



Corporate Parenting Panel

Date **Friday 9 June 2023**

Time **9.30 am**

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

Business

Part A

Items which are open to the press and public

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Substitute Members
3. Minutes of the meeting held on 19 May 2023 (Pages 3 - 12)
4. Declarations of interest
5. Number of Children Looked After and Care Leavers - Verbal update from the Deputy Corporate Director, Children and Young People's Services
6. Ofsted Updates - Verbal update from the Deputy Corporate Director, Children and Young People's Services
7. Proud Moments - Verbal update from the Strategic Manager
8. Children in Care Council Update - Presentation of the young people from the Children in Care Council (Pages 13 - 16)
9. Performance Update - Report of the Corporate Equality and Strategy Manager (Pages 17 - 34)
10. Annual Report on the Adoption Service 2022/2023 - Report of the Head of Children's Social Care (Pages 35 - 62)
11. Progress report on Children Looked After in the Virtual School: Update for Autumn and Spring Term - Report of the Virtual School Head (Pages 63 - 74)
12. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.
13. Any resolution relating to the exclusion of the public during the discussion of items containing exempt information.

Part B

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

14. Regulation 44 Visits - Presentation of the Head of Children's Social Care (Pages 75 - 78)
15. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.

Helen Lynch

Head of Legal and Democratic Services

County Hall
Durham
1 June 2023

To: **The Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel**

Councillor M Simmons (Chair)
Councillor M Walton (Vice-Chair)

Councillors R Adcock-Forster, J Charlton, S Deinali, J Griffiths, T Henderson, C Hunt, B Kellett, M McGaun, L Mavin, J Miller, A Reed, I Roberts, K Robson, K Rooney, S Townsend and C Varty

Co-opted Members

J Bell, C Brown, J Gamble, S Neale, W Taylor and R Woods
Young persons representative of the Children in Care Council

Contact: Jill Hogg

Tel: 03000 269 711

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Corporate Parenting Panel** held in **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham** on **Friday 19 May 2023** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor M Simmons (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors M Walton (Vice-Chair), R Adcock-Forster, S Deinali, J Griffiths, T Henderson, B Kellett, J Miller, A Reed, I Roberts, K Rooney, A Sterling, S Townsend, C Varty and L Mavin (substitute for B Coult)

Co-opted Members:

J Gamble, Luke and W Taylor

Also Present:

Laura Armstrong	– Professional Practice Manager
Sharon Davey	– Strategic Manager for Looked After and Permanence
Rachel Farnham	– Head of Children’s Social Care
Paula Gibbons	– Head of Service, Regional Adoption Agency (RAA), Adopt Coast to Coast
Anne Haigh	– Aycliffe Secure Services Centre Manager
Rachel Harris	– Service Improvement Manager
Jodie Henderson	– Practice Lead, Children and Young People’s Services
Rob Johnson	– Project Manager, Investing in Children
Melanie King	– Lawyer Children, Adults and Health
Alex Latham-Reynolds	– Head of Partnerships, Care Leaver Covenant
Lee Peacock	– Participation and Engagement Officer
Paul Rudd	– Strategic Manager, Children’s Homes
Martyn Stenton	– Deputy Corporate Director, Children and Young People’s Services
Jac Taylor	– Strategic Manager, Children and Families, East
Jayne Watson	– Senior Partnerships Officer

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors I Cochrane, B Coult, O Gunn, C Hunt and from Co-opted Members J Bell, C Brown, S Neale and B Leigh.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor L Mavin substituted for Councillor B Coult.

3 Minutes of the meeting held on 28 April 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 April 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The following matters arising were reported:

The Chair presented a picture she had been given by a young person to the Deputy Corporate Director, Children and Young People's Services for display in his office. He was extremely pleased and explained it would be proudly displayed for all those visiting to see.

- The Chair noted that in respect of the Entry into Care Packs, the original amount being sought was £7,600. She explained that Members had provided contributions from their budgets and approx. £18,500 had been raised. It was suggested that a letter of thanks from the CICC be e-mailed to Councillors in respect of their kind donations. The Senior Partnerships Officer noted that Luke had referred to packs for those exiting care and suggested that any surplus could be used for those packs. The Panel agreed. The Chair asked if Luke could provide an update for the Panel in July, Luke agreed.

Councillor T Henderson entered the meeting at 9.40am

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

5 Number of Children Looked After and Care Leavers

The Deputy Corporate Director, Children and Young People's Services informed the Panel that the total number of children looked after stood at 1,081, including 33 young people placed for adoption, 64 unaccompanied asylum seeking young people (UASC) and 290 care leavers.

6 Ofsted Updates

The Deputy Corporate Director, Children and Young People's Services advised there had been no recent Ofsted visits.

7 Proud Moments

This month's proud moment was reported by the Practice Lead, Children and Young People and was a statement from a young person who had experience with the care system in County Durham and had applied to join the Armed Forces. She explained the challenges the young person had

faced and gave the Panel an extract from their military application statement. The Practice Lead, Children and Young People advised that the young person was not successful this time but were not deterred and noted the excellent journey that the individual had taken, having come from a background with neglect and many challenges.

8 Children in Care Council Update

Luke explained that the younger CICC members were developing a survey relating to savings and life skills. It was noted that a suggestion to help raise engagement had been for a prize draw. He noted the previously mentioned Entry into Care Packs and the positive response from Elected Members. Luke updated on the work taking place with Full Circle and noted the views relating to the building move of Full Circle and in understanding the benefits of this. Luke asked the Panel to note a “Celebrate Me Award” and Fostering Event at Ramside Hall on 15 May 2023. Rob noted a work of art by a young person relating to the Art Stop, a ‘Spiderboy’ design for their bedroom that the excellent artwork was huge and had taken over the entire bedroom.

9 Language Update

Following from language discussions at the previous meeting, The Head of Children’s Social Care asked the Panel to consider a video where Luke Rodgers BEM, Director of Strategy for The Care Leaders shared his experience as a young person in the care system and the language that had been used to describe him as a young person in his referral to his foster carers.

The Head of Children’s Social Care noted that it was a powerful message and helped to demonstrate the importance of stepping back and thinking about the language being used in recording and describing young people.

10 Adopt Coast to Coast

The Panel received an update report on the second year of operation and marketing activity of the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA), Adopt Coast to Coast presented by the Head of Service, Adopt Coast to Coast, Paula Gibbons (for copy of report and presentation see file).

The Head of Service referred to the performance of the three Local Authorities: former Cumbria County Council, Durham County Council, Sunderland City Council and noted significant challenges in terms of recruitment, impacted by the recent criminal case in Cumbria, the period following the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and the cost of living crisis, with a massive reduction in the number of enquiries. She noted that it was important be upfront regarding the financial implications.

It was explained that Durham County Council had a good percentage of enquiries leading to approvals.

The Head of Service referred to marketing activities and explained as regards the strong commitment to keeping our children within the North East, given the strong cultural identity within the region. She explained the total percentage of conversions from enquiries to approvals for the RAA for 2022/23 had been 19 percent, however, it was noted that the 32 Regional Agencies differed in how figures were counted and that the important point was that it was felt that the marketing messages were right and resonating with those people who would then go on to make enquiries. The Panel were asked to note that the figures for Durham in terms of enquiries and approvals had been fairly consistent, noting the highly experienced Team led by the Team Manager, Barbara Arbon.

The Panel were referred to marketing activity priorities for 2023/24 and noted that Cumbria having undergone reorganisation to become two Unitary Authorities had withdrawn from the RAA, leaving Durham County Council and Sunderland City Council. She noted that this did not mean there was a decrease in the numbers of children, with marketing still emphasising there were lots of children for potential adoptions. She explained that money was not the motivating factor for prospective parents and reiterated that it was important to help support those prospective parents and reassure them that they would not struggle. She concluded by noting that there would be groups that waited longer for adoption and that targeted marketing needed to be ran alongside general recruitment, focussing on prospective adopters for those children.

Resolved:

That the content of the report and presentation be noted.

11 The Pause Programme Durham

The Panel received an update report on the Pause Programme Durham presented by the Strategic Manager, Children and Families, East (for copy of report and presentation see file).

The Strategic Manager explained the background to the Pause Programme Durham, having been established in 2021 in order to reduce the number of children being taken into care and improve the lives of women who have had one or more children permanently removed from their care

The Strategic Manager explained that Pause was unique in targeting adults who have had engagement with Children's Social Care as mothers but were

no longer eligible for support due to their children being permanently removed from their care.

It was explained that the programme was delivered with each woman over a period of 18 months is flexible and delivered at the correct pace for each woman.

The Panel noted the original Pause Programme in the east of the county, operated by Barnardo's, with the programme moving in-house following award of match funding from the Department for Education (DfE).

Councillor B Kellett left the meeting at 10.14am

The Strategic Manager explained that of the previous cohort of 22 women worked with by Pause Durham, there had been a total of 83 children removed from their care, with the woman being aged between 22 to 40 years old. It was noted that 38 percent of the women were care experienced. Feedback from the women had highlighted a number of positives including that they had grown in their confidence and now had access to sexual health services, domestic abuse services, housing and education. The Strategic Manager explained that none of the women had had any further pregnancies during, or following intervention, and one woman had had her two children returned to her care.

The Strategic Manager noted that for the current cohort, Pause Durham were working with 21 women in total, 11 who were fully on the programme. She explained that 11 women had a total of 33 children removed from their care, with 73 percent of the women being care experienced. It was noted that the main areas of need for those women were mental health, domestic abuse, drug and alcohol abuse, learning needs and homelessness. The Panel were shown a graduation video with women providing their experience of the Pause Programme.

Councillor A Reed noted that positive impact of the programme was a fantastic thing for those women and their children and thanked all involved for their work.

The Vice-Chair noted that the positive impact was great and asked as regards any changes in the numbers within cohorts between when the programme was operated by Barnardo's and when it was brought in-house. The Strategic Manager said this would be difficult as it was now operating as a rolling programme, with intake being based upon need.

Councillor S Townsend gave an example of a women who had been successful in keeping her child, which had been transformative for her and her child, however, that had been the beginning of another set of challenges,

including the stigma unfortunately still attached to those women, issues with childcare providers, ex-partners, and she asked what the Council could do in the longer-term in such cases. The Head of Children's Social Care noted that it would be different for each individual case, however, if an assessment had deemed that it was safe for a child to return to a parent, support would continue to ensure this was sustainable.

Resolved:

That the content of the report and presentation be noted.

12 Care Leavers' Covenant

The Panel received an updated report on the Care Leavers' Covenant from the Strategic Manager for Looked After and Permanence, and welcomed Alex Latham-Reynolds, Head of Partnerships, Care Leaver Covenant (CLC) who gave an overview of the report (for copy of report and presentation see file).

The Head of Partnerships, CLC explained that regional work was DfE funded and noted the phrase 'it takes a village to raise a child', adding that the aim was to build a village of opportunity to give care leavers a choice for their future. He added that it was important to work in co-production with young people and added that in the North East their needs were often underserved and that it was important for organisations in both the public and private sector to look to the CLC. He noted that there were five core outcomes for the CLC: Independent Living; Employment, Education and Training; Safety and Security; Health; and Finance.

The Head of Partnerships, CLC noted there had been over 500 signatories to the CLC and ranged from large companies down to small family run firms. He noted other Local Authorities that had signed up, including Gateshead Council who had worked with Sky to offer free broadband for 18 months, a free laptop and an employment and life skills training day for care leavers. He noted another example was Merlin Entertainment, offering free tickets to those applying for jobs, and work with Universities in the region with the North East Raising Aspirations Partnership. The Panel noted work with the NHS, with examples given including accommodation being provided for apprentices in Birmingham. It was noted around a third of young people wanted to work in the health and social care sector and the Head of Partnerships, CLC explained that all the Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) had signed up to the CLC, with over 1,000 ringfenced jobs over three years. He noted that in building up a regional care leaver offer, it was important to work with Local Authorities in terms of internal opportunities and also with the Civil Service.

