



Corporate Parenting Panel

Date Friday 15 October 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 Friday 24 September 2021
(Pages 3 - 14)
4. Declarations of Interest
5. Number of Looked After Children - Verbal Update from Head of Children's Social Care
6. Proud moments - Verbal Update
7. Actions in response to Ofsted focused visit to Children's Services - Presentation by Head of Children's Social Care (Pages 15 - 20)
8. Investing in Children / Children in Care Council Update - Presentation by Project Officer, Investing in Children (Pages 21 - 22)
9. Performance Update - Report of Corporate Equality and Strategy Manager (Pages 23 - 36)
10. Annual Report on the Adoption Service: April 2020 - March 2021 - Report of Head of Regional Adoption Agency (Pages 37 - 54)
11. Full Circle Service Update - Presentation by Strategic Manager, Full Circle and Supporting Solutions Service (Pages 55 - 60)
12. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.
13. 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)

14. Regulation 44 Visits and Regulatory Body ratings of Children's Residential Homes - Report of Head of Children's Social Care and Head of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children (Pages 61 - 68)
15. 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
7 October 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, B Coult, J Charlton, S Deinali, C Fletcher, J Griffiths, O Gunn, T Henderson, C Hood, C Hunt, J Miller, K Robson, K Rooney, A Surtees, S Townsend, C Varty

Co-opted Members

C Baines, J Bell, L Burns, A Ferguson, W Taylor
Young persons representative of the Children in Care Council

Contact: Jill Hogg

Tel: 03000 269 711

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of Corporate Parenting Panel held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on Friday 24 September 2021 at 9.30 am

Present:

Councillor M Simmons in the Chair

Panel Members:

Councillors Adcock-Foster, Bainbridge, Bell, Coult, Deinali, Griffiths, Gunn, Henderson, Hood, Hunt, Miller, Roberts (substituting for Councillor Townsend) Robson, Rooney, Surtees, Varty and Walton

Co-opted Members:

C Gray, H McFarlane (substituting for A Ferguson) and W Taylor

Also Present:

Kelsey Clayton – Legal Services Manager

Helen Fergusson - Head of Children's Social Care

Lindsey Herring – Project Manager, Children and Young People's Accommodation Sufficiency

Robert Johnson - Project Manager, Investing in Children (with Caitlyn Gray – representing the Children in Care Council)

Claire Morris – Strategic Manager, Looked After Resources

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

Melanie Stubbs – Head of the Virtual School

Jayne Watson – Senior Partnerships Officer

Lisa Wood – Strategic Manager, First Contact and Specialist Countywide Service

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Charlton and Townsend and from Co-opted Members C Baines, A Ferguson and M Green.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor Roberts was in attendance for Councillor Townsend and Heather McFarlane, Designated Nurse, Safeguarding and Children Looked After attended for Co-opted Member, Alison Ferguson.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The following matters arising were reported.

Referring to agenda item 5 of the minutes, the Senior Partnerships Officer provided details of appointments to sub-groups as follows:

- Fostering Panel - Councillors Simmons, Hunt, Varty and Miller
- Aycliffe Secure Centre - Councillors Walton, Hunt, Deinali, Coul and Varty
- Aycliffe Secure Centre Schools Group – Councillors Deinali and Varty

The Panel noted that Regulation 44 representatives will be aligned to residential homes in due course.

Members were asked to consider vacancies on the Virtual School sub-group and the Head of the Virtual School, Melanie Stubbs, offered to provide further details on the role to those interested in obtaining further information.

The Senior Partnerships Officer reminded the Panel that the joint meeting of the Children in Care Council and Corporate Parenting Panel will be held on Tuesday 19 October at 5.30 pm at the Sjovell Centre. Members were encouraged to attend the event.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Number of Looked After Children

The Head of Children's Social Care reported that the number of children looked after stood at 912, which was a significant reduction on the figure reported in July. With proceedings gradually returning to normal following the pandemic, an increasing number of children and young people are moving into their more permanent arrangements.

6 Ofsted focused visit to Children's Services

The Head of Children's Social Care updated the Panel on Ofsted's two-day focused visit to Children's Services which took place remotely on 13 and 14 July and looked at Durham County Council's arrangements for children in care.

The Head of Children's Social Care highlighted the key findings set out in the Ofsted letter which was published on 23 August 2021 (for copy of letter see file of minutes).

The inspection identified a range of strengths and recognised that the service knows its children well, with Ofsted commenting that the self-assessment provided an accurate picture of children in care. The letter identified areas of strong performance including that social workers were very positive about working for Durham and receive good support and supervision. Positive feedback was received on the quality of social workers, with Ofsted finding that most children in care are making good progress; that their needs are understood and high-quality care plans are in place. The wide range of specialist support available, including the Full Circle and Supporting Solutions was highlighted. The letter also commented that children and young people at risk of exploitation and missing from care are provided with a prompt response. Ofsted acknowledged the processes in place to listen to the views of children and young people and to ensure their views positively impact service delivery. Inspectors were extremely complimentary about the Children in Care Council, having had the opportunity to meet representatives, to hear about their experiences and achievements.

The Head of Children's Social Care explained that in the service's submission to Ofsted, challenges were recognised, particularly in the area of placement sufficiency, which is a national issue. Ofsted found there were no risks to children, however, some process issues were identified which included two areas for priority action and one area for improvement. The Head of Children's Social Care informed the Panel that an action plan is being developed to address these issues and an update on the service's response will be provided at the Corporate Parenting Panel meeting in October.

Councillor Gunn praised the Head of Children's Social Care and her team for the good outcome and observed that regulations may cause difficulties for local authorities when placing challenging young people, which can hamper improvements in this area. Adding her thanks to the Head of Children's Social Care and the team, Councillor Walton, Vice-Chair, commented on the excellent strengths, adding that the feedback with regard to how the service strives to ensure the young people's views are taken into account is particularly pleasing. The Vice-Chair assured the Head of Children's Social Care that the Panel will support the service with regard to the areas for action and improvement.

7 ADCS North East Submission to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care

The Head of Children's Social Care referred to the independent review of Children's Social Care which was commissioned by the Department for Education in March 2021. This is a national piece of work into the delivery of Children's Social Care Services. The Panel heard that the work includes extensive consultation with stakeholders and young people, with representatives of the Children in Care Council, including Mitchell Green, submitting their views.

The ADCS North East Submission to the Independent review (for copy see file) was commissioned by the 12 directors of Children's Services to reflect their views as statutory leaders, and has been submitted as part of the independent review. The Head of Children's Social Care referred to the issues raised by Councillor Gunn in the previous item and informed the Panel that the review aims to address these issues, with the challenge in respect of sufficiency being a central part of the review. Councillor Gunn responded that she would be grateful for further information in due course. The Head of Children's Social Care agreed to circulate the 'case for change' document and update the Panel on learning from the review, as work progresses.

8 Investing in Children / Children in Care Council (CiCC) Update

The Panel welcomed Robert Johnson from Investing in Children and Caitlyn Gray, representing the young people of the Children in Care Council who were in attendance to provide an update on the CiCC's recent activities, including the following (for copy of presentation see file):

- Caitlyn explained that she was one the young people who had met with the Ofsted inspectors during their focused visit in July and she spoke of how much she had enjoyed talking to the inspectors and how she was pleased to see their excellent feedback.
- The recent CiCC training session with the police had resulted in very positive feedback and follow-up work will take place.
- A research project is being undertaken into the experiences of the young people of the CiCC during lockdown in order to identify the young people's views and to look at how the findings can be shared.
- Virtual foster care training had taken place and meetings are returning 'in person' as COVID-19 restrictions are eased. CiCC members led the training with input from new members and the feedback from foster carers was excellent.

- Peer mentor training took place over the summer for CiCC members and a meeting will be held in October, with 5-10 year olds, at which older members will be leading the session and answering questions from the younger members, about the Children in Care Council.
- CiCC members are contributing to the development of ‘young people friendly’ care and health plans.
- Caitlyn informed the Panel that whilst Mitchell and Lesley are now studying at university they are continuing to support members of the CiCC to attend future Corporate Parenting Panel meetings from January 2022.

