



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

**Date**      **Wednesday 20 March 2024**  
**Time**      **1.30 pm**  
**Venue**     **Committee Room 1A , County Hall, Durham**

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### **Business**

#### **Part A**

**Items during which the Press and Public are welcome to attend.  
Members of the Public can ask questions with the Chairman's  
agreement.**

- 1 Apologies for absence
- 2 Substitute Members
- 3 Declarations of Interest, if any
- 4 Any items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties
- 5 Children's Social Care Demand - Report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services and Presentation by the Head of Children's Social Care (Pages 3 - 36)
- 6 Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration

**Helen Bradley**  
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

County Hall  
Durham  
12 March 2024

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

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

Councillors C Bell, R Crute, S Deinali, K Fantarrow, J Griffiths,  
K Hawley, C Hunt, C Lines, L Mavin, M McGaun, D Mulholland,  
K Rooney, J Scurfield, M Simmons, S Townsend, C Varty, E Waldock  
and M Walton

**Faith Communities Representatives:**

Mrs L Vollans

**Parent Governor Representatives:**

Professor Gosia M Ciesielska and Mr P Debrett-Watson

**Co-opted Members:**

Ms A Gunn

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**Contact: Jordan Bell**

**Tel: 03000 269701**

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

**20 March 2024**

**Children's Social Care  
Demand**



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

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 The purpose of the report is to provide members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee with information on demand for Children's Social Care.

**Executive summary**

- 2 Members of Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee requested in their work programme for 2023/24 to receive information on the demand for Children's Social Care.
- 3 Arrangements have been made for the Head of Children's Social Care and the Practice Lead (Safeguarding) to attend the meeting on 20 March to deliver this information to members of the committee.

**Recommendations**

- 4 That Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive the report and presentation and comment accordingly.

## **Background**

- 5 At its meeting on 6 July the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered and agreed its work programme for 2023/24, which included an item on Children's Social Care Demand.
- 6 Arrangements have been made for the Head of Children's Social Care to attend a Special meeting of the committee to provide members with information on the demand placed on the service.
- 7 Members will find a presentation at appendix 2 this covers the following areas:
  - (a) Social Care Demand including Social Work Caseloads;
  - (b) Social Care Workforce including Recruitment and Retention;
  - (c) Practice Model update including direct impact examples.

## **Conclusion**

- 8 Members of Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be aware of the demand for the service and the challenges this brings.
- 9 Members will be aware there is a national increase in demand in the social care system at a time when the national profile of recruitment and retention is challenging.
- 10 The presentation appended to the report provides an overview of the profile of the demand within Durham, the work ongoing to ensure there is sufficient resilience in the workforce to meet demand and provide an overview of ongoing implementation of the practice model and direct accounts of the impact of this for the children and families of Durham Council.

## **Author**

Bernadette Toomey

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

None currently

### **Finance**

None currently

### **Consultation**

Not applicable

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

Not applicable

### **Human Rights**

Not applicable

### **Climate Change**

No additional considerations.

### **Crime and Disorder**

No additional considerations.

### **Staffing**

The report and appendix 1 outline the activity to recruit and retain staff. There are no proposed changes to staffing.

### **Accommodation**

Not applicable

### **Risk**

An inability to recruit and retain social care staff would provide a risk to the delivery of services to vulnerable children and families. This has been identified on the corporate risk register and appropriate mitigations are in place.

### **Procurement**

Not applicable

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## **Appendix 2: Children's Social Care Demand Presentation**

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# Children's Social Care Demand

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

20 March 2024

Rachel Farnham – Head of Service  
Children's Social Care



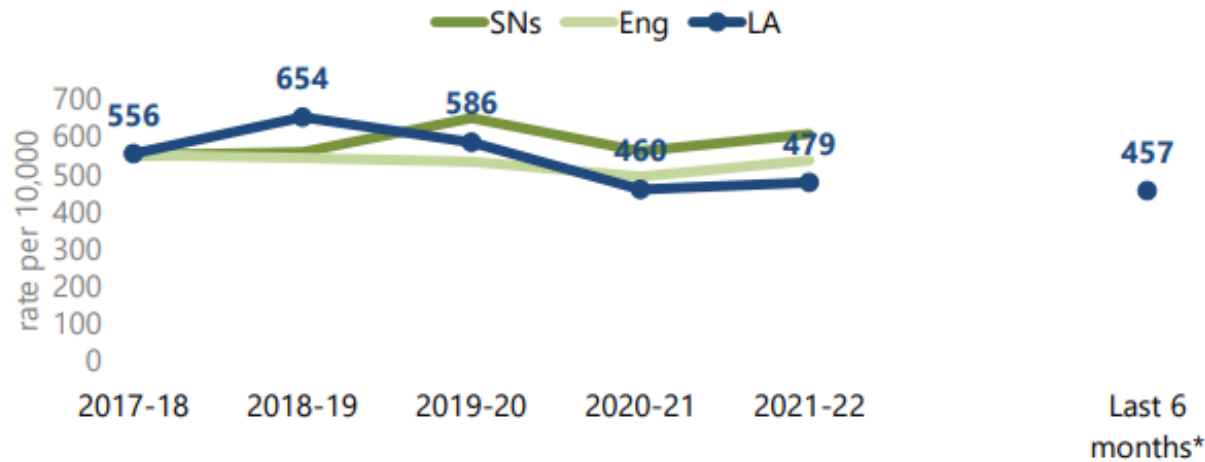
# Purpose

- Social Care Demand
- Recruitment and Retention
- Our Practice Model - Signs of Safety



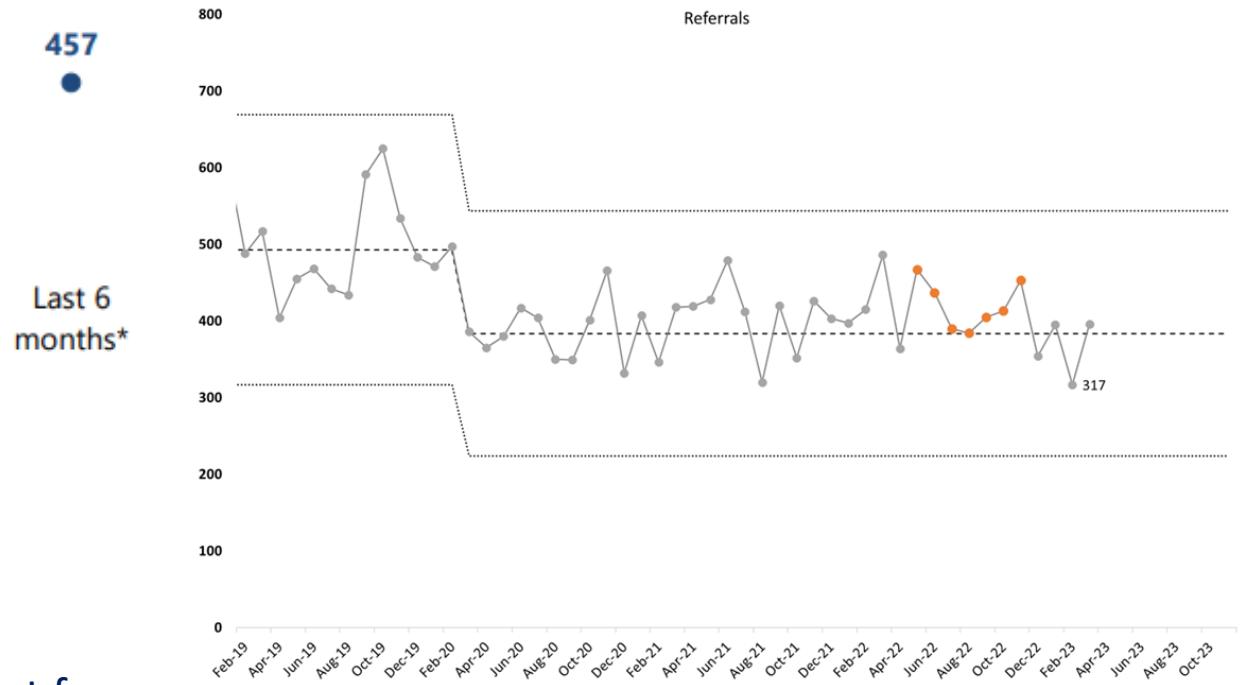
# Social Care Demand

Rate of referrals per 10,000 children aged 0-17



	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Jan	395	397	407	471	608
Feb	317	415	346	497	488
Mar	396	486	418	386	517
<b>Total</b>	<b>1108</b>	<b>1298</b>	<b>1171</b>	<b>1354</b>	<b>1613</b>