In terms of accessing information and offer, the Head of Partnerships, CLC explained there was the 'Connects' a system that young people could access. He noted that there was the Regional Care Leavers Board and explained that it was important to ensure that care leavers did not lose out when they moved across borders between different Local Authority areas and therefore work with areas/organisations with devolved powers.

The Head of Partnerships, CLC noted that it was also important to embed work with care leavers into economic development, and that could be through the work of Councillors in their work with businesses and gave an example of working with regional water companies to offer discounts to care leavers and noted that it was not Local Authorities working on their own.

The Chair thanked the Head of Partnerships, CLC and asked the Panel for their questions and comments.

Councillor A Sterling noted the work with ENGIE and asked if there were any plans for similar work in the North East. The Head of Partnerships, CLC noted he could look into the matter.

The Vice-Chair noted a recent television programme titled 'Kids' following the experience of two care leavers and suggested it would be useful to watch.

The Strategic Manager for Looked After and Permanence explained that the recommendation within the report was asking that Durham sign up to the CLC and Connects system. Luke explained he was aware of the system from discussion at an Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor B Kellett entered the meeting at 10.46am

Resolved:

- (a) That the content of the report and presentation be noted.
- (b) Agree that Durham County Council become a signatory to the Care Leavers' Covenant.

13 Routes into Social Work

The Panel received a report for information on Routes into Social Work, with comments from the Head of Children's Social Care and Practice Lead, Children and Young People in terms of Government requirements, the support offered in Durham in terms of getting into social work, numbers in terms of interest in opportunities, and support to help those choosing to work in Durham thrive and stay in Durham.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

14 Any Other Business

The Head of Children's Social Care informed the Panel of the 'Mind of My Own' award received by the Participation and Engagement Officer and noted it was for all the children and young people in the county.

The Deputy Corporate Director, Children and Young People's Services noted the language updates and asked if the Panel felt it was important to keep the topic on the agenda for the Panel and that it may be useful to have input from partners, such as the health service, Police and the Virtual School and their use of language in their interactions with young people.

Members agreed to this approach and the following themes were suggested to come to future meetings:

- Health
- Police
- SEND
- Language used by social workers in their reports e.g. reports to prospective foster cares and adopters

The Practice Lead, Children and Young People suggested that the Care Experience Group could 'audit' and provide feedback on language. Luke noted he would ask the group.

Councillor C Varty shared her personal adoption experience and underlined the importance to support foster carers for all the hard work that they do for our young people, and prospective adopters.

Councillor B Kellett left the meeting at 11.04am

15 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.

16 Regulation 44 visits and Regulatory Body ratings of Aycliffe Secure Centre

The Panel considered a report of the Head of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children which provided an overview of the Regulation 44 visits and regulatory body ratings of independent children's residential homes in which Durham children and young people are placed (for copy of report see file of minutes). The Panel also received a presentation by Aycliffe Secure Services Centre Manager.

Resolved:

That the report and presentation be noted.

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Durham Children in Care Council update

Billie-Leigh and Luke CiCC CPP representatives, and Robert Johnson ~ Investing in Children



- Both CiCC groups met with Full Circle, and discussed ideas for the reopening of the building. They want to progress young people friendly material to promote the benefits of Full Circle.
- Several care experienced young people will have their artwork displayed throughout the re-designed building.
- The service manager from the IRO team has connected with both groups and is considering approaches and ideas to continue to progress work with CiCC.

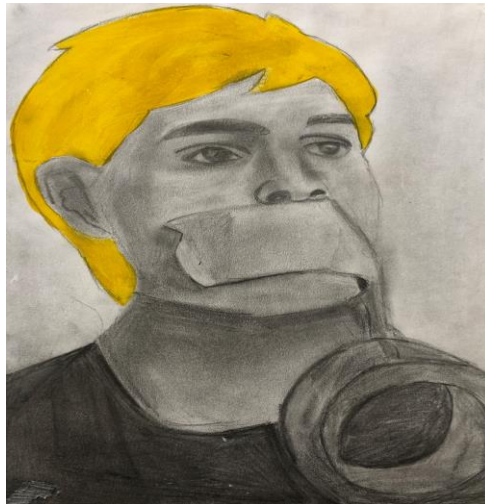
Promoting the Rights of Children and Young People



- Life Map work is progressing and will be discussed further at June's older CiCC meeting. Some CiCC members have come up with ideas to develop a 'No What When' map.
- Both CiCC groups continue to review the Education Fun Fund. A summary report has been developed and shared across DCC.
- Unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) are beginning to benefit from the fund with some excellent support from the UASC team.
- Durham's CiCC /CPP savings and life skills survey has gone live. CiCC members want this to remain open until 16 June to allow young people the opportunity to complete it.



- Members meet with Durham's Participation and Engagement Officer to review communication approaches with DCC Staff.
- Members planned the next session for future foster care training on 8 June.
- Below are two examples from two new care experienced young people for the next Artstops Initiative.



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Corporate Parenting Panel

9 June 2023

Performance Update



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

Electoral division(s) affected:

None

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of the report is to advise that a presentation will be given at the meeting to provide the Corporate Parenting Panel with an overview of performance in relation to children looked after and care leavers.

Executive summary

- 2 The Strategy Team Leader – Children and Young People’s Services will deliver a presentation at the meeting giving an overview of performance.

Recommendations

- 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

Helen McAloon

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Appendix 1: Implications

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>Q3 2022/23</i>	<i>Q4 2022/23</i>	<i>England</i>	<i>North East</i>
Rate of CLA per 10,000 u18 population [Number]	82.9 [833]	90 [914]	93 [949]	96 [982]	102.2 [1042]	105 [1071]	70 (2021/22)	110 (2021/22)
Age and length of time in care						See presentation	N/A	N/A
CLA Placement breakdown						See presentation	N/A	N/A
Percentage of CLA placed over 20 miles (outside LA boundary)	7%	10%	9%	10%	13% [133/1041]	13% [140/1069]	16% (2021/22)	10% (2021/22)
Number of children placed for adoption	25	75	39	38	42	29	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]	3% [34/1042]	6% [59/1071]	7% (2021/22)	2% (2020/21)
Social worker caseloads						See presentation	N/A	N/A

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

<i>Measure</i>	<i>2018/19</i>	<i>2019/20</i>	<i>2020/21</i>	<i>2021/22</i>	<i>Q3 2022/23</i>	<i>Q4 2022/23</i>	<i>England</i>	<i>North East</i>
Percentage of CLA with a missing incident during the year	5.0%	5.5%	7.0%	9.9%	15% [177/1214]	14% [179/1239]	11% (2021/22)	11% (2021/22)
Percentage of children on Child Exploitation and Vulnerability Tracker that were CLA^					37% [61/167]	35% [51/144]		
Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire - Average score	NND	13.6	14.0	14	Reported annually	Reported annually	13.8 (2021/22)	14.3 (2021/22)
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]	3% [17]	4% [22]	2% (2021/22)	2% (2021/22)

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?

<i>Measure</i>	<i>2018/19</i>	<i>2019/20</i>	<i>2020/21 [Provisional]</i>	<i>2021/22</i>	<i>Q3 2022/23</i>	<i>Q4 2022/23</i>	<i>England</i>	<i>North East</i>
Number of CLA accessing an independent visitor			16	69 (59 CDYJS, 10 AFC) 15 waiting for match	46 (44 CDYJS, 2 NEPACS)	46 (45 CDYJS, 1 NEPACS)		

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>Q3 2022/23</i>	<i>Q4 2022/23</i>	<i>England</i>	<i>North East</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]	10% [109]	9% [99 / 1068]	10% (2021/22)	10% (2021/22)
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]	63% [252]	66% [257 / 392]	71% (2021/22)	70% (2021/22)
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	428	423	454 (Q1 2022/23)	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	134	157	184 (Q1 2022/23)	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]	14% [38/277]	16% [61/373]	10% (2021/22)	13% (2021/22)
Number of Mainstream Foster Carers (Approved in period YTD)	26	12	21	29	11	12	N/A	N/A
Number of Friends and Family Foster Carers (Approved in period YTD)	52	91	145	121	56	65	N/A	N/A
Number of Adopters (Approved in period YTD)	22	25	47	40	27	35	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>Q3 2022/23</i>	<i>Q4 2022/23</i>	<i>England</i>	<i>North East</i>
Initial Health Assessments completed within 20 working days of the child becoming looked after	63%	73%	73%	59%	64%	67%	N/A	N/A
CLA with the required number of health assessments	91%	94%	91%	93%	89%	89%	89% (2021/22)	92% (2021/22)
CLA who have had a dental check	85.5%	87%	41%	85%	70%	80%	70% (2021/22)	72% (2021/22)
CLA whose immunisations were up-to-date	99.3%	99.0%	90.0%	90.9%	Reported annually	Reported annually	85% (2021/22)	86% (2021/22)
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%	Reported annually	Reported annually	89% (2021/22)	95% (2021/22)
% CLA identified as having a substance misuse problem in the year	1.9%	2.0%	Data Error	0.9%	Reported annually	Reported annually	3% (2021/22)	3% (2021/22)
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 not available	Data not available	44% (2020/21)	33% (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]	21% [25/121]	19% [22/114]	N/A	N/A
Care leavers aged 17-25 who are pregnant or mothers (as a % of female care leavers)				30% [39/132]	24% [34/139]	24% [33/137]	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>Q3 2022/23</i>	<i>Q4 2022/23</i>	<i>England</i>	<i>North East</i>
Percentage of care leavers age 18-21 who have stayed with their foster carer	N/A	N/A	N/A	21% [50]	18% [45]	18% [44]		
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]	61% [55 / 90]	71% [64 / 90]	66% (2021/22)	67% (2021/22)
Percentage of care leavers aged 17-18 in suitable accommodation	96.4% [80 of 83]	90% [76 / 84]	95% [74 / 78]	93% [76 / 82]	98% [88 / 90]	97% [87 / 90]	90% (2021/22)	93% (2021/22)
Percentage of care leavers aged 17-18 in higher education	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0 / 78]	6% [5 / 83]	1% [1/90]	2% [2/90]	4% (2021/22)	3% (2021/22)
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]	59% [97/165]	59% [95/160]	55% (2021/22)	52% (2021/22)
Percentage of care leavers aged 19-21 in suitable accommodation	94.4% [152 of 161]	83% [144 / 174]	90% [177 / 196]	85% [186 / 218]	98% [162 / 165]	98% [157 / 160]	88% (2021/22)	90% (2021/22)
Percentage of care leavers aged 19-21 in higher education	8.7% [14 of 161]	9% [16 / 175]	6% [11 / 197]	8% [18 / 213]	16% [26 / 165]	16% [26 / 160]	7% (2021/22)	7% (2021/22)

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Performance Report Q4 2022-23

