

Key Findings and Actions in response to Ofsted Focussed Visit - July 2021

Key Themes

- Positive feedback about our great social workers and how well they know their children. Social workers spoke with real empathy about their children
- They saw examples of really good direct work with children which was sensitive to their needs
- Evidence of sound decision making for children coming into care and appropriate consideration of family networks and evidence of strong management oversight
- Good care plans which were tailored to meet the needs of children
- Good participation of children within their reviews
- They saw examples of regular supervision which made a difference to children and social workers spoke highly about the support and supervision they received from managers
- Social workers spoke positively about working in Durham and inspectors noted that the stability of our workforce is supporting good quality work with children

- Positive feedback for the work of the Supporting Solutions and erase team and the impact of their work on outcomes for children.
- Some children in supported living arrangements needed more through assessment of their needs prior to them moving to determine that the placement could appropriately meet their needs
- We told inspectors that there were some children living with carers who did not meet fostering regulations but had oversight from the court and this is an area of work that they and we agree needs to improve.
- We told inspectors that there are placement sufficiency challenges for some of our young people in identifying the most appropriate placement to meet their needs and this remains an area of priority focus for us.
- They were very positive about their meeting with our children in care council who described feeling empowered and heard by senior managers and they told inspectors that changes were being made as a result of their feedback. The young people spoke positively about their social workers and IRO's.

Intention to Build on strengths identified

- Continue to embed the Signs of Safety Practice Framework
- Continue to implement the current, successful workforce strategy to ensure we continue to have a high quality, highly skilled social care workforce who choose to remain working in Durham
- Continued focus on ensuring every child has a good quality care plan which they understand and which makes a difference to them and improves their life
- Continued focus on supporting managers to provide high quality reflective supervision to their staff which supports good planning for children

Action to Respond to Quality of plans for minority of children living with connected persons

- Resolve current arrangements through existing legal processes
- Training and awareness raising with social workers, managers, legal colleagues, CAFCAS and Judiciary
- Audit of assessments and decision making relating to connected carers
- Peer review

Action to respond to increasing sufficiency of placements for children in care

- Deliver on key actions within the Sufficiency Strategy 2018 / 2021

<https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/19179/Sufficiency-and-Commissioning-Strategy-for-Looked-After-Children-and-Care-Leavers>

- Foster care recruitment campaign
- Focus on ensuring high quality support and training for carers to support high levels of retention including 'Mockingbird' model
- Work with regional colleagues to review and re procure the contract for Independent Fostering Agencies – March 2022
- Open new children's homes: Edge of care home; 4 x 2 bed and 3 x 3 bed (2021-25)
- Develop and deliver a workforce strategy dedicated to residential services
- Work with private providers locally to develop the 'Durham First' approach

Action to respond to the quality of assessments for young people living in supported accommodation

- Ensure up to date assessments for all young people living in supported living arrangements – Nov 2021
- Senior manager to chair panel to oversee these arrangements
- Work with commissioning colleagues to increase number and choice of options for young people – March 2022
- Work with Independent Reviewing Officers to ensure robust oversight of these arrangements