

## SUPPORTIVE PARENTING PARTNERSHIP

### AGENDA

Meeting to be held on Monday 17 July 2023 at 5.00pm in the Conference Room, Sandhill Centre, Grindon Lane, Sunderland, SR3 4EN

#### Part I

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1.	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>	
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	Minutes of Meeting held on 6 March 2023 (copy attached).	
4.	<b>Health of Cared for Children</b>	9
	Report of the Designated Nurse for Cared for Children (copy attached).	
5.	<b>Sunderland CYPS Cared for Children's Pathway</b>	13
	Report of the Community Clinical Manager, Sunderland and South Tyneside CYPS (copy attached).	
6.	<b>Regulation 44 Visits</b>	17
	Report of the Regulation 44 Officer (copy attached).	
7.	<b>Annual Adoption Report</b>	43
	Report of the Team Manager, Adoption (copy attached).	

8.	<b>Annual Fostering Report</b>	57
	Report of the Registered Manager, Fostering (copy attached).	
9.	<b>Travel for Care Experienced Young People</b>	-
	Verbal report from the Head of Service, Cared for Children and Provider Services.	
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ELAINE WAUGH  
Assistant Director of Law and Governance

City Hall  
SUNDERLAND

7 July 2023

## **CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 6 March 2023 at 5.30pm in the  
Conference Room, Sandhill Centre, Grindon Lane, Sunderland, SR3 4EN**

### **Present:**

#### **Members of the Board**

Councillor L Farthing (in the Chair)	Washington South Ward
Councillor C Burnicle	St Chad's Ward
Councillor M Crosby	Sandhill Ward

#### **All Supporting Officers**

Majella McCarthy	Director of Children's Social Care, TfC
Tracy Jelfs	Head of Service for Cared for Children, TfC
Anita Swales	Acting Headteacher, Virtual School
Kimberley Richardson	Strategic Service Manager, TfC
Kaye Fox	Foster Carer
Samantha Diston	CNTW
Jo Morgan	Designated Nurse, Cared for Children
Sharon Willis	Strategic Service Manager, TfC
Andrea Solomon	Team Manager, Next Steps
David Grayden	Assistant Team Manager, Next Steps
Alexandra Bowey	Participation and Engagement Officer
Chantelle	Change Council
Caitlin	Change Council
Katherine Corfield	Housing Strategy Officer
Gillian Kelly	Governance Services

#### **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bewick, Price and Smith together with Catherine Hearne.

#### **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **Minutes**

34. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

The Chair highlighted that some of the Board Members had been able to attend the training and this would be rolled out to all elected Members from May 2023.

The Notice of Motion on Addressing Discrimination of Cared for Children had been passed by the Council on 25 January 2023 and Councillor Farthing and Councillor Gibson had been photographed with cared for and care experienced young people as part of a press release issued after the meeting.

## **Change Council Update**

The Change Council report had been submitted to the Board and was presented to Members by Chantelle and Caitlin.

The Change Council had continued to meet in their designated space and both the 10-15 and 16+ group were meeting fortnightly.

Planning had begun for the short films which the Change Council wanted to make to raise awareness and challenging the stigma in education for cared for young people. The group were working with Sunderland University and they would be funding two students as part of their Changemaker scheme to take this forward with the Change Council, however the project was at a standstill until the students were appointed.

The Chair asked if care experienced young people had a group at Sunderland University and Alexandra Bowey said that there was a new Change Council member from outside of the area who was very active in the university group.

The first training workshop for Corporate Parents had been delivered and Change the Language training would be delivered for NHS England staff as part of a digital conference.

The regional meeting with other children in care councils had taken place on 10 January and there would be a residential in April. It had been noted that the local offer varied widely across the region and regional groups would like to see the same entitlements for all cared experienced young people in the North East.

The Change Council had supported the press release on the Notice of Motion and would be keen to support the Council in any way with the implementation of the protected characteristic. The Chair suggested that this be added to the Change Council's planned work for the year ahead.

Two young people had taken part in the Safeguarding Education conference and had delivered the Change the Language and Changeable game to education professionals across the city. There had been some very positive feedback on this and young people were working on how this could be pushed further into schools.

Care Day had taken place on 17 February 2023 and had been celebrated on 22 February during the half term holiday.

The planned work for January to December 2023 was as follows: -

- Drive forward the Change the Language campaign, including working groups and workshops
- To set up a younger group aged 7-11 to capture younger voice.
- Corporate Parenting introduction training and support the development of the corporate parenting strategy
- Engage young people in enriching activities to celebrate their hard work and increase engagement
- Consult and involve more cared for and care experienced children and young people.
- Alex was to regularly drop in to Children's Homes and Support 2 Independence and also to be around for Warm Spaces.
- To create easy guides to different aspects of being cared for/care experienced to support other young people with things they have been unsure of – accessing records, entering care.

The Chair thanked Chantelle and Caitlin for presenting the report and accordingly it was: -

35. RESOLVED that the Change Council update be noted.

### **Next Steps Team – Update**

Sharon Willis, Andrea Solomon and David Graydon were in attendance to deliver a presentation on the Next Steps team and their work in supporting cared for young people into independence.

It was confirmed that the team carried out planning based on the Signs of Safety model and the Chair commented that young people needed the right information at the right time in their lives and suggested that the team might feed into the 11-15 group at the Change Council. Sharon Willis agreed that the final cared for review provided an opportunity for checking for key issues and Tracy Jelfs advised that she was meeting with Andrea and David on this during the week.

The Chair noted that it was a difficult task for the team, particularly when a large number of young people came into the care system in their teenage years. Accommodation was one of the most difficult areas, there had always been cared for young people looking for suitable living spaces and there were other groups such as homeless adults and asylum seekers who were also seeking similar accommodation.

She highlighted that young people gained confidence through activities and post-18, family and community learning could tie in with this element. David explained that one of the student social workers was working on an information card for young people with information about Personal Advisors, what was on offer and what to

expect at age 21. It would be possible to bring this along to a future meeting of the Change Council.

Having thanked Sharon, Andrea and David for their presentation, it was: -

36. RESOLVED that the update be noted.

### **Health of Cared for Children**

The Designated Nurse for Cared for Children submitted an update report on the health of cared for children.

The Health Partnership for Cared for Children had held their first meeting in January and it was planned to develop a health workstream which would then be reported into the Corporate Parenting Board. Partnership members were getting to know what other services were being provided for cared for children within Sunderland.

Jo Morgan advised that a Peer Mentor project had been agreed for care experienced young people and this would also offer a social prescribing element.

Discussions were still ongoing with commissioners regarding the Cared for Health team model and Jo stated that they were keen to lengthen the period of time the team had contact with young people. A proposal had been submitted to the Integrated Care Board (ICB) to provide free prescriptions for care experienced young people across the ICB footprint and this was to be considered.

37. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

### **CNTW – Sunderland Cared for Children**

The Board received a report covering the period November 2022 – January 2023.

In November six referrals had been received and one had been discharged unseen, there were 10 referrals in December, five of which were seen and in January one out of four referrals was discharged unseen. There had been seven urgent referrals by the CYPS Intensive Community Treatment Service (ICTS) within the period.

The waiting time for treatment currently stood at 12 weeks and young people who were cared for would be offered priority appointments within CYPS. Cared for children currently made up 5.2% of the overall CYPS caseload. The Children who are Cared For Pathway was a multi-disciplinary team consisting of nursing, social workers, psychologists, child psychotherapists and was able to access Psychiatry if required. The team had all completed specific formal training to deliver psychological therapies to meet the needs of young people and their carers.

Board Members were advised of the training Liz Christie, Consultant Clinical Psychologist was delivering on Trauma Informed Care to new members of staff in Together for Children's homes. This training had also been offered to the new Next

Steps social worker, the new Edge of Care Team and the new postholder for young women who were at the risk of being exploited.

Liz had also been working on a Model of Care, and with the manager of Revelstoke Road had developed and published research around its effectiveness. This model was now being set up in other children's homes.

38. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

## **Virtual School Headteacher's Annual Report**

Anita Swales, Acting Headteacher of the Virtual School submitted the annual report of the Headteacher which provided an overview of the outcomes for cared for children during 2021/2022. The report utilised, where available, national and North East regional data alongside locally sourced data.

The reportable cohort for statistical purposes was the number of cared for children who had been in care for 12 months or more as of 31 March 2022 which was 306, and this was broken down to 40% in primary education and 60% in secondary. 55.5% of the cohort had been identified with Special Educational Needs, predominantly in the social, emotional and mental health category. 19.9% of the children had an Education Health and Care Plan. Anita reported that there remained a national shortage of specialist school places and this was mirrored locally, bringing a significant challenge to providing for children and young people's needs.

84% of all cared for children attended schools which were rated Outstanding or Good. If a school was judged to Require Improvement then the Virtual School would look carefully at the guidance and support offered by that school and would not immediately move a child if their needs were being met at the existing provision.

It was noted that 32% of children were educated in schools outside of Sunderland, the majority being in neighbouring authorities. The Virtual School had excellent relationships with Sunderland schools but these could be more difficult in other local authority areas.

Anita advised that achievement for cared for children was a mixed picture; there were good results at the Early Years Foundation Stage, Reading was good at Key Stage 1, Phonics was at the national average, Maths was close to the regional average but the expected standard in Writing was well behind the regional figure.

At Key Stage 2, Reading was well below the national and regional average. It was acknowledged that this was a challenge and there were already two reading programmes in operation to try to close the gap. Writing, Maths and combined scores were above average.

The Chair commented that she had been concerned when she saw the Reading statistics and suggested that it could maybe be looked at alongside SEND groupings. This problem would continue into secondary school if it was not addressed at an early stage. Kimberley Richardson highlighted that children had

missed some of the foundation blocks due to the pandemic and still needed to catch up.

Anita said that the capacity restructure had given the Virtual School team the opportunity to start drilling down and form meaningful interventions for young people. Any young person who was underachieving would be offered that support and SEN could also be identified quickly through this approach.

Turning to Key Stage 4, achievement for Attainment 8 and English Baccalaureate was slightly above average and the achievement of Grade 5+ in English and Maths was above average. Despite all the challenges, the cohort had done really well.

Board Members had been regularly updated on attendance during the year and the three-year trend across all key stages had shown an improvement year on year. There had been no permanent exclusions in the last academic year and the number of suspensions were declining.

Over the academic year 2021/2022 a total of 1,541 Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings had taken place for 629 young people. PEPs were quality assured and 92.7% were judged to be Good, an improvement from the 2020/2021 academic year. As there was an increased number of caseworkers within the Virtual School, for the coming academic year they would be able to attend all PEPs to ensure support and challenge was given to maximise outcomes for cared for young people.

Pupil Premium Plus funding was allocated to cared for children and schools had used the additional funding for a number of things including: -

- 1:1 and small group tuition
- Alternative education provision
- Extra staff to support individuals
- Music lessons
- Extra-curricular activities

The capacity of the Post-16 team had been expanded to enable more intensive support to be provided to young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). In particular, the work with young people transitioning from Year 11 to Year 12 was proving effective and 79% of all cared for young people in Years 12 and 13 were in employment, education and training, an improvement from 50% two years ago.

The Chair asked if young mentors might be useful in providing support for young people who were NEET and Anita said that the team were linking with university and college students to look at mentoring and would be getting in touch with the Change Council.

The Chair went on to commend the team for the excellent outcomes in relation to post-16 work.



The Virtual School Governing Board included representation from a broad spectrum of partners who provided support and challenge at meetings during the academic year. Governors were aligned to a specific area of the School Development plan.

The Chair highlighted that digital inclusion was also a crucial theme for cared for young people and it was important to make sure that they had the knowledge to use technology safely.

Having thanked Anita for the detailed report, it was: -

39. RESOLVED that the Virtual School – Headteacher’s Annual Report be noted.

### **Number of Changes of Social Worker for Children and Young People**

The Head of Service for Cared for Children and Provider Services submitted a report setting out data relating to the number of changes in social worker which cared for and care experienced children and young people have experienced whilst in the care of Together for Children (TfC).

Tracy Jelfs explained that Members had requested this information after taking part in the Changeable game as part of the Corporate Parenting training. Historically there had been a high usage of agency staff and this had led to instability. There remained a national trend towards agency social workers but there were no agency workers in Children’s social care in Sunderland and one agency member of staff supporting a young person placed in London.

Tracy advised that there had been a lot of work carried out to stabilise the workforce and there were planned changes to social workers at certain stages in care proceedings but these were always child focussed. For the year to date there had been 320 changes involving 220 children and from April 2023 this data would be collated for the Department of Education. There would always be some degree of change for cared for young people but the focus was on more effective handovers between social workers.

The Chair noted that a large proportion of the cared for population had social, emotional and mental health needs and it helped them to deal with changes if there was appropriate communication.

Majella McCarthy commented that this issue had been raised at the younger Change Council group and she would communicate the information in the report back to them.

40. RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted.

## **Work Programme 2023/2024**

The Board were informed of the work programme for the municipal year 2023/2024 and forthcoming agenda items.

41. RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

## **Councillor Louise Farthing**

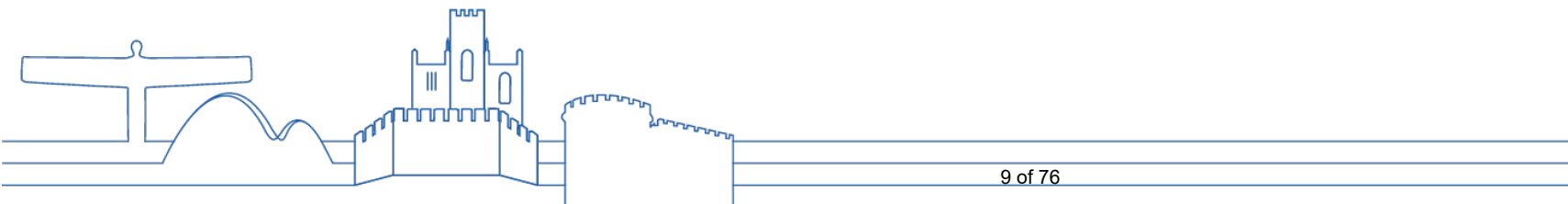
On behalf of the Corporate Parenting Board, Councillor Louise Farthing was thanked for her commitment and passion to improve the lives of children and young people during her time as portfolio holder for Children's Services and wished well for her retirement.

(Signed) L FARTHING  
Chair



**Report to Supportive Parenting Partnership  
Northeast North Cumbria Integrated Care Board  
17 July 2023  
Cared for Health Update**

What is working well	What are the worries	What needs to happen
Health Partnership for Cared for Children.		
<p>The group have now met twice.</p> <p>We have already shared a project to support unaccompanied young people and health outcomes with TfC.</p>	<p>To ensure that we continue to have cross partnership attendance.</p> <p>That work is not duplicated within other workstreams.</p> <p>That it is effective and useful to partner organisations.</p>	<p>An invite has been sent to YDAP for representative in the partnership.</p> <p>To continue to meet as a group and develop our strategic priorities.</p> <p>To ensure the voice of the young person is in all that we do.</p> <p>We are planning a 'Practitioner Forum' focussing on cared for and care experienced</p>



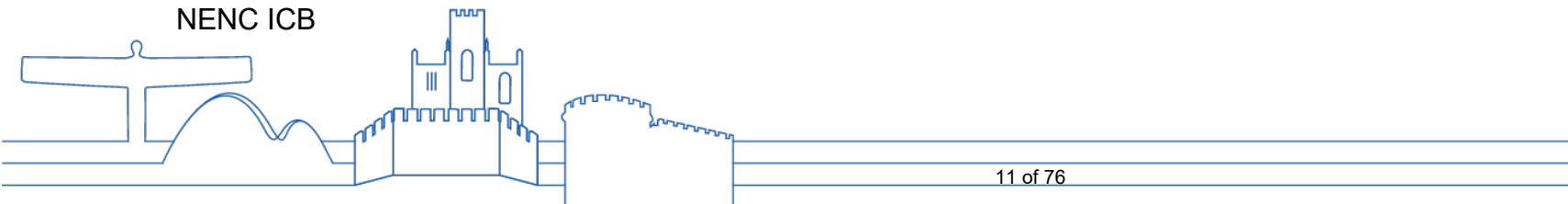
<b>Improving the mental and physical health of care leavers and care experienced.</b>		
<b>What is working well</b>	<b>What are the worries</b>	<b>What needs to happen</b>
<p>We have had a mentoring and social prescribing service agreed within Sunderland.</p> <p>We are developing a health passport app for cared for and care experienced young people.</p>	<p>How to launch both projects effectively.</p> <p>The Young People have asked for emotional wellbeing support with life story work.</p>	<p>The app is at the point of trial by young people.</p> <p>We need to consider what this looks like and how this can be met – this will be raised at the Health Partnership meeting.</p>
The Looked After Health Team		
<b>What is working well</b>	<b>What are the worries</b>	<b>What needs to happen</b>
<p>151 Initial Health Assessments were complete from Q1-Q4(22-23) 128 were in times scales (85%)</p> <p>512 review health assessments were completed from Q1-Q4 (22-23). 464 of these young people were seen within time scale. (91%).</p>	<p>Sunderland has vacancies in both their Designated Doctor and Named Doctor posts for Cared for Children. The Designated Doctor for Children's Safeguarding continues to support CfC.</p> <p>There is limited capacity within the Community Paediatric team with regards to Initial Health Assessment capacity and therefore timescale</p>	<p>The Designated Nurse is working with Commissioners and Contractors to update the current SLA.</p> <p>The Designate Nurse has completed an Audit with the Independent Reviewing Service to look at the impact of health assessments within the current model – this needs to be shared with Commissioners, the health team and TfC.</p>

<p>All our Care Leavers were offered a leaving care health summary.</p> <p>80% of our young people agreed and attended their final health assessment before leaving care.</p> <p>A locum Consultant Paediatrician has been recruited for 3 months to help with Community Paediatric capacity. He will carry out additional IHA clinics.</p>	<p>compliance has fallen. In the final quarter of 22-23 67% of IHA's were in timescale.</p> <p>The current Service Leave Agreement (SLA) is out of date and needs to be reconsidered.</p> <p>Nursing capacity remains below Intercollegiate recommendations.</p> <p>The current cared for health team is clinic based and this can be a challenge for carers to attend as appointments can often be in school time and impact on other children in their care.</p> <p>Appointments can fall out of timescale due to the current model.</p>	
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Jo Morgan

Designated Nurse Cared for Children

NENC ICB







Cumbria, Northumberland,  
Tyne and Wear  
NHS Foundation Trust

**Topic: Sunderland CYPS Cared For Children's Pathway**

**Background/ Overview:**

Sunderland Children and Young Peoples service (CYPS) understands the need for children who are care experienced to be seen in a timely manner for their acute mental health needs.

This Pathway was reviewed internally in 2022, it specifically undertakes direct therapeutic work with children and young people, along with Foster Carers where appropriate.

Consultation is provided in conjunction with Together for Children, and CYPS continue to scaffold and support to Residential Homes.

Young People are offered priority appointments within CYPS, and following assessment will access treatment usually within 10 weeks. The Pathway is a multi-disciplinary team consisting of nursing, Social Workers, Psychologists, Child Psychotherapists and can access Psychiatry if required.

What is working well?	What are we worried about?	What needs to happen?
<p>The team have all completed specific formal training to deliver psychological therapies to meet the needs of the young people and their carer's.</p> <p>41 referred into the CFC pathway since January, 8 of which were declined, 1 of which was signposted to the mental health pathway and 32 accepted into CFC pathway.</p> <p>The current average wait for CFC is 8 weeks – this has come down from approx. 12 weeks earlier in the year.</p> <p>There are currently 64 cared for children allocated on caseloads.</p> <p>5 awaiting to be allocated to begin treatment.</p>	<p>Not worried about but for the board's awareness the 8 referrals declined were due to:</p> <p>1 x following initial referral SW contacted CYPS duty to update that Freedom from Torture is the more appropriate service.</p> <p>1 x had already accessed appropriate therapy via post adoption team as foster carers adopted YP.</p> <p>1 x initially declined as not enough supporting information on referral, resubmitted and accepted in June.</p> <p>1 x Louise Harrison supporting foster carers, no need for referral into CYPS.</p> <p>1 x YP referred with outdated information (over 12 months) advised to get updated picture from SW and virtual school and re-refer.</p> <p>1 x Liz Christie had consultation with SW following referral and clinical rationale for why CYPS wasn't required.</p> <p>1 x referred at age 17 &amp; 9m, CNTW agreement that YP are transitioned into adult services from 17 &amp; 6m</p> <p>1 x YP referred by primary school, Durham child with GP in Hetton. Limited information and CYPS unable to speak with SW to gain collateral information.</p>	



**What is required from Corporate Parenting Board (or new title):**

Arrangements for the training from the Change Council to be delivered to some of the key partners in CYPS so we can cascade the message within the service.

Following discussion within our CFC pathway we would be happy to come and present to the board if requested about the pathway and work undertaken.

**Report written by:** Samantha Diston

**Date:** 7<sup>th</sup> July 2023





putting  
the child first

# Regulation 44 Visitor – Annual Overview April 22 – March 23



together for  
children  
SUNDERLAND



Report Author: Jackie Amos, Regulation 44 Officer

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## 1. Purpose

To provide elective members of the Corporate Parenting Board with an update on the findings in relation to the Regulation 44 visits undertaken between April 2022 and March 2023.

## 2. Regulation 44 Visit and Structure within Together for Children

The current Children's Homes Regulations and Quality Standards were published in April 2015.

Regulation 44 of the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 states that the registered provider shall appoint, at the registered provider's expense, an independent person to visit and report on the children's home in accordance with this regulation. This is to ensure objective critical analysis with a view to improve safeguarding and service delivery for children.

The Regulation 44 visitor must be able to evidence demonstrable independence and have the skills necessary to relate to children and young people, assess all relevant information and form a rigorous and impartial assessment of the home's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children in the home's care. This is achieved by scrutinising all relevant documentation, talking to at least one of the children and young people accommodated in the home, their parents or relatives, staff from the home and relevant professionals.

The Regulation 44 Visitor service sits within the Children's Independent Reviewing Service within Together for Children, Sunderland and has both a part-time, and PVH Regulation 44 Visitor. Together for children is the registered provider of five children's homes that require Regulation 44 visits.

## 3. Performance Overview

The following table provides the dates of the most recent Ofsted inspections for each home. During the reporting period every home received a monthly Regulation 44 visit, in compliance with the regulations.

Home	Date of most recent Ofsted Inspection
Colombo Road	14/03/23 – 15/03/23
Monument View	10/05/22 – 11/05/22
Grasswell House	24/01/23 – 25/01/23
Revelstoke Road	03/10/22 – 04/10/22
Nook Lodge	08/03/23 – 09/03/23

All Regulation 44 visits were undertaken face-to-face, and in accordance with Covid-19 risk assessments.

## 4. Administration

As part of the Regulation 44 Visit, the following tasks are undertaken by the Regulation 44 Visitor:

- Reading the Regulation 45 Report.
- A visit to the home.
- Speaking with young people who live there to gather their views regarding their standard of care.
- Speaking with young people’s carers, parents, social workers, Independent Reviewing Officer, and any other relevant persons such as independent advocate, to collect their views on the standard of care being provided.
- Reviewing and evaluating records such as young people’s files, critical incident logs, medical records, and any notifications to Ofsted

Upon the Visitor evaluating all the above, a report is produced and sent to the manager of the home and the responsible person for Together for Children for comment. The report is then sent to Ofsted at the end of each month.

The Visitor also completes a short letter for the young people at the home about their visit and findings. During this reporting period we also ensured that whereby any young person living in one of our homes whose first language is not English, the letter has been translated for them.

## 5. Colombo Road

Colombo Road Children’s Home is situated on a large housing estate in the Hylton Castle area of Sunderland and is approved for up to six young people, aged from 11- 17 years. Ofsted inspectors have given the home an overall judgement of “Outstanding” for the last five visits they have undertaken.

The home’s workforce is stable. Whilst the home is currently fully staffed in terms of Residential Childcare Workers (RCCW), a recruitment process is underway for a Relief Residential Childcare Worker (RRCCW). The stability of the workforce has enabled team members to engage in trusting and meaningful relationships with the young people and other professionals.

Since the last report to Corporate Parenting in March 2022, Ofsted visited Colombo Road in March 2023. The judgement remains “Outstanding”:

Ofsted Judgements	14 <sup>th</sup> /15 <sup>th</sup> December 2021	14 <sup>th</sup> /15 <sup>th</sup> March 2023
Overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Outstanding	Outstanding
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good	Good
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding	Outstanding
<b>Overall Judgement</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>

Whilst there were no statutory requirements made by Ofsted in March 2023, the following three recommendations were included in the report:

*The home's location risk assessment needs more consultation with local Police and Counsellors.*

*Impact risk assessments require further work.*

*Supervision needs more reflective practice throughout the full process.*

An action plan has been completed and the manager has complied with the recommendations. These will be monitored by the Visitor during the Regulation 44 visits.

In this reporting period Colombo Road has provided care for the following numbers of young people:

April 22	May 22	June 22	July 22	Aug 22	Sep 22
6	6	6	6	6	6
Oct 22	Nov 22	Dec 22	Jan 23	Feb 23	Mar 23
6	6	6	6	6	6

Two boys, both seeking asylum, and four girls, aged between 14 and 17 years, currently reside at Colombo Road. All have differing needs and interests which are respected and supported by the team.

No of admissions in reporting period	No of discharges in reporting period	No of missing incidents	No of missing incidents over 24hrs	Number of recommendations in the reporting period
3	3	15	4	6

The number of young people residing at Colombo Road, during this reporting period, remained at six throughout the year. Three young people moved out of the home in line with their care / pathway plans and three young people moved in.

The matching of young people who move into the home is carefully judged, with consideration given to the individual needs of the young people. This process considers the potential impact of any young person moving into the home and how they may affect the dynamics of the other young people already living there. Overall, this has been undertaken successfully and the Visitor has not seen indicators that would suggest any new young person, has led to an increase in critical incidents or team members needing to restrain young people.

