



## **Corporate Parenting Panel**

**Date**      **Friday 30 September 2022**

**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**

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Substitute Members
3. Minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2022 (Pages 3 - 10)
4. Declarations of Interest
5. Number of Children Looked After - Verbal update from the Head of Early Help, Inclusion & Vulnerable Children
6. Ofsted Updates - Verbal update from the Head of Early Help, Inclusion & Vulnerable Children
7. Children in Care Council Update - Presentation of the Project Officer, Investing in Children (Pages 11 – 18)
8. Proud Moments - Verbal update from the Service Manager, Children and Young People's Services
9. Performance Update - Report and presentation of the Corporate Equality and Strategy Manager (Pages 19 - 34)
10. Language Update - Verbal update from the Head of Early Help, Inclusion & Vulnerable Children
11. Supporting Solutions Update - Report and presentation of the Strategic Manager, Countywide Specialist Services (Pages 35 - 52)
12. Contextualised Safeguarding - Presentation of the Strategic Manager, Countywide Specialist Services (Pages 53 - 58)
13. Annual Report of Durham County Council's Fostering Service - Report of the Practice Lead Children in Care, Children and Young People's Services (Pages 59 - 84)

14. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.
15. Any resolution relating to the exclusion of the public during the discussion of items containing exempt information.

### **Part B**

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

16. Regulation 44 Visits and Regulatory Body Ratings of Children's Residential Homes - Joint Report of Practice Lead, Children's Social Care and Head of Early Help, Inclusion & Vulnerable Children (Pages 85 - 102)
17. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.

**Helen Lynch**

Head of Legal and Democratic Services

County Hall  
Durham  
22 September 2022

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

Councillors R Adcock-Forster, C Bell, J Charlton, I Cochrane, B Coult, S Deinali, J Griffiths, O Gunn, T Henderson, C Hood, C Hunt, B Kellett, J Miller, I Roberts, K Robson, K Rooney, A Sterling, S Townsend and C Varty

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

J Bell, S Neale, W Taylor, R Upton and K Watson  
Young persons representative of the Children in Care Council

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**Contact: Jill Hogg**

**Tel: 03000 269 711**

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## DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Panel** held in **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham** on **Tuesday 19 July 2022** at **9.30 am**

**Present:**

**Councillor M Walton (Chair)**

**Members of the Panel:**

Councillors Adcock-Forster, C Bell, J Charlton, B Coult, S Deinali, J Griffiths, C Hunt, B Kellett, I Roberts and A Sterling

**Co-opted Members:**

Caitlyn Gray, Luke Joseph, Sarah Neale and Wendy Taylor

**Also Present:**

Laura Armstrong – Professional Practice Manager  
Laura Counce – Service Manager, Children and Young People  
Helen Fergusson – Head of Children’s Social Care  
Rachel Harris – Service Improvement Manager  
Jodie Henderson – Practice Lead, Children and Young People  
Robert Johnson - Project Manager, Investing in Children  
Rachel Riley – Service Manager, Care Leavers and Adoption  
Martyn Stenton – Head of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children  
Jayne Watson – Senior Partnerships Officer  
Julian Wilson – Senior Lawyer, Children, Adults and Health

### **1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cochrane, Henderson, Hood, Miller, Rooney, Simmons and Townsend and from Julie Bell, co-opted member.

Apologies were also noted from officer Melanie Stubbs, Head of the Virtual School.

### **2 Substitute Members**

No substitute members were in attendance.

### **3 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The Chair reported the following matters arising;

- Members had received an invitation to the induction session on Friday 16 September at 1.00 pm and they were asked to contact Jayne Watson, Senior Partnerships Officer, with any questions or specific topics they would like to cover at the session.
- An update on language has been included on the agenda of alternate Corporate Parenting Panel meetings, to ensure the issue is regularly reviewed.

### **4 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **5 Number of Children Looked After**

The Head of Children's Social Care reported an increase in the number of children looked after which stood at 1,006. The Panel heard that the recently reported backlog caused by delays to adoption proceedings had been addressed. Data from the first quarter of the year will be gathered to obtain a clearer picture of the reasons for the increase and further information will be provided at the next Panel meeting.

### **6 Ofsted Updates**

The Head of Children's Social Care advised she was to provide an update on the recent Ofsted visit to Framwellgate Moor children's home, in the private part of the meeting.

### **7 ILACS Update**

The Head of Children's Social Care delivered a presentation on the recent Ofsted inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS), outlining key headlines and themes and providing details of areas identified for improvement (for copy of presentation see file of minutes).

The report included a graded judgement against three areas: children in need of help and protection; children in care and care leavers and the impact of leaders.

The Head of Children's Social Care was pleased to report that overall, services were rated good and the outcome was outstanding in respect of the impact of leaders. Ofsted acknowledged the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel and the ambitious corporate parenting strategy.

The Panel noted the three areas for improvement were the response to children who go missing from care; sufficiency of short break placements for disabled children and pathway planning for care leavers. A comprehensive action plan is underway to ensure a robust response to the areas identified for improvement.

The Panel viewed a video giving headline messages from the Ofsted report which included images of artwork produced by the young people involved in the Artstops project.

In response to comments from Councillor Hunt on the standards and support offered to connected carers with regard to training, unannounced visits, lifestory work and completion of paperwork, the Head of Children's Social Care replied that standards and commitments are the same for all foster carers, with all foster carers being subject to the same expectations in terms of unannounced visits and the completion of paperwork and lifestory work. A comprehensive review of the training programme had recently been undertaken to ensure the training offer is consistent for all fosters carers and a dedicated connected carers team is in place to offer support to those who may require assistance to access training and support available. With regard to unannounced visits the Head of Children's Social Care informed the Panel that robust management oversight is in place to ensure the monitoring of unannounced visits.

An update will be included in the fostering update report which is scheduled for the Panel's consideration at the September 2022 meeting.

The Chair congratulated staff on achieving the good Ofsted outcome.

## **8 IIC / Children in Care Council Update**

The Panel received a presentation from Caitlyn of the Children in Care Council on CiCC activity during June (for copy of presentation see file of minutes).

Caitlyn explained that a sub-group had been set up to work with NHS nurses to incorporate young people's views about how they feel when discussing health issues, into training for health practitioners and foster carers.

The Panel noted that practitioner profiles are being developed through the 'All About Me' project and a CiCC member had designed the template for the profile. The Chair requested that all Panel members complete their personal profile as soon as possible.

The Chair updated the Panel that, further to requests made from members that the Artstops artwork be displayed in as many locations as possible, it had been found that some bus-stops are unsuitable to accommodate the artwork. Members who would like to nominate a bus-stop were asked to contact the Senior Partnerships Officer who will coordinate an approach to the Neighbourhood Services team, to identify suitable bus-stops.

## **9 Annual Report on the Adoption Service 2021/22**

The Panel considered the Adoption Annual Report which reviewed the service during 2021-22 and highlighted priorities for 2022-23 (for copy of report see file of minutes).

The Practice Lead for Children and Young People highlighted the continued strong performance with 42 adoptive families on their adoption journey as at 31 March 2022 and, during the year 2021-22, 65 children had been matched with adoptive families.

The Panel noted two significant issues in respect of adoption nationally which had a significant impact on workloads. The first was an Ombudsman finding against a local authority which led to an increase in work for adoption agencies nationally. Secondly, the resolution of the Somerset Judgement caused delays for children waiting to be matched with prospective adopters.

The Practice Lead responded to questions and comments from the Panel as follows:

- The Panel questioned why, out of 217 enquiries only 62 had led to initial visits. The Practice Lead clarified that some enquiries were not suitable to be progressed and a number of enquiries were requests for information only. A breakdown of the figures and further details will be incorporated into future adoption updates.
- The Practice Lead clarified that the young people placed with families in Cumbria were placed there as those families were the best adoptive matches and reiterated that Cumbria forms part of the Regional Adoption Agency.
- Referring to the map showing the number of enquiries per postcode, the Panel observed fewer enquiries from the west of the county and the Practice Lead pointed out that the relatively low population density in the rural west may be a factor. This will be looked at and reported on in future updates, if necessary.

- The Practice Lead informed the Panel that the recruitment drive for new panel members seeks to be reflective of the community, therefore members are recruited from all backgrounds, including experts from social work and medical fields, elected members and people with personal experience of fostering and adoption.

**Resolved:**

That the priorities contained within the report be agreed.

## **10 Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report 2021-22**

The Panel considered the Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report for April 2021 – March 2022 (for copy of report see file of minutes).

The Senior Partnerships officer explained the Annual Report had been produced in collaboration with the young people of the Children in Care Council who had worked with officers on its design to ensure it was easy to read and in a young person friendly format. The report had been designed to enable it to be viewed digitally and included details of key achievements during the year and priorities for the forthcoming year.

**Resolved:**

That the Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report 2021-22 be agreed.

## **11 Proud Moments**

The Service Manager for Children and Young People spoke of the pride expressed by staff caring for a young person, approaching the age of 18, who, despite some very challenging times, is flourishing in their transition and wholeheartedly embracing the changes to come, with positivity.

**Resolved:**

That the report and presentation be noted.

## **12 Any other business**

The Head of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children announced that the Head of Children's Social Care, Helen Fergusson, is leaving the authority. The Panel thanked Helen for all her hard work and wished her well in her new role. The Panel also bid farewell to Caitlyn who will soon be leaving to study social work at Manchester. The Head of Children's Social Care responded by thanking the Panel for their support and she also thanked Caitlyn for being such a fantastic advocate for young people in care.

The Panel echoed the comments and thanked Caitlyn for her invaluable contribution, with many achievements being testament to the work of Caitlyn, Luke and representatives of the Children in Care Council.

It is anticipated that a new CICC rep will take over from Caitlyn from September 2022.

### **13 Exclusion of the public**

#### **Resolved:**

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

### **14 Regulation 44 visits and Regulatory Body ratings of Children's Residential Homes**

The Panel considered the monthly report on Regulation 44 visits and regulatory body ratings of children's residential homes (for copy see file of minutes).

The Head of Children's Social Care reported on the findings from the inspection of Framwellgate Moor Children's Home and the actions taken in light of the findings.

The Panel acknowledged the impact of the pandemic and thanked staff for their hard work and resilience. Referring to the use of language, the Panel, whilst accepting the word 'discharge' is used as part of the regulatory framework, requested that an alternative, more sensitive word be used.

#### **Resolved:**

That the report be received.

### **15 Any other business**

A Panel member referred to correspondence received from a foster carer relating to the reimbursement of mileage in which the foster carer asked how decisions are made regarding which journeys qualify for reimbursement. The foster carer explained that whilst educational, medical and family time journeys qualify, day trips and activities such as Brownies and sports activities do not. Members commented on the importance of these activities for health and wellbeing and the development of social skills. Members also raised concerns regarding the additional financial pressures faced by foster carers during the school holidays.

The Head of Children's Social Care responded that specific issues are discussed on an individual, case by case basis with foster carers and she informed the Panel that work is underway to review foster carer payments, with a new process to be launched in April 2023.

It was agreed that the current policy should be emailed to the Panel, for information, in advance of the September meeting, for the matter to be considered in further detail.

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# Presentation by Billie-Leigh and Luke CiCC CPP representatives and Robert Johnson - Investing in Children



## Durham Children in Care Council (CiCC) – Summer Highlights 22

- CiCC 8<sup>th</sup> edition Newsletter has been produced – lots of articles written by many different young people.
- 14 young people attended an end of summer activity at Durham Infinity Air – (trampoline park)



- Six CiCC members met with IRO officers as a sub group to finalise the care plan journey.

# Presentation by Billie-Leigh and Luke CiCC CPP representatives and Robert Johnson - Investing in Children

## Durham Children in Care Council (CiCC) – Summer Highlights 22

- Another Artstops initiative has taken place with several more care experienced young people connecting with it. 25 care experienced young people have now connected with it through liC art and wellbeing café - further approaches to expand all the approaches.



