

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

AGENDA

**Meeting to be held in the Civic Centre (Committee Room 2) on
Monday 1 July 2019 at 3.15pm**

NB: PLEASE NOTE CHANGE IN MEETING START TIME

Part I

ITEM	PAGE
1. Apologies for Absence	
2. Declarations of Interest	
3. Minutes	1
Minutes of Meeting held on 1 April 2019 (copy attached).	
4. Change Council Update	9
Report of the Change Council (copy attached).	
5. Health of Looked After Children	-
Report of the Safeguarding Children Lead Nurse (copy to follow).	
6. NTW Sunderland Looked After Children Data	19
Report of NTW attached.	
7. Housing Offer for Young People	23
Report of the Senior Housing Manager, Neighbourhoods and the Strategic Service Manager, TfC (attached).	

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Information contained within this agenda can be made available in other languages and formats.

8.	Virtual School Headteacher's Report	31
	Report of the Headteacher of the Virtual School (attached).	
9.	Annual Fostering Report	37
	Report of the Lead Manager, Fostering and Adoption (attached).	
10.	Annual Adoption Report	55
	Report of the Lead Manager, Fostering and Adoption (attached).	
11.	Regulation 44 Visits	71
	Report of the Regulation 44 Officers (attached).	
12.	Work Programme 2019/2020	83
	Report of the Assistant Director of Law and Governance (copy attached)	

ELAINE WAUGH
Assistant Director of Law and Governance

Civic Centre
SUNDERLAND

21 June 2019

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 1 April 2019 in Committee Room 2,
Civic Centre, Sunderland at 5.30pm**

Part I

Present:

Members of the Board

Councillor L Farthing (in the Chair)	Washington South Ward
Councillor R Davison	Redhill Ward
Councillor C Marshall	Doxford Ward
Councillor P Smith	Silksworth Ward

Young People

Gabby Dunn
Skye McBurnie

Also in Attendance

Councillor L Williams	Washington Central Ward
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All Supporting Officers

Jill Colbert	Chief Executive, TfC
Martin Birch	Director of Social Care, TfC
Linda Mason	Head Teacher, Virtual School
Gavin Taylor	IRO Service, Together for Children
Jane Wheeler	Participation and Complaints Manager, TfC
Dr Sarah Mills	Designated Doctor for Looked After Health
Janet Thomson	Associate Director, NTW
Maurice Davis	Foster Carer
James Harrison	Sunderland Echo
Gillian Kelly	Governance Services

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors O'Brien and Johnston, together with Councillor D MacKnight and Kay Dixon.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

27. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2019 be agreed as a correct record.

The Chair asked if there had been any progress with regard to the Life Story Co-ordinator role and Martin Birch advised that it was still on the agenda but had not been progressed at this time. Jane Wheeler highlighted that the young people on the Change Council were undertaking some life story training.

Change Council Update

Gabby Dunn presented the report of the Change Council and advised that the council had now agreed to run two separate groups based on age, one to cover 10-15 years and the other for 16 and over. The groups would then be able to focus on issues which they felt were relevant to them and other young people their age. Change Council 10-15 years would focus on issues around being a child looked after and 16+ would focus on issues such as becoming a care leaver and staying put.

The Change Council had named the family time centre 'The Bramble Centre' and the signage for the facility was to be created by young people. The council would be working on ideas to support the centre to raise donations and funds for equipment to make the family time experience better for all.

The Board were advised that the Change Council were focusing on how life story work could be improved for children and young people and some of the group were planning to support the delivery of a workshop to Together for Children staff along with the Next Steps Team Manager. Young people had been looking at the pledges made at the Regional Children in Care Conference and would be contacting professionals to see what progress had been in implementing their pledges.

The Change Council had the opportunity to review an app for care leavers which would hold information and advice on the local offer. Young people had looked at an app that already existed but felt that a 'virtual world' would be more inclusive and preferable for young people so they could access advice and guidance on the local offer, information around health, housing and finance in a relatable and engaging way. This had been discussed in Change Council meeting with the Sunderland City Council Chief Executive, Jill Colbert and Martin Birch. The Chief Executive had suggested that the Change Council should pull some ideas together and a meeting had been held with David Dunn at the Software Centre to progress this.

Jane Wheeler advised that a specification was being developed now and children and young people would be very much involved in the process.

The Board were informed that Saul Cranson had recently started in his role as Regional Children in Care Young Ambassador for Sunderland and Durham. Saul would be working to support and represent young people in both areas and was attending all regional meetings.

IRO Service Managers Gavin Taylor and Kim Roberts had attended both the 10-15 and 16+ Change Council groups to talk to the groups about the best way to introduce their IRO and what they would like to know about them. The Change Council made some suggestions for information which could be given to children and young people before they met their IRO and how best to access this.

The Chair noted that there had been some discussion about providing photographs of IROs before they met young people but it had been felt that there were pros and cons about this approach.

Councillor Davison asked about the intention raise funds for the Bramble Centre and Gabby said that this would be for equipment for the centre. A lot of items had already been donated but young people ideally wanted equipment which would be appropriate for all ages.

Councillor Davison suggested approaching the area committees for funding, however this had been ruled out as it was a citywide facility. The Chair commented that she had raised this matter with officers as it was difficult for organisations which served the whole city to access funding due to the area structure. Board Members would support any efforts to raise funds for the Bramble Centre.

28. RESOLVED that the Change Council update be noted.

Commitments Review

The Board were advised that the Change Council had identified the first two commitment themes which they would be focusing on and would carry out the following actions from March to June 2019 to gather as much evidence as possible: -

- Surveys with young people and staff members
- Interviews with young people and staff members
- Interviews with commissioned providers such as National Youth Advocacy Services (NYAS)
- Collection of communication information relevant to the two themes
- Review of tools used to gather children and young people's voice

The 16+ group would focus on Commitment 3, 'We will make sure that your voice is heard and listened to' and the 10-15 group would be looking at Commitment 2, 'If you need to come into care we will make sure that you are safe and properly cared for'.

Jane Wheeler advised that the work had started on these and a report would be brought back to the Corporate Parenting Board on each Commitment in due course.

29. RESOLVED that the Commitments Review update be noted.

Health of Looked After Children

The Designated Doctor for Looked After Children submitted a report providing an update on health activity for looked after children.

There had been an average of 600 children looked after in this quarter which was a slight reduction on the previous quarter. At the present moment, compliance with Initial Health Assessments (IHA) being carried out within 20 working days of a child being looked after was 100% for the first quarter ever.

Compliance with Review Health Assessments (RHA) was 98%, however this had been 100% in January and March. Two young people had refused to attend, one had since been seen and the looked after nurses would attempt to engage with the remaining young person in the coming months.

Children who were placed outside of the North East were seen by their local looked after health teams and the Sunderland team had been doing an audit of the out of area health assessments and looking at timeliness and quality of these. There had been 14 out of area health assessments required in quarter 4 and compliance with the target time was 71%. There were big issues around capacity in the South of the country and the Board were advised that out of area review health assessments were requested three months in advance. Two of the teams could not accommodate the assessment in time and one young person did not attend the two appointments offered, however they now had an appointment booked in April.

Issuing of health passports stood at 100% for quarter 4 and it was noted that in the 2019 work plan, the Health passport would be revised in line with improved joint working between the next steps and looked after health teams. It was highlighted that services would be aligned across geographical areas to reflect the merger between City Hospitals and South Tyneside Hospital Trusts.

A leaflet for young people explaining health assessments was being developed in conjunction with the Change Council and was awaiting sign off. Data collection for health outcomes had been established and some early information was coming through regarding the health needs of children looked after.

Jill Colbert referred to out of area health assessments and noted that nearly one third of children placed outside the area were not having assessments conducted in a timely manner and queried if the health team was satisfied that enough was being done.

Dr Mills advised that on most occasions notifications and consent was delaying the process and it was hoped that the improved system for this would have an impact and had already changed since the audit had been carried out. When children had been moving frequently it had could be difficult to follow them around the country. It was highlighted that the themes from the out of area health assessments were the

same as those carried out in area and it was reassuring to know that concerns were not being discounted because a young person was from out of the area.

Having considered the report, it was: -

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

NTW Sunderland Looked After Children Data

The Board received a report from NTW for the period December to February 2019. There had been a slight increase in referrals in the period; six young people had been discharged unseen out of 16 in December for a variety of reasons and in January five out of 15 were discharged unseen. It was highlighted that a refusal to engage could be an issue for older young people and in February two from ten referrals were discharged unseen. There had been one urgent referral in both December and January and none in February.

The Board were advised that the Trust was undertaking a range of initiatives to support the reduction of waiting times within community services and were looking at the pathway for children looked after, specifically in CYPS. There was a lot of work to be undertaken in relation to engagement, scaffolding and support and a service was still offered to residential homes and for foster carer training.

The Chair commented that it was useful to have the background for some of the cases and noted that one mentioned a lack of consent and when a young person did not attend she queried if that young person had consented or understood the process. Janet Thomson advised that there had been a change in practice over the last six months and specialist looked after clinicians would look at referrals to see what was going on in each individual case.

Jill Colbert stated that TfC would be engaging with work on the pathway and felt that having a range of models was the answer. It was important that the young people should be referred with good quality information and with their consent.

The total CYPS caseload as of February 2019 was 2,332 of which 121 were children looked after, representing 5.2% of the total.

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

Virtual School Update Report

Linda Mason, Headteacher of the Virtual School provided a verbal report to the Board and in doing so advised that PEP compliance currently stood at 95% and thanked the data technician for enabling this. A failsafe two week warning notice had been developed to increase compliance.

School attendance was still around 92% but was being maintained and it was hoped to bring something back to the Board on this.

The Virtual School was working with designated teachers in schools and had held five training sessions which had been attended by between 75 and 80% of teachers. There was some new statutory guidance for designated teachers and the Virtual School and an extended role for previously looked after children. The guidance set out a clear definition and that it was good practice for adopted children to have education plans.

A session had also been carried out on the role of the Governing Body and provided some suggested questions that Governors should be asking. A key aspect of the Governor role was to test out that outcomes, policies and procedures for children looked after were appropriate.

Teachers were keen to move to an ePEP system and it was hoped to have this in place for September. There would be designated training for teachers and step training for social workers on ePEPs. The Virtual School had also provided an example of a Pupil Premium Policy for schools to use and a model children looked after policy which had been developed nationally and could be adopted by schools.

There was a raft of draft documentation available from the Virtual School including a school self-evaluation document to assess how effective the school was in supporting children looked after and also advice on avoiding exclusions. With regard to SEN processes there was also an ambition for primary schools to request EHCPs as soon as they had concerns.

It was hoped to develop joint training to look at the expectations from schools and also IROs, carers and adoptive parents. A reference group of designated teachers and social workers had been pulled together.

In terms of technology, the Virtual School worked closely with performance and data teams and would be looking at using Capita 1 going forward and fine tuning Liquid Logic. Additional funding would be provided for Years 5 and 6 and Years 10 and 11 to help with preparation for SATs and exams. The Board were invited to make suggestions for what they would like to receive in future update reports.

Councillor Smith asked what was the biggest issue for the Virtual School at the moment and Linda stated that it was ensuring that they had accurate data and good quality PEPs which spend could be matched with. It was also important to get a robust training programme for colleagues in place and to have the website up and running.

It was queried if the additional funding for young people about sit SATs or exams would also apply to the sixth form and Linda said that this was a possibility. She added that she would like to explore how she could utilise some of the Virtual School funding for years 12 and 13.

Councillor Smith said that she would be interested to hear more about how young people were doing and what were the barriers if they were not progressing. Linda suggested that it might be useful to produce some anonymised case studies when the data for the year was available.

Maurice Davis asked if links with young people were lost once they were no longer classed as being in care and were in staying put or independent arrangements. Jill Colbert advised that once young people became 'corporate adults' then information could only be provided on the basis of consent but it was necessary to think about how corporate parenting could continue post-18.

Martin Birch highlighted that young people had a personal advisor until they were 18 and it was suggested that some examples could be brought forward showing where that had worked well.

Having thanked Linda for her update, it was: -

32. RESOLVED that the information be noted.

Provisional Work Programme 2019/2020

The Board received a report setting out the proposed work programme for the forthcoming municipal year and were asked to consider any additional topics for discussion at a future meeting.

The Chair suggested that the Commitments Review should be a standing item for every meeting and an update on Foster Care Recruitment should come in March 2020 as well as October 2019.

Jill Colbert proposed that updates on the Regional Adoption Agency be brought to the meetings in July and October. In addition, it was suggested that items on the regional position with regard to pocket money, sufficiency planning and case studies for pathway planning and personal advisers should be added to the work programme.

33. RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006

At the instance of the Chair it was: -

34. RESOLVED that in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 the public be excluded during consideration of the remaining business as it was considered to involve a likely disclosure of exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, Part 1, Paragraph 3). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2019, Part II, be agreed as a correct record.

(Signed) L FARTHING
 Chair



REPORT AUTHOR:	Loren Nergaard (Business Admin Apprentice – Participation and Engagement Team)
SUBJECT:	CHANGE COUNCIL UPDATE
PURPOSE:	To update members on Change Council activities from April- June 2019

1. Return home interviews

Both the 10-15 group and 16+ group were asked by TfC Commissioning Team to review the Return Home Interview questions that Barnardo's use when speaking with a young person after a period missing.

Young people from both groups commented on the forms. Below is the information from young people and the response that has been fed back.

