



DARLINGTON
Borough Council

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Agenda

9.30 am

Monday, 25 October 2021

Council Chamber, Town Hall, Darlington

Members of the Public are welcome to attend this Meeting.

1. Introductions/ Attendance at Meeting
2. Declarations of Interest
3. To approve the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 23 August 2021 (Pages 3 - 8)
4. Adoption Tees Valley Annual Report 2020-21 –
Report of the Service Manager Adoption Tees Valley
(Pages 9 - 48)
5. Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report –
Report of the Group Director of People
(Pages 49 - 84)
6. Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report 2020-21 –
Report of the Group Director of People
(Pages 85 - 104)
7. Learning and Skills Annual Report 2020/21 –
Report of the Group Director of People
(Pages 105 - 110)

8. Performance Indicators Quarter 1 2021/22 –
Report of the Group Director of People
(Pages 111 - 138)
9. Work Programme –
Report of the Group Director of Operations
(Pages 139 - 156)
10. SUPPLEMENTARY ITEM(S) (if any) which in the opinion of the Chair of this Committee are
of an urgent nature and can be discussed at this meeting
11. Questions



Luke Swinhoe
Assistant Director Law and Governance

Friday, 15 October 2021

Town Hall
Darlington.

Membership

Councillors Ali, Mrs Culley, Bell, Crudass, C L B Hughes, Lister, Lucas, Renton, Snedker, Sowerby and Willis

Statutory Co-optees

Malcolm Frank and Carly Spence

Non Statutory Co-optees

Maura Regan, Tim Fisher, Nick Lindsay, Janet Woodcock and John Armitage

If you need this information in a different language or format or you have any other queries on this agenda please contact Allison Hill, Democratic Officer, Operations Group, during normal office hours 8.30 a.m. to 4.45 p.m. Mondays to Thursdays and 8.30 a.m. to 4.15 p.m. Fridays email: allison.hill@darlington.gov.uk or telephone 01325 405997

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 23 August 2021

PRESENT – Councillors Crudass (Chair), Mrs Culley, Snedker, Sowerby and Willis

STATUTORY CO-OPTees – None

NON-STATUTORY CO-OPTees – None

APOLOGIES – Councillors Ali, C L B Hughes, Lister and Renton, Carly Spence, Tim Fisher, Nick Lindsay and John Armitage

ABSENT – Councillors Bell and Lucas; Malcolm Frank, Maura Regan and Janet Woodcock

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Jane Kochanowski (Assistant Director of Children's Services), Allison Hill (Democratic Officer) and Calvin Kipling (Virtual Head Teacher)

CYP8 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at this meeting.

CYP9 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 21 JUNE 2021

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 21 June 2021.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 21 June 2021 be approved as a correct record.

CYP10 DESIGNATED OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

The Group Director of People submitted a report (previously circulated) to present the Annual report and update Members on the progress and performance of the Designated Officer, April 2020 to March 2021 and to highlight the required actions for April 2021 to March 2022.

The submitted report outlined the function of the Designated Officer in line with national guidance and the requirement of all organisations working with children in Darlington to have policies and procedures in place on what their organisation should do when an allegation is made against an employee/volunteer who has contact with children.

It was reported that these policies and procedures were in line with Darlington Safeguarding Partnership multi-agency procedures.

RESOLVED – (a) That the Annual Report and the work undertaken during 2021/22 and the priorities of the Designated Officer service for 2021/22 be agreed and noted.

(b) That all agencies consider how to promote the role of the Designated Officer within their own organisation.

CYP11 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PUBLIC HEALTH OVERVIEW

The Director of Public Health submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide an update of the Children and Young People Public Health interventions and programs namely the Healthy Lifestyles Survey 2021, the Childhood Healthy Weight Plan, mental health in schools projects and the 0-19 Service.

It was reported that the Healthy Lifestyles Survey was delivered to 8500 pupils across 33 schools completing the survey annually; between April and June 2020, the Public Health team delivered virtual focus groups and online surveys with pupils from year 5 to year 10, parents and carers and school staff; and responses were received from 167 pupils, 32 parents and carers and 41 school representatives.

The Childhood Healthy Weight Plan aims to increase a healthy weight in children and young people and the objectives are focused to increase fibre and fruit and vegetable uptake, reduce sugar by increasing healthy food and drink swaps and aim to achieve 60 minutes of physical activity for every child and young person in the borough; and partnership work has resulted in the coproduction of a looked after young people and families toolkit, a children's home food policy and a nutrition education staff training programme.

With regard to mental health in schools it was reported that the Children and Young Peoples (CYP) Mental Health Network continued to meet and provide an overview of CYP Mental Health on a fortnightly basis and the group had highlighted that children and young people are still being affected by COVID-19 in terms of mental health; the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and other services are noticing increased referrals although some of this may be due to the backlog when services could only be provided face to face for some patients with more complex needs; and to support staff in schools a Suicide Prevention Grant programme for training in relation to suicide prevention and self-harm was launched in June and the two applications submitted by Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College and St. Aidan's Academy were successful in receiving £2000 each.

It was also reported that the 0-19 Service had introduced an enhanced digital offer to children and families during the Covid-19 pandemic and as restrictions were lifted the Service introduced more face to face appointments, while continuing to build on the success of the virtual offer.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

CYP12 SELF ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

The Group Director of People submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide Members with the Annual Self- Assessment for Children's Services to enable constructive 'critical friend' challenge to take place and drive improvement in public services.

It was reported that Children's Services update each quarter an assessment of social work

practice, inclusive of Early Help, based on changes in performance data. To bring the information into a stand-a-lone easy read document an annual self-assessment overview document is completed.

It was highlighted that the aim of the self-evaluation was to answer three questions: What do we know about the quality and impact of social work practice in our local authority; How do we know it; and What are our plans for the next 12 months to maintain or improve practice. The self-assessment is used as part of Ofsted's ILACS Annual Engagement Meeting and plays an important role in their understanding of local authorities and how they work.

RESOLVED – That the report is noted.

CYP13 TRAUMA AND HORIZON SCANNING

The Group Director of People submitted a report (previously circulated) at the request of Members to provide an overview of 'Trauma Informed Practice' and how Children's Services are starting to embed and respond to Trauma and to outline the work towards becoming a Trauma Informed Service.

It was reported that Trauma is conceptualised in a broad spectrum, from the impact of poverty to the significant events that can be thought of in terms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (having a clear clinical start point). Trauma for children, young people and families can also occur via interaction with professionals and organisations, particularly when the approach does not follow a relational and strength-based methodology.

The submitted report highlighted that Trauma Informed Practice is relational and strengths-based, grounded in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma. It was also reported that in Children's Services the overarching practice methodology was based on Strengthening Families and Relational Practice therefore Trauma Informed Practice would fit seamlessly into the embedded approach to working with families.

The Virtual Head advised Members that from September the role of the Virtual School was expanding and will embed the Trauma Informed approach with the authorities Looked After Children and discussion ensued on the training with the majority of schools in Darlington attending and each school has an Designated Teacher who attends networking meetings. Training provided for Governing Bodies had also been well attended.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

CYP14 CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE - OFF FRAMEWORK PLACEMENTS

The Group Director of People submitted a report (previously circulated) at the request of the Members to provide an overview of children in care who are placed in provision that is 'off – framework'.

The submitted report outlined several rationales to why off-framework provision is commissioned and outlined annual costing and comparison with placements made 'on-framework'; outlined the average off framework residential placement cost for Darlington in 2020/21 was £3,791 per week compared with £3,069 per week on Framework; advised that

the number of off framework residential placements is 66 per cent based on all residential placements made in 2020/21 but was reflective of regional and national trends; and highlighted that within Independent Fostering, Darlington had a comparatively low number of off framework placements comprising 25 per cent of all placements at any one time.

General discussion ensued on the cost of off framework placements and the number of complex factors that whereby placement demands significantly outstrip placement availability and it was highlighted that placements were not necessarily more costly because they were off framework. The Assistant Director of Children's Services emphasised that off framework placements can be the most suitable for some young people and can include education on site and work was constantly ongoing to review placements and placement costs and to analyse the cohort of Looked after Children.

Members questioned if there was any help the authority could offer to small local providers who find the bureaucracy associated with large framework contracts and procurement prohibitive and the Assistant Director of Children's Services assured Members that Children's Services were working with providers and commissioners to provide encouragement and assistance.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

CYP15 WORK PROGRAMME

The Group Director of Operations submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to this Scrutiny Committee's work programme and to consider any additional areas which Members would like to suggest should be included in the previously approved work programme

The submitted report advised Members that Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee had requested that Youth Unemployment be included in this Scrutiny's work programme and had proposed a joint piece of work to be undertaken with Children and Young People Scrutiny. Members discussed the request to undertake a joint piece of work to examine the impact of youth unemployment on the economy, apprenticeship schemes and the numbers claiming benefits and agreed to lead on this work.

It was noted that an item raised at the last meeting to be included in the work programme to examine and understand what services and funding was provided by the Tees Valley will no longer be added to this Scrutiny work programme as Children's Services did not receive any direct money from the Tees Valley Combined Authority and therefore may be an area for Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee to examine as part of their work programme.

RESOLVED – (a) That the work programme be noted.

(b) That a joint review on Youth Unemployment be undertaken with Economy and Resources Scrutiny.

CYP16 ASSISTANT DIRECTOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The Chair, on behalf of the Members of this Scrutiny Committee, offered thanks to Jane

Kochanowski for her assistance to this Committee and wished her well for the future as she takes her retirement from the authority.

RESOLVED – That the thanks of this Scrutiny Committee be extended to Jane Kochanowski, the Assistant Director of Children’s Services upon her retirement.

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Adoption Tees Valley Annual Report 2020-2021



Transform a child's life...

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Glossary

ADM- agency decision maker

PO- Placement order

RAA- Regional Adoption Agency

VAA- Voluntary Adoption Agency

1. Introduction

This is the 3rd full annual report of Adoption Tees Valley, which is the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA), for the 5 Local Authority Councils of Darlington; Hartlepool; Middlesbrough; Redcar and Cleveland; and Stockton.

This Annual Report covers the period of 1.4.20 - 31.3.2021.

This period has been impacted by the national Covid 19 pandemic, and the year reported on has been characterised by adoption activity which has been conducted within the amended regulations and restrictions that have been imposed because of the public health emergency.

The pandemic has brought both challenge and opportunity to work differently across Children's Services, and within the arena of adoption. To continue adoption activity and finding permanent new families for children requiring adoption, it has been essential to work creatively, and collaboratively, to deliver the best possible services to children and adoptive parents throughout. The service has trialled new ways of working and has implemented practices which have been underpinned by nationally developing adoption practice, and research.

This report will show that 82 children have been placed for adoption within this year, and a further 17 have been placed for early permanence, not yet "placed for adoption" which is overall placement activity broadly consistent with the previous year. This level of adoption activity demonstrates that across the 5 Children's Services Teams, and within Adoption Tees Valley, work has been continued, challenges discussed, and solutions found, and children with an adoption plan have continued to achieve permanence, through safe, and well supported social work practice. A point of celebration is that 20 % of children placed have been over 5 years of age, and 56% have been in the harder to place categories, which includes children aged 5 +, siblings and children of ethnic minority backgrounds.

Referral numbers of children to ATV have continued to rise, with a 19% increase on the previous year. This is indicative of continuing high numbers of children in our care across the Tees Valley, which is in contrast to national trends across England.

Adoption Orders granted have been at their highest numbers for 6 years in the region, at 89, again going against national trends in adoption activity.

The data for this period shows that there is a continued demand for permanence via adoption for children who are, sadly, unable to be cared for safely by birth parents, or within their birth family, or kinship network.

The timeliness data shows that ATV has brought a year on year steady improvement to overall average timescales, for children from starting their care journey to moving in with adopters. This is a positive indicator as we know that there are a number of children, now adopted, who have had significant periods of time before becoming adopted, and who are now reflected in overall timeliness data.

The specific data on Placement Order to Match timescales has shown an increase, which is reflective of this same group of children. The service is working with Local Authorities to understand the story for children with lengthy care episodes prior to adoption. It is notable that across England this timeliness figure (A2) has also increased this year.

ATV is also reviewing and analysing critically the practice which supports timely matching of children once PO is granted. It's crucial that Local Authorities and ATV work closely and collectively together where a child may have a plan for adoption, and that information is shared in a timely way, to enable early family finding to take place. There are good processes in place for early notification of children, who may have a plan for adoption, but we know timely sharing of all information has been a barrier in some cases. The service has asked its Legal Advisor to develop an Information Sharing Protocol for early permanence planning for children, and this has been a piece of work which has been ratified through the Local Family Justice Board, and through consultation with multi agency partners. It is intended that this protocol will support early information sharing for the benefit of finding families for children at the earliest opportunity where adoption is their plan.

The work, and outcomes are reflective of good, well planned and collaborative work through multiple stakeholders, including the Courts. Professionals have communicated well, and have planned together, using new ways of working to achieve best outcomes for children and their families, taking account of the challenges of the pandemic, on health and movement within and between communities.

Although the pandemic has brought some significant challenges, the service has developed and piloted some new ways of working, which are outlined in the report.

- Early permanence has been embedded in a more systemic way, with a clear pathway for adopters wishing to offer this placement type.
- The service has worked with the University of East Anglia research "Moving on to Adoption" to trial a model of Introductions and Placement planning, which supports moving children in with adopters at a pace they need.
- The service has developed the "Assessment to Support Pathway", enhancing the continuity of preparation for adoption, and adoption

support, using the underpinning model of Secure Base, and PACE parenting.

- A new Friends and Family training module is now offered to all adopters and their support networks.

2. Covid Regulation Flexibilities

The Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations (2020) was passed through parliament on the 23.4.20 and came into force on the 27.4.20. These permitted adoption services a range of flexibilities which would enable adoption activity to progress, through the pandemic. The amended regulations were again amended in September 2020, and March 2021, changing what flexibilities were permitted.

ATV has used flexibilities as follows:

- i. A panel has always been convened for usual panel business. No adopter has been approved, and no match has proceeded to a decision, without being considered at the adoption panel. The flexibility to stand down panel has not been used.
- ii. The Agency produced amended procedures to allow for the possibility that the panel may not achieve quoracy of 5, in unforeseen circumstances. On 4 occasions the agency has operated with 4 panel members, and on all other occasions, there have been at least 5 panel members. The panel is independently chaired, and there is always at least 2 further independent panel members. This flexibility has not been permitted since September 2020 and has not been used since that time.
- iii. No relinquished child has been referred or considered within this period.
- iv. The agency has progressed adopters to stage 2 of the assessment process, without having yet obtained health information, and/or DBS information. This has been necessary, as GP's have not been able to prioritise adoption medicals of prospective adopters. Since September adopters have only been progressed to stage 2 without Medical Reports having yet been received.
- v. No adopter who is required to have a medical assessment has been approved without one having taken place and considered by one of the Agency Medical Advisors.

A significant challenge for the Agency has been the situation with respect of provision of Medical Reports by GP's, due to challenges of covid, and pressure on GP practices.

The service has worked at a local GP practice, and strategic partnership level to attempt to address the timeliness of adopter medicals. The service valued the input of Safeguarding GP's particularly for Hartlepool/Stockton and for Darlington, who have liaised with local GP practices to promote the importance of adopter medicals in the safeguarding of children. However, some GP practices continue to present lengthy delays in providing adopter medicals, which has impacted on overall assessment timescales, and in some cases led to some dissatisfaction for prospective adopters.

3. Governance

The RAA is governed by a Board, which comprises the 5 Directors for Children's Services of the 5 Local Authorities within the partnership. There are 2 non-Executive Directors, who were recruited to the Board in 2020, and who are adoptive parents who have adopted through ATV.

The Service Manager for ATV attends all Board meetings and presents information to enable oversight of the performance of the RAA, strategic direction and operational practice. The Board has a role in being assured of the quality of adoption work in Adoption Tees Valley, and receives information on quality, outcomes, and proposed improvements.

Board meetings are held quarterly.

The Chair of the Board is Sue Butcher, DCS at Middlesbrough Children's Services, and it is now agreed Chair tenure will be for 2 years.

In each of the 5 LA's there is an Adoption Lead Officer who is responsible for ensuring that the RAA is delivering effective and high quality adoption services for the children in its area. The Adoption Lead Officer is registered with Ofsted,

Adoption Leads meet with the Service Manager and Team Managers of ATV monthly.

The Lead Elected Members of the Council with responsibility for Children's Services, for each Local Authority area meet bi-annually with the Board and Service Manager, to oversee the work of ATV, and be kept informed of key developments.

4. National Context of Adoption

The government has rolled out the programme of regionalisation of adoption over the past 4 years, and almost all Local Authorities in England are now in a RAA.

Regionalisation has enabled a viable working group of RAA leaders to meet and work together, to develop practice, and address challenges and opportunities affecting the adoption of children across England.

The core objectives are to enable children to be placed with adoptive families more quickly, reducing waiting time to be adopted; and to improve the quality of adoption support for children and families.

The DfE have supported the regionalisation programme, and there is now central government funding to progress strategic leadership, and programme workstreams for adoption across the national RAA Leaders Group.

The ATV Service Manager participates in the national RAA leaders' forum, and through this, ATV is developing adoption practice within a national context, influenced by key stakeholders.

The Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board (ASGLB) seeks to address matters impacting on permanence for children. Locally, the regional ASGLB is a strategic and practice forum for North East and Cumbrian Local Authorities, and Voluntary Adoption Agencies, and is chaired by Sally Robinson, DCS at Hartlepool BC who is also a member of ATV Board.

Within this year, the Regional ASGLB convened a conference, delivered virtually, with researchers from The University of East Anglia presenting the findings of the Moving on To Adoption Model. ATV has begun to adopt this best practice model in some targeted cases, planning for an introductions programme for the child which is centred around good relationship building between foster carers and adopters, and taken at the child's pace.

ATV works as part of the regional and national strategic and operational forums, to be influenced by, and to influence best practice for adopted children, and those who have a plan for permanence via adoption.

Through regional collaborative work, there has been a drive to achieve better opportunities for placing children within the region, where possible through the development of a regional protocol, where VAA's and RAA's have agreed to maximise and protect the opportunities for children to be placed with locally approved adoptive parents, where possible.

Work is underway through the RASGLB partnerships to develop a regional market position statement, to underpin sufficiency analysis and planning for the children requiring adoption. The aim is to use regional adopters for regional children, and to plan for future needs, and skills to take the children who require adoption.

5. Key Strategic Development

Early Permanence

ATV has set out to offer more opportunity for children to be cared for by their likely permanent family, at an earlier stage in their lives. This is achieved through fostering for adoption, where the child's plan is well developed before the Placement Order is granted, enabling a transparent, well planned placement, which reduces moves for children, and enables vital bonding and attachment with those likely to become parents to the child, at an earlier stage.

This has been mobilised through the Early Permanence Strategy, which has been collaborative, and has involved key stakeholders with a role in care planning and the placement of children for adoption.

This report will show the work and progress in developing early permanence, and key challenges learned through the process.

In total 17 children have been placed on a fostering for adoption basis, prior to the Court authorisation to place for adoption.

6. Three Year Review of Adoption Tees Valley

The Board have directed a review of ATV, in line with original plans in the Business case presented to Councils prior to implementation.

The review will measure performance against the 4 key objectives set out in the original full business case, presented to the 5 Local Authority Councils for agreement, prior to the establishment of the RAA.

These were:

- To deliver better outcomes for children and families
- To deliver improved value for money
- To establish strong and sustainable services
- To successfully implement the RAA

The review is being supported by a member of the Stockton BC Transformation Team and is using a mixed methodology of data and financial review; surveys; focus groups; and peer to peer learning project between ATV and a similar sized RAA. An independent facilitator, experienced in RAA development, has been appointed for a Focus Group with the Board of ATV.

The review is underway and will conclude with findings in September 2021.

7. Performance Benchmarking Information

This section will compare ATV overall performance to England average, where comparable data is published and exists.

Individual LA data for the 5 Local Authority partners will be provided in later sections

Children

	ATV 2019-20	ATV 2020-21	Direction	All England	Direction
Adoption Orders	64	89	↑ Inc 39%	2,863	↓ Dec 16%
Placements	91	82	↓ Dec 10%	3,064	↓ Dec 7.5%
PO's	82	76	↓ Dec 7%	2,907	↓ Dec 12.5%
ADM BID's	96	99	↑ Inc 3%	3,731	↓ Dec 9.5%
Early Permanence	10	17	↑ Inc 70%	449	↓ Dec 7%
A10 (entering care to moving in with adopters) - days	414	405	↓ Dec 2%	418	↑ Inc 11% from 375 2019/20 Adoption Scorecard
A2	214	238	↑ Inc 11%	206	↑ Inc 11% from 185 2019/20 Adoption Scorecard
Rate of leaving care by AO	10%	12%	↑ Inc 2%	11% (2019/20)	↓ Dec 1% from 12% 2018/19

From ATV Q4 Scorecard, taken from ASGLB returns, England Data from ASGLB Q4 2020-21

X indicates data not available, or not meaningful in this report

Adopters

	ATV 2019-20	ATV 2020-21	Direction	All England	Direction
Approvals	51	62	↑ Inc 22%	3,164	↑ Inc 6%
Numbers in assessment-end of period	34	40	↑ Inc 18%	X	
Stage 1 starts	60	63	↑ Inc 3%	X	

	ATV 2019-20	ATV 2020-21	Direction	All England	Direction
Stage 2 starts	57	62	↑ Inc 9%	X	
Fastrack	20	12	Dec 40%	X	
Waiting to be matched at end of period	22	36	↑ Inc 64%	X	
Waited more than 3 months to be matched	71%	54%	↓ Dec 17%	X	
Approval to match timescale Days		129		269	
Approval timescale days	202	217		295	
Stage 1 days		93		112	
Stage 2 Days		127		141	

From ATV Q4 Scorecard, taken from ASGLB returns, England Data from ASGLB Q4 2020-21

X indicates data not available, or not meaningful in this report

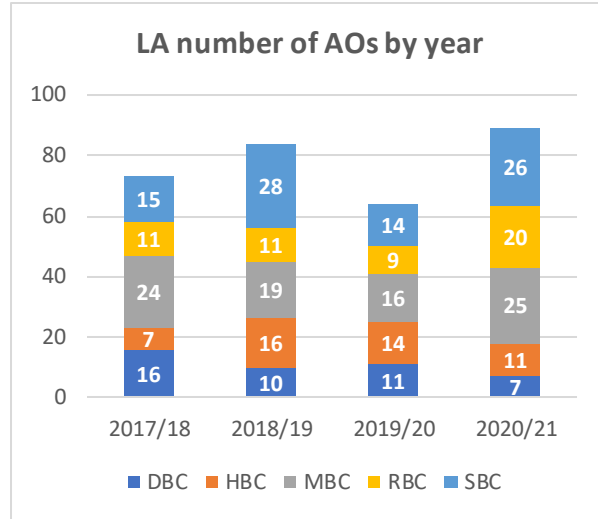
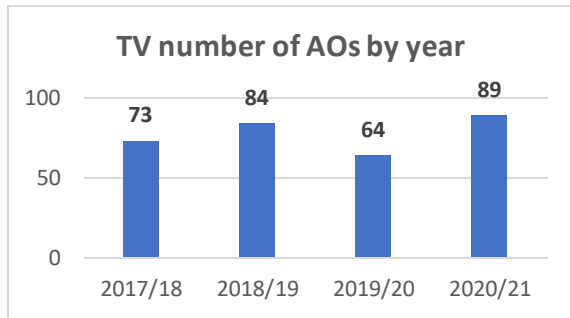
Characteristics of children Adopted 2020-21, and Children Waiting with PO as of 31.3.21

	Age under 5	Age over 5	Female	Male	Ethnic Minority Heritage	Disabled	Part of Sib group	Harder to place
Adopted	71	18	49	40	8	2	37	46
Waiting with PO, 31.3.21	39	9	25	23	7	0	19	20
Waiting over 18 months since	9	6	7	8	4	0	10	10

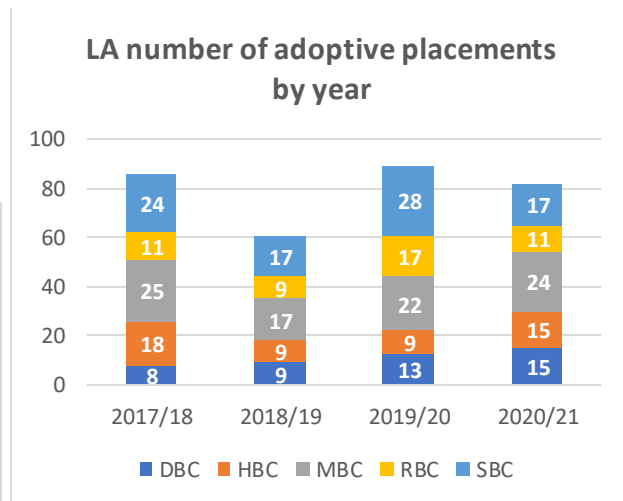
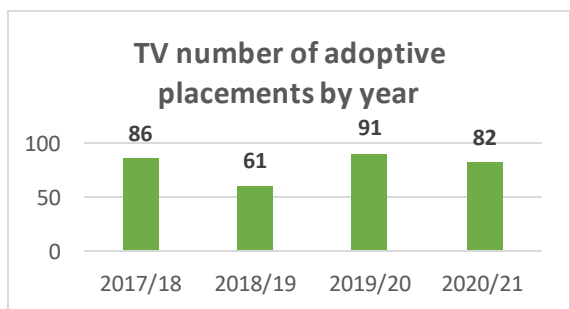
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Individual Local Authority Performance

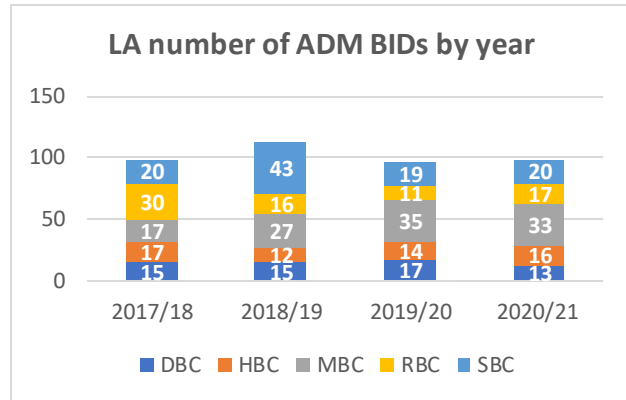
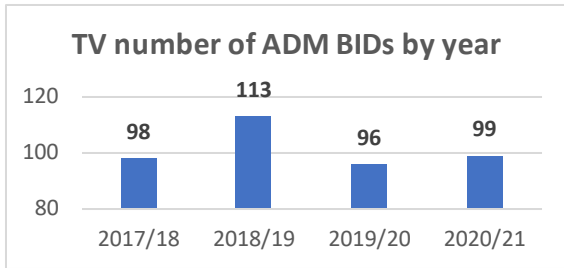
Adoption Orders



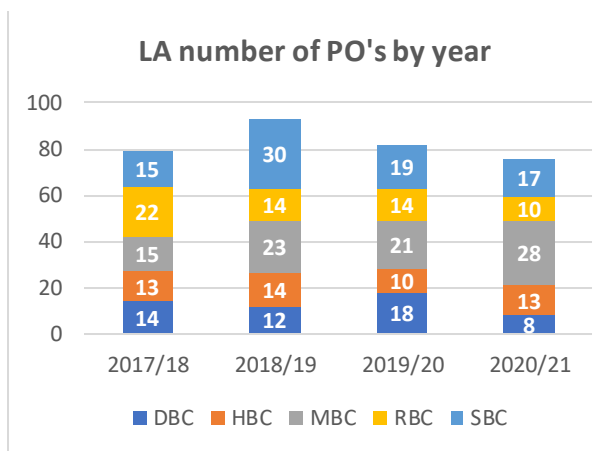
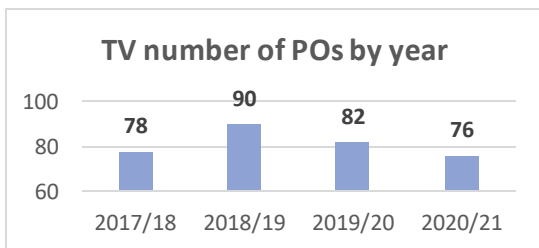
Children Placed for Adoption



Agency Decisions that Adoption is in the Child's Best Interest (ADM BID)



Placement Orders



Analysis of Performance

The numbers of children adopted from care in this year has risen by 39%, with 89 children having been adopted this year. This is the highest level of adoption orders in the last 6 years, and indicates that in Tees Valley, adoption activity does not appear to be following the national trend, of a decline in numbers.

Stockton, Redcar and Cleveland, and Middlesbrough have seen Adoptions from care rise in the last year, with Redcar and Cleveland seeing a 122% increase; Stockton seeing an 85% increase and Middlesbrough seeing a 56% increase.

Darlington and Hartlepool have seen fewer children adopted in this year, than the previous one.

Adoptions from care in this year reflect the high numbers of children placed overall for adoption in the previous year.

This year, the numbers of children placed with adoptive families has dropped by 9% from 91 to 82 children placed for adoption in the year.

Stockton have seen a 39% drop in placements; and Redcar and Cleveland a 35% drop. Middlesbrough have had 9% more children placed; Hartlepool have had 66% increase and Darlington 15% increase.

The service has promoted early permanence (EP), as detailed above. This has impacted on EP cases, with more children having started their adoption placements at an earlier stage, via fostering for adoption. The number of children in EP has risen by 70%, although numbers are small. The numbers have risen from 10 in the previous year to 17 in this year.

To date no children have been returned to parental care following placement in a fostering to adopt placement, however, the Service is now beginning to encounter cases where this is being considered. It should always be remembered that where parents are able to care for their child safely, this is the best plan for that child.

ATV has had significant impact in terms of adoptions of older children from care, with 18 of the 89 children adopted from care this year being over age 5. This is 20% of all children adopted were over the age of 5. This particular outcome is a positive one, indicating that in Tees Valley, we are collectively ambitious that older children can be adopted, and have achieved permanence via adoption for many older children.

The number of children for whom the permanence decision has changed from adoption remains steady at 21. The reasons include: a change of plan due to the child's needs changing; no adopters able to be found in the timescale required; Court not granting PO.

Adoptions of children from ethnic minority backgrounds have increased slightly in this year, from 5 to 8. This represents 9% of all children adopted.

Agency Decisions that adoption is in the child's best interest have risen slightly (3%), with Redcar and Cleveland being the LA which has seen more plans decided.

Placement Orders have declined in this year by 7%, from 82 to 76. This may reflect the national trend is beginning to follow in Tees Valley, with national adoptions reducing, or due to delays in Final hearings. Better analysis will be available of the trend in PO's, as the year 2021-22 progresses.

ATV has increased its approval of adopters by 24%, rising from 51 in the previous year to 62 adopter approvals in this year. This is a significant achievement, especially during the pandemic. This figure could have been greater; however, many assessments have been delayed due to delays in GP practices in undertaking adult health assessments.

ATV has seen a greater number of Stage 1 assessments starts (a rise of 3% to 63) however, noted is a number of stage 1 drop outs due to the adopters not being at the right time in their lives to adopt, or checks identifying it is not suitable to proceed. It is felt that more people considered adoption during covid, but more applicants were not yet ready to adopt, when stage 1 commenced. Stage 2 starts have increased in the year, from 57 to 62, a 9% rise.

The above reflects that in Tees Valley, adoption is continuing to be busy and to thrive, with children being matched and placed at a relatively similar level, and with a continuing interest in adopting from people within the community.

The performance also will help address whether ATV is recruiting the right adopters for the children who require placement.

This year 30 children have been placed with external agency adopters, which is the same number as the previous year, but is a greater percentage of the total (36%). Of these 30 children, 15 were placed within the NE and Cumbria region, with local VAA's, which is a positive in terms of seeking to offer children families where contact plans can more easily be maintained, and where their regional identity, and longer term adoption support needs are planned for closer to the home region.

At the end of the period 36 families were approved, not yet matched. However, of these families many were in the process of matching, and the data shows that the percentage of families who wait more than 3 months following approval, to match has reduced from 71% to 54%. This means that nearly half of all families were matched with children within 3 months of their approval and is a positive indicator that ATV is utilising its own adopter resources. The rise in numbers not yet matched is also indicative of a greater number approved. There are few adopters who are waiting over 12 months to take a child, and ATV adopters are almost always taking Tees Valley children.

ATV is matching adopters more quickly following approval than the England average, by 140 days, with ATV average timescale being 129 days following approval, and the England average being 269 days following approval. This indicates that ATV is recruiting the right adopters for children, and is effective in matching quickly, with much linking activity taking place as adopters are in the later stages of assessment.

More adopters are needed to meet the demand for placements, which is continuing to show an increase, with no reduction in placements.

ATV has been working on an improved Assessment to Support Pathway, as detailed, seeking to offer greater information, support and provide more confidence to those adopters who can consider children in the harder to

place category, which includes older children, siblings, children of ethnic minority heritage, and disabled children, or those with developmental delays.

Within this year, ATV has placed a sibling group of 3 children together, with adopters recruited and approved internally, which is a significant achievement.

8. Marketing and Recruitment

ATV has planned a number of key marketing activities, aimed at promoting the RAA and achieving more people choosing to come to ATV to adopt.

There have been key lines of marketing approach this year, supported by 3 campaigns, focussing on attracting more prospective adopters to ATV.

1. The service has worked with the RAA National Recruitment Campaign, funded through DfE, targeting adopters for children who wait the longest. Nationally these are children from black ethnic minority backgrounds. The campaign has been branded #YouCanAdopt and has its own website. National film and materials were used, and ATV produced its own film, echoing this campaign, with our social worker, Chioma, being the face of ATV during this campaign.
2. ATV analysed our sufficiency needs, assessing the needs of children in this region who wait the longest to be adopted. In this RAA it is siblings, where one or both siblings have additional needs, and one or both children are aged 5+. In August 2020 ATV did a dedicated (anonymised) profile campaign, generating huge social media interest, making ATV one of the biggest RAA facebook accounts in England.

To promote needs, ATV set out 3 clear campaign periods in 2020-21:

- August 2020– profiling our needs for adopters for hard to place children.
- October 2020- National Adoption Week- supported the National Adopter Recruitment campaign, with use of national materials, and our own film. Focus was on promoting the need for adopters for black and ethnic minority children, who wait the longest to be adopted in UK.
- March- April 2021- Sibling campaign, with media interviews, and a dedicated focus on the need for adopters for siblings in Tees Valley.

The ATV website (www.adoptionteesvalley.org.uk) is the largest source of enquiries, and enquirers can now request a call back, seeking an initial conversation with one of our team to discuss their interest. Systems in ATV mean that enquirers receive a friendly call, within the same day, and can

easily access an initial conversation followed by an initial visit, to progress their interest.

Outcomes:

87 visitors to the ATV website as a result of national campaigns, and who have directly visited the #YouCanAdopt website.

Significant increase in social media following as a result of profiling. It is not yet clear what impact on overall approval rate, however, since 3.1.21 there have been 5 approvals of adoptive parents who can seek to adopt siblings.

2 families of ethnic minority heritage have come to ATV as a result of the National Adoption week/ATV promotional campaign.

	Full year 2019-20	Q1&Q2 2020-21	Full Year 2020-21
Enquiries	270	196	357 (32% increase)
Social media followers	1,000		10,989
Website Visits	18,175	11,000	17,738
Attendees at Information Events	Not counted	Not counted	205
Registration of Interest	61	30	63

Conversion Enquiry to Registration of Interest - 22%

In the forthcoming year, ATV will be focussing more effort on developing the website, and reaching out to our target audience, supported by digital marketing expertise.

