manager, delivered a presentation which updated the Panel on recent activities carried out by the Children in Care Council (for copy of presentation see file of minutes).

The Project Manager explained the young people have continued to connect with the Corporate Parenting Panel, remotely, throughout the pandemic, and, during the summer the young people highlighted a national campaign which aims to challenge the stigma and negative stereotypes that some people associate with being in care. The young people considered this was so important that it should be brought to the attention of the Corporate Parenting Panel who could highlight this at a more local level. The young people suggested that the Corporate Parenting Panel could assist by reviewing positive news stories with the Children in Care Council on a regular basis, and they would also like to see more positive promotion of children looked after through platforms such as the foster carer recruitment campaign and the Children in Care Council newsletter.

Councillor Milburn asked the Programme Manager whether the Children in Care Council promote through Durham County Council's media and communications team.

The Programme Manager confirmed that the media team does promote the work of the Children in Care Council and they do gain recognition, for example, the Children's Commissioner for England had retweeted a poem written by one of the young people. However, in addition to media coverage, the young people would also like Corporate Parenting Panel members to continue to promote them within their wards.

Councillor Considine commented that she would be more than happy to share the Children in Care Council's magazine and she suggested that it may be beneficial if the magazine could be distributed with the County Durham News magazine which is circulated to every household in County Durham, thereby maximising its circulation.

Acknowledging how difficult the months during the pandemic have been for young people, Councillor Tucker asked if the young people had received additional mental health support. The Head of Children's Social Care informed the Panel that the service has continued to provide mental health services, and, therapeutic support through the Full Circle, and, in addition there is work being done to develop peer support to encourage young people to support each other. The service has found the pandemic has been very much an individual experience with some young people embracing the use of online and digital platforms and some finding that remaining in foster care, or, in their children's homes for longer than anticipated, a very positive experience.

Councilor Tucker asked what support is available to help young people gain employment and whether vetting of prospective employers takes place. The Head of Children's Social Care explained that a dedicated team of officers prepare young people for the transition into further education or employment. She added there are approximately 30 older children looked after in higher education, and the service is aware of how challenging the COVID-19 pandemic is going to prove with regard to employment opportunities and this will continue to be a priority.

The Project Manager concluded his item by paying tribute to the Young People's Service including the Young People's Advisers, saying the support they had provided throughout the pandemic, had been invaluable.

7. Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report

Jayne Watson, Senior Partnerships Officer presented the Corporate Parenting Annual Report for 2019/20 and delivered a presentation (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

The Senior Partnerships Officer explained the report was produced in conjunction with the young people of the Children in Care Council, to ensure their voice was reflected in it, and she presented highlights of the achievements during the year and details of the priorities for the forthcoming year.

The Chair thanked all those involved in the production of the annual report.

Resolved:

That the recommendation in the report be approved.

8. Corporate Parenting Strategy

The Committee considered a report and presentation of Helen Fergusson, Head of Children's Social Care on the development of the Corporate Parenting Strategy (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

The Panel noted the strategy outlines the range of work taking place to continue to improve outcomes for children looked after and care leavers. The Head of Children's Social Care described eight priority areas and gave the following examples of planned work for the forthcoming year, aligned to the eight strategic priorities:

1. Work with health partners to increase support for young people with complex mental health needs, including work with Tees Esk and Wear Valley Mental Health Trust to support young people in crisis.
2. Expansion of the Edge of Care provision and a focus on delivering Family Group Conferences to reach extended family members to ensure that, wherever it is safe to do so, the possibility of children remaining with extended family members is explored. Work is also being undertaken to embed Signs of Safety to ensure all families who are experiencing difficulty are offered a family network meeting.
3. Work will continue to ensure placement sufficiency, through the recruitment of foster carers. The Panel noted a new Children's Home is due to open imminently, and it is hoped to further increase residential provision to offer more short breaks and respite. Work is also taking place with providers of smaller, more specialist provision.
4. There are plans to extend the pre-birth service to include care leavers who are becoming parents and a dedicated Pause project for County Durham is due to be launched for parents who have repeatedly had children removed from their care, in order to provide them with support to break the cycle.

5. Work will be done to improve the local offer through increasing employment opportunities and to further develop the Staying Close project where young people leaving care can continue to live close to, and access support from, their former children's home. In addition, a plan for a new drop-in centre for young people is being developed.
6. Clear Cut Communication will be implemented to identify, at an early stage, those children and young people who require additional help with speech and language.
7. The Virtual School now has increased capacity to include oversight of all children in early years settings as well as school settings, and, within the next year, it also plans to have oversight of post-16 provision.
8. The service will continue to listen and respond to the views of children looked after and young people. An issue had come to light during the pandemic with the increase in the use of technology where it became apparent that some of the children's homes had inadequate wi-fi facilities. As a result of this feedback from the young people, steps will be taken to improve the wi-fi speed in all Durham County Council's children's residential homes.

The Head of Children's Social Care responded to comments and questions as follows.

In response to a question from Councillor Charlton, the Head of Children's Social Care said further details would be provided to Councillor Charlton in due course, regarding the location of the drop-in centre.

Councillor Jopling asked what support is provided to those leaving care who find they cannot cope with independent living. The Head of Children's Social Care explained that every care leaver is assisted by a Young Person's Adviser and they have access to a wide range of support and accommodation. It is recognised that all young people are different and a plan is developed for each care leaver to identify exactly what support they need. The service keeps in touch with all care leavers and support continues up to the age of 25. Where a care leaver is not able to live on their own, alternative living arrangements are explored, including supported lodgings and group living arrangements.

Councillor Considine referred to the Fostering to Adopt placements and asked if these had increased and she added that she was pleased to see progress of the Pause and Staying Close projects. The Head of Children's Social Care said the service is working closely with colleagues in housing to identify suitable properties to extend the Staying Close project.

With regard to Fostering to Adopt placements, four arrangements are in place, and, the Regional Adoption Agency, which is due to launch next year, will offer additional opportunities.

Councillor Reed commented on the amount of work planned for the future and extended praise to the staff. She spoke of those young people who, on reaching secondary school find it difficult to cope, refuse to engage and may go missing from school and asked what provisions are in place to assist young people experiencing difficulty, and, to assist schools to manage these issues.

Melanie Stubbs, Virtual School Head Teacher informed the Panel that there are a variety of service level agreements in place with therapeutic and educational health service professionals and schools are requested to alert the Virtual School as soon as issues occur. On a positive note, there have been no permanent exclusions from the Virtual School since 2014 and only 2 children looked after had been discussed at Behaviour Panels throughout the county. Support from the Full Circle is available to schools through a telephone helpline. With regard to alternative provision, an inclusion base at Lanchester provides respite for young people experiencing difficulties. The Virtual School head commented that young people looked after require a sense of belonging and the focus is to ensure that stability is maintained as much as possible.

Councillor Tucker asked what steps are taken when a young person simply refuses to accept help offered. The Virtual School Head explained that, as a former designated teacher, she never gives up on a child. She emphasised that a young person must always have someone to turn to and that, in itself, sends a very important message. When a young person refuses to engage, they strive to find a method that will work. On occasions, it is necessary to engage experts from the health needs team to assist and alternative provision will be investigated if all other methods of intervention have failed. This year has seen the introduction of the Personal Education Plan caseworker remaining with the child throughout, in order to promote continuity.

Councillor Tucker asked for information on what is done to ensure that children's homes are located in suitable locations. Claire Morris, Strategic Manager responded that close work is carried out with police, housing and planning to ensure that a potential location is suitable in terms of schools, the community, safety, and, importantly, the views of young people are also taken into account.

Councillor Bainbridge asked whether additional funding had been accessed during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Head of Children's Social Care confirmed additional government funding had been obtained to provide support for adopters, kinship carers, special guardianship carers and for peer support opportunities, including a dedicated telephone helpline being set up. A number of the funding streams are currently under review.

Councillor Smith drew members' attention to the County Durham Plan, adopted at the Council meeting held on Wednesday 21 October, which includes clear guidance relating to planning decisions on appropriate sites for children's residential homes.

The Chair thanked members and officers for the useful discussion.

Resolved:

That the report be received.

9. Performance Update

The Panel considered a performance update and presentation from Stephen Tracey, Corporate Equalities and Strategy manager (for copy see file of minutes).

The Corporate Equalities and Scrutiny Manager referred to the rise in the number of children and he pointed out that although the figure has increased by 50, there had been a 25 % reduction in the number of children becoming looked after and a 50% reduction in the number of children ending their time in care, therefore more children had remained in care for longer, during the pandemic. The pandemic had also had an impact with regard to fewer hospital and dental appointments and this had led to a slight dip in performance relating to the number of health and dental assessments being carried out. Outcomes for care leavers had improved during the period with two-thirds of care leavers being in education, employment or training and only a very small number of care leavers are not in suitable accommodation.

Councillor Jopling congratulated the service on their performance, in particular in relation to suitable accommodation and asked if any young people were known to be sleeping rough. The Head of Children's Social Care confirmed that no young people looked after were sleeping rough and bed and breakfast accommodation is used only in very exceptional circumstances. She pointed out that the data includes a small number of young people in custody.

Councillor C Wilson asked about unaccompanied asylum seeking young people and she asked how they are cared for. The Head of Children's Social Care replied that, as soon as the Council becomes the responsible authority for those young people, they are cared for in the same way as all other children looked after, with access to the same accommodation and support.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

10. Any other business

Claire Morris, Strategic Manager for Children Looked After Resources shared a good news story resulting from the pandemic. One of the young people in care with an ambition to become a footballer used lockdown to his advantage to practise his footballing skills at every available opportunity. The residential home staff spent many hours, over the weeks, helping the young person to develop his skills. As a result of this, he successfully gained a place on a local football team and his team won their first match 7-0. To everyone's delight, the young person was selected as man of the match. The Strategic Manager added that seeing how proud this young person was of what he had achieved demonstrates how important and rewarding the work can be.

In response to a request from Councillor Considine, the Panel placed on record their thanks and well wishes to Florence Coulter, former Fostering and Adoption Team Leader, on her recent retirement and wished her well for the future.

11. 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.

12. Regulation 44 visits

Dawn Wilson, Senior Commissioning Officer reported that virtual visits had taken place since March and the statutory requirements had been met throughout the pandemic.

As a result of feedback from the Panel, future Regulation 44 visits reports will be in a new, summarised format.

The Chair praised the current model of quality assurance and thanked the Commissioning Officers for their professional approach.

The Chair asked members to consider the two vacancies and asked that they speak to him, or, the Senior Partnership Officer if they required further information. Councillor Tucker commented that she would be happy to fill one of the vacancies.

Councillor Tucker commented that the meeting had been very productive adding that she was pleased to see that children looked after and care leavers have been well supported and encouraged throughout the pandemic. She added that staff in Children's Services had clearly done a great deal of work over recent months and they should be commended. The Head of Children's Social Care thanked the Panel for the kind words, saying they were much appreciated and she assured the Panel that she would pass these comments to staff at the next staff briefing.

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Presentation by Amber, Mitchell and Ian CICC / CPP representatives

CICC Update November/ December 2020

- Designated teacher training and plans moving into 2021.
- Social Work training and future developments.
- Future Foster Care Training update
- Child Friendly Policing.



CICC /CPP fundraising annual event.

- Based on the success of the summer box project CICC members would like CPP to consider an annual fundraising event with CPP once a year.
- Funds raised could benefit children , young people and families in County Durham who are care experienced. Investing in Children could support?

Animals and Use-

- Can DCC do more to promote 'Animal Time'
- Schools adopt animals – Could DCC adopt an animal for young people and career's to spending time with safely – like Hall Hill farm's approach to adoption or even adopt one there and possibly connected it with the freedom card scheme?
<http://www.hallhillfarm.co.uk/choose-animal/>
- Can CPP consider this?



Positive New Story.

Ian shares his positive story of becoming A National Voice ambassador with Coram Voice and what he would like to do with CICC/CPP in future.

<https://coramvoice.org.uk/latest/meet-your-new-ambassadors-on-instagram/>

Finally we want to wish you all a Happy Festive Season. From Amber, Mitchell and Ian.

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Corporate Parenting Panel

18 December 2020

Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for Children Looked After and Care Leavers



Report of John Pearce, Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services

Sarah Burns, Joint Head of Integrated Strategic Commissioning for County Durham CCG and Durham County Council

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 This report provides an Executive Summary in relation to the updated Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for Children Looked After and Care Leavers 2020-2023 (Appendix 3).

Executive summary

- 2 The Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy sets out Durham's strategic approach to securing sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of our children looked after.
- 3 It looks closely at the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic over the last 8 months, how this has affected our sufficiency and the steps we are taking to ensure that our sufficiency offer is robust and continues to meet our changing needs.
- 4 Between March 2014 and March 2020, we have experienced a 51% increase in the number of children and young people that we care for (605 in March 2014 and 914 in March 2020). The increasing demand for children and young people who require care continues to place significant pressure on services.
- 5 Durham has seen a 4% increase in the number of children coming into care between March 2020 and September 2020, in comparison with neighbouring authorities such as Darlington and Middlesbrough, with a 12% increase.

