

# CORPORATE PARENTING SUB OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AGENDA

Monday, 10 July 2017 at 1.30 pm in the Bridges Room - Civic Centre

---

From the Chief Executive, Sheena Ramsey

---

Item Business

**1 Apologies**

**2 Minutes (Pages 3 - 6)**

The Committee is asked to approve as a correct record the minutes of the last meeting held on 20 March 2017

**3 Constitution**

The Constitution of the Committee and the appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair as approved by the Council for the current municipal year is as follows:-

**Chair** Councillor B Oliphant  
**Vice Chair** Councillor M Hall

**Councillors** J Adams  
B Clelland  
S Craig  
A Geddes  
E McMaster  
C McHatton  
C Simcox

**Non-Voting Members**

Anne Page – *Foster Carer*  
Julie McCartney – *The Gateshead Housing Company*  
Sasha Ban – *School Governor*  
Jeremy Cripps – *Voluntary Sector representative*  
1 vacancy – *Care Leaver*  
1 vacancy – *Families OSC representative*

**4 SEN and LAC (Pages 7 - 12)**

Report of Strategic Director, Care Wellbeing and Learning

**5 Fostering Service Annual Report (Pages 13 - 36)**

Report of Strategic Director, Care Wellbeing and Learning

**6 Support for Disabled LAC (Pages 37 - 52)**

Report of Strategic Director, Care Wellbeing and Learning

**7 Exclusion of Press and Public**

The Committee may wish to pass a resolution to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of the following item on the grounds indicated:

<b>Item</b>	<b>Paragraphs of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972</b>
-------------	--

8	1
---	---

**8 Regulation 44 Report (Pages 53 - 58)**

Report of Strategic Director, Care Wellbeing and Learning

**GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**CORPORATE PARENTING SUB OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING**

**Monday, 20 March 2017**

**PRESENT:** Councillor B Oliphant (Chair)  
Councillor(s): S Green, J Adams and B Clelland

**CO-OPTED MEMBERS** John Wilkinson and Jeremy Cripps

**CP23 APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Cllr S Craig, Cllr Simcox, Cllr McMaster, Sasha Ban and Julie McCartney.

**CP24 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2017 were agreed as a correct record.

**CP25 PRESENTATION BY YOUNG PEOPLE - REGIONAL CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL**

Representatives from One Voice attended the meeting to talk about the work of the Regional Children in Care Council and what it feels like to be a looked after child (LAC).

The group looked at the number of house moves each person had had throughout their life and discussions took place around that.

It was reported that the group has asked services to start mapping what they already do for care leavers, the information will be collated and any gaps identified. Committee was asked for ideas as to any priorities the Children in Care Council should be looking at. It was suggested that work could focus on the risk of exclusion from school, looking at what could best help LAC to be stable in school and make their experience better.

The young people discussed their own experiences of school and what their future plans look like.

It was suggested that it could be timely to review the Care Pledge and the Care Leavers Charter to ensure the pledges promised are still appropriate.

**RESOLVED** - That the information be noted.

## CP26 PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW

The Committee received a report outlining performance data for 2016/17. It was reported that to date there is 371 children looked after in Gateshead, this is above the national average and work is ongoing to look at this in terms of how to reduce numbers, for example through early help and support before children come into care.

The majority of looked after children are in the age group 9-17 years old. There are less younger children as it would be hoped most would be rehabilitated to home or adopted. In relation to the types of orders it was confirmed that the majority are through section 20 orders, this is a voluntary arrangement where the parents are working with the local authority, the local authority has no parental responsibilities. A full care order is based on assessments on the family and occurs when there is no option for the child to return home, this lasts until the child is 18.

It was noted that placement stability is important in ensuring positive outcomes for young people. This performance indicator is measured through the number of looked after children who have had three or more placements during the year. It was reported that 3.5% of looked after children in Gateshead have had three or more moves, the national average is 11%. In relation to long term placements, 86.8% of looked after children in Gateshead have remained in their placement for at least 2 and a half years, the national average is 67%.

The number of out of borough placements remains static, the majority are in foster placements just outside of Gateshead in the local area. It was confirmed however that some placements are further afield, in Barnet, South Lakeland and North Yorkshire. In terms of adoption there have been 17 this year, 13 of which were within the best interest date timescale, this is above the national average.

It was reported that care leavers data is gathered based on the position of the care leaver on their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, which does not take into account any breaks in education, employment or training.

The Mind of My Own (MOMO) app is continuing to be used to gather LAC views, which is being used in conferences and LAC reviews. The MOMO continues to be developed for younger children and also for those young people who are not verbal.

It was questioned what is in place to keep the knowledge within the service when there is a high staff turnover. It was confirmed that monthly meetings are held with the quality assurance team and reports are fed back to senior management team who keep on top of data.

It was queried why the number of LAC is higher in Gateshead than in other areas. It was confirmed that all North East authorities are higher, which is as a result of the economic deprivation in the area. Work is ongoing to get to the root of the problem before it escalates. It was questioned at what point the number of LAC becomes too much. It was acknowledged that the average case load for Social Workers in Gateshead is 22 cases, for Gateshead this between 350 – 390 LAC. It was also noted that numbers have plateaued over the last few years.

RESOLVED - That the comments of the Committee on the performance outlined be noted.

## **CP27 OFSTED INSPECTION - SPECIFIC LAC IMPROVEMENT PROGRESS UPDATE**

A report was presented to Committee on the work on the LAC Improvement Plan following last year's Ofsted inspection. A number Recommendations were received from Ofsted around improving the quality of all children's plans. A working party has been set up to develop new LAC and pathway plans, which will go onto Care First in May 2017, this will map a child's journey through care and ensure a more outcome focussed plan.

Another recommendation was ensuring child protection conference and reviews are used to drive plans through robust challenge. It was noted that training has been carried out to ensure challenge is monitored and evaluated. In terms of supporting care leavers to understand their health histories, a nurse has been appointed to work with the LAC team to ensure all care leavers receive their health passports. In addition, Personal Advisors are in place wot work with care leavers to ensure they are aware of their legal entitlements.

In terms of education and training partners offering support for care leavers to stay on their courses, a steering group has been set up. The group is looking at improving the apprenticeship, internship and traineeship offer and further education provision to ensure a wider offer for care leavers. It was confirmed that the group is made up of a number of partners who meet bi-monthly.

It was questioned what is being done in relation to mental health needs of care leavers. It was confirmed that there is a national working group whose findings are due to be published at the end of March. It was acknowledged that LAC can be fast tracked into the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). It was suggested that more work is needed into terms of those non LAC with mental health needs and those children on the edge of care. It was confirmed that a report on the re-design of CAMHS is due to be reported to Families OSC in the next work programme.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That the Committee's comments on the progress of the Ofsted recommendations be noted.
  - (ii) That the Committee agreed to receive a progress update in March 2018.

## **CP28 ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME**

Committee received the provisional work programme for the municipal year 2017/18.

It was suggested that the Committee visit a children's home or an alternative venue instead of inviting children into the Committee.

It was noted that young people would be invited to attend October 2017 and March

2018 meetings and it was agreed to look at an alternative venue on these dates.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That the Committee endorsed the OSC's provisional work programme for 2017/18 and referred it to Council on 8 June 2017 for agreement.
  - (ii) That the Committee noted that further reports will be brought to the Committee to identify any additional issues which it may be asked to consider.

#### **CP29 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

- RESOLVED - That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the remaining business in accordance with the indicated paragraphs of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

#### **CP30 REGULATION 44 REPORT**

The Committee received a report on the Ofsted inspection outcomes and regulation 44 independent visits carried out in the Council's children's homes. The reports written as a result of the visits are circulated to the Service Director, Social Work, Care Wellbeing and Learning, Service Manager for Looked After Children and the Registered Manager of each Home.

- RESOLVED - That the information be noted.

**TITLE OF REPORT:** Education of Looked After Children – REALAC Virtual School SEND Report

**REPORT OF:** Strategic Director Care, Wellbeing and Learning

---

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report provides the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update on SEND pupils who are also LAC.

---

**Purpose of Report**

1. To update the Committee and provide a report on SEND pupils in care of the local authority.

**Background**

2. Attached to this summary is a report June 2017 outlining the support to pupils with SEND and in care of the local authority. The report covers provision and activities undertaken to support children. It includes detailed information on:
  - Progress of SEND LAC
  - Type of support available from the service
  - Current challenges for SEND LAC and REALAC team
3. Officers will make a brief presentation to the Committee, drawing attention to some of the main features of the report.

**Recommendations**

4. The Corporate Parenting OSC is asked to:
  - (i) Consider and comment on the attached annual report.

**CONTACT:** Ann Muxworthy

**EXT:** 8609

This page is intentionally left blank

## Appendix 1

### Looked After Children with Special Educational Needs Report

June 2017

#### Background

- 1 There were 244 LAC in July 2016 at the time of collating this information. In Gateshead there were 97 SEND pupils of whom 53 had Education Health Care (EHC) Plans or Statements. This is 22% of the LAC number of pupils. There were 44 pupils receiving SEND support therefore 18% of the LAC pupils. Overall 97 were SEND LAC which is 40% of pupils.
- 2 Of the 53 pupils with Plans for SEND, the largest area is Social, Emotional, Mental Health (SEMH) with 23 pupils. There are relatively small numbers in other areas. See table below.

Breakdown of LAC	Number of Children
Attention Control Difficulties (SEMH)	6
Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	6
Disruptive & Disturbing Behaviour (SEMH)	23
Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD)	6
Physical Disability (PD)	2
Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD)	6
Speech, Language & Comms Needs (SLCN)	3
Visual Impairment (VI)	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>

- 3 Out of borough there were 18 pupils in special schools.
- 4 In Key Stage 1 there were 21 Looked after children in the Year 2 cohort. 12 of these were SEND which is 57%.
- 5 In Key Stage 2 there were 21 Looked after Children of which 8 were SEND 36% were SEND in the Year 6 cohort. 2 pupils were at special schools, one at an Independent Special school and one at Eslington.
- 6 There were 37 Looked after Children in the Year 11 cohort, 21 of these were SEND which is 57%. Of the 21 pupils they were either SEND support or with Statements and/or EHC plans. 9 of these pupils were in special schools.

### **SEND LAC Progress**

#### **1 Key Stage 1**

On entry to reception, 9 of the cohort were working below the expected standard at Early Years Foundation Stage, however, despite this 5 of the 9 still made the expected standard in Writing and Maths and 4 in reading. This is outstanding progress for those pupils meeting the expected standard from their low starting points. The other 4 pupils made progress but because of their SEND needs were working at a low developmental age.

#### **2 Key Stage 2**

There were 8 pupils in Year 6. 50% of SEND made the expected level in reading. Of the 8 children 6 were below expected level at Key Stage 1. However, 4 of these pupils met the expected standard for reading. Tracking showed that all were on track from their starting points though 2 had exceeded them from KS1.

#### **3 Key Stage 4**

There were 37 in the cohort of which 21 were SEND that is 57%. 15 of the 21 pupils, 71% of LAC SEND made good progress in gaining at least 5 GCSE qualifications. 9 pupils were in special schools. 4 of these pupils were in Furrowfield special school. The other 5 pupils were in other local special schools or the Behaviour Support Service (BSS).

### **Provision**

- 1 Schools receive pupil premium money to use to provide additional support for those pupils falling behind. This sum of money is linked to

- the pupils education plan (PEP). The first intervention to support LAC pupils is in the schools with this additional funding.
- 2 Our special schools are all deemed Good or Outstanding in Ofsted terms, so provision is strong.
  - 3 Some pupils may need further additional support if they are falling further behind and need help to catch up, stay engaged with their education or prevent the school excluding them. REALAC then has a few options:
    - Offer advice and check strategies the school is using to support the pupil and liaise with SEND agencies for their advice.
    - On specific cases provide additional pupil premium funding to the school.
    - Support assessment in conjunction with the Education Psychology Service so that the pupil is moved on to an EHC plan.
    - Provide additional teacher support from the REALAC teacher.
    - Provide 1:1 tuition to boost progress or close gaps in learning.
    - Provide mentor support if the pupil is at risk of exclusion.
    - Some pupils have Education Psychology time for Play Therapy.
  - 4 In addition primary age pupils are monitored to identify those at risk of not meeting expected standard in reading. They are given the Letterbox programme to support the development of reading skills.
  - 5 All SEND pupils have access to the Pathways to Work Programme. SEND pupils and those pupils at risk of exclusion are particularly targeted.
  - 6 Schools also receive training on attachment and SEND to support them in meeting needs.

