

Corporate Parenting Panel

6 December 2024

Supporting Solutions – Edge of Care and Family Group Conference



Report of Rachel Farnham, Head of Children's Social Care, DCC

Electoral division(s) affected:

None

Purpose of the Report

- 1 This report outlines the activity and development of the Supporting Solution Service (SSS) from 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024.

Executive Summary

- 2 The Supporting Solutions Service continuous to develop to meet the needs of young people, parents and carers. The offer of support from Supporting Solutions includes:
- 3 **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 (YP) may need to become looked after or experience a placement move. This support is available to young people aged seven plus.
- 4 **Twenty-four-hour support** – by SSS and Emergency Duty Team (EDT), this provides an out of hours, overnight support for a young person entering care in an emergency, staff will support them until a placement has been found.

Recommendation

- 5 Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to:
 - (a) note the contents of this report.

Staffing and Workload

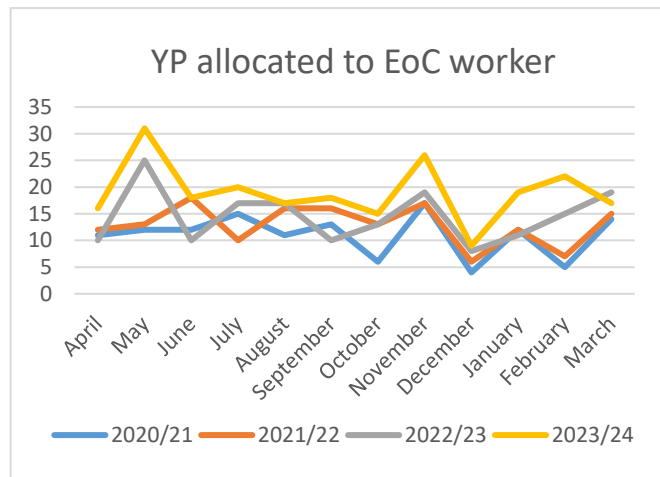
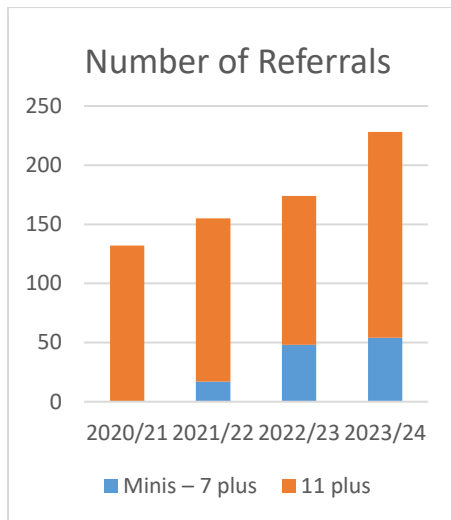
- 6 Current agreed staff ratios are one Team Manager, one Team Leader, 12 x full time equivalent 11 Plus Workers, and four full time equivalent Seven Plus Workers. However, during 2023/24 the Team Leader post became vacant. As an interim measure there are two members of staff acting up as Team Leaders; one for Family Group Conferencing and one for Edge of Care, both overseen by the Team Manager. This has increased management oversight in the service. The management structure is now being reviewed, with a view that this current arrangement becomes permanent.
- 7 The team also have access to a Therapeutic Social Worker from the Full Circle service and clinical supervision.
- 8 EoC workers support six young people and their families/carers at any one time, this may be increased if working with a sibling group. This means when fully staffed we can support 96 young people at a time.
- 9 During 2023/24 there have been some significant gaps in staffing due to maternity leave, sickness and progression within the team where the substantive post was not backfilled. These gaps in staffing are being reviewed as part of the review of the management structure in the service (see Appendix 2 – Summary of Report).

Supporting Solutions Performance

Referrals and Allocations

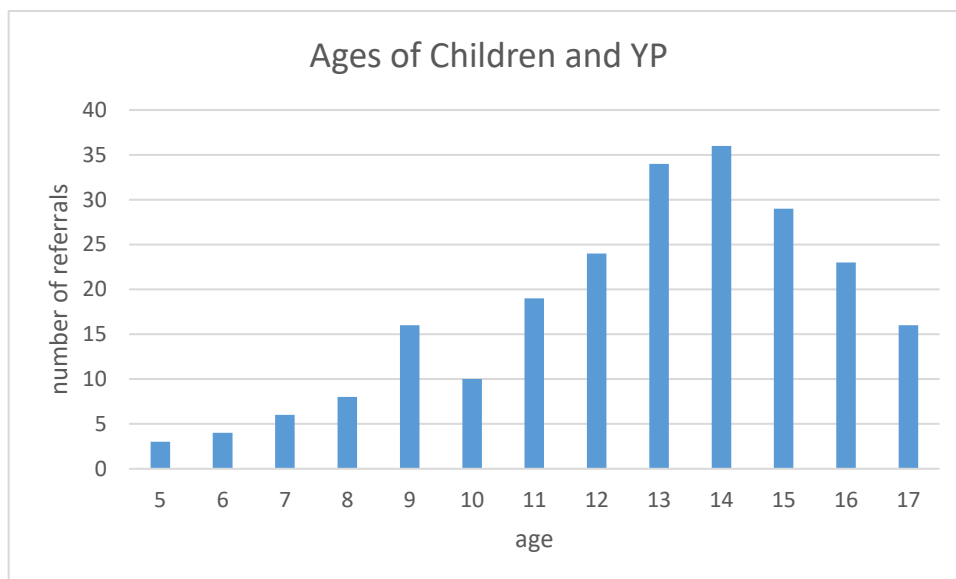
- 10 The tables below show number of young people allocated to Edge of Care workers, with a breakdown of allocations per month. One clear trend is that young people in need of intensive support spikes in November but then drops on the run up to Christmas. Referrals then tend to increase again in the New Year. The last two years we have seen an increase in referrals in May; this is potentially linked to the increased offer of support to young people aged 16 plus as they approach their exams and school leavers age. Summer months then tend to be more settled in terms of number of referrals.

