

Corporate Parenting Board - 15 March 2021

Children in Care / Leaving Care - Q3 Performance 2020/21

Purpose of report

To provide key performance information for Children in Care and Care Leavers for Q3 period 01.10.2020 to 31.12.2020. A separate item on the Health of Children in Care is noted to be on the agenda today.

Recommendations:

1. that the Board approves the following areas to be added to the work plan for further consideration and scrutiny:
 - a) Personal Education Plans;
 - b) Placement Sufficiency and Stability;
 - c) Permanence (including long-term fostering and adoption – to include an update from Adoption East Midlands);
 - d) Suitable Accommodation – to include use of B&B, unregulated placements, young people in custody;
 - e) Fostering Service Performance.
2. that the Board notes the report and that:
 - i. Social Care will continue to work with Health partners to ensure routine dental checks resume as government restrictions ease;
 - ii. the Head of Service will work with the Virtual School to access interim data for ePEPs to ensure there is an improvement in the number and will take a decision regarding the completion of ePEPs without the attainment and assessment data;
 - iii. the Head of Service and Service Manager will continue to drive the work on increasing the number of children in long term fostering arrangements.

Statutory visits

% Children in Care with an up to date visit is 86% with target of 100%. Fortnightly data is provided to the Department for Education about statutory visiting at a 4weekly frequency for Children in Care. Service Managers review specific details for those children that are not seen at that frequency. Visits to children in care and open to fieldwork teams is in the high 90's %. The reasons for some children not being seen are provided below:

- those in custody where face to face visits are not agreed by the secure establishment and virtual contact is not in line with statutory frequency.
- Self-isolation due to Covid has impacted on some visits not taking place in timescales.
- Children and young people who are placed in stable long term foster placements have visits agreed at 12 weekly levels.

We are maintaining face to face visits on each visit unless it is not appropriate to do so, some are replaced with virtual visits with agreement from Service Managers. Guidance has been issued regarding visits to children in care.

As at 15th December 2020, there were 298 young people open to the Leaving Care Service and 73% had been seen or spoken with at the required frequency of 8

weekly visits and detailed rationale why the remaining had not been seen has been scrutinised.

Health and Dental performance

% Children in Care with up to date Health Assessments-these are annual check ups for Children in care and the target for this measure is at 90% and for Q3 the performance has been at 87.5%. We have identified some delays in Initial Health assessments being requested and a process has been put in at the front door to address this. We have a Business Support lead who supports the processing of Health Assessments in Children in Care teams where the performance is higher, she is now supporting those Children in Care open to Fieldwork teams.

There are no issues about young people receiving medical attention when it has been required.

% Children in Care with up to date Dental Checks-the target for this measure is 90% and we have seen a month on month deterioration in the measure. This is in part due to restrictions under Covid impacting. We know that children who require dental treatment are able to access this however routine checks have not been possible. This deterioration is expected nationally. Q3 performance is at 58%. There is a working group including health and social care colleagues to address this locally.

Pathway plan

% Pathway plans, authorised in the last 6months- the target for this measure is 95% and Q3 performance for:

- CIC is 82%
- Care leavers is 87%.

There has been work undertaken to Pathway Plan form and feedback is being sought from young people to ensure it meets their needs.

Due to Covid, there has been a challenge in undertaking direct work with Children in Care to complete their Pathway Plans and social workers are trying to work creatively with placement providers to try and undertake this work. For those young people at university, in secure institutions or not engaging with frequent visits, this is proving to remain challenging and colleague remain tenacious in working with young people to complete or update their Pathway Plans.

Personal Education Plans (PEP)

The percentage of electronic PEP (ePEPs) completed is now reportable on a termly basis and for 01.09.2020 until 31.12.2020 there were 58% of children with a statutory PEP in place. This is a new system. The next data will not be available until May reporting on the January to end of April period.

