

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

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

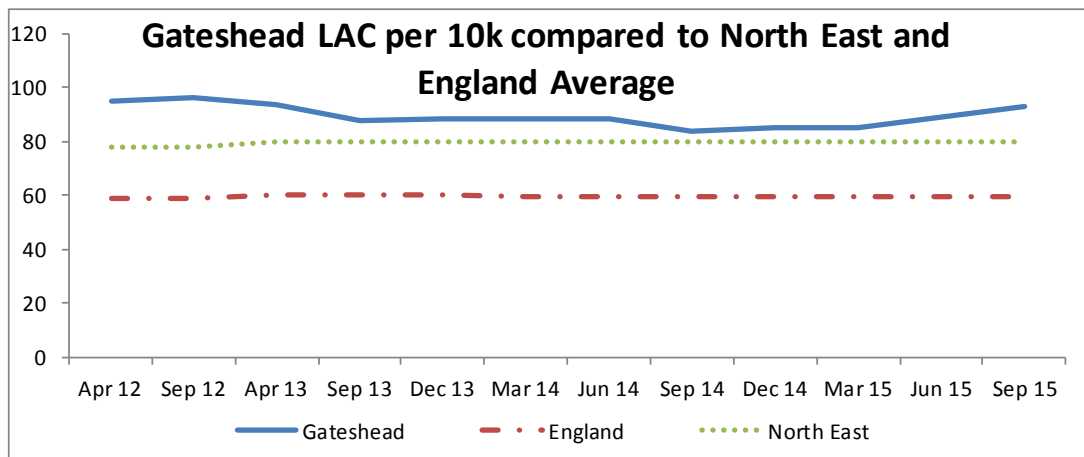
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**Purpose**

1. This report provides a summary update in relation to performance for looked after children’s services showing comparative data and analysis for current performance for 2015/16 and additionally provides a snapshot of some of the activities and achievements that our young people have been involved in.

**Background**

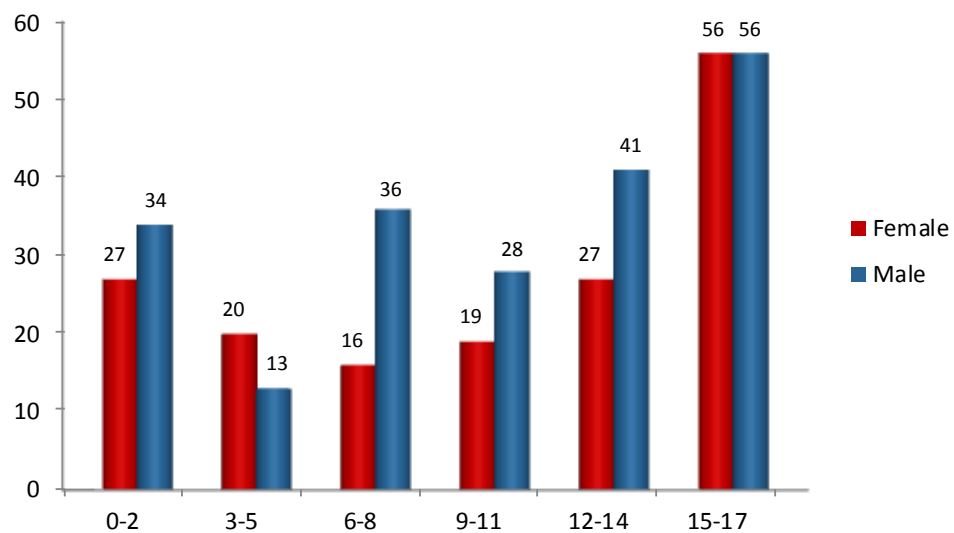
2. At 10th September 2015 there were 373 children and young people who are classed as being Looked After. Since March 2015, when the end of year figure stood at 340, we have experienced an increase of 9.7% in the number of looked after children. The graph below provides a representation of the numbers of looked after children since 2012 and shows a decrease experienced in those numbers during 2012-13 when they started to stabilise and then in Q1 2015 when they started to increase.



