

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

AGENDA

**Meeting to be held in the Civic Centre (Committee Room 2) on
Monday 8 October 2018 at 5.30pm**

Part I

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Contact: Gillian Kelly, Principal Governance Services Officer Tel: 0191 561 1041
Email: gillian.kelly@sunderland.gov.uk

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

9. **Regionalisation of Adoption**

-

Verbal update.

ELAINE WAUGH
Head of Law and Governance

Civic Centre
SUNDERLAND

28 September 2018

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 2 July 2018 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
Councillor S Watson	St Anne's Ward

Also in Attendance

Councillor M Beck	Fulwell Ward
Councillor P Gibson	Silksworth Ward
Councillor D MacKnight	Castle Ward
Councillor B McClennan	Hendon Ward
Councillor A Lawson	Shiney Row Ward
Councillor L Williams	Washington Central Ward
Councillor K Wood	St Anne's Ward

All Supporting Officers

Simon Marshall	Director of Education, TfC
Margaret Clouston	Head of Commissioning and Quality Assurance (South), NTW
Kelly Haslem	CYPS, NTW
Deanna Lagun	Head of Safeguarding, Sunderland CCG
Annette Parr	Support and Intervention Officer, TfC
Gavin Taylor	IRO Service, Together for Children
Jane Wheeler	Participation and Complaints Manager, TfC
Sheila Lough	Service Manager, TfC
Liz McEvoy	People Services
Gillian Kelly	Governance Services

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Francis and Johnston, together with Maurice Davis, Dr Sarah Mills, Janet Thomson and Trish Stoker.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 April 2018 be agreed as a correct record.

The Chair requested that, with the agreement of the Board, an additional item be added to the agenda on 'Education for Children Looked After'.

Change Council Update

Jane Wheeler presented the update from the Change Council and advised that the group had recently had their annual Away Day at Moor House Adventure Centre to review the work plan for the year and also to have fun. Simon Marshall and Sue Carty had also attended the day, which was greatly appreciated by the children and young people.

The Children Looked After Nurse was invited to one of the sessions and this had led to the development of a Healthcare Action Plan. The group spend time discussing the Children Looked After celebration and Awards Evening which would take place on Friday 14 December, with the young people wanting to plan the event to mirror the success of last year's evening.

The Regional Children in Care Conference was discussed at the Away Day. This was scheduled to take place on Friday 2 November and tickets were already available at a cost of £80. The focus of the conference was to be 'entitlements' and 'family visits'. The Chair commented that the conference was a very interesting event and encouraged elected Members to attend.

The Local Offer was now complete and available in hard copy or on the Together for Children website. The Change Council would also be discussing their action plan in relation to 'Commitments' at their next meeting and would report back to the Board.

2. RESOLVED that the Change Council 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.

During the report period there was an average of 607 children looked after in Sunderland and 46 were recorded as being placed outside the North East. Deanna Lagun was in attendance to present the report and advised that a correction was required in relation to the Quarter 1 compliance for Initial Health Assessments. The

number completed was in fact 66 rather than 55 and this represented a compliance figure of 91%. Four of the IHAs which had not been carried out within the 20 working days timescale were due to the assessments being required from services outside of the North East. There was now a pathway in place to address this issue however the capacity of the receiving authority was not always known.

The number of Review Health Assessments (RHAs) carried out in Quarter 1 was 144, rather than 98 as stated in the printed report. The compliance stood at 95% which was back to the previous level achieved prior to the disruption caused by the introduction of Liquid Logic. 100% of the required Health Passports had been issued.

The Board were reminded that the post of the Designated LAC Nurse was currently vacant but this had been advertised and interviews were taking place later in the week. The Named Nurse LAC was on sick leave and the Children and Young People's Nurse was acting up during this period.

Dr Sarah Mills had now taken over the role of Designated Doctor for LAC from Dr Kim Barrett and was responsible for the Looked After service as well as sharing the role of Medical Advisor to the Adoption Panel with Dr Sian Firth.

Dr Mills, Dr Firth and the CCG Safeguarding Nurse had attended a meeting about Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children on 14 June to hear more about meeting the needs of this particularly vulnerable and complex group. This may become more of an issue in Sunderland.

The Looked After admin team were collecting information about health outcomes from each health assessment and it was hoped to present data about emerging health issues to the Board in the future.

Councillor Lawson asked about the current situation with unaccompanied children and Sheila Lough advised that one was in a care home, two were in supported accommodation and one had been placed in London due to a cultural match.

The Chair highlighted that recent statistics from Public Health had shown that levels of immunisation had fallen in the looked after population. Deanna commented that there had been an issue around data quality and there was some work being done to ensure that information was quality checked before submission as it was not felt that this was a correct reflection of the position.

The Board were also provided with a report for information on Demand and Capacity in relation to the Looked After Health Team between June 2017 and May 2018.

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

Education of Children Looked After

It had been suggested that the Board receive a regular report on the education of Children Looked After and Annette Parr proposed that the termly Governing Body report for the Virtual School be brought to the Board in future. The report covered

matters such as staffing, premises, governance, GDPR, reviews of effectiveness, PEPs and attendance. Annette asked for suggestions from Board Members about what they would like to see in the report.

The Chair suggested that information about PEPs would be useful as the Virtual School had been looking at compliance and was now focusing on quality. Annette said that some examples of good and not so good PEPs could be brought to the Board and added that all Headteachers were receiving letters about this.

The Chair noted that numbers of school moves had also been a concern and that this should be included in the report. The current Governing Board report would be circulated to all Corporate Parents for feedback.

Simon Marshall reported that individuals were still being recruited to the Board of Governors for the Virtual School and asked if Members had any suggestions for potential Governors to forward them to him. The Governing Body was particularly looking for people with skills in finance, bid writing, fundraising and with business links.

4. RESOLVED that the proposal be noted.

NTW Sunderland Looked After Children Data

The Board received a report presenting the data for looked after children currently accessing services from CYPS.

The overview of referrals received between March and May showed a total of 30 referrals with five not being accepted during the period. The reasons for referrals not being accepted were set out and these included there not being enough information within the referral or the service user not being ready to engage with treatment. The team was in discussion with the CCG about the service specification and how carers could be supported at a time when the young person was not engaging with CYPS.

In relation to sources of referral, the majority were from social services and there were no new trends identified. The CCG had requested that Children Looked After be seen as a priority and this had to be worked through as it had an impact on the rest of the team.

There had been 20 discharges between March and May, two children were discharged unseen and two had been discharged after assessment. The full reasons for the discharges were set out within the report. There was a slight improvement in relation to waiting lists and a service review was currently being undertaken to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the current service model and how this could be improved. In terms of the current caseload for CYPS, in May 2018 5% of the total in Sunderland was Children Looked After, this was 117 out of a total of 2,216.

Councillor Davison noted that there were a number of young people who had been waiting more than 30 weeks and asked if there was a maximum wait time. Margaret

Clouston said that this information would be included within the next report and Deanna Lagun advised that as part of the work with the Sunderland Safeguarding Board there had been exercises on 'Turning the Curve' looking at demand across the partnership.

It was noted that some of the acronyms being used in the report were confusing and it was clarified that 'ICTS' referred to Intensive Community Treatment Service.

Councillor Davison also commented that age 6 – 13 years was a broad age range and there could be significant differences between children in that group. Margaret stated that these were the national age bands which were used for reporting but thought that this could potentially be broken down further.

5. RESOLVED that the information be noted.

Housing Offer

The Senior Housing Manager, People Services submitted a report detailing the Council's housing offer.

Liz McEvoy was in attendance to present the report and advised that the Council had recently approved a Housing Strategy for Sunderland 2017-2022 and one of the main priorities of the strategy was supporting vulnerable people to access and maintain housing. Within this priority there was a key action to develop a joint protocol between Together for Children and Housing Services to ensure that homeless young people and those leaving care were supported to find suitable accommodation.

The duty to provide accommodation for young people fell under the Children Act 1989 and the Housing Act 1996 and from April 2018, the Council had a duty to prevent homelessness under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018.

Young people who were within 56 days of their eighteenth birthday would be referred to Housing Services in line with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018 (HRA). A Personalised Housing Plan (PHP) would then be drawn up with the young person which would outline their housing needs and any support they required.

The Board were advised that the Government's Homeless Advice Service Team (HAST) was visiting the Council later in the month to meet with officers from Housing and Together for Children and young people. The purpose of the visit was to give advice and make recommendations in the context of the Homelessness Reduction Act, current practice and any Ofsted recommendations.

The next steps to progress the key action were set out as follows: -

- Robust data is gathered on future housing and support needs of young people and care leavers by March 2019;
- Recommendations made by HAST are considered and implemented;

- Recommendations made by OFSTED in relation to the housing needs of homeless young people and care leavers are considered and implemented;
- Together for Children and Housing Services draw up a written joint protocol which sets clear and practical arrangements to prevent youth homelessness and to ensure 16 or 17 year olds have accommodation which meets their needs. This will be based on the recommendations above and in the light of Government guidance with a target date for completion being March 2019;
- A Homelessness Strategy is developed which addresses the needs of homeless young people and care leavers by September 2019; and
- The Council's Housing Allocation Scheme is revised in the light of the HRA and the needs of care leavers are reflected in the revised Scheme which has a target date for publication of January 2019.

Councillor Wood asked who would be responsible for supporting young people in their property and Liz stated that the PHP would link to support agencies and a young person would have a case worker to offer advice on the tenancy.

Councillor Gibson queried if there were any specialist young people's units in the city and Liz advised that these were commissioned with the YMCA. Nacro Homes Agency, good private landlords, Gentoo and other social landlords were also used to provide accommodation.

Councillor McClennan asked if there was enough suitable housing stock for care leavers and also, what emphasis was being placed on educating young people on how to be good tenants and neighbours. Liz commented that there was enough bricks and mortar but the main issue was whether this was where young people wanted to live. The suitability of accommodation and the support packages offered to young people needed to be monitored and the team was about to recruit a Tenancy Support Officer to look at this.

Councillor Lawson commented that a number of elected Members had raised the location of accommodation for young people over the years and there had been a view that the housing was more convenient for social workers than young people. Liz said that choice of location would be monitored and reported back at the next update.

Councillor Davison said that she would like assurances that the young people were adequately supported and Liz highlighted that Together for Children placed young people in commissioned properties and there was a wide range of accommodation available from age 18.

Councillor McClennan recognised that support packages were costly and queried if there had been any research showing that funds could be used to make property more suitable of the needs of young people so that less support was needed. Councillor Wood said that she was aware of a property developer doing something in the city which was tailor made for young people and Liz confirmed that the developer was applying to become a registered social landlord.

The Chair noted that supported accommodation was expensive and when young people began earning money, they were no longer able to access that provision. If

they were in receipt of housing benefit then they had to live in shared accommodation and this was a big issue.

Having thanked Liz for her report, it was: -

6. RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the update on the Housing Offer for young people and the new duty of prevention through the HRA be noted; and
- (ii) a further report be received by April 2019 on the joint written protocol and the Homelessness Strategy in relation to young people.

Annual Adoption Report

The Board received the Together for Children Adoption Report for 2017/2018 which had been prepared by the Lead Manager for Fostering and Adoption. The Voluntary Adoption Agency had now been in operation since 1 April 2017 and the main priorities of Together for Children Adoption Sunderland were: -

- 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 sector was highly regulated and a very skilled workforce was required, particularly to recruit adopters for hard to place children. The agency provided a range of services and commissioned birth family support services from Arc Adoption.

The report set out the staffing levels for the team and that the agency had a Statement of Purpose and Recruitment Plan which were reviewed on an annual basis. Together for Children Adoption Sunderland was moving forward with plans to become a Regional Adoption Agency with Cumbria County Council and Durham County Council. It was envisaged that Regional Adoption Agencies would speed up matching, improve adopter recruitment and encourage specialisation.

There had been a steady improvement in the timeliness of each of the stages on a child's journey to adoption and adopters' assessments had also been completed within a timely fashion. It was highlighted that Together for Children Adoption Sunderland had an enhanced support offer for adopters and had successfully claimed £150,000 from the Adoption Support Fund which benefitted 63 families.

The agency outsourced services in relation to Inter-country adoption and birth family support and continued to receive a number of enquiries from step-parents regarding in-family adoption.

Together for Children had recently received its OFSTED inspection and the Adoption Agency would get a grading from this inspection, with verbal feedback having been positive, and would also receive an individual inspection relating solely to the adoption services which it was registered to provide.

The challenges and priorities for the year ahead were: -

- 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 support Together for Children with their forthcoming OFSTED Inspection with the intention of achieving a rating of 'Good' for the company's adoption services.
- To continue to improve the excellent record of the service regarding timeliness.
- To continue to seek feedback from the adopters with whom we work regarding all aspects of the service and to establish a 'survey monkey' to enable adopters to anonymously provide their views.
- To establish a 'survey monkey' for children who have been adopted and to use the information received to help to shape the 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 enhance therapeutic work that is provided to children pre and post adoption order and to continue to develop the engagement group recently established.

The landscape of adoption would continue to change both nationally and locally as the Government's Regionalisation of Adoption agenda was driven forward and Together for Children Adoption Sunderland aimed to continue to be at the forefront of good adoption practice.

Councillor McClennan asked if the Adoption Support Fund had to be used more because CAMHS had been slow to respond to requests for services. Sheila Lough stated that sometimes the counselling required was very specialised and the Adoption Support Fund had been introduced because there had not always been ready access for therapeutic provision.

Deanna Lagun asked if there was an issue with recruitment for the Adoption Team and also what learning was undertaken when placements broke down. Sheila advised that all of the staff were permanent within the team. Breakdowns were quite unique and a disruption meeting would be held to discuss what had led to the breakdown and an annual report was produced.

7. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Annual Fostering Report

The Board received the first Fostering Service Monitoring Form which had been completed since Together for Children Fostering Sunderland became an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA).

Sheila Lough stated that the IFA was unique in having responsibility for foster carers, connected carers and the children themselves. The report set out the summary data for foster carers and it was highlighted that the service had looked closely at improving training for foster carers alongside specific training for First Aid and administering medicines. Supervision arrangements were in place for all foster carers and there was good communication between professional and carers.

All complaints and compliments were recorded and the IFA worked closely with the LADO and would refer concerns to them. Work had been undertaken to increase engagement with foster carers and a number of Foster Carers were nominated for Together for Children Spotlight Awards. An online survey had been rolled out to Foster Carers and the results of this were being evaluated.

A report had been prepared on Foster Carer fees and presented to the Directors of Together for Children the previous week. This would now be taken to the Board and it was hoped to have a positive outcome and agreement to the new fees structure.

The two Fostering Panels were very busy and were considering a large number of applications to be connected carers at the present time. This pattern may change once the issues around fees were resolved.

Councillor McClennan asked about the 'Solihull Parenting Programme' which was referenced in the report. Sheila advised that this was a programme aimed at upskilling staff in therapeutic input for children and carers. There were currently a number of children under ten who were displaying challenging behaviour and efforts needed to be made to understand what this was about.

Councillor McClennan also noted the courses which were offered to carers and queried whether there was the potential to have an accredited qualification for carers. She also asked if the training provided by the IFA could be marketed to other organisations. Sheila stated that some training had been done with Northumberland County Council on 'Fostering to Adopt'.

Councillor Williams drew attention to the finding of the Lead Manager for Fostering and Adoption that there were a high number of inappropriate schedule 7 notifications being submitted to Ofsted. Sheila explained that when the service became an IFA there were new regulations and requirements to comply with and a cautious approach was taken initially. Notifications had increased for a time until staff began to better understand how IFAs worked. It was confirmed that the current levels of notifications were correct.

Councillor Davison commented on the allegations of suspicions of abuse or neglect and that 10 out of 37 of these had been substantiated. She asked what period this covered and how this had been picked up. Gavin Taylor stated that these had been

notifications to what was the LADO (Designated Officer) and it was common to receive a large number of these allegations. There was a clear definition within the Designated Officer functions in relation to allegations and the outcomes. Sheila noted that some allegations required a formal meeting, then possibly a formal investigation and referral to the Police.

8. RESOLVED that the Fostering Monitoring Form be noted.

Reg 44 Visits

The Board received a report providing an update on the findings in relation to the monthly unannounced visits undertaken between December 2017 and April 2018 to each of the Together for Children Sunderland Children's Homes in accordance with Regulation 44 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2015.

It was a statutory obligation for monthly Regulation 44 visits to be made to all five of the Sunderland's Children's Homes by an 'independent person'. Within Together for Children there were two Foster Care Review/Reg 44 Officers who took responsibility for conducting the visits to children's homes, however one of the officers had left their post in January and had been replaced in May 2018.

Gavin Taylor guided Board Members through the report highlighting the current Ofsted ratings for each home and the outcomes of the Regulation 44 visits. Colombo Road had been found to have sustained effectiveness and young people had been encouraged to give their views, as had parents. It was noted that the service was fostering safe and healthy relationships with parents and families. One recommendation had been made for the home within the period.

Monument View was also judged to have sustained effectiveness and each of the six residents was attending education or training provision. There was a reduction in missing incidents from the home and the views of young people and parents were taken into account. There were no recommendations in this period.

Grasswell House currently had four young people in the home but had six residents at the time of the inspection. The home had previously been judged to be inadequate by Ofsted in November 2017 but to have shown some improvement in January 2018. The Reg 44 visit found that young people and parents were consulted and nine recommendations had been made with regard to the update of risk assessments, individual crisis management plans and case files and consultation with young people. There was a culture of learning from events at the home.

There had been five young people resident in Revelstoke Road at the time of the visit and the home had been found to have improved effectiveness. One of the young people was not attending school regularly and staff at the home were working with him to improve his attendance.

Councillor Gibson expressed concern that there were 24 missing incidents for over 24 hours. Gavin explained that this represented one child who had been missing 24

times. The reasons for this type of incident often related to a specific event and staff had to develop appropriate strategies to deal with this.

Councillor Smith highlighted the recommendation with regard to staff supervision at Revelstoke Road and young people who were not in education. Gavin advised that the Reg 44 Officer had found that evidence of staff supervision was not in place and that had led to a recommendation which would be reviewed at the next visit. The Reg 44 visit provided a snapshot of the day and it was possible that the supervision had not been written up.

The next Reg 44 visit would look at the strategies which had been put in place to address the issue of young people not being in education. Contact had been made with the Virtual School and that would be driven forward. From the point of view of the Reg 44 Officer, this would be a continuing recommendation.

Simon Marshall said that there were only very small numbers of Children Looked After who would not engage with education and the Virtual School had been very creative in identifying young people's interests and trying to tailor education around that.

Councillor Wood asked what percentage of young people were in alternative education and Simon said that he could provide that information as list of each individual child and their educational provision had been required by Ofsted.

Councillor Davison asked what the 'improved effectiveness' judgement meant for Revelstoke Road and Gavin noted that the starting point was different to other homes. Revelstoke had been found to have an improved effectiveness on a judgement of 'good' for the overall experience and progress of children and young people. Ofsted had visited the home the previous week and found all three areas of judgement to be 'good'.

Sea View Road was a short break residential care home with a maximum of four young people in the setting. There were some good comments from parents in relation to the care at the home and there had been nine recommendations made. The service was shortly to move out of Together for Children and the new provider would take responsibility for monitoring the home.

The Chair raised the issue of elected Member involvement in Reg 44 visits and it had been suggested that a Member could have a link to a particular home. It was proposed that councillors be asked if they were interested in becoming a 'friend' of a home. The individual would become known to the home and would need a DBS check and to undertake Reg 44 training. This information would be circulated to all Members.

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

Corporate Parenting Board Training

Gavin Taylor asked the Board Members to consider what the Independent Reviewing Service might be able to offer in terms of training. He referred to the 'Change Game' training which explored the experiences of children and young people in care and had been found to be useful by Members in the past.

The IRO service would also offer training on Reg 44 and elective visits and also develop some procedures around visits. It was hoped to provide an overview of the statutory role of the IRO service and it was noted that there was potential to do this at a short session prior to a Corporate Parenting Board meeting.

A training session on the Change Game had been provisionally scheduled for Monday 24 September at 4.30pm and Reg 44 Visit Training would take place on Monday 10 September at 5.00pm.

10. RESOLVED that the information be noted.

Work Programme 2018/2019

The proposed work programme for the municipal year 2018/2019 was presented to the Board.

Suggestion for agenda items which had been made during the course of the meeting were noted and would be added to the work programme.

11. RESOLVED that the Work Programme 2018/2019 be noted.

(Signed) L FARTHING
Chair

CHANGE COUNCIL UPDATE SEPTEMBER 2018

Regional Children in Care Council

On the 13th of July the regional children in care council went on their annual residential to plan for this year's regional conference which is on the 2nd of November at St. James Park. The local authorities separated into groups and chose a topic to work on this year. Sunderland are working with south Tyneside and they are working on life story work, there workshop is called **It's my life**. Below is a table of the other workshops that will be a part of the conference.

<p style="text-align: center;">Its a family affair</p> <p>This workshop is designed to put you in the shoes of children in care. As an interactive workshop, you will be immersed in the complexities and barriers that children in care and their family endure during contact, resulting in a deeper understanding of the practical and emotional barriers that inhibit lifelong positive relationships.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Its my life</p> <p>Everyone has gaps in their life, whether it's because you were too young to remember or no one to explain what was happening at that time, as you get older this is where photo albums come in and explanations help but often, children in care do not get this, resulting in huge gaps in our understanding. This workshop will explore how to help people look back to move forward.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Right here, right now</p> <p>This workshop will take you through a young person's journey in the care system, and focus on their rights and entitlements and how this affected everything from practicalities to mental health and emotions. It will focus on young people's experiences on what happens when you don't get your rights and entitlements, with real life examples.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Who Cares?</p> <p>This workshop will explore Corporate Parenting and the difference it can make in the lives of the young people in our care. It is vitally important that we act in a way which ensures children in our care achieve the best outcomes for their future. Young people want to and expect to be treated the same as their peers. We will be doing fun based interactive activities which are based on real life scenarios.</p>

To register your interest please email regional.cicc@northtyneside.gov.uk you will then receive a booking form to secure your place on the event.



Two members of change council represented Sunderland and had a great time; they participated in team building, canoeing, ghyll scrambling and tree climbing.

Sunderland and South Tyneside ready to go ghyll scrambling!



TFC board – The Change Game

Change council came up with a game in 2016 which we named the 'Change Game' it is designed to help professionals understand what life can be like as a child looked after or leaving care. The game requires a group of professional, split into groups, who are given a board piece shaped as a young person and they have to draw their own young person. This can be done in two ways, stereotypes that they feel society has about children in care or actually what a young person in care may look or feel like.

Each group takes turns rolling the dice and the first group to reach the end wins. However, while making their way around the board there are thumbs up and thumbs down cards. If you land on a thumbs up it could read "you have moved into semi-independent accommodation and this is going well move forward 5 spaces" or you could land on a red card and this could say "you have been moved to a new placement and are not sure why this is happening and you feel unsettled and lost go back to the beginning".

Change council have played this game with Corporate Parents and most recently in August 2018 they played it with the TFC Board Members.



Recruitment and Selection

Members of change council have recently been involved in the recruitment for a new Director of Social Care and the Virtual Head Teacher. Young people met with HR and developed questions for the young person's panel. The young people choose a formal interview process. Young people have enjoyed being part of the process and empowered and that they are being listened to when they are involved in the recruitment of social care staff which is really important to them.

CLA Celebration and Awards Evening

Change Council have been working hard planning their annual Children Looked After Celebration Event and Christmas Party, they have lots of activities booked and nominations have started to filter in for the awards part of the evening. As with everything Change Council are always looking for valuable donations for the evening, particularly for their goodie bags that they like to give all CLA and LC young people when they leave that evening. If anyone has any ideas please email Loren Nergaard loren.nergaard@togetherforchildren.org.uk



Name change

There has been many discussions regionally about the name 'contact' which we refer to when many children have time with their family members, previous carers, friends and others. Contact can be very important in helping children develop their sense of identity and understand their lives, however children and young people don't like it is called 'contact', they feel it is too formal and not 'normal'. After much discussion regionally the children and young people in Change Council have discussed changing the name to 'family time'. They would also like to take this one step further and support Children's Social Care in relation to developing family time spaces. Change Council has raised with Jill Colbert and Martin Birch who are happy to progress with this. The young people will also work with TfC communications team to brand and communicate the change.



We are pleased to announce the next North East Regional Children in Care Council conference for 2018.

Friday 2nd November, 10am - 3.30pm

St. James Park Stadium, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE1 4ST

In 2016 the Regional Children in Care Council held their first youth led conference for professionals. The conference was organised and facilitated by young people with care experience from across the region, and was one of the first of their kind. It was attended by a wide range of professionals, senior leaders and organisations who heard first-hand accounts from young people about their experience and how they want to see the care system changed. This was followed by another successful conference in 2017; both were a huge success with outstanding evaluations.

2018 will see four workshops covering key issues chosen by young people who are in, or have been in the care system, as well as opening talks from some of our inspirational young people and a key note speaker. The event is being organised and led by the young people of the North East Regional Children in Care Council.

The cost of attending is £80, which includes free parking, lunch, materials and refreshments.

To register your interest please email regional.cicc@northtyneside.gov.uk, you will then receive a booking form to secure your place on the event.

Spaces are limited to 150 delegates so please register early to avoid disappointment.

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

8 October 2018

HEALTH OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Report of the Looked After Health Team, City Hospitals Sunderland

1. Purpose of the report

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the activity of the Looked After Health team to Sunderland Corporate Parenting Board.

In this quarter there was an average of 630 children looked after, this has increased from the previous quarter. 41 were recorded as being placed outside of the North East, this has reduced slightly.

2. Compliance data for health assessments Quarter 1

- 2.1** Local Authorities are responsible for making sure a health assessment of physical, emotional and mental health needs is carried out for every child they look after. Initial Health Assessments (IHAs) must happen within 20 working days of the child becoming looked after. In order for the health team to ensure compliance with statutory timescales it is imperative they are advised of the child becoming looked after and consent for health assessments received in a timely manner.

Table 1 – Initial Health Assessments

	Quarter 2
Number	52
Compliance (target 100%)	73%

- 2.3** The compliance reduced over the summer because of disruption to the process. A new more efficient system was to be implemented using the placing social worker to notify the looked after health team rather than the CIRT team. Due to a lapsed information sharing agreement notifications were not sent in a timely way during August. The old system was reinstated and the new system will be implemented from 1st October 2018.

- 2.4** One child was not brought to their arranged appointment and there was one health assessment required from a service out of the North East that has not been performed in a timely manner. There is a pathway in place to address this issue.

- 2.5** The RHA must happen at least every six months before a child's 5th birthday and at least once every 12 months after the child's 5th birthday. Table 2 depicts the compliance rate.

Table 2 – Review Health Assessments

	Quarter 2
Number	165
Compliance (target 100%)	95%

- 2.5** Non-compliance was due to 7 children not being brought for their arranged appointment. 2 children placed out of the area did not have their health assessments completed on time. This has improved from the previous quarter.

3.0 Health Passports

- 3.1** The pathway for providing Health passports works well.

