

## Corporate Parenting Panel

16 December 2022

### Annual Summary Report of the Children Looked After Strategic Partnership (CLASP)



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## Report of Jodie Henderson, Practice Lead, Children in Care & Care Leavers, Durham County Council

### Electoral division(s) affected:

None.

### Purpose of the Report

- 1 This report provides a summary of the activity of the Children Looked After Strategic Partnership (CLASP) for the period August 2021 to August 2022.

### Executive Summary

- 2 The CLASP was developed to improve the partnership working between services at a strategic level to meet the needs of children in care and care leavers.
- 3 The group meets bimonthly consists of representatives from Children's Social Care, partner health authorities, youth offending, police, education and housing services, Investing in Children and Advocacy services.
- 4 To increase the influence of the group and to improve the connectivity of work with children in care and care leavers it has been agreed that the Children Looked After Strategic Partnership will provide update reports into the Corporate Parenting Panel on a quarterly basis with a full report on an annual basis.
- 5 In the last year the CLASP has worked to bring together a pilot for care leavers with a dedicated GP practice, established a data reporting set to improve the effectiveness of the partnership, reviewed the timeliness of initial health assessments (IHA) and review health assessments (RHA) and identified a challenge for children placed outside of the area. This work has helped shape the priorities of work moving forwards.

## **Governance**

- 6 The Children Looked After Strategic Partnership will report annually into DSCP.
- 7 The Care Leavers strategic group will report into the CLASP with updates from their multi agency action plan on a quarterly basis.
- 8 The Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Subgroup of the local Transformation Plan will report quarterly into the CLASP
- 9 The Project Board of the Children Looked After Health Needs assessment will report quarterly until the work is complete.
- 10 The Children Exploited Group will report outcomes for Children Looked After and Care Leavers who are missing and / or at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation quarterly into the CLASP.
- 11 The chair and/or vice chair of the Children Looked After Strategic Partnership will meet with the Children in Care Council twice yearly to ensure that strategic priorities are developed with children and young people, they are updated on the work of the CLASP and their feedback is taken directly back to the partnership meeting.
- 12 The Children Looked After Health Needs Operational Group will report quarterly into the CLASP.
- 13 The Virtual School will report quarterly into the CLASP.

## **Recommendation**

- 14 The Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to note the content of this report and agree the reporting mechanisms moving forward.

## **Background**

*The Children Looked After Strategic Partnership work to:*

- 15 Deliver services to our Children Looked After and Care Leavers in a way that mirrors as far as possible the way a good parent would support their child
- 16 Work closely with Children Looked After and Care Leavers to ensure that there is a good understanding of their views and experiences and that these views inform the work of the CLASP.
- 17 Develop a good understanding of the needs (and changing needs) of our Children Looked After and Care Leavers and ensure that these are reflected in local strategic needs assessments; strategies; local service provision or are developed to meet need.
- 18 Identify gaps in provision and provide solutions. Develop working groups to focus on understanding areas of need and taking a multi-agency approach to improving outcomes.
- 19 Meet needs of Children Looked After and Care Leavers with SEND.
- 20 Develop and deliver services in a way that recognises the unique circumstances of Children Looked After and Care Leavers, this includes sharing information and developing responses to Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children.
- 21 Collectively deliver services to Children Looked After and Care Leavers in a way that is joined-up and which supports young people to make a successful transition to adulthood.
- 22 Challenge ourselves to ensure that the children and young people in our care are enjoying happy, fulfilled childhoods and looking forward to their adult lives, with positive foundations and stable relationships
- 23 Scrutinise multi agency performance information and benchmark against regional and national comparators to promote a continuous improvement cycle.
- 24 Consider opportunities for joint commissioning of services and pooled budgets to enhance the quality and provision of services for Children Looked After and Care Leavers.
- 25 Ensure that best practice is shared.
- 26 Develop a multi-agency action plan in the light of the above and monitor progress and impact against the plan.

- 27 Develop an agreed set of multi-agency performance indicators and associated data set to monitor and track progress.

