



Corporate Parenting Panel

Date **Friday 8 March 2024**
Time **9.30 am**
Venue **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham**

Business

Part A

Items which are open to the public and press

- 1 Apologies for Absence
- 2 Substitute Members
- 3 Minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2024 (Pages 3 - 12)
- 4 Declarations of Interest
- 5 Number of Children in Our Care and Care Leavers - Verbal update from Deputy Director of Children and Young People's Services
- 6 Ofsted Updates - Verbal update from Deputy Director of Children and Young People's Services
- 7 Proud Moments - Verbal update from Strategic Managers
- 8 Children in Care Council Update - Presentation of young people from the Children in Care Council (Pages 13 - 14)
- 9 Regional Pathfinder Project Update - Report of Head of Children's Social Care (Pages 15 - 24)
- 10 Performance Update - Report and presentation of Corporate Equality and Strategy Manager (Pages 25 - 42)
- 11 Corporate Parenting Panel Development Session and Action Plan - Report of Deputy Director of Children and Young People's Services (Pages 43 - 48)
- 12 Poetry Book, Children in Care and Care Leavers - Report of Head of Children's Social Care (Pages 49 - 68)

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

Part B

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

- 15 Regulation 44 Visits - Durham County Council Residential Homes - Presentation of Strategic Manager of Children's Homes (Pages 69 - 74)
- 16 Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.

Helen Bradley

Head of Legal and Democratic Services

County Hall
Durham
29 February 2024

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, S Quinn, A Reed, K Robson, K Rooney, A Savory, P Sexton, S Townsend, C Varty and M Wilson

Co-opted Members:

J Bell, C Brown, J Gamble, E Reed, W Taylor, F Tweddle, R Woods and Children in Care Council representatives

Contact: Jill Hogg

Tel: 03000 269 711

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Panel** held in **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham** on **Friday 26 January 2024** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor M Simmons (Chair)

Members of the Panel:

Councillors M Walton (Vice-Chair), R Adcock-Forster, S Deinali, B Kellett, S Quinn, K Rooney, A Savory, S Townsend and C Varty

Co-opted Members:

J Bell, Billie-Leigh, J Gamble, Luke and W Taylor

Also Present:

Sharon Davey – Strategic Manager, Looked After and Permanence

Rachel Harris – Service Improvement Manager

Anne Haigh – Aycliffe Secure Services Centre Manager

Rob Johnson – Project Manager, Investing in Children

Michelle Nicholson – Maple House Manager

Lee Peacock – Participation and Engagement Officer

Helen Radcliffe – Strategic Manager, Progression and Learning

Martyn Stenton – Deputy Director of Children’s Services

Melanie Stubbs – Head of the Virtual School

Bernadette Toomey - Practice Lead, Children & Young People’s Services

Jayne Watson – Senior Partnerships Officer

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Charlton, J Griffiths, T Henderson, C Hunt, L Mavin, A Reed, K Robson, M Wilson and Co-Opted member Fiona Tweddle.

2 Substitute Members

No substitute members were in attendance.

3 Minutes

With an amendment to the minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2023 to add Councillor M Wilson’s name to the attendees, the minutes were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Under matters arising, it was reported that an update on Christmas cards had been received from Demi and Zoe who had advised that the maximum number of Christmas cards they could produce was one hundred cards. The Senior Partnership Officer advised she will send an email to Members to check who would like to place an order.

4 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Number of Children in our Care and Care Leavers

The Deputy Director of Children's Services reported that the figure for children in our care remained the same as last month at 1,202, including 22 young people placed for adoption, 80 unaccompanied asylum seeking young people and 327 care leavers.

6 Ofsted Updates

The Panel noted the findings of the Ofsted visit on 14 and 15 November 2023 which focused on the Care Leavers' Service. An event was held to celebrate the successful visit and publication of the report, on 12 January.

The Practice Lead for the Children and Young Peoples Service, Bernadette Toomey, shared her reflections of the visit. She reported that Ofsted were impressed at the Council's response to young people transitioning from care and they recognised that the voice of young people is not only heard but that young people have meaningful collaboration. Quoting from the report, the Practice Lead highlighted that Ofsted found the voice of care experienced young people to be 'central to decision making'. Ofsted also recognised the commitment from practitioners to strive to do the best for young people to achieve their ambitions. Relationships between young people and their Young People's Advisers were considered to be strong and trusting and Ofsted acknowledged the importance of the links with partners and the wider care community.

The quality of written supervision records was an area highlighted for further improvement and the service was addressing the issue, to ensure all supervision records represent the breadth and depth of conversations.

Luke and Billie-Leigh commented that the experience of meeting the Ofsted inspectors had shown the young people how important their views are in helping to help shape the services of the future.

They spoke of how heart-warming the celebration event had been and they thanked Lee Peacock, Participation and Engagement Officer, for arranging such a fantastic event at short notice.

Billie-Leigh also shared a touching poem with the Corporate Parenting Panel, that she wrote and performed at the event as a 'thank you' to the Young People's Advisers for their belief in young people.

Service Improvement Manager, Rachel Harris, said the event felt very much like a family event and it brought people together. Luke and Billie-Leigh agreed with the positive comments and commented on how much they had enjoyed seeing the young people relaxing and enjoying themselves. The Practice Lead concluded by saying the comments bore testament to the positive report from Ofsted.

Councillor Varty expressed how proud members were to be part of such a wonderful event.

7 Proud Moments

The Service Improvement Manager reported that she was proud to have Billie-Leigh joining the team as a sessional employee in the role of Junior Project Support Worker.

The team was looking forward to welcoming Billie-Leigh and the role will see her participating in a range of engagement work.

8 Children in Care Council (CiCC) Update

Billie-Leigh and Luke delivered a presentation on CiCC highlights during the month (for copy of presentation see file of minutes).

Highlights included the quarterly meeting with the Chief Executive at which the young people shared their ideas and opinions on how the Council is meeting its corporate parenting responsibilities.

The 'Know, What, When' guide had been finalised and the guide will ensure that young people are aware of what to expect when entering care. The CiCC Christmas quiz was planned by the young people and it had been a resounding success.

The Panel noted that Care Day 2024 will take place on Saturday 17 February 2024 and the event will premiere the #morethancare film. Rob Johnson, Project Manager of Investing in Children, explained that a young person who is keen to study media at university had been central to the production of the film. Members were encouraged to attend the event and share the event leaflet, within their networks.

9 Children Looked After Strategic Partnership (CLASP) Update

The Panel considered the Children Looked After Strategic Partnership update report presented by Sharon Davey, Strategic Manager (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

The Strategic Manager delivered the presentation which provided details of the eight key priority areas to achieve the CLASP vision. The Panel noted the work of the CLASP continues to build multi-agency partnerships and promote collaborative working to meet the needs of young people in our care and care leavers, up to the age of 25.

The Strategic Manager emphasised the importance of young people's engagement to achieve the key priorities and she spoke of the positive feedback received throughout the year with regard to how well the young people influence services. It was noted that young people were particularly proactive in the opening of the Care Leavers' Hub at Chester le Street; the production of the 'Know, What, When' interactive book and the setting up of an 'Experts in Experience' group.

The launch of a prison support pilot at HMP Durham has enabled Young People's Advisers to visit and support care experienced young people in the prison. The success of the pilot has led neighbouring authorities to offer the same support to their care experienced young people.

Priority actions in the workplan for 2024 include to build on the feedback received from the Care Leavers' Service inspection, to evaluate the newly formed education subgroups and the performance with regard to early permanence, with input from the Regional Adoption Agency Manager who is now part of CLASP. The Service will also work with CLASP members to establish a framework to measure success.

The Vice-Chair asked what support was provided to train staff who are engaged in providing employment opportunities for young people and the Strategic Manager responded that the establishment of NEET clinics help to track young people's progress. Information gathered at the clinics is then reported to CLASP meetings, bi-monthly. The Education Sub-Group provides additional support to Social Workers to ensure young people achieve their potential and the group includes representation from Strategic Managers, Residential Home Managers, the Virtual School Head and Durham Works.

The Chair announced that it was to be Sharon Davey's last meeting and the Panel expressed their thanks to Sharon for all her hard work and they wished her well for the future.

Resolved:

That the report and presentation be noted.

10 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

Sharon Davey, Strategic Manager, presented an update on the work of the Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) Team (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

The Panel noted that most UASC arrive through the Home Office Transfer Scheme, however some arrive unexpectedly as spontaneous arrivals. The UASC Team was established in February 2022 due to the increased demand for social work capacity and care provision for UASC. UASC are represented on the Children in Care Council and work to establish the profile of UASC has assisted the Children in Care Council to tailor their UASC offer.

The Strategic Manager thanked all those who had provided support to develop the service, including the Early Help Service, the National Youth Advocacy Service and voluntary and community groups including local sports clubs and businesses whose contribution had helped the young people to feel part of the community.

The Vice-Chair referred to the diverse profile of UASC and asked whether translation services were available for the many different nationalities. The Strategic Manager replied that translation services were available and the Deputy Director of Children's Services explained that the Education Service also provides support through the English as an Additional Language (EAL) service. He highlighted that many of the young people have a good command of the English language on arrival and they are fully committed to learning English with many attending ESOL (English as a Second Language) courses. The Head of the Virtual School commented that support is also available through the FlashAcademy online language learning facility and a teaching agency may be used to provide lessons to young people awaiting a school placement.

Councillor Quinn spoke of the dedication of staff who are committed to breaking down barriers in order to do everything possible to support young people and she thanked staff for their good work.

Resolved:

That the report and presentation be noted.

11 Virtual School Annual Report 2022-23

Melanie Stubbs, Head of the Virtual School, presented an overview of the Virtual School Annual Report for the period September 2022 to July 2023 academic year (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

The Panel noted that at the end of the academic year, the Virtual School had supported 766 children of statutory school age and delivered early years and post 16 young provision. 53% of Durham children had an identified special educational need in 2022-23, however this figure was approximately 3% below the national figure. The Head of the Virtual school highlighted that identifying a special need enabled the right support to be provided and a young person in receipt of an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) would continue to have access to the funding, if they were to move out of the county.

The number of school moves which had taken place during the year was reported as 52, which was slightly higher than the previous year and a total of 54 school moves were challenged by the Virtual School. Attendances were improving and there had been one permanent exclusion, 40 suspensions and 21 young people had more than one period of suspension. Short term support for suspended young people was available, which relieved pressure on carers.

The Head of the Virtual School provided details on continuing priorities and new priorities for 2023-24. A new priority had been the appointment of a dedicated Previously Child Looked After Officer. Other priorities include to continue the development of the support for UASC and to provide a cohesive system for children looked after who require a statutory assessment and an EHCP, to ensure needs are met in a timely manner.

The Vice-Chair highlighted the continuing priority to focus on attendance and asked how this would be carried out. The Head of the Virtual School replied that work is carried out with the Attendance Improvement Team (AIT) and Social Workers to promote a positive ethos around attendance and she added that attendance would be discussed in more detail at the forthcoming sub-group meeting. The Head of the Virtual School reminded the Panel that there were concerns, previously, regarding a dip in attendance of year 6 pupils on reaching year 7, however this was much improved due to the success of the new transition work.

The Chair thanked the Head of the Virtual School for the useful Appendix B to the report which provided definitions for abbreviations used within the report.

Councillor Deinali was pleased to see the appointment of an officer specifically for previously looked after children and requested further information on their remit. The Head of the Virtual School clarified that the officer would attend each young person's final Personal Education Plan meeting when the child is about to move for adoption, to build up an educational profile and they will liaise with the adopter and school, when a young person is moving out of the county, for up to two terms.

