

# CORPORATE PARENTING SUB OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AGENDA

Thursday, 17 October 2019 at 4.30 pm in the Bridges Room - Civic Centre

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From the Chief Executive, Sheena Ramsey

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| Item | Business  |      |   |   |   |
|------|---|------|---|---|---|
| 1    | <b>Apologies</b>  |      |   |   |   |
| 2    | <b>Minutes</b> (Pages 3 - 8)<br><br>The Committee is asked to approve as a correct record the minutes of the last meeting held on 4 July 2019   |      |   |   |   |
| 3    | <b>Young People's Presentation</b>  |      |   |   |   |
| 4    | <b>Performance Overview</b> (Pages 9 - 22)<br><br>Report of the Strategic Director, Care Wellbeing and Learning   |      |   |   |   |
| 5    | <b>Progress in relation to reducing the number of LAC and Children subject to Child Protection Plans</b> (Pages 23 - 32)<br><br>Report of Strategic Director, Care Wellbeing and Learning   |      |   |   |   |
| 6    | <b>Work Programme</b> (Pages 33 - 36)<br><br>Joint Report of the Chief Executive and Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance  |      |   |   |   |
| 7    | <b>Exclusion of Press and Public</b><br><br>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: <table border="1" data-bbox="255 1568 1276 1724"> <thead> <tr> <th>Item</th> <th>Paragraphs of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>8</td> <td>1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | Item | Paragraphs of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 | 8 | 1 |
| Item | Paragraphs of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972   |      |   |   |   |
| 8    | 1   |      |   |   |   |
| 8    | <b>Regulation 44 Report and Residential Placement Sufficiency Update</b> (Pages 37 - 42)<br><br>Report of Strategic Director, Care Wellbeing and Learning   |      |   |   |   |

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

**Thursday, 4 July 2019**

**PRESENT:** Councillor B Oliphant (Chair)

Councillor(s): M Hall, D Bradford, P Craig, S Craig,  
C Davison, M Ord, R Oxberry and N Weatherley

**CP1 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Clelland, Councillor McMaster, Councillor McCartney and co-opted members Penny St Bernard and Malcolm Hedley.

**CP2 MINUTES**

RESOLVED - The minutes of the last meeting held on 28 March 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

**CP3 CONSTITUTION**

RESOLVED - That the Constitution of the Committee and the appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair as approved by the Council for the current municipal year be noted.

**CP4 GATESHEAD COUNCIL ADOPTION SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT**

Committee received the annual report on the Adoption Service. As was required by all local authorities a regional adoption agency was formed, Adopt North East, the adoption team moved from December 2018 so the report only covers activity from April 2018 until December 2018.

It was reported that LAC numbers remained relatively static. There was a reduction in the number of 6-8 year olds coming into care and the largest increase was 9-11 year olds.

From April 2018 to March 2019 there were 28 children placed for adoption, 10 girls and 18 boys. There were 18 children placed individually and 10 children were part of a sibling group, five groups of two children. It was acknowledged that the performance was good in terms of keeping siblings together.

46% of the adoptions were done within best interest timescale, this performance has decreased since the same period last year. However it was confirmed that this was due to delays in DBS checks which affected a sibling group of three, as well as delays in family finding due to concerns around foetal alcohol spectrum disorder and external family finding to reflect the child's cultural background. It was acknowledged that there is a balance between keeping sibling groups together and ensuring best interest timescales are met.

Committee was advised that for the period April 2018 until November 2018, 14 adoptive families were approved, in total 12 matches were made before the team moved to Adopt North East. It was clarified that the Council still has oversight of matches and Elaine Devaney is the agency decision maker, however the agency has responsibility for family finding and recruitment of adopters. It was also noted that the Early Permanence Group still meets on a monthly basis so officers are aware of any drift or delay.

It was questioned if there are any breakdown of placements. It was confirmed that there are not a lot of breakdowns, approximately one per year, these are usually in relation to older children with complex needs. Committee was advised that there is also the Adoption Support Team in place so there is a robust package of support available to prevent adoption breakdowns. If this happens follow up work is carried out through disruption meetings, however there are very few cases.

RESOLVED - That the Committee noted the performance of the adoption service in 2018/19 and noted the changes in service delivery.

## **CP5 PLACEMENT SUFFICIENCY**

Committee received a report on Gateshead's Fostering Service outlining performance over the last 12 months.

Committee was advised that payment for skills scheme continues which supports the best possible Foster Carers to meet the needs of children and young people. Over half of placements (51%) of placements were requested as emergencies, this figure is similar to previous years.

It was reported that there is not always a lot of spare capacity for emergency placements, this is due to an aging population of Foster Carers which is a challenge across the region. The Marketing and Recruitment Officer is currently working with Corporate Communications to develop a range of ways of encouraging new Foster Carers. More community based resources are being used, for example attendance at local food markets, as well as a lot of digital marketing. The most successful channels with which to promote foster caring in Gateshead has been through the Council's website, radio adverts, Council News, leaflet drops and local press as well as bridge banners, however this is no longer allowed due to health and safety reasons. It was noted that Facebook is becoming a more popular way of advertising. The aim is to recruit 30 new Foster Carers this year. Committee was advised that as a local authority we offer very good support and a lot of Foster

Carers choose Gateshead as they are aware of the quality of training and support offered.

It was questioned what causes potential Foster Carers to drop out of the assessment process early. It was explained that sometimes they realise it is not right for them as a family. During the initial visit the social worker will explore their reasons for wanting to foster and give them further information on what is entailed, this can initially discourage people. Pre-approval training is also carried out followed by assessment and once passed they are referred through to Panel. It was noted that there is an eight month timescale to get to Fostering Panel.

Committee queried what training has to be undertaken. It was confirmed that all Foster Carers must do standard training within 12 months, depending on the level of Foster Care depends on the number of courses required. It was also noted that for certain Foster Carers specific training will be identified around the needs of a child in their care.

It was questioned what type of issues would make a potential Foster Carer unsuitable. This would include such things as non-disclosure of an offence, attitude and value base. Committee was advised that it can be very individual and is about the assessor and how they assess whether the skills will transfer to foster caring.

Committee questioned how those Foster Carers who are dealing with challenging young people are supported. It was noted that all Foster Carers undergo robust assessments and are supervised on a monthly basis so that any concerns can be dealt with immediately. Action plans can also be put in place where there are concerns. Standard of care meetings are also held to ensure Foster Carers are meeting standards.

RESOLVED - That the Committee noted the report.

## **CP6 EARLY PERMANENCE**

Committee received a report on early permanence, this includes Fostering for Adoption and Concurrent Planning. This ensures permanent care arrangements are secured as quickly as possible.

It was noted that the Adopt North East Early Permanence Project is funded by the DfE, the aim of which is to embed early permanence planning through cross-sector expertise, best practice sharing and upskilling the workforce. There is a drive to recruit more adopters willing to foster first, this ensures a more seamless transition and avoids disruptions in a child's life, as well as helping them to bond and make attachments with adopters. Usually if a placement is not a foster to adopt the child or young person will be with a Foster Carer for a year before settling with its adoptive parent. It was acknowledged that this can be quite a disruption in a child's life.

It was reported that as of June 2019 there were 28 children and young people in the adoption process with only 2 of those being in foster to adopt placements. Over the

last three years seven babies have been in foster to adopt placements, all of which have been successful.

Committee was advised that Adopt North East take the view that if there is a chance of a child reuniting with its birth family they would not be placed in a foster to adopt placement.

It was noted that in Gateshead the average time between court approval and being matched with an adopter is 4.28 months. From entering care to being placed for adoption children in Gateshead wait on average just over one year. Although this figure is less than the national average there will be more work undertaken to get more foster to adopt placements. It was pointed out that adults are not always keen to take the risk of fostering to adopt, however in those cases where it has worked there has been very positive feedback.

Committee questioned why only babies are subjects of fostering to adopt arrangements. Committee was advised that this is such a new process and most adopters only want babies so that they are with the family from the start. Also, once a child is 2 or 3 there is more likely to be disruption trauma as they have made links with their foster family, this creates more issues. It was also noted that the babies successfully placed in foster to adopt placements are those babies from families which the teams have had dealings with, for example where the baby is the fourth or fifth child, where there is less risk of the court not awarding a placement order.

RESOLVED - That the Committee noted the content of the report and noted the Early Permanence process.

## **CP7 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee received the report setting out the provisional work programme for the municipal year 2019/20.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That Committee endorsed the provisional work programme for 2019/20.
  - (ii) That Committee noted that further reports will be brought to the Committee to identify any additional issues which the Committee may be asked to consider.

## **CP8 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

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

**CP9 REGULATION 44 REPORT**

The Committee received a report outlining Ofsted regulation 44 independent visits and inspection outcomes carried out in the Council's children's homes between April and June 2019.

RESOLVED - That Committee noted the contents of the report.

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**CORPORATE PARENTING  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
17 October 2019**

**TITLE OF REPORT:** Looked After Children Performance Overview

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

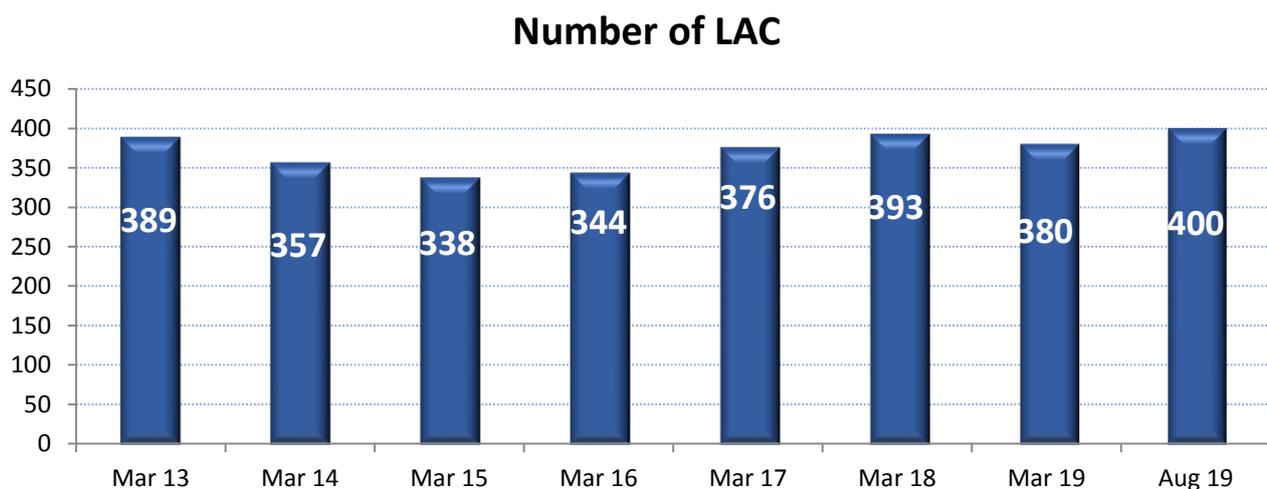
**Section 1: Purpose**

- 1.1 This report provides statistics relating to looked after children in Gateshead and covers the period up to the end of August 2019. The report focusses on providing key characteristic data linked to those children who are currently looked after, and those who started and ceased to be looked after over the previous 12 months.
- 1.2 The report also includes a performance scorecard in appendix 1 which provides the latest position for key looked after children performance measures, with performance data up to the end of August 2019 (the latest available at the time of writing the report). A summary of the performance measures is described in section 3.
- 1.3 Corporate Parenting Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members are asked to receive this report for information, and to identify any areas they feel they require more information about or require further scrutiny.

**Section 2: Looked after children statistics**

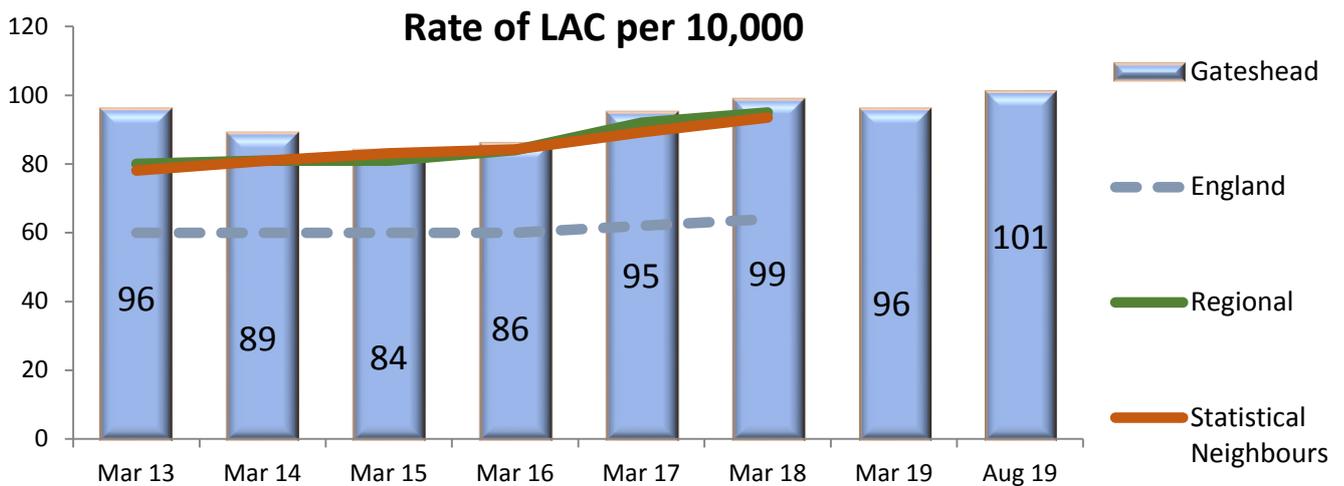
**How many looked after children do we have, and how does that compare to other areas?**

*Chart 1: number of LAC*



- 2.1 Chart 1 shows at the end of August 2019, 400 children and young people were classed as being Looked After. The 400 LAC children come from 271 different families. Since the end of the March 2019, when the figure was 380, we have experienced an increase of 5.3% in the number of looked after children.

Chart 2: Rate of LAC per 10,000 population

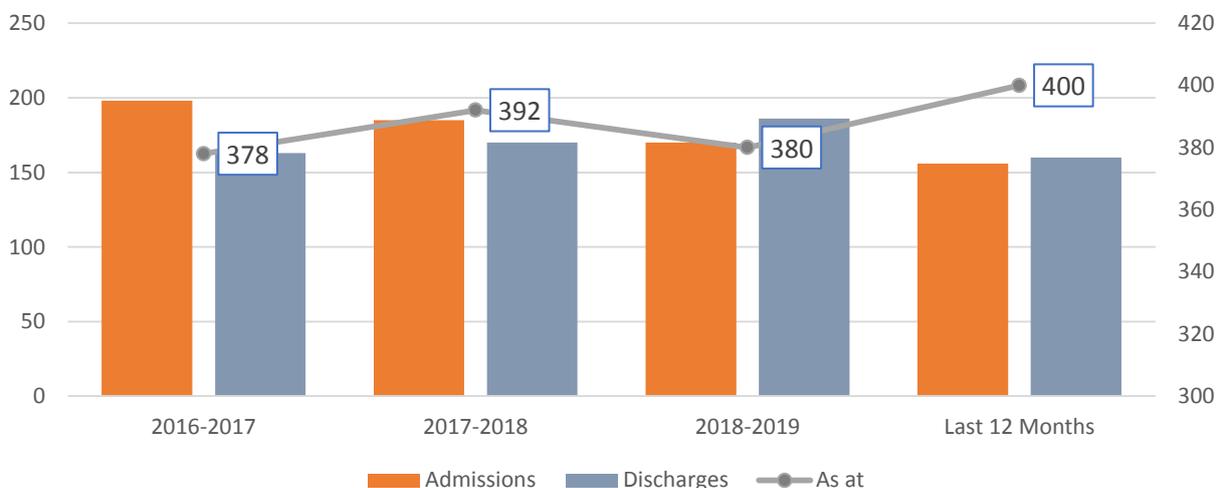


2.2 400 looked after children equals a rate per 10,000 of 101. Chart 2 shows our current rate of LAC compared with the latest statistical neighbour, regional and England averages as remaining higher than all the benchmarking groups. We are waiting for latest regional and national figures to be published for 2018/19 (which are due in November), however end of year monitoring by the Association of Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS) suggest the regional average has increased to nearly 100 per 10,000 in 2018/19, meaning we are more in line with the regional picture.

**How many children entered care and how many children and young people left care**

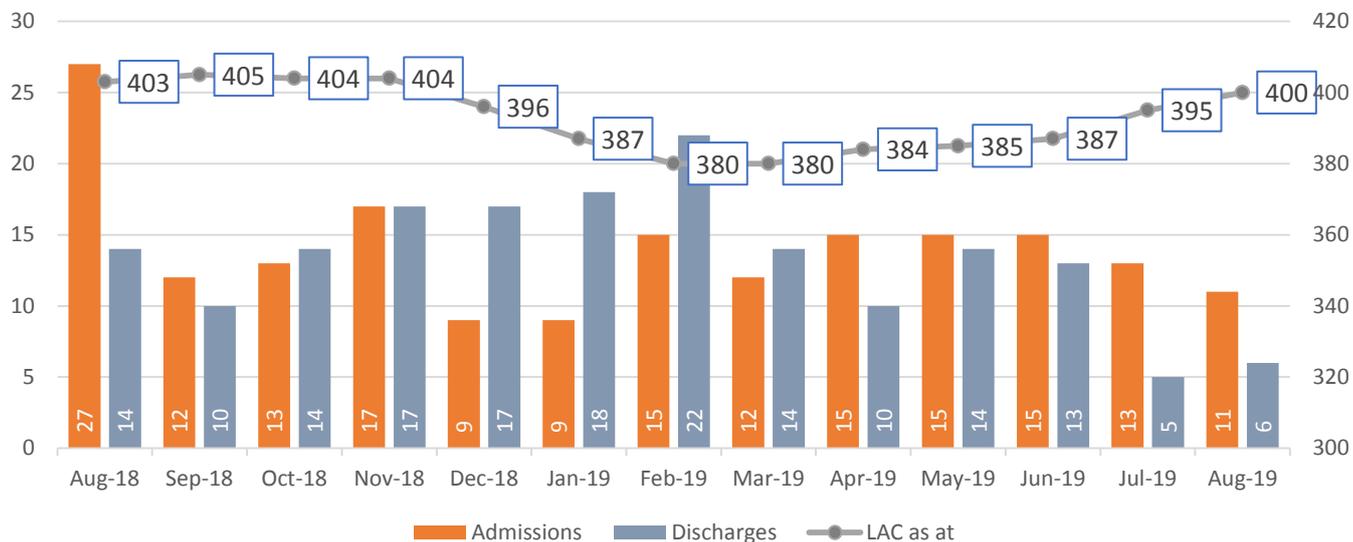
2.3 The following charts illustrate that over the last 12 months, we have discharged slightly more children (160 – Chart 3), than we have admitted (156), resulting in a net loss of 4 young people. There is an ongoing trend that we are admitted fewer children to the LAC system than in previous years. Gateshead have admitted around 15% less children in the last 12 months than the 3 year average of 184 admissions.

**Chart 3: Looked after children admissions & discharges**



2.4 However, during the last 12 months period (Chart 4), the LAC figure has dropped as low as 380 (March 2019), and higher admissions than discharges month on month since April has seen the figure climb back to 400. In July and August 2019, there were an unusually low number of discharges (5 in July, 6 in August).

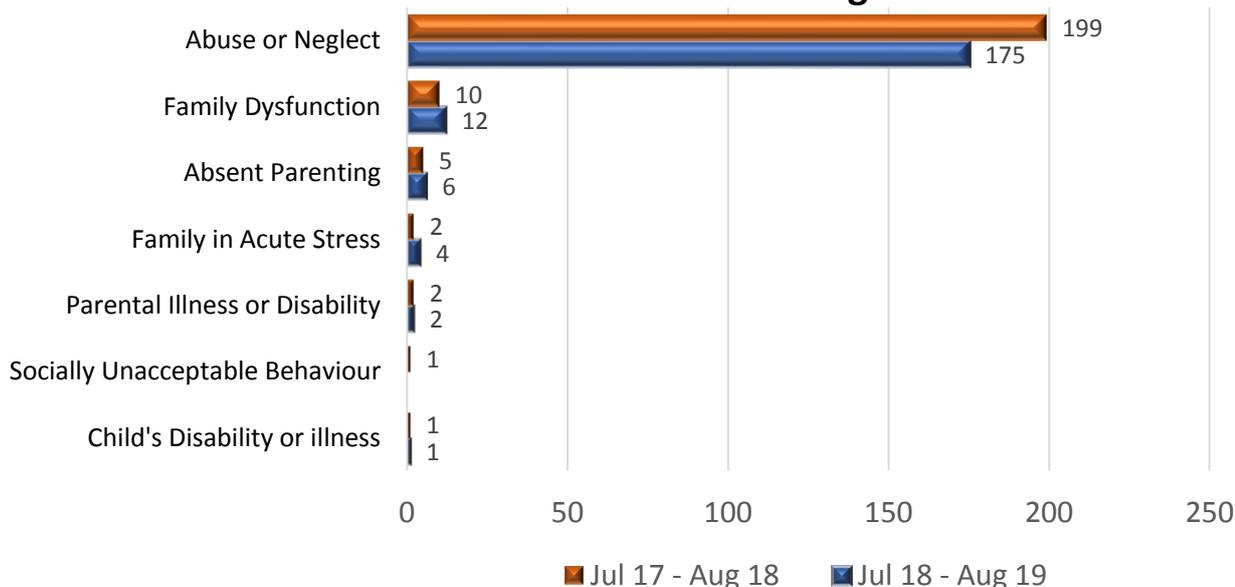
**Chart 4: Looked after children admissions & discharges**



2.5 In the last 12 months ending August 2019 the lowest number of admissions in a month was 9 and the highest 27. While for children leaving care, the lowest number was 5 and the largest 22.

Chart 5: Primary need category for those entering care

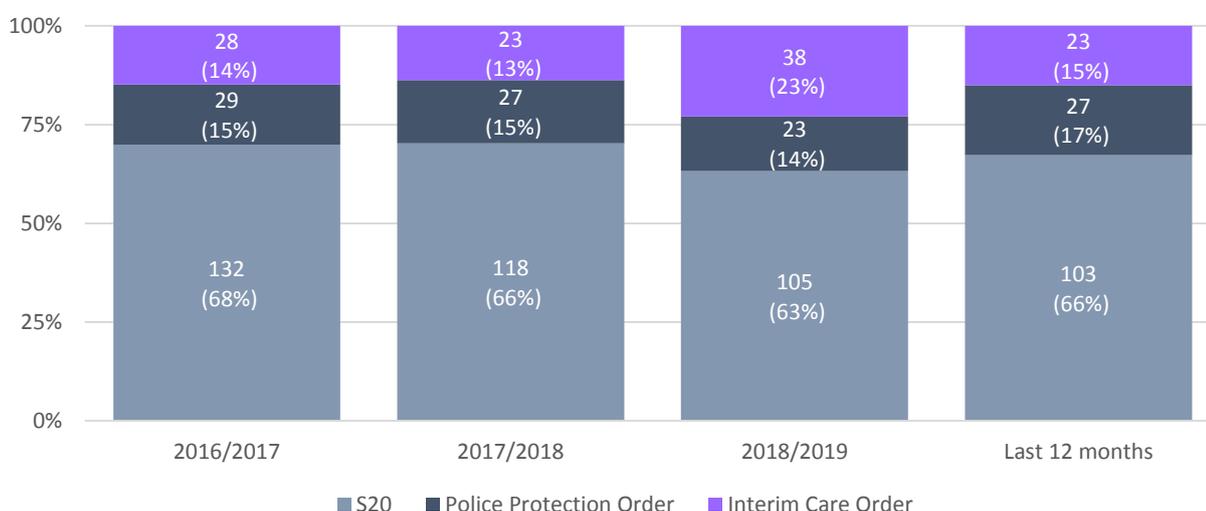
**Chart 5: Reasons for entering care**



2.6 Chart 5 above provides an indication of primary need categories for children who entered care. Primary need codes do not provide the exact reason for admission, which will vary by case however help in identifying the broad circumstances for why a child may need to come into care. The definitions for each of the categories in the chart is included in appendix 3 of this report.

2.7 Chart 6 shows the largest category in each year by far was Abuse or Neglect, which accounted for 88% of children who entered care in 2018/19 and 90% in 2017/18. The definition for the category is “*Children in need as a result of, or at risk of, abuse or neglect; also includes children at risk because of domestic violence*” (note this does not mean Domestic Violence has to be a factor in the case). There have been increases in the number of children admitted into care under family dysfunction, family in acute stress and absent parenting.

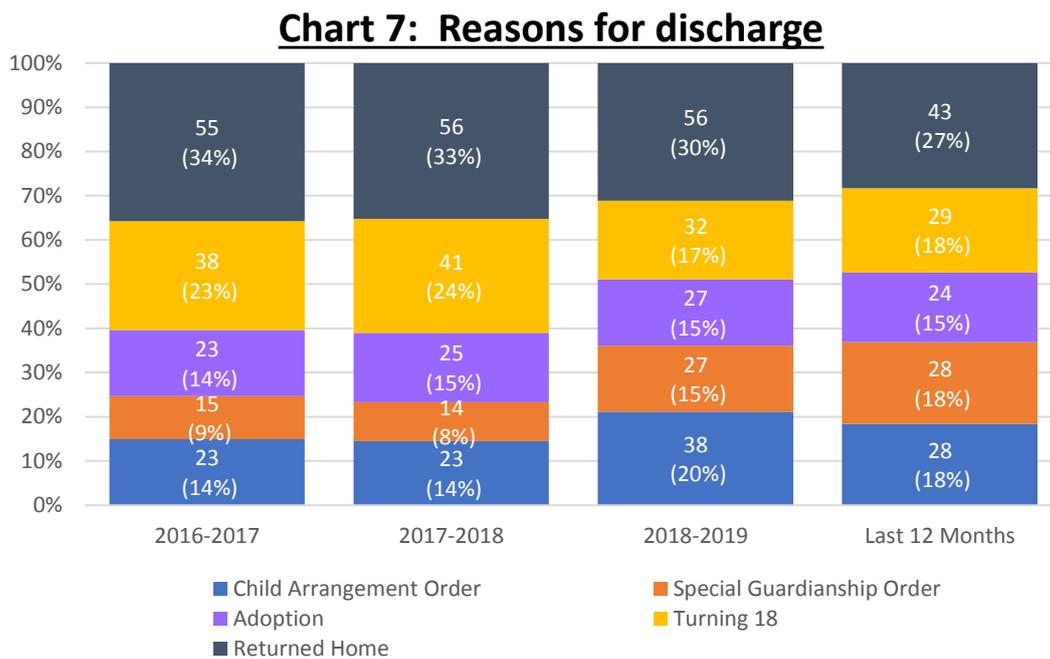
**Chart 6: LAC Admissions by legal status**



2.8 Children being admitted to care under a section 20 agreement has consistently accounted for the highest proportion of legal orders that a child has come into care for in Gateshead (66%/103 – see Chart 6). During 2018/2019 children were admitted to care under a higher proportion of interim care orders than in previous years (23% / 38 children), but in the last 12 months this has dropped back down to 15% (23 children).

2.9 The number of discharges over the last 3 full financial years has increased (from 163 in 16/17 to 186 in 18/19), the last 12 months shows it to be lower than the figure reported in 16/17 (See Chart 7 below). The reasons for discharge have also changed over time, with fewer young people returning home in the last 12 months (43), and fewer young people also leaving care on their 18th birthday (29 / 18%). There have, however, been increases in children leaving care after being placed on a child arrangement order (28/18%) and special guardianship orders (28/18%). Adoptions, as a proportion and a number have remained consistent (ranging between 23 – 27/ 14 – 15%).

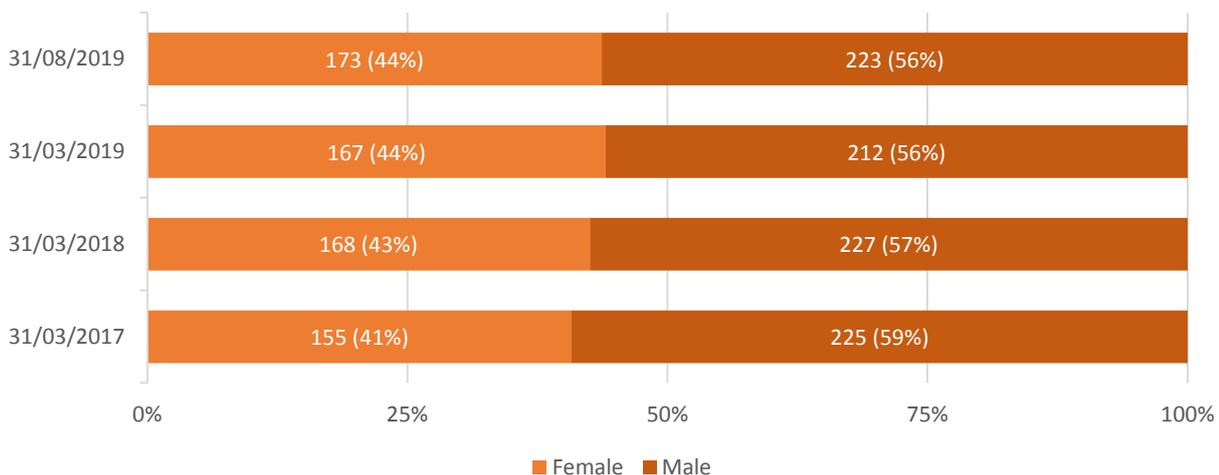
Chart 7: Reason why the child or young person left care



**What are the characteristics of our current looked after population**

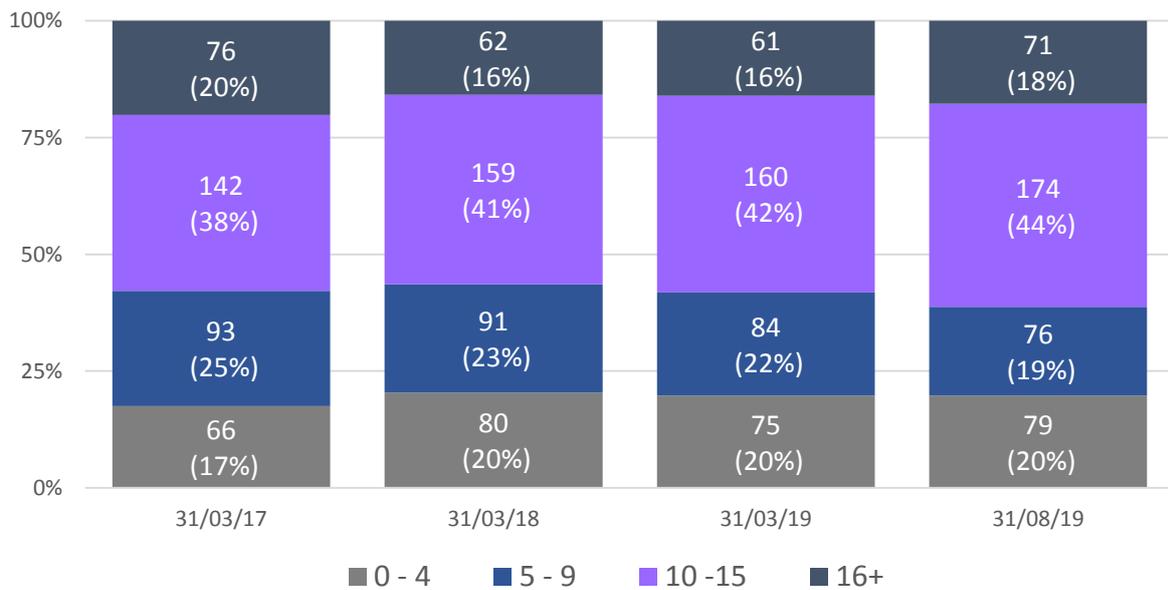
2.10 The gender split of looked after children in Gateshead has remained fairly consistent over time, with males representing 56% of our current looked after cohort.

**Chart 8: Current LAC by gender**



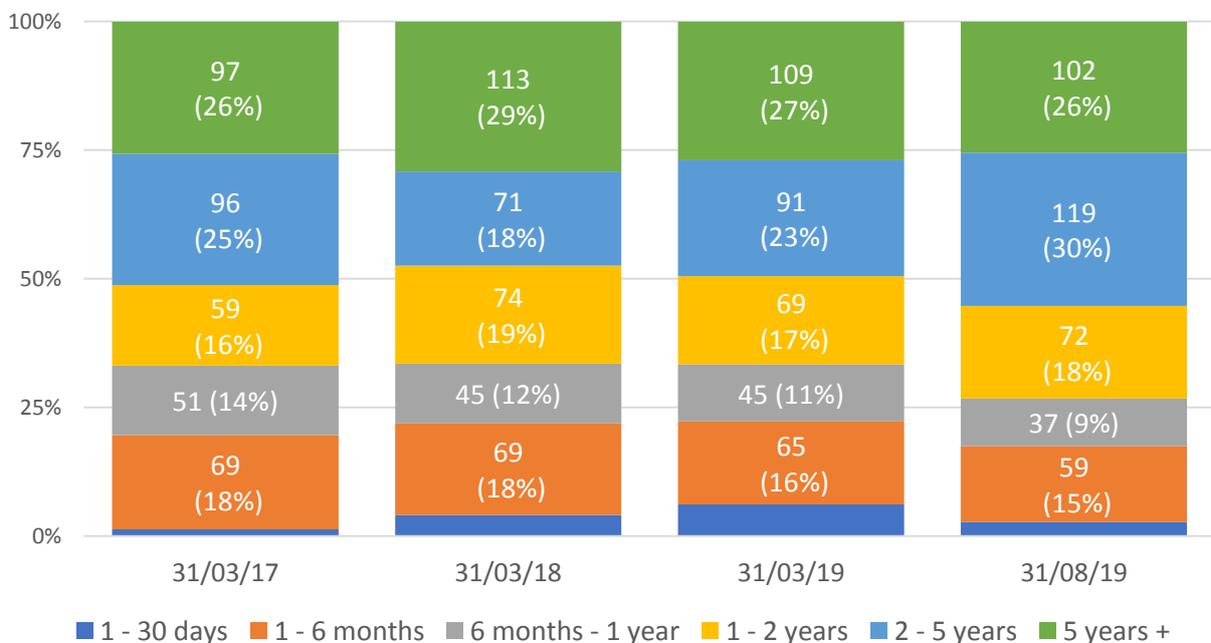
2.11 44% (174) of our current LAC are aged between 10 and 15 years old. Whilst the proportion was similar at the end of March 2019 and March 2018 (42%/41%), it is much higher than in March 2017 when 38% of looked after children were in that age band. There are less 5 – 9 year olds in care now (76) than there were in March 2017 (93), but more 0 – 4 year olds (79 compared to 66).

**Chart 9: Current LAC by age**

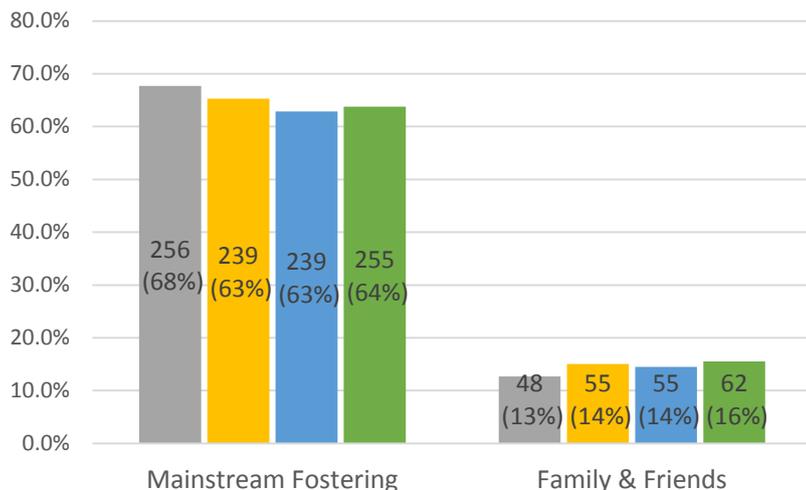


2.12 A quarter of our current LAC cohort have been in care for more than 5 years (102 / 26%), which is slightly lower than March 2018 and March 2019 but is generally consistent with previous years. There is also a much larger proportion of children who have been in care for between 2 – 5 years (119 / 30%). Less children have been in care for between 1 day and 12 months which would tie in with Gateshead’s lower admissions over the last 12 months.

**Chart 10 : Current LAC Duration**



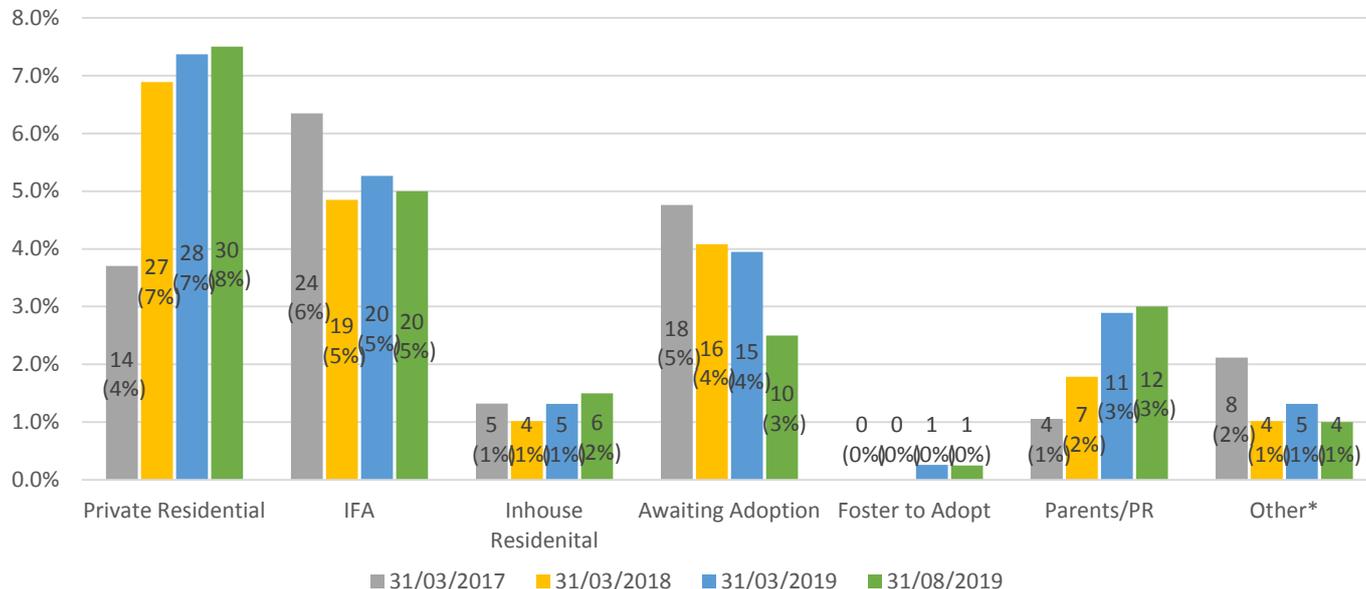
## Chart 11a: LAC by placement type



The majority of Gateshead's current LAC are placed in mainstream fostering placements (255 / 64% - see Chart 11a). This is a similar proportion that is reported at the end of the last 3 financial years. Family and friend placements make up 16% of the cohort (62), which is a small increase compared to March 2017 when that type of placement accounted for 13% of placements.

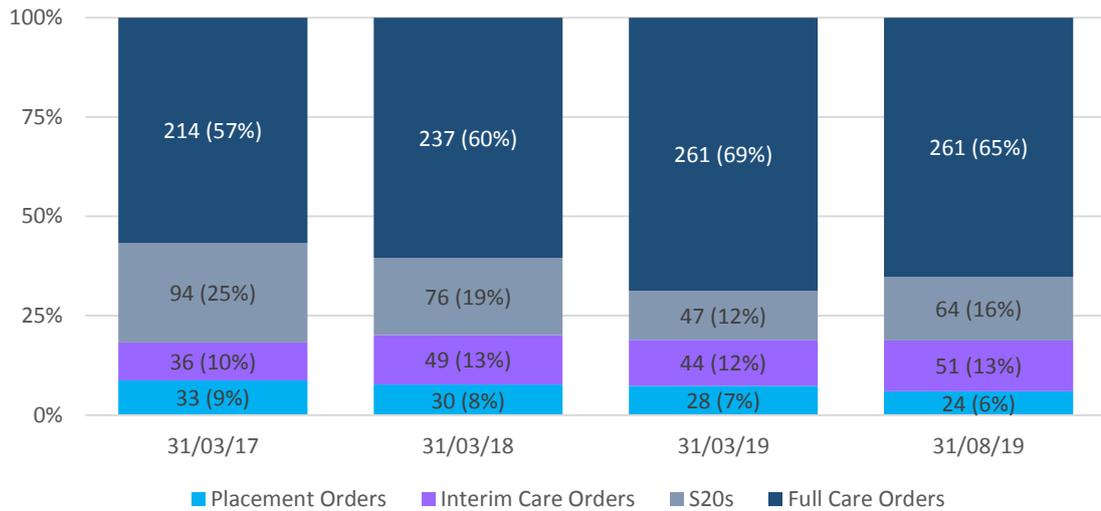
2.13 Chart 11b shows that almost double the number of children are placed in private residential placements (8%/30) compared to March 2017 when private residential placements accounted for 4% (14) of placements. Children awaiting adoption has also seen a reduction from (3% down from 5%), whilst those children placed with parents has increased from 1% to 3% of placements.

## Chart 11b: LAC by placement type



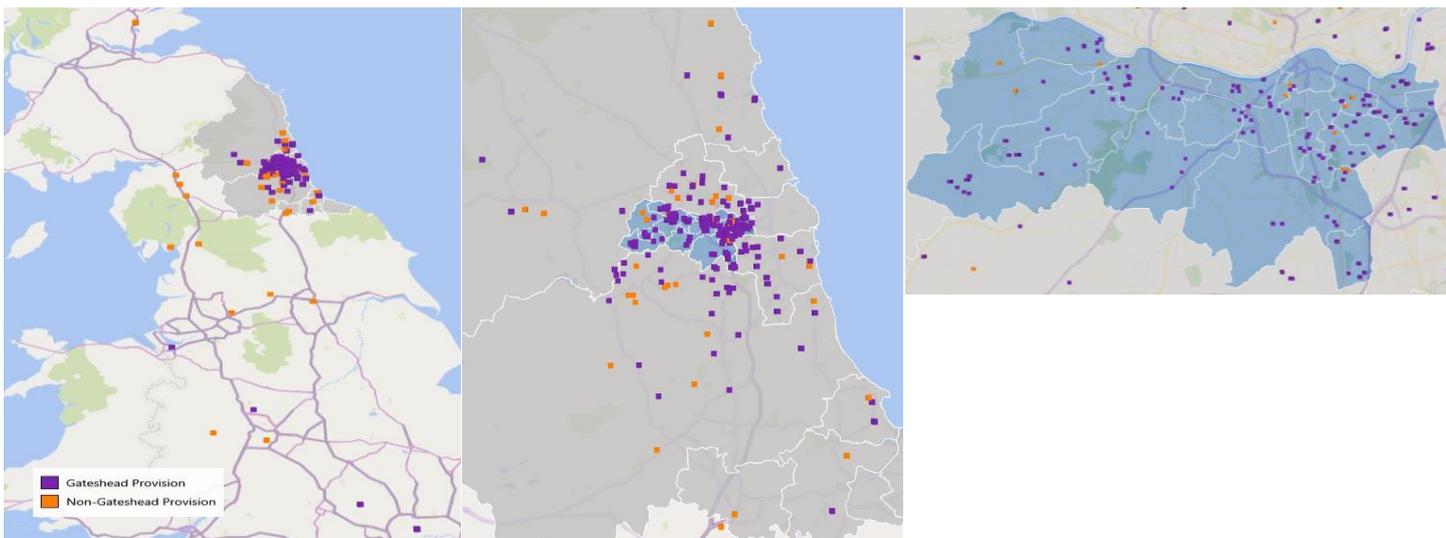
2.14 Chart 12 shows that the legal status of our current looked after cohort has remained fairly consistent between end of March 2019 and August 2019, although the number of children on section 20s has decreased longer term from 94 (25%) to 64 (16%) between March 2017 and August 2019. There are also more children on full care orders (261 / 65%) compared to March 2017 (214 / 57%).

**Chart 12: Current LAC by legal status**



2.15 Figure 13 (below) shows the overall numbers of children who are placed out of borough. By out of borough we mean physically outside of the Gateshead Local Authority boundary area, this will include both Gateshead owned provision and independent.

Figure 13: Number of children placed physically out of borough (OOB)



2.16 Figure 14 shows the local authority area the child is placed, which is grouped by region along with the number of those placed out of borough are in non-Gateshead Local Authority owned provision.

At the end of August 2019, 178 children and young people (which is 44% of the total number of LAC) were placed physically outside of the borough a reduction from 193 at the end of August 2018. Of those 132 (74%) were within the North East region. Of the 178 placed geographically outside of Gateshead 132 (74%) were in Gateshead Local Authority provision. We had 46 LAC who were placed physically outside the Gateshead authority boundary in independent provision, again the majority of which were within the North East. Also included in this number were 12 children who were placed in their adoptive placements.

Figure 14: Number of children placed physically out of borough (OOB)

| Region               | Local Authority     | Aug 18     | Of which were Gateshead own provision | Aug 19     | Of which were Gateshead own provision | Change in numbers (Aug 18 to Aug 19) |
|----------------------|---------------------|------------|---------------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| North East           | Durham              | 69         | 59                                    | 56         | 44                                    | -15                                  |
|                      | Sunderland          | 38         | 30                                    | 36         | 32                                    | 2                                    |
|                      | Newcastle Upon Tyne | 34         | 26                                    | 29         | 21                                    | -5                                   |
|                      | Northumberland      | 16         | 13                                    | 15         | 11                                    | -2                                   |
|                      | South Tyneside      | 8          | 8                                     | 6          | 6                                     | -2                                   |
|                      | Darlington          | 1          |                                       | 2          |                                       | 0                                    |
|                      | North Tyneside      | 2          |                                       | 1          |                                       | 0                                    |
|                      | Hartlepool          | 1          |                                       | 3          | 2                                     | 2                                    |
|                      | Stockton            | 3          | 1                                     | 3          | 1                                     | 0                                    |
|                      | Middlesbrough       | 1          |                                       |            |                                       | 0                                    |
| East of England      | Lincolnshire        |            |                                       |            |                                       | 0                                    |
|                      | Peterborough        | 1          |                                       |            |                                       | 0                                    |
| Yorkshire and Humber | Bradford            | 1          |                                       | 1          |                                       | 0                                    |
|                      | Doncaster           |            |                                       |            |                                       | 0                                    |
|                      | Wakefield           |            |                                       | 1          |                                       | 0                                    |
| West Midlands        | Birmingham          |            |                                       | 1          |                                       | 0                                    |
|                      | Staffordshire       |            |                                       |            |                                       | 0                                    |
| North West           | Wirral              |            |                                       |            |                                       | 0                                    |
|                      | Cheshire            |            |                                       | 1          | 1                                     | 1                                    |
|                      | Cumbria / Carlisle  | 4          |                                       | 5          |                                       | 0                                    |
|                      | Rochdale            |            |                                       | 1          |                                       | 0                                    |
|                      | Shropshire          |            |                                       | 1          |                                       | 0                                    |
| Outer London         | Barnet              | 3          | 3                                     | 3          | 3                                     | 0                                    |
| Scotland             | Glasgow             | 1          | 1                                     |            |                                       | -1                                   |
|                      | Perth & Kinross     |            |                                       | 1          |                                       | 0                                    |
| Other                | Adoptive placement  | 10         | 10                                    | 12         | 11                                    | 1                                    |
| <b>Total Number</b>  |                     | <b>193</b> | <b>151</b>                            | <b>178</b> | <b>132</b>                            | <b>-19</b>                           |
| <b>Total %</b>       |                     |            | <b>78.2%</b>                          |            | <b>74.2%</b>                          |                                      |

## Section 3: Performance overview – Key LAC performance indicators

- 3.1 Appendix 1 at the end of this report provides a performance scorecard for 7 key looked after children performance indicators. The scorecard indicates if in year targets are currently being met, and a direction of travel compared to the same time last year.
- 3.2 In summary the scorecard shows the following, with additional detail for all the indicators is provided below:
- **4 indicator targets are currently being met** (stability of LAC – 3 or more placements, stability of LAC – long-term stability, proportion of children ceasing LAC under SGO or adoption, timeliness of adoptions)
  - **1 indicator has currently not meet their target** (LAC reviews within timescales)
  - **2 indicators have ammended** and targets will be revised and set when 2018/19 comparative data is published in nov 19. Both however are showing a improving trend from last year.

### LAC reviews

- 3.3 **LAC reviews** - Ensuring a child's care plans is being reviewed and implemented in timely manner is a key priority of the Safeguarding Children Unit. Close monitoring processes ensure nearly all reviews happen within statutory timescales. A total of 353 LAC reviews for 302 eligible LAC have been completed during April-August 2019. Of the 302, only one (99.7%) was have been reviewed outside the statutory timescales. This was a result of human error in predicting the next required date. The process for scheduling reviews has been improved and the service now receives a weekly report highlighting any reviews that have been scheduled that may take place out of timescale to try and mitigate this error in the future.

### Placement Stability

- 3.4 Research shows the importance of the stability of young people's placements as important in ensuring they have positive outcomes. Overall performance in relation to affording young people stability remains good and has been for some time.
- 3.5 **Three or more placements** - at the end of August 2019, there were 6 out of 400 children looked after who had experienced 3 or more placement moves in the previous 12 months (1.5%). At the same time last year there were 8 out of a total of 403 Looked after children (2%). Our performance compares favourably with the national picture where around 10% of children have experienced 3 or more placement moves on average.
- 3.6 **Long-term stability** - A further measure of stability looks at the stability of those children who have been in long-term placements. There were 104 out of 138 children who have been looked after for over 2 and half years who had been living in the same placement for at least 2 years (75.4%). At the same time last year there were 107 out of 132 children in the same placement (81%).

## Adoption and Special Guardianship Orders (SGO)

- 3.7 **Adoptions of Looked After Children and SGO** - The 2018 England average (we are awaiting publication of the 2019 average) for children who ceased to be looked after who were adopted was 13%, and for children who left care on an SGO was 12%, a combined total of 25%. Our local target of 26% has been calculated based on this national comparison when the combined figure was 26%. During the period April to August 2019 there were 10 children who had been looked after for over 6 months and had been adopted and 8 children have left care on a SGO. During the period there were a total of 48 children who have left care giving an overall performance of 37.5%. At the same time last year there were 13 (12 adoptions/1 SGO) out of 68 (19.1%) so a significant improvement.
- 3.8 **Timeliness of placements of looked after children for adoption** - During April to August 2019, 10 adoptions took place, all of which were within the best interest date timescale (100%). At the same point last year there were 13 adoptions, of which 5 were within time (38%).

## Care Leavers

- 3.9 Nationally, young people leaving care have significantly poorer outcomes than their peers in relation to education, training and employment (EET). When young people enter care, some as late as 13 to 17 years of age, their educational attainment levels are often well behind those of same age young people in the general population and therefore when they leave care they need additional support from the service. There are currently 117 care leavers aged 17-21 in touch with our leaving care team
- 3.10 **Education Employment or Training** – of the 105 allocated care leavers that we are in touch with, 60 (57%) of them are in some form of education, employment and training. This is an improvement on the 54.8% that we reported at the same time last year.
- 3.11 Without young people leaving care having somewhere appropriate to live, it is unlikely that care leavers would be able to sustain education, employment or training. Improving the quality and choice of housing is crucial to improving the stability and engagement of care leavers in education, employment and training.
- 3.12 **Suitable accommodation** – At the end of August, 99% of care leavers were deemed to be in suitable accommodation. We have identified 1 young person as being in unsuitable accommodation (in custody).

## **4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Committee is asked to note the content of the report and identify if there are any other areas for which it requires further information.

### **Contact Officer:**

Jon Gaines, Service Manager Quality Assurance  
Tel: x3484

## Appendix 1: Performance Scorecard

| Ref     | Theme                                    | Indicator Description  | Previous Year End 2018/19 | Current Month Previous Year (2018/19) | Performance Latest in the current year (2019/20) | Target for 2018/19 | RAG rating against current target. | Trend (Compared to same time last year) | Comments   |
|---------|--|--|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|--------------------|------------------------------------|---|--|
| 1       | LAC reviews                              | NI 066 Looked after children cases which were reviewed within required timescales                | 99.15%                    | 100.00%                               | <b>99.67%</b>                                    | 100%               | Not Met Target                     | →                                       | <p>A total of 353 LAC reviews for 302 eligible LAC have been completed during April-August 2019. Only one was completed out of timescale.</p> <p>At the same time last year there were 291 out of 291 completed within time (100%).</p>  |
| 2       | Placement Stability                      | NI 062 Percentage of looked after children with three or more placement during the year          | 8.40%                     | 2.00%                                 | <b>1.50%</b>                                     | 10.0%              | Met Target                         | ↑                                       | <p>During the period of April to August 2019 there were 6 Looked after children (LAC) who have had 3 or more placements. The total number of LAC at the end of the period was 400 (1.5%).</p> <p>At the same time last year there were 8 out of 403 LAC who had 3 or more placements (2.0%).</p> <p>Our performance compares favourably with the national picture where around 10% of children have experienced 3 or more placement moves on average.</p>  |
| Page 20 | Placement Stability                      | NI 063 Percentage of looked after children living continuously in the same placement for 2 years | 75.40%                    | 81.10%                                | <b>75.36%</b>                                    | 78.0%              | Met Target                         | →                                       | <p>During the period of April to August 2019, 104 children have been in their placement for at least 2 years out of the 138 children who have been looked after for 2 and a half years or more (75.4%).</p> <p>At the same time last year there were 107 out of 132 (81%).</p>   |
| 4       | Adoption and Special Guardianship Orders | LCH-CFYO-002 Adoptions of Looked After Children and SGO  | 29.7%                     | 19.10%                                | <b>37.50%</b>                                    | 26.0%              | Met Target                         | ↑                                       | <p>Adoptions of Looked After Children and SGO - The 2017 England average for children who ceased to be looked after who were adopted was 14%, and for children who left care on an SGO was 12%, a combined total of 26%. Our local target of 26% has been calculated based on this national figure.</p> <p>During the period April to August 2019, there were 10 children who had been looked after for over 6 months and had been adopted and 8 children have left care on a SGO. During the period there were a total of 48 children who have left care giving an overall performance of 37.5%. At the same time last year there were 13 (12 adoptions/1 SGO) out of 68 (19.1%).</p> |

| Ref | Theme                                    | Indicator Description   | Previous Year End 2018/19 | Current Month Previous Year (2018/19) | Performance Latest in the current year (2019/20) | Target for 2018/19  | RAG rating against current target. | Trend (Compared to same time last year) | Comments   |
|-----|--|---|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|---|------------------------------------|---|--|
| 5   | Adoption and Special Guardianship Orders | NI 061 Timeliness of placements of looked after children for adoption   | 46.43%                    | 38.46%                                | <b>100.00%</b>                                   | 80.0%   | Met Target                         | ↑                                       | During April to August 2019, 10 adoptions took place all of which were within the best interest date timescale (100%). At the same point last year there were 13 adoptions, of which 5 were within time (38%). |
| 6   | Care leavers                             | LW09 - (NI 148) Ensure Young Care Leavers are Supported to be in Education, Employment, Apprenticeships or Training | 62%                       | 55%                                   | <b>57%</b>                                       | Target will be set when 18/19 comparative data is published in Nov 19 | N/A                                | ↑                                       | Of our 105 care leavers, 60 (57%) of them are in some form of education, employment and training. This is an improvement on the 54.8% that we reported at the same time last year.                             |
|     | Care Leavers                             | LW08 - (NI 147) Ensure Young Care Leavers & Homeless are Supported to have a Safe Place to Live                     | 98%                       | 98%                                   | <b>99%</b>                                       | Target will be set when 18/19 comparative data is published in Nov 19 | N/A                                | ↑                                       | Of the 105 care leavers that were allocated at the end of August we identified 1 young person as being in unsuitable accommodation (in custody).   |

## Appendix 2: Primary need codes definitions

- **Abuse or neglect** - Children in need as a result of, or at risk of, abuse or neglect; also includes children at risk because of domestic violence.
- **Family Dysfunction** - Children whose needs primarily arise from living in a family where the parenting capacity is chronically inadequate.
- **Absent parenting** - Children whose needs for services arise mainly from having no parents available to provide for them.
- **Parental illness or disability** - Children whose main need for services arises because the capacity of their parent(s) (or carer(s)) to care for them is impaired by the parent(s) (or carer(s)) disability, physical or mental illness, or addictions.
- **Family in acute stress** - Children whose needs arise from living in a family that is going through a temporary crisis that diminishes the parental capacity to adequately meet some of the children's needs.
- **Childs disability or illness** - Children and families whose main need for services arises because of their child's disability, illness or intrinsic condition.

**TITLE OF REPORT: Monitor progress in relation to reducing the number of LAC and children subject to Child Protection Plans**

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

## Summary

The purpose of this report is to seek the OSC's views on the work that is being undertaken to reduce the numbers of children subject to CP plans and what services are doing to reduce the number of Looked After Children.

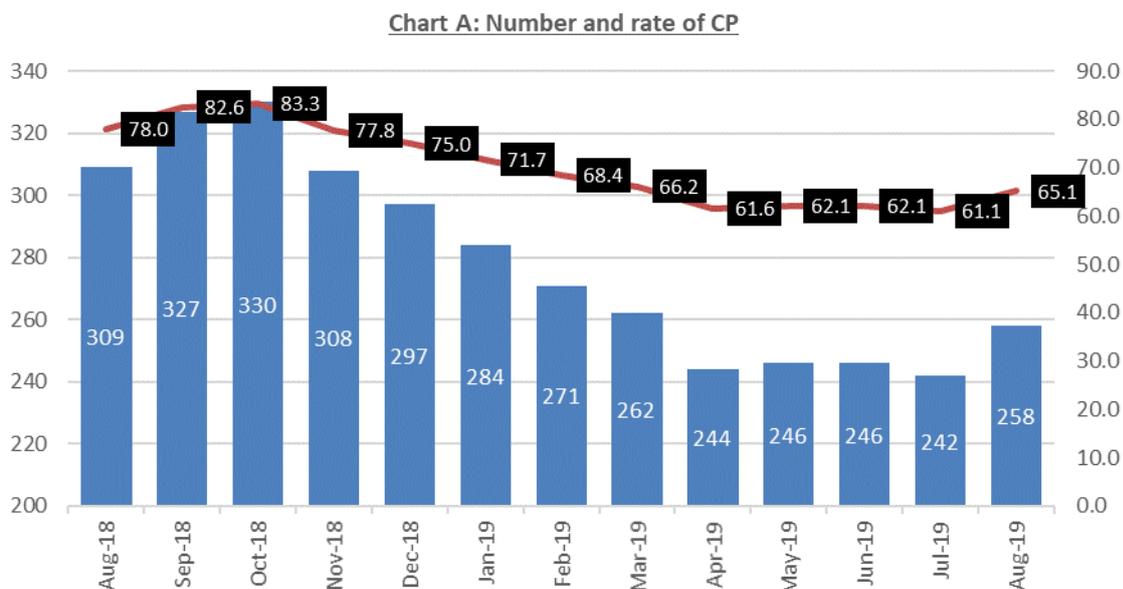
## Background

1. Performance reports have been presented to OSC to demonstrate how we are meeting our performance targets and how we compare both regionally and nationally in relation to children on Child Protection Plans and Looked After Children.

## Children subject to Child Protection Plans

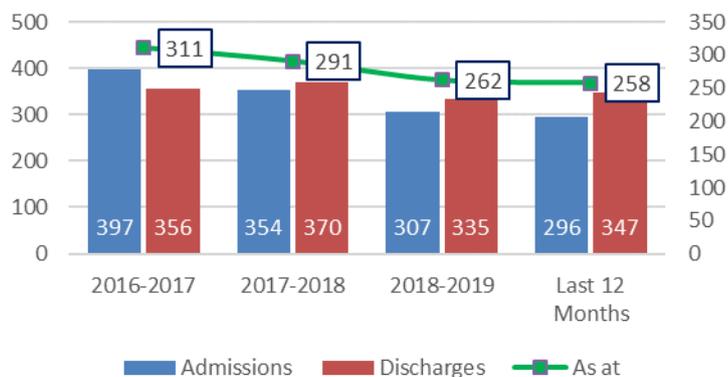
Child Protection Numbers Overview August 2019

2. Chart A shows that in October 2018, there were 330 children placed on child protection plans (83.3 per 10k). As at 31<sup>st</sup> August 2019, this has reduced by 21.8% to 258 children (65.1 per 10k).



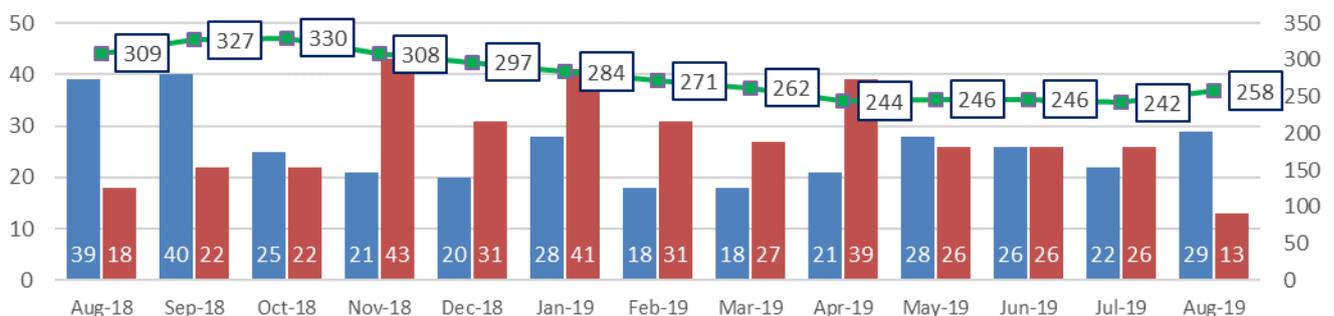
- Chart B shows that over the last 12 months, consistently more CP plans have ended than started – which has helped to reduce the as at figure (258). There has also been year on year reductions in the number of plans starting – with plans starting in the last 12 months showing a 25% decrease compared to 2016-2017. The current number of children subject to CP plans is at its lowest level since July 2018 and, it is felt, attributable to two main reasons; the re-focusing of our social work teams, so that work with the family begins earlier with the families concerned and targeted work to reduce the numbers of children on CP plans for longer than two years.

**Chart B: Child Protection Plans starting and ending**



- Chart C shows plans beginning and ending over the last 13 months – November 2018, January 2019 and April 2019 all stand out as being months when much higher numbers of plans were ended than started, which has helped see the overall figure drop. August 2019, however, did see a larger number of plans starting than ended, which explains the recent increase in the figure.

**Chart C: Child Protection Plans starting and ending**



### What is the service doing?

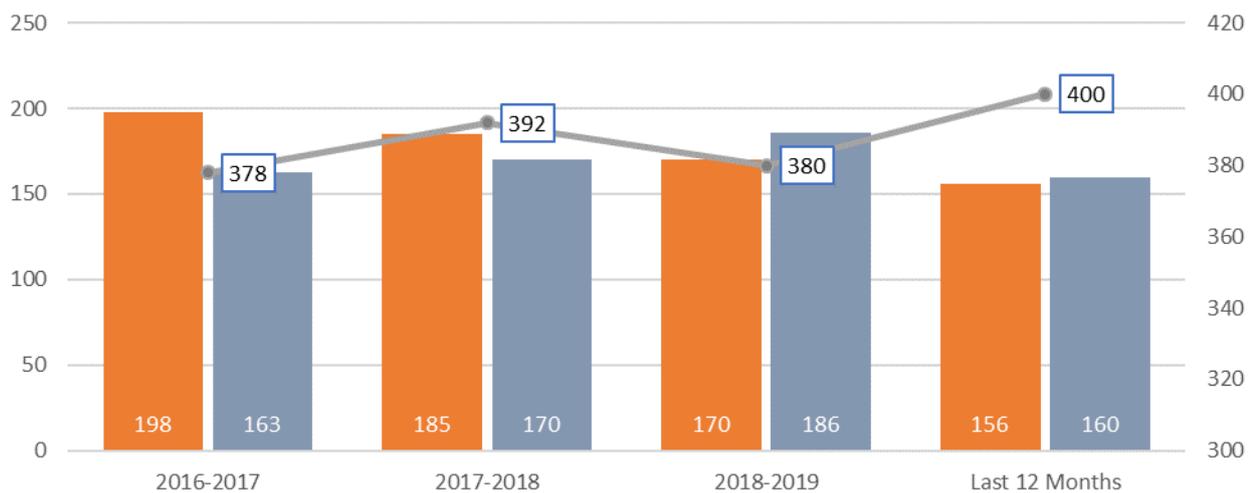
- Since January 2019, there have been significant changes to the arrangements in the Assessment and Intervention Service (previously known as Referral and Assessment) and the Safeguarding and Care Planning Teams. Previous arrangements were that Referral and Assessment would simply complete a Child in Need (CIN) assessment and then transfer the case to Safeguarding and Care Planning to complete any work, either on a CIN basis or under child protection processes, and for the most serious cases, ultimately agreeing a plan of permanence for the child/ren through the courts.

6. The current arrangements are that the Assessment and Intervention Service both assess families and continue to work with them under CIN arrangements. Investment in training in systemic and relational social work has meant that social workers are more able to intervene at a CIN level, before concerns escalate and therefore avoid the need to initiate child protection processes. It is felt that this way of working has significantly contributed to the reduction in the numbers of children subject to CP plans.
7. The Safeguarding and Care Planning Service continues to work with families and children subject to CP plans and those cases where a legal framework is required to secure a safe, stable and permanent home for the child/ren.
8. There has been a recent review and launch of the LSCB multi-agency safeguarding thresholds to ensure that children and families are given the right level of protection and support.
9. Our Edge of Care Team continues to work to prevent those teenagers who have difficult family relationships and entrenched patterns of family functioning from coming into care or becoming subject to a Child Protection Plan.
10. We continue to monitor the trends in the numbers of children with CP plans at the monthly Performance Clinics and make appropriate arrangements in response.
11. In June 2019 Ofsted delivered a “good” judgement about the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection. Ofsted reported:  
*“The quality and impact of social work practice is good. Children and young people are seen regularly by their social workers, who know their children well. Social workers spend time understanding children’s lived experiences to provide the most effective support to improve their circumstances. Children and their families benefit from bespoke support from the dedicated family support team. Staff are well trained in delivering a broad range of interventions, including parenting programmes and work to build self-esteem, to improve home conditions and to support children returning home from care.”*
12. Audits that have been undertaken in 2018 and 2019 into the reasons why children stay on CP plans over two years or why they may have been subject to more than one CP plan have identified domestic abuse as a significant factor; it is known that 55% of children currently subject to a CP plan have experienced domestic abuse as a key factor in the case. For children on their second or subsequent plan, this figure rises to 82%. The response to domestic abuse has been strengthened through the merging of children’s and adults’ resources to form a domestic abuse team that is dedicated to supporting the whole family. This is providing a consistent response to domestic abuse across both early help and statutory services; it is recognised, however that we need to continue to find additional solutions for our children and families. As such, we have planned a series of Practice Innovation Groups to look at different ways of working with families who experience domestic abuse, with the aim of ameliorating the effects on children.

## Looked After Children

13. At the 31 August 2019, there were 400 looked after children in Gateshead. The below charts illustrate that over the last 12 months, we have had discharged slightly more children than we have admitted (156), resulting in a net loss of four young people. Additionally, Gateshead has admitted around 15% less children in the last 12 months than the three-year average of 184 admissions.

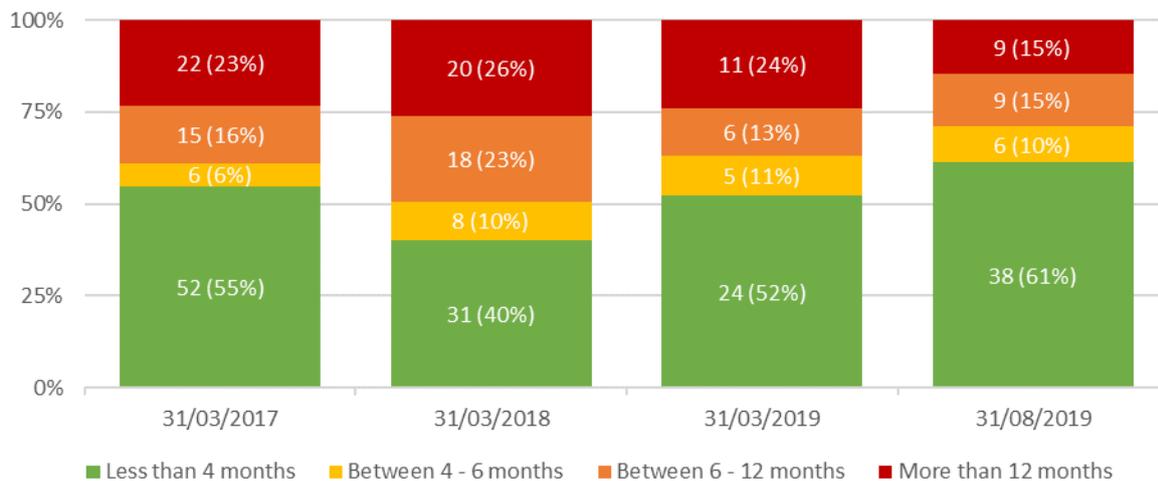
14. During the last 12-month period, the LAC figure has dropped as low as 380 (March 2019), however higher admissions than discharges since April has seen the figure climb back to 400.



## Admissions

15. Children being admitted to care under a section 20 agreement accounts for 66% of our admissions, Interim Care Orders account for 23% and the other 11% are either Full Care Orders or Emergency Protection Orders.

Current S20 cases by duration



16. The above chart shows the duration that children have been subject to a section 20 agreement (s20). At the end of August 2019, 61% of children had been subject to s20 for less than four months and 15% had been subject to s20 for more than 12 months. This shows a reduction compared to previous year end dates, as in 2017, 23% had been subject to s20 agreements for more than a year. This has been achieved by ensuring there is robust management oversight of these cases to ensure that accommodation under s20 is appropriate and there is no drift and delay in permanence planning. The young people who remain on s20 over 12 months are primarily older adolescents, including UASC and some children with disabilities.

### Discharges

17. The number of discharges over the last three years has increased from 163 in 16/17 to 186 in 18/19. The reasons for discharge have also changed over time, with fewer young people returning home. There have, however, been increases in children leaving care after being placed on a Child Arrangement Order and Special Guardianship Orders. Adoptions have remained consistent at 15%. It is noted that the last 12 months is showing a slightly different picture, however by the end of the financial year we are envisaging the statistics to be similar to last year.

#### Reasons for discharge

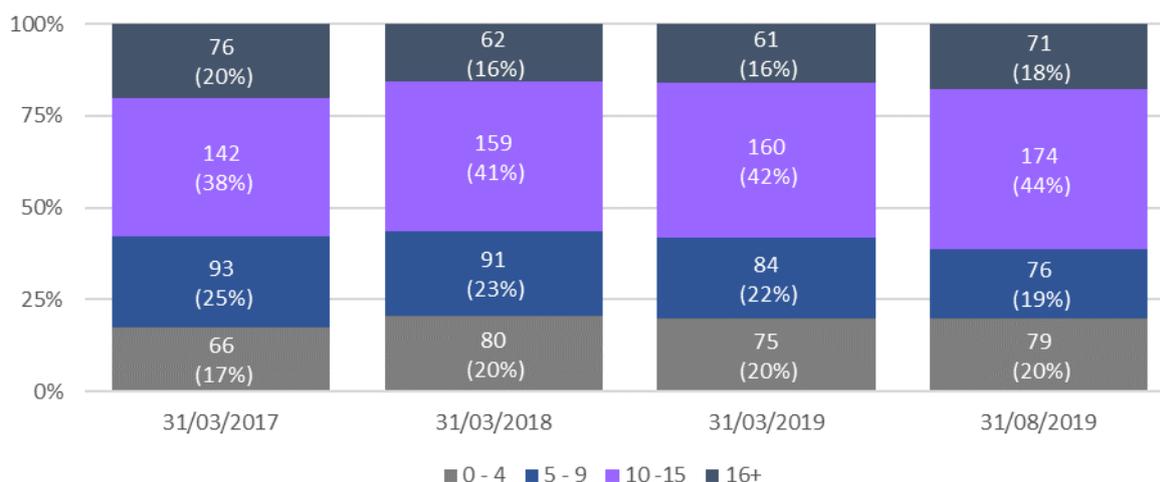


### Current LAC

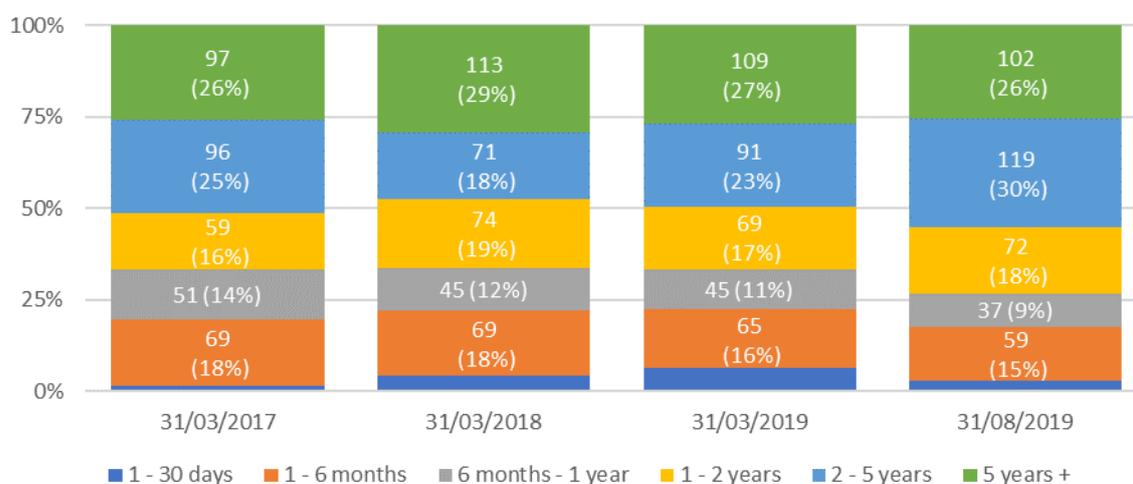
18. The gender split of looked after children in Gateshead has remained fairly consistent, with males representing 56% of our current looked after cohort.

19. 44% (174) of our current LAC are aged between 10 and 15 years old. Whilst the proportion was similar at the end of March 2019 it is much higher than in March 2017 when 38% of looked after children were in that age band. There are less 5-9 year olds in care now than there were in March 2017, but more 0-4 year olds.

## Current LAC by age



**Chart H: Current LAC Duration**



20. A quarter (26%) of our current LAC cohort have been in care for more than five years, which is slightly lower than March 2018 and March 2019 but is generally consistent with previous years. There is also a much larger proportion of children who have been in care for between 2-5years (30%), however less children have been in care for between one day and 12 months.

## Placement type

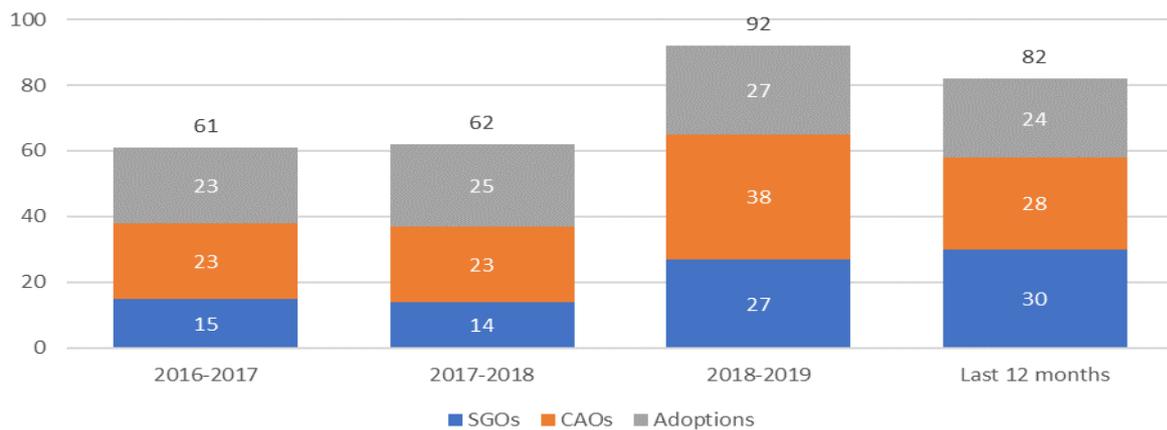
21. The majority of Gateshead's current LAC are placed in mainstream fostering placements (64%). This is a similar proportion that is reported at the end of the last three financial years. Family and friend placements make up 16% of placements, which is a small increase compared to March 2017 (13%). The number of children placed in private residential placements is 8% which is slightly higher than in previous years. Children awaiting adoption has also seen

a drop (3% down from 5%), whilst being placed with parents has increased from 1% to 3% of placements.

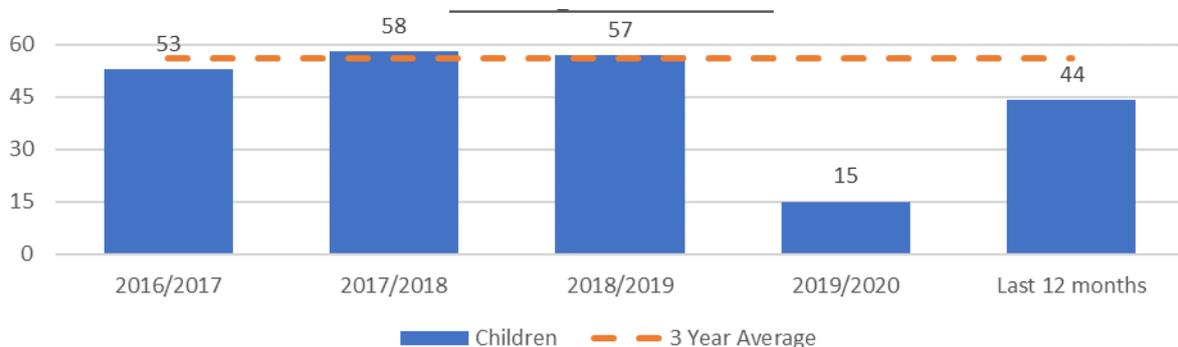
### **Early Permanence**

22. Compared to 2016/17 and 2017/18 more children have left care on Special Guardianship Orders (30 compared to 15) and Child Arrangement Orders (28 compared to 23). There has been a similar number of adoptions (24 compared to 23) over the last 12 months. Currently, there are 24 children on Placement Orders – of which 10 have been matched to an adopter (42%).

### **SGO's, CAO's and adoptions**



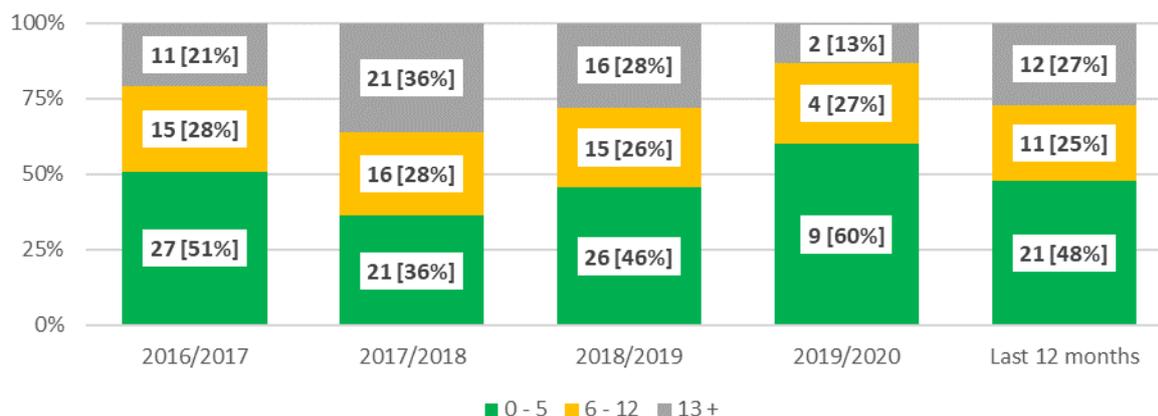
### **Returning home from care**



23. Over the last three financial years, on average, 56 children have returned home after being looked after. This has shown a slight decline in the last 12 months and we plan to undertake a deep-dive audit into the reasons why children come into care and subsequently return home. This should help us to fully understand the reasons for the reduction.

## **Demographics:**

### Returned home – Age came into care



24. Of the looked after children returning home, those who were aged 0-5 years when being taken into care account for the largest proportion ranging from 36% in 2017 to 60% so far in 2019/2020 (although this only accounts for April to August and is for a lower number of children).

## **Previous involvement with Children services**

25. We monitor the children who have had previous involvement with services to see if there are any patterns in relation to looked after episodes and children returning home. Approximately half of the children who returned home had been on a child protection plan prior to becoming looked after, which demonstrates that we are working with families to try and prevent children becoming looked after.
26. Children coming into care who subsequently return home have tended to initially come into care under s20. Intensive work is undertaken to return children home safely and if this cannot be achieved a decision making meeting is held to look at making plans of permanence for children.

## **Returned home – Subsequently returned to care**

27. Of our children who returned home, a small proportion will return to care. In the last 12 months, 11% of those who returned home have since come back into care (5 children)
28. Care episode for children who returned home from care have varied from year to year with no discernible pattern, although in the last 12 months, around 63% of children who returned home had been in care for less than 3 months. The return to care is something we need to understand better as we know that multiple moves can cause additional trauma to children. A deep dive audit on this is planned to ensure we are getting the decision-making right for children.

| Returned home - Placement Duration | 2016/2017 |       | 2017/2018 |       | 2018/2019 |       | 2019/2020 |       | Last 12 months |       |
|------------------------------------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|----------------|-------|
|                                    | No.       | %     | No.       | %     | No.       | %     | No.       | %     | No.            | %     |
| Less than 1 month                  | 14        | 26.4% | 20        | 34.5% | 10        | 17.5% | 9         | 60.0% | 16             | 36.4% |
| 1 - 3 months                       | 14        | 26.4% | 13        | 22.4% | 12        | 21.1% | 2         | 13.3% | 12             | 27.3% |
| 3 - 6 months                       | 8         | 15.1% | 5         | 8.6%  | 9         | 15.8% | 1         | 6.7%  | 4              | 9.1%  |
| 6 - 12 months                      | 12        | 22.6% | 10        | 17.2% | 14        | 24.6% | 1         | 6.7%  | 5              | 11.4% |
| More than 12 months                | 5         | 9.4%  | 10        | 17.2% | 12        | 21.1% | 2         | 13.3% | 7              | 15.9% |
| <b>Total</b>                       | 53        |       | 58        |       | 57        |       | 15        |       | 44             |       |

### What the service is doing

29. Over the last 12 months the service has introduced a number of measures to try and ensure any children that can be returned home safely are. These include:

- Monthly meetings to look at new into care
- Monthly meetings to look at section 20s
- Themed audits on the performance data
- Review of children and family situations and plans via care teams and Looked After Reviews
- Bespoke packages of support to families to ensure children can return home
- Practice innovation group has been established to ensure we provide the best interventions and support to children and families

### Issues the OSC might want to consider

30. In light of the information provided the OSC might wish to consider whether it is satisfied with the level of support being offered to children and families in order to reduce the number of children subject to CP plans and reduce the number of Looked After Children. When addressing this question, the OSC might wish to take into account the following:

- Are we working proactively with families?
- Have we got the right involvement from our partners?
- Are we promoting positive outcomes for children?

### Recommendations

The views of the OSC are sought on:

1. Whether it is satisfied with the level of support children and families receive in Gateshead Council

|   |          |
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| Contact: Jill Little and Chris O'Reilly | 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

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### **Summary**

This report sets out the provisional work programme for the Corporate Parenting OSC for the municipal year 2019/20.

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### **Background**

1. Every year each Overview and Scrutiny Committee draws up a work programme based on the Council's policy framework which is then agreed by the Council as part of the policy planning process
2. The Committee's work programme is a rolling programme which sets the agenda for its quarterly meetings. It is the means by which it can address the interests of the local community, focus on improving services and seek to reduce inequalities in service provision and access to services.

### **Recommendations**

3. The Committee is asked to
  - a) Endorse the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's provisional work programme for 2019/20 attached at Appendix 1.
  - b) Note that further reports will be brought to the Committee to identify any additional issues which the Committee may be asked to consider.

**Contact:** Angela Frisby

**Ext:** 2138

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## APPENDIX 1

| <b>Corporate Parenting OSC 2019/20</b> |  |
|--|--|
| <b>4 July 19</b>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regulation 44 Report</li> <li>• Adoption Annual</li> <li>• Early Permanence (including a focus on sufficiency of local placements / reduction in use of IFAs/the quality of foster carers looking after Gateshead children)</li> <li>• Early Permanence (what it means/accelerated plans/placement stability)</li> <li>• Work Programme</li> </ul>  |
| <b>17 October 19</b>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young People’s Presentation</li> <li>• Performance Overview</li> <li>• Monitor Progress in relation to reducing the numbers of LAC and children subject to Child Protection Plans</li> <li>• Regulation 44 Report and Residential Placement Sufficiency (proposed way forward in relation to out of borough placements)</li> <li>• Work Programme</li> </ul>                                      |
| <b>16 January 20</b>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Missing from Care Annual Report</li> <li>• Education Annual Report (incl focus on employment/training/ apprenticeships)</li> <li>• Health of LAC Annual report</li> <li>• How we assess Young People in Crisis - (Changing Live Project)</li> <li>• Regulation 44 Report</li> <li>• Work Programme</li> </ul>   |
| <b>2 April 20</b>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young People’s presentation</li> <li>• Performance Overview</li> <li>• Care Leavers Offer – Quality and Impact – Annual Report / incl session with care leavers</li> <li>• Social Work Practice and the Voice of the Child – Case Study (work with the Safeguarding Board to develop core model /systemic working practices)</li> <li>• Regulation 44 Report</li> <li>• Work Programme</li> </ul> |

**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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