



Corporate Parenting Board

Date: Thursday, 22 July 2021

Time: 5.00 pm

Venue: Committee Room 1, County Hall, Dorchester,
Dorset, DT1 1XJ

Membership: (Quorum 3)

Kate Wheller (Chairman), Richard Biggs (Vice-Chairman), Ryan Holloway, Carole Jones, Stella Jones, Andrew Kerby and Cathy Lugg

Chief Executive: Matt Prosser, County Hall, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1XJ

**For more information about this agenda please contact Megan Rochester,
Democratic Services Officer Apprentice Tel: 01305 224709 -
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Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting with the exception of any items listed in the exempt part of this agenda. Please note that if you attend a committee meeting and are invited to make oral representations your name, together with a summary of your comments will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

Please refer to the guide to public participation at committee meetings for more information about speaking at meetings and further details are set out below about speaking at Cabinet.

Recording, photographing and using social media at meetings

Dorset Council is committed to being open and transparent in the way it carries out its business whenever possible.

A G E N D A

Page No.

1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

To elect a Chairman for the year 2021/2022.

2 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

To elect a Vice-Chairman for the year 2021/2022.

3 APOLOGIES

To note any apologies for the meeting.

4 MINUTES

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 29 April.

5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To disclose any pecuniary, other registrable or non-registrable interests as set out in the adopted Code of Conduct. In making their decision councillors are asked to state the agenda item, the nature of the interest and any action they propose to take as part of their declaration.

If required, further advice should be sought from the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting.

6 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

To receive questions or statements on the business of the committee from town and parish councils and members of the public.

The deadline for submission of the full text of a question or statement is 8.30am on Monday 19 July 2021.

Details of the Council's procedure rules can be found at: [Public Participation - Dorset County Council \(dorsetcouncil.gov.uk\)](http://dorsetcouncil.gov.uk)

7 INTRODUCTION AND SCENE SETTING (17:05)

Theresa Leavy, Executive Director Children to set the scene of the meeting.

8 INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER'S ANNUAL REPORT 2020 - 2021 (17:10) 5 - 40

Jane MacLennan, Quality Assurance Manager to lead the report.

9 ANNUAL LADO REPORT (17:30) 41 - 56

Laura Ketchen, Quality Assurance Manager to report.

10 PRIVATE FOSTERING ANNUAL REPORT (17:50) 57 - 68

To receive a report from Paula Golding Head of Locality & Strategy.

11 FINAL OFSTED REPORT HAYESWOOD (18:10) 69 - 84

Paula Bates, Service Manager Harbour & Residential to report.

12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING (18:20)

To confirm details and deadlines for papers for the next meeting of the (formal) Corporate Parenting Board which will be held on Monday 11 October.

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Corporate Parenting Board Thursday 22 July 2021 Quality Assurance & Reviewing Officer (QARO) Annual Report 2020/2021

For Review and Consultation

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

Local Councillor(s):

Executive Director: T Leavy, Executive Director of People - Children

Report Author: Jane MacLennan
Title: Quality Assurance Manager
Tel: 01305221351
Email: jane.maclennan@dorsetcc.gov.uk

Report Status: Public

Recommendation:

Members are requested to note the content and actively consider and comment upon the strengths and future recommendations.

Reason for Recommendation:

To be assured that the report has identified the strengths and areas for development that will strengthen the work we do as corporate parents. To ensure children and young people in Dorset will be happy, safe and have opportunities to reach their goals.

1. Executive Summary

This Annual Quality Assurance & Reviewing Officer (QARO) Report provides quantitative and qualitative evidence relating to the QARO Services in the Dorset Council area as required by statutory guidance. The Annual Report must be presented to Corporate Parenting Board and the Safeguarding Children Partnership.

2. Financial Implications

N/A

3. Well-being and Health Implications

None identified

4. Climate implications

None identified

5. Other Implications

There has been an ongoing impact due to the restrictions in place as a direct result of the Covid 19 pandemic and the way we have been able to implement our statutory duties.

6. Risk Assessment

Not applicable

7. Equalities Impact Assessment

Not applicable

8. Appendices

Appendix one: IRO 2021 report final

9. Background Papers

None

Footnote:

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.



Dorset Council: Quality Assurance & Reviewing Officer (QARO) Annual Report 2020/2021

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1. Introduction

- 1.0 This annual Quality Assurance Reviewing Officer (QARO) report provides evidence relating to the wider Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) role within the Quality Assurance Reviewing Officer Service in Dorset Council. It covers the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, as required by statutory guidance.
- 1.1 The information and data describe a developing and quality service which continues to support good outcomes for children and young people in care in Dorset. Within this report are examples of QARO work with children, as well as detailed charts showing key information.
- 1.2 This collaborative approach to working enables the service to work alongside our Corporate Parenting Board, our Children in Care Council and Dorset's Safeguarding Children's Partnership.
- 1.3 We continue to believe that a person centred, relational approach is more effective in improving the experiences and outcomes for our children in care and that this can be achieved alongside robust escalations and challenge.
- 1.4 The report includes a profile of the service, which continues to see minimal staff changes throughout the year and enables consistency for our children and young people. We have secured permanent appointments for both QARO and QA manager during the year and have had the consistency of an interim manager working alongside the permanent QARO manager for a seamless handover and transition period.
- 1.5 Sickness absence has been a challenge during some periods of the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite this we have managed to maintain a consistent and effective service throughout the unprecedented last 12 months. Average caseloads for QAROs are no higher than 70 for full time and 35 for part-time staff. The report identifies the importance of supervision and peer support, alongside training and reflective practice to maintain the professional development of the team.
- 1.6 This report considers in detail the profile of our children in care, including their age, gender and ethnic background, the length of time in care, legal status, and type of placement.
- 1.7 In the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, the QARO service completed a total of 1397 child in care reviews with 96.28% completed within timescales. Just over 91% of children aged 4 and over participated fully in their reviews.
- 1.8 The report highlights the development of our escalation process and evidence that this is becoming embedded in practice and having a positive impact on outcomes for our children and young people. The service escalated 208 concerns over the 12-month period. 28% were concluded informally, 52% reached stage 1 (team manager), 16% resolved by stage 2 (service manager) and just 4% required escalation to Stage 3 (Head of Locality). There were no escalations to the Corporate Director or Executive Director within this period. Learning from any themes identified are explored within this report.
- 1.9 The quality of care planning within Dorset is informed by data and service audits. QAROs provide a level of stability and continuity for many children in care and this report provides examples of QAROs supporting children and young people through care planning and the difficulties and uncertainties some of our children are faced with. There is increasing evidence of the "QARO

“footprint” and oversight on our children’s records, alongside the audit outcomes which are used to inform and improve QARO practice as well as support wider improvements across Dorset Council Children’s services.

- 1.10 The QARO service, like the rest of the Council and its partners, has needed to adapt quickly to the changing situation linked to the Covid-19 pandemic. This has resulted in a high number of reviews being held remotely via a range of technologies. Where it has been safe and following a clear risk assessment, child in care reviews (CICRs) and visits to children and young people by their QARO have continued throughout the pandemic to maintain “business as usual” for our most vulnerable children and young people.
- 1.11 The report concludes with a summary of achievements & progress made over the last 12 months as well as details of our service intentions for the forthcoming year (2021/22).

2. Purpose of Service & Legal Context:

- 2.1 The QARO service is set within the framework of the IRO Handbook (2010), linked to the Revised Care Planning Regulations and Guidance (April 2011).
- 2.2 The QARO has a key role in relation to the promotion and improvement of Care Planning for Children in Care and for challenging drift and delay in their care and permanence planning. A key task for the QARO is to build relationships with children, young people, family network and professionals to enhance effective decision making and care planning to establish positive outcomes. The Handbook sets out the requirement for the QARO service to produce an annual report and the legal context and the purpose of the service.
- 2.3 The functions and requirements of the IRO function within our QARO service are:
 - All Children in Care should have a named QARO who, as far as possible, remains a consistent figure in the child’s life, during their journey through care.
 - There should be the same QARO for sibling groups where possible.
 - The QARO should chair the child or young person’s Child in Care Reviews
 - Promote, and ensure that due regard is given to the voice of the child in their care plan, permanence plan and care arrangements.
 - Ensure that plans for the child are based on a detailed and informed assessment, which is up to date, effective and provides a real and genuine response to each child’s needs.
 - Meet with the child and consult with him or her, making sure that the child understands what is happening to them, can make a genuine contribution to plans, fully understands the implications of any changes, and understands how an advocate could help, and his/her entitlement to this, and legal advice.
 - Be aware of, and if necessary, take action to prevent any unnecessary delay in care and permanence planning for children in care and the delivery of services to them.
 - Have an overview of the Local Authority as a corporate parent in ensuring that care plans have given proper consideration and weight to the child’s wishes and feelings.
 - To provide challenge and support to social workers and their managers to ensure the best life chances for children and young people.
 - To have an effective means of challenging the Local Authority, including a

Dispute Resolution Procedure, with the ability to convey concerns to CAFCASS and access to independent legal advice

- 2.4 The roles and responsibilities of the IRO are defined by:
- The Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 (ref section 7)
 - The Children Act 1989
 - The Human Rights Act 1998
 - The Adoption and Children Act 2002
 - The Children Act 2004
 - The Children and Young People's Act 2008
 - Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010
 - QARO Handbook 2010 (implemented 1 April 2011)

3. Professional Profile of Dorset Quality Assurance Reviewing Officer (QARO) Service

- 3.1 The QARO Service sits within the Quality Assurance & Partnerships area of Children's Services. It has core responsibility for reviewing care plans for children in care and monitoring and challenging the Local Authority in respect of its corporate parenting and safeguarding responsibilities.
- 3.2 The QAROs are independent but remain managed within Children's Services. They hold no line management responsibility for any children in care. They are qualified experienced social workers with significant children's social work and Team Management experience. Each QARO has links to a locality within Dorset which enables relational practice and consistency for all our staff & partner agencies.
- 3.3 The IRO element of the QARO Service continues to be separate to the Child Protection Conference Service. We are working towards QAROs having a caseload of both child protection and children in care. By having responsibility for the chairing and oversight of child protection alongside children in care, we believe this will enable sustained capacity to strengthen identity, culture, and working practice across the service. This also enhances the independent challenge required and strengthens the skill set of QAROs to provide a service in line with the IRO handbook.
- 3.4 The IRO function of the QARO service has a staffing configuration of 8.6 FTE staff at Team Manager Level (Grade 13) with a QARO Manager (Grade 14), overseen by Head of Service (Grade 17). On 31 March 2021 there were 10 QAROs of mixed gender (3 males, 7 females) and ethnicity. The diversity of the workforce potentially enables a better awareness and understanding of the potential discrimination that children in care may face. The QAROs consider and promote the different needs of children, to ensure that their care plan addresses their specific identity including ethnicity and diversity needs. Since October 2020 the workforce has been stable, with all QAROs being permanent employees of Dorset Council.

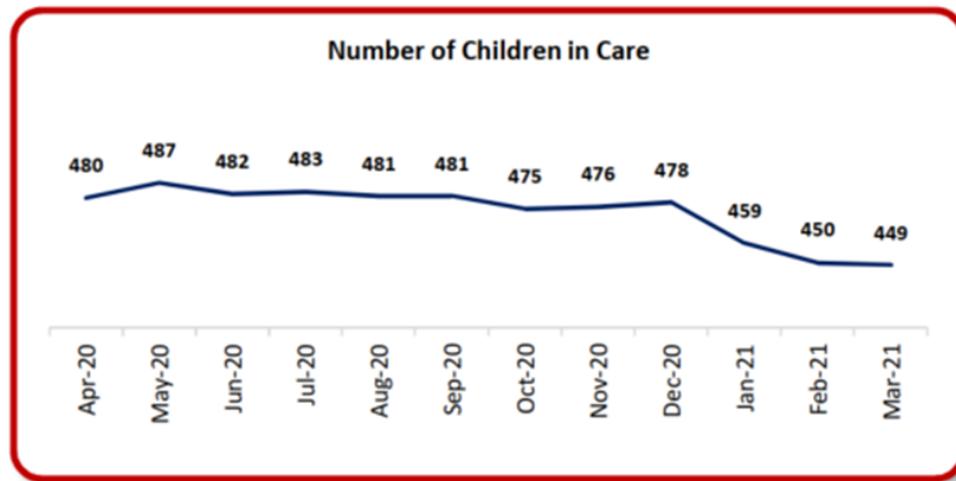
4. National, Regional and Local Links:

- 4.1 The Quality Assurance manager meets every 3 months with IRO & child protection managers from the South West region. This has been of particular benefit throughout the Covid pandemic where we have maintained reflective and peer support and shared changes to practice and procedures.
- 4.2 The CAFCASS (Child & Family Court Advisory Services) manager meets monthly with the Heads of Service. Alongside this there is direct communication and liaison between the QARO and CAFCASS officers for those children where there are care proceedings. Communication between the CAFCASS and QARO managers is currently informal, with the expectation that there will be increased opportunities for joint working and collaboration over the next 12 months.
- 4.3 The service has sought to maintain direct working relationships and links with the social work services (albeit virtually) over the last 12 months. The Director, Head of Locality and Service Managers regularly attend relevant senior management meetings and events held by the Council. Each QARO has a direct link to the locality teams across Dorset. This has enabled them all to develop professional working relationships & improve communication between the 2 services. The QARO can share performance data, audit outcomes, and offer consultations to a range of professionals working within the localities.
- 4.4 Liaison with our partner agencies in Health and Education continues to be a priority for the service. We have a professional working relationship with the Children in Care virtual schools service and Children In Care nurses. This includes meetings between managers & attendance at team meetings to promote partnership working.
- 4.5 The service has monthly Quality assurance meetings (QPAG) attended by the Corporate Director of Children's services, Heads of Service, Heads of Locality, Service managers and Locality Education Leads, alongside the QA managers. This has enabled a wider awareness and understanding of the QARO role and contributes to the discussions and analysis of the Council's performance and key priorities. QAROs continue to routinely contribute to the Council's practice evaluation and learning processes.

5. Quantitative information - Children in Care Population

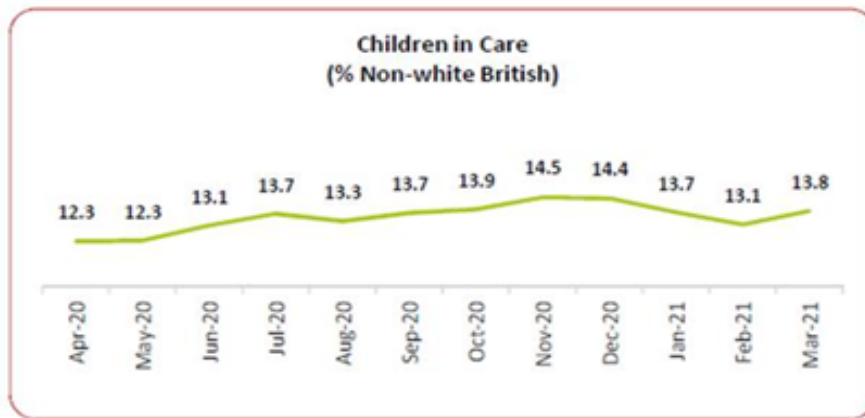
- 5.1 As at 31 March 2021, Dorset Council had corporate parenting responsibility for 449 children and young people. This is a reduction of 31 over the last 12 months. The reduction in children in care numbers can be attributed to preventative work at early intervention to maintain children & young people to remain within their family, a number of our young people have turned 18, some have been reunified with family members or have achieved permanency through adoption or special guardianship orders. We are continuing to work hard to enable children and young people to either remain with or return to their birth families, when it is safe to do so.
- 5.2 On 31 March 2021, 51% of our children in care had a SEN. 34% of these children & young people had an EHCP and 18% received SEN support from their school. 56% of the children in care with a SEN were male and 41% female. 5% of the young people in care were not in Education Employment or Training (NEET).

Fig 1: Indicates the reduction in Children in Care between April 20 and March 21.



- 5.3 14% of the children in care population are from black and minority ethnic groups. We have seen a small increase of 1.5% in the last 12 months and reflects the increase in diversity of Dorset school age population.

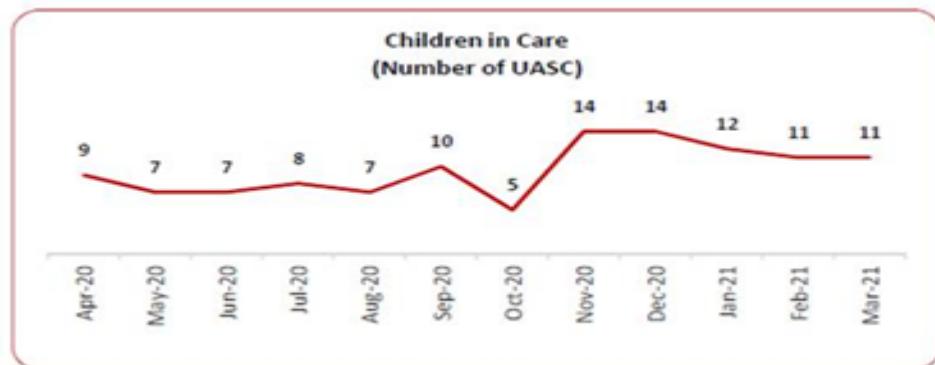
Fig 2: Shows a graph of % of Children in Care who are white non-British



- 5.4 Dorset has a small number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children which makes up 2% of the Children in Care population. Nationally unaccompanied asylum-seeking children represent around 6% of all Children in Care and are usually male, with absent parenting identified as the main category of need. We are acutely aware that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children may be amongst the most traumatised & vulnerable children our service works with. The QARO provides independent oversight and challenge (where needed) to ensure the children have the right support at the right time to help them to adjust and start to rebuild their lives. This includes the need for any specific psychological or mental health support and giving regard to the young

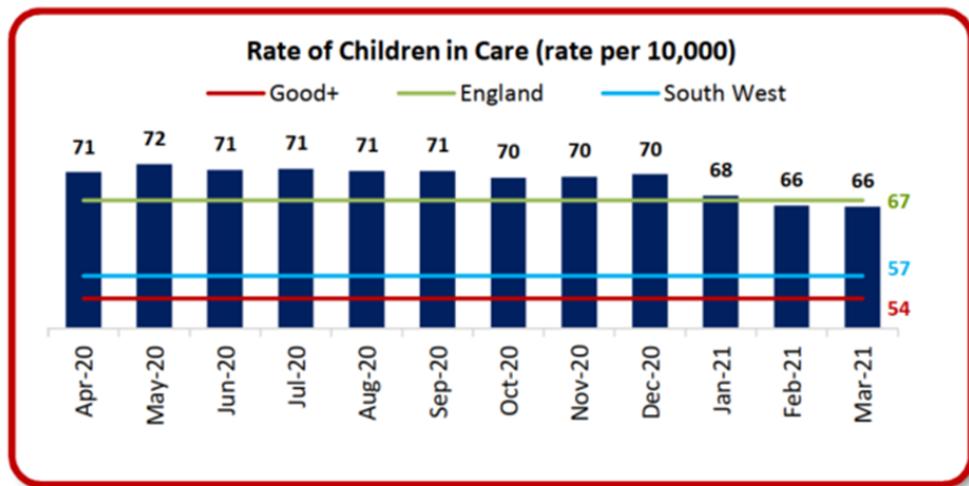
person's age and independent living skills when considering the intensity of support and intervention required.