The young people living at Colombo Road attend a range of mainstream and alternative education and training provisions. The young people each have friendship groups within their own communities or through their education provision. The young people have the chance to discuss their wishes and feelings independently from the home with their Social Workers, Independent Reviewing Officer's

(IRO) and the Regulation 44 Officers. In addition to this all-young people have access to share their views via the Mind of My Own application.

During Regulation 44 visits the Visitor always speaks to at least one young person at Colombo Road, to explore how they feel they are being cared for and if they want anything to change for them at the home. This can involve face-to-face discussions or the completion of a questionnaire. Some of the young people expressed the reason they didn't offer their views to the Visitor was because they struggle with the number of professionals visiting their home and asking them questions. Different ways of engaging young people and ascertaining their voice, in a way that works for them, continues to be a focus by the Visitor. The Visitor continues to work in partnership with the home's staff team to find creative ways in engaging the young people who live at the home.

Unannounced Regulation 44 visits have been undertaken, to allow the visitor to experience the day to day running of the home. Visits took place at different times which assisted the Visitor in having contact with the young people to collect their views. Given the ages of the young people they are often out with their friends or visiting families during visiting times therefore the Visitor aims to do later evening and weekend visits, going forward.

Fifteen missing episodes were reported during this twelve-month period, a significant reduction when compared to the previous year when twenty-eight missing episodes were recorded. Four of the missing episodes exceeded twenty-four hours which is an increase when compared to the last reporting period when no reported missing episodes were recorded for twenty-four hours or over. Team members undertake one-to-one sessions with the young people to disrupt the missing episodes. These open conversations ensure that the young people have the right information to help make safe and informed decisions. In addition, Police Prevention Interviews and Return Home Interviews are also offered to the young people, to support them to understand how to keep safe. This is a multi-agency approach in safeguarding the young people.

The Regulation 44 Visitor made six recommendations during this reporting year, a slight reduction when compared to the previous year when seven recommendations were made. Examples of recommendations included: Review section 8 of a young person's risk assessment, team members should consider updating a young person's Individual Crisis Support Plan and team members to consider arranging a meeting with a mother to discuss her worries about her daughter's care.

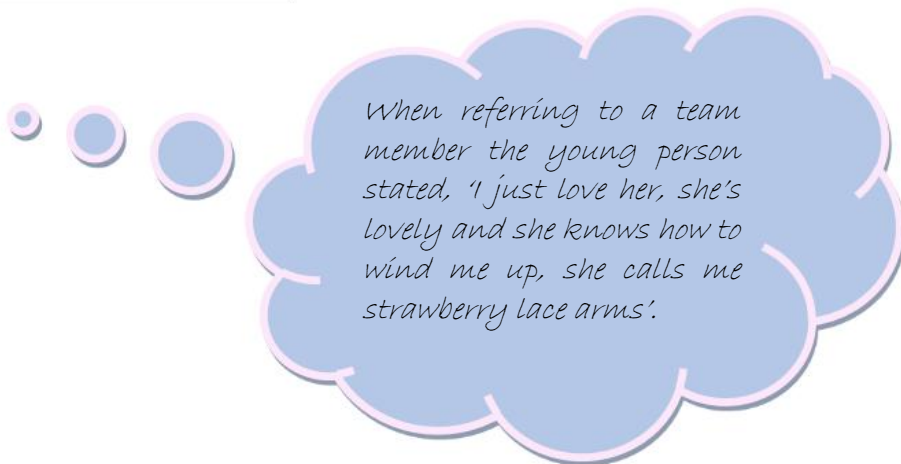
There were no restraints recorded during this reporting period, compared to one recorded restraint in the previous year. The main factor which has influenced the rare use of restraints is the trauma informed training team members have undertaken. Team members do not wish to re-traumatise young people in their care and therefore believe restraint should only be used if a young person is a serious threat to themselves or others.

Type of Notification	Reported Incidents 2021-2022	Reported Incidents 2022-2023	Variance
Critical incident	24	7	-15
Ofsted notification	25	7	-18

The significant decrease in critical incidents and Ofsted notifications were due to a young person moving out of the home to a more suitable, out of area accommodation.



## Voices of the Young people



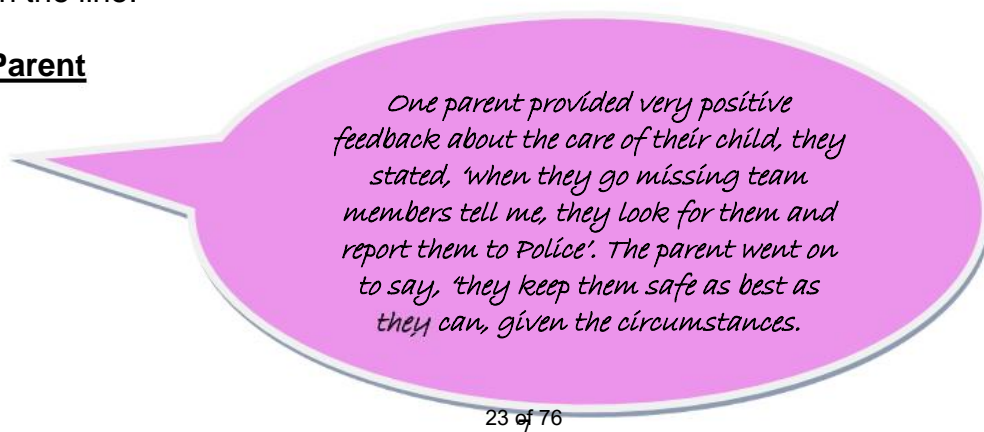
Engagement between the young people and the Visitor, during this reporting period, has varied somewhat, depending on the timing of the visit and the young people's personal circumstances. However, some of their views were captured throughout the year. The young people who talked to the Visitor were consistent in terms of their 'good relationships' with their Link Workers, they liked their bedrooms which they personalised, and that they felt their cultural needs were met to a high standard. We know that young people, living in a caring environment, can develop a sense of belonging/identity and learn how to manage their feelings better, this leads to good outcomes for them.

An example was:

A young person seeking asylum, who moved to live at Colombo Road in this reporting period, arrived in a very distressed state. The young person told the Visitor, via an app on their phone, that he felt very sad, that he would remain in his bedroom, he did not wish to eat, and wanted to return home to his country of origin. This young person shared that he felt traumatised by their journey to the UK and his situation, at that time. He felt he could not communicate with anyone, which added to his difficulties, he described feeling like he was 'in prison'.

Very quickly, the same young person presented as more settled, he looked physically well and had access to a full-time educational placement with additional English support provided. The young person was supported to engage with other young people from the same village he had come from, who were cared for by a neighbouring authority. They began to develop a meaningful relationship with each other, supported by their Link Workers and other professionals involved with them. Colombo Road has worked very hard to identify communities for young people seeking asylum. They go above and beyond what is expected, to ensure young people have access to all opportunities available for non-cared for young people. That same young man is now happy, he enjoys living at the home, he looks forward to his education and his future in the longer-term. The Visitor is delighted with the obvious progress and how happy this young person presents, some few months down the line.

## Voice of a Parent



A parent of another young person explained they are of the view their child is 'happy and settled living at the home' and that they are 'well informed, via telephone and stated that they receive a monthly update about their child's progress'.

**Summary**

The manager accepted and implemented all recommendations from the Regulation 44 Visitors reports and implemented them within the timescales provided. The management and members of the team remain committed to supporting young people to the best of their abilities, helped by Dr Christie, Psychologist, to implement trauma informed residential childcare practice. Team members celebrate the young people's differences and celebrate their many achievements.

The care afforded to the young people is excellent and when scoring what service delivery is like the Visitor has consistently scored 9, 10 being the highest score.

No concerns or complaints have been raised by any professional about the care afforded to the young people, in fact, quite the contrary, many positive reports have been provided, complimenting the care provided.

**6. Grasswell House**

Grasswell House is located within Sunderland West and continues to provide residential care for up to six young people aged 12-17 years. The home's workforce is stable, they are currently fully staffed in terms of Residential Childcare Workers (RCCW) however, are in the process of recruiting one Relief Residential childcare Worker (RRCCW). The stability of the workforce has enabled team members to engage in trusting and meaningful relationships with the young people and other professionals. The manager and the leadership team work hard to achieve best outcomes for all cared for young people.

Since the last report to the Corporate Parenting Board in March 2022, Ofsted visited Grasswell House in January 2023, some eighteen months later, where they maintained their overall judgement of good.

<b>Ofsted Judgements</b>	<b>8th/9th Jun 2021</b>	<b>24th/25<sup>th</sup> Jan 2023</b>
Overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Good	Good
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good	Good
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good	Good
<b>Overall Judgement</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b>

Three statutory requirements were made by Ofsted in January 2023.

*Regulation 8 – Education – inspectors wanted to see more evidence of planning for young people who do not have full time education or who refuse to attend education provided.*

*Regulation 12 – Impact Risk Assessments for young people moving into the home – inspectors wanted to see more in-depth analysis of the impact of identified risks.*

**Regulation 35 – Use of sanctions/consequences – inspectors did not agree with a financial consequence that had been used and noted some minor recording issue in the timing of the review of records.**

Five recommendations were also made by Ofsted in January 2023.

***The registered person should ensure that the staff meet the children's basic day-to-day needs and physical necessities. Staff should seek to meet the child's basic needs in the way that a good parent would, recognising that many children in residential care have experienced environments where these needs have not been consistently met. This is an important aspect of demonstrating that the staff care Inspection report for children's home: 1254837 8 for the child and value them as an individual. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.7)***

***The registered person should ensure that the children are consulted regularly on their views about the home's care, to inform and support continued improvement in the quality of care provided. Children should be able to see the results of their views being listened to and acted on. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11).***

***The registered person should ensure that any child who has been restrained should be offered the opportunity to access an advocacy support to help them express their feelings about their experiences of the restraint. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 50, paragraph 9.60).***

***The registered person should ensure that there are systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them not only to reflect on their practice and development, but also to focus on the needs of the children assigned to their care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2).***

***The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. Records should be kept up to date, and staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion, and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)***

The manager has fulfilled the three requirements and five recommendations, made by the Ofsted Inspectors, and these will continue to be monitored by the Visitor during Regulation 44 visits.

In this reporting period Grasswell House have provided care for the following numbers of young people:

<b>Apr 22</b>	<b>May 22</b>	<b>June 22</b>	<b>Jul 22</b>	<b>Aug 22</b>	<b>Sep 22</b>
6	6	6	6	6	6
<b>Oct 22</b>	<b>Nov 22</b>	<b>Dec 22</b>	<b>Jan 23</b>	<b>Feb 23</b>	<b>Mar 23</b>
6	6	6	6	6	6

Four girls and two boys currently reside at Grasswell House, aged between 15 - 17 years, they all have differing needs and interests which are supported by the team.

<b>No of admissions in reporting period</b>	<b>No of discharges in reporting period</b>	<b>No of missing incidents</b>	<b>No of missing incidents over 24hrs</b>	<b>Number of recommendations in the reporting period</b>
2	2	77	2	4

Within this reporting period, two young people moved out of the home and two young people moved in, all in line with their care or pathway plans. The matching of young people who move into the home is carefully considered in respect of the individual needs of each young person and the potential impact the young person moving in may have on the dynamics of the other young people living at the home.

There have been 77 missing from care reports this reporting period, a notable increase when compared to the previous reporting period when 42 missing episodes were reported. The missing episodes increased due to three young people who were repeatedly reported as missing, which influenced at least one new resident. Two of the young people were moved to alternative provisions which appears to be having a more positive impact on the remaining young people.

One-to-one sessions were undertaken with the young people to discuss the teams worries about their safety. These open conversations helped to disrupt missing episodes and enabled the young people and team member to develop meaningful relationships, as the team member showed the young person how much they care. Information was added to the young person's risk assessments to strengthen the safety planning, should future episodes happen.

Two of the 77 missing episodes exceeded twenty-four-hour periods which were notified to Ofsted. Police Prevention Interviews and Return Home Interviews were offered to the young people following every missing episode. It is disappointing to note that the young people chose not to engage in many of the interviews.

Four recommendations were made during this reporting period a slight decrease when compared to the previous reporting period when seven recommendations were reported. One recommendation was in relation to Standard 6.2, The Positive Relationship Standard, in that one of the young people's Individual Crisis Support Plan needed updating. One was in relation to Standard 7, The Protection of Children Standard, in that a one-to-one session was recommended for a young person, regarding staying safe.

Six restraints were recorded during this reporting period, an increase when compared to the previous reporting period when one restraint was recorded. One of the restraints was a standing hold and two were restricting two young people access to certain parts of the room, to support their safety. There are two main factors which influence the rare use of restraints. These are the implementation of trauma informed residential childcare practice and because team members do not wish to risk re-

traumatising young people to experiences, they may have experienced within their birth families, prior to being cared for. Therefore, the team believe restraint should only be used if a young person is a serious threat to themselves or others.

