



Corporate Parenting Panel

Date **Friday 17 December 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 22 November 2021 (Pages 3 - 12)
4. Declarations of Interest
5. Number of Looked After Children - Verbal update by Head of Children's Social Care
6. Ofsted Updates - Verbal update by Head of Children's Social Care
7. Supporting Care Leavers into Education, Employment and Training - Report of Strategic Manager, Progression and Learning (Pages 13 - 20)
8. Performance Update - Report and Presentation by Corporate Equality and Strategy Manager (Pages 21 - 40)
9. Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Officer Service - Report of Operations Manager, Children and Young People's Services (Pages 41 - 54)
10. Proud Moments - Verbal update by Strategic Manager, Looked After Children Resources
11. Investing in Children / Children in Care Council Update - Presentation by Project Officer, Investing in Children (Pages 55 - 58)

12. Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2020/21 - Children Looked After Update (For Information only) (Pages 59 - 88)
13. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.
 - a) Fostering marketing and promotional resources
14. 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)

15. 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 89 - 108)
16. 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
9 December 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, S Deinali, C Fletcher, J Griffiths, O Gunn, T Henderson, C Hood, C Hunt, J Miller, J Nicholson, I Roberts, K Robson, K Rooney, 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 the **Corporate Parenting Panel** held in the **Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham** on **Monday 22 November 2021** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor M Simmons in the Chair

Members of the Panel:

Councillors R Adcock-Forster, B Bainbridge, C Bell, B Coult, S Deinali, J Griffiths, O Gunn, T Henderson, C Hunt, J Miller, J Nicholson, I Roberts, K Robson, K Rooney, S Townsend, M Walton and C Varty

Co-opted Members:

J Bell, A Ferguson, C Gray and W Taylor

Also Present:

Kelsey Clayton – Legal Services Manager
Helen Fergusson - Head of Children’s Social Care
Jodie Henderson – Strategic Manager for Looked After and Permanence
Robert Johnson - Project Manager, Investing in Children
Martyn Stenton – Head of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children
Melanie Stubbs – Head of the Virtual School
Jayne Watson – Senior Partnerships Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor C Hood, C Baines, M Green and officer C Morris.

2. Substitute Members

No substitute members were present.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5. Number of Looked After Children

The Head of Children's Social Care reported the number of children looked after remained stable at 906.

6. Ofsted Updates

The Head of Children's Social Care informed the Panel that Ofsted inspections had taken place at High Etherley and Framwellgate Moor Children's Homes and there had been a mid-year review of Aycliffe Young People's Centre. Initial feedback is positive and further details will be shared with the Panel in due course. Councillor Gunn requested that letters of thanks be sent to the respective homes to acknowledge the good outcomes and thank all those involved for their hard work.

7. Proud Moments

The Strategic Manager for Looked After and Permanence congratulated Commissioning colleagues for achieving the Family Friendly Fostering Award.

Commenting on how all the young people looked after are inspiring, the Strategic Manager shared two examples of proud moments this month. The first was a young person living in shared care arrangements who had experienced difficulties and disruption in his life, however he is now making remarkable progress, attending school regularly and achieving new goals both at school and in his personal life. Staff and his family have commented on how proud they are to see his progress and the kindness he is showing when caring for his younger sibling who has additional needs.

Another proud moment came when a young person with disabilities completed a sponsored walk for the Dogs Trust, raising over £100.

The Panel commended the achievements of the young people and wished them well going forward.

8. Update on Language

The Strategic Manager for Looked After and Permanence informed the Panel that staff are continuing to work with young people on the use of language to ensure that it is considerate, relevant and reflective of how young people communicate.

When preparing Care Plans, staff are using language that young people understand and events are being described in ways which are familiar to the individual young person. For example, if a young person refers to their grandmother as 'nanny' then that term is used their Care Plan. The feedback from young people is that these small changes mean a great deal to them.

The Strategic Manager highlighted that this is an ongoing exercise and the young people continue to challenge and encourage the service to use 'young-person friendly' language, where it is appropriate, as an alternative to professional terms.

As a result the term 'family time' is used as an alternative to 'contact' and the word 'home' is used instead of 'placement'. The Strategic Manager asked the Panel to consider the term 'Corporate Parent', and how the young people looked after feel about being corporately parented. She asked the Panel to bear in mind that young people mirror language and how sensitive they are to non-verbal cues, such as eye-contact, facial expressions and body-language. The Panel also noted the impact of trauma on young people may impair their attention and focus, making effective communication even more important in these circumstances.

Councillor Gunn thanked the Strategic Manager for highlighting the importance of this work and she asked whether consideration is being given to the language used by young people through social media. Referring to the good efforts by the young people to make these changes, she asked if Members could do more to improve how they communicate with young people. Caitlyn Gray of the Children n Care Council referred the Panel to the language guide produced by Durham County Council in conjunction with the Children in Care Council which details the terms young people prefer and would like to be used.

Councillor Hunt asked if work is done in schools to encourage education staff to adopt these terms. The Virtual School Head confirmed that the young people of the Children in Care Council attend regular meetings with Designated Teachers and policy changes have been made as a result of their discussions.

The Head of Children's Social Care spoke of how the service is committed to improving the use of language in liaison with young people and this is subject to continuous review.

Councillor Deinali informed the Panel that during the recent joint meeting with the Children in Care Council, the young people shared their concerns that complex language can create barriers and negatively impact how they perceive themselves and may exacerbate stigma and discrimination.

As a result, as a member of the National Education Union, she has put forward a motion to campaign for schools to address stigma and discrimination.

Recognising the importance of this matter, the Panel agreed that an update on language should become a regular agenda item.

9. Investing in Children / Children in Care Council Update

Robert Johnson, Project Manager of Investing in Children and Caitlyn Gray of the Children in Care Council presented an update on recent activities (for copy of presentation see file of minutes).

Caitlyn explained that a joint meeting of members of the Children in Care Council and the Corporate Parenting Panel was held on 19 October. Topics discussed included the importance of family time, support for care leavers and ways to challenge stigma and discrimination.

Referring to family time, the young people highlighted that some of the venues used for this purpose are in need of updating and some of the rooms are suitable for younger children but not older children and teenagers. Caitlyn explained that in 2017 funds were raised through donations from Members to refurbish some family time rooms, with young people being actively involved in helping to design the rooms. The young people of the Children in Care Council would like the Panel to consider donating funds for the refurbishment of more family time venues.

Another issue discussed at the joint meeting was support for care leavers and what more could be done to assist care leavers and how this is a corporate responsibility and, as such, all services across the Council should be encouraged to look at ways in which they can support young people on leaving care.

The Project Manager explained how the young people are continuing to highlight the issues of stigma and discrimination and two young people gave a presentation to social work students at Sunderland University. The presentation was thought provoking and challenged the students' thinking and it was so well received, the young people will be following this up with a presentation to master's degree students in the near future.

Other developments during the month include the production of the next CiCC newsletter and the launch of the Education Fun Fund project, which utilises pupil premium money for fun education activities.

Peer mentors hosted a Halloween session for 6 to 10 year olds which gave the mentors the opportunity to talk to the younger children about the roles of the people who care for them, including the roles of Social Workers and Independent Reviewing Officers.

The young people are also discussing ideas for the production of a film and encouraged thoughts from Members as to a theme for the film.

Caitlyn concluded the presentation by sharing the details of a fundraising project by a young person who is raising money for Pancreatic Cancer UK, in memory of a foster carer.

The Chair congratulated the young people of the Children in Care Council on their work during a busy month.

Councillor Miller spoke of how much he enjoyed the event and he thanked all those that took part, adding that he would like to see the meetings taking place more often. He agreed with the young people that location and venues are a key part of the family time experience and therefore it is important that the venues are fit for purpose. He asked if it would be possible for Members to visit some of the family time locations. The Head of Children's Social Care confirmed that a visit will be arranged for Members to view family time venues.

Councillor Bainbridge echoed Councillor Miller's positive feedback saying how much she had enjoyed the evening and thanked the young people for organising the event. She spoke of how keen the young people are to increase opportunities and challenging stigma.

She commented on how she had been disappointed to see the press releases circulated by the young people which painted a negative picture of young people looked after. Referring to the refurbishment of the family time rooms and speaking as a long-standing member of the Panel, she spoke in support of raising funds to extend this project.

Councillor Townsend thanked the young people for the joint meeting, saying how refreshing and rewarding the experience was for her. She congratulated the young people on being such good advocates for themselves, inspiring others by driving their messages forward and using their voices and leadership skills to achieve their goals. She agreed that language must be relevant and consistent, especially for young people who are new to being in care so that they are not confused by many different ways of saying the same thing. She added that the work the young people are doing will be of benefit, not only now but also to young people looked after in the future.

Councillor Hunt thanked the young people for the fantastic event, saying one issue in particular had resonated with her which was the discussion regarding discrimination and she recognised the Panel's duty to challenge that perception. She spoke of her support for the young people's plans for their artwork to be displayed in bus stops to showcase how talented they are and she encouraged the young people to continue to 'think big'.

Councillor Deinali referred to the proposal to display the artwork in bus stops at Chester le Street and Framwellgate Moor and requested that this be rolled-out to all areas of the county. Councillor Gunn requested that the smaller villages and rural areas of the county are also included. Councillor Miller agreed and suggested that, with some major regeneration projects in the pipeline, there should be consideration given to incorporating projects like this into the plans for the future.

Alison Ferguson, Designated Nurse for Safeguarding and Looked After Children asked for permission to share the artwork with paediatric services and GP surgeries as they would also like to celebrate the talents of the young people.

The Project Manager thanked the Panel for their comments adding that the young people have produced fantastic artwork and he is looking forward to informing the Panel of the launch of the project.

Councillor Varty thanked all the young people who worked to organise the joint event, saying they all made a lasting impression. She commented that she learnt a great deal and she encouraged the young people to keep up the good joint working through sharing their thoughts and views with Members.

9a Feedback from joint CiCC / CPP

The Head of Children's Social Care delivered a presentation summarising the key themes discussed at the joint Children in Care / Corporate Parenting Panel meeting (for copy of presentation see file of minutes).

As a result of the young people's comments regarding the family time venues, a review of the facilities will be carried out and more venues will be investigated such as community venues to provide local and convenient venues. An update on this work will be provided to the Panel in due course.

With regard to support for care leavers, the young people are keen to increase apprenticeships, employment opportunities and access to interviews within the Council. They also discussed the financial challenges faced on leaving care, the emotional aspects of the transition and the barriers that lack of access to transport can create. Members noted that the scheme to assist young people with the cost of driving lessons had been suspended during the pandemic and whilst this has resumed, there is now a long waiting list of young people waiting to access the scheme.

The young people also discussed how they can work with the Panel to continue to raise the profile of young people looked after, improve their experiences at school and provide them with support in their communities.

The Head of Children's Social Care explained that work will be done with the Children in Care Council to develop an action plan and bi-monthly meetings will be held to discuss progress on these themes. An update will be provided at the next joint meeting in March and a full update will be provided to Panel in April 2022.

In response to Councillor Miller's earlier comment regarding having more joint meetings, the Head of Children's Social Care explained that the joint meetings are currently scheduled to take place twice per year and the meetings are administered by the young people who also decide on the topics for discussion.

Councillor Miller commented that the issue of stigma was a focal point for discussion at the joint meeting and he had highlighted the good work of the Children in Care Council at the full Council meeting which was held on the day after the joint meeting. He suggested that the Council should give consideration to issuing a press release to show their commitment and pride in the county's young people. The Chair agreed this suggestion should be discussed with officers.

Caitlyn reiterated the importance of the use of language and how professional terms, which are often used subconsciously, may have negative connotations, such as the word 'vulnerable'. Caitlyn explained that the term is often used, however, young people looked after do not feel this term is relevant to them as they have a circle of support around them and feel safe, not vulnerable.

Councillor Hunt spoke of a young person she had spoken to at the event who had expressed a wish to have more family time.

The Head of Children's Social Care explained that decisions in respect of each young person are made at multiagency meetings and if the young person is of an appropriate age, they are involved in the decision making process. The service endeavours to ensure the voice of the child is heard and investigates specific issues.

10. Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Update

The Chair reported that this item was to be deferred to the next meeting.

11. Progress Report on the Care Leavers' Strategy and Action Plan

The Strategic Manager for Looked After and Permanence presented a report and presentation on the Care Leavers' Strategy and Action Plan which included progress against key areas of focus (for copy see file of minutes).

The Strategic Manager explained that Pathway Plans have been improved to ensure young people are fully involved in them which helps to make these plans functioning documents. She spoke of how Durham is proud of the work ethos shown by young people and colleagues in DurhamWorks and the Corporate Management Team recognise this and are working to explore more opportunities for care leavers.

The Panel noted that one of the main challenges for care leavers is accommodation. Durham offers a wide range of accommodation including Staying Put, Staying Close, Supported Lodgings and semi-independent living, however, rates of pay can make it difficult for care leavers to access benefits therefore further work is being done to ensure that care leavers are not disadvantaged.

Colleagues in health are mindful that young people are developing their skills, as young adults, to recognise when they need to see a doctor and it is important that they are supported to reach out and access that help. Therefore they continue to ensure health services are open and accessible for young people.

The Strategic Manager stressed that young people are not being prepared for 'independence', instead, they are being prepared for adult-life and being supported to establish successful relationships with others.

The Panel noted that a group of young people has been established to review the action plan and rate the offer against the national offer. An update on the matter will be brought to the Panel in the new year.

Councillor Gunn thanked the Strategic Manager for the presentation and referred to hearing a national radio programme on the subject in which a care leaver commented that leaving care had been a 'frightening' experience. She commented that a successful and supportive transition can pave the way for the quality of a care leaver's life which highlights the importance of a successful strategy. Councillor Gunn expressed concern that actions require funding which is becoming more and more difficult whilst budgets are squeezed, not only locally but nationally.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

12. Any other business

Councillor Gunn requested that consideration be given to starting the Panel meetings slightly later, at 9.45 am, to avoid traffic congestion.

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 Head of Children's Social Care presented the monthly Regulation 44 Visits and regulatory body ratings report (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

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Corporate Parenting Panel

17 December 2021

Supporting Care Leavers into Education, Employment and Training



Report of Linda Bailey, Strategic Lead: Progression and Learning, Children and Young People's Services, Durham County Council

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To update members of the Corporate Parenting Panel on the support available to Care Leavers to enable them to progress into Education, Employment and Training.

Executive summary

- 2 A number of measures are being implemented to support Care Leavers into Education, Employment or Training. These include transition support for young people aged 15 to 16 through the DurhamWorks Programme for Schools, the introduction of a new DurhamEnable (Supported Employment) Service, continued support provided through the DurhamWorks Programme, and further embedding of the Durham County Council Pathway for Young People - incorporating a Sessional Employment Programme, Kickstart placements and Apprenticeships.
- 3 Outcomes from these actions are closely monitored and this report contains the latest performance data in relation to the participation of Care Leavers in Education, Employment and Training. This report also contains an outline of future priorities.

Recommendation

- 4 Members of Corporate Parenting Panel are requested to:
 - (a) Note the information contained in this report.