The Panel congratulated all the young people who had studied for exams over the summer and thanked Caitlyn for her comprehensive presentation adding that she is an excellent mentor for the new representatives who will be coming along to future meetings. The Panel placed on record their thanks to the young people of the Children in Care Council for their input which is valued by the Corporate Parenting Panel to inform the programme of work. The Panel also recognised that the CiCC has a wide reach and their views are reflected in work across the Council’s services, as well as being considered by key partner organisations. Members commented on the commitment shown by the young people, observing it is clear that officers and members are very proud of the young people.

Robert Johnson, Project Officer, encouraged members to attend the joint meeting on 19 October, as the young people are working on creative plans for the event. The Chair commented on how much she looks forward to these joint meetings and encouraged Panel members to attend.

9 Annual Performance Report – Supporting Solutions

The Panel received a report on the activity and development of the Supporting Solutions Service from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 presented by Lisa Wood, Strategic Manager, First Contact and Specialist Countywide Service (for copy see file).

The Strategic Manager informed the Panel that the Supporting Solutions Service is continuing to develop the service to meet the needs of young people, parents, and carers. The offer of support includes Edge of Care support, Family Group Conferences, a Missing from Home Co-ordinator, Child Exploitation Workers and access to crisis beds. The Panel heard how the service had maintained its offer throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure families continue to have access to support, with all young people on the edge of care having access to the same level of support as had been available to them, prior to the pandemic.

The service has recognised that there is an increasing number of children of a younger age presenting on the edge of care and a pilot project 'Edge of Care Minis' has been established to support 7-11 year olds.

The service has also responded to the need for extra support from families experiencing domestic abuse, with a full time worker from the Domestic Abuse Team being seconded to the service. In addition, a dedicated Child Exploitation worker is available to work with those at risk of exploitation and an additional Missing from Home Coordinator has been appointed to ensure return to home interviews are offered in a timely manner.

The Strategic Manager for First Contact and Specialist Countywide Service then responded to questions and comments as follows.

The Vice-Chair asked how the service has expanded to provide support to young people under the age of 11. The Strategic Manager explained that the service was developed in 2018 and the young people presenting on the edge of care at that time were predominantly aged 14-18 years. However during the first year, a demand from those aged 11-14 was observed and new members of staff were employed as a response. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there had been an increase in those aged under-11 requiring the service and the 'Edge of Care Minis' pilot was established to address the demand.

Councillor Surtees welcomed the work with regard to domestic abuse, with the appointment of a dedicated Domestic Abuse worker, and stressed the importance of the focus on the child in families where domestic abuse is a factor.

Councillor Varty spoke anecdotally about the Edge of Care staff showing great enthusiasm in their work and how she has confidence that family group conferencing is successful. She encouraged staff to keep up the good work.

Councillor Coulter enquired about the number of young people who repeatedly go missing from home. The Strategic Manager responded that the majority of young people who go missing from home go missing on only one occasion. However, each time a child goes missing from home, a return to home session is held. When a child goes missing from home three times in one month, a multi-agency meeting is held, and, if required, a formal strategy is put in place to ensure the child is safe. The Strategic Manager also noted that during lockdown a lot of activities, such as meeting friends were prohibited, so if young people did this they could be classed as missing from home.

Councillor Miller commented on the pleasing progress with regard to the reduction in risk for young people at risk of exploitation. The Head of Children's Social Care echoed Councillor Miller's comments, saying she was proud of the developments in the service and she congratulated the team on being shortlisted for a Local Government Chronicle national award, which is testament to their hard work.

Heather McFarlane, Designated Nurse for Safeguarding and Children Looked After asked the Strategic Manager whether the service feels it receives the necessary support when children who require health interventions go missing from home. The Strategic Manager replied that health colleagues are very much a core and part of the team, however, there is always more to do in terms of joint awareness and training on early warning signs and sexual health and it was agreed that Heather would discuss link-working with the Strategic Manager.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

10 Fostering Service Annual Report 2020-21

The Panel received the Fostering Service Annual Report for 2020-21 presented by Claire Morris, Strategic Manager for Resources (for copy of report and presentation see file).

The Strategic Manger spoke of the competitive nature of foster care recruitment and informed the Panel of improvements made to the marketing campaign which is taking a more targeted and personalised approach. In addition, the service has embraced virtual ways of working and is using social media in order to reach a wider audience and increase accessibility. The campaign is also seeking to dispel myths around foster caring and to promote open dialogue around aspects which are often difficult to discuss, such as finance. The campaign seeks to highlight the unique selling points that Durham has to offer, such as the wide support offer available. The service has recognised that some of the processes involved in becoming a foster carer can be onerous and steps have been taken to streamline these processes and increase the support available. The Strategic Manager referred the Panel to links included in the presentation to local radio campaigns which were aired during fostering fortnight and she thanked all those involved in their production, including Caitlyn and the young people of the CiCC. The Strategic Manager then explained the Family Finding activity which supports foster families to promote stability and prevent unplanned moves. Through this, families are supported and encouraged to consider the challenges ahead.

In addition, the training offer has been updated with increased investment and a tailor-made programme for foster carers, with the programme being designed in consultation with foster carers and children and young people. Alongside this, is an improved data recording system to inform service plans for the future.

The Strategic Manager concluded by outlining the priorities for the future including the continuation of recruitment of, and support for, foster carers, preventing unplanned moves, improving management oversight and promoting the voice of the child.

The Strategic Manager responded to questions and comments as follows.

The Vice-Chair asked if there was information available as to why some people enquire about fostering but decide not to take the enquiry further. The Strategic Manager pointed out that a number of enquiries are made by competitors who are merely gathering information about Durham's offer. Others approach the service for information with a view to becoming a foster carer at some point in the future. Some are not able to make lifestyle changes required, such as giving up smoking. The Strategic Manager stressed the importance of monitoring the data in relation to the drop-off rate, which is not a cause for concern at present and it is hoped that the improved marketing strategy will provide better information and answer some questions so that prospective foster carers can make an informed choice, prior to the initial point of enquiry.

Heather McFarlane spoke from experience when supporting foster carers and commented that some health aspects, such as sexual health were areas of concern on a frequent basis. Referring to foster carer training, she asked whether the training involves local / national health providers and experts. The Strategic Manager explained that training includes input from experts and links with health colleagues with regard to training and marketing, however this is under constant review to ensure needs are met.

Councillor Miller observed that the drop-off rate in 2020-21 is worse than in the previous year and asked how many foster carers the service would like to recruit. The Strategic Manager pointed out that the pandemic had been a uniquely challenging time and many people had been re-evaluating their lives and looking at different avenues, including fostering, without following through at the present time. However, the analysis of data indicates there is no suggestion that the marketing message is lacking. With regard to the number of foster carers, this is managed through analysing the number of foster carers leaving the service and the number of children and young people entering the care system and this informs the number of foster carers that are required to be recruited.

There is, however, no upper limit to the amount of foster carers recruited, therefore applications for new foster carers will always be accepted.

With regard to training, Councillor Hunt emphasised the power of hearing the experiences of young people who have lived happily with foster families and how they have gone on to achieve great success as adults.

Councillor Gunn thanked the Strategic Manager for the comprehensive report and said that one of the most compelling marketing campaigns she recalls is one in which an officer, whose family included foster children, spoke of the positive experience. Councillor Gunn also highlighted the importance of learning from, and mentoring by, experienced foster carers.

The Strategic Manager agreed that success stories and personal experiences send a very powerful message, therefore they are being used in the marketing campaigns. She added that a number of support sessions and groups are held with experienced foster carers and whilst virtual meetings are very useful, the value of learning from each other, in person, cannot be under estimated.

Resolved:

That the report be received.

11 Proud Moments

The Strategic Manager spoke of how the service endeavours to raise the profile of the young people looked after, however, as Panel members have observed in the meetings, Caitlyn and the representatives of the CiCC are making this task very easy for officers, as they are doing such a great job.

The Panel heard about a young person in care who had suffered a number of traumas which had a long-lasting impact on this young person who had, as a result, missed much of their education. With support from their family, the Virtual School and other professionals, the young person had grown stronger and on their trial day at work, they were offered the position. The Strategic Manager acknowledged this well-deserved achievement for the young person, who had shown great strength in the face of adversity, adding that it is hoped this is just the beginning of a very bright future. Members echoed these comments and wished the young person continued success.

12 Regulation 44 Visits Update

The Project Manager for Children and Young People's Accommodation Sufficiency presented the Regulation 44 Visits Update which provided an update on the plans in place to deliver Regulation 44 visits across all Children's Homes operated by Durham County Council (for copy of report see file).

