



DARLINGTON
Borough Council

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Agenda

9.30 am, Monday, 23 October 2023
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 21 August 2023 (Pages 3 - 6)
4. Performance Indicators Year End 2022/23 –
Report of the Assistant Director Childrens Services
(Pages 7 - 38)
5. Performance Indicators Quarter 1 2023/24 –
Report of the Assistant Director Childrens Services
(Pages 39 - 70)
6. Review of Performance Indicators used in Performance Management and Regulation –
Report of the Assistant Director, Childrens Services
(Pages 71 - 74)
7. Designated Officer Annual Report 2022/23 –
Report of the Assistant Director of Childrens Services
(Pages 75 - 96)
8. Learning and Skills Annual Report 2022/23 –
Report of the Assistant Director of Education and Inclusion
(Pages 97 - 102)

9. Adoption Tees Valley Annual Report 2022/23 –
Report of the Service Manager, Adoption Tees Valley
(Pages 103 - 144)
10. Dedicated School Grant and the Safety Valve –
Report of the Assistant Director of Education and Inclusion
(Pages 145 - 152)
11. Work Programme 2023-2024 –
Report of the Assistant Director Law and Governance
(Pages 153 - 164)
12. 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
13. Questions



Luke Swinhoe
Assistant Director Law and Governance

Friday, 13 October 2023

Town Hall
Darlington.

Membership

Councillors Ali, Allen, Crudass, Dillon, Durham, Johnson, Layton, Renton, Storr and Toms

Statutory Co-optees

Carly Stonier

Non Statutory Co-optees

Maura Regan, Janet Woodcock, John Armitage and Sally Hudson

If you need this information in a different language or format or you have any other queries on this agenda please contact Paul Dalton, Democratic and Elections 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: paul.dalton@darlington.gov.uk or telephone 01325 405805

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 21 August 2023

PRESENT – Councillors Allen (in the Chair), Crudass, Layton, Storr and Toms.

APOLOGIES – Councillors Ali, Dillon, Johnson and Renton, Carly Stonier, John Armitage and Sally Hudson.

ABSENT – Councillors Durham, Maura Regan, Tim Fisher and Janet Woodcock.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Tony Murphy (Assistant Director Education and Inclusion), Ken Ross (Public Health Principal), Alison Lavender (Head of Service - Children's Front Door; Building Stronger Families; Young People's Engagement and Justice Service; Independent Review Team and Safeguarding Partnership) and Paul Dalton (Elections Officer)

CYP10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at this meeting.

CYP11 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 19 JUNE 2023

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 19 June 2023

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 19 June 2023 be approved as a correct record.

CYP12 TO CONSIDER THE TIMES OF MEETINGS OF THIS COMMITTEE FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023/2024.

Members entered into discussion as to whether it would be beneficial to Committee Members to hold meetings later in the day.

RESOLVED – That meetings of this Committee for the Municipal Year 2023/24 continue to be held at 9.30 a.m. on the dates previously agreed by Cabinet at Minute C258/Feb/2023.

CYP13 QUALITY ASSURANCE - DARLINGTON OWNED CHILDREN'S HOMES

The Assistant Director Commissioning, Performance and Transformation submitted a report (previously circulated) to update the Scrutiny Committee on the recent review of service assurance in place for Darlington owned Children's Homes, share the improvement opportunities identified, and the action being taken to strengthen confidence in this area.

The submitted report stated that the review was prompted by an inadequate rating of services at one home last Summer, and that the review highlighted opportunities to improve quality management processes in place to ensure that there is more continuous assurance of service performance to regulatory quality standards.

It was reported that the review did not explore how many homes were currently operating or measure services therefore it was not an assessment of, or intended to infer assessment of service quality or performance in any of Darlington's homes.

Members entered into discussion on staffing in children's homes, and the perceived inappropriate content of a newsletter previously circulated.

RESOLVED – That the work completed to review service assurance, and the proposed action plan for improvement, be noted.

CYP14 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PUBLIC HEALTH OVERVIEW

The Group Director of People submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide Members with an update on the Children and Young People Public Health interventions and programs.

The submitted report provided an overview on the Healthy Lifestyles Survey 2023, the Childhood Healthy Weight Plan and the 0-19 Service. It was reported that the Healthy Lifestyles Survey 2023 had been delivered for 14 years with a total of over 8500 pupils across 33 schools completing the survey annually. The topic areas covered by the Survey were outlined, and the submitted report stated that work had been undertaken to conduct a pilot of the Healthy Lifestyle Survey in the town's Further Education settings and sixth forms.

The submitted report outlined the overall objectives of the Darlington Childhood Healthy Weight Plan, and the progress made against these objectives. It was noted that the Darlington Childhood Healthy Weight Plan was in its final year and that work had commenced to evaluate the learning from this plan and the approach and apply this to developing a whole systems approach to the population for the Borough.

The performance of the 0-19 Service provided by Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust was reported on, with Members advised that the service achieved well against the statutory and contract performance targets. It was reported that the service had introduced new interventions, which included new ante natal virtual sessions, training for staff and peer supporters and more collaborative working with Family Centres; had successfully achieved accreditation for the UNICEF Gold Baby Friendly Award; and had enhanced and improved its digital offer.

The submitted report provided a summary of the Child Health Profile for Darlington, which demonstrated a mixed picture, with some key indicators being worse when compared to national figures, and others being better or similar to the national figures.

Members enquired as to whether they could receive a sample of the Healthy Lifestyles Survey and an overview of the questions asked, and were interested to know whether children and young people had a role in preparing the survey questions. Members were interested to know if the use of food banks was covered as part of the Darlington Childhood Healthy Weight Plan.

Discussion ensued on the compilation of the obesity statistics, the perceived lack of exercise in schools, the provision of practical classes, such as sewing, cookery, etc., and the activities undertaken at the 'family hubs', and the insight provided to schools in relation to beliefs and

actions of children and young people.

RESOLVED – That the content of the report be noted.

CYP15 WORK PROGRAMME 2023-2024

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.

Members noted the extensive number of reports scheduled for the Ordinary Meeting of this Committee in October, however Members were keen to ensure that all proposed business was addressed.

RESOLVED – That the Work Programme be noted.

This page is intentionally left blank

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 23 October 2023

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS YEAR END 2022/23

Purpose of the Report

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

Summary

2. This report provides performance information (April 2022 – March 2023) in line with an indicator set agreed by Monitoring and Coordination Group on 2 July 2018, and subsequently by Scrutiny Committee Chairs.
3. It is suggested monitoring focuses on issues and exceptions, and relevant Assistant Directors will attend the meeting to respond to queries raised by the committee regarding the performance information contained within this report.
4. Where indicators are reported annually, quarterly updates will not be available.

Where are we performing well?

5. 84.1% of referrals received in 2022/23 were completed within 1 working day. We are still below the internal target of 90% completed within 1 working day however compared to 2021/22 (72.1%) and 2020/21 (77.7%) this is an improvement. This improvement is evident of the hard work the CIAT team have been doing and the team have processed 75.5% more referrals than last year. 0.8% of referrals took over 3 working days to be completed in 2022/23 which is outperforming our target of 5% and an improvement compared to 5.6% completed in 2021/22.
6. At year end we were in line, at 17.7%, with our internal target of having no more than 18% of the referrals being repeated within 12 months of a previous referral starting. In terms of our performance over the past 3 years, this is an increase compared with 2021/22 at 10.9% but slightly below our 2020/21 performance of 19.1%. National benchmarking data is not yet available for 2022/23 but when looking at data for 2020/21 we were performing slightly better than our statistical neighbours (20.5%), regional average (20.5%) and national average (21.5%) (LAIT 2022). The increase year on year increase is likely to relate to us receiving a much higher number of referrals.
7. 1,650 Early Help Assessments (EHA) were started in 2022/23, 13.5% of which were initiated by external agencies. This is an increase on 2021/22 (839 EHA's) but with a decrease on the proportion of externally started EHA's (19.2%).

8. In 2022/23, Return Home Interviews (RHI) (excluding children from other authorities) have been offered in 94.4% (473 / 501) of the cases, 84.6% of which were offered within 72 hours and 59.1% of the children/young people engaged in their RHI.
9. 116 children were subject to a Child Protection plan (CP) as at the end of March 2023 This is a slight decrease on the 120 children who were subject to CP at the end of March 2022, but an increase on March 2021 (87) and March 2020 (85).
10. 100% of children with a Child Protection (CP) plan, and 100% of Children in Care (CiC) have an allocated social worker.
11. 98.7% of children with a Child Protection (CP) plan, and 98.0% of Children in Care (CiC) had their reviews completed within timescale.
12. 2.2% of the children, ceasing to be subject to a CP plan in 2022/23, had been subject to the plan for 2 or more years, which is meeting the target of 5%. As of March 2023, no child open to CP has been on their plan for more than 2 years.
13. During 2022/23, 4 families became CP for the 2nd time within 2 years of the previous plan ending. This has taken us just above our internal target (6%) to 6.9% but is a reduction on previous years.
14. 21.0% of the children ceasing to be in our care did so due to being returned home to a parent, 39.0% had a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) / Child Arrangement Order (CAO) granted to a relative and 21.0% turned 18 years and progressed to a care leaver. 17.0% of the children ceasing care were adopted.
15. 83.3% of children due a review health assessment by March 2023 have had one completed. 47.7% of Children in Care, that were due a dental check assessment by March 2023 have had one completed. The percentage of children who have refused their medical checks have decreased throughout the year, with 0.9% refusing their health review and 1.4% refusing their dental review. Although they are refusing, they are continually reminded of the benefits of having a check-up and encouraged to take part.
16. 96.3% of our care leavers aged 19-21 and 95.9% aged 22-25 were in suitable accommodation at the end of March 2023. Of those who were not in suitable accommodation, this was due to them being in custody (2 aged 19-21 and 2 aged 22-25).
17. The percentage of care leavers who were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) continues to be inline with the target of 30% at 20.4% at the end of March 2023. 13.0% young people, aged 19-21, were engaging in education (11.1% of which are in studies beyond A level) and 66.7% young people were in training or employment (29.6% in full time, 37.0% in part time).

Where do we need to improve?

18. 1,461 C&F assessments were completed in 2022/23. This is a substantial increase on previous years, with an 81.2% increase on the 806 assessments in 2021/22, 111.1% increase on the 692 assessments in 2020/21 and 53.8% increase on the 950 assessments in 2019/20, increasing our rate per 10,000 population to 645.5. This increase in C&F assessments is a result of the increase in children referred during 2022/23 which has had a negative effect on the timeliness of recording completion on the system with 69.3% of our C&F assessments being completed within timescale in 2022/23.
19. 74.4% of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC) were held within 15 working days from the strategy meeting / section 47 being initiated, excluding children who were transferred-in conference, in 2022/23. Work is ongoing to incorporate systems of process to aid the reduction in late requests for conferences.
20. 67.8% of CP visits completed within 10 working days and 90.0% of the visits were completed within 15 working days. This is a decrease when compared to 2021/22 which had similar number of visits completed with 82.9% completed within 10 working days.
21. 322 children were in care as of March 2023, 5.3% of which are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. During 2022/23 a total of 149 children came into the care of DBC, 18 of which were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, and a total of 100 children ceased to be in care.
22. 83.4% of statutory CiC visits were completed within timescale in 2022/23. This is below our internal target of 90%.
23. 13.7% of our Children in Care, as of March 2023, have had 3 or more placements within the previous 12 months, which is above our internal target (10%).
24. 58.7% of our Children in Care aged under 16 (who have been looked after for at least 2.5 years) have been in their current placement continuously for at least 2 years as of March 2023, which is below our internal target (68%).
25. 12.5% of our Children in Care have needed to be placed 20 or more miles away from home as of March 2023. This is above target of 10% but all placements have been confirmed by team managers to be appropriate for the child enabling them to have the best support either with family links or specialised care.

Recommendation

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

Chris Bell
Assistant Director Childrens Services

Background papers

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

Sharon Raine Head of Performance and Transformation: Extension 6091

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

This page is intentionally left blank



DARLINGTON
Borough Council

Children's Social Care Performance & Practice Report

Page 13

Year end 2022/23

Scrutiny

Scrutiny

Year end 2022-23 Performance Summary

Referrals: 84.1% of referrals received in 2022/23 were completed within 1 working day. We are still below the internal target of 90% completed within 1 working day however compared to 2021/22 (72.1%) and 2020/21 (77.7%) this is an improvement. This improvement is evident of the hard work the CIAT team have been doing, the team have processed 75.5% more referrals than last year. 0.8% of referrals took over 3 working days to be completed in 2022/23 which is outperforming our target of 5% and an improvement compared to 5.6% completed in 2021/22.

Re-Referrals: At year end we were in line, at 17.7%, with our internal target of having no more than 18% of the referrals being repeated within 12 months of a previous referral starting. In terms of our performance over the past 3 years, this is an increase compared with 2021/22 at 10.9% but slightly below our 2020/21 performance of 19.1%. National benchmarking data is not yet available for 2022/23 but when looking at data for 2020/21 we were performing slightly better than our statistical neighbours (20.5%), regional average (20.5%) and national average (21.5%) (LAIT 2022). The increase year on year increase is likely to relate to us receiving a much higher number of referrals.

Re-referrals are being scrutinised during weekly WRM meeting to ensure best practise and learning outcomes are shared.

Early Help: 1,650 Early Help Assessments (EHA) were started in 2022/23, 13.5% of which were initiated by external agencies. This is an increase on 2021/22 (839 EHA's) but with a decrease on the proportion of externally started EHA's (19.2%).

Missing: In 2022/23, Return Home Interviews (RHI) (excluding children from other authorities) have been offered in 94.4% (473 / 501) of the cases, 84.6% of which were offered within 72 hours and 59.1% of the children/young people engaged in their RHI. Each are a performance improvement when compared with 2021/22. Where the co-ordinator cannot engage the child or young person, discussions take place with parents, carers, teachers, or social workers to offer insight around reducing the missing episodes. Of those who went missing, 19.1% were a Child in Care accounting for 55.4% of the missing episodes.

Children & Families Assessments: 1,461 C&F assessments were completed in 2022/23. This is a substantial increase on previous years, with an 81.2% increase on the 806 assessments in 2021/22, 111.1% increase on the 692 assessments in 2020/21 and 53.8% increase on the 950 assessments in 2019/20, increasing our rate per 10,000 population to 645.5. This increase in C&F assessments is a result of the increase in children referred during 2022/23 which has had a negative effect on the timeliness of recording completion on the system with 69.3% of our C&F assessments being completed within timescale in 2022/23. Our frontline social workers are often prioritising visiting families; undertaking duty visits or supporting during a crisis; resulting in the written completion of assessments being delayed. Plans are in place and reviewed to ensure social workers given dedicated the time to catch up on outstanding admin tasks. Social workers have also been offered overtime to support in clearing any backlog they may have. In the longer-term discussions with our business support colleagues have commenced to explore how they can relieve some of the administrative pressures on social workers and their managers.

Section 47 Enquiries: 351 section 47 enquires were started in 2022/23, involving 681 individual children.

Child Protection Conference timeliness: 74.4% of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC) were held within 15 working days from the strategy meeting / section 47 being initiated, excluding children who were transferred-in conference, in 2022/23. Work is ongoing to incorporate systems of process to aid the reduction in late requests for conferences.

Child Protection Plans: 116 children were subject to a Child Protection plan (CP) as at the end of March 2023 This is a slight decrease on the 120 children who were subject to CP at the end of March 2022, but an increase on March 2021 (87) and March 2020 (85).

100.0% of CP cases were allocated to a social worker and 98.7% of the CP reviews were carried out in timescale. 2 families ceased to be subject to a CP plan after being subject to the plan for 2 or more years. This occurred at the start of the reporting year and due to no further children ceasing in this measure, our performance has reduced to 2.2%, which is outperforming the target of 5%. As of March 2023, no child open to CP has been on their plan for more than 2 years. During 2022/23, 4 families became CP for the 2nd time within 2 years of the previous plan ending. This has taken us just above our internal target (6%) to 6.9% but is a reduction on previous years.

Child Protection Statutory visits: We have continued to see a reduction in the timeliness of Child Protection statutory visits carried out during 2022/23, resulting in a yearly total of 67.8% of CP visits completed within 10 working days and 90.0% of the visits were completed within 15 working days. This is a decrease when compared with 2021/22 which had similar number of visits completed with 82.9% completed within 10 working days. The capacity of social workers to make regular visits has been impacted on during 2022/23 due to rising workloads. This has resulted in other social workers assisting in carrying out visits but has also resulted in delays in updating the system. Changes have been made to case allocation for the A&S teams based on the child's location. This aims to help reduce travel times and times away from the office, which in time will improve the performance of visit recording.

Children in Care: 322 children were in care as of March 2023, 5.3% of which are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. During 2022/23 a total of 149 children came into the care of DBC, 18 of which were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, and a total of 100 children ceased to be in care.

Children in Care Reviews: 100.0% of Children in Care (CiC) were allocated to a qualified social worker. 98.0% of the reviews have been completed within required timescales in 2022/21.

Children in Care Statutory visits: 83.4% of statutory visits for Children in Care (CiC) were completed in timescale in 2022/23. Due to rising workloads the capacity of social workers time has been impacted resulting in delayed visit recording. Changes have been made to case allocation for the A&S teams based on the child's location. This aims to help reduce travel times and times away from the office, which in time will improve the performance of visit recording.

Children in Care Placements: 13.7% of Children in Care (CiC), as of March 2023, have had 3 or more placements within the previous 12 months. 58.7% of our Children in Care aged under 16 (who have been looked after for at least 2.5 years) have been in their current placement continuously for at least 2 years. 12.5% of our Children in Care have been placed 20 or more miles away from home as of March 2023. This relates to young people who have been placed in residential care due to their disability / placed with family / or placed for adoption, and this provision is not available within 20 miles.

Initial Health Assessments: 54.5% of the children whose forms sent to Health received a health assessment by them within 20 days.

Health and Dental Reviews: 83.3% of children due a review health assessment by March 2023 have had one completed. 47.7% of Children in Care, that were due a dental check assessment by March 2023 have had one completed.

The percentage of children who have refused their medical checks have decreased throughout the year, with 0.9% refusing their health review and 1.4% refusing their dental review. Although they are refusing, they are continually reminded of the benefits of having a check-up and encouraged to take part.

Care Leavers: 96.3% of our care leavers aged 19-21 and 95.9% aged 22-25 were in suitable accommodation at the end of March 2023. Of those who were not in suitable accommodation, this was due to them being in custody (2 aged 19-21 and 2 aged 22-25). The percentage of care leavers who were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) continues to be positively below the target set of 30% at 20.4% at the end of March 2023. 13.0% young people, aged 19-21, were engaging in education (11.1% of which are in studies beyond A level) and 66.7% young people were in training or employment (29.6% in full time, 37.0% in part time).

REFERRALS: TIMELINESS

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

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

During 2022/23, we have seen a steady improvement in the timeliness of referrals being completed. We are still below the internal target of 90% of referrals completed within 1 working day at 84.1% however compared with 2021/22 (72.1%) and 2020/21 (77.7%) this is an improvement.

This improvement is evident of the hard work the CIAT team have been doing also considering they have processed 75.5% more referrals than last year.

0.8% of referrals took over 3 working days to be completed in 2022/23 which is exceeding our target of 5% and an improvement compared with 5.6% completed in 2021/22.

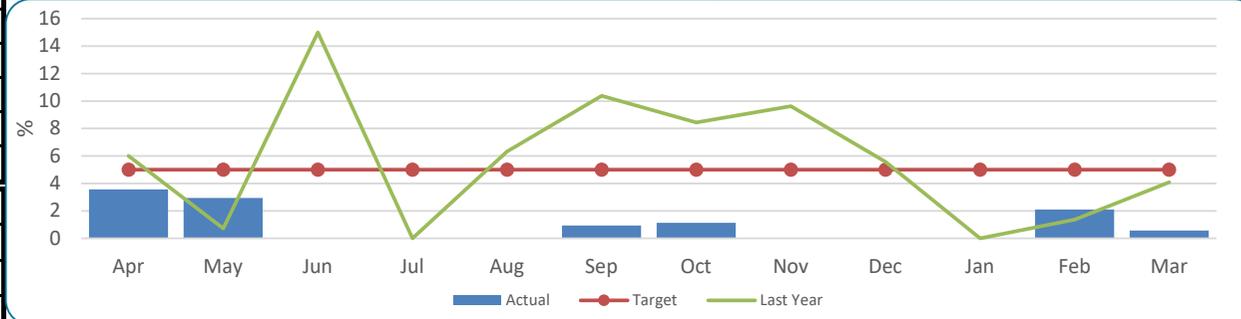
Page 17

		CSC 022	CSC 026
		Monthly % of referrals completed within 1 working day.	Monthly % of referrals completed in over 3 working days.
In Month Performance	Target	90%	5%
	Apr-22	71.4	3.6
	May-22	77.5	2.9
	Jun-22	86.2	
	Jul-22	81.1	
	Aug-22	86.3	
	Sep-22	87.0	0.9
	Oct-22	81.9	1.1
	Nov-22	91.4	
	Dec-22	85.1	
	Jan-23	84.7	
	Feb-23	84.6	2.1
	Mar-23	86.8	0.6
Annual Trend	2019/20	86.8	1.6
	2020/21	77.7	4.7
	2021/22	72.1	5.6
	2022/23	84.1	0.8

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



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



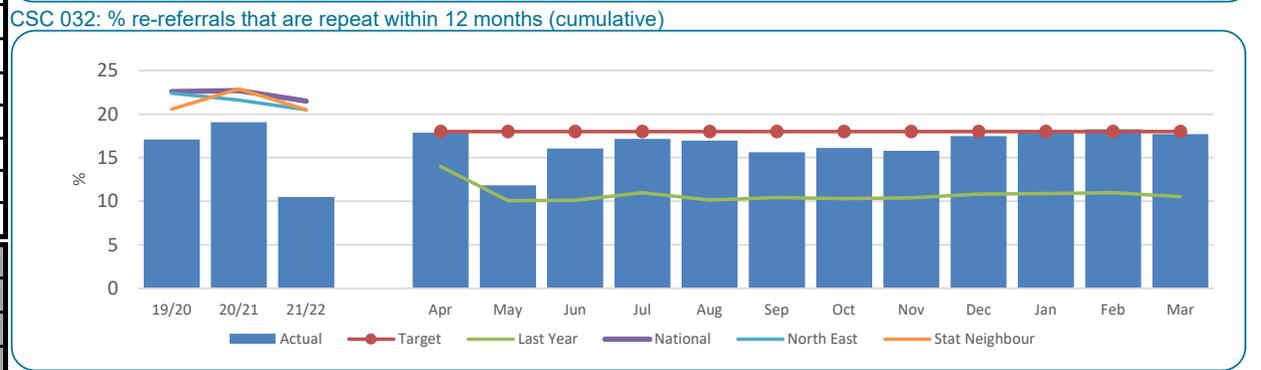
REFERRALS: RE-REFERRALS

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

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS At year end we were in line, at 17.7%, with our internal target of having no more than 18% of the referrals being repeated within 12 months of a previous referral starting. In terms of our performance over the past 3 years, this is an increase compared with 2021/22 at 10.9% but slightly below our 2020/21 performance of 19.1%. National benchmarking data is not yet available for 2022/23 but when looking at data for 20/21 we were performing slightly better than our statistical neighbours (20.5%), regional average (20.5%) and national average (21.5%) (LAIT 2022). The increase year on year increase is likely to relate to us receiving a much higher number of referrals.
Re-referrals are being scrutinised during weekly WRM meeting to ensure best practise and learning outcomes are shared.

Page 18

		CSC 034	CSC 032	
		Monthly number of re-referrals that are repeat within 12 months	% re-referrals that are repeat within 12 months (cumulative)	% of referrals that are re-referrals (monthly)
In Month Performance	Target		18%	
	Apr-22	15	17.9	17.9
	May-22	7	11.8	6.9
	Jun-22	30	16.1	21.7
	Jul-22	29	17.2	19.6
	Aug-22	20	17.0	16.1
	Sep-22	9	15.6	8.3
	Oct-22	32	16.1	18.1
	Nov-22	19	15.8	13.7
	Dec-22	42	17.5	29.8
	Jan-23	30	18.0	21.9
	Feb-23	30	18.3	21.0
	Mar-23	23	17.7	13.2
Annual Trend	2019/20	171	17.1	
	2020/21	143	19.1	
	2021/22	106	10.5	
	2022/23	286	17.7	



EARLY HELP ASSESSMENTS: STARTED

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

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS 1,650 Early Help Assessments (EHA) were started in 2022/23, 13.5% of which were initiated by external agencies. This is an increase from 2021/22 (839 EHA's) but with a decrease on the proportion of externally started EHA's (19.2%).

	CSC 002		CSC 001		
	Target	Total number of individual EHA's started in month (inc. external)	Number and percentage of the EHA's initiated by external agencies per month	TBC	Number of individual EHA's started; year to date (inc. external)
In Month Performance	Apr-22	116	24 (20.7%)	116	
	May-22	147	20 (13.6%)	263	
	Jun-22	126	22 (17.5%)	389	
	Jul-22	147	29 (19.7%)	536	
	Aug-22	101	2 (2.0%)	637	
	Sep-22	115	10 (8.7%)	752	
	Oct-22	134	16 (11.9%)	886	
	Nov-22	160	23 (14.4%)	1,046	
	Dec-22	162	17 (10.5%)	1,208	
	Jan-23	154	19 (12.3%)	1,362	
	Feb-23	126	21 (16.7%)	1,488	
	Mar-23	162	20 (12.3%)	1,650	
Annual Trend	2019/20	893	265 (29.7%)	893	
	2020/21	623	127 (20.4%)	623	
	2021/22	839	161 (19.2%)	839	
	2022/23	1,650	223 (13.5%)	1,650	



MISSING: EPISODES

DEFINITION	The number of episodes of children going missing in Darlington, including Children in Care, Children in Care with another authority and children who are not currently open to Social Care. The percentage of Return Home Interviews (RHI) completed within 72 hours and the level of engagement by the child.
-------------------	--

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS	<p>The total number of missing episodes in 2022/23 was 691 episodes involving 162 individual children and young people. This is a reduction on the number of children reported missing compared with 2021/22 (from 174 individual children and young people), however the frequency of episodes has increased (from 582 episodes). Excluding children open to another LA this equates to 555 missing episodes involving 132 children and young people.</p> <p>Our CiC young people continue to dominate the number of missing episodes.</p> <p>78.6% of the missing episodes had a duration of less than 12 hours from being reported to the child being located and returned home. 2.9% of the episodes lasted over 72 hours.</p> <p>In 2022/23, Return Home Interviews (RHI) (excluding children from other authorities) have been offered in 94.4% (473 / 501) of the cases, 84.6% of which were offered within 72 hours and 59.1% of the children/young people engaged in their RHI. Each are a performance improvement when compared with 2021/22.</p>
-----------------------------	---

Page 20

		CSC 215		CSC 246			
		Total number of missing episodes and children involved in month		Missing - Children in Care with DBC		Of which are in a placement more than 20 miles from home	
In Month Performance		Episode	Child	Episode	Child	Episode	Child
	Apr-22	57	27	33	6		
	May-22	62	31	29	9		
	Jun-22	86	38	45	10	1	1
	Jul-22	80	32	47	12		
	Aug-22	96	29	53	11		
	Sep-22	69	27	37	6		
	Oct-22	52	26	32	10	1	1
	Nov-22	45	29	20	7		
	Dec-22	28	15	16	5		
	Jan-23	44	19	29	6		
	Feb-23	38	22	22	7		
Mar-23	34	19	20	8			
Annual Trend	2019/20	351	136	129	24	32	10
	2020/21	370	152	107	30	15	4
	2021/22	582	174	253	31	22	4
	2022/23	691	162	383	31	2	2

ASSESSMENTS

DEFINITION Monthly and cumulative number of Children & Families (C&F) assessments completed for a child.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS 1,461 children had a C&F assessment completed in 2022/23. This is a substantial increase on previous years, with an 81.2% increase on the 806 assessments completed in 2021/22, 111.1% on the 692 assessments in 2020/21 and 53.8% on the 950 in 2019/20, increasing our rate per 10,000 population to 645.5.

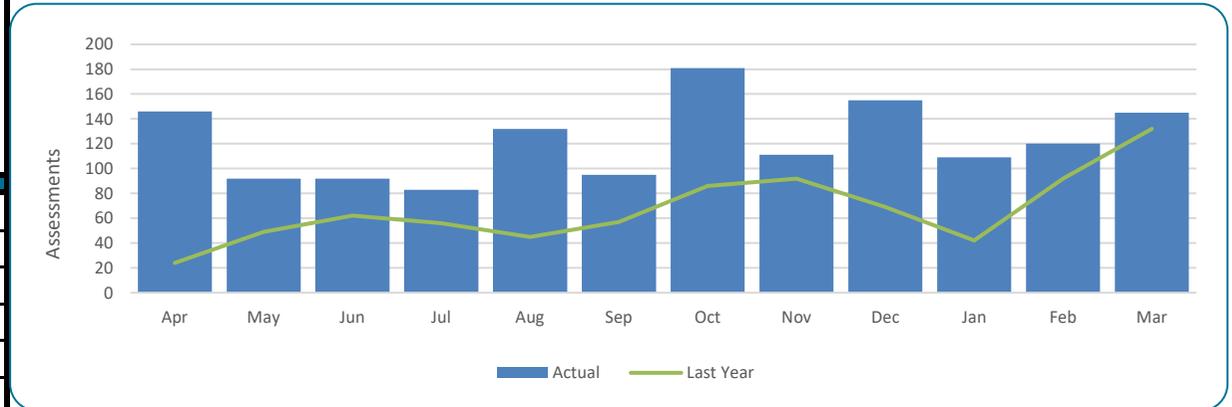
This increase in C&F assessments is a result of the increase in children referred in 2022/23.

Page 21

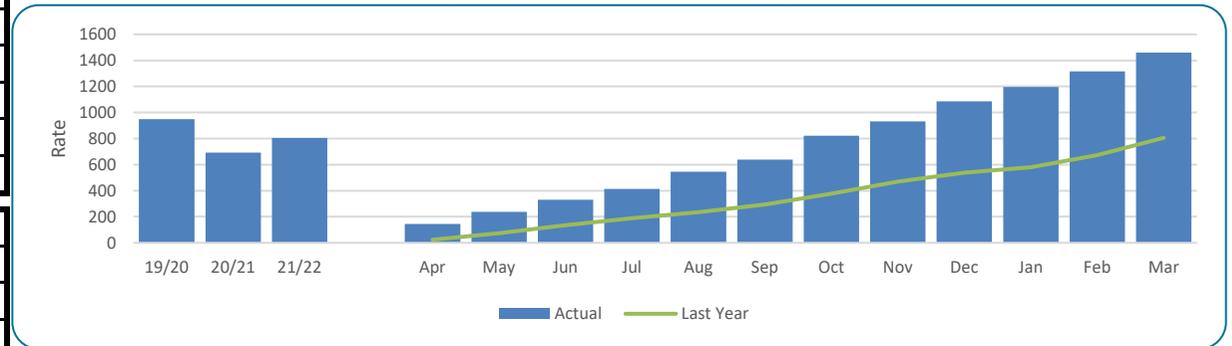
CSC 036 CSC 035

		CSC 036 Number of C&F assessments completed year to date	CSC 035 Rate of C&F assessments completed per 10,000 of the 0-17 population.
In Month Performance	Apr-22	146	64.5
	May-22	238	102.5
	Jun-22	330	145.8
	Jul-22	413	182.5
	Aug-22	545	240.8
	Sep-22	640	282.8
	Oct-22	821	362.7
	Nov-22	932	411.8
	Dec-22	1,087	480.3
	Jan-23	1,196	528.4
	Feb-23	1,316	581.5
	Mar-23	1,461	645.5
Annual Trend	2019/20	950	422.7
	2020/21	692	308.2
	2021/22	806	356.1
	2022/23	1,461	645.5

CSC 037: Monthly number of C&F assessments completed



CSC 035: Rate of C&F assessments completed per 10,000 of the 0-17 population.



ASSESSMENTS: TIMELINESS

DEFINITION

Of those assessments completed in a period, the percentage completed within 45 working days. Day zero is the first working day on or after the start date of the referral, or strategy discussion decided to initiate S47 enquiries, or where new information indicates that an assessment should be undertaken. The end date is the first working day on or after the recorded date the Team Manager closes the single assessment.

A process indicator as a proxy measure for improved child safety and how quickly services can respond when a child is thought to be at risk of serious harm. Local authorities should investigate and address concerns in a timely and efficient way.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

69.3% (1,013 / 1,461) of our C&F assessments were completed within timescale in 2022/23. This is below our 90% internal target and when compared with March 2022 (84.5%), which was comparable to our statistical neighbour (82.2%), regional (83.6%) and the national average (84.5%) (LAIT 2022). However, it is of note that there was a smaller number of assessments completed in the year ending March 2022 (806).

Page 22

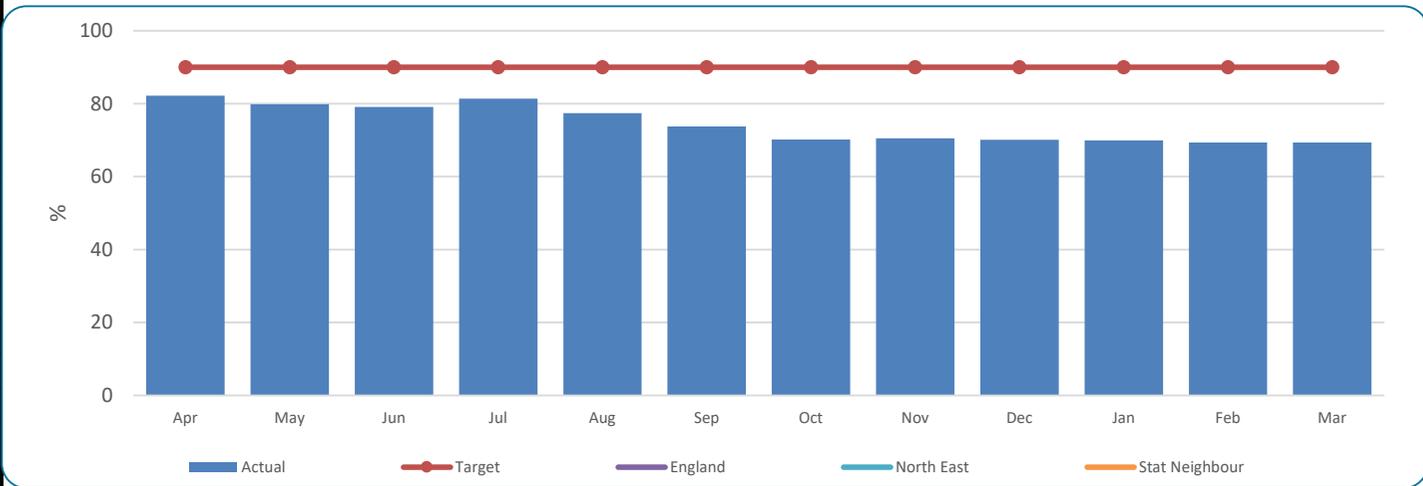
CSC 038

% C&F Assessments completed within 45 working days (year to date)

% C&F Assessments completed within 45 working days (year to date)

In Month Performance	Target	90%
	Apr-22	82.2
	May-22	79.8
	Jun-22	79.1
	Jul-22	81.4
	Aug-22	77.4
	Sep-22	73.8
	Oct-22	70.2
	Nov-22	70.5
	Dec-22	70.1
	Jan-23	70.0
	Feb-23	69.4
	Mar-23	69.3

Annual Trend	2019/20	90.9
	2020/21	86.4
	2021/22	84.5
	2022/23	69.3



SECTION 47 ENQUIRES: STARTED

DEFINITION Number of children who have had a section 47 enquiries started monthly and year to date and the actual number of enquires started.

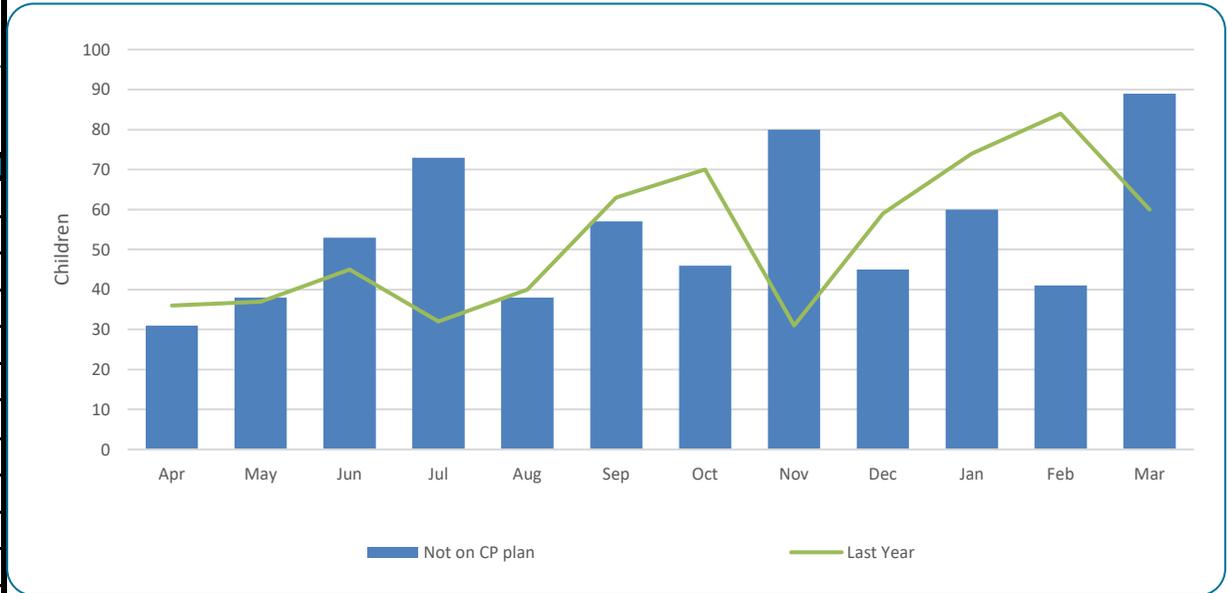
PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS 351 section 47 enquires were started in 2022/23, involving 681 individual children.
 Our rate of enquires per 10,000 population was 300.9 at the end of 2022/23. Although an increase on the previous year, it is not a corresponding increase when compared with strategies held, this is due to the increase in no further action outcome on some strategies in 2022/23.

Page 23

CSC 166 CSC 164

		Number of children who had a section 47 enquiry	Rate of section 47 enquiries started per 10,000 of the 017 population (Cumulative)
In Month Performance	Apr-22	31	13.7
	May-22	38	30.5
	Jun-22	55	54.8
	Jul-22	75	87.9
	Aug-22	44	107.4
	Sep-22	59	133.4
	Oct-22	51	156.0
	Nov-22	85	193.5
	Dec-22	45	213.4
	Jan-23	66	242.6
	Feb-23	41	260.7
	Mar-23	91	300.9
Annual Trend	2019/20	486	214.4
	2020/21	358	158.2
	2021/22	633	279.7
	2022/23	681	300.9

Number of children; showing the total including and excluding those already on CPP



INITIAL CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCES: TIMELINESS

DEFINITION Of those Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) held within the period (excluding transfer ins), the percentage recorded in the Safeguarding Unit workbook where Child Protection strategy meeting / section 47 enquiry to ICPC are within 15 days (CPP). This provides an indication of how quickly the safety of the child is considered by a multi-agency meeting.

