



## **Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Date**        **Monday 9 January 2023**

**Time**        **9.30 am**

**Venue**      **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham**

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### **Business**

#### **Part A**

**Items which are open to the Press and Public**  
**Members of the Public can ask questions with the Chair's agreement**  
**and if registered to speak**

1. Apologies for absence
2. Substitute Members
3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 November 2022 (Pages 3 - 16)
4. Declarations of Interest, if any
5. Any items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties
6. Relationship Based Social Work Practice
  - a) Report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young people's Services (Pages 17 - 26)
  - b) Presentation by Strategic Manager Safeguarding and Social Work Practice (Pages 27 - 34)
7. Sufficiency Strategy
  - a) Report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services (Pages 35 - 104)
  - b) Presentation by Practice Lead Children in Care (Pages 105 - 116)
8. Revenue and Capital Forecast Q2 - Report of the Corporate Director of Resources (Pages 117 - 128)
9. Performance Management Q2 - Report of the Corporate Director of Resources (Pages 129 - 142)
10. CAMHS Waiting Time Data - For Information (Pages 143 - 144)
11. 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  
21 December 2022

To: **The Members of the Children and Young People's Overview  
and Scrutiny Committee**

Councillor A Reed (Chair)  
Councillor J Cosslett (Vice-Chair)

Councillors C Bell, R Charlton-Lainé, I Cochrane, M Currah, S Deinali,  
J Griffiths, O Gunn, C Hunt, L Kennedy, C Lines, C Martin, L Mavin,  
D Mulholland, K Rooney, A Sterling, S Townsend, C Varty, E Waldock  
and M Walton

**Faith Communities Representatives:**  
Mrs L Keenan and Mrs L Vollans

**Parent Governor Representatives:**  
Mr P Debrett-Watson

**Co-opted Members:**  
Ms R Evans and Ms A Gunn

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## **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

At a Meeting of **Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Monday 14 November 2022 at 9.30 am**

### **Present:**

**Councillor A Reed (Chair)**

### **Members of the Committee:**

Councillors J Cosslett, V Andrews, B Coult, M Currah, S Deinali, C Hunt, C Martin, K Rooney, A Sterling, S Townsend and M Walton

### **Faith Community Representative:**

Mrs L Vollans

### **Co-opted Members:**

Ms A Gunn

### **Also Present:**

Councillors M Simmons

## **1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors I Cochrane, O Gunn, L Mavin, C Varty, E Waldock and Ms R Evans.

## **2 Substitute Members**

Councillor V Andrews substituted for Councillor C Varty and Councillor B Coult substituted for Councillor L Mavin.

## **3 Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings held on 23 September 2022 and 7 October 2022 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

#### **4 Declarations of Interest**

Councillors B Coult, S Deinali, S Townsend, Ms A Gunn and Mrs L Vollans declared an interest in Agenda Item No.8 as they had a family member who had an Education Health and Care Plan and received funding.

#### **5 Any items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties**

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised members that a number of questions in relation to Agenda Item No.8 had been received from Ms A Gunn.

The questions had been circulated to all members of the Committee and forwarded to the service for a response.

Once a response had been received from the service to the questions, this would be circulated to all members of the Committee.

*Councillor C Martin entered the meeting at 10.08 am*

*Councillor M Simmons left the meeting at 10.12 am*

#### **6 Support for Young People who are Not in Education, Employment or Training**

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services that provided members with information on programmes available to support young people into employment, education and training in County Durham (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

The Strategic Manager Progression and Learning was in attendance to present the report and deliver a presentation (for copy of presentation, see file of minutes).

The presentation provided members with details of the overview of participation in learning; programmes to support young people; programmes to support those with disabilities; challenges and actions.

Members were advised that the overall cohort of 16-17 year olds in County Durham was 11,170 as at June 2022 and this was the largest cohort in some time. Of this figure 579 were not in education, employment or training (NEET), 424 of which were available to the labour market and 155 were not, additionally there were 79 young people whose destination was not known, this could be that the young person had moved house, or they did not want to engage.

The Strategic Manager advised that approximately 90% of the cohort participated in learning however it had remained at this figure for some time although the service

had carried out several exercises to increase it but was in line with regional averages.

It was highlighted that it was of particular concern to the service that 155 young people were not available to the labour market out of choice. It could be that these young people were suffering mental health issues, physical health issues, or they could be carers, however the number was growing. For the 16 – 18 cohort in 2021, 26.1% were inactive and chose not to engage whereas in 2022 there was a rise to 33% of the 16 -18 cohort being inactive. The Strategic Manager highlighted concerns that inactive young people could become inactive adults which was not good for them or the economy

Information was given on the trend from 2019, to 2022 the Strategic Manager advised that it was best not to focus on 2020 and 2021 which were affected by the pandemic. Members were advised that a reason for the participation in learning figures stagnating was that more young people wanted to work and were seeking apprenticeships. Comparing 2019 to 2022 figures 947 young people had an apprenticeship this year. Members were advised that some young people were in jobs without training, which was a concern to the service as they would prefer them to be in jobs where they received training.

Members were then given information on the DurhamWorks Programmes which include Durham Works, Durham Works 3 and Durham Works Futures. It was highlighted that the funding for the original DurhamWorks ended December 2021 but the gap has been filled with the three current programmes, the funding for these programmes started in January 2022 and would continue until December 2023.

In addition, there was also Durham Help that supported the young people on the programmes who experienced low level mental health issues that were causing a barrier to progression. Members were advised that three mental health practitioners were currently working with 73 clients and were oversubscribed. The Strategic Manager added that staff on the Durham Works Programmes also worked with young people affected by mental health issues and that mental health was the biggest factor affecting young people and there was lots of work ongoing to address this.

Among the challenges the service was facing was that although there was a buoyant labour market and jobs were relatively easy to come by the types of jobs were usually low skilled, low paid, no training given, and these jobs were not secure and more at risk during an economic downturn. The numbers of young people claiming Universal Credit was increasing and the service were monitoring this.

There were higher levels of economic inactivity due to mental health problems and there were also issues with engagement. Although staff were proactively engaging with young people prior to their appointments they did not attend, some young people were lacking the motivation or the ability to be contacted.

A major concern for the service was that funding for all the Durham Works Programmes comes to an end in December 2023 a significant piece of work was ongoing to address this, and the service was looking at the budget. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund has £9million for People and Skills element. There was a gap in quarter one of 2024 and the service was working on what was needed, there was lots of things happening but no conclusions as yet.

Members were advised that the service was using initiatives to attract more young people to Durham Works Programmes, such as if a young person on the programme introduces a friend, they would receive free leisure vouchers if that young person joined the programme. The service had recently employed a young person's engagement worker who was getting information and messaging out to young people and target social media used by young people by age group. The service works with the construction, hospitality and warehousing sectors and were looking to work with construction green skills and that the teams were well connected. Members were advised of the flexi fund that helped young people with transport costs, equipment and interview clothing.

The Chair thanked the Officer for her presentation and asked members for their questions.

Councillor Walton referred to the 155 young people who were not available to the labour market and asked how many were not accessing the programmes with mental health being the only factor. She then asked if those not engaging with services was out of choice or if this due to their mental health.

The Strategic Manager Progression and Learning responded that some chose not to engage with the service, but some could not engage such as those who were young carers and those suffering from mental health issues. The Strategic Manager Progression and Learning advised that unfortunately she did not have the figures to hand but would circulate the information outside of the meeting.

Councillor Walton then referred to the decreasing trend in NEETs and Not Known, that was positive, but commented that it would be useful to have an idea of those who were choosing not to engage and those who could not engage.

Councillor Sterling asked how many employers were part of the DurhamEnable and how good was the pool of employers and if it was easier to get employers. She indicated that hospitality was desperate for staff and there seemed to be a gap connecting these two and if they could possibly look into giving incentives to businesses and try different opportunities.

The Strategic Manager Progression and Learning indicated that the teams were not working with the same employers as they did not have a pool of employers and were working across the county all of the time with a whole range of employers.

The team were good at job carving for DurhamEnabled participants which allowed for parts of the job to be 'carved' to another young person. There was an employer grant scheme for DurhamWorks 3 and DurhamWorks Futures which paid for 50% of the young person's salary for up to six months.

Councillor Sterling commented that members could be used a resource.

Mrs Gunn referred to lower-level jobs and commented that someone had to do those jobs and asked if the schemes were working with employers to try and limit those negative aspects such as zero-hour contracts.

The Strategic Manager Progression and Learning responded that jobs without training was an area of concern, as the employers who were not doing any training with young people expected them to start work and immediately know what was expected. This was difficult for anyone but even more so for a young person without much experience if any and was problematic. They did their best to talk to employers about training but if a young person was in the job and they were happy it was difficult to get employers to then train them. The priority for the service was the young people and not the employers and the funding was to get the young person into the job in the first place. However, the service was no longer constrained by the European Social Fund (ESF) rules and there was more that could be done to support employers when they initially take on a young person and commented that employers value the work that the teams do.

Mrs Gunn then referred to the funding and asked if any of the funding was at risk.

The Strategic Manager Progression and Learning responded that the funding would be spent in line with expectations and the budgets were monitored carefully. The service had to report to the Department for Work and Pensions quarterly, but they monitored the budgets on a monthly basis and would maximise the funding.

Councillor Coult referred to young people who were NEET or their destination not known and asked if the service engaged with parents and what kind of support or reaction did the service receive.

The Strategic Manager Progression and Learning indicated that they received mixed support from parents some were engaged and were active in their encouragement while for those young people who chose not to engage there was usually something going on at home supporting that decision or making it difficult for them to engage and commented that each circumstance was different.

Councillor Andrews referred to young people living in rural areas with limited access to transport and asked if this had an impact on their employment.

The Strategic Manager Progression and Learning responded that living in a rural area could impact on their ability to find employment, but they had worked with

young people and gave an example of the Wheels to Work Programme, where a young person gained access to a scooter to get them around. She also advised members that they try and find local employment for those young people living in rural areas.

The Chair indicated that it was clear that staff were working hard and asked the Officer to thank the staff on behalf of members. It was good to see an increase in apprenticeships, but it was concerning that some young people were not receiving any training. She referred to the incentives on offer for young people that was a good idea and asked the Officer if she could provide members with an update at a later meeting.

**Resolved:** (i) That the report and presentation be noted.

(ii) That the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee continue to receive further progress reports on participation in learning and programmes available to support young people into employment, education and training in County Durham.

## **7 School Funding Update**

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director of Resources that provided members with information on school funding in Durham (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

The Finance Manager for Children and Young People's Services was in attendance to present the report and deliver a presentation (for copy of presentation, see file of minutes).

The presentation provided members with details of the dedicated school grant which was the main source of funding for schools; mainstream schools funding and the formula; pupil-led factors; additional pupil needs; minimum per pupil funding; school-led funding; premises-led funding; minimum funding guarantee/growth; future developments and other funding for mainstream schools.

Members were advised there were 164 maintained schools and 100 academies in county Durham, 211 mainstream primary schools and 30 mainstream secondary schools. Funding for these schools was provided via the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) which was notionally split into several blocks – schools block; central services block, high needs block, and early years block. Members were advised that the focus of the presentation was the schools block. He confirmed that local authorities needed consent from the schools forum and the Secretary of State to transfer funds between blocks and funding was ringfenced.

Information was given that as well as the basic funding per pupil there were additional pupil needs that were considered and included deprivation, English as a



second language; mobility (members noted that this was on the movement of pupils from one school to another within the year), and low prior attainment.

The Finance Manager CYPS advised that in 2018 the Government had indicated their intention to replace local funding formulas with a national funding formula which constrained local funding formulas and limited their use. In County Durham the process was started to align the local funding formula and now it mirrors the national funding formula.

Members were made aware that Durham did not expect much turbulence as we move to a national funding formula.

Councillor Townsend advised that she was hearing from schools about the impact of inflation on their budgets and the funding they received from government was not enough and asked if they had heard of any relief coming from central government.

The Finance Manager for Children and Young People's Services responded that they were waiting to see what came out of the Autumn Statement, but they were hoping that funding would be held at the levels promised for 2023/24.

Councillor Walton asked the Officer to explain about the additional pupil needs funding and that it should not be linked to individual pupils.

The Finance Manager for Children and Young People's Services responded that proxy indicators were used which were the number of pupils on the school roll at the time of the October school census, the number of pupils receiving free school meals or having English as an additional language or live in a particular post code area. These statistics would suggest if additional support was required and don't know the individual characteristics of that pupil but are saying because of what these statistics suggests that they will need additional support and funding is received for those pupils. It is then up to the school to assess the overall needs of all of their pupils and make decisions on how they can best support those pupils. Just because you are in a particular post code does not suggest that you will have any additional needs but there was more chance of it.

Councillor Sterling indicated that they hear from families a lot that when a child is being assessed for an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) it can take a long time and the school need to support the child through the funding. However, schools are reporting that if they do not have an EHCP then they were unable to allocate any extra support and asked if that was the case.

The Finance Manager for Children and Young People's Services responded that within the school formula there was a national SEN budget, this was a calculation within every school to say you are receiving money. They would expect a proportion of those pupils to be funded the first £6,000 of support from the school budget for that pupil that was not linked to individual pupils. Beyond that £6,000

cost they would need to speak to the local authority about what additional support they needed in terms of a top up fund.

The Strategy Manager SEND, and Inclusion Strategy Assessment and Provision advised Members that he would be talking about SEND funding in his presentation, but the key point was that you did not have to have an EHCP in place to receive funding. Schools could apply for funding with a SEN Support Plan that did not take 20 weeks for an assessment. He was happy to send to members the Local Offer that was written for parents by parents on how the system works in County Durham.

The Head of Education indicated that the school-led funding for primary schools five years ago was around £175,000 a year and were now down to around £121,000 that had a significant impact on schools. He commented that small schools were still benefiting from this payment but schools who had around 90 to 130/140 pupils were struggling, and the authority had a few schools with these numbers.

The Chair thanked the Officer for his presentation.

**Resolved:** That the contents of the report and presentation be noted.

## **8 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Update**

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services that provided members with a progress update on Children and Young People with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in County Durham specifically the trends in requests for Education, Health and Care (EHCP) needs assessments, EHCP timeliness performance, identified needs of young people and where young people with SEND are educated in County Durham. Members were also provided with an update on national policy consultation (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

The Strategic Manager SEND, and Inclusion Strategy Assessment and Provision was in attendance to present the report and deliver a presentation (for copy of presentation, see file of minutes).

The presentation provided members with details of key findings; number of children receiving SEN support and Educational Health and Care Plans; the number of Educational Health and Care Plan requests; details of the number of Educational Health and Care Plans refusals; the number of Educational Health Care Plans completed within 20 weeks; primary need of young people with Educational Health Care Plans; Autism analysis; active Educational Health Care Plans placements; details of the SEND Green Paper and the Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission proposed SEND inspection framework.

Members were advised that there had been a change in the way that EHCPs had been recognised in the age phases so in 2014 they moved to a 0-25 system that was previously 0-19, the Officer commented that the authority had a lot of young people in the older age phase.

The Strategic Manager SEND and Inclusion advised that there was a 60% increase in EHCP requests which was held back during the COVID pandemic but had now picked up again with a lot more requests driving SEND needs. At a younger age children's SEND needs are managed in school, but the number of requests increase at a primary school level and reduce at secondary level because there were plans already in place.

Members received information about the EHCP assessment refusals which was when an assessment was refused due to lack of information, usually from schools. The basis of decision to refuse was that it was felt that schools had not done enough to support young people in school through SEN Support. Information indicated that the EHCP assessment refusals were higher in County Durham than both regionally and nationally. However, when Durham was challenged on refusals, they found that the refusal was repealed therefore changes were made to the decision-making process to address this. The Strategic Manager advised that young people's SEND needs could be met through SEN Support and the service was promoting early working with SEN Co-ordinators (SENCOs) and that EHCPs should only be when a full multi agency assessment was required.

The Strategic Manager advised that 2022 had been another challenging year in relation to the number of assessments required. There was an issue with a lack of Educational Psychologist which was a national issue too and the problem in County Durham was not as big as in other areas. The majority of EHCP assessments were undertaken by 20 weeks and all were complete by 23 weeks but there was still pressure on the team.

Members were then given information on the primary needs of young people with EHCPs which indicates autism as the primary need for young people in County Durham which was higher than what was reported regionally and nationally. However, it was stressed that although autism may be a young person's predominant need it may not be their only need and would encourage that young people are not seen only in terms of their primary need.

The Strategic Manager advised that previously there were higher percentages of other needs but due to a higher level of awareness of autism they had now become secondary. He went on to advise that Durham County Council had an Autism Strategy and there was lots of training with regard to autism taking place and suggested that previously autism may have been an unrecognised need.

Members were advised that there were more children with EHCPs of secondary age group attending special schools than of primary age group. Information was

provided in relation to enhanced learning provision working with local authorities and special schools and that there were funding improvements, where local authorities were given money upfront, and they were making headway. It was better if the young person stayed in their mainstream school as they would stay with their friends and peers and stay in the local community where they can flourish and thrive.

Members were given an update on the SEND Green Paper and advised that the service had responded to the consultation through engagement with service users and key stakeholders including members and was now being analysed by the Department for Education (DfE). The Strategic Manager advised that a new inspection framework was being built around the Green Paper but the anomaly in the fact that it was a Green Paper and not a White Paper, but the service welcomed the thematic work with Ofsted.

The Chair thanked the Officer for his presentation and asked members for their questions.

Councillor Hunt referred to the rise in EHCPs in mainstream schools and asked if that was due to there not been enough provision for special schools, which was a concern if this was the case.

The Strategic Manager responded that there had been a rise in the number of needs assessment requests. He stated that 98% of those assessments ended up with an EHCP but were still in mainstream schools as an EHCP did not mean that you went to a special school, their needs were assessed, and they determined what provision the young person required. He commented that a number of parents preferred to see their child go to a special school and the service did try to work with that. However, the service aimed to keep as many children as possible in their mainstream school for a number of benefits. There was a high demand for SEND school places that was higher than the national and regional average and in some year groups in these schools there were no more spaces available. There were some high needs young people in special schools, but there were other young people who were managing in mainstream schools and their parents wanted them to remain there. The service were trying to create more provision in SEN schools with an extra 90 places and the potential for a further 200 in the future.

Councillor Hunt responded that in her ward there were some children who had attended a SEN primary school but could not obtain a place in a SEN secondary school, as there was insufficient provision.

The Strategic Manager indicated that he was not aware of any pupils who had transitioned from a SEN primary school to a mainstream secondary school, but he would look into this. Councillor Hunt responded that she would provide the Officer with the details.

Councillor Walton sought reassurance on the assessment refusals for EHCPs as many of them were overturned which was alarming especially from a parent's point of view having to keep going through the assessment. She noted that the figures for these refusals were now decreasing but wanted a reassurance that the process was robust.

The Strategic Manager responded that he was happy to talk through the assessment process which was via a multi-agency panel that looked at the applications and was consistent with national figures and there was no involvement of case workers at this point. He commented that more could be done in schools in terms of SENCO assessment, and they would expect this to be done first with top-up funding and other resources but recognised that there were pressures on parents.

Mrs Gunn suggested that most special schools in the North East were predominantly Social, Emotion and Mental Health (SEMH) with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) bolted on however these are two very different cohorts of young people whose needs were very different and do not work well together and suggested that this should be addressed and asked if there were schools for autistic young people. She added that the closest independent school for high functioning autistic pupils was in Thirsk and only catered for boys. To consider the opportunities of the SEND Green Paper review to direct independents to become more specialised in their provision across the North East.

She then asked the Officer to be aware of change management processes if further changes are required from the SEN review and the impact on the team and if more needed to be implemented.

The Strategic Manager responded that in County Durham they had the Elemore Hall, the Meadows and Walworth special mental health schools with other generic special schools which would support a range of different needs. Some young people attended these schools as recognised SEMH need as their primary need, but then other needs were identified. It was dependant on the young person's primary need and their behaviour could be an unrecognised need. In the Northeast SEMH schools as a proportion of SEND placements was 19/20% with the rest of the country at around 15%. He stated that he was working with a regional network to understand this and look at the SEMH schools and provision and look at the cohorts in these schools. They would only ever place a young person in a SEMH school if this was recognised as the primary need, there were some provisions where young people were also Autistic, but the primary need was SEMH. Special schools had carried out a lot of work on their Autism offer and there was a lot more discreet Autism in generic special schools where classrooms had all autistic pupils with different sensory needs. The service also worked with the independent sector, and with the North East Autism Society that operated in County Durham, but they didn't want to rely on the independent sector for their main offer. In terms of the service's awareness regarding change management, they were set up for this and

used to change. The SEN casework team had grown to recognise the importance of being involved in the annual review process and not just the assessments and they were involved in key transition points.

Mrs Gunn indicated that in her experience a lot of SEMH schools did not offer GCSE qualifications. She then referred to the legal process and if a school can't meet a child's need legally, they have to say why to be inclusive but what she had discovered was that if they can meet the needs there is no legal obligation to say how they can meet the needs and therefore don't have the same protection for a child and gave an example of her experience and asked if they could protect the child. She then referred to managing the contract and when places don't work out and a child had to move provision, the local authority was contracted to pay the school for that placement and hoped it was not a lot of funds and provided details of her own experience.

The Strategic Manager responded in terms of high functioning orders in the County if a young person was high functioning with autism the best offer was to adapt a mainstream environment where they had high level teaching and high-level offer and encouraged Mrs Gunn to look at the enhanced learning provision that they had on offer and provided some examples of different things they could offer. In terms of the legal challenge the authority had no control over this, the power was with the parents and if their preference was for their child to go to a mainstream school the law was on their side.

Councillor Coult referred to how the council worked with SENCO leads and how they ensured that the SENCO leads in schools had the skills and knowledge to run the process from start to finish which was a stressful process. She then referred to her own experience and how the Council did not recognise a condition of a family member and how it was deemed by the local authority that the person did not have special needs and that they had to go back to the medical professionals to justify the family member's special needs.

The Strategic Manager indicated that terminology was difficult, and he was unable to comment on individual cases. In terms of SENCO support there was pressure in schools and SENCO required time. The SENCO staff had a lot of experience and were well placed to do the job effectively, but this needed to be prioritised within the school, but this was down to school governance and leadership. The service could offer support, and they delivered the national SENCO qualification on a termly basis and ran networks and had almost complete attendance at these networks.

Councillor Andrews asked if there was any comparative data between private and state schools for SEND pupils including Autism.

The Strategic Manager indicated that there was not any specific data, but they did have people with special education needs going to private schools. They had looked at SEN across deprivation and they found that SEN did not follow

deprivation. There were some trends that showed social, emotional and mental health was higher in deprived communities and Autism was higher in non-deprived communities, but the trend was not massive.

Councillor Hunt asked if they had any data on EHCP areas and SEND to ascertain if certain areas had more need and look to having more provision in these areas.

