

Corporate Parenting Panel

24 September 2021

Annual Performance Report: Supporting Solutions – Edge of Care, Family Group Conference and ERASE



Report of Helen Fergusson, Head of Children' Social Care, Durham County Council

Electoral division affected:

None

Purpose of the Report

- 1 This report outlines the activity and development of the Supporting Solution Service (SSS) from 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021.

Executive Summary

- 2 The Supporting Solutions Service continues to develop the service to meet the needs of young people, parents, and carers. The offer of support from Supporting Solutions includes:
 - (a) Edge of care support
 - (b) Family Group Conferences
 - (c) Missing from Home Co-ordinator
 - (d) Child Exploitation (CE) Workers
 - (e) Access to crisis bed.

Recommendation

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

Background

- 4 The offer of support from Supporting Solutions includes:
- (a) Edge of care (EoC) support – intensive interventions to young people, parents and carers where there has been a relationship breakdown and without this support it is likely that the young person may need to become looked after or experience a placement move;
 - (b) Family Group Conference (FGC) – support to families to identify and establish a sustainable plan to meet the needs of children and young people within their family unit;
 - (c) Missing from Home Co-ordinator – co-ordination and delivery of services for children who are Missing from Home or our care (MFH);
 - (d) Child Exploitation Workers – offering support and interventions to young people at high risk of Child Exploitation (CE);
 - (e) Access to crisis bed – staffed by SSS and Emergency Duty Team (EDT), this provides an out of hours, one night only crisis bed for a young person when all other options have been explored.

Staffing

- 5 Current agreed staff ratios are:
- Edge of Care: 13 full time equivalent posts
 - Family Group Conference: 7.5 full time equivalent posts
 - Child Exploitation: 4 full time equivalent posts
 - 2 Missing from Home Co-ordinators.
- The team also have access to a Therapeutic Social Worker from the Full Circle service and clinical supervision.
- 6 Within staffing levels, the three temporary full time posts in EoC have been extended to 2-year contracts. There is one full time CE post temporary for 1-year and one MFH co-ordinator temporary for 1-year due to the increase need during the COVID pandemic and funded via Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) monies.
- 7 Currently there is one full time equivalent vacant post in EoC which will be recruited to in the coming months.

Outcomes Supporting Solutions

- 8 During 2020/21 Supporting Solutions supported 179 young people (YP) on the edge of care.

Outcome	Number of young people
Young people received support	179 YP including 132 new referrals for YP
Young People/occasions emergency bed was accessed	29 young people 49 nights
Number of young people who are in the care of their parents or family/friend at time of closure / writing report including those rehabilitated home from the care of the LA	121 7 YP rehabilitated from care of LA
Number of young people who were in a long term placement and remained there	11
Number of young people who have become looked after children during SS interventions	28
Number of young people who are now living in supported accommodation	5
Number of young people who are now living in Supported Lodgings	2
Number of young people who were already looked after but moved to a new placement	11
Number of young people detained under the Mental Health Act	1

NB

74% of young people who accessed support in 2020/21 are either at home / with extended family or have remained in their long term placement.

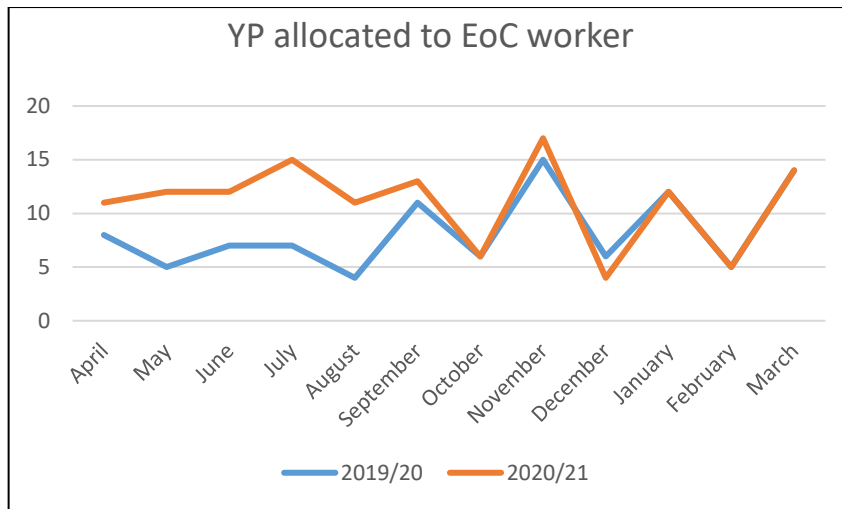
28 young people (15%) who accessed support during 2020/21 have become looked after during SS interventions, this is a clear increase from the previous year. These young people became looked after either because of safeguarding reasons or because home life became so untenable it was not safe for the young person to remain at home. Some of these young people remain open to interventions from SSS in the hope that in future a return to family care can be supported.