6 The strategy outlines the ongoing work being carried out to improve and broaden our current placement sufficiency offer and the short to medium term priorities.

Recommendations

7 The Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to:

- a) Consider the Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for Children Looked After and Care Leavers set out in Appendix 3 and provide comments.
- b) Consider the strategic priorities contained within Appendix 2 and provide comments.

Key Priorities within the Strategy

- 8 There are four overarching objectives within the Strategy, with a number of priorities that sit below. The key objectives include:
 - (a) Grow our number of in-house foster carers and reduce our reliance on independent foster care provision;
 - (b) Increase the number of adopters;
 - (c) Continue to develop and broaden our residential homes offer and maximise opportunities with external providers when there is a case to do so; and
 - (d) Develop access to a diverse range of appropriate accommodation for Care Leavers.
- 9 Our key priorities within the Commissioning Strategy are detailed in Appendix 2 of this report.

Background

- 10 The council has a duty, as stated in section 22G of the Children Act 1989, to take steps to secure, as far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for children looked after within their local authority area. The 2010 guidance on the ‘sufficiency duty’ states that local authorities should have embedded plans, as part of their commissioning processes and through partnership working, to meet the duty.
- 11 The sufficiency duty must take account of the requirement, under section 22C (5) of the Children Act 1989, that the overriding consideration for placing a child is that the placement must be the most appropriate available to meet the child’s needs. Next, preference must be given to a placement with a friend, relative or other person connected with the child and who is a local authority foster carer. Failing that, a placement must be found, as far as is reasonably practicable in all circumstances, that:
 - (a) Is near the child’s home;
 - (b) Is within the local authority’s area, unless that is not reasonably practicable;
 - (c) Enables the child to live with an accommodated sibling;
 - (d) Where the child is disabled, is suitable to meet the needs of that child; and
 - (e) Does not disrupt his/her education or training.
- 12 The objectives and indicators within the Strategy will be monitored on a 3 monthly basis and used to understand and determine our ongoing changing needs in relation to placement sufficiency.

Conclusion

- 13 As Corporate Parents we must ensure that we have a range of good quality placement provision that is able to meet the varying needs of our children looked after and our care leavers.
- 14 The strategy sets out our current position in being able to meet these needs and the challenges presented to us, particularly in light of the ongoing covid-19 pandemic; and outlines the key prioritises that we will deliver over the coming two years to address gaps in provision and to broaden our sufficiency offer for children and young people.

Author: Lindsey Herring, Children's Commissioner Tel: 03000 265 766

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The Local Authority has a legal duty to provide sufficient accommodation options for children and young people who are looked after and those that are care leavers.

The strategy outlines a number of key priorities which will enable us to continue meeting are changing needs and to minimise any reputational and political damage with regulators such as Ofsted.

Finance

A number of the proposals set out in this strategy will require either capital or revenue investment in order to take forward. These will be subject to individual business cases, setting out the rationale and justification for services and the funding requirements.

Consultation

The Local Authority will be required to consult with elected members and local communities when developing many of the services as outlined in the strategy. This will be completed as part of the formal planning process.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

The Authority is required to ensure that all children looked after have equality of opportunity, to ensure best outcomes.

Human Rights

Young People who are in the care of Durham County Council have the right to be provided with suitable and appropriate local care which can meet their needs to enable them to successfully move into adulthood.

Crime and Disorder

Non applicable.

Staffing

The strategy sets out the development of a range of new services which will broaden and enhance our current sufficiency offer. These services will require new staff to support their operational delivery. All revenue funding required to recruit new staff will be subject to individual business cases.

Accommodation

The report provides information about the range of accommodation options available for our children and young people and also proposes a suite of new service developments to broaden and improve our sufficiency offer.

All proposed service development involving new accommodation will be subject to individual business cases.

Risk

There is a significant risk to the Local Authority if we are unable to provide suitable accommodation and care options for our children and young people.

Whilst there is a risk of prosecution from Ofsted which would be reputationally damaging to the Local Authority.

Procurement

When commissioning new services, the Contract Procedures Rules will be adhered to and Corporate Procurement Colleagues involved.

Appendix 2: Strategy Priorities

No	Overarching Objective	Priorities	Completed by
1	Grow our number of in-house foster carers and reduce our reliance on independent foster care provision	Recruit 30 new foster carer households during 2021/2022 and 2022/23	March 2022 and March 2023
		Review the training and support offer to support the retention of our foster carers	March 2022
		Evidence the good work we do in ensuring the voice of the child and their carers informs service delivery	March 2022
		Carry out targeted foster carer recruitment so we are able to care for more teenagers and sibling groups	March 2022
		As part of the annual review process for foster carers, we will continue to ensure that we have carers with as wide an approval range as possible to provide flexibility and opportunities for placement finding	March 2022
		We will develop respite foster carer provision which will support the stability of our placements	March 2022
		We will continue to work regionally with other Local Authorities to ensure that the regional Independent Fostering Agency commissioning framework continues to be fit for purpose.	Ongoing
		Through the framework solution we will continue to develop the independent fostering agency market to be able to take more complex young people. This	March 2023

No	Overarching Objective	Priorities	Completed by
		will take time to develop, however we would like to see a shift in the type of placements that IFAs are able to provide over the next 3-5 years	
		We will seek to reduce the dependency on IFA provision by developing and implementing strategies to recruit in-house, local foster carers and maximise in-house provision	March 2023
2	Increase the number of adopters	To work in partnership with Together for Children, Cumbria Council and Voluntary Adoption Agencies to develop and roll out the 'Coast to Coast' regional adoption agency which will be hosted by Cumbria County Council.	April 2021
		Improve practice to increase in-house adoption provision in preparation for a partnership RAA model	April 2021
3	Continue to develop and broaden our residential homes offer and maximise opportunities with external providers when there is a case to do so	Develop and open a new Edge of Care Children's Home	September 2021
		Develop a 'Relief Pool' to provide additional staffing capacity, across residential homes and our edge of care service	Ongoing
		Develop a Staying Close Pilot	June 2021
		Expand our smaller homes offer (1-2 bedded homes) with potentially up to 4 additional homes, depending on the ongoing service needs	March 2023

No	Overarching Objective	Priorities	Completed by
		Develop up to three new therapeutic children's homes for children aged 7-13 and 12-17	March 2023
		Review the upper bedding capacity of our existing children's homes to meet our changing needs	March 2022
		We will continue to work in partnership with a community of interest company to develop a bespoke package of care for a child/children with ASD. The service will become an extension of our in-house residential offer for Durham children and young people.	January 2021
		We will continue to play an active role in the NE12 regional consortia, working closely with residential providers	Ongoing
		We will continue to work closely with providers that wish to develop new services in County Durham, to shape services and to positively challenge service development when this does not meet our needs	Ongoing
		As our capacity increases within in-house residential home provision, we will review our out of county placements to understand which children and young people have a plan to move back into Durham	April 2021 onwards
4	Develop access to a diverse range of	To review the marketing and recruitment strategy for Supported Lodging provision	April 2021

No	Overarching Objective	Priorities	Completed by
	appropriate accommodation for Care Leavers	We will review the current supported living offer on an ongoing basis and ensure that new services are secured when gaps in provision are identified	Ongoing
		We will seek agreement to extend the current offer provided by Hedley House, based on the findings at the 6-month review stage, developing two dispersed supported living properties with outreach support, in line with our increasing care leaver numbers	April 2021
		We will recommission our Supported Living Provider Panel for young people with needs that challenge services, in 2021, enabling new providers to join, broadening our current offer	December 2021

Appendix 3: Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for Children Looked After and Care Leavers 2020-2023

Attached as a separate document

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Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for Looked After Children and Care Leavers 2020-2023

October 2020

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Please note that the most up to date available data has been used in the writing of this strategy.

Issue Date	Date of Next Strategy Review	Lead Service(s)
October 2020	October 2021	Commissioning Service

1. INTRODUCTION

The Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy sets out Durham's strategic approach to securing sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of our looked after children.

It looks closely at the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic over the last 8 months, how this has affected our sufficiency and the steps we are taking to ensure that our sufficiency offer is robust and continues to meet our changing needs.

The Strategy should also be considered alongside the wider Children and Young People's Commissioning Plan 2019-2021.

2. POLICY CONTEXT

The council has a duty, as stated in section 22G of the Children Act 1989, to take steps to secure, as far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for looked after children within their local authority area. The 2010 guidance on the 'sufficiency duty' states that local authorities should have embedded plans, as part of their commissioning processes and through partnership working, to meet the duty.

The sufficiency duty must take account of the requirement, under section 22C (5) of the Children Act 1989, that the overriding consideration for placing a child is that the placement must be the most appropriate available to meet the child's needs. Next, preference must be given to a placement with a friend, relative or other person connected with the child and who is a local authority foster carer. Failing that, a placement must be found, as far as is reasonably practicable in all circumstances, that:

- Is near the child's home;
- Is within the local authority's area, unless that is not reasonably practicable.
- Enables the child to live with an accommodated sibling;
- Where the child is disabled, is suitable to meet the needs of that child; and
- Does not disrupt his/her education or training.

3. BEING A CORPORATE PARENT

Looking after and protecting children and young people from harm is one of the most important jobs that Durham County Council, as a Local Authority must undertake. Where a child cannot remain safely at home for whatever reason and comes into the care of the Local Authority and becomes 'Looked After' the council becomes the 'corporate parent' for that child. They are also the corporate parent for any young person who is under 25 and has been looked after for at least 13 weeks after their 14th birthday.

The term ‘corporate parent’ means the collective responsibility of the council, elected members, employees and partner agencies, for providing the best possible care and safeguarding support for the children and young people who are looked after by the council. A child in the care of the council looks to the whole council to be the best parent it can be to that child. Every member and employee has a statutory responsibility to act for that child in the Our commitment is to all children and young people living in foster care and residential care, placed for adoption, those living in supported lodgings or at home under Placement with Parent Regulations, as well as those living in secure establishments or in custody.

4. POSITION STATEMENT

As an Authority we:

- Will work collaboratively with families and our partners to offer family support and enable children and young people to be cared for within their own families wherever possible.
- Offer a range of early help services to support children subject to a Child Protection Plan and their families and prevent entry into care. This includes Family Group Conferencing, our Supporting Solutions Service (Edge of Care service) and direct social work interventions from our One Point Service and Families First Teams.
- Will undertake robust assessment, planning and case review to ensure that we only look after children and young people for whom being in care is the only way of ensuring their safety, protection and development.
- Will continue to work with those with parental responsibility to help a child or young person in care return home safely, wherever this is possible.

When it is not possible for a child or young person to remain with their family, we will seek to provide high quality care which meets their individual needs and as near as possible to the child or young person’s home to maintain links with birth parents, relatives and their communities (where appropriate).

As an Authority we:

- Will aim to secure legal and emotional permanence, preferably through adoption, Special Guardianship, Child Arrangement Orders or where this is not possible, through long-term foster care.
- Will maximise the use of internal foster care resources before using local external fostering agencies.
- Will avoid using residential care except when it is in the best interests of the child / young person and meeting their complex needs.
- Are committed to be the best parent we can be for our Looked After Children and Care Leavers and strive to ensure that we deliver support and care that is as good as every good parent.

- Are committed to ensuring that Looked After Children and Care Leavers have the best opportunities available to them to achieve their potential and that these are at least as good as the opportunities available for all other children. We recognise that many children and young people face significantly greater levels of challenging circumstances before reaching adulthood than their peers and that this may mean that they have the need for additional support.
- Are committed to ensuring that services are designed with and for Looked After Children and Care Leavers to meet their needs.
- Want all our Looked After Children to live in loving, stable and safe homes in a place that they can 'call home'.
- Want the people who are caring for them to be fun, loving, skilled, enthusiastic, ambitious and fighting their corner every step of the way.
- Want our children and young people to form good, trusting, nurturing relationships with their carers and have positive experiences.
- Want our children and young people to live in stable placements and only having to move when it is in their best interests or when they have chosen to do so.
- Are ambitious for our children and young people and want to encourage them to dream big and fulfil their potential.
- Are committed to ensuring that they receive the best education in the best schools and get additional support if they need it; that they are well prepared for independence and work through apprenticeships, high quality training, supported into higher education and into university for those who aspire to do so.
- Want our children to be well, healthy and have good emotional and mental health.
- Want to celebrate their achievements, whether big or small so that they can be proud of themselves and know that we are proud of them.
- Want them to have fun and be able to develop their own interests and hobbies so that they can develop in confidence; develop friendships and memories that they can fondly look back on in later years.
- Are committed to listening to our children and young people, hearing what they have to say and acting on it wherever possible. We will develop our services based on this feedback and regularly check with them that we have got it right. We will be open to change and challenge.
- Want our care leavers to be well prepared for adulthood and ensure that they feel that they are part of a wider extended family who will be there for them if they are needed.
- Want our care leavers to feel safe and to receive the appropriate level of support and advice to enable them to transition to adulthood. This includes

young people living in staying put arrangements with their carer(s) and having access to suitable high-quality supported living or independent living provision. We recognise how big a challenge this is and that many of our young people do this at a much younger age than many other young people.

