

CORPORATE PARENTING SUB OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AGENDA

Monday, 15 January 2018 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 9 October 2017

3 Health of LAC Annual Report (Pages 7 - 16)

Report of Strategic Director, Care Wellbeing and Learning

4 Education Annual Report (Pages 17 - 40)

Report of Strategic Director, Care Wellbeing and Learning

5 Adoption Annual Report - 2017 (Pages 41 - 56)

Report of Strategic Director, Care Wellbeing and Learning

6 Missing from Care Annual Report (Pages 57 - 70)

Report of Strategic Director, Care Wellbeing and Learning

7 Work Programme (Pages 71 - 74)

Joint Report of the Chief Executive and Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance

8 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:

Item

**Paragraphs of Schedule 12A to the Local
Government Act 1972**

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Regulation 44 Report (Pages 75 - 80)

Report of Strategic Director, Care Wellbeing and Learning

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

Monday, 9 October 2017

PRESENT: Councillor B Oliphant (Chair)
Councillor(s): B Clelland, E McMaster and C Davison

CO-OPTED MEMBERS Sasha Ban

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor(s): G Haley

CP9 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Hall, Cllr S Craig and co-opted member Jeremy Cripps.

CP10 MINUTES

Resolved

- (i) The minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2017 were agreed as a correct record.

CP11 YOUNG PEOPLES PRESENTATION - DIGITAL ME PROJECT

An overview of the Digital Me project which ran over the summer was given. The project is a partnership of Gateshead Council and Digital Voice for Communities.

LAC who took part in the project attended to showcase the work they had done which included creating a digital avatar to illustrate their stories as well as musical projects. Digital Me provided LAC with an opportunity to express their feelings and tell their story in a creative way.

Those present also spent some time to talk with the LAC to view their individual digital portfolios. There was also an opportunity for those present to ask questions to the LAC about their life and experiences.

It was suggested that it would be good to have continuity of visitors at these meetings so that those present can meet with the LAC who attended previously to catch up on their progress.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the information was noted.

CP12 PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW

A performance overview presentation was delivered.

In comparing the numbers and rates of LAC to neighbouring authorities Gateshead is in the middle with a rate of 95 LAC per 10k of the child population at 31st March 2017. These figures have seen a recent increase of 9.4% bringing about its own challenges however performance outcomes continue to be good.

Information was presented detailing the percentage of looked after children with three or more placements during the year. Gateshead Council continues to have a good record for placement stability for LAC as figures fall below the national average for LAC moves during placement.

Clarity on what “out of borough placements” are was provided. This refers to LAC who are moved geographically out of the Gateshead area. Currently around 41% of Gateshead’s LAC are placed out of the borough. Gateshead keeps ownership of all LAC placed out of the borough working in partnership with other local authorities/agencies to provide suitable care.

It was also mentioned that LAC are kept at the same school when appropriate to provide stability. If a LAC is placed out of the borough transport would be provided so that they are able to attend their normal school if this is suitable.

A point was raised regarding the use of “The Care Leavers’ App” – staff have seen this system and thought it was good but the system has not yet been purchased. It may be possible for some care leavers to trial the system in future.

A discussion took place around the gaps in provision in relation to accessing mental health support for care leavers. Work with the CCG is ongoing to make improvements as this is now a strategic priority for Gateshead Council.

A question was asked about the provision of training for foster carers on mental health/emotional wellbeing. It was said that the training provided to foster carers is excellent in Gateshead and is mandatory.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the information was noted.

CP13 SUPPORT FOR CARE LEAVERS

A summary of the Support to Care Leavers was provided.

It was explained that increased focus is being placed on care leavers and the responsibility of Local Authorities to ensure that they transition well into adulthood. In response to feedback the service has developed a care leaver’s charter representing a set of over-arching principles designed to improve the experiences of care leavers through preparation, transition and their journey into adult life.

The report has focused on:

- Support to care leavers
- Accommodation
- Financial support
- How we monitor the work or education status for young people age 17 – 21 years
- Identifying young people needing additional support
- Working with our partners

There is particular focus on developing independent living skills for young people working with social workers, personal advisers and partner organisations.

A question was raised regarding sourcing supported accommodation for young people with complex needs. This process is managed working with the transitions team and The Gateshead Housing Company so is not a reactive process; those requiring support are to be identified early so that appropriate support is put in place.

RESOLVED

- (i) The recommendations were agreed.

CP14 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received the work programme for the municipal year 2017/18, which will be a standing item on each agenda. There were no changes to note.

RESOLVED

- (i) That Committee noted the provisional programme.
- (ii) That Committee noted that further reports on the work programme will be brought to the Committee to identify any additional policy issues, which the committee may be asked to consider.

CP15 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

- (i) 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.

CP16 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

- (i) That the information be noted.



TITLE OF REPORT: Gateshead Looked After Children and Young People's Health Team – Annual Report 2016-17

REPORT OF: Caroline O'Neill, Strategic Director, Care, Wellbeing and Learning

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a summary of the work and outcomes for the Looked After Children and Young People Health Team in Gateshead 2016-17. Themes from the team's annual report are presented. There is brief information regarding the work undertaken by colleagues in sexual health and drug and alcohol services. Priorities for the future year are also included.

Background

- This document aims to give an overview of the work and achievements of the Looked After Children's Health Team for Gateshead 2016-17.
- The Looked After Children's (LAC) Health Team in Gateshead is commissioned by Newcastle Gateshead Clinical Commissioning Group. During the reporting period the team consisted of:
Designated Doctor LAC, 6 Direct Clinical Care PA's & 1 Supporting Professional Activity (SPA) for LAC. This includes the role of medical advisor to the adoption agency. The designated doctor is employed by Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust
The Designated Doctor LAC retired in December 2016 and some of the work associated with that role has been covered by other paediatricians in the department since then. The post was advertised in 2017 but not recruited to, there is a plan to re-advertise in 2018.
The team consists of:
Secretary -1WTE
Named Nurse LAC 1 WTE
Specialist Nurse LAC 1WTE (from June 2016)
LAC Administrator – 1 WTE with an additional 0.5 WTE from April 2016
All were employed by South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust until 1.10.16.
There have been a number of changes to staffing during the year. The LAC Health Team have transferred to a different provider organisation. From 1.10.16 the LAC Health Team have been employed by Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust (GHNT).

Activity

Initial Health Assessments

- The team recorded a total of 187 notifications of children and young people becoming looked after in 2016-2017 of which 165 had IHA's completed. The remaining 22 were/have not been done for the following reasons: 2 no consent received, 1 did not attend appointment, 1 asylum seeker deemed to be 18+, 3 left care before appointment could be arranged, 1 absconded, 14 left care without consent being received.
- Our overall compliance for Medical Practitioners to complete the IHA (DH/DfE 2015) was **97.6%**.
- There is on-going monitoring of timeframes for completion of Initial Health Assessments within 28 days (20 working days) (DH/DfE 2015) In 2016-2017 **43.82 %** compliance was achieved, this is a drop from 47% for the previous year.
- The LAC Health Team were able to offer IHA appointments to **77.16 %** of children within 20 working days of consents being received, a decrease on the previous year (81.7%)
A challenge in meeting the overall time frame was delay in obtaining parental consent from social workers (40.12%) which is a decrease from 59.34% the previous year.
Other contributing delays:
Late consents together with late appointments
Lack of clinic appointments .
Appointments not attended or cancelled by carers.
- Improvement in IHA timescales will continue to be a key priority for 2017-18. So far actions include meetings with the local authority to embed and streamline the process of consents being forwarded to LAC Health Team in a timely manner. In addition medical practitioners have tried to offer flexibility around clinic dates to reduce the number of children seen for IHAs just outside of timescale though this is limited by capacity issues. The effectiveness of these actions will be continuously reviewed and monitored throughout 2017-18

Review Health Assessments

- A total of 286 RHA's were completed 2016-2017
85% of these were completed within 28 days of their due date, many of which were completed earlier.

Leaving Care

- The LAC Health Team are commissioned to undertake statutory health assessments for Looked after Children up to their 18th birthday and to support care leavers 18+ to access the appropriate health services they require. A leaving care health consultation is undertaken by the Named

or Specialist Nurse LAC, during the final year (age 17-18). This may be achieved at the time of the final statutory health assessment or may be done as a separate contact closer to their 18th birthday if there are additional needs for services and support.

- The document provided is a Leaving Care Health Passport, which has been developed with young people involved in the consultation phase. Amendments have been made; there are many more links on health promotion and advice on access to health services, previous health and immunisation history are included.
- Leaving Care Health Passports were provided to 37 of the 39 (94.87%) young people recorded as leaving care. This is an improvement from 68.7% in the previous year. The two missed opportunities were with those who turned 18 earlier in the year.
- Support has been given to personal advisors from the Local Authority to develop their skills on health needs and services.
- A Drop In for Care Leavers has been tried and the LAC Health Team have supported this.

Statistical Returns

- The team have achieved good returns as reported by the Local Authority in their SSDA 903 returns to Central Government. The Performance Indicators for health were maintained at a level that exceeds the national average and are improved from the previous year.

	Provisional 31.3.17	31/03/16	31/03/15	31/03/2014	31/03/13
Health Assessments	98.8%	99.1%	96.6%	95.7%	96.98%
Dental Appointments	94.7%	90.7%	94.4%	87.9%	92.08%
Immunisations	99.2%	96.9%	94.8%	96.1%	92.83%

Children and Young Peoples Service (CYPS)

- Northumberland, Tyne & Wear NHS Foundation Trust Children and Young Peoples services (CYPS) provide services for children and young people in Gateshead and Newcastle who present with mental health difficulties.
The LAC Health team have no data from the service and would expect that this will be available within the CYPS own Annual Report.
During the year a Consultation Clinic has been commenced and takes place twice a month. Professionals can refer to this service to discuss cases.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

- 6 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children were seen for Initial Health Assessments in Gateshead during 2017. The LAC Health Team used tools developed by other local authorities (eg Kent) more familiar with the needs of this group. Careful consideration was given to their individual needs including ensuring the use of interpreters that they felt comfortable with and offering the option of a male doctor wherever possible. These appointments included discussion around screening for blood borne viruses and considering the specific mental health needs of those who have fled violence and persecution or who may have experienced abuse and harm on their journey to the UK.

Safeguarding

- The LAC Health Team continue to recognise that the Looked After population are more vulnerable to exploitation and some other forms of abuse and harm. They are therefore not only involved in training to ensure awareness of this within the wider health community but also participate in reviews of Serious Incidents which have involved Looked After Children to see if learning can be identified. The Specialist / Named Nurse LAC attends the LSCB Missing Sexually Exploited and Trafficked (MSET) subgroup to consider individual cases where Looked After Children may be vulnerable and attend Gateshead NHS Foundation Trust Safeguarding Committee

Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

- A significant number of children and young people who are Looked After have been diagnosed with FAS/FASD in recent years. There is a planned review of this work and paediatric services in Gateshead remain involved in the development of a regional approach to the assessment of children with possible FASD. This work remains a long-term objective and is important both for the Looked After population but also the wider population of Gateshead.

Drug & Alcohol Services

- Drug and Alcohol Services for children and young people in Gateshead is provided by the PLATFORM service.
There were 18 referrals from 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017. The referral sources were: A&E – 1, Social Services – 6, School – 3, Self - 1, YOT – 7.
The first substance of choice was: Alcohol - 3, Cannabis - 8, Cocaine - 1, MDMA - 1, Nicotine - 3, NPS (predominately Cannabis) - 1, Paracetamol - 1.

Sexual Health Services

- Young people are encouraged to access generic sexual health services in their placement area as required. Those young people identified as in

need of specialist intervention are assessed on an individual basis and professionals work together to ensure that their identified needs are met.

There were a total of 3 young people who had pregnancies during the year. 2 had their babies during the reporting period and one is due to have her baby after the reporting period. 100% have engaged with Family Nurse Partnership.

- Information provided by Anne Carey, Specialist Nurse Sexual Health, South Tyneside Foundation Trust.
There were 68 LAC contacts.
These contacts included contraception, pregnancy testing and STI screening.

Adoption

- The Designated Doctor LAC is the Medical Advisor to the adoption agency. Since the Designated Doctor LAC role became vacant in December 2016 this statutory element of the role has been covered by other community paediatricians with appropriate experience. This has involved:
 - The Medical Advisor reviewing a total of 40 adult medicals with advice being provided to the agency and the panel
 - Completing adoption medicals for children for whom a plan of adoption has been made. 42 adoption medicals (including reviews) were undertaken during the year.
 - Close working with social workers and members of the adoption team to ensure that historical medical information is collated, the child's family and genetic information considered, and that all the child's health and development needs are identified and shared openly with the prospective adopters. This entails meeting with adopters face to face and providing them with a comprehensive medical report.
 - Sitting on the adoption panel as an advisor and as an independent panel member.
 - Actively considering the implications of Regionalisation of Adoption Services and the ongoing major procedural and legislative changes in adoption which continue to impact upon the Medical Advisor role.
- The Adoption Panel considered 26 matches of children with prospective adopters during 2016/17 which is similar to the previous year number of 27. The Medical Advisor met 17 prospective adopters for 19 children to share all available health information and a detailed health report was prepared for the adopters to share with the new primary health care worker for the child.
- In total during 2016 / 2017 23 children were adopted which is similar to the previous year (24).
- 24 new families were assessed and approved for adoption by the adoption panel, an increase from 13 the previous year.

Fostering

- The Designated Doctor LAC attended some Foster Panels as Panel Advisor / independent panel member and provided medical advice the other panels.
The Named Nurse has attended some of the other panels as an independent panel member.
- There has been a fall in the number of adult medicals requiring medical advice in 2016/17 (132 – compared to 146 in 2015\16). The Designated Doctor LAC attended 10 foster Panels and supplied advice to 2.
- Due to limited capacity within the service and that there is not a statutory role for the Designated Doctor or other member of the LAC Health Team to attend Foster Panel it has been decided within the team that this service cannot be provided in the future. The paediatrician who is currently covering the role of the Medical Advisor will continue to provide health advice for adult medicals and can be consulted directly on an individual basis to provide more detailed advice if that is required. This can be reviewed once the role of Designated Doctor LAC is recruited to.

Training

- Training has been offered to residential and foster carers about the health needs of Looked after Children.
- The Designated Doctor LAC delivered training regarding Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) prior to her retirement to a range of audiences including Paediatricians, Midwives, Nurses, GPs, CYPS, Community Health Workers, a range of educational professionals, probation workers, Social Workers and Barnardos staff. She facilitated this both through targeted work and LSCB training.
- Looked after children's health needs & issues are included in Level 3 safeguarding training to GPs, A&E obstetric and paediatric staff
Level 2 safeguarding training delivered in Gateshead NHS Foundation Trust.
- Level 3 Safeguarding training :
'Looked After Children –Health Professionals Role' continues to be delivered to community health staff and doctors who have or may have involvement with this client group by South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust. The training on Quality Health Assessments for LAC is delivered as part of this course for those carrying out health assessments from South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust.

Inspection

- Between 6 February 2017 to 10 February 2017, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) conducted a joint inspection of the local area of Gateshead to judge the effectiveness of the area in

implementing the disability and special educational needs reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014.

As part of the inspection the Designated Doctor for Safeguarding, Designated Nurse LAC, Named Nurse LAC and Specialist Nurse LAC met with an inspector as a focus group.

- Overall, inspectors identified that Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Gateshead are safe and achieve good outcomes. It was also identified that all agencies worked well together to meet the needs of children with SEND. Some areas for further development were suggested. Though none of these were specific LAC, the LAC Health Team will contribute to the multi- agency improvement plan.