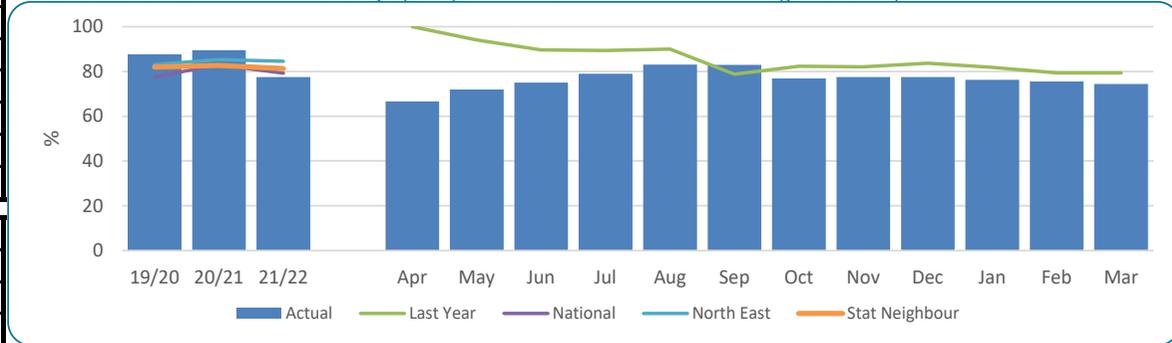
PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS 74.4% of the children (who were not transferred in) had their Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC) within timescale in 2022/23. This is a decrease on the conference timeliness compared with the past 3 years (77.5% in 2021/22, 89.5% in 2020/21 and 87.7% in 2019/20). Work continues to find a workable solution to timeliness of conference requests.

	Target	CSC 178		CSC 176	
		% ICPC's held within 15 days (CPP). Excludes transfer-in conferences (monthly).	% ICPC's held within 15 days (CPP). Excludes transfer-in conferences (year to date).	% ICPC's held within 15 days (CPP). Excludes transfer-in conferences (year to date).	95%
In Month Performance	Apr-22	14 / 21	66.7	14 / 21	66.7
	May-22	4 / 4	100.0	18 / 25	72.0
	Jun-22	3 / 3	100.0	21 / 28	75.0
	Jul-22	9 / 10	90.0	30 / 38	79.0
	Aug-22	24 / 27	88.9	54 / 65	83.1
	Sep-22	9 / 11	81.8	63 / 76	82.9
	Oct-22	10 / 19	52.6	73 / 95	76.8
	Nov-22	3 / 3	100.0	76 / 98	77.6
	Dec-22	10 / 13	76.9	86 / 111	77.5
	Jan-23	4 / 7	57.1	90 / 118	76.3
	Feb-23	12 / 17	70.6	102 / 135	75.6
	Mar-23	14 / 21	66.7	116 / 156	74.4
Annual Trend	2019/20	150 / 171	87.7	150 / 171	87.7
	2020/21	112 / 126	89.5	112 / 126	89.5
	2021/22	135 / 174	77.5	135 / 174	77.5
	2022/23	116 / 156	74.4	116 / 156	74.4

CSC 178: % ICPC's held within 15 days (CPP). Excludes transfer-in conferences (monthly).



CSC 176: % ICPC's held within 15 days (CPP). Excludes transfer-in conferences (year to date).



CHILD PROTECTION PLANS

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

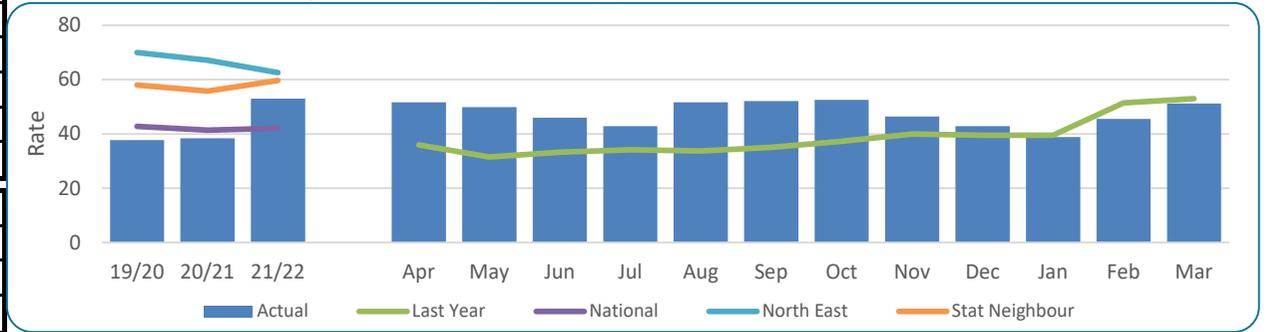
PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS	<p>116 children were subject to a Child Protection plan (CP) as at the end of March 2023. This is a slight decrease on the 120 children who were subject to CP at the end of March 2022, but an increase on March 2021 (87) and March 2020 (85).</p> <p>Our rate of CP plans per 10,000 was 51.3 at the end of March 2023, there has been no significant change since March 2022 looking back at the latest benchmarking available for this period our rate was (53.0) which was above the national rate (42.1) and below our statistical neighbour (59.7) and regional (62.6) rates (LAIT 2022).</p>
-----------------------------	---

		CSC 182	CSC 181
		Number of children subject to a CP plan	Rate of children subject to a CP Plan per 10,000 population
In Month Performance	Apr-22	117	51.7
	May-22	113	49.9
	Jun-22	104	46.0
	Jul-22	97	42.9
	Aug-22	117	51.7
	Sep-22	118	52.1
	Oct-22	119	52.6
	Nov-22	105	46.4
	Dec-22	97	42.9
	Jan-23	88	38.9
	Feb-23	103	45.5
	Mar-23	116	51.3
Annual Trend	2019/20	85	37.7
	2020/21	87	38.4
	2021/22	120	53.0
	2022/23	116	51.3

CSC 182: Number of children subject to a CP plan



CSC 181: Rate of children subject to a CP Plan per 10,000 population



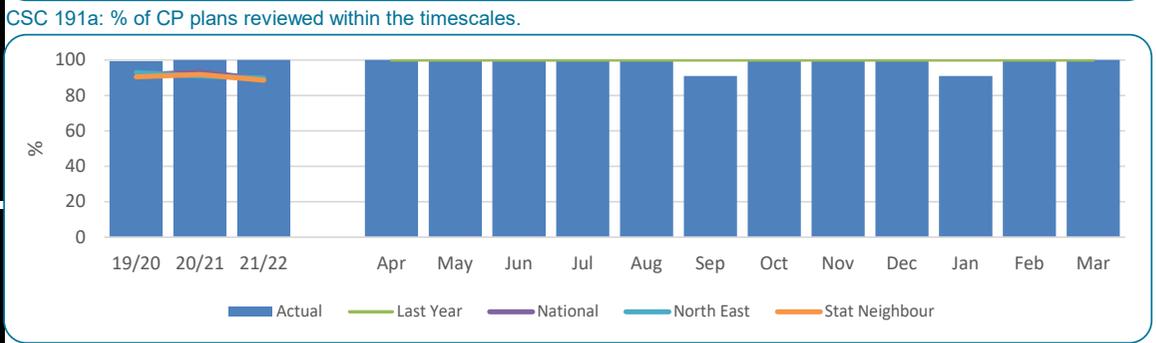
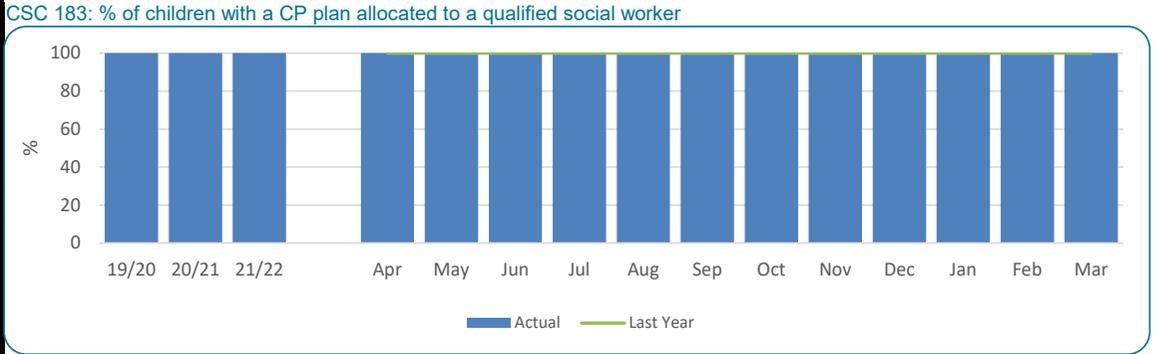
CHILD PROTECTION PLANS: ALLOCATION & REVIEWS

DEFINITION Reviews are a key element in delivering CP Plans and effective reviews should ensure the provision of good quality interventions. This indicator is a proxy for the measurement of effectiveness of the interventions provided to children subject to a CP plan. "Working Together to Safeguard Children" guidance requires that the first review should be within 3 months of their ICPC and thereafter at intervals of no more than 6 months.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS
 100% of Child Protection Cases were allocated to a qualified social worker.
 98.7% (153 / 155) of Child Protection reviews have been completed within the required timescales.

Page 26

		CSC 183	CSC 191a	
		% of children with a CP plan allocated to a qualified social worker	CP plan review meetings held in timescale during the month	% of CP plans reviewed within the timescales.
In Month Performance	Target	100		100
	Apr-22	100.0	10 / 10	100.0
	May-22	100.0	13 / 13	100.0
	Jun-22	100.0	15 / 15	100.0
	Jul-22	100.0	20 / 20	100.0
	Aug-22	100.0	7 / 7	100.0
	Sep-22	100.0	10 / 11	90.9
	Oct-22	100.0	15 / 15	100.0
	Nov-22	100.0	15 / 15	100.0
	Dec-22	100.0	17 / 17	100.0
	Jan-23	100.0	10 / 11	90.9
	Feb-23	100.0	10 / 10	100.0
	Mar-23	100.0	11 / 11	100.0
Annual Trend	2019/20	100.0	170 / 171	99.4
	2020/21	100.0	138 / 138	100.0
	2021/22	100.0	159 / 159	100.0
	2022/23	100.0	153 / 155	98.7



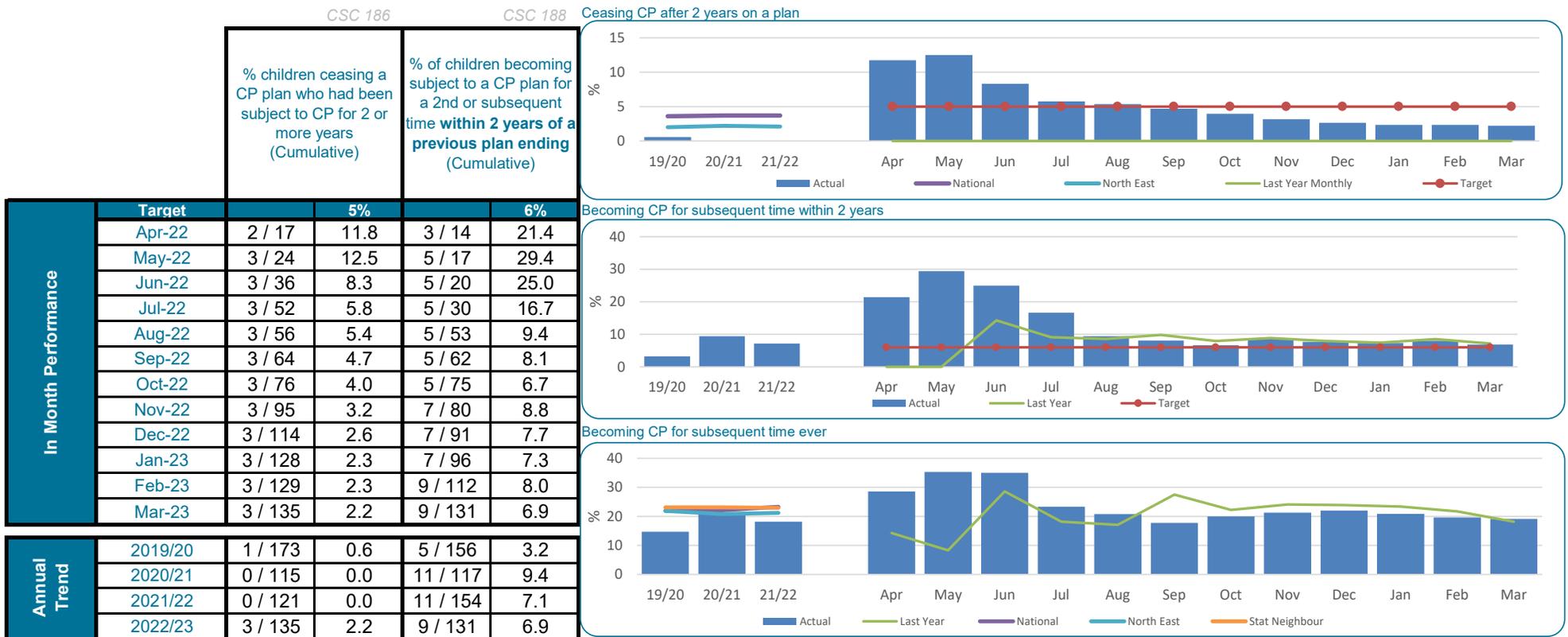
CHILD PROTECTION PLAN: TIME PERIODS

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

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS 2 families ceased to be subject to a CP plan after being subject to the plan for 2 or more years. This occurred at the start of the reporting year and due to no further children ceasing in this measure, our performance has reduced to 2.2%, which is outperforming the target of 5%. As of March 2023, no child open to CP has been on their plan for more than 2 years.

During 2022/23, 4 families became CP for the 2nd time within 2 years of the previous plan ending. This has taken us just above our internal target (6%) to 6.9%, but is a reduction on previous years.

Page 27



CHILD PROTECTION: STATUTORY VISITS

DEFINITION

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

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

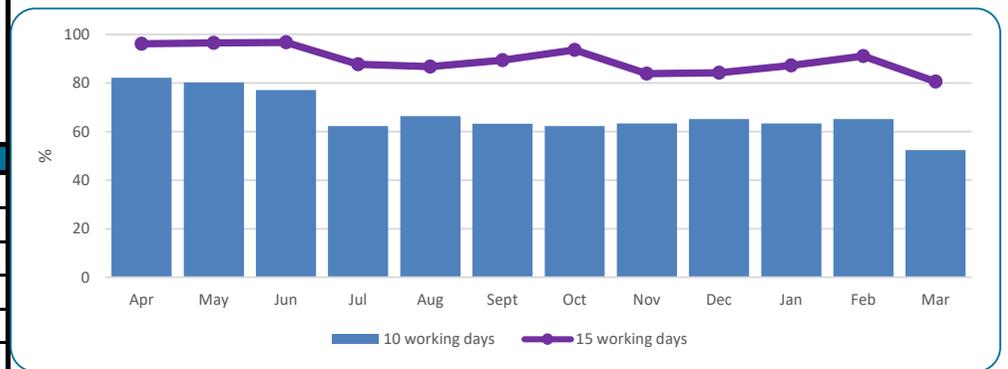
We have continued to see a reduction in the timeliness of Child Protection statutory visits carried out during 2022/23, resulting in a yearly total of 67.8% of CP visits completed within 10 working days. This is a decrease when compared to 2021/22 which had similar number of visits completed with 82.9% completed within 10 working days. 90.0% of the visits were completed within 15 working days.

CSC 252a

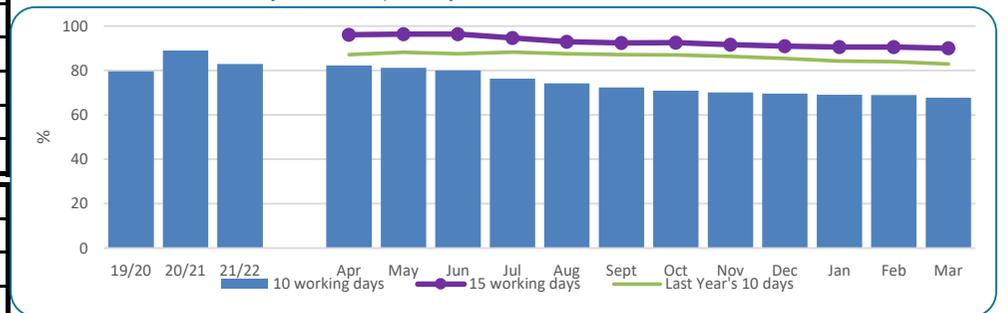
CSC 252b

	Target	CSC 252a		CSC 252b	
		% CP visits completed within 10 working days within the month	% CP visits completed within 15 working days within the month	% CP visits completed within 10 working days year to date (cumulative)	% CP visits completed within 15 working days year to date (cumulative)
In Month Performance					
	90	90	90	90	
Apr-22	82.2	96.1	82.2	96.1	
May-22	80.2	96.5	81.2	96.3	
Jun-22	77.1	96.7	80.0	96.4	
Jul-22	62.2	87.8	76.3	94.6	
Aug-22	66.4	86.7	74.2	93.0	
Sep-22	63.3	89.4	72.3	92.4	
Oct-22	62.3	93.6	70.9	92.5	
Nov-22	63.4	83.9	70.1	91.6	
Dec-22	65.2	84.2	69.6	90.9	
Jan-23	63.3	87.2	69.1	90.6	
Feb-23	65.2	91.2	68.9	90.6	
Mar-23	52.4	80.6	67.8	90.0	
Annual Trend					
2019/20	79.6	92.0	79.6	93.8	
2020/21	89.0	98.4	89.0	98.4	
2021/22	82.9	96.8	82.9	96.8	
2022/23	52.4	80.6	67.8	90.0	

% Child Protection statutory visits completed within the month



% Child Protection statutory visits completed year to date



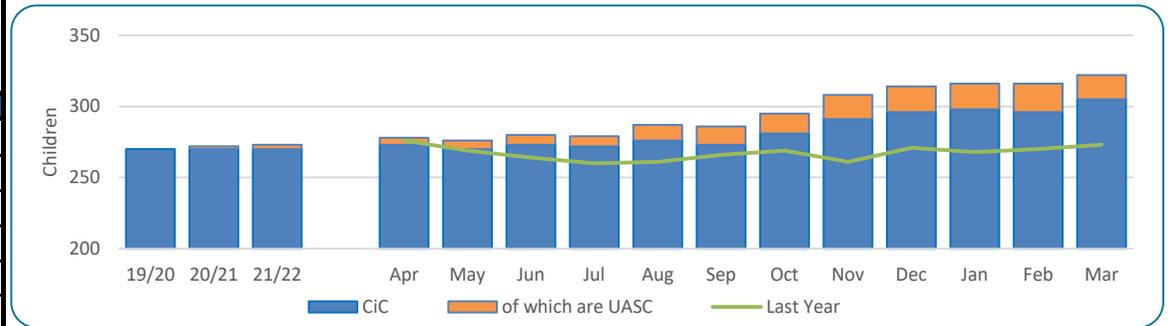
CHILDREN IN CARE

DEFINITION Number of Children in Care (CiC) at the end of each month and of which are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child (UASC).

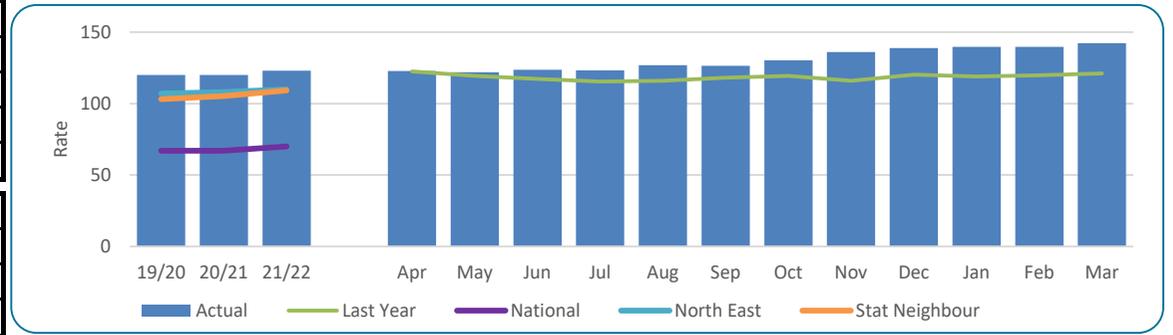
PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS 322 children were in care as at March 2023, 5.3% of which are Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC).
 This equates to 305 children, excluding UASC, that were in our care at the end of March 2023, a 12.9% increase from around 270 which was seen at the end of the reporting years 2021/22, 2020/21 and 2019/20.

		CSC 201	CSC 200	
		Total number of Children in Care	Of which are identified as a UASC	Rate of CiC per 10,000 population
In Month Performance	Target			95
	Apr-22	278	5	122.8
	May-22	276	6	122.0
	Jun-22	280	7	123.7
	Jul-22	279	7	123.3
	Aug-22	287	11	126.8
	Sep-22	286	13	126.4
	Oct-22	295	14	130.3
	Nov-22	308	17	136.1
	Dec-22	314	18	138.7
	Jan-23	316	18	139.6
	Feb-23	316	20	139.6
	Mar-23	322	17	142.3
Annual Trend	2019/20	270		120.0
	2020/21	272	2	120.0
	2021/22	273	3	123.0
	2022/23	322	17	142.3

CSC 201: Total number of Children in Care



CSC 200: Rate of CiC per 10,000 population



CHILDREN IN CARE: COMING INTO CARE

DEFINITION Number of children coming into the care of the local authority during the month and year to date and where they are an unaccompanied asylum seeking child (UASC). This is further broken down to show their first placement type.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

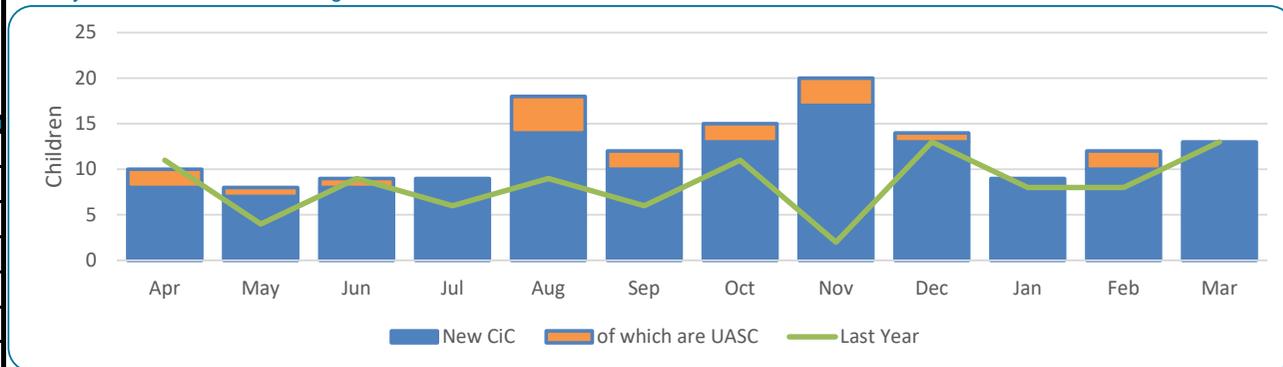
131 children from 86 families came into care in 2022/23, a further 18 young people came, came into care after accepted by the Home Office as UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child).

Excluding the UASC, this is an increase when compared with 2021/22, and with a similar conversion of families (98 children over 68 families in 2021/22 to 126 children over 86 families in 2022/23).

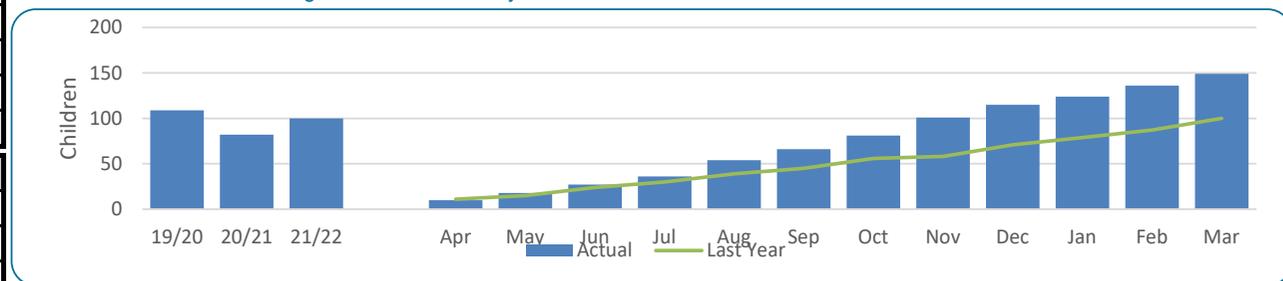
Page 30

		CSC 209	CSC 208b	
		Monthly number of children coming into care	Cumulative number of children coming into care	of which are UASC
In Month Performance	Apr-22	10	10	2
	May-22	8	18	1
	Jun-22	9	27	1
	Jul-22	9	36	
	Aug-22	18	54	4
	Sep-22	12	66	2
	Oct-22	15	81	2
	Nov-22	20	101	3
	Dec-22	14	115	1
	Jan-23	9	124	
	Feb-23	12	136	2
	Mar-23	13	149	
Annual Trend	2019/20	109	109	
	2020/21	82	82	2
	2021/22	100	100	2
	2022/23	149	149	18

Monthly number of children coming into care



Total number of children coming into care within the year



CHILDREN IN CARE: CEASING CARE

DEFINITION	Number of children ceasing to be a Child in Care during each month and year to date and their destination when they ceased being in care. This could be due to returning home to parent or other person with no PR (planned and unplanned), having a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) / Child Arrangement Order (CAO) granted by the courts to a carer, adoption or turning 18 years old and becoming a care leaver and supported by a personal advisor. Other reasons why a child could cease care could be due to receiving a custodial sentence or moving out of the area and transferring to a different local authority.
-------------------	---

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS	<p>100 children and young people, over 79 families, ceased to be in care in 2022/23. This is a small increase in the number of children who ceased to be in care in 2021/22 (99) and 2020/21 (80), and in line with pre Covid numbers in 2019/20 (102).</p> <p>Of the children and young people who did cease CiC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 39.0% had a Special Guardianship Order / Child Arrangement Order granted to a relative • 21.0% returned home to their parent(s) • 21.0% turned 18yrs and became a care leaver • 17.0% were adopted • 2.0% ceased for another reason. <p>Comparing to 2021/22, we have seen an increase in children ceasing care to a relative, with a corresponding decrease in their return home to a parent.</p>
-----------------------------	---

Page 31

		CSC 212	CSC 211
		Monthly number of children ceasing care	Cumulative number of children ceasing care
In Month Performance	Apr-22	5	5
	May-22	10	15
	Jun-22	5	20
	Jul-22	10	30
	Aug-22	10	40
	Sep-22	13	53
	Oct-22	6	59
	Nov-22	7	66
	Dec-22	8	74
	Jan-23	7	81
	Feb-23	12	93
	Mar-23	7	100
Annual Trend	2019/20	102	102
	2020/21	80	80
	2021/22	99	99
	2022/23	100	100

CSC 212: Monthly number of children ceasing care



CHILDREN IN CARE: ALLOCATION & REVIEWS

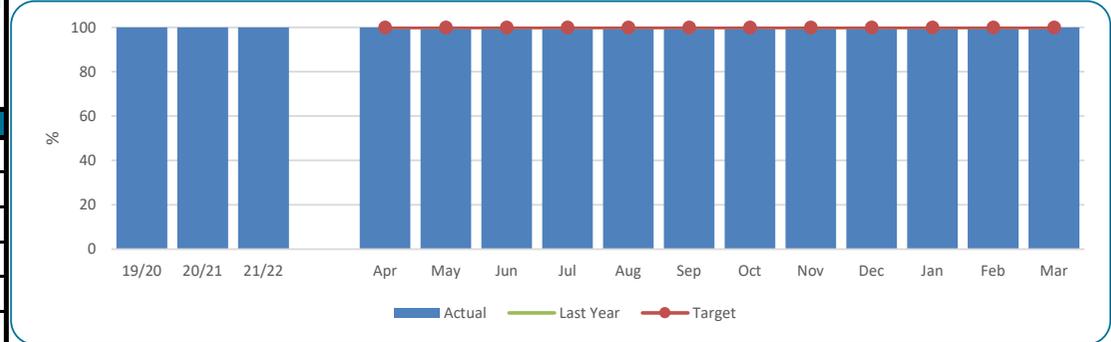
DEFINITION
 The percentage of Children in Care (CiC) which should have been reviewed during the year ending 31 March that were reviewed on time and the percentage of Children in Care that were allocated to a qualified social worker at the end of the month. The purpose of the review is to consider the plan for the child's welfare, to monitor the progress of the plan and amend it as necessary in light of changed information and circumstances. The statutory intervals are within 20 working days of placement, then within 3 months and 6 monthly thereafter, but reviews may be rescheduled or held inside these intervals if there are significant changes to the child's care plan.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS
 100% of Children in Care (CiC) are allocated to a qualified social worker and 98.0% of the reviews were completed within required timescales during 2022/23.

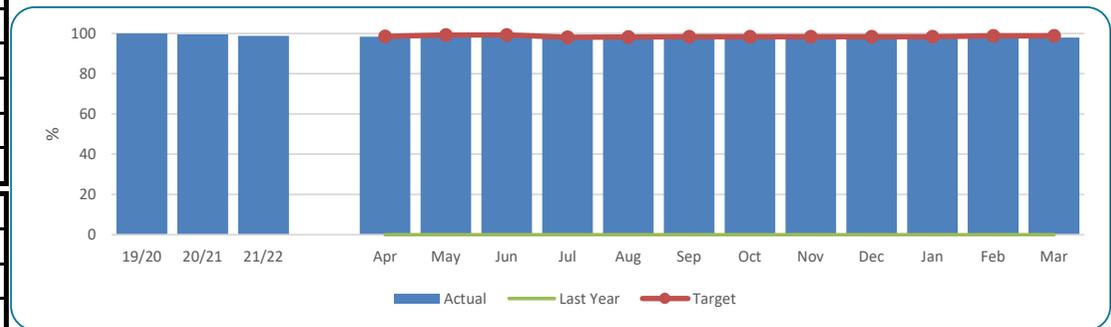
Page 32

		CSC 227	CSC 218		
		% Children in Care allocated to a qualified social worker	% of Children whose reviews had been completed within required timescales (as at month end)		
In Month Performance	Target	100	Num	%	
		Apr-22	100.0	64 / 65	98.5
		May-22	100.0	113 / 114	99.1
		Jun-22	100.0	161 / 163	98.8
		Jul-22	100.0	204 / 206	99.0
		Aug-22	100.0	229 / 232	98.7
		Sep-22	100.0	263 / 266	98.9
		Oct-22	100.0	266 / 269	98.9
		Nov-22	100.0	262 / 265	98.9
		Dec-22	100.0	262 / 267	98.1
		Jan-23	100.0	267 / 273	97.8
		Feb-23	100.0	291 / 297	98.0
	Mar-23	100.0	297 / 303	98.0	
Annual Trend	2019/20	100.0	251 / 251	100.0	
	2020/21	100.0	249 / 250	99.6	
	2021/22	100.0	243 / 246	98.8	
	2022/23	100.0	297 / 303	98.0	

CSC 227: % Children in Care allocated to a qualified social worker



CSC 218:



CHILDREN IN CARE: STATUTORY VISITS

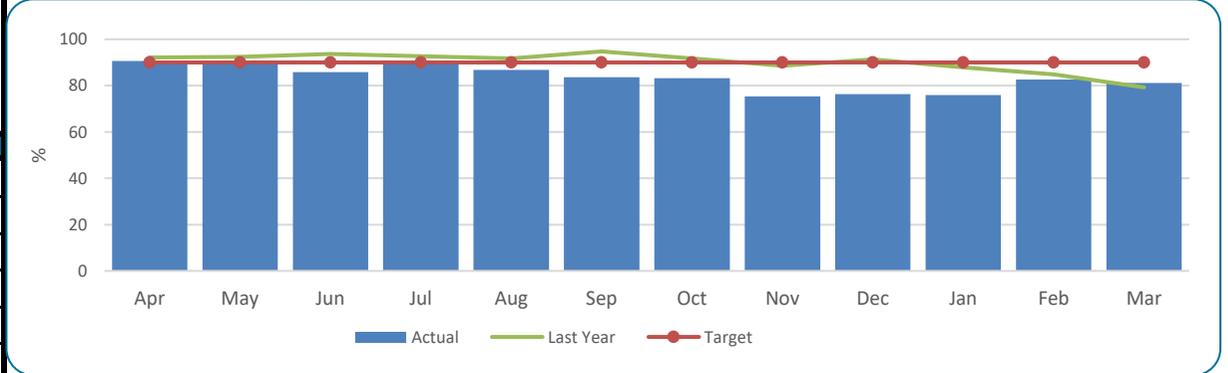
DEFINITION Percentage of Children in Care (CiC) who had all statutory visits completed within required timescales each month and year to date.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS 83.4% of statutory visits for Children in Care (CiC) were completed in timescale in 2022/23. This is a decrease when compared with previous years (2021/22 90.1%, 2020/21 93.1% and 2019/20 89.0%) and remains below our internal target (90%).

Page 33

		CSC 260a	CSC 260b
		% CiC visits completed in timescale within the month	% CiC visits completed in timescale year to date
In Month Performance	Target	90	90
	Apr-22	90.6	90.6
	May-22	89.8	90.2
	Jun-22	85.8	88.8
	Jul-22	89.8	89.0
	Aug-22	86.8	88.5
	Sep-22	83.6	87.6
	Oct-22	83.2	87.0
	Nov-22	75.4	85.5
	Dec-22	76.3	84.5
	Jan-23	75.9	83.6
	Feb-23	82.7	83.5
	Mar-23	81.2	83.4
Annual Trend	2019/20	89.0	89.0
	2020/21	93.1	93.1
	2021/22	90.1	90.1
	2022/23	83.4	83.4

CSC 260a: % CiC visits completed in timescale within the month



CSC 260b: % CiC visits completed in timescale year to date

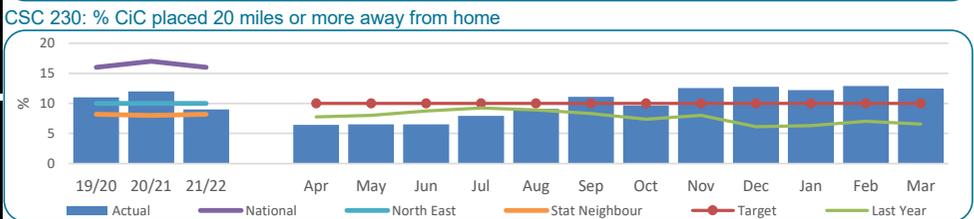
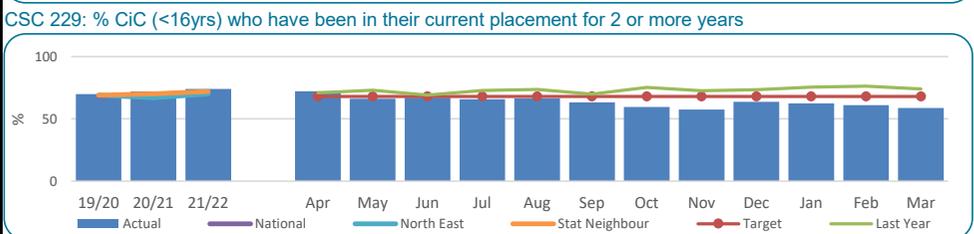
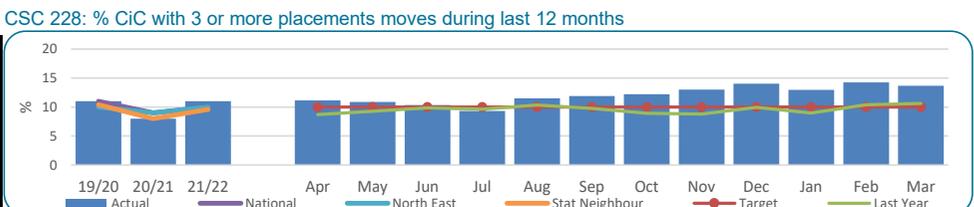


CHILDREN IN CARE: PLACEMENTS

DEFINITION
 Of those Children in Care (CiC) at the point in time (excluding series of short-term placements), the percentage that had 3 or more separate placements in the previous 12 months; who (under the age of 16 years) had been in their current placement for 2 or more years. and who were placed more than 20 miles away from their home address. Proper assessment and an adequate choice of placements to meet the varied needs of different children are essential if appropriate stable placements are to be made. Inappropriate placements often break down and lead to frequent moves. Nevertheless, the circumstances of some individual children will require 3 or more separate placements during a year if they and others are to be kept safe.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS
 13.7% of our Children in Care, as of March 2023, have had 3 or more placements within the previous 12 months. This is above our internal target (10.0%), Looking at the most recent benchmarking available at the end of March 2022 (11.0%) of our children in care with 3 or more placements was comparable to our statistical neighbour (9.6%), regional (10.0%) and the national average (10.0%) (LAIT 2022).
 Currently, 58.7% of our Children in Care aged under 16 (who have been looked after for at least 2.5 years) have been in their current placement continuously for at least 2 years. Performance on this indicator is below our internal target of 68% and has declined since with March 2022 when it was at 74.0%. Benchmarking data is not yet published for 2022/23 however when comparing data from 20/21 our performance of 74% at that time was comparable with our statistical neighbour (72.0%), regional (70.0%) and the national average (74.0%) (LAIT 2022). However, it is of note that there was a smaller cohort of children in March 2022 (119).
 12.5% of our Children in Care have been placed 20 or more miles away from home as of March 2023. This is above our internal target of 10% and when looking at the available benchmarking data from March 2022 (9.0%) this was comparable to our statistical neighbour (8.2%), and regional (10.0%) but below the national average (16.0%) (LAIT 2022). All these placements have been confirmed by team managers to be appropriate for the child enabling them to have the best support either with family links or specialised care.