- Want our young people to be able to make mistakes and know that they will be supported to learn and that someone will be there to help them pick up the pieces.

5. LISTENING TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

As an authority we are committed to listening to children and young people and have embedded this practice across Children and Young People's Services. We work in partnership with a social enterprise called 'Investing in Children'. They deliver a range of children's participation services on our behalf and implement several schemes through a contract arrangement:

- Facilitation of young people's participation / reference groups;
- Facilitation of the eXtreme group to ensure that the voice of children and young people with disabilities are listened to and acted upon;
- Coordination of the Children in Care Council;
- Management of the Drive Project – enabling some young people to learn to drive;
- Management of the Freedom Card – enabling Looked After Children and their carers to access a range of leisure activities at a discounted price;
- Management and facilitation of the Investing in Children Membership Programme – services are reviewed annually to ensure that they meet investing in children criteria.

All teams across Children's Services have either achieved Investing in Children Membership or are working towards this. The 'Investing in Children membership', is a kite mark which demonstrates that Looked After Children and young people feel valued and are listened to by adults.

6. CHALLENGES DURING 2020

Covid-19 Pandemic

The pandemic has presented the council with many challenges over the last 8 months, which we continue to work through day to day. Our key priorities during this time have been, and continue to be:

- Ensure that children and young people continue to be safe;
- Ensure that children and young people continue to be cared for and supported in good quality provision;

- Support the continuation of services, both in-house and externally commissioned and to minimise placement disruption or breakdown;
- Continue to support children and young people to remain at home with family / connected persons, where we are able to do so and subject to thorough assessments;
- Support commissioned providers, particularly those that have been impacted directly due to a down-turn in use, through the provision of relief funding, to minimise market failure and support provider recovery;
- To ensure that all services are Covid compliant and have robust risk assessments in place, are aware of local guidance in place and support to access PPE;
- Constantly review our sufficiency gaps, secure appropriate accommodation and care for children and the development of new solutions to meet our changing needs;
- Reflect on this period of time, consider changes and improvements made and implement on a permanent basis moving forward.

An increase in the number of Children Looked After by the Authority

Whilst the number of children who present as children in need, has been relatively stable over the last three years (3,570 in 2017/18, 3,571 in 2018/29 and 3,551 in 2019/20), the number of children looked after by the Local Authority which has risen by 51% from 605 in 2014 to 914 as at 31st March 2020.

Between the 16 March 2020 and the 14 September 2020, the number of children looked after has increased by 4% (914 to 946, with 34 children becoming looked after). Delays at court, as a result of the pandemic has also prevented children and young people who have plans to return home to parents or family, from returning home, which has resulted in fewer children leaving the care of the local authority, and CLA numbers remaining high.

When comparing the number of children coming into care between March and September 2020 with neighbouring local authorities, Durham has had a 4% increase, in comparison with Darlington and Middlesbrough which have both recorded an increase of 12% and North Tyneside experiencing a 4% reduction in the number of children that they cared for during this period.

Within this group, there has been a notable growth in the number of older children looked after by the Local Authority. Improved identification and understanding of risk factors have contributed to the continued, and in some cases escalating, concerns around adolescents presenting with multiple and complex needs:

- Environmental factors: attachment difficulties, parental conflict, domestic abuse, homelessness;
- Internal factors: social communication difficulties including Autism, mental ill-health, behaviours that challenge services;

- External factors: interpersonal relationships, criminal and sexual exploitation, alcohol and substance misuse, serious youth violence and bail, licence and discharge conditions.

Where living with family cannot be maintained, securing safe, local accommodation and care that can meet the often be-spoke needs and requirement of this age group can be both complicated and costly and represents a particularly volatile area of demand.

This has presented many challenges for services across the Authority, ensuring that appropriate placements that meet the individual needs of children and young people can be secured.

The Transforming Care Agenda

During 2019 the Multi-agency Collaborative Care Meeting (MACC) was established. This ensures that all children and young people with a diagnosis of autism and/or a learning disability are offered a Care, Education and Treatment Review (CETR) prior to admission and discharge to or from hospital to ensure that they are in receipt of suitable support or care services within the community.

The numbers of County Durham children placed in Tier 4 beds remains relatively stable, although there is a notable increase in the number of children and young people being admitted who had not been previously known to social care services. There is also a heightened number of children and young people at risk of admission due to an eating disorder.

The Closure of West Lane Hospital in Autumn 2019 has resulted in Children and Young People requiring treatment in a Children's Mental Health in-patient setting often having to be placed far from home due to bed shortages in the area. Ferndene Hospital in Northumberland remains the only local Tier 4 children's hospital provision.

The MACC group was re-launched in October 2020 and now takes places fortnightly as opposed to monthly to ensure any urgent multi-agency discussions can take place as soon as possible, with professionals seeking advice and guidance from the MACC group when they are concerned about children and young people who are at risk of in-patient admission.

Mental Health Offer

The emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people continues to be key priority for the council and even more so given the ongoing pandemic.

All children have been impacted one way or another during this period i.e. face to face family time moving to virtual means, children not being able to see their friends, not being able to participate in group activities and sports and most significantly, not accessing education for a substantial period of time. Some of these restrictions have eased, however this continues to be an

uncertain time for many of our children and their carers / families, particularly those that may have poor mental health and who may need to access community mental health services.

The council is working collaboratively with health partners, including the CCGs and TEWV to develop a robust offer and menu of services in the community that supports children, young people and their families and prevents an admission to tier 4 mental health hospitals.

We are also developing an offer which supports children and young people to be discharged from hospital into community provision, in a timely way.

Placement finding and matching children and young people

Over the last 2 years, CYPS has been rolling out signs of safety training and practice support across all Social Work Teams and this is now captured within our children and young people's risk assessments. Producing strength-based information has improved the quality of information that we share with a provider which improves placement opportunities for children and young people.

Matching children and young people in residential provision given existing young people in the setting and their presenting risks continues to present us with an ongoing challenge. Given the complexities of some of our children and young people we have a greater need for smaller regulated children's home settings.

Durham First Approach

We continue to work with external providers to shape the services that they are developing for children and young people and to ensure that these meet our sufficiency needs.

All new developments are now jointly considered with Durham Police, and we advise providers that this should be carried prior to the formal planning application if a change of planning use is required.

Where the council has a definitive need for the service that is being developed, we ask that the provider enters into a 'Durham First Approach', enabling Durham County Council to access local placement provision or services, first and foremost. This approach enables us to secure placements in the local area, as it is generally in children and young people's best interests to live within Durham close to family and friends.

Supporting placement stability and families on the edge of care

There is an ongoing drive to support placement stability and to offer increased support and intervention to carers if there is a risk of placement breakdown, across all our placements. Those carers who work with children and young people with particularly complex and challenging behaviours often require support or respite for short periods of time.

Families on the edge of care, often require outreach support and respite to prevent children and young people from coming into care.

The Supporting Solutions Service has been operating since 2018 and offers crisis interventions for young people aged between 11 and 17 years who are on the edge of care. During 2019/20, a total of 101 young people have successfully engaged with the service and of those young people 7, then subsequently became looked after, demonstrating the positive work that the service is able to undertake to support children to continue living with their family, where it is safe and possible to do so.

The Supporting Solutions Service is also able to offer Family Group Conferences which supports families to come together and develop sustainable safety plans which results in children remaining at home with their families. During 2019/20, the service completed 224 family group conferences.

When children and families require longer periods of support and intervention, additional support is commissioned on a case by case basis, which can often be expensive and does not provide value for money. CYPS is in the process of broadening its current offer, which will result in the development of a 'relief staffing pool' to support children and young people and will provide greater capacity across the Supporting Solutions Service and our Children's Residential Service.

In 2021 we also plan to open a new Edge of Care home which will support children and young people on the edge of care (working hand in hand with our Supporting Solutions Service) preventing children from entering statutory looked after services; and supporting children who are looked after whose placement may be at risk of breaking down. The service will offer planned respite to children and work closely with families / carers providing support and targeted interventions.

Short Breaks for children, young people and their families

Parent and carers of children and young people with special educational needs and / or disabilities may sometimes feel like they need a short break from their caring role, with the pandemic has placing further pressure on families.

Children and young people would ordinarily take part in social opportunities outside of their education, providing a break for their parent / carer and is intended to prevent children requiring statutory services, however not all children are able to access these.

The council and Health partners commission a menu of opportunities for children and young people unable to take part in the universal offer to allow those parent / carers who need a short break from caring, the opportunity to receive one.

During 2020 a Short Breaks Solution central point of contact was launched, where parents / carers are able to discuss their needs and consider options available to them. Where possible any barriers to accessing universal services will be overcome, however for those children and young people unable to take part in these, a menu of services are available. These short break services include: Physical Activity Programmes for children with SEND, Community Enablers, Virtual Groups and Keeping families connected.

There are some families who may require additional support which is more specialist than what is on offer and available to them. For these families an assessment of need is completed, which will highlight the levels of support which is required to meet their needs, which may include over-night respite, in-reach support, outreach support or domiciliary care.

Supported Living for young people who challenge services

In 2019/20 we developed a provider panel which offers a range of support and accommodation options for young people aged 16+ who have needs that challenge services and could not be accommodated within mainstream supported accommodation options or traditional residential provision. The new solution has been successful with 11 providers able to offer a range of options. The solution will be opened up later in 2021 to allow more providers to join

Spend Position

The increasing number of children that are looked after by the council is continuing to result in increased social care costs for children and young people.

The current budget for all LAC placements including in house residential services is £28.979 million. The current forecast cost of placements is £36.160 million creating a forecast overspend of £7.181 million.

This overspend is being offset for Covid-19 related costs (£2.055 million) which are being treated corporately and offset by Government funding so far as is possible. The net current forecast overspend on LAC placements is therefore £5.126 million in the current financial year.

7. IN-HOUSE FOSTERING

We continue to have an extensive in-house fostering offer for children and young people who cannot live with their families and who have a plan of fostering.

- In October 2019, 49% (432) of our CLA were living in in-house fostering provision; in October 2020, 43% (412) of our CLA are accommodated in in-house fostering provision.
- The 5% reduction is as a direct result of the pandemic, with a number of carers being unable to care for children during this time, or due to ill health.

- 1 in 5 children living in in-house foster care having been living in their current placement for 5 years or more; equally 1 in 5 children having been living in their placement for less than 6 months.
- The major challenge during 2019/20 has continued to be centred around the recruitment and retention of foster carers, which is also a national issue experienced by other Local Authorities and Independent Fostering Agencies.
- During the year we have received 353 initial enquiries (321 in 18/19) and 122 expressions of interest (116 in 18/19). This has resulted in 7 new foster carer households in comparison with 26 new foster carer households in 18/19. Whilst there are 10 applications still ongoing, this is a reduction in comparison to last year's recruitment figures which we believe is as a direct result of the pandemic (please refer to table 3 in Appendix 1 for further comparative data).
- The average time for completion of assessments was only 3.7 months from receipt of application form to being presented at panel. This is a lot quicker than the regulation timescale which is 8 months from someone applying to being assessed and presented to panel.
- A total of 21 mainstream foster carers were de-registered during the year. The reasons for these range from significant health issues, retirement, starting a new job and standards of care issues. None of these carers left to go to another Independent Fostering Agency or other Local Authority.
- Our Marketing and Recruitment Strategy focusing on a range of activities throughout the year – regular drop in in central locations in Durham, recruitment campaigns in May and September, radio adverts, outdoor advertising, local press adverts, social media adverts, word of mouth etc. We continue to promote our unique selling points in Durham, particularly the wrap around support offer for foster carers and continue to deliver our retention programme focusing on foster carer events and our annual foster carer celebration, which unfortunately has been postponed due to the pandemic.
- Our strategy focuses on the recruitment of foster carers for teenagers and brothers and sisters to enable them to be placed together, which is a gap in our current service offer.

Priorities

1. To recruit 30 new foster carer households during 2021/22.
2. Review the training and support offer to support the 'retention' of foster carers.
3. Evidence the good work we do in ensuring the voice of the child and their carers informs service delivery.

4. To carry out targeted foster carer recruitment so we are able to care for more teenagers and sibling groups.
5. As part of the annual review process for foster carers, we will continue to ensure that we have carers with as wide an approval range as possible to provide flexibility and opportunities for placement finding.
6. We will develop respite carer provision which will support the stability of our placements.

8. INDEPENDENT FOSTERING PROVISION (IFAs)

When we are unable to meet the needs of our children and young people within in-house foster care provision, we then approach Independent Fostering Agencies.