Team Developments

- The commitment from the Clinical Commissioning group to fund additional resources in the team has been progressed. A full time Specialist Nurse Looked After Children has been in post since June 2016. The Designated Nurse LAC post in the team was transferred to Newcastle Gateshead Clinical Commissioning Group and that post was replaced with a full time Named Nurse Looked After Children. The change in structure and roles is supported by the guidance in the 'Looked After Children, Knowledge, skills and competence of health care staff. Intercollegiate Role Framework' (RCN & RCPCH 2015)
- A new leaflet for young people has been produced with LAC & YP involvement which includes contact details for the LAC Health Team and information about health assessments.
- The increased staffing resource has supported the development of a database within the team.
- The coverage of Leaving Care Health Passports has improved. The support to care leavers has been improved by improving the coverage of Leaving Care Health Passports, attendance at the Transitions Meeting, introduction of a RAG rating and support to the Leaving Care Team.
- The LAC nurses are now completing the majority of review health assessments on the children and young people who are placed out of the area, attending education out of area or not in education but are still placed within the region. The majority of these have been completed within timescale.
- The LAC nurses attend the majority of Strategy Meetings they receive an invite to.
- The team have worked with the local authority to improve the SDQ and consent process.

- The provisional statistics for the end of year have remained high. The dental and immunisation percentages have improved from previous years.

Priority action for 2017 -2018

- Continue a programme of audit strengthened and influenced by the Designated Nurse LAC in the CCG.
- Embed RAG rating for young people age 15 –17 years in relation to health needs to support their transition to leaving care. To monitor the progress of this.
- Continue to develop work supporting the more vulnerable care leavers, including health involvement at Health Transitions Meeting.
- Contribute to the further development of the regional pathway for the diagnosis of children with FAS/FASD Review of the work that has already happened in Gateshead will feed into this process.
- Continue to work closely with the Local Authority to improve the overall timeframes for Initial Health Assessments.
- Recruitment to the post of Designated Doctor LAC is a key priority for the coming year. In the interim arrangements are in place to cover the vital elements of this role.
- To monitor the updated process for SDQs and to use the score as part of the health assessment.
- Obtain feedback from children and young people regarding health assessments, to ensure the voice of the child is heard.
- Provide Level 3 LAC training to health professionals at Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust.
- The timeliness of consents and initial health assessments will be reviewed continuously throughout 2017-18.
- LAC Health Team will provide support to drop in sessions for care leavers once this is arranged by the local authority

Recommendations

That the committee notes the contents of the report and the priority actions for 2017/18

References

Dept. Children School & Families (DH / DfE) 2015 Statutory Guidance –Promoting the Health & Emotional Well-being of Looked After Children

Royal College of Nurses & Royal College of Paediatrics & Child Health (RCN & RCPCH) 2015 Looked After Children, Knowledge, skills and competence of health care staff. Intercollegiate Role Framework.

Contact

Jean Hubble

Named Nurse - Looked After Children & Young People, Gateshead.

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Footnote from Designated Nurse Looked After Children

The role of Designated Nurse for Looked After Children now sits within Newcastle Gateshead Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and as such covers both areas. This ensures that the CCG is supported in meeting its statutory requirements for looked after children.

The CCG has developed a Looked After Children's Strategy 2017-2020 containing outcomes aligned to national and local drivers with a focus on supporting provider services in strengthening processes and improving the quality of services to looked after children. The Designated Nurse is also developing a new resource for General Practitioners and staff working in primary care to support and enhance their understanding of statutory requirements and needs of looked after children and care leavers.

The CCG provided additional funding to enable an increase in both the nursing and administration resource within the LAC health team, this was achieved April – June 2016.

The CCG seeks assurance from the health teams it commissions for looked after children on meeting the statutory requirements and relating to the quality agenda and developments this requires.

The CCG is aware that recruitment to the post of Designated Doctor LAC has been challenging. In this interim period the CCG has been assured that the key components of the job have been met from paediatric staff in the provider organisation and that there is an ongoing recruitment strategy in place.

Linda Hubbucks

Designated Nurse Looked After Children

Newcastle Gateshead Clinical Commissioning Group

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

REPORT OF: Caroline O'Neill, Strategic Director Care, Wellbeing and Learning

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a summary of recent work by the Virtual School.

Purpose of Report

1. To update the Committee and provide a progress report on the work of the Virtual School.

Background

2. Attached to this summary is the annual report 2016/17 of the Virtual School. The report covers service provision and activities undertaken to support the education of looked after children. It includes detailed information on:
 - Achievement data
 - Personal Education Plans
 - Support from Education Psychology
 - Pathways to Work for LAC
3. Officers will make a brief presentation to the Committee, drawing attention to some of the main features of the report.

Recommendations

5. The Corporate Parenting OSC is asked to:
 - Consider and comment on the attached annual report.

CONTACT: Ann Muxworthy, Jean Thompson

EXT: 8609

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VIRTUAL SCHOOL (REALAC)

Report to Corporate Parenting
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

January 2018



Contents

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1. LAC School Population

The following tables provide an overview of the numbers of Gateshead LAC across a number of key stages, school and educational settings, LAC ethnicity and out of borough (OOB) data where this has been available.

LAC Numbers in and out of Borough per statutory age

Current Year Group	Jul-15	Jul-16	Jul-17
Year 11	45	35	34
Year10	32	26	23
Year 9	24	23	29
Year 8	19	25	19
Year 7	22	12	27
Year6	9	24	23
Year 5	19	20	18
Year 4	22	14	28
Year 3	14	24	27
Year 2	18	20	15
Year 1	16	17	12
Reception	15	4	6
Total	256	244	261

The largest number of LAC within the secondary sector is in Year 11 with 34 LAC in 2017. LAC at Key Stage 4 are the most challenging of all LAC year groups in terms of behaviour and the risk of fixed term and permanent exclusion. The challenges and demands this places, and continues to place, on service delivery is significant. Last year's Year 11 cohort dominated a substantial amount of service resource due to the complexity of need and corresponding support that was required in response to issues relating to behaviour, alternative provision and potential exclusion.

Years 7, 9 and 11 LAC cohorts are large in number which is significant due to the critical stage this age range represents in the educational pathway. Year 7 are settling into secondary education in more complex large schools. LAC in Year 9 will be making important decisions about curriculum choices which will impact upon their future, those in Year 10 will be embarking upon GCSE study and Year 11 LAC will be preparing for final exams.

In primary larger numbers are coming through in years 3 and 4 than previous years. While most are settled in their schools there has been more involvement with some individual pupils in year 4 who are having difficulties in school with behaviour.

2. LAC Gateshead Secondary Schools			
School	Gateshead LAC	LAC – attending Gateshead schools from other Local Authorities	Total No Of LAC Gateshead & Other Local Authorities
Cardinal Hume	5	2	7
Thorp	7	3	10
Emmanuel College	7	0	7
Heworth	11	0	11
Joseph Swan	12	1	13
Kingsmeadow	8	2	10
Lord Lawson	8	0	8
St Thomas More	10	5	15
Thomas Hepburn	4	0	4
Whickham	5	5	10
Total	77	18	95

(Figures taken from REALAC, EMIS and Care First July 2017)

Overall the number of Gateshead LAC, including LAC from other Local Authorities attending Gateshead secondary schools, increased slightly since the beginning of the 2016-17 academic year from 94 to 95.

The school with the largest total of Looked after Children combined (Gateshead and non Gateshead) is St Thomas More with 16 whilst the lowest is Thomas Hepburn which has 4.)

REALAC has a role in supporting other Local Authority LAC who attend Gateshead schools. There was a slight drop in the number of non Gateshead LAC attending Gateshead schools in 2016-17 with the figure at 18 compared to 20 in 2015-16. However, some pupils from other local authorities can impact on REALAC when complex pupils attend Gateshead schools or other Local authorities seek places in our good and outstanding schools.

The figures for OOB may not always be totally accurate as we do not always get informed about OOB LAC attending Gateshead schools.

3. LAC Educated out of Borough

Out of borough	Nos of LAC
Primary	16
Secondary	27
Special	18
Total	61

(Figures taken from REALAC July 2017)

There is a significant number of Gateshead LAC being educated out of borough, (23% of the total Gateshead LAC population). This has necessitated an increased need to attend PEP meetings beyond Gateshead to ensure Pupil Education Plans are completed.

LAC Educated out of Borough across all Key stages

Key Stage	Total
Early Years (EY, N & R)	1
Key Stage 1 (Year 1 & 2)	4
Key Stage 2 (Year 3, 4, 5 & 6)	17
Key Stage 3 (Year 7, 8 & 9)	22
Key Stage 4 (Year 10 & 11)	14
Key Stage 5 (Year 12 & 13 HE)	3
Total	61

Some pupils are beyond the local region, in London, Cumbria, Scotland and other areas of the country.

LAC Educated out of Borough according to setting

Number of out of borough Educational Settings	
Primary	8
Primary Special	8
Secondary (including middle)	20
Secondary Special	12
Total	48

(Figures taken from REALAC July 2017)

The 61 Gateshead LAC educated out of borough is spread across 48 settings, of which 42% are special school places.

4. Special Educational Needs (SEN) and LAC

The following tables provide data relating to LAC with SEN, across a number of key stages and year groups.

Year	Single Plan	SEN Support
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Reception	1	0
1	2	4
2	1	6
3	11	3
4	4	8
5	3	7
6	7	5
7	8	9
8	10	6
9	2	7
10	16	8
11	16	4
Total	81	67

There has been a significant increase in those pupils identified as SEND LAC with Education Health Care plans or statements from 53 last year to 81 this year. This impacts on LA services and the work of REALAC as statutory processes have to be supported to ensure appropriate provision is in place.

Breakdown of LAC with Single Plan by Category

Category	Number of LAC
Attention Control Difficulties (SEMH)	8
Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	8
Disruptive & Disturbing Behaviour (SEMH)	*37
Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD)	8
Physical Disability (PD)	4
Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD)	8
Speech, Language & Comm Needs (SLCN)	6
Visual Impairment (VI)	2

(Figures at July 2017)

* The table above shows the SEND category breakdown for Looked after Children with a Single Plan, the biggest cohort is children who come under the category of Disruptive & Disturbing Behaviour of which there are 37.

Gateshead LAC Educated out of Borough including SEN

Key Stage	Out of Borough LAC <u>WITHOUT</u> Statement	Out of Borough LAC <u>WITH</u> Single Plan/SEN Support	Total
Early Years (EY, N & R)	1	0	1
Key Stage 1 (Year 1 & 2)	3	1	4
Key Stage 2 (Year 3, 4, 5 & 6)	12	5	17
Key Stage 3 (Year 7, 8 & 9)	10	12	22
Key Stage 4 (Year 10 & 11)	3	11	14
Key Stage 5 (Year 12 & 13 HE)	3	0	3
Total	32	29	61

(Figures at July 2017)

48% of Gateshead LAC educated out of borough have a Single Plan/SEN. It is expected that this figure would be high as many LAC are educated out of authority where specialist placements have been identified to suit their needs.

5. LAC School Attendance

Attendance figures are drawn down to the Virtual school on a termly basis from EMIS and via school information requests. LAC who achieve 100% attendance are rewarded with a certificate and a voucher from REALAC. Where low attendance is identified as an emerging issue this is picked up in the PEP or reported by social workers and this is then followed up by the REALAC team.

As there has been a problem with the links between EMIS and the schools we are unable to give yearly attendance figures for 2016/17.

At present we can confirm that 30 Looked after Children have achieved 100% Attendance for 2016/17.

6. Pupil Premium Plus Grant 2016-17

Following discussions with the Children and Young People Portfolio meeting and Schools Forum, the following information was prepared for schools. This is to inform them of the arrangements for the distribution of the Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) for Looked After Children (LAC) for financial year 2016-17 and the role of your school in ensuring that payments are received by school for each individual LAC entitled to the funding.

In March/April 2017, each school (maintained and non-maintained but not private schools) will receive a payment broken down as follows:

£300 paid for each term.

£500 paid based on 2 completed Personal Education Plans over a 12 month period (statutory requirement) received into the REALAC/Virtual School

£500 to be retained by Realac/Virtual School to be used for additional support to both Individual Looked after Children and their schools

It is expected that schools will use this funding to:-

- directly support the achievement and attainment of LAC
- close the attainment and progress gap between LAC and their peers
- support underlying issues and interventions for LAC who are at risk of exclusion, non- attendance and other issues that may affect learning

All social workers and designated teachers must follow the Gateshead PEP processes in ensuring each LAC has an up to date quality PEP. REALAC will monitor and compile an accurate list of qualifying schools for Finance in accordance with the above expectations.

7. Private Tuition

Within the period September 2016 - July 2017 a total of 26 Looked after Children received one to one private tuition totaling 296 sessions overall. The majority of these sessions were through a national company called Fleet Tutors. We have also now started to use a local company called Vision for Education and arranged sessions through other Virtual Schools for some of our children placed Out of Borough.

The numbers receiving tuition are far higher than in previous years, we have been able to fund this by using some of the Pupil Premium money that we retain in REALAC.

The tutoring support offered during this period was in English and Maths and targeted mainly at Years 10 and 11 LAC to support those who were about to take their examinations, we also were able to offer some sessions to Year's 12 & 13 for students who were resitting their examinations.

8. Outcomes

8.1 Key Stage 1

There were 15 LAC pupils in Year 2. Below is a table showing results of their end of year assessments.

Number Achieving Expected Level	12	12	13	12
Number in Cohort	15	15	15	15
% Achieving Expected Level				
Writing	80			
Reading		80		
Maths			87	
Reading, Writing & Maths				80

The Cohort was 15 in 2016-17 which is less than 2015-16 when it was 21. 2 Children were SEN – 13% of the cohort.

12 out of 15 children gained the expected level in writing
 12 out of 15 children gained the expected level in reading
 13 out of 15 children gained the expected level in maths
 12 out of 15 children gained the expected level in the combined Reading, Writing and Maths.

The table below shows a comparison between Looked after Children Results at Key Stage 1 for 2016-17 and 2015-16.

% Achieving Expected Level	2015-2016	2016-2017
Writing	52%	80%
Reading	57%	80%
Maths	57%	87%
Reading, Writing & Maths	48%	80%

Reading - 80% achieved the expected level in 2016-17 compared to 57% in 2015-16, a rise of 23%.

Writing – 80% achieved the expected level in 2016-17 compared to 52% in 2015-16, a rise of 28%.

Maths – 87% achieved the expected level in 2016-17 compared to 57% in 2015-16, a rise of 30%.

Reading, Writing and Maths combined – 80% achieved the expected level in 2016-17 compared to 48% in 2015-16, a rise of 32%.

The results for Gateshead Looked after Children in 2016-17 have risen quite considerably considering the greater challenges to the curriculum and significantly improved on 2015-16 in some areas by as much as 32%

8.2 Key Stage 2

The Gateshead Year 6 Cohort was 20 pupils of which 12 were SEND. Below is a table showing results of their SATs tests and a comparison with All of Gateshead and Nationally.

Key Stage 2 SATS Results			
% Achieving Expected Level	LAC	All Gateshead	National
Writing	60%	81%	76%
Reading	40%	76%	71%
Maths	40%	79%	75%
Writing, Reading and Maths	30%	67%	61%
Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling	60%	81%	77%

This is the second year for the new SATS tests which are marked differently to previous years where a Level 4 was seen as making Expected Level, they are now marked out of 120. Anyone achieving a score of 100 or above is classed as being at the Expected standard, 99 or below is classed as not meeting Expected standard. The children sat a series of tests for each subject to gain their score, the exception to that is in Writing where it is graded through Teacher Assessments.

The Cohort was 20 in 2016-17 this is very similar to 2015-16 when it was 21.

12 Children were SEN – 60% of the cohort. 8 of the 20 pupils, therefore, would be expected to get the expected standard. In writing and grammar, punctuation and spelling 4 more pupils gained the standard than was expected.

12 children gained the expected level in writing
 8 children gained the expected level in reading
 8 children gained the expected level in maths
 12 children gained the expected level in Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling
 6 children gained the expected level in Writing, Reading and Maths

Gateshead schools results were higher than the National Average in all subjects. Gateshead Looked after Children were below the National Average which was to be Expected because of the high percentage of SEN children in the cohort. Please note this is not the National Average for LAC pupils but for all pupils nationally.

