

# Public Document Pack



**Service Director – Legal, Governance and  
Commissioning**

**Julie Muscroft**

The Democracy Service

Civic Centre 3

High Street

Huddersfield

HD1 2TG

**Tel:** 01484 221000

Please ask for: Jodie Harris

Email: [jodie.harris@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:jodie.harris@kirklees.gov.uk)

Monday 27 September 2021

## Notice of Meeting

Dear Member

### Corporate Parenting Board

The **Corporate Parenting Board** will meet in a **Virtual Meeting - online** at **10.00 am on Tuesday 5 October 2021.**

The items which will be discussed are described in the agenda and there are reports attached which give more details.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julie Muscroft".

**Julie Muscroft**

**Service Director – Legal, Governance and Commissioning**

Kirklees Council advocates openness and transparency as part of its democratic processes. Anyone wishing to record (film or audio) the public parts of the meeting should inform the Chair/Clerk of their intentions prior to the meeting.

## **The Corporate Parenting Board members are:-**

### **Member**

Councillor Viv Kendrick (Chair)

Councillor Richard Smith

Councillor John Lawson

Councillor Karen Allison

Councillor Elizabeth Reynolds

Councillor Andrew

Marchington

Councillor Carole Pattison

Gill Addy

Tom Brailsford

Ex-Officio

Cabinet Member for Learning, Aspiration and Communities

Designated Nurse for Looked after Children/Care Leavers

Service Director (Resources, Improvement and Partnerships)

Kirklees Fostering Network

Head of Joint Commissioning, Children & Families

Kirklees Fostering Network

Kirklees Fostering Network

Service Director, Family Support and Child Protection

Director for Children's Services

Interim Head of Service (Child Protection & Review Unit)

Service Director for Learning and Early Support

Principal Social Worker

Virtual School Headteacher

Kirklees Fostering Network

Keith Fielding

Stewart Horn

Colleen Kenworthy

Barry Lockwood

Elaine McShane

Mel Meggs

Sara Miles

Jo-Anne Sanders

Ophelia Rix

Janet Tolley

Christine Carmichael

# Agenda

## Reports or Explanatory Notes Attached

---

**Pages**

**1: Membership of the Board/Apologies**

To receive apologies for absence from those Members who are unable to attend the meeting.

---

**2: Minutes of previous meeting**

1 - 8

To approve the Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

---

**3: Interests**

9 - 10

The Board Members will be asked to say if there are any items on the agenda in which they have disclosable pecuniary interests, which would prevent them from participating in any discussion of the items or participating in any vote upon the items, or any other interest.

---

**4: Admission of the Public**

Most debates take place in public. This only changes when there is a need to consider certain issues, for instance, commercially sensitive information or details concerning an individual. You will be told at this point whether there are any items on the Agenda which are to be discussed in private.

---

**5: Deputations/Petitions**

The Board will receive any petitions and hear any deputations from members of the public. A deputation is where up to five people can attend the meeting and make a presentation on some particular issue of concern. A member of the public can also hand in a petition at the meeting but that petition should relate to something on which the body has powers and responsibilities.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10 (2), Members of the Public should provide at least 24 hours' notice of presenting a

deputation. To register a deputation please email [executive.governance@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:executive.governance@kirklees.gov.uk).

---

## **6: Public Question Time**

The Board will hear any questions from the general public. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, questions should be emailed to [executive.governance@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:executive.governance@kirklees.gov.uk) no later than 10am on Monday 4 October 2021.

---

## **7: Exclusion of the Public**

To resolve that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

---

## **8: One Adoption West Yorkshire Annual Report**

11 - 26

The Board will consider an Annual Report from One Adoption West Yorkshire.

Contacts:

Suzanne Whiteley, One Adoption West Yorkshire  
Michelle Rawlings, One Adoption West Yorkshire

---

## **9: Children's Performance Highlights Report**

27 - 40

The Board will consider a report giving key highlights from the latest Performance Monitoring Data for the Children's Service.

Contacts:

Ophelia Rix, Head of Corporate Parenting  
Janet Tolley, Virtual School Headteacher

---

## **10: Staying Put Fostering Policy**

41 - 48

The Board will consider the refreshed Staying Put Fostering Policy Cabinet Report.

Contacts:

Lisa Warnes – Programme Manager, Children’s Improvement Team  
Elaine McShane – Service Director, Family Support and Child Protection

---

## **11: Virtual School Governing Body Update**

The Board will receive a verbal update in relation to the Virtual School Governing Body.

Contact:

Janet Tolley, Virtual School Head Teacher

---

## **12: Ambition Board Update**

The Board will receive a verbal update in relation to the Children’s Ambition Board.

Contact:

Elaine McShane, Service Director – Family Support and Child Protection  
Tom Brailsford, Service Director – Resources, Improvement and Partnerships

---

## **13: Updates from Board Members on Interaction with Services**

The Board will consider verbal updates from Members in relation to progress and key issues following interactions with Services and partners to challenge the role of the Corporate Parent.

Contact:

Jodie Harris, Principal Governance and Democratic Engagement Officer

---

**14: Corporate Parenting Board Agenda Plan 2021/22**

49 - 56

The Board will consider its agenda plan for 2021/22.

Contact:

Jodie Harris, Principal Governance and Democratic Engagement  
Officer

---

Contact Officer: Jodie Harris

## KIRKLEES COUNCIL

### CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

**Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> June 2021**

Present: Councillor Viv Kendrick (Chair)  
Councillor Carole Pattison  
Councillor Richard Smith  
Councillor Karen Allison  
Councillor Andrew Marchington (ex-officio)  
Stewart Horn, Head of Joint Commissioning - Children and Families  
Elaine McShane, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection  
Sanna Mahmood, Care Leavers Advocate – Family Support and Child Protection  
Colleen Kenworthy - Kirklees Fostering Network  
Anna Gledhill, Service Manager , Quality Assurance and Social Work Practice Lead – Children and Families  
Dale O'Neill – Children's Scrutiny Panel Co-optee

In attendance: Melanie Tiernan, Service Manager, Family Support and Child Protection  
Lisa Warnes, Programme Manager – Children's Services Improvements , Children and Families.

Apologies: Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director, Learning and Early Support - Learning and Skills  
Christine Carmichael - Kirklees Fostering Network  
Ophelia Rix, Principal Social Worker  
Keith Fielding, Kirklees Fostering Network  
Tom Brailsford, Service Director (Resources, Improvement and Partnerships)

#### **1 Membership of the Board/Apologies**

The Chair welcomed Board Members to the meeting. Apologies had been received from Gill Addy , Tom Brailsford , Sara Miles , Christine Carmichael, Cllr Fazila Loonat, Barry Lockwood and Janet Tolley.

Error! Unknown document property name. – Error! Unknown document property name.

**2. Interests**

No interests were declared.

**3. Minutes**

The Board considered the minutes of the last meeting held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2021.

**RESOLVED-**

- 1) That the Minutes of the previous meeting be approved as a correct record.
- 2) That the reports agreed to be presented to the Board as detailed in the Minutes be added to the Boards work programme for 2020/21.

**4 Admission of the Public**

It was agreed that all agenda items would be held in public session.

**5 Deputations/Petitions**

No deputations or petitions were received.

**6 Public Question Time**

No questions from the public were received.

**7. Children's Performance Highlight Report**

The Board considered a report giving key highlights on Performance Monitoring data for Children's Services.

Ophelia Rix ,Head of Corporate Parenting, presented the performance data relating to 'children entering care, children in care and placement stability'. It was reported that the data as of 31 May 2021 continued to show a decreasing trend in the number and rate of children in care in Kirklees. The positive trend was attributed to clear and robust procedures. The following areas of work were highlighted:

- The Legal Gateway and Permanence Panel continued to oversee the decision making and planning around Placement moves and care planning for children and young people.
- The continuation of strong partnership working was helping to ensure that children and young people remained within their families where possible.
- Where children needed to become looked after, clear processes ensured that matters were presented before courts in a timely manner.

The Board commented that the data presented was reassuring and that it was positive that the services provided were enabling children and young people to remain with their families where possible.

Elaine McShane, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection advised that the introduction of the Multisystemic therapy (MST) Teams was beginning to have a positive impact as reflected in the data presented. It was explained that the MST approach was a restorative, evidenced-based intervention that aimed to prevent children from entering care by working with families. Elaine further suggested that an update on the work of the MST teams be presented to a future meeting of the Board.



The Board members welcomed this suggestion and agreed that the report to be presented to the Board should be focused on how the multisystemic approaches were helping to keep children with their families and on understanding data in respect of the outcomes produced. The Board further agreed that it would be helpful for Board members to visit the MST Teams to gain greater understanding of their work.

The Board noted that partnership work between Children's Services and the Police was ongoing in respect of the Philomena Protocol (a scheme that asks carers to identify children and young people who are at risk of going missing, and to record vital information about them that can be used to help find them quickly and safely). Ophelia Rix advised that there was an improving picture in respect of timelines, but more work was required to increase understanding and fully implement the protocol across the partnership.

In relation to educational outcomes, Cllr Carole Pattison reported that the number of in-year school moves had continued to decrease over 2018-19 and 2019- 20 and the Board were advised that continuing to reduce the number of young people with a break in educational provision whenever possible was a priority of the virtual school.

Stewart Horn, Head of Joint Commissioning – Children and Families presented the data for 'Children Looked After Health' and reported that, there was a steadily improving picture of review health assessment data. 93% of assessments were achieved on time, and for most of the year 100% were completed within the statutory timescales. There was also an increase in the number of dental registrations and immunisations continued to go well.

Elaine McShane presented the data in relation to 'Children Looked After Convictions' and explained that offending rates were decreasing. It was advised that a Youth Justice Inspection was taking place and the Board requested that a report setting out the outcomes of the inspection be presented to a future meeting of the Board.

In relation to Care Leavers and 'Staying Put' placements, the Board asked some questions around Personal Advisors (PA's) and how a change of PA related to disengagement with services. It was requested that a report detailing the number of PA changes be produced to identify any correlation between changes to PA's and care leavers levels of disengagement with services.

In response, Elaine McShane agreed with Board members comments and advised that modernisation of the PA service was being undertaken within the 'Staying Put Policy' which was currently being developed. Ophelia Rix added that it was important to continuously review and improve the ways PA's are matched with young people to build positive sustainable relationships.

In response to question from the Board about how often children and young people are contacted by PA's, Elaine McShane advised the standard frequency was 6 weekly, but this was not a one size fits all approach. Following a discussion around PA contact with Care Leavers, Ophelia Rix suggested that a review took place around how often young people were visited by their PA's against the individual's circumstances and to help take a more bespoke approach to visit frequency going forwards . The Board welcomed this suggestion.

In relation to Adoption figures, the Board welcomed the data showing that Kirklees was significantly below the England rate of 12.0% and the Statistical Neighbours rate of 19.0%.

**RESOLVED –**

1. That the Board noted the Children’s Performance Highlight Report.
2. It was agreed that an update on the work of the MST Teams be presented at a future meeting of the Board. This report should contain information on how the multisystemic approaches were helping to prevent children from entering care and on understanding the data in respect of the outcomes.
3. It was agreed that Board members may choose to visit the MST Teams to gain a greater understanding of their work.
4. It was agreed that a report setting out the outcomes of the Youth Justice Inspection be presented to a future meeting of the Board.
5. It was requested that a report detailing the number of PA changes be provided to a future meeting of the Board. This report should include data in respect of changes to PA’s and , levels of disengagement with services as a part of the ‘Staying Put/Fostering Modernisation Update’.
6. It was agreed that information was collected around how often young people were visited by their PA’s and that this should be reviewed against the young person’s circumstances to help take a more bespoke approach to visit frequency’s that is based on the individual’s needs.

**8. Overview of Number and Age of Children in Care**

The Board considered the report ‘Overview of Number and Age of Children in Care’ which was presented by Ophelia Rix, Head of Corporate Parenting. The report included information relating to the number and profile of children in care in Kirklees as well as the number of Children placed outside of the District.

Following a discussion about the retainment of foster carers and the inclusion of out of area carers, the Board agreed that data relating to the number of Kirklees foster carers who had moved out of the area be provided to the Board.

Elaine McShane, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection advised that over the next 6-12 months significant work was being undertaken around supporting foster carers through the ‘Mockingbird Model’ which aimed to modernise the support given in terms of improving the stability of fostering placements. The Board requested any estimated dates for the completion of the ‘Mockingbird’ policy. Elaine advised that progress was been made and September was anticipated to be the next phase of moving forward.

**RESOLVED –**

1. The Board noted the report ‘Overview and Age of Children in Care’ and Ophelia Rix was thanked for her contributions.

Error! Unknown document property name. – Error! Unknown document property name.

2. It was agreed that data relating to the number of Kirklees foster carers who had moved out of the area be provided to the Board.

## 9. Children's Rights Team Annual Report

The Board considered the Annual Report from the Children's Rights Team relating to service delivery from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 which was presented by Melanie Tiernan, Service Manager, Family Support and Child Protection.

Melanie Tiernan explained that the key priorities for the Children's Rights Team in 2021/22 were to:

- Increase children and young people's participation in Looked After Reviews and Child Protection conferences.
- Increase membership of both the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum, to ensure that the voices of children and young people inform future service delivery and that there is representation of all groups of young people.
- Work with others across Children's services to capture children's voices and experiences and to help support participation inform service development and design.
- Introduce improved quality assurance mechanisms, to support the development of the Children's Rights Service and the team.
- Develop the Independent Visitor Scheme to provide a consistently high service to children, young people, and volunteers

In relation to point 9.1 in the report, under Child Protection Conference Advocacy, the Board asked a question as to why no referral from a social worker was listed as a reason for children not been seen. In response, Melanie Tiernan reassured the Board that instances of no referral were always followed up by a social worker and explained that the reason given may have been because the referral wasn't received on time. Further to this, it was advised that work was been done to make the referral process smoother and more efficient. The Board noted the positive feedback given by young people highlighting that this showed the value having an independent visitor can provide.

In response to this, Anna Gledhill, Service Manager, Quality Assurance and Social Work Practice Lead, advised that part of the campaign was increasing the publicity of the Independent Visitors work and the positive outcomes achieved. The Board welcomed this approach. In the discussion to follow, the Board suggested that as a part of recruiting volunteers to be Independent Visitors, that information about being an independent visitor could be advertised to the Councils internal retirement.

The Board responded to a number of questions submitted in a letter to the Chair of the Board from the National Independent Visitor Network (via Barnardo's) in relation to reviewing and monitoring Independent Visitor provision, ensuring that statutory responsibilities are met and that children in care are receiving the support they are entitled to. It was agreed that Anna Gledhill would respond to the letter reflecting the discussion held during the meeting of the Board in response to the questions.

The Chair of the Board verbally reported under this item, that Sanna Mahmood, Care Leavers Advocate – Family Support and Child Protection, would be resigning as the Boards standing care leaver representative. The Board thanked Sanna for her time and valuable contributions to the Board.

To follow a further discussion was held about how best to represent the voice of care leavers during meetings of the Board. Melanie Tiernan suggested that a new care leaver be appointed as the standing representative, alongside periodical submissions from the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum which would showcase their work, highlight issues raised by young people as well as representing the collective voice of children and young people in care.

It was also suggested that members of the Board visit meetings of the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum. The Board welcomed this suggestion and agreed that periodically 1 or 2 different Board members should be invited to these meetings and requested that Melanie Tiernan provide dates of future meetings to the Board.

Social media platforms were also highlighted as a mechanism for engagement with young people. A discussion concerning privacy and safeguarding followed and in response to Board members concerns, Sanna Mahmood advised that Facebook discussions could be made confidential by using a closed group. The Board agreed this was a work in progress and that it was important to be careful about the information that is shared on social media and that use of a closed Facebook group may be the safest method to use if taken forward.

#### **RESOLVED –**

1. The Board noted the Children’s Rights Team Annual Report.
2. The Board thanked Sanna Mahmood, Care Leavers Advocate – Family Support and Child Protection for her contributions to the work of the Board in her role as care leaver representative.
3. It was agreed that information about volunteering as an Independent Visitor be added if possible, to the Councils internal retirement course.
4. It was agreed that a written response be given to the National Independent Visitor Network reflecting the Boards responses to their questions.
5. That the dates of future meetings of the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum be provided to the Board and that 1 to 2 members would be invited to attend these meetings periodically.
6. That the matter of Care Leaver representation on the Board and the use of social media be a work in progress considering suggestions made.

#### **10. Overall Financial Policy for Care Leavers**

Elaine McShane, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection gave a presentation setting out the refreshed Care Leavers Support and Financial Guidance Policy.

Error! Unknown document property name. – Error! Unknown document property name.

Board members welcomed and fully supported the draft policy and highlighted that a clearer and more flexible financial support policy was an important part of supporting looked after children post 18 and fulfilling the Councils role of a Corporate Parent. The Board also recognised that the draft policy was a good starting point that would evolve as work was taken forward.

**RESOLVED:-** The Board noted the Care Leavers Support and Financial Guidance Policy and thanked Lisa Warnes, Programme Manager – Children’s Services Improvements, Children and Families and Elaine McShane, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection for their contributions.

## 11. **Virtual School Governing Body Update**

Cllr Carole Pattison gave verbal update on the work of the Virtual School Governing Body. It was reported that

- Attainment in primary schools had improved and had stayed the same in secondary schools over the course of the pandemic to date.
- 100% of Personal Education Plans (PEP’s) were completed within the Spring Term in-line with the new termly processes.
- Children looked after by virtual school attended approximately 220 educational settings. Of those 220, 101 children were based within Kirklees and the rest were out of area.
- A grant had been awarded to extend the role of the Virtual school Head Teacher include children with a social worker in addition to Looked After Children.
- The focus going forward was to maintain the completion of termly PEP’s, attendance/persistent absence and the reduction of school moves remained a high priority.