The young people living at Grasswell House attend a range of mainstream and alternative education and training. The young people have friendship groups through their education provision or within their own communities. The young people can discuss their wishes and feelings, independently, with Residential Care Workers, Social Workers, Independent Reviewing Officer's the Regulation 44 Visitor and via the Mind of my Own application. During Regulation 44 visits the Visitor attempted to speak to at least one young person to discuss how they feel they are being cared for and if they wanted anything to change for them. However, due to the timing of some of the visits, the young people's commitments, and choices, it was not always possible to speak to a young person face-to-face. Some young people completed the Visitors questionnaire, and some chose not to. Given that the Visitor spoke to the young person's Link Worker, their Social Worker, Independent Reviewing Officer, and other relevant professionals such as Independent Visitors, an understanding of the young person's wishes, and feelings were still ascertained.

Unannounced Regulation 44 visits were undertaken, every month, during the reporting period. In future, the timing of the visits will be more varied including evenings and weekends for a better chance to engage with the young people.

Type of Notification	Reported Incidents 2021-22	Reported Incidents 2022-23	Variance
Critical incident	28	29	+1
Ofsted notification	25	20	-5

During this reporting period 29 critical incidents were recorded, and 20 notifications were made to Ofsted. This compares to 28 critical incidents and 25 notifications during the previous reporting period. Not all critical incidents require reporting to Ofsted as they may not meet the criteria.

**Voice of the Child/Young Person**

The young people engaged intermittently with the Visitor during this reporting period. The age of some young people, their wishes and feelings meant they chose when to engage with the Visitor. However, on occasions, when the young people chose to engage, they were very positive about the care they received. One young person wrote:



A young person shared that she wanted to live with her mam but was worried that her mam could not cope with her behaviour. The same young person told the Visitor that she has a good relationship with her Link Worker who she calls 'nana'.

The young people have enjoyed a wide variety of activities and opportunities throughout the year. Their achievements are acknowledged and celebrated with them, which they appear to enjoy.

### Voice of a Parent



A young person's grandparent was contacted by a translator as English is not their first language. He confirmed that whilst he wants to care for his granddaughter, he has no concerns about the care she receives. The grandparent confirmed that, 'I received regular updates about my granddaughter'. This evidences that team members maintain regular contact with birth family and ensure their views are ascertained in their language.

### Summary

The manager challenged some of the requirements/recommendations, however, intends to implement all, which will be overseen by the Regulation 44 Visitor. The management and members of the team remain committed to improving the standards of care they provide for young people, assisted by Dr Christie, Psychologist, to implement further trauma informed residential childcare practice. Team members celebrate the young people's differences and praise all their achievements. The home has been judged to be Good by Ofsted in January 23.

## 7. Revelstoke Road

Revelstoke Road's children's home is situated on a housing estate within Sunderland North, it provides residential care for up to six young people of either gender. In terms of management structure there have been no changes in relation to the senior team, in this reporting period. The management team have continued to positively support and encourage team members to successfully achieve the best outcomes for the young people in a safe and nurturing environment, despite the difficult circumstances they have experienced due to the previous behaviour of one young person and the recent behaviour of a young person currently residing at the home.

Since the last report to Corporate Parenting in March 2022, Ofsted visited Revelstoke Road in October 2022, with the table below outlining the judgements:

<b>Ofsted Judgement</b>	<b>11<sup>th</sup> / 12<sup>th</sup> January 2022</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> October 2022</b>
Overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Outstanding	Good
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good	Good
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good	Good
<b>Overall Judgement</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b>

Two requirements were made following the Ofsted inspection October 2022.

*The care planning standard is that children receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home, that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose.*

*The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only employ an individual to work at the children's home; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification, and skills for the work that the individual is to perform.*

An action plan was developed and both requirements responded to.

Within the reporting period the home has cared for the following number of children and young people:

Apr 22	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22	Aug 22	Sep 22
6	6	6	5	6	5
Oct 22	Nov 22	Dec 22	Jan 23	Feb 23	Mar 23
5	5	4	4	3	3

As highlighted in the grid above, three to six young people were cared for throughout this reporting period, at Revelstoke Road. The team and young people experienced a very difficult time in caring for one young person whose behaviour was concerning and impacted upon potential admissions, until it was agreed that the young person should move to live with family members. At the time of writing this report, another young person moved to live in the home whose complex presentation has also resulted in no further moves into the home, until a more settled period is experienced by all.

Currently three young people are being cared for at the home, with differing levels of complexity. Team members are experienced and are competently managing and supporting the young people, supported by Dr Christie, Psychologist who is providing support and advice to the team, to enable them to achieve the best outcomes for the three young people.

No of admissions in reporting period	No discharges in reporting period	No of missing incidents	No of missing incidents over 24hrs	No of rec's in the reporting period
6	9	114	10	6

The three young people currently residing at Revelstoke Road are experiencing difficulties due to their presenting behaviour which is impacting upon their learning and relationship with each other and team members. All three young people are challenging boundaries, rules, and expectations of them. Worries include the significant increase in missing episodes and assaults on team members. Dr Christie is supporting team members to understand why the young people exhibit complex behaviour and risk assessments are in place to ensure the safe care of everyone.

Young people's meetings are held regularly to ascertain the young people's views. All young people are visited every four weeks by their Social Worker to discuss their feelings and wishes, and they are invited to share their views with the Regulation 44 Visitor, monthly. The latter, however, often proves difficult due to the young people's commitments or simply they choose not to engage with the Visitor. When this happens, the young people are invited to share their views using a questionnaire.

Unannounced Regulation 44 visits were undertaken, every month, during the period of April 2022 to March 2023. The visits took place at tea-time/early evening, and daytime during school holidays. The times chosen were to support the Visitor in meeting the young people in their home and to seek their views. Weekend visits will be incorporated, moving forward.

One hundred and fourteen missing episodes were reported during this twelve-month period, a notable increase when compared to 24 missing episodes recorded during the previous year. Ten missing episodes were over 24 hours, a further increase when compared to the previous year when only one missing episode over 24 hours was reported. The significant increase in missing episodes primarily related to one young person who persistently refused to adhere to their care plan and return to the home every evening. The young person insisted on staying with her sister, hence this was reported as a missing episode. The young person's Social Worker re-assessed the care plan and changed it accordingly, to meet the needs of the young person supported by a safety plan. Team members worked hard to disrupt missing episodes and they re-assessed their approach to the young people to support a safer environment.

Five recommendations were made during this reporting period, a slight increase when compared to the previous reporting period when four recommendations were made. Given the significant difficulties the team has encountered this year, recommendations were low, evidencing that despite the difficulties, team members worked hard to support and care for the young people.

Two recommendations were in relation to Standard 9, The Care Planning Standard, one regarding a young person's independent living skills plan, another in relation to a young person's Pathway planning. One recommendation was in relation to standard 6, the Positive Relationship Standard, which referred to high-risk behaviours being recorded in her care plan. The last recommendations, made in January 2023, were both in relation to Standard 7, The Protection of Children Standard, and referred to the Visitor requiring an update in relation to an investigation involving a team member.

Eleven restraints were used during this reporting period, an increase when compared to last year when no restraints were recorded. The team at Revelstoke Road are of the view that restraints should only be used if young people are a threat to themselves or others. The Visitor read and acknowledged that all restraints were appropriately used to protect the young person, the audience and team members. For example, on one occasion a group of young people threatened to burn the home down, resulting in one young person leaving the home with a weight lifting bar to assault the group. After attempting to support the young person to return to the home team members had to restrain the young person for her own safety. The restraint involved a team member placing his arms around the upper part of the young person's body. A debrief was provided for both the young person and team member involved.



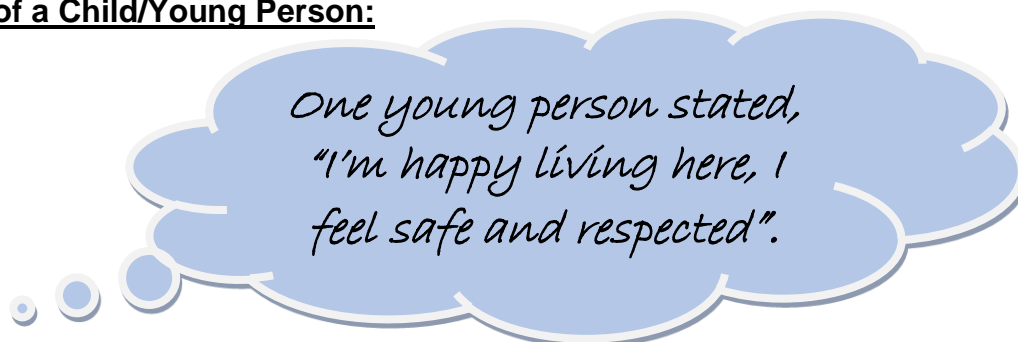
Type of Notification	Reported Incidents 2021-22	Reported Incidents 2022-23	Variance
Critical incident	18	43	+ 25
Ofsted notification	16	36	+ 20

During this reporting period 43 critical incidents recorded, and 36 notifications were made to Ofsted, a notable increase when compared to the previous year. The significant increases were primarily due to two young people, one who recently moved, the other is in relation to a young person currently residing at the home, whose chaotic history is impacting upon his current presentation.

The team, at Revelstoke Road, is welcoming, the home is comfortable and warm, with a beautifully refurbished kitchen. The current young people are experiencing difficulties due to the impact their past has had upon their emotional well-being. Despite their difficulties, during Regulation 44 visits, the Visitor has observed how happy and relaxed all three young people present. For example, the Visitor has observed positive interactions between the young people and team members, verbally and whilst enjoying shared activities within the home. The Visitor has, however, experienced difficulties in engaging some of the young people to share their views about what is working well and what concerns, they have. The Visitor provides a monthly letter describing the visit and leaves a work mobile number, should any of the young people wish to share their views via text or by phoning the Visitor.

Revelstoke Road is maintained externally and internally to a good standard and is decorated and furnished in a modern style. The whole house has been updated and decorated to include the kitchen, bathrooms, and the team's sleep-in rooms. The young people's views regarding how the home is maintained are accessed during monthly young people's meetings, they provide a varied response about meals, decoration, young people they would like to move to live with them and about their bedrooms. The outdoor areas of Revelstoke Road are also maintained to a very good standard and whilst the rear garden is equipped with modern outdoor furniture, it also has a large wooden outdoor summerhouse, for the young people to enjoy with their friends.

**Voice of a Child/Young Person:**



On the occasions that the young people agreed to speak to the Visitor, they spoke positively about their home, the team and how well they feel cared for. The young people are happy about the way their home is maintained and feel they have access to a varied activity planner.

During this reporting period the following comments have been made by the young people. One young person stated: 'I feel respected by the team', 'I feel safe', 'I like the food', 'there are lots of activities on offer, 'the team help me with family time'.

Whilst the young people have not always been willing to share their views with the Visitor, the Visitor also accesses the views of professionals known to the young people. There have been no significant concerns raised by any professional regarding the care the young people receive, quite the contrary,

as several positive comments have been recorded throughout this reporting period. For example, a young person's Social Worker shared that the young person she works with, 'settled into Revelstoke Road much quicker than I had anticipated and has made so much progress already'. A young person's Independent Reviewing Officer shared, 'the young person is making positive progress'.

Flexible approaches are used in terms of accessing information about the young people to ensure that the care and support they receive are reflected in the Regulation 44 Report.

### **Voice of a Parent:**



Consistent positive feedback has been provided by family members. For example, a young person's mother was spoken to, she stated 'I have no concerns about my sons care'. Another young person's aunt was spoken to, and stated, 'the staff need a medal'.

### **Summary:**

The number of missing episodes and missing episodes of over 24 hours, sanctions, use of restraint and recommendations increased, during this reporting period. The reasons, as stated above, predominantly related to two young people. Critical incidents and Ofsted notifications also increased, again mostly in relation to two young people. The team have experienced a very difficult year, at times, although have remained positive and professional throughout to ensure that the young people enjoyed positive experiences.

The team at Revelstoke Road provide support to the young people to access education, attend health appointments and learn new skills to develop their independence for moving on. The team listen to and respond to the needs of the young people to evidence that they genuinely care about them. Dr Christie remains involved and meets with the team monthly to explore their worries and progress about the young people. All team members feel this intervention is positive and does make a difference to the young people.

The recommendations from the Regulation 44 visits, documented above, were accepted by the manager, and implemented within timescales. The management team and all team members remain committed to the young people, they acknowledge and celebrate the young people's achievements and accept that they are individuals with differing skills/needs.

The young people living at the home are very different and tend to lead separate lives however, all are developing positive relationships with team members. The young people enjoy community activities, supported by team members.

As stated, the home is of a good standard internally and externally and is well maintained. The home is decorated and furnished to good standard in a modern style, with a homely family feel.

## 8. Nook Lodge

Nook Lodge children's home provides residential care for up to three young people of either gender, 10 to 17 years old. It is situated on the outskirts of a housing estate within Sunderland. Nook Lodge was registered by Ofsted on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2020. The first three young people moved into Nook Lodge between October 2020 and March 2021, two of whom moved in August 2022; one into independent living and the other young person returned home to live with her mother.

In terms of the management structure there are two senior members: one team manager and one assistant team manager. Both commenced their positions in October 2020 and remain in their current posts. The two managers have developed a positive, professional working relationship with each other and have established a strong and committed team who are supported to achieve the best outcomes for the young people.