Performance Indicator: <b>Number of children who are Looked after</b>								
Responsible Officer: Debra Patterson								
Previous year's performance		2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16			
					1 <sup>st</sup> qtr Jun-15	2 <sup>nd</sup> qtr Sep-15	3 <sup>rd</sup> qtr Dec-15	4 <sup>th</sup> qtr Mar-16
Gateshead	Per 10,000 pop	96.0	88.6	84.8	89.5	-	-	-
	Actual	388	358	340	359	-	-	-
Comparative	National	59.7	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Statistical/regional	80.4	-	-	-	-	-	-

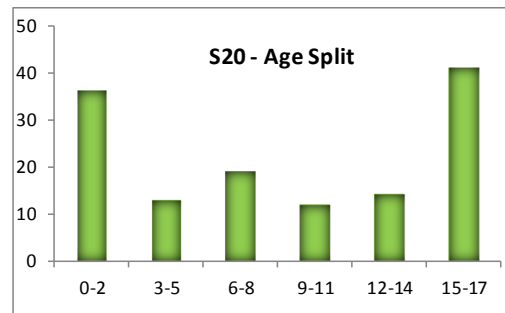
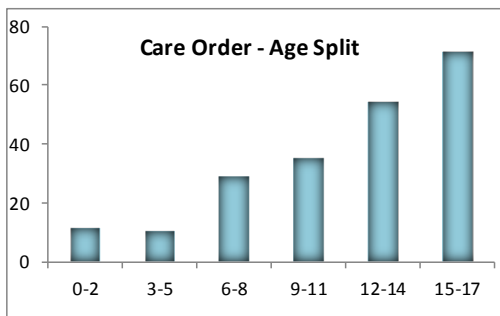
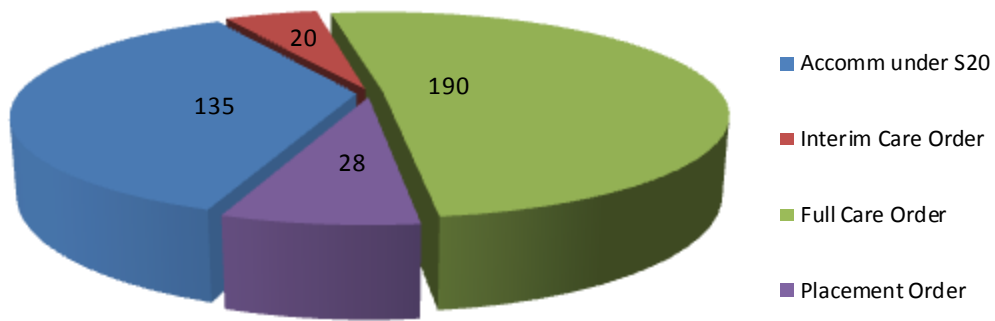
3. The age and gender of looked after children are shown below. Numbers of children aged 3-5 and those aged 9-11 has remained the same. The number of those looked after aged 2 and under has increased by 17% (from 52 to 61). We have also seen an increase in the number of males in this age group (from 22 to 34).
4. There has been a 13% increase in the number of 6-8 year olds (46 to 52), again, the number of males has increased (from 28 to 36).
5. Whilst the 12-14 age group has seen only a slight increase (66 to 68), the gender profile has seen some changes; number of females has decreased from 32 to 27 and the number of males have increased from 34 to 41.
6. The numbers aged 15-17 has increased from 105 to 112, the numbers of females increasing from 53 to 56 and the numbers of males increasing from 52 to 56.