Table 3 – Health Passports Issued

	Quarter 1
Number	11
Compliance	100%

4.0 Looked After Health Team

- 4.1** Claire Elwell has now been appointed into the role of Named Nurse for Looked After Health. The role of Children and Young People's Nurse has been appointed to and will be filled from December 2018.
- 4.2** Victoria Smith will commence her role as Designated Nurse for Looked After Health from November 2018.

5.0 Developments

- 5.1** The Looked After health team met with Sheila Lough and Martin Birch to discuss improving the consent process. This would allow an improved consent form and leaflet to be used by social workers. The looked after health team are to attend the Management meeting at Together for Children to promote the process.
- 5.2** A leaflet for young people which will explain the health assessments is in development. The text has been produced and the design work will be created to match the 'Commitments' leaflet produced by Together for Children.
- 5.3** Dr Mills, Dr Firth and Claire Elwell met with residential unit managers, Sharon Willis and Liz McManus, Consultant Psychologist to discuss how to build relationships and health support between the residential units and the health team.
- 5.4** Dr Mills, Sheila Lough, Agnes Physic, Looked after lead CYPS and Kelly Haslem, Community CYPS manager met to begin working together on improving the mental health support for looked after children and young people. On the 2nd October 2018 a day long meeting was held by the Looked After Health team looking at 'Addressing

the Mental Health Needs of Children and Young People who are Looked After' speakers from CYPS, CAMHS, Washington MIND, Adoption support team, the virtual school and the participation team attended. The day ended with a collaborative session looking at how to build relationships and better meet the mental health needs of the Children and Young People.

- 5.5** The data collection for health outcomes health assessment has been established. Figures will soon be collated on a regular basis looking at issues such as smoking rates, substance misuse and obesity. The team will also be able to gather information on the services they provide at the health assessment for example performing blood tests, giving immunisations or carrying out sexual health screening. Once an information agreement is established the team look forward to presenting this data to Corporate Parenting Board in the near future.

6.0 Recommendations

The Corporate Parenting Board is asked to note the content of the report.

Signed



Dr Sarah Mills
Locum Paediatric Consultant
Designated Doctor for Looked After Children

27.09.2018

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

8 October 2018

**POCKET MONEY, SAVINGS, ALLOWANCES AND PERSONAL ITEMS FOR
CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**

Report of the Strategic Service Manager – Looked After Children

Purpose of the Report

The policy on Pocket Money, Savings, Allowances and Personal Items for Children in Foster Care has been drafted to bring the offer in line with what already exists in Children's Homes. This is also in line with one of the topics of the Regional Children in Care Council.

A consultation process is to take the place with children, young people and foster carers. The Director of Finance is currently considering the policy and financial implications.

Policy: Pocket Money, Savings, Allowances and Personal Items for Children in Foster Care

Related Policy Framework; Regulations; Statutory Guidance

- National Minimum Standards For Fostering (2011), Standard 2
- Volume 4 Guidance to the Children Act: Fostering Services
- Foster Care Agreement
- Sunderland City Council Policy- Management of Disability Benefits

Policy

Together for Children believes that all children placed in foster care should be encouraged to develop their own personal identity; personal choice and to develop a positive sense of themselves through fostering which respects and promotes individualised care.

Provision of pocket money and personal allowances appropriate to the age of the child or young person, are part of the parenting and care they need to help them have personal choice. Having pocket money is good for children and encourages them to gain a sense of independence, and develop skills in deciding what to buy and what things cost. It helps children to learn about the value of money, and to develop budgeting skills as they grow up, which are essential for independent life. The purpose of this policy is to set out the minimum expectations for each child placed in foster care, in respect of pocket money, savings and allowances. Foster carers may decide to provide more money to children, or reward children and young people for particular positive actions or decisions.

Foster carers looking after more than one child, or looking after birth children and looked after children must take care not to discriminate between children, or appear to do so. Where children receive different amounts of pocket money or allowance, due to age differentials, foster carers must be able to let children know why, and the basis of any difference.

The Fostering Allowance includes an element for pocket money, savings and personal care for children. These payments should be made from the Fostering Allowance paid to the foster carer.

Pocket Money

Pocket money is for the child to choose how to spend, and should not be used to pay for regular entertainment, leisure activities, clothes or personal items, unless the child or young person chooses to buy more out of their own choice.

From the outset of placement, the following weekly pocket money rates are the minimum expected for looked after children:

Under 3 years	No Pocket Money	11	£5.50
3	£1.00	12	£6.50
4	£1.00	13	£7.00
5	£1.50	14	£7.50
6	£1.50	15	£8.00
7	£2.50	16	£9.00
8	£3.00	17	£10.50
9	£4.00	18+	No allowance
10	£5.00		

For children under 5 years foster carers should talk about using pocket money to pay for small treats such as sweets, or a small toy. Even at this young age, children can start to learn about paying for things, and start to build skills in basic numeracy understanding. They can also gain the pleasure and enjoyment of choice. There is flexibility in the under 5's- and there should be discretion based on the child's development and understanding. However, the principle of equality across all children in the family should be observed.

The pocket money rate to be paid should be confirmed within the Placement Agreement, and Placement Plan. Children and young people will be asked about pocket money in preparation for their review each time.

Children may not have pocket money permanently taken from them, as a sanction. If pocket money is withheld, it must be for a short period of time, and the child must know how to gain it back again.

Where a child or young person is suspected of spending pocket money on items such as alcohol or cigarettes, the foster carer should discuss with the child's social worker how money will be provided and spending supervised. Such arrangements should be for as short a time as possible, because it is important that children and young people gain the skills, experience and choice they need as they grow up.

Savings

It is an expectation of Together for Children that all children placed in foster carer will have savings set aside for them. Saving up for something that may be expensive, or saving to make sure that there is a “safety net” when you need it are independence skills that are required as children grow up, and become adults. Learning to save, and experiencing the benefit of saving is an essential life skill.

Having a bank account and saving through a bank is also an essential life and independence skill. Many parents open bank accounts for children, and help them to learn about having an account, and a bank card, as they grow up.

When a child becomes looked after it is expected that the foster carer will set up a savings account, for all children over the age of 7 years, once the 28 day review has taken place.

The account should be for the child, and the account will be open in the name of that child, when they move placement. Where a child is moving on to another foster placement, the bank account details, and access details should be provided to the new foster carer, and a record made that this has taken place.

Where a child is returning home, the social worker for the child and the foster carer should discuss appropriate arrangements to safeguard savings, in the name of the child, or young person only.

The savings guidance is as follows:

Child 5-11 years	£5 per week
Child 11-18 years	£10 per week

Junior ISA

When a child/young person has been looked after for 52 weeks, The Share Foundation will open a Junior Individual Savings Account (Junior ISA) on behalf of the child/young person with an initial government payment of £200.00.

Children and young people may wish to add contributions to their ISA from pocket money, savings or other money earned or given as a gift.

Children/young people should be provided with a yearly statement setting out the level of savings in their Junior ISA.

See separate guidance on the transfer of savings to a responsible adult where a child/young person ceases to be looked after prior to their 18th birthday and the transfer of savings to young people leaving care on their 18th birthday.

Personal Allowances

Many parents provide young people with a personal allowance for clothing and toiletries, to develop their budgeting skills, and to help them make choices about costs, preferences and brands.

From the age of 12 upwards, foster carers may decide that provision of a personal allowance will help the young person to develop life skills, and have personal choice. Foster carers should always provide school uniform, a warm coat, nightwear, and ensure that basics of leisure and none school clothes are provided.

Foster carers should always provide basics such as toothpaste, toothbrush, shampoo and conditioner, soap, toilet rolls and sanitary products.

However, foster carers may wish to provide a sum of money on a weekly or monthly basis, to encourage personal choice of clothing and personal care.

The following guidance is provided, as a weekly equivalent, where the young person and foster carer agree that the young person will be provided with an allowance:

Age	Clothing	Toiletries
11-15	£10	£2.50
16-18	£20	£5

The differential rates are reflective of the expectation that where young people are moving towards independence they will be expected to be responsible for more of their personal care and provision.

Any personal allowances to be paid should be confirmed in the Placement Agreement and in the Placement Plan.

Birthdays and Festivals

Foster carers will receive an additional allowance equivalent to the Fostering Allowance, for each of the child's birthday and Christmas, or religious festival. The foster carer should expect to spend all of this sum on a gift for the child, or gifts to the equivalent value.

The principle of equality should apply to provision of birthday and festival gifts.

Receipts

Foster carers do not normally need to keep receipts for expenditure relating to provision of pocket money, or an allowance for the child or young person. However, where any additional allowances are claimed, for example a Clothing Allowance where the child is placed without sufficient suitable clothing, receipts will be required, and must be provided to the Fostering Service. Failure to provide receipts may result in a decision not to reimburse the allowance.

Disability Living Allowance

Some children or young people will be entitled to Disability Living Allowance (DLA) in respect of additional supports they require for their care.

Where the child may be eligible for DLA, or is in receipt of DLA, please see Sunderland City Council Children's Services Policy on Disability Benefits, and specifically related to a child looked after in foster care.

In summary, the timescale at which DLA should be transferred from payment to the parent of the child, to the foster carer is when the child has been looked after for 12 weeks.

The foster carer is required to set up a separate bank account specifically through which the DLA for that child is managed, and must keep accounts and a record of all payments into the account, and expenditure from the account. The account should be for no other purpose. The Department of Work and Pensions may decide to audit the expenditure, and foster carers must, by policy, maintain records of expenditure. To be clear, any DLA paid must be for the benefit of the child, in respect of their disability or special needs of the child, for example, laundry needs; additional transport costs.

At age 16, the benefit transfers to Personal Independence Payments, and the policy for these payments, and the management of any financial benefits paid is within the SCC Disability Benefits Policy, as above.

Arrangements for the management of the DLA or PIP should be confirmed at the Placement Agreement Meeting and detailed within the Placement Plan. These arrangements should be checked at each LAC review.

Payments when the Child goes for respite care

The responsibility for payments to the child when he or she goes to another foster carer on a short break basis should be agreed during the planning and preparation for that placement.

The following is a guide for those decisions:

Respite care placement for 4 nights or less	Main carer to provide all pocket money; usual personal allowance payment; DLA.
Respite care for 5 to 13 nights	Respite carer to provide pocket money and personal care/personal care items. Main carer to provide any clothing allowance, and DLA .
Respite care for 14-21 nights	Respite carer to provide all payments, with the exception of DLA.

Personal Belongings

Children and young people coming into foster care, or who are looked after need to have their own personal belongings, clothes, games, toys, electronic equipment, and special possessions with them. Personal items are very much part of our identity and for looked after children, keeping and safeguarding their personal items is especially important, for their identity, self-respect, and individuality.

Foster carers should welcome the child, or young person, with personal possessions and make sure that space and room is found for them. Where there are large items, or things that pose a challenge for storage or safety, there should be discussion about how and where these might be stored, or kept.

Foster carers are expected to ensure that children have suitable clothes for their needs, and to maintain a good standard of clothing for children. For children who come to the placement with inadequate clothing, an initial clothing allowance may be requested. This can only be authorised by the Child's Social Work Team Manager, and any clothing purchased, which has not been authorised may not be reimbursed.

It is expected that the child's social worker and the Fostering Social Worker will both ensure that the child is clothed to a good standard, and that where there are any concerns about the adequacy of clothes, in respect of amount of clothing, size and fit, or condition and cleanliness, these issues will be sensitively discussed with the foster carer in supervision, or in private by the Child's Social worker.

It is very important that children's personal belongings are safeguarded when they are in foster care, and the foster carer has an important role in valuing and respecting the child and their personal possessions.

The Child's Social Worker, and foster carer should agree who will make a record of the belongings of the child, at the time of placement, with due consideration to working sensitively with the child, and avoiding any sense of institutionalisation. This can be done creatively and sensitively with the child- creating a positive value on the child's possessions. This should be discussed at the Placement Agreement meeting. The record should be provided to the Child's Social Worker, and recorded on the child's file.

The record of possessions should be checked when the child leaves the foster care placement, and the foster carer should account for any loss, or decision to dispose of the child's belongings.

Together for Children Children Independent Reviewing Team Annual Report 2017-2018



putting
the child first

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1. Purpose of the Annual Report

- 1.1. This report covers the period 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018. The report provides an overview of the work undertaken by the Children Independent Review Team (CIRT) and the impact that the work has had upon children and young people. The report includes areas of service improvement, emerging themes, examples of good practice and the CIRT priorities for the next 12 months.

2. Roles and Functions

- 2.1. CIRT undertakes a wide range of key statutory roles and functions. These roles include the following:-
- Chairing of Initial Child Protection Conferences and Child Protection Review conferences: Conference Chair Person (CC).
 - Chairing of Children and Young People's Looked after Review: Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO).
 - Chairing of Placement Order and adoptive placements: Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO).
 - Chairing of Fosters Carer Reviews: Foster Carer Review and Regulation 44 Officer (FCR/Reg 44 Officer).
 - The completion of monthly Regulation 44 visits to TFC- Sunderland's five registered Children's Homes: Foster Carer Review and Regulation 44 Officer (FCR/Reg 44 Officer).
 - Chairing and management of allegations against adults working with children: Designated Officer (DO previously known as LADO).
- 2.2. The above six functions are completed and undertaken in accordance with key child care legislation, regulations and national and local procedures. In addition to these core areas, CIRT also continues to support a wide range of other services. Support is offered via training and development sessions to partners and the service is represented in key work groups such as:
- SSCB
 - SSCB Audit group
 - MALAP
 - Foster Carers consortium
 - Regional IRO managers group
 - Regional designated Officer (LADO) group
 - Northumbria Police & CIRT Management forum
 - NHS digital implementation group
 - Liquid Logic implementation/project group
 - NHS/TFC Safeguarding Forum

- Young Peoples participation Group
- Change Council
- External Placement panel
- Permanency Monitoring Group
- Corporate Parenting Board
- Scrutiny Committee
- Practise Champion Forums within TfC
- CAFCASS

2.3. The impact of membership within these groups provides the opportunity for a better informed team that is able to reach a more diverse group of practitioners, manages and directors. It provides an opportunity to influence practice and procedural developments, which ultimately deliver positive outcomes for the children of Sunderland.