Fig 3: Indicates the change in numbers of our unaccompanied asylum-seeking children over the last 12 months.



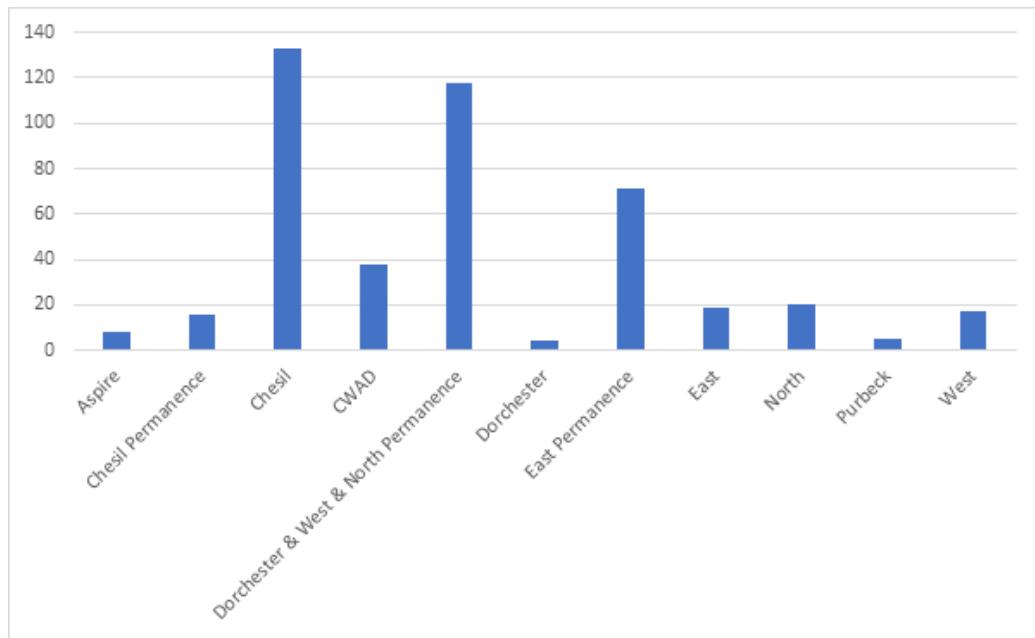
- 5.5 As of 31 March 2021, the rate of Children in care in Dorset was 66 per 10,000 population. This has reduced from 71 in April 2020 and been relatively consistent for the last quarter (January-March 21). It is positive that this is just below the National average (67 per 10,000) but significantly higher than our statistical neighbours' in the South West, which is a rate of 57 per 10,000.

Fig 4: Shows the rate of CIC per 10,000 for Dorset and comparison locally and nationally.



- 5.6 Noting the comparisons for Dorset Council with national, regional, and statistical neighbour figures, there is also some considerable difference across the Council's locality/areas. Fig 5 highlights the areas with the highest number of children in care.

Fig 5: Indicates numbers of Children in care per locality area (31.3.21)



- 5.7 Dorset has a higher number of males (57%) in care, compared to females (43%). Both figures have remained consistent from last year. There is no current data available for those children and young people who are non-binary.
- 5.8 Of the 449 children in care across Dorset the highest proportion of children are within the 16 years+ age range, making up 25% of the overall Children in Care population. 30% of Children in Care are age 0-9 years with 50% of the population being between the ages of 10 to 15.

Fig 6: Ages & percentage of CIC in Dorset on 31.3.2021

Age	0-4	5-9	10-12	13-15	16+
Number	71	63	100	104	111
% 2021	16%	14%	22%	23%	25%
% 2020	18%	16%	19%	24%	23%

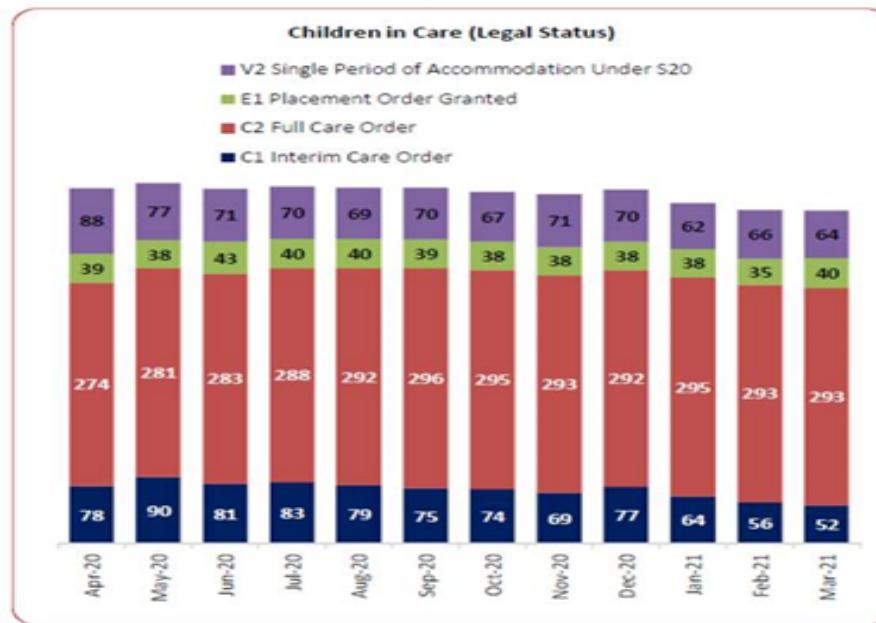
- 5.9 National data as a comparison is only available for the previous year (2020). This child in care data indicates a 2% overall increase in children in care, with the general characteristics for CLA (children looked after) similar to the previous year (2019) 56% are male, 39% age between 10-15 years and 74% were of white ethnic origin. When comparing Dorset against this data we have a reduction in CIC by 6.3%. 57% male, 45% age between 10-15 years and 86% of our CIC population are white ethnic origin.

5.10 The table below and chart (Fig: 7) shows a snapshot of the CIC population on 31 March 2021 by legal status. This shows that most of Dorset's children and young people are in care subject to a legal order, compared to through a voluntary arrangement (S20) with their parents. There has been a noticeable change in the legal status of CIC in recent years. Both the number and proportion of CIC under care orders have increased, with those in care under voluntary arrangements decreased. This reflects the family court ruling in 2015 with advice and guidance from the judiciary in respect of the use of Section 20, which is now firmly embedded in practice.

CIC legal orders: Number, % and comparison with National average 2020.

Order detail	Number March 2021	Percentage March 2021	National % March 2020
Interim Care Order	52	12%	N/A
Care order	293	65%	77%
Placement order	40	9%	6%
Voluntary/Section20	64	14%	17%

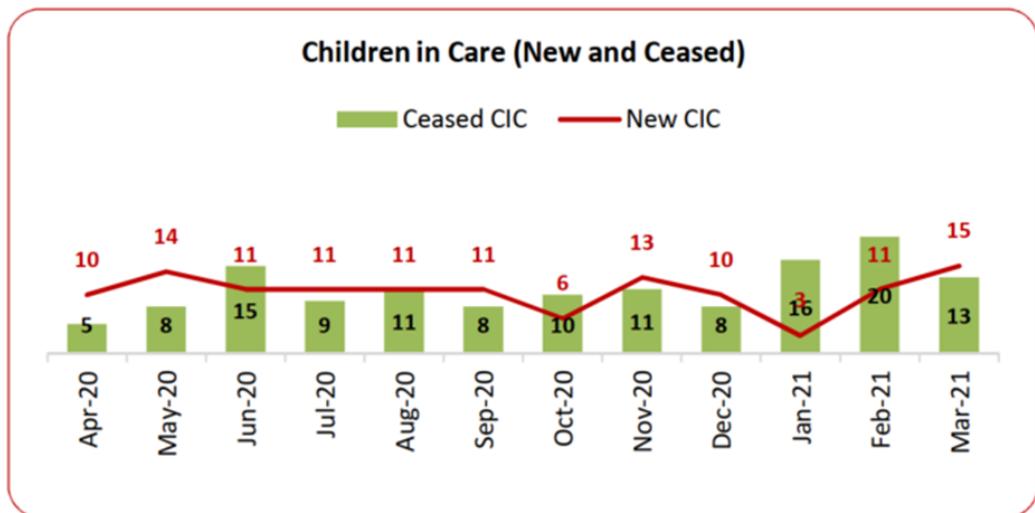
Fig 7: Snapshot of CIC by legal orders.



5.11 The total number of new admissions into care between 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 was 126. This is 28% of the total CIC population. With a total of 134 ceasing to be in care for the same period. This shows an overall reduction in our CIC numbers. It is significant to note that in the

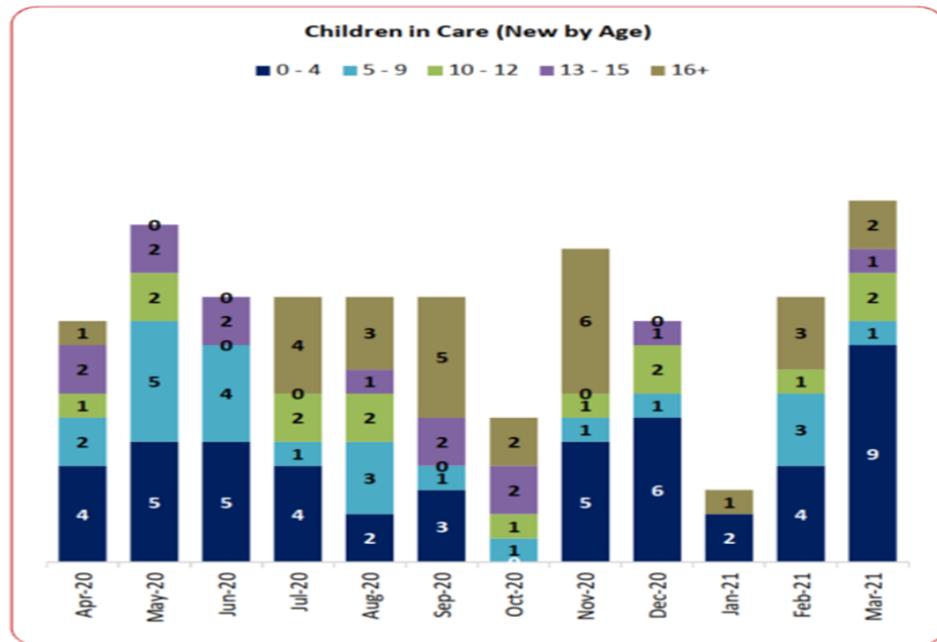
period of national lockdown the numbers of those coming into care remained stable at 11 for a period of 4 months.

Fig: 8 Shows the number of children entering and leaving care.



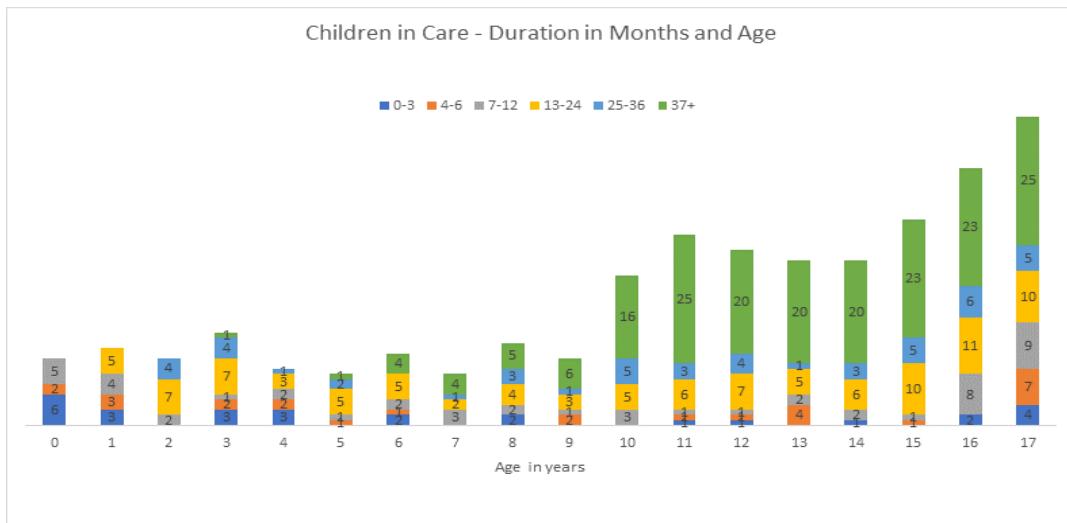
- 5.12 We have seen an increase in the number of 0-4-year olds coming in to care and a reduction of 5-9-year olds which is a similar pattern to that in 2019/20. When comparing to National statistics of Children in Care in England, the age of those coming into care appear to be more evenly spread with 26% 0-4, 16% 5-9, 27% aged between 10-15 years and 20% aged 16 and over.

Fig: 9 Indicates new into care by age.



5.13 Of those in care on 31 March 2021 (Fig 10) and the following chart clearly highlights the high proportion of children remaining in care the longest. 172 children age 10 year+ have remained in care for longer than 37 months. This accounts for 38% of the total CIC population for Dorset. It is important to note that this also represents stability and permanency for several children.

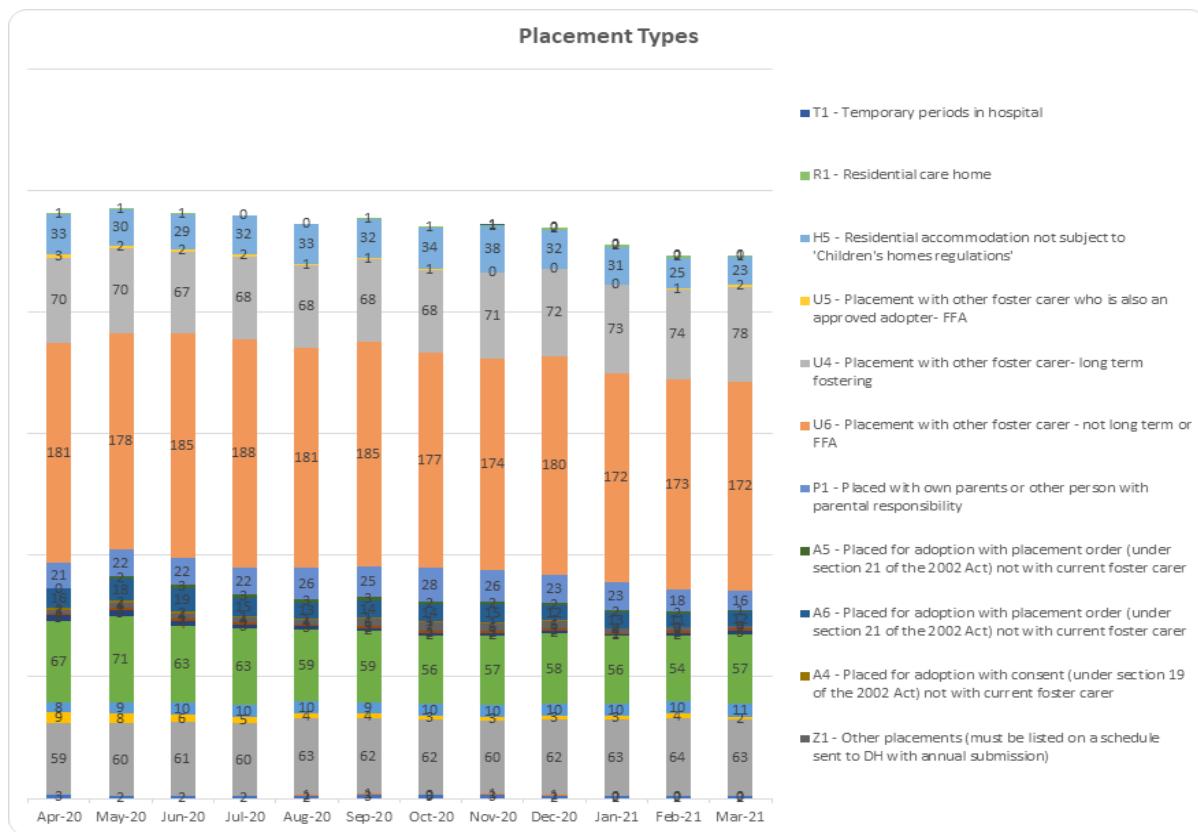
Fig 10: Records CIC ages and duration.



Age in years	Duration in Months					
	0-3	4-6	7-12	13-24	25-36	37+
0	6	2	5			
1	3	3	4	5		
2			2	7	4	
3	3	2	1	7	4	1
4	3	2	2	3	1	
5		1	1	5	2	1
6	2	1	2	5		4
7			3	2	1	4
8	2		2	4	3	5
9		2	1	3	1	6
10			3	5	5	16
11	1	1	1	6	3	25
12	1	1	1	7	4	20
13		4	2	5	1	20
14	1		2	6	3	20
15			1	10	5	23
16	2		8	11	6	23
17	4	7	9	10	5	25

- 5.14 On 31 March 2021, the majority (79%) of our children are placed within a family. 57% are placed with foster carers, 15% placed with family/friends who are approved carers, 3% placed for adoption and 4% are placed with their own parents. The remaining 20% of our CIC population covers; 15% of our children who are placed in a residential setting, 1% who are living independently (with support) and the remaining 5% are made up through small numbers in hospital or parent and child placements.

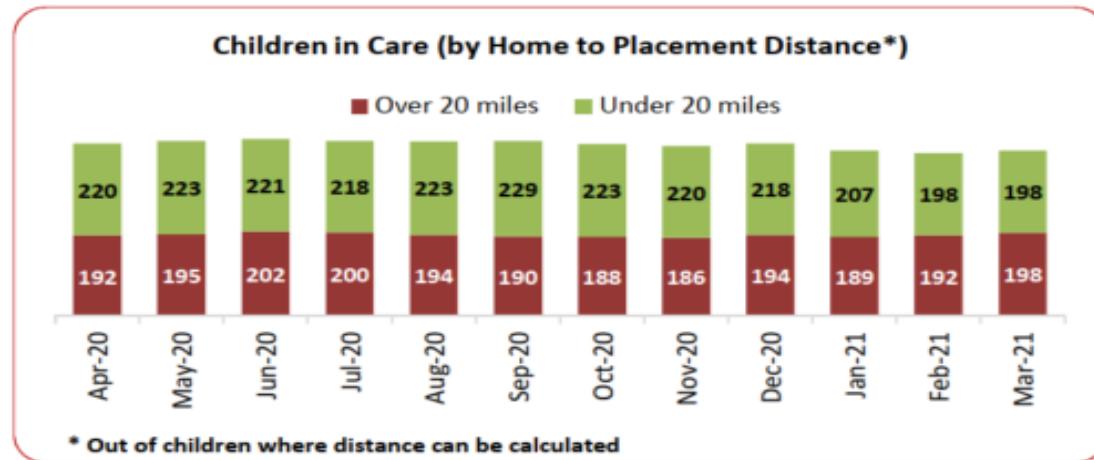
Fig 11: Placement profile for CIC



- 5.15 On 31 March 2021, 50% of children in care in Dorset were living in accommodation within 20 miles of their home address. This has been identified as an area of priority and efforts are being made through our permanency tracking and line of sight meetings to enable our children and young people to return to the local area. Whilst arrangements were in place for several young people, plans have been postponed due to the impact of Covid and the need for some of our young people to complete their education, which would be otherwise disrupted. We are confident that this figure will increase over the coming months.

