

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

20th October 2025

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS QUARTER 1 2025-26

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 2025- June 2025) 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. 0.3% of the 311 referrals were processed within three working days, exceeding our target of 5%.
6. In Q1 2025/26, 15.4% of children referred came from families with a previous referral within the past 12 months. This is a positive outcome, remaining below the target threshold of 18%.
7. At the end of Q1 2025/26, the Building Stronger Families team was supporting 233 families and 462 children. An additional 61 families, including 132 children, were receiving support from external agencies. During the quarter, 368 Early Help Assessments (EHAs) were initiated, with 13.3 % led by external agencies. This represents a 21.5% increase compared to the 303 EHAs started in Q1 2024/25, with a similar proportion of externally led assessments (13.5%).
8. In Q1 2025/26, there were 90 reported missing episodes involving 35 individual children and young people (CYP). This represents an increase from Q1 2024/25, which recorded 50 episodes involving 31 individuals, largely driven by a rise in reported incidents among children in care (CiC). Despite the quarterly increase, the current figure remains significantly lower than the 117 episodes recorded in Q1 2023/24.
9. All children and young people were offered Return Home Interviews (RHI) (excluding children from other authorities) following their missing episode in Q1 2025/26.
10. 85.7% of the young people reported missing had 3 or less episodes during Q1 2025/26 and 8.6% had between 4 and 9 episodes, with 5.7% having more than 10 episodes.
11. In Q1 2025/26, 295 children received a Children and Families (C&F) assessment—up from 259 in the same quarter last year, but down from 418 in Q1 2023/24.
12. 89.8% of C&F assessments were completed with the 45-day timescale. This represents a positive

trend compared to previous years, indicating improved timeliness and efficiency.

13. At the end of June 2025, 122 children had an open Child Protection (CP) plan — an increase from 115 in June 2024. In Q1 2025/26, 38 CP plans were initiated, compared to 30 in Q1 2024/25 and 27 plans were ceased, a decrease from 49 in Q1 2024/25.
14. Of the children whose CP plans ceased in Q1 2025/26: 51.9% transitioned to a Child in Need (CiN) plan following improvements and reduced risk. 29.6% entered care. 18.5% ceased for other reasons, including relocation to another local authority or ended social care involvement as significant improvements had been made and were either supported by the Building Stronger Families team or directed to universal services.
15. As of June 2025, 269 children were in care, of whom 9.3% were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC).
16. In Q1 2025/26, 29 children from 19 families in Darlington entered care. This represents an increase from Q1 2024/25 (14 children), but a decrease compared to Q1 2023/24 (44 children). During Q1 2025/26, 6 young people entered care after being accepted by the Home Office as unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
17. 30.6% (including UASC) of the children and young people (CYP) who came into care during Q1 2025/26, were placed with an internal foster carer.
18. 25 families ceased to be in care in Q1 2025/26. 43.3% of children returned home, 6.7% had an SGO/CAO granted, 6.7% were adopted, 30.0% turned 18yrs becoming care leavers (33.3% of which were UASC) and 13.3% due to other reasons.
19. In Q1 2025/26, there has been a reduction in the proportion of children in care placed with Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) carers compared to Q1 2024/25. This has been accompanied by an increase in placements with in-house foster carers. Additionally, placements with parents have decreased, while placements with connected carers have risen.
20. 20.0% of children requiring a review health assessment or dental check-up by June 2025 have had one completed, meeting the current trajectory for this year.
21. At the end of June 2025, 98.7% of care leavers aged 19–21 and 96.6% of those aged 22–25 were living in suitable accommodation.

Where do we need to improve?

22. In Q1 2025/26, 88.7% of children's referrals were completed within 1 working day, just below our 90% target. This marks a notable improvement from Q1 2024/25, when only 81.0% were completed within the same timeframe, despite a 48.1% increase in the number of referrals assessed. Overall timeliness has improved compared to previous quarters. However, due to the relatively low volume of referrals we receive, even a small number of late completions can significantly affect our performance percentages, especially when compared to larger councils.
23. In Q1 2025/26, 59.7% of children (excluding those transferred in-conference) had their Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC) held within the required timescale. This remains below the target of 95%, despite efforts throughout the year to improve performance. The main cause of delays continues to be late notification from Social Work Teams that an ICPC is

required. This notification must occur within 10 working days of the enquiry to allow partner agencies at least 5 working days to prepare reports and arrange attendance.