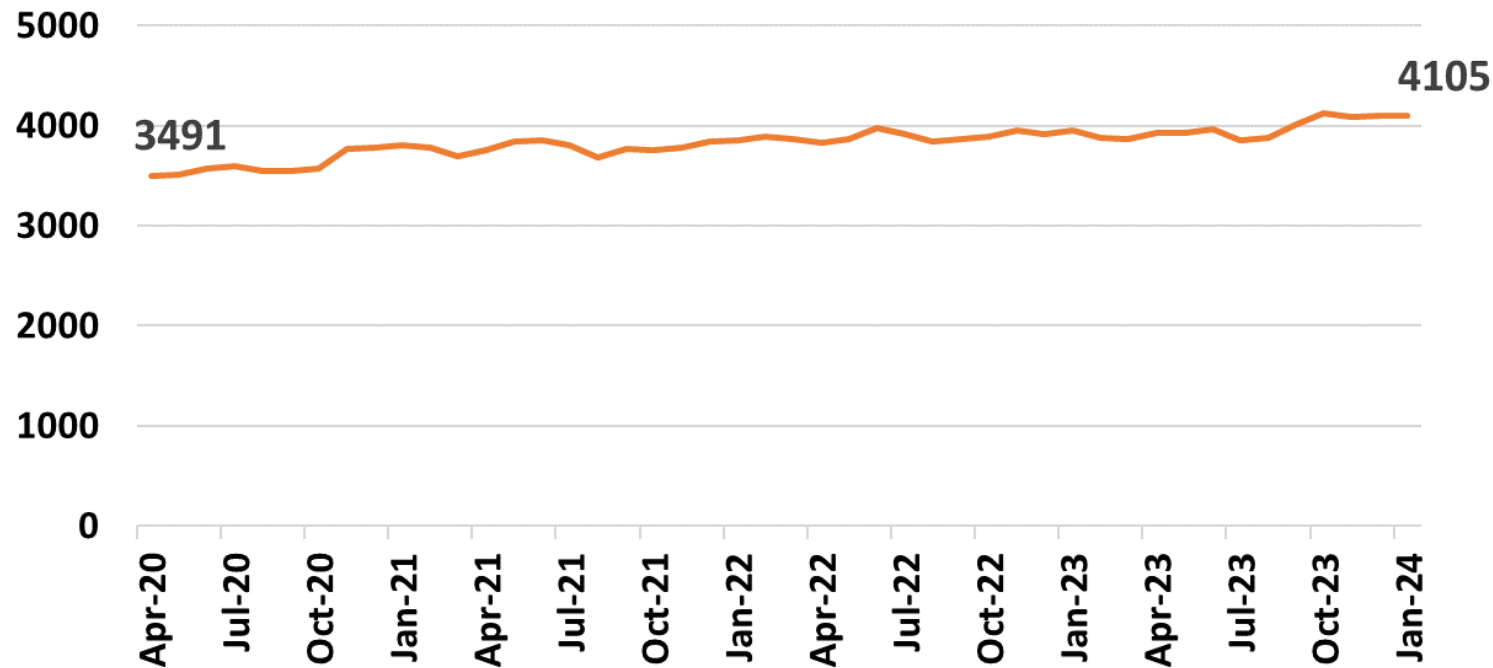
Referral rate for last six months continues to be below latest benchmarks and similar to the last two years.



Page 9 Latest monthly demand for Q3 is also similar to the last few years

# Social Care Demand

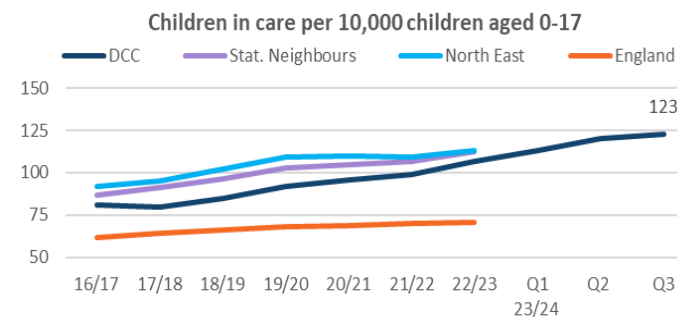
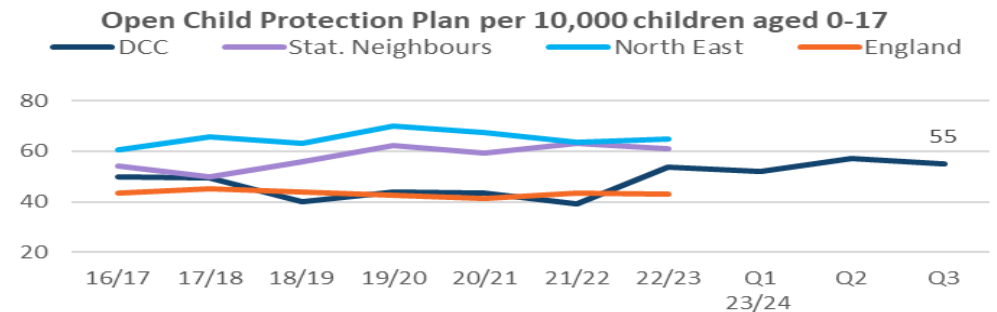
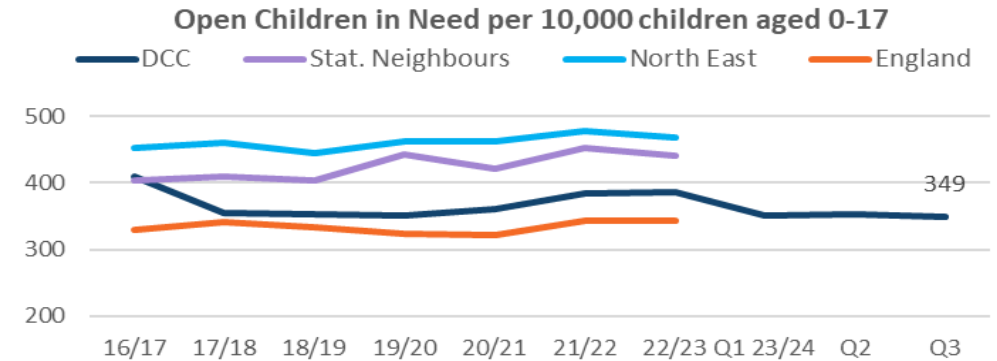
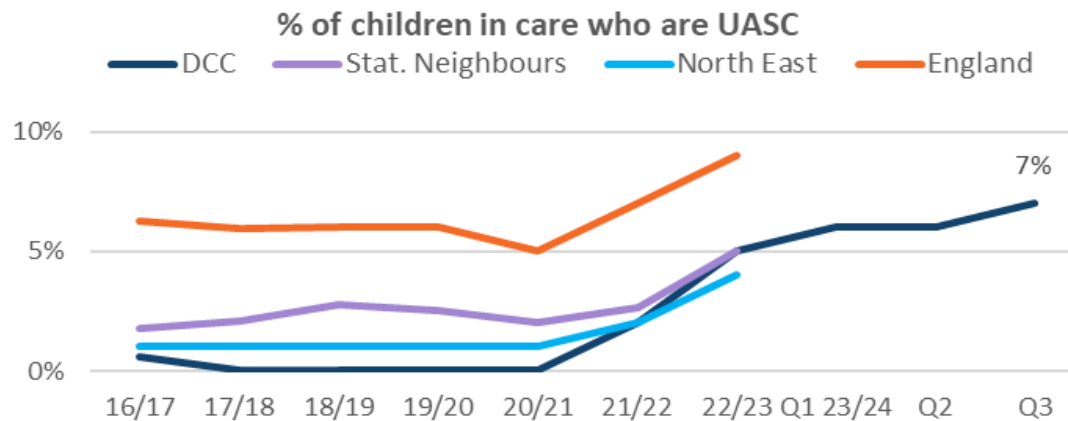
## Overall Cases in DCC Children's Services