9. Adopter Journey – Enquiry to Approval

	Total 2019-20	Q1 & Q2 2020-21	Q3 & Q4 2020-21	Total 2020-21
Initial Visits to prospective Adopters	65	50	42	92
Stage 1 Starts	61	30	33	63
Stage 2 Starts	54	32	30	62
Adopter Approvals	50	26	36	62

Conversion Initial Visit to Approval – 67%

Assessments have been undertaken virtually by assessing social workers, qualified and experienced under the Restriction on the Preparation of Adoption Reports Regulations. During the early part of the year, assessments were being fully continued via virtual video technology, for those assessments started face to face before the initial lockdown. ATV operated within practice guidelines agreed through the RAA Leaders group, enabling sharing and learning around opportunities for best practice, and high quality assessments, conducted virtually. During the year, assessing social workers identified that where they had not yet met the applicants, building a relationship with prospective adopters was more difficult via virtual means. The service agreed planned face to face visits, to enable good quality assessments to be undertaken, while maintaining careful risk assessment around covid protection, for all parties. It has been high priority to ensure that children's welfare and future safety are paramount, and this has been at the forefront of continued assessment work. No adopters have been approved without at least one home visit, which enabled a full home safety inspection, and face to face meeting between assessor and the applicants.

New Initiative

10. Assessment to Support Pathway for Adopters

During this year, service planning has sought to strengthen the preparation, assessment, and support pathway for prospective adopters. The objectives are:

- To help ATV adopters to feel even more equipped and prepared to consider children with greater needs, with the aim of increasing more internal placements, and reducing inter agency placements
- To follow recommendations of the 2020 Adoption Barometer report (Adoption UK) which recommends that all adopters should have an identified support plan.

A small group of social workers, and the Recruitment Manager have developed the ATV model of assessment, using the Adopter Hub (PACT UK) materials, and webinars, and building on the Secure Base Model (Schofield and Beek). Additional elements of the assessment include:

- More use of Adopter Hub materials to explore how prospective adopters understand and will meet the needs of children with wider needs
- A Self-Care plan, developed and worked out by applicants with their social worker
- Case Studies available to develop thinking and self-awareness

- A new Family and Friends Training Course, enabling the support network of adoptive parents to learn more about the needs of adopted children.

Kirsty - one of ATV's experienced social workers, who developed the course explains:

"The motivation to start this training session was to share our knowledge at ATV with the people that will be ultimately supporting the adopter(s) as parents and who will be the ones that are playing an important role in a child's life. The aim was to provide an understanding of the differences parenting an adopted child and the reasons why a child's behaviour and development might be slightly different to other children in the family and network. Ultimately it was to equip the family and friends with how best to support the child and the adopters.

We started the training in March 2021, and we have facilitated 4 sessions. There are another 3 sessions scheduled for the rest of the year and are running bimonthly. So far, we have had 39 individuals who have attended the half-day session, supporting 20 couples / single prospective adopters in their adoption journey.

The topics we cover include: The adoption process, attachment, contact in adoption, why children require an adoptive family, the different categories of abuse, identity, fostering for adoption, therapeutic parenting and how you can support and help".

Feedback from a prospective grandparent highlights "Each child has gone through trauma and they will remember and grieve for that. They have no idea what is ahead of them so they will need time to readjust, so we as new grandparents need to be mindful of that and adjust ourselves to think first and foremost of their life story and realise this child will have different needs from us too regarding what we knew as parenting".

11. Preparation for Adoption Groups

ATV saw an increase in the numbers of applicants starting the process during covid and progressing through assessment and preparation.

The Preparation sessions were held via Video conferencing however, applicants completed all 4 days and the same content, and opportunity to meet various key people who could talk about adoption was maintained.

ATV has a lead social worker for the development and implementation of Preparation Training. She has maintained a dedicated focus on the preparation of adopters, supported by a number of social workers in the

team, ensuring that all speakers continued to join, giving prospective adopters a good preparation experience.

Angi Simmons - ATV's Lead Trainer

We have completed all training since May 2020 in the virtual format. This has been a learning curve but so far, the feedback has been positive. We have now the ability to have "breakouts rooms" and this has helped in the socialising of the group members too. Extra groups were held in October 2020 and January 2021

Within ATV we have continued to move forward with our assessment tools and the training has also been a tool that has been updated.

Using the Secure Base Model (Schofield and Beek) and incorporating this throughout the 4 days will ensure our adopters have awareness of this important theory in child development to carry on through their stage 2 assessment period, offering a range of ongoing learning.

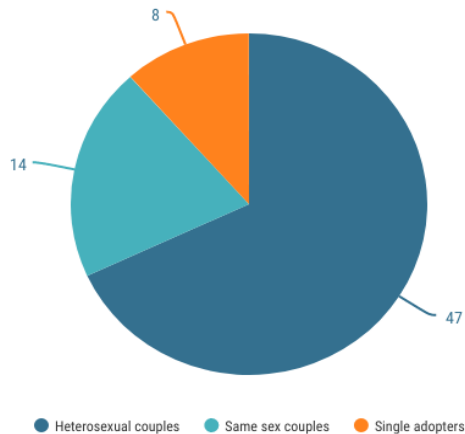
Prospective Adopter feedback -

- *I thought today was amazing taught us more than expected considering it was the first day.*
- *There is a lot to take in but it definitely was worth it*
- *Learning about separation and loss was really important. We always believed that we would be as open as possible with our child to help with their identity. This input reaffirmed that for us, and we believe strongly about children knowing where and who they have come from and having open and honest conversations.*
- *We look forward to being part of the ATV family and meeting you in person. Thank you!*
- *The courses have allowed us to question our own preconceptions and has totally changed our opinions on some aspects such as contact and meeting the birth family. We feel like we are more informed in general and now feel this is definitely the journey we want to follow.*
- *We feel the preparation training was extremely useful. It has opened our eyes to the issues we may face as well as providing us with tools and resources to help us along the way.*

Number of groups held: 6

Number of households attending in total: 69

Characteristics of attendees at preparation training



12. Early Permanence

ATV has acted on a strategic plan to deliver early permanence for children in the Tees Valley for whom the Local Authority has an adoption plan, or is in the process of assessment, with adoption as one possible outcome.

Early Permanence (EP) is the placement of a child who may have/is likely to have an adoption plan, with prospective adopters, who are dually approved as foster carers and adopters. The usual route is often called **Fostering for Adoption (FFA)** and the approved adopters are identified as prospective carers for the child, before the Court has authorised the placement for adoption of that child, through a Placement Order. The child is placed with the family on a fostering basis, until such time as the Court grant a Placement Order, or that the Court determines that the child will return to birth parents, or to a family member, based on evidence provide in the Final Hearing.

The benefits of EP are that the child has fewer moves in care, prior to formal placement for adoption, and the child has the opportunity for beginning bonding and attachment to their permanent carers, at the earliest time. Both these actions are well researched as being beneficial to children in the short and long term.

Early permanence does not pre-empt the decision of the Court and Judges will always decide a child will return to the care of parents, or family members where the welfare of the child dictates this is the best outcome.

ATV rolled out the early permanence Strategy is 2020-21, a delivery plan which was delayed due to covid.

- Meetings were held with senior managers and senior solicitors in each LA, to agree the key approach to early permanence across Tees Valley.
- An Information Sharing Protocol has been drawn up by ATV Legal Advisor (Cygnet Family Law) which was consulted on, through the Local Family Justice Board, including with members of the Judiciary.
- ATV Managers delivered a training programme to each Local Authority in Tees Valley, and to Cafcass and the Adoption Panel. Additional sessions have been offered to some IRO's.
- ATV has implemented a preparation workshop which is mandatory for any prospective adopter wishing to consider early permanence.

ATV and the Local Authorities have delivered 17 early permanence placements for children in Tees Valley, an increase of 7 on the previous year.

Of these 17 placements, no child has returned to parents within the year. One child continues without PO and may return to birth family care.

More opportunity for Early Permanence is a strategic goal of the national RAA system, and ATV has worked in collaboration with other RAA's practice to develop the service in Tees Valley. Its success as a pathway for children is based on good quality assessment work by the Local Authority children's social work team, and in good preparation and support to prospective adopters.

ATV will build on support to adopters offering early permanence in this year (2021-22). ATV will further develop the preparation module for prospective adopters, in line with Coram BAAF training in September 2021. Work is underway to strengthen the partnership between the 5 LA Fostering Services and ATV, to deliver a clearer and more cohesive offer to adopters and the child.

13. Referrals of Children, Matching and Placing

Early Notifications to ATV

	Q1&Q2	Q3 &Q4	Full Year	
Early Notifications 2019-20	88	76	164	
Early Notifications 2020-21	98	97	195	19% increase

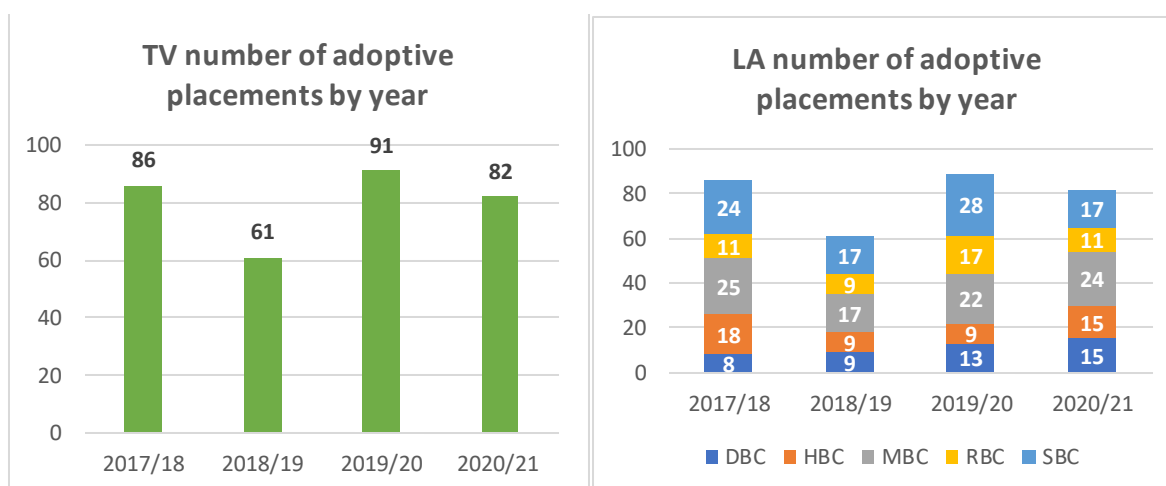
Referrals by Local Authority

Year	DBC	HBC	MBC	R&CBC	SBC	TV
2020/21	26	28	58	31	52	195

Placements

	2019-20	2020-21: April-September	2020-21: Oct-March	Totals 2020-21
ATV children placed with ATV adopters	60	27	25	52
ATV Children placed with external adopters	31	18	12	30
External children placed with ATV adopters	2	1	1	2
Total ATV children placed	91	45	37	82
Total placements	93	46	38	84

Placements by Local Authority



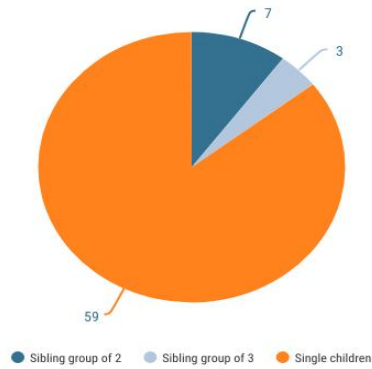
14. Characteristics of children placed

Age at the time of moving in:

0-12 months	1-2 yrs.	2-3 yrs.	3-4 yrs.	4-5 yrs.	5+ yrs.
26	31	11	4	4	6
32%	38%	13%	5%	5%	7%

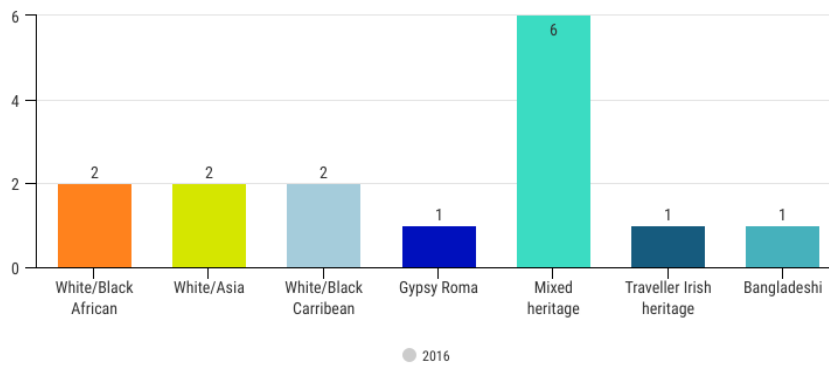
Siblings

Number of children in sibling groups, 2020-2021

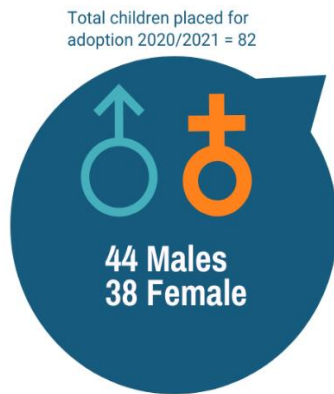


Ethnicity

Ethnicity breakdown (15 children from ethnic minority backgrounds), 2020-2021



Gender



Children who wait the longest to be adopted in Tees Valley

Analysis of children waiting with a Placement Order data, at the end of Q4, identifies that the characteristics of children waiting more than 4 months in almost all cases include children in sibling groups. There were 27 children waiting with PO, not matched, at the end of Q4. Of these children:

- 5 have waited more than 12 months to be matched
- 7 have waited between 8-12 months to be matched
- 4 have waited 4-8 months to be matched
- 11 have waited less than 4 months

4 of the 5 children who have waited longest (over 12 months) are in sibling groups, and each of the sibling groups includes at least one child over age 5.

One who has waited over 12 months is a young child, with uncertain developmental needs, but not a disability.

Of the children waiting 8-12 months, 2 are part of a sibling group of 3 children, waiting to be placed, aged over 5 and ethnic minority heritage.

There is a further white sibling group of 3, with a child aged over 5 in that group. Also, a white sibling group of 2, also with a child aged over 5.

15. Disruptions

There have been no disruptions to a child's placement, following placement with adopters, and before the adoption order is granted.

This is a positive, indicating that children have been matched appropriately, and adopters have been supported to meet the child's needs.

One child was matched, and began introductions, but then did not go on to be placed.

16. Adoption Panel

An Adoption panel Chairs report has been co-produced by 2 Independent Chairs, as required by Adoption National Minimum Standard 17.2 (NMS 2014)

The full report is made available to the Board of ATV; to the Adoption Panel; to the management and team at ATV.

This report is for the second period of 6 months in this year- 1.10.20-31.3.21

Thematic strengths and areas for improvement for ATV Panel Business and Management of panel

Panel chairs fed back that overall adoption activity was positive, and panel was operating well.

There were a total of 28 panels held within this six month period and 23 within the previous six months. The total number of cases considered was 69 as opposed to 70 in the previous period reflecting the limit on work presented to any one panel, which is welcomed.

Panel chairs summarised:

- It is to the adoption team and panel members credit that adoption business has been maintained throughout this period, including a third 'lockdown' and that no panels have had to be cancelled due to Covid related issues.
- Due to the 'virtual' nature of Panels, the Chair continues to have a much more formal role in directing the business and ensuring everyone has the opportunity to speak and to ask questions. This format does reduce the free flowing discussion previously held during face-to-face meetings, which does not sit comfortably with Panel Chairs.
- The Chair continues to take on the additional role of agreeing and collating panel member questions, which are submitted in advance of panel.
- There continue to be the challenges associated with technology and virtual panels. IT issues during virtual panel meetings have delayed business on occasions and have meant that the experience for adopters will have been less well managed and supported.
- None of the panels in this timeframe were held with the reduced quoracy allowed under the Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020. However panel continued to see the

impact of the 'easing' allowed by these regulations, particularly in timescales for medicals, meaning these were not always completed until nearer the end of the assessment process, giving little or no time for medical issues to be fully addressed within the reports in some cases.

- Adopter preparation training, meetings and assessment sessions continued to be held virtually rather than face-to-face. Although applicants and adopters are generally positive about their experiences the longer-term impact of this remains to be seen.

Strengths identified over the past 6 months include

- Continued consideration of adoption business and commitment of everyone involved throughout a time of unprecedented upheaval and anxiety due to the Covid 19 pandemic.
- Consideration of questions for applicants/adopters prior to panel has been a benefit and saved time on the day.
- In contrast to the national trend, adoption business is increasing in the region with 6 additional panels having to be arranged to supplement the weekly panels already planned. Additional panels are already being planned for the next 6 months ensuring there are sufficient central list members available and documentation can be read in a timely manner.
- There have been 17 fostering for adoption cases presented for match, ensuring good outcomes for those children in terms of establishing and maintaining their early attachments.
- Panel minutes are now circulated to all panel members for consideration to ensure a full and accurate record is agreed.
- All Central List Members have now had an Annual Review.

Areas for improvement include:

- 1 Panel was cancelled at short notice due to lack of business during this timeframe, with 6 additional Panels arranged at relatively short notice, although with the required 10 day period for panel papers to be circulated, and read, indicating that the planning of work to be presented at panel perhaps needs more careful oversight.
- The number of individual documents presented for adoption matches continues to prove challenging when dealing with information electronically.
- Although a very helpful update on outcomes was provided in February 21, panel members do not receive regular, timely feedback on outcomes following Panel e.g. whether ADM agreed with panel recommendations and made their decision within the 7 day timescale;

whether planned placements went ahead successfully, information about reasons for interruptions/disruptions or feedback received from presenting social workers or prospective adopters.

- It would be helpful for a summary of pertinent issues raised in Central List member appraisals to be made available to Panel Chairs to contribute to the 6 monthly report.
- Although there has now been training relating to trends in disruption in specific cases that have disrupted since ATV went live, this did not allow the panels that dealt with the particular cases to look forensically at their practise in the approval and/or match.
- There continues to be some evidence of missed opportunities for early permanence placements when matches come to panel, though early permanence does seem to be embedding in some of the Local Authorities.
- There continue to be some delays in progressing children's plans, resulting in delays in identifying children who require adoption and subsequent matching. Availability of case work time, changes of social worker, staff sickness and Court timescales are some of the reasons cited.
- There is not always consistent practice across the Tees Valley Local Authorities in respect of Life Appreciation events, which are not always in evidence where, ideally, they should be required. Sometimes there has been planning and thinking about Life Appreciation Events, but not shared in the panel documentation. Such events should draw on information from all carers and significant agencies involved in a child's life.
- Although there are some excellent examples of CPR's the inconsistent quality continues to cause concern at panel where lack of knowledge about regulatory requirements on the part of some authors in preparing children's plans for adoption is evident. Some CPR's don't have updated information in and this compromises what is available for adopter and children. The importance of full, factual and qualitative information being available to children for their future cannot be overstated.

The agency meets with panel Chairs following provision of the annual report and has continued to make changes and amendments to process, to reflect feedback, and improve quality. A challenge for Adoption Tees Valley is that although panel is a busy, weekly (sometimes twice weekly) formal meeting requiring a significant amount of administration, planning, and quality preparation, there is no additional Panel Advisor or Panel Administrator to support this process, as is the case in most other Regional Adoption Agencies.

17. Life Story Work

The Biannual report 2020-21 highlighted challenges with managing the volume of life story books for children who are placed for adoption. The forum of LA Adoption Lead Officers and ATV have continued to address backlog of life story work, looking at short term and longer term measures to address this issue. Additional staffing (temporary) has been introduced to address backlog however, barriers are identified whereby the child's social worker may not always provide information in a timely way or gather this at the time events are progressing with the child's journey through care. The ATV Board have considered this matter and agreed that children's social workers should be responsible for life story work for children. It has been agreed that children's social workers will be more actively monitored within each LA for progress with life story work, and the ATV role will be to support the child's social worker in producing the book.

The backlog of life story work is being addressed between each Local Authority and ATV, via agency agreements in each case.

Longer term options for a digital app, to support gathering life story information are being explored. Consultation has taken place with a group of adopters, who have given valuable feedback, but in general welcome the idea.

18. Adoption Support

The adoption support service to adopters has by necessity been delivered largely through virtual means, due to the pandemic, with some face to face contacts where this has been required for case work, and the need to visit children and families.

	2019-20	2020-21	
Number of adoption support referrals	147	83	
Access to Files requests/completed	35	36	
Adoption Support Assessments completed	132	55	
Successful application to ASF	175	166	
Unsuccessful application to ASF	0	0	
Value of applications to ASF	£692,833	£637,551 + £70,965 Covid	

Education Support Cases during year	28	59	
Number of Post Box Contract Agreements		279	

The 3 Tier model continues to be in place. Tier one face to face supports located within the ATV building have not been delivered within this year.

Referrals

Referrals for adoption support are now managed through the duty system, with social workers being booked for a one hour call back, to undertake a telephone duty referral, which is then forwarded to the Adoption Support manager for consideration.

Referrals for adoption support have decreased this year, which may be reflective of less demand due to covid. Another possibility is that the service faced a high demand arising from adopters waiting for a service, prior to commencement of ATV, with more adopters in high need now receiving a service, and underway with a support plan. It may be early days to evaluate the impact of strengthened tier 1 and tier 2 offers, and whether the universal offer via ATV is beginning to meet needs at an earlier stage.

A challenge for the service is the waiting list for adoption support allocation, which can run into months. The service has designated 3 FTE adoption social workers to the Adoption Support Service.

The service development plan for 2021 is to increase partnership working, and a more integrated approach with LA's, to enable children and their adoptive parents to access more readily wider supports from Local Authorities and strategic partners, where services can and should be made available to families from wider partner provision.

Adoption Support Assessments

The number of adoption support assessments has reduced this year. However, this is reflective of covid funding enabling the service to "group book" therapeutic training, without having to use the multiple application process. Also, the impact of the Education Support Worker may be now helping families to receive the support they need, in the area of education, which is reducing demand for adoption support assessments. The waiting list continues to be a challenge to adopters waiting, and for the service.

Applications to Adoption Support Fund

The service has progressed slightly fewer applications to the ASF in this year, although as with adoption support assessments, covid funding has allowed

for group applications to be progressed as one application, rather than many individual applications.

Many of the individual applications are repeat applications for families who referred in for support, and assessment in 2018, 2019, and 2020, but have entered into repeated annual applications for continuing therapeutic input.

The application process for ASF funding has become more administrative this financial year, due to changes in the ASF. Nevertheless, it is welcome additional funding, to enable access to therapeutic supports for families and children.

The application value in this year is c£638,000 down from c£693,000 in the previous year. Although down by £55,000 there has been additional covid funding which the service applied for, amounting to £71,000 spent in total.

Therapeutic provision

The Service was supported by Stockton procurement team to re-open the Preferred providers list for therapeutic services, to be funded via ASF.

A further 4 services were admitted to the list.

Children and families continue to value the therapeutic input which is vital to help children who have experienced harm, through early adverse childhood experiences, abuse and neglect.

Access to files

The service has commissioned Adoption Matters to deliver the service for Access to Files for adult adoptees, and birth relatives. Significant partnership working has taken place to establish a procedure for access to records, including work with all 5 Local Authorities, via Adoption Lead officers. After considerable working together, with this experienced Voluntary Adoption Agency the service is working effectively to provide timely access to records, for eligible people.

There have been 36 Access to Records requests progressed this year. This is a similar level to the previous year.

Education Support

The service has continued to employ an Education Support worker, co-funded through the 5 Local Authority Virtual Schools, via DFE grant funding for children previously in the care of the LA.

This post has become well embedded over the last year, and the worker is delivering effective education support to children, and families, within the context of schools. This means that she also works frequently with Designated Teachers, and others involved in helping and supporting children. The worker

meets regularly with Virtual School Heads, to plan for her own development, to work within a collective approach to educating children, and facilitating emotional and attachment related needs to be understood and planned for within the school setting.

59 families and children have been supported during this year.

The Education Support Worker says:

The main areas of support are helping schools to understand a child's behaviour and needs, training schools about developmental trauma and the impact, mediating between parents and schools when relationships have broken down and providing schools with strategies to help the child be ready and able to learn. Also, to help families to have a better understanding of the education system.

As the post has developed and become more well known, schools and parents contact me directly for support and advice daily.

Thrive Approach: I'm now a Thrive trained practitioner, and I have added this element to my support within schools. It has been used as a social and emotional intervention to help support the children with neurodevelopmental gaps due to adverse childhood experiences. I work closely with the teachers to profile the children and this indicates where the 'gaps' in their neurodevelopment have occurred. I then provide planning for the schools to deliver the interventions and then reprofile the child to assess. It is a holistic approach therefore I provide parents also with lists of planned activities that they can complete at home, which will consolidate what has taken place in school. This support has been positively received by the schools, children and the families involved.

Training: I was a speaker at Middlesbrough practice week and delivered a presentation on Previously Looked After Children.
Delivered developmental trauma and attachment training at schools.
I am also due to deliver adoption awareness training during the next academic year to schools.
I attended the FASD conference network which furthered my knowledge and understanding in this area and how it can be used to support schools, children and families.

Hartlepool Virtual School Heads says:

The Education officer provides invaluable advice, guidance and support to children, their parents and schools in relation to any aspect of education. This input has been important in ensuring that schools are aware of the difficulties that children adopted may face in school, providing training and recommendations to support. She also provides parents with a significant assistance with any aspect of education,

attending meetings alongside parents, guiding them through complex education processes and being a point of contact for them.

Post Box

The service has reviewed how post box contact, also known as letterbox is delivered in ATV.

The system is one which takes time to make sure all letters exchanged are properly recorded and checked, also that where letters aren't received according to agreed arrangements a follow up is made with parties to remind of the need for the contacts to be sent.

The service has made changes to the way in which these arrangements are recorded in the system, aimed at providing greater confidence in the flow and exchange of the information, with records kept in the system of all correspondence exchanged.

The way in which the arrangements are counted has also changed. Therefore, data provision is not a like for like comparison with previously reported data.

There have been 279 post box contact arrangements in the last year.

Birth Parent Support

Adoption Tees Valley has commissioned Adoption Matters to provide birth parent support to all birth parents whose child is to be placed for adoption, from the point at which adoption is the plan for the child. There has been work across all 5 LA's, through Adoption Lead officers to promote this service.

Adoption Matters have called their Birth Parent Support project "Birth Ties" and have produced a leaflet for awareness raising with families and professionals working with them. Leaflets have been made available to IRO's and Adoption lead officers, and it is now agreed that referral for independent birth parent support will take place at the time the LA makes its sole plan for adoption.

In this year, 37 families were provided with independent birth parent support. The families came from all 5 Local Authorities across the Tees Valley and Darlington.

Therapeutic Parenting Courses

ATV seeks to offer a regular option for therapeutic parenting training, which is funded through applications to the ASF. This is part of the Tier 2 offer, and all adopters are encouraged to attend once the child is placed with them.

In the year, one course was held in this period. The Nurturing Attachments training was held in November 2020 and was attended by 3 families. Although the service sought to generate applicants from the adopter community, for therapeutic parenting training, the numbers seeking to attend during covid have been lower than during pre-pandemic times.

Efforts were made to convene a Future Stars (a sensory parenting) programme, however, take up was again low, and this has been run in June 2021, outside of this time period.

One provider of non-violent resistance training specifically delivered the course to adoptive parents and special guardians, during the lockdown, and this was funded through covid funding for adoption and SG support.

Adopter Hub

The service commissioned the Adopter Hub as a new on-line tool for adopters providing information, detailed in depth guidance, webinars and on line support. This was initially commissioned as part of covid funding and has provided a range of valuable information to adopters. It is now being used for support to adopters and prospective adopters, throughout assessment, preparation and post placement support. Around 170 users have registered.

Covid Funding

Covid funding was made available and applied for via DfE, to provide additional supports to families in need.

The following services were provided through this additional, one off, funding source.

- Adopter Hub
- NVR (non-violent resistance training and support)
- Child Psychology Service
- Access to specialist support via Child Psychologist

Adoption Support – Development areas

Post adoption support is one of the areas that has received most attention for development since regionalisation of adoption. One of the key government objectives was to improve adoption support to children and families, to improve long term outcomes for adopted children.

Measures of success in ATV include:

- Implementation of an adoption support service, with dedicated adoption support workers
- Collaborative work with virtual schools, and the partnership funding model for an Education Support Worker post.
- Regular opportunity for all adoptive parents to access therapeutic parenting training
- Significantly higher draw down on ASF funding and therapeutic service input.

ATV continues to work with the national forum of RAA's to learn and develop around improving support to adoptive families.

In ATV all families now have an adoption support plan, in line with recommendations from the National Adoption Barometer Report (Adoption UK, 2020). The support plan will detail the available support to families within ATV, at Tier 1,2, and 3.

All families have access to register for a 2 day therapeutic parenting course, and all families will receive one year adoption support from their assessing social worker, beyond the adoption order.

The service now requires that any requests for financial allowances or supports are made prior to matching panel, in order that families are clear about the financial support plans, prior to confirming they wish to progress the match. This does not mean families cannot request further assessments, post placement, but the service is much clearer that adoption allowances must have been applied for, and agreed by the relevant LA, prior to matching panel.

The biggest challenges for adoption support in ATV are:

- Waiting timescales for allocation for adoption support assessments
- Having a shared wider strategic partnership approach that means adoption support needs are understood and recognised by local authority, health and other statutory and third sector partners.

To address these issues, ATV is working to review allocation timescales for adoption support assessments.

ATV is also currently undertaking wider systems awareness of adoption support, across early help, and other LA Children's services teams.

19. Children's Voice in Adoption

ATV has been working with a Doctorate Researcher, Helen Woolley, who is undertaking research into life stories for children. Through the research project, a group of teenage young people has been formed- the Junior Researchers, who are now working closely with the researcher, to share ideas

and thinking about what it means to be adopted, and where they feel organisations and individuals could be influenced to better understand adoption.

The Junior Researchers have already identified they believe that ATV would benefit from a Teenagers Worker, to support adopted young people with the variety of issues that they encounter as they grow up.

The service will be working with this group, to help progress the voice of the child, through influencing and targeted campaigns, but also on how the service can better develop to listen to the voice of adopted young people.

Prior to the national pandemic, ATV had started a children's group, to incorporate the child's voice into ATV, and to enable groups of children to receive some dedicated support to help them with understanding their identity as adopted children, alongside other adopted children.

The group has not progressed due to the pandemic. It is planned to resume this group as an when the service is able to commence working safely again in the building.

20. Non Agency Adoptions

ATV is responsible for non- agency, step parent adoptions. This is the adoption by one birth parent and a partner to that person, who is not the natural birth parent, of a child. It is a full assessment, which will inform the Court on the granting of an adoption order, and the permanent dispensation of parental responsibility to the absent birth parent.

This service continues to present a resource and demand issue, whereby the service has the challenge of allocation of resources to step parent adoptions, from the overall team which must focus effort on the high number of children in our care, requiring permanence planning and adoption.

One worker has been allocated to manage step parent adoptions.

The following data applies to 2020-21

Enquiries	46
Initial Visits	9
Awaiting assessment	39
In assessment as of 31.3.21	10
Adoption Orders granted	8

21. Quality Assurance

National Minimum Standard 25.

The following mechanisms have been implemented for managing and monitoring the work of the agency, and the quality of work.

- The Review of ATV is a wide reaching review, to assess progress of the RAA against the agreed objectives that were set out at the implementation of the RAA.
- Tracking systems to enable regular monitoring of children and adopter journeys; timeliness, and outcomes. Tracking systems have been further improved in this period. Tracking highlights barriers to be addressed, for example, delays in GP reports have been addressed with Commissioners in health; Designated Child in Our care Nurses, and via safeguarding GP's.
- Tracking of children enables focussed discussions with Adoption Lead officers quarterly, or as required, to ensure that individual children's plans are progressed in a timely way, and that thematic practice issues within Local Authorities are addressed.
- A performance, assurance and challenge meeting (PAC) has been held with the senior adoption lead for each LA, quarterly following ASGLB and ATV Scorecard data returns. All children for each LA have been tracked and monitored, and agreement about direction, or decisions signposted where applicable.
- Permanence Champions for each Local Authority ensure that children's referrals are progressed and tracked in a timely way. This means that ATV is able to family find for children at the right time, and with the right information about that child's plan.
- ATV attends one Local Authority (Middlesbrough) Permanence Monitoring Group, monthly, and the Gateway panel monthly, to assist with the improvement journey for that LA, and with quality and timeliness of practice for children.
- The balanced scorecard (BSC) has been reviewed and developed to better reflect nationally submitted data, via ASGLB returns from Local Authorities and Adoption Tees Valley. The BSC is generated quarterly detailing key performance data, user feedback/satisfaction measures; complaints/compliments; finance. This has been presented to the Board, which has a role in questioning, challenge and being satisfied of the effectiveness of the service.
- The Adoption Panel has a quality monitoring role in the Service around business presented to it, for consideration and advice. As detailed in the Panel section, this period has seen some gaps in provision of quality monitoring data which is now being addressed. Quality of PARS is felt to be high, with some recommendations about consistency of practice across PAR's. Quality of CPR's is generally improved, although some remain poor. Minutes now detail feedback on quality of CPR in order that ADM's in Local Authorities are able to read the panel comments

around quality of the CPR. Panel has commented on improvements to the Adoption Support Plan, and APR.

- The Adoption Panel Chairs provide a report bi-annually to the Service Manager, which will be presented to the Board; Panel; and to the team, for learning and improvement where required.
- Staff performance is monitored via supervision, which is monthly for all staff.
- A case practice audit tool has been developed. Case practice audits were undertaken, across a sample of case records, with managers independent of that case, and the worker. These will be collated into a thematic audit report for board to consider.
- Most staff, and all managers have had an annual appraisal.
- All Central List members and Panel Chairs have had an annual appraisal. Panel chairs now request that the agency collates themes from appraisal for the annual report. Panel training has been delivered to panel members arising from feedback from panel appraisals, which includes Disruptions; Roles and Operational processes for ATV; early Permanence.
- Team meetings take place monthly, and are used to convey policy and practice information, involve staff in developments and any quality improvements that are required.
- Adopter feedback has been sought at the start of lockdown via a Consultation Survey. User feedback was used to inform adoption support needs during lockdown. There is an adopter survey currently live, seeking adopter views on the services ATV provides, which will be analysed as part of the ATV review.
- The Service Manager, and Team Manager, post adoption support, have reviewed and monitored work undertaken by external agencies for post adoption support, to ensure that work supports outcomes and delivers best value.
- Stockton BC have undertaken an audit of the service to provide an “independent” QA mechanism.
- The Service has commissioned a person with senior experience and understanding to update and write the policies and procedures for ATV. These are now well underway and will be completed by September 2021. Policies have been shared via Adoption Leads, to enable LA development of policy framework which is integrated with ATV, for adoption practice.

22. Finance

Adoption Tees Valley is joint funded as a shared service under the Education and Adoption Act (2016) and is a joint funded on a shared basis, with the allocations of funding per LA as detailed below.

	Baseline Running Costs (based on former costs of the Adoption Services in the year preceding the RAA)	Percentage Interagency fee contributions (based on average annual adoption numbers 2014/15 to 2016/17)
Darlington	16.2%	20.2%
Hartlepool	13.5 %	14.0%
Middlesbrough	31.8%	27.2%
Redcar and Cleveland	16.7.%	14.0%
Stockton	21 %	24.7%
	100%	100.0%

2020/21 Financial Year End Position

At the end of the 2020/21 financial year, Adoption Tees Valley underspent by £24,000, which has been carried forward in the ATV reserve.

Expenditure Heading	Budget 2020/21	Actual Outturn	Variance year end
Employees	1,322,700	1,432,000	109,300
Running Costs	295,000	190,000	(105,000)
Support Service Costs	113,000	118,000	5,000
Interagency Fees	500,000	909,000	409,000
Income	(2,230,700)	(2,673,000)	(442,300)
Total	0	(24,000)	(24,000)

Interagency Fees

Interagency fees are payable for those children matched with adopters who are not recruited by ATV. The budget for interagency fees is £500,000 and was overspent by £409,000. This led to additional contributions from each Local Authority, as follows:

	Budgeted Contribution to Interagency Fees	Actual for 2020/21	Additional Contribution for 20/21
ATV Interagency 2020/21	500,000	909,000	409,000
Darlington - 20.2%	101,000	184,000	83,000
Hartlepool - 14%	70,000	127,000	57,000
Middlesbrough - 27.2%	136,000	247,000	111,000
Redcar & Cleveland - 14%	70,000	127,000	57,000

Stockton -24.6%	123,000	224,000	101,000
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Overspend on employee costs is largely offset by underspend on running costs, leading to a net budget saving. This is being reinvested into services for post adoption support, and marketing.

