



Member Report

Children in Our Care & Care Leavers Update Report Quarter 1

Report to:	Borough Council
Report from:	Cabinet Member for Children & Families
Portfolio:	Children & Families
Report Date:	July 2024
Decision Type:	Executive
Council Priority:	Meeting Residents' Needs

HEADLINE POSITION

1. Summary of report

- 1.1 This report provides an update to Corporate Parenting Board about the work undertaken by the Children & Families Directorate, in respect of children and young people who are in our care and our care experienced young people. Information provided covers the second quarter of the financial year which includes April, May and June 2024.
- 1.2 There is a specific focus on the work that the Service has been doing to support some of our most vulnerable children and gives key information on the activity of the Children in Our Care and Care Leaving Service; Our Virtual School Service as well as information in relation to our Vulnerable, Exploited, Missing and Trafficked (VEMT) young people.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 It is recommended that this report is noted by members.

DETAILED PROPOSALS

3. What are the objectives of the report and how do they link to the Council's priorities?

- 3.1 The objective of the report is to provide a quarterly update on activity pertaining to those children and young people who require our care, providing data and analysis to support members in their understanding of the work that is undertaken, the impact that the work has and the level of demand that the service has. It will also highlight the positive work that is on-going as well as future plans for the service.
- 3.2 This quarterly report links to the Council priority of meeting residents' needs.

4. What options have been considered?

- 4.1 The report and performance data are to be noted only, decision/options are not required.

5. Impact Assessment

- 5.1 Social Value – The Services detailed provide support to some of our most vulnerable children in Redcar and Cleveland. They seek to provide them with a service that gives them the best opportunities to thrive and develop within our communities.
- 5.2 Legal – The work undertaken within this area are governed by Statutory requirements.
- 5.3 Financial – By providing our children and young people with the right support, education and homes we will reduce the number of moves while they are in our care, we will reduce a reliance on external costly placements and support our children and young people to achieve and reach their full potential as adults.

6. Service Updates

6.1 Fostering Team

- 6.1.1 Over the months of April, May and June we have had 8 initial inquiries from potential foster carers, 7 of whom have progressed to initial assessment. We have had two fostering households who have now been approved at panel. One is a lady who specialises in caring for separated migrant young people and who is currently caring for a young person from Sudan. The other carer is a single male carer, who is approved for one short term placement and one respite only placement. He also has a child in placement and has cared for several children on a respite basis, since being approved.
- 6.1.2 We continue to have a high number of requests for connected carers assessments, this allows children and young people to be placed within their family and friends network, rather than stranger foster care.
- 6.1.3 Fostering fortnight took place on the 13th – 26th May whereby the fostering team were out recruiting potential foster carers from the Redcar and Middlesbrough areas. There was an opportunity to meet with our foster carers in the Parkway Centre in Middlesbrough, a drop in at Little Acorns Café in Skelton and a fostering walk around Locke Park. As always there were many people who came to chat to us, and it is hoped that these conversations will result in fostering applications in the near future.
- 6.1.4 The fostering team were also happy to be invited to the opening of the community

centre in Loftus in May, where the team were able to talk to the residents of Loftus and explain the recruitment drive for fostering. As well as networking with the community, our RCBC foster carers attended, and discussed, how they will organise events in the local community to fund raise for the fostering team, these events include a possible bingo and pie and peas night.

6.1.5 The foster carer coffee mornings have continued to be very successful and every month we see number of attendees increase. These coffee mornings are held in both the Central and East Cleveland areas of Redcar and are an opportunity for carers to meet each other in an informal setting, have a piece of cake and a chat. The team have received excellent feedback from carers regarding how helpful it is to meet with other carers and offer support to one another.

6.1.6 The fostering team has recruited a new business administrator and a new social worker and there is agreement for a Deputy Team Manager, a recruitment officer and one and a half new social work posts. This is part of a drive to support the team to ensure that the recruitment and retention of foster carers, remains our priority.

6.2 Children in our Care (CIOC)

6.2.1 On Wednesday 12th June the 'Have Your Say Group'(HYS), supported by the Junction and Redcar and Cleveland staff, hosted the Children in Our Care Awards, which was held in Redcar Civic Centre. There were over one hundred nominations for the awards such as 'best friend award', 'overcoming difficulties award', 'most inspirational learner award.'

