

CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 19 JULY 2023

6.00 PM

Bourges/Viersen Room - Town Hall

AGENDA

Page No

1. Apologies for Absence	
2. Declarations of Interest	
At this point Members must declare whether they have a disclosable pecuniary interest, or other interest, in any of the items on the agenda, unless it is already entered in the register of members' interests or is a "pending notification" that has been disclosed to the Head of Legal Services	
3. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 15 March 2023	3 - 8
4. Update from Foster Carers	9 - 14
5. Participation Update for CICC	15 - 18
6. Appointment of Champion Members	19 - 22
7. Draft Work Programme 2023 – 2024 and Review of Work in 2022 - 2023	23 - 44
8. Annual Fostering Service Report	45 - 62
9. Annual Adoption Report Regional Adoption Arrangements	63 - 128
10. Annual Independent Review Officer (IRO) Report 2022 - 2023	129 - 150
11. Children in Care that go Missing	151 - 156
12. Performance Reports	157 - 164
1. Homes of Children in Care	
2. Scorecard	
13. Health Report	165 - 168
14. Members Issues	

Members that are not part of the core CPC membership, but hold Corporate Parenting responsibilities, are invited to raise any issues they have with regard to the services provided to Children in Care.



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Committee Members:

Councillors: Ayres, Bi (Vice Chairman), Bond, G Casey, Cole, Jones (Chairman), S Lane, G Nawaz, D Over, Seager and Tyler

Substitutes: Councillors: Allen, Barkham and Hemraj

Further information about this meeting can be obtained from Karen Dunleavy on telephone 01733 452233 or by email – karen.dunleavy@peterborough.gov.uk

**MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE MEETING (FORMAL)
HELD AT 6:00PM, ON
WEDNESDAY, 15 MARCH 2023
BOURGES/MIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH**

Committee Members Present: Councillor Jones, (Chairman (Chair), Councillors Ayres, Bisby, S Bond, Knight, Lane and Sainsbury.

Other Councillors in attendance: Cllr Bi

Officers Present: Ricky Cooper, Ricky Cooper, Assistant Director, Children's Services
Shalina Chandoo, Quality Assurance Lead
Anita Hewson, Head of Service (Acting) Fostering
Katie Liddle, Designated Nurse for Looked After Children
Dr Aslam, Consultant Paediatrician
Karen S Dunleavy, Democratic Services Officer

Also Present: Glen Crossland, Foster Carer Community Representative

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Allen, Howard and Barkham.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

3. MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 23 NOVEMBER 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2022 were agreed as a true and accurate record, subject to the amendment of Cllr Lane's apologies being recorded.

4. Update From Foster Carers Committee

The Corporate Parenting Committee received a report in relation to updates from the Foster Carer Committee.

The purpose of the report was to update the Committee about the activities of the Foster Carer Committee (FCC). Key points highlighted included:

- Meetings had been held regularly and positions on the committee had remained the same for most.
- Update on the work undertaken for help with the cost-of-living payments for foster carer families.
- Working with the Cambridgeshire Fostering Association on the retention of foster carers.

- Recruitment Ambassadors working on pathways for new carers entering the system.
- Access to Liquid Logic had been provided to foster carers.

The Fostering Service Manager and Foster Carer Representative introduced the report and asked Members to note the contents and raise any queries they had with representatives.

The Corporate Parenting Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Councillors complemented the foster carer on the report and the progress that had been made over the years.
- Members were advised that the Fostering Service had acknowledged how stressful investigations were for carers and would work as quickly as possible to resolve the issues. In some cases, there needed to be involvement from partner organisations, which could delay the process, however the Foster Carer (FC) payments would continue up to a 13-week period, with further bespoke support negotiated thereafter.
- The Recruitment Ambassadors and drop-in sessions to attract FCs, could be held at a community events, shopping centres and other events such as pride. In addition, Members were advised that there would be virtual information sessions held.
- The Fostering Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Focus Group would feed into Government. The focus currently was to modernise the way the Council interacted with YP to take on board how they wished to be addressed, such as the use of Pronouns. The EDI Focus Group had made good progress, however, there were issues with programming text used on the Liquid Logic software system, which was used to manage the day-to-day care of Children and Young People in Care.
- Children in care were taught from an early age to understand finances, and foster carers introduce budget management, mobile banking and savings, and the cost of living from a very early age. Some activities also entailed taking the children to shops to teach them how to compare food products. In addition, CiC were taught how to prepare meals to include the costs involved. All of these areas of budget management activities were discussed regularly at the FC meetings to ensure that consistency was being delivered across the board with all carers.
- Members commented that the best training providers for EDI Focus groups was the Kite Trust.
- Members were advised that the EDI needs of carers was proactive and, in most cases, learning was provided by the CiC in addition to community groups and the Cambridge Association. In addition, the carers would be encouraged to complete a diversity questionnaire.
- Independent skills had started from birth age by teaching them to self sooth in their cots. The teaching of independents had also been a key area of interests for Independent Review Officers (IROs) and was very much part of a CiCs care plan.
- Members felt that it would be helpful to receive regular feedback on the skills for independent living support, particularly within the briefing notes of the relevant Corporate Parenting Champion.
- Members were advised that the Children in Care Council was working on a money management and financial literacy training programme for children and young people in care. The Head of Fostering Services commented that the training offer should also be co-produced with foster cares to ensure all training was consistent.

The Corporate Parenting Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** (Unanimously) to note the contents and agreed that regular updates should be provided on money management and financial literacy for CiC and YP in Care.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Corporate Parenting Committee noted the report and agreed that:

1. The Children in Care Council would provide and update within their next report on the work that they were undertaking on money management and financial literacy for Children and Young People in Care.

5. CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL (CICC) PARTICIPATION REPORT

The Corporate Parenting Committee received a report in relation to the work of the Children in Care Council and the outcome of their discussions at meetings and events organised.

The purpose of the report was to update Members on the Children in Care Council activities and participation services.

Key points raised in the discussion included:

- An update provided on the care leaver that had recently been selected as a regional National Voice Ambassador for 2023/24. It was hoped that the young person would attend the next informal meeting to update Members.
- The CiCC continued to be consulted by lots of Council services with the recent being the development of an online support tool known as Squiddle for Virtual Schools, where CiC could chat to professionals that provided support to them.
- CiCC had been working with animators on the mental health campaign.
- The Every Word Matters project and the development of a code of conduct for Youth Club.
- Care Leaver Forum projects and a future update to be provided at an informal meeting.
- Every Word Matters and a podcast led by Care Leavers, who shared their experiences. This was a preferred media platform for CiC going forward.
- The Young Inspectors visit to contact centres and the recent visit to Cherry Lodge. A report on the outcome was being drafted.
- The Young Trainers were working with newly qualified Social Workers (SW).
- Young Recruiters were working on SW recruitment, Anglia Ruskin University candidates for the SW degree programme and interviews for the Executive Director of Children's Services.
- CiC and YP activities, joint activities with Cambridgeshire and the summer programme.

The Quality Assurance Lead introduced the report and asked Members to note the update and raise any queries they had with officers.

The Corporate Parenting Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members commented that the Care Leaver that had become the Voice Ambassador could consider sharing this success on media such as TV and Radio. Members were advised that the CL Voice Ambassador had featured in a newsletter, which was distributed with other CiC and CLs.
- The Youth Club usually attracted 8 to 12 year old CiC, and some continued to attend until age 14. Members were also advised that there could be in the region of 10 CiC at a Youth Club session. In addition, older children tended to help and mentor the younger participants in events.

- Members were advised that there had been CLs that had shared their experience of leaving care further as they had felt so empowered. The CLs had not been updated about the impact they had made for others yet as they had only recently started to share this feedback, however, it was felt that this would be a naturally progression and reported back to them in the future. A good example would be to use the progress of the financial literacy training and the progress CLs could make in the future.
- Members commended the work of the CLs and suggested that Councillors might wish to consider a nomination for the CL Voice Ambassador for Peterborough to receive a Civic Award.
- Members were advised that there were circa 100 young people involved in the group, activities and events such as the CLs Forum, CiCC, Young Trainers and Ambassadors.

The Corporate Parenting Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** (Unanimously) to note the contents.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Corporate Parenting Committee noted the report and agreed that:

1. Councillors would nominate the Care Leaver Voice Ambassador for Peterborough for a Civic Award through the Civic Office.

6. ANNUAL HEALTH REPORT

The Corporate Parenting Committee received a report in relation to the Annual Health Report.

The purpose of the report was to update Members in relation to the health and dental services for children in care. In addition, Members were advised that the Designated Nurse and Doctor for Looked After Children had requested the reasons why assessments had been conducted late for CiC. The Designated Nurse for CiC had also advised of a date correction at 4.8 of the report, which should read 2023 and not 2022. Thanks, were paid to Councillor Knight for seeking the volunteer dental practice in Bushfield, which had assessed eight CiC to date.

The Designated Nurse for Looked After Children introduced the report and asked Members to note the contents and raise any queries with officers.

The Corporate Parenting Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- The Designated Nurse would continue to work on improvements for the health questionnaire, particularly in relation to the wording and communications to build relationships.
- The out of CiC county placement health assessments for CiC, were always assessed after the Authority's own children and this was the stance nationally. The delays were mainly in relation to under resourced Health Teams. Solutions would need to be found for this issue, with the aim to resolve them.
- Members commented that being placed out of the county should not a factor in delay of any child's health assessment.
- There had been a preference by management to make the health assessments virtual, as it had been felt this would speed up the process however, the questionnaire had demonstrated that CiC preferred face to face appointments.
- One person had stated that they felt alternative therapy had not benefited them, which had skewed the figures and made it seem that the result was 25%. Members

suggested that the questionnaire should be taken to the Care Leavers Forum to obtain a wider view of the therapy service.

ACTION AGREED

The Corporate Parenting Committee noted the report and agreed that:

1. The Designated Nurse for Looked After Children would include figures about how late the out of county health assessments were being conducted for YP and CiC, to include the reasons why they had been overdue.

7. PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Corporate Parenting Committee received a report in relation to Performance Data for Children in Care and Care Leavers.

The purpose of the report was to update Members in respect of the numbers of children and young people being looked after by the Council as of 31 January 2023 providing a breakdown of the types of homes in which they were living in. The report also provided information about the age, gender and ethnicity of those children and young people.

The Head of Corporate Parenting introduced the report and asked Members to note the contents and raise any queries with officers.

The Corporate Parenting Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Family safeguarding caseloads had shown as amber; however, 18 had been an acceptable level. There was an option to call on agency if caseloads were high.
- The caseload figures for Independent Reviewing Officers were at a manageable level despite the high figure.
- There had been a rise in children in care intake figures and this had been due to the increased population of separated migrant children. The migrant population figure used to be calculated at 0.07% and had recently changed to 0.01%.
- Children would not be placed in schools that were not classed as good or outstanding by Ofsted, however, a child would not be moved from a school that had been below the target unless it was necessary, as this would be too disruptive for the CiC.
- Members commented that it would be helpful for the safeguarding team to provide a breakdown by ethnicity for CiC as it could help with recruitment purposes.
- There were some 16-year-olds living in semi-independent accommodation, where they would receive 20 hours of support. It was also advised that a panel would review the support provided to 16-year-olds and the need would be adjusted where appropriate.
- Post 16 accommodation, such as Brinkly House, would be staffed for 24 hours to support occupants.
- Members were assured that 16-year-old children were not placed in houses of multiple occupation.
- There were some neighbouring Authorities that purchased properties specifically for CiC post 16 independent living accommodation and this option could be explored for Peterborough City Council.
- The current post 16 home arrangements were subject to regular reviews by the Council.
- Some children subject to a Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs), were not looked after and would not show in the performance report.
- There had been children that were subject to an SGO that were not looked after, however would be covered by the safeguarding team systems, whether they qualified

under the corporate parenting or the fostering remit. It was advised that it would be beneficial to Members to provide an outline of the volume of children in the looked after system subject to an SGO and what their support offer had included.

The Corporate Parenting Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** (Unanimously) to note the contents.

AGREED ACTIONS

The Corporate Parenting Committee noted the report and agreed that The Head of Corporate Parenting would provide Members with:

1. A briefing note to show the current breakdown of CiC population by ethnic group.
2. Information on the CiC population by ethnicity group within performance reports going forward.
3. A briefing note on the types of semi-independent living accommodation.
4. A plan on how the Council intended to meet the sufficiency need of CiC post 16 semi-independent living accommodation and whether it would be beneficial to continue to rely on the marketplace or invest in properties to supply these provisions in house.
5. A cost benefit analysis of the Council's current post 16 semi-independent living accommodation arrangements.
6. An outline going forward in performance reports to include the volume of children that were subject to an SGO that were not classified as looked after by the Authority.

8. MEMBERS ISSUES

Members that were not part of the core CPC membership, but held corporate parenting responsibilities, were invited raise issues they had with regard to the services provided to Children in Care (CiC).

- Members were advised that the children in care missing report, which was due to be presented as part of the March 2023 work programme, had been delayed because of a change in Corporate Parenting Heads of Service leadership.
- Members were advised that there had been some work to undertake in relation to specialist organisations, such as Parker, that could assist with the health assessments and integration support needed for separated migrant children.

The Corporate Parenting Committee considered and **RESOLVED** that there were no issues to raise.

CHAIRMAN
END 7:20PM

CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM No. 4
19 JULY 2023	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:	John Gregg Executive Director Children and Young People's Service	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Councillor Lynne Ayres Cabinet Member for Education, Skills, and Children's Services	
Contact Officer(s):	Brian Relph, Assistant Director, Fostering, Regional Adoption and Specialist Young People's Services	Tel. 07885 717462

UPDATE FROM FOSTER CARERS

RECOMMENDATIONS	
FROM: Despina Kaoura and Sue King, Service Managers Fostering	Deadline date: N/A
<p>It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Notes the content of this report 2. Raises any queries they have with the lead officers 	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report is submitted to the Corporate Parenting Committee as a regular work programme item from the Fostering Service.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to keep the Corporate Parenting Committee informed of activity undertaken by the Foster Carer Community together with the Fostering Service and to update on Fostering Service developments.
- 2.2 This report is for the Corporate Parenting Committee to consider under its Terms of Reference No. 2.4.4.6 This report is to support the Corporate Parenting Committee to monitor the quality of care delivered by the City Council and review the performance of outcomes for children and young people in care, (d) Hold meetings with children and young people in care, frontline staff and Foster Carers to inform the committee of the standards of care and improvement outcomes for looked after children.
- 2.3 *How does this report link to the Children in care Promise?*

This report links to the Children in Care Promise by focussing on respect for Children in Care and Care Leavers

3. TIMESCALES

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	
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4.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

4.1 This report has been prepared to update the Corporate Parenting Committee on participation activity and collaborative working with Peterborough Foster Carers, and to provide an overview of relevant service development activity.

The Peterborough Foster Carer Community (PFCC) continue to meet bi-monthly.

Foster Carers representatives on the PFCC are Mandy Nicholson, Chair of the Peterborough Foster Carer Community, Glen Crossland, Vice Chair, Andrea Hughes, Secretary & Events Coordinator, Lynne Bailey, Treasurer.

4.2 **Fostering Working Groups – Progress Briefing**

The Fostering Service strives to develop and improve the service we deliver to Children in Care of the Local Authority (LA) and the Foster Carers who provide this care on behalf of the LA. The Fostering Service recognises the wealth of fostering and life experience, knowledge and understanding Foster Carers come with. They have a great understanding of children who come into the care system through caring for children within their homes as part of their families. The Service values the individual skills which Carers bring with them to support the Foster Carer Community. The Service works closely with the members of the Peterborough Foster Carer Committee (PFCC) and the Cambridgeshire Foster Carer Association (CFCA) but also with the wider fostering community throughout the year to ensure the voice and views of Peterborough and Cambridgeshire Foster Carers are heard and are central to plans for service development.

An excellent example of development work by the PFCC is a Welcome Pack designed by the PCC Committee to send out to all PCC carers to keep carers informed and provide easy access to Fostering and other relevant policies and procedures and handbooks etc including the most up to date information from the service.

The current working groups we have are:

- Recruitment Ambassador Working Group
- Retention Working Group
- Mentoring Working Group
- Amongst other joint working to meet the needs of the service and the children we care for.

4.3 **Retention of Foster Carers**

We continue to host a monthly Foster Carer Retention Working Group, with Foster Carers working alongside Social Workers, Recruitment Officers and Managers to consider issues related to the retention of Foster Carers. This quarter we have put focus on the 'Cost of Living' crisis and impact this is having on Foster Carers and the retention of applicants in assessment and newly approved Foster Carers. We have also put focus on recruitment activity as part of retention, since the more involved Foster Carers are with the service, the better the retention of the Foster Carers. There has been a range of activity focused on these areas, which include Foster Carers and Staff working with the finance department to rectify issues with the remittance forms, annual statements, and reimbursements for expenses and money owed. The Foster Carer Community awaits the decision of the Local Authority on the increase in Foster Carer Allowances for 2023-2024. Foster Carers choose to foster for a range of reasons, but financial gain is not one of them, however Foster Carers need to receive adequate financial support to meet the needs of the children they care for, and expenses incurred.

Foster Carers have told us that they sometimes find it difficult to discuss money issues or emotional wellbeing matters. We have responded by asking Supervising Social Workers to promote with Foster Carers that we want them to feel able to discuss these matters freely with us and without judgment. We have also written a range of articles within the Fostering newsletter on financial matters and emotional wellbeing to promote this further. Foster Carers also have access to the Employees Assistance Programme the same as staff employed by PCC.

We have expanded on our informal coffee mornings and lunches with Foster Carers leading on this activity, to ensure that new Foster Carers and existing Foster Carers have increased opportunities to socialise with one another, and to share their knowledge and skill. This activity also lessens any risk of Foster Carers feeling isolated within their role.

The Fostering Service together with the PFCC continue to bring together the two Local Authorities through events held throughout the year. There are also a range of working groups, that include both Peterborough and Cambridgeshire Foster Carers.

We continue to ensure that for any carer considering leaving the service, we have cultivated a system whereby managers are informed of this immediately. The Foster Carer is visited by a manager and an action plan is drawn up to ensure that any issues are managed in a proactive and timely manner. This approach is working well, with Foster Carers not leaving the service due to being unhappy with the fostering service. In this quarter we have had five fostering households leave the service. One was due to ill health, one retired, two had a significant change in family circumstances and one felt they had too many other commitments and no availability to foster. Overall, the retention activity is going well, with Foster Carers being a core part of this work.

4.4 Recruitment Ambassadors

The Fostering Recruitment Ambassadors from within the Fostering Community continue to work alongside the Service supporting recruitment activity and raising the awareness of fostering in their communities using their wealth of knowledge and experience of the fostering task. We currently have three Peterborough Ambassadors and three Cambridgeshire Ambassadors. All of the Ambassadors meet with the Recruitment Team quarterly to review the progress of work undertaken and to consider new ideas.

The Ambassadors are very proactive in researching recruitment opportunities within their local area and they have continued to support with a range of events in their local communities. They have also been working on a new initiative for the summer months, which focuses on picnics in the park. The concept is that picnics will be arranged, and the Foster Carers will be encouraged to bring along their family and friends. This enables the Ambassadors and Recruitment Officers to engage with family and friends in an informal manner and provide information about fostering should they wish to apply. In addition, these picnics are also good for the retention of Foster Carers.

One of the Ambassadors and a Team Manager have started a monthly online Q&A session which is focused on providing fostering applicants and newly approved Foster Carers with the opportunity to come along to the session, ask any questions and learn from others. This session has proved popular, and the feedback has been very good.

To promote the Council's Foster Friendly initiative one of the Ambassadors recently supported with a presentation on 'Peterborough Conversations' and has made a video of her experience of working for the Council, alongside her fostering role, to promote this to other council workers. Other Ambassadors are also very involved with creating case studies and videos for promotional purposes.

The Ambassadors are supporting with creating content for the Foster Carer newsletter. We feel that if the newsletter content is predominately led by Foster Carers, then it will be more engaging to other Foster Carers.

The Ambassadors are also promoting the Fostering Service across Peterborough and Cambridgeshire by assisting with the organisation of drop-in sessions which have a different focus to the established information evenings that we host. Instead, they are being advertised as 'Come and talk to a Foster Carer'. We feel that this type of event will be more appealing to the public, since most people who enquire are most interested in talking to a Foster Carer who is already in this role.

In addition to the Ambassadors, we are also widening our pool of Foster Carers that support generally with Fostering recruitment. There are several monthly meetings with Foster Carers who want to share their recruitment ideas with the Recruitment Team. Recently we ran a competition with Foster Carers to submit their recruitment ideas to be entered into a prize raffle. We had an excellent response to the competition and obtained some really good ideas for recruitment activity.

4.5 Mentoring Scheme

The Fostering Service continues to operate a peer Mentoring Scheme. The Mentors work in a structured one-to-one relationship with a Foster Carer, with the main purpose being to support a Foster Carer to develop their knowledge, experience, skills and build on their confidence within the Fostering role.

Significant progress has been made to ensure that the Peterborough Mentoring Scheme is established, and it now equals that of Cambridgeshire. There has been training undertaken by the Peterborough Mentors, together with a change in payments to bring them in line with their Cambridgeshire peers. There is now a uniform approach to the Mentor role in both councils.

In this quarter, there has been a significant change in terms of allocating Mentors to Mentees. Previously Mentors were allocated to new Foster Carers on approval, or where it was felt that providing a Mentor to a more experienced Foster Carer may be beneficial. However, we now allocate a Mentor to applicants during the fostering assessment. This provides the Mentor with the opportunity to develop a relationship with the Mentee prior to approval to enable the Mentee to be better prepared for the fostering role and for the Mentor to be able to actively support their Mentee when a child is placed.

We currently hold regular quarterly meetings (with a virtual option) with our Mentors to discuss any issues around mentoring and to provide updates regarding the fostering service. The fostering social workers who support the Mentors also give advice to colleagues regarding which Carers to refer and when to refer for a Mentor.

A Mentor's Handbook has been developed and disseminated to carers. We have arranged an in-person meeting for all the Peterborough and Cambridgeshire Mentors at New Shire Hall on 27th June 2023.

4.6 Fostering Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Focus Group Update

The Fostering Equality, Diversity & Inclusion focus group (which included staff and carers) raised requests for changes to Liquid Logic (the children's data base) to include gender / pronoun preference on demographics. The Liquid Logic change board considered the proposals, the system requires selection of either male or female currently as this data is required by Government, however, the system has now been adapted to give a Mx option. Liquid Logic is continuing to investigate ways of being able to express gender preferences within personal profiles.

4.7 Feedback Loop

The feedback loop sets out Foster Carer experiences, views and feedback gathered through the Foster Carer forums in Peterborough (the Peterborough Foster Carer Community: PFCC) and in Cambridgeshire (the Cambridgeshire Foster Carer Association: CFCA). It reflects Foster Carer voices from across the fostering community in relation to a range of topics they have chosen to provide feedback on or areas of specific challenge. For each new feedback theme there is a

section for the Corporate Parent response which will be taken back to the Foster Carer forums, providing a transparent and open dialogue between Foster Carers, Children's Services, and the wider Council departments.

The Fostering Service continues to engage with Foster Carers via regular meetings with the Foster Carer Association/Community, Support Groups, the range of working groups discussed above in order to hear feedback directly from Foster Carers on what is working well and what Foster Carers feel needs to be considered or addressed not just by the Fostering Service but also the wider organisation relevant to caring for children in care. The Fostering service will continue to engage the wider organisation to respond to the Feedback loop to continue to develop the service.

Changes

4.8

The fostering service is entering a period of transformation to enable it to be competitive within the commercial market and to support best practice. As part of this transformation, we will be looking at practice models which includes a network hub model to ensure the needs of our most vulnerable children and young people with complex needs and or whose behaviours challenge can be met in house. An example of such a network model is [Mockingbird](#) (there are other similar models that we are also exploring).

There will be some leadership changes within the fostering service with a change of Assistant Director and Head of Service. The new interim Assistant Director is Brian Relp and he came into post on the 26th of June 2023. The new Head of Service is yet to be confirmed but it is anticipated that an interim will be in place at the point that the current Head of Service Anita Hewson leaves on the 6th of August 2023. Every effort will be made to ensure a smooth transition of the leadership team to ensure as little impact as possible to our Children in Care, Foster Carers and staff.

Fostering Service Annual Report

4.9

The Fostering Services Regulations 2011 require that the Fostering Service provides an annual written report on the management, outcomes and financial aspects of the Local Authority's Fostering Service. This is complete for 2022-2023, the report provides an overview of the activity of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fostering Service for the last financial year and is reflective of the shared fostering service. See Joint Fostering Annual Report for details.

5. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

5.1

This work links to the Council's Corporate Priority in relation to the following:

Priority Prevention, Independence & Resilience

The Fostering Service ensures every child gets the best start in life – with more children and young people in care finding permanent, safe and stable homes and support to care leavers to access a good, enhanced local offer that meets their health, education, housing and employment needs.

The Fostering Service ensures that children and young people are safe from harm and lead healthy lives. Children and young people are confident, resilient, thrive in their learning and engage positively and actively in their communities. The Fostering Service supports Care Leavers through the Staying Put Scheme.

Further information on the Council's Priorities can be found here - [Link to Corporate Strategy and Priorities Webpage](#)

6. CONSULTATION

6.1

N/A

7. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

7.1 Foster Carer views will feed into the key priorities of the service.

8. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

8.1 Corporate Parenting Committee Members have a duty to review the performance of Children's Social Care.

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 N/A

10. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

10.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Legal Implications

10.2 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

Equalities Implications

10.3 There are no equality implications associated with this report.

10.4 Carbon Impact

The report contains no new proposals, and therefore there are no decisions which will have an impact on carbon emissions.

10.5 Impact on Children in Care

This report relates to the services provided for Children in Care and Care Leavers and ties into the Pledge and Charter that the Local Authority respects the differing wants and needs for all.

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

11.1 None

12. APPENDICES

12.1 Joint Fostering Annual Report appended to the Annual Fostering Report.

CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM No. 5
19 JULY 2023	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:	John Gregg Executive Director Children and Young People's Service	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Councillor Lynne Ayres Cabinet Member for Education, Skills, and Children's Services	
Contact Officer(s):	Alison Bennett, Service Director, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance	Tel. 01733 452540

CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL PARTICIPATION REPORT

RECOMMENDATIONS	
FROM: Shalina Chandoo, QA Lead	Deadline date: N/A
<p>It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Notes the content of the report.</i> 2. <i>Raise any queries they have with the lead officers.</i> 	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

1.1 This report is submitted to each formal and informal Corporate Parenting Committee.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update from the Children in Care Council and the Participation Service.

2.2 This report is for the Corporate Parenting Committee to consider under its Terms of Reference:

2.4.4.1 To act as advocates for looked after children and care leavers.

2.4.4.6 To monitor the quality of care delivered by the City Council and review the performance of outcomes for children and young people in care.

(a) Raise the profile of the needs of looked after children and care leavers through a range of actions including through the organising of celebratory events for the recognition of achievement.

(b) Ensure that leisure, cultural, further education and employment opportunities are offered and taken up by our looked after children and care leavers.

(c) Promote the development of participation and ensure that the view of children and young people are regularly heard through the Corporate Parenting Committee to improve educational, health and social outcomes to raise aspiration and attainments.

(d) Hold meetings with children and young people in care, frontline staff and foster carers to inform the committee of the standards of care and improvement outcomes for looked after children.

2.3 This report links to the Children in Care Promise under:

Respecting You: We will do everything we can to make you feel cared about, valued and respected as an individual.

Making Decisions Together: We will involve you in decision making so your views are listened to, and will explain when we make a decision you may not like or agree with.

3. **TIMESCALES**

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	
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4. **BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES**

- 4.1 The Participation Team continues to promote opportunities for children and young people under the care of Peterborough City Council (PCC) through regular newsletters, as well as creating event-specific publications to encourage engagement. Recent newsletters have updated young people on the work of the Children in Care Council (CiCC), Peterborough Care Leaders (PCL), 'Children in Charge' Youth Cub and other participation groups including the Young Inspectors, Young Recruiters and Young Trainers. Newsletters have also promoted relevant opportunities with external organisations such as IMO (the Children's Commissioner's digital offering for teenagers in care and care leavers) and Become (the national charity for children in care and care leavers).
- 4.2 The Participation Team promotes the voice of children and young people in care. All feedback, including suggestions and ideas from children and young people is communicated to services on a regular basis, and responses on action taken is shared with the CiCC for final review.
- 4.3 The Participation Team has organised a programme of fun face-to-face and virtual engagement activities in the Summer holidays for children and young people in care. These engagement activities enable children and young people to meet members of the CiCC and Participation Team, and learn about different participation opportunities.
- 4.4 Children and young people told the Participation Team that they would like additional opportunities to work on art and to create pieces for a face-to-face art exhibition this year. As a result, dates have been confirmed for three art sessions in the Summer holidays, with a view to arranging an art exhibition in the October half term.
- 4.5 After working on a Mental Health Awareness project for the last year, the CiCC was pleased to premiere their video to destigmatise mental health issues and signpost young people to available support, at the informal Corporate Parenting Committee meeting in June. To create the video, the group wrote and recorded a spoken word poem and worked with animation professionals on the design. The CiCC also worked with the Designated Nurse for Children in Care to collate information about what mental health support is available to children and young people. The CiCC has shared the [final video](#) with social care, health and education professionals across Peterborough and Cambridgeshire, as well as on social media, and would like as many children and young people to see it as possible.
- 4.6 The CiCC has been working on co-producing the Children in Care Awards and Celebration Day, and the date and venue have been sent to all Children in Care, carers, staff and Corporate Parents. The group has been looking at activities, entertainment and refreshments for all age ranges, to make sure the event is fun for everyone.

- 4.7 The 'Children in Charge' Youth Club has been designing feedback boxes and posters that can be placed in Supervised Contact Centres, to encourage children who use them to let the service know what they think of the centres and make their suggestions for improvements.
- 4.8 Peterborough Care Leaders (previously the Care Leaver Forum) met with the Housing Link Officer for Leaving Care to feed back their views and experience and arranged to meet with the Lead Fostering Trainer to offer advice on improving the foster carer training program. Peterborough Care Leaders also discussed how they would like to see those with care experience recognised with protected characteristic status in Peterborough, following in the footsteps of other local authorities, as well as a council tax exemption for care leavers.
- 4.9 The Young Trainers group continues to deliver training for prospective foster carers across Peterborough and Cambridgeshire, as part of the Foster Carer Training programme. Young Trainers also successfully delivered their first training session to the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) Student Social Workers in collaboration with Workforce Development. The Young Trainers will be look at the overall training programmes, to select other areas that they can contribute towards from a young person's perspective, and to explore ways to develop their current training sessions.
- 4.10 The Young Recruiters continued working with the Principal Social Worker to interview Newly Qualified Social Workers for the next ASYE places, and have been involved in interviews for various roles including Head of Service and Principal Social Worker. Having previously worked on collating questions that can be posed to prospective foster carers, the Young Recruiters are now looking at questions that can be used by adoption panels.
- 4.11 Children and Young People across Peterborough and Cambridgeshire continued to work on the 'Every Word Matters' project, looking at the language used around children with social care experience, sharing views and feelings on certain words and suggesting alternatives. Children and young people recorded audio in a podcast format and shared views on what the final animation should look like. This will be used as a key training resource for professionals, as well as informing language used when meeting children and young people and in documents raising from policies to job descriptions.
- 4.12 The Participation Service commissioned two Leadership Training events for Children in Care across Peterborough and Cambridgeshire. The training, facilitated by the British Youth Council, was open to children and young people from the CiCCs, CLF, Young Inspectors, Young Trainers and Young Recruiters as part of their ongoing training and development. The sessions were followed by lunch for participants and fun activities. Children and young people gave positive feedback on the sessions which focused on confidence building and problem-solving strategies as well as leadership and decision-making skills. Following the success of these sessions, the Participation Team is working with the CiCC to decide further development sessions for children and young people.

5. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 5.1 This report provides an update on activities linked the Council's Corporate Priority:

Prevention, Independence & Resilience

- *Children*

Participation is an essential service for Children in Care and Care Leavers, offering activities and opportunities to provide feedback on Children's Services to improve services for all children and young people who use them,

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1 This report was completed in consultation with members of the Children in Care Council.

7. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

7.1 Improved engagement with Children in Care and Care Leavers and improved services.

8. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

8.1 *N/A*

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 There are no changes required.

10. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

10.1 *There are no financial implications.*

Legal Implications

10.2 *There are no legal implications, as the report is for information only.*

Equalities Implications

10.3 Participation is an essential service for Children in Care and Care Leavers, offering activities and opportunities to provide feedback on Children's Services.

10.4 Other Implications

Participation is an essential service for Children in Care and Care Leavers, offering activities and opportunities to provide feedback on Children's Services. This report demonstrates the level of participation in various events and activities, the feedback received, and action taken as a result

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

11.1 *N/A*

12. APPENDICES

12.1 *N/A*

CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM No. 6
19 JULY 2023	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:	John Gregg Executive Director Children's and Young People Services	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Councillor Lynne Ayres Cabinet Member for Education, Skills, and Children's Services	
Contact Officer(s):	Gary Jones, Service Director Safeguarding and Targeted Support	Tel. 864391

CORPORATE PARENTING CHAMPIONS REPORT - 2023 - 2024

RECOMMENDATIONS	
FROM: Corporate Parenting Committee Chair	Deadline date: N/A
<p>It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notes the content of the report, • Confirm the Corporate Champion Roles, and • Confirm the appointment of Corporate Parenting Champions 	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

1.1 This report is submitted to Corporate Parenting Committee following the recent Cabinet and Committee changes made at Annual Council on 22 May 2023.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

2.1 This report will allow the Committee to review the current Corporate Parenting Champions positions and allocations, which is in line with the recent Cabinet and Committee changes made.