The table below shows the comparison from the monitoring visit held in September 2021 to March 23, and it is important to note the progress made during this time.

Ofsted Judgment	14 <sup>th</sup> /15 <sup>th</sup> September 2021	8 <sup>th</sup> /9 <sup>th</sup> March 2023
Overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Good	Good
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good	Good
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement	Good
<b>Overall Judgement</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b>

Nook Lodge's last Ofsted inspection took place in March 23, the outcome of which was Good in all three categories, although the team awaits the full outcome of the report.

Two statutory requirements were made:

*Regulation 12 – relating to Impact Risk Assessments and young people's risk assessments.*

*Regulation 32– relating to staff training.*

Two recommendations were made:

*To ensure that advocacy is offered to every child following a restraint.*

*To ensure consistency of quality of supervision.*

The two requirements and two recommendations have been acted upon in a timely manner as requested by Ofsted.

Within the reporting period the home has cared for the following number of children and young people:

Apr 22	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22	Aug 22	Sep 22
3	3	3	3	1	3
Oct 22	Nov 22	Dec22	Jan 23	Feb 23	Mar 23
3	3	3	3	3	3

As highlighted in the grid above, three young people, two boys and one girl, aged between 12 and 17 years, have continued to reside at Nook Lodge since opening. All three young people are of differing ages and have different interests, however, are respectful of each other and continue to develop a positive relationship with each other and team members.

No of admissions in reporting period	No of discharges in reporting period	No of missing incidents	No of missing incidents over 24hrs	No of rec's in the reporting period
2	2	25	1	7

The above table highlights that Nook Lodge team members provided a stable level of care to the same three young people from October 2020 to August 2022 when two young people moved out and two young people moved in. Currently there are three young girls, one who has remained living at the home since October 2020 and two young people who have resided at the home for nine months. The three young people enjoy settled periods however, at times, due to the differing ages/ability/needs the young people sometimes choose not to positively engage with each other. However, with support and guidance by Dr Christie for team members, the young people are making progress and their needs are being addressed to a good standard.

Unannounced Regulation 44 visits were undertaken, every month, during the period of April 2022 to March 2023.

Type of Notification	Reported Incidents 2021-22	Reported Incidents 2022-23	Variance
Critical incident	15	11	-4
Ofsted notification	16	6	-10

Twenty-five missing episodes were recorded this reporting period, compared to no missing incidents in the previous year. One of the two young people who moved to live at the home in August 2022 has complex social and emotional needs, resulting in worries regarding behaviour, including missing episodes. One of the recorded twenty-five missing episodes was for a period of over 24 hours and was in relation to the same young person.

Three restraints were recorded this reporting period, all reports were read by the Visitor and noted to be appropriate. A debrief was offered to the young people and team members involved in the restraint.

Eleven critical incidents were recorded this reporting period, a decrease when compared to the last year when fifteen critical incidents were recorded. Six Ofsted notifications were recorded, a significant decrease when compared to last reporting period when sixteen notifications to Ofsted were made. Not all critical incidents meet the criteria for Ofsted notifications. The critical incidents were generally in relation to one young person who has additional needs to include requiring support around her behaviour.

The Regulation 44 Visitor made seven recommendations during this reporting period, compared to one in the previous year. The recommendations were accepted by the manager and shared with the team to enable them to reflect upon their practice and improve standards. The recommendations were progressed appropriately, within timescales. An example of a recommendation made during this reporting period: Standard 7, The protection of Children Standard, recommending that a risk assessment should be updated to reflect changes to a young person's plan.

The team and young people at Nook Lodge are welcoming, the home is comfortable and warm, and the young people, when at home during the visit, present as settled and happy, on most occasions. However, one young person is rarely seen as she is often enjoying family time or in the community with friends.

Nook Lodge is maintained internally and externally to a good standard and is decorated and furnished in a modern style. The house is frequently decorated, and a newly refurbished kitchen has been installed. The rear garden is a work in progress. The young people are proud of their home and have decorated their bedrooms according to their style/fashion.


### **Voice of a Child/Young Person**



All three young people have been spoken to, during this reporting period, by the Regulation 44 Visitor. The young people do not always wish to engage with the Visitor, however, are generally polite and welcoming when they have chosen to partake in discussion. Two young people are most willing to engage, one young person can present as less interested however, with encouragement she shared her views about team members, living with the other young people and the home in general and all comments were positive. The young people have raised no significant concerns about the care afforded to them.

One young person completed a questionnaire in February 2023 and answered all questions positively and reported that she enjoys living at the home, likes to cook and that team members are supportive of her. The young person who has resided at the home since opening is now looking forward to returning home to live with her mother. She has reservations about moving out as she has developed positive relationships with team members.

## Voice of a Parent



*"I know my child can be difficult at times and the team really care about him and offer him lots of support"*

The feedback from parents, during this reporting period, remains positive. One mother stated that the team really cared about my child and offered him lots of support. The same mother felt that she had a positive relationship with team members.

The feedback from another parent was positive in that she feels her daughter is listened to and her needs are acted upon.

### Summary:

Nook Lodge is a three-bedroom home on the outskirts of a residential estate, which opened in October 2020. Team members are established and making good progress in terms of their achievements. The outcome of the recent Ofsted report was good in all three sections which is an improvement on the previous one. However, missing incidents have increased, together with critical incidents and notifications to Ofsted, albeit this is due to the difficulties exhibited by a young person who moved out in August 2022 and a young person who moved in, in August 2022. Despite the difficulties, team members remain committed and supportive of the young people and thrive to build upon their progress to ensure cared for young people have similar opportunities to any other child.

The three young people, although of differing ages, interests, and views attempt to be respectful of each other however, like any other young people they sometimes struggle to always remain positive.

Positive feedback has been received from two of the three young people's family (there is a No Contact Order in place for the remaining young person), and all professionals involved with the young people, regarding the care they receive. No significant concerns have been raised.

The team at Nook Lodge support the young people to access education, attend health appointments and learn new skills to develop their independence for moving on. The team listen to and respond to the needs of the young people to evidence that they genuinely care about them.

The team approach issues, with the young people, sensitively and therapeutically, with support from external agencies.

The recommendations from the Regulation 44 visits, documented above, were accepted by the manager, and implemented within timescales. The management team and all team members remain committed to the young people, they acknowledge and celebrate the young people's achievements and accept that they are individuals with differing skills/needs.

The fabric of the home at Nook Lodge is of a very good standard internally and externally and is well maintained. The home is decorated and furnished to good standard in a modern style, with a homely family feel, to include the newly refurbished kitchen.

## 9. Monument View

Monument View Children’s Home remains approved for up to six young people of either gender, aged from 11 to 17 years. It is situated on a large plot of land within the Shiney Row area of Sunderland. Monument View provides residential care for up to six young people of either gender. In terms of management structure there have been no changes in relation to the senior team, this reporting period. The management team have continued to positively support and encourage team members to successfully achieve the best outcomes for the young people in a safe and nurturing environment.

Ofsted Judgement	4 <sup>th</sup> / 5 <sup>th</sup> May 2021	6 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2022
Overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Requires improvement	Sustained effectiveness
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement	Sustained effectiveness
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement	Sustained effectiveness
<b>Overall Judgement</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>Sustained effectiveness</b>

Three requirements were made:

*The quality and purpose of the care standard is that children receive care from staff who – understand the children’s home’s overall aims and outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children’s needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to – ensure that staff – protect and promote each child’s welfare; treat each child with dignity and respect; help each child to understand and manage the impact of any experience of abuse or neglect; help each child to develop resilience and skills that prepare the child to return home, to live in a new placement or to live independently as an adult; and provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably. (Regulation 6(1)(a)(b), (2)(b)(ii)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii)). This specifically relates to cleanliness of children’s bedrooms*

*The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children (“a quality of care review”) at least once every 6 months. The registered person must – supply to HMCI a copy of the quality of care review report within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed. (Regulation 45 (1) (4)(a)).*

*The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure – that staff – 6 February 2022 Inspection report for children’s home: 1254843 6 assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child’s relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(v)).*

Two recommendations were made:

*The registered person should ensure that there is a workforce plan which details the processes and the agreed timescales for the staff to achieve induction, probation and any core training (such as safeguarding, health and safety and mandatory qualifications). The plan should be updated to include any new training and qualifications completed by the staff while they are working at the home and should be used to record the ongoing training and continuing professional development needs of the staff, including the home's manager. (@Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)*

*The registered person should ensure that case records are kept up to date and are signed and dated by the author on each entry. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)*

Within the reporting period Monument View has provided care for the following numbers of children and young people:

Apr 22	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22	Aug 22	Sep 22
6	6	5	5	6	6
Oct 22	Nov 22	Dec 22	Jan 23	Feb 23	Mar 23
6	6	6	6	6	6

Six young people have been cared for by the team at Monument View for most of this reporting period. Three young people have moved out of the home in line with their care or pathway plans and three young people have moved in. The matching of young people who move into the home is carefully considered in respect of the individual needs of each young person and the potential impact the young person moving in may have on the dynamics of the other young people living at the home.

Six boys currently reside at Monument View, aged between 14 and 17 years. They all have differing needs and interests which are supported by the team.

No of admissions in reporting period	No of discharges in reporting period	No of missing incidents	No of missing incidents over 24hrs	Number of recommendations in the reporting period
3	3	11	1	13

Eleven missing episodes were recorded this reporting period, an increase of one when compared to the previous reporting period. One of the missing episodes was more than 24 hours.

Thirteen recommendations were made during this reporting period, a decrease of four when compared to the previous year. Examples of the recommendations include updating all documents to include risk assessment, individual crisis support plan and home plans. As good practice, plans should be updated monthly and, on these occasions, they were out-of-date by two months.



There were no records of restraints this reporting period a decrease of two when compared to the previous reporting period. The home has implemented a trauma informed approach, team members do not wish to risk re-traumatising young people to the experiences, they may have had within their birth families prior to being cared for. Team members believe restraint should only be used if a young person is serious threat to themselves or others.

The young people living at Monument View attend a range of mainstream and alternative education and training and all have friendship groups in their own communities. The young people can discuss their wishes and feelings independently via the Mind of My Own application but also with Residential Care Workers, Social Workers, Independent Reviewing Officer's, and the Regulation 44 Visitor. During Regulation 44 visits the Visitor spoke to at least one young person to discuss how they feel they are being cared for and if they wanted anything to change for them about how they are cared for at the home.

Unannounced Regulation 44 visits were undertaken, every month, during the period of April 2022 to March 2023. The visits took place at tea-time/early evening and daytime during school holidays. Unannounced visits are carried out to assist the Visitor in having the experience of the day to day running of the home and the times chosen are to support the Visitor to meet the young people in their home to seek their views.

Type of Notification	Reported Incidents 2021-22	Reported Incidents 2022-23	Variance
Critical incident	16	14	-2
Ofsted notification	14	13	-1

During this reporting period 14 critical incidents were recorded, and 13 notifications were made to Ofsted. This compares to 16 critical incidents and 14 notifications during the previous reporting period, therefore a noted reduction.


**Voices of Children and Young people**



One young person is particularly happy with how staff support his family time with his dad. He reported that team members collect his dad and return him to his home. The parent has limited funds so is supported to maintain family time with his son, and he is given his tea.

Three of the six young people at Monument View are seeking asylum, therefore have additional needs in terms of their culture, asylum status, maintaining family time and dietary needs. The team at Monument View have gone above and beyond to ensure that the young people have everything they need to support their cultural and religious beliefs.

## Voice of a Parent



*"I feel supported by the team here, they help me to visit my child and are very welcoming".*

A young person's father told the visitor he finds the team members at the home very supportive and caring towards his son, also welcoming and kind to him, during family time.

Other parents have referred to how good communication is and that they are updated and informed of their young person's needs via telephone as well as the monthly summary which is posted to their home.

## Summary

The home has enjoyed a very settled year both in terms of the team and young people. The team present as happy and devoted to the young people, resulting in positive outcomes for them. The young people appear happy and settled and continue to be cared for in a safe and nurturing manner. The voice of the young people is strong, they are supported to make themselves heard and some participate in various groups to share their views more widely. This continues to be work in progress and the visitor will continue to assist the home's manager in driving improvements to recognise excellent care and achieve a good judgement. It is hoped these figures and what underpins them is recognised in the homes next inspection by Ofsted. Staff at the home continue to work with Dr Christie to further improve the implementation of trauma informed practice

## **10. Analysis**

All homes have been visited by Ofsted this reviewing period. Four (Grasswell House, Monument View, Nook Lodge and Revelstoke Road) were judged as Good. One (Colombo Road) remained Outstanding for the past five visits.

The Visitors have seen the homes go from strength to strength. The qualified, experienced teams care for the young people to a very high standard, they strive to safeguard them and have their best interest at heart. All homes work closely with Dr Christie, who advises team members about trauma informed approach. This approach supports the quality of care provided to the young people, with positive outcomes, to include their emotional well-being. The young people feel listened to, included, empowered and cared for. They are happy, settled and developing good relationships with team members.

