

**Children Looked After Overview Report  
Corporate Parenting Board  
29<sup>th</sup> March 2022**

<b>Report of</b>	Head of Corporate Parenting
<b>Report to</b>	Corporate Parenting Board
<b>Report Originator</b>	Ophelia Rix
<b>Date of Report</b>	13 <sup>th</sup> March 2022

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The report outlines the work done and improvements achieved regarding the support services provided for looked after children.
- 1.2 As Corporate parent it is our role to ensure that children who are looked after are supported to achieve their goals and have the same opportunities to reach their full potential, enjoy leisure and cultural activities as any other child. Our role aim is to ensure:
- Children's care and pathway plans consistently and comprehensively address their needs and experiences, including the need for timely permanence.
  - Children's plans are thoroughly and independently reviewed with the involvement, as appropriate, of parents, carers, residential staff and other adults who know them. Plans for their futures continue to be appropriate and ambitious, reflecting children's wishes, goals, and aspirations
  - All children looked after will be prepared for independence and a healthy adulthood
  - Review of plans are thorough, involve all key people and plans for their future are appropriate and ambitious.
  - Wellbeing and Mental health needs are recognised and support to access services is improved.
  - We work closely and effectively with all our partners to ensure the role and responsibility of corporate parent is appropriately shared and all available support and services are readily available for all Children in Care.

## **2. Statistical Neighbours**

- 2.1 Local Authorities that the Department for Education regard as similar and close socio economically to Kirklees, not measured by population size.

<b>Local Authorities "Very Close"* to Kirklees</b>
<b>(* Source LAIT)</b>
<b>Kirklees Council</b>

<b>Rochdale Borough Council</b>
<b>Bolton Council</b>
<b>Calderdale Council</b>
<b>Bury Borough Council</b>
<b>Dudley MBC</b>
<b>Derby City</b>
<b>Lancashire Council</b>
<b>Stockton-on Tees Borough Council</b>
<b>Leeds City Council</b>
<b>Telford &amp; Wrekin Council</b>

### 3. Number of Looked after Children

- 3.1 The number of looked after children has seen a further decrease from 628 in January 2021 to 615 at the end of February 2022. The percentage of looked after children is 61.5 which remains lower than our statistical neighbours. (Fig 1)

Fig 1

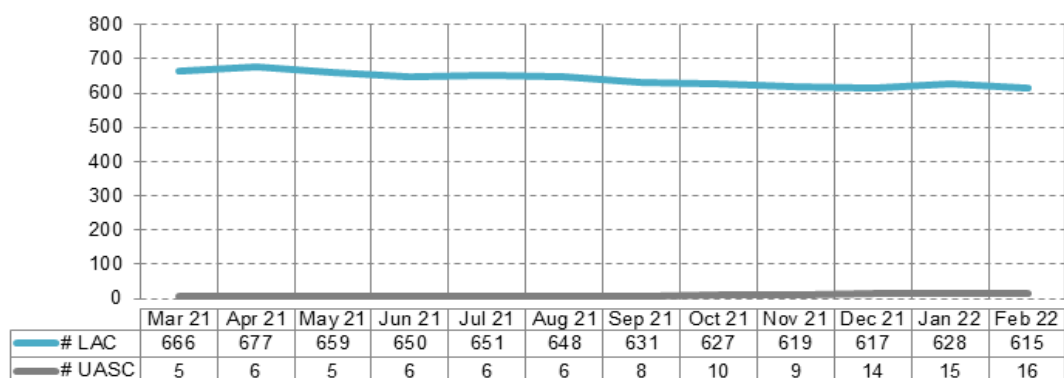
Local Authority	Number of CLA				0-17 Population	Rate of CLA (per 10,000 aged 0-17)			
	DfE Published Data	Quarterly Data <small>(source: ADCS Y&amp;H RIA data collection)</small>				DfE Published Data	Quarterly Data <small>(source: ADCS Y&amp;H RIA data collection)</small>		
		31/03/2021	30/06/2021	30/09/2021			31/12/2021	31/03/2021	30/06/2021
Bolton	617				68,931	89.5			
Bury	347				43,180	80.4			
Calderdale	341	345	348	344	45,951	74.2	75.1	75.7	74.9
Derby	642				59,691	107.6			
Dudley	621				69,594	89.2			
Kirklees	661	650	631	617	100,020	66.1	65.0	63.1	61.7
Lancashire	2,006				252,984	79.3			
Leeds	1,279	1,303	1,330	1,337	170,581	75.0	76.4	78.0	78.4
Rochdale	559				53,846	103.8			
Stockton-on-Tees	579				44,021	131.5			
Telford and Wrekin	425				41,646	102.1			