There is currently no comparison of LAC pupils nationally on performance until March 2018. Writing and grammar, punctuation and spelling though below the national average for all pupils is good performance considering 60% were SEND.

The table below shows a comparison between the SATs results for 2016-17 and 2015-16 for Gateshead Looked after Children which are the only two years that the new format for testing has taken place.

Key Stage 2 Looked after Children SATS Results		
% Achieving Expected Level	2016	2017
Writing	71%	60%
Reading	62%	40%
Maths	43%	40%
Writing, Reading and Maths	29%	30%
Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling - GPS	62%	60%

60% of Children were SEN in 2016-17 compared to 2015-16 when it was only 38%. Writing, Reading and Maths - 30% achieved the Expected level in 2016-17 compared to 29% in 2015-16. There was no significant difference in the percentage of LAC from 2015-16 in maths despite high SEND. Reading and writing were lower because of the high literacy difficulties and high SEND.

8.3. Key Stage 4

Gateshead's Looked after Children Year 11 Cohort was 36 Children, below is a table showing Provisional Results for their GCSE/Equivalent Results.

36 Looked after Children	No of Children	Percentage
5 A*-C	11	31
5 A* - G	18	50
5A*-C inc M&E	5	14
1 A*-G	27	75
SEN	20	56

This year's GCSE's in English Language, English Literature and Mathematics come under the new Grading system, these subjects are marked by a number system between 9 and 1, 9 would be the equivalent of a A* while 1 would be the equivalent of a G. 4 is the classed as a C which is seen as a standard pass. These examinations are generally seen as of a Higher Level and harder to attain the standard pass or above.

56% of the Cohort were SEN

27 Looked after Children achieved 1 x GCSE Passes at Grade G or above.

18 Looked after Children achieved 5 x GCSE Passes at Grade G or above.

11 Looked after Children achieved 5 x GCSE Passes at Grade C or above.

5 Looked after Children achieved 5 x GCSE Passes at Grade C or above including English & Maths.

Of the 36 pupils 40% were in special schools or on alternative programmes because of behaviour.

14% of the cohort attend PRU's as a result of being at risk of permanent exclusion.

17% of the cohort attend Special Schools and were not expected to make 5A*-C because of SEN needs.

9% of pupils were on roll in schools but on alternative programmes to prevent permanent exclusion.

Some of these have gained entry level qualifications though not GCSE grade C.

The table below gives a comparison with the results from 2015/16

	2015/16 Cohort (37)	Percentage	2016/17 Cohort (36)	Percentage
5 A*-C	8	22	11	31
5 A* - G	25	68	18	50
5A*-C inc M&E	7	19	5	14
1 A*-G	32	86	27	75
SEN	21	57	20	26

The cohort for this year had a slightly lower ratio of SEN children decreasing from 57% in 2016 to 56% in 2017. Results were variable when compared to 2015-16 though improvements in 5 A*-C. It should be noted that the comparison with last year's figures might not give a true reflection of how good or bad this year's cohort has done, it is generally accepted that the new exams in the English subjects and Mathematics are of a higher standard than previous years.

All figures are collated from information received directly from the schools. This is to be used only as a guide, official figures will not be available until end of 2017. National Looked after Children figures will not be published until March 2018.

9. Letterbox

The Letterbox Club Programme aims to inspire a love of reading and engagement with Numeracy in children who are looked after. The packs include a variety of books, maths games and stationary that are sent out in colourful packaging on a monthly basis (This is over a period of 6 months). Letterbox Club also provide REALAC with a special pack during the Christmas period that we send to the children as an additional extra.

This year's cohort includes 53 children that range from Nursey up to Year 6. The cohort is divided up into 5 different packs depending on age, for instance: - Purple (Nursey & Reception), Orange (Year 1 & 2), Blue (Year 3 & 4), Red (Year 5 & 6) & Yellow for our children who have a Special Educational Need. For many children, it's the first time they have had a letter or a parcel through the post and for some it's the first time they have had books of their own.

We have had positive feedback from our evaluation forms from both Foster Carers and participating LAC. Some of the examples below illustrate this well.

How did your child react to receiving the letterbox club parcels? (Foster Carer)

One foster carer quoted "Very excited when each parcel arrived in the post. Could not wait for the next one to be delivered!"

What was the best thing about Letterbox Club? (Child)

One of our LAC said "Opening and not expecting what was in it!"

Do you have any feedback about Letterbox Club? (Foster Carer)

"Excellent! Each and every parcel. My child took some of his books and counting games to school to play with, he will use the items for years to come, thank you!"

This feedback shows how the Letterbox Club provides such a positive impact not only on the children's reading, but other aspects of their education & valuable skills that can be transferred into their everyday life. This is a yearly process that will hopefully continue to make encouraging influence to other LAC children who become involved with Letterbox Club.

10. Teaching

The REALAC teacher has provided a variety of one to one support to thirteen LAC (1 early years, 8 primary, 5 secondary) during the period September 2016-July 2017.

The teacher has worked with pupils who have SEN and who have gaps in their learning as result of earlier adverse experiences. She has liaised with Speech and Language specialists and Educational Psychologists in the support of these young people.

For example she has helped one pupil address gaps in Maths and English, following systematic schemes. She provided 1:1 support for pupils preparing for KS2 SATs.

She has supported secondary age young people, for example helping a young woman to re-engage with education and working with a young man on an intensive literacy programme. Another important aspect of her work has been in preparation for GCSEs.

11. Support worker

Tony Nicholson commenced with the team fulltime in September 2017, having previously undertaken a dual role, between REALAC and The Behaviour Support Service. Tony has extensive experience of multi-disciplinary working, within the Primary and Secondary setting, working within inclusion and safeguarding. This role is developing within REALAC, offering our young people the opportunity of a mentor and advocacy person, to assist with issues of an educational or personal nature. He offers support in schools, aimed where possible at early intervention and prevention, and is working with those at risk of exclusion or simply in the need of motivation. His current caseload includes some of our more challenging pupils who are presenting behavioural problems and challenges within schools.

12. Education Psychologist (EP)

This post is for one day a week. The role this year has focused around two key project areas. The first involves a therapeutic group intervention based on theraplay principles. Theraplay is an approach for enhancing self-esteem, trust in others and joyful engagement. It is based on the natural patterns of healthy interaction between parent and child. It is personal, physical and fun and draws upon attachment theory, inter-subjectivity, brain research and the importance of play. The EP attended course lead by the Theraplay Institute

during summer term 2016 and since then has run groups in a number of schools in Gateshead alongside school based staff members.

The schools have been chosen based on the identified needs of key looked after children who attend. The evaluation data from the children involved has been overwhelmingly positive as has the response from school staff who have been involved.

In order to further develop capacity within Gateshead for this type of work we are in the process of organising a training event at The Dryden Centre, run by The Theraplay Institute. A future plan is to invite staff from schools where the numbers of looked after children are historically high. There is also plan to liaise with social care staff to explore further opportunities for delivering the intervention.

The second key project area is aimed at improving transition to a new school. It has involved the production of a resilience based checklist which was developed through a joint piece of work between the REALAC EP and a trainee Educational Psychologist. The checklist is based on research about what works in supporting the resilience of looked after children. During summer term 2017, all Year 6 teachers were visited where the EPs worked with them to complete the checklist for each Year 6 looked after young person. Key areas of strength and areas for development were identified alongside 3 key areas of focus to support a successful transition. This document was then forwarded to the secondary Designated Teachers to support the transition process and we requested that the checklist should be referred to at the initial Year 7 PEP meeting held during autumn term 2017. Social workers are supporting this initiative in ensuring that the document is used within the PEP meetings. Following the first, round PEPs schools will be contacted for their feedback about the document. The aim is that the document will become part of the transition programme for all Year 6 looked after children moving to secondary education.

Additionally the EP role involves liaison with the team around SEND issues; providing a bridge to the EP service; individual casework and training for school staff and foster carers.

13. Post 16 Progression, Higher Education & NEET

The following table provides a snapshot of the destinations of students progressing into year 12, 13 and post y13 (as of November).

LAC Progression Routes 2015 - 17

Cohorts	2015 cohort (provisional data from Connexions/REALAC as of 22/09/15)			2016 Cohort (provisional data as of 01/11/16)			2017 Cohort (provisional data as of 16/11/17)		
	Y12 (46)	Y13 (34)	Y14 (19)	Y12 (36)	Y13 (46)	Y14 (34)	Y12 (33)	Y13 (38)	Y14 (47)
6th form	11	7		8	12	1	9	5	3
College	14	12	2	16	11	8	18	17	10
Study Programme/ Traineeship	7	5	1	3	2		1	4	
Apprenticeship	3	2	1	6	3		1	5	1
NEET	7	5	6	2	11	14	3	4	13
University	n/a	n/a	6	n/a	n/a	2	n/a	n/a	5
Princes Trust/personal Development Programme	3			1	1	1	1		2
Work (eg without accredited training or part time)		1			4	4	0	2	10 (1 pt)
Not available	1 health concerns	1 teenage parent	2 Teenage parents		1 teenage parent	3 (2 teenage parent + 1 FT SEN care home)	0	1 teenage parent	2: 1: residential care/health concerns, 1: full time parent
Other		1 custody	1 custody		1 custody	1 custody	0		1 custody

13.1 NEET

A joint monthly meeting with Social Care and Connexions has continued to identify and plan work with young people who are NEET or who are at risk of becoming NEET. External partners have been brought into this group to work with NEET young people. These include agencies who can offer intensive support to the young people to help challenge/support some of the reasons why they are NEET.

13.2 Work Experience

Background

The Pathways2Work (P2W) project aims to support Looked After Young People aged 15 - 18 in gaining work experience during their school/college holidays within a real working environment. This opportunity is also open to students who require work experience for entry onto university courses. A young person can work for a period of one day to several weeks. They are supported to help identify the correct type of placement suitable to their needs.

The P2W Co-ordinator works in partnership with Social Care and foster carers to help give all interested young people access to quality work experience and help to prepare for the experience. They are financially supported via a payment of £10 a day. The young person is expected to take responsibility for the completion of their timesheet, diary and feedback sheet to help them reflect on their time there and recognise the skills employer's look for.

Pathways2Work Participation (April 2014- Oct16)

Half Term	No of participants 2015	Total days 2015	No of participants 2016	Total days 2016	No of Participants 2017	Total days 2017
February	7	27	7	25	4	11.5
Easter	3	18	4	27	8	33
May/June	1	3	3	12	5	14
Summer	14	90	14	117	12	103
October	8	38	5	17	10*	33.5
Total	33	176	33	198	39	195
Weekly work experience to support education	1	9	1 organised to start Nov 16		1	0 – 2 placements were organized, but the students DNA
Weekly work experience to support application to uni					1	4 days

Pathways2Work Applied, but did not happen (Feb 2017 – Oct 17)

February	12	5 – Young Person changed their mind (eg due to work commitments, going on a course) 3 - Decided to not go ahead 1 – cancelled due to a change in the young person's circumstances 3 – Unable to go ahead as the identified employer was not able to accommodate eg due to staff shortage/sickness
Easter	2	1 – Carer cancelled due to family commitments 1 – Young person did not attend

May	2	1 – Carer cancelled due to family commitments 1 – care changed their mind as concerned about how the young person would be with a new employer
Summer	7	1 – cancelled due to work commitments/illness 1 – young person changed their mind about the vocational area 3 – Got a job/traineeship 1 – employer cancelled, no longer able to offer the placement 1 – signposted to summer activities as felt this was more suitable to their needs than work experience
October	2	1 – was a late application and unable to get a place in time 1 – young person cancelled as they got a place on the NCS course * - the young person requested a work placement within the performing arts industry. Secured a meeting with the Sage, who discussed/advised her on careers within the industry

Types of Placement

In 2016, examples of placements included: Audio Engineering, Sport, Retail, Equine, Legal, Building Control, Child Care, Dog Walking, Joinery, Elderly Care, Facilities Management, Special Olympics (supporting people with learning disabilities) ICT. Teaching, Catering, Active Kidz, Customer Services/Admin, Hospitality, Outdoor Activities, Painting & Decorating, Motor Vehicle, Accountancy, Web Design and Hairdressing/Beauty,

Evaluation and Feedback

- All students, who returned their feedback, said that the experience had been helpful. One marked the experience (scored out of 5) as being 5++
- 1 student has done 4 weeks of work experience with the same employer. They have received excellent feedback from the employer who have said that they will keep them in mind when they take on apprentices next year
- 1 has been offered future volunteer opportunities with the company

Feedback comments

Examples of replies to the question “What have you enjoyed” or any other comments

- Working with such welcoming people
- The happiness, the atmosphere, how kind and thoughtful the staff are
- That it is a very funny and helpful experience as I want to work for them
- Enjoyed everything
- Learning about electrics
- Working around and with a joiner

Examples of replies to the question “What skills have you improved” or “What have you learnt”

- Observation
- Having confidence, carrying a number of plates at a time...
- Organisation, efficiency and confidence
- Communication, punctuality
- To be more organised, complete tasks against the clock, to be more confident when talking to people
- Listening/Numeracy/Literacy

- Spotting problems

Employer's comments – these are shared with the young person and social workers.

- ...he seemed very keen and eager to learn, the joiners he worked with had nothing but positive comments saying R was a pleasure to work with
- J was a pleasure to have working with us. He was keen to learn and enthusiastic. J worked hard at all tasks presented to him without any fuss. J particularly seemed to enjoy the expedition where he fitted in with the staff team fantastically and was an asset to the team. J used his time wisely learning from the expedition for his own Duke of Edinburgh award... He has been given volunteer forms to fill out, so he can take up further opportunities with W if he would like to.
- Everyone was very impressed with K. He had a great attitude and was a pleasure to have in the office
- Very nice lad to work with, no problem followed all H&S rules
- Keep up the enthusiasm and willingness to learn and you will do fine.
- ...she worked really well with the children...well done. She was a pleasure to have here

13.3 Choices

The numbers of LAC progressing to higher education remains very low. It is most likely that some LAC engage with HE at a later stage but there are no figures at present to capture this. REALAC continue to financially support students in their first year at university, when they receive an HE bursary of £2,000.

REALAC also continues to work with the North East Raising Aspirations Partnership, to try to improve young people's knowledge and experience of university. This is via their Choices programme, which has 2 strands: 'Choices together' aimed at year 10 and 11 and their themed Foster Family Fun Days aimed at year 8 and 9's but younger siblings can attend.

- Each of the Year 10/11 sessions had an academic taster combined with a specific area of university eg 'Student Finance', Student Accommodation'. There was also a session specifically for Foster Carers, which aimed to increase their awareness of HE and the support available for looked after young people. The sessions are ran by student reps, many of whom were previously looked after children, which helps as the participants can relate to the reps' life story and personal situation.
- The year 8 & 9 sessions were 2 Foster Family Fun Days, timed around Easter and Halloween. The theme of these being Eggcellent Engineering and Zombie Apocalypse Part III. The emphasis was on STEM and creative subjects, giving the students experience of building their own rocket, designing their own alien and learning about the science behind surviving and thriving in different environments.

Choices LAC Participation

Choices Programme	Number of participants (who attended at least 1 session) sept 2014/aug 15	Number of participants who attended at least 1 session 2016	Number of participants who attended at least 1 session 2017

Year 7,8 & 9 (plus siblings)	2	3	5
Year 10&11	5	5	3
Total	7	8	8

Following the last data analysis of PEPs which revealed a very low return of completed PEPs from both in borough LAC and out of borough LAC, a new PEP process is now in place. In addition, a revised, PEP document has been implemented. These changes have been implemented to ensure an increase in PEPs completed and returned.