*“It’s been amazing to watch Henley’s confidence grow whilst he has been attending the art cafe and we’re so proud of his artwork. Henley has found so many good mentors and they should really take credit for the way he has been able to open up and be himself. Henley has suffered so much at school being bullied and it’s good that there is a safe space he can go.”*

*“Henley is always saying he loves been part of the art cafe and everyone is friendly He thinks his artwork is awesome and wants to thank everyone for believing in him and helping to make it happen.”*



# Presentation by Billie-Leigh and Luke CiCC CPP representatives and Robert Johnson - Investing in Children



## Durham Children in Care Council (CiCC) – Summer Highlights 22

- A older CiCC member acted as a care experienced advisor for Durham and Darlington Constabulary offering advice regarding building relationships with young people in children homes. This Included advice on CSE and going missing. Please see separate Learning Together Session report.
- The same young person is also be developing training material for the constabulary through an internal film with key messages.
- The education fun fund continues and more care experienced young people continue to apply. Below is a recent quote from a young person who bought a computer to develop their skills in computer coding as their chosen career.

***“I have been using the computer for coding and it has helped me a lot on how to create apps, e.g. games like pong and a clock app, using a programming language called python. It has been very useful on how to learn python and interpreting it. This has been very successful because I have been wanting to be a computer programmer for some time and this has helped me develop my understanding on how to become one and how hard/challenging it can be.”***

Promoting the Rights of Children and Young People



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**Durham CiCC Learning Together Session Report**

Robert Johnson

28<sup>th</sup> August 2022

The Sjovoll Centre

**Introduction**

Investing in Children supported a young person with care experience acting as an advisor to 11 Police and Community Support Officers with Durham & Darlington Constabulary who all have duties and responsibilities to connect with communities that include young people homes and keeping young people safe. The care experienced advisor had knowledge growing up in care connecting with the police and go missing procedures.

**The number of attendees who rated the questions**

<b>Attendees</b>	<b>11</b>				
	<b>1 Strongly Agree</b>	<b>2 Agree</b>	<b>3 Neither agree nor disagree OR no reply</b>	<b>4 Disagree</b>	<b>5 Strongly Disagree</b>
<b>I got to listen and learn from a care experienced advisor.</b>	8	3	0	0	0
<b>I found out ways to better support care experienced young people.</b>	6	4	1	0	0
<b>I feel more confident about this area of work.</b>	6	4	1	0	0
<b>I learned about better practices from colleagues.</b>	5	4	2	0	0
<b>Overall, I thought the session was excellent</b>	6	4	1	0	0

In total there were 11 attendees who completed the feedback form from the Durham CiCC Learning Together session on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2022 with a young person with care experience acting as an advisor.

We have broken down the feedback and produced them into percentages which will show what the attendees thought of the event and whether or not they thought the event was useful to them.

From 11 attendees:

**I got to listen and learn from a care experienced advisor.**

73% strongly agree

27% agree

**I found out ways to better support care experienced young people.**

55% strongly agree

36% agree

9% neither agree nor disagree

**I feel more confident about this area of work**

55% strongly agree

36% agree

9% neither agree nor disagree

**I learned about better practices from colleagues.**

46% strongly agree

36% agree

18% neither agree nor disagree

**Overall, I thought the event was excellent**

55% strongly agree

36% agree

9% neither agree nor disagree

Looking at these percentages we can see that attendees strongly agree the session was excellent and that they will use the information / knowledge they have gained from this session in future practice.

On the feedback form there were some questions which attendees filled in, here are some of the comments from the attendees:

**I enjoyed...**

*The interaction.*

*Listening to Charlee.*

*Listening to first hand experienced.*

*Hearing Charlee's story.*

*Charlee's input.*

**I was surprised by...**

*The lack of positive experiences from PCO's.*

*What leads to young people going missing.*

*Amount who go missing.*

*Funding available to young people/ services.*

*The lack of transparency and communication with partner agencies.*

*How little police link in with other agencies when talking to people in care.*

**I was most interested in...**

*Charlee's feedback.*

*Different areas where other PCO's work.*

*How Charlee feels we should deal with young people.*

*Listening to Charlee's experience.*

*Hearing what works when engaging with people in care.*

*The reasons for young people going missing.*

**I felt inspired by:**

*Charlee's experience of what she can do to engage with other children.*

*Charlee's story.*

*Charlee's change.*

*Charlee's advice not to give up on young people.*

*Charlee's story and how she has turned her life around.*

*Hearing I could make a difference to a young person.*

**I'm most enthusiastic about:**

*What the buddy scheme can achieve.*

*Engaging with young people.*

*Trying to help children who need it.*

*Building better relationships.*

*Using the advice given in the homes in my area.*

*Putting what I've learnt into practice.*

*Using the shared knowledge moving forward in my role as a PCSO.*

*Further engagement.*

*Encouraging others to do the same.*

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**Investing in Children CIC**

Investing in Children CIC is a company (number 08428687) registered in England and Wales:

The Sjovoll Centre, Front Street, Pity Me, Durham, DH1 5BZ

Tel: 0191 307 7030. Company Reg. 8428687

[info@investinginchildren.net](mailto:info@investinginchildren.net)  [www.investinginchildren.net](http://www.investinginchildren.net)

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**Corporate Parenting Panel**

**30 September 2022**

**Performance Update**



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

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

None.

**Purpose of the Report**

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

**Executive summary**

- 2 The Corporate Equality and Strategy Manager will deliver a presentation at the meeting giving an overview of performance.

**Recommendation(s)**

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

## **Background**

- 4 A quarterly performance management framework is presented to Corporate Parenting Panel which is structured around the Local Government Association's Key Lines of Enquiry for Corporate Parenting Panel members.

## **Conclusion**

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

## **Other useful documents**

- Quarterly Performance Scorecard

## **Author**

Stephen Tracey

Tel: 03000 268 029

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

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

### **Finance**

N/A

### **Consultation**

N/A

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

N/A

### **Climate Change**

N/A

### **Human Rights**

N/A

### **Crime and Disorder**

N/A

### **Staffing**

N/A

### **Accommodation**

N/A

### **Risk**

N/A

### **Procurement**

N/A

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## County Durham Corporate Parenting Panel: Performance Management Framework

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

<i>Measure</i>	<i>2018/19</i>	<i>2019/20</i>	<i>2020/21</i>	<i>2021/22</i>	<i>Q1 2022/23</i>	<i>England</i>	<i>North East</i>	<i>Stat Neighbour</i>
Rate of CLA per 10,000 u18 population [Number]	82.9 [833]	90 [914]	93 [949]	96 [982]	<b>99</b> <b>(1005)</b>	67 (2020/21)	108 (2020/21)	103 (2020/21)
Age and length of time in care					See presentation	N/A	N/A	N/A
CLA Placement breakdown					See presentation	N/A	N/A	N/A
Percentage of CLA placed over 20 miles (outside LA boundary)	7%	10%	9%	10%	<b>10%</b>	16% (2020/21)	10% (2020/21)	9% (2020/21)
Number of children placed for adoption	25	75	39	38	<b>47</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A
Percentage of CLA who are unaccompanied asylum seeking children [Number] u18	0.4% [3]	0.1% [1/914]	0.1% [1/949]	2% [16/982]	<b>2%</b> <b>[20/1002]</b>	5% (2020/21)	1% (2020/21)	2% (2020/21)
Social worker caseloads					See presentation	N/A	N/A	N/A

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

Measure	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Q1 2022/23	England	North East	Stat Neighbour
Percentage of CLA with a missing incident during the year*	5.0%	5.5%	7.0%	9.9%	<b>15%</b> [168/1144]	<b>10%</b> (2020/21)	<b>10%</b> (2020/21)	<b>9%</b> (2020/21)
Percentage of children on Child Exploitation and Vulnerability Tracker that were CLA^				24% [70/289]	<b>24%</b> [84/357]			
Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire - Average score	NND	13.6	14.0	14	<b>13.9</b>	14 (2020/21)	14 (2020/21)	14 (2020/21)
Percentage of looked after children aged 10 and above convicted or subject to a Youth Caution or Youth Conditional Caution during the year [number of children]*	4.6% [17]	3% [11]	3% [11]	3% [12]	<b>1%</b> [4]	<b>2%</b> (2020/21)	<b>3%</b> (2020/21)	<b>3%</b> (2020/21)

\*Benchmarking data relates to 2020/21 during COVID Pandemic/lockdowns

^Definition amended at Q4

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

Measure	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21 [Provisional]	2021/22	Q1 2022/23	England	North East	Stat Neighbour
Number of CLA accessing an independent visitor			16	69 (59 CDYJS, 10 AFC) 15 waiting for match	<b>43</b> (36 CDYJS, 7 AFC)			

### Are we providing stable environments for children in our care?

<i>Measure</i>	<i>2018/19</i>	<i>2019/20</i>	<i>2020/21</i>	<i>2021/22</i>	<i>Q1 2022/23</i>	<i>England</i>	<i>North East</i>	<i>Stat Neighbour</i>
Percentage of CLA with 3 or more placements during the year	10.7% [90 of 840]	7.6% [70 / 922]	8% [73]	12.4% [122 / 985]	<b>11.3%</b> <b>[111]</b>	9% (2020/21)	8% (2020/21)	8% (2020/21)
Percentage of CLA continuously for 2.5 years or more aged under 16 who were living in the same placement for at least 2 years	63.9% [195 of 305]	59.8 [ 201 / 336]	67% [225]	65.8% [244 / 371]	<b>61%</b> <b>[237]</b>	70% (2020/21)	67% (2020/21)	68% (2020/21)
Average number of days between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, adjusted for foster carer adoptions (A10) [Last 12 months]	430 [2015-18]	428 [2016-19]	439 [2018-2021]	466	<b>467</b>	451 (Sep21)	N/A	N/A
Average time between an LA receiving court authority to place a child and the LA deciding on a match to an adoptive family (A2) [Last 12 months]	NND	192 [2016-19]	178 [2018-2021]	144	<b>347</b>	213 (Sep21)	N/A	N/A
Percentage of children adopted from care (as % of total children leaving care) [number of children adopted shown in brackets]	12.3 [39 of 316]	16% [55 / 352]	18% [54 / 304]	19% [65]	<b>5%</b> <b>[2 / 39]</b>	10% (2020/21)	13% (2020/21)	13% (2020/21)
Number of Mainstream Foster Carers (Approved in period YTD)	26	12	21	29	<b>0</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of Friends and Family Foster Carers (Approved in period YTD)	52	91	145	121	<b>22</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of Adopters (Approved in period YTD)	22	25	47	40	<b>8</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A

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

<i>Measure</i>	<i>2018/19</i>	<i>2019/20</i>	<i>2020/21</i>	<i>2021/22</i>	<i>Q1 2022/23</i>	<i>England</i>	<i>North East</i>	<i>Stat Neighbour</i>
Initial Health Assessments completed within 20 working days of the child becoming looked after	63%	73%	73%	59%	<b>67%</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A
CLA with the required number of health assessments	91%	94%	91%	93%	<b>93%</b>	91% (2020/21)	94% (2020/21)	94% (2020/21)
CLA who have had a dental check	85.5%	87%	41%	85%	<b>73%</b>	40% (2020/21)	43% (2020/21)	41% (2020/21)
CLA whose immunisations were up-to-date	99.3%	99.0%	90.0%	90.9%	<b>90.9%</b>	86% (2020/21)	89% (2020/21)	91% (2020/21)
CLA whose development assessments were up to date (CLA 12+ months and aged 5 or younger at 31 March)	95.0%	97.0%	83.0%	98.9%	<b>98.9%</b>	89% (2020/21)	92% (2020/21)	98% (2020/21)
% CLA identified as having a substance misuse problem in the year	1.9%	2.0%	Data Error	0.9%	<b>0.9%</b>	3% (2020/21)	3% (2020/21)	4% (2020/21)
Percentage of new presentations to drug and alcohol treatment during period who were CLA [Number] YTD	10% [18 of 185]	10% [21 of 216]	TBC	17% [27/149]	Data available end Sept	44% (2020/21)	33% (2020/21)	37% (2020/21)
Care leavers aged 17-21 who are pregnant or mothers (as a % of female care leavers)		26.3% [25/95]		29% [32/111]	<b>25%</b> <b>[29/114]</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A
Care leavers aged 17-25 who are pregnant or mothers (as a % of female care leavers)				30% [39/132]	<b>26%</b> <b>[36/137]</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A

What are outcomes like for our care leavers?