2.2 This report is for Corporate Parenting Committee to consider under its Terms of Reference 2.4.4.6 To appoint elected members as Champions for Children in Care, with the roles being decided and approved by the Committee at the first formal meeting of the municipal year. Suggested Champion roles are as follows:

- i) Support for Care Experienced Young People (Housing, Finance and Asylum)
- ii) 0-25 Education, Employment and Training (including the Combined Authority and Partners)
- iii) 0-25 Physical and Mental Health and Emotional Well Being
- iv) Citizenship, Participation and Leisure activities
- v) Foster Carer Retention
- vi) Foster Carer Marketing and Recruitment

2.3 The report addresses all areas of the Children In Care Promise and the Care Leavers' Charter. It specifically addresses the requirement to deliver effective support to Children In Care by validating and triangulating information to quality assure services.

3. TIMESCALES

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	N/A
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4. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

4.1 In November 2023 the Corporate Parenting Committee Champions and roles for 2022 – 2023 were confirmed as:

Champion Role	Councillor
Support for Care Experienced Young People (Housing, Finance and Asylum)	Cllr Sandra Bond
0-25 Education, Employment and Training (including the Combined Authority and Partners)	Cllr Oliver Sainsbury
0-25 Physical and Mental Health and Emotional Well Being	Cllr Lucinda Robinson
Citizenship, Participation and Leisure activities	Cllr Barkham
Foster Carer Retention	Cllr Knight
Foster Carer Marketing and Recruitment	Cllr Jones

The Corporate Parenting Champion would be responsible for the following:

- a) Meeting with the Lead Officer
- b) Undertaking a site visit
- c) Meeting with a child in care / young person / service user / other officers and discuss their experience of the service for Children in Care
- d) Contributing to a brief report back to the Committee, jointly between Champion and Lead Officer

Key Issues

Following the Annual Council meeting held on 22 May 2023, changes to the positions of Champions have been reviewed at the Corporate Parenting Committee work programming session held on 1 June 2023 and at the informal meeting held on 14 June 2023. Corporate Parenting Committee members were asked if they wished to be considered as a Champion.

The following have expressed an interest:

Champion Role	Councillor
Support for Care Experienced Young People (Housing, Finance and Asylum Issues)	Cllr Sandra Bond
0-25 Education, Employment and Training (including the Combined Authority and Partners)	Vacant
0-25 Physical and Mental Health and Emotional Well Being	Vacant – Nomination for Cllr Katy Cole
Citizenship, Participation and Leisure activities	Vacant
Foster Carer Retention	Vacant
Foster Carer Marketing and Recruitment	Cllr Jones

The appointment of the Corporate Champions will be confirmed at its first formal meeting of Corporate Parenting Committee on 19 July 2023.

5. Corporate Priorities

Consider how the recommendation links to the Council's Corporate Priorities:

Prevention, Independence & Resilience

- *Children*

The Corporate Parenting Elected members become Champions of a particular area i.e. Housing / fostering. This champions group is about raising awareness of corporate parenting throughout the organisation and sharing with colleague's ways that they can get involved in corporate parenting activities such as volunteering. Champions attend meetings with lead officers and brief other Corporate Parenting Committee Members on their findings, including what next steps they intend to take next.

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1 Corporate Parenting Committee members were asked to express an interest in the Champion positions.

7. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

- 7.1 Ensure there is a more robust approach to supporting the experiences of children and young people in order to improve their lives.

8. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 Statutory requirement.

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 9.1 N/A

9. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

9.1 N/A

Legal Implications

9.2 N/A

Equalities Implications

9.3 N/A

Other Implications

9.4 The appointment of Corporate Parenting Champions provides an opportunity to ensure that the level of service provided to Children in care and care leavers is to the highest standard.

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

10.1 None

12. APPENDICES

12.1 N/A

CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM No. 7
19 JULY 2023	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:	Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Councillor Lynne Ayres Cabinet Member for Education, Skills, and Children's Services	
Contact Officer(s):	Karen S Dunleavy Email: karen.dunleavy@peterborough.gov.uk	Tel. 01733 452233

DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2023/2024 AND REVIEW OF WORK IN 2022/23

RECOMMENDATIONS	
FROM: Director of Law and Governance	Deadline date: N/A
<p>It is recommended that Corporate Parenting Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Notes the 2022/2023 year in review and makes recommendations on the future monitoring of these items where necessary. II. Determines its priorities and approves the draft work programme for formal and informal meetings for 2023/24 attached at Appendix 1. III. Notes the Recommendations and Actions Monitoring Report attached at Appendix 4 and considers if further monitoring of these during the 2023/24 municipal year is required. IV. Notes the Terms of Reference for this Committee as set out in Part 3, Delegations Section 2 – Regulatory Committee Functions, 2.4. 	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

1.1 The report is presented to the Committee on behalf of the Director of Law and Governance.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

2.1 To enable the Committee to discuss its objectives and priorities for 2023/24 and to approve the draft work programme for 2023/24 (Appendix 1).

The report also provides the Committee with the opportunity to review its work conducted throughout the municipal year 2022/23. A copy of the actions and recommendation made are attached at Appendix 4.

2.2 This item is being presented to Corporate Parenting Committee under its terms of reference 2.4.4.5): Raise awareness in Peterborough City Council and the wider community by promoting the role of Members as corporate parents and the Council as a large corporate family with key responsibilities.

2.3 In accordance with the Constitution, the Committee is responsible for agreeing a skeleton work programme annually which will be reviewed at each formal meeting. In reviewing the work programme, the Committee may agree to request reports on particular matters of their own preference or as advised by the lead officer.

2.4 The Work Programme links into all of the Children in Care Pledge Priorities and Care Leavers Charter.

3. **TIMESCALES**

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	N/A
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4. **BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES**

4.1 The Corporate Parenting Committee was established by Council at its meeting on 13 July 2016. The Committee is scheduled to meet six times a year bi-monthly preceded by an agenda setting meeting.

4.2 Three meetings are formal Committee meetings and three informal meetings. The purpose of the informal meetings will be to engage with looked after children, young people and their representatives.

As part of the Committee's programme of works it can also:

- Make formal recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, and to Cabinet collectively;
- Formally report any issues to the relevant Scrutiny Committee, to full Council, or other bodies, such as the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and the Health and Wellbeing Board.

4.3 The Committee Membership consists of:

- Eleven elected Members
- Up to four Children in Care Council Representatives – with no voting rights
- Up to four Foster Carer Forum Representatives – with no voting rights

4.4 In addition, the Committee has the ability to appoint non-voting co-opt members to help them undertake their work and responsibilities if they feel necessary.

4.5 A work programming session was held on 1 June 2023 and at the informal meeting on 14 June 2023 with Members of the Corporate Parenting Committee (CPC) and the Children in Care Council representatives at a meeting in order to prioritise the work of the CPC for the municipal year 2023/2024.

5 **REVIEW OF 2022/23**

5.1 During the year 2022/2023, the Committee considered the following issues:

Information/updates

- Annual Adoption Report
- Annual Fostering Service Report
- Annual Independent Reviewing Officer Report
- Annual Virtual School Report
- Annual Corporate Parenting Committee Report to the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee 2022-2023
- Annual Health Report

Standing Agenda Items Include:

- Updates from Foster Carers (formal meetings)
- Children in Care Council (informal meetings)
- You Asked We Did (informal meetings)
- Various Case Studies which included Supervised Contact, Virtual Schools, Operations And Placements, SDQ and Dental provision updates (informal meetings)
- Corporate Parenting Champion Updates (updates listed below in the report)
- Members Issues
- Questions from the Children in Care Council (informal meetings)
- Ice Breaker sessions hosted by the CiCC

Monitoring Items Include:

- Performance reports, Placements of Children in Care and Scorecard
- Health report
- Case Studies (informal meetings)

Corporate Parenting Committee Champion Briefing Notes:

Corporate Champion	Topic
Effective Care Planning *Role Deleted*,	Placement Sufficiency and Care Planning
Foster Carer recruitment and training	Foster Carer Recruitment
Support for Care Experienced Young People (Housing, Finance and Asylum Issues)	Housing, Finance and Asylum Issues
Foster Carer recruitment and training	Foster Carer Recruitment Ambassadors meeting
0-25 Education, Employment and Training (including the Combined Authority and Partners)	Virtual Schools
0-25 Physical and Mental Health and Emotional Well Being	Statutory Health Assessments
Support for Care Experienced Young People (Housing, Finance and Asylum Issues)	Housing, Finance and Asylum Issues update

5.2 For the information of the Committee, a copy of the progress on actions and recommendations raised during the year are attached at Appendix 4

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 N/A

7. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

7.1 To ensure the Corporate Parenting Committee fulfil the requirements as set out in the terms of reference attached at Appendix 2.

8. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

8.1 None.

Legal Implications

8.2 Continuous improvement and approval of the coming year's Corporate Parenting priorities

providing a planned and focussed approach to the work of Corporate Parenting, is in keeping with good governance.

Equalities Implications

8.3 None

8.4 Other Implications

Setting and agreeing the draft work programme for 2022/23 and reviewing the past year's work provides an opportunity to ensure that the level of service provided to children in care and care leavers is to the highest standard.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

9.1 Minutes of the Council meeting held 13 July 2016.

10. APPENDICES

- 10.1 Appendix 1 - Draft Work Programme 2023/24
Appendix 2 - Terms of Reference
Appendix 3 - Children in Care Pledge and Care Leavers Pledge
Appendix 4 - Progress on actions and recommendations made in 2022/23

DRAFT CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2023/2024

14 June 2023 Informal	Theme: Homes	
	Part 1	
Priority	Topic	Contact Officer
2. Effective care planning	Update from Children in Care Council (CiCC) b) To encourage our children & Young people to express their views, wishes & feelings c) To take account of the views, wishes & feelings of our children & young people	CiCC Shalina Chandoo/Marya Ali
2. Effective care planning	Children in Care Council Asked and We Did b) To encourage our children & Young people to express their views, wishes & feelings c) To take account of the views, wishes & feelings of our children & young people	Shalina Chandoo/Marya Ali
Priorities 2 - 6	Draft Work Programme 2023 - 2024 and Review of Work in 2022 - 2023	Karen Dunleavy/Gary Jones/Michaela Berry
Priorities 2 - 6	Role of Champion Members d) to help our children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners	Karen Dunleavy/Gary Jones/ Michaela Berry
Priorities 2 - 6	Update from Corporate Parenting Champions	Corporate Parenting Champions
All Priorities	Performance Update Presentation	Michaela Berry
Priorities 2 - 6	Part 2	
Priorities 2 - 6	Children In Care Experience – of the Care Provision	CiCC Representatives

Priorities 2 - 6	Members Issues	All Councillors
Priorities 2 - 6	Questions from the Children in Care Council	CiCC

19 July 2023 (Formal)	Theme: Homes	
Priority	Topic	Contact Officer
2. Effective Care Planning	Update from Foster Carers d) to help our children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners	Foster Carers/ Anita Hewson/Amanda Carter/Despina
2. Effective Care Planning	Youth Voice Coordinator Update for CiCC d) to help our children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners	Marya Ali/Shalina Chandoo
Priorities 2 - 6	Appointment of Champion Members d) to help our children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners	Gary Jones/Karen Dunleavy
All Priorities	Annual Fostering Service Report	Sue King (Fostering)
2. Effective care planning	Annual Adoption Report Regional Adoption Arrangements	Jo Banks (Adoption)
2. Effective care planning	Annual Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Report 2022 - 2023	Anna Cullen TBC
	Children in Care that go Missing	Michaela Berry
	Members Issues	All Councillors
All Priorities	Performance Reports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homes of Children in Care Scorecard Health Report 	Michaela Berry Designated Nurse for Looked After Children
Priorities 2 - 6	Draft Work Programme 2023 – 2024 and Review of Work in 2022 - 2023	Gary Jones/Michaela Berry/ Karen Dunleavy

27 September 2023 (Informal)	Theme: Education	
	Part 1	
Priority	Topic	Contact Officer
2. Effective care planning	Ice Breaker and Update from Children in Care Council (CiCC) b) To encourage our children & Young people to express their views, wishes & feelings c) To take account of the views, wishes & feelings of those children & young people To include young inspectors update briefing note	Children in Care
2. Effective care planning	Children in Care Council Asked and We Did b) To encourage our children & Young people to express their views, wishes & feelings c) To take account of the views, wishes & feelings of those children & young people	Shalina Chandoo
All Priorities	Performance Update Presentation	Michaela Berry
All Priorities	Update from Corporate Parenting Champions	Corporate Parenting Champion
Priorities 2 - 6	Part 2	
Priorities 2 - 6	Case Study: Personal Education Plans – Plan for Closing the Gap	Dee Glover
Priorities 2 - 6	Members Issues	All Councillors
Priorities 2 - 6	Work Programme	Karen Dunleavy/Gary Jones/Michaela Berry
Priorities 2 - 6	Questions from the Children in Care Council	CiCC

22 November 2023 (Formal)	Theme: Education	
Priority	Topic	Contact Officer
2. Effective care planning	Update from Foster Carers d) to help our children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners	Foster Carers/Anita Hewson

2. Effective care planning	Youth Voice Coordinator for CICC d) to help our children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners	Shalina Chandoo/ Marya Ali
Priorities 2 - 6	Virtual School report to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exam results • The position for Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) • The position for Children in Care with Special Education Needs 	Dee Glover
	Members Issues	All Councillors
All Priorities	Performance Reports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homes of Children in Care • Scorecard • Health Report - Report to include an update progress for dental appointments for cic 	Gary Jones/Michaela Berry Designated Nurse for Looked After Children
All Priorities	Annual Corporate Parenting Committee Report to Children and Education Scrutiny Committee Including Corporate Parenting Champion Feedback	Gary Jones/Michaela Berry
N/A	Start time of meetings for 2024/25	Karen Dunleavy
Priorities 2 - 6	Work Programme	Karen Dunleavy/Gary Jones/Michaela Berry

30

31 January 2024 Informal	Theme: Health	
	Part 1	
Priority	Topic	Contact Officer
2. Effective care planning	Ice Breaker and Update from Children in Care Council (CiCC) b)To encourage our children & Young people to express their views, wishes & feelings c) To take account of the views, wishes & feelings of those children & young people	CiCC
2. Effective care planning	You Asked We Did b)To encourage our children & Young people to express their views, wishes & feelings c) To take account of the views, wishes & feelings of those children & young people	Shalina Chandoo
All Priorities	Performance Update Presentation	Michaela Berry
All Priorities	Update from Corporate Parenting Champions	Corporate Parenting Champion
Priorities 2 - 6	Part 2	

Priorities 2 - 6	Children in Care Experiences – in Health Provision	CiCC/Designated Nurse for Children in Care
Priorities 2 - 6	Members Issues	All Members
Priorities 2 - 6	Work Programme	Karen Dunleavy/Gary Jones/Michaela Berry
	Questions from the Children in Care Council	CiCC

6 March 2024 (Formal)	Theme: Health	
Priority	Topic	Contact Officer
2. Effective care planning	Update from Foster Carers d) to help our children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners	Foster Carers
2. Effective care planning	Youth Voice Coordinator Update for CiCC d) to help our children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners	Shalina Chandoo/ Marya Ali
Priorities 2 - 6	Annual Health Report - To include an update on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The work of the Integrated Care Board (ICB) in relation to Children (CiC) and Young People (YP) in Care The Dentistry Provision for CiC and YP The Mental Health Provision for CiC and YP 	Designated Nurse for Looked After Children
Priorities 2 - 6	Members Issues	All Councillors
All Priorities	Performance Reports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homes of Children in Care Scorecard 	Michaela Berry

To Be Confirmed Items

Quality Assurance Updates

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2.4 Peterborough Corporate Parenting Committee

2.4.1 It is advised that Members undertake relevant training within the past three years in order to hold a seat on this committee.

2.4.2 TERMS OF REFERENCE

2.4.2.1 OUR COMMITMENT TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE:

2.4.2.1 Peterborough City Council is committed to raising the quality of life of everyone living within the city. For children in particular, the city council aims to provide high quality opportunities for learning and ensure children are healthy and safe. It is important that the Corporate Parenting Committee members ensure that the Council provides such care, education and opportunities that the Committee would be afforded to their own children.

2.4.3 PURPOSE:

2.4.3.1 To ensure that the Council effectively discharges its role as Corporate Parent for all children and young people in care and care leavers and holds partners to account for the discharge of their responsibilities.

2.4.3.2 On behalf of the Council and partners of the Local Authority to ensure that all services directly provided for children and young people in care and care leavers are scrutinised to deliver to a high standard and to all statutory requirements.

2.4.3.3 To raise the aspiration, ambitions and life chances of children and young people in care, narrowing the gap of achievement between children in care and their peers.

2.4.3.4 To ensure that the Council effectively discharges its role as Corporate Parent for all children and young people in care and care leavers and holds partners to account for the discharge of their responsibilities.

2.4.3.5 To ensure that all elected members are aware of their corporate parenting responsibilities and that all Council services are mindful of the needs of children in care and respond accordingly within their particular remit.

2.4.4 FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMITTEE:

2.4.4.1 To act as advocates for looked after children and care leavers.

2.4.4.2 To receive statutory reports in relation to the adoption, fostering, commissioning, looked after children services and children's homes with a view to recommending any changes.

2.4.4.3 Ensure that the needs of looked after children and care leavers are addressed through key plans, policies and strategies throughout the Council overseeing interagency working arrangements.

2.4.4.4 Review complaints from looked after children to ensure officers have dealt with these appropriately and made any recommendations for change.

2.4.4.5 Raise awareness in Peterborough City Council and the wider community by promoting the role of members as corporate parents and the Council as a large corporate family with key responsibilities.

2.4.4.6 To monitor the quality of care delivered by the City Council and review the performance of outcomes for children and young people in care.

- (a) Raise the profile of the needs of looked after children and care leavers through a range of actions including through the organising of celebratory events for the recognition of achievement.
- (b) Ensure that leisure, cultural, further education and employment opportunities are offered and taken up by our looked after children and care leavers.
- (c) Promote the development of participation and ensure that the view of children and young people are regularly heard through the Corporate Parenting Committee to improve educational, health and social outcomes to raise aspiration and attainments.
- (d) Hold meetings with children and young people in care, frontline staff and foster carers to inform the committee of the standards of care and improvement outcomes for looked after children.
- (e) Monitor the ongoing commitment to providing support, training and clarity of expectations to foster carers to achieve excellent and high quality care.
- (f) To appoint elected members as Champions for Children in Care, with the roles being decided and approved by the Committee at the first formal meeting of the municipal year.

2.4.5 WORK PROGRAMME

2.4.5.1 The corporate parenting committee will formally agree a skeleton work programme annually which will be reviewed at each formal meeting. In reviewing the work programme, the committee may agree to request reports on particular matters of their own preference or as advised by the lead officer.

2.4.6.2 PERFORMANCE MONITORING

2.4.6.3. The Corporate Parenting Committee will scrutinise and monitor outcomes for children in care and care leavers. To this end, the Committee will develop and agree a core data set which it wishes to receive at each Committee meeting. Additional detailed monitoring reports will be presented in accordance with the agreed work programme on the following key aspects of care:

- (a) Placement stability
- (b) Independent child care reviews
- (c) The performance of all care standards regulated services
- (d) Adoption and adoption support
- (e) Fostering
- (f) Children's homes
- (g) Service to care leavers, including accommodation, education, employment and training
- (h) The health needs of children in care
- (i) Educational attainment of children in care

2.4.6.4 The Corporate Parenting Committee will report to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and to the Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis or more frequently if required.

2.4.7 Membership of the Committee

2.4.7.1 There will be a standing membership of the Corporate Parenting Committee to provide continuity and consistency. Councillors outside the standing membership will be invited to discuss issues and raise questions within a standing agenda item.

2.4.7.2 The membership of the Corporate Parenting Committee must include the Cabinet Member with the responsibility for Children's Services.

2.4.7.3 All Councillors are invited to attend the informal meetings. The Committee may also co-opt non-voting members. Membership may include up to four foster carers and representatives from the Children in Care Council. The Committee may invite participation from non-members where this is relevant to their work.

2.4.8 Children in Care Council

2.4.8.1 Representatives from the Children in Care Council may attend the Corporate Parenting Committee up until and no later than 8pm.

Our Promise to Children and Young People in Care

This promise was written by your Children in Care Council and Children's Services to make sure you are getting the right services and support.



1

We will work to keep you safe and help you to keep yourself safe.



2

We will do everything we can to make you feel cared about, valued and respected as an individual.



3

We will be honest with you and explain if we are unable to do something we said we would do. We will not make unrealistic promises to you.



4

We will involve you in decision making so your views are listened to, and will explain when we make a decision you may not like or agree with.



5

We will work to keep you in a supportive and caring environment where you feel safe and happy.



6

We will support you to maintain a healthy lifestyle and help look after your physical and mental health.



7

We will help you see your family, friends and other people who are important to you. If there are people we can't support you to see, we will explain why.



8

We will support you to achieve your goals and reach your potential, in your education, hobbies and interests.



9

We will work with you to give you all the help and support you need to make a success of moving on from care to adult life.

10

We will make sure you have the up-to-date information you need, including who is working with you and how to give us your views or ask us for help.



To give us feedback on how well Children's Services are keeping these promises, contact the Participation Team:

participation@peterborough.gov.uk



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Meeting Type	Meeting Date	Item	Recommendation	Actions	Referred to	Response/ Outcome	Needs Follow Up
Informal	15/6/2022	Item 3. Update From The Children In Care Council (Cicc)		The CiCC would conduct a survey to capture the thoughts of children and young people in care in relation to the service received from the Contact Centres. The survey results would be shared at a Corporate Parenting Committee (informal) meeting.	Marya Ali	Currently not feasible for the CiCC to conduct such surveys as it would not fall within their remit.	N/A
Informal	15/6/2022	Item 3. Update From The Children In Care Council (Cicc)		The Democratic Services Officer would circulate the updated Pledge to all Councillors.	Karen Dunleavy - DSO	Complete - concertina cards tabled at the Full Council meeting held on 27 July. The Mayor also reminded Councillors about the corporate parenting meetings and advised that they could attend any of the meetings.	Completed
Informal	15/6/2022	Item 3. Update From The Children In Care Council (Cicc)		Members would inform the Youth Voice Worker of any raffle prizes that could be offered for the Children in Care Awards event.	Councillors	N/A	N/A
Informal	15/6/2022	Item 5. Draft Work Programme 2022/23 And Review Of 2021-22		The Health Services would provide an overview of mental health services within their reports for children and young people in care at all meetings going forward.	Designated Nurse for Children in Care	This information to be included in reports going forward	Ongoing
Informal	15/6/2022	Item 5. Draft Work Programme 2022/23 And Review Of 2021-22		Members would be provided with a briefing note on the recent Health Care Review.	Ricky Cooper	Covered in the Annual Health Report	Completed
Informal	15/6/2022	Item 5. Draft Work Programme 2022/23 And Review Of 2021-22		Members would receive feedback from the Corporate Parenting Champions at each of the respective themed meetings.	Ricky Cooper	Work is underway to provide support to champions to undertake this task. Meeting arranged for 13 October for Officers to discuss with Champions further.	Completed
Informal	15/6/2022	Item 5. Draft Work Programme 2022/23 And Review Of 2021-22		It was agreed that the Democratic Services Officer would circulate the Corporate Parenting Committee dates and the Children in Care Promise to all Councillors and invite them to attend forthcoming meetings.	Karen Dunleavy - DSO	As above - the promise circulated at the Council meeting on 27 July 2022. Reminder has been included in an FAQ document for Councillors and to direct them to where they can find forthcoming meeting dates on the Council's website.	Completed
Informal	15/6/2022	Item 6. Role Of Champion Members 2022 - 2023		The Corporate Parenting Committee Members confirmed that they wished to retain their current Parenting Champion Role with Councillor Barkham was to be nominated for the Citizenship, Participation and Leisure activities position.	Karen Dunleavy - DSO	Cllr Barkham appointed on 20 July 2022	Completed
Informal	15/6/2022	Item 7. Case Study – Supervised Contact		It was agreed that the Assistant Director, Regional Adoption and Fostering would arrange for Corporate Parenting Committee Members to attend a visit to the Contact Centre at an appropriate time.	Anita Hewson	Visits organised from 27 January 2023	Completed
Formal	20/7/2022	Item 4. Update From Foster Carers Committee		To provide members with a briefing note on the work undertaken to improve the passport issues being experienced by foster families and to outline the progress of the task and finish group to date. In addition, the briefing note should include information on the delays experienced in retrieving documents required for passport applications and the actions being taken to rectify this.	Jenny Goodes	Ricky to confirm status	

Meeting Type	Meeting Date	Item	Recommendation	Actions	Referred to	Response/ Outcome	Needs Follow Up
Formal	20/7/2022	Item 4. Update From Foster Carers Committee		To provide Members with a briefing note on the transport issues being experienced by foster families outlining the progress of the software application launch. The briefing note should also include the progress made on the delegated authority provision to foster carers so they were able to control transport arrangements for their foster children.	Jenny Goodes	Despina Kaoura to provide a briefing note	
Formal	20/7/2022	Item 5. Update From The Youth Voice Coordinator On Behalf Of The Children In Care Council		The Corporate Parenting Committee noted the report and agreed that the Quality Assurance Lead would provide the Committee's positive feedback to the CiCC and CLF about their involvement in informal meetings.	Shalina Chandoo	N/A	N/A
Formal	20/7/2022	Item 6. Appointment Of Champion Members		The following champion roles and appointments were approved: Support for Care Experienced Young People (Housing, Finance and Asylum Issues) - Cllr S Bond 0-25 Education, Employment and Training (including the Combined Authority and Partners) - Cllr Sainsbury 0-25 Physical and Mental Health and Emotional Well Being - Cllr Robinson Citizenship, Participation and Leisure activities - Cllr Barkham Placement Sufficiency and Care Planning - Cllr Jones Fostering: Cllr Knight.	N/A	N/A	N/A
Formal	20/7/2022	Item 9. Performance Report (Placements Of Children In Care And Scorecard)		The the Service Manager Corporate Parenting would review the use of step down to foster care descriptions and replace the term with more appropriate wording	Michaela Berry	This is now referred to as 'step into' Corporate Parenting are consulting with the CiCC on the language used in reports	
Formal	20/7/2022	Item 9. Performance Report (Placements Of Children In Care And Scorecard)		The Service Manager Corporate Parenting would provide Members with clarification over the timeliness of adoption placement target figures used within the performance report	Joanne Banks	Briefing note circulated to Members of the Committee	13-Sep-22
Formal	20/7/2022	Item 9. Performance Report (Placements Of Children In Care And Scorecard)		The Service Manager Corporate Parenting would Check and confirm to Members whether there were any children placed in care with Bear Care Fostering Services.	Michaela Berry	Whenever there is a concern raised in the media we immediately check with our commissioning team if we have any children in placements where there are concerns. This had been checked prior to the last corporate parenting committee and we had no children placed with Bear Care fostering, I was not aware of this information at the time though.	
Formal	20/7/2022	Item 10. Performance Report (Health)		The Lead Nurse, Children in Care would ensure that Mental Health assessment statistics would be included on the health reports going forward.	Tessa Bilson	This information to be included in reports going forward	Ongoing
Formal	20/7/2022	Item 10. Performance Report (Health)		The Lead Nurse, Children in Care would provide Members with information about dental health costs being met by the Local Authority and the reasons why the NHS was not meeting the costs as it had been adequately funded to do.	Tessa Bilson	Councillors have been provided with the details of the fellow for dentists to discuss costs and availability of local dentists	Completed 19/08/2022
Formal	20/7/2022	Item 11. Draft Work Programme 2022 – 2023 And Review Of Work In 2021 - 2022		The Head of Virtual Schools would include information in future education reports to Committee about services provided to children and young people in care with disability support requirements.	Dee Glover	Ongoing	Ongoing

Meeting Type	Meeting Date	Item	Recommendation	Actions	Referred to	Response/ Outcome	Needs Follow Up
Informal	21/09/22	Item. 5 PERFORMANCE UPDATE PRESENTATION		The Committee noted the report and agreed that the Participation Team would work with the CiCC to identify performance areas that they wanted covered within the performance update presentation.	Myra O'Farrell	The Participation Service has spoken with the CiCC who would like different sections to be focused on each time. The CiCC will give their feedback on the presentation after the January informal meeting.	Ongoing
Informal	21/09/22	Item 6. Update from Corporate Parenting Champions		The Committee noted the update and agreed that the Champion briefing notes would be provided in an easier to understand formats for all going forward.	Shalina Chandoo	The champion briefing template has been amended to include advice on how to ensure the contents are child-friendly, including not using jargon and including pictures where possible.	
Informal	21/09/22	Item8. Members Issues		The Corporate Parenting Committee dates and the Children in Care Promise would be sent to all Councillors and invite them to attend forthcoming meetings.	Karen Dunleavy - DSO	Completed	
Formal	23/11/22	Item 5. Children In Care Council (Cicc) Participation Report		Members would feedback any service issues they had about the Contact Centre with the Chief Executive, so that these could be investigated.	Councillors	N/A	
Formal	23/11/22	Item 5. Children In Care Council (Cicc) Participation Report		The Assistant Director, Children's Services would follow up on Members visits to the Contact Centres.	Ricky Cooper	Completed, visits organised from 27 January 2023	
Formal	23/11/22	Item 5. Children In Care Council (Cicc) Participation Report		The Quality Assurance Lead would provide Members with the number of young people from the Children in care Council that had attended the ARU open day.	Shalina Chandoo	None of the Children in Care Council members we spoke to said they had attended the ARU open day.	Completed
Formal	23/11/22	Item 6. Virtual Schools		The Head of Virtual Schools would provide a briefing note on children in care school attendance data on a termly basis.	Dee Glover	This will be provided at the end of the Spring term	First report sent for the Autumn 2022 term on 27 Jan 2023
Formal	23/11/22	Item 6. Virtual Schools		The Head of Virtual Schools would provide Members with the number of children on a protection plan that were home educated.	Dee Glover	This information has not been available to us to date .	
Formal	23/11/22	Item 6. Virtual Schools		The Head of Virtual Schools would provide members with the The actual numbers as well as percentages in Virtual School reports going forward.	Dee Glover	Numbers will be provided in the upcoming update of Annual Report	
Formal	23/11/22	Item 7. Update On Not In Education, Employment Or Training (Neet)		The Head of Virtual Schools would explore the opportunity of care leavers to become mentors for NEET young people in care.	Dee Glover	This is an ongoing piece of work	
Formal	23/11/22	Item 7. Update On Not In Education, Employment Or Training (Neet)		The Head of Virtual Schools would explore the provision of funding for driving lesson funding for young people in care, in order to enhance their employment opportunities.	Dee Glover	To be discussed with social care service manager	
Formal	23/11/22	Item 7. Update On Not In Education, Employment Or Training (Neet)		The Head of Virtual Schools would engage with the Chief Executive of the Council to discuss work experience or other employment opportunities within the Authority for Young People in Care.	Dee Glover	Still to be arranged.	
Formal	23/11/22	Item 8. Annual Adoption Report		The Head of Regional Adoption Agency would use case studies to inform the adoption advertisement campaigns to address the challenging types of adoption placements in order to increase adoption rates.	Joanne Banks	complete as we have used case studies and EP videos as part of the marketing strategy already this year	
Formal	23/11/22	Item 8. Annual Adoption Report		The Head of Regional Adoption Agency would report back to Members on the work underway to identify the reasons why the adoption numbers had lowered for Peterborough.	Joanne Banks	on-going, with JB	Ongoing
Formal	23/11/22	Item 9. Annual Report On Work Of The Corporate Parenting Committee For The Children And Education Scrutiny Committee 2021-2022		The Head of Corporate Parenting would include an addendum to the Corporate Parenting annual report to Children and Education Scrutiny Committee to accurately reflect the figures of children in care	Myra O'Farrell	Completed	
Formal	23/11/22	Item 9. Annual Report On Work Of The Corporate Parenting Committee For The Children And Education Scrutiny Committee 2021-2022		The Head of Corporate Parenting provide Members with a briefing note outlining the reasons why children in care move around placements.	Myra O'Farrell/Michaela Berry		
Formal	23/11/22	Item 9. Annual Report On Work Of The Corporate Parenting Committee For The Children And Education Scrutiny Committee 2021-2022		The Chief Executive of the Council would include an item on a future agenda for the Corporate Leadership Team to discuss the challenges around children in care placement sufficiency	Matt Gladstone	This item is on the CLT agenda for 8 March 2023	On the CLT agenda