In response to a question from Luke as to whether the Education Fun Fund could be used as an incentive to promote school attendance, the Virtual School Head offered to meet with Luke to discuss the matter further.

Resolved:

That the report and presentation be noted.

12 Supporting Care Leavers into Education, Employment or Training

Helen Radcliffe, Strategic Manager for Progression and Learning gave an update report and presentation on the support provided to care leavers to enable them to progress into sustained post-16 education, employment or training (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

Information was provided on the Durham Works Programme for Schools which provides transition support and careers guidance to targeted pupils in years 10 and 11. The Workplaces Project, which began in June 2023, introduces pupils in years 10 and 12 to the world of work through visits to work premises and meetings with employers, in a sector of interest to each young person. Sessional employment opportunities provide paid work placements with Durham County Council and 26 care leavers have accessed these placements since October 2021. Currently 7 care leavers are apprentices with Durham County Council.

The Panel noted the Council has used Pupil Premium Plus Post-16 funding to appoint a dedicated officer to support care leavers who are enrolled in further education and an incentive scheme was introduced to encourage those in further education to maintain regular attendance at college. The Panel noted that 32 care leavers are studying at university and their Young People's Advisers work closely with the young people with regard to issues including accommodation and finance.

Current data produced by the Department for Education shows that the proportion of care leavers aged 17-18 and 19-21 for whom Durham County Council is the corporate parent, who are not in education, employment or training is lower compared to the average rates regionally and nationally. However, the proportion of care leavers, whose destination is not known in Durham is greater compared to the average rates regionally and nationally.

The Vice-Chair noted the relatively high rate of those whose destination is not known and the Strategic Manager responded that work is ongoing to investigate further and she referred to the increasing number of young people who have mental health and anxiety issues which may act as a barrier to engagement.

Luke provided the view that 32 care leavers at university out of a total cohort of over 300 seemed low and he asked whether more work should be done to raise awareness of the support available to those who decide to take the university route. The Strategic Manager highlighted that the support offered to young people attending university was one of the areas identified by Ofsted as a key strength and she added there is always more work to be done. The Strategic Manager undertook to make enquiries as to whether information was available from neighbouring authorities on the percentage of care leavers studying at university.

Resolved:

That the report and presentation be noted.

13 Bi-Annual Adoption Service Report

The Panel received the six monthly review of the adoption service as a spoke in the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

Sharon Davey, Strategic Manager, highlighted that within the reporting period, nine adoptive families had been approved. Matches for children with adopters continued to be carried out in a timely manner, to promote early permanence for children. In addition, non-agency adoption referral work was increasing. Eleven panels met during the period and work was ongoing with regard to the recruitment of new panel members to increase the central list. Members interested in joining the panel were asked to inform the Senior Partnerships Officer.

Post-adoption support is an area of strength, with 119 young people supported and 64 successful applications made to the Adoption Support Fund to purchase additional therapeutic support. The Adoption Support Fund includes kinship carers and Special Guardians, to ensure they receive the same level of support as adoptive parents. Support is also provided to birth parents to help them to write letters to adopted children.

Councillor Adcock-Forster spoke positively of his involvement in the Adoption Panel and he encouraged members to consider joining the panel in the future.

In response to an observation from the Vice-Chair on the number of enquiries received which seemed comparatively low, the Strategic Manager clarified that the report was a mid-point review, however, the number of enquires had reduced. This trend was reflected nationally and possible causes were cited as the aftermath of the pandemic and cost of living pressures. The Strategic Manager spoke of the continuing work to ensure messages are conveyed regarding the amount of support available, including the Adoption Support Fund.

Councillor Deinali thanked the team for their valuable work done to support birth parents to write letters to adopted children.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

14 Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP) Update

The Panel received the Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP) Update, for information.

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 Aycliffe Secure Centre

The Manager of Aycliffe Secure Centre, Anne Haigh and Michelle Nicholson, Maple House Manager, provided a quarterly update on Aycliffe Secure Centre children's homes and Maple House transition home (for copy see file of minutes).

Councillors Quinn and Townsend reported that they had not been contacted by their NYAS representative and any other Members who had not been contacted were asked to inform the Senior Partnerships Officer who would follow this up with the Strategic Manager for Children's Homes.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

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

Durham Children in Care Council (CiCC) – February Update

12 young people attended the older CiCC group in January to discuss DCC's Children Looked After Strategic Partnership's (CLASP) priorities and the work of Durham CPP. They discussed what they thought was important regarding this work. All the young people had a lot to share regarding their care experienced journey. Rob Johnson sits on the CLASP as a link with the CiCC.

The following themes came through strongly:-

- **Feeling Safe:** A stable home that creates positive memories and promotes good times growing up was seen as important.
- **Emotional and Physical Wellbeing:** It was felt that emotional and physical support tailored and provided by the right people at the right time.
- **Positive People in Your Life:** Having people around you that are positive and who you can turn to for advice/support/friendship was significant – Everyone needs a Friend! Alongside being part of the local community in different ways.
- **Being Listened to:** Having the chance to share your view on life in different ways was seen as important.
- **Understanding Things Better:** Developing information and presenting it in different ways that children and young people understand how lots of people are trying to help them in joined up ways.
- **To be the best I can be:** Learning and developing in a variety of ways, connecting and learning through different opportunities.



Promoting the Rights of Children and Young People



- Durham CICC will continue to work alongside DCC representatives to feed into CLASP these themes and work on a range of projects and work taking place this year.
- Care Day Feedback.
- Here is a picture that was part of IIC/ CICC Care Day. The picture was part of a photo exhibition and raffled as a prize:



Corporate Parenting Panel

8 March 2024

Regional Pathfinder Project Update



Report of Rachel Farnham, Head of Children’s Social Care, Children and Young People’s Services, Durham County Council

Electoral division(s) affected:

None

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide an update to Corporate Parenting Panel on the Regional Pathfinder Project, Foster North East.



Executive summary

- 2 As part of the care review all 12 Local Authorities in the North East region, including Durham County Council, came together to create a regional Hub for the recruitment of new foster carers. The regional hub is hosted by Sunderland Together for Children and has been operational since September 2023. The project is due to end April 2024, and will be evaluated in March 2024. The project is funded through the Department for Education (DfE).
- 3 Since the launch of the project Durham County Council has seen an increase in referrals for potential new foster carers and an increase in the number progressing to the assessment phase of the process.
- 4 Durham County Council (hereafter referred to as DCC) have continued to compliment the marketing activity of Foster with North East.
- 5 An update to the progress of this project is provided within the body of this report.

Recommendations

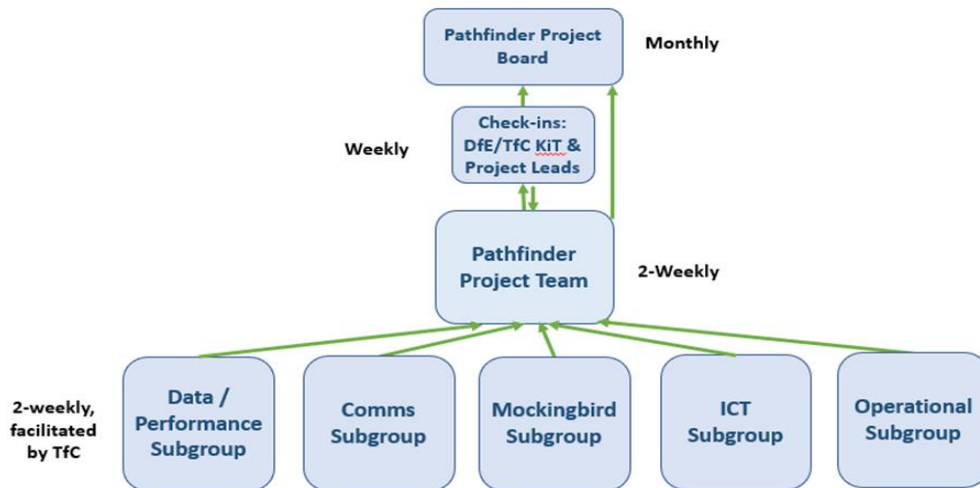
- 6 Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to:
 - (a) note the content of the report and progress of the project; *and*
 - (b) note the project timescales of evaluation by the DfE of March 2024.

Background

- 7 The regional fostering pathfinder project and campaign is led by the DfE working in close partnership with the North East. It is designed and targeted to meet the specific needs and provision gaps in the North East region for foster carers. While the DfE has worked with the North East to deliver a central North East campaign, this has been supported by Local Authority sign-up and commitment to the project. This is hosted by Sunderland Together for Children. The governance structure is explored later in this report.
- 8 The projects aims were to:
- (a) increase the number of foster carers in the region;
 - (b) reduce the need for Independent Foster Carers;
 - (c) reduce the need for Childrens Homes as an alternative for children due to the lack of available carers;
 - (d) reduce the number of children being moved out of the area in which they live;
 - (e) reduce the number of occasions children go missing due to being placed out of county; *and*
 - (f) bring placement stability with the introduction of the Mockingbird Programme to all Local Authorities.
- 9 To promote the project and routes to fostering for individuals within their own Local Authority, a regional communications campaign was launched supporting marketing activity across the region and looking to ensure it is targeted and effective. The project will be evaluated in March 2024 with an outcome report shared following completion.

The Partnership Governance

- 10 The Project operates in accordance with the following governance model:

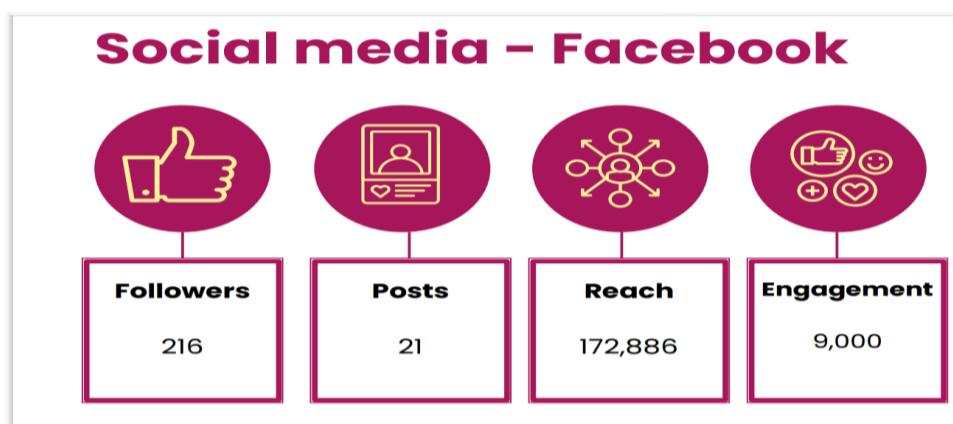


- 11 There is a monthly Board meeting for the 12 North East Local Authorities to attend and feed into service delivery. These were initially weekly when forming the partnership and reduced gradually to fortnightly and then monthly as the project progressed.
- 12 There is a monthly newsletter shared across the partnership.
- 13 There are monthly data sets produced to track progress of referrals.

Marketing

- 14 The marketing strategy used has been to target local media platforms, TV, radio, online and printed materials to increase brand awareness and attract potential foster carers.
- 15 Review of the impact of the marketing activity is monitored in the analytical subgroup. Findings are produced and disseminated from the group to demonstrate reach and impact.

Facebook



- 16 Activity linked with case studies and interviews are highlighted below and evaluation of the impact will be reviewed following the next circulation.

