

## Corporate Parenting Board – 26<sup>th</sup> July 2021

<b>Title of paper:</b>	<b>2021/22 Q1 Performance Report Children in Care/Leaving Care</b>	
<b>Director(s)/ Corporate Director(s):</b>	Helen Watson, Interim Director for Children's Integrated Services Catherine Underwood, Corporate Director for People	<b>Wards affected: All</b>
<b>Report author(s) and contact details:</b>	Tajinder Madahar, Head of Duty, Housing Aid, Children in Care and Leaving Care Services <a href="mailto:tajinder.madahar@nottinghamcity.gov.uk">tajinder.madahar@nottinghamcity.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Other colleagues who have provided input:</b>	Sharon Clarke, Interim Head of Children in Care (Regulated Services).	
<b>Date of consultation with Portfolio Holder(s) (if relevant)</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> July 2021	
<b>Relevant Council Plan Key Theme:</b>		
Nottingham People		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Living in Nottingham		<input type="checkbox"/>
Growing Nottingham		<input type="checkbox"/>
Respect for Nottingham		<input type="checkbox"/>
Serving Nottingham Better		<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Summary of issues (including benefits to citizens/service users):</b>		
This report outlines key performance information for Children in Care (CiC) and Care Leavers (CL) for Q1 period 01.04.2021 to 30.06.2021. This enables consideration and scrutiny by the Corporate Parenting Board of the effectiveness of services and support for CiC/CL and key outcomes for this cohort.		
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>		
<b>1</b>	That the Board note the contents of the report and, where appropriate, seek assurances about the action being taken to address areas of under-performance and maintain strong performance.	

### 1 Reasons for recommendations

- 1.1 The Corporate Parenting Board has a statutory duty to ensure that we are delivering effective support for CiC/CL, and that Council and wider partnership services are having a positive impact for this cohort of vulnerable children and young people.

### 2 Background (including outcomes of consultation)

#### Statutory Visits - Target 95%

- 2.1 Whilst the Q1 performance saw a slight dip this quarter to an average 80%, the year-end performance was 82%. Since March 2020 in the Covid context we have continued to see strong performance in visiting and this is borne out by the data we have been required to report to the DfE due to the Pandemic. We report on children and young people being seen within the preceding 4 weeks and 90% of Children in Care open to Fieldwork services in June had been seen within the previous 4 weeks. For children and young people open to the Children in Care service, they have permanency plans in care and

therefore their visiting frequency may be up to 12 weeklies. The reasons for some children not being seen are provided below:

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

2.2 We are maintaining face to face visits unless it is not appropriate to do so; some are replaced with virtual visits with agreement from Service Managers and guidance has been issued regarding visits. Visits to Care leavers are undertaken at 8 weekly frequencies and as at the report to the DfE in May 66% of young people had been seen at that frequency with detailed scrutiny of those not being seen.

#### Health and Dental performance

2.3 Health Assessments-the expected target is 90% and Q1 performance remains below this at 83.9%. We have been working with Health colleagues to address delays identified in Initial Health assessments being requested. There are no issues about young people receiving medical attention when it has been required.

2.4 Dental checks-the expected target is 90% and we had seen a month on month deterioration in the measure which currently stands at 59.9%, at outturn 2020-21 this was at 49%. Dentists being shut during the Pandemic impacted on routine appointments, however as restrictions have lifted we are starting to see an improvement in this measure and expect this improvement to continue. We know that children have not been prevented from accessing treatment when required. This deterioration was expected and raised nationally. There is a working group including health and social care colleagues to address this locally.

#### Pathway Plans

2.5 % Pathway Plans, authorised in the last 6months- there are two measures that we report on because there are two services responsible for the split cohort e.g. care leavers and (eligible) Children in Care. The target for this measure is 95% and Q1 performance for:

- **CIC is 73.8% of children eligible for a Pathway Plan have had a plan authorised in the last 6months. These cases are held in Fieldwork, Children in care and Whole life disability services**
- **Care leavers is 93.8% an increase from 92% outturn 2020-21.**

2.6 Pathway Plans are key to supporting children in care and care leavers prepare for independence when appropriate to do so. It is an assessment of their needs, identifies any risks and any actions required to support their next steps. We are working on improving the template used to produce the Pathway Plan to make it more user friendly, having had feedback from young people.

It remains a challenge for the update of some Pathway plans especially for those young people at university, in secure institutions or not engaging with frequent visits, however colleagues remain tenacious in working with young people to complete or update their Pathway Plans.

## Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

### 2.7 PEP compliance

- The PEP reporting has continued to show improvement and the latest performance for PEPs was that they were at 86%, this being a marked improvement from the status of compliance in PEPs prior to them being electronic updates
- The Virtual School were the subject of a Peer review, a report is expected to today's Board regarding the findings and subsequent plan. The draft plan has been shared with Social Care leaders

## Placement Stability

2.8 % of Children in Care who have had three or more placements in the previous 12 months has remained reduced over the last quarter to 7.2%, this is good because at outturn 2020-21 this was at 8.3% and we know our Statistical neighbour group (SNG) against whom we bench mark at outturn 2019-20 were at 11%. Having said this, we know that the Pandemic and a lack of placement choice can have a negative impact. A shortage of placement availability can limit choice in matching children to the most suitable placements. We have continued to offer support to foster carers both virtually and face to face to support stability. Movements for children in care are picked up by the Independent Reviewing Officer during statutory reviews.

2.9 % Children in Care who have lived in the same placement for at least 2 years-Our performance for Q1 has also seen a slight improvement at 66.4% from 65.3%. However, we are below our last year outturn which was 69%. Our target for this measure is 70%. Some positive reasons for moves:

- Moving children to adoptive placements contributes to this measure but should be considered as a positive move.
- Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children can sometimes move from residential accommodation to semi-independence quicker once an assessment is undertaken of their needs and will also contribute to this measure.
- Some Young people may ask to move on to semi-independence as they approach leaving care stage rather than moving straight into independence. This is considered to be a good move in line with young people's needs and wishes.

## Type of placement

2.10 70% of our children in care are in foster care the remainder are in other types of placements which include Residential, Independent living, semi-independent living and other categories including health placements, placed for adoption, secure accommodation or with parents.

2.11 The ratio of fostered children homed with internal: external foster carers is at 53%:47%, this is good because our target is 50:50.

## Fostered children that are in long-term fostering placements

2.12 The Department for Education target is for 40 to 60% of children fostered to be in long term fostering placements and our performance in Q4 was at 26.2% this is at 27% at Q1. A robust tracking process has been put in place setting timescales for all children and young people who have been in placement and are to remain long term fostered. 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.

- 2.13 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.
- 2.14 Of the 480 cohort as at the end of March 2021, in foster care we know that:
- 82 representing 17% had a plan to return home, for adoption or Special Guardianship and therefore we would not expect to agree a plan of long term fostering, and
  - 55, representing a further 11% had been in care for less than 6months and therefore considering long term fostering with that placement would not be appropriate before they had been in placement for 12 months
- 2.15 Therefore, if we remove those 2 cohorts then as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 our performance for this measure stood at 54% which is within the 40-60 range. However, we cannot report to the DfE in this way.

#### Children in Care numbers

- 2.16 The number of children in care has continued to rise and as at Q1 this stands at 710 this is a rise in our rate per 10,000 from 99 at outturn 2020-21 to Q1 being 102.5. The SNG for 2019-20 was 98.3 per 10,000 however we know that other local authorities have seen an increase between 4.7% to in their 20's%.
- 2.17 We have robust processes in place to agree entry into care. The increase in cost of placements has impacted on the overall cost of children in care.
- 2.18 We have 2 programmes to support step downs from residential care to foster care, external foster care to internal foster care and also to support re-unification back to parents and wider families with robust packages of support and these are through the STARS project and a new Re-unification programme.

#### Discharges

- 2.19 During Q1, 10 children have been adopted or discharged through Special Guardianship Orders and therefore are no longer children in care, this was at 8 in the last quarter. We know there have been delays in discharges through adoption, Special Guardianship and also revocation of Care orders when children are placed with parents and the local authority apply to discharge the care order. Senior leadership in Children's escalate their concerns about court delays to the Local Family Justice Board and CAFCASS.
- 2.20 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

- 2.21 95.5% of Children in Care statutory reviews took place in timescale during Q1, 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 2020-21 was 95%.
- 2.22 % of reviews where the child (excluding under 4's) participated in their review at Q1 is 94.4% which is an improvement on outturn 2020-21 when it was 91.7%. The Strategic Lead for Quality Assurance and Safeguarding has identified actions to improve the participation of young people in their reviews.

