

TITLE OF REPORT: Child Protection and Children in Need Annual Joint Report

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek the views of the Corporate Parenting Board on Child Protection and Children in Need Annual Joint Report

BackgroundLegal and statutory guidance context

Section 17 of the **Children Act 1989** imposes a general duty on Children's Social Care (CSC) to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are *'in need'* and to promote the upbringing of children in need by their families by providing a range and level of services to meet those children's needs.

Section 17 of the Children Act defines a Child in Need (CIN) as a child:

- who is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, **a reasonable standard of health or development** without the provision of services;
- or a child **whose health or development is likely to be significantly impaired**, or further impaired, without the provision of services;
- or a child who is disabled.

Section 47 of the Children Act places a duty on Local Authorities to investigate children in their area where there is reasonable cause to suspect they are or are likely to suffer significant harm. This is known colloquially as a Child Protection investigation or enquiry.

Under both section 17 and section 47 other agencies have a duty to co-operate with CSC in carrying out this duty to assess the needs of children and to provide services as necessary.

To determine the needs of a child and the support that they and their family may require, CSC will carry out a child and family assessment by a qualified Social Worker. This is known as a Child in Need Assessment which where necessary will run concurrently alongside a section 47 investigation.

Working Together (WT) to Safeguard Children (DFE 2018) is the statutory guidance that informs and instructs the Council on how to enact this legislative framework. WT 2018, inter alia, also places the responsibility on CSC to establish a process for receiving referrals and acting as the principle point of contact for safeguarding referrals relating to children.

What do we do in Gateshead

In Gateshead there is a Tier 2 and Tier 3 services. Tier 2 services are our Early Help providers and Tier 3 services are the statutory intervention services that covers CIN and CP plans. There has been a recent review and launch of the LSCB multi-agency safeguarding thresholds to ensure that children and families are given the right level of protection and support through the tier system.

The (Tier 2) Early Help Service works closely with colleagues in Tier 3 teams to ensure that families receive timely support across a clearly understood continuum of risk, as set out in the GSCB multi-agency thresholds. In the last 12 months, 26.8% of all new referrals into Early Help are step-down referrals from Tier 3 services (314 children from 194 families), while 13.3% of all Early Help case closures (152 children from 74 families) have been escalated to Tier 3 for social work assessment and oversight.

The effectiveness of the step-up/down system was recognised by the Ofsted Focused Visit (September 2021) in the following observation:

“Decisions by managers to step up and down to early help services are appropriate. Partner agencies have a shared understanding of thresholds, augmented by the daily multi-agency triage meeting, which includes the early help service. Proportionate checks are undertaken with professionals; they work closely together and collaborate well.”

Colleagues from Early Help and the Assessment and Intervention Team continue to deliver training on thresholds to multi-agency groups as part of the Level 3 Safeguarding offer.

The (Tier 3) services start at the Integrated Referral Team (IRT) who deliver this service and the Assessment and Intervention (A&I) Teams who principally undertake section 17 and 47 assessments.

The current arrangements are that the Assessment and Intervention Service both assess families and continue to work with them under CIN arrangements. Investment in training in systemic and relational social work has meant that social workers are more able to intervene at a CIN level, before concerns escalate and therefore avoid the need to initiate child protection processes. It is felt that this way of working has significantly contributed to the reduction in the numbers of children subject to CP plans.

Our Edge of Care Team continues to work to prevent those teenagers who have difficult family relationships and entrenched patterns of family functioning from coming into care or becoming subject to a Child Protection Plan.

Alongside our A&I service the Children with Disabilities teams complete CIN assessments where it is identified that disability is or may be a factor for the child. Workers from Children with Disabilities team will also offer consultation to social Workers completing assessment work with families when disability is potentially identified. Under legislation families can request an assessment of need when they feel their children have additional needs due to a disability.

The Safeguarding and Care Planning Service works with families once a child becomes subject to a Child Protection Plan. The plans are discussed, agreed, and reviewed with the families and core group members by way of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). The social worker continues to work with families and children subject to CP

plans and those cases where concerns have escalated, and a legal framework is required to secure a safe, stable and permanent home for the child/ren.