The Strategic Manager responded that SEN followed the population areas and was where they had the special schools in the higher population areas. He stated that transport was an issue, more local provision would be the long-term solution, but the service was looking at some short-term solutions to address this which was outside of the schools budget as it was a council budget. He advised there was a going review of Home to School transport.

Councillor Hunt referred to the waiting lists and asked if any areas had longer waiting lists.

The Strategic Manager indicated that they did not have waiting lists there were needs assessments ongoing but there were no trends. The 20-week process was the closest thing to a waiting list, sometimes they had higher demand for a particular school. Young people would remain in their current provision until other provision became available. The biggest issue was transport when they had a place at specialist provision at the other end of the county and passed several mainstream schools which could have made adaptations to meet a young person's needs was the biggest challenge.

**Resolved:** (i) That the report and presentation be noted.

(ii) That the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee continue to receive further progress updates on young people with SEND and EHCPs.

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**Children and Young People's  
Overview and Scrutiny  
Committee**

**9 January 2023**



**Relationship based social  
work practice**

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

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide.

**Purpose**

- 1 The purpose of this report and accompanying presentation is to provide members with an overview of the progress being made within Children's Social Care to embed high quality relationship based social work.

**Executive Summary**

- 2 Durham Children's Social Care and Early Help Services are committed to embedding relationship-based practice across all services, ensuring that the relationship between the child, young person, parent or carer and the practitioners who work with them is central to our practice.
- 3 Since 2018 Signs of Safety has been the practice framework that has been utilised to support high quality relationship-based practice across Early Help, Children's Social Care and the wider safeguarding partnership. Signs of Safety is a practice framework which provides a method and suite of tools to give as much responsibility as possible to families and their network for the safety of their children. It is a strength-based approach, balancing what we are worried about against strengths and safety within a family.
- 4 This report gives a brief overview of the elements of the framework that have been the focus of 2021-22 and provides evidence from collaborative evaluations, case-studies and feedback from parents that working in this way is making a difference to the outcomes for children, young people and their families.
- 5 The Ofsted ILACS inspection carried out in May 2022 is referenced as it validated our internal belief that Signs of Safety was making a

difference to children and families. In summary the inspection found, *“Children in need of help and protection, and children in care, are benefiting from relationship-based practice that focuses on children’s needs. The approach is to work in partnership with families to achieve change that can be maintained over time. This is leading to children and families making sustainable progress.”*

## Recommendation

- 6 Members of Children and Young People’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the content of the report and presentation and comment accordingly.

## Background

- 7 In 2018 across Children’s Social Care and Early help we began to implement Signs of Safety, a practice framework, which provides a method and suite of tools to give as much responsibility as possible to families and their network for the safety of their children. It is a strength-based approach, balancing what we are worried about against strengths and safety within a family.

- 8 As our understanding of the framework has developed we have increased our use of it across teams, services and across partner agencies. Over the last year we have focused on four areas of the framework that have application across teams and services:

**Networks** – Identifying and utilising a family’s naturally connected network is essential in ensuring that families have all the resources they need.

**Mapping** – This is a tool to support strength-based assessment work and provides a framework for asking good curious questions.

**Words and Pictures** – This is a tool that is used to help parents explain their story to their child(ren).

**Questioning approach** – This should underpin all the work that we do and is fundamental to really understanding what life is like for children and young people

- 9 The case examples below demonstrate how a consistent focus on these areas of the practice framework have made a difference to children and young people.

## Training

- 10 We continue to offer a comprehensive training programme with accredited trainers alongside a programme of workshops and bite-sized sessions delivered in-house. The below table shows a summary and numbers of staff who have attended.

Training course	Staff attendance - 2021-22
2 Day Introduction to Signs of Safety	270
5/6 Day Advanced Training	114
Narrated Overview of the Model	188
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## Key developments

- 11 We have consolidated all the work we have done since the beginning of the implementation and published a comprehensive practice guide for practitioners that sets out how we apply the practice framework in Durham.
- 12 We have used the practice framework to drive improvement in the quality of care planning and care plans for children and young people across Children's Social Care. Within Early Help services we have used the framework to develop and re-launch our Early Help Assessment tool.
- 13 We have continued to develop our IT system (Liquidlogic) so that it supports practitioners and managers effectively using the practice framework. Significant development work has been undertaken in relation to the format of Care Plans, the ability to record a Mapping tool to inform assessments, the ability to record the Harm Matrix tool to support risk assessments, the ability to record an Early Help Assessment.

## Partnership

- 14 We have a well-established partnership group that continues to identify areas of the practice framework that can support the work of partner agencies and promote high quality multi-agency working. Over the past year we have developed and launched a new Early Help Assessment and designed a single report format for Child Protection Conferences. The North East Ambulance Service have begun to explore how they can use the framework to support their crews ask more curious questions when attending households and the education team have piloted the use of the framework to identify children who require support when transitioning from primary to secondary school.

## Impact

- 15 We know from our internal and external scrutiny that the implementation of Signs of Safety in Durham is having an impact on children and families.
- 16 Ofsted inspectors are not able to advocate one particular practice framework above another, so will never name Signs of Safety in an inspection report but where they refer to a practice framework in the context of Durham they are referring to Signs of Safety.
- 17 The ILACS inspection published in July 2022 wrote in their overarching summary that, *“Children in need of help and protection, and children in care, are benefiting from relationship-based practice that focuses on children’s needs. The approach is to work in partnership with families to achieve change that can be maintained over time. This is leading to children and families making sustainable progress.”*
- 18 There was a thread throughout the inspection report of Signs of Safety making a real difference:

*“Senior leaders have enabled and facilitated the embedding of the chosen practice model, which is underpinned by **relational practice**. There has been a relentless focus and deliberate drive to working longer and more intensively with families, in order to achieve **real sustainable change**, and to improve children’s circumstances in the longer term, preventing multiple re-referrals back to the service.”*

*“A proactive culture of working in **partnership with families** leads to children and families receiving sensitive and proportionate early help support”*

*“There is effective use of **family network meetings**, which lead to robust and helpful family-led support plans.”*

*“For children on child in need and child protection plans, social workers use **strong relationship-based practice to build trusting and enduring relationships** with children and their families.”*

*“When children can no longer safely remain at home, they are brought into care at the appropriate time. They are well supported by committed social workers who visit children regularly and build **trusting and understanding relationships** with them.”*

*“The experiences of care leavers are improving through **strong relationships** with their young persons advisers (YPAs), who provide valuable emotional and practical help.”*

- 19 Two key measures within Children’s Early Help and Social care continue to evidence that this work is leading to sustainable outcome:
- 20 Durham has exceeded the 2022/2023 target set by DLUHC of 760 families ‘turned around’ with a total of 883 families successfully achieving significant and sustained outcomes as of October 2022.
- 21 We have seen a sustained improvement in our re-referral rate within Children’s Social Care, which has reduced from 28% in 2019/20 to 18% in 2021/22 which is below our comparators. This has reduced further in the year to date to 16%.
- 22 Relationship based practice continues to be the strongest feature in our collaborative evaluation programme and is highlighted in the three quotes below:

*“XX on speaking about her Social Worker described XX as the best Social Worker that she could have had. She saw her through some dark times and offer her support which was a million percent, stating that she could not have done it without her.”*

*“When asked what could have been done differently/better, XX responded by saying 'don't have anything as everything was supportive and helpful'.”*

*“XX has felt that all of the planning has been around her and what she wished for. Workers did not judge but were patient and helped support her when she started to build her relationship with her mother.”*

## Case studies that evidence impact

- 23 The case studies below highlight how the key principles and some of the tools within the framework have been skilfully applied by practitioners to make a real difference for children and their families.

### Key Worker and Family Worker in Seaham One Point Team

- 24 Words and pictures is a simple creative tool that provides parents with the opportunity to explain to their child(ren), in “words and pictures”, their explanation for an event or series of events. It can have a significant therapeutic impact on the adults completing the exercise and it promotes an honesty with children and young people that has real impact.
- 25 In this example a child’s mother was struggling to manage his behaviour. It was evident that his behaviours were a response to not understanding why his father was not in the family home. There was a history of domestic abuse and his mother told practitioners that she struggled to answer the young person’s questions about why he did not live with her or see his dad so avoided this. This caused conflict between them impacted on their relationship.
- 26 By completing a words and pictures explanation with the child’s mother and sharing it with her son the child no longer felt rejected as he understood his story and now feels he belongs to a family. His mother has said she, *‘feels that she has her little boy back’*. When discussing words and pictures she said it was, *‘something so hard yet this was so simple.’*

### One Point Family Worker

- 27 In this example Words and Pictures was used to support a family that was struggling around the suicide of mother’s partner and the children’s father. The children thought he would be returning to the family home after two weeks.
- 28 A words and pictures explanation was completed with the family showing their dad loved them but would not be returning. The children really liked this explanation and shared the words and pictures with people who entered into their life.

### Fostering Services

- 29 Words and pictures explanation used with a connected carer to help a child who was struggling, to remind her why she was living with aunty and what was happening with family time.

- 30 The new story helped the child to remember why she was with aunty so the child started to open up to her aunty about her worries. The child understands that she is safe now and what people are doing to make her happy.

## **Children in Care Team**

- 31 This example involves a family of three siblings who had been in foster care for over three years. The social worker skilfully used the mapping tool to set out what the worries were about the children returning home, but as important the existing strengths and safety that would support such a plan. There was a focus throughout this intervention on strengths and what had changed since the children were removed, for mother and the children. The children were kept at the centre of everything and the timeline allowed the care team to work to a specific date to return the children home which helped to build hope for the family. These children returned to their mother's care, which means the children can grow up in their natural family, but continue to have a relationship with their foster carer and other people who are important to them. The feedback from the children's mother is below:

*'My first experience of Children's Social Care wasn't great. I'm not sure if it was fear on my part or not trusting the system, but it felt as though the goal posts were being moved and I didn't have any hope. I couldn't build a relationship where we communicated and this led to me telling lies and not thinking about the part I played in it. Once the kids were removed, I knew I needed to put some trust in services. Charlotte was easy to communicate with. She was responsive. If I needed advice, I could ask her. I trusted her and I could talk to her. Everything I was asked to do, I did. Every time I contacted Charlotte, she would get straight back to me. I suffer from anxiety so this was a massive help. I could be open with Charlotte. With her, everything was dealt with when I asked. Charlotte is very easy to talk to. Now the children are home, every night I feel accomplished. I look back on my day and I reflect on it. Everything feels natural. I know it's not going to be perfect but knowing I can speak to Charlotte when I have any worries is helpful. If she can, she will help me. If I'm struggling, I can tell her. I've waited 4 years to get my children back. I worked so hard to get here. It feels like my life is complete. I feel content and relieved. Everything is how it is meant to be.'*

## **Consett Families First Team**

- 32 This example involves children subject to a child protection plan. The practitioners involved the family and significantly their wider network from the beginning of their work. They used the Mapping tool with family and the network to map what the worries were but also the strengths and existing safety within the network. In doing this they were able to

build a trusting relationship with the family and the children began to open up about what life was like for them. This ensured that the practitioners had an accurate assessment of risk, and could develop a meaningful plan *with* the family and wider network. In turn this gave the practitioners confidence that the children no longer required a child protection plan.

## **Areas for development**

- 33 Through the existing project governance and specific support from our two Signs of Safety Co-ordinators we will continue to work across Early Help, Social Care and the wider Safeguarding Partnership to identify areas where practice can be strengthened and ways in which the practice framework can be aligned to all services.
- 34 There will be a specific focus on supporting staff identifying and describing adult behaviours that are having an impact on children and that need to change to make life safer for children.
- 35 Work will be undertaken to identify how the practice framework can support the Family Centre offer, and it will be integral in the development of the Family Hub model.
- 36 The IT system will continue to be reviewed to ensure that it supports practice developments across the system.
- 37 Throughout this work we will continue to ensure that we are seeking feedback from children, young people and their families so that we know that this way of working with them is making a difference.

## **Conclusion**

- 38 Since 2018 there has been a continued drive to implement Signs of Safety across Early Help and Children's Social Care. Our collaborative evaluations and feedback from children and families is providing increasing evidence that the principles and tools within this framework are effectively supporting practice and making a difference to children and families.
- 39 The Ofsted ILACS inspection in July 2022 provided external validation of the progress being made with reference to relationship-based practice threaded through the inspection report.

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

None

### **Finance**

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.

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# Relationship-based Practice

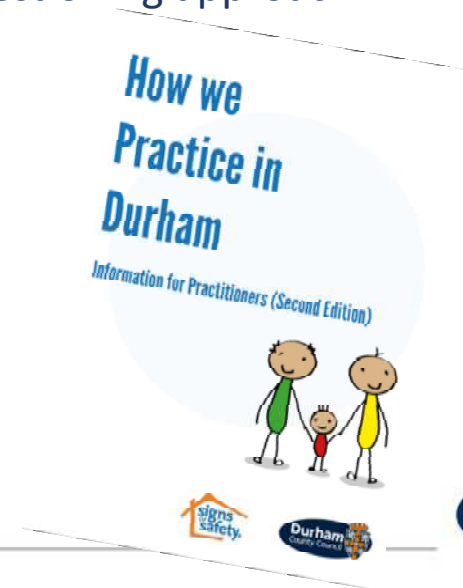
Chris Ring , Strategic Manager Safeguarding and Professional Practice

9th January 2023



## Background and key developments

- Began implementing Signs of Safety practice framework in 2018
- Practice framework providing a method and suite of tools for practitioners
- Vision to help children and families remain within their families and networks where it is safe and provide a secure and stable home when it is not possible
- Focus in 2021-22 on Networks, Mapping, Words and Pictures and Questioning approach
- Significant IT developments
- Launch of Practice Guide
- Use of practice framework across wider Safeguarding Partnership



# Impact

## Sustainable outcomes

- 883 families achieving significant and sustained outcomes
- Sustained improvement in re-referral rate (28% in 19/20 – 18% in 21/22)

## Relationship-based practice is a continued strength of audit programme

- *“XX on speaking about her Social Worker described XX as the best Social Worker that she could have had. She saw her through some dark times and offer her support which was a million percent, stating that she could not have done it without her.”*

# Impact



- **Words and Pictures** – undertaken with parents and shared with children
  - Providing explanation to children following suicide of their father
  - Providing explanation of why a father is not in the home in context of domestic abuse



*"Something so hard yet this was so simple"*

*"it feels like I have my little boy back"*



# Impact

- Successfully returning 3 children home who had been in Foster Care for over 3 years. Using the framework to work in partnership with the network, focusing on strengths, building hope and achieving successful outcomes.

*"Once the kids were removed, I knew I needed to put some trust in services. Charlotte was easy to communicate with. She was responsive. If I needed advice, I could ask her. I trusted her and I could talk to her.*

*Now the children are home, every night I feel accomplished. I've waited 4 years to get my children back. I worked so hard to get here. It feels like my life is complete. I feel content and relieved. Everything is how it is meant to be."*

# Impact

- Golden thread through OFSTED ILACS May 2022 inspection report:
  - Real sustainable change
  - Culture of working in partnership with families
  - Effective use of network meetings
  - Trusting and enduring relationships

*“Children in need of help and protection, and children in care, are benefiting from relationship-based practice that focuses on children’s needs. The approach is to work in partnership with families to achieve change that can be maintained over time. This is leading to children and families making sustainable progress.”*



# Next steps

- Continued alignment of framework to practice across all services
- Specific focus on describing adult behaviours impacting on children
- Explore how framework can support development of Family Hub model
- Continued review of IT system
- Continued feedback from children, young people and their families

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## **Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**9 January 2023**

### **Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for Children Looked After and Care Leavers 2022-2024**



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## **Report of John Pearce, Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Service**

### **Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

### **Purpose of the Report**

- 1 This report provides information about the purpose of the Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for Children Looked After and Care Leavers, the current delivery position, ongoing challenges and actions we are taking to improve the sufficiency of living arrangements for children and young people in our care.

### **Executive summary**

- 2 The Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy sets out Durham's strategic approach to securing sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of our looked after children.
- 3 The Strategy outlines the sufficiency position at a point in time, providing local intelligence and data and identifies a series of key priorities and actions which will improve the council's overall sufficiency of provision for children and young people who can no longer live with their family.
- 4 The Sufficiency Strategy has recently been updated and now covers the period 2022 to 2024 – attached at Appendix 3. The Strategy was approved at Corporate Management Team (CMT) in December 2022 and is due to be considered by Cabinet in January 2023 and the Corporate Parent Panel in February 2023. The information contained in this report is based on the new Strategy and it's key priorities and actions.

- 5 The increasing demand and pressure placed on councils to meet their sufficiency duty is a position that is replicated across the UK and has recently been highlighted in the Independent Review of Children's Social Care by Josh MacAlister (May 2022) which proposes to "reset children's social care".
- 6 The Sufficiency Strategy outlines a number of challenges and pressures, including:
  - (a) An increase in the number of children and young people that we look after. Between March 2015 and March 2022, this has increased by 62%, with numbers continuing to increase to 1,034 as of the October 2022 and as predicted in the strategy;
  - (b) We have an increasing number of older teenagers in care who are experiencing multiple moves and it is difficult to find suitable provision to meet their complex needs. This has resulted in the use of unregulated provision for a small number of children and young people;
  - (c) Use of external residential provision has increased by 50% between 2020 and 2022;
  - (d) The need to increase the number of available foster carers to meet our increasing demand;
  - (e) Increasing number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children moving to Durham placing pressure on already stretched resources;
  - (f) Placement stability – increasing number of breakdowns and moves;
  - (g) An increasing number of children, young people and families requiring support who are on the edge of care;
  - (h) More families require respite services for their children who have a disability, with increasing gaps in service provision, particularly overnight provision for children with complex needs;
  - (i) A small number of delayed discharges from tier 4 hospital, due to limited specialist local regulated provision;

- 7 The strategy identifies a series of objectives and short to medium term key priorities, many of which are ongoing and being developed, to improve and broaden our current sufficiency offer.
- 8 There are six overarching objectives within the strategy, including:
- (a) Grow our number of in-house foster carers, support the retention of carers and work with Independent Fostering Agencies to ensure that children and young people can live with foster carer families when it is in their interests to do so;
  - (b) Increase the number of adopters;
  - (c) Continue to develop and broaden our children's homes offer and maximise opportunities with external providers when there is a case to do so;
  - (d) Develop access to a diverse range of appropriate accommodation for Care Leavers;
  - (e) Improve our sufficiency offer for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) / Young People and reduce waiting times;
  - (f) Broaden our short breaks offer for disabled children and their families.
- 9 Each objective proposes a series of key priorities / actions to support their delivery. A total of 39 priorities are identified. These are identified in appendix 2 of this report.
- 10 Capital funding to the value of £2.2m has been secured through DCC capital bidding rounds to support the development of new children's homes, which are in the process of being developed.
- 11 A further £1.6m capital funding has been requested to support the development of specialist homes for children with disabilities and short break provision offering planned respite for children with complex needs. The funding request is subject to approval.

## **Recommendations**

- 12 Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to consider the contents of this report and in particular the key priorities outlined in appendix 2.
- 13 Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to make any observations or comments about the detail within this report and to share any thoughts, ideas or suggestions about the ongoing improvements being made and proposed.

## **Background**

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

## **Being a Corporate Parent**

- 16 Looking after and protecting children and young people from harm is one of the most important jobs that Durham County Council must undertake.
- 17 The term 'Corporate Parent' means the collective responsibility of the council, elected members, employees and partner agencies in providing the best possible care and support to children and young people who we look after. A child in the care of the council, looks to the whole council to be the best parent it can be, and every member and employee has a statutory responsibility to act in the best interests of children and young people in our care.
- 18 A LEAN review of the children's home development process has recently been completed. This explored opportunities for streamlining processes and developing new homes in the shortest timeframe possible. The review made a series of recommendations including the need to carry out further targeted work with elected members to outline

our collective corporate parent responsibilities and in particular the need to develop new Local Authority operated children's homes within County Durham and the role that Members have in highlighting the importance of these services within their local community. The work is planned over the coming months.

## **Key Achievements**

- 19 The Covid-19 pandemic presented the council with many challenges over the last 2.5 years, in relation to being able to provide sufficient living arrangements to children and young people in our care and ensuring that these continued to provide good quality provision.
- 20 Despite the challenges, the council has strived to continue developing and improving service provision, including, but not limited to:
  - (a) Developing a new Rapid Response Service preventing admission and readmission to tier 4 mental health hospital beds;
  - (b) Improved brokerage capacity to support children's home searches;
  - (c) Continuing to support providers to develop 'Durham First' homes and influencing service development in line with our ongoing needs. This has enabled children and young people to continue living in County Durham;
  - (d) Recommissioning the Independent Fostering Agency Framework, resulting in 18 providers now being part of regional commissioning arrangements, with new providers able to join monthly moving forward;
  - (e) A new Supporting the Provider Market Team working with social care providers to support the recruitment of staff and workforce development. An initial pilot focused on the supporting the recruitment of in-house children's home staff;
  - (f) We opened two new children's homes in 2021 each caring for three children and young people; a new home in 2022 caring for up to two children and young people; and we have two further homes due to open in the coming months (a solo home and a home for up to two children). These homes enable children and young people to continue living locally in regulated settings;
  - (g) Launching new local provider forums to support improved dialogue with the provider market, to share information about our gaps in service provision and to maximise opportunities for collaboration;

- (h) Secured DfE Staying Close Funding and launched a new Staying Close Pilot Programme, supporting young people to move on from their children's home with ongoing, consistent, familiar support.

## **Overview of the Strategy**

- 21 The Sufficiency Strategy was reviewed in 2022 and sets out the council's approach to securing sufficient local living arrangements for children and young people in our care and provides information about the social care landscape and the ongoing challenges and pressures, our current offer and how this continues to meet the needs of children and young people and the ongoing cycle of improvements that we are driving forward to broaden our sufficiency offer in County Durham.
- 22 As of November 2022, 70.3% of children and young people in the council's care live in County Durham, with 29.7% living in out of county arrangements. Of those living outside of County Durham, 17.5% live under 20 miles from their originating home address and 12.2% of children and young people live 20 miles or more from their originating address. We always seek to secure appropriate homes locally when it is safe to do so and, in the child, or young person's best interests. Some children and young people live in out of area provision, due to limited availability to meet their complex needs within County Durham. The Strategy outlines a range of development priorities which will create additional local sufficiency options, enabling a greater proportion of children and young people to live locally.
- 23 Whilst the council is able to provide good quality care and support to the vast majority of our children and young people, we continue to be presented with a number of challenges and pressures, including:
  - (a) An increase in the number of children and young people that we look after. Between March 2015 and March 2022, this has increased by 62%, with numbers continuing to increase to 1,034 as of the October 2022 and as predicted in the strategy.
  - (b) We have an increasing number of older teenagers in care who are experiencing multiple moves and it is difficult to find suitable provision to meet their complex needs. This has resulted in the use of unregulated provision for a small number of children and young people.
  - (c) Use of external residential provision has increased by 50% between 2020 and 2022.
  - (d) The need to increase the number of available foster carers to meet our increasing demand.