- 3.2 The graph (Fig 2) shows the number of children in care (615 excluding any looked after children receiving only S20 short term breaks) alongside the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC).
- 3.3 Of the current number Children Looked after, 437 are subject of a Care Order, a further 96 are subject of an Interim Care Orders, whilst 37 have been made subject to Placement Orders, 42 are accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act, 1 is on Remand and 2 were subject to Police Powers of Protection.
- 3.4 The current number of Children Looked After equates to a rate per 10,000 population aged 0-17 of 61.5. This compares to a statistical neighbour average of

93.3 and a national average of 67.0 based on published data for March 2021. The number of UASC has increased from 5 in March 2021 to 16 in February 2022.

- Kirklees (Nov 2021) = 61.5
- Statistical Neighbours (2021) = 93.3
- England (2021) = 67.0

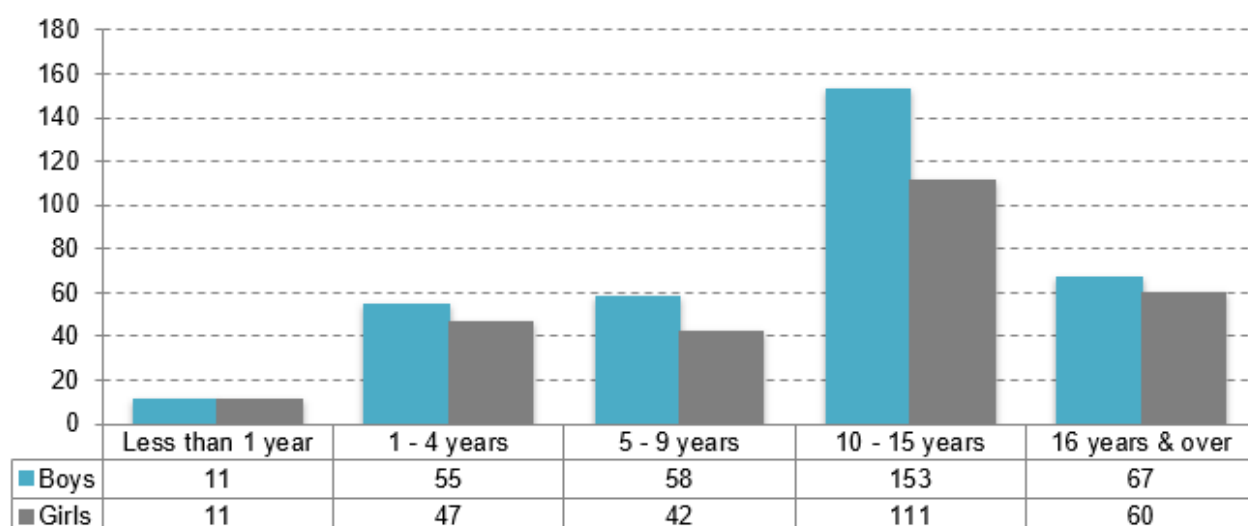
**Fig 2**



3.5 The graph (Fig 3) shows the breakdown by age and gender of the children in care. The largest age group for boys is 10 - 15 years with 153 children and the largest age group for girls is also 10-15 years with 111 children.