<i>Measure</i>	<i>2018/19</i>	<i>2019/20</i>	<i>2020/21</i>	<i>2021/22</i>	<i>Q1 2022/23</i>	<i>England</i>	<i>North East</i>	<i>Stat Neighbour</i>
Percentage of care leavers age 18-21 who have stayed with their foster carer	N/A	N/A	N/A	21% [50]	<b>17%</b> [41]			
Percentage of care leavers aged 17-18 in education, employment or training (EET)	63.9% [53 of 83]	65% [ 55 / 84 ]	76% [ 59 / 78]	66% [55 / 83]	<b>66%</b>	65% (2020/21)	63% (2020/21)	63% (2020/21)
Percentage of care leavers aged 17-18 in suitable accommodation	96.4% [80 of 83]	90% [ 76 / 84 ]	95% [74 / 78]	93% [76 / 82]	<b>91%</b>	91% (2020/21)	94% (2020/21)	93% (2020/21)
Percentage of care leavers aged 17-18 in higher education	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0 / 78]	6% [5 / 83]	<b>3%</b>	4% (2020/21)	4% (2020/21)	0% (2020/21)
Percentage of care leavers aged 19-21 in education, employment or training (EET)	54.0% [87 of 161]	54% [ 94 / 175 ]	56% [110 / 197]	61% [129 / 213]	<b>61%</b>	52% (2020/21)	50% (2020/21)	54% (2020/21)
Percentage of care leavers aged 19-21 in suitable accommodation	94.4% [152 of 161]	83% [ 144 / 174 ]	90% [177 / 196]	85% [186 / 218]	<b>94%</b>	88% (2020/21)	91% (2020/21)	92% (2020/21)
Percentage of care leavers aged 19-21 in higher education	8.7% [14 of 161]	9% [16 / 175 ]	6% [11 / 197]	8% [18 / 213]	<b>11%</b>	6% (2020/21)	7% (2020/21)	8% (2020/21)

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# Children in our Care

Corporate Parenting Panel

30 September 2022

Q1 2022-23

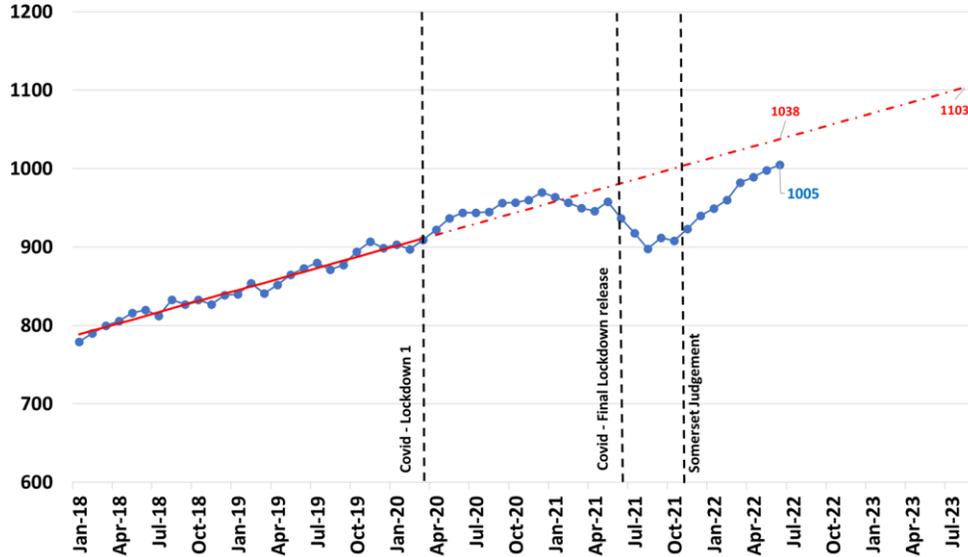


# Children in Care: 1,002

## 20 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

This will increase as UASC move to Durham through the National Transfer Scheme

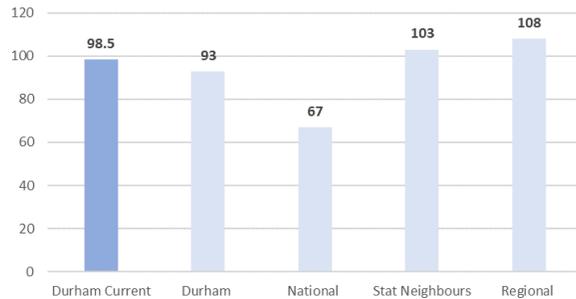
CLA - Trend Forecasts



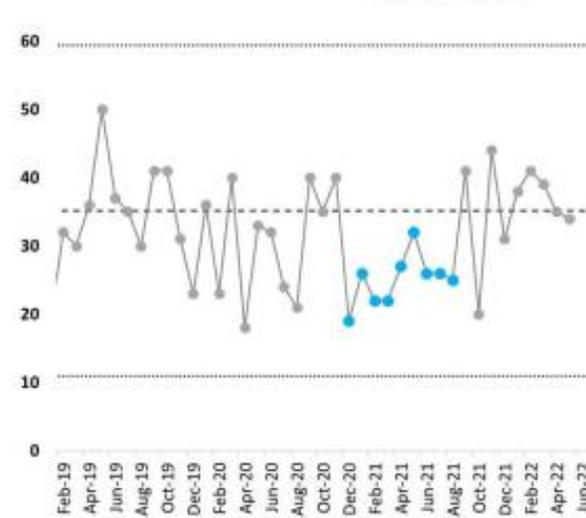
Reducing u1 CLA starts as % of all CLA starts  
Increase in 16+ starts

Increase in overall number of CLA but rate remains below regional and statistical neighbour average

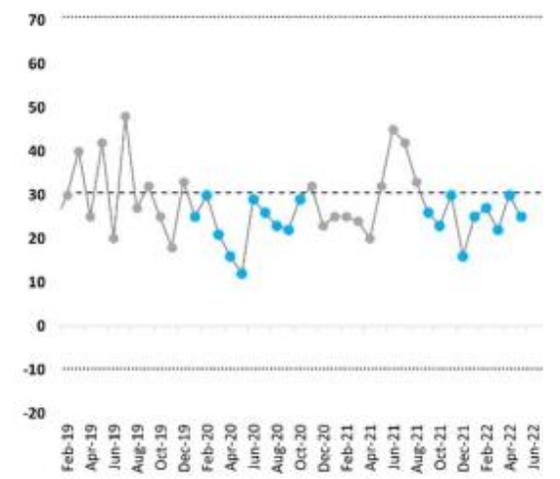
CLA Rate



CLA Starts Trend



CLA Ceases Trend



378 children became looked after  
349 children left care in 2021/22



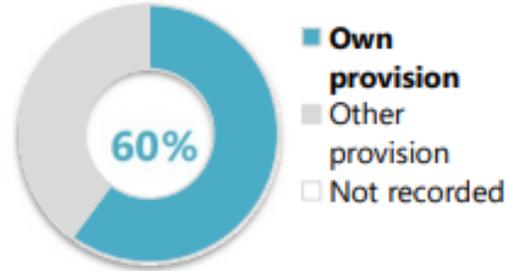
# Placements and Placement Stability

## CLA placements by type and provision

### Foster placements



### Own provision



LA 2020-21 66%  
SNs 2020-21 72%  
Eng 2020-21 71%

LA 2020-21 56%  
SNs 2020-21 57%  
Eng 2020-21 48%

Placement type (open CLA)	Own LA	Private	Other	Total
Foster placement	550	132	46	728
Placed for adoption	17	0	32	49
Placed with parents	0	0	67	67
Independent living	9	21	14	44
Residential employment	0	0	0	0
Residential accommodation	0	0	0	0
Secure Children's Homes	4	1	0	5
Children's Homes	23	70	6	99
Residential Care Home	0	0	0	0
NHS/Health Trust	0	0	1	1
Family Centre	0	1	0	1
Young Offender Institution	0	0	2	2
Residential school	0	0	0	0
Other placements	0	6	0	6
Temporary placement	0	0	0	0
<b>Total placements</b>	<b>603</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>1002</b>

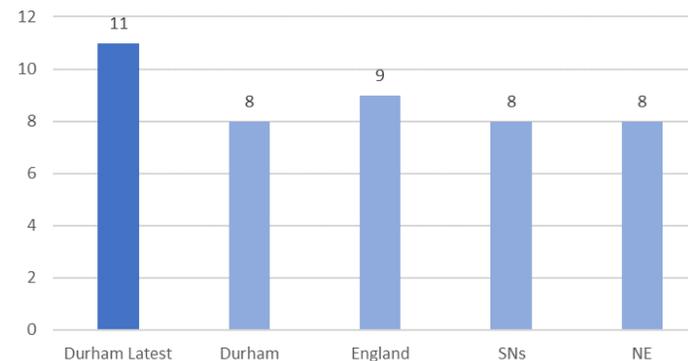
A higher proportion of children in Durham are placed in foster placements and in in-house provision than in our benchmarks. Both have also increased from 2020/21

16% increase in Children in Care from 2019 - highest increase in 14-15 year olds

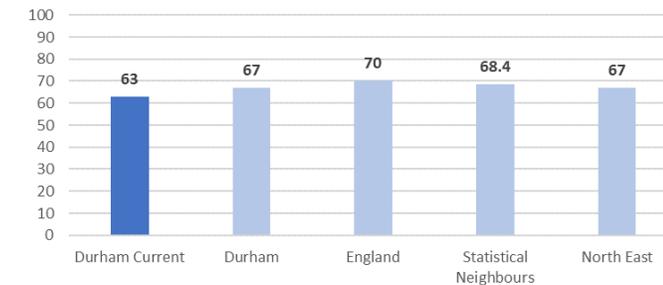
Placement Stability remains an ongoing area of focus – This is currently worse than in 2021 benchmarks

Age	Latest	Jun-19	% Diff
0	65	65	0%
1	56	78	-28%
2	41	45	-9%
3	46	28	64%
4	35	30	17%
5	37	30	23%
6	34	25	36%
7	47	49	-4%
8	56	35	60%
9	42	37	14%
10	63	56	13%
11	48	57	-16%
12	46	51	-10%
13	71	58	22%
14	86	45	91%
15	80	50	60%
16	82	64	28%
17	71	63	13%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1006</b>	<b>866</b>	<b>16%</b>

% CLA with 3+ placements in year

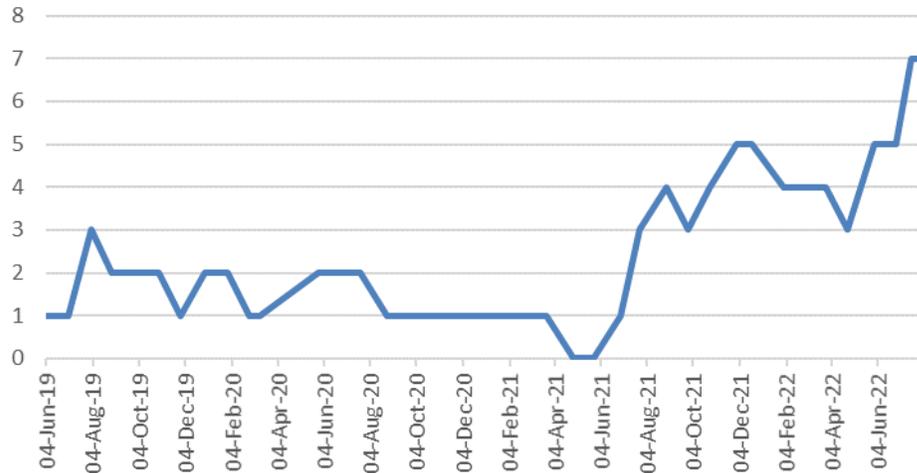


% Children looked after for at least 2.5 years and aged under 16 who have been in the same placement for at least 2 years



# Secure Placements (Durham Children in Care)

Secure Placement Trend



Year	Average
2019/20	1.6
2020/21	1.3
2021/22	3.1
2022/23 YTD	5.3

Increase in children in a secure placement as at point in time

- 11 Durham CiC started a secure placement in the period
- The age at secure placement start ranged from 12-15 years
- There were 5 females and 6 males
- **8 of these placements were in Aycliffe** (3 female / 5 male)
- 3 placements were in other secure accommodation (Clayfield House, Kyloe House, The Good Shepherd)
- **2 Durham CiC were already in Aycliffe on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021**