## **Challenges**

- 1 There is a significantly increasing number of permanent exclusions from Gateshead schools. This is impacting on the need to intervene with schools to prevent permanent exclusions. This has predominantly taken most of the team's support time over the last three terms. Mostly arrangements are made that maintain pupils in school by managing moves through the Fair Access system, however, in primary and secondary schools there are a growing number of pupils the schools will not accommodate because of their behaviour that are on shared place arrangements with alternative programmes. The pupil BSS was full this year which meant it was extremely difficult to find provision for the LAC SEMH pupils.
- 2 Those pupils with SEND EHC plans that are now on the LA complex needs list where special schools out of borough don't maintain them because of their SEMH and they lose their school place.

- 3 Schools that have left it late to identify a special educational need for SEMH and wish to permanently exclude, particularly younger pupils in KS1 and KS2.

Ann Muxworthy, Headteacher of the Virtual School



**TITLE OF REPORT: Gateshead Fostering Service**

**REPORT OF: Elaine Devaney, Service Director Care,  
Wellbeing and Learning**

---

---

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report provides an update on Gateshead's Fostering Service, highlighting the progress made over the last 12 months and the plan for developing the service.

---

---

**Policy Context**

1. The information and proposals in this report are in line with the Council's statutory duties and with the outcomes for children and young people set out in the Corporate Plan, the Children and Young People's Plan and Gateshead's Sustainable Community Strategy - Vision 2030.
2. The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) is responsible for registration, regulation and inspection of services for young people. All schools, early years provision, children's residential care, fostering and adoption services must be registered and have regular assessments and inspections. This applies to all providers in the public, private and voluntary sectors

**Background**

3. The National Fostering Standards for England were written to ensure that looked after children, birth families, prospective/approved foster carers and the general public understand what they can expect from the fostering services. Many of the National Fostering Standards restate what is already required either by primary legislation or regulations in which case both local authorities and Voluntary Fostering Agencies must comply with them. The national minimum standards help the registration authorities in determining whether the fostering agency is meeting the relevant regulatory requirements.
4. Inspection and regulation by external and independent agencies assists with ensuring that children and young people are achieving the best possible outcomes and are being kept safe and free from harm. Monitoring of Service outcomes and Inspection and regulation reports also give an independent account to local citizens on how well services are doing and how public money is being spent.

5. In April 2011 the Government published new National Minimum Standards and Regulations for Fostering Services in England. Whilst there is no requirement under the regulations for the executive side of the local authority to receive written reports on the performance of its fostering service, it is deemed good practice to produce an annual report in order to monitor the management and outcomes of the Service and ensure that the agency is effective and achieving good outcomes for the children in its care.
6. Whilst there is no guidance on what should be covered in the report, there should be sufficient information on all activities undertaken by the fostering service including information relating to service development.
7. The annual report for April 2016 - March 2017 is attached and gives an update on the activities and progress of the fostering service.

**Recommendation**

8. That the Corporate Parenting OSC is asked to consider and comment on the content of this report.

**CONTACT:  
Alan Clark  
4332867**

# APPENDIX

## FOSTERING ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17

### INTRODUCTION

As Lead Member for Children and Young People in Gateshead and Chief Executive/Interim Strategic Director of Care, Wellbeing and Learning we hold the responsibility to ensure that children requiring fostering receive good quality services which will support them.

Our Fostering Service and team of foster carers work in partnership to ensure children live in safe, nurturing family homes where they can achieve their potential and enjoy their childhood.

This 2016/17 Fostering Annual Report of Gateshead Council highlights the progress the Fostering Service has made over the past year. **28** new foster carers have been approved, and our carers continue to achieve success in their Level 3 Diploma qualifications and Training Support and Development Standards. This year we also celebrated an exceptionally high number of foster carers receiving long service awards, with one foster family receiving an award for forty years' service.

The national trend shows that over the next five years between 10 and 15 percent of older foster carers will retire and therefore it is a priority for us to ensure that we recruit enough new carers to replace those retiring but also to continue to increase the overall numbers of fostering households to between 200 and 230.

This year we will focus on:

- Further developing the Staying Put Scheme to allow young people to stay with their foster families beyond the age of 18.
- Increasing the number of foster placements for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children, Teenage Placements and Sibling Group Placements.
- Ensuring the recruitment strategy is effective enough to provide a range of placements.
- Reviewing the training and support package offered to foster carers considering caring for teenagers with complex needs.
- Maintaining placement stability.
- Further reducing the number of Independent Fostering Placements we use.
- Monitoring and evaluation the Fostering Service to ensure that the best performance and outcomes possible are achieved.

We are extremely proud of the work that the whole Fostering Team does in order to provide the best possible service and opportunities for our Looked After children in Gateshead and this work will continue. We are acutely aware that children in our care deserve the very best and colleagues and foster carers alike are to be commended for, not only the work they do but for their dedication and commitment.

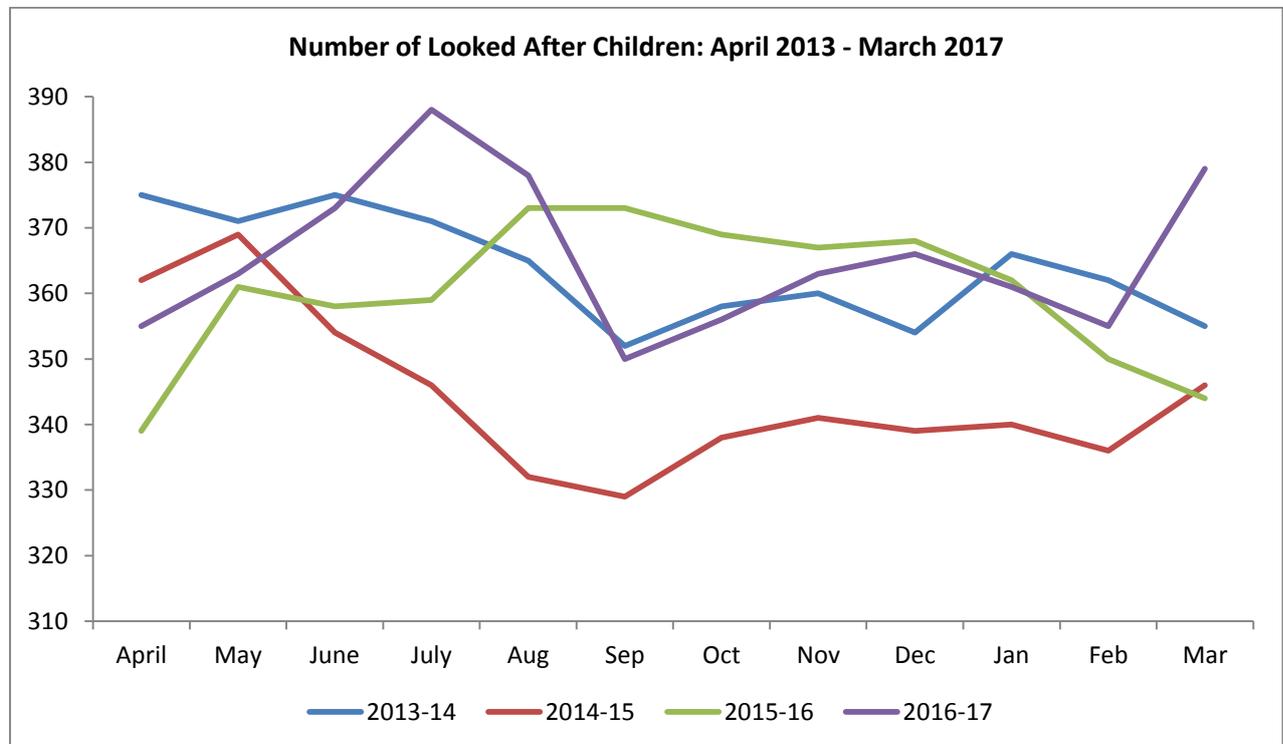
We thank you all for everything you do ....every day.

**Councillor Angela Douglas**  
**Cabinet Member for Children and Young People**

**Sheena Ramsey**  
**Chief Executive and Interim Strategic Director of Care, Wellbeing and Learning**

## The Fostering Service

The Fostering Service staff team is made up of the Team Manager, 2 Assistant Team Managers, 15 Supervising Social Workers, an Education Worker who liaises with the REALAC team and schools in the area, and a Recruitment and Marketing officer. The team is supported by a Business Support unit with dedicated support to foster carer payments, panel and duty administration.



Over the last year the number of Looked After Children in Gateshead has ranged from 341 to 388 with the majority of these children being placed with in-house foster carers.

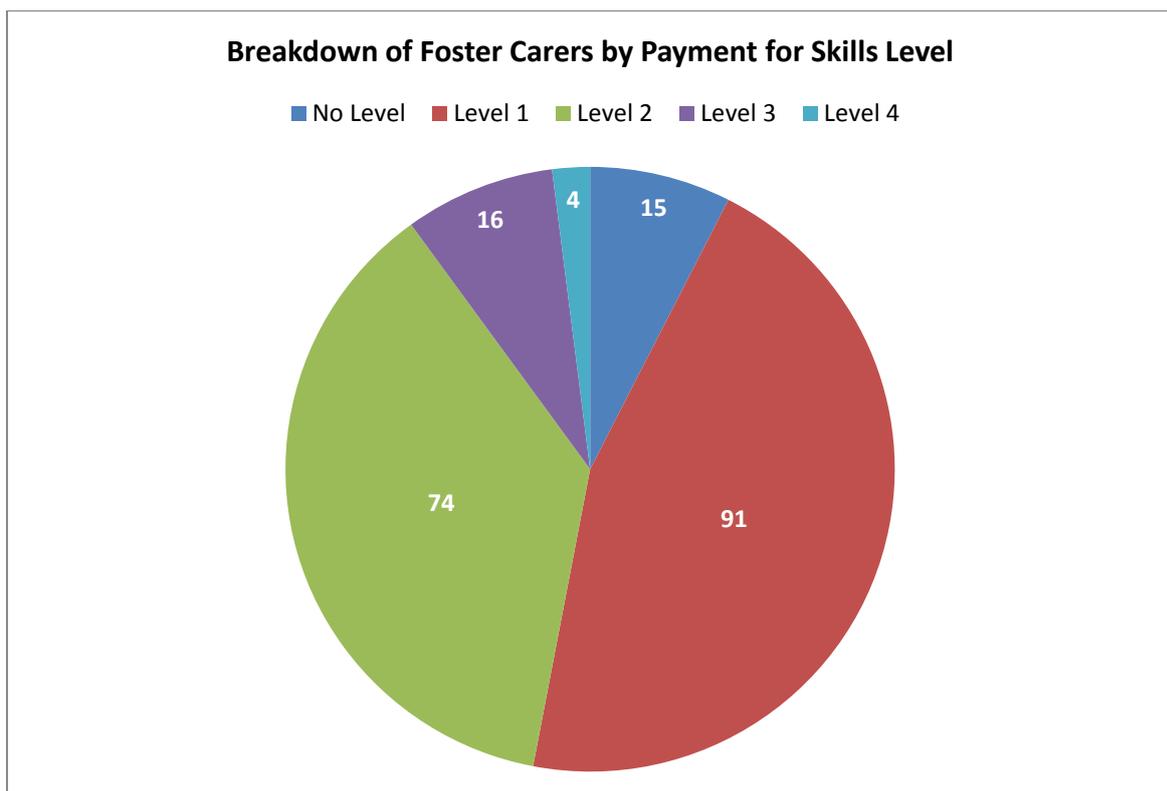
Many of the children leaving care throughout the year are those who are already living with relatives under Fostering Regulations where other legal orders are obtained to secure their permanence with that family i.e. Special Guardianship or Residence Orders. This does not free up any fostering placements within the Service and consequently resources and placements have continued to be limited. This issue of limited placement capacity is not unique to Gateshead as the Fostering Network estimates that there is a shortfall of 8,750 fostering placements across the whole of the U.K.

## Payment for Skills

Gateshead Council seeks to continuously improve outcomes for Looked After Children in order to improve their life chances and opportunities. These outcomes are closely linked to the achievement of placement stability and ensuring that children have placement choice and are subsequently matched and placed with the right carers. These factors were at the heart of the Payment for Skills scheme which was developed to operate through a payment model that clearly defines the expectations and in September 2012 the scheme was approved by Cabinet for implementation within the Service.

There are four payment levels within the scheme structure; Level 1 being the lowest level of payment and Level 4 being the highest. The highest level of payment is based on the areas of greatest skills which are required in order to undertake the necessary care tasks. The payment levels were implemented for new and existing foster carers during 2013 and the majority of foster carers are now on one of the four levels, linked to their skills, knowledge and competencies. There is a small number of fostering households, primarily those approved as Connected Person foster carers, who choose not to progress onto Payment for Skills.