14. Personal Education Plans

In order to achieve the outcomes of increasing PEP returns for LAC the Virtual school has increased the capacity of the team by employing a Business Admin Apprentice who has made a significant contribution to the team and has enabled members of the team to increase attendance at PEP meetings. REALAC also commissioned an additional PEP support worker to attend out of borough PEP meetings and ensure the completion and return of PEPs.

Summary of changes

Schools are now responsible for initiating the PEP meeting with Social Workers and hosting the meetings. The Virtual School PEP team have set a timescale for all PEPs to be completed and returned. All schools and Social worker managers have been given a copy of the new process and documents.

It is recommended that all PEP meetings take place twice a year between October and November and February and March. This will allow the PEP team to monitor returns, quality assure every PEP and follow up any concerns or actions arising from the PEP. To date the results have been excellent.

PEP Data Analysis December 2017

The total number of LAC	392
3-16 Year Olds	265
Post 16	63
Under 3 Year Old	64

3-16 Year Olds

PEP's Returned	
Number of LAC In Borough	Number of LAC Out of Borough
190	75
Number of PEP's returned In Borough	Number of PEP's returned Out of Borough
161	58
Number of PEP's not returned In Borough	Number of PEP's not returned Out of

		Borough
	29	17
% of Completed PEPs Returned to REALAC		
% of PEPs returned In Borough		% of PEPs returned Out of Borough
85 % (Previously 36%)		77% (Previously 27%)
% of PEPs not returned In Borough		% of PEPs not returned Out of Borough
15%		23%

63 Post 16 LAC

PEP's Returned	
PEP's returned	PEP's not returned
23	40
% of PEP's Returned	% of PEP's not returned
37%	63%

The results clearly show a significant increase in PEP returns for LAC 3-16 years in primary and secondary schools in and out of borough.

This is largely due to the implementation of the new PEP process and building the capacity within the Virtual School team.

Disappointingly the number of returns for Post 16 LAC has remained similar to the last data analysis. This is largely due to the educational setting and social workers not setting dates for meetings and completing PEPs. Some educational providers are hard to engage with. This is an area that the Virtual School needs to address.

Further Actions and challenges

- To develop a revised system for improving PEP returns for all Post 16 LAC.
- To further increase PEP returns for 3-16 LAC both in and out of borough.
- To continue to challenge schools to complete PEPs within the given timescales and return all PEPs within 10 days.
- To increase the number of PEP meetings attended by the Virtual school, focusing particularly on Year 9 and Year 6 in order to flag up any possible difficulties around transitions.

15. Exclusions

There are significant challenges with the significant increase in permanent exclusions in primary and secondary schools in Gateshead and local authorities outside of Gateshead. Schools are aware that Gateshead will not agree a permanent exclusion for a LAC child, however, there is often the threat of permanent exclusion where the service has to intervene. REALAC has had some very pleasing outcomes for these pupils in crisis which have included: finding a new school place, ensuring SEND assessments are completed and

new schools are found, working directly with schools with additional funding and using the REALAC team to maintain the pupil at the school.

16. Recommendations

- 1 To agree a process and system in partnership with colleges and social workers for completing PEPS in a timely way for post 16 pupils.
- 2 Continue the improvements made in and out of borough on the return of PEPs.
- 3 Increase attendance by REALAC at transition meetings to ensure the needs of more vulnerable pupils are met.
- 4 Continue to intervene to prevent permanent exclusion in partnership with schools, behaviour and attendance team, SEND and social care.

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TITLE OF REPORT: Gateshead Council Adoption Service Annual Report

REPORT OF: Caroline O'Neil, Strategic Director, Care Wellbeing and Learning

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarises the activity of the Adoption Service for the year ending March 2017 with particular reference to proposed developments in adoption.

Background

1. The Adoption Service produces an annual report of its activities and key developments to cover each financial year, 1 April to 31 March. A copy of the most recent annual report produced by the Service covering the year April 2016 – March 2017 is attached. This report is freely available to the public via the Council's website pages on adoption.
2. The report for April 2017 – March 2018 is due to be completed in early summer 2018.
3. The 2016/17 annual report provides details of the numbers of children successfully adopted during that period with an accompanying breakdown in terms of age and gender. There was a slight decrease in the number of children matched to their adopters in comparison to the previous year, with a high proportion of children being matched to adopters recruited and assessed by Gateshead Adoption Team.
4. For the current year, April 2017 to the time of writing this report, 19 children have been successfully adopted with adoption hearings pending for a further 9 children. A further 9 children are also placed with their adoptive families awaiting adoption and the Service is currently family finding for 10 children.
5. The annual report for 2016/17 highlights some of the factors that had a bearing on both family finding and adopter recruitment during that year, such as the reduction in the number of Placement Orders for adoption that were granted by the courts.
6. The Service has been fairly consistent with regard to the number of enquiries in relation to adoption that it has attracted and an analysis of the figures from the past four years suggests that we have maintained our ability to attract enquiries from prospective adopters from across the whole of the north-east region.

However for the current year, April 2017 to the time of writing this report enquiries have fallen which is in line with information provided by other local authorities to the Adoption Leadership Board.

7. Feedback from adopters at various stages of the process continues to be positive. The level of adoption placement breakdowns of children placed by the Service continues to be extremely low, a rate of no more than one a year, and usually involving children with very complex needs and challenging behaviours.
8. Requests for adoption support from families continue to increase, partly as a reflection of the more complex needs and backgrounds of children being placed for adoption and increased public awareness of the national Adoption Support Fund.
9. The pressure and demand on the Adoption Support Fund has been so great that the 'cap' of £5,000 per child/family is to continue with local authorities expected to meet the costs for anything over this level or to match-fund.

Policy Context

10. The 2016/17 report draws attention to some of the proposed changes for the way adoption services could be delivered in the future. The publication in January 2016 of the Department for Education document 'Vision for Change', outlines an expectation for local authorities to move to a system by 2020 whereby adopter recruitment, matching and support will be delivered on a regional basis by a single organisation. Local authorities were also expected to demonstrate that they had plans in place by 2017 to evidence that locally they are working constructively towards achieving such an outcome.
11. The rationale is that operating at this larger scale will overcome the current challenges in the adoption system, lead to improved adopter recruitment, speed up the process of matching children with adoptive families and enable the provision of better adoption support across the region.
12. In the north-east region, five local authorities (Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton) and all the local voluntary agencies in the region have combined to set up a Regional Adoption Agency project Group (Tees Valley). This group has already undertaken some initial scoping and consultation and hopes to have an established Regional Adoption Agency for the Tees Valley area up and running at the earliest by April 2018.
13. Work in relation to the establishing a Regional Adoption Agency – Adopt North East (Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland and South Tyneside) is ongoing with proposals to be considered by Cabinet in February 2018 with a 'go live' date of October 2018.
14. A board which includes Senior Officers from each of the local authorities and voluntary agencies has been established to oversee the work of the project. The board is assisted in its work by a project team and the project work is underpinned by input from a variety of work streams which involve key stakeholders e.g. operational staff from each local authority and key agencies; adoptive parents etc.

15. The work streams are looking at a range of issues pertinent to the establishment of a RAA such as the adoption journey for adopters and children; communication and engagement; business models; legal advice; finance; IT and performance; workforce and HR issues.
16. The group has explored different delivery models for the new adoption agency and the decision about whether the new agency is a joint venture between the local authorities or a hosted model is expected to be made by the end of the year/ early 2018.
17. The challenges for the adoption service going forward towards regionalisation are continuing to recruit adopters for older children with complex and challenging needs and sibling groups. Continuing to meet the increasing demand for post adoption support and managing the implications of the development of the Regional Adoption Agency (AdoptNE).

Recommendation

It is requested that the Corporate Parenting Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the performance of the adoption service in 2016/17 and notes the implications for the service of future proposals to changes in the service delivery.

CONTACT: Elaine Devaney

EXTENSION: 2704

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September 2017



Adoption Service Annual Report

adopt with
Gateshead



INTRODUCTION

It gives us great pleasure to introduce Gateshead Council's 2016/17 Adoption Service Annual Report. As Cabinet 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 adoption receive good quality services which will support them. Achieving positive outcomes for children and the provision of effective support for all those affected by adoption is a crucial component of the work of the Adoption Service and fits well within the strategic vision for Gateshead, Vision 2030, which sets out targets for the improvement of the lives of Gateshead residents. This Annual Report provides a summary of the performance of the Adoption Service during the past year. It also includes analysis and comparative data for 2016/17, highlighting progress made over the past year and identifying potential areas for future development in the year ahead.

The Service continues to operate against a backdrop where major structural and procedural reform is being proposed. One of the key challenges for the Service in the forthcoming year will be to ensure the continuing provision of effective services for adoptive families and children requiring adoption, whilst also managing the impact of significant changes for both

the Service and its staff. The Adoption Team has always been committed to doing its best to secure positive outcomes for children and young people and for a small percentage of children, the most effective way to achieve this will be through the provision of new permanent families.

This year we will focus on:

- Attracting potential adopters from within a 50 mile radius of Gateshead and increasing enquiries.
- Exploring opportunities for continued collaborative working with other local authorities and voluntary adoption agencies in order to maximise placement choices for children.
- Evaluating and developing the existing post adoption support offer and maximising use of the Adoption Support Fund.
- Continuing to develop "foster to adopt" opportunities.
- Managing the changes and requirements of the Adoption Reform Agenda and the implications of the "regionalisation of adoption" which requires all local authorities in England to move to delivering adoption services on a regional basis.
- Monitoring our performance and systems to effectively analyse outcomes and identify potential areas for future service development.

We would like to thank all the members of the Adoption Panel and their commitment during the past year and all the staff, from within the Council and other organisations, for their continued hard work in making adoption a positive outcome for many children in Gateshead.

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

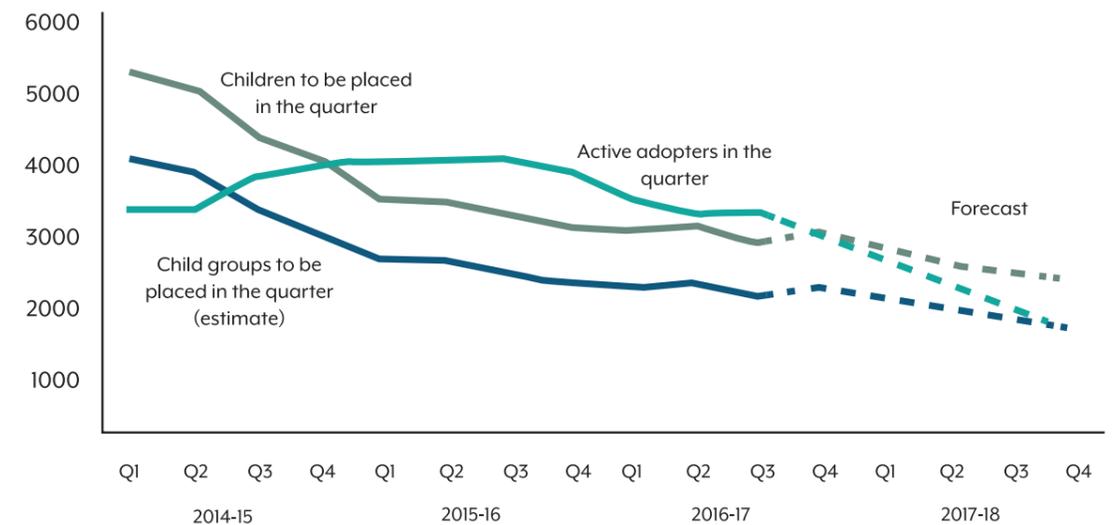
Background

In April 2017 the National Adoption Leadership Board (ALB) published a paper collating data recently gathered from local authority adoption agencies in England. The purpose of this research was to identify current trends in adoption and to provide estimates as to the future numbers of children likely to require adoptive placements and the number of adoptive families potentially available to meet that need.

The ALB model suggests that at any point in time between January and March this year there were approximately just fewer than 3,000 children requiring an adoptive placement with about the same number of approved adoptive families currently active at the same time. The model anticipates a continuing rise in the number of children requiring adoption alongside a corresponding fall in the number of available adoptive families.

If these projections are correct, this will represent the end of a period (since January 2015) of there being more approved adoptive families available than children needing to be placed. Should current trends continue, the number of approved families available in any given quarter will continue to fall faster than the number of children needing to be placed, and will have significant implications in relation to the Service's future recruitment and family-finding strategies.

Projected number of adopters and children to be placed (and child groups, counting siblings as one) in England



56% of the children waiting for adoption as at December 31 2016 were part of a sibling group, whilst the preference of the majority of prospective adopters during the same period appears to have been for a single child.

In reality, only a proportion of the 2,160 children identified in the table above as "waiting" to be placed are actually waiting, as this overall figure includes children who have been matched to adoptive families and not yet placed, together with children who have previously been identified as requiring adoption but where the plan has subsequently changed.

An estimated 1,220 children do not fall into either of these categories and therefore this will be the more representative figure for the number of children for whom English local authorities were actively seeking adoptive families at the end of 2016.

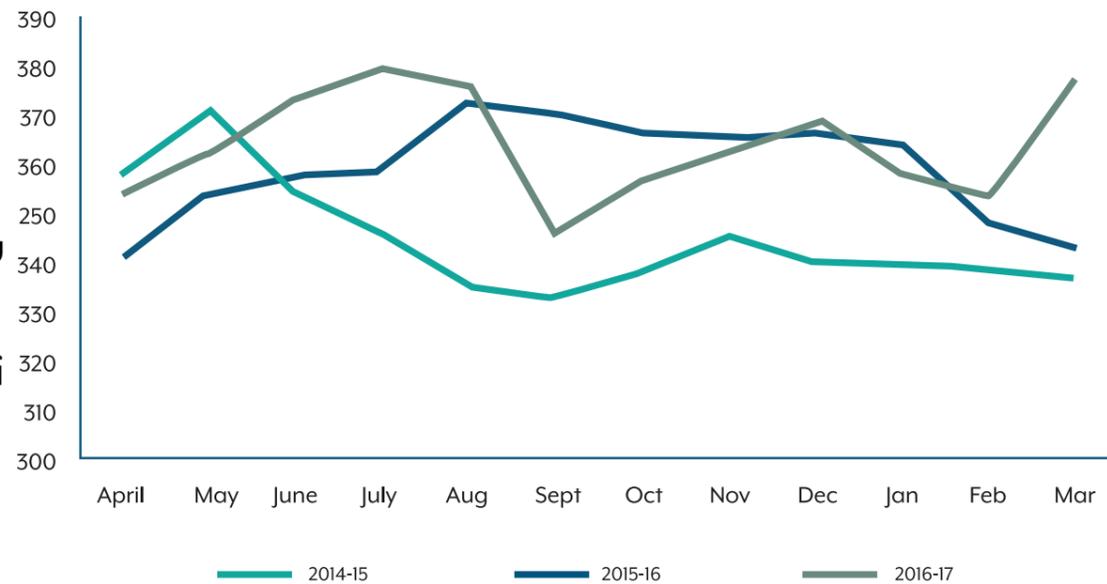
Whilst a "surplus" of adopters might look like sufficiency, consideration also needs to be given to the fact that collectively the families waiting may not be able to meet the needs of many of the children waiting, and this in turn represents a further challenge in relation to future adopter recruitment.

Average figures from the last 4 quarters suggest that a net 840 children are entering the system requiring adoption each quarter against a net 460 adopters. Assuming that placement order numbers remain stable, and these trends continue, far more adopters will need to be recruited and approved in the future than is presently the case, not just by our Service, but by all agencies nationally.

Over the last year the number of Looked After Children in Gateshead has ranged from 346 at its lowest to 380 at its highest. Since the peak of 380, the Looked After figure has fluctuated throughout the year. The Gateshead Looked After rate per 10,000 children still remains high, higher than the regional rate of 82 and significantly higher than the national rate of 60 per 10,000.

More recently the numbers of Looked After children have increased quite sharply to 377 which will be our 2017 year end figure.