11 young people moved to a new placement as relationship with carers had completely broken down. SSS are exploring the timeliness of referrals made for CLA in long term placements. Some requests for support were made following carers giving their 28 day notice, had they been made earlier there is the potential that this may have reduced placement moves for some young people.

During 2020/21 intervention ended with 115 young people, at the point of closure 73% of young people were either at home / with extended family or have remained in their long term placement.

- 9 There has been an increase of YP people allocated to an edge of care worker in 2020/21 compared to the previous year, this has increased by 32%.
- 10 Looking more closely at Q3 and Q4 in 2020/21 after the North East entered further lockdown restrictions the rates of allocation are similar compared to the previous year. However, what is different is the number of YP who remained open to an edge of care worker. In Q3 and Q4 of 2019/20 there were 88 YP allocated to an edge of care worker, compared to 132 YP in 2020/21. This is an increase of 50%. This is a direct result of covid and the complexity of young people at risk of becoming looked after.

	Allocations 2019/20	Allocations 2020/21
April	8	11
May	5	12
June	7	12
July	7	15
August	4	11
September	11	13
October	6	6
November	15	17
December	6	4
January	12	12
February	5	5
March	14	14
Totals	100	132

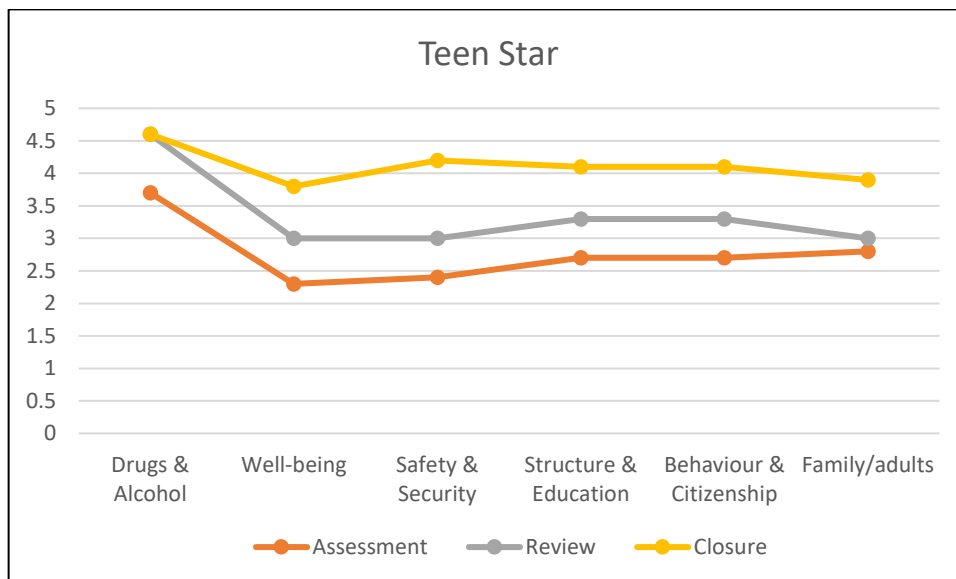


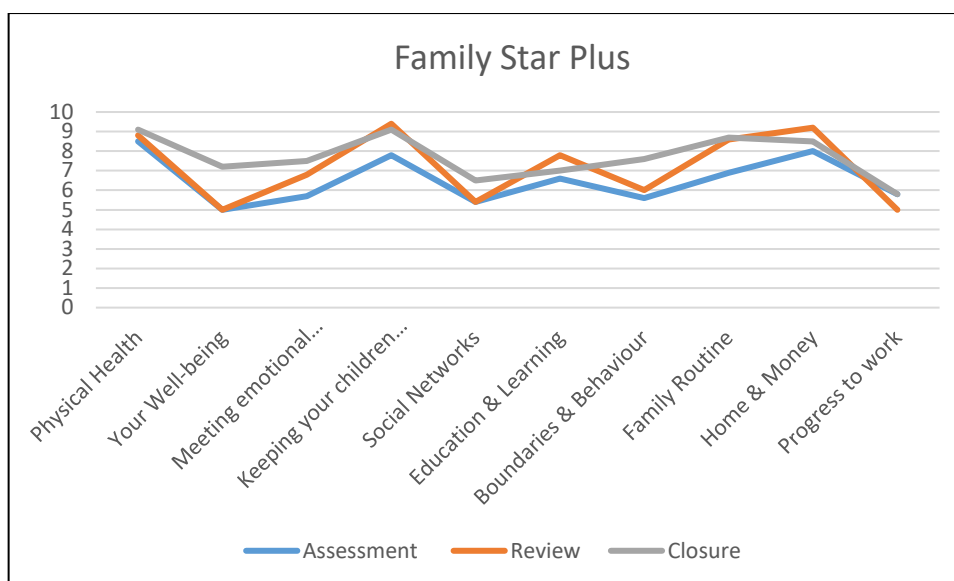
- 11 When referrals are made for young people to Supporting Solutions, but they do not meet the criteria, a consultation is held between the SSS Manager and the Safeguarding Social Worker to explore most appropriate course of action for the social worker to implement to prevent the young person from becoming on the edge of care and needing supporting solutions support. During 2020/21, 104 consultations were held for young people. These consultations are recorded as a case note on Liquid Logic. Following consultations these young people are not allocated to an Edge of Care worker either because:
- (a) They were under the age of 11;
 - (b) Concerns were predominantly around safeguarding;
 - (c) Concerns were predominantly around significant mental health needs of the young person;
 - (d) Concerns were around parents / carers struggling to cope with behaviour of young person in relation to diagnosis of autism;
 - (e) Young person was not on the edge of care.
- 11 Out of the 104 young people, further referrals were received for 16 of these young people. At the point of these referrals, family dynamic / need had changed, and edge of care workers were allocated.
- 12 Moving forward, further consideration needs to be given to how the impact of these consultations is monitored. This has been added to Service Development Plan.
