



DARLINGTON

Borough Council

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Agenda

9.30 am

Monday, 5 September 2022

Council Chamber, Town Hall, Darlington. DL1 5QT

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 27 June 2022
(Pages 3 - 6)
4. Designated Officer Annual Report 2021/22 –
Report of the Assistant Director of Children’s Services
(Pages 7 - 30)
5. Children and Young People Public Health Overview –
Report of the Director of Public Health
(Pages 31 - 34)
6. Children's Services Self-Assessment 2022 - Overview –
Report of the Assistant Director of Children’s Services
(Pages 35 - 66)
7. Work Programme –
Report of the Group Director of Operations
(Pages 67 - 80)

8. 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
9. Questions



Luke Swinhoe
Assistant Director Law and Governance

Thursday, 25 August 2022

Town Hall
Darlington.

Membership

Councillors Ali, Bell, Crudass, C L B Hughes, L Hughes, Johnson, Lucas, Preston, Snedker, Sowerby and Willis

Statutory Co-optees

Malcolm Frank and Carly Spence

Non Statutory Co-optees

Maura Regan, Tim Fisher, 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, 27 June 2022

PRESENT – Councillors Ali, Bell, Crudass, C L B Hughes, L Hughes, Johnson, Lucas, Preston, Snedker and Willis

STATUTORY CO-OPTees – None

NON-STATUTORY CO-OPTees – John Armitage

APOLOGIES –Carly Spence

ABSENT – Councillor Sowerby, Malcolm Frank, Maura Regan, Tim Fisher and Janet Woodcock

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Asst Chief Constable Tonya Antonis (Durham Constabulary)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Chris Bell (Assistant Director of Children's Services), Tony Murphy (Head of Education and Inclusion), Alison Poulter (Service Manager - First Response Services) and Allison Hill (Democratic Officer),

CYP1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2022/23

RESOLVED – That Councillor Crudass be appointed Chair of this Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal Year 2022/23.

CYP2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2022/23

RESOLVED – That Councillor Willis be appointed Vice-Chair of this Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal Year 2022/23.

CYP3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at this meeting.

CYP4 TO CONSIDER THE TIMES OF MEETINGS OF THIS COMMITTEE FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2022/23 ON THE DATES AGREED IN THE CALENDAR BY CABINET AT MINUTE C100/FEB/22

RESOLVED - That meetings of this Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee be held at 9.30 a.m. on the dates, as agreed on the calendar of meetings by Cabinet at Minute C100/Feb/22.

CYP5 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 25 APRIL 2022

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 25 April 2022.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 25 April 2022 be approved as a correct record.

CYP6 MISSING AND EXPLOITED OPERATIONAL CHANGE

The Head of Service, Children's Front Door and Early Intervention submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide an update on operational changes, improvements and developments in relation to the Missing and Exploited Service.

The submitted report outlined the changes to the service since the remodeling of the Children's Front Door in March 2020 to ensure that the right service is provided swiftly to children and their families. The remodeling at the Front Door also transformed the Children's Access Point (CAP) into the Children's Initial Advice Team (CIAT) and is now at the forefront of an ever growing Front Door Service.

It was reported that one area in particular had seen much improvement and change being children who go missing and who are at risk of exploitation and in October 2020 the Missing and Exploitation Team was formed and is a multi-agency group that sits within the Front Door Service.

The submitted report also outlined a further review that had taken place at the end of 2020 which focused on the impact of operational processes and how they supported improvement of practice; outlined the operational processes currently in place including the Child Exploitation Vulnerability Tracker Meeting and the Children Exploitation Operational Group; and outlined how the revised processes will aim to support those children and young people at the most significant risk of harm and how involvement from Children's Services and internal and external partners can bring about a positive impact on children and their families.

Members questioned if training was being offered to the Bus Network; and how the Service intended to measure its success going forward.

The Assistant Chief Constable, Tonya Antonis attended the meeting and advised Members of her many years' experience in safeguarding and that she was encouraged by the work of the team linking missing and exploited and the various multi-agency meetings that were taking place to address a national issue.

She advised Members that the British Transport Police undertake training to spot signs and signals of those at risk; advocated the Crimestoppers Charity as a valuable source of intelligence for the police and that the use of this charity be encouraged as it was anonymous; and also highlighted the St Giles Trust Charity and the services specifically aimed at children experiencing adverse circumstances.

John Armitage, the Primary Schools Forum representative advised Members of the various forums held within schools and confirmed that access to the Front Door was more accessible and more schools were receiving advice and also confirmed that schools were part of the training roll out; and Tony Murphy, the Assistant Director of Education and Inclusion referred to the Vulnerable Pupil Panel as a key tool for more specific discussions on vulnerable children who may be experiencing social, emotional and mental health difficulties within mainstream school settings.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

CYP7 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2020/21

The Group Director of People submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide Members with an update on performance against key performance indicators.

The submitted report provided year-end (April 2021 to March 2022) performance information in line with an indicator set agreed by the Monitoring and Co-ordination Group and subsequently by each individual Scrutiny Committee.

The submitted report also highlighted where Children and Young People were performing well and where there was a need to improve. It was also outlined that where indicators are reported annually, quarterly updates will not be available.

It was highlighted that 10.5 per cent of children referred by the end of March 2022 had been a re-referral to Children's Social Care within 12 months of a previous referral which was below the internal target of 18 per cent; 4.7 per cent of the referrals took over 3 working days to be completed in 2021/22 which was positively just below the target of 5 per cent; 100 per cent of children with a Children Protection Plan (CP) and 100 per cent of Children in Care (CiC) had an allocated social worker; in 2021/22 no child had ceased to be subject to a CP plan who had been subject to the plan for two or more years positively below the target of 5 per cent; 100 per cent of CiC were allocated a qualified social worker and 98.8 per cent of reviews had been completed within required timescales; the number of CiC was 273 by the end of March 2022 with 100 children coming into care and 99 ceasing care during the reporting year and work continues to safely reduce the number of children coming into care; 90.1 per cent of statutory CiC visits had been completed within timescale in line with the target of 90 per cent; 10.6 per cent of CiC had had three or more placements within the previous 12 months and was in line with the internal target of 10 per cent; 74 per cent of CiC aged under 16 years had been in their current placement continuously for at least two years and was positively above the internal target of 68 per cent; 6.6 per cent of CiC had been placed 20 or more miles away from home as of March 2022 below the target of 10 per cent; 90.5 per cent of CiC due a review health assessment by March 2022 had one completed and 83.7 of the children due a dental check had one completed; 23.1 per cent of Care Leavers were Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) at the end of March 2022 which was positively below the target of 30 per cent and 100 per cent were in suitable accommodation.

Areas highlighted for improvement were in relation to 72.1 per cent of referrals screened and completed within one working day in 2021/22 was below the target of 90 per cent; social workers completed 84.5 per cent of the C and F assessments within timescale in 2021/22 below the target of 90 per cent, similar to the same period the previous year; 79.3 per cent of Initial Child Protection Conferences were held within 15 working days from the strategy meeting/section 47 being initiated, excluding transfer-in conferences in 2021/22; at the end of March 2022 the percentage of children becoming subject to a CP plan for a second or subsequent time within two years of the previous plan ending was 7.1 per cent above the target of 6 per cent, however this was a reduction from 9.4 per cent at the end of March 2021; and 82.9 per cent of children received a statutory CP visit within ten working days in 2021/22 and was below the target of 90 per cent.

Members discussed the continued challenge in Foster Carer sufficiency and its impact on the performance data and the challenges around stability.

Members also discussed access to mental health services and direct mental health support and how that lack of provision can be challenged; the work of the Vulnerable Pupil Panel in assessing the challenges across educational settings, some as a result of the Covid pandemic; and the work of the Education Psychology Service who offer a training programme to prioritise return to school and the work taking place by the authority to support school colleagues. It was also highlighted that a pilot scheme was being undertaken around Mental Health Teams in schools to offer support before any professional counselling service can be assessed and provided.

A Member questioned if there had been a rise in pupils being educated at home and the Assistant Director of Education and Inclusion advised Members that there had been a spike in Elective Home Education (EHE) during lockdown however those numbers had now stabilised but the concern now was non-attendance of those pupils on roll and it was agreed that further information and data on EHE/non-attendance be supplied to Members of this Scrutiny Committee to monitor.

RESOLVED – That the performance information reported for year end 2021/22 be noted.

CYP8 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

Reference was made to the information that had been circulated by the Assistant Director of Education and Inclusion, following Members request, on current pre-school supply and demand at ward level and also information on how planned investment in the Liquid Logic Early Years and Education System will enhance the collection of data.

Members noted the information and requested that further discussions are carried with Members regarding childcare sufficiency and the determination of nursery places and location ahead of the scheduled annual report to Scrutiny.

RESOLVED – That the work programme be noted.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY

5 September 2022

DESIGNATED OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to update Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on the progress and performance of the Designated Officer (DO) between April 2021 and March 2022 and to highlight the required actions for April 2022 to March 2023.

Summary

2. In line with national guidance, the Designated Officer function is to ensure that:
 - a) advice and guidance are provided to partner agencies and staff where an allegation is made against a person who works with children (paid or voluntary capacity).
 - b) the Designated Officer will facilitate and oversee this process. The Designated Officer does not investigate. Investigation is the role of the employer or the police where a criminal offence has been committed.
 - c) an agreed outcome of the investigation is established.
 - d) allegations are appropriately managed by employers to protect not only the welfare of children but also staff.
 - e) support actions are taken without delay to protect children.
 - f) all learning is effectively disseminated.
3. All organisations working with children in Darlington are required to have policies and procedures in place in relation to what their organisation should do when an allegation is made against an employee/volunteer who has contact with children. These policies and procedures should be in line with Darlington Safeguarding Partnership multi-agency procedures.
4. The allegation can be in connection with:
 - a) employment
 - b) voluntary activity
 - c) work placement
 - d) the individual's own children
 - e) related to the community or private life of a partner, member of the family or other household member

Recommendations

5. It is recommended that:
- a) the contents of the report and the work undertaken during 2022/23 and the priorities of the Designated Officer service for 2022/23 be noted.
 - b) the annual report be agreed.
 - c) all agencies consider how to promote the role of the Designated Officer within their own organisation.

Chris Bell
Assistant Director of Children's Services

Background Papers

None

Marian Garland: Extension 6451

S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for Crime and Disorder
Health and Wellbeing	The work of the Designated Officer can have a positive impact on the health and well-being of children and young people
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	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	All wards
Groups Affected	All Children and Young People
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework
Key Decision	Not a key decision
Urgent Decision	Not an urgent decision
Council Plan	This report has no implications for the Council Plan
Efficiency	The outcome of this report does not impact on the Council efficiency agenda
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

Designated Officer Annual Report 2021/22

Managing Allegations and Concerns against Staff, Carers or Volunteers

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Appendices

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| Appendix 1 | Service Improvements & Developments 2021/22 |
| Appendix 2 | Designated Officer Service Priority Plan 2022/23 |

Designated Officer Annual Report 2021/22

Managing Allegations and Concerns against Staff, Carers or Volunteers

1.0 Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members of Scrutiny on the progress and performance of the Designated Officer (DO) service, (previously known as the Local Authority Designated Officer LADO) between April 2021 and March 2022 and to highlight the required actions for April 2022 to March 2023.

2.0 Introduction / National Context

- 2.1 The framework for the management of allegations of abuse is set out in [Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children \(July 2018\)](#) and [Keeping Children Safe in Education: Statutory Guidance for Schools and Colleges \(September 2018\)](#).

In line with the guidance, the Designated Officer function is required to ensure that:

- advice and guidance are provided to partner agencies and staff
 - any allegation made against a person who works with children in either a paid or a voluntary capacity is investigated. The Designated Officer will facilitate and oversee this process to conclusion. The Designated Officer does not investigate. That is the role of the employer or if a criminal allegation, the police
 - Designated Officer meetings are chaired effectively, and an agreed outcome of the investigation is established
 - allegations are appropriately managed by employers to protect not only the welfare of children but also staff
 - support actions are taken without delay to protect children
 - learning from Designated Officer referrals is effectively disseminated
- 2.2 All organisations within Darlington are required to have clear policies and procedures in place which outline how and what their organisation should do when an allegation is made against an employee/volunteer who has contact with

children. These policies and procedures should be in line with Darlington Safeguarding Partnership procedures.

2.3 The criteria for a Designated Officer referral are when a person is alleged to have:

- behaved in a way that has harmed or may harm a child
- has possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates that he or she may pose a risk of harm if they work regularly or closely with children
- behaved in a way or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children

The allegation can be in connection with employment / voluntary activity / work placement, regarding individual's own children or related to the community or private life of a partner / member of the family / household member.

3.0 Local Arrangements

3.1 Darlington Borough Council currently has one Designated Officer who is based with the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Business Unit and has undertaken the role since November 2019. The current Designated Officer has a dual role and is also a Policy Development Officer within the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Business Unit.

3.2 Clear arrangements are in place to ensure robust oversight and monitoring of the Designated Officer function. This has been provided through supervision with a Service Manager to ensure that policies are applied consistently and fairly and that all enquiries are progressed in a timely manner.

4.0 Cross Boundary Issues

4.1 Where a child from the Darlington Local Authority area makes an allegation in a setting or placement which is outside the Darlington Borough Council jurisdiction, the lead responsibility for action lies with the Designated Officer in the local authority for the area where the alleged abuse occurred. The Designated Officer has received notification of 4 allegations about Darlington Children placed in other Local Authority areas and all have been addressed by the Designated Officer for that area.

4.2 In these circumstances, the relevant Designated Officer, and where appropriate, the child's Social Worker, will liaise with the relevant local authority and agree a joint strategy.

4.3 Checks should be made as to whether there are any other children in the placement. If so, the child's Social Worker and manager must be informed, and

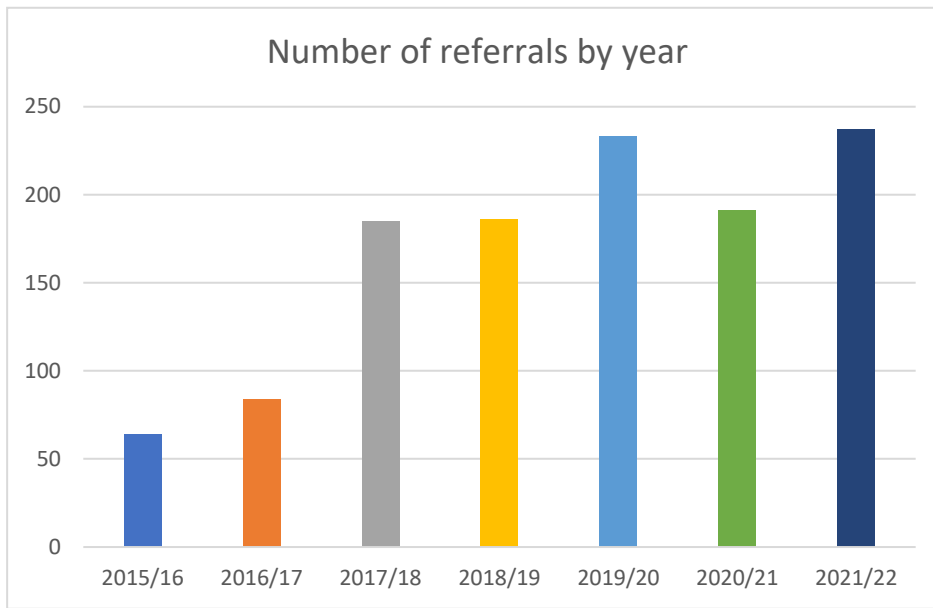
the Designated Officer should consult them about the action required.

- 4.4** Interviews of children from Darlington Local Authority areas will usually be undertaken by their own local children's social care services in conjunction with the police as appropriate.
- 4.5** Where the referral relates to a child from another Local Authority temporarily placed in an establishment located within the Darlington Local Authority area, the Darlington Designated Officer should liaise with the child's home authority about the roles and responsibilities in carrying out this procedure. In 2021/22 the Designated Officer received 50 allegations concerning children from other Local Authority areas either temporarily placed in an establishment in Darlington or receiving education in Darlington.

