



Corporate Parenting Panel

Date **Friday 2 July 2021**
Time **9.30 am**
Venue **Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham**

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 30 April 2021 (Pages 3 - 10)
4. Declarations of Interest
5. Introduction to Corporate Parenting Panel - Presentation by Head of Children's Social Care (Pages 11 - 22)
 - a) Durham County Council, Induction for Councillors: Being a Corporate Parent - Presentation attached for information (Pages 23 - 44)
6. Introduction to the Children in Care Council - Presentation by Project Officer, Investing in Children and young people from the Children in Care Council (Pages 45 - 52)
7. Mind of My Own - Presentation by Participation and Engagement Officer, Children's Social Care and young people (Pages 53 - 62)
8. Overview of Children and Young People's Services - Presentation by Head of Children's Social Care (Pages 63 - 68)
9. Useful Resources - Report of Head of Children's Social Care (Pages 69 - 110)
10. Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report 2020-21- Report of Head of Children's Social Care (Pages 111 - 142)
11. Number of Children Looked After - Verbal update by Head of Children's Social Care

12. Ofsted Inspection: Aycliffe Secure Centre full inspection results - Verbal update by Head of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children
13. Proud Moments - Strategic Manager Looked After Children Resources
14. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.
15. 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)

16. Regulation 44 visits and Regulatory Body Ratings of Children's Residential Homes - Joint Report of Head of Children's Social Care and Head of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children (Pages 143 - 148)
17. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.

Helen Lynch

Head of Legal and Democratic Services

County Hall
Durham
24 June 2021

To: **The Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel**
Councillor M Simmons (Chair)
Councillor M Walton (Vice-Chair)

Councillors R Adcock-Forster, B Bainbridge, C Bell, J Charlton, B Coult, S Deinali, C Fletcher, J Griffiths, O Gunn, T Henderson, C Hood, C Hunt, J Miller, K Robson, K Rooney, A Surtees, S Townsend and C Varty

Co-opted Members

C Baines
A Ferguson
W Taylor
Young persons representative of the Children in Care Council (CiCC)

Contact: Jill Hogg

Tel: 03000 269 711

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Panel** held remotely via Microsoft Teams on **Friday 30 April 2021** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor I Jewell in the Chair

Panel Members:

Councillors B Bainbridge, P Crathorne, S Quinn, A Reed and M Simmons

Co-opted Members:

A Ferguson

Also in attendance:

Helen Fergusson - Head of Children's Social Care

Paula Gibbons – Head of Regional Adoption Agency

Anita Harvey – Solicitor, Children, Adults and Health

Jodie Henderson – Strategic Manager, Looked After and Permanence

Mark den Hollander – Independent Visitor Co-Ordinator

Robert Johnson - Project Manager (Investing in Children) and Mitchell Green and

Lesley Caulkin of the Children in Care Council

Selwyn Morgans – Centre Manager, Aycliffe Secure Centre

Claire Morris - Strategic Manager, Children Looked After Resources

Melanie Stubbs - Virtual School Head

Jayne Watson - Senior Partnerships Officer

Lisa Wood - Strategic Manager, First Contact & County Wide Specialist Services

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J Charlton, Councillor J Considine, Councillor E Scott, Councillor H Smith and co-opted members C Baines and W Taylor.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute members.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2021 were confirmed as a correct record to be signed by the Chair.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Number of Looked After Children

The Panel noted the decrease in the number of children looked after which had reduced from 959 in January to the current figure of 937. This reduction reflected that systems and processes were gradually returning to normal following the pandemic.

6 Investing in Children / Children in Care Council Update

Lesley and Mitchell from the Children in Care Council updated the Panel on the following recent activity at the Children in Care Council:

- Funding had been secured for older care leavers to be involved in a 'Positive Relationships' project to raise awareness of the many different forms of abuse through peer-led workshops in schools.
- Work is taking place with the Virtual Head's team to increase the participation of young people in how pupil premium is spent.
- Younger members of the CiCC held their first 'face to face' meeting at which they developed artwork for the Full Circle service. Further meetings are being planned.
- The young people have supported the launch of the 'Mind of my own' app and launched the first in a series of podcasts called 'We are no different', focusing on young people's experiences of the care system.
- The first police training session is being developed, facilitated by the young people.
- Peer mentoring training is being offered to young people in children's homes, with several young people expressing an interest in becoming mentors to the younger children. One young person from Coxhoe Children's Home has been making a very positive contribution to the CiCC meetings and has been particularly proactive in the peer mentoring programme.

The Chair thanked Robert, Lesley and Mitchell for their presentation and perspective which is always very much appreciated by the Panel.

7 Adopt Coast to Coast Update

The Panel received a presentation from Paula Gibbons, Head of the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) who provided an update on Adopt Coast to Coast which was launched virtually on 1 April 2021. The Head of Service extended her thanks to the staff within the three spokes of Cumbria, Durham and Together for Children for the hard work that had gone into making the launch a success.

Members were informed that the partnership builds upon the strengths across the three services and that performance in 2020-21 included 77 adopters approved and 130 children matched. The Head of the RAA described the key priority areas for the future including the development of the branding, streamlining processes to reflect best practice, the promotion of early matching and the further development of the post adoption support offer.

Members praised the positive progress and in response to a question from Councillor Reed regarding the assessment of prospective adopters, the Head of the RAA clarified that the service investigates all options which are in the best interests of the child, including assessing foster carers and extended family members as adopters.

Councillor B Bainbridge acknowledged the foster to adopt approach which is a really positive initiative.

The Chair congratulated the Head of the RAA on the launch, adding that he is looking forward to seeing the service develop, through maximising efficiency and improving outcomes for children and young people.

8 Children who go Missing from Home and Care - ERASE

The Panel received a report and presentation from Lisa Wood, Strategic Manager, First Contact and Countywide Specialist Services outlining the recent activity and development of the ERASE Team since the service was reviewed in 2019 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Strategic Manager highlighted service improvements which had taken place including working with police colleagues to ensure the recording criteria for reporting children missing is aligned with the police definition. In addition, a data analyst had been seconded from Durham Constabulary to obtain a clear picture of the position to ensure an appropriate response is provided.

The Strategic Manager explained that, on recognising that a number of professionals were undertaking return to home interviews, a dedicated Missing Coordinator was appointed in April 2020, to provide independent return to home interviews for all children going missing from care. Close work is undertaken with the police co-ordinators which enables the sharing of intelligence and promotes a better understanding of any emerging trends.

The Panel noted that the Strategic Child Exploitation Group had increased its membership to include the voluntary sector and representatives of the LGBTQ community and young people with offending behaviour.

In terms of performance, the Panel noted that the number of young people missing from home and care had increased during the year, however, members were asked to bear in mind the exceptional circumstances of the pandemic and the new definition developed in line with police colleagues which may account for the increase in the number of reported incidents. Nationally there had been an increase in the reporting of children going missing as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Strategic Manager highlighted the improved performance with regard to the number of return to home interviews completed as a result of the dedicated officer in post and that the service had created COVID-safe ways of working to ensure the service continued throughout the pandemic, including 'talk and walk' sessions.

Learning from audits and inspections had led to improvements such as the development of a language document which had been designed in conjunction with young people, which aims to promote consistent use of language when describing children and young people missing from home or care and those vulnerable to exploitation.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

9 Independent Visitor Service Update

The Panel received a report and presentation from Mark den Hollander, Independent Visitor Service Coordinator which updated on Durham County Council's Independent Visitor service for children and young people looked after (for copy see file of minutes).

The report also provided assurance in response to the open letter from the National Independent Visitor Network, that we are meeting our statutory duty to make Independent Visitors accessible to the children and young people in our care.

The Service Coordinator began by describing the challenges experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic and he outlined the steps taken to manage risk during the period, whilst ensuring the service was maintained.

The Service Coordinator explained that the Children Act 1989 placed a duty on local authorities to appoint an independent visitor for children looked after. The role of an Independent Visitor is to promote the child's developmental, social and emotional needs and encourage participation in positive activities. Volunteers are trained and matched with a young person, in a professional befriending role.

The service currently has 42 volunteers and 22 matches have been completed. An important aspect of the service is to offer young people opportunities to have fun whilst complementing the work of the young person's wider care team.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

10 Proud Moments

Claire Morris, Strategic Manager for Children Looked After Resources, spoke to the Panel about one young person who had informed her that she had created some posters and leaflets which had won a competition. The young person had been grateful for the opportunity to identify her talent and she shared her thoughts about the praise she had received and how much this had increased her confidence, improved her schooling and relationships and had also led her to decide to pursue art as a future career. Members commended the young person on her achievement, acknowledging her effort and they paid tribute to the service for their support.

On behalf of the Head of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children, the Senior Partnerships Officer stated that she would circulate a very positive article published in Children and Young People Now, about Aycliffe Young People's Centre to the Panel. The Panel noted the last full Ofsted Inspection of the Centre in 2019 resulted in the achievement of outstanding in all areas and an assurance visit which took place in November 2020, found high standards had been maintained. The Head of Children's Social Care updated members that Ofsted had paid a further visit to Aycliffe Centre within recent weeks and whilst the published report is awaited, the initial feedback is very positive. The Chair praised the continued excellent work at the Centre.

11 Regulation 44 Commissioning Arrangements Update

The Head of Children's Social Care provided an update on Regulation 44 Commissioning Arrangements, informing the Panel that the current arrangements for Aycliffe Centre will remain, however, the arrangements for community Children's Homes will change. Organisations have been invited to tender for delivery of the service on behalf of Durham County Council and the new arrangements are expected to be in place by June. The new provider will be invited to a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel in due course.

12 Any other business

The Chair took the opportunity to thank all officers and members involved in the Corporate Parenting Panel as he was to stand-down at the forthcoming election. Having been a member of the Panel for 8 years, he commented that he had found it a very enjoyable experience and he had been pleased to be a part of the progress made, with all those involved sharing the common goal of having children's best interests at heart. He added that he was particularly heartened to see the increasing participation of the children and young people, as their views are essential to inform the work of the Panel.

The Chair also conveyed thanks to all members who would be stepping down at the election including Vice-Chair, Councillor Heather Smith who had asked him to pass on her good wishes. He also thanked Councillor Jude Considine who had been a very active member of the Panel.

The Head of Children's Social Care thanked the Chair and Vice-Chair for all their support to officers and more importantly for their support to the children and young people. She added their commitment had been very much appreciated, particularly during the pandemic, with regular meetings being held throughout, which had resulted in significant progress being made.

The Senior Partnerships Officer read out a message from the Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People, Councillor Gunn, thanking all members for their commitment, particularly the Chair and Vice-Chair for their strong leadership, especially during the restrictions of the pandemic. Councillor Gunn expressed gratitude to all the officers involved and concluded by thanking the young people of the Children in Care Council for their strength and creativity.

13 Exclusion of the public

Resolved:

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

14 Regulation 44 Visits and Regulatory Body Ratings of Children's Residential Homes

The Panel considered a report presented by the Head of Children's Social Care which provided a monthly update on Regulation 44 visits and regulatory body ratings (for copy see file of minutes).

The Panel noted the continuing progress, demonstrating good quality care and support being provided to young people.

The Head of Children's Social Care informed the Panel that registration process for the new homes at Aycliffe and Sacriston had now been completed. During the registration process the Ofsted Manager had been very complimentary about the quality of the homes, the managers and teams and the views expressed by the young people who were moving into the homes. Work continues to identify further new properties and the Head of Children's Social Care stated that this quality and rigour will continue in respect of future homes.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

15 Any other business

The Chair placed on record his sincere thanks to all those involved in the work of the Panel and extended his best wishes for the future.

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Introduction to the Corporate Parenting Panel

Helen Fergusson
Head of Children's Social Care



Corporate Parenting Panel Terms of Reference

Function One

Ensure that the Council acts as a good corporate parent to children and young people in care and care leavers including:

- Children and young people in residential care, foster care, supported lodgings, placed for adoption or placed at home under care planning, placement and case review regulations
- Young people in secure services, or in custody.

Corporate Parenting Panel Terms of Reference

Function Two

To engage and listen to the views of children, young people and their carers for whom the Council is the parent.

Function Three

To work in partnership with other statutory agencies to drive forward improvements in care.

Corporate Parenting Panel Terms of Reference

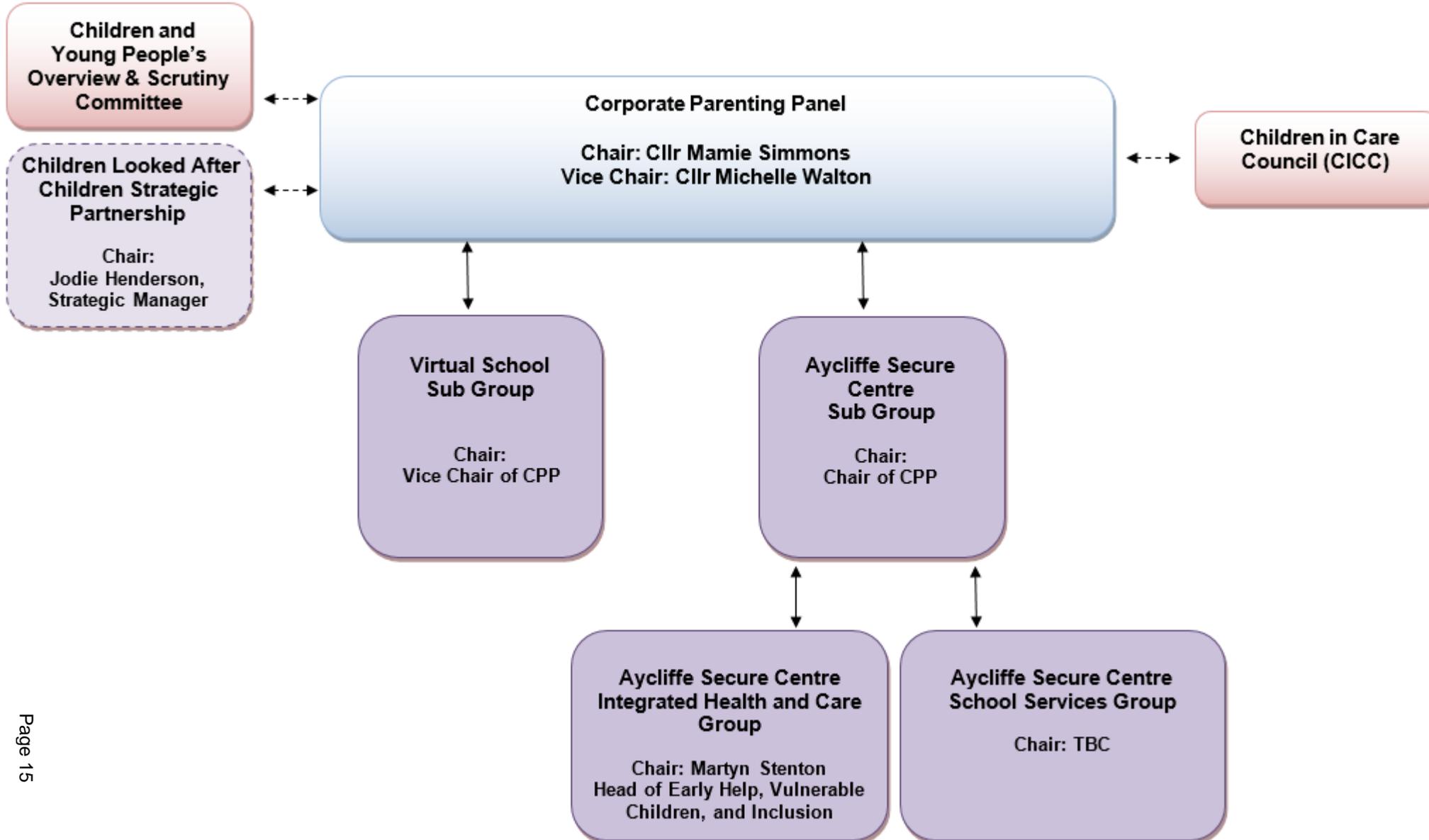
Function Four

To act as the governing body for the Virtual School for looked after children and young people.

Function Five

To act as the governing body for Aycliffe Secure Services, monitoring and ensuring the quality of secure accommodation.

Governance



LGA – Key Lines of Enquiry

1. What are the characteristics of our cohort of children in care and care leavers?
2. Do all of our councillors and officers know about their corporate parenting responsibilities?
3. Do our partner agencies understand their role in supporting us as corporate parents?

LGA – Key Lines of Enquiry

4. How are we giving children and young people the chance to express their views, wishes and feelings?
How do we know those are being acted on?

5. How do we show children in our care that we have high aspirations for them?

6. Are we providing stable environments for children in our care?

LGA – Key Lines of Enquiry

7. What are we doing to look after the health and wellbeing of children in our care?

8. What are we doing to ensure that our children in care are not unnecessarily criminalised?

9. What are outcomes like for our care leavers?

LGA – Key Lines of Enquiry

10. How many children are we placing in out of area placements and why?

11. How are we planning for the future and commissioning services?

12. How well do we support our foster carers?

Vacancies

Fostering Panel

- Councillor representation from Corporate Parenting Panel

Aycliffe Secure Centre Sub Group

- Chair of Corporate Parenting Panel
- Councillor representation from Corporate Parenting Panel

Aycliffe Secure Centre School Services Group

- Chair of the CPP
- Councillor representation from Corporate Parenting Panel

Virtual School

- Vice Chair of Corporate Parenting Panel
- Councillor representation from Corporate Parenting Panel

Vacancies

Regulation 44 Visits
Coxhoe
Newton Drive, Durham City
High Etherley
West Rainton
Park House, Sherburn Village
Newton Aycliffe
Moorside, Spennymoor
New Lea, Stanley
Orchard House, Sacriston
Barnard - ASC
Durham - ASC
Walworth - ASC
Lumley - ASC
Auckland - ASC

ANY QUESTIONS?

CONTACTS:

Head of Children's Social Care: Helen.Fergusson@durham.gov.uk

Corporate Parenting Panel support: Jayne.Watson@durham.gov.uk

Chair of Corporate Parenting Panel: Mamie.Simmons@durham.gov.uk

Durham County Council Induction for Councillors

Being a Corporate Parent

Helen Fergusson

Head of Children's Social Care



Children in Care

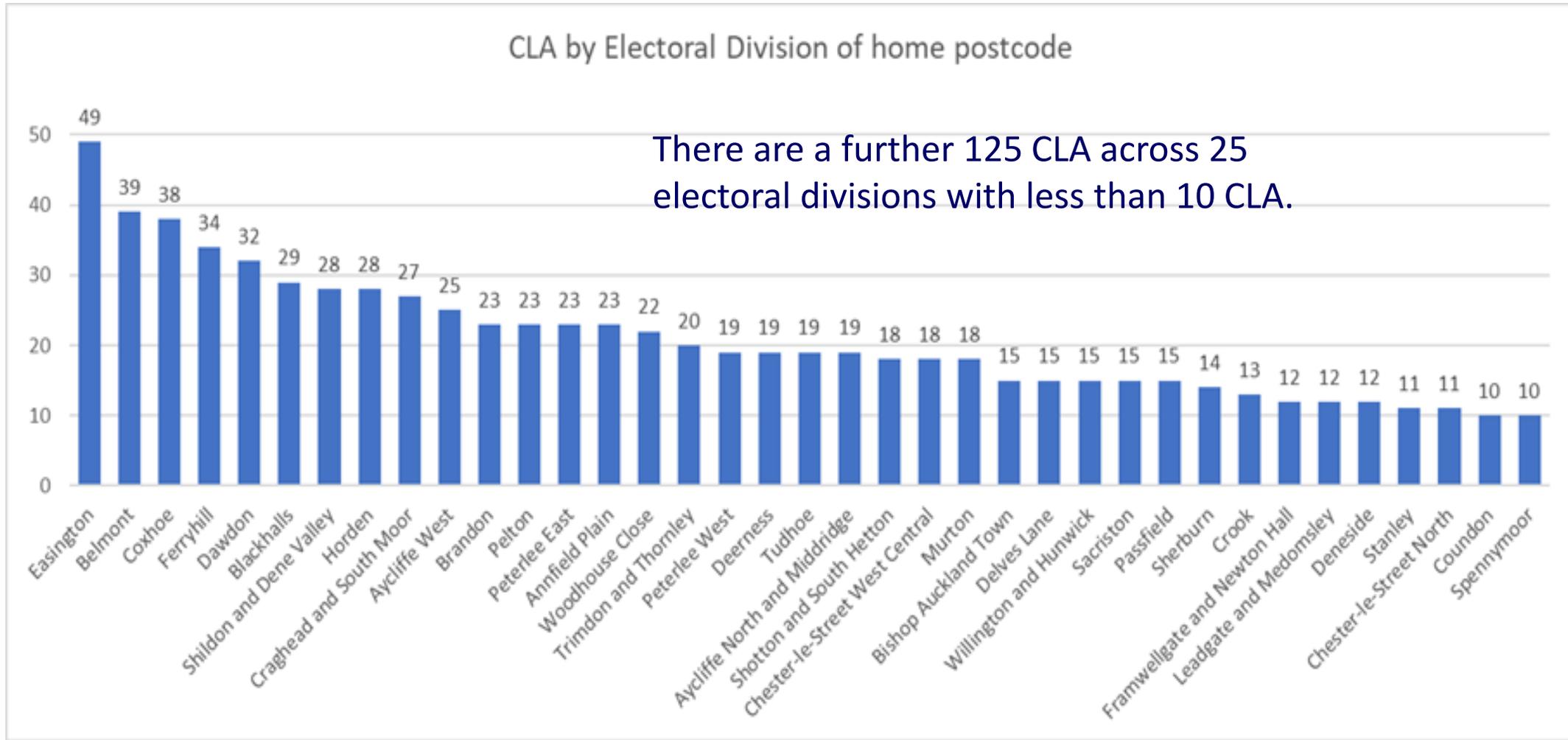
What brings children into care?