- But despite referrals being low the number of cases open in the service has been increasing.
- This is partly due to increasing numbers of care leavers (eligibility for support was extended to age 25 in 2018\*)
- But more recently we are seeing a change in the composition of the types of need children and families require which means cases are open longer.

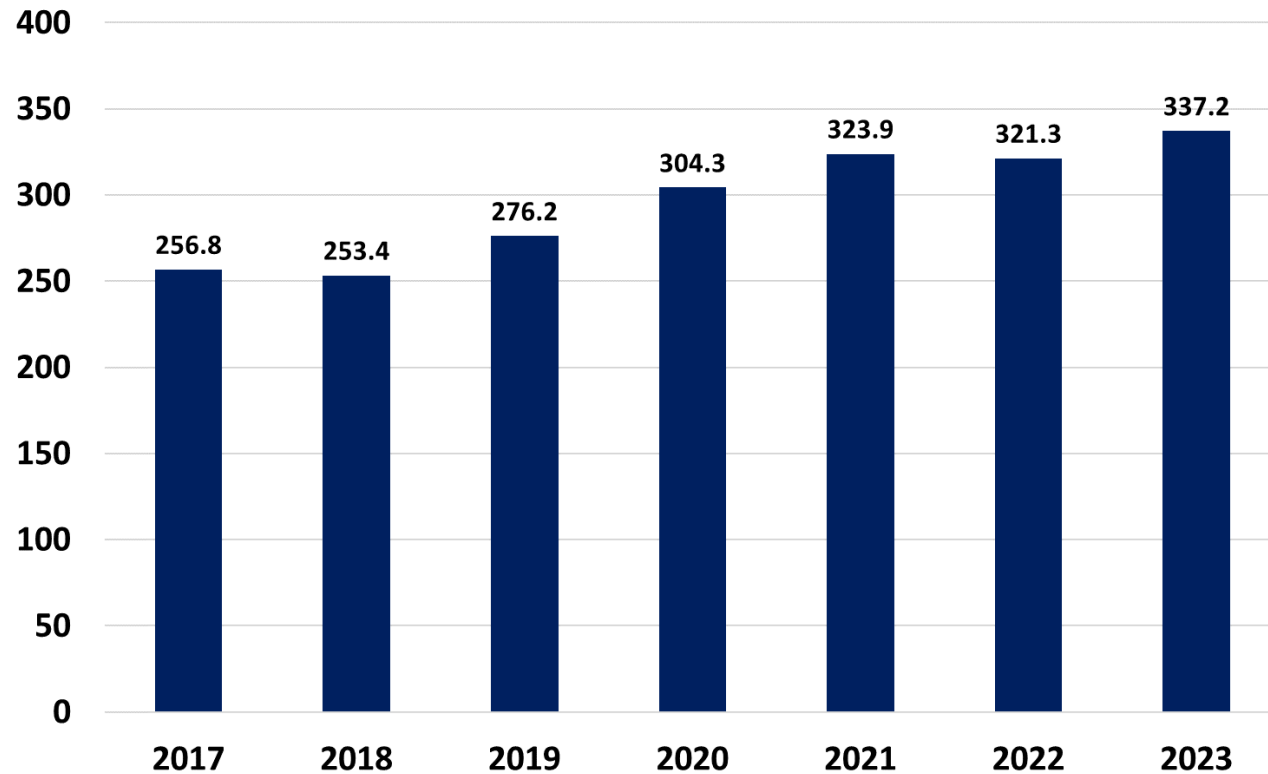
# Composition of Social Care Demand

- Children in Need rates are relatively low in Durham compared to regional and stat neighbours. This group around two thirds of all children requiring SW support.
- Rates of Children on a Child Protection Plan and Children in Care have been increasing in recent years but these remain much smaller cohorts compared to CIN.



# Total Children’s Social Worker fte – as at 30 Sept

Social Workers in Post - Durham County Council



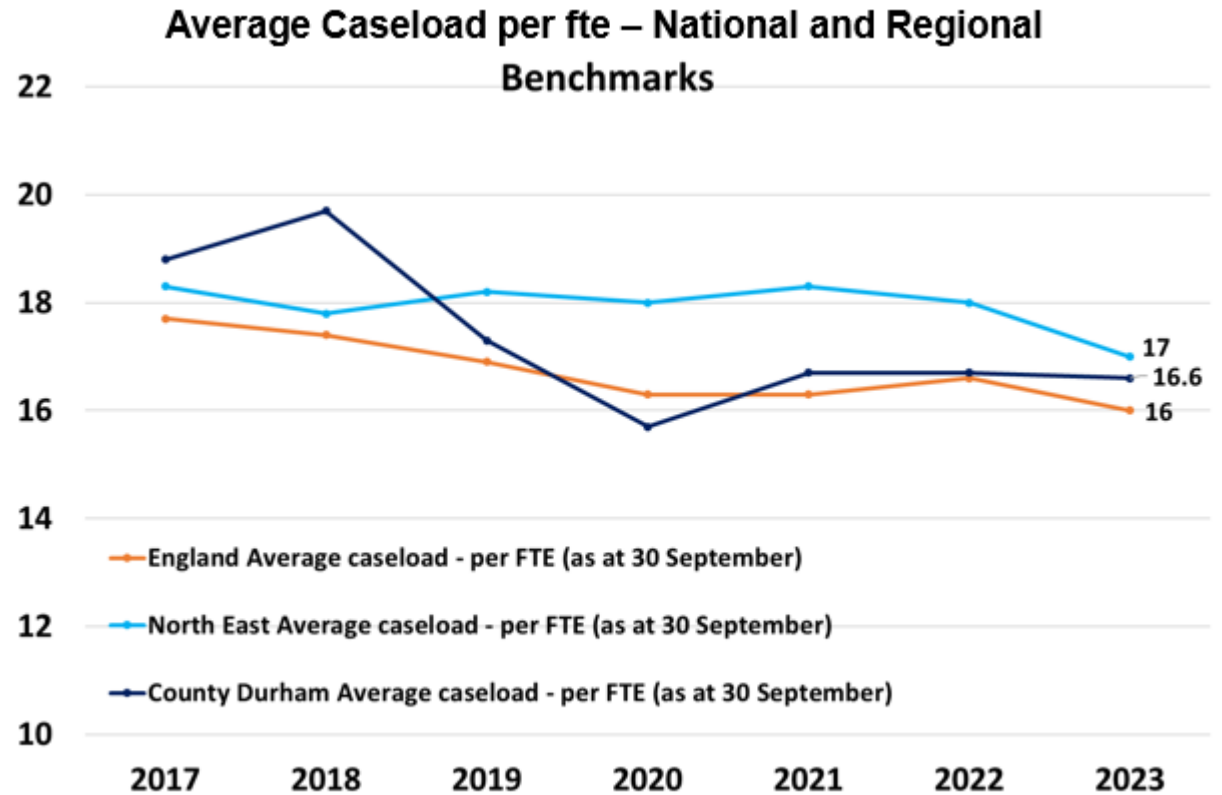
- 2023 data shows we now have the most social workers employed than ever.
- Since 2019 staffing levels have increased by a fifth in DCC more than regional and national averages.