**RESOLVED:-** The Board noted the Virtual School Governing Body Update.

## 12. **OFSTED Ambition Board Update**

Elaine McShane, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection gave a verbal update on the work of the Ofsted and Ambition Board. It was noted that the Board now had broadened its scope of focus to include the SEND transformation programme. Elaine suggested that a report on SEND Transformation be provided to the Board in relation to Looked After Children, the Board noted the update and agreed that the report be presented to a future meeting.

**RESOLVED:-**

1. The Board noted the Ofsted Ambition Board Update
2. It was agreed that a report on SEND Transformation be presented to the Board in relation to Looked After Children within the Calendar year.

### **13. Membership of the Board**

The Chair of the Board verbally reported that:

- Cllr Fazila Loonat was to be removed from the membership and be replaced by Cllr Elizabeth Reynolds
- Sanna Mahmood was to be removed as Care Leaver representative and future care leaver representation on the Board be reviewed as discussed under item 9.

#### **RESOLVED –**

1. The Board noted the membership changes and thanked Sanna Mahmood and Cllr Fazila Loonat for their time and contributions to the Board.
2. That the Boards new membership be formally agreed at the next meeting of the Board.

### **14. Updates from Board Members on Interactions with Services**

Board members were advised that the Chair of the Board had been to visit 3 children's social work teams based in Batley, Huddersfield, and Colne valley. It was noted that the committed, positive and enthusiastic attitude that the social workers had towards their work was clear. The Chairs visit also gave members of those teams the opportunity to put forward various ideas and concerns. The Chair highlighted the value in visiting services and encouraged other Board members to visit teams.

#### **RESOLVED:-**

1. Board members noted the update on Interactions with Services.
2. It was agreed that Board Members would contact the Chair or Jodie Harris to arrange any visits to services.

### **14. Corporate Parenting Board Work Programme and Agenda Plan for 2020/21.**

The Board considered the work plan for 2021/22.

#### **RESOLVED –**

1. The Board noted the forward work programme for the 2021/22 municipal year,
2. It was agreed that all reports agreed within the meeting of the Board as of 29 June 2021 be added to the forward plan.

**KIRKLEES COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL/CABINET/COMMITTEE MEETINGS ETC**

**DECLARATION**

**CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

Name of Councillor

Item in which you have an interest	Type of interest (eg a disclosable pecuniary interest or an "Other Interest")	Does the nature of the interest require you to withdraw from the meeting while the item in which you have an interest is under consideration? [Y/N]	Brief description of your interest

Signed: .....

Dated: .....

## NOTES

### Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

If you have any of the following pecuniary interests, they are your disclosable pecuniary interests under the new national rules. Any reference to spouse or civil partner includes any person with whom you are living as husband or wife, or as if they were your civil partner.

Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain, which you, or your spouse or civil partner, undertakes.

Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from your council or authority) made or provided within the relevant period in respect of any expenses incurred by you in carrying out duties as a member, or towards your election expenses.

Any contract which is made between you, or your spouse or your civil partner (or a body in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest) and your council or authority -

- under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and
- which has not been fully discharged.

Any beneficial interest in land which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, have and which is within the area of your council or authority.

Any licence (alone or jointly with others) which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, holds to occupy land in the area of your council or authority for a month or longer.

Any tenancy where (to your knowledge) - the landlord is your council or authority; and the tenant is a body in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest.

Any beneficial interest which you, or your spouse or your civil partner has in securities of a body where -

(a) that body (to your knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of your council or authority; and

(b) either -

the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or

if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.





## One Adoption West Yorkshire Annual Report 2020/21

May 2021

### 1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report sets out the developments within One Adoption West Yorkshire from April 2020 to March 2021.

### 2 Background information

- 2.1 Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield adoption functions as specified in the partnership agreement were delegated on the 1st April 2017 to Leeds City Council & One Adoption West Yorkshire formally opened on this date.
- 2.2 The regionalisation of adoption services by the government as a structural reform programme is almost complete with 31 Regional Adoption Agencies (RAA's) and 145 local authorities (LA's) now live, with the remaining 6 local authorities likely join existing RAA's. The government is supporting the RAA's and is funding the development of a small national team to develop and improve services and support across for vulnerable children and families within the adoption system, working closely with Association of Directors of Children's services (ADCS) and others across the sector.
- 2.3 The latest figures released nationally show that there is no longer a be a gap between children waiting and the number of adopters available. However, there is a mismatch between the needs of the children requiring adoption and the adopters willing to consider these priority children. There remain a high number of children waiting with a placement order for 18 months or more. The government provided £1million to the adoption sector to improve the recruitment and preparation of adopters, with a key focus on attracting more adopters from the black and minority ethnic communities. The national campaign #YouCanAdopt was launched in September 2020 focussing on myth busting about who can adopt followed up with a pilot project for Black Adopters in Birmingham and London. In April, a further national campaign around adopting brothers and sisters together was launched with a more targeted approach to seek adopters specifically for priority children.
- 2.4 The future of the Adoption Support Fund (ASF) remains uncertain although a cross party all parliamentary group fully supports the continuation of the fund and the fund is committed to continue until July 2022. The government are undertaking a review of the ASF and this will inform the future plans for the ASF. The next Spending Review will hopefully clarify the longer-term plans for the adoption support fund.

### 3 Main issues

#### 3.1 Use of Resources

##### 3.1.1 Staffing

The last year has been unprecedented for everyone and the teams have adapted well and have found creative ways to ensure that families are supported and children's plans progressed as far as possible. All staff and managers have been supported throughout the year in a variety of different ways from formal wellbeing support meetings with regular check ins as well informal support and buddying arrangements. There has been a range of materials and tips for self-care in these difficult times and as a service we have advocated flexible working and this has been well received by the staff. It is fair to say that morale across the teams has fluctuated at different times over the last year and as a management team we have tried to be proactive ins supporting staff whilst also being responsive to need.

- 3.1.2 Sickness levels have remained low however, there are a small number of staff experiencing long term health problems related to emotional and mental health. These issues impact upon the capacity within certain areas of the service which are discussed later in the report. Occupational health is involved in advising and supporting staff and managers in these circumstances.
- 3.1.3 Recruitment has taken place regarding social worker appointments and business support staff with a number of new staff starting work in lockdown. Staff are looking forward to getting out to meet others outside initially as things open up. We have just completed a staff survey regarding future working arrangements and this will need analysis and further consideration over the coming months.

##### 3.1.4 Duty System

The duty and advice service has been maintained with staff working this from home and as such we have continued to provide the same level of duty service as we were pre-COVID/ lockdown. The use of a collective check-in call at the start of each day between duty manager and duty workers, has meant work has been able to be prioritised and breaks for workers throughout the day agreed. This has enabled the workers to identify each other as the 'duty team' and they have been able to

keep in contact with each other throughout the day. The overarching view is that a better service has been offered to callers, without the distractions of the office environment.

3.1.5 At the beginning of August, a choice system was implemented when a member of the public calls the duty and advice line. They can choose option 1 if they are interested in becoming an adopter; option 2 if they have a letterbox or contact query; and option 3 for any other type of call. This has reduced the number of calls to option 3 (which is essentially the 'old' main duty and advice line) and ensures that callers are able to immediately speak with someone who can better respond to the nature of their call. It also means that we can better understand the amount and type of calls into the service. Latterly there have been some difficulties with staff capacity to respond to option 2 and so these calls have been temporarily diverted to option 3 due to staffing issues which will be discussed later in the report. The total number of calls to the duty and advice line for the year is 3893. This averages at 75 calls per week. During lockdown periods when schools have been mostly closed we experienced a lower number of calls to the line, but this has since picked up again, although it is noted the average weekly calls for 2019/20 was 98 with total for the year at 5119, so it is clear that the number of calls to the duty and advice line have been lower over the past year. There has, however, been a significant increase in callers interested in becoming adopters across the year.

### 3.1.6 Accommodation & service delivery

Staff are continuing working from home with one member of staff in each area collecting the post with some managers going in for the induction of new staff and some staff go into the office for wellbeing or practical reasons when they are unable to work from home. The managers have been meeting up with staff for 1-2-1's and teams are starting to meet up in person. There is currently no accommodation for staff in Kirklees or Calderdale areas due to refurbishment and other staff using the space respectively. Bradford relocated OAWY staff to another floor that has no network for the Leeds computers and this is currently been looked at to address this issue. The local authorities are trying to identify interim accommodation, pending a more permanent relocation. The completion of the letterbox work and access to files work has been challenging without an office base in these areas leading to a full service not being able to be provided. The letterbox post has been re-directed from Huddersfield office to Leeds creating some delays and staff needing to travel to Leeds to process the work.

3.1.7 There are a lot of benefits with regards to staff working from home and it is clear there are efficiencies in this way of working as we can see from the performance data later in the report. The need to come together for collaboration, peer support and team discussions are high on the priority, therefore a different way of working is likely to be needed moving forward. The impact of this on service delivery needs to be fully assessed and we are currently working with staff to understand which elements can continue virtually and what needs to be carried out face to face. The importance of relationships with families and colleagues is critical and this must be taken into consideration when planning future arrangements.

### 3.1.8 Information Technology

The Bradford, Calderdale and Wakefield portals have been working effectively for most of the year. This has been essential with all staff working from home. The Kirklees portal remains an issue and has not been prioritised for resolution over the last year. However, this needs to be a key priority for next year as staff working with Kirklees still must use two laptops and the information regarding care planning is not as easily accessed.

## 3.2 **Partnership working**

### 3.2.1 Operational leads meetings

Over the last year this group has continued to address interface issues and particularly focussing on the impact of coronavirus upon children's care planning and moving onto adoption. Discussions have also taken place around the implementation of aligning adoption and special guardianship payments and joint audit work has also been discussed and agreed.

### 3.2.2 Multidisciplinary Team

The inaugural year of the OAWY Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic, which delayed the start of the full operational service. Leeds Community Healthcare was awarded the contract to provide the health element of the MDT service in early December 2020. The recruitment of the health staff was quickly commenced, and all positions were successfully recruited in early 2021. The full team is expected to be in positions in summer 2021 when the Speech & Language Therapist and the Clinical Psychologists start in their roles.

The annual report regarding the work of the MDT is discussed more fully in Appendix 1 of this report with an evaluation of the work over the year and the planning for the forthcoming year.

### 3.2.3 Agency Medical Advisors and GP's

Medical advisors have continued to work hard during the Covid 19 pandemic to ensure that they provide medical information for children in a timely way for their adoption plans to progress. Medical advisors have also continued to support adoption panels. Due to increased demand the number of adoption panels has now increased from 7 to 8 per month and commissioning discussions are under way with health in relation to providing medical advice for the additional panel on a consistent basis. The issue of GP's undertaking medical assessments of adopters has been a crucial issue this year with the focus of health staff towards managing the impact of Covid within the NHS. GP's largely have tried to work with the agency to

progress matters but inevitably there has been delays. There are a small number of GP's who have refused to carry out medicals regarding prospective adopters or who request large fees and in these cases issues have been escalated within the Clinical Commissioning Groups local.

#### 3.2.4 Virtual school heads (VSH)

The work across the region from our Education Lead alongside the five Virtual School Heads (VSH) continues to grow. The helpline is well used and accessed by adoptive parents, schools and other professionals offering advice and support as needed. This allows us to have a very current understanding of the difficulties faced by families and professionals, informing training needs, developing the services understanding of how best to support our families and to develop online tools as needed. We continue to work to increase the awareness of attachment and trauma in West Yorkshire schools and see this as such an important piece of work that it is now outlined within the Terms of Reference for the VSH meetings. We remain passionate in our delivery of Attachment and Trauma training to school staff and childcare provisions and by providing workshops to adopters in partnership with the service delivery teams. This is discussed more in the Appendix 1.

3.2.5 Grandparents plus continue to attend allowing further opportunities to share information and knowledge across the region regarding support for special guardians around education issues and the growth of referrals to Kinship has been helped given information provided to schools raising awareness about special guardianship arrangements.

#### 3.2.6 Special Guardianship

The two key areas for development over the last year across the region regarding Special Guardians has been the implementation of a regional support plan and the implementation of a regional approach regarding the financial support to SG's. The Special Guardianship (SG) Support Plan is being rolled out across West Yorkshire and is currently being used in all the local authorities (LA) for post order support and testing is underway for its use following initial assessment and during proceedings. The financial offer for Special Guardians is being implemented in each LA with some differences regarding post 18 support and additional benefits to mirror the fostering offers. Calderdale remain the only LA to have executive sign off on their offer. Leeds have an in principal agreement and are aiming to implement their offer by July 2021. Bradford is likely to be the last LA to implement their offer in April 2022 although in principal agrees to the proposals. Wakefield are considering this following financial and legal advice with a decision due in the next two months.

3.2.7 The Kinship (formerly Grandparents Plus) project is progressing well with the further support provided from the ASF Covid-19 funds. There are three project workers offering 1:1 Support to kinship carers in the region, alongside support groups and access to telephone advice. Their regional Facebook group is now moderated and had over 200 very active members. This allows us to connect with many special guardians in the region and hear their views. OAWY is also exploring the use of two casual Youth Workers to establish an advocacy group for young people on SGOs to develop the voice and influence of young people in these arrangements across the region. Training in Non-Violent Resistance for the kinship teams across the 5 LA's took place in January 2021. 23 support workers and managers undertook this training Two of these were the project workers from Kinship. There were four follow up practice sessions to help embed the model in practice and the participants can attend the OAWY practice sessions on an ongoing basis.

3.2.8 A therapeutic parenting programme designed for special guardians called 'Guiding Guardians' has been commissioned. The first program was in March and OAWY made a group application to the fund on behalf of the region. OAWY are working with the kinship manager's in the region to find ways to increase the use of the Adoption Support Fund, to provide much needed therapeutic support to special guardian families.

3.2.9 OAWY hosted a development day on 21<sup>st</sup> April 2021 with senior leaders and practice managers from the 5 LAs, Kinship and two special guardians. The focus was on the vision for special guardianship support across the region, reaffirming current goals and considering future priorities. There is current discussion about where OAWY can add value to local services and the benefit of regional working to deliver or co-ordinate some services for special guardians such as a website/information pack, preparation, ASF applications, Family Time support etc. An options paper for considering the progression of this regional approach to developing services will be discussed with the management board in the next few months.

### 3.3 **Performance Management**

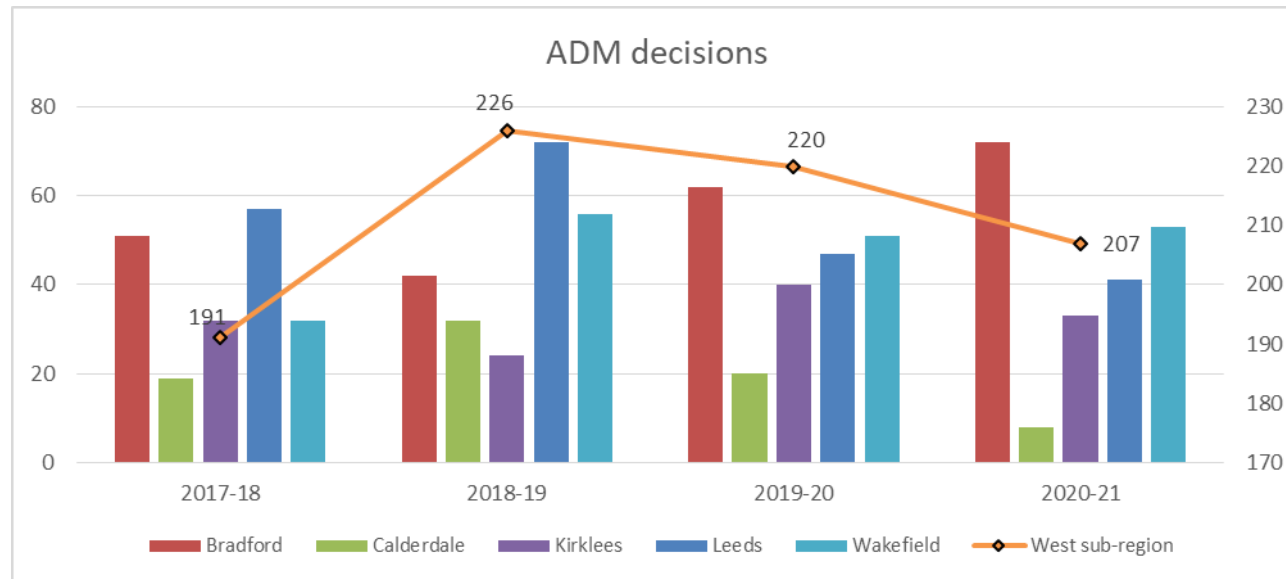
3.3.1 The agency provides quarterly reports to the management board. This data provided has developed over the last 4 years and is gathered to ensure that we are aware of how much work is undertaken, how well was it undertaken and if anyone is any better off.

**A) Sufficiency:** Are enough of the right kind of adopters being recruited and approved to meet the needs of the children waiting:

#### 3.3.2 The children with a plan ratified for adoption during 2020/21

Between April 2020 and March 2021, 207 children had a plan for adoption ratified by the 5 West Yorkshire local authorities Agency Decision Makers. Of the 207 children with a plan for adoption, there were 99 female and 108 male children. In total,

this is a reduction from last year's full year figure of 220 children from across the 5 West Yorkshire local authorities and reflects the delays in the court arena caused by the pandemic. Adoption decisions across Bradford continue to rise and Wakefields number have remained high for the last three years. Conversely numbers in Calderdale, Kirklees and Leeds have reduced.



