



Corporate Parenting Board

Date: Monday, 9 December 2019
Time: 3.00 pm
Venue: Committee Room 1, County Hall, Dorchester,
DT1 1XJ

Membership: (Quorum 3)

Toni Coombs (Chairman), Richard Biggs (Vice-Chairman), Ryan Holloway, Stella Jones, Andrew Kerby, Cathy Lugg and Andrew Parry

Chief Executive: Matt Prosser, South Walks House, South Walks Road,
Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1UZ (Sat Nav DT1 1EE)

For more information about this agenda please contact Liz Eaton, Democratic Services Officer Tel: 01305 225113 - Liz.Eaton@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk



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AGENDA

Page No.

1 APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

2 MINUTES

5 - 16

To confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2019.

3 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

To receive any Declarations of Interest.

4 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

To receive any questions or statements on the business of the Board from Town and Parish Councils and members of the public.

5 URGENT ITEMS

To consider any items of business which the Chairman has had prior notification and considers to be urgent pursuant to section 100B (4) b) of the Local Government Act 1972. The reason for the urgency shall be recorded in the minutes.

6 FOSTERING AND PERMANENCE PANEL ANNUAL REPORT - 3.15 PM

17 - 22

To receive the Fostering and Permanence Panel Annual Report.

7 ANNUAL FOSTERING SERVICE REPORT - 3.30 PM

23 - 38

To consider the report by the Executive Director of People – Children.

8 COMMISSIONING ARRANGEMENTS FOR INDEPENDENT FOSTERING AGENCY PLACEMENTS - 3.40 PM

39 - 42

To consider the report by the Executive Director of People – Children.

9 CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT - 3.50 PM

43 - 52

To consider the report by the Executive Director of People – Children.

10 SERVICE UPDATE AND PERFORMANCE DATA - OFSTED INSPECTION/JTAI AND QA - 4.00 PM

To receive an oral update from officers.

11 CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW - 4.10 PM 53 - 66

To consider the report by the Executive Director of People – Children.

12 CARE LEAVERS ANNUAL REPORT - 4.20 PM 67 - 72

To consider a report by the Executive Director of People – Children.

13 CHILD EXPLOITATION AND MISSING CHILDREN - 4.30 PM 73 - 82

To consider the report by the Executive Director of People – Children.

14 EXEMPT

To consider passing the following resolution:

To agree that in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the public from the meeting in relation to the business specified in items 15 and 16 because it is likely that if members of the public were present, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs detailed below of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act and the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information to the public.

15 UNREGISTERED PLACEMENTS UPDATE REPORT - 4.40 PM 83 - 88

To consider the report by the Executive Director of People – Children.

16 CLICC UPDATE AND CHALLENGE CARDS - 4.50 PM 89 - 100

To receive an update from CLiCC and make comment on the Challenge Cards.

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DORSET COUNCIL - CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2019

Present: Cllrs Toni Coombs (Chairman), Ryan Holloway, Stella Jones, Cathy Lugg and Andrew Parry

Apologies: Cllrs Richard Biggs and Andrew Kerby

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):

David Alderson (Senior Advisor, Schools and Learning Service), Mark Blackman (Corporate Director - Education and Learning), Tony Bygrave (Senior Assurance Officer - Complaints), Emily Clark (Virtual School SENDCo), Antonia Dixey (CEO Participation People), Penny Earney (Designated Nurse for LAC), Karen Elliott (Designated Safeguarding Manager), Marc Eyre (Service Manager for Assurance), Ann Haigh (Participation Worker, Participation People), Madeleine Hall (Corporate Parenting Officer), Jan Hill (Foster Carer), Martin Hill (Foster Carer), Elaine Okopski (Dorset Parent Carer Council), Sarah Parker (Executive Director of People - Children), Kevin Stenlake (IRO Manager for Looked After Children), Mary Taylor (Acting Assistant Director for Care and Protection) and Liz Eaton (Democratic Services Officer)

36. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 September were confirmed and signed.

37. Matters Arising

Minute 30 MASH Update

The Executive Director of People – Children explained the MASH service still existed and was located at Poole Police Station. The new ‘front door’ arrangement was located at Westport House in Wareham.

Councillor Stella Jones mentioned she would like to visit Westport House and the Chairman confirmed she would be visiting on the 22 November 2019. It was agreed they would visit Westport House together.

Resolved

That the Chairman and Councillor Jones would visit Westport House on the 22 November 2019.

38. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest were made at the meeting.

39. Public Participation

There were no public questions or statements received at the meeting.

40. Urgent Items

There were no urgent items of business.

The Chairman informed the Board that agenda item 9 would be considered as item 15 just before the exempt items and item 11 would be deferred until the next meeting of the Board on the 9 December 2019.

41. Quality Assurance and Audit Update Report

The Corporate Parenting Board considered a report by the Executive Director of People – Children on Quality Assurance and Audit.

Officers explained that the Audit compliance had dropped significantly in September to 59% whereas in July it had reached 89%. Because the audit cycle ended at the end of October and Ofsted have given notification of their visit, there was a decline of client audits during that month.

The Chairman asked of the audits that were ready to go whether they would be completed, or would they be audited again. Officers explained the cohort of children would be all those that would have been audited as officers wanted to check children's records to ensure that auditing was of a good quality.

The Executive Director of People – Children informed the Board that a new audit process called "Moderation" had been designed which Ofsted picked up.

One member observed that on occasions officers went to see siblings and asked whether all children in the family were being shown in the audit. Officers confirmed that they could now accurately report on where children had been more clearly now.

Noted

42. IRO Annual Report

The Corporate Parenting Board considered a report by the Executive Director of People – Children on the IRO Annual Report 2018/19.

Officers informed the Board the report was slightly out of date as it had been prepared in July 2019. The data related to the last financial year but focussed on changes going forward.

At present there were 462 Looked After Children, IRO's regularly checked on the children to ensure they were the right children to be placed in care. It was hoped the Blue Print for Change would impact on the number of Looked After Children. 96% of children had up to date care plans and the visits by social workers was now at 86% which was an improvement, the target was mid-90%. Part of the IRO's responsibility was to look at the quality of plans

particularly for a child that had several plans missing but currently there were 37% that were good and 2.97% were outstanding. During the last 6/7 months there had been measurable improvements. Blue Print for Change would influence the IRO Service it was hoped the LAC reviews would be more child centred with the child and foster carers in attendance a discussion was had about teachers attending and whether it was necessary. A personal letter was now written to each child rather than a report. Permanency had improved in Dorset ensuring children were placed in long-term placements or adoption. Officers were looking at providing midway reviews in addition and prior to the 6 monthly review to ensure actions had taken place and officers were aware of what progress had been made regarding the children.

One member felt it was a good idea to send letters but asked whether they were written letters or in the form of an email and whether these could be sent by both email and letter. Officers confirmed they wrote letters to the children as some children were not always very good at managing their email, so a letter was written within a form and was in paper format. It was confirmed they could be sent both ways.

One member thought that by reducing the number of professionals that attended meetings officers should check with the child to ascertain whether they wanted a teacher to be present. Officers confirmed the child could choose an advocate, eg someone from Action for Children and a teacher could attend as well.

The Chairman informed the Board that schools rated Ofsted Outstanding were not required to have inspections and over time standards could slip and asked what checks were in place to ensure a child was still receiving a report.

Officers confirmed the child would still have a social work report but would not have a meeting in the foster placement unless one was required. If information showed things were going off course, then a meeting would be arranged.

One member asked about the large rise in the number of children coming into care and asked whether this was voluntary and why it was happening.

Officers explained it was a complicated situation you had to think about why the child/children needed to come into care. Social Workers would recommend a child needed to be removed for their own safety. Parents were also asking Dorset Council to look after their 13/14 year olds. This was not only happening in Dorset, nationally the number of LAC had increased. County lines and sexual exploitation came into play with children being on the edge of care. Youth centres have closed, and there is nowhere for young people to go. Multi-agency working was crucial to keep children in school and looking at the services for children at home to ensure early help was available to enable them to stay at home.

One member asked if a child was looked after by the extended family would the Authority pay them. Officers confirmed they would be treated the same as foster parents.

The Chairman was pleased to see that very few of the number of complaints and escalations mentioned in the report had not risen to level 3 or 4 and asked if there was anything the Board could do to help.

Officers felt this was very challenging as it was not acceptable to have children in unregistered accommodation and hoped inhouse residential care would help to reduce the complaints. It was reassuring that the majority were resolved at the lowest level, complaints received at a higher level had very complex issues and were resolved as soon as possible.

The Chairman asked Board members if this was something Corporate Parents would want to know about. Members responded they would not want to know immediately but if something could not be resolved they would, or if it was a matter of policy they would want to know.

The Chairman asked Board members as this was an annual report would it be helpful to have a progress report later in the year. Officers thought a progress report back to the Board in 6 months' time would be of benefit.

The Chairman of Dorset Parent Carer Council asked how confident officers were that information was getting to the small number of children that had a disability as it was important their views were heard and considered. Officers informed the Board they were dependent upon parents and carers to ensure information was received by the children in the best possible way.

The Chairman drew attention to Section 11 of the report relating to entitlements for care leavers and asked whether the new council tax exemption information would be included. Officers confirmed that would be included in the next report to the Board.

Resolved

1. That unresolved level 4 escalations should be notified to the Chairman.
2. That the Corporate Parenting Board receive an update report in 6 months' time to the meeting on the 9 June 2020.

43. Aspire Adoption Agency Annual Report

The Corporate Parenting Board received the Aspire Adoption Agency Annual Report 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019.

The Service Manager informed the Board the Annual Report was from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019 and covered the 3 previous councils, the six monthly Performance Update only covered Dorset Council.

The Chairman complimented the service given the comments on pages 66/67 of the report relating to the Ofsted inspections.

The Service Manager confirmed they had brought 3 separate services together and their underlying policies and were the second Regional Adoption Agency to go live. Aspire were very much under the spotlight and part of a

longitudinal government assessment were keen to know what was working. The Agency were one of 7 case studies, and Ofsted were positive about the way they were performing last year.

The Chairman asked how things were settling with the 2 new Councils and whether the Service Manager saw any threat to being a Regional Adoption Agency as she had heard rumours that BCP were looking to the east, what would be the outcome. The Service Manager confirmed they were finding their way, Dorset was in the middle of a restructure and she knew they would be working with different teams. With regard to rumours about BCP Aspire would be in trouble as they only looked after 2 authorities it would be a threat and they would not be viable if they looked after only one local authority, she had not heard anything as yet and reminded the Board Aspire had entered into a 3 year agreement. She felt it would be a shame if arrangements were changed as at present everything was under one roof and had kept a local concept. Aspire had recently taken on responsibility to provide special guardianship case responsibility for BCP.

One member asked how Aspire were working to ensure foster families were diverse and all inclusive. The Service Manager confirmed she had information she would send. In terms of ethnicity that reflected the population, there were a lot of same sex relationships, disability assessing, single people. It was very similar to the national picture. She mentioned it was difficult to recruit in the west of the county. Aspire worked in partnership with voluntary adoption agencies and with Families for Children the adoption charity in Devon.

The Chairman thought an article ought to be placed in the next Dorset Council newsletter.

One member asked how many children were adopted on an annual basis. The Service Manager confirmed there were approximately 60 children adopted.

The Executive Director of People – Children mentioned she had seen a film about an adopted mother and her experiences and thought if the Board saw the film they would understand the barriers for adopted people. It related to a local parent in Dorset. The Chairman considered it would be a very good idea to show as a one off as part of member training.

Resolved

1. That the Aspire Adoption Service Manager provide the Board with the information relating to agency's inclusiveness.
2. That the Chairman arrange for an article to be placed in the next Dorset Council newsletter relating to Aspire.
3. That the Corporate Parenting Officer arrange the viewing of the film relating to an adopted mother as part of members training.

44. Annual Complaints Update - People Children

The Corporate Parenting Board considered the Annual Complaints Update – People Children.

Officers explained that quarter 2 of this year was a positive one and explained the complaints for both Children’s Services – Social Care and Non-Social Care were split into quarters in the report. Individual’s felt they were being listened to and for stage 2 the costs were in the region of £8,000, a stage 3 complaint would be determined by a panel of people. In 2018/19 the timescales for dealing with a complaint for quarters one and two were quite high but quarters three and four were much lower. It was noted there was a 20 working day deadline for complaints to be dealt with. Officers explained that Children’s Services – Non-Social Care were in relation to Dorset Council’s own complaints process. Any complaints that were received by the Local Government Ombudsman would not be closed until all actions had been completed.

Officers explained a generic compliments email address would be set up for the Complaints Team as quite a few compliments had been received.

The Executive Director of People – Children mentioned they were looking at auditing complaints and feeding that information into the audit process.

The Chairman asked how the Authority would know that the new systems for reporting complaints would still be embedded in two or three years’ time. Officers explained they were a new team and were changing the way they communicated with the Directorates and allocated complaints and challenged any views that they felt were not completely independent.

One member asked whether the timescales were negotiable. Officers confirmed the 20 working days was a statutory requirement which should not be extended. It was very rare that an extension of time was asked for and if necessary, all such requests would be subject to the Executive Director’s decision.

One member asked whether the Complaints Team worked with the Family Partnership Zones. Officers confirmed they did, and it was very productive.

One member asked if there was a worry that a complainant might be browbeaten into not proceeding with a complaint if they were having an informal meeting. Officers agreed that could be the case but hoped they would enter into the formal complaints procedure.

The Dorset Parent Carer representative mentioned it took a lot of energy to complain and a lot less to compliment someone and asked how officers gathered all the information about compliments. Officers explained any compliments were received through the post not via the online compliments form. The Chairman considered that as members they ought to forward any compliments received to the officers concerned.

The Chairman thanked officers for their report.

Noted

45. **Fostering Service Annual Report - Deferred until the 9 December 2019 meeting.**

46. **Unregulated Placements Update**

The Corporate Parenting Board considered a report by the Executive Director of People – Children on Unregistered Placements Update

The Executive Director of People – Children informed the Board there had been some changes since the report was circulated. Child A remains in an unregistered placement out of county property which the Directorate were working with the provider to take over responsibility for the placement and commence the registration process to come within Dorset Council responsibility. Both the young people in B and C were in Dorset Council properties, the properties would be registered in time for the change review, Ofsted would fast track this when it arrived with them. Child D was now placed in an appropriate setting, however since the report had been written another child had been placed in an unregulated placement out of county. Officers were working hard to have that child placed in a registered setting. The Executive Director of People - Children reassured the Board that officers searched for placements daily. Child B was living with staff and would stay with the Authority until their 18th birthday and likewise child A. Regarding child C there were promising signs that officers may have found a placement for that child. There were sufficiency issues as these young people had needs that required carers with specific skills to be able to support them and the forms that were sent to providers had been redrafted to reflect this. Officers had been talking with the young people about their next placement what they would like that to have and would like to see.

One member asked if a child had a list of things they would like and officers found a placement that did not have all the requirements would that child still be put in the placement. The Executive Director of People - Children emphasised it was important to listen to the young person and to explain to them that they might not find somewhere with everything they wanted. It was important to find somewhere where they would be more settled.

One member referred to Child D's assessment the report mentioned that was being carried out, was that still the case. The Executive Director of People – Children confirmed that child D was no longer in an unregistered setting.

The Dorset Parent Carer representative asked whether Child B had an EHCP because if they had they would not have been a surprise to the service and how did they end up in unregulated property. The Executive Director of People – Children explained the situation regarding Child B.

The Chairman asked whether child D had been reported in the press. The Executive Director of People – Children informed the Board of the circumstances relating to child D.

Noted

47. Verbal Update on Urgent Review to ensure EHCP's are delivered

Officers gave a verbal update to the Board on the number of EHCP's being delivered. There were 355 LAC on the Virtual School register in 195 different schools and settings, the number on the SEND register was 189, 53% of LAC were out of county with 72 in county, 117 EHCP, 108 LAC, 44 of those were out of county with 33 at specialist schools the number in county was 64. Officers mentioned they looked at how far things were being delivered and checked with the case workers to ensure that through personal case plans the EHCP's were met. Reviews took place when required and may be more than once a year. Funding and extra support was made available for those young people with an EHCP who were out of county.

One member mentioned they had recently seen the conclusion of a whole streamlining of EHCP's. The Executive Director of People – Children explained that the department was currently undergoing a restructure and the SEND co-ordinators were being integrated into localities with colleagues and the family partnership zones. On top of which there were new processes to be used, for example, the new Dorset Graduated Offer and accepting that an EHCP was required and how families were stood down from EHCP's. Staff from schools, SENDCo, CCG, Dorset Health Care were involved, there would be a significant difference over the next 6 months. She was happy to update the Board in 6 months' time.

The Dorset Parent Carer representative mentioned the out of county young people and that could be any young person over the border, also that the youngest on the SEN register would be in Reception. This regularly featured as a question on the Virtual School Governing Body meetings to ensure we knew where young people were including Ofsted gradings for the schools they attend.

The Chairman asked officers in future when giving statistics could they give other information as well.

Resolved

That the Executive Director of People – Children update the Board on the restructure of SEND Co-ordinators at its meeting on 9 June 2020.