- 13 Out of the 132 new referrals in 2020/21 16 of these were re-referrals to SSS, re-referrals were made for:

- (a) 2 x to support reunification plans with parents / family members;
- (b) 6 x change in circumstances, therefore further support required;
- (c) 7 x YP and parent / carer experiencing further crisis period and additional support needed.

Individual Young People Journey Mapping (soft outcomes)

- 14 All young people as part of their engagement with Supporting Solutions are asked to complete the Teen Outcomes Star and parents / carers are asked to complete the Family Star Plus. This helps to identify distance travelled in terms of young people, parents and carers achieving the best possible outcomes. Outcome stars are also used as motivational tools and assist workers in being able to offer targeted support to young people and families.
- 15 The tables demonstrate that in all areas of the Teen Star and Family Star Plus young people, parents / carers felt they had made improvements after accessing Supporting Solutions interventions.





- 16 Information is also gathered at the point of referral in relation to other issues that may have an impact on the YP or family life, for example, Child Exploitation, Domestic Abuse, NEET (not in employment, education or training), Substance and Alcohol Misuse. This information is collated to gain a better understanding of the issues affecting YP on the edge of care but also to observe any patterns that may be emerging. In 2020/21 there was a significant increase in the number of YP who had a parent or carer experiencing difficulties with their Mental Health. This is potentially an impact of COVID restrictions and how people's support networks, access to appointments and general daily lives have been affected by the pandemic.
- 17 Moving forward this information will be captured throughout the year and will be included in each quarterly report.

Numbers of Young people entering care aged 11 – 17

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

Reporting Period	Entered care due to family breakdown	Entered care due to abuse or neglect	Total number of YP aged 11-17 who entered care
2019/2020	28	82	110
2020/2021	24	72	96

- 19 There has been a reduction of young people aged 11 years and above entering care in this reporting year however an increase in young

people entering care as a result of relationship breakdowns. Again, this may be a result of lockdown, young people not attending school, social isolation etc. These numbers now also include 16-17 year olds who have presented as homeless.

Performance – Family Group Conferencing

- 20 The table below illustrates the referrals received and initial FGCs completed for April 2020 – March 2021.