### 3.3.3 Ethnicity

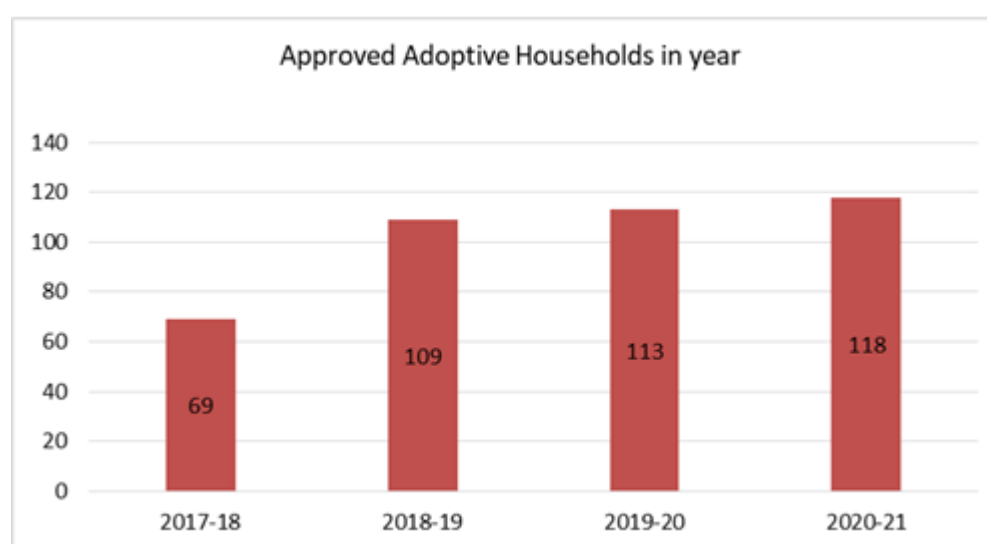
Of the 207 children with a plan for adoption ratified this year, 167 (81%) children were from white British backgrounds (including information not obtained) and 40 children (19%) were from Black and Minority Ethnic groups, including children from eastern European, Gypsy Roma, Black African and Black Caribbean backgrounds.

### 3.3.4 Placement with Siblings

As a general principle, siblings will be placed together; however, due to the individual needs of children, this is not always appropriate and cannot always be achieved. It is essential that sibling assessments are carried out to ensure good quality decision making and support plans are evidence based if children are placed together or apart. Of the 91 individual siblings placed during the year, 35 individual children were placed apart, for which 32 the plan was to be placed apart.

### 3.3.5 Adopter recruitment

118 adoptive households were approved during the year and you will note from the table below that this is another increase compared to the previous three years.



3.3.6 Within the 118 households, 221 individuals were approved throughout 2020-21. Of these, 22 (10%) are from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds (last year it was 10%). We need to improve our percentage of BME carers and keep a focus on ensuring that we approve a full range of adoptive families to meet the range of children requiring placement, while at the same time not relying on matching children with regard to ethnic identity as an overriding factor. Over the last year we commissioned an organisation called My Adoption Family to work with us in engaging with Black African and Black Caribbean communities in the region to help us increase the diverse range of adopters available. We undertook a webinar with key organisations to discuss local reflections on the barriers for people coming forward and to seek their help in our campaign to attract more adopters to come forward. The feedback from this discussion highlighted issues of trust regarding public services. Face to face engagement and building trust and credibility is key in increasing the recruitment of adopters within the Black communities and working with faith and community-based organisations is key moving forward. During the pandemic this development work has been hindered and with the court delays we now have a number of adopters from BAME communities who are waiting for a match.

3.3.7 Households approved for sibling groups has increased by 8 this year with 24 households approved for sibling groups, all 24 for 2 children; and 28 households open to an Early Permanence Placements ..this has reduced but has, nevertheless, exceeded the demands for these placements over the year. The implementation of a new training course has helped to shift thinking of those prospective adopters in being able to have the confidence to consider adopting brothers and sisters together.

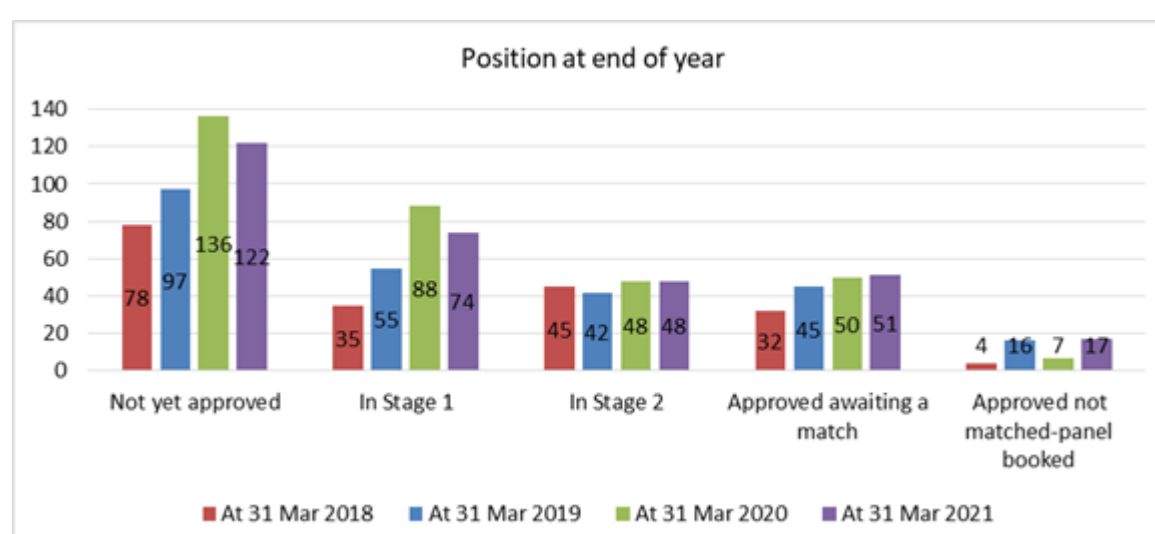
### 3.3.8 Children currently with an adoption plan

As of the end of March 2021 there are 137 children with a plan for adoption and have a placement order, from the 5 West Yorkshire local authorities not currently placed and requiring adopters. 64 children out of the 137 are 0 - 2 years, 52 are between 2 and 4 years and 21 children are 5 years of age or older.

3.3.9 From the children waiting for a placement there are 66 girls and 71 boys, and 22% are children from BME backgrounds (including children from eastern European, Gypsy Roma, Black African and Black Caribbean backgrounds). 65 children are from sibling groups. The plans for these children are actively reviewed with the local authorities with clear monitoring and tracking systems to understand the range of family finding activity going on for these children and whether adoption remains the right plan for each child. The delays for these children are related primarily to the needs of the children; the need to place siblings together, the age of the children or their particular special needs or complexity.

### 3.3.10 Adopters available

As of the end of March 2021, there are 51 approved adoptive households that have not been matched and 34 are in the process of looking and are in discussions about considering placements and 17 have a panel date booked.



3.3.11 On the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 122 adopters are in the process of assessment (in stage 1 or 2) although these will take a number of months to become approved. This is a positive picture as the number of adopters approved is healthier than previously and allows for placement choice for some children. However, a more nuanced approach to recruitment and approval is required to ensure that we have adopters who can meet the needs of children with a plan for adoption and particularly the children we know who wait longer. This will be discussed later in the report.

**B) Timeliness:** Are children being matched and placed without delay including those children who wait longer?

### 3.3.12 Children matched in the year for adoption

Between April 2020 and March 2021, 183 children from the 5 West Yorkshire local authorities were matched with families at adoption panels; this is an increase compared to the previous three years from across the 5 West Yorkshire local authorities and is really positive given the pandemic. From April 2020 to March 2021, 23% (42) of the children matched were from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities and this is extremely positive news as these children often wait longer to be placed.

- 138 of the children matched were 0 to 2 years old.
- 30 children matched were 2 to 4 years old.
- 15 children were aged 5 years or older.
- 88 children were part of a sibling group (of the 183 matched).
- 81 children (of the 183 matched) were placed who are part of a sibling group of which 33 were placed apart, 31 had a plan to place apart due to their individual needs.
- 19 children (of the 183 matched) had been previously placed in early permanence placements (11 during the year) of which 6 of these 19 children have been adopted in the year. This is a very positive step in reducing the number of moves for children before they reach their permanent family.

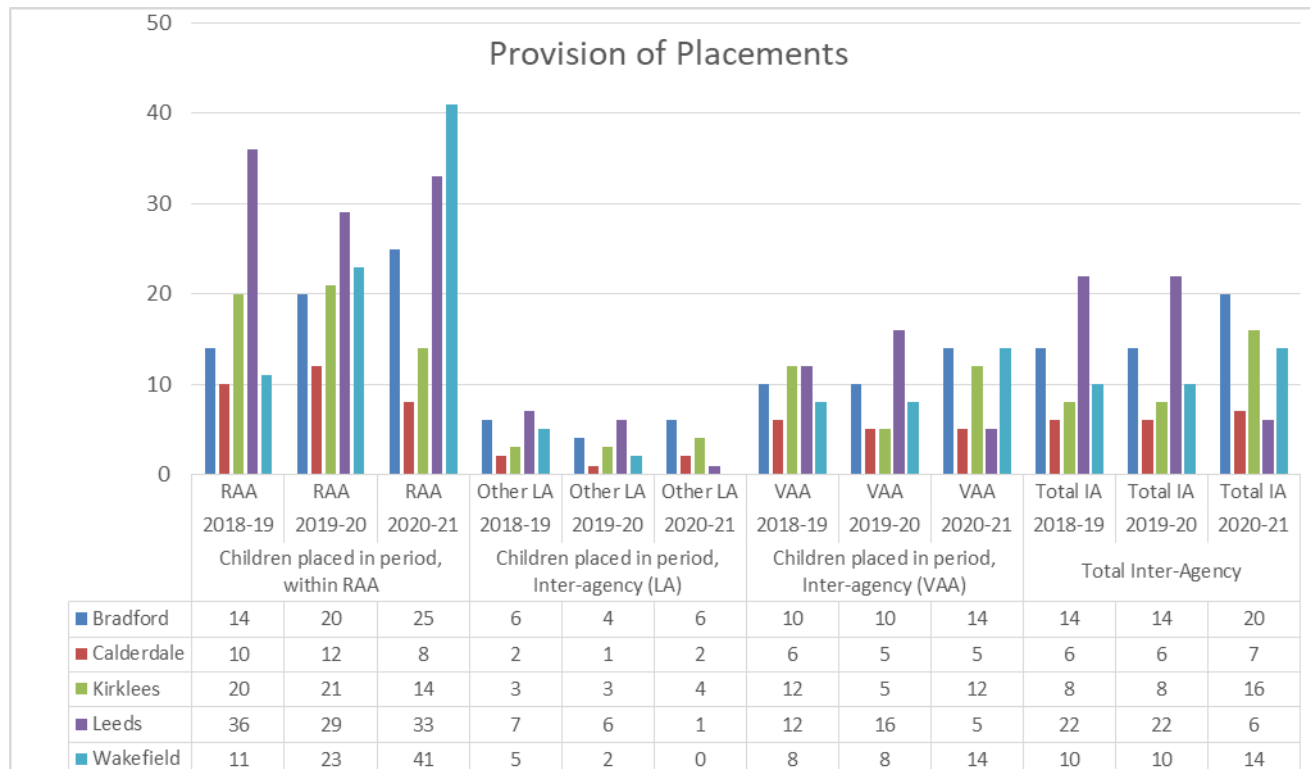
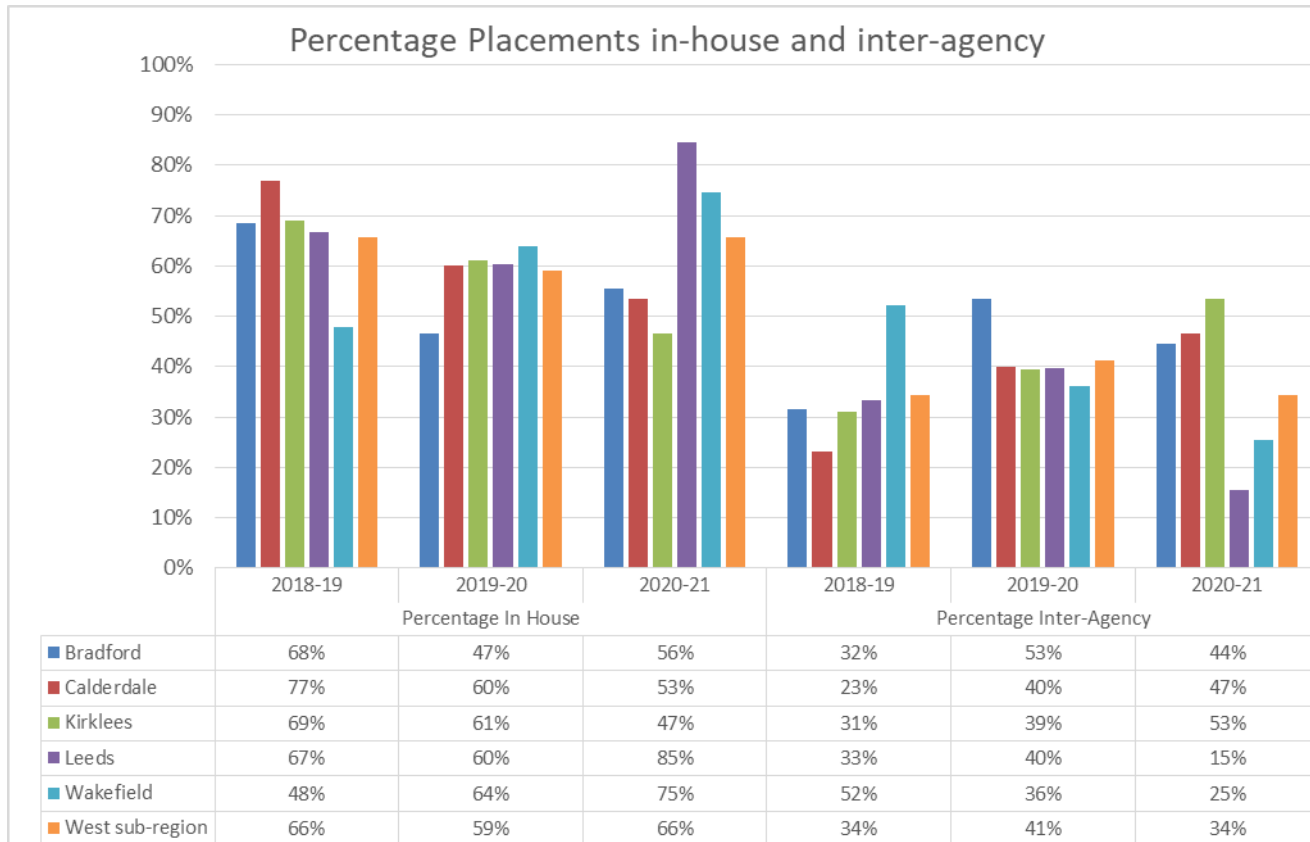
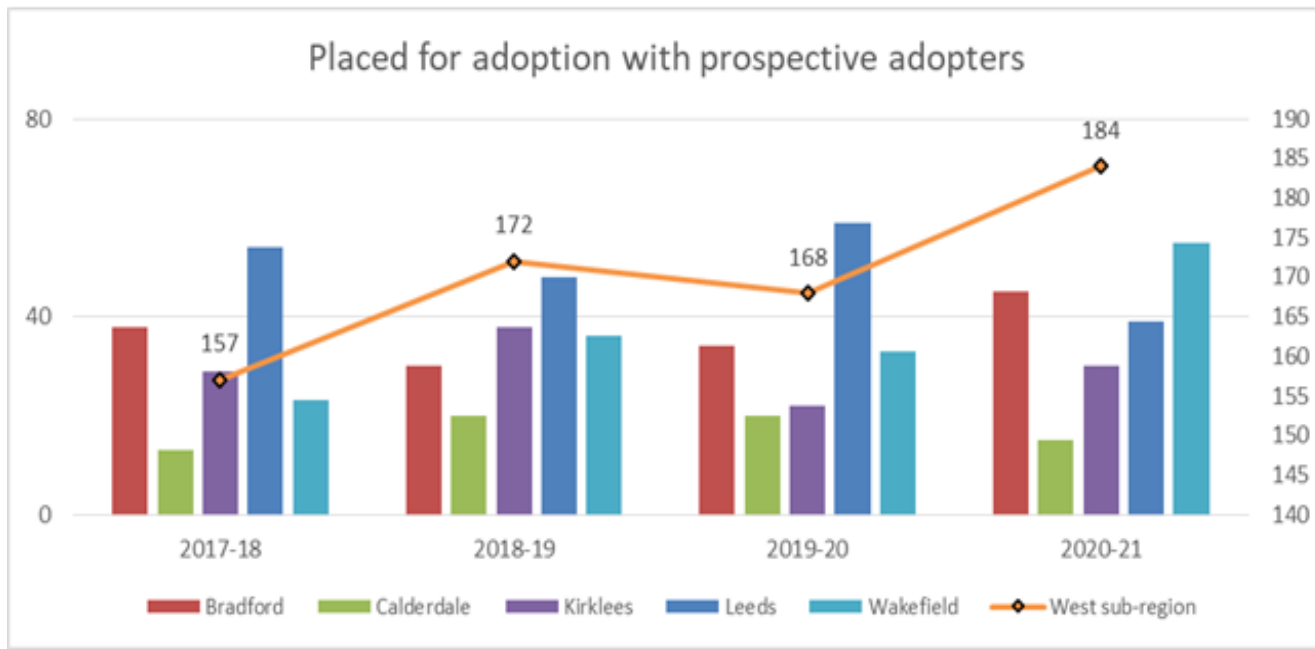
### 3.3.13 Provision of Placements

184 children were placed this year. The percentage of placements provided in-house within the region has increased significantly this year.