- Most commonly, it is neglect as a result of parents' alcohol and drug use, mental ill health, domestic violence or learning difficulties.
- There are currently around 945 Children in Care. This has increased significantly from 2016, when there were around 600. The number has further increased during Covid-19.
- These increases are happening all over the country

Why are these children vulnerable and need special attention?

- Education, Health, Crime, Employment

Children in Care – County Profile



Putting Corporate Parenting into practice

1. **Universal responsibility** – All Councillors
2. **Targeted responsibility** – Corporate Parenting Panel
3. **Specialist responsibility** – Lead Member and Portfolio team

What does Corporate Parenting mean?

Universal responsibility - Level 1

- When a young person comes into care, the Council becomes their 'Corporate Parent'.
- We have a statutory responsibility to act for and care for that child in the same way that a good parent would for their child.
- We care about these young people, and it is our responsibility to ensure they get the best experiences in life.

Every Councillor is a Corporate Parent

Councillors are expected to undertake ***Corporate Parenting training*** as part of the induction programme to enable the Corporate Parenting role to be carried out adequately.

- You recognise the prevalence of young people from your ward
- You ensure that children are treated with respect
- You have an interest in their general welfare
- You raise any concerns about children more generally

Corporate Parenting Panel

Targeted responsibility - Level 2

The Corporate Parenting Panel is a forum made up of 21 Councillors plus officers who are responsible for corporate parenting. The Corporate Parenting Panel has a targeted responsibility to ensure Durham County Council undertakes its duties as corporate parents:

- Ensuring the Council acts as a good corporate parent to children and young people in care and care leavers – we check out their progress in education, that their health needs are being met, that they are making the transition to adulthood through work, housing and independence, that they have a range of opportunities
- Engaging and listening to the views of children, young people and their carers for whom the Council is the corporate parent
- Working in partnership with other statutory agencies to drive forward improvements in care
- Acting as the governing group for the Virtual School for looked after children and young people
- Acting as the governing group for Aycliffe Secure Services, monitoring and ensuring quality of secure accommodation for looked after children across the county

Role of Lead Member

Specialist responsibility – Level 3

- Ensure the local authority demonstrates high standards of corporate parenting and fulfils its responsibilities to the children for which it is the corporate parent
- Holds equivalent responsibilities as the Director of Children and Young People's Services at a local political level, as required by the Children's Act (2004)
- Make links with other Executive Members to ensure issues affecting looked after children and care leavers are taken into account and prioritised in all council decision making
- Ensure the views of looked after children and care leavers are sought and used to influence service development and delivery
- Accountable for the actions, decisions and delivery of services for looked after children and care leavers

Being a good parent - 3 questions:

- If this were my child, would it be good enough for them?
- If I were this child, would it be good enough for me?
- How could I make it even better?

Things to consider as a Corporate Parent

- Young People's **health**, for example vaccinations, healthy weight, mental health
- **Educational attainment** of young people through the virtual school head, including apprenticeships and further education opportunities
- Ensure there are a **range of opportunities** available to young people, and that they are taken up to develop their skills and talents
- Make sure they have an **enjoyable childhood** progressing onto a **successful adult life**
- **Preparation for adulthood**

Corporate Parents

Corporate Parents have to understand, accept and carry out the functions outlined in the DfES guidance 'if this were my child', specifically:

- **Accept responsibility** for children in the care of Durham County Council, and make their needs a priority
- Seek for them the **same outcomes** any good parent would want for their own children and seek reassurances about their **safety and wellbeing** raising concerns with appropriate officers and/or Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel
- **Question** how well DCC looks after these children through membership of formal systems such as Fostering and Adoption Panels, Corporate Parenting Panel, and Governing Bodies of schools

Durham County Council Fostering Service Web Page



- Residents
- News & Events
- Business
- Council

We are still looking for foster carers to join our fostering family. All contact with you will be online or in a Covid safe way.

Home / Residents / Children & Families / Looked after children and care leavers / Fostering

Fostering



Ask about fostering



Why foster with us?



Who can foster?



Fostering information events



Fostering support



Your fostering journey



Fees and allowances



Corporate Parenting Panel Achievements

- 2019/20 *priorities and action plan* were agreed with Member involvement
- Participation and raising awareness of the *Care Leavers Challenge*
- *Children in Care Council (CICC)* work and involvement in CICC meetings
- *Co-opted places on CPP* for two young people who are CICC members
- Members committed in providing *increased opportunities* for looked after children and care leavers to access education, employment and training - Ringfenced apprenticeship posts in DCC 'the family firm'
- Corporate Parent *training* for all new members, some of which is delivered by young people
- Elected Members are *Adoption and Fostering Panel Members*
- Involvement in all *Regulation 44* visits to children's homes and Aycliffe Secure Services
- *Awards ceremonies* to celebrate young people's and their carers achievements
- *Changes to the language* we use based on feedback from young people
- Free access to *DCC leisure centres* for young people to swim or use the gym
- *Council Tax* exemptions or concessions, and winter fuel allowance payments
- *Christmas meal 2019 & Christmas hampers 2020* funded by money from members budgets
- CPP were shortlisted for *LGC Awards 2020*

What is the Children in Care Council (CiCC)

- All children and young people who are looked after by Durham County Council are automatically members of the CiCC and have a right to attend meetings.
- The CiCC meets once a month to talk about what is good about being in care and what needs to change, due to the pandemic these have been virtual meetings.
- The children and young people bring their ideas and suggestions and work with professionals to improve services – this was done monthly via virtual meetings.
- CiCC attend the Corporate Parenting Panel meetings to provide an update on the work of the CiCC and to hear the updates coming into the CPP, and give feedback as necessary.

What does the Children in Care Council Do?

The Children in Care Council has:

- Worked on developing 'Young People' guides that will be available to anyone in care
- Delivered training to social workers (and social work students in universities), Independent Reviewing Officers, foster carers, potential adopters and corporate parents
- Been involved in the Epic Awards
- Consulting other young people and then sharing views on key issues. For example CiCC provided views on the benefits of having pets in children's homes and in fostering families
- Produced newsletters throughout lockdown. DCC provided a link with the wider council Marketing Team to support young people to understand the editorial role and become a 'young editor' for the newsletter
- Been involved in work for the Children's Commissioner around young people's views of the police
- Been involved in the Digital Voice project creating animations to allow young people's voices to be heard
- Bid for money to develop summer packs to be distributed to young people during lockdown
- Asked the CPP to challenge stigma and at each meeting we now share 'proud moments'
- Hosted an easter egg competition during lockdown

Children in Care Council – You Said, We did



Money and allowances

What Young People wanted.....

Lots of children and young people were saying that it all depended on where you live to how much pocket money or allowances you get.

They all agreed this wasn't right and that everyone should be treated the same, and that some young people shouldn't be rewarded for being good when others are good all of the time.

What has changed.....

A piece of work has been undertaken with the CICC looking at all of the money and allowances young people get across residential care and foster care

- The Service increased the pocket money allowances, toiletries and birthday / Christmas money.

Risk Assessments (Foster care)

What Young People said.....

Young people said that they did not like the term 'risk assessment' as it felt like they were a risk to the foster family.

What changed.....

- Young people worked with us and we met regularly to review the language and criteria used to describe a young person's individual circumstances. These were re-written and re-named Safety Plans.
- The service is now working to ensure that these are in place for every young person.



investing in children

*Promoting the Rights of
Children & Young People*

Review of Freedom Cards

What Young People asked for.....

- Young people said that they wanted a review of the Freedom cards to see if additional offers and discounts could be included which would meet the needs of older young people as well as those younger.

What has changed.....

- From January 2020 the cards have included access to Leisure Centres at the request of young people.
- Exploration has taken place to try and expand the Freedom Cards to include discounts in shops, cinema etc. This was stalled due to the pandemic response but work recently resumed.



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Children & Young People*

School Settings

What Young People said...

Work with school settings so that they better understand the needs of children who are looked after.

What changed for the Young People...

Training event delivered to over 60 designated teachers across County Durham by young people to help them to understand what it is like to be a child in care.

Progress has been made with the virtual head to better promote young people's individual voices about pupil premium funds and personal education plans.



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Young Inspectors

What Young People said...

They would like to use their knowledge to shape the services we provide in Durham County Council Children's Residential homes.



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What changed for the Young People...

The CPP is developing a framework, training and support to allow them to carry out the role of a Young Inspector. The role will involve them visiting homes and sharing views on services provided to the young people and their home.

This work is on hold due to Covid-19. In the mean time we have supported our care experienced young people with opportunities to take part in interviews across a range of jobs - asking questions, leading discussions, rating presentations. These skills are transferrable to the young inspector role.

Pets

What Young People said...

That it is really important for some young people to have their own pet, or to have family pets

What changed for the Young People...

Animals that young people would like to keep in contact with are now included in safety plans as they are important to the young people. This is now part of social work training.

A number of children's homes have introduced pet hamsters.

Some of the children's homes are hosting 'dog-fostering days' when staff bring their dogs in – this enables the young people to walk, groom and feed the dogs.

One home has an allotment with chickens and one young person is helping a horse owner to care for their horse.

Work around animals and pets will be replicated in the fostering service.



WiFi

What Young People said...

That the WiFi wasn't very good in the children's homes

What changed for the Young People...

New WiFi has been put into all of the homes, and any new homes will have WiFi included in the service specifications to ensure it meets the needs of the young people



*Promoting the Rights of
Children & Young People*



Any questions?



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Presentation by Mitchell and Lesley CiCC CPP representatives and Robert Johnson ~ Investing in Children

What is Durham Children in Care Council (CICC)?

- The Children in Care Council (supported by Investing in Children) exists to give children in care and care-leavers a voice and help them to have a say in the way their care service is run.
- All children and young people who are looked after in County Durham are automatically members of the CICC and can take part in discussions and raise any issues that are important to them.





How CICC meetings work

- Two meetings take place per month for different age groups.
 - Under 14's
 - Over 14
- The younger group have restarted face to face meetings and the plan is to re-introduce this to the older group at the Investing in Children office over June and July.
- During Covid-19, from April 20 until March 21, there were 221 interactions from both age groups across different CICC projects.
- 45 different young people from across the care community in and outside the County have been involved in discussing and shaping their experience of the care service.
- Sub groups also meet to discuss and plan ideas throughout the year.



Under 14 group overview – projects, developments and approaches

- Supporting work with Durham Virtual Head – recently developed a PEP (Personal Education Plan) guide so children, young people and adults understand them better.
- Developing a project with funding from Pupil Premium Funds – allowing children and young people the opportunity to apply for funding for their own education project. The project will be launched in September after developing the application process.
- Working with Full Circle – a Durham County Council service that offers types of therapy to care experienced young people. Additional funding is being used for children and young people to co-design new rooms and supporting a better experience by the team.
- Many of this group are new members and will be meeting during the summer holidays to review and develop the group relationship further.
- Creating and writing the 5th CICC newsletter.

Over 14 group – projects developments and approaches

- Leading on future foster care training and reviewing the process in the summer. Supporting more young people to get involved.
- Involved in interviews for senior staff and social workers.
- Recently involved in piloting a police training session alongside the Children's Commissioner for England.
- Undertaking peer mentor training in the summer holidays to support the development of the younger group.
- Designing social worker 'top trump' profiles.
- Working alongside Independent Reviewing Officers to reshape review approaches and learning from feedback.
- Leading on podcasts, promoting the care community positively.
- Meeting with Corporate Parent Panel members, agreeing ideas and actions.
- Applying to the Key Fund for a care community celebration event - after Covid-19 restrictions are fully lifted.





How CICC connects with CPP

- During Covid-19, bi-monthly meetings took place with CPP members – providing different young people with opportunities to share ideas – information is fed back to young people and CICC members. Further discussions or actions also take place.
- Two meetings per year take place between CICC /CPP members. Topics agreed by CICC members. CPP members look to progress and feedback.
- CICC members deliver training to CPP members about experiences of care and wide ranging approaches are discussed to improve experiences.
- Two meetings take place a year with John Hewitt, Durham County Council's Chief Executive, regarding Corporate Parenting responsibilities.
- CPP members undertake the care leavers challenge.
- CPP members invited to different CICC meeting to discuss different topics/ themes and corporate responsibilities.

What we think makes a good Corporate Parenting Panel Member/Board. We want you to:

- **Be Ambitious** ~ Wanting the very best for children and young people with caring responsibilities.
- **Listen** ~ Meet with children and young people to hear their voices, ideas and concerns and then take action.
- **Be Bold** - We think the panel should be a 'force to reckon with' throughout DCC.
- **Advocate and Uphold** ~ corporate responsibilities across the Council in meetings and other committees by asking questions & critiquing services.
- **Connect** with the care community within local communities, challenging discrimination, promoting and increasing opportunities locally for children and young people.
- **Learn** about practices and support offered by DCC teams by listening to foster carers and teams so CPP are better informed.
- **Celebrate** the care community by supporting events and considering neighborhood budgets and the benefits to the care community.



Working with CICC and CPP – ‘Moving Forward’

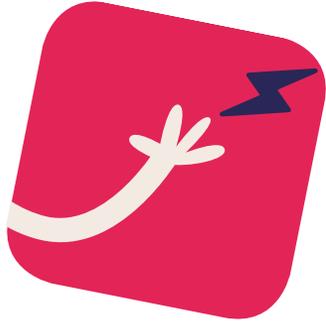
- Meet with CICC representatives - discuss and plan CICC /CPP joint first meeting - August 2021
- Hold joint first CICC /CPP meeting - October half term 2021
- CPP members to provide feedback to CICC regarding actions from October meeting - December 2021
- Review and undertake care leavers challenge with CPP members - February 2022
- CICC members facilitate annual training and capacity session to CICC members - March 2022
- Meeting with CICC representative to discuss and plan a second joint meeting - April 2022
- CPP members provide feedback to CICC regarding actions from October meeting - June 2022
- Review CICC and CPP working together and benefits - June 2022





Any questions

?

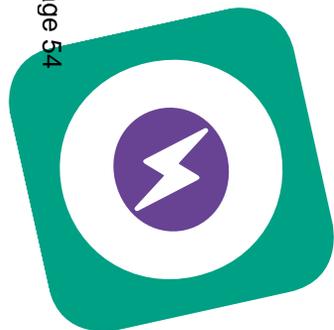


Mind Of My Own

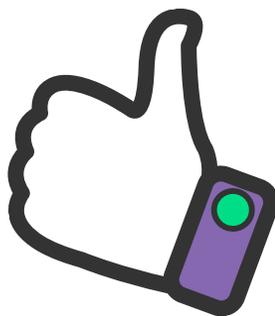


Every child is a different kind of flower, and together make this world a beautiful garden.





Mind Of My Own ONE



Mind Of My Own EXPRESS

Hi Harry

What would you like to do today?



My worker is visiting



My life



Get ready for a meeting



Share my good news



Prepare for a Child Protection Conference



Sort a problem



Planning for adulthood



Get ready for a foster care review



How did the meeting go?



My wellbeing

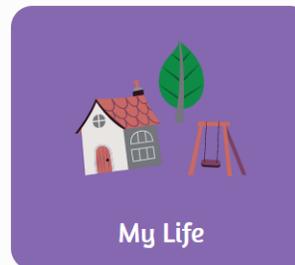
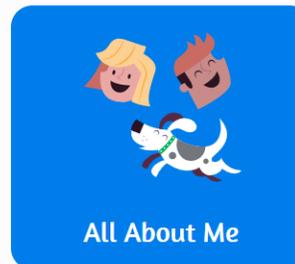


THE KNOWHOW

My rights

Trouble right now?
Call Childline: 0800 1111

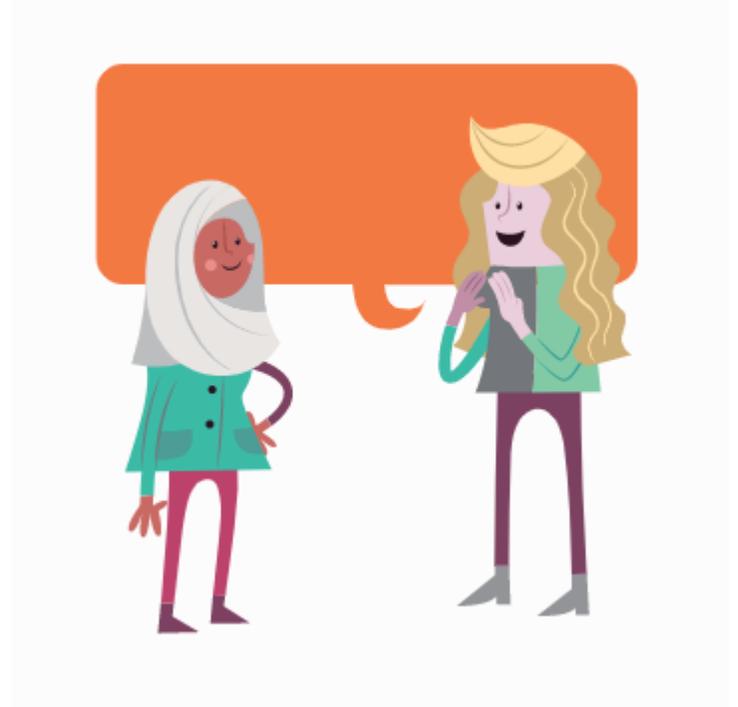
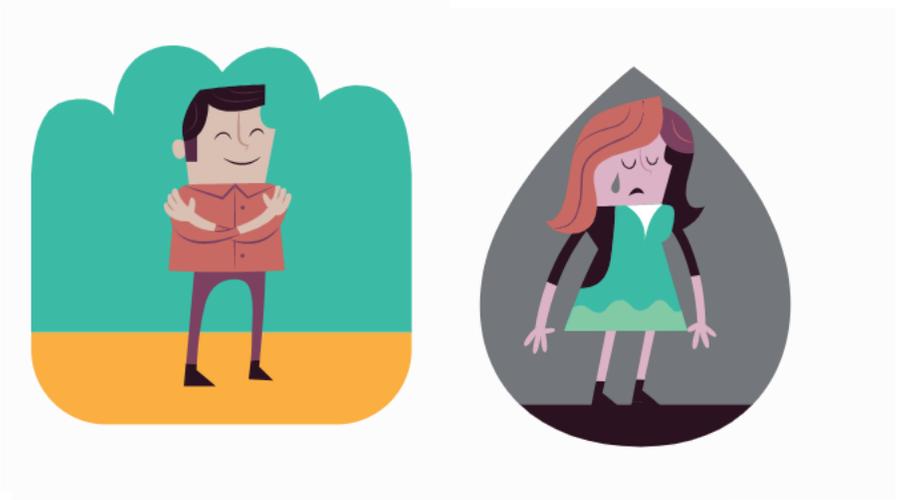
Start by choosing a topic





Children and young people across Durham have already begun to use Mind of My Own and this is what they have said about the app so far:

Easy to use
Think about emotions
Love the emojis
I can keep a journal
I can use it anytime
Positive Colourful
Share the good things
Talk about my feelings
Easy to talk to adults
Fun Private Independent
I can say what I want



“Takes away face to face awkwardness “

“Easiest way to communicate“

“Helps the worker to know what’s going on in your life“

“It so easy to use, I can’t thank the app enough“

“It’s so clear for workers“



William's experience of using Mind of My Own:

“Helps you talk about your feelings and emotions”



“When I’m nervous or sad I can tell the app how I feel”

“You can use it anytime you want”



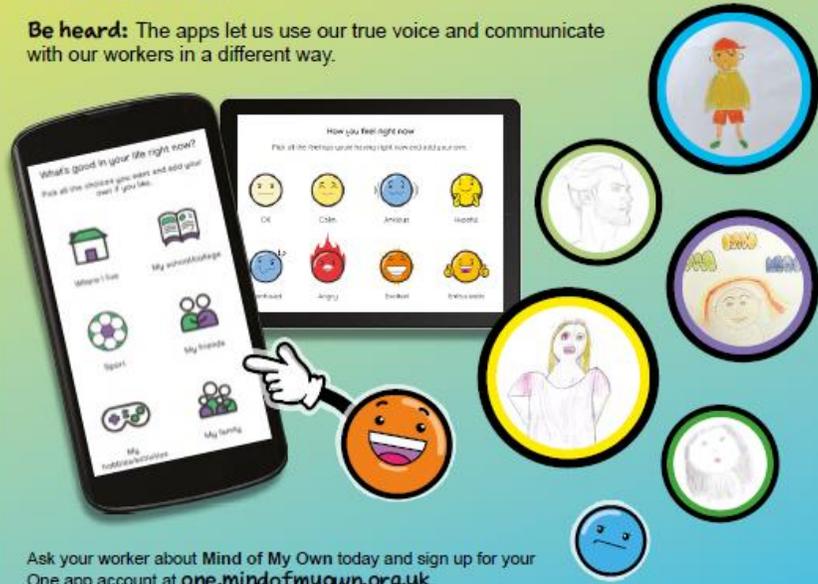
My Opinions Matter

“Mind of my Own apps can help you say what you want to say and help you talk to your workers before, during and after meetings.”