3. CIRT in Together for Children Sunderland

3.1. The service has remained within the Quality and Performance Directorate within Together for Children-Sunderland. This continues to ensure the independence of the service from Children's Social Care and enables the practitioners to provide independent scrutiny on behalf of children in Sunderland.

4. CIRT Staffing

- 4.1. CIRT has a permanent staffing structure inclusive of:
- 1 FTE Service Manager (for Quality Assurance, Performance & CIRT)
 - 2 FTE IRO Managers,
 - 13.5 FTE IRO/Conference Chairs,
 - 1 FTE Designated Officer,
 - 2 FTE Foster Carer Reviewing and Reg 44 Officers,
 - 1 FTE Business Manager,
 - 7.8 FTE grade 2 Business Administration,
 - 3.8 FTE grade 1 Business Administration.
- 4.2. At the time of the last annual report recruitment to the new structure was being progressed. All appointees took up their positions as planned by the end of May 2017.
- 4.3. In this reporting year there have been four personnel changes. Two Fostering Reviewing and Regulation 44 Officers left the service due to career progression/changes. An IRO/Conference Chair left the service due to retirement in October 2017, and the Designated Officer left their position at the end of March 2018 to follow an alternative career path. All positions have been successfully recruited.
- 4.4. All front-line positions excluding business support require HCPC social work registration. The service maintains a wide range of knowledge and practice experience, including:-

- Frontline Child Protection Social Work
- Team Management within Social Care and Fostering
- Ofsted inspection; including inspection of secure accommodation provisions
- Adoption and Fostering
- Next Steps (Leaving Care)
- Children with Disabilities
- Therapeutic Work
- Residential Work
- Cafcass Work
- Direct Work with Looked after Children

5. Training

5.1. Training of all staff is encouraged and facilitated where possible; within this reporting year staff have attended and completed training in the following areas:

- Strengthening Practise, Planning module -2.5days, (all social work staff attended)
- Liquid Logic-E learning and class room learning, (all of the CIRT)
- Modern Day Slavery
- Mind of My Own (MOMO)
- Domestic Violence
- TFC-Sunderland, Corporate Induction
- HR: policies and procedures
- SSCB threshold guidance
- Sexual Exploitation
- Secure Accommodation Panel membership
- Team Development days; two full and two half days
- Bespoke training sessions on SMART/child focused planning
- Family Group Conferencing
- Advocacy
- WRAP training (Warning Advice and Reporting Point)
- CLA-Health Team
- Annual CIRT Open Day

5.2. The service has maintained its independent scrutiny and challenge through:-

- Strengthening and communicating directly with children and young people to understand their views, wishes and feelings about what they want to happen and how their Child Protection Plan could help reduce risk for them.
- Building upon relationships with Social Workers, Team Managers, Operational Managers and Directors through open discussion around practice and service developments and ensuring every team has a dedicated CPCC/IRO link person.
- Sharing of monthly data in relation to DRPs with Children's Social Care, identifying themes and practice issues.
- Monthly scrutiny of the CIRT scorecard and monthly data with regards to performance.
- Strengthened relationships with elected members and awareness rising of the roles within CIRT. This has been achieved via the presentation of the annual report to both the Corporate Parenting Board and the Scrutiny Committee, as well as through the completion of joint visits with elected members to undertake Regulation 44 visits to our residential establishments.
- The service has continued to work closely with SSCB members by attending the Quality Assurance Sub Group and undertaken auditing work on their behalf.
- Monthly case file audits are also completed on child protection cases and children who are looked in Sunderland.

6. Caseloads

- 6.1. In this reporting year caseloads within the service have created an area of pressure partly due to unforeseen staff absences but mainly due to an increasing number of children being referred into CIRT through either the Child Protection or Children Looked After mechanisms.
- 6.2. At the time of the last annual report caseloads averaged 71 children per FTE compared with an average of 83 and the end of this year. This is reflective of some of the pressures that the CIRT has faced in this reporting year.
- 6.3. Action has been taken during the reporting year by management to reduce the growing pressure on the team. In November 2017, two agency workers were appointed for 3 months to help alleviate some of the pressures in relation to growing demands for Child Protection Case Conferences. However, in March 2018 it was acknowledged that the pressures upon CIRT resources were not easing and therefore a better, medium term solution was required. Two IROs were recruited on a six month fixed term contract with the potential to extend should caseloads remain high.
- 6.4. In the forthcoming reporting year it is expected that IRO caseloads will continue to be an area of pressure. The IRO handbook advises that IRO's should have a caseload of between 50 and 70 and we continue to consider the best way to achieve this within the current restraints to reduce any impact on performance and the experiences of children we work with.









7. Child Protection 2017/2018

- 7.1. On the 31st March 2018, Sunderland had 499 children who were subject to a child protection plan compared with 425 in March 2017; this represents a 17% increase.
- 7.2. A total of 1630 conference has been held in this reporting year; 814 were Initial Child Protection Conferences and 816 were Review Child Protection Conferences.
- 7.3. A total of 715 Child Protection Plans have been ended:
- 282 ended under 6 months
 - 424 ended under 24 months
 - 11 ended within 36 months
- 7.4. The 11 plans that were open for longer than 36mths were due to ongoing police enquiries.

Timeliness of Initial Child Protection Conferences

- 7.5. An ICPC should be held within 15 days from the date of a strategy, where a child protection investigation has been carried out. Performance relating to the timeliness of ICPC's is calculated on this premise.
- 7.6. From 1st April 2017 - 31st March 2018, 87% of all ICPC's were held within timescale. This represents a 7% increase in performance within this reporting year, building upon the 2016-17 annual data. The following table shows the reasons why timescales have not been met.









**DOT - Direction of Travel*

ICPC OOT Reasons	16/17 As at 31/03/17	17/18 As at 31/03/18	Variance	*DOT
Late Notifications	40	27	-13	
Admin Errors	9	21	+12	
Missing reports	2	3	+1	
Non Attendance By Significant Person	9	13	+4	
Non Attendance By Social Worker	2	2	-	
Inclement Weather	-	2	+2	
Conference Not Quorate	1	2	+1	
Total Number of Children	102	115	+13	

- 7.7. The reasons for an ICPC's not being held within timescales are reported to senior management via monthly data and then further through quarterly reports to TFC - Sunderland Senior Management.
- 7.8. It should be noted that on occasion it is good practice to stand down a conference if it is in the best interest of the child and family. For example it is important that all those attending are fully informed about the conference and that all appropriate attendees are present to allow the correct decision to be reached for the child.
- 7.9. The national average for England, with regards to the timeliness for ICPC's is 77%. Sunderland's performance is 10 % above the English national average and 1% above the North East average. CIRT along with partner organisation have worked persistently in this reporting year to build upon the improvements made in 2016/17.
- 7.10. The service has continued to provisionally plan ICPC's at the start of the section 47 investigation giving Social Care and other organisations the full 15 days to plan for the ICPC. This has led to a reduction in ICPC's being held out of timescales, due to late notifications.
- 7.11. The impact of improved timeliness, for children who are risk of significant harm, is that decisions are made quicker and that child centred protection plans are developed with a clear aim of what work is required for the child, to reduce risk.
- 7.12. However the number of admin errors has increase. The majority are due to the incorrect reporting of the strategy dates as provided to CIRT by Social Care, at the time of them making the request for an ICPC. This affected 21 children; resulting in their conference being held out of timescale in this reporting year. These figures are reported upon weekly to management.

Timeliness of Child Protection Reviews

- 7.13. The SSCB procedure states the following with regards to the timeliness of reviewing:-
- 7.14. "The Child Protection Plan and its criteria should be reviewed at a Child Protection Review Conference (RCPC) which should be held within three months of the Initial Child Protection Conference and then at intervals of no more than 6 months".
- 7.15. Between 1st April 2017 and 31st March 2018, 98% of RCPC's were held within timescale. This is one per cent more than last year and 6% above the national average. Sunderland is also 3% above the North East average%.
- 7.16. The ability of CIRT to capture and report on this data has improved throughout 17/18, due to the appointment of a permanent business manager, and a weekly service manager meeting where performance is reviewed and challenged.
- 7.17. 100% of RCPC's were planned within timescale in 2017/18. However the need for some adjournments led to 8 conferences going out of timescale which involved 18 children. The reasons for adjournment are detailed below.





RCPC OOT Reasons	16/17 As at 31/03/17 **	17/18 As at 31/03/18	Variance	*DOT
Late Notification	0	0	0	
Calculation Error	1	0	-1	
Missing report	1	0	-1	
Non Attendance By Significant Person	1	2	+1	
Non Attendance By Social Worker	1	3	+2	
Conference Not Quorate	0	2	+2	
Other	0	1	+1	
Total Number of Children	10	18	+18	

** Data capture in 16/17 relates to quarter 3 and 4 only, as previous quarterly data was recorded differently.

- 7.18. Where reviews have been held out of timescale, safety plans have been agreed to ensure the safety of the children. CIRT continues to consider these issues to limit the overall number of out of timescale reviews.

Progression of Child Protection Plans

- 7.19. Where a child is subject to a child protection plan for longer than 12 months the question has to be considered, 'what alternative intervention is required to reduce the risk of significant harm to that child'? The longer a child is subject of a Child Protection Plan can be an indicator that the plan may not be achieving the required outcome for the child. Since the last annual report there has been an increase in the number of plans open longer than 12mth from 57 children to 91 children.
- 7.20. In order to address this, CIRT staff are requested via supervision, reflective discussion and midway reviews to track the progression of CP plans for children and to use the Dispute Resolution Process (DRP), where there is clear drift and delay, to address matters.
- 7.21. One of the themes that has been noted within the reporting year, which has impacted upon the progression and ending of CP plans for children, has been the short fall of provision for adults around tackling Domestic Violence within the City of Sunderland. The lack of a comprehensive provision is having a direct impact on the ability of TFC-Sunderland to cease CP plans. This matter has been raised within senior management.
- 7.22. The following table shows the percentage of children on a CP plan within the CP categories.

CP Categories	No Of Children Within Category	% Within Category (31.3.17)	No Of Children Within Category 31.03.18	% Within Category (31.3.18)	No Variance	*DOT
Emotional Abuse	145	33.72%	166	33.26%	+21	
Neglect	251	58.37%	279	55.91%	+28	
Physical Abuse	12	2.79%	22	4.40%	+10	
Sexual Abuse	22	5.12%	32	6.41%	+10	

- 7.23. In the reporting year work has been undertaken with CIRT staff around the child protection categories to ensure that categories are used appropriately and reflect the area of risk of significant harm for the child.
- 7.24. Neglect, was the identified category in 279 CP plans; of these cases there is evidence of the toxic trio being present. The toxic trio being; substance misuse, mental health and domestic violence.
- 7.25. Whilst all the categories have seen an increase in the number of children subject to them, the category of emotional has decreased in terms of %. Work continues with Conference Chairs regarding the appropriate use of categories.

Mid Way reviews

- 7.26. A mid-way review is a contact between a Conference Chair and the allocated Social Worker for a case. Mid-way reviews are planned after each review, but may also take place on an ad-hoc basis; they focus on the progress of the CP plan.
- 7.27. In the reporting year 16/17 the information was not readily collated, however since the introduction of Liquid Logic we are able to report the following:

Midway Reviews	February 18	March 18
CP Midway Reviews	22	13

Child's Voice within CP

- 7.28. Where children are in attendance, the conference chairperson will invite them into a pre meeting half an hour prior to the start as a means to supporting their engagement. Where a child is not attending a conference, the Conference Chair will encourage professionals working with the child to collect their views by the use of the child protection conference pack or the use of the MOMO app (Mind of My Own).

Parents Views

- 7.29. CIRT has continued to use the parental questionnaire; asking parents for their views on the Conference Chair's role. The completion of the questionnaire







remains optional and not all parents have been willing to complete the questionnaire.

- 7.30. During this reporting year a total 180 questionnaires have been completed, 54 from parents who have attended an initial child protection conference and remaining 126 from those parents in attendance at a child protection review conference.
- 7.31. Analysis from the 180 completed questionnaires continues to provide evidence that parents feel meetings are chaired appropriately and they feel supported during the course of the meeting by the Chairs.

8. Children Looked After










Numbers of Children Looked After

- 8.1. As of the 31.3.18 Sunderland had 618 children looked after within its service. This is an increase of 84 more children being cared for compared to the same time last year. A total of 1552 looked after reviews have been completed in the reporting year which is an increase of 41 reviews for the year. CIRT has continued to monitor its performance with regards to children looked after via the monthly IRO scorecard that was introduced in 2017.
- 8.2. The rise in numbers has a direct impact upon the work of CIRT. The rise creates increased work requirements in respect of pre child looked after visits, mid-way enquires, (held by the IRO and SW), and the frequency of reviews. Despite this increase percentage of reviews held in timescale has remained stable in this reporting year.
- 8.3. In terms of timeliness, 94% of children had their Looked After Review held within timescale, which ensures that there is a clear Care Plan designed to support and meet their individual needs.