121 children within OAWY.

- 13 children with other local authorities or other Regional agencies.
- 50 children with Voluntary Adoption Agencies

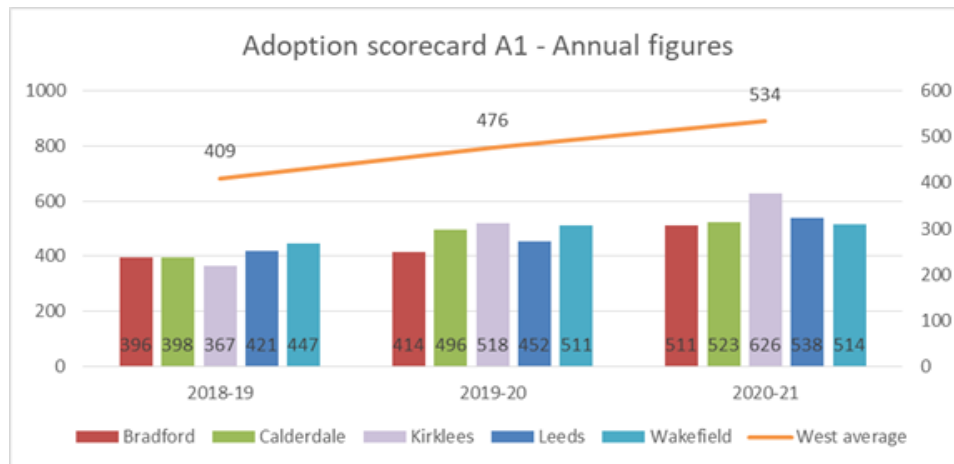
The percentage this year was 66% in house and 34% interagency. Last year it was 59% in house and 41% interagency and is a positive picture.



3.3.14 Adoption Scorecards

**A1 indicator**

The average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family (indicator A1) for children in West Yorkshire is 534 days, the National Indicator target is 426 days.

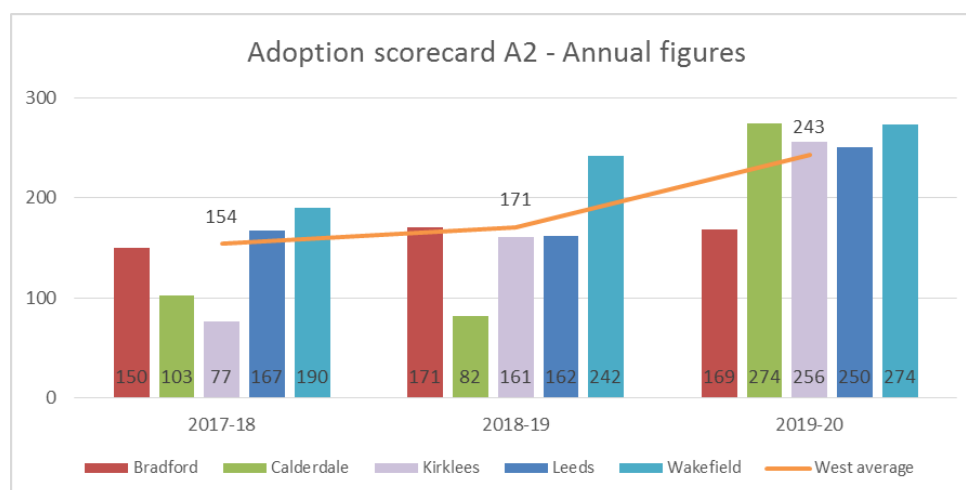


- 39 of the 157 children adopted entered care more than 3 years ago.
- 94 of the 157 children adopted were hard to place children.
- 70 of the 157 children adopted took more than 500 days between entering care and being placed,
- Of the 70 children that took more than 500 days 45 of the 70 were hard to place children with 20 having 2 or more characteristics

3.3.15 These figures relate to the time children entered care and were then adopted in the year. It is clear that some of the children being older and with more complex needs has resulted in adoption taking longer to achieve and there are positives that adoption has been achieved for some of these children who would otherwise remain in care. Some children entered care and there were delays in the court processes and plans that did not come to fruition with family members. It is important to look at the individual local authorities and situations but on the whole most of the children will have actually been placed in the last 3 years and formally adopted more recently, reflecting a number of years of local authority practice and care planning from a number of years ago.

3.3.16 **A2 indicator**

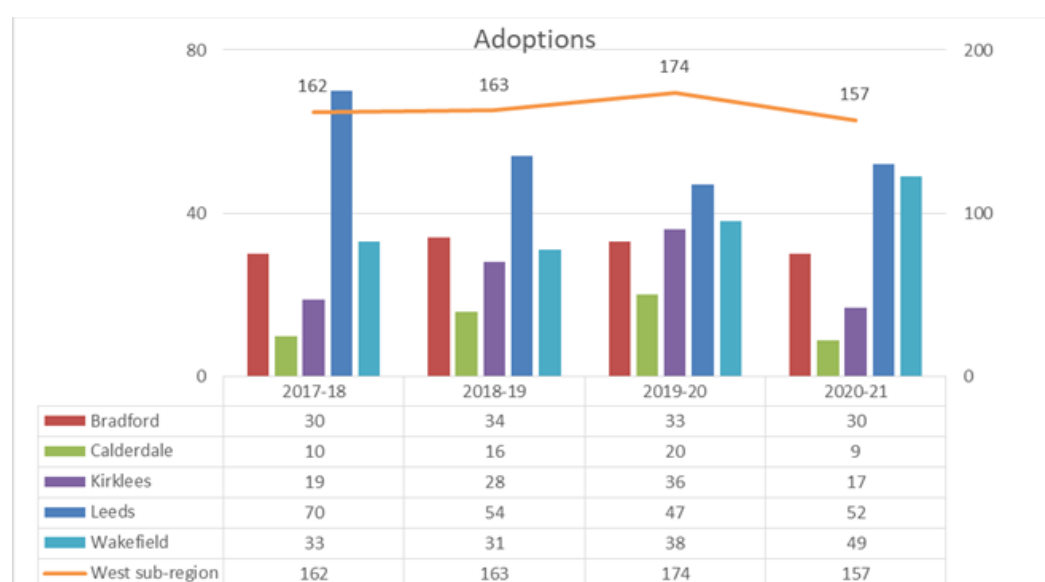
The average time for those children adopted in the period, between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family (Indicator A2) for children in West Yorkshire has increased to 259 days, the National indicator target is 121 days. This is above the national indicator and reflects an issue of a national decline in the number of adopters available and the complexity of children waiting for adoption. However, as discussed in the above paragraph the cohort of these children adopted is important to note and the fact that children have secured permanence and an adoptive family is positive for each of these individual children.



3.3.17 Children adopted from care

The number of children who have been formally adopted has decreased by 17 (157) with 12% of children leaving care being adopted across the region. The National average is 12%. This is reduced due to the pandemic and delay in the family courts hearing adoption cases.





### 3.4 Practice, quality of provision and management oversight

#### 3.4.1 Recruitment and Assessment

The first half of the year saw an increase in enquiries to adopt and with a backlog caused by the pandemic this presented real challenges for the recruitment teams. The number of people entering the adoption process slowed during Quarters 3 and 4 of the year as a result of the decision to temporarily decline applications from those seeking to adopt a child under two years of age unless they were interested in adopting children from a Black African/Caribbean or mixed heritage background or siblings or children with a disability of complex health issues. This provided much needed respite to the Recruitment and Assessment teams to progress applicants in the assessment process from the beginning of 2020/21. The number of sessional assessment workers was increased to help with the capacity to progress assessments in a timelier way and there are currently no adopters waiting to be allocated an assessing social worker for their stage two assessment.

3.4.2 Two additional social workers have been recruited and are due to join the Recruitment and Assessment teams in the coming month to add further capacity. Despite the ongoing challenges relating to staff sickness and the impact of Covid 19, 118 households were approved to adopt in 2020/21, an increase of five households from the previous year. The feedback from adopters during the pandemic regarding their experience has, overall, being very positive. This is some feedback from one adopter:

*“We have always felt that K. has always been in our corner even in the most difficult of times. This sometimes meant advising us what we needed to hear rather than what we wanted to hear! She has always offered emotional and practical support whilst being her calm and measured self....We did not always initially understand the reasons why K was so thorough, but as the process progressed this always became clear and we quickly realised it was best to follow her advice! She left no stone unturned and her preparation for the panel reviews meant we felt confident on both occasions.”*

3.4.3 Online training and preparation for prospective adopters has continued to develop and now includes:

- Preparation Training (3 days via webinar)
- Building Relationships (E-learning)
- Early Permanence (Half day webinar)
- Adopting Siblings (Half day webinar)
- Experienced Parents (Half day webinar)
- Foster Carers Adopting (One day webinar)
- Connected by Adoption (Half day webinar)

3.4.4 Further training is now in development to offer additional support to adoptive parents in relation to preparing to become parents and in relation to issues around contact and identity. We have engaged the support of a number of adopted adults, alongside adoptive parents to develop and co-facilitate elements of the training. We remain in regular contact with PAC-UK, who provide support to birth parents, and will revisit their involvement in the preparation of adopters when they feel able to facilitate this.

3.4.5 Following a review of Stage One data and extensive consultation with staff, from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 the Recruitment and Assessment service was re-structured with two managers overseeing all adoption advisors and families in stage one of the adoption process. The implementation of this change has resulted in some line manager change for staff, but this has been kept to a minimum. It is hoped that the re-structure will provide greater consistency in the experience of prospective adopters and in decision making early in their adoption journey. The business support to the recruitment and assessment work is key in moving adopters through the process ensuring that checks and training are progressed from stage 1 to stage 2 of the process.

3.4.6 We are now taking steps to increase the number of adopter enquiries again through our marketing strategy for priority children in particular, and through increasing the possible number of attendees at online information events, which take place twice per month.

### 3.4.7 Adoption Panels

Adoption panel is working online via Zoom and is operating well although capacity continues to be a challenge and we meet regularly review agendas to ensure that items can be progressed. We have moved from 7 to 8 panels per month to increase capacity and continue to hold two panels per month specifically for approvals as this allows us to add an additional case. The panel chairs provide a biannual report for the adoption agency and this feedback is discussed with the local authority adoption leads and decision makers regularly. The business support teams are central to the effective running of panels and the feedback regarding the quality of the organisation of these and minutes are very positive.

See 3.4.31 for quality assurance data relating to adoption panels.

### 3.4.8 Family Finding

With 184 children being placed for adoption during the year the family finding teams have worked creatively to undertake family finding and achieve matches for children within the constraints of a challenging and the increase in the number of children being placed for adoption is reflective of this work. The number of children placed for adoption is the highest number of children placed since the regionalisation of adoption services within West Yorkshire.

3.4.9 There have been additional pressures on all the teams in family finding, the complexities of transitions during the pandemic have remained challenging throughout the year with the differing restrictions in place during the year, this has meant an increase in the work required to ensure effective planning including individual risk assessments being carried out to ensure transitions can be undertaken safely as well as a higher level of support needed for both adopters and foster carers. The University of East Anglia Moving to Adoption model has been utilised where possible to support transitions and has particularly supported the getting to know you phased of introductions.

3.4.10 There has been an increase in the number of children placed within the West Yorkshire region during 2020/21, which has increased from 61.5% (during 2019/20) of children placed to 64.7% of children, children placed in the wider Yorkshire and Humber region has also increased from 8.9% in 2019/20 to 11.4% in 2020/21. The number of placements outside of Yorkshire has fallen from 29.6% during 2019/20 to 23.9% in 2020/21.

3.4.11 This is largely due to an increase in the availability of in-house families and the fact that OAWY commissioned the Voluntary Adoption Alliance within the region to provide families more locally for priority children. This contract commenced at the end of May 2020 with the aim of 30 families being provided within an 80-mile radius, in fact, 34 children were placed by the end of the year. A project lead has worked with OAWY to enhance the knowledge regarding the needs of children requiring external placements through the contract. We have also established external linking meetings where children are profiled to partner agencies under the contract and work continues to ensure placements are utilised and working relationships continue to be developed.

3.4.12 Feedback from families have been positive regarding the work of the family finders includes this quote:

*"The adoption process has not always been easy as single adopter however C is a fantastic asset to your organisation! Over the last 6 months his professionalism, efficiency and conscientious approach ensured our match continued to progress swiftly during the difficulties we encountered."*

3.4.13 Social workers from the local authorities also welcome the support of the family finders:

*"It's my first Early Permanence case and L has really taken the time to explain everything to me which I really appreciate. It was also clear that she had really taken the time to read the case files in detail before the linking meeting and she has done an amazing job with the EPP paperwork"*

3.4.14 Profiling events have been delivered virtually during the year with five events taking place, the initial event engaged adopters approved by OAWY and the subsequent events have also included adopters from the Voluntary Adoption Alliance and local regional adoption agencies (RAA's) and LA's. These events take a great deal of organisation and the business support staff are key in ensuring the booking system works well and that the technology is working well to manage such big events. 55 children have been profiled at the events, including 8 sets of siblings (2 children in sibling group), 166 adoptive families have attended the events, with 27 children receiving expressions of interest. 3 children have subsequently matched with adopters, with 2 now being placed for adoption and one who was in the introduction process at the end of the year, in addition 1 child was linked with adopters at the end of the year (matched at the start of 2021/22) and there are 2 linking visits scheduled from the latest profiling event.

3.4.15 OAWY is utilising Link Maker to profile children to OAWY approved families as well as being able to use the system to profile children to a wider reach of adopters, including targeted profiling to adopters through the contract with the Voluntary Adoption Alliance and nationally where needed. During the year we have reviewed our approach to internal linking meetings and have made these more practitioner led with both family finding and adoption social workers profiling the children and families they

are family finding for, this change continues to be under review to ensure we are able to achieve timely matches for children. Alongside utilising Link Maker, networks between teams and profiling events we have a number of family finding methodologies to support children being matched with adoptive families.

#### 3.4.16 Adoption Support

a) **Adoption support:** Do children and families have timely access to high quality support services?

The teams adapted very quickly to the pandemic and their first concern was the wellbeing of families they support and ensured that families were aware quickly about support available. The teams have continued to work with families via virtual means and undertake risk-assessed home visits where it is considered to be necessary from a well-being point of view, in addition to those where there is a risk of breakdown or potential safeguarding concerns. As part of the virtual contact with families we have been able to continue to complete Adoption Support Assessments and reviews as well as keeping in touch calls. As we anticipated we saw an increased number of calls to the duty and advice line since the schools re-opened in September with key themes from parents relating to difficulties their children were experiencing with the transitions from school to home-schooling (and vice versa); we have been able to support parents to seek ongoing places in school for those children who needed the consistency and predictability of going to school through the lockdowns. Some feedback from adopters about the work undertaken by OAWY staff in the last year include:

- *Thank you for always being there for us. You are amazing and always have the right things to say. Also thank you for your letter that you wrote to for his high school. Really appreciated.*
- *I just need to say Thank you, from the bottom of my heart. When we were in crisis you listened and more importantly you acted. You have saved this family*
- *Once again...many thanks for your engagement, kindness and understanding yesterday. I appreciate all that you have sent to me today (from a caller to duty and advice)*

3.4.17 Applications to the Adoption Support Fund have continued unabated throughout the year. Some of the therapy provided to children, young people and families has been able to be delivered by providers via virtual means and where this hasn't been an appropriate method, therapy has paused by agreement and the therapist has had a minimum contact to keep in touch and maintain relationships. Some providers have been able latterly to explore with families safe means for therapy to be delivered face to face again. This year we have successfully accessed £1,995,729 of adoption support funding for families via 534 applications to the ASF. Because funding to the ASF was only agreed for 1 year there has been a high-intensity of activity since February 2020 with workers reviewing support plans and applying to the ASF in order that there is no break in therapy from the old financial year to the new – since 1<sup>st</sup> February to end March there were 237 applications made for therapy to take place in 2021/22. The administrative burden of the ASF is a constant issue and the business support team manage the applications and the invoicing arrangements professionally and are extremely effective and efficient in overseeing this work.

3.4.18 The Adoption Support Fund COVID packages proved popular with families, in particular workshops in relation to Child to Parent Violence, support to adopted teens, Adoption UK webinars and support groups and the offer of EMDR sessions to parents. It is estimated that through these additional packages we were able to provide support to over 2,500 families.

3.4.19 The NVR (Non-violent Resistance) programme has been adapted as a virtual model and is being delivered from April '21. A new programme 'Talking Teens' has also been able to be delivered successfully online in February/March with further programmes due to be delivered later in the year. Brain based parenting webinars and FASD webinars are really popular. Stay and Play support groups have moved to be run outdoors with smaller groups attending when restrictions have allowed that to happen. The single adopters' group has resumed, with a mixture of outdoors meet-ups and online support and the general adopter support group has started back up – now a regional online support group, meeting monthly via Zoom. There are further plans for a support group for Dads and one for those involved in Trans-racial adoption to be established during the next year. Other groups and parenting programmes have had to be paused because they work best on a face-to-face basis.

3.4.20 Access to records work had virtually ceased at the start of the lockdown and the archivist but with a revised protocol with the local authorities being agreed, some work has been able to be undertaken although this involves electronic records only at this stage. The Letterbox service has been impacted over the last year. The work has had to focus upon electronic exchanges where possible. One Adoption West Yorkshire has been involved in early discussions around the development and piloting of an App specifically to aid contact between Adoptive and First (aka birth) families. It is hoped we will be able to pilot this with a small number of families towards the end of this year.

#### 3.4.21 Commissioned Contracts: Adoption UK and PAC/UK

##### Adoption UK: Peer Mentoring

There are currently 24 active peer mentors supporting 57 families across the region via the 1:1 support service. Furthermore, there are 6 families who are accessing the enhanced peer mentor support package.