The Panel heard how the Corporate Parenting Panel agreed with plans to outsource the Regulation 44 function at a meeting held in February 2021. An open procurement process was carried out over the summer and NYAS (National Youth Advocacy Service) was awarded the contract, which commenced on 1 September 2021.

Meetings will be held with NYAS to review the findings and recommendations identified in Regulation 44 visits. This information will be used to continually review and improve residential care provision.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

13 Exclusion of the public

Resolved:

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

14 Regulation 44 Visits 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 conflicts of interest with sub-group representation, will be addressed when aligning Regulation 44 representatives to Aycliffe Secure Centre residential homes.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

15 Any other business

The Head of the Virtual School spoke to the Panel about the work of the Virtual School Sub-Group and several members volunteered to be appointed.

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Actions in response to Ofsted Focussed Visit - July 2021

Build on strengths identified

- Continue to embed the Signs of Safety Practice Framework
- Continue to implement the current, successful workforce strategy to ensure we continue to have a high quality, highly skilled social care workforce who choose to remain working in Durham
- Continued focus on ensuring every child has a good quality care plan which they understand and which makes a difference to them and improves their life
- Continued focus on supporting managers to provide high quality reflective supervision to their staff which supports good planning for children

Quality of plans for minority of children living with connected persons

- Resolve current arrangements through existing legal processes
- Training and awareness raising with social workers, managers, legal colleagues, CAFCAS and Judiciary
- Audit of assessments and decision making relating to connected carers
- Peer review

Sufficiency of placements for children in care

- Deliver on key actions within the Sufficiency Strategy 2018 / 2021
<https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/19179/Sufficiency-and-Commissioning-Strategy-for-Looked-After-Children-and-Care-Leavers>
- Foster care recruitment campaign
- Focus on ensuring high quality support and training for carers to support high levels of retention including ‘Mockingbird’ model
- Work with regional colleagues to review and re procure the contract for Independent Fostering Agencies – March 2022
- Open new children’s homes: Edge of care home; 4 x 2 bed and 3 x 3 bed (2021-25)
- Develop and deliver a workforce strategy dedicated to residential services
- Work with private providers locally to develop the ‘Durham First’ approach

Quality of assessments for young people living in supported accommodation

- Ensure up to date assessments for all young people living in supported living arrangements – November 2021
- Senior manager to chair panel to oversee these arrangements
- Work with commissioning colleagues to increase number and choice of options for young people – March 2022
- Work with Independent Reviewing Officers to ensure robust oversight of these arrangements

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



Promoting the Rights of Children and Young People



- Peer Mentor developments and aims.
- IIC art café connected with CiCC members.
- Challenging stigma and breaking down barriers.
- CPP joint event - why it's important – establish ideas and hearing from young people.
- CiCC member's fundraising awareness raising.
- Foster Care Training Progress.

Durham Children in Care Council - Update September 21

Durham Children in Care Council - Update September 21

- Celebrate Me Awards – why they are important.
- Children and Young People Now Magazine National Nomination – Summer Pack Project 2021 #Positive Story.
- #TeamEffort involving CICC members, IiC staff time and DCC staff input.



Corporate Parenting Panel

15 October 2021



Performance update

Report of Stephen Tracey, Corporate Equality and Strategy Manager, Durham County Council

Electoral division(s) affected:

None

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of the report is to provide the Corporate Parenting Panel with an overview of performance in relation to looked after children and care leavers.

Executive summary

- 2 Stephen Tracey, the Corporate Equality and Strategy Manager will present an overview of performance at the meeting.

Recommendation(s)

- 3 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to note information contained within the report and comment accordingly.

Background

- 4 Until March 2020, members of the Corporate Parenting Panel received quarterly performance updates to ensure they were sighted on performance within County Durham, along with relevant comparisons to our statistical neighbours.
- 5 As a result of the pandemic, and subsequent cancelling of Corporate Parenting Panel meetings, members were receiving monthly briefing notes, however these did not contain the same level of performance information.
- 6 This is a return to the usual Corporate Parenting Panel Performance Scorecard (attached as Appendix 2).

Conclusion

- 7 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel will be sighted on performance in relation to looked after children and care leavers, and will have an opportunity to discuss performance at the meeting.

Author

Stephen Tracey Tel: 03000 268029

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

We have a duty to comply with all statutory duties in relation to the children and young people who are in the care of DCC

Finance

NA

Consultation

NA

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

NA

Climate Change

NA

Human Rights

NA

Crime and Disorder

NA

Staffing

Staffing within Children's Services will impact upon social worker caseloads

Accommodation

NA

Risk

Reputational risk to the Council and Corporate Parenting Panel if it is not judged to be performing effectively by Ofsted

Procurement

NA

Appendix 2: Q1 Performance Scorecare

Attached as a separate document

County Durham Corporate Parenting Panel: Performance Management Framework

NNND - No New Data

What are the characteristics of our cohort of children in care and care leavers?

Measure	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21 [Provisional]	Q1 2021/22	England	North East	Stat Neighbour
Rate of CLA per 10,000 u18 population [Number]	82.9 [833]	90 [914]	93.5 [949]	92.7 [937]	65	101	94
Age and length of time in care			See chart 1		N/A	N/A	N/A
CLA Placement breakdown			See chart 2		N/A	N/A	N/A
Percentage of CLA placed over 20 miles (outside LA boundary)	7	10	8.7		16	10	9
Number of children placed for adoption	25	75	39	34	N/A	N/A	N/A
Percentage of CLA who are unaccompanied asylum seeking children [Number] u18	0.4% [3]	0.1% [1/914]	0.1% [1/949]	0.6% [5/900]	6	1	1
Social worker caseloads			See chart 3	See chart 3	N/A	N/A	N/A

Do our partner agencies understand their role in supporting us as corporate parents?

Measure	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21 [Provisional]	Q1 2021/22	England	North East	Stat Neighbour
Number of CLA reported as missing or absent from care [occurrences]							
Percentage of Return to Home Interviews completed with CLA (where accepted)							
Percentage of CLA with a missing incident during the year	5.0%	5.5%	7.3%	NND	11	10	11
Percentage of children on Child Exploitation and Vulnerability Tracker that were CLA			14% [3/22]	14% [3/22]			
Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire - Average score	NND	13.6	13.5	NND	14.1	14.2	14
Percentage of CLA achieving the expected <u>Key Stage 1</u> standard in: <i>Reading</i>	46.7%	NND		NND	51% (2017/18)	55% (2017/18)	
<i>Writing</i>	26.7%	NND		NND	42% (2017/18)	48% (2017/18)	
<i>Maths</i>	33.3%	NND		NND	46% (2016/17)	49% (2016/17)	
Percentage of CLA achieving the expected <u>Key Stage 2</u> standard in Reading, Writing and Maths	36.6%	55%		NND	37%	47%	40%
Average Attainment 8 score of Children Looked After (<u>Key Stage 4</u>)	23.2	25.6	20.5	NND			

Measure	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21 [Provisional]	Q1 2021/22	England	North East	Stat Neighbour
Percentage of CLA permanently excluded [number of children]	NND	NND		NND	0.1% (2016/17)		
Percentage of CLA with at least one fixed exclusion from school [number of children]	NND	NND		NND	11.8% (2016/17)	10.4% (2016/17)	10.7% (2016/17)
Percentage of CLA classed as persistent absentees (Maintained schools)	6.9%	NND		NND	10.6% (2017/18)	9.5% (2017/18)	8.9% (2017/18)
Percentage of children looked after continuously for 12 months or more aged 10+ who received a conviction [number of children]	4.6% [17]	3% [11]	2.8% [11]	NND	3.0%	4.0%	3.8%

The Virtual School Head produces an annual report which provides a detailed overview of educational attainment and attendance of Durham's CLA

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?

Measure	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21 [Provisional]	Q1 2021/22	England	North East	Stat Neighbour
Number of CLA accessing an independent visitor			16	21			

Work is ongoing to determine how the Voice of the Child is captured within County Durham

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

Not evidenced through performance measures

Are we providing stable environments for children in our care?