16+ Group

- The group agreed the form was too long but understood that there is a need for this information, but they would not answer these questions.
- Young people think that the interview should be done by people the YP know and trust – **fully accept this point but it is not possible as the law requires that the interviewer has to be independent of the young person. The key worker that the young person knows should also be supporting the young person through the challenges and trying to work with them to reduce the risks from going missing.**
- If completed by staff i.e. Barnardo's they should be young people friendly – **agree**
- Young people do not want to be interviewed by strangers and find police and professionals intimidating – **accept however the Law requires that the interviewer must be independent of the young person.**
- Wouldn't admit to committing a crime – some children might not realise that a crime has been committed. **The question is there to identify any threats/risks and possibly identify perpetrators. Professionals have to report any potential crime to the police. it doesn't necessarily mean the young person will be prosecuted but that crimes against children can be identified and risks reduced**
- Young people feel that professionals should offer them someone else talk to. – **agree**

10-15yrs Group

- Quite overwhelming there are a lot of questions – agree but this is required to try and protect the young person
- There should be a little statement at the top before the interview where the person completing the interview should give the young person a choice of completing the interview - No one would be forced to complete the interview but as it is required by law every effort has to be made to encourage the young person to discuss the missing episode
- Young people said they would never disclose who they were missing with so there is no point in asking – we have to ask so that we can try and identify any potential risks from perpetrators, people influencing the young person and to try and protect them. It can also identify other young people at risk
- Some of the questions didn't make sense at all – is there anything more specific here that we can use to improve these questions?
- They had a feeling the interview would take a long time as there are 6 pages to go through, they agreed that they would get bored and give up half way through or not participate in the first place – a skilled interviewer should be able to get the information without going through the form question by question and making it a tedious and lengthy process for the young person.
- Young people weren't keen on completing a return home interview as they said that they have gone missing for a reason and don't want to talk about it for example, being upset, not happy where they live, meeting friends and going out and they wouldn't be happy telling anyone who they were out with as that would "drop them in it or they will get in trouble" – accept the point but it is a process that has to be followed with the aim of safeguarding children and young people it is meant to offer the chance for young people to disclose anything that they might not want to say to the people they live with etc

2. Care leavers cook book

Our Change Council 16+ (Care Leavers group) are in the process of creating a cookbook (to be named) that young people moving into supported accommodation and beyond will be given in a bid to support those faced with finding the money to eat properly.

It has been estimated that those who leave care without a job have only £21 a week to spend on food, drink and transport after bills and the new cookbook follows on from the £21 Challenge we looked at some years ago.

The book will include recipes created by our young people, to support this the City of Sunderland College have kindly agreed to support the event and will allow our young people to use their kitchen facilities to cook up a storm on Thursday 11th and 12th July 2019.

Our young people have invited the SLT to come and enjoy their recipes on **Thursday 11th July** in the City Campus Restaurant and even have the opportunity to cook with them.

3. Innovation unit

Early in 2019, TfC commissioned Innovation Unit as a partner in its transformation work. Their role was to help colleagues to identify priorities for change; to develop an investment case to secure additional financial support; and to begin mobilise a wider variety of players across the system around a vision for change. During March-April 2019, they ran a series of conversations with a variety of stakeholders across the system - from senior system leaders to front-line practitioners and children and young people engaged with the care system. Members of Change Council met with the innovation Unit to share their views and opinions.



Feedback from for our young people,

“Please let the Change Council know how powerful and crucial their words and thoughts were to us making this investment case.

It was a real pleasure to meet them all, and I hope you and they are doing well.”

4. Young People’s Room at Stanfield

TfC support services moved to Stanfield in May 2019 along with Support Service Children and Young People now have their own dedicated space at the front of the building showing our commitment to ensuring the voice of children and young people are at the heart of our work.

Young people from all the participation and engagement groups share the space and have co-designed how they would like it



5. Kooth Launch

Together for Children and Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group have commissioned Kooth, an online counselling and emotional well-being platform for children and young people that is accessible through mobile, tablet and desktop and free at the point of use.

Representatives from Change Council were involved in the press release for the Launch of Kooth which featured in the Sunderland Echo and took part in a radio interview with Metro radio as they have been involved with Kooth being brought to Sunderland from the beginning.



6. Recruitment and Selection of Social Workers

In the last few months, Children's Social Care have recruited Heads of Service, Service Managers and Social Workers. Members of Change Council have been involved with the recruitment and selection process by being part of the interviewing panel for the above positions. Young people created their own questions to ask applicants which for the social worker interviews have included;

If a young person you work with is going missing a lot and has recently been in hospital as a result of taking drugs and alcohol, what would you put in place and how would you treat the young person?

What made you want to be a social worker?

Young people's feedback has then been used when appointing for the above positions.

7. Young Commissioners

Members of Change Council who have become part of our Young Commissioners group have completed a two day training programme that trains young people aged 11-19 (up to 25 with LDD) to commission and inspect services used by young people. We are working with the commissioning team and young people are becoming more involved in the commissioning process from the beginning.



8. Regional Trip to Alton Towers

The regional children in care council finally got to Alton Towers. This was a reward to the group for the hard work and dedication that the young people put into planning the 2018 children in care conference. The admission to Alton Towers was free, so the costs was a bus trip and a few ponchos. Despite the rain our children and young people who attended had a great time and can't wait to go back, with yet another batch of free tickets.



9. BYC Youth Voice Leadership Programme (Swindon)

Two young people from our Change Council along with two young people from Sunderland Youth Council spend the weekend developing their skills to be able to become youth voice leaders.



10. Regional Children in Care Council Update

Young people are currently working as part of the Regional Children in Care Council to plan the next Conference. Members of Change Council have met with other regions to discuss what the focus of this years Conference should be on. Sunderland teamed up with Newcastle to discuss what they feel the biggest issues they would like to focus on are, possible venues where they could hold the Conference and who they would like to attend. Our regional young ambassador captured the views/thoughts of the group, please see attached appendix 1.

11. Sunderland Preventative Programme Digital Survey

Jamie Scott, Project Manager Prevention and Early Help attended Change Council to ask the group about a project he is working on about being healthy and how we communicate this to children and young people. Jamie created a survey however feedback from the young people was that they didn't like it and would prefer Jamie to attend a group to work through the questions, such as what stops young people doing healthy things, understand what technology young people use to improve their health and what suggestions young people have improving the health of children and young people in the city.

12. Commitment Update

Change Council 10-15yrs have worked on creating a survey to go out to as many young people with care experience in Sunderland as possible to get feedback on Commitment 2; If you need to come into care we will make sure that you are safe and properly cared for. The group tried to cover each point within the commitment, the survey is now complete and ready to go, Change Council will put their finding into a report with recommendations and actions.

13. Permanence Away Day

Change Council were invited to one of the Social Care teams away team days on 29th April 2019. They were asked to come along to speak to the team about family time. The feedback to our young people;

'Just wanted to say thank you for your help with this. Jess and Blaine attended (as did Lauren) and they did well to face a room full of strangers and they really made us think about who supervises family time, who pays for things and where it takes place. As well as Family Time we began thinking about venues and just what the Change Council does, and a couple of the Social Workers are really interested in getting more involved. Please let me know if there is anything we can help with, particularly around Family Time'.

Appendix 1

Regional conference planning notes

Sunderland and Newcastle's notes

Issues

- Life stork work
- Housing
- Mental health
- Sexual health
- NEET
- Transport
- Family time
- Lack of communication between professionals
- Hygiene
- Crime
- Positive image
- Support after 18

Venues

- Beacon of Light
- Stadium of Light
- St James Park
- Durham Cricket Club
- Rainton Meadows
- TA centre
- Gateshead Stadium
- Kingston Park
- FED
- Seaham Hall

Who do we want there?

- Chief executives
- Directors
- Heads of service
- Independent agencies

Northumberland Tyne & Wear NHS Trust

Sunderland Children Looked After Report

June 2019



Sunderland Children Looked After Report

March – May 2019

1. Activity

	March -18	April - 19	May - 19
Referrals	18	5	19
Referrals discharged unseen	2	4	2

Referrals discharged unseen

The following provides narrative in relation to reasons why the young people were not seen by the service.

March

1. Young man aged 17 years old, CYPS attempted to engage him in therapy on 3 occasions which he declined, agreed to discharge him from CYPS as he did not wish to engage.
2. Young person was referred to CYPS, carers were contacted to offer appointment and CYPS were informed the young person had moved out of area.

April

1. Attempted to offer an appointment, did not wish to engage, young person moved out of area.
2. Young person did not wish to engage, Consultant Clinical psychologist offers sessions into residential home and staff can be provided with support/ advice and scaffolding to support the young person's mental health until they feel ready to access direct 1:1 therapy within CYPS.
3. Multi agency meeting held regarding the child's presentation, all professionals in agreement child does not require CYPS intervention at this time.
4. Young person did not attend 2 arranged appointments, due to young person not wishing to engage case reviewed and discharged by clinical psychologist.

May

1. Young person previously seen in CYPS and discharged by clinical psychologist, clinical psychologist has spoken with social worker and advised young person does not require further intervention from CYPS at this time.
2. Young person had moved out of area when contacted to arrange an appointment.

2. Referral Urgency

All cases referred to CYPs either by phone, fax, and email or in written format are reviewed on a daily basis by a member of the clinical duty team and a senior clinical lead. The purpose of this initial review is in order to signpost any cases that have been inappropriately referred and to ensure any cases that require an urgent or priority response are highlighted and actioned immediately.

All cases into the service are categorised into either Urgent or Routine. An urgent referral will be offered a telephone triage appointment within 4 hours and a face to face assessment within 24 hours.

	March -18	April -19	May -19
Urgent	1	2	0
Routine	17	3	19
Total	18	5	19

3. Waiting List

The Trust is currently undertaking a significant data migration to support national reporting requirements as such current waiting time information is unavailable for LAC however the average wait for first contact for the CYPS service is currently 18 weeks from referral to entering treatment.

The Trust is currently undertaking a range of initiatives to increase clinical capacity to support the reduction of waiting times within community services in addition to additional funding secured from the CCG within the 2019/20 contracting round.

Current treatment pathways are under review in CYPS and clinical pathways have been reviewed and enhanced to meet the needs of our Looked After Children. We have established weekly Consultant Clinical Psychology time into the residential homes in Sunderland to offer scaffolding, supervision and advice and support to staff when young people do not wish to engage in direct therapy.

CYPS are in the process of setting up a group based intervention for foster carers in Sunderland with the aim of commencing this in September. The group will consist of 12 foster carers attending for 10 fortnightly sessions with a clinical psychologist and a fostering social worker from Together for Children. The aim of these sessions will be initially to provide foster carers with training on attachment and how to support the children they care for using attachment-focused strategies. Following this the sessions will then move on to a consultation focus aimed at supporting carers to put the techniques into practise.

The overall goal is for carers to feel they are better able to understand why their foster child presents the way they do, and feel more confident in managing it in a way that promotes attachment security, which will hopefully reduce the risk of placement breakdown. They will be flexibility during the sessions to ensure the foster carers get what they need out of attending. CYPS will use pre and post outcome measures and evaluation forms to monitor how helpful it has been and support evaluation and planning of the next groups moving forward.

4. Current Caseload

	March -19	April- 19	May - 19
Total Children Looked After	126	120	129
Total CYPS Caseload	2352	2314	2380
Total % Children Looked After	5.3%	5.2%	5.4%

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

1 JULY 2019

HOUSING OFFER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Report of the Senior Housing Manager, Neighbourhood Directorate and the Strategic Service Manager, Together for Children

1. Strategic Context

The Housing Strategy for Sunderland 2017 – 2022 has as one of its main priorities “to support vulnerable people to access and maintain housing” and within this priority there is a key action to develop a joint protocol between Together for Children and Housing Services to ensure that 16 and 17 year old homeless young people and those leaving care are supported to find suitable accommodation.

The Council has also recently drafted its Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Prevention Strategy following consultation with partners, including Together for Children. This draft Strategy also has as a key priority to prevent homelessness among young people and to ensure that there is suitable advice and accommodation for them. This could be accommodation within the family home, in commissioned or supported accommodation or in their own tenancies with appropriate levels of support.

2. Introduction

A paper was presented to the Corporate Parenting Board in July 2018 in the context of the recently implemented Homelessness Reduction Act and the imminent visit of the Government’s Homeless Advice Service Team (HAST) to look at how housing services for young people were being offered. The introduction of new prevention duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act is now a year old and an action plan, which resulted from the HAST visit (Appendix One) is being delivered through a working group comprised of staff and officers from Housing, Together for Children, Adult Social Care and Commissioning.

3. Current Picture

Since the previous presentation to Board in July 2018 and the next steps outlined in that report, much progress has been made and there are also areas where joint work is required to be continued.

1. Robust data is gathered – the Homelessness Reduction Act, and the accompanying CDP soft system, has allowed for detailed and robust data to be gathered on homeless young people aged 18 – 25 years old and this has shaped and informed our commissioning needs in this respect. This

data has been complemented through data from Together for Children's on homeless young people and looked after children. However, there is still some work to be done in collecting data through Liquid Logic on all young people where homelessness may not be the primary presenting need.

2. Recommendations made by HAST

The recommendations made by HAST are captured in the action plan attached at Appendix one but a summary is outlined below:

- Communications and advice for young people and their families/carers – the web pages have been reviewed and specific and appropriate advice for homeless young people is available both on Together for Children and Housing web sites. An information leaflet has also been produced. This is based on best practice from around the UK.
- Training on best practice and joint working was undertaken by HAST in October 2018 for frontline service staff from Housing, Together for Children, providers, YOS and ASC.
- A Housing officer now sits on the Together for Children Accommodation Panel so joint advice can be given.
- Housing Officers now undertake home visits to prevent homelessness by mediating between parents/carers and young people.
- Joint commissioning, based on the data gathered, is being undertaken to provide accommodation for 16 – 25 year olds rather than having a different service for those aged 18 years plus. This will also provide supported accommodation for young people with complex needs.
- An operational group of front line staff from across the Council and Together for Children was established and met for a year to oversee the implementation of the action plan. It will meet annually to review the Joint Protocol for homeless 16 – 17 year olds.