All young people seeking asylum are being supported to an excellent standard. Team members are thoughtful, creative, keen to learn and progress the plans of young people with additional needs. In terms of vulnerabilities team members are supportive of those young people who identify with the LGBT+ community. Their skills are impressive and their willingness to learn more is remarkable.

Good and Outstanding homes understand the need for the young people to have meaningful relationships with their family members and this report identifies a real strength in team members. The views of the parents and professionals are positive, throughout this reviewing period there have been no negative comments about the teams care of the young people, quite the contrary comments

have been positive and have highlighted the good and quality care provided to the young people. Together for Children is proud of the approach of team members in the five homes.

## 11. Service Review & Development

The annual programme of themed audits continues to be in place, this is to support and encourage the homes to continuously consider the children's homes regulations (2015, updated 2018).

The Regulation 44 Visitor has continued to attend quarterly residential management meetings to share learning and to hear feedback with regards to the Regulation 44 visits.

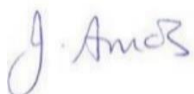
The Regulation 44 Visitor continues to liaise with the Mind of my Own team to support the young people to share what's working well, what's not so good and what can be done to help make their home better.

The Regulation 44 Visitor is of the opinion that the young people in all five homes are cared for to a good standard. Regulation 45 reports are received within timescales, are detailed, and assist the Visitor in completing the Regulation 44 report. Reports are now saved in the young people's Teams Folder and on the Liquid Logic system. The Visitor navigates both systems to access information needed for the Regulation 44 Report.

Currently there are five registered homes however, there are plans for a further three homes to open, to include Maple Cottage, Claremont and Manor Drive. Timescales vary however, it is anticipated that the three homes will open within the next reviewing period.

**Jackie Amos**

Regulation 44 Officer



**Date: 06.07.23**





# Together for Children Adoption Sunderland NMS 25 Report 2022/23

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Together for Children Adoption Sunderland has been in operation since 31st March 2017) and provides Adoption services on behalf of Sunderland City Council.

The main priorities of Together for Children Adoption Sunderland are:

- To achieve forever homes for cared for children for whom adoption is the Care Plan, with appropriate approved adopters, matched according to the children's specific needs and circumstances and within appropriate timescales.
- To prepare, assess and support prospective adopters who are likely to be able to meet the needs of the children waiting for families across the RAA, North East and nationally.
- To provide post placement and post Order support to adoptive families.
- Birth Record Counselling for adopted adults
- Birth Family Support for families whose children are adopted

The needs of the children requiring forever homes are the agency's paramount consideration.

Adopt Coast to Coast launched on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021. Durham County Council and Together for Children/Sunderland are the spokes that continue to deliver their local authorities statutory adoption functions. They do so under the coordination and support of a Head of Service who has have overall responsibility for quality management and practice oversight. The recruitment and associated activity which includes the website, Facebook etc is managed in the Hub by a dedicated Communications and Marketing Manager.

The shared vision -

*Coast to Coast will deliver high quality, adoption services across the three local authority areas, raising performance to the levels of the highest performing Adoption Agencies and improving outcomes for children across the region.*

## 2 LEGISLATION, REGULATIONS AND GUIDANCE

There is a range of Legislation, Regulations and Guidance, which influence the working of Adoption Agencies. These include:

- The Children Acts of 1989 and 2004
- The Care Standards Act 2000
- The Adoption and Children Act 2002 (revised 2011)
- The Adoption Agency Regulations 2005 (amended 2011)
- The Children and Adoption Act 2006
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010
- Adopters Charter 2011
- Adoption Statutory Guidance 2011 and 2013
- The Adoption Agencies (Panel and Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2012
- Action Plan for Adoption Tackling Delay 2012
- The Children and Families Act 2014
- The Adoption Minimum Standards 2014

### **3 KEY REQUIREMENTS OF LOCAL AUTHORITY ADOPTION SERVICES**

The key requirements of all Local Authority Adoption Services have not changed significantly since the formation of Together for Children Adoption Sunderland. These are that:

- The focus is firmly on the needs of the child, whose needs will be paramount in all decisions relating to adoption
- Highly skilled professionals lead a quality service delivered to National Minimum Standards
- A permanency plan is identified for all cared for children within four months of them coming into Local Authority care. (This may be a return home, or any of a range of different permanent home options, one of which is adoption)



- Focused effort goes into finding permanent families for all cared for children waiting to be adopted
- A range of potential adopters are welcomed and assessed efficiently in an open and fair way
- Children and their adoptive families have easy access to adoption support services

## **4 ADOPTION SUPPORT SERVICES**

Support to the prospective adopters assessed by Together for Children Adoption Sunderland is provided by Social Workers within the Service from the point of a child/children going to live with them and up to three years post Order.

After 3 years, the support needs of the adoptive family transfer to the Local Authority where they reside. Though many adopters live in Sunderland's local authority boundaries the conclusion of the Regional Adoption Agency programme may see an increase in such services being delivered to Sunderland's previously cared for children by the other Adopt Coast to Coast spokes. Likewise, year on year children placed from outside the region with adoptive families living in Sunderland and approved by other adoption agencies become our responsibility under the 3-year rule.

Birth families have been provided with support services from ARC Adoption Northeast (ARC), this has ensured that independent support is available and is offered via a service level agreement between Together for Children Adoption Sunderland and ARC.

Access to their records for adopted adults and counselling support is provided by Social Workers within the service. This remains the same and increase of 9 respectively on the previous reporting period.

Theraplay from within the adoption team has been provided for 2 children. The therapeutic training across the staff group also includes DDP, therapeutic life story work and the Solihull Parenting programme. In this period all staff have completed the Solihull Parenting programme to support the service's ambition to build a local therapeutic offer for families, both pre and post adoption and in doing so reduce the reliance on commissioned services through the Adoption Support Fund.

We operate our Post-box Service and currently there are 516 active post-box files. This is a increase (14) on the previous period, and this is in keeping with an increase in the number of children placed in this reporting period. The overseeing of post-box

correspondence and responding to enquiries is a whole team task undertaken on duty.

<b>Post Adoption Assessments</b>	<b>No completed</b>	<b>Within 6 weeks</b>	<b>Over 6 weeks</b>	<b>% completed in timescales*</b>
17-18	66	42	24	64%
18-19	45	29	16	64%
19-20	41	35	6	85%
20-21	17	7	10	41%
21-22	69	60	9	87%
22-23	71	57	14	80%
*NB this 6-week timescale is set by TfC, as a measure of best practice				

The requests for post adoption support have decreased slightly on the previous year's figures.

Reviews of post adoption assessments are included on LCS, so reports are able to evidence this statutory aspect of adoption practice.

## **5 The National Minimum Standards – Adoption**

The Adoption National Minimum Standards came into force in April 2003 and were updated in April 2011. Local Authority adoption agencies are expected to fully comply with the Minimum Standards which cover all areas of an agency's responsibilities and function.

Together for Children Adoption Sunderland's procedures are fully compliant with both the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (revised February 2011) and the Adoption National Minimum Standards.

Following the launch of the Regional Adoption Agency a revised Statement of Purpose was completed and was provided to Ofsted and is available on our website and Adopt Coast to Coast's.

## **6 Organisation**

The ongoing work of the Service is monitored by Together for Children's Board.

The Service has all of the necessary key documents in place including:

- Statement of Purpose

- Adopt Coast to Coast’s Recruitment Strategy for Prospective Adopters
- The Service has comprehensive written procedures.

## 7 STAFFING

Current staffing levels

The current team consists of:

- Responsible Individual - Director of Social Care – Full time
- ADM – Head of Service – Full time
- Registered Manager and Panel Advisor – Full Time
- Service Manager and Adoption Support Services Advisor (ASSA) – Service Manager – Full time
- Assistant Team Manager (1 posts) (F/T)
- Adoption Social Workers (3 posts) (F/T)
- Adoption Social Workers (3 posts) (.8 post)
- Adoption Social Workers (2 post) (.6 post)
- Administrator (Letterbox) (1 post) (1 x .5 posts)
- Senior Panel Administrator (1 posts) (.5 post)
- Team Administrator (1 post) (.5 post)

Team administrators and Panel administrators are centrally managed as part of the Together for Children Sunderland business support.

Business support is provided to Together for Children Adoption Sunderland from the business support team within Together for Children.

## 8 STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND RECRUITMENT STRATEGY

Together for Children Adoption Sunderland has a Statement of Purpose and is referenced in the Adopt Coast to Coast Statement of Purpose. The hub lead in the recruitment of prospective adopters and the dedicated Communications and Marketing Manager works closely with the comms leads in each spoke. The recruitment strategy is regularly reviewed to ensure it is meeting the recruitment needs of the spokes. Together for Children Adoption Sunderland are responsible for following all enquiries received by them and a comprehensive written plan is in place

and is compliant with all current legislation, regulations, standards and best practice guidance.

The Statement of Purpose is due for an annual update in June 2023.

## **9 ADOPTION TIMELINESS DATA ANALYSIS**

Together for Children Adoption Sunderland monitor the child's journey from the child becoming Looked After to being adopted in line with the DfE threshold.

- The number of days from a child becoming Looked After to the Decision to Place for Adoption has decreased by 6 days to 235 from the figure reported in the previous report.
- In respect of the number of days from the date of Decision to Place to Placement Order date, this has reduced by 10 days to 56. This is very positive performance.
- The number of days from Placement Order date to Date of Matching increased from 151 days to 215. This is an increase however during this reporting period there have been more children matched who have complex needs, children who are older as well as more groups of 2 and 3 children, which takes more planning.
- The date of a child starting to be Looked After to the date of placement for Adoption decreased from 462 days to 423 days. This is very positive performance.

The practice within Together for Children continues to be child led and there has been an increase in Best Interests decisions have increased from 29 in the previous reporting year to 34 this reporting year. Placement Orders have slightly decreased by 4 to 28 this can still be attributed particularly at the beginning of this reporting period, to the Somerset Judgement and which the majority of adoption agencies have experienced delays in the making of Placement Orders, the matching of children and the granting of Adoption Orders which comes on the back of the remaining Court delays following COVID.

### **Adoptive family approvals:**

During the period 2022/23 a total of 28 prospective adopters were approved, an increase of 2 on the previous year. 2 of the prospective adopters were adopting for a

second time and as such were progressed onto Stage 2 of the adopter recruitment process.

### **Timeliness of adopters' assessments:**

Of the 28 approved prospective adopters who entered Stage 1, none were completed within stage 1 timescales, this is a decrease on the previous year's 35%. For all of the prospective adopters who did not complete stage 1 in statutory timescales, the delays were linked to DBS, medical timescales and further exploration regarding medical and mental health being needed. The timeliness of Stage 1 remains a national issue for the reasons highlighted above.

Of the above 28 approved, 10 prospective adopter Stage Two Assessments was not completed within the 4-month timescale. The reason for this was that for one the adopters required their medicals to be redone as they were completed as TFC foster carers and were unable to arrange this appointment with their GP. Additional Overseas checks were required on another couple, one couple we had to delay going to panel as the male applicant had not advised us that he was still smoking, one was 1 day over the 4 months another 4 days over, we have had to have review Adoption Medicals completed on a couple of these couple's as new information became known during assessment that needed to be explored further and updated prior to attending panel. We have subsequently adapted both the midway review paperwork and quality assurance processes to monitor the timeliness of stage 2 more closely moving forward.

In this period, 34 children were matched and placed an increase of 2 on the previous year. The Somerset Judgement has had widespread impact across RAAs and the spokes in Adopt Coast to Coast. There have been 32 Adoption Orders granted within this reporting period. This is an decrease of 4 on the previous year. We have still experienced issues with court's availability particularly in the earlier parts of this reporting period due to the ongoing impact of the Somerset Judgement and the pandemic.

## **10 ACHIEVEMENTS 2021/22**

### **Children and Adopters**

The above data demonstrates the wide-ranging progress in improving outcomes for children and prospective adopters. This is even more impressive in the context of the complex physical needs of some of these children. As 7 of the 34 children matched were placed with prospective adopters approved by other agencies this increases the workload for staff and it is to their credit.

Together for Children Adoption Sunderland has a consistent enhanced support offer:

- £196,861.28 has been claimed from the ASF following 61 successful applications.
- Disruptions –  
17/18 – 2, 18/19 – 0, 19/20 – 1, 20/21 – 0, 21/22 – 1, 22/23 - 2

The thorough assessments of prospective adopters, the strong matching practice and the rigorous oversight of the Adoption Panel and the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) have resulted in only 2 disruptions in this period. Disruption meetings were held, and the practice developments actioned by the Agency.

### **Engagement with Adopters**

Together for Children Adoption Sunderland is mindful of the benefits of engaging with prospective and approved adopters around Service Development at all levels. The positive track record has continued despite the challenges of this year and Microsoft Teams has been utilised for virtual support groups. Regular activity packs for children are well received.

Adopt Coast to Coast's Stakeholder Engagement Strategy sets out the RAAs activity to gather the views and lived experience of enquirers, prospective adopters, and adopters. The experiences and views shared through the engagement activity is shared across the year with each spoke and this supports Together for Children in reviewing their day-to-day practice alongside developing the adoption practice across the RAA.