Mind of My Own can be used by us all, it's so easy, you can share it with workers who support you but only if and when you want to.

Take control: We love that the app is safe, private and gives us the chance to say how we feel in our own time.

Be heard: The apps let us use our true voice and communicate with our workers in a different way.



Ask your worker about **Mind of My Own** today and sign up for your One app account at one.mindofmyown.org.uk

For more help and support around **Mind of My Own** please contact your worker or email your questions to CSCParticipationandEngagement@durham.gov.uk



This leaflet was created with Nat, William, Shannon, Will, Lesley, Caitlyn, Megan, John and Ella



9 Young Ambassadors in Durham won a Vox Con award for producing and delivering a launch event where they launched their young person leaflet to promote the apps and celebrated using Mind of My Own



A screenshot of a presentation slide from VoxCon 2021. The slide has a green background and lists award winners. At the top right, it says 'VoxCon 2021 17th - 21st May'. The main title is 'Most Creative Comms'. Below this, it lists: 'Aberdeen City - Virtual Webinar', 'Coventry - User Guides', 'Durham - Online event' (in yellow), 'Somerset - Video', and 'York - Young person leaflet'. On the right side, there is a vertical stack of four video thumbnails showing participants: Holli.Meadows, Hunter Jones, Elliot Gould, and Heath Crosby. The 'SHOUT' logo is visible on the thumbnails. At the bottom left, there is a partial view of the Durham University crest and the word 'ham'. At the bottom right, the text 'con2021 #Voi' is partially visible.



support@mindofmyown.org.uk
 www.mindofmyown.org.uk
 @MindOfMyOwnApp

46
 YOUNG PEOPLES
 ACCOUNTS

**Worker who used
 their account the most**

Hannah Topping



84 statements sent: 35
were sent through young
people's accounts and 49
through worker accounts

**WORKER
 ACCOUNTS**
370



What young people are telling us....



**The TOP 3 things that are
 good in their lives are:**

- Family
- Friends
- Where they live



**Things they feel are not
 so good in their lives are:**

- Relationships
- Money
- Work



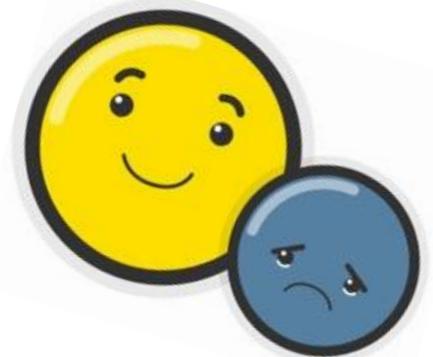
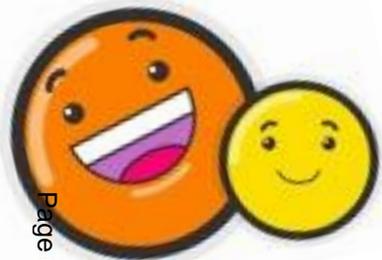
**Top 3 things young people
 are telling us about:**

- Their Wellbeing
- Their life
- Good news in their life



**90 % of young people said
 they felt positive about
 where they live**

67%
**of young people said they
 were feeling positive!**



- MOMO now accessible to all children and young people across Durham's Children's Social Care
- Relaunching promotional materials for all children and young people through information packs and videos
- Young people who have volunteered to become Young ambassadors for Mind of My Own will be further linking in with MOMO staff champions in sub groups
- Mind of My Own being a regular agenda item in CICC and young person meetings
- Regular promotion via Newsletters, Twitter presence, DCC webpages and MOMO users of the month



Overview of Children and Young People's services

Helen Fergusson
Head of Children's Social Care



Children and Young People's Services

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

Jim Murray

Head of Education and Skills

- Professional Support and development
- Performance and Standards
- Progression and Learning

Martyn Stenton

Head of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children

- Aycliffe Secure Services
- Youth Justice Services
- SEND
- Specialist Inclusion Support
- One Point, and Think Family Service

Helen Fergusson

Head of Children's Social Care

- Children Looked After and Permanence
- Children Looked After Resources
- Families First
- First Contact
- Specialist Countywide Services
- Safeguarding and Professional Practice

Helen Fergusson, Head of Children's Social Care

<p>Jodie Henderson</p> <p>Children Looked After and Permanence</p>	<p>Claire Morris</p> <p>Children Looked After Resources</p>	<p>Jane Ayres / Jac Tyler / Bernadette Toomey</p> <p>Families First</p>	<p>Lisa Wood</p> <p>First Contact & Specialist Countywide Services</p>	<p>Chris Ring</p> <p>Safeguarding and Professional Practice</p>
<p>CLA Teams</p> <p>Young Peoples Services</p> <p>Adoption Team</p>	<p>Fostering Teams</p> <p>Residential Children's Homes</p> <p>Kinship Care Support Team</p> <p>Placement Team</p> <p>Reg 44 visits</p>	<p>Families First Teams</p> <p>Children with Disabilities Teams (0-18 years)</p>	<p>First Contact</p> <p>MASH</p> <p>Family Time</p> <p>Full Circle therapeutic services</p> <p>Supporting Solutions</p> <p>Edge of Care</p>	<p>Service improvement</p> <p>Practice lead</p> <p>Social Work Academy</p> <p>IRO Service</p> <p>LADO Service</p>



**Aycliffe Secure
Centre (ASC)**
Accommodation for up
to 38 young people

- Five houses set within a large complex.

Facilities include:

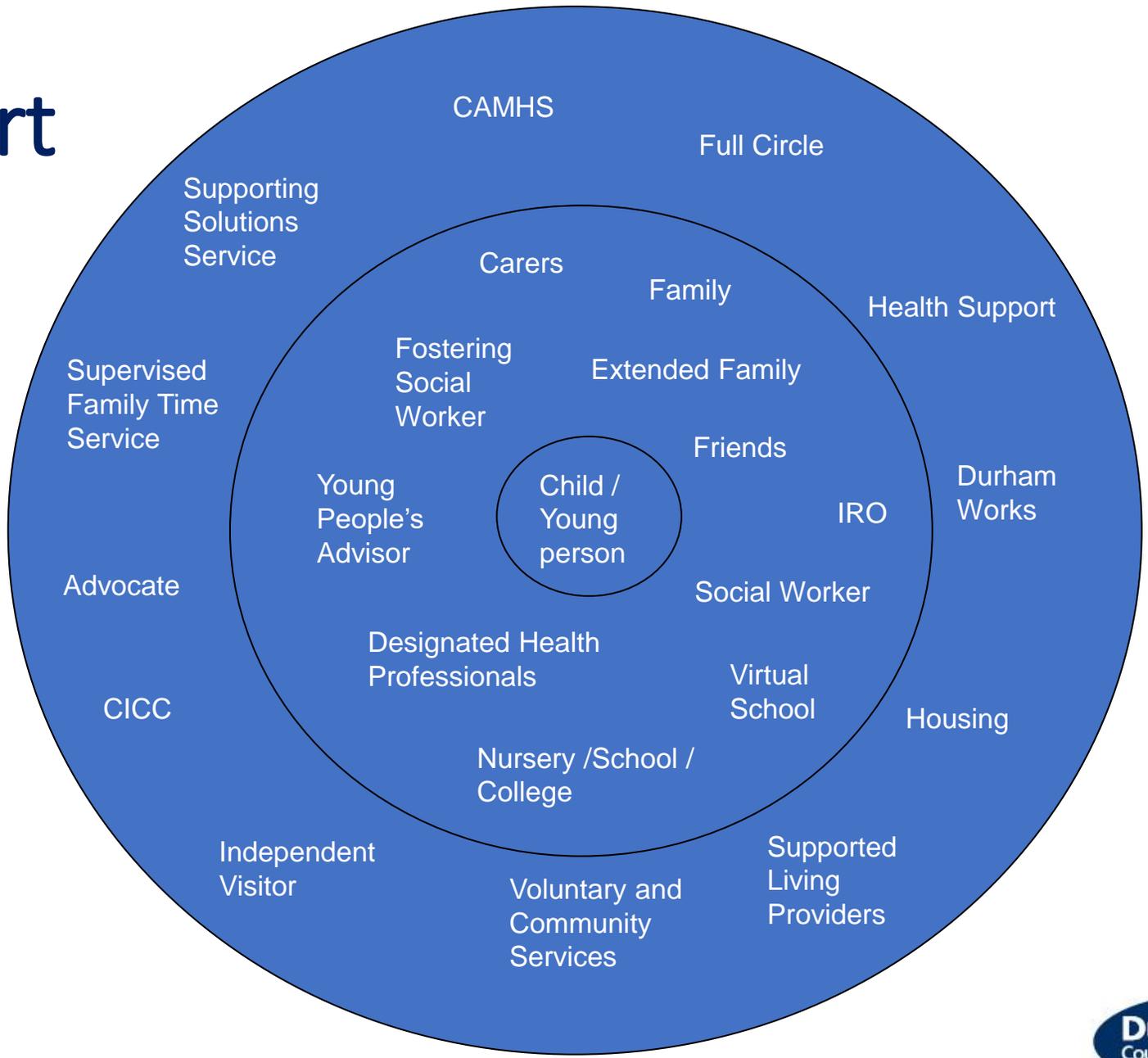
- School
- Workshops
- Training kitchen
- Gym, fitness room & swimming pool
- All weather sports pitch & courtyards for games / activities



- Transitions house in development to support young people to integrate back into the community after leaving ASC
- ASC employs a multi-disciplinary team of approx. 160 staff
- Additional services at ASC include:
 - Mental health & physical health support
 - Speech and language therapy
 - Substance misuse interventions



Circle of Support



Corporate Parenting Panel

2 July 2021

Useful Resources



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

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of the report is to present members of the Corporate Parenting Panel with useful resources for reference in their role as corporate parents.

Executive summary

- 2 There are a number of resources which have previously been presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel, that are being re circulated for reference.

Recommendation

- 3 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are requested to note the resources as detailed in the report.

Background

- 4 Following the County Council elections on Thursday 6 May 2021, there will be changes to the make up of the Corporate Parenting Panel membership moving forward.
- 5 To ensure that useful resources which have previously been shared with the Corporate Parenting Panel are not lost, it was agreed that these would be shared as a reference point for all elected members to have sight of.
- 6 By sharing these documents, elected members will have a better understanding of their role and responsibilities, which will support them to ensure we strive to achieve the best possible outcomes for the children and young people in our care.

Corporate Parenting Strategy 2020-2022

- 7 The Corporate Parenting Strategy for Children and Young People aged 0-25 years is usually produced on an annual basis to reflect on the achievements over the previous year, and to set out ambition for our Children Looked After and Care Leavers, and key priorities for the year ahead. Due to the global Coronavirus pandemic a decision was taken for the strategy to cover 2020-2022 to incorporate the impact of Covid-19 on service delivery and to reflect the demands on staff due to the pandemic response.
- 8 As well as responding to the pandemic, a huge amount of work continued within the service which is reflected within the strategy, both in terms of achievements and the plans and priorities moving forward.
- 9 The Corporate Parenting Strategy outlines the statutory obligations and collective responsibilities within County Durham in regard to children and young people who are in the care of the Local Authority.
- 10 The Corporate Parenting Strategy 2020-22 provides information on:
 - (a) An introduction to Corporate Parenting
 - (b) Durham County Council's Position Statement
 - (c) Our 'Promise' to Children and Young People
 - (d) Role of the Corporate Parenting Panel
 - (e) Children and Social Work Act Corporate Parenting Principles
 - (f) Corporate Parenting Panel Work Programme

- (g) Sources of information to the Corporate Parenting Panel
 - (h) Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report
 - (i) The strategy then goes on to provide achievements in 2019-20 and priorities for 2020-22 for the following eight themes:
 - (i) Multi agency partnership work and integrated governance
 - (ii) Enabling children and young people to remain at home with their families, where it is safe to do so
 - (iii) Sufficiency of placements and placement stability
 - (iv) Early permanence
 - (v) Local Offer for care leavers
 - (vi) Health and wellbeing of our children and young people
 - (vii) Employment, Education and Training opportunities
 - (viii) Engagement with children and young people
- 11 The Children Looked After Strategic Partnership is a multi-agency operational group ensuring delivery against the priorities outlined in the Corporate Parenting Strategy.
- 12 A copy of the Corporate Parenting Strategy is attached as Appendix 2 of the report.

Local Government Association (LGA) Resource Packs

- 13 Every Councillor has a role to play in protecting the children and young people who are in our care. The LGA have produced a range of resource packs which aim to help Councillors fulfil their role as effectively as possible.
- 14 The packs are a valuable resource to help Councillors embed the corporate parenting principles in their work and do what they can to support children and young people to live meaningful and fulfilling lives.
- 15 The Corporate Parenting resource packs contains:
- (a) An introduction to Corporate Parenting
 - (b) Updates to legislation and practice
 - (c) Key lines of enquiry for Councillors

- (d) Local Case Studies
 - (e) Key resources and further reading
 - (f) Useful terms
- 16 The Corporate Parenting resource pack can be found at <https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/corporate-parenting-resource-pack>.

This is the overarching resource, with the following supplementary resource packs available:

- (a) Permanency
<https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/permanency-resource-pack>
- (b) Support for Care Leavers
<https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/support-care-leavers>
- (c) Youth Justice
<https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/youth-justice-resource-pack>

Conclusion

- 17 A range of work is taking place across County Durham to improve outcomes for our Children Looked After and Care Leavers, and plans are in place to continue to make improvements. It is important the new members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are sighted on these.
- 18 Similarly, it is important that valuable resources are shared with new members of the Corporate Parenting Panel to support them in their role as corporate parents, to ensure the best possible outcomes are achieved for our children and young people.

Author

Jayne Watson jayne.watson@durham.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The Corporate Parenting Panel's role is to lead on ensuring the corporate parenting responsibilities of the Council are being met in line with the duties under the Children Act 1989.

Section 22 of the Children Act 1989 sets out the general duty of the local authority in relation to children looked after by them, to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of these children, ensuring effective, individualised support and access to services.

Finance

Financial implications are noted and considered within the service.

Consultation

No implications

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

No implications

Climate Change

No implications

Human Rights

No implications

Crime and Disorder

No implications

Staffing

Staffing implications are noted and considered within the service.

Accommodation

Accommodation implications are noted and considered within the service.

Risk

No implications

Procurement

No implications

Appendix 2: Corporate Parenting Strategy for Children and Young People aged 0-25 years, 2020-22

Attached as a separate document.

Corporate Parenting Strategy for Children and Young People aged 0–25 years

2020-22

1 INTRODUCTION - CORPORATE PARENTING

Looking after and protecting children and young people from harm is one of the most important jobs that a Local Authority can do. Where a child cannot remain safely at home for whatever reason and comes into the care of the Local Authority the council becomes the 'corporate parent' for that child. They are also the corporate parent for any young person who is under 25, who 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, in providing the best possible care and safeguarding support for the children and young people who are looked after by the council for the purpose of this strategy document. The associated responsibility and any reference to 'we' refers to all multi-agency partners. 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 elected member and employee have statutory responsibility to act for that child in the same way that a good parent would act for their own child.

This strategy sets out Durham County Councils (DCC) ambition for our Children Looked After and our key priorities for 2020/21.

Our commitment is to all children and young people living in foster care and residential care; placed for adoption; living in supported lodgings or at home under Placement with Parent Regulations as well as those living in secure establishments or in custody, and unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

2 DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL'S POSITION STATEMENT

Durham County Council is committed to be the best parent it can for our Children Looked After and Care Leavers and strives to ensure that we deliver support and care that is as good as every good parent.

Durham County Council is committed to ensuring our Children Looked After and Care Leavers have the best opportunities available to them to achieve their full potential and that these are at least as good as the opportunities available for all other children. It is recognised 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. Durham County Council are committed to ensuring that services are designed with and for Children Looked After and Care Leavers to meet their needs.

We want all of our Children Looked After to live in loving, stable and safe homes in a place that they can 'call home'. We want the people who are caring for them to be fun, loving, skilled, enthusiastic, ambitious and to fight their corner every step of the way. We want our children to form good, trusting, nurturing relationships with their carers and have positive experiences.

We want our children to live in stable placements, only moving when it is in their best interests or when they have chosen to do so.

Durham County Council is ambitious for our children and wants to encourage them to dream big and fulfil their potential. We 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, support into higher education and into university for those who aspire to do so.

We want our children to be well, healthy and have good emotional and mental health. We want to celebrate their achievements, no matter what these are, so that they can be proud of themselves and know that we are proud of them too. We want them to have fun and be able to develop their own interests and hobbies so that they can develop in confidence and establish friendships and make memories that they can fondly look back on in later years.

Across Durham County Council, we 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 welcome their feedback and will use this to challenge the way we do things, and to make changes based on their views.

We want our care leavers to be well prepared for adulthood and want to ensure they feel part of an extended family who will be there for them if they are needed. We want our young people to be able to make mistakes and know that they will be supported to pick up the pieces if things don't go to plan. This is part of learning and developing, and an important part of growing up and it is really important that there is someone there to offer help, support and guidance at these times.

We want our young people to be able to move into their own homes when they are ready, and to feel safe and supported. This can be a big a challenge for any young person and we know that young people who leave care, often do so earlier than their peers.