3. Actions completed because of the recommendation made by OFSTED in relation to the offer of Section 20

- An information leaflet has been produced to ensure that children who present as homeless fully understand their rights to become looked after under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989, and the benefits this brings.
- Young people are formally informed of their right to become Section 20 at the point of being accommodated, and at the 5 day and 10 day checkpoints within their Child In Need Assessment. They are informed again at the conclusion of assessment at 45 days. This is recorded within the assessment.
- Where young people decline the offer of Section 20, a management decision is recorded within their case notes.
- Further development of Liquid Logic post introduction of the Signs of Safety model of practice will further improve consistency of recording in relation to the offer of Section 20.

4. Together for Children and Housing Services draw up a joint protocol which sets clear and practical arrangements to prevent youth homelessness and to ensure 16 and 17 year olds have the accommodation to meet their needs – this protocol is complete and is attached at Appendix 2. It includes best practice from around the UK and input from HAST and Youth Homelessness North East.
5. A Homelessness Strategy is developed which addresses the needs of homeless young people and care leavers.
<https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/article/12172/Homeless-services>. This has been developed with input from partners including providers and Youth Homelessness North East as well as from officers within the Council and Together for Children. This Strategy will be finalised by September 2019 and partners have drawn up action plans in order to deliver the Strategy in relation to young people.
6. The Council's Housing Allocation Scheme has been revised and is published. <https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/article/12169/Find-a-home> This scheme now gives priority to Care Leavers and Gentoo has also agreed to give priority to young people who are at risk of homelessness such as care leavers. This means that young people no longer need to go through a process where they have to become homeless to get priority housing and instead can access social housing through the revised Allocation Scheme. However, there is still an issue around affordability of social housing with young people not always being able to afford to maintain their own tenancies.

4. Next Steps

1. Finalise and publish the Homelessness Prevention Strategy and develop delivery plans linked to the priorities in relation to homeless young people and care leavers. September 2019
2. Finalise and publish the Joint Protocol between Housing and Together for Children by July 2019
3. Work with housing providers to overcome the affordability issues around young people having their own tenancies. On-going
4. Jointly commission supported housing for young homeless people and looked after children – working party is established
5. Together for Children to use Liquid Logic going forward to collect data for all young homeless people including those whose priority reason for presenting may not be homelessness – this had been added to the work plan

5. Recommendations

The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to:

- i) Accept this report as an update on the joint work undertaken by Housing and Together for Children on the housing offer for young people; and
- ii) Agree to receive a further report in July 2020 on the Homelessness Strategy and Joint Protocol in relation to young people as well as the recommendations in this report required to improve the housing offer for young people further.

Area for development
Joint working

Process is deemed to be too rigid which has resulted in a division of responsibilities and different front doors.

Operational Working Group

- o Review current process/protocol and explore at each point where joint working would be beneficial.
- Joint training with HAST
- Joint front door for all YP threatened with homelessness.
- Integrated gateway/Next Steps with HOT officer to support joint assessment and plans and offer housing expertise on duties and access to DHP.
- Hold regular operational partnership meetings to improve cohesiveness, information sharing, updates and training across TfC, HOT and commissioners starting with briefing on the HRA legislation changes and duties.
- Assessment plan sent to HOT via the professional referral address.
- Personal advisers attend initial HRA (homeless) application meeting.

September 2018

September 2018

Operational group to be established looking at delivering joint working area for development. This group will meet on a monthly basis and report back to the strategic group. Membership of the group will be:

Joan Reed
Gill Welsh / Justin Collins
Andrea Solomon / Josh Barr
Ron Hamilton
Laura Johnstone / Emma Stewart

Weekly panels - a member of staff from the Housing Options Team to be invited to sit on these young persons panels. They occur every Wednesday. Representative is Leanne Riddell from HOT.

The actions from the workshop have highlighted that the biggest in terms of tenancies is affordability.

- k An action plan from the workshop, including timelines, to be prepared and circulated to this group.

Complete

Complete

Complete - the Joint Protocol was presented to the working group on 30 May for approval. This was agreed with some amendments and reformatting. It was further agreed that the final draft be presented to the senior management teams in both TFC and Neighbourhoods, with advice being sought as to whether or not it should be presented to Cabinet for final approval and adoption.

There is no joined up data currently available across TFC, HOT and Adult services to inform commissioning and no forum to jointly understand and monitor need or outcomes. There is no joint commissioning between Tfc, Adults and HOT.
Data on 18 - 25 year olds has now been produced.

Spreadsheet to be mapped and recording formally agreed and how this is reported internally.

Complete a youth homelessness housing needs assessment for YP. Collating data from the current cohort regarding age, types and levels of need, along with similar data from other cohorts such as younger looked after children to gain current and future picture of support and provision needed in Sunderland. Also include the underlying causes of homelessness.

Create a regular young person's accommodation forum and support commissioning forum with TFC, HOT, Adults to agree and review data collection, outcomes and needs of homeless young people and those threatened with homelessness.

Dec-18

A task and finish group to be convened to look at the collection and analysis of data relating to young people. This group will meet on a fortnightly basis. Membership of the group will be:

Gill Lawson / Liz McEvoy
Leanne Riddell / Justin Collins
Julie Lynn
Josh Barr
Jane Wheeler
Ruth Neasham

The data collection for 18+ is available. However, TfC still need to identify a way in which they can reliably capture all the information for 16-17 year olds who present as homeless.

Consideration to be given to including a tab in LiquidLogic which can be used to record both young people who present as homeless to their social worker and also those who come in through Next Steps. This would give a more accurate picture of 16-17 year olds who are homeless. J Lynn to raise the issue with TFC in meeting on 1 February.

A request to be submitted to get the Housing Options Team access to both children and adults LiquidLogic.

Amber - TfC have agreed that as part of the project to reconfigure LiquidLogic a tab will be created to record homelessness which should allow reports to be written from LiquidLogic. This should allow recording by both Next Step and Locality Social Workers.

Complete - training has been given and officers in the Housing Options Team can now access Adults LiquidLogic.

Amber - However, permission is still to be given for the Children's system.

Joint commissioning and sourcing of supported accommodation for homeless YP	TfC about to start commissioning .	Emma Stewart TfC, Ann Dingwall Adults, Liz McEvoy, Gill Lawson Housing	Meeting/discussion with HOT, Adult, TfC to explore joint commissioning. Housing related floating support - targetted at supporting vulnerable young people, including those previously on the edge of care, those aged 18 - 25 who Housing are working with to support them to develop and maintain positive, independent living skills. Emergency accommodation including crash pad provision pending CIN assessment.		A meeting is scheduled for 13.09.18 to discuss whether the current specification can be changed to support those on the "Edge of Care". The issue of making this service available to non-Looked After. Consider if the providers can be requested to offer up a range of beds rather than a specified number. Clarification on the length of the contract - is it 3 years with an extension built in? Provision being made for 16-17 year olds presenting as homeless, however what is being done for the 18-21 age group?	Four days have been set aside from 29 January for the evaluation of tenders for the supported accommodation contracts. A young person has been invited to be part of the assessment panel.	Complete
Preventing homelessness	Focus is on providing accommodation rather than trying to prevent evictions	Gill Welsh Housing/Andrea Solomon TfC	Create opportunities and incentivise future planned moves and not focus too early on accommodation and offer of S20. Increase capacity for on the day home visits in every case.	Jan-19	In terms of capacity for home visits, this may be able to be picked up following the recruitment of additional staff members within the Housing Options Team. GW to progress with A Solomon.	An officer of the Housing Options Team has been shadowing a social worker from Next Steps. There are implications regarding a resource for these to continue happening.	Complete
Transition with Adult Social Care	Sunderland currently has a multi-agency protocol and pathway in place, setting out a shared vision for supporting children and young people with disabilities to prepare for adulthood. A Multi-Agency Transition Management Group meets on a monthly basis to discuss and coordinate identified cases, in order to ensure a smooth transition for young people with disabilities and/or social care needs, as defined under the Care Act 2014.	Eirini Zochiou (Team Manager, Adult Social Care)	Existing Transition protocol to be reviewed (Multi- agency preparing for adulthood protocol & pathway for Children and Young People with SEND) in order to ensure a robust approach to Homelessness reduction. Review to be informed by the Prevention of homelessness and provision of accommodation for 16 and 17 year old young people who may be homeless and/or require accommodation guidance.	Sep-18	Complete - however a further, more in-depth review, including the structure is being undertaken. EZ will keep this group informed of any changes and ask for input as and when required.	The protocol has been circulated to the attendees of the Transition Magement Group for final comments. A meeting is planned for Tuesday 12 February for final sign off.	Complete
Review of Allocations Policy	Currently young people leaving care are being routed down the homeless route via professional referral to get priority for Gentoo's Home Hunt scheme.	Liz McEvoy, Housing Manager	Care leavers and children aged 16/17 who are not looked afetr but are in need, to have priority allocation banding with the Council and gentoo's Home Hunt but only when they are ready to live independently.	Jan-19	Complete - following discussions with Gentoo, young people will no longer need to be classed as homeless to be allocated housing. They will be given Band 2 priority with Gentoo and will therefore not have to be assessed as being homeless.	Previous comments raised by LM have been forwarded to L Langman (as the Lead) to ensure they are included in the final version.	Complete
Communications with Young People	Neither TfC or LA website provides homelessness information or advice for parents, YP or care leavers. The HRA has introduced additional duties to provide universal advisory service including YP. Care leavers are a named group and a LA must provide specific information.	Sharon Willis (Service Manager Children's Homes) Gill Welsh HOT	Next Steps and HOT work with YP to design how general information is provided. Explore different media, including short videos. Provide practical self help information for YP and their families or carers, including care leavers along with early contact support to prevnt crisis later on.	Feb-19	This work is ongoing. Josh TfC has produced a draft which is with HOT for comment. HOT drafting advice for young homeless people outside of the care system.		Complete
Explore funding opportunities		TfC Gill Lawson Housing	Explore, Flexible Homeless Support Grant, Homeless Prevention Grant, TfC and Adults Commissioning funding.	Mar-19	To be progressed.	Bids for funding have been submitted Regional Rough Sleeper Fund (16 bed) Changing Lives regional bid for £250,000	Complete - bids were successful

HAST Workshop	HAST Workshop	L McEvoy - Housing	Offer made from HAST to run a workshop in Sunderland. This has been scheduled to take place on 2 October from 10.00 - 3.00.	Oct-18	<p>This session will be aimed at opertional staff from HOT and Next Steps. SW has proposed that providers be invited, she will send invitations to the appropriate organisations.</p> <p>The focus of the workshop will be a summary of the session held in Newcastle and good practice around the UK, following this working groups will focus on prevention, joint working, particularly around how young peope enter the service.</p>	Complete
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CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD	
DATE:	1 July 2019
REPORT AUTHOR:	Linda Mason HEAD TEACHER Virtual School
SUBJECT:	Head Teacher's Report
PURPOSE:	FOR INFORMATION

1. SUMMARY

The purpose of this agenda item is to provide the Corporate Parenting Board with an update on some key indicators and developments in the last 6 months.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

The Board is requested to receive the report for information

3. Context

This report provides an update on the current cohort of children looked after currently totalling 621, of which: 401 are statutory school age (187 primary and 214 secondary); 147 are pre-school age; and, 74 are post 16. Attendance and exclusion data is provided for the 2018/19 school year up to the 14 June 2019, this data will change when full year figures are validated. Proposed staffing changes are included together with an update on the schools accommodation move.

3.1 Virtual School Team

Head Teacher	1 FTE	Strategic Leadership
Teaching Staff	1.5 FTE	Specialist teachers
Support Staff	2.6 FTE	Post 16 and NEET Intervention and Support for most complex including SEND and special schools, and, out of area LAC Emotional and Mental Support
Business Support	1 FTE	
Data Technician	1 FTE	

3.2 Proposed Virtual School Team

- 3.2.1 Currently the Virtual School consists of a variety of staff with different terms and conditions as well as a range of full and part time hours. Job descriptions were created several years ago and do not clearly define the roles required as we move forward in the context of the new Statutory Guidance in support of: Children Looked After, the work of the Designated Teachers, social workers, IROs and foster carers. It is essential that full time equivalent staff are available across the week as currently our teacher coverage is across the middle of the week leaving us with little cover on a Monday and Friday. There is also an increased role with an additional workload in providing support, advice and guidance for those involved with children who are previously looked after too.
- 3.2.2 In analysing the demands of the service for the future the focus of the new structure is on specialist areas across the phases of education specifically: Early Years, Key Stage 1 and 2; Key Stage 3 and 4; Post 16 and NEETS; and, with a clear emphasis on teaching and learning, achievement and progress. Also, a significant amount of staff time and energy is invested in providing support, guidance and alternative provision for a large number of children who display social and emotional and mental health issues. These children often require high levels of staff support as well as bespoke packages to ensure they remain in education.
- 3.2.3 As the team move into the proposed new structure it is important for us to be able to provide leadership and ownership of key areas of work for example for a particular phase (Early Years, KS1 and 2 OR Key Stage 3 and 4) and with responsibility for leading on the development of advice and information for previously looked after children, parents and professionals. Leadership and management responsibility is further required for key areas for example: deputising for the Head Teacher; PEP completion and quality assurance; coordinating and allocating the work of 121 Associate teachers, teaching assistants and mentors; safeguarding; CPD; Social and Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH), Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and, Out of Area placements. These areas have traditionally been picked up through good will and I wish to formalise these and recognise these through job descriptions and grading. Each of these leadership roles will hold a responsibility for the development of one of English, maths or science subject areas.
- 3.2.4 The Virtual School employs several tutors to provide one to one support for a number of pupils who need additional support for a variety of reasons and often at short notice. Currently we employ these tutors and teaching assistants through employment agencies and have to pay an agency fee as well as the salary costs. Currently we cannot flexibly deploy the tutors and we cannot source immediate support as we have to vet each new tutor before we match them to a child or school. It is therefore proposed to create our own supply of Associate Teachers and Associate Teaching Assistants/Mentors so that we can respond quickly to any requests or needs as soon as possible. They will be employed casually and would be paid an hourly or daily rate depending on deployment. They will be part of the Virtual School team and increase our resource whilst also enabling us to reduce agency costs. These changes will be fully met within existing budgets.