Whilst the news system is up and working and training events successfully implemented and completed, there are currently a low number of signed off as complete PEPs. The principle reason being that from a schools there is a low level of completed attainment and assessment data. This is reflective of the overarching Covid impact situation in schools for all pupils, rather than a Children in Care specific issue. Some Virtual Heads have taken the position of therefore signing off PEPs as "complete" with the caveat that all necessary assessment data will be added as soon as it becomes available and that this proviso is noted on the form. We are considering taking the same approach.

The Head of Service will be working with the Virtual School Head to try to access data between reporting periods to satisfy that we are seeing an improvement. The new process takes us from having twice yearly PEPs to having them 3 times a year. All social work colleagues have been made aware that statutory school aged children in care require an updated PEP each term populated using the new ePEP portal.

Placement Stability

% of Children in Care who have had three or more placements in the previous 12 months has decreased to 9% which is an improvement and on target.

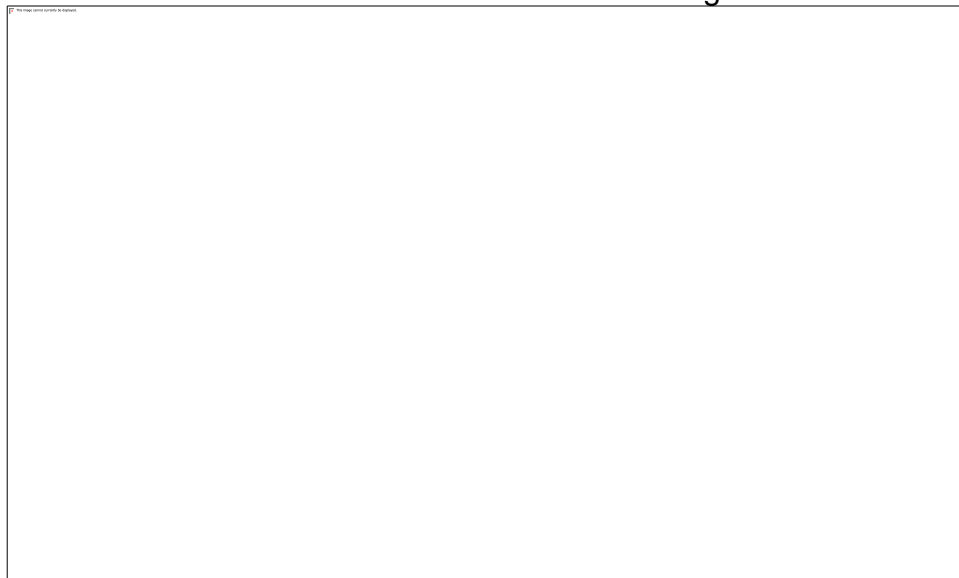
% Children in Care who have lived in the same placement for at least 2 years-Our performance for Q3 is 62.2% and performance for our Statistical neighbour group at 2018/19 was 68. We know that some foster carers are worried about visits to the home and where appropriate to do so, introduced virtual visits with face to face. If placements are at risk of breaking down, then face to face visits are being maintained. Lockdown restrictions are still impacting on stability of placements and is adding pressure to placements.

We are negotiating for Supervising Social Workers to visit foster homes on alternate visits with virtual visiting in between to reduce the carers anxiety but to support stability.

Type of placement

The ratio of fostered children homed with internal: external foster carers is at 52.6:47.4%, this is good because our target was to be at 50:50.

There are still a high proportion of children and young people in external residential placements (as below) and work remains ongoing to support stepping down of children in residential to foster care and increasing our internal residential offer.



Fostered children that are in Long term fostering placements

The Department for Education target is for 40 to 60% of children fostered to be in long term fostering placements and our performance in Q3 was at 26.2%. The impact of this work is that children in care have a greater sense of security that they are remaining with their foster carers long term.