This evidence based approach is also being used in the assessment of new foster carers, with the Fostering Panel linking the recommendation of approval of new carers with the Payment for Skills level.



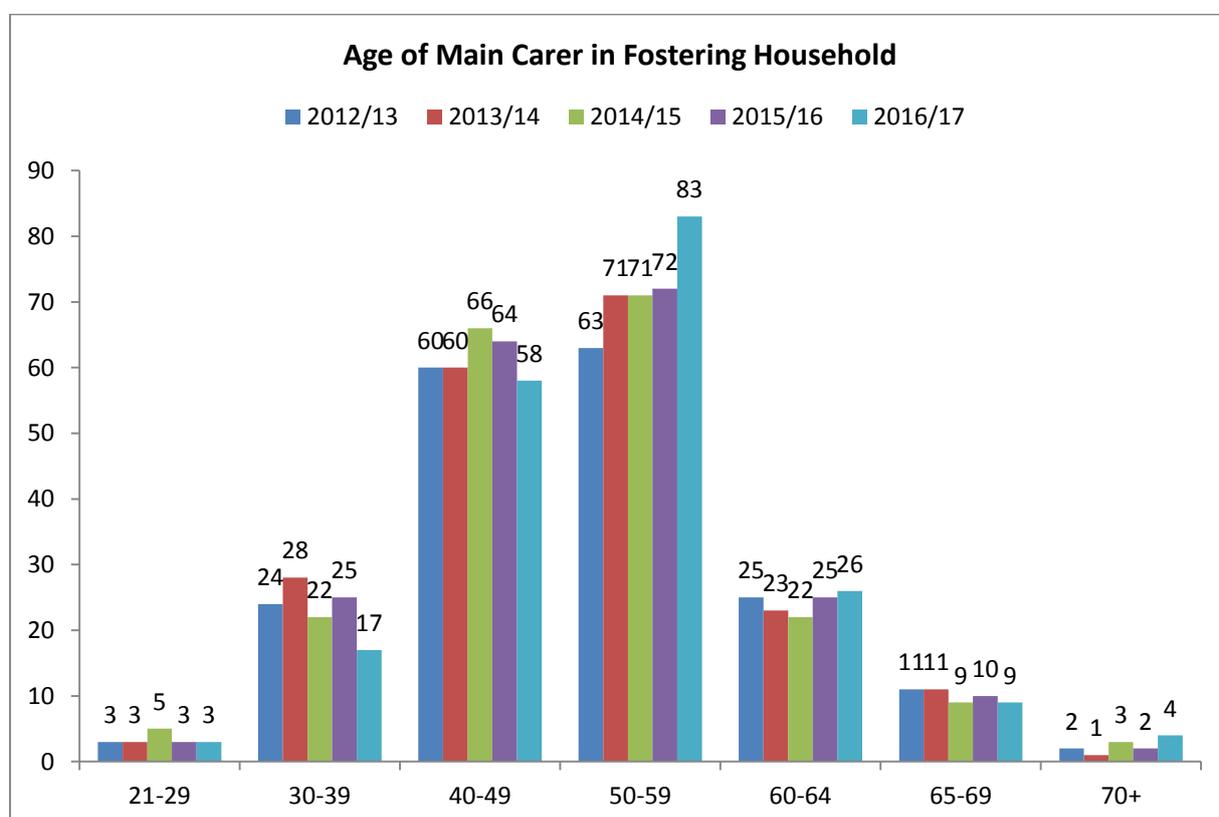
## The Foster Carers

At 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 there were 200 approved fostering households comprising 349 foster carers, a slight decrease on the previous year. During the year ending 31 March 2017, 28 new fostering households were approved at Fostering Panel, with 26 being deregistered.

The Fostering Service provides a wide range of resources including short break and emergency, short term, task centred and long term/permanent placements for Looked After Children and Young People. The Service also provides short breaks to families who have a child with a disability through the Home from Home scheme and we also have a growing number of foster carers who are providing placements for extended family members or connected children. Many foster carers can offer more than one type of placement, which increases the flexibility within the Service regarding the types of placements we can offer.

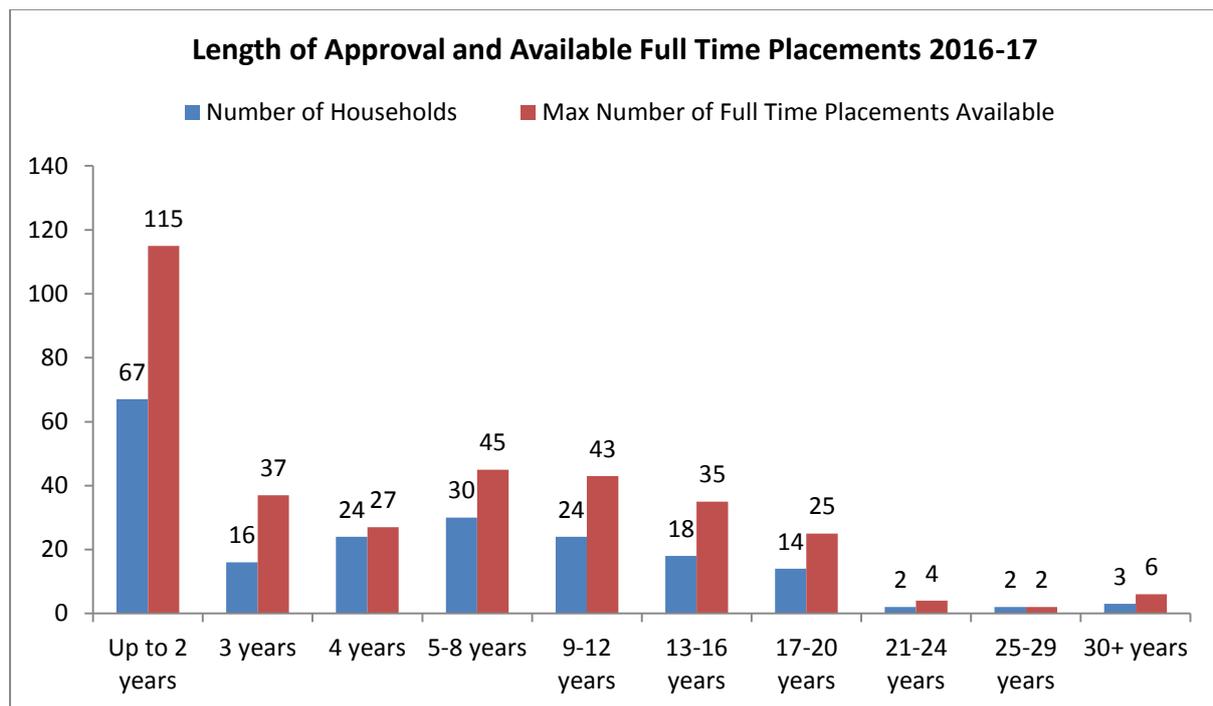
Main Type of Care	Number of Households
Short Break and Respite	2
Short Term and Task Centred	64
Long Term/Permanent	94
Home from Home	11
Connected Person	29

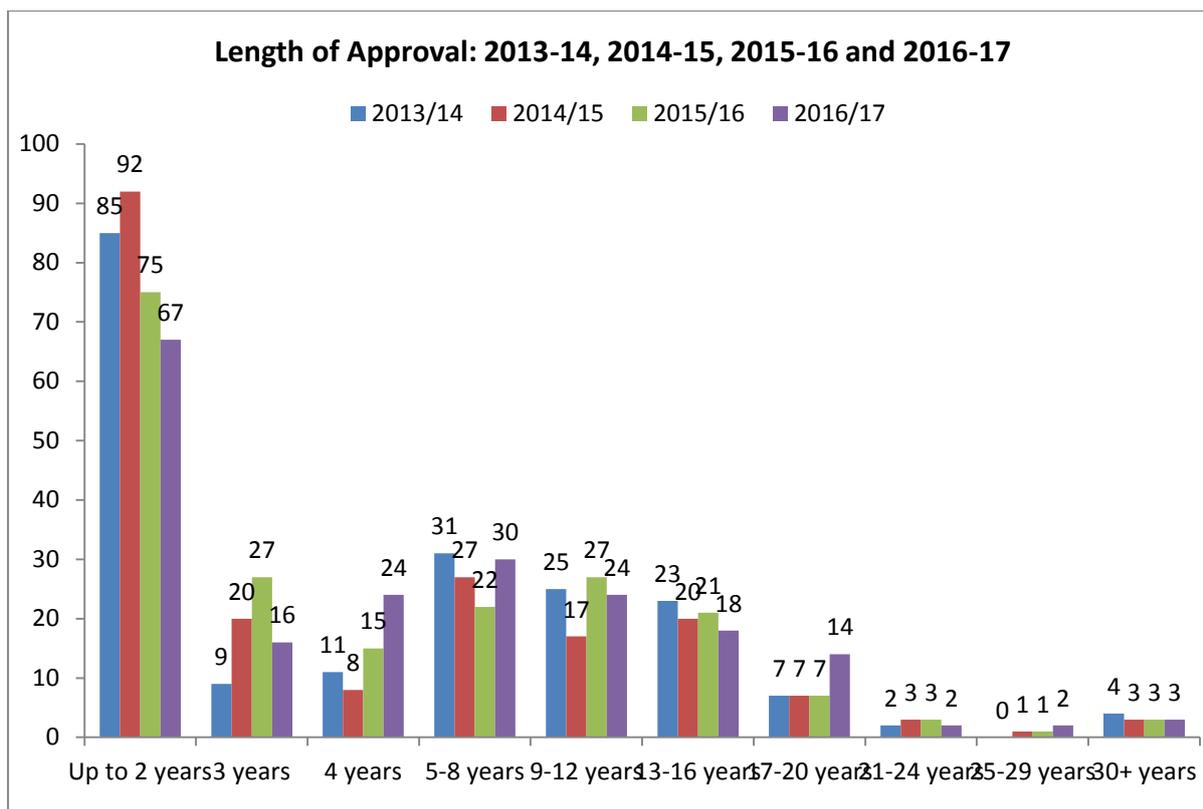
The majority of foster carers (98%) within Gateshead come from a White British ethnic background; however we also have fostering households from the Pakistani and Orthodox Jewish communities. This reflects the shortage of foster carers from ethnic minorities that is experienced nationally. Though a high proportion (91%) of children in placement during the year ending March 2016 were White, our carers also provided placements for those from other ethnic groups.



We continue to have a high proportion of older foster carers within the Service, with the average age of a foster carer being 52 years old. 61% (122) of main carers within fostering households are over the age of 50 and currently provide approximately 62% of the potential available full time placements. This is a sharp increase on the figures last year where 56% of available placements were offered by older fostering households.

The national trend shows that over the next 5 years between 10 - 15% of these older foster carers will retire and therefore it is a priority for us to ensure that we recruit enough new carers not only to replace those retiring but also to continue to increase the overall numbers of fostering households to between 200 and 230. This would provide a significant increase in placement choice and assist in reducing the numbers of children being placed in Independent Fostering Agencies.





The Fostering Service has recruited a number of new foster carers in the last 5 years, with 33% (67) of fostering households having 2 years or less service with the Authority. This number also includes Connected Person carers for specific named children. We also have a cohort of very experienced foster carers, with 15% of our fostering households having over 15 years service. Three households have been fostering for at least 30 years, with one household reaching 40 years in November 2016.

