

Council Report

Corporate Parenting Performance

Title

Corporate Parenting Performance Report – February 2019

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan? No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

All

Summary

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of performance for key performance indicators across Looked After Children (LAC) services. It should be read in conjunction with the accompanying performance data report at Appendix A which provides trend data, graphical analysis and benchmarking data against national and statistical neighbour averages where possible.

Recommendations

- 2.1 The Panel is asked to receive the report and accompanying dataset (Appendix A) and consider issues arising.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix A – Corporate Parenting Monthly Performance Report – Feb 2019

Background Papers

Ofsted Improvement Letter
Children's Social Care Monthly Performance Reports

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel
No

Council Approval Required No

Exempt from the Press and Public No

Title: Corporate Parenting Performance Report – February 2019

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to receive the report and accompanying dataset (Appendix A) and consider issues arising.

2. Background

- 2.1 This report provides evidence to the council's commitment to improvement and providing performance information to enable scrutiny of the improvements and the impact on the outcomes for children and young people in care. It should be read in conjunction with the accompanying performance data report which provides trend data, graphical analysis and benchmarking data against national and statistical neighbour averages.
- 2.2 Targets, including associated 'RAG' (red, amber, green rating) tolerances, are included. These have been set in consideration of available national and statistical neighbour benchmarking data, recent performance levels and, importantly, Rotherham's improvement journey.
- 2.4 Please note that all benchmarking data is as at the latest data release by the DfE and relates to 2017/18 outturn
- 2.5 The narrative supplied within the report has been informed by the Deputy Director for Children's Services and the Head of Looked After Children Services.

3. Key Issues

3.1 Service Overview and Context

- 3.1.1 In February, we had the first increase in the month end number of LAC since October. The post-Christmas period often evidences a spike in referrals resulting in CiN, CP and an eventual rise in LAC numbers. In addition children are less likely to be adopted or achieve permanence over the Christmas period as this can be an emotionally challenging time for them and reduce the chances of such moves being ultimately successful.
- 3.1.2 The second year of Right Child Right Care programme has begun. 228 children have been identified as potential candidates for discharges from care in 2019. 48 of these will turn 18 and the remaining 180 fall under the identified categories of: Adoption; Aged 14-16 years; Long Term Matched; placed with Family and Friends; or in placement for more than 18 months. Other children at baseline fell under these categories, but when assessed, it was not deemed appropriate for those children at this time. The project aim is to ensure the child is in the right care. This also means that some children will fall 'out of scope' as the year progresses and it

becomes apparent that the plan for the child is not deemed appropriate for discharge this year.

3.1.3 We have identified 10 children for participation in the Lifelong Links programme. The project aims to improve outcomes for those children who do not have a plan to live with their family or secure permanence through adoption, by helping them to make lifelong links with people who are important to them. In turn, this should improve placement stability for those children. The programme will begin following initial training and set up of processes.

3.2 Looked After Children Profile

3.2.1 In February, we had 26 children admitted to care and only 6 children ceased to be looked after. This gave us a total of 645 LAC at the end of the month.

3.2.2 The rate of LAC per 10k population is 113.3%. The highest we have experienced has been 114.8% in August 2018. We are exceptionally high in comparison to our statistical neighbours who for 2018 were recorded at 87.8%.

3.2.3 The percentage of our children who ceased to be looked after due to permanence remains at 29% so far this financial year. This is an increase on our previous 2 years of 27.9% for 16/17 and 27.3% for 17/18. Permanence includes SGO, Residence Order and Adoption.

3.2.4 Table 1 provides a breakdown of the LAC population by age group against the latest national comparator data. This shows that, overall, Rotherham's LAC age profile follows a similar distribution to the national. The most notable difference being the lower proportion aged over sixteen (17% compared to 23%).