5.0 Contact made with the Designated Officer

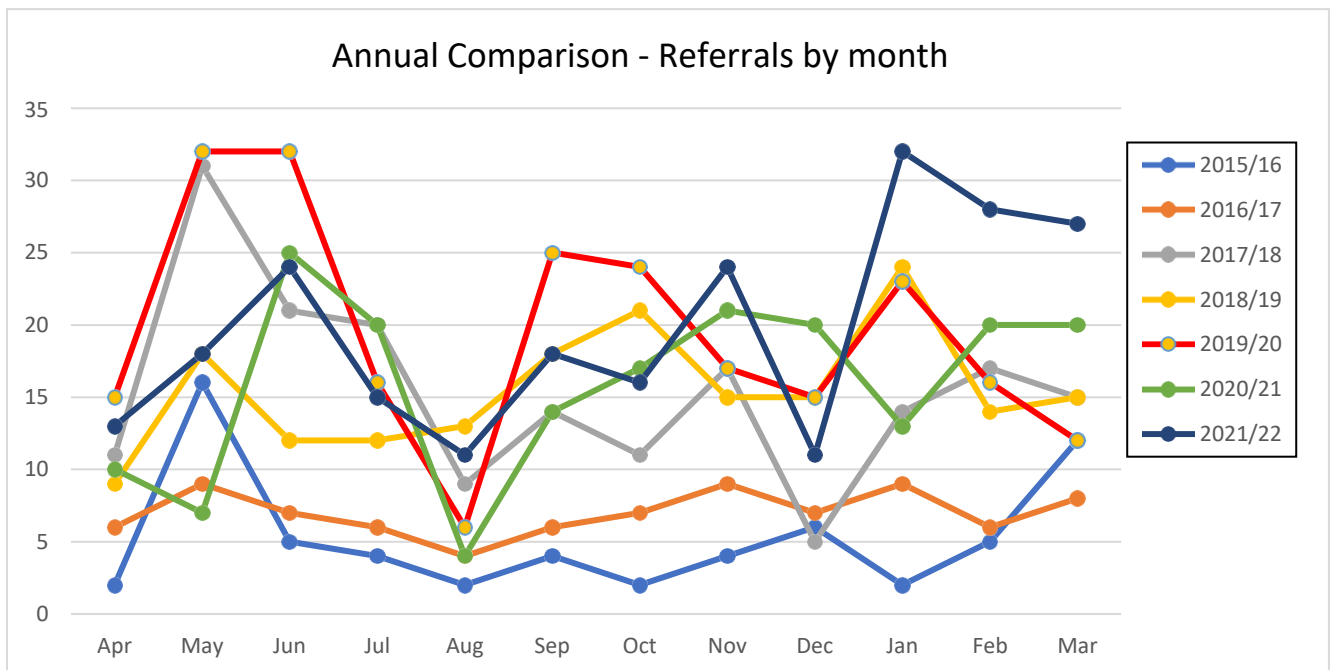
- 5.1** In 2021/22 the Designated Officer service received a total of 237 contacts in respect of allegations. This represents a 24% increase on the number of contacts received in 2020/21 and is the highest number of yearly contacts ever recorded. Of the total number of contacts received, 59 allegations progressed to an Initial Evaluation Meeting (IEM), (all of which were conducted via Microsoft Teams), amounting to 25% of all contacts, which is an 84% increase on the 2020/21 figures when 32 Initial Evaluation Meetings took place. The increase in the number of Initial Evaluation Meetings is mainly a consequence of the introduction of meetings held remotely via Microsoft Teams during the Covid-19 pandemic, meetings held in this way have proved very popular with practitioners and has greatly improved attendance at meetings. This has improved information sharing and decision making and has been of benefit to the Designated Officer service and remote meetings will continue going forwards. Of the allegations which progressed to an Initial Evaluation Meeting, 37% were subject to at least one review meeting. Again, this is beneficial to the Designated Officer service. The increase in the number of Initial Evaluation Meetings and review meetings has significantly increased the workload of the Designated Officer.
- 5.2** Initial Evaluation Meetings take place when information sharing is beneficial between agencies involved, for example, Designated Safeguarding Leads within the referring organisation, Human Resources, Police and Children's Services. This can be after a Strategy Meeting held by Children's Services, or it may be a stand-alone meeting. In some circumstances, it is appropriate to share information via telephone without the need of convening an Initial Evaluation Meeting, for example, when the allegation is not of a serious nature, there is no involvement with other agencies, or there is limited information to share with the employer. These allegations are still monitored by the Designated Officer.

CHART 1



5.3 The figures in **Chart 1** show that the rate of contacts in 2021/22 increased by 24% (an increase of 46 contacts) in comparison to the previous reporting year, which is to be expected as we gradually moved forward from the pandemic restrictions in 2021/22 and the effects of the national lockdowns.

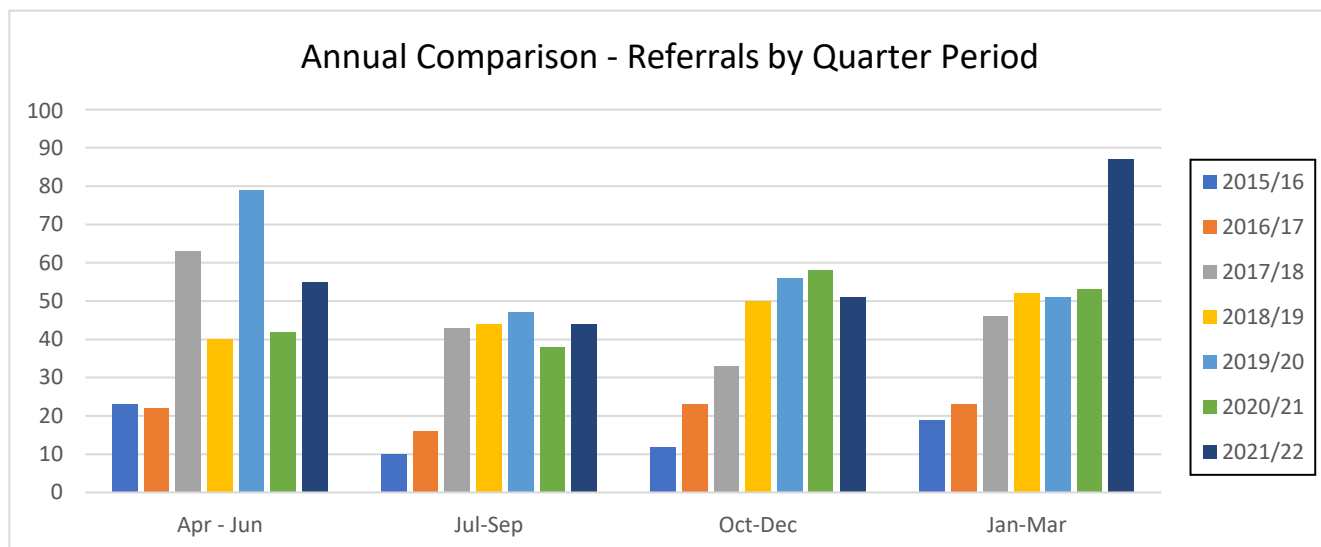
CHART 2



5.4 Analysis of the breakdown of monthly data reflects the gradual return to normality beyond the pandemic restrictions as the phased exit from lockdown

commenced in March/April 2021. The majority of contacts with the Designated Officer relate to schools and the number of contacts tends to fall significantly in the month of August during the summer break. However, the graph shows a significant increase in the rate of contacts to the Designated Officer between January and March 2022.

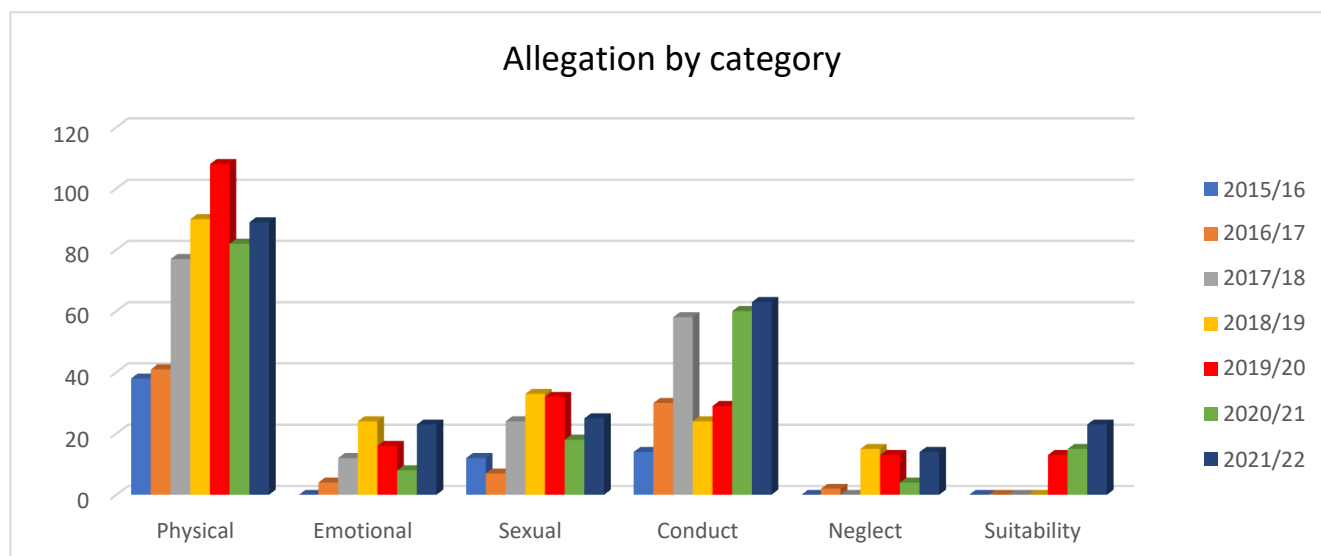
CHART 3



5.5 The effects of the gradual return to normality beyond the pandemic restrictions are also demonstrated in **Chart 3**, which provides an annual comparison of the rate of contacts by quarter and shows the significant increase in the rate of contacts in Quarter 4. A similar pattern has been noted by Designated Officers throughout the North-East region and similar increases in both safeguarding referrals and the complexity of investigations were experienced by Children’s Services in Darlington at the same time. A potential explanation for the significant increase is the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the mental health and wellbeing of the population as outlined in the [Government’s Covid-19: mental health and wellbeing surveillance report](#). The ‘up and down’ nature of the changes in mental health coincide with periods of national lockdown and high levels of Covid -19 cases. The report highlights a deterioration in the population’s mental health and wellbeing around late December 2021 when the Omicron variants spread rapidly. This may explain the sharp increase in the rate of contacts in Quarter 4.

6. Categories of Concern

CHART 4



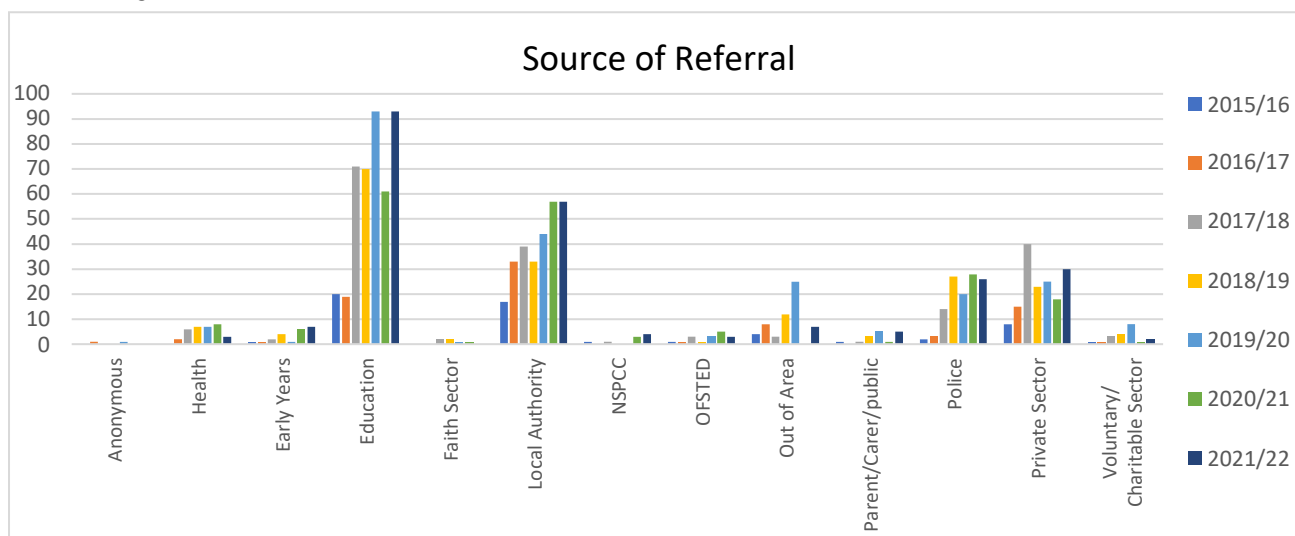
- 6.1** Of the 237 contacts in 2021/22, the main category for referral was allegations of physical abuse. This is in line with the data from previous years.
- 6.2.** In 2021/22, 89 (38%) contacts were in relation to physical abuse which represents an increase of 9% on last year's figures within this category. This is probably explained by the increase in allegations of physical assault within education settings as schools gradually moved out of lockdown as pandemic restrictions were gradually eased, resulting in an increase in allegations involving the use of Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) or allegations of assault. There is more detailed information on this in paragraph 8.5.
- 6.3** Allegations under the category 'conduct' have seen a slight increase accounting for 63 (27% of total) contacts to the Designated Officer in 2021/22. This is comparable with the figures for the previous twelve months but demonstrates a continuing upwards trend in this category. Contacts recorded within this category relate to behaviours which do not easily fit into the four main categories. A total of 26 (41%) contacts recorded as 'conduct' were in relation to incidents which occurred in the private lives of individuals and did not occur within the workplace.
- 6.4** A total of 23 contacts have been recorded under the category of 'suitability'. This category amounts to 10% of the total and a slight increase in contacts under this category compared to last year and represents a continuing upward trend. This category usually relates to issues in an employee's personal life, such as mental ill-health or 'association' with an offender, or association with proscribed organisations, which may affect their suitability to work with children. Some of these incidents related to mental health and alcohol abuse and self-harm or association with a partner who has committed sexual offences. Again, the

increase is potentially a consequence of the adverse effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the wellbeing of the population and the sharp increase in the rate of contacts between January and March 2022. Improved reporting from Children's Social Care to the Designated Officer (following the structural changes and reporting mechanisms to the Children's Front Door) in allegations where a parent's employment involves working with children, is likely to be a contributory factor in the continuing upwards trend.

- 6.5** There were 25 contacts regarding allegations of sexual abuse in 2021/22. This is 11% of all contacts and represents a 10% increase in contacts under this category compared to last year. Again, this is probably a reflection of the gradual move away from pandemic restrictions bringing the rate of contacts in this category close to pre-pandemic rate.
- 6.6** There were 14 contacts regarding allegations of neglect in 2021/22. This is 6% of all contacts and represents a 250% increase in contacts under this category in comparison with last year (when figures were very low). Again, this is probably a reflection of the gradual move away from pandemic restrictions, bringing the rate of contacts in this category close to the pre-pandemic level.
- 6.7** There has also been a 187% increase in the number of contacts regarding emotional abuse in comparison to the rate of contacts in the previous reporting year, with a total of 23 recorded in 2021/22 (when figures were very low). Emotional abuse contacts represented 10% of all referrals to Designated Officer. Once again, the increase is not significant and is likely to reflect the gradual move away from pandemic restrictions, bringing the rate of contacts in this category back towards pre-pandemic levels.
- 6.8** A total of 54 contacts to the Designated Officer in 2021/22 were related to incidents which have occurred in the private lives of individuals (as opposed to the workplace), which is 22% of the total contacts and represents a decrease in the rate of such contacts reported in the height of the pandemic in 2020/21 when lockdowns impacted on families and wellbeing. These incidents mainly relate to alcohol abuse, domestic abuse, mental health problems and allegations of child abuse and neglect within the family. Such allegations can be complex in terms of disclosure and resolution and may require review meetings.