Gateshead received a focussed visit to the front door of children's services in September 2021;

- “Contact and referrals for children in need or at risk of harm are managed effectively in the IRT. Social workers and managers make prompt, well informed decisions about what help and protection are required. Decisions by managers to step up and down to early help services are appropriate.”
- Partner agencies have a shared understanding of thresholds, augmented by the daily multi agency triage meeting which includes the early help service. Proportionate checks are undertaken with professionals they work closely together and collaborate well. As a result, most children and families get the right level of help and protection at the right time, delivered by very committed and skilled professionals. This is making a difference to their day to day lives and is keeping them safer. Parental consent to share information is sought routinely or appropriately over ridden if Required.
- Responses to children at risk of harm are timely and effective. Visits are carried out swiftly by IRT staff when they are concerned about children's immediate welfare, and this is a real strength. Multi agency child protection strategy meetings are used constructively to share information about children leading to well informed decisions about what needs to happen next to protect them from harm.
- Inspectors agree with a recent independent audit of strategy meetings and child protection enquiries which concluded that children and their families receive a proportionate response.

Most assessments of vulnerable children are comprehensive and analytical. They demonstrate effective and thoughtful engagement with families and a good understanding of children s needs. They are thorough and clearly reflect the child s voice and experiences. However, some are not updated regularly”

Proposal

2. It is proposed that the Corporate Parenting Board has been asked to consider the content of the report.

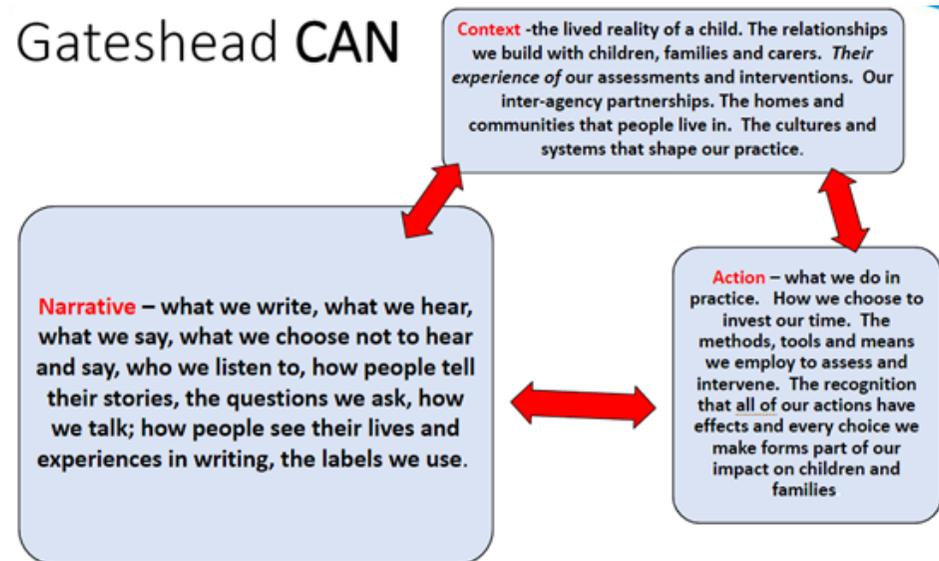
3. Performance Data

We continue to monitor the trends in the numbers of children with CIN and CP plans at the monthly Performance Clinics and make appropriate arrangements in response.

Number of contacts/referrals received 2021/2022	Number of Children and Families Assessment undertaken 2021/2022	Number of children in Need of Tier 3 Services across Gateshead as of March 2022	Number of Children Subject to CIN Assessments/Plans as of end of March 2022	Number of Children subject to CP Plans as of end of March 2022
6364	2617	1979	1152	233

Please refer to appendix 1 at the end of this report for further data information.

4. Gateshead CAN model



Our approach to Social Work, Gateshead CAN, is central to this strategy as Social Work. We commit to putting the ‘social’ back into social work. For us, social work is about the relationships we build, the conversations we have, the direct work we do with the children and families who need our services. We put an emphasis on reclaiming *practice* as the central tenet of our social work. We are investing in learning and developing systemic and strengths-based practice skills to enable our social workers to support real sustained change in the lives of vulnerable children and their families.