**Fig 3**

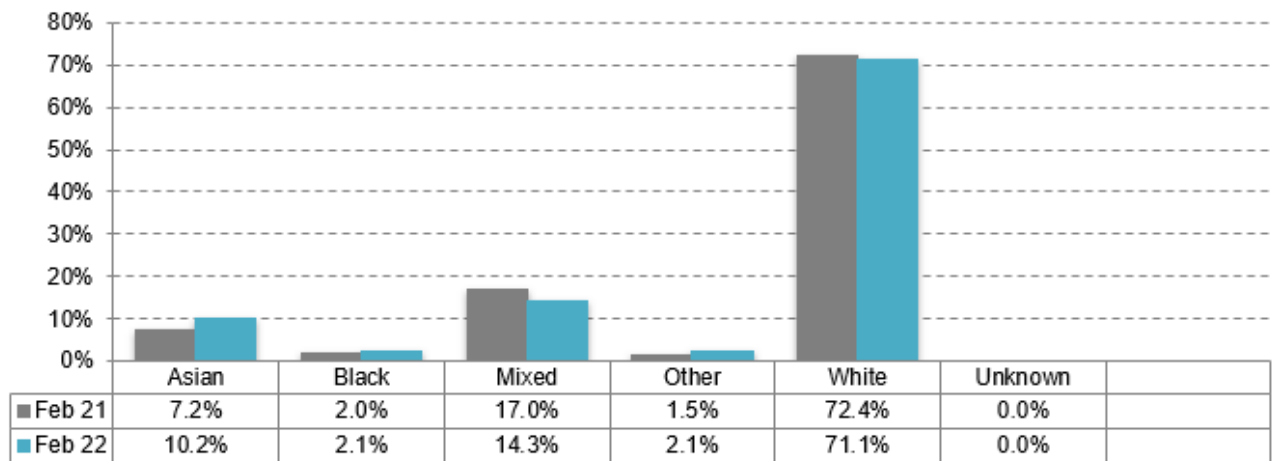
**Children looked after age and gender breakdown**



3.6 The graph (Fig 4) shows the ethnic breakdown of the children looked after at the end of February 2022 and the same point 12 months ago. There has been a decrease in the percentage of Children Looked After who are of White and Mixed ethnicities in this period and an increase in the percentage of Asian ethnicity.