	Allocations 2020/21	Allocations 2021/22	Allocations 2022/23	Allocations 2023/24
Minis – 7 plus		17	48	54
11 plus	132	138	126	174
Totals	132	155	174	228



Age Range of Referrals

11 The table below shows the number of referrals for each age. The majority of referrals continue to be for young people aged 13-15. Seven children under the age of seven accessed interventions from Supporting Solutions, this was because they had a sibling over the age of seven who was part of the referral.



Analysis of Edge of Care Performance

12 During 2023/24, Supporting Solutions supported 302 YP on the edge of or edging towards care.

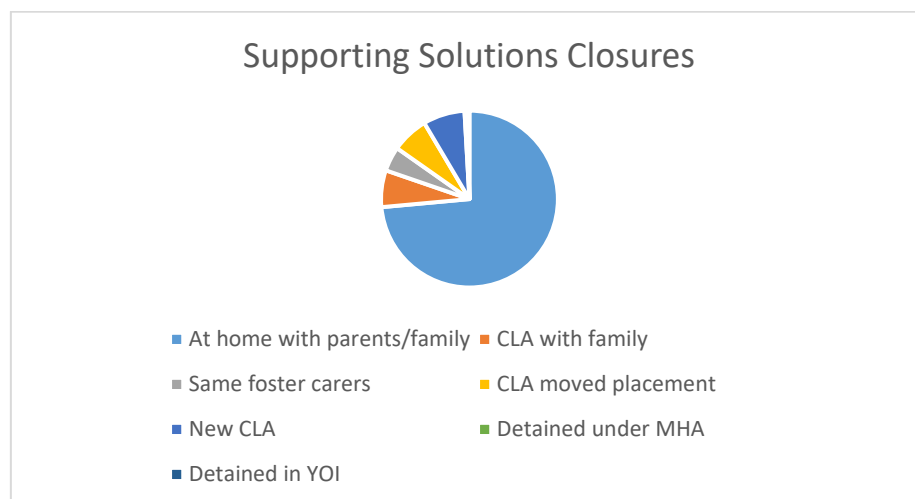
Outcome	Number of young people
Young people received support	302 YP including 228 new referrals for YP
Number of young people who are in the care of their parents or family/friend at time of closure / writing report plus those rehabilitated home from the care of the LA	244 3 YP rehabilitated from care of LA
Number of young people who were in a long-term placement and remained there	15
Number of young people who have become looked after children during SS interventions	14 (5 YP with foster carers, 6 in Children's Residential Homes and 3 in unregistered placements supported by a staffing team)
Number of young people who are now living in supported accommodation as a CLA	5
Number of young people who are now living in Supported Accommodation not as a CLA	2
Number of young people who were already looked after but moved to a new placement	17 (4 CLA in Supported Accommodation)
Other:	1 YP detained under Mental Health Act (MHA) 1 YP serving a custodial sentence
Number of YP at risk of homelessness – new referrals (16/17-year-olds)	27 16/17-year-olds at risk of homelessness (21 from ASET and 6 from FF teams)

- 13 There has been a significant increase in the number of young people and their parents / carers who have accessed interventions from Supporting Solutions. The number of young people accessing support has increased from 238 to 302, an increase of 27%.

- 14 Despite staffing changes, we have been able to offer support to more YP who are edging towards care accessing preventative support alongside crisis support for those young people on the edge of care.

Outcomes

- 15 Eighty seven percent of YP who accessed support in 2023/24 are either at home / with extended family or have remained in their long-term placement. This is an increase of four percent compared to the previous year.
- 16 Six percent of young people who accessed support in 2023/24 have become Children Looked After (in foster care / children's home / supported accommodation / unregistered placement) during SSS interventions. On reviewing these young people, they 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. It is also the role of SS to ensure that all avenues of support have been explored and provide evidence to our social work colleagues where the best outcome for a YP would be to come into the care of the Local Authority.
- 17 Young people (6%) moved to a new placement as relationship with carers had completely broken down. For six of these YP this was a move from being looked after with a family member to living in foster care, residential children's home or supported accommodation.
- 18 During 2023/24, intervention ended with 223 young people. This figure includes any young people where intervention started in the previous year. At the point of closure 85% of young people were either at home / with extended family or have remained in their long-term placement; this is an increase of 8% from the previous year. There will be further exploration into sustained outcomes for these young people one-two years post closure.



See appendix 3 – ‘Sustained outcomes for Young People’