3.3 Virtual School Governance

The Chair and Vice Chair of Governor met with Cllr Farthing and the Director of Education to discuss the future role of the governing body for the Virtual School. It was agreed, that together with the Head Teacher, that a National Leader of Governance (NLG) be asked to do a review of current arrangements and to make recommendations for governance from September 2019. After various meetings with the NLG and consideration of guidance from the National Association for Virtual School Head Teachers regarding Virtual School governance the governors will meet to determine the new procedures by the end of June 2019.

4. LAC POPULATION

Table 4.1

SCHOOL ROLL	Total	Male	%	Female	%	EHCP	SEND Support
Pre School	102	45	44	57	56	0	0
Nursery 1	23	14	60	9	40	0	0
Nursery 2	22	11	50	11	50	0	1
Total	147	70	48	77	52	0	1
Reception	24	12	50	12	50	0	6
Year 1	18	10	55	8	45	1	4
Year 2	26	15	58	11	42	1	4
Year 3	23	13	56	10	44	0	4
Year 4	26	14	54	12	46	4	8
Year 5	32	16	50	16	50	5	11
Year 6	38	20	53	18	47	4	13
Total	187	100	53	87	47	15	50
Year 7	42	25	60	17	40	8	10
Year 8	51	30	59	21	41	10	13
Year 9	36	23	64	13	36	7	12
Year 10	41	21	51	20	49	4	14
Year 11	44	27	61	17	39	5	16
Total	214	126	59	88	41	36	62
Year 12	53	26	49	27	51	12	19
Year 13	21	16	76	5	24	12	3
Total	74	42	57	32	43	24	22
TOTAL LAC Population	622	338	54	284	46	75	235
TOTAL SEND Population						75 (12%)	235 (38%)

Source Virtual School Data 2019

Table 4.2

Pupils in schools by OFSTED Category

OFSTED RATING	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Inadequate	Not applicable
401	59 (15%)	229 (57%)	73 (18%)	30 (7.5%)	9 (2.25%)

Source Virtual School Data and OFSTED 2019

5. Attendance

We commission Welfare Call to collate this data on a daily basis (this organisation works with 112 local authorities nationally), this enables us to intervene quickly with any persistent or unauthorised absence.

Current data:

Overall attendance is 92% up to 21 June 2019.

56 have achieved 100%

280 have achieved 95% or above

326 have achieved 90% or above

That means that 81.5% of the 400 children have achieved above 90% attendance.

10 children have attendance below 50%. These children are monitored very closely and often have complex issues and they have been supported by a variety of services.

All children who fall below 95% are monitored on a monthly basis.

6. Exclusions

The Virtual School works closely with schools to support any behavioural issue that may emerge and that could result in fixed term exclusions. Data for this year so far indicates that 60 children looked after have received a total of 270 days of fixed term exclusion.

6 children have accumulated 88 days between them this year. These children are known to the virtual school and other services. Support and alternative package/placements have been put in place to prevent further exclusions.

The main reasons for fixed term exclusions are: persistent disruptive behaviour, physical assault on staff; and, physical assault on pupils.

We have had no permanent exclusions for children looked after.

7. Personal Education Plans (PEPS)

We are currently 94.4% compliant. A significant improvement. In September all schools will be using an electronic PEP (EPEP). We have just concluded 6 training

sessions for all schools Designated Teachers and other staff in schools led by Welfare Call. A number of other local authority schools with Sunderland children looked after on roll also attended. This is an exciting phase of the development of the PEP and the feedback about the training has been excellent.

8 Accommodation

The team will soon move into newly refurbished accommodation planned for the summer holidays. We would be keen for members of the Corporate Parenting Board to visit when we are established.

9 Key areas of focus in the next 6 months

- Collate and analyse the outcomes for EYFS, KS1, KS2, KS3 and KS4
- Establishing the new structure
- Leadership and Management development
- Teaching, Learning and Assessment
- Early Years
- Post 16
- Joint Working
- Continue with EPEP development and improvement of quality and timeliness of completion
- Improving attendance
- Further reducing exclusions
- Education placement for all LAC
- No drift on admissions to new schools
- Annual training programme

10 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Full utilisation of the Pupil Premium grant in support of improving educational outcomes

11 BACKGROUND PAPERS

DFE Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children

Statutory guidance for local authorities February 2018

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-the-education-of-looked-after-children>

DFE The Designated Teacher for looked-after children and previously looked-after children
Statutory guidance for local authorities February 2018

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/designated-teacher-for-looked-after-children>

National Association of Virtual School Head Teachers
The Virtual School Handbook 2018

<http://navsh.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/NAVSH-The-Virtual-School-Handbook-2018.pdf>

CONTACT

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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 st April 2018 – 31 st March 2019
Name of person completing the form	Kathryn McCabe
Position in the fostering service	Registered Manager
Date form was completed	23 rd May 2019

Date of last Ofsted inspection	September 2018
Overall judgement	Good

Statutory requirements for improvement (with dates)

A fostering service provider must maintain a case record for each foster parent approved by them which must include copies of the documents specified in paragraph (2) and the information specified in paragraph (3).

The documents referred to in paragraph (1) are—

- (b) any recommendations made by the fostering panel,
- (d) the foster care agreement,
- (Regulation 30 (1)(2)(b)(d))

To be actioned by 30/11/18

Action undertaken to meet those requirements

This requirement was fulfilled within the necessary timescale. A new Foster Carer agreement will also be sent to all carers upon the launch of the new training, support and finance scheme in April 2019.

Recommendations for improvement (with dates)

- Ensure that reviews of foster carers' approval are sufficiently thorough to allow the fostering service to properly satisfy itself about their carers' ongoing suitability to foster. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 13.8) This is with particular regard to ensuring that all foster carers have their background checks refreshed every three years in line with the organisation's policy.

We are now able to access a report from our social care recording system to allow monitoring of DBS checks, previously this was managed manually. This data forms part of the monthly management meeting and is also shared regularly with the staff team. Further, during the establishment of this system the Foster Care Reviewing

Officers are making management aware if review paperwork is received and checks are outside of Together for Children's timescales.

■ Ensure that the fostering service only suggests foster carers to local authorities as a potential match for a child if the foster carer can reasonably be expected to meet the child's assessed needs and the impact of the placement on existing household members has been considered. Where gaps are identified, the fostering service should work with the responsible authority to ensure the placement plan sets out any additional training, resource or support required. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 15.1)

Matching continues to be a pressure within the service, however a working group is established to update and develop matching paperwork and a greater emphasis across the team is in place to record the detail of matching conversations. The enhanced training programme available to all continues to develop the skills of the carers and staff alike.

■ Ensure that foster carers maintain an ongoing training and development portfolio which demonstrates how they are meeting the skills required of them by the fostering service. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 20.4)

The social care system has now been developed to allow us to access a report for each individual carer. The established foster carer portal also collates information for individual carers, including their learning logs and certificates of attendance (only released once learning log completed).

■ Ensure that each approved foster carer is supervised by a named, appropriately qualified social worker who has meetings with the foster carer, including at least one unannounced visit a year. Meetings have a clear purpose and provide the opportunity to supervise the foster carer's work, ensure the foster carer is meeting the child's needs, taking into account the child's wishes and feelings, and offer support and a framework to assess the carer's performance and develop their competencies and skills. The frequency of meetings for short break foster carers should be proportionate to the amount of care provided. Foster carers' files include records of supervisory meetings. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 21.8)

We can now access a report from the social care system in relation to completion of monthly supervision of carers and unannounced visits. Previously there was no reporting mechanism for supervisions and manual collation of data for unannounced visits. Both reports form part of the monthly management meeting agenda. Supervision training has been provided to all Fostering Social Workers (FSW).

• Ensure that the fostering service has and implements a written policy that clarifies the purpose, format and content of information to be kept on the fostering service's files, on the child's files and on case files relating to foster carers. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 26.1)

A policy has been developed and shared with staff.

- Ensure that staff, volunteers, panel members and fostering households understand the nature of records maintained and follow the service's policy for the keeping and retention of files, managing confidential information and access to files (including files removed from the premises). There is a system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record keeping and take action when needed. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 26.2)

A training course has been developed for carers and staff encouraged to attend. Training specific to panel members is built into the introduction to panel training and is planned to be part of a panel training day later this year. The Registered Manager and Assistant Team Manager's undertake up to 5 brief case audits each month to identify themes for development. Completion of any outstanding actions is monitored.

Action undertaken to meet those recommendations

See above

2. Summary data

Foster carers			
Expressions of interest	April – June 2018 - 9 July – Sep 2018 - 4 Oct – Dec 2018 - 6 Jan – March 2019 - 15		
Assessments completed	There has been a total of 45 assessments completed within the reporting period.		
Assessments ongoing	5		
Approvals	Temporary Foster Carers (Reg 24) – 148 Connected Carers – 35 Mainstream Carers – 5 Respite - 1		
Reviews completed	There have been 205 foster carer reviews completed within the reporting period.		
Foster carer training		2018	2019
	Attachment	84	20
	Autism Awareness	59	0
	Basic First Aid	75	25
	Behaviour that Challenges Distance Learning	2	1
	Bullying Awareness	2	0
	Child Development	67	0
	Contact Training	1	0

	CSE	7	1	
	Emergency Duty Crisis & Child Expl	3	0	
	Emergency Duty Team	1	0	
	Equality and Diversity Distance Learning	7	3	
	E Safety	1	1	
	FASD	36	0	
	Impact of Abuse	35	0	
	Life Story Work	6	1	
	Managing Allegations	71	1	
	Mental Health Awareness Distance Learning	1	0	
	Moving Children on to Permanence	14	0	
	Next Steps	14	14	
	Online safety	1	1	
	Other	47	19	
	Permanence Training	11	1	
	Prevent	1	0	
	Skills to Foster	19	5	
	Substance misuse	1	0	
	Talking to Children & Young people about sexual health	8	0	
	Theraplay	34	0	
	Training and Development Standards	5	1	
	Virtual School	12	15	
	What is Permanent Fostering	3	1	
	Foster carer support groups	Monthly support groups, including guest speakers (at most) have taken place each month in the reporting period. Attendance at a minimum of three support programmes is now mandatory for carers.		
	Terminations of approval	<p>We have had 27 foster carers resign over the reporting period, 5 of these resignations were because of the agency raising standards of care concerns, the other 22 were for a range of personal reasons.</p> <p>We have had 27 foster carers temporarily approved under regulation 24 whose approval has ceased within the 16-week period.</p>		
Number of foster carers	76 Connected Carers 183 Mainstream 8 Short Breaks Carers 267 in total			
Comment, analysis, and any action taken				
<p>On the 1st April 2019 we launched our new training, support and finance scheme for carers, our offer is now in line with neighbouring local authorities. The increase in fee has led to an increase in interest in enquiries to foster with Together for Children. Whilst interest increases we also expect some carers to choose to leave the agency as they do not wish to commit to the training requirements and expectations. We continue to work with our colleagues in the communications department to develop coverage of the new scheme.</p>				

The training programme and support groups are now well established, and participation is good with positive feedback. We continue to review training and work with carers for how they wish to see this continue to develop. Most of the work within the team continues to be in relation to connected carers, a scoping exercise is currently taking place to consider 'splitting' the team and forming two teams, one specific to mainstream carer recruitment and support and one in relation to connected carer assessment and support. This would allow the team members to develop specific skill bases and focus on the differing needs of each set of carers.

Children and young people

Referrals	213
New placements	149
Placements ended	48 (from 1 st July 2018, so 9 month period)
Unplanned endings	4 (same 9 month period)
Number of children	

Comment, analysis, and any action taken

Demand upon the service remains high. We are currently working with colleagues in performance to establish the ability to collate the breakdown of placements ending, unplanned endings and the number of children this is in relation to. Currently this is manually collated (from 1st July 2018) and as such question marks over accuracy remain.

However, a disruption policy has been implemented and disruption meetings are now held, being chaired by the Fostering Panel Advisor. Currently this covers permanent placements for children placed in excess of 3 year and children who have had multiple unplanned endings. As capacity increases we hope to widen the scope.

3. Detailed data

Compliance with care plan

The Foster Carer Supervision template has been updated to allow for greater reflection between FSW and the foster care. This should contribute to ensure, that the carer is clear about the care plan for each child, and that the child is aware, subject to their age/understanding? 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. Training on this template has taken place with all FSW's and a report developed to monitor the completion of monthly supervision.

The Fostering Service works 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 and signature before the review is held.