FGC - Performance Activity	Annual Target	Achieved
Referrals received	360	316
Initial FGCs completed	360	270

- 21 The table above also shows a difference in the number of referrals received and FGCs completed. This is due to:
- (a) Referrals that resulted in no further action;
 - (b) Staffing issues across the year including vacancy, long term sickness and a member of staff seconded to EDT, this accounts for an estimated loss of capacity to complete 49 initial FGCs;
 - (c) The FGC staff also been required to take on additional responsibilities throughout the year within the Supporting Solutions Services which requires time:
 - (i) Back up duties as a response to the increase in admissions to the Nest;
 - (ii) Support with return to home interviews (RTHI) due to an increase in missing episodes;
 - (iii) Support to Social Work teams re Family Network Meetings (FNM).
- 22 There have been lessons learnt with a new way of working through Covid-19. From attending the national FGC conference, it was clear that we were one of the few FGC services in the country that did not stop through the Covid-19 pandemic, we adapted and moved to a virtual way of working very quickly to ensure there were no gaps in service delivery for the families we work with. We will carry this learning forward as a team.

- 23 Although targets have not been met, this year has been the highest amount of initial FGC's achieved, this is a trend following on from previous years, there has been a yearly increase in initial FGCs achieved. Moving forward into this year, staff stability, training, supervision and clear expectations aim to ensure targets are achieved throughout the year.
- 24 The tables below show the outcomes following a FGC, where families devised their own plan which was agreed by the social worker at the time of the conference.

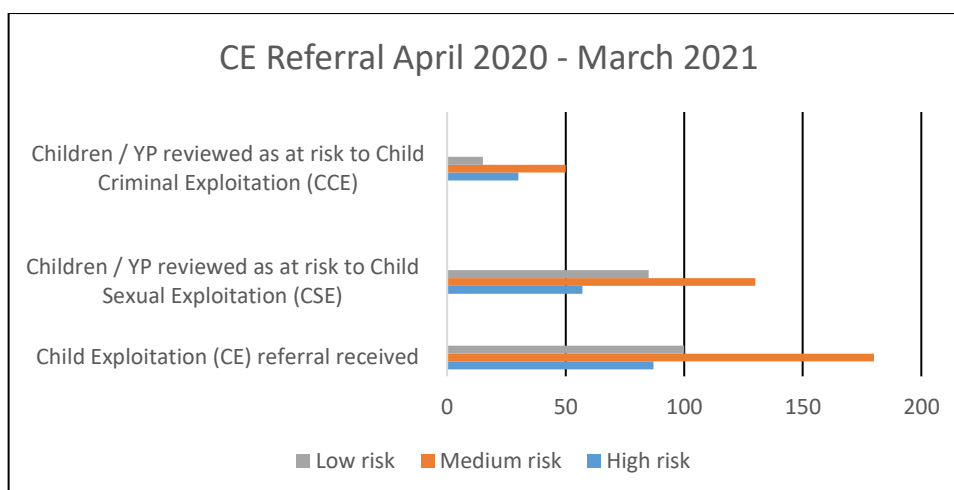
April 2020 – March 2021 Initial FGC - Outcomes for families / children	Number of children
1 Awaiting Outcomes from Assessments and court	42
2 Rehabilitation plan from care of LA to family	20
3 Remain with Extended Family / private fostering arrangement	35
4 Remain looked after by Local Authority	18
5 Remained with parents with support from family members	267
6 Alternative Carers Identified	5
7 Support plan for young person moving to independent living from residential / foster care	3
Total	390

Q3 Review FGC - Outcomes for children	Number of Children
Remained with Parent/carer	97
Awaiting outcomes form assessment	2
Remained with extended family – transition plan in place for return to parents	1
Remained looked after by Local Authority	4
Rehabilitation from extended family to parents	1
Remain in the care of extended family	7
Total	112

Performance – Erase Child Exploitation Service

25 Referrals received through the Child Exploitation Vulnerability Tracker (CEVT) from April 2020- March 2021:

	High risk	Medium risk	Low risk	No risk	Total
Child Exploitation (CE) referral received	87	180	100	8	375
Children / YP reviewed as at risk to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)	57	130	85		272
Children / YP reviewed as at risk to Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)	30	50	15		95