- Durham is part of the NE7 Regional Framework, which enables the council to purchase independent foster placements at a fixed rate from a range of providers. When framework providers are unable to meet our placements needs, we approach off framework Independent Fostering Agencies.
- As our CLA numbers have continued to increase since 2015, our reliance on independent fostering placement has increased also.
- As of 25 October 2019, the council had 127 (14% of CLA) children and young people living in IFA placements. This has increased to 158 (16% of CLA) as of 7 October 2020, which a 24% increase since last year (please refer to table 4 in Appendix 1 for further data).
- Between April and September 2020, we have placed 8 children and young people in IFAs, in comparison to 43 children and young people placed in in-house fostering provision.
- 16% of our children and young people have been living in their IFA placement for 6 months or less; 54% continued to live in their placement between 1 and 5 years; and 10% lived in their placement for 5 years or more, demonstrating the high proportion of children who have a plan of permanence and who are settled.
- Children and young people are placed in IFAs, primarily due to brothers and sisters needing to be placed alongside one another and there being limited availability within in-house foster care provision; matching criteria, older children and children with complex needs and/or challenging behaviour.

Priorities

1. We will continue to work regionally with other Local Authorities to ensure that the commissioning solution continues to be fit for purpose and to encourage off framework providers and new providers to join.

2. Through the framework solution we will continue to develop the IFA market to be able to take more complex young people. This will take time to develop, however we would like to see a shift in the type of placements that IFAs are able to provide over the next 3-5 years.
3. We will seek to reduce the dependency on IFA provision by developing and implementing robust marketing strategies to recruit in-house, local foster carers and maximise current in-house provision.

9. ADOPTION

Adoption gives vulnerable children, including many with complex needs and a history of ill-treatment, the greatest possible stability, in a permanent home with a permanent family.

- Initial enquiries have remained relatively static since 2017/28 at 159, increasing to 165 in 2018/19 and 165 in 2019/20.
- During 2019/20, 25 new adopters were approved in comparison to 21 in 2018/19.
- A total of 66 children were granted a placement order, with 64 children matched at panel. This is a significant improvement on the previous two years, with 35 matches in 2017/18 and 49 matches in 2018/19. Of the 64 children, 24 were placed with in-house prospective adopters and 38 were placed in interagency placements.
- A review of practice by the Adoption Team has highlighted opportunities for reducing the time taken from the identification of a suitable match to the child moving in with their new family. Changes have been made in practice to support this.
- The number of children who have plans for adoption agreed by the court are increasing and it is therefore essential that resources and energy are increased to continue to increase the number of in house adopters recruited and approved as the reliance on other agencies is not only expensive but more importantly children experience drift and delay which ultimately impacts on their outcomes once permanency is achieved.
- Durham is committed to being part of a new Regional Adoption Agency, called 'Coast to Coast'. The model of delivery combines Together for Children (Sunderland), Durham County Council and is be hosted by Cumbria County Council. Four voluntary Adoption Agencies, ARC Adoption NE, Barnardos NE, Caritas Care and Adoption Matters (formerly DFW Adoption) are part of the new agency. There has been significant investment of time and resources in developing an agreed model of practice that is able to achieve and maintain the vision. The modelling has taken account of the learning from the RAA's that have gone live both regionally and nationally. The new agency will be operational from the 1 April 2021.

Priorities

1. Improving practice to increase in-house adoption provision in preparation for a partnership RAA model.
2. To implement the new RAA in 2021

10. IN-HOUSE RESIDENTIAL CARE

The council recognises that group living in residential homes is a positive choice for some young people and is the best way to meet their assessed needs.

We are committed to looking after as many of our own children as possible as we believe this enables children to be close to home and their family. This offers the best opportunity of achieving good outcomes and placement stability for children and young people. This approach also ensures that resources are used as effectively and efficiently as possible.

We are also committed to ensuring that all of our children and young people with a plan of care are living in registered placements.

10A Existing Offer and Usage

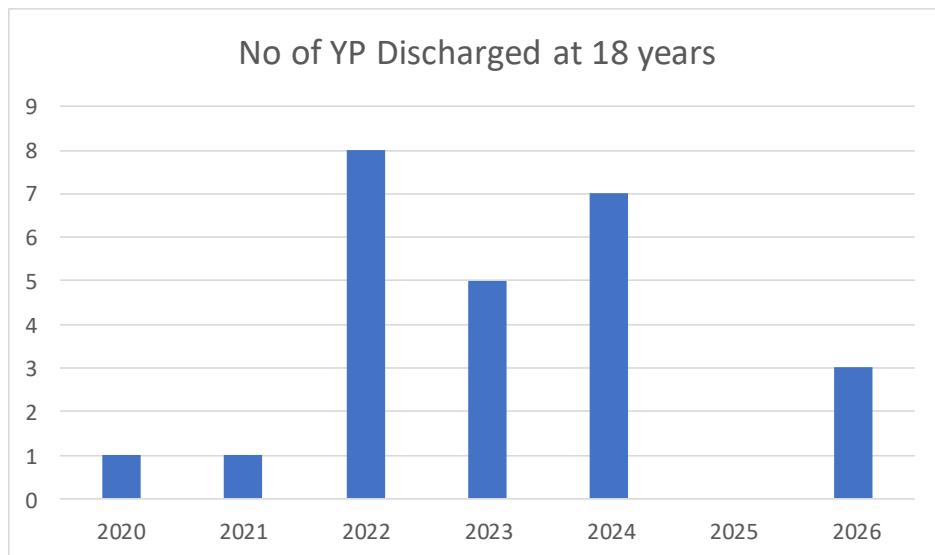
- Durham continues to deliver an in-house residential home offer to children and young people. Eight of Durham's children's homes are rated by Ofsted to be 'Good', with one home (Tow Law) with a notice to improve in all areas. Plans are in place to address these concerns.

Table 1 – In-house residential home provision

Children's Home	Type of Provision	Number of Beds	Age Group	Occupancy last 12 months
West Rainton	Medium Long-Term Therapeutic	3	7-12 years*	96%
New Lea House,	Long Term	4	12-17 years	99%
High Etherley	Long Term	3	12-17 years	97%
Cedar Drive	Long Term	4	12-17 years	100%
Framwellgate Moor	Long Term	5	12-17 years	79%
Moorside	Long Term	5	12-17 years	81%
Coxhoe	Long Term	3	12-17 years	94%
Tow Law	Long Term	5	12-17 years	51%
Park House	Short Break/Respite for disabled children/ young people	6 + 1 emergency bed	7-17 years	TBC

- The council has 7 long-term children's homes, with 29 beds (25 available beds due restrictions in our Tow Law home); 1 therapeutic home for young children to support them to move into long-term fostering; 1 respite/short breaks home for disabled children.
- In October 2019 we had 25 children and young people accommodated in in-house residential care, in comparison with 28 children and young people accommodated in October 2020, which is a 3% increase.
- 43% of young people accommodated in our in-house residential homes are female; with 57% male.
- 57% of young people currently accommodated are aged 11-15 years old (in comparison with 46% in October 2019); 32% are aged 16+, with the remaining 11% aged under 11 years old (3 children accommodated in our therapeutic children's home). Two young people are aged 17 and due to move on within the next 12 months, providing some capacity for new admissions. All other young people have a plan to remain in residential care until they are 18 years old, or until they are ready to transition into supported accommodation, dependent on their individual needs.
- 25% of young people have been living in in-house residential care for 6 months or less; 25% between 6 and 12 months and 51% living in their current placement between 1 and 5 years.
- Many of our larger homes struggle to match a 4th or 5th child into the home, due to the complex needs of children and young people. This is evidenced in the occupancy information in table 1. All long-term homes being developed by CYPS will care for no more than three children, given the ongoing matching issues that we experience. It is also proposed that we review the upper capacity for our existing larger homes.
- The table 2 on page 16 assumes that all young people (25) currently in long-term in-house residential homes will remain until they reach the age of 18 years, however work is ongoing to ensure that young people's pathway plan is in place to determine which young people have needs and wishes to move into supported living prior to the young person's 18th birthday.

Table 2 – Expected discharges from in-house residential care



- Our future demand for residential provision is dependent on the number of children that are becoming looked after and the complexity of their needs; the number of children that are due to exit the service and our plans for bringing children back into Durham from out of county provision. As our children looked after numbers continue to increase and children continue to present with a range of complex behaviours where their needs can't be met in fostering provision, our demand for residential provision continues to be high. Whilst there is limited capacity to accommodate further young people and little flexibility within in-house homes to move children if a situation arises, this presents a clear rationale to grow and broaden our in-house offer.
- Whilst we have limited in-house capacity over the next two years, there are eight young people that are due to leave the service in 2022, five young people in 2023 and seven young people in 2024, providing substantial additional capacity, meaning less reliance on independent children's home providers that we've experienced more recently and an opportunity to move children from out of county provision, back into Durham where it is in their best interests to do so.

10B Review of Children's Residential Services

- Throughout 2019 and 2020, we have been delivering a programme of service development within Children's Residential Services, to provide additional capacity and to meet the needs of children that have behaviours that challenge services:
 - The re-provision of our four bedded children's home at Aycliffe, to a new home in Aycliffe for three young people. The new home is due to be operational from November 2020;

- The development of a new home in Sacriston for up to three children. This new service will care for some of our most complex children and young people and is due to be operational from November 2020;
- The agreement to develop a new 1-2 bedded children's home that will be managed by Durham's Children and Young People's Service which will be our first smaller home and will care for a child who would benefit from a smaller setting. This is a new service model and will directly support children who cannot live alongside other children and will reduce our use of unregistered placement provision. This is due to be operational from September 2021.
- The agreement to develop a new Edge of Care Children's Home. This new service will support our children and families on the edge of care preventing them from entering statutory services and will support children who are currently looked after, offering planning respite with a view to supporting placement stability and preventing placement breakdown. Funding is in place, with the new service forecast to be operational from September 2021.
- Given the increasing pressure on our in-house Residential Services and the need to support a small number of children in unregistered placements, we are developing a 'Relief Pool' of seasonal staff. This will provide greater capacity and will reduce our use of external agencies.
- We have a high number of young people who are approaching independence and we are starting to work with housing colleagues to develop a Staying Close pilot. This will enable young people to step down from residential provision into a supported property within close proximity to their children's home, with support provided by a mixture of residential staff and independent support workers.
- We are continuing to improve our quality assurance and oversight, systems and records and investing in our workforce to ensure that services provided to Durham children and young people are good or above, in relation to Ofsted's Quality Improvement Framework.

Priorities

1. Continue to develop and broaden our in-house residential offer, which includes:
 - (i) Develop and open a new Edge of Care Home;
 - (ii) Develop a 'Relief Pool' to provide additional staffing capacity;
 - (iii) Develop a Staying Close Pilot;
 - (iv) Expansion of our smaller homes offer (1-2 bedded homes) with potentially up to 4 additional homes, dependent on the ongoing service needs
 - (v) Up to three new therapeutic children's homes for children aged 7-13 and 12-17.

- (vi) Explore the development of a home to care for children and young people with a diagnosis of autism and/or a learning disability.
 - (vii) Review the upper bed capacity of our existing children's homes.
2. Re-provide our Tow Law children's home to an alternative, appropriate location in County Durham which is able to care for up to three children and young people.
 3. Review the Short Breaks Home.
 4. Continue to review and assess the number of children and young people coming into care and their needs, to ensure that future residential developments continue to meet our sufficiency needs. This will be facilitated by developing a 'plan on a page' with identified triggers and review points and will feed into the wider Specialist Accommodation Review.

11. EXTERNAL RESIDENTIAL CARE

Given our increasing number of children that are looked after and lack of in-house capacity, we are placing more children with external residential providers.

11A. Existing Offer, Usage and Gaps

- There are currently 28 private children's home in County Durham, consisting of 117 beds of which 8 are short breaks beds.
- We have a block contract arrangement with a 2 bedded children's home provider which ends in March 2022.
- As of October 2020, we have 44 children living in external residential home placements, consisting of 5% of all children that are looked after and a 29% increase in the number of external residential placements since October 2019.
- Approximately 70% of external residential care placements were made as there was limited in-house capacity at the time that the placement was made.
- 43% of all children and young people have education provided on site, with the remaining children accessing either mainstream education or bespoke packages of education.
- 70% of children accessing external residential care provision are male. 18% are aged under 12; 58% are aged 12-15 years old; and 24% are aged 16-17 years old.
- Whilst Durham has a large number of external residential providers operating in the county, we continue to struggle to identify appropriate

placement provision which meets the needs of our children and young people, as this is dependent on a 'matching exercise'. Many providers also operate off framework and except referrals nationally.

- In 2016, the council joined the Regional Children's Home Framework, given our increasing use of external residential home provision, as a result of our increasing looked after numbers. Whilst we continue to be part of this regional solution, Durham makes very few residential placements with framework providers, with many providers choosing to remain off framework.
- There is a gap in smaller residential children's homes within the private market, which are able to accommodate children who present risks to themselves and others.
- Given the significant demand for external residential placements (with demand outstripping supply), independent providers can be selective regarding any future admissions, which often results in the most challenging and high-risk young people with limited placement opportunities. This is resulting in a small number of children and young people being placed in unregistered placements with the council taking steps to develop appropriate in-house or joint care solutions which are tailored to meet the needs of some of our most complex children and young people.