Table 1 – Age distribution of Looked After Children at the end of the month

Age Band	Number	% of total	Latest National comparative data (Mar-18)
Under 1	50	8%	6%
1 – 4	94	15%	13%
5 - 9	139	22%	19%
10 - 15	253	39%	39%
16+	109	17%	23%
Total	645		

3.2.5 Further to this the average age of children admitted to care has reduced from 10.5 at the start of 2018 to only 6 over the past six months. This is of relevance because CYPS performance data evidences that the younger a child comes into care the shorter the time they spend in care, the greater the chance of them moving to permanence and the less expensive their placement costs

3.2.6 The percentage distribution by legal status remains a consistent picture with 52% of children subject to full care orders, 30% on an Interim Care Order, 11% are on Placement Orders and 5% under Section 20. We have 1% (4 children) who are Accommodated with breaks.

3.3 LAC Plans

3.3.1 Our target for care plans is 95%. Our highest this year has been 92.8% in the summer with a low of 83.9% in January. At the end of February we had 87% of children with an up to date care plan. We are approaching year end, and by comparison, at year end 2017/18, we were at 89.5% of up to date care plans with a slightly lower number of LAC at 628. Care Plans will be the area of focussed activity for March in order to further drive up performance.

3.4 Reviews

3.4.1 Statutory Reviews over the last few months has maintained well with 93.9% of cases reviewed within timescale in the month of February. This has been an improvement on the earlier months this year, where we constantly sat between 80 and 90% up to the month of October. This is partly owed to the stabilisation of our IRO staffing. It must, however, be noted that we have a planned reduction in agency staff at the end of March 2019, therefore IRO caseloads will be closely monitored over the next couple of months.

3.5 Visits

3.5.1 Statutory visits have remained consistent across the year with 97.4% of visits up to date and complete within timescale. Further to this the quality of the recording of these visits also seems to have significantly improved over the course of the past 12 months as evidenced by the Head of Service whom reads the previous 3 statutory visits whenever opening a case file.

3.6 Placements

3.6.1 As is evidenced by research the best indicator of a positive outcome for looked after children is the extent to which they have been supported to remain living in the same placement or with as few placement disruptions as possible. Placement stability is most likely to be achieved by good matching processes; high levels of support provided to foster carers; and strong relationships being developed by social workers with their young people to ensure they are best placed to address any issues as and when they arise.

3.6.2 At the end of February we had 62.5% of LAC in long term stable placements, similar to the start of the year figure of 62.3%. We did reach a high of 69.7% in October, which was higher than the statistical neighbour average of 68.2%. However, as predicted through the initiatives to discharge children from care to secure

permanence such as SGO using the Right Child Right Care programme, some of those long term cases have now left care. Although a decline in performance these are, most importantly, positive outcomes for our children and subsequently, for the service in terms of capacity and demand management.

- 3.6.3 For stability through the number of placement moves, 13.4% of our LAC have experienced 3 or more placement moves in the previous 12 months period. This is a slight improvement since the start of the year at 14.4%, but a slight performance decrease since the low of 12.1% in the summer.
- 3.6.4 The number of LAC placed in family based settings including internal fostering, independent fostering, pre-adoption placements and those placed with parent/family/friends, remains stable at 82.9%, and slightly above the 81.1% at the beginning of the year.
- 3.6.5 There has been a steady increase in the numbers of children placed with parents but this evidences the increase in rehabilitation work being implemented by the LAC teams over the course of the past few months. Many of these Care Orders should be discharged over the course of the coming months.