## **Progress Update**

- 28 Within the year the CLASP has refined their data requirements and are now provided with the appropriate data to inform the work of the group on a regular basis.
- 29 This work has included reviews of the health assessments for children in care, the initial and subsequent health assessments, and the quality of these assessments. This has highlighted some concern over the timeliness of referral for initial health assessments which results in additional challenges in achieving the health assessment within the required time. This information has been shared with partners to improve practices.
- 30 The CLASP has focused on the experiences of children in care who have been placed outside of the Durham area. These children are identified as most vulnerable and often face additional barriers to accessing specialist services such as CAMHS. The work of the CLASP has supported the ability to ensure priority is given to children's fully assessed needs and that services are referred at the beginning of a placement being made.
- 31 The group has also focused on children who have been missing from care. There has been an increase in numbers of children missing from care and the group have been keen to understand the mechanisms to prevent this and to understand from young people what their experiences have been when missing and when they have returned.
- 32 The Local Authority Health Assessment subgroup has focussed on understanding the barriers to initial health assessments being completed within timescales and a system has been developed to ensure health are informed swiftly of all Out of County Placements.
- 33 The CLASP members have focused on the impact of COVID and shared data on impact within each agency area. A recovery approach has been taken to support children and young people, such as addressing the need for dental assessments.
- 34 Clear Cut Communications is a tool for assisting children and young people's communication with adults through assessing their speech and language skills– The Virtual School complete a Clear-Cut communication assessment with children within 8 weeks of them coming into care. In some cases where a child has previously been identified as having speech and language difficulties the assessment will not be completed as the information is already known. The

assessment is intended to support a better understanding of the child's cognition and use of language. The intention is that Social Workers will complete the same assessment on all children already in care. The programme of Social Workers completing the training to allow them to carry out the assessment has begun.

## **Future Priorities**

- 35 The group have agreed that in the next quarter a focus will be given to the experiences of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. It is noted that through the national transfer scheme Durham are receiving a relatively high number of children on an increasingly regular basis and the experiences and support for these children as a group is a regional and national priority.
- 36 The CLASP is aware of the placement sufficiency issues nationally and through the data reporting of the need to provide greater placement stability for children in care in Durham. The group intend to consider the challenges and actions that can be taken to improve this picture over the next quarter.
- 37 The needs of children who have suffered lots of unplanned moves is a focus of a working group, the CLASP members seek to understand why this has happened and ensure that the multi-agency approach to preventing placement breakdown is robust.
- 38 Ensuring the needs of children from County Durham who are placed out of area are met including improving compliance of Out of Area (OOA) health assessments within statutory timeframes. Seeking to understand and address the impact on education of children placed Out of Area is also a focus of the CLASP this quarter.
- 39 Continue to ensure the Signs of Safety Model is imbedded in practise throughout all agencies including the use of networks and reunification.
- 40 Use health data and analysis to support service improvement including in areas such as initial and review health assessments, dental checks and Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires.
- 41 Understand the needs of those children and young people who are not in Education, Training or Employment, how we measure the outcomes for these children and young people and further develop the multi-agency approach.
- 42 Work together to support Children Looked After in their schools and settings to ensure they are safe, happy and settled and they begin to close the gaps in their learning, following the disruptions created by the pandemic.

- 43 Ensure the mental health needs of children and young people are understood and well supported including the further imbedding of a trauma informed approach.

## **Conclusion**

- 44 The work of the CLASP continues and seeks to improve how services work together to identify and meet the needs of children in care and care leavers.
- 45 The CLASP operates as the officer arm of the Corporate Parenting Panel to undertake improvement activity with an ambitious forward-thinking desire to keep removing barriers and making the lives of children in care and care leavers in Durham as successful as possible.

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

None.

### **Finance**

There are no financial implications linked to this report.

### **Consultation**

The work of the CLASP is co-produced with children and young people although no additional consultation has taken place in the preparation of this report.

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

None.

### **Climate Change**

None.

### **Human Rights**

None.

### **Crime and Disorder**

None

### **Staffing**

None.

### **Accommodation**

None.

### **Risk**

The risk of failing to develop productive working relationships and practices to meet the needs of children in care and care leavers would pose a risk of failure to meet statutory responsibilities to these groups.

### **Procurement**

None.