

Corporate Parenting Board

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| Title of paper: | 2021/2022 Q2 Performance Report Children in Care and Leaving Care Period covered 01.07.2021 to 30.09.2021 | |
| Director(s)/ Corporate Director(s): | Helen Watson – Interim Director, Children’s Integrated Services | Wards affected: All |
| Report author(s) and contact details: | Tajinder Madahar-Head of Service Children’s Duty, Children in Care, Leaving Care and Housing Aid Mary-Anne Cosgrove Head of Children in Care (Regulated Services) | |
| Other colleagues who have provided input: | Tina Thurley-Analysis and Insight | |
| Date of consultation with Portfolio Holder(s) (if relevant) | | |
| Relevant Council Plan Key Outcome: | | |
| Clean and Connected Communities | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Keeping Nottingham Working | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Carbon Neutral by 2028 | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Safer Nottingham | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Child-Friendly Nottingham | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| Healthy and Inclusive | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Keeping Nottingham Moving | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Improve the City Centre | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Better Housing | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Financial Stability | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Serving People Well | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| Summary of issues (including benefits to citizens/service users): | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To update the Board of the Q2 2021/22 performance data for children in care and leaving care young people. The Board to note progress in work with children in care and leaving care and to challenge where performance falls below our targets. | | |
| Recommendation(s): | | |
| 1 | For the Board to note and challenge the performance data regarding performance relating to the Authority’s work with children in care and leaving care | |
| 2 | Social Care will continue to monitor performance regarding dental checks to ensure this improves as Pandemic restrictions reduce, and to address any barriers | |
| 3 | 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. | |

1 Reasons for recommendations

- 1.1 The Department for Education, in its Corporate Parenting principles states that the role that councils play in looking after children is one of the most important things they do. They further state that local authorities have a unique responsibility to the children they look after and their care leavers.
- 1.2 Corporate Parenting Board in discharging its function should be asking in adopting such an approach “**would this be good enough for my child?**” The Corporate Parenting Board is presented with performance information which shows how well we are caring for our children and are asked to challenge where performance needs to improve.

2 Background (including outcomes of consultation)

- 2.1 Each quarter the local authority provides information to the Corporate Parenting Board of performance against its targets. This data is provided by the Authority’s Analysis and Insight team. We measure our performance against the previous quarter, the 2020/21 outturn and comparison against our Statistical Neighbour Group.
- 2.2 **Statutory Visits- Target 95%-** Q2 has seen an improvement this quarter since Q1 rising from 80 to 83%, however there is more to do to continue to improve on this. Since March 2020, and 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. We report on children and young people being seen within the preceding 4 weeks and we have been informed by the DfE that this reporting regime is to continue. This allows senior leaders to have assurance on children and young people being seen by the social worker. Delays in recording account for some discrepancy and service managers are driving on this with their team managers and social workers. For children and young people open to the children in care service, most have permanency plans in care and therefore their visiting frequency may be up to 12 weekly. There are a very few children with visiting at even less frequency. The reasons for some children not being seen are provided below:
 - 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.
- 2.3 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, guidance has been issued regarding such visits. Visits to care leavers are undertaken at 8 weekly frequencies and as at the report to the DfE 19th October 55% of young people had been seen at that frequency with detailed scrutiny of those not being seen. In respect of those not seen the service manager has detailed breakdown of the reasons for this and the steps being taken to arrange visits. Covid has had some impact with some young people refusing contact but agreed to being kept in touch through letters. A small number are missing or are out of the country.
- 2.4 **Health and Dental performance-Target 90%-** at Q2 this is at 83% which remains below where we want it to be. We have the Service Manager from the children’s duty service working to address the delay in initiation of initial health assessments when children and young people first come into care. In addition, the service managers from the children in care service and fieldwork service have also been working with health colleagues to address delays in Health assessments being requested. There are no delays in young people receiving medical attention when it has been required.
- 2.5 **Dental checks- target is 90%** and we had seen a month on month deterioration in this measure last year and 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 expected this improvement to continue. We know that children have not been prevented from accessing treatment when required. There is a working group including health and social care colleagues to address this locally as the pace of improvement is not where it needs to be. We have identified some delays in recording which is being proactively driven by service managers with their team managers.

2.6 **Pathway Plan**-% 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 eg care leavers and (eligible) children in care. The target for this measure is 95% and Q2 performance for:

- CIC has seen a small improvement from 89 to 89.3% of children eligible for a Pathway Plan having had a plan authorised in the last 6months. These cases are held in Fieldwork, Children in care and Whole life disability services and evidences good progress
- Care leavers with a plan having been authorised has risen this quarter from 92 to 92.2%.

2.7 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. The new template is being tested currently with a final meeting to check progress on this 26th October 2021, following which Heads of Service will consider final approval of the template before it goes live.

2.8 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 visits, however colleagues remain tenacious in working with young people to complete or update their Pathway Plans.