Measure	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21 [Provisional]	Q1 2021/22	England	North East	Stat Neighbour
Percentage of CLA with 3 or more placements during the year	10.7% [90 of 840]	7.6% [70 / 922]	7.7% [73]	10.5% [98]	11	10	10
Percentage of CLA continuously for 2.5 years or more aged under 16 who were living in the same placement for at least 2 years	63.9% [195 of 305]	59.8 [201 / 336]	68.9% [233]	64.6% [265]	68	69	68
Average number of days between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted	430 [2015-18]	428 [2016-19]	443	442	376	N/A	N/A
Average number of days between an LA receiving court authority to place a child and the LA deciding on a match to an adoptive family, for children who have been adopted	NND	192 [2016-19]	179	163	178	N/A	N/A
Percentage of children adopted from care (as % of total children leaving care) [number of children adopted shown in brackets]	12.3 [39 of 316]	16% [55 / 352]	16.2% [54]	23.8% [24]	11.7	12	18.2
Number of Mainstream Foster Carers (Approved in period)	26	12	21	5	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of Friends and Family Foster Carers (Approved in period)	52	91	145	48	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of Adopters (Approved in period)	22	25	47	42	N/A	N/A	N/A

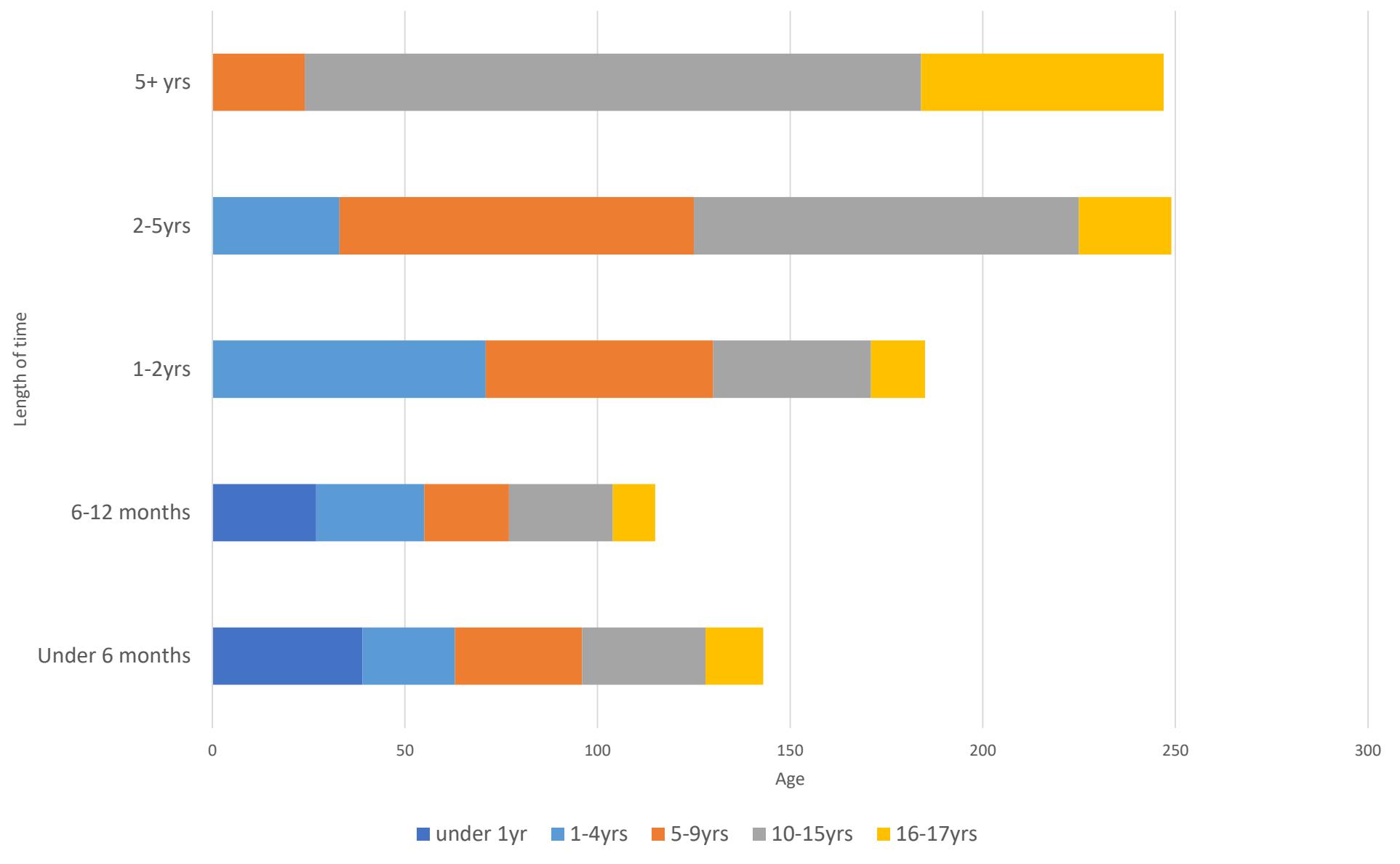
What are we doing to look after the health and wellbeing of children in our care?

Measure	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21 [Provisional]	Q1 2021/22	England	North East	Stat Neighbour
Initial Health Assessments completed within 20 working days of the child becoming looked after	63%	62%	74% [Q4]	57%	N/A	N/A	N/A
CLA with the required number of health assessments	1	94%	92%	90%	90	92	93
CLA who have had a dental check	85.5%	87%	41%	53%	86	86	89
Measure	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21 [Provisional]	Q1 2021/22	England	North East	Stat Neighbour
CLA whose immunisations were up-to-date	99.3%	99.0%	89.9%	NND	88	92	93.6
CLA whose development assessments were up to date	95.0%	97.0%	82.9%	NND	88	86	95.7
% CLA identified as having a substance misuse problem in the year	1.9%	2.0%	0.0%	NND	3	3	6
Percentage of new presentations to drug and alcohol treatment during period who were CLA [Number]	10% [18 of 185]	10% [21 of 216]	0.0%	NND	11%	N/A	N/A
Care leavers aged 17-21 who are pregnant or mothers (as a % of female care leavers)		26.3% [25/95]		24.8% [29/11]	N/A	N/A	N/A
Care leavers aged 17-25 who are pregnant or mothers (as a % of female care leavers)				27.6% [37/134]	N/A	N/A	N/A

What are outcomes like for our care leavers?

Measure	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21 [Provisional]	Q1 2021/22	England	North East	Stat Neighbour
Percentage of care leavers age 18-21 who have stayed with their foster care	N/A	N/A	N/A	7.1%			
Percentage of care leavers aged 17-18 in education, employment or training (EET)	63.9% [53 of 83]	65% [55 / 84]	75.6%	70.6%	64	63	65
Percentage of care leavers aged 17-18 in suitable accommodation	96.4% [80 of 83]	90% [76 / 84]	94.9%	95.0%	88	93	91
Percentage of care leavers aged 17-18 in higher education	0% [0]	0% [0]	0.0%	4.0%	3	3	0
Percentage of care leavers aged 19-21 in education, employment or training (EET)	54.0% [87 of 161]	54% [94 / 175]	55.8%	58.9%	53	52	53
Percentage of care leavers aged 19-21 in suitable accommodation	94.4% [152 of 161]	83% [144 / 174]	90.3%	93.0%	85	90	87
Percentage of care leavers aged 19-21 in higher education	8.7% [14 of 161]	20% [35 / 175]	5.6%	8.0%	6	7	8

Chart 1 - Length of time looked after by Age



Placement Mix (as at 20-Jun-21)