Fig 12: Details of placements in/out of Dorset.

5.16



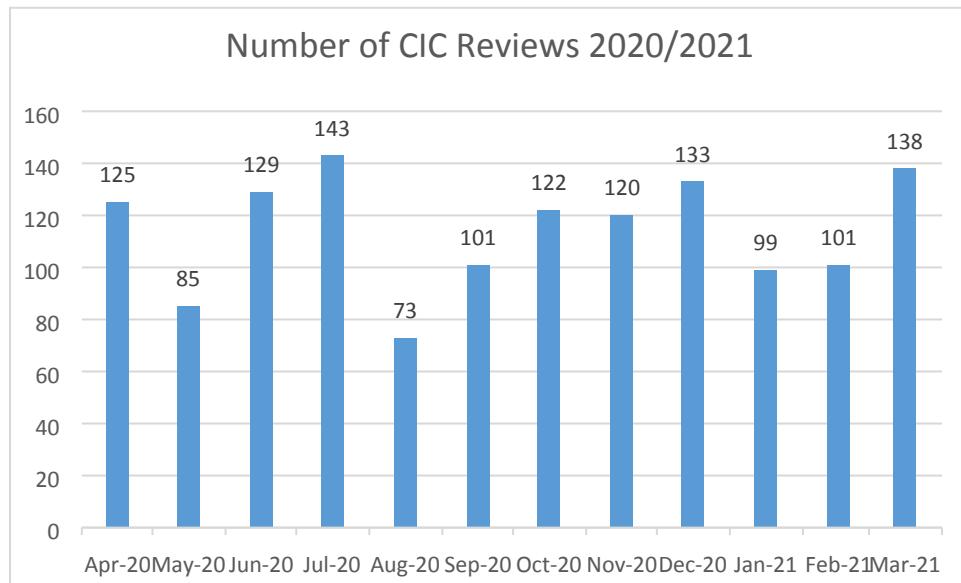
On 31.3.21, 27 young people were placed in an unregulated placement. This is reduction of 25% (total of 9 young people) over the last 12 months. These young people are over the age of 16 requiring support to live independently rather than needing full time care. For those young people in an unregulated provision (such as supported housing) there is a high visiting frequency by the allocated social worker and enhanced monitoring, contact and oversight by the QARO. This is in recognition of the additional needs and vulnerabilities for these young people and a clear commitment that no further young people will be placed in any unregulated provision by Dorset. 2 of the young people had previously been placed in an unregistered provision (arrangements are in place to register this provision). These young people in an unregistered provision have high level of visits from the allocated social worker and QARO, as well as team and senior management oversight. There are currently no children aged under 16 living in unregistered provision.

6. Quantitative information- The QARO Service

- 6.1 Between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021 the QARO service completed a total of 1,369 reviews. This is an increase of 128 reviews compared to the performance data of 2019/20. This figure seems linked to an increase in reviews associated with early care planning, reunification back to birth family and unplanned placement changes for some of our young people. QAROs have continued to seek to address matters of concern through direct communication with social workers and team managers, alongside utilising the escalation process. It is important that the frequency of reviews reflects the need to review and/or change the child or young person's care plan, as opposed to using it as an opportunity for case or care planning meetings. The QAROs are aware of the need to not blur boundaries between case management and oversight and independent review.
- 6.2 On average there are about 114 reviews a month (28-29 a week) with peaks of 143 in July and 138 in March 2021, with less busy months being May and August 2020 with 85 and 73 being held respectively. This variation is largely due to the availability of children, young people, carers, professionals, and family members in holiday periods.

6.3

Fig 13: Detailing number of reviews held



QAROs are required to hold a child's first review within 28 days from the date they came into care, then no later than 3 monthly and 6 monthly thereafter. An important performance measure is for children to have their reviews held within the statutory timescales.

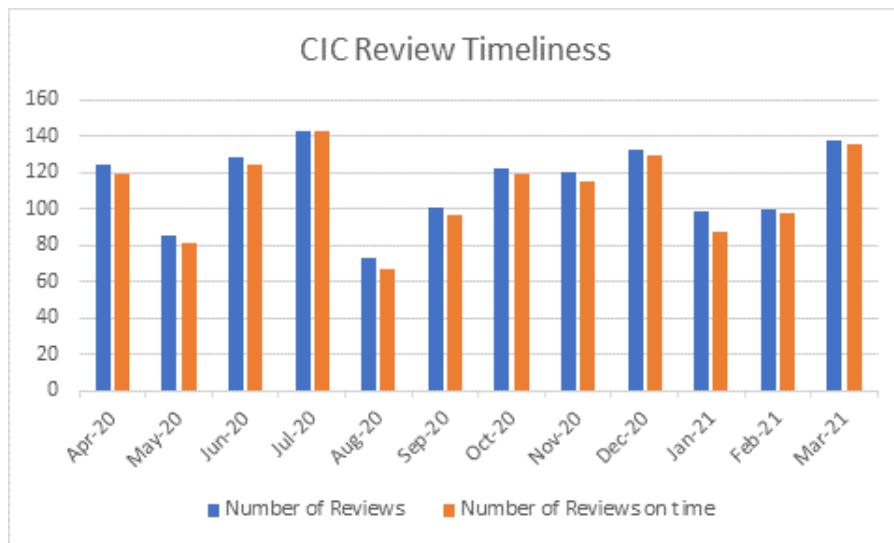
6.4

Over the last 12 months the QAROs have completed on average 96% of reviews on time. Given the level of restrictions in place since April 2020 due to Covid and the impact the pandemic has had on the health and wellbeing of our children, carers, and professionals, as a service we feel this reflects the dedication and hard work of the team.

Details	Number	%
CIC reviews that took place in period	1389	
CIC reviews that took place within timescales	1337	96.26
CIC reviews with completed recommendations	1385	99.71
CIC reviews with completed recommendations within 5 working days of review	944	67.96
CIC reviews that took place in period for children aged 4 and over	1152	82.93
CIC reviews that took place in period for children aged 4 and over who participated	1062	92.19
CIC reviews with full review minutes completed	1325	95.39

CIC reviews with full review minutes completed within 20 working days of review	563	40.53	
Month	Number of Reviews	Number on time	%
Apr-20	125	119	95.20%
May-20	85	81	95.29%
Jun-20	129	124	96.12%
Jul-20	143	143	100%
Aug-20	73	67	91.78%
Sep-20	101	97	96.04%
Oct-20	122	119	97.54%
Nov-20	120	115	95.83%
Dec-20	133	130	97.74%
Jan-21	99	87	87.88%
Feb-21	100	98	98%
Mar-21	138	136	98.55%

Fig 14: Indicates timeliness of Reviews

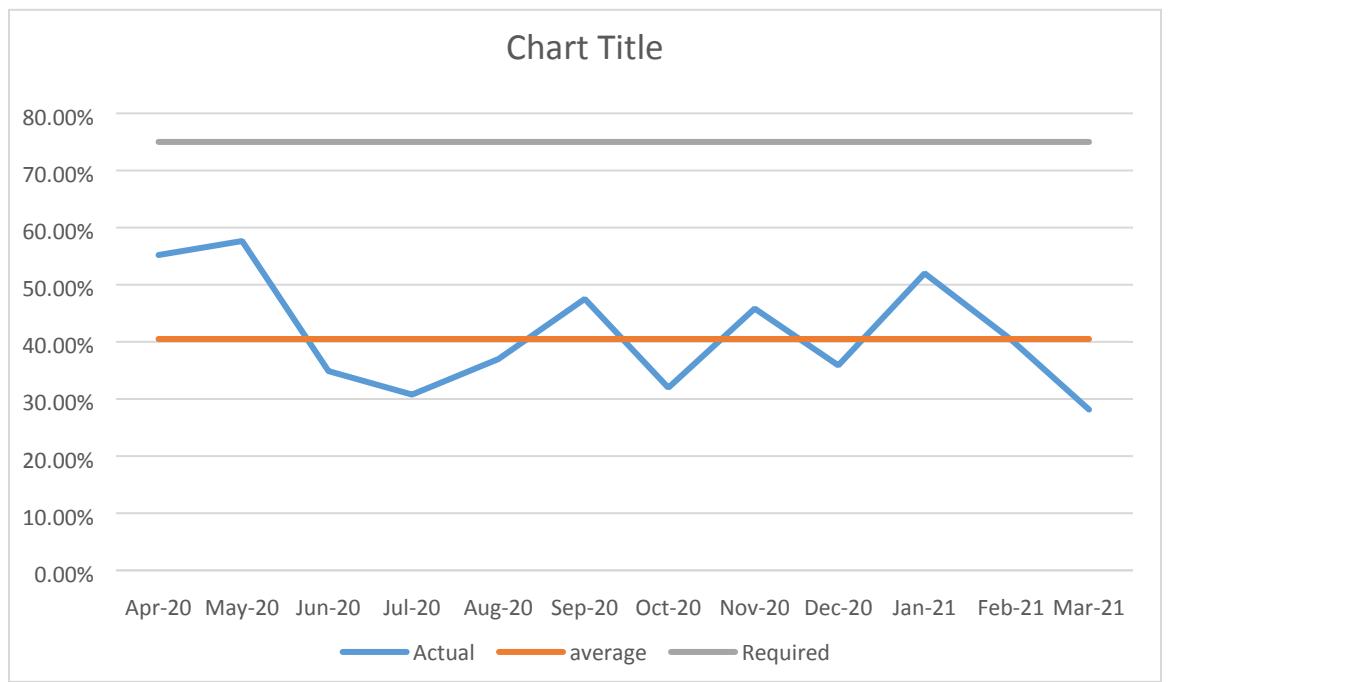


- 6.5 The reviews that have been out of timescale are few (3.74%). There are several reasons for late reviews which include changes of workers, the impact of Covid (health of carers and children/young people), technical difficulties (due to internet and IT for virtual reviews) and parents not being able to attend. This remains a focus for the team and a priority action for the coming year. January 2021 was particularly difficult for completion of reviews on time and correlates to the 3rd lockdown and the decision for schools to remain closed.
- 6.6 The QARO service is notified by the business support central team of children who are likely to or have come into care. This system works well, and children are allocated to a QARO within 5

working days of the notification (usually the same day). The QARO will then liaise with the social worker to arrange a date and time for the review, to ensure it is held within the 28-day statutory requirement. If there are delays in the service receiving the notification, then this will impact on the timescales for allocating to a QARO and arranging the review within timescales.

- 6.7 The performance data for the timeliness of sending out review recommendations and minutes (within 5 and 20 days of the review taking place) is an identified area for improvement. The data recorded does not always reflect actual practice as review dates can be changed but remain within timescales leading to the system not being up to date. This then impacts directly on the data reports for the timeliness of reviews taking place and also the distribution of recommendations and minutes, all within timescales. We are working with our colleagues in business support and data to address this issue so we can be confident in the Corius reporting in this specific area.
- 6.8 It is clear from the diagram below that this performance is inconsistent and is a priority action for the service. We are confident that the impact of the recruitment of a permanent QA manager (in March 2021), weekly highlight reports, QA management oversight and regular tracking, alongside supporting the QAROs through formal supervision will lead to improved performance in this area over the next 6 to 12 months. This will be monitored through the weekly, monthly and data performance reports with regular oversight by the Quality Assurance manager.

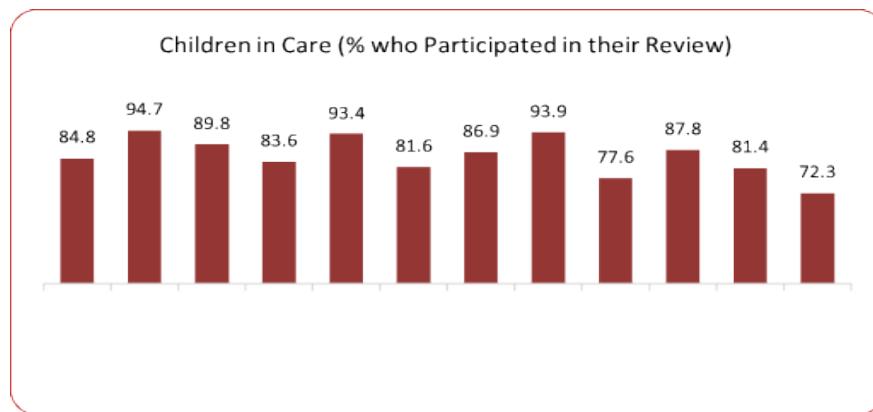
Fig 14: Highlights performance of timeliness of minutes for CIC reviews completed within 20 working days.



7. Children and young people participation

- 7.1 A primary objective of the service is to ensure children are central to decisions about them and that their voice is evident in their care plans. A key element in delivering this objective is the measure of the young person's participation in the Statutory Review of their care plan and care arrangements.
- 7.2 Across the year from April 2020-March 2021, there is no stability in number of children attending their reviews. The data shows that between 72% & 94% of children, & young people (age 4 years +) had attended and participated fully in their review. The 28% who have no apparent voice is a real concern and it should be expected that the QARO is addressing this through their visits to children and young people as well as formally through the escalation process.

Fig 15: Percentage of those participating in reviews.



- 7.3 The overall figure considers the full range of acceptable methods of participation agreed by the DfE (**Fig 15**). All methods of participation add value to the review process and for some young people it can take considerable effort from them and those working with them to achieve it. The move to virtual reviews for some children and young people has enabled full participation in their reviews, when in the past they have chosen not to engage. These forced changes through Covid are areas of practice where we need to consider ways to maintain the level of engagement and improve for others.

Fig 15: Details of DfE participation

Detail	Actions
Child under 4 at time of review	Observations of behaviour, interactions
Child physically attends and speaks for him/herself	Attendance
Child physically attends but advocate speaks for them.	Views represented by advocate or QARO
Child attends and conveys views non-verbally	Symbols, behaviour
Child attends but does not speak, does not convey views and does not ask an advocate to speak on their behalf	Attendance without contribution
Child does not attend but briefs an advocate to speak for them.	Through advocate or QARO Text, phone, audio, video format and written format
Child does not attend but conveys his/her feelings to the review by a facilitative medium	Text, phone, audio, video format and written format with QARO

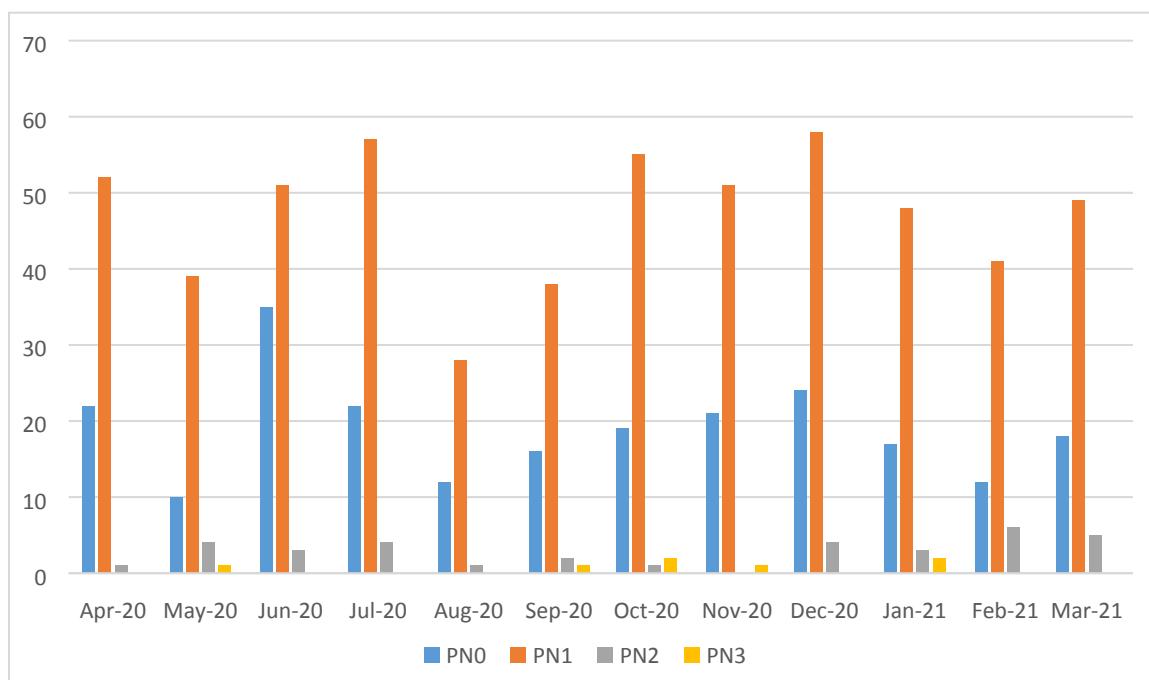
Fig 16: Indicating review participation April 20 to March 21.

PN0: child under 4 at time of review

PN1: child attends & speaks for themselves

PN2: Child attends & advocate speaks for them

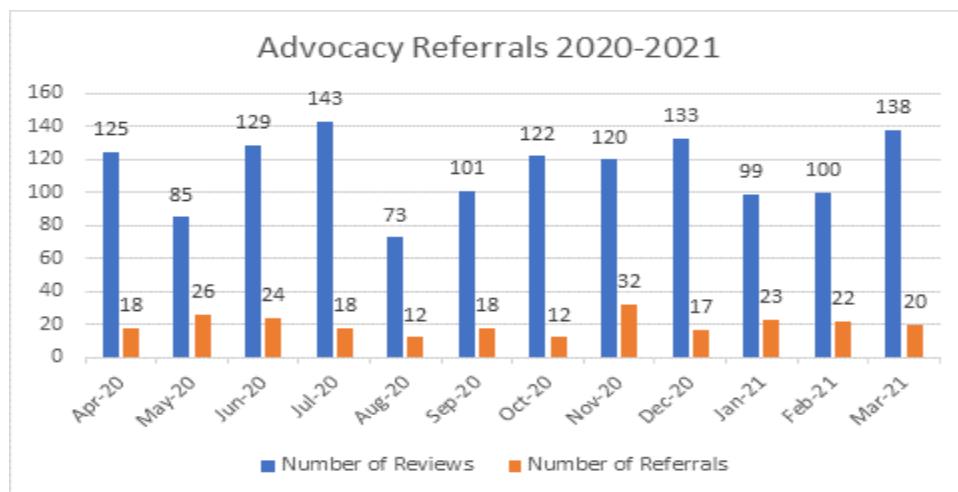
PN3: Child attends and views conveyed non-verbally



- 7.4 When looking further into the ways that children and young people have taken part in their review (Fig16) tells us that 80% of children aged 4 and over either physically attended or participated in their review meeting. It should be noted that Dorset's attendance figures compare favourably with other local authorities in the region.
- 7.5 There is no identified single reason why young people are not motivated to participate in their reviews. We have identified the need to look at ways we can adapt the meetings to become person centred. The QAROs have worked in partnership with young people, social workers, education, and health colleagues to formalise the process for person centred reviews to ensure there is consistency across the service. We will continue to support all of our young people to engage in their review and a key priority remains for their views, thoughts and wishes to be central to any review meeting.
- 7.6 The service continues to provide a robust approach to improving the quality of our records through quality assurance oversight. During the past year, the QAROs continue to develop the quality of their outcomes and recommendations ensuring these are SMART and based on the child's individual needs. The minutes of the meetings continue to be written direct to the child or young person as a letter. This assists in making it person centred, relevant and more accessible to our children & young people now and in the future. This will continue to be implemented to ensure we have a consistent response to our children and young people who are in care.

