

Corporate Parenting Panel

28 April 2023

Annual Summary Report of the Children Looked After Strategic Partnership (CLASP) March 2022 - March 2023



Report of Jodie Henderson, Practice Lead, Children and Young People's Services, Durham County Council, and Sharon Davey, Strategic Manager Children in our Care, Children's Social Care, Durham County Council

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 This report provides a summary of the activity of the Children Looked After Strategic Partnership (CLASP) for the period March 22 to March 23.
- 2 Future developments are highlighted, and progress will be presented quarterly moving forward.

Executive summary

- 3 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.
- 4 The group meets bi monthly and consists of representatives from Children's Social Care, partner health authorities, youth offending, police, education, housing, and the Project Manager for Investing in Children.
- 5 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 CLASP will provide update reports into the Corporate Parenting Panel on a quarterly basis with a full report on an annual basis.
- 6 The chair and/or vice chair of the CLASP 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.

Recommendation

7 Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to:

- (a) Note content of this report.

Background

8 The CLASP will have high aspirations for all Children In our Care and Care Leavers in Durham and will work to support them to achieve excellent outcomes in childhood and into adulthood through the delivery of the highest quality services across the partnership.

9 The CLASP will work to ensure that there is a shared understanding across the Local Authority and its partners about the needs of its Children In our Care and Care Leavers and provide the strategic direction for the development and improvement of services in line with the views and feedback from children and young people.

10 The CLASP have 8 Priority Actions as follows:

Priority 1) Ensure good multi-agency partnership work and integrated governance to meet the needs of our Children Looked After and Care Leavers.

Priority 2) We will develop services which are focused on providing high quality support to enable children and young people to remain at home with their families, or return to their families, where it is safe to do so.

Priority 3) Sufficiency of Placements and Placement Stability is important for our children and young people. We want to ensure there are enough high-quality placements to meet their diverse needs and to ensure that young people have a choice where this is appropriate.

Priority 4) Promoting Early Permanence is a key priority for us, we want to ensure that children are moved into their permanent placement or adoptive placement as quickly as possible once this has been agreed as the appropriate plan.

Priority 5) Durham County Council and its partners will develop a 'local offer' for our care leavers and provide them with advice and support from a personal advisor until they are 25 years old.

Care Leavers need to have a range of appropriate accommodation options to meet their needs.

Priority 6) We will work to ensure the right services are in place to meet the health and wellbeing needs of our children and young people.

Priority 7) We will continue to work with our children and young people to ensure they have opportunities to access good education, employment and training to achieve their full potential.

Priority 8) The engagement and influence of children and young people is a key priority across Durham County Council.

We will continue to work with Children Looked After to ensure that we have adequate strategies in place to hear their voice. We will work proactively to ensure that opportunities are available to enable more young people to share their views and be involved in developing services and setting priorities.

Progress Update

- 11 Between March 2022 to March 23, the CLASP has regular performance presentations from the Local Authority to inform the partnership of any developments and areas of focus on a regular basis.
- 12 There has been a review of the timeliness of health assessments for children in care, the initial and subsequent health assessments, and the quality of these assessments is reported across the partnership.
- 13 Information sharing and developments of the Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) Team have strengthened the knowledge and working within the partnership.
- 14 CLASP has reviewed of the current workstreams and lines of reporting to the CLASP and how this will feed into the Corporate Parenting Panel for the 2023 workplan:
 - A marketing strategy for Foster Carers recruitment has commenced for cohorts of children under 'keeping children together', 'Children with disabilities', 'UASC' and 'fostering as your career'. This included a TV advert and radio appeal;
 - Review of Fostering Payments for skills and allowances;
 - Launch of the Mockingbird Model;
 - Developed a 'Staying Close' strategy and coordinator for the project moving forward;
 - Joint working with timeliness of Initial Health Assessments;
 - Tracking of health needs and trends for future planning with UASC;
 - Project group established to review Health Passports for care leavers.

Lines of reporting to CLASP

- 15 The Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Group will report quarterly into the CLASP moving forward.
- 16 The Child Exploitation Group (CEG) will report outcomes for Children In our Care and Care Leavers who are missing and / or at risk of CSE quarterly moving forward.
- 17 The Children Looked After Health Needs Operational Group will report quarterly.
- 18 The Virtual School will report quarterly to the CLASP.

Future Priorities of CLASP

- 19 CLASP is aware of the placement sufficiency issues nationally and in care in Durham. The group intend to consider the challenges and actions that can be taken to improve this picture across the partnership:
 - Ensuring the needs of children from County Durham who are placed Out of Area (OOA) meet the statutory requirement for completion of their health assessments;
 - Strengthen the Health Passport uptake;
 - Launch of Second Mockingbird Hub;
 - 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;
 - Review of the outcome and productivity of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Group;
 - Strengthen the offer within the Care Leavers Hub.
- 20 Further priorities set by the Children In Care Council of new projects for the forthcoming year have commenced. These include:
 - Embed the Young People's Scrutiny Panel;
 - Entry into Care Packages;
 - Development of Pathway Planning Training with social workers;
 - Expansion of the Care Leavers Hub.

Conclusion

- 21 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.
- 22 The CLASP operates as the link into understanding practice between the frontline practitioners, subgroups and systems allow for a direct line of sight for Corporate Parenting Panel.
- 23 The CLASP is hoped to be the golden thread of the partnership and report back as a corporate parent.

Authors

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Appendix 1: Implications

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.