



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

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	9th September 2021
Subject:	Quarter 1 Performance Report for Children in Care

Summary:

The accompanying appendices to this report provide key performance information for Quarter 1 2021/22 that is relevant to the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Recommendation(s):

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 15 measures in total that relate to Children in Care that are reported on in Quarter 1. Of these measures 10 are outside of the target set by the services.

These are:

Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family- Despite the on-going Covid-19 pandemic, Lincolnshire continues to perform well in this measure and the numbers are significantly better than figures from recent history for comparator areas (both Statistical Neighbours and Nationally). Our high performance in this area is achieved through being aware of the journey of each child and ensuring that the adoption team is able to engage in twin tracking at the earliest opportunity within service and via the regional adoption

approach. There has been some delay in getting cases through the courts during Covid, and this may continue to have some impact on the statistics and data for

this year despite the gradual easing. Several of the children are in protracted proceedings.

Average time between the Local Authority receiving court authority to place a child and the Local Authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family- The performance this quarter continues to exceed target, despite the Covid 19 pandemic, and is better than National and Statistical Neighbour comparator figures. Recruiting the right families for children reduces the needs to identify independent adoptive placements which in turn minimises potential delays and ensures we continue to do well in respect of this indicator. The Covid-19 pandemic continues to affect this PI. Until we were able to develop our systems and use Covid risk assessments fewer children were placed in quarter 1 last year. These systems are now effective, and we were able to place a higher number of children in quarter 4, some of whom had been difficult to place.

Fostering/adoption of Children in Care aged 10 to <16 years old- This performance remains under target. The vast majority of children in care 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 being offline to take new placements during the Covid 19 restrictions and the gradual easing. However, 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 environment. 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 or granting of private law orders.

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 slipped under target last year although our performance is generally better than other East Midland authorities where an average of 10% of children in care experienced 3 placement moves in a year. At this stage performance remains good, but this is a cumulative indicator and may change at year end. 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 have declined to take additional placements.

Stability of placements of Children in Care: length of placement- Performance remains just below target. For all placements, the service continues to ensure that foster carers are well supported and that potential problems are identified early.

This has been reinforced by the success of the caring2learn project which has encouraged foster carers to share and find solutions to problems and developed a whole range of tailored training. Nevertheless, we have continued to see that some stable placements disrupt unexpectedly and this can have a significant impact upon this indicator. We have also seen an increase in the number of children with care plans for long-term fostering and this will present challenges in achieving placement stability for some children due to the local and national shortage of foster carers who want to care on a long-term basis.

Percentage of Children in Care with an up-to-date dental check- Whilst at 59.2% this measure is still below the target of 95%, it has improved markedly (by almost 10%) from 49.5% in the previous quarter of Q4 2020/21. However, the number of Children in Care with an up-to-date dental check continues to be significantly impacted by the Covid Pandemic. 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.

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 and the availability of dentists across the county continues to impact on our ability to ensure that all children in care have regular dental checks.

Percentage of Children in Care with an up-to-date routine immunisation- The number of routine immunisations being completed continues to be impacted by the Covid Pandemic, with the measure staying broadly static at 78.6% in Q1 2021/22 compared to 80% in Q4 2020/21. The majority of overdue immunisations continue to be 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 Suitable Accommodation- The good performance in relation to accommodation is down to good working relationships with District Councils and their willingness to view care leavers as a priority group. The continued flexibility and resilience of our housing provider, Nacro, during the pandemic ensured safe accommodation is on offer should also be noted. The above combined with persistent and creative work of leaving care staff has ensured that nearly every care leaver is suitably accommodated. A further 2 young people have gone to custody, and this is deemed as unsuitable accommodation, this will impact on our figures, but LCC is unable to change a care leaver being in custody.

Care Leavers in Education, Employment or Training (EET)- Whilst this measure remains below target, performance is on an upward trajectory and at 53% there has been a notable improvement from the previous quarter's performance of 49.8%. 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.

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- Performance remains above target and has improved slightly on last quarter (78.5% in Q1 2021/22 compared to 77.8% in Q4 2020/21). It confirms that, for the vast majority of children in care, a family placement is the most effective means of offering care.

3. Conclusion

This report summarises the Quarter 1 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.

4. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

5. Appendices

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

6. 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, who can be contacted via e-mail at simon.hardcastle@lincolnshire.gov.uk.

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