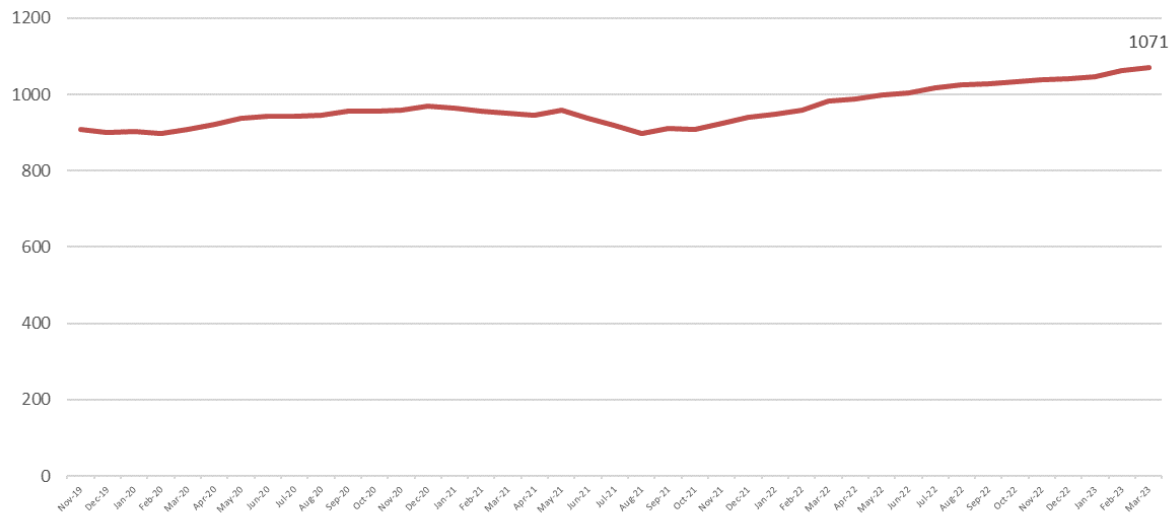
Children in our Care: 1,071

Page 28

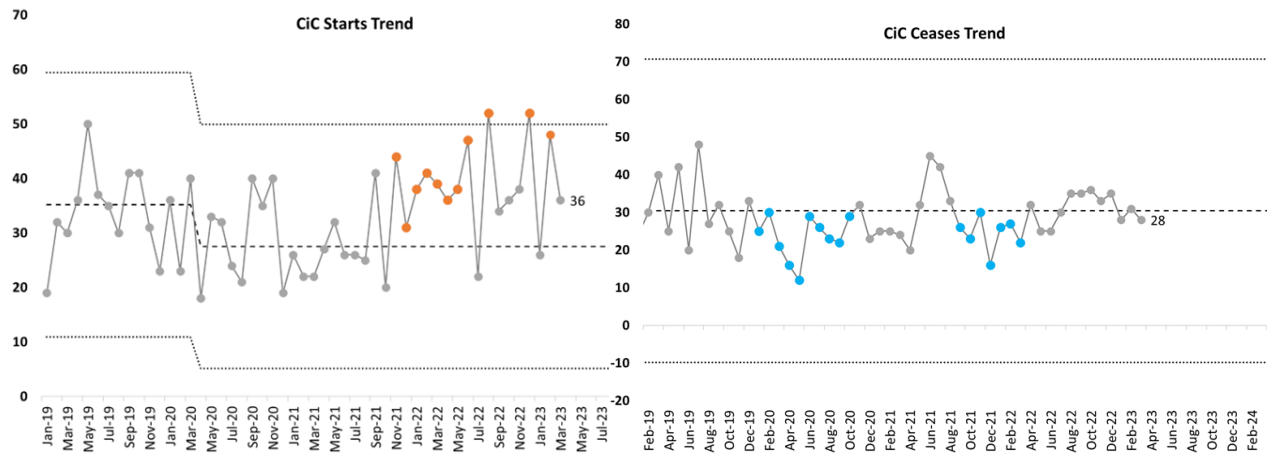
59 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

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

Monthly CLA Numbers



Reducing u1 CiC starts as % of all CiC starts
 Increase in age 1-4 and 10-15 starts
 Increase in 13-15yr olds in care



Increase in overall number of CiC but rate remains below regional and statistical neighbour average (5th lowest in North East)

Around a third of children have been in care for less than 12 months whilst over a quarter have been in care for over 5 years

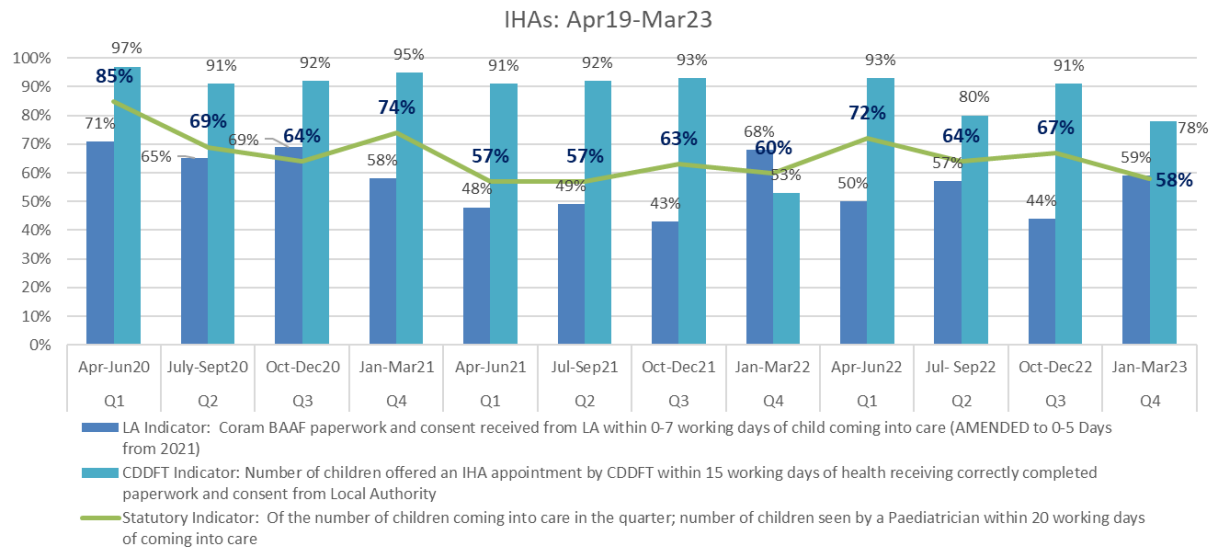
LoT in care	Under 6 Months	6-12 Months	1-2 Years	2-5 Years	5 Years+
No	218	116	177	270	286
%	20%	11%	17%	25%	27%

341 children became a child in care
277 children left care in Apr-Dec 22



44% of Social Workers in our Children in Care and Care Leavers Teams had fewer than 25 cases, one had 30+

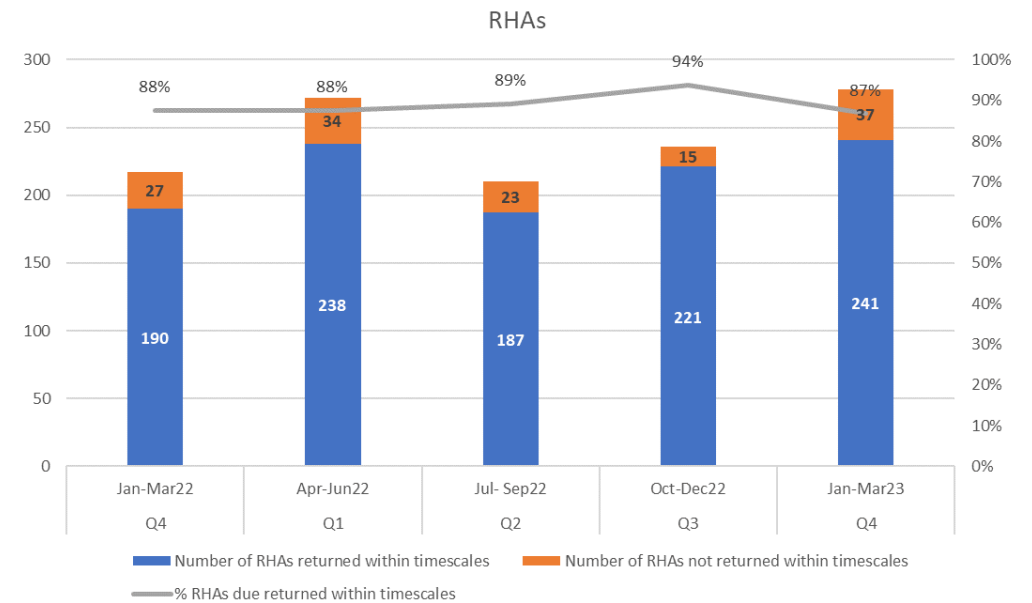
Initial Health Assessments



Reduction in children in care receiving an Initial Health Assessment within 20 working days of coming into care.

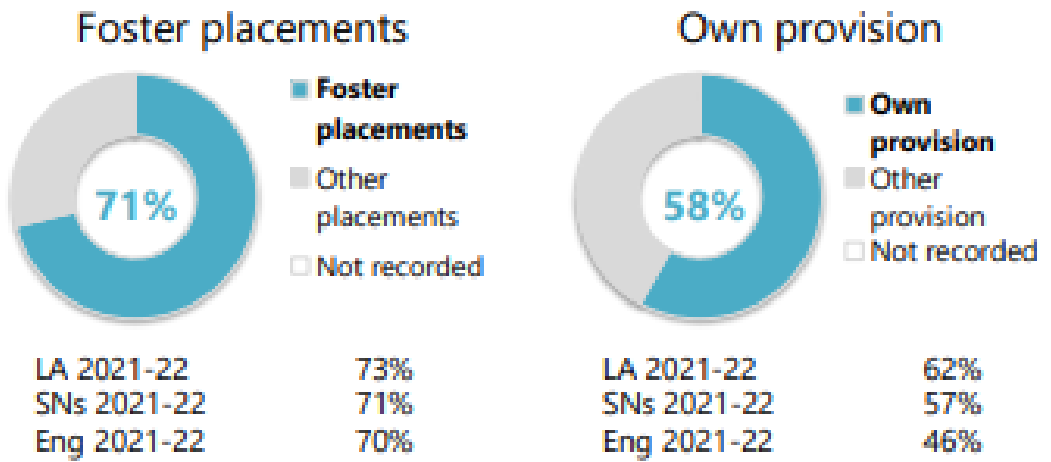
Improvement in required paperwork submitted in timescale but still room for improvement

Review Health Assessments



Review Health Assessments completed within timescale remains relatively stable – 37 out of timescale in Q4

Providing Stable Homes



A similar proportion of children in Durham are living in foster homes and in in-house provision to our benchmarks.

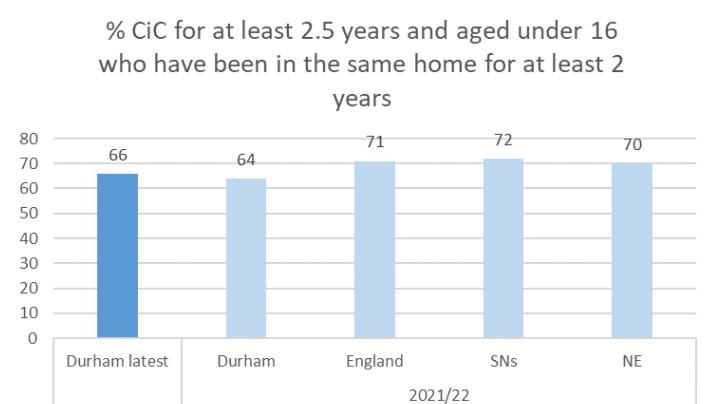
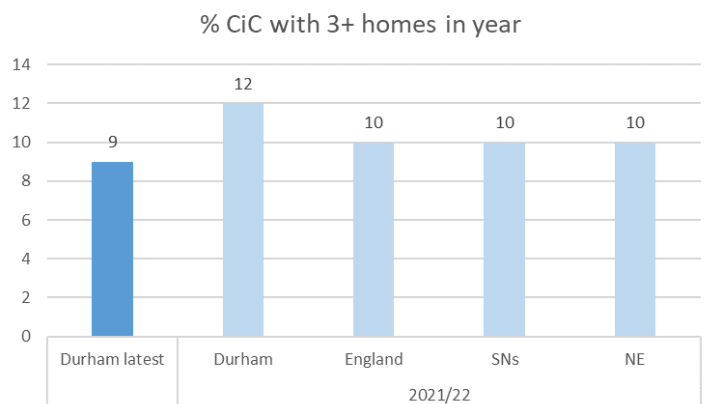
18% increase in Children in our Care from 2019/20 - highest increase in 14-17 year olds

Providing stable homes remains an ongoing area of focus – This has improved but is currently worse than /same as 2021/22 benchmarks

CiC at date	2019/20		2022/23	
	No.	%	No.	%
0	79	9%	68	6%
1	46	5%	49	5%
2	48	5%	46	4%
3	34	4%	37	3%
4	34	4%	45	4%
5	34	4%	32	3%
6	39	4%	46	4%
7	35	4%	33	3%
8	57	6%	51	5%
9	35	4%	55	5%
10	49	5%	46	4%
11	59	7%	70	7%
12	58	6%	55	5%
13	62	7%	60	6%
14	59	7%	81	8%
15	54	6%	87	8%
16	57	6%	109	10%
17	63	7%	97	9%
Total	902		1067	