Background

- 5 A number of measures are being implemented to support Care Leavers into Education, Employment and Training, as well as to enable Durham County Council to fulfil its responsibilities as Corporate Parent, including
- (a) Support for Looked After Children to enable them to make a successful transition from Year 11 into post-16 learning.
 - (b) Continued support for Care Leavers through the DurhamWorks Programme.
 - (c) Introduction of a new DurhamEnable (Supported Employment Service) for Care Leavers who have learning, physical and mental health barriers.
 - (d) Measures to support young people (including Care Leavers) whose employment prospects have been adversely affected by COVID-19.
 - (e) Processes to provide more employment-based opportunities for Care Leavers within the Local Authority through the Durham County Council Pathway for Young People.
 - (f) Delivery of a Pupil Premium Plus pilot scheme, to support the sustained participation of Care Leavers in Further Education.

Transition Support

- 6 In conjunction with support that Looked After Children receive in relation to their academic attainment, a range of other measures are in place to support their transition into post-16 Education, Employment and Training, through the DurhamWorks Programme for Schools. These include individual careers guidance with a Progression Adviser; access to group based activities to prepare them for leaving school; as well as intensive mentoring support. Progression Advisers also attend PEP reviews to ensure there is a partnership approach to transition support.
- 7 During the academic year 2020/21, a total of 800 young people in year 11 who were identified as being at risk of NEET (not in Education, Employment or Training) have been supported through the DurhamWorks Programme for Schools. This includes 34 Looked After Children. Initial information shows that of these, 28 (82.4%) have progressed into a positive Education, Employment or Training destination.

DurhamWorks Programme

- 8 DurhamWorks provides Care Leavers with support to enable them to progress into and remain in Education, Employment and Training. Through this Programme, Care Leavers receive wrap-a-round support from a Specialist Progression Advisor and have the opportunity to undertake bespoke activities to motivate and prepare them for employment. A DurhamWorks Grant has also been available to SME businesses to support the employment of young people – including Care Leavers.
- 9 Since its inception, 664 young people who have been supported by the DurhamWorks Programme have identified themselves as being Looked After or a Care Leaver. Of these, 478 young people have completed the Programme, with 354 (74.1%) of young people progressing into an Education, Employment or Training destination.
- 10 DurhamWorks and the Young People's Service hold monthly clinics to review and agree actions to support Care Leavers who are NEET into a positive destination.

DurhamEnable

- 11 DurhamEnable is a new Supported Employment Service for those aged 18 and above who have learning, physical and/or mental health barriers to employment. The Service has received ESF funding to support 900 County Durham residents between February 2021 and December 2023.
- 12 There are currently 69 participants being supported through the Programme, 5 of whom are Care Leavers. To date, 21 participants have been supported into employment, including one Care Leaver.

Durham County Council Pathway for Young People

- 13 Work is continuing to further embed the Pathway for Young People, which was developed to provide more opportunities for Care Leavers within Durham County Council.
- 14 A new Sessional Employment Programme offers Care Leavers the opportunity of paid work experience. Opportunities are identified which meet the talents, interests, and aspirations of each individual Care Leaver. A Sessional Employment Co-ordinator was appointed in July 2021 to facilitate the programme, an Implementation Plan has been developed and is currently being implemented. To date, 9 Care Leavers have been engaged onto the Programme and are being supported to find an appropriate placement.

- 15 The Kickstart Scheme was launched in Sept 2020 by the Department for Work and Pensions in response to the negative economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and aims to provide jobs for 6 months to young people aged 16-24 who are claiming Universal Credit. DurhamWorks has established a gateway to enable employers to recruit young people. Durham County Council has identified a number of opportunities across Services, with support being provided by a DurhamWorks Progression Worker. It was agreed that 6 of the opportunities within Durham County Council would be ringfenced specifically for Care Leavers. Two of these opportunities have been filled and a further 4 Care Leavers have successfully obtained non-ringfenced Kickstart opportunities.
- 16 Further action has been undertaken to enhance the existing measures that are in place to support more Care Leavers into Durham County Council Apprenticeships. This includes the ring-fencing of Apprenticeship opportunities specifically for Care Leavers, as well as delivery of bespoke training to support Care Leavers with their applications and to prepare them for the interview stage. There are currently 7 Care Leavers undertaking Apprenticeships within Durham County Council.
- 17 DurhamWorks is liaising with the Department for Work and Pensions to establish a number of 'Youth Hubs' across County Durham. These are spaces where unemployed young people can access a range of intensive support and provision to enable them to find a job. Youth Hubs are operating in Stanley and Peterlee, with plans to open a Youth Hub in Bishop Auckland in January / February 2022.
- 18 Increased awareness for Team Leaders / Managers – It was felt that Team Leaders / Managers may feel ill-equipped to employ care leavers and the need to increase their confidence was agreed. A number of briefing sessions to raise the profile of our role as "Corporate Parent" and to provide information on the range of support available have recently been delivered to Tier 4 and 5 Managers.
- 19 Support for individual Team Leaders / Managers – A further measure to enable individual Team Leaders/Managers to be more confident and comfortable in employing individual Care Leavers, was to ensure that a clear offer of support is established for each care leaver. This is currently available through their Social Worker, or Young Person's Advisor, or DurhamWorks member of staff. It has been communicated via the Tier 4 and 5 briefings but on appointment to any of the above programmes the key member of staff contacts the Team Leader/Manager to agree any support requirements and future contact levels.

- 20 Recruitment Policy - Durham County Council's Recruitment Policy outlines the Local Authority's responsibility as a Corporate Parent to young people who are leaving care and making the transition to adulthood. Care Leavers are guaranteed an interview, provided they meet the essential criteria for an advertised post.
- 21 The recruitment policy is currently in the process of being amended to include an Equal Opportunities statement to prompt managers to give further consideration to the appointment of Care Leavers.

Pupil Premium Plus Pilot

- 22 Durham County Council is taking part in a six month Pupil Premium Plus pilot scheme that is supporting Care Leavers in academic years 12 and 13 who are attending a Further Education College. As part of this programme, there is a dedicated Personal Adviser who is supporting a caseload of Care Leavers, to manage their sustained participation in Further Education. There is also a 'Keep In College' weekly incentive payment of £20 per week for Care Leavers who achieve over 80% authorised attendance. There are currently 58 Young People attending 14 different Further Education Colleges, who are accessing the Pupil Premium Plus offer.

Performance Data

- 23 The Local Authority, through the Progression and Learning Team, collects and reports the destinations of all young people aged 16-17 to the Department for Education on a monthly basis. This includes the number of those whose destination are 'NEET' and 'Not Known'.
- 24 The following table shows the performance data for young people aged 16-17, compared to the same period in 2020 and 2019 respectively.

	2021 (June)		2020 (June)		2019 (June)	
	All 16-17	LAC/CL	All 16-17	LAC/CL	All 16-17	LAC/CL
Total Cohort	10,691	118	10,204	146	10,012	115
Total EET	93.6%	76.3%	94.3%	83.6%	93.0%	68.7%
NEET	5.8%	22.0%	5.0%	16.4%	5.5%	31.3%
Not Known	0.6%	1.7%	0.7%	0.0%	1.4%	0.0%
Combined NEET and Not Known	6.4%	23.8%	5.7%	16.4%	7.0%	31.3%

- 25 The number and proportion of 16-17 year old Care Leavers who are NEET has been decreasing over the past few years as demonstrated from 2019 to 2020. However, 2021 has halted this trend owing to the reduction in numbers of young people accessing participation opportunities, linked in part to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 26 Those whose destination is Not Known has followed a similar trend. The inability to conduct face-face work during significant periods as a result of the COVID pandemic undoubtedly contributed to a slight increase in 2021 compared to 2020.
- 27 The Looked After and Permanence Service (Children and Young People’s Services) also tracks and reports on the destinations of Care Leavers aged 17-18 and 19-21 to the Department for Education and comparative data is published on an annual basis. This data captures the destinations of Care Leavers at the time of their birthdays.
- 28 The following table shows the latest performance data for 17-18 year old and 19-21 year old Care Leavers, compared to the previous two years.

	2020		2019		2018	
	CL 17-18	CL 19-21	CL 17-18	CL 19-21	CL 17-18	CL 19-21
Total Cohort	84	175	79	156	62	160
Participating in EET	65% (55)	54% (94)	61% (48)	51% (80)	82% (51)	59% (95)
NEET	27% (23)	35% (62)	34% (27)	38% (60)	15% (9)	32% (51)

Department for Education: Children Looked After in England (including Adoption), year ending 31st March.

Future Priorities to Support Care Leavers

- 29 To support more Care Leavers to make a successful transition into post-16 Education, Employment and Training, the following priorities have been identified:
- Continue to work with senior managers to maximise the Durham County Council Pathway for Young people, including increasing the number and variety of opportunities being offered.
 - Co-ordinate the new ESF programmes (being delivered via DurhamWorks) from January 2022 to ensure Care Leavers continue to be a priority and benefit from the increase in employment focused opportunities.

Conclusion

- 30 This report has highlighted the actions undertaken to support more Care Leavers into Education, Employment or Training, including measures to support Care Leavers through the Durham County Council Pathway for Young People. However, it is recognised that further work is required, and to this end, the report has also highlighted a number of future priorities that aim to build upon the progress that has already been made.

Author: Linda Bailey Tel: 07919 298983

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

None.

Finance

None.

Consultation

None.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

None.

Human Rights

None.

Crime and Disorder

None.

Staffing

1.0 FTE Progression Adviser post funded to support delivery of Pupil Premium Plus pilot programme. 0.5 Sessional Employment Co-ordinator post funded to support delivery of Sessional Employment programme.

Accommodation

None.

Risk

None.

Procurement

None.

Corporate Parenting Panel

17 December 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 update is to provide the Corporate Parenting Panel with an overview of performance in relation to looked after children and care leavers.

Executive summary

- 2 The Corporate Equality and Strategy Manager, Stephen Tracey will provide an update at the meeting giving an overview of performance.

Recommendation(s)

- 3 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to note information contained within the presentation 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 have not contained the same level of performance information.
- 6 This is a return to the usual Corporate Parenting Panel Performance Scorecard.

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.

Other useful documents

- Performance scorecard

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

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County Durham Corporate Parenting Panel: Performance Management Framework

NND - 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	Q2 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]	90 [912]	67 (2019/20)	108 (2019/20)	102 (2019/20)
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	10
Number of children placed for adoption	25	75	39	34	32	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]	1% [9/917]	6	1	3
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	Q2 2021/22	England	North East	Stat Neighbour
Percentage of CLA with a missing incident during the year	5.0%	5.5%	7.3%	Reported annually	Reported annually	11	10	11
Percentage of children on Child Exploitation and Vulnerability Tracker that were CLA				15.9% [24/151]	17.2% [29/169]			
Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire - Average score	NND	13.6	13.5	Reported annually	Reported annually	14.1	14.2	14

Measure	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21 [Provisional]	Q1 2021/22	Q2 2021/22	England	North East	Stat Neighbour
Percentage of CLA permanently excluded [number of children]	0%	NND		Reported annually	Reported annually	0.1% (2016/17)		
Percentage of CLA with at least one fixed exclusion from school [number of children]	6.2%	9.1%		Reported annually	Reported annually	11.4% (2019/20)	10.5% (2019/20)	11.1% (2019/20)
Percentage of CLA classed as persistent absentees (Maintained schools)	6.9%	7.9%		Reported annually	Reported annually	12.0% (2019/20)	11.2% (2019/20)	11.6% (2019/20)
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]	0.5% [2]	1.2% [5]	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
Permanent exclusions and suspensions data is collected two terms in arrears, which means the latest available data is for the 2018/19 academic year*

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	Q2 2021/22	England	North East	Stat Neighbour
Number of CLA accessing an independent visitor			16	21 matched 12 in progress	9 matched 2 in progress			

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?

<i>Measure</i>	<i>2018/19</i>	<i>2019/20</i>	<i>2020/21</i> <i>[Provisional]</i>	<i>Q1</i> <i>2021/22</i>	<i>Q2</i> <i>2021/22</i>	<i>England</i>	<i>North East</i>	<i>Stat</i> <i>Neighbour</i>
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]	10% [91]	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]	72% [302]	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	413	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	304	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]	18.2% [54 / 296]	23.8% [24]	21% [41]	11.7	12	18.2
Number of Mainstream Foster Carers (Approved in period YTD)	26	12	21	5	11	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of Friends and Family Foster Carers (Approved in period YTD)	52	91	145	48	85	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of Adopters (Approved in period YTD)	22	25	47	10	16	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	Q2 2021/22	England	North East	Stat Neighbour
Initial Health Assessments completed within 20 working days of the child becoming looked after	63%	73%	73%	57%	57%	N/A	N/A	N/A
CLA with the required number of health assessments	91%	94%	92%	90%	92%	90	92	92
CLA who have had a dental check	85.5%	87%	41%	53%	65%	86	86	87
CLA whose immunisations were up-to-date	99.3%	99.0%	89.9%	Reported annually	Reported annually	88	92	93.6
CLA whose development assessments were up to date	95.0%	97.0%	82.9%	Reported annually	Reported annually	88	86	95.7
% CLA identified as having a substance misuse problem in the year	1.9%	2.0%	TBC*	Reported annually	Reported annually	3	3	6
Percentage of new presentations to drug and alcohol treatment during period who were CLA [Number] YTD	10% [18 of 185]	10% [21 of 216]	9% [13/137]	20% [8/40]	17% [12/69]	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% [29/117]	29.5% [33/112]	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]	30.5% [39/128]	N/A	N/A	N/A

*Data quality issues under investigation

What are outcomes like for our care leavers?

