



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

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	10 March 2022
Subject:	Children in Care - Quarter 3 Performance Report

Summary:

This report and accompanying appendices, provide key performance information for Quarter 3, 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 3. Of these measures seven are below target and one is ahead of the target set by the services.

The seven below target 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 Covid19 19 pandemic as placement options have reduced as a result of foster carers initially isolating, being offline and some very recently returning to fostering.

Following the government relaxation and gradual easing the capacity of fostering beds available is still slowly recovering but is still significantly reduced to what it was prior to Covid19. 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 placements moves who struggle to adjust 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 yet our transformational work which is ongoing supports our practice in identifying local resources for those children who are deemed to have sufficiently progressed and are assessed as suitable for foster care or alternative in house provision. There has also been a concentrated focus on reunifying children with their birth families this year whilst we await revocation of Care Orders or granting of private law orders e.g., Special Guardianship Orders within the Court.

Number of Children in Care per 10,000 under 18s - This measure has not achieved the target of 46 per 10,000, moving slightly above the upper target tolerance of 48 per 10,000. The number of Children in Care starters over Quarter 3 2021/22 has increased by around 39% compared to Quarter 2, whilst the number of care leavers has remained reasonably static. The increase in new entrants to care has pushed the Children in Care per 10,000 figure further up over the past quarter. The growth in numbers is partly attributable to the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children that have arrived as part of the new temporary mandated scheme for all Local Authorities in relation to the 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 growth this quarter and the potential for future increase there continues to be an emphasis on prevention from children going into care and exit planning from the care system where it can be achieved. However, despite the increase, the Lincolnshire number of Children in Care per 10,000 remains significantly below the most recent published figures both nationally and by our statistical neighbours (67 per 10,000 and 63.4 per 10,000 respectively as of 31st March 2021).

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.

This has been reinforced by 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, we have continued to see that some stable placements disrupt unexpectedly, and this can have a significant impact upon this indicator. The impact of reduced carer resources during the pandemic has also played its part and cannot be underestimated. The service has also seen an increase in the number of much younger 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 or permanent basis.

Percentage of Children in Care with an up-to-date dental check - This measure continues to improve and is now sitting at 71.5% which is an increase from 65.1% in the last quarter, however this measure remains below the target of 95%. Prior to Covid19, 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.

Access to NHS dentistry is a national issue 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 more time to deal with the backlog of appointments.

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 Covid19 Pandemic, with the measure staying broadly static at 76.2% in to 79.3% in the last quarter. 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 projected that it will take approximately 18 months for the programme to be fully back on schedule. However, further pressures have been added to their workload due to the need to catch up on those that have been missed/delayed during the pandemic and 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 target tolerance for this performance indicator by 3.2%. This represents approximately 4 young people. The Virtual School has been selected to participate in the DfE Post 16 pilot which runs from Sept21 – Mar 22. The pilot has enabled the Virtual School, working in partnership with post 16 providers, Leaving Care and Social Care colleagues, to allocate additional funding through the PEP process to promote young people's access to and engagement in further education. This will assist the Virtual School to find placements for those Young People not participating in learning and provide individual learners with advice and support through the Personal Education Plan regardless of where placed.

Care Leavers in Education, Employment or Training- This measure remains below target but is slowly improving despite fluctuations and is up from 49.8% to 52%. 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 are not in EET, and the main barriers reported back are poor mental health (depression and anxiety) lack of qualifications and substance misuse issues. The new Aspirations worker is focusing on supporting young people back into employment and assisting young people to access the Covid19recover 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, so much so a wellbeing worker is being recruited. A further piece of work is being undertaken to fully understand the lived experiences of these young people in EET and fully appreciate why they are in EET and develop individual plans. It is anticipated that legacy Covid19 will continue to impact on emotional wellbeing and EET.

The one performance indicator ahead of target is:

Children in Care Living Within a Family Environment- Performance continues to remain above target and has improved slightly on last quarter (80% in Q3 2021/22 compared to 79.65% in Q2 2021/22). It confirms that, for many children in care, a family placement is deemed the most suitable means of offering care and maintaining children within their family networks. The Council continue to explore enabling children and young people to remain within their family or extended network if they cannot, for whatever reason, live with their parents.

2. Conclusion

This report summarises the Quarter 3 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

Non-Applicable

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 on simon.hardcastle@lincolnshire.gov.uk.