**Age of LACs at 10th September 2015**



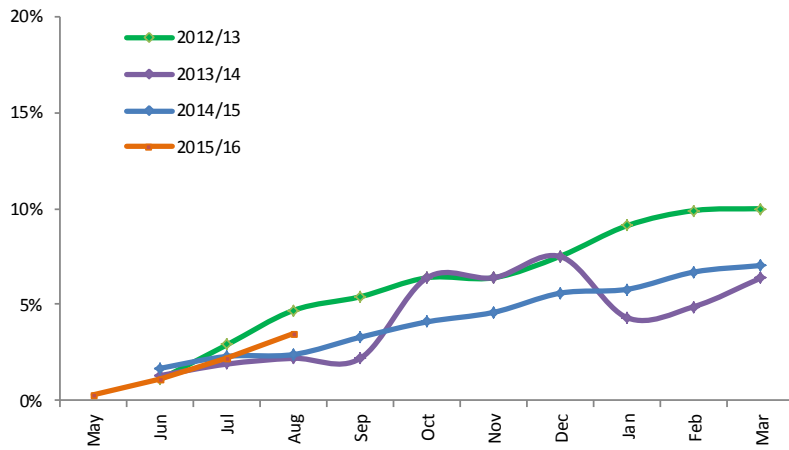
7. The legal status of children and young people is shown below. The majority of young people are accommodated under a care order (56%).
8. There has been a 12.5% increase in the number of looked after children with accommodated under a S20 and there has been a slight reduction in the number of LAC with placement orders (reduced from 30 to 28).

**Legal status of LAC as at 10th September 2015**



9. We know that the stability of young people's placements is important in ensuring they have positive outcomes. In Gateshead whilst there remain a number of children for whom stability is difficult due to the additional needs they have, the overall performance in relation to affording young people stability is good. At the end of August there were 13 out of 372 children looked after who had 3 or more placement moves (3.5%). At the same time last year there were 8 out of a total of 341 Looked after children (2.4%).

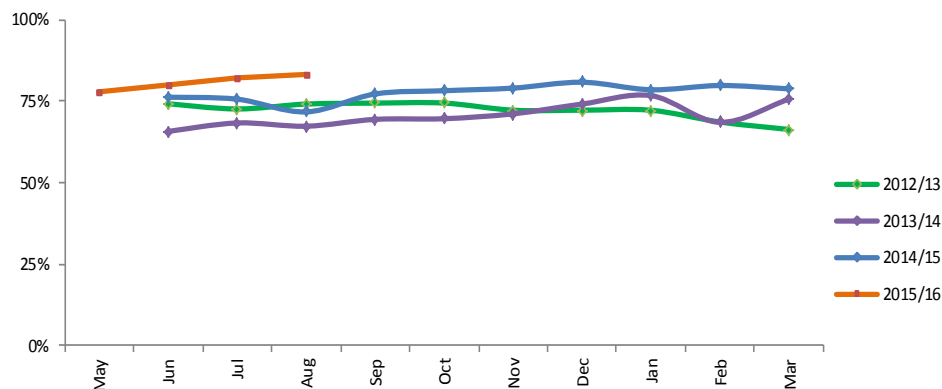
**% of looked after children with three or more placements during the year**



Performance Indicator: % of looked after children with three or more placements during the year								
Responsible Officer: Debra Patterson								
Previous years performance		2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16			
					1 <sup>st</sup> qtr Jun-15	2 <sup>nd</sup> qtr Sep-15	3 <sup>rd</sup> qtr Dec-15	4 <sup>th</sup> qtr Mar-15
Gateshead	Actual	10.0%	6.4%	7.0%	1.1%			
	Target	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%
Comparative	National	11%*			-	-	-	-
	Statistical/regional	11.0%			-	-	-	-