48. Verbal update on Measuring of "Any Other Reason 21"

Officers gave a verbal update on "Any Other Reason 21" which reflected the number of young people who were left out of care. It was explained that 15 young people had turned 18, 2 had a revocation of care order where the court had confirmed there should be no more intervention by the care authority and 4 had left home and stepped down from children in need.

Noted

49. **CCG Annual Report Including Emotional Health and Wellbeing**

The Corporate Parenting Board received the CCG Annual Report including Emotional Health and Wellbeing.

The LAC Designated Nurse proposed the Board looked at the overarching strategic summary and the looked after children nursing service where 2 emotional health practitioners were imbedded due to children informing the service there was a gap in provision. This had been identified by Ofsted and the CCG sought feedback from young people on the appointment of 2 posts. The new service was now embedded and young people were asked what they thought of the service. A film was shown where the young people commented that they were very happy with the additional practitioners. There was week to week contact and a high level of intense work had been put into emotional health. The young people in the film were positive and mentioned it was important to have a say. The Designated Nurse for LAC informed the Board that 3 of the young people in the film had been involved in the consultation in 2016.

Noted

50. **EXEMPT**

51. **Joint Health and Dorset Council Briefing Report**

The Corporate Parenting Board considered a joint report by the Designated Nurse for Looked After Children and the Executive Director of People – Children.

The Chairman referred to bullet points on page 196 and asked how the items were being checked off. The Designated Nurse for LAC confirmed there was a quarterly quality assurance check, Appendix F of the National Audit Tool was used and she self-checked to ensure the audit was completed. These would be clinical audits of the clinician.

One member mentioned that some of the timescales were missed as foster parents had said the appointments were inconvenient. Officers informed the Board that the Fostering Team were working with foster carers to ensure they were aware of the priority that must be placed on Initial Health Assessments (IHA's), this was also being followed-up with the independent fostering carers.

The Chairman asked if, for example, a foster carer had pre-booked a holiday surely that information should be known when the child was placed. Officers responded it was difficult if the foster carer just decided to take a holiday but if they had booked a holiday and could take the child with them that would be good, officers would try to change the appointment within the timescale.

One member asked how long the IHA's took and commented that the wait for the first assessment was taking too long. The Designated Nurse for LAC confirmed there had been ongoing performance issues around IHA's, but they

were now working jointly with Dorset Council to ensure the IHA's took place. If a young person was under 5, they had 2 statutory health assessments a year and over 5 they had one statutory health assessment.

The young person from CLiCC asked why there were the delays. The Chief Executive of Participation People relayed to the young person that IHA's were mandatory and that there might be delays and barriers to the young people preventing them from attending an IHA eg exams.

The Chairman asked whether there was confidence with the update report that the Authority and CCG were getting on top of this and asked for an update report in 3 months' time at the 11 February 2020 meeting. The Designated Nurse for LAC confirmed yes as there was now an action plan.

Resolved

That a Joint Health and Dorset Council Update Report be provided to the Board in 3 months' time at its meeting on 11 February 2020.

52. CLiCC - Review of Satisfaction Survey and Receive 4 Challenge Cards

The Chief Executive of Participation Children introduced the young person from CLiCC who attended the meeting. She explained there were 2 Satisfaction Surveys one for age 2-11 year olds and another for 11-18 year olds the same questions were used every year and were aiming for 100 responses this year. They would report back on the survey to the meeting of the Board in February 2020.

The Board considered the 4 Challenge Cards:

Challenge One – “Young people struggle to understand job titles. How can you make every professional's job title, youth friendly?”

Response - Officers confirmed that the job title did not always tell people what they did and hoped the postcards that had been completed were useful. The Board and officers mentioned their job title and what they did. The Chief Executive of Participation People gave an example of a title that the young people did not know what they were, eg Operations Manager. Officers agreed and explained that a Corporate Director in Dorset would be a different role to that of a Corporate Director in BCP. It was agreed that officers would let CLiCC have a list of their job titles and ask the young people to let them know what they think the job should be called. If the young people let officers know what titles they were looking at they would go and see them and let them know what they did. The Chairman felt this was something for the CLiCC Workshops

The Independent Visitor colleague from DAIVS explained it was hard to talk about their role and were looking to change the name.

The Chairman asked the young person if they were happy with the response – which they were.

Challenge Two – “Children and young people in care have told us that sometimes they need to speak to Social Workers privately, but it can be awkward to ask for this in front of Foster Carers.” “We would like to be given the opportunity to meet and speak privately without being afraid of offending Foster Carers. How can you help us?”

Response - Officers explained social workers should always see a child or young person alone and they would be reminded of that unless the child or young person did not raise that as a challenge. Officers confirmed they would ensure that happened.

The Chairman mentioned that not wanting to offend foster carers should not worry young people and asked whether there was a briefing that could be given to foster carers. Officers confirmed that foster carers should not be offended as this was not about them or about the request.

The Chief Executive of Participation People thought it might be an idea to complete another postcard about “Your rights when seeking your social worker”. Officers confirmed the responsibility was the social workers’ for seeing children and young people on their own.

Challenge 3 – “Children in foster placements want to be treated as part of the family. It is hurtful to go to respite care when the rest of the family have their holiday. Children in foster care want to be part of family holidays. How can you help us?”

Response - Officers thought this was a tricky question as sometimes foster carers needed a short break and the authority should ensure young people have something fun to do and have a little break. It was considered that all young people and children that the authority looked after should have a holiday and most of the time the authority would want young people to go on holiday with their foster family. There were occasions when perhaps the foster carer was unwell and could not always be there. Officers should talk to children and young people in advance to ensure they know what respite would be like and whether there was something different that could be arranged, eg staying with a relative or friend for a few nights. The young person asked whether there were any situations where foster carers had said yes to the child or young person going away with them. Officers mentioned that it could be the case that the children and young people did not have a passport and that was something that needed to be addressed. On occasion a family may have booked a holiday before the young person moved in with them. The Authority needed to do whatever they could to ensure that did not happen.

Challenge Four – “Care Leavers have told us that don’t feel they have been equipped with the skills to properly manage their money and to budget effectively. What is in place to help give young people these life skills? What else could be done?”

Response - Officers mentioned there had been discussion recently about how the Authority helped young people. Several of the banks and building

societies offered support and officers thought about approaching some of the them to see whether they would provide training for some of our young people. It was hoped to talk to the banks and see what they can provide and also speak with foster carers and ensure they do what would be expected of them in providing guidance to young people to enable them to budget and have life skills, and that over time they give young people clothing money and perhaps money to buy food etc.

The Corporate Director of Education and Learning thought this was important as leaving care was a major step and confirmed he would speak with the banks and inform CLiCC if anything could be provided for the young people.

The young person asked even if there was nothing in the system why could the schools not teach them.

The colleague from DAIVS confirmed they had run a scheme with CAP and would let officers have a named contact. The Chief Executive of Participation People gave some other examples of other life skills the young people ought to be aware of.

Officers confirmed the skills required were needed before the young people left care and it was up to foster carers, schools and residential providers to ensure they were equipped with these life skills as they were growing up. It was considered that pathway plans should provide some of the skills required and officers would need to look at the quality of the pathway plans.

The Foster Carer representative asked whether this could be included on the Foster Carers Forum agenda. Officers confirmed this could be included.

It was confirmed officers would have answers for the young people at the next meeting of the Board on 9 December 2019 and the item would be placed on the Foster Carers Forum agenda.

Resolved

1. That the responses to the challenges be actioned as set out in the minutes.
2. That life skills training be included on the Foster Carers Forum agenda.

Duration of meeting: 2.30 - 5.15 pm

Chairman

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Dorset Council Fostering and Permanence Panel

Overview Report – Panel Chair

April 2018 to March 2019

For the period of this report, Dorset's Fostering and Permanence Panel has continued to meet every other week on Tuesdays and Wednesdays to consider applications brought before them.

To ensure consistency across the panels, there is one Dorset Council Professional Panel Adviser and a Medical Adviser who, although does not attend Panel in person, provides a written report in each case. Legal advice where required is provided by the team of Dorset Council Solicitors.

Sadly, our Panel Adviser, Ann Craft, died in service in August 2018 following a short illness. Teresa Millard, one of Dorset Council's fostering social workers, was recruited to the Panel Adviser post and started in October 2018.

This report considers the period from 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019 in terms of statistics and content.

1. Panel Membership and Quoracy

I, Fran Thompson, have chaired Dorset Council's Fostering Panel since January 2008. I am independent of Dorset Council – a requirement of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 (as amended).

My background is as a lawyer with additional experience of chairing several Multi-Agency Group environments, as a Chairman in the Family Proceedings Court and other LA Adoption and Fostering Panels for 11 years previously. During the period of this report I have been the Independent Chair of the Joint Adoption Panel of Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Councils, and Bracknell Forest Council Fostering Panel, By The Bridge, a national Independent Fostering Agency, Southampton City Council Authority Adoption Panel and Isle of Wight Authority Adoption Panel, now both part of the RAA Adopt South.

The Fostering and Permanence Panel holds a central list of Panel members that each Panel could call upon to be quorate. As the Fostering Panel is a single panel, under Reg 24(1) quoracy consists of:

1. The person appointed to Chair the panel or one of the Vice-Chairs; and
2. A Social Worker with at least three years relevant post-qualifying experience; and
3. Three other members at least one of whom must be independent if the chair is not present.

Panel's central list of 11 members has remained stable in the last 12 months and it remains that up to 7 members are invited to every panel on a rota system. A core group attend the majority of panels and this allows for consistency, particularly when cases are returning to panel, sometimes more than once. Panel value the consistency of its membership and the good working relationship that has developed as a result. The importance of this stability was highlighted during Dorset Council's Modernising Fostering review in 2017.

The members of Dorset's Fostering and Permanence Panel bring a wealth of experience and knowledge from their backgrounds in health, education psychology, housing, mental health, education, law, social work, fostering and experience as looked after children.

Councillor Susan Jefferies retired from the Fostering and Permanence Panel in May 2019. We would like to thank her for commitment and excellent work on behalf of the Panel, Fostering Service, foster carers and children in care.

Panel are delighted that Councillor Cathy Lugg and Councillor David Taylor have now been appointed to the central list. Two further social workers have also been recently appointed which will bring the central list to 14 members.

All new panel members are required to attend and observe a panel as part of the induction process before joining the Central List.

All panel members have shown very high commitment to attending panels and it is obvious from their contributions that they put a great deal of time, thought and dedication into their roles on panel.

The Fostering Panel became paperless during 2018 and the transition has proved very successful. Savings to staff time and postage costs to the Authority is estimated to be in the region of £37,000. Panel members now receive their papers at least 7 working days in advance of Panel. Reading the papers supplied in preparation for discussion is a considerable undertaking as the papers may involve up to a full day of close reading for each panel. All members devote a great deal of time and personal commitment to the work of the panel and invariably come well prepared.

Getting the balance of Panel members right on any Panel is a constant process of review. Despite appointments to Panel in the previous period there is still an identified lack of members representing minority religious and ethnic backgrounds which will be a focus when further recruitment is undertaken. There remains a good gender balance and balance of experience and expertise however and panel is reflective of the demographics of its users.

The appraisal of all members takes place annually. All involved value this opportunity to consider Panel functioning outside the day to day work of panel. The appraisals, conducted by the Panel Chair and the Panel Adviser, reflect on the Panel member's contribution during the previous the year, and note any comments they have on improving processes as well as any training they wish to undertake in the coming year. These were completed between October 2018 and January 2019 with some still awaiting approval.

The Panel Chair is appraised by the Agency Decision Maker and this was completed in March 2019.

Panel Support.

As in previous years, Panel continues to be supported by two excellent Panel Administrators. They had been working for the Panel for many years and I cannot speak highly enough of their effort, efficiency, organisational skills and good humour throughout.

2. Panel Roles / Tasks.

Regulation 25 lists the functions of the Fostering Panel as:

1. To make a recommendation as to whether the applicant is suitable to be a foster carer and the terms of the approval.
2. To consider the first annual review for newly approved foster carers, as well as reviews following the managing allegations process, and where foster carers are seeking a change in the terms of their registration status.
3. To recommend whether or not a person remains suitable to be a foster parent, and whether the terms of their approval (if any) remain appropriate.

4. To give advice or make recommendations, on other matters or cases referred to it by the fostering service provider, including terminations of approval.
5. The fostering panel must also advise, where appropriate, on the procedures under which reviews in accordance with Reg. 28 are carried out by the fostering service provider, and periodically monitor their effectiveness.

In addition the National Minimum Standards 2011 requires that:

1. Panels provide a quality assurance feedback to the fostering service provider on the quality of reports being presented and the timeliness of assessments and decisions.

Following Dorset Council's Modernising Fostering review 2017, in 2018 the Fostering Panel took on the role of recommending matches for those children in care who need permanence by way of a long-term foster placement and recommends changes of approval for the matched foster carers to long-term. Panel appreciate the significant role they have within the matching process, and foster carers have been proactive in sharing their feelings and views surrounding their wishes to provide a long-term placement for the children in their care. Most importantly this provides assurance to children in the future that the consideration given to their permanence through fostering was akin to those achieving permanence through either Adoption or Special Guardianship. There are newly implemented certificates sent to the children confirming that they will be with their foster carers on a permanent basis; this is their 'forever' home.

In addition, since October 2018, three yearly reviews which coincide with when foster carers have their DBS' and medicals updated, have also been presented at panel.

All recommendations of the Panel are sent to the Agency Decision Maker (ADM), Tim Wells, who then either ratifies or rejects the recommendation. Applicants have the right of review through the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) or a return to Panel for the case to be re-heard.

Over the period of this report, the Fostering Panel heard a total of 167 cases. They recommended 21 mainstream foster carers and 19 connected persons for approval between April 2018 and March 2019. This represents a significant increase in mainstream foster carer approvals in this period.

There continues to be an increase in connected person assessments being started and presented at panel who have needed 8-week extensions due to difficulties in getting checks, references and medicals completed within the 16-week period. If the total of 24 weeks for assessment in these cases is not achieved, then the placement becomes unregulated. There was also an increase in applications before the Court for a Special Guardianship Order which were granted before the Connected Person fostering assessment was completed.

Overall the mainstream assessments were of a high standard and involved a range of people with different backgrounds. There remains a lack of prospective foster carers coming forward who are same sex couples and from diverse backgrounds.

The connected person assessments varied more in standard and were often complex and more challenging for Panel to reach a decision to recommend approval. In one case Panel did not make a positive recommendation and this was upheld by the ADM's decision. There have been no cases taken to the IRM.

There has been a steady increase in reviews following from the management of allegations procedures being presented to the Fostering Panel with 3 resulting in de-registration. Panel heard a total of 12 other de-registrations which included; 8 who retired, 3 who resigned for a variety of reasons, 1 due to not engaging with the service or taking placements over a long period of time.

The management of the Annual Household Review process has improved enormously in the period of this report, assisted by the appointment of two Reviewing Officers following the Modernising Fostering review in 2017.

3. Transparency and Openness

Applicants attending Panel

It continues to be the usually accepted practise that Applicants attend Panel for most of the time their case is heard. The main exception to this is the time during which Panel reaches its recommendation but also a short time at the end of each case when any third party confidential information is discussed. Although Applicants are often nervous at the prospect of coming to Panel, many of them find the experience much less daunting than they feared, and feel included in the process by the wider Fostering Team right from the start. Applicants always have a social worker with them, and some (often single applicants) chose to bring a friend or family member with them for support.

Observers

17 observers arranged to attend and observe panels during the period April 2018 to March 2019 including student social workers, members of staff on induction, members of Senior Management and prospective panel members. Observers are limited to two at any panel in order to minimise the impact on the applicants of a large room full of people. Panel welcomes observing at meetings, it is an excellent way to see how Panel works and helps to demystify the process, particularly for those who will, in the future, present cases to Panel for the first time.

Panel Feedback

Applicants attending panel are asked to complete and return an evaluation form - this information is fed back to the next Panel and helps to shape panel's direction moving forward. Honest feedback is encouraged and has had a significant effect on how Panels are run. A sample of feedback received during this period is as follows:

- We feel that Panel were very professional in their approach. Each panel member asked us questions and allowed ample time for discussion. We were given the opportunity to raise our own concerns and discuss them with the Panel. We very much appreciated this approach.
- I felt comfortable and put at ease to answer or clarify anything that the panel requested further information about. A smooth and positive experience this time.
- Having pictures and descriptions of the panel beforehand was really good. It was nice to be greeted by the Chair before and her explanation of the process was good. The way the panel was chaired and organised was good. All of the questions were very relevant and we felt able to ask questions and give full answers. Thank you!

4. Quality Assurance role.

Panel covers its Quality Assurance roles at a number of levels:

1. Individual Issues

A Quality Assurance questionnaire is used for completion by the Panel at the end of each case. Matters which relate to a specific case are picked up at the time and will be fed back to the Fostering and Assessment Teams by the Panel Adviser. This also provides the opportunity for recognition of particularly thorough and well prepared pieces of work.