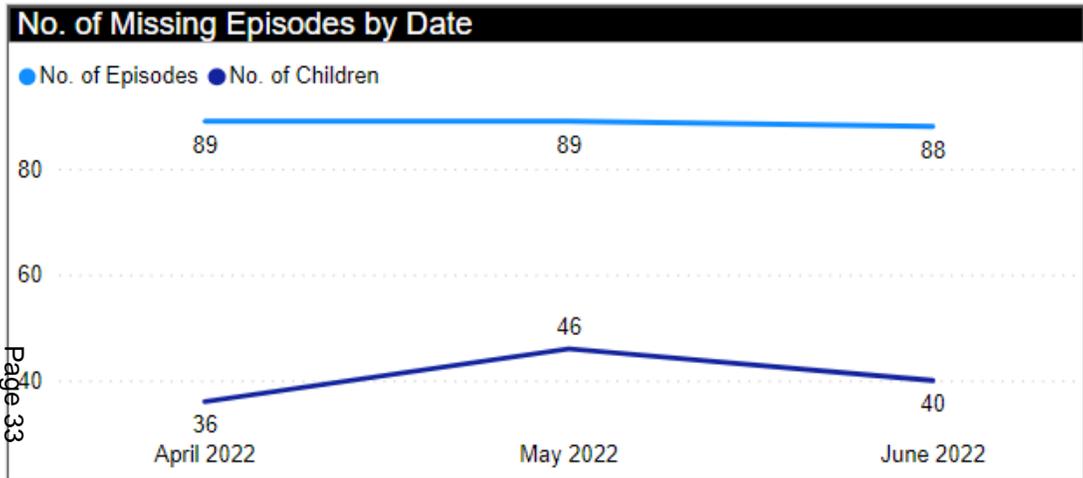
# Missing Children

**77**  
children

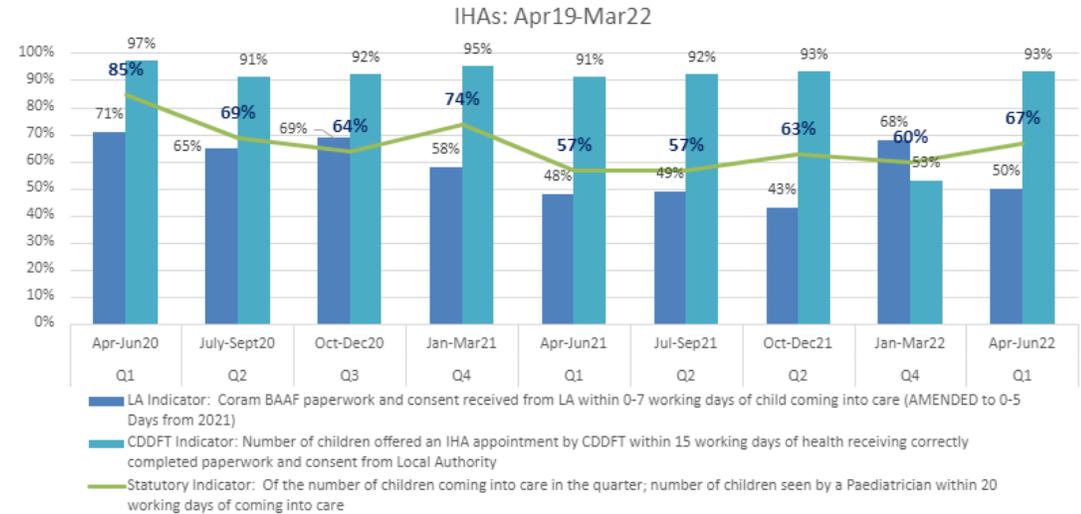
**266**  
missing episodes

Following easing of lockdown restrictions we saw an increase in children reported missing

**Return to Home Interviews**



# Initial Health Assessments

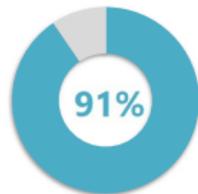


Increase in children in care receiving an Initial Health Assessment within 20 working days of coming into care but 3 in 10 children not receiving IHA in timescale

# Care Leavers

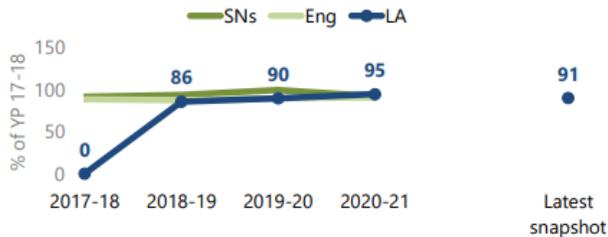
## 283 Care Leavers aged 17-21

### Accommodation suitability of 17-18 year olds



■ Suitable accom  
■ Not suitable  
□ No information

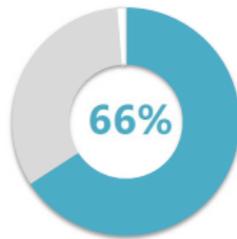
ChAT	Aged 17	Aged 18	Total
Numbers in cohort	4	70	74
In suitable accommodation	100%	90%	91%



### Accommodation types of 17-18 year olds

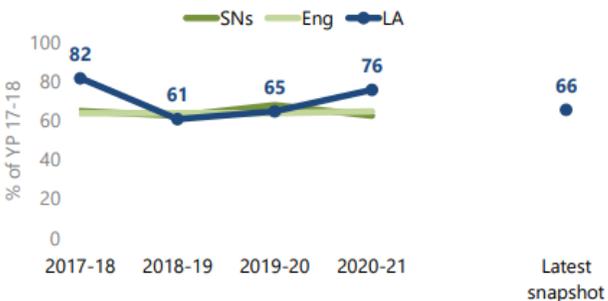
■ Latest snapshot ■ LA 20-21 ■ SNs 20-21 ■ Eng 20-21

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



■ YP in EET ■ NEET  
□ No info

ChAT	Aged 17	Aged 18	Total
Numbers in cohort	5	71	76
In EET	40%	68%	66%

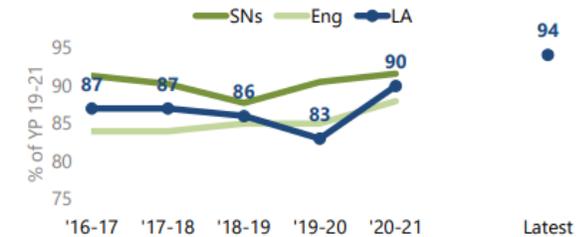


### Accommodation suitability of 19-21 year olds



■ Suitable accom  
■ Not suitable  
□ No information

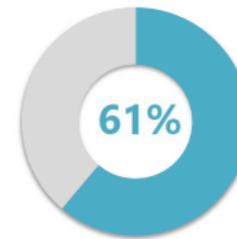
ChAT	Aged 19	Aged 20	Aged 21	Total
Numbers in cohort	72	61	37	170
In suitable accommodation	97%	93%	89%	94%



### Accommodation types of 19-21 year olds

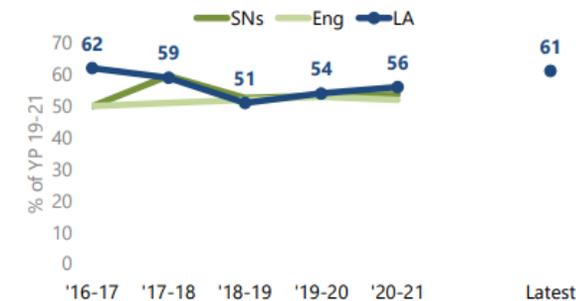
■ Latest snapshot ■ LA 20-21 ■ SNs 20-21 ■ Eng 20-21

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



■ YP in EET ■ NEET  
□ No info

ChAT	Aged 19	Aged 20	Aged 21	Total
Numbers in cohort	72	61	37	170
In EET	58%	64%	62%	61%



**Corporate Parenting Panel****30 September 2022****Supporting Solutions update**
**Report of Lisa Wood, Strategic Manager, Countywide Specialist Services, Durham County Council**
**Electoral division(s) affected:**

None

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 This report outlines the activity and development of the Supporting Solution Service (SSS) from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

**Executive Summary**

- 2 The Supporting Solutions Service continuous to develop to meet the needs of young people, parents and carers. The offer of support from Supporting Solutions includes:
- 3 Edge of care (EoC) support – intensive interventions to young people, parents and carers where there has been a relationship breakdown and without this support it is likely that the young person may need to become looked after or experience a placement move.
- 4 Initially the service was to support young people aged 11-18yrs but we now have a pilot offer of support to young people aged 7-10yrs until March 2023. This is a result of an increase in crisis support for younger children.
- 5 SSS has increased its offer to 16-17 young people on the edge of homelessness to try and repair relationships within the family and to support a young person to remain living with family.
- 6 Family Group Conference (FGC) – support to families to identify and establish a sustainable plan to meet the needs of children and young people within their family unit.

**Recommendation**

- 7 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are recommended to:
  - (a) note the contents of this report.

## Background

- 8 The offer of support from Supporting Solutions includes:
- (a) Edge of care (EoC) support – intensive interventions to young people (aged 7 plus), parents and carers where there has been a relationship breakdown and without this support it is likely that the young person may need to become looked after or experience a placement move;
  - (b) Family Group Conference (FGC) – support to families to identify and establish a sustainable plan to meet the needs of children and young people within their family unit;
  - (c) Access to crisis bed – staffed by SSS and Emergency Duty Team (EDT), this provides an out of hours, one night only crisis bed for a young person when all other options have been explored.

## Outcomes Supporting Solutions

- 9 During 2021/22 Supporting Solutions supported 198 Young People on the edge of care. The details are on the table below.

Outcome	Number of young people
Young people received support	198 YP including 138 new referrals for YP
Young People/occasions emergency bed was accessed	59 YP 73 nights
Number of young people who are in the care of their parents or family/friend at time of closure / writing report plus those rehabilitated home from the care of the LA	130 6 YP rehabilitated home from care of LA
Number of young people who were in a long term placement and remained there	10
Number of young people who have become looked after children during SS interventions	21
Number of young people who are now living in supported accommodation as a CLA	11

Number of young people who are now living in Supported Accommodation not as a CLA	7
Number of young people who were already looked after but moved to a new placement	11
Number of young people detained under the Mental Health Act	1
Number of young people detained in secure accommodation	1

- 10 74% of young people who accessed support in 2021/22 are either at home / with extended family or have remained in their long term placement. This is the same % as the previous year.
- 11 21 young people (10.5%) who accessed support during 2021/22 have become looked after (foster care / children's home) during SSS interventions. On reviewing the situation for these young people it is clear that they came into our care, either because of safeguarding reasons or because home life became so untenable it was not safe for the young person to remain at home. It is also the role of SSS to ensure that all avenues of support have been explored and provide evidence to our social work colleagues where the best outcome for a YP would be to come into care. Some of these young people remain open to interventions from SSS in the hope that in future a return to family care can be supported.
- 12 16/17 years olds (5.5%) moved into supported accommodation and into our care. Some of these young people moved from foster placement to supported accommodation, however, the majority of these young people were supported to remain in the care of their family for as long as possible before the move to supported accommodation was made, this is the same for the 7 16/17 year olds (3.5%) who moved to supported accommodation and did not become a child in care.
- 13 11 young people (5.5%) moved to a new placement as relationship with carers had completely broken down.
- 14 1 young person was detained under the Mental Health Act and 1 young person was detained in secure accommodation (1%).
- 15 During 2021/22 intervention ended with 142 young people, at the point of closure 68% of young people were either at home / with extended family or have remained in their long term placement. There will be

further exploration into sustained outcomes for these YP 1 year post closure.

- 16 The table below illustrates the number of young people in County Durham aged 11yrs and above and the categories of why they came into our care.