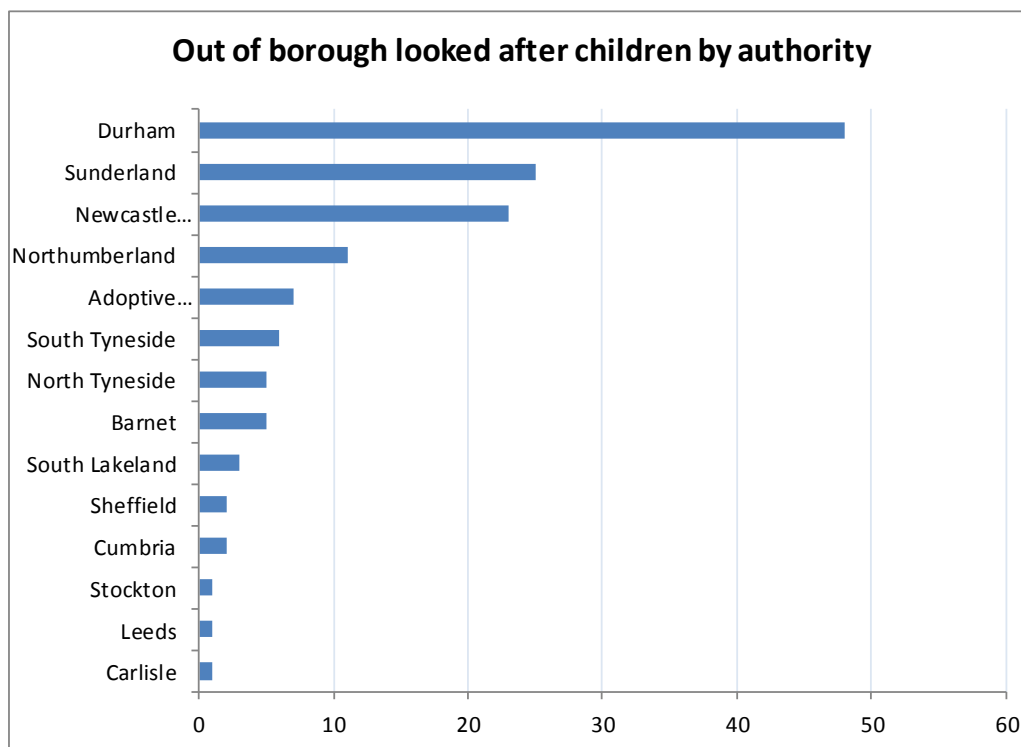
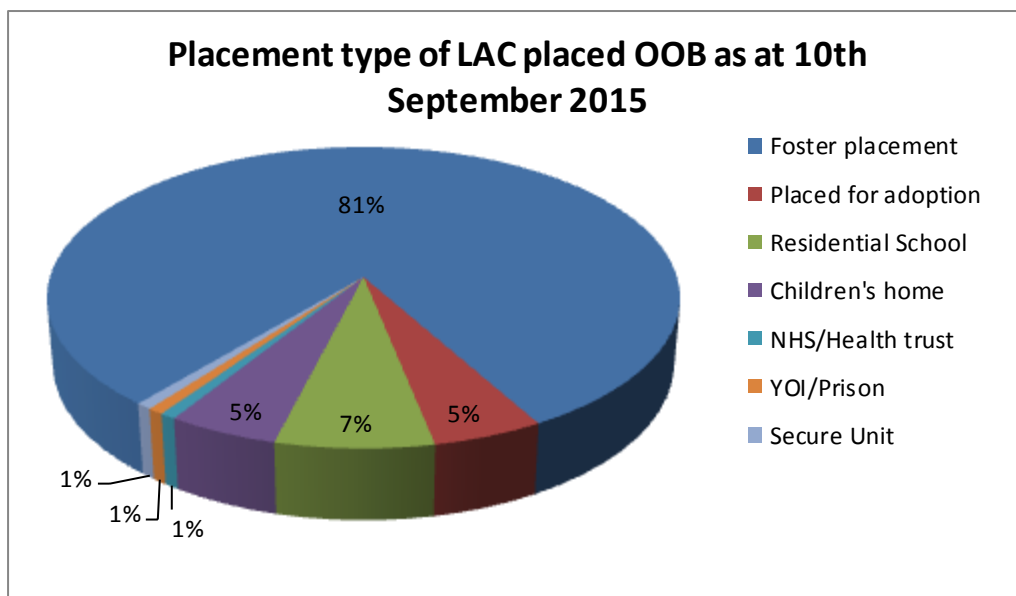
10. In addition to this measure of stability we also look at the stability of those children who have been in long term placements. 110 children out of the 132 children who have been looked after for over 2 and a half years remain in the same placement (83.3%). At this point last year there were 91 out of 127 children in the same placement (71.7%).
11. A number of initiatives have been developed to ensure the focus on providing high quality stable placements is maintained including permanence practice, training for foster carers that support placement stability such as behaviour management and payment for skills fostering initiative which was introduced in April 2013.