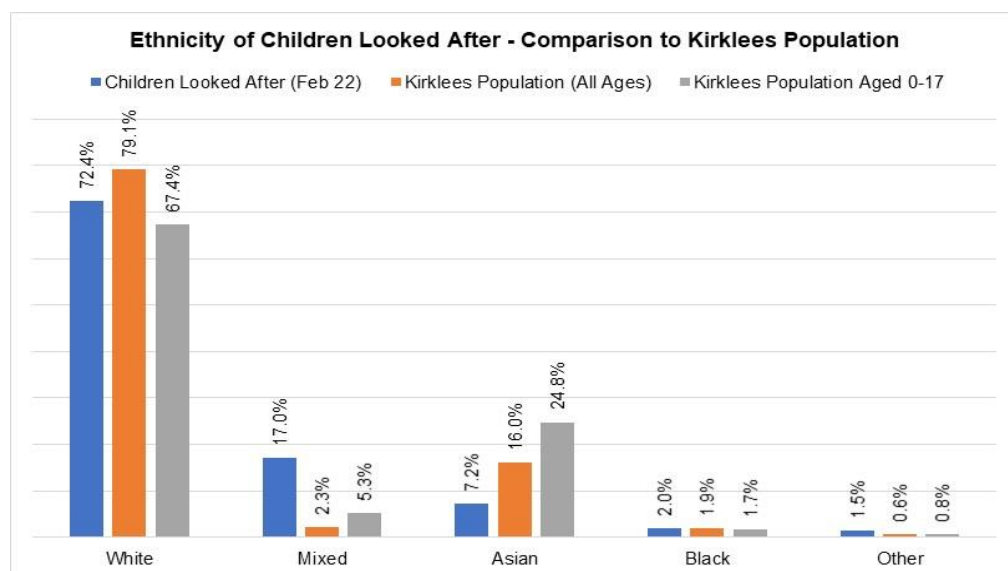
**Fig 4**

**Ethnicity changes in children looked after**

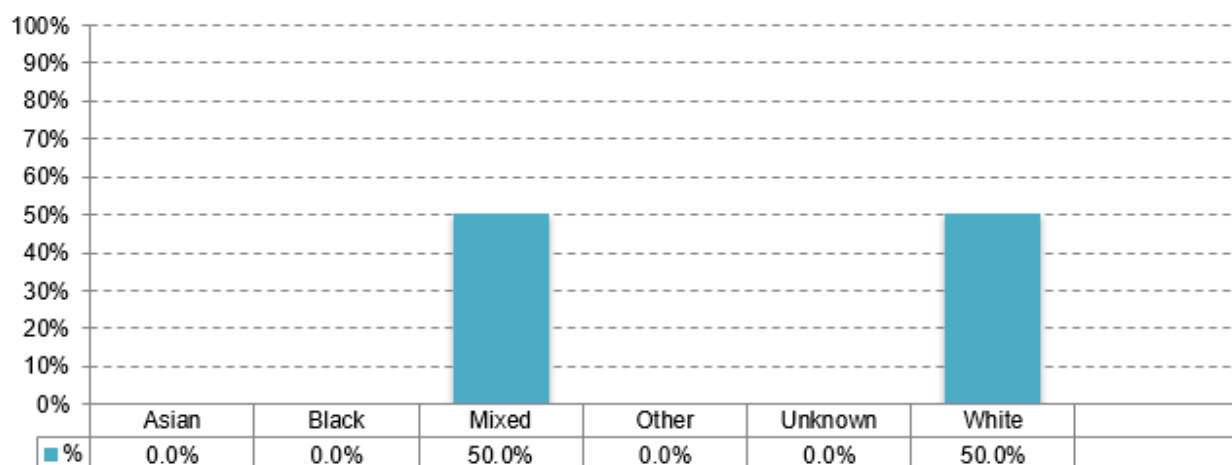


3.7 The graph (Fig 5) shows the data in relation to the ethnic breakdown of the children looked after at the end of February 2022 compared with the Kirklees population data. There is an over-representation for those of mixed ethnicity and an under-representation for those of Asian ethnicity.

**Fig 5**



3.8 The graph (Fig 6) shows the percentage breakdown by ethnicity of children entering care this month. Note that this outcome is based on small numbers. In February 2022 there were 2 young people who were recorded as entering care in the month at the point of data extraction, 1 of White ethnicity and 1 of Mixed ethnicity.

**Fig 6****Ethnicity of children becoming looked after this month****4. Children and Young People placed more than 20 miles outside of Kirklees**

- 4.1 The number of looked after children placed outside Kirklees District and 20 plus miles from their home address was 76 on 28/02/2022. This equates to 12.4% of the total number Children Looked After. This represents a significant decrease from 127 in 2017.
- 4.2 The majority, of our children and young people placed out of area are placed in foster care, the remainder are placed in children's homes, semi-independent homes and a small number in youth custody or other specialist settings. The recent historical position is detailed below:

	31/12/2021		31/01/2022		28/02/2022	
	Number	Number	Number	%	Number	%
<b>Placed outside Kirklees &amp; over 20 miles from home address</b>	78	12.6%	77	12.3%	76	12.4%

- 4.3 On 28/02/2022 there were 29 young people accommodated in semi-independent accommodation, 20 within District and 9 of our young people placed outside of the Kirklees District as detailed in the following table:

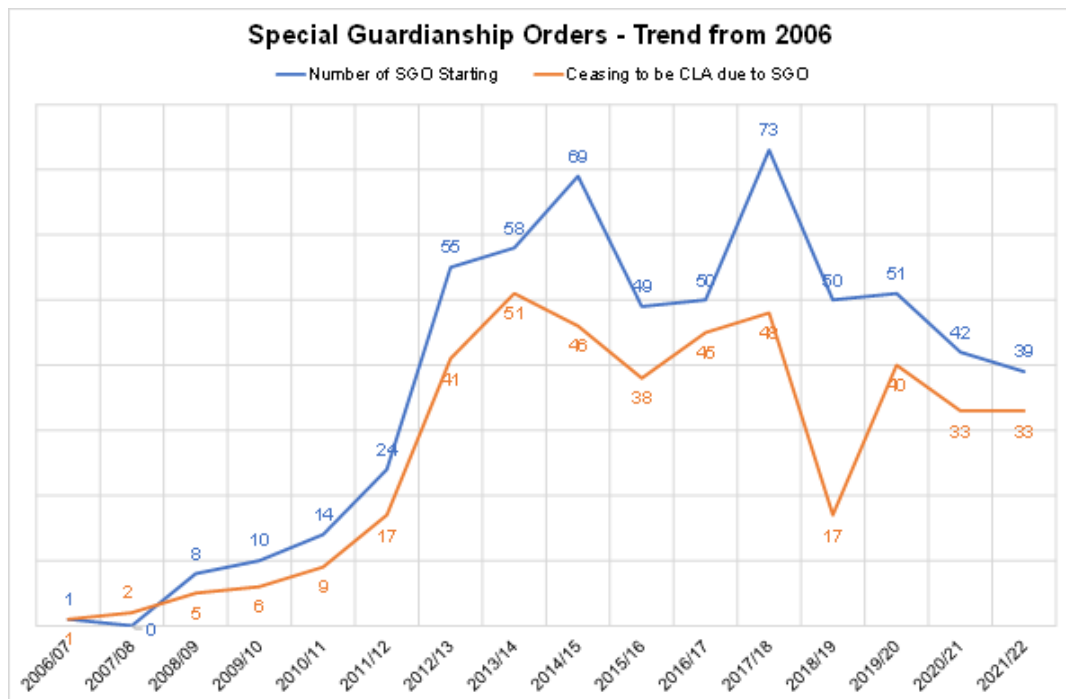
<b>Placements outside of Kirklees in semi-independent living accommodation (not subject to Children's Home regulations) - as at 28/02/2022</b>			
<b>LA of Placement</b>	<b>Aged 16</b>	<b>Aged 17</b>	<b>Total</b>

Bradford		2	2
Calderdale	1	1	2
Wakefield	1	4	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Legal Status</b>	<b>Aged 16</b>	<b>Aged 17</b>	<b>Total</b>
Full Care Order	1	4	5
S20 CA 1989 - Single Placement	1	3	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>

## 5. Care Planning

- 5.1 The care planning and decision-making processes for children and young people has Senior Manager oversight through Legal Gateway, Permanence and Children Accessing Service Panel. The panels consider the most effective route to securing permanency for a child or young person, oversees the quality and timeliness of care planning and ensures that children and young people receive the right services at the right time.
- 5.2 Permanence and timely accessing of early support services has been achieved through Family Group Conference (FGC) service that is a family-led meeting in which the family and friends network come together to make a plan for a child and the promotion of Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) that provide an alternative legal status for children that offers greater security than long term fostering but without the severance from the birth family that stems from an Adoption Order and Child Arrangement Order (CAO) can be made by the court to formalize any of the following arrangements for a child's:
- Living arrangements
  - When and how often the child will spend time with or have "contact" with any person
- 5.3 An outcome of the early and effective planning has resulted with a total number 490 children being made subject of Special Guardianship Order (Fig 7 and 8) and 86 subject to Child Arrangement Orders, a total of 576 that would have alternatively been looked after by the Local Authority. If we had not been successful in achieving this our total number of looked after children would stand at 1191.
- 5.4 It is worthy of note that since the 1 January 2021 we have successfully secured through Care Proceedings 51 Special Guardianship Orders and 11 Child Arrangement Orders.

**Fig 7**



**Fig 8**



5.5 The Connected Carers Placement Support and Multi Systemic Therapy Teams (MST) both work closely with the Social Work Teams to ensure support plans are being discussed and written with families. Joint visits are undertaken at an early

stage, to ensure families are equipped with all the knowledge they require regarding ongoing support available.

- 5.6 Multi Systemic Therapy (MST) is an evidence based intensive family and community-based intervention for children and young people aged 10-17, where young people are at risk of out of home placement in either care or custody.
- 5.7 The key goals of MST are to break the cycle of anti-social behaviours by keeping young people safely at home, in school, and out of trouble.
- 5.8 The MST Family Integrated Transitions (FIT) programme combines a number of evidence-based interventions with the goal of targeting multiple determinants of antisocial behaviour, substance abuse and mental health issues in young people. The overarching framework of the intervention is derived from Multisystemic Therapy (MST) and this is combined with Dialectical Behaviour Therapy to target young people's individual mental health needs and support those caring for them more effectively.
- 5.9 The model works for 3 to 4 months with young people and their carers while they are placed away from home, thus improving skill level of the current residential or foster carers and with the young person's family to identify the issues which may present difficulties in order to plan a successful return home. Once the young person has returned home, work continues with the family for a further four months and with other key agencies, such as social care and schools and to support the family members to develop community-based supports and reduce their longer-term reliance on statutory services.
- 5.10 The MST-FIT team are currently working with four young people and their families and have successfully supported the return of one young person back to the full-time care of their mother.