We also want our young people to have the knowledge, skills and confidence to be able to independently manage their own health and wellbeing to ensure they are living the best life they can.

3 YOUNG PEOPLE'S PROMISE

We have a 'promise' that has been developed with children and young people who are in the care of Durham County Council to show our commitment to providing the best care we can. Our 'promise' outlines what young people have said they want from their social workers, foster carers and the other services we provide, to support them, to help them achieve and succeed and to ensure we listen to their views and their voice throughout the time we look after them.

Printed copies were distributed to DCC teams and offices that work with children Looked After, and framed copies are displayed in public view outside the offices of our Chief Executive, Director of Children and Young People's Services and Heads of Service within Children and Young People's Services.

We have asked those who work with our Children Looked After to keep the promise and stick to these principles in all aspects of their work. We promise to:

- Treat you with respect and to remember that everyone is different
- Help find best home we can for you. It will be where you feel safe, cared about and treated well
- Help you stay in touch with family and friends if it is ok to do so
- Listen carefully to you and try to act on what you say
- Make sure that your social worker will get to know you well
- Make sure your social worker will keep in touch with you and listen to what you say
- Really listen to things you would like to change about being looked after
- Be honest and share any information or changes with you
- Involve you in any decisions, plans or changes that affect you or your future
- Give you any help or support that you need
- Help you to be the best that you can at school, college, training and work
- Give you help and support when needed to move from care to adult life
- Work together and support you during every change in your life e.g. moving placement or leaving care.

Young people from the Children in Care Council (CICC) regularly challenge us on any areas where they do not feel we are keeping our promise, and we encourage them to continue to hold us to account.

4 ROLE OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

The Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) is made up of 21 elected members including the Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People's Services and the Chair of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee as well as senior officers from within the council. In addition, there are co-opted members on the panel including representatives from local schools and health services as well as young people from the Children in Care Council.

The Corporate Parenting Panel is responsible for the following five functions as set out in the Council's constitution:

Function One: Ensure that the Council acts as a good corporate parent to children and young people in care and care leavers including:

- Children and young people in residential care
- Children and young people in foster care
- Children and young people placed for adoption
- Children and young people placed at home under care planning, placement and case review regulations
- Young people who are living in supported lodgings
- Young people in secure services
- Young people in custody.

Responsibilities:

- Take an overview of the Councils and partner agencies responsibilities toward children and young people in care and care leavers
- Monitor performance of services for children for whom we are corporate parents, including care leavers, receipt of information on regulation 44 visit and inspections, referring any systemic issues to Cabinet and or Scrutiny as required
- Maintain a strategic overview of all developments, plans, policies and strategies for children whom the Council is a corporate parent and make appropriate recommendations for action
- Ensure all members of the Council are regularly updated on issues affecting children for whom they are the corporate parent including care leavers through an annual report to Council, Cabinet and Scrutiny
- Receive an overview of Regulation 44 visits and inspections of private children's homes within the County Durham area
- Receive an update on independent residential homes within County Durham and their Ofsted inspection reports outcomes
- Agree an annual work programme based on corporate parenting strategy and priorities.

Function Two: Engage and listen to the views of children, young people and their carers for whom the Council is the parent.

Responsibilities:

- Provide a forum for children and young people in care and care leavers to participate and influence policy and have an opportunity to talk about their experiences of the services they have received
- Ensure that positive experiences are maintained, lessons are learnt, and changes made in areas that require improvement
- Meet with children for whom the council is corporate parent and their carers on a regular basis and celebrate their achievements
- Participation in Regulation 44 visits quarterly allows the Panel to improve planning and understanding of care in residential homes
- Ensure that leisure, cultural, further education and employment opportunities are offered and taken up by our Children Looked After and care leavers.

Function Three: Work in partnership with other statutory agencies to drive forward improvements in care.

Responsibilities:

- Examine ways that the Council as a whole and partner agencies can improve life chances of children in care and care leavers
- Ensure there is good joined up working with partner agencies
- Develop links with the Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership including a picture of Serious Case Reviews of Children Looked After.

Function Four: Act as the governing body for the Virtual School for Children Looked After and young people.

Responsibilities:

- Maintain an overview and provide challenge of governance arrangements for the virtual school
- To monitor and bring challenge to ensure Children Looked After's educational attainment and performance is optimised.
- To encourage and support each looked after child to achieve optimum educational outcomes at each stage of their schooling.

Function Five: Act as the governing body for Aycliffe Secure Services, monitoring and ensuring the quality of secure accommodation.

Responsibilities:

- Maintain an overview and provide challenge of governance arrangements for Aycliffe Secure Services
- Support and bring challenge to achieve the best outcomes for Children Looked After who are in secure services
- Agree the themes and performance, on an annual basis that enhance corporate parenting of Children Looked After in secure services.

5 CHILDREN AND SOCIAL WORK ACT

Section one of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires local authorities to have regard to the following seven corporate parenting principles when discharging their functions in relation to Children Looked After and care leavers:

- To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people
- To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
- To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
- To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
- To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people
- For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work
- To prepare children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

6 CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL WORK PROGRAMME

The Corporate Parenting Panel sets its work programme around key lines of enquiry as outlined in the Local Government Association (LGA) resource packs (Corporate Parenting; Permanence; Support for Care Leavers; Youth Justice), in relation to outcomes for Children Looked After and Care Leavers which require oversight and scrutiny, these include:

- Understanding the characteristics of our cohort of young people including age and length of time in care; where children are placed; numbers of children in different types of provision; those waiting for a permanent placement or match to a prospective adopter, those with additional health or developmental needs
- Understanding the role of key partners in supporting our young people to achieve good outcomes and providing challenge where this is needed
- Exploring how we demonstrate to children in our care that we have high aspirations for them
- Understanding how well we provide stable environments for our children.
- Ensuring that the partnership is looking after the health and wellbeing of our children
- Understanding how many children are placed out of county and the reasons for this, and ensuring there is sufficient placement provision within the local authority
- Ensuring that we support our foster carers well
- Examining the quality of outcomes for our care leavers against a range of measures
- Understanding how well we develop and commission new services to meet the needs of our children
- Ensuring that children and young people have an opportunity to express their views and ensuring that we know that they have been acted upon.

7 SOURCES OF INFORMATION TO THE CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

There are numerous sources of information provided to the Corporate Parenting Panel, which informs the work of the Panel, and the Work Programme. These include, but are not limited to the following:

- Monthly Corporate Parenting Panel meetings, where members receive regular reports and updates from a range of sources.
Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, meetings were cancelled from March 2020. In their place, we have developed monthly briefing notes which are circulated to members of the CPP to ensure they receive assurance around the wellbeing of our Children Looked After and Care Leavers during the pandemic and receive regular updates on how young people are being supported in response to the ever changing situation.
- The Children in Care Council (CICC) have a standing item on each Corporate Parenting Panel meeting agenda, where they provide feedback from CICC meetings.
Due to the CPP meetings being cancelled from March 2020, we have implemented monthly CICC meetings, which are hosted virtually through Microsoft Teams, enabling young people to continue to have regular communications with the chair and vice chair of the CPP and senior leads from within CYPS during the pandemic.
- The CICC usually host two meetings per year, where they set the agenda. Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel and senior officers within the service area are invited to attend, and feedback is shared through the Corporate Parenting Panel meetings and actions taken as appropriate. Due to the pandemic, these have been replaced by the monthly CICC meetings, however we hope to re-establish these meetings as soon as we are able to do so as CPP elected members value the direct interaction with children and young people.
- Care Leavers have a separate forum and feed their views into a panel either by attending personally or through their representative
- Feedback from foster carers and adoptive families is shared with the Corporate Parenting Panel
- A number of annual reports are presented to the CPP, including:
 - Independent Reviewing Officer in respect of Children Looked After
 - Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership, including Serious Case Reviews
 - Fostering Service
 - Adoption Service
 - Care Leavers
 - Sufficiency Strategy
 - Virtual School
 - Corporate Parenting Panel

- The Corporate Parenting Panel receives regular updates from the Corporate Parenting Panel subgroups, which has been incorporated into the monthly briefings during the pandemic:
 - Virtual School
 - Aycliffe Secure Centre
- Regular Performance Reports are presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel in respect of the following:
 - Placement stability
 - Health of Children Looked After and timeliness of health and dental assessments
 - Education outcomes
 - Outcomes for care leavers including the proportion in education, employment and training and appropriate accommodation
 - Children placed out of Durham or in external provision
 - Children who are missing from care
 - Unaccompanied asylum seeking children
 - Children awaiting adoption or permanence.

During the pandemic, this information has been captured in the monthly briefing note.

8 CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL ANNUAL REPORT

The Corporate Parenting Panel Terms of Reference which form part of Durham County Council's Constitution, make specific reference that the Corporate Parenting Panel will prepare and provide an Annual Report that will be shared with Cabinet, Council and Overview and Scrutiny.

To ensure the voice of the child is reflected in the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel, it was agreed that young people from the Children in Care Council, supported by officers from Durham County Council Partnerships team, would co-produce the Corporate Parenting Panel's Annual Report.

For the 2017-18 Annual Report, the young people worked on the design, layout, content and language of the Annual Report to ensure it was easy to read and understand. Moving forward, a decision was made to use DCC Design and Print Team to align the Annual Report with other strategic documents. This was implemented for the 2018-19 Annual Report, and young people worked with us to approve a template to be used for future versions, ensuring the corporate design retained enough of the young people's original design to make it appealing to young people and easy for them to read and understand.

The Annual Reports are published on the Durham County Council website, and hosted on the Investing in Children website, and the Children in Care Council website.

We held one meeting with young people in March 2020 to get their comments and ideas on what the 2020-21 Annual Report should include. Approximately 25 young people attended this session, however due to Covid 19 restrictions, which were implemented later that month, the rest of the consultation was undertaken virtually, which has proven to be really successful.

The Annual Report includes information on:

- Message from chair
- Message from Co-opted CICC members
- What a Corporate Parent is
- Why and where young people are in care
- The role and responsibilities of the Corporate Parenting Panel
- The Corporate Parenting Panel's Terms of Reference
- Key performance data
- Achievements
- Care Leavers Challenge
- Children in Care Council
- Update against 2019-20 priorities 'You Said – We Did'
- Virtual School subgroup update
- Aycliffe Secure Centre subgroup update
- The Corporate Parenting Panel's priorities for 2020-21.

9 ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2019-20 AND PRIORITIES FOR 2020-22

Priority 1

Ensure good multi-agency partnership work and integrated governance to meet the needs of our Children Looked After and Care Leavers.

We need to work closely with all partner agencies to ensure there is high quality multi-agency working to meet the wide range of needs of our Children Looked After and Care Leavers.

Achievements in 2019-20

The Looked After Strategic Partnership group continues to meet to ensure that there is a joined up approach to our multi agency work with children and care leavers.

There is a proactive multi agency steering group leading the work on developing services and support for care leavers.

In addition, the Multi-Agency Collaborative Care Meeting was established in March 2019. The membership of the group comprises of a range of organisations who can help to identify children and young people who are at risk of being admitted into hospital due to their mental health needs as well as tracking and monitoring care arrangements for young people once admitted. The group are responsible in ensuring that the appropriate care and treatment can be identified to meet the needs of children and young people post discharge from hospital.

The group are also responsible for the Dynamic Risk Register (DRR). In Durham we have expanded the criteria for the DRR to include all of those Children and Young People at risk of in-patient admission regardless of diagnosis.

The group has recently reviewed its membership and has agreed that the social worker with care/aftercare planning responsibility should attend the meeting virtually to give an overview of progress and next step planning. This will also give the social worker an opportunity to hear and receive advice from the specialist mental health providers and commissioners who are core attendees.

In recent months, during the Covid pandemic, the group has observed a significant rise in the number of children and young people admitted into hospital for specialist treatment who were unknown to services previously. In response to this the group has identified that Care Education and Treatment Review (CETR)'s could and should be considered for children and young people earlier, and that everyone working in children's social care need to understand what a CETR is, why and when they are used to prevent hospital admissions and so children and young people can receive treatment to meet their needs in the community close to where they live.

What further action will we take and when?

What	When
CETR Awareness Training delivered across children's services	March 2021
Re-launch of the Multi-agency Collaborative Care Group (MACC)	October 2020
Work in partnership with a range of mental health providers and commissioners to create an intensive support crisis offer to young people and their families to prevent admission into specialist mental health provision.	February 2021

Priority 2

We will develop services which are focused on providing high quality support to enable children and young people to remain at home with their families where it is safe to do so.

Achievements in 2019-20

We continue to implement the Signs of Safety (SOS) practice framework. The Signs of Safety Framework puts the child(ren) and their naturally connected networks of support at the centre of decision making and planning so that more children can remain safe and well in the care of their families. We have seen examples over the last year where this approach has been used and children have been safely returned to the care of a family member. We currently have a focus on holding family network meetings with families as early as possible in their journey through services. The Supporting Solutions Service have been supporting this work.

The Supporting Solutions Service (SSS) has been in operation for 24 months offering crisis interventions for young people aged between 11 and 17 years, classed as being on the Edge of Care (EOC). The service also manages a crisis bed for young people who need emergency out of hours accommodation for one night.

Supporting Solutions have successfully engaged with 169 young people on the edge of care between April 2019 and March 2020.

The SSS is also responsible for Family Group Conferences (FGC), the aim which is to find extended family and ensure the family are supported to work together to create their own solutions and create sustainable safety plan to the local authority of family support to prevent a child becoming looked after.

Ofsted Feedback – Inspection of Durham’s Children’s Social Care Services - September 2019: “The work of the supporting solutions service (edge of care) is strong and effective. Good use is made of family group conferences to develop networks of support or to identify suitable alternative care arrangements for children who cannot continue to remain at home safely.”

Development Activity

Family Group Conference video for young people – SSS have now been awarded ongoing ‘Investing in Children’ status as an outcome of the project completed with young people. The aim of this was to create a video animation that helped to describe to Children and families the role of a FGC through the eyes of a young person. This has been a huge success and we now have an excellent engagement tool designed and created by young people for young people. This has really helped other professionals to have a better understanding of the FGC process and ethos.

Sessional Support - The service has a number of staff from across Children’s services who offer sessional intervention to young people over weekend periods if this is required as part of a crisis support package.

Consultation Clinics - The Therapeutic Social Worker provides a number of sessions per week for staff to discuss individual young people and their families/carers who require a service from Full Circle. This also includes fast track referrals into CAMHS. The Full Circle Social Worker is also able to work alongside the EOC Worker in some instances to deliver therapeutic interventions where appropriate.

Voluntary and Community Sector – Since January 2020, a member of the VCS has sat within SSS one day per week. This arrangement has strengthened the links between SSS and the VCS, team members have reacted positively to this change and have expressed how beneficial it has been. This has also helped to build stronger links between the families we work with and the resources they have in their local communities to empower families to access more sustainable support moving forward.

What further action will we take and when?

What	When
Extend the service criteria to support children from 8yrs old	January 2021
Family Group Conference Workers to be link workers into safeguarding teams to help social workers expand skills in delivering family network meetings	September 2020
Signs of Safety implementation to work towards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Family Network Meetings being held with all families within 15 days of a new referral - The identified network will be involved in creating and reviewing the plan for the child / young person - Where there are plans for a child / young person to return home, then the identified family network will be involved in safety planning and the trajectory tool will be used to support this 	January 2021 January 2021 March 2021

Priority 3

Sufficiency of Placements and Placement Stability is important for our children and young people. We want to ensure there are enough high-quality placements to meet their diverse needs and to ensure that young people have a choice where this is appropriate.

Placement Sufficiency

We have reviewed the remit and membership of the Placement and Resource Panel (PRP) to ensure all young people who live in foster care (in-house or with an Independent Fostering Family), residential care (in house or external) and young people who live in supported living arrangements have their package of care or support agreed at panel and reviewed by PRP. This ensures we are reviewing whether their home continues to meet their need and that a tighter and more robust process for agreeing and reviewing the financial arrangements and quality of provision is in place. This has included a review of all young people who are placed out of area or at a distance where we can explore if it is right for them to return to Durham and if so, that this happens in a timely manner in line with their needs. Equally we have reviewed all arrangements where there is a bed block in place, ensuring support is given, progress is made, and financial review of these arrangements is undertaken.

The Sufficiency Strategy was reviewed considering both the current demands on the market due to The Covid pandemic, and in line with the needs of Durham County Council. This strategy will continue to be under review as we move through 2021. A key focus within the strategy is to ensure we have enough bespoke and solo homes in place to meet the needs of the children and young people, who due to the level of trauma and challenges in their lives, need homes who can care for and safeguard their individual needs.

Kinship Carers (friends and family carers)

We have taken the opportunity over the last year to review and strengthen our information, guidance and assessment tools, learning from feedback from the people who use our service and national best practice. This has helped carers understand the process, what is expected and by when.

We have worked hard in the last year to ensure our support offer to kinship carers has continued to be strengthened. This offer has seen the increased support and offer through Grand Parents Plus, who are an organisation specifically set up to support kinship carers with the challenges they face. Equally we have seen the increased support provided by Full Circle, our therapeutic team, who offer advice, guidance and training. The kinship team have continued to develop their sign posting offer which helps kinship carers know which service to access and how to access them based on their individual needs.

Residential Services

We have embarked on supporting a change in culture across the homes which has seen several changes come into place across the establishment. These changes have been underpinned by our child centred values. This drive has seen us share more widely the views of children and young people and ensure they are at the

forefront of shaping their home and future homes for other children and young people. This has seen children and young people take a more active role in reviewing and changing the things that matter most to them, for example pocket money and holiday allowances, Wi-Fi access and being an active member of the interview panels for new appointments to the service.

We have worked hard across our residential homes to ensure that we have the right infrastructure to support our ongoing development. This has included a review of our recording system which will see our paper records replaced with electronic files available through Liquidlogic, to bring us in line with the rest of the service. This work also includes the updating of our policies which underpin and guide the teams. Equally we are strengthening the training and development offer, ensuring training and development includes research, access to networks, development of the champion role, involvement in service and partnership activities and a bespoke programme designed and delivered specifically for registered managers on Regulation 45 reports.

We have designed and piloted two quality frameworks across the residential homes. One which looks at the qualitative information which feeds into the Annex A and Regulation 45 process which is outlined in the Children's Home Regulations 2015 and develops a greater understanding of what's happening and where it is recorded. The second tool is a reflective audit tool used to support analysis and case discussion which focuses on the qualitative information which improves thinking and practice as well as the quality of our records.

We have worked hard to ensure the move of one of our existing homes, to a new home, which ensures we continue to have a range of homes that are of high quality and in good repair. Equally we have purchased an additional home which will support three young people who require a higher level of support to ensure their safe care.

It's not withstanding that Covid has presented us with some challenges, however from this we have looked at opportunities to change and review the way we work as well as ensuring we continue to safeguard and care for our young people during these unprecedented times. We used the opportunity the Covid pandemic presented to support people to work across different homes and take advantage of moving on a more permanent basis to a new home by sharing skills and energising teams. We have also undertaken a recruitment campaign which has enabled us to succession plan some of our existing team members, recruit new people into the residential team and develop a pool of relief workers who are trained and supported to provide high quality and consistent care to our children and young people.

Unfortunately, the development of the Residential Edge of Care provision was halted whilst we responded to Covid, and to allow us to ensure we responded to the needs of young people who need to live in a children's home. This was particularly important as the private sector struggled to meet demand, particularly during this period. However, we are back on track with our search for a suitable property and the work already undertaken will not be lost. Equally our relationship with our colleagues in the supporting solutions team has grown from strength to strength, which ensures progress will be expedited throughout 2021.

Mainstream Fostering

We have worked hard in recent months to review the marketing offer ensuring that we look at recruitment and retention in tandem following a slow start to the year. We are steadily improving our understanding of the market position and how we can target campaigns and responses to get the best responses to our campaign. Equally, we have increased our focus on understanding how to maintain and support our current foster carers, particularly when many of us are reflecting on the future. We have seen more active targeted marketing which promotes our unique selling points, this was demonstrated in the Christmas Wonderland event and our radio campaigns.