Our approach to Social Work practice is not limited to one model or ‘way to do it’. **Gateshead CAN** is an overarching systemic and strengths-based approach, which recognises the interrelationships between **Context**, **Action** and **Narrative**. The purpose of the model is to work with and alongside our families so they understand what we are doing, why we are doing it and how we all can achieve better outcomes for our young people. The care plans that are formulated for the children are written to them and their parents/carers so they can understand what is being asked of them.

What are the benefits to writing to the child/young person?

- They understand what is written
- Builds rapport
- Sense of value – being listened to and understood
- Inclusive
- Builds their life story as they remember it
- Shifts the power balance

We want to tread meaningfully and respectfully in the lives of the children we work with- then we need to be able to write in a way that reflects their lived experiences, and they can relate to. We want to demonstrate our social work skill and creative practice. Then we do away with jargon, and we explain and analyse situations standing in the child's shoes and writing to them.

Whilst we are in the early stages of the implementation of narrative practice, we have a task and finish group that meets monthly implementing training and best practice support to the social care staff. The use of champions has been implemented across social care services to lead by example in terms of the change in practice. As the service becomes more confident in the use of narrative practice it is hoped that all care plans will be written in this way, alongside our assessments, court work and our own policies and procedures.

5. Quality Improvement Group (QIG)

Gateshead Children's Social Care Services have a robust Quality Assurance Framework that helps ensure that there is a continuous drive on practice improvement which in turn leads to improved outcomes for children and families in Gateshead. We believe that every child and young person should thrive and have a safe, loving, and stable home so that they can explore the world around them safely and become the young adult that they want to become.

The framework integrates Performance Management and an Audit Framework. It builds on the work described within the Research in Practice paper "Building a quality culture" and the learning from several Local Authorities who have effectively used this approach to drive improvement and achieve better outcomes for Children and Young People.

There is a Quality Improvement Group (QIG) which is chaired by the Strategic Director, Children Adults, Families and is the primary mechanism for ensuring that all learning from the framework is captured and that both the audit programme and improvement plan are aligned to learning from the quality of practice.

In addition to QIG, the learning from the below sources of information are collated and reported on to ensure that all forms of audit activity are captured across the service and outcomes are improved.

- Themes from Audits (that have not been discussed at the Performance and Outcome meetings)
- Children, Young People and Families Feedback (that has not been discussed at the Performance and Outcome meetings)
- Safeguarding Practice Reviews
- Peer Challenge activity
- Dispute Resolution Process

Gateshead have recently reviewed the way in which audits are undertaken across the service and in line with feedback from the recent Ofsted Focus Visit. The new Practice Day Proposals have a more holistic approach to reflective learning and include direct observations of practice and feedback from families.

Purpose of Practice Days

Practice days will enable us to assure the quality of practice and influence this by facilitating reflection on case direction, work undertaken and case recording. Comments and feedback from auditors will be provided to practitioners at the time to encourage their learning. All case audits will be uploaded on to the child's file to ensure that any learning is captured.

Overview

During practice day, case audits and practice observations are completed alongside the social worker or practitioner. This also includes consultations with other relevant professionals as well as the family and young people (where achievable) to provide a rounded view of practice. Any concerns around individual practice will be followed up with Team Managers. Similarly comments about good practice are passed on to Team Managers and examples of excellent practice shared across the service.

The week also includes observation of visits, child protection conferences, LAC reviews, supervision and other activities of staff. Any observation of activity with children and their families is agreed by the child/family in advance.

Feedback

Collection of this wealth of information needs to be purposeful and useful in providing feedback to improve practice. We will use the information to know where our strengths and weaknesses lie and to respond to themes that emerge. The following are key when completing an overall analysis report:

- Patterns and themes to be clearly identified, provided in concise form and acted upon.
- To ensure the information collected is current, there will be a short time period between the quality assurance activity and summary reports being provided
- When shortfalls in practice are identified in different parts of the service and for individual practitioners, contextual issues will be considered, e.g. staff shortages or other resource issues.
- Good practice exemplars will be used to help less experienced staff understand the standard required and develop their own knowledge and competence.
- Front line managers will be given detailed feedback about the judgements made about practice within their teams and shortfalls addressed within the spirit of a learning rather than blame culture.