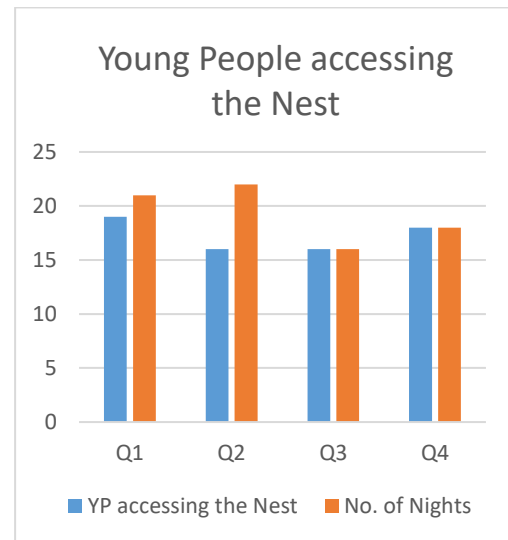
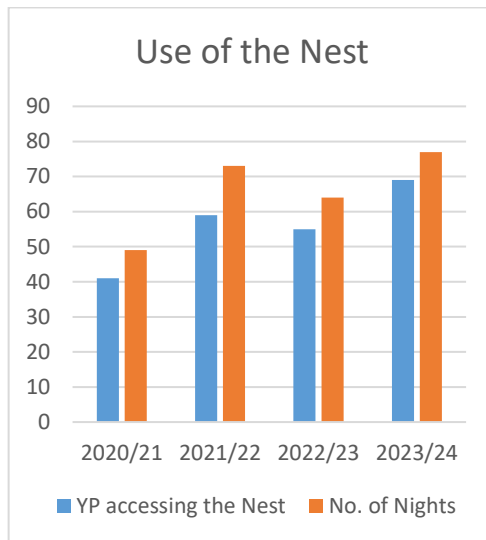
- 19 Homelessness: Supporting Solutions edge of care workers continue to support 16/17-year-olds at risk of homelessness helping to ensure that all options to return to the care of parents or people in their network are explored before alternative accommodation is considered. Supporting Solutions workers were allocated to 27 young people at risk of homelessness this year and continued to support seven young people from the previous year. In total we supported 34 young people at risk of homelessness. Out of these 34 young people 30 remained with parents or their extended family network, two moved into Supported Accommodation as children looked after and two moved into Supported Accommodation as children in need.
- 20 For the nine 16/17-year-olds (3%) who moved into Supported Accommodated as children looked after/ children in need, the majority of these young people were supported to remain in the care of their family / long term foster carer for as long as possible before the move to supported accommodation was made. Five of these young people are new entries into care, three of these young people were originally referred from the Adolescent Safeguarding & Exploitation Team (ASET) as they were at risk of homelessness.

Duty Visits and Consultations

- 21 During 2023/24 SS duty workers spent 460 hours completing home visits to young people and families exploring if there was a role for Supporting Solutions.
- 22 SS completed 116 consultations / duty visits where the outcome was not to allocate an edge of care worker. Consultations were arranged either because of a request from a Social Worker (SW) or because of EDT involvement with a family. Where the outcome was that there was no role for an edge of care worker at that time other avenues of support were suggested, for example, Family Group Conference(FGC), family worker interventions, independent visitor, Children and Adult Mental Health Service (CAMHS), Full Circle, Harbour, Humankind and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS).
- 23 Following these consultations, further referrals were made for 14 of these young people, at this point edge of care workers were allocated due to more imminent risk that young person may need to come into the care of the Local Authority / experience a placement breakdown. Out of those young people 86% remain in the care of their family / long term carer.

Use of The Nest

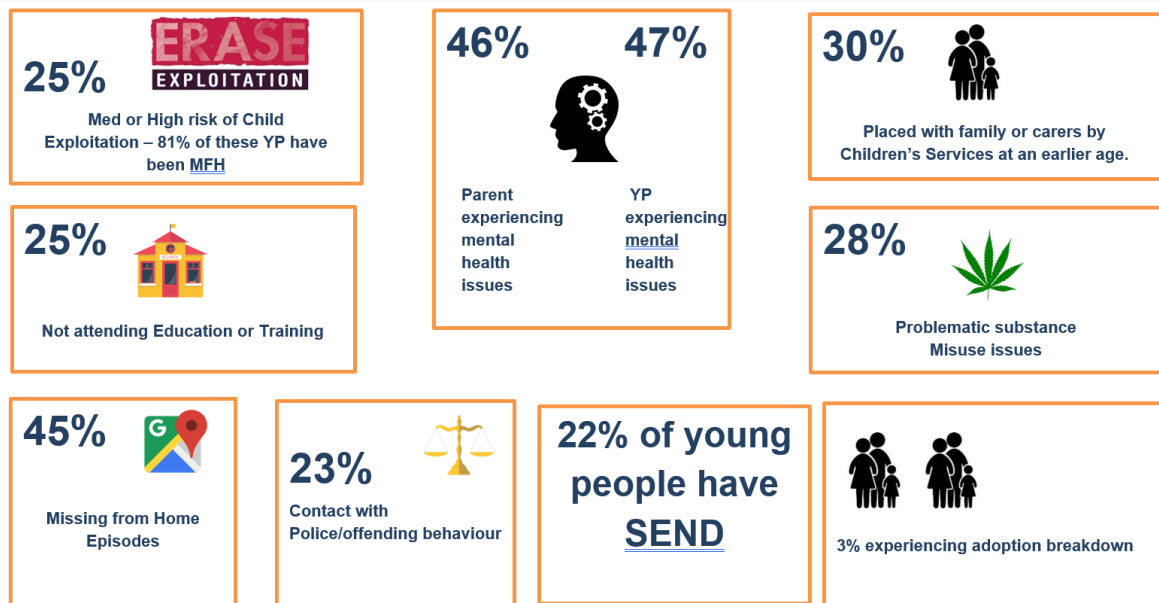
- 24 Some children need to be taken to the Nest while they wait for a placement to be found. The Nest was used on 69 occasions, for a total of 77 nights during 2023/24. The graphs below show use of the Nest throughout the year in 2023/24 and use of the Nest in comparison to the previous three years:



- 25 Use of the Nest has increased in comparison from the previous years. Duty rota remains in place with an AM and PM duty worker covering the hours of 8am – 8pm with an additional back up duty worker in place from 9am – 12pm. If a YP needs to be cared for while they wait for an emergency placement to be found, this often requires two workers, either to support young people or to co-ordinate support for young people to return to the care of their family.
- 26 We have seen over the last year a reduction in the availability of emergency foster carers, even for younger children. This means there has been more variety in the ages and needs of children and young people accessing the nest. We have also supported a mother and child in the nest who were fleeing domestic abuse, on this occasion there was no refuge provision available.

