

# CORPORATE PARENTING SUB-COMMITTEE



**Wednesday, 16 November 2022**

**Democratic and Members' Services**

Fiona McMillan  
Monitoring Officer

**16:00**

New Shire Hall  
Alconbury Weald  
Huntingdon  
PE28 4YE

**The Red Kite Room, New Shire Hall, Alconbury Weald,  
Huntingdon, PE28 4YE  
[Venue Address]**

## **AGENDA**

**Open to Public and Press**

**Meeting theme: Education**

**1. Membership Update**

*To note the appointment of Councillor Lucy Nethsingha to the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee on 22 September 2022, and the appointment of Councillor Nethsingha as Vice Chair of the Sub-Committee by the Children and Young People Committee on 19 October 2022. Councillor Slatter becomes a substitute member of the Sub-Committee.*

**2. Apologies for absence and declarations of interest**

*Guidance on declaring interests is available at  
<http://tinyurl.com/ccc-conduct-code>*

**3. Minutes of the meeting on 3 August 2022 and Minutes Action Log 1 - 12**

**4. Petitions and Public Questions**

<b>5.</b>	<b>Participation Report</b>	<b>13 - 16</b>
<b>6.</b>	<b>Cambridgeshire Foster Carers' Association Report</b>	<b>17 - 22</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b>Virtual School Report</b>	<b>23 - 56</b>
<b>8.</b>	<b>Regional Adoption Agency Annual Report 2021-22</b>	<b>57 - 120</b>
<b>9.</b>	<b>Children in Care and Care Leavers in Education, Employment and Training Action Plan</b>	<b>121 - 126</b>
<b>10.</b>	<b>Performance Scorecard</b>	<b>127 - 134</b>
<b>11.</b>	<b>Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee Workshop and Training Plan</b>	<b>135 - 138</b>
<b>12.</b>	<b>Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee Agenda Plan</b>	<b>139 - 142</b>

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The Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee comprises the following members:

Councillor Anna Bradnam (Chair) Councillor Lucy Nethsingha (Vice-Chair) Councillor Alex Bulat Councillor Anne Hay Councillor Mac McGuire

Clerk Name:	Richenda Greenhill
Clerk Telephone:	01223 699171
Clerk Email:	Richenda.Greenhill@cambridgeshire.gov.uk



## Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee: Minutes

Date: Wednesday 03 August 2022

Time: 4.00pm – 6:14 pm

Venue: New Shire Hall, Alconbury Weald

Present: Councillors A Bradnam (Chair), A Bulat, A Hay, P Slatter (Vice-Chair)

Non-voting observer:

K Arrowsmith – Chair, Cambridgeshire Foster Carers' Association (from 4.10pm)

### Meeting theme: Placements

#### 36. Notification of the appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee for 2022/23

Councillor Bradnam was appointed as Chair and Councillor Slatter as Vice-Chair of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee by the Children and Young People Committee on 17 May 2022.

#### 37. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mac McGuire.

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 38. Minutes – 23 March 2022 and Action Log

The minutes of the meeting on 23 March 2022 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair. The action log was noted.

#### 39. Petitions and Public Questions

There were no petitions or public questions.

#### 40. Annual Health Assessment Audit Report for 2021-22

The Sub-Committee received an audit report on health assessments completed between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022, during pandemic pressures. Through the period, children were seen both in person and virtually and the overall quality of cases reviewed was found to be good. Recommendations within the report included: improving carers' understanding of the Strength and Difficulty Questionnaire (SDQ); ensuring availability of interpreters; signposting unaccompanied asylum seekers to relevant charities and the Refugee Council; improving access to routine dental checks; and avoiding telephony appointments when possible. The service had acted on audit recommendations, making mouth check training available to help professionals assess levels of dental need; and distributing SDQ pathway leaflets to foster carer forums countywide.

Carers now received the SDQ through secure email and a separate explanatory email listed timescales. The Chair of the CFCA suggested this change may have affected SDQ completion rates, but that existing mentoring and leafleting would assist carers to adapt to this change.

In response to the report, Sub-Committee members:

- Noted that SDQ questionnaires were scored by an external website after the questionnaire had been completed.
- Established that communication occurred predominantly through email, however, if an email address was not available a letter was sent. The service also assisted with completion of the SDQ through alternative means. The Chair of the Sub-Committee suggested deadlines within the SDQ explanatory email were highlighted in bold.
- Clarified that the small sample size was due to the impact of coronavirus but normally, and for the 2022/23 audit, the Initial Health Assessment and Review Health Assessment audit sample size would be double.
- Noted that the service used a national provider of translation and interpretation services to increase the breadth of their translation offer. Members suggested community organisations, such as local charities, might offer another resource.
- Agreed to collaborate to formulate a directory of local groups available to support young unaccompanied asylum seekers.
- Requested that, in future reports, all acronyms be written out in full the first time.  
**Action.**

The acronym CRAFTT stood for a health screening tool designed to identify teenagers at risk of substance abuse.

It was resolved to:

- a) Note the content of the report.
- b) Raise any queries with lead officers.

#### 41. Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report 2021-22

The Sub-Committee received a report on the activities of Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) in Cambridgeshire for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. A total of 1,655 Children in Care (CiC) reviews had been conducted virtually and in person. Within this, 51% of children were recorded as being in long-term foster homes and 28% were recorded to be progressing towards that. Over the year, there had been 25 foster family breakdowns (formerly placement breakdown) and 404 escalations of concern. This was a reduction from 506 escalations the previous year, with this reduction attributed mainly to practice improvements and the number of CiC reducing during the period.

Concerns raised by IROs included insufficient oversight of the service by management and delays in permanence planning. To mitigate concerns, the 2022/23 action plan included: a review of the existing mechanisms to create a constructive feedback loop between the IRO Service and Social Care; progression of the Pathway Planning Project; and strengthened IRO oversight of children missing from education or care.

In response to the report, Sub-Committee members:

- Clarified that number of children in care in March 2022 was 597, but in July 2022 was 614. This increase had been impacted by large sibling groups entering care and would continue to be monitored.
- Around a third of issues highlighted by IRO's related to accountability and record-keeping. To help address this the report template was being re-formatted to make completing it less onerous
- Recognised that the overall reduction in escalations was reflective of service improvements in particular areas.
- Suggested postcode mapping of foster carers and those under their care that specified whether the carer was in-house and/or offered specialist support. This would also give an indication of the geographic spread of foster carers. Action
- Noted that IROs worked in partnership with the service to deliver training in areas identified for improvement.
- Emphasised the importance of providing support to care leavers as they transitioned to adulthood.
- Noted that the contents page had been updated since publication to rectify dating on items 9 and 10.

It was resolved to:

- a) Note the content of the report.
- b) Raise any queries with lead officers.

#### 42. 'Siblings Forever' Project Report 2021-22

The Sub-Committee received a report providing an overview of the activities and impact of the Cambridgeshire Siblings Forever project 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, excluding a suspended period of activity during pandemic restrictions. One holiday for sibling groups had occurred in 2021-22 and a further two were scheduled.

In response to the report, the Chair noted how difficult separation at the end of the holiday would be for young people, but how positive the experience was overall. She asked her thanks be passed on to members of staff who had volunteered and made the event possible. **Action.**

The Cambridgeshire Siblings Forever Project was commended by the Assistant Director for Children's Services.

It was resolved to:

- a) Note the content of the report.
- b) Raise any queries with the lead officer.

#### 43. Participation Report

The Sub-Committee was advised that recent activities organised in collaboration with the Children in Care Council included: virtual and in-person half term activities; a music and performance skills project staged at the Junction; production of an ideal worker video which would be used for training and promotion; a 'Coming into Care' pack relaunch; the Annual Awards event; and young inspector checks. Scheduled summer activities included ice skating and farm trips.

In response to the report, Sub-Committee members:

- Commended the work of the Children in Care including the ideal worker videos and young person's inspection report.
- Asked that the proforma for a pen picture of Sub-Committee members be re-sent.

#### **Action**

- Asked whether councillors could see the Care Experience Roadshow planned in order to dispel myths and stereotypes around children in care.
- Noted that around half of children under Cambridgeshire's care were housed out of county. 10% of young people lived in Peterborough, including many older



unaccompanied asylum seekers. Online groups were available if these individuals wished to engage in the Participation Team's offer.

- Expressed that young people in care could also progress hobbies through community groups.
- Commended the videos shown at the recent Virtual School Multi-Agency Conference and suggested that these should be shared with children and young people accommodated outside of the county. Officers stated that these were available on YouTube. The Chair suggested that links to these videos should also be shared with all county councillors. **Action**

The Chair stated that it was encouraging that so many young people were choosing to be part of the Children in Care Council and the Care Leavers' Forum - often children and young people did not wish to be identified as being in care. She was also in discussion with officers regarding methods for increasing young people's engagement in informal Sub-Committee meetings.

It was resolved to:

- a) Note the content of the report.
- b) Raise any queries with the lead officer.

#### 44. Report from Cambridgeshire Fostering Service and Cambridgeshire Foster Carer Association

The Sub-Committee received an update on the service's engagement and development activity with foster carers both in and outside of the Cambridgeshire Foster Carer Association (CFCA). This included meetings with council chairs; a working group on carer; CFCA meetings; foster carer recruitment ambassadors; a mentoring scheme for foster carers; foster carer support groups; a New Carers event; and a training review. The report also addressed issues raised by the Cambridgeshire Foster Carers' Association such as transport to school and contact visits; raising the profile of the CFCA; and obtaining passports for children in care, which was recognised as a national issue. Arranging routine dental appointments remained a challenge and officers were working on this with health colleagues. The CFCA had also identified issues with social workers changing, and officers acknowledged the benefits to both children in care and foster carers of consistent social worker support. The CFCA would also like to see more accredited training opportunities made available to foster carers.

The Chair welcomed the collaborative work between the CFCA and officers to produce the report and emphasised the importance of ensuring the foster carers' views were accurately represented.

The Chair of the CFCA expressed pleasure with the report and the engagement with officers in its production, commenting that the voice of foster carers came through clearly. He highlighted the section relating to the feeling of isolation which foster carers

could experience as being of particular importance and stated that foster carers were keen to be involved in work around addressing transport issues. He praised the 'Siblings Forever' project, commenting that the CFCA was looking for opportunities for potential foster carers to get involved with activities during their assessment period and suggesting this was something which might be explored.

In response to the report, Sub-Committee members:

- Emphasised the importance of supporting and retaining the county's in-house foster carers, noting that any social worker feedback that a foster carer was feeling isolated or experiencing difficulties would trigger a retention visit to offer support.
- Impressed the importance of supporting eligible young people in care with applications for a British passport. The Member suggested asking Government to consider fast-tracking passport applications for children in care. The Assistant Director for Regional Adoption and Fostering offered to take this suggestion to the Regional Group of Assistant Directors of Children's Services. He reassured councillors that officers were doing everything possible to expedite passport applications and that they would continue to champion the needs of children in care in relation to this. **Action.**
- Noted that foster carer support groups were located in Cambridge, the Fens (Wisbech and March), Huntingdonshire and Ely.

The Chair stated that she would like a report back on how the commitments and targets contained in the report were being delivered. **Action.**

It was resolved to:

- a) Note the content of the report.
- b) Raise any queries with the lead officer.

#### 45. Cambridgeshire Fostering Service Annual Report 2021/22

The Sub-Committee received the Fostering Service annual report for the period April 2021 to March 2022 which used data from the fostering service self-assessment and Ofsted inspection. Key aspects included: foster carer retention – in 2021/22 four caring families had left the service, in 2020/21 this number was ten; safeguarding outcomes; foster panels; campaigns and training; compliments and complaints. It also outlined service priorities for the forthcoming year which aimed to improve recruitment, retention, resilience and reputation.

In response to the report, members:

- Obtained clarification that the service was supporting foster carers to expand their offer through additional training and myth busting. This would enable carers to accommodate more young people, a wider age range and emergency care.

- Commended the recent annual Fostering Panel Training Day and shared their experience that the Fostering Panel contained a good mix of people and skills sets. Officers stated that work was taking place around offering additional training opportunities.
- Thanked the report author for the report's inclusion of organisational changes, compliments, and evidence of robust complaint handling.
- Asked for an avenue of communication between Members and working groups.  
**Action.**

It was resolved to:

- a) Note the content of the report.
- b) Raise any queries with the lead officer.

#### 46. Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee Annual Report 2021 – 2022

The Committee received a report which detailed the work of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee 2021-2022. This included a review of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire [SDQ]; a letter to NHS England advocating better access to dental services for children in care; scrutiny of out of area foster homes; and supporting the Young Inspectors' inspection of supervised contact centres. Resulting service work had led to internal audit and independent reviewing officers [IROs] noting improvements in long-lasting foster family matching, statutory visiting, the fostering service and fostering allowances. Further, corporate outcomes for the service regarding accountability, health and education had been consistent through the pandemic. The officer noted that the report scorecard listed 632 children in care in 31 March 2022, compared to the 597 referenced previously (minute 41). This was due to the figure being adjusted to correct reporting errors.

In response to the report, Sub-Committee members:

- Recognised that the Independent Care Review recommended adoption of a model similar to the Regional Adoption Agency model: It proposed creation of regional care co-operatives to increase the market and meet sufficiency. This could make residential placement matching more systematic in Cambridgeshire, but concern was expressed that this could also reduce Cambridgeshire's ability to tailor its response to meet local needs. The Assistant Director for Children's Services emphasised that these proposals had not yet been formalised and there was a need to wait and see if they were translated into tangible recommendations. He offered a briefing note on the Care Review and the potential implications for the Council.  
**Action.**
- Welcomed the improvements in access to dental services which had been seen following representations made by the Chair, commenting that this showed the

importance of raising matters at the Sub-Committee and pressing for positive change for the Council's children in care.

- Stated that the Children in Care Council preferred to avoid the use of the term 'placements'. The term 'stability at home', rather than 'stable placements', should be used where possible.

The Chair thanked foster carers and social workers and recognised their dedication and care towards the children and young people in their care.

#### 47. Sub-Committee Workshop/ Training Plan

It was resolved to note and comment on the Sub-Committee workshop and training plan, subject to inclusion of training attendance on 7 April 2022 and 4 May 2022.  
**Action.**

#### 48. Sub-Committee Agenda Plan

The Chair asked that the dates and agendas of informal Sub-Committee meetings should be included on the agenda plan in future. **Action**

It was resolved to note and comment on the Sub-Committee agenda plan.

#### 49. Date of next meeting

Sub Committee members would meet informally and in private on 7 September 2022. The next public meeting would be on 16 November 2022.

Chair

## Action Log

### Summary

The Action Log is a list of all of the things that people have been asked to do at earlier meetings. It is included at each meeting so that members can check that everything is being done. It was last updated on 4 November 2022.

### Minutes – 17 November 2021

	Report title	Officer	Action	Update	Status
23.	Corporate Parenting Performance Report September 2021	Ricky Cooper/ Catherine York	The Designated Nurse for Children in Care and Service Director: Corporate Parenting to discuss data presentation prior to the next Committee meeting.		

### Minutes – 23 March 2022

	Report title	Officer	Action	Update	Status
	CFCA Report	Fiona van den Hout	The Assistant Director for Children's Services offered a note about the USPs and benefits of fostering for Cambridgeshire in comparison to an independent fostering agency.	Elected members are invited to view the Council's fostering website which sets out the benefits of fostering for Cambridgeshire County Council and our Unique Selling Points. The website can be accessed here: <a href="#">Fostering with us - Cambridgeshire County Council</a>	Completed

	Report title	Officer	Action	Update	Status
		Ricky Cooper	A training session on care leavers to be made available to all Members. Date TBC, mid-May onwards.	Meeting to discuss with officers on 11.07.22. Updated training plan to follow from then.	Open
		Ricky Cooper	A training session on children in care returning to live with their birth families to be made available to members of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee and Children and Young People Committee. Date TBC, mid-May onwards.	The service will be offering dates for this training in January 2023.	Open

### Minutes – 3 August 2022

	Report title	Officer	Action	Update	Status
	Annual Health Assessment Audit Report for 2021-22	All	Clarify acronyms used in reports.	Report authors reminded.	Closed
	Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report 2021-22	Olly Grant	Suggested postcode mapping of foster carers and those under their care that specified whether the carer was in-house and/or offered specialist support. This would also give an indication of the geographic spread of foster carers.		
	‘Siblings Forever’ Project Report 2021-22	Olly Grant	Pass on the Chair of the Sub-Committee’s thanks to members of staff who had volunteered at the Siblings Forever holiday.		
	Participation Report	Shalina Chandoo	Re-send the proforma for a pen picture to Sub-Committee members.	22.08.22: A template sent to all Sub-Committee members for completion.	Closed

	Report title	Officer	Action	Update	Status
	Participation Report	Shalina Chandoo	Consider sharing the links to the Children in Care Award videos to all county councillors.		
	Report from Cambridgeshire Fostering Service and Cambridgeshire Foster Carer Association	Ricky Cooper	Ask the Regional Group of Assistant Directors of Children's Services whether there would be a benefit in asking the Government to consider fast-tracking passport applications for children in care.		
	Report from Cambridgeshire Fostering Service and Cambridgeshire Foster Carer Association	Despina Kaoura	At a future point, formulate a follow up report on how the commitments and targets contained in the report were being delivered.	A briefing report will be provided to members in advance of the January 2023 informal meeting to update on the progress of work streams. An annual overview will be presented in the Fostering Annual Report.	Open
	Cambridgeshire Fostering Service Annual Report 2021/22	Fiona van den Hout	Create an avenue of communication between Members and working groups.	Members can contact the working group leads on: Retention Working Group: <a href="mailto:Amanda.carter@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">Amanda.carter@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a> Recruitment Ambassadors: <a href="mailto:Anita.hewson@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">Anita.hewson@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a> Mentorship: <a href="mailto:Despina.kaoura@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">Despina.kaoura@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a> Training: <a href="mailto:Sue.king@peterborough.gov.uk">Sue.king@peterborough.gov.uk</a>	Closed
	Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee Annual	Ricky Cooper	Provide a briefing note on the Care Review and the potential implications for the Council.		

	Report title	Officer	Action	Update	Status
	Report 2021 – 2022				
	Training Plan	Myra O'Farrell	Include training attendance on 7 April 2022 and 4 May 2022.		
	Agenda Plan	Ricky Cooper	Include dates and agendas of informal Sub-Committee meetings on the agenda plan.		



## Participation Report

To: Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee

Meeting Date: 16 November 2022

From: Participation Team, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: No

Forward Plan ref: n/a

Outcome: To provide an update on the activity of the Participation Service in relation to Children in Care.

Recommendation: The Sub-Committee is recommended to:

- a) Note the contents of the report.
- b) Raise any queries with the lead officers.

### Officer contact:

Name: Shalina Chandoo  
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Tel: 01733 452540

### Member contacts:

Names: Cllr Anna Bradnam/ Cllr Lucy Nethsingha  
Post: Chair and Vice Chair, Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee  
Email: [anna.bradnam@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:anna.bradnam@cambridgeshire.gov.uk) [Lucy.Nethsingha@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:Lucy.Nethsingha@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01223 706398 (office)

## 1. Background

- 1.1 The Participation Team continues to promote the voice of children and young people in care by offering a variety of opportunities for engagement and feedback, and ensuring action is taken as a result of that feedback.
- 1.2 The October half term engagement activities for Children in Care (CiC) focused on the 'Every Word Matters' project, looking at language that is used in relation to children in care or with social care experience.
- 1.3 The Children in Care Council (CiCC) enjoyed the opportunity to meet Corporate Parents at the face-to-face informal Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee in September. The group gave lots of positive feedback following the meeting.
- 1.4 The Young Inspectors completed some re-inspections of Supervised Contact Centres in the October half term and also worked on a mural for one of the centres alongside local artists. The group won the Coram Voice 'A National Voice' Participation award on 25 October 2022 for their work on inspecting Supervised Contact Centres.
- 1.5 The Young Trainers continue to deliver training to prospective foster carers and are in the process of designing training to deliver as part of the assessed and supported year in employment for newly qualified social workers in the new year.
- 1.6 The Care Leaver Forum (CLF) successfully completed its performance project and designed and facilitated a workshop at the Virtual School Conference.

## 2. Main Issues

- 2.1 The Participation Team continues to promote opportunities for children and young people 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), Care Leaver Forum (CLF) and other participation groups including the Young Inspectors, have advertised the 'Every Word Matters' project launch and the Virtual Art Exhibition, and have promoted other relevant opportunities including training opportunities with the Virtual School, the Children's Commissioner's Big Summer Survey, courses for Care Leavers and an Explore University event with ARU Peterborough.
- 2.2 Children and Young People started working 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. In addition to supporting each participation group to provide their feedback on the project, the Participation Team organised focus groups for three different age groups in the October half term to gather views from young people. The focus groups included an engaging lyric writing workshop led by a local award-winning Music Practitioner and Rap Lyricist.
- 2.3 The annual Virtual Art Exhibition was launched in October and comprised of artwork submitted by children and young people in Peterborough and Cambridgeshire. Many of the art pieces were produced in workshops supported by the Participation Team and were gifted

to local family contact centres so they can be enjoyed by children and families who use those spaces.

- 2.4 The CiCC continue to meet in person on a monthly basis to work on their projects and consultation requests, meet professionals and give feedback on services. Recent consultations have included giving feedback on consultation booklets used for reviews to the Independent Reviewing Service Manager and discussing ideas for the development of a short pre-initial meeting video for young people with the Family Group Conference Service Manager.
- 2.5 The Children in Care Council (CiCC) enjoyed the opportunity to meet Corporate Parents at the face-to-face informal Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee in September. The group gave lots of positive feedback following the meeting, saying they understood a lot more than they had at previous meetings and appreciated the child-friendly style of reports presented. The CiCC would like to get to know members of the Sub-committee better and would like any members who have not yet returned a councillor profile to do so.
- 2.6 The CiCC have completed their work on the Coming into Care Packs and created a [video](#) to explain why they created the packs and what each contains. Packs have been made available to social work teams who work with children at the point they come into care. Feedback from young people who receive the packs has been requested and
- 2.7 The Young Recruiters continue to be actively involved in recruitment and helped conduct Open University social work course interviews and interviews for a new Family Group Conference Coordinator.
- 2.8 The Young Inspectors completed re-inspections of some of the Supervised Contact Centres in the October half term, to ascertain whether their recommendations had been implemented by the service. Further re-inspections are planned in the coming months, after which a new report will be drafted and shared by the group. The Young Inspectors were also involved in creating a mural for one of the centres alongside local artists during the October half term. The group has demonstrated its commitment to the project and was recognised by being nominated for, and winning, the Coram Voice 'A National Voice' Participation award on 25 October 2022.
- 2.9 The Young Trainers continue to deliver training to prospective foster carers and have received excellent feedback from attendees. The Fostering Service reported that some prospective carers widened the age range of children they would like to work with to include teenagers, following the training and discussion with young people. The Young Trainers are in the process of developing their training offer further by designing a session to deliver as part of the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) for Newly Qualified Social Workers.
- 2.10 The CLF successfully delivered their music, spoken word and performance skills and confidence-building project aimed at Children in Care and Care Leavers aged 15-21, using grant money awarded by the Cambridgeshire Community Foundation. The final event for this project was held at Cambridge Junction. Feedback from participants and Care Leavers organising the event demonstrated that the project had been an empowering experience for them during which they had developed skills and confidence.

- 2.11 The Care Leaver Forum (CLF) worked with the Virtual School to create a workshop for their multi-agency conference. This aimed to increase awareness of the issues faced by Children in Care in education settings, and to educate providers around how to effectively support young people. The Care Leavers used their own experiences, as well as the experiences of other young people to create the content for this presentation. Following this, Care Leavers have been working with the Independent Reviewing Service Manager on pathway planning training workshops for social care staff.
- 2.12 Recent consultation requests for the CLF include a request from the Designated Nurse for Children in Care for feedback on Health organisations and a request from the Leaving Care Service to discuss different accommodation options for young people when they become eighteen years old, if they cannot stay in the same place.