2. Practice Issues

At every meeting, the Panel considers whether matters have emerged which may be affecting more than one carer / worker which need to be followed through. These issues are taken back by the

Panel Adviser to the relevant Team Manager and the Panel Adviser will feed back to Panel any outcomes.

3. Panel Chairs Meetings

An arrangement has been reinstated that throughout the year the Panel Chair meets on an approximately three monthly basis with the Panel Adviser, Operational Manager, Senior Managers, and the Agency Decision Maker. This is an invaluable opportunity to develop a strong working relationship in the light of the appointment of new key positions within the authority.

Summary

The year has seen us continue in our journey to modernise and embed good practice within the Fostering and Permanence Panel and that from within the Fostering Service. There has been indication from the Fostering Service that further work on modernising the Panel is planned during the 2019-2020 year, but have been assured that this will involve the panel members and Chair in consultation.

Fran Thompson

15 August 2019

Independent Panel Chair, Fostering and Permanence Panel

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Date of Meeting: 6 December 2019

Lead Member: Cllr Andrew Parry - Lead Member for Children, Education and Early Help

Lead Officer: Sarah Parker - Executive Director for People - Children

Executive Summary:

The committee are asked to consider the Annual Fostering Service report which sets out the activity and performance of the service including matters relating to the recruitment and retention of Foster Carers, Foster Carer training and the training and development of the teams. The report also contains a summary of the activity during Foster Care Fortnight, a national event celebrating foster care and raising awareness.

Equalities Impact Assessment:

Not applicable as the report is for information.

Budget:

Not applicable as the report is for information.

Risk Assessment:

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: HIGH/MEDIUM/LOW (Delete as appropriate)

Residual Risk HIGH/MEDIUM/LOW (Delete as appropriate)

Other Implications:

Report is for information

Recommendation:

The committee are asked to consider the content of the report and Foster Care Fortnight addendum.

Reason for Recommendation:

It is a regulatory requirement that an annual report for a local authority fostering services is presented to elected members. Fostering Standards and Regulations 2011 (England)

Appendices:

Foster Care Fortnight Addendum Report to the Main Report

Background Papers:

Fostering Standards and Regulations 2011 (England)

Officer Contact

Name: Tim Wells

Tel: 01305225738

Email: Tim.wells@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Fostering Service Annual Report April 2018-March 2019

1. Introduction

1.1 It has been another busy year for the Fostering Team, embedding the modernising fostering changes and continuing to improve our processes and procedures. The highlights include: development of an improved spreadsheet to capture our performance management data and enable us to complete the annual Ofsted dataset more quickly and easily; the team move from Monkton Park to County Hall; working with the MOSAIC team to ensure that we have the forms and workflows needed to enable the work of fostering; the introduction of aids to practice (crib) cards to our Fostering Social Workers; the introduction to our foster carers of the new skills based fees scheme and all-inclusive age-related allowances; improvement in our training and development offer to foster carers; revision of the annual review process; paperless panels; working with our recruitment company Whitehead Ross (WREC) on the marketing plan and delivering assessment-ready people to our Pre-Approval Team.

2. Fostering Service Infrastructure and Processes

2.1 Working with our Data Analysis Team, we built an extensive spreadsheet to capture the information needed for performance management and the dataset upload to Ofsted. We are planning to achieve the upload for 2018-2019 in record time as a result.

2.2 The Safeguarding and Standards (SaS) Team took on the role of undertaking the annual reviews on our foster carers to ensure independent scrutiny and quality assurance. Two interim Fostering IROs were appointed – one covering East and one covering West. We are continually improving the process of reviews, including on MOSAIC. We have introduced a three-yearly cycle of reviews being presented at the Fostering and Permanence Panel, to tie with foster carers renewing their DBS and medical checks. In the intervening years, the annual review is conducted by the Fostering Service and SaS, then signed off by the Agency Decision Maker as an internal process rather than being presented at panel, unless the review is for a change in approval or following a managing allegations process.

2.3 In July 2018 the Fostering Service moved from Monkton Park into County Hall. One of the positives is being co-located with the Placements Team to enable easier updates on our foster carers' availability, and aid matching of children to placements. Being closer to other Children's Services Teams, including the LAC Teams, enables improved working together.

2.4 In April 2018, Whitehead-Ross Education and Consulting (WREC) began their contract with Dorset Council, to recruit new foster carers. They have been working closely with DC's Communications Team and the Fostering Service throughout the year to deliver publicity and marketing activities and undertake initial enquiries. In the Autumn, their remit was extended to complete the initial assessment visits and provide our Pre-Approval Team with people who are ready to undertake the full assessment to become mainstream foster carers. WREC, together with the fostering service, have been contracted to deliver 70 new foster carers over a two-year period, from April 2018. Monthly review meetings are in place to monitor delivery to the contract.

- 2.5 The Fostering Panel became paperless during 2018. Savings to staff time and postage costs will be estimated to be in the region of £37,000. Further work on modernising the Fostering and Permanence Panel is planned to be undertaken during the 2019-2020 year.
3. Learning and Development for Fostering Social Workers and Managers
 - 3.1 All of our Team Managers and most of our social workers, completed the Reinvigorating Social Work (RSW) programme over the last year. This programme was aimed at empowering social workers and team managers to improve outcomes for children first time around. The programme consisted of some externally delivered training, action learning sessions and workshops delivered by Dorset Council staff. At the end of the course, social workers submitted portfolios containing reflective learning logs and examples of application of learning in current casework. The RSW programme has afforded the team opportunities to develop their social work practice and embrace current models of relationship building and strengths-based delivery.
 - 3.2 The Fostering Service has quarterly team training and development away half days for staff on a variety of topics associated with fostering. As well as attending the range of learning and development courses provided internally, members of the Fostering Service have gained qualifications at Bournemouth University in Risk Assessment and Decision-Making Practice and to become Practice Educators to support social work student placements in the Fostering Service. Staff have also attended external conferences and are linked to the South West Fostering Managers Forum (lead by Fostering Network), the South West Recruitment Forum and the South West Learning and Development Forum for Fostering. The knowledge gained at these events is disseminated across the fostering service.
4. Learning and Development Programme for Foster Carers
 - 4.1 We worked closely with L&OD to produce a training brochure for foster carers for April 2018-March 2019 (and one for April 2019-March 2020), with a wide variety of training programmes, some of which were specially commissioned, to suit all carers from those who are newly approved, to those who are more experienced. Our training courses are offered to all foster carers, mainstream and connected persons.
 - 4.2 Our preparatory course for prospective foster carers was revised during the year and is now known as Journey to Foster and includes a session delivered by Participation People.
5. Recruitment and Retention Strategy
 - 5.1 The recruitment side of the strategy is being delivered by an externally commissioned organisation, Whitehead Ross Education Consultancy (WREC). WREC liaises with the Communications and Fostering Services to implement the marketing plan which is continually updated. New banners, a stand, posters and fliers were printed featuring a range of images of children and adults. Activities over the last year included radio campaigns with Heart FM and Wessex FM. WREC maintained social media accounts and promoted fostering via talks to various community and professional groups, alongside general campaigns in public venues such as coffee shops, supermarkets, libraries etc. When the film 'Instant Family' was released, WREC took their stand to Weymouth Cineworld to engage the cinema goers and promote fostering. They also ran webinars (both live and recorded). Campaigns are tied into national and local events, times of year and themes e.g. Foster Care Fortnight, the seasons, 'empty nesters' in September, Christmas, famous people who were fostered etc. The themes are constantly refreshed so they feel new and not

'the same old message'. WREC also launched a 'Fostering 500' campaign – the idea being to recognise 500 companies and individuals who support and promote fostering. They are photographed being given a certificate and this is put on social media – both our social media and theirs - giving us an increased reach.

- 5.2 A Facebook page, local radio interviews and editorials in local newspapers (free), telling a personal story alongside video clips of foster carers, their children and looked after children works well in promoting fostering. Live face chats and having the recorded webinar which people can view at any time has also been successful. What has not worked so well is paid for advertising in newspapers, magazines, and on the radio. It is a lot of money for little return.
 - 5.3 Several measures were employed during last year to aid retention of our existing foster carers. The new fees and allowances scheme was introduced on 1st April 2018. This saw a move away from fees being based on the needs of the child to being based on the evidenced skills and experience of the foster carers. Fees are set at four levels, with clear criteria at each level, to enable a career progression for foster carers who wish to pursue this. Foster carers need to evidence at their annual review that they continue to meet the skills level they are paid at or that they meet a higher skills level. Our new training and development offer to foster supports the fees and allowances scheme. Stability meetings have been instituted and have taken place regularly throughout the year to support continuation of placements or to enable a planned move for a looked after child where this is needed.
 - 5.4 The format of support groups was changed to provide evening and day time support groups which, although geographically located across Dorset, are open to all foster carers across the county, rather than just those in that local area. The Awards Ceremony held at Bryanston on 6th October 2018 recognised foster carers with long service and those who had gone 'above and beyond' their role. We also gave awards to foster carers sons and daughters who had been particularly supportive of the foster children in their home and foster carers' children receive an annual £10.00 token during Sons and Daughters month every October. Feedback from the foster carers at our Foster Carer Forum on 13th March was very positive about the new fees and allowances scheme and the developments in the Fostering Service generally. Carers stated that they felt valued, clear about the expectations of them and part of a more professional service.
 - 5.5 Our annual Fostering Fair and Picnic planned for 29th July 2018 unfortunately had to be cancelled due to bad weather. This event is planned this year for 28th July 2019 and will include a climbing wall, swimming pool, rounders, bouncy castle, bungee run, arts and crafts, face painting, story-telling and, for the first time, a children's bake-off competition!
6. Staffing
 - 6.1 We were fully staffed, and our staff group remained stable throughout last year with one person retiring. Sadly, our panel adviser, Ann Craft, died in service in August 2018 following a short illness. Teresa Millard, one of our Fostering Social Workers, was recruited to the panel adviser post and started in October 2018. We successfully recruited to Teresa's vacant post within the Fostering Service.

7. Data April 2018 - March 2019

Number of Enquiries -243
Number of Initial Assessment Visits -140
Number of Application Packs Issued - 72
Number of Closures following Application Pack being issued – 48*
Number of Mainstream Foster Carers Approved - 21
Number of De-registered Mainstream Carers - 17**
Total Number of Mainstream Carers as at 31st March 2018 - 144
Number of Connected Persons Assessments Commenced - 49
Number of Connected Persons Assessments Closed - 24
Number of Connected Persons Approved - 19
Number of Approved Connected Persons Closed after Approval - 2
Total Number of Connected Persons Carers as at 31st March 2018 - 53

* Reasons for closures following application packs being issued:

12 No longer wish to pursue fostering
8 No response from applicant despite several attempts to contact
7 Applicant stated that it was not the right time for them
4 Having/trying for a baby
3 Personal reasons
3 Health reasons
3 Closed at Stage 1 due to concerns in references/DBS/application
2 Chose to foster for another service (1 chose Bournemouth as they live closer and 1 chose an IFA)
2 Currently foster for another service and decided not to transfer
1 Not enough availability to foster
1 No spare bedroom
1 Moved out of area
1 Decided to pursue adoption instead

** Reasons for de-registrations:

8 Retired from fostering (one carer continuing to offer Staying Put arrangements)
3 De-registered following management of allegations process
2 Foster to adopt foster carers and subsequently adopted the child(ren)
1 Resigned as she moved out of the area
1 Resigned due to being awarded an SGO for the child
1 Resigned due to family commitments and state they will reconsider when situation settled
1 De-registered due to long period of not taking placements or engaging with their social worker

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Data for April 2019 to 08.10.2019

Approvals

- 11 sets of MAINSTREAM Carers approved

- 9 sets of CONNECTED PERSONS Carers approved

De-registrations

- 11 sets of MAINSTREAM Carers have deregistered for a number of reasons –
 1. 2 have gone over to Staying Put
 2. 2 have deregistered because of an allegation
 3. 1 has deregistered as they have adopted another child so have no spare rooms (Cornwall/Hedges)
 4. The remaining 6 have deregistered for either personal reasons or retirement
- 10 sets of CONNECTED PERSONS Carers have deregistered because –
 1. 3 have transferred to BCP
 2. In 4 cases, the child has left their carer
 3. In 1 case, the child has turned 18, now Staying Put Carer
 4. In 1 case, an SGO was awarded
 5. In the final case, there was an allegation
- It's difficult to predict how many we'll have by March, but we currently have 19 Temporary approved Carers and 14 Mainstream Carers being assessed at the moment.

8. Summary

- 8.1 The year has seen us continue in our journey to modernise the Fostering Service. This has been achieved in a climate of changes in Children's Services, most notably within our senior management and leadership arrangements. We are working proactively to reach our target of increasing the number and range of in-house placements to offer to our Dorset looked after children, alongside continuing measures to aid retention of foster carers. The coming year offers the opportunity to consolidate the contractual arrangements and fully evaluate the effectiveness. We are looking to form a focus group of foster carers to work with us on developments to the Fostering Service and will continue with our close links to Participation People to obtain the views of our looked after children and young people.
- 8.2 Currently the demand for foster carers outstrips supply. Successful recruitment and retention within Dorset is being developed in conjunction with Whitehead Ross, who have been commissioned to recruit a diverse range of foster carers, utilising images, which are reflective of our current society, incorporating age and social trends to enable us to deliver an effective fostering service.

We have concern within the fostering service, that our Fostering population is largely made up of people over the age of 50, is losing experienced carers through retirement, this being not just a local issue, but nationally.

The lack of high-quality carers also means that as a service we are struggling to

support children and young people with complex needs, as well as older children and those with behavioural issues.

Foster Carers are volunteers who receive an allowance to cover their costs. This is augmented by a fee, based on training and level of experience. Foster Carers are paid, to reflect the skills and experience utilised to care for children and young people with complex needs. It is difficult for a foster carer to hold down another job, given the unpredictable nature of a placement, but income from fostering after expenses is modest, and uncertain. Placements can end suddenly, and it may be several weeks before another begins, during which no allowance is paid.

Record numbers of children are being taken into care but changes to the way we live, and work mean the fostering workforce is shrinking

A typical foster carer is in their mid-50s, and there is a distinct lack of younger families coming forward to take their place.

Why is this? I have no doubt that they are at least as generous and caring as previous generations. But demographics are conspiring against foster care, bringing change to the way we live and work.

Families are having children later, and those children remain in the family home for longer, dependent on their parents well into their 20s. Their parents are increasingly responsible for the care of their own mums and dads in old age. The period of years that might have been devoted to the care of foster children is getting squeezed.

Many women who would have fostered in the past now have careers. There are far fewer stay-at-home mothers than there used to be. Nowadays those women (and indeed most women at every level of the social scale) are juggling careers alongside their birth children, needing dual incomes.

Fostering for many women is now a far bigger commitment than having birth children, because women largely expect to return to work after having a child. With fostering, that's would prove extremely difficult. There are so many meetings, many children not in full time education. Most families simply cannot afford this.

Employment trends are unhelpful. The shift to self-employment and zero hour contracts creates financial instability at home, which is not conducive to foster care. Paradoxically, the "national living wage" is reframing the conversation about paid employment. It is a test of a carer's 24/7 commitment to vulnerable children when you know that there probably is a part-time job just around the corner that will make a meaningful contribution towards the household bills. Just as nurses and care assistants are rethinking their career options, so too are foster carers.

The cost of housing is another significant factor. Having a spare bedroom has become an unaffordable luxury for many. Those lucky enough to have one may need to rent it out to help pay the mortgage or rent. Few families can afford not to downsize once grown-up children eventually fly the nest.

Renting a home, as more families now do, is no reason not to foster. But it is more difficult without long-term security of tenure. Landlords can be picky with tenants, and unconventional families with an assortment of children don't tick the right boxes. In any case, families obliged to move every couple of years are less likely to set down roots in the local community, which are important for fostering.

Our homes are getting smaller. Typically, new builds are some 10 sq m smaller than those built at the turn of the century. Larger, older houses are being repurposed as flats. Given the housing shortage, all this makes good sense. But it doesn't help foster care.

Generally, the changes to the political economic landscape is having a major impact upon us to recruited and retain carers.

Rebecca Holmes
Operational Manager - Permanency

Please see attached Addendum report regarding Foster Care Fortnight 2019

Addendum to Annual Report re Foster Care Fortnight 2019

Foster Care Fortnight is The Fostering Network's annual campaign to raise the profile of fostering and to show how foster care transforms lives. It is the UK's biggest foster carer recruitment campaign. Foster Care Fortnight 2019 is taking place from 13th to 26th May. Please see Dorset's attached plan of activities for this year. The WREC Team have been joined in their activities by foster carers and members of the Fostering Team. On Tuesday 14th May the Fostering Service, alongside the Placements Team, held a day long pedal-athon and a cake and craft sale. We raised £250.00 for the Dorset Care Leavers charity. So far Foster Care Fortnight has generated 8 enquiries from people interested in learning more about fostering. Foster Care Fortnight is just one in a number of campaigns as part of our building relationships with members of the community to raise the profile of fostering and generate wider public interest. We would anticipate therefore that the impact on numbers of enquiries will more likely be seen following Foster Care Fortnight rather than during it.