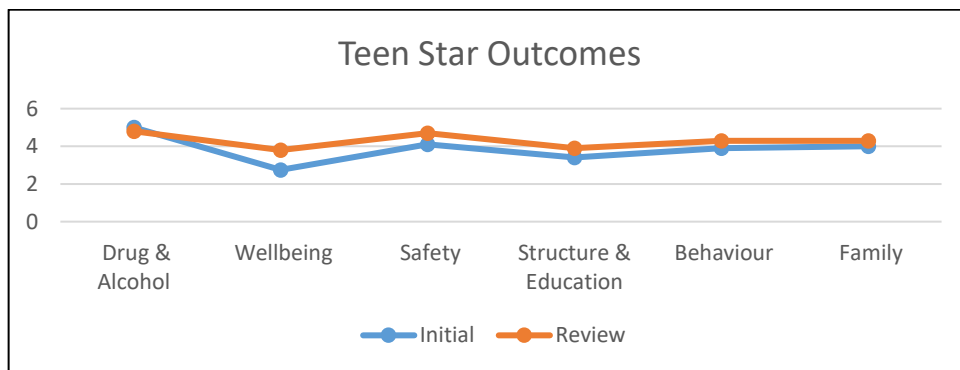


- 26 All young people who have had their CE risk reviewed through the CEVT process have had multiagency agreed next steps suggested as actions for the lead worker. All those young people who had been reviewed as high risk of CE, have been allocated an Erase CE Worker in the aim of exiting or reducing their risk of CE. Those who are high risk have also been referred to the multiagency monthly CE Group.
- 27 The table below illustrates the outcomes from when a young person is reviewed as high risk between April 2020 – March 2021, then allocated an Erase CE Worker and the outcomes for where they are now in relation to their risk of CE.

	High risk at the original CEVT	Reviewed as medium risk April 2021	Reviewed as low risk April 2021	Reviewed as high risk as of April 2021
YP reviewed as at risk to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)	57	16	24	17
YP reviewed as at risk to Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)	30	4	13	13

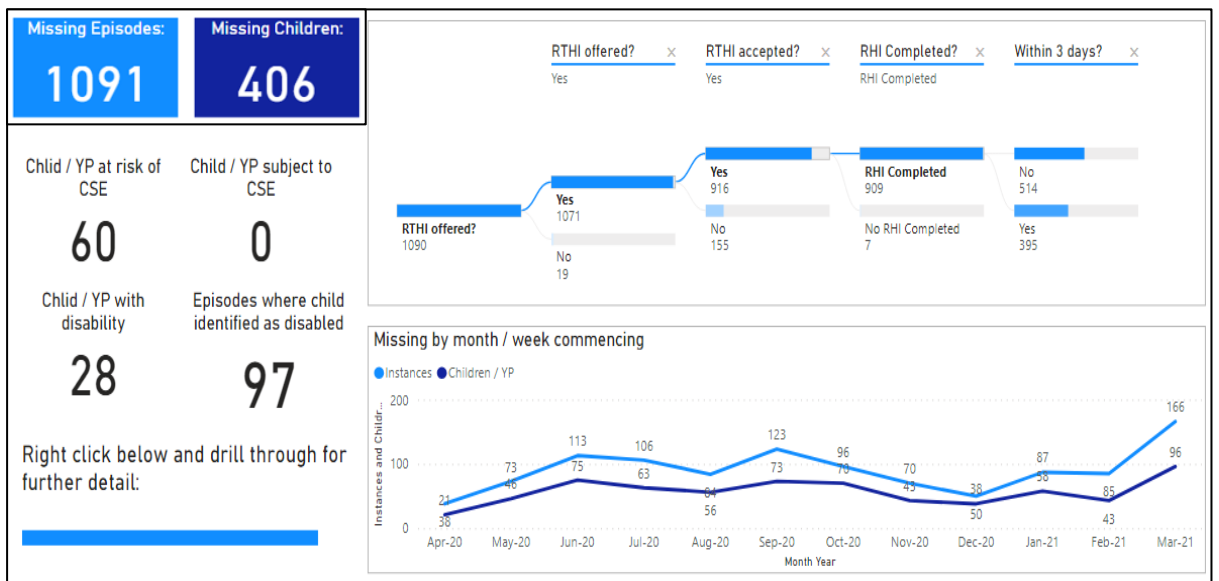
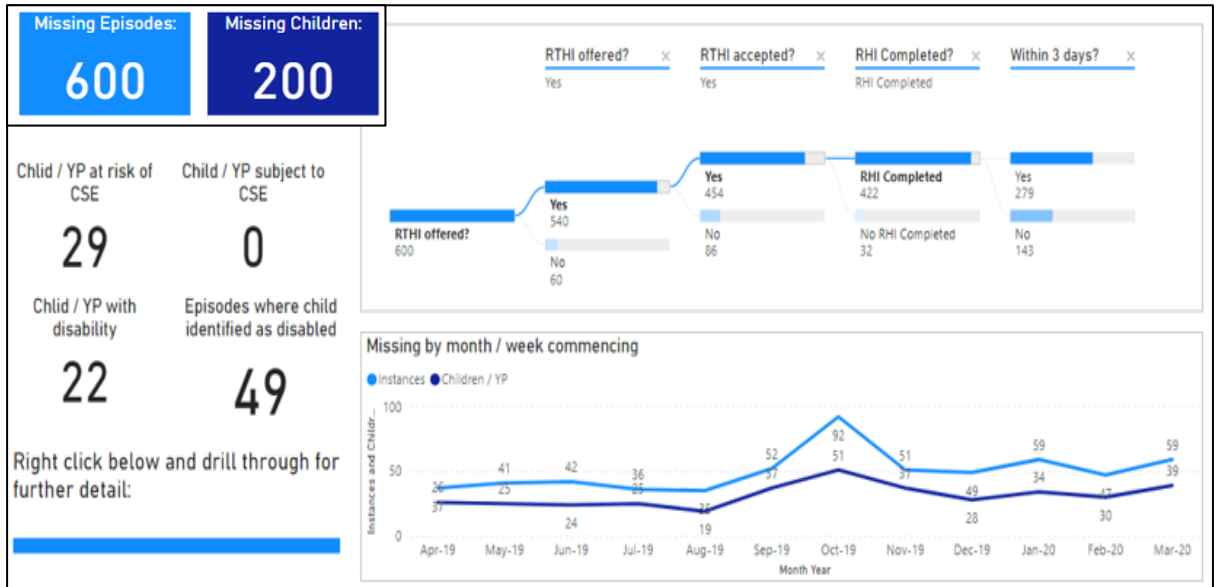
- 28 The above table illustrates that for those young people who were reviewed as high risk of CSE between April 2020 and March 2021, 42% of those now have a reduced risk level of low. 28% have a reduced risk level of medium and 29% remain high risk. This is a significant reduction in risk for the young people.