	SW fte 2023	% increase since 2019	% increase since 2022
England	33,119.10	8%	5%
North East	2,159.90	11%	5%
County Durham	337.2	22%	5%

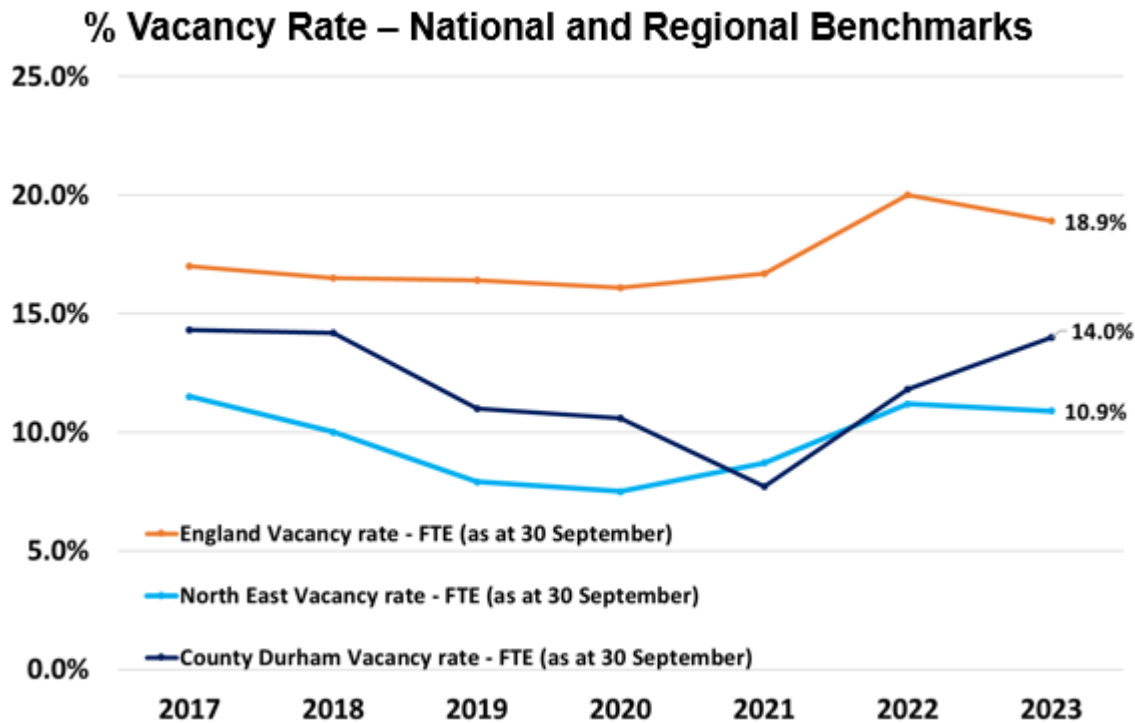
# Average Caseload by fte\*

- Overall caseload averages have remained similar over the last three years.
- Durham caseloads are slightly higher than regional averages but lower than the England average

\*These data are the only benchmarking data available on caseloads and comprise an annual snapshot of total cases divided by total FTE SW holding cases



# Social Worker Vacancies



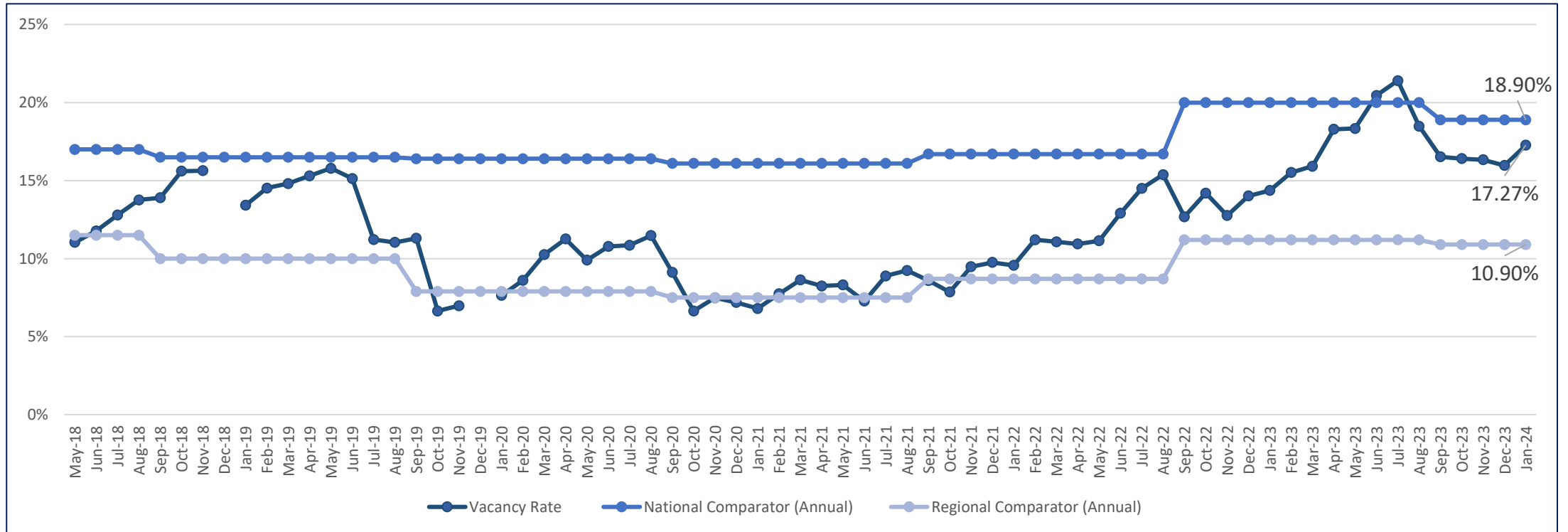
- National Children’s Social Work Workforce data was released in February
- Vacancy rates are higher than regional levels but are well below the national average.
- There were 70.2 new starter fte in the service in 2023 an increase of 46% on 2022

	New Starters fte 2023	% increase since 2019	% increase since 2022
England	6,027.50	2%	25%
North East	392.8	-3%	46%
County Durham	70.2	17%	46%

# Recruitment activity

- **Recruitment to almost all of our social work posts is difficult, and this is mirrored in local authorities across England.**
- Approx. 68% of posts are now eligible for an annual recruitment and retention allowance of £2,500.
- £2,000 “one off” welcome payment in place for all newly qualified social workers who join us.
- Adverts are regularly reviewed and promoted through social media.
- Our [Working in children and families social work](#) webpages support our job adverts and can be used in combination with social media to encourage job seekers to view our vacant roles.
- We continue to explore new ways to recruit.