	CSC 228	CSC 229	CSC 230	
	% CiC with 3 or more placements moves during last 12 months	% CiC (<16yrs) who have been in their current placement for 2 or more years	% CiC placed 20 miles or more away from home	
In Month Performance	Target	10%	68%	10%
	Apr-22	11.2	72.3	6.4
	May-22	10.9	66.1	6.5
	Jun-22	10.4	67.0	6.5
	Jul-22	9.3	65.8	7.9
	Aug-22	11.5	66.4	9.1
	Sep-22	11.9	63.3	11.1
	Oct-22	12.2	59.5	9.6
	Nov-22	13.0	57.6	12.5
	Dec-22	14.0	63.8	12.8
	Jan-23	13.0	62.4	12.2
	Feb-23	14.2	61.1	12.9
Mar-23	13.7	58.7	12.5	
Annual Trend	2019/20	11.0	70.0	11.0
	2020/21	8.0	72.0	12.0
	2021/22	11.0	74.0	9.0
	2022/23	13.7	58.7	12.5



CHILDREN IN CARE: INITIAL HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

DEFINITION	Percentage of Initial Health Assessments completed within 20 working days of a child coming into our care year to date (data from Health), This excludes children / young people coming into care due to being remand or UASC.
-------------------	--

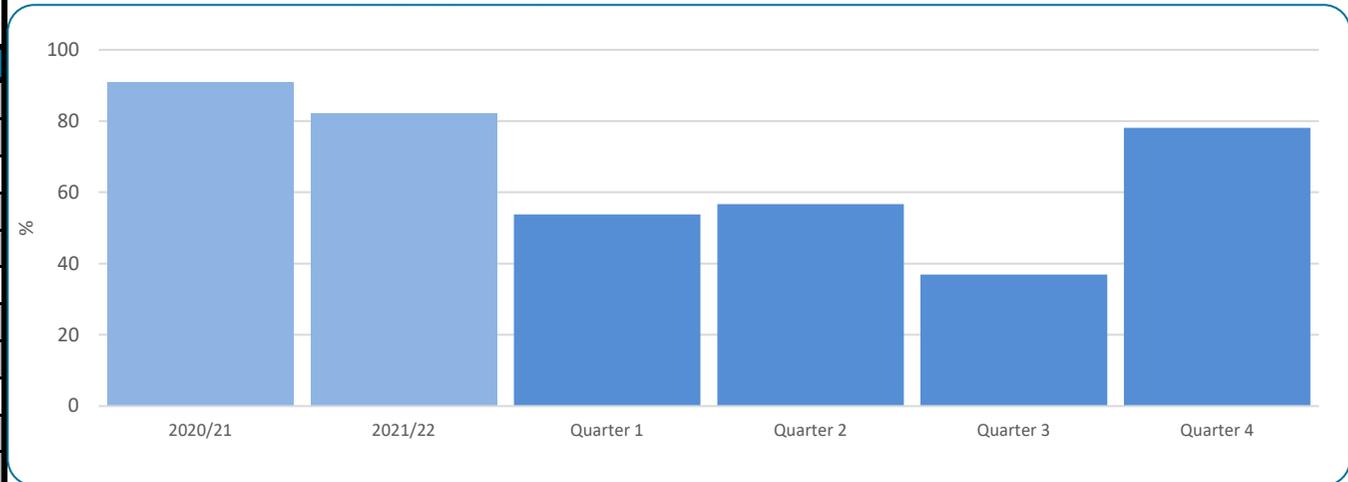
PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS	54.5% of the children whose forms sent to Health received a health assessment within 20 days.
-----------------------------	---

Page 35

		Completed IHA within 20 working days (by Health)
		Target
In Month Performance		95
	Apr-22	
	May-22	
	Jun-22	14 / 26
	Jul-22	
	Aug-22	
	Sep-22	17 / 30
	Oct-22	
	Nov-22	
	Dec-22	17 / 46
	Jan-23	
	Feb-23	
Mar-23	25 / 32	

		Annual Trend
		Percentage
2019/20	72.9%	
2020/21	90.9%	
2021/22	82.1%	
2022/23	54.5%	

Completed IHA within 20 working days (by Health)



CHILDREN IN CARE: HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

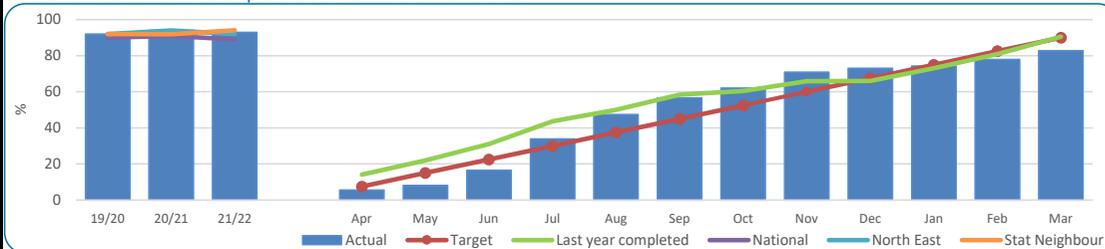
DEFINITION Of the Children in Care (CiC) at 31 March who had been in care continuously for at least 12 months, the percentage who have had their Review Health Assessment (RHA) completed and the percentage who have an up to date Health Check (excludes any who will turn 18 before 31st March). Children in Care share many of the same health risks and problems as their peers, but often to a greater degree. These indicators track the participation of our Children in Care's health as a proxy for monitoring the general health and wellbeing of the children, as well as providing a check on the effectiveness of joint working with Health to secure good health outcomes for Children in Care.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS 83.3% of children due a review health assessment by March 2023 have had one completed.
Of the children who have not had their health review, 0.9% are refusing to have one completed at this time. Although they are refusing, they are continually reminded of the benefits of having a check-up and encouraged to take part and it is a positive to see the number of refusals decrease over the year.

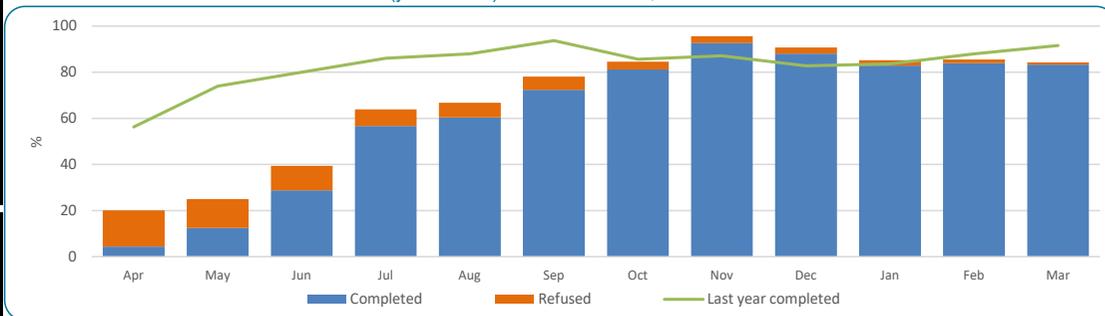
Page 36

		CSC 250	CSC 250b	CSC 250b
		% of CiC who have an up to date health checks	% of CiC refusing engagement in their review health check (in month)	% of CiC who had a review health check completed (year to date)
In Month Performance	Target	90%		90%
	Apr-22	5.6	15.6	4.4
	May-22	8.1	12.5	12.5
	Jun-22	16.5	10.6	28.8
	Jul-22	33.9	7.2	56.6
	Aug-22	47.5	6.3	60.4
	Sep-22	56.7	5.7	72.4
	Oct-22	62.0	3.4	81.2
	Nov-22	70.9	3.0	92.6
	Dec-22	73.0	2.7	88.0
	Jan-23	74.2	2.4	82.8
	Feb-23	78.0	1.6	83.9
	Mar-23	82.9	0.9	83.3
Annual Trend	2019/20	92.0	3.1	93.3
	2020/21	94.0	3.7	91.2
	2021/22	93.0	3.7	91.6
	2022/23	82.9	1.6	83.3

CSC 250: % of CiC who are up to date for a review health check



CSC 250b: % of CiC due a review health check (year to date) that have had one, and % that refused



CHILDREN IN CARE: DENTAL HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

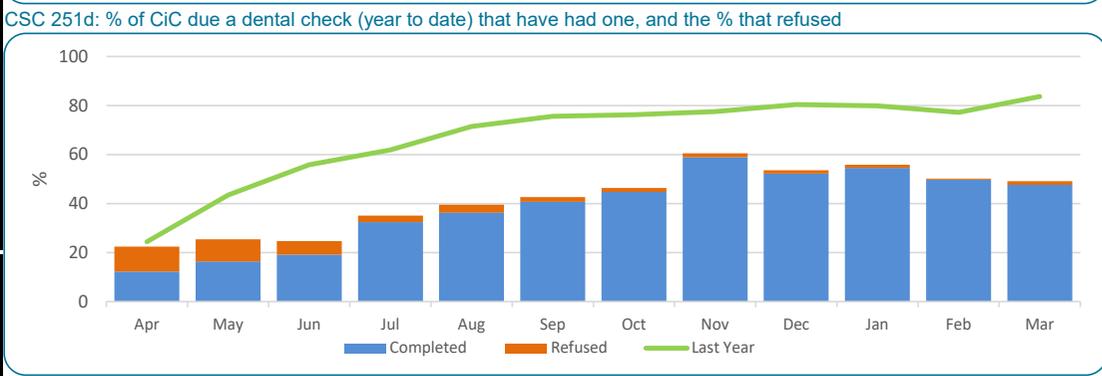
DEFINITION Of the Children in Care (CiC) at 31 March who had been in care continuously for at least 12 months, the percentage who had had their teeth checked by a dentist during the previous 12 months, and the percentage who had had an annual health check during the previous 12 months (excludes any who will turn 18 before 31st March). Children in Care share many of the same health risks and problems as their peers, but often to a greater degree. These indicators track the participation of our Children in Care with dental checks as a proxy for monitoring the general health and wellbeing of the children, as well as providing a check on the effectiveness of joint working with Health to secure good health outcomes for Children in Care.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS 47.7% of children due a dental check assessment by March 2023 have had one completed. Work has progressed throughout the year to secure check-ups with a dentist which did increase the number of checks being completed mid-year, but this has now plateaued.

Of the children who have not had their dental check, 1.4% are refusing to have one completed at this time. Although they are refusing, they are continually reminded of the benefits of having a check-up and encouraged to take part and it is a positive to see the number of refusals decrease over the year.

Page 37

		CSC 251	CSC 251d	CSC 251d
		% of CiC who have an up to date dental check	% of CiC refusing engagement in their dental check (in month)	% of CiC who had a dental check completed (year to date)
In Month Performance	Target	90%		90%
	Apr-22	2.0	10.2	12.2
	May-22	3.5	9.1	16.4
	Jun-22	5.9	5.5	19.2
	Jul-22	10.6	2.6	32.5
	Aug-22	14.4	3.3	36.3
	Sep-22	19.9	1.9	40.7
	Oct-22	25.3	1.6	44.7
	Nov-22	31.3	1.6	58.9
	Dec-22	32.3	1.4	52.2
	Jan-23	37.6	1.3	54.6
	Feb-23	42.2	0.5	49.7
	Mar-23	47.7	1.4	47.7
Annual Trend	2019/20	94.0	3.1	90.2
	2020/21	68.0	2.8	57.2
	2021/22	89.0	2.6	83.7
	2022/23	47.7	1.4	47.7



CARE LEAVERS

DEFINITION
 Former relevant care leavers split to show the young people who, at 31st March, will be aged 19-21 and those who will be aged 22-25. The percentage who were in suitable accommodation at their most recent contact, and the percentage who were not in employment, education or training at their most recent contact.
 This measures accommodation and employment outcomes for young people formerly in care - a key group at risk of social exclusion. It is intended to increase the proportion of former care leavers who are in suitable accommodation and employment, education or training.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

96.3% of our care leavers aged 19-21 and 95.9% aged 22-25 were in suitable accommodation at the end of March 2023. Of those who were not in suitable accommodation, this was due to them being in custody (2 aged 19-21 and 2 aged 22-25).

Of the care leavers, aged 19-21 as of 31st March 2023, who were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

- 3.7% NEET because of illness or disability
- 7.4% NEET because of other circumstances
- 9.3% NEET because of pregnancy or parenting.

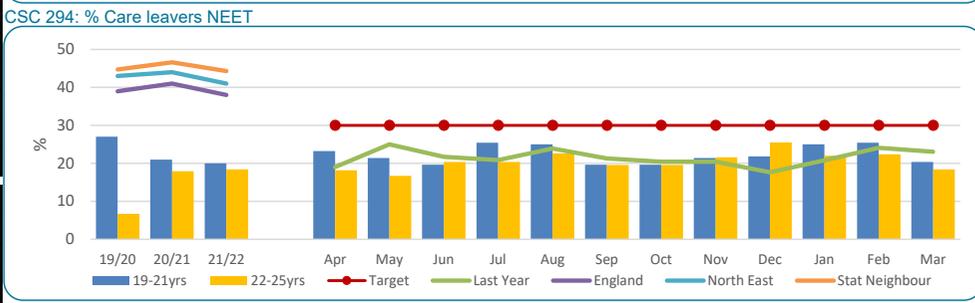
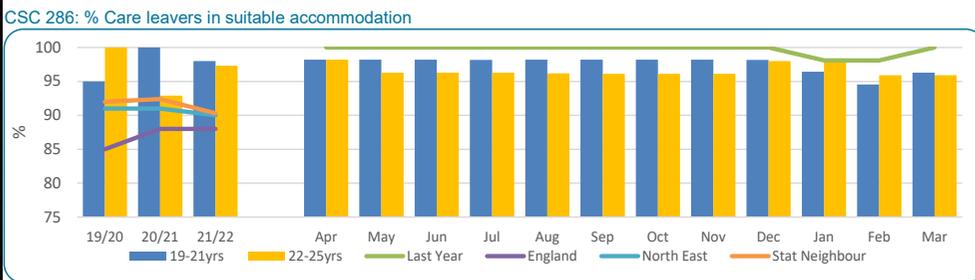
This equates to 20.4% of our care leavers which is positively below the internal target of 30% NEET.
 13.0% young people, aged 19-21, were engaging in education (11.1% of which are in studies beyond A level) and 66.7% young people were in training or employment (29.6% in full time, 37.0% in part time).

Of the care leavers, aged 22-25, as of 31st March 2023, who were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

- 12.2% NEET because of illness or disability
- 4.1% NEET because of other circumstances
- 2.0% NEET because of pregnancy or parenting.

This equates to 18.4%.
 6.2% young people, aged 22-25, were engaging in education in studies beyond A level and 75.5% young people were in training or employment (28.6% in full time, 46.9% in part time).

		CSC 286 19-21 year olds		CSC 294 22-25 year olds	
		% Care leavers in suitable accommodation	% Care leavers NEET	% Care leavers in suitable accommodation	% Care leavers NEET
In Month Performance	Target	90%	30%		
	Apr-22	98.2	23.2	98.2	18.2
	May-22	98.2	21.4	96.3	16.7
	Jun-22	98.2	19.6	96.3	20.4
	Jul-22	98.2	25.5	96.3	20.4
	Aug-22	98.2	25.0	96.2	22.6
	Sep-22	98.2	19.6	96.1	19.6
	Oct-22	98.2	19.6	96.1	19.6
	Nov-22	98.2	21.4	96.1	21.6
	Dec-22	98.2	21.8	98.0	25.5
	Jan-23	96.4	25.0	98.0	22.0
	Feb-23	94.6	25.5	95.9	22.4
	Mar-23	96.3	20.4	95.9	18.4
Annual Trend	2019/20	95.0	27.0	100.0	6.7
	2020/21	100.0	21.0	92.9	17.9
	2021/22	98.0	20.0	97.3	18.4
	2022/23	96.3	20.4	95.9	18.4



CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
23rd October 2023

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS QUARTER 1 2023/24

Purpose of the Report

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

Summary

2. This report provides performance information (April 2023 – June 2023) in line with an indicator set agreed by Monitoring and Coordination Group on 2 July 2018, and subsequently by Scrutiny Committee Chairs.
3. It is suggested monitoring focuses on issues and exceptions, and relevant Assistant Directors will attend the meeting to respond to queries raised by the committee regarding the performance information contained within this report.
4. Where indicators are reported annually, quarterly updates will not be available.

Where are we performing well?

5. 81.1% of referrals received in Q1 2023/24 were completed within 1 working day. We are still below the internal target of 90% completed within 1 working day however compared to Q1 2022/23 (79.6%) and Q1 2021/22 (68.0%) this is an improvement. This improvement is evident of the hard work the CIAT team have been doing. 1.3% of referrals took over 3 working days to be completed in Q1 2023/24 which is outperforming our target of 5%.
6. At the end of Q1 2023/24, there were 240 families, 511 children open to the Building Stronger Families team. A further 52 families with 97 children were open to an external agency supporting the families. 365 Early Help Assessments (EHA) were started in Q1 2023/24, 8.2% (30) of which were initiated by external agencies. This is a decrease when compared to Q1 2022/23 (389 EHA's) and a decrease on the proportion of externally started EHA's (17.0%).
7. In Q1 2023/24, all children who were reported missing (excluding children from other authorities) were offered a Return Home Interviews (RHI), 89.2% of which were offered within 72 hours and 77.5% of the children/young people engaged in their RHI. Each are a performance improvement when compared with Q1 2022/23. Where the co-ordinator cannot engage the child or young person, discussions take place with parents, carers, teachers, or social workers to offer insight around reducing the missing episodes. Of those who went missing, 32.1% were a Child in Care accounting for 49.6% of the missing episodes.

8. 109 children were subject to a Child Protection plan (CP) as at the end of June 2023 This is a slight increase on the 104 children who were subject to CP at the end of June 2022. As of June 2023, no child open to CP has been on their plan for more than 2 years.
9. 100% of children with a Child Protection (CP) plan, and 100% of Children in Care (CiC) have an allocated social worker.
10. All of children with a Child Protection (CP) plan, and 97.0% of Children in Care (CiC) had their reviews completed within timescale. All children with a CP plan and who were in care were allocated to a qualified social worker.
11. 52.0% of the 25 children who ceased to be in care in Q1 2023/24 were reunified home to a parent.
12. 98.4% of our care leavers aged 19-21 and 95.2% aged 22-25 were in suitable accommodation at the end of June 2023. Of those who were not in suitable accommodation, this was due to them being in custody.
13. The percentage of care leavers who were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) continues to be positively below the target set of 30% at 27.0% for care leavers aged 19-21 and 19.0% for those aged 22-25 at the end of June 2023. 20.6% of the young people, aged 19-21, were engaging in education (7.9% of which are in studies beyond A level) and 52.4% of the young people were in training or employment (23.8% in full time (including apprenticeships) and 28.6% in part time). 6.3% of the young people, aged 22-25, were engaging in education (all of which are in studies beyond A level) and 74.6% of the young people were in training or employment (28.6% in full time (including apprenticeships), 46.0% in part time).

Where do we need to improve?

14. We have continued to see an increase in re-referrals this quarter in comparison to previous years with 21.7% of re-referrals during Q1 2023/24. Due to the increase in contacts being made, it is expected that the number of children referred will increase, however this means that we have missed our internal target of having no more 18% of referrals being re-referrals. Re-referrals are being scrutinised during weekly WRM meeting to ensure best practise and learning outcomes are shared.
15. 412 C&F assessments were completed in Q1 2023/24. This is a substantial increase on previous years, with an 24.8% increase on the 330 assessments in Q1 2022/23 and a 205.2% increase on the 135 assessments in Q1 2021/22. This increase in C&F assessments is a result of the increase in children referred. Due to this increase we have seen a decline in timeliness of assessments with 56.1% of our C&F assessments being completed within timescale in Q1 2023/24. Actions plans are being developed to improve this performance.
16. 76.6% of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC) were held within 15 working days from the strategy meeting / section 47 being initiated, excluding children who were transferred-in conference, in Q1 2023/24. Work is ongoing to reduction in late requests for conferences.

17. 69.8% of Child Protection statutory visits were completed within 10 working days in Q1 2023/24. This is a decrease when compared with Q1 2022/23 which saw 80.0% completed within 10 working days. The capacity of social workers to make regular visits continues to be impacted due to rising workloads. Changes to the new locality allocations for the A&S teams are currently being reviewed to ensure a fair and even distribution of allocation and workloads.
18. 343 children were in care as of June 2023, 5.0% of which are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. During Q1 2023/24 a total of 46 children came into the care of DBC, 2 of which were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, and a total of 25 children ceased to be in care.
19. 81.6% of statutory visits for Children in Care (CiC) were completed in timescale in Q1 2023/24. This is a reduction compared to the 88.8% of visits carried out in timescale in Q1 2022/23, however there has been a 14.8% increase in the number of visits being carried out due to the increased number of children in care.
20. 13.7% of our Children in Care, as of June 2023, have had 3 or more placements within the previous 12 months, which is above our internal target of 10%.
21. 62.1% of our Children in Care aged under 16 (who have been looked after for at least 2.5 years) have been in their current placement continuously for at least 2 years as of June 2023, which is an improvement on year end 2022/23 but below our internal target of 68%.
22. 11.6% of our Children in Care have needed to be placed 20 or more miles away from home as of June 2023. This is just above our target of 10%, all placements have been confirmed by team managers to be appropriate for the child enabling them to have the best support either with family links or specialised care.

Recommendation

23. It is recommended:

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

Chris Bell
Assistant Director Childrens Services

Background papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.
Sharon Raine Head of Performance and Transformation: Extension 6091

S17 Crime and Disorder	This report supports the Councils Crime and Disorder responsibilities
------------------------	---

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



DARLINGTON
Borough Council

Children's Social Care Performance & Practice Report

April - June 2023 Q1

Scrutiny

Scrutiny

Q1 2023-24 Performance Summary

Referrals: 81.1% of referrals received in Q1 2023/24 were completed within 1 working day. We are still below the internal target of 90% completed within 1 working day however compared to Q1 2022/23 (79.6%) and Q1 2021/22 (68.0%) this is an improvement. This improvement is evident of the hard work the CIAT team have been doing. 1.3% of referrals took over 3 working days to be completed in Q1 2023/24 which is in line with our target of 5%.

Re-Referrals: We have continued to see an increase in re-referrals this quarter in comparison to previous years with 21.7% of re-referrals during Q1 2023/24. Due to the increase in contacts being made, it is expected that the number of children referred will increase, this means that we have missed our internal target of having no more 18% of referrals being re-referrals. Re-referrals are being scrutinised during the weekly WRM meeting to ensure best practise and learning outcomes are shared.

Building Stronger Families: At the end of Q1 2023/24, there were 240 families, 511 children open to the Building Stronger Families team. A further 52 families with 97 children were open to an external agency supporting the families.
365 Early Help Assessments (EHA) were started in Q1 2023/24, 8.2% (30) of which were initiated by external agencies. This is a decrease when compared to Q1 2022/23 (389 EHA's) and a decrease on the proportion of externally started EHA's (17.0%).

Missing: In Q1 2023/24, all children who were reported missing (excluding children from other authorities) were offered a Return Home Interviews (RHI), 89.2% of which were offered within 72 hours and 77.5% of the children/young people engaged in their RHI. Each are a performance improvement when compared with Q1 2022/23. Where the co-ordinator cannot engage the child or young person, discussions take place with parents, carers, teachers, or social workers to offer insight around reducing the missing episodes. Of those who went missing, 32.1% were a Child in Care accounting for 49.6% of the missing episodes.

Children & Families Assessments: 412 C&F assessments were completed in Q1 2023/24. This is a substantial increase on previous years, with an 24.8% increase on the 330 assessments in Q1 2022/23 and a 205.2% increase on the 135 assessments in Q1 2021/22. This increase in C&F assessments is a result of the increase in children being referred which has also contributed to the decline in timeliness of assessments with 56.1% of them being completed within timescale in Q1 2023/24. Our frontline social workers are often prioritising visiting families; undertaking duty visits or supporting families during a crisis; resulting in the written completion of assessments being delayed. Plans are in place and reviewed to ensure social workers are given dedicated time to catch up on outstanding admin tasks. Stop the clock days are taking place to support social workers clear any backlog they may have. In the longer-term, discussions with our business support colleagues have commenced to explore how they can relieve some of the administrative pressures on social workers and their managers.

Section 47 Enquiries: 109 section 47 enquires were started in Q1 2023/24, involving 189 individual children.

Child Protection Conference timeliness: 76.6% of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC) were held within 15 working days from the strategy meeting / section 47 being initiated, excluding children who were transferred-in conference, in Q1 2023/24. Work is ongoing to reduction in late requests for conferences.

Child Protection Plans: 109 children were subject to a Child Protection plan (CP) as at the end of June 2023, this is a slight increase on the 104 children who were subject to CP at the end of June 2022.

100.0% of CP cases were allocated to a social worker and all the CP reviews were carried out in timescale. As of June 2023, no child open to CP has been on their plan for more than 2 years.

Child Protection Statutory visits: 69.8% of Child Protection statutory visits were completed within 10 working days in Q1 2023/24 and 87.2% of the visits were completed within 15 working days. This is a decrease when compared with Q1 2022/23 which had more visits completed with 80.0% completed within 10 working days. The capacity of social workers to make regular visits continues to be impacted due to rising workloads. Changes to the new locality allocations for the A&S teams are currently being reviewed to ensure a fair and even distribution of allocation and workloads.

Children in Care: 343 children were in care as of June 2023, 5.0% of which are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. During Q1 2023/24 a total of 46 children came into the care of DBC, 2 of which were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, and a total of 25 children ceased to be in care. 52.0% of the 25 children returned home to a parent when ceasing care.

Page 45

Children in Care Reviews: 100.0% of Children in Care (CiC) were allocated to a qualified social worker. 97.0% of the reviews have been completed within required timescales in Q1 2023/24.

Children in Care Statutory visits: 81.6% of statutory visits for Children in Care (CiC) were completed in timescale in Q1 2023/24. This is a reduction compared to the 88.8% of visits carried out in timescale in Q1 2022/23, however there have been a 14.8% increase in the number of visits being carried out due to the increase in children in care. Due to rising workloads the capacity of social workers time has been impacted resulting in delayed visit recording. Changes to the new locality allocation for the A&S teams are currently being reviewed to ensure a fair and even distribution of allocations and workloads.

Children in Care Placements: 13.7% of Children in Care (CiC), as of June 2023, have had 3 or more placements within the previous 12 months. 62.1% of our Children in Care aged under 16 (who have been looked after for at least 2.5 years) have been in their current placement continuously for at least 2 years. 11.6% of our Children in Care have been placed 20 or more miles away from home as of June 2023. This relates to young people who have been placed in residential care due to their disability / placed with family / or placed for adoption, and this provision is not available within 20 miles.

Initial Health Assessments: 52.3% of the children whose IHA form was sent to Health, received a health assessment by them within 20 days.

Health and Dental Reviews: 37.7% of children due a review health assessment by June 2023 have had one completed. 38.5% of Children in Care, that were due a dental check assessment by June 2023 have had one completed.

The percentage of children who have refused their medical checks continues to remain low, with 2.9% refusing their health review and 1.7% refusing their dental review. Although they are currently refusing, they are continually reminded of the benefits of having a check-up and encouraged to take part.

Care Leavers: 98.4% of our care leavers aged 19-21 and 95.2% aged 22-25 were in suitable accommodation at the end of June 2023. Of those who were not in suitable accommodation, this was due to them being in custody. The percentage of care leavers who were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) continues to be positively below the target set of 30% at 27.0% for care leavers aged 19-21 and 19.0% for those aged 22-25 at the end of June 2023. 20.6% of the young people, aged 19-21, were engaging in education (7.9% of which are in studies beyond A level) and 52.4% of the young people were in training or employment (23.8% in full time (including apprenticeships) and 28.6% in part time). 6.3% of the young people, aged 22-25, were engaging in education (all of which are in studies beyond A level) and 74.6% of the young people were in training or employment (28.6% in full time (including apprenticeships), 46.0% in part time).

REFERRALS: TIMELINESS

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

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

In Q1 2023/24, 81.1% of children had their referral completed within 1 working day. This is an increase when compared with 79.6% in Q1 2022/23, 68.0% in Q1 2021/22 and 77.8% in Q1 2020/21, however, this is still below our 90% target. 1.3% of the referrals took over 3 working days to be completed in Q1 2023/24 which is achieving our target of 5%.

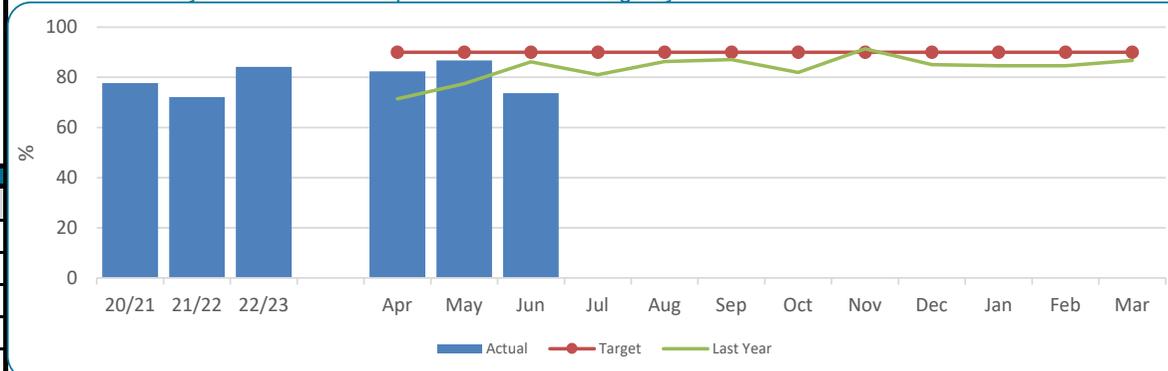
All referrals that are completed out of timescale are reviewed by the service manager to ensure the delay was unavoidable. A summary of the reasons are as follows:

- Difficulties in contacting the family for further information
- Awaiting further information from a 3rd party
- Further information gathering to allow for an informed decision.

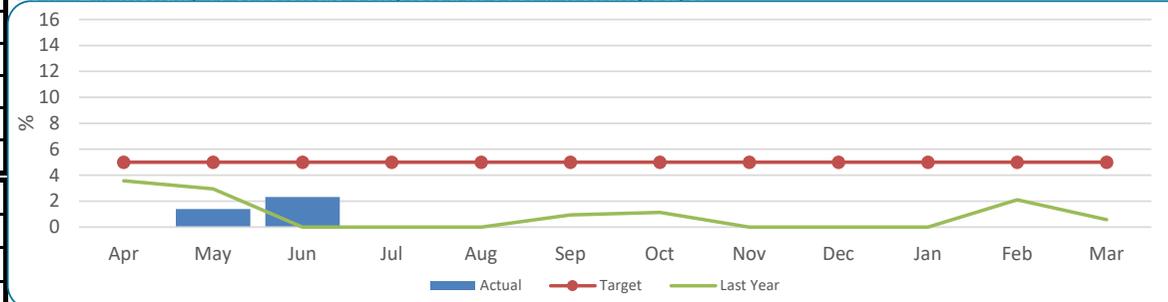
Page 47

		CSC 022	CSC 026
		Monthly % of referrals completed within 1 working day.	Monthly % of referrals completed in over 3 working days.
In Month Performance	Target	90%	5%
	Apr-23	82.4	1.4
	May-23	86.7	1.4
	Jun-23	73.6	2.3
	Jul-23		
	Aug-23		
	Sep-23		
	Oct-23		
	Nov-23		
	Dec-23		
Jan-24			
Feb-24			
Mar-24			
Annual Trend	2020/21	77.7	4.7
	2021/22	72.1	5.6
	2022/23	84.1	0.8
	2023/24	81.1	1.3

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



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



REFERRALS: RE-REFERRALS

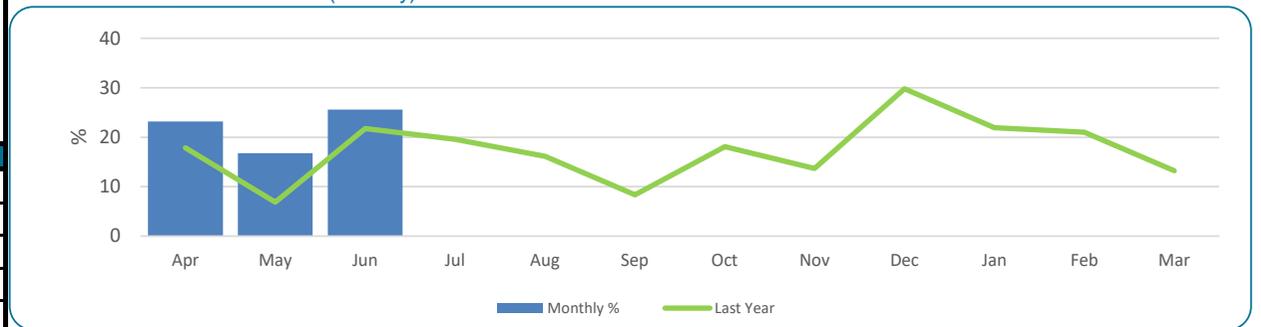
DEFINITION	Percentage of re-referrals that are received within 12 months of a previous referral (based on referral start dates and in line with DfE definition). A re-referral to Children's Social Care could be an indication that the previous referral was inappropriately closed down without addressing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

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS	<p>We have continued to see an increase in re-referrals this quarter in comparison to previous years with 21.7% of re-referrals during Q1 2023/24. Due to the increase in contacts being made, it is expected that the number of children referred will increase, however this means that we have missed our internal target of having no more 18% of referrals being re-referrals.</p> <p>The Service Manager has been reviewing the re-referrals each month to identify any reoccurring theme or how we can improve our processes and decision-making to reduce the need for families to come back into our service and are also scrutinised during the weekly WRM meeting to ensure best practise and learning outcomes are shared.</p>
-----------------------------	--

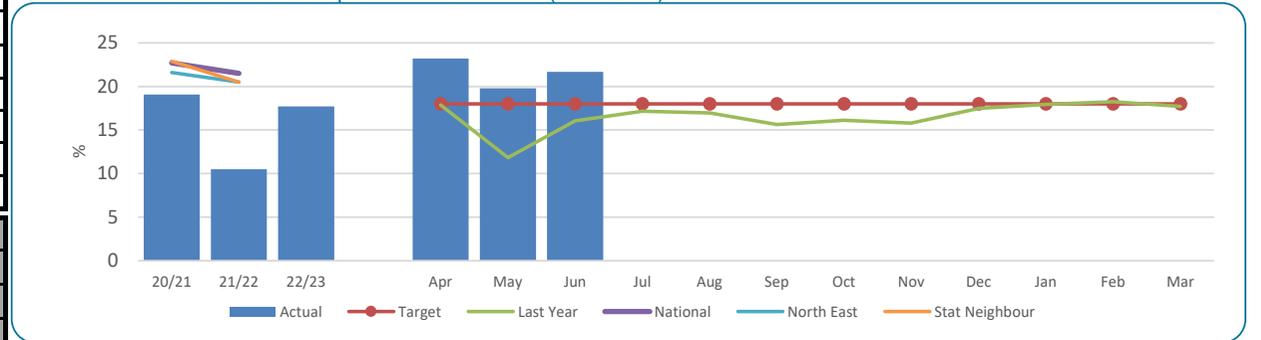
Page 48

		CSC 034	CSC 032	
		Monthly number of re-referrals that are repeat within 12 months	% re-referrals that are repeat within 12 months (cumulative)	% of referrals that are re-referrals (monthly)
In Month Performance	Target		18%	
	Apr-23	29	23.2	23.2
	May-23	24	19.8	16.8
	Jun-23	33	21.7	25.6
	Jul-23			
	Aug-23			
	Sep-23			
	Oct-23			
	Nov-23			
	Dec-23			
	Jan-24			
	Feb-24			
	Mar-24			
Annual Trend	2020/21	143	19.1	
	2021/22	106	10.5	
	2022/23	286	17.7	
	2023/24	86	21.7	

% of referrals that are re-referrals (monthly)



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



BUILDING STRONGER FAMILIES: OPEN EPISODES

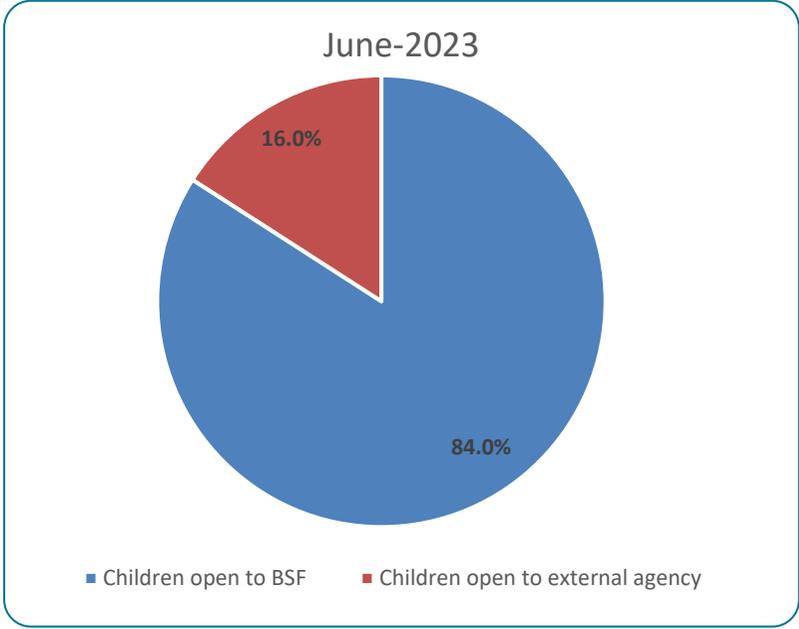
DEFINITION	The number of children and families that have an open episode with the Building Stronger Families (BSF) team at the end of each reporting month. Also reported is the number of children and families that have an open episode with an external agency. The proportion of children open to BSF is then calculated using the total cohort and displayed as a percentage.
-------------------	--

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS	At the end of Q1 2023/24, there were 240 families, 511 children open to the Building Stronger Families team. A further 52 families with 97 children were open to an external agency supporting the families.
-----------------------------	--

Page 49

In Month Performance		Open to BSF at month end		Open to an external agency at month end		% of children open to BSF
		Children	Families	Children	Families	%
	Apr-23	487	223	123	65	79.8%
May-23	491	230	124	68	79.8%	
Jun-23	511	240	97	52	84.0%	
Jul-23						
Aug-23						
Sep-23						
Oct-23						
Nov-23						
Dec-23						
Jan-24						
Feb-24						
Mar-24						

Annual Trend		Children	Families	Children	Families	%
	2020/21	253	123	93	43	73.1%
	2021/22	411	191	73	35	84.9%
	2022/23	490	218	125	68	79.7%
2023/24	511	240	97	52	84.0%	



EARLY HELP ASSESSMENTS: STARTED

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

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS 365 Early Help Assessments (EHA) were started in Q1 2023/24, 8.2% (30) of which were initiated by external agencies. This is a decrease when compared to Q1 2022/23 (389 EHA's) and a decrease on the proportion of externally started EHA's (17.0%).

		CSC 002		CSC 001	
		Total number of individual EHA's started in month (inc. external)	Number and percentage of the EHA's initiated by external agencies per month	Number of individual EHA's started; year to date (inc. external)	
In Month Performance	Target			TBC	
	Apr-23	106	11	10.4%	106
	May-23	114	17	14.9%	220
	Jun-23	145	2	1.4%	365
	Jul-23				
	Aug-23				
	Sep-23				
	Oct-23				
	Nov-23				
	Dec-23				
	Jan-24				
	Feb-24				
	Mar-24				
Annual Trend	2020/21	623	127	20.4%	623
	2021/22	839	161	19.2%	839
	2022/23	1,650	223	13.5%	1,650
	2023/24	365	30	8.2%	365



MISSING: EPISODES

DEFINITION	The number of episodes of children going missing in Darlington, including Children in Care, Children in Care with another authority and children who are not currently open to Social Care. The percentage of Return Home Interviews (RHI) completed within 72 hours and the level of engagement by the child. The number of episodes missing is cumulated to give a year to date figure but the children are only counted once for the year to date total.
-------------------	---

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS	<p>The total number of missing episodes in Q1 2023/24 was 117 involving 56 individual children and young people. This is a reduction compared to Q1 2022/23 which saw 205 episodes of missing involving 66 individual children.</p> <p>CiC young people continue to dominate the number of missing episodes accounting for nearly half of the missing episodes, however, this quarter we have seen an increase in children open to CiN and CP being reported missing compared to previous quarters.</p> <p>In Q1 2023/24, all Return Home Interviews (RHI) (excluding children from other authorities) were offered, 89.2% of which were offered within 72 hours and 77.5% of the children engaged in their RHI. This is an increase in children engaging with their RHI compared to previous quarters (Q1 2022/23, 48.6% and Q1 2021/22, 60.4%).</p>
-----------------------------	---

Page 51

		CSC 215		CSC 246			
		Total number of missing episodes and children involved in month		Missing - Children in Care with DBC		Of which are in a placement more than 20 miles from home	
		Episode	Child	Episode	Child	Episode	Child
In Month Performance	Apr-23	24	17	10	7		
	May-23	55	30	26	12	1	1
	Jun-23	38	26	22	10		
	Jul-23						
	Aug-23						
	Sep-23						
	Oct-23						
	Nov-23						
	Dec-23						
	Jan-24						
	Feb-24						
	Mar-24						
	Annual Trend	2020/21	370	152	107	30	15
2021/22		582	174	253	31	22	4
2022/23		691	162	383	31	2	2
2023/24		117	56	58	18	1	1

ASSESSMENTS

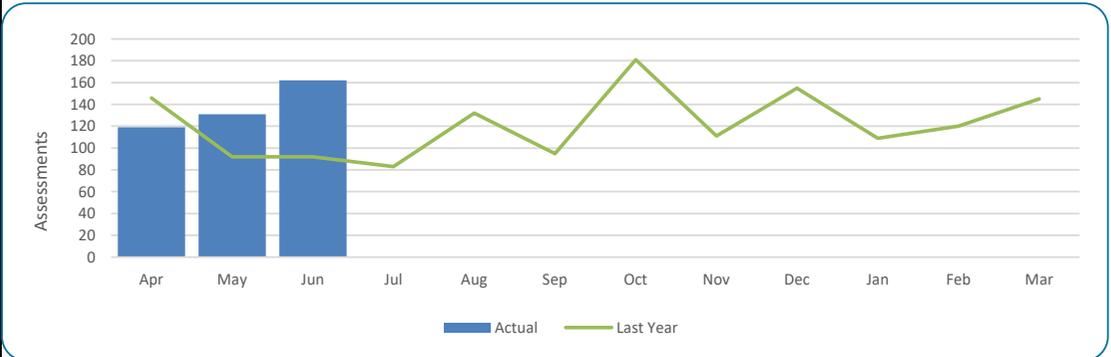
DEFINITION Monthly and cumulative number of Children & Families (C&F) assessments completed for a child.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS 412 children had a C&F assessment completed in Q1 2023/24. This is a continual increase when compared to Q1 2022/23 (330), Q1 2021/22 (135) and Q1 2020/21 (142).