- (e) Increasing number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children moving to Durham placing pressure on already stretched resources.
  - (f) Placement stability – increasing number of breakdowns and moves.
  - (g) An increasing number of children, young people and families requiring support who are on the edge of care.
  - (h) More families require respite services for their children who have a disability, with increasing gaps in service provision, particularly overnight provision for children with complex needs.
  - (i) A small number of delayed discharges from tier 4 hospital, due to limited specialist local regulated provision.
- 24 Following the review the Sufficiency Strategy a series of priorities have been identified which will broaden and improve our sufficiency offer in County Durham. These are outlined in appendix 2 of this report.

### **Listening to children and young people**

- 25 As an authority we are committed to listening to children and young people and have embedded this practice across Children and Young People's Services.
- 26 Whilst children and young people are not involved in identifying gaps in sufficiency, which is based on data and local intelligence, care experienced children and young people play a key role in the co-production and shaping of services which directly impact them. Their engagement this way is meaningful and enables the voice of young people to be listened, considered and acted upon.
- 27 We work in partnership with a social enterprise called 'Investing in Children'. They deliver a range of children's participation services on our behalf and implement several schemes through a contract arrangement:
- Facilitation of young people's participation / reference groups;
  - Facilitation of the eXtreme group to ensure that the voice of children and young people with disabilities are listened to and acted upon;
  - Coordination of the Children in Care Council;
  - Management of the Drive Project – by listening to young people this project enables some young people to learn to drive;

- Management of the Freedom Card – by listening to young people and their carers this offers free access to DCC leisure centres and access to a range of leisure activities at a discounted price;
- Management and facilitation of the Investing in Children Membership Programme – all services and teams across CYPS are reviewed annually to ensure that they meet award criteria. All teams across Children's Services have either achieved Investing in Children Membership or are working towards this. The 'Investing in Children membership', is a kite mark which demonstrates that Looked After Children and young people feel valued and are listened to by adults.
- Examples of co-produced services include, but are not limited to:
  - The development of our new Edge of Care Home. Care experienced young people played an active role and identified key features within the home, how the home could better meet the needs of young people and the name of the new home;
  - The commissioning of independent fostering households and the involvement of children and young people in the tendering / procurement process, which influenced the outcome of the exercise;
  - The involvement of children and young people in staff recruitment i.e. young people being part of the interview panel and having an influence over the recruitment of new Registered Managers for children's homes;
  - Ensuring that children's social care providers listen to the views and wishes of the children and young people that they care for and use this information to make ongoing improvements.

## **Providing Stability to Children and Young People**

- 28 When children and young people are unable to live with their birth families and they need to come into care, it is important that care provides them with the stability they need to feel safe to build relationships with their carers.
- 29 Currently in County Durham, we are struggling to do this, and it is usual for children to have to move at least once when they come into care. That means that they have lived in at least two homes, three if their family home is included.

- 30 The stability of homes available to children in care is recorded as a measure of overall children's social care performance (Placement Stability). This is measured by Ofsted for children aged under 16 who have been in care for at least 2.5 years who have stayed living in the same home for more than 2 years.
- 31 In Durham, we have 64% (251) children under 16 who have been looked after for a minimum of 2.5yrs who have been in their current caring arrangement for less than 2 years. 34% of children who have been in care for more than 2.5 years have remained living in the same care arrangement for more than 2 years. In the last year we have 58 children who have moved three times and there are seven children who have moved more than seven times.
- 32 This is in part explained by the ongoing work that has been undertaken to support children and young people to return to the care of their parents. It is however accepted that this is an area for improvement, and we need to be able to offer a wider range of homes with carers that are trained and supported to meet the children's needs.

### **Out of Area Living Arrangements**

- 33 As a result of a lack of available homes in Durham that can meet the needs of our children and young people who have needs that challenge services, we sometimes need to place children outside of County Durham.
- 34 Finding these children homes at a distance from Durham results in a number of challenges for them including needing to move schools and make new friends but also making it harder to see the people that they need to have trusting relationships with including their parents and families.
- 35 There are 306 children and young people placed outside of Durham in a range of different care arrangements. Some of these children and young people have been placed for adoption, are with family members or attending colleges, making their move out of area a positive development for them. Other children live in fostering homes or within private children's homes outside of the county. Most children who live outside of County Durham live in the region, but this is not the case for all children, and we have children placed as far away as Inverness and Plymouth.

### **Unregulated Arrangements**

- 36 On the 9 September 2021, the law changed prohibiting local authorities from placing children under the age of 16 in an unregulated provision (The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2021).

- 37 All children and young people who have a plan of care and/ or who are under the age of 16 must legally live in a regulated setting, such as a foster carer household or a children's home which is registered with Ofsted.
- 38 The majority of our children and young people live in regulated homes, with 99.32% (1,028) living in regulated settings as of 9 December 2022.
- 39 A child / young person is only accommodated in an unregulated setting, when all other options have been completely exhausted. Whilst the local authority does not support these arrangements, sometimes there are no available alternative options. A total of 7 children and young people under the age of 16 currently live in unregulated settings. This equates to 0.67% of our looked after population. The local authority strives to have all children and young people living in regulated settings.
- 40 Unregulated provision for under 16's occur when:
- A young person's previous living arrangement breaks down and they can no longer remain in their regulated provision or remain at home with parents;
  - A young person has complex needs, can't be matched alongside other young people and requires a single occupancy provision for a period of time;
  - There are no available regulated homes that can meet the needs of the young person at the time.
- 41 When children and young people live in an unregulated setting the following quality assurance framework is implemented to ensure that children are cared for in line with their care plan and that the living arrangement is safe:
- Quality check of the property;
  - Regular contact with landlords to ensure speedy repairs and health and safety issues resolved;
  - Daily visits from the young person's Social Worker or Duty Social Worker;
  - Weekly care team meetings;
  - Ongoing communication with the support agency to ensure that care is in line with the young person's plan and risk assessment.

- 42 When a young person moves into an unregulated setting, the local authority continues to pro-actively search for a suitable regulated home. Ofsted is notified of the arrangement, highlighting the extent of the search, move on options and timescales. Of the 7 young people, move on arrangements have been developed for 3 young people, with further work ongoing for the other 4 young people.
- 43 Some young people are able to return to the family home and others need to stay in the care of the local authority but require a small setting to manage their complex needs and behaviours.
- 44 When suitable existing provision can not be identified the local authority works with providers to develop bespoke regulated living arrangements for children and young people.
- 45 The local authority is also committed to developing a suite of new smaller children's homes, which can accommodate between 1 and 2 young people. These are in the process of being developed, with the first solo home and a two bedded home due to open in March 2023.

## **Key Development Priorities**

- 46 The local authority has identified six overarching objectives within the strategy, which will address current gaps in provision and will seek to broaden and make improvements to our sufficiency offer in Durham. These are:
- (a) Grow our number of in-house foster carers, support the retention of carers and work with Independent Fostering Agencies to ensure that children and young people can live with foster carer families when it is in their interests to do so;
  - (b) Increase the number of adopters;
  - (c) Continue to develop and broaden our children's homes offer and maximise opportunities with external providers when there is a case to do so;
  - (d) Develop access to a diverse range of appropriate accommodation for Care Leavers;
  - (e) Improve our sufficiency offer for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) / Young People and reduce waiting times;
  - (f) Broaden our short breaks offer for disabled children and their families.

- 47     Sitting under each objective is a series of key priorities, which relate to the development of new services to support our range of needs for children and young people. All 39 priorities are outlined in Appendix 2 of this report.

## Conclusion

- 48     As Corporate Parents we must ensure that we have a range of good quality living arrangements that are able to meet the varying care and support needs of our looked after children and our care leavers.
- 49     The strategy outlines the existing sufficiency offer which provides good quality care and support to our children and young people. It also provides further information about the challenges that we experience and the key priorities that we will deliver over the coming two years to address gaps in provision and to broaden our local sufficiency offer.

## Background papers

- None

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

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

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

### **Finance**

A number of the proposals set out in this strategy will require either capital and/or revenue investment in order to take forward.

These will be subject to individual business cases, setting out the rationale and justification for services and the funding requirements.

Capital funding of £2.2m has been secured in previous years to develop a number of new children's homes. A further £1.6m capital request is subject to ongoing consideration and will enable the development of some specialist homes for children with disabilities.

### **Consultation**

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

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

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

### **Human Rights**

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

### **Climate Change**

Not applicable

### **Crime and Disorder**

Not applicable

**Staffing**

The strategy sets out the development of a range of new services which will broaden and enhance our current sufficiency offer. These services will require new staff to support their operational delivery. The recruitment of new staff is aligned with the development of new children's homes.

**Accommodation**

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

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

**Risk**

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

There is both a legal and reputational risk to the Local Authority if it is unable to safely care for children and young people and offer a broad range of living arrangements to meet individual needs.

**Procurement**

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



## Appendix 2 – Sufficiency Strategy – Priorities

N o	Overarching Objective	Priorities	Completed by
1	<b>Grow our number of in-house foster carers, support the retention of carers and work with IFAs to ensure that children and young people can live with foster carer families when it is in their interests to do so</b>	Recruit 35 new foster carer households in 2022/23 and a further 35 new foster carer households in 2023/24	March 2023 and March 2024
		Develop and launch the new fostering website	December 2023
		Launch the Mockingbird Model to support our in-house foster carers	July 2022
		Review the current Payment for Skills Model in consultation with foster carers, which seeks to improve our sufficiency of in-house foster carers, by attracting new carers and retaining existing carers and implement findings	October 2023
		Develop a 'wrap around support' team that will work intensively with our in-house foster carers to promote stability and prevent breakdown	March 2023
		Develop the respite foster care offer for children and young people with a disability	September 2022 – March 2024
		We will continue to work regionally with other Local Authorities to ensure that the new commissioning solution continues to be fit for purpose and to encourage off framework providers and new providers to	April 2022 – March 2024

<b>N o</b>	<b>Overarching Objective</b>	<b>Priorities</b>	<b>Completed by</b>
		join.	
		We will launch a new Provider Forum with our IFAs outside of our regional arrangements to share information about our demand, gaps in provision and to maximise effective partnership working.	September 2022

<b>2</b>	<b>Increase the number of adopters</b>	Ensure that the transition to Adopt Coast to Coast does not impact on the recruitment improvements made in 2020-2022.	March 2024
		Work collaboratively with RAA partners to develop practice around linking and matching, to reduce the waiting time for children when being matched to their forever family.	March 2024
<b>3</b>	<b>Continue to develop and broaden our residential homes offer and maximise opportunities with external providers when there is a case to do so</b>	Develop up to 4 x smaller children's homes. Two will accommodate up to two children and young people and a further two homes will accommodate one young person each. Homes to be operational in 2022 and 2023.	December 2022 and December 2023
		Develop an Edge of Care home	August 2023
		Re-provide a children's home for three young people	November 2023
		Continue to develop the residential peripatetic staffing team to support capacity and reduce the use of agency staff within homes.	April 2022 – March 2024
		Continue to have close oversight of the residential workforce to ensure that the experience and skills of the workforce continues to meet our sufficiency needs.	April 2022 – March 2024

		Continue to review the upper bedding capacity in our existing children's home, taking into account ongoing sufficiency press	April 2022 / March 2024
		Develop a step down to foster care children's home for younger children, by reviewing our existing children's home provision	March 2024
		Develop a children's home for disabled children and young people, in line with feedback from Ofsted. We will consider both DCC and provider led options, including new build options.	March 2025
		Develop a specialist short break home which offers planned respite for up to two children / young people with complex needs. We will consider both DCC and provider led options, including new build options.	March 2025
		Develop a Staying Close Programme for a small group of identified young people	July 2022 – March 2025
		We will continue to work with providers to sustain children and young people's residential home arrangements, offering support and solutions which minimises moved for children and young people.	April 2022 – March 2024
		We will continue to work closely with providers that wish to develop new Durham First services in County Durham, to shape services and to positively challenge development when this does not meet our needs.	April 2022 / March 2024
		We will review our potential future use of parent and child residential units and encourage providers to develop these services when there is an identified need.	March 2024

		We will explore options for working in partnership with a provider to develop a solo / dual registered children's home in County Durham, specifically for our use.	April 2022 – March 2024
		We will continue to play an active role in the NE12 regional consortia, working with neighbouring Local Authorities, to understand regional challenges, demand and to work collaboratively.	April 2022 – March 2024
		We will launch a new Provider Engagement Forum with our residential homes providers. This will be specific to Durham's local needs.	July 2022
		We will work with health partners to develop a new registered step down from hospital offer to meet the needs of children and young people with ongoing mental health needs.	March 2024
		As our capacity increases within in-house residential home provision, we will review our out of county living arrangements, to understand which children and young people have a plan to move back into the area.	Ongoing
<b>4</b>	<b>Develop access to a diverse range of appropriate accommodation for Care Leavers</b>	Review the marketing and recruitment strategy for Supported Lodging providers	March 2023
		We will open up the Supported Accommodation Provider Panel for young people with complex needs, broadening our pool of providers.	October 2022
		Establish a new Provider Engagement Forum with supported accommodation providers.	September 2022
		Work with supported accommodation providers in relation to the regulation of provision, to understand any potential impact or emerging gaps in provision.	August 2022 – March 2024

5	<b>Improve our sufficiency offer for UASC and reduce waiting times</b>	Work with local supported accommodation providers to explore the extension of existing services to meet our increasing accommodation and support needs for UASC.	December 2022
		Consider options and funding opportunities to develop a local supported accommodation and assessment hub, which will assess UASC over a 6 – 12-week period, before moving young people onto suitable long-term supported accommodation.	December 2022
		Develop a new supported accommodation assessment service for UASC	September 2023
		Continue to work in partnership with regional LAs to explore opportunities for joint commissioning	April 2022 – March 2024
6	<b>Broaden our short breaks offer for disabled children and their families</b>	Develop a Short Breaks Sufficiency Action Plan which highlights the range of actions that will be taken forward to address the ongoing challenges and gaps in provision, and to improve both the universal and statutory short breaks offer for children, young people and their families / carers	July 2022
		<p>Deliver a programme of non-assessed community short break improvements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Ensure that organisations maximise inclusion for disabled children in community activities across County Durham and have the right skills and experience to respond to young people's needs.</li> <li>(ii) Further invest to enable children and young people with disabilities to access local universal activities, ensuring that parents / carers access regular breaks when these are needed and reducing the reliance on commissioned assessed services, preventing escalation of family needs.</li> </ul>	July 2022 – March 2024

		(iii) Continue to commission a menu of community activities for children unable to access the community due to their disability, without the need for a statutory assessment, whilst ensuring that providers are upskilled to respond to specialist needs.	
		<p>Deliver a programme of assessed specialist enhanced short breaks:</p> <p>(i) Ensure that the provider market has the capacity, experience and skills to meet to children and young people's short break needs, either at home, in the community or in a residential setting.</p> <p>(ii) Develop specialist and inclusive community hubs to enable complex young people to be supported within their local area.</p> <p>(iii) Review overnight respite provision at Park House, alongside the wider overnight respite offer in the region, propose options to meet all needs, including those young people with complex disabilities / challenging behaviours that post a risk to other children. Develop a model and service provision for overnight respite (this action overlaps with Priority Number 9 within the In-House Residential Homes section of this strategy).</p> <p>(iv) Change our commissioning approach to block investment with existing providers to develop, stabilise and upskill the workforce so it can respond to short break demand, particularly for those young people with autism and challenging behaviours.</p>	July 2022 – March 2024

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### **Appendix 3: Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for Looked After Children and Care Leavers 2022-2024**

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Attached as a separate document

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# **Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for Looked After Children and Care Leavers 2022-2024**

**May 2022**

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

Issue Date	Date of Next Strategy Review	Lead Service(s)
May 2022	January 2024	Integrated Commissioning Service

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

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

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

## **2. POLICY CONTEXT**

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

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

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

## **3. BEING A CORPORATE PARENT**

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

The term 'corporate parent' means the collective responsibility of the council, elected members, employees and partner agencies, for providing the best possible care and safeguarding support for the children and young people who

are looked after by the council. A child in the care of the council looks to the whole council to be the best parent it can be to that child. Every member and employee has a statutory responsibility to act for that child. Our commitment is to all children and young people living in foster care and children's homes, placed for adoption, those living in supported lodgings or at home under Placement with Parent Regulations, as well as those living in secure establishments or in custody.

#### **4. POSITION STATEMENT**

As an Authority we:

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

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

As an Authority we:

- Will aim to secure legal and emotional permanence, preferably through adoption, Special Guardianship, Child Arrangement Orders or where this is not possible, through long-term foster care.
- Will maximise the use of internal foster care resources before using local external fostering agencies.
- Will avoid using children's homes except when it is in the best interests of the child / young person and meeting their complex needs.
- Are committed to be the best parent we can be for our Looked After Children and Care Leavers and strive to ensure that we deliver support and care that is as good as every good parent.
- Are committed to ensuring that Looked After Children and Care Leavers have the best opportunities available to them to achieve their potential and that these are at least as good as the opportunities available for all other children. We recognise that many children and young people face significantly greater levels of challenging circumstances before reaching

adulthood than their peers and that this may mean that they have the need for additional support.

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

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

## 5. LISTENING TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

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

- Facilitation of young people's participation / reference groups;
- Facilitation of the eXtreme group to ensure that the voice of children and young people with disabilities are listened to and acted upon;
- Coordination of the Children in Care Council;
- Management of the Drive Project – enabling some young people to learn to drive;
- Management of the Freedom Card – enabling Looked After Children and their carers to access a range of leisure activities at a discounted price;
- Management and facilitation of the Investing in Children Membership Programme – services are reviewed annually to ensure that they meet investing in children criteria.
- Ensuring young people's views and thoughts are captured when we develop new services i.e., Edge of Care Home, recommissioning the Independent Fostering Agency Framework and the service specification for our new children's homes.

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

## 6. CHALLENGES

The Covid-19 pandemic has presented the council with many challenges over the last two years, in relation to sufficiency of living arrangements for children and young people and the ongoing work with social care providers to ensure that children's living arrangements are stable and that they continue to provide good quality care.

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

Whilst the number of children in need has been relatively stable over the last four years (3,570 in 2017/18, 3,571 in 2018/29, 3,551 in 2019/20 and 3,683 in 2020/21), the number of children looked after by the Local Authority has risen by 62% from 615 as of 31 March 2015 to 982 as of 31 March 2022. Based on recent increases, it is forecast that CLA numbers will increase to 1015 by

December 2022 (see Appendix 2 – Table 1). The current rate of CLA is 96 per 10,000 which is above the national average (67), however remains below the NE average (108).

From March 2020 we experienced an accelerated increase in the number of children looked after as a direct result of COVID, which was above the long-term forecast. Delays at court, as a result of the pandemic also prevented children and young people who had plans to return home to parents or family, from returning home, which resulted in fewer children leaving the care of the local authority. When courts re-opened this enabled an increasing number of children and young people to return home between June and August 2021 (Appendix 2 – Table 3), however with a steady increase in the number of children coming into care and a reduction in the number of children leaving care, the overall number of children that are looked after, has continued to increase, placing ongoing pressure on services across CYPS.

Our number of under 1-year olds (24%) remains around the regional 2020/21 benchmark (national – 20%; regional – 23%) and is the second lowest it has been over the last 12 months. The proportion of 16/17 year olds have increased to 13% over the last 12 months bringing us in line with statistical neighbour and regional average. Our biggest increase has been in relation to teenagers aged 14–15-year-olds, with a 31% increase. Our Sufficiency Strategy Action Plan focuses on the development of new smaller, local children's homes to meet this increasing need.

There has been a growth in the number of older children looked after by the Local Authority, that present with complex needs and behaviours:

- Environmental factors: attachment difficulties, parental conflict, domestic abuse, homelessness.
- Internal factors: social communication difficulties including Autism, mental ill-health, behaviours that challenge services.
- External factors: interpersonal relationships, criminal and sexual exploitation, alcohol and substance misuse, serious youth violence and bail, licence and discharge conditions.

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

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

### **Ensuring that our children and young people live locally**

The sufficiency duty requires Local Authority's to "take steps to secure, as far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for looked after children within their **local** authority area.

A large proportion of our children and young people live in County Durham, with 70.3% living in county and 29.7% living in out of county arrangement. Of the

29.7% of children and young people that live outside of County Durham, 17.5% live under 20 miles from their originating home address and 12.2% of children and young people live 20 miles or more from their originating home address.

We always seek to secure appropriate living arrangements locally, when it is safe to do so and in the child or young person's best interests. A small proportion of children and young people need to live away from their local area (+20 miles) due to the immediate risks and challenges this presents, however some children and young people live in out of area provision, due to limited availability to meet young people's complex needs within County Durham. This Strategy outlines a range of development priorities which will create additional local sufficiency options, enabling a greater proportion of children and young people to live locally.

### **The Transforming Care Agenda**

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

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

The Closure of West Lane Hospital in Autumn 2019 has resulted in Children and Young People requiring treatment in a Children's Mental Health in-patient setting often having to be placed far from home due to bed shortages in the area or placed on adult wards. Ferndene Hospital in Northumberland and Acklam Road provide tier 4 CAMHS hospital provision for children and young people, with 7 Durham young people currently inpatients at these settings.

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

Durham's new Rapid Response Service, providing support to children, young people and their families / carers, to prevent admission and readmission to tier 4 hospital provision, works closely with children and young people identified and discussed within the MACC meeting.

### **Mental Health Offer**

The emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people continues to be key priority for the council.



All children have been impacted one way or another during this period i.e., face to face family time moving to virtual means, children not being able to see their friends, not being able to participate in group activities and sports and most significantly, not accessing education for a substantial period of time. Whilst these restrictions are no longer in place and we learn to live with covid, the pandemic has had a lasting impact on many young people, particularly in relation to poor mental health, with a significant increase in demand on community health services.

The Council, TEWV and other health partners worked collaboratively to develop a new support offer for children, young people and their families to prevent admission to tier 4 mental health hospital provision, launching the Rapid Response Service (RRS) in July 2021.

The RRS was developed in response to an identified need for additional services to support young people and their families where there is a high level of risk of young people being admitted to hospital under the Mental Health Act. Support is focused specifically on young people who are identified in the Dynamic Support Register. The offer of support includes intensive support and packages of intervention tailored to the particular needs of the young person and their family / carers.

When children and young people need to be discharged from tier 4 hospital into the care of the Local Authority, there is often limited suitable local provision that can provide the specialist care and support that young people require. To enable the timely discharge of children and young people back into community-based provision, a dedicated specialist service is required. Work is ongoing to explore all available options to meet this particular sufficiency need, prior to any service development.

### **Sourcing suitable living arrangements and matching children and young people**

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

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

As our use of externally commissioned children's residential home provision has increased by 50% between 2020 and 2022, with 69 children and young people living in children's homes managed by providers, we have developed a dedicated brokerage function within our Commissioning Service, to support with the increasing number of children's home searches and activity. This investment consists of a new Placement Team Manager post and two additional Placement Officer posts, to support the existing post within the Commissioning Service.