Measure	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Q1	Q2	England	North East	Stat
Percentage of care leavers age 18-21 who have stayed with their foster carer	N/A	N/A	N/A	7.1%	8.1%			
Percentage of care leavers aged 17-18 in education, employment or training (EET)	63.9% [53 of 83]	65% [55 / 84]	75.6% [59 / 78]	70.6%	70.0%	64	63	68
Percentage of care leavers aged 17-18 in suitable accommodation	96.4% [80 of 83]	90% [76 / 84]	94.9% [74 / 78]	95.0%	93.0%	90	94	100
Percentage of care leavers aged 17-18 in higher education	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0 / 78]	4.0%	12.0%	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% [110 / 197]	58.9%	60.0%	53	52	53
Percentage of care leavers aged 19-21 in suitable accommodation	94.4% [152 of 161]	83% [144 / 174]	90.3% [177 / 196]	93.0%	93.0%	85	91	91
Percentage of care leavers aged 19-21 in higher education	8.7% [14 of 161]	9% [16 / 175]	5.6% [11 / 197]	8.0%	7.0%	6	8	8

Chart 1 - Length of time looked after by Age

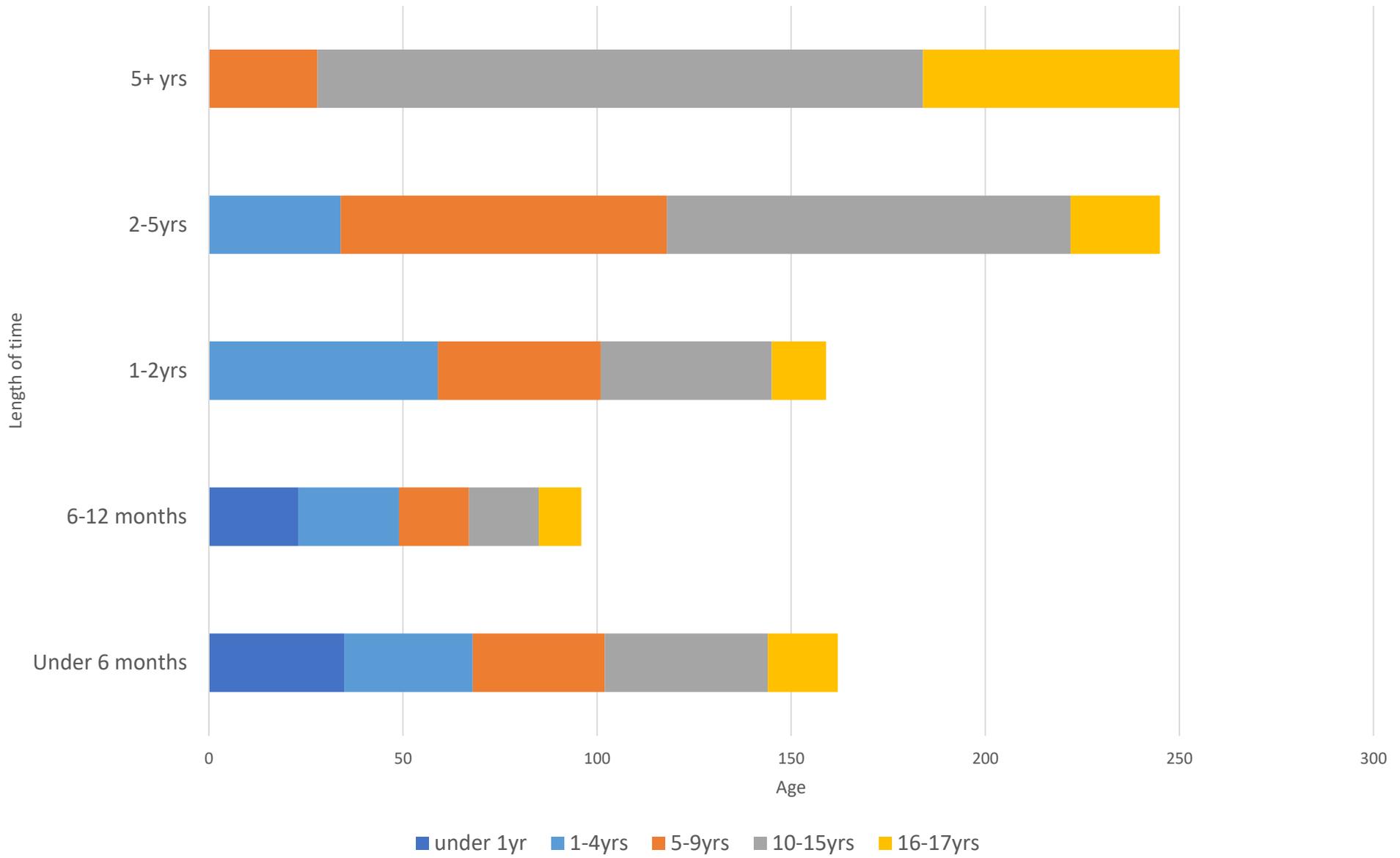


Chart 2 - Placement Mix (as at 27-Sep-21)

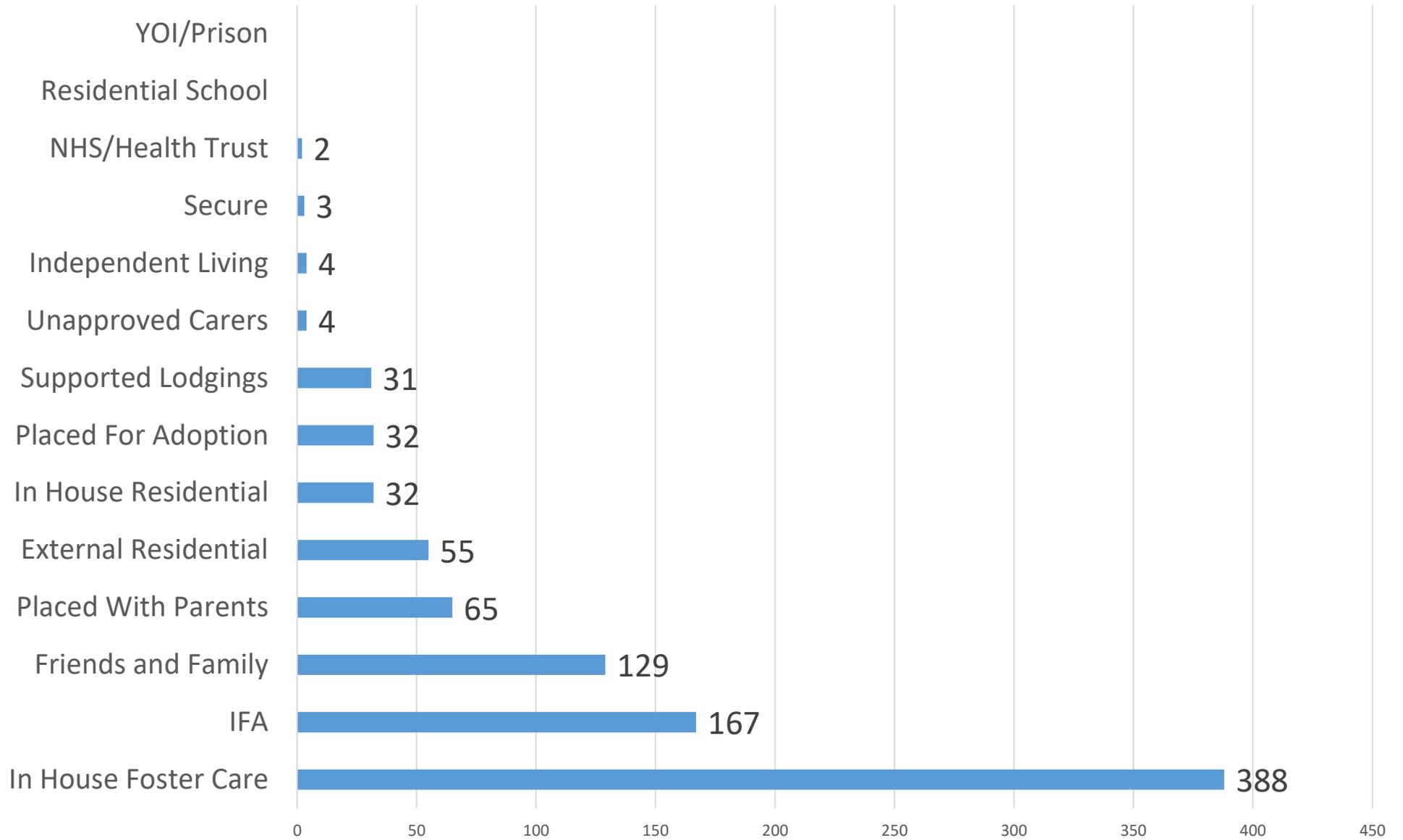
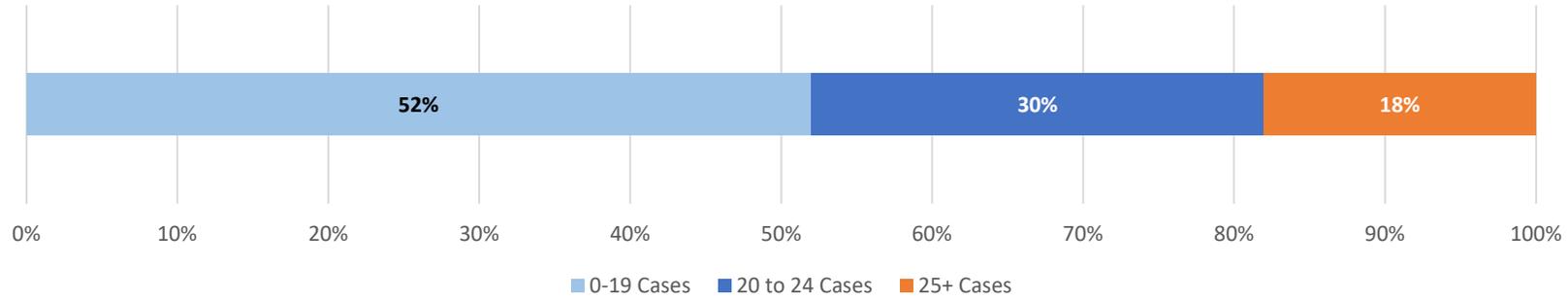


Chart 3 - Caseload Breakdown (SW/ASYE) - Sep 2021 WTE

Overall Children's Social Care Caseloads at September 2021



Corporate Parenting Panel

CLA Update

CYPS Strategy Team
Q2 2021-22

Performance Management Framework: Key Questions

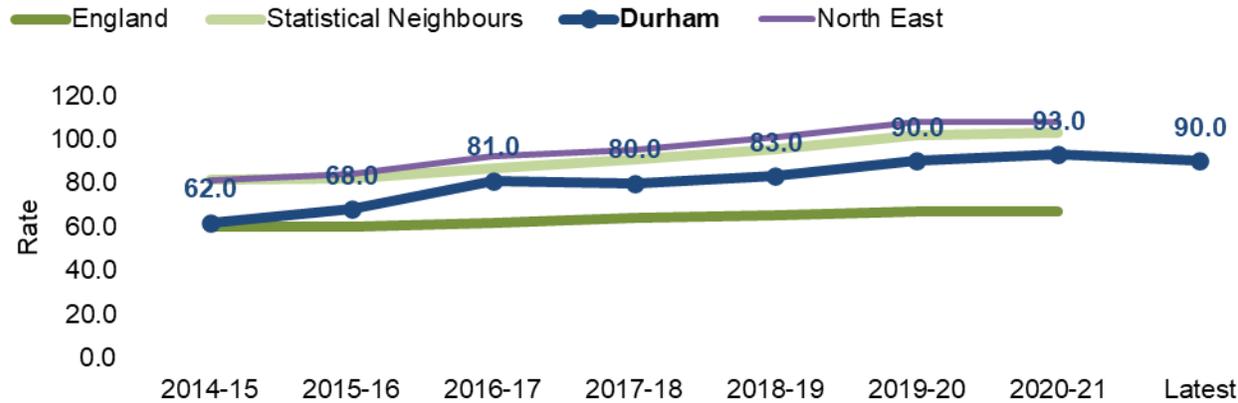
- What are the characteristics of our cohort of children in care and care leavers?
- Do our partner agencies understand their role in supporting us as corporate parents?
- How are we giving children and young people the chance to express their views, wishes and feelings? How do we know those are being acted on?
- How do we show children in our care that we have high aspirations for them?
- Are we providing stable environments for children in our care?
- What are we doing to look after the health and wellbeing of children in our care?
- What are outcomes like for our care leavers?

[Adapted from LGA Corporate Parenting Resource](#)

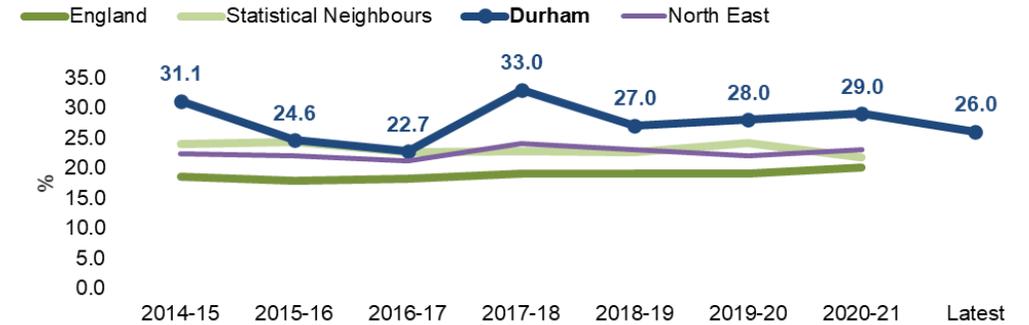
Children Looked After: 912

13 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

Rate of children looked after at 31 March per 10,000 children aged under 18 years



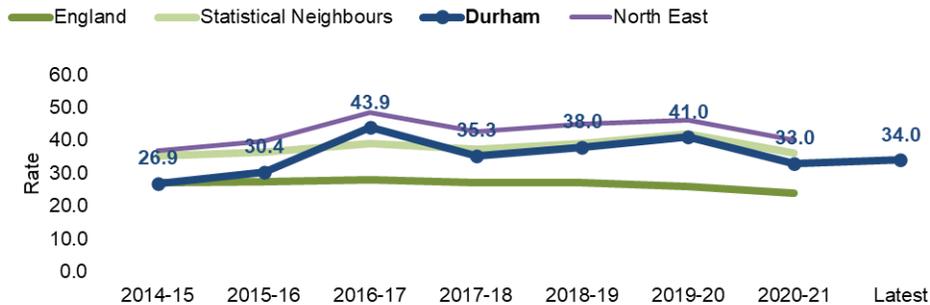
CLA started in the year by age: % Age: Under 1



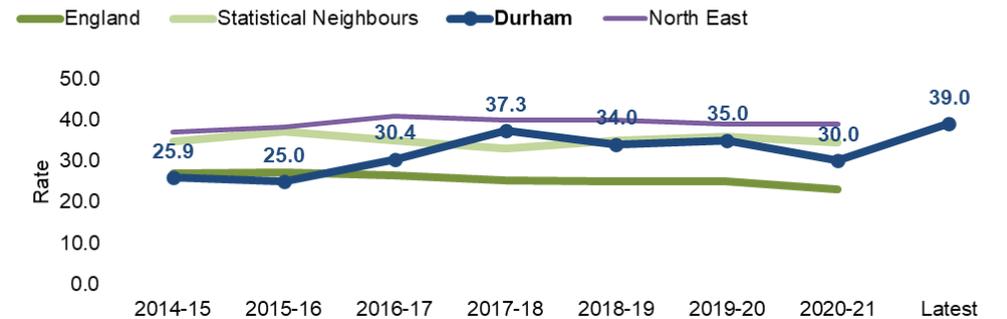
Reducing u1 CLA starts as % of all CLA starts

Our CLA rate remains 3rd lowest in North East

Rate of children who started to be looked after during the year per 10,000 children