The interagency fees budget overspend is reflective of the higher numbers of children who have been referred and placed for adoption than was forecast at the outset of the RAA implementation.

The Service is seeking to increase recruitment of adopters, and by the close of the year had increased adopter recruitment by 39% on the previous year.

Nevertheless, a similar number of children have been placed for adoption externally as the previous year. Data shows that adopters in Tees valley are being used for placements, with few being available for external placements. ATV adopters are on average being matched 100 days more quickly than the national average.

The service has progressed the Invest to Save model noted in the Biannual report. there is a small pool of casual assessors who are able to supplement assessment activity where demand is high, and pressures exist.

Furthermore, a greater focus on digital marketing is being progressed with a local Digital Marketing Company, with the aim of securing more market share of those wishing to adopt in this region.

The review of ATV will evaluate the "Value for Money" objective in ATV, and all LA Finance Teams are involved in the evaluation.

The ATV board has considered the Budget and Financial Report. the ATV Board continues to monitor actions to reduce external expenditure, however, children who are waiting to be adopted should not be further delayed due to an unwillingness to use external agencies, and in this region, this is agreed as paramount by the Board.

23. Development Areas for Adoption Tees Valley

The service continues to review and develop, in the light of data analysis against national and regional benchmarking; through feedback; national and regional practice development in adoption; Panel Chairs feedback; Quality feedback. The Service will also be taking account of the Review of ATV, and any lessons or themes for improvement.

Key Developments within the 2021 Service Plan are:

- Strengthening the involvement and voice of adopted children in ATV.

- Strengthening the Preparation and Assessment of Adopters, to help them feel more informed and equipped to meet the needs of children, including those with additional needs. The Assessment to Support Pathway has already commenced, and is practitioner led.
- Continuing to address sufficiency of adopters, through improved marketing and recruitment. Also through the strategic work with VAA partners to provide regional sufficiency, where ATV does not have adopters available. This will help ATV to continue to work at reducing the waiting time for all children who require permanence via adoption
- Taking the Early permanence strategy to “Phase 2”, building on the learning and experience during “Phase 1”, especially with respect to supporting adopters, and professionals; working more closely with Fostering Services; working across more multi agency partners including health; workforce development.
- Strengthening the partnership working with children’s services partners, Early Help, and other strategic partners, to extend and improve access to support when and where it is needed, at the earliest possible opportunity.
- Continuing to address the model for life story work, to ensure this is done in a more timely way. This will be informed by the PhD research currently underway, which in turn is informed by Junior Researchers.
- Continuing to address timescales for adoption support assessments. Also, extending the options for Tier 1 and Tier 2 support, include peer to peer support, to help adopters and children.
- Taking forward actions from Panel Chairs report, to continue to work at smooth and streamlined operation of panel.
- Working together with the 5 LA partners, to continuously improve permanence planning, and quality of CPR’s, to deliver timely and well matched placements for children.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY 25 OCTOBER 2021

DARLINGTON SAFEGUARDING PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT – 2020/2021

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to enable the Children and Young People Scrutiny to receive and comment upon the Annual Report of the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership (DSP) for the period 2020/21.

Summary

2. Local Safeguarding Partnerships are required to produce an Annual Report to account for the Partnerships achievements over the previous year and make an assessment of the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements within the local area.
3. The Annual Report outlines what the Partnership has done over the period 2020/21, drawing upon a range of data and information to outline the progress made and illustrates the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding partnership arrangements. As is to be expected, the Covid-19 Pandemic and the challenges posed to ensure children, young people and vulnerable adults were safeguarded was the main focus throughout the year.
4. It is recommended that:
 - (a) The Children and Young People Scrutiny note and comment on the DSP Annual Report for 2020/21 which will be published on the DSP website.

Reasons

6. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:
 - (a) Children and Young People Scrutiny have an understanding of the Partnership's work to date.
 - (b) To challenge and scrutinise the work of the DSP and raise any challenges as appropriate with the Independent Chair.

- (c) To have assurance that the Safeguarding Partnership is effectively coordinating multi-agency safeguarding practice in Darlington and promoting the welfare of children and adults with needs for care and support.

James Stroyan
Group Director of People

Background Papers

Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report – 2020/2021

S17 Crime and Disorder	All children at risk of crime and disorder are a priority within this report. DSP works alongside Youth Offending Services to help reduce crime and first time entrants into the criminal justice system.
Health and Well Being	The health and wellbeing of all children in Darlington are a priority within this report. DSP works alongside all organisations to promote the health and wellbeing of children and their families.
Carbon Impact	There are no implications arising from this report.
Diversity	DSP works to ensure that all groups are considered within their safeguarding agenda.
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	All
Budget and Policy Framework	N/A
Key Decision	N/A
Urgent Decision	N/A
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The work of the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership complements the priorities in One Darlington Perfectly placed.
Efficiency	N/A
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has not impacted on Looked After Children or Care Leavers.

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Darlington Safeguarding Partnership

Protecting Children and Adults

Annual Report

2020-2021



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1. Introduction

Foreword by Statutory Safeguarding Partners

Welcome to the second annual report of the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership, it covers the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. The report outlines the progress the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership has made throughout the year, illustrating the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements across Darlington.

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected everyone nationally and locally, rising to this challenge has been a priority for Darlington Safeguarding Partnership throughout the past twelve months. All agencies working with children and adults have been required to adapt the way they deliver their services, working out how to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities. We thank the dedicated professionals across all agencies who continued to work so positively, keeping our children and adults safe and protected through such a very challenging year.

The Partnership recognised the need to have stronger collective oversight of all safeguarding arrangements to ensure the discharge of our statutory obligations. We worked flexibly to have open and transparent conversations and proactively engage with wider partner agencies. This helped to understand the challenges and pressures, but also gave assurance that safeguarding activity continued to be effective, maintaining service delivery without putting children, adults or their families and practitioners at risk.

The vision of Darlington Safeguarding Partnership is to ensure ‘Darlington is a place where children and adults can live their lives safely’. The COVID -19 pandemic has emphasised the fact that anyone can be at risk of harm and has reminded us that the risk of abuse and neglect is increased by a range of factors including mental health, poverty, domestic abuse as well as loneliness and isolation.

Working together across organisations will always be a challenge, however we are confident that the Partnership is functioning well. We recognise there is always room for improvement and we strive to ensure that agencies continue to work together to keep children, young people and vulnerable adults safe in Darlington.

Ann Baxter, Independent Chair/Scrutineer

Adrian Green, Detective Chief Superintendent, Durham Constabulary

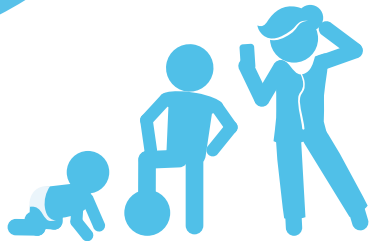
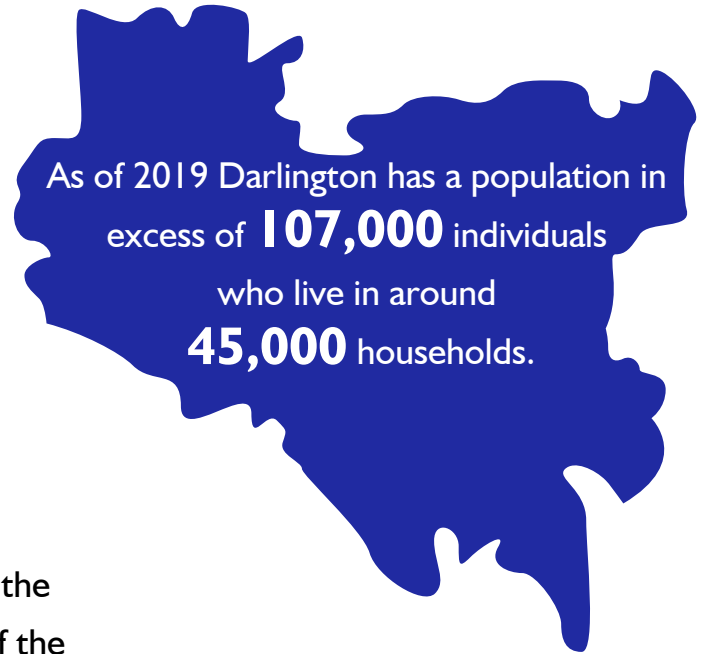
James Stroyan, Director of Children and Adult Services, Darlington Borough Council

David Gallagher/Jean Golightly, Chief Officer/Director of Nursing and Quality, Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group



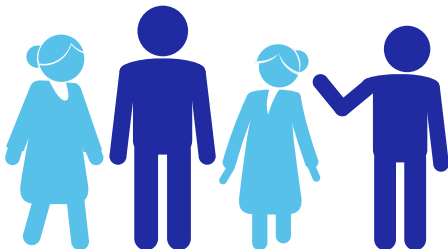
2. Local Picture

Darlington Borough Council is a Unitary Authority in the North East of England which covers 76.3 square miles. Darlington is part of the Tees Valley city region.



Children and young people under the age of 25 years make up **28%** of the population, with 22% (23,599) aged 0-18.

The Health of People in Darlington is varied compared with the England average and **20%** of children live in low income families.

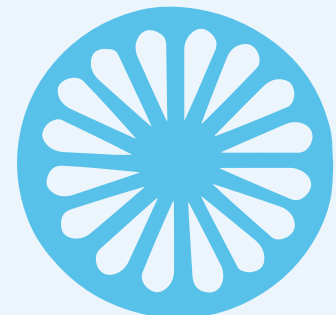


In terms of ethnicity, the 2011 Census reported 96.2% of Darlington's population as White and **3.8%** from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups.



The number of people aged over 65 years old in Darlington is estimated at **21,700**

In County Durham and Darlington the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) community form the largest single ethnic minority group, the proportion of Darlington residents who identify themselves as GRT (2011 census) is **0.3%** which is three times higher than the national average.



3. Responding to Coronavirus and the impact on Safeguarding

As is to be expected, the Covid-19 pandemic and the challenges posed to ensure children, young people and vulnerable adults were safeguarded was the main focus throughout the year.

Darlington Safeguarding Partnership (DSP) worked with partner agencies to understand the impact COVID - 19 had on services and to gain assurance about how children and young people and vulnerable adults were being supported as well as how services were adapting to meet their statutory safeguarding duties and responsibilities

The usual sub-group arrangements were temporarily suspended at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic and reporting arrangements adapted. In response to the Governments emergency procedures a Critical Safeguarding Partnership Group was established, initially to identify the most vulnerable children in Darlington. This group evolved into a broader multi-agency group which included designated safeguarding leads from key partner agencies. The group had responsibility for the weekly management and oversight of vulnerable children ensuring they had been visited or contacted by relevant agencies in line with agreed frequency or continuing care clinical need requirements.

As partners saw the benefit of having the Critical Safeguarding Partnership Group for children, they implemented a similar Group for adults to oversee adult safeguarding arrangements and ensure there was multi-agency 'line of sight' on those adults identified as most at risk. It was acknowledged that it is a very different scenario as many vulnerable adults are hidden behind closed doors, either in their own home or care setting without much scrutiny and advocacy and is not yet possible to understand the extent of the impact of being in isolation has had on the most vulnerable.

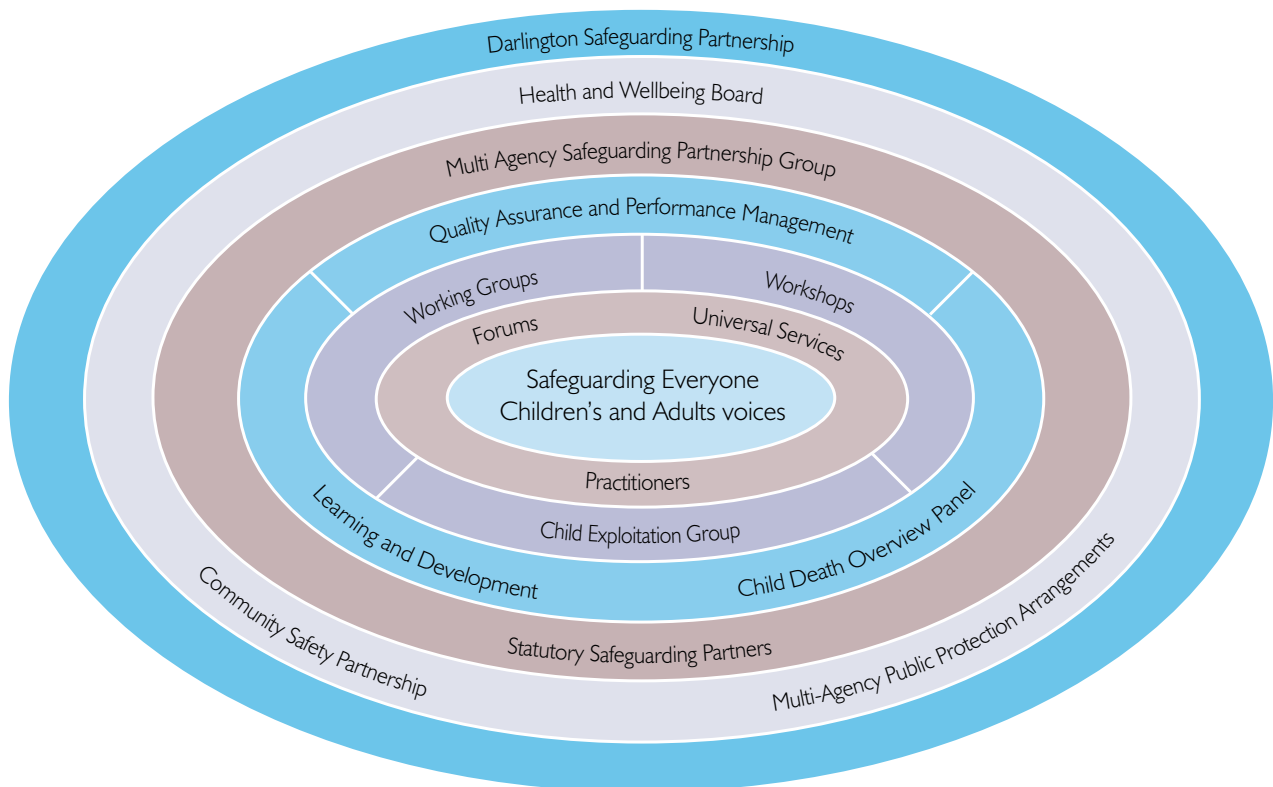
Partners were assured that organisations were able to maintain service delivery without putting children, adults, families or practitioners at risk, and everyone was working closely and appropriately, adapting ways of working to ensure the most vulnerable were supported and safeguarded.

The introduction of virtual technology enabled essential multi-agency meetings to take place ensuring child and adult strategy meetings, Child Protection and Looked After processes were able to continue. The use of virtual technology enabled those children identified as highest risk to have additional oversight from organisations through the adoption of different and innovative ways of working which will continue in the future.

Professionals reported greater involvement in multi-agency meetings held virtually as practitioners have not been required to travel. However, the impact of home working in an intensive but potentially isolated way has been recognised and agencies are considering how to achieve a balance.



4. Governance and Structure



• Statutory Safeguarding Partners

Underpinned by The Care Act 2014 and Children and Social Work Act 2017, the Statutory Safeguarding Partners set the strategic direction of the Partnership aligning the work of Adult and Child Safeguarding. Members are the most senior leaders from the three statutory partners.

The Partners have a strong collective oversight of all safeguarding arrangements to ensure fulfilment of their statutory obligations. They engaged with wider partners by inviting key leads along to meetings on a rotational basis to obtain an understanding of current issues and safeguarding challenges organisations were facing.

• Quality Assurance and Performance sub-group (QAPM)

The role of the QAPM group is to scrutinise, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding work across partner agencies and commissioned organisations. It continues to gather and monitor quarterly performance data and is taking steps to implement quality assurance processes to understand the strengths and weaknesses of safeguarding arrangements and to understand how learning has been embedded within organisations.

Quarterly Performance reports provide the information by exception on the current highs and lows and highlight the changing landscape due to the Pandemic. Measures are in place to address themes and trends to further understand these changes which will shape what the Partnership needs to take forward.

• Learning and Development sub-group (L&D)

Underpinned by The Care Act 2014 and Children and Social Work Act 2017, the Statutory Safeguarding Partners set the strategic direction of the Partnership aligning the work of Adult and Child Safeguarding. Members are the most senior leaders from the three statutory partners.

The Partners have a strong collective oversight of all safeguarding arrangements to ensure fulfilment of their statutory obligations. They engaged with wider partners by inviting key leads along to meetings on a rotational basis to obtain an understanding of current issues and safeguarding challenges organisations were facing.

- **Child Exploitation Group (CEG)**

The primary purpose of CEG is to oversee, monitor, evaluate and improve responses to tackling children missing from home, care and education and act as the strategic lead group for the reduction of Child Exploitation across Durham and Darlington. An operational group oversees individual cases of children at risk of exploitation in Darlington with a purpose to prevent, disrupt and deter them from being criminally or sexually exploited.

- **Critical Safeguarding Partnership Groups**

Two groups were established at the start of the Pandemic to understand the most vulnerable children and adults and the mechanisms in place to provide assurance on who had line of sight. The groups were responsible for the management, oversight and response to any emergency regards the most vulnerable in Darlington and provided Statutory Partners with assurance and an operational overview of what was happening on the ground.

Both groups had oversight of processes and how agencies were operating. These group ensured there was strategic oversight of vulnerable children and adults across all agencies and a new guidance was developed to support the groups.

- **MASH/Childrens Front Door Operational Group**

The MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) Operational Group for children was established during this period to share good practice, practice challenges and any other information relevant to the operational management and functioning of the Childrens Front Door in Darlington. It is a multi-agency group with a shared responsibility for safeguarding children with an aim of promoting effective communication between all partner agencies contributing to decision making and involvement with children and families at the Front Door.

- **Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP)**

Child Death Overview Panel arrangements are undertaken cross border with Durham Safeguarding Partnership. The Panel continues to review all deaths of children as required in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018.

This year the panel has identified a number modifiable factors and key learning points from reviews completed which include:

- Smoking in the household
- Smoking during pregnancy
- Management of high risk pregnancies
- Co-sleeping and parental alcohol and/or substance misuse.
- The new mortality database collates and shares all learning from reviews across the country.

Review of Governance arrangements

Discussions continue in respect of the development of the governance arrangements and work is ongoing to review how groups can align more closely to ensure learning is embedded into practice. What has been highlighted during the Pandemic is the need to have two separate operational groups for children and adults, to have oversight on the most vulnerable and ensuring mechanisms are in place to provide assurance on who has line of sight. The groups will focus on practice issues and challenges relating to operational management and will feed up to the Learning and Development and Quality Assurance and Performance Groups, who will take a strategic and coordinated view including a programme of checks and balances. This will be a priority for the Partnership going into 2020/21.

5. Activities and Interventions

Performance data and quality assurance activity

Work has progressed in collating multi-agency performance data to obtain an understanding of how COVID-19 has impacted on the changing landscape over the year.


There was a decrease in referrals to child and adult services in the first weeks of the lockdown and partners saw a decline in referrals into other services such as CAMHS and Paediatrics. There was an increase in contacts from midwifery and pre-birth assessments and repeat referrals.

As the year progressed the number of contacts into Children's services started to rise and were nearer normal levels. Police did not experience an increase in domestic abuse incidents as was reported in the media and this was supported by children's services data as the number of contacts received regarding domestic abuse had decreased. However, a larger number progressed to a referral to social care which suggested a rise in the severity of the abuse and a higher level of impact/risk/concern for the child.

Health Trusts saw an increase in children presenting with accidents to Emergency Departments and a decrease in those accessing services where there are more complex health issues. It was appreciated there were caveats with less activity in the general population due to lockdown and a genuine nervousness of accessing hospital due to COVID-19. Partners were assured the children attending A&E due to accidents were genuine and not as a result of non-accidental injury.

There was a noted increase in the number of contacts to the children's front door from members of the public and a revised process was adopted to respond to these to ensure information was triangulated.





Cases involving self-neglect and people with complex lifestyles have increased, there is emerging evidence the increase in the conversion rate could be related to the pandemic, particularly in relation to the cohort of individuals who have either no or low level care and support needs. Many in this cohort can be described as leading “chaotic lifestyles” where a prevalence to abusing substances often lead to self-neglect issues. The safeguarding team spent an increasing amount of time assisting these individuals who may have lost what little informal/formal support they had due to restrictions through the pandemic. As is being reported elsewhere the most vulnerable in the community appear to be the most severely impacted as a result of COVID-19.

There have been some changes in conversion rates for acute health providers who are seeing less people as a result of COVID-19 lockdown isolation.

During the pandemic three care homes and a private hospital met the threshold for Executive Strategy Meeting (ESM) process. This is a significant increase from the previous year. In all cases CQC have inspected these homes and rated them as either inadequate or requires improvement. The ESM process holds providers to account, however significant support is also made available from the Local Authority, Clinical Commissioning Group and Care Quality Commission (CQC). It is clear the provider market has struggled with the impact of the pandemic and those providers where there is weaker leadership and issues with recruiting and retaining staff of a sufficient quality have suffered most.

A significant Provider Forum which has multi-agency oversight on Care Home Sector and those settings in ESM and includes CQC and commissioning agencies, continues to monitor those settings as well as escalating any emerging concerns.

The most vulnerable in the community appear to be the most severely impacted as a result of COVID-19 and is acknowledged that there is likely to be an increase in referrals as there will likely be many hidden issues, which will emerge over time.

Adult Insight Project

Darlington took part in the COVID-19 Safeguarding Insight project which was developed to create a national picture regarding adult safeguarding activity during the Pandemic and was supported by the Local Government Association (LGA), Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) and National Network of Chairs of Safeguarding Adults Boards.

At the start of the Pandemic there were concerns that safeguarding issues were not being identified and reported during the lockdown period and was considered important to understand what had happened to learn lessons for future COVID-19 outbreaks, as well as responding to changing safeguarding needs.

The project required the collection of monthly data on safeguarding activity alongside a series of questions to elicit further insight and intelligence on local trends and changes. The data was analysed looking at the differences between activity in March 2019 and March 2020 and Darlington was generally comparable with the national picture.

Multi-Agency response to COVID-19 Practitioner Survey

The partnership carried out a survey to obtain a collective understanding of how agencies worked together to safeguard children during the Pandemic and to establish what has worked well and where improvements were required. Findings highlighted that partners were satisfied there was a 'line of sight' on the most vulnerable children, especially those children who were not in school. Appropriate safeguarding procedures were in place and agencies continued to work through the pandemic and ensure visits/contacts were safely undertaken. Services worked together to share the responsibility and there had been good communication and information sharing between agencies.

MASH multi-agency audits

In February 2020, the MASH Operational Group agreed to commence a multi-agency audit process based on key themes highlighted at the children's front door to review live cases. There will be a focus on two to three live cases as this means they will be timely and may result in a change of outcome for families. A model as to how this might be approached was being firmed up and initial areas suggested for initial focus were Cumulative Harm/Neglect and information sharing.



6. Analysis of impact and effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements

Child Safeguarding

Early Help

The partnership has recognised that early help requires a wider involvement than that provided by the local authority and the pressure on 'universal' services such as schools and health visitors has increased year on year. There was a reduction seen in the number of early help assessments undertaken by partner agencies due to impact of COVID.

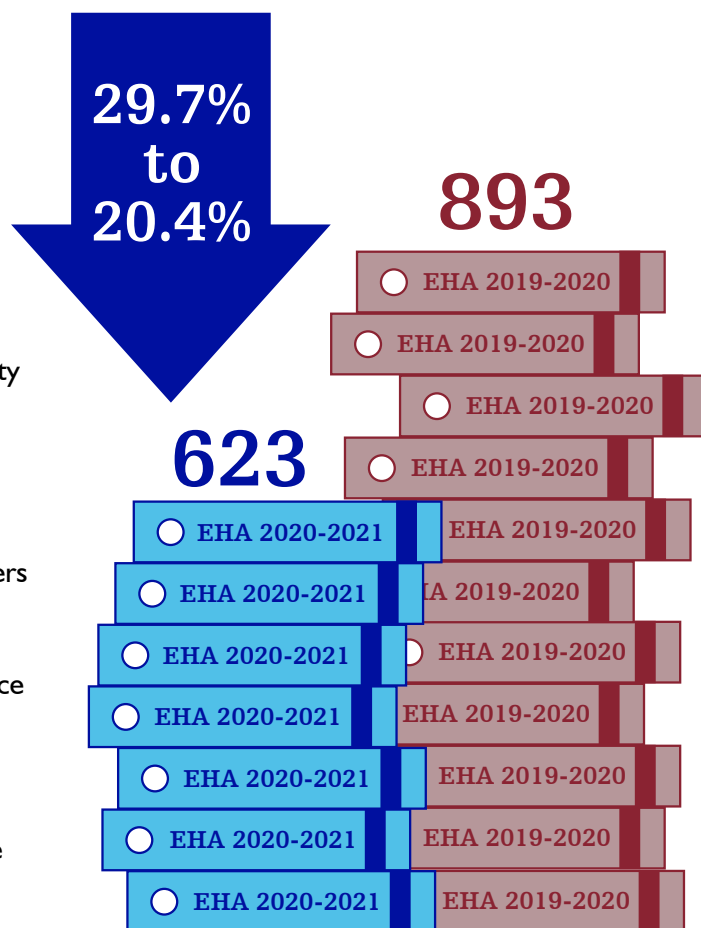
The Early Help Assessment is used by multi-agency partners and provides a standard and coordinated approach for practitioners to ensure children, young people and their families receive the right support at an early stage to reduce the chance of escalation to specialist services.

Early Help Services continued to respond to all contacts during the lockdown and continued to maintain a focus of regular contact with families as services which would have been delivered through face to face were being delivered online.

During 2020-21 there were 623 Early Help Assessments (EHA) started which is a decrease on the 893 completed in 2019-20, which is largely due to the impact of the pandemic. The percentage of EHAs completed by external agencies has also seen a decline from 29.7% to 20.4% which is below the 30% target.

Children in Need (CiN)

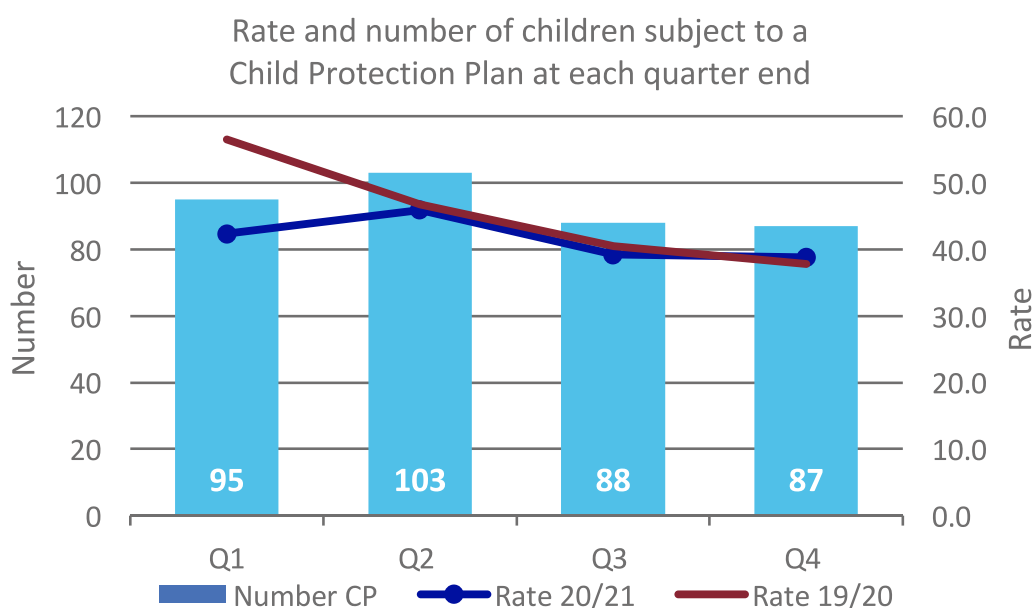
In March 2021 there were 332 children in Darlington identified as CiN, compared to 357 children that were at the end of the 2019/20 period.





Child Protection Plans (CPP)

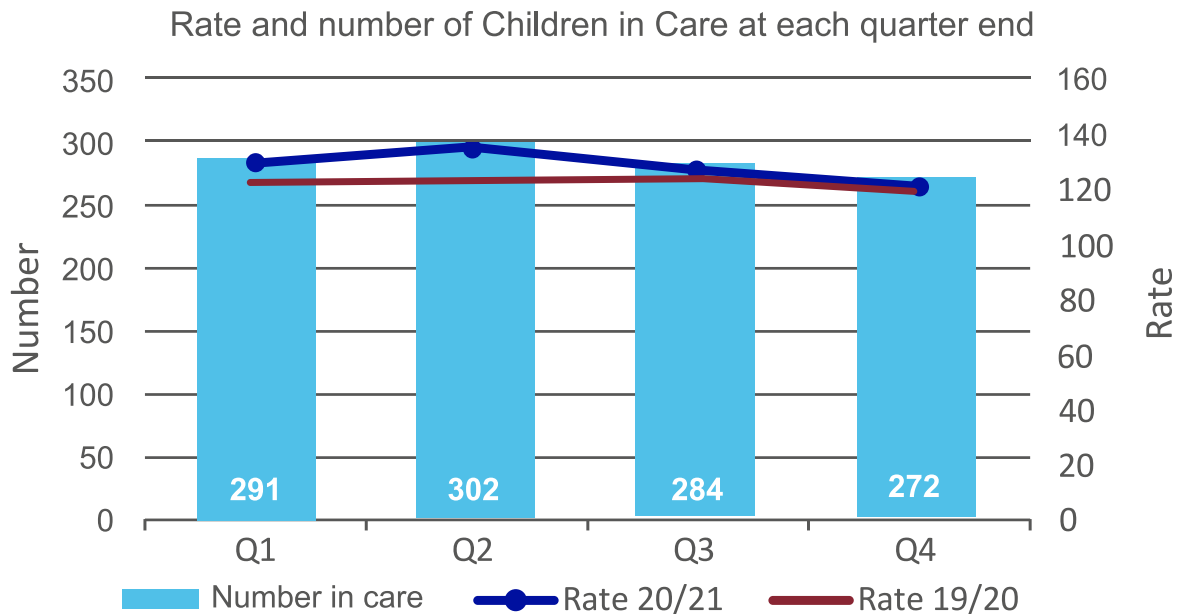
At the end of March 2021, 87 children were subject to a Child Protection Plan in Darlington (a rate of 38.8 per 10,000). This is lower than: regional average (70.0); statistical neighbour (53.9) and the national average (42.8).



Risk Factors associated with Child Protection were due to:			
Neglect	Emotional Abuse	Physical Abuse	Sexual Abuse
42%	42%	14%	2%

Children Looked After

Children looked after and care leavers are recognised nationally as one of the most vulnerable groups. It was reported from the beginning of April there had been a total of 26 children brought into care with 61% of those being placed with extended family members. During the pandemic the Family Courts adapted to new processes and reduced the number of hearings in order to manage virtual Court hearings, they remained open for urgent applications in respect of children who were at risk of significant harm. There had been minimal movement of placements as a result of the Pandemic.



The number of Looked After Children (LAC) by the local authority at the end of March 2021 was 272 (121.1 per 10,000); which is higher than our statistical neighbours (100.3), regional (108.0) and national average (67.0).

These placements were made up of:							
In house Fostering	Connected Carers	Private Fostering	Residential Care	Placed for adoption	Independent Living	Placed with parent	Other
54	44	91	28	17	6	22	10

Care Leavers

Care leavers remained in contact with services during the Pandemic and were supported in various ways. The Local Authority has a 'Staying Put' policy and there are currently nine young people accommodated under this arrangement.

74 out of 75 care leavers in Darlington were in suitable accommodation by the end of 2020-21 and the percentage of care leavers (aged 19-21) who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) was 17.9%, below the target of 30%, these were either due to disability or illness, pregnancy or parenting or other circumstances.

Transition to Adulthood

When a young person reaches the age of 18 they are legally an adult under SEND and Leaving Care statutory guidance, however children's services retain the responsibility to ensure the right package of care is provided. There is a difference between the thresholds for support and models of care between adults and children's services, therefore a child and young person who has qualified for care and support under the SEND agenda for Children's legislation will be reassessed as to their eligibility to receive support from Adult Social Care.

Education

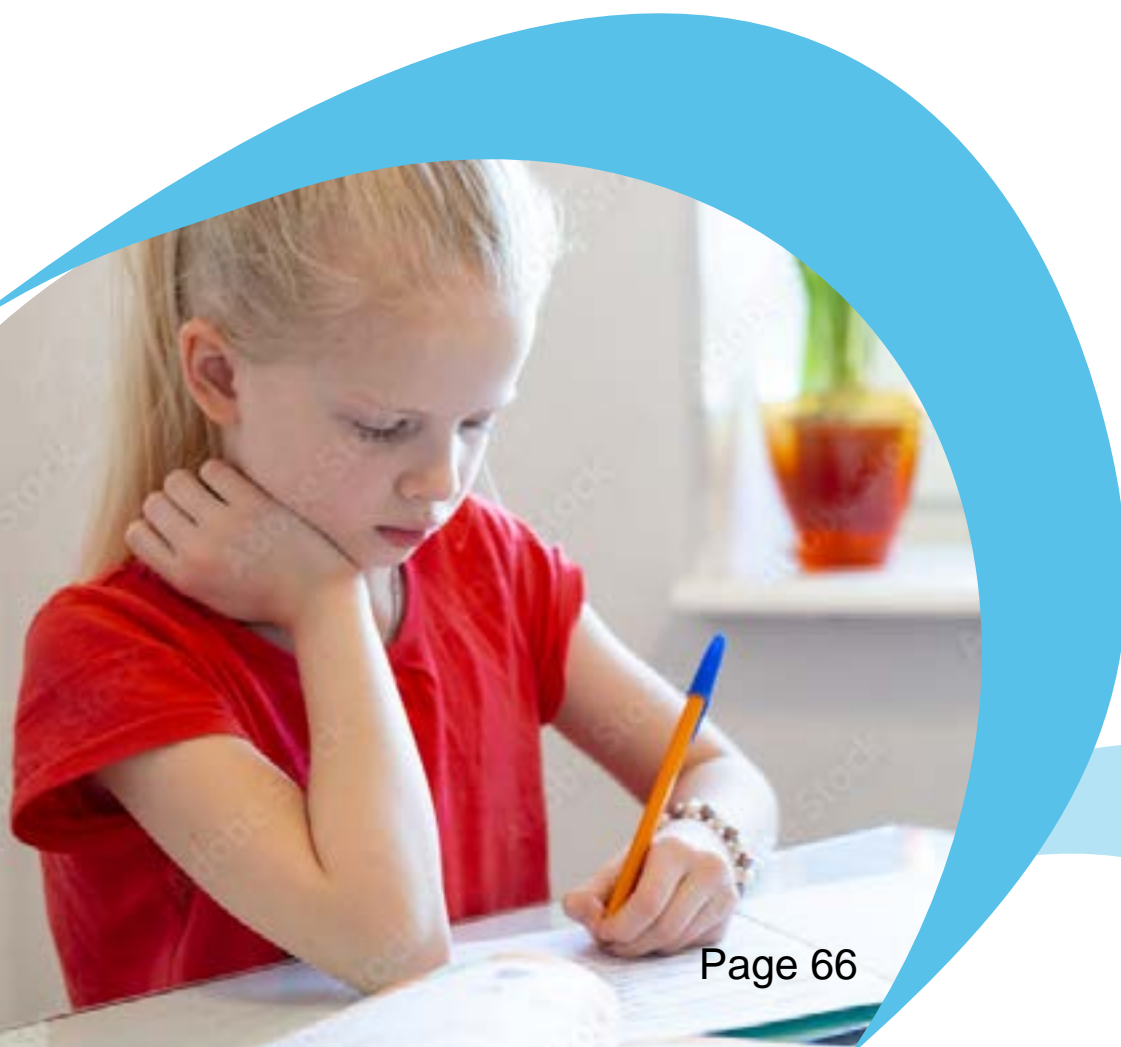
Throughout the Pandemic, 100% of schools in Darlington remained open for vulnerable children and those with critical worker parents, compared to the national average of 61%. All schools in Darlington made arrangements that enabled children with a social worker to continue to attend and children and their parents were actively encouraged to do so with school attendance being monitored daily.