## **Availability of Foster Carer Households**

The availability of foster carer households for children and young people, particularly those aged 13+, continues to be a pressure across the service. This has resulted in a small number of children and young people accessing children's homes given the lack of availability. These young people's plans continue to be monitored closely.

The number of children and young people living within in-house foster care provision reduced to 375 in November 2021, however this has gradually increased, month on month, with 408 children and young people currently living within in-house foster carers (41.3% of all CLA). Covid had a significant impact on the availability of in-house foster care provision.

Due to limited availability in-house, this has placed a reliance on the use of IFAs, which peaked at 174 in February 2022, however over recent months has started to gradually reduce.

It is our ambition to care for an increasing number of children and young people with Durham foster carers, with a target of 48% by March 2023. As such, we continue to focus on the recruitment of new foster carers for teenagers, sibling groups, UASC, children with a disability and respite for children with a disability, whilst continuing to support the retention of current foster carers.

## **Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)**

In line with the new mandatory National Transfer Scheme, Durham is required to accept approximately 4-5 UASC per cycle, with over 50 UASC expected over the coming months. The Local Authority must identify suitable care or support arrangements, dependent on each young person's needs. To date, the majority of young people referred have been aged 16+ and their needs have been primarily met in Supported Lodgings or Supported Accommodation, with a smaller proportion of children identified as being under the age of 16.

Identifying suitable living arrangements for this cohort of children and young people, does present sufficiency challenges i.e., suitable living arrangements need to be sourced within 10 days, there is limited information available about UASC, many UASC wish to live in cities and not rural areas (Durham is predominantly rural) and there are already pressures in relation to securing regulated provision for children that are under the age of 16.

Whilst our UASC require accommodation, care and support, it is important that they can access other key services such as health, education, mental health, advocacy, translation services and an independent visitor, when there is a requirement for one.

The offer available to UASC is being developed on both a regional and local level to ensure there is sufficient capacity to meet our ongoing needs. Sufficiency options to improve capacity are currently being developed, within our wider supported accommodation provision.

## **Children's Home's in County Durham and securing 'local' provision through a Durham First Approach**

Durham has the highest percentage of children's homes per population in the region, with 467 children's homes in the North-East (81%) judged good or above (August 2021), which is a reduction from 88% in August 2019.

Whilst there is a high percentage of children's homes in Durham given its rural nature and more affordable property, there is also a high proportion of children placed in these homes from Local Authorities across the country, which often makes it difficult to identify suitable, local children's home provision for Durham children and young people and places significant pressure on services such as the Police, CAMHS and Education.

In order to maximise our access to local children's home provision, we remain in regular contact with providers to understand current and future vacancies, so children who require children's homes provision, can access this in a planned way.

We continue to work with external providers to shape and influence the services that they are developing for children and young people and to ensure that these meet our sufficiency needs, particularly smaller solo or dual registered homes, where there is an increasing demand for this type of provision.

When providers seek to develop new homes that do not meet our local needs, we positively challenge these during the early stages of their development and through the statutory planning process taking into account Planning Policy Guidance (Children's Home Planning Policy 18).

We work closely with Durham Police to consider new developments and sign-post providers to the police for locality risk information when considering the suitability and safety of a location.

Where the council has a definitive need for the service that is being developed, we ask that the provider enters into a 'Durham First Approach', enabling Durham County Council to access local provision or services, first and foremost. This approach enables us to secure provision in the local area, as it is generally in children and young people's best interests to live within Durham, close to family, friends and support networks. However, it should also be recognised that some young people benefit from living at distance, either due to risks in the local area or the need to access more specialist provision out of area.

## **Supporting Stability of Living Arrangements**

Given an increasing number of breakdowns in children and young people's living arrangements and moves, there is an ongoing drive to support stability and to offer increased support and intervention to carers if there is a risk of breakdown, across all our types of living arrangements. Those carers who work with children and young people with particularly complex and challenging behaviours often require support or respite for short periods of time.

To respond to this particularly need, we are taking steps to develop and implement an improved support offer for our in-house foster carers. This consists of a 'wrap around support' team that will work intensively with our foster carers to promote stability and prevent breakdown of living arrangements. The Mockingbird Model is also being implemented which will offer improved support networks and respite for our foster carers.

To further support our children, young people with disabilities and their carers, we also plan to develop our in-house foster care offer to enable children and young people to access planned respite, as we have an increasing demand for respite at our Short Break Children's Home (Parkhouse) and this will enable us to expand our respite offer.

### **Families on the Edge of Care**

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

The Supporting Solutions Service has been operating since 2018 offering crisis support to young people aged 11-17 and their families / carers. The service is expanding its offer, supporting children and their families / carers for children aged 7-11. The service offers:

- Edge of Care support – intensive intervention to young people, parents and carer where there has been a relationship breakdown and without support it is likely that the young person may need to become looked after or experience a move.
- Family Group Conference – support to families to identify and establish a sustainable plan to meet the needs of children and young people within their family unit.
- Missing from Home Coordinator – co-ordination and deliver of services for children who are Missing from Home.
- Child Exploitation Workers – offering support and interventions to young people at high risk of child exploitation.
- Access to a crisis bed – providing an out of hours, one night only crisis bed for a young person when all other options have been explored and exhausted.

During 2020/2021 the service supported 179 young people and their families, in comparison to 101 young people supported in 2019/20. Of those young people support during 2020/21, 74% continued to live at home / with extended family or have remained in their long-term living arrangement. 28 young people (15%) who accessed support, became CLA after Supporting Solutions interventions and this is a clear increase from the previous year. These young people could not continue to live at home with family as it was not safe to do so. Some of these young people remained open to the Supporting Solutions Service in the hope that in the future a return to family care can be supported. 11 young people moved to a new living arrangement as relationships with carers had completed broken down.

The number of young people who remained open to an edge of care worker, has increased during 2020/2021, with 88 young people in 2019/20 and 132 young people in 2020/21, highlighting a 50% increase. This period covered the

second covid lockdown, when some families were struggling to care and support their children at home and required intensive support and ongoing interventions.

The service continues to demonstrate the positive work that it undertakes to support children to continue living with their family, where it is safe and possible to do so.

To further support our Edge of Care, Supporting Solutions Service, we plan to open a new Edge of Care home in summer 2023. The new home will support children and young people on the edge of care, offering planned respite. The home will also support children who are looked after and whose living arrangement may be at risk of breaking down. This will enable CYPS to broaden its current Edge of Care offer with dedicated respite provision.

### **Child Sexual Exploitation – Adolescent Safeguarding and Exploitation Team**

There is an increase nationally, regionally and locally in Durham of adolescents experiencing extra-familial harm and young people presenting with complex issues including mental health and substance misuse who require a different model and approach outside of the traditional child protection framework and operating model.

The (ASET) Adolescent Safeguarding and Exploitation Team was established in early 2022 and consists of a Team Manager, Social Work Consultant and 6 Social Workers.

The vision for the team “is a future where young people feel safe beyond their own homes because their communities and our safeguarding system can, and will, protect them from harm”.

ASET will provide assessment and care-planning in line with statutory safeguarding procedures and deliver interventions to young people who are victims or at risk of extra-familial harm or experiencing complex issues and comorbidities. The team provides specialist advice and guidance to workers where a young person and/or their siblings are already open to services. This will reduce the need to change workers while ensuring young people receive a specialist service. ASET are a specialist knowledge hub who will provide advice and guidance and support the delivery of evidence-based practice while upskilling of the wider workforce.

### **Short Breaks for children, young people and their families**

Both during and following the pandemic the Council has experienced an increase in the demand for both non assessed and assessed short breaks, with an increasing number of families seeking support. It is important that assessments are holistic and understand the overarching needs of children and their families with a range of different options being explored, working with the voluntary community sector.

Following the pandemic, the provider market is in a weakened position, with the following intelligence gathered:

- Current providers on commissioning frameworks are not able to meet all needs – both volume and needs
- Ongoing staffing issues in relation to capacity
- New providers developing within the market, who require intensive development support
- Lack of experience in the workforce
- Difficulty meeting the needs of the most complex children and young people
- Ratio of support to children is increasing, therefore placing more pressure on providers and cost impact on the Council
- Delays in securing services for children, young people and their families / carers
- A reduction in families use of direct payments

Work is ongoing with the provider market to review the ongoing challenges and to develop creative solutions. An Action Plan is being developed which will capture all key improvement areas, including, exploring the development of:

- A long-term children's home for disabled children and young people;
- An improved overnight short break offer for children and young people with highly complex needs;
- In-house foster carers that can offer respite to disabled children and young people

### **Supported Accommodation for young people aged 16 and 17**

Our use of supported accommodation arrangements for young people aged 16 and 17 has more than doubled since pre-pandemic (22 in June 2021, increasing to 43 in April 2022). It is likely that demand will continue to increase as we receive UASC through the National Protocol Arrangements.

In order to broaden our Supported Accommodation Offer we will open our preferred provider list in October/November 2022, enabling new providers to join and deliver services to young people in Durham.

We will work with providers during 2023 in relation to the introduction of new national standards and the Ofsted-led registration and inspection framework, to understand any impact on sufficiency.

### **Supporting the Provider Market**

The Supporting the Provider Market Team within the Commissioning Service now works with providers offering services to children and young people to improve services and to support market stability and sustainability.

The team focuses on five key areas:

- Recruitment and retention of staff
- Training and development
- Proactive interventions
- Technology and innovation
- Provider interfaces with health and social care

The County Durham Care Academy managed within the team, offers a routeway course for individuals wishing to work in adult or children social care. The 6-week programme does not affect an individual's benefits and results in a guaranteed interview with a provider and a transferrable DBS.

The children's routeway has been piloted with Durham County Council's Children's Residential Service to support recruitment and will be rolled out to support a wider range of providers supporting children and young people in County Durham.

This new offer has come at a time, when many providers are struggling to recruit and retain staff, as the country continues to recover and adjust following the pandemic and workforce sectors evolve.

### **Spend Position**

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

The outturn position for 2021/22 for CLA living arrangements, excluding in-house services was:

- Budget - £30.817m
- Actual - £33.993m
- Overspend - £3.176m

CLA budgets have increased year on year in line with increasing demand for services. This will increase by a further £2.863m in 2022/23 plus price inflation.

All costs are considered in a range of decision-making panels, where suitability of the living arrangement in line with the care plan and value for money are considered and scrutinised.

The priorities set out in this Strategy are subject to individual business cases, considering rationale, cost, impact, value for money and sustainability. Proposals will demonstrate best use of public funding, alongside our ongoing need to meet our sufficiency duty.

## **7. IN-HOUSE FOSTERING**

We have an extensive in-house fostering offer, which we utilise for children and young people who cannot live with their families and whose needs would be best met in a family environment.

- Pre-covid in March 2020, we had 430 children and young people living in in-house fostering households, accounting for 48% of all CLA.
- In December 2021, 41% (378) of our CLA were living in in-house fostering provision, which was a significant reduction and resulted in the increasing use of IFA provision.

- Of the 378 children living with an in-house foster carer as of December 2021.
- 1 in 5 children had been in their current living arrangement for 5 years or more (21%); almost a quarter (23%) have been living in their living arrangement for less than 6 months.
- We experienced a reduction in children placed with our in-house foster carers directly following the first national lockdown in March 2020 primarily as a result of carers own ill-health and concerns about taking new children into their own homes during the pandemic.
- As of May 2022, we have 411 children and young people (41% of CLA) that are accommodated in this type of living arrangement. There has been an increasing number of in-house foster care households made in the last two months.
- During 2021/22, 29 new foster carer household were recruited, against a target of 30 households.
- Our Marketing and Recruitment Strategy focuses on ongoing media campaigns using TV adverts, digital advertising, social media, radio and a new promotional sign located outside of County Hall.
- Work is ongoing to make improvements to the website.
- Almost half of enquiries (49%) in 2021/22 have come from the website enquiry form, followed by email (37%). Website hits are increasing month on month.
- Social media campaigns have been targeted based on ongoing demands. These include campaigns focusing on the recruitment of new foster carers for children with disabilities, UASC, teenagers and sibling groups.
- In order to remain competitive with the independent sector and to attract and retain foster carers we will review our current Payment for Skills Model. It is important that we develop a foster carer 'offer' where all carers are incentivised and incorporates the following: competitive financial incentives for caring for children/young people (particularly those with more specialist behavioural and health needs), good quality support and training and development. Whilst this will require changes to the payment structure, an increase in the number of these foster care households will be a key enabler in improving outcomes and reducing the overall cost of provision in the longer term.
- We are in the process of implementing a Mockingbird Model, which will ensure that our foster carers receive ongoing, appropriate, experienced support and planned respite when it is required. Hub carers are being appointed which will support stability and the retention of foster carers. The new service model is being launched in July 2022.

## **Priorities**



1. Recruit 35 new foster carer households in 2022/23 and a further 35 new foster carer households in 2023/24.
2. Develop and launch the new fostering website by December 2023.
3. Launch the Mockingbird Model to support our in-house foster carers in July 2022.
4. Review the current Payment for Skills Model in consultation with foster carers, which seeks to improve our sufficiency of in-house foster carers, by attracting new carers and retaining existing carers; and to implement the findings by October 2023.
5. Develop a 'wrap around support' team that will work intensively with our in-house foster carers to promote stability and prevent breakdown and implement by March 2023.
6. Develop the respite foster care offer for children and young people with a disability.

## **8. INDEPENDENT FOSTERING AGENCIES (IFAs)**

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

- Durham is currently part of the new NE12 Regional Framework, which enables the council to purchase independent foster carer household arrangements.
- From July 2022, IFA households are commissioned through one single regional commissioning solution, involving all 12 regional Local Authorities. Extensive consultation and market engagement has been carried out to help shape and influence a commissioning model, that meets the needs of Local Authorities and is fit for purpose for participating providers.
- As our CLA numbers have continued to increase, our reliance on IFAs has increased also, with 158 IFA arrangements in June 2021 (similar to pre-Covid rates of 159/18%) rising to 172 arrangements in April 2022, equating to 17.5% of all CLA living with IFAs.
- As of December 2021, 28% of our children and young people were living with an IFA household for 6 months or less; 14% between 6-12 months, 47% between 1 and 5 years; and 11% lived in an IFA household for 5 years or more, demonstrating the high proportion of children who have a plan of permanence and who are settled.
- Children and young people live in IFAs, primarily due to brothers and sisters needing to be placed alongside one another, limited availability within in-house foster care provision and matching criteria.
- Due to the increasing needs of a small cohort of young people, when a foster care can not be identified, a children's home has been considered and

secured. This change in provision has been considered and informed by the care team with the change in the young person's care plan ratified.

- As our number of children and young people placed in in-house foster care starts to increase, we aim to reduce the number of children and young people living in IFAs by 15% by March 2024. This would equate to approximately 147 children and young people living in an IFA household.

### **Priorities**

1. We will continue to work regionally with other Local Authorities to ensure that the commissioning solution continues to be fit for purpose and to encourage off framework providers and new providers to join.
2. We will launch a new Provider Forum with our IFAs outside of our regional arrangements to share information about our demand, gaps in provision and to maximise effective partnership working.

## **9. ADOPTION**

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

In April 2021, Adopt Coast to Coast launched as the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) for Durham County Council with two partners, Cumbria County Council and Together for Children who provide children's services on behalf of Sunderland City Council. The RAA is a partnership model whereby the central function of marketing and recruitment activity are centrally located in the hub with each partner retaining their adoption team who respond to enquiries in their allocated area and assess / support enquirers throughout their journey. All enquires received through the new enquiry and outcomes system where the enquirer has a Durham postcode, lives South of the Durham boundary or chooses Durham to receive the interest.

- In 2021/22 there has been 217 adoption enquiries, in comparison to 100 in 2020/21 and 165 in 2019/20.
- There was an 18% conversion rate from enquiries to approvals in 2021/22, a reduction in comparison to 2020/21 (41%) but an improvement from 2019/20 (15%).
- There were 66 placement orders in 2021/22, an increase from 2020/21 (58).

Recognising the sufficiency challenges across the region, a contract with ARC Adoption North-East provides the three spokes of Adopt Coast to Coast with exclusive access to prospective adopters they are assessing until they are approved as prospective adopters. This is in place to support early linking prior to a Placement Order being granted to reduce the time a child waits to be placed with their adoptive family.

## Priorities

1. To ensure that the transition to Adopt Coast to Coast does not impact on the recruitment improvements made in 2020-2022.
2. To work collaboratively with RAA partners to develop practice around linking and matching, to reduce the waiting time for children when being matched to their forever family.

## 10. IN-HOUSE CHILDREN'S HOME PROVISION

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

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

We are committed to ensuring that all of our children and young people with a plan of care are living in provision that is regulated with Ofsted.

### Existing Offer and Usage

- Durham continues to deliver an in-house residential home offer to children and young people. Eight of Durham's children's homes are rated by Ofsted to be 'good', one new home is awaiting its first Ofsted Inspection and one requires improvement with plans in place to address all areas of improvement.

**Table 1 – In-house residential home provision**

Children's Home	Type of Provision	Number of Beds	Age Group
West Rainton	Long-Term	3	12-17 years
New Lea House,	Long Term	4	12-17 years
High Etherley	Long Term	3	12-17 years
Framwellgate Moor	Long Term	5	12-17 years
Moorside	Long Term	5	12-17 years
Coxhoe	Long Term	3	12-17 years
Hickstead	Long Term	3	12-17 years
Orchard House	Long Term	3	12-17 years
The Manse	Medium / Long-term	2	12-17 years
Park House	Short Break/Respite for disabled children/ young people	6 + 1 emergency bed	7-17 years

### **Over the last 12-24 months we have:**

- Changed the registration of our children's home in West Rainton from a children's home for young children (7-11) which supports them to step down into foster care, into a home for young people aged 12+. The statement of purpose was reviewed to reflect our ongoing pressures for young people aged 12+. There are however an increasing number of younger children that require residential home provision, so we will seek to re-provide the step down to foster care model in the future.
- Re-provided our children's home previously at Cedar Drive. Our new children's home cares for up to three young people.
- Developed and opened a new children's home (Orchard House) for up to three young people.
- Developed a new smaller home for up to two young people aged 12-17. This was registered with Ofsted in June 2022.
- Used our short breaks home for both short breaks and short-medium term care arrangements, whilst alternative provision was identified for children and young people. This supported some of our immediate accommodation pressures but reduced the number of available overnight short breaks. The home has since reverted back to a short break only home with one emergency bed.
- Closed a children's home in Tow Law, as the building was no longer considered fit for purpose. An alternative property has been identified and the home is being re-provided.
- The council has increased its' number of long-term children's homes from 7 to 9, with 31 beds available for children and young people.

### **As of May 2022:**

- 31 children and young people were accommodated within in-house children's home, in comparison with 26 children and young people accommodated in March 2020.
- An increasing number of females are accommodated in our in-house children's homes (52% as of May 2022 and 43% in March 2020). 42% are male and 6% are transgender.
- 45% of young people accommodated are aged 11-15 years old with this trend being consistent since 2019 (46% in October 2019); an increasing number of young people are aged 16+ (52%); with 3% of children under the age of 10 (1 child), which was 11% in 2020.
- We have 13 young people (42%) that will be turning 18 over the next two years, whereby improving the sufficiency across our children's homes and reducing our reliance on independent children's home providers. We will also focus on reviewing young people's care plans at the age of 16 to determine if children's home provision continues to be the most appropriate type of provision to meet their needs.

- There has been a lot of movement within our homes over the last 3 months with 9 new arrangements made. 11 young people have been in their home for less than 1 year; 8 young people have been in their home for just over 1 year.
- Our future demand for residential provision is dependent on the number of children that are becoming looked after and the complexity of their needs; the number of children that are due to exit the service and our plans for bringing children back into Durham from out of county provision. As our children looked after numbers continue to increase, children continue to present with a range of complex behaviours where their needs cannot be met in fostering provision and we are increasingly placing young people out of area, with demand for local residential provision continuing to be high. Whilst there is limited capacity to accommodate further young people and little flexibility within in-house homes to move children if a situation arises, this presents a clear rationale to grow and broaden our in-house offer.
- Given the ongoing demand for smaller children's residential homes to meet the needs of our complex and challenging young people who can't be safely matched into larger homes, we have secured investment to develop a number of new, smaller children's homes over the next 3 years.

### **Residential Transformation Programme – new children's homes**

Due to our ongoing demand for children's residential home provision, with up to 30 children and young people being searched for at any one time, and ongoing challenges identifying smaller homes that can safely manage the needs of some of our more complex children and young people, we are committed to developing a number of new smaller children's homes in County Durham.

This will ensure that we have sufficient, smaller local children's home provision, reducing the need to place children and young people at a distance or to place young people in unregulated arrangements for short periods of time. Homes will either be purchased, leased or new builds. Given the lead in time for purchasing / building and setting up children's home, a number of temporary medium-term options have / are being developed through lease agreements.

We are in the process of developing the following children's homes:

- Up to **4 x smaller children's homes for children and young people aged 12-17**. Two homes will each provide accommodation and care for two children, with a further two solo homes (with one overarching Registered Manager), each providing accommodation and care for one child. Two homes will be operational by the end of 2022, with the further two homes operational by the end of 2023.
- The development of a new **Edge of Care Children's Home**. This new service will support our children and families on the edge of care preventing them from entering statutory services and will support children who are currently looked after, offering planning respite with a view to supporting stability and preventing breakdown. The home is forecast to be operational from summer 2023.

- **Re-provide a home for three children and young people** that was closed in 2020. The home is forecast to be operation in Autumn 2023.
- The ongoing development of a '**Peripatetic Residential Staffing Pool**'. This will provide greater capacity and will reduce our use of external agencies.
- We are continuing to improve our quality assurance and oversight, systems and records and investing in our workforce to ensure that services provided to Durham children and young people are good or above, in relation to Ofsted's Quality Improvement Framework.

Given the needs of children and young people, it is increasingly difficult to match children and young people into either a 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> bed within a children's home. This is evidenced in our occupancy information for larger homes. As such, all new homes developed will have an upper limit of three young people.

We propose to review the upper capacity of our established larger homes, when our new homes are developed, however this must be considered carefully alongside our ongoing sufficiency needs.

Based on our ongoing sufficiency pressures we have identified gaps in the following types of service provision and will explore a range of delivery options including the development of services that DCC will operate, and provider delivered services:

- Children's home for disabled children and young people
- Specialist Short Break Home which offers planned respite for up to two young people with complex needs

The above gaps in service provision were also identified by Ofsted in their July 2022 inspection.

## **STAYING CLOSE**

When young people transition from their children's home and into supported accommodation or independence at the age of 18, this is often described as a 'cliff edge'. Staying Close looks to improve the outcomes for young people transitioning from their children's home, by providing continual, ongoing, familiar support from their keyworker or children's home staff as they transition into adulthood, for an agreed period of time.

The development of a Staying Close offer is a key priority and as such we now wish to develop and pilot this, capturing all learning and feedback and use this information to inform and shape Staying Close as we move forward.