Reduction in children with 3+ homes and more CiC in long-term homes

Placement type (open CLA)	Own LA	Private	Other	Total
Foster placement	557	140	62	759
Placed for adoption	20	0	8	28
Placed with parents	0	0	87	87
Independent living	14	42	11	67
Residential employment	0	0	0	0
Residential accommodation	0	0	0	0
Secure Children's Homes	3	4	0	7
Children's Homes	26	78	3	107
Residential Care Home	0	0	0	0
NHS/Health Trust	0	0	2	2
Family Centre	0	1	0	1
Young Offender Institution	0	0	2	2
Residential school	0	0	0	0
Other placements	0	7	1	8
Temporary placement	0	0	0	0
Total placements	620	272	176	1068



Missing Children

179 of 1239 looked after children had a missing incident in the last 12 months

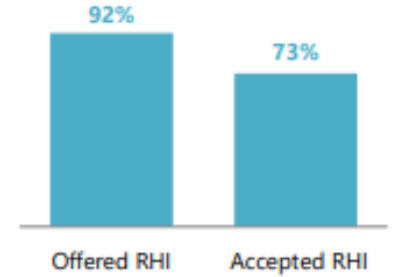
	Latest data	LA 21-22	SNs 21-22	Eng 21-22
Number of all CLA with a missing incident	179 of 1239	129		
Percentage of all CLA with a missing incident	14%	10%	10%	11%
Total number of missing incidents for all CLA	1791	892		
Average number of incidents per CLA who went missing	10.0	6.9	6.6	6.3

142 children

992 missing episodes

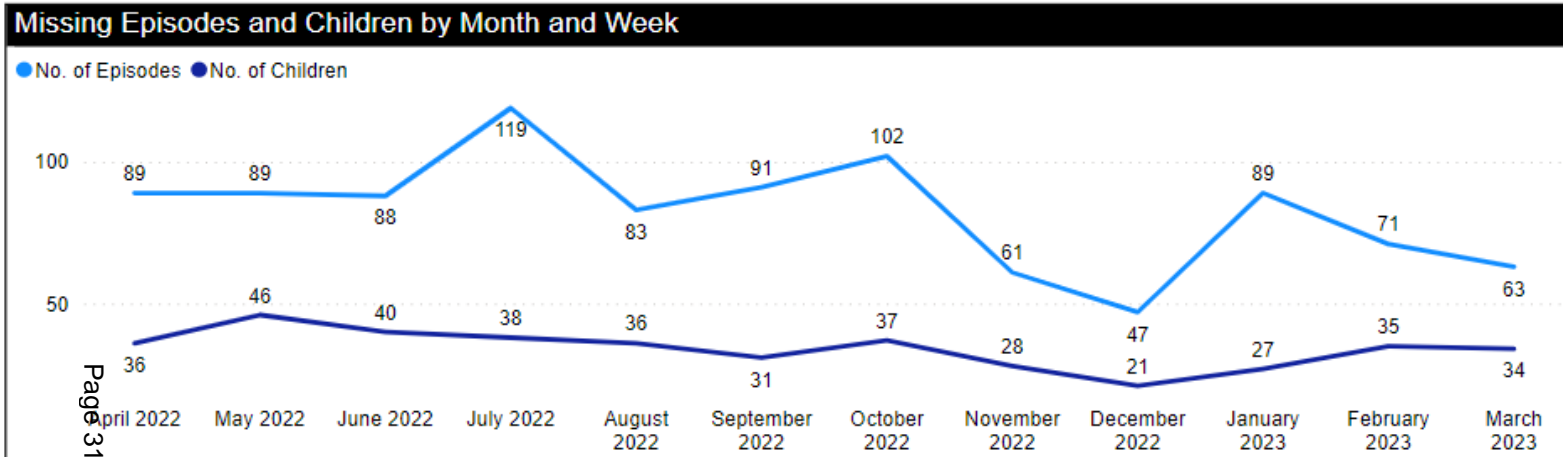
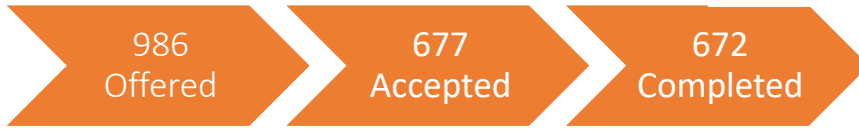
Missing incidents - return home interviews

	Latest data	
Missing children offered return interview	164 of 179	92%
Missing children not offered return interview	1 of 179	1%
Missing children return interview offer not recorded	10 of 179	6%
Missing children where return interview was n/a	4 of 179	2%



	Latest data	
Missing children accepted return interview	119 of 164	73%
Missing children not accepted return interview	41 of 164	25%
Missing children return interview acceptance not recorded	4 of 164	2%

Return to Home Interviews

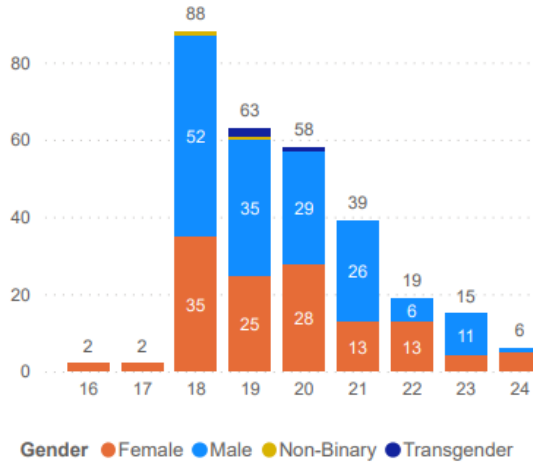


Following easing of lockdown restrictions we saw an increase in children reported missing

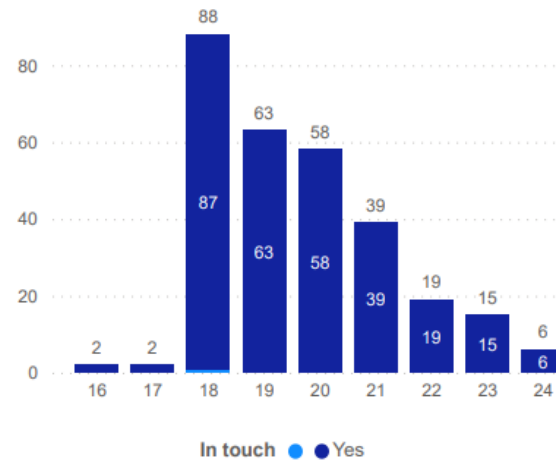
Care Leavers

250 Care Leavers aged 17-21

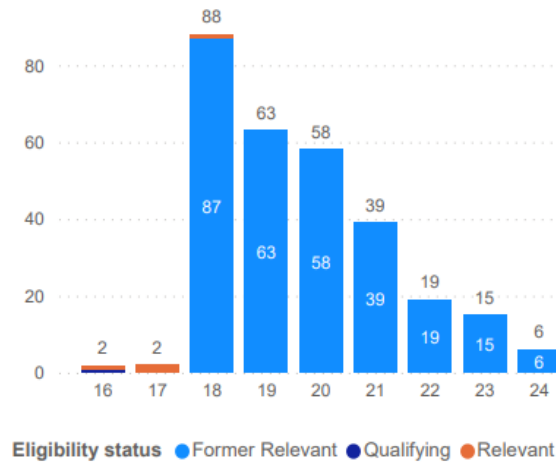
Care leavers by current age and gender



Care leavers by whether in touch



Care leavers by eligibility status



Care Leavers by age group and whether in touch

Age group	17-18		19-21		22-24		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Y	2	100%	89	99%	160	100%	291	100%
N			1	1%			1	0%
Total	2	100%	90	100%	160	100%	292	100%

Care leavers by age and whether in touch

In touch	Age									Total
	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
Yes	2	2	87	63	58	39	19	15	6	291
Total	2	2	88	63	58	39	19	15	6	292

Care leavers by eligibility status

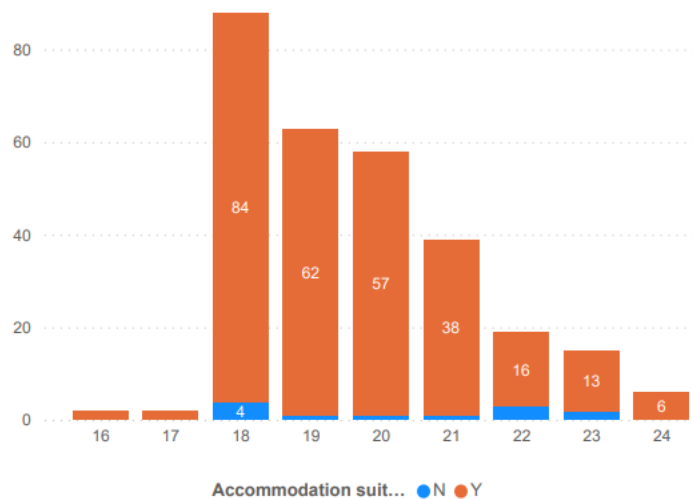
Eligibility status	No.
Qualifying	1
Relevant	4
Former Relevant	287
Total	292

28 of our care leavers are recorded as being unaccompanied asylum seekers (UASC) and 26 are male aged 18-23, 2 female.

Currently have 179 YPS team monitoring open cases in addition to the 250 aged 17-21. Work on data recording is ongoing to ensure accuracy and has improved in touch information

Care Leavers – suitable accommodation

Care leavers by whether in suitable accommodation



Care leavers by whether in suitable accommodation and age group

Age group	17-18		19-21		22-24		Total	
Accommodation	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
suitable	2	100%	86	96%	157	98%	35	88%
Y	2	100%	86	96%	157	98%	280	96%
N	0	0%	4	4%	3	2%	5	13%
Total	2	100%	90	100%	160	100%	40	100%

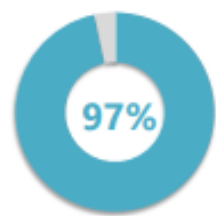
Care leavers in unsuitable accommodation by age and type

Accommodation code	18	19	20	21	22	23	Total
X - In custody	3	1	1	1	3	2	11
Total	4	1	1	1	3	2	12

The proportion of care leavers in suitable accommodation aged 17-18 is 96% and for ages 19-21 is also 98%

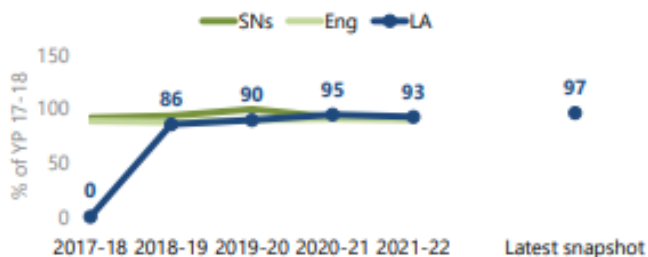
Above benchmarks

Accommodation suitability of 17-18 year olds



■ Suitable accom
■ Not suitable
■ No information

ChAT	Aged 17	Aged 18	Total
Numbers in cohort	4	86	90
In suitable accommodation	100%	97%	97%

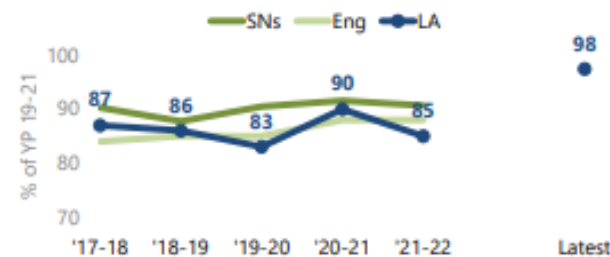


Accommodation suitability of 19-21 year olds



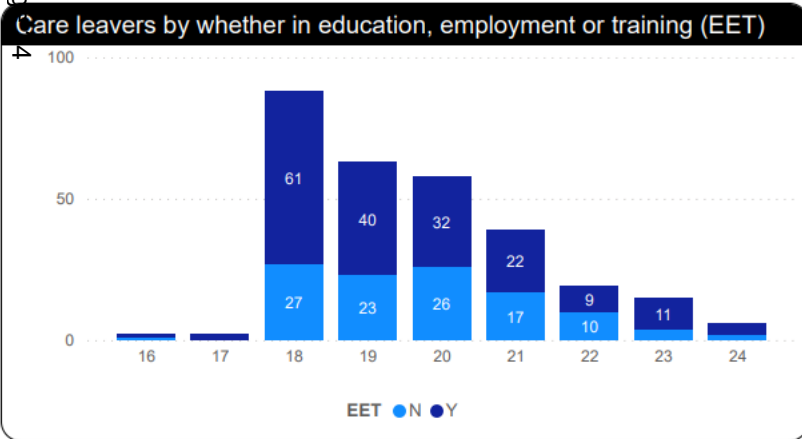
■ Suitable accom
■ Not suitable
■ No information