### 3. Alignment with corporate priorities

- 3.1 Environment and Sustainability  
There are no significant implications for this priority.
- 3.2 Health and Care  
There are no significant implications for this priority.
- 3.3 Places and Communities  
There are no significant implications for this priority.
- 3.4 Children and Young People  
The report above sets out the implications for this priority in section 2.
- 3.5 Transport  
There are no significant implications for this priority.

### 4. Significant Implications

n/a

### 5. Source documents guidance

- 5.1 None.

## Cambridgeshire Foster Carers' Association Report

To: Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee

Meeting Date: 16 November 2022

From: Ricky Cooper Assistant Director, Children's Services  
Fostering, Regional Adoption and Specialist Young People's Services

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: No

Forward Plan ref: n/a

Outcome: The Sub-Committee is being asked to note the work of the Cambridgeshire Foster Carers' Association with Cambridgeshire County Council Fostering Service.

Recommendation: The Sub-Committee is asked to note the contents of this report.

### Officer contact:

Name: Despina Kaoura  
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### Member contacts:

Names: Councillors Anna Bradnam and Lucy Nethsingha  
Post: Chair/ Vice Chair, Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee  
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Tel: 01223 706398 (office)

# 1. Background

## 1.1 Overview of activity

- 1.2 This report has been prepared to update the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee on participation activity and collaborative working with Cambridgeshire Foster Carers, and to provide an overview of relevant service development activity. Due to availability of the CFCA, this report has been drafted by Despina Kaoura and content agreed by the Vice Chair Tracey Stephenson.
- 1.3 The Cambridgeshire Foster Carer Association (CFCA) meet monthly where possible and the Annual General Meeting will take place in December 2022. During this quarter the CFCA were only able to meet in July and September due to August being a particularly busy holiday month.
- 1.4 Foster Carers representatives on the CFCA are:  
Kevin Arrowsmith (Chair), Tracey Stephenson (Vice-Chair), Ann Bradford (Treasurer).  
Stuart Currie, Julian Ayres and Nicky Flowers continue as Association members in support of the Chair and Vice-Chair (amongst others).
- 1.5 The CFCA have a wealth of fostering experience along with individual inter-personal skills which they bring with them to support the Foster Carer Community. The service works closely with the members of the CFCA throughout the year to ensure the voice and views of Cambridgeshire Foster Carers is heard and remains central to plans for service development.
- 1.6 The Fostering Service continues to attend meetings with the CFCA to hear feedback from Foster Carers on what is working well and what Foster Carers feel needs to be considered or addressed by the Fostering Service and Children's Teams within the wider Children's Services. The Head of Service for Fostering, the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting and the Support and Supervision Service Manager for Fostering are also invited to attend the CFCA meetings.
- 1.7 The Head of Service for Fostering continues to meet monthly with the Chair and Vice-Chair of both the CFCA and the Peterborough Foster Carer Community, which provides the opportunity to discuss service developments and plans in more detail, and to review feedback from Foster Carers received at formal meetings. In October, the Head of Service alongside key managers also hosted an informal meeting attended by a number of foster carers from across both Local Authorities which raised a productive discussion on topics such as: Cost of Living, re-imbursement for Children's emergency clothing and other items, complex needs of children coming into the care system and support needs of carers, the updated Clinical Offer, and new transport Portal, (amongst other topics).
- 1.8 The CFCA are invited to be involved in a range of work schemes being initiated within the service and are very proactive in providing their experience, knowledge, and skills to support service development.

- 1.9 The service continues to invite foster carers to be actively involved in and contribute to a range of new and established initiatives and working groups e.g., the existing carer retention working group. The carer retention work is ongoing with the group meeting monthly and continues to be supported by carers from both Local Authorities. The impact of the group and the work to develop our approach to carers at risk of stopping fostering (for any reason) has been evident in improved foster carer retention and positive feedback from carers.
- 1.10 It is clear that our new approach, which is informed by carer experience, is having a positive impact on the way we respond to our carers, and is becoming embedded into daily practice, for example supporting all carers undergoing any kind of investigation into their practice with access to peer support as well as more formal support as part of policy and procedure.
- 1.11 The group includes staff from across the service in order that retention of carers becomes embedded into the culture of the service from the starting point of our foster carers' journey into fostering.
- 1.12 The Fostering Recruitment Ambassadors from within the Fostering Community continue to work alongside the service supporting recruitment activity and raising the awareness of Private Fostering in their communities using their wealth of knowledge and experience of the fostering task. We are also supported in this area by our local elected Member Champion.
- 1.13 We continue to work together with carers to develop our Mentoring Scheme; mentors are allocated to and support carers who might be experiencing a difficult time in their fostering role, e.g., those who are subject to an allegation or Standards of Care investigation. Currently we have one Foster Carer Mentor who has been trained and supported by the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) to offer support to carers. We hope to increase this offer to at least two specialist mentors across the service. Experienced Foster Carer Mentors are matched to and provide support to carers who are new to the service, in assessment or undertaking a fostering task which may be unfamiliar to them.
- 1.14 Face to face (in person) Support Groups for carers have returned (following the pandemic) and are being held in easily accessible community venues across the County. The service ensures support groups are held in the north, south, east and west of the County to enable as many carers as possible to attend without significant travel time implications for carers. Some virtual Support Groups will continue for specific meetings i.e., for those times which may prove difficult for carers to attend, for instance evening meetings. There are four Support Groups for Cambridgeshire Carers including the group focussed on caring for teenage children. This is a monthly (virtual) Support Group and is offered to both CCC and PCC carers of teenage young people and the very specific needs they present with. This has been welcomed by carers from CCC and PCC. Both Foster Carer forums have been very proactive in attending and supporting these groups.
- 1.15 The Service has fully supported carers from the CFCA and PFCC to organise and attend a day out at Wicksteed Park with all the children and young people in their care and birth children. This activity proved to be very enjoyable for all, much fun was had by our children, carers and a meet and greet was hosted by our staff.

- 1.16 The service is busy organising the Annual Foster Carer Awards which is held to celebrate our Fostering Community. This is taking place on 18 November at Burgess Hall in St Ives. It is hoped that this event will be well attended and enjoyed by all.
- 1.17 The Fostering Service has implemented a 'Feedback Loop' System. This is a new initiative whereby specific issues raised by the Foster Carer forums are collated and discussed with the relevant areas of the wider children's services. Responses are collated and then shared with the Chairs and Vice-Chairs.

## Main issues

- 2.1 The CFCA held two meetings in the second quarter of 2022. The following matters were raised/discussed:
- 2.2 **Transport:** Foster Carers continue to experience issues with transport, particularly at the start of the new (Autumn) school term. Foster Carers report that there continue to be instances where taxis have not been provided for children's appointments or where a child's transport needs have needed to be changed, however carers are unable to make these changes. Carers also report that they continue to have difficulties making contact with Social Workers to inform of changes to journeys in a timely manner.
- 2.3 Foster Carers have suggested a system whereby the Foster Carer arranges the transport or makes changes to transport arrangements when needed with the transport service which is then authorised by the child's Social Worker. Foster Carers feel as they are managing the children's daily activities that this would support improvement.
- 2.4 **Service response:** The Fostering Head of Service and Service Manager will be discussing the suggestions provided by Foster Carers with the Assistant Director for Education Capital and Placement Planning. It is anticipated that this meeting will take place by mid-November. The service is also keen to explore a system whereby urgent requests for transport to school can be instigated by the Fostering Service at the point a child moves into a fostering household.
- 2.5 Representatives from the Fostering Service continue to attend all Transport Development meetings to share the experience of Foster Carers and the children they look after. There has been some delay with the launch of the new transport portal and that the team continues to work with all departments to ensure all service area needs are met.
- 2.6 **Junior ISAs and Trust Fund Accounts:** Foster Carers continue to seek clarity in regard to procedures around the opening of ISAs/Trust Fund Accounts for Children in Care. Ideally Foster Carers would like one point of contact to advise on savings/ISA accounts and a dedicated email for this activity. Foster Carers have also asked for an update in regard to pocket money expectations, the policy being on hold whilst carer feedback was considered.
- 2.7 **Service Response:** The responsible Service Manager will be escalating their request for clarity to colleagues in the Corporate Parenting Service and will discuss the need to develop a clear procedure for Foster Carers and suggestions regarding a single point of contact. We apologise that there has been a delay in achieving clarity around expectations relating to the pocket money Foster Carers should be giving children. We recognise this is outstanding and a request for resolution has been raised with senior management.



- 2.8 **Rising energy costs:** Foster Carers have recently received an additional payment from the Local Authority in recognition of the rising energy costs. The majority of carers have responded to say they are grateful for his recognition by the Local Authority. Carers, however, did express their concerns and some anxiety with regards to the issues around the increasing cost of living.
- 2.9 **Service response:** The service recognises the national, local and fostering specific challenges related to the increase in energy costs and general cost of living. In addition to the financial recognition which has been made to carers, the service has also shared, and will continue to share via the newsletter, details of organisations offering advice and guidance and Foster Carers can also access the Council's Employee Assistance Programme which also offers additional source of information and advice.
- 2.10 **Children's passports:** Foster Carers have raised that they continue to experience delays in passports being applied for. Carers have requested guidance with regard to who can and who should apply for passports and when this should be done.
- 2.11 **Service response:** The Fostering Service has been working with the wider Children's Service to develop a passport procedure. The Passports for Children in Care Procedure has been drafted and shared for comment with the Chair and Vice Chair. Once comments have been reviewed, the procedure will be implemented. This is planned for mid-November and the service will share this with both Foster Carer forums and staff followed by the wider Fostering Community in the December newsletter.
- 2.12 **Children's emergency clothing and personal items:** Foster Carers have raised that child newly into care can arrive at their home without the clothing and personal care items that they need. Whilst the cost for these is reimbursed to carers, Foster Carers are concerned that not all carers will have the have the funds to buy these items immediately.
- 2.13 **Service response:** The Fostering Service will ensure Supervising Social Workers are proactive in ensuring that carers are aware of what they can apply for in relation to the emergency clothing allowance as detailed in the Foster Carer Handbook. The Fostering Service is undertaken a review of its internal financial processes relating to this activity and will streamline where possible to ensure timely payment. Where there is uncertainty about who is responsible for funding certain items or activities, the Fostering Service is also responsible for resolving this with colleagues from across the wider organisation.

### 3. Alignment with corporate priorities

- 3.1 Environment and Sustainability  
There are no significant implications for this priority.
- 3.2 Health and Care  
There are no significant implications for this priority.
- 3.3 Places and Communities  
There are no significant implications for this priority.

3.4 Children and Young People  
There are no significant implications for this priority.

3.5 Transport  
There are no significant implications for this priority.

## 4. Implications

5.1 None

## 5. Source documents guidance

5.1 None.

## Virtual School Report

To: Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee

Meeting Date: 16 November 2022

From: Claire Hiorns, Headteacher, Virtual School

Electoral division(s): All

Forward Plan ref: n/a

Key decision: No

Outcome: To provide an overview of the Virtual School Service.

Recommendation: The Sub-Committee is recommended to:

- a) Note the content of the report, and
- b) Raise any questions with the lead officer

### Officer contact:

Name: Claire Hiorns  
Post: Virtual School Head Teacher  
Email: [Claire.Hiorns@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:Claire.Hiorns@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

### Member contacts:

Names: Councillors Anna Bradnam and Lucy Nethsingha  
Role: Chair/ Vice Chair, Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee  
Email: [anna.bradnam@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:anna.bradnam@cambridgeshire.gov.uk) [Lucy.Nethsingha@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:Lucy.Nethsingha@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01223 706398 (office)

## 1. Summary

1.1 This report is to provide an overview of the Virtual School Service.

### Background

- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to detail and evaluate the work undertaken by the Virtual School from September 2021 to August 2022 and to set out the key priorities for the academic year 2022-2023. Furthermore, it is to share the outcomes of the eligible cohort (children in the care of Cambridgeshire County council for a year or more as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022). This year the report also details outcomes (as relevant) to all children in care.
- 1.3 Every local authority in England must appoint at least one person to fulfil the local authority's statutory duty to promote the educational achievement of its children in care, wherever they live or are educated. This person is called the Head of the Virtual School. Within Cambridgeshire we have a team of education professionals that supports the Virtual School Head in fulfilling these responsibilities.
- 1.4 Cambridgeshire Virtual School support children and young people in care between the ages of 2 and 18. The Virtual School brings together information about children and young people who are in the care of Cambridgeshire as if they attend a single school.
- 1.5 Additionally, Cambridgeshire Virtual School provide information and advice for children previously in care including those who have been adopted from care and those under special guardianship and child arrangement orders. Cambridgeshire Virtual School are responsible for children previously in care attending a Cambridgeshire school or education setting.
- 1.6 The Virtual School has a non-statutory strategic leadership role for children who have or have had a social worker (in the last 6 years). This commenced from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021.
- 1.7 Cambridgeshire Virtual School sits within the Education Directorate. The Virtual School Head is line managed by the Assistant Director for School Improvement. The Virtual School has a 'management board' which offers both challenge and support to the work and direction of the Virtual School.

## 2. Main Issues

2.1 Please see Report.

## 3. Alignment with corporate priorities

3.1 Environment and Sustainability

There are no significant implications for this priority.

### 3.2 Health and Care

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

- Recovery Through Relationships (detailed within the report) is an evidenced based approach to respond to adverse childhood experiences (ACES) by being trauma responsive.

### 3.3 Places and Communities

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

- Recovery Through Relationships (detailed within the report) is an evidenced based approach to respond to adverse childhood experiences (ACES) by being trauma responsive.

### 3.4 Children and Young People

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

- The work of the Virtual School starts when a child turns two (as detailed within the main report)
- The extension to the Virtual School remit means that there is now involvement at a cohort level where the child or young person has a child in need plan or child protection plan, or has within the last six years (as detailed within the main report)
- Education support and outcomes for early years children, school aged children and destination data for post 16 is reported in the main report
- Almost 60% of Cambridgeshire children in care have a special educational need, the main report details the work of the Virtual School to support

### 3.4 Net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2050

There are no significant implications for this priority.

## 4. Significant Implications

### 4.1 None.

## 5. Source documents

### 5.1 None

## 6. Accessibility

### 6.1 An accessible version of the appendix to this report is available on request from [Claire.Hiorns@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:Claire.Hiorns@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)





## Head Teacher's Report 2021-2022

**Annual statement from Children in Care Council:** It's so important that children are supported to reach our goals in education. It's really good that this report shows achievements for different age groups as it makes things clear. We've given our views on how to improve our PEPs and are happy we're being listened to so that they can be made better for us.

**Annual statement from the Chair of the Virtual School Management Board:** The virtual school remains an essential ingredient in the delivery of the local authority's strategy to maximise opportunities for vulnerable young people, including the new addition of those with recent social care experience. Again, this year, the report demonstrates the increasing success of building strong relationships with multi-disciplinary practitioners, as the team work in co-ordinated delivery with all education and social care providers, of all types and sizes. Such an approach that pivots provision around a well-informed collective understanding of learner need and experience, is increasingly resulting in better outcomes, and is indicative of a service on a trajectory of improvement through its strong leadership and high-quality support. In this way, the report demonstrates very good use of local authority funding in a critical area in need of continued investment, supported by a committed management board whose voluntary work I thank again this year.

**Annual statement from the Director of Education:** This report highlights the impact of the continuous improvement journey of the Virtual School. The clear vision, strategic planning, and the collaborative approach to delivery, have continued to change life chances for the children of Cambridgeshire Virtual School. This report highlights the positive impact of the team and their work with settings to ensure high aspirations for our young people. A key priority this year has been the development of collaborative relationships with multi-academy trusts, which is now a strength of the virtual school. The approach has been recognised as effective practice by the Eastern Region and will be used as a model for other virtual schools. This is testament to the work of leaders and the team to ensure all young people are offered a quality provision.

**Annual Statement from the Director of Children's Services:** This report continues to demonstrate the importance of our children in care to the Council and how we continue to work together to strive for the best possible educational outcomes for our children and young people. It has been a challenging year, recovering from the educational and social impact of the pandemic, and I am really pleased to see so much activity and involvement from the Virtual School, social workers and our children in care themselves. I look forward to that collaboration continuing to blossom, and the ongoing achievements of all our children and young people.

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## 1 Introduction

The purpose of this report is to detail and evaluate the work undertaken by the Virtual School from September 2021 to August 2022 and to set out the key priorities for the academic year 2022-2023. Furthermore, it is to share the outcomes of the eligible cohort (children in the care of Cambridgeshire County council for a year or more as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022). This year the report also details outcomes (as relevant) to all children in care.

Every local authority in England must appoint at least one person to fulfil the local authority's statutory duty to promote the educational achievement of its children in care, wherever they live or are educated. This person is called the Head of the Virtual School. Within Cambridgeshire we have a team of education professionals that supports the Virtual School Head in fulfilling these responsibilities.

Cambridgeshire Virtual School support children and young people in care between the ages of 2 and 18. The Virtual School brings together information about children and young people who are in the care of Cambridgeshire as if they attend a single school.

Additionally, Cambridgeshire Virtual School provide information and advice for children previously in care including those who have been adopted from care and those under special guardianship and child arrangement orders. Cambridgeshire Virtual School are responsible for children previously in care attending a Cambridgeshire school or education setting.

The Virtual School has a non-statutory strategic leadership role for children who have or have had a social worker (in the last 6 years). This commenced from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021.

The Virtual School offer can be viewed on the next page.

Cambridgeshire Virtual School sits within the Education Directorate. The Virtual School Head is line managed by the Assistant Director for School Improvement. The Virtual School has a 'management board' which offers both challenge and support to the work and direction of the Virtual School.

# Cambridgeshire VIRTUAL SCHOOL OFFER

@CambsVS

cambslearntogether.co.uk

virtuelschool@cambridgeshire.gov.uk



## 2 Child and Young Person's Report Summary



**1795** children with  
a Social Worker

This year we have also started to promote education for other children with social workers including children in need and on child protection plans.



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE**  
**VIRTUAL SCHOOL**  
LEARN ASPIRE THRIVE ACHIEVE

Our new logo  
designed by  
you ☺

Learn

### Early Years About You

(Age 2 to 4) **20** children on roll at any point reaching **38** in the year.

Aspire

### Your Voice

At our conference, we worked with your social workers, carers and teachers to explore the best ways for us to hear your voice.

Thrive

### How We Helped

We have signed up to the Dollywood project, so that you each get a book every month until you are 5.

Achieve

### What You Learnt

This year you started learning against the new Early Years Framework, so we changed our PEP.

**82**

Unaccompanied  
Asylum-Seeking  
Children overall  
this year.



**198** families with  
children previously  
in care supported



Learn

### School-Aged About You

(Age 5 to 16) **374** children on roll at any point reaching **435** in the year. ideal worker films. Your overall attendance was 85%.

Aspire

### Your Voice

You told us that you didn't all know who your DT was and how they could support you. We worked with you to create DT cards and funded the ideal worker films, so your DTs know what you need.

Thrive

### How We Helped

34 of you took up our offer of additional careers information, advice and guidance.

### What You Learnt

**33%** of you achieved Good Level of Development at the end of Reception.

**46%** of you achieved the expected standard for reading in year 2.

**35%** of you in year 6 achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and maths.

**51%** of you achieved a 4 or higher in English GCSE.  
**37%** of you achieved a 4 or higher in maths GCSE

Learn

### Post-16 About You

(Age 16 to 18) **108** children on roll at point reaching **156** in the year. **120** of you have been in education, employment or training.

Aspire

### Your Voice

At the conference, our care leavers shared their experiences about how placement changes can impact education so that all professionals understand this better.

Thrive

### How We Helped

We have been tracking attendance at colleges and sixth forms so that we can offer early support if needed. Your average attendance was **73%** overall.

Achieve

### What You Learnt

**41%** of the courses studied have been level 3

**73%** of you in education have made expected progress or better.

**5** of our year 13 leavers are going to university.








## This year we have...

## Next year we want to...




 Trained your teachers, social workers and foster carers. 160 attended our big event


 Virtual Reality Training Offered


 Included your voice in training




- Train the leaders in the council so they understand what it is like to be care experienced.
- Support your designated teachers to teach other teachers how to help you in school.
- Provide more training so that schools understand about Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

 Pupil Premium Plus paid to schools


 About 60% was used to help with maths, English, science...


 About 30% helped with care and friendships


 About 10% helped in other areas such as speech and language



- Look at how the money spent helped you most. We will use this to help your teachers know how to use the money in future.

 PEPs quality assured

 Used data to create dashboards so we know who needs help, when

 Worked with your teachers, social workers and carers to find solutions



- Use the data to plan how best to help before a difficulty becomes too big.
- Use your ideas to make the PEP better for you.

 Supported 4 of you move to independent schools

 Helped schools and Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) to think about how to improve education for you

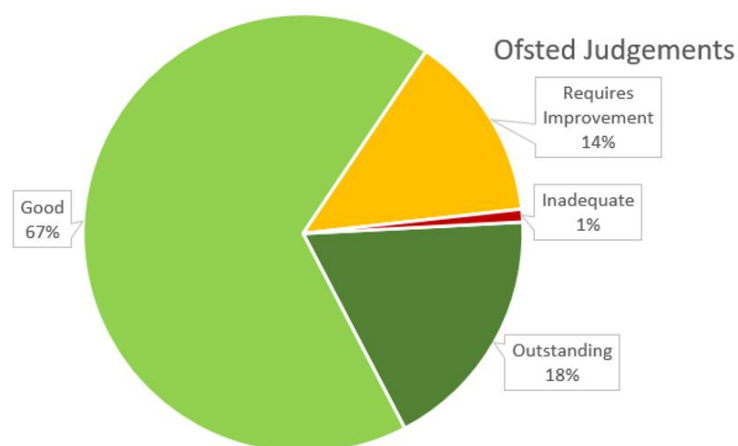
 We looked at the progress you made in school and talked to your teachers to make sure you were doing the best you can



- Support more of you into independent schools
- Include how to help children with a social worker with our Multi Academy Trusts (MAT) and school work.
- Work more closely with other teams that help children (including Special Educational Needs Team and admissions)

### 3 Children in Care Characteristics and Contextual Data

The national 8-year trend shows a gradual increase in the numbers of children in care; Cambridgeshire data does not mirror this. The number of Children in Care on roll with the Virtual School has decreased for this reporting period (May 2022) and the previous reporting period (May 2021). The decrease in numbers of children in care in Cambridgeshire coincides with the introduction of the family safeguarding model in Cambridgeshire. 48% of children in care are placed outside of Cambridgeshire; Cambridgeshire Virtual School have therefore worked with education settings across 44 different educating authorities.



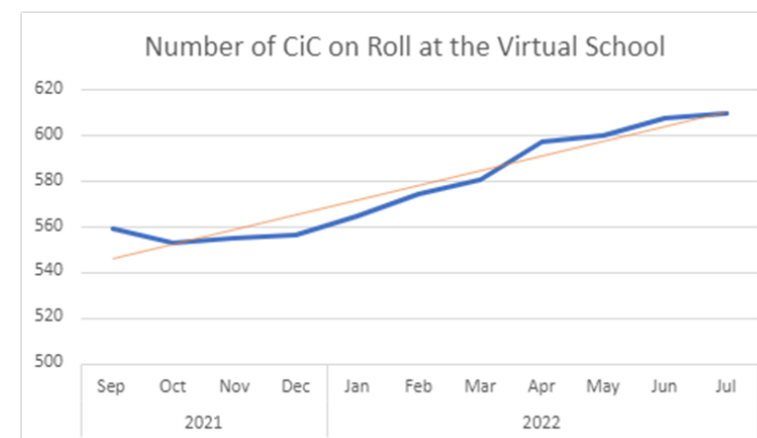
At point of school admission, the Virtual School promote admission to a school that is good or better.