Average attendance for children with a social worker was 30% which compared favourably with national attendance estimate of 18%. It was also reported that throughout the pandemic there had been a strong multi-agency focus on attendance with liaison between Head Teachers, Designated Safeguarding Leads, Social Workers and health colleagues to ensure the most vulnerable children received a co-ordinated approach to their education and on-line learning.

Elective Home Education (EHE)

There are effective measures in place for Elective Home Education following a real focus in Darlington and the appointment of a full-time EHE Advisor. A local policy has been developed in line with 2019 EHE guidance and all cases are RAG rated against the statutory guidance on evidence of receiving suitable education.

As was to be expected and seen nationally, the number of children EHE increased significantly during the year due to the Pandemic, with reasons cited as COVID related. Although face to face visits were not taking place, welfare texts, phone and conference calls have continued with vulnerable pupils as a priority.



Since beginning of March 2021, 151 unannounced visits were conducted, during which contact was re-established with 72 families. The EHE data continues to fluctuate regularly as parents have free choice to elect for home education. Schools have been encouraged to inform EHE Advisor prior to parent's decision to home educate.

As at 31 March 2021 there were 209 EHE with 110 from GRT community. Darlington has a higher than average GRT population, with a high proportion of EHE from this community. The EHE advisor works closely with the GRT teacher and the 'Moving on and Aiming High' project was well attended.

There continues to be a focus on the safety and wellbeing of EHE children and partners received assurance reports throughout the year.

Children Missing from Home, Care and Education

The total number of children who went missing from home or care during 2020-21 was 219 with 100% of children being offered a return home interview, 69% within the 72-hour timescale. Of these young people who went missing 21.9% were Children in Care. Return Home interviews were offered for all children and feedback suggests children were not returning home at the time they should have due to pressures and strain of the lockdown and children feeling isolated with added pressure in family home.

The Philomena Protocol continues to protect children who go missing from care by promoting a joint investigation with an aim of returning the child to safety.

The total number of children missing from education (CME) for 2019-20 were 58 and all children referred had been traced.

Exploitation of children and young people

Multi-agency work around child exploitation is coordinated through the Child Exploitation Group (CEG), which was extended to reflect a broader focus and includes all forms of Criminal Exploitation, County Lines, Organised Crime and Modern-Day Slavery.

The partnership continues to obtain an understanding of the risks posed to young people as they grow and become influenced by a whole range of environments and people outside the family home such as school/college, their community, peer groups or online.

A cross agency Child Exploitation Vulnerability Tracker (CEVT) was launched in November 2019, originally designed to track County Lines. The tracker is used across Darlington and County Durham to identify children at risk. Children are scored based on level of risk, the tracker is monitored by CEG.

Child Deaths

During 2020/2021 there were 11 child deaths in Darlington. The 2020-21 CDOP Annual report contains a summary of activity carried out by the County Durham and Darlington Child Death Overview Panel.



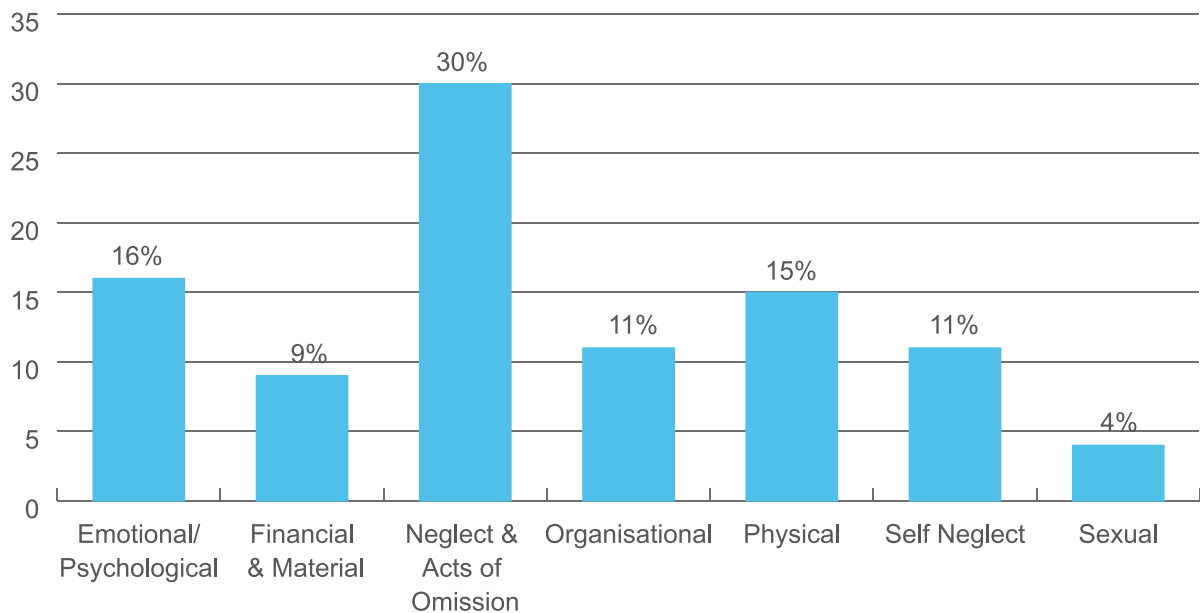


Adult Safeguarding

The number of reported concerns for abuse and neglect in 2020/21 was 1543, with 40% progressing to S42 safeguarding enquiry. Of the concluded S42 enquiries, in 95% of cases the outcome was that the risk was either reduced or removed.

The most common category of abuse in Darlington continues to be Neglect and Acts of Omission which represented 30%. This was followed by Emotional/Psychological (16%) and Physical Abuse (15%).

Categories of Abuse



Location of abuse:								
Own home	In the Community	Community Service	Care Home Nursing	Care Home residential	Hospital Acute	Hospital Mental Health	Hospital Community	Other
35.6%	6.6%	3.2%	2.3%	33%	3.3%	8.6%	0.8%	1.9%

Executive Strategy Process

Executive Strategy processes are held to address all concerns and issues relating to suspected organised or institutional abuse or neglect of adults. In 2020/21, there were three care settings in Executive Strategy Process, two of these settings were removed during this period as assurance was provided that they had made improvements and had safe practices in place and all regulatory action had been completed. One setting continues to remain in Executive Strategy Process and continues to be monitored by the Significant Provider Forum.

Adults who go missing

The Herbert Protocol is a national scheme adopted by Durham Constabulary, working alongside its partners and encourages staff, families, friends and carers to provide useful information which could be used in the event of a vulnerable person going missing from either a care home or their own home. The information may help police and other agencies locate the missing person much more quickly and return them to safety.

Domestic Abuse

The vision of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) is for all agencies to work together to reduce the prevalence of domestic abuse and to provide a co-ordinated community response. The safeguarding partnership is committed to supporting a reduction in the prevalence of domestic abuse in Darlington, including a co-ordinated community response to prevention, support and protection services and services for perpetrators.

Operation Encompass addresses shortcomings in the early sharing of information with schools to enable them to provide proactive support to children and young people who are affected by domestic abuse within the family home. During the period April 2020 to March 2021 there were 406 incidents which involved 576 children, all notified to schools.

Domestic abuse remains a key training module to raise awareness and to ensure frontline practitioners are aware of the impact domestic abuse can have on victims, children and vulnerable adults. It also includes an emphasis on coercion and control.

The Domestic and Sexual Violence Executive Group (DASVEG) monitors local arrangements and the role key partners have in tackling domestic abuse which provides some assurance about multi-agency response to tackling domestic violence and abuse.

December 2020, saw the launch of the 4Kids project, a partnership approach to tackling domestic abuse in the family home, with particular emphasis on the harm caused to children in the household. Through a restorative approach, the aim of the project is to have both parents acknowledge the impact of their unhealthy relationships and to recognise how their behaviour affects the development of their children. The project is still in its infancy, however it is already having a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing of children and through support offered is hoped will improve their life chances.

The Domestic Abuse Bill 2020 will offer many new protections for domestic abuse victims and their families and places a duty on local authorities and partner agencies to support victims of domestic abuse and their families and the Partnership will explore how it can work together with the Community Safety Partnership to tackle its response to domestic abuse in Darlington.





Housing and Homelessness

2020/21 has been a challenging and busy year for Darlington Borough Council housing teams and partner agencies. Changes in legislation means that the local authority has a duty to house people and as a consequence there was a significant increase in the numbers of people in emergency accommodation compared to pre Covid-19 levels. Between May and June 2020 there were 243 presentations requesting emergency accommodation, with June 2020 seeing the highest levels ever recorded. In April 2019 there were 297 people in accommodation and by April 2020 this had increased to 817. These mainly represent the 'hidden homeless' who sofa surf and needed to find accommodation during the lockdown.

There has been an increase in victims of domestic abuse seeking housing and all such victims were accommodated. There has also been an increase in people with mental health needs requesting housing along with people who have multiple complex needs and dual diagnosis, but who are nevertheless deemed to have capacity.

Higher risk people have been housed outside of the borough due to a lack of suitable premises. However, central government announced a four year funding initiative and Darlington Borough Council, with the Community Safety Partnership made a bid for funding to secure accommodation for rough sleepers and will look at funding support workers for offending/substance misuse and providing 'higher risk' units with 24/7 support.

Communication and Engagement

The voice of children, young people and adults with needs for care and support and their families is at the heart of all partnership activity. The Partnership structure includes the provision for actively seeking the voice of children and adults ensuring their voices are threaded throughout the structure. It is a challenge for some agencies to demonstrate and we will continue to review ways in which we can gather this feedback and recognise there is much more that can be achieved.

Where possible the partnership will involve families in Child and Adult Safeguarding learning reviews and information from such engagement will be used to inform and develop practice.

The Communication and Engagement strategy sets out the strategic aims and objectives of the Partnerships approach to communication and engagement. The strategy embraces the 'Think Family' approach to ensure the work of the Partnership is effectively communicated to relevant audiences which includes children, young people and adults at risk, their families as well as practitioners and the wider community in Darlington.

Annual Young People Conference

Dralington Safeguarding Partnership is committed to hosting an annual Young People's Conference, unfortunately, due to the Pandemic the conference scheduled for July 2020 had to be cancelled. The conference aimed at young people aged 12-14 is an opportunity to promote key messages on the prevention of harm. Again, due to the Pandemic it is unlikely there will be a conference held in 2021.

Corporate Parenting Panel

Care Leavers have an active voice in shaping and developing children's services through a number of channels including the Corporate Parenting Panel and Leaving Care Forum.

Healthy Lifestyle Survey

A healthy Lifestyle survey is usually conducted annually in participating schools, however due the Pandemic it has not been possible to conduct as normal. A survey was shared with Primary sector and summary of results includes reporting an understanding of what positive relationships should look like and the effects of negative behaviours on others such as bullying. The influence of social media is significant and children are largely reporting unrestricted and unsupervised access to the internet and social media.

Regional Adult Safeguarding Radio Campaign

The North East Association of Directors of Adult Social Services launched a regional safeguarding radio campaign during the year, with a purpose of reinforcing awareness of safeguarding issues amongst the public and to empower them to feel confident in reporting a concern and to reassure vulnerable adults, their relatives and carers that social services are concentrating on abuse and have not let it slip as a priority during the Coronavirus Pandemic. The radio campaign was listened by 30% of the region's population and an increase of impact was shown across the region for safeguarding concerns whilst the campaign was live.





Making Safeguarding Personal

Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP) is applicable to all agencies and aims to develop a person centred and outcomes focus to safeguarding. In Darlington MSP and the involvement of service users or their representative in safeguarding enquiries is measured from the outset and is evaluated as part of the safeguarding process. Despite the pandemic, the principles of MSP were being maintained through telephone, face time or zoom calls. It was highlighted that using these platforms there can be some difficulties in reading body language and therefore making more difficult to monitor and offer support where needed, discussions were taking place with families to prepare for virtual meetings.

In 2020/2021 96% of cases consistently involved the individual (or their representative or advocate) in the safeguarding enquiry. The partnership continues to seek assurances that the principles of MSP are embedded within partner agencies.

Review of Children's Front door arrangements

Darlington Borough Council implemented its new strengthening families programme which was to see relational and restorative practices at the centre of practice to find solutions to issues and work together to lead to better outcomes for children and young people.

The new practice went live in March 2020 and requires partners to telephone the Children's Initial Advice Team and have a conversation with a social worker to discuss the concerns to ensure the right support is put in place to meet the needs of the children and young people. Prior to the process the Children's Access Point were receiving 292 telephone calls and 7177 email contacts. A critical part of the implementation was to encourage practitioners to hold telephone conversations and over the course of the year the number of telephone contacts has increased seven fold to 2364 telephone contacts. These figures evidence the new process has been fully embraced by partner agencies and initial feedback indicates partners are welcoming the opportunity for discussion with richness in having a conversation to support families.

The conversion from contact to referral has reduced by 22.6% which has also resulted in a reduction in the number of strategy discussions, evidencing the model is proven to be effective. There has also been a reduction in the number of single assessments with those resulting in no further action reducing by 39.4%, which can be attributed to consistency at the front door and evidencing there has been a reduction in unnecessary or inappropriate interventions with families.

Independent Chair Engagement

During the year the Independent Chair held multi-agency meetings with the relevant agencies of the Partnership and attended other forums such as primary and secondary education forums to talk about current issues, what is working well and what needs to change relating to current safeguarding arrangements.

DSP website, briefings and newsletters

The DSP uses a variety of methods to communicate to many different audiences. From DSP members, wider safeguarding partners, managers and frontline practitioners, to the general public, children & young people, parents and carers and adults and their families.

The Partnership website continues to be a key forum to provide key safeguarding messages to practitioners and to the wider public as well as useful information and resources to support those working with children and adults.

www.darlington-safeguarding-partnership.co.uk

The partnership developed a number of briefings to update on national, regional and local information which highlighted key headlines the partnership should be sighted on, including bulletins to support partners through the beginning weeks of the COVID Pandemic.

In December 2020, the partnership launched its quarterly newsletter to provide information and guidance to those working across child and adult services and feedback on this has been positive, however it is recognised there is much more to be done to ensure key messages are cascaded to the right people within each partner organisation.



Learning and Development

Whilst the partnership continues to deliver a high-quality inter-agency training programme, the Pandemic has greatly impacted on the ability to provide face to face training. During 2020/21 a programme of both eLearning and virtual training was developed to cover any gaps and address any potential risks that the Statutory Safeguarding Partners may need to be sighted on.

Increasingly, courses were being adapted to be relevant for work for both child and adult service user groups. This facilitates a greater understanding of respective roles and responsibilities and supports some of the 'transition' areas for improvement and 'think family approach'. The training is regularly updated to ensure the lessons from learning reviews are reflected within the training programme as well as identifying the local needs of the multi-agency workforce. The virtual training offer was well received and helped to reduce the risk of professional isolation associated with the pandemic.

The Learning and Development group continues to ensure there is quality and consistency of single and multi-agency training through initiatives such as training needs analysis (TNA), peer evaluation, quality assurance and the pre and post course evaluation process. The development of training is supported and actively monitored by the sub group. Any development and changes are reported to the group by the Multi-Agency Trainer.

Despite the pandemic the Partnership continued to provide an extensive multi-agency programme of virtual courses and provision of new training.

Examples of development during 2020-2021 include:

- The local authority is licensed to use the NSPCC Graded Care Profile support tool for child neglect, the multi-agency trainer delivers the training and the course is now embedded into the multi-agency training programme.
- Development and delivery of sessions to support the updates to Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020.
- Additional courses have been developed and introduced to the programme and focus on Professional Challenge, Cumulative harm and Safeguarding Children with Special Educational needs and Disabilities.
- Podcasts have been developed to focus on the revised guidance on Professional Challenge and Information Sharing.



What did we achieve?

- 104 virtual multi-agency training sessions delivered throughout 2020/21 via Microsoft teams
- 1166 attendances recorded for the virtual training
- 578 people completed e-learning modules

Partner agencies provided details on their interim measures to address safeguarding training during the Pandemic, with the majority also delivering on a virtual basis.

Evaluation and Assessment

It is recognised that assessment of learning is necessary to measure both the quality of training and to evidence the impact on practice and how the training is contributing to improving the knowledge and skills of the workforce. Demonstrating the effectiveness of training is not an easy matter and whilst the partnership continues to seek evidence of quality of training and impact of practice, due to the Pandemic the usual paper data evaluation process has proven to be unsuitable following virtual training. As an interim measure only the trainer has requested delegates to feedback via email commenting on the quality of training. The feedback has been positive although a few delegates have highlighted that virtual training is not as effective as face to face training.

Examples of feedback received:

The session was informative and helpful in relation to all aspects of safeguarding procedures. It is reassuring to know there is someone at the end of a phone for help, support and advice (voluntary sector)

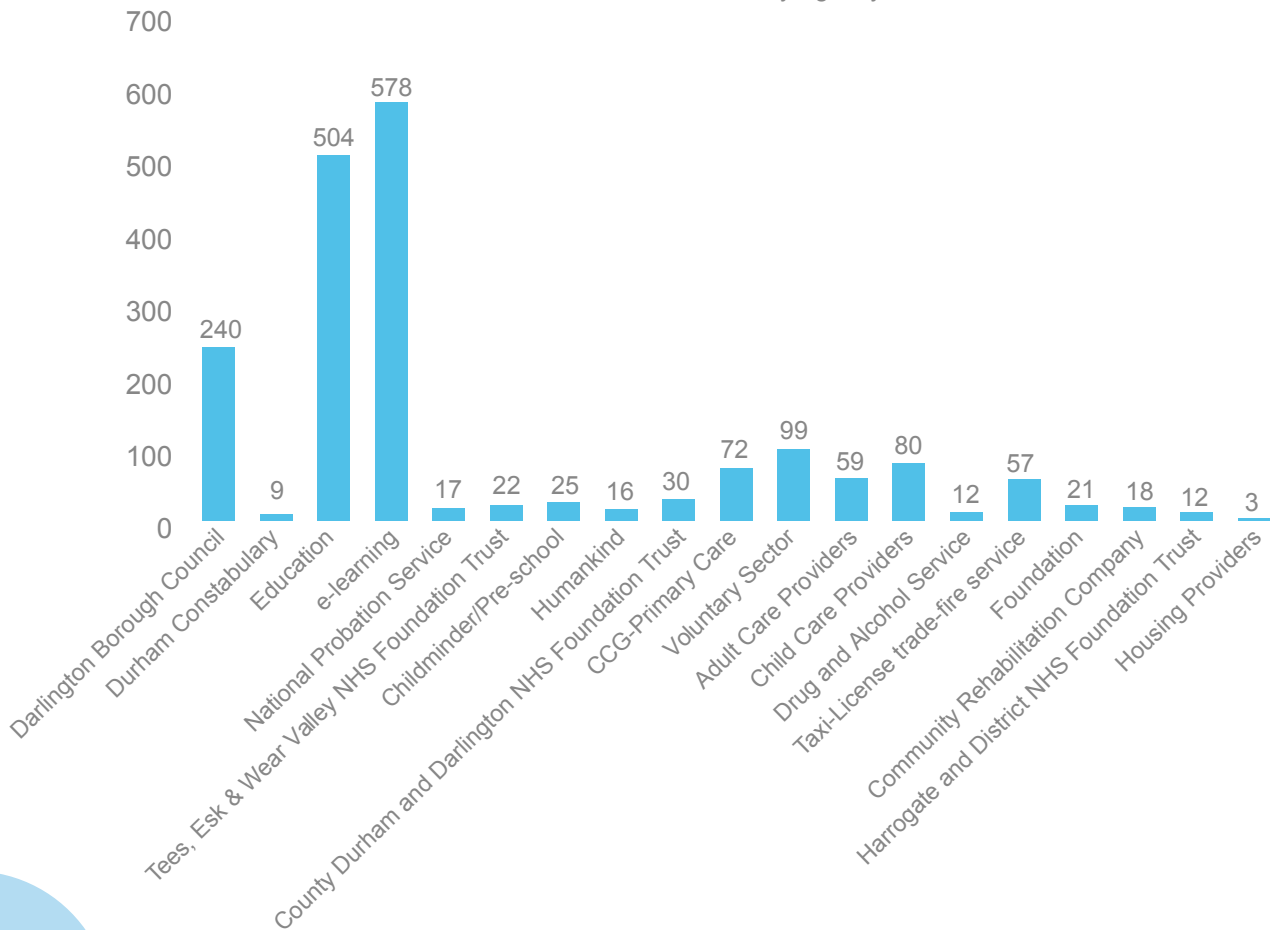
I think I enjoyed it more than the face to face training. Loads of helpful information and advice. Although I have a great network it is so reassuring to know that someone is available to talk to and advise at the end of a phone. Thank you again (volunteer)

The training was very good and a great refresher for us all. Its will be nice when we can return to face to face training, but that training was very well delivered. (Care Home)



The chart below outlines the attendance by partner agencies during the period April 2020 - March 2021.

Learners 2020-21 by Agency



Policy and Procedure

Enabling continual improvement and learning for partners and practitioners is important to the Partnership. The ongoing review of policies, procedures and guidance documents is important to support front line practitioners with both prevention, early intervention and awareness raising. There is a clear timeline for the revision of policy and procedure which is monitored through a policy revision schedule.

The Learning and Development Sub Group continues to provide a co-ordinated multi-agency approach to safeguarding practice through the development, review and updating of policies and procedures for use by professionals across the partnership.

During 2020/21 the following were developed, reviewed and revised by the Partnership:

- Medical Assessments - information on medical assessments have been incorporated into the Child Protection Procedures to support practitioners when there is an allegation, suspicion or disclosure of child abuse involving a suspicious injury.
- Managing Allegations against employees and volunteers who work with adults who have needs for care and support - incorporating advice on dealing with those who are self employed.
- Bruising in non-mobile children Protocol - setting out the referral pathways and incorporating into the Child Protection Procedures
- Guidance on Confidentiality has been incorporated into the Child Protection Procedures
- Professional Challenge Procedure revision - to include additional guidance on when and how it should be applied
- Forced Marriage Practice Guidance
- Honour Based Abuse Practice Guidance
- Safeguarding Adult Review Procedure
- Child Safeguarding Practice Review and serious Incident Notification Procedures
- Fire Setting Guidance

All revisions are undertaken in consultation with partner agencies and partners agencies are expected to disseminate and implement within their own agency. All documents are published on the DSP website.



7. Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and Safeguarding Adult Reviews

During 2020-21, the Partnership did not undertake any new Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR) or Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SAR). Whilst it is acknowledged the number of Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews or Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs) in Darlington have been low, the Partnership recognised there was a need to improve the processes and guidance to clearly set out organisational responsibilities for dealing and responding to serious incidents.

Whilst there is no formal requirement for notification for a SAR, partners agreed a similar process to replicate that of a Child Safeguarding Practice Review should be followed where appropriate, which has been reflected in the SAR Procedure.

DSP revised Serious Child Safeguarding Incident and Child Safeguarding Practice Review Procedure and Safeguarding Adult Review Procedure.





Partners are assured there is now a robust process in place for all circumstances and/or events which either meet the criteria for notification to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel or meet the criteria for Safeguarding Adult Review, as well as for reporting those cases that do not meet the criteria however highlight there is learning to be explored and are referred to the Learning and Development Group.

There were a number of cases referred during the year that were deemed did not meet the criteria for notification which the Learning and Development Sub Group has considered and taken forward as learning events.

Key messages from reviews are shared using a range of methods, including the development of briefing documents and training podcasts. Partners are asked to use these tools within their own organisation to support and improve learning and practice.

As a result of learning, the following guidance and tools were developed:

- revision of the Professional Challenge procedure and guidance
- development of a training podcast to support professionals in knowing when and how to apply the procedure
- development of a training podcast on information sharing
- development of fire setting guidance

It was noted that it is only the local authority who have referred cases in this and the previous period and work continues in raising awareness of the CSPR and SAR procedures and the role that all partners have in reporting cases.

8. Looking Ahead

This year has been a year like no other, the Covid-19 pandemic will continue to influence the services provided by partners. We will ensure lessons learnt from how we safeguarded during the pandemic will be taken forward.

There are a number of challenges to support organisations and professionals across Darlington to safeguard children and adults. We will begin the year focussing on embedding the revised governance arrangements and develop the role of the Operational Groups. We will then work with partners in developing our key priority areas. These will include:

- Further develop scrutiny processes
- Transitional safeguarding from childhood to adulthood
- Learning from good practice as well as CSPRs/SARs
- Lived experience of child/adult
- Website development
- Domestic Abuse and collaboration with CSP



Appendix 1

Staffing and Budget

Darlington Safeguarding Partnership is supported by the following staff within the Business Unit:

- Business Manager
- Development Officer/Designated Officer
- Multi-Agency Trainer
- Business Support Officer
- Analyst (P/T seconded from Durham Constabulary to work jointly across Durham and Darlington Safeguarding Partnerships)
- Information Officer (P/T)

Contributions from Partner Agencies for 2019-20 period	
Darlington Borough Council	£88,942
Darlington Clinical Commissioning Group	£41,310
Durham Constabulary	£34,404
Schools Forum	£10,000
Darlington College	£1,600
County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust	£16,973
Queen Elizabeth 6th Form College	£1,515
Community Rehabilitation Company	£1,000
National Probation Service	£770
Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust	£2,000
Course and Training Fees	£1,930
Total Revenue	£200,444

Appendix 2

Relevant Agencies

- Darlington Local Authority - Housing, Public Health, Youth Offending
- Health agencies - County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust (CDDFT), Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV), Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust (HDFT), North East Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (NEAS)
- Children and Families Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS)
- Care Quality Commission (CQC)
- Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (DDFRS)
- Early Years Settings
- Education (Primary, Secondary, Further Education, SEN)
- Support organisations for issues such as Substance Misuse / Domestic Abuse / Sexual Exploitation / Sexual Abuse (SARC)
- Family Justice Board (FJB)
- National Probation Service (NPS)
- Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC)
- Voluntary and third sector organisations (including Healthwatch)
- Darlington Primary Care General Practices
- Darlington Clinical Commissioning Group
- NHS England (pharmacy, dentist and optometrists)
- Independent providers including private hospitals, children's homes, nursing and care homes, domiciliary providers
- Youth groups - e.g. sport, scouts, brownies
- Faith settings
- Minority Communities
- British Transport Police (BTP)
- Chairs of other key local boards
- Representatives of other National Partners
- Darlington Partnership - which includes business and community organisations
- Coroner



DARLINGTON
Borough Council





**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
25 OCTOBER 2021**

CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING UNIT

INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCE CHAIR ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. The Annual Independent Reviewing Officer report is produced by the Children's Safeguarding Unit (CSU). The report includes an overview of the work by of the Independent Reviewing Officer Service. In Darlington the service provides independent reviewing and functions in relation to both:
 - (a) Children who are Looked After, and
 - (b) Children who are the subject of Child Protection Conferences and / or multi-agency Child Protection Plans.
2. The report provides an overview of performance, activity, and areas for development.
3. The report provides an overview of the service followed by two sections that can be separated:
 - (a) Part 1 is the Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report 2020/21. The production of this report is a requirement under the statutory guidance. This covers the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer which is a defined role that relates to Children Looked After. This statutory function is set out in the IRO Handbook (2010), and links to the revised Care Planning Regulations and Guidance (2011).
 - (b) Part 2 is the Child Protection Conference Chair Annual Report 2020/21. This covers the role of the conference chair in relation to children who are in need of safeguarding. The statutory requirements are set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children (July 2018), which stipulates that the chair of a Child Protection Conference needs to be accountable to the Director of Children's Services, and should be a professional, independent of operational and / or line management responsibilities for the case.

COVID-19

4. For the whole of the period April 2020 – March 2021 the work undertaken by the Children’s Safeguarding Unit has been under Covid-19 arrangements. The Government’s *Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for children’s social care service*, states that meetings should; “go ahead, using video conferencing or conference calling solutions where appropriate.”
5. In line with this guidance, all formal meetings, which in previous years would have been face to face, have been conducted using virtual platforms. This applies to all Child Protection Conferences, Child Looked After Review, and the majority of contact with children, young people and their families.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Members note the content of this annual report.

James Stroyan
Group Director of People

S17 Crime and Disorder	No direct impact
Health and Wellbeing	The service actively promotes health and wellbeing of Children & Young People
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	No direct impact
Diversity	The service actively supports the diversity agenda
Wards Affected	The service offers provision across all of Darlington
Groups Affected	Children & Young people subject to Child Protection Conferences Children & Young people who are Looked After
Budget and Policy Framework	The service is managed within current budgets
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
Council Plan	The service contributes to the priorities in the Council Plan; Providing care and support when needed / Working with partners
Efficiency	Scrutiny of performance is integral to optimising outcomes
Impact on Children Looked After Children and Care Leavers	The first part of the report has a focus on Children Looked After

Role of Independent Reviewing Officers

6. The Independent Reviewing Officers are committed to achieving the best outcomes for all children and young people in Darlington, particularly the most vulnerable; including, children who are looked after and those subject to Child Protection Plans.
7. The service is responsible for the following statutory functions:
 - (a) Initial Child Protection Conferences;
 - (b) Child Protection Review Conferences;
 - (c) Child Looked After Reviews;
 - (d) Annual Foster Carer Reviews;
 - (e) Adoption Reviews;
 - (f) Disruption Meetings;
 - (g) Reviews of children placed in Secure Accommodation.
8. In Darlington, Independent Reviewing Officers undertake a range of non-statutory functions including, providing advice and guidance to professionals, facilitating single and multi-agency child protection training, are members of formal panels, management meetings and undertake a range of audits and other quality assurance activities.
9. Responsibility for the operational management, performance and development of the Service lies with the Service Manager for Quality Assurance and Independent Review, who reports to the Head of Practice, Children and Adult Services.

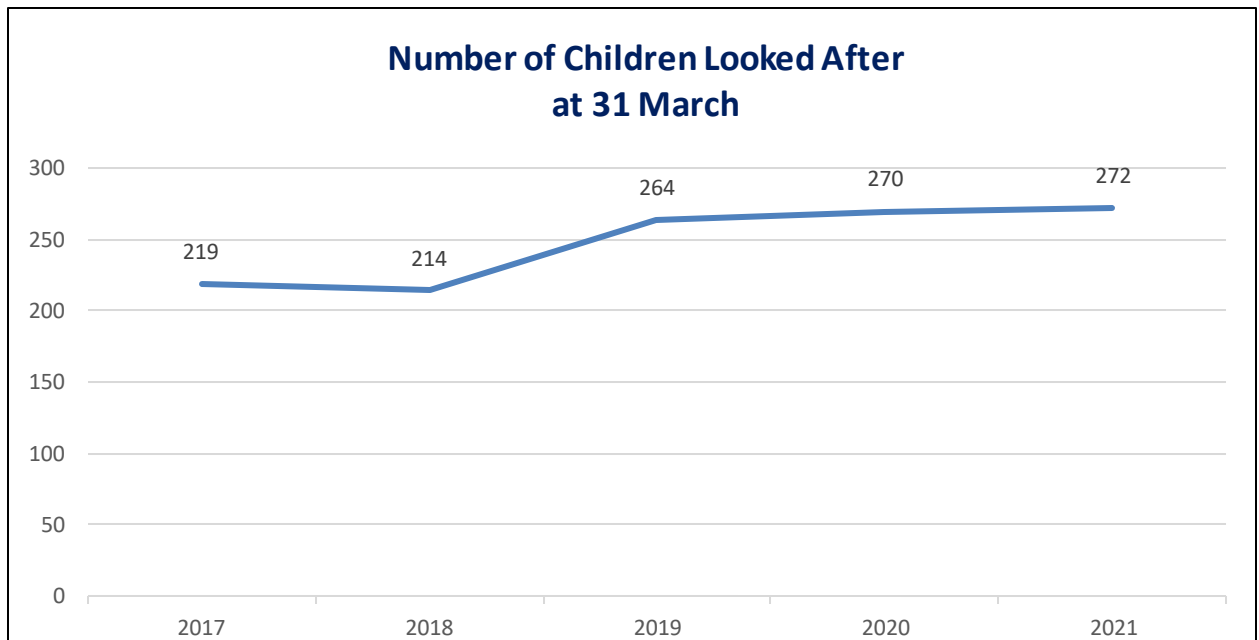
Part 1: INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

10. The Independent Review Officer (IRO) has a statutory responsibility / role in relation to Children Looked After. This is set out within the statutory framework of the IRO Handbook (2010) which is linked to the revised Care Planning Regulations and Guidance (2011). The responsibility of the Independent Reviewing Officer changed from the management of the Review process to a wider overview of the child's case including regular monitoring and follow-up between Reviews. The Independent Reviewing Officer has a key role in relation to the improvement of Care Planning for Children Looked After (CLA) and for challenging drift and delay.

Children Looked After

11. At the end of March 2021 there were 272 Children Looked After in Darlington, a similar position to the previous year (270).

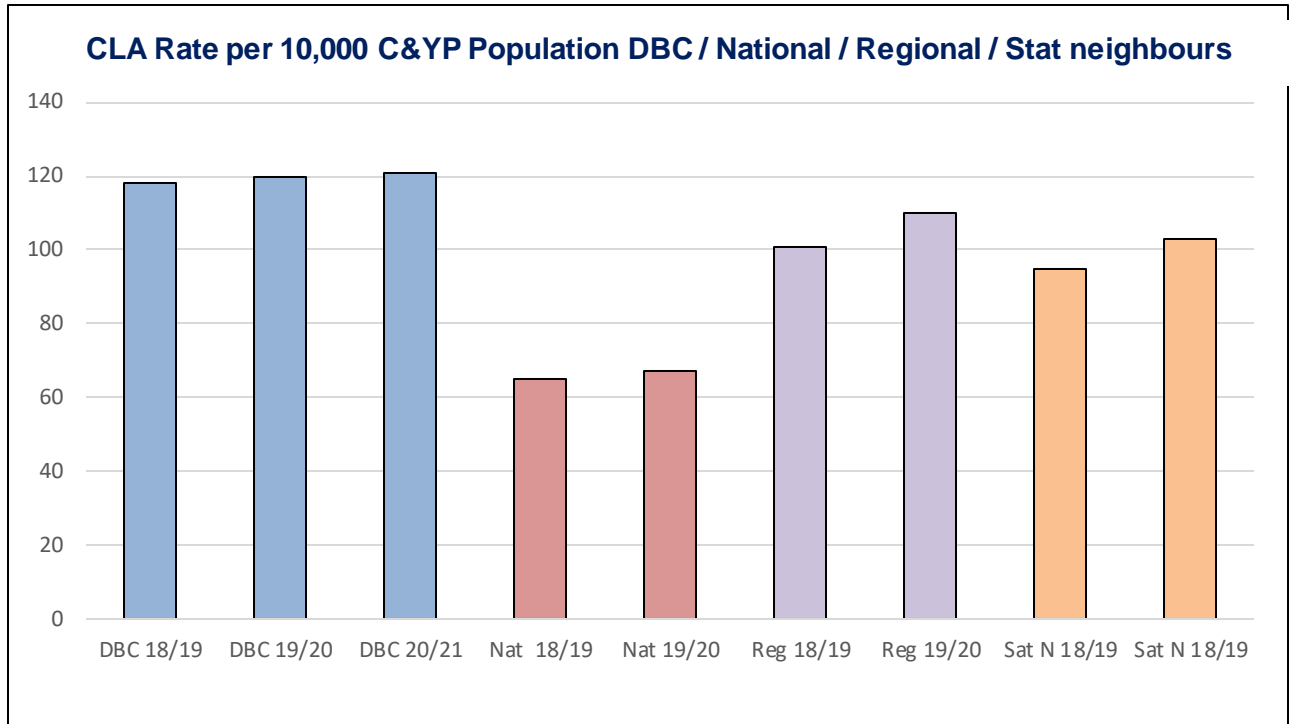
12. The chart below shows the monthly number of Children Looked After over the last 5 years.