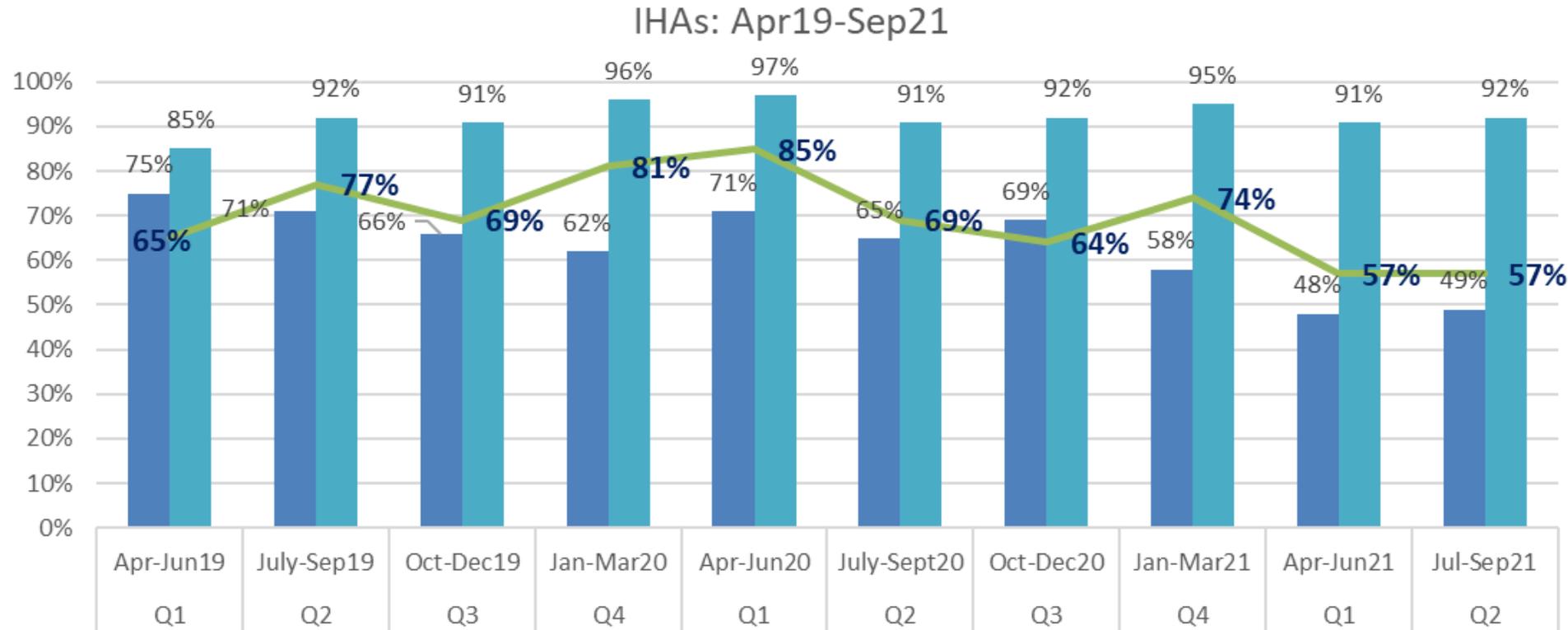
Rate of children who ceased to be looked after during the year per 10,000 children



177 children became looked after in last 6 months

198 CLA ended in last 6 months

Initial Health Assessments



LA Indicator: Coram BAAF paperwork and consent received from LA within 0-7 working days of child coming into care (AMENDED to 0-5 Days from 2021)

CDDFT Indicator: Number of children offered an IHA appointment by CDDFT within 15 working days of health receiving correctly completed paperwork and consent from Local Authority

Statutory Indicator: Of the number of children coming into care in the quarter; number of children seen by a Paediatrician within 20 working days of coming into care

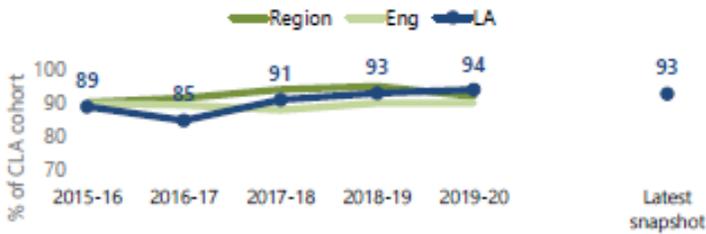
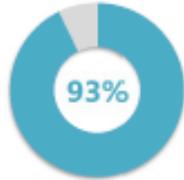
Placement Type	04-Jun-19		11-Mar-20		27-Sep-21		No. change on Jun19	% change on Jun19	No. change pre-lockdown	% change pre-lockdown
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%				
External Residential	31	3%	38	4%	55	6%	24	77%	17	45%
Friends and Family	134	14%	126	14%	129	14%	-5	-4%	3	2%
Unapproved Carers	5	1%	10	1%	4	0%	-1	-20%	-6	-60%
IFA	126	14%	159	18%	166	18%	40	32%	7	4%
In House Foster Care	422	45%	430	48%	388	43%	-34	-8%	-42	-10%
In House Residential	31	3%	26	3%	32	4%	1	3%	6	23%
Independent Living	9	1%	8	1%	4	0%	-5	-56%	-4	-50%
NHS/Health Trust	2	0%	1	0%	2	0%	0	0%	1	100%
Placed For Adoption	24	3%	23	3%	32	4%	8	33%	9	39%
Placed With Parents	66	7%	62	7%	65	7%	-1	-2%	3	5%
<i>Full Care Order</i>	57	6%	47	5%	49	5%	-8	-14%	2	4%
<i>Interim Care Order</i>	9	1%	15	2%	16	2%	7	78%	1	7%
Residential School	2	0%	2	0%	0	3%	-2	-100%	-2	-100%
Secure	1	0%	1	0%	3	0%	2	200%	2	200%
Supported Lodgings	12	1%	15	2%	31	3%	19	158%	16	107%
YOI/Prison	1	0%	1	0%	0	0%	-1	-100%	-1	-100%
Grand Total	932	100%	902	100%	911	1	-21	-2%	9	1%

Health

656 current open CLA looked after for at least 12 months

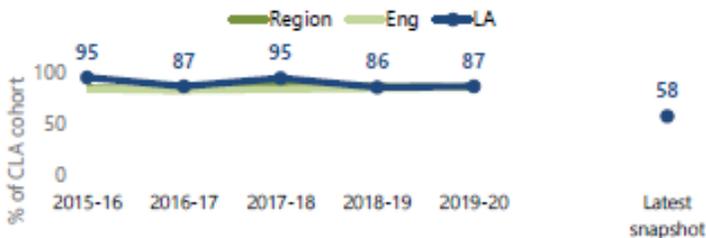
Health assessments

Current open CLA who have been looked after for at least 12 months with an up to date health assessment (in the last 6 months for CLA aged under 5, and in the last 12 months for CLA aged 5-plus)



Dental checks

Current open CLA who have been looked after for at least 12 months who have had a dental check in the last 12 months.



Missing Episodes:

382

Missing Children:

81

Return to Home Interviews

372 Offered

313 Accepted

313 Completed

Missing by month / week commencing

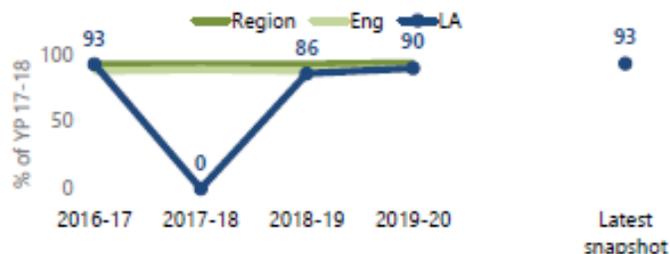


In Q2 four in ten missing episodes were less than 8 hours and 80% less than 24 hours

Actively working with **280** Care Leavers

Accommodation suitability of 17-18 year olds

ChAT	Aged 17	Aged 18	Total
Numbers in cohort	7	69	76
In suitable accommodation	100%	93%	93%

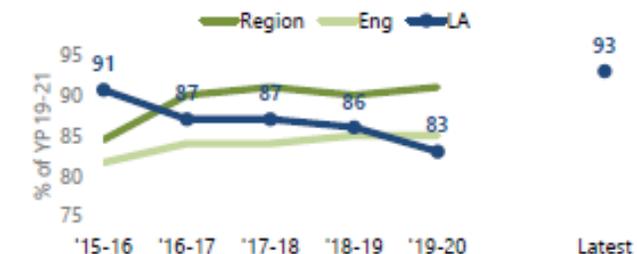
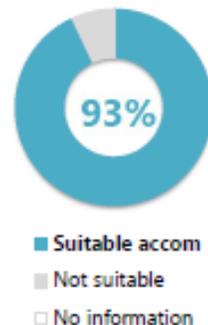


Accommodation types of 17-18 year olds

■ Latest snapshot ■ LA 19-20 ■ Region 19-20 ■ Eng 19-20

Accommodation suitability of 19-21 year olds

ChAT	Aged 19	Aged 20	Aged 21	Total
Numbers in cohort	69	66	36	171
In suitable accommodation	93%	91%	97%	93%

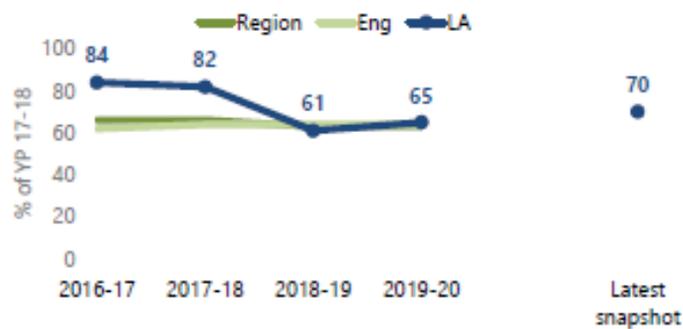


Accommodation types of 19-21 year olds

■ Latest snapshot ■ LA 19-20 ■ Region 19-20 ■ Eng 19-20

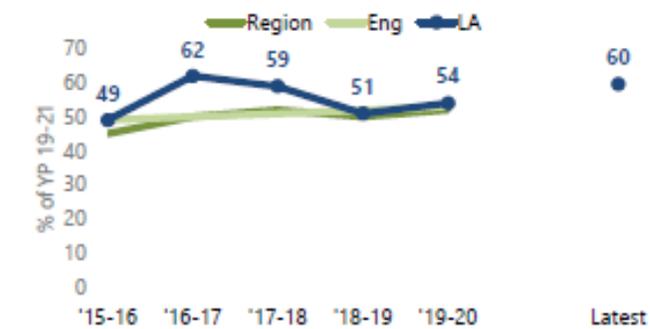
Education, Employment, or Training (EET) of 17-18 year olds

ChAT	Aged 17	Aged 18	Total
Numbers in cohort	8	69	77
In EET	38%	74%	70%



Education, Employment, or Training (EET) of 19-21 year olds

ChAT	Aged 19	Aged 20	Aged 21	Total
Numbers in cohort	69	66	36	171
In EET	65%	56%	56%	60%



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Corporate Parenting Panel

17 December 2021

**Annual Report of the Independent
Reviewing Officer Service**



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

Electoral division(s) affected:

None.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to introduce the Independent Reviewing Officer, Children in Care, Annual Report Summary, covering the period 2020/21 which will be presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel at its meeting on 17 December 2021. This was scheduled to come to the meeting on 22 November 2021, but due to unforeseen circumstances needed to be moved on the day.
- 2 The Annual report is attached as Appendix 2 of this report.

Executive summary

- 2 This report highlights the key messages that are contained within the accompanying IRO Service Annual reports and sets out 4 key priorities that have been identified to address these.

Recommendation

- 3 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are required to:
 - a) Note the contents of the annual report.

Background

- 4 The annual report set out the performance and the direction of travel for the IRO service.
- 5 The IRO service is required to play a critical role in supporting and challenging the work of Children's Social Care in relation to Children who are In Our Care who are subject to a Child Protection Planning process.

Key messages within Annual Report

- 6 In 2020/21, the timeliness of children Looked After (CLA) reviews increased to 99%.
- 7 100 % of children under a Private Fostering arrangement had their review within timescales.
- 8 87% of Foster Care reviews were held within timescales.
- 9 The IRO Service has been successful in achieving Investors In Children (IIC) Status and 10 year award. The positive feedback from this report is within the Annual Report.

Key Priorities for 2020/21

Children who are Looked After

- a) To improve on the quality of care plans for children and young people and ensure these plans are formed with children and their families.
- b) Continue to support social care and the IRO service to embed Signs of Safety as the practice model.
- c) We want our children to have good prospects when leaving care.
- d) To support Social Care to make continuous improvements to the service they provide for children and young people.

Conclusion

- 17 The four priorities identified within the Annual Reports will be taken forward by the IRO service and form a critical part of the Social Care response to the ILACS inspection in September 2019.

Authors

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The statutory duties of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) are set out in section 25B (1) Children Act 1989 with further statutory guidance contained in the IRO handbook, which sets out the IRO in relation to case management and review for looked after children.

There are two clear and separate aspects to the function of the IRO:

- i. chairing the child's review; and
- ii. monitoring the child's case on an ongoing basis.

Finance

There are no Direct Financial Implications within this report.

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: Children Looked After Annual Report

Attached as a separate document



Independent Reviewing Officer

Children in Care

Annual Report Summary

2020/21

What do IROs do?

The law states that all children and young people that become looked after must be appointed an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). The IRO Handbook (2010) sets out the requirements of the IROs in supporting children and young people who are in the care of the local authority. An IRO has an important role in making sure that children and young people's care plans meet their needs. IROs are there to make sure that reviews are run properly, that children and young people's views are listened to and their best interests are protected, and to ensure that children are only looked after as long as necessary.



IROs also make sure that they talk to the local authority when they are worried about whether plans are progressing for children or young people. IROs will challenge the local authority if they disagree with the local authority's plan for a child or young person. IROs will also tell the local authority about things that they are doing particularly well.

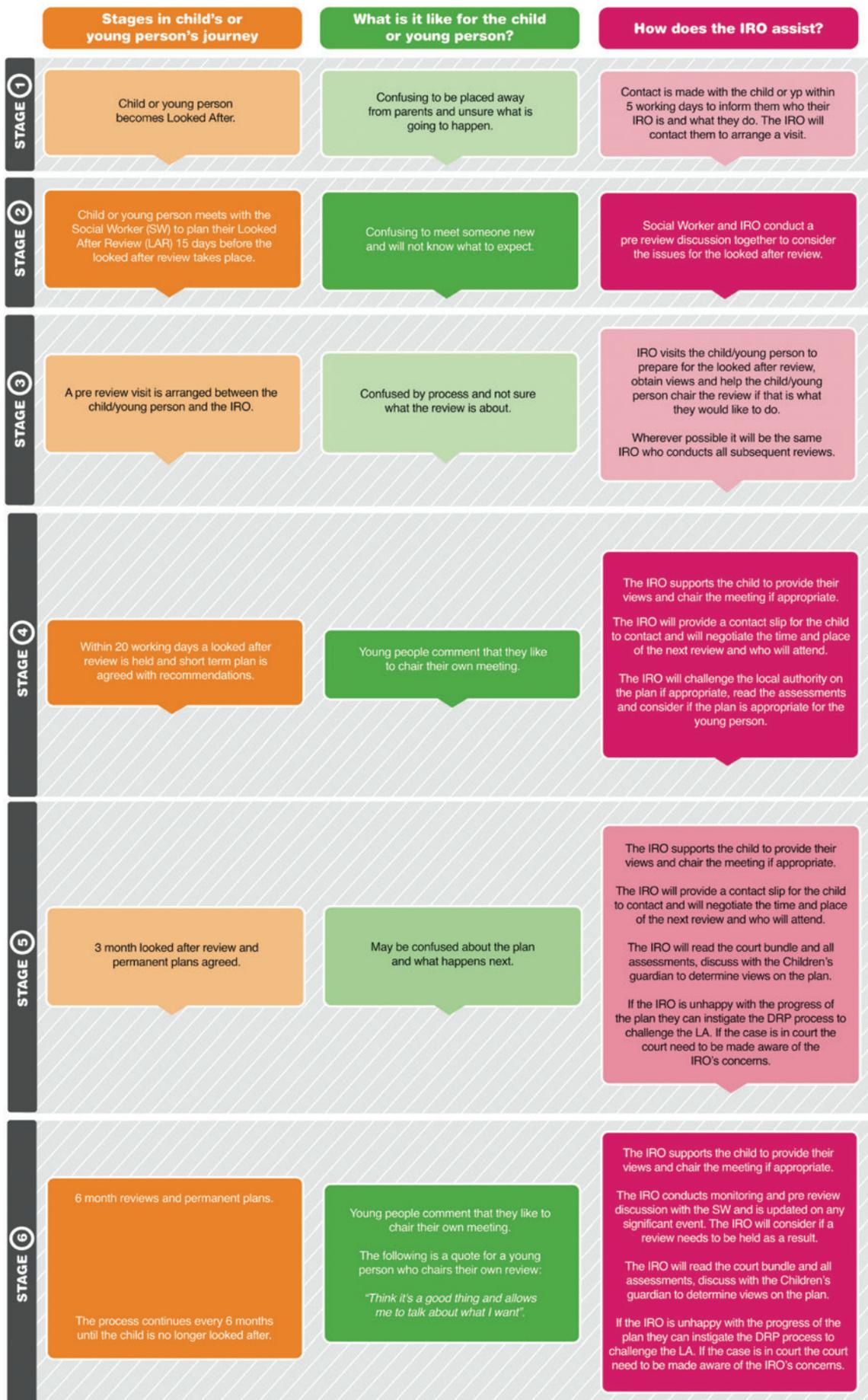
IROs in County Durham also chair child protection conferences and work within the Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP).