Within this period, we have developed a policy and procedure in relation to disruption meeting's and these are now considered for any child/young person within a permanent placement who has an unplanned ending and also for any child/young person who has experienced multiple unplanned endings. This helps us to identify areas for improvement. During the reporting period 10 young people have moved on to access 'staying put' arrangements and 31 children have moved on to be placed with prospective adopters.

All foster carers now have updated portfolios which identifies and lists all documentation a foster carer should have for each child in their care – each child has their own individual portfolio where this information can be stored.

Accidents, injuries and illnesses

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

There have been nine schedule 6 notifications regarding a serious illness or accident within the reporting period. These were made up of childhood accidents. One schedule 7 notification relating to one child, this involved a child attempting to drown themselves in the bath, resulting in the foster carer forcing entry into the bathroom. Additional support was put in place for both the carer and child.

Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided

Since I began my position as Registered Manager in September 2017 there have been a high number of changes to practice expectations for both carers and staff. As a management team we need to ensure support and training is available to all during this ongoing period of change. Monthly supervision for all staff, including case supervision, is well embedded, this allows for management oversight and review. Monthly management meeting's (between assistant team managers, team manager and business manager) allow for this to be monitored.

Notifications under schedule 7 have been brought into line with expectation and policies and procedures continue to be reviewed and updated, being mindful to meet requirements whilst managing the process of change. The Foster Care Agreement has been updated and is specific in outlining to carers their responsibility to keep the FSW informed about the child's progress and to notify the Fostering Service without undue delay, but within 1 working day of matters relating to schedule 7 of the Fostering Regulations.

Policies and procedures are being updated and as sign off is given these are made available to carers, we also have an established foster carer online portal which has improved accessibility to all carers to access updated documents.

A pro forma has been developed and shared with FSW who in turn have been asked to share with carers, this allows an effective mechanism to record details of any accidents, injuries, illnesses, incidences and any missing episodes – this pro forma includes prompts for action by the carer and guidance on how to record. This has recently been introduced and as it becomes embedded into practice we will monitor within our monthly manager meeting's. This pro forma is included in the portfolio provided to all carers which are currently being distributed.

A review of schedule 6 notifications is necessary to ensure all staff members and carers are working within the requirements as it is noted that compliance can be changeable.

Medication, medical treatment and first aid administered

Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided

The Foster Carer Supervision template has been updated and includes prompts for discussion around medication, medical treatment and first aid. Together for Children have an established relationship with Learning Curve (training provider) and carers can now access a range of training programmes via this tool. This training programme includes a Level 2 Certificate in Understanding the Safe Handling of Medication. Carers have recently requested (via the consultative group) more detailed training in this area for carers caring for children reliant on daily medication – this is currently being explored with health colleagues.

Information is currently held within the foster carer's handbook which was updated in April 2019. Mandatory First Aid training is held and repeated every three years.

Measures of control, restraint or discipline

Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided

The Foster Carer Supervision template has been updated and includes prompts for discussion around this area. Policies and procedures continue to be updated and as sign off is given these are made available to carers, all policies and procedures are also made available on the foster carer portal.

'Learning Curve' also offers a Level 2 Certificate in Behaviour that Challenges. Delivery of the Solihull Parenting Programme commenced within the reporting period and demand from carers is high. We are currently exploring training further staff in the delivery of this course to widen availability.

Complaints in relation to children/about foster carers, and their outcomes

Summary	<p>There have been seven schedule 7 notifications regarding a serious complaint about a foster carer. Within the reporting period there has been one complaint submitted to Together for Children's Compliment and Complaint department. This complaint was addressed within stage one of the complaint process and related to a recommendation of non-approval of a Connected Carer.</p> <p>During the reporting period there have been 15 compliments submitted to Together for Children's Compliments and Complaints Department.</p>
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Evidence of notification under schedule 7 regarding any serious complaint about a foster carer, or information being provided to the Disclosure and Barring Service

Within the current reporting period we have submitted one notification to the DBS service in relation to one carer. This carer has been de-registered by the agency.

Allegations or suspicions of abuse or neglect, and investigation outcomes

Evidence	<p>There have been 8 foster carers referred to the Designated Officer within the reporting period.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3 of these cases remain open - From 5 closed cases the outcomes have been found to be: 3 Unsubstantiated / 2 Substantiated
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Evidence of notification under schedule 7 regarding instigation and outcome of any child protection inquiry, or suspicion/involvement of child in "prostitution"

There have been 5 schedule 7 notifications submitted due to 'instigation and outcome of any child protection enquiry.'

Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided

As a service we continue to develop relationships with the Designated Officer and are introducing regular monitoring and information sharing meetings. This will allow us to monitor trends and develop an appropriate action plan. As we have managed several carers within standards of care since my commencement in post in September 2017, as well as improving the training and support provided to carers we have seen a reduction in the involvement of the Designated Officer.

Children missing without permission

Evidence of notification under schedule 7 regarding a child missing from placement

There have been no notifications in this regard.

Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided

Our ability to report using our social care system continues to improve and we are now able to receive information in relation to children that go missing, this includes data around the child and the carer with whom they are placed. 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.

A pro forma has been developed and shared with FSW who in turn have been asked to share with carers, this allows an effective mechanism to record details of any accidents, injuries, illnesses, incidences and any missing episodes. This pro forma includes prompts for action by the carer and guidance on how to record and this pro forma is included in the portfolio provided to all carers.

Allegations that a child has committed a serious offence

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.

Serious incident necessitating police being called to the foster carer's home

Evidence of notification under schedule 7 regarding a serious incident necessitating police being called to the foster carer's home

There have been no notifications made to this regard.

4. Staffing

Summary of staffing position
<p>Registered Manager – Full time Assistant Team Managers – 3 FT Fostering Social Workers – 11.3 FTE Fostering Support Worker – 1 FT Panel Advisor – 1 0.5 FTE Independent Practitioners – 5</p> <p>There is currently one member of staff absent from work due to long term sickness, this sickness is currently reviewed, in line with HR processes within formal sickness reviews. During the reporting period there have been several staffing changes, including some temporary positions to backfill previous long-term sick leave and the retirement of one member of staff. Any vacancies are quickly filled using external advertising.</p>
Recruitment of new staff
<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>
Staff supervision
<p>All staff, including the 5 independent practitioners have a named supervisor and receive monthly personal and case supervision. SW supervision is undertaken by an Assistant Team Manager and the TM supervises the ATM's. 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>
Staff training
<p>The training programme for foster carers has been significantly enhanced and all staff have been asked to link with their supervisor and attend this training as is appropriate. It is important that staff have an awareness of the training that is on offer to carers and it is also an opportunity for them to enhance their own knowledge base.</p> <p>The team plan was developed in January 2018 and reviewed in March 2018 and June 2018. It 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, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (not whole staff team), Train the trainers in relation to Solihull Parenting Programme (not whole staff team) and Robust Analysis and an Evidence Based Approach to Connected Carers Assessment (attended alongside Panel members).</p>
Staff appraisals
<p>Staff appraisals are completed annually, the number of changes across the team in the last 18 months has placed pressure on staff to engage with new policies and procedures and expectations. Staff are positive about the changes that have been achieved and this is reflected within their commitment to the team and carers.</p>
Staff meetings

Team meetings are held monthly, they are chaired by the TM or an ATM in her absence and minutes are taken on a rota basis by members of the team. Within the reporting period a team day to review the team plan was held in June 2018. In recognition of the number of changes that have taken place within the agency it was agreed to wait a further year before reviewing to allow staff to work on their areas of development, however small working groups were established for key areas and these meet regularly. These working groups include, participation and engagement, matching and permanence and recruitment.

Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided

Whilst for some staff members it has been difficult to adjust to a differing management style overall feedback is positive, staff recognise the improvements in the service they provide and are becoming more and more confident in their decision-making ability. There have been a number of staffing changes across the team and this has affected dynamics and brought a new approach.

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 size of the team can make this difficult at times, 22 staff members from the fostering team report to the Registered Manager, as mentioned above a scoping exercise is currently underway to consider making two teams to manage mainstream/connected carers. This would allow areas of specialism to be further developed and allow for a more cohesive team approach.

5. Fostering panel

Summary of panel

Panel is experiencing a time of growth and development, with the Panel Chair in post since May 2018, followed by the Panel Advisor in September 2018. In addition, three new Independent Panel members began sitting on Panel in October / November 2018. Further recruitment took place in early 2019, with an additional 5 Independent Panel members ready to begin sitting on panel from April / May 2019, these include a previous care experienced person, who is also a qualified social worker. Therefore, both Panel's now have a previous care experienced person represented as a core panel member. The Fostering Panel has representatives from education, early years, social work, fostering, foster carers, adopters and an adoptee and 2 elected members, promoting a diverse range of experience and knowledge base. The panel also has a named legal representative available to seek advice as and when required.

Panel have seen a gradual improvement on the quality of reports being presented to the Fostering Panel, which has seen less cases being deferred. There has been a focus by panel members on ensuring the 'Voice of the Child' is clearly heard within reports, to include questionnaires / interviews of adult birth children and any children residing within the household. This is now filtering through and provides a more evidence based and analytical approach to reports, to further inform panel members with their recommendations.

The practice of providing the panel questions to applicants 15 minutes prior to attending panel, continues to be well received and frequently receives positive comments from both the applicants and the Social Workers within the evaluation feedback. Several applicants comment upon, how hearing the Panel Chair refer to the strengths of their application, as identified by panel members, before asking them any questions, makes them feel at ease.

Recommendations made by the Fostering Panel and the Agency Decision Maker are now routinely recorded on the Foster Carers electronic file. Panel members now provide written feedback in terms of the assessment and 5 minutes are set aside at the end of each presentation to provide feedback to the Panel Advisor. On occasions panel members wish to highlight good Social Work practice and this is shared by the Panel Advisor to the relevant managers for recognition within supervision.

Panel are now utilising a recording device during the Fostering Panel to ensure the accurate minutes of the meeting. Presenting Social Workers and applicants provided their agreement in writing and panel members also have their agreement recorded on file. The recording is deleted once the final panel minutes have been agreed.

Panel meetings

There has been 24 Fostering Panels held during the reporting period.

Cases considered and recommendations

- Connected Carers – 54 Cases Considered, recommendation to approve 39 cases and not approve 9, 1 withdrawn on day of panel, 5 deferred
- Mainstream Foster Carers – 6, recommendation to approve all 6 carers
- Regulation 25's – 18, recommendation to approve 18
- First Reviews – 11, recommendation on-going approval for all 11 cases
- De-Registrations – 2 Mainstream
- Resignations – 45 (including regulation 24 temporary approval)

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. A Foster Carer presented with their 1st Foster Annual review, commented that they were thanked for attending and felt appreciated for the work they had done. Where issues or difficulties are noted, these are explored and when required they are considered within the ongoing panel development / action plan.

Training and appraisals

All panel members have had an appraisal within 2018 –these were completed with the Panel Chair and Panel Advisor. Two Independent Panel members resigned following their appraisal. A further Independent Panel member's panel membership was terminated in March 2019, following a 3-month review period, where limited changes to practice were observed by the Panel Chair.

There has been one training event within the reporting year, facilitated by an external CoramBAAF trainer, "Robust Analysis and an Evidence Based Approach to Connected Carers Assessment". It was helpful to have assessing Social Workers and Panel members attending the same training, to share and explore practice dilemma's, also to consider the outcome of serious case reviews. The clear message taken away for all attendees was the need for a more 'Needs' led approach to the information shared within the assessment and will require a more joined up approach from the assessing Social Worker and the children's allocated Social Worker. In response to this the Panel Advisor will be meeting with managers to feed this back.

The Induction pack and process has been updated and is being utilised for the new panel members, joining as Independent Panel members in April / May 2019.

Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided

- De-Registration reports / Cease of Approval for Connected Carers reports now include a section for the Foster carers to sign and include any feedback they wish to add to the agency or the fostering panel.
- Panel continues to ask Connected Carer applicants whether they have all of the necessary paperwork pertaining to the child, in the main this is now in place and therefore less of a concern than it had been previously.
- Whilst the Panel Chair wishes to promote transparency throughout the panel process, Social Workers are requesting that where questions around previous care planning arise, these be asked without the applicants in the room. This is an area for further development and consultation.
- Where Panel raise concerns relating to safeguarding or requests a case review or review of care planning, there is now a system in place to feedback the relevant findings to the Fostering Panel. The learning for the agency is not always noted and this is an area for further development.
- Panel currently asks all applicants one 'children's question' from the Children in Care Change Council, this is now being updated and work with the Fostering Agencies children's group 'VOKOL' is in progress to include the 'Voice of the Child' through a recording of young people asking their identified questions. The two Independent Panel members with previous care experience will take a lead role in developing this.