7.0 Source of Referrals by Profession / Employment setting

CHART 5



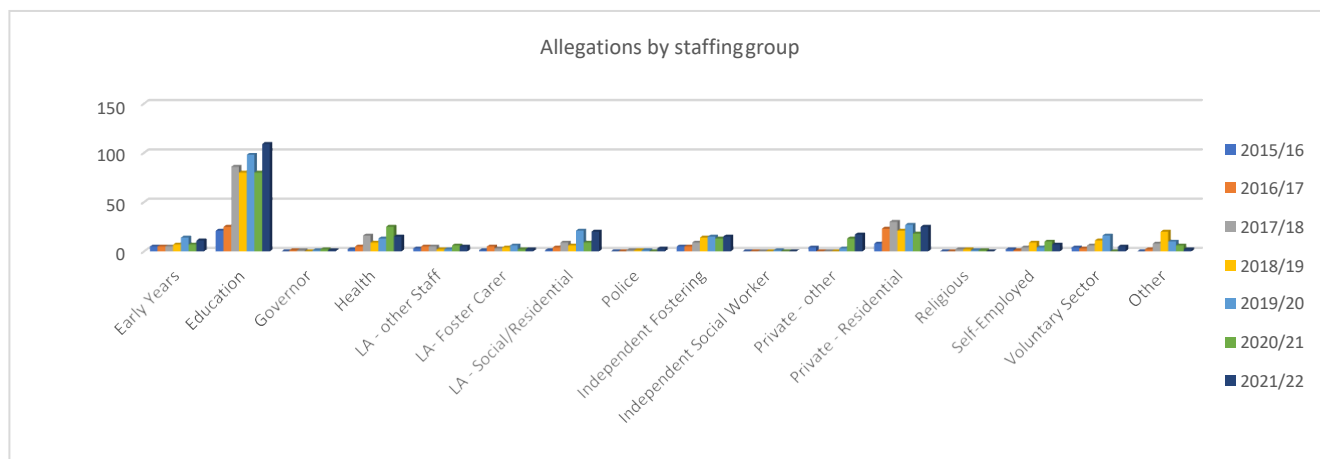
7.1 As can be seen in **Chart 5** Education settings in 2021/22 continues to be the largest referring group, accounting for 93 (39%) of the 237 contacts with the Designated Officer. This represents an increase on last year's figures and once again brings the rate of contacts back to pre-pandemic levels. Most contacts from and involving schools were as a result of allegations of physical abuse and correspond to the analysis of 'category of concern' data, showing that physical abuse is the most common category of allegation reported to the Designated Officer. It should be noted that the total number of allegations relating to education establishments in the 'allegations by staff group' is slightly higher at 102 and this is because some of the allegations involving an employee in education were referred to the Designated Officer by other agencies.

7.2 Contacts have continued to be received from a wide range of professions and organisations. In 2021/22, there were a total of 64 contacts to the Designated Officer by a Local Authority, the majority of which originated from Darlington Borough Council. This represents a 12% increase on the previous reporting year and demonstrates a continuous upward trend year on year. This is likely to be a result of the changes in the safeguarding arrangements within Children's Social Care at Darlington and the creation of the Children's Initial Advice Team, which has improved the process of referral to the Designated Officer and has been of considerable benefit to the service. It is also once again possibly a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic and the spike in the rate of contacts between January and March 2022 and a potential increase in safeguarding referrals to Children's Social Care of incidents involving domestic abuse and parental mental health concerns, or other categories of abuse which are referred to the Designated Officer if a parent or carer works with children.

8.0 Allegations by Staff Group

8.1 **Chart 6** shows that referrals are made across a wide range of roles and settings, whether paid staff or volunteers, as outlined in the national guidelines.

CHART 6



8.2 As expected, and in accordance with previous years, the largest number of allegations by staffing groups is Education, accounting for 102 contacts which is 43% of all allegations referred to the Designated Officer in 2021/22 and the largest number recorded in any reporting year. The [Covid 19 mental health and wellbeing surveillance report \(Chapter 4\)](#) states that over the pandemic, girls and young women, 16-24 year olds, disadvantaged children and young people and those with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) were more likely to report difficulties with mental health and wellbeing. Wellbeing scores between March and July 2021 appeared lower than during a similar period of restrictions in the previous year. Some children with SEND appear to have suffered substantial impacts on their mental health and have experienced greater anxiety during the pandemic and in the 2021 summer term staff. Parents of special schools or college pupils reported poorer pupil wellbeing, particularly greater anxiety and a decline in student mental health. This may explain the increase in contacts involving Education regarding allegations. Equally, increased knowledge and awareness on the part of staff of the requirement to notify the Designated Officer and clear channels of communication may also be a factor. The Education Safeguarding Officer works closely with the Designated Officer and regularly deliver refresher training to Designated Safeguarding Leads in schools. The Designated Officer has a good relationship with the Designated Safeguarding Leads in all schools for children with SEND in Darlington and there are clear channels of communication.

8.3 Of the 102 contacts relating to allegations received in 2021/22 about employees in education settings, 23 (23%) were regarding employees from primary schools;

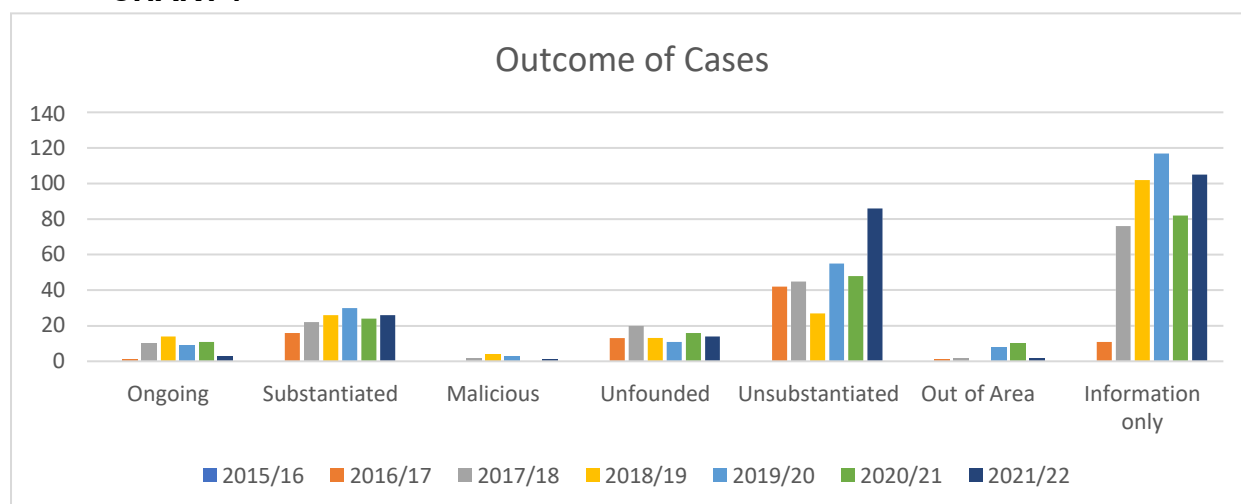
14 (14%) from secondary schools; 9 (9%) from Further Education settings; 7 (7%) referred to an agency teacher and 6 (6%) from a residential establishment with attached education provision. A total of 43 (43%) were from schools which provide a service for children with Special Educational Needs (both primary and secondary age groups). The Designated Officer has noted that there has been an increase in the number of allegations against supply teachers employed by recruitment agencies in this reporting year. It is likely that this is a consequence of the current challenges faced by schools in the recruitment and retention of permanent teachers and a greater reliance on agency staff.

- 8.4** There was a total of 52 allegations (52%) in the category of physical abuse relating to the education sector and this represents a 33% increase in the number of contacts within this sub-category in comparison to the previous reporting year. This figure correlates with the presenting contacts by education, often involving Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) being used within educational settings for children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), for example, Team Teach, which is an approved management model for dealing with children and young people who are posing a risk to themselves or others.
- 8.5** The rate of allegations involving the use of Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) in education settings has been closely monitored by the Designated Officer throughout this reporting period. There were 25 allegations involving the use of Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) across the Education sector in 2021/22, which accounts for 48% of all allegations under the category 'Physical' in education settings. This represents a slight increase in the number of allegations involving the use of Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) in schools in comparison with the previous reporting year and is probably explained by more children returning to school as pandemic restrictions eased and the negative impact of the pandemic which is particularly evident in children with SEND. The Designated Officer currently does not have any concerns regarding the use of RPI in any education settings in Darlington for children with SEND and will continue to monitor the use of Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) in schools throughout 2022/23.
- 8.6** The number of contacts regarding Independent Foster Carers has slightly increased with 15 allegations being referred during 2021/22. There have been 2 contacts relating to Darlington Borough Council Foster Carers during the recording period, comparable with last year's figures.
- 8.7** The Designated Officer continues to work closely with the Service Manager for the Fostering Team (Darlington Borough Council), following a decision in 2018 that all referrals about foster carers (including Independent Fostering Agencies) would be shared with the Service Manager. This enables the Service Manager to keep a close check on those agencies where the standards of care fall below what is expected of an accredited provider of services. When appropriate, this information

is shared with the Commissioning Team.

9.0 Outcome of Cases

CHART 7

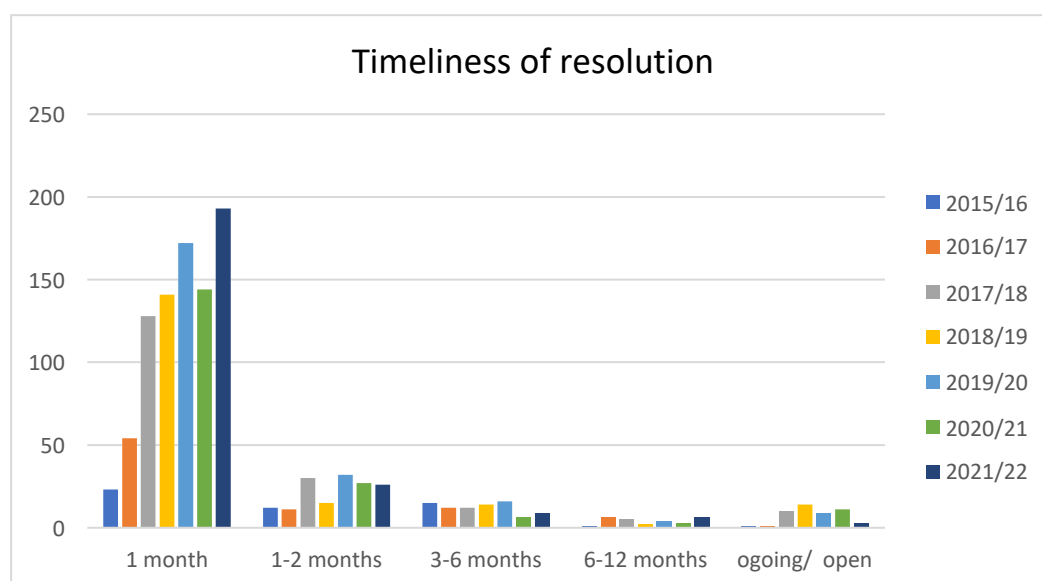


- 9.1** In relation to the 26 substantiated allegations, 12 employees were dismissed (46%), 1 was deregistered (4%), 6 resigned from their position (23%), and 5 staff members were reinstated (19%) with management advice/written warnings. No action was taken in respect of two allegations. The number of dismissals has increased significantly in comparison to previous years and suggests that some employers are taking a robust stance against employees who may pose a risk of harm to children.
- 9.2** There were 86 unsubstantiated outcomes and of these, 6 staff were re-instated (7%) and 77 resulted in no further action (90%), 1 staff member was dismissed (1%) and 2 staff members resigned (2%). When an allegation is recorded as unsubstantiated, employers are encouraged to look at whether learning can be derived from the incident to inform future practice and whether additional training or management advice for the employee is required.
- 9.3** There were 14 allegations deemed to be unfounded, of these 2 staff were re-instated (14%) and in respect of 12 allegations no further action was taken (86%).
- 9.4** One allegation was recorded under the category ‘malicious’. This outcome is not used by the Designated Officer unless there is overwhelming evidence that the allegation was based on deliberate falsehoods and in this case the allegation was made by an adult.
- 9.5** In this reporting period, 105 allegations were recorded for ‘information only’. This includes allegations which are ‘out of area’ (sometimes this fact is only established after initial enquiries have been carried out by the Designated Officer), which are reported to the Designated Officer but are subsequently found not to be in the

remit of the Designated Officer procedures and result in advice being given and enquiries which are transferred to the Safeguarding Adult Manager, as they are better dealt with under the Managing Allegations Procedures in accordance with the Care Act 2014. Some allegations can fall within the remit of both the Designated Officer and the Safeguarding Adult Manager, for example, agency employees or employees with two roles. In such enquiries the Designated Officer works closely with the Safeguarding Adult Manager and a joint meeting may take place.

9.6 At the time of writing, a total of 3 allegations (1%) remain open. These are either ongoing police investigations, complex internal disciplinary investigations, or investigations which are awaiting the outcome of a court case or an appeal.

10. Performance
Chart 8



10.1 The Designated Officer continues to work to the professional standards set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010, even though there is no longer a timescale for completion of enquiries stipulated in the updated versions of the legislation. The performance of the Designated Officer is measured and monitored through supervision between a Service Manager and the Designated Officer.

10.2 It is important to manage allegations within timescales to ensure that investigations are dealt with promptly, firstly to ensure that children are protected from employees who may pose a risk of harm, but also to ensure a fair and consistent process for employees (who should be supported by the employer throughout the process). Oversight and management of allegations within timescales helps employers to conduct investigations and disciplinary proceedings lawfully and expeditiously, enabling employees to be either reinstated, disciplined or dismissed at the earliest opportunity thereby minimising disruption to the employer and employee.

10.3 There is currently no requirement in legislation for enquires to meet timescales. However, local targets are set in line with an earlier version of Working Together (2010) in that:

- 80% of allegations are resolved within one month
- 90% within are resolved within three months

10.4 In 2021/22 allegations were resolved in a timely manner with 193 (81%) of the total being resolved in one month and this is a slight improvement on performance data from previous years. Resolution timescales can be impeded by the complexity of allegations involving ongoing criminal investigations and internal investigations where the employee has declared themselves unfit for work, therefore delaying disciplinary action.

10.5 A total of 92% of allegations were resolved within 3 months and 93% within 6 months. A total of 96% were completed in within 6 months and 99% within 12 months. The remaining allegations were ongoing and not finalised at the end of this reporting period, all involve ongoing complex allegations and criminal or internal disciplinary investigations. At the time of writing the report, a total of 3 (1%) investigations originating in 2021/22 were still active. Again, this is a slight improvement on the performance data from previous years.

10.6 The Designated Officer tracks all open enquiries on a 4 weekly basis to ensure that updates on outcomes of investigations are received and to enable enquiries to be closed in a timely manner. However, it should be noted once a police investigation is involved or a case is referred to an employer for disciplinary procedures to be followed, the Designated Officer is reliant on external process which impact on resolution timescales.

11.0 Freedom of Information Requests

11.1 Throughout 2021/22, the Designated Officer service has continued to take the lead with regards to Freedom of Information Requests with regards to allegations made about employees or volunteers working with children. Over the 12 months reporting period, 6 Freedom of Information requests were processed.

12.0 Service Improvements & Developments 2021/22

12.1 See Appendix 1.

13.0 Designated Officer Service Priorities and Plan 2022/23

13.1 In 2022/23, the Designated Officer service plans to continue to promote

awareness of the service across a range of professions to ensure that appropriate referrals are coming in and to break down any barriers to agencies seeking the advice and support of the Designated Officer service. The role of the Designated Officer and the responsibilities of employers are included in multi-agency safeguarding training.