Facebook – top posts



Post reach – 5,139
Engagement – 387
Reactions – 143
Comments 15
Link clicks – 53
Shares – 48



Post reach – 4,795
Engagement – 138
Reactions – 34
Comments 0
Link clicks – 56
Shares – 10



Post reach – 1,961
Engagement – 212
Reactions – 69
Comments – 5
Link clicks – 57
Shares – 14



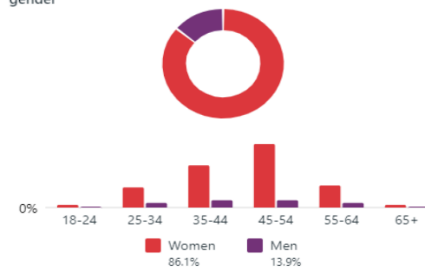
- 17 Facebook has been beneficial for the project and supported links through Facebook to the website for further information.

Facebook – audience profile

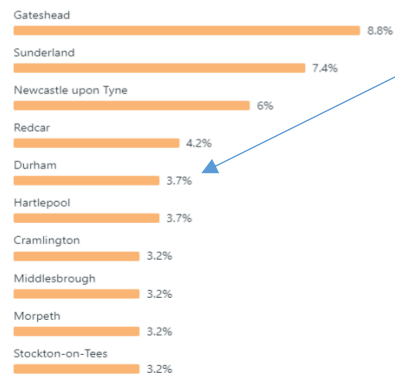
Facebook followers ①

216

Age & gender ①



Top towns/cities



Instagram

- 18 The social media platform Instagram has brought in no views from County Durham.
- 19 Newcastle, Darlington, Gateshead, Sunderland and London have had 241 followers from this. The case studies had 14,932 reactions on Instagram. This is potential exposure DCC could be included in if we were to expand on the Instagram platform.
- 20 As a result of the activity seen in other Local Authorities, DCC will explore this platform further over the next quarter.

Website

- 21 The Foster with North East website has had 31,762 visits as shared below.

Website referrals



- 22 DCC provides the highest number of people to the Foster with North East website in comparison to the other Local Authorities. DCC has utilised established events to sharing three links with Foster with North East. As shown in the infographic, the most effective pathway to the Foster North East website is from Facebook.

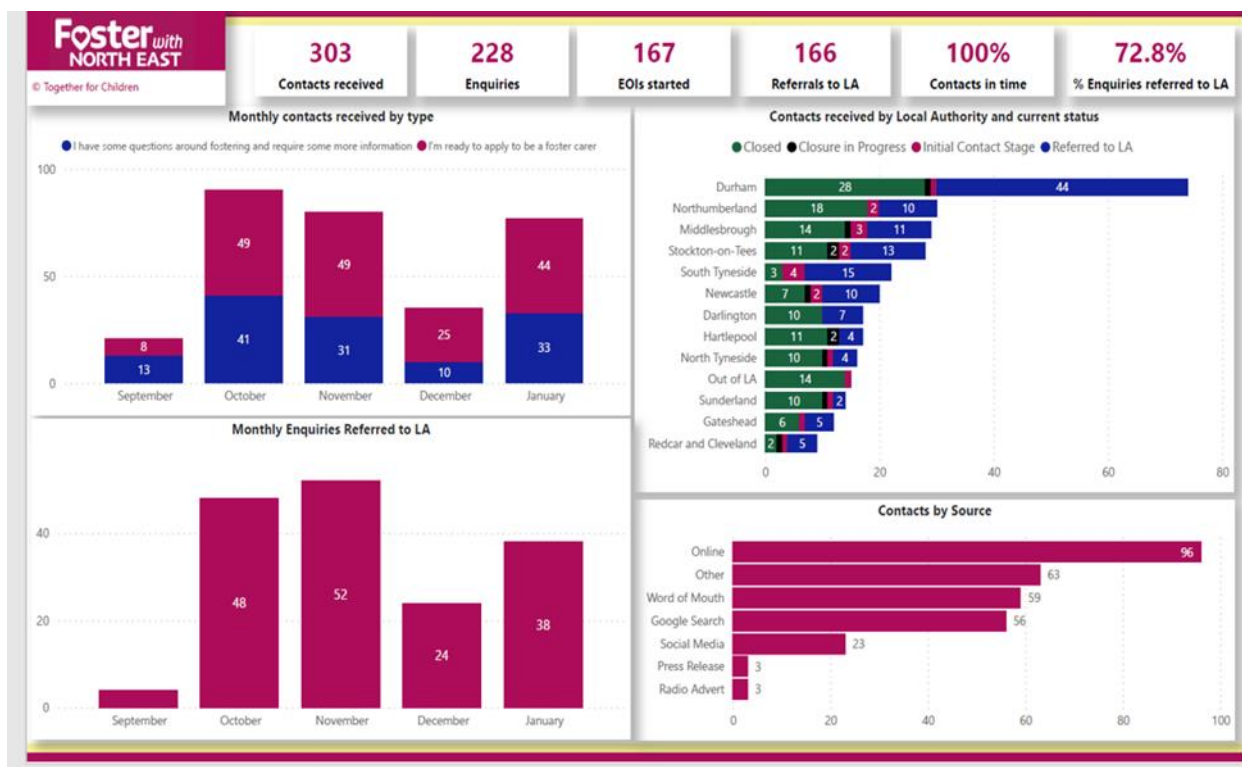
Supplementary Marketing Activity by DCC to promote the project.

- 23 DCC has used the regional marketing templates on its Facebook and wider communications.
- 24 DCC has continued to hold recruitment activities and drop in events. We have raised the profile of the Pathfinder Project to generate interest.
- 25 DCC paid for additional bus stops to have the Pathfinder Project advertisement as we did not have much focus in comparison to the other Local Authorities.
- 26 These additional marketing points may have generated more interest than other Local Authorities which are relying solely on the Pathfinder Project to create interest.

Conversion Activity

- 27 An overview of the number of referrals and enquiries can be found below. County Durham has the highest number of enquiries. These have translated into ten families being assessed at present.

- 28 DCC had 22 approved foster families between April 2023 to February 2024. Twenty of these were not linked to the launch of the project as some of these families started their assessment prior to April 2023, i.e. January, February and March 2023, and others had expressed their interest to foster prior to the project launch.
- 29 However, since the project was launched at the end of September we have seen a significant increase in Expressions of Interest (EOI) made to the Pathfinder Hub in relation to fostering with DCC. Of the 22 approvals, DCC is the first Local Authority to subsequently have two new families approved who attended the hub training. We are delighted the Pathfinder Marketing Team have asked to make an article/feature of the new County Durham families who have gone through the process.
- 30 Twenty further assessments are currently being undertaken, with a plan of eight coming to panel in March 2024.



- 31 There will be an evaluation of the Foster with North East Pathfinder Project in March 2024. The interviews with each local authority have commenced for this.

Conclusion

32 At this stage it is too early to analyse the impact of the project. As the project progresses we will be in a position to fully analyse the benefits for County Durham. This will be further strengthened by the full DfE evaluation in March 2024.

Authors

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Anne Middleton

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

To be kept under review should the project be extended past March 2024.

Finance

To be shared at Finance Clinic for potential costs should the project be extended after March 2024.

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

The project may discontinue.

Procurement

This has been to legal services for a NE12 agreement. Approved at Cabinet.

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Corporate Parenting Panel

8 March 2024

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 presentation is to provide the Corporate Parenting Panel with an overview of performance in relation to children in our care 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.

Recommendation

- 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 in our care and care leavers and will have an opportunity to discuss performance at the meeting.

Other useful documents

- Quarterly Performance Scorecard

Author

Helen McAloon

Tel: 03000 268 026

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>2022/23</i>	<i>Q3 2023/24</i>	<i>England</i>	<i>North East</i>
Rate of CLA per 10,000 u18 population [Number]	85 [840]	92 [914]	96 [949]	99 [985]	107 [1067]	122 [1215]	71 (2022/23)	112 (2022/23)
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%	8%	9%	10%	11% [117/1071]	15.1% [182/1208]	17% (2022/23)	10% (2022/23)
Number of children placed for adoption	24	31	39	37	26	27	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% [18/982]	5% [53/1067]	7% [88/1215]	9% (2022/23)	5% (2022/23)
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?

Measure	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Q3 2023/24	England	North East
Percentage of CLA with a missing incident during the year	5%	6%	7%	10%	10% [143/1427]	16% [218/1389]	11% (2022/23)	11% (2022/23)
Percentage of children on Child Exploitation and Vulnerability Tracker that were CLA^					35% [51/144]	27% [67/250]		
Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire - Average score	14.1	13.6	13.5	14.1	14.8	Reported annually	14.4 (2022/23)	14.4 (2022/23)
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]*	5% [17]	3% [11]	3% [11]	2% [12]	3% [15]	4.4% [30]	2% (2022/23)	3% (2022/23)

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

Measure	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21 [Provisional]	2021/22	2022/23	Q3 2023/24	England	North East
Number of CLA accessing an independent visitor			16	69 (59 CDYJS, 10 AFC) 15 waiting for match	46 (45 CDYJS, 1 NEPACS)	64 (62 CDYJS, 2 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>2022/23</i>	<i>Q3 2023/24</i>	<i>England</i>	<i>North East</i>
Percentage of CLA with 3 or more placements during the year	11% [93/840]	8% [74/914]	8% [73/949]	12% [122/985]	9% [101/1067]	11% [129/1215]	10% (2022/23)	9% (2022/23)
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	62% [186/298]	65 [203/314]	67% [225/338]	64% [239/371]	68% [263/389]	66% [265/401]	69% (2022/23)	68% (2022/23)
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]	431 [2015-18]	428 [2016-19]	439 [2018-2021]	466	423	490	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]	190 [2015-18]	192 [2016-19]	178 [2018-2021]	144	157	193	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]	18% [65/360]	14% [13/94]	10% (2021/22)	13% (2021/22)
Number of Mainstream Foster Carers (Approved in period YTD)	26	12	21	29	12	18	N/A	N/A
Number of Friends and Family Foster Carers (Approved in period YTD)	129	121	190	150	219	TBC	N/A	N/A
Number of Adopters (Approved in period YTD)	22	25	47	40	35	9	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>2022/23</i>	<i>Q3 2023/24</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%	65%	50%	N/A	N/A
CLA with the required number of health assessments	93%	94%	91%	93%	95%	87%	89% (2022/23)	92% (2022/23)
CLA who have had a dental check	86.0%	87%	41%	85%	95%	64%	76% (2022/23)	76% (2022/23)
CLA whose immunisations were up-to-date	99%	99%	90%	91%	82%	Reported annually	82% (2022/23)	84% (2022/23)
CLA whose development assessments were up to date (CLA 12+ months and aged 5 or younger at 31 March)	95%	97%	83%	99%	97%	Reported annually	88% (2022/23)	90% (2022/23)
% CLA identified as having a substance misuse problem in the year	2.0%	2.0%	Data Error	1.0%	1.0%	Reported annually	3% (2022/23)	3% (2022/23)
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]	13% [17/126]	13% [5/40]	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]	19% [22/114]	19% [23/123]	N/A	N/A
Care leavers aged 17-25 who are pregnant or mothers (as a % of female care leavers)				30% [39/132]	24% [33/137]	24% [35/144]	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>2022/23</i>	<i>Q3 2023/24</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% [44]	15% [43]		
Percentage of care leavers aged 17-18 in education, employment or training (EET)	61% [48/79]	65% [55/84]	76% [59/78]	67% [56/84]	65% [68/104]	54% [51/94]	66% (2022/23)	63% (2022/23)
Percentage of care leavers aged 17-18 in suitable accommodation	86% [68/79]	90% [76/84]	95% [74/78]	93% [76/84]	86% [89/104]	88% [83/94]	91% (2022/23)	93% (2022/23)
Percentage of care leavers aged 17-18 in higher education	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0 / 78]	6% [5 / 83]	0% [0/104]	1% [1/94]	3% (2022/23)	3% (2022/23)
Percentage of care leavers aged 19-21 in education, employment or training (EET)	51% [80/156]	54% [94/175]	56% [110/197]	61% [134/218]	56% [127/228]	52% [90/172]	56% (2022/23)	52% (2022/23)
Percentage of care leavers aged 19-21 in suitable accommodation	86% [131/156]	83% [144/175]	90% [177/197]	85% [186/218]	84% [192/228]	97% [166/173]	88% (2022/23)	89% (2022/23)
Percentage of care leavers aged 19-21 in higher education	7% [11/156]	9% [16/175]	6% [11/197]	8% [18/218]	9% [21/228]	13% [22/173]	6% (2022/23)	8% (2022/23)