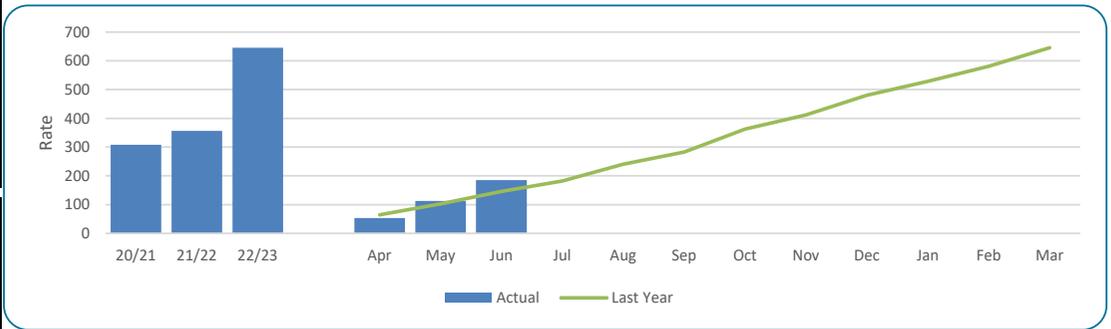
Page 52

		CSC 037	CSC 036	CSC 035
		Monthly number of C&F assessments completed	Number of C&F assessments completed year to date	Rate of C&F assessments completed per 10,000 of the 0-17 population.
In Month Performance	Apr-23	119	119	53.5
	May-23	131	250	112.3
	Jun-23	162	412	185.1
	Jul-23			
	Aug-23			
	Sep-23			
	Oct-23			
	Nov-23			
	Dec-23			
	Jan-24			
	Feb-24			
	Mar-24			
	Annual Trend	2020/21	692	692
2021/22		806	806	356.1
2022/23		1,461	1,461	645.5
2023/24		412	412	185.1

CSC 037: Monthly number of C&F assessments completed



CSC 035: Rate of C&F assessments completed per 10,000 of the 0-17 population.



ASSESSMENTS: TIMELINESS

DEFINITION

Of those assessments completed in a period, the percentage completed within 45 working days. Day zero is the first working day on or after the start date of the referral, or strategy discussion decided to initiate S47 enquiries, or where new information indicates that an assessment should be undertaken. The end date is the first working day on or after the recorded date the Team Manager closes the single assessment.
 A process indicator as a proxy measure for improved child safety and how quickly services can respond when a child is thought to be at risk of serious harm. Local authorities should investigate and address concerns in a timely and efficient way.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

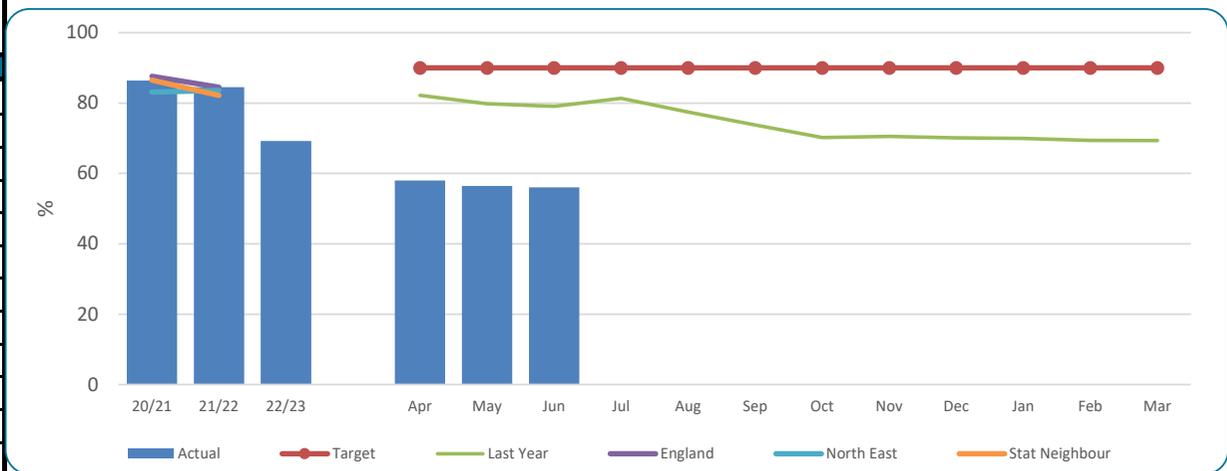
56.1% of our C&F assessments were completed within timescale in Q1 2023/24. This is significantly below target of 90.0% and when compared to Q1 2022/23 (68.5%). Timeliness has seen a continual drop since April 2022 (from 82.2% in timescale).

Analysis of the North East ADCS Benchmarking report 2022/23 informs that 8 of the 12 authorities have seen reductions in assessments completed within 45 working days, falling from 83.6% in 2021/22 to 77.4% at the end of Quarter 4 2022/23. Compared to the 2019/20 position, the overall performance has reduced by -12.6% regionally. For 2021/22, the North East were below the National (84.5%), Yorkshire and the Humber (82.0%) and the North West (81.2%). Darlington, along with South Tyneside, has the lowest percentage of their C&F assessments completed within timescale in 2022/23 (69.2%).

Page 53

		CSC 038	CSC 040
		% C&F Assessments completed within 45 working days (year to date)	Monthly % completed within 45 working days
In Month Performance	Target	90%	90%
	Apr-23	58.0	58.0
	May-23	56.4	55.0
	Jun-23	56.1	55.6
	Jul-23		
	Aug-23		
	Sep-23		
	Oct-23		
	Nov-23		
	Dec-23		
	Jan-24		
	Feb-24		
	Mar-24		
	Annual Trend	2020/21	86.4
2021/22		84.5	
2022/23		69.2	
2023/24		56.1	55.6

% C&F Assessments completed within 45 working days (year to date)

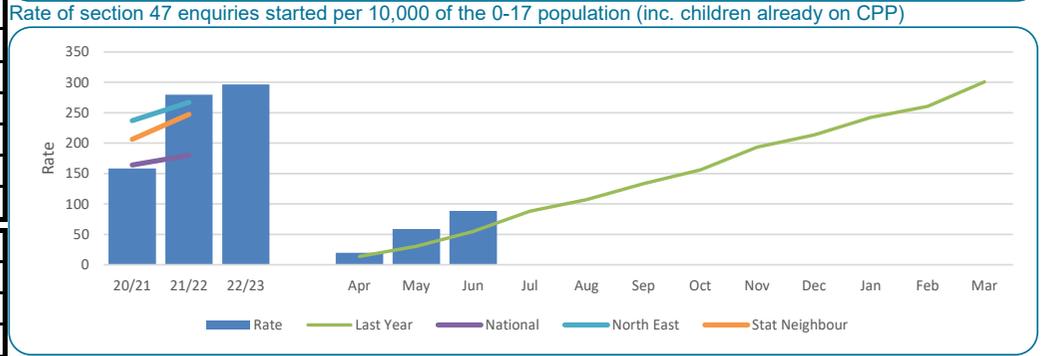
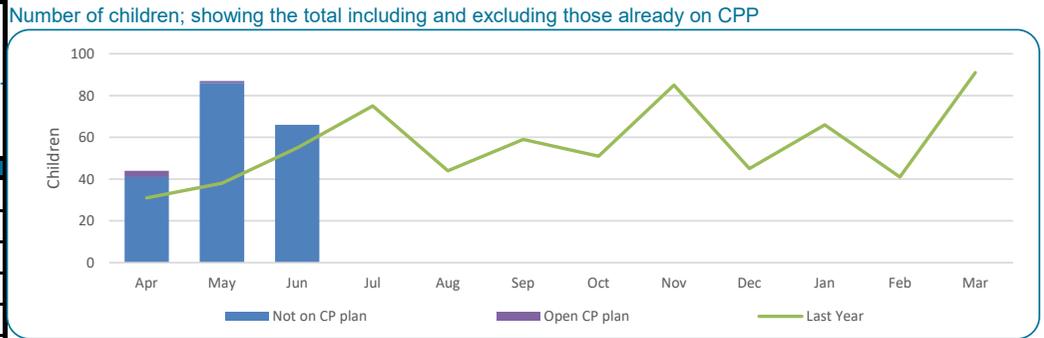


SECTION 47 ENQUIRES: STARTED

DEFINITION Number of children who have had a section 47 enquiries started monthly and year to date and the actual number of enquires started.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS 109 section 47 enquires were started in Q1 2023/24 involving 189 individual children.
Our rate of enquires per 10,000 population was 88.5 at the end of Q1 2023/24. This was above that at Q1 2022/23 (54.8) and as a result of the increased strategies held this quarter.

		CSC 166		CSC 164	
		Section 47 enquires started in the month	Number of children who had a section 47 enquiry	Of which also had an open CPP plan	Rate of section 47 enquiries started per 10,000 of the 0-17 population (Cumulative)
In Month Performance	Apr-23	24	44	3	19.8
	May-23	48	87	1	58.9
	Jun-23	37	66		88.5
	Jul-23				
	Aug-23				
	Sep-23				
	Oct-23				
	Nov-23				
	Dec-23				
	Jan-24				
	Feb-24				
	Mar-24				
Annual Trend	2020/21	195	358	7	158.2
	2021/22	317	633	14	279.7
	2022/23	351	681	30	296.6
	2023/24	109	197	4	88.5



INITIAL CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCES: TIMELINESS

DEFINITION Of those Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) held within the period (excluding transfer ins), the percentage recorded in the Safeguarding Unit workbook where Child Protection strategy meeting / section 47 enquiry to ICPC are within 15 days (CPP). This provides an indication of how quickly the safety of the child is considered by a multi-agency meeting.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS Of the 47 children (who were not transferred in), 36 had their Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC) within timescale (76.6%) in Q1 2023/24. Of the families who did not have their ICPC within timescale, the reasons provided were due to the late conference notification by the social worker and family requesting the conference date to be changed due to their availability.
This measure continues to be below the target of 95%.

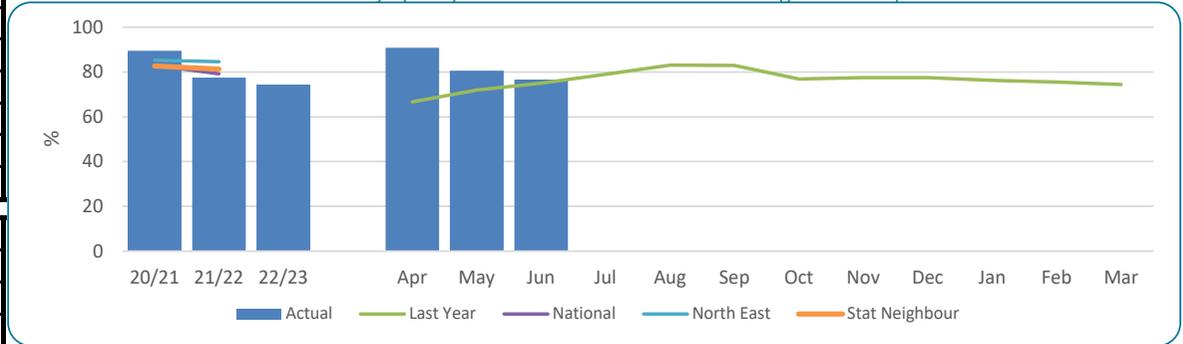
Page 55

		CSC 178		CSC 176	
		% ICPC's held within 15 days (CPP). Excludes transfer-in conferences (monthly).		% ICPC's held within 15 days (CPP). Excludes transfer-in conferences (year to date).	
In Month Performance	Target				95%
	Apr-23	10 / 11	90.9	10 / 11	90.9
	May-23	15 / 20	75.0	25 / 31	80.7
	Jun-23	11 / 16	68.8	36 / 47	76.6
	Jul-23				
	Aug-23				
	Sep-23				
	Oct-23				
	Nov-23				
	Dec-23				
	Jan-24				
	Feb-24				
Mar-24					
Annual Trend	2020/21	112 / 126	89.5	112 / 126	89.5
	2021/22	135 / 174	77.5	135 / 174	77.5
	2022/23	116 / 156	74.4	116 / 156	74.4
	2023/24	36 / 47	76.6	36 / 47	76.6

CSC 178: % ICPC's held within 15 days (CPP). Excludes transfer-in conferences (monthly).



CSC 176: % ICPC's held within 15 days (CPP). Excludes transfer-in conferences (year to date).



CHILD PROTECTION PLANS

DEFINITION

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

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

109 children were subject to a Child Protection plan (CP) as at the end of June 2023 with a rate of 49.0 per 10,000 population with a CP plan. This is comparable to the rate of 46.0 for the 104 children who were subject to CP at the end of June 2022 and above the 42.3 rate for 95 children at the end of June 2021.

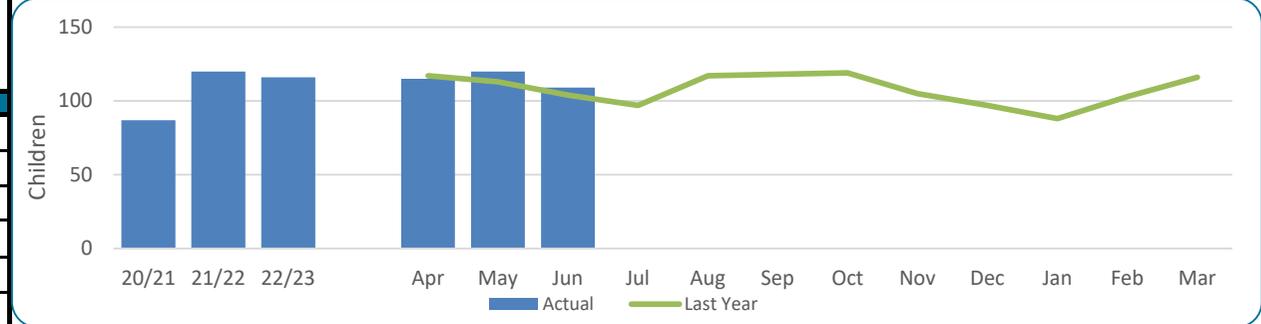
Although Darlington's rate per 10,000 population for children subject to a CPP has increased, this is still below our statistical neighbours and regional trend rate as seen in the 2021 LAIT.

CSC 182

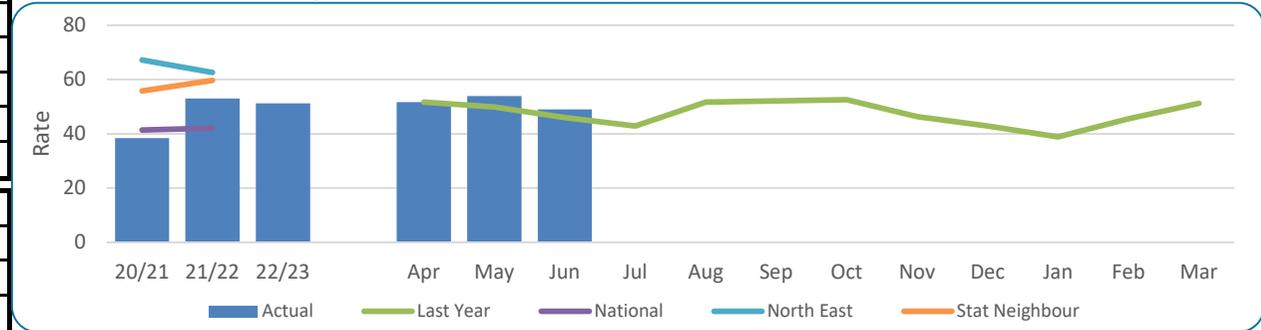
CSC 181

		CSC 182 Number of children subject to a CP plan	CSC 181 Rate of children subject to a CP Plan per 10,000 population
In Month Performance	Apr-23	115	51.7
	May-23	120	53.9
	Jun-23	109	49.0
	Jul-23		
	Aug-23		
	Sep-23		
	Oct-23		
	Nov-23		
	Dec-23		
	Jan-24		
	Feb-24		
	Mar-24		
	Annual Trend	2020/21	87
2021/22		120	53.0
2022/23		116	51.3
2023/24		109	49.0

CSC 182: Number of children subject to a CP plan



CSC 181: Rate of children subject to a CP Plan per 10,000 population



CHILD PROTECTION PLANS: ALLOCATION & REVIEWS

DEFINITION Reviews are a key element in delivering CP Plans and effective reviews should ensure the provision of good quality interventions. This indicator is a proxy for the measurement of effectiveness of the interventions provided to children subject to a CP plan. "Working Together to Safeguard Children" guidance requires that the first review should be within 3 months of their ICPC and thereafter at intervals of no more than 6 months.

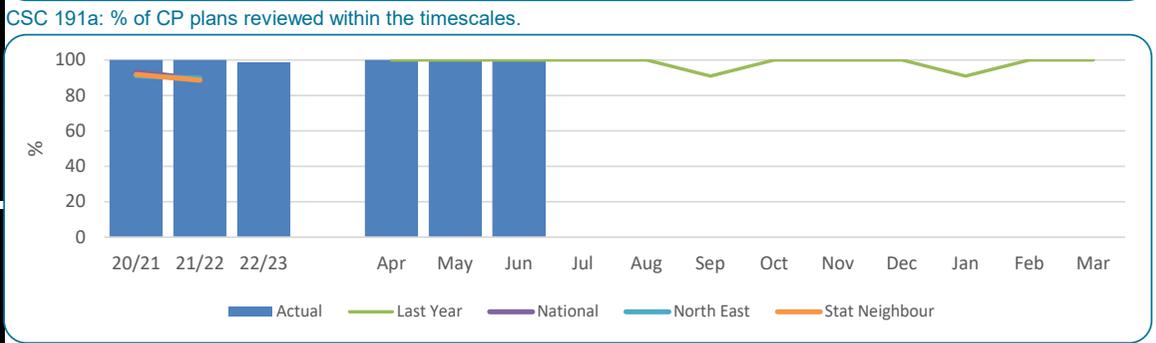
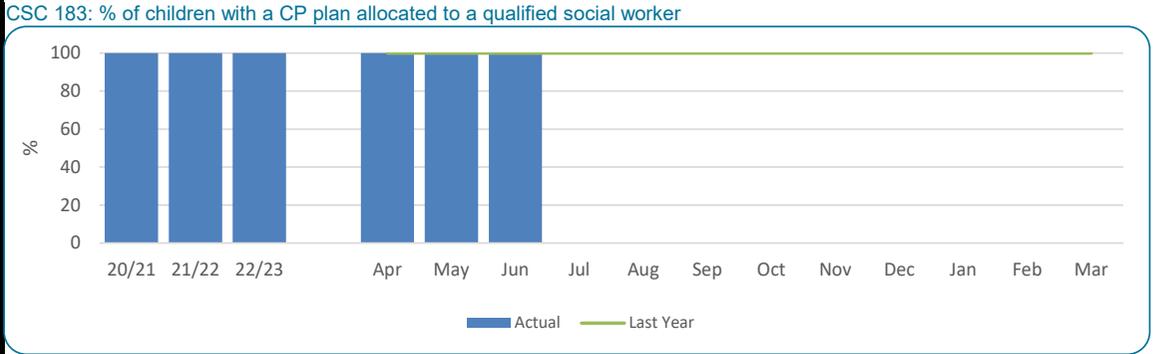
PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

100% of Child Protection Cases were allocated to a qualified social worker.

100% of Child Protection reviews have been completed within the required timescales.

Page 57

		CSC 183	CSC 191a	
		% of children with a CP plan allocated to a qualified social worker	CP plan review meetings held in timescale during the month	% of CP plans reviewed within the timescales.
In Month Performance	Target	100		100
	Apr-23	100.0	14 / 14	100.0
	May-23	100.0	13 / 13	100.0
	Jun-23	100.0	17 / 17	100.0
	Jul-23			
	Aug-23			
	Sep-23			
	Oct-23			
	Nov-23			
	Dec-23			
	Jan-24			
	Feb-24			
	Mar-24			
Annual Trend	2020/21	100.0	138 / 138	100.0
	2021/22	100.0	159 / 159	100.0
	2022/23	100.0	153 / 155	98.7
	2023/24	100.0	44 / 44	100.0



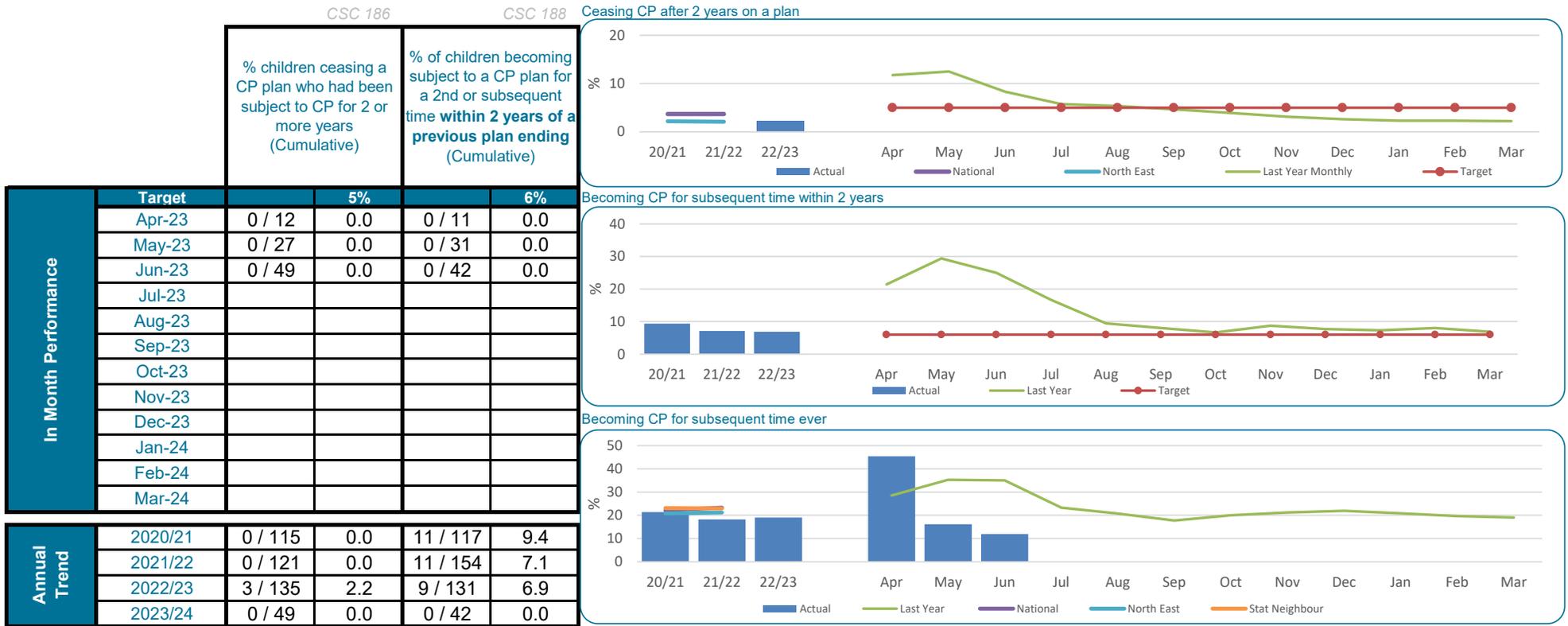
CHILD PROTECTION PLAN: TIME PERIODS

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

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

Of the 42 children who became subject to a CP plan in Q1 2023/24 none became subject to a CP plan for a second or subsequent time within 2 years of the previous plan ending.

No children have ceased to be subject to a CP plan in Q1 2023/24 after being subject to the plan for 2 or more years.



CHILD PROTECTION: STATUTORY VISITS

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

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS 69.8% of Child Protection statutory visits were completed within 10 working days in Q1 2023/24.

When compared with Q1 2022/23, the number of visits carried out has decreased (from 731 to 602 visits) but due to competing priorities the timeliness of completing the visits has also decrease. Teams, along with managers are currently working to address the drop in performance.

Page 59

		CSC 252a		CSC 252b	
		% CP visits completed within 10 working days within the month	% CP visits completed within 15 working days within the month	% CP visits completed within 10 working days year to date (cumulative)	% CP visits completed within 15 working days year to date (cumulative)
In Month Performance	Target	90	90	90	90
	Apr-23	70.3	92.2	70.3	92.2
	May-23	72.1	83.8	71.3	83.8
	Jun-23	66.5	87.2	69.8	87.2
	Jul-23				
	Aug-23				
	Sep-23				
	Oct-23				
	Nov-23				
	Dec-23				
	Jan-24				
	Feb-24				
	Mar-24				
Annual Trend	2020/21			89.0	98.4
	2021/22			82.9	96.8
	2022/23			67.8	90.0
	2023/24	66.5	87.2	69.8	87.2



CHILDREN IN CARE

DEFINITION Number of Children in Care (CiC) at the end of each month and of which are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child (UASC).

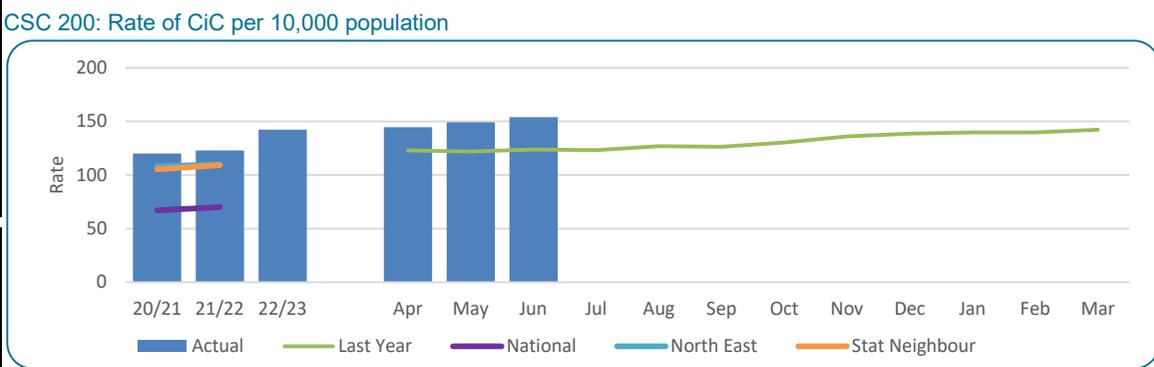
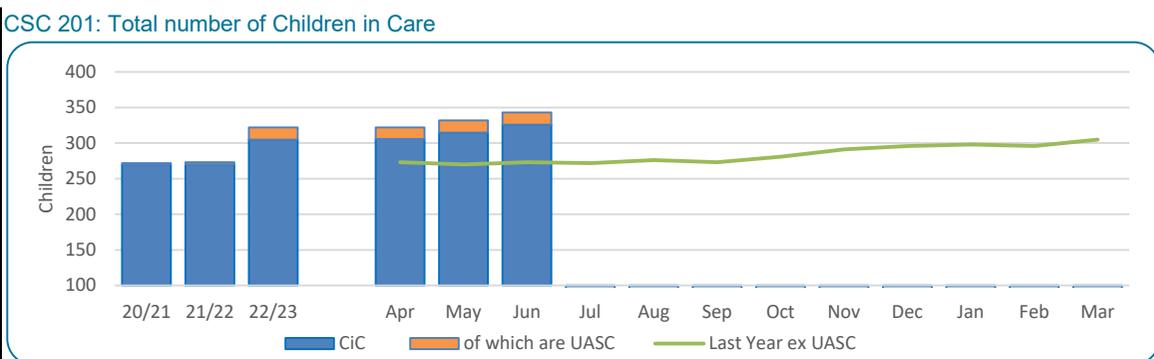
PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

343 children were in care as at June 2023, 5.0% of which are unaccompanied asylum-seekers. The rate of children in care per 10,000 population has continued to rise and rose to 154.1 at the end of June 2023, compared to 123.7 at June 2022, 117.2 at June 2021 and 129.6 at June 2020.

Regional data provided by ADCS for the end of the 2022/23 reporting period shows that in 2021/22, the North East was the highest region nationally, for the rate of Children Looked After (110.0) and this rate has increased again in 2022/23 to 114.6. Darlington, along with 5 other authorities have a higher rate of children in care, per 10,000, than the regional average and have also been above the regional average for the last 3 recorded years.

Page 60

		CSC 201	CSC 200	
		Total number of Children in Care	Of which are identified as a UASC	Rate of CiC per 10,000 population
In Month Performance	Target			95
	Apr-23	322	16	144.7
	May-23	332	17	149.2
	Jun-23	343	17	154.1
	Jul-23			
	Aug-23			
	Sep-23			
	Oct-23			
	Nov-23			
	Dec-23			
Jan-24				
Feb-24				
Mar-24				
Annual Trend	2020/21	272	2	120.0
	2021/22	273	3	123.0
	2022/23	322	17	142.3
	2023/24	343	17	154.1



CHILDREN IN CARE: COMING INTO CARE

DEFINITION Number of children coming into the care of the local authority during the month and year to date and where they are an unaccompanied asylum seeking child (UASC). This is further broken down to show their first placement type.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

46 children came into care in Q1 2023/24. This is an increase when compared with the 28 children who came into care in Q1 2022/23, but less of an increase when comparing families instead of individual children, as 22 in Q1 2022/23 and 28 in Q1 2023/24. This is due to larger family sizes coming into care this quarter.

Regional data provided by ADCS for the end of 2022/23 reporting period shows that regionally the rate of Children Becoming Looked After (44.8 per 10,000) is 6.6% higher than year end 2021/22 (42.0) which was significantly higher than the National figure (26.0) as well as the North West (29.0) and Yorkshire and the Humber (27.0). In 2022/23, Darlington and Hartlepool saw the largest increase in children coming into care during 2022/23 when compared to 2021/22, and both are in the bottom 3 authorities when comparing the actual number of children, the rate refers to. Only 3 of the 12 authorities had less children coming into care during 2022/23 than 2021/22.

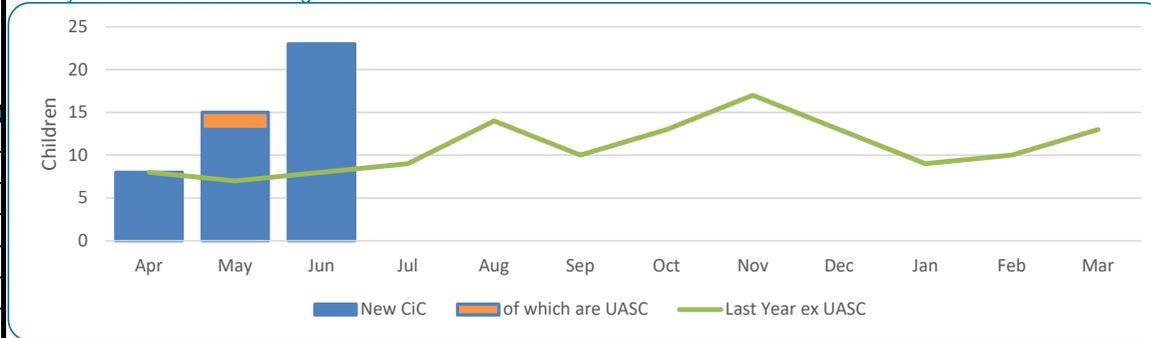
2 males came into care after accepted by the Home Office as UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child), however after an age assessment, one of them was identified as being over the age of 18 years.

The North East currently sits at the bottom of the regional percentage of UASC children in care with 2.0% in 2021/22 and 3.7% in 2022/23. Darlington was the 4th highest of the North East authorities regarding the proportion of their children in care being UASC with 5.3%.

Page 61

		CSC 209	CSC 208b	
		Monthly number of children coming into care	Cumulative number of children coming into care	of which are UASC
In Month Performance	Apr-23	8	8	
	May-23	15	23	2
	Jun-23	23	46	
	Jul-23			
	Aug-23			
	Sep-23			
	Oct-23			
	Nov-23			
	Dec-23			
	Jan-24			
	Feb-24			
	Mar-24			
Annual Trend	2020/21	82	82	2
	2021/22	100	100	2
	2022/23	149	149	18
	2023/24	46	46	2

Monthly number of children coming into care



Total number of children coming into care within the year



CHILDREN IN CARE: CEASING CARE

DEFINITION Number of children ceasing to be a Child in Care during each month and year to date and their destination when they ceased being in care. This could be due to returning home to parent or other person with no PR (planned and unplanned), having a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) / Child Arrangement Order (CAO) granted by the courts to a carer, adoption or turning 18 years old and becoming a care leaver and supported by a personal advisor. Other reasons why a child could cease care could be due to receiving a custodial sentence or moving out of the area and transferring to a different local authority.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

25 children and young people, from 20 families ceased to be in care in Q1 2023/24. This is an increase when compared with the 20 children ceasing in Q1 2022/23 and Q1 2020/21 (8 children), but a decrease on the 32 children who ceased in Q1 2021/22.

Of the 25 children and young people who did cease CiC:

- 52.0% returned home to their parent(s).
- 20.0% had a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) / Child Arrangement Order (CAO) granted to a relative.
- 20.0% were adopted
- 8.0% due to turning 18 and becoming a care leaver.

One of the care leavers, following an age assessment, ceased care as it was identified they were over the age of 18.

The proportion of children who returned home to their parent(s) has increased when compared to Q1 2022/23 (25.0%), Q1 2021/22 (9.4%) and Q1 2020/21 (0%).

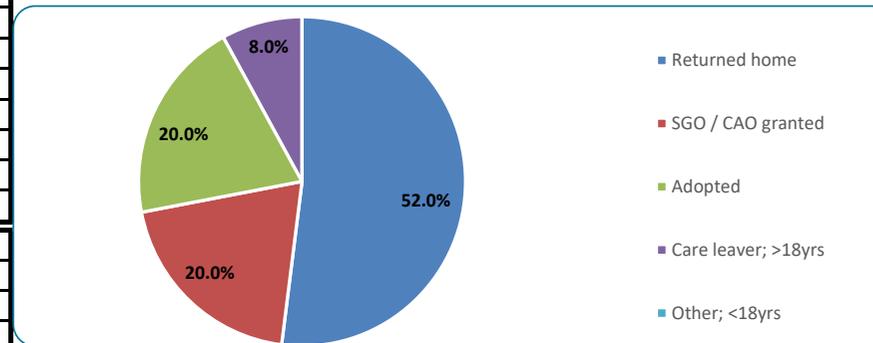
Page 62

		Reason for ceasing to be a Child in Care						
		Returned home	SGO / CAO granted	Adopted	Care leaver; >18yrs	Other; <18yrs		
		CSC 212	CSC 211					
		Monthly number of children ceasing care	Cumulative number of children ceasing care					
In Month Performance	Apr-23	8	8	7	1			
	May-23	4	12	1	1	1	1	
	Jun-23	13	25	5	3	4	1	
	Jul-23							
	Aug-23							
	Sep-23							
	Oct-23							
	Nov-23							
	Dec-23							
	Jan-24							
	Feb-24							
	Mar-24							
	Annual Trend	2020/21	80	80	22	39	7	9
2021/22		99	99	28	34	15	19	3
2022/23		100	100	21	39	17	21	2
2023/24		25	25	13	5	5	2	0

CSC 212: Monthly number of children ceasing care



Cumulative reason for children ceasing care



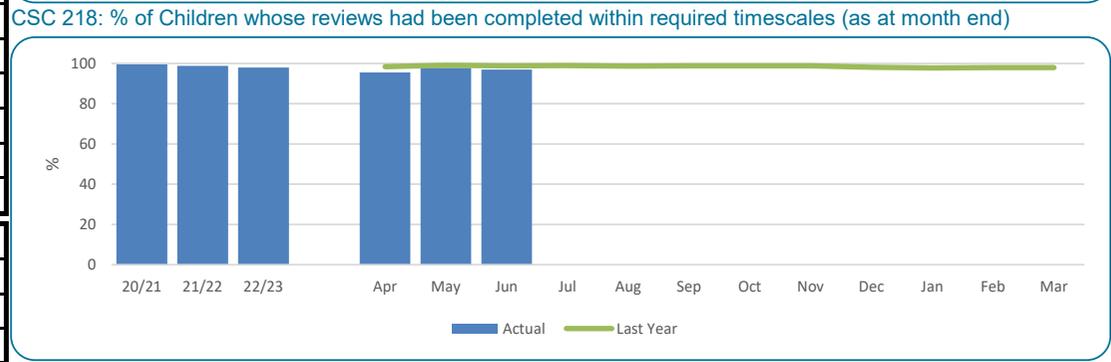
CHILDREN IN CARE: ALLOCATION & REVIEWS

DEFINITION
 The percentage of Children in Care (CiC) which should have been reviewed during the year ending 31 March that were reviewed on time and the percentage of Children in Care that were allocated to a qualified social worker at the end of the month. The purpose of the review is to consider the plan for the child's welfare, to monitor the progress of the plan and amend it as necessary in light of changed information and circumstances. The statutory intervals are within 20 working days of placement, then within 3 months and 6 monthly thereafter, but reviews may be rescheduled or held inside these intervals if there are significant changes to the child's care plan.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS
 100% of Children in Care (CiC) are allocated to a qualified social worker and 97.0% of the reviews were completed within required timescales.