We reviewed the feedback from children and young people and as a result the care experienced young people reviewed the pre induction training for foster carers which they deliver. The feedback from carers and young people is phenomenal. We have also strengthened the foster carer support group and young people's group, reviewing delivery and attendance. This has been positive and will continue to develop. Care experienced young people and foster carers continue to support recruitment, whether that be recruitment to the team or recruitment of new carers.

In preparation for April 2020 we reviewed the work across the service to ensure the fostering teams can focus on the right areas of work and that they can consolidate their work to get the most out of their roles. This resulted in formation of a designated connected carers team, two mainstream teams, a recruitment and retention team and placement team. We have also ensured that we have improved our recording system within Liquidlogic to ensure the teams have a robust and effect workspace and as we progress throughout the rest of 2020 we will continue to develop the performance dash boards and reports which enable us to better understand ourselves. We have had a huge push on ensuring a timely and effective response to family finding and have put in place more robust measures to support and track progress. Equally the introduction of performance reviews have meant we have been able to strengthen and quicken our response to foster carers when needed, provide more stability and consistency from named fostering social workers and improve the timeliness of the foster carer reviews which supports retention.

What further actions will we take and when?

What	When
<p>Sufficiency Strategy: Working alongside commissioning undertake a needs analysis to inform the range of accommodation options required to meet the needs of children looked after and care leavers</p> <p>Review existing accommodation options to identify gaps in relation to emerging need and develop proposed accommodation solutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing in-house/independent residential capacity - Developing access to a diverse range of appropriate accommodation for Care Leavers - Develop an appropriate community-based accommodation and care solution which meets the needs of children and young people stepping down from tier 4 mental health hospital provision 	December 2021
<p>Sufficiency Strategy: Continue to monitor the efficiency of placements through the Placement Resource Panel, ensuring providers continue to meet standards and agreed outcomes for children and young people.</p>	Weekly throughout 2020 - 2021
<p>Residential Care: Develop a new edge of care home within the Residential Service to support placement stability and to prevent children and young people from coming into care</p>	October 2021
<p>Fostering: Support growth in the number of in-house Foster Carers and review the existing marketing strategy to ensure a focus on recruitment and retention as well as targeted and general campaigns.</p> <p>Increase the number of foster carers joining Durham and reduce the number leaving.</p> <p>Review the support and opportunities to support the skills, knowledge and values of foster carers to understand, respond too and care for our young people.</p>	<p>January 2021</p> <p>March 2021</p> <p>March 2021</p>
<p>Recording and Performance: Continue to develop and embed Liquidlogic within the fostering service and develop dashboard and performance reports to track and monitor progress</p> <p>Support the development of a Liquidlogic workspace for the review of kinship assessments and develop dashboard and performance reports to track and monitor progress.</p>	<p>February 2021</p> <p>July 2021</p>

What	When
<p>The voice of children, young people and families: Review the learning from feedback and best practice to inform what support is available to kinship carers.</p>	Ongoing
<p>Ensure care experienced children and young people continue to inform and shape practice using collaborate approaches and opportunities such as training, interviewing and joint projects / reviews.</p>	Ongoing
<p>Expand the opportunities whereby care experienced children and young people share their views.</p>	Ongoing

Priority 4

Promoting Early Permanence is a key priority for us, we want to ensure that children are moved into their permanent placement or adoptive placement as quickly as possible once this has been agreed as the appropriate plan.

Achievements in 2019-20

Since the implementation of the Early Permanence Strategy in May 2018 which included an improved focus on 'fostering for adoption' whereby prospective adopters are also approved as foster carers to ensure that very young babies have the opportunity to be fostered by the people who want to adopt them, where it is appropriate. To date we have 4 babies (children between 0-4) under foster to adopt arrangements, since 2018 we had a further 7.

During 2019-20, 164 children were permanently matched into foster placements, which is an improvement on the previous year which was 155.

We have continued to increase the number of children and young people subject to a Special Guardianship Order and in receipt of financial support from the local authority, which means we have been able to secure stable long term permanent care arrangements for children within their families.

During 2019-20 the Adoption Team have worked hard to improve practice in all areas of their responsibilities. Processes and practices were reviewed and streamlined to increase efficiencies. A concerted effort to improve the timeliness of assessments of prospective adopters resulted in all assessments allocated from November 2020 being completed in the statutory timescale. This achievement increased the number of available in-house adoptive placements to 25 with a target of 31 for 2020-21.

The availability of in-house adoptive placements has positively impacted on the time for some children to be placed with their forever family, with 55 children adopted in 2019-20.

Work has continued regionally during this period to prepare for the launch of Adopt Coast to Coast, the Regional Adoption Agency, which is a partnership model for Durham, Cumbria and Together for Children/Sunderland. A shadow launch is planned for 1 February 2021.

The Pre-Birth model and ambition is to enable babies to remain with their parents, or at least within the birth family where it is safe to do so, or identify quickly that parents cannot meet their babies needs and ensure children achieve permanence without delay and numerous moves. The current criteria is that either parent has had a previous child permanently removed from their care through care proceedings.

A review of the Pre Birth Intervention Service (PBIS) was undertaken, this highlighted a great deal of positive and effective work being undertaken. However, it also highlighted the complexity of the work, a large proportion the team were working with parents who were resistant to the intensive 20-week pre-birth intervention programme and parents showed very little capacity of change. It was clear that the

intervention had deviated from the original intention and referrals were accepted whether meaningful consent was given by parents or not.

This led to a review of the criteria for the PBIS which focused on the most vulnerable groups of parents who would benefit from the intensive package of support on offer. Consideration has been given to care leavers, parents with a learning disability and parents who have had a previous child removed through care proceedings at least 12 months previous, where there are some noted positive changes of circumstances.

Following a successful regional 18 month pilot of the PAUSE project, Durham have commissioned their own PAUSE project from the licensed provider who would look to support 24 women across the county who have experienced repeat removals of children from their care. The Pause program works with mothers who have had 2 or more children removed permanently from their care, before they become pregnant again. The aim of the service is to help mothers address their own individual issues before they become pregnant, so that they stand a better chance of keeping their babies. This may be supporting them to access services to address their mental health issues, self-esteem, relationship issues, substance misuse issues, housing etc. It is anticipated PAUSE will 'go live' at the end of November 2020.

We monitor children with a plan of permanence with foster carers by understanding which children have a plan of permanence who are in a permanent placement awaiting a match and the number of children with a plan of permanence who are not in a permanent placement and who we are actively family finding for. We have reviewed the way in which we undertake family finding to ensure this is linked directly to the consultant social workers role. Whilst this work is in its early days, we have already seen an improvement.

To help us improve and reduce the time it takes to achieve permanence at the earliest opportunity we have embarked on a review of the performance data which we will then streamline to develop a cross service permanence tracker. This will tighten the focus, maintain grip and increase challenge

There are built in review points between the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) service and social work team to monitor the progress of the child/young person's plan. This is in addition to those stated within the IRO Handbook.

All staff across Children Social Care were invited to attend workshops on Early Permanence and Family Time in the spring of 2020. Since then further work to promote the family time service has continued which has been really positively received by children, young people, parents and carers.

What further action will we take and when?

What	When
Finalise the develop a service wide permanency dashboard and report which provides real time information which demonstrates progress and challenges drift.	February 2021
Continue to recruit prospective adopters and foster carers who can meet the needs of our children, particularly for brothers and sisters, children with complex needs and our older young people.	Ongoing
Review the Post Adoption Support offer, including streamlining the referral process and improving timeliness and consistency of response.	December 2020
Improvement the adoption workflow on LCS to aide service delivery and review.	January 2021
Support the adoption team and wider staff groups for the launch of Adopt Coast to Coast.	Ongoing
Review of the IRO Dispute Resolution Process to have a focus on improving outcomes for the child/young person.	October 2020
Implement the changes to the PBIS criteria	December 2020
PAUSE to go live	November 2020

Priority 5

Durham County Council and its partners will develop a 'local offer' for our care leavers and provide them with advice and support from a personal advisor until they are 25 years old.

Care Leavers need to have a range of appropriate accommodation options to meet their needs.

Achievements in 2019-20

- The Local Offer has been reviewed and work continues to be ongoing in order to develop services/support for care leavers. A meeting is planned in September 2020 with the Director of Children's Services and senior managers to look at broadening the offer across the council and with local community businesses.

There continues to be excellent working relationships between CYPS, Housing the Improving Progressions team, and human resources, to continuing developing The Local Offer with a range of suitable accommodation options for care leavers and extend the employment/further education opportunities. Work is also being undertaken to look at work experience on a wider scale within the council.

- Unfortunately, the EPIC awards have not taken place this year due to the COVID 19 pandemic, however achievements have been recognised on an individual basis.
- We currently have four Care Leavers in apprenticeship posts within the council, with a further three Care Leavers starting apprenticeships in September 2020.
- Work continues to develop further opportunities for Children Looked After and Care Leavers through the corporate apprenticeship approach and associated Organisational Development (OD)/Work Force Development (WFD) programmes e.g. work experience, traineeships.
- Close joint working continues with the CYPS Progression and Learning Team and the Looked After and Permanence Service to provide support to Children Looked After and Care Leavers to access the council's apprenticeships. All unemployed Children Looked After and Care Leavers have a Progression Advisor through the council's DurhamWorks programme.
- In addition to the support provided through DurhamWorks, Children Looked After and Care Leavers are supported through the recruitment process as follows:
 - guaranteed interview if essential criteria for the post is met;
 - revised qualification levels for apprenticeships, based on the minimum entry requirements for the apprenticeship standard subject to business requirements. This helps to remove qualification barriers for Children

- Looked After and Care Leavers to enable them to meet the essential criteria to be guaranteed an interview;
 - Where Children Looked After and Care Leavers are shortlisted, the Organisational Development (OD)/WFD team contact the Lead Officer prior to the interview to remind them of their corporate parenting responsibilities and to provide the highest level of support/opportunities in-line with these responsibilities.
- The teams are improving the quality of the pathway plans, ensuring a more consistent approach across the three teams, with all teams using the Signs of Safety practice model. Team managers are continuing to quality assure the plans, and this has also been reported back from the IROs. There is still room for further improvement and this work will be monitored closely by managers, IRO's and the Quality Improvement Service.
- Premises have been identified which will provide an opportunity for a drop-in centre to be developed. Refurbishment of the premises is expected to begin in December 2020.
- Joint work is being undertaken with Children and Young People's Services (CYPS), Housing Solutions and Commissioning to increase the supply of accommodation:
 - Housing Solutions and CYPS jointly fund supported accommodation provision for homeless young people, Children in Need and Care Leavers, delivered by Changing Lives for 16-21 year olds as part of Homeless Support Services Contract
 - The Newly formed County Durham Lettings Agency will provide further opportunities to source appropriate tenancy options for young people
 - Working with Housing Providers on New Start model to reduce bed blocking in Supported Accommodation and secure own tenancy.
 - A bid has been submitted by Housing Solutions to secure government funding to introduce a 'Housing First' model in Durham.
- A meeting has taken place with the Department for Education (DFE) to explore the possibility of us being part of a pilot to develop 'Staying Close'. Housing colleagues are looking to identify premises which are in the close locality of the residential home.
- Changing Lives have been successful in supporting young people into independent living from Hedley House, discussions are taking place to see if this can be developed further with outreach support workers supporting young people following the move.
- An accommodation and support framework for young people aged 16-18 with complex needs was commissioned in December 2019 and is now in place offering a range of solo occupancy provision across a range of providers. Market engagement was carried out as part of the commissioning exercise as referenced above. Accommodation options and gaps are evaluated on an ongoing basis and are considered in the sufficiency strategy for Children Looked After and Care Leavers.

What further action will we take and when?

What	When
Joint working continuing with Young People's Service (YPS) and housing to offer a wider range of suitable accommodation options for care leavers	Review April 2021
Joint working continuing with YPS Improving progress team, HR and the virtual school to extend opportunities for young people with employment, education and training through work experience, developing Teenagers to work and continuing to offer a wide range of apprenticeship opportunities	Review April 2021
Develop and review the Local Offer for care Leavers and broaden the offer across the council and local partnerships	Review April 2021
Joint working with commissioning to review and develop services to support care leavers	Review April 2021
Work with DFE, housing, residential and YPS to implement Staying Close	Review March 2021
Programme in place for Drop-in centre available for care leavers	April 2021
Continuous improvement of pathway plan assessments, with measurable outcomes	Review April 2021

Priority 6

We will work to ensure the right services are in place to meet the health and wellbeing needs of our children and young people

Achievements in 2019-20

- Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust (HDFT) have strengthened the Vulnerable Parent Pathway, and have introduced a single point of contact
- Within the safeguarding service specifications and Local Quality Requirements there are clear requirements for the Children Looked After nurse team with key outcomes relating to health assessments and health passports, supervision and training being reflected within the local quality requirements. In response, two dashboards have been developed for County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust (CDDFT) and Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV) to measure activity in regard to Children Looked After service delivery and improve our understanding of the Children Looked After cohort to inform and improve service delivery.
- The number of children seen by a paediatrician within 20 working days, if paperwork is received from the local authority within 7 working days, has shown an improvement. It is to be noted that some factors which may impact the assessments taking place cannot be controlled by either health or the local authority, for example young people leaving care before the assessment has been undertaken, parent/child refusing consent etc. However, these numbers are small and have limited impact on compliance.

Number of children offered IHA appointment within 20 working days of LAC start date, where paperwork was received from LA within 0-7 working days of coming into care.	78 (95%)	69 (100%)	57 (95%)	55 (100%)
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- The Designated Nurses successfully submitted a business case for additional resource into Durham, which includes a Designated Nurse for Children Looked After to give priority to children in care, and this post will commence in November 2020. One young person was an active panel member for this recruitment process. Furthermore, there will be an additional session for the Designated Doctor role which will support the strategic priorities as well as meeting the needs of children in care. As well as the Designated Doctor the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) also commission paediatric sessions to support the adoption medicals, initial health assessments and the panel requirements of both the adoption and fostering panels.
- A template has been developed to improve GP compliance and the quality of information being shared in health reviews for children. This will be embedded and audited during 2021.
- As part of the public health contract, 0-19 staff are commissioned to undertake review health assessments (6 monthly for under 5 and annual for over 5s) for those children in care within the boundaries of County Durham and Darlington, including those still in care at the point of leaving full time

education. The CDDFT Children Looked After nurse team will continue to request the member of staff undertake the assessment 3 months prior to the due date and will forward to the local authority upon completion. The Children Looked After nurses will monitor the quality and timeliness of review health assessments providing performance data to HDFT and CCGs on a quarterly basis. Furthermore, the new public health 0-25 contract that HDFT were successful in securing will consider the needs of care leavers. Further development will be part of the transformation process.

- During 2019/2020 The Looked After Health Needs subgroup continued to meet prior to the Covid 19 pandemic restrictions. This is a joint County Durham and Darlington partnership meeting with membership including health providers (CDDFT, HDFT), commissioners (Clinical Commissioning Group and Public Health), Education and the Local Authority with two Young People as substantive members of the group. The sub-group meets bi – monthly with the aim of improving operational processes and the quality of services for children in care. The group is a subgroup of the Durham Children Looked After Strategic Partnership and Darlington Multi-Agency Children Looked After (MALAC) to which it is accountable. The aim is to support the improvement of health outcomes for Children Looked After and governance arrangements across County Durham & Darlington.
- During Covid all children continued to be offered an initial health assessment (IHA) and review health assessment (RHA). Health agencies responded quickly to a new and uncertain situation ensuring the health needs of our young people were either met or at least followed up post lockdown. The Designated Nurses joined a daily National Network of Designated Health Professionals to understand the emerging picture for children in care during this pandemic, which included understanding the provision for care leavers and unaccompanied asylum seeking children as well as those in pre-adoptive placements. The challenge for health professionals going forward is to understand the impact of the pandemic on our children and their families, to understand what has worked well and what we need to adapt, and this must be completed jointly with children and young people.
- The Health Needs Assessment identified the following four priority areas, and work has taken place to implement the recommendations and actions plan:
 1. Mental health and emotional wellbeing
Currently half of all children in care meet the criteria for a possible mental health disorder, compared to one in ten children outside the care system. Pathways to access mental health services need to be robust and clear to all agencies. In response to this, a task and finish group was established in October 2019 to produce an outcomes audit to include mental health and the emotional well-being of children in care. Public Health worked closely with key partners to lead a review and improve the current mental health pathway for Children Looked After and Care Leavers. This was progressed via a workshop which reviewed the pathways and resources for addressing mental health and emotional wellbeing for children in care in County Durham including the KOOOTH programme of online support for

young people. Commissioned by TEWV 'KOOOTH' is a free, online counselling and emotional wellbeing platform which is available to young people aged 11-18 years across County Durham and Darlington. Public Health report on data and progression of the review for Children Looked After to the aforementioned children looked after groups in County Durham and Darlington.

2. Risk-taking behaviours, including smoking, substance misuse, sexual health and teenage conceptions

We continue to deliver the updated rolling training programme including introduction to sexual health services, C Card and Sexual Health and the law to Foster Carers and staff within residential homes, however the impact of Covid 19 has caused delays.

Pathways are in place to ensure that Children Looked After and Care Leavers are able to access dedicated, enhanced support through Teen Mother Pathway delivered by County Durham and Darlington's Integrated Sexual Health Service. This service provides effective contraception advice, and a subsequent plan to prevent further unplanned conceptions.

Education Durham continue to offer a comprehensive offer of training and support to staff who are supporting Children Looked After and Care Leavers, this includes the delivery of a number of evidence-based programmes aimed at promoting topics such as confidence and self-esteem and healthy relationships.

3. Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) and Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)

In respect of Speech and Language we undertook an audit of speech and language therapy (SLT) assessment of children during their initial health assessments. As an outcome from that piece of work we explored utility of the clear cut communication tool and agreed as a strategic partnership to look at embedding this assessment in the early stages of working with children, young people and their families, recognising that communication underpins any support, intervention or plan. This is in the process of being rolled out within Children's Services

4. Wider determinants of health for care leavers: e.g. education, employment and training; accommodation and financial management

All children aged 16-17 years should now receive a summary of their health records in line with 'Promoting the health and wellbeing of Children Looked After: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities, Clinical Commissioning Groups and NHS England (2015)'. A working group was established in 2017 to develop and introduce health passports, in line with the pathway plan and 'developmentally appropriate healthcare'. Young people were consulted, and one young person attended the working group deciding when and how they wanted this information to be shared. Those young people not opting in continue to be reviewed within review health assessment processed to ensure they are appropriately signposted for

their health needs. Additionally, 100% of the Review Health Assessments for Care Leavers are quality assured.

What further action will we take and when?

What	When
Determine if young people age 16+ want digital Health Passports See what Apps are currently on the market/available	Ongoing
Further identify ways to ensure we include the voice of our Children Looked After and young people	Ongoing
To work with GP practices to inform GPs about their responsibilities to care leavers by progressing the Task and Finish Group gap analysis based on Children Looked After commissioning toolkit	August 2021
Increase compliance of Primary Care GP information to inform initial and review health assessments.	May 2021
The GP Template completed however requires further action to embed into primary care	February 2021
Initial Health Assessment Quality assurance audit to be completed	April 2021
Children Looked After outcomes multiagency audit to be completed with the agreed focus to include Care Leavers, access to health assessments, mental health and emotional wellbeing, to include child/Young Person's voice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - did we listen? - were we accessible? 	May 2021
Due to an increase in under 1's in Durham becoming looked after, plan a review of the pre-birth service including birth response plans and Early Help	February 2021
The impact of Covid 19 on Children Looked After and the assessments utilising the national questionnaire March – June identifying the views of children prior to reviews in September to include the voice of the child and influence of further services provision	December 2020
Continue the development of a process for health passports for those young people who are placed out of area and those requesting a passport post 18 years	August 2021
Roll out of ClearCut Communication Tool across Virtual School, Early Help and Looked After service initially	March 2021

Priority 7

We will continue to work with our children and young people to ensure they have opportunities to access good education, employment and training to achieve their full potential.