The report will be shared across the service which will include QIG and Practice/ Performance Meetings as this will allow learning to be discussed, actions to be captured and importantly good practice will be celebrated.

6. Recommendations

The Corporate Parenting Board has been asked to consider the content of the report.

No of Children in Need of Services from Gateshead Children's Services.

Gateshead Children's Social Care Performance Workbook

Reporting Period: March 2022

Children in Need (including LAC and CP) : Number and Rate

	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	YTD (2021-2022)	Mar-21	Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22
[F1] Number of Children in Need at month end (caseload)*	1505	1587	1697	1979	1697	1712	1751	1798	1851	1851	1821	1915	1884	1839	1868	1914	1979
[F2] Rate of Children in Need per 10,000	378.33	400.71	430.85	502.45	430.85	434.66	444.56	456.5	469.95	469.95	462.34	486.2	478.33	466.91	474.27	485.95	502.45
[F3] Number of Child Protection Plans Open at month end	262	274	206	233	206	209	204	231	240	256	244	272	250	248	259	248	233
[F4] % of caseload that are CP at month end	17.4%	17.3%	12.1%	11.8%	12.1%	12.2%	11.7%	12.8%	13.0%	13.8%	13.4%	14.2%	13.3%	13.5%	13.9%	13.0%	11.8%
[F5] Number of Looked After Children at month end	380	414	440	485	440	432	425	430	430	427	431	437	447	462	473	479	485
[F6] % of caseload that are LAC at month end	25.2%	26.1%	25.9%	24.5%	25.9%	25.2%	24.3%	23.9%	23.2%	23.1%	23.7%	22.8%	23.7%	25.1%	25.3%	25.0%	24.5%
[F7] Number of Careleavers we are in touch with	111	115	117	109	117	117	108	113	108	116	114	115	115	114	103	110	109
[F8] % of caseload that are careleavers at month end	7.4%	7.2%	6.9%	5.5%	6.9%	6.8%	6.2%	6.3%	5.8%	6.3%	6.3%	6.0%	6.1%	6.2%	5.5%	5.7%	5.5%

*Includes all cases held by C + F social workers including: LAC, CP, CIN, CWD Review, Private Law & Careleavers

Rate of Children in Need per 10,000 (including LAC & CP)



Source: LAIT (CIN Census 2018-2019)

Child Protection Plan's by category of protection

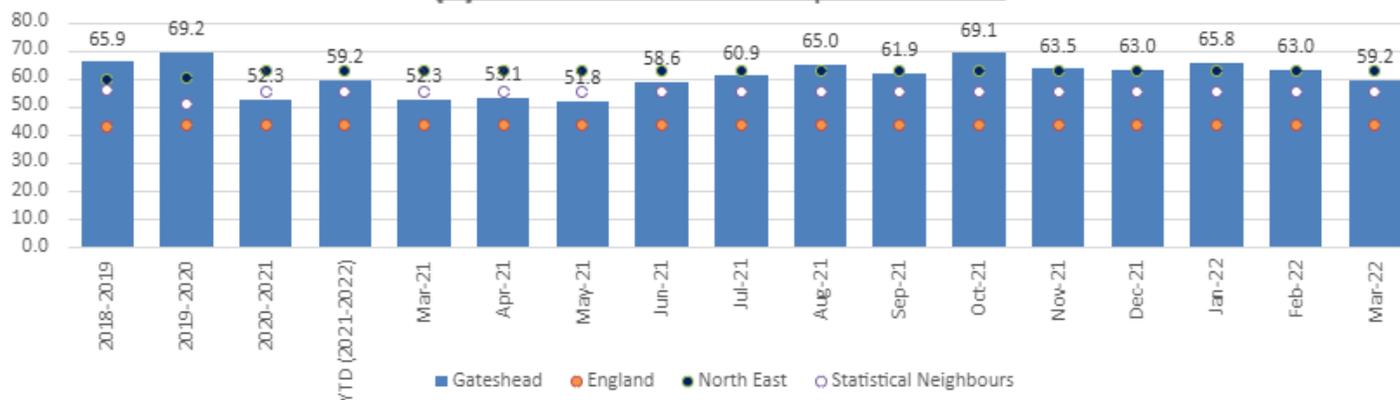
Gateshead Children's Social Care Performance Workbook