Here are some comments from those accessing the mentoring service:

- Mentee – *“To normalize in some way what feels so alien at times and at my lowest points to bring some hope and strong sense that this too will pass. Hearing about the mentors’ journey, empathy and hearing something familiar at such a strange time was reassuring.”*
- Mentor – *“It just gives the personal side to the adoption process, because from day one you meet professionals and I think it brings adopted children to life.”*
- Social Worker – *“I don’t live the experience of adoptive life every day. I can talk about it anecdotally...but peer mentoring has really helped support and complement what we do as it gives adopters whether in assessment or post placement a very real perspective about the emotional impact but also the practical things.”*

#### 3.4.22 Adoption UK: Adopter Engagement

The Adopter Engagement provision has been active in One Adoption West Yorkshire in the following work:

- Q&A Prep Training x2
- Sibling Training co delivered
- Sibling Webinar
- Experienced adopter planning meeting
- Experienced adopter webinar

3.4.23 In addition Facebook groups run by Adopter Engagement coordinators across the whole of the Yorkshire and Humber region have reported the following activity:

- Adopter Voice Facebook group 732 Members. Facebook Early years and Primary school group 226 members. Facebook Secondary and Further Education group 124 members.
- Themes on Facebook have been around children’s behaviour responses, Mother’s Day difficulties and anxiety increase amongst children, particularly teenagers. Also, parents’ understanding of different kinds of therapies on offer and the adoption support fund.

#### 3.4.24 PAC-UK: adults work

PAC-UK have dealt with 472 calls to their advice line and worked with 184 service users (existing and new) across the year. These services are provided for all adults affected by adoption but most of the work is undertaken with birth parents and adopted adults.

#### 3.4.25 PAC-UK: Adopteens service

71 young people from West Yorkshire have been involved in Adopteens during the year. Additionally, 6 of the members of the Adopteens Youth Council are from West Yorkshire. Activities over the past year have been mostly online activities and a chat forum, which has been a new service introduced to offer support since the introduction of the Covid restrictions.

#### 3.4.26 Non-Agency Adoption

One Adoption West Yorkshire undertakes non-agency adoption on behalf of Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield councils, Bradford and Leeds councils undertake their own. Due to the pandemic this work was temporarily suspended due to priorities within the service and the court process. There were a number of urgent matters to progress as directed by the court and these were completed. This work has now fully resumed.

3.4.27 Over the last 12 months there were a total of 10 enquiries received for non-agency adoption. 40% of enquiries were from families living in Wakefield, 10% were from families living in Calderdale and 50% were from families living in Kirklees.

3.4.28 Over the past 12 months there were 12 non-agency adoption orders granted, 33% were for families from Calderdale, 25% were for families from Wakefield and 42% were for families from Kirklees.

#### 3.4.29 Disruptions

There were 2 disruptions of adoption placements (preadoption order) during 2020/21 which relate to 1 placement (the 2 children were part of a sibling group) with in house adopters. This is a decrease from last year of 7 disruptions. The children’s ages at disruption were 1 and 2 years of age, their placement disrupted shortly after placement (6 days for one of the children and 2 days for the second child). A disruption review has been commissioned to analyse the circumstances of the disruption. Given the circumstances of the lockdown and availability of support services I would have expected higher rates of disruption given the stresses of lockdown. This reflects the hard work and support provided by staff across the region to supporting children moving in with their new family.

#### 3.4.30 Quality Assurance

One Adoption West Yorkshire has developed a practice improvement framework and is committed to an improvement culture of learning. The principal sources of feedback are:

- Views of Children and Families: The views and experiences of children & young adults.
- Performance Data: Any statistical data that helps us judge the quality and effectiveness of our professional practice.

- Practice Wisdom & Knowledge: The practice wisdom of those staff who work with children, young people and families, adoption panels and learning from disruptions.
- The findings of external and internal inspections, audits and evaluations of our practice.

3.4.31 A Quality Assurance mechanism for panel work is used as a matter of course and has found that 93% of prospective adopter reports were of a good or outstanding standard (14% outstanding, 79% good, 1% requiring improvement and 6% not recorded) this is an improvement on last year's figure of 82%.

3.4.32 In relation to Child Permanence Reports (CPRs) provided by local authority social workers 85% were considered good or outstanding (2% outstanding, 83% good, 11% requiring improvement and 3% not recorded) this is an improvement on last year figure of 57%. OAWY continue to work with the 5 local authorities to raise the quality of CPRs and support them with training and development work. More detailed feedback is provided for each local authority.

3.4.33 There has been 42 responses to the panel survey in 2020/21. Attendees were asked to rate their overall experience of attending adoption panel, the responses were:

- Very good – 33 (78.57%).
- Good – 7 (16.67%).
- Neither good nor poor - 1 (2.38%).
- Very poor – 1 (2.38%).

3.4.34 Between 01 April 2020 and 31 March 2021 the Customer Relations Service logged twelve complaints for One Adoption West Yorkshire. Three customers complained wishing to challenge an assessment, two complained about a breakdown in the adoption process and one customer complained about both of these areas. Three people complained about a lack of post-adoption support. Issues relating to letterbox contact, disagreement with placement and sexual orientation discrimination each received one complaint respectively.

3.4.35 No complaints were logged at stage two which is extremely positive. The customer relations team's experience of working with OAWY is that stage one investigating officers are proactive in making phone/ face to face contact with complainants and very rarely exceed the corporate or statutory response timescales. Where this is unavoidable the team liaise well with customer relations so that customer expectations are managed. This approach is positive and an understanding of any themes arising from complainants is regularly discussed at the senior leadership team to see if there is any learning from these in making changes for improvement.

#### 3.4.36 Case File Audits

55 audits were completed across the service during 2020/21 by Service & Team managers. The result of each audit is recorded as either excellent, good, satisfactory or requires improvement. Any actions identified from the audits are fed-back to the worker to support improvement. Of the 55 audits:

- 4 (7.27%) were excellent.
- 32 (58.18%) were good.
- 16 (29.09%) were satisfactory.
- 3 (5.45%) required improvement.

3.4.37 An independent auditor was appointed to undertake specific audit work across the recruitment & assessment teams to ensure the quality of the casework, decision making and management oversight was safe and appropriate. 32 files were audited between September and October 2020. Of the 32 audits:

- Excellent – 5 (15%).
- Good – 10 (31%).
- Satisfactory – 13 (40%).
- Requires improvement – 4 (12%).

An action plan was developed as part of this audit and the majority of points raised have been addressed.

3.4.38 Joint audits were completed across the region, 27 in total, between a OAWY Service Manager and an LA lead during 2020/21. OAWY recorded the result of each audit as either excellent, good, satisfactory or requires improvement. Of the 27 audits:

- Excellent – 6 (22.22%).
- Good – 11 (40.74%).
- Satisfactory – 9 (33.33%).

- Requires improvement – 1 (3.7%).

This joint audit work is work in progress and will be further developed over the coming year to look at themes emerging from these for both agencies.

### 3.4.39 Voice and Influence of Children, Young People and Adopters

Appendix 2 provides the Voice and Influence of Children, Young People and Adopters report card. This highlights examples of work undertaken to capture the views of service users to help develop and shape the service.

## 3.5 **Continuous Professional and Service Development**

### 3.5.1 Staff development and support

Staff development during the year has been challenging with the focus with staff on self-care and emotional wellbeing for themselves and the families they are working with. A staff event was held in June and featured guest speaker Lisa Cherry. The focus was relationships, trauma and adversarial growth. A second event was held in November and the focus was Black Lives Matter with staff hearing from those with lived experience and given time to consider how we can improve our practice as well as support staff regarding these issues.

### 3.5.2 Training

No training was commissioned during 200/21 due to Covid. However, here are details of what was delivered:

- Adoption Support have had 2 whole-service get togethers in the past year; the first was a social to reconnect people but the second focussed on contact (the pilot of the App and letterbox policy).
- Family Finding and Recruitment & Assessment - to enable connectivity between family finding and adoption teams within OAWY virtual joint practice forums have been established focus on joint areas of practice with the opportunity to network. There have been a number of forums over the year which have focussed on transitions in adoption during the pandemic, adoption disruptions, adoption support provision and contact in adoption.
- HOME-assessment Training: During this reporting period the Multidisciplinary Team continued to deliver Assessment Framework training, by supporting OAWY social work teams in conducting HOME assessments. 15 support / training sessions were delivered during this year. The HOME is a core instrument in the assessment framework and focuses on how a child's day to day experiences are relevant to different aspects of their developmental needs. The instrument traditionally uses interview and observation to explore the key themes during a one-hour home visit to the family. Throughout the interview and visit the interaction between the child and main caregiver is carefully observed. At the beginning of the pandemic an on-line version of the method was developed; using videophones and tablets the team worked with OAWY social workers and carers to create "virtual home visits", which meant that the vital assessments were not delayed during the pandemic;
- School Training: 15 sessions of trauma and attachment training were delivered to schools across the WY region. These training sessions were delivered using on-line platforms and aim to increase school staff's understanding of the impact of trauma and early adversity on child's behaviour and their development.
- The education specialist created and developed an on-line video to help with lock-down and home schooling. In addition, on-line videos were created and published on One Adoption You-Tube Channel to provide information about FASD aimed at schools and returning to school for parents. In August a webinar for 50 parents with school age children provided guidance on returning to school. The feedback from the parents was very positive; the participants appreciated the content of the session and the fact that it was hosted on-line, which made it easier for a larger number of parents to participate.
- FASD and Brain based parenting webinars delivered to over 500 staff and adopters and special guardians

### 3.5.3 Strategic issues and forward plans

OAWY's 3 Year plan on a page, Appendix 3, outlines the vision, mission, outcomes, and priorities up to 2024. Activities linked to the delivery of the plan are tracked through the OAWY Service Improvement Plan.

## **Corporate Considerations**

### 4.1 **Consultation and Engagement**

There has been ongoing engagement with staff over the year. 2 all staff events have been held, one in June and one in November which covered relationships, trauma and adversarial growth and Black Live Matters respectively. Quarterly newsletters are in place to keep staff updated as well as email bulletins if needed. Ongoing engagement with adopters,

young people through adoptees and birth parents is an integral part in order to co-develop and co deliver the services provided for children and families in the region.

#### **4.2 Equality and Diversity/ Cohesion and Integration**

The OAWY Equality Impact assessment was reviewed and updated February 2021 and can be found as Appendix 4. Actions from this are fed into the annual service improvement plan and tracked throughout the year.

#### **4.3 Resources and value for money**

4.3.1 The final 2020/21 outturn position for OAWY was an underspend of £16.6k. The main pressure on the 2020/21 budget was a £292k shortfall of Inter Agency income but this was offset by Staffing savings of £159k, additional income of £104k and Inter Agency expenditure savings of £55k. A further point to note is that a total of £1.95m of expenditure was attributed to the ASF and this was offset by corresponding ASF income received in year.

### **5. Conclusions**

5.1 The Covid-19 pandemic has brought many challenges for the service and the staff have worked tirelessly to ensure that families have been supported and plans for children moved on. The discussions regarding a hybrid approach to working from home and the office and will need to continue given the impact of the pandemic and particularly given some of the positive changes that have been made to improve service delivery. The consultation with staff, partners and service users will be important to shape and develop this as we move forward. The performance this last year has been really positive and it is clear that the staff in the agency are extremely committed, passionate and well motivated in their work and they are all focussed about improving outcomes for children in the region.

This page is intentionally left blank



## Corporate Parenting Board – Highlight Report

Date of Board: 5 October 2021

Data is as at 31 August 2021, unless stated otherwise.

\* Benchmarking Source: Children's Social Care Benchmarking Tool (BMt) V3.10. Benchmarking data is from March 2020 unless stated otherwise. SN = Statistical Neighbours average, Eng. = England average. Where no equivalent published data is available, "N/A" is shown.

### Children Entering Care, Children in Care and Placement Stability

Key Indicator	Type of measure	Month End				*Benchmarking	
		Sep 20	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	SN	Eng.
4.02.01 Children in care - numbers in care per 10,000 of age 0-17 population.	Per 10,000 population aged 0-17	68.6 (687)	64.9 (650)	65.0 (651)	64.7 (648)	92.2	67.0
	Direction of Travel		↓	↑	↑		
4.02.04 Children in care by placement within and outside the LA boundary: Total placed outside Kirklees and more than 20 miles from home address	% (number)	12.2% (84)	11.1% (72)	11.5% (75)	11.9% (77)	12.9%	16.0%
	Direction of Travel		↓	↑	↑		
4.05.01 Placement Stability Within Year - LAC with three or more placements	% (number)	7.7% (53)	5.8% (38)	6.9% (45)	6.2% (40)	10.3%	11.0%
	Direction of Travel		↑	↑	↓		
4.05.04 Social Worker change of LAC in care 12+ Months: Number of Social Worker changes	Number	267	215	232	217	N/A	N/A
	Direction of Travel		↔	↑	↓		
Average number of SW changes	Average	0.56	0.42	0.45	0.42	N/A	N/A
	Direction of Travel		↑	↑	↓		

### Service Narrative

#### What difference did we make?

- There is currently a decreasing trend in the number and rate of children in care from 68.7 (688 children) in Nov 20 to 64.7 (648 children) in Aug 21. The current 12-month average for Kirklees is 66.9 (670 children), below our 31 March 2020 published rate of 67.0, England 2020 rate of 67.0 and our Statistical Neighbours 2020 rate of 92.2.
- Of the 77 children placed outside of Kirklees and more than 20 miles from their home address, the large majority are placed in fostering.
- Stability in leadership, management and decision-making are helping to improve the quality of planning and engagement from a strength and relational based approach with children and their families in achieving timely permanence for our looked after children, but we recognise there is still more to do. Purposeful and confident planning and practice has helped to safely reduce the number of looked after children. Good and regular performance reporting are supporting and informing managers' ongoing work to drive improvement. As a result, there is increased confidence in decision-making, ensuring the right children are supported at the right time through our care planning processes.
- Legal Gateway and Permanence Panel takes place on a weekly basis and chaired by the Head of Service. The panel meetings continue to oversee, and quality assure the consistency of practice in regard to decision making and planning around Placement moves, and care planning for children and young people. An External Placement Review Panel is now in place, and is held every 2 weeks,

chaired by the Service Director. The purpose of the panel is to ensure better oversight of children who are not placed in Local Authority provision.

- A monthly review of external residential placements will be undertaken of all children who are placed out of Local Authority to consider their care planning and explore options of returning to the local area, if this is in line with meeting the children and young person's needs. We have already made progress reducing this number placed outside of Kirklees and more than twenty miles away from Kirklees.
- For Placement Stability the Placement support team are very active, and we have implemented innovative solutions to support several placements to limit unplanned moves in that, where a foster carer or Placement is given 28-day notice, the Team Manager will coordinate a stability meeting within 5 working days to look at what can be provided to avoid Placement breakdown and to maintain the current Placement.
- Whilst the data shows improvement in certain areas, we are focusing on the data relating to children and young people who have had three or more Placement changes in the previous 12-month period and continuing to reduce the number of Placement with Parents.
- As of at the end of July 2021 there had been 232 social worker changes in the previous 12 months with a further reduction to 217 by the end of August 2021. Whilst social work change data has improved a focus needs to remain on reducing this number further, as we are mindful of the impact this has on our children and young people and will continue to focus on staff retention, staff absence and case allocation.
- As of the end of August 2021 there are 48 children subject to Placement with Parent regulations. 30 children are subject of a Care Order and care proceedings are ongoing for 18 of the children who are subject of Interim Care Order.

#### **What do we want to improve?**

- Work to continue in relation to improving placement stability for our children and young people and will focus on lessons learned to inform practice. We are currently in the process of reviewing our model of practice and have established much better links with our supervisory social workers to help with better support to our foster carers. We are currently reviewing our placement support so that we are able to enhance our offer to foster carers.
- Further worker needs to be undertaken to improve allocated social worker stability.
- Reduce number of children placed more than 20 miles from their home address. We aim to recruit more local foster carers to provide more local placement options.
- We are planning to review all of our external foster placements to consider whether children and young people who are placed more than twenty miles from Kirklees, in line with their care planning and meeting the children and young person's needs, are able to return to more local placements.
- Further improvement work to be undertaken to focus on whether: the improvement activity that had taken place had resulted in improved outcomes for looked after children and to identify what are the key issues that impacted on outcomes.
- Further reduce the number of Placement with Parents and increase the number of Special Guardianship Orders, for the looked after children in long term foster care.