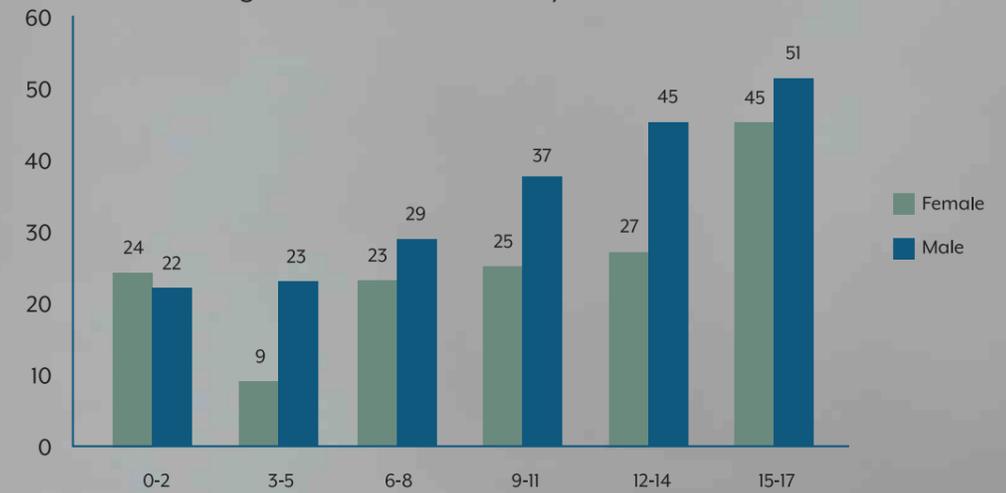
Number of looked after children - April 14 - March 17



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From September 2016 to February 2017 the number of Looked After children under the age of 2 has decreased and those aged 3-5 have increased quite significantly

Age of LAC as at 13 February 2017



The number of Placement Orders granted has remained constant during the latter part of the year. At 31 March 2017 there were 377 Looked After Children of whom 31 had a Placement order granted (8.2%). This represents a slight change in trend as previously the declining number of Placement Orders had a significant impact on the number of adoptions achieved and adopter recruitment generally.

Continuation of this new trend together with increasing numbers of Looked After Children will undoubtedly have implications for effective adopter recruitment in the year ahead, coupled with the ongoing need for the Service to broaden the pool of available families by attracting more prospective adopters able and willing to consider older children, sibling groups, and children with more complex needs.



Our performance April 2016 - March 2017

Children adopted

At the year end March 2017, **23** children placed for adoption by Gateshead Council had been successfully adopted, and a further **18** children were also in placement with their adoptive families, awaiting hearings for adoption orders. In addition, members of the team were also actively family finding for a further **11** children.

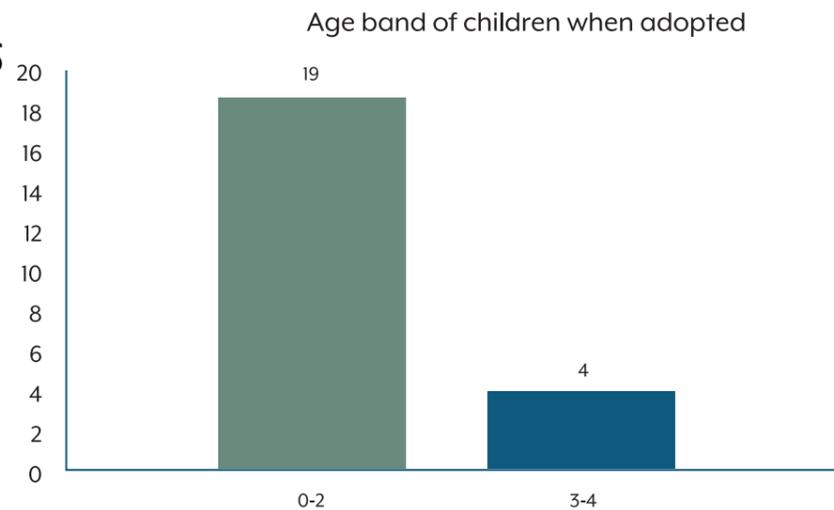
For some of this latter group the Service had already predicted that it would need to look outside of its own internal resources, given the children's' specific needs or a requirement to place geographically outside the north-east.

Of the **23** children adopted during the year 2016/17

- **5** were boys and **18** were girls.
- **14** children were placed individually and **9** children were part of a sibling group.

The average age at adoption in England for the year ending 31st March 2016 was 3 years 5 months, two months older than in 2015. The ages of the children placed for adoption by Gateshead Council and adopted during the same period corresponds well with the national picture.

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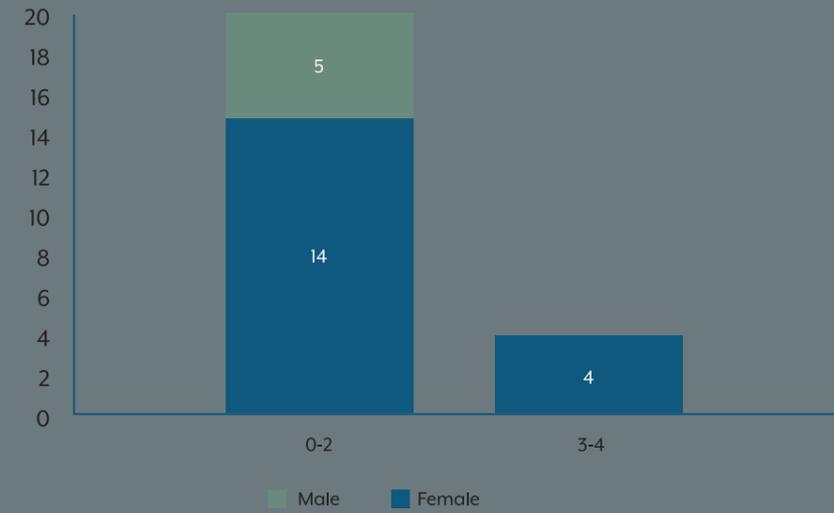


Whilst there has always been a high number of younger children adopted, in 2016/17 all our children were aged 4 or under when they were adopted.

This is a change from the previous year when 28% of our adoptions were for children over 4, including some slightly older children for whom the Service was successful in finding families and a foster carer who successfully adopted an older child with complex needs who had been in their care from a very young age.

Figures for England reveal that 53% (2,490) of children adopted during the year ending 31st March 2016 were boys and 47% (2,200) were girls. The figures for Gateshead for the same period show the opposite, with more girls than boys being adopted.

Number of children adopted by age and gender



For the year April 2016 to March 2017 23 adoptions took place of which 19 (82.6%) were within the best interest timescale of taking no more than four months between obtaining the legal authority to place a child for adoption and the agency making its decision on a match.

This is a considerable improvement in performance from the previous year end at which there were 26 adoptions of which (69.2%) 18 were in timescale.



Where cases were out of timescale during the year April 16/March 17 the Service was able to identify the reasons, which included:

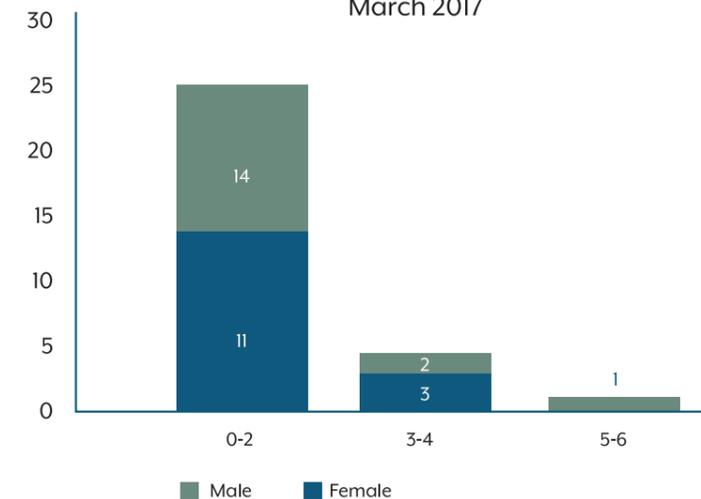
- Children having very complex backgrounds.
- Complex needs which impacted significantly on family finding, e.g. one child with considerable developmental delay.
- Issues of uncertainty, such as potential of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).
- Issues in relation to achieving suitable placements of siblings together in a way that most effectively met the children's needs, e.g. where an older sibling was already in foster care and the plan for their unborn sibling also became adoption. Initially it was not possible to place the younger sibling in the same foster placement as their older sibling. Following the identification of a suitable foster placement together where both children's needs could be met a period of time was required for them both to settle and establish their sibling relationship before their subsequent move together to an adoptive placement

Gateshead Key Indicators	Average time between entering care and moving in with adoptive family (days)		Average time between court authority and deciding on a match (days)		Number and percentage of children adopted from care	
	2015/16	2016/17	2015/16	2016/17	2015/16	2016/17
	633	409	172	108	26 (12.5%)	23 (14.2%)

In relation to timescales for entering care and moving in with the adoptive family (14 months) there has been an improvement in these figures from the previous year.

For **13** of the **23** adopted children this timescale was achieved and for those outside of timescale the reasons are similar to those outlined above. In addition, in some cases the court process took much longer than anticipated to conclude and necessitated adjournments and/or additional requests for further assessments and reports.

Number of children with placement orders as at 31st March 2017



Of the **23** children adopted from care in 2016/17 91% (**21**) were matched with adopters assessed and approved by Gateshead and **2** were placed with adopters assessed by external agencies.

At the time of writing this report we currently have two families whose details are on the Register for whom there are no suitable in-house links but who are still awaiting a suitable link from the Register.

For several years the Service has been able to provide at least two-thirds of the families for Gateshead children requiring adoption from within its own internal resources. However, the figure for 2016/17 represents a very substantial increase on this.

Where we are unable to meet needs from within our own resources we will continue to proactively make use of external resources such as the Adoption Register to locate families for children. At the time of writing this report there are currently 708 active children on the Register, of whom 26 are from the North-East region, including 7 children from Gateshead.

Whilst this proportion of "in-house" placements is much higher than previous years this could be more reflective of the earlier down turn in the number of adoptive placements required and the agency having a larger than usual pool of available adopters waiting, and should not be taken as indicative of any need to reduce our efforts in any way with regard to the future recruitment of prospective adopters.

The level of family finding being undertaken within the Service has increased since year end March 2016 and the Service is currently in the process of attempting to identify prospective adoptive families for 12 children and also has advance notice in respect of a further 22 children whose cases are currently in court proceedings, or due to enter proceedings, and depending on the final outcome may potentially require adoptive placements.

Adopters for whom no suitable matches can be identified with Gateshead children within 3 months of their approval will continue to be encouraged and supported in their consideration of appropriate and suitable links with children from other agencies, and to submit their details to the Adoption Register, which is not only of benefit to children elsewhere in the country waiting for adoption but also assists the Service to offset some of its costs in purchasing external placements for children when needs cannot be met via our own resources.



Adopters approved

Within the year April 2016 to March 2017 Gateshead Council Adoption Panel recommended approval for 24 prospective adoptive families recruited and assessed by the Adoption Team. This is a 100% increase on the previous year's figure, which was lower as a consequence of the earlier reduction in the number of Looked After Children being granted Placement Orders and a reduced need for adoptive placements.

Quarter	Apr/June	Jul/Sept	Oct/Dec	Jan/March
Number of families approved	11	3	7	3

During the year ending 31 March 2016 in England 89% of children were adopted by couples and 11% by single adopters, 9.6% of children were adopted by same sex couples. Gateshead figures for the same period evidence that 96% of our children were adopted by couples and 4% by single adopters. During the year 2016/17 the majority of adopters approved by the agency (74%) were couples but this cohort also included 3 same sex couple (13%) and 2 single adopters (9%).

“We really appreciate all the amazing support you have given us over the adoption journey. You have been so professional and honest whilst also being caring and we have felt prepared for all stages of the process. We have felt you have been so easy to talk to and we always felt we could open up to you and obtain support. We will miss you and can't thank you enough. You really are a special person”.

Adopters June 2016

It is also pleasing to see that two sets of adopters approved during the year were “second time adopters” i.e. adopters who had previously adopted a child via Gateshead Council and had subsequently applied to us to adopt again.

The current assessment process is a two stage process with the expectation that the first stage is completed within two months and the second part within four months. Just over half the assessments presented to Panel within the past year have been completed within the 6 month timescale. Where the Service has been unable to meet this deadline we have been able to identify the reason. In the main this has generally been due to our awaiting the return of essential information from other agencies, such as police and health checks, without which it is not possible to proceed.

	Apr/Jun	Jul/Sept	Oct/Dec	Jan/Mar
Assessments completed	10	3	7	3
Within timescale	7	2	3	Nil
Outside timescale	3	1	4	3
Reasons	1 delayed by staff/adopter holidays 1 delayed as awaiting return of checks and references 1 delayed due to staff leaving the service and change of social worker	Awaiting return of references and checks/ annual holidays	1-Adopter requested break in process 2-Awaiting checks and references 1-Impact of Adopter and staff holidays	1-Awaiting return of checks and references 1-Report deferred by panel

At the date of writing this report the Service currently has 7 prospective adoptive families under assessment, with a further 13 adoptive families already approved and awaiting placements. There are links already in progress for a number of these families so it is anticipated that several Gateshead children currently requiring adoptive placements should be matched and placed with some of these families in the next few months.

‘Thank you for all the months of advice, support and help. Our family is now complete and without you this would not have been possible.’ Adopter November 2016



Matches

During April 2016 to March 2017 Gateshead Adoption Panel considered matches for **26** children with their prospective adoptive families, one less than the previous year. This figure includes **20** children placed individually and three sets of sibling groups of two. Eight of the **26** children were adopted during the year April 2016 to March 2017 and a further **17** of these children are currently placed with their adoptive families, awaiting their adoption.

Matches per Quarter	Apr/June	Jul/Sept	Oct/Dec	Jan/March	TOTAL
Total	14 children	2 children	4 children	6 children	26
Individual children	8	2	4	6	20
Sibling groups	3 groups of 2 siblings	nil	nil	nil	6
Matched In-house	8 children in total 1 sibling group x 2 6 individual children	2	1	5	16
Matched with External adopters	6 children in total 2 x 2 siblings 2 single children	nil	3	1	10



The overwhelming majority of the matches, 62%, were made with adopters recruited and assessed by Gateshead Adoption Service. This performance is in line with, and similar to, our performance over a number of years.

'For all your time and support through matching panel and the introduction week, we cannot thank you enough. Knowing you were always at the end of the phone or email and then talking to you about our little joy - we couldn't have wished for a better support worker! And we are over the moon with our child - they are ACE!' Adopters June 2016

Life Appreciation Days have been held for children over the age of 3 and a complex sibling group in order to help inform the prospective adopters of the childrens' background and history and likely needs following placement.

