



Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy, Executive Director - Children's Services

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	06 July 2023
Subject:	Children in Care Performance Report - Quarter 4

Summary:

This item enables the Panel to consider and comment on the report and accompanying appendices to this report, that provide key performance information for Quarter 4 2022/23 that is relevant to the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Actions Required:

Members of the Panel are invited to consider and comment on the performance information contained in the appendices of this report and recommend any actions or changes to the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety and Procurement.

1. Background

Appendix A provides a full and detailed report that covers the measures that are relevant to Children in Care (CiC) used by Children's Services. This is available for questions.

There are 18 measures in total that relate to CiC that are reported on in Quarter 4. Of these measures 8 did not meet their target and 1 are ahead of the target set by the services.

1.1 Measures that did not meet their target:

1.1.1 Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family -

There has been continued significant delay in the length of time care proceedings are taking this will continue to have some impact on the statistics and data for this year and accounts for the increased timescales. This measure is a 'rolling' 3 yearly averages, as we have moved forward the calculation has considered more of the period covered by the pandemic, which has in turn increased the rolling average figure. It is important to note that the figure presented includes some rare anomalies which have also adversely affected the overall timescales, such as one case which lasted for over 2000 days due to

an unusual amount of disruption as well as an increase in the number of children deemed harder to place in general. There are also some children later adopted by their foster carers, but this measure does not properly take in to account the time they began living with those families, producing a longer timescale than there was in reality.

1.1.2 Stability of placements of Children in Care: Number of moves - This is a cumulative indicator identifying those children who experience 3 placement moves. Our performance is in line with the recently published data from other East Midland authorities where an average of 9% of children in care experienced 3 placement moves in a year.

The first half of the year's performance was promising, however there remain ongoing challenges in respect of placement availability, resources, and suitability of matching some children with the right fostering household/provision. Placement availability has remained static and foster carers have continued to be very resourceful and committed to the children they care for resulting in some households choosing not to take additional placements. This enables carers to give their energy and focus to these children who have experienced trauma and have a range of complex needs and behaviours. However, with a backdrop of raised numbers of children in care and a limited number of foster carers available, effective matching remains a considered priority in promoting and maintaining placement stability and improving outcomes for all children in care.

1.1.3 Stability of placements of Children in Care: length of placement - Performance remains below target. For all placements, the service continues to ensure that foster carers are well supported and that potential problems are identified early to support them in continuing to care for children whose needs are varied and complex. This has been supported using the Valuing Care toolkit and the embedded caring2learn approach which has supported and empowered foster carers to share, find and deliver solutions within a context of a tailored fostering service training and support offer. Nevertheless, the service has continued to see that some stable placements disrupt unexpectedly, and this can have a significant impact upon this indicator. The service has also seen an increase in the entrants of older children (teenagers) which poses some challenge in terms of identifying longer term accommodation options whilst the younger cohort of children with care plans for long-term fostering presents challenges in achieving placement stability due to the local and national shortage of foster carers who want to care on a longer term or permanent basis. Alongside positive fostering recruitment, it is envisaged that an anticipated cost of living increase in fostering allowance will aid new enquiries into fostering and help to retain our valued volunteers.

1.1.4 Percentage of Children in Care with an up-to-date health check - The number of children in care has increased and there is evidence of more young people aged 16/17 entering care and exercising their right to refuse an assessment. These include young asylum-seeking children who have come through the national transfer scheme. This age group of children are often not committed to accessing their health assessment, although they continue to access healthcare when required. The Children in Care Teams continue to encourage and promote health assessments with their young people but must accept

their right to refuse. There has been a lot of activity to improve the timeliness of Initial Health Assessment and this measure has significantly improved.

1.1.5 Children in Care persistent absence rate - Our children and young people have performed well historically for persistent absence, with the last 3 years of complete data prior to Covid showing fewer persistently absent pupils compared to national, regional, and statistical neighbour averages. As with overall absence, there have been large increases in persistent absence across the board across all pupils and all comparators in 2022. Although the persistent absence rate for our children in care is below that for all children in Lincolnshire, robust monitoring has been introduced with the aim to reduce barriers to improved attendance. In addition to an increased focussed discussion in Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings, the Virtual School has introduced half termly attendance monitoring meetings to enable early identification of dips in attendance. In line with DfE statutory guidance, from September 2023 Local Authorities will also be carrying out termly support meetings with every school nationally to identify, discuss and agree joint targeted actions for all pupils for whom attendance is below expected levels.