## Children Looked After Reviews, Visits and Missing

Key Indicator	Type of measure	Month End				*Benchmarking	
		Sep 20	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	SN	Eng.
4.06.01: CLA Reviews Within Statutory Timescale	%	97.6%	99.2%	99.3%	99.4%	N/A	N/A
	Direction of Travel		↑	↑	↑		
4.07.01: CLA visits within statutory time-scale: % of CLA visited in line with Kirklees Practice Standards	%	93.1% (639/ 687)	92.6% (602/ 650)	90.5% (589/ 651)	90.4% (586/ 648)	N/A	N/A
	Direction of Travel		↑	↓	↓		
4.09.02: Missing children: a. No. of CLA having at least one Missing episode per month	% (number)	3.2% (22)	2.2% (14)	3.2% (21)	2.8% (18)	9.3%	11%
	Direction of Travel		↓	↑	↓		
b. No. of LAC that have more than one missing episode in the month (repeat Mispers)	% (number)	31.8% (7)	71.4% (10)	57.1% (12)	44.4% (8)	N/A	N/A
	Direction of Travel		↑	↓	↓		
4.09.03: Independent Return Interviews for CLA offered within 72 hours of the child being located	% (number)	91.7% (11/ 12)	75.0% (33/ 44)	73.7% (14/ 19)	78.9% (15/ 19)	N/A	N/A
	Direction of Travel		↓	↓	↑		

### Service Narrative

#### What difference did we make?

- 18 requests for Initial Review forms were received by the Child Protection and Review unit from 1 July to 31 August 2021 relating to 23 children in total, all of whom remain Looked After as at end August 2021. For all the referrals received, children and young people were allocated an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) within 24 hours and Initial Child Looked After Reviews were arranged within 4 weeks of the children and young people becoming Looked After.
- In July and August 2021, the Child Protection and Review Unit held 279 Looked After Review Meetings for children, with over 99% of these being held within timescales
- Independent Reviewing Officers closely monitor Child Looked After Review timescales to ensure that this high percentage is maintained, whilst a clear rationale is recorded on a child's file if there are circumstances which result in a child's review meeting not being held within statutory timescales.
- In August 2021, 3 children and young people were supported by an Advocate from the Children's Right's Team at their Looked After Review.
- At the end of August 2021 29 Children Looked After were receiving support from an Independent Visitor.
- The timeliness of CLA visits has fluctuated with a 12-month low of 87.7% in Jan 21, and a high in Mar 21 of 93.8%. Performance in Aug 21 was 90.4%, just below the 12-month average of 91.4%.
- There has been a slight decrease with regards to the number of Children in Care who have received a statutory visit in line with practice standards, we continue to monitor the visits as part of our service performance meetings to address and increase the timeliness of visits to children and young people.
- Missing CLA:
  - All children's homes have been encouraged to review missing reporting strategies with the placing Local Authorities to ensure they are fit for purpose and have a clear expectation on the home to try all avenues to locate a child/young person before reporting they are reported as missing to the Police.
  - The Philomena Protocol documents are being used by children's homes and semi-independent providers in Kirklees, and meetings have been held with providers to review the protocol, the information within it and expectations of providers.

## What do we want to improve?

- The Service Managers are increasing focus on statutory visit compliance to improve the performance. Regular performance meetings are held within the service to ensure that we can improve our performance.
- Independent Reviewing Officers to continue to liaise closely with Social Workers and the Children's Rights team to ensure that children are enabled to participate in their virtual Reviews and that their voice is heard. Reviews are still being held virtually, but there are creative ways being utilised to develop the engagement of children and young people in their Review process, alongside this recovery planning is in place to resume in person CLA Reviews
- IROs are linked to social work team clusters and continue to share updates about the IRO service and CPRU Service Manager continues to liaise regarding any themes that may be contributing to delays for children.
- Children's Rights Service have liaised closely with IRO Service and updated physical and online versions of Children's consultation documents for Looked After Reviews are being produced. These will be shared with children and young people when they first come into care. They will help children and young people gain understanding of what a Review meeting is, what they can expect, why it is important that their views are heard, the different ways they can make sure this happens, and to encourage improved participation from children and young people in their Reviews. The documents will also be made available to existing children Looked After. IRO Service will be part of this relaunch and will send electronic documents to each child after their Review from October 2021, these will highlight the key decisions which were made at their Review Meeting.
- The Children's Rights Service has sought the views of children who have an Independent Visitor to gain an in depth understanding of their experience during Covid-19. The feedback received has informed a service action plan focused on ensuring continuous service delivery improvement.
- A recent Independent Visitor recruitment exercise has been successful and interviews for new Independent Visitor volunteers are currently being coordinated and will commence shortly

## Children Looked After Education Outcomes

Key Indicator	Type of measure	Autumn Term 20/21	Spring Term 20/21	Summer Term 20/21	Benchmarking	
					SN	Eng.
4.10.02 Personal Education Plans (PEP) up to date (current school age LAC with PEP in the last term)	%	100%	100%	100%		
	Direction of Travel	-				

Key Indicator	Type of measure	Month End				Benchmarking	
		Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Cumulative	SN	Eng.
Initial PEP completed within 10 school days of Virtual School being notified child came into care	%	100% (10/10)	100% (9/9)	n/a – no PEPs	97%	N/A	N/A

Key Indicator	Type of measure	Month End				Benchmarking	
		Sep 20	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	SN	Eng.
4.10.05 LAC Persistent Absentees	%	N/A	40.8%	45.6%	N/A	10.5% (2018/19)	10.9% (2018/19)
	Direction of Travel		↑	↑			
LAC with a mid-year school move	%	N/A	3	3	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Direction of Travel		↓	↔			

## Service Narrative

### What difference did we make?

- 100% of PEPs have been completed within the Summer Term in-line with the new termly processes.
- The Virtual School is currently leading on all PEPs since the Covid-19 lockdowns began in March 2020. These are all currently virtually held meetings.
- 97% of initial PEPs in 2020-21 have been completed within 10 school days of child coming into care since 01/09/2020. 4 were held out of timescales
  - 2 were due to the CLA start date having changed in Liquid Logic to an earlier date
  - 1 was due to Covid-19 (positive case in education setting – PEP had to be meeting rearranged)
  - 1 was due to being cancelled by SW
- We continue to work with social work teams to improve both PEP and initial PEP completion and the quality assurance of PEPs. We have successfully moved to termly PEPs to meet statutory requirements.
- 100% of school moves since the start of the academic year have been carefully planned across the service to ensure a smooth transition with no break in provision

### What do we want to improve?

- Our initial focus was the transition back into education following the Covid-19 school closures (vulnerable offer) with a continued focus on supporting young people who are having to work at home e.g. isolation / bubble closures. This will continue to be our priority following the current return to school for all pupils.
- We will continue to have a focus on termly PEP completion with transition support and support for working at home where necessary as key focus areas.
- Attendance / Persistent Absence (PA) remains a high priority and all pupils with attendance less than 90%. We will need to be mindful of some of the emotional issues for our young people as they return and respond creatively where there are issues or concerns. Attendance data is collected daily by welfare call for us. We do have attendance data for 2020-21, and attendance to the end of the 2020-2021 academic year is 86.7%. However, this is not information that can be used in any comparative way to previous years due to the Covid impact and the use of X and C codes. As X codes did not count as possible attendance in the first lockdown there is a disproportionate impact on any illness or absence of any other reason. This includes time working at home and shielding. Subsequently C codes were used in the second lockdown for those young people learning at home and these counted as a non-attendance – although young people were accessing 100% of their learning at home. This has therefore negatively impacted on the number of PA pupils, even though many of these young people are not attendance concerns. We monitor individual attendance closely and work to support young people on an individual basis. We will have a detailed summary and analysis of this in the Headteacher Report using data for the whole academic year.
- We will continue to maintain a strong focus on pupils not in full-time education provision.
- We will continue to work across service to reduce the number of school moves (2018-19 (82), 2019-20 (64) 2020-21 (75)) and to reduce the number of young people with a break in provision whenever possible.

## Children Looked After Health

Key Indicator	Type of measure	Month End				Benchmarking	
		Sep 20	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	SN	Eng.
4.11.11 Dental Checks within last 12 months - timeliness	%	64.8%	42.8%	45.9%	50.7%	N/A	N/A
	Direction of Travel		↑	↑	↑		
4.11.12 Initial health Assessments completed on time - within 20 days	%	88.3%	92.9%	88.5%	88.8%	N/A	N/A
	Direction of Travel		↑	↓	↑		
4.11.13 Annual health assessments: a: Under 5's 6 month Developmental Assessments -percentage up to date	%	88.8%	94.7%	86.3%	88.2%	N/A	N/A
	Direction of Travel		↑	↓	↑		
b: Over 5s Annual Health Assessments – percentage up to date	%	89.2%	92.7%	90.5%	92.2%	N/A	N/A
	Direction of Travel		↑	↓	↑		
4.11.16 No. of LAC in care more than 12 month and identified as having a substance misuse problem during the last year	% (number)	0.42% (2)	0.39% (2)	0.39% (2)	0.97% (5)	2.4%	3.0%
	Direction of Travel		↑	↔	↑		

### Service Narrative

#### What difference did we make?

- **Initial health assessments:** Kirklees Local Authority (LA) rolling 12-month data shows that 88.8% were completed in the statutory 20 working day timescale. Locala monthly data was not available at the time of report request. Verbal feedback will be given on 5th October meeting. There is now limited opportunity to re-set part of the IHA assessment in clinic preceded with a virtual call. This is to comply with the clinic 2-person attendance (Paediatrician, Carer & child), and to ensure the birth parents and social worker are involved in the initial discussion.
- **Review health assessments:** Kirklees rolling 12-month data shows that **88.2%** & **92.2%** of the 'Developmental' assessments (under 5yrs old) and 'Annual' assessments (over 5 yrs. old) respectively, were completed in statutory timescales. Locala monthly data was not available at the time of report request. Verbal feedback will be given on 5<sup>th</sup> October meeting.
- **Dental Checks within last 12 months:** Kirklees rolling 12-month data shows that **50.7%** of children had attended the dentist. Locala monthly data was not available at the time of report request. Verbal feedback will be given on 5<sup>th</sup> October meeting. This is an improving picture from times when the closure/limited availability of dentists during the Covid lockdown, prevented routine checks. The cohort figure is likely higher, as it will need to wait for the question to be asked at their RHA. A new 'Flexible Commissioning' dental project (Y&H) aimed at vulnerable children, is allowing easier access to some named dental surgeries in Kirklees.
- **Substance misuse:** 5 young people (**0.97%**) have admitted or are known to use substances that significantly affect their life, when asked at their RHA. It is dependent on admission and their wish to share that information. There may be a more accurate source for this information, possibly through social workers and substance misuse services. Any young person misusing substances at any level is offered support. Young people who refuse support, are discussed with the local Substance Misuse Service, to try to offer an alternative response e.g., group work or access through other agencies.

## Children Looked After Convictions

Key Indicator	Type of measure	Quarter				*Benchmarking
		Jul-Sep 20/21 Q2	Oct-Dec 20/21 Q3	Jan-Mar 20/21 Q4	Apr-Jun 21/22 Q1	
4.12.01 Number of young people who have been looked after continually for 12 months or more aged between 10 and 17 who have offended and received a substantive outcome (Youth Caution/ Conditional Caution or a Court Order)	%	1.87% (6/321)	1.24% (4/321)	1.24% (4/321)	1.37% (5/364)	Eng.: 3.00% SN: 3.43% Y&H: 3.00%
	Direction of Travel	↑	↓	↔	↑	

### Service Narrative

#### What difference did we make?

- For the year 2018/2019 65.8% of Children Looked After successfully completed their interventions but is however a much-improved picture from 2016 when less than 30% of Children Looked After successfully completed their interventions
- For the year 2019/2020 90.9% of Children Looked After successfully completed their interventions which in comparison with the last year is an increase of over 25% (65.8%).
- For the year April 20 to March 21, 87.7% of Children Looked After successfully completed their interventions. Whilst this performance is slightly worse than the same period of the previous year, it remains in line with that of the general population successfully completing their intervention.
- For the April to June 21 period 87.5% of Children Looked After successfully completed their interventions, compared to 91.5% of the general population.
- Whilst the numbers of Children Looked After offending remain small in the cohort, we are seeing a very small increase in the numbers compared to the same period last year. In the year to date we have seen a rise in the percentage of CLA offending from 1.24% (20/21) to 1.37% (21/22).

#### What do we want to improve?

- Continued reduction in the numbers of Children Looked After offending. The overall cohort for the 21/22 year is bigger than the 20/21 year (364 compared to 321), but through continued interventions by the YOT, restorative processes, liaison with Children's Homes and creative out of court disposals it is hoped the offending rate will continue to fall.
- To maintain the high level of successful outcomes achieved by Children Looked After, through creative interventions, restorative processes, liaison with Children's Homes and the continued development of the Youth Engagement Service.

## Care Leavers

Key Indicator	Type of measure	Month End				*Benchmarking	
		Sep 20	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	SN	Eng.
5.01.04 Children in care aged 17 years and 4 months with a Personal Advisor	%	78.2%	87.2%	83.8%	72.2%	N/A	N/A
	Direction of Travel		↑	↓	↓		
5.01.08 Local Authority In Touch with Care Leavers	%	95.4%	92.7%	91.2%	92.1%	94.0% (2019)	93.0%
	Direction of Travel		↑	↓	↑		
5.01.09 Care Leavers in suitable accommodation	%	88.2%	87.2%	85.7%	87.0%	89.3%	85.0%
	Direction of Travel		↑	↓	↑		
5.01.10 Care Leavers Employment, Education and Training (EET)	%	52.7%	54.9%	55.7%	57.0%	49.1%	53.0%
	Direction of Travel		↑	↑	↑		
5.01.11 Number of Care Leavers with a Pathway Plan that is up to date	%	95.8%	81.7%	85.0%	78.0%	N/A	N/A
	Direction of Travel		↓	↑	↓		

## Service Narrative

### What difference did we make?

- *Contact with care leavers* – There has been increase in relation to the number of Care Leavers we were in touch with during June, July, and August 2021. This has to be viewed in the context of this group all being aged 18 plus. In some situations, young people do not wish to keep in contact with their Personal Advisor. The team work innovatively to keep in touch, we have a best practice protocol in place.
- *Number of young people in suitable accommodation* - Despite the recent pandemic there has been a significant impact on the increasing demands for tenancies. However, we have worked closely with our housing colleagues who have agreed to prioritise the properties for our young people, and this has helped to improve our performance in May 2021. We continue to maintain strong links with KNH and Housing and the Housing Panel is enabling us to ensure that suitable accommodation is available. We have strong links with private housing providers and are considering how collectively we can improve our skills for independence training. We have continued to provide virtual life skills and pre-tenancy training during COVID19.
- *Kirklees Commitment to Care Leavers* – Unfortunately during the year our drop-in centres at N°11 and N°12 have been closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. N°11 is open and we are hopeful that we will be in a position to reopen N°12 in October 2021.
- *Children in Care aged 17 years and 4 months with an allocated Personal Advisors* – There has been decrease in performance on this indicator from 83.8% in July 2021 to 72.2% in August 2021. Work to be undertaken with the team to address Personal Advisor (PA) allocation, but it is important to note that all the young people do have either an allocated PA or an allocated Social Worker.
- *Education Employment Training* – Our performance in relation to Employment, Education and Training (EET) indicator is a focus for improvement. We have a C&K Careers Advisor in the Leaving Care Service. We have a pro-active multi-agency group to improve opportunities in partnership working and there is a real desire to ensure our young people are afforded the best of opportunities in relation to EET. Due to the COVID19 pandemic some of our young people have unfortunately been in a situation where they have either been furloughed or made redundant from their employment. In order to offer support to our young people we have recently established a virtual clinic where extra support is available from our Careers Advisor. In August 2021 we have seen an increase in the number of young people who are either in employment, education or training.
- *Pathway Plans* – We have seen a decline in the numbers of young people who have an up-to-date pathway plan. Further work is required to be undertaken with the Team Leaders and Personal Advisors to ensure pathway plans are completed in a timely manner to meet targets with a focus going forward on the improvement of the quality of plans, the involvement of young people and



ensuring we capture their wishes and feelings. This will continue to be monitored in the performance meetings, held fortnightly and chaired by the service manager.

### What do we want to improve?

- *Number of young people with a pathway plan* – The number of young people with a pathway plan has seen a decrease in the timely completion of pathway plans. Work is currently ongoing within the service and it is expected that the measure will improve. We continue to work with the Personal Advisors to ensure pathway plans are completed in a timely manner to meet targets with a focus going forward on the improvement of the quality of plans, the involvement of young people and ensuring we capture their wishes and feelings.
- We have recently reviewed our financial offer to our care leaver along with our staying put policy and they are in the process of being implemented. We aim to review our commitment to care leavers and both will significantly improve and enhance our offer to our young people.
- To improve the allocation timeliness of Personal Advisors.

## Adoption

Key Indicator	Type of measure	Month End				*Benchmarking	
		Sep 20	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	SN	Eng.
5.02.01 Number of children adopted as a percentage of children leaving care (12 month rolling period)	% (number)	9.4% (21)	7.6% (18)	8.1% (19)	7.8% (17)	19.0%	12.0%
	Direction of Travel		↑	↑	↓		
5.02.03 A1 Average timescale (days) between the child coming into care and being placed with the adopter (12 month rolling period)	Number	515.7	627.8	637.0	628.1	386.0 (17-20)	367.0 (17-20)
	Direction of Travel		↓	↑	↓		
5.02.05 A2 Average timescale (days) between Kirklees council receiving court authority to place a child and the council deciding to match the child with an adoptive family (12 month rolling period)	Number	227.4	274.1	257.9	267.1	173.0 (17-20)	175.0 (17-20)
	Direction of Travel		↓	↓	↑		

### Service Narrative

#### What difference did we make?

- At the end of August 2021, 7.8% of children leaving care in a 12-month rolling period had been adopted, equating to 17 children. At the level of performance to May 2021, Kirklees is significantly below the England rate of 12.0% (2020) and the Statistical Neighbours rate of 19.0% (2020)
- The average timescale has been on an increasing trend, standing at 515.7 days in Sep 20 before increasing to 648.0 days by Apr 21. This has since reduced to 628.1 days. This remains well above the Statistical Neighbours average of 384.7 days and the England average of 376.0 days from the Adoption Scorecard (3-year average outcome to March 2019). Kirklees performance on the Scorecard was 388 days, so the average timescale has increased since this time.
- The average timescale has been on an increasing trend, standing at 227.4 days in Sep 20 before increasing to 282.6 days by May 21. This has since reduced to 267.1 days. Overall, this remains above the Statistical Neighbours average of 168.9 days and the England average of 178.0 from the Adoption Scorecard (3-year average outcome to March 2019). Kirklees performance on the Scorecard was 132.0 days, so there has been an increase in the average timescale since this time.
- We have established weekly clinics to support children's Social Workers who are undertaking child permanence reports, sibling assessments and considering whether a plan for adoption is

appropriate. This is a joint initiative between the Assessment & Intervention Service and One Adoption and will be supported by regular training and workshops. One Adoption continue to attend Legal Gateway and Permanence Panel on a weekly basis in order to track children with a plan for adoption and to ensure a family finder is allocated.

