

Corporate Parenting Board – 16 May 2022

Title of paper:	2021/2022 Q4 Performance - Children in Care and Leaving Care	
Director:	Alisa Barr – Children’s Integrated Services	Wards affected: All
Report authors and contact details:	Treza Mann Interim Service Manager, for Children in Care and the Leaving Care Service Mary-Anne Cosgrove Head of Children in Care (Regulated Services)	
Other colleagues who have provided input:	Jonathan Hurst - Analysis and Insight and Andy Shone Strategy & Improvement	

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):

- To update the Board of the Q4 2021/22 performance data for children in care and leaving care young people.
- For the Board to note progress in work with children in care and leaving care and to challenge where performance falls below our targets.

Recommendations:

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| 1 | To note and challenge the performance data regarding performance relating to the authority’s work with children in care and leaving care. |
| 2 | To note that Social Care will continue to monitor performance regarding dental checks to ensure improvement and to address any barriers. |
| 3 | To note that the Head of Service will 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. |

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 100%

Performance has dropped from 82% in March 21 to 71% in March 22, 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. Although there should be increase in the next quarter due to all restrictions being lifted.
- 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 performance -Target 90%

78.2% of CIC had an up to date Health Assessment compared to 87.3% in March 2021 which is significantly below target. 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%

68.0% of CIC had an up to date Dental Check compared to 49.0% in March 2021, an improvement of 19ppts; however, this is still a long way from the 90.0% target. 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 6 months- 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 drop from 90.0% in March 2021 to 79.0% in March 2022 of children eligible for a Pathway Plan having had a plan authorised in the last 6 months. 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 seen a drop from 92.0% in March 2021 to 82.2% in March 2022, the narrative for this is high levels of long-term sickness, staff moving on to other employment and vacancies within the team. Now that the staff team are on full form, the figure will increase as staff start to progress the Pathway Plans with Carer Leavers.

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 has been used by all staff now, and feedback from the staff has been positive, as the new Pathway Plan is very focused on the young person and their needs.

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 performance for the Spring 2022 term was 86%, this being a slight drop from August when it was reported as 88% (although this was 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

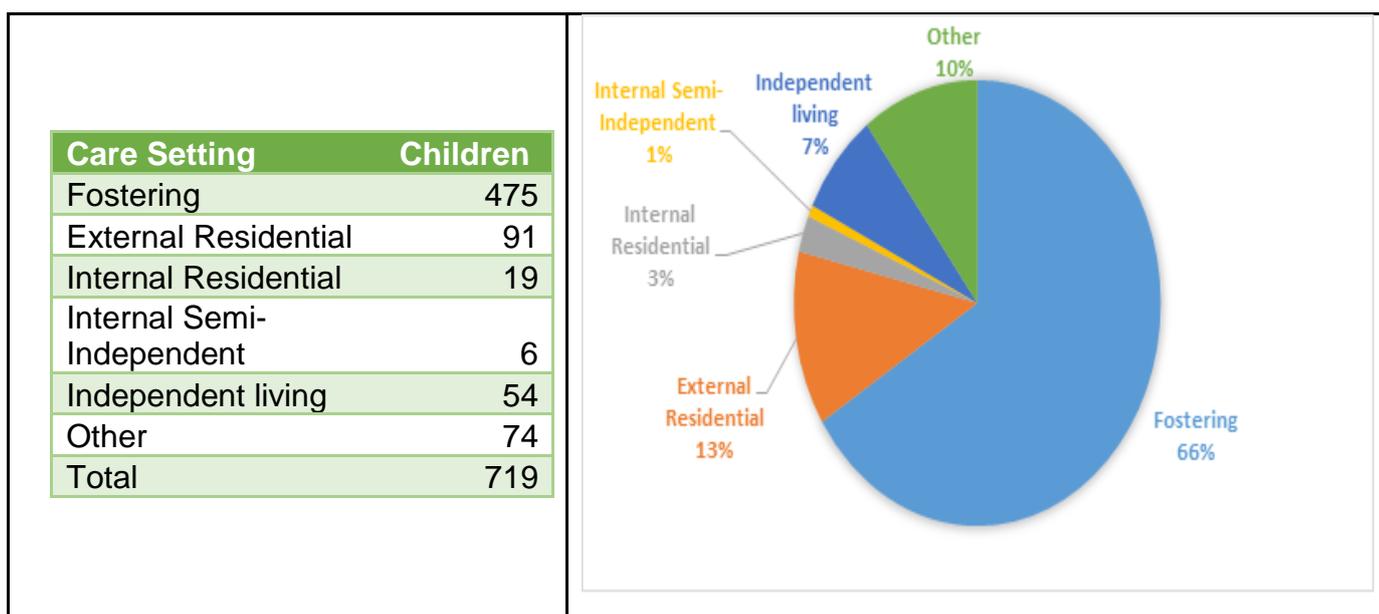
2.10 Placement Stability % of Children in Care who have had three or more placements in the previous 12 months reduced from 8.3% in March 2021 to 7.1% in March 2022, this is good because we know our Statistical neighbour group (SNG) against whom we bench

mark at outturn 2020-21 were at 8.5%. 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 has impacted nationally on the recruitment of carers and residential staff. An increase in the number of our children in care and increased competition for placements 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. The CAMHS for Children in Care as well as the Virtual school contribute to this. 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 63.9% in March 2021 to 71.6% in March 2022. 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- 66 % 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.