Children and young people in the care of County Durham

The IROs chair Child Looked After Reviews (CLAs) for all children, including those placed for adoption, those in short break respite care, young people who are remanded into the care of the Local Authority.

The Child's Journey

The information below contains the key stages in the child's journey when being care for by the Local Authority and how the IRO assists the child or young person in this process.



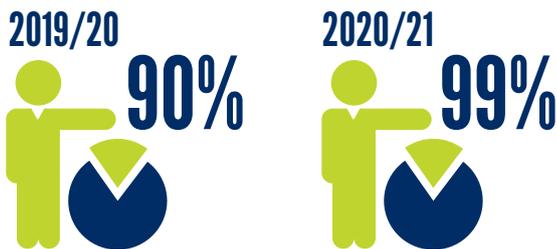
Summary of Development Activity 2020/21

Issues identified 2020/21	Response
<p>Need to increase the timeliness of children's plans of permanence being ratified</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● IRO Performance Clinic established to offer a reflective space for IROs to work through any issues of delay in care planning. ● Supported the reviewed of the Permanency Strategy and co-delivered briefings across the service. ● Established communication plan between the IRO Service and Legal Services to support in setting timetables for care proceedings in line with Care Planning regulations. ● Operations Manager attendance at Strategic Legal Panel to offer guidance and support in care planning timeframes. ● Reporting data sets now agreed to support Team Managers and IROs future planning for the 4-month review. ● Change to the IRO chair report to allow tracking of this to strengthen the timeliness of plans ratified.
<p>Use the Signs of Success framework to ensure that care plans are developed with children, young people and their network and that children and young people are more involved in the care planning process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We have remained consistent involving children who have been involved in the reviewing process and their CLA reviews. This has included face to face visits, virtual video call visits and some children report that the virtual meetings have been much more in line with their lifestyles thus attending their meeting. ● Covid-19 has hindered our ability to carry out face to face meetings consistently, however, we have had some lovely success stories where children have engaged with the reviewing process via video links showcasing educational skills and life skills within their meetings. ● There has been an increase in IRO activity on case files, with more pre-review discussions taking place, children speaking with IROs prior to their meetings and engaging in conversations with IROs in-between meetings. ● The IRO Service have taken the lead in creating an Advocacy Working Group, chaired by the IRO Operations Manager. There has been a drive in increasing the accessibility of an advocate and Independent Visitor for all children. A work plan has been established and reviewed by commissioning services.
<p>Use the Signs of Success framework to structure review meetings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Group supervision now embedded monthly. ● Training with all IROs on the use of language was carried out. ● Group Supervision identified a common approach to the use of 'best questioning', 'use of harm matrix' and 'introducing the use of trajectories'. ● Some scaling questions are now seen within meetings to measure impact. ● All children who are permanently matched, placed over 2 years and/or the IRO feels should- receive a letter to the child as the notes of the meeting, rather than in impersonal set of notes. ● A working group has been established to review the most appropriate way to review the child's Care Plan, Personal Education Plan (PEP), Strength Difficulty Questionnaire (SDQ) and Looked After Health Assessment as a holistic approach. Further developments will be part of the forthcoming year.

Issues identified 2020/21	Response
<p>Review the Dispute Resolution Process so that when there is a challenge made by IROs it makes a genuine difference for children and young people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A working group was established across all areas of Social Care to devise better ways of working in partnership taking a strength-based approach. ● Resolution Process Presentation delivered by Team Managers and IROs in joint approach to the full workforce. ● Review of IRO dashboard to enable quantitative and qualitative data to be produced about nature of challenge IROs make and how these are resolved to make a difference for children and their families. ● Resolution Process has brought about more reflective conversations with a focus on practice and needs of the child to agree outcomes for children in real time, unlike the built-in delay created by email exchanges and systems.

Timeliness of reviews

Despite the impact of Covid-19 we have continued to review Care Plans for all children in a timely way. 99% of our Children’s Reviews were held within timescales, an improvement from the 90% in 2019/20.



Children’s Reviews held within timescales

A new approach to the Dispute Resolution Process

The IRO service continues to have a Dispute Resolution process, however as Durham has adopted a strength-based relational practice model (Signs of Safety) we have reviewed our Dispute Resolution Process and renamed this the ‘Resolution Process’. The aim is to have a greater number of challenging but effective conversations between IROs and social work teams that make a real difference for children.

The number of resolution conversations that have taken place this year has remained relatively static. The primary reason for a resolution conversation has been delay in achieving a plan of permanence for a child or young person.



The number of resolution conversations

Secure Reviews

The IRO Service provides the Independent Panel Chair for all Secure Reviews. This is a separate IRO to that of the child’s allocated IRO. Of these 2 children, 1 child has left Secure in a planned way at the time of this report.



2020/21
2 children have required secure accommodation

Private Fostering Reviews

The IROs carry out Private Fostering Reviews on an annual basis. There have been 13 children between March 2020 - April 2021 who have required a Private Fostering review. 100% have all been held within timescales.

13 children who have required a private fostering review



have been held within timescales

Disruption Meetings

The IRO Service chair disruption meetings for children who have moved in an unplanned way who have been in their placement for 2 years or more, permanently matched or the issues are complex and require an independent chair.



The IRO Service have chaired 4 disruption meetings within 2020/21

Foster Care Reviews

273 Foster Care Reviews



Feedback from children and young people

The participation of children and young people in their own reviews is vitally important and the table below shows how successful we have been in promoting this participation:

How child participated in their CLA Review

Total Number of children

Child was under 4 years of age at the time of the meeting

663

Child attended and spoke for themselves

971

Child attended and advocate spoke

112

Child attended and gave views non-verbally
(Children with Disabilities)

8

Child attended without contribution

15

Child did not attend, advocate shared views

475

Child did not attend, views sent

741

Child did not attend or share views

51



We have established a CICC IRO consultation Group which meet termly on a Saturday morning to review changing practices within the IRO Service. This group has developed an IRO information leaflet to share with children and young people prior to their first meeting. This explains the role of the IRO, IRO profile and contact information for the IRO allocated to the young person. The consultation group is currently making an animation video to explain what a looked after review is and what to expect from the IRO Service. This is hoped to be live on the CICC website in May 2021.

The IRO Service has been successful in achieving Investors In Children (IIC) Status Gold award for 10 years' service to children and young people.

Key Priorities for 2021/22

Issues identified 2021/22	Improvement Plan
<p>To improve on the quality of care plans for children and young people and ensure these plans are formed with children and their families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Focus on the timeliness of plans ratified at the child's 4-month review with a clear rationale for decision making. ● Improve on the IROs voice within Care Proceedings to ensure their views are represented in court. ● Clear reviewing processes to be established for all children who are living at home under a Care Order to ensure this is not longer than necessary and does not exceed 18 Months. ● IROs will promote the use of trajectories in care planning for all children to avoid drift and delay. ● Bi-Monthly working group established focusing on the need for advocacy support. ● Animation video is being created to explain the child looked after review meetings and how children and young people can feed into this reviewing process.
<p>Continue to support Social Care and the IRO Service to embed Signs of Safety as the practice model.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The IROs will continue to have monthly Signs of Safety group supervisions, with a focus on 'Best Questioning', 'Use of Harm Matrix' and 'Use of trajectories' when reviewing care planning and managing risk. This is something which will be a key priority for the service moving into 2021-22. ● IROs will promote the use of trajectories, words and pictures and safety plans in aspects of care planning.
<p>We want our children to have good prospects when leaving care.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The IRO Operations Manager is researching across the partnership, into the merit of the IRO offering up to two care leaver reviews for young people who are more complex or require that higher level of scrutiny and oversight when making that transition to care leaver. ● Work with the Pathways/Young Peoples Service towards ensuring transitions for care leavers have a trajectory for leaving care with aspirational goals. This will include looking at care arrangements such as 'Staying Put', 'Supported Lodging' and reunification with family. ● IROs will continue to work with the CICC in ways to promote the child and young people voice in care planning.
<p>To support Social Care to make continuous improvement to the service they provide for children and young people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The IRO service will provide updated on lessons learnt from disruption meetings, dip samples, outcomes from informal and formal resolutions meetings and audits- to Social Care regarding any themes, trends and learning from these meetings at the Quality Improvement Board (QIB). ● The IRO Service is working with the Residential Quality Improvement Manager to review how the resolution process could be replicated for children who move when living in a residential care home to build on placement stability. ● A Quality Assurance Framework will be devised looking at how the role of the IRO can support the improvement of quality of practice in Social Care.

Feedback

““ The review meeting was well planned and managed in a professional manner by the Designated Independent Reviewing Officer (DIRO).

Panel consideration was thorough, reflecting on matters which led to the most recent admission, previous placement breakdowns and exploring risks. Panel members were given appropriate time by the DIRO to discuss, question and clarify any queries or concerns. The DIRO ensured that our discussions were fair, considered risks to all options, and were relevant.

Feedback from an independent person on a secure review

““ I really wish I had communicated with you when all this started in the very beginning. It is evident that you care about your job role just from the brief conversations we have shared. You have shown me empathy and compassion when others haven't which goes a very long way.

Feedback from a mum to an IRO

““ She listened to him and she answered the best way she could so he is happy and not on edge as much. Thank you for dropping everything to listen to him, this means a lot to me, from my heart thank you.

Feedback from a mum to an IRO about her son

For further information or to discuss anything in this report please contact

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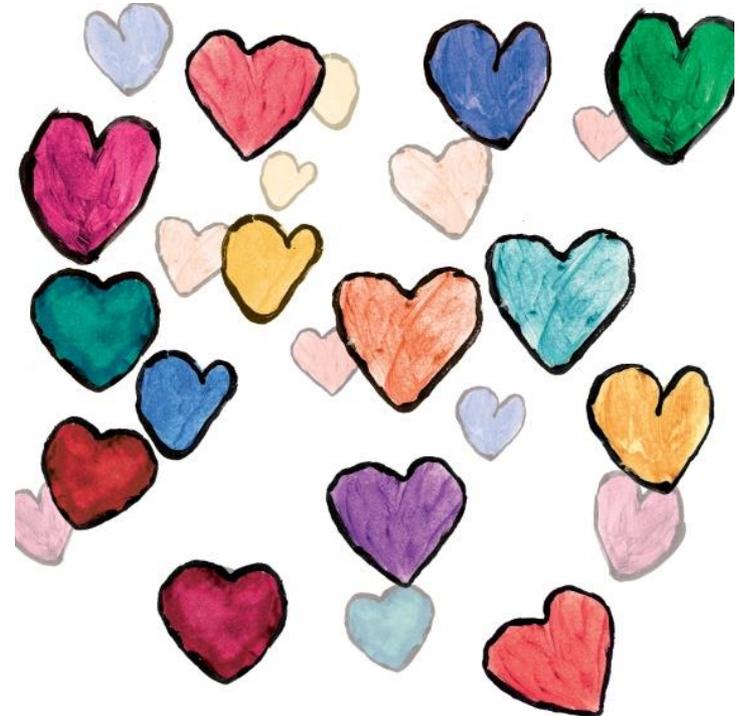
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Durham Children in Care Council (CiCC)

12 care experienced young people have been involved in the Artstops project.

Several pieces will be displayed, including this one . . .



for every moment you lose a little hope,
your loved one whispers...

I ♥ You



CICC Highlights October 2021.

- Two CICC members delivered training to 15 Students from Sunderland University doing a Masters in Social Work
- Five CICC members have supported the development of Care Plan Documents.
- The younger CICC group are developing a project called 'All About Me' in the new year with disposable cameras – focusing on identity. An update will be brought to the CPP next year.



The older CICC members:

- Have successfully secured £2,000 from The Key, which will be used to celebrate Care Day 2022 in a variety of ways across County Durham. Further information can be found here: [The Key: Inspiring Belief in Young People | The Key \(thekeyuk.org\)](https://thekeyuk.org)



- Linked with Newcastle University's Street Law project to developed better information about care orders and rights. Further information can be found here: [Pro Bono Schemes | Newcastle Law School - Newcastle Law School - Newcastle University \(ncl.ac.uk\)](https://ncl.ac.uk)



- Developed a training session with 14 PCSO, focusing on relationship building with young people aligned to Children Homes.
- The sixth edition of the CICC newsletter is being finalised and will be circulated soon.



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Corporate Parenting Panel

17 December 2021

Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2020/21



Report of David Pickard Independent Chair & Scrutineer - Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP)

Electoral division(s) affected:

None.

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to present the Corporate Parenting Panel with the Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2020/21. The full annual report is available via the DSCP website at <https://durham-scp.org.uk/professionals/key-reports/> and is attached as Appendix 2.

Executive summary

2. The Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership is required in law to produce a report at least every 12 months into the effectiveness of its arrangements to safeguard children in the area.
3. This report details our Vision and Values and the work undertaken against set priorities for 2020-21 and outlines our focus for 2021-22.

Recommendations

4. Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are recommended to:
 - a) Note the content of this report.
 - b) Accept the DSCP Annual Report for information as an overview of the work undertaken in 2020/21 and our priorities for action in 2021/22.

Background

5. The Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership is a statutory body established under the Children Act 2004. It has an independent chair and scrutineer and consists of three statutory partners, namely Durham Constabulary, Durham County Council and the Clinical Commissioning

Group. Other relevant agencies form part of the broader partnership across Education, Health, Criminal Justice and the Voluntary & Community Sector.

6. The DSCP's primary responsibility is to provide a way for local organisations that have a responsibility in respect of child welfare, to agree how they will work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in County Durham and to ensure that they do so effectively.
7. Statutory Guidance from Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) requires each local Safeguarding Children Partnership to produce and publish an Annual Report every 12 months, evaluating the effectiveness of safeguarding in the local area.
8. This annual Report provides an overview of the DSCP's 'Practice Improvement and Impact' on our areas of focus in line with our Vision and Values for keeping children safe.