Day	Fostering Network Focus	Local Location Event	Activity	Who
Monday 13 th May	A welcome to FCF from Fostering Network Chief Executive – highlighting why have a FCF campaign and what do we hope to achieve	<p>Blandford Job Fair at the Corn Exchange</p> <p>Sherborne Oliver’s Café – drop in session for enquirers and existing FCs</p> <p>Dorchester Keep 106 – Radio Interview</p>	Share on social Media	Jo/ Fiona
			Local welcome to FCF – overview of plans for week – Facebook live	Jo
			Check in on Facebook	Jo & Laura
			Information stand	
			Check in on Facebook	Catherine & Sarah
			Foster Friendly and placard photos	Jo
Share on Facebook	Jo			
Tuesday 14 th May	What is Fostering? – Basic information about the different types of fostering as		Share Fostering Network info	Jo/ Fiona

	well as the differences between fostering and adoption	<p>County Hall Pedal-a-thon</p> <p>Cake and Craft Sale</p> <p>Weymouth Coffee #1 - drop in session for enquirers and existing FCs</p>	<p>Facebook live – Q&A session</p> <p>Photos and support on Facebook</p> <p>Check in on Facebook</p> <p>Foster Friendly and placard photos</p>	<p>Jo</p> <p>Fostering and Placement Team</p> <p>Fostering Team</p> <p>Jo</p> <p>Jo</p>
Wednesday 15th May	Local Focus	<p>Interview with Sarah Parker – Director of Children’s Services & Foster Carer</p> <p>Dorset Council Preparation for Retirement</p>	<p>Share on Facebook</p> <p>Fostering Presentation</p> <p>Live webinar Info Sessions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2pm • 7pm 	<p>Fiona/Jo</p> <p>Jo</p> <p>Jo</p>
Thursday 16th May	The Process of applying and approval – timescales from first enquiry, types of questions prospective Foster Carers can expect, and the nature of support and assessment throughout the process		<p>Share Fostering Network info</p> <p>Share recording from live webinar</p> <p>Foster in Dorset Facebook Live – 1. Making an enquiry</p> <p>Check in on Facebook</p>	<p>Jo/ Fiona</p> <p>Jo</p> <p>Jo & Catherine</p>

		Verwood The Hollow - drop in session for enquirers and existing FCs	Foster Friendly and placard photos	Jo Jo
Friday 17th May	Local Focus	Interview with Bridport based Foster Carer Bridport Chocolate Café - drop in session for enquirers and existing FCs	Share on Facebook Check in on Facebook Foster Friendly and placard photos	Jo/ Fiona Catherine Catherine
Saturday 18th/ Sunday 19th May	Why foster – over the weekend we will be putting out success stories or positive quotes on social media from Foster Carers and young people		Share Fostering Network info	Jo

Week 2

Monday 20 th May	Local focus	<p>Interview with North Dorset based carer</p> <p><u>Shaftesbury</u> High Street Bakery and Café - drop in session for enquirers and existing FCs</p>	<p>Share on Facebook</p> <p>Live webinar Info Session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8pm <p>Check in on Facebook</p> <p>Foster Friendly and placard photos</p>	<p>Jo/ Fiona</p> <p>Jo</p> <p>Catherine</p> <p>Catherine</p>
Tuesday 21 st May	<p>Who needs fostering? We will highlight the need for more carers for children with SEN, sibling groups and teenagers across the UK. It's a great opportunity for services to discuss their specific requirements.</p>	<p><u>Wimborne</u> Cloisters - drop in session for enquirers and existing FCs</p>	<p>Share Fostering Network info</p> <p>Share Dorset specialist interviews/ videos</p> <p>Foster in Dorset Facebook Live – 2 Initial Call and Home Visit</p> <p>Check in on Facebook</p> <p>Foster Friendly and placard photos</p>	<p>Jo/ Fiona</p> <p>Fiona</p> <p>Jo & Catherine</p> <p>Jo</p>
Wednesday 22 nd May	Local Focus	<p>Latest Blog from Swanage FC Amanda</p> <p><u>Swanage</u> Love Cake - drop in session for enquirers and existing FCs</p>	<p>Share on Facebook</p> <p>Check in on Facebook</p>	<p>Jo/ Fiona</p> <p>Jo</p>

			Foster Friendly and placard photos	Jo
Thursday 23rd May	What to expect once approved – we will talk about the practicalities of having your first placement	Bovington The Hive - drop in session for enquirers and existing FCs	Share Fostering Network info Interview with newly approved carer Check in on Facebook Foster Friendly and placard photos	Jo/ Fiona Jo Jo Jo
Friday 24th May	Thank you to Foster Carers – although the campaign has a strong recruitment element it is obviously vital that the existing workforce of Foster Carers feels valued, so we'll be sharing pictures of thank you events and writing a thank you message.		Share Fostering Network info Foster in Dorset Facebook Live – 3. Application & Beyond Dorset 'Thank you' from CE and Director?	Jo/ Fiona Jo & Catherine Fiona
Saturday 25th/ Sunday 26th	Can I foster if – we will be sharing our <i>Can I foster if</i> short films on social media		Share Fostering Network info	Jo/ Fiona

PLUS – HALF TERM WEEK – after Foster Care Fortnight

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24hr Sponsored Danceathon

Where: County Hall Dorchester

When: Wednesday 29th May from 09:30 through to Thursday 30th May at 09:30 (half term)

Why: To promote fostering in Dorset. To raise the profile of care leavers.
To raise money for 'Friends of Dorset Care Leavers'

The public can join us anytime between 10am and 5pm. We would love to see foster families and care leavers popping by for a boogie too. There will be a HUGE hokey cokey at 1pm outside County Hall on the grass - everybody welcome.

Keep an eye on us with Facebook Live and make a song request for a small donation.

With a dressing up box, hula hoops and dancing ribbons - we'll be ready for themed hours!

 Dorset Council
Foster in Dorset

 @FosterInDorset
@dorsetcareleavers

 @friends_of_DCL





Corporate Parenting Board

Commissioning arrangements for independent fostering agency placements

Date of Meeting: 9 December 2019

Portfolio Holder: Cllr A Parry, Children, Education and Early Help

Director: Sarah Parker, Executive Director of People - Children

Executive Summary: Commissioning arrangements for independent fostering agency placements

Equalities Impact Assessment:

There are no equalities impact implications arising from this report.

Budget:

N/A

Risk Assessment:

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: MEDIUM

Residual Risk MEDIUM

Climate implications: None

Other Implications:

None

Recommendation: For the Corporate Parenting Board to note the contents of this report.

Reason for Recommendation: This report is for information.

Appendices:

Background Papers: None

Officer Contact:

Name: Claire Shiels, Acting Corporate Director, Commissioning and Partnerships

Tel: 01305 224682

Email: claire.shiels@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Commissioning Arrangements for Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) Placements

1. Introduction

1.1 Dorset Council has worked in partnership with consortiums of other local authorities to commission IFA placements through tendered frameworks for a number of years now and is currently a member of the South Central Consortium of 14 local authorities comprising: Southampton City Council (Procurement lead), Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (Contract management coordination lead), Bracknell Forest Council, Dorset Council, Isle of Wight Council, Oxfordshire County Council, Portsmouth City Council, Reading Borough Council – Brighter Futures for Children, Slough Children’s Services Trust, Surrey County Council, The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, West Berkshire Council and Wokingham Borough Council. Collaborative working through consortiums shares the workload of tendering and provides greater economies of scale for providers to offer competitive placement fees.

1.2 The South-Central Consortium’s tendered IFA framework commenced on 1st April 2017 and is due to expire on 31st March 2021, proposals for a successor to this framework are being drafted for the consideration of the member local authorities. The initial tender process resulted in 49 Providers being appointed to the framework. The current number of providers is 50. In the course of the contract 3 Providers terminated the agreement, 2 mergers took place, and 6 new Providers joined as part of the annual Framework re-opening.

1.3 The aim of the framework has been through a compliant procurement route to provide children and young people with family placements as close to their area of origin as possible and for the IFAs on the framework to provide high quality, good value for money placements that:

- Improve stability and reduce the likelihood of placement moves;
- Offer children and young people the opportunity to maintain stable local networks and contact with their families by providing care that is local to their homes, and is ‘fit for purpose’;
- Meet the diverse range of needs of children and young people;

- IFAs to work effectively in partnership with the Councils, Partner agencies and other professionals to ensure all available resources are used to achieve positive outcomes.

1.4 The vast majority of Dorset's IFA placements have been made through agencies on the current framework or previous South West framework. A small number of IFA placements have been made through other Ofsted registered agencies not yet on the South-Central Framework where it wasn't possible to find the right placement at the time the placement was needed.

1.5 All Independent Fostering Agencies are inspected under the Social Care Common Inspection Framework (SCCIF) and therefore they are obligated to comply within the same regulatory framework as that of all local authority fostering services which includes inspections by the regulator Ofsted.

2. Contract Management

2.1 The current contract management arrangements work at two levels:

- Consortium-wide and
- Individual local authority level.

2.2. The consortium-wide contract management is carried out by Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP) who carry out quarterly monitoring of key performance indicators (i.e. Unplanned endings of placements, any termination of placements not complying with the contractual obligation to provide 28-day notice in writing, any allegations of misconduct, general feedback). BCP also collate placement data from IFAs and share this with consortium members and holding contract reviews with each provider. In addition to the key performance indicators mentioned above, annual reviews also cover feedback from social workers and independent reviewing officers on how well placements are meeting the needs of individual children or young people.

2.3. As an individual local authority within the Consortium, Dorset Council makes placements from providers on the framework, establishes individual placement agreements negotiates fees and liaises with IFAs about forthcoming vacancies and alerts them to areas where carers are needed. In addition, children's social workers visit them regularly in placement and carry out looked after children reviews. The Placements team are notified of any concerns about the quality of the placement so these issues can be followed up with the provider and appropriate action taken.

3. Placement Sufficiency

3.1 While it is sometimes necessary to place children some distance from their home, either for their own protection or to access specialist services, in most cases, placement closer to home will enable a child to maintain contact with

family and friends, continue at their existing school, and continue access any specialist support services. However, only around 20% of independently provided placements (both in children's homes and fostering) are provided within Dorset. This pattern suggests that some determined engagement with the market might be able to either bring providers into Dorset or unlock existing provision in Dorset so that the number of children placed within the local authority can increase.

3.2 At the time of writing of our current total of 102 IFA placements with 21 different IFAs, 29 are in Dorset and 24 are the Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole Council area and there are 50 in other local authority areas. We have 29 placements made on the South-Central framework and 53 made through the previous South West framework and 20 spot purchased placements (i.e. IFA placements made from Ofsted Registered providers not on either framework).

4. Market Development

4.1 This autumn Dorset Council held a market engagement event for independent providers of placements for children (IFAs and Children's Homes). There were useful conversations at this event and discussions with IFAs covering topics such as: offering more, local placements to Dorset Council, possible links between residential placements and step-down to fostering provision, effective working relationships, recruitment and retention of carers, early notification of vacancies and planned placement moves, training, feasibility (or not) of retaining carers for emergency placements.

4.2 Providers would welcome further market engagement events and an opportunity to build on existing working relationships with Dorset's Children's Services Commissioners and Placements and Brokerage team.



Corporate Parenting Board

Dorset Council – Children’s Services

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

Annual Report 2018/19 (Bi Annual Snapshot)

Date of Meeting: 9 December 2019

Portfolio Holder: Cllr A Parry, Children, Education and Early Help

Director: Sarah Parker, Executive Director of People - Children

Executive Summary:

This is the first Annual Report of Dorset Council’s Corporate Parenting Board and reflects a ‘midway snapshot’ of Corporate Parenting in Dorset following the Local Government Reorganisation and the inception of the new Dorset Council in May.

Councillor Toni Coombs (Chairman) is the first new Dorset Council - Corporate Parenting Board Chair and together with six elected members and the Lead Member for Children’s Services (LMCS) they form the Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) for Dorset. Corporate Parenting was formally introduced in legislation by the Children Act (1989). The Children and Social Work Act (2018) defined in law for the first time the statutory requirements that all councils have as Corporate Parents by outlining seven principles that must be considered. The principles are based on the needs of children in care and care leavers and the responsibility that Councils have to those children.

Corporate parenting is a ‘task’ and must be shared by the whole local authority and partner agencies’. This midway report shares some of the reporting and oversight considered at monthly CPB meetings.

Looking at the recommendations members are invited to consider how they can further support children and young people to have access to high-quality service provision from other directorates within the council and how they can influence those services to improve the quality of provision to Looked After Children. Examples are Housing, Transport, Leisure and Sports facilities and the provision of support to families in communities before any statutory involvement is required.

Parenting is a lifelong commitment and the children and young people who are forced to navigate the care system do not have the luxury of ‘lifelong’ corporate parents.... Therefore, the window for Corporate Parents to be the best that they can be is considerably short.

'All children need love and stability to thrive. A strong corporate parenting ethos means that everyone from the Chief Executive down to front line staff, as well as elected council members, are concerned about those children and care leavers as if they were their own. This is evidenced by an embedded culture where council officers do all that is reasonably possible to ensure the council is the best 'parent' it can be to the child or young person. [Statutory guidance](#) on the role of the Director of Children's Services and Lead Member for Children describes how those roles set the tone for the local authority to be an effective corporate parent.' – Applying Corporate Parenting Principles DfE (2018)

Equalities Impact Assessment:

N/A

Budget:

None Identified

Risk Assessment:

N/A

Climate implications:

N/A

Other Implications:

None

Recommendation:

Members to consider and act on the recommendations within the report to continue to drive high standards and aspirational parenting for Looked After Children in Dorset.

Reason for Recommendation:

Good parents are aspirational and ambitious for their children and corporate parenting shouldn't be any different. Ensuring Care Leavers and Looked After Children have access to everything they need to prepare them for adult life is a responsibility and a duty we all share - *'if this were my child'*.

Appendices:

N/A

Background Papers:

Applying Corporate Parenting Principles to Looked After Children and Care Leavers – statutory guidance (2018)

Local Government Corporate Parenting Resource Pack – Guidance (2017)

The Children and Social Work Act (2017)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/major-new-scheme-launched-to-support-young-people-leaving-care>

Officer Contact:

Name: Madeleine Hall – Corporate Parenting Officer

Tel:

Email: madeleine.hall@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

1 Corporate Parenting duty

- 1.1 This is the first Annual Report of Dorset Council’s Corporate Parenting Board and reflects a ‘midway snapshot’ of progress following Local Government Reorganisation and the inception of the new Dorset Council in May 2019.
- 1.2 Councillor Toni Coombs (Chairman) is the first Dorset Council - Corporate Parenting Board Chair and together with five elected members and the Lead Member for Children’s Services they form the Corporate Parenting Board. Corporate Parenting was introduced in the Children Act (1989) and defined in law for the first time in The Children and Social Work Act (2017) which outlines how the local authority should carry out its duty as the corporate parent to looked after children and care leavers. Seven principles must be considered and are based on the needs of children in care and care leavers and the responsibility that councils have to those children.

‘Being a corporate parent means doing everything we can for every child in the council’s care – and every care leaver- to give them the opportunities that other children get. This covers everything from keeping an eye on their progress at school, to looking after their health and wellbeing, to preparing them for life as independent adults – and supporting them when they get there. We need to be ambitious for the children in our care, encouraging them to dream big and take chances even if they don’t feel like that’s been an option in the past.’ LGA Guidance – Corporate Parenting resource pack (2017)

2 Corporate Parenting Principles

- 2.1 The corporate parenting principles are intended to inform how a local authority carries out existing responsibilities, they are about the behaviours and attitudes. They should shape the mind-set and culture of every part of a local authority in how it carries out all its functions in relation to looked-after children and care leavers. The principles intend to ensure that all councils

have high ambitions for the children in their care. In doing so, the application of the principles must respond to the individual needs, vulnerabilities or disadvantages of looked after children and care leavers.

- 2.2 Using the seven principles as headings, this report will comment briefly on the reporting, progress and oversight of the Corporate Parenting Board since its inception in May.

3 Principle 1 - Physical Mental Health and Well Being

- 3.1 The board receive annual reports and interim updates when required from Health providers and services which include the Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group (DCCG), CAMHS, the specialist emotional health practitioners and the Looked After Nursing Service to include reporting on health review assessments carried out annually and initial assessments (IHA's) which must be completed within 20 days of a child coming in to care.
- 3.2 The IHA statutory 20-day timescale completion rate continues to challenge both children's service officers and the healthcare provider, the Designated Nurse for Looked After Children and Care Leavers (DNLAC) escalated the concern to the Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) last year and requested that IHA's remain a standing agenda item at Board meetings.
- 3.3 Sporadic improvements throughout the last six months have been recorded, but timeliness continues to be inconsistent and unacceptable and the Council and the health provider as the partner agency share the responsibility to ensure IHA's are completed within the acceptable parameters with a minimum agreed completion target of 85%. The DNLAC and the Acting Corporate Director for Care and Protection have committed to achieving the target set.
- 3.4 This year through the DNLAC service, children and young people reported that they want continued and improved access and timely support for emotional and mental health and for Care Leavers transitioning into adulthood.

