

Agenda Item 9



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

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	22 July 2021
Subject:	Children in Care Performance Measures Quarter 4 2020/21 (January to March 2021)

Summary:

The report and accompanying appendices provide key performance information for Quarter 4 2020/21 which are relevant to the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Actions Required:

The Panel is 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 used by Children's Services. This is available for questions.

There are 16 measures in total that relate to Children in Care that are reported on in Quarter 4. Of these measures 7 are outside of the target set by the services.

These are:

Fostering/adoption of Children in Care aged 10 to <16 years old - This performance has remained under target at year end. The vast majority of children looked after within this age group are placed in foster care settings, but this has been impacted by the pandemic as placement options have been reduced as a result of foster carers shielding and unable to take additional placements. In addition, there has been an increase in the numbers of younger children in residential placements in the past year. These are often children who have experienced a number of foster placement moves, who struggle to adhere to the expectations of living in a family. Residential care has provided a nurturing environment for this group and has enabled them to settle. There has also been a concentrated focus on

reunifying children with their birth families this year and some of this group are awaiting revocation of their care orders which has been delayed by the impact of the pandemic.

Stability of placements of Children in Care: Number of moves - This is a cumulative indicator identifying those children who experience 3 placement moves. The target is challenging and has slipped under target again this year although our performance is generally better than other East Midland authorities where an average of 10% of looked after children experienced 3 placement moves in a year. The year has been challenging for all children, but foster carers have proven to be very resourceful and committed to the children they care for. However, placement availability has been negatively impacted as some foster carers have chosen to concentrate on the children already in their care and declined to take additional placements. With a backdrop of increased numbers of children in care and a depleted pool of foster carers available, effective matching for children has been more difficult.

Percentage of Children in Care with an up-to-date health check - The Covid Pandemic has had less negative impact on this area of the children's health than dental care and the immunisation programme. However, the number of children in care has increased and there is evidence of more young people (16/17 age range) exercising their right to refuse an assessment. There have been a number of young people in this age range becoming looked after and generally they are not committed to accessing their health assessment.

The Children in Care Teams continue to encourage and promote health assessments with their young people but have to accept their right to refuse.

More recently there has been an increased delay in Initial Health Assessments due to the nurses no longer being able to undertake these – these have reverted to the GP's who are in very short supply and only limited appointments have been offered.

Where there appears to be a particularly long wait for an appointment the nurses are telephoning the carers to undertake a quick health check (this does not replace the health assessment) to ensure that there are no significant areas of concern/worry that need to be addressed urgently.

Percentage of Children in Care with an up-to-date dental check - The reduction in the number of Children in Care with an up-to-date dental check has been significantly impacted by the Covid Pandemic. During periods of lockdown, National Health Dentists were only dealing with emergencies and outside of lockdown many have continued to restrict the number of patients they will see in any one day due to the increased levels of hygiene/protection that needs to be in place. Many were and are continuing to refuse new registrations.

Prior to Covid, we were seeing increased difficulties in children being able to register with a National Health Service Dentist. Many of these appear to have made the decision to only provide private dentistry thereby impacting on the number of NHS practices available.

Percentage of Children in Care with an up-to-date routine immunisation - The reduction in the number of routine immunisations has also been significantly impacted by the Covid Pandemic.

The majority of overdue immunisations are the teenage boosters which are undertaken in school. These were clearly delayed due to schools being closed for extended periods of time.

The health immunisation team have now resumed their programme of immunisations. However, it is projected that it will take approximately 18 months for the programme to be fully back on schedule. The team have to catch up on those that have been missed/delayed during the pandemic and also the increase in their workload due to all males now being offered the HPV and all school population being offered the flu immunisation.

Care Leavers in Education, Employment or Training (EET) - The Leaving Care Service continues to monitor every single young person who is not in EET. The Service continues to report on a monthly basis the efforts of the service to re-engage individuals back into EET and the Corporate Parenting Manager tracks this performance. Covid-19 and the legacy of it continues to have an impact on the services sector and this does directly affect care leavers. Most young people start their working lives with jobs in bars, restaurants, shops and front-line customer services where the largest job losses are being witnessed and it continues to impact on the ability of these employers to open. It is anticipated that Covid-19 will continue to impact on EET, and the percentage remains in the low to mid 50% range.

Since the last performance funding has been secured from the Covid recovery fund in order to recruit 2 specialist Leaving Care posts for a period of 1 year. The purpose of these 2 posts is to build capacity within the service and to focus specifically on EET. The focus will be on finding employment opportunities, work experience and unpicking and making best use of a range of initiatives and funding that will become available from central government to aid with the recovery from the pandemic.

Children in Care Living Within A Family Environment – This has ended the year ahead of target. It confirms that, for the vast majority of children in care, a family placement is the most effective means of offering care. Of these, 36 children at the end of the year were living with parents and were either subject to an order as part of care proceedings or reunified home.

2. Conclusion

This report summarises the Quarter 4 performance for Children in Care and Young People, and the Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to raise any questions on the content of the report.

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 Measures

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, who can be contacted at simon.hardcastle@lincolnshire.gov.uk.