11B. Developments

- As part of the wider 'Residential Review' a number of developments / initiatives have been implemented, including:
 - The joint development of a new 1-2 bedded children's home with a community of interest provider that specialises in the care of children with a diagnosis of autism. This new service is due to be operational from January 2021;
 - A block contract with an external resident care provider for a 2 bedded home. This service is in place and will be reviewed later in 2021;
 - A 'Durham First Approach' – shaping and informing new services being developed by external providers, to ensure these meet our sufficiency needs and to ensure that Durham has access to these services first and foremost. This usually takes place prior to the formal planning process and has resulted in the size of the development being reduced and the scope of the service being adjusted, so that services met Durham's sufficiency needs. There are a number of new homes currently being developed which will result in 10 new residential children's home vacancies in the county which can be accessed by Durham children.
 - Our Placement Resource Panel (PRP) which has management and financial oversight of all placements made for children and young people that are looked after has been reviewed during 2019/20,

resulting in improved oversight of all placements, improved scrutiny of costs, ongoing review of placements to ensure that they continue to be the most appropriate and improved management of resources and forward planning.

11C. Step Down Provision from Tier 4 Mental Health Hospital

- During 2020, we have had to secure placement provision within the community for an increasing number of children and young people. Given the complexity and the ongoing risk that children and young people continue to present this is often difficult and sometimes results in a delayed discharge from hospital which we try to prevent at all costs.
- Given the length of time that it takes to secure appropriate, specialist provision for children and young people, we are currently working with health colleagues to develop a 'step down service' within the community, which will provide intensive care, supported by a range of wrap-around services, until the young person can be carefully transitioned into their long-term community placement or is able to go home.

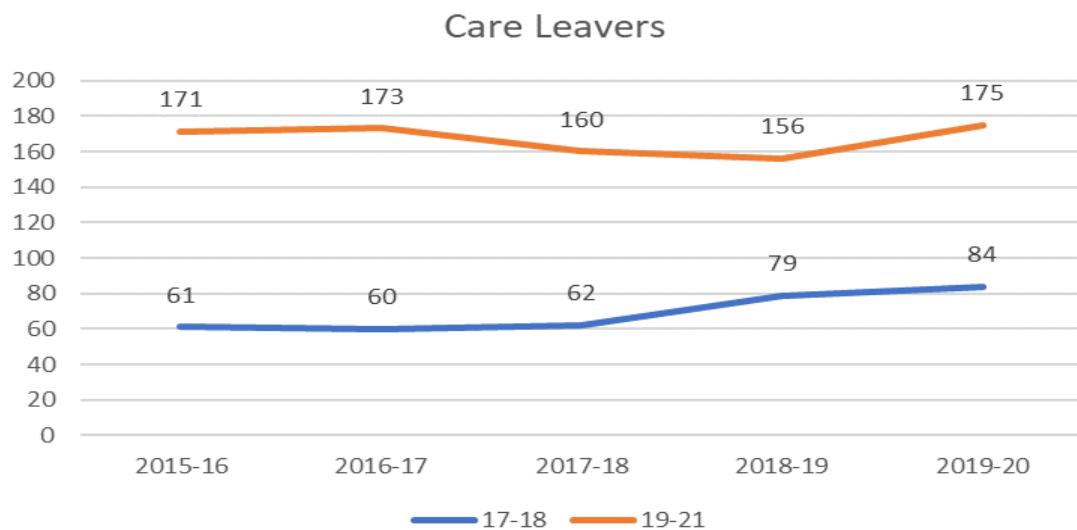
Priorities

1. We will continue to work in partnership with a community of interest company to develop a bespoke package of care for children and young people with ASD. This service will become an extension of our in-house residential offer for Durham children and young people.
2. Explore and develop a registered step down from hospital offer to meet the needs of children and young people with ongoing mental health needs.
3. We will continue to play an active role in the NE12 regional consortia, working closely with residential providers.
4. We will continue to work closely with providers that wish to develop new services in County Durham, to shape services and to positively challenge service development when this does not meet our needs.
5. As our capacity increases within in-house residential home provision, we will review our out of county placements, to understand which children and young people have a plan to move back into the area.

12. CARE LEAVERS

- Over the last 5 years, Durham has seen an increase in the number of care leavers that it supports aged 17-18 and in the last year also an increase in those aged 19-21. This is reflected in Graph 1.

Graph 1 – Care Leavers Number (updated Oct 2020)



- In 2019-20, 90% of our Care Leavers aged 17-18 were in suitable accommodation, in comparison to 88% in England, 91% in our Statistical Neighbours and 93% in the North East (2018-19).
- In 2019-20, 83% of our Care Leavers aged 19-21 were in suitable accommodation, compared to 85% in England, 87% in our Statistical Neighbours and 90% in the North East (2018-19).
- In order to meet the accommodation and support needs of our care leavers aged 16 and 17, Durham has a range of 16+ accommodation options. This includes:

<p>In-House Provision: Supported Lodging Carers</p> <p>Commissioned Services: Hedley House – Changing Lives Staying Put (through IFAs) YMCA (spot purchase) ROC Solid (spot purchase) Moving on (spot purchase) Jigsaw Recovery Project (spot purchase) SHAID (spot purchase) Home Group</p> <p>Durham Local Letting Agency for general needs housing options for young people.</p>	Low-Medium Level Needs
<p>Commissioned Services: Supported Living Provider Panel for young people aged 16-17 who have needs that challenge services – consisting of 11 providers</p>	High Support Needs

- We continue to work jointly with housing colleagues who are reviewing the current Homelessness Strategy. An action plan will follow the review which will include further work around care leavers and how the existing offer can be improved.

Priorities

1. To review the marketing and recruitment strategy for Supported Lodgings.
2. We will review the current supported living offer on an ongoing basis and ensure that new services are secured when gaps in provision are identified.
3. We will extend the current offer provided at Hedley House, based on the findings at the 6-month review stage, developing two dispersed supported living properties with outreach support, in line with our increasing care leaver numbers.
4. We will recommission our Supported Living Provider Panel for young people with needs that challenge services, in 2021, enabling new providers to join and broadening our current offer.

13. CONCLUSION

The aim of this Strategy is to ensure that children and young people in care live in stable, high quality settings, where their needs can be met and their outcomes improved, enabling them to return home where this is in their best interests.

As corporate parent, the whole Council has a role to play to improve the outcomes for Durham's looked after children and care leavers. This Strategy and the delivery of its outcomes form just one part of our overall approach to supporting looked after children and care leavers and those on the edge of care and should be read in conjunction with other local strategies for children and families in need of support and protection.

14. PRIORITIES

Based on the analysis of the needs of looked after children and care leavers, an understanding of the market locally and a range of research, four main objective have been identified within this Strategy to contribute to achieving the authority's sufficiency duty and meeting the best possible outcomes for children and young people.

The four objectives set out in Appendix 1 of the Strategy and will shape the activities, we as an authority believe will best deliver this outcome. As we make progress with these objectives, we will achieve the quality, sufficiency and value for money we need in order to achieve the best for children and young people in County Durham

15. INDICATORS

A range of ‘Indicators’ have been identified and will be reviewed on a 6-monthly basis, to help inform and assess the Authority’s effectiveness in delivering its overall sufficiency duty.

These are set out in the table below.

1.	Number of unplanned placement endings
2.	Percentage of CLA with 3 or more placements during the year
3.	Percentage of CLA continuously for 2.5 years or more aged under 16 who were living in the same placement for at least 2 years
4.	Percentage of care leavers living in suitable accommodation
5.	Number of unregulated placements made
6.	Number of out of county placements made
7.	Number of children adopted
8.	Percentage of children and young people with a plan of permanence
9.	Number of children and young people living with their family that are in receipt of respite
10.	Number of children and young people in IFA placements
11.	Number of children and young people in external residential and education placements
12.	Number of delayed discharges from a tier 4 hospital setting

KEY PRIORITIES

The table below captures the ‘key priorities’ as outlined in the body of the strategy.

No	Overarching Objective	Priorities	Completed by
1	Grow our number of in-house foster carers and reduce our reliance on independent foster care provision	Recruit 30 new foster carer households during 2021/2022 and 2022/23	March 2022 and March 2023
		Review the training and support offer to support the retention of foster carers	March 2022
		Evidence the good work we do in ensuring the voice of the child and their carers informs service delivery	March 2022
		Carry out targeted foster carer recruitment so we are able to care for more teenagers and sibling groups	March 2022
		As part of the annual review process for foster carers, we will continue to ensure that we have carers with as wide an approval range as possible to provide flexibility and opportunities for placement finding	March 2022
		We will develop respite foster carer provision which will support the stability of our placements	March 2022
		We will continue to work regionally with other Local Authorities to ensure that the regional Independent Fostering Agency commissioning framework continues to be fit for purpose.	Ongoing
		Through the framework solution we will continue to develop the independent fostering agency market to be able to take more complex young people. This will take time to develop, however we would like to see a shift in the type of placements that IFAs are able to provide over the next 3-5 years	March 2023
		We will seek to reduce the dependency on IFA provision by developing and implementing strategies to recruit in-house, local foster carers and maximise in-house provision	March 2023

2	Increase the number of adopters	<p>To work in partnership with Together for Children, Cumbria Council and Voluntary Adoption Agencies to develop and roll out the 'Coast to Coast' regional adoption agency which will be hosted by Cumbria County Council.</p> <p>Improve practice to increase in-house adoption provision in preparation for a partnership RAA model</p>	April 2021
3	Continue to develop and broaden our residential homes offer and maximise opportunities with external providers when there is a case to do so	<p>Develop and open a new Edge of Care Children's Home</p>	September 2021
		<p>Develop a 'Relief Pool' to provide additional staffing capacity, across residential homes and our edge of care service</p>	Ongoing
		<p>Develop a Staying Close Pilot</p>	June 2021
		<p>Expand our smaller homes offer (1-2 bedded homes) with potentially up to 4 additional homes, depending on the ongoing service needs</p>	March 2023
		<p>Develop up to three new therapeutic children's homes for children aged 7-13 and 12-17</p>	March 2023
		<p>Review the upper bedding capacity of our existing children's homes to meet our changing needs</p>	March 2022
		<p>We will continue to work in partnership with a community of interest company to develop a bespoke package of care for a child / children with ASD. The service will become an extension of our in-house residential offer for Durham children and young people.</p>	January 2021
		<p>We will continue to play an active role in the NE12 regional consortia, working closely with residential providers</p>	Ongoing
		<p>We will continue to work closely with providers that wish to develop new services in County Durham, to shape services and to positively challenge service development when this does not meet our needs</p>	Ongoing
		<p>As our capacity increases within in-house residential home provision, we will review our out of county placements to understand which children and young people have a plan to move back into Durham</p>	April 2021 onwards

4	Develop access to a diverse range of appropriate accommodation for Care Leavers	<p>To review the marketing and recruitment strategy for Supported Lodging provision</p>	April 2021
		<p>We will review the current supported living offer on an ongoing basis and ensure that new services are secured when gaps in provision are identified</p>	Ongoing
		<p>We will seek agreement to extend the current offer provided by Hedley House, based on the findings at the 6-month review stage, developing two dispersed supported living properties with outreach support, in line with our increasing care leaver numbers</p>	April 2021
		<p>We will recommission our Supported Living Provider Panel for young people with needs that challenge services, in 2021, enabling new providers to join, broadening our current offer</p>	December 2021

KEY DATA TO SUPPORT THE STRATEGY**Durham's Population**

Between 2018-2028, the county's population is predicted to increase by 3.7% (rising to 546,500), and by 5.8% (rising to 557,400) over the next twenty years (2018-2038). The number of children aged 0 to 15 is also predicted to fall by 3.1% (from 90,800 to 88,000 children) over the next ten years (and fall by 4.4% over the next twenty years/falling to 86,900).

Historically, the county has had a low ethnic population which increased slowly from 1.0% (5,100 people) in 2001 to 1.8% (9,500 people) in 2011. Work around using administrative data to support the 2021 Census suggests that the ethnic population in the county has fallen slightly and may in part be due to economic change and uncertainty around Brexit. However, the main contributing factor to changes in the ethnic population of the county is due to the expansion of Durham University as the majority of people from ethnic minority populations are students.

Since 2010/11 the number of births in the county has steadily fallen from 5,800 to 5,000 in 2017/18. This trend may continue as recent ONS population estimates have indicated a fall in the number of female children aged under 18 between 2001 and 2019 (a fall of 4.8% / 2,500 fewer female children) which will feed into a lower number of women of child-bearing age.

Durham's Looked After Population

Durham's looked after number have risen by 51% from 605 in 2014 to 914 as at 31st March 2020. This has presented many challenges for services across the Authority, particularly in relation to ensuring a sufficient number and range of placement types to meet the individual needs of children and young people.

Table 1 identifies the increasing trend of children and young people being cared for by the Authority.