- 13.2** The Designated Officer service will continue to be crucial to frontline practice to safeguard children in Darlington. Working in partnership with the Designated Officer and sharing information effectively ensures that children are protected from people who pose a risk of harm and promotes good practice and challenges unsafe practice. The Designated Officer continues to work with the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Trainer and the Education Safeguarding Officer to raise awareness of the role of the Designated Officer and the Managing Allegations Procedures to promote good practice and safeguard children.
- 13.3** The service also wants to improve the quality of the performance information gathered and to maximise the efficiency of the service using electronic recording systems. In 2021/22, the recording of referrals to the Designated Officer service was integrated within the casework system Liquid Logic. However further work is required to adapt the system for the purpose of recording allegations. This will enable Children's Services to improve data matching where appropriate. This work will continue in 2022/23.
- 13.4** In 2021/22 the Designated Officer established close links with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) which has provided a single point of contact for professionals. The Designated Officer intends to work with DOs in the North-East region in 2022/23 to promote safer recruitment.
- 13.5** The Designated Officer service has identified 5 key priorities (Appendix 2) to progress in 2022/23 which are pivotal to the on-going development of the service.

14.0 Recommendations

- 14.1** To note the contents of the report and the work undertaken during 2021/22 and to acknowledge the priorities of the Designated Officer service for 2022/23.
- 14.2** To share the Annual Report with Darlington Safeguarding Partnership and Members who will be asked to:
- agree this Annual Report
 - consider how they will continue to promote the role of the DO within their own organisation.

15.0 References

- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018
- Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2018
- Guidance for staff facing an allegation 2014

16.0 Author

Marian Garland
Designated Officer
Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Business Unit
Date: 20th June 2022

Appendix 1

Service Improvements & Developments 2021/22

Actions were identified for development of the Designated Officer function during 2020/21 which would further improve the performance of the service. The progress against these actions in 2021/22 is highlighted below.

	Action	Lead	Timescale	Update
1	To ensure the induction of a newly appointed DO is successful and the appointee is retained	AD	Jan 2022	Review of the role and function to ensure the Designated Officer role is in the appropriate service area. This is ongoing
2	The Designated Officer will continue to monitor the rate of allegations involving the use of Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) in schools for pupils with SEN and identify themes and take action where appropriate.	DO	Ongoing	The DO holds regular meetings with one provider regarding allegations involving the use of Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) (as a means of monitoring the rate of allegations) and has regular conversations and meetings with head teachers in the schools for children with SEND.
3	DO will continue to raise awareness of the DO role via a range of media throughout the coming year	DO	Completed	All relevant information re the DO service has been updated on the revised Darlington Safeguarding Partnership website (July 2021). Websites and literature to have the name and contact details of the DO. All agencies will have correct details of DO. DO information will be easily accessible and relevant referrals made.
4	DO will continue to engage with the Safeguarding Multi Agency Trainer and Safeguarding Education Officer in	DO	Ongoing	This is an on-going process and a top priority. In 2021/22 the DO and Education safeguarding Officer held a joint refresher training session with Designated

	relation to continual roll out of designated training to improve practice and reduce referrals across all organisations			Safeguarding Leads from Education to explain the KSCIE amendment in respect of low level concerns. The DO has also started a rolling programme of sessions to raise awareness of the managing allegations procedures across the wider partnership.
5.	DO to liaise with police in relation to any historical allegations that may come as a result of the Independent Enquiry into Child Sexual Abuse.	DO	Ongoing	The DO has an agreed strategy in place referring any notifications of historical sexual abuse from the Independent Enquiry into Child Sexual Abuse. There has been one referral from the IICSA via the NSPCC.
7.	The DO will continue to maintain accurate records of referrals, decision making and outcomes and identify and monitor any themes which emerge and feed the themes into training sessions	DO	Ongoing	Records are reviewed monthly to ensure that they are accurate and up to date. Regular conversations take place between the DO and the Principals of schools for pupils with SEND to monitor the use of Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI).
8.	DO to attend all regional DO meetings to ensure that Darlington's views and opinions are represented.	DO	Ongoing	The DO has attended all quarterly regional meetings in 2021/22. These meetings are held via Microsoft Teams.
9.	DO will continue to develop recording practice within system development for future reports.	DO	Ongoing	The DO has worked with the Liquid Logic team in 2021/22 and has developed a recording system. However, there are currently limitations in the system and further work is required.

9	To develop a safer recruitment guidance to offer further support and guidance to settings	DO and HR	Completed	The Safer Recruitment guidance is available on Darlington Borough Council's Recruitment and Selection Policy.
11	The DO will provide feedback on National DO standards and seek approval from DSP and legal services	DO	Ongoing	The National Standards are not yet completed. There is an ongoing discussion as to whether a National Guidance will be appropriate for such a wide diversity of Local Authorities.
12	The DO will review and up-date the procedure for Managing Allegations and concerns against staff, carers or volunteers and seek approval via the DSCB Practice and Development and Procedures sub-group as required.	DO	Completed	The procedures were reviewed in 2021/22 within the framework of the DSP Learning and Development sub-group, the procedures have been updated to reflect the changes to legislation – Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018 (additional amendment)
13	To review and up-date the guidance for staff facing an allegation	DO	Completed	This guidance was reviewed in 2021/22 within the framework of the DSP Learning and Development sub-group but will be kept under review.

Designated Officer Service Priority Plan 2022/23**Priority 1: Training and Awareness Raising in respect of the Designated Officer role and local procedures**

Action	Planned outcome	Lead	Timescale
DO will continue to engage with the Safeguarding Multi Agency Trainer and Safeguarding Education Officer in relation to continual roll out of designated training and will hold awareness raising sessions with employers as requested.	Increased awareness amongst employers of the DO procedures and their responsibilities in reporting allegations to the DO and improved transparency in reporting allegations. This will potentially increase the number of referrals to the DO service and will improve safeguarding outcomes for children.	DO	March 2023

Priority 2: To monitor and address the prevalence of allegations involving the use of Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) in SEN Education settings in Darlington

Action	Planned Outcome	Lead	Timescale
Monitor the rate of allegations involving the use of Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) in SEN education settings in Darlington in respect of repeat allegations.	To work with Head Teachers and Safeguarding Leads to ensure that the DO is informed when such an allegation is made by a pupil/parent and that staff are using Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) appropriately and that any breaches of Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) guidelines are dealt with appropriately schools with a view to reducing the annual number of allegations of	DO	March 2023

	Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) within this category. This work is ongoing.		
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Priority 3: DO database/recording to be integrated within Liquid Logic

Action	Planned Outcome	Lead	Timescale
In conjunction with the Liquid Logic team improve the DO casework recording system within Liquid Logic.	Improved recording and enhanced searching capacity for the DO and improved data matching for Children's Services where appropriate. Performance Indicators to be available on Liquid Logic which will feed figures into the DO Annual report.	DO/LL team	September 2022

Priority 4: The future of the Designated Officer service in Darlington to be agreed and a decision made as to where the service will be placed within the Local Authority

Action	Planned Outcome	Lead	Timescale
A decision to be made as to where the Designated Officer would be best placed within the Local Authority with regards to workload and taking into consideration resilience for abstraction.	A decision regarding where the DO role should be placed.	Assistant Director	September 2022

Priority 5: To work closely with the Disclosure and Barring service to support safer recruitment practices

Action	Planned Outcome	Lead	Timescale
To work closely with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Single Point of Contact and Police to	To ensure that employers have the necessary disclosure to make decisions regarding safer recruitment to ensure that applicants who	DO	March 2023

address concerns around disclosure as they arise and to provide information to the DBS as requested in accordance with GDPR in support of disclosure and safer recruitment.	may pose a risk of harm to children are identified at an early stage in the recruitment process and children are protected from harm.		
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CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
5 September 2022

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PUBLIC HEALTH OVERVIEW

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Members with an update of the Children and Young People Public Health interventions and programs.

Summary

2. This report will brief members on the Healthy Lifestyles Survey 2021, Children's Health Profile for Darlington and 0-19 Service.

Recommendation

3. It is recommended that Members note the contents of the report and presentation.

Penny Spring
Director of Public Health

Background papers

Childhood Healthy Weight Plan 2019-2024

S17 Crime and Disorder	This report supports the Council's Crime and Disorder responsibilities
Health and Well Being	This report supports to health and wellbeing of children, young people, and families in the borough.
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	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
Council Plan	This report contributes to the Council Plan by involving Members in the scrutiny of performance relating to the delivery of key outcomes
Efficiency	There are no implications arising from this report.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report impacts on all children across the borough.

MAIN REPORT

Healthy Lifestyles Survey

4. The Healthy Lifestyles Survey (HLS) has been delivered for 12 years with a total of up to 8,624 pupils across 33 primary and secondary schools completing the survey annually.
5. The survey of 2021 is the first full survey that has been completed following the pandemic and includes some specific topics and questions that have been developed and agreed by young people, schools, and other professionals to reflect the impact of the pandemic on young people.
6. Completion of the survey is only one part of the process. These results will be fed back to young people themselves so that they are aware and understand the lifestyle and behaviour choices of their peers and can use this to inform their own choices and decisions.
7. These results are also disseminated to schools, other professionals working with young people, elected members, parents and the public. This provides an objective picture of how young people are dealing with the pressures and issues of growing up in Darlington.
8. This feedback to adults provides schools, professionals, and elected members better understanding to commission services to support young people more effectively. It helps parents better understand and support their children growing up. These results also challenge myths and perceptions about certain health behaviours and attitudes in young people, reduces discrimination and stigma.
9. Delivery of the next Healthy Lifestyle survey begins again in the new term in September with the survey being sent out for collection of the responses for the academic year of 2022/23.

Child Health Profile for Darlington

10. The Child Health Profile are produced annually by Public Health England (now Office of Health Improvement and Disparities OHID) for every local authority area in England.
11. This profile provides a snapshot of child health in this area. It is designed to help the Authority; health services and other stakeholders improve the health and wellbeing of children and target Public Health interventions that can improve child health at a local level.
12. The same indicators are measured each year and are the same for every local authority. This enables changes or trends in outcomes to be shown as well as allowing Darlington to benchmark our progress and results against other local authorities in England.
13. The profile for Darlington this year when compared to the England averages shows that the health and wellbeing of children in Darlington is mixed with some key indicators such as breastfeeding, smoking in pregnancy and obesity being worse compared to England while others such as vaccination uptake, admission to hospital for common health conditions being better or similar when compared to England.

0-19 Service

14. The 0-19 Service provided by Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust continues to perform well, achieve well against the statutory and contract performance targets. The Service continues to receive positive feedback from parents/carers and other users of the service across the full age range, with high levels of satisfaction recorded with their staff being recognised as regularly making a difference to families in Darlington.
15. The Service have continued their innovative work in relation to infant feeding with the popular groups at the Dolphin Centre going from strength to strength. New work includes a parent led WhatsApp peer support group as well as an antenatal walking group for new mothers in South Park.
16. The Service has also introduced new interventions including new ante natal virtual sessions, training for staff and peer supporters and more collaborative working with Family Centres.
17. The Service is also working towards reaccreditation for the UNICEF Gold Baby Friendly award this year. There is work planned to improve and promote breastfeeding in local communities including celebration events in the Dolphin Centre and South Park; and engagement with local business and public venues in the town to make them breastfeeding friendly. A sustained yearlong campaign to promote and improve breastfeeding is planned for 2023.
18. Work with schools continues including a new 'drop in' offer to school's post pandemic as well as more close working and liaison with specialist mental health teams in Tees Esk and Wear Valley NHS Mental Health Trust to ensure young people have faster access to the right services when required. The Service has produced digital interactive presentation for sessions in schools and these were offered until the end of the summer term and included early years and puberty sessions.
19. The Service continues to enhance and improve the digital offer which proved to be very successful during the pandemic and lockdown. This now includes a 'Growing Healthy' app, a text service for information and appointment reminders and the continued development of virtual visits where appropriate.

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**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
05 SEPTEMBER 2022**

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SELF ASSESSMENT 2022 - OVERVIEW

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. 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.

Summary

2. Darlington 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.
3. The self-assessment draws on existing documentation and activity and reflects the local authority's business for children's services. It identifies what leaders are doing to maintain or improve good practice for children and their families, demonstrating the effectiveness of our actions and address weaknesses in practice, with clear, appropriate plans to improve services.
4. The self-evaluation should answer 3 questions: 1) What do we know about the quality and impact of social work practice in our local authority? 2) How do we know it? and 3) What are our plans for the next 12 months to maintain or improve practice?
5. 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. It helps them see whether leaders and managers have a grip on practice and are taking suitable action.

Recommendation

6. It is recommended that:
 - (a) The contents of the report are considered in terms of Children's Services role and functions and critical challenge is afforded to improve outcomes for children and their families.

CHRIS BELL
Assistant Director of Children's Services

Background Papers

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

Chris Bell: chris.bell@darlington.gov.uk

S17 Crime and Disorder	This report supports the Council's Crime and Disorder responsibilities
Health and Wellbeing	This report supports the health and wellbeing of children, young people and families in the borough.
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	This report supports the Council's sustainability responsibilities
Diversity	This report supports the promotion of diversity
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Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
Council Plan	This report contributes to the Council Plan by involving Members in the scrutiny of performance relating to the delivery of key outcomes
Efficiency	There are no implications arising from this report.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report supports the health and wellbeing of Looked After Children and Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

See attached Self – Assessment Document

Darlington Children's Services

Self-Assessment 2022



Knowing ourselves and knowing our children,
young people and families



DARLINGTON
Borough Council

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Introduction and Overview

Our busy and productive year has been in the context of the ongoing recovery from Covid-19 and the subsequent impact on our children, families and communities in Darlington. We are learning from the Pandemic, identifying and using experiences such as: closer partnerships, remote practice and innovative use of technology. We welcome a flexible return to the office and increased opportunity of face-to-face interaction.

Darlington Children's Services continues an improvement journey with our Strengthening Families Programme as we work hard to embed and maintain relational practice across the service. We have seen the conclusion of our work with Leeds City Council and DfE on Strengthening Families but with additional corporate investment we are excited to be on the next stage of this journey. We are building on the progress made and have identified key priorities to improve outcomes for our children and families.

We have completed a restructure of Children's Services Senior Leadership Team (SLT) in early 2022 to support our key priorities. This has seen extra resource to support and oversee the Care Planning teams and a more streamlined focus for services for Children who are in our Care.

Darlington continues to understand performance well with regular, robust oversight and challenge from Senior Leaders and Elected Members. In practice clinics managers and leaders' evidence good knowledge and clear insight into what the performance data and intelligence tell us as well as demonstrating what they plan and do in response.

Progress has been made to make quality of practice as well understood as performance, through working to understand how our practice achieves outcomes and impacts for children, young people and families. The Weekly Review Meeting (WRM) continues to provide a high level of management oversight and challenge to decision making at the front door. Ensuring that our approach is relational and that we offer children and families the right service at the right time. Monthly Practice Review Meetings (MPRM) have also been initiated, with live audits of current practice undertaken by practitioners and managers, and with families where possible. This is helping us to better understand outcomes and the impact of the services we deliver.

In October 2021 a focused visit from OFSTED on the experiences and outcomes of Care Leavers led to some very positive feedback recognising several strengths. Inspectors particularly recognised the positive relationships between workers and young people, and the impact of these relationships on achieving good outcomes.



They are always there for me, it is like a big massive family

A young person's comment about Darlington's Leaving Care Team

We were also visited by the local Deep Dive Team as part of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care in November 2021. The visit was to understand the strengths and challenges of our service and contribute towards the findings and recommendations of the national review.

"In Darlington we saw how their restorative practice model and improved front door had helped improve the service for children and families, earning well deserved great feedback from their partners."

The Independent Review of Children's Social Care

This feedback gives us confidence that our improvement journey is progressing well but reminds us not to be complacent, we need to continue to innovate, deliver and develop together.