- 7.7 We recognise the need to improve participation and that further work is required. Linked to understanding the role of the QARO and reviews, as well as reflection with QAROs as to how we are doing and what evidence there is to show how we are all supporting participation and prioritising the voice of the child. The service will need to consider the continuation of the creative use of technologies to enable direct involvement. This has been highlighted through how we have conducted reviews and included children and young people in reviews during the response to the Covid 19 pandemic.
- 7.8 QAROs aspire to conduct reviews at times and venues that will be child focused and maximise children & young people's attendance. They are mindful for the review impact on the child's education or leisure activities. This is not always possible and has proved to be a significant challenge, as this involves the availability of others (including carers) for reviews outside of school hours, as well as being aware of after school time with their families, friends and engaging in out of school activities. The work being undertaken to develop a more relational and person-centred approach to reviews is expected to result in reviews that are more suited to the child or young person (such as venue, times and who to include).
- 7.9 In addition to formal reviews, the service continues to embed progress updates between reviews. We are working towards extending the current informal discussion between social workers and QAROs to include children & young people so that it is the child or young person that guides the direction of the QARO challenge.
- 7.10 Feedback from children and young people is important and needs to be a further focus for the service. We have not been able to establish a specific method for feedback following reviews and we are in the process of developing feedback arrangements for 2021-22.
- 7.11 The use of advocates for children in care needs to increase; the number of referrals made for children over the age of 8, compared to the number of reviews that take place are disproportionate. The data shows that out of 1,368 reviews that have taken place there have been 242 (18%) with an advocate. (Fig 17). A new service provider will be taking over the provision of the advocacy service from June 2021. The service will work closely with them to ensure the access to and take up of advocacy is well embedded.

Fig 17: Number of advocacy referrals and reviews.



- 7.12 Dorset's children in care council has been limited in its activity during the Covid pandemic. The QA managers will attend future meetings (by request) to receive feedback and respond to questions about the role of the QARO and the review process. There will be a clear process of ensuring that feedback from these meetings is shared within the QARO service and any learning/agreed actions are taken forward.

8. Case Studies: participation

Case study- virtual meetings

I have a young person who in the 5 years I have known him has chosen not to attend a review. For his last review we agreed it would be held virtually. Through text messages with the young person (and carer) we agreed who would be invited. This was on the understanding that the young person and the carer would be at home and everyone else would be on the computer. For the first time the young person attended the whole of his review. He decided to turn off the camera but was able to speak and made sure everyone else had their camera on! I am hoping that post Covid we can continue to hold his reviews in this way.

Case study- To encourage child participation,

I always discussed child coming to the review and making sure that they felt comfortable; for 1 boy this meant agreeing that he would chair the meeting and that we would hold a themed review – for him it was Manchester U as he was a devoted fan – I put together a quiz on the knowledge of Man U & agree we were all going to wear a red t-shirt/ something relating to Man U – I had an old Man U T shirt and a small ball which was on display during the online review. He won the quiz hands down and loved it! I do hope that he comes to the next review and co-chairs or chairs it again. For another YP (P) the review was themed around equine/ horse knowledge as that's her passion and college course/ future plan and, again, I prepared a quiz to use during the review to show P's amazing knowledge and skills and celebrate outstanding achievements.

Case study- understanding reviews and listening to young people

The young person had recently come into care and I met with him the day before his first review. I talked about my role as the QARO and gave him my 1-page profile and we went on to think about what his review would be like. He wasn't sure he wanted to come as he didn't want to see or be seen by his Mum. We talked through different ways I could help him manage this and we agreed the meeting would be held virtually. We agreed together that he could sit off camera and the foster carers could mute when he wanted to talk to them, and they would say what he thought. He would also write some things down and send them to me, so I knew what he was thinking. I sent him over the agenda, and he managed the review really well and was able to speak to everyone directly and hear what was being discussed and agreed. He was even able to feedback to me how it wasn't as bad as he thought it was going to be!

Case study- Engagement

I have a dedicated big notebook and pack of coloured gel pens when going to speak with children about their views and wishes – this provides more robust evidence to discuss in the meeting and refer to during the discussion in the meeting.

Using scaling questions – I use it frequently when speaking with children and have also used it in visual form when talking about home life, school and contact on a scale of 0 (don't go there) to 5 (couldn't be better) with children with some autistic features – I kept them for the subsequent visit and it did help to check how things have changed or stayed the same with the scaled responses comparison.

Case study: One- page profile.

I (reluctantly) sent out my 1-page profile to a young person who I had not been able to meet with for several months. I hoped this would encourage & enable them to attend a virtual review. I was surprised by the feedback and how receiving the profile led to the young person asking me some questions & also helped them to know (& remember) what I looked like! I believe this simple tool enabled participation in both the review and sharing their thoughts directly with me prior to the review meeting which was a significant change given the young person's history.

Case study- participation

One of the things I do for all my reviews is have notebooks and pens (colourful or appropriate for the child or young person) that I give to the child. This is for them to keep and enables them to have space to write down anything they want or even use it to doodle. I often find it helps them feel included and the same as the others who often have paper and pen to make notes.

Case study: Voice of the child/young person

The QARO has known E for the last 8 years. She has a high level of needs and requires additional support from her carers. E chooses not to meet with the QARO, and communication has been through letters and cards. She has shared her thoughts through the consultation papers and chooses also not to attend her review meetings. In preparation for the last review the QARO sent a card and a letter explaining the review was coming up and suggested ways she could contribute to the meeting. The QARO was surprised to receive a video from E telling them all about the things she likes doing and what she thinks should be discussed in the meeting. This has highlighted the importance of QARO stability and persistence in getting to know the child or young person as well as being creative in how we encourage and support participation. What we think is the right way to communicate and engage them may not always work! It's important not to give up.

Case study: maintaining contact

For all of my children & young people the way I have developed a relationship with them over the years has been to maintain contact. I will write or send a card when anything significant happens for them and also before their reviews, letting them know I am thinking about them and will be visiting soon. Sometimes this can be a simple "hello I was wondering how you are doing and can't wait to hear all about it when we meet" or for some of my young people "I know things are pretty tough at the moment but I'm really proud of how you have managed, I will be coming to see you soon". It depends on the child, young person and their individual circumstances. I think for some this shows that someone actually really cares and does think about them, which is important.

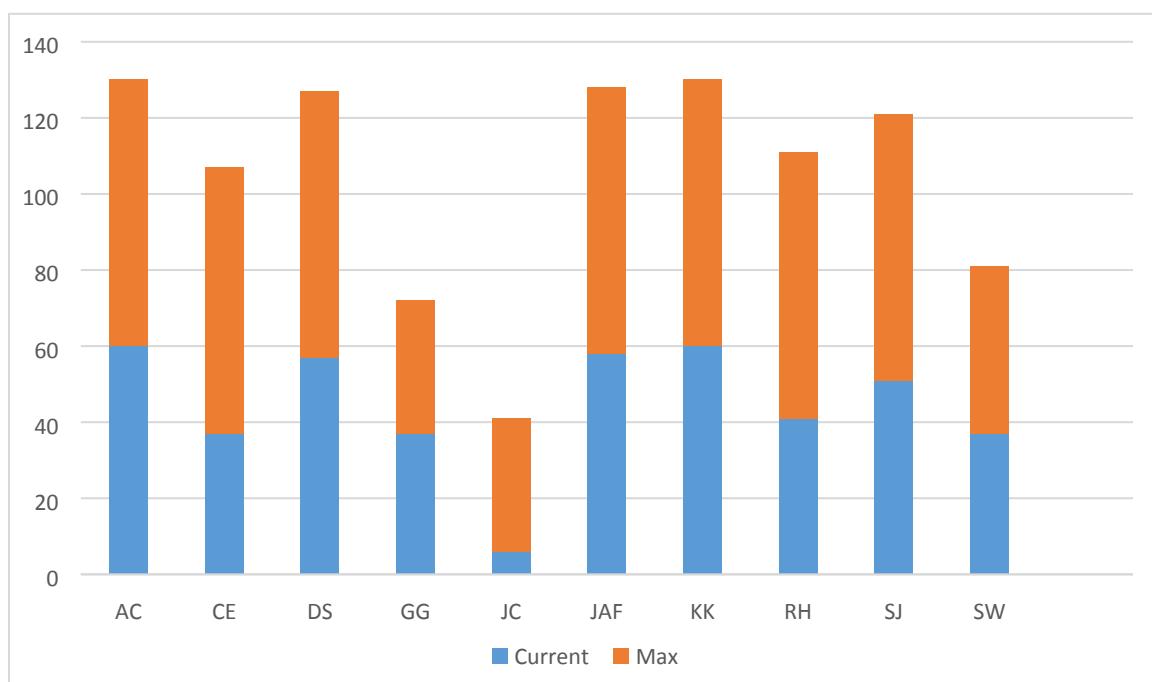
Case study- voice of the child

I am an QARO for a young person who is 10 and needed to move placements. He was told about this and in 1 week he was moved without any preparation. I ensured that for his first review in his new placement he had an advocate and we discussed what he was unhappy about, what he wanted people who made decisions to know and how his advocate could help him with this. In doing this I had supported his participation in the review, enabled him to have a voice and as the QARO supported his views and acknowledge his feelings.

9. Caseloads

- 9.1 It is recommended in the IRO (QARO) Handbook that a caseload of 50 to 70 looked after children (full time equivalent QARO), would represent good practice in the delivery of a quality service and facilitate the full range of functions as set out in the handbook.
- 9.2 The average caseload for a Dorset QARO ranges between 54 and 62. For those that have additional responsibilities (such as the Reg 44 visits) this is significantly lower (around 46). By having a central allocation process this facilitates and maintains a degree of equity in caseloads across the service. We allocate in terms of needs of the child, QARO capacity and worker skills mix, rather than solely on geography.

Fig 18: QARO caseload 31.3.21



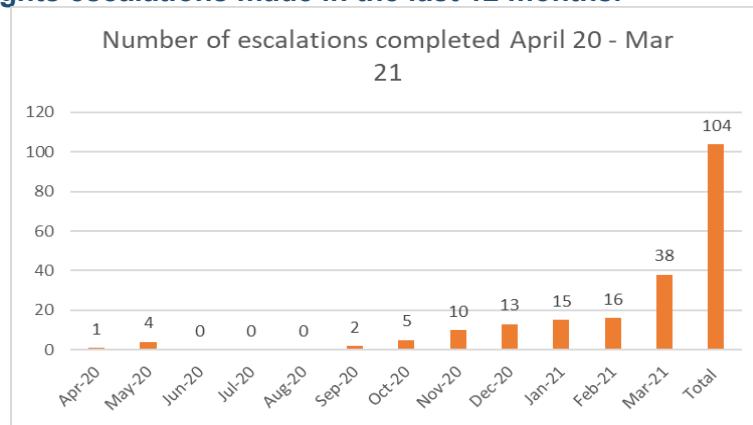
- 9.3 National data (taken from NAIRO benchmarking research) indicates that 16% of QAROs have between 50-60, 42% 60-70, 16% between 70-80 and 11% between 80-90.
- 9.4 Dorset has a commitment to keeping QARO caseloads at 60 or below. This will enable the QARO to have the capacity to meet with their children and young people as and when required, depending upon the individual circumstances. It is important for the QARO to have contact with their children & young people at mid-way points and prior to reviews, working towards progression of review decisions, developing relationships, gaining feedback and overall participation in the process.
- 9.5 Other tasks that QAROs complete include enhanced monitoring visits and contact with young people in unregistered and/or unregulated housing provision, maintaining links with locality

teams, contributing to foster carer reviews as well as auditing and moderating as part of the wider service quality assurance framework.

10. Escalation and dispute resolution

- 10.1 One of the pivotal roles of the QARO is to raise issues affecting a child's care with the social work service where, for example, performance issues, care planning, education and resources are having a negative impact on the child, or that permanence plans are not progressing at pace.
- 10.2 This is an area identified as a key priority and over the last 12 months, work has taken place to establish an escalation and dispute resolution process within Dorset. Fig 18 clearly shows the impact of a review of the process, training, and development of systems to track and record informal and formal escalations. Prior to November 2020, little or no escalations were formally recorded.

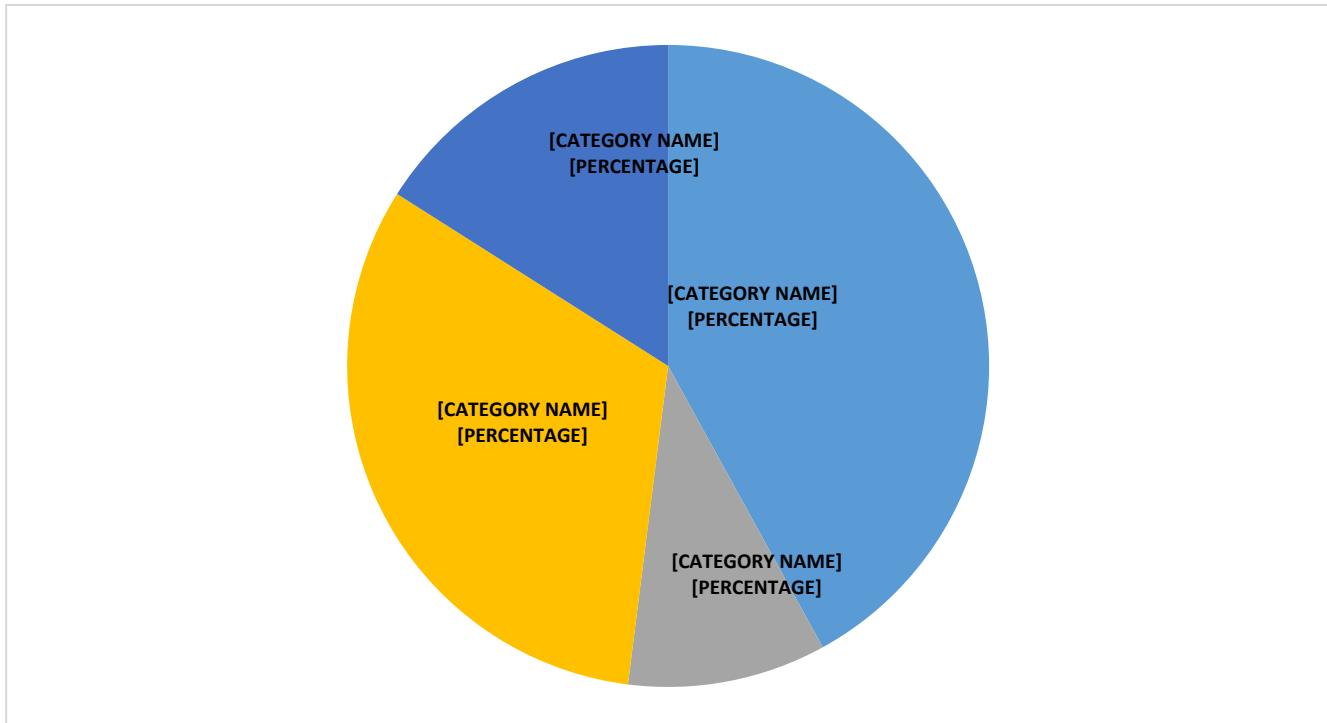
Fig 19: Highlights escalations made in the last 12 months.



- 10.3 There is now an established Dispute Resolution and Escalation process in place. QAROs continue to seek resolutions to issues through dialogue with the social worker or their manager before and at each stage of the procedure, but if no resolution is achieved the problem can and should be escalated to the attention of senior managers and ultimately the Executive Director and/or Cafcass.
- 10.4 Audits of escalations have identified continuing positive outcomes for children from interventions by their named QARO and the use of the escalation process to raise issues of delay or concern. Escalations have been grouped around 4 areas:
- **Permanency:** These made up the highest number of escalations and generally relate to lack of a permanency plan, insufficient permanency planning meetings and delays in children achieving permanency.
 - **Care planning:** These concerns centre around lack of up to date care plans in place, insufficient transition plans & lack of progress in accessing suitable education.
 - **Practice concerns:** Involved the impact of changes or lack of social workers, lack of evidence of supervision and/or sufficient management oversight on the cases between reviews and statutory visiting patterns. This was also highlighted in audits and a supervision tracker is now in place. A further audit of supervision and management oversight completed in April 2021 has shown significant improvements in this area.

- **Drift and delay:** The escalations for this area focuses primarily on delay in applications to court to revoke care and placement orders. Although this is often outside of the control of the Local Authority it is important to continue to raise so that there is evidence when discussing themes and areas of practice with legal services and the local courts.

Fig 21: Percentage of escalations



Case study: escalation education provision

I escalated the issue of lack of suitable education provision for a young person as they had been without a school place for nearly a year. The young person had a diagnosis of high functioning autism but could not cope within a mainstream education setting. In response to the escalation a place was secured within a suitable education provision where he continues to attend with a good chance of now going onto higher education. The escalation has been effective, and the young person is now able to achieve within education which is fantastic.

- 10.5 Oversight of the escalations indicates that all have resulted in the locality teams implementing the advice or recommendations of the QARO. QAROs initially raised a concern about the lack of response to their escalation by team managers. This has been addressed and a system is now in place to ensure that escalations are responded within the timescales or escalated further. This will avoid any further drift or delay for the children and will improve outcomes for our children and young people in care.
- 10.6 The QA manager reviews the escalations on a weekly basis and provides detail of those remaining outstanding to locality team and service managers. Although time consuming, this process is helping to ensure the timeliness of conclusion to formal escalations.

- 10.7 There are some concerns that whilst most escalations are resolved informally or at stage 1, there are some that take considerable time to resolve fully. Often the reasons for this are outside of the control of the locality teams and sometimes even the Local authority. An example of this is with respect to the need to make applications to court to revoke care orders. Through Covid the courts have had restricted sittings, and these have been prioritised for children at risk of immediate harm. Therefore, those children who no longer need to remain in care, or require a change of formal legal status have not been progressed. These situations have the potential to undermine the effectiveness of the process.

Case study: escalation re contact

I escalated issues regarding lack of clear arrangements for the young person to see their family, especially over the Christmas period. This escalation led to further consideration of the changes in the family circumstances and the young person spending time with his Mum at her house over Christmas (although not overnight as requested by the child). There is now a focus on assessing how these arrangements can gradually increase to hopefully overnight and weekend time with his family. Without this escalation I am sure this would not have happened, or at least as quickly!