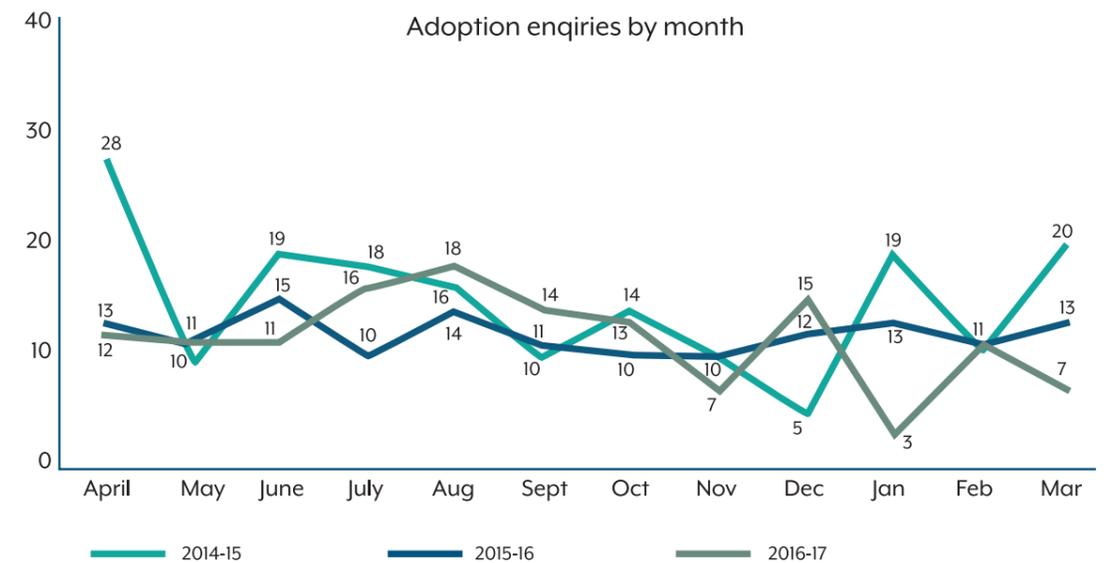
Adopter Recruitment

The Service has utilised various methods to recruit adopters during the past year including:

- Radio campaigns
- Regional outdoor (billboard) advertising
- Public Transport advertising

The graph below provides information of the trends in enquiries for the past three years, and although at a higher level than previous years 2012-2014, the numbers of enquiries received by the Service do appear to have fallen more recently, perhaps in line with national trends previously referred to in this report.

"When I contacted Gateshead the lady I spoke to was lovely." Prospective adopter - February 2017



During the early part of 2016 the service did experience some increase in referrals from neighbouring local authorities, mainly from adopters interested in adopting very young children and where their own local authority was not prioritising this type of recruitment.

"We researched different ways in which to adopt and spoke to voluntary agencies as well as local authorities. We felt that Gateshead stood out from other agencies in terms of their initial response and the information pack."

Prospective adopter - February 2017

Enquiries by Month	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	Total
April	13	3	28	12	13	69
May	5	6	10	11	11	43
June	5	7	19	11	15	57
July	6	4	18	16	10	54
August	8	4	16	18	14	60
September	9	3	10	14	11	47
October	8	6	14	13	10	51
November	6	10	10	7	10	43
December	8	2	5	15	12	42
January	10	26	19	3	13	71
February	13	26	11	11	11	72
March	7	11	20	13	7	58
Total	98	108	180	144	137	667

Out of 137 enquiries received in 2016/17 we issued 19 registrations of interest forms. This represents a conversion rate of 13.8%; which equates to nearly 1 in every 8 enquiries progressing to the stage of being invited to register an application. This is a reasonable outcome given we know that a high proportion of enquirers will approach a number of agencies before finally deciding on which agency to register their interest with.

The table below evidences the origin of the enquiries received by the Service. Given that one of the service aims is to offer an assessment to potential adopters within a fifty mile radius we will continue to promote Gateshead Council across a broad geographical area in order to attract prospective adopters from outside the Council boundaries.

This is particularly pertinent as there are occasions when the Service needs to identify options for children requiring placements outside the immediate vicinity.

Enquiries by Area	2012/2013	%	2013/2014	%	2014/2015	%	2015/2016	%	2016/2017	%	Total
County Durham	2	2.04%	5	4.63%	15	8.57%	7	4.86%	9	6.87%	38
Cumbria					1	0.57%	1	0.69%			2
Gateshead	49	50.00%	53	49.07%	98	56.00%	54	37.50%	59	45.04%	313
Glasgow City									1	0.76%	1
Hartlepool					1	0.57%			1	0.76%	2
Newcastle Upon Tyne	4	4.08%	4	3.70%	9	5.14%	13	9.03%	16	12.21%	46
North Tyneside	3	3.06%	3	2.78%	12	6.86%	9	6.25%	8	6.11%	35
Northumberland	3	3.06%	6	5.56%	1	0.57%	12	8.33%	7	5.34%	29
Redcar and Cleveland					1	0.57%	1	0.69%			2
Slough					1	0.57%					1
South Gloucestershire			1	0.93%							1
South Tyneside	10	10.20%	9	8.33%	7	4.00%	10	6.94%	10	7.63%	46
Stockton-on-Tees									1	0.76%	1
Sunderland	3	3.06%	6	5.56%	13	7.43%	15	10.42%	3	2.29%	40
Not Recorded	24	24.49%	21	19.44%	16	9.14%	22	15.28%	16	12.21%	99
Total	98	100%	108	100%	175	100%	144	100%	131	100%	656

The majority of enquiries continue to come from within the Gateshead area but more input into recruitment from outside the area will need to be put into place for the year ahead in order to offer a wider number of placement options for children.

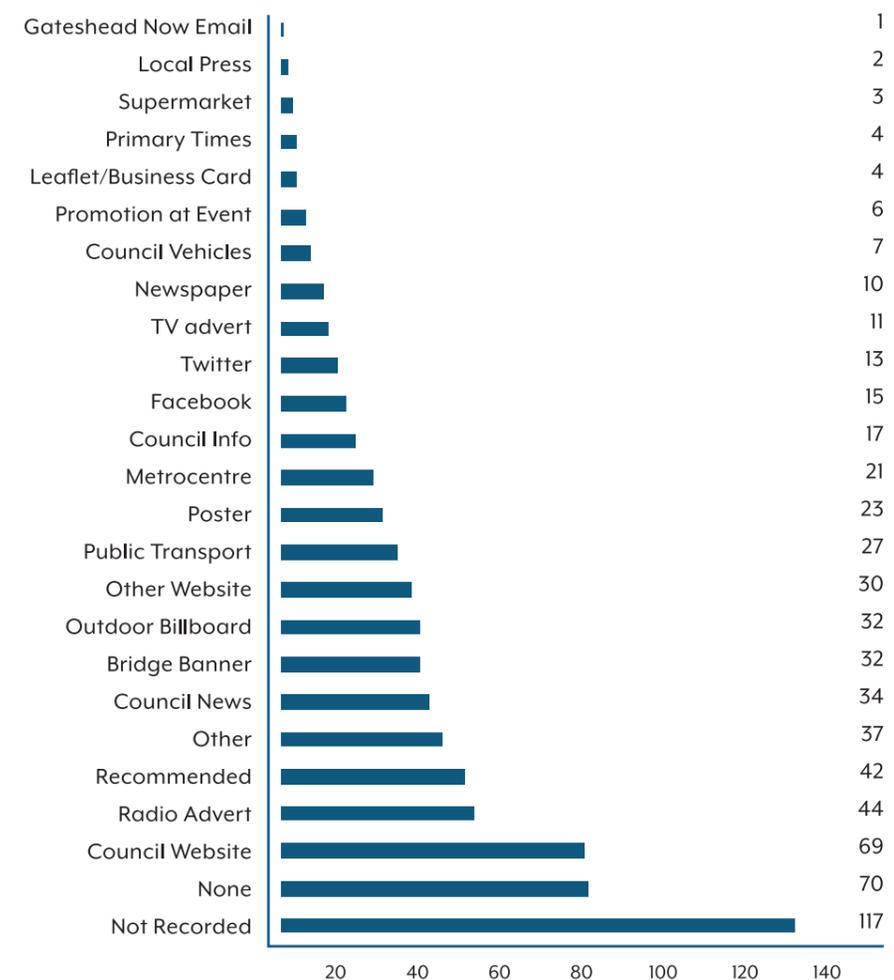
To ensure that the high level of adopter recruitment from within the immediate locality is also maintained we will continue to make full and effective use of “Free of charge” tools such as Council News, Council Website, Council Info and Gateshead Now.

In order to monitor the effectiveness of our recruitment activity we routinely ask all our enquirers which of our promotional materials they have seen. The table on the following page shows all of the promotional materials which have been seen and used by enquirers since 2014.

The top eight channels cited are:

- Council Website
- Radio Adverts
- Recommended
- Council News
- Bridge Banners/Billboards
- Other website
- Public transport

Promotional Material Seen



31 individuals commented that they came to us “by word of mouth” and indicated that Gateshead Council had been recommended to them by friends, colleagues or professionals. As a result we have seen an increase in recommendations in 2016/17. Further feedback also indicates that a large proportion of enquirers have found the sections on adoption on the Council website very informative and helpful. This feedback will also be utilised to help inform and improve our communication and recruitment plans for the year ahead.

“Recommended by a friend of friends. Impressed at the information evening and also by the Ofsted rating.” Adopter - June 16

The Service has held six information evenings and quarterly training sessions for prospective adopters in the past year and it would be our intention to maintain this level in the year ahead.

“Fantastic course leaders, friendly and understanding - great team, thank you”

July 2016 Training Participant & Prospective Adopter

Family finding for children

The service will continue to utilise a wide range of family finding methods for children such as the Adoption Register, Adoption Link, Parents for children and access national and voluntary sector resources as required. Members of the team will also continue to be involved in regional family finding events and meetings such as Activity days and, as and when required, the Service will host its own “You, Me, Us” profiling events.

Future family finding

If we take an average of the last two years as a benchmark for the number of Looked After Children who might require adoption then one could estimate that at the very most 10% of our Looked After Children may need adoptive placements.

However, one would also need to continue to monitor these figures on a regular basis to see if trends change.

For comparison,

- If we predict that 10% of our Looked After Children will need adopting then we would need to recruit adopters for at least 36 children.
- If we predict that the figure is nearer to 7 or 8 % then we would need to recruit adopters for between 25 to 29 children respectively.

It would therefore seem sensible to plan our recruitment strategy for the year ahead to meet a minimum need for **29** placements, similar in number to the number of children currently with a placement order in place as of 31st March 2017.

There will always be identified placement needs which simply could not be met from within our own resources and for which the agency will need to seek external placements from either regional or national partners.

Similarly, there will be the continuing need to monitor the level of recruitment of in-house adopters on a regular, ongoing basis and have suitable contingency plans in place to broaden the choice of suitable placements in the event that the agency experiences further rises in the number of placement orders and/or Looked After children for whom the plan may become adoption.

Recruitment of adopters in the year ahead will need to focus on prospective adopters able to consider young children and young sibling groups, but given the trends suggested by the work of the ALB and the increasingly complex background of children being placed for adoption, the Service will need to re-evaluate its earlier recruitment activity with a view to identifying new ways and methods to better attract additional applicants able to consider placements of older children and sibling groups, as well as very young children with complex developmental and health issues.

Foster for Adoption

We have incorporated information about Fostering for Adoption into all our information and publicity for prospective adopters and into the preparation training. Fostering for Adoption will not be suitable for all adopters so this is an aspect that would be robustly explored with prospective adopters both during the assessment process and following approval. Effective links are also in place with the Fostering Service to provide additional input and training with regard to the fostering requirements for prospective adopters who might be interested in offering such placements.

Since the implementation of Fostering for Adoption the Service has been able to offer a small number of Foster for Adoption placements.

The background circumstances of each placement have been very different and the experience of the adopters involved to date has been varied, partly as a result of requirements of the courts

“Fostering to adopt is a relatively new initiative that is successfully achieving permanence through adoption for children. One fostering-to-adopt couple spoke positively of how they were able to care for a new-born baby through early medical treatments in hospital. The baby had the opportunity to form early attachments from birth... This is a very positive start and the Service is actively promoting this initiative as part of the options for adoption in all recruitment activity.”

Ofsted inspection report - March 2016.

Adoption Support

In 2015-16 the government invested £19.3 million towards the creation of the National Adoption Support Fund (ASF). The fund came into operation on 1st May 2015 and is intended to be used for payments for therapeutic interventions to help support adoptive families. Recent announcements have confirmed that the ASF will continue to operate with increased funding every year until 2020, following which it is hoped plans will be in place to ensure its future sustainability. Since the inception of the Adoption Support Fund the Adoption Service has made several applications to the Fund and has been successful in obtaining funding for all but one of the applications, which was deemed not to meet the necessary criteria.

The average amount received per application has been in the region of £1,700 and has been used to commission services such as therapeutic life story work and counselling for adoptees, therapeutic parenting sessions for adoptive parents, and therapeutic respite and short-breaks for children in adoptive families. Since implementation the remit of the fund has been further expanded and access to funding for therapy is now available to Special Guardians of children who were previously Looked After. This will require the agency to review and update current application processes, and identify the capacity for dealing with a potential increase in the number of applications and requests for support, once details of increased access to the fund becomes known more widely and publicly.

The Service will continue to review and consider what changes can be made in terms of its existing service provision to help develop and enhance the current “Gateshead adoption support offer”.

We already have in place a well-established support group and the facility to offer a parenting skills group courses for adopters. We will also continue to run our annual "Summer Fun Day" for adopters in July each year. This day provides a great opportunity for adopted children and their parents to get together and enjoy activities and provides an excellent informal support opportunity as adoption social workers are also available on the day.

In addition to information sessions and training for prospective and approved adopters, new group sessions were introduced during the year 2016-17 specifically for extended family members of prospective adopters who were likely to provide support to placements. The aim of these sessions is to relay information about the nature of adoption, the likely background factors for children requiring adoption and offer advice as to how family members can best help support their adopters. Two sessions were run last year, both of which received positive feedback from participants, and further sessions will be offered in the year ahead.

'Thanks for letting me know and I'll look forward to hearing about other sessions. As I said on the phone, I found the session I attended really helpful and left me with plenty to think about. As I hope you are aware, we were both more than happy with the training and general 'adoption process' we went through. However, all the training in the world couldn't really prepare you for the realities especially as the youngsters get older'.

Adopters July 2016

The service has also maintained its involvement in local initiatives, such as the Sage Music Project, which not only provides support to adopters, but helps children's development and attachment through the use of music, and we will continue to be involved in any future discussions with the project in relation to further project development.

We also continue to work alongside other adoption agencies in the region to run a monthly "Waiting Adopters Group". This group provides support to approved adopters who are waiting to be matched with a child or children. These groups are generally well attended by Gateshead adopters alongside staff from the Adoption Team.

Our post adoption contact post-box system currently manages 467 different contact agreements involving both adopters and birth families. Each separate contact agreement can include several individuals in addition to birth parents and adopters, e.g. siblings, grand-parents etc. Consequently the amount of information involved in such exchanges, and people affected by post adoption contact who may need support, will vastly exceed this figure. Capacity to manage this will become more pertinent given the number of arrangements continues to rise each year, and currently is up by a further 24 agreements on the previous year's figures.

As well as dealing with an increased number of contacts our input and support to birth family members affected by adoption and adopters requiring support post adoption also appears to be increasing. There has been a rise in the referrals from families who are resident in Gateshead but who adopted children via other adoption agencies. Once that agency's statutory responsibility for providing support has ceased it becomes the responsibility of the agency where they are residing.

"I want to thank you for all you've done - taking time to help, any information or place you thought would help you contacted on my behalf. Alas it did not reap any benefits but your effort and time and kindness was much appreciated".

Adoption support case - request for access to records, July 2016

Our existing Service Level agreement with After Adoption currently enables us to pass on a small number of adoption support and access to birth record cases and to offer families requiring a support service the option of input that is independent of the local authority, thus adding capacity and flexibility to our adoption support offer.

Disruptions, adopters withdrawing, changes of plan for children

At the latter part of the year end 2016/17 the Service was involved, along with other teams in the agency, in working with several adoptive families experiencing difficulties with children mainly in teenage years/early adolescence. These families included children who had been placed by other agencies with families living in Gateshead but also a couple of children who had been placed by Gateshead and had been living with their respective adoptive families for several years.

Many of the children in question had very complex needs, some of which became more apparent and intensified following their placement in their adoptive family. At an appropriate point in time in the year ahead it will be beneficial for the Service to undertake an intensive review of at least one of these cases in order to help identify any points of learning and areas for future service development.

"There are minimal disruptions, with one break down in 2014-15. This demonstrates the quality of matches for children and the post-adoption support available. The potential lessons from a review of the disrupted placement have been reflected on by the service and the Adoption panel"

Ofsted inspection report - March 2016.