	16/17 As at 31/03/17	17/18 As at 31/03/18	Variance	*DOT
% of CLA Reviews held in timescales	94%	94%	-	
% of CLA Reviews where YP participated within the review	97%	94%	3%	
% of CLA with an up to date care plan	93%	N/Avble		
% of CLA with an up to date PEP	81%	92%	11%	
% of CLA accommodated under section 20	24%	25%	1%	
% CLA with an up to date Pathway Plan (within 6 months)	94%	Report not available, due to IT changes		
MOMO: (Mind Of My Own) statements	139	275	136	
Viewpoint –relating to CLA review	175	143	-32	

Timeliness of Child Looked After Reviews (CLA):

- 8.4. An initial CLA review is required with 20 working days of a child becoming looked after, a second review within 3 month (91 days) and subsequent reviews 6 monthly (183 days). Reviews can be held early where there is evidence of a significant event in the child's life or where consideration is required for changes to the Care Plan.
- 8.5. Performance in terms of timeliness has remained consistent at 94%. The reasons for a child's review being held out of timescale can be seen in the table below.

Review OOT Reasons	16/17 As at 31/03/17**	17/18 As at 31/03/18	Variance	*DOT
Late Notification	1	14	+13	
Admin Error	20	31	+11	
Missing report	0	0	-	
Non Attendance By Significant Person	7	19	+12	
Non Attendance By Social Worker	0	1	+1	
Series of Meeting	4	3	-1	
Data Discrepancy	-	20	+20	
Other	-	2	+2	
Total Number of Children	32	90	+58	

** Data capture in 16/17 relates to quarter 3 and 4 only, as previous quarterly data was recorded differently.

- 8.6. The 20 issues relating to data discrepancies are linked to migration issues between CCM and Liquid Logic, this matter has been raised with the project and therefore the data will be corrected.

Participation within LAR

- 8.7. 94% of children participated in their review, however transitional migration issues have been noted, namely gaps in CCM recording prior to the CCM switch off. Therefore CIRT management is of the belief that this figure should in fact reflect, if not have improved upon last year's reporting figure of 97%. CIRT continues to utilise a number of tools to secure children's engagement in their review i.e. Pre Child Looked After Review Visits (PLV), Viewpoint and MOMO.
- 8.8. In respect of MOMO statements there has been a 37% increase on the number of statements received on last years reported figure. Whilst this figure relates to reports covering many aspects of a child's life it is positive to see the increase as it clearly evidences that TFC-Sunderland is receiving and hearing a child's views.
- 8.9. Viewpoint figures have dropped for this reporting year, this drop may be attributed to staffing issues and transitional difficulties with the move to Liquid Logic but also the increased use of MOMO an alternative method.

- 8.10. CIRT staff are aware that it is key component of their role to support children to ensure that their voice is heard and to ensure that the impact social care intervention will lead to positive changes for the individual child. In order to promote this ethos one of our officers attends the Participation Forum each quarter. Also the IRO managers attend Change Council on a quarterly basis in order to develop and maintain links around the best way to hear the child's voice on an individual basis and as a group voice.
- 8.11. CIRT have also undertaken a letter drop to all children looked after, in this reporting period which reiterates the name and contact details of their IRO and the IRO managers. We have also developed a web page, as suggested by Change Council, which contains contact details for the service.

Pre Looked After review visits (PLV)

- 8.12. A PLV is a visit, by an IRO, to a child prior to their Looked After Review. In previous reporting years data was captured differently, therefore it is not appropriate to measure like for like.
- 8.13. In this reporting period 941 PLVs have taken place. During these visits the child is given the opportunity to discuss the venue, attendees and 'agenda' for the meeting. Ideally children would be encouraged to chair their own meeting, if appropriate, and given the opportunity to identify issues important to them.

Mid Way reviews

- 8.14. A mid-way review is a contact between an IRO and the allocated social worker for a case. Mid-way reviews are planned after each review, but may also take place on an ad-hoc basis; they focus on the progress of the Care Plan.
- 8.15. In the reporting year 16/17 the information was not readily collated however since the introduction of Liquid Logic we are able to report:

Midway Reviews	February 18	March 18
CLA Midway Reviews	41	62

Education

- 8.16. The work undertaken by TFC-Virtual School Team has led to an increase in the number of children with Personal Educational Plans (PEP) to 92%; the rise in the number of PEP's has a direct impact and leads to positive progress of a child's individual educational needs which are considered with a CLA review

Children Looked After Section 20

- 8.17. There is an increase of 1% of children accommodated via S20 in this reporting period. This equates to 31 children. The increase is in keeping with the rise in the overall CLA population, which in part is due to rising caseloads for our colleagues in Social Care.
- 8.18. IRO's are mindful of the need to monitor a child's legal status within midway reviews and within CLA reviews.



Secure Accommodation Panel Reviews (SAR)

- 8.19. With regards to children who have been placed in secure accommodation under Section 25 of the Children Act 1989, (Welfare Secure) a SAR panel must be arranged within 20 working days of the Order being made and subsequently three monthly. TFC-Sunderland continues to have a reciprocal regional arrangement in place with South Tyneside and Gateshead to accommodate the SAR as there is a requirement for three IRO, one of which must be independent.
- 8.20. In the report year TFC-Sunderland has had 4 children placed in a secure accommodation. This is decreased of one child compared with the 2017 figure.

9. Dispute Resolution Procedure (DRP)

DRP Themes

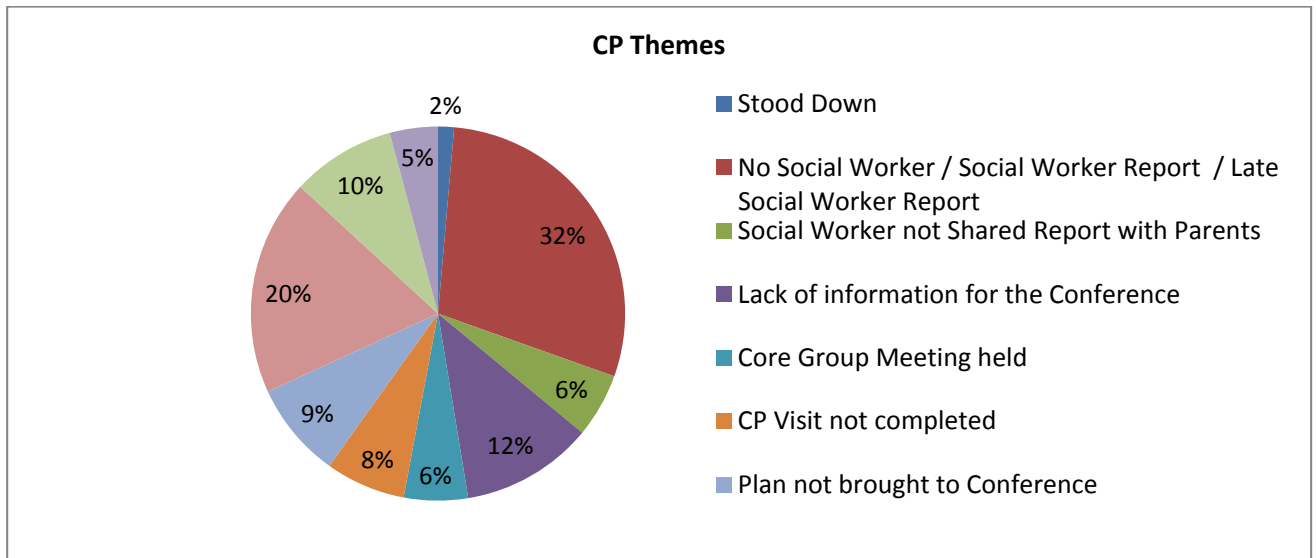
- 9.1. As of April 2017, CIRT combined its processes for raising practice issues with Social Care into one process; the DRP Process.
- 9.2. The DRP has five stages in total; the process begins with an informal DRP and progress to consultation with the Directorate. Once the DRP has been initiated the issues should be addressed within 20 working days.
- 9.3. In 2016-17 there were 89 QPI's issued and 81 DRP's, totalling 170. This figure has increased in 2017/18 to 291 DRP's issued.
- 9.4. In July 2017, Ofsted noted the modification had been made to the DRP process and stated, "...it is more supportive in influencing improvements in practice before issues are exculpated further"
- 9.5. The table below shows the number of DPRs raised in relation to child protection.

CP – DRPs	16/17 As at 31/03/17 (QPI)	17/18 As at 31/03/18	Variance	*DOT
No of DRP's Raised In Relation to Children on CP Plans	89	193	+104	
No of CP Positive Practice Raised	0	15	+15	

- 9.6. The table below high lights the different stage in which DRP's have been resolved for children subject of child protection plans in this reporting year.

CP – DRP Closure	Informal	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Total Closed
Stage at which the DRP was closed	177	4	8	3	1	0	193

- 9.7. The child protection DRP themes and issues can be seen within the pie chart below



- 9.8. The impact of DRP is individual to each child and depends upon the concerns raised. Below are examples of how the DRP process has impacted upon children with a child protection plan.

Example One

- A DRP was raised following a RCPC for 2 children, the SW failed to complete assessment work which would have supported their recommendation to end the CP plan. The Conference Chair was not able to end the CP Plan as there was no written evidence to support this action; which meant that the children remained subject to a CP plan longer than was necessary. As a result of the DRP a timetable was agreed for the required work.
- The Social Worker completed further domestic violence work and a midway review was held to ensure that timetable agreed was progressed; at the CP review the updated report was shared; it outlined the work completed with the children and the parent and it was agreed that the CP plan ended and that a Child in Need plan would support the children moving forward.

Example Two

- A DRP was raised for three children which questioned their legal status, the requirement for individual Care Plans and agreement re timescales for the completion of assessment work; including the need for a schedule four assessment of the children's auntie to support the children's long term plans.
- Following the initiation of the DRP and discussion TFC-Social Care agreed that the children were in fact children looked after and a schedule four assessment was completed. The children's CP plans then ended and their care plan was commenced and reviewed to ensure that planning was progressed timely for the children.

Example Three

- A DRP was initiated following an RCPC where a 17 old sibling return to the family home without the completion of an assessment despite the fact that he was presenting with concerning behaviours.
- The DRP led to appropriate safeguards being put in place whilst assessment work was undertaken.

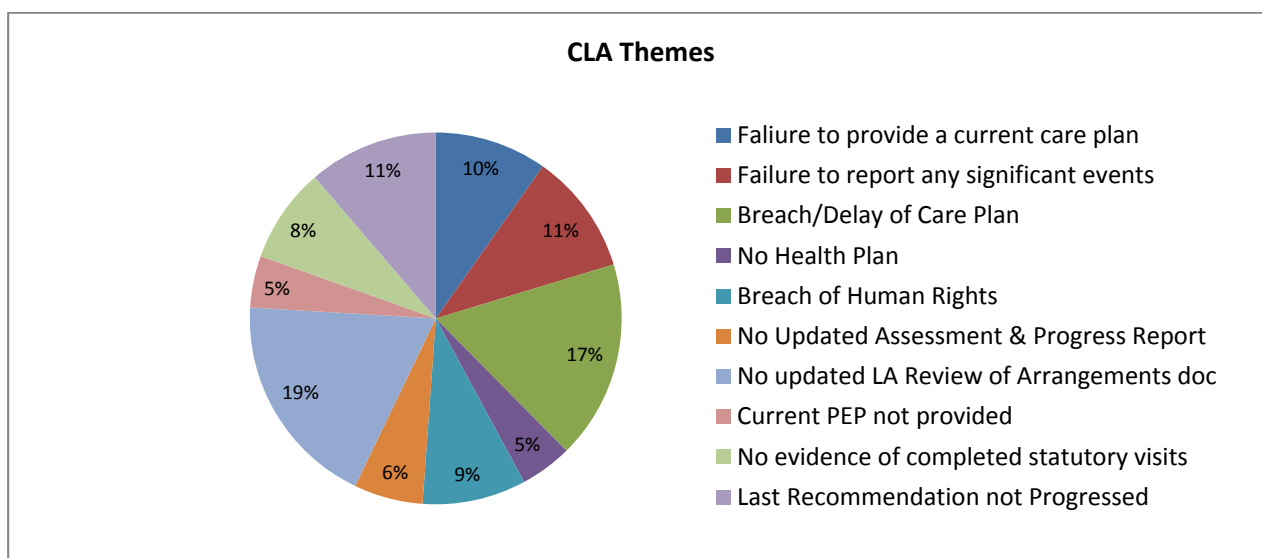
9.9. The table below shows the number of DPRs raised in relation to children looked after

CLA - DRP	16/17 As at 31/03/17	17/18 As at 31/03/18	Variance	*DOT
No of DRP's raised	81	98	+17	↑
No of CLA Positive Practice Raised	Not previously recorded	14		

9.10. The table below highlights the different stage in which DRP's have been resolved for looked after children in this reporting year.

CLA – DRP Closure	Informal	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Total Closed
Stage at which the DRP was closed	91	4	3	0	0	193

9.11. The children looked after DRP themes and issues can be seen within the pie chart below:



9.12. The impact of DRP is individual to each child and depends upon the concerns raised. Below are examples of how the DRP process has impacted upon child/children looked after:

Example One

- DRP initiated due to a 15yr old child being placed in an unregulated placement, outside of Sunderland area. The IRO had concerns that the placement was unable to meet the needs of the child both in terms of their social and educational needs.
- The issue of the DRP lead to a review of the child's placement and care plan. The outcome of this was that the child returned to Sunderland where they were able to access an appropriate education provision.

Example Two

- A DRP was initiated due to a child not having a clear permanency plan at the time of the second looked after review.
- Following the initiation of the DRP in September the case was tracked by the IRO and a further LAR was held on the 18/10/ 17 where a plan of permanence via adoption was agreed as the best plan for child.

