

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

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	11 November 2021
Subject:	Quarter 2 Performance Report for Children in Care

Summary:

The accompanying appendices to this report provide key performance information for Quarter 2 2021/22 that is 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 2. Of these measures 8 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 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 Covid 19 pandemic as placement options have been reduced as a result of foster carers initially being offline or isolating. More recently with the easing the capacity of fostering beds available is still slowly recovering. 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.

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.

Percentage of Children in Care with an up-to-date dental check - This measure has improved from 59.2% in the previous quarter to 65.1%, it is still below the target of 95%. 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. This, coupled with the impact of the COVID19 Pandemic has impacted significantly on the number of Children in Care with an up-to-date dental check.

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. Efforts continue to be made to ensure that all children in care are registered with a dentist and dentists are working to ensure that dental checks are being completed, although it is likely to take some time to deal with the backlog of appointments.

Percentage of Children in Care with an up-to-date routine immunisations - The number of routine immunisations being completed continues to be impacted by the Covid Pandemic, with the measure staying broadly static at 79.3% in Q2 2021/22 compared to 78.6% in Q1. 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 COVID19 and flu immunisations.

16–17-year-old Children in Care who are participating in Learning - The performance for this quarter is below the lower tolerance for this performance indicator by 6.4%. This represents approximately 7 young people. The Virtual school team have identified all of those 16–17-year-olds not participating in learning and have been successful in finding appropriate placements for the majority of students in the period September October

2021. This has brought performance within the tolerance range for this indicator as of October 2021.

Care Leavers in Suitable Accommodation- The good performance in relation to accommodation continues to be 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 and after the pandemic continues to ensure 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. 1 young person left custody, and this is deemed as now being in suitable accommodation as he moved into supported housing driving up performance.

Care Leavers in Education, Employment or Training- This measure remains below target but is slowly improving despite fluctuations and is up from 49.8% which is the lowest it has been. 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. A survey has been carried out with every Care Leaver who is not in EET and the main barriers are poor mental health (depression and anxiety) and substance misuse issues. The new Aspirations worker is focusing on supporting young people back into employment and assisting young people to access the Covid-19 recover initiatives, but issues such as poor mental health and substance use continue to be a barrier. 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. It is anticipated that legacy Covid-19 will continue to impact on emotional wellbeing and EET.

Children in Care Living Within a Family Environment- Performance remains above target and has improved slightly on last quarter (79.65% in Q2 2021/22 compared to 78.5% in Q1 2020/21). It confirms that, for the vast majority of children in care, a family placement is deemed the most suitable means of offering care and maintaining children within their family networks.

2. Conclusions

This report summarises the Quarter 2 performance for Children in Care. The Corporate Parenting Panel is invited to review the Report, comment on the Report's 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 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, Performance Support Officer, who can be contacted at simon.hardcastle@lincolnshire.gov.uk.