Meeting Type	Meeting Date	Item	Recommendation	Actions	Referred to	Response/ Outcome	Needs Follow Up
Formal	23/11/22	Item 10 Performance Report - Scorecard		The Head of Corporate Parenting would provide Members with a briefing note to show an example of what a pathway plan looked like.	Myra O'Farrell		
Formal	23/11/22	Item 10 Performance Report - Scorecard		The Head of Corporate Parenting would provide Members with a report at a future Committee meeting to outline all the scenarios around why Children and Young People go missing, what the risk factors were and what the Council's response was to those risks.	Myra O'Farrell/ Elaine Redding	rolled over to municipal year 23/24	
Formal	23/11/22	Item 11 Performance Report - Health		The Designated Nurse for Looked After Children would Include further information within Corporate Parenting Committee health reports to outline the reasons and challenges that were being experienced in completion of CiC health assessments on time.	Katie Liddle	This data will be included in the next report completed by health for the formal meeting. Some of the reasons were touched on by Michaela Berry at the recent informal meeting on 18 January 2023	
Formal	23/11/22	Item 11 Performance Report - Health		The the Designated Nurse for Looked After Children would Conduct a face-to-face visit to dental surgeries in order to encourage them to address the issues of dental service provision for CiC and YP and encourage more dentists to volunteer their services.	Katie Liddle	This update was part of the recent informal meeting via powerpoint presentation - Face to face meetings with Peterborough dental practices not realistic. We have approached Nikesh Patel (our current East of England Dental Leadership Fellow) to request attendance at a regional meeting and link up with Cambs and Peterborough dentists specifically.	
Formal	23/11/22	Item 13 Corporate Parenting Champions		Confirmed the amended Corporate Champion roles, Confirmed the responsibilities of the Corporate Champion roles and reporting requirements; and Confirmed the appointments to the revised Champion roles as follows: Support for Care Experienced Young People (Housing, Finance and Asylum Issues) - Councillor Sandra Bond 0-25 Education, Employment and Training (including the Combined Authority and Partners) - Councillor Sainsbury 0-25 Physical and Mental Health and Emotional Well Being - Councillor Robinson Citizenship, Participation and Leisure activities – Councillor Barkham Fostering Retention - Councillor Knight Fostering Marketing and Recruitment – Councillor Jones	N/A	N/A	N/A
Formal	23/11/22	Item 14 Start Time of Meetings for 2023/23		The Corporate Parenting Committee agreed the start time for all formal and informal Corporate Parenting Committee meetings for the Municipal Year 2023-24 as follows: 6:00PM - formal 5.30PM - informal	Karen Dunleavy DSO	Completed	Completed
Formal	23/11/22	Item 15 Work Programme 2022 - 23		A report on CiC that go missing would be added to the work programme for 15 March 2023	Elaine Redding	Completed	Note this has rolled over to municipal year 2023/24
Formal	23/11/22	Item 15 Work Programme 2022 - 23		Centre 33 would be invited to attend a future Corporate Parenting Committee meeting.	Karen Dunleavy DSO	centre 33 have been invited	Completed

Meeting Type	Meeting Date	Item	Recommendation	Actions	Referred to	Response/ Outcome	Needs Follow Up
Formal	23/11/22	Item 15 Work Programme 2022 - 23		The Participation Team would raise the service of Centre 33 with the CiCC to encourage engagement.	Shalina Chandoo	We have spoken to young people about the service and have arranged for the January Care Leaver Forum meeting to be at Centre 33.	Completed
Formal	23/11/22	Item 15 Work Programme 2022 - 23		The Designated Nurse for Looked After Children would provide a briefing note to update the Committee on the work undertaken to improve the dental services for CiC at the informal meeting due to be held on 18 January 2023	Katie Liddle	Update provided at the Informal meeting in January 2023	Updates provided in report
Informal	18/01/23	4. Update From The Children In Care Council (Cicc)		The Interim Executive Director of Children's Services would explore what options were available to ensure that there was no break experienced by Children in Care and Young People in Care for the provision of National Health Service (NHS) mental health support	Elaine Redding	Shalina Chandoo and Marya Ali to confirm with the CiCC if this is something they would like to happen. A response should be provided by end of Feb.	31/01/23
Informal	18/01/23	5. The Children In Care Council Said And We Did Update 2023		Would share the YouTube link of the mental health poem being developed by the CiCC with Councillors.	Shalina Chandoo/Marya Ali		
Informal	18/01/23	5. The Children In Care Council Said And We Did Update 2023		Arrange for the CiCC to be involved in the supervised contact centre improvement discussions and the alternative building commission exercise being undertaken by the Council as per the invite from the Interim Director for Children's Services.	Shalina Chandoo/Marya Ali	Teams meeting to be arranged with Director and Officers to take forward CiCC involvement.	
Informal	18/01/23	5. The Children In Care Council Said And We Did Update 2023		Would continue planning activities and events jointly with Peterborough City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council for 2023.	Shalina Chandoo/Marya Ali	Ongoing	
Informal	18/01/23	6. Performance Update Presentation		To provide members with a breakdown of staff sickness levels where there were high caseloads in services areas that support children in care and care leavers.	Michaela Berry	Briefing note provided and information to be provided in future reports	
Informal	18/01/23	8. Case Study: Sdq's And Dental Services		To circulate the information provided in the SDQ update for health to Members	Tessa Bilson/Katie Liddle	Completed	Completed
Informal	18/01/23	9. Questions From The Children In Care Council		The Lead Nurse, Children in Care would provide feedback to the CiCC and Elected Members on the provision of registration for care leavers at dental practices, once the Health Team, had raised the issues at the dentistry forum meeting.	Tessa Bilson	Ongoing discussions	
Formal	15/03/23	4.Update From Foster Carers Committee		The Children in Care Council would provide and update within their next report on the work that they were undertaking on money management and financial literacy for Children and Young People in Care.	Shalina Chandoo on behalf of CiCC	To be provided in future reports	
Formal	15/03/23	5. Children In Care Council (Cicc) Participation Report		Councillors would nominate the Care Leaver Voice Ambassador for Peterborough for a Civic Award through the Civic Office.	Councillors	Ongoing	
Formal	15/03/23	6. Annual Health Report		The Designated Nurse for Looked After Children would include figures about how late the out of county health assessments were being conducted for YP and CiC, to include the reasons why they had been overdue.	Katie Liddle	To be included in a future report	
Formal	15/03/23	7. Performance Report		A briefing note to show the current breakdown of CiC population by ethnic group.	Michaela Berry		
Formal	15/03/23	7. Performance Report		Information on the CiC population by ethnicity group within performance reports going forward.	Ricky Cooper/Michaela Berry	Ongoing to be included in report going forward	
Formal	15/03/23	7. Performance Report		A briefing note on the types of semi-independent living accommodation.	Ricky Cooper/Michaela Berry	Due to be completed by 9 June	
Formal	15/03/23	7. Performance Report		A plan on how the Council intended to meet the sufficiency need of CiC post 16 semi-independent living accommodation and whether it would be beneficial to continue to rely on the marketplace or invest in properties to supply these provisions in house.	Ricky Cooper		
Formal	15/03/23	7. Performance Report		A cost benefit analysis of the Council's current post 16 semi-independent living accommodation arrangements.	Ricky Cooper		
Formal	15/03/23	7. Performance Report		An outline going forward in performance reports to include the volume of children that were subject to a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) that were not classified as looked after by the Authority.	Ricky Cooper/Michaela Berry	To be included in the performance report	Ongoing

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CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM No. 8
19 JULY 2023	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:	John Gregg Executive Director Children and Young People's Service	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Councillor Lynne Ayres Cabinet Member for Education, Skills, and Children's Services	
Contact Officer(s):	Brian Relph, Assistant Director, Fostering, Regional Adoption and Specialist Young People's Services	Tel. 07885 717462

JOINT FOSTERING ANNUAL REPORT 2022 - 23

RECOMMENDATIONS	
FROM: Despina Kaoura and Sue King, Service Managers Fostering	Deadline date: N/A
<p>It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Notes the content of this report 2. Raises any queries they have with the lead officers 	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report is submitted to the Corporate Parenting Committee as a regular work programme item from the Fostering Service.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to keep the Corporate Parenting Committee informed of activity undertaken by the Fostering Service and to update on Fostering Service developments.
- 2.2 This report is for the Corporate Parenting Committee to consider under its Terms of Reference No. 2.4.4.6 This report is to support the Corporate Parenting Committee to monitor the quality of care delivered by the City Council and review the performance of outcomes for children and young people in care, (d) Hold meetings with children and young people in care, frontline staff and Foster Carers to inform the committee of the standards of care and improvement outcomes for looked after children.
- 2.3 *How does this report link to the Children in care Promise?*

This report links to the Children in Care Promise by focussing on respect for Children in Care and Care Leavers

3. **TIMESCALES**

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	
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4. **BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES**

4.1 **Executive Summary**

The reporting period of 2022-2023 represents the second full year of operations for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fostering Service, which launched on 1 December 2020.

There is a combined recruitment and assessment function, supervision and support function and a combined dedicated team that undertakes independent household reviews and monitors practice to ensure quality and compliance with the Fostering National Minimum Standards. There are two supervision and support teams which oversee Cambridgeshire Foster Carers and one supervision and support team which oversees Peterborough Foster Carers.

The report outlines the development of the key areas of the service and the progress made in each.

Cambridgeshire County Council

In this reporting period, the service recruited 11 new fostering households.

22 fostering households resigned from fostering, giving an overall net loss of 11 households.

On 31 March 2023, 51% of children in foster care were living in in-house foster homes.

There was a total of 112 referrals for Special Guardianship assessments.

There were 14 assessed private fostering arrangements in place.

Peterborough City Council

In this reporting period, the service recruited four new fostering households.

12 fostering households resigned from fostering leaving an overall net loss of six households.

On 31 March 2023, 58% of children in foster care were living in in-house foster homes.

There was a total of 54 referrals for Special Guardianship assessments in the reporting period.

There were three assessed private fostering arrangements in place.

4.2 **Audit and Inspections**

Fostering Service Self- Assessment 2023

What's working well

- Investment in a dedicated Fostering Resource Team has improved the sufficiency of use of in-house carers increasing the number of fostered children living with in-house carers
- Focussed retention activity which has led to the service seeing a reduction overall in resignations of foster carers. There have been 31 mainstream/link households leave fostering across both Councils in 2022-23 compared to 47 in 2021-2022.
- A dedicated and bespoke Foster Carer training offer and opportunities for Foster Carers to become Ambassadors and to take roles as Mentors through our dedicated Ambassador and Mentoring Schemes operated and developed alongside the Foster Carer Community.

What needs to improve

- Increased number of enquiries to foster with high conversion rates through to approval to meet demand and in recognition of an aging population of current foster carers. The conversion rate from enquiry to application in CCC in this reporting period was 14.5%, and in PCC the conversion rate from enquiry to application in this reporting period was 10%
- Placing more young people with complex needs locally with carers and placement providers who are equipped and well supported to work with them
- Embedding a practice of learning and action through the findings of audits, improved collection of the child's voice and ensuring annual review actions are progressed and monitored
- Improving the quality of assessments and support plans for Special Guardians and Connected Person's Foster Carers which are co-written with colleagues to ensure continuity

Priority actions

- To further develop our care arrangement offer to Foster Carers including the adoption of a practice model and further development of an in-house clinical offer and placement stability interventions. To develop a model of practice that supports the Family Safeguarding Model within operational social work teams that enhances our offer to Foster Carers that includes the support and integration of our clinical offer that supports placement stability and delivers direct interventions to children, young people and fostering households.
- Continue to improve and refine our fostering marketing and recruitment activity
- To ensure that the child's voice is evident in all our practice, alongside that of the carer
- To improve the critical analysis within Special Guardianship assessments and write child centred support plans in consultation with stakeholders as applicable.

4.3 Ofsted Inspections

Peterborough received a focused visit from Ofsted on 1 March 2023 when inspectors looked at arrangements for the front door services. Areas for priority actions were identified in respect of improving the timeliness of response to contacts, referrals and multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) enquiries about children and subsequent visits from Social Workers, and additionally in respect of the multi-agency arrangements and responses to children and young people at risk of extra-familial harm. There were no comments relating directly to the Fostering Service.

Cambridgeshire County Council received no Ofsted inspections during 2022 – 2023. Cambridgeshire County Council is awaiting an anticipated ILAC inspection which is imminently due. As part of that ILAC inspection, the Fostering Service will be considered in the overall findings for Inspectors.

4.4 Summary Fostering Households Year End – 31 March 2023

Cambridgeshire

The Fostering Service was supporting 169 Fostering Households which included:

- 138 Mainstream households (Professional Foster Carers)
- 9 Link households (short breaks for children with disabilities)
- 20 Connected Carer households (fully approved Kinship Carers)
- 2 Supported Lodgings households

Peterborough

The Fostering Service was supporting 84 Fostering Households which included:

- 73 Mainstream households (Professional Foster Carers)
- 1 Link household (short breaks for children with disabilities)
- 9 Connected Carer households (fully approved Kinship Carers)
- 1 Supported Lodging household

4.5 **Core functions of the Fostering Service**

The Fostering Service's aim is to provide a high-quality responsive child-centred service in relation to its core functions and to recruit and support new local Foster Carers to therapeutically parent the children in their care.

The service prepares applicants throughout the assessment and training process. The service recruits foster carer applicants for the following types of fostering: mainstream / short term Foster Carers, Connected Persons Carers, LINK Carers, emergency, parent and child, respite, Supported Lodgings Carers, those who offer Private Fostering and PACE. [The Local Authority has duty to provide accommodation to children and young people under the age of 18 years who have been arrested and charged in relation to a criminal offence. PACE stands for Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 which placed this duty. PACE transfers take place to limit the amount of time children and young people are required to spend in police custody with the young person being transferred to Local Authority accommodation overnight before being presented to court the following morning.]

The service undertakes comprehensive assessments and checks to ensure that prospective carers are suitable to foster and able to carry out their role.

We supervise, support and develop the skills and knowledge of Foster Carers so that they can provide the highest standards of safe, therapeutically minded family-based care to our children and young people in care so that their outcomes are improved.

The service also supports young people to stay with their Foster Carers beyond the age of 18 years in a 'Staying Put' arrangement if this is considered the best plan for the young person. This is not a regulated fostering activity, and the young person, having left care, no longer has a Social Worker and the Foster Carer no longer has a Supervising Social Worker, but the young person continues to receive support, advice and guidance from their Personal Advisor who is employed by the Local Authority.

4.6 **Foster Carer Recruitment and Retention**

The 2022-23 Recruitment, Marketing and Communication strategy outlined the key aims and priorities for the Fostering Service in respect of increasing the number of Foster Carers, their diversity, skills and experience. The key priority was to recruit carers to look after teenagers and to look after children and young people with disabilities.

Since November 2022, the Fostering Recruitment Team have had a key focus on promoting fostering by having a physical presence in various community venues in the Peterborough and Cambridgeshire areas. These include information and drop in stands at eight libraries (Histon, Huntingdon, Peterborough Central, Yaxley, Orton, Chatteris, March, and Werrington) and a market stall in St Ives. Additionally, the team have had an in-person presence at three supermarkets (two Tesco stores and one Waitrose store) and one church hub (Bretton).

Alongside in person attendance in community venues, there has also been a significant amount of fostering promotional material distributed in poster and leaflet form in shops, cafes, gyms, public houses, beauty, hair salons and other venues where appropriate. In total the team have covered 32 towns and villages in the Cambridgeshire area and 16 in and around Peterborough.

Following the John Lewis 2022 Christmas campaign advert, which had a fostering focus, members of the recruitment team have attended the Partners Lounge at the Cambridge Grafton Centre John Lewis store to speak with Waitrose and John Lewis staff.

The following campaigns took place during the year:

DATE	CAMPAIGN
April 2022	LGBTQ+ Week
May 2022	Foster Care Fortnight
July / August 2022	Children at the Heart Campaign
September 2022	UASC mini appeal and Private Fostering Week
October 2022	Kinship Care Week
November / December 2022	All Hearts need a home and Sons & Daughters month
February/March 2023	LGBTQ+ History month and LGBTQ+ Week

The team has also hosted virtual information sessions monthly and have trialed an in-person information session at the Peterborough Weston Homes Stadium.

Over the next few months, the Fostering Recruitment Team will be attending further library and supermarket sessions, having a stand in John Lewis entrance, progressing the development of Foster Carer picnics in the park, and planning opportunities to talk about the difference between Local Authority & Independent Fostering Agency's unique selling points (USP) and the Refer a Friend scheme with Local Authority employees and Foster Carers.

Monthly Information Sessions for prospective enquirers have been held virtually either in the early evening or at lunch times. Virtual Information Sessions proved to be more successful in terms of attendance than the in-person events which the service previously held.

The Recruitment Team (Front Door to the Fostering Service) has three full time Recruitment Officer posts, which includes a Senior Recruitment Officer post whose role it is to support the consistency and the development of the team.

4.7

Fostering Recruitment Activity

Activity	Annual figure CCC 2020/21	Annual figure CCC 2021/22	Annual figure CCC 2022/23	Annual figure PCC 2020/21	Annual figure PCC 2021/22	Annual figure PCC 2022/23
Enquiries	329	239	179	161	78	104
Initial Visits	101	68	62	60	24	32
Application forms received	79	26	27	26	11	10
Attended Skills to Foster/ Journey to Foster	47	22	20	16	14	9
End of year assessments in progress (Form F commenced)	10	13	11	10	6	4
Approved	25	12	11	6	15	4
Number of resignations and de-registrations	19	35	22	6	12	9
Net gain	6	-23	-21	0	+3	-6

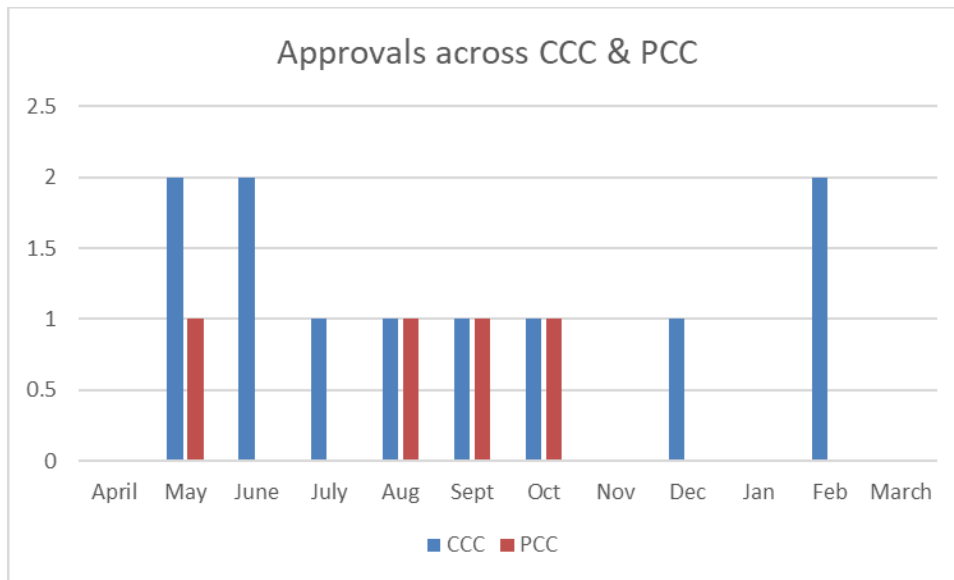
Cambridgeshire The conversion rate from enquiry to application in this reporting period was 14.5%

Peterborough The conversion rate from enquiry to application in this reporting period was 10%

During the assessment process a total of 15 applicants did not progress in Cambridgeshire which included the service closing six applications and nine where the applicant withdrew.

In Peterborough there was a total of 10 applications not progressing, four closed by the service and 6 who withdrew.

The total number of newly approved fostering households across the combined Councils for 2022-2023 is 15 (11 CCC/4 PCC). This is down by 45% compared to 2021-22 (when there were 27 approvals). There are currently 15 applicants in assessments across both Councils however this is down 29% compared to 2021-2022 in the same period.

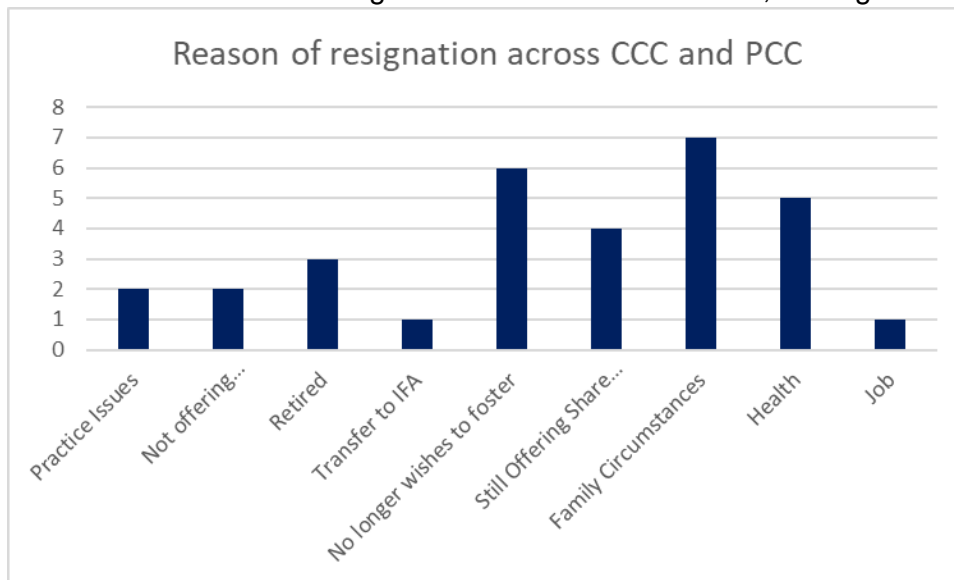


It is of note that the 11 new fostering households in CCC provided 12 beds plus four sibling beds. two of the Carers recruited were Link Carers and seven out of the 11 were within our target age range of offering care to young people aged 11+.

In PCC the four new fostering households have provided seven beds plus two sibling beds. Two of the four fostering households were in our target age range of being able to offer care to young people aged 11+.

Resignations

There have been 31 mainstream/link households (22 CCC/9 PCC) leave fostering across both Councils in 2022-23 compared to 47 (CCC 35/PCC 12) in 2021-2022. This highlights a decline overall in the number of resignations across both Councils, although an increase in PCC.



The main reason Foster Carers are leaving is due to family issues, no longer wishing to foster or ill health. Of note, only one carer has moved to an Independent Fostering Agency, two have chosen to leave following standards of care concerns and three have left but continue to care for young people either through Shared Lives, Staying Put or Adoption.

Both Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are reporting a net loss of Fostering households and beds at the end of 2022-2023. Cambridgeshire has a net loss of 11 households with a net loss of 21 beds and Peterborough has a net loss of six households and a net loss of nine beds.

Occupancy rates

Neither Cambridgeshire nor Peterborough is reaching the target of 60% of children in care living in in-house fostering households. As of 31 March 2023, the split is 51% in in-house beds in Cambridgeshire and 58% in Peterborough. Additionally, there are currently 15 Cambridgeshire children living with Peterborough Foster Carers and 23 Peterborough children living with Cambridgeshire Foster Carers.

National Picture

Other Local Authorities are reporting a similar picture in terms of the challenges in recruiting new fostering households and an increase in the reporting of net losses. The reasons for this are not fully understood however the cost-of-living crisis is believed to be having a detrimental impact, as well as people reviewing their life chances post the pandemic, a competitive marketplace and foster care being a vocation and not a job.

Our priorities remain for the need to recruit more carers for children aged 11 years and older, carers who can look after brothers and sisters together and children with more complex needs and disabilities.

Foster Carer Retention

In this reporting period the Fostering Service has continued to focus on the retention of Foster Carers:

- The Retention Working Party involving staff and Foster Carers has explored how Foster Carers can be actively supported to stay with the Fostering Service and to understand the barriers that they experience in fostering. This is a very productive and positive group which has contributed to developments within the service. These have included specific support groups for Foster Carers of teenagers, a 'Question and Answer' support group for people in assessment and newly approved carers, to provide a safe space to check out the realities of fostering. The importance of allowances being paid in a timely way was raised by the group, which led to weekly meetings taking place involving finance teams and senior managers. In addition, we made suggestions to simplify the accreditation matrix paperwork which were adopted, which enables Foster Carers to progress through the Skills levels. The group includes the two chairs from the Foster Carer committees. Their membership enables the service to understand the issues that are important for Foster Carers and develop a joint action plan to resolve the issues raised.
- Identified all Foster Carers who have indicated that they were considering leaving the service. Retention visits are carried out to discuss the Foster Carer's specific concerns and to seek a resolution where possible. In this financial year, a total of 15 retention meetings were held, resulting in 12 of the foster carers remaining with the service.
- Exit interviews were carried out to give Foster Carers leaving the service, the opportunity to give feedback on their experience of fostering. Most of the carers who decided to leave did so, due to a change in their own circumstances or ill health. There has been a very positive shift in Foster Carers no longer leaving the service, due to dissatisfaction with support offered by the fostering service. When the feedback has involved partner agencies, the fostering service ensures that the information is passed on to enable changes to be made where needed.

4.8 **Safeguarding – allegations and standards of care**

Allegations against Foster Carers, outcomes and timescales

Allegations against foster carers	CCC	PCC
The number of allegations against foster carers made by fostered children	2	0
The number of allegations against foster carers made by other sources	9	2
The number of children who have made allegations against their foster carers	2	0
The number of foster carers who have been subject to allegations	11	2
Information about the categories of alleged abuse		
Physical abuse	7	0
Sexual abuse	0	0
Neglect	4	1
Emotional abuse	0	1
Information about the outcome of investigations of allegations		
Concern(s) resolved - no further action	4	1
Continued monitoring for an agreed period	1	0
Concern remained, referred to fostering panel to review foster carer approval	6	2
Timescale for investigations		
less than 21 working days	6	1
22-30 working days (4 - 6 weeks)	0	0
31-50 working days (6 - 10 weeks)	4	0
More than 50 working days (> 10 weeks)	1	1

11 fostering households were subject to allegations during this reporting year, which is in line with the previous year where there were 10 fostering households subject to allegations.

Most investigations are carried out by Fostering Reviewing Officers who are independent of the Supervision Teams, providing objectivity to the process, although some are carried out by the Fostering Social Worker when appropriate. Following an allegation, a Foster Carer’s suitability to continue to foster will be considered by the Fostering Panel and Agency Decision Maker.

Being subject to an allegation or concern process can be very distressing for a Fostering Household and in recognising this, free and confidential emotional health and well-being advice has been available to Foster Carers through the Councils’ Employee Assistance Programmes throughout the past year in addition to independent advice and advocacy.

4.9 **Compliments and complaints**

The following are a selection of the compliments received by the service.

Source	Summary of compliments about foster carers
IRO	Children have made excellent progress, (Foster Carers are) outstanding at meeting their cultural needs and advocating for them.

Child's Social Worker	The Foster Carer was very attuned to the young person's needs and ensured that their holistic needs were met consistently and appropriately
Young Person	My Foster Carer is an awesome superhero, she's my idol. We have rough times, but we make it through. She's kind, she's bright.
Child's relative	She is the best thing that has happened for (child) she is like a friend, sister, mother, all in one and I am very happy to see them together (she) is very kind and a perfect person for (child).
Concerning staff type	Summary of compliments about our staff from foster carers
Fostering Social Worker	I'd just like to say how supportive the conversations with (my Social Worker) were. I felt listened to and valued. Her carers are lucky to have her as their Social Worker.
Fostering Social Worker and Service	I received excellent support from both Social Worker and Service Manager, who have offered exceptional support throughout - extremely pleased with the fostering service who have genuinely cared through a difficult time.
Fostering Team	They felt 'blessed' to be so well supported and they could not foster without the backup of the fantastic team around them.
Training	The training offer is more flexible, has a far greater menu, is more efficiently packaged/managed in the interactive brochure/booking process and accesses higher quality trainers than we have experienced previously.

Summary of complaints and outcome

COMPLAINANT TYPE	SUMMARY OF COMPLAINT	OUTCOME
CCC		
Prospective Foster Carer	Dissatisfied with the way that their enquiry to foster was handled and the outcome.	Not Upheld
Prospective Foster Carer	Poor service during assessment period.	Partially Upheld
PCC		
Foster Carers	Unhappy with decision about fostering allowance for a child with additional needs.	Partially upheld

Of the three complaints made, none were upheld, two were partially upheld and one was not upheld.

The service always seeks to speak to the complainant directly to understand the complaint fully, and to seek early resolution of any concerns. Learning from complaints is taken back to the service to improve practice.

4.10 **Foster Carer training and development opportunities**

There has continued to be a mixture of face to face and online training courses for Foster Carers in the last year. Practical courses such as First Aid and Positive Behaviour Support are now delivered face to face in several venues around Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. A

recent Foster Carer Training Survey has indicated that there is an equal preference between face-to-face courses, e-learning courses and courses delivered online via Teams or Zoom. Carers report liking virtual training as it is more time efficient, although at times miss the opportunity to network directly with other Foster Carers.

Numbers attending

In the reporting year we have run 97 training courses with 911 places being taken up. Additionally, we have provided specialist courses for our Link carers and Foster Carers of disabled children. The Assisting People to Move course ran on two occasions, where eight participants attended. We also ran a Foundations for Attachment six-week course, led by Nicola Ellis from the clinician team, which had 14 attendees. A further two courses were commissioned through AC Education with eight attendees on the first of the courses and 18 on the second.

E-Learning

We have continued to offer e-learning modules with 251 Me learning courses being completed and 560 e-learning modules from the Foster Carer Training Hub have also been completed. There have been some benefits to the e-learning offer such as being able to offer material around recording and reporting whilst the recording policy was being updated and First Aid modules if there is not a first aid course running for a few weeks or carers are struggling to attend.

Special Guardianship Training

Our special guardian training has continued with 82 attendees over six courses. It is hosted by a member of the training team, an experienced special guardian contributing as well as a Social Worker from the special guardian support team from the Regional Adoption Agency.

Developments

Following the development of the Next Steps training we have, along with the Reunification and Placement Stability Service (RAPSS), evaluated the modules. We have noted that the content of some of the workshops is beneficial to a wider cohort of Foster Carers than those in the first year and so we will continue these workshops, widening the offer to other carers who would benefit.

We are currently setting up a new booking system for our training that should give Foster Carers an improved experience in managing their course bookings, there are options for carers to express an interest in a course if the date does not work for them or has already run, which can inform our planning. In addition, the ME learning e-learning modules that we have been using for the previous seven years can also be self-allocated via this booking system.

A highlight of our year was to run a day-conference called 'From Chaos to Cake' at the Weston Homes Stadium in Peterborough with 108 attendees, equally split between staff and Foster Carers. The speakers were Sarah Naish and Sarah Dillon, and the focus was on Foster Carers taking care of themselves to therapeutically parent the children in their care. This was a very enjoyable event and received excellent feedback.

4.11 Carer consultation, engagement and support

Support Groups have operated for both Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foster Carers throughout the year with face-to-face groups taking place four times a month in Cambridgeshire and once a month in Peterborough. Additionally, there are dedicated groups for some carers – the support group for teenage carers is held virtually and the support group for Foster Carers looking after children aged 0 – 5 years meeting monthly face to face.

Foster Carers have established their own informal support groups which take place in two locations, both of which meet monthly.

All new Foster Carers continue to be linked with a Mentor who is an approved Foster Carer prior to their approval to offer peer support in the early stages of their fostering career. They maintain contact throughout their career to offer advice as needed.

Events have taken place throughout the year for fostering households to meet with each other and staff including day trips to Wicksteed Park, a summer picnic and Christmas parties all of which were well attended. In addition, the New Carer event was held for the first time since the pandemic to welcome all new Foster Carers to the service along with the Foster Carer Award ceremony which also took place in person.

The Assistant Director has continued to hold virtual 'Coffee and Cake' sessions following on from the success of these informal events which began during lockdown and has also attended the support group in Peterborough in person. It provides an opportunity for all Foster Carers to ask questions and hear about developments in the service and wider children's services.

The Service Manager for Supervision and Support meets monthly with the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Cambridgeshire Foster Carer Association and Peterborough Foster Carer Community. Mandy Nicholson is the chair for Peterborough Foster Carer Community and Tracey Stephenson is the chair for Cambridgeshire Foster Carer Association. The Head of Service joins these meetings on a bi-monthly basis.

Managers from the service also attend the committee and community meetings to hear about what is working well for Foster Carers and areas that need to be addressed or developed.

There have been no consultations with Foster Carers during the period, however the feedback given in the previous consultation about allowances identified the rise in the cost of living as a concern for Foster Carers. Consequently, two further payments were made to Foster Carers during the year in recognition of this.

Foster Carers attend the formal Corporate Parenting Committee in Peterborough and the Corporate Parenting Sub Committee in Cambridgeshire to represent Foster Carers and ensure their views are heard by Elected Members.

Foster Carer Newsletters from the Service provide updates to fostering households about changes and developments in the service.

4.12 **Fostering Panel**

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fostering Panels have continued to operate separately and virtually during this reporting year. The business of the Fostering Panel is to consider Foster Carer's suitability to continue to foster or to be approved as Foster Carers (both as Mainstream Carers and as Connected Persons Carers), post allegation reviews, noting resignations, extensions of temporary approval and changes to Foster Carer terms of approval.

In Cambridgeshire, 27 Fostering Panels sat during the year and in Peterborough 11 Fostering Panels sat. Panel members have continued to receive medical advice and legal advice when required.

The Fostering Panel Adviser role was held by Stuart Stapleton for both Cambridgeshire and Peterborough until September 2022 when the new Fostering Panel Advisors, Claire Baxendale and Liz Devoti came into post.

Additional panels were convened to prevent drift and consider cases in a timely way. No panels were cancelled due to lack of quoracy.

In Cambridgeshire Richard Holland is the Panel Chair and Elaine Barry is Vice Chair.

In Peterborough Mick Cunningham is the Panel Chair and Fernley Copping is Vice Chair.

Panel training days were held for Peterborough on 25 May 2022 and for Cambridgeshire on 19 May 2022. A further Panel Members' event was held on the 31 January 2023.

Appraisals for the chairs and panel members have been carried out during the year in line with requirements.

A new Quality Assurance Feedback Form was introduced in March 2023 and the Advice Tracker updated and shared as part of the ongoing development to strengthen the links between the Service and the Fostering Panels.

Fiona Van Den Hout, Head of Service for Fostering and Supervised Contact acted as Agency Decision Maker for the Fostering Panel. Fiona left the service on the 30 December 2022, and from this point Anita Hewson, Acting Head of Service for Fostering, Supervised Contact, (Family Time), Reunification and Placement Stability Service and Family Group Conferencing has acted as the Agency Decision Maker for the Fostering Panel.

Heads of Service Sam Nour, Samantha Howlett, Fiona Van Den Hout, Myra O'Farrell, Michaela Berry and Mandeep Gill have acted as the Local Authority's Nominated Officers for regulation 24 temporary fostering arrangements.

4.13 **Management arrangements**

The management of the service was carried out by Nicola Curley, Interim Service Director Children's Services across both Local Authorities until December 2022 when Elaine Redding was appointed Interim Service Director for Children's Services.