Page 63

		CSC 227	CSC 218	
		% Children in Care allocated to a qualified social worker	% of Children whose reviews had been completed within required timescales (as at month end)	
In Month Performance	Target	100	Num	%
	Apr-23	100.0	65 / 68	95.6
	May-23	100.0	139 / 142	97.9
	Jun-23	100.0	194 / 200	97.0
	Jul-23			
	Aug-23			
	Sep-23			
	Oct-23			
	Nov-23			
	Dec-23			
	Jan-24			
	Feb-24			
Mar-24				
Annual Trend	2020/21	100.0	249 / 250	99.6
	2021/22	100.0	243 / 246	98.8
	2022/23	100.0	297 / 303	98.0
	2023/24	100.0	194 / 200	97.0



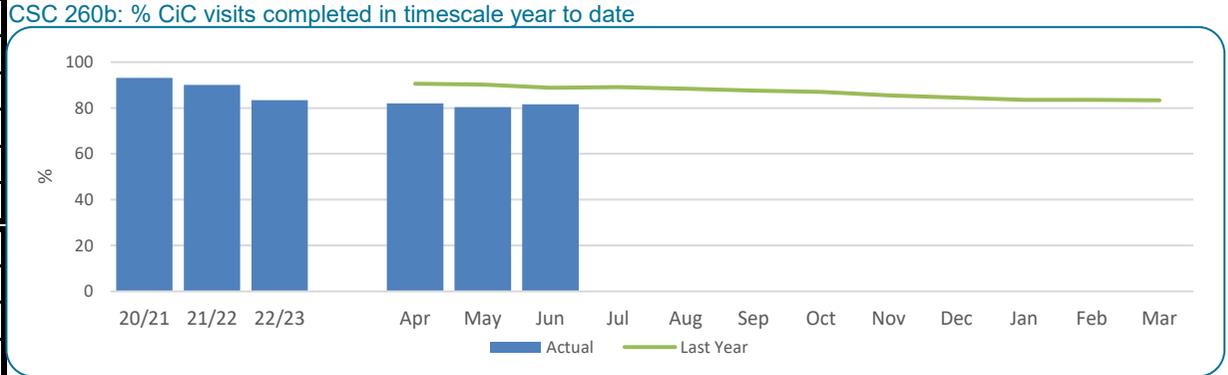
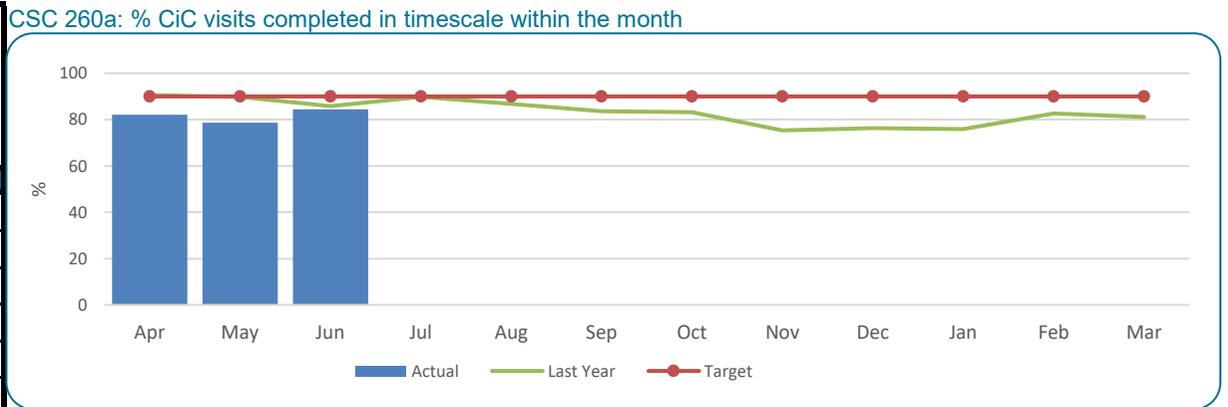
CHILDREN IN CARE: STATUTORY VISITS

DEFINITION Percentage of Children in Care (CiC) who had all statutory visits completed within required timescales each month and year to date.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS 81.6% of statutory visits for Children in Care (CiC) were completed in timescale in Q1 2023/24. This is a decrease when compared with Q1 2022/23 when there were 88.8% of visits completed in timescale, however this was with 116 less visits required. We continue to be below our target of 90% of visits completed in timescale.

Page 64

		CSC 260a	CSC 260b
		% CiC visits completed in timescale within the month	% CiC visits completed in timescale year to date
In Month Performance	Target	90	90
	Apr-23	82.1	82.1
	May-23	78.7	80.3
	Jun-23	84.5	81.6
	Jul-23		
	Aug-23		
	Sep-23		
	Oct-23		
	Nov-23		
	Dec-23		
	Jan-24		
	Feb-24		
	Mar-24		
Annual Trend	2020/21		93.1
	2021/22		90.1
	2022/23		83.4
	2023/24	84.5	81.6



CHILDREN IN CARE: PLACEMENTS

DEFINITION Of those Children in Care (CiC) at the point in time (excluding series of short-term placements), the percentage that had 3 or more separate placements in the previous 12 months; who (under the age of 16 years) had been in their current placement for 2 or more years. and who were placed more than 20 miles away from their home address. Proper assessment and an adequate choice of placements to meet the varied needs of different children are essential if appropriate stable placements are to be made. Inappropriate placements often break down and lead to frequent moves. Nevertheless, the circumstances of some individual children will require 3 or more separate placements during a year if they and others are to be kept safe.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

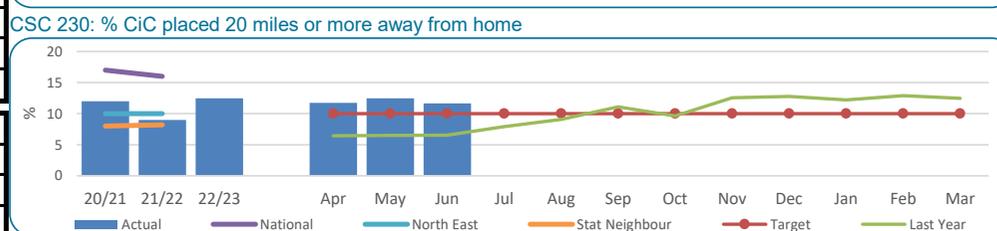
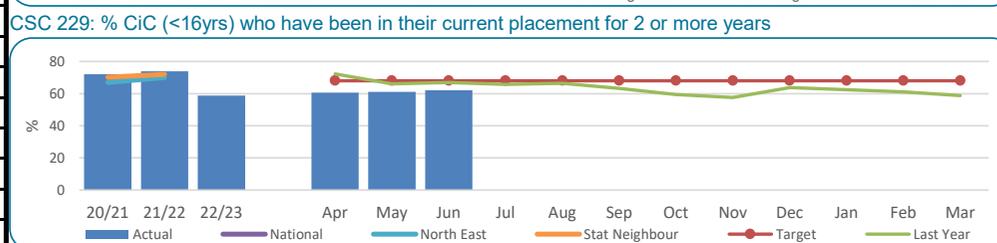
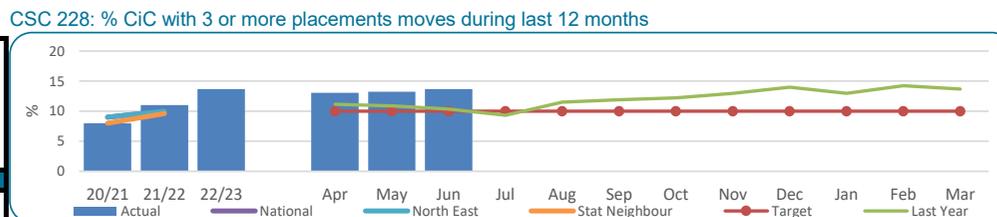
13.7% of our Children in Care, as at June 2023, have had 3 or more placements within the previous 12 months. This is not meeting the internal target of 10%.

Currently, 62.1% of our Children in Care aged under 16 (who have been looked after for at least 2.5 years) have been in their current placement continuously for at least 2 years. This is below our 68% target, however the numerated cohort has remained the same this quarter.

11.6% of our Children in Care have been placed 20 or more miles away from home as of June 2023 which is above our target of 10%. These children are either placed in a children's home, with a connected carer, with IFA carer, with internal foster carer, placed with parents or in a mother and baby unit.

All these placements have been confirmed by team managers to be appropriate for the child enabling them to have the best support either with family links or specialised care.

		CSC 228	CSC 229	CSC 230
		% CiC with 3 or more placements moves during last 12 months	% CiC (<16yrs) who have been in their current placement for 2 or more years	% CiC placed 20 miles or more away from home
In Month Performance	Target	10%	68%	10%
	Apr-23	13.0	60.6	11.7
	May-23	13.3	61.1	12.5
	Jun-23	13.7	62.1	11.6
	Jul-23			
	Aug-23			
	Sep-23			
	Oct-23			
	Nov-23			
	Dec-23			
	Jan-24			
	Feb-24			
	Mar-24			
Annual Trend	2020/21	8.0	72.0	12.0
	2021/22	11.0	74.0	9.0
	2022/23	13.7	58.7	12.5
	2023/24	13.7	62.1	11.6



CHILDREN IN CARE: INITIAL HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

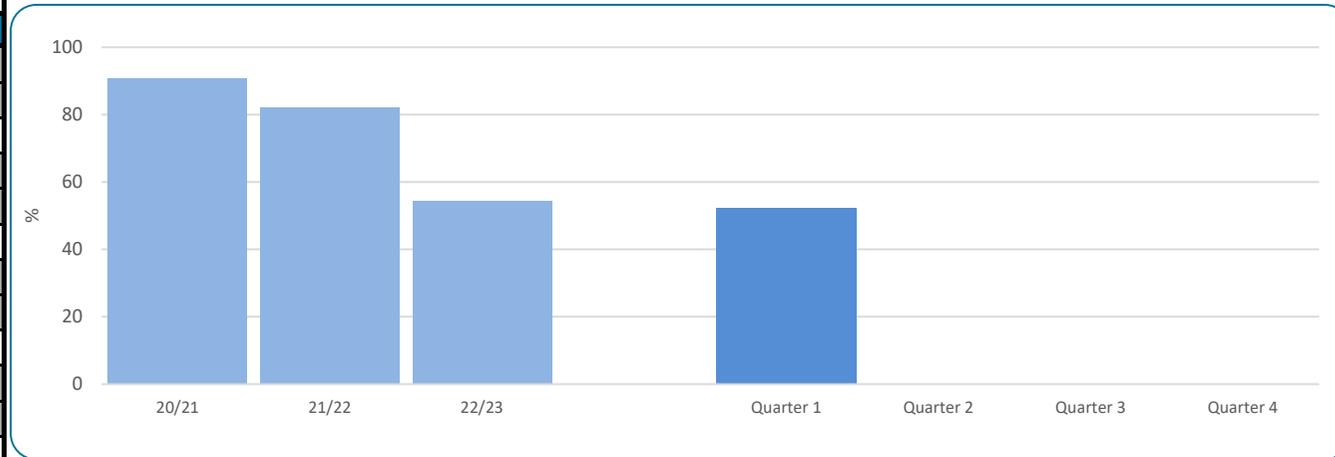
DEFINITION	Percentage of Initial Health Assessments completed within 20 working days of a child coming into our care year to date (data from Health), and percentage of IHA forms returned to Health within 5 working days. This excludes children / young people coming into care due to being remand or UASC.
-------------------	--

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS	52.3% of the children had their IHA completed within 20 days of coming into care by Health. 70.5% of the forms were completed and set to health within the required timescale of 5 days.
-----------------------------	--

Page 66

		Completed IHA within 20 working days (by Health)
In Month Performance	Target	95
	Apr-23	
	May-23	
	Jun-23	23 / 44
	Jul-23	
	Aug-23	
	Sep-23	
	Oct-23	
	Nov-23	
	Dec-23	
	Jan-24	
	Feb-24	
	Mar-24	
Annual Trend	2020/21	90.9%
	2021/22	82.1%
	2022/23	54.5%
	2023/24	52.3%

Completed IHA within 20 working days (by Health)



CHILDREN IN CARE: HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

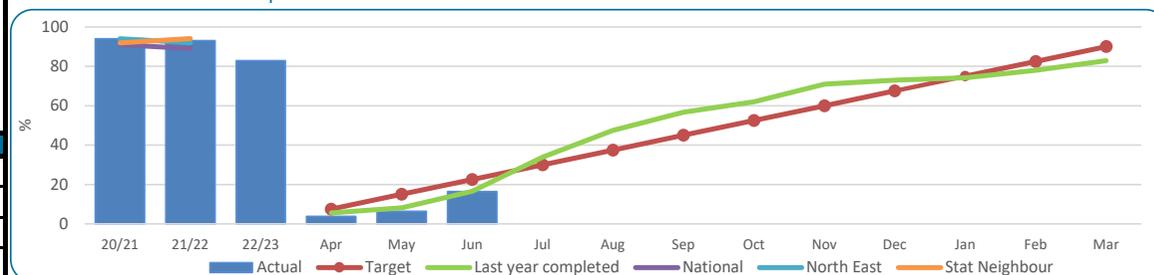
DEFINITION
 Of the Children in Care (CiC) at 31 March who had been in care continuously for at least 12 months, the percentage who have had their Review Health Assessment (RHA) completed and the percentage who have an up to date Health Check (excludes any who will turn 18 before 31st March).
 Children in Care share many of the same health risks and problems as their peers, but often to a greater degree. These indicators track the participation of our Children in Care's health as a proxy for monitoring the general health and wellbeing of the children, as well as providing a check on the effectiveness of joint working with Health to secure good health outcomes for Children in Care.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS
 37.7% of children due a review health assessment by June 2023 have had one completed.
 Currently only 2.9% of the children are refusing to have a health review completed. They are continually reminded of the benefits of having a check-up and encouraged to take part.

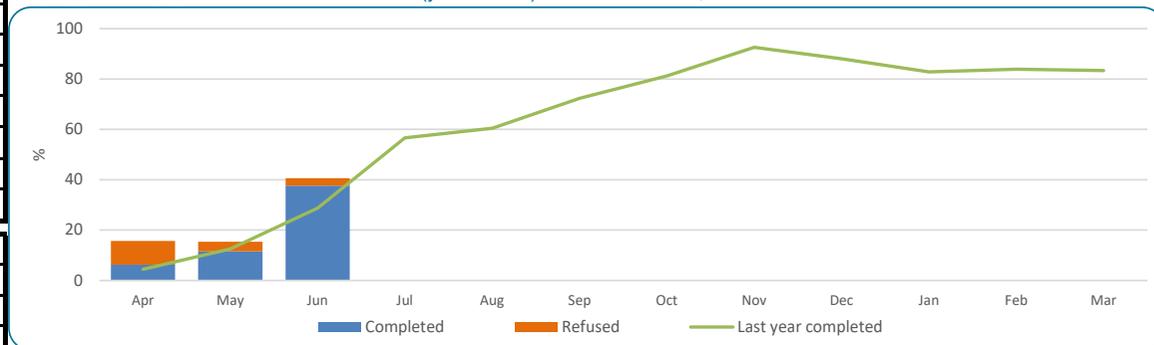
Page 67

		CSC 250		CSC 250b
		% of CiC who have an up to date health checks	% of CiC refusing engagement in their review health check (in month)	% of CiC who had a review health check completed (year to date)
In Month Performance	Target	90%		90%
	Apr-23	3.8	9.4	6.3
	May-23	6.4	3.8	11.5
	Jun-23	16.4	2.9	37.7
	Jul-23			
	Aug-23			
	Sep-23			
	Oct-23			
	Nov-23			
	Dec-23			
	Jan-24			
	Feb-24			
	Mar-24			
Annual Trend	2020/21	94.0	3.7	91.2
	2021/22	93.0	3.7	91.6
	2022/23	82.9	1.6	83.3
	2023/24	16.4	2.9	37.7

CSC 250: % of CiC who are up to date for a review health check



CSC 250b: % of CiC due a review health check (year to date) that have had one, and % that refused



CHILDREN IN CARE: DENTAL HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

DEFINITION

Of the Children in Care (CiC) at 31 March who had been in care continuously for at least 12 months, the percentage who had had their teeth checked by a dentist during the previous 12 months, and the percentage who had had an annual health check during the previous 12 months (excludes any who will turn 18 before 31st March). Children in Care share many of the same health risks and problems as their peers, but often to a greater degree. These indicators track the participation of our Children in Care with dental checks as a proxy for monitoring the general health and wellbeing of the children, as well as providing a check on the effectiveness of joint working with Health to secure good health outcomes for Children in Care.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

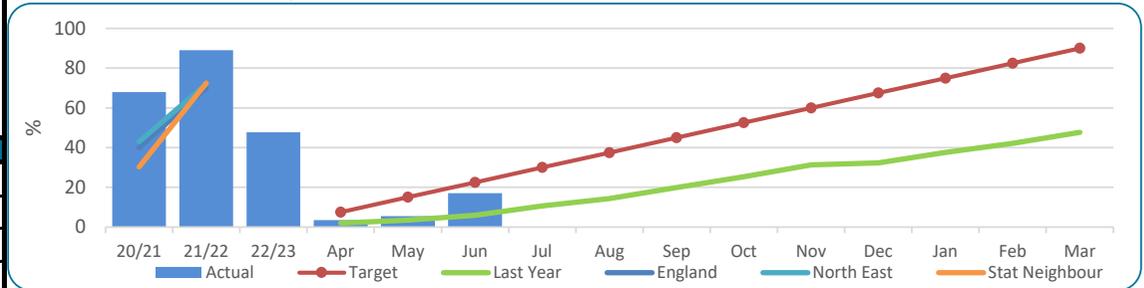
38.5% of children due a dental health assessment by June 2023 have had one completed.

Currently only 1.7% of the children are refusing to have a dental check-up completed. They are continually reminded of the benefits of having a check-up and encouraged to take part.

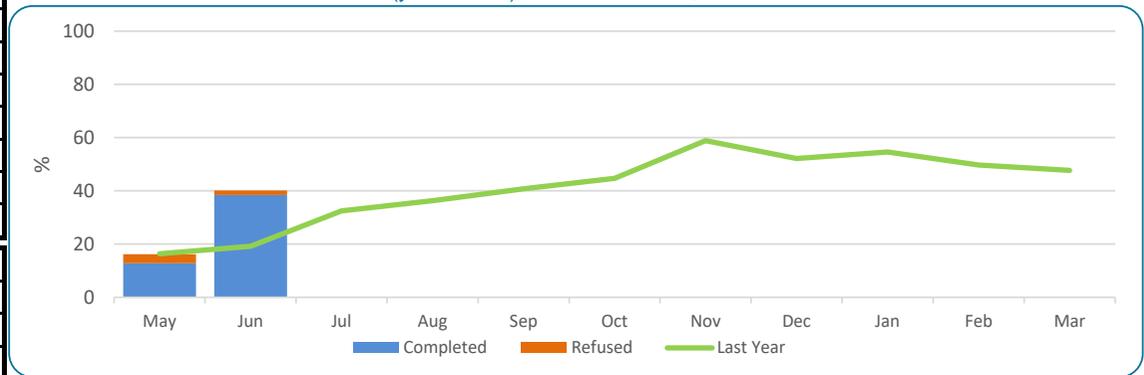
Page 68

		CSC 251		CSC 251d
		% of CiC who have an up to date dental check	% of CiC refusing engagement in their dental check (in month)	% of CiC who had a dental check completed (year to date)
In Month Performance	Target	90%		90%
	Apr-23	3.5	3.6	8.9
	May-23	5.5	3.4	12.8
	Jun-23	17.1	1.7	38.5
	Jul-23			
	Aug-23			
	Sep-23			
	Oct-23			
	Nov-23			
	Dec-23			
	Jan-24			
	Feb-24			
	Mar-24			
Annual Trend	2020/21	68.0	2.8	57.2
	2021/22	89.0	2.6	83.7
	2022/23	47.7	1.4	47.7
	2023/24	17.1	1.7	38.5

CSC 251: % of CiC who are up to date for a dental check



CSC 251d: % of CiC due a dental check (year to date) that have had one, and the % that refused



CARE LEAVERS

DEFINITION Former relevant care leavers split to show the young people who, at 31st March, will be aged 19-21 and those who will be aged 22-25. The percentage who were in suitable accommodation at their most recent contact, and the percentage who were not in employment, education or training at their most recent contact. This measures accommodation and employment outcomes for young people formerly in care - a key group at risk of social exclusion. It is intended to increase the proportion of former care leavers who are in suitable accommodation and employment, education or training.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

98.4% of our care leavers aged 19-21 and 95.2% of our care leavers aged 22-25 were in suitable accommodation at the end of June 2023. This was due to some young people being in custody.

Of the care leavers, aged 19-21 and as of 30th June 2023, were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

- 6.3% NEET because of illness or disability
- 14.3% NEET because of other circumstances
- 6.3% NEET because of pregnancy or parenting.

This equates to 27.0% of our care leavers which is positively below the internal target of 30% NEET but the highest proportion we have seen.

Of the care leavers, aged 22-25 and as of 30th June 2023, were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

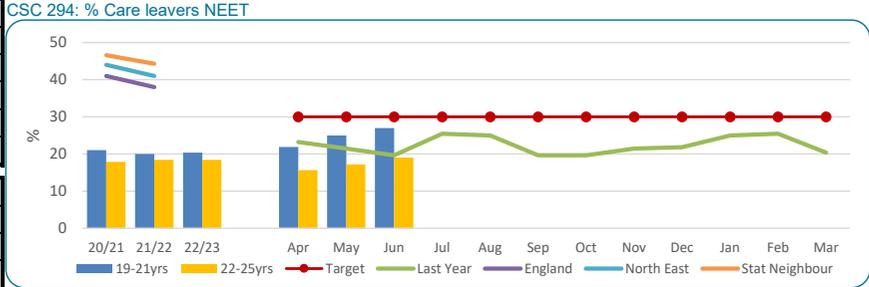
- 9.5% NEET because of illness or disability
- 3.2% NEET because of other circumstances
- 6.3% NEET because of pregnancy or parenting.

This equates to 19.0%.

20.6% of the young people, aged 19-21, were engaging in education (7.9% of which are in studies beyond A level) and 52.4% of the young people were in training or employment (23.8% in full time (including apprenticeships) and 28.6% in part time).

6.3% of the young people, aged 22-25, were engaging in education (all of which are in studies beyond A level) and 74.6% of the young people were in training or employment (28.6% in full time (including apprenticeships), 46.0% in part time).

		CSC 286 19-21 year olds		CSC 294 22-25 year olds	
		% Care leavers in suitable accommodation	% Care leavers NEET	% Care leavers in suitable accommodation	% Care leavers NEET
In Month Performance	Target	90%	30%		
	Apr-23	98.4	21.9	95.3	15.6
	May-23	98.4	25.0	95.3	17.2
	Jun-23	98.4	27.0	95.2	19.0
	Jul-23				
	Aug-23				
	Sep-23				
	Oct-23				
	Nov-23				
	Dec-23				
	Jan-24				
	Feb-24				
	Mar-24				
Annual Trend	2020/21	100.0	21.0	92.9	17.9
	2021/22	98.0	20.0	97.3	18.4
	2022/23	96.3	20.4	95.9	18.4
	2023/24	98.4	27.0	95.2	19.0



This page is intentionally left blank

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY 23 OCTOBER 2023

REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE INDICATORS USED IN PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND REGULATION

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide scrutiny committee with an overview of the current Performance Indicators used within the Scrutiny process and to consider appropriate next steps in relation to a review of the Performance Indicators.

Background

2. Childrens Services provide a range of statutory services and functions on behalf of the Council as well as being a regulated service, subject to regular Inspection and judgement by OFSTED. As part of these processes Childrens Services are duty bound to measure their performance through a range of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).
3. A significant proportion of the performance measures that are collated are statutorily required to be collected and measured and there are statutory returns which must be completed, for example the SSDA903 which requires the statutory return of data to the Department for Education.
4. As our improvement journey has developed since the Inadequate judgement in 2015, a key focus has been performance data. This focus has seen the demand for data increase and the numbers of measured performance indicators has increased significantly with the current quarterly Childrens service Performance report containing 84 individual performance measures.
5. Whilst the importance of the members of Scrutiny committee members scrutinising and challenging the data is well recognised, there was previously a decision reached that the attention of the committee would be better focused on a smaller sub section of the key indicators and a more condensed version of the performance report was produced for scrutiny.

Current Situation

6. An overview of Childrens Services Performance is currently presented on a quarterly basis by the Assistant Director of Childrens Services to the Scrutiny Committee. This is presented by way of an agreed selection of Indicators (22 of the KPIs) and an overview report.

7. From a service perspective, the 22 KPIs were selected as they are seen to provide a summary of the key areas across the whole service and in this sense are seen as a representative sample of the larger full Performance Report.
8. Members have expressed the wish to review the Performance Indicators currently presented to Scrutiny. The service is wholly supportive of this and welcomes the oversight and challenge that scrutiny presents. Given the purpose of presenting the report is to empower committee members to scrutinise the service, it would seem more appropriate that members are included in the review process, rather than an officer process and decision.
9. I would therefore suggest that a Task and Finish group be established to include members and Officers to review the use of Performance indicators. This group should consider both the existing KPI's which are presented, as well as the overview report in the context of the full performance report, to consider if there are any measures currently not being presented to Scrutiny which members would value seeing.

Recommendations

10. It is recommended that Scrutiny note the contents of the report and support the establishing of a Task and Finish Group to review the Performance Indicators used within the Scrutiny process.

Chris Bell

Assistant Director, Childrens Services

Background Papers

Tony Murphy: Extension 5637

S17 Crime and Disorder	The service supports the Council's crime and disorder responsibilities, young people engaged in learning are less likely to engage in anti-social behaviour
Health and Wellbeing	The service actively promotes health and wellbeing
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	The service promotes sustainability
Diversity	The service actively supports the diversity agenda
Wards Affected	All wards will be affected
Groups Affected	All families of learners with special education needs
Budget and Policy Framework	Services for SEND are supported through the Dedicated Schools Grant
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
Council Plan	This work will support the aim to provide excellent services for children and young people with special educational needs and disability (SEND) - implement a new SEND strategy, increase the number of SEND places in schools and work to raise SEND funding levels from central government
Efficiency	The work will support efficient use of resources to support SEND
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This work will have a positive impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers

This page is intentionally left blank

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY

23rd October 2023

DESIGNATED OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

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 Officers' (DO) response to all contacts received relating to allegations/concerns of abuse by those who work with children for the period April 2022 to March 2023 and to highlight the required actions for the period April 2023 to March 2024.

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 2023/24 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 Childrens 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
Corporate Plan	This report has no implications for the Corporate 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 2022/23

Managing Allegations and Concerns against Staff, Carers or Volunteers

Contents

1. Purpose of report
2. Introduction / National Context
3. Local Arrangements
4. Cross Boundary issues
5. Contact made with the Designated Officer
6. Categories of Concern
7. Source of Referrals by Profession / Employment Setting
8. Allegations by Staff Group
9. Outcome of Allegations
10. Performance
11. Freedom of Information Requests
12. Service Improvements & Developments 2022/23
13. Designated Officer Service Priorities and Plan 2023/24
14. Recommendations
15. References

Appendices

- | | |
|------------|--|
| Appendix 1 | Service Improvements & Developments 2022/23 |
| Appendix 2 | Designated Officer Service Priority Plan 2023/24 |

Designated Officer Annual Report 2022/23

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) for all contacts received relating to allegations/concerns of abuse by those who work with children for the period April 2022 to March 2023 and to highlight the required actions for the period April 2023 to March 2024.

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 \(Revised 2022\)](#).

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 within the Independent Review and Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Service. Between April 2022 and November 2022, the Designated Officer role was undertaken by a Darlington Borough Council employee, however due to a change in working arrangements, for the period December 2022 and March 2023, the role was undertaken by an Agency Designated Officer.

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.

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 Team Manager must be informed, and the Designated Officer should consult them about the action required.

4.4 Interviews of children from Darlington Local Authority living out of area 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.

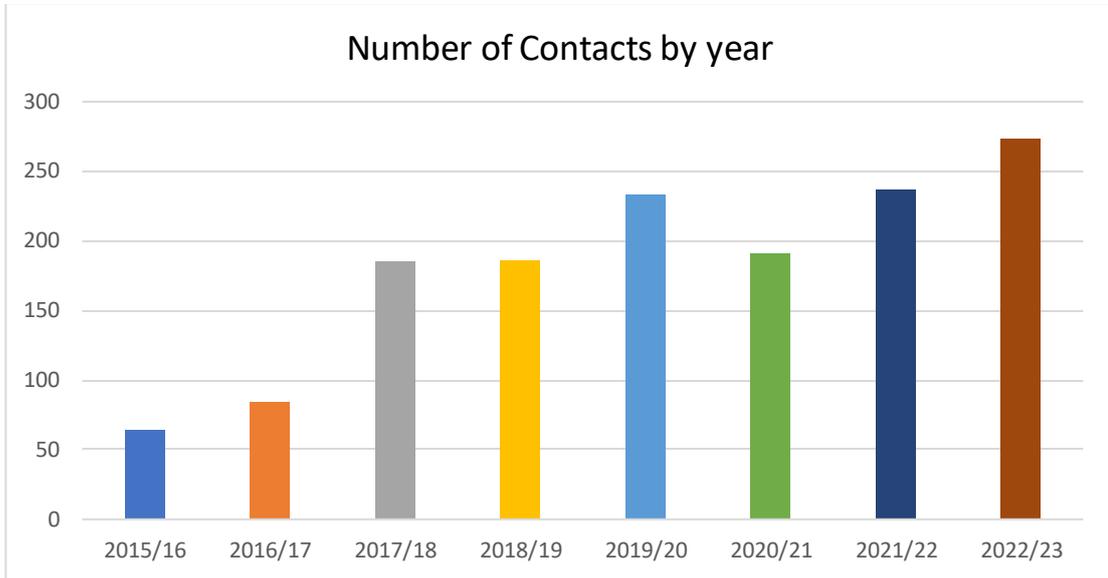
5.0 Contact made with the Designated Officer

5.1 It should be noted that two Designated Officers have carried out the role at different times throughout 2022/23 and their recording practices and thresholds may have differed slightly. All percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

5.2 In 2022/23 the Designated Officer service received a total of 273 contacts in respect of potential allegations. This was a 15% increase on the number of contacts received in 2021/22 and is the highest number of yearly contacts ever recorded. Of the total number of contacts received, 60 allegations progressed to an Initial Evaluation Meeting (IEM) or a strategy meeting which the Designated Officer attended, (all of which were conducted via Microsoft Teams). This was 22% of all contacts, which is a slight decrease on the 2021/22 figure.

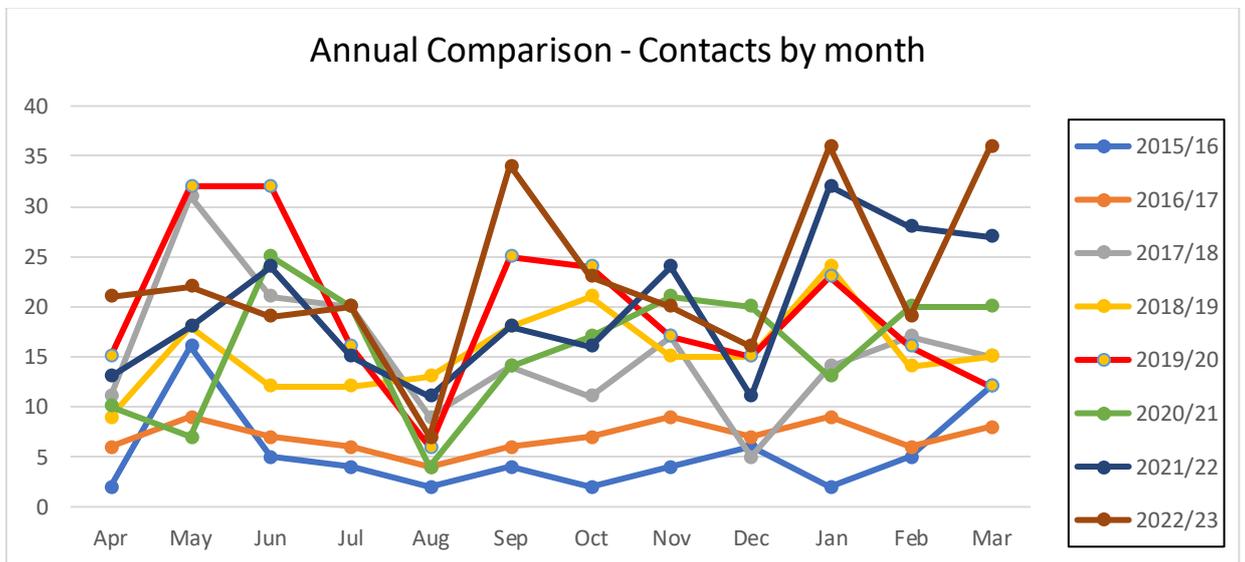
5.3 Initial Evaluation Meetings take place when information sharing is beneficial between agencies involved, for example, Designated Safeguarding Leads within the referring organisation, Human Resources, Police and Children's Services. This can follow a Strategy Meeting held by Children's Services, or 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.

5.4 CHART 1



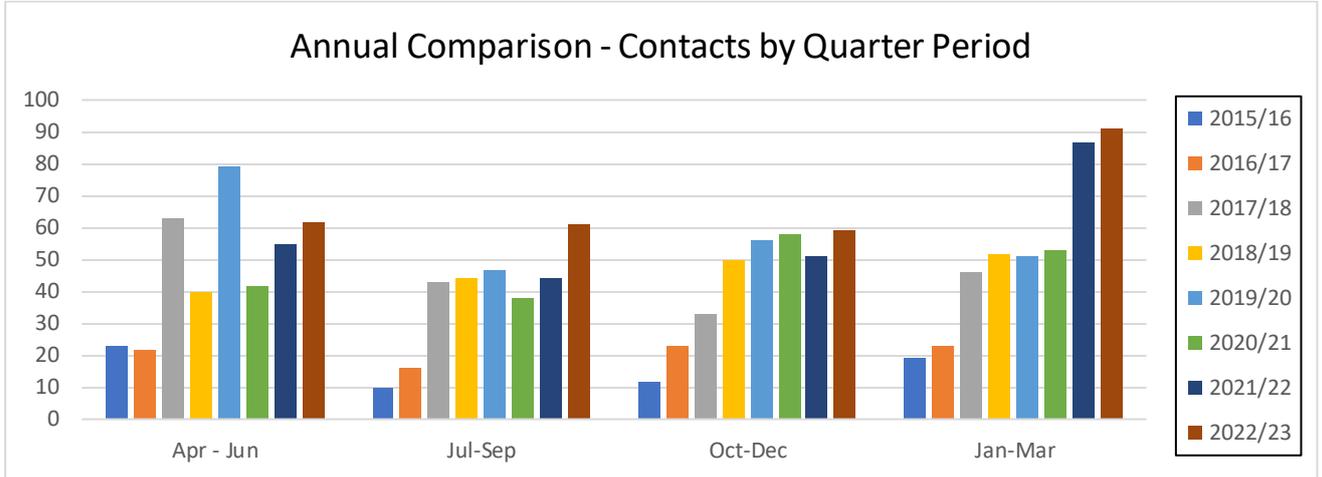
5.5 The figures in **Chart 1** show that the rate of contacts in 2022/23 increased by 15% (an increase of 36 contacts) in comparison to the previous reporting year.

5.6 CHART 2



5.7 Analysis of the breakdown of monthly data reflects the fact that 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 and falls to a lesser extent during other months when schools are closed.

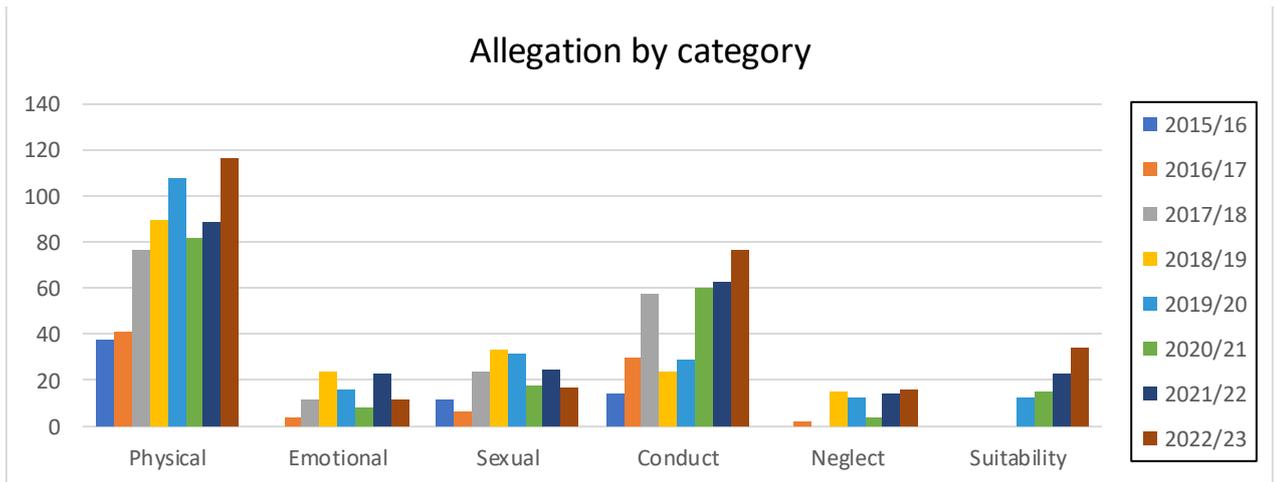
CHART 3



5.8 Chart 3 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 previously been noted by Designated Officers throughout the North-East.

6. Categories of Concern

CHART 4



6.1 Of the 273 contacts in 2022/23, the main category for referral was allegations of physical abuse. This is in line with the data from previous years.

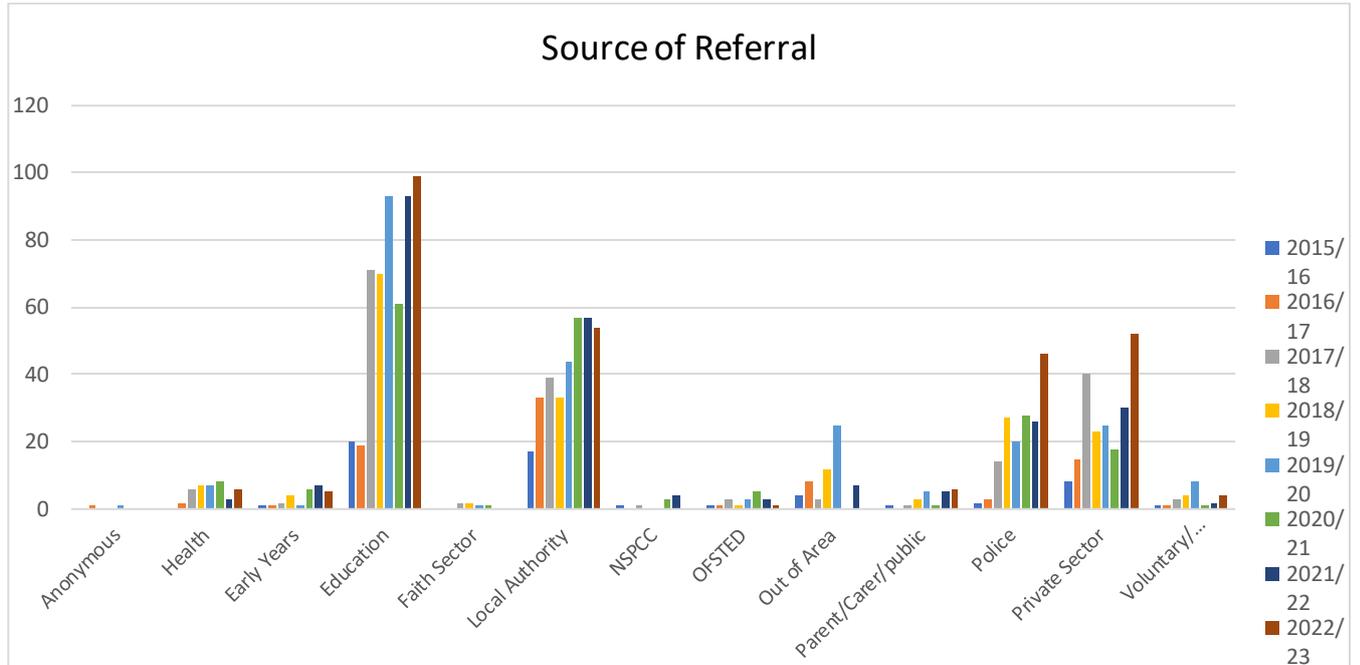
6.2. In 2022/23, 117 (43%) contacts were in relation to physical abuse which represents an increase of 5% on last year’s figures within this category. This is probably explained by

allegations of physical assault within education settings and complaints about the use of Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) in schools with SEN provision. 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 77 (28%) contacts in 2022/23. This is comparable with the figures for the previous year's reporting figures 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.
- 6.4** A total of 34 contacts have been recorded under the category of 'suitability'. This amounts to 12% of the total and an increase when 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. Improved reporting from Children's Social Care to the Designated Officer (following the structural changes and reporting mechanisms to the Childrens 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 17 contacts regarding allegations of sexual abuse in 2022/23. This is 6% of all contacts and represents a decrease in contacts under this category compared to last year.
- 6.6** There were 16 contacts regarding allegations of neglect in 2022/23. This is 6% of all contacts in this category and is comparable with the previous year's reporting figures.
- 6.7** There has been a total of 12 contacts regarding allegations of emotional abuse in 2022/23. This is 4% of the total contacts which represents a decrease on the previous year's reporting figures.