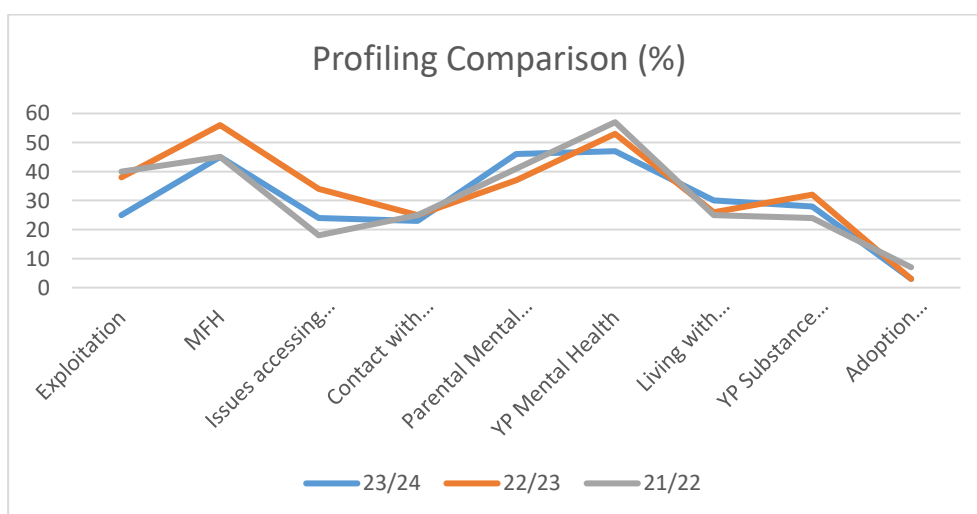
Profiling

- 27 For the YP who started to access support in 2023/24, the following factors were present and had an impact on YP being on the edge of care.



28 There continues to be a significant cross over in the number of young people on the edge of care who are also exploited or at risk of exploitation and have missing from home episodes (81%). Many young people on the Edge of Care are also experiencing issues in education, whether this be exclusion, refusal to attend or out of education altogether. This means that young people spend more time at home, which has an additional pressure on parent/carer where they are already experiencing difficulties in their relationship with their child. It has been identified that 22% of young people on the edge / edging towards care also have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

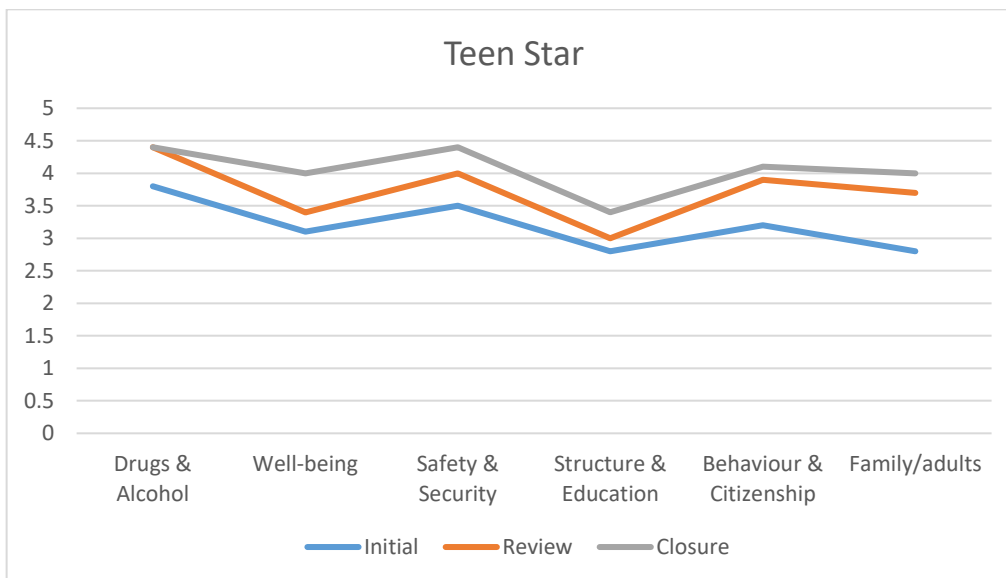
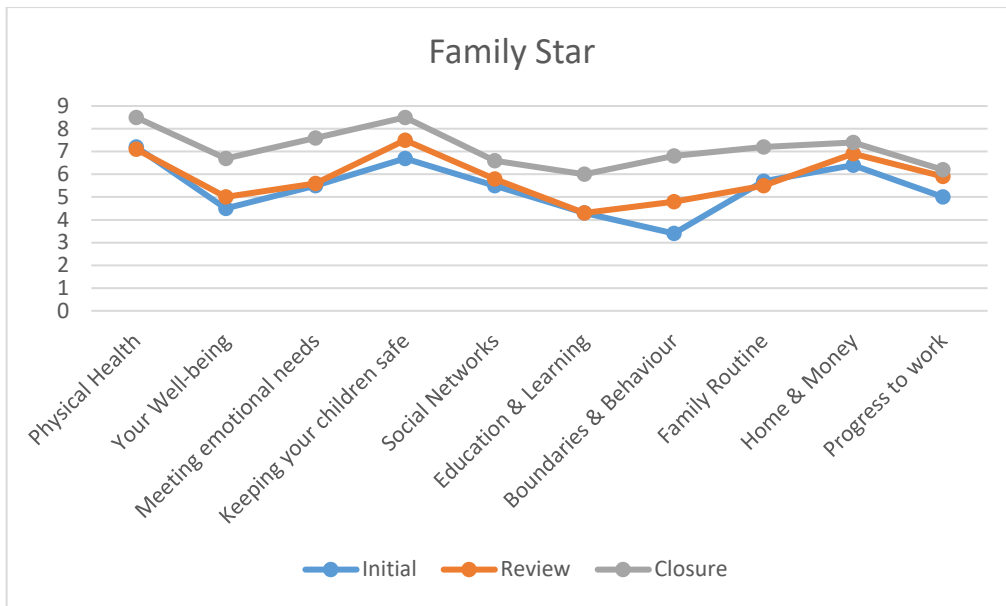
29 In addition to this there continues to be a significant amount of young people who are experiencing worries with their mental health needs. For 64% of young people where their parent /carer had difficulties with their mental health this was also a factor for the young person.