**% of looked after children living continuously in the same placement for 2 years**



Performance Indicator: % of looked after children living continuously in the same placement for 2 yrs								
Responsible Officer: Debra Patterson								
Previous years performance		2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16			
					1 <sup>st</sup> qtr Jun-15	2 <sup>nd</sup> qtr Sep-15	3 <sup>rd</sup> qtr Dec-15	4 <sup>th</sup> qtr Mar-16
Gateshead	Actual	66.3%	75.6%	75.6%	80.0%			
	Target	71.0%	71.0%	71.0%	71.0%	71.0%	71.0%	71.0%
Comparative	National	67.0%			-	-	-	-
	Statistical/regional	67.0%			-	-	-	-

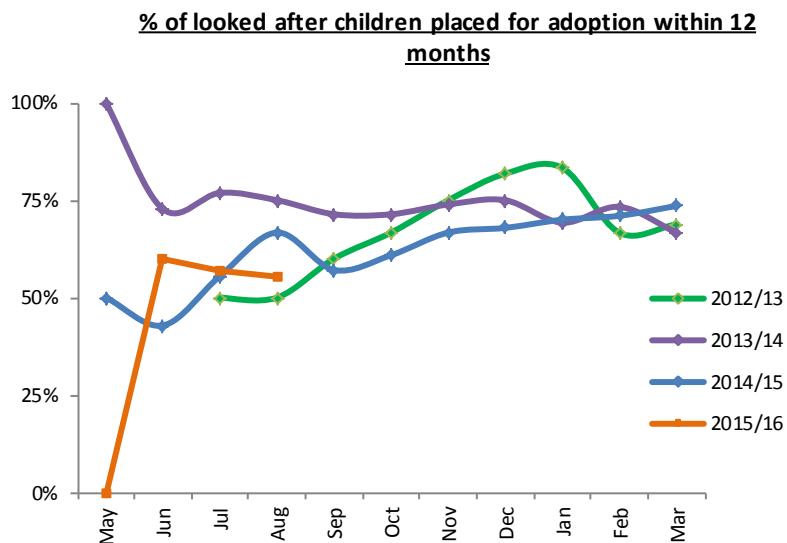
12. 140 children and young people, 37.5% of the total number of LAC, are placed Out of Borough, this has reduced from 40% in February 2015. Of those the majority, 113, are placed in foster care, of those young people 17 are in Independent Foster Care placements. Most of the placements remain within the region with only 14 young people placed further afield, 5 of whom are in placements in Barnet in order to support their Jewish identity.



13. There are 25 children placed in Independent Fostering placements 18 are outside the Borough; of those 7 are in Sunderland, 4 in Durham, 2 in Northumberland, 2 in North Tyneside, 2 in Sheffield and 1 in Newcastle.
14. Number of children in residential placements including secure placements 19, 5 placed in Durham, 3 in Newcastle, 3 in Lancashire, 3 in Cumbria, 2 In Northumberland 1 in the secure unit Kyloe House, 2 in Sunderland and 1 in Middlesbrough.
15. There are three looked after young people who have missed their LAC review (99.1%), two of these cases relate to two siblings. The quality and degree of their engagement in reviews is mixed with many children and young people seen outside the meeting just prior to their review. IROs are increasingly trying to meet with children and young people prior to their review.