6. Consultation with children and young people

Evidence	<p>An online survey using 'survey monkey' is completed yearly with both carers and children placed with our foster carers. The feedback is used to inform decisions relating to service development.</p> <p>Two separate children and young people groups were developed in April 2018, one for children who live with foster carers and the other for children who foster. Engagement has been limited but is increasing at each group and as we develop new activities.</p> <p>Informal support events are held in each school holiday period, a range of activities take place and again feedback is extremely positive. Our last event was attended by 66 children, along with their carers.</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>An online survey using 'survey monkey' is completed yearly with both carers and children placed with our foster carers. The feedback is used to inform decisions relating to service development.</p> <p>We hold bi-monthly coffee mornings for carers which is an opportunity for them to chat informally both with staff and each other. The Registered Manager attends these. Monthly support groups are held, these are more 'formal' and usually include guest speakers on a range of topics from how to help a child with their homework to foetal alcohol syndrome.</p> <p>We have an established consultative group which meets bi-monthly, the Registered Manager chairs this group, over the reporting year I have seen the group develop and attendance increase. Carers advise they feel supported and listened to, they are empowered to raise issues as they now know their concerns will be listened to and acted upon. A shift in presentation is also evident – carers approach is positive, they raise concerns in a way that feels thought through and with reason.</p> <p>We held our foster carer awards ceremony in June 2018, previously only those receiving an award were invited to attend, this is now inclusive and open to all. Feedback was extremely positive. This will now be an annual event. Informal support events are held in each school holiday period, a range of activities take place and again</p>
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	<p>feedback is extremely positive. Our last event was attended by 66 children, along with their carers.</p> <p>Two foster carers are long standing members of the corporate parenting board. Foster carers are regularly involved in the delivery of training and the training lead is linking with carers who have expressed an interest to develop this further.</p> <p>The Fostering Service has links with a local charity, 'more than grandparents' who provides support to family members caring for the children of their relatives. Specific engagement, including a working party of carers was established as part of the implementation of the new fee structure.</p>
<p>Comment and any action undertaken to improve care provided</p>	
<p>Participation and engagement have been a real area of development within the reporting period, our groups for both carers and children are becoming more and more established, with attendance increasing at each event. 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>We recognised that trust within the new management structure needed to be gained to ensure we were able to receive accurate views when consulting. Carers report that they are listened to, they have direct contact details for the Registered Manager and are also able to meet with her/raise issues both at informal and formal meetings.</p> <p>The implementation of the new training, support and fee scheme has been a significant piece of work within the last quarter of the reporting period. As well as three whole carer engagement events, a working party was developed. In addition, the Registered Manager spent over 50 hours in one to one meeting's with carers who were concerned and/or anxious about what the changes would mean for them.</p>	

8. Financial information

Comment			
Completed by Finance Department:			
1.1 Together for Children Sunderland has a Services Contract with Sunderland City Council and the value in 2018/19 was £68.4m. Performance against this budget is detailed in a monthly Finance report to the Company Board of Directors.			
1.2 The table below provides the draft summary financial information relating to the Fostering Service for 2018/19.			
	Actual	Budget	Variance
Category	£	£	£
Employees (inc Agency)	950,427	816,460	(133,967)
Premises (Room Hire)	4,704	2,000	(2,704)
Car Mileage (Employee)	42,467	27,392	(15,075)
DBS / Medical Reports	133,220	41,505	(91,715)
Equipment (Foster Carers)	46,844	45,000	(1,844)
Publicity	2,311	0	(2,311)
Other Running Expenses	13,772	2,535	(11,237)
Foster Care Payments	5,939,429	5,940,000	571
IFAs	3,113,274	3,000,000	(113,274)
Total	10,246,448	9,874,892	(371,556)
1.3 The key priority for the agency remains to recruit more foster carers with a focus 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 coming into care.			
1.4 Following Board approval, a new Foster Carer Fee and Support framework was introduced on 1 April 2019 with the aim of better retention and recruitment of carers.			

Signed	
Name	Kathryn McCabe
Position	Lead Manager for Fostering and Adoption
Date	23.05.19



Together for Children Adoption Sunderland NMS 25 Report 2018/19

CONTENTS

1	Introduction
2	Legislation, Regulations and Guidance
3	Key Requirements of Local Authority Adoption Services
4	Adoption Support Services 4
5	The National Minimum Standards – Adoption
6	Organisation
7	Staffing
8	The Current Government Review of Adoption / Regionalisation Agenda
9	Statement of Purpose and Recruitment Plan
10	Adoption Timeliness Data Analysis
11	Achievements 2017/18
12	Outsourced Services
13	Non agency adoption
14	The Inspection of Local Authority Adoption Agencies
15	Complaints and compliments
16	Challenges and priorities for the year ahead
17	Conclusions

1 INTRODUCTION

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

Together for Children Adoption Sunderland (on behalf of Sunderland City Council) is currently in the process of jointly negotiating to become part of a larger Regional Adoption Agency, with Cumbria County Council, Durham County Council and a number of VAA's.

The main priorities of Together for Children Adoption Sunderland are:

- To achieve the placement of children in care 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 recruit, prepare and assess adoptive applicants who are likely to be able to meet the placement needs of the children waiting for families both locally 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 placement are the agency's paramount consideration.

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 and supporting statutory guidance and regulations;
- The Care Standards Act 2000;
- The Adoption Act 2002;
- The Adoption Agency Regulations 2005 (amended 2011);

- The Children and Adoption Act 2006;
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 and accompanying statutory guidance;
- The National Minimum Standards for Adoption (2011);
- Adoption Statutory Guidance 2011;
- The Children and Families Act 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 children in care within four months of them coming into Local Authority care. (This may be a return home, or any of a range of different placement options, one of which is adoption);
- Focused effort goes into finding permanent families for all children in care 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 recruited by Together for Children Adoption Sunderland is provided by Social Workers within the Service from the point of placement and up to three years post Order. Following the making of an Adoption Order responsibility for post Order support lies with the Local Authority area within which the adopters live, for many this may remain as Together for Children Adoption Sunderland.

Birth families are provided with support services from ARC Adoption, this ensures independent support is available and is offered via a service level agreement between Together for Children Adoption Sunderland and ARC Adoption.

Access to their records for adopted adults and counselling support is provided by Social Workers within the service. In the year 2018/19 this service has been provided for 11 clients. Intermediary services have been provided to 5 people for the same period.

In addition Social Workers within the team provide therapy for children pre and post placement. Alongside this, training in therapy techniques is provided for foster carers, prospective adopters and adopters as well as Social Work colleagues in other teams within Together for Children. An additional 4 Social Workers within the team will access therapy training in April 2019. Social Workers within the team are also trained in DDP and therapeutic life story work and the Solihull Parenting programme as we continue to increase the skill base of team members and build upon the therapeutic offer for families, both pre and post adoption.

We operate our Postbox Service and currently there are 493 active post-box files. We have seen some reduction in the number of active files within the reporting period as a result of a review and closures of young people turning 18. All team members are involved in proof reading post-box correspondence and responding to enquiries. One team member takes overall responsibility for overseeing, reviewing and developing the post-box Service. There is dedicated admin support for the post-box service.

Post Adoption Assessments	No completed	Within 6 weeks	Over 6 weeks	% completed in timescales
16-17	33	18	15	55%
17-18	66	42	24	64%
18-19	45	29	16	64%

NB this 6 week timescale is set by TFC and not DfE led

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 Statement of Purpose and procedures are fully compliant with both the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (revised February 2011) and the Adoption National Minimum Standards.

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,
- Policy and Plan on the Recruitment of Prospective Adopters,
- The Service has comprehensive written procedures.

7 STAFFING

Current staffing levels

The current team consists of:

- Responsible Individual and ADM – Director of Social Care – Full time
- Registered Manager and Adoption Support Services Advisor (ASSA) - Lead manager for fostering and adoption – Full time
- Panel Adviser (0.5 post)
- Assistant Team Managers (2 posts) (F/T)
- Adoption Social Workers (5 posts)(F/T)
- Adoption Social Workers (2 posts) (.8 post)
- Adoption Social Workers (1 post) (.6 post)
- Adoption Support Worker (1 post) (F/T hours)
- Administrator (Letterbox) (1 post) (2 x .5 posts)
- Family Finding Support Officer (1 posts) (F/T hours)
- 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.

The Lead Manager for Fostering and Adoption is currently a temporary position, through to 30th April 2019, a restructure of Senior Management within Together for Children is currently underway and permanent clarity will be sought for this position as a part of this restructure. One of the Assistant Team Manager's within the team is seconded on a temporary basis to the fostering team with a Social Worker within the adoption team 'acting up' to the position of Assistant Team Manager, also on a temporary basis.

The admin services are provided to Together for Children Adoption Sunderland from the admin team within Together for Children.

8 THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT REVIEW OF ADOPTION / REGIONALISATION AGENDA

As detailed above Together for Children Adoption Sunderland (on behalf of Sunderland City Council) is moving forward with plans to become part of a Regional Adoption Agency – Coast to Coast. The other participating local authorities will be:

- Cumbria County Council
- Durham County Council

Together for Children Adoption Sunderland are undertaking the project work entailed with the regionalisation programme and are keeping Sunderland City Council abreast of all developments via the involvement of the Director of Children's Services and regular reporting to Sunderland City Council Cabinet Meetings.

The Department of Education paper published in June 2015 and titled 'Regionalising Adoption', first proposed the creation of Regional Adoption Agencies across the UK and anticipated that the creation of larger agencies, which included the participation of Voluntary Adoption Agencies, should serve to:

- Speed up matching of children with adopters;
- Improve adopter recruitment to make sure that it is more effective and linked to the needs of children waiting;
- Ensure that high quality adoption support services are available nationally;
- Reduce costs;
- Encourage specialisation;

- Broaden strategic planning;
- Encourage innovation and investment.

9 STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND RECRUITMENT PLAN

Together for Children Adoption Sunderland has a Statement of Purpose and a written plan relating to the recruitment of adoptive parents both of which are compliant with all current legislation, regulations, standards and best practice guidance.

The Statement of Purpose has been reviewed (January 2019) and is available on the website.

The Statement of Purpose and Recruitment Plan are reviewed annually.

10 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 was 238 in 2018 and dropped to 202 days in 2019. This figure has improved over 3 years and for the last 3 years has been below the National average.
- There were 76 days in 2018 and 91 days in 2019 from the date of Decision to Place to Placement Order date. The increase in days can be linked to cases with specific Court related issues.
- The number of days from Placement Order date to Date of Matching was 162 for 2018 and fell to 152 days for 2019. This figure has been improving over 3 year averages and was below the England average in the last 2 reporting years.
- The figures for Date of Matching to date Placed for Adoption were 29 days for 2018 and 14 days for 2019.
- The date of a child starting to be Looked After to the date of placement for Adoption was 518 days in 2018 and fell to 455 days in 2019. This brings us

closer in line with DfE threshold guidance for the number of days within the child's journey (threshold 426 days).

NB The above data is to the end of Q3 for both 2018 and 2019 as the data for Q4 in 2019 is not yet available.

Adoptive family approvals:

During the period 2018/19 a total of 24 prospective adopters were approved, this consisted of 5 single adopters and 19 couples.

Timeliness of adopters' assessments:

Of the above 24 approved prospective adopters all were completed within Stage One timescales.

Of the above 24 approved prospective adopters all Stage Two Assessments were completed within timescale.

11 ACHIEVEMENTS 2018/19

Children and Adopters

Together for Children Adoption Sunderland achieved the placement of 33 children with prospective adopters in the period April 2018 / March 2019. Of these 8 children, 24% were 'hard to place.'

Together for Children Adoption Sunderland achieved 9 early permanence placements in 2018/19.

Together for Children Adoption Sunderland has an enhanced support offer;

- Knowledge transfer partnership with Sunderland University
- Representation at an ACAMH International Conference
- £201,484.04 has been claimed from the ASF following 65 successful applications (2018/19)
- Enhanced support offer, including; Child psychologist available for consultation sessions with both families and staff and an independent counsellor who provides a talking therapy, using a humanist and integrative approach (for adults).
- Reduction in disruptions – 15/16 – 3, 16/17 – 2, 17/18 – 2, 18/19 – 0

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 and seeks to do this through:

- Discussions around development issues at the bi-monthly Support Group for approved adopters and quarterly waiting adopters group (offered alongside others within the North East consortium;
- Seeking written feedback about their experiences of working with Together for Children Adoption Sunderland from adoptive applicants, approved and waiting adopters and legal adopters, at key stages of the adoption process (additional quality assurance has been developed mid-way through the assessment process and a quality assurance visit is undertaken by an Assistant Team Manager following completion of the assessment and prior to Panel).
- Child Appreciation Days are routinely considered for all children aged three years and over who are placed for adoption as well as for younger children if they have experienced changes of foster-carer. Child Appreciation Days are all run by the Together for Children Adoption Sunderland Service.
- The Together for Children Adoption Sunderland bi-monthly Adopters' Support Group is well established, providing an additional avenue of support for approved and waiting adopters. On occasion, as appropriate, this group is opened up to invite prospective adopters within the assessment process.
- We continue to distribute our newsletter quarterly, highlighting relevant adoption news and research both on a regional and national level. We also use this as a way to engage adopters with our locally ran events.
- We continue to offer Crafty Kidz – a craft based activity for adopters and their children, this group has grown from strength to strength with attendance increasing with up to approximately 19 adults attending each session.
- We continue to offer our Summer and Christmas Parties, these events continue to increase in popularity and feedback is positive. These parties not only provide an opportunity for adopters and their children to come together but for some children this provides an opportunity for direct contact with siblings adopted within separate families.
- We have introduced a text message service so we can quickly and easily inform adopters of events.

- We complete an annual 'survey monkey' to seek the views of adopters on specific issues. This service allows for the completion of anonymous surveys.
- Specific consultation in relation to the development of a Regional Adoption Agency has taken place within the reporting year.

Engagement with Children

- The therapeutic consultative group engages adoptive children, who have been involved in a therapeutic intervention, to feedback and contribute to how our further services for children are going to be developed. To date they have named the group and have continued to engage in theraplay based activities. They are in the process of developing their own logo for the group.
- Crafty Kidz is an informal support group offering craft based activities to children and their families from placement. We now regularly have a large number of children and their families attend on a regular basis and this has enabled siblings to have contact and for friendships to develop, which is positive for everyone. It is a friendly and welcoming event, where at least 19 children regularly attend with their families.
- Our Fun 4 All group is for young people age 11-14 years who have been adopted and is held every six weeks. The young people enjoy doing various activities such as arts and crafts. They have recently been involved in devising questions to ask prospective adopters when they attend our Adoption Panel. It is also an opportunity for the young people to get together to share their experiences and discuss other issues relating to adoption.
- An adopted young person is now a member of Together for Children's Change Council. This young person has recently begun to attend the group and we hope she becomes an established and valued member.
- 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.
- Specific consultation in relation to the development of a Regional Adoption Agency has taken place within the reporting year.