Chris Bell

Assistant Director of Children's Services

James Stroyan

Group Director of People

Director of Children's Services

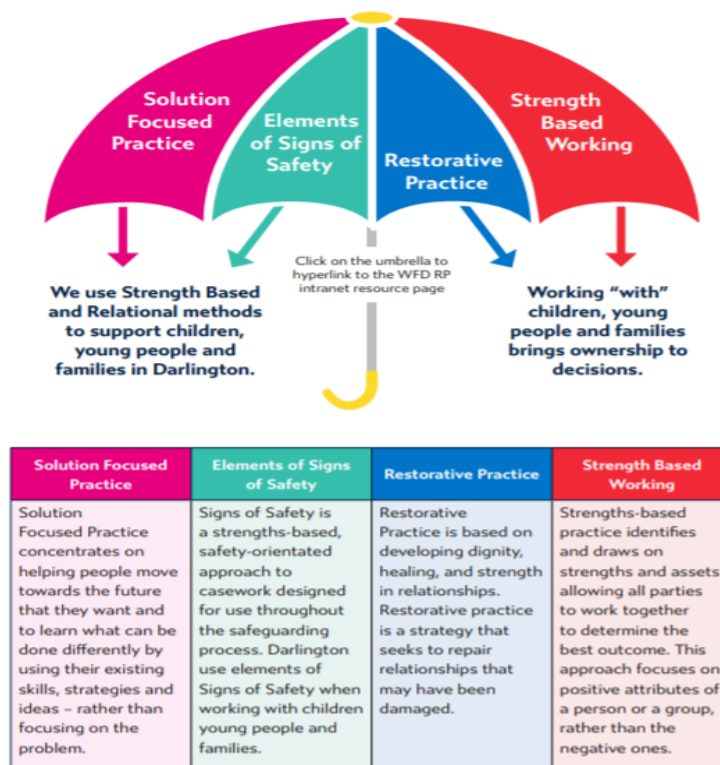
What is the quality and Impact of Social Work Practice and how do we know?

Relational Practice Model

We have implemented a Relational and Restorative Practice model in Darlington, and the quality and impact of our work is measured through the lens of the outcomes children and families achieve and the evidence of the strong relationships supporting these outcomes. We have developed a Relational Practice Umbrella which outlines the different methodologies that our teams can utilise to match the needs of the children, young people and families they are working with. The emphasis is on flexibility of approach, recognising children and families are individuals and one size does not fit all. As such we empower our practitioners to select the approach they deem most appropriate, within the parameters of our Relational Practice umbrella. Through this approach we support children, young people and families to recognise and build on their strengths, they co-produce and own their decisions and actions. We give high support (listening, encouraging and helping) and high challenge (setting limits and boundaries) to help and support children, young people and families make their own decisions. This helps identify and achieve results that are important to all of us. Our approach is about working together as a collective to recognise and help develop Relational Practice.

We truly believe that our relational approach brings positive outcomes and impact for children, young people and families.

RELATIONAL PRACTICE UMBRELLA



Quality Assurance

The Process

Darlington's improvement journey is ongoing and in addition to constantly improving our day-to-day management oversight we have further invested in our approach to quality assurance. We have built on our strong understanding of performance data and created a framework that helps us to better understand the quality of our practice and what our services mean for children and families, in terms of outcomes and overall impact.

The Quality Assurance Framework sets out the service expectations of what good looks like and how we know the quality of practice. We hold a Weekly Review Meeting (WRM), which allows us to understand the quality of practice at the front door and our initial decision making. Monthly Practice Review Meetings (MPRM) facilitate live audits of current practice across the service using a re-designed audit tool which focuses on key features of social worker practice to assess the quality and impact of services and interventions for children and families.

As part of MPRM, leaders speak to the social worker and team manager, as well as the family to understand all the different perspectives and to reach a conclusion about the quality of practice and its impact, in a relational and restorative style. Strengths and areas for improvement are then feedback to teams and any learning or training actioned, ensuring a systematic closing of the loop.

The findings from the WRM and MPRM are then captured and assimilated within the Quality Improvement Group, led by the Head of Practice and Principal Social Worker. This ensures that good practice and areas for improvement are shared widely across the service.

The findings and actions are then overseen within Director and Assistant Director Practice sessions so that the impact of Quality Assurance and development work can be closely considered in the context of the strategic and corporate aims of the service.

What it is telling us

Findings from our activity and the resultant changes in practice are discussed throughout this document. Overall and in summary however, the framework is telling us that:

The quality of contact enquiries continues to improve and that professionals receive good quality advice and support from social workers. Children and family's situations at the point of contact are well understood and as a result they receive the right service at the right time.

During assessment and support, children and families receive good and outstanding services in most cases and that they are effectively safeguarded.

The 48 Practice Review Audits completed this year demonstrated most assessment and plans were good or outstanding, all showed that children and young people were not at risk. Feedback from families is often positive and affirms our improving relational practice, although at times this is not as evident as it could be in case recording.

Areas identified for improvement through the Practice Review Audits are: the consistency of good quality management oversight; strong analytical assessments; consistency in ensuring a thorough understanding of the child's lived experience, and the quality of plans.

Chronologies and genograms are improving in quality. The resulting impact for families has been that they experienced the completion of a more meaningful assessment and plan which better identifies and meets their needs through fully capturing and understanding their history.

In our Looked After Through Care service we have developed an approach of writing our case notes about young people **for** young people. This has resulted in case notes which are clear and concise but written in a relational way which better helps a young person to understand the nature and reason for services we are providing to them. This in turns allows young people to better understand their own story and support their recovery from trauma.

Some specific examples of changes to process and practice because of the increased focus on quality assurance include:

Policies and procedures in relation to sexually harmful behaviour between peers have been changed and strengthened.

Contact enquiries on anonymous referrals now include a full MASH enquiry.

Management oversight at the point of allocation has been strengthened, to ensure that the language is relational and recognises the needs of the child and family in a respectful and understanding way but also gives clear guidance to social workers to support focused and timely interventions with families. This helps to give social workers clarity and understanding and contributes to families being clear about the reason for services and the expected outcomes for them.

Family Feedback

Within our Quality Assurances processes, we increasingly seek families' views of the support they are or have received. This allows us to understand our impact and areas for development. Feedback ensures that families and children are spoken to independently from their social worker or practitioner. The focus of these conversations is to understand whether families understood our intervention and subsequent planning, whether they were involved in the process, and whether it made a difference. Key to these outcomes is ensuring there was an effective relationship between the worker and the family. The different methods we use will be described throughout the document and there are examples of feedback from children and families throughout.

No doubt that XXXX was respectful. Didn't feel judged and felt comfortable talking to XXXXX. More like talking to a friend than a professional.

XXXXX was very thorough, the children are still living with me 6 months on, XXXX was always very friendly

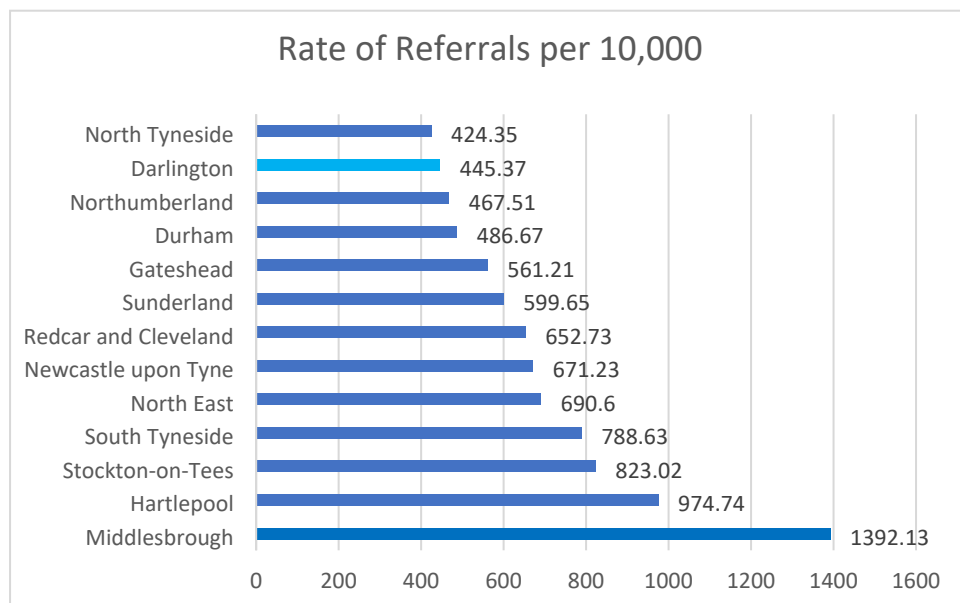
The Experiences and Progress of Children in Need of Help and Protection

Identifying and responding to children’s needs and appropriate thresholds

By re-modelling the Front Door in March 2020, we have brought about a change in the way concerns for children are considered and acted on. Now the referrer can speak directly to a social worker without delay using our designated telephone number. Careful, well-thought-out decisions are made in partnership with Children’s Initial Advice Team (CIAT), the referrer, and where possible families, to make sure the right service is provided at the right time using our relational practice framework, ensuring that children and families receive a proportionate response to address and support their identified needs.

During 2021-22 we have seen an increase in contacts of around 27%. Analysis suggests that this is linked to the pandemic; an increase in contacts relating to mental health; and violence. As well as this being linked to improvements to the Front Door, as partners feel empowered and supported to contact us to discuss their concerns and worries.

Since 2018/19 there has been a consistent reduction in referrals, with our rate per ten thousand population falling from 490.8 (in 2018/19) to 330.5 (in 2020/21), however due to increased contacts in 2021/22 this has increased to 447.4.



Local comparison illustrates our rate of referrals reduction and supports our view that families are being supported to solutions without a formal referral.

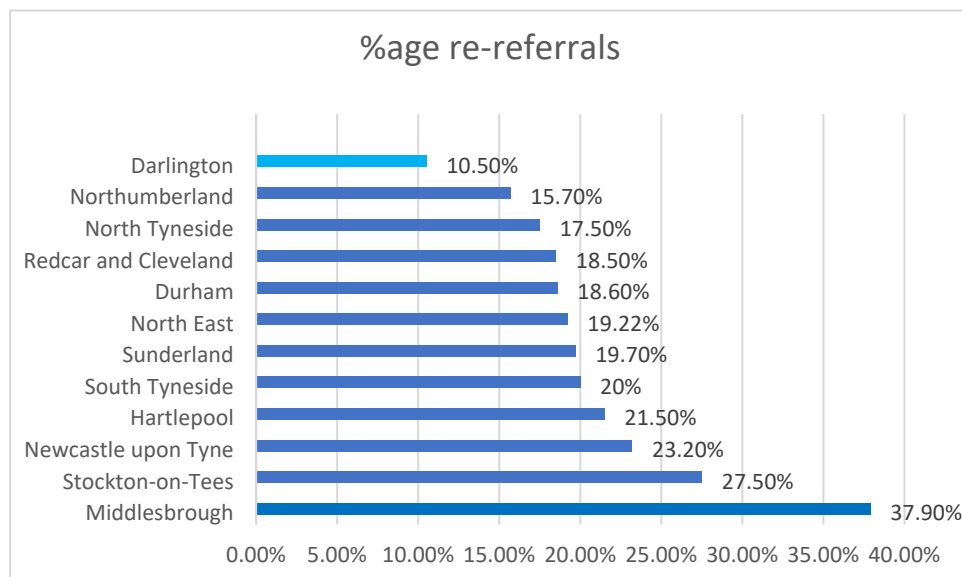
ADCS North East Regional Improvement Alliance quarter 4 2021/22

Contacts are completed in one working day with a few exceptions. Delays are primarily due to needing further details from the families / partners to ensure a fully informed decision is made, in cases such as this there is strong management oversight and driven by making the most informed decision which is in the best interest of the child.

After finding that the transfer point from CIAT into Assessment Teams could cause a delay in strategy meetings being initiated, the Front Door now identifies the need for the strategy meeting and arranges this to be held at the earliest convenience. Therefore children deemed to be at risk of harm on initial

contact progress to Social Care Assessment Teams without delay. Our safeguarding responses are scrutinised in a Weekly Review Meeting (WRM) to ensure appropriate and timely responses to children and families and their issues. This ensures that families do not experience a delay or a disproportionate response or service, helping them find the right help and support at the right time.

Despite the increase in contacts being referred into social care, we have seen a reduction in the percentage of those being re-referred, from 19.1% in 2020/21 to 10.5% in 2021/22. This gives us confidence that our interventions with families lead to sustained change.



Local comparison illustrates our rate of re referrals reducing below local levels.

ADCS North East Regional Improvement Alliance quarter 4 2021/22

The above is evidence of the hard work the

service has carried out during 2020/21 to ensure that families are in the best possible mindset with appropriate tools and knowledge to support themselves, resulting in fewer families needing to re-engage with our services.

I felt listened to and the Social Worker summarised my concerns and opinion back to me and also outlined the plan following my referral. Thank You

Response in CIAT satisfaction survey April 2022

Making good decisions and providing effective help

Consent is consistently considered and recorded throughout decision making processes. If consent is not gained a clear rationale is recorded as to why not and a strategy meeting is arranged. This helps ensure that families are included in the decision-making process proportionate to their needs.

MASH assessments only commence where there is a clear and evidenced rationale which is recorded. The MASH Assessment is used effectively particularly in relation to anonymous referrals, where information is historical, complex and harm deemed cumulative. Multi-agency information is also gathered at times to inform a step-up from Early Help services. This ensures that children are effectively safeguarded and supported to receive the proportionate service, recognising the need for safeguarding interventions where necessary.

Early help is considered for every family where needs are identified whether this be during multi-agency daily triage meetings, or during contact enquiries. An early help coordinator works with partner agencies to support the quality of any early help which is led externally. This allows families to receive early help services where this is most appropriate and encourages early help services to be led and coordinated by professionals already known to the family where appropriate, reducing the number of changes for families and reducing the need for them to “re-tell their story”.

Early intervention and targeted work with families is provided by the Building Stronger Families (BSF) Team. In 2021/22 839 Early Help Assessments commenced, of which 19.2% were started by an external agency. 832 children from 405 families closed to BSF in 2021/22 and 65.0% of the children from across 265 families made progress during this time resulting in either a step down to universal services or closure to BSF.

A newly created post for a domestic abuse worker as part of the Front Door in relation to our response to domestic abuse is now in place, they will work across services as needed. This will strengthen our collaborative understanding of and response to domestic abuse and provide a higher quality of service to families, recognising the intricacies and complexities of domestic abuse and how this affects families.

The open ‘Front Door’ is well accessed and utilised by internal and external partners, reflecting the positive impact of ‘information and advice’ that is offered. We are building on the belief a social care assessment is not always needed and professionals with existing relationships are often best placed to support children and families. CIAT’s vision is that ‘gatekeeping’ is not a positive response and ‘thresholds’ are not always effective. Safety of the child is first and foremost the priority; once established gaining the right service for a family is the priority. The referrer and an experienced social worker, together with the family make decisions with thorough and robust management support and oversight.

I was talked to and not down to, this made me feel at ease as I was worried at first about being judged. I have let off a lot of steam throughout the work.”

Parent about Building Stronger Families Worker

Pre-birth work has been strengthened with the creation of the Unborn Baby Tracker Meeting held monthly at the Front Door. This meeting brings together Children’s Services and Midwifery Services to consider any Unborn Baby that is open to Building Stronger Families (BSF). If it is deemed appropriate for a social care assessment to commence, then a step-up to social care is progressed no later than 18 weeks into the pregnancy to avoid any delay in safeguarding and care planning that might be necessary. We are working with colleagues in the region to strengthen our offer to Unborn Babies and their families as part of the regional response to the “Born into Care” findings.

Management Oversight of Frontline Practice

There is a solid grip and effective oversight of the Front Door in terms of practice and decision making. We have a committed, stable and experienced management team; and have built strong relationships with our partners.

Our weekly review meeting (WRM) is a well-embedded, highly effective forum where senior leaders and the quality team review contacts and referrals that come through the Front Door each week. The forum allows senior leaders to understand problems families are facing in the 'here and now' and helps gain an accurate picture of what children and families are experiencing. WRM is a safeguarding check point and integral to helping senior leaders know what practice is like and have oversight, and accountability, ensuring children are safeguarded with proportionate and appropriate response to risk and need. It helps us to identify any emerging issues in real time, and to take remedial actions to support practitioners and managers to address these. Senior leaders now provide better support those involved directly with the child, understanding and appreciating the hard work and commitment from the many professionals who are already, or may become, involved in working with our families.