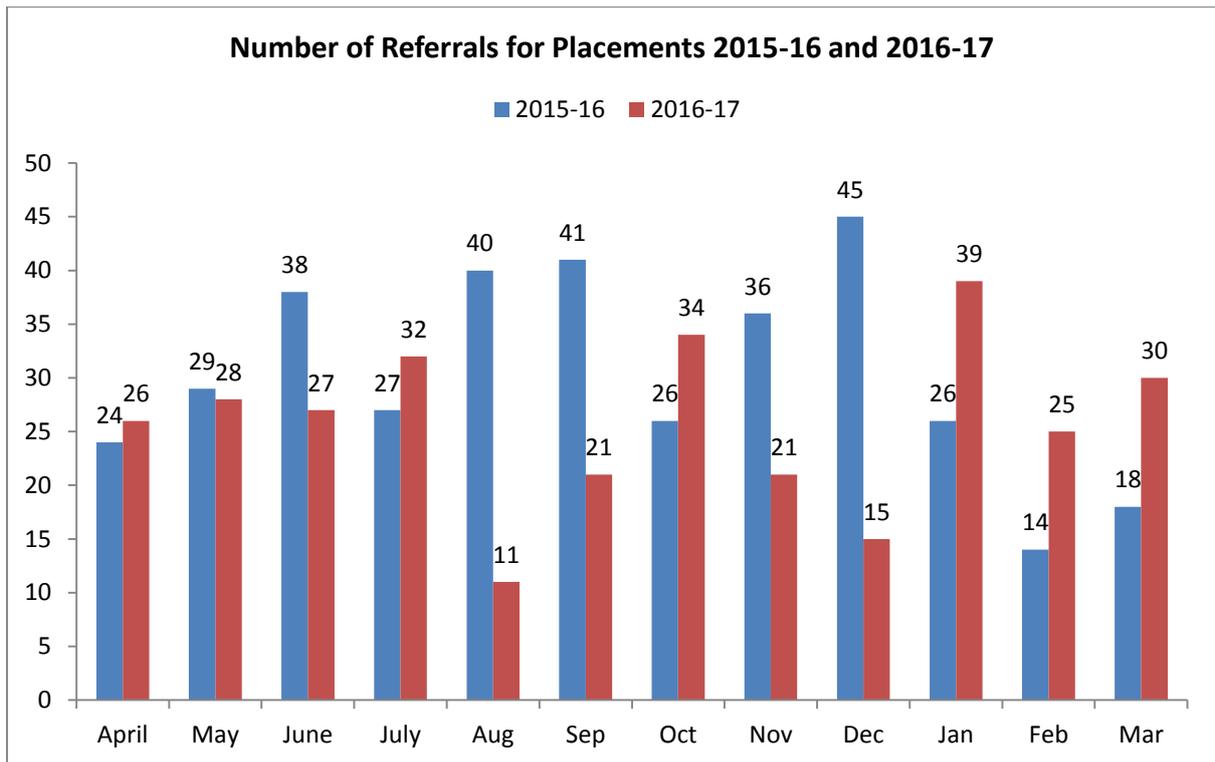
### Connected person

This area of work continues to increase as more children are being placed with family members, and given the tight timescales for assessments panel are monitoring these closely to ensure compliance with the regulations. To ensure compliance with regulations, this work is monitored and regularly reviewed by the Assistant Team Manager of the long term team.

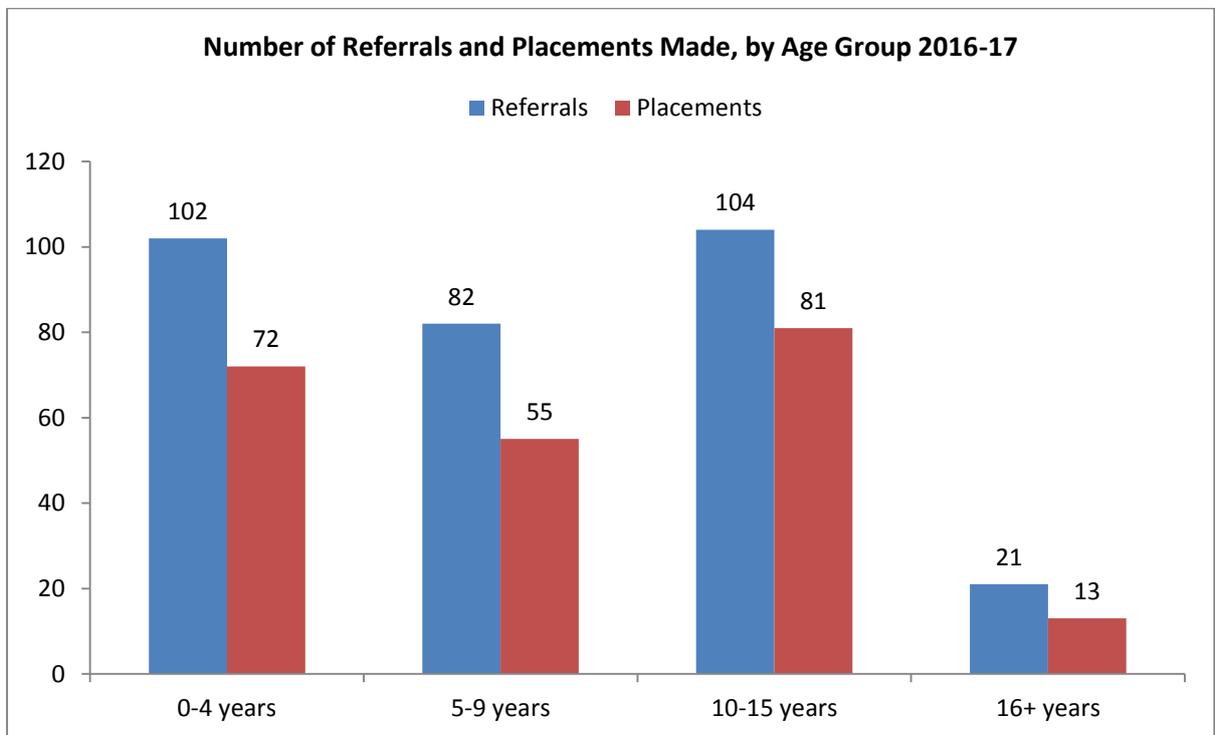
The service recognises that these carers are often dealing with complex family situations and have implemented special support groups for connected person carers. We have also developed strong regional links with the national support group Grandparents Plus, with two of our connected person carers being regional mentors for this group.

### Referrals for Placements

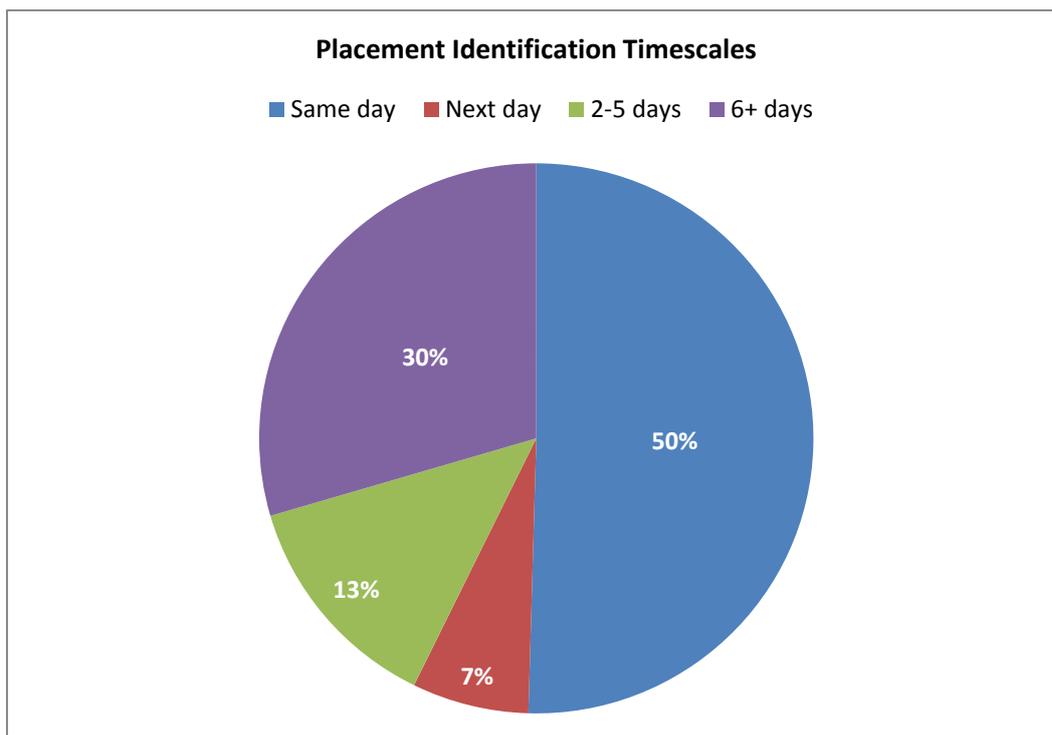
Gateshead's social work teams made 309 referrals to the Fostering Service for placements between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017. This is a decrease of 15% on the previous year. Of these referrals, 221 (72%) placements were subsequently made and 88 (28%) were withdrawn by social workers as alternative arrangements were made for the children in question including placements with family or friends.



In contrast to the previous year, the highest numbers of referrals during 2016-17 were received in the first months of 2017. The highest demands for placements during the year continues to be on the 0-4 and 10-15 years range, which continues to influence the marketing campaign to attract more carers for older children in particular teenagers.



The majority of placement referrals from social work teams are for emergency requests where 57% of placements are needed within one working day of the referral being submitted. 7% are needed within 2-5 days and 30% of referrals were needed after six days.



Over the year 49 sibling groups were referred to the Service for a total of 114 children, an increase of 16% on last year. In general requests are primarily to keep siblings together. This is often difficult to achieve given the size of sibling groups referred and has resulted in a number of sibling groups being placed in Independent Fostering placements. However, in the last year the Service has worked on reducing the number of sibling groups having to be split and as a result, there have only been 5 groups placed separately.

Size of Sibling Group	Number Referred and Placed	Number of Groups Placed Together	Number of Groups Split	Total Children
2	30	30	0	60
3	5	0	5	15
4	1	1	0	4

### Independent Fostering Placements

Occasionally, due to the type of placements requested and the availability of our own foster carers we are unable to place children in house. In this event the Service commissions placements through external independent fostering agencies, which are more expensive than placing a child with our own foster carers.

All Independent Fostering placements are approved and monitored by the regular External Placements Panel which is chaired by Elaine Devaney, Service Director – Social Work. Every effort is made to keep the use of these placements to a minimum, and also to return children to our own foster placements as soon as possible. However if there are ongoing care proceedings the Service is often directed by Court to leave the children in their placements until these proceedings are concluded.

As of 31st March 2017, Gateshead had commissioned Independent Fostering Placements for 26 children. Of the 22 new placements commissioned during the last financial year, the majority placements were needed for teenagers aged 14 years and older with complex and challenging behaviour where there were no in house foster carers with the necessary skills or space to accommodate them.

Several sibling groups were also placed in Independent placements where the requirement from social workers was to keep the children together and it was not possible to do this within the Service.

However, out of the 22 new Independent Placements commissioned between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, 11 of these also ended during same period. Targeted recruitment has continued to take place over the year in an attempt to increase the number of teenage placements Gateshead can offer and this will continue into the next financial year.

To the period 31 March 2017 Independent placements ended for a total of 20 children which helped the Service's aim of reducing Independent placements.

**Reasons for Placement Endings:**

	Number of Children
Rehabilitated Home	5
Moved to Supported Lodgings/Independent Living/Staying Put	5
Carers transferred to Gateshead Fostering	1
Moved to In-house Placement	6
Absconded from placement (on bail)	1
Adopted	2

## **RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION**

### **Recruitment Strategy**

The service has in place a recruitment strategy spanning the three year period to the end of March 2018 with a target of recruiting at least 30 new foster carer units each year. The marketing plan for 2016/2017 focussed on providing a constant presence across a wide range of media channels with the aim of promoting fostering and adoption jointly, where appropriate, to maximise exposure. Promotional activities were mainly generic in order to reach out to as many potential foster carers as possible throughout the year rather than campaigns aimed at attracting foster carers for specific groups of children, which had previously been unsuccessful.

### **Promotional Activity**

Promotional activity throughout the year has been ongoing and included the use of wider Council resources to target all Gateshead residents. The following outlines the main activity undertaken throughout the year.