Achievements in 2019-20

- The process for completing Personal Education Plans (PEPs) has been streamlined to ensure we meet the 10-day deadline for initiation, and work is ongoing to improve quality assurance systems. A new IT system has been implemented to help achieve this. This now covers early years and Post 16 PEPs for Year 12 and will support Year 13 from September 2021.
- We have improved opportunities for our children and young people to have their voice heard with regards to education / voice of the child (VOTC). We have attended Children in Care Council meetings and have supported them in producing a leaflet for the Designated Teacher. They are to support a future Network meeting. We are working with them to produce a series of Podcasts for the Virtual School website.
- Work with social care teams has been undertaken to establish a PEP process for Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Post 16 and in September 2020 we moved to an electronic system.
- We reviewed the impact of the Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) grant and explored how to use it more effectively to secure additional and timely therapeutic input to support emotional and mental wellbeing and readiness to learn. We have secured a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Full Circle to provide an Early Help helpline for schools and training where the need is identified. We have access to 0.5 Education Psychology and an SLA with Durham Counselling Service. We have promoted the SLA with schools, settings, social workers and IRO with Future Steps (Occupational Therapy).
- We continue to share National Association of Virtual School Headteachers (NAVSH) research. During the Covid period the focus has been on outcomes for children, supporting Carers during lockdown, supporting emotional wellbeing, attachment and trauma. Information was shared with the Head of Children's Social Care on the outcomes of the research on Children in Need and Children Looked After which was carried out by David Berridge (Emeritus Professor of Child and Family Welfare).
- Work is ongoing with teams in Early Years and Post 16 to ensure seamless transition in and out of statutory education and support young people to achieve the best outcomes they can to support transition into Employment, Education and Training (EET). WE have added an Early Years Specialist to the Virtual School team (0.4 Post) to support Early Years children as they move into reception. We have also introduced systems to share information and establish clear communications between Early Years settings and

schools. A seconded post from the Progression and Learning Team has been brought in to support the Post 16 system, work with Young People's Advisors (YPAs), Post 16 providers and Children Looked After PEP Caseworkers to introduce improved systems for transferring information to help the young person succeed in Post 16 settings. This post will also play an active part in supporting young people to avoid them from becoming NEET.

- Care Leavers have continued to receive sustained wrap-a-round support through the DurhamWorks Programme, to enable them to progress into and remain in Education, Employment and Training. Since the Programme commenced, 579 young people who identified themselves as Children Looked After / Care Leaver have been supported by DurhamWorks. Of these, 224 young people have completed the programme, with 190 progressing into Education, Employment or Training – a progression rate of 84.8%.
- Care Leavers have accessed opportunities to increase their confidence and motivation, as part of the DurhamWorks Programme. For example, Care Leavers have had the opportunity to access specialist learning provision (First Point Training - On the Road Programme), which has focused on providing support to young people who have additional needs / barriers.
- Two Care Leavers successful obtained Apprenticeship opportunities with Durham County Council. These posts were ring-fenced specifically for Care Leavers (the original intention was to ring-fence six Apprenticeship positions for Care Leavers but as a result of Covid 19, the overall recruitment of Apprenticeships by Durham County Council was reduced). Additional support was provided to Care Leavers applying for the Apprenticeships through the DurhamWorks Programme, this included support with their application form and interview preparation.
- Care Leavers in Year 11 received information about their Post-16 progression pathways through one-to-one careers interviews from Specialist Progression Advisers during school. There are also annual Post-16 Options Events which are specially tailored for Care Leavers. There has been an increase in the proportion of Care Leavers progressing into post-16 Education, Employment or Training – the 2019 Year 11 Activity Survey shows that 86.9% were participating in learning, compared to 82.1% in 2018.
- The number of Care Leavers into Higher Education is increasing. In 2019-20, 23 Care Leavers were attending a Higher Education institution, compared to one young person in 2010.
- We continue celebrating the success of Care Leavers who progress into Post-16 EET through annual awards, which included the annual EPIC Awards (organised by the Children and Young People's Service). Care Leavers were also nominated for awards at the annual DurhamWorks Achievement Awards.

What further action will we take and when?

What	When
Undertake consultation on top slice PP+ with DAPH / DASH.	Ongoing
Develop Work Experience, Traineeship and Apprenticeship opportunities for Children Looked After and Care Leavers, by embedding our 'Durham County Council Pathway for Young People'	Ongoing
Develop more opportunities for young people to develop skills for life, to support their transition.	Ongoing
Work with Social Care to identify smoother transitions and improved procedures when a child/young person is placed outside of County and the move is Care led.	December 2020
Provide further training on the ePEP system for Social Workers and IRO's to ensure a high quality PEP is produced for all Children Looked After of Statutory School Age.	December 2020
Embed the new Virtual School structure to support better outcomes for Children Looked After	November 2020
Develop training for Post 16 Providers and YPA's to support the new PEP system.	September 2020
IROs to review all plans as part of the looked after review relating to a child/young person which will include the PEP, EHCP and Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ).	October 2020
Utilise opportunities through the Government's Plan for Jobs e.g. the Kickstart Scheme, to support unemployed Care Leavers who have been affected by COVID-19, to progress into employment.	October 2020
Provide further pathways into employment within Durham County Council for Care Leavers e.g. paid sessional employment opportunities.	December 2020

Priority 8

The engagement and influence of children and young people is a key priority across Durham County Council.

We will continue to work with Children Looked After to ensure that we have adequate strategies in place to hear their voice. We will work proactively to ensure that opportunities are available to enable more young people to share their views and be involved in developing services and setting priorities.

Achievements in 2019-20

- Meetings with DCC's Chief Executive Officer and the CICC continue to take place, providing young people an opportunity to have discussions and share ideas, thoughts or concerns directly.
- Children and young people are regularly part of the recruitment process for staff who will be working with Children Looked After and Care Leavers within the council. The views of children and young people are also included in relevant recruitment packs so that candidates know what children want from their practitioners from the outset.
- Children and young people can chair their own looked after reviews where they wish to do so.
- Two young people from the CICC have co-opted positions on the CPP and attend each meeting (supported by IIC) to share feedback from the CICC. The young people attend the full meeting and are involved in decision making within the CPP, which influences service decisions and developments as necessary.

Due to the Covid 19 pandemic, CPP meetings were cancelled from March 2020 and replaced by monthly virtual meetings with young people from the CICC, providing an opportunity for young people to maintain regular contact with the chair and vice chair of the panel, along with senior leads from CYPS. These meetings do not pick up CPP work programme items, instead they are led by the young people and are proving to be popular, with young people keen to engage.

- In addition to the formal CPP meetings, children and young people from the CICC (supported by IIC) host a joint meeting with the CPP every 6 months. The young people set the agenda/venue for the meeting and invite members and officers of the CPP to attend to meet with the full CICC. This is a much less formal meeting than the CPP meeting, and provides an opportunity for all of the young people who are part of the CICC to raise issues which are important to them, and have discussions directly with members and officers of the CPP. Feedback from the discussions is collated by IIC and key issues are presented by the young people from the CICC at a formal CPP meeting, for further discussion. Work takes place to address these issues within the service, and feedback is provided to the CICC at the next joint meeting.

Due to the Covid 19 pandemic, these meetings have been incorporated into the monthly virtual meetings, with wider CICC members being encouraged to join in.

- During Covid 19, young people from the CICC have developed two newsletters, which have been circulated to members of the CPP and also shared with The Children's Commissioner for England to enable our young people's experiences to be included in a piece of work they are doing about 'life in lockdown'.
- As CPP meetings have been cancelled, a monthly briefing has been developed to ensure that members of the CPP receive assurance around the wellbeing of our Children Looked After and Care Leavers during the pandemic and receive regular updates on how young people are being supported in response to the current situation.
- At the request of our young people, photographs and profiles of Regulation 44 visitor are on display in all residential settings so that the young people know who's who before they come to visit their home. These have also been included in the CPP Annual Report.
- All of Durham County Council's looked after services and their nine residential homes have retained the Investing in Children Membership Award™, and each were able to clearly demonstrate the ways in which children and young people had a voice and evidence the changes that had been made as a result.
- Young people from the CICC have continued to be involved in the co-production of the CPP annual report during the pandemic, with meetings being adapted to virtual communications. This has proved successful, allowing young people to be involved in the process from start to finish.
- Young people from the CICC challenged the CPP to undertake the Care Leavers Challenge to live on £57.90 per week. The young people want members to understand some of the challenges faced by care leavers, and champion for change on the back of this. Following a previous challenge, a letter was sent to the Secretary of State for Education requesting that consideration be given to bring the benefits system in line with the legislative requirements of local authorities to provide care to the age of 25.

From this year's challenge one of the significant issues was transport costs, and as a result this has been identified as a priority area of focus in the CPP Annual Report for 2020-21.

- Young people from the CICC deliver foster carer training to potential foster families and feedback has been that this is invaluable in informing potential foster families to make informed decisions.

- Young people from the CICC deliver training to those on Social Worker courses in the North East, ensuring these students understand what young people in care want from a social worker from the outset.
- Head of Service training was delivered last year by the CICC, to ensure senior leaders are aware of the views of our children and young people, and use this to shape service delivery
- Young people sit on the fostering panel, and supported lodgings panel to provide diverse representation, from a young people's perspective.
- Consideration is being given to the language used across Durham County Council as a result of feedback from children and young people. Further work is scheduled to take place to address this, but some initial changes have been made, including:
 - Using 'children who are looked after' instead of 'LAC'
 - Using 'family, brother/sister' instead of 'siblings'
 - Using the 'family time' instead of 'contact'
- Feedback from the CICC, indicated that the young people thought that the 'risk assessment forms' which were completed before they went into placements made it sound like they were dangerous and should not be placed. Members of the CPP requested work to be undertaken on this to address the young people's concerns and the forms have been amended and agreed by the young people.
- Following our continued commitment to listen to young people and act on what they tell us, we are making changes to the rooms where family time takes place after feedback indicated that these are not particularly nice places to spend time. Young people, supported by staff within the service have identified the changes they wish to make to the rooms, and have sought out items they want to purchase. The money to make these changes have been allocated by members from their own individual neighbourhood budgets. Work will continue, although the Covid 19 pandemic has slowed progress.
- The CPP recognised the importance of informal meetings, and the value this brings in effective communications. With this in mind, elected members donated money from their own budgets to pay for our care leavers to go out for a Xmas meal in 2019. The young people chose the venue and 31 young people, 2 of their own children and 14 staff from the YPS celebrated together. Enough money was secured to repeat this in 2020, although due to the Covid 19 pandemic we are looking to postpone this until 2021.
- Across Children and Young People's Services, 44 teams have worked with young people to achieve Investing In Children Membership Awards, which give national recognition for the good practice and active inclusion of children and young people in dialogue that results in change

- The IRO service has worked in partnership with the CICC to establish a young people forum to hold the IRO service to account, feedback on developments and provide an expert view as care experienced young people on any future changes needed for the service.

What further action will we take and when?

What	When
Durham County Council engagement approach to be rolled out across the council, with the development of a youth council with representation from the CICC	October 2020
Exploration into the expansion of the Freedom Cards to establish a discount scheme for care leavers.	Ongoing
Care Experienced Young Inspectors would help us to shape the services we provide in Durham County Council Children's Residential homes. The Inspectors will be developing a framework and toolkit, accessing training and support to allow them to carry out the role of a Young Inspector. The role would involve them visiting homes and sharing their views and observations on the services provided to the young people and their home.	April 2021
Work with young people to improve WIFI in our Children's Homes	April 2021

Corporate Parenting Panel

2 July 2021

**Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report 2020-21****Report of Councillor Mamie Simmons, Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel, and Helen Fergusson, Head of Children's Social Care, Durham County Council****Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to present the Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report April 2020 – March 2021, for agreement.
- 2 The Annual Report 2020-21 is attached as Appendix 2 of this report.

Executive summary

- 3 To strengthen political and management oversight of the Corporate Parenting Panel and increase the voice of children and young people in our work, a number of changes were implemented. As a result, the September 2019 Children's Services Ofsted inspection report stated that 'The Corporate Parenting Panel is effective and is maintaining good political and strategic governance of children in care and care leavers.'
- 4 The Corporate Parenting Panel's Terms of Reference form part of Durham County Council's constitution and make specific reference that the Corporate Parenting Panel will prepare and provide an annual report that will be shared with Council, Cabinet and Scrutiny.
- 5 This is the fourth Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Panel, following the changes to political oversight.

Recommendations

- 6 Corporate Management Team are recommended to agree the Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report at the meeting on 2 July 2021.

Background

- 7 The terms of reference of the Corporate Parenting Panel are taken from Durham County Council's Constitution with the responsibilities of the Corporate Parenting Panel in relation to each of the functions clearly set out.
- 8 The terms of reference make specific reference that the Corporate Parenting Panel will prepare and provide an annual report that will be shared with Council, Cabinet and Scrutiny.
- 9 In September 2019, Durham County Council's Children's Services were inspected by OFSTED. The inspection report states that since previous inspections (JTAI in July 2018, and focused CIN visit in January 2019) 'the local authority has taken swift and decisive action to strengthen services. Pace has increased since the focused visit, and solid improvements can be seen in many service areas, including at the front door and for children in care. Firm foundations are in place to sustain and build on the improvements made'.
- 10 The inspection report also states that 'The Corporate Parenting Panel is effective and is maintaining good political and strategic governance of children in care and care leavers.'

Development of the Annual Report

- 11 To ensure the voice of the child is reflected in the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel, young people from the Children in Care Council, supported by officers from the Partnerships Team, help to develop the Corporate Parenting Panel's Annual Report.
- 12 The young people work on the design, content and language of the Annual Report to ensure it is easy to read and understand.
- 13 To ensure we continue to raise the profile of the Corporate Parenting Panel, the Durham County Council Communications and Marketing Team have been involved in the development of the Annual Report to ensure it follows a more corporate format, whilst ensuring it uses language and design which is also appealing to young people.
- 14 The Annual Report will hold a more prominent position on the Durham County Council website and will again be hosted on the Investing in Children website, and the Children in Care Council website.

- 15 The Annual Report includes information on:
- (a) What a Corporate Parent is
 - (b) The role of the Corporate Parenting Panel
 - (c) The Corporate Parenting Panel's Terms of Reference
 - (d) Key performance data
 - (e) Achievements during 2020/21
 - (f) Priorities for 2021/22

Next Steps

- 16 Following presentation at Children's Social Care management team on 18 May 2021, and Children and Young People's Services Management Team on 10 June 2021, the Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report will be presented for agreement at the Corporate Parenting Panel meeting on 2 July 2021.
- 17 Corporate Parenting Panel members are to note the following key date for the Annual report:
- (a) Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Date TBC, for information.

Conclusion

- 18 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel will have oversight of the work undertaken during 2020-21, and the priorities for the year ahead.

Background papers

- None

Other useful documents

- None

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The Corporate Parenting Panel's Terms of Reference form part of Durham County Council's Constitution.

Finance

There are cost implications for design and print services, however the Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report will primarily be shared by email, and will be hosted on the Children in Care Council, Investing in Children and Durham County Council websites to minimise printing and distribution costs.

Consultation

Young people from the Children in Care Council have been involved in the development of the Annual Report. The consultation has been done in the main through virtual meetings coordinated by Investing in Children, due to the Coronavirus pandemic and lockdown restrictions.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Looked After Services are available to all children and young people in line with legal duties.

Climate Change

There are no climate change implications

Human Rights

Children and young people have been central to the development of the Annual Report to ensure that their voices are heard.

Crime and Disorder

There are no crime and disorder implications.

Staffing

There are no staffing implications.

Accommodation

There are no accommodation implications.

Risk

There are no risk implications.

Procurement

There are no procurement implications.

Appendix 2: Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report 2020-21

Attached as a separate document.

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County Durham Corporate Parenting Panel

Annual Report
April 2020 - March 2021

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**“Every child
is a different kind of
flower and together
make this world a
beautiful garden.”**

Shannon

What is a corporate parent

Local Authorities must provide the care, support, and security that young people need if they can't stay at home safely and become the young people's 'corporate parent'.

Being a corporate parent isn't just up to the Corporate Parenting Panel, everyone should be looking out for our children and young people, and every councillor and council employee has a role to play as the eyes and ears of the community.

Being a corporate parent means doing whatever we can to support young people in our care and our care leavers, to help them achieve their full potential and have the best possible outcomes.

Why are children in care?

Young people are looked after for a variety of reasons including neglect and abuse. They could also be in care if their parents are unable to look after them because of their own complex health needs or behaviours. Some young people have no parents to care for them, or they could be unaccompanied asylum seekers.

Message from the Chair!



Cllr Ivan Jewell
Chair of the CPP

I would like to take this opportunity, as chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP), to thank everyone for their continued hard work and commitment over what has been a very challenging year. We could not have imagined the impact the global Covid-19 pandemic would have on delivery of services across England. In Durham our staff, partners, volunteers and the young people themselves played a key role in helping us to respond to the outbreak to ensure that all children, young people and their carers received the best possible help, advice and support during this difficult time.

During the pandemic, we have tried new ways of communicating with our children and young people using apps, Microsoft Teams and Zoom as well as socially distanced walks and picnics when the restrictions allowed. We have also sent interpreted coronavirus fact sheets to unattended asylum-seeking children who needed them.

Amongst the challenges, there have also been successes with some of our young people having had the poems they published about life in lockdown re-tweeted by the Children's Commissioner for England.

I will not be standing for re-election as a Councillor in the May 2021 elections, so will be stepping down as Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

I have enjoyed my time in this role and really appreciated being able to work with children and young people to understand how we can support them to achieve the best possible outcomes.

I wish everyone all the best for the future and take great pleasure in introducing the Corporate Parenting Panel's fourth annual report. **April 2021**

Councillor Mamie Simmons will become Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel from May 2021, with Councillor Michelle Walton as Vice Chair.



Cllr Mamie Simmons
Chair of the CPP



Cllr Michelle Walton
Vice Chair of the CPP

Where are children in care?

Children and young people can be in care in a range of settings, including foster care, children's homes, supported lodgings, and secure accommodation – the council is corporate parent to all of them.



Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Awards

In November 2019, the Corporate Parenting Panel was shortlisted for the LGC Awards 2020 in the Children's Services category. The awards ceremony was due to take place in March 2020, however this was postponed due to the Coronavirus pandemic with a virtual event taking place in October 2020. It was a huge achievement for the Panel to be shortlisted as a record number of entries were submitted.

Message from Children in Care Council (CICC) co-opted members

"I attend Corporate Parenting Panel to represent young people from the CICC. We have been giving feedback on all the wonderful things us young people have been able to achieve within the CICC.

"Due to the circumstances of Covid-19 we have been able to still achieve changes, one being the children's homes that have had improvements to their Wi-Fi which was very important because of online learning. Another is adding a positive story so, at every meeting, we hear about something that has been positive which is now many of the members favourite part of the meeting.

"I've had a very positive experience when working with the Panel and I'm looking forward to seeing all the changes that we are able to make together."

Lesley Caulkin

"I have been a representative at Corporate Parenting Panel meetings on behalf of CICC for a long time now. At these meetings, we get to feedback what we have discussed in our meetings, any training sessions we have taken part in, and the amazing stories about what children and young people have achieved or created through great art work.

"Due to Covid-19 we have been unable to attend our meetings face to face at County Hall and some decisions and improvements have taken longer to process. For example, faster Wi-Fi for children in our children's homes around the county which was to help with their education, social needs, and family time. However, at the end of our meetings we always have a positive story about what a child or young person has been up to during the pandemic such as arts and crafts and podcasts, which has always been members of the council's favourite part of the meetings.

"In my time so far, I have enjoyed being on the Panel and it has grown my confidence.

Mitchell Green

“I am so proud of all the changes we have made to improve services for children and young people who are cared for in Durham, and I want to see more positive changes and new ideas going forward.”

Role of the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP)

The CPP is a group that is part of the council, which is called a committee. It has 21 councillors as well as council officers. There are also 10 other members, including school representatives and young people's representatives to make sure there's a broad range of experience and knowledge and that children and young people are heard, and actively responded to.