Some children enter care whilst on roll at a requires improvement or inadequate rated school or the rating changes whilst the child is in attendance. In these situations, there is a process to decide whether it is in the child's best interests to move schools or remain where they are. Where a child attends schools judged as requires improvement or inadequate, their progress is monitored closely.

Typically, there is a much higher number of children in the older age range than in the younger years. Numbers increase across the academic year which impacts on rising caseloads within the team.

Source: Welfare Call (May 2022)

Category	May 2022	Decrease from May 2021	
Number of All Children on Roll	603	↓	68
Total Number Reception - Y11	415	↓	14
Total Number of Early Years	37	↓	5
Total Number of Post 16	149	↓	49



**Virtual School Daily Bulletin**
**22 Mar 2022 - The Dashboard figures below are updated weekly**
**Become Looked After 2 Cease CLA**
**3**


Date Received	Reason SOC 408 completed	Date of Status Change	CYP Name	DOB	Age	NCY	SwiftID	UASC	EHCP	School Name	Reason/Notes/ Moved to
17/03/2022	Cease CLA	15/02/2022		01/05/2004	17	13					Returned back to Sudan
21/03/2022	BLA	18/03/2022		14/05/2021	10 months	-4					
21/02/2022	Cease CLA	20/03/2022		20/03/2004	18	13					18th Birthday
21/03/2022	Cease CLA	20/03/2022		20/03/2004	18	13					18th Birthday
21/03/2022	BLA	11/03/2022		03/01/2022	2 months	-5					
18/03/2022	Placement Move	18/03/2022		18/01/2007	15	10					Huntingdon
21/03/2022	Placement Move	18/03/2022		18/01/2007	15	10					Wisbech

There is a high level of fluidity within the cohort; this includes children coming into care and ceasing to be in care. This is communicated via a bulletin to all Virtual School officers to ensure effective transitions and that the needs of all children are met without delay. Placement moves are also communicated through the bulletin.

33.6% of Cambridgeshire children in care have an EHCP which is higher than the 2019 figure of 29.3% but is broadly in-line with previous years. The national CiC cohort figure is 28.9% & statistical neighbour average is 36.5.%. The proportion of young people with education, health and care plans receiving provision in special schools is 34%, while the proportion in mainstream schools is 40%. The percentage of Cambridgeshire CiC who require special or additional support without an EHCP is currently 26% which is a decrease on the same figures for last year. The largest SEN need for children is social, emotional, and mental health.

Number of UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children)	
	Total
Years 7-9	5
Years 10-11	22
Years 12-13	55
Total	82

Source: Welfare Call (May 2022)

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children have no responsible adult, and therefore have child in care status. Cambridgeshire participates in the Dubs Amendment which means children and young people may be taken into our care as:

- Spontaneous arrivals within the county borders
- Transfers in from other local authorities

Over recent months there has been a rise in school aged unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

## Achievement Through Schools

In September 2019, Cambridgeshire Virtual School launched a new model which has a strategic focus designed to support education settings to develop and embed policy and practice which supports our cohorts. This is driven through advisory meetings, an increased training offer and an extended use of data to pinpoint next steps. The success of working with individual schools, alongside the national agenda of academisation, led to an extension of our strategic work to include multi-academy trusts. This was launched through the CEO network; 13 trusts engaged with this offer which has been recognised nationally and is being taken forward as The Eastern Region Virtual School Heads' priority in the forthcoming year.

Each MAT is provided with data which enables key performance indicators for their children in care to be compared with:

- all children within Cambridgeshire Virtual School
- all children in Cambridgeshire
- all children within the MAT

Through termly meetings, the MAT lead alongside the virtual school advisor uses the data to identify priority areas. An indicator of good practice tool provides a framework for MATs to consider how they may use their strategic influence to affect change across their schools. This has driven development in the MATs in:

- PEP quality
- Trauma Responsive Practice
- Attendance Monitoring
- Role of the Governor

In addition to the eastern region development, over the next year the advisory meetings with schools and MATs will be extended to include a focus on children with a social worker. The Virtual School has appointed an Assistant Head to drive forward the strategic and operational work within this area.

*The collaborative partnership with the Virtual School with the Eastern Learning Alliance has significantly improved the quality of provision that we are providing for Care Experience Children (CEC). The direct support from PEP Champion for schools has improved the practice at an operational level, whilst the work with senior leaders at the Virtual School has provide MAT leaders with professional support and challenge to ensure more robust and rigorous oversight is in place. The Virtual School Best Practice Tool was a great place to start with all schools carrying out a robust self-audit which led to an agreed action plan for each school that was managed by the Designated Teacher and shared with the MAT Lead and formed the basis of termly review meetings. The collaboration has also led to a more proactive approach to provision for CEC with a significant increase in the use of PP+ funding to broaden and enhance the support available in schools. Most importantly the collaboration has delivered professional support and challenge in appropriate measure underpinned by a high challenge low threat ethos. I would strongly recommend all MATs to engage in this level of collaboration with the virtual school for the benefit of their organisation but most importantly the benefit of CEC children in their schools.*

Deputy CEO, Eastern Learning Alliance

## Broadening Educational Pathways

Cambridgeshire Virtual School worked alongside the Royal Springboard Foundation 'Broadening Educational Pathways', to support access to independent schools for children in care. 4 children have been offered places and begin in year 7 and year 12 in September 2022. As part of the scheme, the children and schools are carefully matched, there is ongoing support and additional funding to enable success. Programmes such as this have been recognised as good practice in the Independent Review of Children's Social Care 2022.

## Training

There is a shared vision between Cambridgeshire Virtual School and SEND Services 0-25 to develop one consistent evidence-based approach supporting schools to be trauma responsive; this will be implemented through a tiered training offer. This will mean that children who have experienced trauma will feel safe, supported, understood and included so that they are ready to learn and achieve educational outcomes.

A twilight session has been developed and a modular approach has been designed. 17 schools have been trained. Following the training, one head teacher commented:

*I just wanted to say thank you again for the training the other week. Staff said after that it's the best training they've ever had and really enjoyed it. The reflections in the afternoon were really interesting and you could definitely sense the 'empathic shift' in the room. This has translated into a brilliant first week at school. The team have really supported one another and have worked really hard with a solutions-focused attitude to support children.*

*Headteacher*

The training has also been delivered to:

- Assistant Directors and Heads of Service within the Education Directorate
- Education Safeguarding Team
- Early Career Teachers (conference)



The Virtual School conference was attended by 160 professionals including designated teachers, social workers, IROs, foster carers and partners within the local authority education directorate. The event focused on 'hearing the voice of our children and young people'. The Children in Care Council animation 'our ideal worker' was shared, there were various workshops including one led by two care leavers. The conference led to the formation of a working group to consider next steps to meaningfully hear the voices of our children and young people. Attendees' feedback on what they valued most included:

*Felt very valued as a 'partner' of the Virtual School*

*Empowering, inspiring and affirming*

*Loved that there was a big focus on better ways to gather the child's view*

*I attended with a colleague and we have a lot to take back to share with our schools and to support the way all staff work with our CIC and vulnerable young people*



Lauren Hayes  
@Laurenn\_Hayes

Being part of a packed conference room when @jazampawfarr said 'stand up if your work has changed someones life' and seeing every single one of my colleagues; SW's, teachers, carers, IRO's, standing was so powerful ❤️

16:44

In addition to the pre-recorded training available on our you tube channel; the Virtual School has offered:

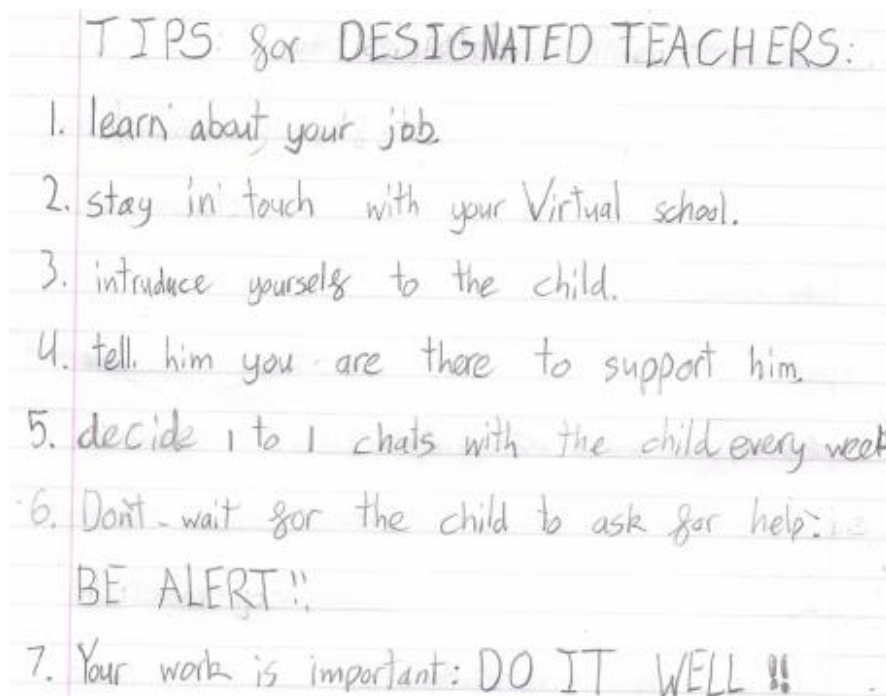
Designated Teacher Training (children in care), Designated Teacher Training (children previously in care) and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Training (outsourced).

There has been a focus on including the voice of children and young people and working collaboratively with foster carers, adopters and designated teachers on the training. An example of this is advice to designated teachers provided by a Cambridgeshire child who is adopted (featured left).

Cambridgeshire Virtual School have widened the training offer for carers to include Independent Fostering Agencies. 121 carers have accessed training, with the mean evaluation rating of 9.4 out of 10. Themes have covered:

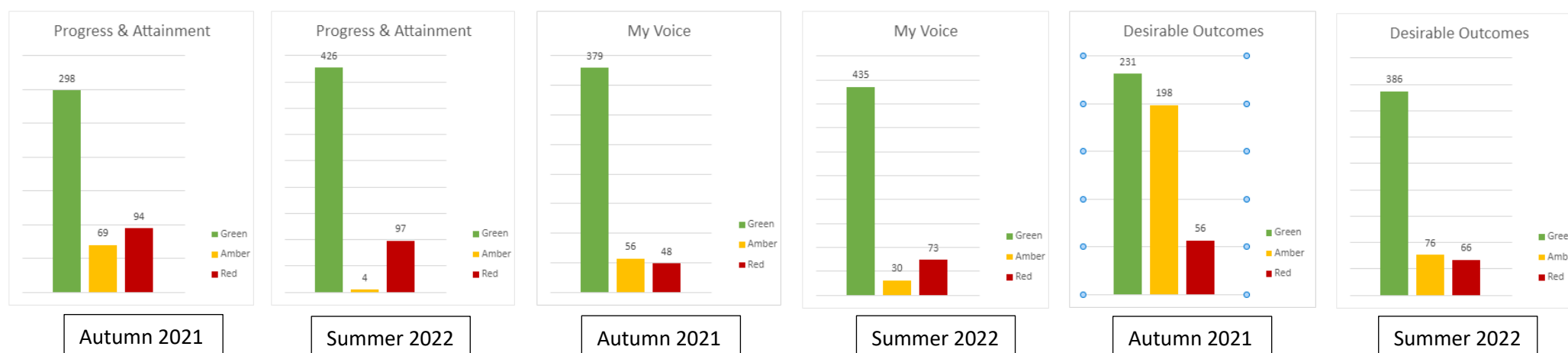
- Supporting each phase of education (early years, primary, secondary, post 16)
- SEND
- Aspirations
- Transitions

All training has taken place virtually to enable greater attendance. The sessions have been held in conjunction with Peterborough Virtual School.



## Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and Pupil Premium Plus (PP+)

Within Cambridgeshire the PEP is led by the school, with attendance from the social worker, carer and engagement with the young person according to their wishes. The Virtual School employ a PEP Champion who provides training and support to social workers and designated teachers. The Virtual School quality assure every PEP. Each section is rated (red, amber or green) and feedback provided. Over the year there has been a significant improvement in all education sections of the PEP.



Social workers complete one section of the PEP containing key information such as contacts, contact arrangements and sensitive issues. Social workers are asked to ensure the information is up to date for each PEP. The quality of social care information in the PEP and attendance at PEPs has been a key focus for the last two years. Key actions have been:

- PEP webinar produced for inclusion in social worker induction
- Virtual School PEP Champion support for teams and for individuals
- Access to PEP reports for team managers
- Attendance of Corporate Parenting Service Manager in PEP audit
- Termly reviews of PEP data with Head of Service for Corporate Parenting and Virtual School Head

Progress has not been rapid or sustained due to challenges within social care resulting in only 60% of PEPs attended by the social worker (summer 2022). For this reason, the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting, with oversight from the Assistant Director and Director of Children Services is leading work to resolve this issue. The Virtual School will continue to provide access to the PEP platform for social workers and team managers, training, support and summative data. The Virtual School Management Board will continue to scrutinise the data and provide challenge as appropriate.

Pupil premium plus should be used to promote high aspirations and seek to secure the best educational outcomes for children in care. It should not be used for activity that is available universally within school. It is equally important that requests are not made for services funded through other sources e.g. an Education Health Care Plan. All requests are considered as part of the PEP quality assurance process. For both the statutory school aged cohort and the early years cohort, cognition and learning accounts for the largest percentage of pupil premium plus requests, with social, emotional and mental health second (dataset appendix 3 .1). This percentage is consistent with last year. This year schools have been asked to match the funding to the Education Endowment Foundation toolkit. Virtual School advisors have scrutinised the attainment and progress data provided, where a child or young person is making below expected progress or targets do not appear ambitious the Virtual School have followed this up with schools, offering additional pupil premium plus to support accelerated progress.

The Virtual School has used retained funding to for the rental of the virtual reality headsets and to provide training at no charge. The Virtual School invited expressions of interest for school / MAT level projects. The following projects are in progress and impact will be reported in the 2022-2023 head teacher's report.

- Millfield Primary School: Reflective spaces and regulating scripts, underpinned by trauma informed training
- Olive Academy: Changing the children's perception of their environment by creating ownership, underpinned by trauma informed training
- Eastern Learning Alliance: First steps in trauma informed and responsive approaches, embedding at a MAT level
- Impington Village College: Creating a sense of belonging through reflective spaces for children who have or have had a social worker
- Inspire Group: Creating a dynamic model to support children in care post 16

The Children in Care Council have asked the Virtual School to support the development of 'usualising' care experience within education settings. Schools will be invited to complete expressions of interest to partner the Virtual School in this exciting development over the next year.

## Attainment and Progress

Attainment and progress data is currently unvalidated and therefore should be treated with caution. There is no current reliable data on outcomes for children in care nationally or for statistical neighbours. The report will be updated in March, once the validated data is available. Trends cannot be reliably considered because of the impact of COVID. The last nationally reported data was 2018-2019.

The Early Years eligible cohort is only 2 children, and therefore not statistically meaningful. Of the 11 children within the full cohort, 9 entered care within the year, it is likely that many of these children will leave care before the next national data set. Data is provided (appendix 3: 2.1 and 2.2). Individuals will continue to be tracked and supported for the duration of their time in care.

The end of key stage one eligible cohort is only 6 children and therefore data is not statistically meaningful. As is 2019 reading and maths continue to be stronger than writing. This is reflected in data for all children nationally and all children in Cambridgeshire (appendix 3: 2.3 and 2.4).

At key stage two the eligible cohort size rises to 26 children, this is comparable to the cohort in 2019 of 29 children. From 2019 the attainment gap between all children and Cambridgeshire children in care has reduced. In all areas except writing, children in care data suggests results improved, this contrasts with the picture for all children nationally and locally (appendix 3: 2.5 and 2.6).

At key stage four the eligible cohort size is 45 young people, compared to 55 in 2019. GCSE grades 4 or above in English and maths has increased by 16% from 2019 to 2022 and grade 5 or above in English and maths has increased by 6% appendix 3: 2.7 and 2.8).

During this academic year attainment and progress data has been analysed and where appropriate follow up conversations have taken place with designated teachers (as detailed within the pupil premium plus section). Over the next year these conversations will become more targeted, with stronger links to evidence informed practice. The Virtual School attainment and progress dashboard will be developed to support this.

## 5 Achievement Through Access and Inclusion

The new Virtual School model enabled revision to Virtual School practice which seeks to facilitate sustained access to, and inclusion within education by empowering the network around the child. Over the last year:















- data systems and dashboards have been developed
- questions have been revised in the personal education plan so that designated teachers are providing risk indicators alongside the current educational picture for the child
- Welfare Call has been commissioned to extend attendance data collection to post 16
- attendance, part timetables and suspension data has been tracked and interrogated (statutory school age and post 16)
- risk of NEET work has taken place with year 11s

This information, alongside referrals from key partners has been used to identify where Virtual School support and challenge is required. Over the last year the response has been primarily at an individual child level. The Virtual School has appointed an Assistant Head to drive forward the strategic and operational work within this area.

### Attendance

The Covid-19 pandemic has continued to impact on attendance over the last year. It has also made it difficult to meaningfully consider trends. National data is only available for 2020-2021 (appendix 3: 3.1). Internal data for 2021-2022 suggests attendance is higher for children who have been in care for more than a year than for the full cohort. Key stage analysis reveals minimal variance between key stage 1, 2 and 3, however key stage four is 10% lower (appendix 3: 3.2). This aligns with the proportion of children per key stage supported by Achievement Through Access and Inclusion.

## Suspension and Permanent Exclusion

CYP Susp. to Date	Total No. of Suspensions	Total No. of Days	Avg No. of Days	In County Suspensions	OoC WFC Suspensions	Overall Schools	No. of IC Schools	No. of OoC WFC Schools	Pupils 2+ Suspensions	No. of Perm. Exc.	Aut. No. of Suspension	Spr. No. of Suspension	Sum. No. of Suspensions
 53	 158	 828	 5.24	 75	 83	 40	 18	 22	 30	 0	 35	 60	 63

The Virtual School has had no permanent exclusions this academic year. Just over 72% of suspensions were children in years 8, 9 and 10 (appendix 3: 4.1). All of these suspensions have been followed up in order to hold schools accountable against the statutory guidance and to support specific needs. 41% of suspensions were across 6 schools. There are concerns regarding policy and practice within 4 of these schools. Over the next academic year there will be a focus with these schools and MATs to evolve relational policies and practice.

## Educated Other Than At School (including reduced timetables)

Where it meets the needs of individual children, alternative provision (including tuition) has supplemented the education offer for Cambridgeshire Children in Care. This provision was offered in a variety of circumstances including new to care, unplanned placement moves and children who were not managing the 'typical' education offer currently on offer to them.

36 children received less than full time education (May 2022), of these 67% had special educational needs (appendix 3: 5.1). The remainder of children had experienced a placement move or were new to care. There has been collaboration with both Access to Resources and the Statutory Assessment Team. The work with Access to Resources has focused on timely involvement of the Virtual School to enable to proactive planning around education. The work with the Statutory Assessment Team has led to the appointment of a dedicated casework officer for children in care, the protocol has been reviewed and updated, and communication / data systems have been streamlined. Work will continue with both teams over the forthcoming year.

The Virtual School has also been worked alongside colleagues within social care on the 'step in to' project. The project aims to support young people moving from residential provision into foster care. Virtual School involvement has led to an agreement that no young person will be moved prior to education being secured.

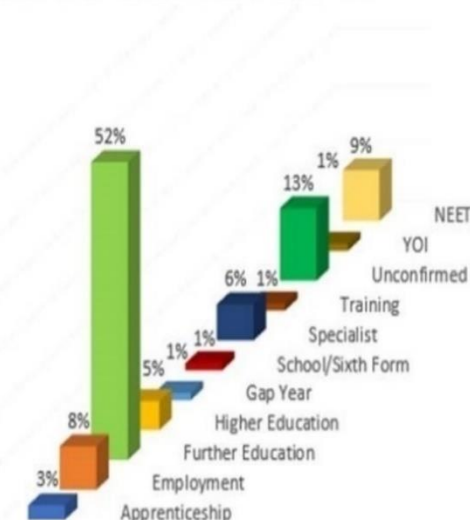
## Education Employment and Training (EET)

The cohort of NEET young people fluctuates across the academic year. Specific trigger points include the end of October which is the point at which colleges review engagement and officially enrolls the young person, and a second trigger point is Christmas. Data for July 2022 shows 76% of the post 16 cohort were in education, employment of training (appendix 3: 6.1) To support EET, the Virtual School has employed Welfare Call to collect weekly attendance data for the post 16 cohort. This has enabled a timely Virtual School response to attendance concerns. Additionally, the Virtual School began working with year 11s identified at risk of NEET. This meant on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022 there were only four year 12s without post 16 provision. In previous years, delays in vulnerable bursaries have meant young people have not been able to purchase equipment required in readiness for a September start. This year additions were made to the year 11 PEP, promoting early applications for the vulnerable bursary and schools were encouraged to apply for pupil premium plus in the summer term for equipment and resources required for post 16. Where relevant, payments were made to carers in the summer holidays.

A concern identified for the forthcoming year is that the main provider of 'roll on / roll off' ESOL provision has ended the offer. This means that from the end of October, there will no access to provision for newly arrived post 16 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children beyond tuition. This will be an immediate priority for the Virtual School to address.

Destination data for year 13s shows less than 10% as not in education, employment of training. 5% are moving into higher education.

Year 13 Pupil Destinations 2021-22



## 6 Children Previously in Care

For children previously in care (CPiC), the Virtual School is not acting as the corporate parent but is there to promote the educational achievement of these children through the provision of advice and information to all relevant parties. There has been a 61% increase in the number of enquiries over 2020-2021 to 2021-2022 (dataset appendix 3: 7.1). It is believed this is because of strengthened relationships with the Regional Adoption Agency leading to an increased awareness of the role of the Virtual School. The Virtual School have continued to offer training to prospective adopters on education. In addition to responding to individual enquires, the Virtual School has revised the training to schools to include the voice of children, alongside that of families and designated teachers. Individual enquires have led to bespoke trauma responsive training in 7 schools with a further 6 scheduled for the autumn term. It is primarily the work with children previously in care which has led to the investment in FASD training for the Virtual School. Over the next year the Virtual School intend to develop the FASD training offered to key partners. The work is timely given the 'Time is Now' publication and the release of the Nice Quality Standards for FASD. The increase in enquires necessitates an adjustment in resource allocation to ensure that in addition to responding to individual enquiries there is capacity to evolve strategy.











## 7 Children With a Social Worker

Virtual Schools were made aware of the non-statutory extension to the remit in June 2021, for a September 2021 start. The remit pertains to children who have a child in need plan (CiN) or a child protection plan (CP) or have been within the last 6 years. It is a strategic leadership role at a cohort level. The guidance is intentionally vague to enable Virtual Schools autonomy in the direction of travel. The DfE have partnered with the Rees Centre who are tracking the activity and impact.