ChAT	Aged 19	Aged 20	Aged 21	Total
Numbers in cohort	63	57	40	160
In suitable accommodation	98%	98%	95%	98%



Care Leavers - Education, Employment or Training

Page 4



Care leavers by main education, employment or training (EET) activity and age group

Age group	17-18		19-21		22-24		Total	
EET	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Y	1	50%	63	70%	94	59%	182	62%
N	1	50%	27	30%	66	41%	110	38%
Total	2	100%	90	100%	160	100%	292	100%

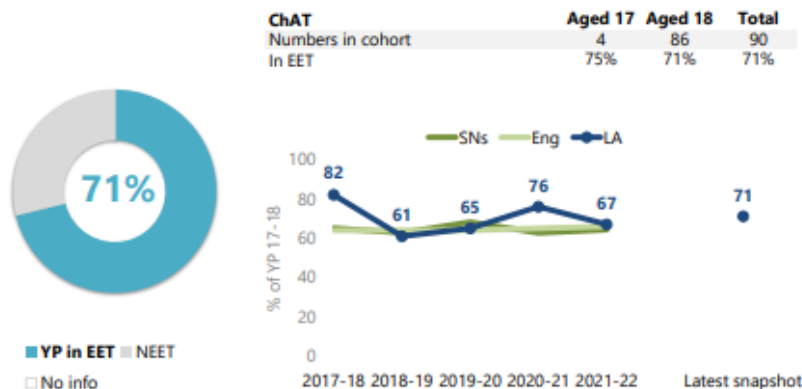
The proportion of care leavers in Education, Employment or Training aged 17-18 is 71% which is above benchmarks.

Care leavers not in education, employment or training (NEET) by main education, employment or training (EET) activity

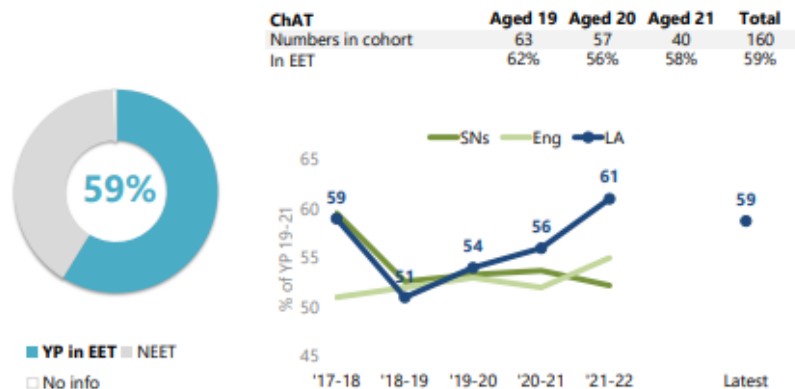
Main EET activity	16	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	Total
G6 - Young person not in education, employment or training due to pregnancy or parenting		1	5	3	2	5	1	1	18
G5 - Young person not in education, employment or training: other circumstances		1	15	7	3	4	2	1	33
G4 - Young person not in education, employment or training because of illness or disability		11	11	20	11	3	2	1	59
Total		1	27	23	26	17	10	4	110

For those aged 19-21 this is 59%; above benchmarks

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



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



Corporate Parenting Panel

9 June 2023

Annual Report on the Adoption Service 2022/2023



Report of Rachel Farnham, Head of Children's Social Care, Durham County Council

Electoral division(s) affected:

None.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 Annual review of the Adoption Service for 2022/23 including the identification of service priorities for 2023/24.

Executive summary

- 2 In 2022/23, the Adoption Service received 267 enquiries, completed 80 initial visits to 111 prospective adopters, and 41 prospective adopting households were approved.
- 3 58 children have been matched at Panel. 7 adoptive households from our partners in Coast to Coast have been used and 17 children were placed externally to Coast to Coast this included 7 brothers and sisters together groups of 2 children and 5 individual children which were older children or young children with complex health needs.
- 4 54 Children have been granted a Placement Order, compared to 59 in the previous year.
- 5 In this period, 65 children were matched at Panel. This is the same number as in the previous year.
- 6 46 of these children being matched within the RAA; of which 39 matches were with DCC approved adopters, 7 matches were with prospective adopters from our partner spokes.
- 7 19 matches were with other Local Authorities, RAA's or Voluntary Adoption Agencies.

- 8 This is a significant decrease from the previous year, where 31 children were placed with external providers.
- 9 43 Adoption Orders have been granted for DCC children within this period.
- 10 28 children are placed with prospective adopters but not yet adopted.
- 11 No disruptions have happened within this period.

Recommendation

- 12 Corporate Parenting Panel is requested to:
 - (a) Note the contents and agree the proposed priorities.

Background

- 13 This annual report sets out the previous performance and the direction of travel for the Adoption Service as a spoke in the Regional Adoption Agency, Adopt Coast to Coast.
- 14 The activity of the Adoption Service detailed in this report

Main Implications

- 15 Key priority areas for 2023/24:
 - To work collaboratively with our partners in Adopt Coast to Coast to recruit, assess and approve adopters in a timely manner.
 - To ensure children's plans of permanence via adoption are progressed without delay.
 - Early Permanence families are to be identified at the earliest possible stage in children's planning to prevent delay and ensure minimal moves for children.
 - To continue to recruit new Panel members to the Central List. This will ensure quoracy and prevent the possible situation of having to stand a panel down due to lack of available Panel members.
 - To continue to embed Signs of Safety into practice and Panel processes in line with the Durham model of social work practice.
 - To increase relationship-based practice with trauma informed service developments, particularly in the development and support of post adoption contact.
 - To identify potential plans of adoption for children as early as possible. This will allow for targeted adopter recruitment at the earliest possible point. Where there is a need for an adopter able to take sibling groups, older children or children with more complex health or disability needs, thus preventing delay or the need to purchase adopters at a high cost from external providers.

Conclusion

- 16 Please note the contents of the Adoption Service's Annual Report which highlights practice achieved in 2022/23 and sets the direction of travel for the remainder of this financial year.

Author

Barbara Arbon, Adoption Team Manager

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

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

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

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

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

Finance

The Adoption service operates within the budget set.

Consultation

None

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

None

Climate Change

None

Human Rights

None

Crime and Disorder

None

Staffing

None

Accommodation

None

Risk

None

Procurement

None

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**County Durham
Corporate Parenting Panel
Adoption Team
Annual report
April 1st 2022 – March 31st 2023**



A picture says a thousand words.

A beautiful picture from a newly adopted child to the family's Adoption Social Worker.

Durham County Council Adoption Service

This annual report covers all adoption activity within Durham County Council (DCC), a 'spoke' within the Regional Adoption Agency, Adopt Coast to Coast. This is a partnership 'hub and spoke' model between Durham and Together for Children (TFC). In this reporting year Cumbria County Council (CCC) were also partners in the spoke, however from 1st April 2023 CCC are no longer partners due to changes within their corporate structure.

The Statement of Purpose for Durham Adoption Service was updated at the time of writing this report and once agreed by Senior Management, a copy will be provided to OFSTED as per the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003. The Statement of Purpose will be reviewed and updated again by October 2023.

Adoption National Minimum Standards 25.6 (2011) states that written reports are provided on the management, outcomes, and financial state of the Agency, every six months. A report was submitted in Autumn 2022 covering April to September 2022. This report takes into account the full financial year, 1st April 2022 to March 31st, 2023.

Durham Adoption Team Staffing

- The Head of Children's Services is Rachel Farnham.
- The Head of Adopt Coast to Coast is Paula Gibbons.
- The Strategic Manager, Looked After and Permanence is Sharon Davey.
- The adoption Agency Decision Maker (ADM) is Jodie Henderson. Other Senior Managers have covered this role with prior knowledge in Jodie Henderson's absence in this year.
- Rachel Riley is the Service Manager, Children and Young Person's Service. The service manager role is new to this area of Children's Services. Rachel came into post in July 2022.
- Barbara Arbon is the Adoption Team Manager and Adoption Agency Advisor. In the absence of Barbara Arbon, Sarah Fitzpatrick and Wendy Ellis, both Adoption Social Work Consultants, have undertaken the Agency Panel Adviser role.
- 2x Consultant Social Workers, Sarah Fitzpatrick and Wendy Ellis
- 7x full time social workers, Ian Jones, Ashleigh Sutherland, Amanda Stearman, Julie Blakey, Kiera Tame, Clare Bewley and Rachel Prudhoe.

- 4x part time social workers, Denise Harding, Kayleigh Thompson, Lynn Patterson, Dawn Linton.
- 1x 4 day week social worker, Karen Wingfield
- 1x Adoption support worker, Rachelle Thompson
- Due to staff sickness and volume of workload there have been 3 full time agency social workers employed to support the team
 - 1 x short term contract leaving after 2.5 months.
 - 1 x left the agency post having secured a permanent position within the team.
 - 1 x remains in post with the team, having joined in May 2022. Should a permanent position become available this worker wishes to apply. This worker has been a valuable asset to the team in her time with us.
- 3 x student Social Workers have been provided with placements within the team over this period.
- The Adoption Team has recruited 3 Social Workers within this period.
 - 2 x Full time Social Worker posts - filled by experienced Social Workers, one who prior to being offered the post had been an agency worker within the team, the second a DCC member of staff in the Fostering Team. The workers commenced their posts in February 2023.
 - 1 x part time Social Worker post (26-hour week) filled by experienced member of staff external to DCC. This worker joined the team in November 2022.
- 2 Adoption Panel Chairs are independently employed. Barbara Brelsford and Sandie Dixon. Jane Lowther is the Vice Chair. Within this year Jane has not needed to cover any panels as Vice Chair.
- Duty is covered on a rota basis by the Social Workers within the team. There is a main duty worker along with a backup duty worker Monday to Friday 8.30am – 5pm, 4.30pm on Fridays. There is also an initial visit rolling rota, which allows a fair dissemination of such visits and Stage 1 allocations across the team.

Recruitment

- In this period, DCC have received 267 initial enquires, (267 applicants equating to 229 households) of which 111 applicants (80 households) progressed to have an initial visit.

This is an increase from the previous year of 217 initial enquiries which resulted in 62 initial visits. Some initial enquiries do not progress to an initial visit. This has been for several reasons, such as the enquirer is under 21 years old, they may not be ready to progress and are just seeking some information at this point, they wish to adopt a baby but are smokers. It not uncommon for people to make an online enquiry but then to not respond to calls or emails from duty staff. In these situations, the RAA has an agreed timeframe of 1 month to keep the enquiry open with regular attempts to make contact with the person/persons before closing the enquiry down. An email, voicemail, text or letter are always sent advising of this closing down but inviting them to return at anytime in the future.

- 12 Information sessions have been held via Teams and facilitated equally by DCC and TFC social workers, each undertaking 6 sessions. There has been a flexible approach to the timing of the events, including evenings and Saturdays. Information events are not mandatory to attend for applicants. The aim of them is to provide further basic information to assist the applicant in deciding if adoption may be what they wish to do. These events are usually attended pre Stage 1.

Stage 1

Information, counselling, and preparation courses (ICP) have been delivered monthly on a shared basis between Durham and TFC adoption teams. The training takes place over 3 full consecutive days. Durham facilitates the training on alternate months. This provides geographical ease for attendees, however, when necessary, Durham & TFC applicants were able to attend Cumbrian courses and vice versa. 2 courses due to be facilitated by DCC were cancelled in December 2022 and February 2023 due to low numbers. Group work and participation makes for better training and learning, therefore those booked onto these groups attended an alternate one.