- 30 The table above shows profiling comparison over the last three years. There has been a decrease in the percentage of children who are on the edge of care who are also at risk of exploitation. There has been a number of factors that may explain this, in the last year, there has been a revised exploitation tool, with the focus on identifying children who are being exploited not vulnerable to, this has seen a reduced number of children being discussed at the child exploitation group (CEG) hence you would expect to see a reduced number across the board. We will continue to monitor this in the coming year. This is done so that only the most vulnerable young people who are being exploited are discussed at CEG, while those at risk receive interventions through ERASE specialist exploitation team and are supported through their usual care planning process.
- 31 SEND information has not been included in the comparison as this is the first year these figures have been considered as a standalone factor. There is a lower percentage of young people experiencing issues accessing education for this year, this is potentially because young people with SEND would have previously been included in this section. Moving forward this will be monitored via data from Liquidlogic Childrens Services (LCS) and the new edge of care dashboard.
- 32 The number of young people on the edge of care already living with extended family members is consistently around 25-30%. This evidences an ongoing support need for this cohort of young people.
- 33 Mental health concerns for young people and parents continue to be a significant factor for families.

Individual Young People Journey Mapping (soft outcomes)

- 34 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. Moving forward we need to ensure that the 'My Star' tool is used with our seven to eleven year-olds to ensure that distance travelled in terms of soft outcomes is captured for the younger children we support.
- 35 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.



Edge of Care Developments

- 36 Edge of Care Home (The Lighthouse) – we are working alongside colleagues in Children’s Residential Services as part of the development of the edge of care short breaks home. This will provide an additional, meaningful resource to young people and families in crisis. This will allow young people and families to access a break as part of their intervention to prevent family breakdown. Supporting Solutions edge of care workers will work alongside the children’s home residential staff to offer a bespoke package of support to young people on the edge of care and their family.
- 37 Supporting Solutions was initially established to work with young people and families where there has been a family relationship breakdown, and the young person is at risk of coming into the care of the local authority. There continues to be many children and young people who come into

care where there are multiple and complex risk factors in the home impacting on the safety and wellbeing of the children, such as substance misuse, domestic abuse, and parental mental health. Over the next 12 months the Team will be looking at how the remit could expand to work with more children edging towards care to support them to safely remain at home.

- 38 Regional Network - We continue to liaise with neighbouring Local Authorities to build a network of Edge of Care services to learn from each other, share good practice, hurdles and service developments.
- 39 Performance and Systems Development: we have been working with LCS systems and performance to develop our forms, including outcome stars, and look at recording to inform the development of a performance dashboard. Currently we capture our data on a spreadsheet but as from 1st April all this data is being captured on LCS with the view of developing a performance dashboard that can be used to continue to analyse practice and improve performance.

Quality Improvements

Investing in Children (IIC)

- 40 Supporting Solutions have achieved renewed Investing in Children status, we did this by evidencing how we support young people to have their voices heard within their package of support and future decision making. The young people involved in this piece of work explained that “the amount of time spent with their workers was valuable, all of their workers went above and beyond to maintain the relationships they had made to get things right for them”.
- 41 Below are some of the comments made by the young people with whom were spoken to:
 - (a) “I don’t like going to meetings, so Claire has helped me get my thoughts across about how I was feeling and to my grandparents who I live with, so that they understand me better”.
 - (b) “I just felt like I could speak to her anytime, not like CAMHS or One Point, it was so different. They always asked about the support, how it was going and if I wanted to change anything”.
 - (c) “It has been really good for me as I don’t like expressing my feelings but have been able to with my worker, which has helped me”.
 - (d) Future Decision Making - all of the young people shared they felt listened to about future decision making and what they thought

would help them to take the next steps in their lives to make things better for them.

- (e) “We came up with a plan to get back into education and the plan is to go to the World of Alternative Education, which links to learning through outdoor education”.
- (f) “They helped me join Sedgefield Harriers and got me some running shoes”.
- (g) “I have had a chance to talk about what’s on my mind, we even went up to the allotments and talked about me wanting to go home and how important it is to me”.
- (h) “They helped me to get an Autism assessment, which has been a massive relief and helped me go back to college after we discussed the best ways to do this”.

Co-Production of Services

- 42 Co-production is a value driven approach and based on the principal that those who use a service are best placed to help design it. Over the coming year Supporting Solutions would like to work closely with the team at The Lighthouse (edge of care home), young people and their parents / carers to help shape the development of the home. We want to hear from young people and those who have caring responsibilities at the earliest stage possible about what works for them, how the service has helped them and what they would like to change for others in future.