In addition to local activity, the RAA is part of a national marketing group and the experiences of mystery shoppers engaging with Adopt Coast to Coast and the spokes is now provided quarterly.

### **Engagement with Children**

- Crafty Kidz is an informal support group offering craft-based activities to children and their families from the start of them living with their forever family. This has been re-established and the yearly dates have now been set.
- An adopted young person is an established member of Together for Children's Change Council.
- We complete an annual 'survey monkey' to seek the views of adopted children/young people on specific issues. This service allows for the completion of anonymous surveys.

## **11 OUTSOURCED SERVICES**

## **Inter-country Adoption**

Together for Children Adoption Sunderland has established a contract with The Inter-country Adoption Centre (<http://www.icacentre.org.uk/>) to provide Inter-country Adoption Services to residents living within the Sunderland area who want to adopt from abroad.

The Inter-country Adoption centre (IAC) provides counselling and information to applicants enquiring about adoption from abroad. The IAC also undertakes the preparation and home study assessments of applicants who decide to pursue a formal inter-country adoption application and on completion applicants are considered by the IAC's Adoption Panel.

## **Birth Family Support**

The contract with ARC ceased on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2023 and the new contract will be undertaken by PAC-UK. The contract with ARC covered support for birth families in engaging with post-box arrangements, facilitating the contribution of birth family members in life-story work, supporting birth family members in terms of their engagement at all stages of the adoption process, support birth family members meeting adoptive parents. Birth families are advised of this independent service, and where they indicate a wish to be supported, a referral is made to ARC on their behalf. Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, 50 birth family members were engaged with the service, of this number 42 were ongoing referrals for previous years. The activity reporting from ARC for the final quarter indicated 47 birth family members actively worked with them and 4 families who did not engage. Quarterly performance and monitoring meetings have been embedded to ensure the service is meeting the needs of birth families and offers value for money. Feedback from birth families has been requested sooner than the end of intervention with the hopes of improving the response rate.

## **12 NON-AGENCY ADOPTION**

Together for Children Adoption Sunderland continues to receive a steady flow of interest from stepparents in respect of in-family adoptions.

In-family applications that relate to children who are within their birth families and not in local authority care are allocated for completion of the necessary enquiries and Court Report/s when notification is received from the Court. It is usual for contact to be made prior to the applicant registering their application with the Court and support/advice is given as appropriate. The decision not to allocate until formal request from the Court is made is in line with the number of applicants that expressed an interest and then did not pursue via the Court.

In this reporting period, Together for Children Adoption Sunderland have had 20 referrals and completed 10 reports.

## **13 THE INSPECTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY ADOPTION AGENCIES**

Together for Sunderland Adoption Sunderland was inspected as part of OFSTED's Single Inspection Framework for Child Protection and Looked After Children in June 2021. This framework was introduced in September 2013 and includes the inspection of local authorities' fostering and adoption functions. Adoption Agency work is given a separate judgment within the wider inspection framework.

Together for Children received an overall rating of outstanding within this inspection with Adoption Services being judged as 'outstanding.'

In addition, As Together for Children Adoption Sunderland is registered as a Voluntary Adoption Agency it received an OFSTED inspection relating solely to the Adoption Services that it is registered to provide in November 2022. The agency received an overall 'good' judgement.

## **14 COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS**

In the period 1st April 2021 – 31st March 2022 there was 1 complaint relating to Together for Children Adoption Sunderland. There were 9 compliments received.

## **15 CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES FOR THE YEAR AHEAD**

To continue to support the development of relationships between staff across Adopt Coast to Coast, recognising that these relationships will contribute to our shared vision.

To work collaboratively with our partner in Adopt Coast to Coast to improve consistency of practice particularly in the recruitment of prospective adopters, linking, matching and introductions.

To continue to improve the excellent record of the service regarding timeliness.

To continue to enhance the therapeutic support that is provided by the team.

To work with the hub in developing consistent feedback/engagement opportunities from children and young people to help shape Adopt Coast to Coast and the 2 spokes.



To engage in the early permanence, pan regional project to improve the opportunities for children to be placed earlier across the North East.

## **16 CONCLUSIONS**

Together for Children Adoption Sunderland continues to perform highly and this was recognised in the OFSTED inspection. We continue to endeavour to achieve timely forever homes for children requiring adoption through the Link Maker portal for Adopt Coast to Coast. Early Permanence is considered for all children and there is a strong consistent practice across Together for Children.

Positive working relationships are well established between the Adoption Service and the locality teams within Together for Children and shared planning can be clearly evidenced.

The feedback received from adopters engaged with Together for Children Adoption Sunderland is generally very positive.

Michelle Ash

Team Manager Adoption

May 2023



## Fostering Service Monitoring Report Form (England) for NMS 25 and Regulation 35 reports

### 1. Introduction

Name of fostering service	Together for Children Fostering Sunderland
Period covered by the report	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2022 – 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2023
Name of person completing the form	Daniel Kenny
Position in the fostering service	Registered Manager
Date form was completed	23 <sup>rd</sup> May 2023

Date of last Ofsted inspection	September 2022
Overall judgement	Good

#### Statutory requirements for improvement (with dates)

If any of the event listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 7 takes place in relation to a fostering agency, the registered person must without delay notify the persons or bodies indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table.

Any notification made in accordance with this regulation which is given orally must be given in writing. (Regulation 35)

Due date – 14<sup>th</sup> October 2022

#### Action undertaken to meet those requirements

This requirement was fulfilled within the necessary timescale. The outstanding notifications were submitted as requested.

#### Recommendations for improvement (with dates)

- The registered person should ensure that they implement a proportionate approach to any risk assessment. In particular, ensure that safe care policies are reflective of children's emerging needs and known risks. Children's risk assessments should explicitly reference where risks to children reduce or increase. (Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards, 4.5)

Safe Caring Policy's are a key document in ensuring children and young people are safely cared for. All fostering family's have a household Safe Caring Policy and individual children and young people Safe Caring Policy's are also in place. Once risks change or serious incidents occur, Safe Caring Policy's are reviewed and updated if necessary.

- The registered person should ensure that foster carer's supervisions have a clear purpose and provide the opportunity to supervise the foster carer's work, ensure that the foster carer is meeting the child's needs, taking into account the child's wishes and feelings, and ensure they offer support and a framework to assess the carer's performance and develop their competencies and skills. Foster carers' files should include detailed records of supervisory meetings. (Fostering Services: national minimum standards, 21.8)

Within this reporting period the foster carer supervision template has been reviewed and updated. Consultation with The Fostering Network has been held and this was a focus of a Team Development Day in November 2022. This update is in place to ensure increased consistency across the service and to ensure that care supervision records are fully reflective of the discussion that has taken place.

- The registered person should ensure that they regularly monitor and quality assure all records kept by the service to ensure that they are compliant with the service's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Ensure that immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring. (Fostering Services: national minimum standards, 25.2)

In this reporting period the fostering service has implemented a regular dip-sampling programme of quality assurance. This programme of quality assurance is evidenced by the monitoring of an action log and documented within the foster carers electronic record.

- The registered person should ensure that the staff's supervision evaluates staff's practice and fostering activity and to ensure that it is consistent with the 2011 regulations, national minimum standards and with the agency's own policies and procedures. (Fostering Services: national minimum standards, 25.3)

In this reporting period greater emphasis around the recording of staff supervision has been introduced. Fostering Social Workers personal supervision template has been amended to offer the opportunity for the recording of greater evidence of reflection which the supervision session.

- The registered person should ensure that information about a child is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future. In particular, ensure that when tracking children's progress there is a clear evaluation of the progress that children make from their starting points. (Fostering Services: national minimum standards, 26.6)

The fostering service will develop a report to be shared with the child in line with their cared for review frequency. This document will be made available for children and young people and accessible to their communication needs. It is expected that this development will be rolled out from April 2023.

Action undertaken to meet those recommendations

See above

## 2. Summary data

<b>Foster carers</b>		
Expressions of interest	April – June 2022 - 0 July – Sep 2022 - 5 Oct – Dec 2022 -3 Jan – March 2023 - 3	
Assessments completed	There has been a total of 11 assessments completed within the reporting period.	
Assessments ongoing	At the time of writing this report, May 2023, there are two assessments of mainstream carers on going.	
Approvals	Connected Carers – 7 Mainstream Carers –11 Long Team Permanence at Panel – 10	
Reviews completed	There have been 182 foster carer reviews completed within the reporting period.	
Foster carer training	ADHD Fostering	1
	Attachment And Bonding Advanced Level Fostering	1
	Attachment and Child Development Fostering	2
	Autism Spectrum Disorder Fostering	4
	Caring For Sexually Abused Children Advanced Level Fostering	4
	Caring for Sexually Abused Children Fostering	4
	Child Development Advanced Level Fostering	6
	Child Development Fostering	3
	Child Exploitation Fostering	1
	Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Foundation Level Fostering Mandatory	6
	Child Sexual Exploitation Fostering	3
	Connected Carer Initial Workshop	2
	Contact and Birth Families Fostering	6
	County Lines Fostering	3
	Cyberbullying Advanced Level Fostering	2
	Cyber Security Fostering	2
	De-Escalation And Young People Non-Physical Fostering	2
	Equality, Diversity and Cultural Competence Fostering	1
	Female Genital Mutilation Awareness Fostering	2
	First Aid Emergency Fostering	5
	First Aid Paediatric Fostering	5
	Food Safety And Hygiene Advanced Fostering	1
	Gangs And County Lines Fostering	1
	Health And Nutrition Fostering	1
	Health And Safety Fostering	1
	How To Save Money In A Cost Of Living Crisis Children Services	1
	Impact of Abuse	4
Impact of Parental Substance Abuse Fostering	1	
Infection Control Fostering	1	
Internet Safety Advanced Level Fostering	1	

	Internet Safety Fostering	1
	Life Story Work Fostering	13
	Managing Allegations Fostering	9
	Medication Advanced Fostering	2
	Medication Foundation Fostering	1
	Moving Forward With Delegated Authority Fostering	4
	Online Safety Fostering	2
	Other	8
	Reporting And Recording Advanced Level Fostering	5
	Reporting And Recording Fostering	4
	Risk Management And Safer Caring Fostering	3
	Safeguarding Adults Level 1 Fostering	2
	Safeguarding Adults Level 2 Fostering	1
	Safeguarding Children Level 1 Fostering	2
	Secure Attachment and Bonding Fostering	7
	Self-Harming Behaviours Fostering	2
	Solihull Approach	2
	Support Group	26
	Support Group - Coffee Morning	24
	Support Group – Toddler Group	8
	Support Group - Vokol	12
	Taking Care of Yourself & Each Other Fostering	1
	Using Basic Theraplay Techniques Fostering	5
Foster carer support groups	Monthly support groups, including guest speakers have taken place each month, face to face, in the reporting period. These support groups are offered in addition to various other engagement events.	
Terminations of approval	We have had 18 foster carers resign over the reporting period, 0 of these resignations were because of the agency raising standards of care concerns, and all were for a range of personal reasons.	
Number of foster carers	174 fostering households	
<b>Comment, analysis, and any action taken</b>		
<p>TfC have continued to invest significantly into our online training programme and the uptake on the variety of courses has been high. We have consulted our carers regarding their preference in respect of accessing training and the majority of carers have preferred a hybrid approach to online and in person training. The service has been able to respond to this feedback and whilst continuing to offer a significant number of training courses online, in person training has continued including the facilitation of paediatric first aid and Solihull Therapeutic Parenting, TfC Fostering’s behaviour management programme.</p> <p>Within the reporting period, we strengthened our relationships with Fostering Network and have been able to successfully embed two Mockingbird Family Model constellations.</p>		

In addition to this, we have continued to see the benefits of a permanent full-time consultant child psychologist, Dr Harrison, to the service which has been very well received by both carers and Social Workers alike. Dr Harrison is currently supporting the service with the roll out of enhanced training to foster carers in order to support their training and development alongside the offer of regular consultation sessions with foster carers and advice to Social Workers in respect of a range of issues.

<b>Children and young people</b>	
Referrals	155
New placements	95
Placements ended	52
Unplanned endings	12
Number of children	155
<b>Comment, analysis, and any action taken</b>	
<p>Demand upon the service remains high with the requests for older children and sibling groups remaining challenging to find homes for. Performance colleagues are able to provide us with detailed breakdowns of unplanned endings and disruptions will allow us to monitor these closely and learn from each event. The number of children and young people received for referral within this reporting period are from Together for Children Sunderland as the placing authority.</p>	



### 3. Detailed data

#### Compliance with care plan

Within the reporting period, the Foster Carer Supervision template has been further updated to allow for greater reflection between FSW (Fostering Social Worker) and the foster care to reflect a Signs of Safety/Success/Wellbeing approach and learning from our most recent Ofsted inspection in September 2022. This should ensure, that the carer is clear about the care plan for each child, and that the child is aware, subject to their age and understanding within this model of working which is the model of practice within the TfC wider organisation. It also considers if the carer is supporting each child to contribute their views, and know their plan as well as identifying if the carer contributes to the care planning process via attendance at meeting's etc.