Gateshead Council activity:

- Up to date information on the website
- Regular use of council TV screens in the Civic Centre and leisure facilities
- Regular adverts and features in Council News and Council Info
- Bridge banner promotion and civic centre railings
- Banners in the civic centre foyer
- Gateshead Now – direct email to Gateshead residents

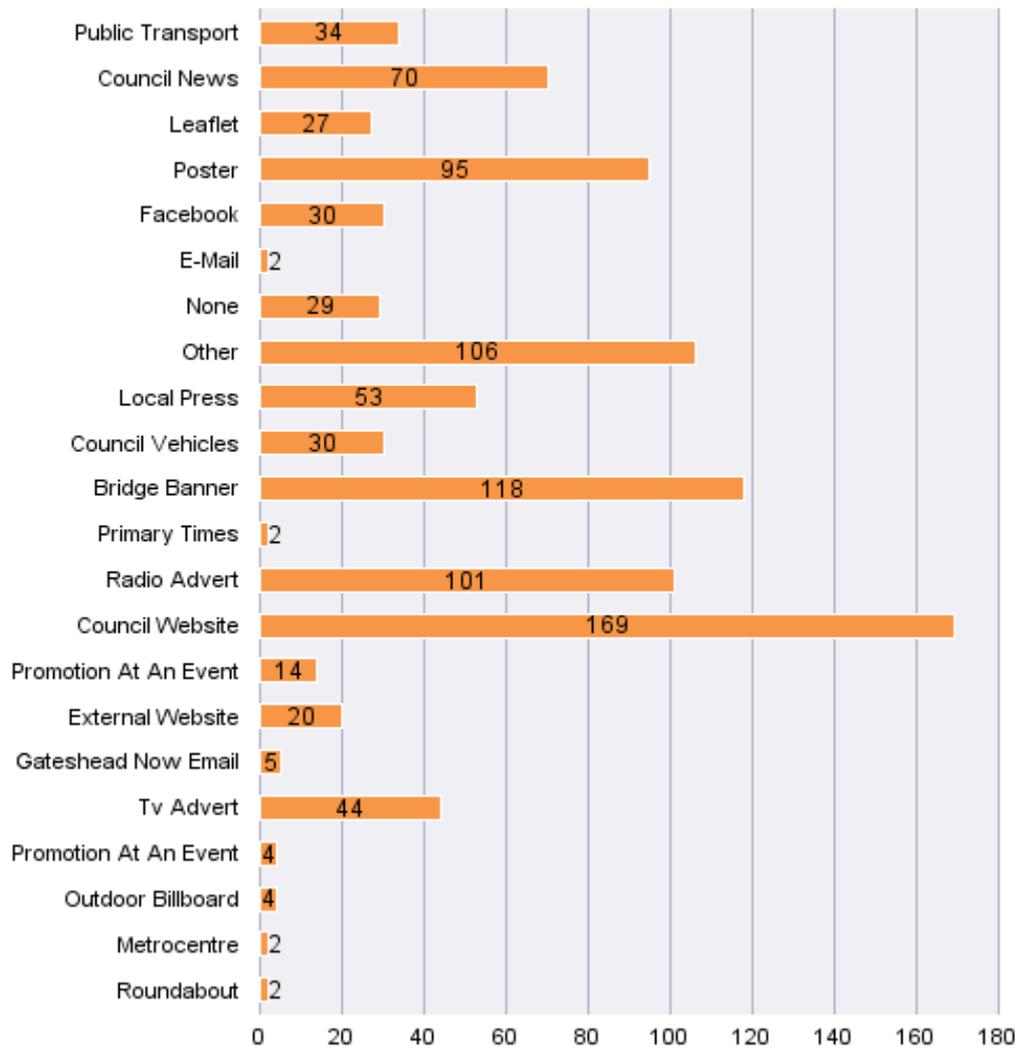
Other external activity:

This focussed on promoting fostering throughout the local region using radio, public transport, outdoor large format poster/digital sites and social media.

### **So which channels are working for us?**

The graph below shows the channels that our enquirers have said they have seen. This information details the responses collected between April 2014 and March 2017 and therefore captures advertising channels used during that period.

**Which of Gateshead Council's Fostering Promotional Materials has been seen by the enquirer?**



The top six channels cited overall are:

- Council Website
- Bridge Banner
- Radio Advert
- Poster
- Council News
- Local Press

*Important note – Bridge banner display is no longer an option available to us as this ceased to be permitted from January 2017.*

The graph below highlights which promotional materials the enquirers have seen between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017 split into the three years.

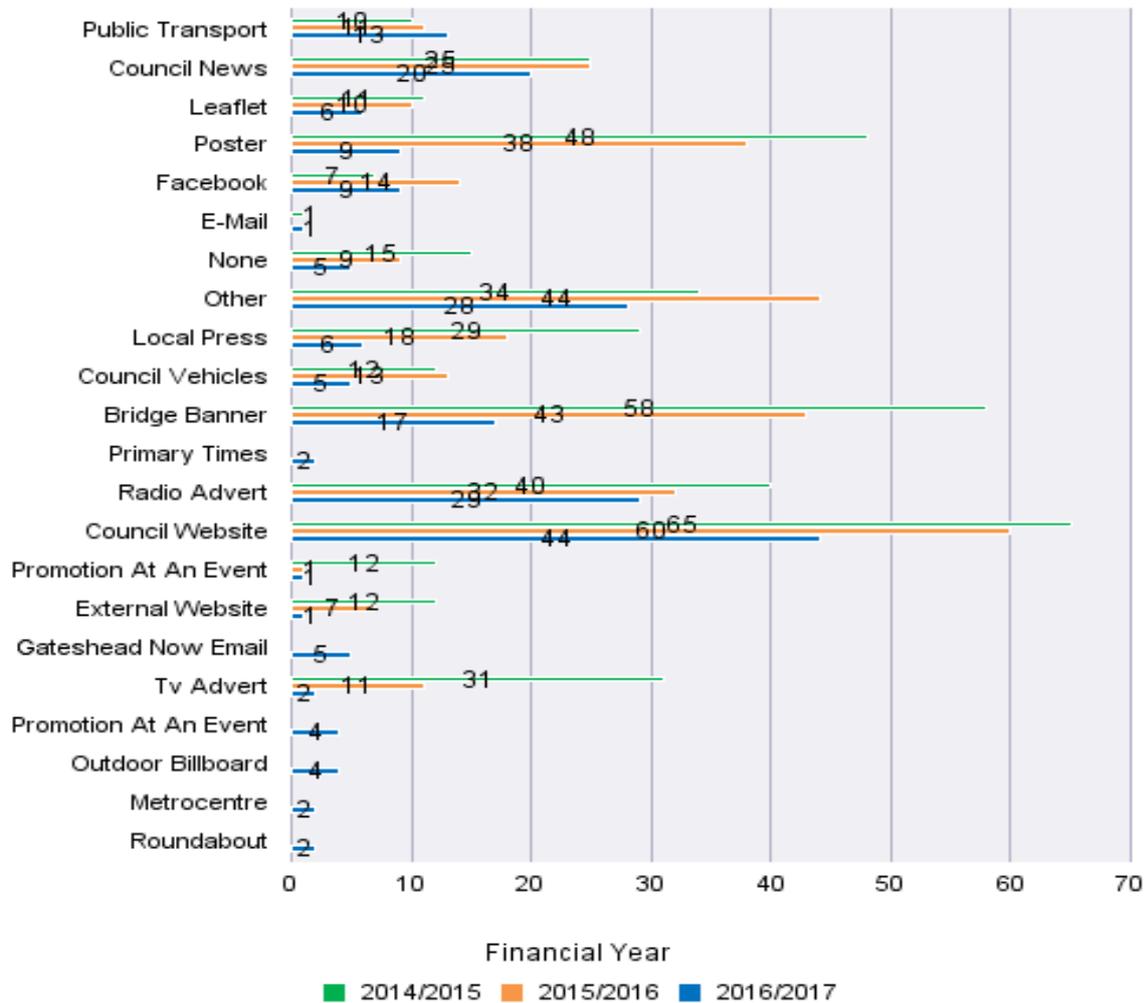
The top six channels cited this year are:

- Council Website
- Radio Advert
- Council News

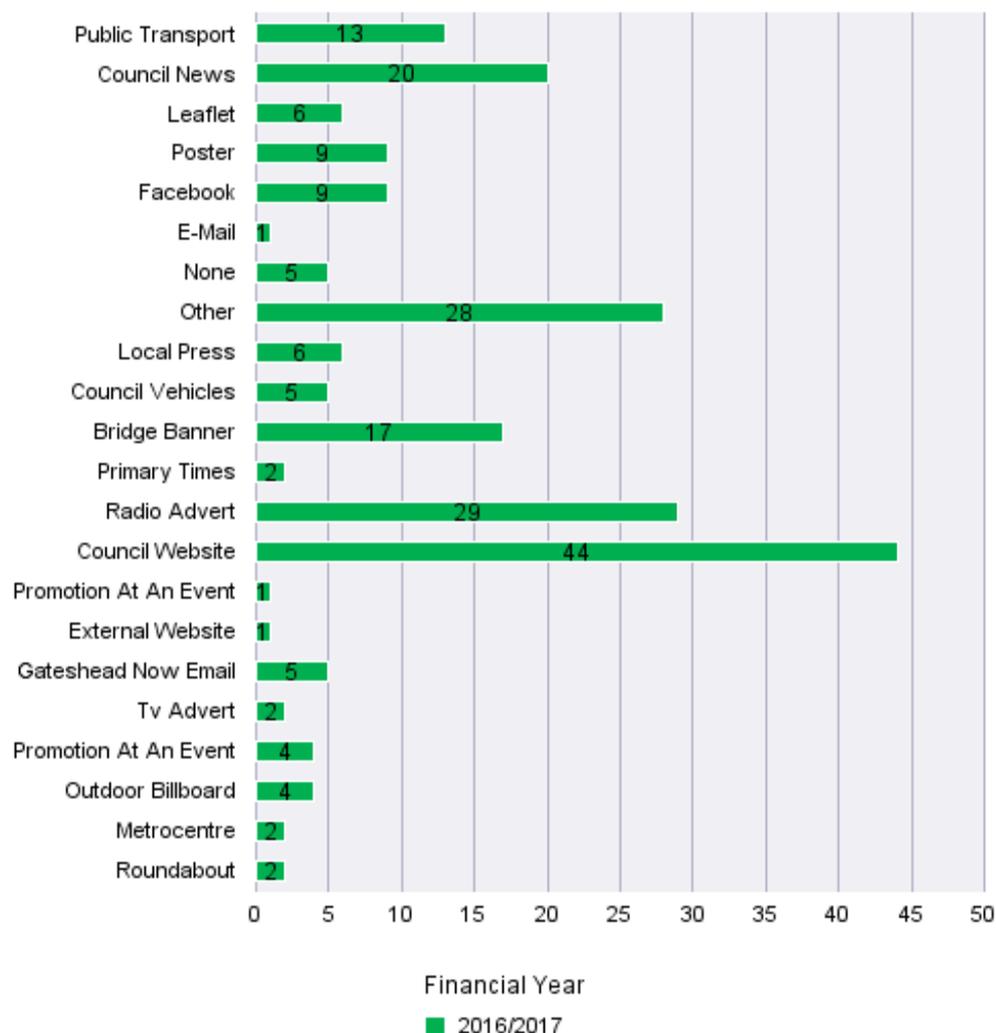
- Bridge Banner
- Public Transport
- Facebook & Poster

The service is making increased use of digital channels and we are starting to see an increase in enquiries via these channels. The radio advertising has been successful this year and we will continue to build awareness via this channel. Public transport advertising is also producing results so should be considered going forward. This information will be analysed further to inform the marketing strategy for 2017/18 and beyond.