Reporting Period	Entered care due to family dysfunction / family in acute stress	Entered care due to abuse or neglect	Other	Total number of YPs aged 11-17 who entered care
2021/2022	23	92	10	124

## Profiling

- 17 For the YP's who started to access support in 2021/22, the following factors were present and had an impact on YP being on the edge of care. The table over the page shows these in % figures for each quarter in 2021/22 as well as a total % and comparisons to the previous 2 years:

Factor	Number of Children (%) Q1 figures	Number of Children (%) Q2 figures	Number of Children (%) Q3 figures	Number of Children (%) Q4 figures	Total for 2021 /22	Total for 2020 /21	Total for 2019 /20
Child Exploitation	37%	37%	48%	37%	40%	30%	30%
Missing from Home	40%	43%	58%	37%	45%	33%	44%
Already living out of parental care as long	33%	23%	16%	31%	25%	17%	17%

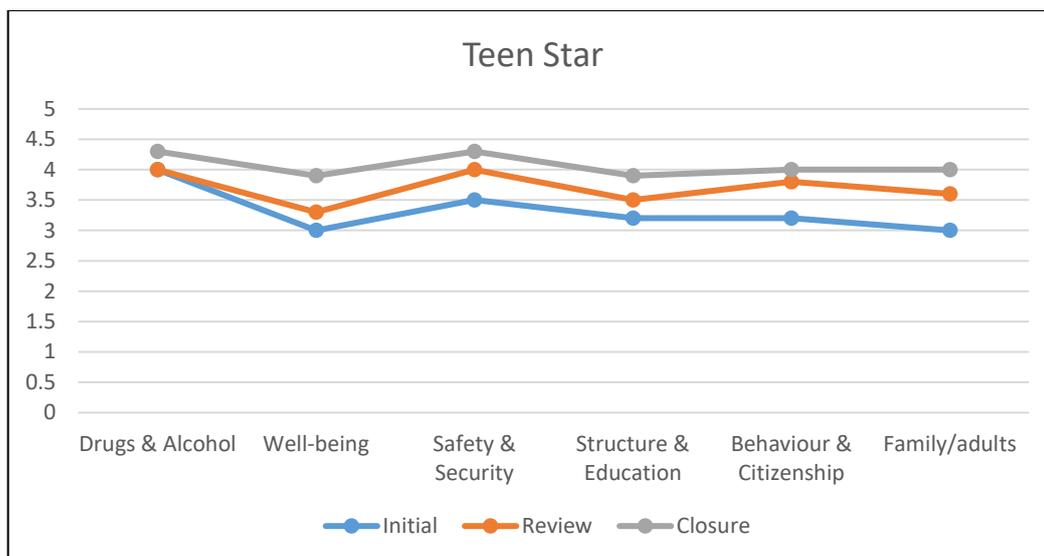
term plan							
Out of Education	23%	20%	17%	14%	18%	13%	21%
Parental Mental Health	49%	45%	32%	38%	41%	41%	27%
YP Mental Health	51%	61%	55%	59%	57%	75%	43%
Substance Misuse	16%	23%	39%	17%	24%	25%	27%
Contact with Police / Offending Behaviour	16%	37%	29%	21%	25%	23%	28%
16/17 year olds at risk of homelessness	7%	11%	26%	14%	15%	11%	9%
Adoption Breakdown	2%	6%	6%	14%	7%	3%	4%

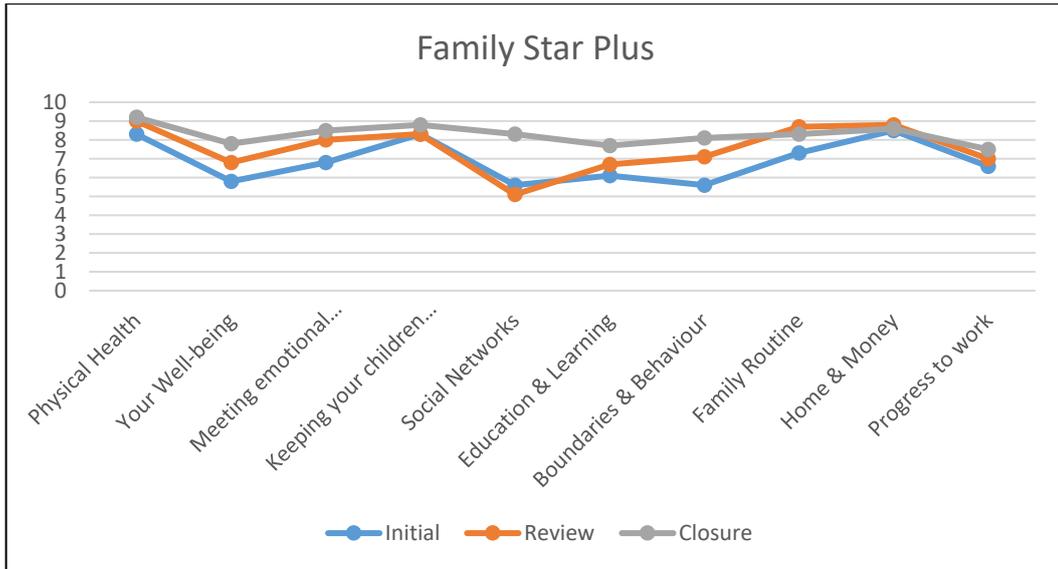
- 18 Since 2019/20 figures show an increase in young people on the edge of care also being subject to / at risk of exploitation. There remains a significant number of young people on the edge of care who have also had Missing from home episodes.

- 19 In addition to the above since 2019/20 we have seen an increase in young on the edge of care also experiencing issues with their own mental health needs, parental mental health needs and an increase in 16/17 year olds at risk of homelessness and adoption breakdowns.

### Individual Young People Journey Mapping (soft outcomes)

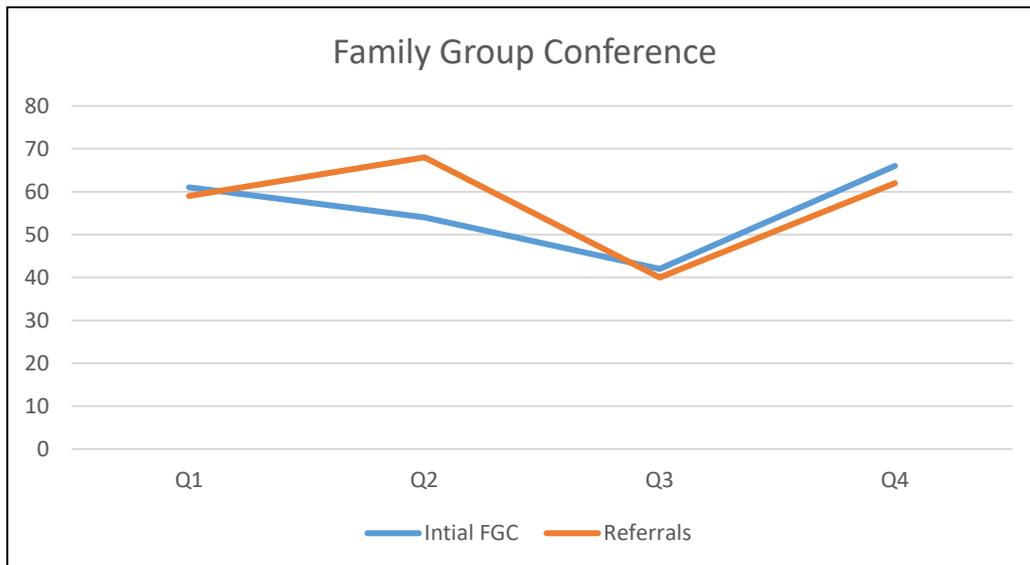
- 20 All young people as part of their engagement with Supporting Solutions are asked to complete the Teen Outcomes Star and parents / carers are asked to complete the Family Star Plus. This helps to identify distance travelled in terms of young people, parents and carers achieving the best possible outcomes. Outcome stars are also used as motivational tools and assist workers in being able to offer targeted support to young people and families.
- 21 The tables demonstrate that in the majority areas of the Teen Star and Family Star Plus young people, parents / carers felt they had made improvements after accessing Supporting Solutions interventions. The average score on the Family Star Plus identifies that parents/carers thought there had been a very slight dip in 'family routines' and 'home and money'.





## Performance – Family Group Conferencing

- 22 The chart below shows the number of initial family group conferences against the number of referrals made.



- 23 In Q3 there was a clear dip in referrals being made for FGC which has impacted on the number of initial FGCs being completed in that quarter. As a result of this, FGC service was promoted further in social work teams and since then referrals and outcomes have increased.
- 24 The tables below show the outcomes following a Family Group Conference, where families devised their own plan which has then been agreed by the social worker at the time of the conference.

<b>FGC - Performance Activity</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Achieved</b>
Referrals Received	233	204
Initial FGC's completed	264	231

<b>Initial FGC – Outcomes for children</b>	<b>Number of Children</b>
Awaiting Outcomes from Assessments and court	32
Rehabilitation plan from care of LA to parents	1
Rehabilitation plan from care of LA to extended family / friends	5
Rehabilitation plan from the care of extended family / friends to the care of parents.	0
Remain with Extended Family / private fostering arrangement	28
Remain looked after by Local Authority	17
Remained with parents with support / safety plan from identified network	145
Alternative Carers Identified	1
Support / safety plan for young person who is in/or moving to - independent living / residential / foster care	2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>231</b>

## Review Family Group Conference

- 25 Every family who completes an initial FGC is offered a review FGC. In 2021/22 FGC reviews were completed for 134 children and young people.

<b>Review FGC – Outcomes for children</b>	
Remained with parent/carer	122
Remained looked after by Local Authority	12
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>134</b>

## Conclusion

- 26 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel will have an oversight and understanding of the Supporting Solutions Service, and will be aware of the continuous developments within the service to ensure we strive to meet the needs of young people, their parent's and carers.

## Authors

Lucy Armstrong                      Tel: 03000 262278

Rachel Holmes                      Tel: 03000 262278

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

Report includes number of young people detailed under the Mental Health Act

Duties under Children & SW Act / Children's Act to act in the best interests of CYP etc

### **Finance**

None

### **Consultation**

None

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

Of the CYP the SSS have supported, 3% were transgender

### **Climate Change**

None

### **Human Rights**

All CYP are supported to identify suitable alternative care arrangements where they cannot continue to remain at home safely.

CYP have access to the DCC complaints process

### **Crime and Disorder**

None

### **Staffing**

Current agreed staff ratios are - EoC – 12 x FTE, EoC 7plus – 4 x FTE, 1x Team Leader (7plus), FGC – 7.5 x FTE. The team also have access to a Therapeutic Social Worker from the Full Circle service and clinical supervision.

Within staffing levels there are currently the following temp posts:

- 2 x FTE EoC workers until March 2023
- 1 x TL and 4 x FTE EoC 7plus workers until March 2023.

Supporting Solutions have increased their pool of sessional workers, this has ensured that there is an additional rota of staff on call to the Emergency Duty

Team and Supporting Solutions to respond to the needs of families experiencing crisis out of hours

**Accommodation**

Should CYP come into the care of the LA, there is a need to ensure there is sufficient suitable placements

**Risk**

The risk of not supporting CYP and their families and carers meant that we are increasing the risk of the young people becoming looked after, or needing to change placements which could cause disruption to the young people.