## **6. Placement with Parents**

- 6.1 We currently have 46 children who are living at home under Placement with Parent (PWP) regulations. Of the 46 children, 33 are the subject of a Care Order and care proceedings are ongoing for 13 of the children who are subject of Interim Care Order.
- 6.2 Between 1 January 2021 and 28 February 2022, 50 young people have successfully been returned home to the care of their family whereby we have concluded court proceedings with no order or discharged care order.
- 6.3 There remains a focus of management oversight of all Placement with Parent placements. A monthly review of all 46 children takes place which has oversight from senior managers to ensure plans are progressing in a timely manner. All delays are addressed with timescales and where there are delays in relation to sufficient court timetabling this is also progressed through legal services.



## **7. Care and Pathway Plans**

- 7.1 It remains a priority that all children in care have an appropriate plan in place to Ensure they are safeguarded, and all their needs related to, education, physical and emotional wellbeing, leisure, aspirations and appropriate accommodation. These plans are written with each young person and fully include there wishes and feelings.
- 7.2 Plans are reviewed by Team Managers and Independent Reviewing Officers to ensure they are being progressed effectively and in a timely manner.
- 7.3 All young people aged 16 and 3 months should have a pathway plan that sets out the support that will be provided. This must be based on the Needs Assessment carried out. The Plan should be prepared before the young person leaves care.
- 7.4 The social worker or personal advisor will hold the responsibility of co-ordinating the Pathway Plan.

The Pathway Plan should include:

- the nature of and level of contact and personal support to be provided
  - the young person's health needs and how these should be met
  - arrangements to support the young person in further education or employment
  - arrangements to support the young person in sustaining and developing family relationships
  - arrangements to ensure the young person is properly equipped for taking greater responsibility towards their independence
  - an assessment of the young person's financial needs and capacity and any financial assistance provided
  - arrangements to ensure the young person is living in suitable accommodation; and
  - any 'Staying Put' arrangements.
- 7.5 The Pathway Plan should set objectives and include how and when these should be achieved. It should be reviewed at a minimum of every 6 months. There has been an increase in the number of young people who have an up-to-date pathway plan from 85.6% in January 2022 to 88.2% in February 2022.

## **8. Statutory Children Looked after visits**

- 8.1 Social workers continue to visit children and young people in line with the 2010 regulations.
- 8.2 The frequency of statutory requirements provides a minimum which is within the first week (7 calendar days) of placement / Interim Care Order being made for those remaining at home, and subsequently at a minimum frequency of every 6 weeks until permanence is agreed and thereafter at intervals of no more than 12 weekly.
- 8.3 There are often times when increased visits are required due to a young person's needs including possible risk factors as well as stress within a placement. Any reductions to the frequency of visiting to a child or young person must be agreed by the manager and recorded within the child's care plan
- 8.4 There is continued improvement of timely statutory visits which is closely monitored by managers in the service.

## **9. Update Assessments**

- 9.1 Update assessments are required to be completed on an annual basis. However due to the ongoing change of circumstances for the children and young people we work with, the assessments are updated more frequently.
- 9.2 All children and young people's assessments record include and take account of individual experiences, wishes and feelings of parents, carers and young people.
- 9.3 The purpose of the assessment is to provide a clear evidence base and oversight that supports future planning and decision making for all children and families.
- 9.4 Through our practice learning days and dip sampling of cases we have seen an improvement in the quality of assessments, but note further work is required to ensure we are achieving consistency across all services.