12 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

We have commissioned the provision of Birth Family Support to ARC Adoption, a Voluntary Adoption Agency in Sunderland. This has been ongoing for three years and a agreement has been reached taking us through to April 2021. This intervention covers support 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 and there is a support group for birth family members for them to gain peer support. Between 1st April 2018 and 31st March 2019, 23 birth family members were referred to this service. Feedback has been collated by the use of questionnaires, this continues to be reviewed as a result of a low response rate.

13 NON-AGENCY ADOPTION

Together for Children Adoption Sunderland continues to receive a steady flow of interest from step-parents 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.

Within 2018/19 Together for Children Adoption Sunderland has completed the necessary Court reports for 6 in-family adoptions.

14 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 May 2018. 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 inadequate within this inspection with Adoption Services being judged as 'good.'

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 September 2018. The agency received an overall 'good' judgement with an 'outstanding' judgement for leadership and management.

The following recommendations were made;

- Ensure that telephone enquiries are made to each referee to verify the written reference. Specifically, that this verification is centrally managed rather than being the responsibility of the registered manager. (NMS 21.1)

Update – Following discussion with both the Responsible Individual and Together for Children's Human Resources Department it has been agreed that responsibility for verifying employee references will remain the responsibility of the Registered Manager. This is due to the Registered Manager also being the recruitment manager and thus having the information pertaining to specific areas whereby further discussion may be relevant.

- The panel chair should ensure that minutes of panel meetings are accurate and clearly cover the key issues. Specifically, that minutes record the documents that were presented to panel and that they considered when coming to their recommendation. (NMS 17.10)

Update – this was introduced in October 2018

15 COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS

In the period 1st April 2018 – 31st March 2019 there were no complaints relating to Together for Children Adoption Sunderland.

During the same period 6 compliments were received relating to Together for Children Adoption Sunderland, these compliments covered both pre and post Adoption Order work.

16 CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

To continue to support the development of a Regional Adoption Agency (in line with government expectations) ensuring that Together for Children Adoption Sunderland takes a key role in contributing to the design of the new Service and the development of future practice in all areas.

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

To continue to enhance the therapeutic support this is available within the team.

To continue to seek feedback from the adopters with whom we work regarding all aspects of the service.

To establish a 'survey monkey' for children who have been adopted and to use the information received to help to shape our service.

To embed the feedback process from birth family members who use services from ARC Adoption, where they are spoken to directly and their verbal feedback is recorded and used to shape future provision.

To continue to develop our engagement groups.

17 CONCLUSIONS

The landscape of adoption continues to change both nationally and locally as the Governments Regionalisation of Adoption agenda is driven forward.

Together for Children Adoption Sunderland continues to strive to be at the forefront of outstanding adoption practice. The Agency has achieved significant success in the reporting year with many elements of the excellent work within the team being recognised. We continue to endeavour to achieve timely placements for children requiring adoption and placing children within early Permanence Placements when appropriate to the needs and circumstances of individual 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. This has meant that children in need of placement have been identified at an early stage and many children with complex needs have been securely placed for adoption.

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

The coming year will continue to be a period of further significant changes for Together for Children Adoption Sunderland as we continue to develop the proposals to become part of a larger Regional Adoption Agency – Coast to Coast. However, we move positively forward with Ofsted's recognition of the 'good' adoption services provided to families within Sunderland.

Kathryn McCabe

Lead Manager Fostering and Adoption

May 2019



TOGETHER FOR CHILDREN	
REPORT AUTHOR:	Glynis Horner, Keith Munro & Agnieszka Indyka Foster Carer Reviewing Officer/Regulation 44 Officers.
SUBJECT:	Regulation 44 report summarising visits from November 2018 to April 2019.
PURPOSE:	To provide the members of the Corporate Parenting Board with an update on the findings in relation to the Regulation 44 visits.

Purpose

To provide the members of the Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) with an update on the findings in relation to monthly unannounced visits undertaken between November 2018 until April 2019 to each of the Together for Children Sunderland Children's Homes in accordance with Regulation 44 of The Children's Homes Regulations 2015

This report provides an overview of service performance reflecting on key areas of strength and highlighting any emerging issues to the Management Team and CPB.

Background

The current Children's Homes Regulations and Quality Standards were released in their final form in April 2015.

Regulation 44 of the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 clearly 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.

Independence is defined in the DfE Guidance as a person outside of the line management of the home, including the involvement in the care planning or financial arrangements of the home, visit and report. They may be an employee or be commissioned but must have, 'a clear separation between those with a direct interest in the home performing well'. (2.12DfE Guidance)

There is one full time and two half time Foster Carer Reviewing /Regulation 44 Officer posts situated in the Children's Independent Review Team within the Performance and Quality Assurance Directorate. Since the last report Agnieska Indyka resigned from her post within Together for Children and will leave the organisation in May 2019 and a successful recruitment process has already been completed with the new member of team due to start in July 2019. The three officers will continue to be qualified social workers who have the relevant skills, knowledge and experience to undertake the Regulation 44 visits.

Role of the Independent Visitor

Regulation 44 states that the independent person, when carrying out a visit, must interview children and young people accommodated in the home, their parents or relatives, staff from the home and relevant professionals. They are also required to inspect the premises and records (including children's case records where the child and their placing authority consents) of the children's home. The independent visitor produces a report about each visit (referred to in the Regulations as "the independent person's report") which sets out, the independent person's opinion as to whether:

- (a) children are effectively safeguarded; and
- (b) the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being.

The independent person's report may recommend actions that the registered person may take in relation to the home and timescales within which the registered person must consider whether or not to take those actions.

A copy of the report is sent each month to Ofsted, the Responsible Individual, the Strategic Service Manager for Accommodation and the Homes Manager.

Performance Overview

The following table provides the dates within the reporting period that Regulation 44 visits have been undertaken and the date of most recent Ofsted visit:

Home	Recent Ofsted	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
Colombo Road	19/09/18	15/11/19	06/12/18	08/01/19	07/02/19	07/03/19	04/04/19
Monument View	10/10/18	08/11/19	05/12/18	14/01/19	14/02/19	05/03/19	10/04/19
Grasswell House	08/05/19	06/11/19	11/12/19	14/01/19	11/02/19	18/03/19	09/04/19
Revelstoke Road	27/06/18	13/11/19	12/12/18	10/01/19	05/02/19	13/03/19	16/04/19

Administration

On average, seven hours each month are spent at each of the four homes to undertake the Regulation 44 visit. Evidence is gathered and evaluated to inform the report which is then written and distributed by the Regulation 44 visitor within the required timescale.

Colombo Road

Colombo Road Children's Home is approved for up to six young people of either gender up to the age of eighteen years. It is situated on a large housing estate in the Hylton Castle area of Sunderland. Within this reporting period there have been no changes to the management structure.

The following table shows the Ofsted Judgements for the 2017 and 2018 Ofsted inspections of Colombo Road. Since the last report to CPB there has been no recent Ofsted inspection during this period. The home remains rated as Outstanding.

Ofsted Rating	5&6/9/17 Judgement	7/2/18 Judgement	18&19/09/18 Judgement
Overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Outstanding	Sustained Effectiveness	Outstanding
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good	Sustained Effectiveness	Outstanding
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding	Sustained Effectiveness	Outstanding

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

Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
5	4	5	5	6	6

Colombo Road has had unannounced Regulation 44 visits undertaken during each month of the reporting period. The management and staff team respond positively to the recommendations made in the monthly reports. They discuss the recommendations at team meetings and view the recommendations as helpful to their ongoing development of practice and running of the home. The care practice observed with young people throughout the reporting period has been of a high standard.

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
4	2	2	0	20

Young people have positive relationships with the staff at the home. Staff use a therapeutic parenting model (PACE) which is centred on understanding trauma and emphasises building relationships where staff focus on connecting with young people. It is positive to report that the episodes of young people reported missing, two for this period, remained extremely low. Sanctions have been issued on three occasions and the use of restraint has been required on three occasions. Thirteen critical incidents were recorded, seven of which became notifications to Ofsted. Critical incidents are responded to and reflected upon in a timely way. A post crisis response is completed for each incident and action identified and taken to prevent reoccurrence. This involves not only learning for staff within the home but also the opportunity for the young person to undertake some reflection to avoid the situation re-occurring.

The fabric of the building of Colombo Road both internally and externally is maintained to a very good standard. The environment within the home feels homely and young people report during visits that they feel safe. The home remains decorated and furnished to a high standard in a modern style. A capital bid to replace the boilers and refurbish the kitchen was agreed and this work is currently being undertaken at the home with a completion date of the 14/06/19.

During each Regulation 44 visit at least one young person is consulted with by the Regulation 44 visitor. The discussions include their relationships with staff and how they try to support them in relation to their education or training, hobbies and personal interests. The following is an example from the record of one such discussion with a young person during the regulation 44 visit:

E has a very positive relationships with the staff and particularly her link worker. E sought a hug from a member of staff appropriately during the visit. E felt she had been living here long enough to develop those relationships. E commented staff helped her to develop respect towards herself and others. She thought it was because they showed her she could have a “stable lifestyle” and could recognise she was “a nice person”. E feels she is more able to control her emotions when she gets upset. E commented she was doing fine at school and that she wanted to go to college afterwards. E aspires to become a midwife or a police investigator. E enjoys spending time with her friends and peers outside of the home as well as the young people who live in the home. At that time E did not have any hobbies of her own. Although E was adamant that if she wanted to find one, the staff would support her in doing whatever she wanted to. E sometimes gets involved in preparing tea within the home. For example, she made Yorkshire Puddings recently. E also talked about participating in Master Chef at school and making Spaghetti Bolognese. E is very happy living in this home.

Wherever possible the parent or carer of a different young person is consulted with during each visit. When this is not achieved the young person’s Social Worker or Independent Reviewing Officer are contacted to gain their views about the care offered to the young person by the home.

When speaking to the Mother of S the Regulation 44 Officer was told that she “*could not fault*” the staff in terms of their communication with her. Staff always give her positive information about what her son has achieved as well as where he needs to improve, she said that she feels comfortable speaking to all the staff and she has an excellent working relationship with S’s link worker. She is pleased with the progress S is making on his college training course and knows he has 100% attendance. In summary Mother said” S wouldn’t be where he is now without them (the staff)”.

The Young People living at the home are settled and have high levels of attendance in education/training. Young people take up a wide variety of activities and hobbies inside and out with the home and take part in trips out.

The number of recommendations increased significantly to twenty in this reporting period. Recommendations have included the requirement for detailed recording around the use of sanctions and updating the records when life skills work has been undertaken. All recommendations are responded to and achieved within given timescales.

Monument View

Monument View provides residential care for up to six young people of either gender. It is geographically situated within Sunderland West. There have been no changes to the management

structure in this reporting period. The staff team remains very stable, cohesive and committed to ensuring the best outcomes possible for young people living there

The following table shows the judgements for the 2017 and 2018 Ofsted inspections of Monument View. At the most recent Ofsted Inspection undertaken on the 9th and 10th October 2018 Monument View retained their overall Outstanding Judgement. There were no requirements resulting from this inspection and just one recommendation. The recommendation concerned the recording of dates on young people's risk assessments and the advice given by the inspector has been implemented.

The inspector spoke to all the young people living at Monument View and commented on how there was evidence that all the young people have made good progress in their care.

The inspector advised that the overall judgement was Outstanding.

Ofsted Rating	12&13/9/17 Judgement	24/01/18 Judgement	9 &10/10/18 Judgement
Overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Outstanding	Sustained Effectiveness	Outstanding
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding	Sustained Effectiveness	Good
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding	Sustained Effectiveness	Outstanding

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

Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
5	5	5	5	5	5

Monument View has had an unannounced Regulation 44 visit each month during the reporting period. The management and staff team respond well to the recommendations. Recommendations are discussed at team meetings and seen as assisting the home in maintaining standards and improving practice. The care practice observed with Young People continues to be of a very high standard during visits to the home. Sanctions were used on four occasions and the use of restraint has not been required. Eight critical incidents were recorded four of which became notifications to Ofsted.

Critical incidents are responded to and reflected upon in a timely way. A post crisis response is completed for each incident and action identified and taken to prevent reoccurrence.

Each young person has education and/or training provision and where young people struggle to engage with education or training the manager and staff team work diligently in supporting them to re-engage. There is demonstrable evidence of how staff work in partnership with young people, their parents and relevant professionals to help young people to achieve their true potential.

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	41	3	5

Young people have good relationships with the staff at the home. Staff are implementing a therapeutic parenting model (PACE) which is centred on understanding trauma and focuses

building relationships where staff place an emphasis on connecting with young people. There was an increase of five episodes of missing compared to the previous reporting period. However, the number of missing incidents that lasted over twenty-four hours fell by three. When an episode of missing occurs a return interview is conducted, with the young person, by the Barnardo's return home interview worker. This is to try and reduce the risk and frequency of episodes re-occurring in the future.

Monument View is maintained to a consistently high standard. The homes location, garden and outbuildings provide a secure and nurturing environment. Young people are supported to grow their own produce and look after the hens and ducks. The home has a community-built yurt in the garden. The most recent project to be completed by staff and young people is the development of a sensory room. The room is equipped to create a therapeutic environment for young people.