- 29 For those young people who were reviewed as high risk of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) between April 2020 and March 2021, 43% of those now have a reduced risk level of low, 13% have now reduced to medium and 43% remain high risk.
- 30 This is a significant improvement from March 2020. In March 2020, before there was a designated Erase CCE Worker, only 4% of young people at risk of CCE reduced from high to medium risk. No young people had their risk reduced to low. This evidences the positive impact an allocated CCE Worker has for young people in the ability to reduce their risk of CCE.
- 31 It must be considered that those young people reviewed as high risk of CE in Q4 have had a limited amount of intervention since the point of being allocated a CE Interventions Worker.
- 32 The CE Interventions Workers are now using the Teen Star tool with the young people they are working with. This has helped to illustrate the wider outcomes for the young people who are receiving support from the Erase CE Team:
- 33 The graph below illustrates that in all areas of the Teen Star apart from Drug and Alcohol, the young people felt they had made improvements after accessing support from the Erase CE Team.



Missing from Home (MFH) and Return to Home Interview (RTHI) outcome comparisons 2019/20 vs 2020/21

34 The below diagrams show MFH activity for 2019/20 and 2020/21:



- 35 The below table provides a summary comparison of the MFH activity from 2019/20 and 2020/21: information taken from Liquid Logic

	2019/20	2020/21	% change
Number of missing episodes	600	1,090*	+81%
Number of individual missing young people	200	406	+102%
Offered RTHI	540 (90%)	1,071 (98%)	+8pp
Accepted RHI	454 (84%)	916 (86%)	+2pp
Completed RTHI	422 (93%)	909 (99%)	+6pp

- 36 Compared to the same period last year, we have seen a significant increase in the number of missing episodes and the number of young people who go missing. The introduction of the Missing Co-Ordinator has had a significant impact on the proportion of RTHIs offered and completed. From the information gathered through the RTHI process, young people have reflected and explained that during lockdown it had come to point where they were tired of being stuck in the house and they just wanted to leave and see their friends. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, many normal teenage activities became illegal, such as meeting friends, leaving the family home unnecessarily etc. this helps to account for the significant increase in missing episodes.
- 37 During quarter 4, 97% of young people were offered a RTHI. Of those who accepted, only 1 interview had not been completed. There has been a significant improvement in the amount of young people who have accepted and taken part in their RTHI. This improvement highlights the importance of having an independent Missing Co-ordinator dedicated to completing RTHI for young people in County Durham.
- 38 The Police Child Exploitation Team have fed back that there has been a significant improvement in RTHI information quality. The analysis of information has improved, which has allowed us better insight into risks YP are exposed to when missing, highlight hot spots and making correlations between YP missing at the same time or with the same people, where before with different workers completing the RTHIs it would not be possible to make these links.