Ricky Cooper, Assistant Director for Fostering, Regional Adoption and Specialist Young People's Services has overall responsibility for the Fostering Service.

Fiona Van Den Hout was the operational Head of Service for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fostering Service until 30 December 2022 when Anita Hewson became Interim Head of Service. There were three lead Service Manager posts during this reporting year, who in turn were supported by their Team Managers as follows:

Recruitment and Assessment:

Service Manager - Anita Hewson until December 2022

Interim Service Manager - Jo Spender from January 2023

Team Manager – Jo Laur

Team manager – Jenni Woodcock

Team Manager – Tasalla Shaiyen

Supervision and Support:

Service Manager - Despina Kaoura

Team Manager- Amanda Carter (covering maternity leave until July 2022) / Sharyl Acheampong (from July 2022)

Team Manager – Jayne Barrett McGrath

Team Manager – Mariepearl Camfield

Household Review & Practice Standards:

Service Manager - Sue King

Team Manager – Stuart Stapleton)

Interim Resource Team Manager – Amanda Carter (from July 2022)

Operational team meetings for staff and managers have been held monthly and both Councils have virtually provided corporate support opportunities for staff including monthly wellbeing sessions and briefings by senior Council Leaders.

4.14 **Children in Care participation and consultation**

The Service works closely with the Councils' Participation Teams who support children and young people in care to provide their views on specific topics via the Children in Care Councils and Care Leaving Forums.

The annual Children in Care Awards are held by each Local Authority and is an event that the whole fostering household is encouraged to attend. It is supported by staff from the Fostering Service.

The service attends the Participation Group and has collaboratively developed a service Participation Plan.

Young Recruiters have helped to interview applicants for social care roles, and Young Trainers have become an established part of the Journey to Foster training for prospective Foster Carers and continue to receive excellent feedback from prospective Foster Carers.

Feedback is sought from children and young people in care about their experience of living within house Foster Carers as part of the Foster Carer's annual review process which provides rich information about the day-to-day life for foster children.

4.15 **Private Fostering**

The Children Act 1989 and subsequent Private Fostering Regulations 2005 place a statutory duty on the Local Authority to monitor the safety and wellbeing of children and young people living in Private Fostering arrangements.

These arrangements are regulated by Fostering Regulations 2011, private fostering arrangements are made between parents or carers who have parental responsibility for that child and another adult who is not a blood relative, so they can take on the care of the child for a single period longer than twenty-eight days.

These arrangements should be reported to the Local Authority for a safeguarding assessment if necessary and a private fostering assessment and monitoring if approved.

Both Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council have private fostering procedures and processes in place.

In Cambridgeshire County Council there were 14 assessed private fostering arrangements on 31 March 2023. Of this figure, five were language schools, five were Homes for Ukraine and four were mainstream.

In Peterborough City Council there were three mainstream assessed private fostering arrangements on 31 March 2023.

There is a working group that meets monthly to monitor the implementation of the Private Fostering Strategy this is chaired by the Private Fostering Lead, Jo Laur, Team Manager Fostering Recruitment and Retention. An annual Private Fostering Report is submitted to the relevant safeguarding board for scrutiny of practice.

4.16 **Connected Person**

Connected Persons fostering is regulated by the Care Planning Regulations 2010 and the Fostering Regulations 2011; it is also known as Kinship or Family and Friends Care. These Regulations govern situations when a child is the subject of an interim or full Care Order under section 38/31 Children Act 1989, when it is not safe for them to live with their parents, and they have a connected person who has nominated themselves to care for the child. Most of the connected persons assessments are completed on people who are related to the children they look after, and in most cases, they are grandparents, aunts and uncles, siblings or other family members, but some are family friends.

The Local Authority has a statutory duty to assess the connected person if a child is not able to live with their parents. The Fostering Service will then make a recommendation about the suitability of the connected person to care for the child throughout their childhood and into adulthood.

A connected person assessment can result in a negative or positive recommendation. If it is positive there can be several outcomes, depending on the risk and who needs to share parental responsibility. The legal options available to support the continuing relationship between the child living with the connected person are no order, child arrangements order, special guardianship order, care order or adoption.

The total number of connected persons' referrals received in Cambridgeshire County Council in 2022-2023 was 112 and in Peterborough City Council the overall number was 54. This equates to an increase in referrals of 22% compared to 2021-2022

During 2022-23 in Cambridgeshire County Council 30% of referrals occurred when the child was in a formal legal process or subject to Child Protection at the time of the referral and 10% of the total referrals were Regulation 24 referrals. Regulation 24 referrals occur when the child goes to live with their family or friend in an emergency and the carers are agreed as temporary foster carers.

In Peterborough City Council 22% of referrals were in formal legal process or subject to Child Protection at the time of the referral and 22% of referrals were Regulation 24 arrangements.

4.17 **Priority Transformation Area 2023 – 2024**

The following areas have been identified as areas of transformation focus for the coming year. A transformation team is supporting the Assistant Director to develop the transformation plan.

- Benchmarking
- Model of practice
- Recruitment
- Marketing
- Review of Internal structure
- Workforce analysis

The four building blocks identified in the previous year also continue to steer the service to ensure that there is greater sufficiency of family-based care available, and to inform the transformation planning. These are:

- Recruitment
- Reputation
- Resilience

- Retention and Reward

5. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

5.1 This work links to the Council's Corporate Priority in relation to the following:

Priority Prevention, Independence & Resilience

The Fostering Service ensures every child gets the best start in life – with more children and young people in care finding permanent, safe and stable homes and support to care leavers to access a good, enhanced local offer that meets their health, education, housing and employment needs.

The Fostering Service ensures that children and young people are safe from harm and lead healthy lives. Children and young people are confident, resilient, thrive in their learning and engage positively and actively in their communities. The Fostering Service supports Care Leavers through the Staying Put Scheme.

Further information on the Council's Priorities can be found here - [Link to Corporate Strategy and Priorities Webpage](#)

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 N/A

7. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

7.1 Corporate Parenting Committee Members are kept updated about performance of the fostering service.

8. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

8.1 Corporate Parenting Committee Members have a duty to review the performance of Children's Social Care including the Fostering Service.

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 N/A

10. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

10.1 There are no financial implications associated with the report outside of the agreed budgets.

Legal Implications

10.2 There are no legal implications associated with the report.

Equalities Implications

10.3 There are no equality implications associated with this report.

10.4 Carbon Impact

The report contains no new proposals, and therefore there are no decisions which will have an impact on carbon emissions.

10.5 **Impact on Children in Care**

This report relates to the services provided for Children in Care and Care Leavers and ties into the Pledge and Charter that the Local Authority respects the differing wants and needs for all.

11. **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

11.1 *None*

12. **APPENDICES**

12.1 *None*

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CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM No. 9
19 JULY 2023	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of: Regional Adoption Agency	John Gregg Executive Director for Children, Education and Families	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Councillor Lynne Ayres Cabinet Member for Education, Skills, and Children's Services	
Contact Officer(s):	Joanne Banks, Head of the Regional Adoption Agency	Tel. 01223 699392

ANNUAL REPORT - REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY

RECOMMENDATIONS	
FROM: <i>Head of the Regional Adoption Agency</i>	Deadline date: <i>NA</i>
<p>It is recommended that Corporate Parenting Sub Committee</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Committee to note the report</i> 2. <i>Committee to raise any queries with officers</i> 	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report is submitted to Corporate Parenting Committee to provide a summary of the Adoption Service for Peterborough City Council Children's Social Care as part of the scheduled work items

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an Annual Report on the business of the Regional Adoption Agency for Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Adoption.
- 2.2 This report is for Corporate Parenting Committee to consider under its Terms of Reference No. 2.4.4.2 To receive statutory reports in relation to the adoption, fostering, commissioning, looked after children services and children's homes with a view to recommending any changes.
- 2.3 *How does this report link to the Corporate Priorities?*
The Annual report supports the city council's Prevention, Independence and Resilience priority.
- 2.4 *How does this report link to the Children in care Pledge?*

This report supports all aspects of the Pledge and it relates to ensuring that those children who are in an adoption placement are offered high quality permanence placements.

3. TIMESCALES

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	
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4. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

4.1 This report is the Annual Report of Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Adoption – the Regional Adoption Agency for Cambridgeshire County Council & Peterborough City Council. The Agency is responsible for adoption services on behalf of Cambridgeshire County Council & Peterborough City Council. Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council collaborated to establish Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Adoption, which is a hosted model, hosted by Cambridgeshire County Council and started from December 2020. The Regional Adoption Agency was created in response to the legal requirement that authorities regionalise their adoption services. The vision and ambition of the two Local Authorities is for Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Adoption to ***make a life-long difference to the lives of children for whom adoption is in their best interests.***

4.2 Since December 2020, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Adoption has had responsibility for recruiting, assessing and supporting prospective adopters, for non-agency adoption work including partner adoptions and intercountry adoptions. We have also had the primary responsibility for family finding for all children with adoption plans from the two Local Authorities. Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Adoption is also responsible for providing support to all parties affected by adoption, including adopters, adoptive families, adopted adults and birth relatives as well as supporting the partner local authority special guardians.

4.3 This Report provides a summary of developments for the period 01 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, the second full operational year of Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Adoption. The report fulfils the statutory requirement that an annual report be produced.

4.4 The Report is divided into subsections covering: an overview of Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Adoption, Performance, Service Update and Staffing Update.

4.5 The aims of the service have continued to be:

- Having a key role in the early permanency planning agenda within both Peterborough and Cambridgeshire and being instrumental in the care planning for children who have a plan for adoption
- Recruiting adopters who can meet the needs of the children with adoption plans (specifically older children, sibling groups and children with additional vulnerabilities)
- Offering high quality support to adopters, birth parents and carers and all parties involved with the children
- Ensuring a culture of continuous challenge, innovation and improvement
- Providing an accessible service to all parties affected by adoption and special guardianship (adopters, adoptees, birth families, foster carers, guardians and children in their care)
- Developing a coherent and robust 'Local Offer' that provides the right support, at the right time to Adopters and Special Guardians

4.6 The current structure for the Regional Adoption Agency has continued in line with the proposals in the consultation where there are four distinct teams dedicated to delivering key focussed activity.

4.7 Recruitment and Assessment:

This service area recruits, assesses and supports prospective adopters to meet the needs of children waiting in each authority in line with their developed recruitment and marketing plan. In addition, the service undertakes annual reviews as required, assesses and supports parents or

partners and family relatives who wish to adopt a child on a non-agency basis and foster carers who are seeking to adopt a child in their care.

4.8 Family Finding:

This part of the service continues to take the lead responsibility for all aspects of the linking and matching of children with adopters. The service also provides support and advice to the child's Social Worker about the adoption process, coordinates other family finding activities and crucially increases the opportunities for children to be adopted who are older, have additional vulnerabilities or who are within sibling groups. Tracking children with a potential or actual adoption plan and reporting on adoption timescales against national and local indicators also takes place within this part of the service.

4.9 Adoption and Special Guardianship Support:

This service area undertakes assessments of Adopter and Special Guardian support needs or commissions these if required, undertaking applications to the Adoption Support Fund for children. The team also takes lead responsibility for reviewing financial allowances provided to families to inform what future allowances should be provided. The core offer also includes social events for children and young people, social/training events for adoptive parents, advice and signposting for adoptive families, independent support and advice to birth relatives, counselling and information to adopted adults post 18 years and independent support to birth parents including a letter box exchange service.

4.10 Panel and Quality Assurance:

This service area administers and supports Adoption Panels which recommend the approval of prospective adopters, matches between children and adopters and provides professional advice on best practice and regulations to the Agency Decision Makers within both Peterborough and Cambridgeshire. The Agency Advisor plays a key role in maintaining a high standard of practice and performance through the quality assurance of all services areas within the Regional Adoption Agency. The panel have remained a very active part of the Regional Adoption Agency and joining Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Adoption Panels together we have 4 Panel Chairs with a broad range of panel members who have supported the continued success in approving adopters and adoptive matches.

4.11 During its last year of operation, between 01 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Adoption has:

- Matched 52 children,
- Placed 49 children,
- Supported 52 children to be adopted,
- Placed 16 children in Early Permanence Placements,
- Commenced 44 prospective adoptive assessments
- Approved 36 adopters,
- Matched 35 adoptive families with children,
- Supported families with £784, 523.19 worth of Adoption Support Fund packages of support.

4.12 The RAA continues to make good progress in relation to the development of practice, systems and processes that operate across both Local Authorities that ensure that children and young people receive a consistent and child focused intervention that brings about securing permanence arrangements where adoption is considered to be in their best interests. Continued effectiveness in developing additional support services for adopted children, young people and adopters, as well as special guardians, remains critical to the growth of the RAA, as well as utilising the Adoption Support Fund. The RAA will continue to have a presence nationally at the RAA Leaders' group and represent the views of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough residents to

ensure we keep abreast of national trends and influence policy and government strategy where we can.

5 CORPORATE PRIORITIES

The Annual report supports the city council's Prevention, Independence and Resilience priority.

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 NA

7. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

7.1 NA

8. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

8.1 This report is just for noting.

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 NA - Please see the Annual Report
There are no alternative options to consider.

10. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

10.1 The report has been shared with Fiona Chapman

Legal Implications

10.2 No legal implications. The report has been shared with Elaine Lewis

Equalities Implications

10.3 NA

Other Implications

10.5 This report relates to children who are placed for adoption, and then adopted.

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

11.1 None

12. APPENDICES

12.1 Appendix 1 - Please see the Annual Report



Cambridgeshire & Peterborough

Adoption

**CAMBRIDGESHIRE & PETERBOROUGH
ADOPTION**

ANNUAL REPORT

1ST APRIL 2022 – 31ST MARCH 2023

CONTENTS

1	Overview & Background	Page 3
2	RAA Governance	Page 4
3	Service Structure	Page 5
4	Performance	Page 6
5	Disruptions	Page 11
6	Service Overview	Page 12
7	Financial Statement	Page 21
8	Commissioned Services	Page 22
9	Staff Profile	Page 23
10	Complaints	Page 24
11	Service Developments	Page 25
Appendix		
A	Internal Audit Report	Page 26
B	Marketing Strategy 2023-2024	Page 27
C	Financial Statement	Page 28
D	Annual Panel Chair Report	Page 30
E	Service Plan 2023-2024	Page 48

1. Overview & Background

This report is the second Annual Report of Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Adoption – the Regional Adoption Agency for Cambridgeshire County Council & Peterborough City Council. The Agency is responsible for adoption services on behalf of Cambridgeshire County Council & Peterborough City Council. Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council collaborated to establish Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Adoption, which is a hosted model, hosted by Cambridgeshire County Council and started from December 2020. The Regional Adoption Agency was created in response to the legal requirement that authorities regionalise their adoption services. The vision and ambition of the two Local Authorities is for Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Adoption to ***make a life-long difference to the lives of children for whom adoption is in their best interests.***

The responsibility for Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Adoption has remained as for recruiting, assessing and supporting prospective adopters, for non-agency adoption work including partner adoptions and intercountry adoptions. We have also had the primary responsibility for family finding for all children with adoption plans from the two Local Authorities. Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Adoption is also responsible for providing support to all parties affected by adoption, including adopters, adoptive families, adopted adults and birth relatives as well as supporting the partner local authority special guardians.

This Report provides a summary of developments for the period 01 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, the second full operational year of Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Adoption. The report fulfils the statutory requirement that an annual report be produced.

The Report is divided into subsections covering: an overview of Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Adoption, Performance, Service Update and Staffing Update.

During its last year of operation, between 01 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Adoption has:

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The RAA continues to make good progress in relation to the development of practice, systems and processes that operate across both Local Authorities. This ensures that children and young people receive a consistent and child focused intervention that brings about securing permanence arrangements where adoption is considered to be in their best interests. Continued effectiveness in developing additional support services for adopted children, young people and adopters, as well as special guardians, remains critical to the growth of the RAA, as well as utilising the Adoption Support Fund. The RAA will continue to have a presence nationally at the RAA Leaders' group and represent the views of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough residents to ensure we keep abreast of national trends and influence policy and government strategy where we can.

In February 2023, Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council launched a People's Services consultation that was in relation to a decision made to separate the current shared services arrangements for Children's Social Care, Adult Social Care, Education and Commissioning functions. The consultation provided details of the proposed new organisational structures for each of the following functions: Adults Services, Children's Social Care, Education and Commissioning. It will provide clarity around the proposed roles and about the impact upon current teams and colleagues. The consultation was clear that there are no proposed changes to the structure of the Regional Adoption Service as outlined in the Partnership Agreement.

2. RAA Governance

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Adoption remains a hosted Regional Adoption Agency and there is a written Partnership Agreement that outlines the specific roles and responsibilities between the two authorities, as well as governance arrangements required for overseeing service provision and terms of the partnership.

The RAA is funded by a designated percentage contribution between PCC (30%) and CCC (70%), taking into account indexation in line with local pay awards, other changes in staff pay, changes in the type of service provided, or any changes in law, government policy, guidance and best practice.

Governance is provided substantially by the 'Regional Adoption Agency Partnership Board' which is chaired by the Assistant Director of Fostering, Regional Adoption & Specialist Young Peoples Services, and comprises key services - finance and safeguarding managers. The Partnership Board shall carry out a quarterly review of the operation with a report being provided to the Partnership Board by the Head of the Regional Adoption Agency. There is an annual review of the Regional Adoption Agency which the Director of Children's Services and Cabinet Leads from each Local Authority shall also attend.

Over the year there have been four Partnership Boards and there is an Annual Board meeting planned for August 2023. The membership of the Partnership Board has remained consistent and includes Virtual School, Looked After Child Health and an Adoptive Parent to ensure the board has a breadth of knowledge around adoption to enable it to play an effective role in developing the services provided by the Regional Adoption Agency.

In March 2022 a Governance Audit was undertaken by the Internal Audit Service of Peterborough City Council and the final report was completed in May 2022. The outcome was Reasonable Assurance and made recommendations all of which have been completed. These recommendations included reviewing the Terms of Reference for the Partnership Board and ensuring partners attendance and commitment to the board, timing of the Annual Report and Annual Board and promoting the boards' role around Quality Assurance. See Appendix A.

3. Service Structure

The Regional Adoption Agency provides a range of services to children and their families including children who are requiring an adoptive placement, supporting those caring for children in a permanent placement, as well as the birth families for those children who are placed for adoption. Here is an overview of these services.

Recruitment, assessment, and approval of adopters – The team supports prospective adopters from the start of their interest in adoption with their initial enquiry, completing the assessment process to enable them to be approved as adoptive parents. The team continue to support the prospective adopters with identifying the children they wish to adopt, enabling the children to move in and until they become the sole legal parents for the children through an Adoption Order.

Family Finding – A key activity of the Regional Adoption Agency is ensuring that children are successfully linked with their forever family as early as possible. Dedicated Family Finding social workers will have developed a detailed knowledge of the child throughout their time in local authority care to ensure that the child's adoptive family can be identified and linked as soon as adoption is the plan for the child.

Adoption Panel – Alongside the Recruitment & Assessment and Family Finding teams is the Adoption Panel that considers all applications for approval from prospective adopters, and all applications for the approval of a match between a child/ren from the RAA and suitable adopters. Their recommendation goes to the Agency Decision Maker (ADM).

Early Permanence – Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have a passion for securing permanence at the earliest opportunity for children and have embedded practices of Early Permanence into the Adoption Service as well as the safeguarding teams. Early Permanence is where adoptive parents are also approved as foster carers so they can provide a safe and stable placement prior to adoption being confirmed as the plan for the child. This will prevent changes in the child's primary caregivers and enables these attachments to be developed at an earlier part of the child's life. Family Finding will consider if Early Permanence is a suitable plan for the child and the adoption assessing social worker will prepare the adopter(s) to support children with these plans.

Adoption and Special Guardianship Support – The team provides support to adopters, special guardians, and their children to enable them to make positive changes to challenges that they face throughout their childhood and beyond. Their approach is rooted in developmental trauma and attachment. They work with a range of stakeholders to provide a child-centred comprehensive approach grounded by the evidence base. The team is responsible for the delivery of letter box contact, birth

records, counselling and intermediary services.

4. Performance

4.1 Children with a plan for Adoption – (with a Should Be Placed For Adoption (SHOBPA) decisions and subject to Placement Orders - also known as Best Interest Decision)

Provisional ASLGB data indicates that over the year, 37 children in Cambridgeshire and 28 children in Peterborough had a plan for adoption and 30 children in Cambridgeshire and 17 children in Peterborough were made subject to Placement Orders.

The national trend is that the number of children with a plan for adoption and placement order has been falling significantly, however Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are not following that trend and the numbers are remaining stable. In 2022-23, 39 children in Cambridgeshire had a plan for adoption and 35 children were made subject to a Placement Order. In Peterborough 21 children had a plan for adoption and 16 were made subject to a Placement Order. This has highlighted that Cambridgeshire and Peterborough continues to have a positive view about adoption and ensures that children have this as a permanence plan when there are no alternatives within the family.

4.2 Children Placed For Adoption

Over the year, 30 children in Cambridgeshire and 19 children in Peterborough were placed for adoption giving an overall total of 49 children being placed for adoption. Of these 49 children, 22 children had been in an early permanence placement prior to being matched as an adoption placement.

When comparing to the previous year, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have had a slight decline in the number of placements however last year the number of placements were higher than expected performance (2021-22 42 children in Cambridgeshire and 23 children in Peterborough) and it was not expected that the number this year would mirror that data. It is important to acknowledge that only 7 of these children (4 in Cambridgeshire and 3 in Peterborough) had been waiting for over a year since the Placement Order was granted due to having characteristics that has meant they were harder to place (including complex developmental needs, ethnic background and sibling groups).

The Agency has a success rate of being able to place 71% of those children who have a placement order with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough adopters. Those placed outside are deemed harder to place with seven being part of sibling groups and the other four being over 4 years old or with complex developmental needs. This has been fed into the marketing strategy for 2023-2024.

4.3 Children Adopted

Over the year, 31 children were adopted in Cambridgeshire and 21 were adopted in Peterborough giving 19% of Cambridgeshire children and 19 of Peterborough children exiting care via adoption which both are higher than the target (18%) as well as the rates on a national (10%) and Eastern Region (12%).

When comparing to the previous year, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have had a slight dip in the number of Adoption Orders granted and the proportion exiting care by adoption. However, it is important to note that 2021-2022 were higher than expected.

For this cohort, the average number of days for A2¹ is 238 for children in Cambridgeshire and 153 for children in Peterborough. The national target is 120 days and the national average is 198 days with the Eastern Region being 180 days.

For this cohort, the average number of days for A10² is 510 for children in Cambridgeshire and 400 for children in Peterborough. The national target is 426 days and the national average is 482 days with the Eastern Region being 464 days.

It is acknowledged that even though the timeliness of adoption is greater than the target, nationally local authorities and regional adoption agencies are struggling to achieve the target. Looking at the children behind the figures, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Adoption have secured Adoption Orders for a number of children who were deemed harder to place – including sibling groups and children over the age of 5 years old – and for these children the timescales to achieve adoption is longer. 40% were part of sibling groups and 25% were children over the age of 5 years. It is important to acknowledge this as positive practice in striving for permanence for these children. It is also noteworthy that there were 5 children where the timeframes had been significantly (5-8 times) higher than the target which had led to a decrease in our performance. These factors together have led to an increase in the average timescales for children adopted over the past 12 months.

Being aware of this dip, we have the Family Finding Team Manager takes a proactive approach to monitor timeframes for children who they are currently family finding for to ensure we can prevent drift and improve practice in the future. We have a number of strategies in place to address this and improve practice.

There are closer relationships between the Recruitment & Assessment team and the Family Finding Teams which has enables early identification of matches within the agency. This has also enabled early identification of children where an interagency match will be needed.

The Family Finding Team Manager attends the Permanency Planning Meetings that are held by the Safeguarding teams. These meetings track all children subject to Public Law Outline and Care Proceedings and this ensures that the Family Finding

¹ (Average time between a Local Authority receiving Court authority to place a child and the Local Authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family, for children who have been adopted (days) - A low number shows good performance)

² (Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family adjusted for foster carer adoptions, for children who have been adopted (days))

team are aware of all the children who have a parallel plan for adoption and ensure any adoption links are started early in the child's journey. The Team Manager is also able to support and influence plans for children to ensure adoption is considered as a parallel plan at the earliest opportunity.

We are promoting early permanence where children will be placed with their potential adoptive families earlier in the child's looked after journey. This has been particularly positive with 24% of the children adopted in the past 12 months were in an early permanence placement. We anticipate this will increase as 40% of the children placed with their adoptive families in the past 12 months were with an early permanence family.

We have a proactive marketing strategy that ensures regular marketing activity and has a focus on recruiting adopters for harder to place children – this will enable us to achieve more adoptions within our own adopters that will in turn will improve the timeliness of adoptions.

There is a Matching Project worker that is currently employed by a neighbouring Regional Adoption Agency, Adoption Connects, who is leading on improving practice for harder to place children. She is working alongside our Family Finding Social Workers to support earlier matching for any children that we are unable to offer an adoptive family. This includes arranging our own Activity Days, proactive profiling of children on any digital platforms as well as developing connections with other Voluntary Adoption Agencies.

4.4 Early Permanence

Sixteen children have been placed in early permanence placements during this period with early permanence carers (dually approved carers) and fostering for adoption families (temporarily approved as foster carers). We have continued to promote early permanence with our adopters and have embedded an 'opt-out' approach rather than the current 'opt-in' approach.

The success of early permanence has continued through the lead practitioners in the Recruitment & Assessment and Family Finding teams. We have also strengthened our relationship with the safeguarding teams through regular attendance at the Placement Planning Meetings that are chaired by Safeguarding. This ensures that we are aware of all children subject to care proceedings and will allow tracking of a child's adoption journey from the earliest appropriate opportunity.

It is clear that we have had a positive year with early permanence placements, however there is a build on this practice further. One aspect is that we are aware that many of our early permanence placements have been later in the child's care journey (including after the Should Be Placed For Adoption decision or the granting of the Placement Order). There have been a number of factors contributing towards this including the reluctance of the family courts and CAFCASS in placing earlier as well as the child's social worker seeing Early Permanence as a parallel plan.

The Regional Adoption Agency will take a focus on earlier placements and to achieve this there needs to be an approach of closer joint working with various services and

agencies to ensure that EP is considered as a parallel plan for children from the point they enter care.

In February 2023 the National Regional Adoption Agency released the National Standards for Early Permanence and these are standards that all Local Authorities are expected to achieve. We have developed a working group, headed up by the Head of the Regional Adoption Agency to develop an action plan to ensure successful implementation of the standards. This has started internally with the RAA, however this needs to broaden and include colleagues in the Safeguarding & Children in Care services so there can be a joined up approach.

4.5 Change of Child’s Plan

It is important to consider any children where the court accepted the local authority’s plan for adoption and granted a Placement Order, however the child’s care plan had subsequently changed. Between April 2022 and March 2023 there have been no children where a placement order has been granted and the care plan has changed.

4.6 Recruitment of Adopters

Year	April 2022- March 2023
A13 - Number of applications to be adoptive families (still being assessed)	31
A21 - Number of adopter approvals	36
A22 - Number of applications commencing Stage 1	44

The data to the end of March 2023 showed that Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Adoption had approved 36 adopters. In relation to applications to adopt, at the end of March 2023 there were 44 applications commencing stage 1 with a total of 31 adopters in assessment. We have maintained a stable number of enquiries with an average of 25 per month (308 over the whole year) and with a steady increase in the number applications to adopt and active assessment, with a 14.2% conversion rate from enquiries. One area that has been a focus is around increasing adopters for harder to place children and this has been supported by our marketing strategy.

An area that has been a focus for the recruitment and assessment team has been in relation to timeliness of assessments. We have established a tracker for all assessments which highlights adopters where their assessments have been significantly delayed allowing the team manager to be proactive in addressing this.

The ASGLB data indicates that stage 1 is not completed within 60 days and 26% of stage 2 assessment are completed in 4 months with the average number of days being 150 days (target of 120 days). It is important to note that the average across England is 14% of stage 1s are completed in 2 months and 40% of stage 2s are completed within timescales with the average number of days being 152 days.

It is acknowledged that we continue to remain behind in terms of performance for our stage 2 assessments, however we are making positive steps since Q1 where the

average number of days has dropped from 154 days and proportion has increased from 22%. However, we need to be more proactive in identifying delays at an earlier point and understanding the themes behind the delays. This is an areas that I will work Christine Clipston (Recruitment & Assessment Team Manager) so we can endeavour to improve over the next year.

Interagency placements for children from other LA

The majority of the children placed with our adoptive parents are from Cambridgeshire & Peterborough (87%) however when there are no suitable matches from our Local Authorities, we support adopters to offer an adoptive placement to children from other local authorities. Over the 12 months we have placed 6 children – one family with 3 children and three families with a child each.

Non Agency Adoption

It is important to acknowledge that there is an element of the activity in the Recruitment & Assessment team that is not included the work outlined above. This includes Step Parent Adoption, Intercountry Adoption for families as well as foster carers making direct application to adopt the child in their placement who is not subject to a Placement Order.

Over the past year there has been a continuous demand on the service for these areas of practice.

In relation to Step Parents Adoption there has been 38 enquiries that have resulted in 20 initial assessments. Despite many of the assessments recommending alternative legal orders, 6 have decided to pursue an application to an Adoption Order which means that a full assessment has been completed. The family court has a clear view that Adoption Orders will only be granted when no other order will do. 3 have resulted in an AO being granted.

In relation to intercountry adoption, the Regional Adoption Agency commission Intercountry Adoption Centre to carry out enquiries and assessments for adopters resident in the UK who wish to adopt a child internationally. However, alongside this we have families who have adopted child whilst living abroad and have subsequently returned to live in the UK who wish to have their adoption order recognised in the UK. To achieve this, we have to complete a court report that is presented to the High Court. We have had 2 of these.

Finally, for foster carers who have been caring for a child for longer than 12 months, they have the legal right to apply to the court for an Adoption Order. These are decisions that foster carers take in conjunction with the child's social worker, the Independent Reviewing Officer as well as birth parents. This is a really positive outcome for the child as it provides them with permanence. During the last 12 months, we completed 4 assessments.

4.7 Adopter Gap

The ASLGB refers to *The Adopter Gap: This is an analysis on the gap between the number of adopters available compared with the number of children needing adoptive parents.*

The National Adopter Gap is +70% indicating that there is an excess of adopters available.

The Eastern Region has a +86% mirroring the national trend with there being an excess of adopters available.

However, the data for Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Adoption is very different; we currently have a 2% adopter gap indicating that we have a small gap between the number of adopters available for children (18 adopters available for 18 children) – the adopter gap only considers those children with a Placement Order. However, internally, we monitor the number of children who have an ADM for adoption and this data indicates there are an additional 19 children where the plan for adoption has been ratified and waiting for the outcome of the Court. It is important to acknowledge that this is associated with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough authorities continuing to promote adoption as a care plan for children, where appropriate.

The proportion of children in with an ADMs³ for adoption in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough is 43% which is higher than the national average at 31% evidencing that adoption has remained an active permanence plan for children. Additionally, liaison with other Regional Adoption Agencies local to us has continued to indicated that they have excess adopters, however they also are struggling to match the adopters due to a mix match of the adopter offer and children available. All of this indicates the importance that we continue to have an active recruitment campaign for adoption to ensure we have a continuous flow of approved adopters to enable to timely matching for children.

5. Disruptions

There have been no disruptions of children from Cambridgeshire & Peterborough in pre adoptive placements.

As outlined above, we have placed 6 children paced with our adopters from other Local Authorities. One of these placements disrupted prior to the Adoption Order being granted. The child was 4 years old at the time of placement. She was placed in July 2022 and the placement disrupted in March 2023. There is a disruption meeting planned for May 2023 where further learning can be taken forward. Information has indicated that there were difficulties from early in the placement and the needs of the child upon placement was far more complex than indicated during matching. There was a range of support offered to the family from us as well as the child's local authority, including therapeutic support to the child and the adopters. Unfortunately, we were unable to support the family to continue to care for the child and there was a joint decision between the adopters and the child's local authority that this was not the best placement for the child. It is important to note there were no safeguarding concerns for the family.

³ % children taken into care before turning 5 with a Best Interest Decision

6. Service Overview

The Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Adoption Agency is overseen by a Head of the Regional Adoption Agency. There are four main service areas and each area has one team:

- Recruitment & Assessment
- Family Finding
- Adoption Panel
- Adoption Support

Recruitment & Assessment

The Recruitment and Assessment Team comprises of a Team Manger, 3 Senior Practitioners, 6 Social Workers and a Recruitment Officer.

Potential adopters who contact the Regional Adoption Agency will initially spend time talking with the Recruitment Officer to explore their interest in adoption. They will have the opportunity to attend an Information Session to understand more about adoption and the assessment process. Initially, due to Covid, we stopped running information sessions as we did not have the facility to run virtual information sessions so we provided detailed written information to adopters. However, after appointment of the Recruitment Officer we have started to hold Information Sessions over MS Teams as well as in person and have run alternate sessions. There will be a review of this approach, including gathering views from those enquiring, as to the future plans for Information Sessions.

Those that meet the criteria to be considered will be offered an initial interview by a member of the social work team; the Recruitment Officer remains their main point of contact during the enquiry phase all the way up to submitting their Registration of Interest, after which the prospective adopter will be allocated a social worker from the Recruitment and Assessment Team.

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Adoption continues to operate a 2-stage assessment process in line with the statutory regulations; stage 1 includes completing statutory checks, and these must be completed and reviewed by the line manager before stage 2 can commence. In addition, the prospective adopters will be asked to complete a series of worksheets in order to increase their understanding in relation to adopting a child from care.

Over the past year we have supported a number of adopters with complex aspects to their life and despite these factors we have supported to them to become approved adopters and then have a child placed. This has enabled the team to broaden the offer of adopters and celebrate the diversity of adoption.