## Adoption

16. During April and August 2015 there were 9 adoptions that took place, of which 5 were within the best interest date timescale (56%). At the same point last year there were 15 adoptions, of which 10 were within time (66.7%).



Performance Indicator: <b>Adopted Children whose placements started within 12 months of the Best Interest Date</b>								
Responsible Officer: Debra Patterson								
Previous years performance		2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16			
					1 <sup>st</sup> qtr Jun-15	2 <sup>nd</sup> qtr Sep-15	3 <sup>rd</sup> qtr Dec-15	4 <sup>th</sup> qtr Mar-16
Gateshead	Actual	68.8%	66.7%	73.5%	60.0%			
	Target	80.0%	80.0%	80.0%	80.0%	80.0%	80.0%	80.0%
Comparative	National	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Statistical/regional	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

17. Our performance measure for timeliness within adoption is challenging. We are waiting for the most recent figures to be published from The Government's adoption scorecard.
18. We are expecting to see an increase in the time it takes to match a child to an adoptive family once the court has granted a placement order. Calculated on a three year rolling average, the provisional figure for 2013-14-15 is 255 days, an increase from the previous 3 year figure of 210 days
19. There were a total of 34 children who were adopted during 2014-15. Within this group of children we had 2 sibling groups of 3, in one of these groups 2 were aged 6 and 7 at the time of matching. The original plan was to place the siblings separately but the two younger siblings were ultimately placed together, however in order to ensure this was the most appropriate plan for the children more time was needed to assess the viability of a joint placement.
20. In another group of 3 siblings, two were placed together but because of the ages of the children (5, 6&7) external family finding was required. In 2 other cases the foster carer came forward with the intention to adopt, so further assessments were required, in one case the foster carer requested a delay in the process due to the behaviour of the young boy.
21. There were 4 groups of 2 siblings adopted. 2 older siblings were placed together (boys aged 4 and 6) and in another case a young boy had health issues and needed an operation, which was undertaken before family finding commenced.
22. Separate to this we also had children that were adopted via fostering to adopt placements.

### **Care Leavers**

23. An increasing focus is being placed on care leavers and the responsibility of Local Authorities to ensure they transition well into adulthood. As a result we are now responsible for monitoring young people's accommodation and work or education status for young people aged 18,19, 20 and 21 years.

### **Care Leavers in Suitable Accommodation**

24. There are 191 young people who will turn 18, 19, 20 or 21 during 2015-16, of which 59 have already had their birthday, we can confirm that of those 59 there are 49 who are in suitable accommodation (83%). There are 2 YP not in suitable accommodation who are in custody. There are 8 YP who we are not in touch with either because they refuse contact or no longer require services but have been reported as not being in suitable accommodation for the purpose of this indicator.

### **Care leavers in Education Employment or Training**

25. There are 191 young people who will turn 18, 19, 20 or 21 during 2015-16, of which 59 have already had their birthday, we can confirm there are 27 who are in some form of employment, education or training (45.8%).

The breakdown of those in some form of EET is:

Age 18- 7/13 (54%)

Age 19- 10/18 (77%)

Age 20 -7/19 (54%)

Age 21- 3/9 (23%)

## **Participation**

26. At the beginning of September a new service was launched to provide a simple and accessible way for looked after children to give their views. The service is called - **MOMO (Mind of My Own)**, and is an award winning APP that helps children and young people express their opinions more clearly by making it easy for them to send social workers their "MOMO statement". They can use it to prepare for meetings, request a change to their care or to ask for a problem to be sorted out.
27. It works by prompting them to enter their views, structuring what they say into a statement and delivering that statement to their social worker or other member of their care team electronically.
28. It gives children confidence to express their views, communicate a problem if they don't feel safe and forces their views into the heart of the decision making processes. **MOMO** can be used on a normal computer, as well as iPhones and Android devices.
29. MOMO is now being used by 26 other Local Authorities and has been selected as a finalist by the Children and young people now magazine's panel of professionals and young people in two award categories. The Children in Care Award and the Advice & Guidance Award.
30. Since its launch we have already had a number of young people use the application as a result Gateshead has been highlighted in a recent MOMO newsletter as having received five MOMO statements in our first week. By the end of week two 12 young people had used MOMO to get their views heard. MOMO anticipate that where Local Authorities are they will receive 70 responses within 3 months, in Gateshead we are confident this will be exceeded.
31. Gateshead continues to support its children and young people to access a broad range of activities to enhance their development and broaden their experiences.