7.0 Source of Referrals by Profession / Employment setting

CHART 5



7.1 As can be seen in **Chart 5** Education settings in 2022/23 continues to be the largest referring group, accounting for 99 (36%) of the 273 contacts with the Designated Officer. This represents an increase on last year’s figures. Most contacts involving schools were because 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 by education settings. It should be noted that the total number of allegations relating to education establishments in the ‘allegations by staff group’ is slightly higher at 120 and this is because some of the allegations involving an employee in education were referred to the Designated Officer by other agencies.

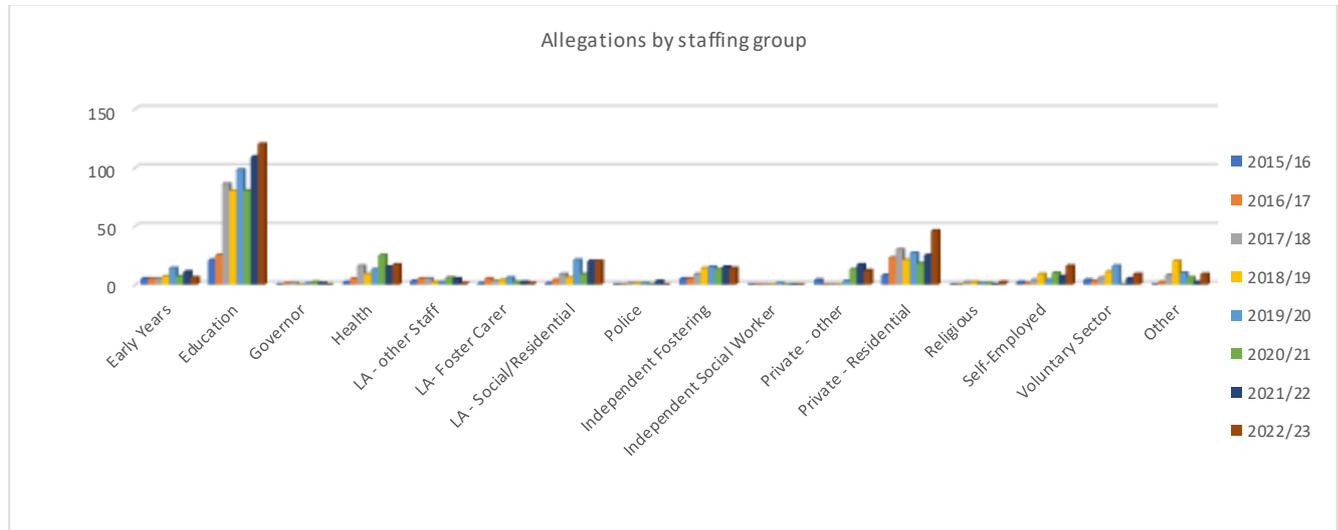
7.2 Contacts have continued to be received from a wide range of professions and organisations. In 2022/23 in addition to Education, there were a total of 54 contacts to the Designated Officer from a Local Authority and 46 from Police, these being the highest referring agencies and commensurate with previous reporting periods.

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 120 contacts which is 43% of all allegations referred to the Designated Officer in 2022/23 and the largest number recorded in this reporting category in any reporting year. The [Covid 19 mental health and wellbeing surveillance report \(Chapter 4\)](#) stated in 2021/22 that during 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 and some children in mainstream schools appear to have suffered substantial impacts on their mental health during the pandemic and there is some evidence that the issues have continued into 2022/23, as reported in [Ofsted: Education Recovery in Schools: Spring 2022](#) (published 4 April 2022), and have impacted on the wellbeing of pupils and behaviour. 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 they co-delivered refresher training to Designated Safeguarding Leads in schools throughout 2022/23. The Designated Officer continues to have a good relationship with the Designated Safeguarding Leads in all schools for children with SEND in Darlington and there are clear channels of communication.

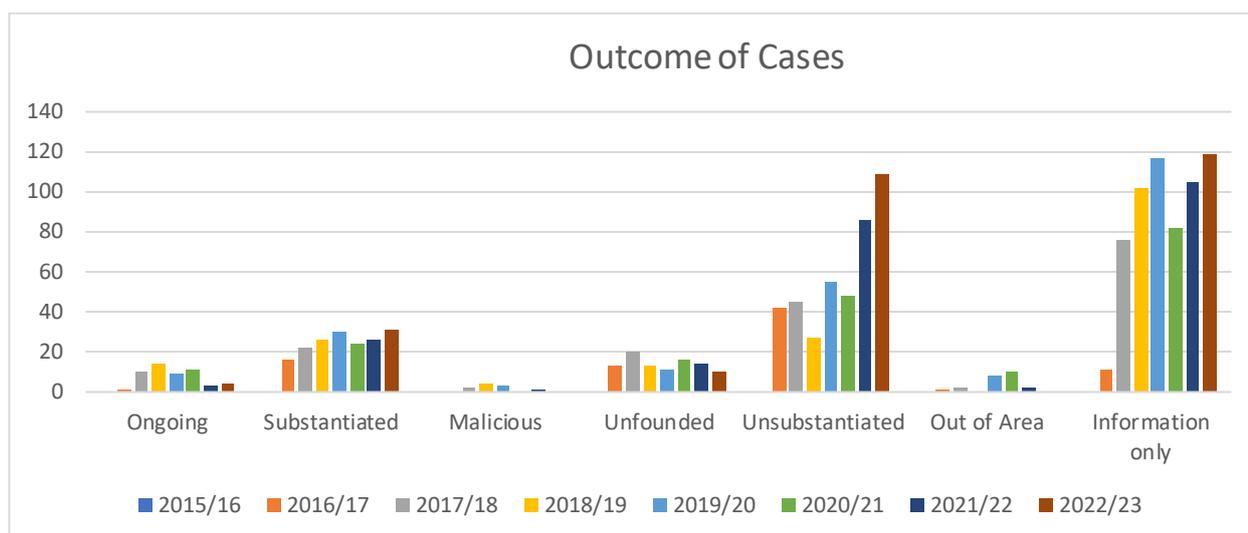
8.3 Of the 120 contacts relating to allegations received in 2022/23 about employees in

education settings, 26 (22%) were regarding employees from primary schools; 19 (16%) from secondary schools; 4 (3%) from further education settings; 7 (6%) referred to an agency teacher and 1 (1%) from a residential establishment with attached education provision. A total of 63 (53%) were from schools which provide a service for children with Special Educational Needs (both primary and secondary age groups). The percentage breakdown is similar to the previous reporting year, though with an increase for employees in schools with a SEN provision.

- 8.4** There was a total of 74 allegations (61%) in the category of physical abuse relating to the education sector and this represents a 9% 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. The Designated Officer had no concerns regarding the use of RPI in this period.
- 8.5** The number of contacts regarding Independent Foster Carers has slightly decreased with 14 allegations being referred during 2022/23. There has been 1 contact relating to Darlington Borough Council Foster Carers during the recording period, comparable with last year's figures which raises no cause for concern.
- 8.6** The Designated Officer works closely with the Service Manager for the Fostering Team (Darlington Borough Council), for all referrals about foster carers (including Independent Fostering Agencies). 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

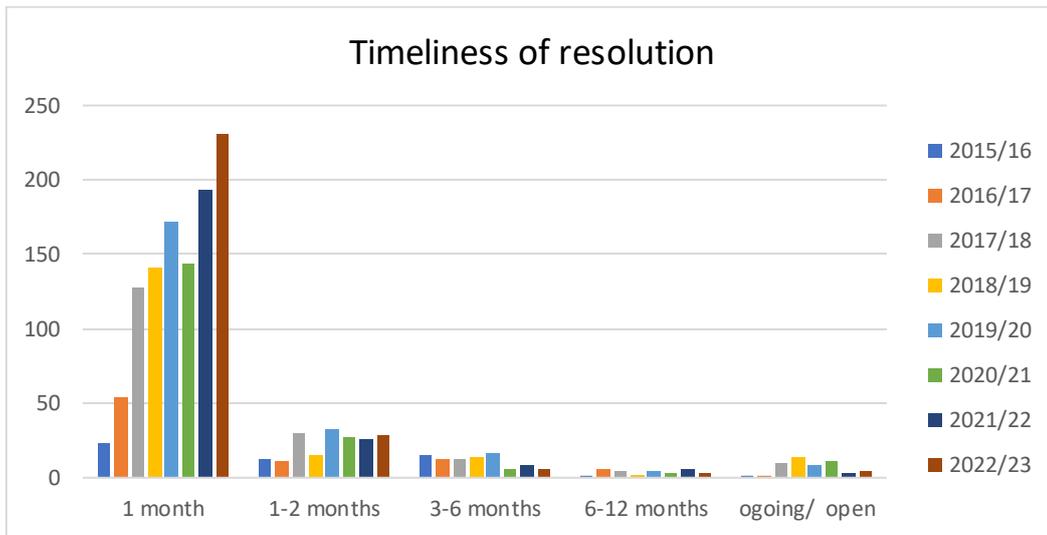


- 9.1** In relation to the 31 substantiated allegations, 5 employees were dismissed (16%), 3 were deregistered (10%), 6 resigned from their position (19%), and 10 staff members were reinstated (32%). No action was taken in respect of 7 allegations (23%), with actions plans or management advice provided.
- 9.2** There were 109 unsubstantiated outcomes and of these, 7 staff were re-instated (6%) and 96 resulted in no further action (88%), 2 staff members were dismissed (2%) and 4 staff members resigned (4%). 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 10 allegations deemed to be unfounded, in all cases, no further action was taken.
- 9.4** No allegations were 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.
- 9.5** In this reporting period, 119 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. Others that are subsequently found not to be in the remit of the Designated Officer procedures and result in advice being given and some enquiries 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. At the time of

writing, a total of 4 allegations (1%) remains open.

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. The performance of the Designated Officer is measured and monitored through supervision with a Service Manager.

10.2 It is important to manage allegations within timescales to ensure that investigations are dealt with promptly. This ensures that children are protected from employees who may pose a risk of harm, but also ensures 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 2022/23 allegations were resolved in a timely manner with 231 (84%) of the total being resolved in one month and this is a slight improvement on performance data from previous years and exceeds the local target. 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 95% of allegations were resolved within 3 months (exceeding the local target) and 97% 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 allegations and criminal or internal disciplinary investigations. At the time of writing the report, a total of 3 (1%) investigations originating in 2022/23 were still active.

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 2022/23, the Designated Officer service has continued to take the lead with regards to Freedom of Information Requests relating to allegations made about employees or volunteers working with children. Over the 12 months reporting period, 1 Freedom of Information request was processed.

12.0 Service Improvements & Developments 2022/23

12.1 See Appendix 1.

13.0 Designated Officer Service Priorities and Plan 2023/24

- 13.1** In 2023/24, the Designated Officer 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. 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** In 2022/23 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 2023/24 to promote safer recruitment.
- 13.4** The Designated Officer service has identified 5 key priorities (Appendix 2) to progress in 2023/24 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 2022/23 and to acknowledge the priorities of the Designated Officer service for 2023/24.
- 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: 31 August 2023

Appendix 1

Service Improvements & Developments 2022/23

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 2022/23 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 2024	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, 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 (March 2023). 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 relation to continual roll out of	DO	Ongoing	A new Multi-Agency Trainer has been appointed and this is an on-going process and a top priority.

	designated training to improve practice and reduce referrals across all organisations			
	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).
	DO to attend all regional DO meetings to ensure that Darlington's views and opinions are represented.	DO	Ongoing	Meetings are held via Microsoft Teams

Designated Officer Service Priority Plan 2023/24

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 2024

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 2024

	Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) within this category. This work is ongoing.		
--	---	--	--

Priority 3: 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	March 2024

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
23 OCTOBER 2023**

LEARNING AND SKILLS ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Members with an update on the performance of the Learning & Skills Service for academic year 2022/23.
2. To allow Scrutiny members oversight of, and an opportunity to challenge, the performance of this externally funded service

Summary

3. The service is now seeing a recovery of learner numbers and performance remains high.
4. The service is growing provision whilst continuing to respond to employer and community need.
5. The service was inspected by Ofsted in June 2022, retaining its assessment of 'Good' overall.

Recommendation

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

Tony Murphy
Assistant Director of Education and Inclusion

Background Papers

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

Paul Richardson: Mobile 0794 724 7224

S17 Crime and Disorder	The service supports the Council’s crime and disorder responsibilities, young people engaged in learning are less likely to engage in anti-social behaviour
Health and Wellbeing	The service actively promotes health and wellbeing
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	The service promotes sustainability
Diversity	The service actively supports the diversity agenda
Wards Affected	The service offers provision across all of Darlington
Groups Affected	The service offers learning for 16–18-year-olds and adults
Budget and Policy Framework	The service is externally funded. This report does not impact on the budget and policy framework
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
Council Plan	The service contributes to the priorities in the Council Plan allowing people to develop their potential, improve their skills and help improve their employment opportunities
Efficiency	Scrutiny of performance is integral to optimising outcomes
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	Looked After Children or Care Leavers may access the service offer

MAIN REPORT

The Learning & Skills Service

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

Learner Numbers

12. In 2022/23 the service supported 1,537 (1,177) learners (previous year's numbers in brackets) across a wide range of programmes, including:
 - (a) 46 (49) 16–18-year-olds on study programme
 - (b) 1,029 (428) people on Adult Skills courses
 - (c) 415 (667) people on Community Learning
 - (d) 47 (33) Apprenticeship starts

Funding

11. The service is totally externally funded. The overall funding generated from the ESFA and TVCA for the Learning & Skills Service in 2022/23 was £1,203,148 (£1,007,210). This was split as follows:
 - (a) £275,419 (£221,801) 16-18 Study Programme (ESFA)
 - (b) £472,590 (£462,760) - Adult and Community Education (TVCA)

- (c) £64,497 (£66,776) - Adult and Community Education (ESFA)
- (d) £242,189 (£224,501) - Apprenticeships (ESFA / Employers)
- (e) £14,639 (£6,501) - Adult Learning Loans (ESFA / SLC)
- (f) £133,814 (£24,871) - Other Income

Performance

12. Due to the impact of the pandemic on post 16 providers no achievement rates were published nationally in 2020/21 or 2021/22 therefore there are no national benchmarks for comparison. However locally produced performance data shows:

Provision Type	Overall Achievement Rate		
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23 (Provisional)
16-18	78.4%	92.3%	95.7%
Adult Skills	73.8%	82.8%	93.6%
Community Learning	98.5%	97.2%	99.3%
Apprenticeships	84.0%	88.0%	71.4%

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

Learner Progression

14. Learner progression, or the positive destination rate, measures the percentage of learner who move into education, employment or training after completing a course with Learning & Skills. TVCA changes in the Learning for Inclusion (previously Community Learning) offer have resulted in a decrease in positive progressions following a shift from qualification led funding to funding for individuals.

Provision Type	Positive Destination Rate		
	20120/21	2021/22	2022/23 (Provisional)
16-18	90.0%	73.0%	90.0%
Adult Skills	72.3%	82.0%	84.6%
Community Learning	75.0%	87.5%	66.3%
Apprenticeships	83.0%	81.1%	72.0%

Learner Satisfaction

15. Learner satisfaction (those rating the service good or above) has remained fairly static, standing at 92% in 2021/22 and 91% in 2022/23.

Employer Satisfaction

16. Employer Satisfaction (those rating the service good or above) rose from 95% in 2021/22 to 96.3% in 2022/23.

Observation of Learning, Teaching and Assessment

17. In 2021/22 91% (12 in number) of observations of learning, teaching and assessment were rated Good or above. This is a slight increase from 90% (10 in number) in 2021/22.

Impact of Covid

18. Whilst there still appears to be a reluctance for some people to engage in learning, learner numbers appear to be recovering following a significant dip during Covid.

Ofsted Inspection Outcome

19. The service was inspected in June 2022 and retained its overall grade of 'Good'. The inspectors looked at eight discrete areas;

(a) The quality of education	Good
(b) Behaviour and attitudes	Good
(c) Personal development	Good
(d) Leadership and management	Good
(e) Education programmes for young people	Good
(f) Adult learning programmes	Good
(g) Apprenticeships	Good
(h) Provision for learners with high needs	Good

20. Only three areas for improvement were identified, all of which are being addressed.

- (a) Ensure that all tutors use information about learners' starting points to effectively plan learning that meets individual needs
- (b) Ensure that all learners benefit from a range of work experience opportunities
- (c) Ensure that tutors receive appropriate training to enable them to continue to develop their teaching skills

21. The report highlighted the fact that the service is meeting the needs of the local community and local businesses, learners were well supported and that the service was well led.

Challenges Ahead

22. The service was awarded a further three-year funding contract by TVCA for Adult Skills in 2021/22 and continues to respond to the demands of local skills needs. However, there are also potential uncertainties if the TVCA devolved funding model starts to diverge from what the rules and requirements were under the ESFA when the service has to re-tender for academic year 2024/25, unless a one-year extension clause is enacted.

23. The government proposed a review of the further education funding system in their white paper 'Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth' which was published in January 2021. These reforms are due to be implemented from academic year 2024/25. At present the service has no indication of the likely impact those funding reforms will have on Learning & Skills or the TVCA devolved funding.

This page is intentionally left blank

Adoption Tees Valley
Annual Report
2022-2023



Index

	Introduction	
1	Executive Summary	2
2	Governance	4
3	National Adoption – National Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pan Regional Early Permanence Project • Pan Regional Multi-Disciplinary Adoption Support Service - MDASS 	4
4	Partnership Working	5
5	Benchmarking Key Performance Data	6
6	Marketing and Recruitment	7
7	Preparation, Assessment and Approval of Adopters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who did ATV approve? 	8
8	Referrals of Children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referrals of Children by LA • ADM Best Interests Decision by LA • PO by LA • Matches by LA • Placements of children for adoption by LA • Adoption Orders by LA • Timescales for children – A2 and A10 • Changes of Plan away from adoption • Interruptions, Disruptions and Children returning to Care post Adoption Order 	11
9	Children Matched and Placed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal- External families • Children with PO, not linked at the end of period. • Demographics of children adopted • Matching and Family Finding Developments 	21
10	Early Permanence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EP by LA 	22
11	Adoption Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tiers 1,2 and 3 	24
12	Commissioned Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth Parent Support and Access to Records • Framework of Providers • ASF applications 	27
13	Involving Children and Adoptive Parents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's Groups • Voice and Influence Group • Adopter Partnership Forum • Adopter Survey 	30
14	Adoption Panel	32
15	Staffing	33
16	Quality Assurance	34
17	Finance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Running Costs • Interagency Fees 	37
18	Service Development Plan	38

Introduction

1. Executive Summary

This annual report of the Regional Adoption Agency business covers the period 1.4.22-31.3.23.

This year has been one of building on partnerships, and existing practice to strengthen and improve adoption in Tees Valley. There has been more work with regional partner RAA 's, and the regional VAA 's, on collaborative projects which are detailed later in this report. Work has continued with the 5 partner Local Authorities to continue to strengthen early twin track care planning for adoption.

The adoption team have been working on trauma informed practice within this year, inspired by one of the presentations at the national RAA Adoption Support Conference in September 22. ATV has now implemented a model of the Trauma Timeline, and use of the trauma tree in assessments of adopters, and in preparation for matching children. Staff, adopters, partner Local Authorities and Panel are reporting very positively on this practice, which is helping to focus on the long term needs of the child, arising from early trauma.

ATV continues to work within the overall framework of the National Adoption Strategy. This year has seen significant focus on early permanence, including the launch of the National Early Permanence Practice Standards. <https://earlypermanence.org.uk/resources/>. While there have been the same number of EP placements as in the previous year, more prospective adopters have been approved for early permanence, however, we continue to aim for greater numbers. The focus has also continued on adoption support, including on the long term identity needs of adopted children and adults. With more early permanence for children, and continuous development of the framework for these placements, more adoptive parents are meeting with the parents of the child from the outset, and we see a national move towards long term maintenance of significant relationships, enacted through direct and indirect ways of keeping in touch, including "letterbox" contact. Research, including the latest Adoption Barometer Report (PAC UK) continues to tell us that many adopted people want to have some form of contact with their birth relatives, and as a whole system we need to continue to review how we move in this direction.

This year followed the "tail" of the Somerset judgement, and its repercussions for children in the adoption system across England. A small number of children in Teesside had delayed adoption orders, and there were some delayed placements due to the legal implications of Somerset in the previous year: for this reason, we see a small number of children who have gone on to

be adopted, or even placed for adoption within this period, who might otherwise have had that part of their adoption journey in the previous year.

Adoption Orders are higher than the last year, while children placed for adoption remains the same as in the previous year. This level of placement activity is at a lower level than has been the case, which follows the national trend, where adoptions from care have reduced over the last 2 years. Of Significance in this region is the increase in numbers of Placement Orders granted within this year – 87 which is the highest level in the previous 4 years. Similarly, ADM best interests' decisions have risen significantly - 100 in this year, a 28% increase on the previous year, also the highest for the previous 4 years.

This shows Local Authorities are planning for adoption for more children, and these care plans are being authorised through Court, indicating that adoption is the right plan for the child.

ATV continues to perform well in timeliness of adoption for children. Many children are being placed within government set timescales for placement once the Placement Order is granted. Timescales (PO to match) have improved this year, from 174 to 146 days and ATV continues to perform better than the England average by some 50 days, although remains over the government target. The time from a child starting their first care placement to moving in with adoptive parents has increased, with average days being 411 across the Tees Valley, which is lower than the national target (421 days) and 70 days lower than the England average.

The number of families approved over the past year has risen from the previous year, with 55 families having been assessed and approved to adopt. While this increase is welcomed, ATV continues to need more families for siblings, for older children up to the age of 5, and for children who may have some uncertainty in relation to developmental delay.

As part of this annual report, I would like to acknowledge the significant contribution of "Lesley" (name changed) a Mum who has had 5 children leave her care, and one adopted, and who makes an important contribution to prospective adopter preparation training within this region. She talks at every preparation training group, about the perspective of birth parents and why keeping in touch matters. "Lesley" is truly exceptional. She has had the courage to talk to hundreds of prospective adopters over the years, and she makes a real and tangible difference to their views and feelings about birth parents, which then goes on to translate into a more informed understanding around keeping in touch.

2. Governance

ATV is governed by the Board of Directors which comprise the DCS's for the 5 partner Local Authorities. There are additionally 2 non-executive directors who are adoptive parents.

In this year, the ATV Board was chaired by the Middlesbrough DCS, Sue Butcher, who has now left post. In February 2023 Sally Robinson, DCS in Hartlepool took over as chair.

Sally has significant operational experience in adoption. she is the ADM for Hartlepool and chairs the regional ASGLB until its decommissioning in 2022. Sally remains as chair of the NE regional adoption network meeting, involving LA's, VAA's and CAFCASS.

The ATV Board meets 4 times each year, and considers performance information, finance, and adoption operational and strategic issues within the region.

3. National Adoption – National Strategy

Adoption Tees Valley works within the wider sector forum of the national Regional Adoption Agencies group, which is linked to ADCS, CVAA, DfE and a wide range of stakeholder committees and groups. The RAA leaders group works with a strategic plan, closely aligned to the National Adoption Strategy, Achieving Excellence Everywhere (2021). Through the RAA leader's forum, the DfE has made available national funding to support strategic delivery against the national priorities. The Service Manager at ATV chairs the national Early Permanence Working Group. Managers and practitioners in ATV have access to forums and training opportunities that are delivered through the RAA Leaders network.

This year has seen stronger pan regional working together across the 3 RAA's of Adoption Tees Valley, Adopt North East, and Adopt Coast to Coast. The 3 RAA's cover the 12 Local Authority areas of the North East, and through collaborative working we have together set an agenda for greater consistency of delivery in this "pan region".

We have secured funding for 2 significant projects pan regionally to offer improved services, and greater consistency of delivery in adoption across the NE region.

NE and Cumbria Early Permanence Project

This is a 2 ½ year funded project to increase the number of children who have access to early permanence, and to develop a range of placements including more concurrent planning placements. The funding is £330,000, funded until April 2025, and has been secured and managed through the support of Stockton BC Procurement Team.

The project has recruited a lead consultant who is Kate Knowles, a manager from the North West Concurrency Project –which has strong experience and expertise in concurrent planning placements. Each RAA has seconded at least one social worker into the project, and one regional VAA, Arc Adoption, is also involved as a partner. The aim is to achieve regional sufficiency of EP carers, and more children having the opportunity for a single placement, without moves around the system, until a Court decision is made on the final care plan.

Adoption Tees Valley has been an active contributor to the Project, with 2 social workers, Angela Simmons, and Kirsty Taylor, being seconded for 1 day per week, to strengthen practice and delivery of EP placements.

North East Multi-Disciplinary Adoption Support Service

This is a 2 year funded project to set up and establish a multi-agency adoption support service for the NE region. It is a pilot project testing out a model of adoption support for any child within the age range of 7-11, who it is considered would benefit from a multi-disciplinary assessment and intervention. The project has a clear ethos that to support children, parents must also be supported, and is seeking to test and refine a model which will be available for ASF funding in the long term.

A strength of the project is the partnership that has been achieved with the 3 RAA's and the Integrated Care Board (ICB) for the NE region, bringing social care and health together in this developing service.

The project has secured £950,000 funding over 2 years and will run until April 2025.

4. Partnership Working

Following the Review of ATV in 2021, the service has strengthened its focus on partnership working, a theme which is also evident in national strategy.

Working in partnership is one of the key elements of the service plan 2023-25, and new ways of working together are continually being tested in the maturation of the RAA. The 2 projects highlighted above reflect a stronger regional partnership, where we are achieving more together than would have been achieved by any single agency.

ATV works together with Local Authorities, through strategic and practice working arrangements. This year has seen a strengthened approach to

working with LA Fostering Services, for early permanence. Also, a shared adoption support process, and a new approach whereby ATV will attend Legal Gateway meetings in the LA.

Work with VAA's has been strengthened through the early permanence project above. This builds on ATV regular working together with regional VAA's to secure regional placements for children where no in house option is available. Working relationships are positive although challenges exist in the increasing costs of VAA placements, while funding to LA's and the RAA is not increased.

ATV works with health predominantly around provision of the Medical Advisor role. This has been an area of significant challenge within the year, especially within the South Tees Trust, affecting Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland. There have been pressures in achieving timely adoption medicals, and adult adopter health appointments. To address this, there has been a lot of collaborative working between Local Authorities, ATV, South Tees Trust and the ICB. Significant management and practitioner time in all agencies is dedicated to addressing how children can progress without delay. ATV remains appreciative of the Medical Advisors, who's expertise and commitment are valued, in helping to ensure that children's health needs are fully understood, and that adoptive parents are given high quality information about the child's health, prior to matching.

Pan regional partnership working has been positive in the year, reflected in the 2 projects highlighted above.

ATV has valued the continued support of the Virtual schools, in helping to understand and promote the needs of adopted children who can be "hidden" if schools are unaware that the child or young person is adopted. Working together is supported by tri-annual meetings and the partners virtual schools' collaborative funding of the ATV Education support worker. See section 13 for details of education support in this year.

ATV works with commissioned providers of services including multiple therapy providers via a commissioned framework, and a VAA providing independent support services to birth parents, and access to adoption records.

5. Benchmarking – Key Performance Data

The key performance data is presented in summary in this section. More detailed performance information, presented by local authority is detailed in section 8.

Data is presented for ATV for the year 2022-23, at the end of quarter 4, and for the previous year 2021-22 for comparison.

Key Indicator	ATV 2021-22	ATV 2022-23	Current c/w previous	National Govt Target where applicable
Adopter Approvals	46	55	Inc 19%	N/A
Children referred to ATV	179	223	Inc 25%	N/A
Children with ADM -BID (Best interests' decision)	78	100	Inc 28%	N/A
PO	74	87	Inc 18%	N/A
Matches	79	81	Inc 1%	
Placed	77	77	No Change	N/A
Early Permanence	11	11	No Change	
Adoption Orders	78	84	Inc 8%	N/A
Disruptions – pre order	0	1		N/A
Timescale – A2 (PO to match)	174	146 days	Dec 16%	121 days
Timescale A10 – BLA- Moved in with Adopters	383	411	Inc 7%	421 days

6. Marketing and Recruitment

ATV marketing aims to promote awareness of the need for more people to consider adopting. ATV also seeks to increase awareness of the role of ATV in providing support to adoptive families including children and adoptive parents. ATV has a multi-channel approach to marketing, using social media including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and also commissioning support to digital marketing campaigns during key campaign periods. It can be difficult to evaluate the impact of any particular campaign, other than numbers of enquiries received. However, it is recognised that the consideration of adoption is a major life decision and there is a pre-contemplative period for adults in deciding to go on an enquiry about adoption. As a result, we use social media reach, and engagement, enquiry numbers and approval numbers to indicate whether marketing is being effective. However, it is not an exact science, due to the time period that people may require, either before enquiring, or following enquiry, before commencing the “adopter journey”.

ATV is seeking to reach out to prospective adopters who can offer the family homes to children in the region where their needs are more complex arising from the child's needs or being part of a sibling group. Marketing has therefore been targeted to people who are interested in older children (age 4+) children with additional needs, and siblings.

Activity	ATV 2021-22	ATV 2022-23
Number of ATV recruitment campaigns year to date	3	5
Number of all Adopter enquiries year to date (all methods)	287	309
Number of ATV enquiries converted to ROI	61	73
% of ATV enquiries converted to ROI	22%	24%
Number of adoptive families attending information events	123	131
Social media followers	11,724	11,751
Website visits	16,819	17,422

What has gone well?

- Greater numbers of enquiries, and adopter approvals
- Attendance at Pride at Newcastle- the major LFJB event in the North
- Introduction of blogs on the ATV website written by adoptive parents
- Press and media presence with coverage on ITV Tyne Tees twice in the last 12 months, interviews on BBC radio Tees and press releases local news outlets including the Gazette and Northern Echo.
- Conversion rate of enquiries to ROI increasing, and numbers increasing.

Challenges?

- The service continues to need more enquirers and adoptive parents for siblings and for older children, and those with more complex needs.

7. Preparation, Assessment and Approval of Adoptive Parents

	Total 2021-22	Total 2022-23	Current c/w previous
Initial Visits to prospective Adopters	71	106	Inc 35%
Stage 1 Starts	46	58	Inc 26%
Stage 2 Starts	52	51	Dec 2%
Adopter Approvals	46	55	Inc 20%
Numbers in assessment at the end of the period	39	38	Dec 2%
Numbers waiting to be matched at end of period	29	29	No change

Timescale S1 (Govt target 60 days)	106	239	
Timescale S2 (Govt target 121 days)	146	156	

ATV has increased numbers of initial visits to prospective adopters and has focussed in this year on the Enquiry to Registration of Interest (ROI) timeline and experience. ATV has created a new role for enquiries management, and through this role, we have seen conversion from enquiry to ROI increase by 2%, however rising well beyond this in the current year, and we expect to see significant improvement in 2023-24.

ATV has partnered in with Redcar and Cleveland, and Darlington Virtual Schools, to share the new Virtual Reality Video headsets adopted by both agencies. These headsets are now being used in all preparation groups, to enable adoptive parents to experience the world of the child in a range of scenarios that a child may have experienced, for example- where domestic violence has taken place around the child. The headsets are aimed at helping prospective adopters have a better understanding of the trauma a child has experienced, and feedback so far is that they are powerful, impactful, and helpful.

ATV has incorporated learning from a national Child Safeguarding Review of a child placed for adoption (LJC case) and has progressed to a trauma informed approach across the service. The team now use the Trauma Timeline approach in assessment work with families, and then through the matching work for a child, helping prospective adopters and all professionals understand the lived trauma of the child. The Trauma Tree is a tool used within the direct work with families, and in preparing to care for a particular child.

ATV is now requiring all family and friends' networks to be involved during the assessment process. The aim is to raise the profile of the role of support networks in any potential safeguarding matters, and to help them be better prepared to support the child and family, with more awareness of the impact of trauma and attachment disruption for children.

All adoptive parents undertaking their first approval are required to complete the 4 day preparation training course, which is underpinned by the Secure Base Model (Schofield and Beek), the Trauma Timeline, and PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy) parenting.

Families are all asked to register with CATCH (commissioned from PACT) which is an on line learning and support forum, and which is integrated into the ATV adopter journey, from assessment onwards.

Timescales for assessments have been challenging in this year (239 days on average with a target of 182 days), and the explanation is largely due to delays in medicals being completed in full during stage 1. This may be with either the GP practice, or with the Medical Advisor providing a summary of the adopter health and advice to the agency.

To address challenges around Medical Advisor capacity, ATV Service Manager has negotiated extensively with partners in the ICB, and Foundation Trusts and fed back to the ATV Board on this key challenge. As the year closes, the ATV Board and ICB have agreed to fund a dedicated “Adult Adopter” Medical Advisor (MA) for ATV to relieve pressure on the paediatricians carrying out adoption health assessments of children, through provision of a MA who will consider all adult health reports. This MA will also have a role in supporting GP awareness of the safeguarding nature of adopter medicals, and in improving GP returns in an improved timescale, through dedicated awareness raising sessions.

What has gone well?

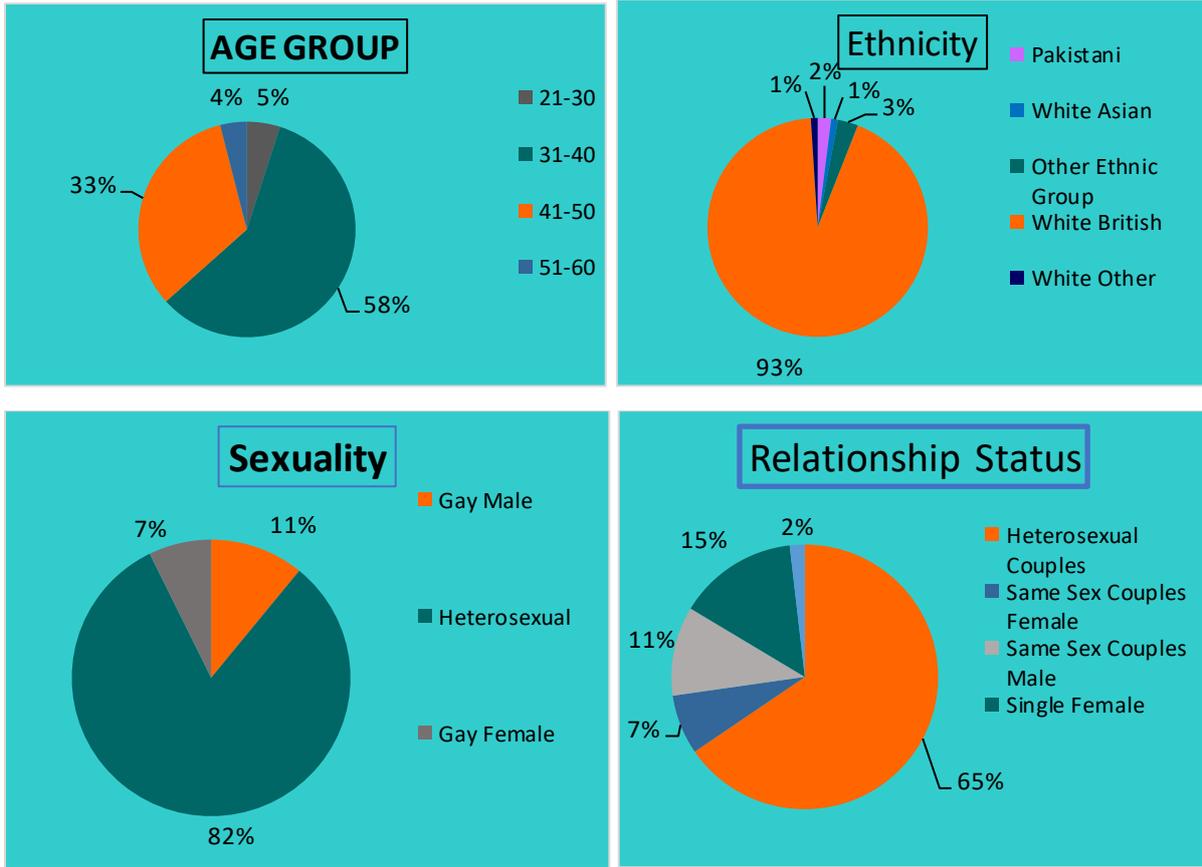
- Strengthening of work around trauma informed practice, and positive partnerships with LA 's, enabling shared resources.
- Increased numbers of adopter approvals in 2022-23
- Improvement in the enquiry to ROI conversion
- Improved timescale from enquiry to ROI
- Response to the LJC safeguarding review- continued review on safeguarding and trauma informed practice.
- Collaborative response to medical advisor pressures.

Challenges?

- Not enough adoptive families for children who have more complex needs.
- Timescales for stage 1 are longer than wished for, and the key reason is delays in health information, either from GP, or from Medical Advisors.

7.1 Who did ATV approve?

Total approvals: 55 families: 99 individuals



Sexuality/relationship status: 35 heterosexual couples; 10 same sex couples; 8 single women and 1 single man.

Prospective Adopters approved for early permanence: 10 (18%)

Age- 92 % of all adopters are aged between 30 and 50 years old.

Ethnicity- most of all adoptive parents are white British, with 93 % in this category.

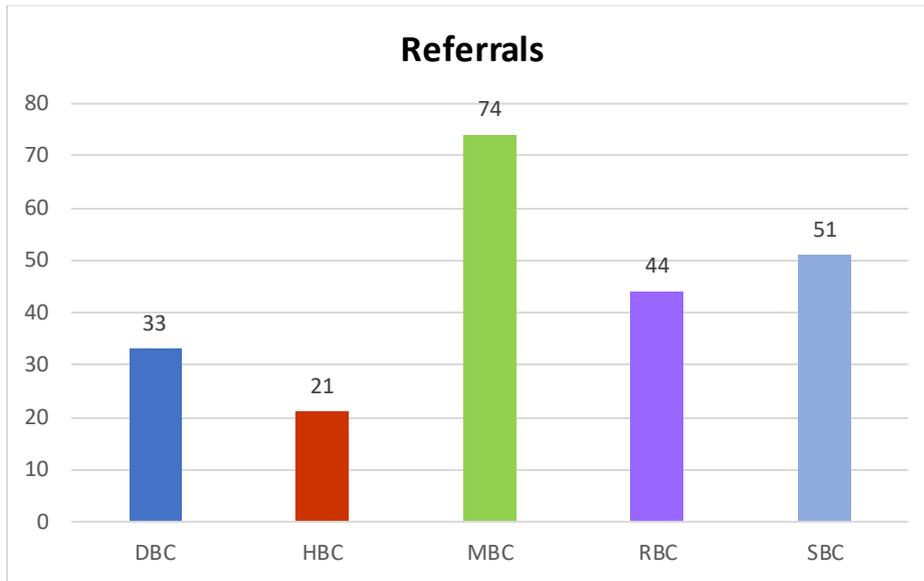
Timeliness of matching adoptive parents: of the adopters approved and matched within the period, 23 were matched with a child within 3 months of approval, and 28 were matched more than 3 months following approval. 4 were not matched within this period.