**Procurement**

None

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# Supporting Solutions Annual Update

Lisa Wood Strategic Manager - Countywide Specialist services



# Supporting Solutions Service

## What we do . . .

### Edge of care

- Work with young people and their families/carers who without intensive support may need to come into care
- Provide tailormade intensive support packages
- Work when families need us most - every evening and weekend

### Family Group Conferencing

- Empower families and wider support network to find their own solutions to prevent children & families coming into care



# Current Developments

- Increase in families presenting in crisis with younger children on the edge of care
- Piloting an Edge of Care Mini's Team working with children 7-11yrs
- Worked with 37 children to date in the pilot – 36 children remained in the care of their parents/extended family - Pilot to be fully evaluated in March 2023
- Extended criteria to work with 16-17yrs on the edge of homelessness



# Edge of Care Outcomes 2021 - 2022

Worked with 198 children and young people

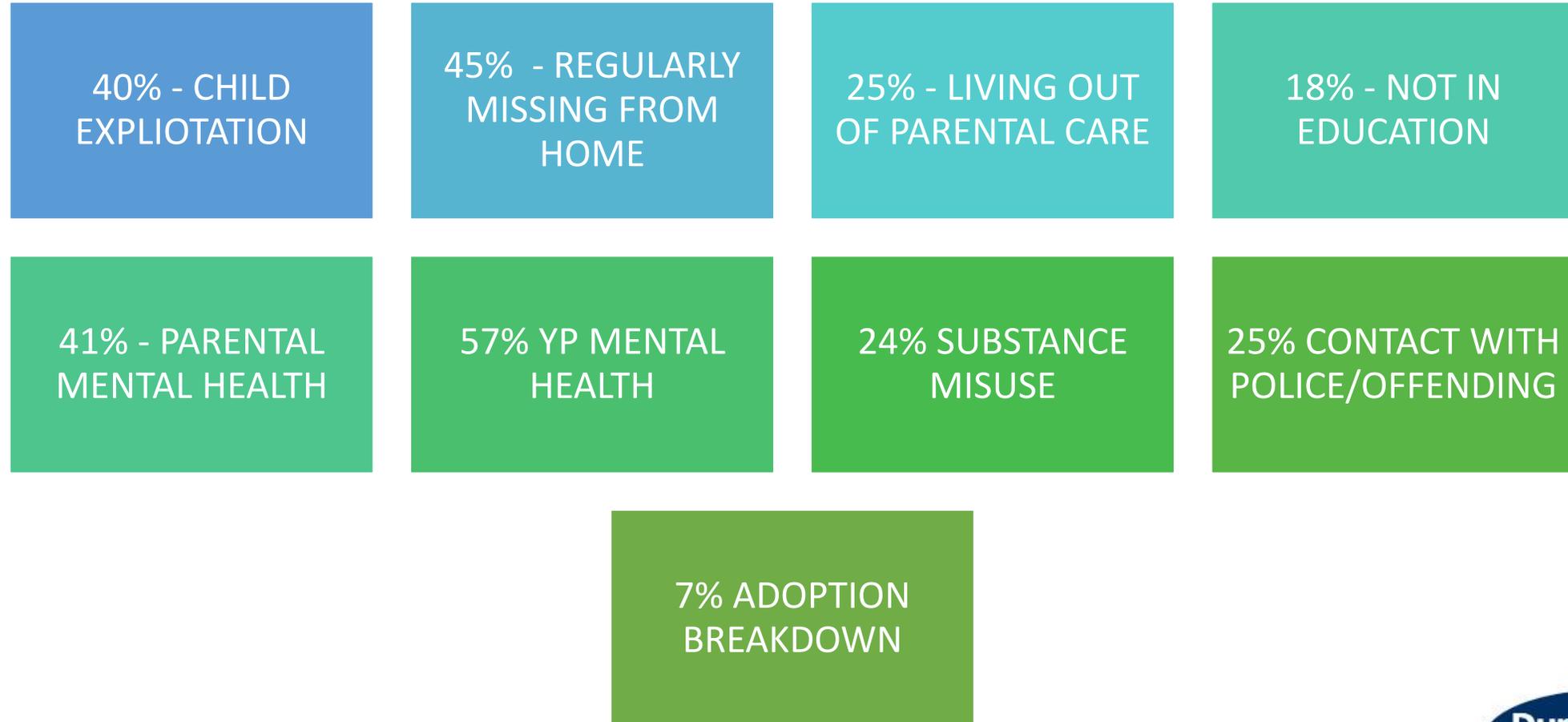
167 (74%) YP's have remained at home or in their long term placement

21 YP's have become looked after. For these YP's this was because their were safeguarding reasons or relationships completely broke down.

16/17yr olds on the edge of homelessness – 5% of YP's moved into supported accommodation and became looked after

3% of 16/17yrs old moved into appropriate accommodation with support but did not become looked after

# Profiles of the Young People on the Edge of care



# Family Group Conferencing Outcomes

145 children remained with parents with support

28 children remain with family members

17 children have remained in care

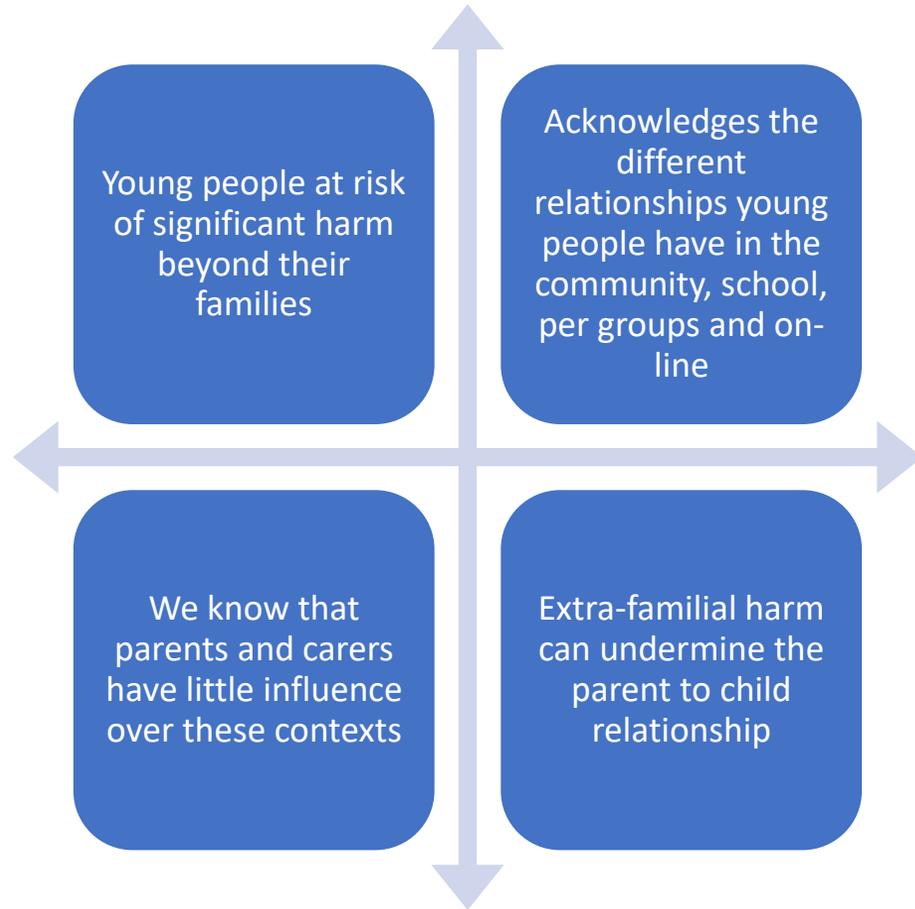
5 children supported back to their parents from care

# Contextualised Safeguarding

Lisa Wood Strategic Manager - Countywide Specialist services



# What is it and what is our Vision/Mission



## Our Vision

- 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

## Our Mission

- Continue to learn about young people's experiences of harm and safety outside the home. Work in partnership with professionals and communities across County Durham, use this learning to increase protection in young people's peer groups, schools and neighbourhoods.



# ASET Team (Adolescent Safeguarding & Exploitation Team)

---

- Team fully operational since Feb 2022
- Works with YP's aged 14-18
  - YP's who are Victims or high risk of Child Exploitation
  - YP's vulnerable to Radicalisation/Extremism
  - YP complex mental health needs – at risk of admission or detained.
  - YP's with complex or multiple needs eg substance misuse impacting on Mental health
- Currently working with 68 YP's
- Providing specialist consultation across Children's Services

# Children who go missing from home/care

- Significant increase in children who go missing from home or care since beginning of covid 19/lockdown
- Recent Ofsted - Jun 2022 Inspection – acknowledged impact of the increase and the need to improve our response
- Additional 2 x dedicated Missing Co-ordinators
- Return to home interviews within 72 hours of YP being found
- Full review - response to children who go missing
- YP's we are really worried about - strategy meetings/multi-agency response and disruption plans



# Child Exploitation (Contextualised Safeguarding)

- Full Systems Review - Learning from Best Practice, Ofsted and inspection feedback – contextualised safeguarding pilot sites
- Working in partnership with the Children's Society to implement Child Exploitation Prevention Toolkit
- Contextualised Safeguarding – level 2 – safeguarding of places and spaces
- Identified pilot site – implement proof of Concept model – Jan 2023



## Next steps and Support needed – Contextualised Safeguarding - Places and Spaces Pilot

- Stanley area
- Community Guardians
- Local services
- Dedicated time
- Share information/intelligence
- Record information
- Collective action and response



**Corporate Parenting Panel****30 September 2022****Annual Report of Durham County  
Council's Fostering Service****Report of Jodie Henderson, Practice Lead Children in Care,  
Children and Young People's Services, Durham County Council****Electoral division(s) affected:**

None.

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 This report outlines the work of the Fostering Service during the period 2021-22 and the activity of the Fostering Panels.
- 2 The Annual Report of the Fostering Service 2021-22 is attached as Appendix 2 of the report.

**Executive summary**

- 2 This report seeks to provide an overview of the achievements and challenges of the fostering service in the context of an increase in the population of our Children Looked After and alongside national fostering trends.
- 3 The report provides a summary of the placement of children showing the usage of inhouse foster carers and increasing numbers of family and friends' carers, as well as the use of independent fostering agency and children's home placements.
- 4 There is an overview of recruitment and retention activity, exploring in particular marketing activity and how this has impacted on our recruitment performance.
- 5 As we are aware of the importance of retention of foster carers the report provides a summary of the support provided to foster carers. In acknowledgement of the need to retain the best foster carers for Durham's children the report includes information regarding the review process for our foster carers and fostering panel activity over the last 12 months.
- 6 The report sets out the priorities for the coming year and developments to increase placement choice for our most complex young people.

## **Recommendations**

- 7 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are recommended to:
- (a) Note the contents of the report.
  - (b) Consider the ways in which they can actively undertake their responsibilities as Corporate Parents and aid the retention and recruitment of the best foster carers for Durham's children.
  - (c) Acknowledge the challenges in recruiting and retaining foster carers and the direct impact on the lives of children in our care.

## Background

- 8 This report provides an overview of the work of the fostering team and the challenges that are faced in securing the right fostering home for each child. Each child has differing needs and it is necessary for the service to have carers with a range of skills and abilities to meet those needs.
- 9 Some children come into care for a very short period because of an acute family crisis other children need to be cared for throughout their childhoods. Most children who need foster care have witnessed scary adult behaviour and experienced loss. They need to be provided with safe alternative family-based care until either the issues can be resolved and they can go home or the adults agree they need to stay in care.
- 10 The needs of children in care mirror those of their peers with the additionality of the trauma they have suffered. Children want to go to school, be with their friends, grow, explore, and thrive. They make mistakes and marvellous achievements, and foster carers are the adults who walk alongside them supporting them and their families as they do so throughout their childhoods.
- 11 Nationally and locally the ability to recruit foster carers is increasingly difficult. There are many theories as to the cause for this, the pandemic, family finances and cost of living pressures, negative media about children in care and social workers to name a few.
- 12 In Durham a dedicated part of the fostering team work to identify new carers, to train and recruit them. This activity takes place at planned recruitment events which while are back to face to face, did continued virtually throughout the pandemic.
- 13 The recruitment of foster carers is however only successful in meeting the sufficiency challenges if retention remains high also. This year despite a record number of newly recruited cares the overall figure of increase is 8 carers because of the number leaving.
- 14 The fostering community is aging, and some people choose to retire, or they have a change in life circumstances, others choose to foster for private agencies, often as the financial rewards are significantly higher and sometimes a foster carer falls below the expected standard and must leave. Therefore, moving forward, the recruitment activity is needed to be 4-fold of this record-breaking year.

- 15 The fostering team are ambitious and drive forward with ideas to improve their service. The development of a Mockingbird fostering hub to aid the placement of children who might otherwise need to be placed in a children's home has been well received. Lots of carers are interested in fostering in this way and it is hoped that we can establish 2 hubs within the year to allow a meaningful evaluation before we consider further expansion.
- 16 This report complies with the statutory requirements as set out under Regulation 35 (review of quality of care) of the Fostering Regulations 2011. These require the responsible individual should monitor all matters set out in Schedule 7, which relate to standards of care and the overall management of the service and to improve the quality of the foster care provided by the Fostering Service.