256 children are placed with in-house carers , an increase of 4 children. 219 children are placed with IFA carers , an increase of 3 children. The ratio of fostered children with internal: external foster carers is at 53.8%:46.2%, a slight increase on the last quarter from 53%.



2.12 **Fostered children who 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 Q4 has dropped from 28.8% to 27.1% and we have hovered around this percentage for some time. A 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 Children in care Plan of 31/12/2021 (Monthly report)

There is a total of 475 children in foster care. Their long term plans are:

Care Plan	Number
Adoption	39
SGO/CAO	26
Return to birth family	9
In care less than 6 months	61
Long Term Fostering	340

Adjusted cohort where long term fostering is the plan is 340 children, 125 (36.8%) of these are long term matched

2.15 Children in Care numbers – There were 720 (103 per 10,000) children in care as of 31 March 2022 compared to 684 (99 per 10,000) in March 2021 – an increase of 5.3%. 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 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- For the year ending March 2022, 55 children have been adopted or discharged through Special Guardianship Orders or Adoption Orders and; therefore, are no longer children in care – the number for the year ending March 2021 was 52. 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 59 and the YTD is 196.

- 2.19 Children in Care Reviews- 92.6% of Children in Care statutory reviews took place in timescale in 2021/22 with the target is 97% - the outturn for 2020/21 was 95.0%. This target was previously at 95% and was raised to be more aspirational and the service are determined to continue this improvement.
- 2.20 In 2021/22, 94.1% of children in care (excluding under 4's) participated in their reviews – compared 91.7% in 2020.21 – the target being 95.0%. 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.
- 2.21 **Sufficiency /Suitable Accommodation/-**The Supported Lodgings scheme with Barnardos is now up and running and two project workers at 30 hours per week started in February joining the project lead. This will increase the capacity to recruit, assess and support hosts. We have agreed to stretch the target from 10 Host families to a potential 20 Hosts by April 2022. Seven hosts have been approved at panel with the ADM ratifying the recommendation. Four hosts are specifically for UASC. Three young people are now living in Supported Lodgings placements. Barnardos are currently working through an additional three assessments, with two due at panel on 9th March. There are also a further four individuals/couples through Place to Call Home.
- 2.22 The block contract for a four Residential Children's home to care for ten children is progressing but there have been some delays due to recruitment challenges and there is now an indicative opening date of May 2022.
- 2.23 The regional bid to the DfE for match funding to develop a residential offer for children with complex mental health needs was not successful. Despite this D2N2 with our CCG partners are running market engagement events to see how we can provide this much needed provision
- 2.24 The block contract for Semi-Independent provision is progressing well and on track to be open for May 2022. It will support ten children locally with a high-quality provider.

Care Leavers

- 2.25 Suitability of Accommodation and Employment, Education and Training (EET) status are key issues in the lives of care leavers. For the year ending March 22, 64.4% of care leavers were in suitable accommodation (age 19-21yrs) compared to 63.2% in 2020/21 – both years exceeding the 60.0% target. Those young people in custody cannot be considered to be in suitable accommodation according to the definition we work to.
- 2.26 The percentage of care leavers in Employment, Education or Training (age 19-21years) has risen from 63.2% as at March 2021 to 64.4% in March 2022 with both years exceeding the 90.0% target. We have implemented an Aspirations Champion Scheme to continue to support children and young people with their aspirations as well as scoping out with Barnardos 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

- 2.27 By the end of March we will have 20 new in-house foster carers resulting from 169 enquiries. This is a conversion rate of 12 %, 10 % is seen as good conversion rate both by IFAs and local authorities. The diagnostics undertaken to inform the transformation work identified a correlation between the loss of the marketing budget and the part time marketing officer and the reduction in recruitment. The recommendations included investment in this area and in website/social media development and support
- 2.28 We continue to try to utilise our internal carers and unlike many local authorities more children are placed with in-house rather than IFA carers. The majority have children placements and only a small number often because of matching, health and family reasons or because they are respite carers only.
- 2.29 We continue to have weekly meetings with Analysis and Insight to produce a robust tracking system and register. 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.
- 2.30 Training for carers is still currently virtual for mandatory training apart from paediatric first aid training that needs to be completed face to face. We are about to hold our first to face to face training but will also provide some virtual training for carers who prefer it.
- 2.31 To contribute to cost reductions from April the ADM will be taken in-house. This will also have the benefit of a closer connection between the leadership team and the fostering service
- 2.32 **Residential** - Ofsted have resumed Inspections and one Children's Residential Home is now rate requires improvement and there is an action plan in place to address the areas of development. The others remain rated by Ofsted as Good or Outstanding. We have continued to maintain our required Regulation 44 inspections. Plans to open a further four bed home are progressing more slowly than expected due to the impact of the pandemic on availability and increasing costs of building materials.

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 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