8. Referrals of children

There has been an increase overall in referrals of children who may require an adoptive family in this year. This has translated into higher numbers of ADM's and POs, although placements remain the same as in the last year.

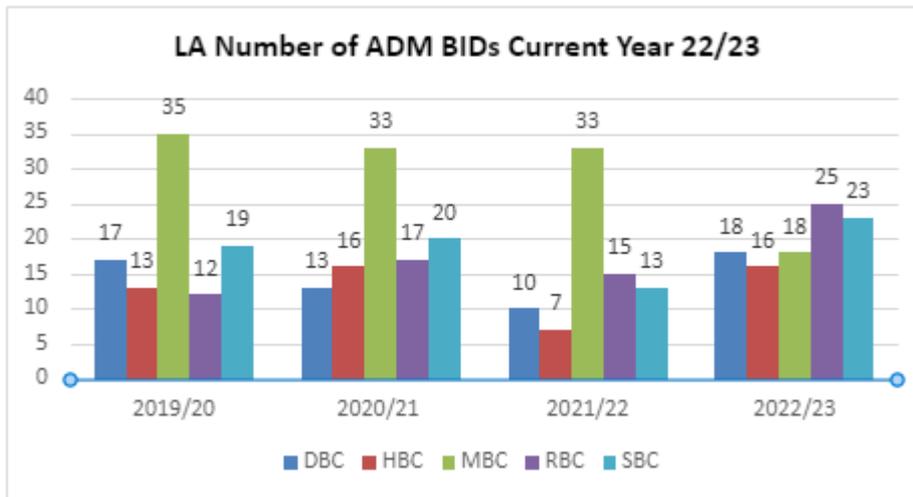
Data is provided below on the number and timescales by Local Authority

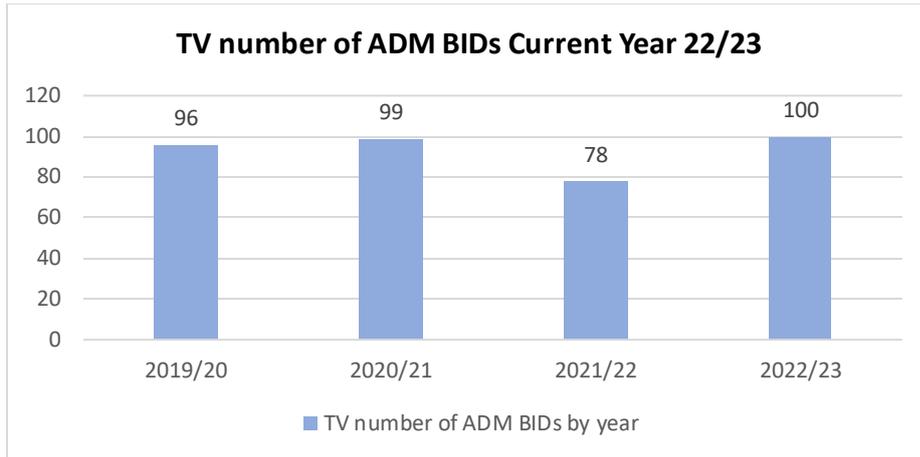
8.1 Referrals – Early Notifications by Local Authority



223 were referred in total. ATV asks for referrals of children at the earliest point they may have an ADM. Not all children progress to a plan of adoption. Middlesbrough are the highest referring LA, followed by Stockton.

8.2 ADM- “Best Interests Decision” by Local Authority



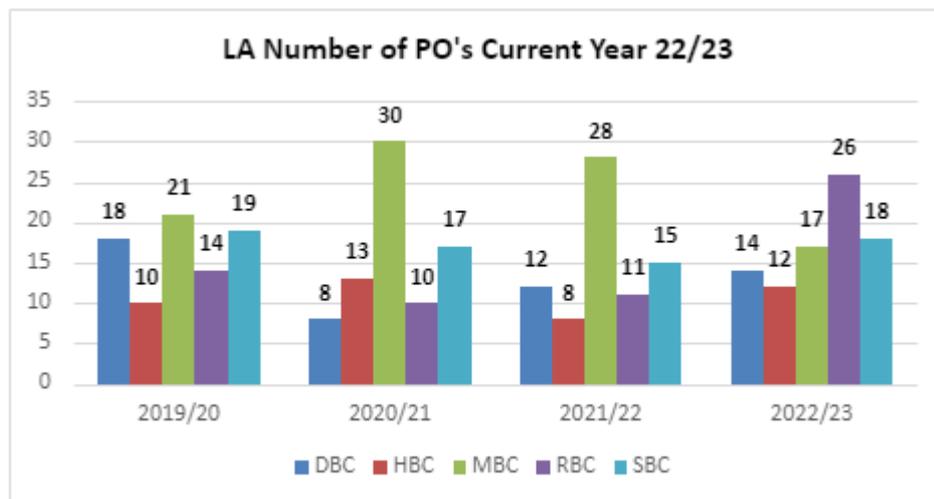


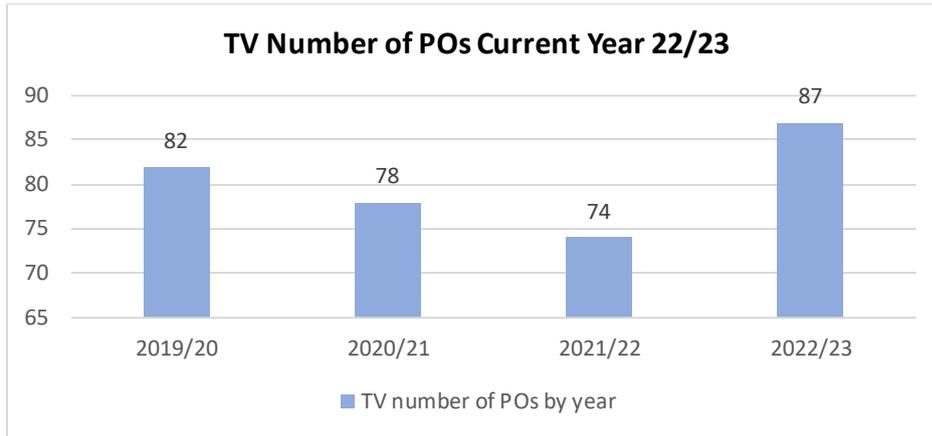
Change by LA on Previous Year

- Darlington increase by 8- 80%
- Hartlepool increase by 9- 128%
- Middlesbrough decrease by 15- 45%
- Redcar and Cleveland increase by 10 – 66%
- Stockton increase by 10- 77%

4 of the 5 LA's have seen a significant rise in the numbers of children for whom they are planning for adoption. Middlesbrough is the outlier with a considerable decrease in numbers of children with an adoption plan.

8.3 Placement Orders- by Local Authority



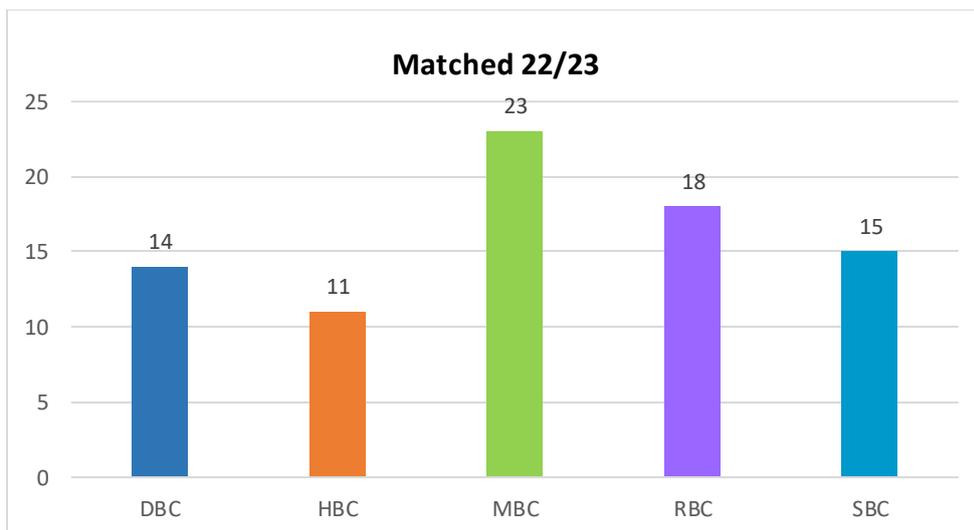


Change by LA on Previous Year

- Darlington increase by 2- 17%
- Hartlepool increase by 4- 50%
- Middlesbrough decrease by 11- 39%
- Redcar and Cleveland increase by 15- 136%
- Stockton increase by 3- 20%

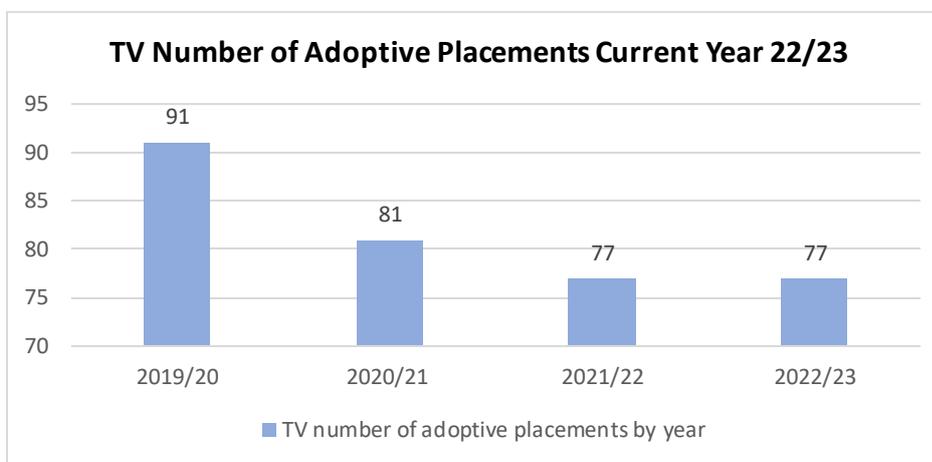
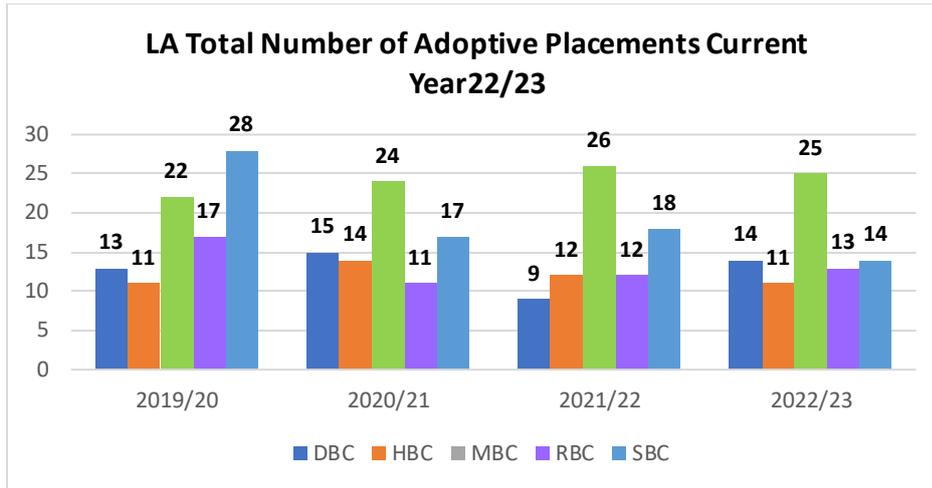
Again 4 LA's have increased the numbers of children for whom a PO has been granted, giving the LA Court authority to place for adoption. Redcar have seen an exceptional increase in numbers on previous years, and Hartlepool have returned to a similar number seen across a number of years, where 2021-22 was an exceptionally low number. Middlesbrough is an outlier with a significant reduction on previous years.

8.4 Matches by Local Authority



The numbers of children matched for adoption will reflect the numbers placed. Slight differences re due to timing within the year period under review.

8.5 Placements of children for adoption by Local Authority



Change by LA on Previous Year

- Darlington increase by 5- 55%
- Hartlepool decrease by 1 – 8%
- Middlesbrough decrease by 1- 4%
- Redcar and Cleveland increase by 1- 8%
- Stockton decrease by 4- 22%

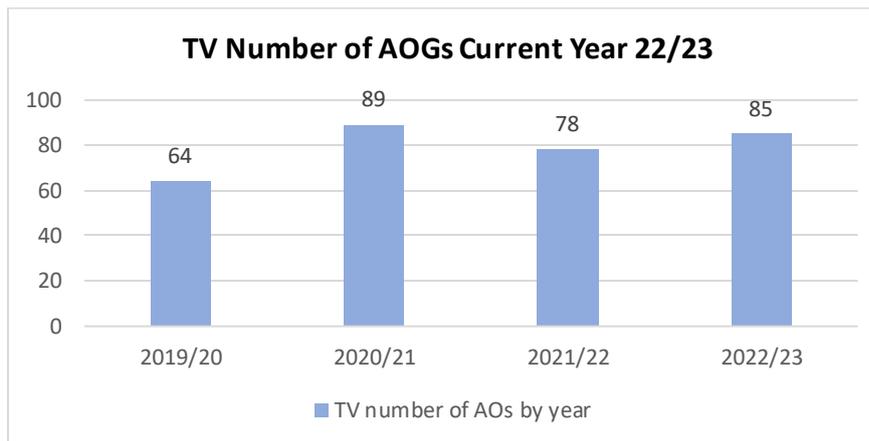
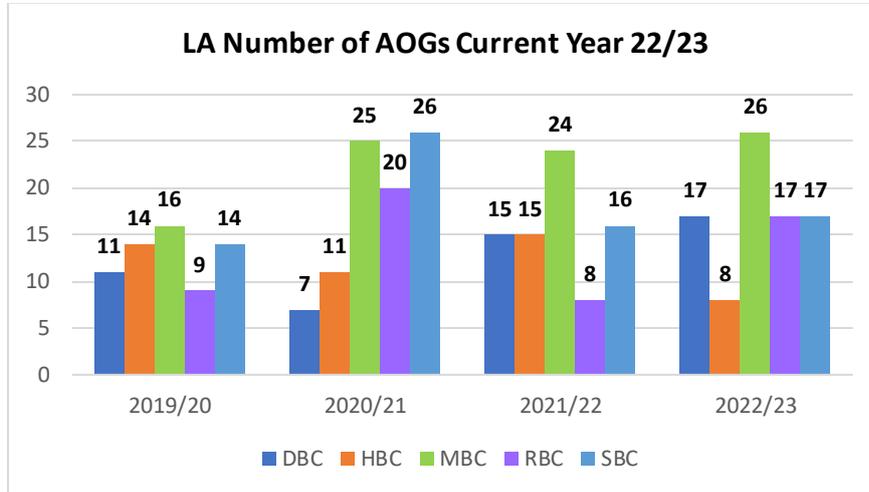
Placement numbers have remained the same over the last 2 years. Reviewing the increase in numbers of PO and ADM BIDs overall, it is identified that there was a rise in rate of PO during Q4 2022-23 and these children will be progressing to match and placement in the forthcoming months.

Although placement numbers remain the same, it is reasonable to evaluate that there is an overall increase in the numbers of children progressing for adoption in this region, due to ADM and PO activity.

Middlesbrough is the outlier. There has been a turnover of workforce, including Agency Advisor and ADM in Middlesbrough and this LA has been impacted by capacity in the Medical Advisor role, which is required for ADM to take place. Work is underway, including in partnership between the LA,

ATV and the South Tees Acute Trust to improve and address capacity issues for MA time.

8.6 Adoption Orders Granted by Local Authority



Change by LA on Previous Year

- Darlington increase by 2- 13%
- Hartlepool decrease by 8- 53%
- Middlesbrough increase by 2- 8%
- Redcar and Cleveland increase by 9- 112%
- Stockton increase by 1 – 6%

Hartlepool decrease reflects a lower number of placements in the previous year.

8.7 Timescales for Children Matched and moving in with Adoptive Parents

The headline measures for timeliness of adoption are:

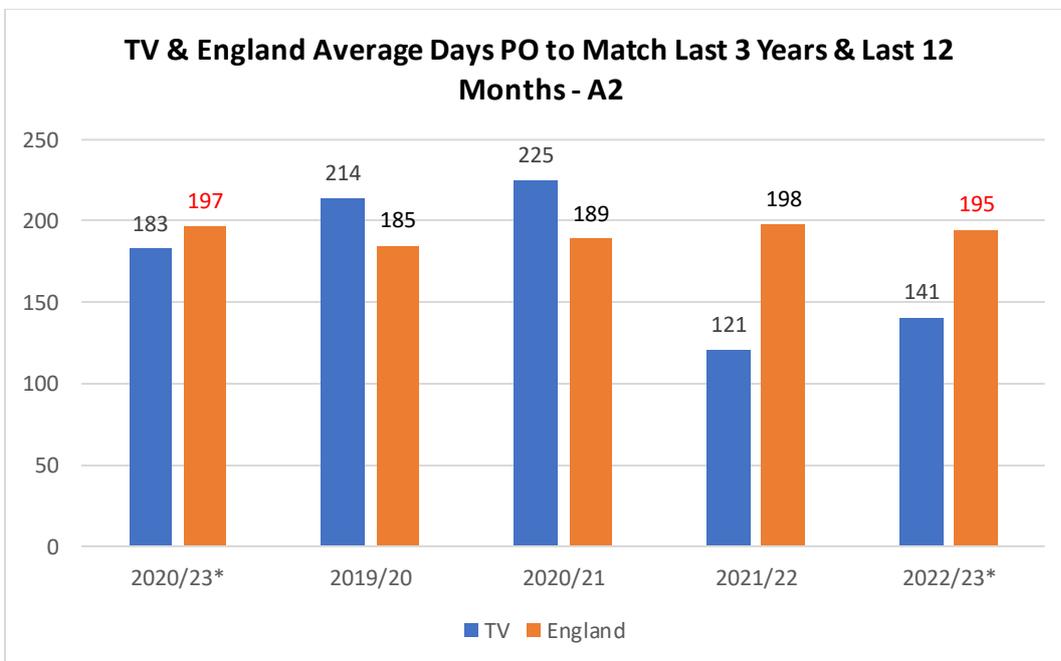
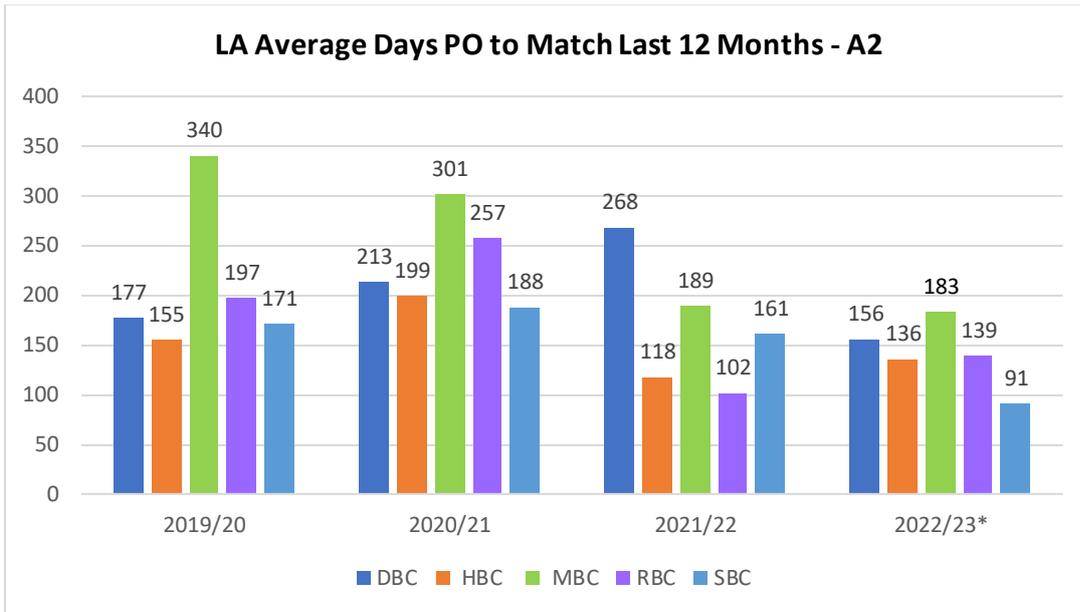
- Adoption scorecard indicator A2- Placement Order to match timescales

- Adoption Scorecard Indicator A10- date child became looked after, to date moved in with adoptive parents

All are based on the timescales of children who have been adopted in the year and are an average of those children. As numbers are low, children with exceptionally high timescales can distort figures.

8.8 A2 – PO to Match by Local Authority

The government target is 121 days



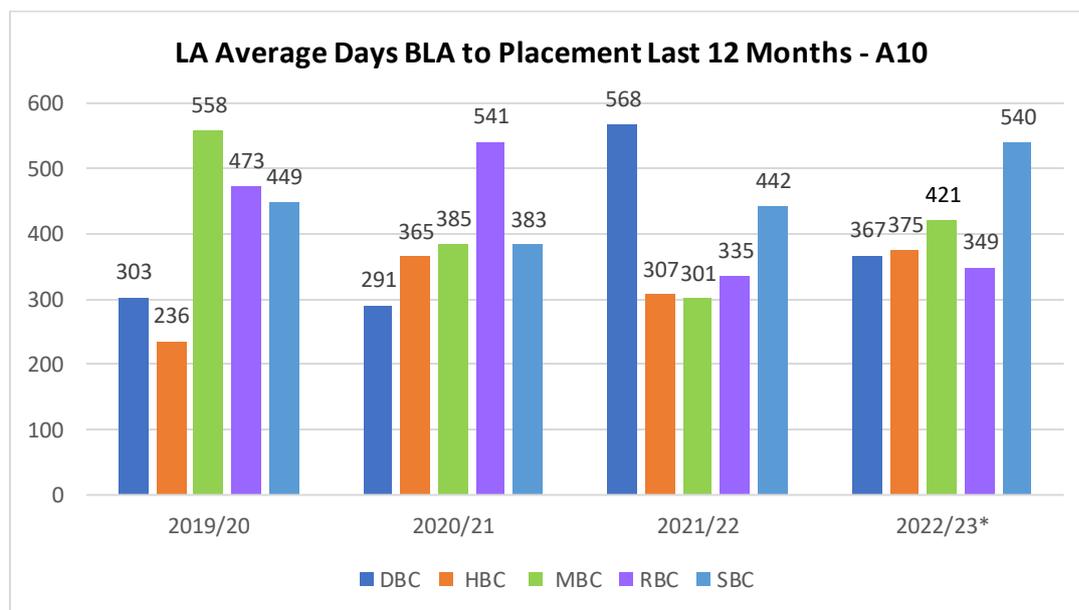
Change by LA on Previous Year

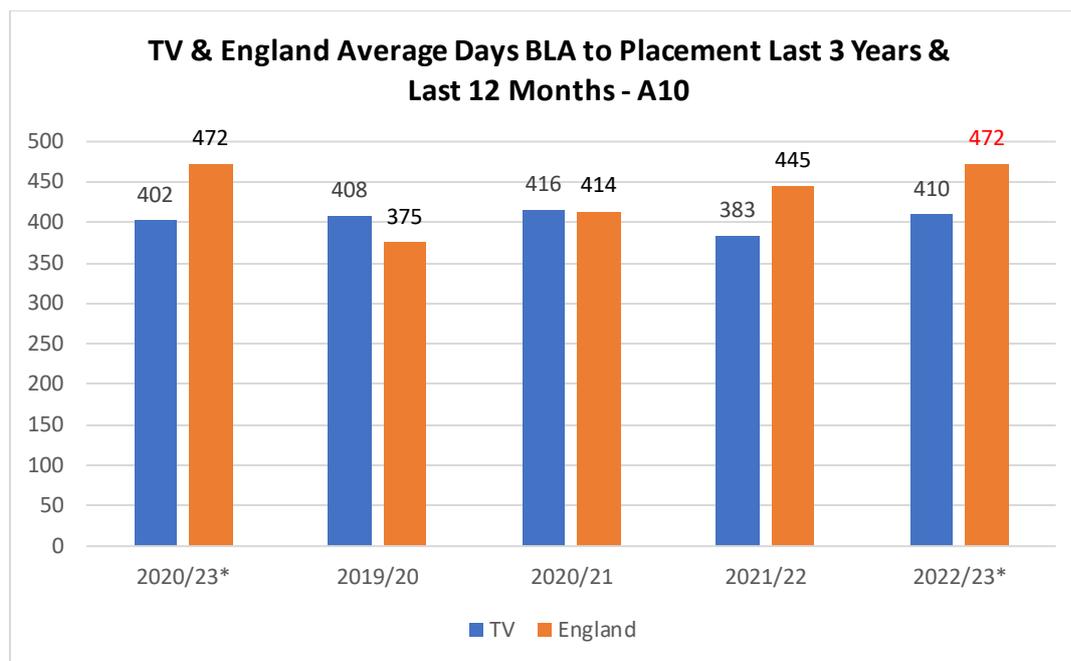
- Darlington reduced PO to match by 112 days, which is positive. The LA remains over the target time, but a reduction by 42 % in average timescale is positive.
- Hartlepool increase by 18 days, an increase of 15%
- Middlesbrough have reduced by 20 days, a decrease of 11%
- Redcar and Cleveland have increased by 37 days, an increase of 36%
- Stockton have reduced by 70 days, which is a decrease of 43%, which is extremely positive.

PO to match timescale is dependent on finding the right family for the child, and having good quality information on which to seek a family who is well positioned to meet the needs of the child. Family finding is most effective where there is an up to date good quality child permanence report, a good quality profile of the child, with high quality photographs and video imagery. Where social workers know the child well and consider the profiles and prospective adopter reports offered in a timely way, linking is effective, and centred around children’s needs. Where children are to be placed alongside siblings, have more complex needs, or need to have contact with family members, it is important to have a good, well evidenced and up to date assessment of needs, as this is critical for successful matching.

8.9 A10- Became a child in our care, to moving in with adoptive parents, by Local Authority

The government target is 421 days.





Change by LA on Previous Year

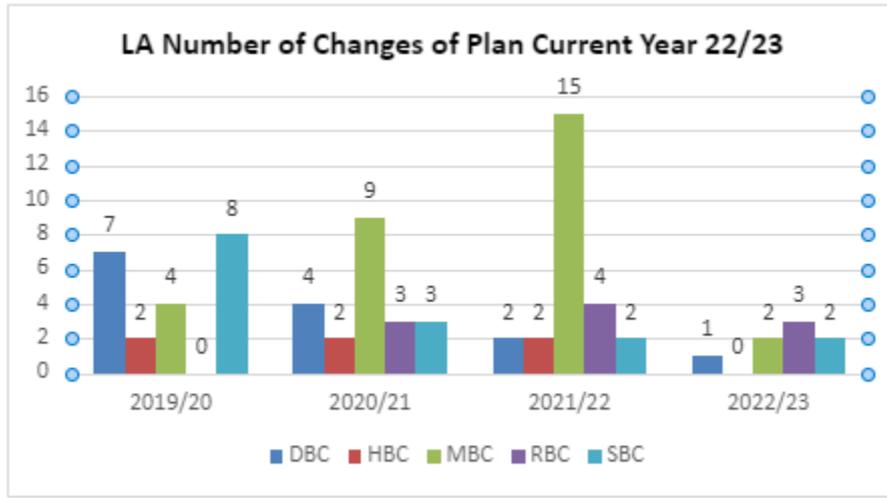
- Darlington reduced by 201 days, and 35% overall. Darlington has significantly reduced timescales for the children adopted, which is extremely positive.
- Hartlepool has increased by 95 days, which is 31%, Hartlepool remains on average within the government target timescale. 3 children had timescales which were higher than expected. As only 8 children were adopted in the year, these 3 children have increased overall average.
- Middlesbrough increase by 90 days, an increase of 30%
- Redcar and Cleveland increase by 14 days, and increase of 4%
- Stockton have increased by 98 days, an increase of 22%

Only Stockton have an average timescale which is over the government target timescale for children in this year, although 4 of the 5 LA's have increased overall timescale averages.

The analysis of timescales for Adoption Tees Valley shows that the average timescale overall for Placement Order to match has increased and is slightly above the government target. However, compared with the England average ATV continues to perform well, and there are generally few children waiting with a PO.

The timescales from a child entering care (CIOC) to moving in have increased for 4 out of the 5 Local Authorities. 4 remain within government target timescales on average, while one LA has a significantly higher average timescale, which is accounted for by a number of children. A theme is a child returning home on a care order, then coming back into care, and going on to be placed for adoption.

8.10 Changes of plan away from adoption by Local Authority



The total numbers of children for whom there is a change of plan away from adoption has reduced year on year, with a significant decrease in this year, which is largely accounted for by Middlesbrough continuing with a plan of adoption for more children (following ADM BID). Changes of plan can arise for a number of reasons, which can include the RAA being unable to find an adoptive family, the needs of children changing, or family members being identified at a late stage during care proceedings.

8.11 Interruptions

There were 2 children who had an interruption to their planned placement. This is where the child is in introductions to their new family, and the plan does not proceed to placement. The 2 children were siblings.

8.12 Disruption

One child has had a disrupted placement. A disruption is where the child leaves the family prior to the granting of an adoption order.

A disruption meeting has taken place, independently chaired, and learning disseminated, and considered by the ATV team, and panel.

8.13 Children Returned to Care, post Adoption Order

6 Children are identified as having returned to care post adoption order, all being in the teenage age range.

9. Children Matched and Placed 2022-23

9.1 *Internal- External Families*

	Totals 2021-22	2022-23 Q1 and Q2	2022-23 Q2 and Q3	2022-23 Totals
ATV children placed with ATV adopters	58	31	21	52
ATV Children placed with external adopters	19	15	10	25
External children placed with ATV adopters	0	0	0	0
Total ATV children placed	77	46	31	77
Total placements	77	46	31	77

52 of the children were placed with ATV families, and 25 with external agencies.

17 of the 25 (68%) children placed with external agencies were placed with the regional VAA's, with whom ATV works in partnership.

Of the 7 children being placed away from the region, 4 were placed with RAA's, in the North region.

ATV continues to strive for sufficiency of adoptive parents. The gap for ATV is adopters who can take siblings, and older children or children with additional needs, including needs arising from maternal alcohol consumption in pregnancy, and significant attachment difficulties.

9.2 *Children waiting with PO – not linked at the year end*

On 31.3.23 there were 5 children with a PO not linked or matched.

Of these children, 2 were siblings, and there were 3 single children.

No child had a PO for over 7 months, and 4 of the 5 had PO for less than 3 months.

The single children were aged 4, 2 and 1.

One child was of mixed ethnicity, Asian- White British.

9.3 *Demographics of Children*

Of the 85 children adopted in the last 12 months:

Aged under 5 years	73	Aged over 5 years	12 (14%)
Female	39	Male	46
Minority ethnic background	10 (12%)	White British	75
Disabled	0	Part of Sibling Group	27
“Harder to Place”	37 (44%)		

9.4 Matching and Family Finding Developments

The first option for considering families for ATV children will always be with ATV approved adopters, and all children with an ADM, or progressing to ADM are considered for available ATV families. Children are placed with families who match their needs, and if no internal family is a suitable match, the agency will seek external families approved to adopt.

ATV has a developed process for family finding regionally, through regular VAA meetings with ATV Family Finding managers. 8 children were linked through these meetings in the reporting period.

Any child not linked by the time of PO is placed on Linkmaker, the national portal for linking children to the right family. In the reporting period 16 children were linked through Linkmaker to external adopters.

There have been 3 funded activity days for children, through the national RAA programme. 1 child has been linked through the Activity Days programme.

ATV has commissioned a professional photographer, to do high quality photos where these are not available, showing children in a positive, and playful light.

10. Early Permanence

Key developments and Vision

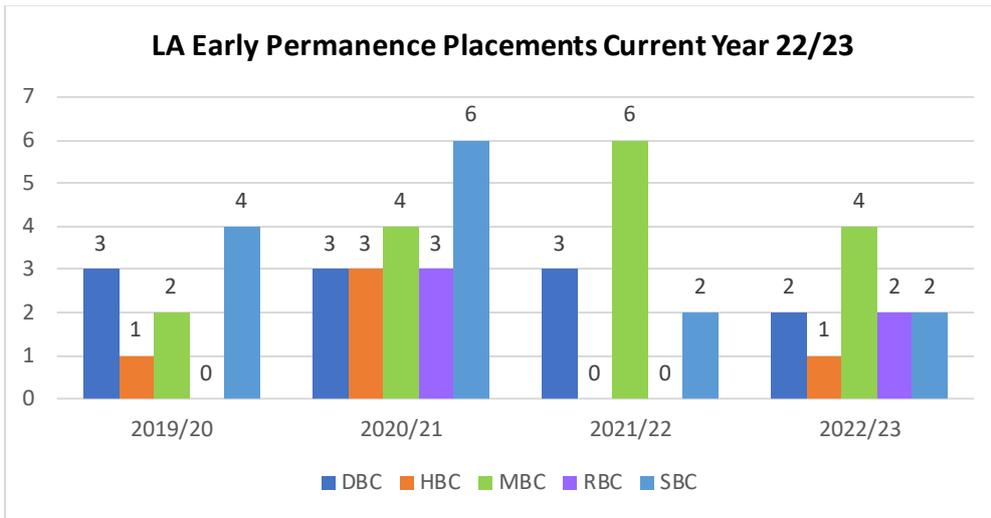
Early Permanence is a key strategic priority for ATV. The reason is that this reduces moves for children, while care plans are being developed, provides the potential for earlier secure attachments, but is not a pre-emptive placement prior to final Court decision making. The service has continued to practice a dedicated early permanence approach for children. Close monitoring of all new referrals by Permanence Champions enables early consideration of those children for whom early permanence may be an option to be considered.

ATV sets out what early permanence means from an early stage with all people approaching the RAA to adopt. This starts with the Information Events, and is followed through initial visits, preparation training and assessments.

Learning from practice, ATV has:

- Moved to a dedicated 2 day preparation programme for all carers wishing to undertake early permanence, following the Coram BAAF EP training programme for carers. The focus is on the fostering role, and working with the wider system, and with birth parents.
- Started a support group for EP carers which is facilitated by one of the senior social workers in the team.
- Commenced wider system engagement through working with Fostering Managers and Fostering Supervising Social Workers, to increase working together. Each Fostering service has a named EP Champion who will promote knowledge and awareness of EP in the LA Fostering team.
- Continued with workforce development of LA social workers by delivering training to LA staff and managers.
- Worked across the regional Sufficiency and EP Placement Project footprint to develop more consistent practice in the North East, and to secure more availability of EP placements.
- Following learning from the National EP Conference, is now moving to attend Legal Gateway meetings in all LA 's, where earlier knowledge of children during PLO enables active consideration of EP for more children.
- Has a suite of leaflets available for various parties, including birth parents.
- ATV now has experience of returning children to parents' care. It is viewed as a positive option where this is safe and right for the child, and the RAA is confident and experienced in promoting a better understanding of this with staff and EP carers.
- ATV will in 2023-24 create a dedicated EP team, to increase sufficiency of carers and promote more children having access to EP.

10.1 Early Permanence in Local Authorities



There have been 11 EP placements made this year. The distribution is shown across the partner Local Authorities.

11 adoptive families have been approved who can undertake EP.

The service will aim to increase the numbers of children who have access to EP and are placed through this route, and the numbers of adopters approved who can also undertake this placement type.

11. Adoption Support

Adoption Support continues to be a key focus for ATV and as a national priority. We know that adopted children and their families need every bit as much consideration for support as foster carers. The child is no longer in the care system, but their needs associated with early adversity, and identity with a birth **and** adoptive family do not change because they are adopted. Adoption is a good outcome for children where no family members can provide the assurance of permanence for the duration of childhood and beyond. We know adoptive families accept, love and care for their children, and relatively few return to Local Authority care. However, many children and families need support to help them thrive and ATV continues to develop its support to adoptive parents and children, aiming to create a community of adoption, and early support for all children and families as they start their lives together.

Tier 1

Support made available and provided for all adoptive families:

- Access to ATV closed Facebook group
- Monthly newsletter
- Face to face Stay and Play weekly- a facilitated support group where adoptive parents come, make friends, talk about parenting and the

children play. This also enables an early help offer where more support is required.

- Loud and Clear music group, facilitated by the Sage, Gateshead. A music group encouraging relationships, bonding and fun, through the sensory world of music.
- ATV events available to all adoptive families, subject to numbers- events such as Christmas party, art days, etc... which engage children and families with ATV.
- Letterbox contact arrangements to support keeping in touch and maintaining significant relationships moving forward. Includes direct support to birth family members where needed.

In this year, 21 children and 23 parents have joined the weekly Loud and Clear music group, bringing opportunity for bonding, sensory development and building relationships between families for the future.

Tier 2

Focussed groups, to support children and adoptive parents, according to needs.

These are:

- Children's Groups, ages 7-11, and 11-16. See below
- Nurturing Attachments- a therapeutic parenting training programme
- Talking about Adoption- a life story course to help parents talk about adoption as their child grows up
- Future Stars- a sensory therapeutic parenting programme for adoptive parents and children
- Non Violent Resistance- a 10 week programme for parents of children who are violent to parents/carers
- STEP group- a 6 weekly support group for adoptive parents undertaking early permanence placements, at any stage of that journey
- Education support provided by ATV dedicated Education Support Worker (ESW) . In many cases, the ESW works alongside an allocated social worker, to provide a multi-disciplinary approach to adoption support, according to the needs of the child.

Partnership work with Virtual Schools

ATV continues to work closely in partnership with the 5 LA Virtual Schools who co-fund the Education Support Worker in ATV. Additionally, VS Heads, and ATV Managers and ESW meet termly to work together to develop a comprehensive education support service developing in partnership with local and regional priorities and changes.

This year, Darlington and Redcar and Cleveland VS's have collaborated to share their virtual reality headsets with ATV, enabling prospective adoptive parents to gain this realistic and experiential insight into the early experiences of children placed for adoption.

Jo Johnson, Redcar and Cleveland Virtual School Head said:

“It is fantastic that partners are so supportive of each other, focusing on the issues that are imperative to strengthening our offer to children and families. ATV have embraced the VR headsets, trained staff and are beginning to deliver headset sessions advocating a trauma based approach to the wider audience of our adopters, early permanence carers and the impact that this undoubtedly has upon our previously looked after cohort of children. This develops what the Virtual Schools are working on within schools and education providers across the Tees Valley.”

In this year, 15 parents have attended Nurturing Attachments to develop therapeutic parenting approaches and skills.

7 families/7 children have joined the Future Stars programme, benefiting from a therapeutic sensory programme for children.

13 families have attended the “Talking About Adoption” workshops, aimed at supporting adoptive parents to talk about adoption as their child grows up.

Tier 3

A dedicated specialist adoption support service, with an allocated social worker from the ATV adoption support team. The adoption support assessment will have indicated a need for a specific adoption support intervention, provided through the Adoption Support Fund (ASF), or for more specialist intervention from a partner agency. ATV has expanded its work with Local Authority early help and assessment teams, to create a shared understanding of adoption support needs, and a shared responsibility for provision of advice, supports and services, including financial support packages.

The service has in this year changed the way in which adoption support assessments are responded to, with a shorter 1 hour telephone assessment

within 10 days, enabling parents to feel confident there is access to support and therapy more quickly. Although delivery of therapy remains within timescale of the Adoption Support Fund (28 days application agreement process) this early response is better for adoptive parents and children and is reflected in a better response on the adopter survey – see below. The early duty response to requests for assessment involves:

- A social work response to requests for an adoption support assessment, either for a specific identified support, or a more comprehensive assessment of support needs.
- An offer of services available under tiers 1 and 2
- Therapeutic support provided by one of the commissioned therapy providers who have been agreed to join the ATV providers framework.