- If an adoption Placement ceases, then One Adoption have a 'disruption review' and their new procedure is on our procedures website. They will be working with Kirklees staff on the implementation of this process. We have a structured Agency Decision Making process in relation to adoption planning. This includes legal and medical advice as well as advice from One Adoption West Yorkshire.
- Adoption Support Fund offers funding for ongoing support to adoptive families and children. There has been an increase in successful applications for Kirklees children that resulted in an increase of support, training and therapeutic input.
- The progression of Adoption cases is now monitored by Head of Service at the monthly permanence tracking panel ensuring a more robust approach to avoiding drift and delay.
- During the recent COVID19 we have had some difficulties in relation to being able to progress transition plans however as restrictions have been lifted we are now in a much stronger position in being able to progress these plans to be able to move children into their potential adoptive Placement. As a result of the CODID 19 pandemic we have experienced delays in relation to court hearings for application for adoption orders again has restrictions have lifted this is now an improving picture.

### What do we want to improve?

- To continue to develop working relationships between One Adoption West Yorkshire and Kirklees social workers and managers, to ensure we maximise the potential benefits of the regional adoption agency in Kirklees. Regular meetings between the Service Managers in One Adoption and Assessment and Intervention have been established which will improve areas of communication and partnership working to assist timely adoption for our children.

## Fostering

Key Indicator	Type of measure	Month End				Benchmarking	
		Sep 20	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	SN	Eng.
6.02.07 Total New Carer Approvals in Month:	Number	8	4	0	0	N/A	N/A
	Direction of Travel		↓	↓	↔		
In-house Fostering approvals in the month	Number	6	1	0	0	N/A	N/A
	Direction of Travel		↓	↓	↔		
In-house Fostering De-registrations in the month	Number	3	0	1	5	N/A	N/A
	Direction of Travel		↓	↑	↑		
6.02.09 Placements split: a. In-house foster placements	Number	256	244	234	230	N/A	N/A
	Direction of Travel		↓	↓	↓		
b. Family and friend placements	Number	102	93	99	100	N/A	N/A
	Direction of Travel		↓	↑	↑		
c. Independent Fostering Agency Placements	Number	185	179	175	170	N/A	N/A
	Direction of Travel		↓	↓	↓		

### Service Narrative

#### What difference did we make?

- June 2021 saw 1 recorded in-house approval with July and August showing no in-house approvals (NB: including Family and Friends carers). The rolling 12-month total to August 2021 was 41

households. There were 5 in-house de-registrations in August 2021 and 1 in July. The rolling 12-months total for in-house de-registrations is 34. This gives a net gain of 7 households.

- The number of children placed with Kirklees foster carers decreased to 230 at the end of August 2021 compared to 244 in June. This is below the 12-month average of 244.
- The number of Family and Friends Placements increased to 100 in August 2021 from 93 in June 2021. This is well below the 12-month high of 118 in Jun 20 (Note that this figure includes Reg 24 Placements). The 12-month average is 100.
- The August figure of 170 Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements is a decrease over the 179 seen in June 2021 and below the 12-month average of 185.
- The forward plan in terms of foster placements to is grow internal fostering capacity reducing the use of fostering agencies and residential placements. The work undertaken so far has a clear focus on this. A review is currently underway of the last 12 months resignations so we can be clear about the reasons for carers resigning and identify learning we can take forward.
- The fostering recruitment process and team functions have been reviewed and the new Liquid Logic pathway is live, this will help provide accurate recruitment data to support the improvement work, regarding enquiries, expressions of interests and assessments.
- In terms of recruitment there are currently 6 fostering households in Stage 2 assessment, and 3 in Stage 1. In addition, there are 2 households being assessed for Supported Board & Lodgings.

### **What do we want to improve?**

- Recruitment and retention of foster carers is a priority as is reducing the use of fostering agency care. We are focussed on recruiting foster carers who can help us to meet our sufficiency needs around placements for older children, children with complex needs, offering long-term placements and emergency placements. Alongside recruitment we want to ensure that new foster carers receive the right level of support particularly in their first year of fostering; induction, training and support from a Supervising Social Worker are all essential aspects of supporting and retaining new foster carers.
- We are currently working with the National Fostering Network to implement Foster Carer Mockingbird hubs in Kirklees. This model facilitates additional support to specific carers. We have recruited the first Hub carer
- We are currently in the implementation stage of the modernisation of the Fostering Service, focusing on management realignment to accommodate the changes which will enable us to achieve our aspirations of all children being placed locally in suitable placements and that when support is needed, it is timely and effective, to help ensure placement stability is achieved.
- Under the wider sufficiency agenda, we are opening a new children's home in Kirklees. We are also opening an MST-FIT residential provision which supports reunification with family using an evidence-based model. Support is provided to the young person and their family with intensive support provided once the young person returns home (after 12 weeks in the residential unit).

## Appendix – Glossary of Terms

Term	Description
A&I	Assessment & Intervention (part of Family Support & Child Protection)
ADCS	Association of Directors of Children's Services
ASYE	Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (for a newly qualified Social Worker)
BSM	Business Support Manager
BSO	Business Support Officer
CCE	Child Criminal Exploitation
CIC	Child(ren) in Care (see also CLA and LAC)
CIN	Child(ren) in Need
CLA	Child(ren) Looked After (also see CIC and LAC)
CPP	Child Protection Plan
CPRU	Child Protection & Review Unit
CSC	Children's Social Care
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation
CWD	Children with a Disability
D&A	Duty & Advice (part of Family Support & Child Protection)
DCS	Disabled Children's Service / Director of Children's Services
EET	Education, Employment or Training
EHC	Education, Health and Care (Plan)
EITS	Early Intervention and Targeted Support
HMCI	Her Majesty's Chief Inspector
Form F	Assessment form for approval of Foster Carers
HMIP	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons
HOS	Head of Service
ICPC	Initial Child Protection Conference
IFA	Independent Fostering Agency
IHA	Initial Health Assessment (for a Looked After Child)
IRO	Independent Reviewing Officer
KNH	Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing
LA	Local Authority
LAC	Looked After Child(ren) (also see CIC and CLA)
LAIT	Local Authority Interactive Tool (DfE tool for access to nationally published data)
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NQSW	Newly Qualified Social Worker
PA	Personal Advisor (to Care Leavers)
PEP	Personal Education Plan (for a Looked After Child)
PLO	Public Law Outline
QSW	Qualified Social Worker
RCPC	Review Child Protection Conference
RHA	Review Health Assessment (for a Looked After Child)
S17	Section 17 of the Children Act – Relates to Children in Need
S20	Section 20 of the Children Act – Relates to a child accommodated by the LA
S47	Section 47 of the Children Act – Relates to Child Protection
SDQ	Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire

Term	Description
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
SM	Service Manager
SN	Statistical Neighbours (closest match Local Authorities for benchmarking)
SW	Social Worker
TM	Team Manager
UASC	Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child
Y&H	Yorkshire and the Humber
YOT	Youth Offending Team

This page is intentionally left blank



**Name of meeting:** Corporate Parenting Board

**Date:** 27<sup>th</sup> July 2021

**Title of report:** Staying Put Policy Refresh

**Purpose of report:** All Local Authorities are required to set out how they will operate a Staying Put scheme. This is a refresh of the existing policy and sets out arrangements in Kirklees for Care Leavers aged eighteen and above to continue living with their foster families.

Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?	Yes. This policy affects all Wards.
Key Decision - Is it in the <u>Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports)</u> ?	Key Decision – Yes
The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?	Yes
Date signed off by <u>Strategic Director</u> & name	Mel Meggs – Strategic Director for Children's Services. 18 <sup>th</sup> May 2021
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance?	Eamonn Croston – 11 <sup>th</sup> June 2021
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning?	Julie Muscroft. – 8 <sup>th</sup> June 2021
Cabinet member <a href="#">portfolio</a>	Councillor Viv Kendrick

**Electoral wards affected:** All.

**Ward councillors consulted:** Not applicable.

**Public or private:** Public.

**Has GDPR been considered?** Yes, No personal or sensitive data, or other information covered by GDPR, is included in this report.

## 1. Summary

- 1.1. All Local Authorities are required to set out local protocols and procedures for supporting Care Leavers aged 18 and over to remain living with their former foster families up to the age of 21. These are known as Staying Put arrangements.
- 1.2. The Staying Put policy was last refreshed in 2016. As part of Children's Services improvement journey to deliver outstanding services for Children and Young People, the Fostering Service have been working to promote and encourage the take up of the Staying Put opportunity for both Care Leavers and Foster Carers.
- 1.3. The policy sets out an improved support and financial offer which reflects the importance of the role Staying Put Carers play in equipping young people with the emotional confidence and practical skills needed to live independently, ensuring Care Leavers get the best start to their adult lives whilst they remain living in a supportive family home.
- 1.4. This policy needs to be considered alongside the Care Leavers Support and Financial Guidance Policy. Care Leavers who take up the opportunity of a Staying Put arrangement are entitled to receive the support, advice and guidance set out in the Care Leavers Support and Financial Guidance Policy

## 2. Background.

- 2.1. Through the Council Plan and the Children's Service's Improvement Plan, the Council and Children's Services share an inclusive vision, where all children and young people get the best start in life. Key to this is the ability for children and young people to live and grow up with loving and nurturing parents and families.
- 2.2. There is strong national evidence to support outcomes and life chances improve when young people delay moving to independent living. Our ambition as Corporate Parents is to enable young people to remain living within a stable and supportive home and pursue educational, training and employment opportunities whilst developing the emotional, social, economic, and practical skills required for living independently. Care Leavers can face considerable disadvantages and barriers to achievement and stability as they move into adulthood. Young people in care are more likely to move out into the adult world earlier, often at the age of 18 and without the same level of ongoing family support their non-care experienced peers are afforded. In comparison, nationally the average age for young non-care experienced people leaving home is 24 and this is increasing year on year.
- 2.3. Successful implementation of this policy will contribute to reducing the equality gaps in Kirklees between vulnerable care leavers and their non-care experienced peers. As Corporate Parents, our commitment to care experienced young people approaching the age of 18, is to ensure that we provide the means for them to continue to live with their former foster family based on their sense of belonging and being part of that family rather than having to move out because of rules of age. We want to make sure these young people are afforded the same opportunity to continue living in the same way other young people live with their families until they are ready to move on to living independently.
- 2.4. The need for an updated Staying Put Policy has been raised by the Kirklees Fostering Network (KFN) during the course of their regular partnership meetings with the Fostering Service. Improved planning for Staying Put arrangements, Allowances for Staying Put carers and clarity on arrangements when Care Leavers in Staying Put arrangements go to University are areas KFN asked the service to review. All these areas have been addressed within the proposed policy.
- 2.5. This "Staying Put" policy has been developed in line with the requirements of the Legislation and Regulatory Guidance which exists in relation to children and young people, Fostering and Care Leavers. Evidence and feedback from both best practice research and KFN have been taken into consideration when refreshing the Staying Put Policy.



2.6. The refreshed Staying Put policy if approved, will see the introduction of some changes and some aspects will feel different for both carers and young people alike. The key changes are set out below along with proposals for mitigation of any risks identified as a result of the proposed changes.

2.7. **Staying Put Carers payments and weekly allowances.**

Unlike allowance amounts for Foster Carers which are set by Children’s legislation, allowances for Staying Put carers are set at the discretion of each local authority.

Whilst it is reasonable to assume a young adult will need less support and therefore allowances should reflect this, the reality is becoming an adult brings a set of new challenges which means young people will need different support and guidance from their carers to help them prepare for living successful, happy and independent lives as adults.

Under the current policy, the transition from being a Foster Carer to being a Staying Put Carer results in a significant reduction in allowances which could be a barrier to Foster Carers being able to continue to support Care Leavers in Staying Put arrangements. The table below reflects how payments change under the current policy.

<b>Allowance Elements paid to Foster Carers</b>	<b>Amount a Foster Carer receives</b>	<b>Amount a Staying Put Carer receives.</b>
Weekly Maintenance Allowance child aged 16 and over	£249.89. This amount includes £57.90 which is the amount set to cover clothes, pocket money, personal care etc	Flat rate -£118.29
Skills level payment Level 1 Level 2 Level 3 Level 4	£101.40 £126.75 £177.45 £228.15	Flat rate -£101.40
Continuous Service Payment	£10.14 per week for each year fostered with Kirklees up to a maximum of 15 years (i.e., up to £152.10 per week)	£0.00
Annual Allowances Birthday 16+ Christmas 16+ Holiday 16+	£249.89 £249.89 £499.78	£0.00. Allowances are paid directly to a young person when they turn 18. Rates are set out in the Care Leavers Support and Financial Guidance Policy.

The Care Leaver’s Service has reviewed the payment model to ensure Staying Put Carers allowances are fair, transparent, and based on the support a young person needs. It is hoped this change will incentivise more Foster Carers to go on to support Care Leavers as Staying Put Carers.

The new model proposes the following framework of payments.

Payment to Staying Put Carer	Year 1 – young person aged 18-19	Years 2 and 3 – young person aged 19-21
Weekly Maintenance Allowance child aged 16 and over minus £57.90 to reflect carers are no longer expected to pay pocket money, buy clothes etc	£191.99	As year 1
Skills payment reflecting the skills level the carer was on at the time of transitioning to a Staying Put Carer	Range of £101 - £228.15	50% of the skills level weekly fee. Where a carer has a single Staying Put arrangement and they are unable to take a further Foster placement, the skills fee

		will not be reduced during for the second year (19 <sup>th</sup> to 20 <sup>th</sup> birthday) but will be reduced during the third year (20 <sup>th</sup> to 21 <sup>st</sup> birthday).
Rent	£56.50 payable directly from young person through wages or benefits. Not a cost to service	As year 1

## 2.8. Responsibility for rent.

After reviewing policies from different local authorities and attending the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum Staying Put and National Policy update session, it is apparent the current Kirklees Staying Put Policy is out of line with how Staying Put is being implemented in other authorities.

Analysis of other local authority's policies shows the majority of policies include and set out a young person's responsibility to pay rent for their Staying Put accommodation. Under the current policy, Care Leavers living in Staying Put are expected to make a small contribution to board costs, but there is no explicit liability for rent. This means there is a difference in the way Care Leavers who live in Staying Put arrangements are treated compared to their peers who move on to living independently.

To ensure all Care Leavers are treated equitably, it is proposed, in line with all young people who take up other types of accommodation when they leave care, that all young people who live in a 'Staying Put' arrangement will need to pay rent for where they live and make a reasonable contribution to food and utilities. Getting used to being responsible for and paying living costs on time is a core budgeting skill young people need to have before they move on to living independently.

It is proposed in line with the practice of other local authorities, that rental liability be set on a commercial basis. The rent liability will be in line with the Local Housing Allowance, currently this is £56.50 per week.

Advice received from colleagues in the Welfare and Exchequer Service is that to avoid the risk of being considered to have 'Contrived Agreements' (where some Staying Put Care Leavers pay rent and others do not) by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), it will be necessary to retrospectively put a standard agreement in place for all existing Staying Put arrangements.

The agreement needs signing by both Staying Put Carer and is used as the licence agreement in circumstances where a young person needs to claim the housing element of Universal Credit.

If we were to be considered to have Contrived Agreements, it would result in the DWP not paying the housing element of Universal Credit.

This is a significant change for both our young people and their Staying Put Carers. To mitigate this issue, a sensitive approach to communications is needed. It is proposed:

- A range of communications are planned which includes offering existing Staying Put Carers and young people the opportunity to discuss with the Foster Service and Care Leavers Service what these changes will mean for them.
- Support be put in place to help young people claim benefits to cover their rental liability if they are unable to pay through their own sources of income (wages from work)
- Support to be put in place for Staying Put Carers to help them understand any financial impact these changes will have on any means tested benefits they receive. This will be delivered jointly with the Kirklees Welfare Benefit Team.

There are 27 active Staying Put arrangements in place which will need supporting.

## 2.9. Early planning.

Early planning is key to creating sustainable arrangements for young people and their carers. The updated policy provides clear timeframes for when the planning and finalisation of Staying Put arrangements need to take place.

By the time a young person is 17½, all plans including the living together agreement need to be in place and finalised in order to be agreed at Permanence Panel no later than 4 months before the young person's 18th birthday.

As part of this early planning, there is the need to provide support to potential Staying Put carers to help them understand the changes, what it might mean for their household and any financial implications.

To ensure carers can make informed decisions and understand the financial impact Staying Put arrangements may have, the service will make a timely referral on behalf of the carer to the Kirklees Welfare Benefit team who will provide support, information and guidance.

## 2.10. Allowances for Staying Put Carers when young people are at University.

The legislation is clear that continuing in education should not preclude a young person from taking up the opportunity of a Staying Put arrangement, however it does not provide any further guidance to how these arrangements should operate.

The Children Leaving Care Act 2000 places a duty on local authorities to ensure Care Leavers have suitable accommodation to return home to during the holidays if they are attending Higher Education Settings.

It is clear from talking to other local authorities and reviewing their policies, this is a challenging area to address due to the lack of legislative guidance and the number of scenarios that can occur depending on whether a young person lives in the Staying Put home whilst attending University or lives away e.g., in Halls of Residence and returns home for holidays and whether a room is kept solely for the young person to use when they return home.