**Table 1: Looked After Numbers (rate per 10,000) between 2014-2020
Comparative data**

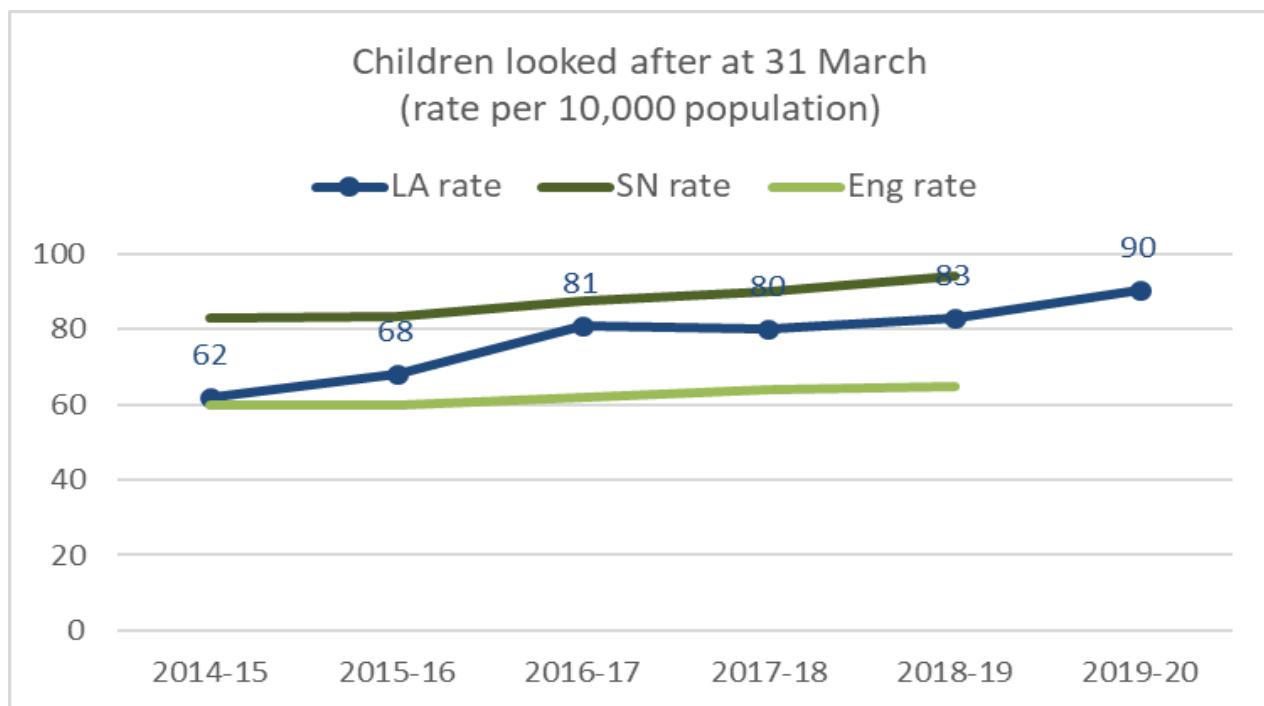


Table 2: Regional Changes to Children Looked After Numbers

Local Authority	16-Mar		14-Sep		Change since 16 Mar	
	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	%
DARLINGTON	270	120.2	303	134.5	33	12%
MIDDLESBROUGH	616	189.5	691	212.5	75	12%
HARTLEPOOL	316	157.6	345	172.0	29	9%
GATESHEAD	417	105.3	441	111.3	24	6%
NEWCASTLE	661	113.9	697	120.1	36	5%
SOUTH TYNESIDE	295	98.1	309	102.4	14	5%
SUNDERLAND	593	108.7	620	113.6	27	5%
NORTHUMBERLAND	425	72.0	441	74.7	16	4%
DURHAM	912	89.9	946	93.7	34	4%
STOCKTON	577	131.6	589	134.3	12	2%
REDCAR	359	130.0	351	127.1	-8	-2%
NORTH TYNESIDE	312	75.4	298	71.2	-14	-4%

Table 3: In House Foster Care - Recruitment and Retention figures for 2019/20

	Initial Enquiries	Expressions of Interest	Initial Visits	Application Forms Received	Foster Carers Approved	Ongoing
2018-2019	321	116	68	31	26	0
2019-2020	353	122	68	25	7	10

Table 4: Number of IFA Placements

Date	No of C/YP in IFAs	% of CLA
March 2015	78	12.6%
March 2016	96	14.2%
March 2017	118	14.5%
March 2018	133	16.6%
March 2019	120	14%
October 2019	127	14%
October 2020	158	16%

Table 5: Number of sections 47 enquiries

S47 enquiries initiated						
Ref nos	Ref rate	Year	LA numbers	LA rate	SN rate	Eng rate
C4.01A	C4.02A	2014-15	934	93	146	139
C4.01A	C4.02A	2015-16	930	93	184	148
C4.01A	C4.02A	2016-17	1382	138	216	158
C4.01A	C4.02A	2017-18	2102	209	201	167
C4.01A	C4.02A	2018-19	1822	180	195	168
CIN1.18		2019-20	1,659	164		

- S47 enquiries have reduced in 2019-20 (1,659), in comparison with 1,822 in 2018/19

Table 6: Number of CIN episodes

Open episodes at 31 March						
Ref nos	Ref rate	Year	LA number	LA rate	SN rate	Eng rate
B1.07	B1.08	2014-15	3745	373	334	337
B1.07	B1.08	2015-16	3523	352	349	337
B1.07	B1.08	2016-17	4097	409	356	330
B1.07	B1.08	2017-18	3570	355	392	341
B1.07	B1.08	2018-19	3571	353	382	334
CIN1.15		2019-20	3,551	351		

- The number of children in need episodes continues to be relatively static over the last 3 years.

Table 7: Children in Care KPIs

	England 2018-19	SNs 2018-19	NE 2018-19	Good is 2017-18	Prediction			Numerator	Denominator
					2018-19	2018-19	2019-20		
Placement 1: Children looked after at period end with three or more placements during the year	10%	10%	10%	Low	8.0%	11.0%	8%	74	914
Placement 2: LAC in care at least 2.5 years at period end living in their current placement for at least 2 years	69%	69%	69%	High	71.0%	63.0%	66%	207	314
Placement 3: Percentage of LAC at 31 March placed outside LA boundary and more than 20 miles from where they used to live.	15%	10%	9%	Low	7.0%	7.0%	8%	73	914
Adoption 1: Percentage who ceased to be looked after who were adopted	12%	16%	13%	High	14.0%	14.0%	16%	55	340
Adoption 2: Percentage who ceased to be looked after because of a special guardianship order	x	15%	x	High	14.4%	23.6%	22%	74	340
Leaving Care 1: The percentage of children leaving care over the age of 16 who remained looked after until their 18th birthday	77%	82%	70%	High	61.2%	72.0%	83%	62	75
Leaving Care 2: The percentage of former relevant young people aged 19-21 who were in education, employment or training	52%	52%	50%	High	59.0%	51.0%	54%	94	175
Leaving Care 3: The percentage of former relevant young people aged 19-21 who were in suitable accommodation	85%	87%	90%	High	87.0%	86.0%	83%	144	174
Leaving Care 4: The percentage of former relevant young people aged 19-21 who were in higher education	6%	8%	7%	High	8.0%	7.0%	9%	16	175

	England 2018-19	SNs 2018-19	NE 2018-19	Good is 2017-18	Prediction			Numerator	Denominator
					2018-19	2018-19	2019-20		
LAC at 31 March by Gender									
Male	56%	56%	55%		56.0%	56.0%	55%	↓ 499	914
Female	44%	44%	45%		45.0%	44.0%	45%	↑ 415	914
LAC at 31 March by Age									
Under 1	5%	6%	6%		10.0%	8.0%	9%	↑ 84	914
1 to 4	13%	16%	17%		19.0%	20.0%	17%	↓ 158	914
5 to 9	18%	22%	22%		21.0%	21.0%	23%	↑ 209	914
10 to 15	39%	40%	39%		37.0%	37.0%	37%	↑ 341	914
16 and over	24%	17%	16%		14.0%	14.0%	13%	↓ 122	914
LAC at 31 March by placement location									
Under 20 miles and inside LA boundary	51%	62%	60%		71.0%	71.0%	73%	↑ 664	914
Under 20 miles and outside LA boundary	22%	27%	28%		19.0%	18.0%	17%	↓ 154	914
Over 20 miles and inside LA boundary	4%	0%	1%		3.0%	2.4%	2%	- 22	914
Over 20 miles and outside LA boundary	15%	10%	9%		7.0%	7.0%	8%	↑ 73	914

Children looked after at 31 March			England 2018-19	SNs 2018-19	NE 2018-19	Good is 2017-18	2018-19	2018-19	Prediction 2019-20	Numerator D	Denominator e
LAC at 31 March by ethnicity											
White	74%	91%	91%			98.0%	97.0%	98%	↑	892	914
Mixed	10%	4%	3%			1.0%	2.0%	1%	↓	11	914
Asian or Asian British	4%	1%	2%			x	0.1%	0%	↑	2	914
Black or Black British	8%	1%	2%			-	-	0%	↑	3	914
Other ethnic groups	4%	4%	2%			x	0.9%	0%	↓	4	914
Other	1%	0%	x			-	0.2%	0%	-	2	914

Children who started to be looked after during the year			England	SNs	NE	Good is	2017-18	2018-19	2018-19	Prediction 2019-20	Numerator	Denominator
Children starting a LAC episode during the period (no duplicates)							355	383	413	00%	↑	
Children starting a LAC episode per 10,000 children	27.0	36.8	45.0				35.3	38.0	40.87%	↑	413	
Gender												
Male	57%	55%	53%			52.0%	54.0%	50%	↓	208	413	
Female	43%	45%	47%			48.0%	46.0%	50%	↑	205	413	
Children starting a LAC episode by age												
Under 1	19%	23%	23%			33.0%	27.0%	28%	↑	116	413	
1 to 4	17%	24%	24%			23.0%	28.0%	23%	↓	94	413	
5 to 9	17%	20%	22%			19.0%	20.0%	21%	↑	87	413	
10 to 15	27%	26%	24%			18.0%	18.0%	24%	↑	99	413	
16 and over	20%	10%	6%			6.0%	7.0%	4%	↓	17	413	
Children starting a LAC episode by category of need												
Abuse or neglect	59%	68%	67%			83.0%	78.0%	86%	↑	356	413	
Child's disability	2%	x	1%			x	0.8%	0%	↓	1	413	
Parents illness or disability	3%	3%	2%			x	3.1%	2%	↓	8	413	
Family in acute stress	8%	9%	7%			3.0%	3.9%	4%	↓	15	413	
Family dysfunction	13%	17%	17%			5.0%	6.4%	6%	↓	23	413	
Socially unacceptable behaviour	3%	5%	3%			3.0%	2.6%	2%	↓	9	413	
Low income	x	0%	x			-	-	-	-	0	413	
Absent parenting	13%	6%	4%			4.0%	6.0%	0%	↓	1	413	

Graph 8: Placement Mix (Oct 2019 vs Oct 2020)

Placement Type	25-Oct-19		07-Oct-20		No. change	% change on last year
	No.	%	No.	%		
External Residential	34	4%	44	5%	10	29%
Friends and Family	129	15%	158	16%	29	22%
Unapproved Carers	14	2%	17	2%	3	21%
IFA	127	14%	158	16%	31	24%
In House Foster Care	432	49%	412	43%	-20	-5%
In House Residential	25	3%	28	3%	3	12%
Independent Living	7	1%	7	1%	0	0%
NHS/Health Trust	2	0%		0%	-2	-100%
Placed For Adoption	27	3%	39	4%	12	44%
Placed With Parents	57	6%	69	7%	12	21%
Residential School	2	0%	1	3%	-1	-50%
Secure	2	0%	1	0%	-1	-50%
Supported Lodgings	15	2%	24	3%	9	60%
YOI/Prison	1	0%	1	0%	0	0%
Grand Total	881	100%	959	100%	78	9%