We rely on great relationships with both internal and external partners. Some of our partners have attended our WRM to observe. They have found this useful in identifying good practice and highlighting areas they look to improve in their own organisations. For example, promoting relational practice across their services.

Practice Review Meetings allow us to understand that all our social workers receive regular reflective supervision from their team manager, with investment in supervision training and a revised supervision policy in place. However, there can be inconsistencies in always ensuring this is recorded onto the child's file in a timely manner. Work has been undertaken to amend our Supervision policy to develop a RAG rating system for the frequency of supervision of individual children, allowing managers to focus on high quality reflection and management guidance. Service managers, Team managers and Advanced practitioners have all attended development sessions on reflective, relational & restorative supervision. This is helping to ensure that children and families are receiving proactive, evidence-based services while avoiding drift and delay in care planning.

In addition to supervision, management oversight and grip is evident on most children's records. Management direction at allocation is reviewed as part of the WRM and is of good quality. When a contact is received on an open family the Team Manager or Advanced Practitioner routinely records their analysis of the information received and any required actions on the child's file.

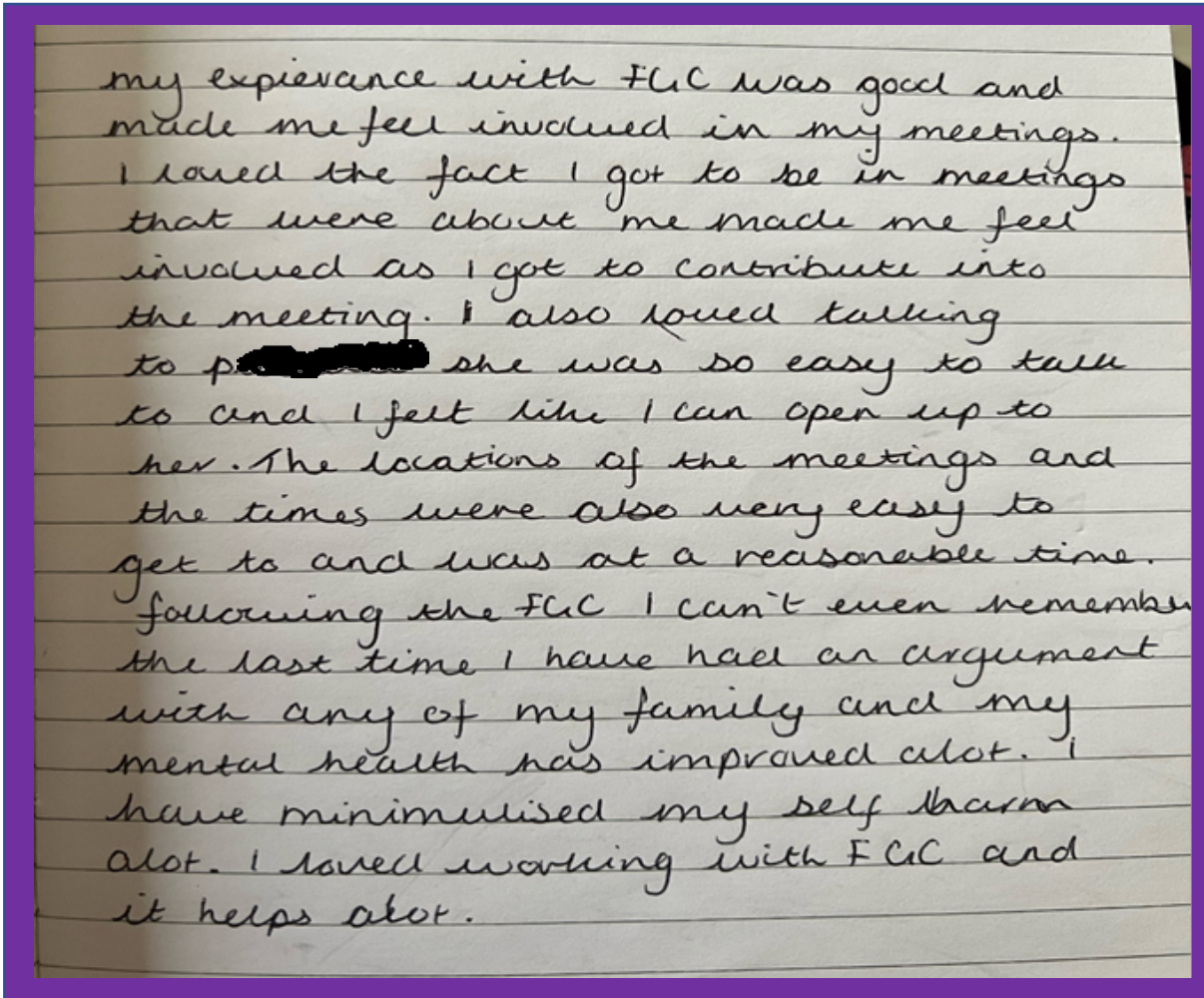
Participation and direct work with children and families

A key aspect of our Strengthening Families Program has been to embed family led decision making, via Family Group Conferencing (FGC), across the service. Families are consistently offered a Family Group Conference as part of their involvement with Children's Services.

Significant expansion to our FGC service has seen the number of FGCs held increase significantly from 25 in 2018/19 to 125 in 2020/21. When analysing the impact of Family Group Conferences we

have found that they were 94% successful in supporting children to return to family from care and 86% successful in avoiding or de-escalating a Child Protection plan.

An FGC duty worker is co-located with the Assessment and Safeguarding duty team, to promote increased understanding of the FGC process and to allow dynamic discussions regarding the appropriateness of Family Group Conferencing at the earliest opportunity. Recommendations for an FGC are routinely included in management direction at allocation and reviewed in supervision.



The views of a young person on their experience of Family Group Conferences (FGC)

There is still work to be done to ensure that the child's plan reflects the family plan from the FGC, and if it does not there are clearly recorded reasons for the deviation.

Social workers and family workers in the assessment and safeguarding teams regularly undertake direct work with children and families, however the recording of this work can be inconsistent. We are working to ensure that social workers reference and analyse the direct work that they undertake, ensuring this includes the child's voice and is completed in a timely way.

All the Assessment and Safeguarding, Children with Disabilities, and Looked After Through Care Social workers have received training and regular team updates on the use of the Mind of My Own (MOMO) app. The fostering team and foster carers are receiving MOMO training currently.

Our "edge of care" service, Keeping Families Together, were recognised nationally at the 2021 Social Work Awards, winning the Gold Award in the Team of the Year category

Direct work is central to their work and the excellent outcomes they achieve

Within Keeping Families Together (KFT) direct work with children has been completed 468 times over 2021/22 and 653 times with the parents. This has been a significant increase when compared to last year. A 39.3% increase with the children and a 79.4% increase with the parents.

3 months after a family has ceased Keeping Families Together, the Keeping in Touch (KIT) worker contacts the families to ask them to participate in a questionnaire with an overall satisfactory level regarding the programme.

In 2021/22, a 57.8% response to the questionnaire demonstrated: - 96.2% satisfied or very satisfied with involvement; 64.4% are on the same support plan after 3 months; 20% have closed to social care; 13.3% had their plan increased but did not come into care; and only 1 family came into care from this cohort within 3 months of working with KFT.

'The team is very supportive and have always told me not to give up on my dreams, they have supported me through my toughest times, and always makes me feel better, I do not know what I would do without the support from this team'

A young person's comment

Identifying and responding to all types of abuse recognising the vulnerability of specific groups of children

At the Front Door we have specialist teams, SWITCH who work with children and young people with issues in relation to substance misuse and Missing and Exploited Team (MET). The Missing and Exploited Team has been recently created strengthened Darlington's response and commitment to 'Harm Away from Home' by offering a dedicated response. MET is working across all services, and external partners, to develop a shared vision for addressing the needs of children being exploited and prevention for others being harmed and drawn into criminal activity. This area of work is already proving successful with a focus on intervention, plans and action, changing the way in which we think and act.

Children who go missing from home are supported by a Missing from Home Worker, commissioned from Barnardo's. The worker offers a Return Home Interview (RHI) and engages the young person in

discussion around their missing episodes. This helps them to develop insight into the risks associated with going missing and identify strategies to prevent this happening again. The recommendations made by the worker are well thought out but do not always inform social care assessments and plans. They can remain as stand-alone vitally important pieces of work. Further work is being done to support workers to ensure that assessments are informed further by RHIs.

Managers in Assessment and Safeguarding (A&S) are working closely with colleagues in the Missing and Exploited team to improve and develop our adolescent safeguarding offer. This is to share best practice and support improvement of young person’s care planning, including further training and support for social workers as well as awareness raising sessions.

Excellent performance information. provided on a weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual basis, enables managers to be fully informed of the nature and timeliness of work completed. A key focus of the coming year is to ensure that performance is clearly linked to quality of practice.

Areas of Strength and Areas for Development

Areas of Strength	Areas for Development
Improving in quality of management oversight being demonstrated on children’s files	Improve the evidence of relational practice in all recording including the “voice of the child”, in chronologies, case files and plans
Weekly Referral Meeting – giving clear oversight, Strong Challenge and Strong Support	Timely case assessment and recording, ensuring records are relational and reflect direct work.
Relational Practice embedding across Front Door and Building Stronger Families	Improve understanding of reasons for “No further action” outcomes to assessment
Increasing level of Family Group Conferencing	RAG rating the frequency of supervision of individual children, to improve recording
Robust oversight of legal and permanence tracking	Early Help Worker to work with social Workers in CAIT

“I feel the most supported I have ever felt, my family have really stepped up now and that’s thanks to her, I love her, and I’m glad I have her as my social worker”

Parent about Social Worker

The Experience and Progress in Care and Care Leavers

Making good decisions

Head of service approval is required for all requests for a child to become looked after, high support and high challenge supports scrutiny of work undertaken. In most cases input from Keeping Families Together and/or Family Group Conferencing is recommended where this has not already happened. This ensures that all decisions made for children to come into care are timely, proportionate and based upon a clear, recorded understanding of the issues and risks.

Legal gateway meetings are held for all children where consideration is being given to commencing Public Law Outline or Care Proceedings. Senior managers chair these meetings and legal advice is taken to ensure that only those children and families that require this level of intervention receive it. Following on from this initial meeting, Permanence Planning and Tracking Panel (PPTP) meetings are scheduled in on a regular basis to ensure that PLO and Court proceeding progress without drift or delay. The introduction of a social work information proforma, and the improved use of analysis, is evidencing decision making more clearly. Our aspiration is that all recording of legal processes should be relational, specifically written with the idea that the child will read it, if not now, then at some point in the future, supporting young people to understand their history and the decisions made in a way that can support any ongoing recovery from trauma.

Once a permanent plan is identified, Permanence Planning Panel meetings take place. Meetings are chaired by a senior manager who provides scrutiny and ensures focus on understanding the child's journey in care, this supports effective permanence decision making. This ensure that any use of Section 20 for Children Looked After is appropriate and the rationale well evidenced; and that where Care Orders are in place they are regularly reviewed with clear actions and timescales. Permanence Tracking panel meetings also take place with relevant operational managers and the Principal Solicitor to ensure a focus on permanence planning and prevent drift and delay for children.

I would again like to express how impressed I have been with XXXXXX's work throughout her involvement. She has developed a lovely rapport with the children and has offered parents frank and proportionate guidance. Her communication is excellent and her written work is of outstanding quality. This was echoed by Her Honour Judge Mitchell who, in her Judgement, said she thought there was a 'very detailed and very thoughtful' supervision plan described as 'impressive'. She was clearly thankful for XXXXXX's hard work.

Discharge of Care Orders and reunification to parent's care or Placement with Parents regulation arrangements take place are carefully planned and managed. Looked After Through Care Team managers and the Family Group Conference Team manager meet on a regular basis to discuss any plans for reunification and return to parents care to ensure Family Group Conference is arranged to identify support from the wider family and networks.

Participation and direct work with children in care and care leavers

Children are regularly visited and seen alone by their social worker. This is a strength, as it gives children stability and helps them to feel valued. Social workers ensure that the views of children are regularly sought, they are incorporated into assessments and reviews, and inform their plans. Children report having good relationships with their social workers and IRO's. IRO's visit children at their homes and ensure that children are listened to.

She was lovely, the best social worker I have had and very understanding

Young Person's comment

Social workers engage children in direct work to help understand how they feel and what their views are.

Children are also encouraged to communicate via the "Mind of my Own" app. There is training for staff on the app and training for foster carers to support children use the app.

90.1% of statutory visits for children in care were completed in timescale in 2021-22. This is a slight decrease on the position in 2020-21 where 93.1% of visits were completed within timescale. This continues to be a focus for ongoing managerial monitoring

97.1% of children in care initial reviews and 99.6% of subsequent reviews were completed in timescales in 2021-22, which is a positive position.

Social workers are proud of the achievements of children, and we provide regular updates to Corporate Parenting Panel about achievements of cared for children and care leavers. The lead member for Children's Services is a very active part of the panel and has said they'll send a card to congratulate those children and young people whose achievements are shared with Corporate Parenting Panel.

Our Corporate Parenting Panel grows from strength to strength. Meetings continued over the Covid lockdown period via Microsoft Teams and since April 2022 meetings take place face to face. The relationship between young people and panel members continues to thrive and develop, young people are sharing their views and challenging the Service appropriately. Their views influence the plans of the service, for example through the Promises Tree and Care Leavers Covenant.

Children are supported by their carers and social workers to develop interests and hobbies, which helps to build self-esteem and confidence.

Throughout 2021-22 work has been ongoing with Blue Cabin, North Tyneside, and Gateshead Councils to develop a Creative Life Story model of practice. Children have engaged in "All about me", "More about me" and Therapeutic Life story work. Staff have had access to extensive training and resources. Funding was initially provided via the DfE What Works programme, we have secured additional funding for this valuable work to continue in 2022-23. 57 looked after children have

benefitted from this work to date and this has led to increased understanding of their history, key decisions made and help them move forward and recover.

The Children in Care Council (the Darlo Care Crew) ensures that children and young people can influence service development and practice. Young people attend Corporate Parenting Panel and share their views help influence change. Children value being able to participate on staff interview panels and have supported with the recruitment of the Assistant Director, Heads of Service, Team Managers and Social Workers.

Helping and Protecting

Children who go missing from care receive a comprehensive and timely response. Workers and managers monitor the timeliness and quality of all return home interviews effectively. When children are found, they are consistently offered a timely return home interview which helps to support them, to understand why they are going missing and work with the young person to reduce risk of them going missing again, helping to keep them safer.

.....given us great advice, listened ,kept us updated at all times, and have shown understanding and empathy particularly during the most stressful times. The Social Worker in particular has helped me personally, helping me to have belief in myself and very often putting things in perspective when I felt very overwhelmed and afraid. Their support has, without a doubt made a huge difference

A family member's comment

There is a very low incidence rate of missing from placement for children and young people placed with in-house, mainstream and connected persons foster carers. There are a higher number of missing episodes for children placed in residential care. Most children are settled, with a smaller number who have more frequent missing episodes. Targeted work has been completed by the children's homes managers and staff, in conjunction with the Missing and Exploited Team to improve services and responses to children who go missing.

The number of Children in Care who had missing episodes in 2021 / 2022 was 31 this is 18% of children who went missing. This is an increase 1 child but decreased from 19.7 % of the total 94.1 % children were offered a Return to Home Interview (RHI) with 79.1% children engaged in the interview.

Children and young people in care classified as being at risk of Sexual and Criminal Exploitation remains low (our numbers are 4 children at risk of sexual exploitation, 3 medium and 1 low and 1 child at risk of criminal exploitation classified as medium risk). These children and young people are well supported by Child Exploitation Group who drive multi agency plans to reduce risk. Children and young people who are victims or perpetrators of bullying are responded to by social workers

working with their individual need and an agreed approach to help understanding of the impact of bullying.

We have a very low number (1% approximately) of our cared for children open to the Youth Engagement and Justice Service. At year end only one young person was remanded to custody.

“The Box”, a local social media team, provide training and advice for children and young people in relation to online safety, support to carers regarding online safety and one to one bespoke support when needed.

Health

89.4% of Initial Health Assessments completed in 2021/22 were completed within 7 days.