6.2.2 The event was attended by our children in care and their carers, and alongside the award presentations, there were fun activities and entertainment. It was inspiring to see the young people so involved in delivering the awards evening. The confidence from the some of the young people was amazing, and it was particularly impressive to see some of the quieter members of the HYS group growing in confidence, taking to the stage to present.

6.2.3 Feedback on the evening was really positive and these views will inform and shape next year's event.

6.2.4 During the later stages of the awards evening planning, the Have Your Say Group started a music project, which will run for 8 -12 weeks. Through the music project the group are creating a piece of music, which will be used as a background for a short film used to promote the positive aspects of being a young person in care.

6.2.5 The group have worked incredibly well in the music project, individual children and young people are working on specific areas – rapping, bass guitar, singing, drums etc. The music leaders have done a fantastic job bringing together the

young people's individual skills. It has been incredible to see the confidence blossom as the project has developed.

- 6.2.6 Attendance in the Have Your Say group sessions has declined to an average of 7 young people. 3 siblings have stopped attending, which alongside absence due to recent exams, has affected the size of the group. In terms of expanding the HYS Group, the Awards evening did create some interest and the team are anticipating an additional 4 young members.
- 6.2.7 Focussing on expanding the HYS group membership, the Junctions new Youth Voice Coordinator will make a link and attend foster carer support meetings in the hope to raise awareness of the group and recruit additional young members.
- 6.2.8 The group have started to make links with the Regional Children in Care Council (CICC) and are invited to the regional CICC meetings. This will provide an opportunity for children and young people to meet their peers and contribute to shaping practice and policy both locally, in Redcar & Cleveland, as well as regionally.

6.3 Migrant Young People

- 6.3.1 The Team have been busy this quarter preparing and hosting a Refugee Event, which was attended by over 150 people. This was a fantastic day providing an opportunity for our young people to tell us about 'home'.
- 6.3.2 Guest Speakers included Omaid Badr, National Social Worker of the Year, who gave an inspiring and motivational speech. Music and entertainment was provided by the Rhythms of Africa Marimba Band. Everyone enjoyed food, danced and had a fantastic day celebrating with our young people.
- 6.3.3 Following research from BASW (British Association of Social Workers) and, in consultation with our young people, we now refer to young people as separated migrant young people. Our young people tell us that the word 'unaccompanied' makes them feel like parents / family have left or abandoned them. They say they prefer separated migrant young person / care leaver as they are separated through no fault of themselves or family.
- 6.3.4 During this quarter the Education Employment and Training Worker, in conjunction with North York Moors, arranged a two-day residential for Care Leavers. The group took part in a range of activities around Danby Moorland Centre including a short orienteering course, team building activities, shelter building and fire, then after lunch walked on to the glider station.
- 6.3.5 Teesside Karting, South Bank, have provided volunteering opportunities for our young people in catering, administration, gardening, being a Handy Person and Track Marshall. One of our Care Leavers has started volunteering and

thoroughly enjoyed himself, he had a Health & Safety induction followed by cleaning the Go Karts and office space. To end the day, he was offered a treat of a 30-minute Go Kart experience that he thoroughly enjoyed.

6.4 Care Leavers & Support

- 6.4.1 At the end of June 2024 there were a total of 131 Care leavers being supported by the Service. This is made up of 100 18–20-year-olds and 31 aged 21 years plus. There are 120 young people living in suitable accommodation with the remaining young people either in prison or homeless. The team maintain links with these young people and when they accept a service continue to support and advise them.
- 6.4.2 External funding has been secured to develop a Hub for care leavers at the Target office, this will see the ground floor of the Target building become a ‘home from home’ for our care leavers. We aim for the opening of the Hub in late 2024, it will be an integral part of central support and offer services, which will improve young people’s independent living skills and, in turn, their opportunities for success. Care leavers have been involved in the planning and development of the Hub.
- 6.4.3 The Local Authority have been successful in securing funding through Anglo American to implement a peer mentoring programme. The programme will build on independent skills for children in our care and care leavers, supported and guided by care experienced individuals.
- 6.4.4 Last month, in co- production with our care leavers and the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum the Leaving Care team updated the ‘21 plus’ process. The updated offer ensures that as ‘good’ corporate parents we continue to strive for the best for all care leavers regardless of age.
- 6.4.5 The majority of our Care Leavers tell us that they know and understand their ‘rights and entitlements’ as a care leaver from Redcar and Cleveland, however, at times young people transitioning to the leaving care service from the social work teams, have not fully understood. To support this at an early age, the team are working with young people in our Care Leavers Forum to produce a Guide in leaflet form.
- 6.4.6 In terms of achievements for young people in the quarter we have:

A young person successfully completed level entry Maths and English so that she can start a childcare course in September.

Two young people, despite experiencing some significant mental health challenges, were successful one secured a place on paramedic sciences at Teesside University, whilst another completed level 2 digital art.

One young person secured their own tenancy within the borough.

A care leaver who, when initially supported by the service, refused to accept support and did not always make wise decisions around her lifestyle choices. Looking forward 3 years, she is now thriving as a mum, managing her own tenancy, and is confident in her decision making. So much so that she understands where she wants to take her career and is working hard to achieve this.

6.5 Virtual School Update

- 6.5.1 Our previous Virtual School update of data was from the end of the spring term 2024; as the summer term is not yet completed, any further data analysis is unviable at this point. Key performance indicators will be provided at the next update for the summer term, and cumulatively for the academic year.
- 6.5.2 We recorded in the previous update that the attendance of Children in our Care had improved significantly from the previous year's figure at this point - an increase of almost 3%. As we are not yet at the end of the current term, in dept analysis is not appropriate but it looks highly likely that our numbers of persistently absence and severely absent young people has decreased dramatically. As soon as the academic year is complete, this will be confirmed.
- 6.5.3 As discussed in the previous update, Virtual School remain concerned about the high number of suspensions and the days lost to learning. However, it appears that so far this term, in comparison with the previous summer term, as a percentage of our cohort there are some green shoots of progress.
- 6.5.4 Despite this upturn in suspensions, we regrettably report the first permanent exclusion of a child in our care this term. The complications regarding their move to an out of area school were such that we were not able to find an alternative solution without the school having to issue the PEX. Usually within R&C, schools work with us to find a different resolution. However, the young person is now successfully placed in a school outside of our area and has settled well, making progress and their behaviour and attitude towards learning have much improved.
- 6.5.5 Back in the summer of 2023, Caedmon, Whale Hill and Grangetown Primary pupils joined together over a half term for a weekly session of drama activities in a project set up by RCBC Virtual School, in collaboration with Blue Cabin and the Mee Mee Theatre. Whilst this was some time ago, we are delighted to announce that this project was nominated in the *Chris Drinkwater Creative Health in Primary Schools Awards 2024* and received the runner up prize. The aim of the project was to develop confidence, build relationships, develop creative skills and for the young people to achieve a national award through Arts Award. Thanks go to all the brilliant children and staff at Caedmon Primary, Grangetown Primary and Whale Hill Primary, Rachel from Virtual School, our artist Pady O'Connor and Jane Grey at Blue Cabin.

- 6.5.6 The current Deputy Headteacher of the Virtual School, Pauline Douglas, has been appointed to take over the headship from September 1st. Therefore, a comprehensive handover will take place over the summer, with a smooth transfer of information, systems and processes.
- 6.5.7 Appointments for the post of Deputy Head of the Virtual School, and lead for the Extended Duties of the Virtual School and in process and will be concluded by the end of July with personnel in place for Sept 2024.