### Suitable Accommodation/Sufficiency

- 2.23 We are working with Barnardo's to create a Supported lodgings scheme for supported accommodation for those children in care and care leavers who are not able to sustain a tenancy.
- 2.24 Barnardo's are working with the Government initiative "Place to Call Home" to recruit specific carers/ Hosts for Supported Lodgings for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children and young people also. We have a Panel set for August and September 2021 to approve identified hosts for the Supported Lodgings scheme which will allow us to formulate a needs led pathway for Care Leavers.
- 2.25 Gap Homes' has been costed out and we were scoping out the feasibility of providing supported accommodation to young people 16 to 18 with the option for those young people who require further support to remain until assessed as ready to sustain their tenancy. There is further work needed to determine the feasibility.
- 2.26 We engaged with a number of other local authorities with the Competition and Marketing Authority (CMA) which had launched a national market study into children's social care provision. The study was to examine the lack of availability and increasing costs in children's social care provision, including children's homes and fostering. The study was to actively seek views from a range of providers and other stakeholders, including private providers and local authorities. We await the findings from this piece of work.
- 2.27 We are currently working on commissioning further block contract beds for Residential care and a block contract for semi-independent provision which will increase sufficiency for our children to live locally.

### Care Leavers

- 2.28 Suitability of accommodation and employment, education and training (EET) status are key issues in the lives of care leavers.
- 2.29 The percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation (age 19-21yrs) has dropped to 88.6%, the target is 90% and the outturn for 2020-21 was slightly higher than the target. Those young people in custody cannot be considered to be in suitable accommodation according to the definition we work to.
- 2.30 The percentage of care leavers in employment, education or training (age 19-21years) has seen a drop to 57.5%, the target is 60%. We have implemented an Aspirations Champion Scheme to continue to support children and young people with their aspirations as well as scoping out with Barnardo's the implementation of the ASDAN Scheme which will provide certification of skills required for independence. Acknowledging the issues young people face in terms of loneliness and isolation we are also working with Barnardo's to implement a volunteer Befriender scheme to support young people in their transition. All of these schemes are launched.

### Fostering Service

- 2.31 A dashboard has been set up on our data management system to monitor compliance regarding checks, visits, training for foster carers which is good. We know some of the data needs cleansing which is underway which will allow a more accurate reflection of performance. This was further highlighted in the DfE return which required manual data cleansing, this allowed us to reflect, the accurate data about the Service. We have identified a number of areas whereby Supervising Social Workers require training to ensure recording on Liquid Logic is accurate and pulls through to the Dashboard.

2.32 This will be underway shortly and regular meetings with Analysis and Insight are held to ensure this occurs. Currently compliance stands at 61.4 % overall but this is impacted by the low percentage of mandatory training undertaken through the pandemic (41.3%). As we progress our Covid Recovery Plan, we can start to undertake the training required face to face for foster carers and a robust training plan has been implemented for this year. The Service has a robust Improvement Plan in place and compliance in respect of Minimum Standards is the priority area we are working on. Recruitment has been maintained throughout the Lockdown periods and we continue to see an increase in Internal Foster carers. The percentage of children in internal fostering in comparison to external remains higher than target. We need to increase our fostering service in terms of placements to reduce the reliance on external provisions both fostering and residential.

### Residential

2.33 Children's Residential have continued to deliver services to children throughout the pandemic. They remain rated by Ofsted as Good or Outstanding which is excellent. As the Pandemic eases Ofsted will resume Inspections, and we have maintained virtually our required Regulation 44 inspections on all of our Homes. Plans are in the early stages to increase the current provision to provide a further four bed home.

### Next steps for the service

- a) Social Care will continue to monitor performance regarding dental checks to ensure this improves as Pandemic restrictions reduce, and to address any barriers
- b) Head of Service to work with the Virtual school to ensure any changes to the PEP for non-statutory school age children are strengthened in line with the Peer Review recommendations. A draft plan has been prepared.
- c) Head of Service and Service Manager to identify the reasons for the dip in suitability of accommodation for care leavers and the Employment, Education and Training for Care leavers in Q1

## **3 Other options considered in making recommendations**

3.1 None

## **4 Finance colleague comments (including implications and value for money/VAT)**

4.1 Not applicable

## **5 Legal and Procurement colleague comments (including risk management issues, and legal, Crime and Disorder Act and procurement implications)**

5.1 Not applicable

## **6 Strategic Assets & Property colleague comments (for decision relating to all property assets and associated infrastructure) (Area Committee reports only)**

6.1 Not applicable

## **7 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

7.1 Has the equality impact of the proposals in this report been assessed?

7.2 No

7.3 An EIA is not required as this report is not proposing any changes to policy or service delivery that would impact citizens.

Yes

Attached as Appendix x, and due regard will be given to any implications identified in it.

**8 List of background papers other than published works or those disclosing confidential or exempt information**

8.1 None

**9 Published documents referred to in compiling this report**

9.1 None