In this period Durham adoption staff have facilitated the training for 58 applicants.

April 2022	25 attendees
June 2022	8 attendees
Aug 2022	13 attendees
Oct 2022	12 attendees
Dec 2022	Course cancelled

Feb 2023

Course cancelled

A delay has been caused within Stage 1 for some applicants between 13th January 2023 and 16th February 2023 in respect of medical assessments for prospective adopters. A concern was raised to DCC Fostering management regarding the sharing of medical information from the GP to DCC admin staff, who then sent the information on to the medical advisers for summaries. The concern related to this being a potential GDPR breach. The Adoption team followed the same procedures and was advised until confirmation was given on what process needed to be followed, no medical documentation was to be sent out. This took a number of weeks for Senior Management and Legal Advisers to conclude, therefore causing delays for adopters. It was eventually agreed the process did not breach GDPR and could then be reinstated.

Stage 2

In this reporting period, 41 adoptive households were approved. At the end of this reporting period, there were 11 prospective adopter households in Stage 1, 2 in stage 2 pending (applicants can choose to have up to 6 months break between stages 1 and 2) and 6 prospective adopters in Stage 2.

During Stage 2, prospective adopters were invited to attend an optional half day training session providing information about Fostering for Adoption (FFA). Should a prospective adopter be clear they do not wish to become parents via this route they can opt to not attend. Early Permanence continues to be a key priority, as it allows children to experience a reduced number of care givers and moves allowing for stronger attachments to be formed much sooner.

The sessions held this year have provided detailed exploration of the FFA process. These sessions provided clear, well-balanced advice and information on the benefits of FFA for both child and adopter. This training has been well received, and prospective adopters are fully aware that attendance at the session does not mean they must undertake FFA. Prospective adopters have felt able to progress with FFA but have not restricted themselves solely to this pathway to being matched with a child, some have chosen to take a child who already has a Placement Order granted.

Within this year work to improve Early Permanence (EP) for children has been undertaken and the EP training programme for prospective adopters is to be extended to 2 full days, as agreed by agencies across the country. It was expected that this would have commenced already, however as yet this has not happened. It is anticipated this will start in the very near future. Adopters will only be considered for Early Permanence if this training has been attended.

The 1-day therapeutic parenting training, which is mandatory has been delivered during Stage 2. This is delivered on a shared basis with TFC staff. 2 experienced

Social Workers within DCC's Adoption Team deliver this training bi-monthly. This training allows for the attendees to understanding the challenges of re-parenting children who have experienced loss and trauma and how therapeutic parenting can help the child with their emotional healing.

Here's what some of our adopters have to say

We found the adoption process so easy.

Great introduction meeting and training. Great initial call from yourself around process and next steps as well as ongoing meetings to get the information needed together for panel.

Teams was great and convenient for many of the session as it gives potential adopters the flexibility to get on with their life in the meantime and reduces time off work.

I hope the service continues to use Teams where is can and learns from some of the learnings/ benefits of Covid.

You were a great help and provided guidance along each step.

I have told lots of friends who are considering adoption that the County Durham team are excellent, and it is nowhere near as scary as you believe. Even panel was fine.

We took the opportunity to get to know the foster parents well which helped massively with introduction and transition to new home.

Everyone we encountered was amazing even the team who help with passports etc. Couldn't have been more accommodating.

You do a great job, and the process is almost perfect!

Thanks again for everything!

We contacted Coast to Coast after being approved as prospective adopters with Barnardos' for coming up to 2 years and we had not being matched with a child.

We contacted Coast to Coast and found out how much of the process we would need to do before going to Panel for approval. We were passed onto our Social Worker who helped and supported us throughout the whole process.

We were quickly matched with our little girl. Social Workers have offered us all so much help and support throughout this whole process and we can't thank them enough for everything they have done for us in helping us become a family.

Firstly we found the whole adoption experience a smooth and enjoyable experience. The one thing that we found the most helpful and beneficial was having you as our social worker right from the beginning. This meant that we developed a positive relationship with yourself in which both myself and (my partner) opened up a lot more and actually made it very easy to talk to you. You were supportive, approachable, and never judged us and we were able to ask questions or voice any concerns we had and did not feel as though we were being a nuisance. Your relationship with our daughter was also great and made this process a smooth one and also one where she felt equally as involved in the process and that her role was just as important. This has supported her in the process as she also felt comfortable talking to you which has led to her having a positive experience in which had led to her developing a close relationship with her little sister. We do feel that this was the most important part of the process that we had this relationship with yourself.

The guidance, training and support we received throughout was really useful, especially the initial training at the beginning of the process. It made us think of aspects of adoption that we hadn't considered and helped us to prepare for what we may experience throughout the process.

We felt the whole process was well planned and we could see where we were going on our journey and also the reason behind it and there was clear structure.

The hardest part of the process we felt was the matching after we had been to panel as this we felt was more like an emotional roller coaster as it took 4 months until we were matched with (our child). This was hard for both us and our daughter who found it hard but again your support here was appreciated and especially when you said things happen for a reason. You were very right there and we were just waiting to be matched with our gorgeous little munchkin who is right for us and who we are right for her. Once the match was made again the process was smooth and the support was great from both yourself and our daughter's social worker in helping prepare for panel and then introductions. We felt really prepared for (our child) coming to live with us and that was a result of all the meetings we had had with Foster Carer, Full Circle and the Medical Advisor.

We honestly couldn't be happier now and are now completed as our little family. This is down to yourself and the agency and we honestly couldn't have asked for it to have gone any smoother or to have received any more support.

Thank you again and we will miss you coming for our meetings which were more like catch ups. We will always be grateful for your support and help.

Adoption Panel/Independent Reviewing Mechanism

Adoption Panel has been held 27 times over this 12-month period. Panel is held fortnightly, and additional panels held when necessary to prevent delays for children. 3 of the 27 panels held were additional panels.

What was presented to panel in this period.

- 58 matches for children with adopters. All matches were recommended and latterly ratified by ADM.
- 42 adopter approvals were considered. 41 adoptive families were recommended and latterly ratified by ADM.
Within this cohort only 1 adoption application for approval in March 2023 was not recommended by Panel. It was necessary to present a short report to panel expressing concerns. The applicants chose not to withdraw themselves during the assessment stage, but advised they wanted Panel to say they felt they were not suitable to become adopters. This recommendation has been supported by ADM.

No applicants have been presented to the Independent Reviewing Mechanism (IRM) within this year.

The quality of reports being presented to panel continue to be of a very high standard. Panel members and Chairs have regularly provided positive feedback to Social Workers, their Managers and Senior Managers. On some occasions, reports have been so thorough panel members have not been able to identify any questions to ask of the applicants or Social Workers within panel.

In respect of training for panel members and chairs, Barbara Arbon, has provided a variety of literature, research, practice updates and information to each member/Chair via email throughout the year. Any such information is discussed in AOB at the end of panel.

Panel members have also received a face-to-face training day within this period held together with the RAA partners.

Panel Members had their annual appraisals in spring 2022, undertaken by Barbara Arbon jointly with either Sandie Dixon or Barbara Brelsford.

There has been a continued drive to recruit new panel members. This continues to be a priority to ensure the Central List has a range of panel members available to ensure quoracy. Currently we have no elected members sitting as panel members. It is hoped that applications will be received for these positions.

In the last year we have successfully recruited 8 new panel members. 5 panel members have resigned due to personal circumstances.

Here's some feedback from a couple who have attended the DCC adoption panel.

A very positive experience overall. It felt like a friendly discussion, and we felt like we were listened to. All panel members were very knowledgeable of our case⁴ and had good, relevant questions and comments.

Reflections of Panel Chairs Barbara Brelsford and Sandie Dixon

During this reporting period, Durham County Council Adoption Service has continued to operate a more flexible hybrid panel whereby members are able to choose their preferred or more convenient method of attendance. The majority of panel members now attend in person and some online, for example, prospective adopters living a distance away from the office base . It is common practice for our two medical advisers to appear online given their pressured clinic responsibilities and appointments.

We are committed to creating an environment which is welcoming and enabling and that approach applies equally to social work staff as well as prospective adopters and staff from other adoption agencies.

Along with the Agency Adviser, it is customary for the Panel Chair to meet with the prospective adopters prior to coming into the panel room , in order to outline the composition and arrangement of the panel . That approach seems to be generally well received and appreciated in what otherwise has the potential to be a daunting experience.

It is also common practice for the Panel Chairs to inform the Agency Adviser if we have any concerns about gaps in information in the paperwork prior to the Panel meeting wherever possible. There is a commitment to avoiding the need to defer making a recommendation on the basis of needing further specific information which creates unnecessary anxiety for the applicant. Close liaison is maintained between the Panel Chairs and the management within the agency, who are always responsive to any requests for additional information or clarity.

Panel members are aware that they have the potential to make an influential contribution to good practice and are supported to grow in confidence about the important role that they can play. They read the panel papers in advance and come fully prepared to contribute to the meeting. Much of the content seems to be becoming increasingly more complex and distressing in its content.

During the reporting period, Durham Adoption Panel has been fortunate in retaining a core of well-established and knowledgeable panel members as well as recruiting new members who are proving to be an asset as they become increasingly more experienced. That is not to say, however, that there are still occasions when the Panel may only just be quorate, with a particular struggle to identify a social work member! Continuing efforts are being made to recruit a local authority elected member as a representative of the corporate parent.

Overall, the panels are used to working together as a group and function best when members know each other.

The quality of social work reports and assessments continue to be of a high standard, and it is clear from the feedback, that prospective adopters feel well supported and valued.

It is gratifying that Early Permanence continues to be a key priority for the Adoption Service. Regrettably, some of our looked after children where adoption is believed to be a potential outcome, spend protracted periods of time with their foster carers until a court has reached a decision about their final care plan. As already stated within the report, Early Permanence offers stability at a very early stage, preventing multiple moves and the associated trauma of separation and loss of attachment figures.

We welcome the introduction in February 2023 of National Early Permanence Standards in what continues to be an area of challenge and look forward to panel members having access to training.

Panel Chairs have noted the Adoption Team's progress in gearing the delivery of its work in relation to ensuring inclusivity, throughout the advice and enrolment process for potential adopters. The team's flexibility in delivering assessment and training has allowed work to be done with people in different circumstances. The results can be seen in the diversity of potential adopters coming to panel in relation to gender and sexuality, though applicants are more likely to be white than from an ethnic minority. The lack of diversity in the make up of panel is, however, an ongoing issue with panel members being mainly White British and predominantly female. Panel Chairs believe that the only way to balance recruitment would be through a targeted approach with a recruitment campaign aimed at reaching a more diverse audience.

As Panel Chairs, we have raised the issue of contact, particularly, but not exclusively, between brothers and sisters. We expressed concerns regarding:

The language in CPR's sometimes being generic, rather than looking at each child as an individual.

A lack of analysis or rationale as to why the level of contact described has been decided upon, Indirect contact being almost always restricted to once per year , with the sharing of photographs being forbidden.

Indirect contact always being in the form of a letter with no thought for the use of any other media [for example, audible tapes and showing little creativity in ways to make indirect contact meaningful and special.

Direct contact between an adopted child and their brothers and sisters who remain in foster care rarely, if ever, being considered, regardless of whether the child who is looked after has or has not maintained regular contact with birth parents. This level of contact [or lack of] is rarely reported as being subject to regular review with an option of change, if in the children's best interest in the future.

As Panel Chairs, we are pleased and reassured to have seen that there has been some progress with an improvement in the Contact section of reports and in the willingness of social workers to be more flexible, but this is work that is ongoing. There is a commitment from the Adoption Team Manager, to ensuring progress in this area.

It is our belief that adopters are often more than willing to promote contact at a level and in such a way, as to be in their child's best interest. It has been heart warming to see instances where prospective adopters of children who are being placed separately from their brother or sister, have come to panel with plans on how they wish to promote relationships not only with their child's brother or sister but also with the child's adopters, seeing them as "extended family " .