We will be working closely with the DfE and other pilot providers / Local Authorities following a successful funding bid which will fund the programme over a 3-year period, enabling an increasing number of young people to access staying close, year on year.

## **Priorities**

1. Develop up to 4 x children's homes. Two will accommodate up to two children and young people and a further two homes will accommodate one young person each. Homes to be operational in 2022 and 2023.
2. Develop an Edge of Care home and open the home in summer 2023.
3. Re-provide a children's home for three young people by Autumn 2023.
4. Continue to develop the residential peripatetic staffing team to support capacity and reduce the use of agency staff within homes.
5. Continue to have close oversight of the residential workforce to ensure that the experience and skills of the workforce continues to meet our sufficiency needs.
6. Continue to review the upper bedding capacity in our existing children's home, taking into account ongoing sufficiency press
7. Re-provide a step down to foster care children's home for younger children, by reviewing the use of our existing children's homes.
8. Develop a children's home for disabled children and young people, in line with feedback from Ofsted. We will consider both DCC and provider led options, including new build options.
9. Develop a specialist short break home which offers planned respite for up to two children / young people with complex needs. We will consider both DCC and provider led options, including new build options.
10. Develop a Staying Close Pilot Programme for a small group of identified young people.

## **11. EXTERNAL CHILDREN'S HOME PROVISION**

Given our increasing demand for children's home provision and the lack of in-house capacity, we are placing more children with external residential providers.

There are currently 41 registered children's homes in the County Durham area:

- 1 x Secure Children's Home operated by Durham County Council
- 9 x Children's Homes operated by Durham County Council
- 31 x Private/Voluntary Sector Children's Homes

Private and voluntary sector children's homes meet a range of needs i.e., emotional behavioural difficulties, learning disabilities, sensory needs and physical disabilities. The size of homes ranges from 8 beds to 1 bed, with the average home caring for 4 young people.

A high proportion of children and young people from out of area, are accommodated in children's home in County Durham.

## Existing Offer, Usage and Gaps

- We are using 47 external residential home providers as of 4 April 2022, in comparison to 27 providers in March 2020. Our use of the external market has increased significantly.
- 7% of CLA are now living in external residential homes, in comparison with 3.6% in 2019.
- As of February 2022, there was a 3% increase in the overall number of new CLA starts since March 2020, and a 31% increase in 14–15-year-olds in external children's homes. Demand is therefore not being driven by new young people coming into care, but by movement within existing looked after children and young people.
- We have had an 82% increase in the use of external residential homes since pre-covid, with 31 living arrangements in March 2020 increasing to 69 living arrangements in April 2022.
- We have seen an increase in the number of young people who have entered care and been accommodated in a children's home, rather than a foster carer household, due to their level of needs and complexity.
- We have started to place a small number of under 10-year-olds in residential homes, compared to zero children in March 2020. This highlights the increasing complexity of our younger children, and the inability to meet their needs within foster care provision.
- 40% of our children living in external residential homes are aged 14-15, in comparison to 16% in March 2020 (26 compared to 6 children, a 333% increase).
- 4 in 10 moves to external children's homes are from another external children's home. 45% of these are aged 14-15. 66% are age 13-15. This highlights providers difficulty in sustaining living arrangements for children and young people.
- There are very few 1 or 2 bedded homes in County Durham, that can offer specialist care and support to meet the needs of our most challenging children and young people. We have an increasing need for smaller homes and as such are working with a number of providers to shape and influence the services that they are developing.
- In 2016, the council joined the Regional Children's Home Framework, given our increasing use of external residential home provision. Whilst we continue to be part of this regional solution, Durham makes very few children's home arrangements with framework providers, with many providers choosing to remain off framework.
- Given the significant demand for external children's home provision (with demand often outstripping supply), independent providers can be selective regarding any future admissions, which often results in the most challenging



and high-risk young people with limited home opportunities, being placed at a distance. Given the lack of suitable local provision, we must therefore develop services that can meet this need.

- Whilst our use of parent and child residential units remains relatively low, when we need to secure this type of arrangement for a parent and their child, which is often directed by court, there are limited local options available.

### **Durham First Approach**

Due to the ongoing pressures in securing appropriate, local children's home provision, whilst we continue to focus on developing and broadening our in-house children's home offer to meet a range of needs, it is equally important to work closely and in partnership with the private and voluntary sector to ensure that we have a mixed sufficiency offer that Durham children and young people can access.

A 'Durham First Approach' has been adopted which allows us to shape and influence new services being developed by external providers, so these meet our sufficiency needs and to ensure that Durham has access to these services first and foremost. This usually takes place prior to the formal planning process and has resulted in the size of the development being reduced and the scope of the service being adjusted, so that services met Durham's sufficiency needs.

There are a number of new homes currently being developed which will result in 10 new vacancies in the county which can be accessed by Durham children. To date we have worked with providers to develop five Durham First homes, which can be accessed subject to suitable matching and assessment of risks.

All providers delivering care to children and young people are allocated a Link Officer with the Commissioning Service. Link Officers offer support and guidance, have oversight of complaints and LADO involvement and develop a positive working relationship with the provider.

### **Step Down Provision from Tier 4 Mental Health Hospital**

During 2021/22, we have had to secure provision within the community for a number of children and young people that have been discharged from Tier 4 hospital. Given the complexity and the ongoing risk that children and young people continue to present this is often difficult; and sometimes results in a delayed discharge from hospital, requiring the development of bespoke regulated living arrangements, which requires a significant lead in time.

It is important that we develop a dedicated regulated offer that can support children and young people for a period of time, until the young person can be carefully transitioned into their long-term community living arrangement or is able to go home. Whilst the provision will provide onsite ongoing intensive care and support for a small number of young people, the service would also be able to provide an element of out-reach wrap around support to young people not accommodated on site, but who are at risk of being admitted to hospital. We will explore options for developing an Intensive Home Treatment Plus Model that is able to provide specialist support into the service and into the homes of

identified young people who are looked after and at risk of admission to hospital.

### **Priorities**

1. We will continue to work with providers to sustain children and young people's children's home provision, offering support and solutions which minimises moving children and young people.
2. We will continue to work closely with providers that wish to develop new Durham First services in County Durham, to shape services and to positively challenge development when this does not meet our needs.
3. We will explore options for working in partnership with a provider to develop a solo / dual registered children's home in County Durham, specifically for our use.
4. We will review our potential future use of parent and child residential units and encourage providers to develop these services when there is an identified need.
5. We will continue to play an active role in the NE12 regional consortia, working with neighbouring Local Authorities, to understand regional challenges, demand and to work collaboratively.
6. We will launch a new Provider Engagement Forum in July 2022 with our residential home providers. This will be specific to Durham's local needs.
7. We will work with health partners to develop a new registered step down from hospital offer to meet the needs of children and young people who are in our care and who have ongoing mental health needs.
8. As our capacity increases within in-house children's home provision, we will review our out of county living arrangement, to understand which children and young people have a plan to move back into the area.

## **12. SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION AND CARE LEAVERS**

Supported accommodation provides a stepping-stone for our young people aged 16 and 17 and care leavers, supporting the development of skills for life as young people transition into adulthood.

Many young people's needs can not be met in traditional accommodation options such as children's homes, with assessments determining that young people no longer require care but would benefit from ongoing support in their day to day lives.

- Our use of supported accommodation provision has increased since pre-covid by 187% (15 YP increasing to 43 YP), which accounts for 4% of our CLA.

- In 2020/21 we had 78 care leavers aged 17-18 that we supported, which is a slight reduction, from 84 in 2019/20. The number of care leavers aged 19-21 has however increased from 175 in 2019/20 to 197 in 2020/21.
- In 2020/21 we had 275 eligible care leavers aged 17-21 and 278 eligible care leavers as of the 8<sup>th</sup> April 2022, with number remaining relatively static over the 2 year period.
- 92% of our care leavers aged 17-18 are in suitable accommodation, which is above the national benchmark (91%) but below the statistical neighbour (93%) and regional (94%). Our number of care leavers aged 19-21 in suitable accommodation is also 92%, which is above the national (88%) and regional benchmark (91%) and on par with the statistical neighbour benchmark.

### Supported Accommodation Offer

In order to meet the accommodation and support needs of our 16- and 17-year-olds, Durham has a range of 16+ unregulated accommodation options. These include:

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

The current supported accommodation provider panel is due to be opened in October 2022, giving new providers an opportunity to join and deliver services for young people, whose needs are best met in a solo occupancy accommodation. This will broaden our current availability of supported accommodation services for young people.

## **New National Standard and Ofsted-led registration and inspection**

We will be working with supported accommodation providers when further information is published by Ofsted in relation to the new national standards and the registration and inspection regime.

Discussion will be facilitated through Provider Engagement Forums to understand any additional support required, the potential impact on providers due to regulatory changes and to understand any emerging gaps in service provision.

## **Homelessness**

When young people aged 16 and 17 present as homeless, they are assessed as being children in need, (CLA would not be considered as homeless) and are considered within joint housing protocol meetings, to explore suitable accommodation and support, if their assessed needs can be met through support accommodation.

Housing Solutions have a dedicated officer who works with Care Leavers to assist within the Homeless Reduction Act when a care leaver is homeless or threatened with homelessness, to help access the most appropriate accommodation to meet their needs.

Housing Solutions will work with the care leavers social worker or young person's advisor using the Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Protocol, to help source accommodation and discuss any additional support requirements that may need as part of their pathway plan.

## **Priorities**

1. To review the marketing and recruitment strategy for Supported Lodging providers, which seeks to recruit new carers.
2. We will open up the Supported Accommodation Provider Panel for young people in October 2022, broadening our pool of providers.
3. Establish a new Provider Engagement Forum with supported accommodation providers.
4. We will work with supported accommodation providers in relation to the regulation of provision, to understand any potential impact or emerging gaps in provision.

## **13. UNACCOMPANIED ASSYLUM-SEEKING CHILDREN (UASC)**

Durham is working in partnership with regional Local Authorities to explore how best to meet the needs of UASC coming into the region, alongside the development of regional and local commissioning solutions. This includes:

- The North-East Migration Partnership acting as a brokerage service on behalf of all 12 regional LAs, when seeking to identify appropriate provision

for under 16's from IFAs through the NE12 Tyne Tees Regional IFA Commissioning Solution.

- The allocation and management of the UASC living arrangements are made based on their location. This does not change the number of UASC allocated to each LA.
- The targeted recruitment of foster carers and supported lodging providers that can care for UASC.
- Development of pooled resources i.e., training, legal and age assessments, pathways and living skills documentation.
- Exploring the development of a regional short-term residential service, where UASC live whilst assessments are concluded, and independent living skills are developed. This type of service would enable LAs to meet the 10-day lead in time for placing children and young people, when all other options had been explored.

As demand for suitable provision will continue and will not reduce, our accommodation options must also be expanded to meet this unprecedented need. One single service will not meet our overarching accommodation and support needs, instead a range of sufficiency options need to be explored and developed.

### **Priorities**

1. Work with local supported accommodation providers to explore the extension of existing services to meet our increasing accommodation and support needs for UASC.
2. Consider options to develop a local supported accommodation and assessment hub, which will assess UASC over a 6 – 12-week period, before moving young people onto suitable supported accommodation.
3. Continue to work in partnership with regional LAs to develop a commissioning solution for UASC.

## **14. SHORT BREAKS FOR DISABLED CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES / CARERS**

The Council has a legal duty under the Children Act 1989 to provide services for children in need and their families. This includes children who are disabled.

Parent and carers of children and young people with special educational needs and / or disabilities tell us that they often need a short break from their caring role. Children and young people would ordinarily take part in social opportunities outside of their education, providing a break for their parent / carer which is intended to prevent children requiring statutory services or becoming looked after.

The Council provides a two-tier short break offer:

- (i) Non-Assessed Community Short Breaks – providing 2-3 hours of community activities, which offer support and a regular break to parents and carers
- (ii) Assessed Specialist Enhanced Short Breaks – offering enhanced support to children and young people with more complex needs, which enables young people to access the community and overnight respite following a statutory assessment. This can be secured through the following:
  - a. Direct payment – personalised response for the family
  - b. Domiciliary Care – going into the young person's home to provide assistance with personal care, feeding, washing, sitting services etc
  - c. Health services – into the home for children with health needs
  - d. Specialist community-based services – hub-based delivery in very small groups or outreach into the community
  - e. Overnight respite within a regulated residential setting

### **Responsiveness, Gaps and Challenges**

- Some providers are unable to offer non assessed short breaks to children and their families as they are unable to provide specialist support required by children.
- As of the 1 April 2022, 242 statutory short break assessments identified that a short break service should be commissioned for a young person and their family. Of the 242 assessments:
  - 1.7% - had been agreed at panel and were due to be actioned
  - 4.6% - no service had been identified
  - 10.3% - service identified but not yet commenced
  - 83.4% - service is being delivered
- There has been a drop in families use of direct payments, with further work ongoing to understand why this is the case, however early indication is that there are ongoing problems in relation to attracting direct payment workers.
- There has been a significant increase in demand for specialist community short breaks, however providers have often been unable to respond to needs. This is in terms of both volume and complexity of children and a lack of providers within the market. During the pandemic some families were waiting 12 months for support due to provider availability.
- The market is unable to respond to overnight respite referrals due to limited availability. There is also limited availability within DCC's in-house respite home, Park House, due to a number of young people being accommodated on a longer-term basis (until they can be transitioned into an alternative home), which is bed blocking.

- There is limited-service provision within hospices, due to inadequate Ofsted judgements, leaving fewer beds available.

## **Priorities**

1. In order to commission services in line with needs, a whole system approach is required to re-shape, stabilise, capacity build and upskill the market.

A Sufficiency Action Plan will be developed and implemented which will Short Breaks highlight the range of actions that will be taken forward to address the ongoing challenges and gaps in provision, and to improve both the universal and statutory short breaks offer for children, young people and their families / carers. This includes:

### Non-Assessed Community Short Breaks:

- A. Ensure that organisations maximise inclusion for disabled children in community activities across County Durham and have the right skills and experience to respond to young people's needs.
- B. Further invest to enable children and young people with disabilities to access local universal activities, ensuring that parents / carers access regular breaks when these are needed and reducing the reliance on commissioned assessed services, preventing escalation of family needs.
- C. Continue to commission a menu of community activities for children unable to access the community due to their disability, without the need for a statutory assessment, whilst ensuring that providers are upskilled to respond to specialist needs.

### Assessed Specialist Enhanced Short Breaks:

- D. Ensure that the provider market has the capacity, experience and skills to meet to children and young people's short break needs, either at home, in the community or in a residential setting.
- E. Develop specialist and inclusive community hubs to enable complex young people to be supported within their local area.
- F. Review overnight respite provision at Park House, alongside the wider overnight respite offer in the region, propose options to meet all needs, including those young people with complex disabilities / challenging behaviours that post a risk to other children. Develop a model and service provision for overnight respite (this action overlaps with Priority Number 9 within the In-House Residential Homes section of this strategy).
- G. Change our commissioning approach to block investment with existing providers to develop, stabilise and upskill the workforce so it can respond to short break demand, particularly for those young people with autism and challenging behaviours.

## 15. CONCLUSION

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

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

## 16. PRIORITIES

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

The six objectives are set out in Appendix 1 of the Strategy and will shape the activities, we as an authority believe will best deliver this outcome.

As we make progress with these objectives, we will achieve the quality, sufficiency and value for money we need in order to achieve the best for children and young people in County Durham

## 17. INDICATORS

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

These are set out in the table below.

1.	Number of children that are looked after
2.	Number of children that are adopted
3.	Number of children living with in-house foster carers
4.	Number of children living with independent fostering agency carers
5.	Number of children living in in-house children's homes
6.	Number of children living in external children's homes
7.	Number of children living in supported accommodation / living
8.	Number of UASC accommodated
9.	Number of living arrangements endings which are at the carers request due to a child's behaviour (looking at age of the child and length of time in their living arrangement)
10.	Percentage of children who are looked after with 3 or more living arrangements during the year



11.	Percentage of children looked after continuously for 2.5 years or more aged under 16 who are living in the same living arrangement for at least 2 years
12.	Number of children with a plan of permanence
13.	Percentage of care leavers living in suitable accommodation
14.	Number of unregulated living arrangements made for children who required care
15.	Number of out of county living arrangements made
16.	Number of children and young people with a disability who live with their family and who are accessing respite

## KEY PRIORITIES

No	Overarching Objective	Priorities	Completed by
1	<b>Grow our number of in-house foster carers, support the retention of carers and work with IFAs to ensure that children and young people can live with foster carer families when it is in their interests to do so</b>	Recruit 35 new foster carer households in 2022/23 and a further 35 new foster carer households in 2023/24	March 2023 and March 2024
		Develop and launch the new fostering website	December 2023
		Launch the Mockingbird Model to support our in-house foster carers	July 2022
		Review the current Payment for Skills Model in consultation with foster carers, which seeks to improve our sufficiency of in-house foster carers, by attracting new carers and retaining existing carers and implement findings	October 2023
		Develop a 'wrap around support' team that will work intensively with our in-house foster carers to promote stability and prevent breakdown	March 2023
		Develop the respite foster care offer for children and young people with a disability	September 2022 – March 2024
		We will continue to work regionally with other Local Authorities to ensure that the new commissioning solution continues to be fit for purpose and to encourage off framework providers and new providers to join.	April 2022 – March 2024
		We will launch a new Provider Forum with our IFAs outside of our regional arrangements to share information about our demand, gaps in provision and to maximise effective partnership working.	September 2022

2	<b>Increase the number of adopters</b>	Ensure that the transition to Adopt Coast to Coast does not impact on the recruitment improvements made in 2020-2022.	March 2024
		Work collaboratively with RAA partners to develop practice around linking and matching, to reduce the waiting time for children when being matched to their forever family.	March 2024
3	<b>Continue to develop and broaden our residential homes offer and maximise opportunities with external providers when there is a case to do so</b>	Develop up to 4 x smaller children's homes. Two will accommodate up to two children and young people and a further two homes will accommodate one young person each. Homes to be operational in 2022 and 2023.	December 2022 and December 2023
		Develop an Edge of Care home	August 2023
		Re-provide a children's home for three young people	November 2023
		Continue to develop the residential peripatetic staffing team to support capacity and reduce the use of agency staff within homes.	April 2022 – March 2024
		Continue to have close oversight of the residential workforce to ensure that the experience and skills of the workforce continues to meet our sufficiency needs.	April 2022 – March 2024
		Continue to review the upper bedding capacity in our existing children's home, taking into account ongoing sufficiency press	April 2022 / March 2024
		Develop a step down to foster care children's home for younger children, by reviewing our existing children's home provision	March 2024
		Develop a children's home for disabled children and young people, in line with feedback from Ofsted. We will consider both DCC and provider led options, including new build options.	March 2025

		Develop a specialist short break home which offers planned respite for up to two children / young people with complex needs. We will consider both DCC and provider led options, including new build options.	March 2025
		Develop a Staying Close Programme for a small group of identified young people	July 2022 – March 2025
		We will continue to work with providers to sustain children and young people's residential home arrangements, offering support and solutions which minimises moved for children and young people.	April 2022 – March 2024
		We will continue to work closely with providers that wish to develop new Durham First services in County Durham, to shape services and to positively challenge development when this does not meet our needs.	April 2022 / March 2024
		We will review our potential future use of parent and child residential units and encourage providers to develop these services when there is an identified need.	March 2024
		We will explore options for working in partnership with a provider to develop a solo / dual registered children's home in County Durham, specifically for our use.	April 2022 – March 2024
		We will continue to play an active role in the NE12 regional consortia, working with neighbouring Local Authorities, to understand regional challenges, demand and to work collaboratively.	April 2022 – March 2024
		We will launch a new Provider Engagement Forum with our residential homes providers. This will be specific to Durham's local needs.	July 2022
		We will work with health partners to develop a new registered step down from hospital offer to meet the needs of children and young people with ongoing mental health needs.	March 2024

		As our capacity increases within in-house residential home provision, we will review our out of county living arrangements, to understand which children and young people have a plan to move back into the area.	Ongoing
4	<b>Develop access to a diverse range of appropriate accommodation for Care Leavers</b>	Review the marketing and recruitment strategy for Supported Lodging providers	March 2023
		We will open up the Supported Accommodation Provider Panel for young people with complex needs, broadening our pool of providers.	October 2022
		Establish a new Provider Engagement Forum with supported accommodation providers.	September 2022
		Work with supported accommodation providers in relation to the regulation of provision, to understand any potential impact or emerging gaps in provision.	August 2022 – March 2024
5	<b>Improve our sufficiency offer for UASC and reduce waiting times</b>	Work with local supported accommodation providers to explore the extension of existing services to meet our increasing accommodation and support needs for UASC.	December 2022
		Consider options and funding opportunities to develop a local supported accommodation and assessment hub, which will assess UASC over a 6 – 12-week period, before moving young people onto suitable long-term supported accommodation.	December 2022
		Develop a new supported accommodation assessment service for UASC	September 2023
		Continue to work in partnership with regional LAs to explore opportunities for joint commissioning	April 2022 – March 2024
6	<b>Broaden our short breaks offer for disabled children and their families</b>	Develop a Short Breaks Sufficiency Action Plan which highlights the range of actions that will be taken forward to address the ongoing challenges and gaps in provision, and to improve both the universal and statutory short	July 2022