Reporting Period: March 2022

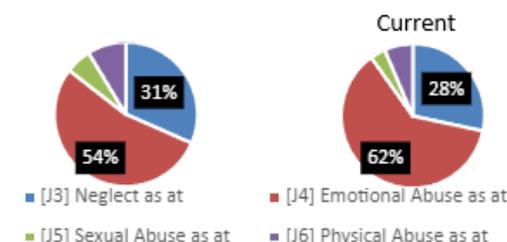
Child Protection Plans: Number open at month end and Categories of Child Protection

	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	YTD (2021-2022)	Mar-21	Apr-21	#####	Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	#####
[J1] Number of Child Protection Plans Open at month end	262	274	206	233	206	209	204	231	240	256	244	272	250	248	259	248	233
[J2] Rate of Child Protection Plans Open at month end	65.9	69.2	52.3	59.2	52.3	53.1	51.8	58.6	60.9	65.0	61.9	69.1	63.5	63.0	65.8	63.0	59.2
[J3] Neglect as at	121	122	65	66	65	61	54	59	56	56	39	57	51	55	64	63	66
[J4] Emotional Abuse as at	117	124	111	144	111	118	117	139	157	171	174	180	158	155	160	156	144
[J5] Sexual Abuse as at	9	11	12	8	12	12	15	15	10	11	14	14	16	15	15	10	8
[J6] Physical Abuse as at	15	17	18	15	18	18	18	18	17	18	17	21	25	23	20	19	15

[J2] Rate of Child Protection Plans Open at month end



CP Category



Source: LAIT (CIN Census 2018-2019)

Subsequent Child Protection Plans

Gateshead Children's Social Care Performance Workbook

Reporting Period: March 2022

Child Protection Plans: Subsequent CP Plans

	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	Last 12 Months	YTD (2021-2022)	#####	Apr-21	#####	Jun-21	Jul-21	#####	Sep-21	Oct-21	#####	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22
[M1] Number of Child Protection Plans Starting	307	316	287	340	340	29	20	14	40	38	27	29	50	15	15	24	40	28
[M2] - no starting for a 2nd or subsequent time	69	74	61	90	90	3	2	2	9	7	5	9	13	2	3	7	19	12
[M3] - % starting for a 2nd or subsequent time	22.5%	23.4%	21.3%	26.5%	26.5%	10.3%	10.0%	14.3%	22.5%	18.4%	18.5%	31.0%	26.0%	13.3%	20.0%	29.2%	47.5%	42.9%
[M4] - no starting for a 2nd or subsequent time within 12 months	11	26	12	14	14	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	9	1
[M5] % starting for a 2nd or subsequent time within 12 months	3.6%	8.2%	4.2%	4.1%	4.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.5%	2.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	13.3%	0.0%	0.0%	22.5%	3.6%

Source: LAIT (CIN Census 2018-2019)

[M3] - % starting for a 2nd or subsequent time



Child Protection Plan by Duration

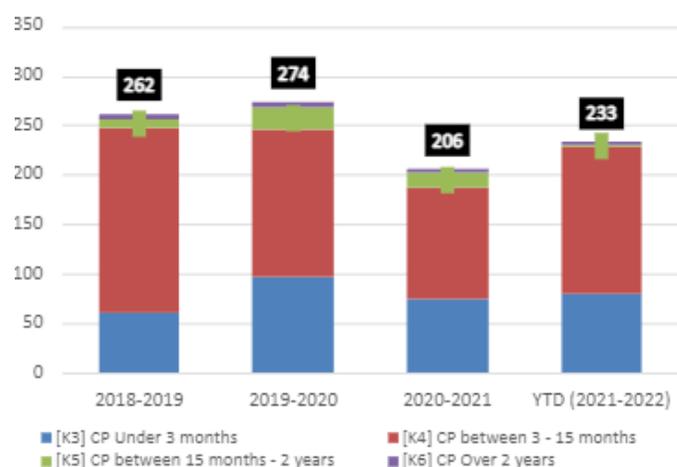
Gateshead Children's Social Care Performance Workbook