- 10.8 In addition to the formal Dispute and Escalation Process and in keeping with the service's aim Of developing a high challenge, high support ethos, QAROs are encouraged to add value to planning for children by developing relationships with key partners within the localities. The aspiration is not to formally escalate disputes unnecessarily but to achieve the desired outcomes for children by positively influencing social work practice through dialogue, negotiation, and resolution meetings. Usually this will make resolutions timelier for the child.
- 10.9 Management audits, oversight and Practice Evaluation suggest that recording of the QARO footprint on the child's record is continuing to improve and becoming more consistent. There is still variation on the types of activity QAROs choose to record relating to their involvement between reviews. We are able to identify these issues with individual QAROs to improve practice and development.

11. Qualitative information- The QARO service review and summary of priorities and actions

- 11.1 **Summary of progress from identified actions 2019/20 report:** All but 1 action has been achieved over the last 12 months.
- ❖ **Securing long term permanence for child at an appropriate time** – A Permanence Panel is now established to prevent drift and delay, with senior management oversight. There are clear terms of reference and a focus on all new children in care and those who have been in care for 4 months or longer without a clear plan for permanency.
 - ❖ **IRO practice standards will be introduced**- these are now in place and available on Tri.X (procedures and policies online)
 - ❖ **Identify the QARO for each child & young person**- One-page profiles are routinely sent out to all new children in care prior to the first review.
 - ❖ **Review the Escalation Policy**- There is now a clear process in place. This is supported through the introduction of an escalation form to enable clarity of the key issues, required outcome and timeliness. This enables us to capture and learn from themes and trends identified where we can strengthen quality of practice.

- ❖ ***Identify good practice and learn what we need to strengthen***- This is continuous and part of the QA manager completing themed audits and dip samples as part of the wider service quality assurance framework.
 - ❖ ***Family Group Conferences to be considered earlier in the child's journey***- These continue to take place and are discussed at line of sight meetings and permanence panel to ensure they are considered for every young person.
 - ❖ ***Practice Framework will be delivered***- Training and workstreams alongside monthly reflective practice events enable us to work with our families in a restorative strength-based way. This supports person centred approaches to children in care reviews.
 - ❖ ***To include children from the children in care council as part of the interview process***- This remains outstanding, there has been a review of the children in care council, alongside the impact of Covid-19. It is anticipated that this action will be achieved and integrated into the recruitment process of QAROs from June 2021.
- 11.2 The QARO Service is continuing to make steady and purposeful improvement on many of its key activities. We have embedded previous improvements and demonstrated that the service can sustain these. Children and young people are being provided with a QARO within three working days of coming into care or within 2 days of notification to the service. There have been few changes in QARO allocations and where unavoidable, these have been kept to a minimum.
- 11.3 Most reviews (96%) are being held within timescale and children are being provided with opportunities to contribute to these reviews. A significant number of review records are completed within timescales, with social work managers being advised of recommendations and decisions within the statutory timescale. Despite the further lockdown restrictions throughout 2020 and into the new year of 2021, most children have continued to be seen (face to face) by their QARO, with 72% attending their review meetings.
- 11.4 Dorset Council continues to be challenged through formal and informal escalations, whenever there are concerns about children's care plans not being effective or delays in plans being pursued. In addition to this, the QARO footprint on children's files is now visible. The escalation process is now routinely used, with the team focus being on maintaining this and acting upon disputes effectively and within realistic timescales
- 11.5 QAROs continue to have a specific impact for individual children and young people in supporting them with plans and issues that arise for them. QAROs continue to work collaboratively with those with responsibilities for caring for and working with children and young people in care to improve outcomes.
- 11.6 There is now team stability with a permanent QA manager (in post since March 2021), with no current team vacancies. Staff supervision is regular and provides management oversight and support, observations of practice take place across the service alongside monthly audits and identifying professional development and training needs.
- 11.7 We have also developed an effective virtual response to ensuring statutory reviews have continue following Covid 19 pandemic restrictions as well as maintaining some face to face visits and reviews. Each decision has been based on a clear Covid risk assessment and individual circumstances of the child or young person.

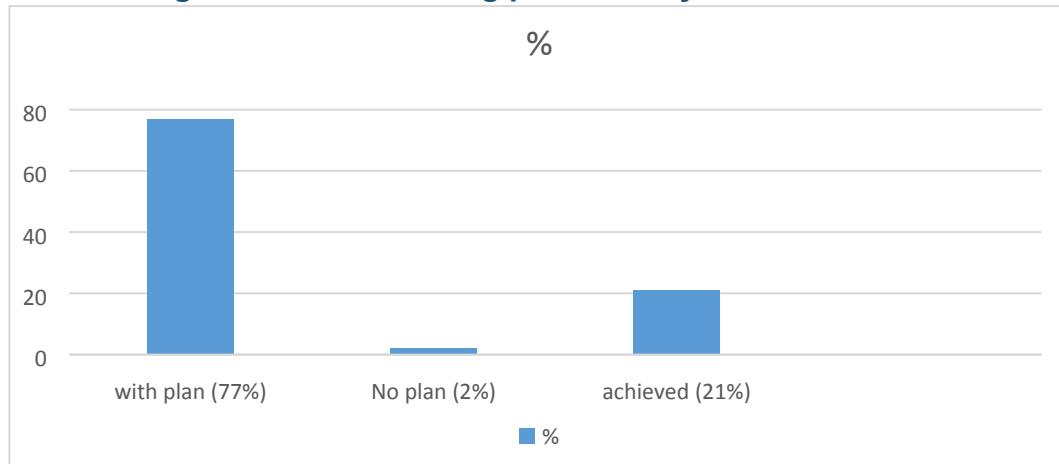
12. Quality of Care Plan & Permanence Planning

- 12.1 QAROs play a significant role in monitoring permanence planning at an early stage of a child's time in care and considering all options for young people by their 2nd review, scrutinising the timeliness of family finding and preparing children for permanent placements.
- 12.2 Achieving permanence for all our children in care remains a priority for the QAROs and Dorset Council. To avoid drift and delay in securing permanence, regular permanency planning meetings are held along with a senior management permanence panel for all new children coming into care and/or those who have not achieved permanence after 12 months.
- 12.3 The figures show that on 31.3.21 the number of children who had a permanency plan was 97%. A total of 12 children or young people who did not have a permanency plan had only recently come into care. (Fig 22)
- 12.4 An analysis of resolution and escalation found that delays occurred mostly around permanence in arranging matching of a permanent foster placement for children with a care plan of long-term fostering, delays in progressing assessments of connected persons carer and delays in moving forward with necessary care applications to the court to support the child's agreed permanence plan.

Case study: permanence panel

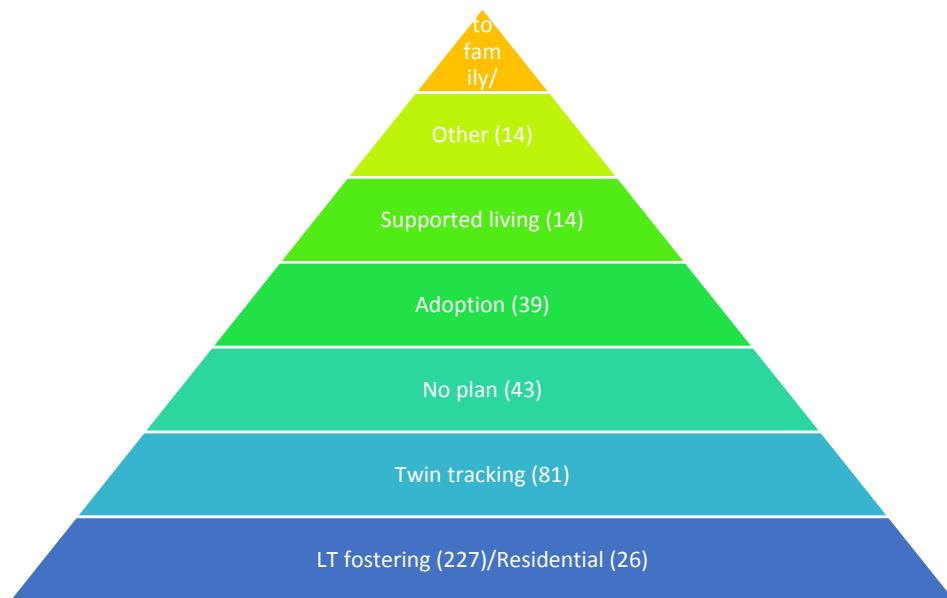
Adam is 8 years old. The plan was for him to have specialist therapeutic intervention through a residential home for up to 12-18 months. The QARO was concerned that after 14 months there were no clear plans for a transition into a family or significant progress made with therapeutic intervention an escalation was raised. The QARO fed back to permanency panel that the social worker was being thorough in exploring what is happening for Adam and if the placement is meeting his needs. The QARO has evidenced how their involvement and escalation of the concerns has resulted in high level of social work visits (unannounced), links with commissioning and the Reg 44 visitor (as placement is out of County) as well as team and senior managers aware of the placement concerns. The permanency panel is now aware that the plans and timescales for achieving permanency through a family placement in the next 4 months is unlikely given the current concerns and can provide oversight to prevent further drift and delay for Adam.

Fig 22: Percentage of those achieving permanency.



- 12.5 The high proportion of children in care fall within the age 10 years + categories which is why we expect to see that permanence through long term fostering is the highest at 51%. Permanence through long term residential provision accounts for 6% of the overall children in care population with adoption and SGO making up only 10% of permanence arrangements for our children in care.
- 12.6 Dorset continues to work with colleagues from the regional adoption agency (Aspire) to increase the number of SGO carers with financial and practical support being maintained. Fig 23 (below) provides a further breakdown of the permanence plans for our children & young people in care.

Fig 23: Details of Permanency planning:



- 12.7 The service continues to develop and maintain positive links with the Virtual School Service with QAROs encouraging the attainment, achievement, and progress of each child by ensuring PEP meetings are taking place and their impact is evidenced through progress in education. QAROs remain active in recognising the educational achievement of children by celebrating their successes within reviews however small these may be.
- 12.8 QAROs have independent oversight in all reviews that the legal status of the child remains appropriate to the care plan. There is a particular focus on the use of section 20, the timely revocation of Placement Orders (when adoption is no longer the plan for the child) and seeking revocation of Care Orders when children have remained safely at home in parents care.
- 12.9 Covid-19 has had an impact on some applications for adoption orders, discharge of placement orders and revocation of care orders. This has been attributed to the reduced staff at court and the limited number of hearings the courts were able to conduct. It is positive that this has been recognised by the Court and arrangements were put in place to work through the number of waiting applications.
- 12.10 QAROs also have a significant role in reviewing plans for court to ensure that they meet children's needs and that undue drift and delay is avoided. QAROs have access to Independent Legal Advice to enable them to effectively challenge plans. The QARO service footprint is more visible in care plans to court and in communication with Guardians. There are references to their recommendations in social work statements. QAROs also have access to court documents, either through access on the electronic recording system (Mosaic) or directly from legal services. Their view on final care plans is also required and evidences the QARO scrutiny and independent oversight of the Local Authority proposed permanency plans for the child or young person.

Case study: Permanency challenge

K is now a 22-month-old boy, who was placed with foster carers since birth. An early plan of adoption was arrived at due to birth mother's history and longstanding substance misuse and poor mental health. The foster carers put themselves forward as adopters early in the care proceedings, feeling they had developed a bond with him and felt able to manage with the level of uncertainties regarding his future health and development. The QARO felt the placement may be suitable and was concerned that looking for alternative adopters in this instance could be detrimental to his wellbeing, so supported an assessment of the current carers with continued searching for approved prospective adopters. There was positive representation for the welfare and need to provide independent view regarding permanency for him. The assessment progressed and resulted in him remaining with his carers and adopted, having developed a secure attachment to his care givers with no placement moves and resulting in permanency. The QARO was able to provide influence and consideration and acted as a further "sounding board" for the decision making that his permanence planning required.

13. Quality Assurance of the QARO service.

- 13.1 There is now less of a reliance on manual trackers and spreadsheets, with performance data collated electronically through Mosaic (children's data base) and Corius reporting system. The service works closely with our colleagues in business support to ensure the data collation and collection is correct and highlights early exceptions, potential risks, and concerns to colleagues within Children's Services.
- 13.2 The service undertakes regular audits of reviews, care planning and monitoring of plans following each Child in care Review. The outcome of these audits are shared with the worker and manager and where necessary escalations are made to avoid any further drift or delay.
- 13.3 In addition to the audits following the reviews, the service contributes to the quality assurance framework within Children's Services. The team work alongside social workers and managers as auditors or moderators which also includes formal observations of social work practice and identifying areas of outstanding and good practice with agreed actions on areas where improvement is needed.
- 13.4 Some of the overall findings that have been identified as good practice include:
- Reviews undertaken within timescales.
 - QARO stability and relationship with the child or young person.
 - Most children had a permanency plan.
 - High number of children had been visited face to face by their QARO during the last 12 months and where this was not possible, there was evidence of communication and representation of the child's voice within the minutes and recommendations of reviews.
 - Escalation process being used effectively by the QARO to promote best outcomes and prevent drift and delay for children and young people.
- 13.5 The areas we have identified through the Quality Assurance framework to improve practice and outcomes for children and young people are:
- Clarity as to the use of "informal" escalations and what would constitute as highlighting an issue and a QARO enquiry alongside monitoring and formal resolution of escalation issues.
 - The need for improved communication between social workers and QAROs so that they are informed in a timely way of significant events and are able to respond appropriately.
 - Consistent and effective use of escalation processes especially in cases where there is the potential for drift and delay in progressing permanence.
 - To continue to be imaginative and creative in the way we support and encourage participation in the review process and evidence the impact this has on the child/young person.

14. Supervision & Training

- 14.1 Supervision is an essential activity for providing support and development to individual QAROs and to work toward creating consistency across the service in terms of practice

and process. The team's supervision and appraisal arrangements have been conducted in accordance with Dorset's supervision policy. Each QARO has around 10 to 12 formal supervisions a year, as well as an annual appraisal.

- 14.2 Supervision covers personal matters, professional development, performance observations of practice and feedback as well as discussing the QARO standards, providing evidence of practice and discussing the high risk or need to know children and young people. Supervision is reflective and booked 12 months in advance and throughout the pandemic has taken place virtually. It is likely that this arrangement will continue.
 - 14.3 Due to the long- term sickness of one of the QA managers there was a period (of around 3 months) where QAROs did not have formal supervision. Informal supervision was available through the Head of Service whilst interim arrangements were put in place.
 - 14.4 QAROs have access to a range of training within Dorset Council Children's Services workforce development programme. This consists of formal and informal events as well as a "Thinking Thursday" and "Weekly Word out" which will focus on themes highlighted through the monthly audits (such as completing chronologies, and the importance of permanence planning).
 - 14.5 In addition to accessing training, the QAROs also support the principle Social Worker with training and webinars sharing their skills and experience across the workforce. The feedback from these from social workers in the localities has been positive and have included things such as, social work reports for reviews, care planning and ways to improve participation of children and young people.
 - 14.6 The development of person-centred reviews and the supporting documents have been completed in collaboration with social workers and partners within health and education along with consultation from children and young people, their carers and birth families. QAROs have presented workshops to help other understand the changes and the impact these will have on the child and young person.
 - 14.7 The QAROs will be able to access bespoke training to develop their understanding, knowledge, and practice around restorative practice from April 2021.
-

15. Areas for Development 2021-22:

- 15.1 The focus of work to continuously improve in our performance will include:
 - High-level service commitment to Learning and Development opportunities for QAROs, including development of relational practice and trauma informed practice to consolidate a child focused methodology and support a focus on strengths based social work practice.
 - Refresh and implement practice developments in respect of tools and arrangements for improving engagement, and a strengths-based, person centred focused approach to Child in Care Reviews.

- Continue to develop mechanisms/tools which facilitate the meaningful involvement of Children in Care in their Reviews, particularly those who are currently reluctant, and consideration of children and young people chairing their reviews.
- We need to improve our current performance on the timeliness of distributing the recommendations and minutes of all our child in care reviews.
- Develop a consistent monitoring of cases between reviews to ensure timely progress of the child's plan and continuing QARO footprint.
- Increase quality assurance of the QARO impact for the child and young person and increase in observation of practice.
- Development of the QARO role within child exploitation and contextual safeguarding meetings.
- Working with Dorset Council in respect of key strategic priorities including permanence for children & considering alternative exits from care.
- Ensuring that young people are better prepared for leaving care by robust review and challenge around pathway assessment and transition planning.
- Develop relationship and communication between the QARO Service and CAFCASS.

Jane MacLennan, Quality Assurance Manager

April 2021

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Corporate Parenting Board Thursday 22nd July 2021 Local Authority Designated Officer Annual Report and Work Plan

For Review and Consultation

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

Local Councillor(s):

Executive Director: T Leavy, Executive Director of People - Children

Report Author: Laura Ketchen

Tel: 01305 221352

Email: Laura.Ketchen@dorsetcc.gov.uk

Report Status: Public

Recommendation: Members are requested to note the content and actively consider and comment upon the strengths and future recommendations

Reason for Recommendation:

To be assured that the report had identified the strengths and areas for development that will strengthen the work we do as Corporate Parents and ensure that children and young people in Dorset will be happy and safe and have opportunities to reach their goals.

1. Executive Summary

This report is to update members of the Corporate Parenting Board on the work of the Designated Officer in relation to allegations against people in a position of trust. It outlines the number, nature and outcome of allegations made against staff within the children's workforce in Dorset.

2. Financial Implications

None identified

3. Well-being and Health Implications

None identified

4. Climate implications

None identified

5. Other Implications

At the beginning of 2020 a worldwide Pandemic started and on 23 March 2020 the UK was advised that all unnecessary social contact should cease. The pandemic continues and has impacted the way we have implemented our statutory duties.

6. Risk Assessment

Current Risk: N/A

Residual Risk: N/A

7. Equalities Impact Assessment

N/A

8. Appendices

Appendix one: LADO Annual Report 2020 – 2021 CS for Review

9. Background Papers

None

Footnote:

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

Annual Report and Work Plan



Dorset
Council

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April 2020 - March 2021

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- 7. Multi-Agency practice development**
- 8. Priorities for 2021-2022**

Our Mission

'Together we will make Dorset the best place to be a child; where communities thrive, and families are supported to be the best they can be.'

The Management of Allegations (MoA) service is integral to protecting children. This safeguarding message is conveyed throughout the MoA casework, training, and staff briefings. The Designated Officer provides a single point of contact within Dorset Council for allegations regarding people working in the children's workforce in statutory and non-statutory organisations.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the management of allegations in Dorset, and the role of the Designated Officer between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021.

The statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018¹ sets out the requirements for all agencies providing services for children to have procedures in place for reporting and managing allegations against staff and volunteers. This is mirrored in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020². The guidance highlights the need for a Designated Officer to oversee the process, by giving independent advice on thresholds and the other aspects of safeguarding when an allegation is made. This will include a range of measures, in consultation with the employer, including risk assessment, the use of suspension for more serious conduct matters or criminal investigations, alongside other issues including managing duty of care to the employee and proportionality to ensure the process is concluded fairly and as soon as possible.

The procedures for the management of such allegations is contained in the Pan- Dorset Child Protection Procedures [Pan Dorset Multi Agency Safeguarding Procedures - Allegations against Staff.](#)

This report summarises the key activity and themes in the past year. Case examples have been used to provide an illustration of the diverse nature of the role.