**Which of Gateshead Council's Fostering Promotional Materials has been seen by the enquirer?**

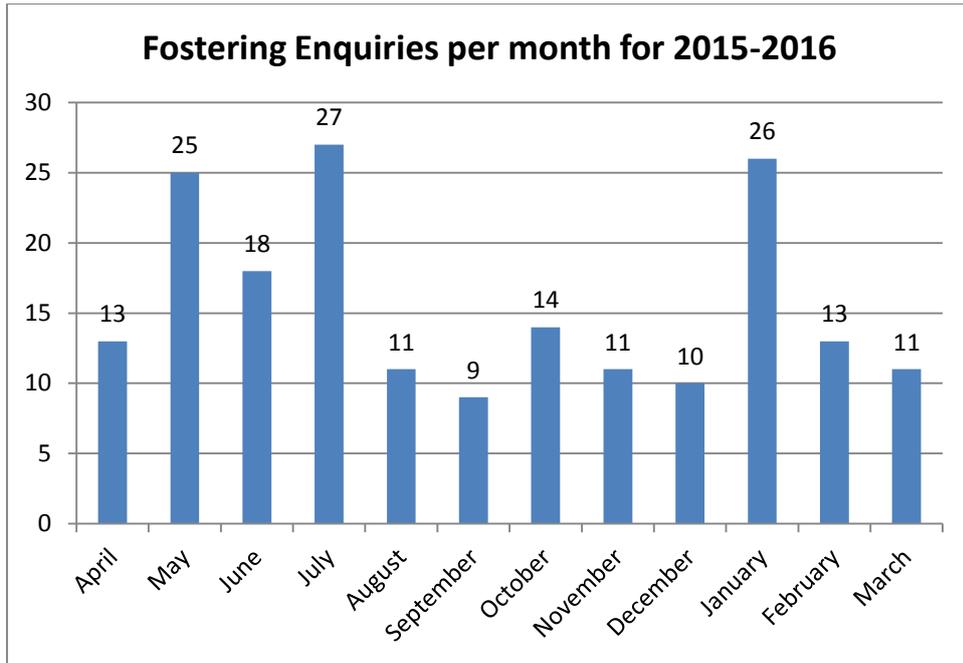


**Which of Gateshead Council's Fostering Promotional Materials has been seen by the enquirer?**



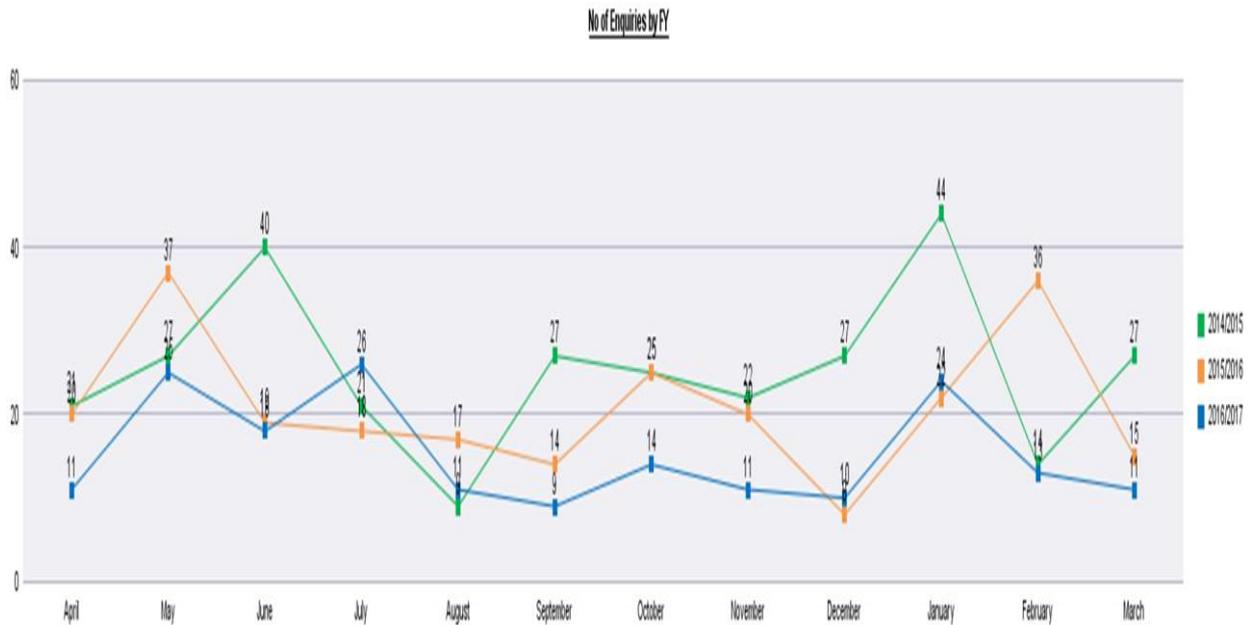
**Enquiries**

In the year to 31 March 2017 the service received 188 enquiries, a decrease in 27% on the previous year. However, the overall number of fostering households approved at panel increased from 21 in (2015-16) to 28 in (2016-17), though only 16 of these were approved as non-connected person households. The service was therefore extremely close to achieving its target this year despite the decrease in overall enquiries. Going forward however, enquiry levels still need to increase as this will ultimately lead to more foster carers joining Gateshead Council, thus enabling us to have more placements for children who need them. A more robust approach to recruitment will aim to deliver an increase in enquiries.



#### Conversion Rate

The Local Authority Fostering Service benchmark for 2015 showed that nationally 11% of enquiries proceed to approved carers. The conversion rate for the service during 2016/17 has increased to 14.9 % (based on the number of approvals this year compared to the number of enquiries received). The graph below shows the level of enquiries over the last three years.



The graph shows that we see peak levels of enquiries in May, July and January but that the remaining months have been consistently below the level of previous years.

### **The next steps**

The recruitment strategy requires a full review to ensure it is aligned to the current business goals and robust enough to deliver its objectives. The marketing plan will then be developed outlining how we will achieve the objectives.

The Fostering Service has widened the responsibility for the recruitment and retention of foster carers by involving the senior members of the Fostering Team directly with planning, delivery and reviewing activities. These roles commenced in April 2017 and will ensure we remain clearly focussed on our objectives, which will be more closely monitored and adjusted as necessary. This marketing plan will then be a document which is continuously reviewed.

Our priority will be to increase the number of foster placements for all children but in particular focus will be the need for placements for sibling groups, teenagers and unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

A plan will be developed for the year in order to utilise the “free of charge” marketing tools as well as deliver “paid for” campaigns to ensure that the Gateshead Council’s Fostering Service receives our fair share of the market.

We are hoping to embrace the Fostering Network’s findings from their report “Why Foster Care – The values and motivations profile of newly approved foster carers” - published in 2015, which identified the followings key findings which can help us to understand the current thinking of newly approved foster carers.

- 81% of newly approved foster carer share a common set of “Pioneer” values.
- At a time when the proportion of the UK population with Pioneer values is decreasing, the opposite is true of the foster carer cohort.
- Support available and peer recommendations are two of the primary motivators for selecting a fostering service.
- 41% of assessments are taking longer than eight months.

This research is up to date and therefore extremely important in helping us to achieve our objectives.

### **RETENTION**

Retention of existing foster carers continues to be a high priority for the Fostering Service and foster carers are provided with extensive support and training.

Each fostering household is reviewed on an annual basis, chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). This process uses feedback from the foster carers, children in placement and children within the fostering family, as well as the carers’ supervising social worker and social workers for children who are and who have been placed with the foster carers. This feedback is valued by the service and is used to develop and improve service delivery.

As part of the marketing and recruitment strategy, retention of our current foster carers is pivotal in ensuring that we are able to keep our numbers of in-house foster carers to at least a minimum level of 200 households. This will ultimately aid the service in respect of placement choice which then leads to greater placement stability for looked after children. This work is managed and overseen by

the Assistant Team Manager in the short term team who will meet with foster carers who indicate that they no longer wish to foster. Exit interviews with foster carers who resign will also be undertaken to establish what the service could do to reduce the number of foster carers leaving.

## **Training**

The service continues to develop the training offered to all approved foster carers. These include specialist subjects such as Attachment, Child Protection Awareness, Equality and Diversity, Emergency First Aid, Level 1 Food Hygiene, Life Story Work, Promoting Positive Behaviour, Recording Skills and Safer Caring Training. Full time foster carers are expected to complete these courses within the first 12 months of their approval, and Home from Home and respite carers are given 18 months to complete these. Foster carers are also encouraged to attend further training through their fostering career. These courses, as well as any refresher training they require, are identified through discussions with their supervising social worker and forms their professional development plan. This is also linked to the payment for skills criteria and levels.

Following feedback from approved foster carers the service has begun to deliver four of the mandatory training courses for people currently in the assessment process and there is an expectation of any prospective foster carer that they will have completed all four courses by the time their assessment is presented to Fostering Panel.

All foster carers under the Fostering regulations have to complete their Training, Support and Development (TSD) Standards for Foster Carers within 12 months of approval. This year 26 foster carer households achieved this. Preparation training and regular workshops are provided for foster carers to help them with the information they need to be able to complete their portfolio, along with giving them practical hints and tips on gathering evidence and information.

The service also requires all foster carers on Payment for Skills level 2 or above to complete their Level 3 Diploma for the Children and Young People's Workforce. 5

All of the carers who completed their TSD or Diploma were presented with certificates for their achievements at the Foster Carer Awards Ceremony.

The training offered and taken up by Gateshead's carers is monitored and evaluated to ensure we are providing our carers with the skills and knowledge they need in order to support young people and help them achieve the best possible outcomes.

## **Support Groups**

Regular support groups for foster carers have continued to take place covering a wide range of relevant topics including Early Years, Advocacy, Sexual Exploitation, Long Term Training and Delegated Authority, with speakers regularly invited to attend. They have proven to be very successful with positive feedback from both foster carers and invited speakers.

A consultation with foster carers takes place annually to help develop the support groups and to find out what carers would like from future support groups. This information has been used by the service to shape the format and frequency of the groups. Non-attendance at support groups is also monitored by the service with foster carers being regularly reminded by their supervising social workers of the importance of attendance to their professional development along with the expectations of the Payment for Skills model.

## Email updates

Regular bulletins to carers about the Service and its recruitment activity have continued throughout the year as well as updates via the Facebook page.

## Christmas Party and Summer Family Fun Day

A Family Fun Day took place in July at Cardinal Hume School. Children were able to take part in a range of activities including face painting, bouncy castles and football shoot outs, and there was the opportunity to see a range of insects and small reptiles and be entranced by a magician! This year there were also stilt walking, craft activities and guest appearances from Spider man and Cinderella. Feedback from the carers and young people in attendance continued to be very positive and they welcome the opportunity to spend "quality time" with their families and fellow foster families, as well as colleagues from across the service.

Children enjoyed a visit from Santa at the annual Christmas Party, and carers met for a Christmas coffee morning, complete with mince pies and Christmas raffle. We also held a coffee morning for Foster Care Fortnight to acknowledge the excellent work foster carers do.

## Foster Carer Awards Ceremony 2017 – Foster 4 Life

The annual Foster Carer Awards were held on 25 April 2017, at the Lancastrian Suite in Gateshead, recognising the dedication and hard work of all the Council's foster carers. In Gateshead there are 303 children placed in short term and long term foster placements, including those placed with relative and friend foster carers.

The theme of our annual event, which sees the Council acknowledge the fantastic job our foster carers do looking after the children in their care, was "Foster4 Life". "Foster 4 life" has a dual meaning; not only does it suggest that fostering is a career for life but it also reflects that it enhances the lives of the children and young people we look after.

This year we celebrated the fact that an exceptionally high number of foster carers reached a significant milestone in the number of years they have been foster carers with Gateshead Council.

We acknowledged that:

- **20** foster families received their 5, 50 or 15 year award,
- **5** foster families received their 20 year award,
- **1** foster family received their 25 year award,
- **2** foster families received their 35 year award, and
- **1** foster family received an award for 40 years' service.

The presentation of the 40 year long service award to Moira and Les Martin was the highlight of the evening for everyone, as caring for children for forty years is a massive achievement. Gateshead Council is immensely proud of all of our foster carers but Moira and Les Martin received a special mention for their dedication and commitment to fostering services. Moira and Les received their award surrounded by their family and children they have, and currently, look after.

In addition to the above Long Service awards the evening acknowledged the following achievements:

- 20 sets of new foster carers welcomed to the service,
- 19 Sets of foster carers achieving their certificates for Department of Education, Training, Support and Development Standards,

- 12 foster carers achieving a level 3 Diploma for the Children and Young People’s workforce,
- 1 foster carer successfully completing the Bridging Units for the Level 3 Diploma.

In addition to these achievements we presented three categories of awards that were nominated by colleagues and other professionals and a set of awards nominated by our looked after children.

These awards were:

- **Extra Mile Award** – Acknowledges foster carers who regularly go above and beyond what is expected of them in delivering an exceptional standard of care. Eight sets of carers received awards in this category. Some of the nominations were for the following:
  - Providing stability to three children via a long term placement arrangement.
  - Ensuring adoption introductions went smoothly.
  - Managing three complex placements and being excellent advocates.
  - Showing resilience and commitment to young people.
  - Never losing focus of the child’s needs whilst facing own health issues.
  - Always putting the best interests of the young person first.
- **Unsung Hero Award** – For foster carers who epitomise dedication and drive and always deliver on their promises in an unassuming way. Nineteen sets of carers received awards in this category. Some of the nominations were for the following:
  - Exceptional support to the training programme.
  - Being respected in the local community as a foster carer and for being a brilliant role model.
  - Providing respite care to two children in addition to their two long term placements.
  - Providing exceptional mother and baby placements.
  - Displaying an amazing insight into the needs of children.
- **Outstanding Newcomer of the Year Award** – For foster carers who have joined the organisation since 1 April 2016, who show real drive, exceptional performance, enthusiasm and motivation. Five sets of carers awards in this category. The nominations were for:
  - Accepting placements outside their age range and providing excellent care to children with very complex needs.
  - Providing a long term placement, rather than their preference for short term, and establishing a wonderful relationship with the children.
  - Showing significant insight into the needs of Looked After Children as well as being extremely flexible.
  - Providing a supportive, child centred placement for a young person whilst demonstrating their confidence, motivation and passion for their role.
  - Accepting a sibling placement within two weeks of approval and working hard to enable the children to meet their developmental milestones.
- **Most Amazing Carer** – Nominated by our Looked After Children. Seven sets of carers received awards in this category.

The event was a fantastic experience for all who attended and the following quotes, from children in foster care who nominated their carers demonstrate the real difference foster carers in Gateshead make to the children in our care.

- “ Being the best cook and the best mam ever, helping us with our homework and washing our faces, loving us and keeping us safe, driving us to school every day and taking us to hospital appointments even when you feel poorly.”
- “They are my family who deal with my problems, buy me clothes, holidays, give me love, teach me manners and spend each and every day of their lives ensuring I am the happiest child in the world. When I am down one hug can say a thousand words.”
- “My foster carer always gives me good advice and helps me move into my future. My carer is amazing because she loves me and wants me to have a good life, a better life and a happy

life because my childhood has not been easy until I came to live with my carer and I appreciate it so much.