DSCP Annual Report

9. The DSCP Annual Report 2020/21 sets out the work of multi-agency partners to ensure effective arrangements are in place to safeguard and protect vulnerable children and young people from abuse and neglect.
10. The report describes the work undertaken against the 2020/21 priorities and sets out the future priorities for 2021/22.
11. The report also provides an overview of our Vision and Values; the demographic of children and schools in County Durham; the effect of Covid on our services; our achievements against priorities; the work of the Partnership sub-groups; Serious Case Reviews, training and other areas of key activity including Looked After Children (LAC) and Elective Home Education.

Vision and Values

12. Our Vision is simple, it's about 'Keeping Children Safe' on the premise that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. It acts as an umbrella covering all that we do and underpinned through our three Core Values – Tenacity; Curiosity; Openness.
 - **Prevention through early intervention** – work together to prevent harm at the earliest opportunity
 - **Joined-up response** - We will respond promptly drawing on appropriate expertise of others
 - **Listening** - We will listen to and observe children to ensure their voice is heard even when they don't or can't speak out.

- **Identifying** - We will identify those most likely to be harmed by sharing information and data effectively.

DSCP Priorities for 2020/21

13. The priorities for the year 2020/21 were determined through multi-agency discussions including at DSCP development sessions:
 - Domestic Abuse – Coercive Controlling Behaviour
 - Cumulative Harm and Risk Assessment.

Achievements Against Priorities

- **Domestic Abuse**

14. This has been one of the key Practice Improvement themes over the last year in raising awareness and understanding, to ensure children are considered as a part of domestic abuse situations and appropriate action taken to protect them.
15. Partner agencies have come together to develop a range of tools, interventions, and workforce development opportunities to support practitioners in identifying and responding to families where coercion and control is a feature.
16. Looking at coercion and control as a part of domestic abuse, the Partnership has worked closely with the Open Clasp theatre company to further develop their production of Rattlesnake and accompanying workshops. The sessions explore how coercion and control can manifest in relationships and the impact this has on families, particularly children.
17. DASH(domestic abuse, stalking, honour based violence) Risk Assessment training linked with the Signs of Safety Harm Matrix has been developed, and managers' report seeing an increase in the use of these tools to better understand risk and potential harm within families.

- **Cumulative Harm and Risk Assessment**

18. The DSCP had earlier recognised that more work was required around the assessment of risk in line with our Signs of Safety Practice framework, and most notably in our judgement on the effect of cumulative harm on children and families. Initial focus was around improving the usage across the Partnership of the Harm Matrix as a tool when developing the risk assessment, in effect asking key questions to illicit quality information to best inform the assessment.
19. A launch event around the Harm Matrix took place across the Partnership in September 2020 and was followed up with a further awareness raising

session during Safeguarding Week in November. Feedback and scrutiny would show a greater understanding of the Harm Matrix and improved use as part of the main risk assessment.

20. It was however recognised that this tool was only one part of the broader need to fully understand and assess risk based on the cumulative harm being experienced by children and its significant effect. With a clear need identified this area is one of our Practice Improvement Themes for 2021/22.

Summary of Key Achievements

21. Below are some examples of achievements and progress made by the DSCP in 2020/21:

- A more rigorous multi-agency risk assessment process dealing with return to home interviews after children have gone missing.
- Significant work within the Embedding Learning sub-group examining actions and recommendations from Serious Case Reviews and other inspection criteria resulted in the development of 4 Practice Improvement Themes (see 2021/22 Priorities).
- A notable achievement around child exploitation is the way in which the use of the Child Exploitation Vulnerability Tracker (CEVT) has been embedded into multi-agency practice influencing decision making on a day-to-day basis around our most vulnerable children. There is clear connectivity and information sharing between the multi-agency processes that feed the CEVT and operational risk/vulnerability areas such as County Lines and radicalisation.
- A key achievement over the last 12 months has been the design of a new Neglect Practice Guidance section as part of the Children and Families Practice Toolkit to assist practitioners in better recognising the signs of neglect to support effective intervention at the earliest opportunity.
- The County Durham Stronger Families Programme has been committed to implement a Place Based Approach (PBA) and associated Locality Early Help Conversations to all seven localities across County Durham with there being a major shift with this approach. The requirement has been that areas embed better ways of collaborative working to mainstream the 'whole family' approach and embed the Family Outcome Framework (FOF) across the Partnership.
- Enhanced focus on Elective Home Education. information is shared openly between partners including Education, Housing, Health, Gypsy Roma and Traveller Education services, Children's Services and the Police to establish when children were last seen. This informs a wider risk assessment process which considers suitable education and safeguarding. The numbers of those EHE remains

low at 472 (0.6%) with over 70 having returned to school in the reporting period.

- By focusing on the successes of our young people it is seen that Care Experienced Young People aged 17-18 in Durham are engaged in education, employment and training at a rate of 74%; this rate has been sustained throughout the COVID-19 pandemic with young people being supported to access digital and other remote solutions where required. These successes are built upon the actions and interventions with children at a younger age where through our multi-agency care planning we retain an ambitious focus on each child's future, supporting them to feel able to stretch themselves to try new things and to feel hopeful for their futures.

Serious Case Reviews and LAC

22. The DSCP have published a number of Serious Case Reviews within the past year that were agreed pre 2019 launch of the new partnership. It must be recognised that as some of these were some time ago, individual agencies and the partnership have progressed the learning and a number of key actions.
23. None of the cases published were in relation to Looked After Children but a number have been in relation to babies and or very young children and this is a theme that the National Panel have also highlighted and published.
24. In June 2020 the DSCP commissioned a report to disseminate the learning and recommendations from 4 Serious Case Reviews. There were 7 identified themes:
 - a) Cumulative harm/ wider risk assessment
 - b) Information sharing including handovers between agencies
 - c) Professional curiosity and professional challenge
 - d) Missed opportunities
 - e) Professional Optimism
 - f) Compliance with statutory duties and decision making
 - g) Voice of the Child
25. The partnership have consolidated the learning from these reviews and other sources into the 4 Practice Improvement Areas for 2021/22 (see below). We have shared the learning with practitioners through the following:
 - Safeguarding weeks in October 2020 and July 2021
 - Monthly bulletins
 - Learning tools published on the DSCP website.
 - Specific targeted awareness raising and review of training.

- Six monthly updates to the Child Protection Procedures which highlight changes
 - Promotion of support through stronger families and resolving parental conflict forums.
 - Continue to work with the Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse Executive Group (DASVEG) and support identified training across the partnership.
26. The DSCP have not commissioned any Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews since the launch of the partnership but have shared learning through the Rapid Review process.

What's Next for 2021/22 – this is correct covers financial year, Apr-March

Focus on Practice Improvement Themes

- Management Understanding and Decision Making
- Voice and Lived Experience of the Child
- Risk Assessment and Cumulative Harm
- Child Sexual Abuse

Other Key Work

- Introduction of new DSCP website.
- Continue to embed the Signs of Safety Practice Framework across partner agencies.
- Improve effectiveness of Partnership scrutiny and the assessment of impact.
- Continue to embed new Training Strategy with hybrid offer.

Conclusion

27. The Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2020/21 was agreed by the DSCP in October 2021
28. The report is available on the Durham SCP website at <https://durham-scp.org.uk/professionals/key-reports/>, and has been disseminated across partners and their own organisational governance structures.

Authors: Jacqui Doherty, DSCP Business Manager, Tel 03000 263989
Stephen Winship, Policy & Strategy Officer Tel 03000267051

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance

Yearly financial contributions to Durham SCP are received from partner agencies and are detailed in the DSCP Annual Report.

Staffing

The priorities identified in the DSCP Annual Report will be delivered using existing resources. Durham County Council will contribute to the delivery of the priorities in partnership with other statutory authorities.

Risk

No adverse implications.

Equality and Diversity/ Public Sector Equality Duty

The DSCP Annual Report identifies the actions to safeguard the needs of vulnerable children and young people.

Accommodation

No adverse implications.

Crime and disorder

The DSCP Annual Report reflects priorities and action that impact positively on crime and disorder in County Durham. The report shows effective partnership working with the Safe Durham Partnership.

Human rights

No adverse implications.

Consultation

Consultation with partner agencies and stakeholders has been undertaken as part of the development of the DSCP Annual Report.

Procurement

No adverse implications.

Disability Issues

No adverse implications.

Legal Implications

Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP) is a statutory body established under the Children Act 2004. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 requires each area Safeguarding Children Partnership to produce and publish an Annual Report evaluating the effectiveness of safeguarding in the local area.

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Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2020/2021



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Introduction

As the three statutory partners of the Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership, we present our report covering the period 2020/21. In it we aim to demonstrate how we function and provide assurance that our safeguarding arrangements are effective in keeping children safe.

We are now two years into the new partnership arrangements and although at times challenging, there is clear evidence this new way of working enables leaders at service delivery and quality assurance levels to maintain ownership of the safeguarding agenda.

Throughout this entire reporting period we have all lived with the COVID-19 Coronavirus and the significant impact it has had both personally and professionally in terms of how we all deliver our services. All partner agencies responded with a positive 'can do' attitude to the challenges faced and were determined to keep vulnerable children at the forefront of their thinking. We embraced new ways of working which we continue to embed into practice.

We detail in this report some key areas of success where we have made a real difference for children and families, but also highlight areas where we need added focus to continually improve services across the DSCP and our individual agencies.

In consideration of this, key work carried out has led us to rationalise a large number of actions from different inspections, audit and learning to theme them into four broad Practice Improvement Areas (detailed in report), that are the basis of our Strategic Plan and focus for activity over the coming year.

John Pearce
Director of Children and Young People's Services, Durham County Council

David Ashton
Detective Superintendent Safeguarding Lead, Durham Constabulary

Anne Greenley
Interim Director of Nursing and Quality, NHS County Durham Clinical Commissioning Group



About Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership

The Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP) has a statutory duty to prepare and publish an Annual Report every 12 months which describes how our partners safeguard vulnerable children and young people. Our primary responsibility is to provide a way for the local agencies that have a responsibility for child welfare, to agree how they will work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and to ensure that they do so effectively. We changed from the old Board structure into a Partnership in April 2019 and are governed by our Partnership Arrangements.

The Annual Report 2020/21 aims to demonstrate the extent to which the functions of the Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership, as set out in the national statutory guidance, 'Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)', have been fulfilled and to provide assurance that the multi-agency safeguarding system is effective.

The work of the partners throughout the entire reporting period has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic with changes in working practices and activity necessary, but this seems if anything to have strengthened connectivity across the Partnership.

The Vision and Values of the DSCP remain consistent being the driver over the last year with continued emphasis on Child Exploitation and Neglect as well as our focus on the following Practice Improvement themes:

- Domestic Abuse – Coercive Controlling Behaviour
- Cumulative Harm and Risk Assessment

The Partnership is supported by three strategic sub-groups; Embedding Learning; Performance, Challenge and Impact; and the Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP). Assurance reporting also feeds into these groups, notably from the Child Exploitation Group, Neglect Group, and other task and finish groups.





Our Vision and Values

Our Vision is simple, it's about 'Keeping Children Safe' on the premise that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. It acts as an umbrella covering all that we do and underpinned through our three Core Values – Tenacity; Curiosity; Openness.



Prevention through early intervention

We will work together to prevent harm at the earliest opportunity.



Joined-up response

We will respond promptly drawing on appropriate expertise of others.



Listening

We will listen to and observe children to ensure their voice is heard even when they don't or can't speak out.



Identifying

We will identify those most likely to be harmed by sharing information and data effectively.



Challenging

We will challenge, learn and continuously improve.

Our Partners

Each local area is required by law to have a Safeguarding Children Partnership. The DSCP is a statutory body established in legislation (Children Act 2017) and works according to national guidance, 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018', and in accordance with the local Partnership Arrangements. The statutory guidance provides children's safeguarding with a legal framework, setting out the responsibilities of local authorities and their partners.

The statutory bodies are supported by a number of other Relevant Agencies coming from the areas of Criminal Justice; Health; Education and the Voluntary sector.



DSCP Budget 2020-21

The financial contributions from the strategic partners are as follows, with monies from the 4 NHS Trusts being part of the CCG overall total:

Partner	Contribution 2020/21 (£)
Durham County Council	181,604
Clinical Commissioning Groups	113,135
Durham Constabulary	39,285
CDDFT – Admin costs for CDOP	6,036
Training fees	5,000
Total	345,524

Children and Young People in County Durham

19% total population are children and young people

4% of pupils in the January 2021 school census are Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME)

101,468 children and young people under 18 living in County Durham (Aug 2020/00)

Age 0-4	26,347	Age 15	5,318
Age 5-9	30,272	Age 16	5,291
Age 10-14	29,209	Age 17	5,031

20,316 (20%) pupils are eligible for free school meals

82 children are missing from education

667 children and young people are electively home educated

1,494 pupils attend special schools in County Durham

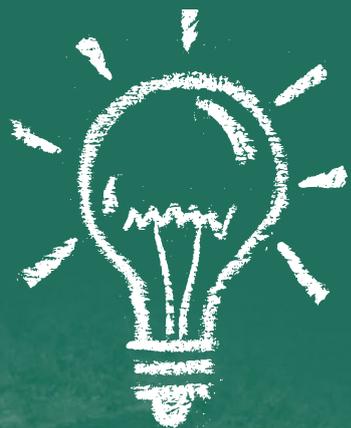
3% of pupils in the January 2021 school census have a first language other than English.