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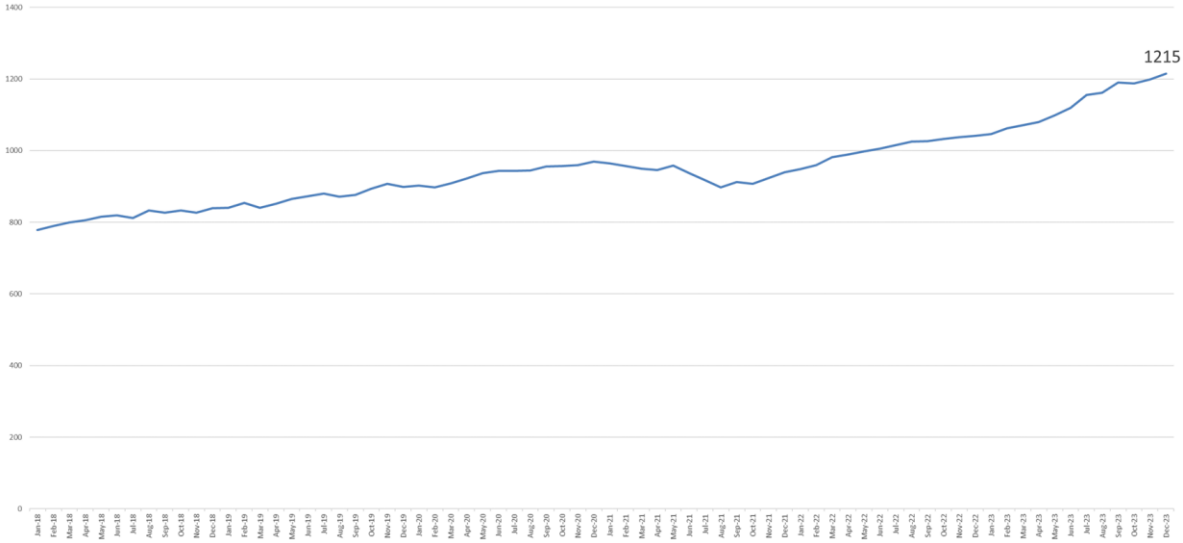
Children in our Care

Q3 2023-24

Children in Care: 1,215

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Monthly CiC Numbers



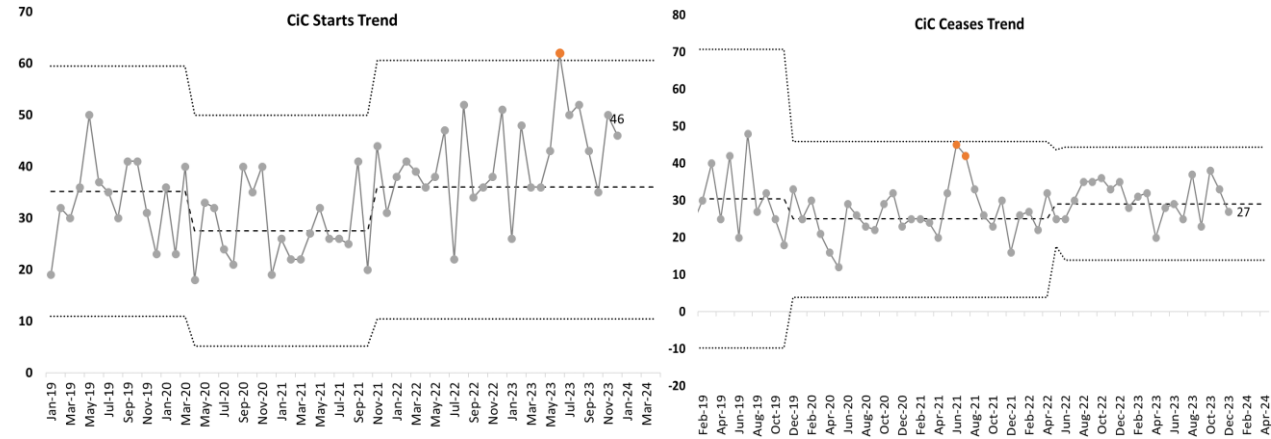
Increase in overall number of CiC and rate is now above regional and statistical neighbour average

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

88 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

This will increase as UASC move to Durham through the National Transfer Scheme – 75 UASC in Q2

Static volumes in u1 CiC starts as % of all CiC starts
Increase in age 1-4yr olds and 10-15 yr olds
Reduction in 5-9



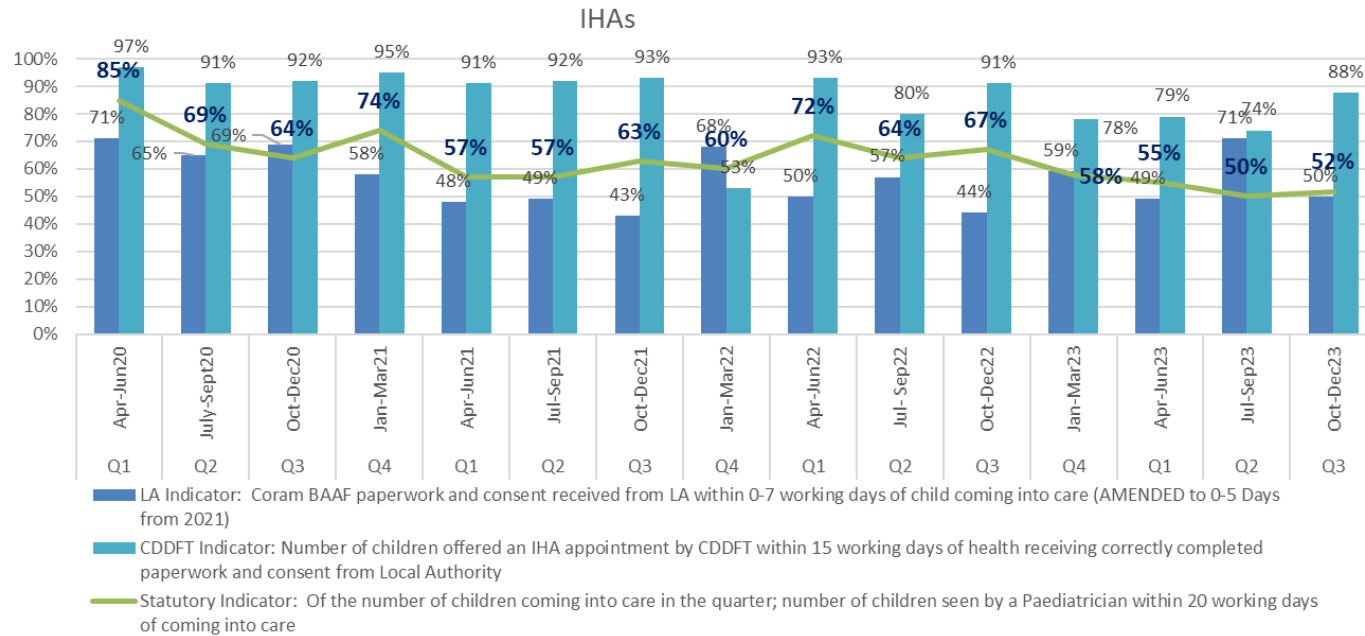
418 children became a child in care April – December 2023
260 children left care April – December 2023

LoT in Care	0-3 Months	3-6 Months	6-12 Months	1-2 Years	2-5 Years	5+ Years	Grand Total
No.	116	119	179	217	291	293	1215
%	10%	10%	15%	18%	24%	24%	100%



77% of Social Workers in our Children in Care and Care Leavers Teams had fewer than 25 cases, 2% with 30+

Initial Health Assessments

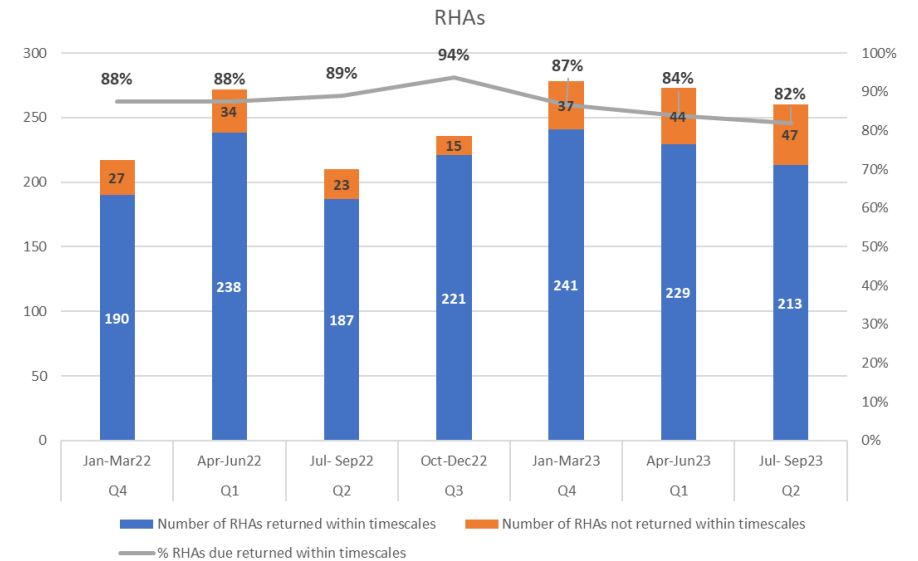


Around half of children in care received an Initial Health Assessment within 20 working days of coming into care in the quarter.