Example Three

- A DRP was raised due to drift and delay in care planning for sibling group of two as assessment work had not been undertaken.
- The initiation of the DRP lead to new social worker being appointed for the children, and a six week timetable being put in place to progress the assessment that was required of parents. There was an Increase in direct work between the social worker and children to gather the children's views and wishes which were used to inform their long term plan. The outcome for the children was that there plan of permanence was achieved via long term fostering

- 9.13. Overall there has been an increase with regards to the number of DRPs initiated; however CIRT Management is aware that there are inconsistencies in DRP initiation. Having considered this, there is one presenting barrier which is the preference of IRO/CC's to use their relationships with social work to resolve matters; whilst this can be effective the presenting difficulty is the failure of the IRO/CC to then complete a DRP. In essence there is no evidence of the CIRT footprint
- 9.14. Another issue is that of time pressure of caseload as it becomes difficult for staff to manage the DRP process. CIRT staff are encouraged to consider the need for cultural change: the initiation of a DRP, on a child behalf, is not a separate function to their role but central to their role to achieve best outcome for children. It is also anticipated that our new IT system Liquid Logic will streamline the DRP process to assist with capacity issues.
- 9.15. CIRT management are working with CIRT staff via training and with social care staff to support an acknowledgement that the DRP process is there to identify difficulties and improve life outcomes for a child.
- 9.16. When a DRP is evidenced, as sighted in the examples, it leads to a change for the individual child; the next stage is to ensure wider service learning in order to reduce the risk of similar events occurring for another child.

Positive Practice

- 9.17. Whilst the CIRT has a key role to play for children in addressing areas of poor practice it also has a key role in supporting and evidencing areas of good practice.
- 9.18. Within this reporting year CIRT has developed a recording method to capture positive practice. The service also notifies the Customer Feedback and Complaints Team of positive DRP's. There have been a total of 14 notifications by CIRT to Social Workers and their Team Manager advising them of identified good practice, which has led to timely and positive outcomes for children.

10. Foster Care Reviews

- 10.1. Within TFC-Sunderland currently there is a total of 267 Foster Carers. This number includes 86 Connected Foster Carers (A Connected Carer is a person who is a family member or friend of the child and is approved by TFC-Fostering to look after a named child) and 181 Foster Carers.
- 10.2. Foster Care Reviews are required on an annual basis. In this reporting year there have been a total of 212 Foster Carer Reviews. These reviews are undertaken by the Foster Care Review Officers who are situated within CIRT.
- 10.3. The reason for the differentiation between the total number of Foster Carers and the total number of reviews is due to Foster Carers leaving and new registrations with TFC-Fostering where a review has to be completed within the first 12 months of a Foster Carer becoming registered.
- 10.4. In this reporting year five carers had two reviews within the 12 month period as per reasons outlined below:
 - 2 were due to professional standard concerns, having been raised during the review period.
 - 2 were due to Designated Officer (DO) concerns.
 - 1 was due to an overlap from last year's annual scheduling.
- 10.5. 189 reviews were completed within timescale giving an output of 89%. 23 reviews occurred outside of the timescale. There are a number of reasons why annual reviews have gone out of timescale, from staffing issues to the availability of the foster carer themselves, to investigation being undertaken on the foster carer due to safeguarding or professional standard issues.
- 10.6. In 2017/2018 work has been undertaken with the Fostering Manager and CIRT management to not only improve the timeliness of Foster Carer reviews but also to improve upon the quality and increase of other professional input.
- 10.7. It is hoped that undertaking this work will lead to improved standards of care and a greater period of stability for children placed in foster care, as the foster carer and organisation will be able to deliver more targeted resources.

11. Designated Officer (DO)

- 11.1. Enquiries to the Designated Officer have risen from 302 to 406. 180 of the 406 met the threshold for referral to an Allegation Management Meeting. The remaining 226 enquiries did not meet the threshold however advice and guidance was offered.
- 11.2. The ongoing increase in referrals would suggest that awareness raising work being undertaken by DO continues to underpin a greater referral rate therefore leading to appropriate safeguards being put in place when there is a concern for adults working with children.
- 11.3. A total of 158 cases have been concluded within this report year with the following outcomes:-
 - 60 were substantiated;
 - 4 were false - No further action
 - 1 was malicious – No further action
 - 22 were unfounded - No further action

- 61 were unsubstantiated. No further action
- 10 were cancelled.

11.4. The Designated Officer continues to work with organisations across the public, voluntary, private and independent sector to ensure that the impact of this work is safeguarding children and limiting adult's access to children when there is a concern about them.

12. CIRT Feedback

Professionals, Parents and children themselves have provided examples of positive feedback with regards to work practice and support offered by CIRT:-

Fostering Social Worker January 2018 re IRO

"Parents felt that review had been chaired well and they felt listened to and appreciated for the work they have done over the past year for them"

Parent November 2017 re their attendance at Child Protection Conference

"that IRO is really nice, she made me feel at ease and not as scared as I thought I would be".

Parent February 2018 re Professionals at Child Protection Conference

"Everyone involved with the CPP has been so supportive and helped changed mine and my son's lives with respect to recognise domestic violence and any risks posed to either myself or my son"

Family solicitor January 2018 re Child Protection Conference Chair

"I wanted to take the time to tell you I thought CP Chair did an absolutely fantastic job in managing what was a very difficult Conference for a variety of reasons. The Conference required a significant amount of sensitivity. I thought XX managed the Conference really well and treated the parents very fairly indeed. They were however tough with the parents when needed but took the time to assist both parents emotionally."

Northumbria Police re Child Protection Conference Chair

An ICPC was held on Child A which had to be split between parents and you dealt with the meeting in an extremely professional way. Child A's father was dismissive of concerns and he tried to deflect from the situation and you asked him to focus on the impact of the current situation on Child A. You encouraged discussion amongst professionals as to whether the child (ren) met the criteria for CPP or if they could be supported under another provision.

Foster Carer November 2017 re Fostering Reviewing Officer

"felt the review was positive for the carer and the Fostering Reviewing Officer picked up the strengths of my fostering well and reflected them back to me..."

Residential Unit January re IRO

Thanks for the support you have afforded Child B and us during the time you have been acting as his IRO. You have consistently strived to seek his feelings and wishes around his care and ensured he feels that this is really important. I am sure that he will remember this moving forward, especially when you travelled down to

see him in the Christmas holidays as this can so often be an emotive and somewhat lonely time for our young people.

Education re DO

Thank you very much for your time and support with this matter. Thank you for resolving the case before Easter holidays for ourselves and for the member of staff involved. You obviously gave a lot of time to this which we appreciate.

13. Partnership Working

- 13.1. The CIRT service continues to be committed to working in partnership with agencies across the multi-agency spectrum, as can be seen by staff involvement in a range of services and groups
- 13.2. CIRT is also working closely with partners with regards to the development of Liquid Logic, the new IT system, to ensure it supports the needs of all service areas. The service has reviewed and supported changes with regard to the CP report template and has continued to raise practise issues on individual cases through the use of the DRP process.
- 13.3. There has been the development of the CIRT team web page in this reporting year, responding to suggestions from our children and young people. The service held an open day in 2017 which has helped to support people's understanding of the many functions undertaken within the service.
- 13.4. The service has continued to be involved in key groups and developments:-
 - Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB)
 - SSCB audit work in the area of child protection minutes to improve standards
 - SSCB Quality Assurance Sub Committee
 - SSCB training in relation to safeguarding children
 - Lesson learning events with multi-agency professionals to identify improvement in CP practice
 - Regional training in the area of safeguarding
 - IRO team attachment with Social Work teams to share and support learning in the area of child protection.
 - Delivery of bespoke training for Children's Services and partners.
 - Attendance at the regional IRO manager group and the development of an IRO Regional Conference, planned for the 10.10.18
 - Attendance at the Cooperate parenting board and Security Panel
 - Publication of quarterly reports

14. Achievements in 2017/18

- 14.1. In the 2016/17 Annual Report CIRT identified a number of priorities for the service. A full breakdown of this can be seen in Appendix 2. We are hopeful that these changes will improve the stability of the team which in turn will lead to a more robust team, who are able to take forward the improvement plan for next year, thus improving outcomes for children/young people in Sunderland.

15. Conclusion

- 15.1. Within the reporting year the service, along with colleagues in TFC–Social Care have seen an increase in work; and we have been part of TFC-Sunderland Ofsted monitoring visits. Within the Ofsted report from the visit of the 14th July 2017,

comment was made around the improvements within CIRT and the positive contribution/influence that CIRT were having for the children of Sunderland.

- 15.2. The challenge for CIRT is to maintain progress whilst at the same time managing the demands of an increased work load, along with the complexities of a new IT system and the progressing of TFC-Sunderland as an organisation.



Signature:

Kim Roberts



Gavin Taylor

Date: 3/8/18

Appendix 1 - Parent/Carer questionnaire

Child Protection Conference Feedback Form for Parents and Carers

Family Name _____ (Please Print)

Date and Time of Conference _____

Chairperson _____ (Please print)

Type of Conference:

Initial ☐

Review ☐

Transfer In ☐

Parents/carers we would be grateful if you could spend some time completing this form.

1) The Chair explained to me before the meeting what was going to happen

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

☐☐☐☐

2) The Chair supported me so I was able to share my views within the conference

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

☐☐☐☐

3) The concerns for my children were clearly explained with the conference

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

☐☐☐☐

4) I am clear about what needs to change/happen for the conference to be able to consider ending the Child protection plan

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Not

Applicable

☐☐☐☐☐

For review Conference only

5) The Child Protection Plan helped my family achieve positive change

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

☐☐☐☐

Is there anything else that you would like to tell us which might help us improve the experience for parents attending a Child Protection conference?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this feedback form.

Appendix 2 - CIRT Priority Plan 17-18

Priority 1: CP & CLA Recruitment Outcome: To recruit to all permanent positions within the CIRT Services					
Action	Success measure(s)	Lead	Time	RAG Current	Progress Update
To seek to appoint to CIRT business manager	In the interim a seconded opportunity to be offered. Short listing and interviewing will lead to the successful appointment of CIRT business manager	Sue Carty Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts	8 th May 2017 30 th July 2017	Achieved	From April –June 2017 a secondment to the Business Manager post was achieved with the permanent position being successfully recruited in July 2017
All new IRO appointees to be in post no later than June 2017	In June that there will be no longer a requirement for agency staff in the CIRT Service	Gavin Taylor	25 th May 2017	Achieved	All appointees took up their permanent positions by the end of May 2017
Fostering Reviewing and Reg. 44 Officer to be in post by 10.5.17	That post holder started in post	Gavin Taylor	9 th May 2017	Achieved	Successfully recruited in May 2017

Priority 2: CP & CLA Improve the CPCC/IRO Footprint and challenge on the child's behalf Outcome: Further increase the "footprint" of the CPCC and IRO on the child's case file in progressing plans and evidencing challenge					
Action	Success measure(s)	Lead	Time	RAG Current	Progress Update
That prior to conference every child over the age of 4 years has the opportunity to communicate / contact their identified CPCC and that the CPCC records this contact on CCM thus evidencing the CPCC's footprint.	Measure improved performance data.	IRO/ IRO Manager & Performance Team	September 2017	Partially achieved	Work within the area of CPCC'S and child engagement remains ongoing. Children over the age of 8yrs, in keeping with the updated SSCB procedures are invited, where appropriate to attend ICPC/RCPC'S.
Every looked after child has a mid-way review and all IRO contact is recorded on CCM thus evidencing the IRO footprint	Measure improved performance data	IRO/ IRO Manager & performance	To be reviewed in the quarterly	Partially achieved	Within CCM it was not possible to collate this data electronically. Following the transition to LL data has collated and has been provided within the report

Priority 2: CP & CLA Improve the CPCC/IRO Footprint and challenge on the child's behalf Outcome: Further increase the "footprint" of the CPCC and IRO on the child's case file in progressing plans and evidencing challenge					
Action	Success measure(s)	Lead	Time	RAG Current	Progress Update
		team	reports		
Pre CLA visits to be completed 5 days prior in order to capture the voice if the child	Evidence to be gathered via performance data	IRO/ IRO Manager and Performance team	Monthly audit	Partially achieved	Due to the limitations of CCM data collection, this figure was not accurate. Since the implementation of LL in February 2018 the figure stands at 942

Priority 3: The Voice of The Child Outcome: To strengthen evidence that the child's voice / participation is LAR's and CP conferences informs the decisions made on their behalf					
Action	Success measure(s)	Lead	Time	RAG Current	Progress Update
Increase use of MOMO/Viewpoint within child protection conferences and LAR's	Evidence the use of MOMO /Viewpoint statements within CLA minutes	CPCC's/IRO's	Monthly via the IRO score card	Partially achieved	There is ongoing promotion for the use of MOMO for children subject of CP, however the number of returns remain relatively low. All CPCC's have been trained with regards to MOMO, but ongoing work across TFC-Sunderland is required to embed and promote its use.
Work effectively with Change Council members to promote the CPCC/IRO presence and utilise the advice offered by Change Council to inform our service development. To develop a web page	Develop a CIRT service web page for young people	CIRT Management & Change Council YPO	February 2018	Achieved	CIRT management have met with Change Council on a quarterly basis. As a result a CIRT web page has been developed.

