

APPENDIX 1

Briefing Paper :

The Chair of Corporate Parenting Committee requested an addendum to the Corporate Parenting annual report to Children and Education Scrutiny Committee to accurately reflect the figures of children in care; and provide members with a briefing note outlining the reasons why children in care move around placements.

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Author	Myra O'Farrell Head of Service Corporate Parenting

Background

This report should be seen as a supplementary report to the Annual Corporate Parenting report to Education and Scrutiny Comm

Current Situation

Accurate reflect the numbers of children in care. Provide additional information on why children move from their homes.

Accurate Numbers of children in care:

The Number of children in care at the end of November was 367. This number has been adjusted to remove children who have been adopted or are over the age of 18, but who's case files remain open due to technical issues.

Those technical issues relate in part to the way in which the integrated children's system has been organised. Peterborough uses Liquidlogic as its integrated children's system.

This system is predicated upon 'workstreams' which are manually set by the allocated social worker, and other key professionals such as independent reviewing officers and team managers. There have been several occasions where when a decision has been made about a child early in the process of a child's care plan and this has been either duplicated by the system or by the person themselves duplicating the decision, which then influences the workstream type. The impact is that the case file cannot be closed until the workstream has been reset. This can mean for some children their case files have to be 'rolled back' years to then reset the workstream before it can be rebuilt onto the right plan. Invariably the issue only comes to light when the case file is due to close.

Corporate Parenting as the final service working on behalf of the child takes responsibility in working with the Liquid Logic team in rolling back and resetting the workstreams. However, this can take time as the process often involves several professionals along the journey of closure to ensure they complete tasks that were assigned to them previously to

rectify the problem. There have been other instances whereby the system has duplicated workstreams and this has added to complicating the process. Additionally, if the plan for the child changes this too can cause a problem in relation to the system.

Additional training has been requested to help social workers, independent reviewing officer and other key professionals in understanding the system better to mitigate the problems from the outset. This is planned in the new year. Corporate parenting, however, remains the key service in working through the case files that remain open.

Another problem identified has been caseloads for corporate parenting social workers who have prioritised open work over closing cases. This is relevant in relation to adoption cases whereby there is a legal requirement for the creation of an adoption file in paper form which must be then stored for 75 years. Along with this is a later life letter which requires much thought and sensitivity as the letter is written by the social worker to the child imagining they are older and able to read and understand the motives behind why they were adopted. Both activities require time. There is a plan in place for both activities to be completed, with the help of business support and family safeguarding writing in part the later life letter to explain why the child was removed.

Why children move round placements

The monthly performance data for November shows that out of 367 children 28 of them moved up to 3+ times in a year. Equally, performance of children and longer-term placement stability is monitored. For Peterborough this was in November was 75.8% for children placed over 2.5 years. Both indicators are positive and above the national and regional average.

The data captures both positive and negative moves. Children can and do move if they have a plan for adoption. For younger children there is an emphasis on fostering to adopt to mitigate a further move where possible. This is a success story for Peterborough and well embedded within the fostering and adoption service.

Young people aged 16-17 can sometimes choose to end their living arrangement with their foster carer as they sometimes feel they want more freedom that semi-independence can allow. For this reason, they will move albeit making an informed decision about the pros and cons.

There can be many reasons why a child moves placements. This can relate to matching, a young person and the carer feeling the placement has come to an end, the child struggling to live with other people other than their family or risks are identified meaning the placement may have to end.

Corporate Parenting works collaboratively with the fostering service, external providers to prevent living arrangements ending where possible. The learning from endings is reflected upon, reviewed to prevent repeated moves.

Next Steps

1. Refresher training for key professionals using the integrated children's system called Liquid Logic.
2. Business Support and FST are working collaboratively to close case files for adopted children.