6.6 Exploitation Arrangements

- 6.6.1 We have continued our work supporting vulnerable children and young people who are at risk of or who are being exploited through our VEMT arrangements (Vulnerable, Exploited, Missing & Trafficked – VEMT). We continue to respond to worries about these vulnerable children and young people and the way they are targeted by Organised Crime Groups who are operating in the Borough. Recently this has included a significant escalation in the use of serious and targeted violence in our communities with some young people being both victims and alleged perpetrators of harm.
- 6.6.2 We continue to make great progress with formal launch of our SAFE - team (Safeguarding Adolescents from Exploitation) which took place on 30th April 2024. By then, all posts in the SAFEW team had been recruited to and we were able to host a very successful launch event which was attended by 72 people from across the children's services directorate and our partnerships. We shared information about the progress of our No Wrong Door children's hub, our ROTH practice, the changes we have made to our missing from home "return home interview" practice and celebrated the launch of our SAFE team, the resources we have developed for practitioners and families, and the imminent launch of our SHiFT practice.
- 6.6.3 Attendees provided a wealth of feedback and commented upon their learning through the event:

"In awe of all the work going on to support and safeguard."

"Lightbulb moment! Fantastic way of working through contextual concerns and risks."

"Fab support to have for young people, families and children."

"Focus on prevention, exploitation and offending - WELL Done!"

"Great presentation, lots of work is well underway, your mapping plans are excellent."

Excellent day - felt "worth the time off site from academy" huge Thank You!

6.6.4 Our next steps for the team include further engagement with our education partners, community engagements, working with more young people and continuing with case mapping which provides information and updates to our workforce and partners.

6.6.5 We continue to discuss a high number of children and young people though our weekly VEMT meeting, whilst not all are children in our care, this is indeed indicative of the growing concern for children and young people who experience harm through exploitation and risk outside the home within our communities, online and due to missing from home or care incidents.

6.6.6 At the end of June 2024 there were 26 young people who were active within our VEMT monitoring and tracking processes. Of the 24 young people identified, 19 were criminally exploited and 5 sexually exploited and 2 being overseen due to significant concerns relating to missing episodes.

6.7 SHIFT

6.7.1 The launch event also introduced to our partnership the work that is now commencing with SHiFT. We have recruited to all posts in the team; the team manager commenced on the 29th of April and the rest of the team on the 13th of May. We have worked with our partners to determine our R&C pathway and we have invited partners to nominate those children about whom they are 'most worried' so that we could identify the first cohort of 27 children. Following nominations and shortlisting during May, work has now commenced on an individual child basis, 11 of the children and young people nominated are cared for children, some of who reside in high cost and/ or out of area placements and are deemed to be at high risk of offending and/ or exploited. The team are based at Golden Boy Green which provides a very central location for them to reach all our communities. The team are working very closely with the SAFE team with their work is overseen by the Service Manager for Vulnerable Adolescents and Independent Review and by SHiFT national. We will report to a strategic board on a quarterly basis to monitor progress and of course to celebrate successes.

6.8 No Wrong Door

6.8.1 Our No Wrong Door Hub has been registered with Ofsted since January 2023. We have had 5 young people reside in the home since it opened, three of whom remain resident with us. We are proud of the work that the team in the Hub have done to support these young people and how they have been instrumental in reducing worries for two young people with a significant reduction in missing from home episodes, criminal behaviour and the evident savings for the local authority in having the young people live in our own home as opposed to an external provider.

6.8.2 The team have continued to provide support to other young people who are on

the edge of requiring our care. At the end of June 2024, 13 young people were open to Edge of Care with 10 cases being closed during the quarter, meaning the team had worked with 23 young people throughout the quarter.

6.9 Looking Forward

- 6.9.1 Following the success of the CIOC awards evening the team are organising an event for our Care Experienced young people to take place later on in the year.
- 6.9.2 The Fostering team are working closely with Foster with North East (FWnE) and our Comms team. The team are planning a recruitment campaign from September 2024 to help generate interest and increase our mainstream carers.
- 6.9.3 The Fostering Team are arranging a summer party for our children in care and their foster carers and this will take place on 26th July.
- 6.9.4 The building designated for the Asylum Through Care team and accommodation for young people should be finalised and ready to be occupied in Quarter 2.

7. Consultation and Engagement

- 7.1 The report provides a review of Quarter 1.

8. Contact Officer

- 8.1 Name: Victoria McLeod
- 8.2 Position: Assistant Director for Children's Social Care & Early Help
- 8.3 Email Address: victoria.mcleod@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk
- 8.4 Telephone Number: 01642 771674