Priority 4: Integrate business support team into the IRO

Outcome: To have admin service that is fit for purpose in the supporting of the IRO business

Action	Success measure(s)	Lead	Time	RAG Current	Progress Update
IRO admin service to support the service to meet its statutory requirements in terms of the distribution of CP & LAR minutes and plans to reduce the current backlog	Improvement to be achieved with regards to performance in this area	Temp IRO Business manager	30 th July 2017	Partially achieved	<p>CIRT business support, have throughout this year worked intensely to address a CP backlog of minutes distribution. In July 2017 there were 175 outstanding pieces of work</p> <p>As of 31.03.18 CIRT Business support had reduced the figure to 23 pieces of work.</p> <p>In addition to this work CIRT business support, in keeping with the rest of TFC had to adapt to the implementation of Liquid Logic. This process in the short term has led to additional pressures. CIRT management maintain an oversight re outstanding business tasks and continue to seek solutions to the pressures faced</p>
Appointment of business manager to support the IRO service with reference to performance data	Monthly scorecard	Business manager/IRO manager	Monthly	Achieved	CIRT has a far greater understanding of its performance and areas of pressure since the permanent appointment of the CIRT Business Manager in July 2017. The impact of this appointment has led to the streamlining of processes and a strengthening in the performance data that CIRT provides to senior management.

Priority 5: Strengthen working relationship with Social Work Team Outcomes: To ensure that the CIRT service has an effective working relationship with the child's social worker					
Action	Success measure(s)	Lead	Time	RAG Current	Progress Update
CIRT service to maintain and develop on going team links with Social Worker team	That there open discussion between IRO services and the Social worker team to develop a respective relationship whereby there sharing of knowledge between the services	IROs with IRO management oversight	Quarterly	Achieved	Links are re-considered to accommodate change team structures
Reintroduction of IRO and Team Manager quarterly meeting	Improved working relationships	Service Manger Children's Social Care	Start date Summer 2017	Partially achieved	Achieved in quarter 4, however this needs to be in place in every quarter to ensure the sharing of information, themes and issues
IRO managers to continue to meet with Service Managers to progress discussion around case themes and issues	Improved working relationships	IRO manager	July 2017	Partially achieved.	There have been difficulties in progressing regular dates however two meetings have been held, and this will be taken forward in the coming year

Priority 6: Further develop IRO training matric and improve training opportunities for IRO's Outcome: To ensure that the CIRT service has a training programme to meet staff needs					
Action	Success measure(s)	Lead	Time	RAG Current	Progress Update
All IRO/CPCC's to be registered on the City Sunderland learning Hub	That there increase in IRO/CPCC engagement in the IRO training. All IRO/CPCC to attend the minimum of two training events in a reporting year	IRO	1 st June 2017	Achieved	The Learning Hub is accessed by staff to promote learning

Priority 6: Further develop IRO training matric and improve training opportunities for IRO's
Outcome: To ensure that the CIRT service has a training programme to meet staff needs

Action	Success measure(s)	Lead	Time	RAG Current	Progress Update
Every IRO/CPCC to undertake appropriate training to support their personal learning	Every IRO/CPCC will complete a minimum of one day's professional training	IRO's	31 st March 2018	Achieved	In this reporting year CIRT staff have undertaken the following pieces of training:- Liquid Logic, MOMO, Health and Safety, Strengthening Practice.

Priority 7: Strengthen CIRT Services Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Oversight
Outcome: Ensure that emerging themes are fed into the QA framework and training programme

Action	Success measure(s)	Lead	Time	RAG Current	Progress Update
To utilise the information provided by the IRO scorecard; to identify themes and performance issues within areas of looked after children and child protection	That improvement use performance data lead to over service improvement	IRO management	Quarterly	Achieved	Prior to the implementation of LL, CIRT data was collated and considered on a weekly basis; the impact of TFC's transition to Liquid Logic has been felt in the area of performance management. The Performance Team and CIRT management have worked together to re-establish the data required for the CIRT scorecard. It is anticipated this will be reintroduced no later than May 2018.
IRO management to completed auditing on IRO's	Monthly audit are completed and the information is used to inform practise development.	IRO management	Monthly	Achieved	IRO managers are notified, by the Quality Performance team of audits throughout the year

Priority 7: Strengthen CIRT Services Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Oversight
Outcome: Ensure that emerging themes are fed into the QA framework and training programme

Action	Success measure(s)	Lead	Time	RAG Current	Progress Update
Peer observation to continue to be undertaken on quarterly cycles to support peer learning	Improve consistency of practise by IRO's	IRO's	Bi monthly	Partially achieved	A quarterly peer observation schedule was prepared however the success of this this has been impacted upon by increasing demands and caseloads.

Priority 8: To strengthen the CIRT Service profile within Sunderland
Outcome: CIRT Service to become a respected and utilised resource to support better outcomes for children / young people within the City

Action	Success measure(s)	Lead	Time	RAG Current	Progress Update
All IRO's to identify a lead in key areas of work within Together for Children and with partner agencies.	Increased membership of appropriate steering groups	IRO's IRO management	February 2018	Achieved	We have identified staff in key areas: as detailed in section 2

Appendix 3 – CIRT Priority Plan 18-19

Priority 1: Recruitment / Retention Outcome: To maintain a stable permanent work force within the CIRT					
Action	Success measure(s)	Lead	Time	RAG Current	Progress Update
To ensure that the Staff team are afforded regular reflective supervision	Data re supervision to be captured and reported on monthly	Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts Heather Sutherland	March 2019		
To actively recruit to any vacant post and manage absence, retirement or resignation	Short listing and interviewing to be initiated ASAP following any job vacancy.	Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts Heather Sutherland	March 2019		
All new staff to CIRT to be involved in TFC-Sunderland induction programme	Staff to be aware of TFC-Sunderland's organisational aims/ policies and procedures.	Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts Heather Sutherland	March 2019		
To nominate staff in recognition of their contribution to the work of CIRT	Increased nomination	Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts Heather Sutherland	March 2019		

Priority 2: Improve the CPCC/IRO Footprint on Liquid Logic & DRP Challenge on the child's behalf Outcome: Further increase the "footprint" of the CPCC/IRO on the child's case file in the progress of plans and in evidencing challenge					
Action	Success measure(s)	Lead	Time	RAG Current	Progress Update
That every child subject to a CP plan or a Care Plan has a mid-way review and that all CC/ IRO contact is recorded on LL thus evidencing the IRO footprint.	Improved performance data, as reflected within Liquid Logic	Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts Heather Sutherland	Reviewed monthly on IRO scorecard		
Pre Looked After visits to be	Improved performance data, as	Gavin Taylor	Reviewed		

Priority 2: Improve the CPCC/IRO Footprint on Liquid Logic & DRP Challenge on the child's behalf Outcome: Further increase the "footprint" of the CPCC/IRO on the child's case file in the progress of plans and in evidencing challenge					
Action	Success measure(s)	Lead	Time	RAG Current	Progress Update
planned and completed prior to the planned review in order to effectively capture the voice of the child.	reflected within Liquid Logic and through IRO audit work	Kim Roberts Heather Sutherland	monthly on IRO scorecard & within CC/IRO audit		

Priority 3: The voice of the child Outcome: To evidence that the child's voice and participation in LAR's and CP conferences informs the decisions made on their behalf					
Action	Success measure(s)	Lead	Time	RAG Current	Progress Update
Increase use of MOMO/Viewpoint and Children's Conference Packs within looked after reviews and child protection conferences	A noted increase in recorded statements and evidence within CLA and CP minutes of consideration to the completed summaries	IRO/CC's	Reviewed monthly on IRO scorecard & CC/IRO audit		
Work effectively with Change Council members to promote links with the IRO/CC's. Utilise the advice offered by Change Council to inform our service development	Quarterly attendance to be achieved, with additional attendance as required.	CIRT management IRO/CC Change Council Young People's Officer	March 2019		
To support children to consider chairing their own LAR's	An increase in the number of children chairing their LAR's	IRO/CC	March 19		
To nominate children for award and attend award ceremonies	Increase in nominates from CIRT	IRO/CC	February 2019		

Priority 4: Integrate Business Support Into the IRO Team Outcome: To ensure that business support staff are able to manage the completed of CIRT Tasks in line with statutory requirements					
Action	Success measure(s)	Lead	Time	RAG Current	Progress Update
CIRT staff including Business Support to achieve statutory timescales in terms of the distribution of LAR/CP minutes and reduce the current backlog	All minutes to be distributed within statutory timescales with detail of outstanding work being recorded on the monthly scorecard	IRO/CC Business support staff Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts Heather Sutherland	March 19		
Business support staff to be included in planned CIRT development days	Attendance to be achieved	Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts Heather Sutherland	Twice a year		

Priority 5: Strengthen working relationship with social care staff Outcome: To ensure that the CIRT has an effective working relationship with children's social worker					
Action	Success measure(s)	Lead	Time	RAG Current	Progress Update
CIRT to maintain and develop team links with Social Worker team	That open discussion between the CIRT and the Social Worker teams is maintained in order to ensure that respectful and positive relationship reinforcing Working Together principles; this will be evidenced in team links and reflected in CIRT team meeting minutes	IRO/CC's	Monthly		
Maintenance of IRO/CC and Team Manager quarterly meeting	Improved working relationships	Service Manger Children's Social Care	Summer 18		
HOS and IRO managers to continue to meet with Service Managers to progress discussion	Improved working relationships	Stacy Hodgkinson Gavin Taylor	Summer 18		

Priority 5: Strengthen working relationship with social care staff

Outcome: To ensure that the CIRT has an effective working relationship with children's social worker

Action	Success measure(s)	Lead	Time	RAG Current	Progress Update
around case themes and issues		Kim Roberts			
Arrange annual Open Day	Increase attendance	IRO/CC's Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts	Summer 2019		
To share areas of expertise with others	An increase in CIRT staff running training sessions	IRO/CC's	March 2019		

Priority 6: Further develop IRO/CPCC Training matrix and improve training opportunities for staff

Outcome: To ensure that the CIRT has a training programme reflective of staff needs

Action	Success measure(s)	Lead	Time	RAG Current	Progress Update
All SW staff to be registered on the City Sunderland learning Hub	An increase in IRO training, evidenced through the CIRT training log. All IRO/CC to attend a minimum of two training events in a reporting year	IRO/CC	March 19		
Every IRO/CC to undertake appropriate training to support their personal learning	Every IRO/CC will complete a minimum of one day's professional training	IRO/CC's	March 2019		.

Priority 7: Strengthen CIRT services quality assurance and safeguarding oversight

Outcome: Ensure that emerging themes are fed into the QA framework and training programme

Action	Success measure(s)	Lead	Time	RAG Current	Progress Update
To utilise the information provided by the CIRT scorecard; identity themes and performance issues	That themes emerging from an evidence base, (performance data /CIRT Score card) lead service improvement for CIRT and Social Care	Stacy Hodgkinson Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts Heather Sutherland	Quarterly		
CIRT management to complete monthly auditing on identified cases	Monthly audit are completed and the information is used to inform practise development.	Stacy Hodgkinson Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts Heather Sutherland	Monthly		
Peer observation to continue to be undertaken on a quarterly cycles to support peer learning	Improve consistency of practise by IRO/CC's	IRO/CC's	Bi monthly		

Priority 7: To strengthen the CIRT service profile within Sunderland

Outcome: CIRT service to become a respected and utilised resource to better support outcomes for children/young people within the City.

Action	Success measure(s)	Lead	Time	RAG Current	Progress Update
IRO/CC's to be encouraged to lead in key areas of work within Together for Children and with partner agencies.	Increased membership of appropriate steering groups	IRO's Stacy Hodgkinson Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts	February 2019		

Priority 7: To strengthen the CIRT service profile within Sunderland
Outcome: CIRT service to become a respected and utilised resource to better support outcomes for children/young people within the City.

Action	Success measure(s)	Lead	Time	RAG Current	Progress Update
IRO managers to participate in regional IRO manager group	IRO managers to achieve regular attendance and take active roles to support improvement in service	Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts	March 2019		
Develop an annual programme of meetings with partner agencies: Police Cafcass	Improvement in level of understanding of one another's role, improved communication, improved systems which positively impact upon joint working	Gavin Taylor Kim Roberts Heather Sutherland	Summer 2018		



Virtual Headteacher Report

Corporate Parenting Board

8th October 2018

Virtual Head Teacher Report to Corporate Parenting Board

Staffing

Appointment of the Virtual School Head teacher

The Personnel Committee of the Virtual School Governing Body carried out the interviews for the Virtual School Head teacher post on the 27th & 28th September. Four candidates were interviewed over the two days and completed a range of tasks including a presentation, data exercise, interview with young people and a formal interview. I am pleased to report that the committee offered the post to Linda Mason subject to references.

Linda has previously worked at Monkwearmouth School in Newcastle as a School Improvement Officer, Bradford City Council as Virtual School Head Teacher and latterly as the Interim Assistant Director of SEN and Access and as such she brings a wealth of experience to the post. Linda has agreed to take up post on 1 November 2018.

Other Staffing Issues

The Virtual School's administrative support officer is currently on maternity leave. Since the beginning of May we have experienced some resourcing difficulties which have impacted on some elements of the work of the Virtual School; however, I am pleased to report that these have been rectified and since the beginning of term we have welcomed an interim administrative support officer who has settled extremely well into the team and has shown that she is highly proficient in all aspects of her work. She has been working with our Database Adviser to learn about our database and has taken to it with ease. She has also received some financial training from our finance department and is undertaking further training in Liquid Logic, Welfare Call and H.R processes.

The team have been thanked for the work that they have undertaken during the period of reduced capacity; of particular note was their whole team approach during both employee absences and the recent Ofsted inspection.

Premises

The KS1 PRU have relocated to Tudor Grove as they could no longer stay in their premises. Due to the specific needs of the KS1 PRU it was agreed that the Virtual School would move into demountable classroom space on the site of Tudor Grove. During the summer holidays there was limited access to computers and telephones however, I can now report that the re-organisation is complete and following some initial teething problems the Virtual School is now fully operational.