It is also pleasing to see that good practice where children are able to maintain contact with foster carers who have been significant people in their lives, is embedded in the thinking around contact.

And finally, sincere thanks to our panel members who are so conscientious and spend a significant amount of their own time in preparing and contributing towards securing a permanent future for our looked after children. Good administrative arrangements also continue to be provided and are key to the effective functioning of the panel .

Adoption service staff should also be commended for their much appreciated efforts along with medical advisers who provide such detailed and informative medical summaries.

The Child's Journey

- In this reporting period, 60 children had an ADM decision for a plan of adoption, in the previous year this was 73.
- 54 Children have been granted a Placement Order, compared to 59 in the previous year.
- In this period, 65 children were matched at Panel. This is the same number as in the previous year.
- 46 of these children being matched within the RAA; of which 39 matches were with DCC approved adopters, 7 matches were with prospective adopters from our partner spokes.
- 19 matches were with other Local Authorities, RAA's or Voluntary Adoption Agencies.
- This is a significant decrease from the previous year, where 31 children were placed with external providers.
- 43 Adoption Orders have been granted for DCC children within this period.
- 28 children are placed with prospective adopters but not yet adopted.
- 41 children's plans were changed from adoption to long-term fostering.

No disruptions have happened within this period.

There has been one extraordinary Court case relating to an Adoption Order application within this period. This related to birth parents being given leave to oppose the granting of the Adoption Order. This caused significant delay for the child and distress for the prospective adopters. The Adoption Order was granted following various assessments by independent professionals being undertaken.

The budget position at the end of this reporting period is;

- DCC placed children with 7 approved adoptive households from our 2 partner spokes. 1 child with Cumbria. 6 children with TFC.
- Cumbria – A recharge to Cumbria of £54000 was made for adopters sold to CCC by DCC. No charge incurred by DCC from CCC.
- TFC – annual recharge costing payable to TFC by DCC = £108000.
- 17 children were placed externally to Coast to Coast with inter-agency fees costing £515,185. This was 7 sibling groups of 2 children and 5 individual children, all of which were older children or young children with complex health needs.
- The total allocated adoption placement budget was £1,265,705. There was an underspend of £655,645. To add to this was a sale of DCC adopters to Cumbria County Council to the value of £70,000.00, thus creating an underspend of £601,060.00

Family Finding

Profiling events/Activity days have been held facilitated or attended by DCC staff.

Activity days are held to family find for children with additional needs, sibling groups or older children. The days allow prospective adopters to interact with the children through fun and enjoyable activities, such as arts and crafts, sports, and games, to establish whether they feel an emotional connection. It

aims to broaden prospective adopters thinking in regards to ages and needs of children and if they feel able to consider children they otherwise would not consider.

The purpose of an exchange day is the same as that for an activity day, however no children attend this event. Adoption family finders and if possible, children's Social Workers and Foster Carers attend. Each adoption agency has a stand where profiles and photographs of children are displayed. Prospective adopters from around the country are invited to attend and they have the opportunity to talk directly with Social Workers and carers about the children. As with activity days, the aim is to broaden prospective adopters' thinking about the child or children they are open to considering as a match for themselves.

Senior Management consent to family find externally to the RAA is sought when no in-house adopters can meet the needs of some DCC children. Such children are those with additional health and/or disability needs, older children and sibling groups. This consent is needed before a child can be either taken to an activity day or their profile shared at an exchange day.

DCC hosted 1 activity day in July 2023, 14 children were taken across the 3 RAA spokes. 3 of these were DCC children. This was a sibling group. No match was identified and latterly the plan for the children needed to be 1 child being separated from their 2 siblings. Matches were identified and progressed with direct sibling contact agreed between adopters.

DCC have hosted 2 exchange days this year in May 2022 and July 2022.

An activity day was held by an external agency in Leeds in March 2023. A DCC sibling group of 2 attended this day, supported by their carer and Social Worker. No update is available as yet as to whether prospective adopters were identified from this event for them.

Cumbria County Council hosted an exchange day in September 2022. Barbara Arbon, Team Manager attended along with a child's Social Worker and Foster Carer, where profiles were presented for twins and another sibling group.

Further activity days and exchange days are to be held in the upcoming year.

Early Permanence (EP) via Fostering for Adoption (FFA) is a priority and within this period 3 children have been placed in this arrangement.

Early Permanence meetings are held as soon as possible once adoption via EP is being considered as a possible plan. The child's plan is then tracked by

the Permanency Monitoring Group, chaired by Jodie Henderson or Rachel Riley, and attended by Sara Peterson, Looked After Team Manager and Barbara Arbon Adoption Team Manager. Further regular weekly monitoring is undertaken by Barbara Arbon, Sarah Fitzpatrick Social Work Consultant and the family finding Social Workers in the Adoption Team.

Post Box contact

Post Box contact has significantly improved through the commencement in post of the Adoption Support Worker and named Business Support Worker who have worked tirelessly to bring the Post Box up to date on the LCS data base. A very large task that remains ongoing is the uploading of old Post Box contact to the electronic database. There have been admin issues over the year which has slowed this process down, however approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ is now uploaded. Work continues to complete the final uploads.

87 birth parents have been supported in writing their Post Box letter or understanding the process. This also included Indirect Contact Agreements that have been put in place on historical Post Box cases. This work has been undertaken by the Adoption Support Worker.

Support is also provided by the Adoption Support Worker to birth mothers who are engaging with the PAUSE project. Pause works with women who have experienced, or are at risk of, repeated pregnancies that result in children needing to be removed from their care. These birth mothers are assisted with their Post Box contact in respect of writing and sending their letters. Also, where needed, contacting other Local Authorities on their behalf to try ensure they receive their letters in return.

Support was also given to a terminally ill birth mother to ensure contact was undertaken early before she sadly passed away.

Post Adoption Support Services

Overall, there has been a significant increase in each area of adoption support services which are a statutory requirement for each Local Authority.

Adoption Support Fund assessments/application

Within this reporting period, 94 children have been supported through successful 'assessments of need' completed by Social Workers within the Adoption team. Overall, 116 claims were made to the Adoption Support Fund on behalf of children in need of therapeutic support relating to adoption issues.

Total Amount for Approved claims by the ASF 2022/23 = £515,153.60

Returned or surrendered funds 2022/23 = £118,884.28 Funds are returned when work ends early. On services and sessions provided are charged for.

Balance = £396,269.32 (of this £88,194.90 Full Circle was the provider)

This area of work is increasing vastly both within DCC and nationally. This is having an impact on the team in respect of duty work and caseloads.

There have also been some children who have also received services from our colleagues within the Safeguarding teams at either Child in Need or Child Protection levels alongside the support received from the post adoption support services. The allocated Adoption Social Workers have attended various meetings as part of the Team Around the Family in all cases.

Feedback from adoptive parents requesting support and advice

- *You have honestly been so kind and helpful and always there if we needed you.*
- *Many thanks for your efficiency with this!*
- *Thank you so much for everything these last few months. Can't wait for the next steps in this next chapter x. Take care, you're amazing x –*
- *Hi, Thank you so much for the attached info for school this is exactly what we needed.*

Full Circle

The DCC Adoption Team and the Full Circle team work collaboratively in supporting families in need of post adoption therapeutic support.

All post adoption service referrals are received by adoption duty. They are screened once information has been provided by the parent making the referral. The duty worker, with management oversight where needed, consider the information and whether their needs may be met by the Full Circle team.

If deemed appropriate, parents are asked if they wish to have a referral made to Full Circle for them to complete the assessment of need. If parents are in agreement, the duty worker then refers the family into Full Circle. An ASF application is made to fund the work following the assessment of need.

This new process provides swifter more streamlined services for families in crisis who are in need of therapeutic support.

It should be noted that it is parental choice, and the adoption staff have a duty to provide a list of therapeutic providers to parents and not to direct them only to Full Circle.

To further support new adoptive parents, prior to Adoption Orders being granted where agreement is given an assessment of need is carried out by the DCC Adoption Social Worker in order to see if the criteria has been met to make an Adoption Support Fund application for the adopters to enrol onto Nurturing Attachment (a rolling programme) with Full Circle. This is intended to ensure ongoing support in the earlier stages of the adoption and build on parent's strengths and abilities, hoping to reduce the need for more intense support as the child grows.

The Adoption Service also provides:

Support, advice, and counselling to birth parents and those who are affected by adoption. This task is undertaken by the Adoption Support Worker. 23 birth parents / grandparents have requested and received support regarding their children's/grandchildren's adoption, by the Adoption Support Worker in this period.

Access to records for adopted adults wishing to access their adoption records. Is undertaken by Adoption Social Workers. 32 adopted adults have requested this service.

Non-Agency Adoption

The number of referrals and complexities of this area of adoption work are increasing. One part time Adoption Social Worker specialises in this field of adoption and leads on and undertakes the non-agency work.

In this reporting period there have been:

- 21 initial visits were completed, with 13 resulting in an assessment commencing.
- 5 Adoption Orders have been granted.
- 6 completed assessments are waiting to be finalised at court.
- All assessments completed have progressed to applications being made to court.
- 11 assessments are ongoing although not all will result in the families making an application to court.

Adoption Support Allowance

Financial support is payable under Part 3 of the Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005 to an adoptive parent for the purpose of supporting the placement

of the adoptive child or the continuation of adoption arrangements after an adoption order is made. The Adoption Support Allowance is means tested and is reviewed annually. The review process requires Strategic Manager sign off.

In this reporting period the agreed annual budget was £798,542.00. The amount of allowance paid to adopters was £747,134.17. This was an underspend of £51,407.83

Signs of Safety/Signs of wellbeing/success

Adoption team staff continue to attend Signs Of Safety training sessions delivered by DCC Learning and Development and this model is now being embedded within day-to-day practice. As this model has been devised primarily as a safeguarding tool, it has been necessary to adapt some wording to ensure it is used to its best advantage within the adoption service. This affords us the opportunity to work with the model to make the best fit for service delivery.

LCS and Dashboard

LCS (Liquidlogic) has now been firmly embraced within adoption. Changes have been made when issues have been identified throughout this year and the final remaining area still to be fully updated is Post Adoption support, including access to adoption records.

Barbara Arbon has met with the LCS team to look at developing this and it is expected that this final area will be fully embedded in the very near future.

In recent weeks the adoption dashboard has gone live. Having the dashboard will help with data collection immensely as the process has been manual using spreadsheets to date. This has historically been both cumbersome and time consuming.

Key priority areas for 2023/24:

- To work collaboratively with our partners in Adopt Coast to Coast to recruit, assess and approve adopters in a timely manner.
- To ensure children's plans of permanence via adoption are progressed without delay.
- Early Permanence families are to be identified at the earliest possible stage in children's planning to prevent delay and ensure minimal moves for children.

- To continue to recruit new Panel members to the Central List. This will ensure quoracy and prevent the possible situation of having to stand a panel down due to lack of available Panel members.
- To continue to embed Signs of Safety into practice and Panel processes in line with the Durham model of social work practice.
- To increase relationship-based practice with trauma informed service developments, particularly in the development and support of post adoption contact.
- To identify potential plans of adoption for children as early as possible. This will allow for targeted adopter recruitment at the earliest possible point. Where there is a need for an adopter able to take sibling groups, older children or children with more complex health or disability needs, thus preventing delay or the need to purchase adopters at a high cost from external providers.

Barbara Arbon

Adoption Team Manager

April 2023



Durham Adoption Service

Annual Report to Corporate Parenting Panel

9 June 2023



What's Working Well

- ❖ We have received 267 initial enquires, (267 applicants equating to 229 households) of which 111 applicants (80 households) progressed to have an initial visit.
- ❖ This is an increase from the previous year of 217 initial enquiries which resulted in 62 initial visits.
- ❖ Adopter feedback is positive about the recruitment and support available.
- ❖ 58 matches for children with adopters. All matches were recommended and latterly ratified by ADM
- ❖ The quality of reports being presented to panel are noted by panel members and ADM to be of a very high standard.
- ❖ Activity days are working well to support children to find adoption homes.
- ❖ Post adoption support is working well, 94 children have received support following assessment of need



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What are we working on

- ❖ Coast to Coast structure has altered with Cumbria leaving reducing the pool of adopters available
- ❖ There was a short delay for a some adopters progressing through Stage 1 as a result of challenges in gaining medical assessments for prospective adopters
- ❖ Early permanence through fostering to adoption is not well embedded and results in children having to move to adoption from foster care.
- ❖ Non agency adoption work is increasing in volume and complexity.