## **Fostering Panel**

In broad terms the role of the Fostering Panel provides an independent perspective on the business of the Fostering Service, informed by a range of expertise to monitor and quality assure social work practice in the best interests of children and young people in foster care. It provides recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker that accurately reflects the facts of the cases presented.

There is a need for Fostering Services to maintain a Central List of panel members consisting of a multidisciplinary membership of experienced professionals. No business can be conducted by panel unless at least the following people are present:

The Chair or one of the Vice-Chairs

One member who is a social worker (who may or may not be employed by the Fostering Service) with at least 3 years relevant post-qualifying experience

Three other members from the Central List

At least one member of the panel must be independent (this can be the Chair or Vice-Chair) – Regulation 24 (1)

The UK National Standards for Foster Care 2011 (14.8) recommends that:

*“...the number, skills, knowledge and experience of persons on the central list are sufficient to enable the fostering service to constitute panels that are equipped to make competent recommendations to the fostering service provider, taking into account the nature of the children and carers that the service caters for”*

Gateshead’s fostering service continues to operate 2 panels per month, with membership being made up from the central list. Each panel has a consistent membership and is chaired by the same panel chair to ensure consistency and continuity when dealing with all panel business.

All panel members have an annual panel review, where they are consulted about their views, discuss how they are developing their role on panel, identify any areas of development and make suggestions on how panel can be improved. The review is carried out by Sue Holton – panel chair and Alan Clark – agency advisor.

All new Panel members are given induction training, which is held over a half day and covers Panel’s statutory function and business as well as the expectations of Panel members. This ensures people are fully aware of the legislation relating to panel, the function and running of panel and the expectations on panel members. People who have attended this training have given positive feedback and feel that it has helped them in their role as a panel member

Training is also provided to all Panel members on a bi-annual basis. This year, the training has primarily focused on the implementation of the new Regulations, the Form F assessment process and analysis, Foster Carer Review paperwork and the long term matching process.

In April 2016 new Service Director Elaine Devaney was appointed as Agency Decision Maker, following the departure of Debra Patterson.

The panel met nineteen times during the year to meet the increasing needs of the service.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>2016-17</b>
Form F assessments	16
Connected person	12
De-registrations of foster carers	21
De-registrations of connected persons	5
Foster carer reviews	47
Matching children and carers	18
Non-progression of Form F assessments	3
Extension to Regulation 24 sixteen week temporary approval period	19

### **Number of placements**

The Service has acquired 16 new sets of non-connected person foster carers who can potentially offer up to 28 full time placements, if siblings can share a room. Panel have been flexible with their approval categories in relation to the age range and have tried to approve people up to the age of 18 if they are in agreement with this. They have recommended preferences in relation to the age range rather than being specific, which ensures carers do not need to come back to panel if they take a slightly older or younger child than their preference. In addition, 12 new sets of connected person foster carers were approved throughout the year, for a total of 16 children. This is a significant increase of 140% on the previous year.

### **De-registrations**

The 'Local Authority Fostering Services in England performance benchmark report 2013/14' shows that nationally 12% of foster carers left their service. In Gateshead 26 sets of foster carers were de-registered at panel, equating to 13%, which is roughly equivalent to this figure. The number of de-registrations in Gateshead has remained at a similar level to the last financial year.

<b>REASON</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>
Resignation	3
Retirement	1
Change of personal circumstances e.g. return to work, new partner	8

Change in family circumstances e.g birth of child, adopted child	1
Allegations/concerns	6
Child Arrangement Order or Special Guardianship Order for carer	2
Connected person – rehabilitation home	1
Impact on Family/Unable to manage fostering task	2
Transferred to another Fostering Agency	2

### **Panel Feedback Forms**

The agency has implemented feedback forms for everyone attending panel. This includes all social workers, prospective foster carers and approved foster carers. This feedback is monitored by the Fostering Team Manager and used to improve panel. The feedback forms have largely identified that people attending panel have a positive experience, they feel that they are made to feel welcome and the questions they are asked are relevant.

### **Service Development**

In addition to working to implement any proposed new governmental reforms to fostering practice, the key areas for development within the Fostering service are:

- Continue to develop the Staying Put Scheme which allows young people to remain in their foster placements beyond the age of 18.
- Undertake targeted recruitment campaigns to increase the number of foster placements specifically around Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children, Teenage Placements and Sibling Group Placements.
- Develop the training and support offered to foster carers who are considering caring for teenagers with complex needs.
- Ensure the recruitment strategy is robust and that there is evidence we are providing a choice of appropriate placements.
- Ensure the excellent work undertaken with regards to placement stability continues.
- Continue in the reduction of the use of Independent Fostering Placements.
- Continue to monitor the Fostering Service and evaluate all activities to ensure that the best performance and outcomes possible are achieved.

This page is intentionally left blank

**TITLE OF REPORT:** Support for Disabled LAC

**REPORT OF:** Strategic Director, Care Wellbeing and Learning

---

## **Summary**

This report details the Council's provision made to support disabled Looked After Children. For the purposes of this report this includes arrangements made for children accommodated under Care Orders (S31), those placed in voluntary care (S20) or those accommodated for an agreed series of short term breaks (S20).

---

## **Background**

1. There are currently 190 children open to the Council's Disabled Children Team. The majority of children receive support under Children in Need (CIN) arrangements or via Team Around the Family (TAF). Reviews of these packages of support are usually undertaken by the Team Manager or Senior Social Worker within the Disabled Children's Team. At present 20 children open to the Disabled Children's Team are LAC (either S20 or S31) and are therefore reviewed by the Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs).

## **Short Breaks**

2. The Council has a duty to provide short breaks which are part of a continuum of services which support children in need and their families. They include the provision of day, evening, overnight and weekend activities for the child, and can take place in the child's own home, the home of an approved carer, or in a residential or community setting and are provided under S17, S20 or S31 of the Children Act 1989.
3. The breaks usually have two aims, to enable the child to participate in safe, fun and interesting activities, and to provide a break to parents from their caring role.
4. Part 3 of the 1989 Act sets out local authorities' powers and duties to provide support services for children in need and their families. The definition of children in need includes children who are disabled within the meaning of the 1989 Act. Short breaks can be provided by local authorities through the use of their powers under:
  - section 17(6) of the 1989 Act, which grants local authorities a power to provide accommodation as part of a range of services in order to

- discharge their general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need; and
- section 20(4) of the 1989 Act, which grants local authorities a power to provide accommodation 'for any child within their area (even though a person who has parental responsibility for him is able to provide him with accommodation) if they consider that to do so would safeguard or promote the child's welfare'.
5. In consultation with parents / carers, the local authority may decide to provide short break accommodation for the child under section 20(4). Providing accommodation on this basis has no effect on the parents' parental responsibility and, of course, parents can remove the child from the accommodation at any time. They retain overall responsibility for the health, education and longer term planning for their child, although they may ask for assistance from the local authority.
  6. Breaks provided for children under section 20(4) mean that those children are looked after during the period of their break and are consequently reviewed by IROs. In Gateshead there are currently 14 children receiving this type of break.
  7. The Council also has a duty to publish the Short Breaks Service Statement. This was revised in May 2016 and is attached at Appendix 1.

### **Children in Foster Care**

8. There are currently 3 children who are in foster care placements. Carers are also eligible to receive additional support to enable them to receive a short break from their caring responsibilities. In some cases, this includes access to Grove House, Grace House and Bradbury View overnight short breaks and others receive support during school holidays through attendance at Active Kidz or FACETS (the Council's specialist holiday provision for children with autism).
9. Further information on overnight shortbreaks accessed by Gateshead children is available at:

<https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/DocumentLibrary/CBS/Care/grove-house/Grove-house-leaflet.pdf>

<http://www.gracehouse.co.uk/>

<http://www.percyhedley.org.uk/education-services/residential/bradbury-view/>

### **Children in Residential Care / Residential Schools**

10. There are a small number of children whose needs are so complex that they cannot be met within a family setting. These children all have an Education, Health and Care Plans and so the majority are placed in 52 week residential school placements. Current placements are at Underley Gardens and

Northern Counties Schools with a further placement likely to be made at the Fullerton House (Doncaster).

**Recommendations**

11. Member of OSC are asked to note and discuss the content of the report.

Contact: Deborah Mason

Extension: 3575

This page is intentionally left blank



# Short Breaks Service Statement

for families with Disabled Children

May 2016

# Introduction

Welcome to the Gateshead Short Breaks Statement. The aim of this statement is to provide parents and carers with information about:

- How we design short break services to meet the needs of disabled children and young people aged 0-17 years in Gateshead and their parents/carers
- The range of short breaks available in Gateshead
- Who is eligible to receive short breaks and how to access them

This revised statement replaces the first "Short Breaks Services Statement for families with Disabled Children" which was published in 2011.

It has been prepared in consultation with disabled children and young people and parents/carers to ensure that we are buying the sort of short breaks services that families have told us they need. It supports the commissioning framework within Gateshead's Care, Wellbeing & Learning which sets out to ensure quality, value for money and continuous improvement in the delivery of services. It is also consistent with our vision "for all families with disabled children in Gateshead to be supported to live ordinary family lives as a matter of course".



# Background

As part of the Government's ambition to improve outcomes for disabled children and their families and to give children, young people and their parents greater control and choice in decisions, all local authorities are now required by law to provide a range of short breaks to meet the needs of disabled children, young people and their parents/ carers and to produce a short breaks statement. This is set out in the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011 (or Short Breaks Regulations 2011) which require local authorities to do three things:

- To ensure that, when making short break provision, they have regard to the needs of different types of carers, not just those who would be unable to continue to provide care without a break;
- To provide a range of short breaks, as appropriate, during the day, night at weekends and during the school holidays; and
- To provide parents with a short breaks services statement detailing the range of available breaks and any eligibility criteria attached to them.

The statement has been reviewed at a time of great change in the way public services are designed, commissioned and delivered. It acknowledges the changes within local government, including reduced funding and the changes in the health service following the abolition of Primary Care Trusts and the transfer of commissioning activity to Clinical Commissioning Groups from April 2013.

We are committed to continuing the legacy of the Aiming High for Disabled Children Programme which tasked local authorities to improve and increase the short break services available to disabled children and young people within their areas. Gateshead has also been a SEND Pathfinder, one of a small number of local authorities working with parents and carers to test out proposals set out in the government's green paper 'Support and Aspiration: a new approach to special educational needs and disability'. A number of these proposals have since been implemented through the introduction of legislation set out in Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014: Children and Young People in England with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities.

## What is a short break?

A short break is a break or time away from a caring role, which used to be called 'respite' and forms part of a range of services which support children with additional needs and their families. A short break gives disabled children and young people experiences away from their main carers and also gives parents and carers a valuable break from their caring responsibilities. A break from a caring role can include activities which last a few hours, a day, an evening, overnight, a weekend or for longer. They can take place in or away from the family home and can include supporting a family to take a short break together.

## Our vision

Our vision is for all families with disabled children in Gateshead to be supported to live ordinary family lives as a matter of course. Every family is different, but every family has the right to a decent quality of life. Central to achieving this vision is the transformation of short break services; developing a menu of provision in partnership with families and other stakeholders to meet the needs of all disabled children and young people, including those whom 'traditional' short break services may struggle to accommodate.

## Who should be considered for access to breaks from caring?

Short break services are provided to enhance the ability of parents to care for their disabled child and any other children they may have. In Gateshead, depending on the type of short break requested, an assessment is usually carried out before a short break is provided.

The assessment is usually carried out by a social worker or key worker and it carefully considers the needs of the child and family, the family's circumstances and whether a short break would have a positive impact on the family. It should be noted that eligibility for short breaks is not based on the severity of a child's disability or impairment alone, although we recognise that caring for children with profound and multiple disabilities, complex health needs and challenging behaviour may be particularly demanding for families.

Information about the types of short breaks that may be available to you, eligibility criteria and how to apply are explained further on in the statement.

## Gateshead's guiding principles for short breaks:

- A Short Break service should provide positive experiences for children by promoting friendships and by encouraging social activities, new experiences and supportive relationships with carers.
- A Short Break service should ensure that provision is available on a planned and regular basis and at the times when families and children need breaks – this should include evenings, weekends and during school holidays, and have the capacity to respond to urgent care requirements.
- A Short Break service should be reliable, so that carers can plan around the breaks provided.
- A Short Break service is also consistent with the needs of the carer to have a break from the caring role.
- A Short Break service should provide culturally appropriate provision that meets the racial, cultural, linguistic and religious needs of children and their families.
- A Short Break service should promote information about available provision to the public, including details of eligibility, threshold criteria and routes to accessing the service. Providers should work in partnership with the Council to promote and publicise services.