Cambridgeshire Virtual School appointed a Strategic Lead and strengthened data resource. The Virtual School also secured a graduate trainee on a six-month placement, to support development in this area. Over the last year activity has included:

- Collection and analysis of data; leading to an understanding of numbers of the current cohort, matched to key performance indicators (appendix 3: 8.1 and 8.2). The data shows the contrast in attendance for all children and children in care. This has facilitated discussion with key partners and supported the direction of next steps.
- Widened the Virtual School training offer to cover the extended remit
- Promotion of the remit and building of partnership working across Children's Services, the Education Directorate and with education settings; leading to the formation of a working group of head teachers and Designated Safeguarding Leads. The group have worked to adapt the previously in care Education Support Plan which for the cohort and will be trialling this over the coming year. Additionally, the concept of an app to support social workers has developed. This will be an accessible way for social workers to understand how to effectively promote education and access to available services. This will be developed and launched during 2022-2023.

Furthermore, over the next year the advisory work undertaken with schools and MATs will be extended to include children with a social worker. There is also an intention to extend the partner engagement to include health and police.

Childrens Social Care Service <b>1607</b>		Gender				Matched in Census		Cohorts			
Case Status		Male	Female	Other	Unborn	SSA Yes	SSA No	Babies	Early Years	SSA	Post-16
Children in Need (CiN)	Child Protection (CP)										
478	417							0-2	2-4	5-16	16+
Children in Care (CiC)	Care Leavers	877	695	2	33	471	66	231	247	537	592

Source: Liquid Logic and Census data (September 2022)



## Review of Development Plan

### Vision

All children and young people (CYP) who have or have had a social worker will have the opportunities, experience and support to enable them to learn, aspire, thrive and achieve their maximum potential.

### 5 Year Outcomes

#### Overarching

- The vision and guiding principles are fully integrated within the VS
- Cambridgeshire Virtual School is recognised both regionally and nationally for impact and innovation
- There is resilience within the VS team and a culture that is proactive, creative and innovative

#### PEPs are dynamic, live and relevant

- PEPs are an integral part of the child's care journey
- PEPs act as a key mechanism to guide the work of key partners to promote educational outcomes

#### Children and young people who have or have had a social worker have increased access to high quality education, leading to improved outcomes

- Education is a protective factor for children who have or have had a social worker
- Suitable care placements are arranged which minimise disruption in education
- There is prompt and timely access to suitable education placements

#### Children and young people in care have increased inclusion within education, leading to improved outcomes

- Improve attendance and reduce incidents of fixed term exclusion
- Identification, tracking and intervention serves as protective factor for CYP with SEND rather than a barrier
- There is strengthened trauma informed pedagogy in schools
- Understanding and awareness of FASD underpins education practice
- Cambridgeshire Virtual School are leading on and engaging in research

#### Aspirational education is seen by all as the key to enable all children to learn, aspire, thrive and achieve their potential

- Cambridgeshire children in care have high aspirations and a clear pathway to success
- Link between PPP spend and area of need correlate with improved outcomes e.g. attainment and progress for cognition and learning
- Improve attainment and progress through effective tracking and response to data
- Promote 18 aware agenda

#### There is a collective responsibility for the education of children who have or have had a social worker, with all parties feeling empowered to support effectively

- There is a culture within the LA that children in care are everyone's responsibility, resulting in seamless partnership working
- CEOs, Head teachers, SLT and DTs understand what they can do to offer the best support and this is embedded in policy and practice
- Carers understand the best way to support learning

### Progress To Date

#### 2019-2020

- Developed an offer to include school level work alongside child level
- Widened capacity and expertise within the VS with the appointment of a VS Education Psychologist
- Redesigned PEP, formalised quality assurance process leading to effective tracking of PEP compliance and quality
- Revised pupil premium plus policy strengthening the link between funding and outcomes
- Strengthened partnership working within the local authority and regional virtual school network
- Invested in Virtual Reality Headsets to strengthen the training offer
- Formalised the SEND protocol in partnership with SAT, ART and Social Care.
- Established SAT and VS operational and strategic meetings to avoid drift in education
- Foster Carers education conference and development of literature to support carers role in education
- Developed weekly homework club for UASC
- COVID response

#### 2020-2021

- Widened capacity and expertise within the VS with the appointment of a Performance Officer, Aspirations Project Lead, Senior Advisory roles, PEP Champion
- Created a Youtube channel with a range of pre-recorded webinars to support DTs, SW, carers in their roles
- Created supporting documentation to empower DTs in their role
- Developed and delivered SEND training across VS, SAT and social care
- Developed an Education Support line for professionals and families of care experienced children
- Development of systems, processes and skills in analysis of attainment and progress data and informed response to this
- Extended training offer to maintain continuity of offer through COVID
- Embraced virtual platforms to ensure continuity of all aspects of service delivery
- Participation in the Dolly Parton Imagination Library leading to 2-4 year olds receiving books monthly
- Internal moderation of roles to create specific preventative, proactive and reactive inclusion focus in VS work
- Growth of presence on social media



## Vision

All children and young people (CYP) who have or have had a social worker will have the opportunities, experience and support to enable them to learn, aspire, thrive and achieve their maximum potential.

### Aims of 2021-2022 (towards 5 Year Outcomes)

#### Overarching

0.1 There is resilience within the VS team and a culture that is proactive, creative, aspirational and innovative

0.2 We hear the voice of individual CYP

0.3 The collective voice of our CYP underpins policy and practice

#### 1. PEPs are dynamic, live and relevant

1.1 Pupil voice is paramount within the PEP process

1.2 Data from the PEP informs the work of the Virtual School

1.3 Rigorous quality assurance informs the work of the Virtual School

#### 2. Children and young people who have or have had a social worker have increased access to high quality education, leading to improved outcomes

2.1 There is a reactive, preventative and proactive focus to NIAP and NEET work

2.2 Ensure high quality education is in place for transitions in and out of care

#### 3. Children and young people in care have increased inclusion within education, leading to improved outcomes

3.1 Analysis of risk indicators allows preventative work

3.2 Scrutiny of data ensures impactful response

#### 4. Aspirational education is seen by all as the key to enable all children to learn, aspire, thrive and achieve their potential

4.1 The impact of the aspirations project is evidenced

4.2 The impact of PPP is evidenced against key performance indicators

4.3 Scrutiny and response to data raises expectations leading to improved outcomes

4.4 Pupil voice informs targeted opportunities and experiences

#### 5. There is a collective responsibility for the education of children who have or have had a social worker, with all parties feeling empowered to support effectively

5.1 Training impacts on whole school / MAT policy and practice

5.2 The strategic value of MATS supports the education of all children who have or have had a social worker

5.3 Key partners are involved at the earliest opportunity in the reactive, proactive and preventive work of the Virtual School

5.4 Head teachers, SLT and DTs understand what they can do to offer the best support and this is embedded in policy and practice

5.5 The Virtual School is high profile for carers, guardians and parents. Training empowers them within their role as educators

### Progress To Date 2021-2022

0. The VS has a new logo co-produced by 4 of our children in care. One YP commented 'It was actually good to be part of this and I'm going to be able to put it on my CV. It was interesting to see all the different options and say what we thought. And think about what the Virtual School is (and) how to put that across. We were included. Thank you'

0. Pupil voice is included within all VS training

0. In response to a request from the Children in Care Council (CiCC), DT cards have been created in collaboration with CiCC. 91 have been distributed.

0. Investment in professional development in FASD for the Virtual School team.

1. Across the EY, SSA and P16 cohorts green ratings of desirable outcomes in PEPs have increased from 54% in summer 2021 to 72% in summer 2022. The highest increase is in statutory school age (46% summer 2021 to 76% summer 2022)

1. Attainment and progress data from PEP analysed and used to inform A&P conversations with DTs

2. Early work with year 11s led to only 4 year 12s being NEET on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022

3. System in place for identifying exclusions, triage and referral for targeted intervention

3. Attendance is monitored extended beyond statutory school age to include foundation stage 2 and year 12 and 13

3. Data dashboards underpin the work of the VS

4. 34 CYP participated in CIAG organised by VS in addition to that offered by schools.

4. KS2 reading, writing and maths combined for the eligible cohort is 35% (compared to 28% in 2019). This reduction in the gap contrasts with the picture for all children nationally and locally

4. 33% of year 11s achieved English and Maths GCSE grade 4 or above

4. 4 CYP will be starting independent schools in September with full scholarships through the Royal Springboard Programme (increasing access to independent schools is a recommendation of the McAllister independent review of children's social care 2022)

5. MAT model of engagement successfully implemented. 13 MATs have proactively worked with the VS. Association of School and College Leaders have expressed an interest in promoting this model as national best practice. Eastern Region Virtual School Heads have agreed to take this initiative forward as a regional priority

5. Increased foster carers training offer. The average rating of training was 9.1 out of 10.

5. In collaboration with SEND, Recovery Through Relationships training has been developed, trialed and endorsed at Director level, with a view to becoming the local authority offer.

5. 160 participants including social care, IROs, designated teachers, partners within education, foster carers and a Cllr attended the virtual school conference with a focus on pupil voice. A participant shared 'Felt very valued as a 'partner' of the Virtual School'

5. Formed relationships with the newly created regional adoption agency, leading to increased early referrals to the virtual school for advice and information

5. The extension to the remit of the VS has been promoted across the LA & a strategic direction of travel agreed

# 2022-2023 Priorities

- Cambridgeshire MAT work extends into Eastern Region practice
- A pilot framework is created utilising care-experience

Learn

## 1. PEPs are dynamic, live and relevant

- Pupil voice is recorded meaningfully within the PEP and informs provision
- Social workers and personal advisors effectively contribute to PEPs
- Foster carers have access to the ePEP platform

Aspire

## 2. Children and young people who have or have had a social worker have increased access to high quality education, leading to improved outcomes

- There is protocol with admissions which ensures timely access to education
- There is an increase in the number of children accessing the independent schools offer
- Provision is well matched to the needs of the CYP educated other than at school. Attainment & progress is tracked and enables improved outcomes

Thrive

## 3. Children and young people in care have increased inclusion within education, leading to improved outcomes

- From at least year 9, NEET risk reduction and aspirational pathways are integrated within the planned ATAI approach
- ATAI / ATS and school / MAT partnership working leads to planned approach which improves practice around suspensions with identified schools
- The needs of UASC cohort are recognised, understood and met within appropriate provision

Achieve

## 4. Aspirational education is seen by all as the key to enable all children to learn, aspire, thrive and achieve their potential

- Early identification and support is in place for CYP on higher education pathways
- Evidence informed practice is used strategically to raise attainment and progress

## 5. There is a collective responsibility for the education of children who have or have had a social worker, with all parties feeling empowered to support effectively

- The Recovery Through Relationships strategy is extended across the education directorate, including through the development of modular training
- Social workers (for CiN / CP) have access to and make use of a range of tools, including the app, to enable them to effectively promote education
- There is increased awareness and knowledge of FASD with key partners

## Appendix 1: Definitions

Definitions			
Cohorts of students	Group or Key Terms	Number of Students	Definition
	<b>Pupils on Roll (May 2022) Academic Year 2021-2022</b>	603	Total number of Children in Care (CiC) that the Cambridgeshire Virtual School were responsible for. The Cambridgeshire Virtual School works with children and young people from when they begin early years education (aged 2) to 18. Where a young person is accessing education at 18, the virtual school continues to be actively involved until they finish year 13.
	<b>On roll at any time</b>	550	The actual Virtual School cohort is fluid, with children entering and exiting care by way of reunification, adoption, special guardianship orders or child arrangement orders, or reaching adulthood throughout the year.
	<b>School Age 5-16</b>	415	Total number of children and young people aged 5 – 16 that Cambridgeshire Virtual School were responsible for during the Academic Year.  The statutory school ages are reception to year 11. Data for the Early Years cohort sometimes includes the Reception (Year 0) data.
	<b>DfE Eligible Cohort</b>	329	Number of Statutory School Aged Children in Care currently who have been in care for the full period April 1st – March 31st that Cambridgeshire Virtual School were responsible for this year.  In this report the end of year results (Summer 2022) refers to the students in care for 12 months from April 2021-March 2022.
	<b>Cambridgeshire Schools</b>	279	Cambridgeshire Children in Care in Cambridgeshire schools, Early Years Settings and Further Education Providers. The figure does not include any children where the adoption has been finalised (awaiting Liquid Logic closure), those with no recorded school or Post 16 who are NEET.
	<b>Out of Area Schools</b>	274	Cambridgeshire CiC in Other Local Authority (OLA) Schools, Early Years Settings and Further Education Providers. The figure does not include any children where the adoption has been finalised (awaiting Liquid Logic closure), those with No recorded School or Post 16 who are NEET.  Many children are placed in settings outside of our authority – however they remain the responsibility of Cambridgeshire Virtual School for their entire time in care.
	<b>Children in Care from other local authorities (OLA) educated in Cambridgeshire</b>	353 59 - registered since 01/09/21)	Total number of OLA children in care aged 2 to 18 registered in Liquid Logic during the academic year.

			<p>Cambridgeshire schools have Children in Care from many other local authority virtual schools.</p> <p>We give advice and support where appropriate/requested, to other Virtual Schools but they remain the responsibility of the home Local Authority who are their Corporate Parent.</p> <p>All Cambridgeshire schools can attend Cambridgeshire Virtual School training at no cost, regardless of whether they have Cambridgeshire Children in Care on roll.</p>
	<b>SEND</b>	288	<p>Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. (All ages)</p> <p>This is the figure for all pupils on roll with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or a need for Special Educational Needs (SEN) support.</p>
	<b>EHCP</b>	182 +7 (Under Assessment)	<p>Education Health and Care Plan (All ages)</p> <p>Children with significant special needs (meeting the threshold within the SEND Code of Practice) must be provided with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) this obliges schools and those working with the young person to work to an agreed plan of support to manage their individual needs. An EHCP is issued to a child after an assessment of their needs is carried out by the SEND team from the Local Authority in which they live. The plan is reviewed regularly and is statutory. An EHCP can be for cognition and learning, communication and interaction, social, emotional, and mental health, or physical and sensory needs.</p>
	<b>SEN Support</b>	99	<p>School Support Students (All ages)</p> <p>Students with SEN needs that are not as significant will still need SEN support, this is organised at a school level.</p>
	<b>No SEN/Not captured</b>	315	<p>Number of pupils on roll who do not have an SEN requirement or where the data has not been captured (at the time of the reporting period (May 2021))</p>
	<b>Children With a Social Worker</b>	1574	<p>Children with a Social Worker</p>

## Appendix 2: Glossary

Glossary			
	Group or Key Terms	Definition	Comments
<b>Key Terms</b>	<b>Progress 8</b>	Progress 8 shows the students' progress across 8 subjects. This is calculated by subtracting the students estimated attainment (calculated from KS2 scores at the end of Primary school) from their actual attainment. This will be shown as a + or -. For example, 0.5 would represent a student being on average half a grade above expectation.	<p>This measure was introduced and replaces previous measures based around the former A*-C grading system for GCSEs.</p> <p>This change was made because the data from the previous examination system did not reflect the progress that a child made over time, from the end of Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4.</p> <p>The average expected progress score is 0.</p> <p>If fewer than 8 subjects are taken, the score will be reduced further; for example, dropping a subject, will affect the overall score by approximately -0.5.</p>
	<b>Attainment 8</b>	The Attainment 8 score is a measure that ensures all students are compared rather than those on the cusp of grade boundaries	<p>This measure was introduced to the KS4 examination system in England because previous measures were not demonstrating attainment from a wide range of subjects.</p> <p>However, the attainment 8 measure can give a negative score to a child who does not sit 8 or more GCSE examinations.</p>
	<b>GLD</b>	Good Level of Development	This is the national benchmark for children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage (aged 5).
	<b>ESOL</b>	English for Speakers of Other Languages	ESOL courses can include areas such as survival English, functional language, specific speaking and listening skills, and sociocultural information. They often have an element of citizenship training.
	<b>EAL</b>	English as an Additional Language	There were 17 children in Care of statutory school age and 17 in year groups 12 & 13 who entered care in 2020-21 who did not speak English. 13 of these children were recorded as unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (USAC).
	<b>UASC</b>	Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child	Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) are children and young people who are seeking asylum in the UK but who have been separated from their parents or carers. While their claim is processed, they are cared for by a local authority.
	<b>CiC</b>	Children in Care	The statutory guidance refers to looked after children; Cambridgeshire children have rejected this term in favour of Children in Care (CiC). The terms looked after child and children in care have the same meaning.
	<b>CPiC</b>	Children Previously in Care	CPiC refers to a child who left care on an order, typically a Special Guardianship Order, Child Arrangement Order or Adoption order. The Virtual School has a duty to provide information and advice to the parents / guardians, education professionals, and other associated professionals, where the

			child attends a Cambridgeshire education setting. This was added to the virtual school remit in September 2018.
	<b>CWSW</b>	Children with a Social Worker	CWSW refers to social who are children in need or under a child protection plan or who have been in the past six years. The virtual school has a non-statutory strategic leadership role to promote education outcomes for the cohort of children. This was added to the virtual school remit in September 2021.
	<b>PEP</b>	Personal Education Plan	The PEP is the education plan. It forms part of the wider care planning for the child. This plan is statutory, it is reviewed each term. PEPS begin when a child enrolls in early years education (from aged 2) and continues until the child turns 18. When a young person turns 18 and is in education, PEPs continue until the end of the academic year.
	<b>PP+</b>	Pupil Premium Plus	PP+ is additional funding for children in early years provision (the year before they start school) and for children in reception to the end of year 11. The funding is managed by the Virtual School and is used to promote education outcomes.
	<b>NEET EET</b>	Not in Employment Education or Training Education, Employment or Training	NEET refers to young people that have finished year 11 and are not in education, employment, or training. EET refers to young people that have finished year 11 and are in education, employment, or training.
	<b>Key Stage (KS)</b>	Early Years Foundation Stage = Age 0-5, Pre-school, Nursery and Reception Key Stage 1 = Age 5-7, Years 1 and 2. Key Stage 2 = Age 7-11, Years 3-6 Key Stage 3 = Age 11 – 14, Years 7-9 Key Stage 4 = Age 14 – 16, Years 10 and 11 Key Stage 5 = Age 16+ following the completion of year 11.	The national curriculum is organised into blocks of years called 'key stages' (KS). At the end of each key stage, there is a formal assessment.
	<b>DT</b>	Designated Teacher	It is statutory for all schools to have a designated teacher, whether they currently have children in care on roll or not.
	<b>DP</b>	Designated Person	In Early years settings and for Post 16 providers the role is termed DP as the member of staff does not have to be a qualified teacher
	<b>Statistical Neighbours</b>	<b>For Cambridgeshire our Statistical Neighbours are</b> Hertfordshire, Wiltshire, West Berkshire, West, Sussex, Bath & North East Somerset, Oxfordshire, Hampshire, Gloucestershire, Warwickshire, and Worcestershire	Many sections of this report refer to similar Local Authorities that would be expected to have similar statistical data. This provides a more contextual comparison than purely national data alone.



## Appendix 3: Data Sets

### 1. Pupil Premium Plus Spend

Area (All Pupils on Roll YR1-11)	Autumn	%	Spring	%	Summer	%
Cognition and Learning	109,990.00	59%	101,672.00	58%	112,396.00	57%
Communication and Interaction	8,952.00	5%	5,966.00	3%	4,950.00	2%
Sensory & Physical	4,272.00	2%	2,404.00	1%	3,762.00	2%
SEMH	49,289.00	27%	56,791.00	32%	56,095.00	28%
Attendance	140.00	0%	1,000.00	1%	1,511.00	1%
Transitions	1,030.00	1%	2,189.00	1%	5,212.00	3%
Wider Achievement	7,629.00	4%	3,919.00	2%	6,153.00	3%
Other	2,525.00	1%	1,664.00	1%	3,121.00	2%
Additional Payments (e.g school moves)	1,830.00	1%	109.00	0%	4,985.00	3%
<b>Total PP+ requested</b>	<b>185,657.00</b>		<b>175,714.00</b>		<b>198,185.00</b>	

Area (All Pupils on Roll Early Years)	Autumn	%	Spring	%	Summer	%
Academic Achievement and Progress	£ 1,377.00	22%	£ 1,440.00	29%	£ 1,016.00	23%
Speech and Language	£ 646.00	10%	£ 294.00	6%	£ 1,309.00	30%
Managing Feelings and Behaviours	£ 1,285.00	21%	£ 938.00	19%	£ 1,178.00	27%
Making Relationships	£ 1,993.00	32%	£ 490.00	10%	£ 78.00	2%
Self-Awareness and Self-control	£ 230.00	4%	£ 100.00	2%	£ 100.00	2%
Physical Development	£ 343.00	5%	£ 133.00	3%	£ 15.00	0%
Moving On Transitions	£ -	0%	£ -	0%	£ 725.00	16%
Other	£ 280.00	4%	£ -	0%	£ -	0%
Additional Payments (e.g school moves)	£ 100.00	2%	£ 1,626.00	32%	£ -	0%
<b>Total PP+ requested</b>	<b>£ 6,254.00</b>		<b>£ 5,021.00</b>		<b>£ 4,421.00</b>	

Source: Welfare Call (July 2022)

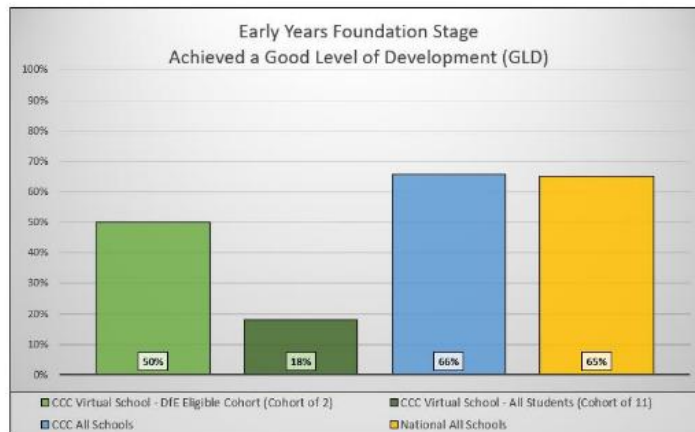
### 2. Attainment and Progress

#### Early Years Data Set Year on Year (2.1)

Good Level of Development (GLD)	RECEPTION (EYFSP)			
	Eligible Cohort			Full Cohort
	2018	2019	2022	
<b>Cambridgeshire - CiC Number in Cohort</b>	12	8	2	11
<b>Cambridgeshire - CiC</b>	42%	38%	50%	18%
<b>National - CiC</b>	47%	48%	x	
<i>Cambridgeshire - All Pupils</i>	71%	71%	66%	
<i>National - All Pupils</i>	72%	72%	65%	

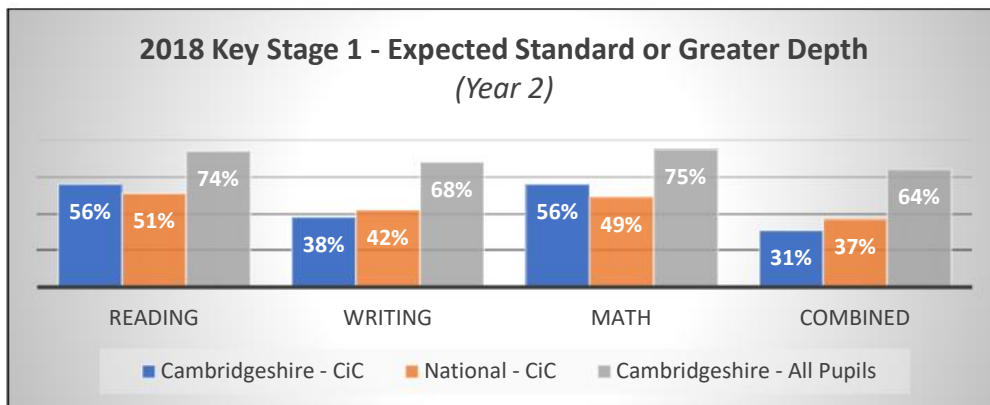
Source: Nexus (July 2019) and Welfare Call (July 2022)