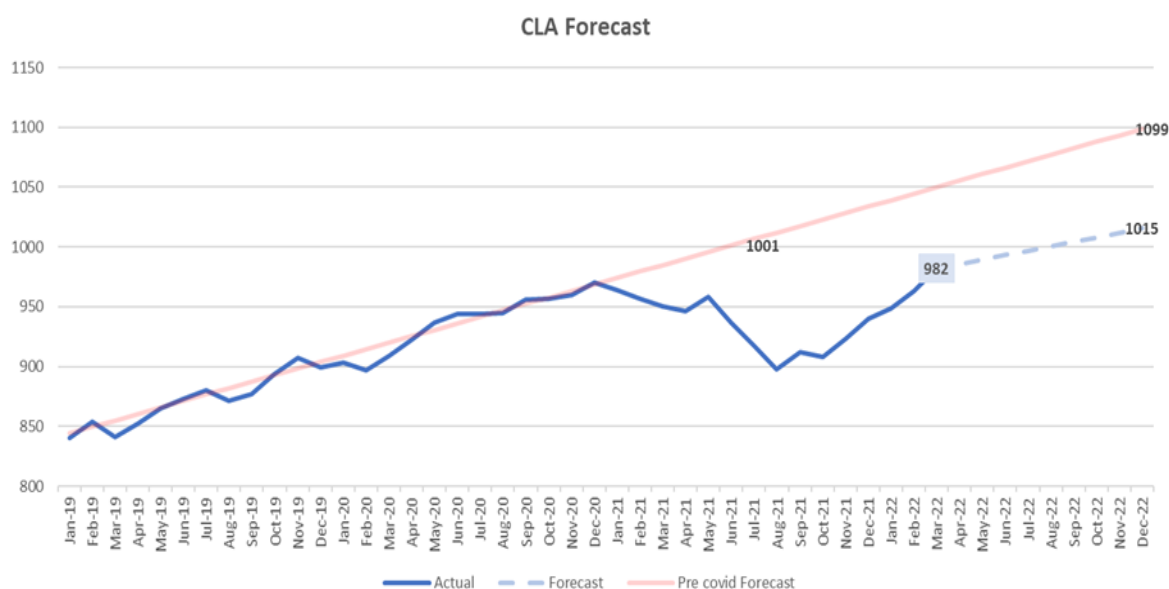
		breaks offer for children, young people and their families / carers	
		<p>Deliver a programme of non-assessed community short break improvements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Ensure that organisations maximise inclusion for disabled children in community activities across County Durham and have the right skills and experience to respond to young people's needs.</li> <li>(ii) Further invest to enable children and young people with disabilities to access local universal activities, ensuring that parents / carers access regular breaks when these are needed and reducing the reliance on commissioned assessed services, preventing escalation of family needs.</li> <li>(iii) Continue to commission a menu of community activities for children unable to access the community due to their disability, without the need for a statutory assessment, whilst ensuring that providers are upskilled to respond to specialist needs.</li> </ul>	July 2022 – March 2024
		<p>Deliver a programme of assessed specialist enhanced short breaks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Ensure that the provider market has the capacity, experience and skills to meet to children and young people's short break needs, either at home, in the community or in a residential setting.</li> <li>(ii) Develop specialist and inclusive community hubs to enable complex young people to be supported within their local area.</li> <li>(iii) Review overnight respite provision at Park House, alongside the wider overnight respite offer in the region, propose options to meet all needs, including those young people with complex disabilities / challenging</li> </ul>	July 2022 – March 2024

		<p>behaviours that post a risk to other children. Develop a model and service provision for overnight respite (this action overlaps with Priority Number 9 within the In-House Residential Homes section of this strategy).</p> <p>(iv) Change our commissioning approach to block investment with existing providers to develop, stabilise and upskill the workforce so it can respond to short break demand, particularly for those young people with autism and challenging behaviours.</p>	
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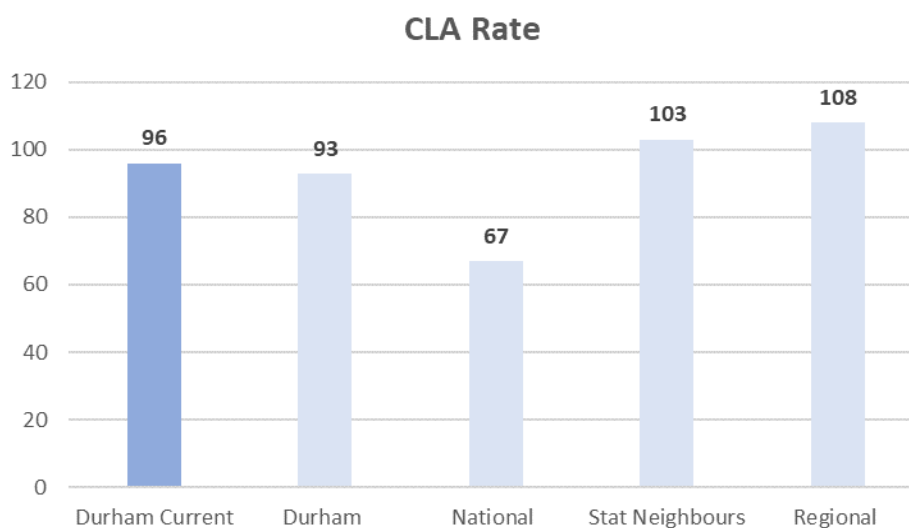
## KEY DATA TO SUPPORT THE STRATEGY

-All data is based on information available as of 31 March 2022-

**Table 1: CLA Forecast (April 2022 onwards)**

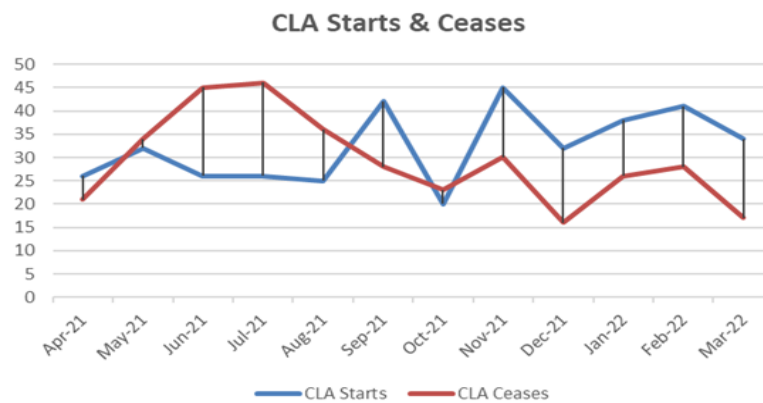


**Table 2: Comparative CLA rate (per 10,000 population)**

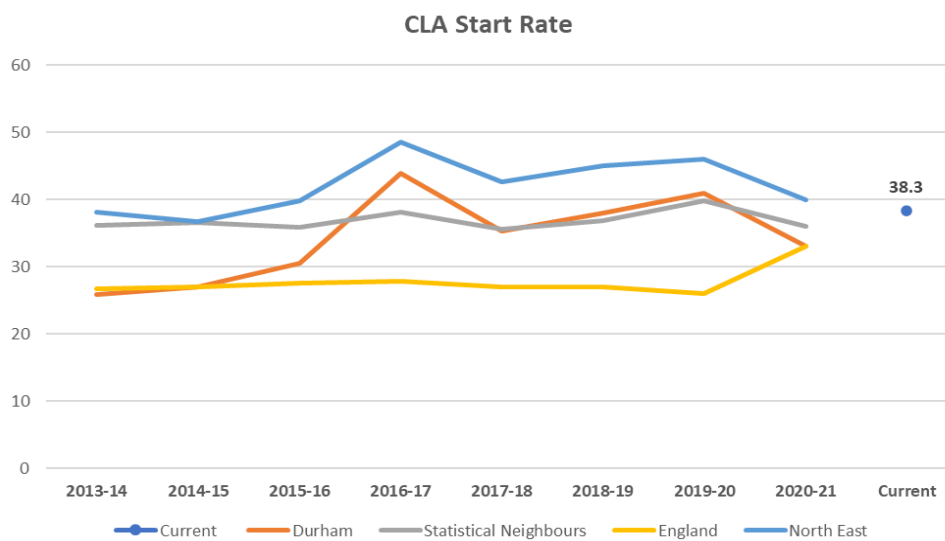




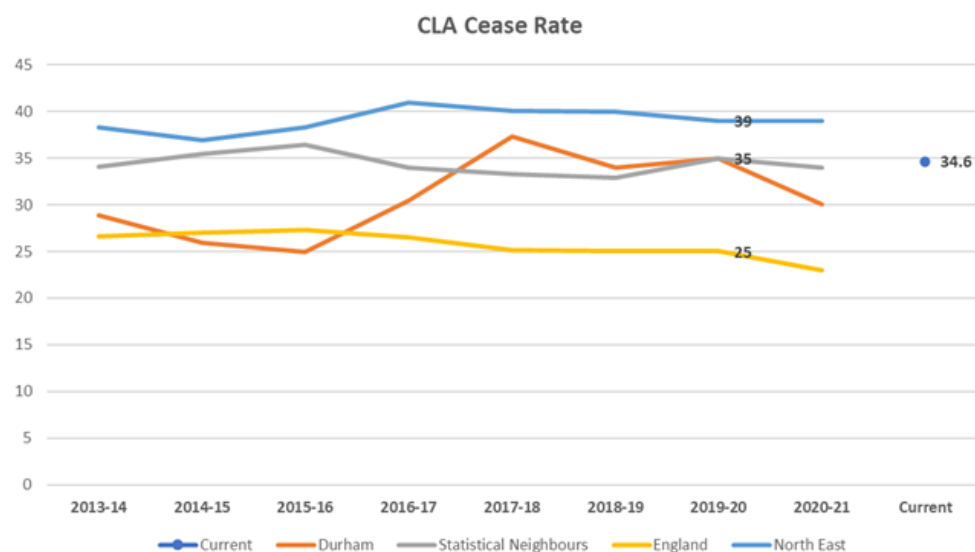
**Table 3: CLA Starts and Ends**



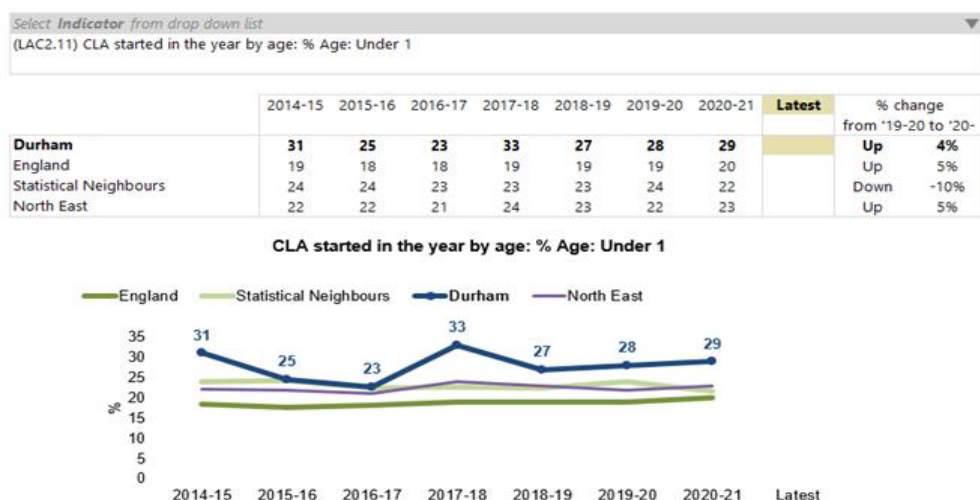
**Table 4: CLA Start Rate**



**Table 5: CLA Cease Rate**



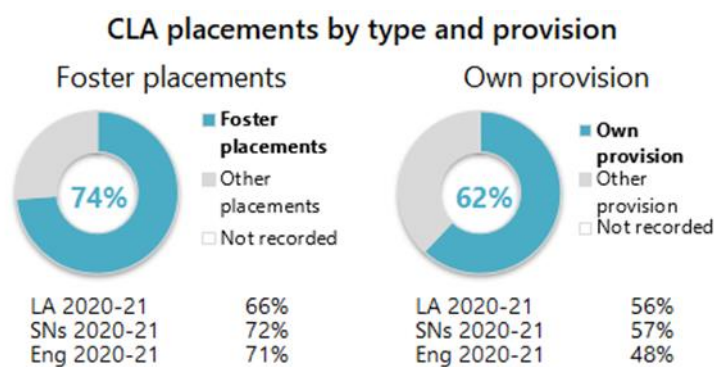
**Table 6: Under 1 CLA starts**



**Table 7: CLA Analysis**

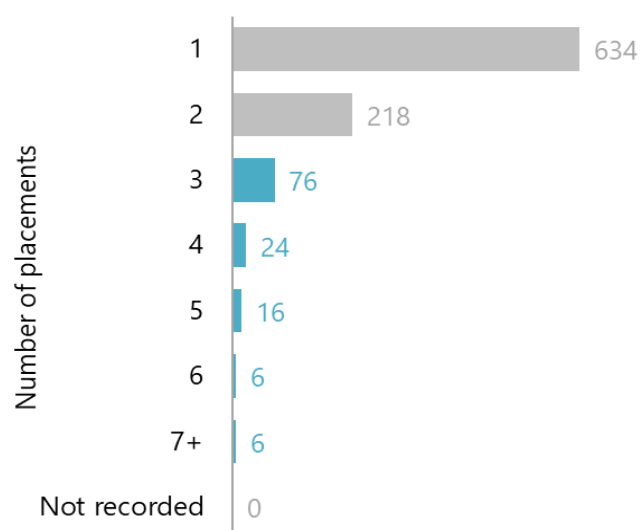
CLA Placement Type Analysis										
	04-Jun-19		11-Mar-20		04-Apr-22		No.	% change	No.	% change
Placement Type	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	change	on Jun19	change	pre-COVID
External Residential	31	4%	38	4%	69	7%	38	123%	31	82%
Friends and Family	134	15%	126	14%	143	15%	9	7%	17	13%
IFA	126	15%	159	18%	172	17%	46	37%	13	8%
In House Foster Care	422	49%	430	48%	411	42%	-11	-3%	-19	-4%
In House Residential	31	4%	26	3%	31	3%	0	0%	5	19%
Independent Living	9	1%	8	1%	4	0%	-5	-56%	-4	-50%
NHS/Health Trust	2	0%	1	0%	1	0%	-1	-50%	0	0%
Placed For Adoption	24	3%	23	3%	38	4%	14	58%	15	65%
Placed With Parents	66	8%	62	7%	63	6%	-3	-5%	1	2%
Full Care Order	57	7%	47	5%	47	5%	-10	-18%	0	0%
Interim Care Order	9	1%	15	2%	18	2%	9	100%	3	20%
Residential School	2	0%	2	0%	0	0%	-2	-100%	-2	-100%
Unapproved Carers - Court Directed*					1	0%				
Unapproved Carers - Not Court Directed*					1	0%				
Unregistered Placement*					2	0%				
Secure	1	0%	1	0%	4	0%	3	300%	3	300%
Supported Lodgings	12	1%	15	2%	43	4%	31	258%	28	187%
YOI/Prison	1	0%	1	0%	0	0%	-1	-100%	-1	-100%
Grand Total	866	100%	902	100%	983	100%	117	14%	81	9%

**Table 8: Living Arrangement by type and provision**

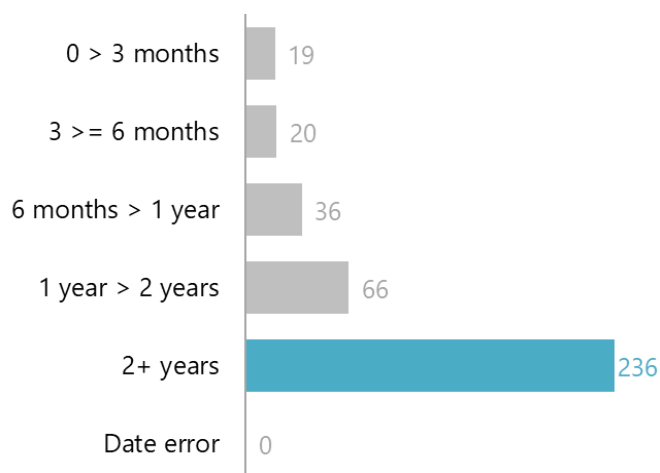


Placement type (open CLA)	Own LA	Private	Other	Total
Foster placement	550	161	12	723
Placed for adoption	11	0	27	38
Placed with parents	0	0	64	64
Independent living	13	24	11	48
Residential employment	0	0	0	0
Residential accommodation	0	0	0	0
Secure Children's Homes	2	1	0	3
Children's Homes	31	69	0	100
Residential Care Home	0	0	0	0
NHS/Health Trust	0	0	1	1
Family Centre	0	0	0	0
Young Offender Institution	0	0	0	0
Residential school	0	0	0	0
Other placements	0	0	0	0
Temporary placement	0	0	0	0
<b>Total placements</b>	<b>607</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>977</b>

**Table 9: Number of moves in the last 12 months**



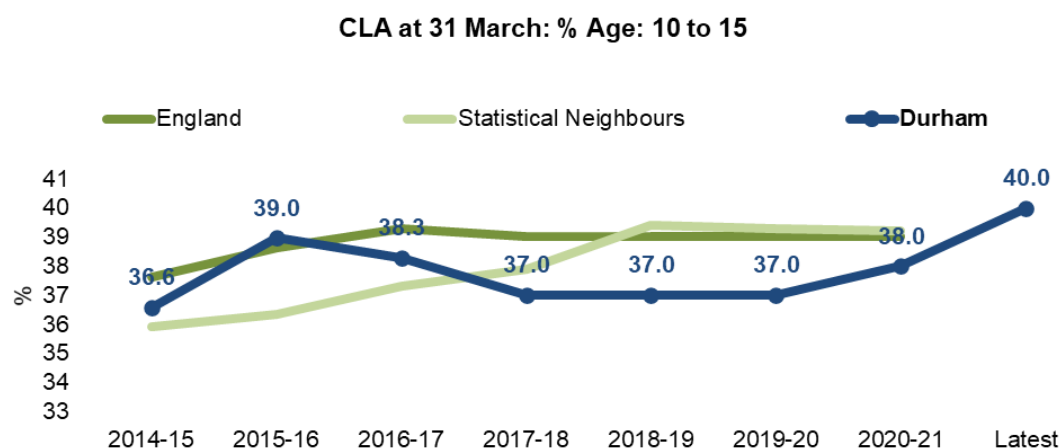
**Table 10: Duration of latest living arrangement for each current CLA aged under 16 who have been looked after for 2.5 years or more**



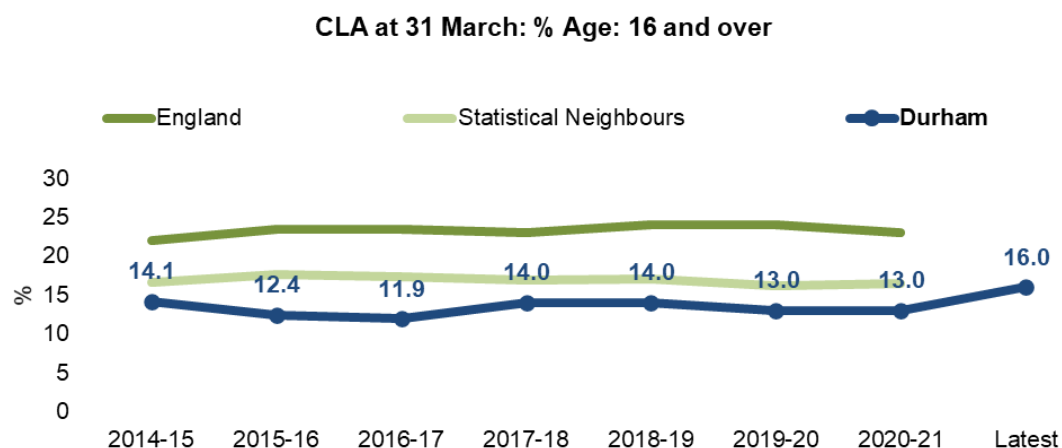
**Table 11: Adoption year on year comparative data**

	Initial enquiries	Conversion Rate	Approvals of prospective adopters	Placement Order	Matched
2019/20	165	15%	25	66	64 (24 with in-house carers)
2020/21	100	41%	41	58	60 (42 with in-house carers)
2021/22	217	18%	40	66	65 (31 with in-house carers)

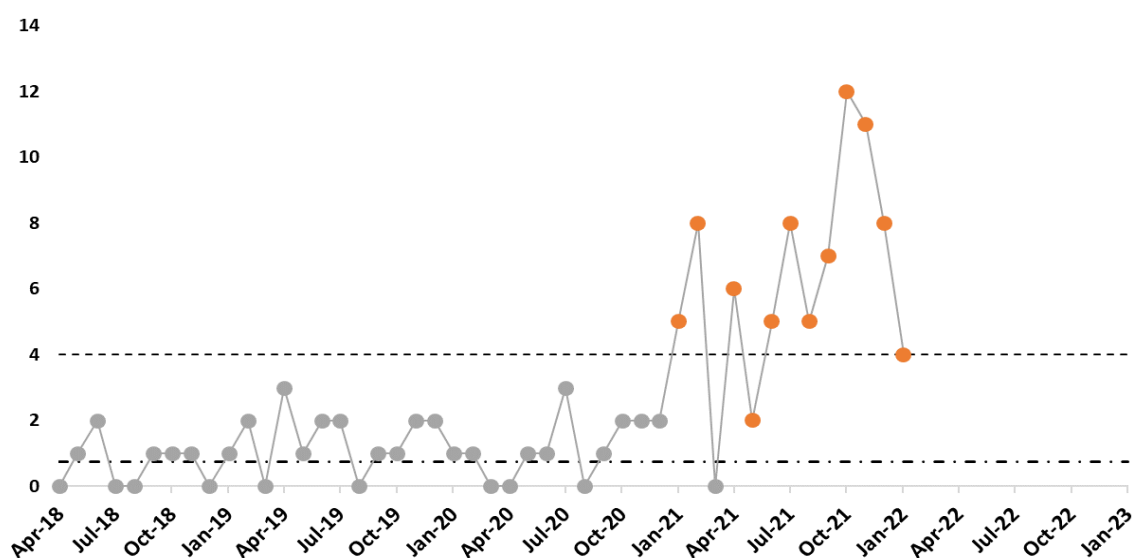
**Table 12: CLA age profile (as of 31 March 2022)**



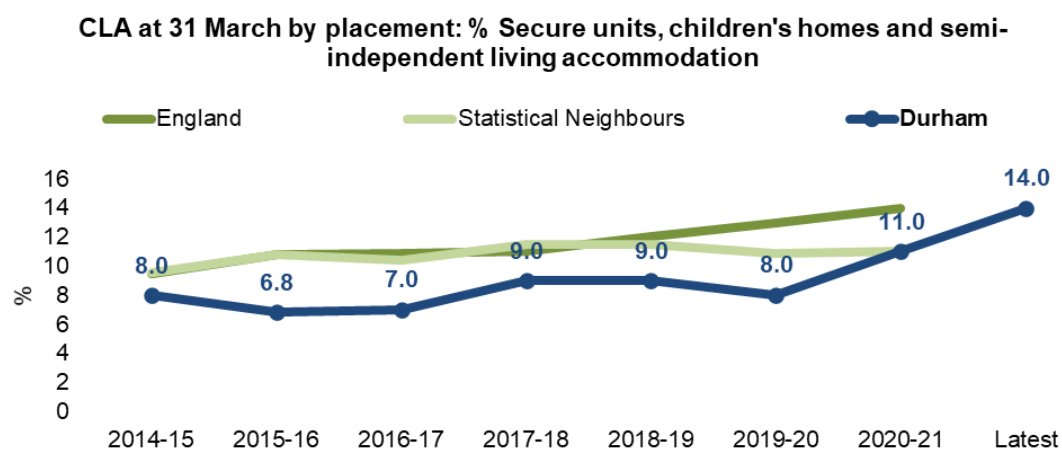
**Table 13: CLA age 16 and over (as of 31 March 2022)**