We run support groups for adoptive families – one for those who offer an Early Permanence placement and another one for all adopters from early in their placement. Both of the support groups are really busy and have been a positive way to support adopters in developing their networks with other adoptive families.

As highlighted earlier in the reported year, we accepted 44 applications to adopt and had 31 adopters in assessment at the end of 31 March 2023.

The RAA's approach towards early permanence needed reviewing to align Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Authorities. Cambridgeshire took a concurrency approach where children were placed early in their looked after journey, whereas Peterborough would place children under a Foster to Adopt arrangement closer to the point where the court were considering the LA's proposed care plan of adoption. It was clear that there were benefits for both and the Agency needed to find a way to merge the approaches so that children were able to achieve permanence as early as possible. A review of the marketing & training material was completed, and the Agency now has a clear approach for both models and messaging that enables adopters to understand each route. The Marketing Strategy for 2022-2023 includes focused social media posts and, alongside this, the Recruitment Team are moving towards an 'Opt-out' as opposed to 'Opt-In' approach to Early Permanence when adopters wish to adopt a child under the age of 2 years old. This will be a strength for the Agency as we will be able to offer permanence to children at the earliest opportunity. There is also work being undertaken by the National RAA team into Early Permanence looking at the definition and the training provided – it is reassuring to see the proposed approach mirrors our approach.

The Agency has a dedicated training lead who has undertaken a review of the training courses offered, as well as the material used. We have improved the quality, engaged adopters in supporting to deliver the training and broadened the information as needed. There is a clear whole team approach that even though there is a training lead, all members of the team take a proactive role in delivering training.

The training offer is:

Prepare to Adopt Training – Stage 1 & Stage 2

Stage 1 is the first part of the core training for prospective adopters and provides a baseline of information around adopting. The training includes practical information about the process of the adoption journey whilst also focusing of the developmental and attachment needs of children placed for adoption. Stage 2 is the second part of the core training and this builds on the previous training. There is a focus on providing adopters with the skills on parenting children with a detailed session around therapeutic parenting, involving case discussions to support adopters into thinking about translating this theory into practice. There is also information around supporting children with their own identity and contact with birth families. The course will provide thinking around loss for children and how to support them with this. There is an opportunity to hear from adopters on their own experiences of adopting. It is also a valuable opportunity to build up support networks with those in the training.

Transitions Training

This training takes the next step for adopters to think about their journey after being an approved adopter. Covered in this training is the matching process as well the introductions and supporting the child with the move. This includes working with schools and provides some practical tools around talking about adoption and using Theraplay games to support developing the child's relationship with the adopter.

Early Permanence

This 2-day course is a course for all adopters who are interested in adopting a child under 2 years old. The course provides detailed information about the principles and

processes around Early Permanence and gives the opportunity to consider this alongside the case examples.

Adopting Siblings

This course focusses on preparing adopters for caring for siblings. The course will help adopters to understand the impact of trauma on sibling relationships and also give the opportunity to hear from an experienced sibling adopter. Alongside this there will be chance to gather some practical advice about managing time, emotional and practical resources within the family, and give space to think about applying theory into practice with some case examples.

Preparing existing children

This is a course aimed at prospective adopters who already have children in the family home, to provide some discussion and suggested tools and resources to support parents in preparing their children.

Friends and Family Training

This is a course offered to any friends and family members of adopters to support them to understand the children placed for adoption, the assessment process and how they can support adopters and children throughout their childhood and beyond. We run this course on a video platform and this has enabled us to reach those members around the world including Canada, Australia and many European counties as well those physically closer to home.

Marketing:

We have a small and dedicated Marketing & Communications Team with a Marketing & Communications Manager working with the RAA as well as the Fostering Service for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. In 2022 we added a time-limited part time marketing assistant to the service to enable the Agency to take a proactive role around the current marketing approach. The marketing assistant post has been a valuable addition to the Regional Adoption Agency – it is currently due to end in September 2023, however I would recommend that the post becomes a permanent addition to the service, There is no expectation that the post could have an additional financial cost to the Local Authorities and can be included in the Regional Adoption Agency budget.

The marketing assistant has allowed us to increase our social media presence and develop the Regional Adoption Agency Website and there are plans to build on this with the creation of podcasts and videos, strengthening our relationships with communities.

We have seen a continuous increase in the enquiries, and it is important that we don't have gaps in our marketing presence to ensure this is maintained.

Over the year marketing and communications have been planned, executed and delivered so that the service is able to meet the needs of the children and young people who need adopting. We have formed an activity plan which details events, campaigns, internal meetings, newsletter publish dates, department comms, light touch messages for social media, reports, supports groups for prepare to adopt, and campaign planning meetings. This means we have been able to co-ordinate all of our activity with the service and make sure that we hit deadlines and keep activity and awareness high. We have undertaken three large campaigns to date covering LGBT month,

YOUCANADOPT and National Adoption Week – all co-ordinated throughout the year to help capitalise on adopters and those core groups highlighted in our marketing and recruitment plan for adoption.

One area we were keen to develop was creating new stories of those that have adopted in order for us to promote the real adoption messages. We have built on the sibling video created last year and created a video based on Early Permanence which we have used as promotion on social media as well internally to encourage those already open to the service to consider being an early permanence carer. This video is on the home page of our website – www.cpadoption.co.uk. We have started to develop plans to create podcasts regarding siblings, early permanence and support available which can have a multi-use through social media as well as within our own information sessions and training offer.

To help us target and reach more adoptive parents we have profiled our service using ACORN. This system uses household information (which is adopted by the council) and allows us to look more closely at reaching families for children with disabilities and sibling groups. It shows us how and where to target them for example the best supermarkets, email or social media. We have based this on the postcodes of our approved adopters since the Regional Adoption Agency has been live.

The Marketing & recruitment Strategy for 2023 – 2024 is Appendix C.

Family Finding:

The Family Finding Team comprises of a Team Manager, 2 Senior Practitioners and 2 Social Workers.

The Regional Adoption Agency has dedicated Family Finding Social Workers who have knowledge of all the children from Cambridgeshire and Peterborough who may need an adoptive placement. The Family Finding Social Workers will regularly review the permanency plan for the child and once it is clear adoption is the plan for a child active family finding will start.

Family finding activity includes early information sharing of children with a plan for adoption with the Regional Adoption Agency approved adopters, the use of exchange events and adoption activity days where required, as well as forums such as Link Maker.

When a child is identified by an adopter, there will be a series of meetings with the Regional Adoption Agency and the Local Authority, or other agency where applicable, to ensure that adopters have full information about the child – as far as is available. This will include meeting with the Medical Advisor, the current foster carer, the child's school, if at school age, and a Child Appreciation Day to gather detailed information about the child's experiences and history to date. Prospective adopters are entitled to all available information about the child that they are considering and will need to feel confident that all information about the child has been shared with them.

If a child is placed on an Early Permanence basis when the final care plan is not yet determined, the placement will be supervised, managed, and supported in line with fostering regulations.

As outlined earlier, over the year, 37 children in Cambridgeshire and 28 children in Peterborough had a plan for adoption and 30 children in Cambridgeshire and 17

children in Peterborough were made subject to Placement Orders. Despite the national trend indicating a decline in numbers, we have not seen this. In fact, our numbers are increasing. This has highlighted that both Local Authorities continue to have a positive view about adoption and ensure children have this as a permanence plan when there are no alternatives within the family. The Should Be Placed For Adoption ADM and Courts for both Local Authorities are the same and this ensures continuity and consistency in the decisions with regards to children.

It is important to acknowledge that over the past year, 49 children have been placed for adoption and even though this is lower than last year, it remains in line with performance as last year was significantly higher. Of these 49 children, we have placed 19 children in sibling placements and many of these children are deemed harder to place not only by being part of a sibling group but also due to their own complex needs. Some of the sibling groups have not been placed together due to the number of children as well as their needs, however we have promoted that the adopters for all of the sibling groups connect up and this has ensured that the siblings maintain their relationships despite not living together. Part of the Family Finding Social Worker role has been to support older children in their preparation for moving to a permanent family. They are undertaking some direct work as well as supporting foster carers in preparing the children. We have been keen to ensure we embed the child's voice in the matching process so this has been a positive platform for us to build on.

It is also positive to acknowledge that we currently have 3 children who have been waiting longer than 12 months. 1 child has been placed with an Early Permanence carer and was matched in April 2023 and 2 of the children are matched with adopters, however due to birth parents subsequent appeal of the placement order the final placement of the children has been put on hold. This is contradictory to the national picture as the work currently undertaken by the national RAA team has shown there are significant concerns for children waiting over 18 months for their adoptive placement.

The National Regional Adoption Agency team has released funding for Regional Adoption Agency's to have joint project workers to support with improving matching timescales. After a joint bid led by Adoption Connects, we have been successful in appointing a 3 year project worker for Adoption Connects and Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Adoption. The worker started in March 2023 and is employed by Adoption Connects however is working closely with us to support with matching for children who are deemed harder to place. Tom Hey, Family Finding Team Manager, is the lead link for this project.

The Regional Adoption Agency does not have a statutory role with the ADM for Should Be Placed For Adoption (also known as Best Interest Decision), however we have been working closely with the ADM to review the processes so we can align Cambridgeshire & Peterborough. As part of this strategy, we are introducing the Agency Advisor to play a quality assurance role for the papers being presented for Should Be Placed For Adoption ADM. The new processes were launched in September 2022 and it is anticipated it will be reviewed following the implementation of the People's Services Consultation.

At 31 March 2023:

	Cambridgeshire	Peterborough
Children being tracked	79	42
Children with PO	13	6
Children with Should be placed for Adoption	14	8
Children Linked	9	4

Panel:

The Adoption Panel for the Region is constituted in accordance with legislation, regulations, and guidance. There is a central list of 23 approved panel members, including three Chairs and a Vice-Chair. The work of the panel is overseen by the Agency Advisor and is supported by a Panel Advisor and Panel Administrators. The Regional Adoption Agency has recently recruited an Adoption Advisor, Jade Cullum, whose primary role is Panel Advisor. She joined us in February 2022.

Members of the Adoption Panel include individuals with personal experience of adoption, adopters and adopted adults and other independent members with professional experience of adoption, fostering and looked after children. Panels are balanced as far as possible in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, and experience.

The purpose of the Panel is to consider all applications from prospective adopters for approval and makes recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker. The Panel considers all applications for the approval of a match between a child/ren from the RAA and suitable adopters. This recommendation goes to the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) for the relevant Local Authority of the child being placed. The Panel also considers placements for adoption where the birth parent(s) request their child be adopted. The recommendation goes to the ADM for the relevant Local Authority.

Over the year there were 35 Panels held that heard 34 approvals, 44 matches, 1 relinquished baby plan and no adopter de-registrations. The Panel will make a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker (ADM), who makes the final decision on the suitability of the adopter or the match of the child with their adoptive family.

All but one of the applications had a positive recommendation and ADM concurred with these recommendations. The one application that did not have a positive recommendation was regarding the match of a child from Cambridgeshire. ADM concurred with panel recommendation and the match was not approved. This was in relation to a single child that was part of a sibling group of 3 children. The child was 2 years old and had a plan for adoption on her own. Following this, I undertook a review of the match and it was clear that there were a number of factors that contributed towards the recommendation, and I could understand the recommendation and subsequent ADM. We are taking forward some changes in panel around the questions posed to applicants (including the number of questions), using breakout rooms for adopters and social workers to meet to discuss questions and supporting social workers to play a more active role in supporting adopters to answer questions. There were concerns raised regarding the clarity in child's plans for adoption on her own or with her sibling following a recommendation made by the judge and how this was shared as part of the case transfer from Safeguarding to Children in Care. The Family

Finding Social Worker will ensure that should there be any similar situations they will ensure greater clarity through the family finding meetings.

The Panel members are provided with training, including mandatory courses, such as equality and diversity, safeguarding, data protection and other learning events relevant to panel activity. These are e-learning modules made available by Cambridgeshire County Council Learning & Development team.

There has also been 4 face to face workshops with topics including

- Therapeutic models used in adoption support including the Trauma Informed Model,
- Prepare to adopt training
- Understanding and awareness of the traveller/gypsy community
- Learning from the Serious Case Review in Cumbria

Alongside this Jade provided 4 group supervision sessions for panel chairs and monthly catch ups for all panel members.

Jade has continued with providing a regular training programme for the upcoming year. There will be a bespoke safeguarding course that has been developed by the Learning & Development team in Cambridgeshire County Council. There are a minimum of 4 workshops planned and some of these are joint with the recruitment & assessment and family finding team and there is a joint session with panel members from Adoption Connects. Topics arranged so far include:

- Early Permanence
- Adopting Siblings
- Secure Base Model
- Transitions for children
- Birth parents of adopted children

Jade will continue with the 4 group supervision sessions for panel chairs and monthly catch ups for all panel members.

There is a detailed Annual Report completed by the Panel Chairs and this is Appendix D.

Adoption & Special Guardianship Support:

The Regional Adoption Agency has a broad offer of support, and this includes approved adopters and the partner local authority Special Guardians Support Order. Post placement adoption support is provided by both the allocated child's social worker and the adopter(s)' social worker or connected person social worker. Once a child is adopted or subject to a Special Guardianship Order, the support is provided by the Adoption & Special Guardianship Support Team.

The Adoption & Special Guardianship Support team comprises of a Team Manager, 4 Senior Practitioners, 1 Social Worker, a Therapeutic Family Worker, a Birth Relative Outreach Worker and 3 Post Box Co-ordinators. Despite the difficult year before, this has been a positive year for the Adoption & Special Guardianship Support team and they have been able to build on their strengths. The staff base in the team is more

stable. There are no vacancies in the team and despite some absences via sickness and maternity leave, the team have been supported through agency social workers to fill the gap.

The Regional Adoption Agency provides a range of adoption support services including advice, guidance, birth relative outreach support, birth records counselling, support with contact arrangements (direct and letterbox), intermediary services, access to adopter peer support and more targeted support through access to therapeutic support via the Adoption Support Fund. There has been an internal review of how we offer support and we have developed a Tiered Approach to support which provides a clearer understand of the support families receive (appendix).

Over the past year the Team has received:

Initial Assessment for family support	104 referrals (70 – Adoptive families, 34 – Special Guardianship Families)
BRC/Intermediary/GRO	44 referrals
Financial Needs Based Assessment	104 referrals
Value of ASF Applications approved by the DfE	£784,523.19

On receipt of a referral for support, an initial assessment will be completed to outline the identified needs for the family, but also the support to be provided to the family. Services can include advice and guidance, parenting support, family work and individual work with children. Some of these services are delivered through the Adoption Support Fund. There has continued to be a high demand for an assessment and subsequent support and even though the waiting time for families to access an assessment has reduced significantly, there continues to be a higher demand that the team has to resource to fulfil. It was agreed that we would employ an additional social worker on a 12-month fixed term contract to help with the demand and the funding for the post would be secured through the team providing Adoption Support Fund commissioned services to families. This will be through 1-1 therapeutic support to families, group therapeutic parenting courses and therapeutic life story work. A social worker has been appointed and will join the team in April 2023

We have continued to commission therapeutic support through the Adoption Support Fund and over the past 12 months we had agreement for £784,523.19 worth of therapeutic support for families. This is a significant amount of money and shows the positive work of the team despite the pressure of capacity.

Three post box co-ordinators sit within the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support team facilitating indirect contact for children who Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have placed for adoption. The Team will also support families where there are plans for direct contact between the children and their birth families.

Birth records counselling and intermediary services are another key area of work for the Team and due to Covid-19 and the difficulties with office-based working, the provision of this support had previously been paused and led to an increase in the

number of people waiting for a service. In acknowledgement of this we employed a Social Worker on a 6 month fixed term contract who focused on only working with Birth records counselling and this was an effective intervention that has brought the waiting list down considerably.

Another area that has become part of the Adoption & Special Guardianship Support Team is the review of Adoption & Special Guardianship allowances. The annual reviews are overseen by the Head of the Regional Adoption Agency who works closely with the respective Local Authority Finance teams. Where there is a clear financial hardship a means test allowance can be provided. However, there are times where the needs of a child indicate the need for an allowance by exception. In these situations, the Support Team will undertake a needs-based assessment to consider the needs of the child and the financial support that should be offered. The Financial Allowance process for Adoption & Special Guardianship Allowances was reviewed and the new process has been in place since July 2022. It has allowed for more timely review of means test allowance and any request for an allowance by exception. In January 2023, there was a decision to review the policy for Special Guardianship and Adoption Allowances, including the means test tool used to calculate the allowances. It was hoped this would be in place by April 2023, however there has been a delay and it is yet to be formally implemented.

The Team facilitate regular support groups for children and families across various locations. There are 6 support groups that run on a minimum of a monthly basis. They are based across the local authorities with a focus to support adopters to build up their own support networks. Members of the Support Team attend to offer advice and support. There is one support group that was set up to support Special Guardians and this is based in Peterborough.

We have run our first summer and Christmas parties for our all of our adoptive families, where new or more established. We have a further one planned for August 2023 that we are running in conjunction with National Trust who have offered us a venue and activities for free. We have also decided to broaden this and offer a summer party for our Special Guardianship families that we will held at an outdoor family activity centre in Peterborough.

We have continued to increase the therapeutic skills in the Team to enable them to provide therapeutic informed support and training to families. All members of staff have provided training on the Trauma Informed Model as well as DDP Training. We are planning to expand our offer of therapeutic support direct to families via providing Foundations For Attachment group training, 1-1 DDP informed therapeutic parenting support to families whilst continuing with offering Therapeutic Life Story work. This will allow the team to generate income via the Adoption Support Fund and has less reliance on external providers to support families. The additional social worker in the team is vital to allow us to offer this without impacting on families waiting for an assessment.

It is an achievement to end this year with such significant improvements for the Adoption & Special Guardianship Support team and even though there is always higher demand than there is resource available, the team have been able to work in ways that have improved the service offer to families.

7. Financial Statement

The budget of Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Adoption is provided by the two Local Authorities and was set by the Partnership Agreement in 2020 with the financial management being overseen through Partnership Board that the Finance Officers for both Local Authorities attend. This ensures robust financial monitoring, with variance challenged and scrutinised.

The Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Adoption in 2022/2023 budget set by the Partnership Agreement was £2,247,723 with Cambridgeshire contributing £1,599,111 and Peterborough contributing £648,612. As outlined in the Annual Statement, the actual spend for the year was £1,534,353.74, an underspend of -£64,757. The underspend was primarily as a result of recruitment campaigns, mileage & Interagency Costs. This has resulted in £64,757 being added to reserves for the Regional Adoption Agency

As part of the financial planning for 2023-2024, it is clear that, despite the underspend, the budget allocated for the Regional Adoption Agency is not excessive and is vital for the running of the essential services. It is proposed that the reserves remain with the Regional Adoption Agency and there are proposals to use these funds to contribute towards the costs of placing children with interagency placements.

8. Commissioned Services

There are a number of services that the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) has to commission to fulfil the needs of the service costing approximately £557,332.35 on an annual basis.

	Annual Cost
Medical Advisor – this is to complete reports with regards to the <i>adopter medical reports that are a statutory requirement for assessment and review of approved adopters</i>	£7,000 (approx.)
Linkmaker – <i>Online service to support linking for children with a plan for adoption and prospective adoptive parents across England, Wales and Scotland</i>	£19,639.35
Birth Relatives Counselling – <i>this is a statutory provision and is currently provided by Adoption Plus.</i>	£17,043
Intercountry Adoption – <i>there is a statutory duty for the local authority to provide intercountry adoption where by the adopters are assessed in the UK and linked with a child that is not based in the UK.</i>	£13,650
Adoption Support Fund – <i>a DfE statutory service where the adoption support fund (ASF) provides funds to local authorities (LAs) and regional adoption agencies (RAAs) to pay for essential therapeutic services for eligible adoptive and special guardianship order (SGO) families.</i>	£500,000 (approx.)

Over the past year the Regional Adoption Agency has been working with the Procurement team to develop a Pseudo Dynamic Purchasing Framework for the services commissioned as part of the Adoption Support Fund. It is anticipated that the framework will be in place by October 2023.

Alongside this, we have ensured that all contracts have followed the procurement rules and waivers have been sought for the Linkmaker, Birth Relatives Counselling and Intercountry Adoption. There is a plan to advertise the Adopter Medical Advisor post in June 2023 to review the current provider.

The Department for Education has implemented their plan to support the National Regional Adoption Agency and cross Regional Adoption Agency commissioning with the ambition to improve efficiencies within commissioning. This is early days, however we will be working with Adoption Connects and Adopt East to explore cross RAA commissioning opportunities.

9. Staff Profile group

As with any service, the staff group is a vital part of the effective running of the Agency and it is really positive to share that there has been increased stability in the service.

We started the year with 2 Social Worker vacancies, however we had appointed to them with members of staff joining in April and July. The management team has remained stable and this has been vital to support the Regional Adoption Agency with settling and embedding practice. We have had a business support officer who has taken a career break, however we have been able to fill this post with a fixed term contract.

Over the year:

8 members of staff have left	3 Social Workers, 2 Business Support Officers, 2 Senior Practitioners & 1 marketing assistant
9 members of staff have joined	5 Social Worker positions, 1 Senior Practitioner, 2 Business Support Officers & a Marketing Assistant
1 members of staff have been promoted	1 Social Worker to a Senior Practitioner.

As at the end of the year we have no vacancies.

Another area that has continued to create pressure for the RAA has been around sickness and this is particularly so for the Adoption & Special Guardianship Support Team. We have also had a Business Support Officer who had a period of sickness followed by a career break to support her with her personal circumstances. We have been able to cover the absences with agency workers and fixed term contracts as a way of minimising the impact of the absences.

Over the 12 months the Service has lost 652 days to sickness over a total of 22 employees. The prevalent reason being stress with 231 days, followed by injury at 142 days and anxiety at 134 days. 465 days have been linked to long-term sickness for 4 members of staff.

For all of those workers who have had a period of sickness, there is a return-to-work meeting and for those on long-term sickness, an Occupational Health assessment was considered and a there is a planned phased return over a 4-week period, with additional support to enable a successful return to work.

It is really important that we ensure the voice of those working for the Regional Adoption Agency is heard, so alongside team meetings and supervision, we have a feedback questionnaire that staff can complete at any time. It asks for their feedback on their team, their manager as well as the Regional Adoption Agency as a whole. They were to give ratings out of 5 (1 being low and 5 being high)

- Rate My Team – 4.57

- Rate My Cohesion – 3.43
- Rate My Recognition – 4.71
- Rate Your Manager – 4.71
- Rate Your Leadership – 4.43
- Would you recommend working for the RAA – 85% said 1 and 15 % said Maybe and no one said no.

Some of the comments included:

The RAA is very supportive offers flexible working and I enjoy the variety of the role.

I have really enjoyed my year and a bit since joining the RAA. In terms of attitude of colleagues, passion for the work we do across the team, and openness to work alongside each other and learn, my experience has been really positive. The opportunities for professional growth in my role has been really welcomed and only further cements my commitment to the role. Leadership and management is really good, and approachable, from my personal manager to higher.

I feel lucky to be able to have recorded five stars across lots of areas and I realise that I am afforded lots of opportunities to do areas of work that I enjoy in the adoption service. I feel that things are more stable in and it feels like it has been a long time since we were constantly raising issues with/discussing staffing and capacity, which is really nice after years of everything being unsettled on every level.

We also asked for feedback on how we could improve, and the consistent theme was closer joining up the separate teams within the Regional Adoption Agency. So we have arranged regular service development workshops as well as cross service working groups on practice themes.

10. Complaints

Over the past year we have received 13 Stage 1 complaints which have come from 12 families. 12 of the complaints related to the Adoption & Special Guardianship Support Team. We upheld 4 complaints, partially upheld 5 and did not uphold 4.

Of these complaints

- 1 was regarding delays in accessing an assessment and support from the Adoption & Special Guardianship Support Team,
- 5 were with regard to delays around post box contact,
- 5 related to special guardianship allowances,
- 1 was related to delays in setting up an adoption allowance
- 1 was regarding accessing birth records as an adopted adult,

We have had two Statutory Stage 2 complaints and two Statutory Stage 3.

The stage 2 complaints and one of the stage 3 complaints related to their Special Guardianship Allowance Policy and it's application to their circumstances. The other stage 3 complaint was related to delays in access to Adoption Support and the support that was offered to the family.

For the Stage 2 complaints and the stage 3 complaint relating to Special Guardianship Allowances, there have been recommendations made regarding the individual allowances however there were also recommendations that the Adoption & Special Guardianship policy be reviewed with specific consideration to the allowances.

For the stage 3 complaint regarding delays in access to Adoption Support and the support that was offered to the family, there were 13 complaints considered of which 6 were upheld, 1 was partially upheld and 6 were not upheld. There were 5 recommendations and these have all been implemented.

11. Service Developments

The Regional Adoption Agency has completed its second full year and it has built on the strengths that were emerging at the end of March 2022. A significant strength is a stable staffing base and we end the year with no permanent vacancies in the team. Those who work for the service show their passion and dedication and will often go behind their role showing that at the heart of what we offer is child and family focused. There is a drive to improve and evolve what we offer and how we offer it.

We have built on the Trauma Informed Practice that we started last year, and this will become our practice model that will be central to everything we do. We have a plan to hold our second Regional Adoption Agency Service Away Day in May 2023 where this will be the theme for the day. This is just the starting point and we will offer follow up sessions throughout the year to embed this further.

Even though we have made several positive strides this year, we have plans not only to ensure that we continue with these but build on them further and this is outlined in the Service Plan – Appendix E



Joanne Banks

Head of the Regional Adoption Agency.

28/06/2023

Appendix A – Internal Audit Report

See Internal Audit Report attached

Appendix B – Marketing Strategy 23-24

See Marketing, Communication & Recruitment Strategy 2023-2024 Attached

RAA Proposed Budget 2023/2024

Cost Centre (T)	Account	Account (T)	Final Budget	Notes
Regional Adoption Agency	A0000	Pay	1,261,831.00	Salary
Regional Adoption Agency	A1000	NI	127,668.00	Salary
Regional Adoption Agency	A2000	Pension	250,347.00	Salary
Regional Adoption Agency	A3005	Other Allowances	48,600.00	Panel fees - £1350 x 36 & inc training sessions
Regional Adoption Agency	A3100	Apprentice Levy	6,309.00	Jo Banks Salary Spreadsheet 23-24
Regional Adoption Agency	A4000	Agency Staff	12,792.00	ISW £2k x 5 assessments + 2792 misc
Regional Adoption Agency	A6200	Staff Training & Development	6,000.00	Staff Training & therapeutic training
Regional Adoption Agency	A6400	Staff health & welfare Costs	1,000.00	OH/Eye tests
Regional Adoption Agency	A6510	Other Staff Deductions	12,433.00	pay increments
Regional Adoption Agency	B2005	Casual hire of facilities	5,000.00	Support Group Hall Hire & Hall Hire for Info sessions
Regional Adoption Agency	C5000	Car mileage and allowances - staff	15,000.00	car mileage
Regional Adoption Agency	C5010	Car mileage and allowances - other	1,500.00	Adopters introduction expenses
Regional Adoption Agency	D0230	Books and Multimedia Supplies	200.00	Books for training
Regional Adoption Agency	D1100	Catering Provisions	500.00	Service Away day
Regional Adoption Agency	D3100	General Office Expenses & Stationery	500.00	stationary
Regional Adoption Agency	D4105	External Legal Fees	1,000.00	legal fees
Regional Adoption Agency	D4110	Professional Fees and Hired Services	39,000.00	Medical Advisor (£9k), Adoption Plus (£17k), IAC (£13k)
Regional Adoption Agency	D4800	Advertising / Publicity (non Recruitment)	36,000.00	Marketing & Recruitment
Regional Adoption Agency	D5110	Mobile Phones	500.00	Mobile Phones
Regional Adoption Agency	D6000	Staff subsistence	1,500.00	Staff overnight & out of county visits
Regional Adoption Agency	D7000	Subscriptions	40,000.00	Coram Baaf Licences - £2500, Coram Baaf Membership - £8k, Ofsted £4250, Linkmaker £19k, NFS £900, Coram EP £500, CVAA £100, other
Regional Adoption Agency	E7100	Adoption Agency	355,650.00	x10 VAA Placements
Regional Adoption Agency	F1010	Adoption Allowances	20,000.00	IA Placement Supervision Fees post 12 months
Regional Adoption Agency	J2205	Other Funding Contributions	-648,612.00	PCC contribution (30%)
			1,594,718.00	

Appendix D - Panel Chairs Annual Report



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE & PETERBOROUGH
ADOPTION**

ADOPTION AND PERMANENCE PANEL REPORT – ANNUAL

1st April 2022 to 1st April 2023

Author- Jade Cullum Regional Adoption Agency Advisor

1.0 Agency Advisors' Introduction

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Adoption, Regional Adoption Agency, was formed on 1st December 2020.

The Adoption and Permanence Panels from both Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council came together to form one Adoption and Permanence Panel for the RAA.

The detail and statistics for this report are for Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Adoption Agency Adoption and Permanence Panel.

The Function of Panel remains unchanged. Panels make adoption recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) in respect of:

- Whether prospective carers should be recommended as suitable to adopt,
- Whether children should be matched with specific adopters, where their permanency plan is for adoption,
- Whether a relinquished child should be placed for adoption

2.0 Adoption Panel

Central List Membership

Gary Shorter	Independent Chair (social worker, adopter and foster carer)
Fernley Copping	Independent Member/Vice chair/Independent Chair
Lesley Hamilton	Independent Panel Chair (Birth Parent)
Jackie Fernandez	Independent Panel Chair (Adopter)
Mervyn Cowdell	Independent Member
Cathie McCulloch	Social Worker, PCC
Sue Hogg	Independent Member (foster carer)

Kathryn Moore	Independent Panel Member (adopter)
Geraldine Moyo	Independent Panel Member/Social Worker
Sabina Giga	Independent Panel Member
Deborah Ward	Independent Panel Member (adopted person)
Jackie Venables	Independent Panel Member (foster carer)
Horia Astalos	Independent Social Worker
Stephen Cook	Independent Member (Adopted Adult)
Patricia Cullen	Independent Social Worker
Rayna Wallis	Independent Member (Adopter)
Louise Fraser	Independent Member (adopted adult)
Laura Dilkes	Independent Social Worker
Darren Jenkins	Independent Member (Adopter)
Elaine Barry	Independent Social Worker
Hugh Minty	Independent Social Worker, (adopter and foster carer)
Patricia Pearce	New member. Independent Social Worker, adoptive grandparent
Monica Dallas	New member. Independent Social Worker
Stacey Haywood	Independent Member (Adopter)
Dr Rachel Bower	Independent Panel Member & Medical Adviser (Designated Doctor for LAC)

The Regional Adoption Agency Adoption and Permanence Panel has a core membership of highly skilled, knowledgeable, committed individuals from diverse professional backgrounds including adopters, adopted adults and a birth parent. The current central list provides us with panel members who have the experience and understanding of the adoption process in order to be able to consider the assessment.

Dr Tim Ladbrooke, Medical Adviser, provides adult medical advice to the Agency. Dr Rachel Bower focuses on children's medicals for Cambridgeshire County Council and when available sits on Panel for matches. Dr Gregory and Dr Augustic provide focuses on children's medicals for Peterborough City Council. Dr Bower, Dr Gregory or Dr Augustic meet with prospective adopters for each child to go through the child's and their family's medical history as far as it is known and provide comprehensive medical reports for adopters and Panel.

Panel members have been appointed subject to relevant references and have up to date enhanced DBS checks. Individual Panel member appraisals took place between April-August 2022 and will be repeated in 2023. Panel Chair appraisals were completed in December 2022 and will again take place in December 2023.

Membership updates

Some Panel members, including one of the Panel Chairs, have been sitting on Cambridgeshire County Council Fostering Panel again this year which has the benefit of further helping them in reaching recommendations on fostering and adoption dual approval cases.

We have had members on temporary hold due to personal circumstances on occasion.

All other Panel members have confirmed that they wish to continue as Panel members and be part of the central list for the RAA Adoption and Permanence Panel.

We have continued to look to increase and diversify our Panel members. As a result of this we have recruited new Panel members, Monica Dallas is a qualified Social Worker with a long-standing experience in children's services adoption teams and Stacey Haywood is an adoptive parent of 2 young children who brings valuable lived experience and expertise to panel. We had had numerous enquires to join the panel and a waiting list is now in place. As part of appraisals the chairs and I will be reviewing panel membership to look at what is needed for the future.

I have also sent enquiries to children's social work teams as I would like to recruit more practicing social workers, this would give panel relevant information reflecting social work practice now and the demands on the service.

Panel Chair Gary Shorter confirmed he will be stepping down from his chair role to focus on family life and his full time business. Gary will be very missed within the panel and we would wish to thank him for his years of service to children in PCC and CCC.

Elaine Barry was successfully interviewed to become a panel chair and her induction started in January 2023. She is due to begin chairing in June 2023.

Panel operation

Jade Cullum remains in post as Agency Advisor.

The Should be placed for adoption processes have been a focus of work for the AA and service manager of the RAA in liaison with medical advisors, ADM and legal. This was to support robust systems being in place (noting importance of the Somerset Judgement) and aligning PCC and CCC process. A new practice guide, process flow chart for social workers and new templates have been created and shared across teams. The Somerset Ruling has been a significant legal ruling in relation to adoption cases, which took place in November 2021, and had a significant impact on adoption activity nationally. The reach, and impact of the Somerset ruling has had a profound effect nationally and led to a significant re-examination of the medical advice provided to Agency Decision Makers (ADM) in coming to their decision that adoption is the Local Authority plan for the child. Specifically, whether the requirements of Adoption Agencies Regulation 15 and 17 (2005) were met in each case. Within our RAA we were fortunate to have not been impacted as formally appointed medical advisors for both PCC and CCC were in place. However we did review procedures, and processes for the making of the Agency Decision, to ensure ongoing compliance with AAR (2005) and specifically Regulations 15 and 17.