13. The rate in Darlington has remained high; it plateaued with only small increases though 2016 to 2018. There was a significant increase in numbers during the summer of 2018. Although the end of year figures for the last two years is similar, the position is not necessarily as stable as it appears; there were 304 Children Looked After in August 2020, and this figure remained at a similar level until November. Due to Covid there were delays in the Courts ability to consider applications to discharge Care Orders which inflated the numbers of Children Looked After for a significant part of the year.

Children Looked After rate per 10,000

14. The table below is expressed as the rate per 10,000, which allows benchmarking with other councils (the most recent published data on National (England) and comparator groups of Regional (North East) authorities and statistical neighbours.



15. At the end of March 2021, 272 children were looked after by Darlington a rate of 121 per 10,000, a slight increase from the rate of 120 per 10,000 for 2019/20.
16. Analysis shows that Darlington continues to have a significantly higher rate of Children Looked After than both the Regional and Statistical Neighbours' average. It should be noted the most recent published data is as of 31 March 2020 and there has been a national increase in Children Looked After over the year. The comparator figures for 31 March 2021 will be published in the autumn.

Child Looked After Demographics

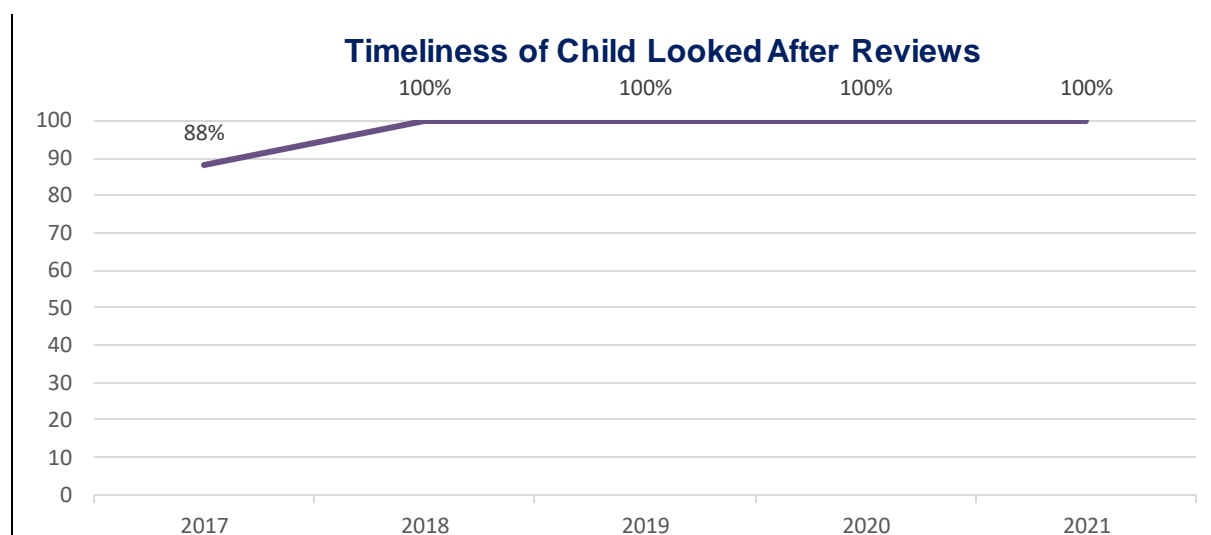
Age of Children Looked After (as of 31 March)	2017	2018	2019	2020		2021	
Under 1	8%	5%	8%	15	6%	11	4%
1-4	16%	15%	16%	51	19%	56	21%
5-9	26%	26%	26%	71	26%	68	25%
10-15	33%	35%	39%	100	37%	100	37%
16-17	17%	18%	12%	33	12%	37	14%
Total	219	214	264	270		272	

17. The age profile of Darlington's Looked After population has remained stable over the last 4 years. The majority of Children Looked After in Darlington continue to be between 10 and 15 years old which matches to the distribution nationally.

Ethnicity of Children Looked After (as of 31 March)	2017	2018	2019	2020		2021	
White	90%	92%	91%	244	90%	250	92%
Mixed	6%	4%	5%	12	4%	10	4%
Asian or Asian British	3%	3%	3%	9	3%	7	3%
Black or Black British	1%	1%	1%	5	2%	4	2%
Other	0%	0%	0%	0	0%	1	<1%
Total	219	214	264	270		272	

18. The ethnic population of Children Looked After in Darlington has remained stable over the previous 4 years. This is predictable due to the continued, comparative, lack of ethnic diversity within the Darlington population as a whole when compared to the national position.

Looked After Reviews and Timescales



19. The above chart shows that during 2020-21 performance in relation to the percentage of Children’s reviews which were completed within statutory timescales was 100%, maintaining the performance of recent years.

Children’s participation and contact with Independent Reviewing Officer

20. Participation applies to children or young people (subject to age and understanding; Care Planning, Placement and Case Review, DCSF March 2010).

21. Participation is based on one of the following methods of participation:

- (a) attending their Review and speaking on their own behalf,
- (b) attending their review but having another person speak for them,

(c) not attending the review but providing their views in a written form or through another facilitative medium, and /or

(d) not attending the review but briefing an advocate to represent their views.

22. Children’s participation in their Looked After Review looks at those children over the age of 4 years who participate in their statutory review through attending or other form of contribution (via advocate, written submission etc.). At the end of this reporting year, 784 individual Looked After Reviews were held, almost the same as last year at 787. [Note last year has seen a 37% increase in activity over the previous year].

C&YP Participation in Reviews (over the age of 4 years)	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Participated		88%	90%	96%	94%

23. The aim will be to increase the proportion of children and young people over the age of 4 that attend their review meeting, and to reduce the number of meetings where there are no views expressed.

24. Independent Reviewing Officers play a key role in actively seeking the views for children who do not wish to attend their reviews and to see what would assist in getting them there. Independent Reviewing Officers ensure that young people are able to contact them if they have any concerns. Once a new admission to care is allocated, the Independent Reviewing Officer will contact the child, if aged 4 or over and make arrangements to meet them prior to their Child Looked After Review. All contact details are provided at the time of allocation.

25. The IRO Handbook recommends the Independent Reviewing Officer meets with the child / young person within their placement, prior to the Looked After Review meeting or as part of the process. Despite the increase in Independent Reviewing Officer caseloads over the last year, this contact with young people between reviews has been maintained. Independent Reviewing Officers continue to offer the option of attending earlier than the review time to meet with the child or young person on the day of the scheduled review.

26. Independent Reviewing Officers currently record on the Liquid Logic case management system when they visit, have a Microsoft Teams, telephone, text conversation, or other form communication, with a child or young person.

Permanence Planning and Adoption

27. At the second Child Looked After Review scheduled within 4 months of a child or young person becoming looked after, the Permanence Plan should be agreed. The Independent Reviewing Officer will then actively monitor the care planning process to minimize any drift or delay. In 2019/20 all children had their permanency plan discussed at their 4-month review.

28. Additional Children Looked After Reviews are required when a child is to be adopted. When a child becomes the subject of a Placement Order an Adoption Review is required. For children moving into an adoption placement additional reviews are held within 28 days and at 3 months regardless of when the last looked after review was held. It is therefore possible for individual children to have up to four Looked After Reviews within a twelve-month period.

Dispute Resolution Process

29. One of the key functions of the Independent Reviewing Officer is to resolve problems arising out of the Care Planning process. The Dispute Resolution process reinforces the authority of the Independent Reviewing Officer and their accountability for decisions made at reviews. Independent Reviewing Officers will refer to the process when they feel that is appropriate to follow up on recommendations that have not been auctioned or where the implementation of a Care Plan is delayed. Independent Reviewing Officers will in the first instance use informal negotiation to resolve issues, and only where this is not successful will a formal challenge be made by instigating the Dispute Resolution Process.
30. There is good evidence of the 'IRO footprint' being evidenced on children's records. The letter from Ofsted following the Focused Visit in February 2019 stated:
- (a) Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) have become more effective since the last inspection (February / March 2018). They appropriately challenge Social Workers and Team Managers to help progress plans and reduce delay for children.
31. Evidence of Independent Reviewing Officer involvement in cases is checked via Learning Audits, dip sampling and through regular case supervision.

Foster Carer Reviews

32. Local Authorities are required by Regulation 29 (The Fostering Services Regulations 2001) to review the approval of foster carers at least once a year and the Independent Reviewing Service is responsible for undertaking the annual reviews. The additional part-time contracted Reviewing Officer has been retained. Ofsted during their re-inspection of Services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers; commented that it was good practice to have someone other than an Independent Reviewing Officer undertaking this role due to possible conflicts of interest.
33. All Darlington Borough Foster Carers and Connected Carers should receive an annual review.
34. In the year (2019-20); 95% of Annual Foster Carer Reviews were completed. Where annual reviews were not completed this was due to either the Carer or Social Worker recovery / availability due to Covid 19. All outstanding reviews were subsequently completed.
35. For all of the Annual Reviews completed recommendations were for carer re-approval. No recommendations were made in relation to de-registration. If any there had been any

significant changes to circumstances, or concerns raised at the Annual Review, these would be referred to the Children's Placement Service Panel.

Annual Foster Carer Reviews (as of 31 March)	
Number of Foster Carers	51
Number of Connected Carers	19
Total number of carers	70
Percentage completed in year	95%

Secure Reviews

36. In the year, no children were placed in Secure Accommodation that required a Secure Accommodation Review.

Observations of Independent Reviewing Officer conducting Looked After Reviews

37. To ensure that quality of practice each year a programme of direct observations of Independent Reviewing Officers of Looked After Reviews is undertaken by the Independent Reviewing Officer line manager.

38. Findings:

- (a) There is good evidence that mid-term reviews are taking place and that there is contact with young people prior to the Child Looked After Review meeting;
- (b) Independent Reviewing Officers chairing Child Looked After Reviews have a good understanding of the child's circumstances and what their plan is;
- (c) Independent Reviewing Officers have a good understanding of children's placements and issues;
- (d) Independent Reviewing Officer recording of what has been discussed with the child / Young person prior to the Child's Looked After Review was not always evident in a case note on the electronic record;
- (e) Independent Reviewing Officers are considering children's specific needs;
- (f) Young people attending reviews feel able to contribute to their meetings and to raise their own issues;
- (g) Where age appropriate the young people involved attend and contribute well to their review meetings.

Registration and accreditation

39. As the National Assessment Accreditation System (NAAS) for Social Workers has been on hold due to Covid, none of the Independent Reviewing Officers have completed the accreditation this year. Two team members completed the NAAS prior to the pandemic.
40. All Independent Reviewing Officers are registered with Social Work England and have completed the required annual CPD and evidenced this as part of their registration.

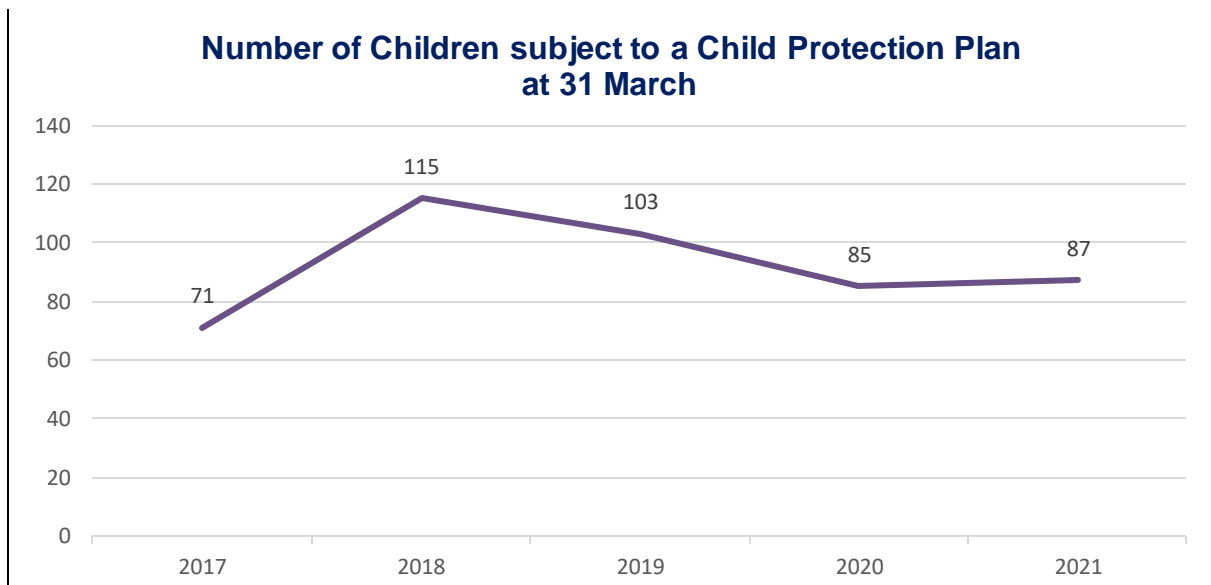
Part 2

CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCE CHAIR’S ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

41. The statutory requirements for individual services to safeguard and promote the welfare of children are set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children, A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (July 2018).
42. Working Together stipulates that the chair of a Child Protection Conference needs to be accountable to the Director of Children’s Services, and should be a professional, independent of operational and / or line management responsibilities for the case. In Darlington this function is undertaken by Independent Reviewing Officers.

Number of Children subject to Child Protection Plans

43. The chart below shows the number of Children subject to Child Protection Plans (CPP) over the last 5 years.



44. The total number of children with a Child Protection Plan on 31 March 2021 was 87; a rate of 38.8 per 10,000 children under the age of 18yrs. This is very similar to the figure position at the end of March 2020, when the figure stood at 85 (a rate of 37.8 per 10,000).

Rate per 10,000 of Children Subject to Child	2019 / 20				2020/21
	Darlington	Regional	Stat Neighbours	England	Darlington

Protection Plans at 31 st March					
National stats table (D1)	38	70	58	43	39

45. The rate of children who were the subject of a Child Protection Plan as of 31 March 2021 remains below the Regional, and in-line with the National averages of 31st March 2020. In the year nationally the rate has reduced (43.7 to 42.8) and regionally the rate has increased 63.1 to 70.0). Published benchmark data for 2020/21 will be available later in the year.

Child Protection Demographics

46. At the end March 2020, 87 children subject to a Child Protection Plan. Nationally the most recent published data for March 2020. In the tables below please note that the percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding. Of the 87 children:

Age of Children subject to a Child Protection Plan / (as of 31 March)	DBC 2020	National 2020	DBC 2021
Unborn	5%	2%	8%
Under 5	24%	34%	41%
5 -9	26%	29%	23%
10-15	39%	31%	22%
16 +	7%	5%	6%
Total	85		87

Category of Child Protection Plan / (as of 31 March)	DBC 2019	National 2020	DBC 2021
Neglect	38%	50%	36%
Physical	8%	6%	26%
Sexual	8%	4%	1%
Emotional	45%	38%	37%
Multiple		2%	
Total	85		87

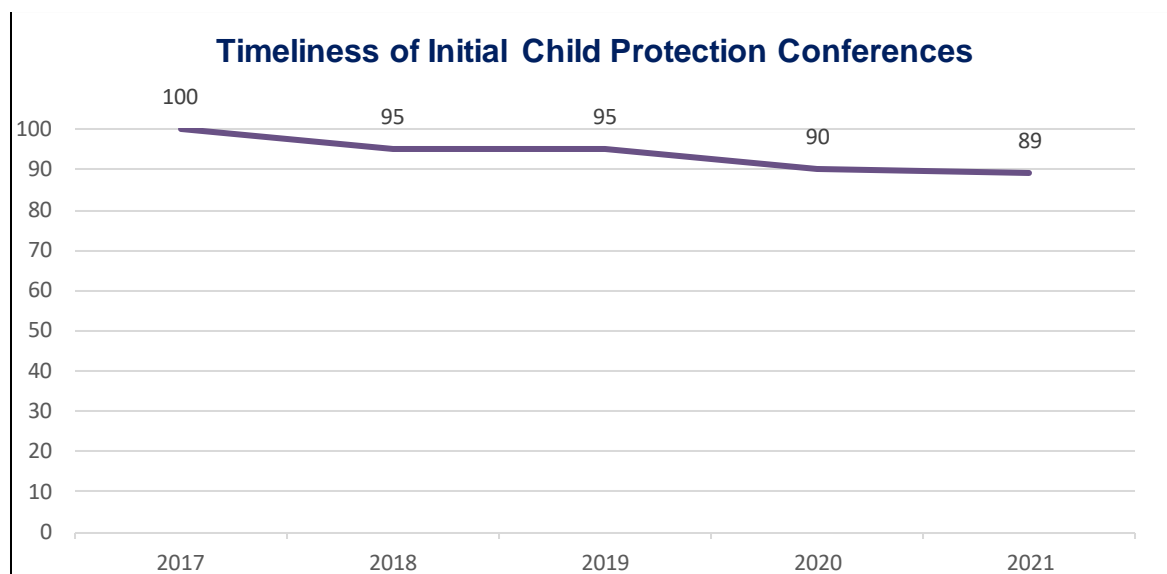
47. The proportion of Children subject to Child Protection Plan where the risk is Neglect or Emotional Abuse remains broadly in line with the national position in that they remain the highest categories. Locally percentages relating to categories can be impacted by one or two families either becoming, to or ceasing to be subject to a child Protection Plan.

48. On 31 March 2020 there were 85 children subject to Child Protection Plans; over the 12 months to 31 March 2021 this had increased to 87 children. 115 Children had Plans removed and 117 new Plans were made.

CP Plan Activity	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Becoming subject to a CP Plan	102	138	180	155	117
Ceasing to be the subject of a CP	166	94	192	173	115
Increase / decrease	- 64	+44	-12	-18	+2

49. The table above shows overall activity in relation to Child Protection Plans (numbers becoming subject to or ceasing). The situation in the last three years has been relatively stable when compared to the larger fluctuations seen in previous years.
50. Over the year, 78 Initial Child Protection Conferences or Transfer Conferences (where a child who is subject to a protection plan in another local authority moves to Darlington) were held [combined total of 133 children]. In addition 124 Child Protection Review Conferences were held [for 250 children].
51. The corresponding figures for the previous year were 100 Initial Child Protection Conferences and 171 Child Protection Review Conferences [342 children].
52. In the year, the proportion of children subject to Initial Child Protection Conferences who were not made subject to a Child Protection Plan was 11.9%, a lower rate than the previous year [16.6%]. Although it is appropriate for some children to be considered at an Initial Child Protection Conference where no Child Protection Plan is made, the reduction in the number of children being considered at conference, where no plan was made, is an improved position.
53. In Darlington at the end of March, there was one child open to Life-stages who was subject to a Child Protection Plan (i.e. Child with Disabilities). The same position as last year. It should be noted that for the two years prior to this there were no children with a disability subject to a Child Protection Plan at the year end. This information is not currently part of the nationally published data, so no comparison is available.

Timeliness of Initial Child Protection Conferences



54. The chart above tracks the Initial Child Protection Conferences held within the year and records the percentage that are held within 15 working days of the multi-agency Strategy Meeting that agreed the section 47 enquiry.

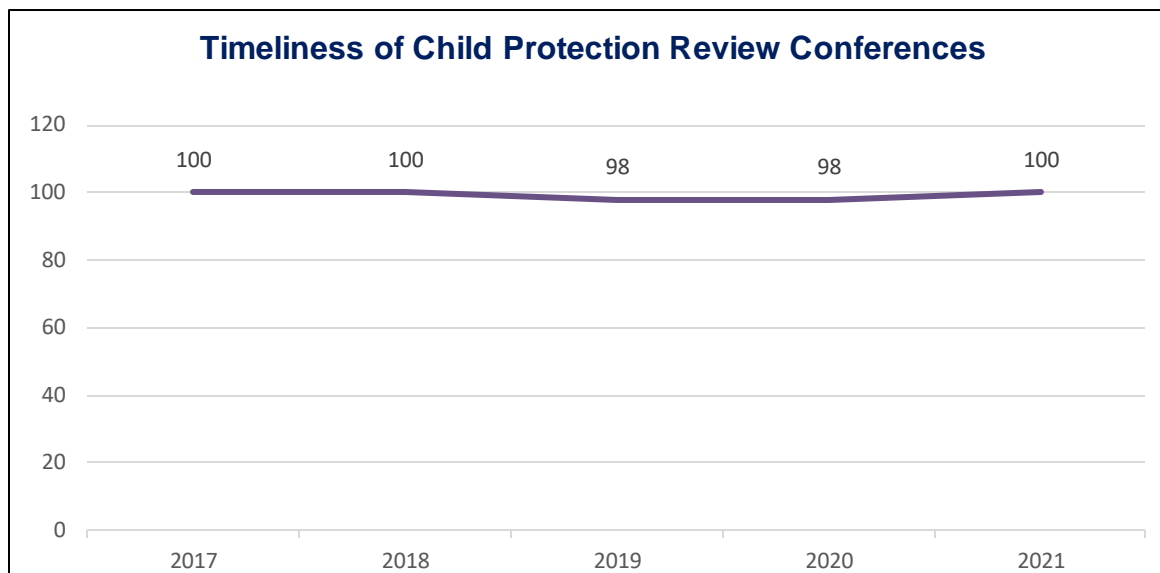
55. For the year to 31 March 2021, 119 (89%) of children were subject to an Initial Child Protection Conference (this excludes transfer conferences from other Local Authority areas) that was held within the prescribed 15 working days of the Strategy Meeting. Performance is similar to last year and remains higher than statistical benchmarks; regional [82%], statistical neighbours [82%] and national benchmark of [78%]. Eighteen children from five families had meetings delayed for the following reasons:

- (a) Delay conference being requested;
- (b) Key information not being available for conference (includes Social Worker reports).

56. In each case an interim plan was in place to ensure that the children were safeguarded.

Timeliness of Child Protection Review Conferences

57. The Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance requires that the first review should be within 3 months of the Initial Child Protection Conference and thereafter at intervals of no more than 6 months.



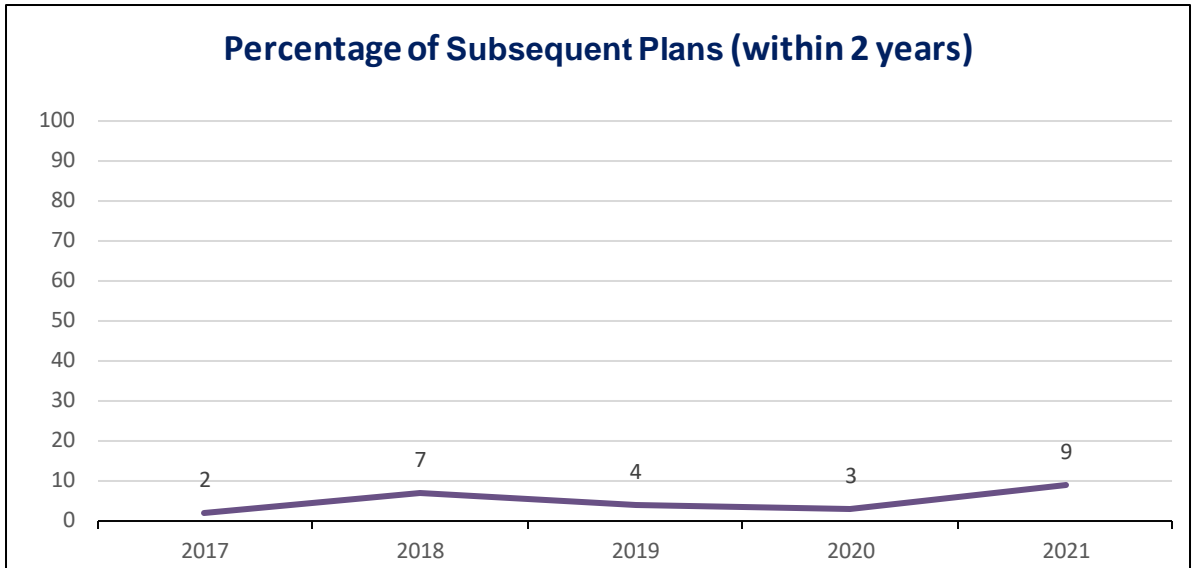
58. The above chart tracks the percentage of Child Protection cases which were reviewed within statutory timescales in the year. Good performance for this indicator is typified by a higher percentage, ideally 100%. In recent years this has been an area of excellent performance.
59. For the year to 31 March 2021, 100% of children had their Child Protection Review Conferences within timescales an improvement on last year. Again performance in this area remains higher than Regional [93%], National [92%] and statistical neighbours [91%].

Child Protection Review Conferences within timescales	2019/2020			2020/21
	Darlington	North East	England	Darlington
	98%	93%	92%	100%

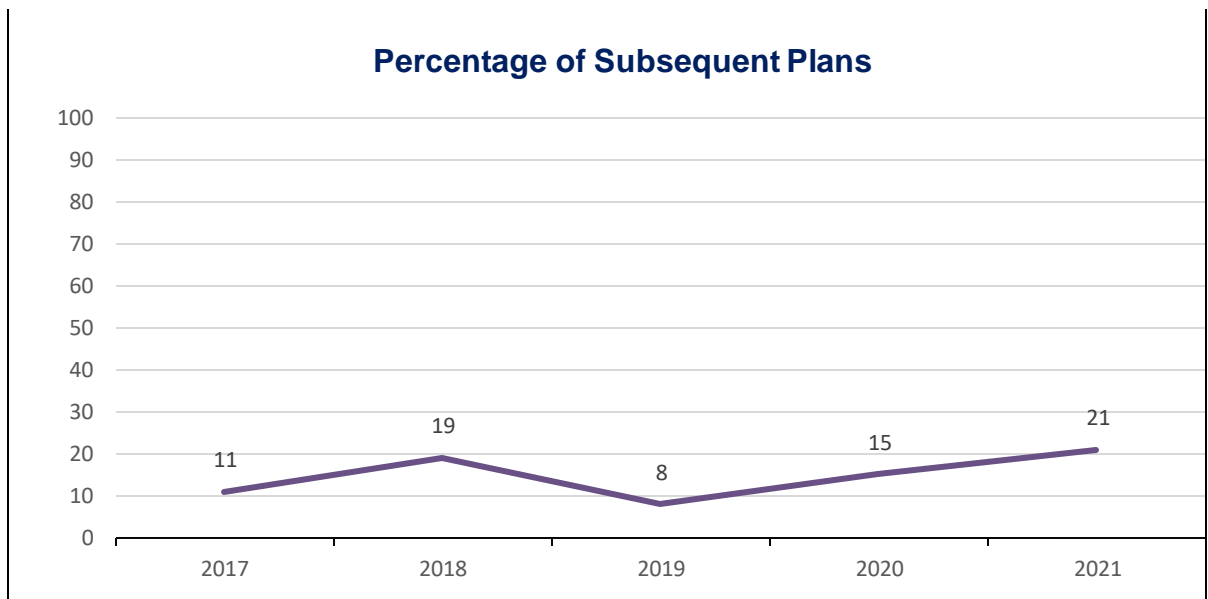
60. Published benchmark data for 2020/21 will be available later in the year.

Second or Subsequent Plans

61. The chart below shows the percentage of children becoming the subject of Child Protection Plans for a second or subsequent time (within 24 months).

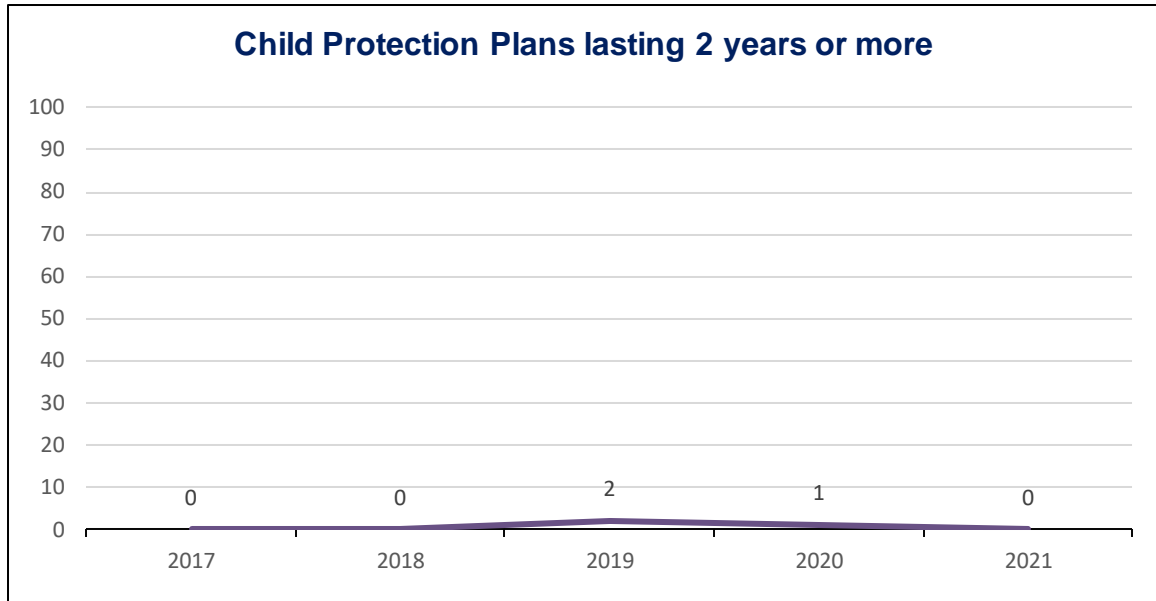


62. This indicator is a proxy for the level and quality of service a child receives. Its purpose is to monitor whether Children's Social Care Services devise and implement a Child Protection Plan which leads to lasting improvement in a child's safety and overall well-being. Good performance for this indicator is typified by a lower figure. However, it is acknowledged that a second or subsequent Child Protection Plan will sometimes be necessary to deal with adverse changes to the child's circumstances.



63. National benchmarked data is based on a second or subsequent plan being agreed at any time after a previous plan. Our rate for 20210-21 was 21%, although this was an increase it remains in line with the National average of 22%, regional average 22% and statistical neighbours 23% (most recent published data).

Child Protection Plans lasting 2 years or more



64. The above chart tracks the number of children who had been the subject of a Child Protection Plan continuously for two years or longer against the number of children ceasing to be the subject of a Child Protection Plan during the year, expressed as percentage.
65. This indicator reflects the underlying principle that professionals should be working towards specified outcomes which, if implemented effectively, should lead to the majority of children not needing to be the subject of a Child Protection Plan within a two-year period, however it is recognised that some children will need Child Protection Plans for longer. Good performance is therefore typified by a lower percentage.
66. The percentage of children ceasing to be the subject of a Child Protection Plan who had been the subject of a Child Protection Plan continuously for two years or longer was 0% during the year to 31 March 2021.
67. The percentage of Child Protection Plans ceasing where the plan had lasted more than 2 years in Darlington [0%] is currently below the regional average [2%] and national [4%] and statistical neighbours average [2%] at 31 March 2020. Published benchmark data for 2020/2021 will be available later in the year.

Family attendance at Conference

68. In the year, out of 78 invitations, parents attended 72 Initial Child Protection Conferences, a total of 92%, again in-line with the rate in recent years.
69. In the year, out of 124 invitations, family members attended 118 Child Protection Review Conferences, a total of 95%, a slight improvement on last year [89%]. Generally, the rate for Child Protection Reviews tends to be lower by a few percentage points, however this year this has been reversed. This could be down to the use of Microsoft Teams to conduct meetings as the overall contribution from agencies has also increased.

Year	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Percentage of ICPCs attended by parent	94%	95%	94%	92%	92%
Percentage of CPRCs attended by parent	91%	91%	91%	89%	95%

70. Over the year to 31 March 2021, no family members with parental responsibility were excluded from attending child protection conferences.
71. A draft Child Protection Plan is produced at the end of the Initial Child Protection Conference. The plan is therefore available to professionals and family members at the first Core Group which is held within 10 working days of the Initial Child Protection Conference.
72. The Unit is committed to promoting independent advocacy for children and young people. The Council has a contract with the National Youth Advocacy Service which provides an independent and confidential service. If the young person is not in attendance the Independent Reviewing Officer should ensure that there is an agreed action for the Core Group regarding how the advocacy role will be communicated to the child or young person.

Child Protection Conference Observations

73. The Children’s Safeguarding Unit is open to external scrutiny. During 2020/21 this has included observations of Child Protection Conferences by staff from Leeds City Council as part of the Strengthening Families Programme. Child Protection Conferences have also been observed by Qualitative Researchers from the *What Works for Children’s Social Care* as part of their evaluation of the Strengthening Families approach in Darlington.
74. Observations of Child Protection Conferences on behalf of the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership have been put on hold. A new programme of observations is due to be scheduled in forthcoming months.

Next steps for 2021/22

75. The following are scheduled for action in 2021/22:
 - (a) To extend the relational approach to the conduct of Child Protection Conferences in line with The Leeds Strengthening Families programme;
 - (b) To use the learning from the relational practice developed around Child Protection Conferences to the statutory Child Looked After Review process. This will include improve performance in relation to how children and young people participate in their looked after reviews;
 - (c) In aligning our approach (as above) to develop consistency and a “team offer” regarding the service provided by the Children’s Safeguarding Unit;

- (d) Ensuring the Independent Reviewing Officer footprint continues to be a focus for Independent Reviewing Officers. This needs to be evident on the child's electronic record and through Independent Reviewing Officer disputes.

Martin Graham
Service Manager Quality Assurance & Independent Review
10 September 2021

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**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
25 October 2021**

LEARNING & SKILLS ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Members with an update on the performance of the Learning & Skills Service for academic year 2020/21.
2. To allow Scrutiny members oversight of, and an opportunity to challenge, the performance of this externally funded service

Summary

3. The pandemic has impacted on the Learning & Skills service and delivery in a number of ways over the last two academic years. However, the staff have responded magnificently and continued to deliver throughout that time, making a very successful transition to online teaching and learning.
4. The service is aiming to grow provision whilst continuing to respond to employer and community need, however there are a number of challenges ahead, not least an impending Ofsted inspection and funding reforms.

Recommendation

5. It is recommended that Members note the content of this report

**James Stroyan
Group Director of People**

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report

Paul Richardson : Mobile 0794 724 7224

S17 Crime and Disorder	The service supports the Council's crime and disorder responsibilities, young people engaged in learning are less likely to engage in anti-social behaviour
Health and Wellbeing	The service actively promotes health and wellbeing
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	The service promotes sustainability
Diversity	The service actively supports the diversity agenda
Wards Affected	The service offers provision across all of Darlington
Groups Affected	The service offers learning for 16-18 year olds and adults
Budget and Policy Framework	The service is externally funded. This report does not impact on the budget and policy framework
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
Council Plan	The service contributes to the priorities in the Council Plan allowing people to develop their potential, improve their skills and help improve their employment opportunities
Efficiency	Scrutiny of performance is integral to optimising outcomes
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

The Learning & Skills Service

6. The Learning & Skills Service is the external training arm of the Council and is funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) to provide learning and skills provision for the local community. The service has been an Ofsted 'Good' provider since 2004.
7. The service provides a range of training from Pre-entry Level to Level 5, including:
 - 16-18 study programme and diploma courses
 - Adult education, including basic skills such as English, maths and ICT
 - Community Learning, including employability
 - Family Learning
 - Intensive Support
 - Distance Learning
 - English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
 - Apprenticeships
8. Learning & Skills supports some of the most disadvantaged adults, young people and families in Darlington and contributes to the priorities of both the Children and Young People's Plan and the Council Plan. Often the provision delivered provides a stepping-stone to those taking their first steps back into learning and a number of past learners have moved on to higher level learning at Darlington College and other providers.
9. Teaching takes place across three main sites: the Coleridge Centre, Bennet House and the units at Lingfield Way, as well as in a number of school and community settings.
10. Apprenticeship provision includes Early Years, Health and Social Care and Healthcare Support, Business Administration, Customer Service, Motor Vehicle, Site Joinery and Leadership and Management.