90.5% of required health assessment reviews completed by end 2021/22 . Of the 18 children and young people who did not have a health review 7 of them (3.7%) are refusing to have one currently. We continue to emphasise the benefits of having a check-up

Some Darlington children in the process of being adopted have experienced slight delays in the process due to the Somerset judgement on adoption medicals. However, we are now in the position that all but 2 children will have had this resolved by the end of August. We have worked proactively with our Regional Adoption Agency to progress children, where appropriate, into foster to adopt arrangements in the meantime thus reducing any impact on the children and avoiding delays for them.

83.7% (159 / 190) of children due a dental check assessment by end of 2021/22 have had one completed. Of the 31 children who did not have a dental check 5 of them (2.6%) are refusing to have one currently. We continue to emphasise the benefits of having a check-up. This is up from 2020-21 which was much lower due to covid and the limited availability of dentists.

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQ) are completed routinely, social workers then identify support appropriate to underlying emotional issues linked to trauma.

A psychological wellbeing practitioner is employed for one day per week to deliver support to care leavers. In 2021/2022 there has been a strong focus on group work and psychoeducation sessions with care leavers alongside 1:1 sessions. This has taken place face to face in community center buildings during covid-19 restrictions before returning to the care leaver base at Pease House in 2022. 8 young people have benefited from the psychoeducation and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) skills group work this year and 14 young people have been referred and supported via 1:1 sessions. Funding has been agreed for this service for a further 2 financial years, a recognition of and a real boost to this service.

Care leavers have a full health passport enabling them to have control over their own medical history and health information. They are supported to have a full understanding of their health status since birth through access to full health information when they are 18. At the point of becoming ‘eligible’ for leaving care services all care leavers are offered and encouraged to consent to a health passport during their first pathway plan needs assessment. The health passport format and process in Darlington was developed with young people in conjunction with the LAC nurses. Each health passport

is shared with the young person by the LAC nurse ensuring if young people have any questions about it, they can be answered by a health professional.

In 2021-2022, 6 care leavers had a health passport completed and 2 young people decided not to engage in the process.

Learning and Development

Most children are making good progress in school and attendance is good with few exclusions.

In 2021-2022 there has been an average school attendance of 92.7% for looked after children. For primary school aged children, it is 96.3% and for secondary school aged children it is 89.7%".

Children in care are well supported in education by the Virtual School Head and Virtual School staff. The Virtual Head teacher has an ambitious vision and understanding of the support needs of cared for children and care leavers. Personal Educational Plans are produced within timescales and regularly reviewed and are of a good standard.

Attendance of Vulnerable Pupils

Attendance of vulnerable pupils in Darlington continues to be higher than the regional average. We have a Vulnerable Pupil Panel (VPP), a multi-agency network chaired by the Virtual School Head that brings together decision makers from all schools, the local authority, health, and police to ensure an appropriate borough-wide response for children identified vulnerable in education. This is a highly effective early intervention approach which aims to support children early in the life of any issues they face.

The latest published DfE data for the week of 31/03/2022 showed that the % of children with a social worker attending school in Darlington was 87.8% compared to the regional average of 83.8%.

For pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) the % of pupils attending school in Darlington for the week of 31/03/2022 was 90.1% compared to the regional average of 82.7%.

The proportion of pupils eligible for Free School Meals attending in this period was 87.4% compared to a regional average of 85.3%.

Fair Access and Elective Home Education

In Darlington the Fair Access process is managed within the VPP and a standing agenda item at each VPP meeting (held every three weeks) is Elective Home Education. The panel protocol encourages schools to expedite the re-admission of children who became electively home educated through the pandemic upon parental request, which is over and above the provisions of the in-year application process with a specific aim of re-integrating those who may have become electively home educated in haste.

The number of children registered as Electively Home Educated in April 2022 was 198, which was 12 less than the comparable figure in April 2021.

Darlington also has a full time Elective Home Education Advisor who provides advice to parents considering electively home educating their child, to support them in making an informed choice. The pandemic has undoubtedly caused some parents increased anxiety about school attendance and the EHE Advisor has been proactive in addressing these concerns.

Stability and Permanence

Children live in safe and secure placements. Wherever possible, children only move in line with their care plan. When children do move to another placement, careful planning takes place. We are continuing to increase the numbers of children in care who live with extended family members in well assessed and supported kinship care arrangements.

At year end 2021-22, 10.6% (29 of 273 children) had 3 or more placement moves in the previous 12 months. This is in line with our annual target of 10% but higher than the position at year end 2020-21 when it was 8%.

This will be an area of focus in the forthcoming year. It reflects the current pressure on sourcing appropriate placements for children, on occasions it means children may need to stay in a short-term “bridging” placement until the appropriate placement is sourced.

At year end 2021-22, 74% of children and young people in care, aged under 16 and looked after for 2.5 years (min) had been in their current placement continuously for at least 2 years. This is higher than the previous year – 72% and above our internal target of 68%. We are currently the third highest performing in the North East Region.

Only 6.6% of children in care are placed 20 miles or more away from home at year end March 2022. This is below our target of 10% and significantly lower than in March 2021 when it was 12%. Social workers and managers ensure that children are not disadvantaged by living outside of the Borough

Sufficiency remains a challenge for Darlington. Our Sufficiency Statement demonstrates a clear understanding of the needs of Darlington children and young people and outlines our priorities for service development.

There is a programme of incremental replacement of the existing three directly provided children’s homes and repurposing the existing residential accommodation to maximise the range and volume of directly provided Ofsted registered accommodation. The first new build children’s home is currently undergoing registration, and the previous accommodation is being repurposed into a short breaks service providing in reach, outreach and overnight accommodation. This will support prevention and escalation avoidance; will help to address bridging placements which will further improving placement stability.

A strong and effective partnership approach is in place between commissioners, operational colleagues and providers. This supports positive outcomes for children and young people and has been instrumental in achieving higher levels of long-term placement stability than our comparators. We have been successful in developing bespoke arrangements with local providers including a bed reservation arrangement in a new step down to fostering residential care home, and with IFAs

whereby they provide advance notice when a new foster carer is recruited in Darlington or a child is leaving a placement in Darlington.

We take a proactive approach through our external placements meeting where all external placements are reviewed to ensure continued appropriateness and positive outcomes for the child/young person.

Low incidence complex care needs remain a significant sufficiency challenge, and Darlington is proactively involved in subregional work with health colleagues to develop a joint service focused on positive behaviour and trauma informed support.

We currently have a bespoke transition to adulthood placement (court ordered with DOLS) for a young person with extremely complex learning difficulties and mental health needs. They are currently being supported in their own accommodation with care provided through a CQC provider commissioned by health colleagues. Robust arrangements are in place for this young person to move back to the Darlington area by November.

Children maintain meaningful relationships with their foster carers into adulthood through “Staying Put” arrangements. At the end of March 2022 there were 9 young people in Staying Put arrangements with their previous Darlington Borough Council Foster Carer, and 3 young people with their IFA carer. This is an increase of one young person since March 2021

When placements are under pressure, placement stability meetings take place at the earliest opportunity and support is offered to help maintain the placement. Where appropriate children and young people can have planned respite care, giving their main carer some time out to recharge. Foster carers are encouraged to develop good support networks, so that they feel supported by their own families and friends. The Principle Social worker and Head of service for fostering have planned a training schedule to strengthen the fostering offer and to consider how best to support permanency for children.

In Autumn 2022 we will be launching a Fostering Network Mockingbird constellation, where a “hub” foster carer will support a constellation of 6 other foster carers and develop a community of foster carers and children which will enhance placement stability and reduce changes of placement for children.

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) are welcomed and are well supported by the Looked After Through Care Team. Following referral via the National Transfer Scheme, suitable accommodation is identified, enabling young people to begin to feel safe. Children are provided with access to an interpreter and legal advice to support their status applications. They are given opportunities to learn English, practise their religion and to develop their friendship networks with connections to neighbouring local authorities.

Care leavers and transitions

In October 2021 Darlington Children’s Services received a focused visit in this area. Ofsted noted that the service had highly skilled, and effective workers who support care leavers extremely well. Ofsted also noted that the Team is led by a knowledgeable and determined team manager who provides consistently good support and supervision. The report highlighted that young people are benefiting

from long-standing, trusting relationships with workers who are emotionally invested in them and recognised the strong corporate parenting support, influence and investment.

The team have continued to work hard to ensure that care leavers up to the age of 25 years have been well supported in their understanding of finances, accommodation, education, and employment. This has been demonstrated in strong transition and pathway planning.

Care Leavers are well informed about their entitlements, they know their rights. Care leavers feel valued due to their being integral in-service development, such as the Leaving Care Offer. A dedicated Care Leaver page is on the Council's website.

Leaving Care Offer

This is a comprehensive local offer, combined with a plethora of creative and generous opportunities from the wider council and its partners, and is contributing to the positive outcomes for care leavers. This offer has further been strengthened in 2022 when Darlington Borough Council made the commitment to sign the Care leaver Covenant and is now actively working with private businesses in the local area to support in continuing with the positive outcome for care leavers in Darlington.

Care leavers regularly engage with their PA and other staff within the team.

We are 'in touch' with 100% of our care leavers

The care leaver base is a hive of activity from cookery classes, mother and baby groups, budgeting workshops, drops ins, leaving care forums and access to the 'leaving care larder' Care leavers are offered lots of opportunities for to new things and socialising through regular day trips.

The team has strong working relationships with the Job Centre in Darlington and in 2022 the joint protocol was updated and strengthen to ensure that they receive an enhanced service. Care leavers benefit from dedicated work coaches within the job centre, giving them increased support and opportunities (such as peer mentoring, marketplace events with training providers).

From the 75 % of care leavers that are in Education, Employment or Training, 6 were at university, and 3 were in apprenticeships. A further 6 care leavers will be progressing to Higher Education in September 2022.

For those not in Education, Training and Employment the team hold a monthly NEET reduction group comprising of Personal Advisor's, the virtual school, Keeping In Touch Workers, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and training providers with the focus on get those young people re-engaged with some form of education training and employment.

Opportunities are improving in the Darlington Borough Council 'family business' and within the business sector with a range of options increasing for Care Leavers to choose. We are delighted that one of our care leavers has been successful in securing one of the care leaver internships at the DfE in Darlington. This is the 3rd young person to have been given this opportunity since the programme was launched. We currently have a care leaver employed within the Looked After Throughcare Team on a

Participation Apprenticeship, again this is the 3rd care leaver who has benefitted from this role within the team since the role was created.

Those at University can access supported lodgings and staying put arrangements should they require to remain in placement. This sustainability in placement allows the young people to concentrate on studies rather than living arrangements for those young people who are living outside of LA provision, PA Support is active with them offering 1-1 advice and guidance to our leavers.

Care leavers wellbeing is supported through access to a Mental Health Nurse on a weekly basis with no waiting times. This has reduced the need to make a referral for tier 4 mental health services for most young people.

Care leavers all receive a copy of their birth certificate whilst they are in care, have support in obtaining their National Insurance Number when they reach the age of 16, and can be provided with a passport and support to secure a driving licence.

Care leavers are prepared for their transition to adulthood as they experience a smooth transition into independent living due to effective pathway planning. Their personal views are central to the planning and are well reflected. Individual risks are clearly identified, their needs are understood, and support is provided to reduce risks. They are supported to think about their choices and to keep safe. If a care leaver is in crisis, they are supported with increased access to their PA, through visits, which at time are daily to minimise risk and help to address the issue.

Care leavers are supported to remain with their foster-carers in Staying Put arrangements post-18, and numbers remains stable, with 8 in Staying Put arrangements, with an additional 2 care leavers who have remaining living with former foster carers post 21 under a private arrangement and a further 2 in Supported Lodgings at the end of June 2022. They have a good housing offer, with a range of accommodation options, and sufficient choice and availability, resulting in very minimal waiting for accommodation. "Taster flats" in use are close to home meaning that support with the transition to independence is high. This Taster Flat support has been further enhanced in April 2022 with additional floating support commissioned. All care leavers live in suitable accommodation, with none in in bed and breakfast accommodation, and only those in custody being classed as being in unsuitable accommodation.

Areas of Strength and Areas for Development

Areas of Strength	Areas for Development
A focused visit by OFSTED in Nov 2021 praised Darlington's support for Care Leavers	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires to be further developed
Children are supported to attend their review meetings and can access advocacy	The number of children participating in their reviews has reduced slightly in 2021-22
Excellent opportunities for Employment, Education and Training on leaving Care.	Placement moves of 3 or more placements has increased due to limited availability of placements.

	Delivering Cedars Emergency and Respite Provision
Children are regularly visited and seen alone by their social worker	Launching a Fostering Network Mockingbird constellation
Long term placement stability	

The Impact of Leaders on Social Work Practice and Children and Families

Corporately, Children's Services are recognised as a key strategic priority and are well supported as such. There is strong political leadership from the Lead Member who is very engaged with not just the service, but with service users and the wider community. They have a clear vision of how services need to be delivered to support a vision for health and prosperity in the Borough.

As Senior Leaders we continue to have the highest aspirations for our children, young people and families. As part of a People's Directorate, led by a Director for Children and Adults, we recognise the benefits of a whole family approach and our Relational Practice model drives the work we do with Children and their families. We are a service that knows ourselves well, both in terms of our strengths and the areas that we want to develop further. We understand the impact of Covid on our communities and how that is driving some increased demand for some services, but we also understand the impact on the workforce and how recruitment and retention into the profession continues to be a real challenge.

Our strategic direction continues to be informed by our Strengthening Families Program, which we are building on following our successful 2-year partnership with Leeds City Council. The Program has allowed us to build a Relational and Restorative culture where as Leaders we provide a high support and high challenge approach. This gives front line workers and managers an environment to provide outstanding services. As with any element of cultural transformation further work remains to be done to embed change and improve but we are confident that we have developed solid foundations to build on.

Senior Leaders have a good level of oversight of front-line practice. Performance is understood, scrutinised and challenged on a continual basis. Regular sessions provide assurance that leaders know their services in terms of both strengths and challenges; and are proactively addressing issues. Knowledge of performance is supported by clear oversight of practice with Weekly Review Meetings allowing the Senior Leadership Team to capture live practice in terms of our response to contacts and referrals as well as understanding decision making, the rationale and evidence for this. Monthly Practice Review sessions are held which allow Senior Managers to look in depth at children's case files and engage in restorative discussions with workers and managers about the quality of practice. The focus of these activities is about the quality of practice, evidence of relational practice and ultimately what the outcomes are for children and their families.

Senior Leaders also understand and have strong management grip over pathways and processes for children and young people and this helps drive effective outcomes and timely planning. There is a Public Law Outline Tracking Panel and Permanence Tracking Panel which meets regular and oversees planning to ensure that children's plans are progressed in a timely and effective way.

Senior Leaders understand the role of partnership working and maintain excellent working relationships at a strategic level. A MASH Operational Group is well established and attended and provides the opportunity for multi-agency audit, scrutiny and challenge and recognises good practice

in partnership working. This has driven several recent practice changes, for example changes in relation to our response to children who go missing and children who are at risk of exploitation, recognising the links and overlaps between these two groups and ensuring that they are not considered in isolation.

Safeguarding Partnership arrangements are in place with a strong supportive Independent Scrutineer providing and enabling professional challenge, and commitment from all partners to ensure our respective safeguarding work is robust. Our Strategic MAPPA Board is chaired by the Chief Superintendent for Safeguarding and Neighbourhood Command and is well attended by all organisations, including local prison services and Safeguarding Partners.

Learning Culture

We keep the voices of children and young people at the centre of our decision making and service delivery and ensure they regularly contribute to our overall learning. We routinely include children and young people as part of our recruitment panels for new posts into the service, with our young people devising their own questions and giving considered feedback about their views on what attributes are important for our staff to have. Through our well-established Corporate Parenting Panel, our young people have contributed to our “Promises Tree” which sets out what they are entitled to from our services and we have recently launched a Care Leavers Covenant, in consultation with our young people, to maximise their opportunities.

We continue to build upon the foundations we have laid for relational and restorative practice to underpin all of our involvements and the services provided, by building a culture of learning and understanding our practice model.