2.9 **Personal Education Plans (PEP)**

PEP compliance

- The PEP reporting has continued to show improvement and whilst the data is only available termly the latest performance for PEPs in August was at 88%, this being a marked improvement from the status of compliance in PEPs prior to them being electronic updates
- The Virtual School are providing fortnightly reports to team managers where PEP meetings have not been scheduled to ensure these are occurring in a timely manner

2.10 **Placement Stability-% of Children in Care who have had three or more placements in the previous 12 months** has reduced over the last quarter from 7.2 to 6.6%, 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%. Our target for this measure is 9%, and therefore this indicates more children have experienced stability in their placements.

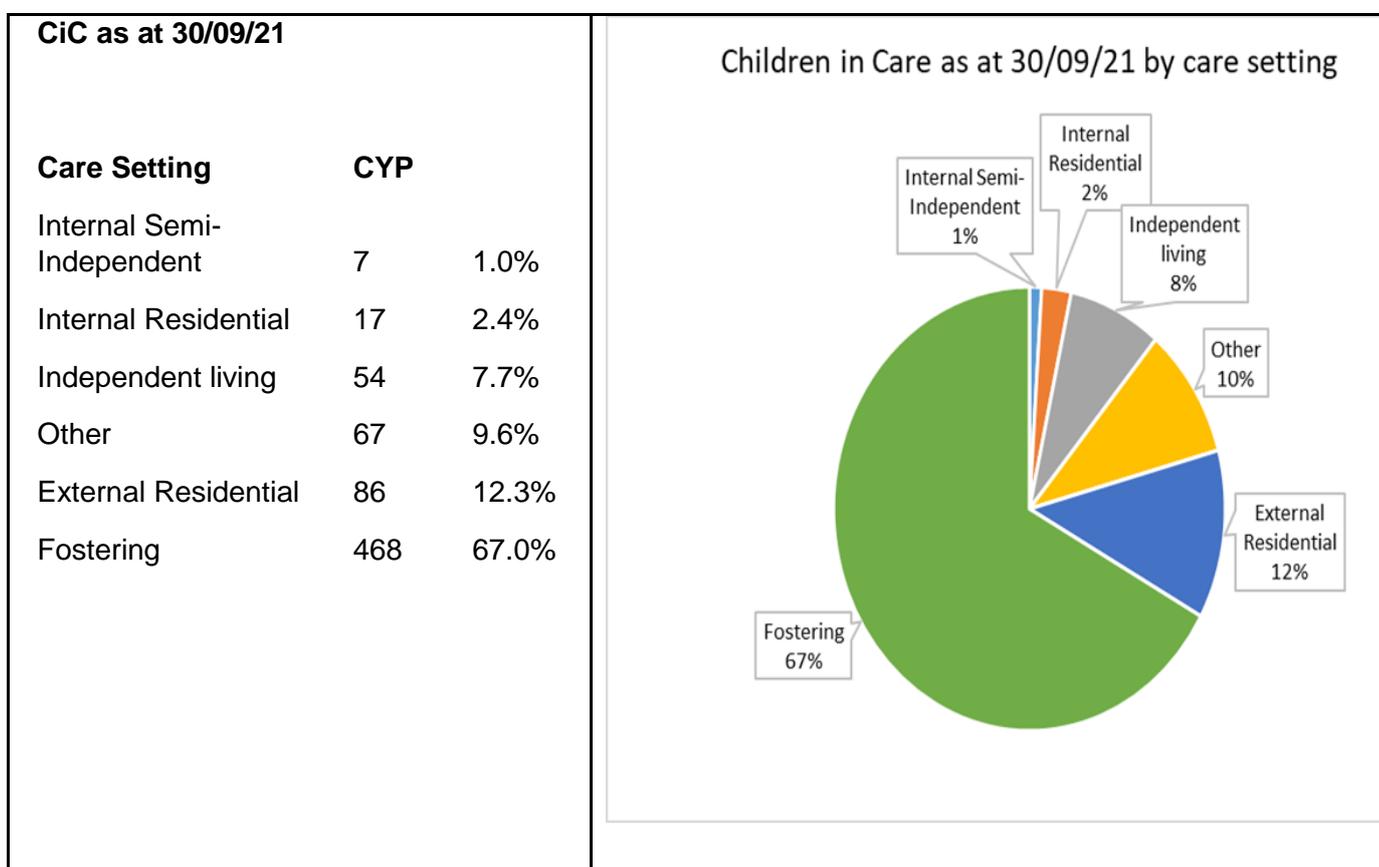
It is helpful to remind ourselves that the pandemic and a lack of placement choice can have a negative impact. A shortage of placement availability can limit choice in matching children to the most suitable placements. We have continued to offer support to foster carers both virtually and face to face to support stability. Movements for children in care are picked up by the Independent Reviewing Officer during statutory reviews.

% Children in Care who have lived in the same placement for at least 2 years-Our target is 70% and our performance has risen from 66.4 to 70.6% and is above 2020-21 outturn which was 69%. This further supports our view about the stability of placements. Some positive reasons for moves are:

- Children moving to adoptive placements contributes to this measure
- 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.