Rising children coming into care including UASC has affected this indicator

Reduction in required paperwork submitted in timescale to 50%

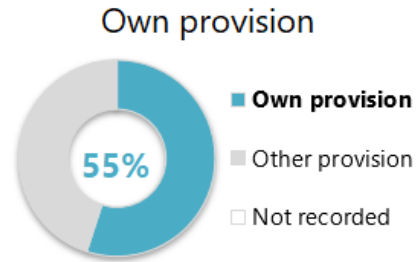
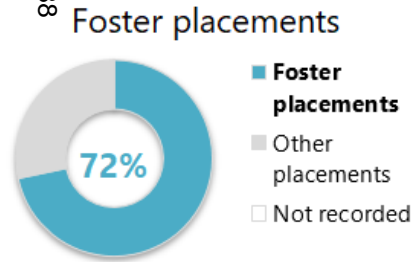
Review Health Assessments



Review Health Assessments completed within timescale have also reduced – 47 out of timescale in Q2

Placements and Placement Stability

CLA placements by type and provision



LA 2022-23: 72%
 SNs 2022-23: 68%
 Eng 2022-23: 68%

LA 2022-23: 58%
 SNs 2022-23: 55%
 Eng 2022-23: 44%

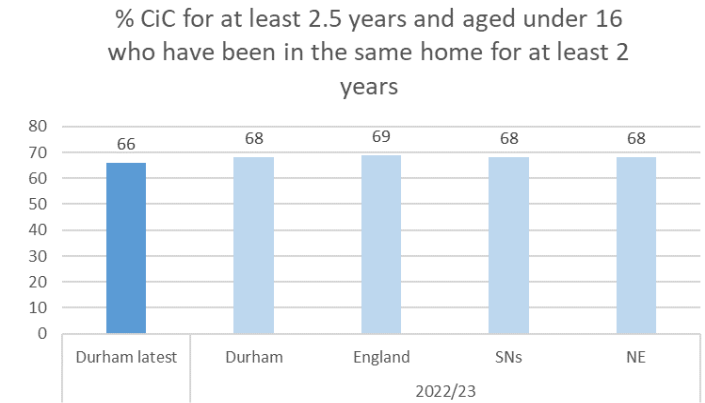
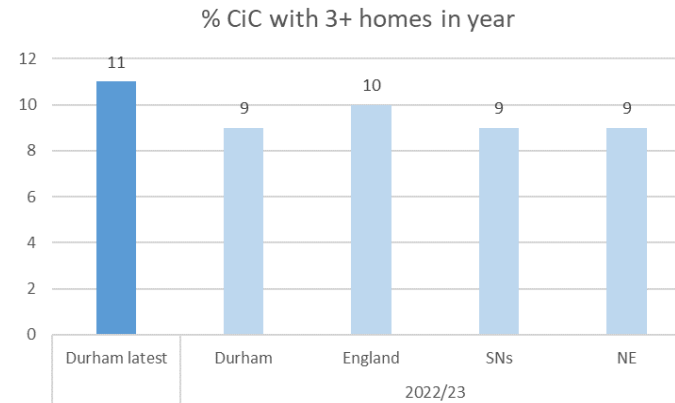
A higher proportion of children in Durham are placed in foster placements and in in-house provision to our benchmarks.

Placement Stability remains an ongoing area of focus – children with 3+ homes in one year is just above benchmarks

Long term stability remains slightly worse than benchmarks

Children in Family Settings:

Reduction in proportion but increase in numbers
 Reduction in number and % in in-house FC
 Increase in other placement types



Placement type	04-Jun-19		11-Mar-20		20-Dec-23		No. change	% change on Jun19	No. change	pre-COVID
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%				
Friends and Family	134	15%	126	14%	228	19%	94	70%	102	81%
IFA	126	15%	159	18%	253	21%	127	101%	94	59%
In House Foster Care	422	49%	430	48%	387	32%	-35	-8%	-43	-10%
Placed For Adoption	24	3%	23	3%	27	2%	3	13%	4	17%
Placed With Parents	66	8%	62	7%	87	7%	21	32%	25	40%
<i>Family Settings</i>	772	89%	800	89%	982	81%	210	62%	182	60%
Grand Total	866		902		1207		341		305	

Missing Children

218 of 1389 looked after children had a missing incident in the last 12 months

	Latest data	LA 22-23	SNs 22-23	Eng 22-23
Number of all CLA with a missing incident	218 of 1389	143		
Percentage of all CLA with a missing incident	16%	10%	11%	11%
Total number of missing incidents for all CLA	2523	996		
Average number of incidents per CLA who went missing	11.6	7.0	8.0	6.4

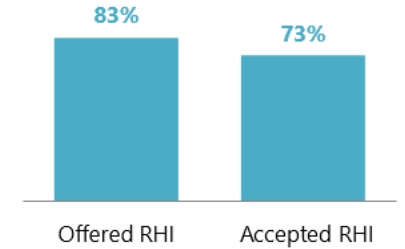
191
Children in care

1304
missing episodes

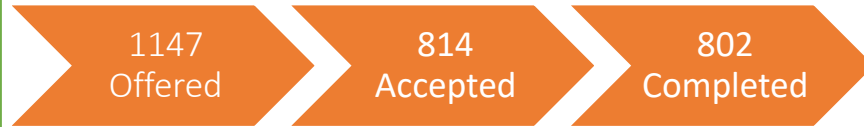
Missing incidents - return home interviews

	Latest data	
Missing children offered return interview	180 of 218	83%
Missing children not offered return interview	22 of 218	10%
Missing children return interview offer not recorded	8 of 218	4%
Missing children where return interview was n/a	8 of 218	4%

	Latest data	
Missing children accepted return interview	132 of 180	73%
Missing children not accepted return interview	39 of 180	22%
Missing children return interview acceptance not recorded	9 of 180	5%



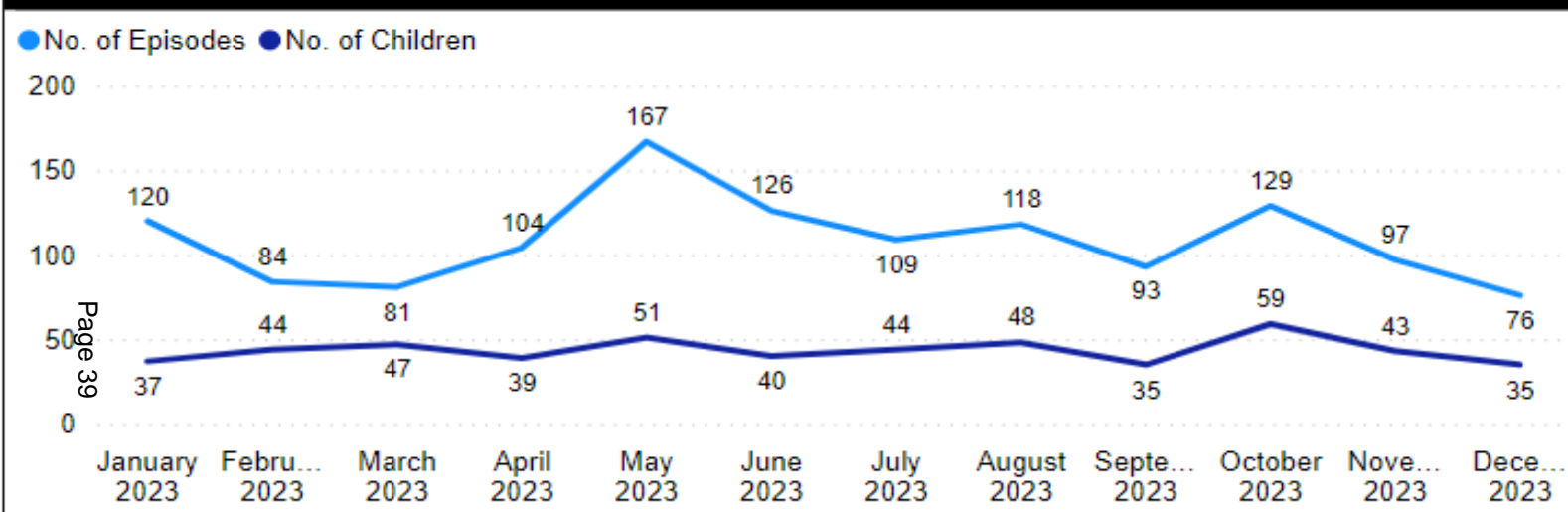
Return to Home Interviews



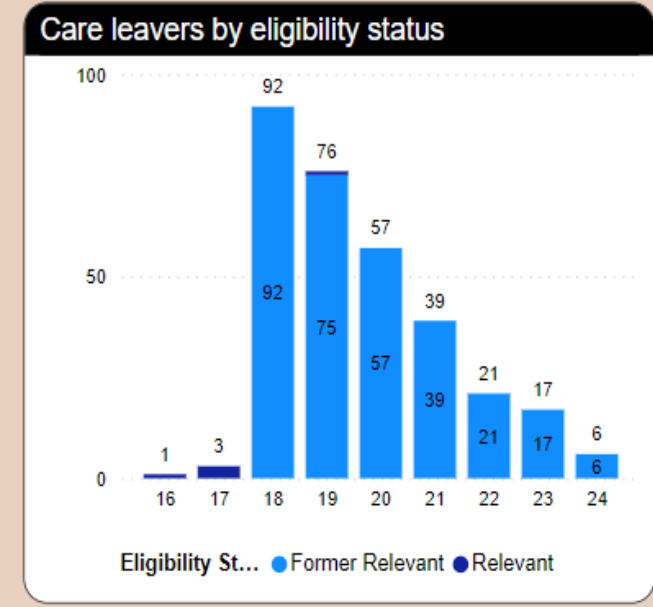
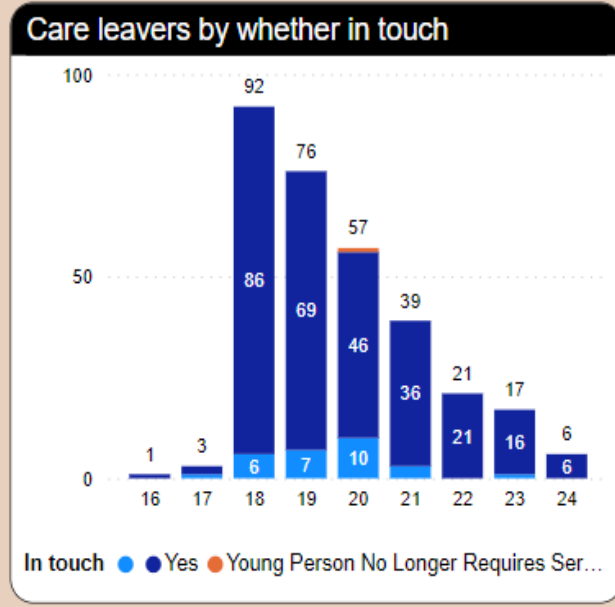
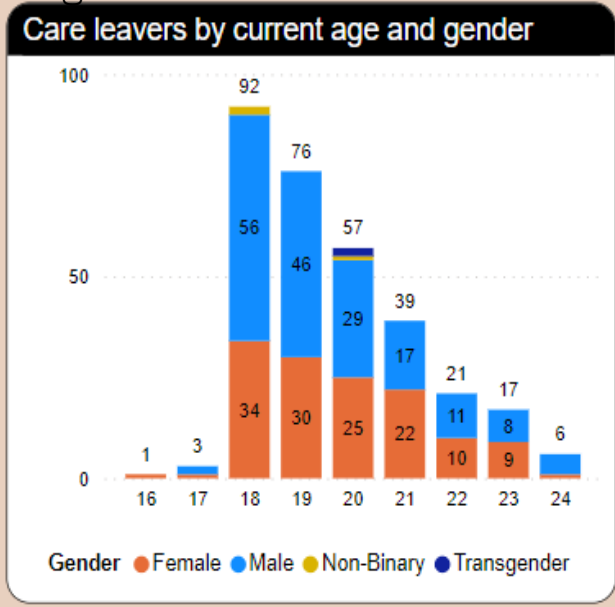
Monthly decrease in volume of missing episodes and number of children in care with a missing episode since October, however this is typical in colder months

High rate of completion of return to home interviews (99%), however there has been a decline in December but this could be a recording issue

No. of Missing Episodes by Date



Care Leavers 267 Relevant or Former Relevant Care Leavers aged 17-21



30 of our care leavers are recorded as being unaccompanied asylum seekers (UASC) all are former relevant status

29 are male aged 17-24, 1 female.

Currently have 198 YPS team monitoring open cases in addition to the 267 aged 17-21.