Training

- 43 Supporting Solutions edge of care staff members will access training alongside staff from The Lighthouse, this will be delivered by Luke Rogers, Care Leaders. This will support community and residential staff in providing a bespoke package of support to young people on the edge of care and their family.
- 44 All staff who as part of their role may need to support young people at the nest will be completing PRICE training, a positive behaviour support training.
- 45 Following the SEND inspection further training will be explored for the team to better support young people who have SEND and their parents / carers. We have a SEND champion in the team who continues to offer advice and guidance to the team.

Auditing

46 Plans for auditing in the coming year include a focus on:

- (a) Case notes – are these written to the child, do they use family friendly language, do they follow the Signs of Safety approach, is the voice of the child clear, is it clear from the case note what support was offered and the impact of this.
- (b) Work plans – are these kept up to date and reviewed as a working document, are the needs of the young person and family clearly represented in the plan with actions of how these are to be met, is the voice of the child clear throughout the plan, is the plan consistent with the young person's care plan.
- (c) Annual review of sustained outcomes for young people who have accessed Supporting Solutions interventions.
- (d) Development of the dashboard will allow further investigation into visiting patterns to young people and families, caseloads, time spent on duty visits and outcomes of these.

Conclusion

47 The Supporting Solutions Service successfully enable most children they work with to remain within their home, whether this is with family or long-term placement in our care. There has been an increase in positive outcomes year on year. The plan is to build on the success, broaden their reach by expanding the criteria and working earlier to support families who are edging towards care. Within the next 12 months we will see the Edge of Care Home opening and an increase in outreach support. The ambition is to be a multi-agency service, bringing in speech and language therapy and clinical psychology.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Report includes number of young people detailed under the Mental Health Act. DCC's Children and Young People's Services have a duty under the Children & Social Work Act / Children's Act to act in the best interests of CYP.

Finance

No implications.

Consultation

Children and young people are involved in consultation where necessary

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

No implications.

Climate Change

No implications.

Human Rights

All CYP are supported to identify suitable alternative care arrangements where they cannot continue to remain at home safely.

CYP have access to the DCC complaints process.

Crime and Disorder

No implications.

Staffing

No implications.

Accommodation

Should CYP come into the care of the LA, there is a need to ensure there is sufficient suitable placements.

Risk

The risk of not supporting CYP and their families and carers meant 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

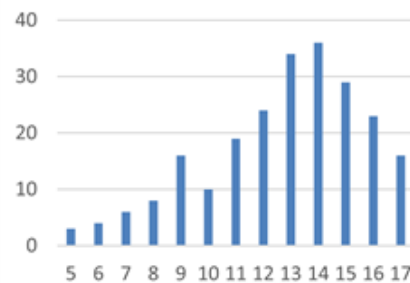
No implications.

Appendix 2: Summary Of Report

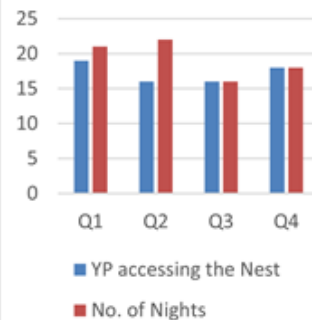
Edge of Care Interventions

We worked with **302 young people** on the edge / edging towards care (Apr 2023 - Mar 2024). **87% young people** were supported to remain in their current family/carer home

13-15 is the most common age that young people access support



The Nest was used on 69 occasions, for a total of 77 nights



25%

ERASE
EXPLOITATION

Med or High risk of Child Exploitation – 81% of these YP have been MFH

45%

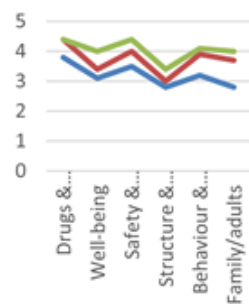


Missing from Home Episodes

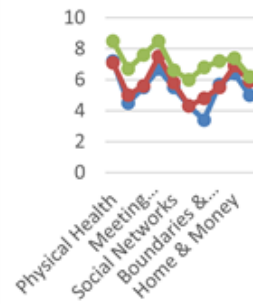
25%



Not attending Education or Training
22% have SEND



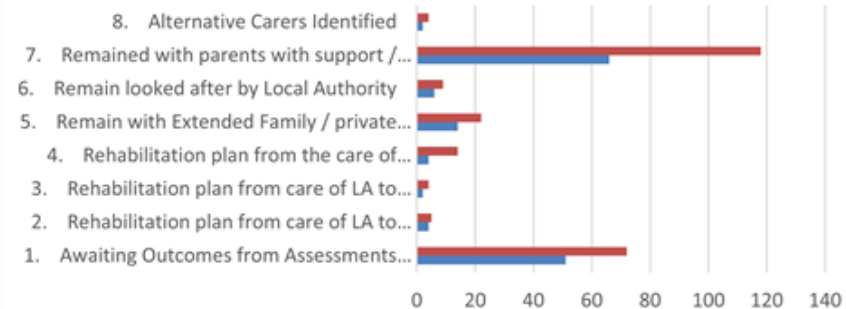
In all areas of the Teen Star and Family Star young people, parents / carers felt they had made improvements after accessing Supporting Solutions



Supporting Solutions Summary 2023-24

Family Group Conference

We completed **149 initial FGCs for 248 children and YP**. **64%** of FGCs resulted in the child/young person being in the care of their parents or extended family, **3.5%** of children and young people had a plan to return to the care of parents / family.



Every family who completes an initial FGC is offered a review FGC. In 2023/24 FGC reviews were completed for 45 families (77 children), this includes 1st, 2nd and 3rd reviews. For the 66 children who took part in a first FGC review 92% are either at home with parents / family carers or have a plan for this to happen.

Moving forward . . .