Work is ongoing to address this issue, with a focus on improving communication and timeliness of requests to ensure better compliance with statutory timescales.

24. Of the children who had an Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC), 66.7% were made subject to a Child Protection Plan (CP). The remaining 33.3% were not placed on a CP plan; however, the conference concluded that these families could be safely supported under a Child in Need (CiN) plan. Notably, no ICPC resulted in a case being closed at that stage.
25. 1 family ceased their CP plan in June after being on it for over two years. This accounted for 7.4% of all cessations in the quarter. Due to the low number of total cessations, this caused the percentage of children ceasing CP after 2 years to exceed the 5% target.
26. In Q1 2025/26, 736 Child Protection statutory visits were scheduled. Of these, 70.4% were completed within 10 working days, and 92.4% were completed within 15 working days. The primary reasons for the delays were family availability and instances where the child was not at home during the scheduled visit time.
27. 66.7% of initial CiC reviews and 78.0% of subsequent reviews were completed within the required timescales. Although both figures fall below the target threshold, the small number of reviews conducted means that any delays have a disproportionately large impact on the overall percentages.
28. In Q1 2025/26, 81.6% of the 670 statutory visits for Children in Care (CiC) were completed within the required timescale. This represents a slight decline compared to Q1 2024/25, when 84.4% of visits were completed on time. While performance has improved compared to last quarter, it remains below the target of 90%.
29. As of June 2025, 16.0% of Children in Care (CiC) have experienced three or more placement changes within the previous 12 months. This exceeds the target of 10%, indicating a need for continued focus on placement stability. However, as the overall number of CiC decreases, even a single placement change can cause a noticeable percentage shift. This means that while the headline figure appears volatile, the underlying trend has remained relatively stable.
30. 51.1% 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 significantly below target (68%) and the national and regional average for 2023/24 (both 68%).
31. As of June 2025, 12.7% of Children in Care (not in an adoption or parent placement) have been placed 20 or more miles from home, exceeding the target of 10%. Although the number of children placed at a distance has only increased slightly over the past 12 months, the overall size of the cohort has decreased. As a result, even small changes in placement numbers can lead to proportionally larger percentage shifts.
32. Currently 8 young people are refusing to engage in medical checks. The children and young people are continually reminded of the benefits of having a check-up and encouraged to take part.
33. During Q1 2025/26, 59.3% of children who entered care for more than 20 days had their Initial Health Assessment (IHA) forms sent to Health within the required 5-day timescale. Of these, 46.2% were seen by a health professional within 20 days. The decline in timely assessments is primarily due to cancelled appointments and limited availability of medical professionals.

34. 31.1% of care leavers aged 19–21 and 34.5% of those aged 22–25 were classified as NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). This is concerning, especially in light of the national trend, where the proportion of care leavers reported as NEET rose from 38% in 2022/23 to 46% in 2023/24.
35. In terms of positive engagement, 44.6% of care leavers aged 19–21 were in employment or training (32.4% full-time, 12.2% part-time), and 24.3% were in education. Among those aged 22–25, 55.2% were in employment or training (25.9% full-time, 29.3% part-time), and 10.3% were in education.

Recommendation

36. It is recommended that the performance information provided in this report is reviewed and noted, and relevant queries raised with the appropriate Assistant Director.

Chris Bell
Assistant Director of Children's Services

Background papers

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

Sharon Raine Head of Performance and Transformation: Extension 6091

Council Plan	This report contributes to the Council Plan by involving Members in the scrutiny of performance relating to the delivery of key outcomes with regards to Children's Social Care.
Addressing inequalities	This involves members in the scrutiny of the level to which Childrens Social Care contributes to ensuring that opportunities are accessible to everyone, with a focus on ensuring a good job, home and/or social connections for all.
Tackling Climate Change	This report does not identify any issued relating to climate change.
Efficient and effective use of resources	This report allows for the scrutiny of performance which is integral to optimising outcomes and ensuring efficient use of resources.
Health and Wellbeing	This report supports performance improvement relating to improving the health and wellbeing of residents.
S17 Crime and Disorder	This report supports the Councils Crime and Disorder responsibilities.
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.
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.