3.3 Recommendation

- Corporate Parenting Board to review the Dorset Young Researchers report on Mental Health and Emotional Wellness 2019 and work with CLiCC to identify what more can be done across Dorset with services and partners to follow up and act on the recommendations within the report.
- CPB to make enquiries as to whether the Dorset Joint Strategic Needs Assessment which informs the Joint Health and Well Being Strategy (JHWS) includes specific consideration for children in care and care leavers.

4. Principle 2 - Encouraging expression of views, wishes and feelings

- 4.1 The Care Leavers and Children in Care Council (CLICC) regularly present and challenge the CPB at monthly meetings. Additionally, members and officers attend activity events held outside of school and the annual residential event where for the first time CLICC chaired the meeting. The CPB meeting times have been adjusted to encourage more young people to attend after school, however the young people's attendance continues to be low.
- 4.2 The chairman and the Lead Member for Children's services (LMCS) attended the Looked After Children awards ceremony held at Bryanston School to celebrate successes and achievements of young people throughout the year.
- 4.3 CLICC report that they would like to see a consistent turn out of CPB members and staff at events and at their 'What it's like to be a child in Care' training session which has been designed to help workers and councillors to gain an informed understanding of the lived experience of a child in care.
- 4.4 The Independent Reviewing Officers annual report informed members about the progress of Children and Young People in care and reminded the board that Permanence – long term placement is crucial to the stability of children and young people and identified several areas for service improvement and changes to practice through an annual work plan.
- 4.5 Children and Young People are invited to complete an annual survey about the service they experience and their life as a child in care or as a care leaver. The survey responses are shared widely with the directorate; senior officers and the Corporate Parenting Board and Council and helps to identify themes and recurring trends for areas of service improvement and learning.
- 4.6 **Recommendation**
- Board members to meet with young people and review where and when CPB meetings should/could be held to enable a greater cohort of young people to attend.
 - Board members to consider how they can assist CLiCC with ensuring their training course becomes part of the induction training for all employees working in the Children's Service directorate.
 - The chair and Board members to meet with the Independent Reviewing Manager to discuss the Annual Work Program and establish how Corporate Parents can support the Annual Work Program.
 -

5. Principle 3 - Taking in to account those views, wishes and feelings of Children and Young People

- 5.1 Places a requirement on the CPB to 'act' on information gathered and shared by children and young people and their representatives, advocates and support workers. To challenge partners and services, to advocate for children in care and care leavers and to ensure they feedback and update young people with progress and responses.
- 5.2 Members and Officers are presented with challenge cards to complete as homework and return to subsequent Corporate Parenting Board meetings. The Officers take the responses and integrate them into the services to develop. This creates the opportunity for young people to influence the service they receive. The introduction of social worker business cards and permitting foster areas to make pre-authorised wider decisions are some of the examples where children's views and wishes have been acted on.
- 5.3 Last Year the Leaving Care team highlighted a national campaign run by the Children's Society to exempt Care Leavers from paying council tax. In September this year the CPB approved and recommended to full council that the proposal should be passed. The LMCS reported that the proposal received unanimous support from counsellors and was passed by the council in October this year.

6. Principle 4 - Enabling access and making the best use of services delivered by the Local Authority and relevant partners

- 6.1 Relevant partners are defined as the governing bodies of the following: - The Police, probation service, youth offending, Clinical Commissioning Groups, school governing bodies of academies and technology colleges and further education providers. Services and partner agencies are also required to submit annual reports to the CPB throughout the year.
- 6.2 The board also received service reports regarding Children Who are Disabled, Children and Care Leavers service performance overview, Quality and Assurance and Audit and Blue Print for Change the Children's Service restructure plans and the proposals for a LAC reduction strategy.
- 6.3 This year there has seen an increase in the number of children and young people placed in unregulated and unregistered settings. Ofsted state that it is recognised there is a national shortage of appropriate accommodation for some young people. The CPB monitor the placements in Dorset monthly and follow the young people's progress very closely.
- 6.4 The LMCS requested monthly notifications to Ofsted on these placements for the purpose of transparency and visited some of the settings with the Executive Director for Children, to listen to the views of the young people in person and to ensure the settings are appropriate and that the young people are receiving a good standard of care. One of the young people insisted that their home is

where they want to remain as they have been the most settled in a long time despite the registration issue. The LCMS and the Executive Director supported the young person's request and are in the process of registering the home to enable the young person to remain in their placement of choice.

6.5 Suitable properties are being sourced within the Local Authority estate, the LMCS and the Executive Director are pro-actively viewing and resourcing alternative properties with a view to increase the number of children's residential homes in Dorset.

6.6 The Corporate Parenting Board have not fully completed a strategy document to provide direction and shared objectives or Terms of Reference defining the purpose and structure of the board. A forward plan of meetings is used to provide structure to meetings but without a strategy and identified objectives the board will not achieve substantial change. A workshop is planned in December with an external consultant to look at how the CPB can meaningfully influence change for children and young people in care.

6.6 **Recommendation**

- Corporate Parents should consider how they can engage creatively with partners to consider what additional accommodation resources in Dorset can be made available for children in care and care leavers. What ideas and incentives can the CPB members consider to encourage landlords and property developers to make available suitable properties for care leavers and foster carers who may need assistance with affordable property in Dorset.
- CPB members to consider how planning applications can be expedited in the case of childrens residential homes and accommodation.
- CPB to complete the Terms of Reference for the new board and to complete the CPB strategy document in partnership with CLiCC to establish shared goals and monitor progress.

7. **Principle 5 - The promotion of high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people**

7.1 Following the recommendation from Ofsted in their full inspection report in 2016 the CPB are aware of their responsibility to challenge and scrutinise the services delivered to Looked After Children and Care Leavers. There are now ten CPB meetings per year to allow for increased monitoring through service annual reports and progress updates where requested by the board.

7.2 Service performance reports are reviewed regularly and the CPB receive the Children's services data analysis tool (ChAT) which encompasses a detailed statistical snapshot of children in care and care leavers information. Having the opportunity to compare data nationally assists the CPB in better understanding developing issues, key performance indicators and comparative information with other Local Authorities.

- 7.3 The Quality Assurance service advises the CPB with updates on service performance attained through audits. The Quality Assurance Officer will be reporting to the Corporate Parenting Board on a six-monthly basis following the introduction of the new Quality Assurance Improvement Program.
- 7.4 The inception of the new Dorset Council introduced one significant change to Corporate Parenting Board reporting, the whole council policy for transparency and openness requires that agendas and minutes are made publicly available. Additionally, attendance by members of the public and press to CPB meetings are invited. Whilst this is a new policy for Dorset, many Local Authorities have made their CPB meetings open to the public for some time. There are arguments for and against the sharing of reporting in relation to children and young people and sensitive or confidential items and reports must remain exempt from public viewing and publishing.
- 7.5 Good parents are aspirational and ambitious for their children and corporate parenting shouldn't be any different, ensuring Care Leavers and Looked After Children have access to everything they need to prepare them for adult life is a responsibility and a duty – as if they were your own child.
- 7.6 **Recommendation**
- Corporate parents to consider how they can meaningfully evidence 'aspirational parenting' and how they will ensure the best outcomes for the children they are responsible for.
- 8 Principle 6 - For children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.**
- 8.1 Stability for children and young people in care is a primary need and local authorities nationally are struggling to offer consistent and high-quality care, this is repeatedly stated in Ofsted inspection reports. Dorset is no exception and constantly challenged to provide 'consistent and stable' accommodation. In the recent Independent Reviewing managers annual report 'permeance' for children in care was declared as a priority and a request to corporate parents to help in any way possible.
- 8.2 There are a very small number of young people in care placed in unregistered/unregulated accommodation and the corporate parenting board insist on regular updates on those young people. The Executive Director and the LMCS have visited some of the young people in their placements to hear what the young people have to say and to make sure the settings are appropriate and safe, as good parents would do. The settings are regularly inspected by officers and the young people are invited to share their views through their advocates or in person.
- 9. Principle 7 – To prepare Looked After Children and Care Leavers for adulthood and independent living.**
- 9.1 The Children and Social Work Act requires by statute that local authorities have in place and publish a local offer to care leavers outlining what services are

available to them as they transition from life in care to independence. The support offered includes advice on services; health and wellbeing, relationships, education training and employment, finance, accommodation. The annual report for Care Leavers and an update on the Dorset local offer is due in December, the offer is published on the council website.

9.2 There is substantially more that can be done to improve the Local Authority offer to care leavers beyond the statutory requirement. Corporate Parents are in a good position to influence services and what can be achieved locally by working together with partners and the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers to source and provide additional support through local businesses, charities and voluntary organisations.

9.3 In October 2018 the government launched the Care Leaver Covenant (CLC) which was introduced as a new scheme to support young people leaving care. The Covenant is a commitment from businesses, charities and the public sector and offers opportunities to access learning from some large corporations; Barclays Bank offer an online life skills hub for care leavers to access in compact learning sessions.

9.4 **Recommendation**

- In consultation with CLICC and Care Leavers and their Advisors and other interested groups, Corporate Parents should initiate a members and business leaders Care Leaver forum and network to look at what type of non-statutory provision can be made available in Dorset to support young people leaving care.

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Corporate Parenting Board

Children in care and care leavers
performance overview

Date of Meeting: 9 December 2019

Portfolio Holder: Cllr A Parry, Children, Education and Early Help

Director: Sarah Parker, Executive Director of People - Children

Executive Summary:

This report provides data and intelligence about children in care and care leavers up to 31st October 2019. It includes information on key performance indicators that are part of a nationally collected data set reported to government.

The format of this report was agreed by the corporate parenting board on 19th Feb 2019 and the same data set is presented at each meeting of the board to enable progress tracking.

Included in this report is:

1. An overview of the 451 children in care and key performance indicators relating to their care, which includes:
 - Timeliness of reviews (100% on time), an increase from 97% in the previous period
 - 80% of children in care were seen in the last 6 weeks, an increase from 77% in the previous reporting period
 - There were 86 new children coming into care in the last 6 months, 2 more than in the previous reporting period
 - 57 children left our care, which is lower than the previous 6 months and contributing to the overall increase in numbers of children in care
 - The proportion of children in foster placements has remained the same, at 68%
 - Placement stability has remained the same, with 7% of children with 3 or more placement moves in the last 12 months and 70% of children in long term placements being in the same placement for more than 2 years
 - 17% of children in care have been reported missing in the last 12 months, with 67% offered a return home interview. This is a slight drop in performance from the previous reporting period.
2. An overview of the 230 care leavers and key performance indicators relating to their support, which includes:
 - There has been an increase in the number of care leavers supported by the council (217 in the previous reporting period)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 87% of care leavers aged 17 to 18 years are in suitable accommodation, which is the same as in the previous reporting period • 91% of care leavers aged 19 to 21 are in suitable accommodation, a slight reduction than previously (93%) • 47% of 17 and 18-year-old care leavers are in education, employment or training (an increase of 10% since the last report) • 55% of 19 to 21-year olds care leavers are in education, employment or training (a slight increase from the previous reporting period) <p>3. Direction of travel on all key performance indicators from the previous reporting period is indicated in the body of the report.</p>
<p>Equalities Impact Assessment:</p> <p>There are no EqIA implications arising from this report</p>
<p>Budget:</p> <p>n/a</p>
<p>Risk Assessment:</p> <p>Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as: Current Risk: LOW Residual Risk LOW</p>
<p>Climate implications:</p> <p>n/a</p>
<p>Other Implications:</p> <p>n/a</p>
<p>Recommendation:</p> <p>Members of the corporate parenting board are asked to note the information in this report.</p>
<p>Reason for Recommendation:</p> <p>Members of the corporate parenting board should receive regular progress reports to keep them informed about the children in the council's care, and care leavers.</p>

Appendices:

Background Papers:

n/a

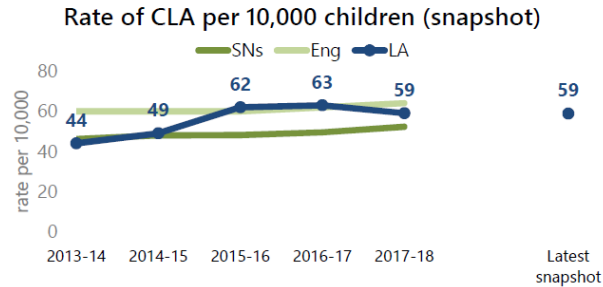
Officer Contact:

Name: Claire Shiels

Tel: 01305 224682

Email: claire.shiels@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

451 Children Looked After (CLA) with an open episode of care

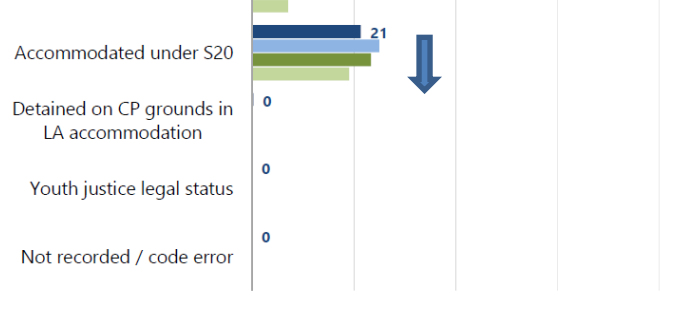
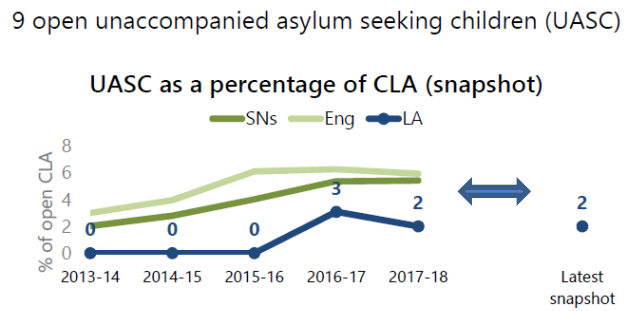
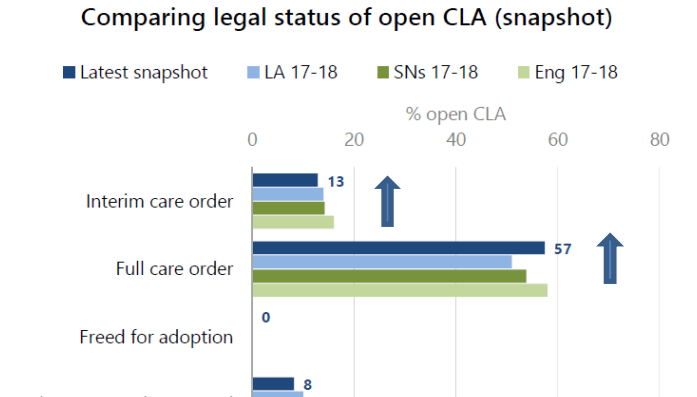
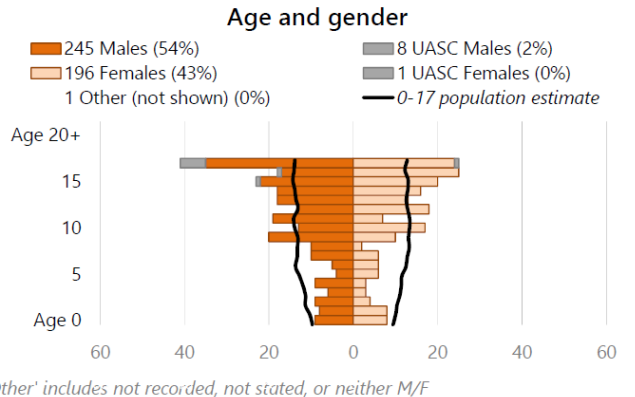


Ethnic background

	All CLA	Not UASC	UASC
White	91%	93%	0%
Mixed	6%	6%	11%
Asian or Asian British	1%	0%	11%
Black or black British	1%	0%	44%
Other ethnic group	1%	1%	33%
Not stated	0%	0%	0%
Not recorded	0%	0%	0%

See page 20 for comparisons

41 children (9%) with a disability



Children Looked After (CLA) started and ceased in the last 6 months

from 01/05/2019
to 31/10/2019

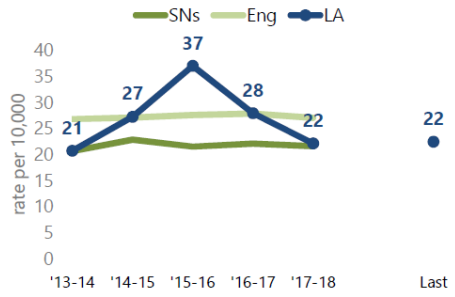
86 CLA started in the last 6 months



57 CLA ceased in the last 6 months

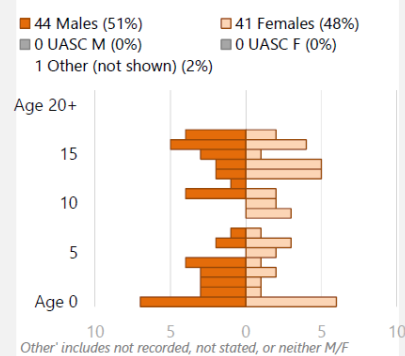


Rate of CLA started per 10,000 children



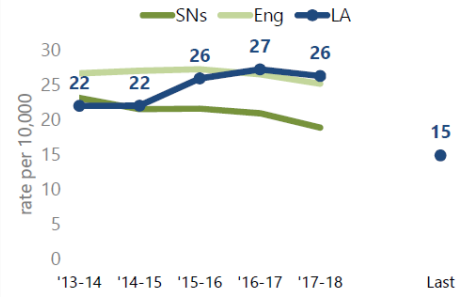
*Annualised rate for comparison purposes

Age and gender



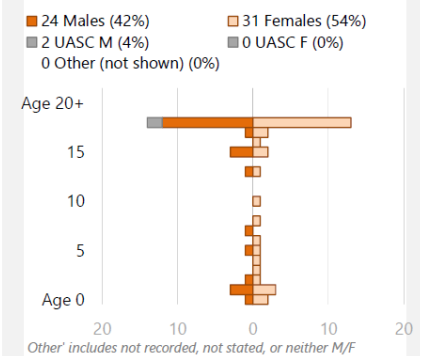
Other* includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

Rate of CLA ceased per 10,000 children



*Annualised rate for comparison purposes

Age and gender



Other* includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

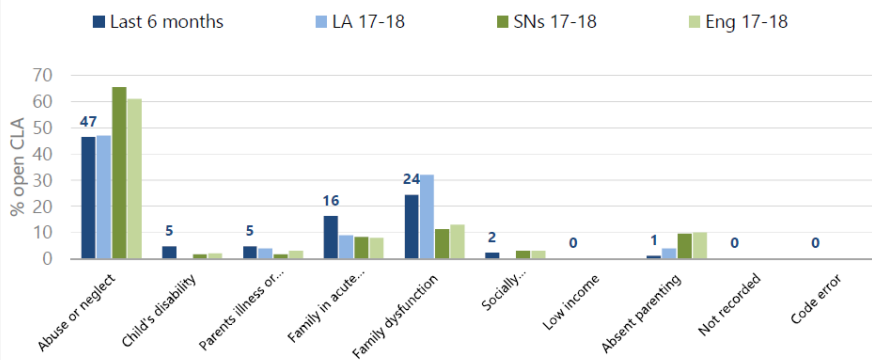
0%

0 of the 86 CLA starters were unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC)

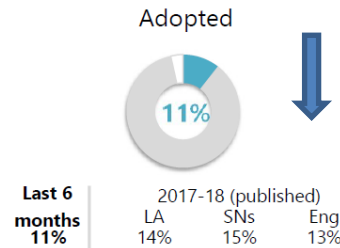
7%

6 of the 86 CLA starters have previously been looked after

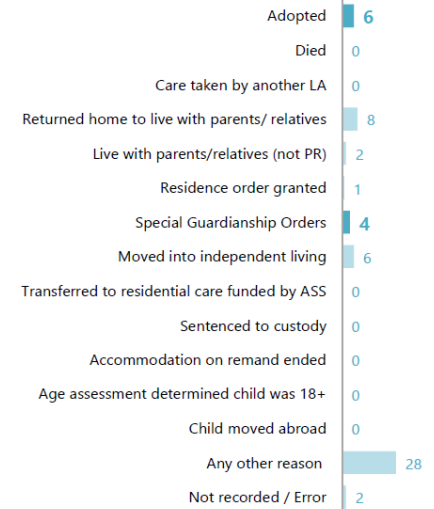
Comparing the primary need of CLA starters



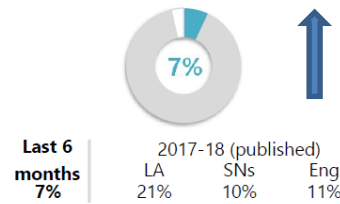
Reason episode of care ceased



Number of CLA ceased by reason in the period



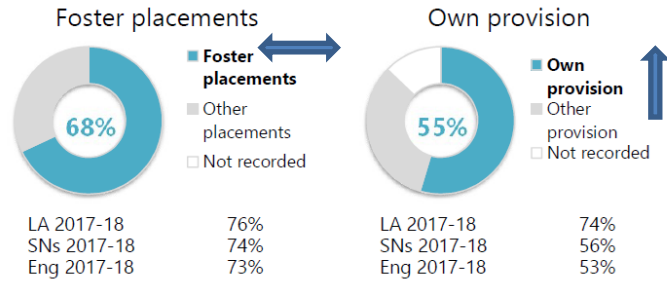
Special Guardianship Order



Children Looked After (CLA) placements

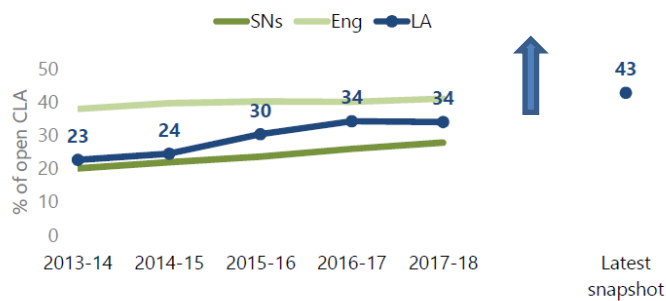
Snapshot 31/10/2019

CLA placements by type and provision

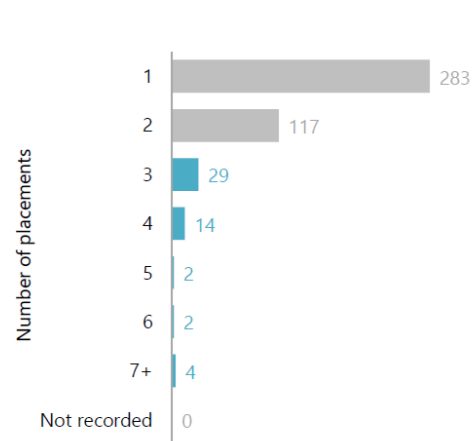


Placement type (open CLA)	Own LA	Private	Other	Total
Foster placement	203	94	10	307
Placed for adoption	0	0	18	18
Placed with parents	21	0	0	21
Independent living	14	1	11	26
Residential employment	0	0	0	0
Residential accommodation	4	13	14	31
Secure Children's Homes	0	1	1	2
Children's Homes	0	0	0	0
Residential Care Home	1	33	4	38
NHS/Health Trust	2	1	0	3
Family Centre	1	1	0	2
Young Offender Institution	0	0	0	0
Residential school	0	2	0	2
Other placements	0	0	1	1
Temporary placement	0	0	0	0
Total placements	246	146	59	451

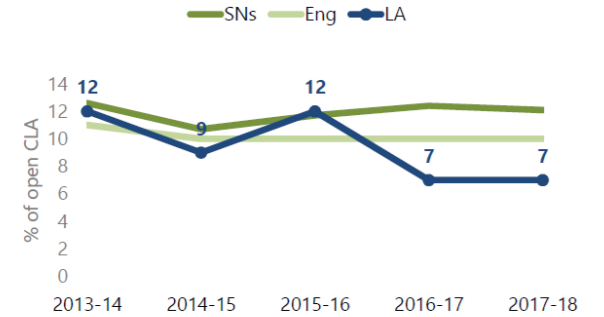
CLA placements out of borough



Number of placements in the last 12 months



Comparing short term placement stability



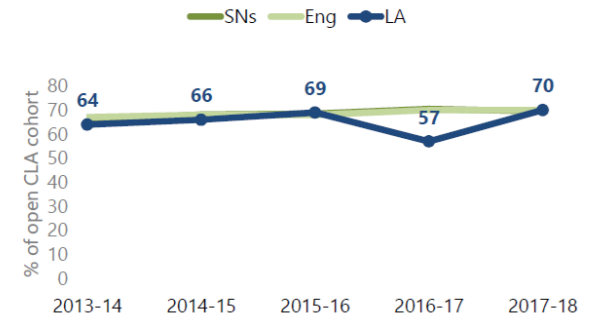
Due to limited data in the Annex A dataset, ChAT does not present short-term stability alongside published statistics

Duration of placements

Duration of latest placement for each current CLA aged under 16 who have been looked after for 2½ years or more



Comparing long term placement stability



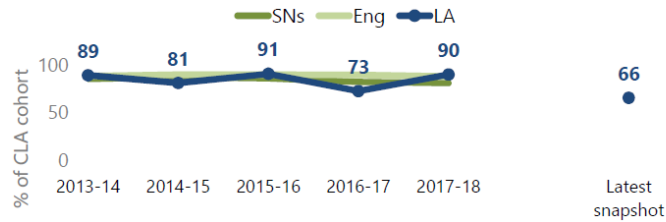
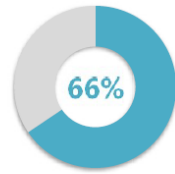
Due to limited data in the Annex A dataset, ChAT does not present long-term stability alongside published statistics

Health

311 current open CLA looked after for at least 12 months

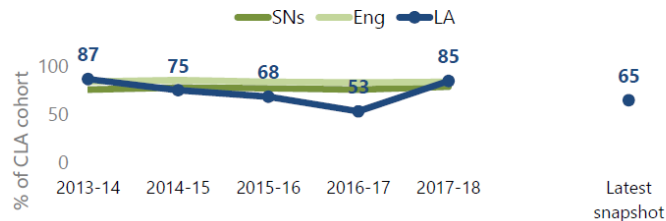
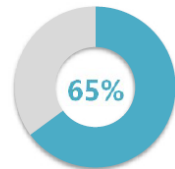
Health assessments

Current open CLA who have been looked after for at least 12 months with an up to date health assessment (in the last 6 months for CLA aged under 5, and in the last 12 months for CLA aged 5-plus)



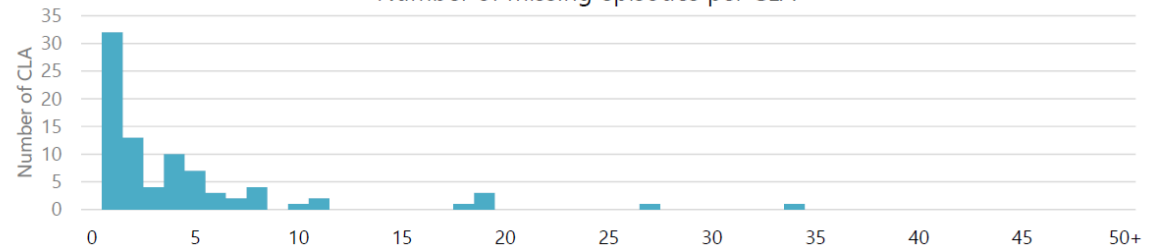
Dental checks

Current open CLA who have been looked after for at least 12 months who have had a dental check in the last 12 months.



Missing from placement

Number of missing episodes per CLA

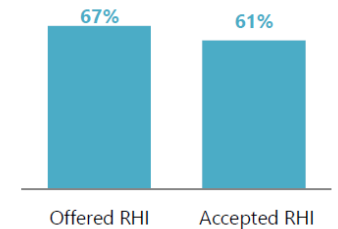


84 of 508 looked after children had a missing incident in the last 12 months

	Latest data	LA 17-18	SNs 17-18	Eng 17-18
Number of all CLA with a missing incident	84 of 508	73		
Percentage of all CLA with a missing incident	17%	11%	10%	11%
Total number of missing incidents for all CLA	377	319		
Average number of incidents per CLA who went missing	4.5	4.4	5.0	6.1

Missing incidents - return home interviews

	Latest data	
Missing children offered return interview	56 of 84	67%
Missing children not offered return interview	7 of 84	8%
Missing children return interview offer not recorded	21 of 84	25%
Missing children where return interview was n/a	0 of 84	0%



	Latest data	
Missing children accepted return interview	34 of 56	61%
Missing children not accepted return interview	22 of 56	39%
Missing children return interview acceptance not recorded	0 of 56	0%

Absent from placement

6 of 508 looked after children had an absent incident in the last 12 months

	Latest data	LA 17-18	SNs 17-18	Eng 17-18
Number of all CLA with an absent incident	6 of 508	x		
Percentage of all CLA with an absent incident	1%	-	1%	4%
Total number of absent incidents for all CLA	6	x		
Average number of incidents per CLA who were absent	1.0	1.3	1.4	4.0

Care leavers currently in receipt of leaving care services

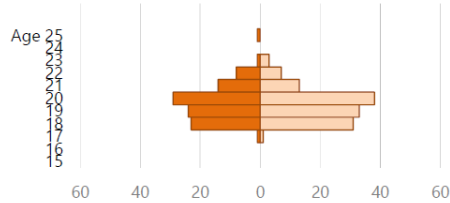
Snapshot 31/10/2019

230 care leavers



Age and gender

101 Males (44%) 126 Females (55%)
3 Other (not shown) (1%)



Other' includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

Ethnic background

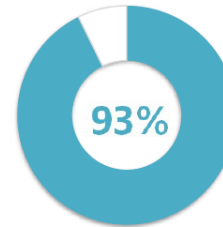
White	89%
Mixed	1%
Asian or Asian British	3%
Black or black British	3%
Other ethnic group	3%
Not stated	2%
Not recorded	0%

See page 20 for comparisons

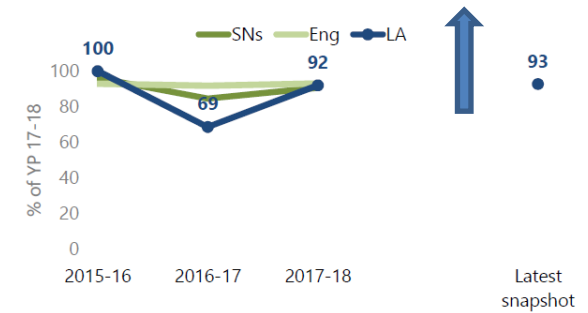
28 (12%) care leavers with a disability

LA in touch with 17-18 year olds

ChAT	Aged 17	Aged 18	Total
Numbers in cohort	2	53	55
LA in touch with YP	100%	92%	93%

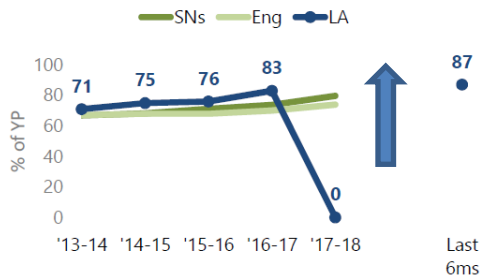


In touch
Not in touch
Not recorded



Remained in care until aged 18

YP who ceased to be looked after aged 16-plus who were looked after until their 18th birthday



Eligibility category

Relevant	2
Former relevant	219
Qualifying	9
Other	0
Not recorded	0

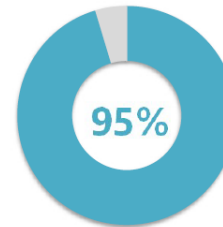
Relevant = YP aged 16-17 no longer looked after and eligible for leaving care services.

Former relevant = YP aged 18-25 eligible for leaving care services.

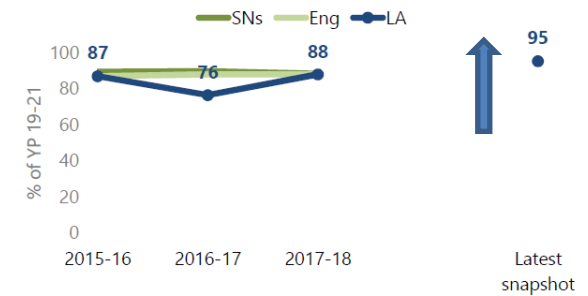
Qualifying = YP aged 18-25 in receipt of support but not eligible for full leaving care services.