Reporting Period: March 2022

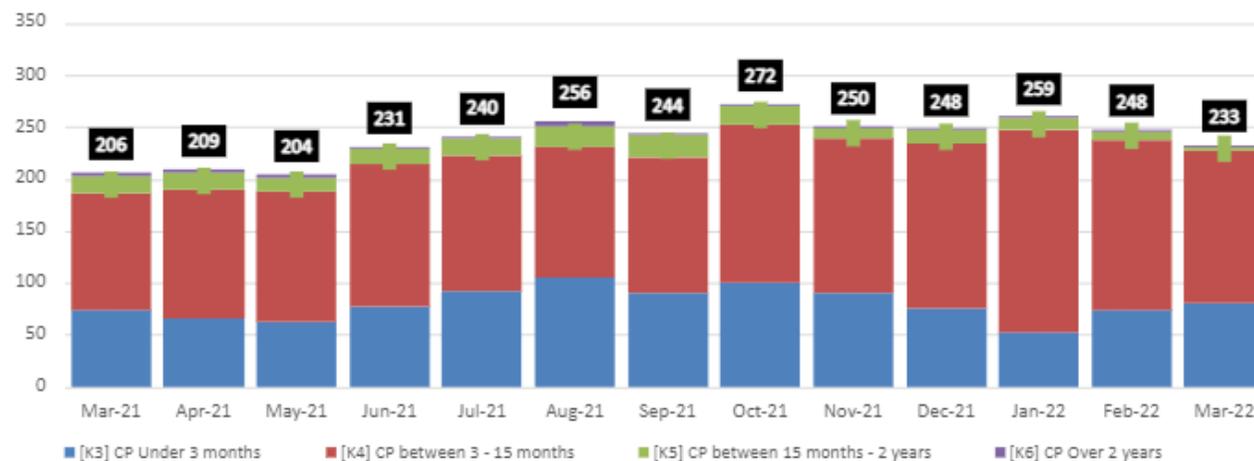
Child Protection Plans: Number open at month end and duration of plans

	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	YTD (2021-2022)	Mar-21	Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22
[K1] Number of Child Protection Plans Open at month end	262	274	206	233	206	209	204	231	240	256	244	272	250	248	259	248	233
[K2] Rate of Child Protection Plans Open at month end	65.9	69.2	52.3	59.2	52.3	53.1	51.8	58.6	60.9	65.0	61.9	69.1	63.5	63.0	65.8	63.0	59.2
[K3] CP Under 3 months	61	97	74	80	74	66	62	77	92	105	90	100	91	76	53	74	80
[K4] CP between 3 - 15 months	186	149	112	148	112	124	126	137	130	126	131	152	148	158	194	164	148
[K5] CP between 15 months - 2 years	9	22	17	2	17	16	13	15	17	19	22	19	10	13	11	7	2
[K6] CP Over 2 years	6	6	3	3	3	3	3	2	1	6	1	1	1	1	1	3	3
[K7] CP Over 2 years (%)	2.3%	2.2%	1.5%	1.3%	1.5%	1.4%	1.5%	0.9%	0.4%	2.3%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	1.2%	1.3%

CP open at month end by duration of plan



CP open at month end by duration of plan



Child Protection Plan by Age

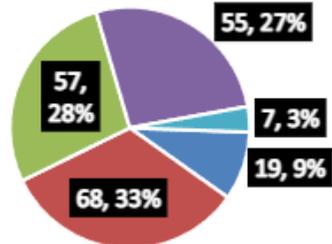
Gateshead Children's Social Care Performance Workbook