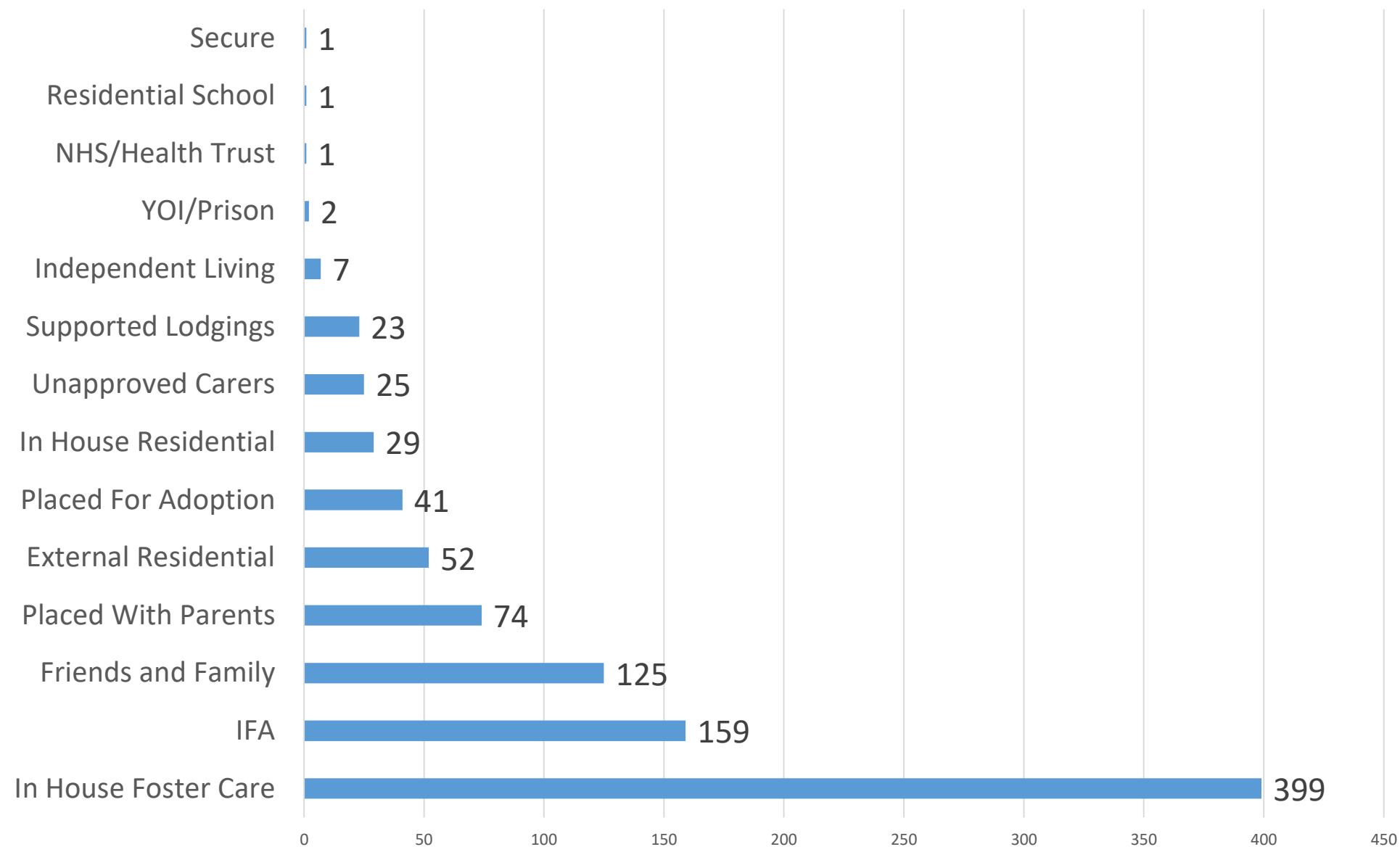
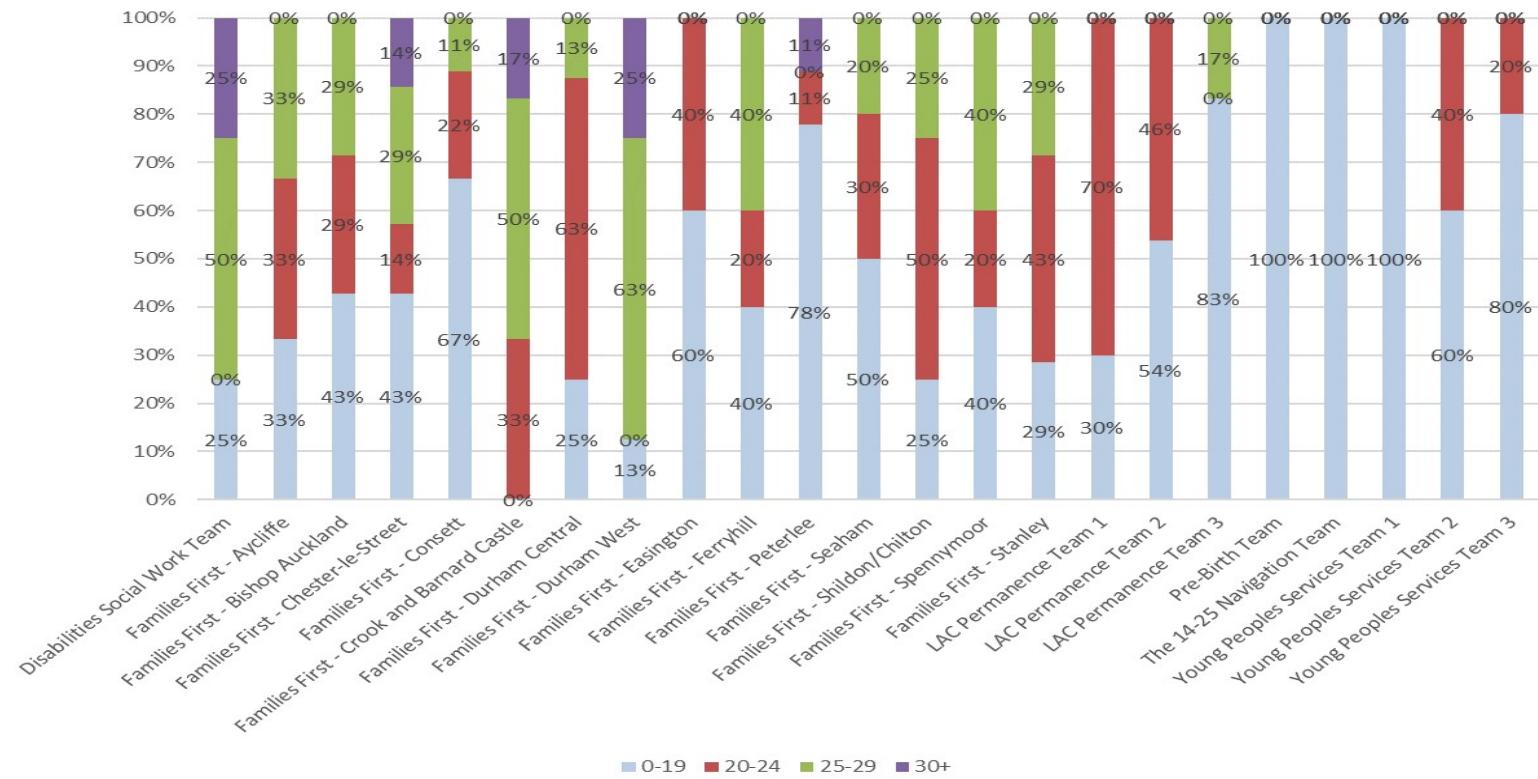


Chart 3 Caseload Breakdown by Team (SW/ASYE/YPA) - June 2021 WTE



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Corporate Parenting Panel**15 October 2021****Annual Report on the Adoption Service:
April 2020 – March 2021****Report of Paula Gibbons, Head of Service, Adopt Coast to Coast:
Cumbria, Durham and Together for Children/Sunderland****Electoral division(s) affected:**

None.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 This is the annual review of the Adoption Service report for 2020/21 including the identification of service priorities for 2021/22. National Minimum Standards 25.6 (2011) state that written reports are provided on the management, outcomes and financial state of the Agency every six months. Six monthly updates will be provided throughout 2021/22.

Executive summary

- 2 There has been a continued focus on recruiting sufficient adopters to meet the needs of children in Durham in 2020/21. Though the Adoption Team received a significantly reduced number of enquiries, 100 as opposed to 164 in 2019/20 and completed 51 initial visits, 41 prospective adopters were approved which is a striking increase on the previous year's figure of 25.
- 3 At the 31 March 2021, there were 9 prospective adopters in Stage 2 and 13 prospective adopters in Stage 1; this is potentially a further 22 families who will complete their adoption journey in 2020/21.
- 4 60 children have been matched at Panel. This is a slight decrease on the previous year's performance of 64 however this is in the context of court delays in the early part of 2020 which saw a temporary reduction in the number of Placement Orders being granted.
- 5 47 Adoption Orders have been achieved, which is a decrease of 8 on the previous year. As 46 children were living with their Prospective Adopters at 31 March 2021, it is projected that performance in this area will be significantly increased in the final report for 2021/22.
- 6 Actual gross expenditure on inter agency adoption placements has significantly decreased from £1.268 million in 2019-20 to £0.491 million. The focus and improved performance relating to the sufficiency of adopters within Durham to meet the needs of our children is a critical

part of the strategy to manage the budget associated with interagency adoption placements. The work of the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) to pool resources to match children to prospective adopters as quickly as possible will also support this work.