9,782 with Special Educational Needs (SEN) support in Durham schools

73,802 pupils attend state-funded schools (Jan 2021)

2,383 children and young people have Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) including those maintained by other Local Authorities

Schools in County Durham



196 primary schools
including
8 infant only schools
8 junior only schools

31 secondary
schools

1 Pupil
referral
unit

10 special
schools
(1 academy)

11 nursery
schools

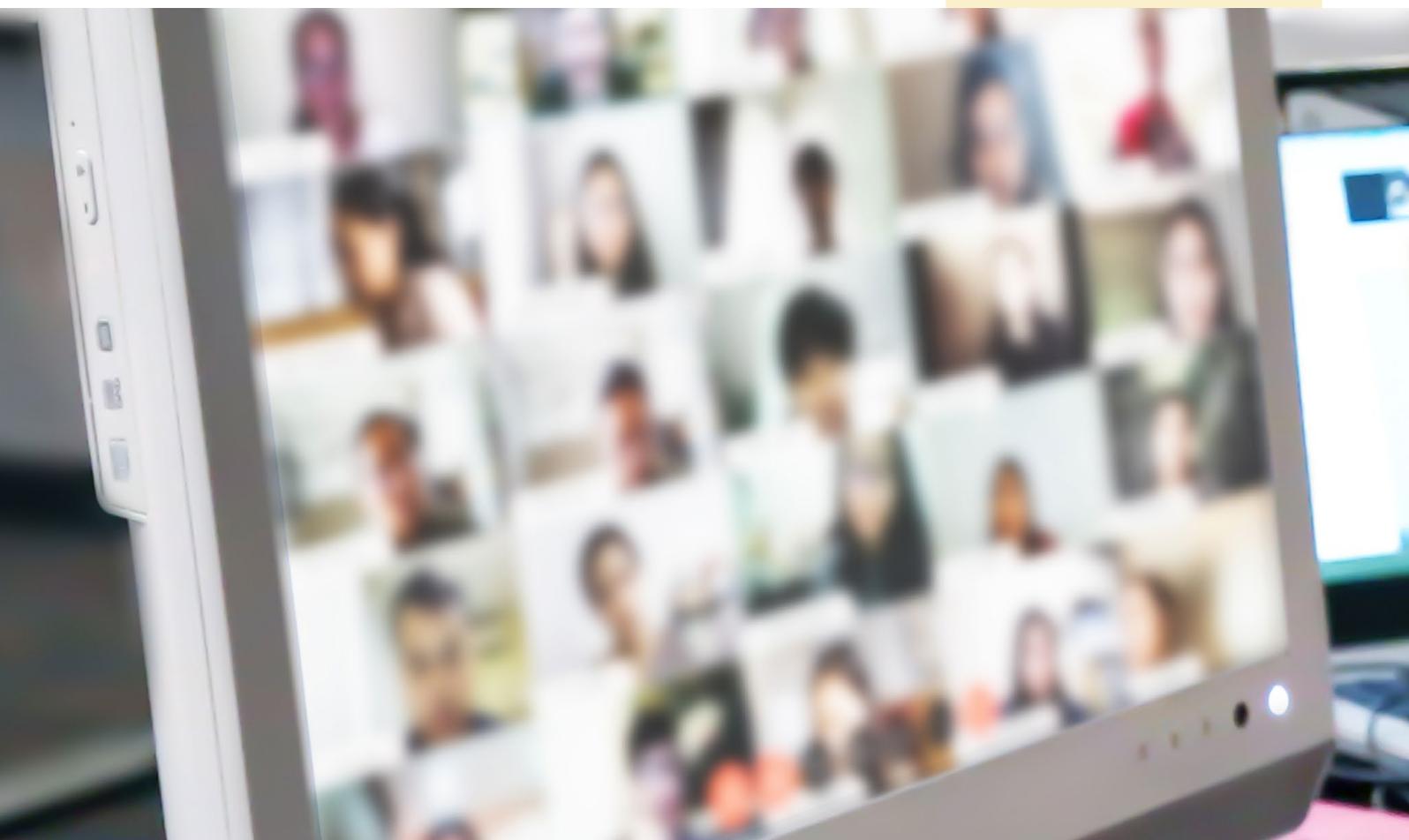


The effect of COVID-19

As soon as lockdown commenced a decision was made to suspend all multi-agency DSCP meetings and face to face training. A Safeguarding Assurance Group was formed which initially met every week. Their primary responsibility was to establish what the core functions were of the partner agencies and working together to address any potential gaps in service delivery in terms of both restriction and capacity, in order to maintain an effective Partnership service during the pandemic. The group was able to coordinate and maximise the capacity of frontline practitioners across the Partnership to ensure that the most vulnerable children were seen.

Business Continuity Plans developed by individual agencies were considered to understand their effect, with Partnership activity altering to ensure essential service delivery for children and families remained in place. This has enabled those with the ability to make decisions to problem solve issues as they arise in a coordinated way. We were able to compare data and discuss emerging risks to understand the impact of lockdown and its relaxation on our children and families.

The group also took responsibility for the communication of key Partnership messages that needed promulgating out during various points during lockdown. Two main social media campaigns were implemented aimed at awareness raising in communities, so families were well informed that services remained in place despite lockdown and signposting them to relevant services. Over time the sub-groups of the DSCP returned, albeit over a digital platform.





Achievements against Priorities

Domestic Abuse – Coercive Controlling Behaviour

This has been one of the key Practice Improvement themes over the last year in raising awareness and understanding, to ensure children are considered as a part of domestic abuse situations and appropriate action taken to protect them.

Partner agencies have come together to develop a range of tools, interventions, and workforce development opportunities to support practitioners in identifying and responding to families where coercion and control is a feature.

Available on the DSCP website is the enhanced Children and Families Practice Toolkit at: <https://durham-scp.org.uk/professionals/early-help-and-neglect/toolkits-and-guidance-for-practitioners-single-assessments-and-early-help/> which was launched during September 2020 through virtual events. These events were attended by representatives across the multi-agency Partnership; feedback from the event and from those using the toolkit has been positive. The toolkit was developed in line with Signs of Safety and includes practical guidance and resources for practitioners to support victims, children and young people and perpetrators. From an impact perspective, managers' report they can see the difference it is making in improving practice across their teams.

Looking at coercion and control as a part of domestic abuse, the Partnership has worked closely with the Open Clasp theatre company to further develop their production of Rattlesnake and accompanying workshops. The sessions explore how coercion and control can manifest in relationships and the impact this has on families, particularly children. The response from staff across all agencies has been overwhelmingly positive with staff describing this as "the most thought provoking session I have ever taken part in" and "this is so hard hitting and emotional, its really made me think about the families I work with". Further work is ongoing on how we can build on the success of Rattlesnake moving forward.

Impact - DASH Risk Assessment training linked with the Signs of Safety Harm Matrix has been developed, and managers' report seeing an increase in the use of these tools to better understand risk and potential harm within families.

Case Study - Impact On Practice

"I would say that the training has brought the issues of coercion and control to the forefront of my mind. It is an issue that is not always visible or obvious and one that is often hard to evidence. Since the training I am more conscious of the issue, am able to identify 'tell-tale' signs at a much earlier stage, and support my team to start and ask the 'right questions'. Since the training we have been able to evidence and step up a family to the most appropriate services. This family had been in and out of Early Help and the focus had always been on neglect issues. Looking at it from a coercion and control perspective, we were able to see a pattern of subtleties that suggested coercion and control leading to more empathetic but direct questions. This enabled us to unpick and identify years of abuse and although the individual in this instance did not initially fully accept or even understand the abuse they are living with, the dialogue is now open which means that the coercive behaviour can be challenged and positive changes made going forward".

Cumulative Harm

The DSCP had earlier recognised that more work was required around the assessment of risk in line with our Signs of Safety Practice framework, and most notably in our judgement on the effect of cumulative harm on children and families. Initial focus was around improving the usage across the Partnership of the Harm Matrix as a tool when developing the risk assessment, in effect asking key questions to illicit quality information to best inform the assessment.

A launch event around the Harm Matrix took place across the Partnership in September 2020 and was followed up with a further awareness raising session during Safeguarding Week in November. An additional briefing session in December 2020 was recorded and is available through the Me Learning platform as well as a narrated Powerpoint presentation on the DSCP website. Feedback and scrutiny would show a greater understanding of the Harm Matrix and improved use as part of the main risk assessment.

It was however recognised that this tool was only one part of the broader need to fully understand and assess risk based on the cumulative harm being experienced by children and its significant effect. With a clear need identified this area is one of our Practice Improvement Themes for 2021/22.





Safeguarding Children Sub-Groups

The DSCP has three principal sub-groups – Embedding Learning; Performance, Challenge & Impact; and the Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP). Two other groups worthy of note that feed into the partnership are the Child Exploitation and Neglect groups.

● Performance, Challenge and Impact Group

The purpose of the Performance, Challenge & Impact group is to monitor the impact and outcomes of partner activity on behalf of the DSCP, as required by Chapter 3 of Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018.

The group considers the performance of all agencies involved in safeguarding children using the Vision of the DSCP as a basis from which to assess good practice and concerns, reporting such to the Safeguarding Executive Group, by using data and intelligence.

Key work for the group has been the improvement in the analysis and understanding of the data so key questions can assist the partners in problem solving and developing options for tackling the issues.

Impact - Return To Home Interviews

Following on from a multi-agency audit in early 2020, improvements were necessary in the way in which we dealt with Return to Home Interviews after children had gone missing. The attrition rate for completion was too high with inconsistent quality.

Two Missing Coordinators were appointed who complete all Return to Home Interviews, and administration sits across both Police and Children's Services in a collaborative multi-agency setting. Assessment is made whether the risk matrix needs completing and feeding into the Vulnerability Tracker. Completion rates on Return to Home Interviews are now high, quality is good, with robust assessment now in place around vulnerability, and fed into the multi-agency processes for intervention.

● Embedding Learning Group

The purpose of the Embedding Learning Group is to improve the quality of multi-agency safeguarding frontline practice through the implementation of a joint, co-ordinated approach which will ensure good outcomes for children which will be evidenced through multi-agency audit; peer review and inspection.

Their work will respond to the recommendations and actions from inspection; audit; serious case reviews/child safeguarding practice reviews; local learning lessons reviews; complaints; performance information; and feedback from children and families. This is to ensure multi-agency safeguarding practice is high quality; makes a difference to children; and enhances learning about what works for children and families.

Work of significance progressed through this group over the last 12 months has been a change in ethos and decision making with the development of Practice Improvement Themes to provide in-depth analysis and work in key areas where we need to improve. Extensive work examining the actions and recommendations from Serious Case Reviews and other inspection, and audit activity has led to their rationalisation into the four themed areas the DSCP are focused on for 2021/22. The introduction of a Workforce Learning and Development Group ensures there is a continuous cycle of improvement, so learning from all sources influences training and impacts on professional practice.

● Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP)

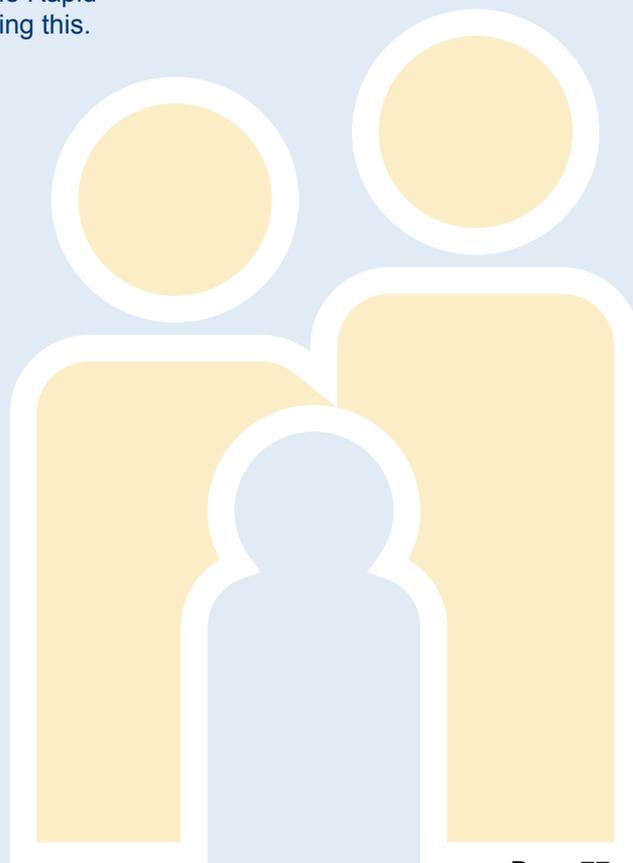
Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 specifies, *'When a child dies, in any circumstances, it is important for parents and families to understand what has happened and whether there are any lessons to be learned'*.

The CDOP oversees all deaths of children under 18 regardless of cause, of which there have been 28 in the reporting period. All of these are subject to a Child Death Review (CDR). The CDOP works closely with the Safeguarding Executive Group to highlight any emerging themes, issues and learning from child death reviews that require further consideration. The CDOP also completes its own Annual Report which is available on <https://durham-scp.org.uk/professionals/serious-case-reviewchild-death-reviews/>

Significant work has taken place to harness the recommendations and learning from all reviews and other areas of both internal and external scrutiny. The Partnership, in an evolving way now determines Practice Improvement Themes which require sustained multi-agency focus going forward, with the governance for progression sitting both with the Embedding Learning Group and CDOP which has its own Thematic Review process. It is within these themed areas that the learning from both Child Death Reviews (CDR) and CSPR's sit. For the coming year there are four themes which are detailed later in this report.

● Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (formerly Serious Case Review Panel)

Over the last 2-3 years the DSCP had an unusually high caseload of Serious Case Reviews (SCR) and through the transition across to Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR) had these to finalise. During the reporting period six serious case reviews were concluded and published. (link to website). Cases have been referred under the CSPR process, but none have progressed to full review. There have been 3 Local Rapid Reviews and one case which was progressed to a Learning Review. With one other case it was agreed that the criteria for a local CSPR had been met, however all the learning had already been identified at the Rapid Review stage meaning there was no added value in undertaking this.





● Child Exploitation Group

Multi-agency work around all forms of child exploitation is coordinated by this group which is a joint group between the two local authorities of Durham and Darlington, thus covering the entire Police Force area. It has both a strategic and connected delivery plan framed around the DSCP Vision.

The primary purpose of the Child Exploitation Group is to monitor, improve and evaluate the strategic response of partner agencies in tackling children missing from home, care and education and the reduction of all forms of child exploitation.

A notable achievement around child exploitation is the way in which the use of the Child Exploitation Vulnerability Tracker (CEVT) has been embedded into multi-agency practice influencing decision making on a day-to-day basis around our most vulnerable children. It feeds into the strategic CEG and offers a richer data picture on which to base analysis and has vastly improved the focus of both Partnerships around our most vulnerable children and young people. There is clear connectivity and information sharing between the multi-agency processes that feed the CEVT and operational risk/vulnerability areas such as County Lines and radicalisation.

Impact - Child Exploitation Team (CET)

The Child Exploitation Team (CET) is a specialist multi-agency team identifying, engaging and working with young people who have been identified as the most vulnerable to exploitation. Police and Children's Services staff are co-located and work together linking in with representatives from, for example, Health and Education, to ensure those most at risk have a joined-up service. The Child Exploitation Vulnerability Tracker (CEVT) is a multi-agency process with relevant partners coming together to complete a holistic assessment of the young person and their needs. The CEVT has become a highly effective tool in the assessment of risk/vulnerability and the prioritisation of the necessary interventions which are subsequently agreed through a multi-agency operational meeting. There is tangible evidence this work is making a real difference in identifying and acting to protect our most vulnerable young people at an early stage.

Case Study

A thirteen-year-old female after triage through the multi-agency CEVT process was graded as high risk of child sexual exploitation. She was deemed to be at risk of being incited to engage in sexual activity by older persons whilst missing and under the influence of drugs or alcohol. The child was frequently missing from home. She was living within a single parent household and the child's relationship with her mother was difficult.

She was allocated an exploitation worker in order to complete a piece of work with her to improve her knowledge around exploitation. The CET conducted disruption work around her associates, including the issuing of child abduction warning notices. One male received a prison sentence for child abduction following this intervention. Also during this period she was made subject of a Child Protection Plan which was de-escalated as the perceived level of risk reduced.

Her missing episodes reduced markedly as the multi-agency work continued, she became more settled and engaged with professionals. Her case was closed to the CET in February 2021 due to there being no ongoing exploitation risks identified.

● Neglect Group

The plan for the group sets out the vision and key priorities for identifying and tackling neglect, through promoting early help and delivering effective interventions. Our agreed vision is 'to reduce neglect, by providing effective help and support at the earliest opportunity' through three key objectives: -

- (a) Understand Neglect: to understand the prevalence of neglect across County Durham in order to effectively target resources in order to help prevent and mitigate the negative impact this has on children and young people;
- (b) Early Identification: to improve the recognition and assessment of neglect
- (c) Effective Interventions: practitioners across County Durham deliver effective evidence-based interventions that reduce neglect before the need for statutory interventions.