We have streamlined some of our processes to secure the permanence arrangement of long term fostering for those children and young people for whom it

is planned they remain with their carers long term. The Head of Service and the Service Manager are tracking progress on this work.

Children in Care numbers

The average number of children in care during Q3 was 672 and this is at a rate of 98 per 10,000, our statistical neighbour group with whom we compare have 97 per 10,000. The outturn for 2019-2020 was 96 per 10,000. The target we have set is 88 per 10,000. An average of 18 children have been discharged from care each month during Q3.

Discharges

The numbers of discharges through Adoption and Special Guardianship orders are low and work is underway to clarify if court proceedings in other local authority areas is impacting on the number of Adoption orders and Special Guardianship orders for Nottingham's children. Considering our high proportion of Black, Asian and Minority ethnic and Hard to place adoption cohort, the issue remains that they are hard to place and this does negatively impact adoption timescales. We will continue to work with Adoption East Midlands on increasing adoption activity by analysing the barriers to achieving adoption for these cohorts and take appropriate action.

The number of children discharged through Child Arrangement Orders to friends and family are also low because we know families and their solicitors, advocate for discharges through Special Guardianship due to the allowances that are payable. We are still driving discharges through Special Guardianships which allows children to have more "normal" life experiences with wider family and friends rather than being involved in statutory social work services and the interventions in their families by social workers.

Children in Care Reviews

95.2% of Children in Care statutory reviews took place in timescale during Q3, and the target is 97%. This target was previously at 95% and was raised to be more aspirational and the service are determined to continue this improvement. The outturn for 2019-2021 was 89.9% and the Year to date performance is 94.6% which is an improvement.

% of reviews where the child (excluding under 4's) participated in their review is at 90.5% and improving. The Strategic Lead for Quality Assurance and Safeguarding has identified an area for improvement in first reviews both with their timeliness and participation by children and will be a focus to support booking of these meetings in a timelier manner.

Quality of practice

12 of the 20 social workers in Children in Care are on caseloads of 19 and higher, with one being on 23 and this is high when colleagues are trying to ensure good social work practice. With the exception of newly qualified social workers, the remainder of social workers in the Children in Care teams are experienced social workers who have been in the team for some time. Newly qualified social workers have protected caseloads which reduces the capacity to allocate in their first year in employment.

The service has no Children in Care unallocated. Many children are placed at long distance and therefore it can be a challenge ensuring face to face statutory visits are taking place and with the added complication of working under Covid restrictions.

All staff have undergone Strengths Based and Signs of Safety training to support improvement in practice and to ensure all social workers understand expectations regarding Practice Standards.

Suitable accommodation/Sufficiency

We are working with Barnardo's to create a Supported lodgings scheme/Gap homes model for supported accommodation for those children in care and care leavers who are not able to sustain a tenancy.

Care Leavers

Suitability of accommodation and employment, education and training (EET) status are key issues in the lives of care leavers.

The percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation (age 19-21yrs) at Q3 is at 90%, the Year to date is 88.6% and the target is 90%. Those young people in custody cannot be considered to be in suitable accommodation according to the definition we work to. The Q3 cohort consists of 58 care leavers, 6 of which are in unsuitable accommodation; 5 in custody and 1 in bed and breakfast accommodation. The Service Manager is working closely with the social work team to resolve the housing situation for the young person in bed and breakfast accommodation which is at significant distance outside of the local authority area. This young person's circumstances are also reviewed in fortnightly meetings with Housing regarding the use of B&B accommodation by the City Council.

The percentage of care leavers in employment, education or training (age 19-21years) is at 63.8% Q3 with Year to date at 61.2% and the target at 60%.

Fostering Service

A dashboard has been set up on our data management system to monitor compliance regarding checks, visits, training for foster carers which is good.

Residential

Children's Residential have continued to deliver services to children throughout the pandemic, on occasions colleagues moving in to live in the home to ensure safe caring. They remain rated by Ofsted as Good or Outstanding which is excellent.

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