Learner Numbers

11. In 2020/21 the service supported 958 (902) learners (previous year's numbers in brackets) across a wide ranges of programmes, including:
 - 51 (54) 16-18 year olds on study programme
 - 406 (420) people on Adult Skills courses
 - 454 (388) people on Community Learning
 - 47 (40) Apprenticeship starts

Funding

11. The overall funding generated from the ESFA and TVCA for the Learning & Skills Service in 2020/21 was £993,206 (£963,757). This was split as follows:
 - £195,663 (£183,901) - 16-18 Study Programme (ESFA)
 - £416,150 (£442,710) - Adult and Community Education (TVCA)

- £53,928 (£48,607) - Adult and Community Education (ESFA)
- £232,340 (£247,489) - Apprenticeships (ESFA / Employers)
- £12,901 (£14,567) - Adult Learning Loans (ESFA / SLC)
- £82,224 (£26,483) – Other projects

Performance

12. Due to the impact of the pandemic on post 16 providers no achievement rates were published nationally in 2019/20 and none will be published for 2020/21 therefore there will be no national benchmarks for comparison. However locally produced performance data shows:

Provision Type	Overall Achievement Rate		
	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21 (Provisional)
16-18	79.70%	69.91%	78.4%
Adult Skills	89.86%	84.31%	86.8%
Community Learning	98.69%	95.05%	98.5%
Apprenticeships	81.13%	87.23%	88.9%

13. The achievement rate percentage is calculated by multiplying the number of learners who complete their course by the percentage of those that sat their exams / assessments and passed

Learner Progression

14. Learner progression, or the positive destination rate, measures the percentage of learner who move into education, employment or training after completing a course with Learning & Skills. The pandemic has impacted on some areas more than others, particularly those seeking to go into employment.

Provision Type	Positive Destination Rate		
	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21 (Provisional)
16-18	70%	54%	90%
Adult Skills	85%	78%	76%
Community Learning	75%	80%	75%
Apprenticeships	93%	81%	83%

Learner Satisfaction

15. Learner satisfaction (those rating the service good or above) dropped from 95.75% in 2019/20 to 91% in 2020/21. This was largely due to the fact that a number of learners were unhappy that they were unable to access face to face support due to Covid restrictions.

Employer Satisfaction

16. Employer Satisfaction dipped from 98.2% in 2018/19 to 92.5% in 2019/20. However, in 2020/21 100% of employer responses rated the service good or above.

Observation of Learning, Teaching and Assessment

17. Over the last two years with the restrictions on face to face teaching it has been challenging to undertake observations of learning, teaching and assessment. However, of those observations undertaken in both 2019/20 (4) and 2020/21 (10) all were rated Good or above.

Impact of Covid

18. The service responded very quickly to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic and made a very successful transition to online learning via Google Classroom and Equal, a distance learning platform. Unfortunately, in some instances it has proved very difficult to recruit learners onto courses, particularly those people who struggle with IT or who needed face-to-face support on courses like basic English and maths. This was also the case with apprenticeship provision due to a national lack of applications across all sectors proving it difficult to meet employer demand. The pandemic also impacted in some areas on performance, destination outcomes and learner satisfaction despite the best efforts of the staff.
19. These difficulties highlighted above and the lack of access to external delivery settings caused by Covid meant the service could not achieve the growth in learners and funding it had planned for. Funding is generated by the number of learners / qualifications delivered. It is hoped that the easing of restrictions will allow the service to grow learner numbers from September 2021.
20. Delivery and qualification outcomes have also been impacted upon by the need for some qualification awarding bodies having to move their exams online and the time that this took. It was also impacted by the introduction of calculated grades for some areas meaning that evidence justification was required to support outcomes and the time this took awarding bodies to process.

Challenges Ahead

21. The service is now overdue for an Ofsted inspection due to the delays caused by the pandemic. Staff continue to make preparations for the impending inspection, and it is hoped that the service can retain its Good grading. However, there are a great deal of unknowns around how much inspectors will take account of the impact of the pandemic.
22. The service has recently been awarded a further three-year funding contract by TVCA for Adult Skills and continues to respond to the demands of local skills needs. However, there are also potential uncertainties if the TVCA devolved funding model starts to diverge from what the rules and requirements were under the ESFA.
23. The government have proposed a review of the further education funding system in their white paper 'Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth' which was published in January 2021. A part of the proposals in the white paper a consultation on a 'New Further Education Funding and Accountability System' was launched on 15 July 2021. At present the service has no indication of the likely impact any funding reforms will have on Learning & Skills or the TVCA devolved funding.

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CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 25 October 2021

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS QUARTER 1 2021/22

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Members with an update on performance against key performance indicators.

Summary

2. This report provides year end performance information (April 2021 – June 2021) in line with an indicator set agreed by Monitoring and Coordination Group on 2 July 2018, and subsequently by Scrutiny Committee Chairs.
3. It is suggested monitoring focuses on issues and exceptions, and relevant Assistant Directors will attend the meeting to respond to queries raised by the committee regarding the performance information contained within this report.
4. Where indicators are reported annually, quarterly updates will not be available.

Where are we performing well?

5. 10.1% of the children referred during Q1 2021/22 have been re-referred to Children's Social Care within 12 months of a previous referral. This is positively below the internal target of 18%.
6. Social workers completed 90.8% of the C&F assessments within timescale during Q1 2021/22, which remains higher than our statistical neighbour, regional and national average benchmarks.
7. 89.7% of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC) were held within 15 working days from the strategy meeting / section 47 being initiated, excluding transfer-in conferences, during Q1 2021/22. This performance, although below internal target, remains higher than our statistical neighbour, regional and national average benchmarks.
8. 100% of children with a Child Protection (CP) plan, and 100% of Children in Care (CiC) have an allocated social worker.
9. During Q1 2021/22 no child has ceased to be subject to a CP plan who had been subject to the plan for 2 or more years, we continue to positively perform below our target of 5%.
10. The number of Children in Care (CiC) has decreased to 264 by the end of June 2021, a large reduction when compared to the number of children at the end of June 2020 (302). Work continues to safely reduce the number of children coming into care.

11. 90.5% of statutory CiC visits were completed within timescale during Q1 2021/22. This is in line with the target of 90%.
12. 9.8% of our Children in Care, as of June 2021, have had 3 or more placements within the previous 12 months. This performance is positively below internal target, our statistical neighbour, regional and national average benchmarks.
13. 69.1% of our Children in Care aged under 16 (who have been looked after for at least 2.5 years) have been in their current placement continuously for at least 2 years. This performance is positively above internal target, our statistical neighbour, regional and national average benchmarks.
14. 8.8% of our Children in Care have been placed 20 or more miles away from home as of June 2021. This is a positive performance and below target of 10%.
15. 86.4% of the children, newly into care, were seen by CDDFT within 20 working days for an initial health assessment during Q1 2021/22.
16. 86.4% of children due a review health assessment year to date had one completed.
17. 21.7% of Care Leavers were not in employment, education or training (NEET) which is positivity below target of 30% and 100.0% were in suitable accommodation.

Where do we need to improve?

18. 68.5% of referrals were screened and completed within 1 day during Q1 2021/22, below the target of 90% and 9.0% of the referrals took over 3 days to complete.
19. At the end of June 2021, the percentage of children becoming subject to a CP plan for a second or subsequent time within 2 years of the previous plan ending was 14.3%, above the 6% target, however, relates to one family.
20. 87.3% of children received a statutory CP visit within 10 working days during Q1 2021/22. This is below the target of 90%.
21. 55.8% of children due a dental check assessment year to date had one completed.

Recommendation

22. It is recommended:
 - a) That performance information provided in this report is reviewed and noted, and relevant queries raised with the appropriate Assistant Director.

James Stroyan
The Group Director of People

Background papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Sharon Raine Head of Performance and Transformation: Extension 6091

S17 Crime and Disorder	This report supports the Council's Crime and Disorder responsibilities
Health and Well Being	This report supports performance improvement relating to improving the health and wellbeing of residents
Sustainability	This report supports the Council's sustainability responsibilities
Diversity	This report supports the promotion of diversity
Wards Affected	This report supports performance improvement across all Wards
Groups Affected	This report supports performance improvement which benefits all groups
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	This report contributes to the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) by involving Members in the scrutiny of performance relating to the delivery of key outcomes
Efficiency	Scrutiny of performance is integral to optimising outcomes.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report may have an impact on their emotional and physical health, social development, education and future employment.



DARLINGTON
Borough Council

Children's Social Care Performance

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Quarter 1 - April - June 2021

Scrutiny

Scrutiny

Q1 2021-22 Performance Summary

Referral: 68.5% of referrals received during Q1 2021/22 were completed within 1 working day and 9.0% took over 3 working days to complete. Extensive work regarding referral enquiries has been required for some cases, resulting in completion taking longer than the statutory timescale. However, the additional work has been to the benefit of the child.

Re-Referrals: 10.1% of the children referred during Q1 2021/22 have been re-referred to Children's Social Care within 12 months of a previous referral. This is positively below the internal target of 18%, our statistical neighbour (20.8%), regional (22.4%) and national average (22.6%) (Source: LAIT 2020).

Early Help: 192 Early Help Assessments have been completed during Q1 2021/22.

Missing: Of the children and young people who are reported missing from home, 84.3% have been offered a return home interview within the 72-hour timescale. Where the co-ordinator cannot engage the child or young person, discussion takes place with parents, carers, teachers or social workers to offer insight around reducing the missing episodes. Of those who went missing, 26.5% were a Child in Care.

Children & Families Assessments: 130 children had a single assessment carried out during Q1 2021/22.

C&F Timeliness: Social workers completed 90.8% of the C&F assessments within timescale during Q1 2021/22. This is positively above our internal target of 90%, our statistical neighbour (87.7%), regional average (88.8%) and the national average (83.1%) (Source: LAIT 2020).

Section 47 enquiries: 76 section 47 enquiries were started during Q1 2021/22 involving 122 children, 4 of which were subject to a Child Protection plan (CP) at the time of the enquiry.

Child Protection Conference Timeliness: 89.7% of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC) were held within 15 working days from the strategy meeting / section 47 being initiated, excluding transfer-in conferences, during Q1 2021/22. Darlington's performance remains higher than our statistical neighbour (80.8%), regional (83.1%) and national average (77.6%) (Source: LAIT 2020) but below internal target of 95%.

Child Protection Plans: 75 children were subject to a Child Protection plan (CP) as at the end of June 2021. This is a 21.1% drop compared to the 95 children who were subject to CP at the end of June 2020. Darlington currently has a 33.3 rate per 10,000 population for children subject to a CPP which is lower than the regional average (70.0), statistical neighbour (53.9) and the national average (42.8) (Source: LAIT 2020).

100.0% of CP cases were allocated to a social worker and all the CP reviews were carried out in timescale. During Q1 2021/22 there were no children ceasing

CP who had been subject to the plan for 2 or more years. At the end of June 2021, the percentage of children becoming subject to a CP plan for a second or subsequent time within 2 years of the previous plan ending was 14.3%, above the 6% target and relates to one family.

Child Protection Statutory visits: 87.3% of children received a statutory Child Protection (CP) visit during Q1 2021/22 within 10 working days, this is just below our target of 90%.

Children in Care: 264 children were in care as of June 2021, which is a reduction to the number of children (302) that were in care as of June 2020. During Q1 2021/22 a total of 23 children came into the care of the DBC and a total of 31 children ceased to be in care.

Children in Care Reviews: 100.0% of Children in Care (CiC) were allocated to a qualified social worker. 99.3% of the reviews have been completed within required timescales during Q1 2021/22.

Children in Care Statutory visits: 90.5% of statutory visits for Children in Care (CiC) were completed in timescale during Q1 2021/22. This is in line with our internal target of 90%.

Children in Care Placements: 9.8% of Children in Care (CiC), as of June 2021, have had 3 or more placements within the previous 12 months. This is positively below the internal target (10%), national (10%), statistical neighbour (9.9%) and regional averages (10%) (Source: LAIT 2020).
69.1% of our Children in Care aged under 16 (who have been looked after for at least 2.5 years) have been in their current placement continuously for at least 2 years. This is positively above our target of 68.0%, regional (69.0%) and national average (68.0%) and in line with our statistical neighbours (69.3%).
8.8% of our Children in Care have been placed 20 or more miles away from home as of June 2021, which is positively below our target of 10.0%. This relates to young people who have been placed in residential care due to their disability / placed with family / or placed for adoption, and this provision was not available within 20 miles.

Initial Health Assessments: 86.4% of the children, newly into care, were seen by CDDFT within 20 working days for an initial health assessment during Q1 2021/22.

Health and Dental Reviews: 80.0% of children due a review health assessment by June 2021 have had one completed. 55.8% of Children in Care, that were due a dental check assessment by June 2021 have had one completed.

The percentage of children who have refused their medical checks has continued to decrease through the year, with 6.7% refusing their health review and 4.7% refusing their dental review. Although they are refusing, they are continually reminded of the benefits of having a check-up and encouraged to take part.

Care Leavers: 100.0% of care leavers were in suitable accommodation at the end of June 2021. The percentage of care leavers who were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) continues to be positively below the target set of 30% at 21.7% at the end of June 2021.

REFERRALS - TIMELINESS

DEFINITION Percentage of referrals completed within 1 working day and over 3 working days. Referrals completed within 1 working day indicates that decisions regarding the services required are made in a timely manner to minimise drift and delay and to ensure that children are safe.

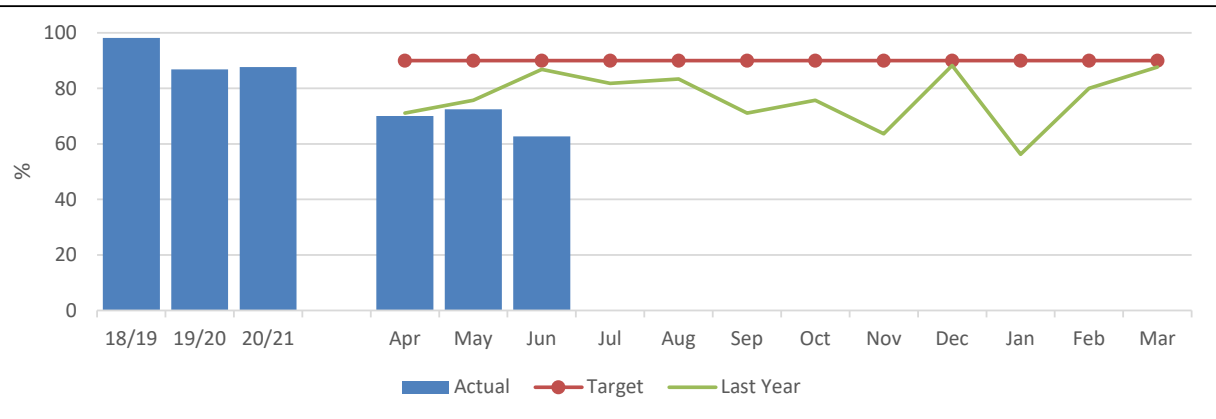
PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

68.5% of the referrals completed this year were finalised within 1 working day and 9.0% of the referrals took over 3 working days to complete during Q1 2020/21.

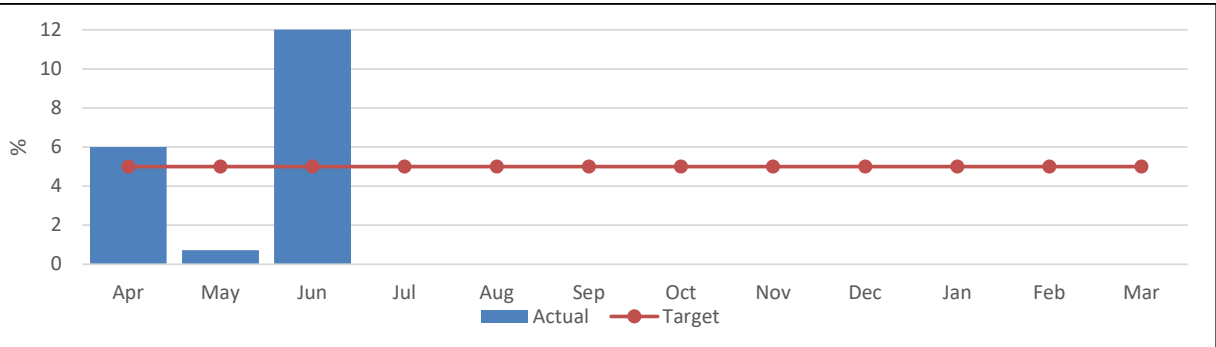
All referrals that are not completed in timescale are reviewed each month by Team Managers. It has been noted that the majority of the delays have been a result of waiting for further information from third parties to make an informed decision or difficulties in contacting the families. All delays were confirmed being required and in the best interest of the family and children.

CSC 022	CSC 026
Monthly % of referrals completed within 1 working day.	Monthly % of referrals completed in over 3 working days.

CSC 022: Monthly % of referrals completed within 1 working day.



CSC 026: Monthly % of referrals completed in over 3 working days.



IN MONTH PERFORMANCE	Target	90%	5%
	Apr-21	70.0	6.0
	May-21	72.5	0.7
	Jun-21	62.7	13.6
	Jul-21		
	Aug-21		
	Sep-21		
	Oct-21		
	Nov-21		
	Dec-21		
	Jan-22		
	Feb-22		
Mar-22			

ANNUAL TREND	2018/19	98.2	0.0
	2019/20	86.8	1.6
	2020/21	77.7	4.7
	2021/22	68.5%	9.0%

REFERRALS - RE-REFERRALS

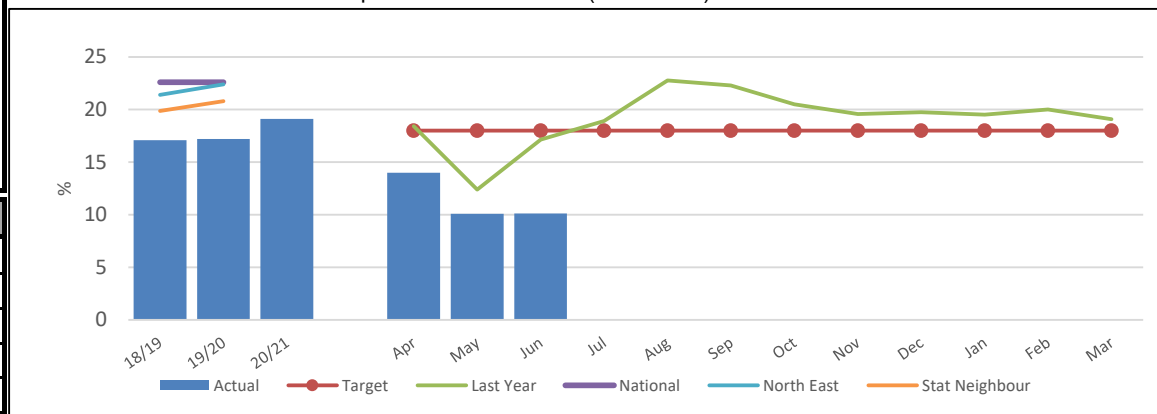
DEFINITION Percentage of re-referrals that are received within 12 months of a previous referral (based on referral start dates)
 A re-referral to Children's Social Care could be an indication that the previous referral was inappropriately closed down without addressing the initial concerns or issues.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS Re-referrals continue to remain low with 18 children, from 12 families, being re-referred to social care during Q1 2021/22. This equates to 10.1% of our referrals during this period have been repeated within 12 months. This is below the internal target of 18%, our statistical neighbour (20.8%), regional (22.4%) and national average (22.6%) (LAIT 2020).

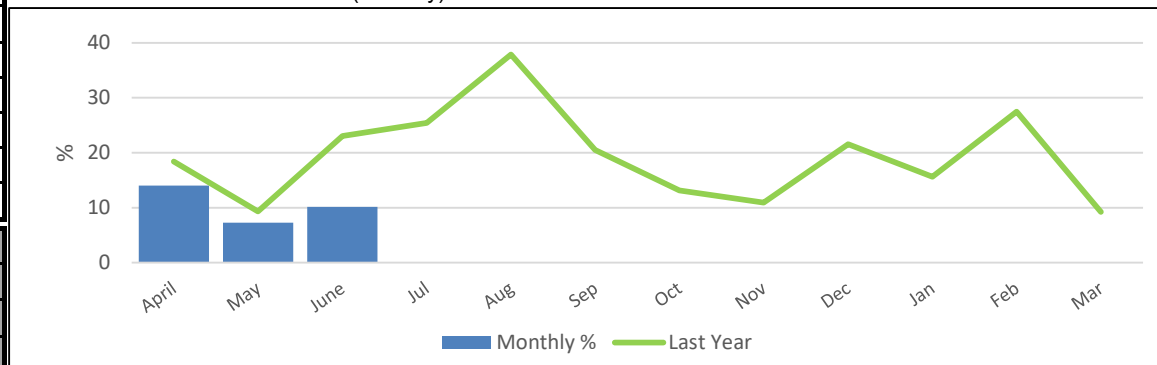
CSC 034	CSC 032	% of referrals that are re-referrals (monthly)
Monthly number of re-referrals that are repeat within 12 months	% re-referrals that are repeat within 12 months (cumulative)	

IN MONTH PERFORMANCE	Target		18%	
	Apr-21	7	14.0	14.0
	May-21	5	10.1	7.2
	Jun-21	6	10.1	10.2
	Jul-21			
	Aug-21			
	Sep-21			
	Oct-21			
	Nov-21			
	Dec-21			
	Jan-22			
	Feb-22			
Mar-22				
ANNUAL TREND	2018/19	205	17.1	
	2019/20	171	17.2	
	2020/21	143	19.1	
	2021/22	18	10.1	

CSC 032: % re-referrals that are repeat within 12 months (cumulative)



% of referrals that are re-referrals (monthly)



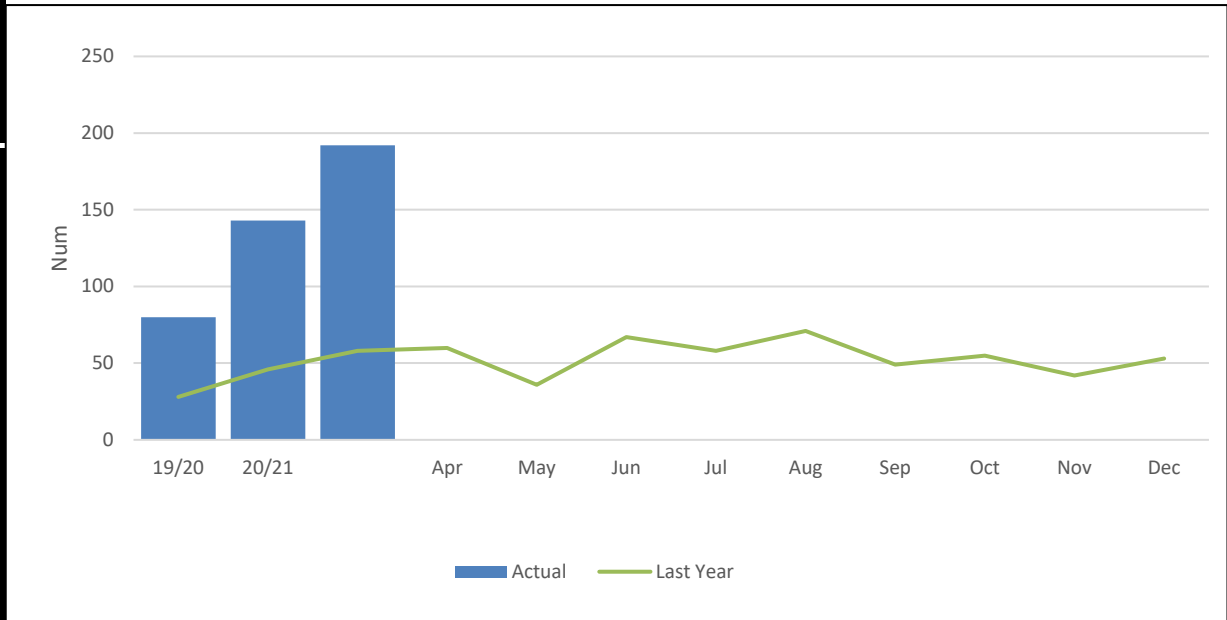
EARLY HELP ASSESSMENTS - STARTED

DEFINITION The number of individual Early Help Assessments (EHA) started in month and year to date, including those initiated by external agencies. The start date of the EHA is taken from the form created date in Liquid Logic and the start date of the external EHA is taken from the contact date when the agency informed us of the EHA.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS 192 Early Help Assessments (EHA) were started during Q1 2021/22.

CSC 002
Total number of individual EHA's started in month (inc. external)

CSC 002: Total number of individual EHA's started in month (inc. external)



IN MONTH PERFORMANCE	Target	
	Apr-21	80
	May-21	63
	Jun-21	49
	Jul-21	
	Aug-21	
	Sep-21	
	Oct-21	
	Nov-21	
	Dec-21	
	Jan-22	
	Feb-22	
	Mar-22	

ANNUAL TREND	2018/19	869
	2019/20	893
	2020/21	623
	2021/22	192

MISSING EPISODES

DEFINITION	The number of episodes of children going missing in Darlington who are a Child in Care (CiC).
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PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS	14 Children in Care (CiC) were reported missing during Q1 2021/22 with a total of 51 episodes. Where children are looked after by other authorities but cared for in Darlington, the ERASE Team have been alerted and provided with relevant information to ensure that the young people have been appropriately placed.
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CSC 246
Number of missing relating to Children in Care with DBC

IN MONTH PERFORMANCE		Ep.	Child.
	Apr-21	8	5
May-21	15	7	
Jun-21	28	10	
Jul-21			
Aug-21			
Sep-21			
Oct-21			
Nov-21			
Dec-21			
Jan-22			
Feb-22			
Mar-22			

ANNUAL TREND child counted once			
	2018/19	199	36
	2019/20	129	24
	2020/21	107	30
2021/22	51	14	

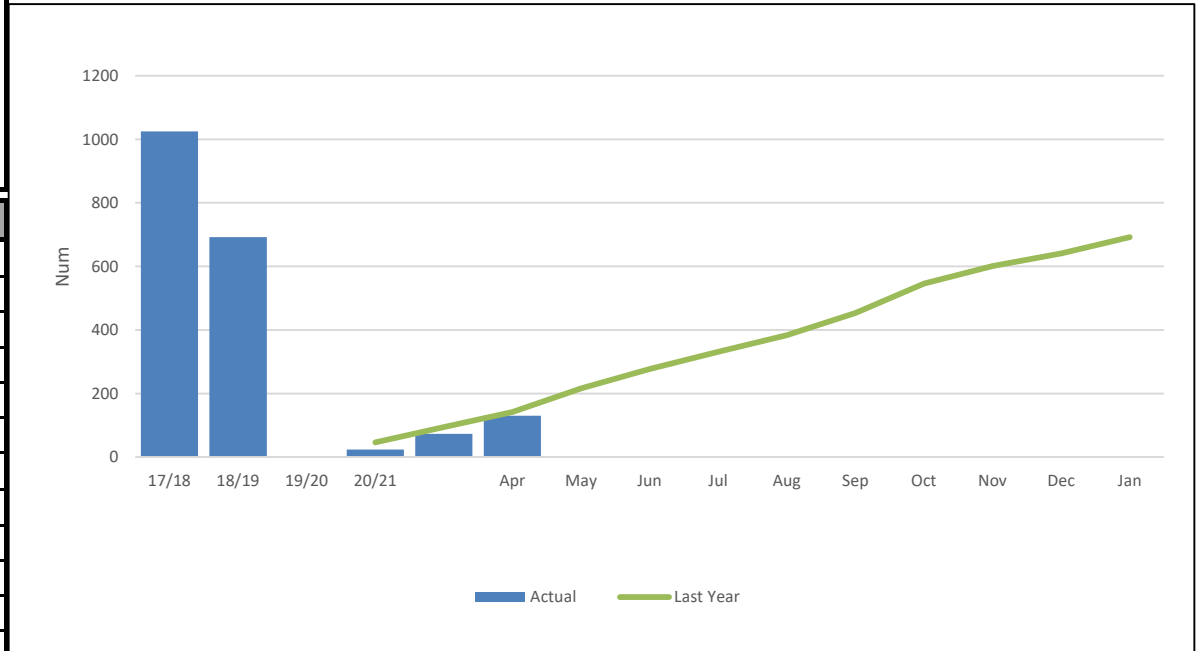
ASSESSMENTS

DEFINITION Monthly and cumulative number of Children & Families assessments completed.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS 130 C&F assessments have been completed in Q1 2021/22, similar to the 142 completed in Q1 2020/21.

CSC 036
Number of children & families assessments completed year to date

CSC 036: Number of children & families assessments completed year to date



IN MONTH PERFORMANCE		
	Apr-21	24
	May-21	73
	Jun-21	130
	Jul-21	
	Aug-21	
	Sep-21	
	Oct-21	
	Nov-21	
	Dec-21	
	Jan-22	
	Feb-22	
	Mar-22	

ANNUAL TREND		
	2018/19	1,025
	2019/20	950
	2020/21	692
2021/22	130	

ASSESSMENTS - TIMELINESS

DEFINITION	<p>Of those assessments completed in a period, the percentage completed within 45 working days. Day zero is the first working day on or after the start date of the referral, or strategy discussion decided to initiate S47 enquiries, or where new information indicates that an assessment should be undertaken. The end date is the first working day on or after the recorded date the Team Manager closes the single assessment.</p> <p>A process indicator as a proxy measure for improved child safety and how quickly services can respond when a child is thought to be at risk of serious harm. Local authorities should investigate and address concerns in a timely and efficient way.</p>
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PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS	<p>As at June 2021, 90.8% of our C&F assessments were completed within timescale. This is above our target of 90%, statistical neighbour (87.7%) and regional average (88.8%) and above national average (83.8%) as recorded for 2020 in the LAIT. It is also an increase when compared to the 75.4% in timescale during Q1 2020/21.</p>
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CSC 038
% C&F Assessments completed within 45 working days (Year to date)

IN MONTH PERFORMANCE	Target	90%
	Apr-21	87.5
	May-21	91.8
	Jun-21	90.8
	Jul-21	
	Aug-21	
	Sep-21	
	Oct-21	
	Nov-21	
	Dec-21	
	Jan-22	
	Feb-22	
	Mar-22	

ANNUAL TREND	2018/19	81.5
	2019/20	88.7
	2020/21	86.4
	2021/22	90.8

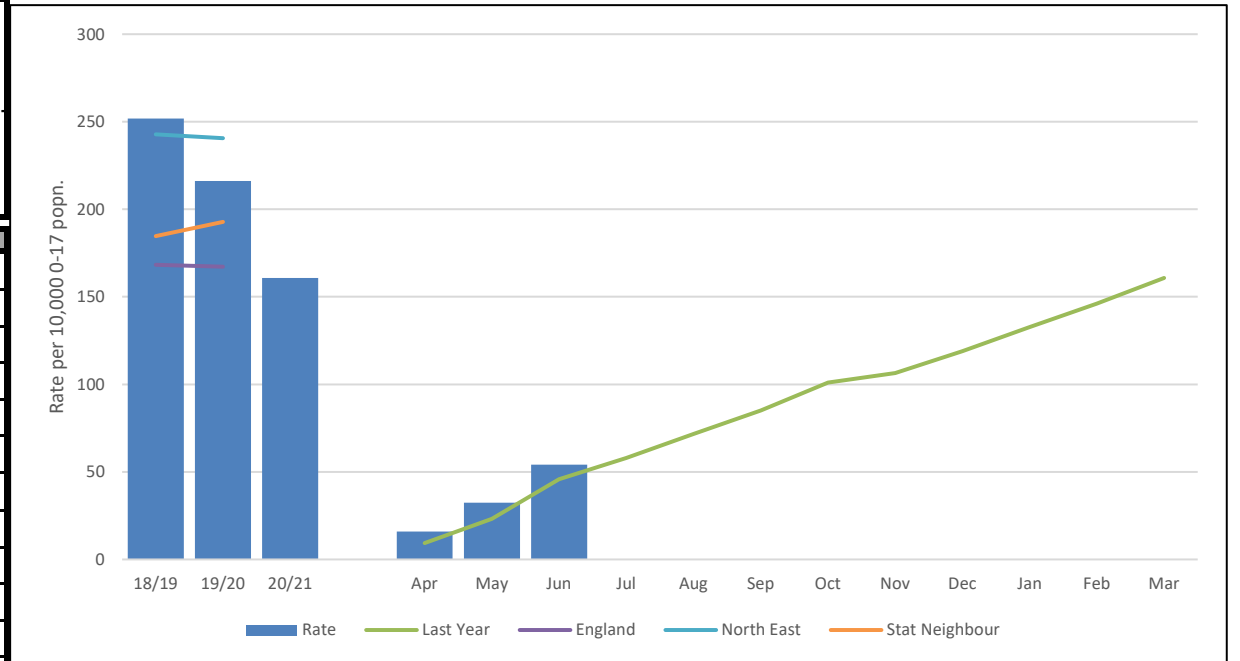
SECTION 47 - STARTED

DEFINITION	Number of children who have had a section 47 enquiries started monthly and year to date and the actual number of enquires started.
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PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS	76 section 47 enquires were started during Q1 2021/22 involving 122 children. This is a 40.7% increase on the 54 section 47 enquiries started in Q1 2020/21 for 18.4% more children (103), but comparable to Q1 2019/20 which saw 75 enquires started for 138 children.
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	CSC 166	CSC 164
	All children who had a section 47 enquires started in the month	Rate of section 47 enquiries started per 10,000 of the 0-17 population (Cumulative)

Rate of section 47 enquiries started per 10,000 of the 0-17 population (inc. children already on CPP)



IN MONTH PERFORMANCE	Apr-21	36	16.0
	May-21	37	32.4
	Jun-21	49	54.2
	Jul-21		
	Aug-21		
	Sep-21		
	Oct-21		
	Nov-21		
	Dec-21		
	Jan-22		
	Feb-22		
	Mar-22		

ANNUAL TREND	2018/19	426	190.0
	2019/20	646	251.8
	2020/21	484	216.2
	2021/22	122	54.2

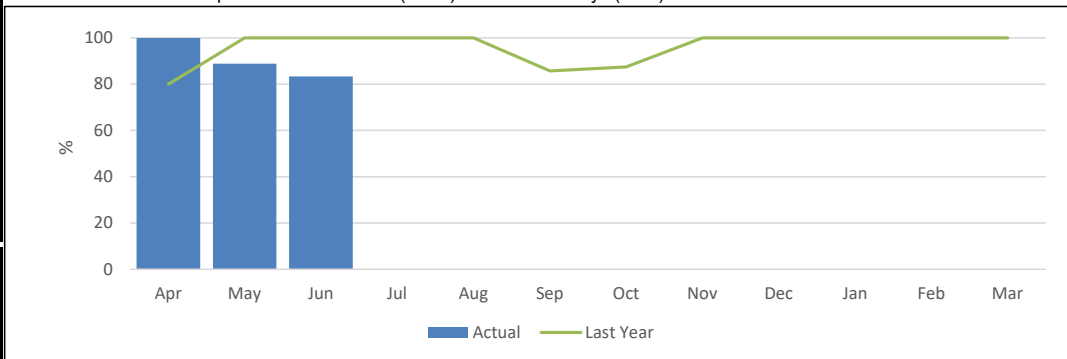
INITIAL CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCES - TIMELINESS

DEFINITION Of those ICPC's held within the period (excluding transfer ins), the percentage held within 15 working days of the S47 enquiry. Provides an indication of how quickly the safety of children who are judged to be continuing to, or likely to suffer significant harm is being considered by a multi-agency meeting.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS 89.7% of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC) were held within 15 working days from the strategy meeting / section 47 being initiated, excluding transfer-in conferences, during Q1 2021/22.
Although the delayed conferences have taken us below our target of 95%, our performance remains higher than our statistical neighbour (80.8%), regional (83.1%) and national average (77.6%) (LAIT 2020).