There are 2 full time Panel administrators' posts; however, this has been an area of difficulty historically. Tracy Fifield and Helen Griffiths remain in post which has had a very positive impact on panels functioning. Having 2 panel administrators remaining in post will greatly improve the running of panels and will over time enable the agency advisor to focus on development of the service. Helen also administrates the should be placed for adoption.

Written Legal Advice is provided by PCC and CCC and ensures cases are well evidenced for the Agency Decision Maker and that the plans are robust and there are no legal issues which may prevent the plans from being considered. There is a good working relationship between myself as agency advisor and the legal leads for both LA.

3.0 Panel processes

Since the RAA started in December 2020, we have continued to operate as a paperless Panel and SharePoint as the method to securely share files. There is a dedicated RAA Adoption & Permanence Panel SharePoint site. Panel has been operating successfully on a virtual platform, Microsoft Teams. We have maintained a quoracy of five members. Panel meetings continue to be virtual at this time.

The online panel processes have been continuously monitored and streamlined to offer continuity and same level of scrutiny across panels; the processes continue to be revised by the Agency Advisor and chairs. Panel has been held virtually since April 2020 using the platform of Microsoft Teams and although there have been some technical challenges at first it has been necessary for all to adjust to working on a virtual platform given the covid impact on face-to-face meetings.

Panel has always operated on the dates planned and no cases have been delayed being considered by Panel. We have been able to use the platform to ensure a better experience for adopters attending. The current plan is future Panel meetings to remain virtual. Social workers have the capacity to request an in-person panel as needed but so far this has not been requested.

The wider context of adoption panels across the area appears to be to remain virtual. In feedback from Panel members there appears to be a majority who prefer virtual and several who have stated they would not necessarily continue to be Panel members if the Panels reverted to in person. While it is recognised that face to face Panels may provide Panel members with the opportunity to consolidate working relationships and for applicants to have direct contact with Panel, this is agreed to be outweighed by benefits of Virtual Panels. The advantages of Virtual Panels are seen to be the accessibility of Virtual Panels for applicants and prospective adopters who may be at some distance to the Agency, and to placing social workers.

With Panel operating on a virtual platform the Panel Chair and AA meet new applicants to have a pre-Panel discussion prior to joining Panel on the day. This discussion notes how panel will function, strengths in their application and question themes that will be asked. The applicants are then offered an opportunity to discuss with their social worker if they wished. Cameras are kept on by the Panel Chair, Panel member asking the question and applicants and their social workers. This is to assist with applicants being able to respond to questions without multiple images of people and uncertainty of who to direct answers to.

A system for Panel to feed back to the Agency on the quality of reports on a case-by-case basis has been established since March 2015 and has proved beneficial to the Agency and to Social Workers. This is an area where additional value could be obtained as the uptake on completion remains low.

Minutes: The format of the Panel minutes has been standardised by Agency advisor and Panel admin in post during the reporting period. Draft minutes are sent for an accuracy check to the Chair and agency advisor before being then sent to Panel members. Templates were updated February 2023.

ADM decisions: The Adoption Panel makes recommendations to the agency and there is a statutory requirement for the ADM to make their decision within 7 working days of receiving the finalised minutes. This is being achieved.

Panel business runs smoothly with all relevant paperwork provided in advance. Panel minutes are available promptly for Panel members' oversight. The process of authorising the Panel minutes has now been amended so that the final Panel minutes is always signed off by the Panel Chair.

4.0 Panel Training

A Panel training session for members took place in August 2022 addressing therapeutic models used in adoption support. The focus was on Betsy De Thierry RAA Trauma Recovery Model (TRM) The session addressed the main aspect of the model:

Relationships are the only way to facilitate healing and enable recovery

Self-Regulation follows Coregulation and enables reflective, appropriate responses

Psychoeducation reduces shame and facilitates confidence

Processing and making sense of the impact of trauma is essential for recovery.

An In person training day took place on 7/10/22 for all the panel team, which was very well attended. The focus was on adopter training in assessment, and gaining an insight into the traveller/gypsy community, which is the largest minority group in Cambridgeshire.

On the 20/10/22 the agency advisor presented a virtual teams training session on the lessons from the safeguarding review relating to the tragic case of Leiland-James Corkhill.

The agency advisor has set up a virtual coffee morning conversation each month to discuss themes/catch up for the panel members which has been attended each time.

Online training via Cambridgeshire County Council's learning and development team has now been set up by the agency advisor with CCC virtual college. An account on the council's Learning Management System for each member was set up to allow them to gain access to eLearning for their roles as Panel Adoption members.

Modules cover.

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion for Employees
- An Introduction to the Autism Spectrum Training
- Mental Health Awareness
- Modern Slavery and Trafficking
- Cyber Security Awareness
- Information Governance
- Safeguarding for the Children's Services Workforce
- County Lines

Within Sharepoint there is a folder for Panel members to access files and videos to support their learning. For example prepare to adopt presentations and research has been added..

Panel Chairs attend the quarterly CoramBAAF meetings for Adoption Panel Chairs.

The agency advisor attends the CoramBAAF Panel advisor Forum and adoption forum meetings.

Panel chairs, Agency advisor and management within PCC/CCC have regular meetings (Panel Advisory Group).

Panel Chairs have 3 monthly supervision/discussion meetings facilitated by the agency advisor.

Panel training has been planned for 2023 which will run from May-December. Additional training will be added as required.

A joint training day with Adopt Connects (neighboring RAA) and with our own RAA adoption team has now been arranged for Autumn 2023.

During the year Panel welcomed a number of social workers, health professionals in training and new Panel members as observers.

5.0 Panel Business – Number of Panels held

	01.04.22 to 30.09.22
Total Panels	19
Cases Considered	18 approvals; 16 matches; 1 De-Registration

	1.10.22 to 1.4.23
Total Panels	17
Cases Considered	17 approvals; 26 matches; 1 De-Registration
Total number panels 1st April 22- 1st April 23	36 panels 35 approvals; 43 matches; 2 De-Registration

The Adoption Panel has met on average 3 days per month. Two Panel meetings were cancelled, one in July and one in August due to lack of cases being booked. We have increased the number of Panel meetings

than were originally planned to ensure the timely throughput of cases and prevent delay for children. September 2022 was very busy with a panel each week after a quieter August due to SW's availability/leave. October to April 2023 period was very busy with children's matches being presented.

6.0 Panel feedback

Social workers, Panel observers and adopters continue to be invited to provide feedback on Panel activity. This is always considered by Panel as part of its post-Panel reflection with discussion and careful consideration about whether any changes are necessary. 6 feedback forms have been received in the last year. Applicants are asked to electronically return their feedback forms. The feedback from adopters remains very positive.

Comments from 3 of these stated;

-The chair made us feel very welcome and calm. The comments we received from the panel members were relevant and useful

-We would like to say how welcomed we felt when we went to matching panel. Everyone was professional but made us feel at ease. We couldn't of had a better panel of people.

-We had a very positive experience with panel.

We left feeling very happy that we had answered all the questions to the best of our ability. With panel being virtually we feel that we were more at ease as we were in our own home and would have been more relaxed especially as there is distance involved.

7.0 Approved Adopters

Number of Adopters Approved (Households)	01.04.22 to 30.09.22
	19
	Mixed Sex Couples 12
	Single Female Adopter 2
	Same Sex Male Couple 4

	Same Sex Female Couple	1
	01.10.22 to 1.4.2023	
Number of Adopters Approved (Households)	17	
	Mixed Sex Couples	12
	Single Female Adopter	4
	Same Sex Male Couple	1
total	36 approvals	

8.0 Ethnicity of Adopters

Ethnicity (as identified by adopters/adoption SW)	Number of Approved Households 01.04.22 to 30.09.22
White British	17
White European	1
White European/White British	2

Ethnicity (as identified by adopters/adoption SW)	Number of Approved Households 1.10.22 to 1.04.2023
White British	11
Middle eastern	1
Asian and British	1
White British & White European	1
White European	1
Canadian	1

Ethnicity (as identified by adopters/adoption SW)	Number of Approved Households 1.4.22 to 1.04.2023
White British	28
Middle eastern	1
Asian and British	1
White British & White European	3
White European	2
Canadian	1

9.0 number of Children matched at panel 2022-2023

April- Oct 22	18 children, including 2 sibling groups
Oct-april 23	32 children, including 6 sibling groups
total	50 children

10.0 Ethnicity of Children matched at panel

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>number</u>
White BRITISH	45
Black AFRICAN	1
White EUROPEAN	4

11.0 Who children were matched with

April 2022- October 2022	number
CHILDREN MATCHED with CCC ADOPTERS	13
VOLUNTARY ADOPTION AGENCY	5

October 2022-April 2023	number
CHILDREN MATCHED with CCC ADOPTERS	20
VOLUNTARY ADOPTION AGENCY	6

12.0 De-registrations

One de-registration case was presented to Panel in the period 01.04.22 to 30.09.22. The case was a couple with a birth child who during introductions felt unfortunately due to the uncertainties regarding possible

complex needs of the child they could not proceed with the match. They decided to withdraw as an adopter as they recognized they could not manage the levels of uncertainty in general.

1 de-registration took place between October 2022 and April 2023. This was due to the prospective adopters relationship breakdown prior to a match taking place.

13. IRM

When a Qualifying Determination (QD) is made by the ADM following a negative recommendation from Panel, the applicants have the following options:

- To accept the QD;
- To appeal to the ADM with additional information; or
- To appeal to the IRM to hear their application.

In this period there have been no negative recommendations or cases where Panel had to consider that approved adopters are no longer suitable to adopt and therefore no applicants have made an application to the IRM

14.0 Quality of Reports

The overall quality of reports is good, and this is reflected in the vast majority of the feedback sheets produced by the Panel on each case heard.

Agency advisor and Chairs will continue to feed back to the Agency on the quality of reports received and the timescales of bringing cases to matching and approval. Panel would also welcome increased feedback from social workers attending.

Agency Advisor and panel team have been working to ensure reports are compliant and of an acceptable level to be heard at panel.

Within the CPR social workers have to sign to confirm whether they have met the regulatory requirements for the qualifications of the workers writing reports, and whether the information required in Schedules 1, 4 and 5 of the AAR is contained in the adoption reports.

Panel compile feedback on each case presented to them, which is reported back to the agency. This is an area that has been further developed to enable more time to be spent on this and the feedback to be constructive, noting good practice and areas of improvement.

The AA is aware that many agencies also provide a rating for reports to provide a more qualitative and informed judgement on how reports have improved or deteriorated over time, and this is being explored.

15.0 Prospective Adopter Reports

The establishment of a more concise PAR has also become embedded in practice and is welcomed by Panel.

The PAR usually evidences well how prospective adopters can meet the needs of the child.

-There is clarity and thoroughness, with clear ecomaps and genograms supplied

-PARs are now more routinely explicit about whether Early Permanence has been explored and discussed with the applicants. There is evidence that Fostering for Adoption had not only been discussed by the social worker, but that the applicants understood the implications

-Feedback from Preparation Course facilitators and applicants on their own learning.

-The Agency has worked to ensure a consistency of format, content and quality of the PARs presented to Panel.

-It is positive to see that the majority of adopters have gained experience of working with children through volunteering when needed.

On occasion the Advisor and Chair have required additional work to be completed prior to formal consideration by Panel however this is rare.

16.0 Child Permanence Reports

The quality of the Child Permanence Reports is seen to be inconsistent, ranging from very good examples to poor. Where CPRs were seen to be of good quality, there was a clear explanation of the child's journey, consideration of birth parents' circumstances and those of siblings and an understanding of the child's experience of being cared for. There were strong examples of where the child 'came to life' from the page with a good description of them as individual children.

There have been some concerns raised around the quality of the CPRs in the sense of a clear narrative on the child's journey in placement as different workers have contributed towards the report. This has been fed back and will become an area for further work.

Areas for continuous review by social workers, particularly prior to matching, are the consistent inclusion of parents' views and post adoption contact plans, in particular contact plans with siblings. As much background information as possible on a child's birth parents and siblings or halfsiblings, including photographs, is obtained. Also contact post adoption is prescriptive, generally no consideration to direct contact. This needs to be further reflected on by the childrens social work teams.

There is ongoing work needed in respect of allocated social workers' ownership of the CPR regardless of if written by someone else. This included attending to tasks from LAC and adoption medicals set out by the medical adviser.

The agency adviser addresses the concerns regarding the Child's Permanence Report needing to be updated before matching to reflect the child and their birth family situation since the making of Care and Placement Orders. AA seeks updated versions that include the final position of the Guardian, the person tasked to represent the child's best interests in court, and whose view is therefore relevant to that child and the IRO.

The agency adviser is exploring how to be of help to the children's services teams. Teams video calls with individual workers are taking place as requested. A presentation on CPRs has been written by the agency adviser to present to children's teams, how to deliver this is currently being explored with head of the RAA and childrens managers. There are considerable changes with PCC and CCC senior structure from April/May 2023 as joint services and roles are separated into PCC and CCC. Teams within children's services will be impacted and the functioning of the RAA will likely be affected. There is ongoing consideration as to how we could further connect with the children's teams to support practice and working relationships with new staff/roles.

17.0 Adoption Placement Reports

Panel has noted-

-The APRs set out the child's journey to adoption, their needs and the family finding process well.

- The contributions by adopters were valued in the report.

-There continues to be concern regarding the progress of Life Story work when a match comes for consideration at Panel. The Panel Chairs understand that there is now a dedicated team within the local authority helping with progressing life story work in a timely way.

-APRs do not always include details of prospective adopters' plans for adoption leave and future childcare plans. Adoption Support Plans would benefit from setting out more clearly the longer-term plans.

- There appears to be a blanket approach regarding the frequency of Letterbox contact with it often being set at twice per year regardless of the likelihood of this being successful. Further consideration is required in APRs on an individual case basis about the reasons behind proposals regarding Letterbox contact. This is also true within CPRs.

-Transitions planning could be further addressed, and the agency adviser did meet with the adoption managers to discuss how this could be done. It is very helpful for Panel to have a full picture of the contact with adopters and foster carers, play dates, telephone calls or other pre panel contact there has been.

-Chairs have also noted how introduction plans and books for children created by adopters were previously shared and are missed by panel.

18.0 Relinquished baby plans

	01.04.22 to 01.04.23
Relinquished baby plans	0

This is an area of ongoing work as a few cases have had paperwork submitted where issues were found resulting in cases not progressing to panel. The AA is working with the adoption team manager to explore further and raise awareness of policy and practice needed.

19.0 Adoption Disruptions (Cambridgeshire children)

	01.04.22 to 31.09.22
Adoption Disruptions	0 child

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There have been no disruptions of adoptive placements between April and September 2023.

20.0 Strengths

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Regional Adoption Agency has been running since December 2020 and throughout that period there has been a smooth transition for the Adoption and Permanence Panel. The Panels have gradually come together with central lists, processes, documents and practice being reviewed and merging together into the RAA Panel. This work is being continued by myself in the post of Agency advisor since February 2022.

Strengths

- Panel is well organised with Panel paperwork made available to Panel members in a timely way
- The Panel benefits from child focused Panel members from a wide range of backgrounds.
- Panels are quorate with no delays to Panel business
 - The quality of assessment and decision making for children has been positive over this last reporting period.
- There are good examples of early permanence
- To strengthen the Quality Assurance role of Panel there is more focus on a specific Quality Assurance item on the agenda of each Panel meeting for each case

I will be exploring how to communicate regular updates for Panel members detailing progress of approved adopters with linking/matching and how matches heard at Panel are progressing. This task - relatively easy for a single Panel constituted from a small central list of members and serving a single local authority pre-regionalisation - has proved challenging where Panel line-ups vary widely. Nevertheless, it is recognised that for Panel members a short update on the progress of a match to which they have given much time and care helps to 'complete the circle' and brings its own reward. While recognising the constraints on social workers' time to provide updates for Panel. Further discussions with the adoption team and chairs will take place to plan how to introduce a level of reporting back for some cases if not all.

Panel will continue to respond to new case law to ensure a full and reasoned recommendation for adoption matches.

I attended a Coram Baaf from which spoke of the report from the Child Safeguarding Practice Review for the tragic death of Leiland-James Michael Corkil. A meeting has been arranged with the adoption team manager and service manager in September to discuss lessons from this review. A workshop to explore this with panel members was completed in October 2022.

21.0 Looking forward

We believe there is a strong argument for Social Workers joining some of these training sessions so the learning can be across the RAA. Dates are booked for 2023 for this with the adoption team.

Ensuring the robustness and credibility of the Panel role is still ongoing. This will be evidenced through further learning around, and development of, the potential of virtual platforms on the part of Panel Chairs, members and staff alike, all of whom will continue to review the effectiveness and limitations of Panel meetings held online. The needs of Panel members to feel part of a team through in-person events were considered, with events occurring in 2022 and further dates planned for 2023.

Panel chairs would like to have regular contact with Assistant Director for Fostering and Adoption and the ADM which has not happened this reporting year.

Signed:

Lesley Hamilton

Panel Chair



Jackie Fernandez

Panel Chair



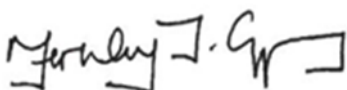
Gary Shorter

Panel Chair



Fernley Coping

Panel Vice Chair



Jade Cullum

Regional Adoption Agency Advisor

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Lynn".

Appendix E - Service Plan 2023-2024

Key Performance Indicators – 2023-2024	
Recruitment & Assessment Of Adopters (CC)	
Number of Enquiries	300
Number of Registration of Interest Received	45
Number of Adopters Approved	40
Timeliness of stage 1	18% completed in 4 months
Timeliness of stage 2	50% completed in 4 months

Joanne Banks (JB) – Head of the Regional Adoption Agency

Chris Clipston (CC) - Team Manager

Tom Hey (TH) – Team Manager

Kelly Johnson (KJ) - Team Manager

Jade Cullum (JC) – Agency Advisor

Katie Gales/Claire Butcher (KG, CB) – Senior Practitioner with EP lead

Susan Place (SP) - Senior Practitioner with a lead for post box and support groups

Tony Darnell (TD) – Marketing and Commination Manager

Lottie Ettling (LE) – Recruitment Officer

Adam Weir (AW) – Business Officer in Adoption & Special Guardianship Support Team

Children (TM)	
Number of children with a plan for adoption	CCC - 36 PCC - 18
Number of children placed for adoption	CCC - 34 PCC - 16
Number of children adopted	CCC – 40 PCC - 20
Proportion of the children exiting care via adoption	18%
Number of Early Permanence Placements	10
A2 - Time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family, for children who have been adopted (days) – A2	National Target - 185 CCC - 300 PCC - 185
A10 - Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family adjusted for foster carer adoptions, for children who have been adopted (days) – A10	National Target – 426 CCC - 500 PCC - 426

Adoption Support (KJ)	
Referrals to be triaged by TM	5 working days
Referrals for support average waiting time	2 months
Initial Assessments completed in 4 months	80%

Objective	Action	Leads	Outcome	Performance Indicator	Target date for delivery
Communication & Recruitment (TD & CC)					
Increased adopters, specifically got for harder to place children – Siblings, children with additional needs, early permanence. Ensure Adopters views central.	Social media presence to expand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular social media posts (in line with the posting guide) Dedicated Twitter Handle??? Creating new material with the voice of adoptive families 	TD, CC	Increase in the number of enquire in total and a higher proportion of interesting in adopting harder to place children.	Number of Enquiries	Review every quarter July 2022 Review September 2023
	Improve the useability of the website – focus on adoption support pages	TD			
	Month long campaigns to promote adoption – yearly planner.	TD, CC			
	Create plan for presence at community events.	TD, CC			
	Continue to develop relationships with external partners to promote adoption overall as well as with those employed – including (but not limited to) fertility clinics, hospitals, police force, fire brigade and community hubs.	TD, CC			
	Quarterly Newsletters to continue	TD			
Assessment of Adopters (CC)					

<p>Recruiting Adopters – creating a stronger resource in line with the children’s needs.</p>	<p>Build creative resources to encourage adopters for harder to place children – create a timeline for additional resources .</p> <p>Explore how to implement the Adopter ambassador role within RAA to feed into recruitment campaigns.</p>				
<p>Strengthen adoptive family relationships early in placement.</p>	<p>Expand therapeutic training offer – including Foundations For Attachment with the Adoption Support Team.</p> <p>Upskilling social workers with DDP training to support social workers with offering families therapeutic parenting support on a 1-1.</p>		<p>Support adoptive families early placement to strengthen relationships</p>	<p>Disruptions & Fragile Placement numbers remain very low</p>	<p>September 2023</p> <p>March 2024.</p>
<p>Improve evidence in assessments.</p>	<p>Recruitment & Assessment team to hold a workshop on evidence based for Prospective Adopter Reports.</p> <p>BO for R&A to continue to ensure Part 2 of the Prospective Adopter Reports is up to date.</p> <p>As a response to the Serious Care Review (Cumbria CC 2022) - evaluate the Approved Adopter Review process to identify any additional checks needed. BO to support with tracking. Update practice guidance.</p>	<p>CC</p> <p>CC, JC, JB</p>	<p>Ensure robust adoptive parents and any areas where support to adopters is identified at the earliest opportunity.</p>		<p>July 2023</p> <p>Review Sept 2023</p>

	Explore implementation of Social Media Checks	JC			
Early Permanence (CC, TH, KG/CB)					
Increase the number of placements earlier in the child's care journey.	Review the EP FF process around referrals to FF for UBB to ensure referrals are made prior to child's birth. Track UBB prior to the referral. TH to be supported by FF BO's to track potential EP placements		Children are placed EP at the earliest appropriate opportunity.	Number of EP placements.	September 2023
	Continue to develop close working between children's Safeguarding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend Permanence Planning Meetings Offering workshops and sessions on Early Permanence 				April 2023 onwards
	Relinquished babies and pre birth protocol to be embedded into the EP processes.				July 2023
	Develop links with legal and CAFCASS to promote Early Permanence.				September 2023
	Review EP training to explore ways to encourage to have confidence for EP.				September 2023
	Review terminology of FFA and EP ensure clarity of the EP offer and expectations of EP carers.				September 2023

Improve practice in line with Early Permanence National Standards	Create an Action Plan to ensure the RAA complies with National Standards.	JB			July 2023
Linking & Matching (TH)					
Interagency Matching – harder to place children	<p>Feed into the National RAA processes around external linking.</p> <p>Create internal process guide when considering interagency placement for children to prevent delays for placements. FF BO to support in reviewing the draft document and oversee the tracker for potential placements.</p> <p>Strengthen the relationship with Adoption Connects including continuing to share profiles, and working the Matching Lead with Adoption Connects to feed into improved practice for harder to place children. Explore the offer of joint playdays.</p> <p>Review FF role for IA placements post placement to prevent drift for children.</p>	<p>TH</p> <p>TH</p> <p>TH</p> <p>TH</p>	Clear processes on interagency placements – pre and post placements.		<p>July 2023</p> <p>September 2023</p> <p>From April 2023 onwards</p> <p>November 2023</p>

<p>Improve quality of the child's documents to reflect their journey and needs.</p>	<p>Improve the quality of APR inc Support Plans by including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work completed with children • Planning and transitions to be included • Contact plans to be explicit 	JC/TH	<p>There is a clear journey for the child in their adoptive paperwork.</p>	August 2023
	<p>Identify good practice examples to be identified and shared within the RAA and children's social care.</p>	JC, TH		August 2023
	<p>Ensure the APR is a useful information resource for adopters to access support based on current needs and also projected potential need.</p>	TH, KJ		September 2023
	<p>Once a permanent BO is within FF there needs to be a review of their role to expand their responsibility to ensure they play a proactive part of the matching process.</p>	TH, RE		August 2023
	<p>CPR's good practice examples to be identified and shared within the RAA and children's social care. Offer workshops alongside this.</p>	JC		

Family Finding to support Child's Social Worker with the child's journey to adoption	<p>FF to support the child's social worker to ensure thorough consideration of the child's need and assessments have fed into the plans for adoption.</p> <p>Continue to improve communication between Safeguarding – particularly for expectations during court process.</p>	TH	Robust and clear decision making regarding plans for children.		From April 2023
Adoption Panel (JC)					
Ensure effectiveness of panel.	<p>Continual review of process for panel to identify strengths and areas for potential improvements. Meetings between JC, CC, TH, RE to allow a continuous review.</p> <p>JC to meet with the Panel Chairs on quarterly basis.</p> <p>Review the template for the panel minutes to ensure clear headings, clear views are recorded & are fully signed. Review in September and Panel admin being involved and make suggestions for improvements</p> <p>Consider implementation of panel members feedback and questions ahead of panel.</p> <p>Feedback from panel to be more detailed and ensured shared with all parties to ensure this can impact on</p>	<p>JC</p> <p>JC</p> <p>JC</p> <p>JC</p> <p>JC</p>	<p>Ensure panel is running effectively and meeting the needs of the adopters and children.</p> <p>Minutes to be a clear documents that represents the meeting.</p>		<p>From April 2023</p> <p>September 2023</p> <p>August 2023</p> <p>September 2023</p>

	practice. Panel admin to collate feedback to be able to see themes				
Increase the number of adopters suitable to adopt siblings.	Work with CC on expanding evidence in PAR's around parenting siblings. Join workshop with panel members, R&A and FF to explore this. Support panel chairs to ensure view on unsuitability for siblings is evidence based and robust.		More internal sibling placements.		November 2023.
Panel Membership	Review panel membership and allow new panel members to join and add the adopters perspective. Expand SW membership with a child's SW experience. Increase diversity of panel members. JC to link with traveller community for panel membership.	JC JC	Sufficient panel members to ensure panel can take place. Panel recommendations & ADM decision to align. More diverse panel members.		October 2023 March 2023
Effective Panel Processes	There has been a continuous evolving role for panel admin upon merging of CCC and PCC panel. Vital to ensure effective organisation of panels given statutory requirements. Review Panel admin role for the RAA		Panel to run effectively and allow the panel admin to manage the process with minimal input from JC & RE.		September 2023
Adoption Support (KJ)					

Clear Support Offer	Practice guides for to be developed (for the RAA and for families) and to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postbox • BRC & Intermediary • Initial Assessments • ASF 	KJ	Clear process around support offer – ensure consistency for families.		August 2023
	Therapeutic Offer document to be widely shared. Simplified version to be created.	KJ			July 2023
	Clear information on the website on service offer.	JB			June 2023
	Formulate a plan of options for an online resource hub for adopters & special guardians.				September 2023
Increase Therapeutic offer	A SP to embed Trauma informed practice into the team, RAA and wider services.	KJ, LB	Assessments use the Trauma Informed Practice in their analysis.		March 2024
	Therapeutic parenting to be baseline to practice – all workers to be DDP Level 1 Trained	KJ	All workers are trained.		June 2023
	Offer Foundation For Attachment training for adopters and special guardians. A SP to take a lead	KJ	Course dates are booked in.		September 2023
	BO to develop knowledge and expertise around internal ASF processes include	AW	Broader knowledge of the ASF processes and prevent delays for children & their families.		September 2023

	internal application. Support the TM with developing a practice guide.				
ASF Framework	<p>JB to work with procurement team to complete the preparation for the framework.</p> <p>Upon launching of the framework a BO to play a proactive role in overseeing the framework and support the TM in managing applications. BO to have a understanding of the ProContract system to then support any new applications after the initial launch.</p> <p>Develop internal processes for managing the framework and the BO will work closely with the TM to achieve this.</p>	<p>JB</p> <p>AW, KJ</p> <p>AW, KJ</p>	<p>Procurement framework to be launched.</p> <p>Clear and transparent process for registering therapeutic providers under the ASF.</p>		<p>June 2023</p>
Strengthening relationship between birth parents & adopters	<p>Settling in letters to be provided by the adopters – Recruitment & Assessments Social Workers for internal placements and Family Finding SW for interagency placements to ensure these are completed.</p> <p>Clear practice guide for post box to be embedded and reviewed – to include the responsibility for completing the agreements. Explore Recruitment & Assessments Social Workers for</p>	<p>CC, TH</p> <p>SP,CC, TH</p>			<p>From April 2023</p> <p>August 2023</p>

	<p>internal placements and Family Finding SW for interagency placements to ensure these are completed by 2nd LAC review.</p> <p>BO to continue to support CCC post box co-ordinator in processing letters upon receipt to then support the post box co-ordinator in the circulation of letters.</p>				From April 2023
Regular Support Groups to be accessible	Review the support group offer for adopters & special guardians	SP	Families have stronger local support networks		September 2022
Quality Assurance (JC)					
Clear awareness of the quality of the written work of the RAA.	Review the Audit Tool for the RAA and create clear expectations on completing Audits.	JC, JB	Clear awareness of the quantity and quality of the recording of the service.		June 2023
	Monthly audits completed by the RAA Management team initially on their own. Review in Q3.	JB, KJ, CC, TH, JC			August 2023
	Review Action Plan from Self-Assessment to ensure improvement are embedded.	JC & JB	Clear action plan for areas of concern of practice.		November 2023

	Self-Assessment to be reviewed in Q2 or Q3 by Safeguarding & Quality Assurance Service.		Identify strengths and areas for improvements.		
To ensure effective and robust Should Be Placed for Adoption Decisions	Continue to QA paperwork to ensure accurate information is considered by ADM.	JC			From April 2023
	Offer workshops to Safeguarding & CiC to promote best practice and to offer a written guide for children's social workers.	JC			September 2023
	Panel admin currently play an active role in co-ordinating papers and the ADM decisions – continue to ensure timely and robust decisions..				From April 2023
	Review the role of the RAA within the Should Be Placed For Adoption process.	JC, JB & ADM			October 2023
Child's Voice					
Action Plan to increase the child's voice in all aspects of the RAA	Create a working group to develop and implement a plan around increasing the child's voices. This to include (but not limited to): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment of adopters Voice of the child to be – top ten tips for adopters 	JC	Child's voice is more central to the work of the RAA		From July 2023

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploration of ways to bring the child's voice into panel. JC to discuss with CC, TH and panel chairs • Guide for including the child's voice in Adoption & Special Guardianship Support Initial Assessments • Create a children's guide to the RAA 				
Adopter Voice					
	<p>Create a leaflet asking for adopters to be an active part of the RAA service delivery.</p> <p>This to include (but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment of adopters – including case studies, pod casts and videos • Feedback on the website and identifying improvements • Explore Adopter Ambassadors • Expand adoptive parents as panel members • Explore adopters involvement in training adopters. 		<p>RAA to be offering service that meets the needs of adopters & special guardians. To increase the number of adoptive families available for our children.</p>		<p>November 2023</p>

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CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM No. 10
19 JULY 2023	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:	John Gregg Executive Director Children's and Young People Services	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Councillor Lynne Ayres Cabinet Member for Education, Skills, and Children's Services	
Contact Officer(s):	Marie Saunders – Deputy Safeguarding Lead	Tel. 07730613958

IRO ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

RECOMMENDATIONS	
FROM: <i>Alison Bennett – Assistant Director, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance</i>	Deadline date:
It is recommended that The Corporate Parenting Committee:	
1. Members are asked to note the report and raise any queries with the lead officers	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

1.1 This report is submitted to The Corporate Parenting Committee by the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Department, Peterborough City Council (PCC) in line with annual requirements.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

- 2.1
- a. The purpose of this report is to provide statutory review and analysis of the Independent Reviewing Service.
 - b. The report shall be presented to Members of the Corporate Parenting committee as requested 19th July for their work programme.

2.2 This report is for the corporate Parenting Committee to consider under its Terms of Reference 2.4.4.2 To receive statutory reports in relation to the adoption, fostering, commissioning, looked after children services and children's homes with a view to recommending any changes.

2.3 *How does this report link to the Corporate Priorities?*

This links to all areas of the Children in Care Pledge and Care Leavers Charter.

3. TIMESCALES

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	N/A
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4. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

4.1 Executive Summary

This Annual Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) report provides quantitative and qualitative evidence in relation to the IRO service in Peterborough as required by Statutory guidance. This report covers the period from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

The key highlights of this report are:

- The number of children in care rose significantly this year (from 344 at the end of March 2022 to 411 at the end of March 2023)
- A total of 1012 Child in Care Reviews were held this year (The total number of reviews held in 21-22 was 933)
- Timeliness of Reviews continues to be excellent at 99.3% (last year was 99.7)
- The IROs Escalation Protocol continues to be fully embedded across the service.

The IRO Service has continued to provide effective provision for reviewing and monitoring the Care Plans for children in care. It contributes to improved outcomes for children in care through increasing participation of children and young people in the decision making about their care, as well as making independent representations to operational teams and management on planning and practice issues. The independent scrutiny provided by the team is valued by social workers and management. IROs have shown continued strength and resilience throughout a very difficult year and have contributed to a creative and high delivering service.

The report concludes with the highlights of the IRO Service for 2022/23 and outlines areas for further development for 2023/24.

5. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

5.1 *Consider how the recommendation links to the Council's Corporate Priorities:*

1. *Our Places & Communities*
 - *Health and Wellbeing*
2. *Prevention, Independence & Resilience*
 - *Children*

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 Parents, carers and children were consulted as part of the review process

6.2 As contained within objectives for 2023-24, improved access to feedback forms maximising consultation

6.3 *Has this recommendation been considered by the below? If not, please provide reasoning.*

- *Corporate Leadership Team (CLT)*
- *Cabinet Policy Forum (CPF)*

Report has not been reviewed by CLT or CPF as this is for information purposes only.

Please also consider whether the recommendation should also be considered by the following:

- *Financial Sustainability Working Group (FSWG)*
- *Group Leaders' Meeting*
- *All Party Policy (APP)*

Report has not been reviewed by FSWG, the Group Leaders' Meeting or the APP as this is for information purposes only.

7. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

- 7.1 To ensure there is a more robust approach to supporting the experiences of children and young people in order to improve their lives.

8. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 Statutory requirement

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 9.1 *N/A*

10. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 10.1 *None*

Legal Implications

- 10.2 *None*

Equalities Implications

- 10.3 *None*

Other Relevant Implications

- 10.4 *Child Care Reviews are held for all children in care.*

The purpose of the Child in Care Review is to bring together the child, parents, carers and other professionals to plan for the child and review the Care Plan. This ensures that everything that needs to be done to enable children to achieve the best outcomes and not drift in the care system is identified and being undertaken.

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- 11.1 *None*

12. APPENDICES

- 12.1 *IRO Annual Report*

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Safeguarding and Quality Assurance

Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report

2022/23

Author: Marie Saunders
Deputy Safeguarding Lead, Peterborough City Council

Executive Summary

This Annual Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) report provides quantitative and qualitative evidence in relation to the IRO service in Peterborough as required by Statutory guidance. This report covers the period from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

The key highlights of this report are:

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The report concludes with the highlights of the IRO Service for 2022/23 and outlines areas for further development for 2023/24.

Contents:

	Page
1. Introduction	4
2. Legal Context	4
3. Structures and Management of the Team	5
4. Supervision and Quality Assurance	5
5. Workload Demand	5
6. Qualitative Data	6
7. Children's Profiles of Children Subject to Placement Orders	7
8. Children in Care Reviews	9
9. Children in Care Reviews – Participation	10
10. Feedback on the IRO Service	12
11. Positive Impact	13
12. QA and Audit of Children in Care Arrangements	15
13. Dispute Resolution	15
14. Summary	16
15. IRO Achievements in 2021/22	17
16. Objectives for 2022/2023	18

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Annual Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) report provides quantitative and qualitative evidence relating to the IRO Services in Peterborough as required by statutory guidance. This report covers the period from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.
- 1.2 The appointment of an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) is a legal requirement under Section 118 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002. In March 2010, the government issued the 'Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 and Statutory Guidance.' They also published the 'IRO Handbook, Statutory guidance for IROs and Local Authorities on their functions in relation to case management and review of looked after children.'
- 1.3 In respect of this report, the IRO Handbook states: 'The manager should be responsible for the production of an annual report for the scrutiny of the members of the corporate parenting panel. This report should identify good practice but should also highlight issues for further development, including where urgent action is needed.' (IRO Handbook 2010, page 48, paragraph 7.11.)

2. Legal Context

- 2.1 The appointment of an IRO for every looked after child is a statutory requirement of the Adoption and Children Act 2002, the Review of Children's Cases Regulations 2004, the Children and Young Person's Act 2008 and the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010.
- 2.2 The IRO Service sits within the Quality Assurance Service with its core functions consisting of reviewing plans for children in care and monitoring the Local Authority in respect of its corporate parenting and safeguarding responsibilities. Independent Chairs in Peterborough operate a dual role and undertake both the role of the Independent Chairperson for child protection conferences (CPC) and Looked after Children responsibilities. For the purposes of this report, we will refer to the Independent Chair as the IRO.
- 2.3 Every child who is looked after by Peterborough City Council must have a Care Plan, which details the long-term plan for the child's upbringing, and the arrangements made to meet the child's day-to-day needs. All Local Authorities have a statutory duty to regularly review that Care Plan within legislative timescales (Care Planning and Case Review Regulations 2010).
- 2.4 It is the responsibility of Local Authorities to develop Care Plans and provide care that gives children in care positive life experiences and the best short and long-term life opportunities. The Children Act 1989 [amended 2004] and the Care Planning Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 set out the duty of the Local Authority to appoint an IRO when a child first becomes looked after.
- 2.5 The IRO should ensure that the Local Authority gives due consideration to any views expressed by the child and the IRO has a responsibility to monitor the Local Authority's performance of its functions in relation to the child's case. Statutory guidance and regulation clearly defines circumstances when the Local Authority should consult with the IRO; for example, proposed change of placement, change

of education plan, or serious incident. The actions that the IRO must take if it is felt that the Local Authority is failing to comply with the regulations, statutory guidance and/or is breaching their duty to the child are also clear.

- 2.6 Every Local Authority is required to have a dispute resolution procedure that reflects the process for effectively resolving areas of disagreement raised by the IRO in respect of care planning. This includes access to independent legal advice for the IRO and referral to the Child and Family Court Advisory Support Service (CAFCASS).

3. Structures and Management of the Team

- 3.1 The team sits within the Quality Assurance Service and is accountable to the Service Director Quality Assurance and Practice Improvement. There are two Deputy Safeguarding Leads within the service who are responsible for the team of Independent Chairs who are all permanent staff. The Deputy Safeguarding Leads line manage the Independent Chairs and will be referred to as Managers throughout this report.
- 3.2 All IROs are qualified social workers with the required knowledge and experience to fulfil the requirements of the role.

4. Supervision and Quality Assurance

- 4.1 IROs receive monthly supervision and have access to informal supervision as and when needed. Managers remain committed to ensuring the level of supervision and support to the IRO is effective, supportive and of a high standard.
- 4.2 The IROs attend team meetings twice a month. The meetings alternate between Practice Meetings and Business Meetings. Focus within business meetings is placed upon emerging legislative/ organisational changes and issues, and implementing processes which impact on the service, current themes and expectations and organisational agenda. The practice meetings give the IROs opportunities to identify, analyse and discuss practice issues, present research, and professional information, give feedback from individual meetings with partners and social workers, identify areas of learning and development and define and support the implementation of good practice. Partner agencies and organisations such as CAFCASS, NYAS and the Lead for Separated Migrant Children in the eastern region are regularly invited as well as others.

5. Workload Demand

- 5.1 The IRO Handbook recommends that a caseload of 50-70 children in care for a full-time equivalent IRO is appropriate. This means the IRO is able to fulfil all of their statutory functions to the best of their ability, thus providing a high-quality service for all children in care. During 2021/22 the average caseload per FTE IRO was consistently between 65 and 68 cases.
- 5.2 Effective business support staff use established systems to support the IROs; this

does not include the typing of minutes, which the IROs complete themselves. All IROs ensure that they distribute the decisions from Children in Care (CIC) review meetings to the responsible Team Manager within five working days of the review; this is in accordance with the IRO Handbook and enables the responsible manager to identify any areas of disagreement and use the provision for challenging the decisions of the meeting in accordance with the IRO Handbook.

- 5.3 The IROs monitor the performance of the Local Authority, the progress of the plan and any decisions made at the review between reviews. This will include oversight of initial health assessments and other general health check-ups, missing episodes, and other key issues, so as to mitigate risk of drift and promote timely and optimum outcomes for children.
- 5.4 Each IRO will also aim to complete a young person's care plan audit bi-monthly. This is completed in conjunction with the young person and findings are sent to the Quality Assurance Team looking at themes and areas for improvement.

6. Quantitative Data up to 31 March 2022

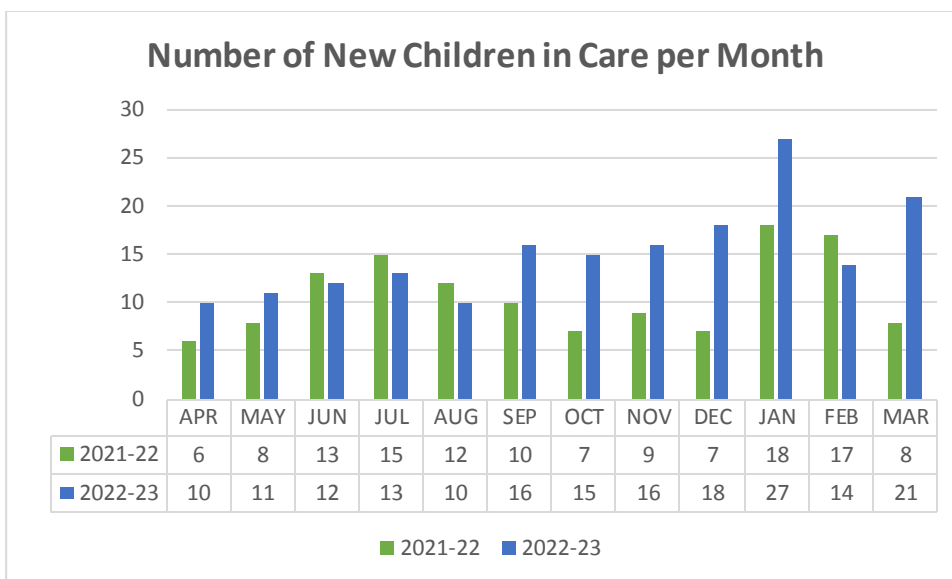
- 6.1 The table below details the *total* number of children in care per 10,000 in the last three years for PCC:

Year	PCC Result
2020/21	71.2
2021/22	67.4
2022/23	78.4

- 6.2 Peterborough City Council's rate per 10,000 children in care for 2022/23 was 78.4, which is higher in comparison with last year. There were 411 children in care during 2022/23. (This relates to a number of factors such as the increase in the number allocated of Separated Migrant Children (SMC) being transferred to Peterborough from the National Transfer Scheme. Additionally, the service is seeing more children presenting with acute, complex behaviours which require statutory intervention / accommodation as a starting point.). 48 Unaccompanied children entered into care during the year, which is 4 more than the previous year.
- 6.3 The table below details the number of *new* children coming into care per 10,000 in the last three years for PCC:

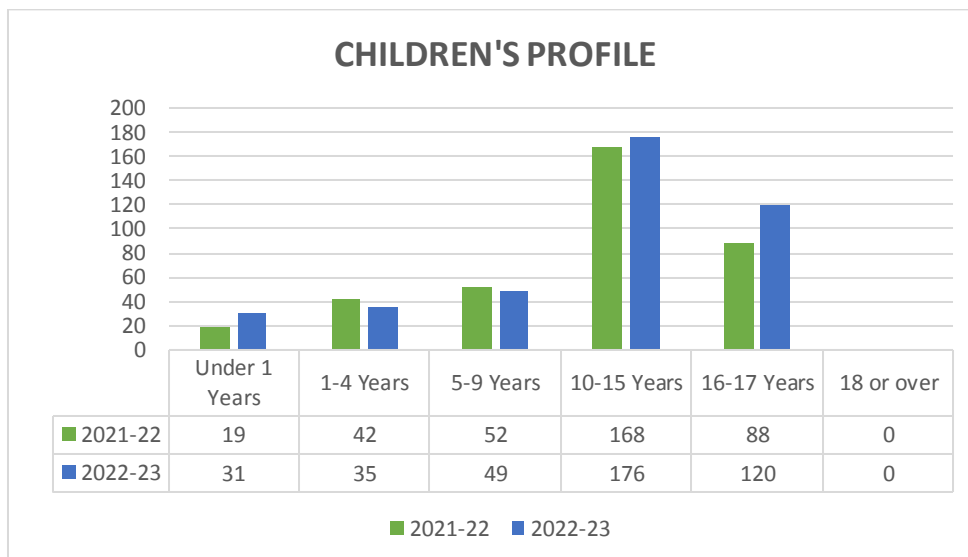
Year	PCC Result
2020/21	26.4
2021/22	23.8
2022/23	33.3

- 6.4 There were 152 new children who came in care during 2022/23. There were a total of 126 children who ceased to be looked after during the year.
- 6.5 The graph below shows the number of new children in care per month:



7. Children’s Profiles

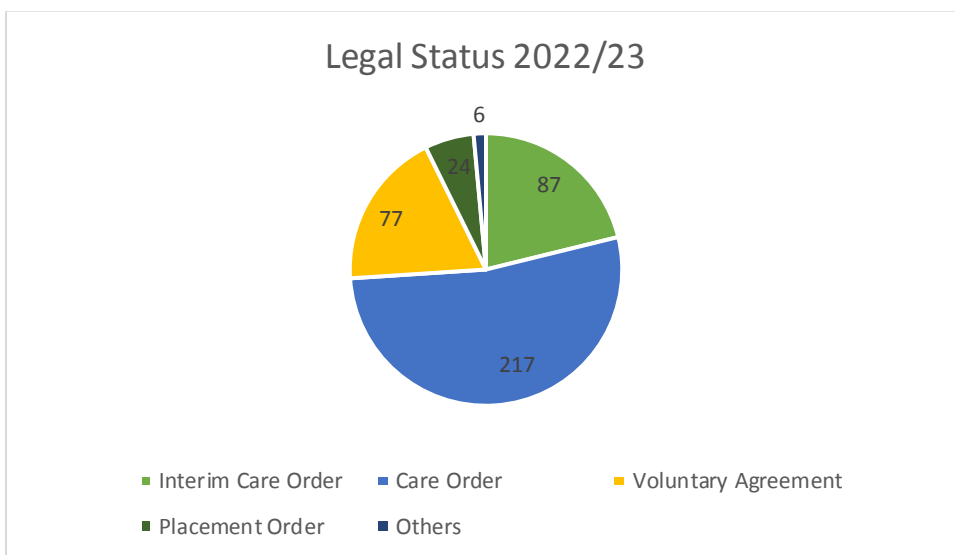
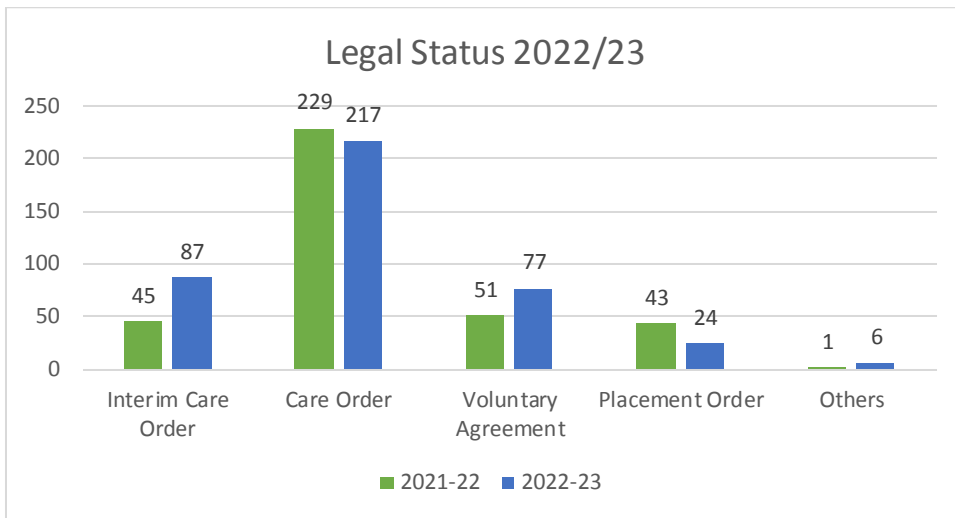
7.1 The graph below shows the age of children in care covering 2022/23 in comparison to 2021/22. There was a total of 411 children in care in 2022/23, of which 216 were male and 152 female, compared to 368 in 2021/22 where 243 were male and 168 were female.



7.2 There continues to be a larger population of boys looked after in Peterborough which reflects similar consistencies within other Local Authorities.

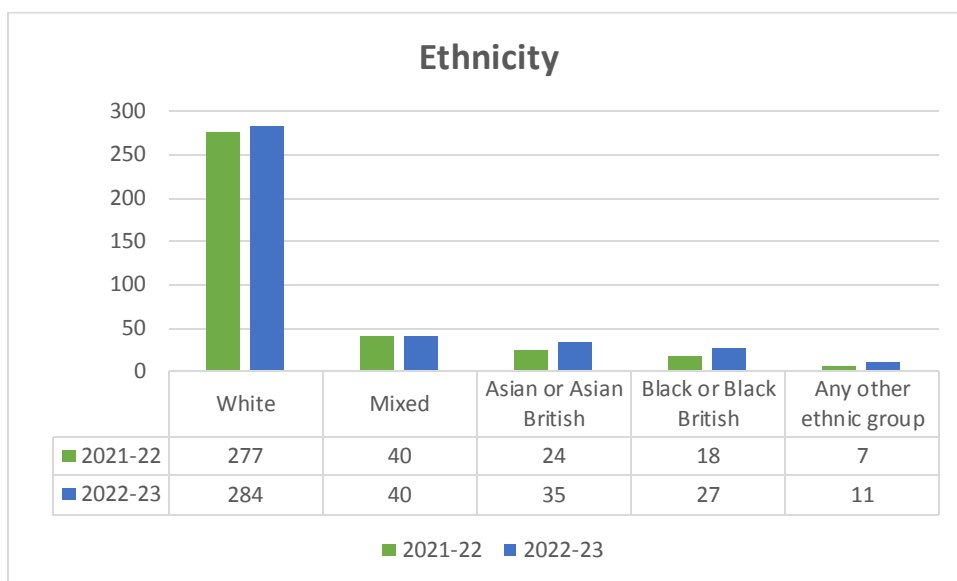
There were 9 young people remanded to local authority accommodation or to youth detention accommodation. 1 Sentenced to Youth Rehabilitation Order (Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 as amended by Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (LASPOA) 2012 with residence or intensive fostering requirement.

7.3 Legal Status



The number of Interim Care Orders and Full Care Orders and Voluntary Agreements obtained for children have increased over the year compared to 2021/22. Placement Orders have decreased.

7.4 Ethnicity



The graph above indicates a consistent reflection in the ethnicity of children in care across the last two years.

8. Children in Care Reviews

8.1 Between April 2022 and March 2023, 99.3% of reviews took place within statutory timescales which continues to be good practice. Reviews were completed in a Hybrid manner with most taking place within placement.

A total of 1012 CIC reviews were held in 2022/23.

CIC Reviews held within timescales	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
	99.9%	99.7%	99.3%

8.2 The Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service has systems in place, which enable CIC reviews to be held within timescales. These are as follows:

- At the beginning of each calendar month, business support staff send out the statutory due date for all CIC reviews. This means that responsible operational team managers, the manager of the conference and review service and IROs can monitor and ensure reviews do not go out of timescale.
- Only the managers can authorise a change in a CIC review date. This endeavours to ensure that if a change of date is unavoidable, the new date is scheduled within statutory timescales. Where necessary and appropriate, meetings are adjourned, or the review held over more than one meeting to ensure the review is child centred and involves all of the necessary professionals.

8.3 IROs focus on the steps taken to progress adoption and permanency planning at CIC reviews. They address delays by raising their concerns with social workers, responsible team managers and heads of service using the well-established case

alert process and where appropriate the Dispute Resolution Process – see also section 12.

- 8.4 IROs complete and update a spreadsheet record of remedial actions and the Deputy Safeguarding Leads monitor this for timely completion. Where remedial actions are not completed in a timely manner, IROs commence the dispute resolution process where appropriate.
- 8.5 IROs will arrange for CIC reviews to take place more frequently in certain circumstances, such as for children who live at a significant distance from Peterborough; and 'where permanence planning is not being progressed in a timely manner'. These reviews include a high level of scrutiny and monitoring of decision-making and actions. This ensures they are in the best interests of the child and that there is minimal delay.
- 8.6 There is an ongoing arrangement between the Local Authority Children's Social Work teams and IROs. This helps to ensure that IROs receive copies of all documents including statements and reports that are filed with the court as part of care proceedings relating to children in care.
- 8.7 All IROs continue to deliver culturally competent practice and the child's individual needs, wishes and feelings are central to all reviews. IROs closely monitor the integration of a child's identity including culture, religion, ethnicity, and birth family values to care planning.
- 8.8 IROs continue to fulfil their responsibility to children remanded into youth detention accommodation (YDA). The key to this role is to ensure that all of these children have active individual care plans that meet their needs. In developing the care plan for children who become looked after solely as a result of being remanded, the IRO will be aware that some children will only be looked after for the period they are remanded. In many cases this period will be relatively short. However, consideration will be given to what longer term support or accommodation the child will need following the remand episode should the young person continue to be looked after at the end of the remand period.

9. Children in Care Reviews – Participation

- 9.1 It is the role of the IRO to encourage and promote the participation of children aged four years and over on the review process. IROs record the method at the end of each CIC review, and these are coded in line with national guidance.
- 9.2 During 2022/23, 1012 Child Care Review meetings were held. The vast majority of these were held in a hybrid manner with the IRO and Social Worker meeting face to face with the Child or Young person in placement and others joining via TEAMS. All children over the age of four participated in their CCR to inform the shaping of their plan, in the way that best suits them, attending part or all of their meetings, using the paper consultation booklet, the Mind of My Own app, or sending their views through their IRO or another trusted adult. 48% of children over the age of four years attended part or all of their meeting in person which is 17% more than the previous year. Of the children who did not attend their review, 36% sent their views in advance and 16% briefed their advocate with their views. Others gave their views via other means including meeting with the IRO prior to their review.

- 9.3 During the period, 731 Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) consultation/ visits with children and young people were held. IROs endeavoured to consult with their young people via Teams, telephone call or other virtual methods during periods where a face-to-face visit was not possible. The service continues to encourage older children to chair or co-chair their CCRs. This has been particularly effective with young people planning their transition to independence, in empowering them and helping them to take increased ownership of their independence. During the year 18 young people chaired or co-chaired their review. This is an improvement on last year but still an area for improvement.
- 9.4 IROs will always aim to spend time individually with children prior to a review to determine their wishes and feelings to identify if they have any concerns; and find out how they would like to participate in the meeting. This includes the time, venue, and attendance at their meeting though it should be noted this remains primarily the social worker's responsibility. It is noteworthy that many young people do not want their reviews to disrupt their school day or leisure activities for example. Each child is given the opportunity to engage with an advocate, particularly if this maximises the young person's contribution to their reviews.
- 9.5 There have been 919 monitoring activities carried out by IROs throughout the year.
- 9.6 The Children in Care Participation Officer coordinates and facilitates the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and liaises with the Corporate Parenting Panel and Cabinet Members to facilitate dialogue between all parties. Peterborough City Council's Looked after Children's Strategy reflects the council's priority for children in care. This strategy lists priorities for the children and young people ensuring that good outcomes are pivotal to processes. Children in care in Peterborough benefit from the continued robust commitment of elected members of the council.

9.7 Mind of My Own

The Mind of My Own One App is an app that helps young people communicate their views in a way that suits them. Young people create their own account, which can be used on any device at any time. The Mind of My Own Express App is a co-designed, innovative and user-friendly app that helps children with learning disabilities and younger children express their views, wishes and feelings in a fun digital way that's easy for workers to understand and evidence.

91 Mind of My Own Statements (76 One App and 15 Express App) were received in the year (chart 1), a continuing decrease on the number of statements received in previous years and just 8 workers and 11 young people used Mind Of My Own in 2022/23.

- 9.8 Parental participation is noted within the minutes of the review and monitored by the IRO manager. There were a total of 1012 CIC reviews completed in 2022/23. The level of participation by parents has remained fairly consistent over the year; 61% for mothers and 37% of fathers. In accordance with the Care Planning, Placement and Review Regulations 2010, IROs offer to meet with parents outside of the main review meeting. This is particularly evident where a parent is prevented from attending.

10. Feedback on the IRO service

- 10.1 Owing to increased pressures on capacity and adjustments required during the Covid-19 pandemic, Professional feedback forms were put on hold. Since last year, we have started to see an increase on the number of these being completed (130 in total for the year as opposed to 82 in 21-22), although this is still an area we would like to see increase further. Parental feedback forms have been sent out routinely where an email address has been provided to encourage feedback from parents' perspectives on the CCR process. We have started to see a slight increase in these being returned but still an area for vast improvement. IROs have been encouraging young people to complete feedback forms via email and where possible have supported in person to complete. Although uptake on these isn't where we would like it to be, the few that have been completed all agree that they feel supported by their IRO; feel their IRO listens to them and all but one felt comfortable attending their meeting. We received a total of 27 during the year. To encourage more response to feedback forms, we are currently updating our processes to provide an option where professionals, parents and young people will be able to complete the feedback forms via a QR code.

Some comments from young people included:

All was perfect! Thank you!

My IRO listens to my wishes and understands me fully

Some of the feedback from parents included:

'It was lovely to hear the updates on X. Happy how the meeting went. We were listened to'.

'A good plan has been formulated'.

And below some examples of feedback received from professionals:

'Always a smooth and efficient process'

'The IRO listened to the child and ensured that their wishes and feelings were made known within the care planning process.'

'The IRO is particularly passionate about the life of our young person, and it is obvious to see. He is very professional and intuitive with Carers and Young people and will "fight" with his last breath if needed, I am certain. Always a pleasure to work with him.'

'They are always at the end of the phone and are easily contactable, the IRO is very child focused.'

11. Positive Impact – 'You said, we did'

11.1 Within the service, we produce a report to highlight some of the examples of impact that IROs have on children's lives. Below are some examples:

YOU SAID...

WE DID...

There was a delay in obtaining ID for x who needed them to commence the process for Citizenship	IRO raised an alert and the ID documents were expedited.	The young person was since able to file their application and Citizenship has been agreed meaning that they can continue to remain and receive appropriate support.
X was subject to S20 for several months without the security of knowing what the future held for her and it was evident that she could not return to her parents' care	IRO raised an alert and the LA sought Legal Advice and started care proceedings	Care proceedings were issued and a long term match was found for X, enabling her to feel secure in her future
X was receiving DLA but this had not been issued for a significant period of time due to delays in opening a bank	The IRO raised an alert and the bank account was opened	DLA payments are now being paid meaning that X can access the additional support she needs

account		
X desperately wanted contact with his birth parents but no contact had been arranged due to numerous changes in SW	IRO raised an alert and permanent SW was assigned. Assessment for contact was completed and contact plan agreed	X now enjoys contact with his parents on a regular basis
X regularly had overnight contact with Grandparents prior to coming into care but this had not been assessed and so X was only seeing them for brief periods which made her very upset	IRO listened and raised an alert asking for the assessment to be completed	X now enjoys overnight contact with her Grandparents on a regular basis and feels happy about the time she spends with them
X had to spend time away from his placement due to health reasons and the placement was terminated without the IRO's knowledge.	The IRO raised a dispute and the placement was reinstated	X returned to her long term placement and feels secure and appropriate post 18 planning was able to be considered
X felt it was taking too long to be adopted by their carers.	The IRO listened to the issues around the package agreed by CSC and made a referral to NYAS who then contacted the adopters.	The CSC team responded to NYAS and reviewed their decision and agreed the package required. X is now happy with adoptive parents.
X wanted to go on a trip and was told funding was agreed but nothing happened.	The IRO raised an alert and challenged the LA.	X got to go on her activity week and thoroughly enjoyed herself.
X moved into semi-independent living and told his IRO he had no money.	The IRO raised a case alert with the team and advised X had no money to buy necessities.	Money was provided and X could buy himself some shopping and vital items.
X was due to turn 18 and there were no confirmed plans for alternative accommodation.	The IRO raised an escalation to challenge this.	X was given an extension at the current placement and was supported to look for long term options.
X really wanted to join a professional rugby academy and board. He asked the IRO to help.	The IRO spoke with the CSC team and it has been agreed that the team will fund his placement.	X is thrilled about his new school and looking forward to wonderful opportunities.

X raised concerns to the IRO relating to the proposed pathway plan and consideration of cultural needs	The IRO raised a case alert and asked for the Pathway plan to be revised and consideration given to Cultural needs	The agreed plan was attuned to X's needs and a number of appropriate options given to him to have more control over his future
X had long lost contact with wider family members who lived in another country and was desperately missing this. Attempts did not work due to language barriers	A case alert was sent and was The IRO raised a case alert and discussed with the Team Manager and suggested agreement for an interpreter to support	X now has regular contact with wider family via Teams with support of an interpreter. One contact was witnessed by the IRO who said it was such a lovely exchange.

12. Quality Assurance and Audit of Children in Care Arrangements

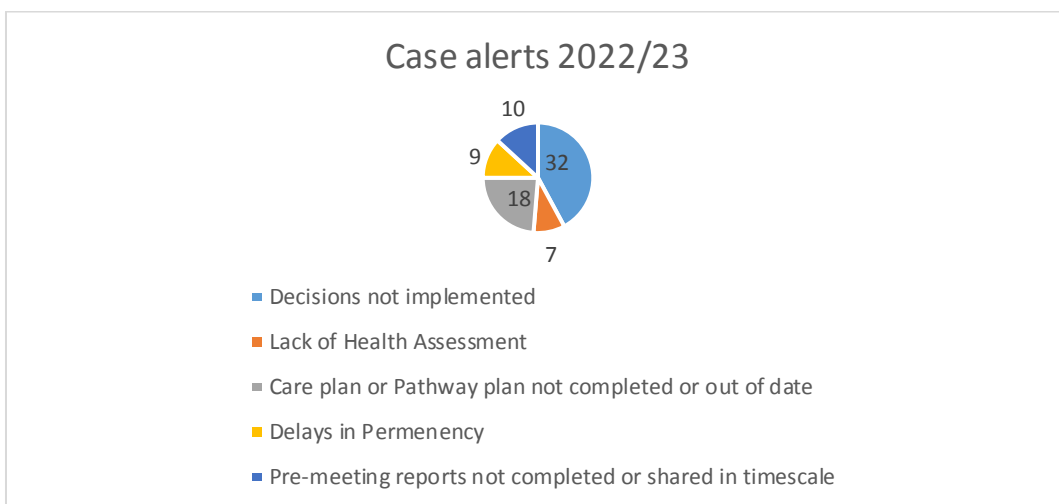
- 12.1 The effectiveness of the IRO service and the difference they make to children's experiences of being in care in Peterborough is monitored through the activity of the Quality Assurance Team including the ongoing thematic audit programmes. In addition, team and senior managers undertake a programme of case file audits. All cases where remedial actions are identified are monitored by the QA Team to ensure that appropriate action is taken in a timely manner. Audit themes and areas for development inform service improvement plans for each service.
- 12.2 All IROs complete a monitoring form after each statutory meeting. This is sent to the social worker and responsible team manager. If the IRO identifies an immediate cause for concern, they will raise a case alert. They will always discuss their concern with the case responsible manager/senior manager and agree a course of actions with timescales. This will then be followed up with an email to the responsible manager and Head of Service and any other managers as appropriate. This ensures that immediate action is taken to safeguard and protect the child.

13. Dispute Resolution

- 13.1 The IRO Handbook clearly describes the role of the IRO where there are areas of disagreement: 'One of the key functions of the IRO is to resolve problems arising out of the care planning process. It is expected that IROs establish positive working relationships with the social workers of the children for whom they are responsible. Where problems are identified in relation to a child's case, for example in relation to care planning, the implementation of the care plan or decisions relating to it, resources, or poor practice, the IRO will, in the first instance, seek to resolve the issue informally with the social worker or the social worker's managers. The IRO should place a note of this initial informal resolution process on the child's file. If the matter is not resolved in a timescale that is appropriate to the child's needs, the IRO should consider taking formal action.
- 13.2 During 2022/23, the Independent Chairs raised 187 case alerts. Sixteen formal DRP cases were raised throughout the year; most of which were addressed within timescale.

13.3 Updates are sent to Heads of Service and Service Managers on a two-weekly basis to ensure management oversight and to bring attention to outstanding alerts. The following themes were noted with regard to the case alerts raised:

- Decisions not being implemented.
- Lack of Health Assessments.
- Care plans and Pathway plans not being updated
- Pre-meeting reports not completed, shared or of adequate quality.
- Issues regarding placement.
- Delays in achieving permanence.
- Drift in Post 18 planning



13.4 Relationships between CAFCASS and the IRO service continue to be positive with a named guardian and IRO providing a link between the two services. CAFCASS attend the IRO team meeting twice yearly and the named IRO reciprocates this arrangement. This ensures joined up working and the sharing of information continues to be a priority between the professionals who maintain albeit differing degrees of independence from the operational social work teams.

14. Summary

14.1 The IRO Service has continued to provide effective provision for reviewing and monitoring the Care Plans for children in care. It contributes to improved outcomes for children in care through increasing participation of children and young people in the decision making about their care, as well as making independent representations to operational teams and management on planning and practice issues. The independent scrutiny provided by the team is valued by social workers and management. IROs have shown continued strength and resilience throughout a very difficult year and have contributed to a creative and high delivering service.

15. Independent Reviewing Officer Achievements in 2022/23

15.1 IROs have:

- Ensured robust oversight of all vulnerable cohorts through enhanced audit activity.
- Maintained oversight of all key decision making and milestones in the child's journey.
- Worked to ensure all essential meetings were able to go ahead via a combination of face to face, virtual and hybrid meetings, providing additional support to families where required.
- Remained proactively responsive to the changing situation by leading the way and developing creative solutions.

- 15.2
- a) Caseloads – Independent Reviewing Officers' caseloads have remained within the recommended guidelines of between 50 and 70. This has enabled the IROs to meet expectations for a high-quality service whereby all aspects of their role are undertaken.
 - b) Oversight and Quality Assurance – IROs have actively addressed concerns, poor practice, and non-compliance in a systematic and professional manner to promote the improvement of standards amongst social work teams and partner agencies. They have challenged as denoted within the IRO Handbook and ensured that timescales are adhered to.
 - c) IRO footprint – There has been clear evidence obtained throughout case audits, supervisions and dataset analysis of the consistent presence and oversight of the IRO and clear demonstrations of the IRO footprint on their caseloads.
 - d) Children's voices – There has been a consistent approach by IROs to maximise the engagement of children and the evidence within reports demonstrates an awareness and objective to ensure that the voice of the child is heard achieving 100% in the year. We have also improved the system for completing feedback forms via an electronic link to maximise the feedback we receive from young people.
 - e) Themed audits – The Quality Assurance team continues to undertake a significant number of thematic audits across Children's Social Care and a number of audits across the IRO service have evidenced robust systems and competent and effective practice and established performance.
 - f) Learning and development – The IRO service continues to promote good practice and to develop and embed learning and supportive relationships within the wider sector. IROs take responsibility in organising and managing meetings with operational team managers to identify impacts and issues within the service and to recognise areas of good practice as well as areas for improvement. They work together in maintaining a respectful, transparent, and learning-abled forum within which to identify and design models of ideal working.
 - g) The IROs also take turns to represent Peterborough City Council at the Eastern Regional IRO network.