3.7 Health and Dental

- 3.7.1 During the month of February, all initial health assessments that were undertaken were complete in time. This is the first time we have ever achieved 100% and is a reflection of the co-working with health over the last few months to implement changes aimed at improving this measure. The annual figure remains at 51.3%, which is lower than the 17-18 figure of 55.7% but looking forward, the improvements and escalation processes implemented should see an improved picture for 2019/20. We are, still working on these improvements and have outstanding issues to overcome, including the on-going requirement for specific parental consent to be given for S20 accommodated children and the option for children who achieve LAC status by virtue of receiving 75 nights short-breaks care, undergoing a desk-top IHA, given the significant range of other health appointments these children are likely to receive. A consultation process is currently being undertaken with the parents of these children with the likely outcome being that they do not want their child to undergo yet another health process.
- 3.7.2 For ongoing health assessments for the overall LAC cohort, we had 84.3% of LAC with an up to date assessment at the end of February. This is a decline in performance compared to previous months but slightly higher than the 2017/18 year end figure of 83.7%. However, delayed inputting could predict an increase in this figure when we rerun the reports next month. A service improvement that has taken some time to achieve, but will help combat this issue on a more permanent basis, is that the LAC

Nurse Team have now been given inputting rights onto Liquid Logic. This should eliminate much of the delay in recording. Also, the LAC Nurse is now co-located with the LAC teams at Riverside House. This should support further improvements in the whole Health Assessments process and continue to strengthen multi agency working.

3.7.3 Dental assessments were a key focus in performance activity during February. Subsequently, we hit a high of 91.9% of LAC with an up to date Dental Assessment, a significant improvement on the entire year.

3.8 LAC Education

3.8.1 Rotherham has a local standard to ensure that each PEP is of good quality and refreshed every term (rather than the annual minimum standard).

3.8.2 As reported at the last Corporate Parenting Panel, 97% of LAC had a PEP meeting during the autumn term 2018-19.

3.8.3 At the end of February, 94.6% of eligible LAC population had a Personal Education Plan. We have not fallen below 93.4% at any month in the entire year.

3.8.4 The performance and data function of the Virtual School is currently in transition and will soon be undertaken by the CYPS Performance and Quality team. As a result, future reporting will incorporate data on exclusions, attendance and progress within this report.

3.9 Care Leavers

3.9.1 There was a realignment of the performance reporting in December of the Care Leavers cohort to reflect the requirements of legislation. Therefore RMBC is now reporting performance on the wider cohort of young people identified as care leavers. This gives us a cohort of 300 Care Leavers at the end of February, a significant increase on the 239 at the end of November.

3.9.2 The percentage of Care Leavers with a Pathway Plan is at 83.9%. 82.9% have an up to date Pathway Plan. This is a slight improvement since we first increased our cohort in December to include a wider range of eligible young people, with the cohort growing even further this last 2 months (from 294 in December to 300 in February). The cases without a Pathway Plan tend to be young people aged 16. The majority of these young people will have an in date care plan and it will be addressed by transitioning young people to a pathway plan on Liquid Logic.

- 3.9.3 We have achieved a high this year of 97.3% of care leavers living in suitable accommodation at the end of February.
- 3.9.4 The number of care leavers who are in Education, Employment or Training has also improved to 65%. This is a significant increase since the year start figure of 61%, which was already placing Rotherham in the top quartile, and above the statistical neighbour average of 56%.

3.10 Fostering

- 3.10.1 At the end of February we had 67.6% of our LAC in fostering placements. This figure excludes relative/friend placements.
- 3.10.2 We have 148 in house fostering households. Despite approving a new household in February, this is a reduction of 2 carers since our last report following 2 de-registrations in January and 1 in February. This remains the most significant performance pressure for the LAC Service.
- 3.10.3 In the year to date, we have approved 10 new fostering households and have a further 13 assessments ongoing. 3 of these will be considered by Panel before the 1st of April.
- 3.10.4 The newly approved households have been negatively offset by the number of de-registrations we have had this year. A number of these have been resignations by carers who have undergone the LADO process, even where allegations were unfounded. As a lesson learned and a mitigating action to avoid resignation following future LADO investigations, the Fostering Team are developing a refined offer of support for carers undergoing this process. This will be supported by a revised Foster Care Allowance Scheme that is currently under review.
- 3.10.5 As previously reported, the Recruitment Team visit to Lincolnshire has now been arranged for March to assess if there is any learning to be had from their recruitment practices.
- 3.10.6 DLT have now approved the Foster Carer Diversity Project (previously named the Muslim Foster Carer Project) which will be having a soft launch on the 20th March and it is hoped that this will have a positive impact on our recruitment performance and subsequently, our in house fostering service.