## Early Years Data Set 2022 (2.2)



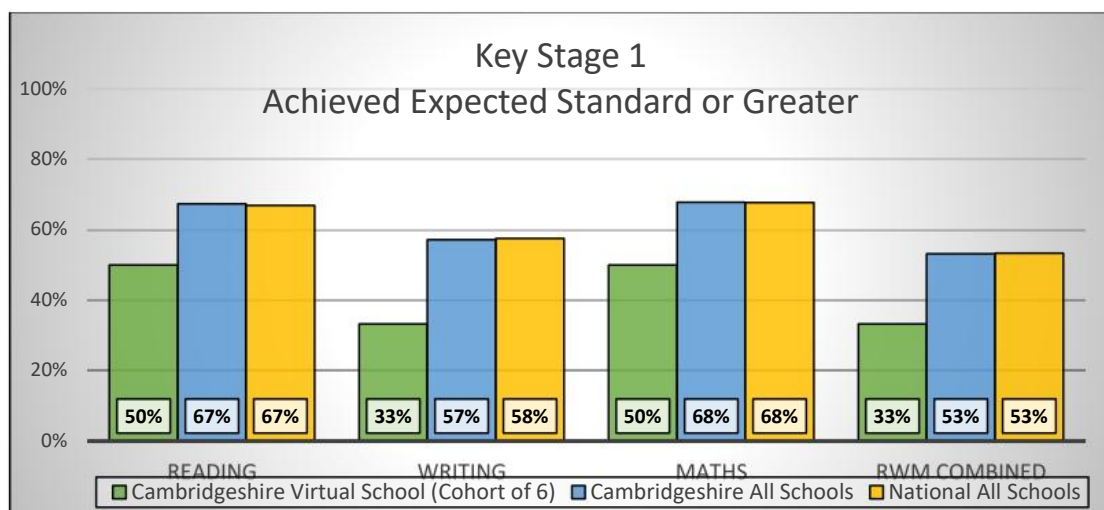
Source: Welfare Call (July 2022)

## Key Stage 1 Data Set 2018-2019 (2.3)



Source: Nexus (2019)

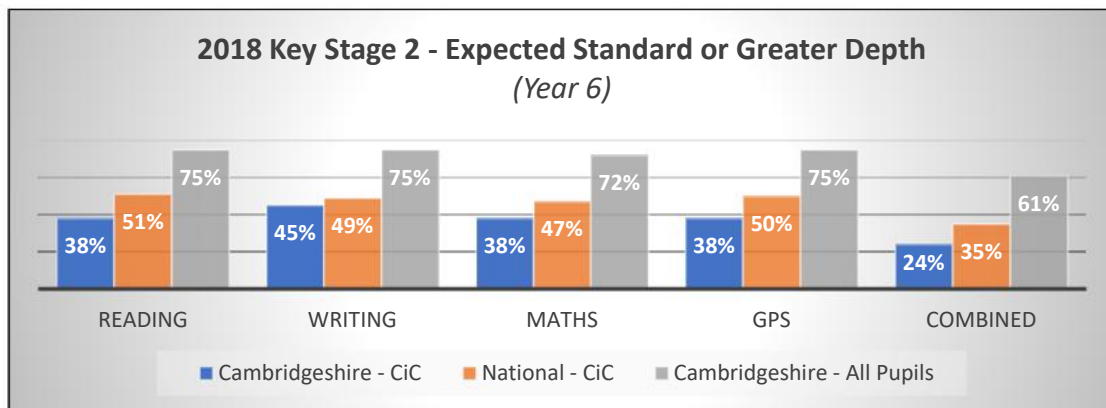
## Key Stage 1 Data Set 2021-2022 (2.4)



Source: Nexus (September 2022)

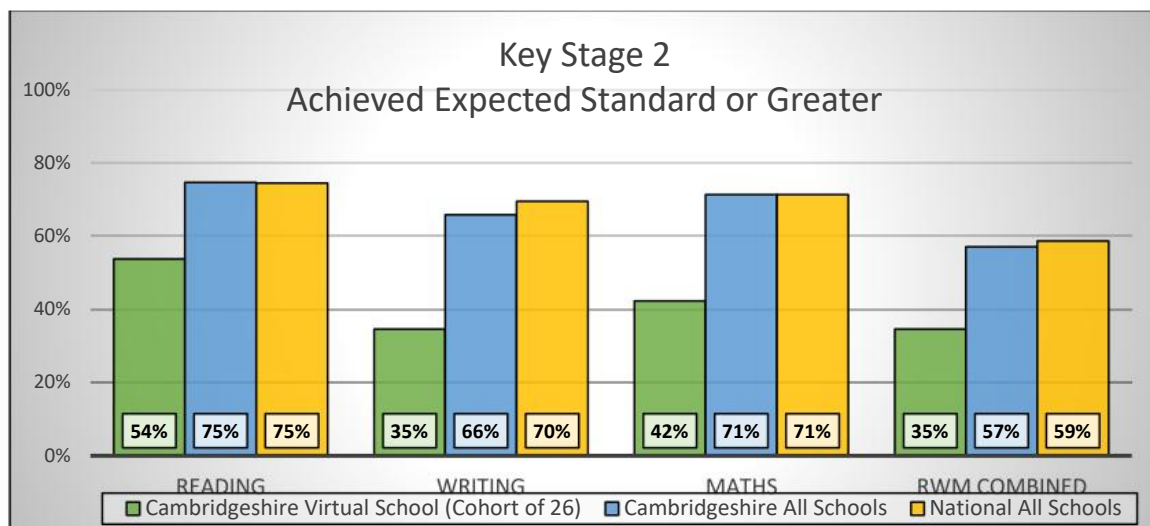


## Key Stage 2 Data Set 2018-2019 (2.5)



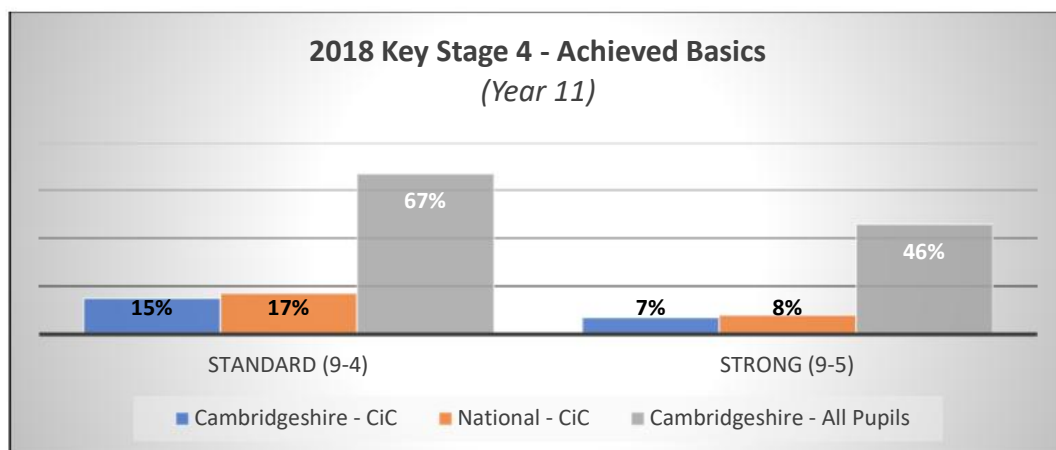
Source: Nexus (2019)

## Key Stage 2 Data Set 2021-2022 (2.6)



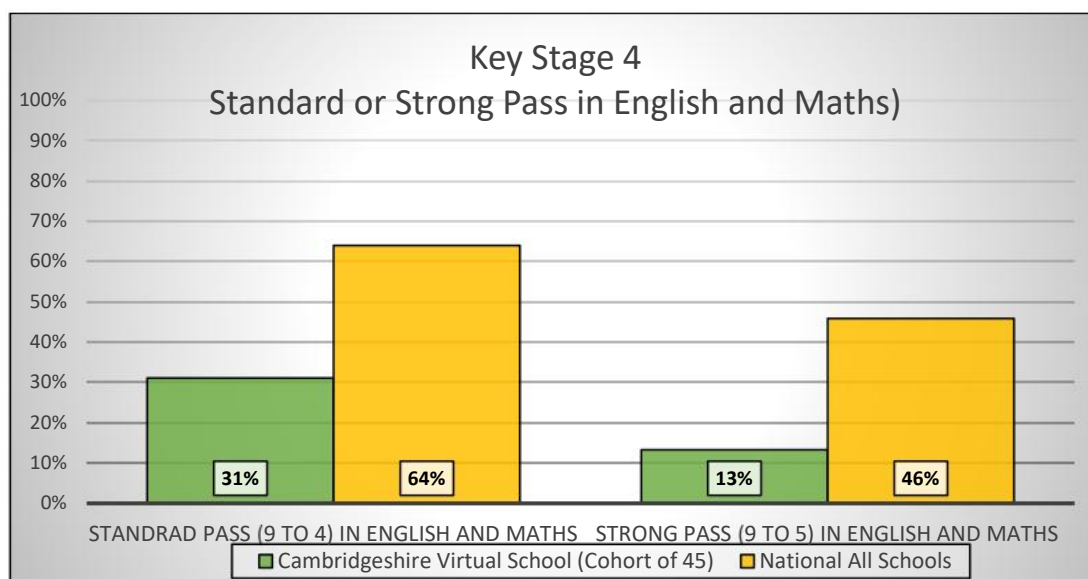
Source: Nexus (September 2022)

## Key Stage 4 Data Set 2018-2019 (2.7)



Source: Nexus (2019)

## Key Stage 4 Data Set 2021-2022 (2.8)



Source: Nexus (September 2022)

## 3. Attendance

### Year on Year Attendance Data (3.1)

Average % Absence	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Cambridgeshire	4.20	4.40	5.00	-	10.20
East of England	4.70	5.10	5.40	-	9.60
Statistical Neighbours	5.04	5.13	5.54	-	9.15
England	4.70	5.00	5.10	-	9.10

Source: LAIT (September 2022)

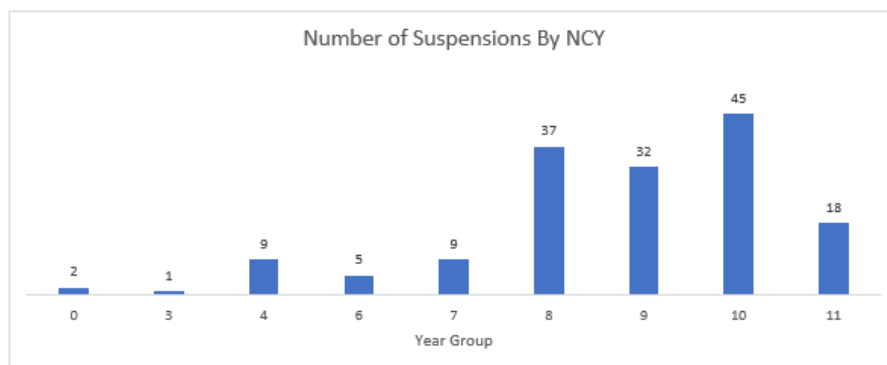
### 2022 Attendance Data by Key Stage (3.2)

Key Stage	Average Attendance
1 (years 1-2)	88%
2 (years 3-6)	92%
3 (years 7-9)	90%
4 (years 10-11)	78%

Source: Welfare Call (May 2022)

## 4. Suspensions

### 2022 Suspension Data by Year Group (4.1)



Source: Welfare Call (July 2022)

## 5. Reduced Timetables

### 2022 Children Receiving Less Than 25 Hours Education (5.1)

CME			Part time timetables Not Receiving 25 Hours Education	
			2021-22	
Key Stage		Pupils in K/S	Number	%
	EYFS	39	0	0%
	1	21	3	14%
	2	108	6	6%
	3	142	9	6%
	4	133	18	14%
Grand Total		443	36	8%

Source: Welfare Call (May 2022)

## 6. Education Employment & Training

### Post 16 Engagement Data (6.1)

Current Engagement	Year Group		2022
	12	13	Total
APPRENTICESHIP	2	2	4
EMPLOYMENT	0	4	4
COACHING	0	1	1
FURTHER EDUCATION	25	46	71
SCHOOL / SIXTH FORM	10	8	18
SPECIALIST	3	5	8
TRAINING PROVIDER	8	4	12
ARMED FORCES	0	0	0
YOUTH OFFENDING	1	1	2
NEET	21	8	29
GRAND TOTAL	70	79	149

Source: Internal data (July 2022)

## 7. Previously in Care Data

### Children Previously in Care Enquiries (7.1)

CPIC Enquiries		
Nature of Enquiry	Amount	Percentage
General / Role of DP	50	25%
Early Years Provision / Funding	10	5%
Pupil Premium Plus	25	13%
Care Status	15	8%
SEND	9	5%
Education Crisis	27	14%
Attendance	2	1%
Exclusion	6	3%
Admissions / Transition	20	10%
Training	11	6%
EAL Funding	0	0%
FASD	0	0%
ESP	3	2%
Other	20	10%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>100%</b>

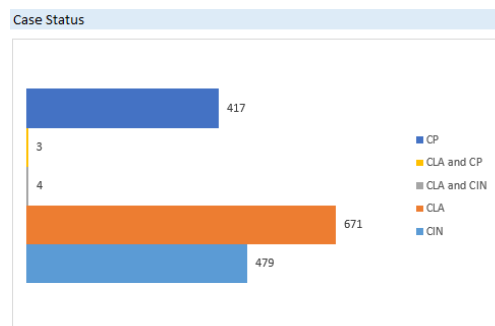
CPIC Enquiries		
Type Of Order	Amount	Percentage
Special Guardianship Order	39	19.7%
Adoption	141	71.2%
Child Arrangement Order	4	2.0%
Not disclosed/Other	14	7.1%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>100%</b>

CPIC Enquiries		
Contact By Whom	Amount	Percentage
Parent / Guardian	61	31%
School / Education Setting	79	40%
Local Authority Partners	58	29%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Internal data (July 2022)

## 8. Children With a Social Worker

### Numbers of Children with a Social Worker (8.1)



### Comparison Attendance Data for Children in Need (8.2)

	CIN pupils	CIC pupils	All Cambridgeshire
Persistent absenteeism	44.8%	33.1%	8%
At least one fixed term exclusion	9.99%	10.7%	3.13%
Authorised absence	11.1%	9%	3.4%
Unauthorised absence	4.5%	1.4%	0.9%

Source: Liquid Logic (August 2022)

## Regional Adoption Agency Annual Report 2021/22

To: Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee

Meeting Date: 16 November 2022

From: Joanne Banks, Head of the Regional Adoption Agency

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: No

Outcome: To provide evidence of the performance of the Regional Adoption Agency.

Recommendation: The Sub-Committee is recommended to:

- a) note the content of the report.
- b) raise any queries with the lead officers.

### Officer contact:

Name: Joanne Banks  
Post: Head of the Regional Adoption Agency  
Email: [Joanne.Banks@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:Joanne.Banks@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01223 699216

### Member contact:

Names: Councillor Anna Bradnam/Councillor Lucy Nethsingha  
Role: Chair/Vice Chair  
Email: [anna.bradnam@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:anna.bradnam@cambridgeshire.gov.uk) / [lucy.nethsingha@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:lucy.nethsingha@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01223 706398 (office)

## 1. Background

1.1 The Regional Adoption Agency was launched in December 2020 and provides the adoption services for Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Councils.

1.2 This is the first Annual Report for the Regional Adoption Agency.

## 2. Main Issues

2.1 Please see the Annual Report for the Regional Adoption Agency that highlights the activity of the adoption practice for Cambridgeshire County Council.

## 3. Alignment with corporate priorities

3.1 Environment and Sustainability

There are no significant implications for this priority.

3.2 Health and Care

There are no significant implications for this priority.

3.3 Places and Communities

There are no significant implications for this priority.

3.4 Children and Young People

Please see the Annual Report for the Regional Adoption Agency for full details. It outlines the activity that is within the Regional Adoption Agency, the financial overview and the service plans going forward. The report highlights the details of the number of children that have been placed for adoption, the number of children adopted and the performance of the service. It also includes information about the recruitment of adopters including the Marketing Strategy and outlining the plans to increase the number of adopters and those open to more complex children.

3.5 Transport

There are no significant implications for this priority.

## 4. Source documents guidance

4.1 None.

## 5. Accessibility

- 5.1 An accessible version of the information contained in the Regional Adoption Agency's annual report 2021/22 can be obtained on request from [Joanne.Banks@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:Joanne.Banks@cambridgeshire.gov.uk).







**Cambridgeshire & Peterborough**

# **Adoption**

**CAMBRIDGESHIRE & PETERBOROUGH  
ADOPTION**

**REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

**1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL 2021 – 31<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2022**

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## 1. Overview & Background

This report is the first 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.***

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.

This Report provides a summary of developments for the period 01 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, the first 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 first full year of operation, between 01 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Adoption has:

- Matched **58** children,
- Placed **65** children,
- Supported **69** children to be adopted,
- Placed **17** children in Early Permanence Placements,
- Commenced **40** prospective adoptive assessments
- Approved **42** adopters,
- Matched **41** adoptive families with children,
- Supported families with **£230,000** worth of Adoption Support Fund packages of support.

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 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.

It is important to recognise that as this is the first Annual Report, throughout the period there has been significant focus on joining up and aligning systems, processes and bringing the staff group together. Whilst undoubtedly challenging, the Agency can report considerable success in doing so and this can be seen throughout this report.

## **2. RAA Governance**

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Adoption is 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%), considering 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 2022. The membership of the Partnership Board has expanded to include 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 we are awaiting the final outcome. However, discussions to date indicate that there are limited concerns and any changes needed are primarily around adjusting Partnership Board organisation and attendance.

### **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 considered 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 adopter 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)

Provisional ASLGB data indicates that over the year, 39 children in Cambridgeshire and 21 children in Peterborough had a plan for adoption and 35 children in Cambridgeshire and 16 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 is not following that trend and the numbers are in fact increasing. In 2020-21, 26 children in Cambridgeshire had a plan for adoption and 32 children were made subject to a Placement Order. This has highlighted that Cambridgeshire 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.

However, there has been a decline for Peterborough<sup>1</sup> and, consideration has been given regarding the children who have been subject to a plan for adoption and a placement order over the past year. We have found that there has been a significant focus on younger children with very few children over the age of 2 having a plan for adoption or being subject to a Placement Order (80% of children made subject to a placement order and 91% of children with a plan for adoption were under 2 years old). The ADM and Family Court for both Local Authorities is the same and this ensures continuity and consistency in the decisions with regards to children.

It is important that we understand this further to ensure adoption is considered as a permanence plan for children over 2 years old. The Family Finding Team Manager attends regular meetings with the Service Manager for the safeguarding team and this will be monitored for the coming year.

### 4.2 Children Placed For Adoption

Over the year, 38 children in Cambridgeshire and 18 children in Peterborough were placed for adoption in mainstream adoptive placements, and an additional 9 early permanence placements became an adoptive placement (4 in Cambridgeshire and 5 in Peterborough). Giving an overall total of 65 children being placed for adoption (42 in Cambridgeshire and 23 in Peterborough). When comparing to the previous year, Cambridgeshire has increased the number of placements (2020-21 37 children), whereas there has been a decline in Peterborough (2020-21 30 children). It is important to acknowledge that 13 of these children (11 in Cambridgeshire and 2 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 and sibling groups). It is important to note that even though there was a reduction for Peterborough, looking at previous year's

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<sup>1</sup> 2020-2021 – 28 children had a plan for Adoption and 29 children were made subject to a Placement Orders and in 2019-2020 30 children had a plans for Adoption and 27 children were made subject to a Placement Orders

data the decline is not so significant and 2020-2021 was an unusually high year so the decline is not a significant concern (2019-2020 – 25 children).

The Agency has a success rate of being able to place 80% 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 2022-2023.

#### 4.3 Children Adopted

Over the year, 43 children were adopted in Cambridgeshire and 26 were adopted in Peterborough giving 33% of Cambridgeshire children and 22% of Peterborough children exiting care via adoption, which both are significantly higher than the target (18%) as well as the rates on a national (10%) and Eastern Region (12%).

For this cohort, the average numbers of days for A2<sup>2</sup> is 216 for children in Cambridgeshire and 126 for children in Peterborough. The national average is 182 days with the Eastern Region being 176 days.

For this cohort, the average numbers of days for A10<sup>3</sup> is 474 for children in Cambridgeshire and 404 for children in Peterborough. The national target is 426 days with the Eastern Region being 412 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. With regards to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Adoption, there have been several children who were deemed harder to place that we have secured adoption orders (40% were part of sibling groups and 25% were children over the age of 5 years) so these are known to come with longer timeframes. It is important that we continue to promote adoption for those harder to place children and this has fed into the marketing strategy for the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Adoption 2022-2023.

The national trend is that the number of children being adopted is falling, however in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough the numbers have increased. In 20-21, 42 children in Cambridgeshire and 14 children in Peterborough were adopted. We have had the advantage that Family Courts have continued to ensure Adoption Hearings take place and have found creative ways to enable the hearings to take place during Covid. This has been with a hybrid of virtual and in person hearings.

#### 4.4 Early Permanence

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<sup>2</sup> (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)

<sup>3</sup> (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))

Seventeen 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 are working towards an 'opt-out' approach rather than the current 'opt-in' approach.

The success of early permanence over the past nine months has been due to lead practitioners in the Recruitment & Assessment and Family Finding teams who have developed close liaisons with the Safeguarding teams and attend Unborn Baby Panels to ensure the right children are identified and linked with carers.

#### 4.5 Recruitment of Adopters

<b>Year</b>	<b>April 2021- March 2022</b>
A13 - Number of applications to be adoptive families (still being assessed)	39
A21 - Number of adopter approvals	42
A22 - Number of applications commencing Stage 1	40

The data to the end of March 2022 showed that Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Adoption had approved 42 adopters and in the context that there have been three Social Worker vacancies (33% reduction in resource) it highlights the strength in the performance of this areas of the RAA.

In relation to applications to adopt, at the end of March 2022 there were 40 applications commencing stage 1 with a total of 39 adopters in assessment. This also indicates positive progress, despite an initial drop at the beginning of Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Adoption going live (40 adopters in assessment), there has been a continued increase in the number applications to adopt and active assessment, with a 14% conversion rate from enquiries.

The RAA continues to seek ways to improve practice and one area is the timescales is in the timeliness of assessments. The ASGLB data indicates that stage 1 is not completed within the 60 days and 33% of stage 2 assessment are completed in 4 months with the average number of days being 155 days (target of 120 days). It is important to note that the average across England is 18% of stage 1s are completed in 2 months and 46% of stage 2s are completed within timescales with the average number of days being 141 days.

As a new Regional Adoption Agency, it was expected that timescales would increase due to significant changes of staff and processes around assessing adopters. There was a significant impact with the absence of a Panel Advisor (March 2021- January 2022) and a 33% staff vacancy in the Assessment Team. To manage this, we commissioned Independent Social Workers to undertake stage 2 assessments as well as expanded the role of the Recruitment Officer to allow some additional capacity for the Social Worker. Additionally, Covid has led to difficulties in adopters accessing an adopter medical check and building up experiences with children, however, I am



pleased to say these are no longer significant issues. Alongside this, the Team Manager has reviewed the processes around stages 1 and 2 to identify changes that could be made without compromising on the quality of the adopters being approved. Some changes have included introducing regular opportunities for reviews of adopters to enable them to start stage 2 as soon as possible and we are looking to introduce a tracker to identify drift in timescales.

A comparative analysis of the ASLGB data with our SN are in Appendix B and it highlights where the Local Authorities are performing well – for Cambridgeshire this is particularly with the number of placements, number of Adoption Orders and the proportion of these placements being with our own adopters. For Peterborough this is around the placement timescales and the number and length of time children are waiting for a placement. However, it also highlights where improvements can be made, and these were areas that had already be identified. For Cambridgeshire this is looking at the timeliness of adoption and for Peterborough the focus is around the number of children with a plan for adoption.