- h) The IROs have contributed to the increase in dental checks and health assessments for children in care due to increased monitoring. They have also been instrumental in the increased oversight of children at risk of CSE or Missing episodes.

16. Objectives for 2023/24

- a) IROs will continue to proactively contribute to improving outcomes for looked after children through rigorous monitoring and challenge of care planning and promoting timely permanency planning.
- b) To support the service in identifying and implementing effective and creative strategies for involving children and young people in the review process in a way that suits them.
- c) To increase the number of children/young people chairing/co-chairing their review.
- d) Review the existing mechanisms for a constructive feedback loop between the IRO Service and social care, so that the broader picture of what is working for children in care and what areas of practice may need attention in order to improve outcomes on a wider scale.
- e) Continue to work closely with the Children in Care Council to review and improve our consultation, feedback and monitoring systems.
- f) Continue to support placement stability as key to emotional wellbeing of our children and young people.
- g) Strengthening our oversight of pathway planning to support successful timely move into independence.
- h) Continue to ensure permanence plan identified at second review with clear robust contingency plan.
- i) IROs will continue to raise awareness amongst Social Workers of the need to keep the IRO informed of significant events between review meetings and to consult the IRO before important decisions are taken in respect of changes to the child's care plan.
- j) To continue to build established relationships with partner agencies.

CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM No. 11
19 JULY 2023	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:	John Gregg Executive Director Children and Young People's Service	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Councillor Lynne Ayres Cabinet Member for Education, Skills, and Children's Services	
Contact Officer(s):	Michaela Berry, Acting Head of Service Corporate Parenting	Tel. 07930 832309

MISSING CHILDREN IN CARE REPORT

RECOMMENDATIONS	
FROM: Alison Bennett, Service Director, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance	Deadline date: N/A
<p>It is recommended that members of Corporate Parenting Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the content of the report, and 2. Raise any questions with the lead officer 	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report is submitted to Corporate Parenting Committee to inform Councillors of the current situation with regard to Children in Care who go missing.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Corporate Parenting Committee in respect of the numbers of children in care that go missing and to provide details behind the data presented. The data within this report is from 23rd June 2023.

- 2.2 This report is for Corporate Parenting Committee to consider under its Terms of Reference No. 2.4.4.6 To monitor the quality of care delivered by the City Council and review the performance of outcomes for children and young people in care.

- 2.3 *How does this report link to the Children in care Promise?*

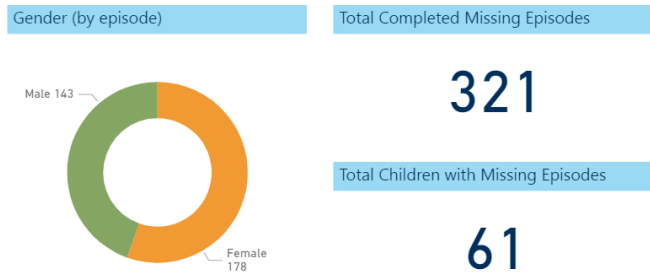
This links to 'Keeping you Safe'. We will work to keep you safe and help you to keep yourself safe.

3. TIMESCALES

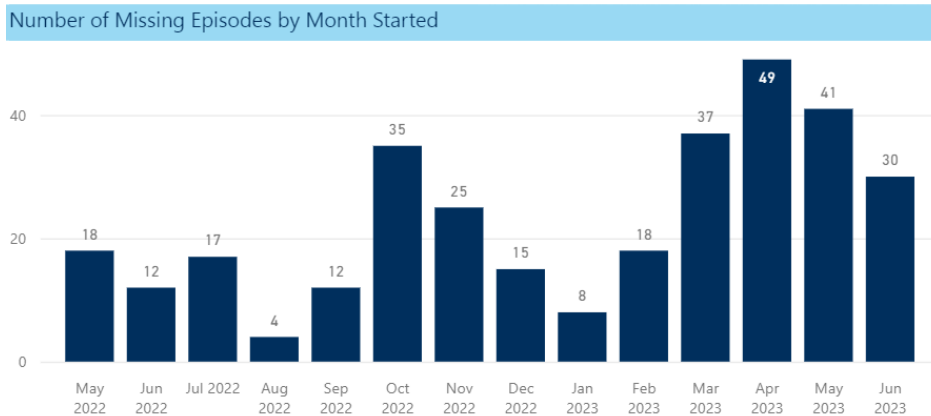
Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	
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4. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

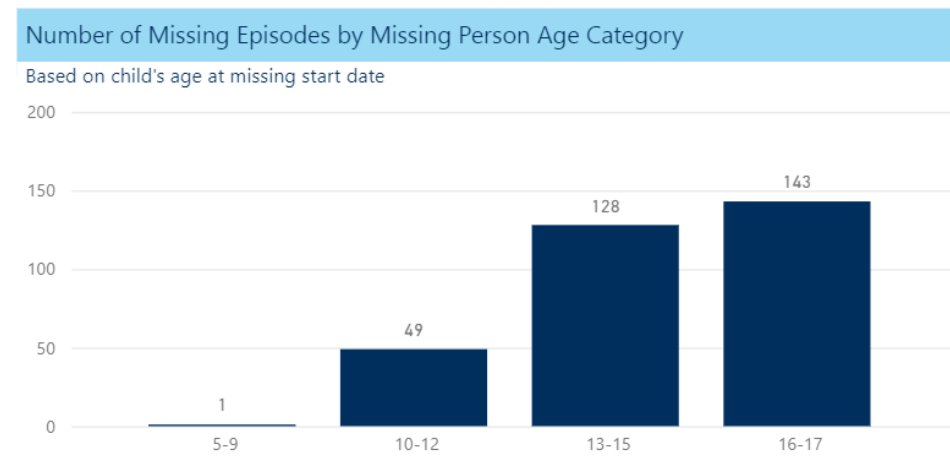
4.1 Over the last 13 months there have been a total of 321 missing episodes for children in care, this involved 61 different children. Of the 321 missing episodes; 44 % were boys and 56% were girls.



4.2 The graph below shows the total number of missing episodes each month, for the last 13 months. The number of children going missing from care were significantly lower during the lockdown periods but have climbed back to the higher level.

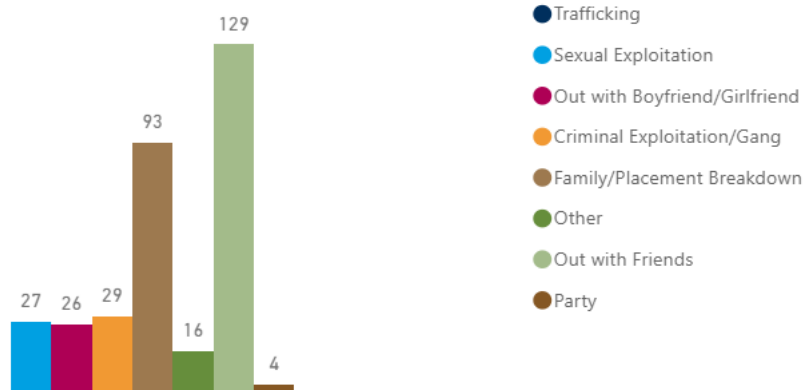


4.3 The graph below shows the number of missing episodes for each age category. The highest number of missing episodes is for the 16-17 year old age category.



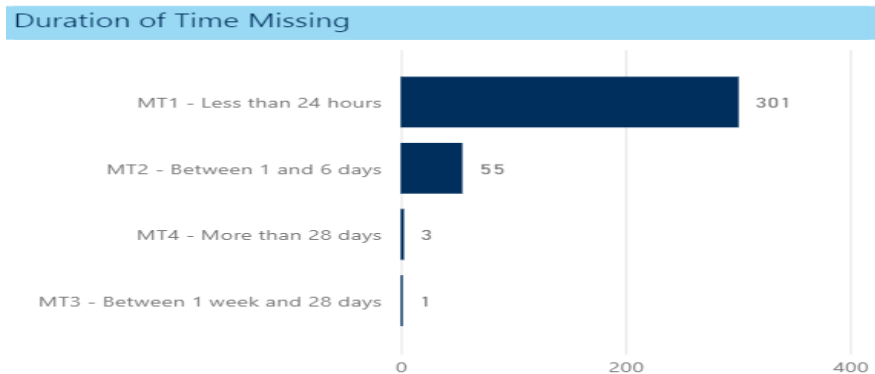
4.4 The graph below shows the reason for the missing episode for the child or young person. The most common reason is that young people are out with friends and do not return on time. This graph does show that we have had 27 missing incidents linked to sexual exploitation and 29 incidents linked to criminal exploitation in the last 13 months.

Missing Reasons



- 4.5 Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is defined as (From Working Together 2018); *a form of child sexual abuse occurring where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.*
- 4.6 Child Criminal Exploitation(CCE) is defined by the NSPCC as; *child abuse where children and young people are manipulated and coerced into committing crimes.*
- 4.7 Children and young people who go missing from care may need safeguarding against the risk of being drawn into offending behaviour by gangs or criminal groups.
- 4.8 We use a risk assessment tool where it is suspected that a child or young person is being exploited through CSE or CCE. Where a risk is identified there is a multiagency response provided through direct work and disruption monitored a multi-agency operational meeting MACE (Missing and Child Exploitation) held on a monthly basis to share information across professions and review intelligence to ensure that those young people most at risk are identified and that clear plans are put in place to mitigate the risks.

The length of time the episodes last is key information, as can be seen below, the majority of missing episodes last less than 24 hours.



- 4.9 The data below is just from the last 3 months, so more focused than the data above. This shows how many times, each child that had a missing episode, was missing. There were 48 children with missing episodes over the last 3 months, 19 of these have just one missing

episodes, 11 had 2 missing episodes, 3 had 4, 3 had 5, 3 had 8, one young person had 11 episodes of missing from care and one young person had 15 episodes of missing from care.



- 4.10 Children who are missing from care are closely monitored and supported. A multiagency strategy meeting is held if a young person is missing for over 24 hours and when a young person has been missing 3 times in 90 days (no matter how long for). Independent Return Interviews are offered and robustly attempted after every missing episode to look at the reasons the child or young person was missing (push and pull factors) and their experiences whilst missing. The information from these missing interviews which includes the 'Voice of the Child' informs the multiagency intervention to reduce the risk of future missing episodes and harm during further missing episodes, if they do occur. As examples; A push factor may be if a child or young person is unhappy with an aspect of their home this can be addressed, or, a pull factor, if they want to spend more time with friends, they can be supported to do this safely.
- 4.11 Because there is such a strong link between children going missing and risk of exploitation, social workers always consider whether a child who has gone missing is being exploited or at risk of being exploited. If CCE or CSE is identified as a risk a referral to our SAFE team is made. The SAFE Team utilises a trauma informed approach in working with young people. This is supported by the SAFE Team Psychologist and where appropriate psychological formulation.
- 4.12 SAFE Team workers will spend the initial few months developing an understanding of and rapport with young people. As a voluntary intervention there are no demands placed upon the young person regarding what is undertaken, but SAFE worker will explain the reason for the offer of support (CCE/CSE risk) and describe what they can offer as a means of support. Young people can feedback as to how they would like this support to look and at what frequency they would like to engage. Focus is on areas that act as push or pull factors exposing the young person to exploitation that are not already covered by other elements of either their Social Care, Youth Justice or other focused interventions. Support has/can include the following with the young person's agreement.
- ❖ Positive Professional relationship development
 - ❖ Exploitation Awareness support
 - ❖ Direct and indirect psychological support
 - ❖ Safety planning support
 - ❖ Access to positive activities

- ❖ ETE advocacy/support
- ❖ Assisting young people to navigating professional relationships
- ❖ Practical support/Motivational support
- ❖ Advocate for unmet needs
- ❖ Contextual safeguarding awareness

5. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

5.1 This report links to the following Corporate Priorities:

1. *Our Places & Communities*
 - *Places and Safety (including any rural implications)*
 - *Lives and Work*
 - *Health and Wellbeing*
2. *Prevention, Independence & Resilience*
 - *Educations and Skills for All*
 - *Children*

To ensure that we are keeping our children and young people as safe as possible it is imperative that we understand the profile of those that have missing episodes and understand the risk associated with going missing from care and the impact.

We need to ensure that we have the right support for our children and young people and that we understand both push and pull factors (factors the child is being drawn to or escaping from whilst missing).

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 N/A

7. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

7.1 For Committee Members to be updated on the data and information related to children who go missing from care.

8. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

8.1 This report is to appraise the Committee Members of the current data and information related to children who go missing from care.

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 No alternative options required for this report as this data is provided for information purposes only.

10. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

10.1 There are no financial implications as this report is for information only.

Legal Implications

10.2 There are no legal implications as this report is for information only.

Equalities Implications

10.3 None

10.4 Other Implications

This report relates to children in care and gives information to members around the numbers of children who go missing from care.

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

11.1 None

12. APPENDICES

12.1 *None*

CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM No. 12
19 JULY 2023	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:	John Gregg Executive Director Children and Young People's Service	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Councillor Lynne Ayres Cabinet Member for Education, Skills, and Children's Services	
Contact Officer(s):	Michaela Berry, Interim Head of Service Corporate Parenting	Tel. 07930 832309

PERFORMANCE DATA FOR CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS MAY 2023

RECOMMENDATIONS	
FROM: Gary Jones, Service Director, Safeguarding and Targeted Support	Deadline date: N/A
<p>It is recommended that members of Corporate Parenting Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the content of the report, and 2. Raise any questions with the lead officer 	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report is submitted to Corporate Parenting Committee to each formal and informal committee as part of the standing work programme item in relation to performance.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Corporate Parenting Committee in respect of the numbers of children and young people being looked after by the Council as of 31 May 2023 providing a breakdown of the types of homes in which they are living in. The report also provides information about the age, gender and ethnicity of those children and young people.
- 2.2 This report is for Corporate Parenting Committee to consider under its Terms of Reference No. 2.4.4.6 To monitor the quality of care delivered by the City Council and review the performance of outcomes for children and young people in care.
- 2.3 This reports to the Children in Care Promise by focussing on the placements for children in care and care leavers.

3. TIMESCALES

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	
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4. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

4.1 As of 31 May 2023, there were 410 children in care.

- 140 children placed with in house foster carers.
- 129 children placed with agency foster carers outside of the city boundaries. These agencies work with the council to provide foster placements on a contractual basis.
- 25 children were placed with family or friends (connected persons). These carers are formally assessed in the same way that in house foster carers are assessed and are presented to the Fostering panel for approval through the same process and standard. They are supported through the foster carer allowance.
- 7 children were living with their parents but are still considered to be 'looked after' because they are subject to full care orders. The Council is sharing parental responsibility with the birth parent. Such placements are made when there is a plan for reunification.
- 6 children were placed for adoption.
- 1 child was placed in a residential educational placement.
- 100 children are placed in residential provision. The placements in these homes are most usually made when it is clear that foster care is not sufficient to meet the child or young person's needs. Residential care is nearly always accessed for older children and only used for younger children in very special circumstances. These are reviewed regularly to ensure children can step down to a foster placement when they are ready. This figure includes 16, 16-18 year olds living in semi-independent accommodation where the focus is preparation for adulthood.
- Of external placements 40% were within 20 miles from home address; 34% within 50 miles; 8% within 70 miles and 18% over 70 miles. There is a national shortage of placements which makes it harder to place children in care close to home.
- In response to a request from the Corporate Parenting Committee, the score card now includes information on the current breakdown of the ethnicity of children in care.

5. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

5.1 This report links to the following Corporate Priorities:

1. *Our Places & Communities*
 - *Places and Safety (including any rural implications)*
 - *Lives and Work*
 - *Health and Wellbeing*
2. *Prevention, Independence & Resilience*
 - *Educations and Skills for All*
 - *Children*

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 N/A

7. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

7.1 This is an accurate report of the current accommodation placements for children in care and care leavers.

8. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

8.1 The data included in this report is from the monthly performance report which includes live data.

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 No alternative options required for this report as this data is provided for information purposes only.

10. IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications as this report is for information only.

10.2 Legal Implications

There are no legal implications as this report is for information only.

10.3 Equalities Implications

The current recruitment campaign for foster carers is focussed on increasing placements for specific groups linked to sibling placement, older children and Link carer for children with disabilities.

10.4 Other Implications

This is high level data concerning our children in care population in Peterborough and how we are performing on some key performance indicators.

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

11.1 Monthly Performance Report

12. APPENDICES

12.1 Appendix 1 – Performance Report May 2023

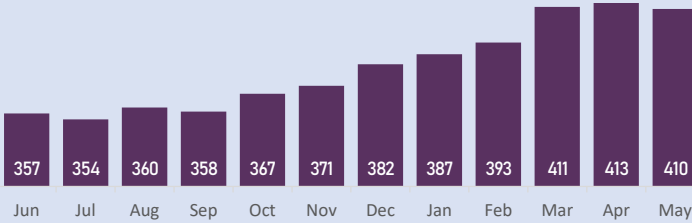
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HEADLINE FIGURES

Number of children in care on the last day of May

410

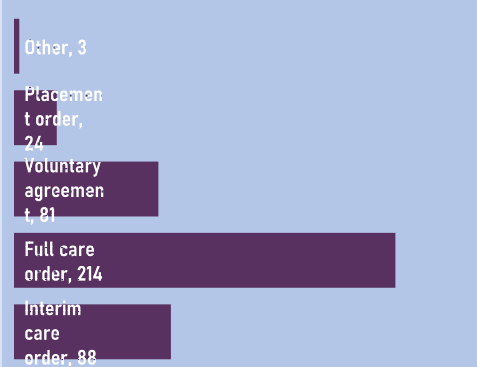
Target: Below 332



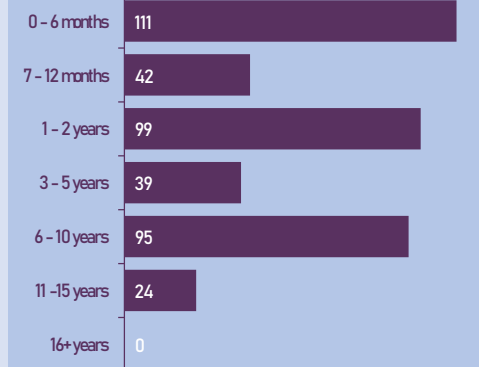
Staffing

	Staff	Average Caseload	Change	Performance
Family Safeguarding Qualified social workers	28	17	▼	-
Children in Care Qualified social workers	16	20	▬	-
Leaving Care Personal Advisors	9	24	▼	-
Independent Reviewing Officers	10	67	▼	-

Legal status of children in care



Length of time children have been in care



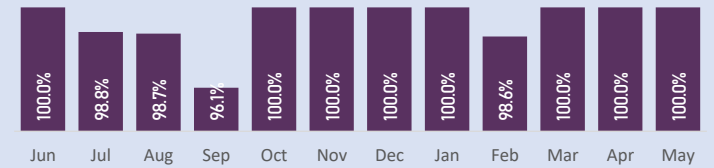
Key Change since previous month: ▲ Improved, ▼ Deteriorated, ▬ Stayed the same, ! Acceptable, ✖ Poor
 Performance against target: ✓ Strong, ✗ Poor

SERVICE STANDARDS

% of child in care reviews which were held on time (year to date, and during each month)

100.0%

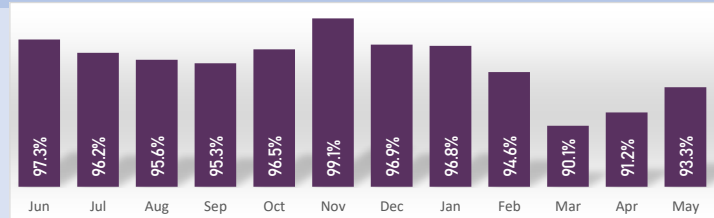
Target: Above 98%



% of child in care statutory visits which were carried out on time (year to date, and during each month)

93.3%

Target: Above 98%



HOME

Home stability

8.8%

Target: below 8%

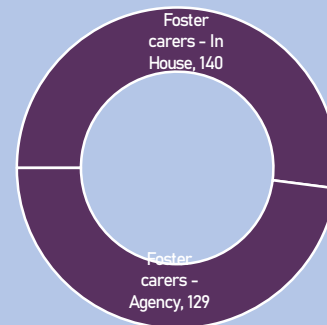
8.8% of children in Peterborough's care had 3 or more different homes in the last 12 months.

Out of those children who have been in care for over 2.5 years, 69.2% have been in their current home for two or more years.

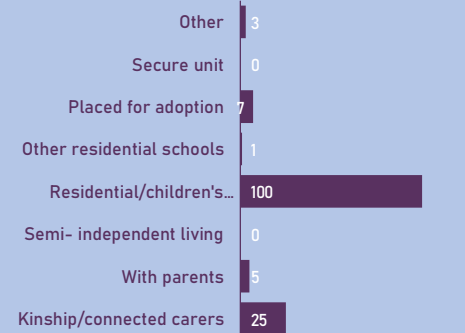
69.2%

Target: above 75%

Type of home of children in care



Other settings breakdown

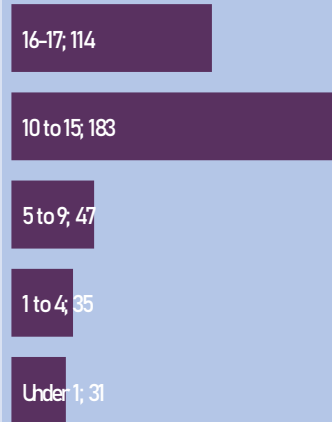


Corporate Parenting Scorecard

May-23

EDUCATION

Children in care by age group



% of school-aged children in care who have a PEP in place

100.0%

Target: above 100%

A Personal Education Plan (PEP) was in place for 264 out of 264 school aged children who were in care for at least a month by the end of May.

81.9%

81.9% of Peterborough's children in care are taught in good or outstanding schools.

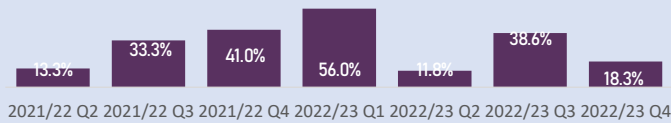
% of school-aged children in care in good or outstanding schools

HEALTH - SERVICE STANDARDS

Children in care whose initial health assessment was completed on time (Year to date and by quarter)

24.5%

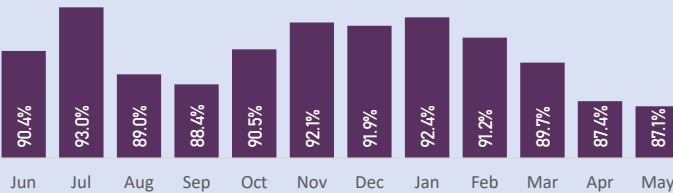
Target: above 95%



Children in care whose annual health assessment was completed on time

87.1%

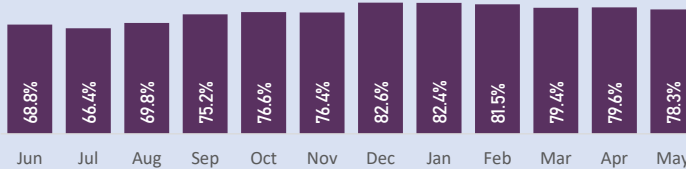
Target: above 93%



Children in care whose annual dental examination was completed on time

78.3%

Target: above 93%



Children in care who go missing (with number of episodes)

24 Children 41 Episodes

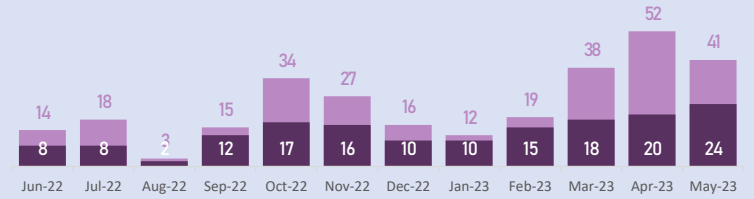
Children

ADOPTION

% of children leaving care who are adopted (Year to date and by quarter)

26.9%

Target: above 18%



Timeliness of adoption process

Time to placement

428

Target: below 426

For children adopted during the past 12 months, an average of 428 days passed between the child entering care and them moving into their adoptive placement. An average of 212 days passed between their placement order being granted and approval of a match with their adopters.

Time to match

212

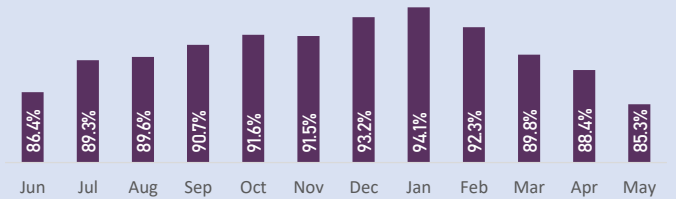
Target: below 120

CARE LEAVERS

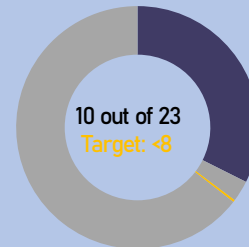
Care Leavers who have a pathway plan in place

85.3%

Target: above 95%



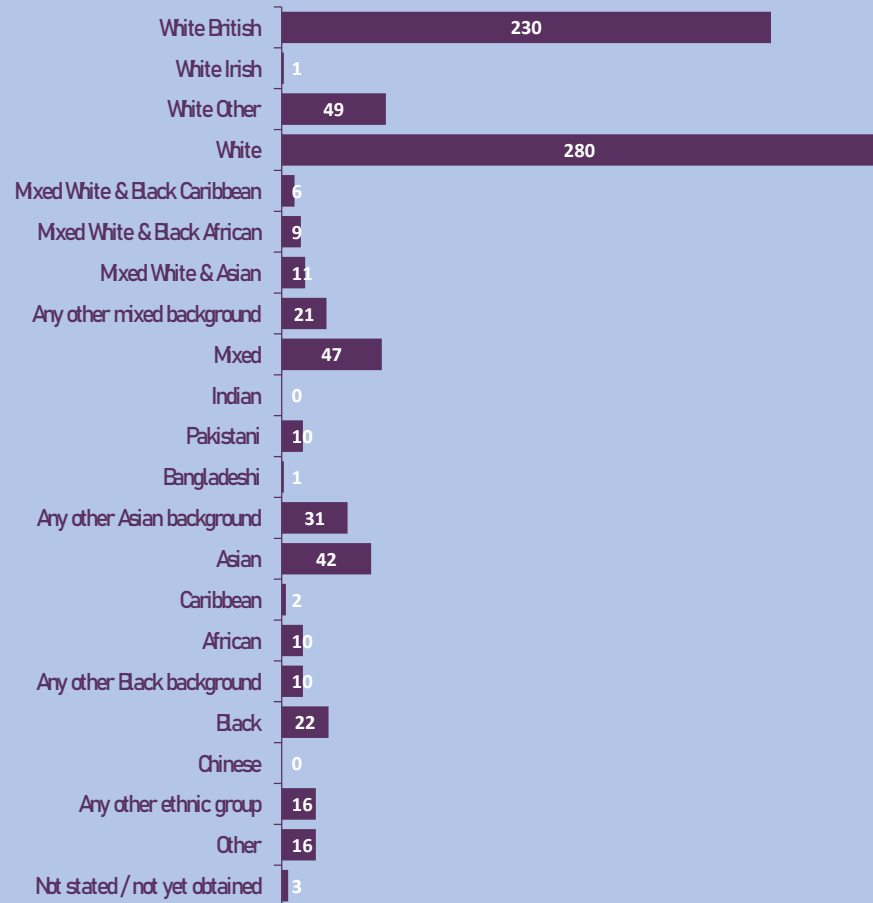
19 to 21 year old care leavers who are not in employment, education or training (NEET)



19 to 21 year old care leavers who live in unsuitable accommodation



Ethnicity of children in care



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CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE (FORMAL)	AGENDA ITEM No. 13
19 JULY 2023	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:			
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:			
Contact Officer(s):	Katie Liddle, Designated Nurse Children in Care	Email:	katie.liddle@nhs.net

HEALTH REPORT

RECOMMENDATIONS	
FROM: Katie Liddle, Designated Nurse Children in Care	Deadline date: N/A
<p>It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Notes the content of the report Raise any queries with the lead officers 	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report is submitted to a formal Corporate Parenting Committee as part of a scheduled work programme item.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

- 2.1 This report provides an update on health and dental services for children in care. The report provides an overview of the Integrated Care Board's (ICB) activities to ensure robust monitoring and quality assurance systems are in place to meet the health needs of Peterborough's Children in Care including those with a disability.

- 2.2 This report is for the Corporate Parenting panel to consider under its Terms of Reference No. 2.4.4.6

- 2.3 *How does this report link to the Children in care Promise?*

We will support you maintain a healthy lifestyle and help look after your physical and mental health.

3. TIMESCALES

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	
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4. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 **Mental Health update – Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation Trust (CPFT)**
At both Initial Health Assessments (IHAs) and Review Health Assessments (RHAs) a variety of methods are used by the health professional to assess a young person's emotional and mental

health. Prior to an RHA, the social worker will send a referral to the CPFT Children in Care (CiC) Health team. This updates the health professional of any concerns Social Care colleagues have regarding physical and mental health. There is regular communication between the CiC Health team and the child/young person's Social Worker in between Health Assessments and opportunity for the Social Worker to raise any concerns which may need attention/support prior to the statutory Health Assessment.

During IHAs and RHAs health professionals use questions, observe body language and interactions to assess the wellbeing of a child/young person. There are a variety of tools that can be used depending on the age and development of the child/young person.

The CiC Health team send Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs) out to carers' and young people aged between 11-17 years prior to the RHA appointment, requesting they are returned before the scheduled Health Assessment. If these are received back prior to the RHA appointment, the answers and overall score are used to inform the Health Assessment and identify difficulties in specific areas which can be explored further by the Health Professional through conversation with the child or young person during the RHA.

There is always time focused on emotional wellbeing and mental health during all Health Assessments (RHAs and IHAs) including how it may be impacting upon the child/young person's day to day functioning, for example: sleep, appetite, general mood and level of enjoyment. There is discussion around the child/young person's mood, thoughts, triggers, thoughts of self harm/suicidal ideation and exploration of what coping strategies they utilise and who they feel comfortable to talk to. The Health Professional will involve the carer in discussions (as appropriate) and how the child/young person can be supported at home and decide what support services may be required.

The CiC Health Team make appropriate referrals to Mental Health and counselling services as required and discuss with the social worker regarding referral pathways (YOUited, Centre 33, Yaxley Young People's Counselling Service (YPCS), Refugee Council (for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASCs)). Some schools have counselling services which can also be referred into. The Local Authority have access to a clinical team who can support children/young people and their carers. The CiC health team liaise directly with Core/Neuro Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) if advice regarding a referral is required or if it is necessary to expedite an assessment. The Health Professional completing the Health Assessment provides clear actions on the Health Action Plan (HAP) about what the next steps are and provides useful and trusted websites which young people and their carers can access, for example Kooth, YoungMinds.

4.2 **Partnership Meetings – broadening attendance**

The Designated Nurse for Children in Care has worked in collaboration with The Head of Corporate Parenting to extend the invitation to the Health of Children in Care Partnership Meeting. Future meetings will include representation from the Safeguarding and Assessment teams in the Local Authority as well as the Children in Care teams. It was recognised that by the time a child was allocated a Children in Care Social Worker, the 20 working days may have passed. This should hopefully improve communication and referral times and build relationships between agencies.

4.3 **Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQs)**

Very few SDQs are returned prior to the RHA appointment taking place to inform the assessment as it is intended. As a result, the Health Professional uses valuable time during the appointment asking the carer and, if required, the young person, to complete the questionnaire. Following discussion at the Health of CiC Partnership meeting, the Designated Nurse has set up a working group to look at the SDQ pathway and work with the Head of Corporate Parenting to establish a revised pathway. RHAs are annual appointments, face to face with a health professional. It is important this time is spent in the most useful and holistic way that meets the needs of the child/young person.

SDQs are a Local Authority function, which has been delegated to health. The CiC Health Teams do not have the resource to facilitate this on behalf of the Local Authority. Social workers have contact with Children/young people in care every six weeks and would perhaps be better placed to support carers and young people with completion of the SDQ prior to the RHA. This will be explored within the working group which is made up of Health and Social Care colleagues and will support working in collaboration.

4.4 **Parental Proxy access to Primary Care records**

CPFT record all Peterborough CiC addresses on SystemOne as c/o Sand Martin House (Local Authority building), even those placed out of area. As a result health appointments were being sent to Sand Martin House and appointments were being missed. CPFT are reluctant to change to placement address due to parental proxy access to primary care records and the possibility the location of foster carer's address being shared inappropriately.

The Designated Nurse has explored this further (locally and nationally) and there does appear to be a lack of national guidance around this. The Designated Nurse is currently working with the Primary Care Team to give assurance that when a child becomes looked after or re-registers with a new practice parental proxy access is revoked. No other areas appear to use a 'care of' address. CPFT CiC Health Team are working on a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to mitigate the risk and seek assurance from primary care colleagues. The Designated Nurse has raised this in an East of England Designate forum, and it is currently being explored nationally on NHS Futures as a result of this being raised by the Designated Nurse for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

5. **CONSULTATION**

5.1 N/A

6. **ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT**

6.1 To improve health and well-being, and health outcomes for children in care by ensuring adequate assessment of health and suitable health provision; addressing areas where there may be a lack of provision or improvements required.

7. **REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION**

7.1 Corporate Parenting Committee have requested a health update at all formal committees.

8. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

8.1 N/A

9. **IMPLICATIONS**

Financial Implications

9.1 N/A

Legal Implications

9.2 N/A

Equalities Implications

9.3 N/A

9.4 **Other Implications**

This report supports the health needs of Children in Care and Care Leavers with the service supporting them to live a healthy lifestyle and ensure they are offered regular health checks and support to attend these.

10. **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

10.1 None

11. **APPENDICES**

11.1 None