In the coming year we need to focus on FGCs that do not progress and timeliness of referrals for FGC. 129 referrals did not progress to FGC, we need to better understand the reasons for this to help reduce the number of NFAs and have more capacity to complete FGCs. The majority of referrals are received when children are in CP planning process or already CLA, ideally these need to be at point of referral to CYPS or within 45 day assessment period to help ensure families get the right support for them ASAP.

Family Group Conference



My family hold the key

Our Lifelong Links programme commenced this year, funded until March 2025 – supporting CLA to maintain and strengthen their support network.

Appendix 3: Sustained Outcomes For Young People

Children's Services – Quality Assurance Board

Date TBC



Supporting Solutions – Review of impact and outcomes for young people on the edge of

Report of Lucy Armstrong Supporting Solutions Team Manager (Edge of Care)

Purpose of the report

- 1 Review of outcomes for young people who were on the edge of care and if those young people after 12 - 24 months have remained in the care of their family.

Executive Summary

- 2 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.
- 3 In 2022/23 the Supporting Solutions Service ended involvement with 145 young people aged 7-17 and their families. Intensive support was offered to these young people and families as without it, there was a risk of the young person needing to be looked after by the local authority.

Purpose of the Audit

- 4 To understand if the outcomes achieved at the end of the episode of intensive interventions delivered by Supporting Solutions – edge of care service was sustained over a 12-24 month period – post discharge.

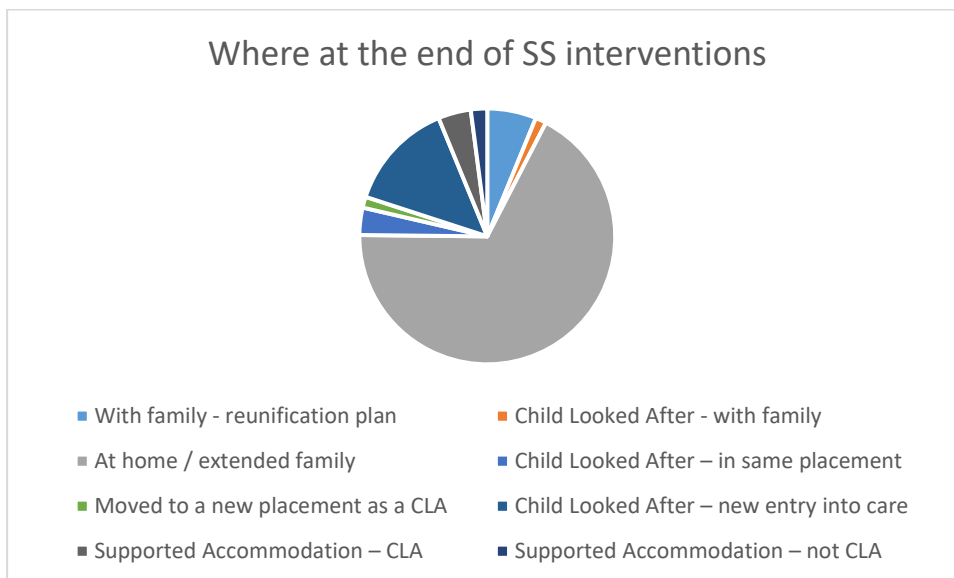
Methodology

- 5 The audit was undertaken by reviewing current living status (as of May/June 2024) recorded within Liquid Logic or planned check in reviews with families (families signed up to check-in service post discharge, as part of the SSS offer).

Outcome in relation to living situation at case closure

6 The table and pie chart below illustrates where the 145 young people were living at the end of SS interventions:

Where at the end of SS interventions	No. of Young People	%
With family - reunification plan	9	6
Child Looked After (CLA) - with family	2	1
At home / extended family	98	68
Child Looked After – in same placement	5	3
Moved to a new placement as a CLA	2	1
Child Looked After – new entry into care	20	14
Supported Accommodation – CLA	6	4
Supported Accommodation – not CLA	3	2