Reporting Period: March 2022

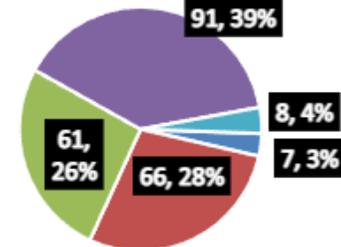
Child Protection Plans: Number open at month end and age of children/young people

	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	YTD (2021-2022)	#####	Apr-21	#####	Jun-21	Jul-21	#####	Sep-21	Oct-21	#####	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	#####
[L1] Number of Child Protection Plans Open at month end	262	274	206	233	206	209	204	231	240	256	244	272	250	248	259	248	233
[L2] Rate of Child Protection Plans Open at month end	65.9	69.2	52.3	59.2	52.3	53.1	51.8	58.6	60.9	65.0	61.9	69.1	63.5	63.0	65.8	63.0	59.2
[L3] Unborn	13	21	19	7	19	17	9	7	11	15	13	13	14	9	7	9	7
[L4] 0 - 4	100	93	68	66	68	67	69	83	77	78	71	75	71	75	79	72	66
[L5] 5 - 9	69	72	57	61	57	60	58	66	69	73	76	88	76	76	78	68	61
[L6] 10 - 15	73	79	55	91	55	57	59	66	78	84	77	87	82	83	89	92	91
[L7] 16 +	7	8	7	8	7	8	9	9	5	6	7	9	7	5	6	7	8

CP Plans by age (Same time last year)



Current CP Plans by age



Chart

Ended Child Protection Durations

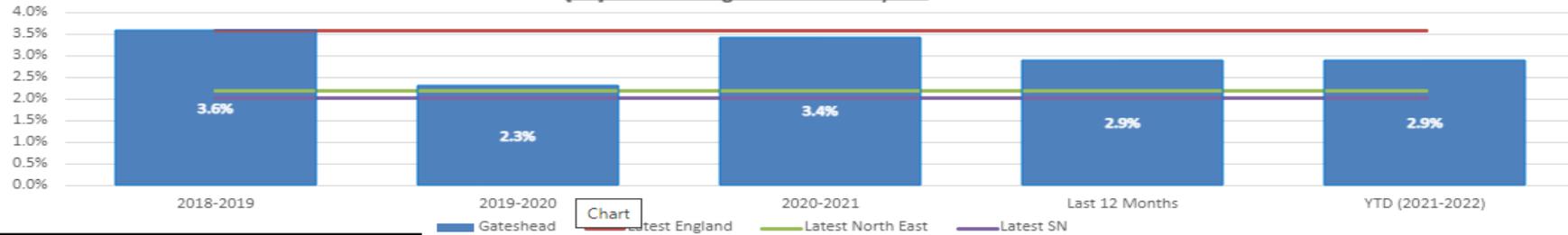
Gateshead Children's Social Care Performance Workbook

Reporting Period: March 2022

Child Protection Plans: Ended Child Protection Plan Durations

	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	Last 12 Months	YTD (2021-2022)	Mar-21	Apr-21	#####	Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	####
[N1] [Number of Child Protection Plans Ending	335	304	349	311	311	49	15	19	13	29	11	41	22	37	17	13	51	43
[N2] - no ending after 2 or more years	12	7	12	9	9	0	0	0	1	1	1	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
[N3] - % no ending after 2 or more years	3.6%	2.3%	3.4%	2.9%	2.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.7%	3.4%	9.1%	14.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
[N4] - no ending within 3 months	43	46	55	43	43	8	2	0	0	1	1	5	6	6	6	2	8	6
[N5] - % no ending within 3 months	12.8%	15.1%	15.8%	13.8%	13.8%	16.3%	13.3%	0.0%	0.0%	3.4%	9.1%	12.2%	27.3%	16.2%	35.3%	15.4%	15.7%	14.0%

[N3] - % no ending after 2 or more years



Source: LAIT (CIN Census 2018-2019)

Contact: Report written by Suzanne Storey, Practice Lead for Assessment and Intervention Services and Victoria Mckay, Practice Lead for Safeguarding and Care Planning Services.