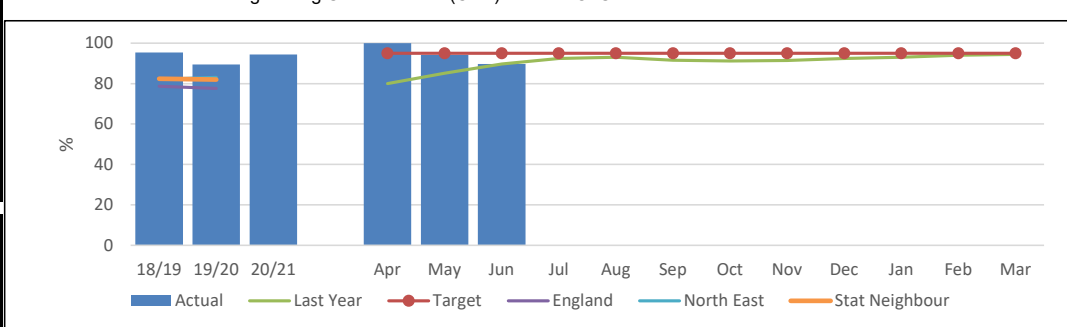
CSC 178	CSC 176
Monthly % of cases recorded in the Safeguarding Unit workbook where Child Protection strategy meeting / S47 start to initial child protection conference (ICPC) are within 15 days (CPP). Excludes transfer-in conferences.	% of cases where the initial child protection conference (ICPC) was within 15 days of the initiating strategy discussion / S47 start recorded in the Safeguarding Unit workbook (CPP). This EXCLUDES transfer-in conferences. Year to Date

CSC 178: Monthly % of cases recorded in the Safeguarding Unit workbook where Child Protection strategy meeting / S47 start to initial child protection conference (ICPC) are within 15 days (CPP). Excludes transfer-in conferences.



IN MONTH PERFORMANCE	Target	CSC 178	CSC 176
	Apr-21	100	100.0
May-21		88.9	94.1
Jun-21		83.3	89.7
Jul-21			
Aug-21			
Sep-21			
Oct-21			
Nov-21			
Dec-21			
Jan-22			
Feb-22			
Mar-22			

CSC 176: % of cases where the initial child protection conference (ICPC) was within 15 days of the initiating strategy discussion / S47 start recorded in the Safeguarding Unit workbook (CPP). This EXCLUDES transfer-in conferences. Year to Date



ANNUAL TREND	2018/19	CSC 178	CSC 176
	2019/20	89.5	89.5
	2020/21	94.4	94.4
	2021/22	83.3	89.7

CHILD PROTECTION

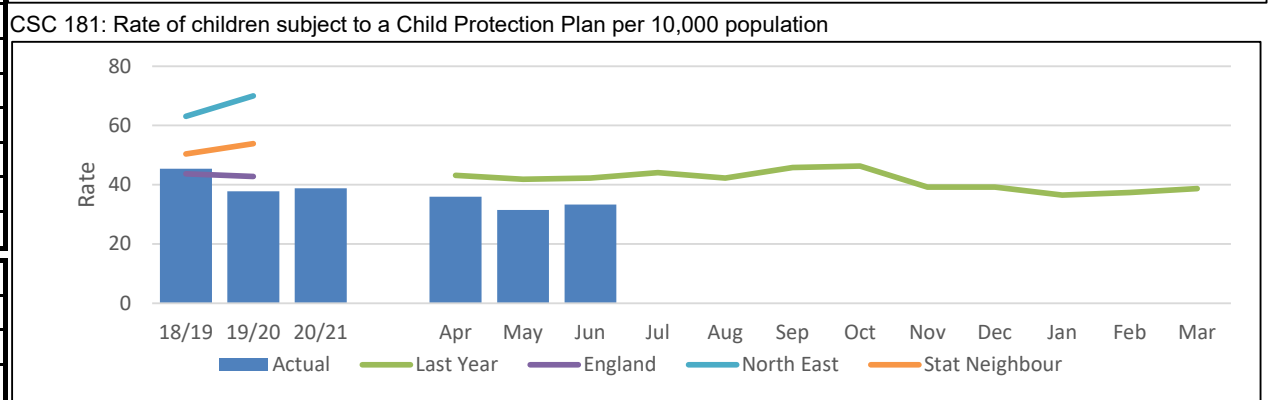
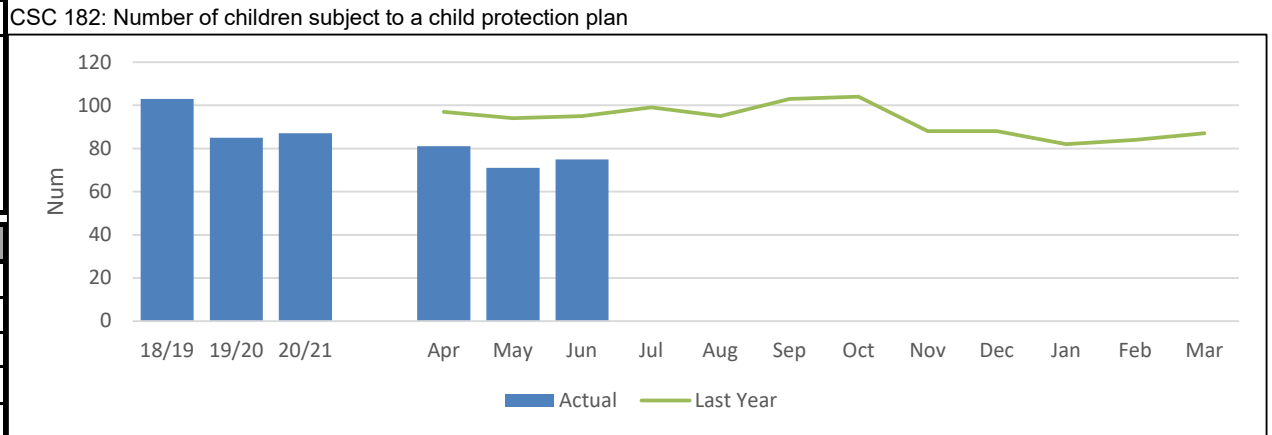
DEFINITION Number of children subject to a Child Protection plan at the end of the month.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS 75 children were subject to a Child Protection plan (CP) as at the end of June 2021. This is a 21.1% drop compared to the 95 children who were subject to CP at the end of June 2020. Darlington currently has a 33.3 rate per 10,000 population for children subject to a CPP which is lower than the regional average (70.0), statistical neighbour (53.9) and the national average (42.8) as reported in the 2020 LAIT.

	CSC 182	CSC 181
	Number of children subject to a child protection plan	Rate of children subject to a Child Protection Plan per 10,000 population

IN MONTH PERFORMANCE			
	Apr-21	81	36.0
	May-21	71	31.5
	Jun-21	75	33.3
	Jul-21		
	Aug-21		
	Sep-21		
	Oct-21		
	Nov-21		
	Dec-21		
	Jan-22		
	Feb-22		
	Mar-22		

ANNUAL TREND			
	2018/19	103	45.7
	2019/20	85	37.8
	2020/21	87	38.8
	2021/22	75	33.3



CHILD PROTECTION - ALLOCATION & REVIEWS

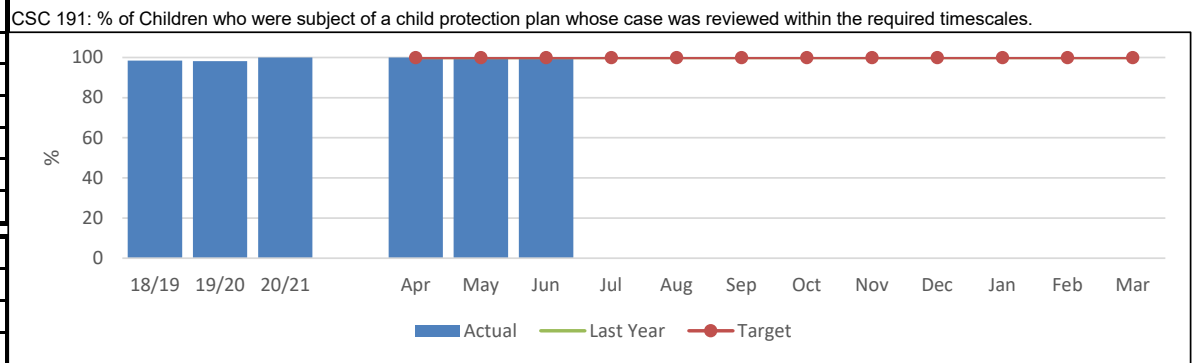
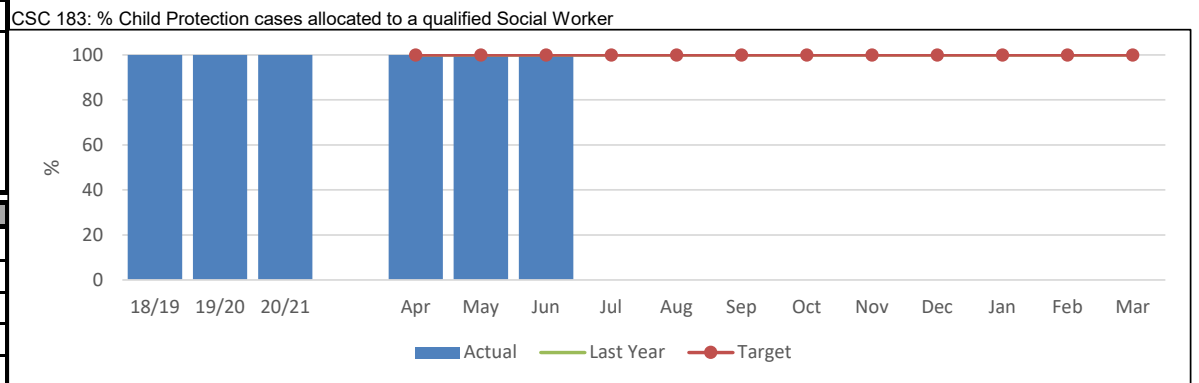
DEFINITION	<p>The percentage of children subject to a Child Protection Plan at the end of the month and who at that date had had a Plan continuously for at least the previous 3 months, whose case was reviewed within the required timescales.</p> <p>Reviews are a key element in delivering Child Protection Plans and effective reviews should ensure the provision of good quality interventions. This indicator is a proxy for the measurement of effectiveness of the interventions provided to children subject to a Child Protection Plan. "Working Together to Safeguard Children" guidance requires that the first review should be within 3 months of the initial child protection conference and thereafter at intervals of no more than 6 months.</p>
PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS	<p>100% of Child Protection Cases were allocated to a qualified social worker.</p> <p>100% of Child Protection reviews have been completed within the required timescales.</p> <p>Performance remains higher than statistical neighbours (89.9%), regional (92.9%) and national averages (91.5%) as reported in the 2020 LAIT.</p>

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CSC 183	CSC 191
% Child Protection cases allocated to a qualified Social Worker	% of Children who were subject of a child protection plan whose case was reviewed within the required timescales.

IN MONTH PERFORMANCE	Target	100	100	
	Apr-21	100.0	100.0	100.0
	May-21	100.0	100.0	100.0
	Jun-21	100.0	100.0	100.0
	Jul-21			
	Aug-21			
	Sep-21			
	Oct-21			
	Nov-21			
	Dec-21			
	Jan-22			
	Feb-22			
	Mar-22			

ANNUAL TREND	2018/19	100.0	98.4
	2019/20	100.0	98.2
	2020/21	100.0	100.0
	2021/22	100.0	100.0



CHILD PROTECTION - TIME PERIODS

DEFINITION Percentage of children ceasing to be subject to a Child Protection Plan who had been subject to a Plan for 2 or more years, and percentage of children becoming subject to a Child Protection Plan for the 2nd or subsequent time within a) 2 years of a previous plan, and b) with a previous plan at any point.
 These indicators reflect the underlying principle that professionals should be working towards specified outcomes which, if implemented effectively, should lead to all children not needing to be the subject of a Child Protection Plan within a maximum of two years, or becoming subject of a Child Protection Plan for a second or subsequent time.

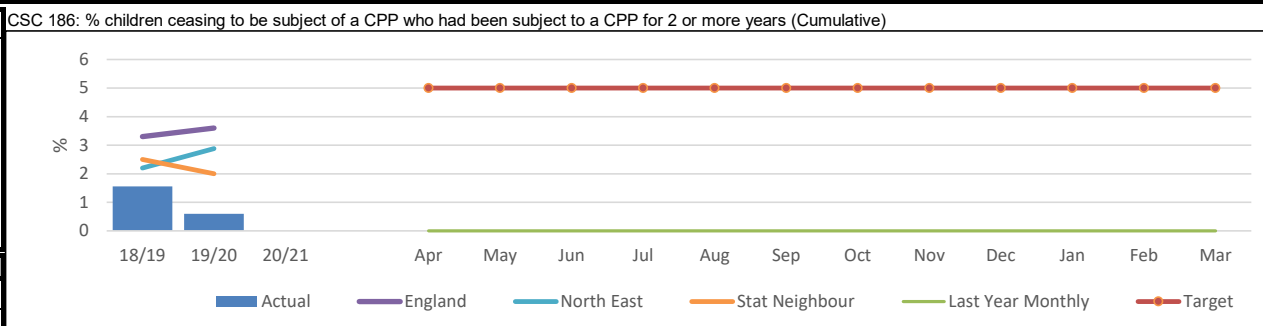
PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

14.3% of the children became subject to a CP plan for a second or subsequent time within 2 years of the previous plan ending. This relates to one family who were closed to the service in June 2020 following a step down to CiN from their CP plan in March 2020. This is above our target of 6% and also when compared to Q1 2020/21 (2.6%, 1 child). Due to the reduced number of children starting a CP plan (21 compared to 39 in Q1 2020/21) this has affected the percentage due to a lower denominator.

Year to date no child has ceased to be subject to a CP plan who had been subject to the plan for 2 or more years and we continue to remain below our target of 5%.

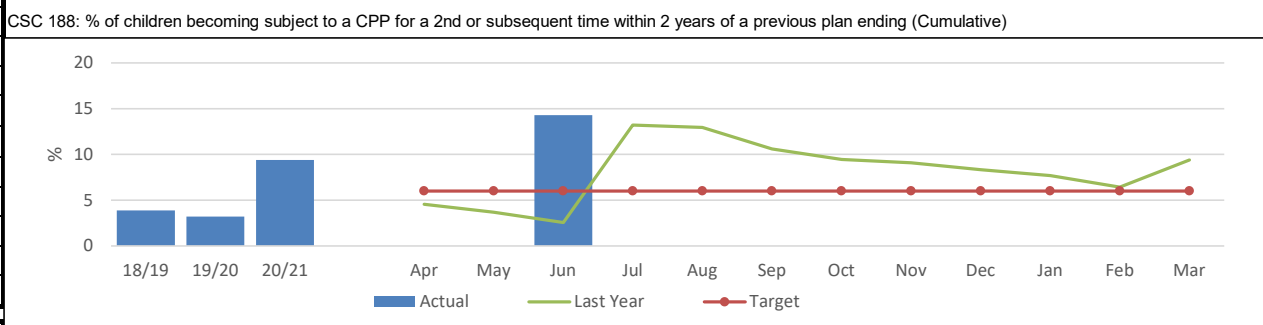
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CSC 186	CSC 188
% children ceasing to be subject of a CPP who had been subject to a CPP for 2 or more years (Cumulative)	% of children becoming subject to a CPP for a 2nd or subsequent time within 2 years of a previous plan ending (Cumulative)



IN MONTH PERFORMANCE

Target	5%	6%
Apr-21	0.0	0.0
May-21	0.0	0.0
Jun-21	0.0	14.3
Jul-21		
Aug-21		
Sep-21		
Oct-21		
Nov-21		
Dec-21		
Jan-22		
Feb-22		
Mar-22		



ANNUAL TREND

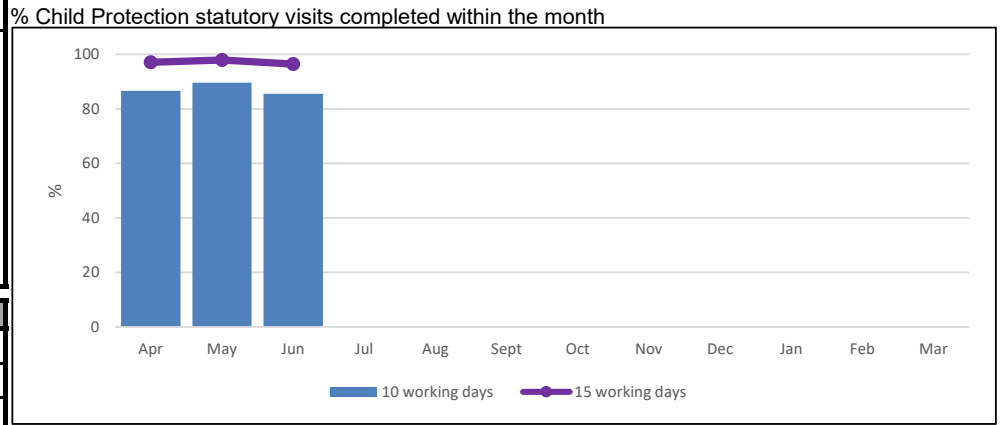
2018/19	1.6	3.9
2019/20	0.6	3.2
2020/21	0.0	9.4
2021/22	0.0	14.3

CHILD PROTECTION - STATUTORY VISITS

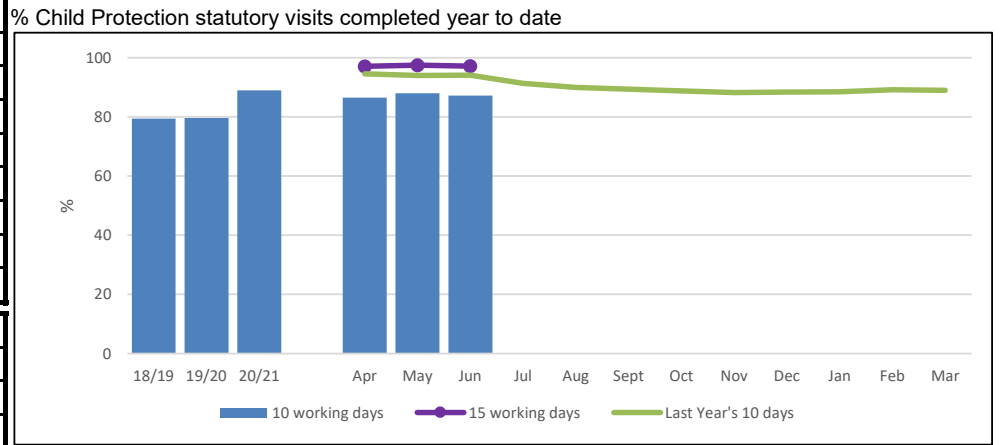
DEFINITION Percentage of children subject to a Child Protection Plan who had all statutory visits carried out within timescales and percentage of Child Protection statutory visits completed within timescale monthly and year to date.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS 87.3% (493 / 565) of Child Protection statutory visits were completed within 10 working days in Q1 2021/22 and 97.2% (549 / 565) of the visits were completed within 15 working days.

CSC 252a		CSC 252b	
% Child Protection statutory visits completed within 10 working days within the month	% Child Protection statutory visits completed within 15 working days within the month	% Child Protection statutory visits completed within 10 working days year to date (cumulative)	% Child Protection statutory visits completed within 15 working days year to date (cumulative)



IN MONTH PERFORMANCE	Target	90	90	90	90
	Apr-21	86.5	97.1	86.5	97.1
May-21	89.5	97.9	88.0	97.5	97.5
Jun-21	85.5	96.4	87.3	97.2	97.2
Jul-21					
Aug-21					
Sep-21					
Oct-21					
Nov-21					
Dec-21					
Jan-22					
Feb-22					
Mar-22					



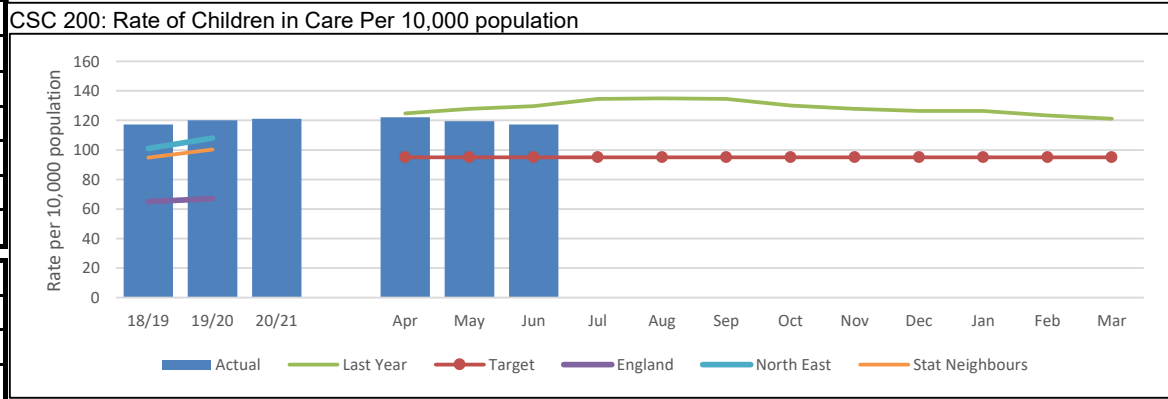
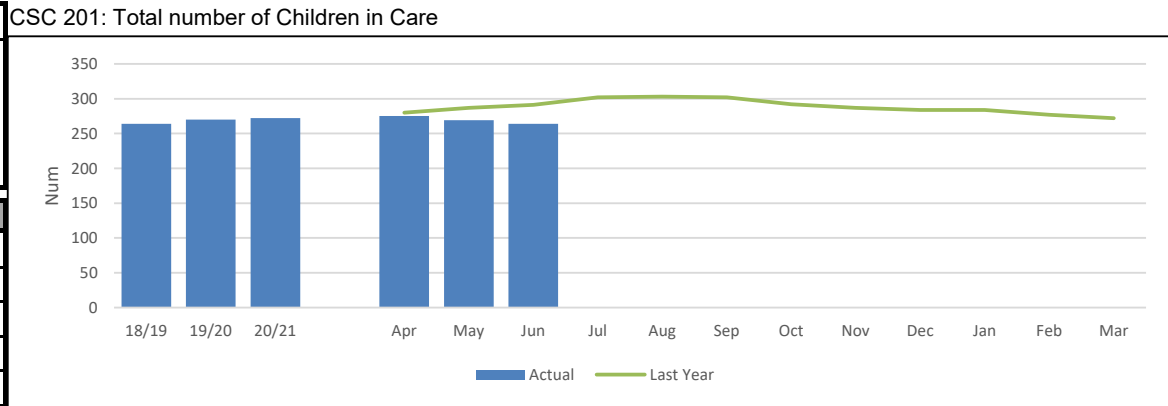
ANNUAL TREND	2018/19	79.3	95.7	79.3	95.7
	2019/20	79.6	92.0	79.6	93.8
	2020/21	89.0	98.4	89.0	98.4
	2021/22	85.5	96.4	87.3	97.2

CHILDREN IN CARE

DEFINITION	Number of Children in Care at the end of each month.
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PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS	264 children were in care as at June 2021 which is a 12.6% reduction from the 302 children in care at the end of June 2020.
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	CSC 201	CSC 200
	Total number of Children in Care	Rate of Children in Care Per 10,000 population
IN MONTH PERFORMANCE		95
Target		
Apr-21	275	122.1
May-21	269	119.4
Jun-21	264	117.2
Jul-21		
Aug-21		
Sep-21		
Oct-21		
Nov-21		
Dec-21		
Jan-22		
Feb-22		
Mar-22		
ANNUAL TREND		
2018/19	264	117.2
2019/20	270	120.1
2020/21	272	121.1
2021/22	264	117.2



CHILDREN IN CARE - ALLOCATION & REVIEWS

DEFINITION

The percentage of Children in Care cases which should have been reviewed during the year ending 31 March that were reviewed on time during the year and the percentage of Children in Care cases that were allocated to a qualified Social Worker at the end of the month.

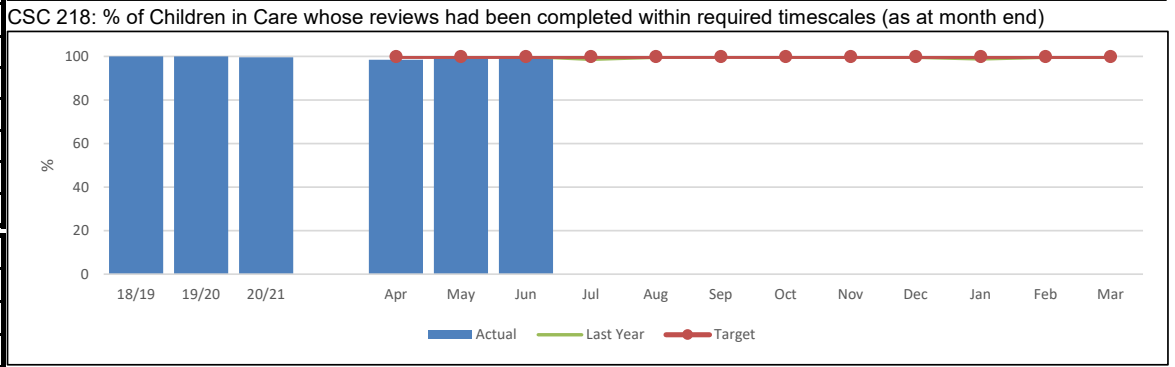
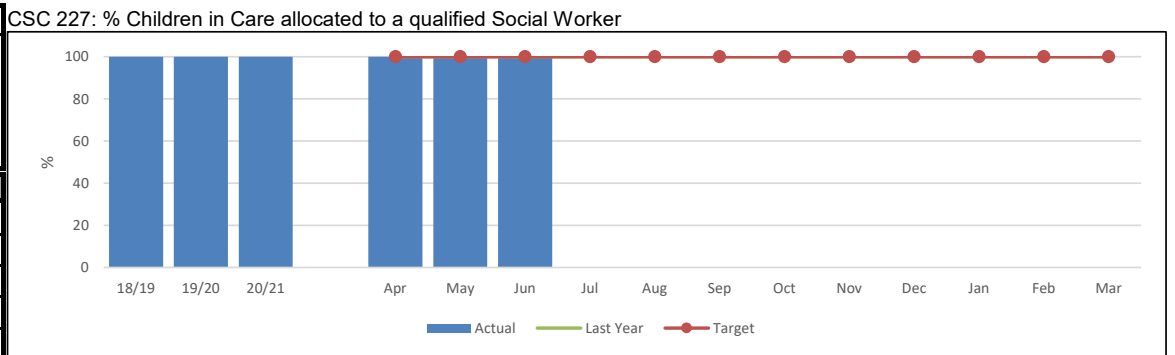
To improve compliance with local authorities' legal requirements under the Review of Children's cases Regulations 1991. The purpose of the review is to consider the plan for the child's welfare, to monitor the progress of the plan and amend it as necessary in light of changed information and circumstances. The statutory intervals are within 20 working days of placement, then within 3 months and 6 monthly thereafter, but reviews may be rescheduled or held inside these intervals if there are significant changes to the child's care plan.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

100.0% of Children in Care (CiC) are allocated to a qualified social worker.

99.3% of the reviews have been completed within the required timescales during Q1 2021/22.

		CSC 227	CSC 218
		% Children in Care allocated to a qualified Social Worker	% of Children in Care whose reviews had been completed within required timescales (as at month end)
IN MONTH PERFORMANCE	Target	100	100
	Apr-21	100.0	98.5
	May-21	100.0	99.2
	Jun-21	100.0	99.3
	Jul-21		
	Aug-21		
	Sep-21		
	Oct-21		
	Nov-21		
	Dec-21		
	Jan-22		
	Feb-22		
	Mar-22		
ANNUAL TREND	2018/19	100.0	100.0
	2019/20	100.0	100.0
	2020/21	100.0	99.6
	2021/22	100.0	99.3



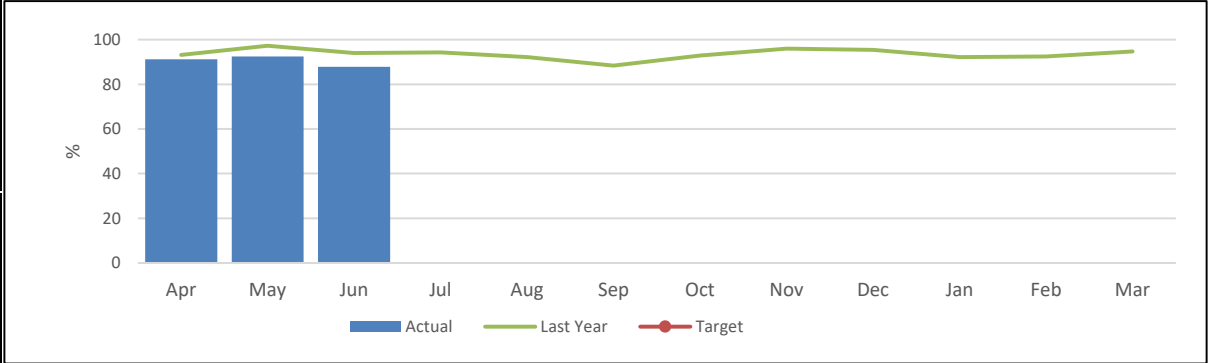
CHILDREN IN CARE - STATUTORY VISITS

DEFINITION Percentage of Children in Care who had all statutory visits completed within required timescales and percentage of Children in Care's statutory visits completed within timescales each month and year to date.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS During Q1 2021/22, 90.5% (762 / 842) of statutory visits for Children in Care (CiC) were completed in timescale. This is a small decrease compared to Q1 2020/21 when there were 94.6% of visits completed in timescale.

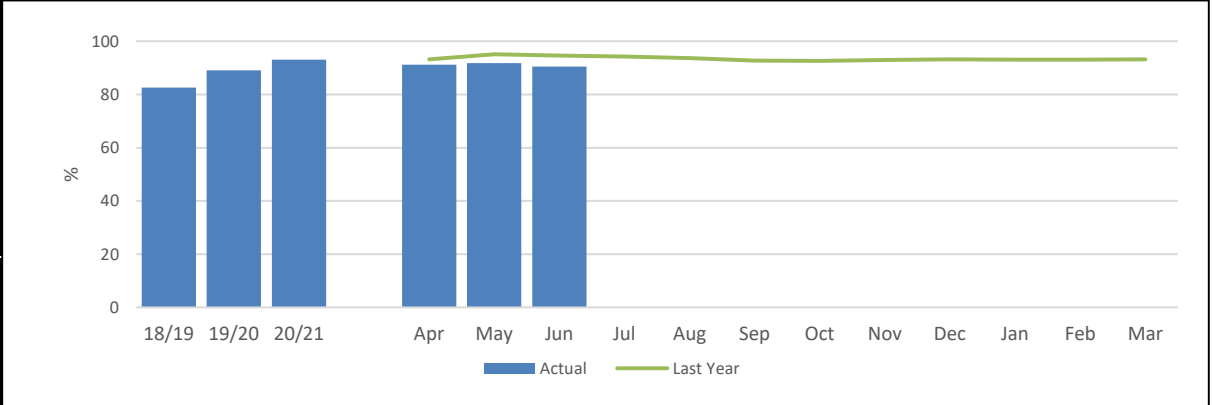
CSC 260a	CSC 260b
% Child in Care statutory visits completed in timescale within the month	% Child in Care statutory visits completed in timescale year to date

CSC 260a: % Child in Care statutory visits completed in timescale within the month



IN MONTH PERFORMANCE	Target	90	90
	Apr-21	91.2	91.2
	May-21	92.4	91.8
	Jun-21	87.9	90.5
	Jul-21		
	Aug-21		
	Sep-21		
	Oct-21		
	Nov-21		
	Dec-21		
	Jan-22		
	Feb-22		
	Mar-22		

CSC 260b: % Child in Care statutory visits completed in timescale year to date



ANNUAL TREND	2018/19	82.6	82.6
	2019/20	89.0	89.0
	2020/21	93.1	93.1
	2021/22	87.9	90.5

CHILDREN IN CARE - PLACEMENTS

DEFINITION

Of those Children in Care at the point in time (excluding series of short-term placements), the percentage that had 3 or more separate placements in the previous 12 months; who had been in their current placement for 2 or more years. and who were placed more than 20 miles away from their home address.

On the whole stability is associated with better outcomes; placement instability has been highlighted as a key barrier to improving educational outcomes. Proper assessment and an adequate choice of placements to meet the varied needs of different children are essential if appropriate stable placements are to be made. Inappropriate placements often break down and lead to frequent moves. Nevertheless, the circumstances of some individual children will require 3 or more separate placements during a year if they and others are to be kept safe.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

9.8% (26 / 264) of Children in Care, as at June 2021, have had 3 or more placements within the previous 12 months. This is below the internal target (10.0%), national (10.0%), statistical neighbour (9.9%) and regional averages (10.0%) as recorded in the LAIT 2020, but above the 6.5% as at June 2020.

Currently, 69.1% (76 / 110) of our Children in Care aged under 16 (who have been looked after for at least 2.5 years) have been in their current placement continuously for at least 2 years. This is a higher percentage compared with June 2020 (66.3%) and is just above the 68% target.

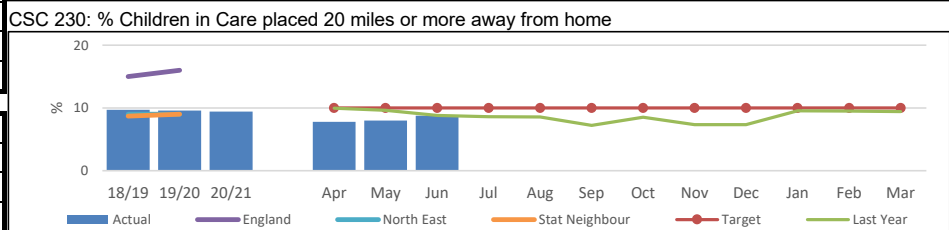
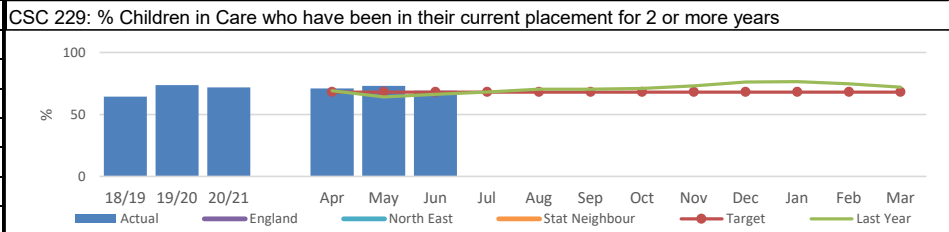
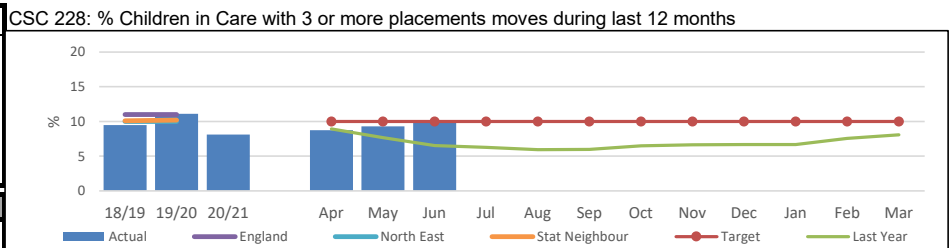
8.8% (22 children) of our Children in Care have been placed 20 or more miles away from home as at June 2021. This is below target of 10%. All these placements have been confirmed by team managers to be appropriate for the child enabling them to have the best support either with family links or specialised care.