The Fostering Service has continued to work closely with the IRO service to ensure compliance with care plans, the IRO manager and Fostering Registered Manager are in regular contact and any issues/concerns are raised and addressed. The Fostering Service currently manually collates data on unplanned endings; however, this information is also monitored via Foster Carer Reviews with a report by the FSW having managerial oversight within the FSW's report.

During the reporting period 5 young people have moved on to access 'staying put' arrangements and 31 children have moved on to live with prospective adopters.

**Accidents, injuries and illnesses**

Evidence of notification under schedule 7 regarding death of a child, serious illness or accident, or outbreak of infectious disease

Within the annual reporting period, there have been 16 schedule 7 notifications regarding serious illness or accident or outbreak of infectious disease. All notifications relate to instances of self-harm, broken bones or hospitalisation.

Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided

Foster Carers are continued to be supported to ensure that any serious incidents are reported without delay to the Fostering Service.

**Medication, medical treatment and first aid administered**

Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided

The Foster Carer Supervision template includes prompts for discussion around medication, medical treatment and first aid. Together for Children has maintained its relationship with The Big Initiative training provider and carers, Fostering Social Workers and Panel Members can now access a range of training programmes via this tool.

Mandatory Paediatric First Aid training is held and repeated every three years for all carers and can be extended to adult household members should the need arise. Within *The Big Initiative*, our online training platform, a significant increase in the online training offer to support carers understanding of these issues, including the safe handling and storage of medication has been provided. Carers have welcomed this addition to our training offer and the return of in person training to cover paediatric first aid.

**Measures of control, restraint or discipline**

Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided

In addition to the training programmes available via The Big Initiative, we have continued in the roll out of the Solihull Parenting Programme having now trained over 200 carers within this approach.

TfC have embedded Mockingbird Family Model within our work delivering foster care, this now includes 15 fostering families and over 35 children and young people with an aim of providing a high level of peer support to the carers and normalising the care experience for those children and young people. We have recently received our first annual data analysis report from Fostering Network which will provide the summary of the costs saved, avoided and overall impact of the model which is currently being considered. We expect to launch our third constellation within the second part of 2023.

<b>Complaints in relation to children/about foster carers, and their outcomes</b>	
Summary	<p>There have been no schedule 7 notifications regarding a serious complaint about a foster carer.</p> <p>During the reporting period there have been 31 compliments submitted to Together for Children's Compliments and Complaints Department.</p>
Evidence of notification under schedule 7 regarding any serious complaint about a foster carer, or information being provided to the Disclosure and Barring Service	
<p>Within the current reporting period we have submitted no notifications to the DBS service.</p>	

<b>Allegations or suspicions of abuse or neglect, and investigation outcomes</b>	
Evidence	<p>There have been 11 foster carers referred to the Designated Officer within the reporting period. 9 of these related to mainstream foster carers and 2 to Connected Carers. Of those 11, 4 cases met the threshold for Designated Officer involvement and 7 were recorded advice given only and did not meet threshold.</p> <p>Of the 4 cases that were accepted, all were closed and there are currently no cases being investigated.</p>
Evidence of notification under schedule 7 regarding instigation and outcome of any child protection inquiry, or suspicion/involvement of child in "prostitution"	
<p>There have been 13 schedule 7 notifications submitted due to 'instigation and outcome of any child protection enquiry.'</p>	
Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided	
<p>As a service we continue to embed relationships with the Designated Officer and are introducing regular monitoring and information sharing meetings. This has allowed us to monitor trends and develop an appropriate action plan as required.</p>	

<b>Children missing without permission</b>
Evidence of notification under schedule 7 regarding a child missing from placement
There have been no notifications in this regard.
<b>Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided</b>
Our ability to report using our social care system allows us to receive information in relation to children that go missing, this includes data around the child and the carer with whom they are living. This data is included within the agenda within the monthly management meetings. This data will allow us to identify any themes or trends that may emerge.  Additional training from colleagues who work within the Emergency Duty Team is also provided to carers to assist in their understanding of these issues.

<b>Allegations that a child has committed a serious offence</b>
Evidence of notification under schedule 7 regarding allegations that a child has committed a serious offence
There have been no incidences within the reporting year whereby a child has committed a serious offence and as such no notifications of this regard have been made to Ofsted.

<b>Serious incident necessitating police being called to the foster carer's home</b>
Evidence of notification under schedule 7 regarding a serious incident necessitating police being called to the foster carer's home
There have been 10 notifications made to this regard.

#### 4. Staffing

<b>Summary of staffing position</b>
<p>Registered Manager – Full time Assistant Team Managers – 2 FT Fostering Social Workers – 12 Assistant Fostering Officer – 1FT</p> <p>During the reporting period there have been some staffing changes, however the staff team is currently stable and with full compliment. Any vacancies are immediately advertised and recruited using safer recruitment guidance.</p>
<b>Recruitment of new staff</b>
<p>Recruitment of new staff is undertaken with the support and guidance of the Human Resources Department within Together for Children. HR ensures that appropriate checks are in place and saved on file prior to appointment.</p>
<b>Staff supervision</b>
<p>All staff have a named supervisor and receive monthly personal and case supervision. The TM undertakes ad hoc dip sampling of the supervision records for all staff. The monthly management meeting has a standing agenda item of ‘staffing’ and key points relating to individual staff members are explored within this.</p>
<b>Staff training</b>
<p>The current team plan was developed in September 2022. The plan incorporates a section on staff training and allows team members to influence training that is identified. Within the reporting year staff have also had access to training on Foster Care Supervision, the social care system, signs of safety, Train the trainers in relation to Solihull Parenting Programme (not whole staff team), Mental Health First Aid and Robust Analysis and an Evidence Based Approach Assessment. We have also supported Social Workers within the team to complete their Practice Educator Award’s to support their development and with an aim to further compliment the availability of Social Workers skilled in delivering Theraplay.</p>
<b>Staff appraisals</b>
<p>Staff appraisals are completed annually, and the development of a personal development plan is used throughout the following year. Together for Children have launched Goal Setting targets for all staff, with regular reviews to ensure that these are being maintained and staff development supported.</p>
<b>Staff meetings</b>
<p>Team meetings are held monthly, they are chaired by the TM or an ATM in his absence and minutes are taken on a rota basis by members of the team. Within the</p>

reporting period, team meetings have been held in person to support colleagues as is their preference.

Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided

Staff enjoy having areas of responsibility which they can 'own' and develop. They also appreciate their regular supervision and accessibility of both assistant team managers and the team manager. We work with a whole team approach which is supportive to all. The further established Connected Carer team within the reporting period has continued to expand the benefits of this specialised service and these are continuing to feed into the wider service.

## 5. Fostering panel

### Summary of panel

The Fostering Panel has continued to function at full capacity during the reporting year. The Panel Chair, Panel Advisor and Panel Members have remained committed to their roles during this time and therefore as a panel the meetings have been quorate with a least 5 members in attendance at each panel, despite the changes to the regulations for quoracy.

Additional panels have been facilitated to meet the increased demand for cases to be heard, alongside the panel's planned introduction of Permanence Panels to consider the permanence planning for children 13 years and under. Fostering Panel are currently exploring how the use of alternative platforms such as Microsoft Forms can be utilised to increase the frequency of panel feedback received to further develop the panel experience for Social Workers and applicants.

### Panel meetings

There has been 22 Fostering Panels held during the reporting period.



Cases considered and recommendations

- Connected Carers – 8 Cases considered, recommendation to approve 7 cases and not approve 1.
- Mainstream Foster Carers – 11, recommendation to approve all 11 carers
- Regulation 25's – 31, recommendation to approve 29, 2 deferred
- First Reviews – 9, recommendation on-going approval for all 9 carers
- Mainstream resignations – 18

Panel feedback

Evaluation forms completed by the applicants, the assessing Social Workers and where appropriate the child's allocated Social Worker in respect of their attendance at the Fostering Panel continues to be requested and the responses are collated and to date this has been largely positive. Applicants refer to being made to feel at ease by a professional but friendly panel, where time is taken to listen to their views.

Training and appraisals

Panel Members appraisals have taken place virtually and all Panel Members have engaged in their appraisals by August 2022. Panel business meetings have been held to inform the panel development, as has Panel Members training.

Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided

In respect of actions taken to improve care, any concerns in respect of safeguarding have been reported to senior managers and ADM. Panel have monitored that the Safer Care Policy for children living with Regulation 24 carers has been child specific and not generic, within the documents provided to panel. This has been a focus in terms of safeguarding and when considering the Voice of the Child. Finally, for further development to feedback to panel the outcome of any case reviews as identified by panel members.

## 6. Consultation with children and young people

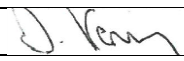
Evidence	<p>An online survey using 'survey monkey' is completed annually with both carers and children living with our foster carers. The feedback is used to inform decisions relating to service development.</p> <p>We have been able to further embed our children and young people's group, VOKOL (Voice of Kids Our Lives) children and young people group within this reporting period. The group, who meet twice monthly, is a combination of cared for children and carers birth children. The group offers them a shared activity space to come together for fun activities and to highlight ways in which the service can be influenced, particularly in relation to recruitment activities and the group has taken a particular lead in this area. The group have recently designed recruitment adverts for carers along with lending their voices to a new marketing campaign to highlight children's experiences of being cared for.</p>
Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided	
See below, along with consultation with foster carers	

**7. Consultation with foster carers**

Evidence	<p>We have continued to hold monthly coffee mornings for carers which is an opportunity for them to chat informally both with staff and each other due within the reporting period. Monthly support groups have also continued to be held, these are more ‘formal’ and usually include guest speakers on a range of topics.</p> <p>We have an established consultative group which meets regularly, the Registered Manager chairs this group and over the reporting year I have seen the group change and attendance begin to increase. Carers advise they feel supported and listened to, they are empowered to raise issues as they know their concerns will be listened to and acted upon.</p> <p>We have plans to recognise the length of service of all carers within Foster Care Fortnight in May 2023.</p>
<b>Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided</b>	
<p>Participation and engagement within the reporting period has posed additional challenges due to the restrictions placed upon on us however despite this, the service has continued to hold regular support groups, children’s events and embed two Mockingbird constellation. Within our team plan we recognised that we wanted to really engage with children and carers at an informal and supportive level before enhancing this further with more formal routes of engagement.</p> <p>Carers report that they are listened to, they have direct contact details for the Registered Manager and are also able to meet with him/raise issues both at informal and formal meetings. Our training, support and fee scheme is a transparent way of financially supporting foster carers and has ensured that an unprecedented level of commitment to developing their own learning and in turn improving the level of care afforded.</p>	

**8. Financial information**

Comment				
1.1 The table below provides summary financial information relating to the Fostering Service for 2022/2023.				
	Actual	Realigned Budget	Variance	Notes
Category	£		£	
Employees (inc Agency)	796,083	860,187	64,104	
Premises (Room Hire)	4,383	2,000	(2,383)	
Car Mileage (Employee)	33,161	25,500	(7,661)	
DBS / Medical Reports	42,925	50,500	7,575	
Equipment (Foster Carers)	1,612	2,000	388	
Publicity	67,931	51,136	(16,795)	
Other Running Expenses	26,256	29,897	3,641	
Foster Care Payments	5,635,075	6,105,000	469,925	
IFAs				
	<b>6,607,426</b>	<b>7,126,220</b>	<b>518,794</b>	
1.2 Key priorities for the agency remain the retention of its excellent carers and the recruitment of more foster carers. A major focus is on recruiting carers who will care for older children and teenagers, or children with complex needs, or large sibling groups and target younger carers who will provide longer term stability for younger children entering care.				

Signed	
Name	Daniel Kenny
Position	Registered Manager
Date	31 <sup>st</sup> May 2023

**SUPPORTIVE PARENTING PARTNERSHIP**

**17 July 2023**

**WORK PROGRAMME 2023/2024**

**Report of the Assistant Director of Law and Governance**

**1. Purpose of the Report**

To inform the Supportive Parenting Partnership of the draft work programme for the municipal year 2023/2024 and forthcoming agenda items.

**2. Work Programme**

**WORK PROGRAMME 2023/2024**

<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Agenda Items</b>	<b>Officer Responsible</b>
17 July 2023	Health of Cared for Children Sunderland CYPS Cared for Children's Pathway Reg 44 Visits 2022/2023 Adoption Annual Report Annual Fostering Report Travel for Care Experienced Children	Jo Morgan Samantha Diston  Gillian Hammell-Purvis Kathryn McCabe Kathryn McCabe Tracy Jelfs
16 October 2023	Change Council Update  Health of Cared for Children Sunderland CYPS Cared for Children's Pathway Update from the Virtual School – 2022/2023 Academic Year IRO Annual Report	Alexandra Bowey  Jo Morgan Samantha Diston  Anita Swales  Gillian Hammell-Purvis
15 January 2024	Health of Cared for Children  Sunderland CYPS Cared for Children's Pathway	Jo Morgan  Samantha Diston
15 April 2024	Change Council Update Health of Cared for Children Sunderland CYPS Cared for Children's Pathway	Alex Bowey Jo Morgan Samantha Diston

### **3. Recommendations**

The Board is asked to note the work programme and suggest any additional topics which may be discussed at a future meeting.