LA in touch with 19-21 year olds

ChAT	Aged 19	Aged 20	Aged 21	Total
Numbers in cohort	57	67	27	151
LA in touch with YP	95%	96%	96%	95%

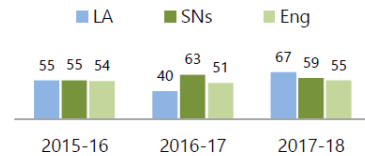


In touch
Not in touch
Not recorded

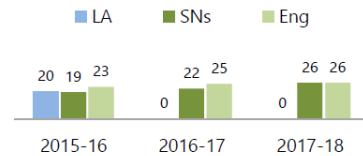


Remain with former foster carer

Aged 18



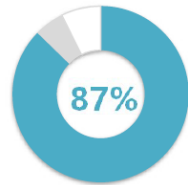
Aged 19-20



Care leavers accommodation suitability and type

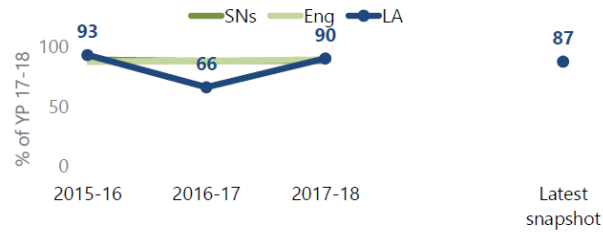
Snapshot 31/10/2019

Accommodation suitability of 17-18 year olds

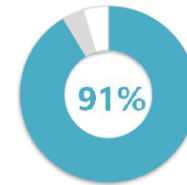


■ Suitable accom
■ Not suitable
□ No information

ChAT	Aged 17	Aged 18	Total
Numbers in cohort	2	53	55
In suitable accommodation	50%	89%	87%

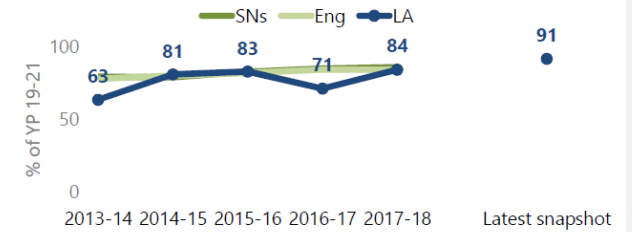


Accommodation suitability of 19-21 year olds



■ Suitable accom
■ Not suitable
□ No information

ChAT	Aged 19	Aged 20	Aged 21	Total
Numbers in cohort	57	67	27	151
In suitable accommodation	91%	91%	93%	91%



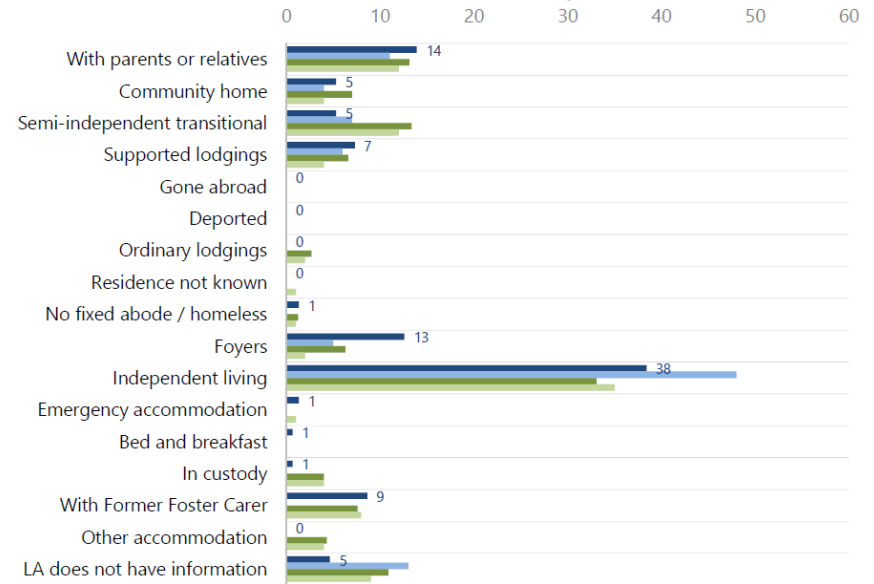
Accommodation types of 17-18 year olds

■ Latest snapshot ■ LA 17-18 ■ SNs 17-18 ■ Eng 17-18
% 17-18 year olds



Accommodation types of 19-21 year olds

■ Latest snapshot ■ LA 17-18 ■ SNs 17-18 ■ Eng 17-18
% 19-21 year olds

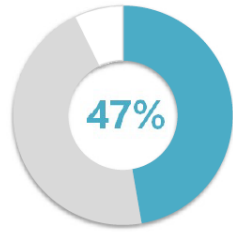


Care leavers activity (Education, Employment, or Training)

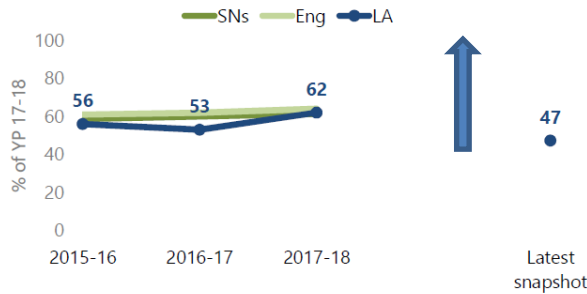
Snapshot 31/10/2019

Education, Employment, or Training (EET) of 17-18 year olds

ChAT	Aged 17	Aged 18	Total
Numbers in cohort	2	53	55
In EET	50%	47%	47%

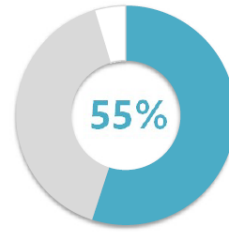


■ YP in EET ■ NEET
□ No info

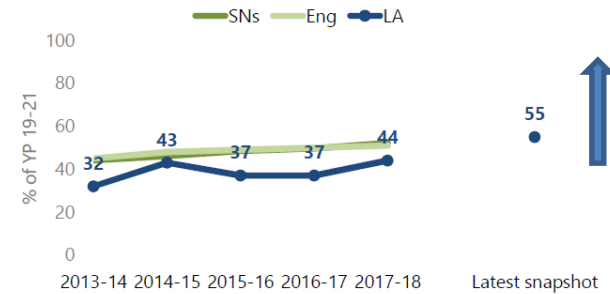


Education, Employment, or Training (EET) of 19-21 year olds

ChAT	Aged 19	Aged 20	Aged 21	Total
Numbers in cohort	57	67	27	151
In EET	63%	49%	52%	55%

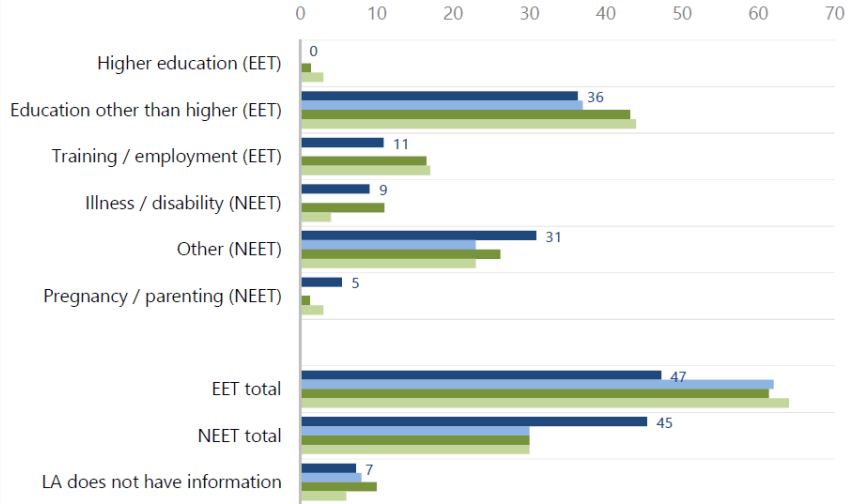


■ YP in EET ■ NEET
□ No info



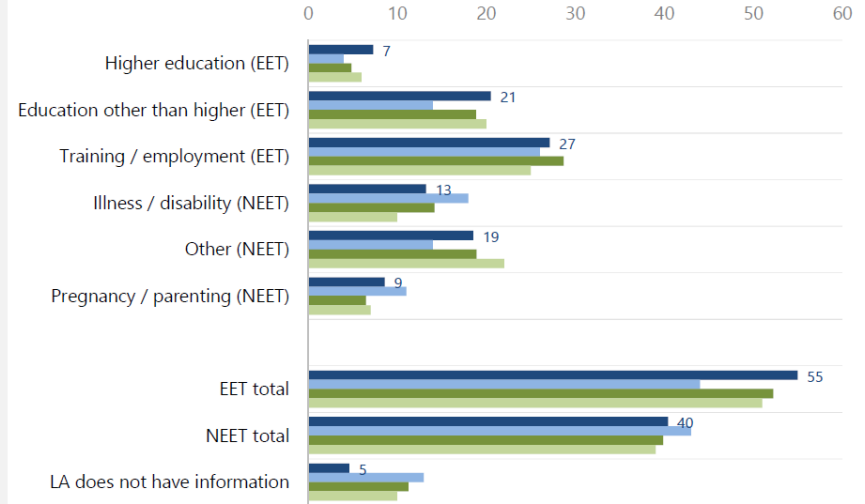
Activity types of 17-18 year olds

■ Latest snapshot ■ LA 17-18 ■ SNs 17-18 ■ Eng 17-18
% 17-18 year olds



Activity types of 19-21 year olds

■ Latest snapshot ■ LA 19-21 ■ SNs 19-21 ■ Eng 19-21
% 19-21 year olds



Service Development focus: Care Leavers

The statutory responsibilities of councils are set out in the Children Act 1989, including through amendments made by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and the Children and Families Act 2014. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 made additional provisions for care leavers, and outlined in law for the first time what it means for a local authority to be a good corporate parent. Councils have responsibilities towards care leavers until they are 21, or 25 if they are still in education or training, are disabled or if the care leaver requests continued support.

Mark Riddell, National Implementation Advisor for Care Leavers, published his first annual report in 2018 and highlighted the importance of a strong Corporate Parenting Board role in supporting care leavers identifying 5 key outcomes:

- Outcome 1: Better prepared and supported to live independently
- Outcome 2: Improved access to education, training and employment
- Outcome 3: Experiencing stability and feeling safe and secure
- Outcome 4: Improved Access to Health Support
- Outcome 5: Achieving Financial Stability

He considers that Corporate Parenting Boards play a key role in supporting the development of opportunities for care leavers and support them to successfully transition into adulthood through effective multi agency planning and commitment and engagement from their corporate parent

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/764710/National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers Annual Report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/764710/National_Implementation_Adviser_for_Care_Leavers_Annual_Report.pdf)

Currently, the Leaving Care Service is actively supporting 241 care leavers with a further 120 that are not currently receiving support but may request this at any point up to then reaching the age of 25. Projections over the next 3 years confirm that this number will increase by 70 over 2020 and 30 each year in 2021 and 2022 (caution needs to be applied to the 2021/ 22 figure as this is based on young people in care as of 21.11.19)

It is clear therefore that demand will continue to increase as will the level of complexity of need within this cohort.

Housing:

Currently the majority of our care leavers are in suitable housing however the range of housing types can be limited by geographic availability and suitability. The creation of the new Dorset Council presents an opportunity for strengthening of the Council as Corporate Parent for our care leavers by prioritisation within local housing planning, enabling young adults to remain within their current communities and networks.

Additional housing opportunities could be provided through the development and prioritisation of “Staying Put” opportunities within strategic planning for Fostering provision thereby enabling young people to remain with their foster carers beyond 18 if appropriate.

“Staying Close” is another option. This is a variant of staying put for young people leaving residential care which enables them to live close to their residential provision, whether independent or semi supported, and continue to receive support from key workers with whom they have established relationships and promote their sense of security and being supported. This could be provided either through local housing or as part of the development of a range of residential options.

All of these require the engagement and commitment from housing services to recognise and prioritise care leavers housing needs promoted by the Corporate Parenting Board.

Education, employment and training:

Our figures for care leavers who are in Education, employment or training (EET) is 47% of 17/18 year olds and 55% of 19-21 year olds. This is broadly in line with national performance however Mark Riddell proposes that Corporate Parenting Boards should set themselves a target of achieving between 70 and 80% of care leavers being EET.

In addition to ensuring that SEN provision actively addresses and prioritises the needs of care leavers with EHCPs, a number of authorities have adopted the principle of being the “family firm” for care leavers through commitment to actively promoting and developing apprenticeship opportunities.

Further employment or training opportunities could be explored and developed through the local Chamber of Commerce and the Council's community engagement activity with local partners/businesses. This could provide a range of opportunities for care leavers to develop work skills or test out areas of work they may be interested in through to full apprenticeship opportunities. It would also bring the community into the "corporate family" for a care leaver, strengthening a feeling of being supported and valued



Date of Meeting: 9 December 2019

Lead Member: Cllr Andrew Parry - Children, Education and Early Help

Lead Officer: Sarah Parker- Executive Director for People – Childrens

Executive Summary:

This report gives an update on the Leaving Care Service over the past year, the current number of care experienced young people receiving support and the types of accommodation in which they are living. Service development work undertaken in this period is also detailed in this report

Equalities Impact Assessment:

N/A

Budget: n/a

Risk Assessment:

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:
Current Risk: LOW
Residual Risk LOW

Other Implications: n/a

Recommendation:

1. Members of the corporate parenting board are asked to note the information in this report

Reason for Recommendation:

Appendices:

Background Papers:

Officer Contact

Name: Tanya Hamilton-Fletcher
Tel: 01305 225937
Email: t.hamilton-fletcher@dorsetcc.gov.uk

1. Background

1.1: The Care and Support 13-25 Team within Children's Services provides support to looked after children aged 13-18 and care experienced young people who are entitled to a leaving care support and for whom Dorset Council is their corporate parent. The 13-25 service was reconfigured in 2019 into 2 teams for looked after children and 2 for leaving care to provide an improved focus on service delivery and in recognition of the differing legislative requirements and support needs for the two groups of young people.

1.2: The Leaving Care Teams consist of 2 FTE Team Managers and 9 substantive FTE Personal Advisors (PAs). Additionally, there are 2 FTE fixed term PAs utilising two separate grant funding streams (PA to 25 grant and Rough Sleeping grant) which brings the service establishment up to 11 FTE PAs

1.3: Care experienced young people are young people who have been in the care of the local authority and are defined within the legislation as being part of 3 distinct groups of care leavers. This report specifically focusses on Relevant and Former Relevant young people.

1.4: **Relevant** young people are aged 16 or 17 and have been looked after for at least 13 weeks since their 14th birthday and, at some point, after their 16th birthday, but who left care before their 18th birthday.

1.5: Looked after children and Relevant care leavers become **Former Relevant** care leavers at the age of 18. There is a further category of care leaver who are described as **Qualifiers** and entitled to limited leaving care support.

1.6: Under previous legislation, local authorities were required to provide young people leaving care with support from a PA until they reached age 21, with that support continuing up to age 25 if a care leaver was engaged in education or training. This support was not available to care leavers aged over 21 who were not in education or training. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduced a new duty on local authorities, to support all Former Relevant care leavers up to age 25, if they want this wish for this support to be provided.

1.7: Alongside the extended PA duty, there is a further duty on local authorities to consult on and publish their 'local offer' for care leavers. The local offer must set out care leavers legal entitlements, plus the additional discretionary support which the local authority provides. Dorset's Local Offer continues to be developed and is available through the following link: <https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/children-families/childrens-social-care/children-in-care/local-offer-for-care-leavers/local-offer-for-care-leavers.aspx>

1.8: The new duties under The Children and Social Work Act commenced on 1 April 2018.

2. Care Leaver population

2.1: The total number of care leavers receiving support from a PA from the Leaving Care Service as reported in our most recent SSDA903 return to the Department for Education, for the period 1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019, was 278 Current case load within the Leaving Care allocated to a PA is 241 as of 19 November 2019.

2.2: To ensure that we track care leavers who are not currently accessing PA support we have two "virtual" caseloads on Mosaic named "Care Leaver Qualifier Virtual" and "Care

Leaver PA to 25 Virtual". These enable us to have visibility for those young people who are not seeking nor requiring PA support but who may require this at a later date as their circumstances change.

2.3: There are 24 and 96 care leavers in these two virtual caseloads who may request a service at some point in the future. The latter number has increased significantly since last year's report to Corporate Parenting Board when the figure was 26. This reflects the increasing number of care leavers who are turning 21 and eligible to request a leaving care service up to the age of 25. This number will continue to increase for the next three years.

3: Accommodation

3.1: The majority of Dorset care leavers are confirmed to be living in suitable accommodation which meets their needs, across a range of housing provision.

3.2: Accommodation is considered suitable if it is safe, secure and affordable. It generally includes short-term accommodation designed to move care leavers on to stable long-term accommodation and support them in developing independence and living skills.

3.3: Accommodation which exposes the care leaver to risk of harm or social exclusion by reason of its location or other factors would be considered as unsuitable, as would any temporary living arrangements. This would include bed and breakfast, custody or where the care leaver is living in an environment which could place them at risk.

3.4: Dorset Council's 2018-19 annual return reported that of the 280 care leavers that were in receipt of a leaving care service, 88.6% were living in accommodation judged as suitable. There are some young people who we are not in touch with and so were unable to confirm their living arrangements. This meant that they cannot be counted as being in suitable accommodation in the annual return. For that small number of care leavers with whom we are not in touch, efforts continue to be made by PA's to locate them and offer a service. For the return in March 2019, this was a total of 18 care leavers

3.5: Independent tenancy: A total of 104 care leavers were living in independent rented properties. This is a mix of private and housing association accommodation.

3.6: Living at home with parents: A total of 38 care leavers were living at home.

3.7: Supported lodgings: Our in house supported lodgings scheme had 16 care leavers placed at the end of March 2019. The small supported lodgings team continues to consider new ways of attracting potential supported lodgings providers. As of 19 November 2019 we had 22 supported lodgings providers with 28 beds. Not all of these are available at any one time as providers need to take breaks for various reasons.

3.8: Staying Put: A total of 18 care leavers were in staying put arrangements, mainly with family and friends' carers. Currently (as of 19.11.19) there are 17 care leavers in staying put arrangements. Of these, 6 are at University returning to their ex foster carers for the holidays and occasional weekends.