## **5. 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 2021/2022 budget set by the Partnership Agreement was £2,145,980 with Cambridgeshire contributing £1,508,799 and Peterborough contributing £637,181. As outlined in the Annual Statement, the actual spend for the year was £1,857,872, an underspend of £288,108.28. The underspend was primarily because of staff vacancies. This has resulted in £288,108 being added to reserves for the Regional Adoption Agency.

As part of the financial planning for 2022-2023 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 further service development – these will be included in Business Cases regarding Commissioning and Adoption & Special Guardianship Support Team Resource.

## **6. Disruptions**

There have been no disruptions during this period.

## **7. 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 Manager, 3 Senior Practitioners, 6 Social Workers and a Recruitment Officer. The Recruitment Officer was a new post for the RAA and started in May 2021. The Recruitment Officer has been a positive addition to the service as it has provided a consistent figure to support adopters at the start of their journey and ensure they feel positive about choosing Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Adoption.

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 have stopped running information sessions as we did not have the facility to run virtual information sessions, so we provided detailed written and 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 to increase their understanding in relation to adopting a child from care.

As highlighted earlier, in the reported year, we accepted 40 applications to adopt and had 39 adopters in assessment as of 31 March 2022.

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 enable 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 an 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. 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

This is the 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 on the developmental and attachment needs of children placed for adoption. This is the second part of the core training and this builds on the previous training. There is a focus on providing adopters the skills on parenting children with a detailed session around therapeutic parenting and involving case discussions to think 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 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.

### **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. During the year, it was agreed that we would appoint a time-limited Marketing & Communication Assistant who would provide dedicated marketing time for the Agency. This started in January as a half time post that will remain until December 2022. The addition of the Marketing Officer has enabled the Agency to take a proactive role around the current marketing approach.

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 adoption. 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, prepare to adopt, and campaign planning meetings. This means we have been able to co-ordinate all 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, YOU CAN ADOPT 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 for us to promote the real adoption messages. We have created four new profiles for our website and our marketing campaigns, as well as video promoting adoption of children with complex needs, and the benefits of caring for a sibling group. We aim to build on this in 2022 with a video promoting Early Permanence.

There was an acknowledgement that the website created for the launch of the RAA was in its infancy and would benefit from changes to improve usability as well as have an eye-catching design to encourage those considering adoption. We completed a review of the website and complete stage one of development which covered images, usability, and support. The website has also been optimised for mobile use as we know a significant number of visitors come via mobile phones and tablets. The website has also had several changes made to improve the navigation for visitors, and we have detailed a plan of action to develop stage 2 and 3, helping to improve each department. We have improved our language so that we are more conversational and more chatty and therefore more appealing.

The service launched its Facebook page in early 2021 with the aim of promoting the service. We have since added Facebook groups and are now engaging more agency support to help us spread the message about the need for more adopters. Our channel

works well and although we have more development work to do, we are seeing more interactions and engagement on the page which feeds back to enquiries (reported on in our quarterly reports). We plan to launch our Instagram page in June 2022 to help target audiences through visual representation and the use of videos. We are going to focus on our core groups of children and young people who need adopters. The service currently uses the corporate Twitter account as research show this will improve awareness – we are working on driving visitors to the website.

For the upcoming year we have conducted research and developed a targeting list for fertility clinics, churches, events, and community groups so that we can promote adoption much more widely. This action plan is currently being worked through in conjunction with the adoption team managers.

The Adoption Service has a full suite of marketing and promotional materials to use for internal/external promotion and at events. We are working on branding each area into one distinct colour from the logo so that they each have their own identities and do not all look the same.

The Marketing & Recruitment Strategy for 2022 – 2023 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, 39 children in Cambridgeshire and 21 children in Peterborough had a plan for adoption and 37 children in Cambridgeshire and 22 children in Peterborough were made subject to Placement Orders and, 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, 65 children have been placed for adoption and that this is a significantly higher number than anticipated. Within these placements, we have been able to secure adoptive placements for those children who have been waiting over 12 months. This is a positive story for the Regional Adoption Agency and has meant that in the current children waiting for adoptive placements, only one has been waiting longer than 18 months and this child is linked and hopes to be placed by September 2022.

The Regional Adoption Agency does not have a statutory role with the ADM for Should Be Placed For Adoption, 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 will be relaunched in August 2022, and this will be a joint approach of Children's Social Care and the RAA.

At 31 March 2022:

	Cambridgeshire	Peterborough
Children being tracked	64	28
Children with PO	20	8
Children with Should be placed for Adoption	18	4
Children Linked	8	3

When considering the matching of children who have a plan for adoption, it is important to consider not only the numbers of children and adopters but the characteristics. 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 +71% 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 12% adopter gap indicating that we have a small gap between the number of adopters available for children (24 adopters available for 22 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 22 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 number of ADMs has remained higher than the national average (ADM Number per 10,00 population under the age of 18 years old is 3.01%, whereas the national average is 2.59% and the Eastern Region is even lower at

2.16%). Additionally, liaison with other Regional Adoption Agencies local to us has 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.

### **Panel:**

The Adoption Panel for the Region is constituted in accordance with legislation, regulations, and guidance. There is a central list of 24 approved panel members, including three Chairs and a Vice-Chair. The work of the panel 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 41 Panels held that heard 50 approvals, 55 matches, 2 relinquished baby plans and 3 adopter de-registrations.

There was one match where Panel did not recommend the match – this took place in May 2021. This was a sibling group of 2 children who were aged 4 and 8 years old who had complex needs as result of their childhood experiences. The match was with adopters approved by another Adoption Agency. The concerns raised by Panel were around the preparation of the children, as well the readiness for the adopters to manage the potential complex needs. The Panel was held on Microsoft Teams. The ADM took on board the concerns, however, being aware of the coherent narrative from the social workers who felt it was a good match for the children, the ADM requested additional information by way of an independent second opinion report to inform the ADM decision. Having received additional information, the ADM agreed to approve the match and I am pleased to report that the placement progressed well with no concerns and the application for an Adoption Order has now been made.

The Panel will make a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker (ADM), in relation to approval. The Panel members are provided with training, including mandatory courses, such as equality and diversity, safeguarding and other learning events relevant to panel activity. In January 2022 we arranged for New Family Social to run a training course on LGBT+ Adoption which gave Panel members a better insight in the routes LGBT+ individuals and couples take to adoption; it explored how we can improve our relationships with potential applicants and existing adoptive

parents or foster carers. Feedback from the Agency Advisor and Panel members who attended said that the course was a useful and helpful course. A comment included:

*I found it useful in as far as it gave insight into how same sex couples feel pressured to fit into a "mould" developed by more traditional relationships. It was interesting how different people feel about labels and how words such as 'queer', which I find so offensive, relate to a time where they were used in a derogatory way (which is probably why I find it so offensive) and how the younger gay community have turned it round and made it a word they are proud of.*

Since Jade has been in post, she has taken a proactive approach to training and is developing a multifaceted approach to training for Panel members including ensuring all Panel members have access to a range of courses provided by Cambridgeshire County Council training department.

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 Workers, a Therapeutic Family Worker, a Birth Relative Outreach Worker and 3 Post Box Co-ordinators.

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.

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.

It is important to acknowledge that the past year has been a challenging time for the team, partially due to significant staff vacancies and sickness absences, as well as a high level of demand for support from families. Until March 2022, the team had 50% social worker capacity in the team which meant families have had to wait for support. Alongside this there are significant difficulties for families to access universal services, include Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), and this has led to substantially higher numbers of referrals than expected from families requesting support from the Agency, when previously universal services would have given this. This has led to families waiting for an assessment of need and support being offered. On a positive note, there has been an agreement for the Adoption Support Fund to be



available until March 2025. The Adoption Support Fund (ASF) is a *DfE statutory service where the adoption support fund 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.*)

However there has also been a considerably high demand for Adoption Support Fund commissioned therapeutic support, which in turn has meant that families are being placed on waiting lists for accessing therapeutic support. The Team have continued to offer duty support for families so that families can access advice and support in the meantime.

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. It was acknowledged that there was a significant high number of people waiting, including many vulnerable due to age and health needs. As response to this, it was agreed that the Team would appoint a social worker on a fixed term contract for 6 months to focus on this area and enable the service to respond to these requests, without having an impact on the capacity of supporting families on the waiting list. We have appointed to this post and the worker will start in June 2022 until December 2022.

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 to complete the annual reviews. Where there is a clear financial hardship a means test allowance can be provided. However, there are times where the needs of 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.

Alongside this, there has been a review of the Financial Allowance process for Adoption & Special Guardianship Allowances; the Finance and Resource Panel has been disbanded and replaced with a clear simplified process for allowances that are within the policy, as well as allowances that are an exception due to the needs of the child. The Head of the Regional Adoption Agency has worked with the Head of Fostering & Supervised Contact to create this process. It is due to be launched in July 2022.

Over the past year the Team has received:

Initial Assessment for family support	107 (49 – SG Families & 58 – Adoptive families)
BRC/Intermediary/GRO	48 referrals
Financial Assessment	68 – since June 2021
ASF initials /reviews	200
Value of ASF Applications	£230,000

The Team facilitates regular support groups for children and families across various locations. There 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 been committed to increasing the therapeutic skills in the Team to enable them to provide therapeutic informed support and training to families. To achieve this, we will have provided training for the Team on the Trauma Informed Model as well as DDP Training. The plan is to be able to use this training to support the other teams in the RAA as well as Panel, to have a Trauma Informed approach to practice. There is also a desire to access training for this model with other areas of Children's Services, specifically Fostering and Children In Care.

It has become clear since the Regional Adoption Agency has been live that there is not adequate capacity in the Adoption & Special Guardian Support team to provide a timely response to referrals from families. After further exploration, a Business Case has been completed to identify options going forward. The Business Case is due to considering by identified members of the Partnership Board to agree a way forward to enable families to access support in a timely way.

## 8. Commissioned Services

There are several services that the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) has to commission to fulfil the needs of the service costing approximately £298,460 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
Panel Chairs – <i>we have 4 Panel Chairs that share the responsibility for chairing the Adoption Panel.</i>	£4,000
Linkmaker – <i>Online service to support linking for children with a plan for adoption and prospective adoptive parents across the England, Wales, and Scotland</i>	£17,000
Birth Relatives Counselling – <i>this is a statutory provision and is currently provided by Adoption Plus.</i>	£18,000
Intercountry Adoption – <i>there is a statutory duty for the local authority to provide intercountry adoption whereby the adopters are assessed in the UK and linked with a child that is not based in the UK.</i>	£13,000

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>	£230,000 (approx.)
Coram BAAF membership – <i>this allows us to access support, advice and discounted training and resources to ensure that we continue to provide complaint and good practice.</i>	£8,500
New Family Social membership – <i>this is an agency dedicated at promoting adoption and fostering within the LGBT+ community. They also provide training, advice, support, and resources that are valuable when supporting adopters in this community. there are different levels of membership with differing levels of promotion and resource access.</i>	£960

The partnership agreement outlines transferring the commissioned services and the responsibility for procurement activity for those services, however there is no resource within the Regional Adoption Agency or Cambridgeshire Country Council's Children's Commissioning Service to fulfil this.

As the Regional Adoption Agency is part of a Local Authority, all commissioning activity is subject to procurement & commissioning regulations. It is also vital that the RAA continues to explore efficiency savings because of the two Local Authorities coming together, and these opportunities will be explored in 2022-2023. As there is no dedicated resource in the Regional Adoption Agency there is a Business Case underway to devise a plan for this going forward. This will be considered by Board in August 2022 is due to be completed by June 2022.

## 9. Staff group – recruitment & retention, sickness

As with any service, the staff group is a vital part of the effective running of the Agency. It is important to acknowledge that there has been a lot of changes in the staff group, however the Agency ends the year in a strong position to move forward.

At the start of the year there were several identified vacancies, including many in the management group. These posts included the Head of the Regional Adoption Agency, 2 Team Managers and a Panel Advisor. These vacancies placed significant pressure on the Agency to have a stable base to grow the service. The Head of the Regional Adoption Agency was appointed and then following this the remainder of the management team were in place by February 2022. Some of the appointments were internal to the Agency by way of progression, internal transfer within the local authority and some new staff to the local authority.

Over the year:

9 members of staff have left	5 Business Support Officer, 2 Social Workers, 1 Team Manager
8 members of staff have joined	2 Management positions, 4 Social Worker positions, 2 Business Support Officers and a Marketing Assistant
4 members of staff have been promoted	3 Management positions and 1 Social Worker positions.

As at the end of the year we have 2 Social Worker vacancies, however we have appointed to these vacancies with members of staff due to start in April and July.

Another area that has created pressure for the RAA has been around sickness and this is particularly so for the Adoption Panel and the Adoption & Special Guardianship Support Team. Over the 12 months the Service has lost 423 days to sickness over a total of 17 employees. The prevalent reason being stress with 276 days, followed by anxiety at 104 days. 315 days have been linked to long-term sickness. For all 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 completed 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 acknowledged that the Adoption & Special Guardianship Support Team has been under significant stress owing to high levels of referrals and families in periods of acute stress, and this has contributed towards staff sickness. In response to this we have provided the Team with additional resources including agency Social Workers and a permanent Full Time Business Support Officer, alongside reviewing the services offered and suggesting referrals to other services as appropriate.

## 10. Complaints

Over the past year we have received 18 Stage 1 complaints which have come from 16 families. 15 of the complaints related to the Adoption & Special Guardianship Support Team. We upheld 3 complaints, partially updated 12 and did not uphold 3.

Of these complaints

- 6 were regarding delays in accessing an assessment and support from the Adoption & Special Guardianship Support Team,
- 3 were regarding delays around post box contact,
- 4 related to special guardianship allowances,
- 2 were regarding accessing birth records as an adopted adult,
- 1 was regarding a decision not to progress with an assessment as an adoptive parent,
- 2 were regarding delays in securing the adoption order for the child.

We have one Statutory Stage 2 complaint and one Statutory Stage 3. These were for the same family who raised a few concerns regarding the support being provided by the Adoption Support Team. For the Stage 2 complaint there were a few issues raised, and one was upheld, 7 complaint issues were not upheld and 2 were partially upheld. There were 9 recommendations, 8 of which have been completed and 1 is in progress.

The statutory Stage 3 complaint was because the family were unhappy with the outcome of the Stage 2 complaint and on 31 March 2022, this is in progress.

## **11. Service developments**

Despite the Regional Adoption Agency only being 15 months old and the significant staffing changes and vacancies, there has continued to be a drive to evolve and improve practice with the Service. Some of these are in the early stages and will be evolved further in 2022 – 2023.

One area that is starting in the Adoption & Special Guardianship Support Team is embedding Trauma Informed practice; this is a strengths-based approach, which seeks to understand and respond to the impact of trauma on people's lives. The approach emphasises physical, psychological, and emotional safety for everyone, and aims to empower individuals to re-establish control of their lives. Research has identified that this is a successful way to support families who are caring for children who have experienced trauma. We have a trained Senior Practitioner in the team who has been sharing this learning with the rest of her team, however there is a plan to broaden this across the whole of the Regional Adoption Agency. There are training dates planned for May & August 2022 so we can support the team and members of the Adoption Panel in embedding this approach.

We have a plan to hold a Regional Adoption Agency Service Away Day in May 2022 where we will bring the whole service together for the first time since we started in December 2020. We will aim to use the day to look at each area of the Service and identify ways in which we can improve. This includes how we promote adoption to recruit adopters, increasing the voice of the adopters, embedding the child's voice within all the work we do, and introducing the Trauma Informed Model.

One of the successes for the past year is that we have an Adoptive Parent who has joined the Partnership Board and has been proactive in offering appropriate challenge and I would like to take this further. There is a plan to embed the Adopter's voice into all aspects of the service we offer. This is outlined in the Service Plan – Appendix E.

As I have already mentioned above, it has been acknowledged that the commissioning work in the Regional Adoption Agency is significant and an area where we need to undertake a Business Case to consider how we approach ensuring effective commissioning is undertaken as well as provide scope for further commissioning with the Agency as well as across other agencies.

Joanne Banks

Head of the Regional Adoption Agency.

27 July 2022

## Appendix A : Financial Statement 2021-2022 & Budget Plans 2022-2023

Account	Account (T)	Current Budget	Actuals	Outturn Variance	
A0000	Pay	1,623,113.00	1,252,143.90	-370,969.10	
A4000	Agency Staff	10,000.00	65,717.50	55,717.50	
A6110	Recruitment Advertising	0.00	1,950.00	1,950.00	
A6200	Staff Training & Development	3,000.00	5,523.00	2,523.00	
A6400	Staff health & welfare Costs	6,500.00	0.00	-6,500.00	Expended under Internal recharges
B2005	Casual hire of facilities	1,000.00	1,064.00	64.00	
C5000	Car mileage and allowances - staff	38,758.00	4,309.85	-34,448.15	
C5010	Car mileage and allowances - other	1,690.00	1,188.40	-501.60	
D0230	Books and Multimedia Supplies	250.00	96.98	-153.02	
D3000	Printing	0.00	167.60	167.60	
D3100	General Office Expenses & Stationery	8,112.00	0.00	-8,112.00	
D3105	Unallocated Purchase card expenditure	0.00	748.98	748.98	
D4105	External Legal Fees	0.00	2,833.30	2,833.30	
D4110	Professional Fees and Hired Services	69,567.00	85,499.37	15,932.37	Ongoing adoption placement costs inc £5334 of PCC costs pre RAA
D4800	Advertising / Publicity (non Recruitment)	36,000.00	22,275.45	-13,724.55	
D5110	Mobile Phones	3,780.00	0.00	-3,780.00	
D6000	Staff subsistence	1,500.00	397.89	-1,102.11	
D7000	Subscriptions	51,460.00	58,747.78	7,287.78	
E7100	Adoption Agency	288,000.00	367,366.00	70,366.00	Inter Agency - Includes £9k of PCC IA costs pre RAA
F1010	Adoption Allowances	3,250.00	7,154.38	3,904.38	
G2000	Internal Recharges	0.00	2,155.75	2,155.75	
J2205	Other Funding Contributions	-637,181.00	-637,181.00	0.00	PCC RAA contribution
J2205	Other Funding Contributions		-274,197.00	-274,197.00	2020/21 carry forward
J2205	Other Funding Contributions	0.00	562,305.00	562,305.00	2021/22 carry forward into 2022/23
J4300	Other Cost Recovery	0.00	-12,468.41	-12,468.41	
		<b>1,508,799.00</b>	<b>1,517,798.72</b>	<b>-0.28</b>	
	Pay		-315,251.60	-288108	2021/22 underspend
	Non Pay		-48,556.68	-274197	2020/21 carry forward
	Inter Agency		61,366.00	-562305	2021/22 carry forward
	PCC				
	Recharge		14334		
			-288,108.28		

## RAA Budget 2022/23

Cost Centre (T)	Account	Account (T)	Current Budget
Regional Adoption Agency	A0000	Pay	1,170,067.00
Regional Adoption Agency	A1000	NI	125,838.00
Regional Adoption Agency	A2000	Pension	246,884.00
Regional Adoption Agency	A3005	Other Allowances	48,600.00
Regional Adoption Agency	A3100	Apprentice Levy	5,850.00
Regional Adoption Agency	A4000	Agency Staff	10,000.00
Regional Adoption Agency	A6200	Staff Training & Development	3,000.00
Regional Adoption Agency	A6400	Staff health & welfare Costs	1,000.00
Regional Adoption Agency	B2005	Casual hire of facilities	1,000.00
Regional Adoption Agency	C5000	Car mileage and allowances - staff	25,575.00
Regional Adoption Agency	C5010	Car mileage and allowances - other	1,000.00
Regional Adoption Agency	D0230	Books and Multimedia Supplies	150.00
Regional Adoption Agency	D4105	External Legal Fees	1,000.00
Regional Adoption Agency	D4110	Professional Fees and Hired Services	37,000.00
Regional Adoption Agency	D4800	Advertising / Publicity (non Recruitment)	36,000.00
Regional Adoption Agency	D5110	Mobile Phones	500.00
Regional Adoption Agency	D6000	Staff subsistence	1,500.00
Regional Adoption Agency	D7000	Subscriptions	40,000.00
Regional Adoption Agency	E7100	Adoption Agency	338,710.00
Regional Adoption Agency	F1010	Adoption Allowances	40,000.00
Regional Adoption Agency	J2205	Other Funding Contributions	-637,181.00
<b>Regional Adoption Agency</b>			<b>1,496,493.00</b>

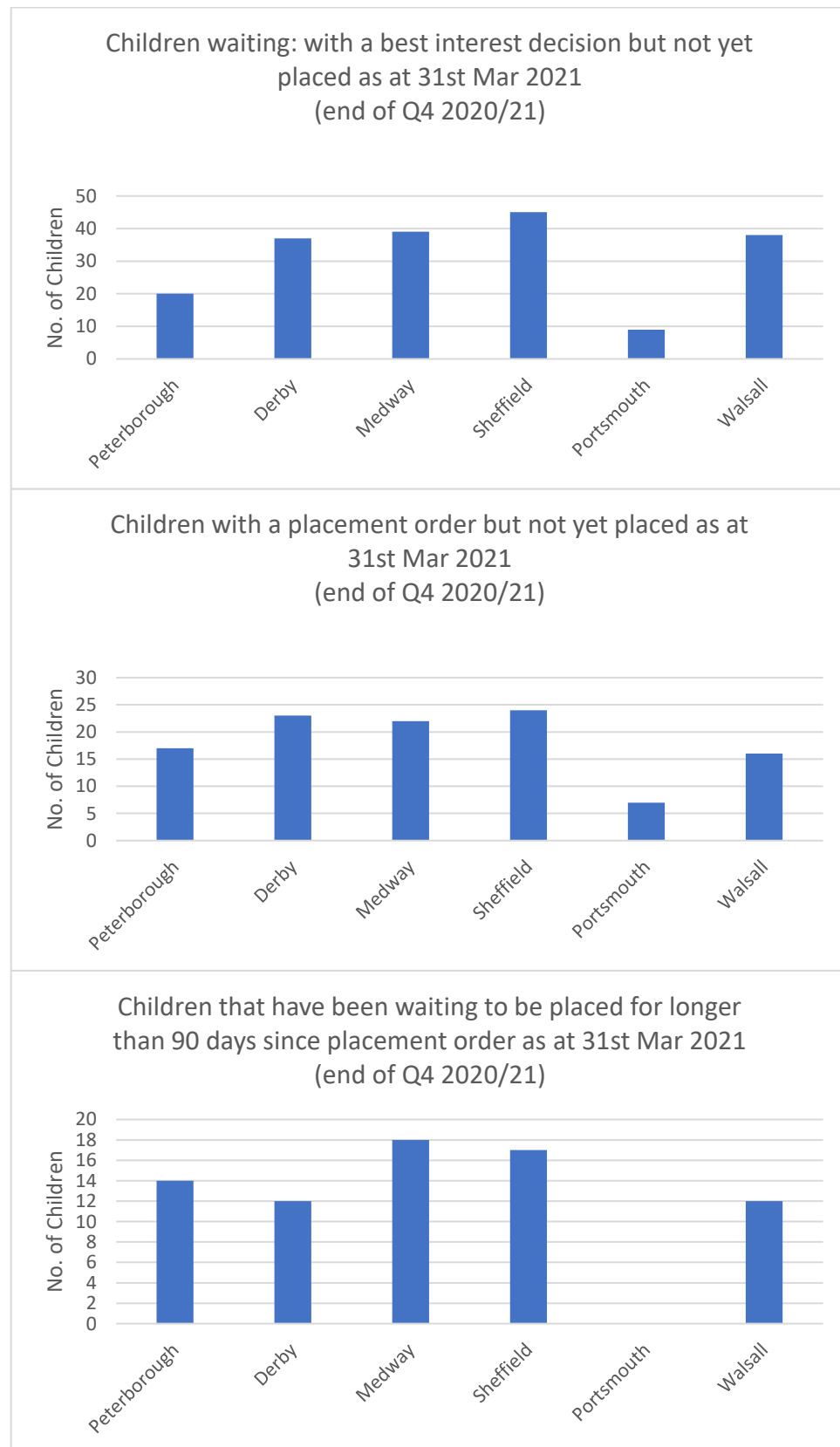
### Note:

Additional budget to cover NI increase has been added to budget which would increase PCC contribution to £640102 (+2921)

Additional budget will also be added to cover 1.75% CCC pay rise which will also necessitate an additional PCC contribution

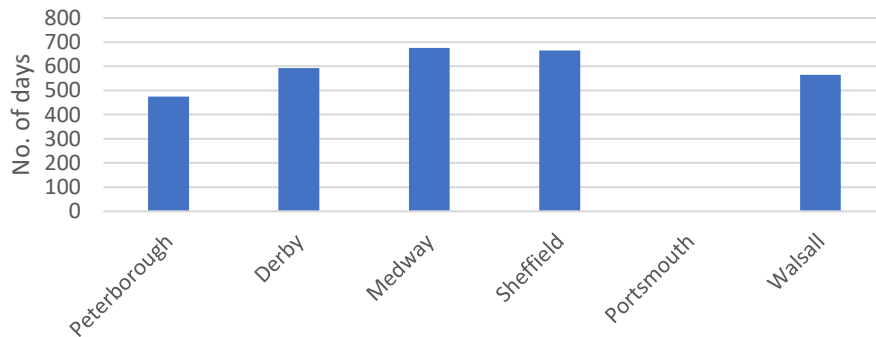
Proposal is once final figure is known this is tabled at the Board for approval

## Appendix B – ASLGB Data SN Comparison - Peterborough

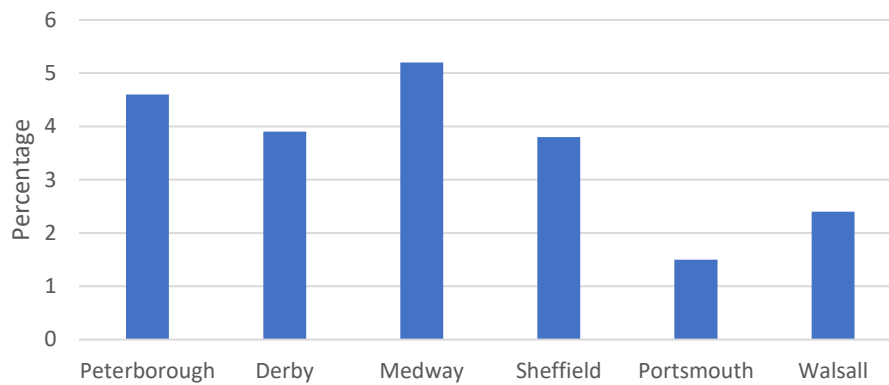




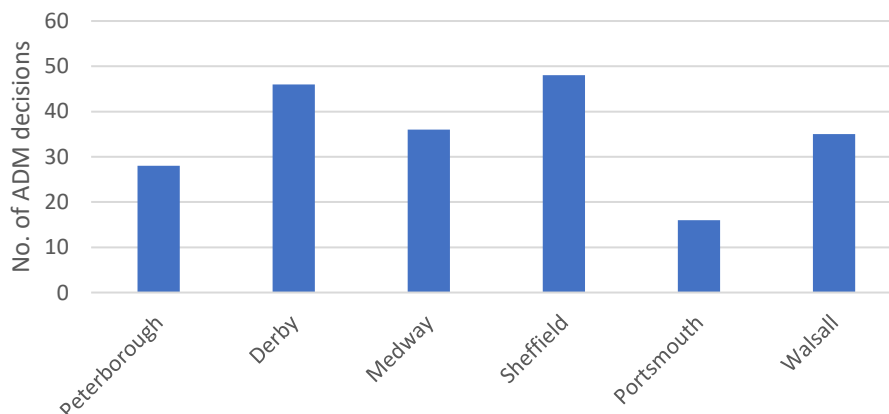
Average number of days spent waiting to be placed with placement order since entering care at 31st Mar 2021  
(end of Q4 2020/21)

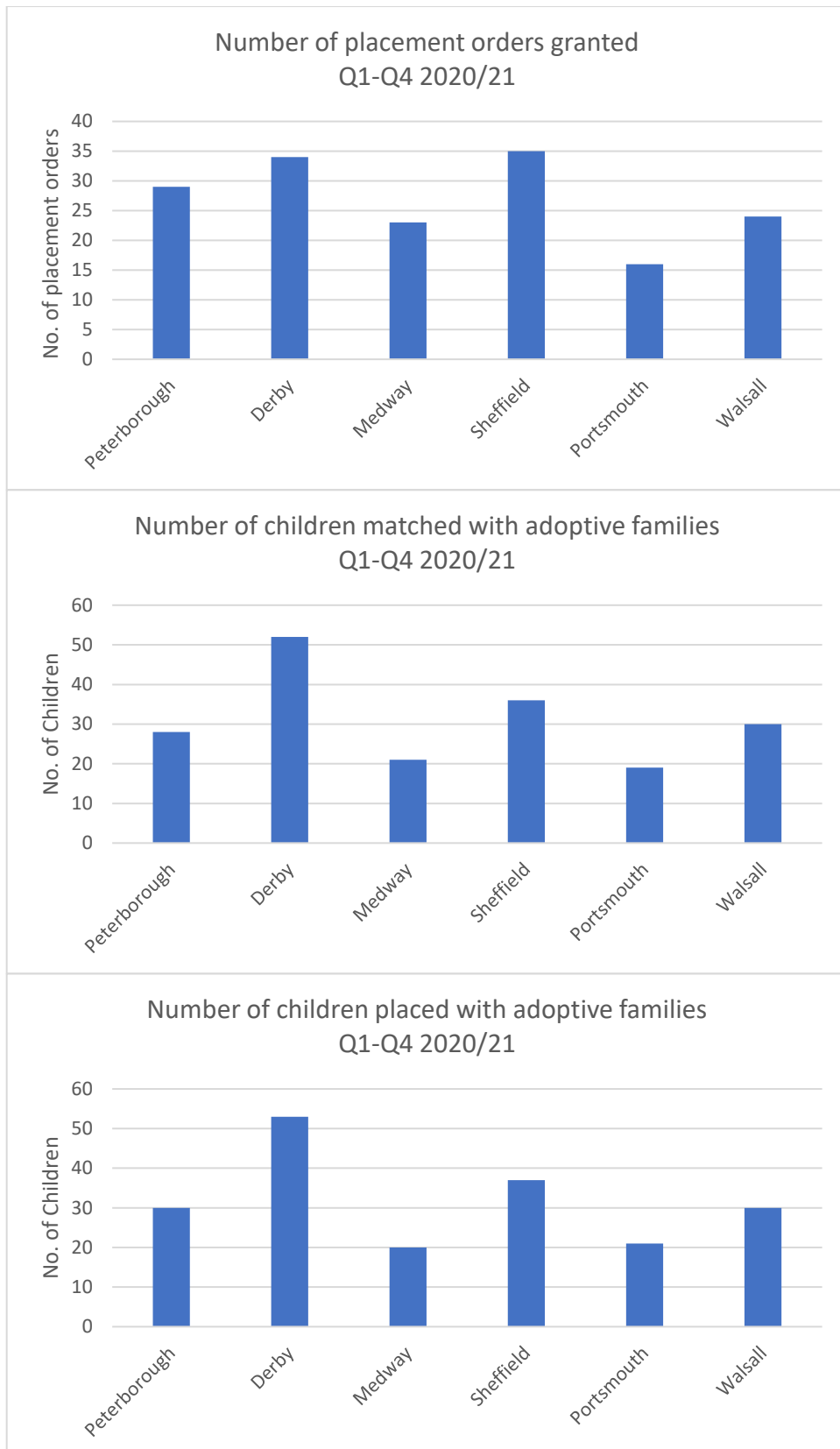


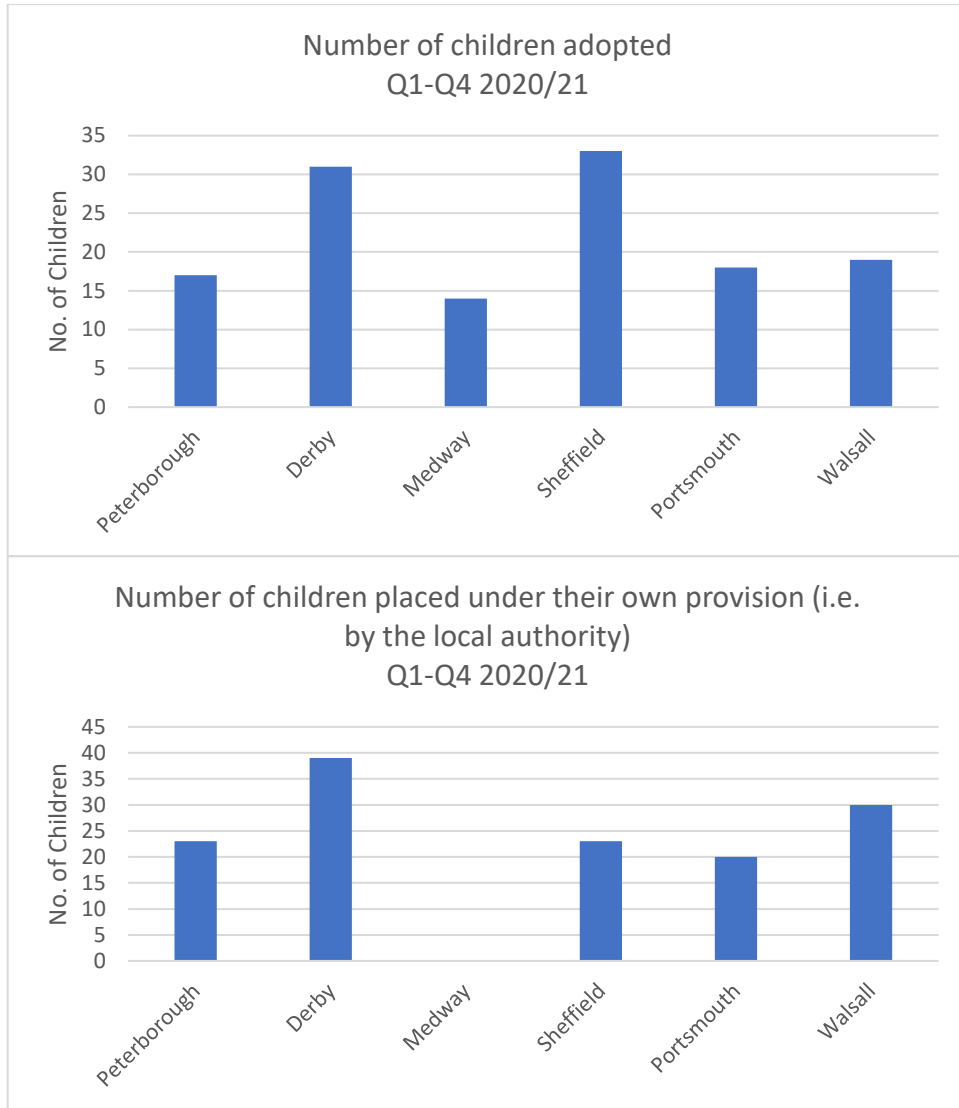
Percentage of children waiting to be placed with a placement order at 31st Mar 2021 per children looked after as at 31st Mar 2020