3.11 Adoptions

- 3.11.1 Rotherham's policy is to persevere in seeking adoptive placements for all children for as long as it is reasonable to do so. Whilst this can impact on performance figures, this practice does give the necessary reassurance that the adoption service is 'doing the right thing' by its children by doing everything it can to secure permanent family placements.
- 3.11.2 We have achieved permanence through adoption for 31 children so far this year. This is already an increase on the 27 we achieved for the whole of 2017-18.
- 3.11.3 A third of the children adopted complete the process within 12 months of the children receiving their formal decision that they should be adopted.
- 3.11.4 The national target for the number of days between a child becoming LAC and having an adoption placement is 426 days. The average for our 31 adoptions so far this year is 385.3 days and well within the target.
- 3.11.5 The national target for the number of days between a child receiving a placement order and being matched to an adoptive family is 121 days. The average for the children adopted this year has been 212.5. However, note that the national average for last year was 220 days, for which we fall within.
- 3.11.6 Looking forward to 2019-20, we have a further 3 adoptive families who have lodged their application and are awaiting a court date; 11 children in their adoption placement for more than 10 weeks but the application is yet to be lodged; and a further 15 children in placement but for less than 10 weeks. This gives us a very good starting point for adoption performance next year.
- 3.11.7 For adopter recruitment, we have successfully approved 22 families this year, a significant increase on the 14 approved in 2017-18. This gives us a larger pool of adopters for the next financial year and will contribute to a positive budgetary impact in 2019-20.

3.12 Caseloads

- 3.12.1 An adjustment has been made for calculating average caseloads for Advanced Practitioners and Newly Qualified Social Workers. We now count AP's as 0.4 of their contracted FTE and NQSW's as 0.6 of their contracted FTE, to reflect the true capacity for Social Workers in these categories.

3.12.2 The maximum case load in February remained at 23 for LAC teams. The average caseload for LAC teams 1-3 has continued to increase throughout the year and is at a high of 19.2. Teams 4 and 5 have increased to an average of 16.5 cases. This is reflective of the high numbers of LAC, but in addition to this, there has been some long-term sickness which is being covered by colleagues in Team 4 for the foreseeable future. Subsequently, high caseloads does have an impact on performance overall.

4. Options considered and recommended proposal

4.1 The full corporate parenting performance report attached at Appendix A represents a summary of performance across a range of key national and local indicators with detailed commentary provided by the service director. Commissioners are therefore recommended to consider and review this information.

5. Consultation

5.1 Not applicable

6. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

6.1 Not applicable

7. Financial and Procurement Implications

7.1 There are no direct financial implications to this report. The relevant Service Director and Budget Holder will identify any implications arising from associated improvement actions and Members and Commissioners will be consulted where appropriate.

8. Legal Implications

8.1 There are no direct legal implications to this report.

9. Human Resources Implications

9.1 There are no direct human resource implications to this report. The relevant Service Director and Managers will identify any implications arising from associated improvement actions and Members and Commissioners will be consulted where appropriate.

10. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 10.1 The performance report relates to services and outcomes for children in care.

11. Equalities and Human Rights Implications

- 11.1 There are no direct implications within this report.

12. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

- 12.1 Partners and other directorates are engaged in improving the performance and quality of services to children, young people and their families via the Rotherham Local Children's Safeguarding Board (RLSCB). The RLSCB Performance and Quality Assurance Sub Group receive this performance report within the wider social care performance report on a regular basis.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 Inability and lack of engagement in performance management arrangements by managers and staff could lead to poor and deteriorating services for children and young people. Strong management oversight by Directorship Leadership Team and the ongoing weekly performance meetings mitigate this risk by holding managers and workers to account for any dips in performance both at a team and at an individual child level.

14. Accountable Officer(s)

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