# Vacancy Rates

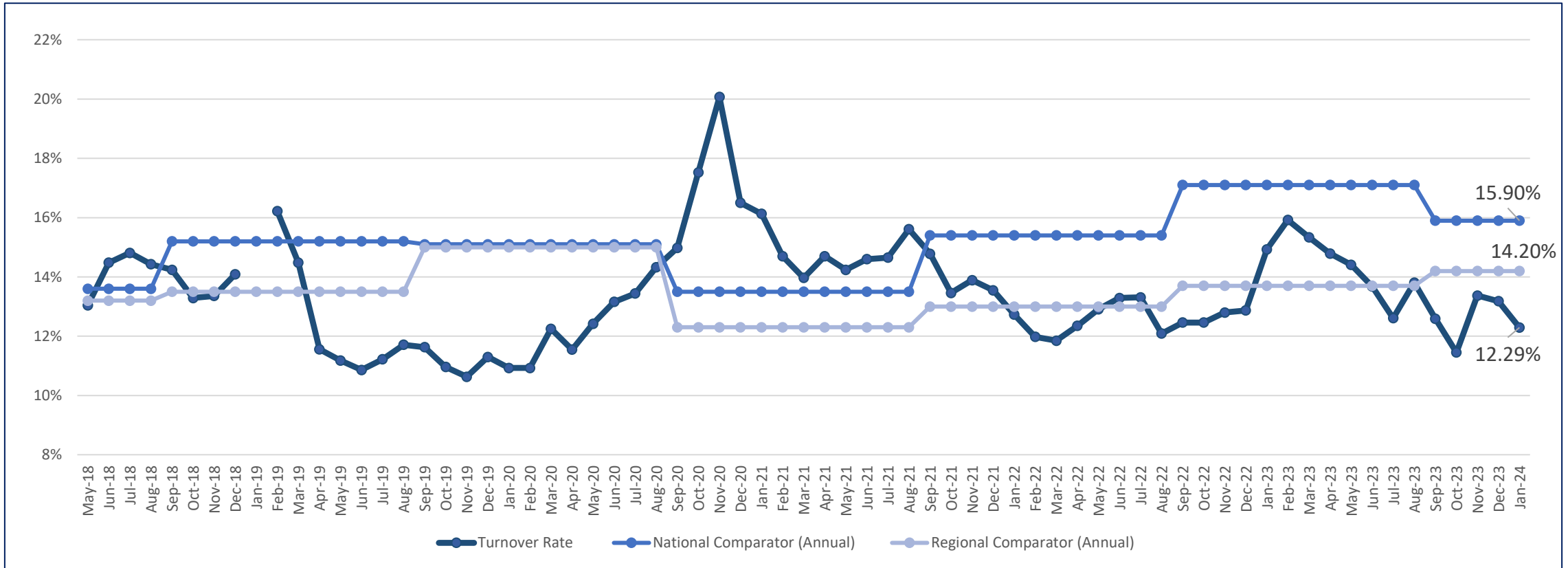


- In January 2024 our vacancy rate was **17.27%**, above the regional average of 10.90%, but below the national average of 18.90%.
- Due to the challenges recruiting social workers we expect our vacancy rate to continue to rise until Summer 2024 when Newly Qualified Social Workers start to join us.



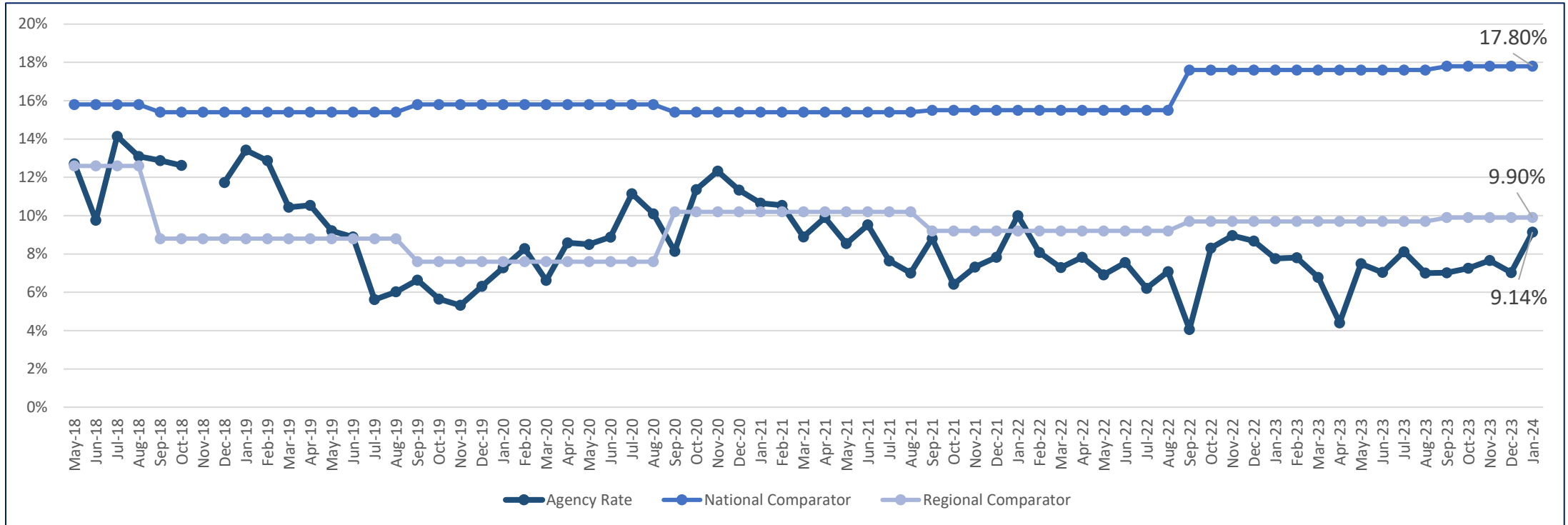


# Turnover Rates



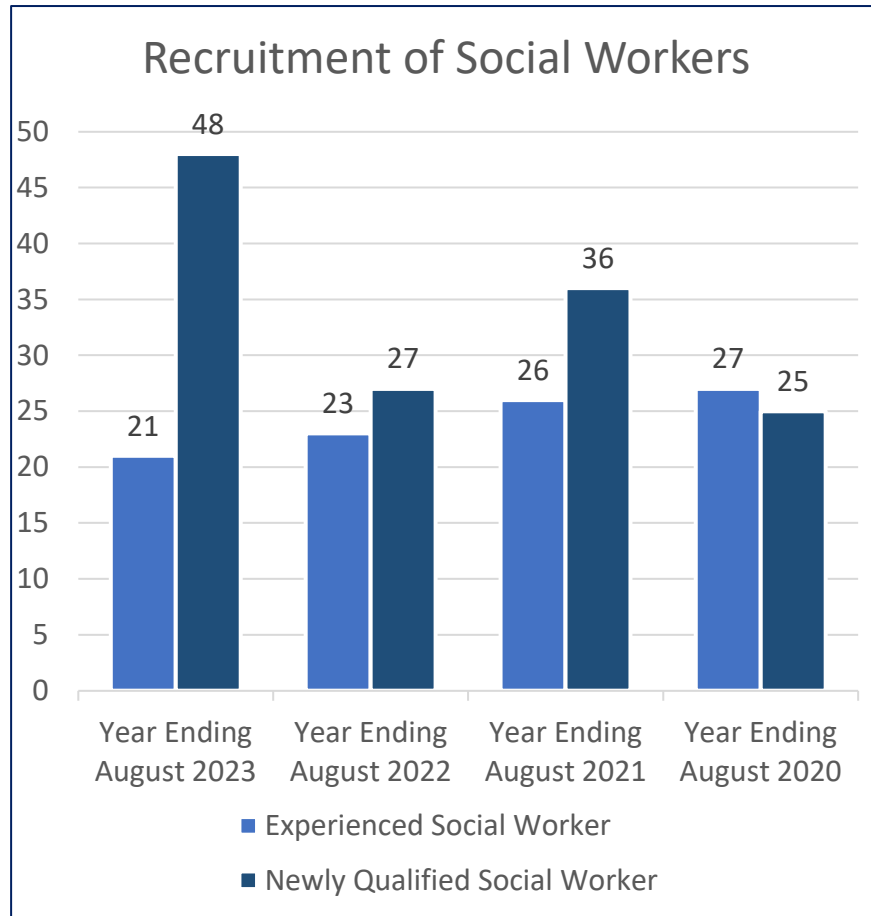
- In January 2024 our turnover rate was **12.29%**, below both the regional average of 14.20%, and the national average of 15.90%.