3.9: Unsuitable accommodation: Very few Dorset care leavers were living in accommodation considered to be unsuitable. This will include care leavers in custody, no fixed abode and B&B. PA's will seek to work positively with such young people to improve their housing arrangements and enable them to live in stable, secure arrangements. Our annual return reported 6 such young people (2.2%) of which 2 were in custody and 4 were recorded as no fixed abode/ homeless

4: Service development

4.1: There have been a number of workstreams focussing on service development and strategic planning for care leavers that have taken place over the past year.

4.2: Partnering with Coram Voice to deliver the "New Belongings" programme. Dorset was one of 8 authorities selected to partner with Coram Voice over 2019 and 2020. This partnership will develop a model for improving support for care leavers based on engagement and involvement of young people as experts in their own experience. As part of this work The Bright Spots' "Your Life Beyond Care" survey will be used alongside a self-assessment tool to provide a baseline and inform action planning in a coproduction model with care experienced young people. The initial set up meeting will take place on 20.11.19

4.3: Becoming part of the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum. Dorset joined this forum in 2018 and through this network we now have access to 3 x yearly national peer manager learning events as well as on line forums around leaving care. This enables us to share best practice and learn from other authorities as well as share our successes.

4.4: Care leavers in Custody Project. Dorset is working alongside Barnardo's and HMP Portland to identify and provide support to care leavers in custody. Links have been made with the Offender Management Unit at HMP Portland and a group work programme developed. The group, comprising young offenders who are care leavers is facilitated by a worker from Barnardo's and 2 PA's from our service. The aim is to support care leavers in custody to develop the skills they will need on release.

4.5: Agreement by Dorset Council to exempt care leavers from paying Council tax: Corporate Parenting Board members will be aware that the full Council has agreed that Dorset care leavers, living in the Dorset Council area and who are in receipt of a leaving care service, will be exempt from paying Council Tax from 1 April 2020.

4.6: Creation of specialist fixed term PA post using the Homelessness Reduction Initiative Grant. A specialist PA post has been created using the Rough Sleeping Initiative grant. This funding is intended to enable local authorities to continue to employ one or more specialist Personal Advisers to provide intensive support to a small caseload of care leavers who the LA judges to be at highest risk of homelessness/rough sleeping with the intention of preventing homelessness as well as strengthening and developing housing opportunities for care leavers. This post will enable us to capitalise on the opportunities present following the creation of the new Dorset Council

4.7: Identification of specialist nurse within LAC Health team with focus on care leavers. Through funding identified through Health partners our LAC Health team now has a post that specialises in health advice and support to care leavers

4.8: Partnership working with Friends of Dorset Care Leavers: The Leaving Care Service is actively working with this separate charitable organisation set up this year to support Dorset care leavers through agreeing PA time to support activities and by

representation on the FoDCL committee

5: Challenges

5.1: As the profile of children in care and the level of needs has become more complex, this more complex needs profile is present within the young people supported by the Leaving Care Service. The creation of the dedicated post detailed in section 4.7 will assist the Service in ensuring that all health needs, including those linked to emotional wellbeing and mental health are better met

5.2: Increasing the range of suitable housing remains an area for further development in terms of available local housing options that enable care experienced young people to remain local and maintain existing links. There is opportunity through the new Dorset Council to develop those links and develop a strong housing offer to our care leavers. The use of the Rough Sleeping grant to create a specialist PA post to provide specialist advice and expertise is a positive development and the post holder has recently started

5.3: PA caseloads remain higher than would be wished and this is a national picture. The creation of a fixed term PA post through the PA to 25 grant will assist with this however this remains an area that requires further consideration given the growing complexity of needs within our care experienced population and the more intensive levels of support that some of our care leavers now require

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Date of Meeting: 9 December 2019

Lead Member: Cllr Andrew Parry - Lead Member for Education and Early Help

Lead Officer: Sarah Parker – Executive Director for People – Children

Executive Summary:

The Joint Targeted Area Inspection carried out in in May 2018, focussed on child sexual exploitation, children associated with gangs and at risk of exploitation and children missing from home, care or education, identified gaps in the partnership understanding and joint working in these areas. Since the inspection, significant work has been completed to develop the understanding of the issues across Dorset and to improve practice with individual children and young people. This work was completed pan-Dorset to support a consistent approach across the partnership and to share best practice. New working practices were put in place during the summer of 2019 with the introduction of the Child Exploitation Toolkit.

This report provides an update of the progress made since the last report to the Corporate Parenting Board held on 4 September 2019.

Equalities Impact Assessment:

Not applicable

Budget:

Not applicable

Risk Assessment:

Medium

Climate implications:

Not applicable

Other Implications:

Not applicable

Recommendation: Not applicable
Reason for Recommendation:
Appendices: None
Background Papers: None
Officer Contact: Name: Maggie Aldwell Tel: 01305 225829 Email: maggie.aldwell@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Young people who go missing or run away from their homes or care are at increased risk of potential harm. Research suggests that approximately 25% are at risk of serious harm; the most significant risk being Criminal Child Exploitation. Child exploitation is where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into criminal, including sexual activity. This will be carried out in exchange for something the young person needs or wants, and/or for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator, and/or through violence or threat of violence.
- 1.2 A young person may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. It is important that all practitioners are aware that when we describe children and young people's experiences, we must avoid language that implies that children and young people are complicit or responsible for the exploitation they may suffer or crimes that they may be victim of.
- 1.3 Criminal exploitation of children is broader than Child Sexual Exploitation and County Lines activity and might include for example, children forced to work on cannabis farms, commit theft, modern slavery, radicalisation and trafficking.

2. Missing Data Q2 2019/20

- 2.1 There was a significant increase in the number of missing incidents reported in Q2 (251) compared with Q1 (176). This is likely to be due to the time of year, with older young people more likely to be out and returning home late during the summer months.

Description	Missing	Absent	Total
01. Number of missing incidences during the period	251	8	259
02. Number of missing children during the period	116	8	124
03. Number of missing incidences where child is still missing	0	0	0
04. Number who were male	124	4	128
05. Number who were female	127	4	131
06. Number of missing incidents where child is missing more than 24 hours	89	2	91
07. Number of children who were missing more than 24 hours	44	2	46
08. Number of missing incidents where child is missing more than 72 hours	9	0	9
09. Number of children who were missing more than 72 hours	8	0	8
10. Number of children who went missing on one occasion	74	6	80
11. Number of children who went missing on more than one occasion	42	2	44
12. Number who are LAC	38	1	39
13. Number who are CIN	50	1	51
14. Number who are children who are vulnerable	36	6	42

Fig.1 Children reported missing Q2 2019/20

- 2.2 Fig.2 provides the detail on the numbers of Return Home Interviews (RHIs) completed and the timeliness of the visit. Every child reported as missing should have been offered and have ideally accepted an RHI. In Q2 all but 13 of the 116 children reported as missing were offered an RHI. In each of the 13 cases, a reason is recorded:

- Missing report made but child not missing x 4
- Child unavailable x 2
- No risk identified by manager x 2
- Completed by residential staff outside of Dorset x 2
- Record unclear x 3

- 2.3 There was an increase in the percentage of RHIs offered and accepted in Q2 from 56% to 60%. The Missing Reports allow for a record of the work completed to encourage young people to accept the RHI. This is not consistently being used. However, where it has been, it is apparent that many of the declines are from young people who are missing on multiple occasions. Workers are generally making robust attempts to engage them.

- 2.4 There was a decline in overall timeliness of RHIs in Q2 from 48% being completed within 72 hours in Q1 to just 37% in Q2. However, data now available shows that in Q2 79% of the RHIs completed were carried out within 72 hours of Children's Services receiving the notification of their return.

Description	Missing	Absent	Total
01. Number of RHIs conducted	154	3	157
02. Number of RHIs not conducted	97	5	102
03. Number of children who had at least one RHI	80	3	83
04. Number of children who did not have an RHI	35	4	39
05. Number of RHIs conducted within 72 hours	56	1	57
06. Number of RHIs conducted within 3 working days of being notified	122	2	124
07. Number of RHIs not offered as child missing on subsequent occasion(s)	0	0	0
08. Number of RHIs not offered as 24 hr decision did not identify risk	0	0	0
09. Number of RHIs not accepted	81	2	83
10. Number of children not accepting RHIs	47	2	49

Fig.2 Return Home Interviews Q2 2019/20

3. Criminal Child Exploitation

- 3.1 Significant work had been completed across the partnership in our understanding of and management of the risk of Child Criminal Exploitation. A toolkit has been developed and is now available to all multi-agency practitioners. The toolkit contains the CE Screening Tool, the CE Risk Assessment and CE Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) Meeting and Plan templates. There is guidance to support practitioners in the use of the toolkit.

- 3.2 Risk Assessments can and should be completed by all partner agencies. The assessments indicate three levels of risk:

- **Significant Risk** – where a significant risk is identified, there will be a Moderation Meeting to consider the risk. This meeting is attended by the assessing practitioner, and MASH Police, Health and Social Care. The Moderation Meeting is a benchmarking and intelligence gathering forum. Where a Significant Risk is confirmed at the Moderation Meeting, a Strategy Meeting will be held within 24 hours. All children and young people where there is a significant risk identified, will have an allocated social worker and an initial Multi Agency Child Exploitation Meeting (MACE) will take place within 15 working days. There will be continued MACE Meetings at least every 6 weeks until the risk is reduced.

- **Moderate Risk** - where a moderate risk is identified and confirmed at a Moderation Meeting, a Social Work assessment will commence if there is not already an allocated social worker. All children and young people where a moderate risk is identified, will have an allocated social worker and an initial MACE Meeting will take place within 15 working days. There will be continued MACE Meetings at least every 12 weeks until the risk is reduced.
- **Emerging Risk** – where a potential emerging risk is identified, a Moderation Meeting is not required but a MACE Meeting should be considered by the assessing practitioner and a MACE plan developed to reduce the risk. This can be managed through the Team Around the Family (TAF) process.

4. Child Exploitation Data Q2 2019/20

4.1 The data for Q2 in relation to child exploitation continues to be somewhat unreliable as practitioners across the partnership become more familiar with the CE Toolkit. This is however steadily improving.

4.2 There has been an increase in the CE assessments completed in Q2. Whilst on the face of it this might seem concerning, it is to be expected as all practitioners become more familiar with the risk assessment and consider all forms of child exploitation, rather than as was previously the case, CSE. Further, the previous data reported only considered 2 months, rather than a full quarter as the CE data was only available to May and June.

Risk Level	CSE	CE	Both	None	Not Known	TOTAL
1. Emerging/Reducing risk of criminal/sexual exploitation	3	2	2	33	0	40
2. Moderate risk of criminal/sexual exploitation	6	11	7	7	0	31
3. Significant risk of criminal/sexual exploitation	2	9	7	0	0	18
4. Category 1 – Minimal risk of sexual exploitation	0	0	0	0	2	2
5. Category 2 - Mild risk of sexual exploitation	0	0	0	0	1	1
6. Category 3 – Moderate risk of sexual exploitation	0	0	0	0	1	1
8. Not Calculated	0	1	0	2	0	3
TOTAL	11	23	16	42	4	96

Fig 3 – New CE Assessments completed Q2 2019/20

- 4.3 Moderation Meetings are now well embedded into practice and practitioners from across the partnership (not pan Dorset) are sending through completed risk assessments for Moderation. We would expect to hold a Moderation Meeting in all cases where a Significant or Moderate risk has been identified. In Q2 there should have been in excess of 49 cases moderated. The table below confirms that 54 moderation meetings were held. The additional 5 cases are likely to have been where the risk was reduced from Moderate to Emerging through the multi-agency discussion.

Did Moderation Meeting Take Place	CSE	CE	Both	None	Not Known	TOTAL
Information Not Available	1	0	1	7	4	13
No	1	2	2	24	0	29
Yes	9	21	13	11	0	54
TOTAL	11	23	16	42	4	96

Fig 4 – Moderation Meetings completed Q2 2019/20

- 4.4 During May and June 2019, just 6 Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) Reviews were recorded as having been completed, presenting a disappointing picture. There has been a significant improvement during Q2 with 30 Reviews recorded although we would want to see this figure approaching the same number as there are children identified as being at Significant or Moderate risk (49).
- 4.5 Q2 is the first period in which we can monitor the difference we are making for children in reducing risk (Fig. 5). Although the risk for 5 children decreased, for 17 we appear to have made no impact on the risk level. This is new data and we will need to monitor this over the coming months as we would want to see many more cases where risk is reducing as a result of the intervention.

Statistic	CSE	CE	Both	None	Not Known	TOTAL
01. How many children were reviewed?	5	17	4	2	0	28
02. How many reviews took place?	5	19	4	2	0	30
03. How many reviews on time?	1	15	2	1	0	19
04. How many children where the risk increased?	0	2	1	0	0	3
05. How many children where the risk stayed the same?	3	12	2	0	0	17
06. How many children where the risk decreased?	1	2	0	2	0	5
07. How many reviews where the professional judgement risk is different from the scored risk?	0	2	0	2	0	4

(Fig 5 – CE Assessment reviews completed Q2 2019/20)

- 4.6 We can calculate the total numbers of children and young people assessed as at Moderate or Significant Risk at any given date. Fig 6 is the total number of young people assessed as being at Significant or Moderate risk as of 10th November 2019.
- 4.7 Although the emerging risk numbers are very low, this does not take account of the children assessed as being at emerging risk by practitioners outside of Children's Services. Currently, this data is not recorded centrally.

Risk Level	CSE	CE	Both	None	Not Known	TOTAL
1. Emerging/Reducing risk of criminal/sexual exploitation	1	2	0	2	0	5
2. Moderate risk of criminal/sexual exploitation	7	18	8	4	0	37
3. Significant risk of criminal/sexual exploitation	4	11	8	0	0	23
TOTAL	12	31	16	6	0	65

(Fig 6 –All children (open to Children's Services) assessed as at risk as of 10.11.19)

- 4.8 We can also report on age and gender of the children assessed at risk at the end of a defined period; with 15-year-old males again being most at risk of CE. 15-year-old females are the likely to be at risk of both CSE and CE.

Gender	Age	CSE	CE	Both	None	Not Known	TOTAL
1. Male	12	0	2	0	0	0	2
1. Male	13	0	1	0	0	0	1
1. Male	14	0	8	0	1	0	9
1. Male	15	0	10	0	0	0	10
1. Male	16	0	4	1	0	0	5
1. Male	17	0	4	2	1	0	7
2. Female	11	1	1	0	0	0	2
2. Female	12	1	0	1	1	0	3
2. Female	13	1	0	0	1	0	2
2. Female	14	4	0	2	1	0	7
2. Female	15	2	1	6	1	0	10
2. Female	16	2	0	2	0	0	4
2. Female	17	1	0	2	0	0	3
TOTAL		12	31	16	6	0	65

(Fig 7 –Age/Gender of children and young people assessed as at risk on 10.11.19)

5. Update on previous plan presented to CPB

Action	Responsible Manager/s	Completion Date	Expected Outcome	Actual Outcome
MASH Audit of RHIs	Maggie Aldwell	30.08.19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased understanding of the decline rate of RHIs offered Increased understanding of timeliness issues 	<p>Completed. General findings where reasons are recorded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reason for the decision to decline an RHI is not always recorded RHIs are often declined by young people who frequently go missing. The young people generally give no reason other than they don't want to meet or see no benefit to them. There are usually robust attempts to engage the young person, including visits to schools Alternative methods for conducting the interview i.e. over the phone, or another person having the conversation are not explored
Discussion with Dorset Police to understand the delays in notifications being sent to Children's Services and resolve the issues	Maggie Aldwell	30.08.19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved notification and RHI timeliness 	Brief discussion took place but did not result in a conclusion. Further discussions to take place.
RHI Options Review to be discussed	Maggie Aldwell/Tanya Hamilton-Fletcher/Mary Taylor	30.09.19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A decision made on how RHIs are managed for children placed outside of Dorset that ensures timely and independent interviews are consistently taking place. 	It had not been possible to fully review this due to the work completed for Blueprint for Change. However, as a temporary measure, the dedicated RHI workers will undertake telephone RHIs with young people placed outside of Dorset. Where concerns are noted, an immediate visit will be arranged by the allocated worker.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 We continue to build on the significant progress in the work across the partnership in assessing and understanding the risks to children and young people at risk of criminal exploitation. The number of MACE Meetings and reviews being held has increased significantly although we would want to see more meetings taking place, meetings being timelier and evidence of reducing risk.
- 6.2 We continue to offer RHIs to most children reported as missing and when an RHI was not offered, this was a decision made in the best interests of the young person. The decline rate remains stubbornly low and this needs to be a priority action for the coming months.
- 6.3 Timeliness of RHIs also needs to improve and we need to work with Police colleagues to ensure that notifications are sent though quickly enough to allow the visits to take place in good time.

7. Actions

Action	Responsible Manager/s	Completion Date	Expected Outcome
Updating Audit of RHIs	Susan Blizzard	31.12.19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased understanding of the decline rate of RHIs offered Increased understanding of timeliness issues Consideration of offering RHIs more flexibly
Further discussions with Dorset Police about the timeliness of notifications	Susan Blizzard	30.11.19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased timeliness of reports and therefore RHIs completed

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