### **Conclusion**

- 17 The information provided within the attached report fulfils this duty and is intended to provide the Corporate Parenting Panel with an overview of the service provided to children in care and their foster carers.

**Author: Anne Middleton**

**Tel: 03000 266333**

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

The Children Act 1989 requires a local authority who are looking after a child, to place that child with a foster care, if it is not possible to arrange for the child to live with a parent or family member. The local authority's duties in relation to the fostering service are set out in the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011; the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards and the Statutory Guidance contained in Volume 4 of the Children Act Guidance. The Regulatory Framework for the inspection of fostering services by Ofsted is contained in the Care Standards Act 2000.

### **Finance**

This report has no direct financial implications on the planned activity and potential expenditure of this area of the service but the success of in the inhouse fostering service ensures children services can minimise the financial impact of having to source suitable externally provided placements at a higher cost.

### **Consultation**

None.

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

None.

### **Human Rights**

None.

### **Crime and Disorder**

None.

### **Staffing**

None.

### **Accommodation**

None.

### **Risk**

None.

### **Procurement**

None.

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## **Appendix 2: Annual Report of Durham County Council's Fostering Service**

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Attached as a separate document



# Annual Report of the Fostering Service 2021-22



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## Introduction

This report provides a description of the structure, an overview and summary of the activity of the Fostering Service during 2021-2022.

In Durham, we pride ourselves on knowing our children and young people well and supporting our foster carers to be the best they can be. We understand that it takes a special person to be a foster carer and with the right support, encouragement, commitment, and passion, together we can achieve great things with the children in our care and their families. Our fostering service is ambitious, and we seek to be the driving force in ensuring that all our foster carers and the children and young people in their care benefit from the people who are around them who are as passionate and committed as they are. We are exceptionally proud of our foster carers and the children and young people in their care. When we can talk about the achievements of the children in foster care and of the foster carers it is both humbling and motivating. Much of this can be seen in or heard as part of our radio, news, tv advert and social media campaigns.

The recruitment of foster carers to meet the demand is a considerable challenge and it is acknowledged that this is a national difficulty. For children in Durham who come into care, or those whose plan is to remain in care, this can make it more difficult to find the right fostering home to meet their needs. Investment in the service to address these challenges has been requested.

Durham County Council Fostering Service is responsible for:

- The recruitment and assessment of foster carers and connected carers
- Ensuring support is provided as well as supervision and training to all our foster carers including connected carers.
- Ensuring the provision of safe and supportive foster families for our children and young people who have a wide range of different needs and providing the opportunity to keep brothers and sisters together wherever possible and appropriate.
- Providing a range of homes with foster carers with a varied skill and experience base.
- The range of foster homes offered includes respite and short term breaks which includes Family and Friends households specialising in offering support to children with disabilities and their families; placements with foster carers who have particular experience and skills in transition to permanence through adoption, return home or placement with family; placements providing permanence through long term fostering, providing a family based model of care to support children and young people through to independence and beyond, as part of our Staying Put offer.
- Promoting placement stability and providing the appropriate help and support when things get difficult.

In 2021 we set out to achieve some key priorities to help our current foster carers and the children and young people in their care. These were:

- To increase the number of Durham County Council Foster Carers.
- Review the marketing strategy to attract and retain a wider group of fostering families who can offer a range of fostering options for our children looked after.
- Improve the timeliness and quality of family finding across the service.
- Reduce unnecessary placement moves for children and young people and strengthen the matching arrangements for them.
- Use reporting data to better understand how our fostering service is performing and prioritising key areas of activity across the service.
- Review the training and support offer to our foster carers.
- Evidence the good work we do in ensuring the voice of children and their carers informs the service we provide.
- Ensure all foster care reviews are timely and where there is delay the reason for this are understood and resolved at the earliest opportunity.

## **Fostering Service**

All mainstream and connected foster carers are supported and supervised by a qualified social worker (Fostering Social Worker) meeting regulatory visiting and supervision requirements. The Service continues to have Service Manager who oversees and manages the running of the service. The service is further supported by a Strategic Manager who takes responsibility for driving the service forward and planning for future need.

The Recruitment and Retention Team, work with marketing to attract and recruit potential foster carers. They assess and train them and provide the initial support to new foster carers. They also organise and run events across the year for our foster carers and children and young people to show our thanks for all of their hard work as part of our retention strategy.

There are two Fostering Support Teams, one for the North of the county and one for the South. They support all our foster carers with good quality supervision and make sure they have all of the support they need, when they need it.

Due to the volume of demand in relation to assessing and supporting our connected carers, we developed a second team, with a dedicated team manager. This was to ensure that there was robust management oversight of the assessments for our connected carers and those who became Special Guardians. This has been effective in improving the timeliness of the assessments and the provision of the support matched to the specific needs of connected carers.

The Placement Team works with the Families First, Pre-birth, Children with Disabilities and Children in Care Teams and the Fostering Teams to find the best match possible for any child or young person who needs to live with foster carers.

Whether this be when they initially come into care or if they need to move for any reason and this can be either in a planned way or on an emergency basis.

In relation to financial support for our foster carers, Durham operates a Payment for Skills (PFS) model for its approved foster carers. All foster carers irrespective of type of approval are supported via weekly child age related allowance payments. The PFS model is currently under review.

In order to ensure that our foster carers are receiving a competitive rate that reflects their skills and experience, we commissioned a review of our PFS's model and the outcome of this is currently being considered with recommendations due to be shared and plans to implement mid-2022.

We also support our foster carers through regular support groups which were held virtually via teams when Covid restrictions were in place but are gradually moving to face to face. We are going to offer a hybrid model for support groups given the success of the virtual ones as they have allowed a lot more people to attend. However, we also know that a lot of our foster carers have missed face to face support groups, which allow for more informal support and make for easier and more relaxed conversations. The Launchpad, which is a support group specifically for new foster carers in their first year has continued and has progressed to some face-to-face groups more quickly at the group's request. This is a small group of carers which makes organisation for these groups a lot easier. Guest speakers have been invited to the support groups covering new topics those that carers have requested more information on.

Training has also progressed down the hybrid route as again virtual training allows a lot more people to participate at any one time. Our Workforce Development Lead has worked very hard over the past 12 months to pull together a comprehensive training package. He has also worked with the Systems team to enable our foster carers to access all training via the Durham Learning & Development Hub. This allows them to keep a record of all of their training in one central place and makes it easier to access for their reviews etc. One full programme of the Strengthening Care course has also been completed with really positive feedback and a second is planned for June 2022. We have continued to run our Skills to Foster Training with the help and support of our experienced foster carers and care experienced young people are involved in the Skills to Foster training.

We work closely with the IRO service, which is independent to the Fostering Service. The main service they provide is one of ensuring that our foster carers are reviewed every year by an Independent Reviewing Officer in line with the fostering standards. We have 2 dedicated Independent Reviewing Officers, and they ensure that the foster carers have the best support possible and that they continue to meet the fostering standards. The IRO regularly praises our foster carers for all the work they do, the training they are offered and their commitment to the children they care for. The support offered by the FSW's is also regularly recognised and praised.

## To Increase the number of Durham County Council Foster Carers.

The major challenge during 2021-2022 for Durham Fostering Service and nationally for other Local Authorities and Independent Fostering Agencies remained the recruitment of new foster carers to the service. Even as restrictions lifted the number of enquiries remained lower than the previous 2 years.

**Table 1 – Recruitment and Retention figures for 2021/22**

	Initial Enquiries	Expressions of Interest	Initial Visits	Foster Carers Approved
2019-2020	353	122	68	7
2020-2021	278	88	49	25
2021-2022	210	146	76	29

Although Initial Enquiries were low, the team has worked hard to make sure that 'Expressions of Interest' were higher than previous years approximately 40% more than in 2020-2021. Initial visits were 35% higher than the previous year and we actually approved 29 new foster carers which was a significant achievement given the number of initial enquiries and also the national shortage.

In 2021-22, we de-registered 21 foster carers giving us an overall increase of +8 mainstream foster families. The reasons for the de-registrations varied from significant health issues either of themselves or close family, retirement, starting a new job, through to Standards of Care issues.

## Review the Marketing Strategy to attract and retain a wider group of Fostering Families who are able to offer a range of fostering options to our children looked after.

Direct face to face marketing activities across the year have again been hampered by Covid restrictions. To compensate for not being able to meet with people face to face at events, either to recruit or in relation to activities with our current foster carers, marketing has focused on social media campaigns, radio adverts, digital campaigns, Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), local magazines such, a huge poster outside County Hall and we also we had our first national tv advert aired in March 2022.

We have held regular virtual Q & A sessions and a year-round digital campaign. As we moved into 2022, we were able to do more face to face recruitment sessions in the Town Hall. There were also still periods of increased advertising at key times



of the year. We continued to use real carers and real stories in our campaigns and challenged stereotypes showing our inclusive approach.

Our targeted campaigns focussed on foster families for teenagers, brothers and sisters, children with complex needs and unaccompanied asylum seekers. We produced a whole new range of advertising leaflets and material focusing on these groups of children and young people.



We have several unique selling points in Durham Fostering Service which includes:

- A wide range of children requiring foster placements
- Full Circle and Clinical Psychologist
- A comprehensive personal development package
- Support Groups including a one solely for new foster carers.
- Fostering Family Retention events
- M8's group for carers own children
- An active Children in Care Council providing training for prospective carers, and involvement in recruitment activities, highly valued by prospective carers
- The involvement of existing foster carers in supporting/ mentoring prospective carers
- Independent Advice and Mediation Service.

We believe retention events are invaluable as a way of thanking our foster carers for all of their hard work. In 2021-2022 we still started with virtual events but as the year progressed, we were able to hold some face to face events with the first one being a visit to Hall Hill Farm by the M8's group in August followed by a Halloween event in October in Hardwick Park.

Unfortunately, we were unable to arrange anything at Christmas due to covid numbers rising, however we did have a competition for our children and young people to decorate a Christmas tree bauble.



In March 2022 we were able to have our Foster Carer Awards, the first in nearly 3 years. This was held at the Gala theatre and was a huge success. Due to number of awards we had we have planned a second awards event with an afternoon tea for the 5 & 10 years long service awards.



## Placement Stability and Sufficiency Strategy

### Reduce unnecessary placement moves for children and young people and strengthen the matching arrangements for them

Over the year the number of all children looked after, rose from 937 on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021 to 982 on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2022. The table below shows that the number of children with in house foster carers did drop over the first half of the year, however, has increased over the second half of the year and is back over 400.

The number of children and young people with connected foster carers dropped slightly but then started to rise again.

The number of children with IFA foster carers remained stable for most of the year only increasing in February and March.

**Table 2 – Number of children in placement type 2021/22**

Date	Children in In House Foster Care	Children in IFA Placements	Children with Connected Carers	Total Number of Children in Foster Care
25 <sup>th</sup> March 2021	396	166	137	699
25 <sup>th</sup> October 2021	380	166	128	674
28 <sup>th</sup> March 2022	407	173	143	723

### Improve the timeliness and quality of family finding across the service

Over the last year there has been a continued focus on family finding and ensuring we help our children and young people to live in the right foster family for them. We continued to have a family finding clinic every two weeks which increased to weekly halfway through the year. The focus of the clinic is on finding appropriate permanent carers for children and young people in line with their plan for permanence.

Recruiting foster carers to offer a permanent home is also part of recruitment campaigns and all new foster carers are assessed and approved at panel for permanence, even if at the beginning of their fostering journey their preference is short term placements. This reduces delay if a child or young person bond with their carers, and it develops into a permanent arrangement.

**Table 3 – Family Finding Activity 2021/22**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Ongoing Active family Finding</b>	<b>Matching report in progress</b>	<b>Matches approved</b>
31 <sup>st</sup> May 2020	36	49	7
25 <sup>th</sup> March 2021	38	53	12
30 <sup>th</sup> September 2021	45	53	14
31 <sup>st</sup> December 2021	44	59	1
31 <sup>st</sup> March 2022	28	48	16

### **Disruption activity**

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, there were 9 children and young people whose placement with mainstream foster carers disrupted. They had been placed with their foster carers and their match had been agreed by ADM.