As part of the work to look at best practice, we reviewed policies from other local authorities. Of the policies reviewed, we did not find any that set out clearly the arrangements and allowances for the different scenarios. We have addressed this in our updated policy.

To ensure there is fairness across the wider cohort of Care Leavers and other Staying Put Care Leavers, the service has clearly set out how liability for rent and payments to carers will work when a young person in a Staying Put arrangement attends University.

Where young people stay living with their "Staying Put" carer whilst attending university they will still be liable for rent as set out in the living together agreement.

During term time, young people will need to continue to pay their Staying Put carer their rent of £56.50 from their student loans and bursaries. During the three main holidays, the Care Leavers Services will pay rent for these periods to the Staying Put carer.

Allowance payments to carers will follow the Staying Put year one, year two and year three model framework.

Where a young person lives away during term time and would like to return to their Staying Put home during the holidays, there must be a bedroom available for the young person to use. Staying Put arrangements will not be supported if a young person would be sleeping on a sofa or expected to share a room.

The rate paid will be £199.54 per week (this is the 16+ weekly allowance minus £57.90 maintenance amount). This will be paid pro rata for the duration of the holiday period that the young person stays at home.

The young person will still be liable for rent whilst a Staying Put arrangement is in place. It would be unreasonable to expect a young person to pay both their University accommodation costs and rent for their Staying Put arrangements. In these circumstances, the rent element of £56.50 per week will be paid on behalf of the young person by Kirklees Leaving Care Services. This will be paid both in term time and during holidays.

The cost and benefits of paying rent across 52 weeks to a Staying Put Carer to keep a room for a young person to return to versus paying for suitable hotel accommodation during the three main holiday periods (this can vary between 12 -14 weeks) has been analysed.

The annual cost of rent would be £2,938.00 per student living away at University.

Prices of hotel accommodation fluctuate across the year. Weekly rates increase during the holiday periods. They increase significantly over Easter and Christmas periods.

Examples of prices from a well-known budget hotel, start from £245 per week over the summer, increasing to £282.50 and £305.50 over Christmas and Easter, respectively.

Based on these costs, it is estimated the annual cost of paying for a young person to stay in suitable hotel accommodation during the holidays may start from £3,136 - £3,626 depending on the duration of the holiday periods.

Whilst cost needs to be a factor, the most important thing to consider is the impact these arrangements would have on young people's ability to maintain their studies without having to worry about where they will stay in the holidays or feeling alone or isolated when they do return.

#### **2.11. Ensuring Staying Put Carers are not financially worse off.**

Where a Staying Put carer is in receipt of some types of means tested benefit, a young person making a claim for benefit in their own right towards their accommodation costs or rent payment may result in the carers' benefit being reduced.

To mitigate the issue of Staying Put Carers experiencing a detrimental financial impact through their benefits being reduced, like all local authorities, Kirklees Council can 'top up' an amount equal to the amount of any reductions in Housing Benefit the carers receive as a result of their young person claiming Universal Credit.

For carers who do receive a reduction in their Housing Benefit, we propose this reduction will be offset by Kirklees Council. We will pay an amount equivalent to the level of the benefit reduction through Discretionary Housing Payments.

Similarly, for Staying Put Carers who may lose or have their Council Tax Benefits reduced, the Council has powers under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 section 13A 1(c) to award a reduction under their local Discretionary Council Tax reduction scheme. It is proposed the Council uses this discretionary power to ensure no Staying Put Carers are financially worse off.

#### **2.12. Sufficiency of Foster Placements.**

Implementing the proposal for Staying Put carers to keep a room free for young people at University to return home to during holiday periods has the potential to impact on the number of Foster Placements available in the system.

Increasing the number of in-house Foster Placements is key to the Sufficiency Strategy. There is a need to increase the number of foster placements available to reduce the amount of spend on external placements resulting from the reliance on Independent Foster Agencies (IFA's) as well as

being able to increase the numbers of children who are looked after living within the boundaries of Kirklees. The latter is an area critiqued by Ofsted.

Whilst Staying Put arrangements can last up to three years, there are occasions where these arrangements end earlier.

There is the need to strike the right balance between having enough fostering capacity in the system and giving Care Leavers the best start at an adult life through promoting and encouraging the opportunities Staying Put bring.

The Foster Service is looking to mitigate this as part of the Fostering Modernisation project, which covers improving marketing to attract a wider pool of potential Foster Carers and improving the Fostering Recruitment process.

Alongside this, as described in the principles of the Staying Put Policy, more work will be done with prospective Foster Carers from the point of their initial application to explain that young people will need to be supported and cared for until they become 21-years old.

This is to ensure there is a clear culture and understanding from our foster carers, when committing to caring for a child or young person that they will be supporting them into adult life and the preparation of young people for adulthood is an essential part of the role of foster carers working with children of all ages.

### **3. Implications for the Council**

#### **Working with People**

At the heart of this policy is the recognition of the fantastic work and commitment Foster Carers give to children and young people and the shared desire for Foster Carers to be able to continue to give this support as Staying Put Carers when their foster children become young adults. We have worked with the KFN to understand what barriers they face as Foster Carers when it comes to becoming a Staying Put Carer and incorporated solutions which address these issues so that Care Leavers can continue to experience the many benefits of being part of a family once they turn 18.

#### **Working with Partners**

The insights used to develop and improve the Staying Put Policy have been gained through working with and listening to the views of the KFN to shape the proposal. The KFN represent the wider cohort of Foster Carers in Kirklees.

Learning from the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum and the wider National Staying Put Policy has been incorporated to reflect Best Practice in this policy area. .

#### **Place Based Working**

There will be no impact.

#### **Climate Change and Air Quality**

There will be no impact.

#### **Improving outcomes for children**

This policy will contribute to the outcomes of Best Start and Independent by supporting, encouraging, and promoting the Staying Put opportunity to Care Leavers, ensuring they can continue to develop the necessary life skills they need to begin independent adult lives within the same safe, loving family environment they have grown up in.

By providing a stable and nurturing home, it is hoped there will be a positive impact on the number of Care Leavers who take up and sustain Education, Employment and Training past the age of 18.

#### **Other (e.g. Legal/Financial or Human Resources)**

There are no HR or Legal implications.

Whilst the Department for Education appear fully committed to supporting more young people to access Staying Put arrangements by awarding further resources to Local Authority budgets since 2020/21, the level of grant is allocated on a year by year basis and any reduction in future years may have financial implications.

#### **4. Consultees and their opinions**

- 4.1. This policy has been prepared in consultation with the Heads of Service and Service Managers from the Fostering, Children Looked After and Care Leavers Services. It is the opinion of the above services that the updated policy is transparent and provides greater clarity for both staff, Staying Put Carers and Young People. It is felt that the proposed payment model better reflects the different skills needed to support and prepare young adults for living independently.
- 4.2. The proposed model, principles and key changes were shared for feedback with KFN. The response to the proposal was positive, and KFN welcomed a refreshed policy that is clear about what happens when a young person goes to University and which addresses the barriers brought by the reduction in allowances when a Foster Carer becomes a Staying Put Carer.
- 4.3. Children's Service's Senior Leadership team received a briefing for their own sign off of the policy on the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2021.
- 4.4. The Portfolio Holder for Children has been engaged and consulted with throughout the process. A meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> May 2021 between Cllr Kendrick, Strategic Director Mel Meggs and Service Director Elaine McShane shared and agreed the final version of the updated policy.
- 4.5. The Executive Team were consulted on the 8<sup>th</sup> June 2021 and approved the policy to move forward to Cabinet.

#### **5. Next steps and timelines**

- 5.1. Steps have been taken to implement the policy, with the aim of it being in place by September 2021. This includes communicating the new policy to all relevant service areas and teams to make sure there is understanding of roles and responsibilities in relation to the changes. The service will work with existing Staying Put Carers and young people living these arrangements to communicate changes on a one to one basis and ensure there is support in place where needed in relation to financial impact queries.
- 5.2. A simplified guide to Staying Put will be produced aimed at Foster Carers and young people who may be considering Staying Put for their future together.
- 5.3. Regular updates on progress and the impact/outcomes as a result of implementing the policy will be scheduled in the forward plan and provided to Corporate Parenting Board

#### **6. Service Director responsible**

Elaine McShane – Service Director for Family Support and Child Protection

Corporate Parenting Board

Agenda Plan 2021/22

Date of Meeting	Issues for Consideration	Officer Contact
<p>29<sup>th</sup> June 2021</p>	<p><u>Pre-meeting (private)</u></p> <p>Performance Monitoring report (Children’s Services) - Stat</p> <p><u>Public Items:</u></p> <p>Minutes of Previous Meeting</p> <p>Children’s Performance Highlight Report CIC and Fostering/Children’s Homes</p> <p>Overview of number of children in Care (snapshot) including age profile</p> <p>Children’s Rights Team Annual report</p> <p>Overall financial policy for care leavers</p> <p>Virtual School Governing Body Update (verbal)</p> <p>OFSTED and Ambition Board Update (verbal)</p>	<p>O Rix/ J Tolley/ E McShane</p> <p>J Harris</p> <p>J Tolly/O Rix/ E McShane</p> <p>O Rix/E McShane</p> <p>M Tiernan/ A Gledhill/ S Miles</p> <p>E McShane/ L Warnes</p> <p>Cllr Pattison /J Tolley</p> <p>E McShane</p>

**Corporate Parenting Board**

**Agenda Plan 2021/22**

	<p>Membership of the Board</p> <p>Updates from Board Members on interaction with services</p> <p>Corporate Parenting Board Agenda Plan 2021/22</p>	<p>Board Members</p> <p>Board Members</p> <p>J Harris</p>
<b>5<sup>th</sup> October 2021</b>	<p align="center"><b>Pre-meeting (Informal)</b></p> <p>Performance Monitoring report (Children’s Services)</p> <p align="center"><b>Public Items:</b></p> <p>Minutes of Previous Meeting</p> <p>One Adoption West Yorkshire – Annual Report</p> <p>Children’s Performance Highlight Report</p> <p>Staying Put Policy Fostering for Children in Care</p> <p>Virtual School Governing Body Update (verbal)</p> <p>Ambition Board Update (verbal)</p> <p>Updates from Board Members on interaction with services</p> <p>Corporate Parenting Board Agenda Plan 2021/22</p>	<p>O Rix/ J Tolley/ S Miles / G Addy</p> <p>J Harris</p> <p>S Whitley</p> <p>O Rix/ J Tolly / E McShane</p> <p>E McShane</p> <p>Cllr Pattison/ J Tolley</p> <p>T Brailsford/ E McShane</p> <p>Board Members</p> <p>J Harris</p>



**Corporate Parenting Board**

**Agenda Plan 2021/22**

<p><b>23<sup>rd</sup> November 2021</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Pre-meeting (Informal)</b></p> <p>Performance Monitoring report (Children’s Services)</p> <p align="center"><b>Public Items:</b></p> <p>Minutes of Previous Meeting</p> <p>Attendance by Strategic Director TBC - Update on the Role of Corporate Parent</p> <p>Children’s Performance Highlight Report CIC and Fostering/Children’s Homes</p> <p>Thriving Kirklees and CAMH’s update</p> <p>Update on the modernisation of the Care Leavers Service</p> <p>Annual Foster Carer Handbook</p> <p>Statements of purpose for fostering/residential care (Tbc)</p> <p>Annual report on Complaints and Compliments for Children in Care (poss to move to Nov)</p> <p>Overview of number of children in Care (snapshot) including age profile</p>	<p>O Rix/ J Tolley/ E McShane</p> <p align="center">J Harris</p> <p align="center">Strategic Director (tbc)</p> <p>O Rix/ J Tolley/ E McShane</p> <p align="center">Stewart Horn</p> <p align="center">O Rix</p> <p align="center">A Quinlan</p> <p align="center">Tbc</p> <p align="center">A Gledhill/S Miles</p> <p align="center">O Rix</p>
---	--	---

**Corporate Parenting Board**

**Agenda Plan 2021/22**

	<p>Virtual School Governing Body Update (verbal)</p> <p>Children’s Ambition Board Update (verbal)</p> <p>Updates from Board Members on interaction with services</p> <p>Corporate Parenting Board Agenda Plan 2021/22</p>	<p>ClIr Pattison/ J Tolley</p> <p>T Brailsford /E McShane</p> <p>Board Members</p> <p>J Harris</p>
<p><b>11<sup>th</sup> January 2022</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Pre-meeting (Informal)</b></p> <p>Performance Monitoring report (Children’s Services)</p> <p align="center"><b>Public Items:</b></p> <p>Minutes of Previous Meeting</p> <p>Children’s Performance Highlight Report CIC and Fostering/Children’s Homes</p> <p>One Adoption West Yorkshire -6 monthly report</p> <p>Overview of number of children in Care (snapshot) including age profile</p> <p>Virtual School Governing Body Update (verbal)</p> <p>Children’s Ambition Board Update (verbal)</p> <p>Updates from Board Members on interaction with services</p>	<p>O Rix/ J Tolley/ E McShane</p> <p>J Harris</p> <p>O Rix/ J Tolley/ E McShane</p> <p>S Whitley</p> <p>O Rix</p> <p>ClIr Pattison/ J Tolley</p> <p>T Brailsford / E McShane</p> <p>Board Members</p>

**Corporate Parenting Board**

**Agenda Plan 2021/22**

	Corporate Parenting Board Agenda Plan 2021/22	J Harris
<b>15<sup>th</sup> February 2022</b>	<p align="center"><b>Pre-meeting (Informal)</b></p> <p>Performance Monitoring report (Children’s Services)</p> <p align="center"><b>Public Items:</b></p> <p>Minutes of Previous Meeting</p> <p>Attendance by Strategic Director TBC - Update on the Role of Corporate Parent</p> <p>Children’s Performance Highlight Report CIC and Fostering/Children’s Homes</p> <p>Overview of number of children in Care (snapshot) including age profile</p> <p>Virtual School Governing Body Update (verbal)</p> <p>Children’s Ambition Board Update (verbal)</p> <p>Updates from Board Members on interaction with services</p> <p>Corporate Parenting Board Agenda Plan 2021/22</p>	<p>O Rix/ J Tolley/ E McShane</p> <p align="center">J Harris</p> <p align="center">Strategic Director (tbc)</p> <p>O Rix/ J Tolley/ E McShane</p> <p align="center">O Rix</p> <p align="center">Cllr Pattison/ J Tolley</p> <p align="center">T Brailsford /E McShane</p> <p align="center">Board Members</p> <p align="center">J Harris</p>

**Corporate Parenting Board**

**Agenda Plan 2021/22**

<p><b>29<sup>th</sup> March 2022</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Pre-meeting (Informal)</b></p> <p>Performance Monitoring report (Children’s Services)</p> <p align="center"><b>Public Items:</b></p> <p>Minutes of Previous Meeting</p> <p>Attendance by Strategic Director TBC - Update on the Role of Corporate Parent</p> <p>Children’s Performance Highlight Report CIC and Fostering/Children’s Homes</p> <p>Overview of number of children in Care (snapshot) including age profile</p> <p>Virtual School Governing Body Update (verbal)</p> <p>Children’s Ambition Board Update (verbal)</p> <p>Updates from Board Members on interaction with services</p> <p>Corporate Parenting Board Agenda Plan 2021/22</p>	<p>O Rix/ J Tolley/ E McShane</p> <p align="center">J Harris</p> <p align="center">Strategic Director (tbc)</p> <p>O Rix/ J Tolley/ E McShane</p> <p align="center">O Rix</p> <p align="center">Cllr Pattison/ J Tolley</p> <p align="center">T Brailsford / E McShane</p> <p align="center">Board Members</p> <p align="center">J Harris</p>
--	--	---

## Corporate Parenting Board

### Agenda Plan 2021/22

#### Standing Items (as on Agenda Plan)

Minutes of Previous Meeting

Attendance by Strategic Director Update on the Role of Corporate Parent

- ( SD Growth and Regeneration– August PROV)
- ( SD Environment and Climate Change – October PROV)
- (SD Children’s Services – date TBC)
- (SD CCG’s Chief Officer – Date TBC)

Children’s Performance Highlight Report CIC and Fostering/Children’s Homes

Overview of number of children in Care (snapshot) including age profile

Virtual School Governing Body Update (verbal)

OFSTED and Improvement Board Update (verbal)

Updates from Board Members on interaction with services

Corporate Parenting Board Agenda Plan 2021/22

#### Future items for consideration:

~~Overall financial policy for care leavers (June)~~

Annual Foster Carer Handbook (November)

Thriving Kirklees and CAMH’s update ( November )

~~Staying Put Fostering for Children in Care ( August )~~

Statement of Purpose for Fostering Service (November TBC)

Statement of Purpose for Residential Care (November TBC )

Supported Lodgings Scheme (date TBC)

~~Q&A – Annual (highlights report on Kirklees performance data) (October)~~

~~Q&A – 6 monthly report (January TBC)~~

## Corporate Parenting Board

### Agenda Plan 2021/22

#### Annual reports:-

- ~~6 monthly report on Children's Rights (Oct to March) (M Tiernan/A Gledhill) (June)~~
- 6 monthly report on Independent Visitors Scheme (Oct to March)
- Annual Report on Children's Rights and Independent Visitors Scheme (April 19 to March 20)
- Annual report on Complaints and Compliments for Children in Care (November)
- Annual report on children who go missing from care
- Annual report on the work of the leaving care service
- ~~Annual report on children and young people placed outside the Kirklees boundary~~
- Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report
- Annual Health Report (report on health of looked after children)
- Annual review of the Foster Caring Handbook
- Annual Report on Kirklees Fostering Service

#### Quarterly reports:

Fostering Agency Report (April to June) (A Quinlan)

- Fostering Agency Report (July to Sept) (A Quinlan)
- Fostering Agency Report (Oct to Dec)
- Fostering Agency Report (Jan to March)