- 7 Expenditure on in house adoption allowances has slightly decreased from £0.879 million in 2019/20 to £0.827 million in 2020/21.
- 8 Adopt Coast to Coast launched on 1 April 2021 and the recruitment activity is led by a fulltime Communications and Marketing Officer in the Hub. There is a shared annual budget for recruitment, with each spoke contributing 1/3.

Recommendation

- 9 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are required to:
 - (a) Note the contents of the report and agree the proposed priorities as outlined in the Annual Report.

Background

- 10 This annual report sets out the previous performance and the direction of travel for the Adoption Team as a spoke in Adopt Coast to Coast.
- 11 The Adoption Team's improved performance in the numbers of prospective adopters approved and a reduced reliance on interagency placements are very positive as the team join colleagues in Cumbria and Together for Children (Sunderland) in our partnership RAA.
- 12 Adopt Coast to Coast was the 31st RAA to go live and it is important that the branding of Adopt Coast to Coast is recognised as well as its partnership with the three local authorities where the children's plans of adoption are agreed.

Main implications

- 13 Key priority areas for 2021/22:
 - (a) Panel Chairs annual report to be provided. Interim 6 monthly report for period 1 April – 30 September to be provided.
 - (b) To work collaboratively with our partners in Adopt Coast to Coast to recruit, assess and approve prospective adopters in a timely manner.
 - (c) To ensure children's plans of permanence via adoption are progressed without delay.
 - (d) Fostering for Adoption placements and matches to be identified at the earliest possible stage in children's planning to prevent delay and ensure minimal moves for children.
 - (e) To recruit new panel members to the central list. This will ensure quoracy and prevent the possible need to stand down a panel due to lack of available panel members.
 - (f) To embed signs of safety into practice and panel processes in line with the Durham model of social work practice.
 - (g) To increase relationship based practice with trauma informed service developments, particularly in the development and support of post adoption contact.

Conclusion

- 14 Please note the contents of the Adoption Service's Annual Report which highlights practice achieved in 2020/21 and sets the direction of travel for the remainder of this financial year.

Other useful documents

- Statement of Purpose (May 2021)

Author

Paula Gibbons Tel: 03000 265 235

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Section 3 Adoption and Children Act 2002 places a duty on each local authority to maintain within their area an adoption service designed to meet the needs of:

- (a) children who may be adopted, their parents and guardians,
- (b) persons wishing to adopt a child, and
- (c) adopted persons, their adoptive parents and natural parents

By making arrangements for the adoption of children and for the provision of adoption support services.

The Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 contain detailed requirements which local authorities must comply with in order to comply with this duty.

Finance

Expenditure on inter agency adoption payments had risen significantly to 2018-19 and the budget was increased to reflect the growth in activity. Inter agency placements have declined in more recent years and the budget has in part been reallocated to other priority areas within Children and Young People's Services (CYPS). The demand driven nature of the provision, availability of suitably matched agency prospective adopters combined with the impact of internal recruitment of prospective adopters on the requirement for interagency placements provides challenges in accurately forecasting demand and potential cost. The interagency fees are however one off payments and cost significantly less than a child in a long term fostering placement.

Consultation

None

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

None

Climate Change

None

Human Rights

None

Crime and Disorder

None

Staffing

None

Accommodation

None

Risk

None

Procurement

None

Appendix 2: Adoption Annual Report

Attached as a separate document

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Durham County Council

Adoption Service Annual Report

1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021

Adopt with us



Durham County Council Adoption Service

- The Head of Children's Social Care is Helen Fergusson.
- The Strategic Manager role of Agency Decision Maker (ADM) transferred to Jodie Henderson in February 2021 in her role as the Strategic Manager for Children Looked After and Permanence.
- Paula Gibbons was in role as the Adoption Team Manager until September 2020 when she took up her role as Head of Service for Adopt Coast to Coast. Following interim arrangements Barbara Arbon joined Durham in March 2020 as the permanent Adoption Team Manager. The Adoption Team Manager continues to be the Adoption Agency Advisor to the Panel.
- The Children Looked After Team 3, Team Manager continues to act as the Adoption Agency Advisor in respect of children's cases.
- The new staff appointed in the previous reporting period joined the Team and following a resignation further recruitment was necessary. The Adoption Team had permission to utilise the staffing budget underspend to offer a secondment opportunity to an internal candidate, which resulted in a half post (18.5 hrs) being over complement.
- A business case to increase staff numbers was approved and 2 full time social work posts and a Family Support Worker post were created. As this period concludes newly recruited staff are due to join in April 2021.
- Once fully staffed the Adoption Team will consist of a Team Manager, 2 Social Work Consultants, 10 (WTE) Social Workers, 1 (FT) Family Support Worker and be supported by dedicated business support for the Stage 1 process and the Adoption Panel.
- The Statement of Purpose was updated in March 2021 to reflect the Regional Adoption Agency and shared with the Adoption Team Manager and Strategic Manager for internal review, approval and publication. As per the The Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003, it is a statutory requirement that an amended copy is provided to OFSTED within 28 days of any amendment and included on the Adoption Service's website. This published report highlights the aims and objectives of the Adoption Service therefore they are not repeated in this report.

COVID-19 Pandemic

- The following achievements and challenges are within the context of an unprecedented period of time. It is to the credit of the staff of the Adoption Team and Panel Members that business was transferred to a virtual platform via Teams so quickly that performance remained high.

Adopters Journey

(Please refer to the dashboard in appendix 1 of this report)

Recruitment

- Initial enquiries reduced significantly from 164 in 2019/20 to 100 in this reporting period. However, the conversion rate from enquiry to approval remained at 41%.
- Monthly information drop in sessions were moved to Teams and this allowed them to be held later in the evening and weekend sessions were introduced. Ten information sessions were held, and 26 households attended. Though this is a decrease on the 62 households from 2019/20, attendance at this aspect of practice is optional and some families prefer to arrange an initial visit.
- 51 initial visits were completed, a small decrease of the 5 in the previous year. The majority of these were completed via Teams and this was not reported as a disadvantage by enquirers or staff. This is a conversion rate of 51% from enquiry, a significant increase from 34% in 2019/20.

Stage 1

- A named business support officer had responsibility for the Stage 1 process with the support of the Team Manager during this period. However, following a review of process at the end of this reporting period, the previous practice of cases being allocated to a Social Worker in Stage 1 is being reintroduced.
- Information, counselling, and preparation courses (ICP) have generally been held monthly. Due to the move to Teams on 1 May, the arrangement with Together for Children was suspended as their staff group did not initially have access to Teams. In this period 7 ICP courses have been facilitated and 35 families have attended, this is a significant increase on 19 families in the previous year.
- The Full Circle Therapeutic Team continue to support the work of all those working with children who have a plan of adoption. Day 4 of the ICP course for Durham prospective adopters is delivered by Full Circle and this supports our prospective adopters in beginning their journey by truly understanding the needs of children who require an adoptive placement and how they can parent therapeutically. Prior to a match being considered by the Panel the prospective adopters have a consultation with a member of Full Circle and this is highly valued and positively viewed by prospective adopters.
- The changes to practice following Adopt Coast to Coast going live on 1 April will be highlighted in the next bi-annual report.

Stage 2

- In this reporting period, 41 prospective adopters were approved, which is an increase on the 25 the previous year. At the end of this period, 1 prospective adoptive family did not have their approval recommended by the Panel. As the ADM was minded to agree with the Panel recommendation a ‘qualifying determination’ letter was sent. The outcome of this will be reported in the next report.
- In this period there was no income generation from Durham approved prospective adopters being utilised by other Local Authorities.
- The success of closer monitoring of the assessment which Adoption Social Workers complete in Stage 2 resulted in all assessments meeting the statutory 4-month

timescale which is from the date the Stage 2 agreement is signed by the prospective adopters to the ADM decision on their suitability to adopt.