Complaints and compliments

For the year 2016/17 the Council's Complaints section has no records of any formal complaints in relation to the Service which needed to be addressed. More positively, the Complaints Section has received 18 compliments from a variety of sources including social workers, applicants going through the process and those who have successfully adopted. A selection of some of these comments has been incorporated into various sections of this report.

"Thanks again for all your support. Gateshead has to rank at the top of Adoption support!"

Social Worker, CoramBAAF August 2016

For the year 2016/17 four potential adoptive families withdrew from the process. Three families withdrew prior to their assessment being completed. Registrations of Interest had been accepted but could not be progressed beyond Stage One. In all of the cases this was as a result of issues in relation to statutory checks and references. One set of approved adopters with a birth child who had been awaiting a placement for some time also decided to withdraw from the process, due to a significant change in life circumstances for their family.

During the year 2016-2017 the plan for adoption was subsequently changed in respect of seven children, where authority to place for adoption was not obtained or the plan became long-term fostering or placement with member of the extended birth family.

Central List membership for Adoption Panel - April 2016 to March 2017

The following members of the Central List have attended at least one meeting of the Panel this year:

Ian Gates, Independent Chair
 Paul Forbes, independent, (Vice Chair)
 Councillor Peter Mole
 Karen Wilson, Social Worker, Fostering Team
 Shauna Garrett, Assistant Team Manager, Fostering Team
 Debbie Wilkinson, Team Manager, Safeguarding and Care Planning Team
 Janet Dugdale, Team Manager, Safeguarding and Care Planning Team
 Jill Smith, Clinical Psychologist
 Ann Forster, Adopter
 Sharon Jones, Adopter
 Neil Carr, Foster Carer, left the Central List in May 2016.

Medical Adviser and Panel member: Dr Helen Palmer/
 Dr Carole Mason

Panel Advisers
 Janice Cook, Angela Simmons-Mather/Legal Services
 Anne Roberts, Adoption Team Manager

Panel Administrator Sonia Forster (Samantha Shannon for 1 panel)

“The adoption panel is suitably robust and carefully considers recommendations for approvals and the quality of matching children with adopters. The agency decision maker makes timely decisions and, where required, pursues additional information to inform well-considered decisions for children.”

Ofsted report - March 2016.



Adoption Service Quality Assurance Framework

The Adoption Service has a robust quality assurance system in place to ensure that feedback is received at various stages of the adoption process. All feedback is collated and used to inform service planning. The table below outlines each stage of the quality assurance process:

Adoption Service Quality Assurance Framework

Stage	Mechanism	Person completing assessment
1.	Training Evaluation Form	Completed by prospective adopter following attendance at training
2.	End of Stage 1 meeting with Team Manager	Discussion led by Team Manager and outcome agreed
3.	Quality Assurance Visit (Pre Adoption Panel)	Adoption Team Manager or Senior Practitioner
4.	Adoption Panel Attendance Feedback Form	Adopter and Child's Social Worker
5.	Satisfaction Survey completed following adoption order	Adopter and Child's Social Worker

During the past year the majority of the feedback received through these processes has been extremely positive. The comment below is reflective of the type of feedback received.

“We were kept up to date throughout the process. Our Social Worker was open and honest with us throughout the assessment. She spent time getting to know us which was invaluable during panels and the matching process. Both our social worker and the children's' social workers have been incredibly supportive and reassuring since placement. We would recommend Gateshead to anyone thinking of entering the process.”

Adopter - November 2016



Key Issues and aims for the year ahead

In 2016/17 the key issues for the Adoption Service will be to:

- To build on our recruitment approach to attract potential adopters from within a 50 mile radius of Gateshead, and to increase the numbers of enquiries from potential adopters, particularly those who might wish to consider older or more complex children or sibling groups.
- To explore opportunities for continued collaborative working with other Local Authorities and voluntary adoption agencies in order to maximise placement choices for children.
- Meet the increasing demand for post adoption support as children with more complex needs continue to be placed for adoption. Evaluate and develop the existing post adoption support that is on offer and make effective use of the Adoption Support Fund. Ensure the provision of access to the fund as appropriate for Special Guardians of previously Looked After Children.
- Continued exploration and development of "fostering to adopt" opportunities in order to reduce delay for children.
- To continue to managing the changes and the requirements of the Adoption Reform agenda, and the implications of the "regionalization of adoption" which will require all local authorities in England to move to a system by 2020 whereby adopter recruitment, family finding for children and adoption support will all be delivered on a regional basis.
- Continued monitoring of our performance and systems to effectively analyse outcomes and identify potential areas for future service development

Conclusion

The Service has achieved several positive outcomes during the past year. Twenty-three children have been successfully adopted and a number of children are currently placed with their adoptive families awaiting adoption. We managed to recruit a sufficient number of adopters to meet our needs during the year and placed several children for adoption with a low level of placement breakdown. We continued to promote initiatives such as fostering to adopt when appropriate. The Service has also continued to develop its adoption support offer, making sensible use of the adoption support fund. Furthermore members of the Service have played a full and constructive part in much of the regional work that has been undertaken by local authority and voluntary sector partners in respect of the development of a Regional Adoption Agency, (Adopt NE).





**CORPORATE PARENTING
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
15 January 2018**

TITLE OF REPORT: Missing from Care Episodes and child sexual exploitation for Children and Young People Looked After by Gateshead Council

REPORT OF: Caroline O'Neill, Strategic Director, Care Wellbeing and Learning and Director of Children's Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an updated summary of missing from care episodes from December 2016 to November 2017 and an update regarding protection and monitoring of child sexual exploitation.

1. Background

Young people who go "missing" from the care of the Council whether from foster care or residential care, do so for many often complex reasons which cannot be viewed in isolation from their home circumstances and their experience within the Looked After system.

2. Policy Context

Gateshead Council has clear procedures regarding missing children and young people which incorporate a joint protocol between Northumbria Police and Children's Social Care. The procedures and data systems form part of the Local Safeguarding Children Board's (LSCB's) oversight of arrangements. A designated officer is a legal requirement for each Local Authority. This remit is delegated to Service Manager Looked After Children.

3. Definition of Missing from Care

"A Looked After young person is considered missing if he/she is absent from her place of residence without authority." Children can be reported missing within 30 minutes to 3 hours from their anticipated return time.

In July 2017 Northumbria Police adopted the new missing definition to identify the type of missing activity;

"Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established will be considered as missing until located, and their wellbeing or otherwise confirmed."

All reports of missing people sit within a continuum of risk from 'no apparent risk (absent)' through to high risk cases that require immediate, intensive action. A missing strategy for each young person may be different depending upon the management of assessed risks relating to the young person.

- **Absent** – no apparent risk of harm to either subject or public
- **Low** - Risk of harm to subject/public is possible but minimal
- **Medium** – Risk of harm to subject/public likely but not serious
- **High** – risk of 'serious harm' to subject/public is assessed as very likely (serious harm is defined as – risk that is life threatening and/or traumatic, from which recovery, whether physical or psychological can be expected to be difficult or impossible)

Missing

A child is categorised as missing when their location or reason for absence is unknown **and/ or** there is cause for concern for the child because of their vulnerability or there is a potential danger to the public.

A child or young person who is absent should be classified as missing if one or more of the criteria below apply:

- There is identified or imminent risk of the child or young person being exposed to significant harm
- The child or young person poses a risk of significant harm to others
- There are suspicious circumstances
- The absence is out of character or unusual behaviour
- There are indications that the child has already come to harm
- There are indications that the episode is not a deliberate or careless act
- There are indications that the child or young person
- Is not expected to return within reasonable time limits
- Is not staying at homes of others known to them
- Will not be easily located

A child or young person in this category must be reported to the police.

Absent

Absent - "A person not at a place where they are expected or required to be and there is no apparent risk."

The 'absent' category should comprise cases in which people are not presently where they are supposed to be and there is no apparent risk. 'Absent' cases should not be ignored, and must be monitored over periods of time with consideration given to escalating to 'missing' if there is a change to the circumstances that has increased the level of risk.

Some children absent themselves for a short period and then return and during their absence their whereabouts are known or they have made contact. Sometimes children stay out longer than agreed, either on purpose or accidentally, and may be

testing boundaries, but do not jeopardise their wellbeing. This kind of boundary testing is within the range of normal teenage behaviour and not necessarily considered a risk.

Whether the absence is careless or deliberate, if there is no apparent risk for their immediate safety, or that of the public, it may fall within the absent category. The assessment of the carer is initially that they are safe but are away from home without permission. It is still important that staff/ carers record these incidences (as absent, not missing episodes), in case the level of risk changes and decisions are auditable. Absent episodes must be carefully monitored however as the child may subsequently go missing.

If a child's whereabouts are known then they cannot be 'missing'. For example, in some circumstances young people staying with a friend without prior agreement may not be 'at risk' and it would be inappropriate to flag this event as a missing from care incident or report it to the police.

In situations where a child is absent without permission the first response may be that providers of their care along with any relevant staff from their responsible authority, which could include the child's social worker, should act as a responsible parent and take all practical steps to establish the child's location and to ensure that they return to their placement without delay.

A child or young person who is not where they are expected to be absent should be classified as absent if the criteria below apply:

- They have deliberately or carelessly absented themselves
- They are likely to return of their own accord or they are staying with others known to them
- They are likely to be easily located
- They are unlikely to suffer or cause significant harm whilst absent

The carer or residential staff member should record any information gained on the whereabouts of the young person whilst absent, and this should be shared as appropriate with the police. Where the person remains absent, and the carer/ staff feels the individual may be at risk of harm then a report should be made to the police.

4. Risk Assessment

In assessing the significance of any child's absence a risk assessment must be undertaken. The service has developed a screening assessment tool based which is completed by the care team and if there are persistent missing episodes this is presented to the Multi agency Sexual Exploitation Trafficking meeting.

Where a child is missing, relevant staff from Local Authority and Police must consider the above definitions and take into consideration the child's care plan and factors listed below, when assessing risk:

- The legal status of the person in care (e.g. Emergency Protection Order, Full or Interim Care Order, remanded, curfew conditions etc).

- Previous behaviour patterns. (Such as a history of absence and quick return)
- The child's state of mind/perceived risk. (Is child likely to self-harm or commit suicide? Does child see risks in a balanced way?)
- Group behaviour at the time of the absence
- Whether the young person is perceived as running to someone or running from a situation
- Any physical or learning disabilities the child may have which increase the risk to them
- Is the child vulnerable due to age or infirmity or any other factor?
- Is the child suspected to be the victim of a significant crime in progress, e.g. abduction?
- Are there family /relationship problems or recent history of family conflict, including domestic abuse
- Does the missing person have any physical illness, disability or mental health problems?
- Are they in the company of a person who may cause them harm?
- Do they require essential medication which is not likely to be available?
- Is there ongoing bullying or harassment, e.g. racial, sexual, homophobic or local community concerns and/or cultural issues?
- Do they pose a threat of harm to others?
- Is there drug or alcohol dependency or substance misuse?
- Any other particular circumstances at the time of the incident influencing the risk assessment?

It is important that the assessment of risk is a dynamic process and should be re-considered and challenged at every point during a child or young person's absence. As a minimum requirement when a child is missing the risk assessment should be reviewed every eight hours and the level of prevailing risk agreed by carers and other professionals responsible for that young person's health safety and wellbeing.

Categories of risk

HIGH

The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the child or young person is in danger through their own vulnerability or may have been the victim of a serious crime, or

The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the public are in danger.

MEDIUM

The risk posed is likely to place the child or young person in danger or they are a threat to themselves or others.

LOW

There is no apparent threat of danger to either the child or young person or the public. The key messages from research regarding young people Missing from

Care over the last five years indicated the need for a regional approach and highlighted that:

- Few young people leave their local area
- Many stay with friends known to them/relatives, less than a third or a quarter sleep rough
- Most common reasons for running away are conflict with parents/step parents and carers and wanting to spend time with friends and partners
- Young people who run away are more likely to be absent from school through refusal to attend or exclusion
- Young people are at as much risk whether they are missing for the first time or on any subsequent occasions
- Young people who go missing place are often very vulnerable and place themselves at risk and are exposed to violence, victimisation, sexual exploitation and involvement in crime

5. Overall data

There were 936 missing episodes in total between December 2016 and November 2017, of which 565 (60%) were looked after children. This represents an increase in the total number of missing episodes compared to 2015-16 (875) and also an increase in terms of the number of missing from care episodes which involved looked after children for the same period (511 (58%)).

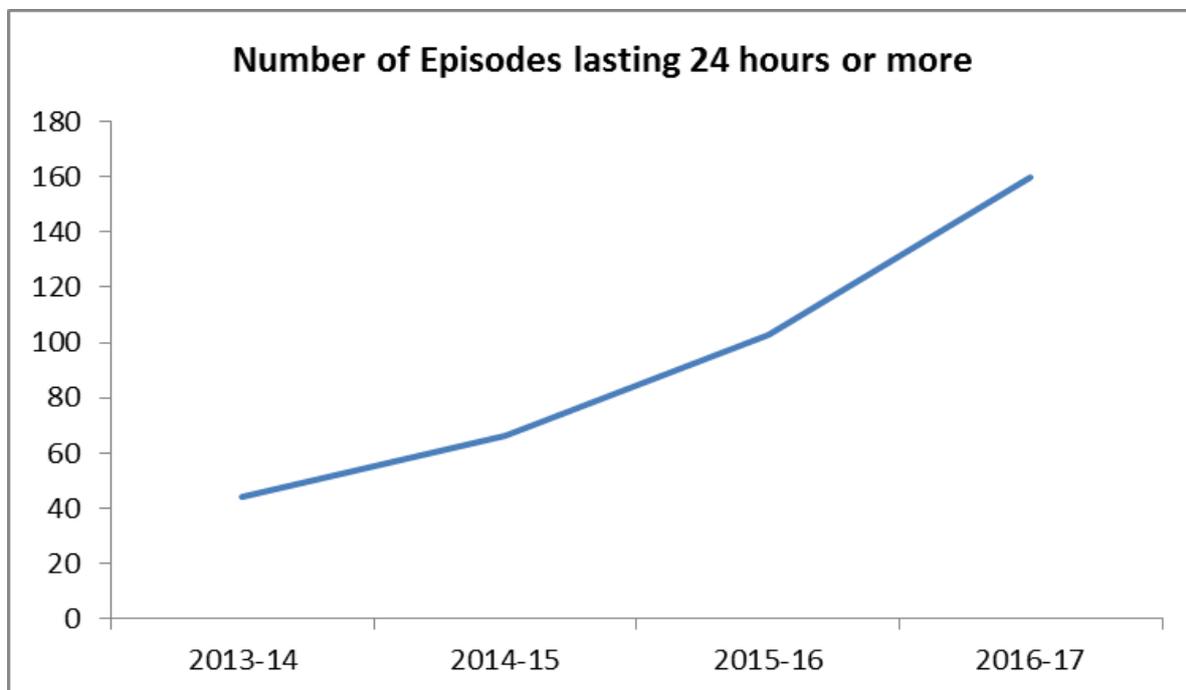
In January 2016 Northumbria Police began to differentiate between a “missing” episode and an “absent” episode. The figures shown below include those reported as missing and absent.

There is a difference between the number of missing/absent episodes each month and the number of missing/absent individuals as some people will have more than one episode. Each month the number of individual young people in total and individual Looked After Children reported missing varies and is different from the number of missing episodes.

Over the last 12 months young people who have been recorded as missing from care have in the majority of cases returned fairly quickly to their placements. Young people who are persistent in being absent without permission often leave their placements because of conflict primarily due to boundary setting, for example around coming in times or refusal to allow them to undertake activities which are not felt to be consistent with promoting their welfare. Some young people have links with others in other placements and are absent from their placements together. Social workers and staff are familiar with these young people, their contacts, likely whereabouts and they usually return later that day, rarely are young people in the care of the Council missing overnight or more than 24 hours.

A small cohort of missing episodes of Looked After Children are for more than a 24-hour period. They are young people who are in the older age group and who have had very complex needs and backgrounds. Clear procedures are in place to manage these longer episodes.

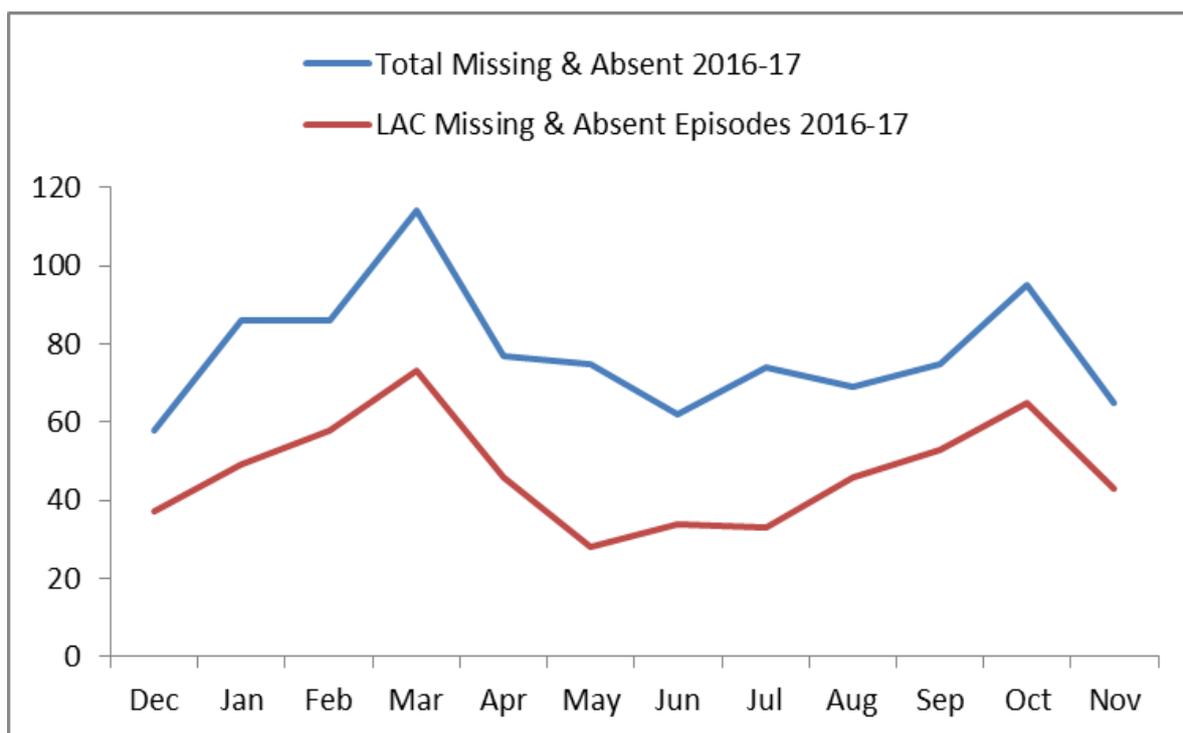
Between December 2016 and November 2017 there were 160 episodes where a young person was missing or absent for over 24 hours. The majority of those young people were missing from care (68%) and this is a continuation in the trend of increased episodes lasting 24 hours or more from previous years. In 2015-16 there were 103 episodes, in 2014-15 there were 66 episodes and in 2013-2014 where there were only 44 episodes lasting 24 hours or more.



It is always a concern when young people are missing for over 24 hours which is why it is monitored to see if there are any patterns for individual or groups of young people. Targeted interventions are implemented and disruption plans looked at by MSET to ensure everyone is doing all they can to keep young people safe

Dec 2016-Nov 17 data

Month	Total missing and absent episodes	Number of individuals	Episodes over 24 hours	LAC missing and absent episodes	Number of individual LAC
December	58	29	10	37 (64%)	13
January	86	43	16	49 (57%)	16
February	86	37	17	58 (67%)	14
March	114	40	15	73 (64%)	15
April	77	39	16	46 (60%)	16
May	75	44	13	28 (37%)	10
June	62	27	12	34 (55%)	10
July	74	41	6	33 (45%)	18
August	69	30	11	46 (67%)	16
September	75	32	14	53 (71%)	16
October	95	35	18	65 (68%)	18
November	65	23	12	43 (66%)	12
TOTAL	936		160	565 (60%)	



To try and understand the missing episodes of Looked after children the following data looks at where young people are placed and the number of missing episodes linked to both residential placements and foster placements

Month	Placement Young Person reported missing from (number of episodes)				Total
	Residential		Foster Care		
	in-house	Other residential (out of borough, private, independent living)	Gateshead (in-house)	IFA placements	
December	7	14	16	0	37
January	16	8	24	1	49
February	26	15	16	1	58
March	26	6	29	12	73
April	16	3	26	1	46
May	9	6	11	2	28
June	3	12	17	2	34
July	1	5	25	2	33
August	1	21	21	3	46
September	3	16	34	0	53
October	0	33	32	0	65
November	0	21	22	0	43
Total	108	160	273	24	565

The data demonstrates that from January 2017 to May 2017 there was a significant amount of missing episodes from our in house residential provision. However, these

missing episodes relate to a relatively small number of young people with one person having 115 missing episodes. Most of these were late returns and following intensive work and support from the staff this has reduced significantly.

In relation to out of borough residential, the high numbers of missing episodes relate again to a relatively small group of young people. One male young person went missing 58 times, another young man went missing 20 times and a female young person went missing 24 times, which accounts for 102 of the 160 missing episodes

In relation to children placed with in-house foster carers, the majority of these missing episodes relate to 9 young people, with the largest number of missing episodes relating to one young female who was missing a total of 57 times. This young person also accounted for the 12 missing episodes in March 2017 recorded for IFA placements and plans have been put in place to keep her safe

6. Other relevant information

MSET

In addition to being reviewed and monitored by their own social workers and care team, children who go missing regular from care are also monitored by the LSCB Missing, Sexually Exploited and Trafficked Sub Group (MSET).

The MSET is a multi-agency group chaired by the police and meets monthly, discussing individual cases where there are concerns around missing from home/care and or Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and/or Human Trafficking. MSET processes have recently been reviewed and strengthened, and a robust risk assessment and monitoring framework is in place for those cases of concern.

In 2016/17 there were 48 young people discussed at the MSET. During 2017, 45 young people were discussed. A number of these young people were discussed at MSET more than once, due to escalating concerns or for review.

Individual social workers attend the meeting to present the case, share information and receive information from other agencies. A diversion plan is then put in place to address and manage the presenting risks and concerns.

Representatives from children's homes and fostering homes are members of MSET, in addition to the Service Managers for LAC, Safeguarding and R&A/EDT. The team manager of the LAC & Young People's Team and Team Manager of the Fostering Team are also members to ensure that information from the meetings is disseminated appropriately.

In addition to discussing individual cases, MSET meetings also focus on wider areas of intelligence in Gateshead and other areas locally, for example known CSE "hot spots" in the borough or issues raised in MSET meetings elsewhere within the Northumbria Police force area. This information is then disseminated as appropriate so that professionals are alert to particular issues of concern.

Return interviews

When a child is reported missing from home or care for the second or subsequent time in a six month period or for a single episode lasting longer than 24 hours they are offered an Independent Return Interview. These interviews are undertaken by Youth Workers or a specialist CSE worker from the Children's Society's SCARPA project. The outcome of the return interview is shared with the young person's social worker, the police and any other relevant professionals. In cases where a Gateshead child is looked after and placed out of borough the information is also shared with the hosting local authority.

Participation levels for Return Interviews range between 8.3% and 66.7%, with an average of 50% participation in return interviews. Even where completed the young people are often quite reluctant to share the reasons why they have gone missing or absent.

Summary of reasons given by young people for going missing or absent

	Care	Home
Alcohol	24	10
Bullying	3	5
CSE	2	0
Drugs	24	10
Emotional	39	19
Physical	2	1
Planned	28	13
Sexual	7	4

Even though the uptake is approximately 50% it essential that this work continues as the information provided feeds into the MSET.

7. Case Scenario

The following outlines a typical response to a young person missing from children's home:

- Child A, a male aged 15 years is placed in Foster Care under a Care Order.
- The young person leaves goes out to meet friends at 6:30 and it is agreed he can return at 9:30pm. He does not return at this time and the foster carer tries to contact him via mobile phone but gets no answer.
- He has a history of coming home late (usually within 30 minutes) and he has occasionally stayed out overnight
- The foster carer allows him an hour before reporting him missing to the police. This had been agreed by the care team and formed part of his risk

assessment. The police wanted to class him as absent rather than missing, however as he was vulnerable and at risk of CSE the foster carer ensured that the police classed her as missing. They informed EDT of the missing episode, shared the Missing from Care details and gave them the police log number.

- His mum was informed and advised to inform staff should he arrive there.
- He returned to the placement at 11.30pm and the foster carer informed the police and EDT that he had returned to placement. They also informed his mum that he had returned.
- Police visit the foster carers home to ensure the young man was safe and to try and find out who he had been. He is unwilling to say where he has been, other than to say he was safe and was with friends.
- An Independent Return Interview in line with LSCB Missing from Care Procedures takes place, however no further information is shared about who he had been with.
- The care team meeting reviews the risk assessment and agrees actions.
- The young person has two further similar episodes in a 2 week period and the foster carer shares with all professionals that she is concerned that he is returning home under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs
- He is discussed at the MSET meeting, scrutinising the plan and considering the risk assessment and disruption plan to ensure a co-ordinated approach is taken to try and minimise risk and to get the young man to work with relevant professionals.
- He is subsequently re scored for the MSET pre meet 2 months later and professionals were happy that there had been no further missing episodes

8. Child Sexual exploitation

The sexual exploitation of children involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where the young person received 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common. A common feature of CSE is that the child or young person does not recognise the coercive nature of the relationship and does not see themselves as a victim of exploitation.

The service monitors the risks of child sexual exploitation very carefully. Currently there are 16 young people who are at risk of child sexual exploitation which is a 33% increase on the number last year. All the young people listed are currently female. The average age is 14 years old, with the youngest being 11 years old.

Processes have been developed to monitor and review these young people to ensure they are categorised appropriately and receive the right support and interventions, which include interventions to minimise risk, disrupt activity and develop incentives and sanctions. The plans are also scrutinised within the MSET meeting.

There is also an escalation process with senior management of the children and families service and the police to ensure further scrutiny is undertaken if the risks to a young person increase or interventions by professionals are having limited impact on the young person.

There is a comprehensive training programme for staff and foster carers to ensure all professionals working with young people at risk of CSE have the knowledge and skills to support and educate the young people

9. Sanctuary South

Operation Sanctuary North has been running since April 2015 and Sanctuary South has been live since Monday 4th April 2016. The two multi-agency operational teams were set up to tackle child exploitation, vulnerability and modern day slavery. This is a Northumbria Police led multi agency team operation to target the criminal behaviour of those who commit sexual offences against vulnerable women and children.

Sanctuary South covers the three local authorities in the South of the Northumbria area, Gateshead, Sunderland and South Tyneside. The co-location within a hub arrangement brings together children and adult social care services, health, the police and a broad range of third sector organisations including Bright Futures, Changing Lives and Barnados.

The multi – agency team adopt a non-police led victim strategy involving social services and the voluntary sector to secure on-going trust and confidence with potential complainants. There have been significant benefits from this approach and this has achieved active engagement from victims as well as access to specialist services at the earliest opportunity.

To further promote joint up working, the Sanctuary South Social Worker for Gateshead is an MSET Panel member, in addition, the pre-meet is also attended with Northumbria Police MFH Co-Ordinator and LSCB Safeguarding Children's Manager to consider the cases for MSET.

All Stage 1 CSE Screenings and Stage 2 Risk Assessments are discussed and this allows professional discussion/challenge as well as continued oversight of children who may be a risk CSE. The Sanctuary South Social Worker being a part of this process whilst being based in the multi-agency Sanctuary Team provides valuable links for potential / identified victims. It has led to joint visits to provide the young people with a consistent person from the Police and Social Care who have Sexual Exploitation knowledge and experience.

If risk assessments and discussion at MSET indicates the child is a medium or high risk of CSE then the Social Worker is also able to provide 1:1 intervention even if a crime has not been identified or investigated. This is in addition, but also feeds into any ongoing Care Plans. The intervention consists of prevention work as well as ongoing education work in a bid to assist with the young person being able to identify exploitative behaviours.

Flexibility around appointments is promoted to provide as many opportunities for the child to engage in the work. As well as acknowledging risks; by undertaking this specialist work it also assists in identifying the young person's understanding and this can lead to highlighting strengths and strategies and any reduction in risks. Any cases which lead to a trial / Court action, the Social Worker provides ongoing support through that process, and again a consistent point of contact.

The funding for these posts has been reviewed and it is hoped this resource will continue to be supported by the police and partner agencies, within the new safeguarding arrangements.

10. Practice developments

Northumbria police continue to have 3 dedicated Missing from Home Coordinators with a remit to improve the police response when someone is reported missing, and to work strategically with partners to reduce the numbers of children and young people reported missing from care. The coordinator from the Central area works closely with the Service Director- Social Work, Children and Families, the LSCB Business Manager, the Local authority Children's Home and Private Children's Homes within Gateshead.

The LSCB Business Manager has continued to work closely with the SCARPA project of the Children's Society as part of their work to establish a "hub and spoke" model following a number of years of successful work in Newcastle. The worker provides training to partner agency staff in statutory services, including social workers, residential staff and foster carers, on sexual exploitation and provide case-based advice to frontline staff.

There has also been the development of a strategic MSET group which the operational MSET group also reports. This group is developing further awareness and strategic plans linking resources to the CSE focus developing multi agency information and training.

The LSCB continues to receive written reports three times a year on children who go missing from home and care and are at risk of sexual exploitation.

The local authority continues to work to develop a system to capture and share accurate and meaningful information on missing from care episodes with the LSCB.

The local authority will continue to work with the LSCB to strengthen work to protect those young people vulnerable to sexual exploitation

11. Recommendation

It is requested that the Looked After Children Overview and Scrutiny Committee continue to receive an annual report on missing from care issues within Learning and Children.

CONTACT: Jill Little
Service Manager
Looked After Children and Corporate Parenting
Ext 3420

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TITLE OF REPORT: Annual Work Programme

REPORT OF: Sheena Ramsey, Chief Executive
Mike Barker, Strategic Director, Corporate Services and
Governance

Summary

The report sets out the provisional work programme for Corporate Parenting Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2017/18.

1. The Committee's provisional work programme was endorsed at the meeting held on 20 March 2017 and Councillors have agreed that further reports will be brought to future meetings to highlight current issues / identify any changes/additions to this programme.
2. Appendix 1 sets out the work programme as it currently stands. Any changes proposed to the programme will be set out in bold and italics for ease of identification.

Recommendations

3. The Committee is asked to
 - a) Note the provisional programme;
 - b) Note that further reports on the work programme will be brought to the Committee to identify any additional policy issues, which the Committee may be asked to consider.

Contact: Angela Frisby

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APPENDIX 1

Draft Corporate Parenting OSC 2017/18	
10 July 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEN and LAC • Fostering Service Annual Report • Support for Disabled LAC • Regulation 44 Report
9 October 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young People’s Presentation – Digital Me Project • Performance Overview (incl update on Ofsted – specific LAC Improvement Plan) • Support for Care Leavers • Work Programme • Regulation 44 Report
15 January 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missing from Care Annual Report • Education Annual Report (incl focus on employment / training / apprenticeships) • Adoption Annual Report 2017 • Health of LAC Annual report (incl update on Foetal Alcohol Syndrome) • Work Programme • Regulation 44 Report
26 March 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young People’s presentation • Performance Overview • Case Study – Performance / Planning / Safeguarding of Care Leavers • Work Programme • Regulation 44 Report

Issues to slot in:

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

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