2. The Role of the Designated Officer

Working Together (2018) and Keeping Children Safe in Education (2020) states the criteria for Designated Officer involvement applies when an individual working or volunteering with children has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child;
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children

All agencies have a duty to contact the Designated Officer directly or make a referral through the Children's Advice and Duty Service (CHAD) if there is a child protection concern or an allegation made that a criminal offence may have been committed or related to a child.

Allegations are considered in the context of four main categories of abuse, including sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse and neglect and there is also consideration of areas including professional conduct and safeguarding concerns arising in a person's private life. Transferable risk is a continuing consideration, this means that when the behaviour of staff or volunteers outside a setting is of concern, there is consideration of the impact of this upon their suitability to work with children and vulnerable young people.

The role of the Designated Officer is varied, but key tasks include:

- Providing independent support and guidance to employers and voluntary organisations regarding allegations or when a pattern of conduct concerns arises.

¹ Working Together to Safeguard Children – A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children July 2018; HM Government

² Keeping children safe in education (2020) – Statutory guidance for schools and colleges. Update – January 2021 (Post EU Exit); Department for Education

- Liaison with the Children's Advice and Duty Services (CHAD) and the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), Children's Services Teams and Police when child protection concerns become known about at the point of referral or during an investigation.
- Participation in strategy meetings and chairing of meetings involving Dorset Council employees or foster carers.
- Chairing of evaluation meetings and professional meetings when the evidence for 'significant harm' for strategy meetings are not met, but where a meeting is needed to consider complex issues and plan to reduce future risk.
- Monitoring progress of referrals and investigations to ensure progress on actions identified are all fully completed.
- Ongoing advice and guidance throughout the process, including organisational learning if gaps in practice are identified.
- Liaison with other local authority Designated Officers when there are cross-boundary issues, including Adult Safeguarding in Dorset when risks are linked to a role with adults.
- Maintaining confidential case records on the secure database (MOSAIC), tracking systems and the Designated Officers database
- Liaison with partner agencies and other departments to improve practice, including police, education, health, transport and Ofsted and contribution to meetings and supporting the development of policies and procedures to improve safeguarding.
- Ongoing practice development and delivering of allegations management training.

3. Service Structure and Supervision

The Designated Officer Service is located within the Quality Assurance and Partnership Service based at County Hall, Dorchester. The service is provided by one Designated Officer with some business support.

The Designated Officer is an experienced qualified social worker registered with the Social Work England with extensive experience at team manager level. The Designated Officer is managed by a Quality Assurance Manager who is also a qualified social worker with considerable social work management experience in child protection.

The Designated Officer attends the annual national Designated Officer conference and monthly regional Designated Officer forum where practice themes are discussed. The National Designated Officer network is currently devising guidance for Designated Officers with a view to setting minimum standards for good practice as this varies across the country. This includes cross boundary working, common language and dealing with specific issues including unregulated and self-employed adults.

4. Process

The flowchart below describes the local process used when an allegation is made against an adult working with a child.

An allegation is made against an adult working with children.



The Designated Safeguarding Lead or manager contacts the Designated Officer Service within 24 hrs or 1 working day.



Within 24 hrs the Designated Officer decides whether the adult may have:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed a child;
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or relating to a child;
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children;
- Has behaved in a way in their personal life that raises safeguarding concerns;



Yes



Maybe



No

Designated Officer consults with relevant professionals such as the police.

The Designated Officer arranges an Initial Evaluation Meeting (IEM), to consider the initial evidence available and agree the formal investigation process and Timescales. A Post-allegation meeting (PAIM) is arranged within 28 days of the IEM.

The designated officer gives advice to the referrer.



A PAIM takes place to establish the investigation findings, agree the final outcome and any next steps.

The contact is Recorded on the Secure tracker.



The agency feeds back on agreed actions and it's recorded on the tracker and closed to the service.

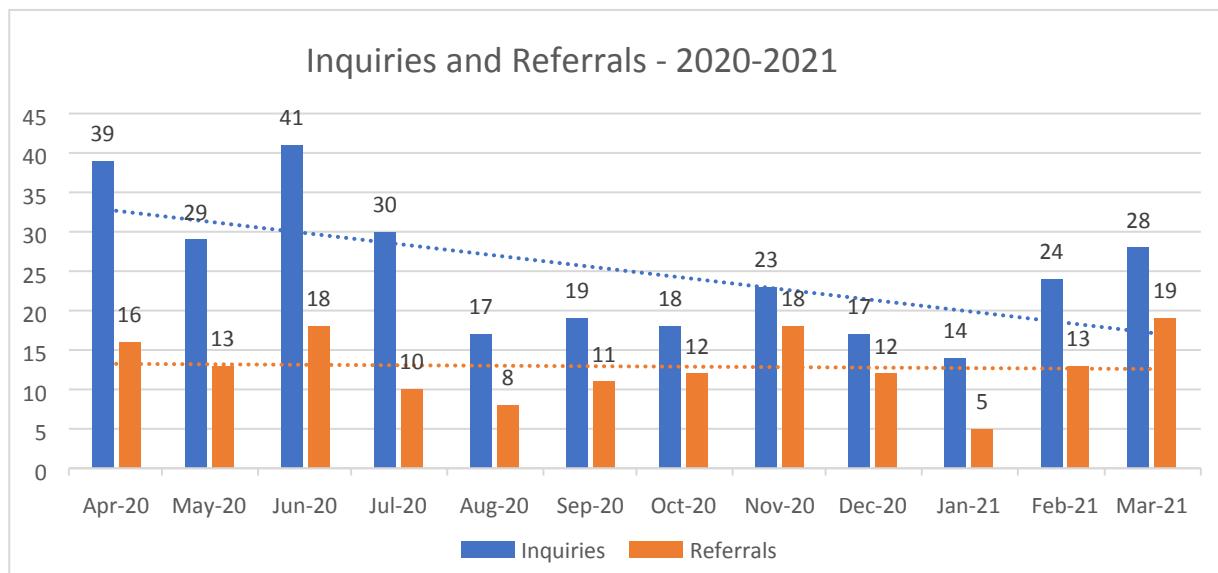
A secure database is used to record information about allegations and the service response. Analysis of the information from the database enables the identification of patterns of referrals and allegation types and enables tracking of the timeliness of the responses.

5. Service Activity

The Management of Allegations Service was carried out online throughout 2020/21, with good participation from key partners. Since 1st April 2020 all Initial Evaluation meetings and Post-Allegation Investigation Meetings have been arranged via Microsoft Teams, and this has allowed colleagues who wouldn't normally be able to attend these meetings due to distance involved, to attend virtually and contribute, hence improving the quality of information shared. This is evidenced through meetings not being required to be rearranged and an improvement in the timeliness of Initial Evaluation Meetings and Post -Allegation Investigation meetings.

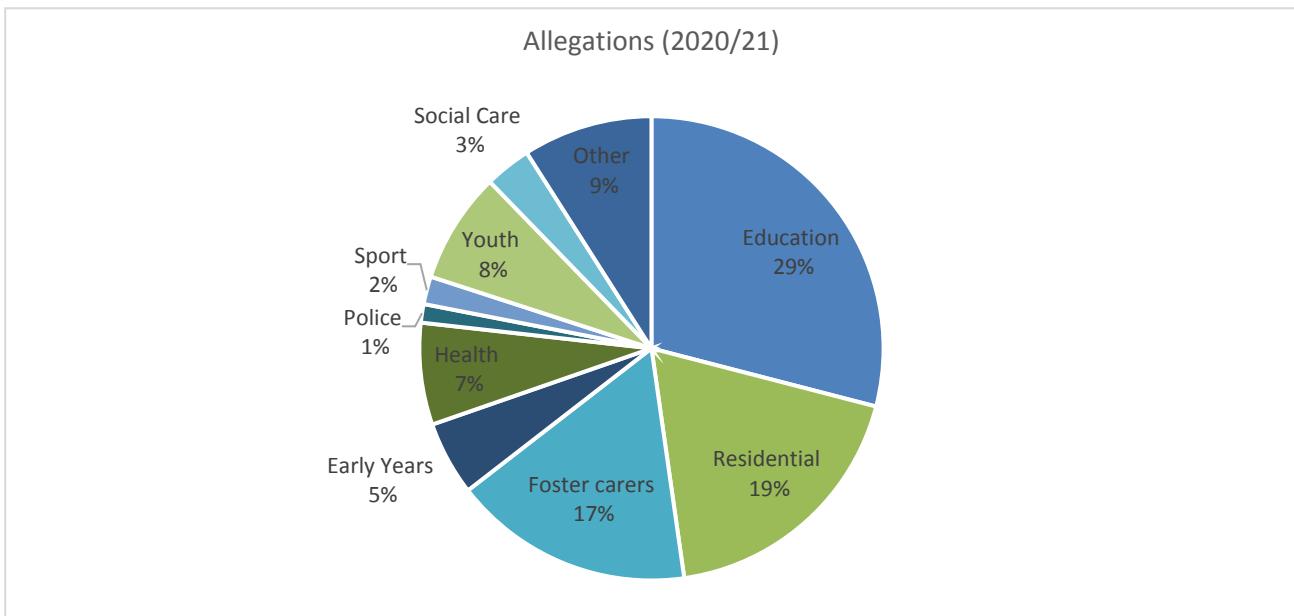
5.1 Inquiries and Referrals (2020/21)

There were just under 300 inquiries resulting in 155 referrals to the Designated Officer Service. The graph below shows the inquiries and referrals made to the Designated Officer over the past 12 months. There was an increased number of inquiries in the early part of the year, but this decreased over the year and became more in line with previous years. The number of referrals per month remained reasonable steady.



5.2 Source of referrals

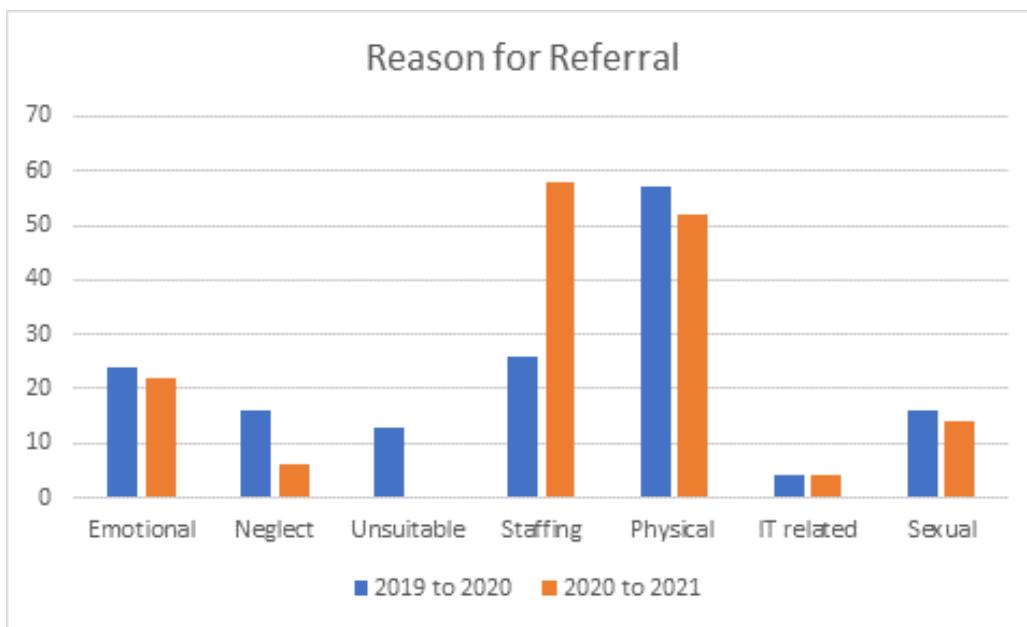
The Pie chart below details the agency where the adult works when the allegation was made about them. The largest group of referrals relate to employees working in education (45, 29%) and are related to concerns regarding physical contact with a child young person. The second largest groups which are in line with previous years relate to employees working in residential care (29) and foster carers (26). The low level of referrals relating to Police staff, is not unique to Dorset and continues to be discussed in regular liaison meetings with Dorset Police to ensure that they understand and refer appropriately when allegations are made against police staff.



5.3 Referral Type

The most common type of referral this year relates to staffing, this is primarily related to been related to professional boundaries and inappropriate professional behaviour during the pandemic period, at a time when online learning and engagement with young people has become embedded in everyday lives.

Over the last year ‘physical’ referrals have reduced, this is in line with our neighbours and very likely to be due to a reduction in face to face education and service delivery.



5.4 Referral Outcomes

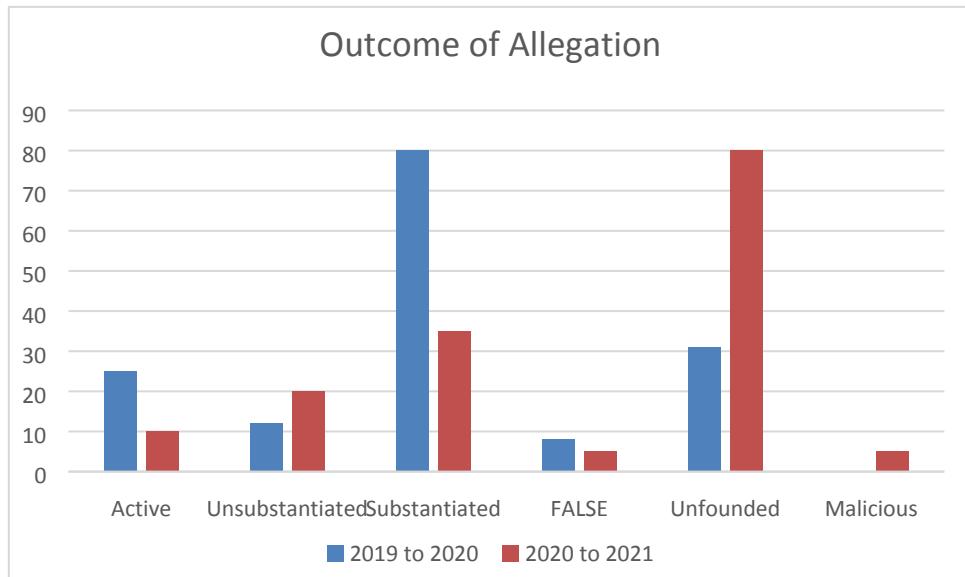
The outcome of investigation of allegations are categorised as follows:

- Substantiated – which means there is sufficient identifiable evidence to prove the allegation
- Not true – which means there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation

- Malicious – which means that there is clear evidence to prove there has been a deliberate act to deceive and the allegation is entirely false
- Unsubstantiated – which means that there is insufficient evidence to prove or disprove the allegation
- Unfounded – which means there is no evidence or proper basis to support the allegation being made.

In 2020/21 there were 35 substantiated allegations and following the Management of Allegations process, 25 adults were referred to the DBS due to the potential risk posed to young people compared to 16 last year. A total of 60 others have been the subject of formal disciplinary processes in their employment and provided with additional training and support.

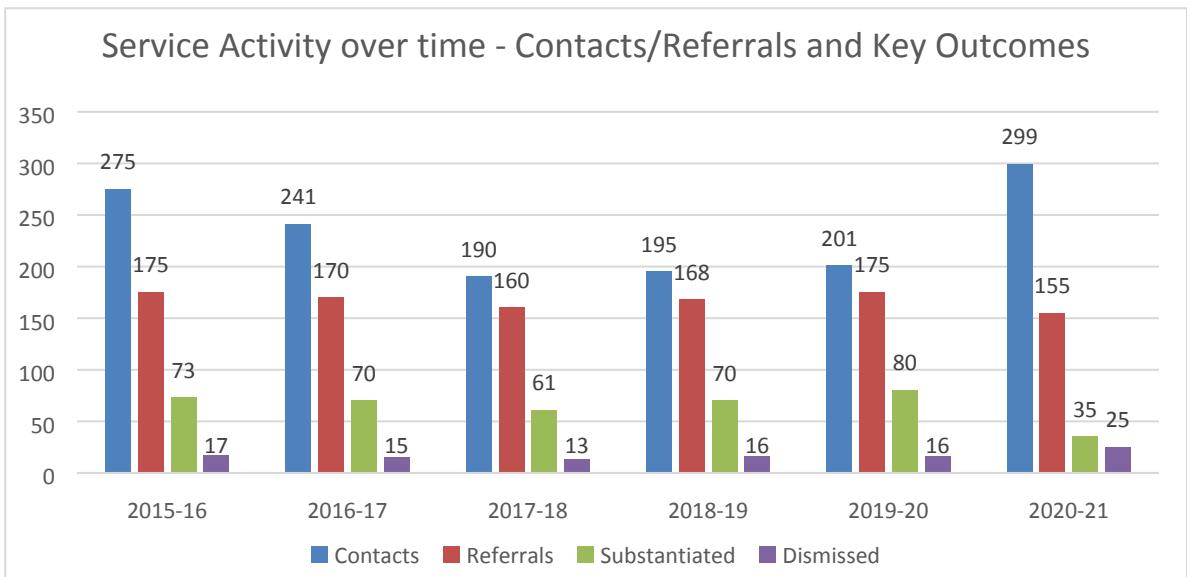
The graph below details the outcome at conclusion of the investigation compared to the previous year.



In 2020-21 there was a decrease by 45 in allegations that were substantiated compared to 80 last year most likely due to the pandemic and fewer children attending school. We have seen an increase in allegations about professional boundaries and inappropriate behaviour but because there was insufficient evidence to support this in many cases, the outcome has resulted in a finding of 'Unfounded'.

Service Activity over time

The graph below shows service activity over time.



The number of contacts from professionals has remained consistent for the last 4 years about 200, with a substantial increase this year to almost 300. This is very likely due to improved scrutiny of recording with the requirement to record all contacts.

6 Quality and Performance

6.1 Internal Audit

During April 2020 an internal audit was carried out with a focus on the tasks linked with the Management of Allegations process. There were some specific issues identified to be strengthened within the service and below is the agreed action plan and update following the audit.

Action	Update
Standards relating to timeliness of Designated Officer referrals from receipt of information and subsequent date which they are recorded on MOSAIC need to be clear. The date recorded should be the date information was received.	This is now happening in 84% of referrals that are recorded onto MOSAIC.
Where there is an initial discussion and no investigation of any type, language should be clear in relation to whether something is a concern or allegation and that the threshold for MoA was not met.	This is now always recorded clearly on the Management of allegations tracker.
Timeliness between referral and IEM needs to be improved in line with the expectations of procedures that state 5 working day and/or reasons why this has not been achieved and clearly recorded.	This is completed in 90% of cases.
Where there is confusion or inability to make a decision as to whether the information constitutes an allegation or concern, the IEM should be utilised as decision for threshold.	This now always happens in these circumstances and is recorded on the MoA tracker.
Professionals within meetings should be reminded/provided with clarity over each outcome and when it should be used.	This is routinely happening in all meetings and discussed at the start of meeting, with possible outcomes clarified.