- The Quality Assurance Visit introduced in the previous period and completed by the Team Manager at the completion of mainstream adoption assessments continue to be well received and valued by the prospective adopters and staff. The written reports from these visits continued to be positively commented on by Panel Members and the ADM.
- At the end of this period, there were 9 prospective adopters in Stage 2 and 13 prospective adopters in Stage 1; this is potentially 22 families who will complete their adoption journey in 2021/22.
- The annual number of children who have a plan of adoption agreed through the Court requires the Adoption Team to at least maintain the number of approved prospective adopters. The goal set for performance in 2020/21 was 31 and it is positive to highlight that this was exceeded by 10 prospective adopters.

Panel

- There were 27 Adoption Panel meetings held during the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 an increase of 1 on the previous year.
- A named business support officer continues to serve as the Adoption Panel Administrator for the fortnightly Panels. In this role she is involved from the ADM agreeing a child has a plan of adoption (as she is responsible for the statutory letters to birth parents) through to the post Panel administrative process. This is a crucial role in the performance of the Adoption Team and she was instrumental in supporting the Panel to move from paperless to virtual in a month as the Adoption Service responded to the practice restrictions of COVID-19.
- The Adoption Panel Independent Chairs, Agency Medical Advisors and Independent Panel Members continue to contribute to the training and preparation courses for prospective adopters. In this period 2 new Medical Advisors joined the Panel following the retirement of the previous postholder.
- Elected Members were represented on the Adoption Panel by 2 Councillors. New Elected Member representation is being sought following the 2021 elections.
- Following a review of the Central List process by the Team Manager, the Annual Appraisals for the Adoption Panel Members have been realigned to April, so all appraisals are completed at the same time.
- Two training opportunities were extended to Panel in this period: Fostering for Adoption Training and Lifestory work.

Child's Journey

- In this reporting period 74 children had an ADM decision for a plan of adoption which was a small decrease of 3 on the previous year.
- 58 were granted a Placement Order, a decrease of 8 on the previous year.
- 60 children have been matched at Panel. Though this is a decrease of 4 on the previous year, it remains an increase on the previous periods. Of the 60 children, 42 were placed with inhouse prospective adopters and 18 in interagency placements. This is a significant improving picture over the last 2 years; the ratio of in house to

interagency placements has improved from 2019/20 when it was 26 inhouse as against 38 interagency.

- Actual gross expenditure on inter agency adoption placements has significantly decreased from £1.268 million in 2019-20 to £0.491 million.
- 47 Adoption Orders have been achieved, which is a decrease of 8 on the previous year.
- 46 children placed with their prospective adopters in this period had not been secured via the granting of an Adoption Order at 31 March 2021.
- 10 children's plans (4 groups of 2 brothers and sisters) changed away from adoption after the Placement Order was granted - all were as a result of family finding not being successful due to their complex needs.
- The Adoption Service are starting the new reporting period 2020/21 with 27 children with an ADM decision, 31 with a Placement Order (14 of whom do not have a link) and 1 of these children have waited over 6 months for a match.
- A practice review completed in the last period resulted in a reduction of the number of days for a child to be matched from the granting of the Placement Order.
- Due to the increasing number of children who have plans for adoption agreed by the court, approval for the adoption service staffing complement to increase the number of in house adopters was approved as the reliance on Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs) is not only expensive but more importantly children experience drift and delay which ultimately impacts on the outcomes once permanency is achieved. Of note, the interagency fee is increasing from £32,063 to £32,320 in April 2021 for families bought from VAA's, whilst the local authority rate continues to remain static at £27,000.

Family Finding

- The allocation of a family finder once a Placement Order was granted continued in this period and through the oversight of the responsible Social Work Consultant this did not negatively impact on timescales for achieving a match. As the Adoption Service had more in house prospective adopters, and the responsibility for the match was allocated to the assessing social worker, this created more time for the 2 family finders to concentrate on those children whose needs could not be met within Durham's resources.
- Where children cannot be matched with in house prospective adopters, the family finders use a range of resources to identify a suitable external match. In line with best practice, where possible children remain in the North East as this ensures services and support is more readily available.
- In the RAA partnership which includes 4 VAA's, practice had to change to offer virtual profiling events rather than face to face. In 2020/21 there were 3 held; a decrease of 1 on the previous year. Where a Placement Order has not been achieved the children's information is anonymised as is that of the prospective adopters still in assessment. In respect of children, Durham only share the details of children where no in house link is achievable. From these events only 2 children were linked and both progressed to a match, an increase of 1 on the previous year.
- The concern raised in the previous period that not all of the VAAs were consistent in their engagement in the bi-monthly family finding meetings, was resolved. However,

the families available across the VAAs was not sufficient for all of the Durham children and 11 of the 18 placed via interagency were not placed with the 4 local VAAs.

- In the absence of local resources, the Family Finders have relied heavily on Linkmaker a national portal utilised by all Local Authorities and RAA's.
- No RAA partnership Activity Days were held in 2020/21 due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- The previous use of Fostering for Adoption by Durham has significantly slowed down and in this period only 5 babies were placed with a Fostering for Adoption Carer, 2 of the 5 prospective adopters were approved by Durham. The need to ensure all children who are suitable for a Fostering for Adoption placement have this consistency considered as part of care planning is acknowledged and the review and amendment of the Early Permanence Strategy and the 3 staff awareness raising sessions offered at the end of this reporting period are hoped to improve this area of performance.
- The majority of children with care plans of adoption and who are placed with prospective adopters have enjoyed stability and security in their new permanent families. The official categorisation of a disruption for the statutory return is where a pre-adoptive placement ends before the Adoption Order is granted. In this period there was 1 disruption of 2 sisters placed with a prospective adopter assessed by another Local Authority. A disruption meeting was held and chaired by a Durham Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). Though not classified as a disruption a placement did not proceed beyond the introductions phase of a single child with a prospective adopter assessed by a VAA. A multi-agency meeting was held to consider the learning from this case.

Post Adoption Support

- Due to staff absence, the business support dedicated to the Postbox arrangements was inconsistent in the first part of the year. However, since Summer 2020, an additional Business Support Team Leader has been working with colleagues to move the management of this critical aspect of adoption practice to Liquid Logic. The learning from complaints has resulted in significant changes to working practices. In recognition of the challenges, an Adoption Social Worker had their caseload changed temporarily to support the continued development of systems and review procedures with Business Support colleagues to improve the experience of Postbox for adopted children, their adoptive parents and birth families.
- We have 759 birth families involved in post adoption contact and as this service is provided until a child reaches 18 and is one of the few aspects of post adoption support that remains with the child's local authority, this number will continue to grow.
- Currently 66 families are receiving an adoption allowance with an associated budget of £0.827 million. This small reduction from £0.879 in 2019/20 is a result of the consistent approach introduced in regard to adoptive family's outgoings which has in some cases resulted in the family no longer receiving a payment.
- Due to national restrictions no face to face social events have been facilitated in this period. Adopt Coast to Coast hosted a September event for adopters across the region and the opportunity to run events alongside the other spokes will be considered in due course.
- The Adoption Support Services Adviser (ASSA) role is now held by the Adoption Team Manager.

- Successful applications to Adoption Support Fund (ASF) have increased from 100 in 2019/20 to 128 in this reporting period. This increase is indicative of an improving Post Adoption Support offer wholly managed within the Adoption Service.
- The funding received from ASF in 2020/21 was £0.337 million an increase of £0.053 million.
- Though adoptive family's location and their choice of therapeutic resource does mean that Full Circle are not the only provider funded by ASF, they remain most used. It is positive to note that in this reporting period they have retained their percentage (59%) of the successful applications.

Post Adoption Support Services

In reviewing the in house offer, a decision was reached not to commence a re-tendering process for the Service Level Agreement (SLA) in place with a local VAA. The funding associated with this SLA is going to be utilised for a Family Support Worker post who will be part of the staff group delivering the following functions:

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

This post is yet to be appointed to.

Non-Agency Adoption

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

- 61 enquiries which is a significant increase on the 35 in the previous reporting period
- 2 initial visits is a significant decrease on the previous 16, however this is as a direct result to changes in working and the recognised importance of face to face initial visits. This was a practice decision and took account of the Courts decision not to accept non-agency adoption applications due to the need to prioritise Care Proceedings. It is positive to note that enquirers have been accepting of the delay.
- 9 Adoption Orders granted
- 2 assessments completed but applications not submitted to Court
- 4 completed assessment in part heard proceedings
- 5 assessments currently underway

Most of this work is undertaken by a named part time Adoption Social Worker and allocations to other Adoption Social Workers have had mixed results due to a combination of the complexity of the work and the confidence of those undertaking it for the first time in a long time.