**Table 14: External Children's Home Usage Trends**



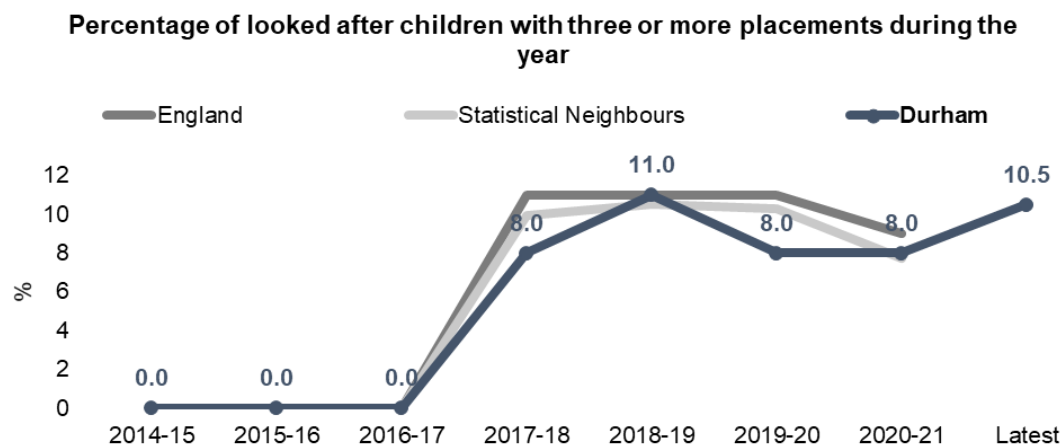
**Table 15: CLA at 31 March**



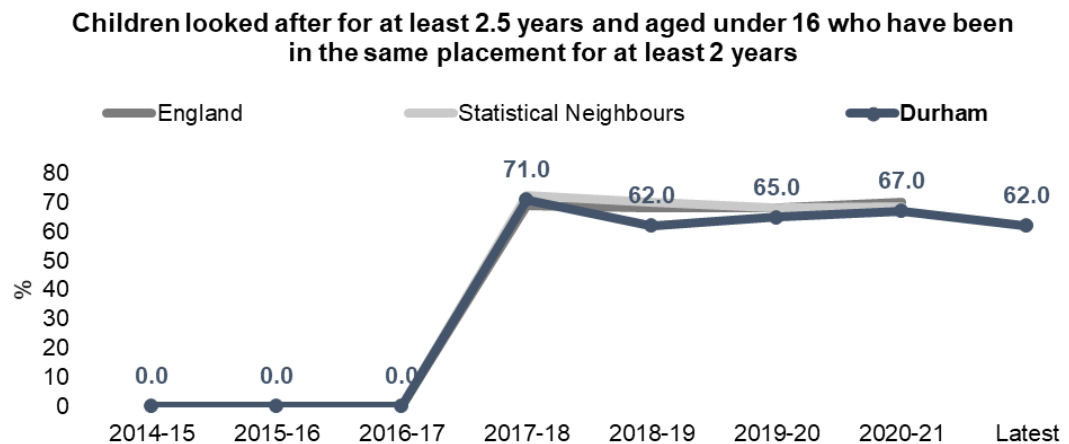
**Table 16: Stability**

Regional Benchmarking	North East	Darlington	Durham	Gateshead	Hartlepool	Middlesbrough	Newcastle upon Tyne	North Tyneside	Northumberland	Redcar and Cleveland	South Tyneside
Placement stability (LAC at end of period with 3 or more placements/LAC at end of period with 3 or more placements/LAC at end of period)	8.5%	10.0%	10.5%	8.7%	2.6%	10.3%	7.4%	10.0%	9.3%	9.0%	8.8%
Placement stability (Number of Children Looked After for at least 2 years/LAC at least 2.5 years at end of period)	69.0%	73.5%	62.0%	71.3%	73.6%	63.1%	69.5%	69.0%	68.1%	71.3%	68.8%

**Table 17:**



**Table 18:**



## **Impact of sufficiency strategy and additional resources**

### **In-house Residential Home Provision**

#### *Current Provision*

- 31 beds available across children's homes (medium/long term living arrangements)
- 6 beds current available in our short breaks home (with one additional emergency bed).

#### *Additional Provision to be developed to meet need*

#### *Funding approved*

- 9 beds for children and young people with emotional behavioural difficulties who require smaller homes
- 3-4 beds for children on the edge of care beds who require planned respite from their family

#### *Funding / Arrangements to be approved*

- 3 beds for children and young people with a disability
- 2 beds for children and young people with a disability who have complex needs and need to access a planned short break in a smaller setting
- 3 specialist beds for children and young people stepping down from tier 4 hospital provision
- 1-2 beds for children and young people with complex needs who need to live in a smaller setting (delivery in partnership by a provider)

### **Up to 23 additional residential children's home beds**



For further information contact:

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# Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for Children Looked After and Care Leavers 2022-24

Presentation to Overview and Scrutiny Committee



# Introduction and Context

- Durham's strategic approach to securing sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of our looked after children and care leavers.
- Sufficiency Duty: "as stated in section 22G of the Children Act 1989, to take steps to secure, as far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for looked after children within their local authority area".
- Covers a 2-year period (2022-2024) focusing on our current offer, challenges, gaps in services / provision and the actions identified to address these.
- Ongoing actions and projects underway and future actions we are proposing to take as a Local Authority – some of which are subject to funding availability
- Not the final version of the strategy – to be reviewed by design team to ensure that it is compliant with corporate requirements

# Local Data and Intelligence

- Number of children in care is increasing in Durham
- Increasing number of teenagers coming into care
- Delayed discharges from tier 4 hospital, due to limited specialist local regulated provision
- Use of external residential provision has increased by 50% between 2020 and 2022
- Need to increase the number of available foster carers to meet demand. Some children moving into children's homes (resource led decisions)
- Increasing number of UASC moving to Durham placing pressure on available resources – in line with the mandated Home Office Scheme
- Placement stability – increasing number of breakdowns and moves
- Increasing number of children being supported on the edge of care with opportunities to broaden the service further
- Gaps in respite services for C/YP with learning disabilities and complex needs, particularly overnight

# Key Achievements

- Developed a new Rapid Response Service preventing admission and readmission to tier 4 mental health inpatient provision
- Improved placement brokerage capacity to support residential home searches
- Durham First – continuing to roll out with providers in Durham and influencing service development
- Re-commissioned the IFA Framework – 18 providers (opens monthly for new providers)
- New Supporting the Provider Market Team – recruitment, training etc
- Opened 2 x new children's homes in 2021; 1 x new children's home for 2 children in 2022; with 2 x smaller homes due to open in the coming months
- Launched new Local Provider Forums to improve communication and collaboration with the provider market
- Secured DfE Staying Close Funding and launched a new Staying Close Programme for our children's homes

# Listening to Children and Young People

- Committed to listening to children and young people; embedded practice across CYPS
- Care experienced young people play an active role in the co-production and shaping of services that directly impact them.
- Work in partnership with a social enterprise – Investing in Children
  - Reference groups, eXtreme group, CiCC, Investing in Children Membership Programme
- Examples include (but are not limited to):
  - Development of new Edge of Care Home
  - Commissioning Process – Independent Fostering households
  - Recruitment of staff
  - Contract management of social care providers

# Providing Stability

- Stability is important so children and young people feel safe and are able to build relationships with their carers
- In Durham it is usual for children to have to move at least once when they come into care – meaning they have lived in at least two homes
- Stability is a key performance indicator for the Local Authority and something that we are monitored on
- 64% of children under 16 years old who have been looked after for a minimum of 2.5 years have been in their current caring arrangement for less than 2.5 years
- 34% of children who have been in care for more than 2.5 years have remained living in the same care arrangement for more than 2 years
- In the last 12 months 58 children have moved 3 times, with 7 children moving more than 7 times
- High number of moves = ongoing work to support children to return to the care of their parents
- Need to be able to offer a wider range of homes with carers that are trained and supported to meet needs

# Out of Area Living Arrangements

- 306 children and young people placed outside of Durham in a range of different care arrangements (29.7%), with 70.3% of children and young people living in county.
- Some children living out of county, have been placed for adoption, are with family members or attending college, making this a positive development for them.
- Most children who live outside of the county live in the region, but this is not the case for all children, with some living in Scotland or as far away as Plymouth
- The Local Authority always seeks to place children locally when it is safe to do so and in their best interests
- A small proportion of children need to live away from their local area due to immediate risks and challenges, however some children live out of area due to limited availability to meet their complex needs within County Durham
- The new Strategy outlines a range of development priorities which will support a greater proportion of children and young people to live locally



# Unregulated Arrangements

- All children and young people with a plan of care and / or under the age of 16, must live in a regulated setting such as foster care or a children's home which is registered with Ofsted
- The majority of our children (99.32%) live in regulated homes
- We have 7 children and young people (0.67%) accommodated in unregulated settings. Only secured when 'all' other options have been completely exhausted. The Local Authority does not endorse these type of arrangements and strives to have all children living in regulated settings
- These occur when a child's previous living arrangement breaks down and they can no longer remain in their regulated setting or at home with parents / family; a young person can't be matched alongside other young people and requires a single occupancy solution for a period of time; and there are no regulated homes that can meet the needs of the child at the time
- Quality assurance framework – quality check of property, regular contact with landlord, daily visit from child's Social Worker, weekly care team meetings and ongoing communication with support agency  
to ensure care is in line with the child's plan and risk assessment



# Unregulated Arrangements (cont.)

- Ofsted are notified and there is a continued focus on moving the child into an alternative regulated setting
- Move on plans developed for 3 of the children, with further work ongoing for the remaining 4 children
- When suitable existing provision can not be identified the Local Authority works with providers to develop bespoke regulated homes
- The Local Authority is committed to developing a suite of new smaller children's homes, both 1 and 2 bedded to meet this ongoing need

# Key Development Priorities

- The local authority has identified **six overarching objectives** within the strategy, which will address current gaps in provision and will seek to broaden and make improvements to our sufficiency offer in Durham. These are:
  1. Grow our number of in-house foster carers, support the retention of carers and work with Independent Fostering Agencies to ensure that children and young people can live with foster carer families when it is in their interests to do so.
  2. Increase the number of adopters
  3. Continue to develop and broaden our children's homes offer and maximise opportunities with external providers when there is a case to do so.
  4. Develop access to a diverse range of appropriate accommodation for Care Leavers.
  5. Improve our sufficiency offer for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) / Young People and reduce waiting times.
  6. Broaden our short breaks offer for disabled children and their families.

# Key Development Priorities (cont.)

- Under each objective is a series of key priorities, which relate to the development of new services to support our range of needs for children and young people. All **39 priorities** are outlined in Appendix 1 of the Strategy.
- Key areas of development include (but are not limited to):
  - Review the payment for skills (foster care payment model) to improve sufficiency by attracting new carers and retaining existing carers
  - Develop a wrap around support team in fostering to promote stability and prevent breakdown
  - Development of new smaller children's homes to meet the needs of our most complex young people and reduce out of county provision
  - Development of a new Edge of Care Home
  - Develop new accommodation and support options for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people
  - Develop overnight short breaks provision to meet the needs of our most complex children and young people

## **Discussion:**

- (i) Observation or comments from the Committee about the detail within the report.
- (ii) Thoughts, ideas or suggestions about the ongoing program of improvements being made / proposed?

## Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny

9 January 2023



### Children and Young People's Services – Quarter 2: Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2022/23

## Report of Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources

### Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide details of the forecast outturn budget position for Children and Young People's Services (CYPS), highlighting major variances in comparison with the budget for the year, based on the position at the end of September 2022.

### Executive summary

- 2 Children and Young People's Services is reporting a cash limit overspend of £12.832 million against a revised budget of £145.162 million which represents an 8.9% overspend. This compares to a forecast overspend of £4.865 million, or 3.3%, at Q1.
- 3 In arriving at the cash limit position, inflation costs of £4.000 million in relation to Home to School transport and £0.233 million on energy have been excluded. Pay award costs of £2.746 million (£1.537 million following general contingencies provision) have also been excluded along with £0.161 million in respect of the reversal of the increase to National Insurance rates.
- 4 There is an overall anticipated net use of earmarked reserves of £15.245 million, leading to a revised balance of £37.122 million at the year end, of which £16.015 million is for delegated schools.
- 5 The projected capital outturn is nil variance against a revised budget of £45.375 million

### Recommendation(s)

- 6 Members of Overview and Scrutiny committee are requested to are requested to:
  - (a) note the Children and Young People's Services overall revenue position.

## Background

7 The County Council approved the Revenue and Capital budgets for 2022/23 at its meeting on 23 February 2022. These budgets have subsequently been revised to take account of transfers to and from reserves, grant additions/reductions, budget transfers between service groupings and budget reprofiling between years. This report covers the financial position for:

- (a) Children and Young People's Services Revenue Budget - £145.162 million (original £142.315 million);
- (b) CYPS – Capital Programme - £45.375 million (original £37.802 million).

8 The original Children and Young People's Services revenue budget has been revised to incorporate various permanent and temporary budget adjustments as summarised in the table below:

Description	Transfer in	Transfer out
Permanent	£m	£m
Q1 Workforce Development Officer to Resources		-£0.050
Q1 Transfer from AHS – Navigation Team	£0.840	
Q1 TF Trainer to Resources		-£0.021
Q1 Pay Award	£0.807	
Q2 Centralisation of Repairs and Maintenance		-£0.241
Q2 Transfer from AHS – Navigation Team	£0.083	
<b>Sub-total permanent changes</b>	<b>£1.730</b>	<b>-£0.312</b>
Temporary	£m	£m
Q1 Recovery Support Reserve	£0.633	
Q1 Holiday Activities and Food Reserve	£0.490	
Q1 Young Parents Programme Reserve	£0.107	
Q1 RAA Early Permanence Project	£0.050	
Q1 Durham Learning Resources Reserve	£0.040	
Q1 Early Years Activities Reserve	£0.011	
Q1 Easington Sports Partnership	£0.009	
Q1 Durham Sports Partnership	£0.053	
Q1 Sessional Employment	£0.036	
<b>Sub-total temporary changes</b>	<b>£1.430</b>	<b>£0.00</b>
<b>Total changes</b>	<b>£3.160</b>	<b>-£0.312</b>
<b>Net budget change</b>	<b>£2.848</b>	

- 9 The summary financial statements contained in the report cover the financial year 2022/23 and show:
- (a) the approved annual budget;
  - (b) the actual income and expenditure as recorded in the Council's financial management system;
  - (c) the variance between the annual budget and the forecast outturn;
  - (d) for the Children and Young People's Services revenue budget, adjustments for items outside of the cash limit to take into account such items as redundancies met from the strategic reserve, capital charges not controlled by services and use of / or contributions to earmarked reserves.

## Revenue Outturn

- 10 The Children and Young People's Services service is reporting a cash limit overspend of £12.832 million against a revised budget of £145.162 million which represents an 8.9% overspend.
- 11 The table below compares the forecast outturn with the budget by Head of Service. A further table is shown at Appendix 2 analysing the position by Subjective Analysis (i.e. type of expense).

Head of Service	Revised Annual Budget	Forecast Outturn	Variance	Pay Award	Inflation Pressures	Cash Limit Variance
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Head of Social Care	82.015	94.352	12.337	-0.804	-0.076	11.457
Education and Skills	39.052	44.701	5.649	-0.064	-4.029	1.556
EHIVC	6.368	6.720	0.352	-0.321	-0.240	-0.209
Operational Support	1.915	1.963	0.048	-0.020	0	0.028
Central Charges	15.811	15.818	0.007	0	-0.007	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>145.162</b>	<b>163.554</b>	<b>18.393</b>	<b>-1.209</b>	<b>-4.352</b>	<b>12.832</b>

- 12 The outturn position incorporates the MTFP savings of £0.365 million built into the 2022/23 budgets.
- 13 The projection factors in forecast overspends within Head of Social Care of £11.457 million, Education of £1.556 million and Operational Support of £28,000, and an underspend in Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children of £0.209 million, with further details provided below.

- 14 Head of Social Care is forecast to be a net £11.457 million over budget for the year. A major part of this is a forecast overspend of £13.253 million against budgets for the cost of placements for children looked after where demand continues to rise.
- 15 The pressure on the budget in children's social care has been evident for several years as the number of children in the care system has increased significantly and their needs have continued to become more complex. As at 26 September 2022 there were 1,028 Children Looked After, which is an increase of 45 on the figure of 983 at the end of June 2022.
- 16 Education is reporting an overspend of £1.556 million after taking account of inflationary pressures and estimated pay award adjustments of £4.095 million to be funded corporately.
- 17 An overspend of £0.758 million against the Home to School Transport budget is forecast, after taking account of £4.000 million as inflationary pressures to be funded corporately. In addition to inflationary pressures affecting contract prices, there has also been an increase in the number of contracts reflecting changes in demand.
- 18 A forecast shortfall of £2.041 million against income budgets, of which £0.752 million relates to Service Level Agreements with schools.
- 19 These overspends are to some extent offset by a saving of £1.131 million against employee budgets, which results in the main from staffing restructures designed to address income shortfalls and implemented from 1 September 2022, along with other vacancies across the service.
- 20 There is a forecast overspend of £28,000 for Operational Support resulting from a shortfall in recharge income.
- 21 Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children is reporting an underspend of £0.209 million, which reflects an underspend of £0.570 million against employee budgets across the service, offset by an overspend of £0.359 million for Aycliffe Secure Centre.
- 22 The overspend for Aycliffe Secure Centre is the result of an underachievement of income of £0.932 million and an overspend against energy budgets of £0.153 million, offset by underspends in employees of £0.323 million and the use of £0.403 million of reserves.
- 23 The forecast cash limit outturn shows the position after a net £2.257 million use of reserves. The main reserves used are as follows;



- (a) £0.542 million drawdown from the Corporate ER/VR reserve to fund agreed redundancies across the service
  - (b) £0.403 million drawdown from Aycliffe Secure Centre reserve to fund increased service delivery costs and under recovery of income.
  - (c) £0.252 million drawdown from the Durham Enable reserve to part fund the Durham Enable employment initiative.
  - (d) £0.238 million drawdown from the Emotional Wellbeing Reserve to fund projects in 2022/23 and increased employee costs
  - (e) £0.184 million drawdown from the PAUSE reserve to fund the programme in 2022/23.
  - (f) £0.173 million drawdown from the Integrated Rapid Response Service reserve to fund additional staffing resources.
  - (g) £0.168 million drawdown from the Music Service reserve to fund additional staffing resources.
  - (h) £0.132 million drawdown from the Mental Health Support reserve to fund the employee and support costs of the Mental Health Support project.
  - (i) £0.110 million drawdown from the Supporting Solutions reserve to fund additional staffing resources to increase referral capacity.
  - (j) £0.108 million drawdown from the Mental Health Counselling reserve to fund service delivery and increased employee costs
- 24 Taking the forecast outturn position into account, there is a forecast £12.832 million deficit cash limit reserve balance at 31 March 2023. This will be funded from general reserves as CYPS has no cash limit balance to call on.

### **Dedicated Schools Grant and Schools**

- 25 The council currently maintains 164 schools, including nursery, primary, secondary, special schools and a single Alternative Provision (AP) school. The AP school is for pupils who have been permanently excluded from other schools, or who are at risk of permanent exclusion.
- 26 The original budget for 2022/23 for these 164 maintained schools was £255 million, funded by income of £62 million, formula funding budget shares of £186 million (from central government funding) and a budgeted circa £7 million use of accumulated schools' reserves. The table below summarises the schools' initial budgets.

Subjective Budget Heading	Nursery £m	Primary £m	Secondary £m	Special / AP £m	Original Annual Budget £m
Employees	4.523	141.327	25.354	32.723	203.927
Premises	0.311	9.543	1.881	1.750	13.485
Transport	0.001	0.366	0.445	1.189	2.001
Supplies and services	0.391	26.171	4.629	4.757	35.948
<b>Gross expenditure</b>	<b>5.226</b>	<b>177.407</b>	<b>32.309</b>	<b>40.419</b>	<b>255.361</b>
Income	-3.883	-43.804	-6.290	-8.037	-62.014
<b>Net expenditure</b>	<b>1.343</b>	<b>133.603</b>	<b>26.019</b>	<b>32.382</b>	<b>193.347</b>
Budget share	1.072	128.305	25.390	31.259	186.026
<b>Reserves</b>	<b>0.271</b>	<b>5.298</b>	<b>0.629</b>	<b>1.123</b>	<b>7.321</b>
Balance at 31 Mar 2022	0.833	21.260	3.842	2.717	28.652
<b>Balance at 31 Mar 2023</b>	<b>0.562</b>	<b>15.962</b>	<b>3.194</b>	<b>1.597</b>	<b>21.331</b>

- 27 Seven maintained schools had deficit balances at 31 March 2022, however, for five of these the budget plans for 2022/23 sought to fully recover the position in year.
- 28 Two schools (Durham Community Business School and Wellfield) have been given approval to set deficit budgets in 2022/23 – where planned expenditure during 2022/23 would result in a deficit balance at 31 March 2023 (known as a licensed deficit). Both schools have been required to set budgets with an in-year surplus so that the accumulated deficit is reduced, as summarised in the table below:

School Name	Phase	Deficit at 31 March 2022	Planned movement of reserves	Planned deficit at 31 March 2023	Licensed deficit (i.e., balance) at 31 March 2023
		£m	£m	£m	£m
DCBC	Secondary	-0.670	0.093	-0.577	-0.577
Wellfield	Secondary	-2.906	0.203	-2.703	-2.703

- 29 Like the Council, schools are facing a range of unfunded inflationary pressures, for pay awards and energy costs in year which are forecast to outstrip the initial budget planning assumptions. The forecast position for all maintained schools for quarter 2 is shown in the following table:

Subjective Budget Heading	Original Budget	Quarter 2 Forecast	Forecast to Budget Variance
	£ million	£ million	£ million
Employees	203.927	221.541	17.614
Premises	13.485	18.061	4.576
Transport	2.001	2.340	0.339
Supplies	35.948	39.585	3.637
<b>Gross expenditure</b>	<b>255.361</b>	<b>281.527</b>	<b>26.166</b>
Income	-62.014	-77.064	-15.050
<b>Net expenditure</b>	<b>193.347</b>	<b>204.463</b>	<b>11.116</b>
Budget share	186.026	191.826	5.800
<b>Use of reserves</b>	<b>7.321</b>	<b>12.637</b>	<b>5.316</b>
Balance at 31 March 2022	28.652	28.652	0
<b>Balance at 31 March 2023</b>	<b>21.331</b>	<b>16.015</b>	<b>-5.316</b>

- 30 In overall terms, the forecast use of reserves of £12.637 million is worse than the original budget position, however it does reflect an improved position from quarter one, when schools were forecasting to require £17.673 million of reserves to balance the in-year financial position.
- 31 The forecasts are based on the following main assumptions:
- pay award for teachers at 5% for Upper Pay Scales (UPS) grades and higher levels for Main Pay Scales (MPS) - compared to the budgeted assumptions of a 2% increase in year;
  - pay award of £1,925 per employee per annum for non-teaching support staff - compared to a flat 2% pay award budget assumption;
  - increased electricity and gas provided via NEPO estimated outcomes (based on limited known detail regarding support to businesses on government announced energy cap);
  - impact of inflation on supplies and provisions (particularly food products) has been considered with individual schools;
  - income forecasts have been reviewed and updated to include the latest available information, particularly for SEND funding;
  - no additional grant income is included in the forecast to cover costs associated with pay awards at this stage;
  - budget share increase of £5.800 million from original budget as a result of the finalisation of The Woodlands Pupil Referral Unit

budget for this year (£3 million higher) and increases for the vast majority of schools for the allocation of NNDR charges.