There needs to be improved scrutiny of information available within meetings. This should include the availability, timeliness and quality of Designated Officer reports and an expectation that the Designated Officer report is complete and available for the PAIM.	This is improving, with this always happening when the referral is regarding a foster carer or educational professional and increasing with voluntary organisations.
Learning points from meetings should be centrally collated and reviewed for action and impact. Where recommendations are made to internal teams, such as fostering, the Designated Officer should consider following these up to ensure impact on practice.	The MoA database now allows for this type of information to be captured and drawn out from it. The Designated Officer will follow up recommendations and has a quarterly meeting with the fostering service to undertake this within that service.
Consideration should be given to the development of a Designated Officer threshold matrix that sets out levels of response and examples across the categories of harm	This is completed and will be updated to Tri-X within 4 weeks
Consideration should be given to the development of local Designated Officer practice standards – this would allow for some detail that is not included in wider procedures i.e. clarity of timescales, decisions etc (when is information a concern or an allegation for an example)	This is completed and will be updated to Tri-X within 4 weeks.
Quality Assurance needs to be evidenced within the Designated Officer process. This should take the form of a regular audit schedule and dip sampling of cases.	Dip sampling has started in respect of dates and timeliness of referrals, this will continue bi-monthly.

In addition to the actions identified above, monthly meetings were implemented with the fostering service to improve the timeliness between allegations being made about foster carers and being taken to Foster Panel where required. These meetings have seen a positive improvement in actions being progressed in a timelier way.

6.2 Key Performance Indicators

A set of Key Performance Indicators were developed for the service following the above internal review, these are as follows:

Activity	Progress
The decision between initial contact and referral should take place within 24 hrs	When reviewing all data over the past 12 months this has occurred in 250 (83%) of the contacts made, out of a total of 299
An Initial Evaluation meeting should be held within 5 working days of the referral.	There have been 215 (72%) Initial Evaluation Meetings held on time out of a total of 299 this year.
The Post-Allegation Investigation (PAIM) meeting should be held within 28 days.	135 (87%) Post-allegation Investigation meetings have been held within the prescribed timescales out of 155.
The length of time between the receipt of a contact and closing of the designated officer services should be reduced.	65% of referrals have been closed within 4 weeks, 25% have been closed within 8 weeks and 8% have been closed within 12 weeks, with 2 % being within 6 months.

There is an ongoing challenge to managing and concluding investigations involving children in care, foster carers and residential staff in a timely way and a priority for 2021/22 is to continue to work with Dorset Police to address this. Challenges are associated with obtaining evidence from victims, witnesses or delays in forensic analysis from seized devices. Requests for updates on the

progress of investigation are responded to with support from police based in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and there are discussions with officers in charge of investigations on a case by case basis.

7 Multi-agency Practice Development

7.1 Awareness Raising

Managing Allegations effectively and appropriately has been promoted through training, liaison with colleagues in the school safeguarding team and early years settings with visits where required to other agencies including independent and specialist schools. Proactive support has been offered to agencies or professionals who contact the Designated Officer most frequently. This year there has been a particular focus on religious bodies who appear to be under-represented in contacts. A publicity campaign was undertaken this year to support raising awareness of Management of Allegations and the role of the Designated Officer.

The Designated Officer and a colleague from the Safeguarding partnership have provided 6 briefings over the year. The feedback from this has been positive and will be collated in a similar way to the wider training in the future. 50 representatives from different groups attended.

7.2 Training

The Designated Officer provides managing allegations training. Training delivery was consistently delivered virtually and well received by those who attended. The virtual delivery of training worked very well, and 10 sessions of training was delivered to partner agencies.

The most recent training was held 1 March 2021 and was well attended by health and education colleagues.

Provision of safeguarding training to the voluntary sector, particularly in relation to the Management of Allegations and Safer Working practice was placed on hold due to the Covid Pandemic but will be restarted in September 2021.

7.3 Education settings

The Designated Officer works closely with the School Safeguarding Advisors who are also based in the Quality Assurance and Partnership Service in order to discuss concerns in practice and learning arising from Designated Officer referrals and complaints. Joint work is carried out where appropriate

7.4 Foster carers

The Designated Officer meets monthly with managers in the council's fostering service to track the progress of investigations and monitor progress of any actions agreed following the Managing Allegations meeting outcome. This includes the fostering review process and presentation at fostering panel where appropriate. This increases the level of understanding and enables learning from specific case work.

Case Example – Foster carers

An accumulation of concerns relating to use of inappropriate, critical language, attitude towards a young person was reported by the social work and fostering teams who were concerned about the emotional impact on the young person. The allegation was substantiated and a training package was put in place including attending Management of Allegation briefings for carers. The foster carers engaged in the package of training and the fostering panels provided oversight with on-going monitoring by Fostering SW.

7.5 Self-employed service providers

A continuing area of work for all Designated Officers is the issue of self-employed service providers (sometimes referred to as 'headless organisations'). These are groups or activities where there is little or no structure or any evidence of lines of accountability. These are groups or services set up by an individual that are not affiliated to any agency. In the absence of accountability this is an additional challenge for Designated Officers. The Designated Officer provides support when required with safeguarding practice reviews where there are shortfalls in allegations management and safer recruitment practice.

Case Example

Repeated concerns raised about the owner of an Early Years setting regarding the performance of staff (e.g. lack of supervision of children) resulting in a potential risk to children. In the absence of specific allegations, the Designated Officer has worked alongside colleagues in Early Years to address concerns and hold the owner to account and, ultimately to make sure the appropriate agency (in this case Ofsted) are aware of the issue

7.6 Professional Collaboration

The Designated Officer attends quarterly pan-Dorset meetings with Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP) to discuss complex cases and cross-boundary issues. This could be further strengthened by strengthening relationships with Designated Officers in other border counties, including Hampshire, Somerset, Wiltshire and Devon, given the number of Dorset children who may go to school in those areas or who are in care provision in those counties.

There have been increased links established with Ofsted over the last year, including a regional Designated Officer meeting held with Ofsted in Somerset to consider the management of allegations and reporting concerns in children's homes. Further meetings are planned and will continue at regular intervals.

8 Priorities for 2021-2022

Capacity	Strengthen the support and cover arrangements for the Designated Officer
Timeliness	Work with partners who are standing members of the Initial Evaluation Meetings to strengthen timeliness so that all are achieved on time

	<p>Amend the process for arranging Post Allegation Meetings to review progress to ensure these always take place within 28 days even if the final outcome of an investigation has not been received, providing an opportunity to review progress and check on any outstanding actions at an earlier stage</p> <p>Continue to work with the police to reduce any unavoidable delay in investigations affecting timeliness</p>
Raising awareness & professional development	Review the virtual training offer and implement an ongoing evaluation framework for briefing and training
	Analyse themes and proactively identify sectors, organisations, and themes for the delivery of training to the sector to prevent harm
	Reinstate training and awareness sessions for voluntary and community sector organisations
Professional Relationships	Move fostering meetings from monthly to quarterly
	Further develop relationship with Designated Officers from border counties
Management Information	Automate reporting and develop a dashboard to facilitate easier tracking of activity and management oversight
	Share quarterly reports on Key Performance Indicators at the Quality and Performance Management Conferences
Service Quality	Introduce a regular programme of auditing to understand quality of service being offered and to identify themes to share with multi-agency partners to inform learning and development
	Develop a system for tracking that recommendations following investigations are implemented

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Corporate Parenting Board Thursday 22nd July 2021 Private Fostering Annual Report

Choose an item.

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

Local Councillor(s):

Executive Director: T Leavy, Executive Director of People - Children

Report Author: Amy Bartram/ Paula Golding

Title: Service Manager Social Care/ Head of Locality & Strategy Dorchester & West

Tel: 01202 868237

Email: paula.golding@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report Status: Public

Recommendation: Members are requested to review the work undertaken around Private Fostering over the past year and consider the action plan identified for the coming year.

Reason for Recommendation:

The Children Act 1989 Private Fostering Guidance identifies that the Local authority must monitor the way in which they discharge their functions under part 9 of the Children Act 1989 in respect of Private Fostering. An annual report should provide an evaluation of the work undertaken in respect of privately fostered children within the Local Authority area. The Annual report should provide evidence that the welfare of privately fostered children is safeguarded and promoted in co-operation with other agencies.

1. Executive Summary

The number of children identified as being privately fostered remains a small cohort. There have been improvements in timeliness of visits and assessments following notification of private fostering arrangements, but further improvement to be made.

Currently BCP private fostering team are commissioned to undertake private fostering assessments for overseas students within language schools who are residing in Dorset Council area. The Covid 19 pandemic has had an impact on the number of children in language schools who have been privately fostered and the length of some of these arrangements.

There has been updated communications within Children's Services and Partners around Private Fostering and notification of arrangements to the Local Authority.

There have been no Prohibitions or Disqualifications for Private Fostering arrangements.

There is an action plan in place for the year 2021/2022 identifying how we can strengthen current arrangements and communication with partners.

2. Financial Implications

None identified

3. Well-being and Health Implications

None identified

4. Climate implications

None identified

5. Other Implications

None identified

6. Risk Assessment

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

Current Risk: N/A

Residual Risk: N/A

7. Equalities Impact Assessment

N/A

8. Appendices

N/A

9. Background Papers

Private Fostering Annual Report attached.

Footnote:

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.



Private Fostering

Annual Report

April 2020 – March 2021

Completed by

Amy Bartram

Service Manager

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This annual report gives an overview of the activities in relation to privately fostered children in Dorset from 1st April 2020 to the 31st March 2021. This report details how Dorset Children Social Care has delivered its duties and functions in relation to private fostering and how the welfare of privately fostered children has been safeguarded and promoted during the last 12-month period.
- 1.2 Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Private Fostering Team are commissioned to carry out duties in relation to children who are fostered from overseas. Despite this arrangement they are children privately fostered in Dorset and will therefore be included within this report.
- 1.3 This report also outlines the activities which have been undertaken to promote awareness of the notification requirements regarding children who are privately fostered, and the actions Dorset propose to undertake in the next year.
- 1.4 Within the report there are two case studies of children who have been privately fostered. It was believed to be important to Dorset Children Social Care to highlight these within the annual report to bring the children's journey to the fore.

2. Legal Definition

- 2.1 The Children Act 1989 defines private fostering as occurring when a child under 16 (or under 18 if the child has a disability) is cared for, and provided with accommodation, for 28 days or more by someone other than a close relative, guardian or someone with parental responsibility. This might be a friend, a great aunt, a cousin or someone else known to the child or young person. A close relative is defined as being a grandparent, aunt, uncle, brother, or stepparent by marriage. The parent/s and the private foster carer would make this arrangement, not the local council.
- 2.2 Parents and carers have a legal duty to notify the local authority when entering a private fostering arrangement; local authorities are then required to carry out an assessment and to monitor the arrangement.
- 2.3 Partner agencies should notify the local authority and any professionals working with children, young people and their families from agencies including (but not limited to) schools or health services, if they become aware of or believe that a child is living in a private fostering arrangement.
- 2.4 There are many reasons why children and young people are privately fostered. Such examples include those listed below:
 - Children or young people who are sent to this country for education or health care by birth parents from overseas;
 - Ill health preventing birth parents from being able to look after their children;
 - Children or young people who are living with a friend/boyfriend/girlfriend's family as a result of parental separation, divorce or arguments at home;
 - Children or young people whose parents work or study long or antisocial hours;
 - Children or young people on school holiday exchanges that last more than 28 days;
 - Children or young people who are on sports or music sponsorships living away from their families.

CASE STUDY

Child N is 15 years old and lived with her mother until the relationship deteriorated following the mothers struggles with Covid – 19 and consequential anxiety. This placed a strain on their relationship which resulted in regular arguments and upset. Child N moved to the care of her second cousin with mothers consent. This became a private fostering arrangement. Since the move N has enjoyed being part of a warm, welcoming family who are encouraging her to rebuild her relationships with her mother and wider family. They are also supporting her with her education, emotional wellbeing, and physical health. The views of the carers was always that they wanted to keep Child N in the family and prevent her coming into care.

3. The Local Authority's Duties and Functions

3.1 The responsibilities of the local authority are outlined within the Private Fostering Regulations ('Regulations') and the Private Fostering National Minimum Standards (NMS) 2005.

3.2 Dorset Children Social Care is responsible for all privately fostered children who reside in their area and have commissioned BCP Council private fostering team to oversee the children who are privately fostered from overseas and who are attending language schools.

3.3 There is a duty placed on anyone involved in a private fostering arrangement to notify Dorset Children Social Care. Dorset needs to be satisfied that the welfare of privately fostered children, or children who are likely to be privately fostered, is being safeguarded and promoted.

3.4 Where the local authority is informed of a proposed or existing private fostering arrangement:

- Dorset Social Care will allocate to a social work to undertake an initial visit.
- The child's Social Worker will undertake an initial visit to the child within 7 working days of the date of notification;
- The social worker will then carry out an assessment of the suitability of the arrangements for the child;
- Visits during the assessment will be fortnightly;
- Following completion of the assessment and thereafter for the first-year visits are 6 weekly unless need of the child requests otherwise;
- Thereafter, the visits move to 12 weekly.

3.5 When completing assessments of, and meeting with, children, young people and their families, all agencies should ask questions about who lives in the household and who has parental responsibility this can help in identifying a private fostering arrangement. All the relevant checks should be undertaken such as medical, DBS and social care safeguarding checks.

3.6 Additional duties of Dorset are as follows:

- Continued development within Children's Social Care around private fostering and what constitutes these arrangements to ensure best practice;
- Building knowledge and raise public and professional awareness with regards to what constitutes a private fostering arrangement and the duty to notify Dorset Children's Social Care.

3.7 For children who are under the age of 16 and are attending a language school in Dorset notifications/referrals should come direct from the language school/guardianship company via the website notification form.

3.8 Occasionally information about foreign language students comes to our attention via Children's Advice and Duty Service (ChAD) particularly in cases of new language schools where there is no established working relationship with the local authority. ChAD at this point will refer them to the BCP private fostering team. BCP private fostering service continue to raise awareness of the private fostering arrangements and their requirements. They advise Dorset Council of any concerns arising of establishments where Dorset young people are affiliated with. Such establishments include Language schools, residential and Private Fostering Households.

4. Private fostering arrangements

4.1 There were 4 children privately fostered as at the 31st March 2021, which is the same figure as the year before. Of the 4 children between the period of 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021, 2 referrals were received by the carers themselves, 1 from a third sector, 1 from a GP surgery. In addition there were 13 children and young people attending Language schools that were staying in private fostering arrangements between 1st April 2020 and 31st March 2021.

4.2 At the end of March 2021 there were 4 children in private fostering arrangements supported within the Locality teams and a further 4 children who remained privately fostered from overseas managed by BCP Council private fostering team.

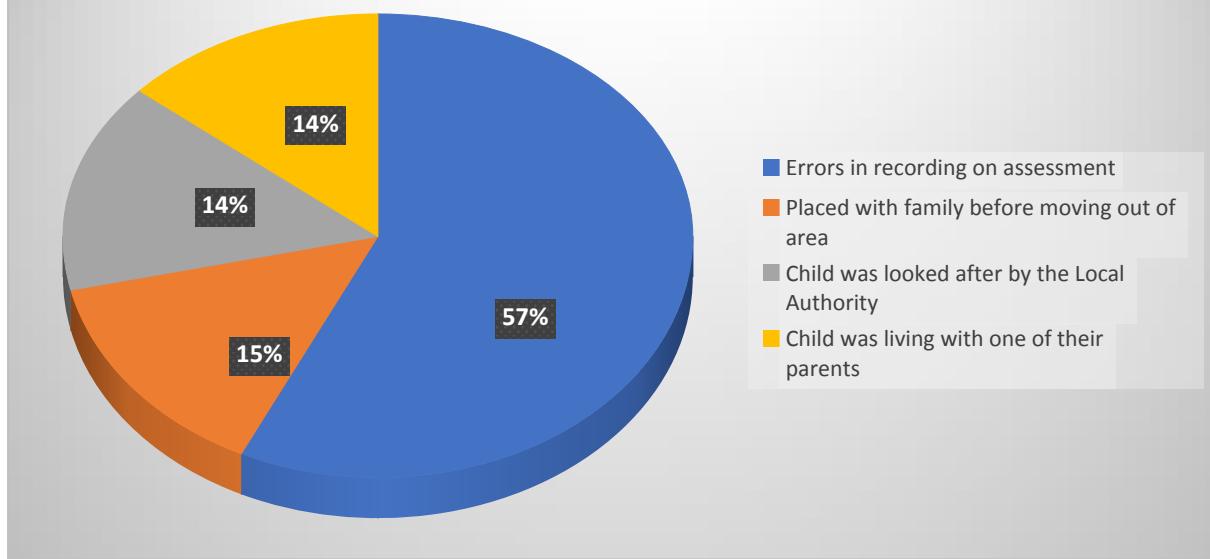
4.3 Dorset Children Social Care is aware of the small number of children in its conurbation which are privately fostered. Dorset Children Social Care have been working hard to raise awareness in order to ensure that children who are privately fostered are adequately identified and referrals are increased.

4.4 Between the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021 there were 15 children who were identified as potentially relating to private fostering from child and family assessments. Of those 15 children eight progressed to a private fostering assessment, two of these children were from overseas who were from private boarding schools and were referred to BCP as part of our commissioning arrangements. At the time those 2 children could not return to their home country due to Covid restrictions so remained with their host families awaiting their return to their school. This has now happened.

4.5 In terms of the 7 children that did not progress to an assessment, the reasons were as follows:

- 4 were errors in recording on the assessment and were not private fostering;
- 1 child was placed with family before moving out of area
- 1 child was a looked after child;
- 1 child related to arrangements where the child was living with one of their parents.