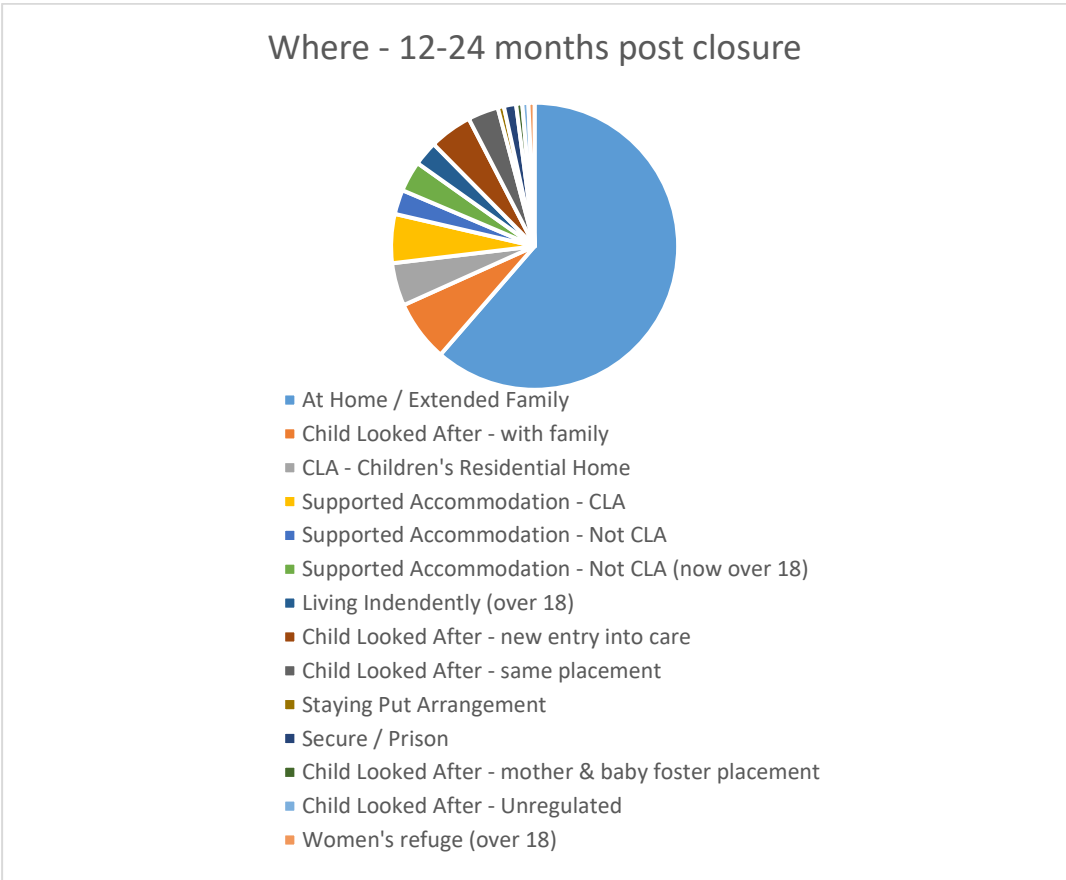


7 At the point of closure to Supporting Solutions 109 (75%) children and young people were either at home with parents or living with extended family.

Review of current living situation – 12 – 24 months post closure

8 The next table illustrates where the 145 young people are living now or at the point of closure to Children’s Services:

Where - 12-24 months post closure	No. of Young People	%
At Home / Extended Family	89	61
Child Looked After - with family	10	7
CLA - Children's Residential Home	7	5
Supported Accommodation - CLA	8	6
Supported Accommodation - Not CLA	4	3
Supported Accommodation - Not CLA (now over 18)	5	3
Living Independently (over 18)	4	3
Child Looked After - new entry into care	7	4
Child Looked After - same placement	5	3
Staying Put Arrangement	1	1
Secure / Prison	2	1
Child Looked After - mother & baby foster placement	1	1
Child Looked After - Unregulated	1	1
Women's refuge (over 18)	1	1



- 9 12 – 24 months post closure to Supporting Solutions 99 (68%) children and young people were either at home with parents or living with extended family.

Analysis and findings

- 10 Out of the 98 young people who were living at home or with extended family members at the point of closure to Supporting Solutions:
- (a) 84 of these young people are still at home
 - (b) 1 young person is living independently (over 18)
 - (c) 7 young people are new entries into care
 - (d) 1 young person is in Secure accommodation
 - (e) 4 young people are in supported accommodation – not Children Looked After (over 18)
 - (f) 1 young person is in supported accommodation – Child Looked After
- 11 Out of the 9 young people who were supported to return to the care of their family following a period of time as a Child Looked After:
- (a) 4 young people continue to be Children Looked After with family
 - (b) 3 young people are at home – not Children Looked After
 - (c) 1 young person is living in supported accommodation (over 18)
 - (d) 1 young person is living independently (over 18)
- 12 For the 2 young people who were Child Looked After with their family this continues to be the same outcome.
- 13 **Therefore out of the 109 young people who were either at home or Child Looked After with family 93 young people (85%) continue to be with their families.**
- 14 Out of these 93 young people, 75 are closed to services (22 over 18), 2 young people are open to the Care Leavers team, 8 young people are open to Families First teams, 3 young people are open to early help and 5 young people open to Children in our Care teams.
- 15 There are 7 young people who have moved from the care of their family / extended network to become Children Looked After, 3 in supported accommodation, 3 in foster home and 1 in residential children's home.

3 young people became children looked after due to significant safety concerns at home while the other 4 became children looked after due to significant family breakdown and despite intensive support this has not been able to be repaired, extended networks were also explored for these young people prior to coming into the care of the local authority. The 4 young people who experienced significant breakdown in family relationships have also experienced significant childhood trauma.

- 16 For the 9 young people who moved to Supported Accommodation not as a Children Looked After; for 3 young people their outcome has remained the same, 1 young person at the end of Supporting Solutions involvement was in Supported Accommodation as a CLA but is no longer Looked After and 5 of these young people were at home at the end of Supporting Solutions involvement. Prior to these young people moving into Supported Accommodation all avenues of support were explored for them to remain with parents or extended family network.
- 17 5 young people were supported to remain in their current foster homes during their interventions with Supporting Solutions, at review 4 young people remained in these foster homes and 1 young person moved onto Supported Accommodation as a child looked after. **Therefore 80% of young people who were supported to remain with their long term foster carers have remained there.**
- 18 Out of the other 28 young people who were CLA at the point of closure to Supporting Solutions:
 - (a) 2 young people have returned home
 - (b) a further 4 are children looked after with family members
 - (c) 2 young people are over 18 and living independently
 - (d) 1 young person is in Supported Accommodation not Child Looked After (over 18)
 - (e) 1 young person has a Staying Put arrangement
 - (f) 7 young people are in Children's Residential Homes
 - (g) 6 young people are living in Supported Accommodation as Children Looked After
 - (h) 1 young person is a Child Looked after in an unregulated provision.
 - (i) 1 young person is now in prison
 - (j) 1 young person is living in a Women's Refuge

- (k) 1 young person is living in a mother and baby foster home
- (l) 1 young person has remained in their long term foster home.

19 The 3 young people living in Supported Accommodation not as a Children Looked After have remained there and are now all over 18.

Learning outcomes and future developments

20 Repeat the audit review every year, to create a longitudinal outcome measurement.

Authors

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