A key achievement over the last 12 months has been the design of a new Neglect Practice Guidance section as part of the Children and Families Practice Toolkit to assist practitioners in better recognising the signs of neglect to support effective intervention at the earliest opportunity.



Impact - Accessing Early Help

The County Durham Stronger Families Programme has been committed to implement a Place Based Approach (PBA) and associated Locality Early Help Conversations to all seven localities across County Durham with there being a major shift with this approach.

The requirement has been that areas embed better ways of collaborative working to mainstream the 'whole family' approach and embed the Family Outcome Framework (FOF) across the Partnership. Partners must demonstrate the difference they are making in supporting families to achieve positive, significant and sustained outcomes.

Feedback shows that through the Locality Early Help Conversations, key professionals come together to provide a broad range of expertise and offers of support that are agreed in a timely manner. This prevents delay in families receiving early help and avoids duplication as all professionals agree the support package being offered to families and is better coordinated.

Durham has far exceeded expectation and to date has 'turned around' 1,054 families against a target of 761. Since 2015, 5,245 families have achieved significant and sustained outcomes with 638 achieving continuous employment, the best in the country.

Case Study

A family were referred into the One Point Service via an anonymous referral into First Contact. The anonymous refer reported concerns in relation to having different men in the home every evening and that she was using drugs and alcohol. The referrer reported the child looked under nourished and sad and the home conditions were described as 'appalling'. The child was reportedly always late for school.

A Whole Family assessment was undertaken with a coordinated multi-agency response being required. The mother had suffered for many years with a physical health condition. It was however established the family had a good network of support in place, including grandparents and other friends. The Key Worker convened a Family Network meeting with the mother and her support network and they developed a support plan for her and the child. The plan brought simple things into play including school transport for the 6 year old and other household requirements. Housing needs were addressed as was support on managing finances. A Safety Plan was introduced that reduced the burden on the family providing support in a number of key areas.

A Housing Association also supported the mother to apply for a debt relief order, therefore, reducing the need to continually borrow from family members to cover the monthly deficit. This extra income enabled her to buy a greater range of healthy food for the family and left some for some monthly "treats", such as a takeaways and movies, thus developing quality time for mother and daughter. Another Housing Association assessed the family home and authorised adaptations to the home to enable mum to be more independent. The impact of her having greater freedom to get about the home reduced the caring role the young girl had carried out previously and gave her more freedom to be a child.

Feedback from the head teacher has been extremely positive as previous offers of support had not been accepted. *"I now have a different child, who skips into school each day with a smile that lights up the room. Worries such as 'will I be late?' and 'what work have I missed?' along with 'will Mum be on time to pick me up tonight?' have completely disappeared.*



Other areas of Key Activity

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

The MASH is a co-located multi-agency team of social workers, police and safeguarding nurses and other professionals. They triage referrals to determine the appropriate course of action. In December 2020 a structured multi-agency assurance visit took place at the MASH.

Good evidence was found that the voice of the child and lived experience were being sought from children; robust multi-agency discussions and decisions around risk were taking place and were well recorded; all partners have a voice in the process; and strong evidence a Signs of Safety (SOS) approach was being used. There was highly effective Partnership working at all levels with effective communication and clear evidence of effective learning processes that feed into the relevant agencies and the wider Partnership.

Looked After Children And Care Leavers

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic children and young people in Durham have been supported with both virtual, and where required, face to face visits by their allocated social workers and young people's advisors with all statutory meetings having taken place.

As Corporate Parents in Durham, we want to focus on the successes of our young people. Our children and young people continue to play an active lead role in our Corporate Parenting arrangements and we benefit from the support and challenge they present to us. We are aware of the skills and talents of our children and young people and are mindful that in measuring this we celebrate not only the successes of their childhoods but that we measure the success of our parenting on the young people that we support.

Care Experienced Young People aged 17-18 in Durham are engaged in education, employment and training at a rate of 74%; this rate has been sustained throughout the COVID-19 pandemic with young people being supported to access digital and other remote solutions where required. The same cohort are managing to retain suitable accommodation at a rate of almost 90%. These indicators of engagement in planning for adult life with productivity and community engagement are hopeful indicators of successful parenting we will continue to progress. Clearly these successes are built upon the actions and interventions with children at a younger age where through our multi-agency care planning we retain an ambitious focus on each child's future, supporting them to feel able to stretch themselves to try new things and to feel hopeful for their futures.



Elective Home Education

Elective Home Education (EHE) is the term used to describe parents' decision to deregister their child from school and provide education for them at home. Local authorities have no formal powers or duty to monitor the provision of education at home. However, they do have duties to make arrangements to identify children not receiving a suitable education, and to intervene if it appears that they are not. Although the trend for EHE is upwards, the numbers remain relatively low at 0.6% of the total in education (472). Over 70 young people have returned to school from this cohort during the reporting period.

In Durham, information is shared openly between partners including Education, Housing, Health, Gypsy Roma and Traveller Education services, Children's Services and the Police to establish when children were last seen. This informs a wider risk assessment process which considers suitable education and safeguarding.

The profile of EHE work has been raised, resulting in increased liaison with families and consequently a notable numbers of pupils returning to school, where this is agreed to be in their best interests. Proportionate support is offered to those pupils and families identified as potentially most vulnerable to promote their welfare. A recent review of local arrangements by the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee provided assurance that clear policies and procedures are in place to ensure children are receiving a suitable, efficient and full-time education, and that safeguarding arrangements are as robust as they can be and ensure that children are seen by Durham County Council officers or partner agencies.



Use of Restraint

In conjunction with Durham County Council, the DSCP monitors the use of restraint at Aycliffe Secure Services Centre. The Centre houses a changing population of young people (aged 11-17) with complex needs. The home regularly reports information regarding the use of restraint to the Youth Justice Board and Ofsted, who has judged it as being outstanding in all areas (April 2021).

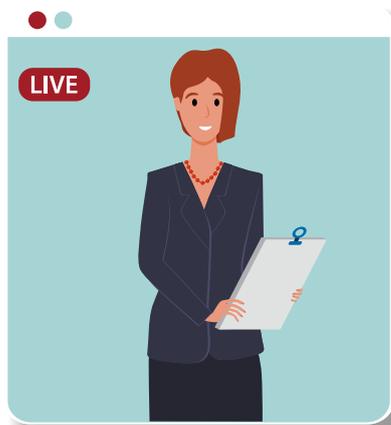
Injuries due to restraint are graded 1-3, with 3 being the most serious involving serious cuts, fractures or loss of consciousness. Of the 134 incidents of restraint recorded for the year, 23 resulted in injury, but only 1 in the highest level 3 category.

Scrutiny involves a regular review of the home's CCTV where randomly selected incidents are reviewed with a manager from the home about the use of restraint, the circumstances leading up to the incident, and what happened afterwards. This scrutiny provides assurance to the Partnership that the use of restraint is being monitored in terms of legality and proportionality in cooperation with the centre. The Aycliffe Centre has been judged as outstanding across all areas in its most recent Ofsted inspection.



OUTSTANDING





Training

With all face-to-face training suspended in March 2020, the Partnership took the opportunity to review its entire training provision and developed a new offer based around e-learning and the online delivery of essential training courses as determined by the Safeguarding Assurance Group. This style of training has been delivered throughout the reporting period and has been effective and well received.

One of the challenges for the DSCP has been the ability to measure the impact of training on service delivery across all partners, something that has proved difficult in any meaningful way. A Workforce Learning & Development Group (WLD) has been established that reports directly into the Embedding Learning Group (ELG). The purpose of WLD is to ensure that safeguarding children training needs are identified, training is delivered to a consistently high standard, and that there is a process in place for the DSCP to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of training.

Primary Aims:

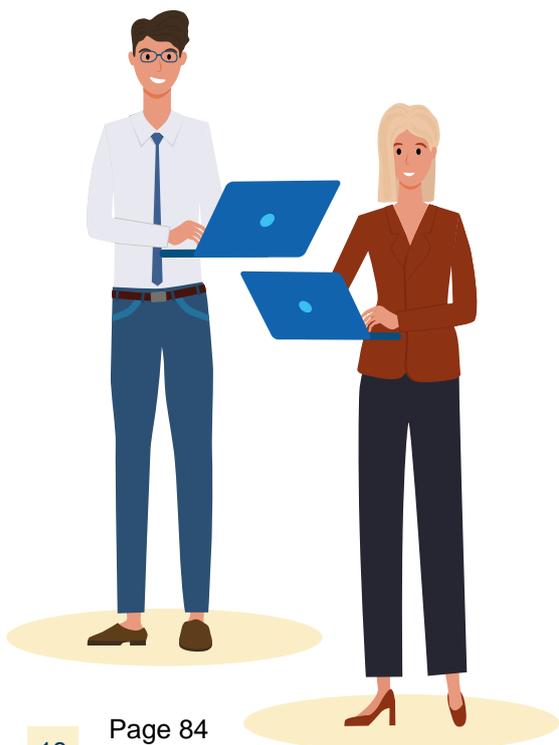
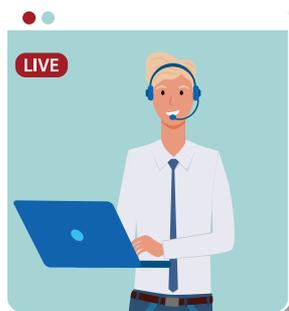
- Develop and coordinate the DSCP programme of safeguarding children training through the formulation of a training strategy.
- To integrate the learning from local and national serious case reviews into the training programme.
- To ensure that all DSCP training reflects the rights of children and encourages participants to consider the experiences of children as central to their work.

Method of Evaluation:

- Measure the impact of multi-agency agency training and ensure single agencies have a process to measure the effectiveness of their training.
- Evaluate all training and incorporate feedback into future training.
- Ensure that training is delivered to a consistently high standard by quality assuring all courses.

A core pillar of the newly developed Training Strategy and Workplan is that we ensure that DSCP training is making a real contribution to improving outcomes for children and families.

In October 2020 we ran a live webinar event focusing on trauma informed practice and led by an eminent expert in this area, Zoe Lodrick. The event was attended by over 700 practitioners and managers from across the Partnership. It was followed up with an additional focused developmental workshop around a specific case. Key learning and areas for improvement were taken from this work and is what is now weaved into the Practice Improvement Themes being progressed by the DSCP for 2021/22.



What's Next for 2021/22

Focus on Practice Improvement Themes:

- Management Understanding and Decision Making
- Voice and Lived Experience of the Child
- Risk Assessment and Cumulative Harm
- Child Sexual Abuse



Introduction of a new website for the DSCP



Continue to embed the Signs of Safety Practice Framework across partner agencies



Improve effectiveness of Partnership scrutiny and the assessment of impact



Continue to embed new Training Strategy with hybrid offer.



Dave Pickard
Independent Chair & Scrutineer.

Overview by the Independent Chair/Scrutineer of the progress made by the DSCP 2020/21

I was appointed by the DSCP Executive in September 2020 with the remit to not only chair certain meetings, but to act as a critical friend to the DSCP in scrutinising their effectiveness.

The annual report indicates what has been achieved by the partnership in 2020/21 against the significant impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The partnership, agencies and particularly staff are to be congratulated as to how they responded to the pandemic by working together to maintain effective safeguarding arrangements for children and young people throughout the year, despite these challenges.

My first task on appointment was to undertake an independent review of how the partnership was operating and the outcomes and associated impact that it was achieving.

The review made seven recommendations for further improvement. These recommendations and subsequent action by the partnership are detailed below.

Reasonable time is committed by the statutory safeguarding partners to lead the DSCP including clarity on priorities and expectations of the subgroups and Business Unit.

The DSCP Executive have committed the required time to drive this area forward. They have agreed a consistent membership and meet monthly alternating between a 'business' meeting and a 'developmental' meeting. This appears to be working well and as progress is made the frequency of the meetings will be reviewed.

Four improvement areas for focus have been identified, utilising learning from local and national reviews, for delivery by the Partnership:

1. Risk assessment and Cumulative Harm,
2. Voice and Lived Experience of the Child,
3. Management Understanding and Decision Making,
4. Child Sexual Abuse.

This has given the DCSP a clearer focus, and work is ongoing to examine the required structures and method of delivery including a greater focus on impact.

The DSCP is moving towards an assurance model in ensuring all agencies are effectively safeguarding children and understanding how they can add value to this process. This will include assurance from other partnerships, for example managing the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people.

Single agency statutory inspections will add to this assurance, such as ones recently completed in Durham Constabulary and Durham County Council Children and Young People's Service but are limited in informing across the whole Partnership.

Understand and agree how best the Independent Chair/Scrutineer can be utilised in achieving the above.

This relationship is evolving whilst maintaining the distinct boundary that the Partnership is led by the statutory partners and not the Chair. An example of this is that the bi-monthly Executive development meeting is chaired by a partner allowing the Independent chair/scrutineer to act more effectively as a critical friend.

Review the functioning of the Performance, Challenge and Impact group to allow a greater focus on outcome and impact.

The group is moving towards a thematic approach to data analysis. This needs improved alignment to the agreed priorities and a more co-ordinated approach in complimenting the work of the Embedding Learning Group. The chairs of both groups are meeting to address this, and the outcomes will be monitored by the Executive group.

Review the functioning of the Embedding Learning Group to allow a greater focus on outcome and impact.

Substantial progress has been made on this recommendation in that the over 300 actions from various SCR's and other reviews/inspections have been rationalised into the four priorities. The ELG has created four task and finish groups, one for each priority, to deliver against the associated action plans. This will be further informed once the Executive have agreed the wider scope of structure for delivery discussed in the first recommendation.

Whatever the outcome of the review into where the Business Unit sit the Executive to take greater ownership in directing and managing the unit as a DSCP resource.

There is a far greater understanding by the Executive of the work, pressure and demands on the Business Unit and improving understanding from the unit on what the Executive would like them to deliver. There is a two weekly catch-up meeting with members of the Executive and the Business Manager, who is also now line managed by one member of the Executive.

The DSCP revisit the purpose and operation of the four sector groups to ensure they are meeting the needs of all parties.

This is the one recommendation, where to date, the least progress has been made. There are four sector groups incorporating:

- Health
- Criminal Justice
- Education
- Voluntary Sector

There is a need to improve the dialogue, expectations, and relationship between these groups and the DSCP. This has been discussed at the Executive Group and work is to commence to align to existing structures to fulfil the intended purpose of the groups.

The DSCP Executive identify a suitable key line of enquiry for the Scrutiny Panel to complete and also consider closer alignment for the Panel with the Business Unit.

The Scrutiny Panel recently completed their first piece of work looking at how the Voice of the Child/Child lived experience was delivered in three agencies:

- Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust
- Durham Constabulary
- Durham County Council Children and Young People's Service

They found excellent commitment in each agency and some innovative practice. It was less clear how this was shared across the Partnership or indeed the impact of this. A report was produced for the Executive which will inform the work of the Child Lived Experience Priority task and finish group but it also stimulated good debate about the role of the DSCP in engaging with children and young people.

In conclusion, I am of the opinion that the DSCP is meeting its statutory obligations and is continuing to improve how it achieves this.

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