1.1.6 Percentage of Children in Care achieving 9-5 in English and Maths GCSEs - GCSE results for 2020 and 2021 were school based assessments due to the covid pandemic and this makes direct comparisons to exam assessed grades difficult. Although below national and regional comparators, there is a 1% increase from 2019 when pupils last sat examinations. This year's cohort included an increased number of pupils with EHC plans who attended special schools compared to last year. Changes in placement for some Year 11 pupils resulted in school moves which also impacted on outcomes. Despite the drop in performance in terms of attainment, progress data is comparable to the figures achieved in 2018 and 2019.

1.1.7 16–17-year-old Children in Care who are participating in Learning - Although the performance for this quarter is below the lower target tolerance for this performance indicator by 2%, it does show an 8% improvement on Q3 and a slight improvement on Q4 last year. The Virtual School co-ordinates termly Personal Education Plans for all our 16- and 17-year-old children in care. These bring young people, their social workers, carers and providers together on a termly basis to focus on educational need and ensures that our young people are supported appropriately while participating in learning. As some of our young people in care struggle to access or sustain engagement in learning, access to therapeutic support and/or alternative routes into educational opportunities are explored through the Personal Education Plan and may be supported by Post 16 Pupil Premium funding. Challenges in securing mid-year school places for recently arrived unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people aged 16 has impacted on this quarter's performance.

1.1.8 Care Leavers in Education, Employment or Training - This measure remains below target and has declined slightly. The Leaving Care Service continues to monitor every single young person who is not in Education, Employment or Training (EET). The Service continues to report monthly on the efforts of the service to re-engage individuals back into EET. The Corporate Parenting Manager tracks this performance regularly and monitors those young people who fall into Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) and those that re secure EET. A survey carried out with every Care Leaver who are not in EET highlights that the main barriers to EET are poor mental health (depression and

anxiety) a lack of qualifications and substance misuse issues. This paper has been shared with members to aid with context.

The Leaving Care service is working with the Corporate Parenting Manager to look at the emotional wellness and recovery of young people, alongside the plethora of activity, to support young people accessing EET. As mental health/emotional wellbeing is one of the biggest barriers to our young people accessing EET, a wellbeing worker and Mental Health professional remain in post to offer additional support to those young people with poor mental health and those who are unable access to work.

Individual wellbeing and recovery are central to improving the EET in the long term. The impact of these posts within the service was praised during a recent Ofsted inspection as an effective method of listening to what young people need, addressing their needs and effectively reintroducing young people to EET and overcoming barriers to remaining EET.

It is important to note that data set used to measure this performance indicator is fixed in time and is not rolling. This cohort in this measure (903) captures young people within a rigid DOB range and pulls in information for all the young people, even if they have been stepped forward to the 21+ service and we are unable to affect change due to age. The more flexible live measure of data on the Children's services Analysis Tool (ChaT) shows 51% in EET. To assist members with perspective, the England average is 54% EET, the difference between our performance and that of the England average equates to 8 young people.

1.2 Measures that are ahead of their target:

1.2.1 Number of Children in Care per 10,000 under 18s - This measure has exceeded the target; however, this target has been revised upward in comparison to recent years to take into account the effects of the National Transfer Scheme and the number of children in care per 10,000 remains at a relatively high level compared to recent years. The recent growth in numbers is attributable to the Council's safeguarding responsibilities and is partly attributable to the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children that have arrived as part of the new temporary mandated National Transfer Scheme. The expectation is that Lincolnshire will take a maximum of 103 children which equates to 0.07% of the general child population and therefore there continues to be a likely impact of growth going forward. Despite the recent growth and the potential for future increase there continues to be an emphasis on prevention from children coming into care and exit planning from the care system where it can be achieved. However, even with the increase, the Lincolnshire number of Children in Care (CiC) per 10,000 remains significantly below the most recent published figures both nationally and by our statistical neighbours (70 per 10,000 and 65 per 10,000 respectively as of 31st March 2022).

2. Conclusion

This report summarises the Quarter 4 performance for Children in Care and Young People, and Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are invited to review and raise any

questions on its content and recommend any actions or changes to the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety and Procurement.

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Children in Care - Performance Measures Quarter 4

5. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Simon Hardcastle, Performance Support Officer – Corporate Transformation, Programmes & Performance, who can be contacted by e-mail at simon.hardcastle@lincolnshire.gov.uk.

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