Currently, the gap is a more joined up approach with health services, provided via TEWV and CNTW mental health specialist services. It is planned that this will be improved through the new partnership model for adoption support, outlined in the introduction to this report.

In this period, work has been undertaken to agree shared Adoption Support procedures across all 5 Local Authorities, and ATV. These detail the responsibilities of ATV, the local authority and how the agencies work together in respect of statutory responsibilities for assessment and provision of adoption support.

12. Commissioned Services

12.1 Independent Birth Parent Support and Access to Adoption Records

Adoption Tees Valley commissions independent birth parent support, and an access to adoption records service from a regional VAA.

In this year, the contract for these services was re-tendered, and was awarded to Arc Adoption, having previously been awarded to Adoption Matters.

The transitional arrangements have been supported by Stockton Procurement, as the host Authority for the RAA. The transition of the contract has been smooth and well managed, and recognition is given to both VAA's for the work that they have/are undertaking for the support of birth parents and adopted adults.

12.2 Framework of Therapeutic Providers

ATV has operated a Framework of Therapeutic Providers for delivery of adoption support therapeutic services for children and families. The framework has been in operation since 2018 and has been fully retendered

within this period. The funding for therapies for children is drawn down from the Adoption Support Fund.

Assessment is undertaken by the adoption support social work service as detailed above, and application is made in each case for the most appropriate therapeutic intervention based on the assessment, and in some cases, specialist assessment- also a commissioned service, through the Framework.

There are a total of 20 providers on the framework, who are awarded the contract for specific therapeutic input, as detailed within each aspect of the framework, dependent on their successful application. The providers are a mix of small and larger local and regional therapy providers, and the range of providers is valued, giving a range of options for therapy for children and families. Therapeutic approaches include: theraplay, Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP), play therapy, family therapy, sensory integration, therapeutic life story work.

The new multi-disciplinary adoption support service under development (MDASS) will bring the added benefit of a partnership with health, enabling more clinical oversight of assessments and of commissioned services.

12.3 ASF Applications

The value of applications to the ASF is set out below. A new process is in place, whereby invoices are paid once the therapy has been completed, and so actual payments are less than the value of applications.

The numbers of referrals and assessments, including cases with education support is set out below.

	2021-22	2022-23	
Number of adoption support referrals	106	126	Inc 19%
Access to Files requests/completed	40	45	Inc 12.5 %
Adoption Support Assessments completed	106 +94 repeated assessments	126 + 163 repeated assessments	Inc 19 % inc 74% repeated assessments

Successful application to ASF	200	289	Inc 44 %
Unsuccessful application to ASF	0	0	0
Value of applications to ASF	£718,302	£1,060,651	Inc £342,349
Education Support Cases during year	77	32 new 114 total	

The information shows an increase in adoption support activity during the year.

ATV makes group applications to fund the Tier 2 therapeutic programmes, and the increase in Tier 2 supports accounts for some of the increase in funding applied for, and assessments.

It is planned that ATV will trial a new outcomes framework- measuring the outcomes of adoption support and therapeutic intervention during 2023-24. This is a national pilot, and a voluntary arrangement. However, ATV will be progressing to develop an outcomes framework, in line with national development moving forward.

13. Involving Children and Adults in ATV

ATV has made good progress in working together with adopted children, and with adoptive parents, to help the service be shaped and informed through the voices of people with lived experience. This year has seen a resumption of groups for children, and of the adopter partnership forum, following the pandemic.

13.1 Children's involvement – Childrens Groups

There has been a full resumption and development of work with children and young people who are adopted, following the pandemic. In April 2022 ATV recommenced the children's groups, which are face to face groups led by one social worker, 2 adoption support workers, and the Education Support Worker.

There are 2 groups in place, each of which meets monthly.

There is a group for 7-11 year olds, and a group for 11-16's.

The groups have been well attended and are very valued by adopted children and their parents. Activities are collective, and promote adopted children meeting with each other, forming friendships, and getting more comfortable with their identity as adopted young people.

13.2 Voice and Influence – Children and Young People

The service has started a dedicated Voice and Influence Group, and development of this is underway within the reporting period, and into this new reporting year (2023-24).

The team have been supported in the development of this group through specialist training: they have learned that it's important to take time to develop the confidence of young people and seek their involvement in having a voice in service development as a separate activity to the focus of the young people's groups. With support from the National RAA project team, ATV has commenced its journey of development of our own Voice and Influence group.

There are 9 young people who have begun involvement, ranging from age 11 to 17, and the group has started to form its aims, and goals, which will include presenting to the ATV Board its ideas.

Young people have been involved in interviews for staff and have begun exploring their big issues which they feel need better understanding for adopted children, including education, and life story work.

13.3 Adoptive Parents- the Adopter Partnership Forum

The Adopter Partnership Forum has recommenced following covid. A survey via the ATV newsletter was sent to adoptive parents to seek expressions of interest for the forum, and a good response was received. The forum has now reconvened, with a monthly meeting, joined by the Service Manager and one of the Team Managers. Attendance is still relatively low, however, is increasing gradually, and the group is forming ideas for involvement of more adopters, and how the voice of adoptive parents can influence the service delivery.

The forum has considered the adopter survey (see below) feedback, and some changes have been made as a result of the feedback and discussion. For example, a new matching agreement, to enable newly approved adoptive parents to tell the service how they want to be kept informed of potential matches.

The ATV Board has decided that the Adopter Forum will be asked to select the next ATV Non-Executive Director for the ATV Board. This has been discussed and will be progressed in the next 3 month period.

A further benefit of the Forum is that one adoptive parent has been able to generate positive links with the Tees Valley museums, who are now considering ways in which adoption and adopted people can be given support through the Museums network.

ATV Board continues to hold 2 Non-Executive Director seats for Adoptive parents in the ATV community. Currently, Pete Kirby Bowstead holds one position. Pete is also a headteacher in a primary school in the region and has been a voice and support of adoptive parents in Tees Valley. Pippa Turner has decided to step down from her position as NED after 3 years on the board. ATV is grateful to Pippa for her contribution on behalf of adoptive parents.

13.4 Adopter Survey

An adopter survey was undertaken with adoptive parents, circulated through the ATV mailing list. There were 44 respondents- all adoptive parents at different stages of their journey.

The survey mirrored a previous adopter survey undertaken at the end of 2021, and much of the feedback is encouraging.

87% were satisfied or very satisfied with ATV response to their initial enquiry.

87% were satisfied or very satisfied with the adoption process through ATV.

88% were satisfied or extremely satisfied with their preparation training.

81% were satisfied or extremely satisfied with the linking and matching process.

90% were satisfied or highly satisfied with the plan of introductions to their child.

72 % were extremely satisfied or satisfied with the adoption support provided in the last 18 months, and 79% were satisfied or extremely satisfied that adoption support was offered in a timely manner. This is a huge and positive development with this figure being much lower at the last survey. As detailed above, ATV has restructured how adoption support initial contacts and assessments are undertaken, and the improved adopter satisfaction is encouraging.

Similarly, the survey tells us that many adopters are aware of the Adoption Support Fund, that they find the CATCH on line training platform valuable, and that they value the monthly ATV newsletter.

Where do we need to pay most attention?

58 % were satisfied or very satisfied with the education support offered, which appears lower than expected. We believe this may reflect some families who

have not needed or taken this up, and therefore are not providing a positive response.

29% of those replying said that they experienced some mental health problems, sadness and/or depression following the child joining their family.

Taking these issues forward, all of the areas for reflection and improvement are tabled for discussion, or have been discussed with the adopter forum, and have been included in the ATV 2023-25 Service Plan.

14. Adoption Panel

Within this year ATV Board has agreed additional funding for a 3 day per week Panel Manager and Agency Advisor to the adoption panel. This has enabled improved performance, quality assurance and consistency in relation to all panel matters and has brought a dedicated focus to panel from one single panel manager. This has brought an improved quality assurance feedback process, with Local Authorities and ATV receiving evidence based quality feedback in a more focussed way. The Panel Manager has provided training on key aspects of adoption panel related work, including production of quality Child Permanence Reports (CPR's).

Panel Business meetings with panel chairs and the Agency Service Manager, who is also ADM for adopter approvals have continued, and are now convened by the Panel Manager. These are supported by 6 weekly business meetings between the Panel manager, Chair, and vice Chairs. The panel now has an improved QA function in relation to feedback forms for applicants, attending social workers, and panel members, and feedback is acted on.

The panel members have all undertaken annual appraisal, using a new more efficient and effective 360 approach, which has been positively welcomed. Panel members have undertaken training on a number of key aspects of adoption related business including early permanence. Panel chairs, vice chairs and the panel manager have undertaken training on Cultural humilities, and a session for all panel members is planned.

The panel chairs 6 monthly reports have been produced and presented to the ATV Board. This details in full the work of panel, including timescales, and quality issues and themes.

In this year, there have been:

- 56 adoption panels convened.
- 71 matches presented, including 79 children.
- 9 cases presented where the child was already placed in an early permanence placement.
- 1 consensual adoption case (previously known as relinquished)

- 55 approvals presented.
- 1 brief report presented.

Panels have remained largely virtual in this year. A survey has been undertaken with all parties to seek views on the question of virtual or face to face panel meetings. The feedback received indicated that a significant minority would value some opportunity for face to face panels again. This has been incorporated into a new plan, with one face to face panel per month, which any applicant who wishes for it can ask to be booked on to.

The agency continues to seek to increase diversity into the Central List, and this year a new panel member who is a young adult with lived experience of being adopted has joined. There are now more male members of panel also. The agency continues to strive to find more panel members from ethnic minority communities, with the aim of having at least one non white panel member wherever a child or family from a minority ethnic background is presented. We have heard nationally from black adoptive parents who feel very disempowered when an all-white panel hears their case, and ATV is placing a priority on this issue. Currently there are 2 black central list members, however, the service is currently seeking to increase this number.

Feedback from panel:

- Quality of matching documentation good
- Child's trauma timeline is appearing in most matching documentation
- Number of children having life appreciation days is increasing
- Quality of CPR's is improving
- The need for continual workforce training in LA's is noted
- PARs are generally good quality.

As part of their role, all 5 Local Authority ADM's have now observed the adoption panel, to be assured of the practice and approach of the RAA adoption panel. Feedback from ADM's has been positive.

The ATV Board has considered the full Panel Chairs report.

15. Staffing

As noted above, the service has appointed a 0.6 FTE Panel manager and Agency Advisor, which is a new post. 2 further social workers (2FTE) have been agreed and are now in post.

The service has 18.85 FTE Social Workers, which includes 12.85 in recruitment, assessment and Family Finding and 5 in Adoption Support. 1 FTE is dedicated to partner adoption assessments.

Within the current year, the service will be undergoing a temporary change in structure, for succession planning for the future. The current Service Manager will be reducing to 3 days per week, a new temporary post of Deputy Service Manager has been created, which is now recruited to, and the service has moved from 2 Team managers, and 2 Assistant Team managers, to a 3 Team manager structure. All appointments are temporary secondments and have been internal.

This will be further reported on in the Bi Annual report, 2023-24.

Overall staff retention remains good. In this year, 1 permanent part time business support staff member retired. This post has been filled by the apprentice, who was successful in gaining a position.

16. Quality Assurance

ATV operates from a position of continuous improvement, across all areas of the work. The service continually develops and seeks to improve through alignment with wider sector influences, changes, and developments; its own feedback mechanisms; audit; research; inspection; self-assessment.

Quality assurance is carried out through a variety of mechanisms. Key means of assuring quality are outlined below, and the service plan 2023-25 is underpinned by a cross cutting platform of continuous improvement and quality assurance.

The ATV Board has a role in being assured of quality of the service delivery, and a risk register is in place around key areas of risk for delivery, and/or quality concerns.

- *Service Plan*

There is an updated service plan, which has been developed through work with managers and staff, and is reflective of local development, and the national strategy and agenda on adoption. This plan will be updated quarterly and presented to the ATV Board with monitoring of progress against target measures, and outcomes.

- *Practice Model*

The service adopts elements of several key practice models in delivery of the adoption service.

The **Secure Base Model** (Schofield and Beek) is an operational model of attachment for children placed with alternative care givers and is used in preparation training and in assessment of adopters, and adoption support.

The **UEA Moving on to Adoption** is adopted in practice in many cases and is adapted dependent on the needs of the child, and family.

As detailed above, the service has adopted the **Trauma Timeline**, and is promoting trauma informed practice, within the RAA's own work, and across partner agencies.

Aspects of **Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy and Practice (DDP)** (Dan Hughes) are supported through the service delivery, including PACE parenting.

The Education Support worker is trained in the **Thrive** approach and adopts this within work with families and across schools.

ATV adopts a relational based approach throughout its work, both with families and children, and with staff in the service.

- *Performance Monitoring*

The RAA collates detailed adoption performance data, as required by the (former) ASGLB for quarterly returns. ATV has a key role in co-ordinating with partner LAs on adoption performance data. A quarterly balanced scorecard (BSC) is produced, which details performance measures, as set out within this annual report. There is a quarterly meeting with each Local Authority adoption service lead, to review each individual LA performance, key practice themes, and also for the LA to be assured about the adoption service. The BSC is presented quarterly to the ATV Board.

- *Panel*

Panel forms a key QA function for the work of ATV and partner agencies. In this year a separate Panel Quality Assurance Action plan has been developed, which is shared and reviewed by the Panel manager, Service Manager, and panel chairs.

- *Surveys and Feedback*

An adopter survey has been undertaken, as reported on above. Changes have been made as a result of feedback and will continue to be made.

Children and Young people have fed back on the groups that have been run. The voice and Influence group will have a role in seeking children and young people's views more widely.

- *Policies*

ATV policies are in a process of review. These are being reviewed to ensure that they reflect current and most up to date practice and expectations. The Adoption Support procedure has been implemented to reflect the shared responsibilities across all 5 agencies with respect to assessment and support of adoptive children and their families.

Policies will be available on the ATV website.

- *Supervision*

All staff receive monthly supervision in ATV, which includes reflective practice.

All staff have an annual appraisal which sets out their further personal development plan for the year ahead, aligned to their own career and role, and service planning.

- *Workforce development*

The service offers and supports workforce development, aligned to service and sector development, and learning needs of staff. Workforce development may be through attending a training event, shadowing, or through group reflective sessions.

Examples within this year are:

- Early permanence training-national
- Whole team reflection on the LJC Safeguarding review.
- ADM training day facilitated by RAA leaders/Coram BAAF.
- National Adoption Support Conference, focussing on trauma informed practice.
- Team day -developing trauma informed practice and the trauma timeline.

3 managers are currently undertaking level 5 management qualification. This will strengthen the management capacity in ATV and support overall succession planning.

- *Audit*

Audits have been regularly carried out with staff involved in individual cases. The audit process has been LA specific in this year, due to a number of partner LA's undergoing full ILACS inspections by Ofsted. The ATV Board has had one overview report presented, following audits within the service. A further overview report is planned.

Audit has helped the service reflect on quality of case records and ensuring that records reflect what an adopted person may need in the future. It has also informed practice standards and implementing these within the team.

- *Ofsted*

4 of the 5 partner LA's have been inspected by Ofsted, which includes inspection of the RAA- Adoption Tees Valley, through the lens of the Local Authority. These are- Redcar and Cleveland; Darlington; Stockton; Middlesbrough.

While a lot of preparation goes into being ready for each Ofsted inspection, reports only include a single short paragraph on the Adoption Agency. In

each Ofsted inspection, the report on ATV was positive, with strengths being the experience of adoptive parents, timeliness of adoption, and the adoption panel.

Ofsted is planning for inspection of RAA's as a single inspection in 2023-25.

17. Finance

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

17.1 General Running Costs

Expenditure	Budget 2022/23	Outturn 2022/23	Variance 2022/23
Employees	1,640,000	1,596,000	(44,000)
Running Costs	244,000	377,000	116,000
Support Service Costs	113,000	114,000	1,000
Subtotal	1,997,000	2,087,000	73,000
Interagency Fees	500,000	652,000	152,000
Total	2,497,000	2,739,000	225,000

Employee costs underspent due to delays filling vacant posts in year and savings in staff mileage.

Running costs overspent due to additional utility costs of premises and additional adoption support and post adoption costs.

Excluding interagency fees, additional contributions from each Local Authority are:

	New % contributions	Additional 22/23
Darlington	14.6%	11,000
Hartlepool	14.9%	11,000
Middlesbrough	28.1%	20,000
Redcar & Cleveland	15.5%	11,000
Stockton	26.9%	20,000
		73,000

17.2 Interagency Fees

Interagency fees exceeded the budget figure by £152,000. Additional contributions from each Local Authority are as follows as follows:

	Percentage	Budget 22/23	Actual 22/23	Additional 22/23
Darlington	15.95%	80,000	104,000	24,000

Hartlepool	14.22%	71,000	93,000	22,000
Middlesbrough	27.16%	136,000	177,000	41,000
Redcar & Cleveland	15.95%	80,000	104,000	24,000
Stockton	26.72%	133,000	174,000	41,000
	100.00%	500,000	652,000	152,000

18. Service Development Plan

The service developments planned at the end of 2021-22 were:

Development Planned	Progress	Forward Plan
Strengthening voice and involvement of adopted children in ATV	Positive progress- V&I group in place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to develop the group, with dedicated staff to support
Strengthening preparation and assessment of adopters, to support more adopters taking more children with additional needs	Preparation strengthened through the Trauma Timeline – trauma Informed Practice, and addition of virtual reality headsets. Challenges remain in ATV adopters providing sufficiency for children with additional needs	Strengthening: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopters waiting group. Ongoing training and support to adopters waiting. Clear information on profile of children from the outset of the adopter journey
Strengthening sufficiency of adopters, through increased marketing	More adopters approved in 2022-23.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to focus marketing on the needs of children ATV needs to find families for
Taking early permanence strategy to the next stage – phase 2	Pan regional Project-funded for 2 years in place. 2 ATV social workers dedicated to EP lead roles Work ongoing with fostering services LFJB discussions on EP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedicated recruitment plan for EP carers- Autumn 2023 Full range of information for all stakeholders about EP LFJB development session on adoption to include EP Target increase of 20% EP carers, and 20% more children accessing EP

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance at legal gateway- all LA's, to jointly plan for early permanence
Strengthen partnership working, including with early help, to strengthen support to adopters when they need it.	<p>New model of assessment has significantly reduced waiting times.</p> <p>Ongoing work with early help/CHUBs across TV to strengthen understanding of adoptive families, and challenges.</p> <p>MDASS team is in progress for more multi-disciplinary adoption support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wider multi-agency representation on ATV Board Develop shared approach of ATV involvement with any child referred to LA CHUB, to prevent child/YP prematurely leaving the family home/return to care.
Continuing to address life story book model.	Now with LA SW's LA's are responding to any LSB's identified as not being completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor for completion of LSB's and liaise where not provided to plan for completion
Continuing to address timescales for adoption support assessments	New model embedded, and survey indicates more satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New staff to be trained in early response, and assessment
Taking forward Panel improvements to maintain a streamlined approach to panel, and quality CPR's	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversify membership of Panel Quality feedback to individual LA's.
Continue to develop a focus on children's diversity needs, and welcoming/increasing prospective adopters from ethnic minority backgrounds	More adopters have been recruited. Children from minority ethnic backgrounds are placed with ethnically and culturally matched adopters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embed a dedicated focus on ATV approach to valuing and strengthening diversity including access to adopting for adults and understanding children's racial, religious, cultural and ethnicity needs for the future, and in matching
2023-25 – Key new Developments Planned		
Planned Development		Target timescale

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restructure for future resilience in adoption activity, and for succession planning. 	September 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a dedicated EP team. ATV attendance at Legal Gateway - more children identified for potential EP, reducing moves for children, and releasing pressure on fostering resources. Recruit more carers for EP 	October 2023 – March 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase sufficiency of adopters, able to take ATV children, including siblings and children who have more complex health and development needs. 	April 2023-March 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen adopters' family and friendship network support 	By December 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve access to early medical assessments for adoption for children, and for adult health reports by appointment of dedicated adult health Medical Advisor 	By October 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workforce development across Tees Valley on adoption, early permanence, and CPR 	By December 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement and test new outcomes framework in adoption support 	By March 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on developing post adoption direct and indirect contact plans to maintain relationships, and promote life long identity and connections 	By March 2024

Vicky Davidson Boyd

Service Manager Adoption Tees Valley

July 2023

This page is intentionally left blank

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
23 OCTOBER 2023**

DEDICATED SCHOOL GRANT AND THE SAFETY VALVE

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide scrutiny committee with an update on progress made on the council's Safety Valve agreement to address historic deficit in the High Needs Block which supports education provision for young people with Special Educational Needs.

Summary

2. The council has entered into the "Safety Valve" agreement with the Department for Education (DfE), enabling funding over a 5 year period to address the accumulated deficit on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) High Needs Block (HNB). The agreement will require commitment to areas of review and improvement identified by Department for Education (DfE) to bring in year spend in line with the in-year budget by 2023/24.

Recommendation

3. It is recommended that :-
 - (a) Scrutiny committee note the terms of the agreement and progress made to date.

Tony Murphy
Assistant Director of Education and Inclusion

Background Papers

Darlington Safety Valve Agreement

Tony Murphy : Extension 5637

S17 Crime and Disorder	N/A
Health and Wellbeing	Supports improved outcomes for children and young people
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	No implications arising from this report
Diversity	No implications arising from this report
Wards Affected	All wards are affected
Groups Affected	Young people 0-25 with Special Educational Needs
Budget and Policy Framework	Dedicated School Block
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
Council Plan	Supports SEND priorities in the Council Plan
Efficiency	Supports efficient use of resources and service improvement
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	Impacts on Looked After Children or Care Leavers with Special Education Needs

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

4. The Department for Education (DfE) as part of its wider SEND reforms, has initiated the 'safety valve' intervention programme. The DfE recognises that over recent years, pressures on high needs budgets have contributed to many local authorities accruing deficits on their Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The DfE states that the right response to tackling this is a multi-faceted approach, which looks to the heart of the issues, taking in the significant increases in high needs funding that have been provided nationally; reform from the cross government SEND review; and targeted intervention for the local authorities who have struggled the most.
5. The safety valve intervention programme began in 2020/21 and has continued with further authorities added to the programme in 2021/22 and 2022/23, targeting the local authorities with the highest DSG deficits. The programme requires local authorities to develop substantial plans for reform to their high needs systems, with support and challenge from the department's expert team, to rapidly place them on a sustainable footing. If a local authority can demonstrate sufficiently that their DSG management plan creates lasting sustainability, including reaching an in-year balance as quickly as possible, then the department will enter into an agreement with the authority (subject to Ministerial approval). Darlington entered into an agreement in March 2023.
6. Through the agreement, the local authority is held to account for the delivery of their reforms and savings targets via regular reporting to the DfE. Contingent on delivery of the reforms set out in the agreement, the DfE will help the local authority with additional funding over time to contribute to eliminating the historic deficit.

Reporting Requirements

7. When Darlington were accepted onto the programme this came with the requirement to formally report progress back to the department three times per financial year. These reporting requirements are a condition of receiving the grant. The dates we are required to report back to the DfE for 2023/24 are as follows:
 - (a) Report 1 - 16 June
 - (b) Report 2 - 15 September
 - (c) Report 3 - 15 December

Darlington Position

8. In Darlington our DSG deficit is made up fully of High Needs deficit. The other blocks are in surplus and therefore reduce the overall net High Needs Block deficit position.
9. Our safety valve plan had projected that we will break even in terms of expenditure against grant in 2023/24 (this year). We expected to have an overspend in 2022/23 of £261,939 on the DSG (£460,276 of High Needs overspend), though this projection was lower than in previous years following the commencement of some of the actions in our agreement and additional high needs funding.

10. After receiving the final expenditure accounts for 2022/23, we are however going into our first full year of the Safety Valve agreement from a position of relative strength as the High Needs Block achieved a balance at the end of the 2022/23 financial year. The High Needs Block of circa £18.7m in 2022/23 had a year-end underspend position of £109,382. This has reduced the overall net deficit on the high needs block to £6,423,149 before safety valve payments received. The DSG deficit has therefore reduced to £5,176,899 before safety valve payments and expected claw back of Early Years Block.
11. We received our first Safety Valve payment of £2.48M in March 2023, which has been allocated to our brought forward deficit in line with the terms of the grant. This has reduced the overall DSG deficit to £2,696,899 (before expected claw back of Early Years Block).
12. We cannot be complacent however in terms of our plan. We are still seeing rising demand and increasing tribunal requests which are impacting on our high needs plans. We therefore still have a significant challenge in the year ahead to provide a balanced budget which we outlined in our agreed plan (2023/24 provided for an underspend of £124,618). Following the submission of our report 1 to the Department for Education we received a positive response reflecting that our plans were on track and confirmation that a further Safety Valve payment of £247k will be made this year.
13. The progress made however reflects the effective work of our SEND services and Finance to manage demand and develop accurate growth projections. We have moved from a high needs overspend of circa £1.6m in 2019/20 to an underspend, though the DSG funding has increased significantly in this period.

Darlington Conditions of Agreement

14. The Assistant Director Education and Inclusion, the Assistant Director Resources, the Head of SEND and the Finance manager meet on a monthly basis to manage our safety valve progress. The Head of SEND and Finance Manager also meet frequently to look at day to day budget management. The council's Chief Officer Board are updated regularly on progress.
15. Schools Forum are also updated as to progress against agreement in the regular cycle of meetings.



Dedicated Schools Grant 'Safety Valve' Agreement: Darlington

1. This agreement is between the Department for Education and Darlington Council, and covers the financial years from 2022-23 to 2026-27.
2. The authority undertakes to reach a positive in-year balance on its Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) account by the end of 2023-24 and in each subsequent year. The authority undertakes to control and reduce the cumulative deficit as follows, not including any contribution made by the department through this agreement:

Year	Forecast DSG Deficit Profile at year end £m
2022-23	£6.2m
2023-24	£6.0m
2024-25	£5.3m
2025-26	£4.2m
2026-27	£2.8m

3. The authority agrees to implement the DSG management plan that it has set out. This includes action to:
 - 3.1. Manage the demand for Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), though the local graduated response, building in early intervention and an inclusive culture, ensuring that children and young people's needs are met within mainstream education;
 - 3.2. Identify, assess and implement alternative forms of Special Educational

Needs and Disabilities (SEND) support through early identification of need and embedding targeted support;

- 3.3. Reduce demand in independent placements through multiple pathways, such as Alternative Provision (AP), Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Resource Bases, and placements through the new Tees Valley Free School;
 - 3.4. Review the Home and Home Teaching Service with a view to reorganise or recommission the current service;
 - 3.5. Deliver a reduction in Post-16 independent special school placements, which will be achieved by current placements reaching a natural end and new Post-16 placements being offered as college placements;
 - 3.6. Consult on all current resource provision and outreach in Darlington, ensuring resources meet the needs of children and young people;
 - 3.7. Introduce an outcome-based framework to ensure quality of the commissioned SEND provision, including monitoring visits to ensure standards are being met and a requirement to independently survey children and young people and families on at least an annual basis to assure satisfaction of service.
4. The authority also agrees to ongoing monitoring of its performance in fulfilling this agreement. The authority will:
- 4.1. Report tri-annually (as a minimum) in writing to the Department (Funding Policy Unit) on its progress towards implementing the plan as per the conditions set out in paragraphs 2 and 3;
 - 4.2. The monitoring reports should include progress against the conditions of grant and a financial dashboard detailing various metrics relating to demand and cost. DfE will provide a template for this;
 - 4.3. Inform the Department (Funding Policy Unit) of any unforeseen difficulties or impacts of carrying out the agreement, or any significant risks to reaching the agreed financial position as soon as they arise;

- 4.4. Meet with the Department at any time when the Department deems it necessary to discuss progress towards the agreement.
5. The Department agrees to pay to the authority an additional **£2.48 million** of DSG before the end of the financial year 2022-23. In subsequent financial years, subject to compliance with the conditions set out in paragraph 3, the Department will pay DSG sums as follows. This funding will be provided in instalments and subject to continued satisfactory progress. Subject to full compliance, Darlington should therefore eliminate their cumulative deficit no later than 2026-27.

Year	The Department agrees to pay to the authority an additional £m of DSG by year end
2022-23	£2.48m
2023-24	£0.74m
2024-25	£0.74m
2025-26	£0.74m
2026-27	£1.49m

6. This agreement is subject to review at any time, for example as a result of the following events:
- 6.1. Higher or lower DSG formula funding levels for the authority in future financial years than those the authority has assumed;
 - 6.2. Significant changes to national SEND policy which impact on elements of the plan;
 - 6.3. Insufficient progress being made towards the authority reaching and sustaining an in-year balance on its DSG account as set out in the plan;
 - 6.4. Whether Darlington are successful in their bid for a free school.

The review process will include an assessment of the impact of the change in circumstances.

On behalf of Darlington Council, signed by:



Ian Williams - LA Chief Executive



Elizabeth Davison – Group Director of Operations/Section 151 Officer



James Stroyan – Group Director of People

On behalf of the Department for Education, signed by:



Tom Goldman – Deputy Director, Funding Policy Unit

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
23 OCTOBER 2023**

WORK PROGRAMME 2023-2024

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To consider the work programme items scheduled to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee during the 2023/24 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 2023/24 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: Paul Dalton

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, with its overarching focus being 'Delivering success for Darlington'.
7. In approving the Council Plan, Members have agreed to a 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.

Forward Plan and Additional Items

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

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

Topic	Timescale	Lead Officer	Link to PMF (metrics)	Scrutiny's Role
Performance Management and Regulation	Q3 19 June 2023 Q4 23 Oct <i>(Deferred to 23 Oct from 21 Aug)</i> Q1 23 Oct Q2 8 Jan 2024 Q3 15 Apr 2024	Sharon Raine	Agreed set of indicators	To receive quarterly monitoring reports and undertake any further detailed work into particular outcomes if necessary
Local Designated Officer Annual Report	23 October 2023	James Stroyan/ Marian Garland		To examine the Annual Report and assure Members that allegations made against staff who work with children are reported and how they are actioned. <i>(Item deferred to 23 October 2023 per Officer Request, with agreement from the Chair).</i>
Review of Performance Indicators used in Performance Management and Regulation	23 October 2023	Chris Bell		To review the Performance Indicators previously agreed for this Scrutiny Committee.
Learning and Skills Service Annual Report	23 October 2023	Paul Richardson		Annual Report to demonstrate challenge
Adoption Tees Valley Annual Report 2021/22	23 October 2023	Vicky Davidson-Boyd, Service Manager, Adoption Tees Valley		Annual monitoring

Topic	Timescale	Lead Officer	Link to PMF (metrics)	Scrutiny's Role
Dedicated School Grant and the Safety Valve	23 October 2023	Tony Murphy		To provide Scrutiny with an overview of the Dedicated School Grant and the Safety Valve.
Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report 2022/23	8 January 2024	Martin Graham	CSC201	To examine the Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Officer produced by the Children's Safeguarding Unit. <i>(Item scheduled for 23 October 2023. Deferred to 8 January 2024 per Officer Request – Agreed by Chair.)</i>
Children's Services Self-Assessment - Overview	8 January 2024	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 <i>(Item scheduled for 23 October 2023. Deferred to 8 January 2024 per Officer Request – Agreed by Chair.)</i>
Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report	8 January 2024	Ann Baxter, Independent Chair		Annual monitoring
Youth Engagement / Communication Strategy	8 January 2024	Tony Murphy		To undertake a review of the Youth Engagement / Communication Strategy, with an additional focus on SEND.
Transitional Services (SEND) for 16 – 25 year	8 January 2024	Tony Murphy		To provide Scrutiny with an opportunity to examine the Transitional Services for 16-25

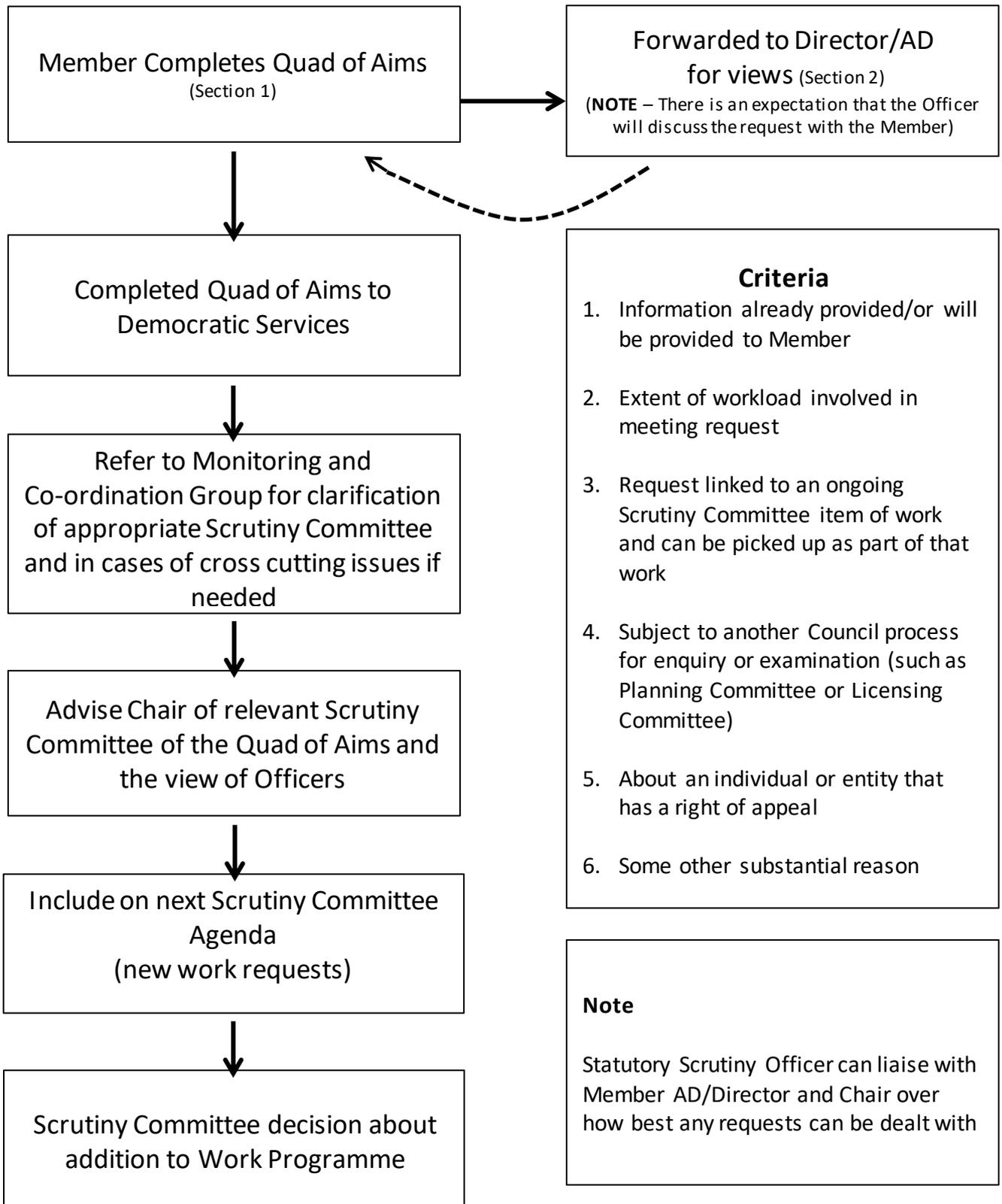
Topic	Timescale	Lead Officer	Link to PMF (metrics)	Scrutiny's Role
olds				year olds.
Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)	15 January 2024 (Special Meeting)	Brett Nielsen / Chris Bell / Tony Murphy		To formulate this Scrutiny Committee's response to the MTFP in relation to those areas within its remit.
2023/24 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment	19 February 2024	Tony Murphy/Nicola Davies		Annual Report
School Transport and the Associated Services	19 February 2024	Tony Murphy		To provide Scrutiny with the opportunity to examine the School Transport provision, and associated services.
Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education	15 April 2024	Tony Murphy		To provide Scrutiny with the opportunity to examine the delivery of Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education within schools.
Refreshed Children and Young Peoples Plan	June 2024	Christine Shields		To update Members on the refreshed Children and Young Peoples Plan

JOINT WORKING

Cross Party Autism Working Group	Final Report of the Autism Provision Review Group to Health and Housing Scrutiny on 14 April 2021. Recommendation to establish a	Christine Shields	To progress the key themes of training and awareness, support, diagnosis and employment, as identified by the Joint Autism Review Group.
---	---	-------------------	--

	Joint Working Group - ongoing		
--	-------------------------------	--	--

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



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?

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 ?	

--	--

Signed **Position** **Date**

**DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
FORWARD PLAN**

APPENDIX 3



**FORWARD PLAN
FOR THE PERIOD: FOR THE PERIOD: 4 OCTOBER 2023 – 29 FEBRUARY 2024**

Title	Decision Maker and Date
Auditors Annual Audit Letter 2020/21	Cabinet 7 Nov 2023
Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 - Fixed Penalty Notices	Cabinet 7 Nov 2023
Consultation on Renewal of Dog Public Space Protection Order	Cabinet 7 Nov 2023
Council Tax Changes to Empty Property Premiums from 2024	Cabinet 7 Nov 2023
Council Tax Support - Scheme Approval 2024/25	Council 30 Nov 2023 Cabinet 7 Nov 2023
Delivery of New Homes at Neasham Road	Cabinet 7 Nov 2023
Housing Services Repairs and Maintenance Policy	Cabinet 7 Nov 2023
Procurement Plan Update	Cabinet 7 Nov 2023
Project Position Statement and Capital Programme Monitoring - Quarter Two 2023/24	Cabinet 7 Nov 2023
Revenue Budget Monitoring 2023/24 - Quarter Two	Cabinet 7 Nov 2023
Schedule of Transactions	Cabinet 7 Nov 2023
Special Free School at West Park, Darlington	Cabinet 7 Nov 2023
Complaints to Local Government Ombudsman	Cabinet 5 Dec 2023
Housing Revenue Account - Medium Term Financial Plan 2024/25 to 2027/28	Council 25 Jan 2024 Cabinet 5 Dec 2023
Land at Faverdale - Burtree Garden Village - Proposed Infrastructure Development Agreement	Cabinet 5 Dec 2023
Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)	Council 25 Jan 2024 Cabinet 5 Dec 2023
Mid-Year Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management 2023/24	Council 25 Jan 2024 Cabinet 5 Dec 2023
Council Tax and Business Rates Debt Recovery Strategy	Cabinet 9 Jan 2024
Council Tax and Business Rates Discretionary Relief Policy	Cabinet 9 Jan 2024
Discretionary Housing Payment Policy	Cabinet 9 Jan 2024
Housing Services Asset Management Strategy	Cabinet 9 Jan 2024
Housing Services Climate Change Strategy	Cabinet 9 Jan 2024
Maintained Schools Capital Programme - Summer 2024	Cabinet 9 Jan 2024
Revised Climate Change Action Plan	Council 25 Jan 2024 Cabinet 9 Jan 2024
Calendar of Council and Committee Meetings 2024/25	Cabinet 6 Feb 2024
Housing Revenue Account - Medium Term Financial Plan 2024/25 to 2026/28	Cabinet 6 Feb 2024
Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2024/25 to 2027/28	Council 21 Mar 2024

**DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
FORWARD PLAN**

	Cabinet 6 Feb 2024
Project Position Statement and Capital Programme Monitoring - Quarter 3	Cabinet 6 Feb 2024
Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management Strategy	Cabinet 6 Feb 2024
Revenue Budget Monitoring - Quarter 3	Cabinet 6 Feb 2024
Schools Admissions 2025/26	Cabinet 6 Feb 2024
Asset Management Plan	Cabinet