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CSC 228	CSC 229	CSC 230
% Children in Care with 3 or more placements moves during last 12 months	% Children in Care who have been in their current placement for 2 or more years	% Children in Care placed 20 miles or more away from home

IN MONTH PERFORMANCE	Target	10%	68%	10%
	Apr-21	8.7	70.9	7.8
	May-21	9.3	73.0	8.0
	Jun-21	9.8	69.1	8.8
	Jul-21			
	Aug-21			
	Sep-21			
	Oct-21			
	Nov-21			
	Dec-21			
	Jan-22			
	Feb-22			
	Mar-22			

ANNUAL TREND	2018/19	9.5	64.4	9.7
	2019/20	11.1	73.6	9.6
	2020/21	8.1	71.9	9.4
	2021/22	9.8	69.1	8.8

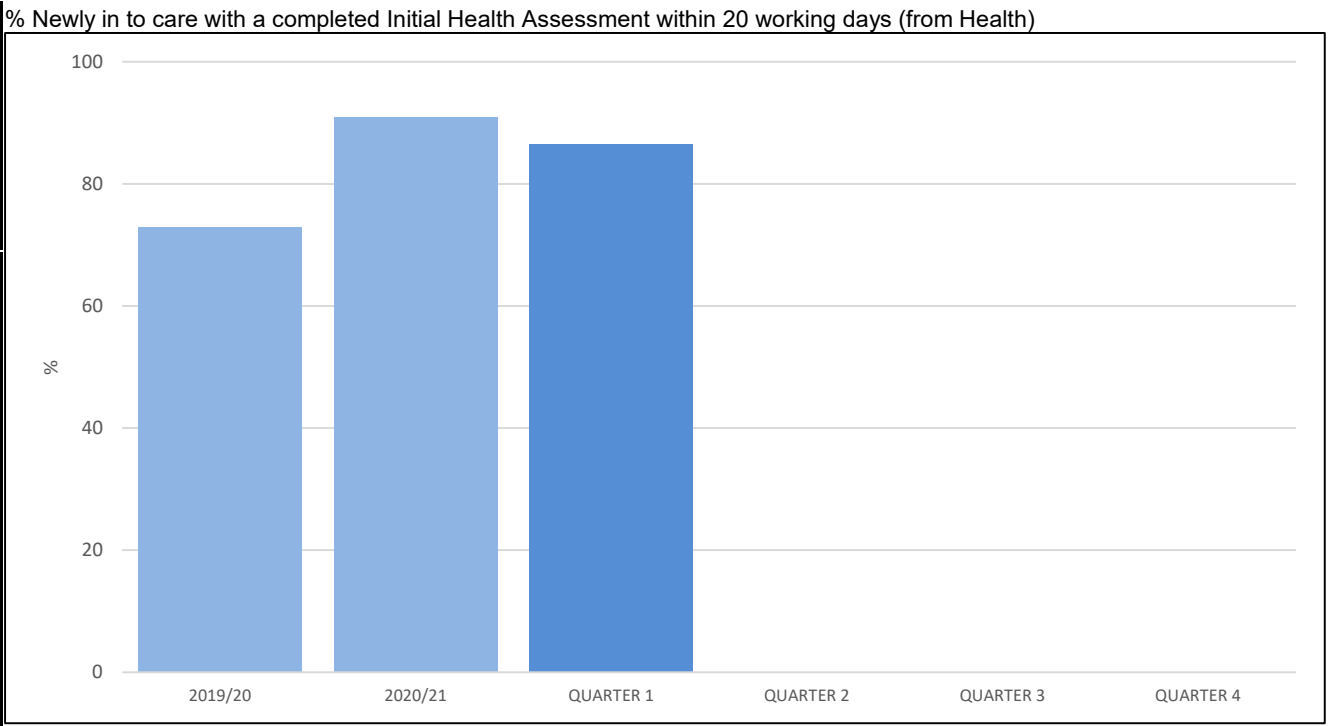


CHILDREN IN CARE - INITIAL HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

DEFINITION Percentage of Initial Health Assessments completed within 20 working days of a child coming into our care year to date (data from Health), and percentage of IHA forms returned to Health within 7 working days.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS Health report 86.4% of the children, newly into care, were seen by CDDFT within 20 working days for an initial health assessment during Q1 2021/22.

% Newly in to care with a completed Initial Health Assessment within 20 working days (from Health)



IN MONTH PERFORMANCE	Target	95
	Apr-21	
	May-21	
	Jun-21	86.4
	Jul-21	
	Aug-21	
	Sep-21	
	Oct-21	
	Nov-21	
	Dec-21	
	Jan-22	
	Feb-22	
Mar-22		

ANNUAL TREND	2018/19	86.2
	2019/20	72.9
	2020/21	90.9
	2021/22	86.4%

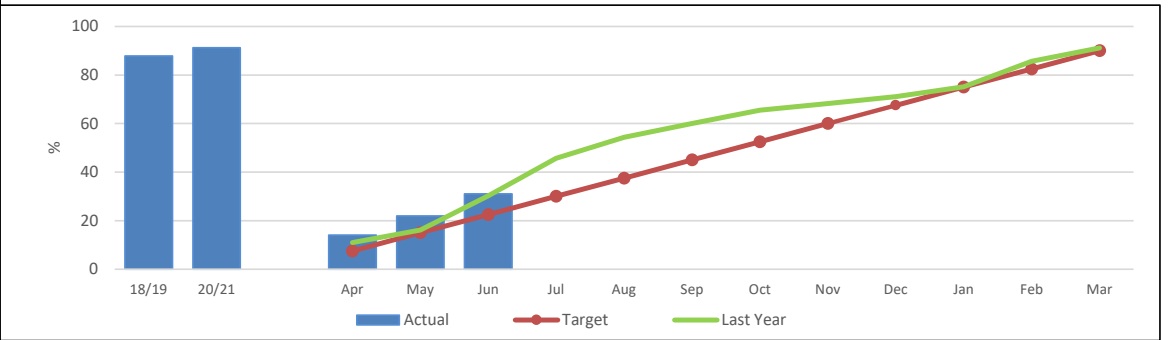
CHILDREN IN CARE - HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

DEFINITION
 Of the Children in Care (CiC) at 31 March who had been in care continuously for at least 12 months, the percentage who have had their Review Health Assessment (RHA) completed and the percentage who have an up to date Health Check.
 Children in Care share many of the same health risks and problems as their peers, but often to a greater degree. These indicators track the participation of our Children in Care's health as a proxy for monitoring the general health and wellbeing of the children, as well as providing a check on the effectiveness of joint working with Health to secure good health outcomes for Children in Care.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS
 80.0% (48 / 60) of children due a review health assessment by June 2021 have had one completed. This percentage is above that in June 2020 (69.9%) and June 2019 (50.0%).

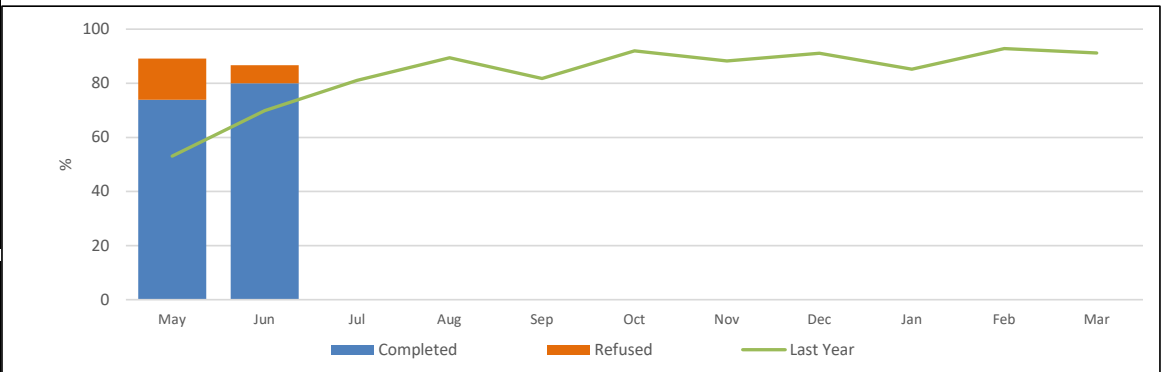
CSC 250		CSC 250b
The % of CiC who have an up to date Health Checks (excludes any who will turn 18 before 31st March)	The % of CiC who were due a Review Health Check (year to date) who refused to engage	The % of Children in Care who were due a Review Health Check year to date and were completed and recorded

CSC 250: % of CiC who are up to date for a Review Health Check at 31st March



IN MONTH PERFORMANCE	Target	90%	90%
	Apr-21	14.1	25.0
May-21	22.0	15.2	73.9
Jun-21	31.0	6.7	80.0
Jul-21			
Aug-21			
Sep-21			
Oct-21			
Nov-21			
Dec-21			
Jan-22			
Feb-22			
Mar-22			

CSC 250b: % of CiC due a Review Health Check during the year (to date) that have had one, and % that refused



ANNUAL TREND	2018/19	87.9	87.9
	2019/20	91.2	3.1
	2020/21	91.2	3.7
	2021/22	31.0	6.7

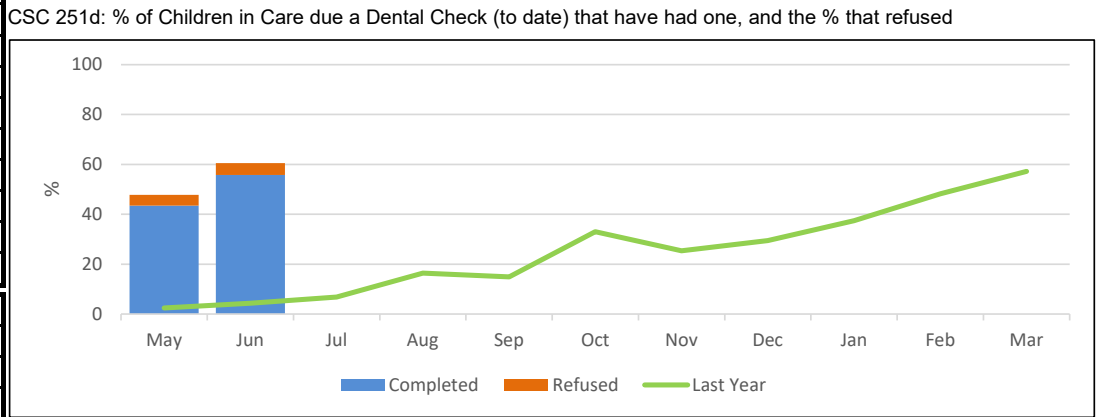
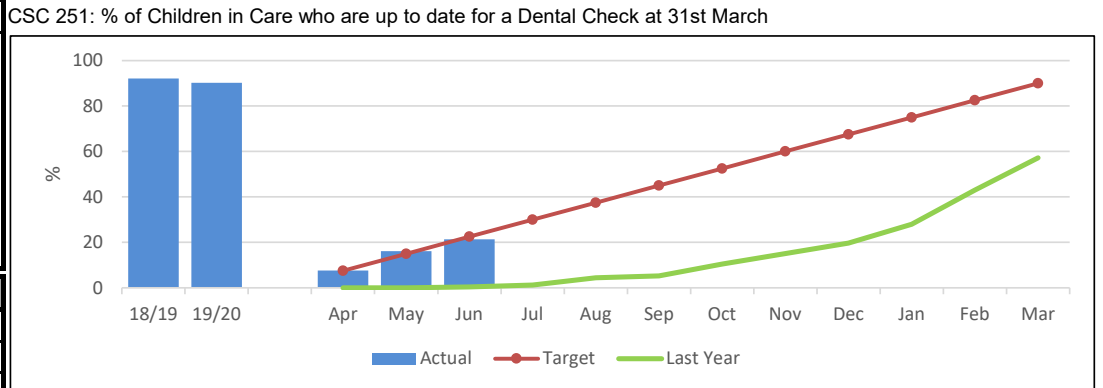
CHILDREN IN CARE - DENTAL HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

DEFINITION
 Of the Children in Care (CiC) at 31 March who had been in care continuously for at least 12 months, the percentage who had had their teeth checked by a dentist during the previous 12 months, and the percentage who had had an annual health check during the previous 12 months.
 Children in Care share many of the same health risks and problems as their peers, but often to a greater degree. These indicators track the participation of our Children in Care with dental checks as a proxy for monitoring the general health and wellbeing of the children, as well as providing a check on the effectiveness of joint working with Health to secure good health outcomes for Children in Care.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS
 55.8% (48 / 86) of children due a dental check assessment by June 2021 have had one completed. This percentage is above that in June 2020 (4.4%, when dental practises were closed due to Covid) and June 2019 (53.5%).

CSC 251	The % of Children in Care who were due a Dental Check (year to date) who refused to engage	CSC 251d
The % of Children in Care with up to date Dental Checks (excludes any who will turn 18 before 31st March)		The % of Children in Care who were due a Dental Check year to date and were up to date by the report date

IN MONTH PERFORMANCE	Target	90%	90%
	Apr-21	7.7	7.0
May-21	16.2	4.3	43.5
Jun-21	21.4	4.7	55.8
Jul-21			
Aug-21			
Sep-21			
Oct-21			
Nov-21			
Dec-21			
Jan-22			
Feb-22			
Mar-22			
ANNUAL TREND	2018/19	92.1	92.1
	2019/20	90.2	3.1
	2020/21	57.2	2.8
	2021/22	21.4	4.7



CARE LEAVERS

DEFINITION

The percentage of 'former relevant' care leavers aged 19-21 who were in suitable accommodation at their most recent contact, and the percentage who were not in employment, education or training at their most recent contact. Published data is included for comparison however data submitted to DfE by Local Authorities captures the young person's status around their 19th, 20th, or 21st birthday each year rather than the latest available information. This measures accommodation and employment outcomes for young people formerly in care - a key group at risk of social exclusion. It is intended to increase the proportion of former care leavers who are in suitable accommodation and employment, education or training.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

100.0% of our care leavers were in suitable accommodation at the end of June 2021.

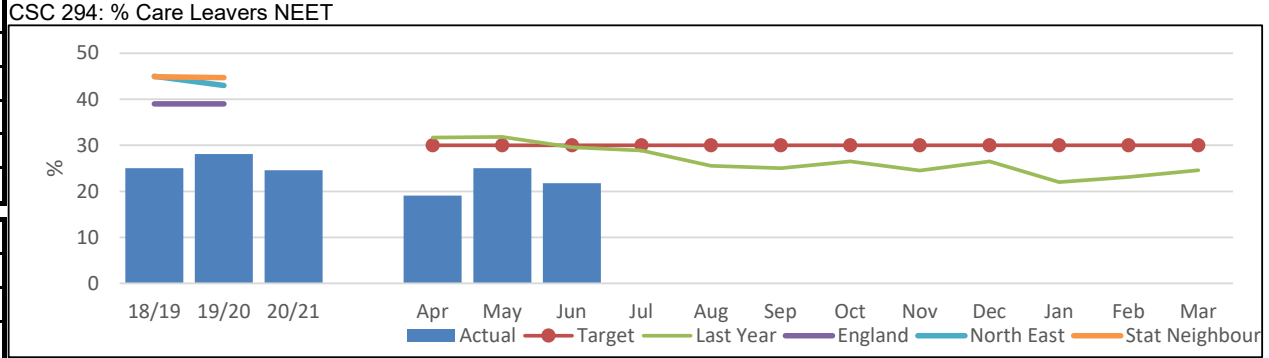
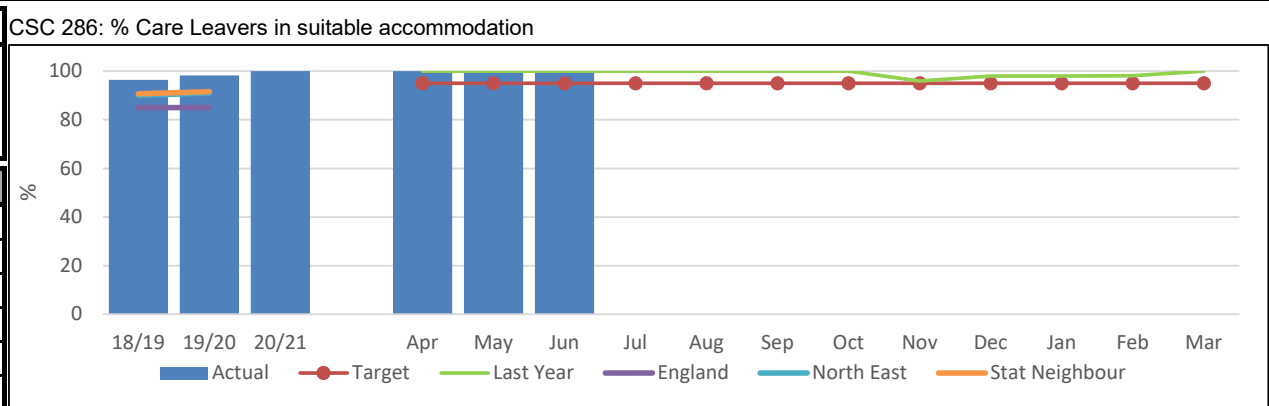
Of the young people (aged 19-21) as at June 2021 who were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET);

- 8.7% NEET because of illness or disability
- 4.3% NEET because of other circumstances
- 8.7% NEET because of pregnancy or parenting.

This equates to 21.7% of our care leavers which is positively below the internal target of 30% NEET.

CSC 286	CSC 294
% Care Leavers in suitable accommodation	% Care Leavers NEET

IN MONTH PERFORMANCE	Target	90%	30%	
	Apr-21	100.0	19.1	
	May-21	100.0	25.0	
	Jun-21	100.0	21.7	
	Jul-21			
	Aug-21			
	Sep-21			
	Oct-21			
	Nov-21			
	Dec-21			
	Jan-22			
	Feb-22			
	Mar-22			



ANNUAL TREND	2018/19	96.4	25.0
	2019/20	98.2	28.1
	2020/21	98.1	24.6
	2021/22	100.0	21.7

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**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
25 OCTOBER 2021**

WORK PROGRAMME

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To consider the work programme items scheduled to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee during the 2021/22 Municipal Year and to consider any additional areas which Members would like to suggest should be included.

Summary

2. Members are requested to consider the attached draft work programme (**Appendix 1**) for the 2021/22 Municipal Year which has been prepared based on Officers recommendations and recommendations previously agreed by this Scrutiny Committee in the last Municipal Year.
3. Once the work programme has been approved by this Scrutiny Committee, any additional areas of work which Members wish to add to the agreed work programme will require the completion of a quad of aims in accordance with the previously approved procedure. (**Appendix 2**)
4. Members will be aware that one of the items on the work programme is to undertake a joint piece of work with Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on youth unemployment and, the Chairs of CYP and E and R are meeting with Tony Murphy, Head of Education and Inclusion to discuss further.
5. Members will then be requested to participate in the review along with two Members of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and a terms of reference will be agreed at the first meeting thereof.

Recommendations

6. Members are requested to note the work programme and consider any additional items which they may wish to include.

**Elizabeth Davison
Group Director of Operations**

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Author: Allison Hill

S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for Crime and Disorder
Health and Well Being	This report has no direct implications to the Health and Well Being of residents of Darlington.
Carbon Impact	There are no issues which this report needs to address.
Diversity	There are no issues relating to diversity which this report needs to address
Wards Affected	The impact of the report on any individual Ward is considered to be minimal.
Groups Affected	The impact of the report on any individual Group is considered to be minimal.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
Council Plan	The report contributes to the Council Plan in a number of ways through the involvement of Members in contributing to the delivery of the Plan.
Efficiency	The Work Programmes are integral to scrutinising and monitoring services efficiently (and effectively), however this report does not identify specific efficiency savings.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

7. The format of the proposed work programme has been reviewed to enable Members of this Scrutiny Committee to provide a rigorous and informed challenge to the areas for discussion.
8. The Council Plan sets the vision and strategic direction for the Council through to May 2023, with its overarching focus being 'Delivering Success for Darlington' .
9. In approving the Council Plan, Members have agreed to the vision for Darlington which is a place where people want to live and businesses want to locate, where the economy continues to grow, where people are happy and proud of the borough and where everyone has the opportunity to maximise their potential.
10. The vision for the Children and Young People portfolio is :

'a borough where young people get the best start in life, can maximise their potential and are safe'

to maximise the potential of our young people by working with partners to maximise educational achievement; working to remove barriers to young people reaching their potential and working at a Tees Valley level to match jobs with skills and training.

Forward Plan and Additional Items

11. Any Member seeking to add a new item to the work programme will need to complete a quad of aims.
12. A copy of the Forward Plan has been attached at **Appendix 3** for information.

Joint Scrutiny Review

13. At the last meeting of this Scrutiny Committee it was agreed to undertake a joint piece of work with Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on youth unemployment with this Scrutiny taking the lead.
14. Councillor Crudass and Councillor Renton are meeting with Tony Murphy to discuss further prior to Members being invited to participate in the review along with two Members of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and a terms of reference will be agreed at the first meeting thereof.

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CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

Topic	Timescale	Lead Officer	Link to PMF (metrics)	Scrutiny's Role
Performance Management and Regulation	Q1 25 Oct 2021 Q2 20 Dec 2021 Q3 25 April 2022	Sharon Raine	Agreed set of indicators	To receive quarterly monitoring reports and undertake any further detailed work into particular outcomes if necessary
Learning and Skills Service Annual Report	25 October 2021	Paul Richardson		Annual Report to demonstrate challenge
IRO Annual Report	25 October 2021	Martin Graham	CSC201	To examine the Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Officer for Looked After Children
Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report	25 October 2021	Ann Baxter, Independent Chair		Annually monitoring
Adoption Tees Valley Annual Report 2020/21	25 October 2021	Vicky Davidson-Boyd, Service Manager, Adoption Tees Valley		Annual monitoring
Early Help services available for new mothers	20 December 2021	Joanne Benson		To examine services available
Darlington Care Collective	20 December 2021	Christine Shields		To provide an Update on the Care Collective

Topic	Timescale	Lead Officer	Link to PMF (metrics)	Scrutiny's Role
Children and Young Peoples Plan	21 February 2022	Christine Shields		Annual Update
2021/22 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment	21 February 2022	Tony Murphy/Nicola Davies		Annual Report
Accessibility Strategy	21 February 2022	Tony Murphy/Helen Ellison/Karen Williamson		To consult with Scrutiny prior to Cabinet approval
Self-Assessment - Overview	August 2022	Jane Kochanowski		To provide Scrutiny with the Annual Self-Assessment for Children's Services so that constructive 'critical friend' challenge takes place to drive improvement in public services
Children and Young People Public Health Overview and Childhood Healthy Weight Plan	August 2022	Ken Ross	PBH 009 PBH 013c PBH 016 PBH 018 PBH 020 PBH 021 PBH 054	Annual Monitoring
Local Designated Officer Annual Report	August 2021	James Stroyan		To examine the Annual Report and assure Members that allegations made against staff who work with children are reported and how they are actioned

REVIEWS

Youth Unemployment (Joint Review with E&R)	Added to the Work Programme at the Scrutiny Meeting held on 23 August 2021	Paul Richardson	To examine youth unemployment and scale of this in the local area
Autism Provision Review Group	Final Report to Health and Housing on 14 April 2021. Cross Party Joint Working Group to be established	Christine Shields	To review the provisions and services and contractual arrangements between this Council and our providers who provide the Autism provisions, diagnoses and support services for Darlington
Adoptive Services	Approved by Scrutiny at their meeting held on 29 June 2020	Vicky Davidson-Boyd	To examine how the Regional Adoption Agency is serving Darlington and to examine how the Coronavirus Pandemic has affected adoption

ARCHIVED ITEMS

Looked After Children Missing From Care	2 July 2018	Alison Poulter / Chris Bell	Enough support for people when needed			To examine the reasons why children in care go missing and the interventions in place to avoid episodes and examine partnership working and parent engagement
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LAC Missing from Care – Reasons and Interventions	10 September 2018	Joanne Stoddart	Children with the best start in life Enough support for people when needed		CSC246	To examine the reasons why children in care go missing and the interventions in place to avoid. To invite the Police Liaison Officer to attend Scrutiny to discuss
Educational Landscape	Archived on 3 Oct 2018	Tony Murphy	Children with the best start in life	Build Strong Communities		To examine school improvement including the decline in performance for maths and English and what action is being taking to address this.
Stability of Places for Looked After Children	10 December 2018	Joanne Stoddart	Children with the best start in life Enough support for people when needed	Build strong communities	CSC 228 CSC 229	To be monitored via the regular performance reports in future
Children Services Accessibility Strategy	10 December 2018		Children with the best start in life Enough support for people when needed			To consider the Strategy prior to Cabinet.
SEND High Needs Review: Strategy and Funding	29 October 2018	Tony Murphy	Children with the best start in life More People healthy and independent			To consider 3 of the 4 core elements of the Review. Members to carry

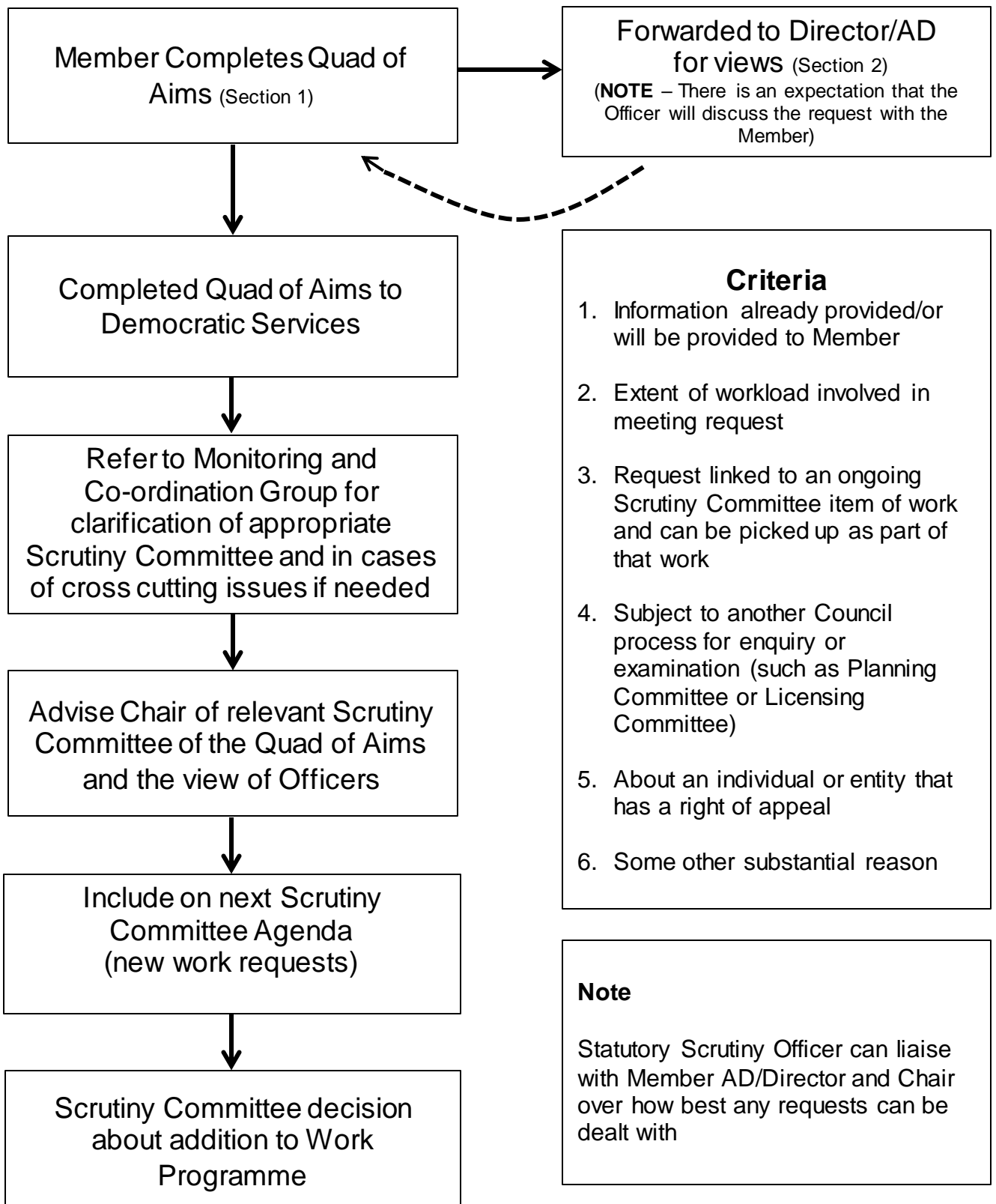
<p>Home to School Transport</p>	<p>10 Dec 2018 29 October 2018</p>		<p>Enough support for people when needed</p>			<p>out a T/F Review on the proposals. Verbal update to Members</p>
<p>SEND Strategy and Funding Consultation Review Group</p>	<p>10 December 2018</p>		<p>Children with the best start in life</p>			<p>To give a Scrutiny response to the consultation on the SEND Strategy and Funding and SEND Travel Assistance Policy</p>
<p>Childhood Obesity/ Oral Health/Mental Health Links</p>	<p>Review suspended – to continue to monitor the effectiveness of the Childhood Healthy Weight Plan. Update report on the Childhood Healthy Weight Plan to Scrutiny on 3 February 2020.</p>		<p>Children with the best start in life Enough support for people when needed More People Healthy and Independent</p>	<p>Build Strong Communities</p>		<p>To investigate the high incidence of childhood obesity in Darlington and the associated links to poor dental health; and whether the desire to promote good ‘self image’ has an impact on mental health issues in young people.</p>
<p>Medium Term Financial Plan 2020/21 to 2023/24</p>	<p>Special Meeting 13 January 2020</p>	<p>Elizabeth Davison</p>	<p>One Darlington Perfectly Placed</p>	<p>Spend Every Pound Wisely</p>		<p>To consider the Medium Term Financial Plan in relation to the areas within this Scrutiny’s remit</p>

Council Plan 2020/23	Special Meeting on 13 January 2020	Paul Wildsmith				To consider the Council Plan
Voluntary and Community Sector Funding Update	3 February 2020	Christine Shields				Update report on the community based initiatives funded from Voluntary Sector Development Fund monies, piloted during 2019/20.
Home to School Transport	3 February 2020	Tony Murphy/ Graham Easterlow				To update Members on the current position/ changes to regulations which may impact on the MTFP
Extension of Funding to 21 for Children in Foster Care	March 2020	Jane Kochanowski	Children with the best start in life A safe and caring community Enough support for people when needed More people healthy and independent	Build strong communities		Annual monitoring – a duty on Local Authorities to facilitate, monitor and support staying put arrangements. Now monitored by quarterly performance reports.
Academy Trusts	2 November 2020	Presentation by Katherine Cowell, the Interim Regional Schools Commissioner for the North of England	Children with the best start in life			To examine safeguarding measures and health and safety training in place within the boroughs Academies and

						attainment within Academy Trusts.
SEND - Outcomes for Parents following Covid-19	4 January 2021	Carla Scaith Darlington Parent Carer Forum				To continue to monitor SEND/EHCPs. To receive the survey results from the Parent Carer Forum SEND Survey and to receive information relating to experiences of the Parent Carer Forum.
Trauma and Horizon Scanning	23 August 2021	Paige Thomason/ Martin Webster				To examine how Children's Services are starting to embed and respond to Trauma.
Looked After Children Off-framework.	23 August 2021	Jane Kochanowski				To examine the current situation with those placed off framework, commissioning of accommodation and costs

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PROCESS FOR ADDING AN ITEM TO SCRUTINY COMMITTEE'S PREVIOUSLY APPROVED WORK PROGRAMME



PLEASE RETURN TO DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

QUAD OF AIMS (MEMBERS' REQUEST FOR ITEM TO BE CONSIDERED BY SCRUTINY)

SECTION 1 TO BE COMPLETED BY MEMBERS

NOTE – This document should only be completed if there is a clearly defined and significant outcome from any potential further work. This document should **not** be completed as a request for or understanding of information.

REASON FOR REQUEST?	RESOURCE (WHAT OFFICER SUPPORT WOULD YOU REQUIRE?)
PROCESS (HOW CAN SCRUTINY ACHIEVE THE ANTICIPATED OUTCOME?)	HOW WILL THE OUTCOME MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

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Signed Councillor

Date

SECTION 2 TO BE COMPLETED BY DIRECTORS/ASSISTANT DIRECTORS
(NOTE – There is an expectation that Officers will discuss the request with the Member)

	Criteria
1. (a) Is the information available elsewhere? Yes No If yes, please indicate where the information can be found (attach if possible and return with this document to Democratic Services)	1. Information already provided/or will be provided to Member
(b) Have you already provided the information to the Member or will you shortly be doing so?	2. Extent of workload involved in meeting request
2. If the request is included in the Scrutiny Committee work programme what are the likely workload implications for you/your staff?	3. Request linked to an ongoing Scrutiny Committee item of work and can be picked up as part of that work
3. Can the request be included in an ongoing Scrutiny Committee item of work and picked up as part of that?	4. Subject to another Council process for enquiry or examination (such as Planning Committee or Licensing Committee)
4. Is there another Council process for enquiry or examination about the matter currently underway?	5. About an individual or entity that has a right of appeal
5. Has the individual or entity some other right of appeal?	6. Some other substantial reason
6. Is there any substantial reason (other than the above) why you feel it should not be included on the work programme?	

PLEASE RETURN TO DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

Signed **Position** **Date**

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PLEASE RETURN TO DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
FORWARD PLAN



DARLINGTON

Borough Council

FORWARD PLAN
FOR THE PERIOD: 6 OCTOBER 2021 - 28 FEBRUARY 2022

Title	Decision Maker and Date
Council Tax Support - Scheme Approval 2022/23	Council 25 Nov 2021 Cabinet 9 Nov 2021
Eastbourne Sports Complex - Release of Capital	Council 25 Nov 2021 Cabinet 9 Nov 2021
Feethams House - European Regional Development Fund	Cabinet 9 Nov 2021
Land at Sparrowhall Drive	Cabinet 9 Nov 2021
Project Position Statement and Capital Programme Monitoring - Quarter Two	Cabinet 9 Nov 2021
Proposed Waiting Restrictions on Woodland Road, Outram Street and Duke Street	Cabinet 9 Nov 2021
Revenue Budget Monitoring - Quarter 2	Cabinet 9 Nov 2021
Schedule of Transactions - November	Cabinet 9 Nov 2021
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Capital Projects	Cabinet 9 Nov 2021
Complaints Made to Local Government Ombudsman	Cabinet 7 Dec 2021
Housing Revenue Account 2022/23	Cabinet 7 Dec 2021
Mid-Year Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management 2020/21	Council 27 Jan 2022 Cabinet 7 Dec 2021
Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 to 2025/26	Cabinet 7 Dec 2021
Rail Heritage Quarter Update	Cabinet 7 Dec 2021
Schedule of Transactions - December	Cabinet 7 Dec 2021
Customer Services and Digital Strategy 2021/24	Cabinet 11 Jan 2022
Maintained Schools Capital Programme - Summer 2022	Cabinet 11 Jan 2022
Tees Valley Energy Recovery Facility	Cabinet 11 Jan 2022
Annual Audit Letter 2020/21	Cabinet 8 Feb 2022

**DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
FORWARD PLAN**

Calendar of Council and Committee Meetings 2022/23	Cabinet 8 Feb 2022
Housing Revenue Account 2022/23	Council 17 Feb 2022 Cabinet 8 Feb 2022
Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 to 2025/26	Council 17 Feb 2022 Cabinet 8 Feb 2022
Project Position Statement and Capital Programme Monitoring - Quarter 3	Cabinet 8 Feb 2022
Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management Strategy	Council 17 Feb 2022 Cabinet 8 Feb 2022
Revenue Budget Monitoring - Quarter 3	Cabinet 8 Feb 2022
Local Transport Plan	Cabinet 8 Mar 2022
Regulatory Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA)	Cabinet 8 Mar 2022
Restoration of Locomotion No 1 Replica	Cabinet 8 Mar 2022