Care Leavers by Age Group and Whether in Touch

Age group	16	17-18	19-21	22-24	Total
In Touch YN	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.
Yes	1	88	151	43	283
No	0	7	21	1	29
Total	1	95	172	44	312

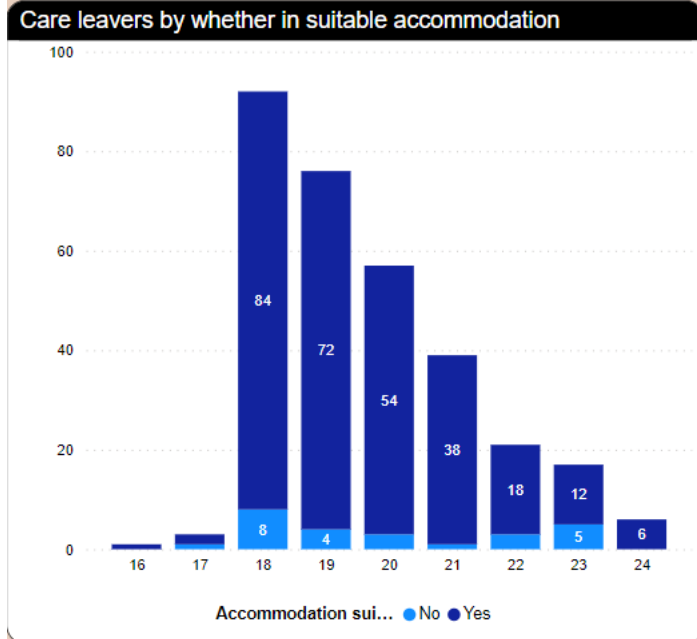
Care Leavers by Age and Whether in Touch

In touch	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	Total
Yes	1	2	86	69	46	36	21	16	6	283
Young Person No Longer Requires Services	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total	1	3	92	76	57	39	21	17	6	312

Care Leavers by Eligibility Status

Eligibility status	No.
Relevant	5
Former Relevant	307
Total	312

Care Leavers – suitable accommodation



Care leavers by whether in suitable accommodation and age group

Age group	16	17-18	19-21	22-24	Total
Accommodation	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.
suitable					
Yes	1 100%	86 91%	164 95%	36 82%	287 92%
No		9 9%	8 5%	8 18%	25 8%
Total	1 100%	95 100%	172 100%	44 100%	312 100%

Care leavers in unsuitable accommodation by age and type

Accommodation code	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	Total
R - Residence not known	1	2		1				4
S - No fixed abode / homeless			1					1
X - In custody		1	2		1	1	5	14
Y - Other accommodation		2						2
Total	1	8	4	3	1	3	5	25

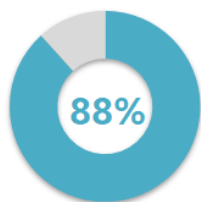
The proportion of care leavers in suitable accommodation aged 17-18 is 88% (in line with benchmarks) and for ages 19-21 is 97% (above benchmarks)

Majority in unsuitable accommodation are in custody

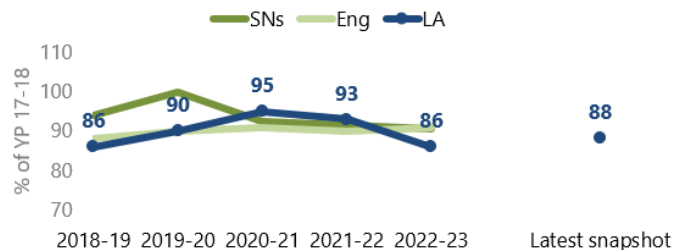
Accommodation suitability of 17-18 year olds (relevant/former relevant)

ChAT

	Aged 17	Aged 18	Total
Numbers in cohort	2	92	94
In suitable accommodation	100%	88%	88%



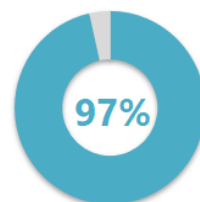
- Suitable accom
- Not suitable
- No information



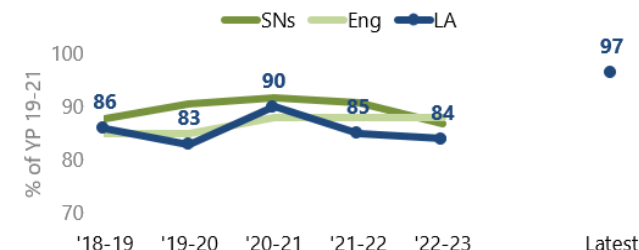
Accommodation suitability of 19-21 year olds (former relevant)

ChAT

	Aged 19	Aged 20	Aged 21	Total
Numbers in cohort	76	55	41	172
In suitable accommodation	96%	98%	95%	97%

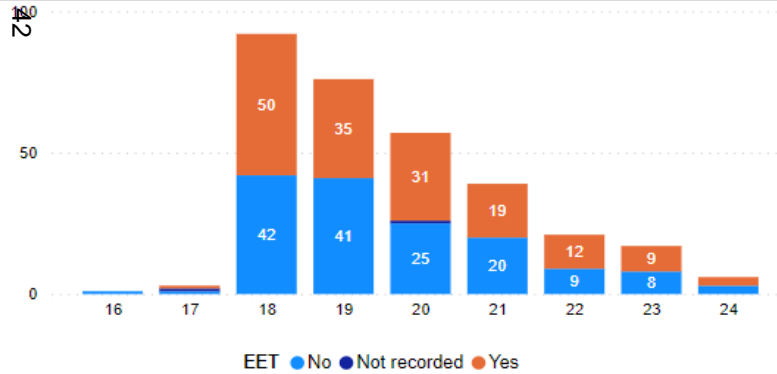


- Suitable accom
- Not suitable
- No information



Care Leavers - Education, Employment or Training

Care Leavers by Whether in Education, Employment or Training (EET)



Care Leavers by Main Education, Employment or Training (EET) Activity and Age Group

Age group	16	17-18	19-21	22-24	Total
EET	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %
Yes		51 54%	85 49%	24 55%	160 51%
Not recorded		1 1%	1 1%		2 1%
No	1 100%	43 45%	86 50%	20 45%	150 48%
Total	1 100%	95 100%	172 100%	44 100%	312 100%

The proportion of care leavers in Education, Employment or Training aged 17-18 is 54% which is below all benchmarks.

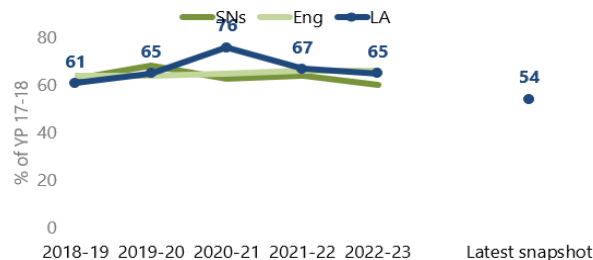
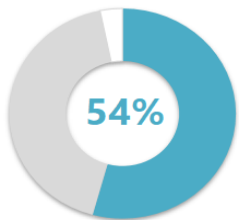
For those aged 19-21 this is 52%, also below benchmarks

Care Leavers not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) by Main Education, Employment or Training (EET) Activity

Main EET activity	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	Total
G6 - Young person not in education, employment or training due to pregnancy or parenting			1	8	4	3	2	3	2	23
G5 - Young person not in education, employment or training: other circumstances	1		26	17	7	3		3		57
G4 - Young person not in education, employment or training because of illness or disability		1	15	16	14	14	7	2	1	70
Total	1	1	42	41	25	20	9	8	3	150

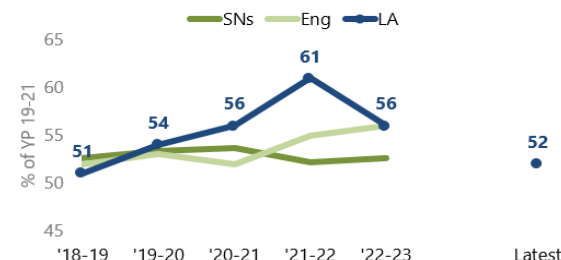
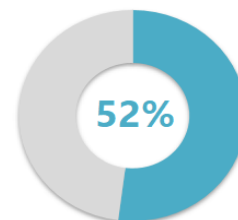
Education, Employment, or Training (EET) of 17-18 year olds (relevant/former relevant)

ChAT	Aged 17	Aged 18	Total
Numbers in cohort	2	92	94
In EET	50%	54%	54%



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

ChAT	Aged 19	Aged 20	Aged 21	Total
Numbers in cohort	77	55	41	173
In EET	45%	65%	46%	52%



Corporate Parenting Panel

8 March 2024

**Corporate Parenting Panel
Development Session and Action Plan**



Report of Martyn Stenton, Deputy Corporate Director, Children and Young People's Services, Durham County Council

Electoral division(s) affected:

None

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The report captures key areas highlighted from the development discussion in September 2023 and asks the Corporate Parenting Panel to consider what it would like to do in relation to future development sessions.

Executive summary

- 2 The Corporate Parenting Panel had a development session including refresher training on 15 September 2023 which was facilitated by the Deputy Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services and Head of Children's Social Care. It also included an input from the LGAs Children's Improvement Advisor.

Recommendations

- 3 Members of Corporate Parenting Panel are recommended to:
 - (a) Note and comment on the action plan compiled after the development session in September 2023 (Appendix 2)
 - (b) Consider what the panel would like to do to support any additional training that may be beneficial along with further improvement and development of the panel

Background

- 4 The Corporate Parenting Panel had a development session including refresher training on 15 September 2023 which was facilitated by the Martyn Stenton, Deputy Corporate Director CYPS and Rachel Farnham, Head of Children's Social Care. It also included an input from the LGAs Children's Improvement Advisor, Caroline O' Neill.
- 5 The session covered information about: Children in our care; Corporate Parenting; Corporate Parenting Panel and who's who; Children in Care Council; CYPS Overview and time for discussions and questions from members of the panel.
- 6 Following the session officers have put together a short action plan to cover key areas discussed which were not already part of the panel's planned work programme and a copy of the latest version of this is attached for panel member awareness and comments.
- 7 Members of the panel are also invited to discuss what they would like to do in terms of any future development sessions they would like to see to further improve the effectiveness, awareness and development of the panel.

Conclusion

- 8 Members of the panel will be sighted on the work taking place following discussion at the development session.
- 9 Members will also have an opportunity to consider further support or additional training that may be beneficial along with further improvement and development of the panel.

Author

Martyn Stenton

Tel: 03000 268 067

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The development session and any subsequent activity would support the panel undertake its statutory duties.