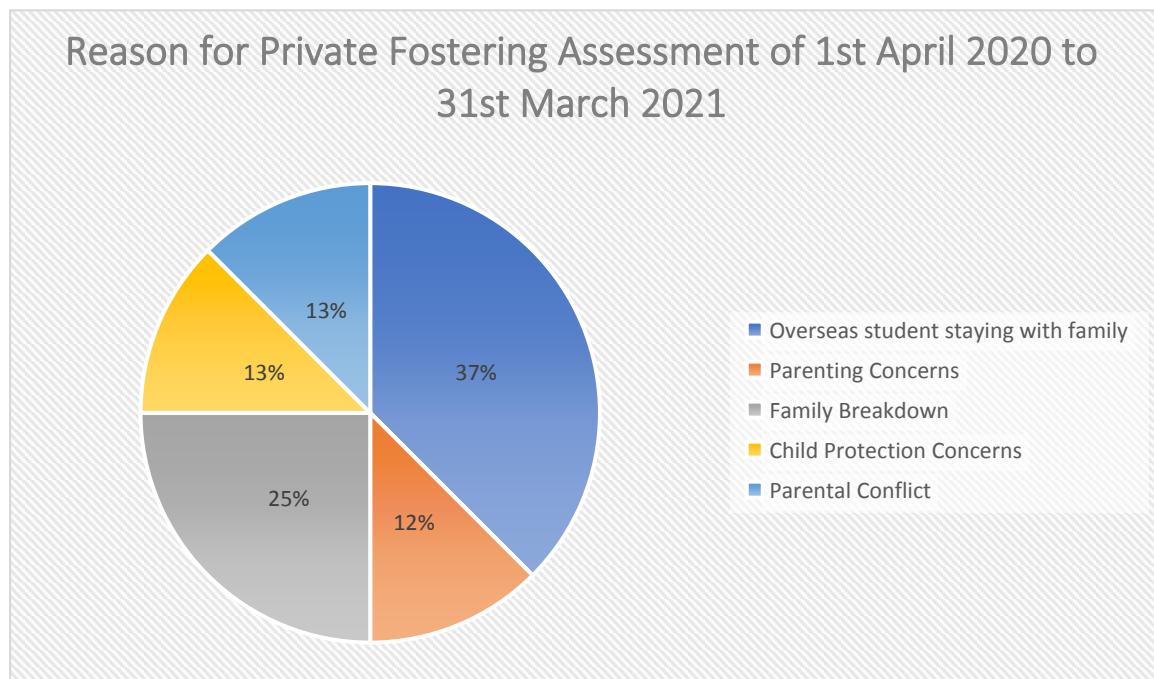
The children that did not progress to an assessment



- 4.6 Once Dorset Children Social Care identified those as potentially relating to private fostering, a social worker should visit the child within 7 working days to assess their welfare and whether the circumstances do constitute a private fostering arrangement. Of the 15 children, 60% of visits took place within timescale, therefore 40% took place outside of the timescale. These figures albeit based on a small number of children represent an improving picture from last year when only 31% of initial visits to potential privately fostered children were on time. Dorset Children Social Care continue to prioritise the timeliness of visits to ensure that children's needs are assessed expeditiously.
- 4.7 Of the 13 children privately fostered from overseas managed by BCP all the children were seen within 7 working days of notification.
- 4.8 When considering all the privately fostered children managed by Dorset and BCP a vital area that was scrutinised was the voice of the child. Within all the records the voice of the child was prevalent this was recorded in the assessments and visits to them. The parent's views were also recorded. Within the children who were privately fostered from overseas there were 2 children where attempts had been made to gain their parents views however, without success.
- 4.9 Once it is confirmed that the child is living within a private fostering arrangement, a social worker from the locality team will undertake an assessment. These should be completed within 42 days. Of the 8 assessments initiated between 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021 50% were completed within the 42 days. Again, this represents an improvement from last year when none of the reports were completed on time. Dorset Children Social Care are striving to build knowledge and practice around this area in general and in relation to timeliness of the private fostering assessment.
- 4.10 BCP undertook 17 Part A assessment for children privately fostered from overseas 15 (88%) assessments were completed within the 42 days. The two assessments that were not completed within timescales were review assessments of known carers with no concerns identified. There were 13 Part B assessments completed of language students living in private fostering

arrangements in Dorset of which 77% (10) of these were completed in timescale. The three assessments that were not in timescale were signed off by management one or two days late. There were more Part A assessments than Part B assessments due to changes in private fostering arrangements prior to the child arriving. This was mainly as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

4.11



4.12 The above chart provides an overview of the key reasons why out of the 8 assessments undertaken by Dorset children were being referred for an assessment between 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021. 37% of children were of overseas student staying with non-immediate / host family. 25% of such arrangements were because of family breakdown. 13% of arrangements where concerns related to parental conflict and child protection concerns and 12% on parenting concerns.

4.13 Of the 4 privately fostered children Regulation 8 visits are completed by a social worker within the locality teams. These visits should take place every 6 weeks or every 12 weeks where the arrangement is assessed as well established and the child is settled. There were 24 Regulation 8 visits undertaken during the year. Of the 4 children 2 children had their visit within the 6-weekly pattern, the other 2 were out of timescales, it is worth noting 1 of these children was all within time save for a visit last year that was two days late. There is evidence of children being seen alone when visited and their views being sought. The child's health and development needs are kept under review and support is provided to secure more permanent arrangements. All these children are subject to a Child in Need Plan.

4.14 The majority of children in private fostering arrangements continue to be between the age of 10- 15 years. Of the children who are privately fostered as at 31st March 2020, 50% were male and 50% female. They are from a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds.

4.15 Of the 13 privately fostered children from overseas, Regulation 8 visits were all completed on time. These visits were taking place within the 6 weekly timescales. BCP visiting pattern is 4 weekly. It was evidenced that overall, these children were having their needs met. They were being cared for by carers who were already known to BCP private fostering team. The children were visited regularly alone, and their wishes and feelings were heard, and they were reporting that they were happy. There were some issues within one placement, and it was addressed quickly with actions identified.

CASE STUDY

Child S is a 15-year-old girl who arrived in England in August 2020 to attend school to expand her learning and improve her English. Child S was due to attend a private boarding school and, in the holidays, stay with a host family. Due to the Covid – 19 pandemic she was unable to attend her school so stayed with her host family. Consequently, it became a private fostering arrangement.

Within this time Child S has received good care, her views of the family were “they are very kind and respectful to me”. The carers ensured that she continued to access education virtually and improve her English. Child S views on her education was “I prefer to be home learning as it means I have more free time.”

Child S has continued to have contact with her family daily and this has been supported by the carers.

Child S has now returned to school full time and will return to visiting her host family in the holidays.

5. Action planned in respect of private fostering in 2021 – 2022:

- 5.1 Whilst progress has been made over the last year in increasing oversight of private fostering arrangements and promoting awareness we also are aware that we need to further strengthen our work with this vulnerable group of children. We have therefore identified the following actions which will be undertaken at pace.
 - 5.2 Continue to build awareness of private fostering and work with key partners through the Pan Dorset Safeguarding Children’s Partnership (PDSCP) to ensure knowledge across all agencies and organisations with regards to identifying and notifying Dorset Children Social Care of children who are believed to be ‘privately fostered’ are increased.
 - Since March 2021 there has been a real drive to build knowledge to ensure that professionals within Children Social Care are as well-informed and equipped to identify this as soon as a referral is received to ensure intervention and assessment can start promptly. A private fostering factsheet (attached) has been devised and been disseminated to staff within Children Social Care, this includes ChAD, locality teams, Early Help;
 - The private fostering factsheet has been circulated to Social Care, Education and Health Services to promote awareness in the community and with other agencies, this has been distributed by being added to the Pan Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership (PDSCP) resource page, to NEXUS for school staff and attached to the PDSCP newsletter. It has also been attached to the internal weekly word out for Social Care staff and for wider networks;
 - The Safeguarding and Standards Advisor Quality Assurance and Partnership Team have been delivering twilight sessions to the Deputy Safeguarding Leads (DSL’s) in schools to provide information and develop knowledge in schools. This will also continue and close

- liaison with Dorset Social Care will take place if required. The team will raise any concerns if any arise;
- Dorset Social Care continue to work closely with the PDSCP around any other ways to promote private fostering;
- Reviewing and updating its Communication Strategy to ensure that all mediums are utilised to raise awareness of private fostering across the children's and adults' workforce and communities, targeting such information where necessary;
- BCP will continue with their robust raising awareness plan to include the language schools. BCP have established relationships with the local language schools and promote early notification of arrangements. Dorset Social Care will work with BCP around this and ensure that information is continually shared.

5.3 Continued work around building knowledge across children's social care workforce and communities, this includes training and through information sharing:

- Continue to share the private fostering factsheet (attached) with Children Social Care staff, this includes ChAD, locality teams, Early Help, and wider partners on a 12 weekly basis this will be through the weekly word outs.
- Awareness sessions around private fostering within our reflective workshops have been delivered and will continue to be carried out, a small clip on private fostering that has been received from the PDSCP website will also be shared in the upcoming months on private fostering to all workers.
- Closer worker with Dorset Adult Social Care around privately fostering and identification of private fostering arrangements.

5.4 Ensure there is sufficient focus on identification and notification of private fostering arrangements, conducting initial visits to children reported as being private fostered and that assessments of such arrangements take place within relevant timescales this will be done through training:

- Team managers to continue to monitor visits and assessments to ensure they are on time. This will be scrutinised through the data reports; Private fostering to be added to current management dashboards for children in need to increase visibility and oversight.
- Audits will be completed on all private fostering children every 6 months to evaluate practice and ensure that concerns are identified sooner so improvements can be made;
- Continued work with professionals around the voice of the child and their parents ensuring that this is fundamental in the planning and decision making. This will be considered within the audit process to ensure that workers are gathering this information;
- Reviewing arrangements to ensure that children living within a private fostering arrangement are properly monitored via Regulation 8 visits and where necessary a Child in Need Plan;
- Regular training to consider Private Fostering and ensure any updates in legislation and procedures are incorporated, as a compulsory element to the training, ensuring new staff are provided with this training and current staff receive refresher training.

5.5 The current contract for privately fostered children attending language schools is managed by BCP this is due for renewal in 2022 and will need to be reviewed.

- Within this period Dorset Social Care and BCP will regularly meet (every 8 weeks) to review the children in their service and ensure oversight and scrutiny.

- BCP to provide monthly data on all notifications of private fostering arrangements and arrangements that have ended. These will be added as a record to Dorset Children's Mosaic to ensure the young person's status in a private fostering arrangement is reflected and understood.
- All Dorset children managed by BCP are to be audited every 6 months these audits are to be shared with Dorset Children Social Care.
- Dorset Children Social Care to consider the arrangements for the privately fostered children from overseas are managed next year.
- The impact of Covid 19 on the number of children that have been privately fostered in Dorset in the last year and how this may change moving forward needs to be understood within this commissioning and planning.

5.6 Ensure that the Private Fostering Annual Report is duly presented to the Corporate Parenting Board and Safeguarding Children's Partnership in July 2021.

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Corporate Parenting Board Thursday 22nd July 2021 Final Ofsted Report – Hayeswood

Choose an item.

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

Local Councillor(s):

Executive Director: T Leavy, Executive Director of People - Children

Title: Full Inspection Report of Hayeswood

Tel:

Email: louise.drury@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report Status: Public

Recommendation:

That the Corporate Parenting Board note the outcome of the full inspection of Hayeswood which was undertaken 19-20th May 2021

Reason for Recommendation:

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015.

1. Executive Summary

Inspection dates: 19 to 20 May 2021

Outcome: Requires Improvement to be good

We welcome this report which highlights that our staff care very much for the young person they look after by encouraging and nurturing aspirations, listening to her voice and providing child-centred care and support that has a positive impact. We are grateful that the report helped identify some important but small matters that have now been resolved. The completed Action Plan has been shared with Ofsted to confirm that all actions have been completed. The report concludes that our newly

appointed manager shows ‘enthusiasm and determination to deliver sustained progress and to continue to develop the service in the best interests of the young person’. We are confident that we are on the road to deliver good and outstanding provision.

2. Financial Implications

None

3. Well-being and Health Implications

Staff provide child-centred care and support which has a positive impact on the young person’s life.

4. Climate implications

None

5. Other Implications

Not applicable.

6. Risk Assessment

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

Current Risk: Low Risk

Residual Risk: Low Risk

7. Equalities Impact Assessment

Not applicable.

8. Appendices

Inspection Report 2624723 and Action Plan

9. Background Papers

Not applicable.

Footnote:

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.

2624723

Registered provider:

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a local authority. It is registered to provide care for one child aged between seven and 17 years. According to the home's statement of purpose, it offers residential care for children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since March 2021.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

Inspection dates: 19 to 20 May 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
---	--

How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: not applicable

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Staff provide child-centred care and support which have a positive impact on the young person's life. However, shortfalls in recognising and responding to some safeguarding risks have undermined the overall quality and experience of care for the young person.

Staff ensure that the young person has a strong voice and that her wishes and feelings, about matters affecting her, are considered and listened to. However, some less experienced staff have let the young person's voice take precedence over their responsibility to provide appropriate support and challenge. As a result, the young person has received mixed messages, for example about when staff may enter her bedroom.

The staff encourage and nurture the young person's aspirations for her future. Staff ensure good routines are in place to support the young person's college attendance. Staff work closely with her tutor to ensure effective communication. Consequently, problems are addressed, college attendance is improving, and the young person is making academic progress.

The staff show a strong interest in the young person's daily experiences and well-being. Staff help the young person develop independent living skills. For example, encouraging her to take the bus to college and encouraging her talent in baking. This helps her learn responsibility and self-reliance.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

The boundaries that the staff have set for the young person have not always been appropriate or consistently followed. The staff and the previous manager did not ensure that, as a team, they managed unsafe behaviours well on all occasions. Staff said that they are now working together more effectively. They acknowledged that they must continue to develop their approach to teamwork, to increase consistency.

The home has an internal wireless broadband set up with an appropriate level of filtering. However, the staff were unaware whether a phone contract, set up by a parent for the young person, has the appropriate blocks on to prevent unsuitable content. Further, there is no risk assessment relating to the young person's social media use. This means that the young person's internet access is not managed by the staff in a way that ensures a reasonable duty of care in providing age-appropriate safeguarding when she is online.

There are clear plans in place for the staff to follow if a young person goes missing. However, on one occasion, the staff did not protect the young person when she left

the home during the night. Staff did not physically follow the young person or use professional curiosity to find out where she was going or who she was with. Consequently, she was not kept safe.

Managers did not notify Ofsted about a child protection incident as required. The young person was not put at risk by this, as the other appropriate agencies were notified promptly.

An agreed action, identified after a previous safeguarding incident, included installing an outside closed-circuit television (CCTV) system. This has not been put in place. As a result, the identified risks have not been reduced for the young person. A video doorbell has been ordered to mitigate the risk but there has been no sense of urgency by the managers to ensure a timely completion.

Staff undertake formal and informal direct work with the young person whenever opportunities arise, for example during car journeys, to explore and address high-risk behaviours. This sends the young person a message that the staff care and worry about her.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

Since the home's recent registration with Ofsted, the registered manager has left her post. This, alongside other staffing changes, has led to a period of instability at the home. The visible and hands-on approach, provided by the responsible individual and other managers, have helped to lessen the disruption. This has provided reassurance and helped maintain steadiness for the young person and the staff. A new manager has been appointed and is in the process of submitting her application to Ofsted.

Leaders and managers have identified areas of weakness in practice and there is an action plan to address these. Some of these areas had been actioned before the inspection. Despite this, further work is needed to ensure staff practice is strengthened to ensure they provide authoritative and consistent care to the young person.

The home is welcoming and homely. The young person's bedroom is well furnished, reflecting her tastes and individuality. Although clean, it was very untidy and fell below reasonable standards expected. For example, there were dishes, food and clothing on the floor.

Several staff have not had the necessary training to adequately meet the needs of the young person. This includes mandatory and child-specific training. The responsible individual is taking proactive steps to address this. This shortfall is in part due to the number of new staff and delays in the availability of training because of COVID-19.

Staff and the managers promote an inclusive and respectful culture in the home. Staff's practice towards the young person reflects these values. Staff spoke of

feeling especially well supported by each other and by the current managers. This is contributing to building confidence in their practice.

The registered individual and newly appointed manager show enthusiasm and determination to deliver sustained progress and to continue to develop the service in the best interests of the young person.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies; that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. <p>(Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(vi)(b))</p> <p>This relates to the registered person ensuring—</p> <p>that children's internet and mobile phone access is managed by the staff in a way that ensures a reasonable duty of care in providing online age-appropriate safeguarding;</p> <p>to assess children's online safety online, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce risk;</p>	<p>1 July 2021</p>

<p>staff take appropriate action to safeguard children if they leave the home at night;</p> <p>timely action is taken in response to safeguarding precautions, as identified by the manager, including the installation of CCTV outside the home.</p>	
<p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate;</p> <p>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;</p> <p>ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child.</p> <p>(Regulation 13 (1)(b) (2)(b)(c)(e))</p>	1 July 2021
<p>The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—</p> <p>a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation;</p> <p>an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious;</p> <p>there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there;</p> <p>a child protection enquiry involving a child — is instigated; or</p> <p>concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or</p> <p>there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious.</p> <p>(Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(i)(ii)(e))</p>	1 July 2021
The registered person must ensure that—	1 July 2021

at all times, at least one person on duty at the home has a suitable first aid qualification.
(Regulation 31 (2)(a))

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff provide a nurturing environment that is welcoming, supportive, and which provides appropriate boundaries in relation to their behaviour. Homes must also meet children's basic day-to-day needs and physical necessities. Staff should seek to meet the children's basic needs in the way that a good parent would, recognising that many children in residential care have experienced environments where these needs have not been consistently met – doing so is an important aspect of demonstrating that the staff care for the child and value them. In particular, ensure that the child's bedroom is kept to a reasonable standard of tidiness. ('Guide to the quality standards including the children's homes regulations', page 15, paragraph 3.7)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, using the 'Social care common inspection framework'. This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2624723

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider:

Registered provider address: Dorset Council, County Hall, Colliton Park,
Dorchester DT1 1XJ

Responsible individual: Paula Bates

Registered manager: Post Vacant

Inspector

Anne-Marie Davies, Social Care Inspector

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Statutory requirement	Action taken	Date completed
12: The protection of children standard	All staff have completed or are booked to attend Safeguarding training.	16/06/2021
	Risk assessment completed regarding the young person's internet use and online safety.	11/06/2021
	Liaison with Education provider to ascertain what E safety has been provided through education to mitigate against risk.	11/06/2021
	Champions in E Safety have been identified and a Strategy is being developed.	11/06/2021
	Build a relationship with the young person's Father to support him to understand the risks associated with online use.	16/06/2021
	Key work sessions utilising E Safety tools undertaken to educate and promote safe online use.	14/06/2021
	New policy and procedure in place if a young person is missing to include leaving the home at night to ensure staff take appropriate action.	09/06/2021
	Video doorbell has been installed. Going forward Managers will ensure all identified safeguarding actions are addressed in a timely manner.	20/05/2021

	Workshop to develop practice around restorative approaches to support the team in having conversations of High Support High Challenge with young people	11/06/2021
13: The leadership and management standard	Fortnightly senior meetings which offers oversight and upskills staff to provide advice and guidance. All staff have an allocated supervisor that will provide robust inductions.	First one 10/06/2021 23/05/2021
	Communication book implemented to overcome gaps in communication within the team about any changes in care planning or directives.	28/05/2021
	Daily checks of the young person's bedroom are undertaken and dirty plates etc removed with the shift leader being accountable.	28/05/2021
	Additional furniture has been purchased for storage of clothes.	10/06/2021
	Clear boundaries around tidying the bedroom have been communicated with the young person alongside the action taken by staff if she does not complete, this is overseen by management. This includes a change in culture and understanding around entering the young person's bedroom.	28/05/2021
	Team Day undertaken on the 01/06/2021 to educate the team on new systems.	01/06/2021

	<p>Weekly team meetings booked to promote a culture of team decision-making and accountability to ensure consistent care and practice is received by the young person.</p> <p>Delegation of training responsibility has been delegated to a senior member of staff and a training matrix is in place to identify gaps in training and ensure timely completion of mandatory training is undertaken.</p> <p>Staff have completed or are booked onto all Mandatory training including first aid.</p>	15/06/2021 14/05/2021 16/06/2021
40: Notification of a serious event	Since the report notifications have been completed in line within statutory requirements. Pathway developed so all staff know of action to take following an incident. This will be ongoing.	07/06/2021 09/06/2021
31: Staffing of children's homes	Delegation of training responsibility has been delegated to a senior member of staff and a training matrix is in place to identify gaps in training and ensure timely completion of mandatory training is undertaken including First Aid training.	14/05/2021

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