- 39 There is a weekly CE Team discussion with the Police regarding who we are most worried about that week, this ensures there is effective sharing of concerns and identified next steps. We are now recording post codes of where the young person went missing from and where they were found. We are also recording information regarding school to ensure there is a more holistic understanding of the current worries and strengths for the young person.

Development and Adaption during Covid-19

- 41 Supporting Solutions has continued to offer services throughout Covid-19 with some adaptations to ensure families continue to access appropriate levels of support. All young people on the edge of care have been able to access the same level of crisis support as was available to them prior to COVID.
- 42 FGCs have continued to give families the opportunity to come together and put forward their plan of sustainable family support. We have done this by adapting the FGC process to make this a hybrid model using face to face and virtual meetings to prepare the family to come together for a FGC. All FGC referral meetings with social workers are now completed over Teams.
- 43 Each member of the FGC team has been linked with a Families First Team / Young People's Services Team to support Social Worker's in gaining confidence in completing Family Network Meetings (FNM). This has worked really well, and the impact has been summarised and presented to Children's Social Care and the Early Help Recovery Group.
- 44 The Nest has remained open during Covid-19 to offer emergency accommodation to young people out of hours.
- 45 Weekend sessional support has continued for young people where without this additional level of support it was believed the living situation could be further at risk.
- 46 Supporting Solutions have increased their pool of sessional workers, this has ensured that there is an additional rota of staff on call to the Emergency Duty Team and Supporting Solutions to respond to the needs of families experiencing crisis out of hours.
- 47 Other teams have also accessed our pool of sessional workers to support their own young people, for example, to support placements for younger children.
- 48 All of Supporting Solutions team members are in the process of completing Restorative Mediation training OCN Level 3. This will

support FGC and EoC workers in their roles to help ensure that young people remain in the care of their families and strengthen their relationships.

- 49 Supporting Solutions Edge of Care management team recognised the need for specialist intervention to be available in the team for young people and families where Domestic Abuse had been a factor in family life. It was becoming more apparent that this was emerging as a common risk factor for young people on the edge of care, especially in terms of child on parent violence and control.
- 50 An opportunity arose via additional funds within Durham Children's Services to build on the Edge of Care service. As a result, we have worked closely with Harbour and appointed a full time equivalent secondment opportunity for 2 years. The worker is offering support to young people where Domestic Abuse is a feature within the family and worrying behaviours around child on parent violence or controlling behaviour could result in the young person being at risk of entering care.
- 51 Alongside carrying a case load of young people on the edge of care where Domestic Abuse has been a factor the worker is:
 - (a) provide learning and awareness raising opportunities for the wider edge of care service workers;
 - (b) offering case discussions to wider edge of care workers to share skills and knowledge in this specialist area.
- 52 SSS has been shortlisted in the Children's Service category for the LGC Awards 2021. Given the number of entries from all Local Authorities it is an achievement to be shortlisted. Final presentations for the awards take place in September and winner is announced in November.

Conclusion

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

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

We are bound by duties under the Children & Social Work Act / Children's Act to act in the best interests of children and young people. The report also includes number of young people detailed under the Mental Health Act.

Finance

None

Consultation

None

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Of the children and young people the SSS have supported, 2% were transgender

Climate Change

None

Human Rights

All children and young people are supported to identify suitable alternative care arrangements where they cannot continue to remain at home safely.

Children and young people have access to the DCC complaints process

Crime and Disorder

None

Staffing

Increased staffing due to the impact of Covid as outlined in paragraphs 5,6 & 7 of the report, with funding from COMF

Supporting Solutions have increased their pool of sessional workers, ensuring there is an additional rota of staff on call to the Emergency Duty Team and Supporting Solutions to respond to the needs of families experiencing crisis out of hours

Accommodation

Should children and young people come into the care of the Local Authority, there is a need to ensure there is sufficient suitable placements

Risk

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

Procurement

None