Finance

None

Consultation and Engagement

The report is inviting members of the panel to consider what it would like to do in the future to support development of the panel. This may involve consultation and engagement with others depending on the outcome of the discussions.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

None directly

Climate Change

None directly

Human Rights

None directly

Crime and Disorder

None directly

Staffing

The work of the panel is supported by existing staffing arrangements

Accommodation

None directly

Risk

Refresher training and development activities help the panel to be up to date and aware of a range of issues and mitigate any risks that they are aware of

Procurement

None directly

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ACTION PLAN: CPP Development

Feedback from CPP Induction Training: 15 September 2023	Action	Lead	Timescale
Provide context on the picture across the County for the children who are in or have left our care, which CPP members can share with other elected members.	Consider developing a briefing note for Cllrs – to be done after we have updated our next self evaluation for the social care service - early 2024	Martyn Stenton/ Rachel Farnham	Spring 2024
Consideration to be given to constructive feedback being shared from both leads, members, and young people around what works well and where there is room for improvement.	Consider a peer review style activity / development session Our Focused Visit on Care Leavers took place in Nov 23 and allowed a great focus on the service with engagement with lead member, leader, chair and vice chair of CPP, leaders, managers, workers, partners and young people - very positive feedback from the inspection team and some areas for further development	Martyn Stenton	Members of CPP invited to Care Leavers event and discussion on findings at CPP Jan 24
Consider how we better engage with the parents and carers of the young people who are in our care	Service is planning some consultation work with parents of children who are in our care to find out what works well, what they are worried about and what needs to change. Findings can be fed through to CSCMT and then into CPP.	Rachel Farnham	June 2024
How many children are we corporate grandparents to	Bring update to a future meeting alongside other data	Helen McAloon	Added to performance update for Dec 23 then quarterly
Can LGA resource packs be shared with OSC committees	Share resource packs with CYP and AWH OSC	Jayne Watson	Done Sept 23
Consider how we can do more to meet the needs of foster	Invite foster carers and adopters to CPP meetings as part of the Fostering / Adoption annual updates.	Rachel Farnham	April 2024

ACTION PLAN: CPP Development

carers and adopters and link them with CPP work	The service is planning to explore with their focus groups to see if there are any reps who would be interested to attend for specific sessions.		
Consider how we get the voice of the parent through to the CPP	Consideration to be given to this in relevant agenda items coming to the panel – example pre-birth service case studies	Rachel Farnham / Martyn Stenton	Ongoing
Share local Councillor information with foster carers as a useful local contact and further promote family hubs	Information about family hubs at Full Council meeting Jan 24 to help awareness raising Information about Family Hubs shared with Foster Carers and some sessions now taking place in Family Hubs Adding information about Family Hubs to 'My Durham Information' and sharing with Foster Carers (already includes details of local councillors) Making people aware of 'My Durham Information' at Family Hubs	Martyn Stenton	Jan 24 Jan 24 Mar 24 Mar 24

Corporate Parenting Panel

8 March 2024

Poetry Book, Children in Care and Care Leavers



Report of Rachel Farnham, Head of Children's Social Care, Children and Young People's Services, Durham County Council

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 This report provides a summary of the Poetry Book project, a collection of poetry from our care experienced children, young people and care leavers. It outlines the process and the completion of the project and advises of next steps.

Executive summary

- 2 The poetry book was a request from Corporate Parenting Panel to develop a collection of poetry from our care experienced children and young people and care leavers. We, in partnership with a local poet ran three poetry workshops for children aged seven year and over. The poems by our children were collated into a book titled 'Cherished' (Appendix 2)

Recommendation

- 3 Corporate Parenting Panel are recommended to:
 - a) note the contents of the report.

Background

- 4 The poetry book was a request from Corporate Parenting Panel following some of our children sharing their poetry with the panel.
- 5 Children's Social Care and the Virtual School agreed the funding and were able to commission a local poet to work with our children and young people with support from Children's Social Care and Education officers.

Summary

- 6 The children and young people attended one session to develop their own poetry which included games and activities to assist them. Young people who were unable to attend one of the planned sessions were offered the opportunity to submit poetry to officers.
- 7 The poems were sent to DCC Design and Print service who created a wonderful book ready for us to share.

Conclusion

- 8 Following on from Corporate Parenting panel on 8 March 2024, the book will be distributed to all schools within the local authority, those schools where children who live 'out of county' reside, Children's Social Care Teams, and all libraries across County Durham. The copy of the book will also be given to Beamish Museum for their 'Cottage.'
- 9 The poetry will be shared with all the children involved and we will celebrate this great achievement. Some of the children involved will join us at Corporate Parenting Panel and share some of their poems.

Author

Laura Armstrong

Tel: 03000 269 444

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The Children Act 1989 places a legal duty on the Local Authority to ascertain the wishes and feelings of the child. Both the Children Act 1989 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child both have general and underpinning principles of the child's welfare and best interests being the paramount concern.

Finance

Durham County Council and the Virtual School were able to jointly fund this project.

Consultation / Engagement

Children and Young People were consulted and created their poems for the book.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

CSC has a duty to consult with and listen to the view of children, young people and their parents and carers of all backgrounds and abilities.

Climate Change

No impact.

Human Rights

None.

Crime and Disorder

None.

Staffing

CSC and the Virtual School jointly provided 3-4 officers to support the sessions with the children.

Accommodation

None.

Risk

Risk Assessments were completed for each session held with children and young people.

Procurement

None.

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Cherished

a collection of poems from care experienced children, young people and care leavers



Foreword

We are very excited to share this collection of poetry which will be available in all schools and libraries across County Durham. This book features a beautiful array of poems written by care experienced children and young people.

A huge thank you to all the children and young people involved in creating this book, the poet Katharine Goda, Durham County Council, Children Social Care, Durham's Virtual School and all staff involved in this project.

Enjoy!

Bright ^{*} ^{*} ^{*} _{*} _{*}

You gift ideas and words, doodle straight lines into dreams,
make snow trails full of stories, find gold in autumn leaves.

You move through life with allies beside you, with fireworks,
song and storm, that new book smell, top football team,
seeking stars at every unknown door.

You bring fairy tales and sisters, dance and fishing
rods and pets, share comfy trainers, hot chocolate, birds,
fixing every bike or engine.

You outline brilliant futures, shine with determined light
but look - you are already the gold, the sun, the fire.

Inspired by our children and young people
- written by Katharine Goda (December 2023)

I DREAM

When I was a little girl I dreamt of many things
I dreamt I was going to be a princess
I dreamt I was going to be an actor
Now



I dream I would be like the other girls my age
I dream of seeing my sisters
I dream of being part of my nephews and nieces lives once again
I dream of being a perfect daughter
Sometimes the dream I dream turn into nightmares
I wonder if I'm good enough
I wonder if I'm worth people's time
I dream of wanting to help other people like you and I
I dream of making my birth family proud of me
I dream of the future ahead of me
I dream of these friendships forever
I dream of the memories I have gained
I dream of my childhood
I dream of my school life
And far I have come since I first started school
All those many years ago
I dream of when my time comes,
And I finally leave foster care



by LG

My Younger Self



It's ok to cry
You have been through so much
You're not a bad person because you were angry
This was a way I showed my feelings
I have people that love me and care about me
I am Caitlyn, I can make a life for myself

I am brave

I am strong



Care experienced people are superheroes

Your life in a bin bag

Talking to strangers

Moving around the country

You are amazing

You have got this

You are an inspiration to others

Your younger self will be proud of the person you are

We leave a mark when we leave

We are never forgotten

We are care kids

Nobody knows what our future holds



by LG

A letter to Directors

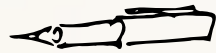
Dear sir, madam or whom it may concern,
Through anguish and through sorrow and through strife,
Our generation has proved it's our turn,
All wanting one same thing a change of life,

No longer will we be seen and not heard,
We may be young but we aren't stupid,
And as we're ignored our vision becomes blurred,
Til you hear us we won't remain muted,

People come in and out of our lives fast
So who are we to put our trust into,
The first social worker we meet or the last,
Same faces are the key and will help us through,

Hope to hear from you soon yours sincerely,
From a somebody you need not know dearly

by B



It's the small things

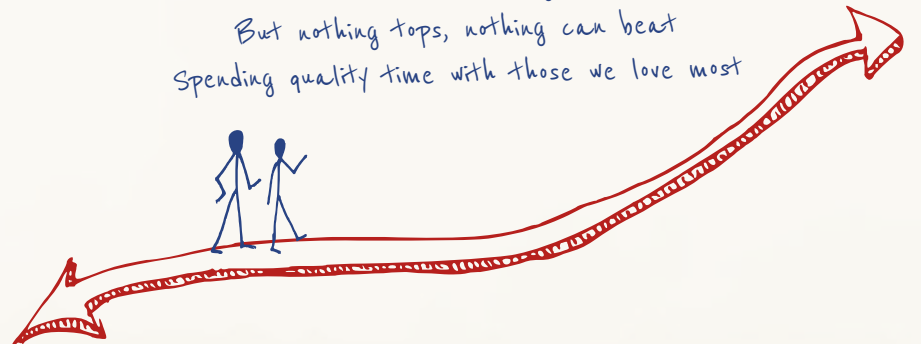


It's the smell bacon on a Sunday morning,
When the flowers first bloom in the spring,
or when the first leaves fall in the autumn,
When the season turns

and we can finally make fresh footprints in the snow,
New fluffy socks and pyjamas
and dressing gowns and slippers,
Sound of rain hitting a window
A candle lit, hot bubble baths
that new book smell



Or cuddling up to our beloved pets
With hot chocolates with whipped cream and marshmallows, the lot
Or the feeling of coming home after a long road trip
Fresh air and long walks,
The sound of crashing waves
But nothing tops, nothing can beat
Spending quality time with those we love most



Untitled



Did you know that I was sunshine
 I am sunshine mixed with thunderstorms
 But when there is thunder I calm down
 My life is like clouds which are like a happy day
 The weather is like up and down all the time
 The sun is very happy as if characters
 The azure sky like sadness
 The thunderstorm like despair



by G

i love cool



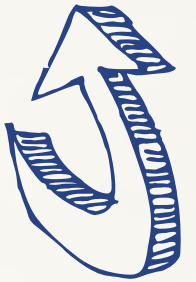
Football's my name
 I love keepers. The goals that I save
 Smashin and Bashin
 Football's my fave
 Go Newcastle go!



by CR



Jumping High

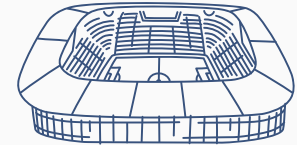


Jumping high
 Brushing the horses
 Spending time looking after them
 Getting the horses ready to ride
 Horses are just great
 Having fun today

By anonymous



Feeling



The time of feeling when you're sat
 in the stadium on a Saturday night
 Hearing the crowd chant when your team is winning
 Its special



By D

I COME FROM



I come from a broken home

I come from a bloom of flowers

I come from a garden full of flowers

I come from a garden full of flowers and roses

I come from holding the love of my family together

I come from faith

I come from the spark and the flash of a storm

I come from mood swings all of the time

By A



A Silent Symphony;

Ode to Young People

In a world of noise, we feel unseen,
Our words lost among the chaos, like a silent scream,
Decisions made without our say,

Leave us lost, can you help us find a way?

In a world filled with possibilities that burn so bright,

Together let's build a future that shines with light,

And when your words fall short, let actions take the stage,

Paint a picture, your words simply cannot engage,

For in the doing, true intentions are unfurled,

As the saying goes actions speak louder than any spoken word,

Let's work together,

And we shall conquer any endeavour,

But not for me and not for you,

For the masses of young people desperate for a breakthrough,

Let's lead a better way,

From here and now today,

Act! Don't just say you will,

And finally, we'll no longer be at a standstill,

The silence of your deeds unspoken,

Reveals a promise unbroken.

By A

MANCHESTER,

Never Change

Manchester Utd is my team

The treble winning team

The **Reds**

The Champions League

Manchester Utd have signed the top talents

Cantona

Old Trafford

The famous shirt

Never change throughout the years

By anonymous



The Complicated Past

It's 12pm and everyone is dead.

All twelve people are dead and slaughtered.

Luckily, I wasn't one of them. But my group was next.

My name's Vinny and I'm number twelve.

Fast forward twelve years. I've never been that scared in my life.

That past was the worst one. I have the power to see all my past lives, and my last one was like living hell.

I'm now sixteen and taking care of my younger brother and sister because my parents died first.

They were group number one. Twelve weeks later,

I was seventeen and died at 12pm.

By C



UNKNOWN

The world around us ever so high,
 Ever so often we'll touch the sky,
 When you're feeling down, just look around,
 In the distance, the fresh awakening breeze,
 To make all our worries just go away and freeze.



The way the wind dances and prances around you,
 Like a pen on paper, it just relaxes you.
 Your imagination creating clouds is a perfect view
 A silhouette of your happiness shining through
 Creating what is a happy day, just to enjoy what we've made.
 In the field with leaves all over, shows an image of autumn air.