Corporate parents have responsibility to act for the children and young people in our care as a parent would for their own child, and should ask three key questions:



CPP responsibilities

There are a number of things which the CPP must do:

- ✓ Make sure the Council acts as a good corporate parent to children and young people in care and care leavers, including:
 - Young people in residential care, foster care and supported lodgings
 - Young people placed for adoption or placed at home under care planning, placement, and case review regulations
 - Young people in secure homes or in custody
- ✓ Engage and listen to the views of children, young people and their carers.
- ✓ Work in partnership with other agencies to make improvements for our children and young people in care.
- ✓ Oversee the virtual school for looked after children and young people. For more information visit www.durham.gov.uk/durhamvirtualschool. A sub-group has been established to lead on this work.
- ✓ Oversee Aycliffe Secure Services. A sub group has been established to lead on this work.

More information on the Corporate Parenting Panel can be found in Durham County Council's constitution at: www.durham.gov.uk/constitution

Updates against 2020/21 priorities

What we said we would focus on	Where we are now	What young people think
Subsidised transport	<p>We have had lots of meetings with the providers, but due to the number of different providers and services across County Durham we are unable to offer subsidised transport for all care leavers.</p> <p>We took steps to liaise with higher education colleges to discuss their approach to supporting students with paying bus passes whilst colleges were closed or delivering lessons virtually.</p> <p>We continue to look at transport support on an individual basis for our young people, and John Hewitt, the Council's Interim Chief Executive will discuss further with senior managers to re-visit this.</p>	
Extension of Freedom Card for care leavers	<p>Exploration into the expansion of Freedom Cards to establish a discount scheme for care leavers.</p> <p>Some discounts have already been offered, and young people have access to Durham County Council discounts and free access to council leisure centres.</p> <p>Unfortunately, this work was postponed due to the pandemic as many shops and services were forced to close as part of lockdown restrictions.</p>	
Teacher training	<p>Two young people from the Children in Care Council (CICC) attended the designated teacher network meeting on 24 November 2020. They presented a workshop "We are no different" to more than 80 designated teachers from schools both in Durham and across the country. This was well received, and discussions took place afterwards about the child/young persons' voice and how their thoughts and requests could be shared in schools. As a follow on from this we have decided to produce a Children Looked After Policy for schools. The CICC have worked with Melanie Stubbs, the Virtual Head to ensure the Child/Young Person's Promise is reflected in the policy.</p> <p>We are also producing a series of podcasts to support training with teachers in the future.</p>	



What we said we would focus on	Where we are now	What young people think
Care Experienced Young Inspectors	<p>It was agreed that Care Experienced Young Inspectors would help us to shape the services we provide in Durham County Council children’s residential homes.</p> <p>The inspectors will be developing a framework and toolkit, accessing training and support to allow them to carry out the role of a young inspector. The role will involve them visiting residential homes and sharing their views and observations on the services provided to the young people and their home.</p> <p>This work has been postponed due to Covid-19 but will be picked up again soon.</p> <p>In the meantime, we have been supporting our care experienced young people with opportunities to take part in interviews. This approach has seen a number of our care experienced young people lead in part of the interview process across a range of jobs by asking questions, leading discussions, rating presentations and making comments as part of the interview process. The skills built up through the interviewing process will be transferable as well as all the valued added to the interview process.</p>	

Care Leavers Challenge

In February 2020, two councillors and two Durham County Council officers took part in the Care Leavers Challenge, living on £57.90 per week, which is what care leavers not in employment received.

Everyone found the challenge hard and it was agreed that we would use the learning from this to improve how we can support young people.

Unfortunately, the Covid-19 response took priority over this work in 2020 so we have not been able to make any progress, and the Care Leavers Challenge didn't happen in 2021 either. We hope to pick this up again in 2022.

Moving forward we will look at the key issues that came from the 2020 challenge:

- Direct debit payments for electricity and gas
- Transport



Children in Care Council (CICC)

The CICC is a group for children and young people who are looked after in County Durham and is supported by Investing in Children. The CICC members meet monthly to talk about issues which are important to them, highlight what works and share stories of the support they have received. This forum is well established, with senior managers from within Children and Young People's Services and elected members who are on the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) regularly attending CICC meetings.

More information on the CICC can be found at www.durhamcicc.co.uk

Co-opted positions for CICC members

Two young people from the CICC have co-opted positions on the CPP providing panel representation from the CICC. They attend each meeting (supported by Investing in Children) to share feedback from the CICC. In addition, the CICC have a standing item on each CPP agenda, where they provide feedback from CICC meetings, ensuring members of the CPP hear real unfiltered feedback directly from the young people. The young people are involved in decision making within the CPP, which is fed back to leads to influence service decisions and developments as necessary.

Joint CICC/CPP meetings

In addition to the formal CPP meetings, children and young people from the CICC (supported by Investing in Children) host a joint meeting with the CPP every six months.

The young people set the agenda for the meeting and invite members and officers of the CPP to attend to meet with the CICC. During 2020 these meetings were postponed but will be re-started from July 2021 using Zoom instead of having a meeting. We also hope this will encourage more councillors to take part as they won't need to travel to attend the meetings.

These meetings are less formal than the CPP meeting and provide an opportunity for all of the young people who are part of the CICC to raise issues which are important to them and have discussions directly with members and officers of the CPP and have their ideas, suggestions and comments heard.

Feedback from the discussions is collated by Investing in Children and key issues are presented by the young people from the CICC at a formal CPP meeting, for further discussion. Work takes place to address these issues within the service, and feedback is provided to the CICC at the next joint meeting.

CICC catch ups

During 2020 CPP meetings were cancelled so virtual monthly meetings were set up with the CICC, the Chair and Vice Chair of the CPP, the Head of Children's Social Care and some of the senior managers from the service so that young people were still able to have contact with the Panel on a regular basis.

When the CPP meetings were re-started they were virtual and every two months instead of monthly, so that regular contact with the CPP could be maintained.

Some of the things we discussed at these meetings were:

- Activities young people had been getting involved with during lockdown e.g. cooking, exercise, DIY and water fights
- The importance of seeing friends, which is now included in young people's plans
- Paying for bus passes while colleges were closed/ deductions from bursaries
- Pets in residential homes, and also about pets being included in safety plans (more info on page 22)



- Use of language including the term 'vulnerable' (more info on page 23)
- Pocket money/varying amounts (more info on page 22)
- Intergenerational work
- Podcast (more info on page 11)

CICC newsletters

Young people from the CICC produced newsletters during lockdown. These were shared across the service, with children and young people and with the CPP. They were also shared with the Children's Commissioner for England.



We continue to support CICC with the newsletter on a monthly basis and have provided a link with Durham County Council's marketing team to support young people to understand the editorial role and become a 'young editor' for the newsletter.

More information on the CICC can be found at: www.durhamcicc.co.uk/cicc-newsletters

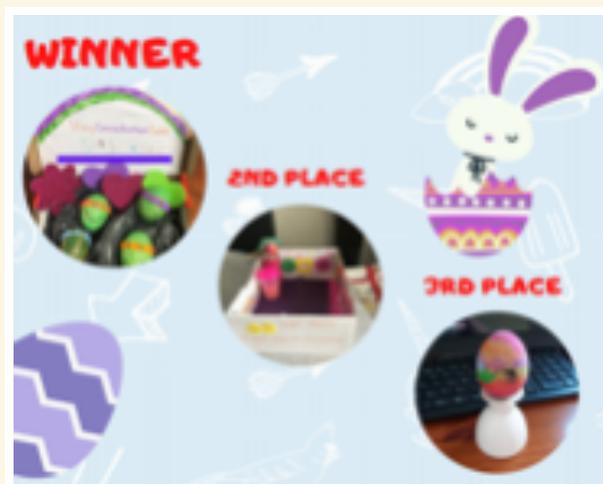
Monthly Corporate Parenting Panel briefings

To ensure members of the CPP remained sighted on the work taking place across the service to support children and young people in response to the pandemic, monthly newsletters were produced and circulated.

These included updates from all partners of the CPP including Aycliffe Secure Centre, the Virtual School and health colleagues. Updates also included key performance data.

What happened in lockdown

- A virtual Children in Care Council (CICC) quiz night took place.
- Some of the children in foster care had fun online with their social workers during their one to one's including playing virtual hide and seek, reading stories together, finding shapes in the clouds, discussing blogs and talking about TikTok.
- Investing in Children hosted an easter egg competition and young people sent in photos of their entries. Here are the top three:



- CICC members supported Investing in Children with a successful funding bid, securing £2,500 to fund summer packs at £50 per pack, which went to children, young people or families who needed additional resources during the summer holidays while we were in lockdown. The packs were personalised based on the young people's interests e.g. paint brushes, outdoor games, sketch books, notebooks etc.



CICC members really wanted to impact on the Covid-19 crisis and worked on the project to do something nice for others and were nominated for a High Sheriff Award because of this work.

More information about the summer packs can be found in this short film on [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)



- Young people from one of our children's homes raised money for Stray Aid, a local dog shelter. They set up a Just Giving page and raised over £600 to help support the dogs by doing a sponsored bike ride, which was over 30 miles!
- CICC members met with workers from the Children's Commissioner for England's Office and the National Police Chief Council to discuss their experience of coming into care and their experience of the police, which will feed into the review of the National Police Chief Council strategy.
- Young people in residential care receive Christmas gifts from a Durham company, and they were particularly generous this year. The young people were so pleased with the gifts they received that they used their excellent IT and creative skills to produce a montage of images of themselves enjoying their presents over Christmas, which they sent to the company as a gesture of thanks. The Strategic Manager was moved when she viewed the montage and impressed at the amount of effort the young people had put in to such a professional piece of work, which they had taken upon themselves to produce, to show their appreciation to the company.

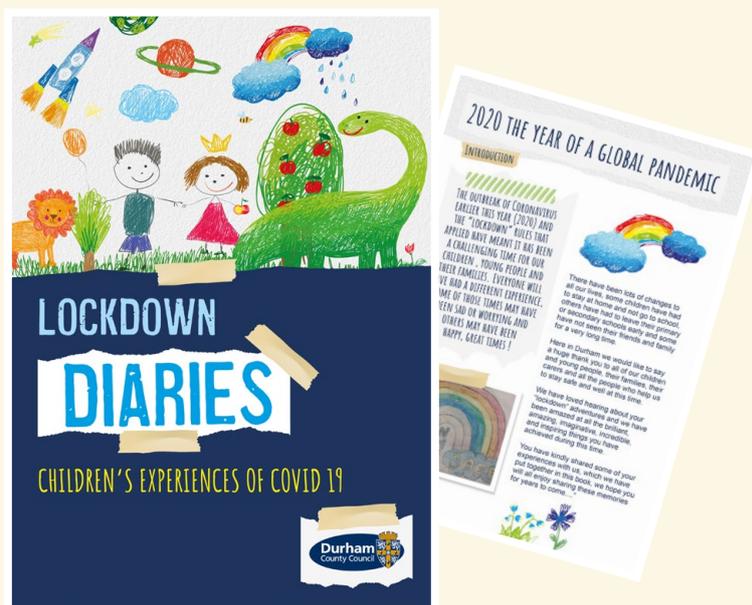
- Young people have developed podcasts:
 - One young person from the CICC launched his podcast 'We are No Different Episode 1' on [Spotify.com](https://www.spotify.com) good news will be shared in the podcast and members of the CPP and staff within the service are invited to take part in future to share interesting stories.

- Two CICC members have done a podcast called 'Experiencing the care system' where they talk openly about their experiences of care and everyday life. They discuss the benefits that foster carers bring to the lives of young people in County Durham, along with valuing the contribution carers and staff have made during Covid-19. Listen to Episode 1 on [Spotify.com](https://www.spotify.com)

If you have any ideas for future podcasts, please get in touch.



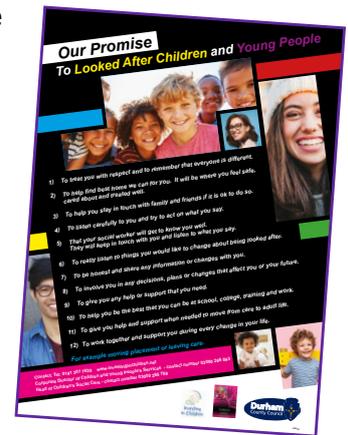
- Mini-Corporate Parenting Panel meetings have been introduced to enable young people to comment on events over the last twelve months. This initiative has been very well received.



- Young people's experiences of the pandemic were captured through creative activities, such as the production of videos, poetry and photographs. An e-book called Lockdown Diaries was produced to capture this work, which you can view at www.issuu.com

Local Offer for care leavers

- Young People from the CICC are involved in supporting us with Durham County Council's promise. The promise launched officially on Friday 26 October 2018 and is regularly reviewed to make sure it is fit for purpose, and that we are doing what we have said we will do. If we are not, the young people can raise this at a CICC meeting so that action is taken.
- In response to the pandemic and lockdown restrictions, when care leavers were approaching 18 years of age and their current placement was due to end, we extended this where possible in line with their wishes.
- In Christmas 2019, members donated money from their budgets to pay for our care leavers to go for a Christmas meal. This was due to be repeated in 2020, however due to lockdown restrictions it was not possible – so instead the money was put towards hampers for the young people.
- We continue to pay young people who are on income maintenance allowance an additional £20 a week to match the government's additional £20 Universal Credit payment. This is in place until September.
- Work is ongoing to 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.
- A drop-in centre for care leavers is being developed.
- The care leavers hub at Sherburn Hill has been refurbished to offer cooking, shower and laundry facilities. We continue to work with care leavers and staff to develop the hub to meet the support needs of our young people.



Drive project

The project supports young people by providing driving

lessons, up to the value of £500. The project pays for one lesson, the young person pays for the next lesson, and so on then the project pays for the first theory test and one practical test. This is available for looked after young people

aged 17+ and care leavers up to the age of 21 (25 if in full time education).

Unfortunately, due to the pandemic restrictions the project was on hold last year but Investing in Children are working through their database to see which young people are in a position to start their lessons when restrictions are eased.

Regulation 44 inspections



The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 requires that an independent person should undertake an unannounced visit to all children's homes at least once a month (Regulation 44). The independent person must produce a report about the visit which sets out whether:

- Children are effectively safeguarded, and
- The conduct of the home promotes children's wellbeing.

Regulation 44 reports come to each Corporate Parenting Panel meeting highlighting any issues or concerns.

In March 2020, we moved from onsite Regulation 44 visits to virtual visits using Microsoft Teams enabling all of our children's homes to continue to benefit from a monthly visit.

During the virtual visit there is an opportunity for the visitor to interview the registered manager, in the same way as they would when on site, ensuring oversight and evidence for the monthly report. The visitor can also see the home by a virtual tour and through photographic evidence which is sent by the registered manager.

During the virtual visit there is also an opportunity for the visitor to speak with the young people to gather their views as well as being able to speak with members of the care team, parents and social workers etc, in much the same way as they did before using emails, phone calls and Microsoft Teams when needed.

Elected members who are aligned to each home receive copies of the monthly reports to ensure they receive regular updates and retain oversight.

New inspectors will be identified after the local elections in May 2021.

Councillors responsible for Regulation 44 inspections April 2020 – March 2021

Home/Councillor

Tow Law

Cllr Anne Reed



Park House

Cllr Ivan Jewell



High Etherley

Cllr Christine Wilson



West Rainton

Cllr Jude Considine



9 Cedar Drive

Cllr Pauline Crathorne



Coxhoe

Cllr Liz Maddison



Moorside

Cllr Beaty Bainbridge



New Lea House

Cllr Jude Considine



Framwellgate Moor

Cllr Mamie Simmons



(Auckland - secure)

Cllr George Richardson



(Barnard - secure)

Cllr Ivan Jewell



(Lumley - secure)

Cllr Eunice Huntington



(Walworth - secure)

Cllr Joe Makepeace



(Durham House - secure)

Cllr Elizabeth Scott



Key performance data 2020/21

- There were 950 children in care at the end of March 2021, with the long-term increasing trend continuing. The rate of children looked after per 10,000 children remains lower than the North East average.
- **Although the overall number of children looked after has increased, fewer children entered care in 2020/21 but Covid-19 impacted on the number of children leaving care during most of the year.**
- 55 children were adopted in 2020/21. This equates to 18% of all children leaving care which is higher than in England and the North East in 2019/20.
- **Around eight in ten of our children in care are placed in foster care or with friends and family. We have seen a reduction in children placed with in-house foster carers during the year, as Covid-19 had a direct impact on foster carers, for example choosing not to take on new placements or to deregister for their own health reasons.**
- 86% of children looked after who had been in care for at least 12 months had an up-to-date health assessment, but there was a significant reduction in dental checks as a direct impact of Covid-19. It has slowly began to increase as dental surgeries reopen.
- **92 children looked after were recorded as missing, accounting for 483 missing episodes. A return to home interview was completed for over 80% of missing episodes, an increase from last year. A child/ young person can refuse this.**
- 66% of our care leavers aged 17-18 were in education, employment and training, above the 2019/20 national rate of 64%.
- **63% of our care leavers aged 19-21 were in education, employment and training, above the 2019/20 national rate of 53%.**
- 94% of our care leavers aged 17-18 were in suitable accommodation, above the 2019/20 national rate of 90%.
- **96% of our care leavers aged 19-21 were in suitable accommodation, above the 2019/20 national rate of 85%.**
- Due to Covid-19, KS2 SATS's were cancelled, therefore there is no KS2 data to report this year.
- **There were 35 young people in the KS4 reporting cohort. 11 of them attended specialist provision, 5 attended alternative provision or independent school, 18 attended mainstream secondary and 1 was in a young offenders institute. Our cohort has continued to perform well at GCSE (grades 9-4) and significant improvements have been made in Maths.**
- We are delighted to report further improvement from 2019, with a positive 3-year trend in pupils achieving Maths at Grade 4+. English grades 9-4 results showed a slight dip, but this follows significant improvements made over the last two years. There was a very positive 3% increase in pupils achieving the higher grades in Maths, with young people achieving grades 9-5 basics rising.
- **43% of Durham looked after children had an identified special educational need (SEN) in 2019-20 with 19% of them supported by an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). This has remained static over the last two years.**



Education, employment and training

Work with further education providers

DurhamWorks and the Young People's Service have strong links with local colleges and meetings take place throughout the year to support transition events. Activities take place to share information and ensure early identification of young people with care experience to prevent disengagement of vulnerable students. Employment, education and training meetings are held monthly and have representation from the further education and regional higher education sector.

Transition support

Looked after young people are supported to make an effective sustained transition into post-16 education, employment and training through our new DurhamWorks Programme for Schools. They are offered one-to-one mentoring support, as well as the opportunity to participate in group activities in identified schools, which focus on transition support, improving motivation, as well as work related learning and enterprise.



Post-16 support

Looked after young people and care leavers receive wrap-a-round support from their named specialist progression adviser in order to sustain their progression into education, employment or training or to re-engage them in learning if they are NEET.

Apprenticeships

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, Durham County Council was forced to reduce its apprenticeship recruitment programme during 2020-2021, which also impacted on the number of care leavers who were recruited. However, plans are currently being developed for 2021-2022 recruitment, which will again include ring-fenced positions specifically for care leavers.



As part of the Government's Covid-19 recovery plan, Durham County Council is offering a number of positions to unemployed young people through the Kickstart Scheme. Up to nine positions have been ring-fenced for care leavers, covering a broad range of occupational areas.

Supporting more young people in care and care leavers into sustained post-16 education, employment and training is a key priority for Durham County Council and is a recognition of its importance in improving the life chances of young people in our care and care leavers in terms of their future income, health, sense of wellbeing and purpose.

DurhamWorks

Additional support is provided to our young people in care and care leavers aged 16-24 through the DurhamWorks Programme. This is a European funded, Durham County Council led partnership project that supports young people aged 16-24 who are NEET (Not in Education, Employment and Training) and resident in County Durham to progress into education, employment or training. The funding which will provide additional support to our young people in care and care leavers through DurhamWorks is available until December 2023.