Table 9: CLA Duration in Placement

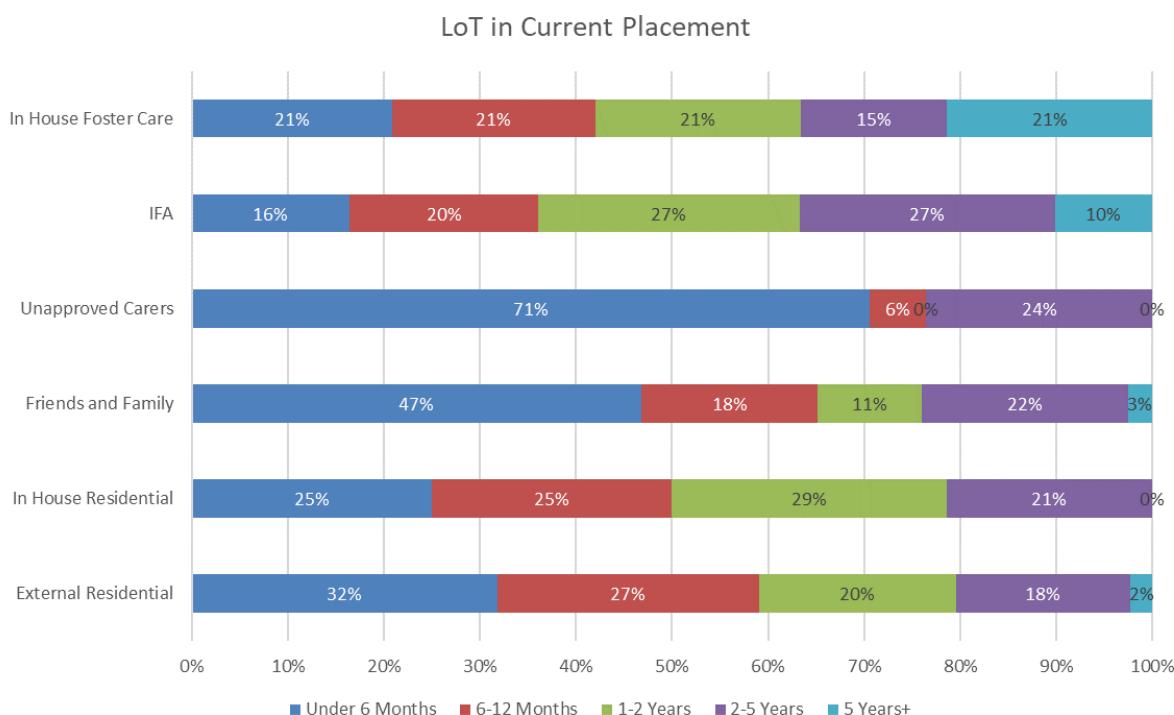


Table 10: CLA Reason for Placement Change

Reason for Placement Change	In-house Res	External Res	In house foster care	IFA	Friends and Family
Carer requests placement end due to child's behaviour	3 20%	6 26%	15 31%	8 21%	2 17%
Carer requests placement end other than due to child's behaviour		1 4%	2 4%	6 15%	1 8%
Change in the status of a placement only		1 4%	1 2%	2 5%	2 17%
Change to/Implementation of Care Plan	10 67%	7 30%	8 17%	16 41%	3 25%
Child requests placement end			1 2%	1 3%	
Other	1 7%	7 30%	17 35%	5 13%	3 25%
Resignation/closure of provision		1 4%	3 6%		1 8%
Responsible/Area authority requests placement end	1 7%				
Standards of Care concern			1 2%	1 3%	
Total with reason	15 100%	23 100%	48 100%	39 100%	12 100%

For further information contact:

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Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for Children Looked After and Care Leavers 2020-2023

Presented by: Lindsey Herring – Commissioning Service

Introduction

- The Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy sets out Durham's strategic approach to securing sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of our looked after children and care leavers.
- The council has a duty, as stated in section 22G of the Children Act 1989, to take steps to secure, as far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for looked after children within their local authority area.
- The updated strategy covers a three year period (2020-2023) and particularly focuses on the ongoing challenges, gaps in services / provision and the actions identified to address these.
- The number of children looked after by the Local Authority which has risen by 51% from 605 in 2014 to 914 as at 31st March 2020, with 954 children looked after as of the 11th November 2020.

Key Priorities

Objective 1 - Grow our number of in-house foster carers and reduce our reliance on independent foster care provision

- Recruit 30 new foster carer households in 2021/22 and a further 30 in 2022/23
- Carry out targeted foster carer recruitment so we are able to care for more teenagers and sibling groups
- We will develop respite foster carer provision which will support the stability of our placements
- We will seek to reduce the dependency on IFA provision by developing and implementing strategies to recruit in-house, local foster carers and maximise in-house provision

Objective 2 – Increase the number of adopters

- To work in partnership with Together for Children, Cumbria Council and Voluntary Adoption Agencies to develop and roll out the ‘Coast to Coast’ regional adoption agency which will be hosted by Cumbria County Council.

Key Priorities

Objective 3 - Continue to develop and broaden our residential homes offer and maximise opportunities with external providers

- Develop and open a new Edge of Care Children's Home
- Develop a 'Relief Pool' to provide additional staffing capacity, across residential homes and our edge of care service
- Develop a Staying Close Pilot
- Expand our smaller homes offer (1-2 bedded homes) with potentially up to 4 additional homes, depending on the ongoing service needs
- Develop up to three new therapeutic children's homes for children aged 7-13 and 12-17
- Review the upper bedding capacity of our existing children's homes to meet our changing needs

Key Priorities

- Continue to work closely with providers, to shape new services, to insist on a ‘Durham First Approach’ and to positively challenge service development when this does not meet our local sufficiency needs
- We will continue to review our out of county placements to understand which children and young people have a plan to move back into Durham

Objective 4 - Develop access to a diverse range of appropriate accommodation for Care Leavers

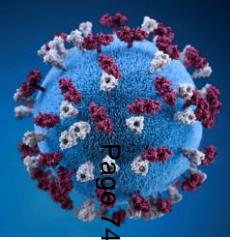
- We will review the current supported living offer on an ongoing basis and ensure that new services are secured when gaps in provision are identified
- We will seek agreement to extend the current offer provided by our commissioned supported accommodation service, with dispersed accommodation provision

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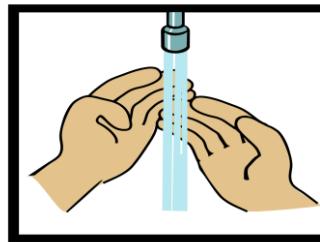
Aycliffe Secure Centre

Coping with the threat of COVID-19





Prevention



- Since March 2020 we have instigated numerous changes to normal procedures and processes to ensure the centre continues to care holistically for young people whilst also maintaining a safe and hygienic environment for all.
- All staff and young people are reminded regularly to wash / sanitise their hands and maintain 2m social distancing where possible. Posters, signage and floor markings have been erected within the centre as a visual aid.
- Since October 2020, all staff (unless medically exempt) are now required to wear a face mask as an additional safety measure.
- Cleaning regimes have increased and are intensively applied throughout the centre.
- PPE stock is ordered on a regular basis and stock levels are monitored weekly.
- Senior Managers formed a 'COVID SMT' meeting in late March 2020. Senior Managers meet every working day at 8.45am via teams to review staffing, young people, facilities and PPE, government guidance, centre recovery plan and centre comms.
- We have amalgamated 5 houses in to 4. Houses are in 'bubbles' thus reducing the risks to our young people even further.

Altogether better





Prevention

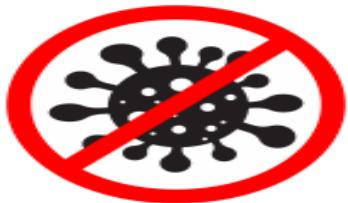


- Family and professional visits ceased during both lockdowns. At all other times visits have been facilitated ‘virtually’ where appropriate or in person if in exceptional circumstances.
- To reduce the risk of infection, when a young person is admitted they are isolated from the other young people in an en-suite bedroom on their house. Staff will engage with the young person and serve meals from a safe distance. They are given a ‘wellbeing box’ which contains lots of games and puzzles to occupy them and they also have one hour per day outdoors for fresh air and exercise. Their physical and emotional health and wellbeing is reviewed daily.
- When restrictions have allowed, those entitled to mobility have been able to enjoy walks around the centre grounds or visits to local park areas.
- The Physical Nursing Team have continued to deliver face to face care to all young people.
- Mental Health, Substance Misuse and Intervention provisions have all taken place with young people either face to face or via teams.
- All Education provision (with the exception of Drama) has continued.
- Staff footfall within the centre has been vastly reduced with a number of support staff working from home and minimum staff levels on houses



Challenges

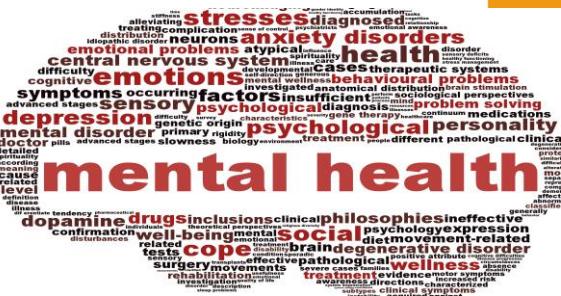
- Monitoring staff absences and managing staff rotas to maintain safe staffing levels
- Test and Trace monitoring and recording
- Staff and young people's mental health and wellbeing



Outcomes

- To date – we have kept our young people safe and have had no young people test positive for COVID-19.
- Recruitment has been able to continue throughout the pandemic.
- Numerous furloughed staff from across the council volunteered to join our staff teams between March and July to assist in the care of our young people.
- We have increased the offer of mental health and wellbeing support for all staff and young people.
- Following a recent assurance visit by Ofsted we have maintained our 'OUTSTANDING' judgement and received some very positive feedback

Altogether better



Aycliffe Secure Centre Development of Transitions Home



Why do we need a transitions home?

- There is a national drive and external demand for new and innovative ways to look at the resettlement of young people leaving a secure environment.
- Once the Transitions home is open, it will provide a service that no other secure children's home is offering. Thus establishing Aycliffe Secure Centre as a market leader.
- This would be an alternative offer after secure orders and prepare young people in a better way to integrate back into the community.
- The overall aim of the home would be to reduce the likelihood of re-offending, reduce vulnerability, and improve life chances for the individual, creating choice and better outcomes for the young person.
- This will offer the opportunity to pilot the new concept of a transitions home that is able to be replicated across the Country.

Altogether better



What have we done so far?

- Developed an options appraisal for the location and size of a new transitions home – this included looking at the re-use of existing space in the centre, building a purpose built unit away from the secure site and an extension to the existing centre.
- The decision was made by Children and Young Peoples Management Team to progress with the investigation of the option of converting the existing space.
- Discussions have begun with the DfE and Ofsted to request support for the transitions home. Both are very supportive of the proposal.
- Appointed an experienced architect to develop design options for the existing space.
- Reviewed the current staffing numbers and improved recruitment processes to encourage staff retention.
- Established indicative charging models in order to meet financial commitments.
- Successfully retained “Outstanding” status with Ofsted.

Next steps...

- To receive detailed fit for purpose and innovative designs from the architect and full feasibility studies on the proposed design including costings (Nov 2020)
- To submit a bid to the DfE for financial support for the building works (Dec 2020)
- To submit a paper to MOWG to gain support for the build and possibly for a financial investment on a repayment basis (Dec 2020)
- Full timescales for opening to be developed following approval of the chosen design.

Altogether better



Corporate Parenting Committee

18 December 2020

Update on Regional Adoption Agency – Adopt Coast to Coast



**Report of Helen Fergusson, Head of Children's Social Care,
Durham County Council**

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countrywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The Regional Adoption Agency (RAA), Adopt Coast to Coast is a Partnership Model agreement reached by Durham, Cumbria and Together for Children/Sunderland to work collaboratively to develop and deliver their respective adoption services under the leadership of the Regional Adoption Agency Head of Service whose joint appointment all have agreed.

Executive summary

- 2 In November 2020, the 3 Local Authority Cabinets agreed the Partnership Model.
- 3 Significant work has been undertaken since the Cabinet decision in December 2018 which approved further work to develop a hosted model. A number of practical issues were raised about the hosted model due in the main to the large geographic footprint of the proposed Coast to Coast Adoption Agency.
- 4 Following discussions with the Department for Education (DfE) it was agreed to look at alternative models that were being developed nationally. This time period has enabled the Local Authorities to explore a newer RAA Model that provides a better fit for Adopt Coast to Coast.
- 5 The Partnership Model is one which the respective Local Authorities believe enables the necessary collaboration to achieve the vision set out by the Government. Adopt Coast to Coast as a Partnership Model will be delivered through a Hub and Spoke structure.
- 6 The Hub will initially be based in County Durham and has been kept deliberately small and cost effective. It will consist of the RAA Head of Service and a Communications and Marketing Officer and will have

access to a number of support services such as Performance and Finance which will be provided in kind from each of the three partners. The Hub costs will be shared equally by each Local Authority.

7 There will be three spokes:

- (a) Cumbria
- (b) Durham
- (c) Together for Children

9 Staff in the spokes will continue to be employed by their existing organisations and work together to achieve the shared vision for Adopt Coast to Coast:

“children will achieve their full potential within a loving and secure family, and everyone affected by adoption will receive a high-quality innovative and sustainable service”

10 The RAA Head of Service was appointed and took up the post on 1 September 2020. The line management of the RAA Head of Service will be undertaken by Head of Children’s Social Care, Durham County Council.

11 The Key milestones for the project are:

- (a) Shadow Go Live – 1st February 2021
- (b) Live – 1st April 2021

12 To meet the Government’s deadline for go live (early Spring 2021) there has been a significant investment of time in developing an agreed model of practice for Adopt Coast to Coast. The modelling has had the advantage of the learning from the RAA’s that have gone live both regionally and nationally.

13 The workstreams which cover all aspects of the development of Adopt Coast to Coast are now meeting regularly to plan and implement the necessary practice changes ahead of go live.

Recommendation(s)

14 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are requested to note the contents of the report.