## How we design services to meet the needs of disabled children and their parents/carers

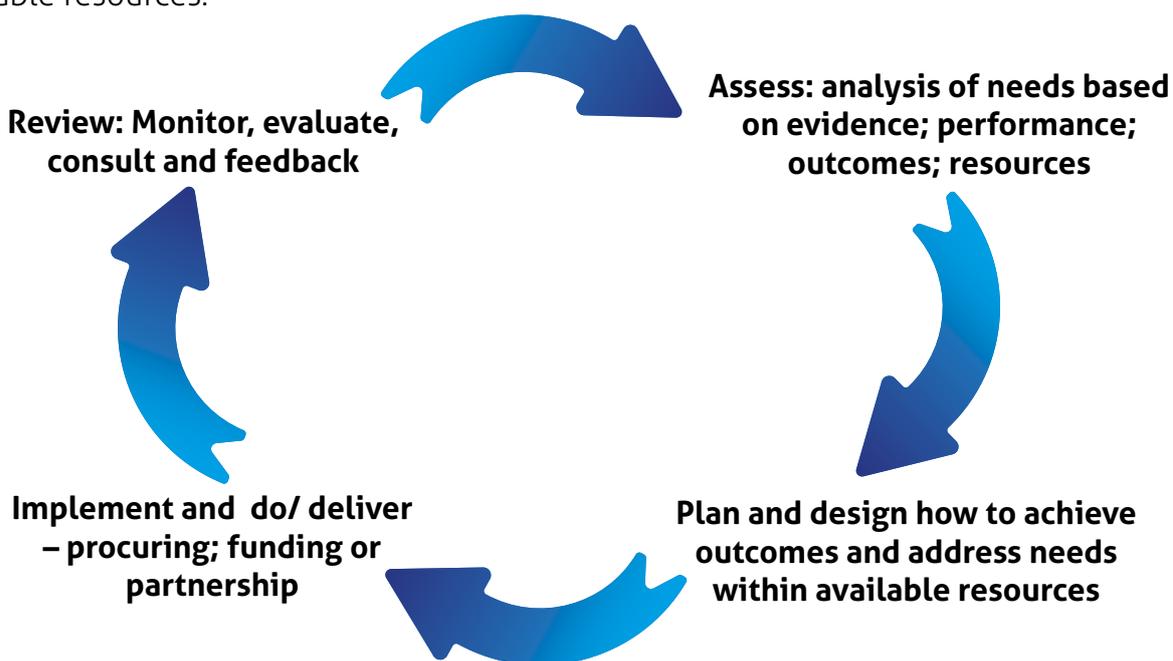
No single source of information gives us comprehensive data about the needs of disabled children. While it is difficult to determine the number of disabled children in Gateshead, there are several sources of information which help us gain a more accurate picture to enable us to plan and provide appropriate services.

### Some facts and figures

In Gateshead there are 40,137 children and young people aged 0-17 years (Mid-Year Population Estimates for Local Authorities 2014).

- There are 811 children who are members of the Gateshead Network of children with disabilities (Network database January 2015)
- 360 out of the 1890 children (19%) classified as Children in Need, receiving social care support from Gateshead children's services, have a disability. (Care First Social Care database January 2016)
- 198 children currently receive social care support from the Disabled Children Team (Care First Social Care database January 2016)
- 4,179 pupils are registered as having SEND (SEN Support and Statement/EHC Plan) (School Census January 2016)
- 982 children and young people aged 0-25 have a Statement of SEN/EHC Plan (SEN2 Return Data; January 2016)
- 530 children and young people are taught in special schools in Gateshead (School Census; January 2016)

The 'commissioning cycle' is the process we use to identify the needs of disabled children in Gateshead, set priorities and purchase and evaluate appropriate services within our available resources.



Our short breaks programme is subject to regular review and involves consultation with families and stakeholders via questionnaires, forums and regular and ongoing feedback through meetings and information we receive from service providers.

We have recently developed a commissioning framework which is changing the way short breaks are provided to create more personalised support for families and to ensure that a clear commissioning approach is followed.

We carried out consultation with disabled children and parents/carers on short breaks services in the summer of 2013 and subsequently we consulted on the draft short breaks statement during August-September 2015. Young people and their parents/carers told us about their experiences, what works for them, what's missing and what could be better. This evidence is fed into our "commissioning cycle," helping us to understand and make decisions on how we can develop short breaks services to ensure that they meet the needs of our local disabled children and their families.

*"I get to spend time with his sister, doing activities of her choice for a change."*

*"It's a life saver for me; I don't know how I would cope without this support."*

*"It would be better if young people had continuity in the staff that work with them."*

*"I trust them fully to keep him safe, we've even had a holiday ourselves when he was with them."*

*"I would like more feedback on what my son is doing."*

*"It's fun being with other young people."*

*"My gran has a chance to recharge her batteries when I'm here. This means she is able to care for me. I get on really well with the staff."*

*"It's like having a sleep over, just like my sister does."*

*"I climbed up and abseiled from the top!"*

*"The staff are fun."*

The way we design short breaks services and influence future commissioning plans is also shaped by other needs assessments including the "Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Assessment" and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment which looks at the main health, social and well-being needs of local residents. The Economic Assessment, Child Poverty Needs Assessment and Safer Gateshead Strategic Assessment also help to inform our approach.

The Disabled Children and Young People's Forum ensures that we hear the voice of the child and parents and carers in the shaping of services.

Parents in Power (a voluntary organisation run by parents/carers for parents/carers of a child with special needs, learning difficulties or a disability) is a key partner in the development of services and represents the voice of parents on many strategic groups, engagement sessions and via their own events and activities.

Tel: 0191 490 0198

Email: [enquiries@parentsinpower.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@parentsinpower.co.uk)

Web: [www.parentsinpower.btck.co.uk](http://www.parentsinpower.btck.co.uk) <http://twitter.com/parentsinpower>

## Short Break Services in Gateshead

A wide range of short breaks services are available in Gateshead. The type of short break that someone may be eligible to receive depends on the child's assessed needs, the needs of a parent or carer and family circumstances.

Where individualised and specialist services are needed, we use service providers who are experienced in working with disabled children and make sure that each child gets the level of staff support they need to have a safe and enjoyable experience.

Although not exhaustive, some examples of the types of short breaks we offer are outlined in the following list:

- Family support and individual one to one support in the home and in the community e.g. sitting service, help with a child's personal care or complex health needs, help with housework, cooking or during mealtimes and providing an 'extra pair of hands' on shopping trips or by escorting a child to a social group/activity.
- Leisure activities e.g. discounted or free access to swimming pools and leisure centres, Max cards - discounted entry to a range of visitor attractions
- Holiday schemes e.g. Active Kidz and the specialist holiday scheme for children with autism
- Out of School clubs e.g. social and group activities outside of school hours
- Specialist Overnight Short Breaks

To find specific information about short break services available in Gateshead, you can access Gateshead's 'Local Offer', an online information resource which highlights the services and support available for children and young people with a special educational need or disability at <http://www.gateshead.gov.uk/localoffer> The short break services can be found by clicking on 'Social Care (including short breaks)' in Gateshead's Local Offer service directory.

## How to apply for a short break service

Not all children and families will need the same level of support and short breaks. Some will need more than others because of the nature of their child's disability and its severity while some families may need more support because of their individual family circumstances. We therefore usually need to assess your child and family to ensure that we provide the right level of support and short breaks at the right time.

Not all services require an assessment to be carried out and can be accessed directly by families. These are called 'Universal Services'.

## Universal Services

These short break services are available to all families where there are **low support needs** as part of our "minimum offer". This is called "universal" provision and might include youth clubs, leisure centres, holiday schemes or you can obtain the Gateshead Leisure and Max cards which provide free or reduced cost entry to swimming pools, leisure centres and visitor attractions throughout Gateshead. Families can access these services themselves and there is no need for an assessment. Contact the Referral and Assessment Team on 0191 4332653 to find out more about Universal short break services available for disabled children and their families.

There are also services that are described as 'Targeted' or 'Specialised' that do require an assessment to be undertaken.

To begin the process you can contact the Duty Social Worker of the **Referral and Assessment Team, 0191 433 2653**, at the Civic Centre, and they will take some basic information about your child and your family. Based on the information you provide, the duty social worker will determine which assessment process is the most appropriate for your circumstances and you may be referred for an assessment for a targeted or specialist short break to be undertaken.

## Targeted Services

These are services available to children/young people with some support needs but who may not meet the threshold for specialist social care support. In this case, the family may be referred for a CAF (common assessment framework) assessment. This type of assessment is undertaken by a member of a team (sometimes called a lead practitioner – for example, a family intervention team worker, health visitor, teacher, children's centre worker), with the support of any other practitioner who may be working with your child/family.

Following assessment, a plan is drawn up outlining the support needed, which will include short breaks. CAF plans are reviewed regularly to check what progress is being made and to decide whether less or more support may be needed. Examples of targeted short break services might include an out of school club place, home care support or childminding services.



## Specialist short break services

These are highly specialised or bespoke services which are available to children/young people and carers with high support needs or circumstances. They can only be accessed as a result of a Child In Need (CIN) assessment which will be carried out by a social worker from the Disabled Children's Team.

The Social Worker has 45 days to complete the CIN assessment which will look carefully at the child's development needs, the parents'/carers' specific needs, any parenting issues and the wider family circumstances and environment. They will also gather relevant information from other professionals involved with your child, such as a Doctor, Community Nurse, Occupational Therapist or Teacher.

The assessment is written into a support plan which outlines the services and short breaks that may be appropriate to be provided and how this will meet the child's/families' needs. The assessment and plan needs to be approved by a panel before the short break is provided.

All plans are reviewed regularly to make sure they respond to the changing needs of the child and family. Examples of a specialist short breaks package may include overnight stays within a residential or foster placement, palliative care or one to one support.

The diagram below summarises the type of short break services provided in Gateshead and how they are accessed based on the level of assessed need.

<b>Specialist short break services</b>	
<p><b>High level of need</b></p> 	<p><b>Specialist Short Break Services</b>  <b>How is it accessed?</b>            Child in Need (CIN) assessment or Continuing Care assessment</p> <p><b>Type of short break service</b>            Grove House, home from home scheme, community outreach support, specialist holiday scheme for children with autism, St Oswald's overnight stay, Palliative care</p>
	<p><b>Targeted short break services</b>  <b>How is it accessed?</b>            Common Assessment Framework (CAF) assessment, Family Service Plan or Child in Need (CIN) assessment</p> <p><b>Type of short break service</b>            Community outreach support, home care and support, parenting and crisis support, out of school club places</p>
	<p><b>Preventative short break services</b>  <b>How is it accessed?</b>            Common Assessment Framework (CAF) assessment or Family Service Plan</p> <p><b>Type of short break service</b>            Community resources worker</p>
<p><b>Low level of need</b></p>	<p><b>Universal short break services</b>  <b>How is it accessed?</b>            Membership of Network of Children with Disabilities (preferred but not essential)</p> <p><b>Type of short break service</b>            Max cards, youth clubs, Active Kidz holiday scheme, emergency support and all universal services (search for services in Gateshead's Local Offer)</p>

## Personal Budgets and Direct Payments

A personal budget is a pot of funding given to individuals after an assessment which should be enough to meet the assessed needs. It can either be taken as a direct payment (while still choosing how your care needs are met and by whom) or leaving the Council with the responsibility to buy the services on the child/family's behalf. Families can also choose to go with a combination of the two. To receive a personal budget and/or direct payment, the child/young person will need to undergo a "child in need assessment" or a Community Care assessment, (if the young person has reached 18), to determine eligibility.

Some families choose to buy their own support via direct payments and personal budgets. This means that instead of getting services directly from Gateshead Council, they get money to buy the support they need. A direct payment enables individuals to be able to buy their own support. It may make up part or all of a care plan and can be used as part of a personal budget. There is no fixed list as to what you can get with a direct payment. Some families use direct payments to employ someone to help out at home while others have bought overnight short breaks for their child.

### More information

For more detailed information about short breaks and the eligibility criteria for accessing short break services, you can contact:

Gateshead Council's Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Team

Tel: 0191 433 3619

Email: [senteam@gateshead.gov.uk](mailto:senteam@gateshead.gov.uk)

Address: SEND Team, Gateshead Council, Care, Wellbeing and Learning,  
Civic Centre, Gateshead NE8 1HH

To find out more about the support and services available to children and young people with SEND and their families go to Gateshead's Local Offer, [www.gateshead.gov.uk/localoffer](http://www.gateshead.gov.uk/localoffer)







By virtue of paragraph(s) 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank