

TITLE OF REPORT: Looked After Children Performance Overview

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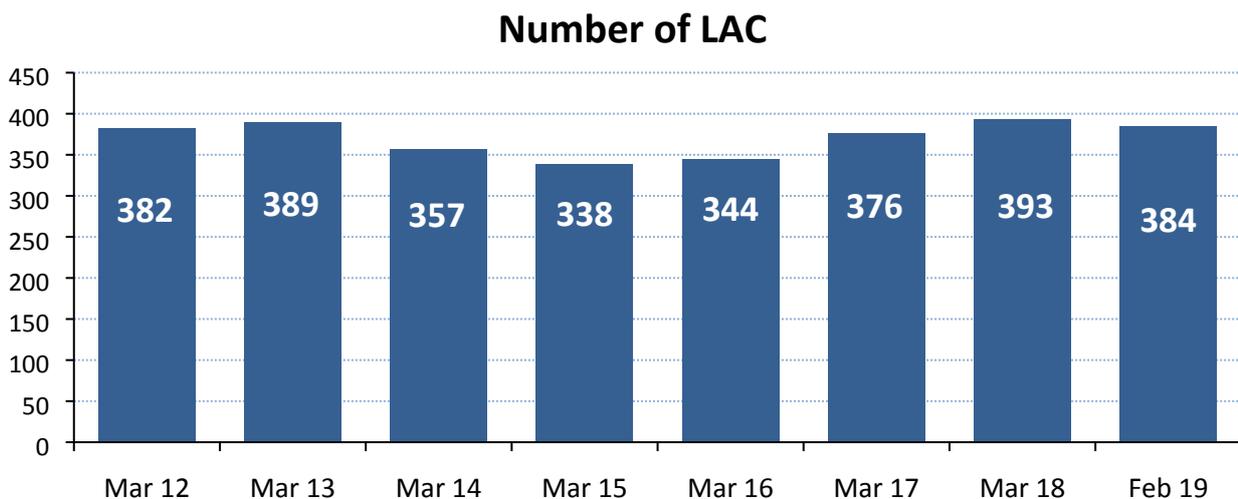
Section 1: Purpose

- 1.1 This report provides statistics relating to looked after children in Gateshead and covers the period up to the end of February 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 31st January 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

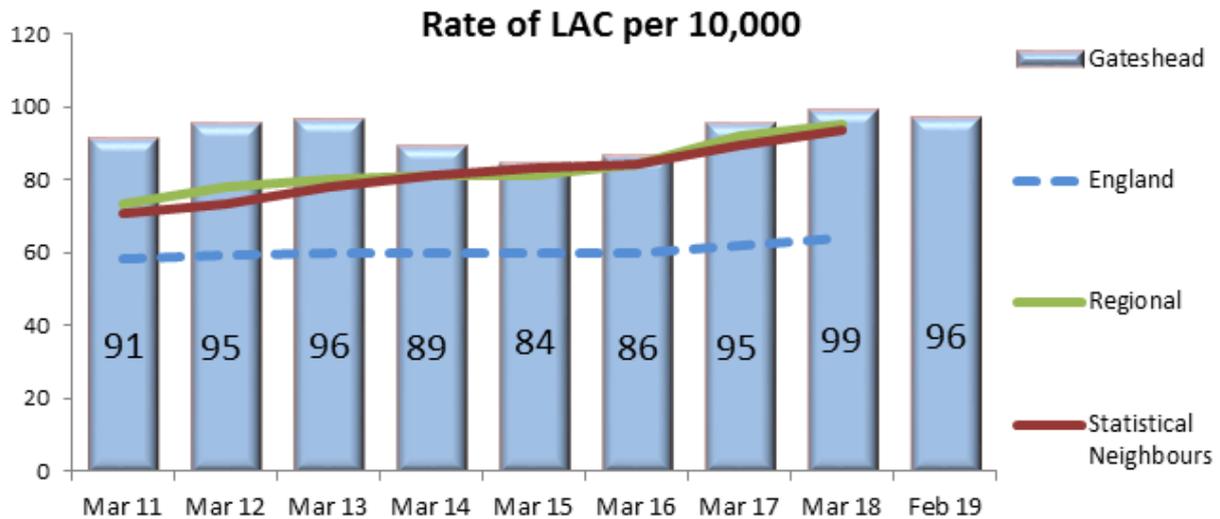
How many looked after children do we have, and how does that compare to other areas?

Chart 1: number of LAC



- 2.1 Chart 1 shows at the end of February 2019, 384 children and young people were classed as being Looked After. The 384 LAC children come from 263 different families. Since the end of the March 2018, when the figure was 393, we have experienced a decrease of 2.3% in the number of looked after children. However, more recently this reduction has been more significant. In November 2018 the number of LAC was as high as 416 (13/11/2018) meaning the end of February 2019 figure is 6.9% lower.

Chart 2: Rate of LAC per 10,000 population

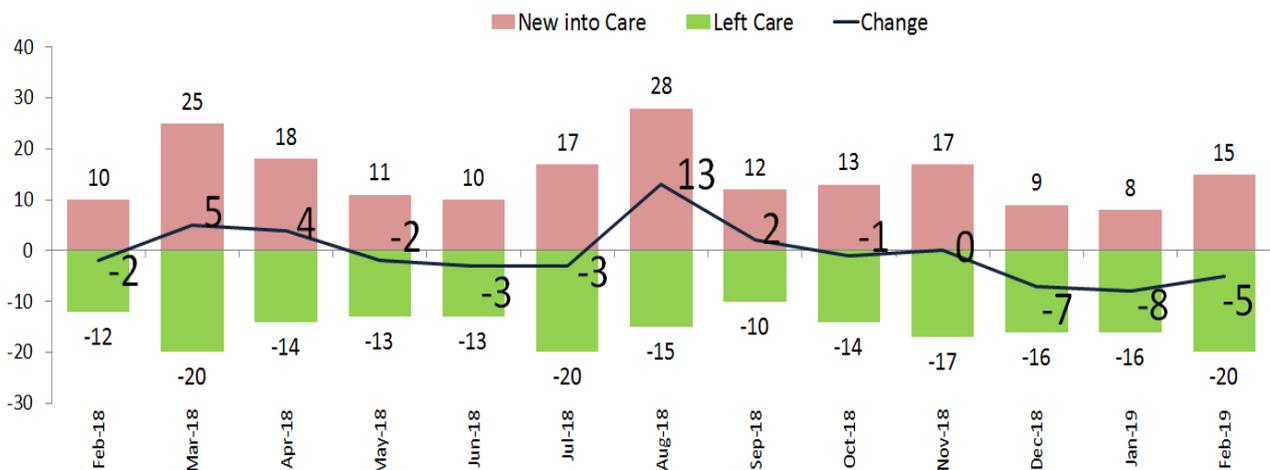


2.2 384 looked after children equals a rate per 10,000 of 96. Chart 2 shows our current rate of LAC compared with the latest statistical neighbour, regional and England averages. At 96 we are now only slightly higher than the latest published Statistical Neighbour rate of 94 and regional rate of 95. Recent quarterly monitoring by the Association of Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS) suggest the regional average has increased however to nearly 100 per 10,000. We remain significantly higher than the England average of 64.

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

Figure 1: Number of children entering and leaving care

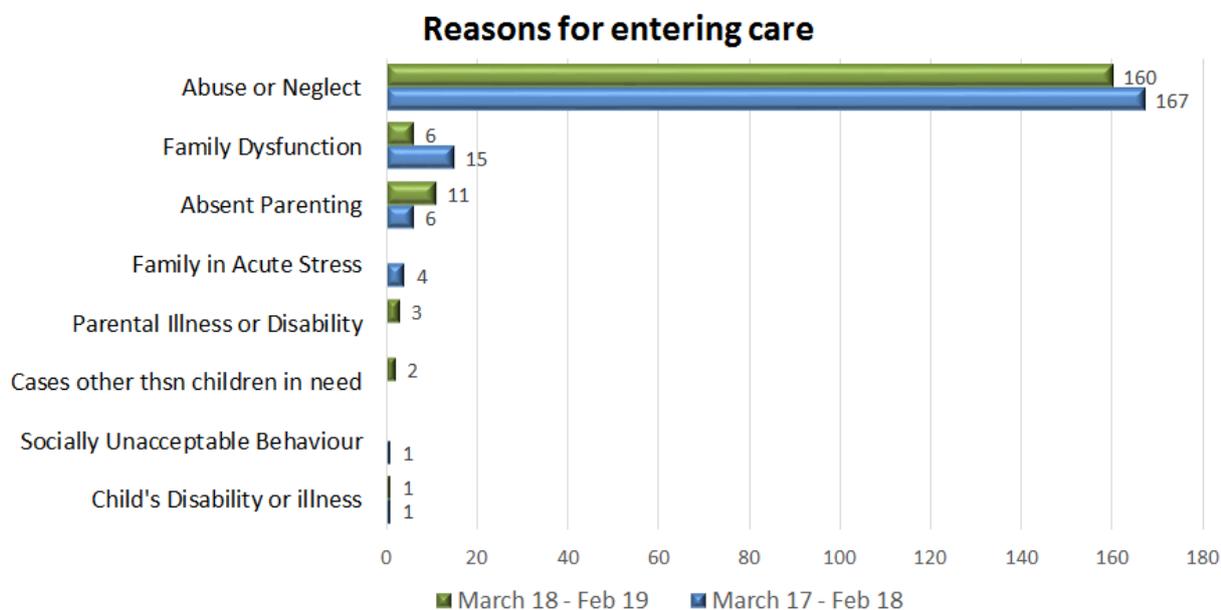
	Aug-17	Sep-17	Oct-17	Nov-17	Dec-17	Jan-18	Feb-18	Mar-18	Apr-18	May-18	Jun-18	Jul-18	Aug-18	Sep-18	Oct-18	Nov-18	Dec-18	Jan-19	Feb-19
New into Care	16	17	18	13	8	14	10	25	18	11	10	17	28	12	13	17	9	8	15
Left Care	-19	-12	-16	-13	-8	-17	-12	-20	-14	-13	-13	-20	-15	-10	-14	-17	-16	-16	-20
Change	-3	5	2	0	0	-3	-2	5	4	-2	-3	-3	13	2	-1	0	-7	-8	-5



2.3 The figure above provides the numbers of children in each month over the last 12 months who have started to be looked after (New into care) and those who ceased to be looked after (Left Care). The chart is intended to demonstrate the constant flow of children who enter and leave the LAC system and show how the LAC cohort is constantly changing.

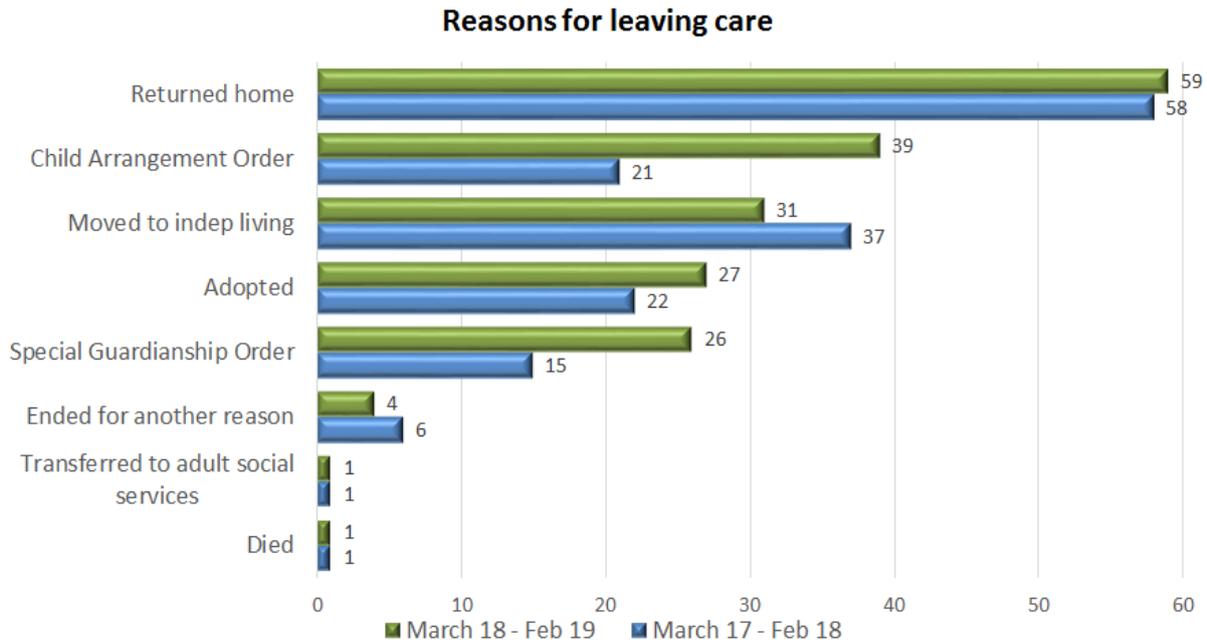
- 2.4 The black line shows the difference between the two figures in the month, and where the black line is above 0 it means more children entered care than left, and where below 0 more children left care than entered. Over the course of the last 12 months reflected in the chart (while individual monthly figures vary) on average 15.2 children entered care each month and 15.7 have left each month.
- 2.5 Activity has been higher in the 12 months ending February 2019 with 183 children starting to be looked after and 188 children leaving care, a total of 371. This compared with 194 starting and 161 children leaving, a total of 355 in the same period in the previous year. However different to the previous year we have seen fewer children starting to be looked after and significantly more ceasing their care period.
- 2.6 In the last 12 months ending February 2019 the lowest number of admissions in a month was 8 and the highest 28. While for children leaving care, the lowest number was 10 and the largest 20.

Chart 3: Primary need category for those entering care



- 2.7 Chart 3 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.
- 2.8 The chart shows the largest category in each year by far was Abuse or Neglect, which accounted for 86% of children who entered care in 2018/19 and 87% 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). The number of children admitted into care under family dysfunction reduced to 6 in 2018/19 from 15 in 2017/18. Conversely, the number of children who were admitted due to absent parenting increased from 6 in 2017/18 to 11 in 2018/19.

Chart 4: Reason why the child or young person left care



2.9 Chart 4 above provides the recorded end reason for those who left care in each of the last two years. 161 left care during 2017/18 compared to 188 in 2018/19. In 2018/19, 31% of children and young people left care because of returning home, (59 actual young people) which is lower than the previous year which stood at 36% (58 actual children). Following returning home, the next largest group of young people ceased care because of the granting of a Child Arrangement Order, with 39 children (20%) ceasing for this reason in the latest period, compared with 21 (13%) in the same period last year. The next largest category was as the result of a move to independent living, 16% (31) of young people left care and moved into independent living in 2018/19 a reduction from 23% (37) in 2017/18. Along with the use of Child Arrangement Orders we have seen a notable increase in the number of children who have been adopted or have had a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) granted from a total of 37 (22% of all cases) to 53 (28% of all cases).

What are the characteristics of our current looked after population

Chart 5a: Age of LAC population

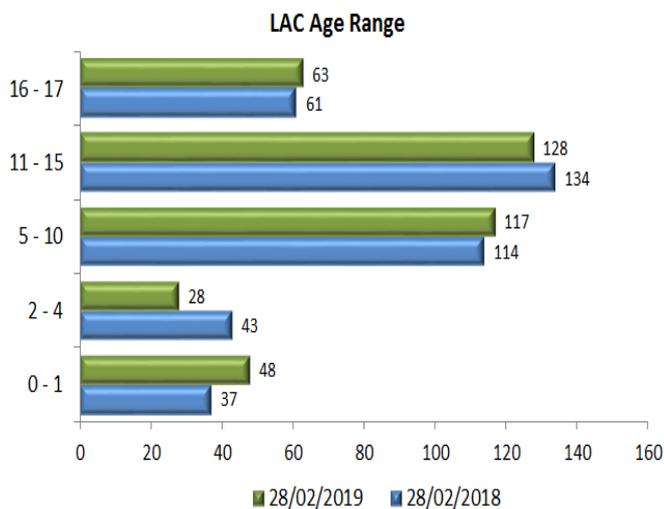
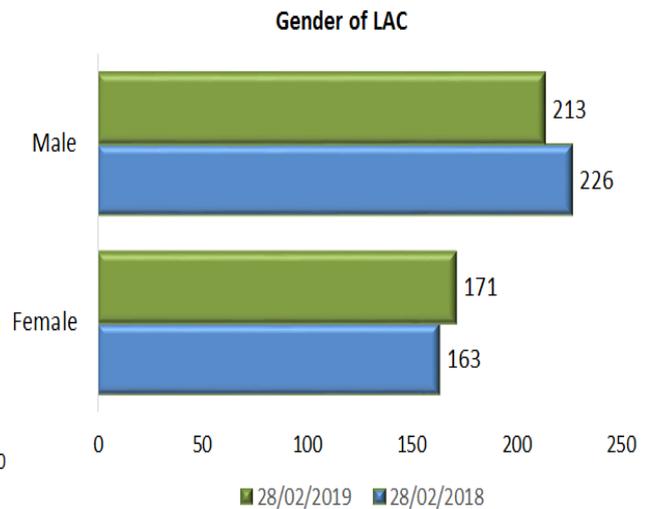
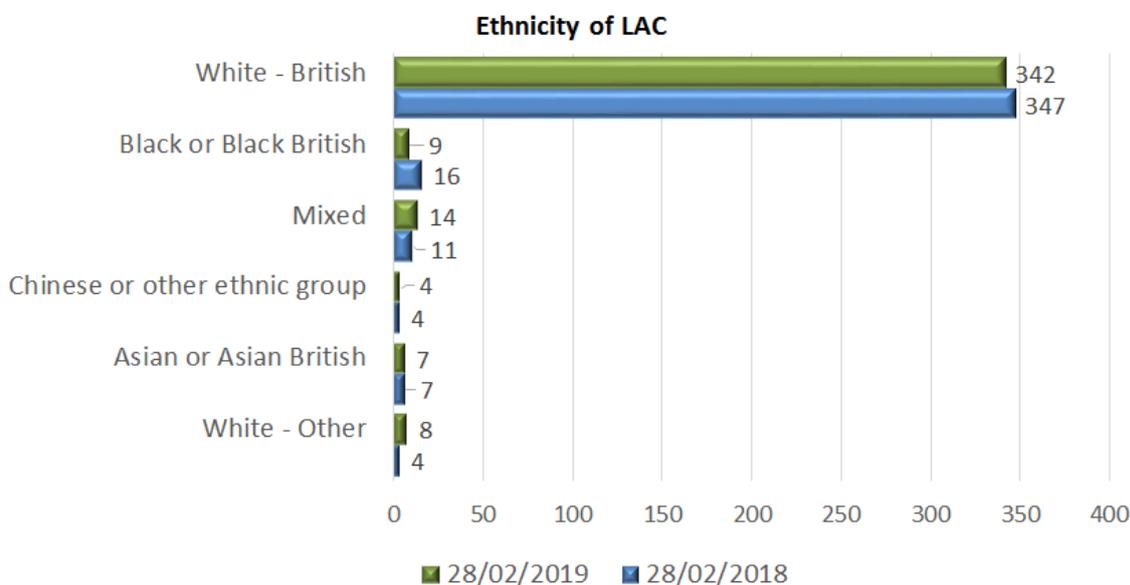


Chart 5b: Gender of LAC population



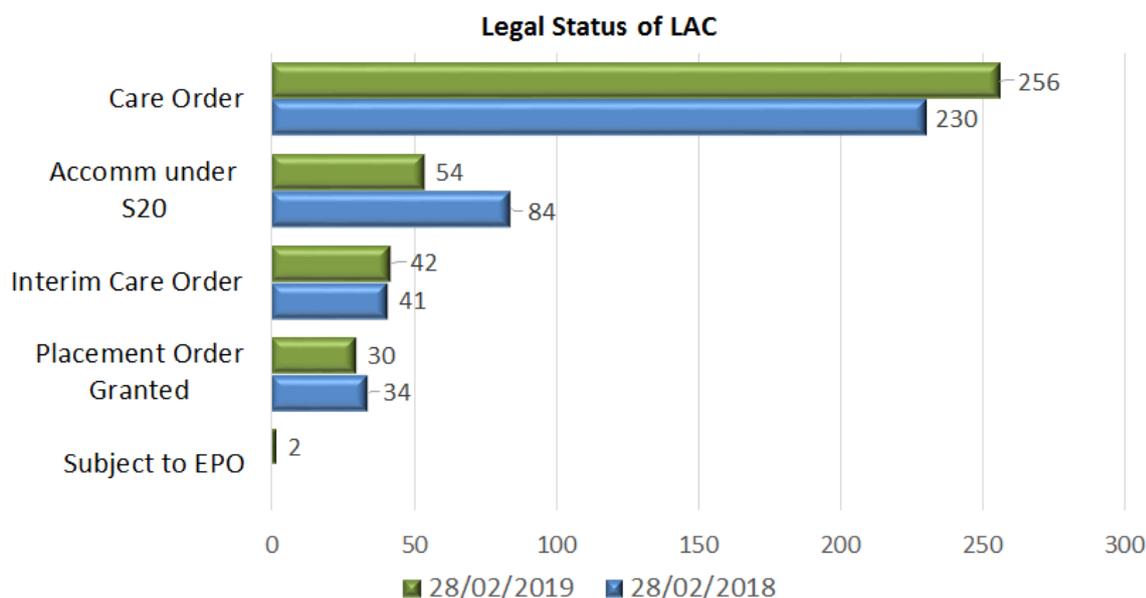
2.10 The age and gender of looked after children are shown in charts 5a and 5b above. Males account for the largest proportion of LAC with 213 children or 55.5% at the end of February 2019. Typically, those aged 11-15 account for the largest proportion of the LAC population, accounting for just over a third LAC at the end of February in each of the last two years.

Chart 6: Ethnicity of LAC population



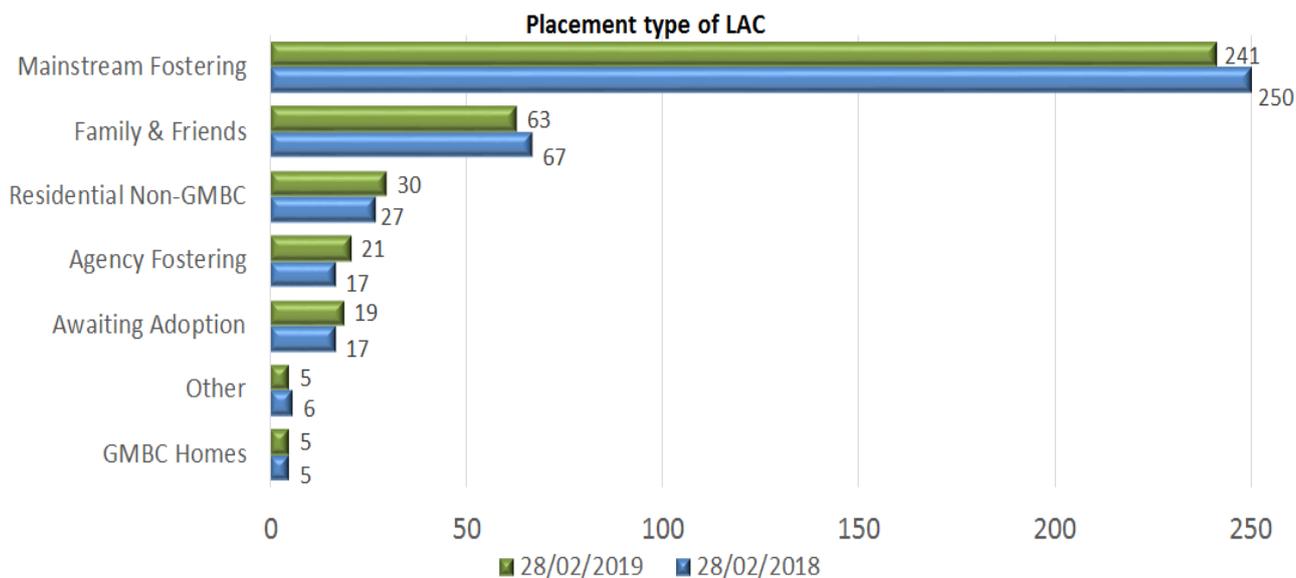
2.11 Chart 6 shows the ethnic breakdown for LAC at the end of February in each of the last two years. At the end of February 2018 there were 38 children from a non-white ethnic background (i.e. not White British or White Other) who were looked after, 9.7% of the total LAC population. At the end of February 2019, the number of children from a non-white ethnic background had decreased slightly to 8.8% of the total population or to 34 in actual numbers. Estimates from the latest school census in January 2019 suggests around 11% of children are from a non-white ethnic background in Gateshead meaning LAC from a non-white ethnic background are currently slightly under-represented compared to the general Gateshead population.

Chart 8: Legal status of LAC population



2.12 Chart 8 shows the majority of our children and young people (256 or 67%) are accommodated under a Full Care Order, with a further 42 (11%) on an Interim Care Order. It was highlighted in October 2017 by Ofsted that we had a high rate of children on Section 20 legal status (s20). We have reviewed all our s20 arrangements over the past 12 months to ensure their appropriateness which has resulted in a steady reduction in children on this legal status, from 84 in February 2018 (21% of all LAC at the time) to 54 in February 2019 (14% of current LAC). There has also been a slight decrease in those who have had a placement order granted, 34 in February 2018 to 30 in February 2019.

Chart 9: Placement Type of LAC population



2.13 Chart 9 shows the placement type of looked after children at the end of February 2019 and the same point in 2018. The chart shows that the majority of our looked after children, 241 or 62.8% at the end of February 2019 were placed in mainstream fostering. We continue to use only a small proportion of Agency Fostering placements, at the end of February 2019, 21 children were in this type of placement, which is slightly higher than the same time last year when the figure stood at 17. There has been an increase in non-Gateshead residential placements, increasing from 27 to 30. Family and friends placements now account for 63 placements or 16% at the end of February 2019, similar to the figure of 67 or 17% at the same time last year. Family and Friends placements include kinship fostering arrangements and children placed at home with parents.

2.14 Figure 2 (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 2 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.

2.15 At the end of February 2019, 173 children and young people (which is 45% of the total number of LAC) were placed physically outside of the borough, of those 151 (87%) were within the North East region. Of the 173 placed geographically outside of Gateshead 126 (73%) were in Gateshead Local Authority own provision. We had 47 LAC who were placed physically outside the Gateshead authority boundary in independent provision, again the majority of which were within the North East.

2.16 Figure 2 shows that we have a small number of LAC children who are placed a distance outside the North East region and around the country, in authorities such Wakefield and Bradford (2), Peterborough and Lincolnshire (2), Birmingham and Staffordshire (2), The Wirral (1), Barnet (3) and Neath and Port-Talbot (1). The 3 children in Barnet at Gateshead owned provision.

Figure 2: Number of children placed physically out of borough (OOB)

Region	Local Authority	Feb 18	Of which were Gateshead own provision	Feb 19	Of which were Gateshead own provision
North East	Durham	51	42	56	44
	Sunderland	33	29	30	26
	Newcastle Upon Tyne	27	20	31	26
	Northumberland	13	10	15	9
	South Tyneside	12	12	7	7
	Darlington	1		1	
	North Tyneside	1		1	
	Hartlepool			1	
	Stockton	1		2	
	Cumbria / Carlisle	8		7	
East of England	Lincolnshire			1	
	Peterborough			1	
Yorkshire and Humber	Bradford	1		1	
	Doncaster	1			
	Wakefield			1	
West Midlands	Birmingham			1	
	Staffordshire			1	
North West	Wirral			1	
Outer London	Barnet	4	4	3	3
Wales	Neath Port Talbot	1		1	
Other	Adoptive placement	14	14	11	11
Total Number		168	131	173	126
Total %			78.0%		72.8%

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:
- **3 indicator targets are currently being met** (stability of LAC – 3 or more placements, stability of LAC – long-term stability and proportion of children ceasing LAC under SGO or adoption)

- **2 indicators are currently not meeting their targets** (LAC reviews within timescales and timeliness of children being placed for adoption)
- **2 indicators have been revised** and so subsequently have not had targets set under the current monitoring framework (care leavers in EET and suitable accommodation), however both are showing improvements 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 677 LAC reviews for 342 eligible LAC have been completed during April-January 2019. Of the 342, 339 (99.1%) have been reviewed within the statutory timescales. The 3 reviews that went out of timescales were the result of human error in predicting the next required date. The process for scheduling reviews within timescales has been re-iterated with all IROs to prevent any future occurrences. Each out of timescale review was only a few days outside of required timescales.

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 January 2019, there were 26 out of 391 children looked after who had experienced 3 or more placement moves in the previous 12 months (6.6%). At the same time last year there were 25 out of a total of 389 Looked after children (6.4%). 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 105 out of 132 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 (79.5%). At the same time last year there were 100 out of 122 children in the same placement (82%). While this is a reduction from last year the current figures continue to compare extremely favourable to the National average which stands at 70%.

Adoption and Special Guardianship Orders (SGO)

- 3.7 **Adoptions of Looked After Children and SGO** - The 2018 England 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 for 2017 when the combined figure was 26%. During the period April to January 2019 there were 19 children who had been looked after for over 6 months and had been adopted and 21 children have left care on a SGO. During the period there were a total of 144 children who have left care giving an overall performance of 28%. At the same time last year there were 31 (20 adoptions/11 SGOs) out of 135 (22.96%).

3.8 **Timeliness of placements of looked after children for adoption** - During April to January 2019, 19 adoptions took place, of which 8 were within the best interest date timescale (42.1%). At the same point last year there were 20 adoptions, of which 13 were within time (65%). Whilst our timeliness of adoptions figure is below our target, there have been several factors which have impacted on this. Factors that attributed to cases going out of timescale include:

- Delays in Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks that affected a sibling group of 3.
- Delays in family finding when trying to place siblings together.
- Challenges around potential links not progressing due to adopters withdrawing.
- External family finding undertaken to reflect the child's cultural background.
- Family finding was delayed until professionals were clearer about possible development delays. When the child was matched, biological parents lodged an appeal and introductions were delayed.
- Delay in twins being placed and adopted together following concerns of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD).
- Demonstrating development delay which resulted in genetic testing and further assessments. Potential adopters withdrew from process and child was adopted by foster carers.

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 117 care leavers in touch with the our leaving care team, 72 (61.5%) of them are in some form of education, employment and training. This is an improvement on the 57.1% 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 January 97% of care leavers were deemed to be in suitable accommodation. We have identified 4 young people as being in unsuitable accommodation (3 in custody, 1 in hospital, under section 3 of the Mental Health Act). At the same time last year, there were 3 in unsuitable accommodation.

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Appendix 1: Performance Scorecard

Ref	Theme	Indicator Description	Previous Year End 2017/18	Current Month Previous Year (2017/18)	Performance Latest in the current year (2018/19)	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	99.47%	99.45%	99.12%	100%	Not Met Target	↓	<p>A total of 677 LAC reviews for 342 eligible LAC have been completed during April-January 2019. Of the 342, 339 (99.1%) have been reviewed within the statutory timescales.</p> <p>At the same time last year there were 364 out of 366 completed within time (99.45%).</p>
2	Placement Stability	NI 062 Percentage of looked after children with three or more placement during the year	6.11%	6.40%	6.60%	10.0%	Met Target	↓	<p>During the period of April to January 2019 there were 26 Looked after children (LAC) who have had 3 or more placements. The total number of LAC at the end of the period was 391 (6.6%).</p> <p>At the same time last year there were 25 out of 389 LAC who had 3 or more placements (6.4%).</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>
3	Placement Stability	NI 063 Percentage of looked after children living continuously in the same placement for 2 years	82.54%	82.00%	79.50%	78.0%	Met Target	↓	<p>During the period of April to January 2019, 105 children have been in their placement for at least 2 years out of the 132 children who have been looked after for 2 and a half years or more (79.5%).</p> <p>At the same time last year there were 100 out of 122 (82%).</p> <p>Current figures continue to compare extremely favourable to the National average which stands at 70%.</p>
4	Adoption and Special Guardianship Orders	LCH-CFYO-002 Adoptions of Looked After Children and SGO	23.46%	22.96%	28.00%	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 January 2019, there were 19 children who had been looked after for over 6 months and had been adopted and 21 children have left care on a SGO. During the period there were a total of 144 children who have left care giving an overall performance of 28%. At the same time last year there were 31 (20 adoptions/11 SGOs) out of 135 (22.96%).</p>

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5	Adoption and Special Guardianship Orders	NI 061 Timeliness of placements of looked after children for adoption	72.00%	65.00%	42.10%	80.0%	Not Met Target	↓	<p>During April to January 2019, 19 adoptions took place, of which 8 were within the best interest date timescale (42.1%). At the same point last year there were 20 adoptions, of which 13 were within time (65%). Whilst our timeliness of adoptions figure is below our target, there have been several factors which have impacted on this. Factors that attributed to cases going out of timescale include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delays in DBS checks that affected a sibling group of 3. • Delays in family finding when trying to place siblings together. • Challenges around potential links not progressing due to adopters withdrawing. • External family finding undertaken to reflect the child's cultural background. • Family finding was delayed until professionals were clearer about possible development delays. <p>When the child was matched, the birth mother lodged an appeal and introductions were delayed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delay in twins being placed and adopted together following concerns of FASD. • Demonstrating development delay which resulted in genetic testing and further assessments. <p>Potential adopters withdrew from process and child was adopted by foster carers.</p>
6	Care leavers	LW09 - (NI 148) Ensure Young Care Leavers are Supported to be in Education, Employment, Apprenticeships or Training	50%	57%	62%	New indicator for 2017/18 - no target set	N/A	↑	Of our 117 care leavers, 72 (61.5%) of them are in some form of education, employment and training. This is an improvement on the 57.1% that we reported at the same time last year.
7	Care Leavers	LW08 - (NI 147) Ensure Young Care Leavers & Homeless are Supported to have a Safe Place to Live	92%	97%	97%	New indicator for 2017/18 - no target set	N/A	→	Of the 117 care leavers that were allocated to the leaving care team at the end of January we identified 4 young people as being in unsuitable accommodation (3 in custody, 1 in hospital, under section 3 of the Mental Health Act). At the same time last year, there were 3 in unsuitable accommodation.

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.