The 9 children and young people ranged in age from 10 to 17 and they had lived with their foster families for between 4 and 8 years. The reasons for the disruptions varied from health issues pertaining to the carers, to escalating behaviour of the young person, the impact on other children in the foster family and the skills of the foster carer in relation to teenagers.

Disruption meetings were held, and all disruption meetings are chaired by an IRO to ensure that patterns and themes are picked up and learning is gained from the issues highlighted. We then use the learning from this to better inform our training for carers, intervention and support offered to carers and when supporting children and young people in their new foster family.

### **Fostering Panels**

The volume of connected foster carers has increased significantly over the past year and the team are getting involved in assessments earlier in the process. This means that the Agency Decision Maker is approving connected foster carers following panel recommendation prior to children being placed as well as when they have been placed in an emergency under Regulation 24.

Previously we had 2 connected carers panels and 1 mainstream panel. The connected carers panel purely approved family and friends who have been assessed

as connected foster carers for a particular child/ren. The volume of carers being assessed as connected carers has meant that we have had to arrange a third panel to sit every month to approve the carers and a third Panel Chair was successfully recruited. We have also been able to recruit a further cohort of independent people to sit on the panel along side social workers.

The mainstream panel makes recommendations regarding the approval of our mainstream foster carers and also reapproval recommendation for any carer, either mainstream or connected foster carer, after their first review. This panel has remained very busy and at times we have had to put an extra panel on in the month to make sure that all carers could be presented.

Our panel chairs are very experienced and manage the panels well. All panel members have a yearly appraisal, are kept up to date with the service and any changes and have at least 1 training day over year. We have a part-time Panel Advisor who advises on all 4 panels, which provides consistency across them all.

## **Fostering and Liquid Logic and Signs of Safety**

### **Liquid Logic and the Fostering Module**

In 2021 – 22, the fostering management team have continued to work with the systems team and performance team to improve the electronic recording system and our use of our performance data.

We continue to use Liquid Logic and have introduced new forms to enable smoother transition through the system and better tracking of the information to enable us to be fully informed of our performance around dates and meeting regulatory timescales.

This helps us to provide daily accurate information regarding the availability we have across our foster families in relation to being able to match and place a child in a fostering home.

We also now have all the information we need to ensure our assessments are completed in a timely fashion, that the records of our foster carers receiving regular supervision, that unannounced visits have been completed and the review has been held within 12 months are available in real time. We can track children and young people's health assessments and dental check ups to ensure that they are having all of their needs met while with our carers. Team Managers can understand caseloads and focus on quality across all areas as everything is accessible on one system.

We have progressed well with our Connected Carers dashboard and are hoping to be able to access all the relevant data and timescales we need to measure performance by mid 2022.

## **Signs of Safety/Success**

The Signs of Safety/Success practice model is more established now in the Fostering Service. There are practice leads in each team, and all staff have been trained. All of the forms used in fostering service are written using the signs of safety/success language and model, including the supervision documents, foster carer review documents and family finding form.

There are regular workshops for the practice leads who then feed back into the teams in relation to improvements being made in each area. This all feeds into the Quality Improvement Board.

All Fostering Social Worker's conduct foster carers supervision using this model. Foster carers understand the language both in relation to themselves and their documents and forms but also in relation to the child/young person in and their and their documents, including their safety plan and care plan. Signs of Safety/Success training for foster carers is to be part of the training programme moving forward.

Reflective group supervision is now embedded into all of the teams in the service.

## **Continued focus on the voice of the child and carers**

To truly understand what children need and what they are wanting to tell us we try to make sure we involve them and listen to them every step of the way.

We work very closely with the Children in Care Council and they are heavily involved in shaping the service moving forward from the language we use to the training of new and existing foster carers. The young people formulated and present a whole section of training to new and existing foster carers, also to staff, managers including senior managers and the Corporate Parenting Board.

They also work alongside the teams in our events such as Halloween and Christmas. We involve young people in the recruitment of new staff to the service, as they are part of the interview panel.

We don't only focus on the voice of the child who is looked after in a fostering home, but we also work with and support the children of our foster carers. During the training of prospective foster carers, a training session is offered specifically to carers sons and daughters which is age appropriate. This offers children the opportunity to meet other's whose parents are undergoing the assessment process, to share their views, ask questions and talk about any potential concerns.

In previous years foster carers children told us how they feel when a child or young person moves on from their home and how they felt they weren't considered or thought about in this process. In order to better hear the experiences of children who foster the M8's group was formed which supports them and was designed by them, it is run how they want it, when they want it and they can do things they want to do.

We also use the Mind of My Own app. This is to enable all children and young people, not just those involved in the Children in Care Council, to be able to share their views and worries at any time. They can share their views in readiness for their own reviews, also on the foster carers for their reviews and they can contact their SW at any time with a query or worry. All fostering social workers have been trained to use it and support and encourage children and young people to use it when they talk to them.

## **Mockingbird Model**

As part of our plans to increase our ability to find fostering homes for Durham's children we started our journey with the Fostering Network in relation to introducing the Mockingbird Model to Durham. This is a model that was developed in America and is based on the family network model. We have had the funding agreed to set up our first Hub which we plan on being in place in the summer of 2022.

This model works with a group of foster carers forming a 'constellation' of support around a hub carer. This model has shown significant progress in improving the stability of fostering homes and of aiding foster carers to meet the needs of children who might otherwise have needed children's home care.

The first Mockingbird constellation in Durham will begin to be established from July 2022 and it is hoped that within 12 months we will have 2 constellations and be able to formally review the effectiveness of the model in Durham.

## **Conclusion**

The fostering service in Durham is currently working at capacity to meet the needs of children in care. The service is focused on the retention of the best foster carers for our children and the recruitment of new carers to meet children's needs.

We need to support our carers to feel able and equipped to provide stable family-based care to children of all ages. We need to be able to keep brothers and sisters together and to support teenagers and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children as well as smaller children and babies.

The staff within the service are ambitious and keen to implement new ways of working to assist in the meeting of our fostering sufficiency challenges. The Mockingbird Model provides an optimistic platform on which to build resilience into fostering homes with dedicated support and training.

We need to make sure that foster carers for Durham are aware at every level of the organisation how much their contribution is valued. We need to support them to provide the best standards of care possible and to hold them to account for doing so.

We need the successes of our fostered children celebrated at every opportunity with acknowledgement of individual achievements to aid future foster carers to see the benefits to them and to children fostering can bring.

To do this the service needs to be able to meet the need for the recruitment and retention of sufficient carers with the allocation of adequate resources.

## **Key Priorities for 2022-2023**

- To increase the number of Durham County Council Foster Carers by 30.
- To increase the availability of fostering homes able to care for teenagers, brothers and sisters, children with disabilities and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- Review the marketing strategy to attract and retain a wider group of fostering families who are able to offer a range of fostering options for our children in care.
- To improve the timeliness and quality of family finding to reduce delay for children in knowing they are living in a home that they can stay in.
- Reduce placement moves for children and young people to improve short- and long-term stability index's to within or to exceed regional comparators.
- Use reporting data to understand fostering service performance and drive improvements.
- Review the training and support offer to our foster carers.
- Improve the recording of the voice of children and their carers and how this informs the service we provide.
- Establish the first mockingbird hub in July 2022 and have a second one up and running before the end of March 2023.

## Appendix 1

The Children Act 1989 requires a local authority who are looking after a child, to place that child with a foster care, if it is not possible to arrange for the child to live with a parent or family member. The local authority's duties in relation to the fostering service are set out in the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011; the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards and the Statutory Guidance contained in Volume 4 of the Children Act Guidance. The Regulatory Framework for the inspection of fostering services by Ofsted is contained in the Care Standards Act 2000.

The work undertaken by the Service is governed by legislation which include:

- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Children & young Persons Act 2008
- Care Standards Act 2000
- Fostering Services Regulations 2011
- Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services 2011
- The Children Act Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, placement and case Review 2010 & Updated 2013 & Updated 2015.

# Fostering Strategy and Mockingbird Fostering Model

Corporate Parenting Panel Overview  
of Strategy and Service Activity  
September 2022



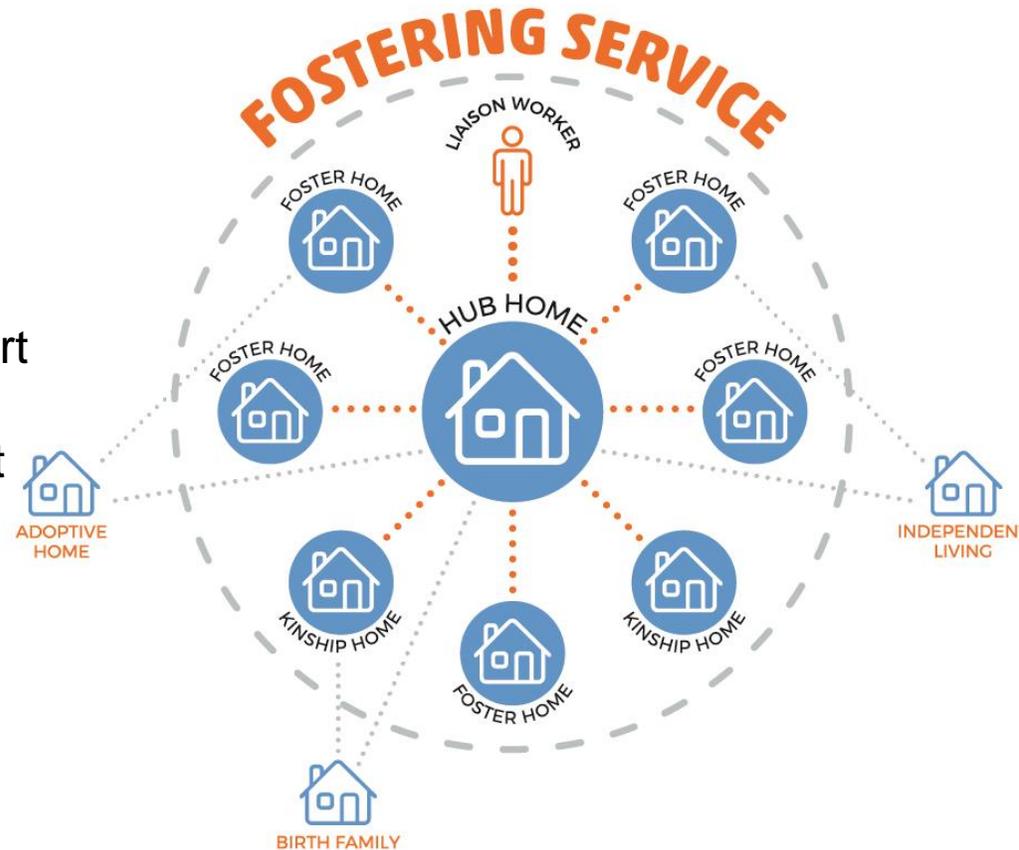
# Key Priorities

- To increase the number of available Foster Carers
- To increase the availability of fostering homes for older children, brothers and sisters, disabled children and unaccompanied asylum seeking children.
- Try to recruit carers from all different parts of Durham with all different skills and interests able to meet children's needs.
- Find the right home for a child at the right time where they can stay as long as they need to.
- Provide the very best training offer to carers.
- Make sure that children's experiences of being in foster care are recorded to best support them and to keep improving foster care generally.

## Mockingbird

### Key elements:

- Peer guidance and support
- Sleepovers
- Training and development
- Socials
- Support to permanence
- Siblings and birth family



### Key Fidelity:

- 6-10 families
- 6-18 children
- 2 spare beds
- Diverse

### Key roles:

- Hub home carer
- Liaison Worker
- Satellite carer



# Impact



- Improved placement stability – reduced placement breakdown
- Improved experience of peer support
- Improved sibling contact
- Improved process and experience of sleepovers
- Improved skills, confidence and role satisfaction for foster carers
- Improved levels of carer retention and recruitment

# Progress so far..

- **Forming and introduction phase**

  - Formal planning meetings/Info sharing

  - Informal park or soft play visits

  - Carer WhatsApp group

  - Invites to birthday parties

- **Official Launch**

  - Event planning

  - Sept 2022

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