

Corporate Parenting Panel

19 May 2023

The Pause Programme Durham



Report John Pearce, Corporate Director of Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services, Durham County Council

Electoral division affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on Pause Durham.

Executive summary

- 2 Pause aims to reduce the number of children being taken into care and improve the lives of women who have had two or more children permanently removed from their care. Pause provides intensive, ongoing practical and emotional support. It is unique in targeting adults who have had engagement with children's social care as mothers but are no longer eligible for support due to their children being permanently removed from their care.
- 3 The women who are eligible have some of the most significant and complex needs in our population. Findings from national evidence qualitative and quantitative data suggest that Pause generally had a positive and significant impact on the women engaging with the programme, many of whom had complex, multiple, and mutually reinforcing needs.
- 4 In order to participate, women must agree to take effective contraception. Pause then offers them an intensive, flexible programme of support, to tackle destructive patterns, develop new skills and avoid further trauma in order to build a more positive future for themselves. The Pause programme is delivered with each woman over a period of 18 months.

Recommendation

- 5 Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to note the contents of the report.

Background

- 6 Office for National Statistics data identifies that approximately 1% of the County Durham population are aged under 1. More than 8% of the total children open to Durham Children Social Care (DCSC) are under one. 20% of all children that come into our care are under 1, the next largest group is 16-year-olds at 9%.
- 7 Of contacts into First Contact, it is noted that 45% of unborn born babies and 34% of under one's go straight to a statutory referral. This is in comparison to 23% of the overall contacts of other age groups. A higher proportion of unborn and under one contact's are also triaged in the MASH than for other age groups.
- 8 A higher proportion of children who are and become children in our care (CiC) in Durham are aged under one than in comparators. In 2020/21, Durham had the 5th highest under one CiC starts in the country with 29% of all CiC starts in Durham. In 2021/22, Durham dropped to 23rd highest under one of CiC children in the country, which was 24% of all CiC starts in Durham. This has reduced again to 50th highest in the country, which is 21% of all CiC starts in Durham.
- 9 A reduction in the under one CiC starts has been a strategic priority and led to implementation of the Pre-birth and Under One development group. Strategies have included the mapping and review of universal services, introduction of pre-birth clinics chaired by strategic manager and Pause intervention.
- 10 Barnardo's were initially commissioned to deliver a regional Pause model for an 18-month period which ended April 2020. During this period the scope was limited to women who lived in the east of county. Given the success DCSC were keen to look at ways to enable women to access the service to women across the county.
- 11 Barnardo's were commissioned to deliver the Pause model county wide in November 2020. At this point funding was split between Durham County Council (DCC) and Pause, who were successful in achieving match funding from a DfE grant. The agreement was that Pause would deliver one cohort of women and at the end of that period Pause would support DCC bring the model inhouse, working closely with the Pre-Birth Intervention Service.
- 12 Pause moved over to DCC on 1st August 2022. Pause have agreed to fund the licence cost for 20 months which will ensure the programme will continue. This allows an opportunity to develop a tailored programme to meet the needs of women in Durham.

- 13 To enable the women, assess the support and intervention they need, pathways have been established with sexual health, domestic abuse services and housing. The next step is to establish a pathway with mental health services.

Pause Durham – Previous Cohort

- 14 There were 22 women who completed the Pause programme who graduated in July 2022. The 22 women on the programme had a total of 83 children removed from their care (an average of 4 children per woman). The women range in age from 22 – 40 years old, with an average age of 29 years. It is noted that 38% of the women where care experienced. To date there has been no pregnancies of the women who are currently working with Pause for those who have graduated.
- 15 The feedback from the women showed an improvement in all areas, particularly domestic abuse, housing, self-esteem and recovery from loss. The women also reported benefits in confidence, self-worth, coping mechanisms and help with the day-to-day challenges and trauma.
- 16 Although reunification is not the aim of Pause, we are aware that sometimes children have returned to women following positive engagement with the Pause program. One Pause Durham who graduate in the summer of 2022 has sustained so much positive progress she has recently had her two children returned into her care.
- 17 18 of the women who graduated continue to link in with the Pause practitioners, this helps to evidence long term impact of the service.

One Woman's Story

- 18 When A first became involved with Pause she was having very little contact with her children and the relationship had broken down between her and her parents (who were caring for two of her four children). She was drinking around two bottles of wine a day and using hundreds of pounds on cocaine each week. A was not paying her gas, electricity or rent – so her tenancy was at risk - and she was in large amounts of debt. She was being financially exploited by local drug dealers, who were lending her money with 400% interest. They would vandalise her home and threaten her when she could not repay. When she did manage to abstain for short periods, dealers would post drugs through the letter box to tempt her back to using. A was extremely socially anxious, and cancelled many meetings before her first successful visit, preferring to chat on the phone or via text. She did not attend any Pause group activities but did get into a rhythm of meeting her Practitioner weekly.

- 19 During her time working with Pause, A was granted a dept relief order, paying off most of her debts. This paid off her rent arrears and allowed her to move away from the drug dealers who were harassing her at her previous address. She is now paying her rent, gas and electricity bills each month and is enjoying having money for food and self-care activities.
- 20 Since graduating from Pause, A has continued to take steps toward her goals. A has been absent from drugs and alcohol for over 7 months. She is completing a course at Humankind, to become a volunteer. A has recently had a positive assessment and is now having unsupervised contact with her youngest son. A is positive and hopeful for the future.

Durham Pause Women – Current Cohort

- 21 Pause Durham currently working with 21 women (11 who are on the program, 10 who are in the engagement phase). The 11 women on the programme have had a total of 33 children removed from their care (an average of 3 children per woman). The women range in age from 19 – 38 years old, with an average age of 26 years. 73% of the women have care experience.
- 22 The main area of need for the women currently on the programme is mental health, domestic abuse, drug and alcohol abuse, learning needs and homelessness.
- 23 The true Pause Model works with women who have had 2 or more children removed permanently from their care during care proceedings. Durham Pause are actively working with younger women who have had one child permanently removed. It is hoped that earlier support will enable the women go on and achieve better outcomes and prevent further children removed from their care.

Conclusion

- 24 Pause is a service for women who do not have children in their care. The vision is of a society where no family experiences the removal of a child more than once. That women who experience, or are at risk of, the removal of children into care are given the best possible support.
- 25 There is strong evidence from national data that those issues addressed through the Pause programme results in harm reduction in areas such as domestic abuse, substance & alcohol misuse, mental health, housing etc. It is important to note that the research mirrors the outcomes of the women who have graduated from the Durham Programme. Pause intervention in Durham has resulted in improvements in the women's confidence and self-esteem which has

led to secure homes and engaging in education and employment, which would not likely have been achieved if it was not for Pause intervention.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The Pause programme assists the authority to comply with the duty in Schedule 2 Paragraph 7 Children Act 1989 to take reasonable steps to reduce the need to issue care proceedings in respect of children in this area.

Finance

None.

Consultation

None.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

None.

Climate Change

None.

Human Rights

None.

Crime and Disorder

None.

Staffing

None.

Accommodation

None.

Risk

None.

Procurement

None.