- 32 The forecast position at individual school level indicates that a small number of schools may be in deficit at the end of the current financial year (this is in addition to the two schools given permission to set a licensed deficit) and a more significant number of schools may not have sufficient reserves available to set a balanced budget in 2023/24.
- 33 The council will work closely with schools over the autumn term to support the financial planning process in the current and future financial years.

### **Dedicated Schools Grant Centrally Retained Block**

- 34 The forecast outturn position for the centrally retained DSG budgets shows a projected underspend of £0.205 million, relating to the High Needs block, as detailed below:

DSG Block	Budgeted 2022/23 Budget	Forecast Outturn	Forecast Over / (Under) Spend
	£m	£m	£m
High Needs	76.267	76.517	0.250
Early Years	29.374	29.374	0
Central Schools Services	2.860	2.860	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>108.501</b>	<b>108.296</b>	<b>0.250</b>

- 35 The forecast overspend position shown against the high needs block relates to the following main areas:
- (a) forecast overspend of £0.668 million against the budget for Special School provision, which largely results from the provision of additional places across the school's sector during the year;
  - (b) forecast overspend of £0.249 million against the budget for placements in Independent and Non-Maintained Special Schools;
  - (c) forecast underspend of £0.380 million against budgets for Early Years Provision;
  - (d) forecast underspend of £0.180 million against the budget allocation for Investment Support Fund;
  - (e) forecast underspend of £0.100 million against the budget for Targeted Support Funding in mainstream schools.

- 36 An updated five-year plan high needs block funding and expenditure, including recovery of the accumulated deficit by the end of the five-year period, was approved by Cabinet in April 2022.
- 37 This plan is now being updated to include the latest forecast of outturn position, revised inflation forecast for future years, and the recent funding announcements.
- 38 All areas of HNB expenditure will be kept under close review in light of continuing COVID-19 issues, with particular attention on the impact of schools returning where it is possible, we will see an upward trend in the volume of requests for additional support for high needs pupils.
- 39 A review of the current programme of work is also taking place in the autumn and this will also include a workshop with Schools Forum. In addition, Durham is identified as one of the 55 local authorities with HNB deficits to work with the DfE on its Delivering Better Value programme.
- 40 The impact of the current forecast on the DSG reserves position is shown in the following table:

<b>DSG Reserves</b>	<b>High Needs Block (Unusable Reserve) £ million</b>	<b>Early Years Block £ million</b>	<b>Schools Block £ million</b>	<b>Total DSG £ million</b>
<b>Balance as at 1 April 2021</b>	<b>-8.047</b>	<b>1.375</b>	<b>2.749</b>	<b>-3.923</b>
Use/ Contribution in 21/22	-0.796	-0.719	-0.348	-1.863
<b>Balance as at 1 April 2022</b>	<b>-8.843</b>	<b>0.656</b>	<b>2.401</b>	<b>-5.786</b>
Forecast Use / Contribution in 20/21	-0.250	0	0	-0.250
<b>Forecast balance as at 1 April 2023</b>	<b>-9.048</b>	<b>0.656</b>	<b>2.401</b>	<b>-5.991</b>

- 41 The overall DSG reserve was in a net deficit position of £5.786 million at the start of the financial year – primarily due to the accumulated £8.843 million deficit position in relation to the high needs block. The overall deficit position is forecast to increase to £5.991 million to the year end.

## Capital Programme

- 42 The capital programme has been revised to take into account budget reprofiled from 2021-22 following the final accounts for that year and to take account of any revisions in the current year.
- 43 The revised budget is presented below together with actual expenditure to date and the forecast outturn. The budget may be subsequently

amended with approval from MOWG. Summary financial performance to the end of Quarter 2 is shown below:

<b>CYPS</b>	<b>Actual 31/08/2022 £</b>	<b>2022/23 Budget £</b>	<b>2023/24 Budget £</b>	<b>2024/25 Budget £</b>	<b>Total Capital Prog. £</b>
PFI	46,050	-	-	-	-
BSF	-	44,985	335,233	-	380,218
Support For Childs Homes	323,705	1,951,678	1,645,875	-	3,597,553
AAP Scheme	693	4,930	-	-	4,930
Planning & Service Strategy	156,240	617,313	100,000	-	717,313
Increased Provision for Two Year Olds	-	-	-	-	-
EHIVC-One Point	-	-	-	-	-
Early Intervention & Involvement	-	-	-	-	-
Education-Early Years	-	582	-	-	582
30 Hours Free Childcare	3,000	19,435	-	-	19,435
School Devolved Capital	872,670	3,503,349	1,200,000	-	4,703,349
DFE School Capital Inc Basic Need	3,750,546	35,163,864	37,783,662	2,710,000	75,657,526
DSG Structural Maintenance	-	-	-	-	-
DFE Special Provision Capital Fund	-	627,893	-	-	627,893
CYPS - High Needs Capital Provision	14,793	2,314,122	-	-	2,314,122
Secure Services	454,489	1,127,236	427,106	-	1,554,342
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,622,187</b>	<b>45,375,387</b>	<b>41,491,876</b>	<b>2,710,000</b>	<b>89,577,263</b>

### **Author(s)**

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

There are no implications associated with this report.

### **Finance**

Financial implications are detailed throughout the report which provides an analysis of the revenue and capital projected outturn position.

### **Consultation**

There are no implications associated with this report.

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

There are no implications associated with this report.

### **Climate Change**

There are no implications associated with this report.

### **Human Rights**

There are no implications associated with this report.

### **Crime and Disorder**

There are no implications associated with this report.

### **Staffing**

There are no implications associated with this report. Any over or under spending against the employee budgets are disclosed within the report.

### **Accommodation**

There are no implications associated with this report.

### **Risk**

The management of risk is intrinsic to good budgetary control. This report forms an important part of the governance arrangements within Children and Young People's Services. Through routine / regular monitoring of budgets and continual re-forecasting to year end the service grouping can ensure that it manages its finances within the cash envelope allocated to it.

### **Procurement**

There are no implications associated with this report

## Appendix 2: CYPS Forecast position by subjective analysis

Subjective Budget Heading	Revised Annual Budget £m	YTD Actual £m	Forecast Outturn £m	Variance £m	Items Outside Cash Limit £m	Inflationary Pressures £m	Cash Limit Variance £m
Employees	87.169	19.786	84.376	-2.793			-2.793
Premises	4.411	1.240	4.861	0.450		-0.352	0.098
Transport	25.415	4.103	26.855	1.440		-1.283	0.157
Supplies and Services	11.299	4.525	12.367	1.068			1.068
Third Party Payments	45.284	8.744	49.289	4.005			4.005
Transfer Payments	1.560	0.628	1.311	-0.249			-0.249
Capital	20.482	0	20.482	0			0
Central Support	25.653	1.221	26.336	0.683			0.683
DRF	0.023	0	0.023	0			0
Grant	-21.194	-6.642	-21.072	0.122			0.122
Contributions Summary	-4.001	-0.595	-4.302	-0.301			-0.301
Sales Summary	-0.071	-0.011	-0.081	-0.010			-0.010
Charges	-16.862	-2.564	-15.664	1.198			1.198
Rents	-0.560	-0.084	-0.372	0.188			0.188
Recharges	-33.264	-8.686	-32.417	0.847			0.847
Other Income Summary	-0.023	-0.107	-0.171	-0.148			-0.148
<b>Total</b>	<b>145.321</b>	<b>21.558</b>	<b>151.821</b>	<b>6.500</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-1.635</b>	<b>4.865</b>



**Children and Young People  
Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**9 January 2023**

**Quarter Two, 2022/23**

**Performance Management Report**



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**Report of Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide.

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To present an overview of progress towards achieving the key outcomes of the council's corporate performance framework and highlight key messages to inform strategic priorities and work programmes.
- 2 The report covers performance in and to the end of quarter two 2022/23, July to September 2022.

**Executive Summary**

- 3 A new [Council Plan](#) for 2022-2026 was approved by Council on 22 June. This set out a new performance framework for the Council. Corporate Management Team committed to the development of a new quarterly performance report format, providing greater focus on these issues. This is the second report for the new reporting period to follow this format.
- 4 The performance report is structured around the two main components.
  - (a) State of the County indicators to highlight areas of strategic importance and reflected in both the [County Durham Vision 2035](#) and the [Council Plan](#).
  - (b) Performance of council services and progress against major initiatives as set out in the [Council Plan](#).
- 5 Performance is reported against the five thematic areas within the Council Plan 2022-2026: our economy, our environment, our people, our communities, and our council.
- 6 Performance is reported on an exception basis with key messages under each of the thematic Council Plan areas being broken down into national,

regional and local picture, things that are going well, areas which require attention and other areas to note.

- 7 We are continuing our transition into a post-pandemic world, but the impacts of COVID-19 can still be seen in our performance reporting. The last two financial years are not representative for many areas of performance and will be an unfair comparison due to pandemic impacts.
- 8 We have therefore, wherever possible, tried to make the comparison of current performance against pre-pandemic data. Whilst COVID-19 continues to impact on certain performance metrics, there is evidence of some areas returning to pre-pandemic levels.
- 9 Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II died on 8 September and the county council were involved together with the Lord Lieutenant in the arrangements to mark this passing and the proclamation of the accession of King Charles III within the county. The official period of mourning and the additional national bank holiday for the date of the State Funeral on 19 September also resulted in several events being cancelled and the closure of public buildings.
- 10 However, the largest challenge for our residents, local businesses and the council is the current cost of living crisis. Inflation is currently running at 10.1%<sup>1</sup> with the Bank of England expecting to remain above 10% for a few months before starting to drop<sup>2</sup>. The inflationary increase is largely driven by the rise in the cost of fuel and energy bills, which is being impacted significantly by world events, including the war in Ukraine, and currency markets.
- 11 The cost-of-living crisis has a triple impact on the council.
  - (a) It impacts on our residents. High inflation is outstripping wage and benefit increases so income is falling in real terms. This will result in increased demand for services to help support people facing financial hardship or who are in crisis and services provided to vulnerable people such as social care for children and adults.
  - (b) Increased costs for the council. Our premises and transport costs have increased because of the rise in energy costs and fuel prices, and, also the cost of other supplies and services where prices have increased as suppliers face similar issues themselves. It is also anticipated that employee costs will increase by more than in previous years when the pay settlement is negotiated to accommodate inflation.

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<sup>1</sup> UK Consumer Price Index for 12 months to September 2022

<sup>2</sup> [Bank of England](#)

- (c) Reduced income for the council. Users of council services may seek to save money resulting in a fall in income from discretionary services such as leisure centres and theatres.

## **Recommendation**

- 12 That Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the overall position and direction of travel in relation to quarter two performance, the continuing impact of COVID-19 and the increased cost of living on the council's performance, and the actions being taken to address areas of underperformance including the significant economic and well-being challenges because of the pandemic.

## **Analysis of the Performance Report**

### **Going well**

#### **Our people**

- 13 In the six months ending 30 September, 883 families were turned around via the Stronger Families programme. 822 attained significant and sustained outcomes and 61 maintained continuous employment.

### **Other areas of note**

#### **Our council**

- 14 Social Care is forecast to be over budget for the year by £13 million, mostly due to the cost of placements for children looked after as significantly more children are now in the care system and needs are more complex.
- 15 Home to School Transport is forecast to overspend by £0.8 million (after taking account of £4 million as inflationary pressures to be funded corporately). In addition to inflationary pressures affecting contract prices, more contracts are reflecting changes in demand.

### **Performance Indicators – Summary**

- 16 We are now transitioning into a post-pandemic world, but the impacts of COVID-19 can still be seen in our performance reporting. The last two financial years are not representative for many areas of performance and will be an unfair comparison due to pandemic impacts.
- 17 We have therefore, wherever possible, tried to make the comparison of current performance against pre-pandemic data.

### **Risk Management**

- 18 Effective risk management is a vital component of the council's agenda. The council's risk management process sits alongside our change programme and is incorporated into all significant change and improvement projects. The latest report can be found [here](#).

## **Background papers**

- County Durham Vision (County Council, 23 October 2019)  
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s115064/Draft%20Durham%20Vision%20v10.0.pdf>

## **Other useful documents**

- Council Plan 2022 to 2026 (current plan)  
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=56529>
- Quarter Four, 2021/22 Performance Management Report  
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s157533/Year%20End%20performance%20report%202021-22.pdf>
- Quarter Three, 2021/22 Performance Management Report  
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s152742/Performance%20Report%202021-22%20003.pdf>
- Quarter Two, 2021/22 Performance Management Report  
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s149087/Q2%20Performance%20Report%202021-22%20-%20Cabinet.pdf>
- Quarter One, 2021/22 Performance Management Report  
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s144872/Q1%20Performance%20Report%202021-22.pdf>

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

Not applicable.

### **Finance**

Latest performance information is being used to inform corporate, service and financial planning.

### **Consultation**

Not applicable.

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

Equality measures are monitored as part of the performance monitoring process.

### **Climate Change**

We have declared a climate change emergency and consider the implications of climate change in our reports and decision-making.

### **Human Rights**

Not applicable.

### **Crime and Disorder**

A number of performance indicators and key actions relating to crime and disorder are continually monitored in partnership with Durham Constabulary.

### **Staffing**

Performance against a number of relevant corporate health indicators has been included to monitor staffing issues.

### **Accommodation**

Not applicable.

### **Risk**

Reporting of significant risks and their interaction with performance is integrated into the quarterly performance management report.

### **Procurement**

Not applicable.



# **Durham County Council Performance Management Report**

## **Quarter Two, 2022/23**



## 1.0 Our People: National, Regional & Local Picture

- 1 The next data release from the National Child Measurement Programme is expected in November 2022, but provisional findings at a national level suggest we will see a reduction in the proportion of year 6 children who are of a healthy weight.

### 1.1 Council Activity: Going Well

#### Stronger Families Programme

- 2 883 families (against the 2022/23 target of 760) were turned around via the Stronger Families programme in the six months ending 30 September 2022: 822 attained significant and sustained outcomes and 61 maintained continuous employment.

### 1.2 Council Activity: Areas which require attention

#### Children's Social Care

- 3 The continuation of an increasing trend in both children looked after and children in need<sup>3</sup>, combined with more complex cases, has led to caseload pressures for some social workers. We are reviewing our workforce strategy with colleagues in HR to focus on the recruitment and retention of social care staff.
- 4 More children in care have led to increased placement pressures, which are reflected both regionally and nationally. We are focusing on increasing the capacity in our own in-house children's homes, recruiting more foster carers, and working with children and their families to prevent them entering care.

## 2.0 Our Council: National, Regional and Local Picture

- 5 Inflation in the UK which is forecast to peak at around 11%<sup>4</sup> in October 2022 is resulting in budget pressures. Service areas where energy and fuel are major factors are being impacted significantly ([more detail](#)). For example, Home to School Transport is forecast to overspend by £0.8 million (after taking account of £4 million as inflationary pressures to be funded corporately). In addition to inflationary pressures affecting contract prices, more contracts are reflecting changes in demand.

<sup>3</sup> includes our children in care as well as children in need, children on a child protection plan and care leavers

<sup>4</sup> UK Consumer Price Index for 12 months to September 2022



- 6 Social Care is forecast to be over budget for the year by £13 million, mostly due to the cost of placements for children looked after as significantly more children are now in the care system and needs are more complex. Latest data shows that the rate of children looked after is 100.7 (per 10,000 population of 0-18 years old) which equates to 1,027 children compared to a rate of 93.8 (944 children) pre-pandemic.

## 6.0 Data Tables

Performance against target and previous performance		Performance against comparable groups		Direction of Travel	
✓	meeting or exceeding	✓	Performance is better than national or north east	↑	higher than comparable period
○	within 2%	×	Performance is worse than national or north east	→	static against comparable period
×	more than 2% behind			↓	lower than comparable period

*NB: oldest data in left column*

### Key to Symbols

#### Types of indicators

There are two types of performance indicators throughout the report:

1. Key target indicators – targets are set as improvements can be measured regularly and can be actively influenced by the council and its partners; and
2. Key tracker indicators – performance is tracked but no targets are set as they are long-term and / or can only be partially influenced by the council and its partners.

#### National Benchmarking (N)

We compare our performance to all English authorities. The number of authorities varies according to the performance indicator and functions of councils, e.g., educational attainment is compared to county and unitary councils, however waste disposal is compared to district and unitary councils.

#### North East Benchmarking (NE)

The North East comparator is the average performance from the authorities within the North East region - County Durham, Darlington, Gateshead, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Newcastle upon Tyne, North Tyneside, Northumberland, Redcar and Cleveland, Stockton-on-Tees, South Tyneside, Sunderland.

More detail is available from the Strategy Team at [performance@durham.gov.uk](mailto:performance@durham.gov.uk)

## Our Economy

Performance Indicator	Latest data (period covered)	Performance compared to:					Direction of Travel - last four reporting periods				updated
		Period target	12 months earlier	Pre-COVID	N	NE					
Increase proportion of young people in education, employment and training to be consistently higher than regional and national levels	87.4% (Jun 2022)	above N / NE ✓	85.3% ✓	85.6% ✓			↑	↓	↑	n/a	No
% uptake of free early education entitlement for 3-4-year-olds	93.7% (2022)	Tracker -	92.8% ✓	96.1% x			→	↑	↓	↑	No
Improve the proportion of children achieving expected standards in maths and reading at KS2 in line with 2030 ambitions*	65% (2018/19)	Tracker -	67% x	65% ○			n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	No
Improve the average grade of achievement of all our pupils within GCSE English and Maths to a Grade 5 (in line with 2030 ambitions)	new PI	5 by 2030	new PI	new PI	-	-	new PI	new PI	new PI	new PI	No
Improve the educational attainment of our most disadvantaged cohorts to meet basic threshold measures in English and Maths	new PI	new PI	new PI	new PI	-	-	new PI	new PI	new PI	new PI	No

\*Not reported for 2019/20 or 2020/21 academic years as no Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) or Key Stage 2 (KS2) assessments took place

## Our People

Performance Indicator	Latest data (period covered)	Performance compared to:					Direction of Travel - last four reporting periods				updated
		Period target	12 months earlier	Pre-COVID	N	NE					
Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieving a good level of development (reported as academic year)	71.8% (2018/19)	Tracker -	72.8% ○	-			n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	No

Performance Indicator	Latest data (period covered)	Performance compared to:					Direction of Travel - last four reporting periods				updated
		Period target	12 months earlier	Pre-COVID	N	NE					
% of pupils attending an Ofsted judged 'good or better' school	84.5% (at 25 Oct 22)	Tracker -	n/a	-	x	x	↑	↑	n/a	n/a	Yes
No. of Children Looked After per 10,000 population	100.7 [1,027] (at 30 Sep 22)	Tracker -	93 [2020/21]	-	-	-	↑	↑	↑	↑	Yes
No. of Children in Need per 10,000 Population	384 [3,920] (at 30 Sep 22)	Tracker -	361 [2020/21]		-	-	↑	↑	↑	↑	Yes
% of Children Looked After placed within 20 miles of their home address	85% (at 31 Mar 22)	Tracker -	87% [2020/21] ○	89% x	✓	✓	↓	↓	→	↑	No
No. of families on our Stronger Families Programme attaining significant and sustained outcomes	883 (Apr-Sept 22)	760 [2022/23] ✓	571 ✓	311 ✓	-	-	↑	↑	↑	↑	Yes
Increase the % of children aged 4-5 who are of a healthy weight ***	74.6% (2019/20)	90% x	75.6% ○	-	x	✓	→	↓	↑	↓	No
Increase the % of children aged 10-11 who are of a healthy weight ***	61.5% (2019/20)	79% x	61.1% ✓	-	x	✓	↓	↑	↓	↑	No
No. of children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan	4,043 (Sep 2022)	Tracker -	3,888 -	3,496 -	-	-	↑	↑	↑	↑	Yes

\*Not reported for 2019/20 or 2020/21 academic years as no Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) or Key Stage 2 (KS2) assessments took place

\*\*\*National Child Measurement Programme ceased March 2020 when schools closed due to the pandemic, so north east and nearest neighbour comparators should be treated with caution due to missing data from some LAs. Whilst the data for the academic year 2020/21 has been published, local authority data is not available as only a 10% sample of data was recorded.

## Other relevant indicators

Performance Indicator	Latest data (period covered)	Performance compared to:					Direction of Travel - last four reporting periods				updated
		Period target	12 months earlier	Pre-COVID	N	NE					
Increase the % of 16-17-year-olds in an apprenticeship	5.6% (Jun 2022)	Tracker -	5.5% ✓	6.8% ✗			↑	↓	↓	n/a	No
% of mothers smoking at time of delivery	14.8% (Jan-Mar 22)	0% ✗	15% ✓	18.1% ✓	✗	✗	↑	↓	↑	↑	No
Reduce % point gap in breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks between County Durham and national average	17.4pp	Tracker	20.2pp	20.2pp	-	✗	↓	↑	↑	↓	No
	(2020/21)	-	✓	✓							

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**Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys**  
NHS Foundation Trust

## **County Durham CAMHS December 2022**

### **Waits for assessment**

217 patients waiting for assessment with an average wait of 20 days; a very positive position which compares very favourably with national benchmarks.

### **Waits for treatment**

There are some significant delays for some forms of treatment, particularly those requiring psychologist or consultant psychiatrist to deliver, due to shortages in that part of the workforce.

976 patients classed as waiting for treatment.

The average time waiting is 189 days but there is significant range and variation on this depending on the team and intervention required.

We would aim for treatment to commence within 3 months. Nationally this metric counts 'contacts' and sets a target for the 2<sup>nd</sup> 'contact' to happen within 6 weeks.

TEWV have a strict definition of 'treatment', the contacts, advice and support offered to these patients who are waiting would be considered 'treatment' in other CAMHS services nationally and counted as such.

There are also significant caveats with regards to the data quality; we are currently working through an issue whereby for young people who have been open to CAMHS for a significant period of time (e.g., those awaiting neurodevelopmental assessment), when a 'new' mental health need is identified and a 'new' wait begins, it is measured by our system from the very start of their journey in CAMHS. This issue is affecting approximately 50% of our waiters, skewing the average waits data, making it longer.

This is a key area for ongoing improvement work.

## **Community Eating Disorders**

The Community Eating Disorders service is consistently achieving its targets for access which are monitored nationally.

‘Routine’ referrals seen within 4 weeks.

‘Urgent’ referrals seen within 1 week.

## **Neurodevelopmental assessment service**

3,466 patients waiting an average of 346 days.

National lockdowns created a backlog as observations and assessments could not take place in the required settings.

Referral rates increased by up to 300% post lockdowns.

This is a key area for ongoing improvement work.