# Agency Rates



- In January 2024 our agency rate was **9.14%**, slightly below the regional average of 9.90%, and much lower than the national average of 17.80%.
- Due to the challenges recruiting agency social workers across the North East, our agency rate is lower than we might like.

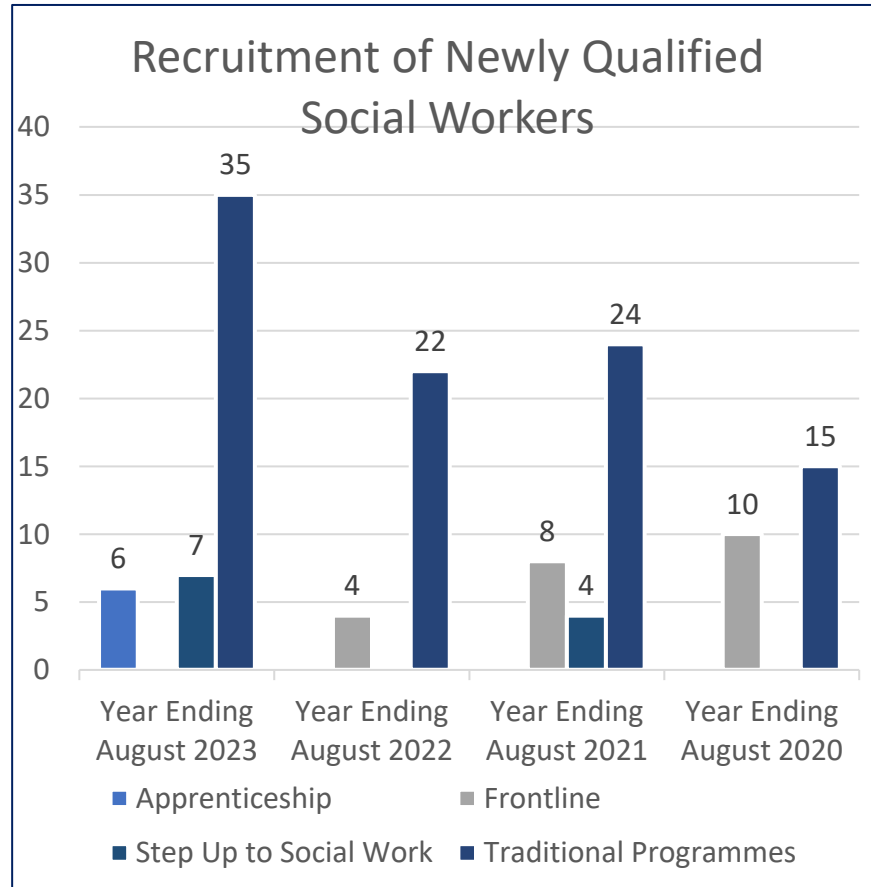
# Who have we been able to recruit?



- **58%** of recruits have been newly qualified social workers.
- **42%** of recruits have joined us with social work experience elsewhere.
- **42%** of experienced recruits have joined us in managerial roles or in teams requiring significant experience or specialist training.

Data: Social workers recruited September 2019-August 2023

# How have we recruited newly qualified social workers?



- We rely on the annual recruitment of newly qualified social workers to fill vacancies across our most “hard to fill” teams.
- We are most successful in the recruitment of newly qualified social workers when we support a range of qualifying programmes.
- Recruitment from traditional programmes at local universities is becoming increasingly difficult across the North East with competition growing from adult services and CAFCASS.

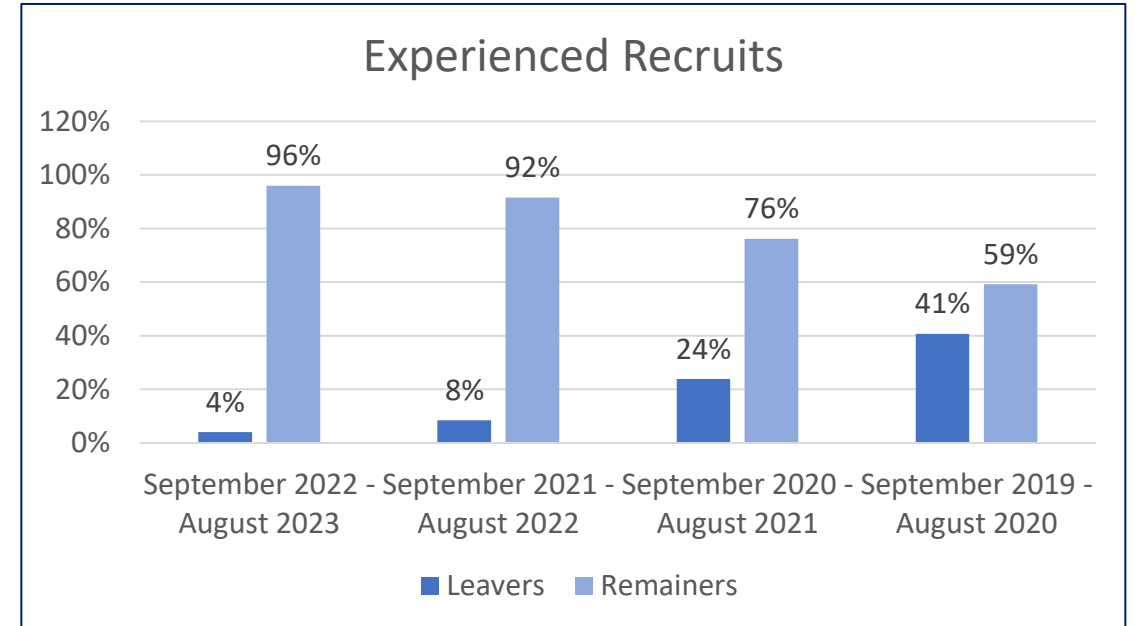
Data: Newly qualified social workers recruited September 2019-August 2023

# How do we expect to recruit newly qualified social workers in the future?

Year Ending Autumn	Projected Recruitment		
	Trainees/ Apprentices	Step Up to Social Work	Frontline
2024	2	0	0
2025	5	6	10
2026	20	0	10

- We are supporting all three programmes employers can with the aim of increasing the number of newly qualified social workers who join us.
- We support student placements from all of our local universities to encourage students to join us after qualification.