What needs to happen next

- ❖ Head of Service for Coast to Coast is leading some work to develop early permanence. This will have targets attached to support more children to be able to live in fostering homes that could become adoption homes where appropriate.
- ❖ Panel membership to be extended and developed to continue to improve the functioning of adoption panel.
- ❖ Coast to Coast targeted recruitment for children with harder to place characteristics to embed and show continued improvements.
- ❖ Post adoption support plans to continue to develop including best practice for trauma informed decision making in order to reduce adoption breakdowns.



Progress report on Children Looked After in the Virtual School: Update for Autumn and Spring Term

Report of Melanie Stubbs, Durham Virtual School Head, Children and Young People's Services, Durham County Council

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of the report is to provide an update on the work carried out by the Virtual School September 2022 to April 2023. This summary focuses on children and young people of statutory school age.

Executive summary

2. The Children and Families Act 2014 requires local authorities in England to appoint at least one person for the purpose of discharging the local authority's duty to promote the educational achievement of its children looked after. That person – the Virtual School Head (VSH) - must be an officer employed by the local authority or, where local authorities agree to collaborate or share the role, another local authority in England.
3. The VSH should be the lead responsible officer for ensuring that arrangements are in place to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of the authority's children looked after, including those placed outside the home authority's boundaries

Recommendation

4. It is recommended that members of the Corporate Parenting Panel note the contents of this update

Background

5. As of March 31st 2023, there were 693 Durham children looked after of statutory school age. 46.5% were of primary age and 53.5% were of secondary age. 43% were female and 57% were male. 21.8% were supported by an Education Health care Plan (EHCP) and 30.2% were identified as requiring SEND Support

Attendance and Exclusions

6. National CLA overall absence rates were over double those observed locally in the 2021/22 academic year. Similarly, national persistent absence rates were almost three times the rate observed locally.
7. Overall attendance since September 22 is 91.3%, reception to Year 11
8. Attendance is improving following the disruption caused by the pandemic and children are less anxious about attending school.
9. The Virtual School works with schools to maintain a high standard of attendance and in line with the Government attendance guidance we do not authorise holidays during term time.
10. We have had one Permanent Exclusion since September 2022

Quality Assurance of the Personal Education Plan (PEP)

11. The Autumn and Spring term has reflected a dip in the number of PEP's rated as Green. This reflects the challenge to schools from the Casework team and the message we are giving to schools that the PEP is a live document and the sign off period must be actioned within a ten-day window. Where this has not taken place a PEP can only achieve an Amber rating.
12. There has been an improvement from the Autumn PEP when 79.9% were rated as Green. The Spring PEP has seen this improve to 85.3%. We believe this challenge is having impact.

Durham Virtual School Team

13. The casework team of seven has been able to maintain the high level of support for our young people and challenge for schools. Since September we have employed two additional Caseworkers on a temporary basis to support a growing cohort of children and young people. One of these Caseworkers carries the Post 16 caseload.
14. We have continued to provide advice to parents of PCLA and those on SGO, thus meeting our duties as a Virtual School.

Virtual School Areas for Development

The key priorities for 2022 – 23 as outlined in the Annual Report :

- a) Identify ways to support CLA to close the gaps created by Covid
- b) Focus on Years 6 and 11 to allow early intervention and release catch up funding during the Autumn term.
- c) Develop progress meetings with the CLA PEP Casework team to enable them to promote reflective conversations with schools around progress
- d) Develop the way in which we work with Foster Carers
- e) Develop work with Children's Homes to support school anxiety and other barriers to education.
- f) Increase the CLA PEP Casework Team to enhance the service we offer and have a bespoke caseworker for Post 16.
- g) Work with other areas, including schools to ensure PLAC and those with a Special guardianship order (SGO) are aware of the support available and how to access this.
- h) Further develop the Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Full Circle to raise awareness of Trauma and Attachment in schools
- i) Review all our SLA to ensure high quality and easy access for schools and identify any gaps in our offer to improve outcomes
- j) Develop the EWEL offer to schools to support early intervention and reduce the numbers of Suspensions.
- k) Develop the work with the SEND and Inclusion Team to ensure all CLA with an EHCP have a named SEND Caseworker, raising the awareness of the need to find a suitable placement when the child needs to change school through a placement breakdown.
- l) Support Designated Teachers to identify smart outcomes for CLA and develop coordinated ways of working with the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) in their schools.

Conclusion

15. Members of the Corporate parenting panel will be sighted on the work of the Virtual School

Author

Melanie Stubbs

Tel: 03000 265848

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The Local Authority has a statutory duty to ensure that top priority is given to creating a culture of high educational aspirations and strives for accelerated progress and age-related attainment or better for looked-after children.

Finance

The support for CLA of statutory school age is provided through the allocation of Pupil Premium Plus, schools receive £1800 per academic year for each Durham child. The Virtual School uses the remaining £730 to provide the additional therapeutic Services and other support for schools to access for children at various points during their learning journey when a need is identified.

Consultation

Ongoing consultation with schools through briefings and a designated teacher network meeting. Consultation with young people through the CiCC.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

As a public body, the Council must consider the Equality Act 2010, a consolidating Act which brings together previous Acts dealing with discrimination. Decisions must be reviewed for potential impact on persons with "protected characteristics".

Climate Change

N/A

Human Rights

It is the right of the child to a high-quality PEP that identifies their needs, sets targets, and uses PP+ appropriately to support their educational outcomes. It is their right to have their voice heard and contribute to matters that affect them in education. We acknowledge the Children Promise and have highlighted this in the Children Looked After and Previously Looked After Policy we have shared with schools and settings.

Crime and Disorder

Young people who do not access full-time education are more at risk of criminality, CSE or criminal exploitation across county lines. The VS supports all CLA to find the right setting to support their needs and promotes high attendance in school.

Staffing

There are eleven full time members of staff, funded through the corporate budget. We currently have two temporary Caseworkers funded through Pupil Premium Plus, one focuses on Post 16, the other on statutory school age children. This is to meet the demands of the increased number of CLA and the need to maintain a high level of support to schools. Without the additional capacity Caseworkers would have a caseload of 102.

Accommodation

The Virtual School Team are based at Green Lane, Spennymoor. The full team now sit in Education Durham.

The Inclusion Base is placed at Lanchester and is accommodated within the building known as The Bridge.

Risk

The extended offer to schools and settings relies upon Pupil Premium Plus. Staff costs are funded through the corporate budget; however, this does not apply to two members of staff at the Inclusion Base. The Base is an asset and supports CLA in times of crisis.

Procurement

The contract with Welfare Call has been extended to August 2024. It would not be wise to change the provider for the ePEP system due to the system we have established with schools and Social Care.

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Corporate Parenting Panel

Friday 9 June 2023

Virtual School Update



**Education
Durham**



Profile of Virtual School Cohort at 31st March 2023

- 693 Learners (Reception to Year 11)
- 152 Post 16
- 102 Pre-school (Age 2 to Nursery)
- 46.5% Primary
- 53.5% Secondary
- The gender split is 43% girls, 57% boys and 1 young person identifies as non-binary.
- During the Autumn Term 21.8% were supported by an EHCP.
- 30.2% were identified as requiring SEND Support.



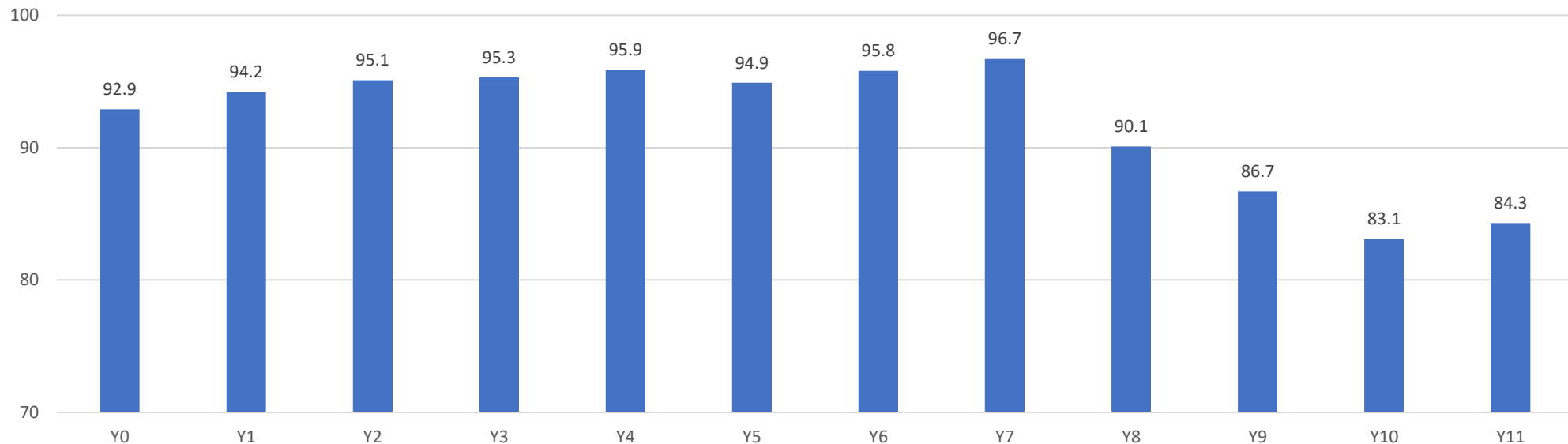
Attendance and Suspensions to 31st March 2023

Attendance Headlines

	Overall absence %		Persistent absence %	
	National	Local	National	Local
CLA 12 months at 31 March 2022	15.2%	7.2%	43.8%	14.6%

National CLA overall absence rates were over double those observed locally in the 2021/22 academic year. Similarly, national persistent absence rates were almost three times the rate observed locally.

- Below shows the attendance for CLA during the Autumn and Spring Terms Combined:
- Overall attendance since September 22 = 91.3%, Reception to Year 11



Suspension and Exclusion Data

- Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Data for the same period

One young person was Permanently Excluded

School	Pupils 21/22	Days Lost 21/22	Pupils with more than 1 Suspension	Pupils 22/23	Days Lost 22/23	Pupils with more than 1 suspension
CLA	31	94	9	29	129	13

PEP Update

Term	Green High Quality	Amber Below expected quality
Autumn 2021	91.7%	8.3%
Spring 2022	88.1%	11.9%
Summer 2022	90.1%	9.9%
Autumn 2022	79.9%	20.1%
Spring 2023	85.3%	14.7%

Progress Against Priorities Identified in Annual Report for 2022/2023

Identify ways to support CLA to close the gaps created by Covid

- Focus on Years 6 and 11 to allow early intervention and release catch up funding during the Autumn term.
- Develop progress meetings with the CLA PEP Casework team to enable them to promote reflective conversations with schools around progress
- Develop the way in which we work with Foster Carers
- Develop work with Children's Homes to support school anxiety and other barriers to education.
- Increase the CLA PEP Casework Team to enhance the service we offer and have a bespoke caseworker for Post 16.
- Work with other areas, including schools to ensure PLAC and those with a SGO are aware of the support available and how to access this.
- Further develop the SLA with Full Circle to raise awareness of Trauma and Attachment in schools
- Review all our SLA to ensure high quality and easy access for schools and identify any gaps in our offer to improve outcomes
- Develop the EWEL offer to schools to support early intervention and reduce the numbers of Suspensions.
- Develop the work with the SEND and Inclusion Team to ensure all CLA with an EHCP have a named SEND Caseworker, raising the awareness of the need to find a suitable placement when the child needs to change school through a placement breakdown.
- Support Designated Teachers to identify smart outcomes for CLA and develop coordinated ways of working with the SENCO in their schools.



By virtue of paragraph(s) 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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