## **10. Quality Assurance and Management Oversight**

- 10.1 As a service we aim to improve our quality and timeliness of work with a view to improving the outcomes for our Children Looked After. We will do this by:
  - Continuing to address the timeliness of practice by monitoring and reviewing the performance data and quality assurance of practice at the performance meeting that will take place every fortnight between the service manager and the team managers.
  - Team Manager and Service Manager practice discussion and dip sampling of cases will take place every 2 weeks that will include the Head of Service.
  - We will undertake regular Practice Learning Days.
  - Practice Learning Days are quality assurance activities that take place across the entire of children's services. These are about learning for the individual

practitioner and the service, enabling a learning culture to flourish.

- The purpose of Practice Learning Days is to maximise impact and learning opportunities, ensuring that all areas of children's services have, the opportunity to engage and influence good quality practice embedded throughout the child's journey.

10.2 The last Practice learning day took place in November 2021 and the focus was

- Timescale of visits
- Supervisions
- Quality of assessments and Care Planning
- Management oversight and supervision
- Cases were randomly selected, and the Social Workers were asked to identify a case they wished to showcase.

10.3 Practice Learning Day Findings

- All Social Workers have a good understanding of young people.
- Strong social work relationship.
- Improved case file recordings from Social Workers and some evidence of detailed and thorough recording. However, there were areas of improvement identified within the 35 cases that were dip sampled. There was a lack of evidence that direct work was being undertaken.
- Planning post 18 and permanence was evident on files and discussions starting to take place earlier. Further work to be undertaken to ensure consistency of practice across the teams.
- Visits not always written up in a timely manner.
- Case summaries need updating with more details to give a clear account of each young person's situation and to include a current profile of young person.
- Minutes of meetings not being on the file in a timely manner.
- Number of changes in Social Workers and Team Managers due to the transfer of cases within the service.
- Clarity of where documents should be saved on the file.
- Care Plans and Pathway Plans on LiquidLogic are completed and are SMART.
- The Child Friendly Care plan were not routinely completed within timescales but noted that when completed they were of good quality.
- Over 90% of cases reviewed had an up-to-date assessment which was of good quality containing the child and carer's voice.

#### 10.4 What we implemented

- Performance management meetings continue to take place on a fortnightly basis which address all data including HR issues and challenges as a result of the current staffing circumstances.
- Service Manager led Service Progress meeting held with Team Managers twice weekly to drive the completion of timely visits to children and assessments of their circumstances and, to ensure supervisions are taking place and to address any presenting challenges.
- Supervision training has taken place and has had a positive impact. There is a renewed commitment between Team Managers and Social Workers to undertake supervision as a priority and new supervision agreements are being completed.
- Assessments: Strengthening analysis and planning is a priority. Advanced Practitioners are to offer Social Workers direct support with this.
- There is a greater recognition for the importance of recording reflective discussions which take place with Social Workers as well as management decisions.

#### 10.5 Quality Assurance and Practice framework will focus on:

- Are we getting the practice basics right for our children and young people?
- Is assessment work being planned, are the right people involved in this and is this leading to meaningful change for children and young people?
- On a practical level what does planning look like for children and young people, their families and carers?
- Are Social Workers planning their work effectively?
- Are clear actions being generated not just from day to day work with the family but through supervision and management oversight and at points of change or crisis?
- Are plans and actions being followed up and reviewed?
- Are children's plans meeting their needs and are these being used to inform day to day support and intervention in their lives?
- Do our processes and procedures support effective planning?

### 9. Summary

- 9.1 As a service, we are confident that as we further embed Performance Management and Quality Assurance processes that we are able to identify, challenge and improve things for children and young people to avoid care arrangements and care plans drifting. There has been an improvement in relation to identifying poor practice and outcomes for our Children Looked After with timely resolution.
- 9.2 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.

- 9.3 There has been some improvement noted in relation to the scrutiny of performance data and quality of practice that occurs at all levels to ensure timely and effective care planning. It is recognised that further embedding of utilising the data to inform practice is required.
- 9.4 The relationship with Child Reviewing Service who provide independent scrutiny of Children Looked After service has been strengthened. There is a clear process for escalation of concerns, and this provides assurances that any delay on planning is escalated timely.
- 9.5 To address timeliness of practice the monitoring and review of the performance data and quality assurance of practice will take place at the performance meeting that will take place two weekly and will be chaired by the Service Managers of the Children Looked After and Care Leaver Teams.
- 9.6 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 .