To achieve this, investment has been made to expand our Senior Leadership Team so they have the capacity to develop their own knowledge and understanding of our Practice Model, the impact on their own practice and on wider services. Through delivering support and training to the SLT, senior leaders will become increasingly confident in the Practice Model and thus be better placed to support and develop their teams and services.

We have a comprehensive learning and development offer for our staff and the development of our “Darlington Xtra Microsite” is a further step to making training, learning and development contemporary and accessible for our teams. This will in turn enhance the knowledge and skills of our practitioners and enable them to provide consistent high quality services to children and their families.

This year has seen us join in partnership with Newcastle University to offer research internships to members of staff as part of the Experts in Practice program. This has resulted in individuals being supported to complete research in 3 key priority areas; Harm Away from Home, Trauma Informed Practice and Creative Life Story Work. The aim of this is to allow individual workers to develop their skills, knowledge and practice and to share their learning with the wider workforce to build our overall knowledge and skills in these areas.

Workforce

We continue to have a stable and experienced leadership Team, led by a Director of Children Services and Lead Member who are invested in and understand the service aims and priorities.

There are challenges in terms of stability of the wider workforce, which mirror the challenges being seen regionally and nationally. Our vacancy rate is 8.4%, which compares favourably with the previous year (11.9%) and with the national average (16.7%). Our agency rates are 10.6% which compares favourably with the previous year (21.2%) and with the national average (15.5%). We continue to invest in “growing our own” and invest in our Academy model accordingly, with our Workforce Development Team coordinating ASYE/Apprenticeship/Student/Step Up to Social Work programmes across the borough, which has supported more than 45% of the current Directorate workforce into employment in Darlington.

The impact of some of the workforce challenges led to a short period of disruption to the allocation of children and families for casework, although this has been resolved. During that period there was a high level of management oversight to ensure that risks were carefully managed and impacts on families understood. We continue to see an increase in demand which means that in some parts of the service caseloads have increased and we are closely monitoring and supporting workers with this. An enhanced recruitment and retention support package has been put in place and Assistant Director led engagement sessions have taken place to understand front line practitioners experiences, their wishes and feelings and to work proactively with them to maintain Darlington as a positive place to work.

In addition we continue to invest in and recognise the worth of our frontline workers and managers. We have a comprehensive in house training offer and are also supporting our front line managers with regular sessions focused on relational practice, with a focus on management oversight and supervision. This gives Team managers the reflective space to discuss, but also the practical tools and skills to provide high quality management oversight, which understands the child and family and their plan and drives the progression of their plans.

Regular Staff and leadership Forums are facilitated, which provides a visibility of senior leaders and allows the vision and strategic aims of the service to be clearly shared and understood by the rest of the service but equally invites the opportunity for front line workers to engage and contribute and this shape the direction of the service.

We are currently piloting an agile working programme which seeks to empower and enable front line practitioners to fully embrace a hybrid approach to working. This supports access to office and peer based working environment when needed but allows this to be mixed with home working as is most appropriate. This is being carefully monitored to understand the impact on the workforce as well as the children and families we support. It will inform a formal review and decision about working patterns in the longer term, with the primary aim of maintaining high quality and effective services for children and their families.

Areas of Strength and Areas for Development

Areas of Strength	Areas for Development
Strong supportive and challenging leadership including from elected members	Development of better ways to work with the Voice of Children, young people and families
A single improvement plan under Strengthening Families building upon strengths at Front Door and in FGC service	Continued implementation of improvements under Strengthening Families
Relational Practice modeled by leadership team	Embedding relational practice across Children's Services and wider.
Strong workforce development with training and support continuously developing	Recruitment and retention, of both qualified and unqualified workers to reduce caseloads.
Very strong Care Leaver Offer	The implementation of hybrid working while maintaining high quality and effective service

What are our plans for the next 12 months?

Following the successful implementation of the Strengthening Families Program we share significant progress in our use of relational practice but there remains work to be done to fully embed relational and restorative practice across the whole service. With the end of involvement of Leeds, we have developed the next stage of the Strengthening Families Plan to build on progress and to rise to meet current and future challenges.

The Plan has 5 key priorities for the coming year,

1 Restorative Culture – empowering the leadership team to embed restorative practice

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will lead the use of restorative approaches across all of Children’s Services practice, both internally and externally

Outcome

A restorative culture creates an environment where restorative practice can flourish. Children, young people and families tell us they are “worked with”, that they co-produce their plans and services which show desired outcomes and how to achieve them.

Impact

Children, young people and families are safe, are worked with and thrive in Darlington

2 Developing and delivering in house training

Our workforce development team will continue developing an in-house training offer which covers our Strengthening Families approach. This will support senior managers as practice leaders to deliver training to respective service areas

Outcome

A workforce trained and regularly refreshed in relational and restorative practice. Families are at the centre of services receiving “high support and high challenge” interventions that maximises their chances of making sustainable decisions.

Impact

Children, young people and families supported by Darlington Children’s Services have a positive experience, achieving positive and lasting change.

3 Increasing the use of Family Group Conferencing (FGC)

We will increase the use of Family Group Conferencing (FGC), targeted work will take place with frontline teams and services to improve access to and awareness of FGC

Outcome

Increased use of FGC will build on and maximise family’s role in decision making. It will facilitate children, young people and families to develop their own plan, to draw effectively on their wider network of support and to put a plan in place to support a sustainable change.

Impact

Children, young people and families are in control of achieving a positive and lasting change they seek.

4 Increasing in-house Foster Carer capacity

A revised fostering marketing strategy is in place, with the support of the Corporate Parenting Panel, to maximise opportunities to recruit foster carers that meet the needs of our most vulnerable children and young people.

Outcome

Children and young people will access to greater placement choice.
More effective placement matching and increased placement stability.

Impact

Children and young people experience of care in Darlington is stable and positive.

5 Delivering Cedars Emergency and Respite Provision

This emergency and respite provision will be a fully registered home able to care for our most vulnerable children and young people when in need of emergency support or respite.

Outcome

A Darlington based emergency and respite service will provide safe and nurturing environment for children and young people in crisis that maximises their chances of recovering from challenge and trauma they have experienced.

Impact

A reduction of the impact of trauma and less risk of repeated cycles of moving and placement change for children and young people in Darlington.

The full programme plan is available on request.

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
5 SEPTEMBER 2022**

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 2022/23 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 2022/23 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**)

Recommendations

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

**Luke Swinhoe
Assistant Director Law and Governance**

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 and Climate Change	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

5. 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.
6. 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’ .
7. 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.
8. 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

9. Any Member seeking to add a new item to the work programme will need to complete a quad of aims. **Appendix 2**
10. A copy of the Forward Plan has been attached at **Appendix 3** for information.

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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 31 Oct 2022 Q2 19 Dec 2022	Sharon Raine	Agreed set of indicators	To receive quarterly monitoring reports and undertake any further detailed work into particular outcomes if necessary
Children's Services Self-Assessment - Overview	5 September 2022	Chris Bell		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	5 September 2022	Ken Ross	PBH 009 PBH 013c PBH 016 PBH 018 PBH 020 PBH 021 PBH 054	Annual Monitoring
Local Designated Officer Annual Report	5 September 2022	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

Topic	Timescale	Lead Officer	Link to PMF (metrics)	Scrutiny's Role
Learning and Skills Service Annual Report	31 October 2022	Paul Richardson		Annual Report to demonstrate challenge
Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report	31 October 2022	Ann Baxter, Independent Chair		Annually monitoring
Adoption Tees Valley Annual Report 2021/22	31 October 2022	Vicky Davidson-Boyd, Service Manager, Adoption Tees Valley		Annual monitoring
IRO Annual Report	19 December 2022	Martin Graham	CSC201	To examine the Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Officer for Looked After Children
Children and Young Peoples Plan	19 December 2022	Christine Shields		Annual Report
2022/23 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment	27 February 2023	Tony Murphy/Nicola Davies		Annual Report

REVIEWS PENDING

Autism Provision Review Group	Final Report to Health and Housing on 14 April 2021. Cross Party Joint Working Group to be established – ongoing.	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
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MEMBER BRIEFINGS

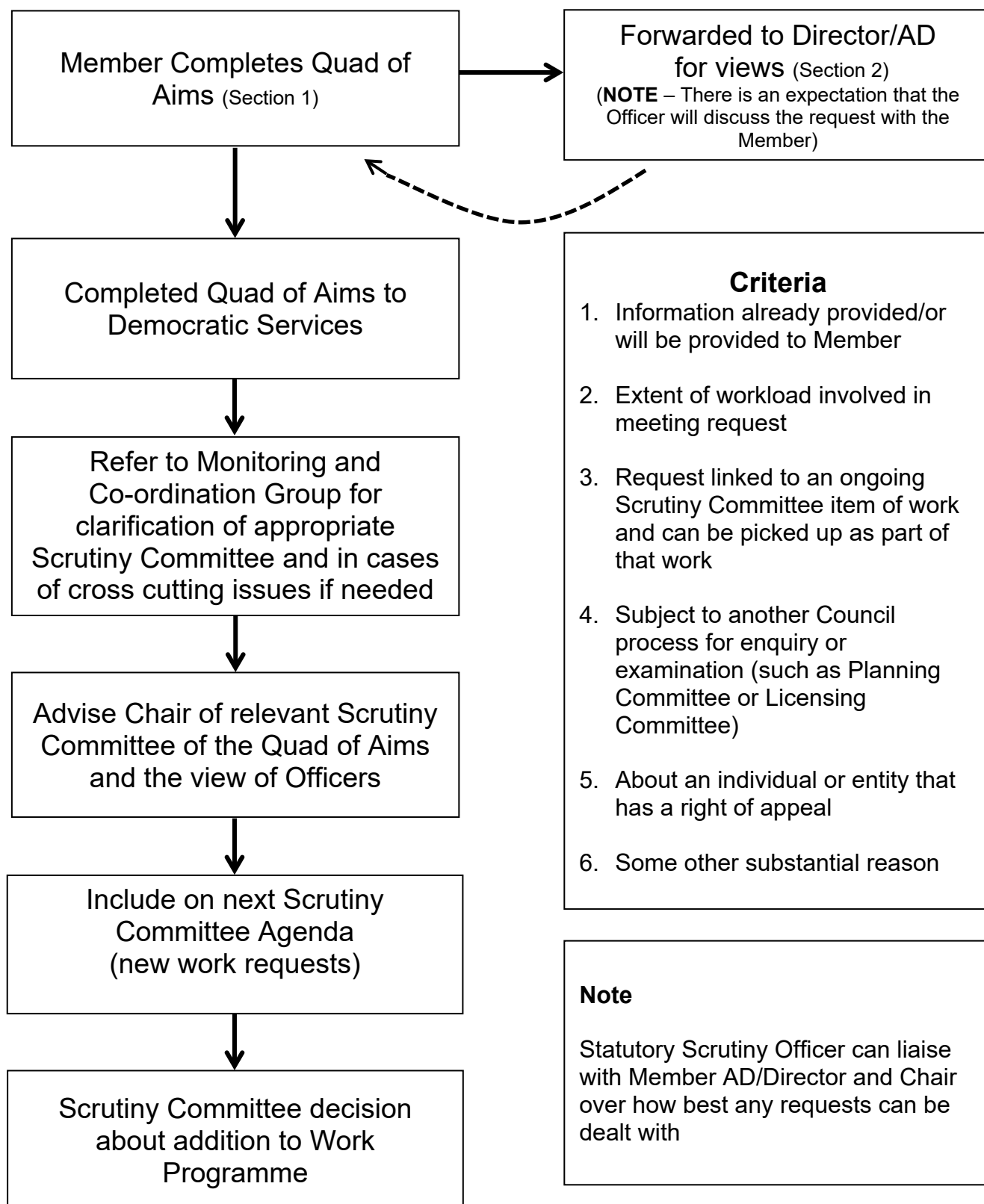
Topic	Timescale	Lead Officer	Link to PMF (metrics)	Scrutiny's Role
Tees Valley Combined Authority Education and Skills – Role and Funding	4 February 2022	Shona Duncan, Head of Employment, Education and Skills, Tees Valley Combined Authority		Joint presentation to CYP and Economy and Resources Scrutiny to receive specific information on the funding allocation as it relates to this authority and where the spend (adult education up to 28 years) is being focused.
Meet with Young People (Council or Schools Councils/Youth Partnership)	22 February 2022	Joanne Shutt		

ARCHIVED ITEMS

Topic	When considered	Lead Officer	Scrutiny's Role
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

Adoptive Services	Item request approved by Scrutiny at the meeting held on 29 June 2020 – Not progressed	Vicky Davidson-Boyd	To examine how the Regional Adoption Agency is serving Darlington and to examine how the Coronavirus Pandemic has affected adoption
Early Help services available for new mothers	20 December 2021	Joanne Benson	To examine services available post and pre pandemic
Developing Darlington Care Collective	20 December 2021	Christine Shields/Martin Webster	To provide an Update on the Care Collective
Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 to 2025/26	Special 10 January 2022	Elizabeth Davison	To consider the MTFP 2022/23 to 2025/26 and make any views, and in particular, those in relation to those services and finances which are specifically within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee
Accessibility Strategy	21 February 2022	Tony Murphy/ Eleanor Marshall	Progress to date in respect of the review of the Special Educational Needs (SEND) Accessibility Strategy 2017-2020
Vulnerable Pupil Panel	25 April 2022	Tony Murphy/Calvin Kipling	To examine the mechanics of the vulnerable pupil panel and to learn about the process and what the scale of the attendance challenge is
Missing and Exploited Young People	27 June 2022	Alison Poulter	To provide Scrutiny with an update following concerns over the increase in numbers of missing

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: 3 AUGUST 2022 - 31 DECEMBER 2022**

Title	Decision Maker and Date	Page
Annual Review of the Investment Fund	Cabinet 6 Sep 2022	5
Bus Services	Cabinet 6 Sep 2022	6
Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Reports 2021/22	Cabinet 6 Sep 2022	7
Complaints Made to Local Government Ombudsman	Cabinet 6 Sep 2022	8
Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPD) Design Code - Skertingham Garden Village SPD Consultation Request	Cabinet 6 Sep 2022	9
Housing Services Anti-Social Behaviour Policy	Cabinet 6 Sep 2022	11
Museum Accreditation Policies	Cabinet 6 Sep 2022	12
Project Position Statement and Capital Programme Monitoring 2022/23 - Quarter 1	Cabinet 6 Sep 2022	13
Regulatory Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA)	Cabinet 6 Sep 2022	14
Restoration of Locomotion No 1 Replica - Release of Capital	Cabinet 6 Sep 2022	15
Schedule of Transactions - September 2022	Cabinet 6 Sep 2022	16
School Term Dates 2024/25	Cabinet 6 Sep 2022	17
The Treatment of War Pensions in the Calculation of Housing Benefit	Cabinet 6 Sep 2022	18
Darlington Transport Plan	Council 24 Nov 2022 Cabinet 11 Oct 2022	19
Land at Faverdale - Burtree Garden Village Development	Cabinet 11 Oct 2022	21
Treasury Management Annual and Outturn Prudential Indicators 2022/23	Cabinet 11 Oct 2022	22
Annual Audit Letter 2020/21	Cabinet 8 Nov 2022	23

**DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
FORWARD PLAN**

Council Tax Exemption for Care Leavers 2023/24	Cabinet 8 Nov 2022	24
Council Tax Support - Scheme Approval 2023/24	Council 24 Nov 2022 Cabinet 8 Nov 2022	25
Final Version of Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPD) Design Code - Skertingham Garden Village	Cabinet 8 Nov 2022	27
Project Position Statement and Capital Programme Monitoring - Quarter 2	Cabinet 8 Nov 2022	29
Revenue Budget Monitoring - Quarter 2	Cabinet 8 Nov 2022	30
Housing Services Fire Safety Policy	Cabinet 6 Dec 2022	31
Mid-Year Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management 2022/23	Council 26 Jan 2023 Cabinet 6 Dec 2022	32
Council Chamber Refurbishment	Cabinet	34
Darlington Parking Strategy	Council Cabinet	35
Darlington Town Centre Transport Plan	Council Cabinet	36