Background

15 The Government's vision the future of adoption services and provision in England encompasses:

- (a) A system where children are matched with the most suitable adopter as quickly as possible.
- (b) Improved targeted recruitment taking place at an efficient scale to provide a pool of 'adoption ready' adopters large enough and well enough matched to the needs of children waiting.
- (c) Improved and sufficient high-quality adoption support services available nationwide.
- (d) Potential for efficiency savings avoiding duplication and operating on a greater scale.

Main implications

16 Key priorities prior to go live

- Ensure the IT solution for recording enquiries is in place
- Adopt Coast to Coast's website is launched to support the recruitment activity
- Develop and gain approval for the recruitment strategy that supports each Local Authority's sufficiency duty
- Staff engagement
- Wider stakeholder engagement and awareness raising
- Early linking and matching solutions are in place

Conclusion

17 Please note the progress made on delivering the Regional Adoption Agency and the key priorities ahead of go live.

Other useful documents

- Cabinet report 'Regional Adoption Agency – Full Business Case' dated 18 November 2020

Author

Paula Gibbons

Tel: 03000 265 235

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The Council is under a legal duty to maintain an adoption service for its area. The Department for Education have expressed their desire for Local Authorities to establish Regional Adoption Agencies with partner LAs and Voluntary Adoptions Agencies. Failure to do so may lead to a direction for the Secretary of State to enter into such an arrangement

Finance

The finance model proposed for Adopt Coast to Coast is that the current Adoption Service's budget shall remain in each respective Local Authority.

The hub costs will be the responsibility of the RAA Head of Service, and each Local Authority will contribute 1/3 of these, c£50K.

Consultation

As part of the development work prior to the formal launch the RAA Head of Service will take the lead in developing and maintaining the active participation of Stakeholder groups who are affected by Adoption.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and will be regularly reviewed up to and post go live.

Climate Change

None

Human Rights

None

Crime and Disorder

None

Staffing

Two new posts are being created in the Hub; the RAA Head of Service post is recruited to and the Communications and Marketing Officer is to be advertised. There are no other implications for staffing in the 3 hubs as all current staff within the three Local Authority Adoption services are remaining employed within their own Local Authorities.

Accommodation

None

Risk

The Partnership Model significantly reduces the risk of developing and embedding a Regional Adoption Agency approach. However, identifying and managing the associated risk of the Partnership will be covered in legal agreements.

Procurement

N/A

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Durham County Council

Adoption Service 6 Monthly Report

1 April – 30 September 2020

Adopt with us

**Durham
County Council**



Durham County Council Adoption Service

This report covers a period of unprecedented change due to the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic and the national and local restrictions which followed. The Adoption Team rose to the challenge of not only maintaining performance but significantly improving it and utilised the amended Adoption Regulations in respect of the Stage 1 process to their full advantage. Each aspect of the prospective adopters' journey was reviewed, and a virtual alternative was developed and the highlights of this were the Information, counselling and preparation courses and the Adoption Panels.

One of our prospective adopters said

"Overwhelmingly positive. Huge congratulations to you all for adapting so well to the 'new normal'.

Staffing Updates

- Paula Gibbons remained the Adoption Team Manager and Adoption Agency Advisor for this period alongside commencing the RAA Head of Service post on the 1st September 2020.
- External recruitment for the Adoption Team Manager vacancy did not attract an adoption experienced candidate therefore an internal secondment opportunity has been circulated to the current adoption staff for expressions of interest.
- The Adoption Team has recruited to 1 full time vacant post in this period and this experienced member of staff joined the team on the 16th September. A part time vacancy arose following a member of staff seeking to reduce hours as part of a phased retirement plan and a full time 1 year internal secondment has been agreed with a proposed start date at the beginning of November.

Adopters Journey

Recruitment

- In this period, there have been 46 initial enquiries and 24 initial visits (the majority via Teams). Though this figure is a reduction on the same period last year the conversion rate from enquiry to visit is 52% which is very positive as it evidences that communication and marketing activity is reaching those families who are ready to start their adoption journey.
- Due to COVID-19, information sessions were halted and did not recommence in this period. Due to the volume of work the Adoption Team did not immediately offer these virtually, however at the end of this reporting period they had commenced and the first held in September attracted 2 families. The format follows the face to face ones and includes contributions from approved adopters.

Stage 1

- Information, counselling and preparation courses (ICP) continued to be held during this reporting period. I am pleased to report that the nominated adoption staff quickly

developed a Teams friendly version, including videos of those who would usually attend the sessions for example the Medical Advisor, Panel Chair etc. In this reporting period, 28 families have attended the preparation courses. Due to COVID-19 and initial challenges for Together for Children in using Teams the sharing of preparation training has been temporarily paused.

- Within this period, the Team added the Fostering for Adoption course into the main preparation sessions, so all families now receive this input to help them make an informed decision about offering this type of early permanence placement. Prior to this change in delivery 10 families attended the training.

The Social Work Consultant said

We considered the challenges that may lie ahead including access to technology, or participants for whom English may not be their first language. We recognised the different ways people learn and made the training fully interactive with discussions and activities. We continue to develop the training in order to prepare adopters for what is an ever changing picture. The training has been delivered to 5 groups of prospective adopters and the feedback we have received has been outstandingly positive.

Stage 2

- In this reporting period, 25 adopters were approved, which is equal to the number approved in 2019/20. The target of 31 will be achieved within the next 2 months.
- At the end of this reporting period, there were 5 prospective adopters in Stage 1 and 8 prospective adopters in Stage 2.

Panel

- Panel continues to operate within the regulatory framework, and it is extremely positive to note that it has moved from paper to electronic to virtual and the feedback from attendees has been wholly positive.

Our prospective adopters said

"A very easy process via Teams in these circumstances of COVID was very smooth"

"Having a virtual Panel meant we were more comfortable and would allow for a more relaxed experience".

- Each Panel Member had their annual appraisal in April 2020. Panel Members said

"I have a much better understanding of the whole adoption process"

"It is immensely rewarding to see children matched with adoptive families"

- Panel have received Microsoft Teams training and Fostering for Adoption training in this period. Panel are always keen to understand the process for Prospective Adopters and Full Circle have shared the resources prospective adopters receive with the Panel Members. In the appraisal process, understanding of life story activity; the

tools used with direct work with children and the life story book produced and the attachment training offered to prospective adopters were highlighted as areas for training in 2020/21.

Child's Journey

- In this reporting period 29 children had an ADM decision for a plan of adoption; this is a significant reduction on the 77 in 2019/20.
- 13 children have been granted a Placement Order which is a significant reduction on the 66 in 2019/20. This is not a surprising decrease, and this is the experience nationally.
- 28 children have been matched at Panel; which is a tremendous achievement in this period and only slightly less than half of the 2019/20 total of 64. Of the 28 children, 13 were placed with external providers at a cost of £390,344
- 19 Adoption Orders have been achieved, which is less than half the 2019/20 figure of 55, which is understandable given the delays in Court processes.
- 40 children are placed with prospective adopters but not yet adopted so if these Adoption Orders are achieved before the 31st March 2021 then last year's figure will be improved upon. Of this 40, 18 children have been placed under 10 weeks, 11 have not yet had applications lodged and 11 are in process within the Court.
- 4 children's plans (2 groups of brothers and sisters) changed away from adoption after the Placement Order was granted all were as a result of family finding not being successful due to their complex needs.
- In this period 4 children experienced a disruption, 1 whilst in introductions, and 3 (two sisters and a single boy) after placement. 3 of the 4 children were matched with prospective adopters approved by other agencies. The Agency learning from disruptions is enhanced by a disruption meeting chaired by an independent person and despite every effort being made to try to secure an independent Chairperson this has been unsuccessful due to the lack of availability of trained and experienced practitioners. However, an internal practice review has been utilised and the learning from this has highlighted clarity around communication, key decisions to be followed up in writing and a holistic consideration of the support needs of single adopters. The issue of lack of Chairpersons will be addressed by training for relevant Durham County Council staff to fulfil this role.

Family Finding

- There have been no further changes to processes for the family finding. The RAA profiling events have moved to a virtual format and this has been positively received.
- The previous use of Fostering for Adoption by Durham has continued to be slow to improve and, in this period, only 1 more baby was placed with a Fostering for Adoption Carer. So far this year 3 children have been placed in this way. However, improvement in performance is being championed at a strategic level through the revision of the Early Permanence Strategy and awareness raising sessions scheduled for early 2021.

Post Adoption Support

- There have been staffing challenges for Business Support in managing the Postbox arrangements and unfortunately this has led to complaints.
- The review of adoption allowances continues, and it is expected that an outcome will be known by early 2021.
- At the end of this reporting period the Adoption Support Services Adviser (ASSA) role transferred to Paula Gibbons and once the Adoption Team Manager is permanently appointed this role will transfer to the new postholder.
- The Adoption Team have had 38 contacts for post adoption support in this reporting period. Of this number, 30 had an assessment of support needs and 27 have had applications to ASF completed. This clearly evidences the increasing nature of this aspect of adoption work and it is nationally acknowledged as a growing area of work.

Post Adoption Support Services

Due to capacity issues within the Adoption Team a Service Level Agreement continues to be in place with ARC Adoption NE for the provision independent adoption support to deliver the following functions:

- To provide support, advice and counselling to birth parents and those who are affected by adoption.
- To assist and advise adopted adults on how to gain access to their birth records.

There is an annual cost of £40K and the extension was agreed until 31st March 2021.

Non-Agency Adoption

The number of referrals and complexities of this area of adoption work are increasing. In this reporting period there have been:

- 32 enquiries, this is a significant increase as this is only 3 less than the whole of the previous year.
- 4 initial visits were completed, and this small number is due to national and local restrictions during this period.

This is a significant increase in a statutory area of adoption practice which is so specialised it is undertaken by a named part time Adoption Social Worker. Should these progress to assessments then this will be a significant allocation challenge.

Complaints

In this reporting period the Service received 1 complaint in respect of practice with the Adoption Team and Permanence Team. It was upheld in part and practice has been reviewed as a result of it.

Update on Key priority areas for 2020/21:

- To develop the ethos of the team recognising that newly appointed staff will soon join. *Ongoing, however remote working has impacted on the development of relationships for new staff members.*
- To develop a learning culture within the Team that supports a wide-ranging review of practice with the goal of updating and improving practice to increase in house provision in preparation for a partnership RAA Model. *An enquiring and learning culture are more in evidence and the improvement in practice is substantial.*
- To review the current Early Permanence Planning practice across other areas to embed models of early permanence for example Fostering for Adoption. *This continues to be developed.*
- Develop and launch training package for the Family and Friends of prospective adopters. *The development of support sessions has met this need and is being positively received by Panel.*
- Review and develop LCS to support practice and aide reporting on performance. *There has been a delay in this commencing however dates are now agreed for reviewing the current provision.*
- Provide written reports twice yearly; April-September and October-March as required by 25.6 of the National Minimum Standards (2011). *In place.*
- Review adoption allowances procedure and embed a means test approach. *This is ongoing.*
- Review and realign the ASSA role alongside developing the Post Adoption Support offer directly from the Adoption Team. *Achieved.*

Paula Gibbons

RAA Head of Service

1st November 2020

Durham County Council Adoption Service 6 Monthly Report

1 April – 30 September 2020

**Paula Gibbons
Regional Adoption Agency, Head of Service**

Staffing

Staff vacancies have been recruited and appointees have added to the skill, knowledge and confidence of the team.

The performance achieved is phenomenal even more so when taking into account that the team have carried vacancies and had to develop new ways of working due to COVID-19.

Performance

- 46 initial enquiries and 24 initial visits (the majority completed via Teams), conversion rate of 52%.
- 28 prospective adoptive families completed Information, counselling and preparation courses presented through Teams.
- 25 prospective adoptive families approved via virtual Panels.
- At the end of this reporting period, there were 5 prospective adopters in Stage 1 and 8 prospective adopters in Stage 2.

Altogether better



Performance (cont.)

- 28 children matched with 26 prospective adoptive families, of this number 14 were prospective adopters approved by Durham County Council
- 19 children have had Adoption Orders granted.
- 40 children are placed with their prospective adoptive families, 22 are eligible to have the Adoption Order application considered by the court.
- 38 contacts for post adoption support directly to the Adoption Team, 30 had an assessment of support needs and 27 have had applications to the Adoption Support Fund completed
- 32 enquiries regarding non agency adoption, this is a significant increase as this is only 3 less than the whole of the previous year.

Update on Key priority areas for 2020/21:

- To develop the ethos of the team recognising that newly appointed staff will soon join. *Ongoing, however remote working has impacted on the development of relationships for new staff members.*
- To develop a learning culture within the Team that supports a wide-ranging review of practice with the goal of updating and improving practice to increase in house provision in preparation for a partnership RAA Model. *An enquiring and learning culture are more in evidence and the improvement in practice is substantial.*
- To review the current Early Permanence Planning practice across other areas to embed models of early permanence for example Fostering for Adoption. *This continues to be developed.*
- Review and develop LCS to support practice and aide reporting on performance. *There has been a delay in this commencing however dates are now agreed for reviewing the current provision*
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of the Local Government Act 1972.

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