# Retention of Social Workers

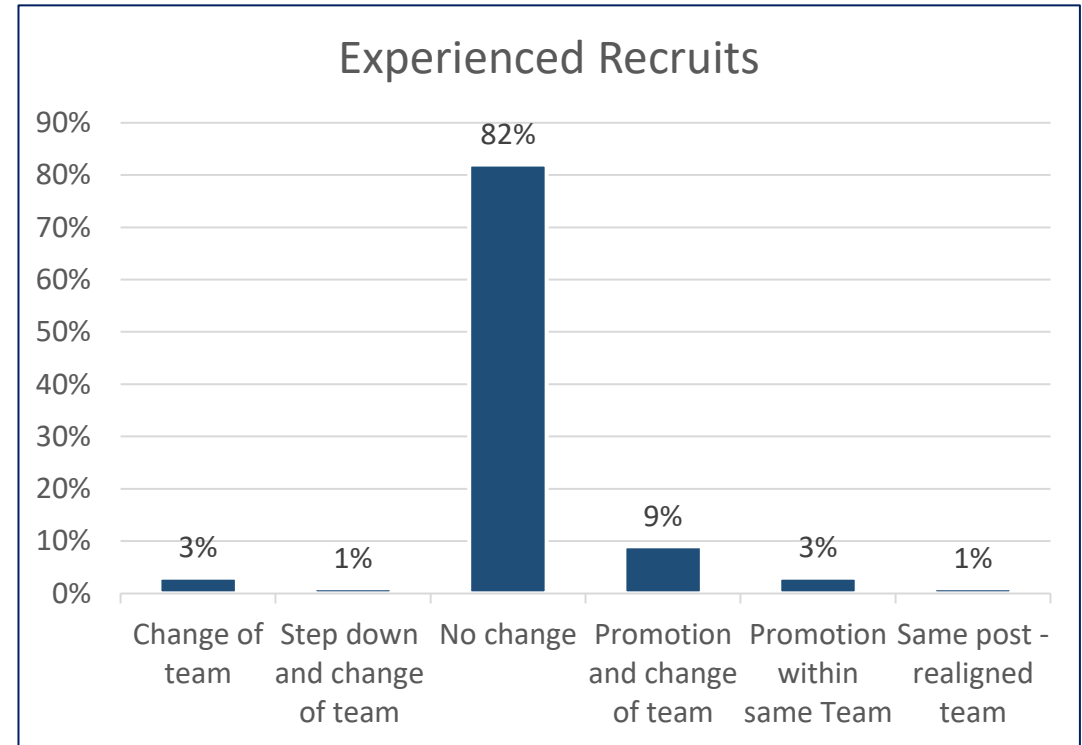
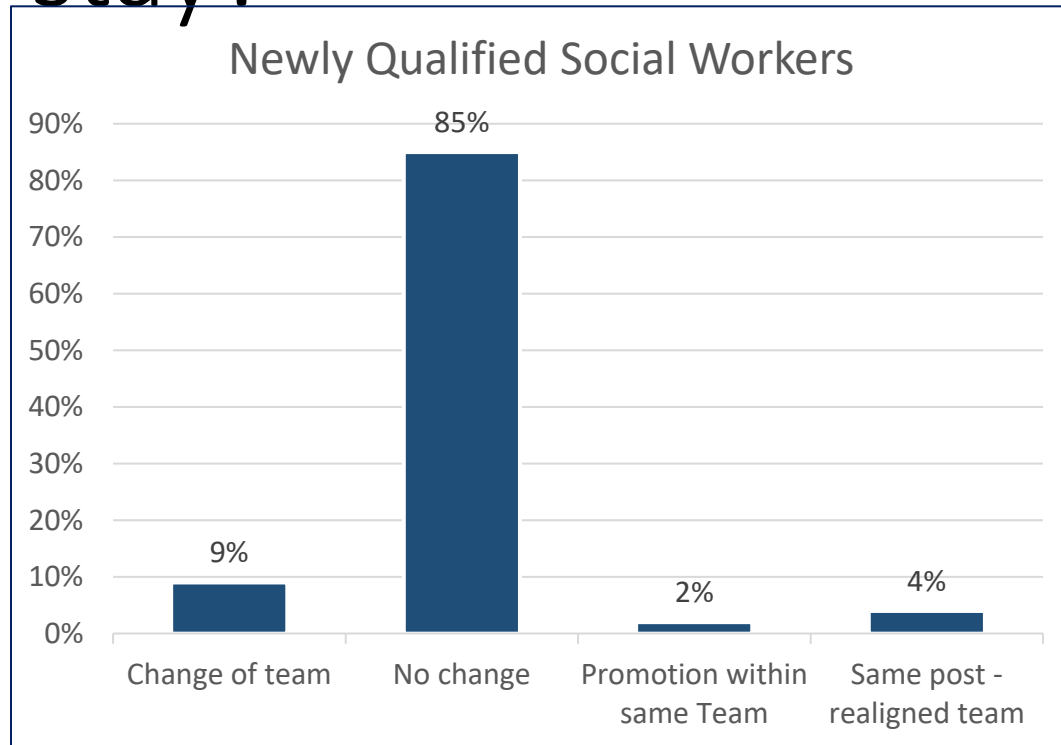


- **77%** of newly qualified social workers who have joined us over the last 4 years are still with us as children’s social workers.
- **46%** of our Families First Service is social workers who joined us as NQSWs within the last 6 years.

- **70%** of experienced social workers who have joined us over the last 4 years are still with us.

Data: Direction of social workers recruited September 2019-August 2023

# What do our social workers do when they stay?



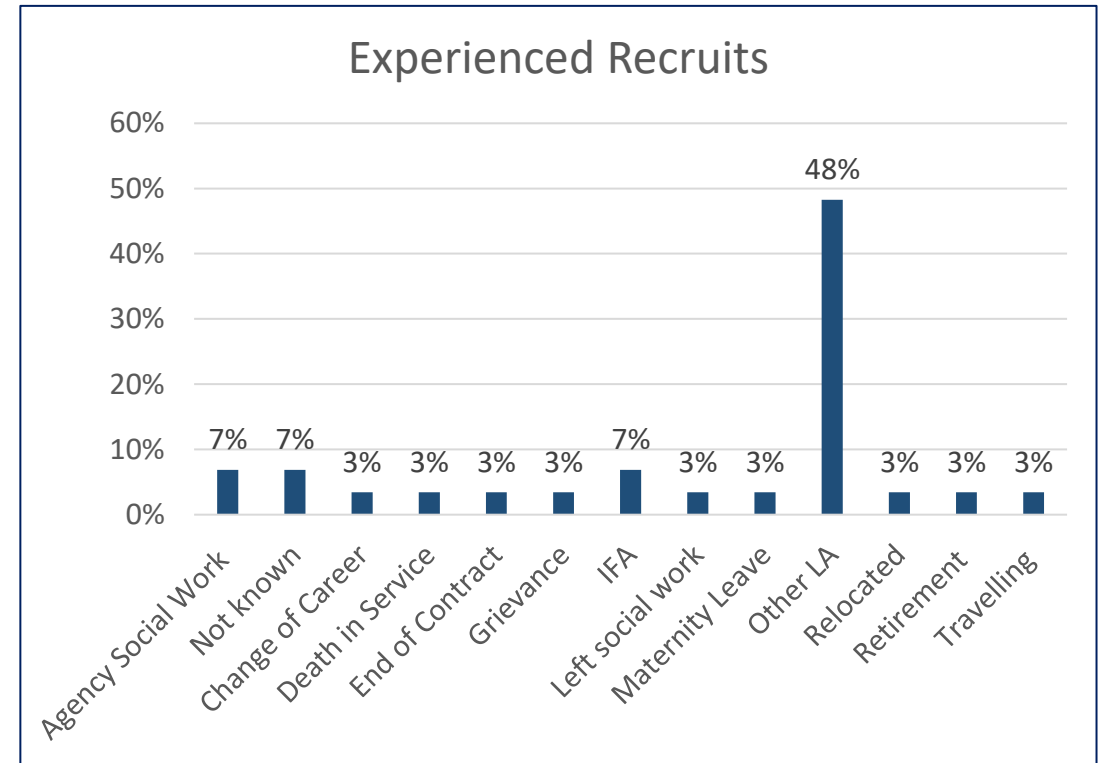
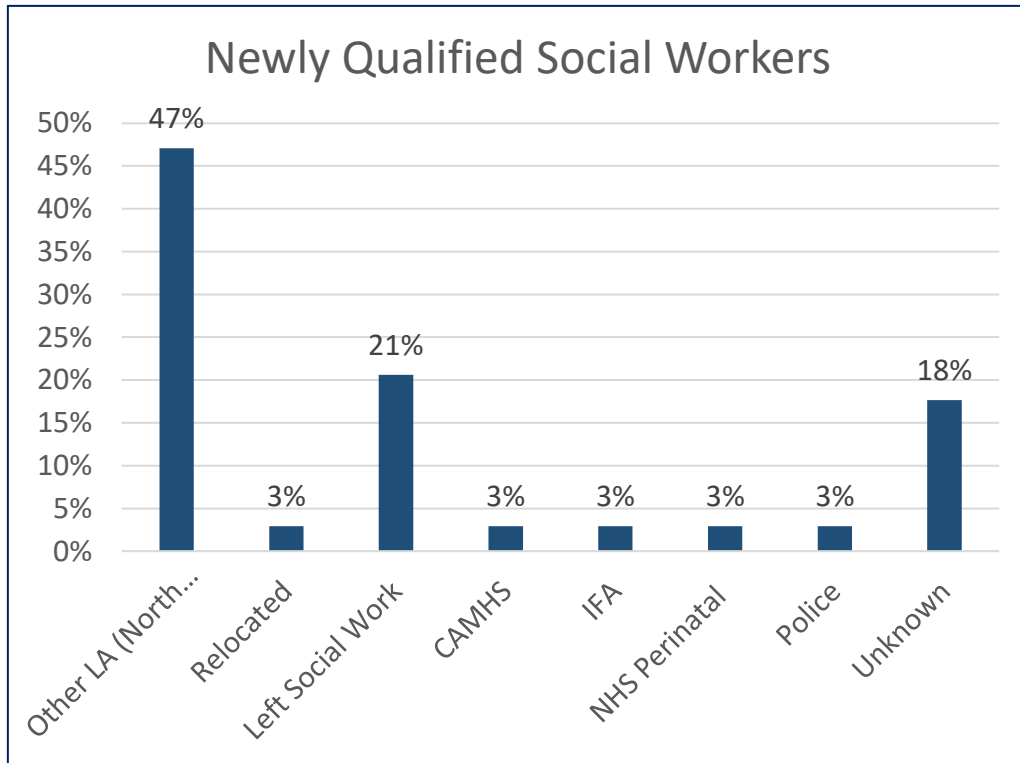
- When we look at the social workers who have joined us over the last 4 years and remain with us, **85%** of newly qualified social workers and **82%** of experienced social workers are still in the same post and team they started in.