Ofsted Outcomes

The outcome of the recent Ofsted 23rd April 2018 - 18th May 2018 was that children looked after and achieving permanence, 'Requires Improvement'.

During the inspection we attended a number of interviews with the inspectors which included:-

- Attendance and Exclusions
- Attainment
- Post 16 and the ELEET Team
- Improvements

Recommendation 1)

Children's emotional and mental health needs are not met well. Not all children in care receive a timely strength and difficulties questionnaire. When these are undertaken, they do not always identify and result in timely additional support. Children and young people experience delay in accessing specialist services when they are needed. Senior managers have responded by commissioning clinical psychologist consultation for residential staff and foster carers. This is making a difference to the care provided. Foster carers receive training on how to identify and better support children's emotional needs. Recent and improved partnerships with schools to develop mental health and well-being groups are beginning to improve the awareness of the needs of children in care.

In response to this recommendation last year the Virtual School have continued to develop more support for our Children Looked After by extending our provision for art therapy and mindfulness within the classroom at Tudor Grove. Young people also from Tudor Grove access this provision in partnership with the Link School.

We support young people who are at risk of being excluded or indeed have been excluded. We are only into the fourth week of the new term and we already have seven young people accessing support. This means we can educate the young person and also allow them to express their views and feelings in a calm environment so we can support their return to school. We are in the process of joining Place2Be as part of the Trailblazer Cities for Mental Health and Wellbeing.

There has been significant improvement in the management, support and training offered by the Virtual School for children looked after during the last 12 months. This means that children are receiving better support and more targeted interventions to address their learning needs. Attendance has improved. The Virtual School addresses any concerns about attendance or punctuality swiftly, regardless of where the children are placed. Visits to out-of-area placements are prioritised. This ensures that those children furthest away are receiving equitable levels of support to those living in the City.

Due to the wide variety of out of area school/placements the Virtual School will continue to undertake, update and review so that we can be more accurately informed of the quality of a school/placement and indeed we have raised awareness of what each offers. We are working closely with our colleagues in commissioning and when this is completed we hope this will give more confidence in placing our young people in the correct setting and help us by giving more up to date/ correct advice.

We have offered training for E.PEPS to other professionals and will be rolling this out after the half term break.

Training for Virtual School Team will include promoting and developing more smart targets for young people (particularly Key Stage 4). We will raise the profile more around the EPEP and due to the Welfare Call system, will be able to monitor PEPS more effectively. We will be more readily aware of other schools or other professionals not working within the timeframe as the new system has a range of alerts. Also linked to the smart targets is the Pupil Premium allocation. This is only passed on when a PEP is deemed good enough.

The Virtual School have a fortnightly update in relation to out of area cases to discuss any issues. This is followed up by a termly meeting with commissioning to quality assure the placements.

Support and planning for Children's education has improved. Resources are targeted to raise the educational attainment of children in care. The quality of personal education plans (PEPS) has improved significantly. The clear majority are now completed with appropriate timescales, but the quality remains inconsistent. Not all PEPS have sufficiently targeted actions to improve specific learning needs and facilitate progress. The Virtual School Headteacher now tightly monitors pupil premium funding and holds the school to account for the spend. This ensures that children receive the additional learning resources they are entitled to.

We continue to evaluate the PEPS that schools sent to us. We challenge any school who has not set SMART targets. This year we will have an improved format for evaluation. Key Stage 3 and 4 are a real focus for us as the quality of PEPS is variable and do not offer a secure platform for the identification of robust, measurable targets supported by effective use of Pupil Premium. Training will be provided to designated leaders to improve the quality of their PEPS based on true person centred approaches.

Team members have analysed current datasets and are targeting all young people where data demonstrates that young people are at risk of under-achievement and personalised plans are being devised to support these children with a particular emphasis on pupils who will be subject to end of Key Stage assessments.

The Virtual School has commissioned a number of places with NISAI learning who provide distance learning packages for young people in Key Stages 3 & 4 who are having some difficulty in accessing school. It also offers the opportunity for pupils to access after school study and revision programmes linked to the young person's current school study modules.

The key focus of our work this academic year will be focused on raising attainment and improving progress of all of our pupils. The newly appointed Virtual Headteacher has a background in school improvement and will be focused on working with our schools and social care staff in ensuring that outcomes improve.

The picture is more encouraging for those 16 and 17 year olds preparing to leave care. Good collaboration between social workers, personal advisers and the virtual school post 16- coordinator is improving outcomes for these young people. Of 78 in this cohort, 69 (82%) are in education, training or employment. The remaining 18% are receiving intensive support to find appropriate placements. This is better than the national average.

Our Post 16 worker continues to support our young people. We are closely maintaining the apprenticeships we have in a local school and are endeavouring to roll this model out as the process of recruitment and package of support put together for the young people proved successful.

We are working very closely with Sunderland College and have been invited to meetings with the college's lecturers/tutors so we can explain the specific needs of our young people and reinforce the strong networking we have to support them.

Senior managers know the rate of progress for children looked after is not rapid enough to close the gap between peers. Low attainment of children looked after continues to be a major cause for concern. Better progress made in early years and at key stage 1 and 2 is not sustained when children move on to secondary school.

Data – GLD, phonics, KS 1 & 2. Please note that this data is unvalidated and could be subject to change. Validated outcomes will be shared with members through the Annual Report of the Virtual Headteacher in January 2019.

Early years – GLD

Unvalidated data shows that 71.4% of CLA achieved a good level of development which is 0.2ppts above non CLA.

Year 1 phonics

70% of CLA achieved the threshold in the phonics test. This was 12.3ppts below non CLA but an improvement on the previous year of 3.6ppts

Year 2 Reading

44.4 % of CLA achieved the expected level in reading against non CLA of 76.1%. The gap has narrowed this year but there is considerable work that needs to be carried out

Year 2 Writing

44.4 % of CLA achieved the expected standard in writing against the non CLA cohort of 71%. The gap between CLA and Non CLA was decreased since 2017.

Year 2 – maths

33.4% of CLA achieved the expected standard in mathematics against the non CLA cohort of 77.1%. The gap between CLA and non CLA has decreased since last year but the gap is remains too wide.

Key Stage 2 - Reading, writing and mathematics combined

37.5% of CLA achieved the expected standard against the non CLA cohort of 67.8%. This is a decline on the previous year. However, 6.3% of CLA achieved greater depth across all three subjects against the non CLA cohort of 10.9%. This is an improvement of 6.3% from the previous year where no CLA achieved at the greater depth.

Key stage 4 & 5 data is not yet available.

Attendance and Exclusions

We continue to improve on the attendance of our young people, with last year being 94.8%.

Welfare Call continues to give us excellent support in informing us of any abnormalities. We have a handful of schools who continue to be difficult in giving us the attendance data (due to their authorities interpretation of GDPR), but we get good support in tackling this from our colleagues at TFC.

Since encouraging schools to contact Virtual School before they consider excluding a looked after child we have been able to work out some solutions to help those children cope with the situation. On a number of occasions we have been able to come out to a young person and discuss the situation. On other occasions we have put some support in the school to alleviate the situation (a short term measure). In more difficult or complex cases we have brought young people in for a more focused intervention. This again is a short term solution but quite often gives both the school and the young person some respite until a longer term solution is found. These solutions vary and are individual. It might be that the school refers the young person to the cities panel which allocate PRU, Returners Home Tuition. It could even be that in consultation with social workers an external placement/ education is considered.

As a result of our actions we have not looked after children subject to a permanent exclusion during the academic year 2017/2018.

Fixed term exclusions 2017/2018 (unvalidated)

2017/18 provisional data shows there have been 37 LAC pupils fixed term excluded, which equates to 123 fixed term exclusions over 201 days.

Prior to 2017/18, historical data indicates that there has been a continuing decrease in the number of fixed term exclusions for looked after children over the preceding 3 academic years. However, Current data indicates that there has been a 3% increase in the number of LAC fixed term excluded, compared to 2016/17. A 38% increase fixed term exclusions which equates to a 13% decrease in the number of days lost due to exclusion for looked after children compared to 2016/17.

The main reasons that LAC were fixed term excluded was due to 'Other' (27%) and persistent disruptive behaviour (24%), comparable to 16/17 data. There has been an increase in the number of fixed term exclusion for looked after children recorded at 'Other' 28 of the 37 LAC pupils were fixed term excluded more than once.

The exclusion of CLA was tracked throughout the year and Letters were sent to schools by the Acting Chief Executive of Together for Children and the Vulnerable Children Service manager challenging actions and requesting information about the provisions being set in place for these children. In addition the Inclusion and Access manager and Virtual School Head Teacher made repeated visits to some schools to challenge their decisions.

In addition, concerns were raised about individual schools with the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC), the Department for Education and Ofsted by the Director of Education Services in regular meetings.

As a result of these actions one academy has made significant changes to approaches and is now engaging pro-actively with Together for Children in sharing their revised protocols.

Post 16 Provisions and NEETS

As of 25th September 2018 there were 102 16-18 year old young people on roll with the Virtual School, 46 in Year 12 and 56 in Year 13.

The current overall NEET figure currently stands at 13, equating to 12.7%. Breaking down these percentages further, current Year 12's account for 7.8% of the overall figure and Year 13's 4.9% of NEETs. Viewed by year group, this means 17.3% of Year 12's and 8.9% of Year 13's are currently NEET. Early destination information was collated from Post 16 education providers (where they were expected to attend, from Schools, alternative Education, Secure units etc.). Final destination information (where they actually enrolled and attended in Sept. 2018) was arrived at by information sharing and contact with Social Workers, Care Home Key Workers, Foster Carers and Connexions professionals in early September 2018.

Comparatively low NEET figures (37% nationally, DfE Feb 2018) have been maintained by early contact with schools and individual young people seen as being at risk of becoming NEET whilst in Year 11 and supporting the retention of Year 13 Young people on courses or transition to higher level courses and carefully selecting courses and training providers that most closely match the support needs and abilities of the individual.

Meetings have been held with Connexions, Sunderland College and various training providers to help target support on those young people currently NEET. All current NEET young people have been contacted and support offered including supported visits, CV writing and long term application and job/training/education search support via the most appropriate professional (SVS, Connexions etc.) given their individual support needs taking into consideration SEN, emotional wellbeing and current cared for status. There has been a reduction in the number of training providers offering courses in the Sunderland area which has had an effect on engagement, and on the variety and range of courses offered by those that continue to serve the area. To remedy this meetings have been arranged with current training providers and contact made with the North East Training Providers Association to discuss further opportunities which may be available with specific focus on looked after young people and in particular attracting NEET back into education or training.

PEPS and Liquid Logic

Due to the way that PEPS are recorded the full six weeks holiday period is counted into the PEP timeline. As it is impossible to undergo PEP meetings in the holidays (schools are closed) when we return in September as expected the number of out of date PEPS has grown dramatically. This obviously has an extremely negative impact on our KPI. This issue needs to be tackled if our KPI is to be a realistic measure.

We have been working with our data colleagues to also match up the figures on our Virtual School Database with the records now held on Liquid Logic. This is proving a mammoth task but by working and continually sharing data sets we are making progress.

We were tasked with putting the PEPS onto Liquid Logic, which we did. We are awaiting instruction to find out where they need to be placed so they are recorded on the system.

Most staff are now trained on Liquid Logic (only 2 left to train) and that also puts us in a better position to populate the system.

The number of PEPS on our system still does not mirror Liquid Logic and we still continue to have that conversation.

The PEP's from KS4 were quite often not focussed enough and did not have smart enough targets. Bearing in mind the challenges that Year 10/11 present in raising achievement, the Virtual School will have a very sharp focus on supporting and challenging the schools where PEPS were not robust enough.

The Virtual School continues to evaluate the PEPS. Each week the team review the PEPS received. When the E'PEP becomes live this will be a more seamless process. Now that the data set matches from Liquid Logic are improving we are close to the E'PEP going live. We have been working very closely with our colleagues to reach that outcome.

Partnership Working

The Virtual School continues to develop strong partnerships with our co-workers in Together for Children. We have very positive relationships with the staff in our residential homes. Over the last 12 months we have worked closely with them to support our young people who are struggling with their education.

We have had a number of successes in overarching support and helping young people reintegrate back into their schools/ training placements. Equally we have encountered a number of issues such as exclusions or young people refusing education. This area is one of our priorities. Partnership working with schools has continued to be strengthened.

Virtual School continue to strengthen and develop its partnership with the Link School, last term, we had some very successful outcomes for a number of our "shared" children. It is particularly heartening that one young person who has previously had the highest number of missing episodes is now settled and accessing 25 hours of education. This was the result of the Virtual School and The Link School developing a package of support around that young person and moving forward at a pace that was suitable for them.

We had 12 young people accessing our "Rainbow Room" last year. Each bespoke package included support for Mental Health and Wellbeing and Mindfulness. We are reviewing this way of working and will be extending it this year.

O Gravity

We have been invited to pilot O Gravity. This is a really exciting opportunity for a number of our young people. The project revolves around how to learn coding and build a Minecraft universe. The classes are delivered from Software City and volunteers are highly qualified professionals from the IT industry. The coding club is being hosted in Saggezza's Offices in Software City. Saggezza is a global solutions provider.

We are hoping that our young people will be inspired by this opportunity and that we will lead the project being developed and extended.

LCEP- Local Cultural Education Partnership

We have been invited to be a partner in our new LCEP. The vision is to establish a cross sector partnership that works together to join up and improve cultural education for children and young people in their local area. Obviously we at Virtual School will be looking at how the partnership will extend more cultural activity to **Children Looked After**. It is part of the Cultural Education Challenge led by the Arts Council England and supported by the Department of Education.