Further details of DurhamWorks can be found at www.durhamworks.info

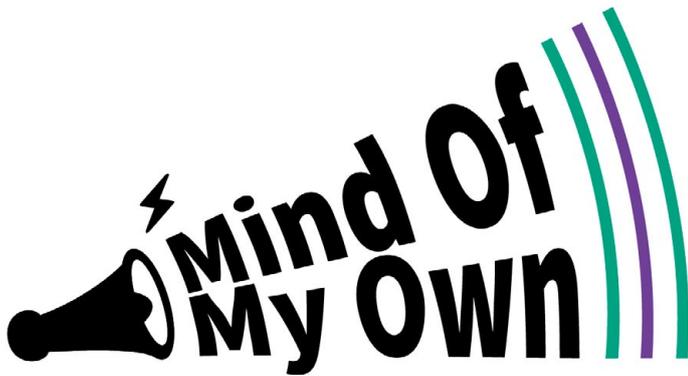
Celebrations

Unfortunately, due to Covid-19, we were unable to host any awards or celebration events in 2020/21.

For the future, young people have asked us to consider hosting virtual 'Celebration events' now that people are getting better at using IT. They also suggested that people they know should present their awards, not important people who they don't know.



Mind of My Own app



We started using Mind of My Own which is a unique digital communication tool for children and young people that supports Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Mind of My Own has been co-produced with children and young people to give a platform for them to easily share their lived experiences at a time that is convenient for them and to have their voices heard.

There are two apps which allow children and young people to communicate with their workers:

- The 'One App' is aimed at children and young people aged 8 years+ who can use the app more independently to prepare for and reflect upon meetings, visits, life events, achievements and problems.

- The 'Express App', for children aged 7 and under and for children and young people with additional needs, can be accessed through the support of a worker to create a one-page profile which shares their views, wishes and feelings.

Some of our young people are ambassadors for Mind of My Own and designed a leaflet for the children and young people's launch event on 9 April.

More information can be found at www.mindofmyown.org.uk





Melanie Stubbs' first year in post as virtual head has been an eventful one. Despite the constraints of Covid-19 and the impact it has had on education, there have been many opportunities to support our children in care to achieve the best possible outcomes for their future. Communication with carers and social workers has been an important part of the process to support children back into education following two lockdowns.

In Durham, school attendance is good for our children in care, and there have been no permanent exclusions since 2014.

The Personal Education Plan (PEP) process has been met favourably by all who use it and has enabled the virtual school caseworkers to monitor the progress of children and young people and champion for the best outcomes. This process allows the PEP's to move with the child electronically as they move through each Key Stage.

Training has been offered to designated teachers and governors to support the implementation of the new PEP system. Early years and post 16 are now part of this system, which has supported smooth transitions to the next phase for children.

Caseworkers work with schools to identify what is best for the child and can advise them about the range of interventions we can put in place to best meet the needs of the child. The Virtual School recognises the effects of attachment and trauma and has worked with the different therapeutic services within the County to ensure we offer schools the best advice at the right time. We have developed our links with Full Circle to provide a helpline to schools for advice and training. With the support of Durham Counselling

services and Education Psychology, children who are looked after should receive support in a timely manner. In addition to this we offer occupational therapy support through Future Steps, giving schools access to assessments when a need is identified.

The Virtual School Head has attended meetings with the young people from the Children in Care Council (CICC) and is forging close links to help them get their voice heard in education. CICC have led a training session for designated teachers and have contributed to a Children Looked After Policy to be shared with schools in May 2021. Further work is planned with CICC as we move into the future.

During lockdown the Virtual School worked with schools and gave an additional £50 for each child to purchase a licence for home learning, or other materials to support carers with home schooling.

A transition workbook was also prepared and posted to all Year 6 children who were moving to secondary school in September 2020.

A circular callout with a yellow center and a light green outer ring, containing the text:

**In Durham,
school attendance
is good for our
children in care, and
there have been no
permanent
exclusions since
2014.**

Aycliffe Secure Centre



Aycliffe Secure Centre was judged “outstanding” in all areas at its full inspection in September 2019, and an assurance visit by Ofsted in November 2020 found high standards had been maintained despite the difficulties posed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Aycliffe Secure Centre provides secure accommodation for up to 38 young people, 8 of whom are sentenced or remanded by the Youth Custody Service. In addition to this there is occupancy for 30 young people accommodated for their own or others safety, under Section 25 of the Children’s Act 1989, commissioned by Local Authorities.

The background experiences and needs of all our young people are usually very similar irrespective of their legal order therefore, the

living accommodation and socialisation for all young people is determined by the risk assessment of the individual and the current group. Young people are not placed in a specific house, solely on whether they are here on welfare or a custodial sentence/status. The centre operates a single sex house for girls, one for boys and one home for young people with particularly complex needs. Gender on the other two houses is decided by the market demand of referrals. Over this period, the centre has only had four houses in operation due to Covid-19 restrictions and the impact on staffing.

The philosophy of the centre is one of ‘Exceptional Parenting’. We aim to ensure that all our young people have opportunities to enrich their lives. The centre also follows the SECURE STAIRS

framework and is now in the early stages of working towards Enabling Environments.

As a result of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, there has been considerable change in managing referrals, admissions and discharges and the direct care and education of young people. The centre has also started to look at its recovery and an Aycliffe specific roadmap is in place, aligned to national milestones.

The centre has faced many challenges throughout this period of uncertainty and no practice has remained unaffected in some way. Key highlights and achievements include:

- The Covid-19 recovery plan is fully implemented, and a roadmap has been developed to continue to aid this positive direction of travel.

- Nationally recognised Butler Award commendation awarded to the lead nurse for her excellence in maintaining a Covid-19 safe environment.
- No positive Covid-19 cases within the population of young people.
- Despite restrictions, all families were offered a face to face visit at Christmas.
- Implementation of lateral flow testing facilities.
- A significant and maintained reduction in incidents.
- The school has remained open throughout this entire period.
- Contribution to the final Anna Freud evaluation.
- Significant improvements in the physical environment of the centre.
- Continued utilisation of digital solutions to facilitate young person contact with parents and professionals and to ensure Mental Health (Kolvin) and Substance Misuse (Humankind) services.
- The local SECURE STAIRS implementation plan is now fully implemented.
- 108 multi-agency staff have attended 5-day Trauma-Informed Practice for Children and Young People training.
- 64 psychological formulation meetings and 598 attendances.

- Positive feedback from young people, parents and professionals.
- Recognition for achieving the Investor in Children award for 10 consecutive years.

Aycliffe Secure Centre has continued upgrading facilities during the pandemic as well as working on plans for the transition home, which will be a registered children's home, accommodating young people from the centre who are no longer on secure orders as it can be difficult to find places for children once they have been in secure accommodation.

Marking celebrations and occasions has almost become more important during this period, there have been individual celebrations of significant milestones as well as special dates in the calendar. This has included:

- Birthday parties, including an 18th birthday celebration
- Winter wonderland ball
- Centre-wide Christmas buffet
- Pets and animals being brought into the centre
- Christmas house decoration competition
- Special end of term assembly
- Visit from DJ



We also work with our catering company to ensure that food is both nutritious and meets the tastes and needs of all our young people, and one of the suggestions they made was to have a themed night where food from different countries and cultures is tried. This has been established on Wednesday nights - so far, the Indian curry night has been the favourite! These activities have been embraced and enjoyed.

“To all staff, I just want to say a big thank you. Thank you for always being there to listen to my problems. Also, I just want to say thanks for trying to make Christmas as good as possible. Many Thanks, love [young person].”

Children's homes

We offer residential services for children and young people, providing support and care for young people who cannot live at home or who require a short break away from their family or carer.

- The children's home in Sacriston was registered with Ofsted in early January 2021 and the young people who now live in their new home love their new posh pad, especially the bedrooms which they designed as part of the moving in plans.
- The move from Cedar Drive has happened and the young people are settling into their new home in Aycliffe enjoying their swanky rooms and all their new space and lovely garden.
- Park House, our short break home was closed temporarily from March 2020 due to Covid-19, but it reopened in June 2020 when the guidance and restrictions allowed and welcomed back their children and young people along with some new children and young people who have settled right in.
- After much searching, a property for the edge of care provision has been identified and we are hoping that all goes well with the purchase and plans to ensure we are supporting our children, young people, families and carers.
- The children's home at Coxhoe is currently going through the planning process.

Fostering and adoption

- During the pandemic, foster carers received additional telephone supervision from their fostering social worker to explore any issues or concerns for the families and the children/young people in their care. For example, if someone got Covid-19, or if people had to self-isolate, a Covid-19 plan was developed with each foster carer.
- Newsletters and links to resources and activities were regularly shared with foster carers and their foster children.
- Many examples of positive feedback from foster carers and the other professionals were received.

“ We really do feel privileged to be prioritised so early in having the covid injection/protection by the Fostering Service. We think it does show how much the service does value us as Foster Carers. ”

- As part of Foster Care Fortnight (11-24 May 2020), the National Association of Virtual School Heads Board asked Virtual School Head Teachers to share what foster carers were doing during the lockdown to help children in care with their learning.

- Young people's guides which help children and young people to understand what foster care is and what they can expect to happen when they first come to live in their new foster family have continued to be sent to carers of children in care.



- The Adoption Team responded to increased enquiries over the last year and the preparation groups for prospective adopters were delivered virtually. One prospective adopter said:

“ I feel I now know more about the correct way to help the child (whilst keeping in mind that every child and situation is different). The training was creative, with a mix of slides and personal experiences, which stuck in my head.... very informative and enjoyable, it was clear the amount of effort that has been put into the new format of this training and I'm grateful to be involved.”

adopt
Coast to Coast

launched virtually on 1 April 2021. The three spokes, Cumbria, Durham and Together for Children will continue to provide their current adoption services from first contact. The key priority areas for 2021/22 are:

- ✓ To establish Adopt Coast to Coast as the 'go to' agency for those interested in adopting,
- ✓ To develop branding so it is recognisable alongside and separately to the Local Authority partners,
- ✓ To continually review the outcome of marketing activity to ensure best value and best return on investment,
- ✓ To ensure the prospective adopter's journey is reviewed and streamlined through review and sharing of best practice,
- ✓ To establish early linking and matching,
- ✓ To embed models of early permanence for example Fostering for Adoption in Durham,
- ✓ To work across the partnership to develop the post adoption support offer.
- Full Circle staff adapted the training packages so that they could be delivered virtually, and the helpline funded by the Adoption Support Fund provided immediate support to adoptive parents and Special Guardianship Order carers struggling with the experience of lockdown while caring for children who have experienced trauma. This service was positively received by those who accessed it.



Achievements

- Young people highlighted the importance of pets and animals in their lives, and how this helps with relationship building and their mental wellbeing.



On the back of this, discussions took place within the service and staff were asked to be less risk adverse and try to accommodate animals or consider what changes could be made to support this.

Young people had been asked to be mindful to ensure that all those in the home were receptive to having pets and as a result, a number of children's homes have introduced pet hamsters.

Some of the children's homes have also implemented 'dog-fostering' when staff members bring their dogs into the home for a few days, enabling the young people to care for the dog and participate in walking, feeding and grooming.

One home has an allotment with chickens, one young person is helping a horse owner to care for their horse and another is volunteering at a local animal shelter.

Young people's safety plans now include a section on pets which details the pets young people would like to keep in contact with, in the event of moving on, and relationships with pets is now a part of social work training.

The importance of animals is being discussed with foster carers, to try and accommodate young people's wishes around having pets or being with animals.

- Young people shared details of the Coram Voice 'Positive Matters' campaign at a Corporate Parenting Panel, to challenge stigma and share positive stories about children in care. As a result, we have added 'Proud Moments' to each meeting agenda

where we share positive stories about our young people.

We are very proud that a young person from the Children in Care Council was selected as one of only 25 young people nationally to become a National Voice Ambassador for Coram Voice. Coram Voice is a national charity for the rights of children who are either in, or, leaving care, which aims to ensure children's rights are upheld, and, that their voices and experiences inform and improve the systems that care for them.

- Young people highlighted that there were disparities in pocket money and other entitlements in residential homes across the County.

A working group was formed to look at all money and incentives including pocket money, birthday money, Christmas presents, college attendance, good behaviour rewards, presents for families etc.

As a result of their work, a decision was made to keep the current system of pocket money and incentives to encourage young people to pull their weight in the home.

Pocket money will be increased, and an annual review will take place for pocket money and incentives, which will be led by the young people, supported by staff within the service. It is anticipated that the review will take place in September / October each year to coincide with the budget cycle.

A similar activity will be undertaken within foster care groups, with benchmark guidance produced for pocket money and incentives, then the information will be included in the updated Young People's guides.

- Young people raised concerns about the Wi-Fi in our children's homes.

Work took place with young people to establish what the problem was, and to discuss the solution and as a result it was felt that a full Wi-Fi upgrade was needed for all the homes.



This work was undertaken around the Covid-19 restrictions and, moving forward, any new homes will have the new Wi-Fi requirements built into the specifications from the outset.

- Laptops were delivered to children and young people who were identified as requiring one under the national government scheme. This includes children in care including those out of county in foster care and residential children's homes. Where children did not have internet access, they were also provided with a 4G router.

This helped young people to stay in touch with friends, family and workers during lockdown, and to help with schoolwork during virtual lessons.



- Looked After Reviews were facilitated on Microsoft Teams, and the Independent Reviewing Officer service devised five questions to be sent to the children, young people and their carers/family after every meeting to capture their views and feed into any improvement work for the service.
- The number of children and young people attending meetings increased by a third in April 2020 in comparison to March 2020, which was really good to see.

- Digital family time sessions were supported and were able to continue in line with Covid regulations. The following feedback was received:

“We are so grateful we are getting to see him like this and see how he’s changing. We know every day when we’re getting up that we’re getting something from him. It’s getting us through the week, we don’t know what we would do without this.”

“Thank you so much for the regular updates about my children, I miss them and love them more than anything in this world! I’m so very grateful for all communication the Local Authority allow me to have with them.”

“It has been brilliant just to see their faces during this awful time, I am so pleased your service offered this to us so I could still get to see them.”

- Although lots of work has been done around language, young people felt that the word ‘vulnerable’ was being overly used during the pandemic. The young people don’t like to be referred to as being vulnerable, because many of them do not feel as if they are actually vulnerable.

Work will take place to look at the use of the word across the service, and it is hoped that this will improve as we move on from the pandemic.

- Young people have continued to deliver training sessions.
 - Children in Care Council (CICC) members delivered development sessions to 48 Durham and Sunderland University social work students about the importance of language and gave an overview of what Durham County Council have done to develop relationships with the young people.
 - Between October 2020 and March 2021, training has been delivered virtually by the CICC to 32 future foster carers over three sessions. Younger CICC members shadowed this training so that they will be able to get involved in the delivery in the future.
 - Over 50 designated teacher leads participated in virtual development sessions, led by CICC members, amplifying key messages about how education and support should work best for the young people. The future aim for CICC is to support the development of a school-based education policy for care experienced young people in line with Durham Virtual School Team.
- Investing in Children are working with 45 Durham County Council teams, who have achieved the Investing in Children's membership award or are working towards this, including Children Looked After Teams, Families First Teams and One Point Centres. 18 of these teams have the Investing in Children Gold Award, for being awarded membership over a 10-year period.



- In terms of the health and mental health of our children in care, the County Durham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) increased its workforce by appointing a dedicated Designated Nurse for looked after children adding to those already in designated safeguarding and looked after children roles.

The CCG has continued to work with health and council colleagues to improve the timeliness of initial health assessments and the availability of health plans at the first looked after review.

The CCG has also been working with the Fostering Network towards achieving a Fostering Friendly Employer Award.

- County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust (CDDFT) has continued to deliver initial health assessments during the pandemic, initially these were virtual assessments, but each child has also had a follow up face to face appointment to ensure a thorough health assessment was undertaken. An audit was also undertaken to compare what was discussed in the virtual and the face to face appointments and learning will be shared.
- Harrogate and District Foundation Trust appointed two specialist nurses for children in care, which has enabled us to:
 - engage with a young person in a residential care home who had previously refused to participate in their last two review health assessments,
 - support a young person with a complex hospital appointment to ensure all health needs are being met,
 - support all children in residential care homes and children at home placed with parents on a care order on a regular basis.
- Young people suggested that 'social worker profiles' are created for young people so that they have their work contact details but also get to know a little bit about their social workers e.g. if they have children, if they have any pets, any likes or dislikes, what their favourite food is, what movies they like etc. It was felt that this would help give young

people something to talk to them about in the early days.

The young people said that they would like the cards to have a picture of their social worker on so that this can form part of their care experience journey.

- We received a request from the Children's Commissioner for England's Office to gather the views of our children in care and care leavers to inform an update of the National Police Chiefs' Council's strategy on policing children and young people. The aim was to ensure the strategy is based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and has children's rights front and centre.

The Children's Commissioner's office hosted focus groups with the CICC to get young people's views. From these, a number of recommendations were pulled together by the Children's Commissioner's Office and handed over to the National Police Chiefs' Council to use to inform their strategy. Feedback from this work will be used to inform service decisions moving forward.

Young people said that in some cases the police had said to them that they were going 'on holiday' when in fact they were being placed in care.

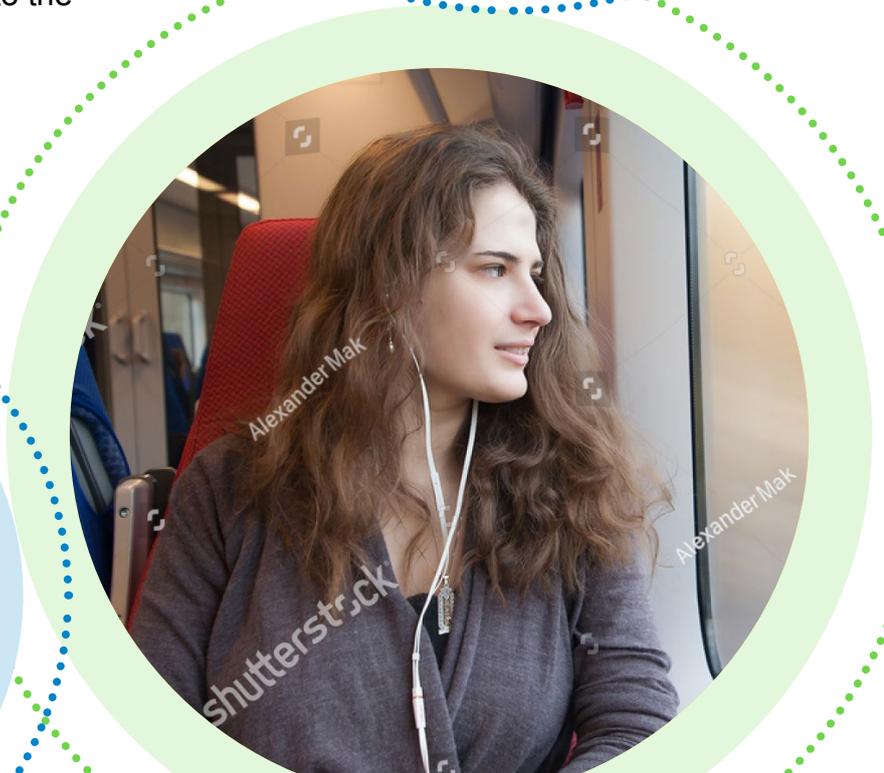


- Five CICC members were involved in a collaborative project with South Tyneside Council, Blue Cabin and Liverpool Hope University (funded by the Department for Education) to work with Children in Care Councils to understand what has happened during the Covid-19 pandemic. The aim is to establish what worked well/not so well and share this learning.
- The young people shared how the Durham CICC and Durham County Council's Corporate Parenting Panel connected virtually and maintained good communication channels during this difficult period.



Priorities for 2021/22

- Transport – again following the Care Leavers Challenge, how we can support young people with their transport issues and costs which eat up a large proportion of budget and are a significant barrier to travel for education, work and social activities.
- Ensure that we consistently use child friendly language across our services based on the feedback from children and young people.
- Care Experienced Young Inspectors – roll out the programme which has been on hold due to the pandemic – as outlined on page 8.
- Sessional employment – paid opportunities to be involved with County Council activities such as events to gain skills and experience.



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