# What do our social workers tell us helps them to stay in Durham?





# Where do social workers go when they leave?



- Newly qualified social workers who leave us are most likely to go to another local authority, but **21%** have left social work. Social Work England have reported a trend in social workers leaving the profession early.
- Experienced recruits are most likely to go to another local authority.

Data: Leavers from those recruited September 2019-August 2023

# Signs of Safety

Nothing about us  
without us



# The Practice Model

In Durham everything we do is based on good strong working relationships with children and their families and we have adopted Signs of Safety as our practice model to help us to do this.

Our practice:

- keeps the child/young person at the centre.
- is trauma informed.
- uses the strengths of a child and/or family's own network as a key source of support.

# The Vision

Signs of safety provides a consistent practice model to help us to support children and young people to remain within their families and networks where they have the potential to care for them safely, and when this is not possible, to provide a secure and stable home and help them achieve their full potential.

# Our “Must Dos”

- 1** We will use kind and clear language in all that we do.



- 2** We will use creative tools in our direct work.



- 3** We will use mapping to inform our work.



- 4** We will help families find and use their family networks.



- 5** We will use the Harm Matrix when we have worries.

Behaviour	Timespan	Severity			Impact on the child
		First	Worst	Last	

- 6** We will create Words and Pictures by working with parents, to help their children understand what we are worried about.



- 7** Monthly Group Supervision will be held by every team.



- 8** Sometimes we must remove children from the care of their family. Where we can, we do everything we can to return children home, by creating a timeline for safety planning on the first day of removal.



# Actions Achieved

## LEADERSHIP

- Celebrating Practice Week 2024 focused on belonging and permanence. There were 2 virtual and three face to face events, with stalls and presentations, which brought staff together to learn, celebrate, a chance to talk with strategic managers and Nick Barwick as keynote speaker.
- Head of Service fortnightly bulletin provides the opportunity to share good practice from around the Service, noting achievements and feedback from families, partners and peers.
- Services & Localities have bespoke action plans for the implementation of SoS and provide quarterly progress updates to ODG, providing assurance on progress made and setting out their priorities for the next quarter.
- Task & Finish Groups for Harm outside the Home & Pre-Birth Assessments are helping to drive forward practice in these specialist areas.
- Practice Champions in each team support Service and Team Managers to develop practice locally.

# Actions Achieved

## LEARNING

- 76% CYPS have completed the Introduction to SoS 2- day course. The main staff group to do this are in Residential.
- 36% CYPS have completed the 6-day Advanced So course ( prior to 2023 only Champions and Practice Leads did this, before a decision that all staff should attend).
- Over 160 individuals from partner organisations, accessed the online SoS course via DSCP.
- Monthly focus on “Must Dos” of practice from Jan- Aug 2024 including several Lunch & Learn sessions per month with over 100 staff attending each session.

# Actions Achieved

## ORGANISATIONAL ALIGNMENT

- Case Supervision process and form - revised to help to develop practice.
- IT –system reviewed to inform future developments to align it more closely to practice.
- Partnership – most organisations attending the SoS Partnership have identified Champions who will be offered the opportunity to attend the 2-day SoS course, so they can help to develop practice as befits their organization.



# Importance of connection to birth family

## MEANINGFUL MEASURES THE IMPACT!

- Brandon, Care Leaver (who had to make a choice aged 10 about whether to see his mam, or his 4 younger brothers who were adopted – he chose to see his brothers and later sought out his mam aged 15).
- ‘It’s awful when you’re growing older, and I hadn’t seen my mam in years and (I was) starting to forget details about my mam’s face.’
- ‘The one biggest benefit was I got to see my grandparents. Sadly, after that my grandad passed away 3 months later, so if I hadn’t have went back then and there, I wouldn’t have seen him. So that was one of the main things. It built a bond, I got to see my family again, it was the best time of my life, I got to see my cousins, my brother and I hadn’t seen them in ages, next thing you know my brother had a little one on the way...it was just amazing’.
- ‘If I need anything, any help... I have multiple places to turn to... it’s comforting as well that no matter where I go, I’ve got someone there for us, so if anything happens, I’ve always got someone close to me...I’ve got my mam to turn to and if anything happens with my mam, I’ve got Chris’s family to turn to...I’ve got both’.

# Returning children home (children in care)

## MEANINGFUL MEASURES THE IMPACT!

- ‘Out of all the social workers Nicks the best one I’ve ever worked with...I know he hasn’t been here long, but he listens to us...he’s open and honest, and we are...I think that’s how we get along really’.
- ‘I could see (her) confidence growing, you would ask (for) a lot of advice in the early days, after a while, the change I saw, you thought ‘I can do this’...you became more relaxed...you grew into the role...you’ve just got it back under control...you’ve grown back into being a mum.’
- ‘I think I’m a better mam now than I was back then, I was young back then...I had my first when I turned 17...I did always say my kids will never be took into care, then that relationship and what happened to Ellie, it killed us. I’ve been diagnosed with PTSD. I look back and think how much my life has changed, that I had to do it for my kids. If I never had my kids, I wouldn’t have been here....that’s the honest truth... and I’m glad I did keep going’.

# How we repaired our relationships to get our children home”

## MEANINGFUL MEASURES THE IMPACT!

- Mum talking about what helped: “3 contact visits a week..... being prepared – support from Lisa, Social Worker, which included talking through worries, Lisa explaining things, Trauma Therapy..”.
- Dad - “I wake up every morning for these kids....just want to see them grow up...I live for my wife and kids”.
- Dad - “I know it might sound horrible .It was a Godsend, when they first got taken away as we might not have stopped taking things .....I’ve used something since I was 19...now through doing certain courses, it’s past traumas that’s why most people take stuff.....I’ve got something...I can’t say it enough...if you can’t give something up for your wife and your kids ...I feel as if I’ve got a brand new life...”.
- Mum - “..we were really , really lucky to get Lisa as a Social Worker...within a couple of days Lisa had come out straightaway.....”
- Dad - “..when we got Lisa things started to move forward..”

# Questions?