## **Northumbria Gliding Club**

32. In August 2015 a second group of young people were given the opportunity to take part in a trial lesson at Northumbria Gliding Club in Chopwell. Each young person was offered a 20-30 minute flight with an instructor. The young people were given the opportunity to take control of the glider during their flight. All of the young people (and some of the supporting staff) who took part and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. The visit was organised to provide a new experience which would enhance the young people's confidence.



## **Expressive arts Group**

33. Children's Services funded the Gateway Studio Project to deliver a 32 week expressive arts programme. The group completed a GCSE qualification in expressive arts. For their final pieces, young people danced, created chalk art, used photography, created a puppet show, wrote poetry and learned to play the guitar.
34. The group included young people aged between 12 and 17. The young people achieved two B's, one C and two D GCSE grades.
35. Children's services have commissioned Gateway to deliver another year of the expressive arts GCSE; however we are waiting for Gateway to find a new venue to deliver from.

### **36. Feedback from foster carers**

- a. The girl I look after struggles with her self-esteem and her confidence is easily knocked however this has improved significantly since starting her GCSE with Gateway. Martin really understood her behaviours responding well to difficult situations this brought out the best in her as well as giving her praise and recognition for her progress. Everyone at Gateway was fully supportive and encouraged her to join in with all opportunities.
- b. She was always eager to attend and got more than just a qualification out of the course. It has helped her concentration and boosted her confidence by giving her an outlet for her creativity and an activity to look forward to.
- c. She has really enjoyed the time she has spent on the course and it has definitely increased her self-esteem as well as gaining a GCSE in Year7! This was a great opportunity and I would encourage carers to get other young people to give it a try.

### **37. Photography**

The Catherine Cookson Foundation funded a photography workshop for looked after children. The workshop was themed around the issues raised from the Beowulf project. The young people spent two days working with Lindsay Duncanson using their own devices to take the photographs. The group learned how to take better pictures and how to think about what they were doing whilst framing their pictures.

The young people selected a number of their images to exhibit at St Marys Heritage Centre. Whilst the photographs were being prepared for the display, a member of the public who was browsing through the images and wanted to buy a copy of one of the young people's photographs, testament to the talent a number of the young people showed.



## **Advocacy**

38. Gateshead provides support to children and young people to ensure they have every opportunity to express their views and have them heard. This can be through independent advocacy commissioned by the local authority or through our own children's rights officer who provides advice and support to young people in a more informal way.
39. **Child A**  
Child A was placed in an Independent Fostering Agency Placement and was unsure about the plans for his future. Chris visited with the Independent Reviewing Officer to gather his views for his Looked After Review. Child A was happy in placement, however did not understand what the plans were for his future. Chris represented the young man in his Review and then supported him to attend at the end of his review. Chris has subsequently supported Child A whilst his Social Worker explained the Authorities plans for his long term care.
40. **Child B**  
Child B is 9 year of age. She and her younger siblings were brought into care following various concerns for the children's safety. Child B's mum worked with the social worker and addressed the issues raised and the younger children were returned to her care. At this time Child B told her social worker that she did not want to return home and wanted to remain living with her foster carer. Chris and Gillian worked with her to gather her views and used various resources including puppets and specialist IPad apps to find out why she wanted to remain in care. Her views were shared with her care team and also fed into her LAC review. Child B has remained in care.
41. Additionally there are 10 children/young people accessing our commissioned independent advocacy service.

## **Recommendation**

42. For the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider and comment on the contents of this report.

**CONTACT: Ann Day, Service Manager**

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