The views of Young People living at Monument View are sought during each Regulation 44 visit. An example of these discussions was a conversation held with K.

K said staff at the home and a member of staff from YOS are supporting him to work on issues he has with anger. The example he gave was working on his "Triggers". K commented that his social worker has made a referral for him to CYPS to support him further with this work. K commented that he can talk to staff and they "*bond*" with him and because of this it "*Puts a smile on my face*". K said that he does make choices for himself which staff support him with. The example K gave was that he wanted to learn to drive and he is now having lessons which he really enjoys and looks forward to. K is using a phone application to revise and prepare for his theory test. The visitor saw K leave on a driving lesson during the visit and saw how happy and proud of himself he was when he returned from the lesson. K commented that staff have worked with him, so he knows how to use the oven, make a breakfast and snacks such as beans on toast. K said he can keep his room tidy which he usually does but sometimes he said he chooses not to. K reported that he has good personal self-care skills and enjoys having a shower room which is for his own use. K said he was supported by staff to attend the Pallion Trust to help him find employment in the construction industry. K commented although staff have supported him to attend it is his choice to attend and make the most of this. At the end of the discussion K wanted to say that "*Wish I had come here first before I went to a foster home*". This was because K felt how staff work with him and the "*Way of living is better at the home*", for him.

Young People's parents or primary carers are contacted wherever possible. If this is not achieved, then their social worker or Independent Reviewing Officer is consulted. A telephone conversation was held with D mother of N. D. D said that she had a "*Fab*" relationship with staff. D commented that she felt comfortable talking with staff from the home and they keep her informed of D's progress. D is pleased N's attendance at school has improved and she has a focus to study art post 16 after her exams this summer. D also likes that N has the option "*To go places*" (trips out) with staff. Overall D is pleased with the standard of care her daughter is provided with at the home.

The number of recommendations has decreased slightly to five in this reporting period. Recommendations have included improving the recording of independent living skills work undertaken with Young People and undertaking more one to one sessions to help reduce or stop smoking by Young People. All recommendations are responded to and achieved within given timescales.

Grasswell House

Grasswell House provides residential care for up to six young people of either gender. It is situated within Sunderland West. The management structure has changed since reporting to members of the Corporate Parenting Board in October 2018 this followed the Ofsted inspection undertaken on

October 31st 2018. The Deputy Manager has been temporarily managing the home since this Ofsted inspection; this arrangement has been approved by Ofsted.

The temporary manager and the leadership team has worked diligently to lead and manage the workforce at Grasswell House. He has been supported by the staff team to ensure the home meets the needs of the Young People living there, whilst at the same time leading the home through its journey of improvement.

At the inspection undertaken in December 2018 the home was judged to require improvement to be good. Although not in this reporting period, it is important to record that at the recent full inspection in May the overall experiences and progress of Children and Young People, was judged to be good.

Since the current management team have led the workforce the home has made remarkable progress, this needs to be acknowledged and celebrated given the improved experience for children in their care. Some new staff have been appointed and good quality training provided. The management and staff demonstrate a commitment to continuous professional development and this is reflected in their competence in practice and motivation to provide the best possible care for Young People

Ofsted Rating	Judgement 31/10/18	Judgement 4&5/12/18	Judgement 7&8/05/19
Overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Declined Effectiveness	Requires improvement to be good	Good
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Declined Effectiveness	Requires improvement to be good	Good
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	Declined Effectiveness	Requires improvement to be good	Good

Within the reporting period the home has been residence to the following number of Young People:

Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
6	6	6	6	6	5

Grasswell House has had an unannounced visit each month throughout the reporting period. Where recommendations are made they are responded to in a timely manner. The management team and staff respond positively to Regulation 44 visits and reports. Each one is discussed during staff meetings so that all are aware of the content and where action is needed to improve outcomes for Young People.

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
0	1	31	10	27

Episodes of young people going missing fluctuated throughout the reporting period. One young person has influenced the incidence of Young People being missing from care for over twenty-four hours. An alternative residential care setting, where the risk of him going missing can be more effectively disrupted, is currently being sought.

Young People have good relationships with the management team and staff built on an understanding of trauma and child centred care practice. A therapeutic parenting model (PACE) is used and it is evident the needs of young people are prioritised appropriately.

Wherever possible Young People are consulted during Regulation 44 visits to Grasswell House. In March D was interviewed, he has lived at Grasswell House for nine months and feels that after initial hesitation he has settled well and now considers this as his home. When D first moved to live at Grasswell House he was frequently missing from care for significant periods of time. It is great to report that this is no longer the case. D told me, *'I feel settled here. I'm comfortable with the staff. My link worker (JB) she is like my Ma, I am more comfortable with her than anyone'* He added, *'it feels like the staff know you really well and have your interests at heart, they wouldn't do all the things they do for you if they didn't'. 'I am one hundred percent happy here and not wishing I was somewhere else'.*

We talked about education and D said he is attending his education placement regularly. I asked what he thought had helped him to get back to school and learning after not attending for a long time. D thinks he has been helped by the home to return to learning and believes he has something to work towards. He has been offered an apprenticeship if he continues to work in the way he is doing now.

D was looking forward to going on holiday with staff and other young people. He enjoys the activities and confirmed Young People choose where they would like to go and what they would like to do. D said, *'staff enjoy the activities too - we all have a laugh together – it's class'.*

The parents or primary carers of Young People living in Grasswell House are consulted wherever possible. When a parent or primary care can not be contacted the young person's Social Worker or IRO is consulted. In January the Social Worker for young person J was spoken to.

Social Worker, DC had no concerns about the care provided for J. She said the staff at the home *'go over and above in providing care for J'*. She added, *'J is difficult to communicate with and they try their very best to understand how he is feeling'*. D explained that a therapeutic placement is currently being sought for J and said she feels he would like to stay where he is as he does get something from the care provided. We spoke about J's wellbeing and D said she is confident staff at the home do everything they can to promote it for J. She said staff work in partnership with other professionals and follow advice and guidance accordingly. She also believes J is kept as safe as he can be by the management and staff team.

Revelstoke Road

Revelstoke Road children's home provides residential care for up to six young people of either gender. It is situated on a housing estate within Sunderland North. There have been no changes to the management structure during this reporting period.

The following table shows the Ofsted Judgements for the 2017 and 2018 Ofsted inspections of the home. At the last full Inspection undertaken in June 2018 the overall experiences and progress of Children and Young People were judged to be Good.

Ofsted Rating	8&9/11/2017 Judgement	12/03/2018 Judgement	26&27/6/18 Judgement
Overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Good	Improved Effectiveness	Good
How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires Improvement to be good		Good
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires Improvement to be good		Good

Within the reporting period the home has been residence to the following number of young people:

Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April
6	6	6	6	6	5

Unannounced Regulation 44 visits were undertaken during each month of the reporting period. Care practice with young people was observed to be of a good standard. Young People are looked after well at the home and they are making progress. Sanctions were used twice, and restraint was used on one occasion. That was a significant drop from thirteen incidents of restraint which took place in the previous reporting period. There was also a significant decrease in critical incidents. There were 19 critical incidents of which ten were reported to Ofsted. Critical incidents were responded to efficiently and a post crisis response was completed. Appropriate actions were identified and taken to reduce the risk of reoccurrence.

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
1	1	16	0	16

The missing incidents decreased significantly since the previous reporting period. It was good to note there was no Young People reported missing for periods of over 24 hours.

Revelstoke Road is maintained, externally and internally, to a good standard and is decorated and furnished in a modern contemporary style. The environment within the home feels welcoming, comfortable and warm and the Young People present as been happy during the Regulation 44 visits.

At the beginning of the reported period four young people attended education, one young person attended an apprenticeship and one Young Person had disengaged from education regardless of consistent efforts from the members of staff to support him. By the end of the six months period another Young Person had left college and was supported into re-engaging into education via an appropriate course.

The attendance and attainment of the Young People at school or an alternative educational provision was varied. Most of the Young People struggled with attainment and their attendance fluctuated, but one Young Person kept consistently high attendance and made positive academic progress.

During each Regulation 44 visit at least one Young Person is consulted with by the Regulation 44 visitor. The discussions include their relationships with staff and how they try to support them with their education, training, hobbies and personal interests. The young people were polite and engaging. They were confident to express their wishes and feelings and raise any concerns they had. The Young People stated that they felt well looked after and that the staff care about them and support them, if they struggled. The Young People gave examples of support with education, developing independent life skills, relationships with other young people within the home and their own emotions. The Young People also had opportunity to participate in Young People's meetings organised to seek their views on aspects of their lives such as meals planning, holidays, or activities. The following is an example from the record of one such discussion with two young person during the regulation 44 visit:

They felt it was "a bit like home". They liked the staff and felt they were respected. One young person said she would be leaving soon and she asked her mother to buy her link worker a present because "she helped me a lot". The other young person also said he liked his key worker. He openly talked about his previous experiences of past foster homes and how he used to run away from them. We acknowledged together that he was not running away from here. He added "Yeah, I just left home with LM, and we were walking along the street, and we knew I was just going till the end of the street and I was going back anyway, but my key worker didn't know that and she ran after me", "cos she was worried about you!" – added the other young person. Both young people acknowledged that the staff cared about them.

Wherever possible the parent or carer of a Young Person is consulted with, if this cannot be achieved the view of a relevant professional would be gathered for consideration. The feedback from the parents of young people in this reporting period has been positive with regards to the quality of care that has been provided and there being clear lines of communication between residential staff and parents. One parent commented that her daughter has "*come on leaps and bounds*" since being placed in the home. The parents in their feedback have also advised that they feel that the home has clear boundaries/expectations and that staff have close relationships with the Young People.

The number of recommendations increased to 19 within this reporting period. Recommendations included, evidencing individual one to one work with the young people. The Manager addressed all of the recommendations that were made.

Analysis

In this reporting period each children's home has had visits undertaken in accordance with Regulation 44 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2015. The reports have been written and distributed to Ofsted, the Responsible Individual, Strategic Manager and Home Manager within the given timescale.

Learning from recommendations is shared within individual homes and across all four homes. Managers and their staff teams have used the recommendations to assist them to provide standards of care which supports Young People to reach their true potential.

Colombo Road and Monument View are currently judged by Ofsted to be providing Outstanding standards of care. Revelstoke Road and Grasswell House have been graded as providing Good standards of care. Grasswell House continued to receive additional support from their Regulation 44 visitor to assist the Acting Manager and senior staff to raise the standards of care they provide for young people.

Service development

In this period the implement an annual programme of themed audits was agreed and introduced. This development means that at each Regulation 44 visit a set theme is examined, in greater depth, for example life skills/preparation for independent living it is envisaged that the themed audit will provide evidence, feedback for further consideration by the Registered Manager.

We have also considered and trailed improved feedback from Regulation 44 visits to the Young People, in June 2019 this will be rolled out to all of the children's homes.

The homes will continue to develop their work with Dr Liz McManus Consultant Child Psychologist for Looked After Children. Teams receive regular training and consultation and are focusing on developing their understanding and skills with regards to Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy and the PACE model (Playfulness, Acceptance, Empathy and Curiously) which focuses on the whole child, not simply the behavior.

Training in each home is needs led and therefore directed by staff experiences of young people's behaviour and what they may therefore need from an adult response.

The Children's Homes work within models of practice that can broadly be described as person centred and strength based. Relationships with young people are key in understanding the impact of poor attachment and ensuring that they receive care from caregivers who are available and responsive to their needs allowing them to develop a sense of security. Staffs actions and responses should ensure that young people know and feel that we are dependable, which will create a secure base for them to then repair and grow.

The homes have been successful in being awarded a Capital bid from the Council with acquired funds being used to refurbish and reconfigure key areas identified within the buildings by the home's managers. It is hoped that all works will be completed by the end of the Summer.

Work is planned to embed the Signs of Safety Model. Staff teams are undertaking the training over the next few months and there is a plan to look more specifically at Signs of Success in line with promoting resilience and preparing young people for moving on.

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

1 July 2019

WORK PROGRAMME 2019/2020

Report of the Head of Law and Governance

1. Purpose of the Report

To inform the Corporate Parenting Board of the revised work programme for the municipal year 2019/2020.

2. Work Programme

Meeting Date	Agenda Items	Officer Responsible
7 October 2019	Change Council Update Health of Looked After Children CYPS Data Dashboard Education for Children Looked After IRO Annual Report RAA Update Foster Carer Recruitment Update	Jane Wheeler Dr Sarah Mills Margaret Clouston Linda Mason Stacy Hodgkinson Sheila Lough/Kathryn McCabe Martin Birch/Sheila Lough
20 January 2020	Change Council Update Commitments Review Health of Looked After Children CYPS Data Dashboard Education for Children Looked After Reg 44 Visits	Jane Wheeler Jane Wheeler Dr Sarah Mills Margaret Clouston Linda Mason Gavin Taylor
30 March 2020	Change Council Update Commitments Review Health of Looked After Children CYPS Data Dashboard Education for Children Looked After Foster Care Recruitment Update RAA Update	Jane Wheeler Jane Wheeler Dr Sarah Mills Margaret Clouston Linda Mason Martin Birch/Kathryn McCabe Sheila Lough/Kathryn McCabe

3. Other Suggested Agenda Items

At the meeting held on 1 April, the following items were suggested to be considered at future meetings: -

- Regional View on Pocket Money
- Sufficiency Planning

- Case Studies for Pathway Planning and Personal Advisors

Members are asked to consider when these items could be brought forward for consideration and whether they have any further suggested topics for future meetings.

4. Recommendations

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