Complaints

In this reporting period the Service received 2 complaints involving the Adoption Service and the Children's Permanency Team. They were upheld in part and necessary aspects of practice were amended as required. One of the complaints is proceeding to Stage 2 of the complaints process and any additional learning will be shared with the relevant staff across the Children and Young People's directorate.

Regional Adoption Agency

Adopt Coast to Coast launched on 1 April 2021. Cumbria County Council, Durham County Council and Together for Children/Sunderland are the spokes that continue to deliver their local authorities statutory adoption functions. They do so under the coordination and support of a Head of Service who has overall responsibility for quality management and practice oversight. The recruitment and associated activity which includes the website, Facebook etc is managed in the Hub by a dedicated Communications and Marketing Officer.

The shared vision -

Coast to Coast will deliver high quality, adoption services across the three local authority areas, raising performance to the levels of the highest performing Adoption Agencies and improving outcomes for children across the region.

Update on 2020/21 priorities

Priority	Update	Progress
To develop the ethos of the team recognising that newly appointed staff will soon join.	Remote working has impacted on the development of relationships for new staff members.	Ongoing
To develop a learning culture within the Team that supports a wide-ranging review of practice with the goal of updating and improving practice to increase in house provision in preparation for a partnership RAA Model.	An enquiring and learning culture has been more in evidence over the last year and the improvement in practice is substantial.	Ongoing
To review the current Early Permanence Planning practice across other areas to embed models of early permanence for example Fostering for Adoption.	The strategy has been reviewed and staff engagement sessions completed. Practice will continue to be monitored so opportunities for children to be placed sooner are not missed.	Ongoing
Develop and launch training package for the Family and Friends of prospective adopters.	The development of individualised family support sessions has met this need and is being positively received by Panel.	Completed
Review and develop Liquid Logic to support practice and aide reporting on performance.	There was a delay in this commencing, however the development and testing has been completed and staff training/support is underway.	Nearing completion
Provide written reports twice yearly; April-September and October-March as required by 25.6 of the National Minimum Standards (2011).	Service Reports provided by Adoption Team Manager as required by statutory guidance.	Completed
Review adoption allowances procedure and embed a means test approach.	The review and consultation was completed in early 2021. However, the commencement of the new	Ongoing

	practice model was temporarily paused.	
Review and realign the ASSA role alongside developing the Post Adoption Support (PAS) offer directly from the Adoption Team.	The expertise of the new staff in PAS has enabled significant progress in a short timeframe.	Completed

Key priority areas for 2021/22:

- Panel Chairs annual report to be provided. As this has not previously been completed a 6 monthly one may be helpful in the next reporting period.
- To work collaboratively with our partners in Adopt Coast to Coast to recruit, assess and approve adopters in a timely manner.
- To ensure children's plans of permanence via adoption are progressed without delay.
- Fostering for adoption placements and matches are to be identified at the earliest possible stage in children's planning to prevent delay and ensure minimal moves for children.
- To recruit new panel members to the central list. This will ensure quoracy and prevent the possible need to stand a panel down due to lack of available panel members.
- To embed signs of safety into practice and panel processes in line with the Durham model of social work practice.
- To increase relationship based practice with trauma informed service developments, particularly in the development and support of post adoption contact.

Paula Gibbons

Head of Service, Adopt Coast to Coast

14 May 2021

Barbara Arbon

Adoption Team Manager

14 May 2021

Appendix 1 – Adopters Journey Dashboard



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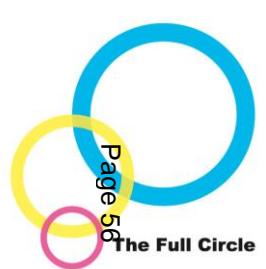
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The Full Circle

Michelle Summerbell

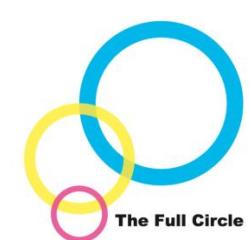
Team Manager, The Full Circle





Background

- Durham County Council is unique in that it has employed a therapeutic team continuously since 1995 in order to meet the mental health needs of the children and young people being supported by the Local Authority.
- Durham's therapeutic team, The Full Circle sits under the umbrella of Countywide Specialist Services and is a specialised, integrated children's mental health service for children particularly for those who have experienced complex trauma through neglect and abuse.
- The Team consists of therapeutically trained social workers, a Clinical Nurse Specialist and a Consultant Clinical Psychologist (both employed by NHS). The benefit Full Circle can provide in addition to private therapy providers is a more holistic approach, having a good understanding of social work and close links with care teams and professional support networks around a family.
- Complex childhood trauma can lead to developmental trauma - it can affect the way the child views themselves, others and the world around them, brain development and subsequently their social, emotional and educational progress.
- The impact of developmental trauma can reach long into adulthood. Effective and targeted services are therefore essential to mitigate the impact of trauma and support children to heal.

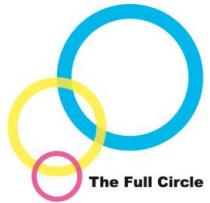


How do we work and what do we offer?

- The Full Circle service works right across children's services and early help, but the majority of our support is provided to children looked after and families seeking post-adoption support. This is because therapeutic support requires safety and stability around the children with all basic parenting in place.
- The Team has close links with agencies such as CAMHS and NSPCC and over time The Full Circle service has developed a positive and respected reputation, feeding into the development of local service provision.
- The Full Circle provides consultation, advice & guidance to parents, carers and a wide range of professionals.
- We also provide therapeutic support directly to children and young people (C&YP), their families and carers using a range of evidence-based approaches to therapeutic intervention.
- The Full Circle also provides training for professionals and carers around attachment difficulties, the impact of trauma on children and how to help them heal.

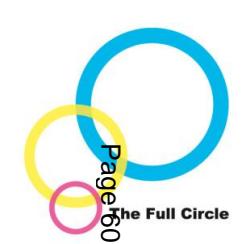
The benefits – a case study

- C was referred into Full Circle as the family were asking for some post-adoption support. C was 5 years old at the point of referral and her parents (adoptive) were experiencing challenges in caring for C whose past trauma had an impact as we know this is a factor even pre-birth.
- C was removed from her birth family at birth after assessment and periods of intervention due to concerns in regards to a chaotic home environment, substance misuse, violence in the home, inappropriate people frequenting the home and neglect and inconsistent care for C's siblings.
- C was subsequently placed in foster care and was adopted when she was 14 months old. C could often hit out, kick and bite others, this could also include other children in school. C required a high level of supervision and parents found it exhausting managing her behaviour all of the time. C's presentation and challenges in school also often meant her learning and social skills were significantly impacted.
- Training and direct therapeutic parenting support was provided for parents alongside school support and training and the outcome of intervention was a positive one. The situation was stabilised, C was more emotionally regulated and connected with her parents and those around her also gained a greater understanding of her hidden needs and how to meet these and help her to heal.
- Family feedback for Full Circle worker: *"Thank you so much for all of your help and support over the last year...your help has been invaluable to us as a family and I really don't think we could ever thank you enough. It literally changed our family for the better! Thank you so much from the bottom of our hearts"*



Key developments in 2020-2021

- Adapted working practices – COVID-19 response
- Trauma Informed approaches strategy roll-out
- Virtual schools pilot to improve support offer to looked after C&YP
- Traded services to extend the offer of support available to children in County Durham – adding value to current provision.



Summary of outcomes

- 593 referrals were received in 2020-2021 with an average of 195 cases open for ongoing work/support at any one time.
- Outcome measures identified that, 75% of children who had been open to Full Circle had improved outcomes across a range of areas.
- Ofsted feedback:

“Most children in care are making good progress. Their assessed needs are understood and addressed by high-quality care plans. Children have access to a wide range of specialised support such as the Full Circle therapeutic team and the Supporting Solutions intensive support team.” (July 2021)

“The therapeutic service provided by Full Circle is invaluable. Using evidence based research, the service is making a real difference to children who have been traumatised by adverse childhood experiences, as well as supporting their carers. “ (September 2019)

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