By C

Moving Placement

The social worker had some news
 I didn't want to hear
 It came as quite a big surprise,
 It filled me full of fear.
 Mind blowing news!
 I'm moving on
 And in less than a week
 I will be gone.

The foster home I've
 come to know is over now
 And I must go,
 The reasons I don't understand,
 but I have to accept
 as it's all been planned.
 Soon arrives the moving day,
 Time to say goodbye,
 to all the friends
 I treasured and made,
 Makes me breakdown and cry
 As the time to leave drew near,
 My heart and mind
 were exploding with fear.

Fear of the unknown,
 and what is in store?
 How will I feel when
 I walk through the door?
 My social worker says it will be alright.
 But I didn't sleep a wink last night!
 All through the journey all the way there,
 I could hear my heart beating,
 felt quite ill to be fair,
 Then, as our destination got near
 I actually began to tremble with fear
 The walk from the
 car to the new front door,
 made my heart race
 faster than ever before.



A little dog came
 to greet me, and he seemed very pleased,
 He helped me relax,
 and my anxiety eased.
 I soon realised that all was okay
 But I will never forget the day!
 Changes like this
 can be something to fear,
 A fear that you may not forget,
 But if you work on
 it and trust those around you
 it may prove to be
 the best change yet.

By GW and D



DEAR PEOPLE READING THIS POEM

Some tips about coming into care,
When you're scared never cry just
tell your carer

When your worried and don't want
to talk just write it down and give
it to an adult they can help you.

Don't worry sweetheart

I LOVE
YOU!

By AM

unknown

I like the feeling when I'm *mbz:gs qomr*

I twirl and swirl all over town

★ When I look at the stars they look like gems in the sky

★ The sky makes me so happy I could cry
My friends laugh with me and I laugh with them

We play LOLs on my LOL

stage and I sing a song from my song page

My trainers are so comfy to wear

They feel like sofas on my feet

When I walk through the woods with them

I can hear the birds tweet. 🐦

By Anonymous

D.A.N.C.E

Dancing and twirling my worries away,

A burning passion

Nerves wash away,

Courage and confidence builds

Enchanted by the music I am able to be me

By I

NOBODY

There was a time, I was alone
 Nobody to talk to and help me
 I was on my own, far away
 In a new place trying to make it my own
 Loosing all hope at the things

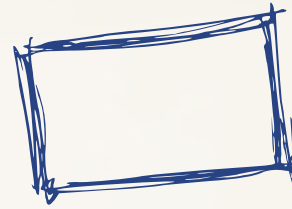
I wanted to do
 Nobody believed in me
 Nobody loved me
 Then one day I was told
 Caitlyn,

I am leaving now
 I have a new Job

Goodbye, thanks for letting me be on your journey
 I have found someone knew for you to meet
 unsure of what to expect
 Sad, goodbye Aimee

Then one June morning
 I was eating a McDonald's breakfast
 My new worker came along
 She called herself Becky

She promised that I would never be lonely
 And ever since that day
 She stayed and had been there when I needed her
 Welcoming me back to the North East
 Taking me to stay somewhere in the summer
 Pushing each other in the sea
 Eating ice cream and food
 Is what we do best



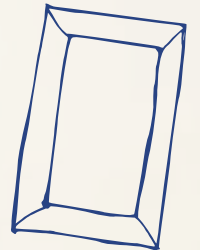
Always causing mischief behind Tracy back
 I was a lost girl from the North East
 Becky rings me once a week
 Okay Caitlyn, whatever Becky
 Helping me through so much
 Becky sprinkles you in pixie dust, and tells you to believe
 Believe in her and you will go far
 unless it comes to trains and coaches
 Then it's sparkle dust you will need
 You will be forever a huge part of my life
 To internal destiny

Becky your alreet I suppose
 I am now not a lost girl from the North East

I have Becky beside me
 Rubbish at accents, she maybe
 Winding each other up, why not
 Caitlyn throwing her phone
 Becky pretending to be annoyed
 Whenever where together
 Where away from reality

You came into my life at one of the most difficult times
 It was meant to be
 I was a lost girl from the North East

By C



HOW I FEEL WHEN I FISH



Goin' fishin'
My passion, my obsession
The rod, the reel, the fishing line
The salt of the sea
The horizon beyond,
Clogged with ships
Casting my line, I dream of the ultimate catch
From the murky depths
Suddenly a bite
A fish tugging a hello
All quite and still,
I can hear my breathing
Then the fish starts squealing
Bring the fish home
My hobby, my dream
Testing my limits against nature
The fresh air
Happiness lies there

By K

In the Moment

I am here right now
Making poems with wonderful words,
Me writing right now
Fidgeting, squirming and turning with siblings,
Very super dupa fun
Lovely jubilee
Family time we came
Making memories everyone

By A



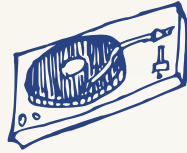
Horrible Moments

A pen
A necessary tool in life
Thin nibs, Medium nibs
Blue, Black, Red and Green
Wonderful, sets me free
Then a horrible moment
A big blue blotch
A leaky pen
How un-necessary

By anonymous



UP THE GERS



I like royal blue
DJ Bad Boy on the loo
I love drinking Iron Bru

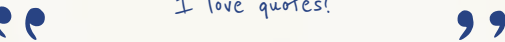
I love Glasgow Rangers
How do you make friends without talking to strangers?
I love football and basketball
Hitting any ball off a wall



I love adrenaline
And fixing mechanical things
Bikes and engines
A V8 modified just sounds so beautiful
A rumble of the broken exhaust
Revvng it, is the most beautiful sound



"If they stand behind you, protect them
If they stand beside you respect them
If they stand against you, no mercy!"
I love quotes!



I love going with the flow
I've learned how to make a paper mouse
I'm not scouse
You're more than likely to buy a house



By J

I AM



I'm a Mazda RX7 FD V8 rotary engine
I'm a Nissan Skylight, R34 GTR V Spec Mark 2
I'm a power bank, knowing my energy
I make people hyper, I make people laugh
I'm just like a modified car like the sound of a V12
I'm a budgie - I'm loud and can fly anywhere I want
Then land, n just chill for 5 minutes, have a moment



If Rangers win, I'm happy and sunny
If Rangers lose, I feel like fighting
Like thunder and lightning
I'm not furniture- that just stands still
I'm rather a Maryland Cookie
With a V10 4 and a half litre engine
Like people cheering at Ibrox
Like Ibrox, Amsterdam and Turkey
I'm smon the Gers



Like 55 titles
I'm the spirit of Bill Struth will carry on

By J

I AM A CARE KID



I am an actor

Putting on a front so that everyone likes me

I'm always trying to better myself change, adapt to, what I think people want

I don't think I have really understood why

Then looking back I remembered

That I'm care kid

And I learned from a young age that I need to follow these rules of a stranger to fit into a family.

I have to be the one that makes an effort to fit into a family that's welcomed me into the home



I've become a people pleaser an actor from this

Something like a scary is people pleasing as a form of manipulation. Not that bad but it's still is because you are changing you are doing with that person wants to get them to like you.

But it's so second nature is so normal. How can I not think about what my friend wants how can I not think about what Bob is thinking?

There's no way to stop it, because it's all I've known is all we've ever known

Care kid

I am a care kid



That does not define me I've struggled, but here I am

I will not be a statistic.

Care is nothing like Tracy Beaker. None of us care kids are bad we've just struggled

We have become actors to fit into families.



We are care kids that said we are children we are young people that had to grow up fast become wise beyond our years, but now has to struggle with the fact that we're in a stranger's home fit into the rules, their families

We are kids

We want to be Home, we wanna find a home



Be patient with us

We're not with our family, the people we've known so of course, it's gonna be hard but your letting us into a home so take time. Let us know that you're gonna be there for us and that you're gonna fight for us that's all we want

We are care, kids

Do we wanna be kids first?



We wanna have fun and have a childhood

We are kids

Not a statistic

By J

On days when I feel sad

On the days when I feel sad
 I cuddle my dog she doesn't make me mad
 Going to the park to see my friends
 Pushing me on the swing 
 The fun never ends
 After my dinner I love to share some sweets
 They are my favourite kind of treats
 In the car I love to sing along to my favourite music
 Sometimes I really lose it!
 On the weekend we sometimes visit the soft play
 I could happily stay there all day
 At night time I love to read my books 
 Fairy tales of all different kinds, but
 Not the books that give me the spooks

By MD



Sending love to my family



My dad. You know my dad is super cool
 If you ever feel sad think about the things that make you happy
 Don't be upset like a wet nappy

By M

I LIKE



I like to tell stories
 I like to colour in
 I like school when it's my birthday
 I like pizza cold like pepperoni
 I like lemon and lime to drink, ice cold like snow



I like the sea
 I like the waves
 I like vanilla ice cream
 With sprinkles and strawberry sauce



By MD

AUTUMN DAYS

What is Autumn?

Well, it's a season to celebrate pumpkins
 And the plot of treason
 On Halloween we hear everyone's screams
 and dress up as witches and ghouls schools!
 We Trick or Treat all over town
 and get so many sweets that no-one can frown
 On bonfire night when I've ate my last sweet,
 I watch the fireworks go fizz, whizz, pop & bang
 That is the reason I love this season

By N

Care KIDS

Care Kids, so young and sweet
A spark of life in their eyes
A future of hope and dreams
A chance to reach for the skies



A world of opportunity, just waiting to be explored
A chance to find their true selves, to find what they adored
to make their own way
A journey of discovery, a path they will lay

A world of compassion, a place to feel safe
A place to find their courage and their strength

Care Kids, so brave and strong
A chance

Care Kids, so kind and wise
A heart of gold, a soul of fire
A chance to make a difference, to bring joy and inspire

A world of love and understanding, a place to learn and grow
A chance to reach their potential, a chance to really show

Care Kids, so beautiful and free
A future of promise and joy
A chance to make their mark, to make their dreams come true

A world of hope and possibility,
A chance to become who they were meant to be.

By J

I AM WAR



The bloodied yet brave soldiers life is struck
The gurgling sounds of the crying souls of war,
You can hear the sounds of death coming nearer and nearer
With the bitter air comes the smell of mustard gas
This new reaper strikes their neck
The literal signs of death
I am war,
I am peace,
The bells are ringing across the streets, ruthless galore
Mothers, fathers and children hugging and kissing
The people loving peace and empathy
The poppies on the battlefield shows death's consequence
I am peace

By A

ALL LIFE'S FAULT

My life is a misery
 I feel I am a prisoner of my life
 Is a mystery
 A puzzle if you like
 I need answers to the life
 That I have
 Its all life's fault
 Its not fair
 Why do I have a life like this
 Its all life's fault
 I need to finish all of the puzzle
 To stop my life from becoming a muddle
 It's all Life's fault!

By AP



BEING A REBEL

There are people in this place whom I rob from
 Yes, you. Ordinary people in this old Victorian world
 Pickpocketing is my style
 I feel free; til I get arrested (bro)
 Beheadings you see (gross)
 Being the rebel that I can
 I aint no hero; I'm not Spiderman (boo!)
 I'm a rebel, I'm coming for you
 Being a rebel is me (very bad)
 Get ready for my scam
 Fighting the rules
 Because being good really drools

By A



CREEPERS

Microsoft, Minecraft may be a blocky word
 The destiny of squares about to be unfurled
 Zombies are green, Creepers explode
 Will I survive? Nobody knows
 Building shelters safe for the night
 Cos' skeletons with bows give me the fright
 Exploring the world, far and wide
 With the tools and armoury by my side
 Picking up loot from the petrifying horrors
 Saying goodbye to all of my sorrows
 You can find husks in the stranded desert
 Minecraft's the game to load up with your presents

By C



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

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