2.11 Type of placement-67% 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.

The ratio of fostered children homed with internal: external foster carers is at 53.8%:46.2%, a slight increase on the last quarter from 53%.



2.12 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 Q2 has risen from 27 to 28.8% which is a gradual month on month increase. 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 continue to track progress on this work.

2.14 Of the 468 in foster care at the end of September 2021:

- 79 – 17% had a plan to return home / adoption / SGO
- A further 63 – 13% have been in care for less than 6 months. LTF as their plan is inappropriate as they have not been in care for more than 12 months.

In regards to an adjusted LTF calculation-

- Remove the 142 as above from the 468 fostering cohort = 326
- Of the 326 cohort, 127 have Long Term Fostering recorded as their exit plan – **40%**

2.15 **Children in Care numbers-** The number of children in care has continued to remain high although this quarter has seen a drop from 710 to 700 which is also a drop in our rate per 10.000 from 102.5 to 101. 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.

2.16 We have 2 programmes; the STARS programme and a new Reunification team to support reunification back to parents and wider families with robust packages of support. Returns home when safe to do so, allows children to be cared for by their families.

2.17 **Discharges-**During Q2, 14 children have been adopted or discharged through Special Guardianship Orders and therefore are no longer children in care, this was at 12 in the last quarter and the YTD is 26. 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 services have escalated their concerns about court delays to the Local Family Justice Board and to CAF/CASS.

2.18 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. Foster carers are also supported to consider Special Guardianship. The total number of children discharged from care this quarter stands at 57 and the YTD is 114.

2.19 **Children in Care Reviews-**93.5% of Children in Care statutory reviews took place in timescale during Q2, 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.

2.20 Percentage of reviews where the child (excluding under 4's) participated in their review at Q2 is 93.2% which is a slight deterioration from last quarter but remains above target which is 90% and an improvement on outturn 2020-21 when it was 91.7%. The Strategic Lead for Quality Assurance and Safeguarding continues to drive on previously identified actions to improve the participation of young people in their reviews.

2.20 **Suitable accommodation/Sufficiency-**The Supported Lodgings scheme with Barnardos is now up and running with three host families approved and a further seven identified. Two young people have been matched and service is now working on identify more young people to be matched

2.21 NCC are working with the Government initiative "Place to Call Home" to recruit specific foster carers/ Hosts for Supported Lodgings for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children and young people also. One potential foster carer has been referred for assessment. We have one approved host and a further six being considered.

2.22 The block contract for a Residential Children's home is progressing well and one home is opening December 2021, and three homes have an indicative opening date of March 2022. A

new internal four bed Residential Children's home is progressing with an indicative opening date of February 2022. We have also been successful in getting Member and senior leadership support to make a bid to the DfE for match funding to develop a local residential children with complex mental health needs home, reducing the need for hospital or secure provision.

- 2.23 The block contract for Semi-Independent provision is also progressing well and on track to be open for April 2022 which will increase sufficiency for our older children to live locally.

Through closer working with Nottingham City Homes and our housing colleagues we have been able to move some care leavers onto their tenancies, freeing up in-house semi-independent provision.

Care Leavers

- 2.24 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) has risen to 92.3% this quarter and takes the YTD to 91.2%. Our target is 90% which is good. Those young people in custody cannot be considered to be in suitable accommodation according to the definition we work to.
- 2.25 The percentage of care leavers in employment, education or training (age 19-21years) had seen a drop to 57.5% last quarter but this has risen this quarter to 60.1%, 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.
- 2.26 **Fostering Service-** Recruitment activity of new foster carers is still continuing we have also had recently approved 2 carers who have transferred from IFA provision. We are in the process of securing funding for the 100 homes campaign who have over the last 3 years helped us approve over 20 new carers. We have information evenings arranged and led by the 100 homes volunteers who are committed in helping us to recruit more internal carers.
- 2.27 We continue to try to make best use of all our internal carers, many have placements and only a small number don't have children in place either because they are on hold due to health and family reasons or they are respite carers only.
- 2.28 There has been a lot of activity on cleaning up the data on duplicate carers and we continue to have weekly meetings with analysis and insight to address these issues. Supervising Social workers have had some training input on a one to one basis and this has worked well improving the data we hold. There continue to be challenges with the Business support team in prioritising completing checks in a timely manner.
- 2.29 Training for carers is still currently virtual for mandatory training apart from paediatric first aid training that needs to be completed face to face. There are still challenges with bringing training face to face in light of the current pandemic. The training programme has been put together for when face to face training can resume in the safest possible way.
- 2.30 **Residential-**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 has eased Ofsted have resumed Inspections, and we have continued to maintain virtually and physically our required Regulation 44 inspections on all of our Homes. Plans are progressing to increase the current provision to provide a further four bed home, which we hope to have open by Spring 2022.

3 Other options considered in making recommendations

3.1 None

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

4.1 None

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

5.1 None

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

6.1 None

7 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

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

An EIA is not required

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