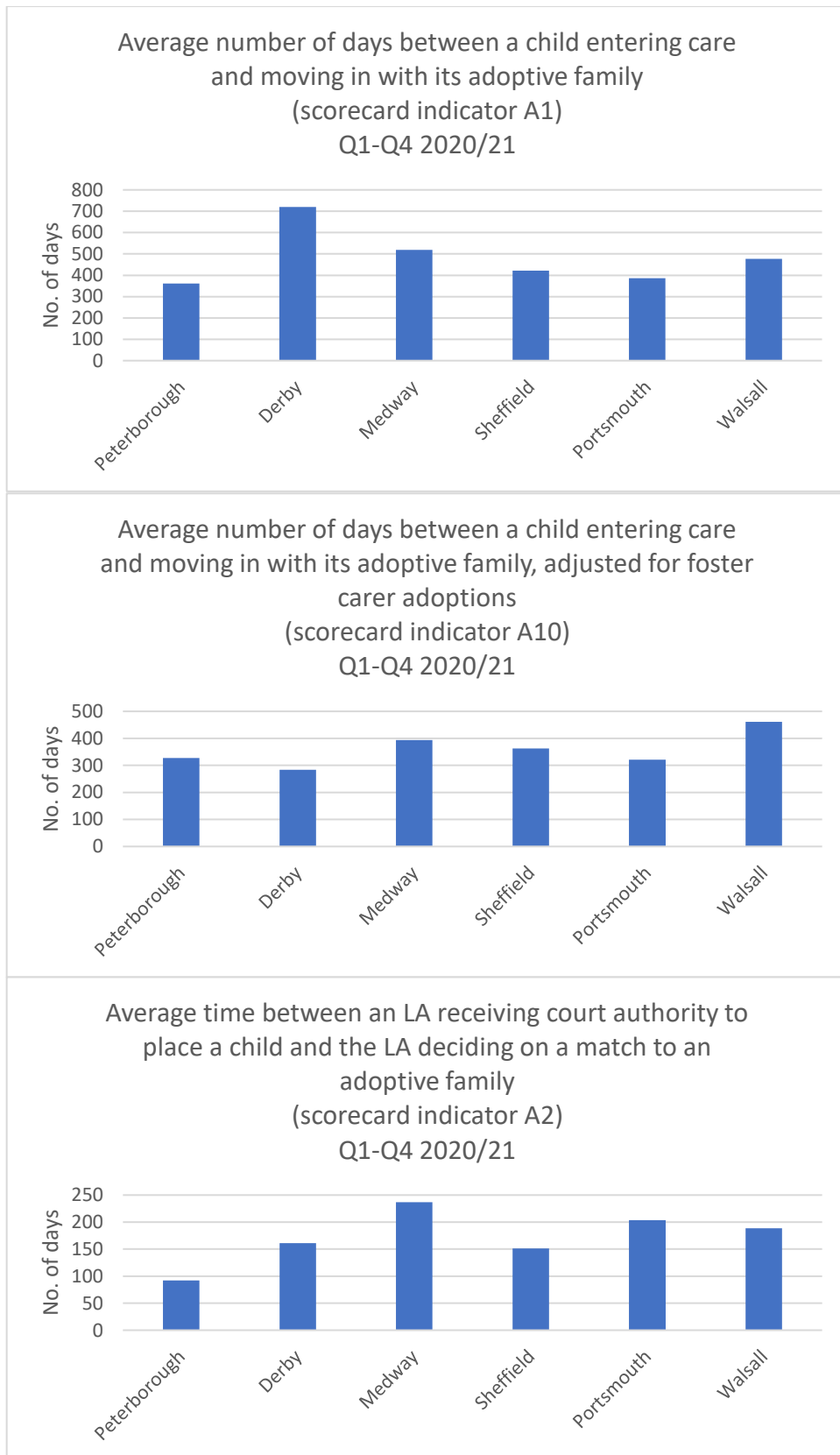


Number of ADM decisions  
Q1-Q4 2020/21

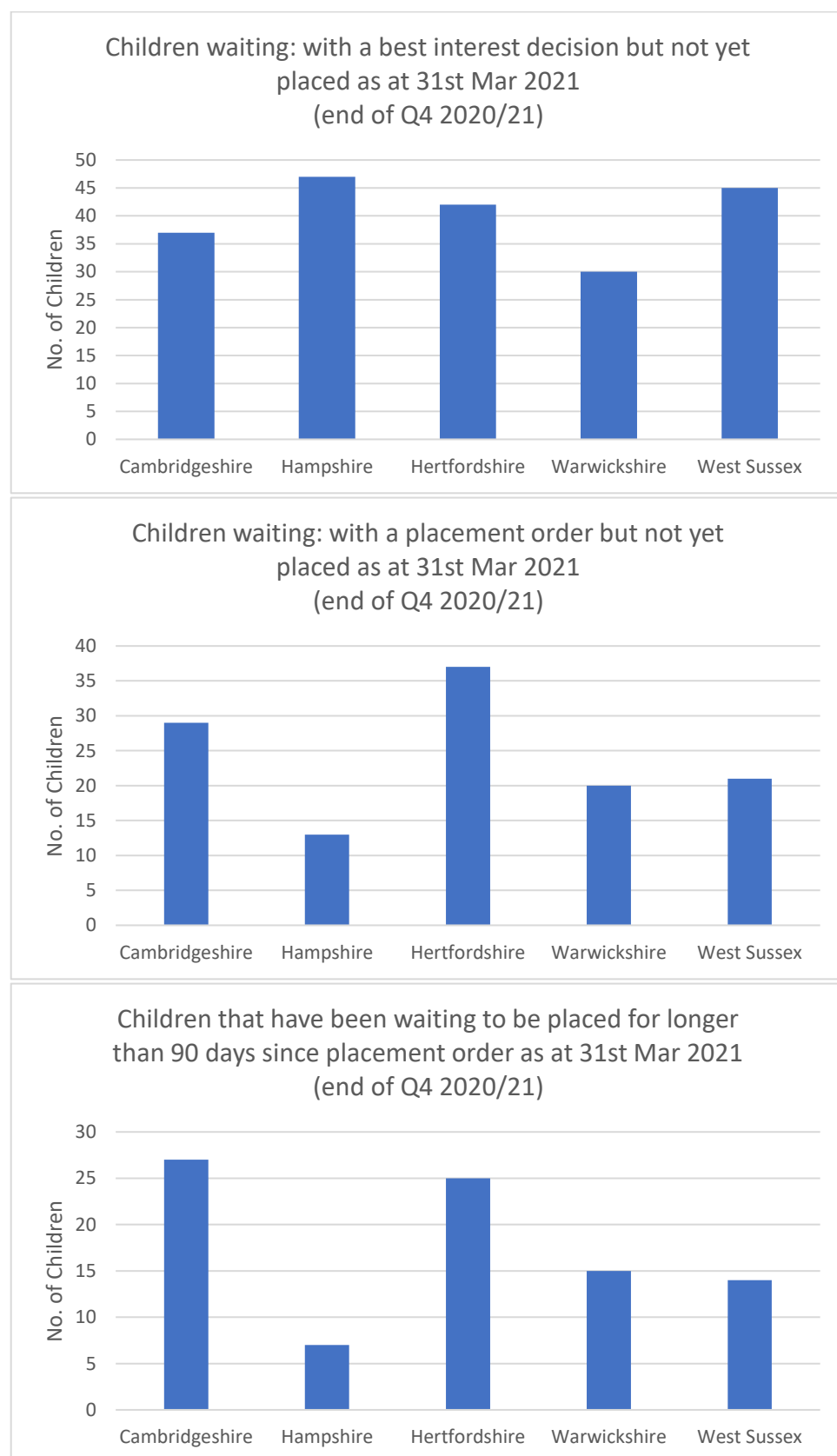


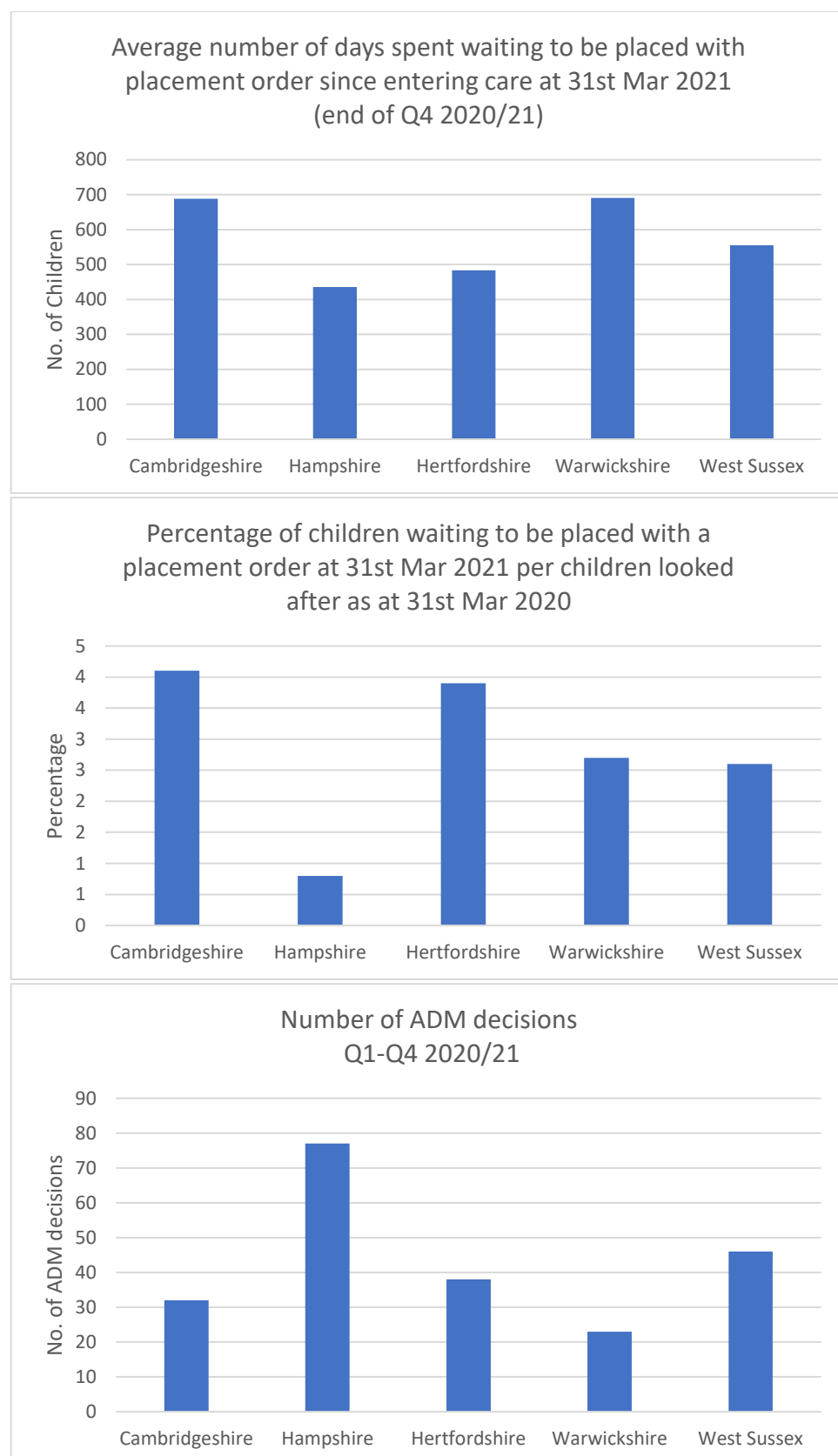


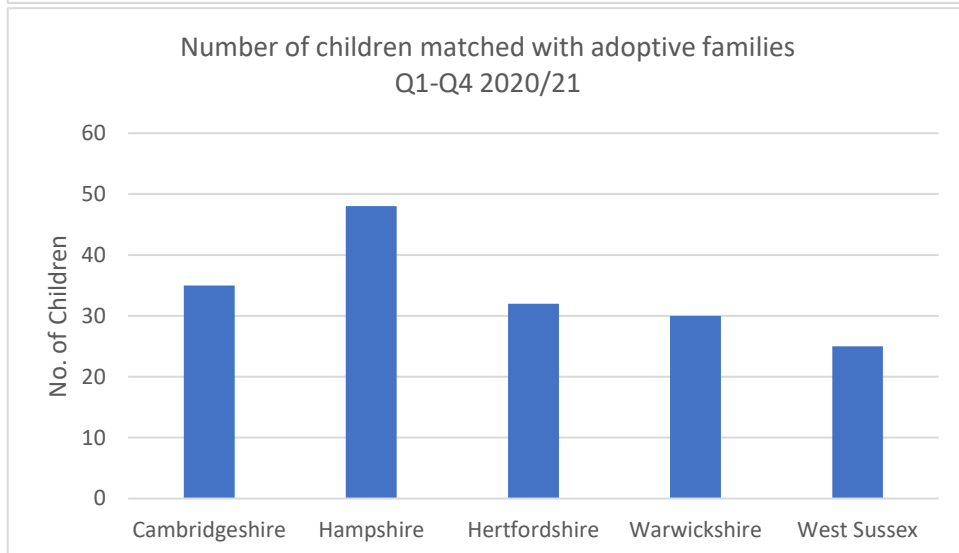
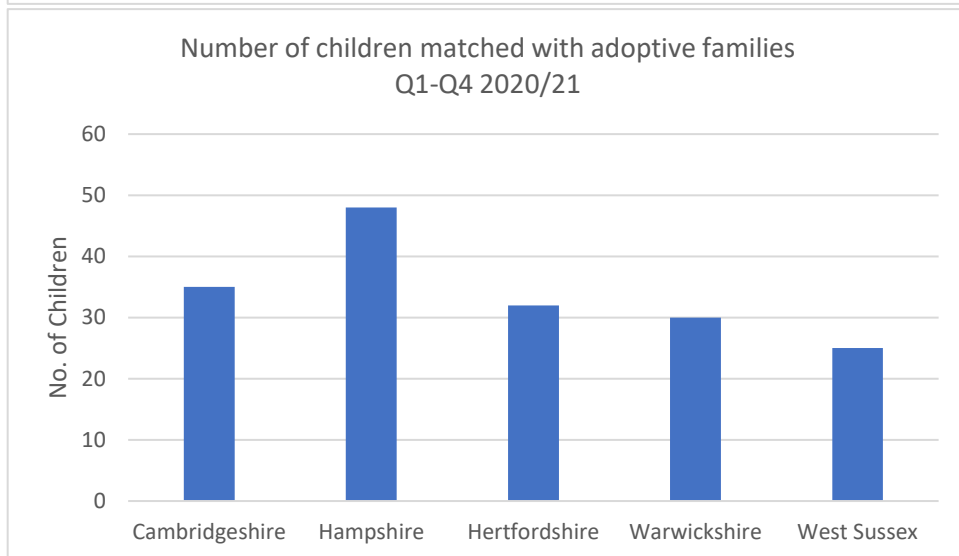
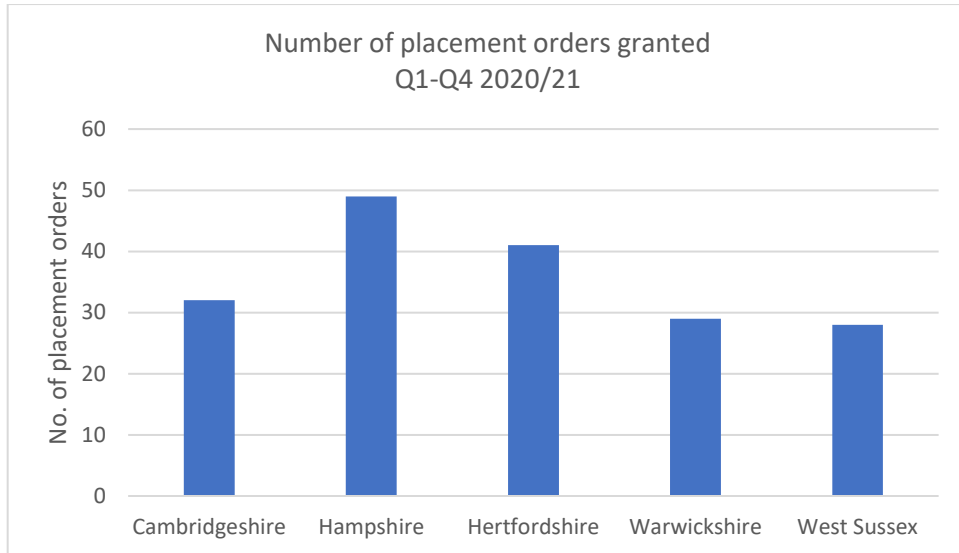


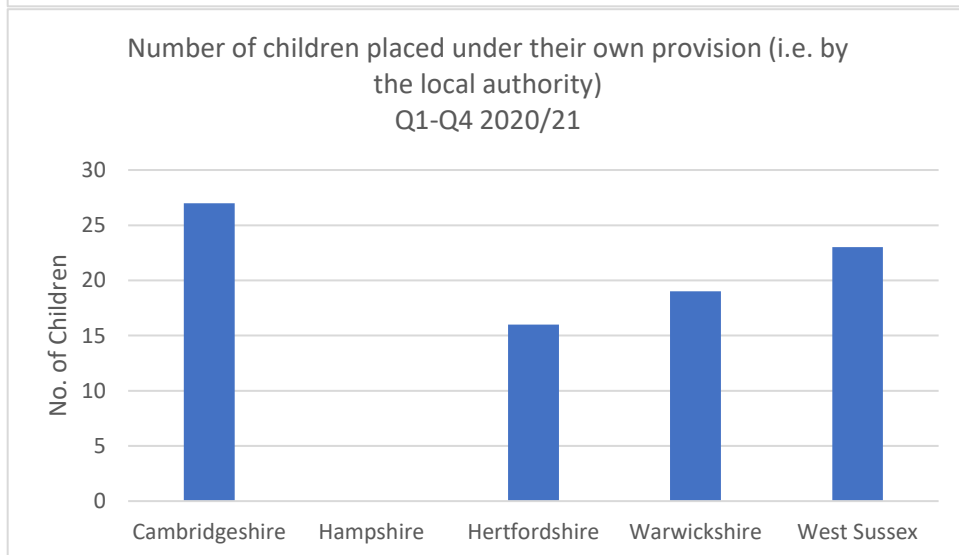
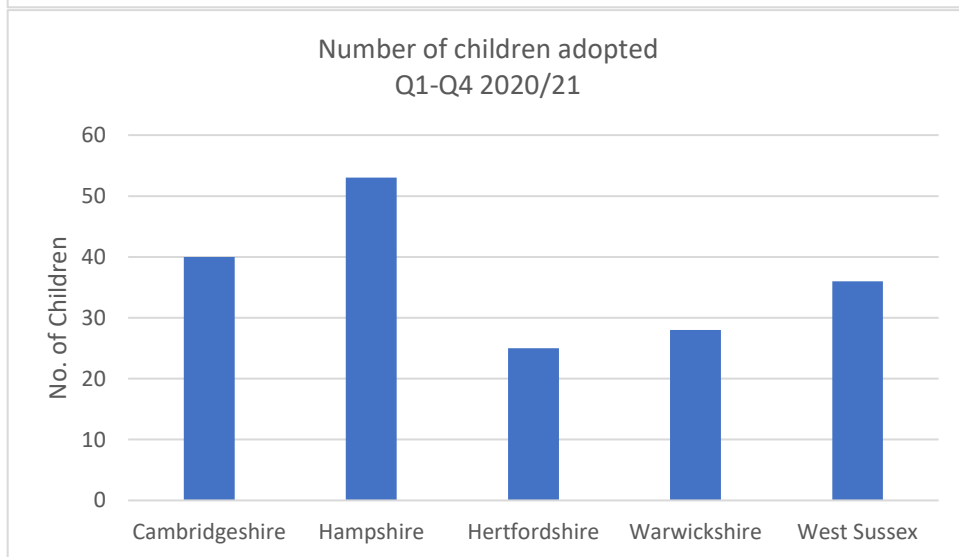
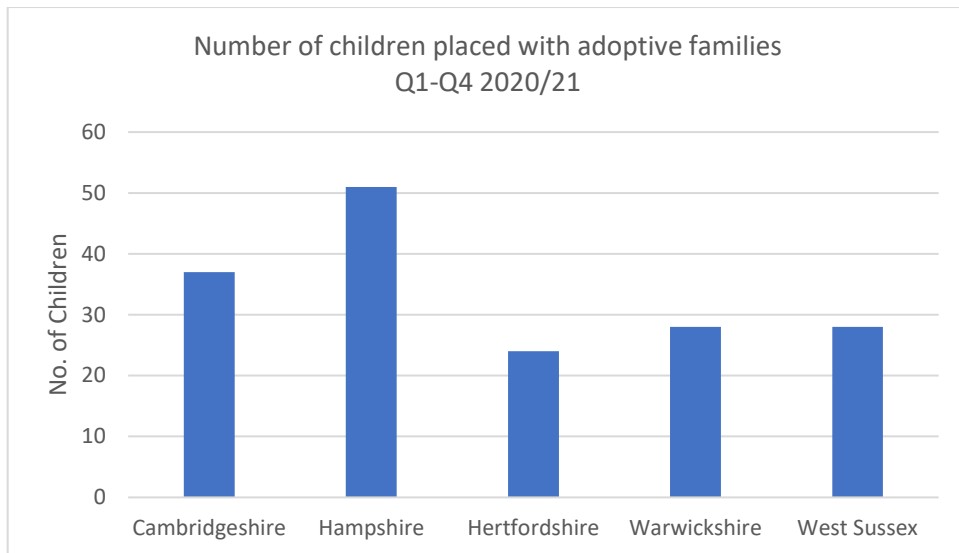


## Appendix B – ASLGB Data SN Comparison - Cambridgeshire

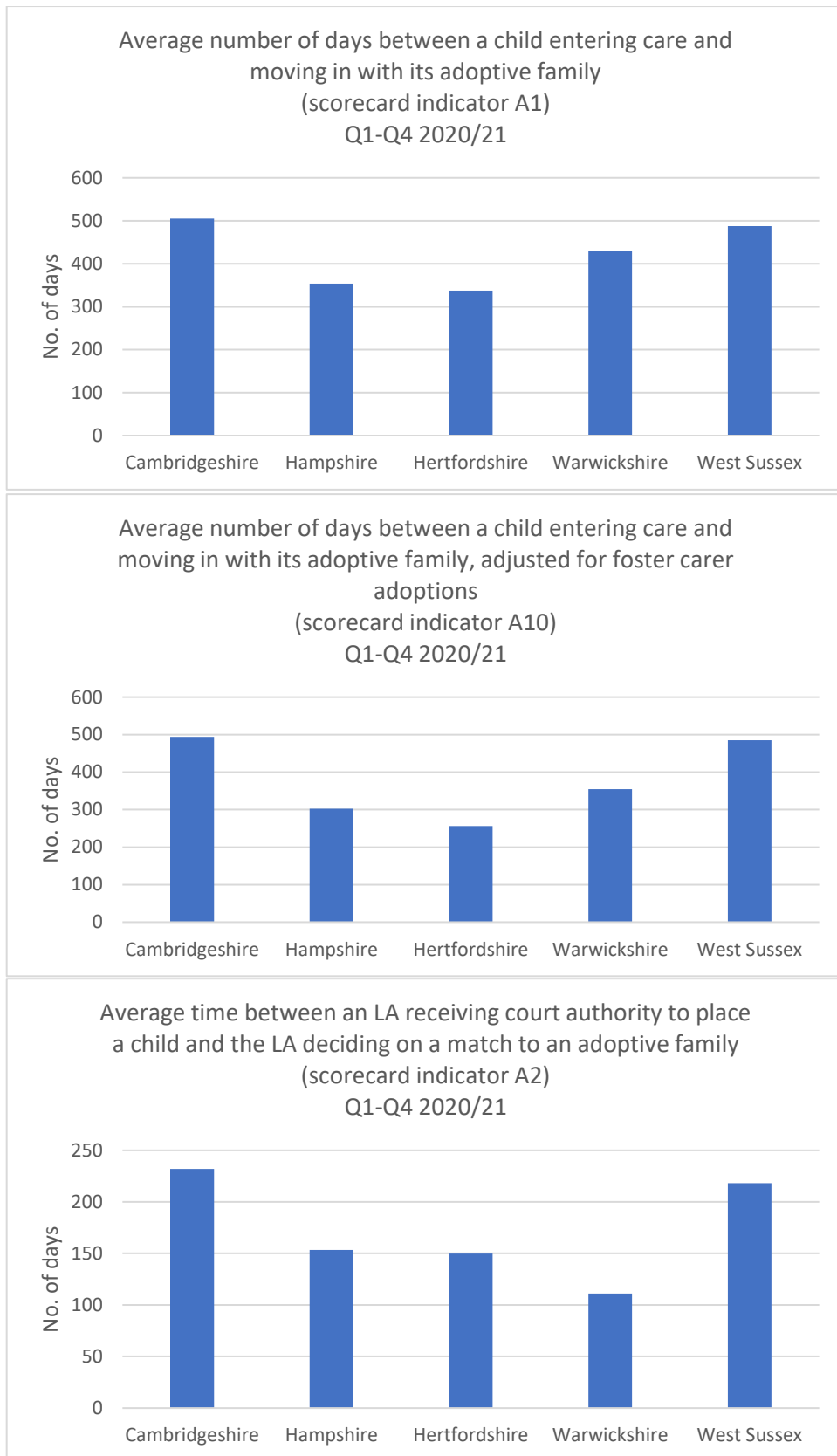












## **Appendix C Marketing Strategy 2022-2023**

**See Marketing, Communication & Recruitment Strategy 2022-2023 Attached**

**CAMBRIDGESHIRE & PETERBOROUGH  
ADOPTION  
ADOPTION AND PERMANENCE PANEL  
REPORT – ANNUAL**

**1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022**

## **1.0 Introduction**

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Adoption, Regional Adoption Agency, was formed and was established from 01 December 2020.

The Adoption and Permanence Panels from both Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council have come 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.

All adoption agencies are required by law to have an Adoption Panel, the key role of which is to provide independent scrutiny of the proposals presented by an Adoption Agency. The Panel is asked to determine whether all the issues have been appropriately clarified and whether the proposal is sound, and to make a recommendation to an Agency Decision Maker (ADM) accordingly.

The proposals placed before the Adoption Panel are:

- The suitability of applicants to become adoptive parents, as presented in the Prospective Adopters Report,
- The match between a child or children and approved adopters, as presented in the Adoption Placement Report (APR) with the Prospective Adopters Report (PAR) and Child's Permanence Report (CPR),
- The plan that a relinquished child be adopted, as presented in the Child's Permanence Report (CPR),
- The Panel will also consider the renewed approval or termination of approval for adopters who have not been matched with a child after 3 years; and a 'Brief Report', i.e., the case made by the Agency that an applicant or applicants is/are not suitable to adopt.

Adoption Panels have the discretion to offer advice to the relevant Agency about:

- The approval range for prospective adopters (i.e., the number, age range and needs of a child or children to be matched),
- The preparation of applicants for Fostering for Adoption,
- The arrangements the Adoption Agency/local authority proposes to make for allowing any person contact with the child.

## **2.0 Adoption Panel**

The Adoption Agencies' Statutory Guidance requires that each Adoption Agency must maintain a 'central list' of persons it considers suitable to be a member of an Adoption Panel. The Panel's business can only be conducted if at least 5 members are present, including the Chair or vice-Chair and a social work representative.

The central list membership stands at 24 active members:

Central List Membership (as of 30th March 2022)

Gary Shorter	<b>Independent Chair (social worker, adopter, and foster carer)</b>
Fernley Copping	<b>Independent Member/Vice chair/Independent Chair</b>
Lesley Hamilton	<b>Independent Panel Chair (Birth Parent)</b>
Jackie Fernandez	<b>Independent Panel Chair (Adopter)</b>
Mervyn Cowdell	<b>Independent Member</b>
Cathie McCulloch	<b>Social Worker, PCC</b>
Sue Hogg	<b>Independent Member (foster carer)</b>
Kathryn Moore	<b>Independent Panel Member (adopter)</b>
Alison Cotterill	<b>Social Work Rep, PCC</b>
Christopher Offiler	<b>Independent Panel Member</b>
Geraldine Moyo	<b>Independent Panel Member/Social Worker</b>
Sabina Giga	<b>Independent Panel Member</b>
Deborah Ward	<b>Independent Panel Member (adopted person)</b>
Jackie Venables	<b>Independent Panel Member (foster carer)</b>
Horia Astalos	<b>Independent Social Worker</b>
Stephen Cook	<b>Independent Member (Adopted Adult)</b>

Patricia Cullen	<b>Independent Social Worker</b>
Rayna Wallis	<b>Independent Member (Adopter)</b>
Louise Fraser	<b>Independent Member (adopted adult)</b>
Laura Dilkes	<b>Independent Social Worker</b>
Darren Jenkins	<b>Independent Member (Adopter)</b>
Elaine Barry	<b>Independent Social Worker</b>
Hugh Minty	<b>New member due to start. Independent Social Worker, (adopter and foster carer)</b>
Dr Rachel Bower	<b>Independent Panel Member &amp; Medical Adviser (Designated Doctor for LAC)</b>

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.

Dr Tim Ladbroke, 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. There was no programme of member appraisals in place during the period before the current Panel Adviser took up the role. Individual Panel member appraisals are planned to take place in May 2022 and will be ongoing until all are completed. Feedback invited from Panel members will form part of the discussion, drawing in members' reflections (they each will be asked to complete a self-assessment) and observations of working with individual Chairs.

All Panel Chair appraisals were completed in December 2021.

The Panel members who sit regularly demonstrate a high level of commitment and passion for their role, and the recommendations made for prospective adopters and children reflect members' broad range of expertise and experience. Panel members are nearly always well-prepared and prompt for meetings and seek to contribute

helpful feedback to the agencies. It is also appreciated that Panel members have been accommodating and patient as new Panel processes are established.

Panel does work effectively and meets the statutory requirements in relation to the central list, including the Panel being quorate for each meeting.

### 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.

All 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 three new Panel members: Laura Dilkes, Elaine Barry, and Darren Jenkins. Laura is a qualified Social Worker with a long-standing experience in Adoption and Fostering. Laura joined Panel in July 2021 and has been a regular member of Panel. Elaine Barry is also a qualified Social Worker and currently sits on other adoption and fostering panels and works for ARU with support for Step Up To Social Work students. Elaine joined us in October 2021. Darren Jenkins is an adoptive father and has adopted 2 children on separate adoption applications. He brings the valued adoptive family view to Panel and is keen to provide a critically helpful view for Panel. He joined us in October 2021.

In March 2022 Hugh Minty joined us too, he is an experienced social worker and Independent Reviewing Officer who is also an adoptive parent and foster carer. Hugh has been observing panels and will be starting to attend panel as a member shortly.

There have been no Panel members leaving the Panel in the last 12-month period.

### **3.0 Panel operation**

Panel is provided with written legal advice in advance for adoption matches by Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council Legal Services and this is presented to Panel.

There are 2 full time Panel administrators' posts; however, this has been an area of difficulty. Tracey Roberts was employed as an agency worker and was very experienced in the role but left in March 2022. A new full time worker Tracey Fifield started March 2022. Due to unexpected circumstances, Kristal remains unable to return as planned.

Benjamin Ness, agency worker began working for 2.5 days to support the service; however, this is temporary only as he will be ending his employment from July. A second full time post will hopefully be filled over the summer. Having 2 full time Panel Administrators will greatly improve the running of panels and enable the advisor to focus on development of the service.

#### **4.0 Agency Advisor role**

Between March 2021- February 2022 Panel advice has been provided by Joanne Banks, Head of the Regional Adoption Agency, following Andy Cussell's departure in March 2021. There has been active review of the role of the Panel advisor and in September 2021 the job was re-evaluated to include providing a role around Practice Standards for the RAA.

Jade Cullum was appointed as Agency Advisor in February 2022. Panel advice has been provided by Jade Cullum from this point on. Jade Cullum had worked as an advanced practitioner in Peterborough adoption team for 9 years and then as a Children's Guardian/Family Court advisor in Cafcass prior to joining the RAA.

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. There is currently a period of consultation before these are shared across teams.

#### **5.0 Panel processes**

Since the RAA started in December 2020, we have continued to operate as a paperless Panel and use Huddle or SharePoint as the method to securely share files. We are looking to move solely to using SharePoint and are creating a RAA Adoption & Permanence Panel SharePoint site.

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, it was not possible for Panel to meet in a physical space. 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 currently. The AA will be reviewing this over the next year.

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.

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 the new 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.

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.

## **6.0 Panel Training**

Adoption National Minimum Standards (NMS) set out several requirements regarding the training and induction of panel members:

*NMS 23.13. The adoption agency provides each person on the central list with an opportunity of observing an adoption panel meeting before they sit on an adoption panel.*

*NMS 23.14. Each person on the central list is given induction training which is completed within 10 weeks of being included on the central list.*

*NMS 23.15. Each person on the central list is given the opportunity of attending an annual joint training day with the agency's adoption staff.*

*NMS 23.16. Each person on the central list has access to appropriate training and skills development and is kept abreast of relevant changes to legislation, regulation, and guidance.*

These standards have been met.

A Panel training day took place in February 2022. This was provided by New Family Social and focused on LGBT+ diversity awareness to aid Panel discussions. This was well attended by Panel members.

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

Jade Cullum has joined the Panel advisor Forum and attends quarterly CoramBAAF Panel 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.

Planning is underway for Panel training in 2022 with various aspects currently being explored by the new agency advisor. Within SharePoint there is a folder for Panel members to access files and videos

The next training event will address therapeutic models used in adoption support and the date is over the summer period.

The AA is currently exploring options for in person workshops/service days.

Online training via Cambridgeshire County Council's learning and development team is being explored by the AA.

During the year Panel welcomed several social workers, health professionals in training and new Panel members as observers

### **7.0 Panel Business – Number of Panels held**

	01.04.2021 to 31.03.2022
Total Panels	41
Cases Considered	50 approvals; 57 matches; 2 De-Registration 2 Relinquished baby plans

The Adoption Panel has met 2-3 days per month. Two Panel meetings were cancelled in the period 01.04.20 to 30.09.21 due to lack of cases being booked.

Between September to April 2022 one Panel meeting was cancelled in this reporting period due to lack of cases being booked.

We have not needed to increase the number of Panel meetings that were originally planned; however, would have the ability to do this as needed.

### **8.0 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. Few feedback forms have been received in the last year. Applicants are asked to electronically return their feedback forms. 10 responses between Sept 2021 and April 2022 have been received from adopters and feedback remains largely positive.

The agency advisor will work with Panel admin to look at increasing feedback numbers and quality from adopters and other professionals.

Feedback from September to April from 4 different applicants

*1-Our feelings about our experience of the Panel are overwhelmingly positive. The questions that were asked to us were fair and gave us a good opportunity to express ourselves. The Panel members were all so friendly and certainly made us both feel at ease.*

2-Adopters have favourably commented on how the meeting is managed in a virtual environment

*We were given plenty of time to answer peoples questioned and we very much liked the way the only person on the screen was the person asking the question. This was fair less intimidating for us.*

3-Virtual panels have been seen as positive by applicants

*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.*

*4-We both felt very comfortable and were made to feel welcome during the panel, which put us both at ease and helped us to confidently provide answers to all the questions.*

## **9.0 Approved Adopters**

	1.4.21 to 30.3.22
Number of Adopters Approved (Households)	44 mainstream adoption approvals and 6 Early Permanence dual approvals

## **10. Ethnicity of Adopters**

Ethnicity	Number of Approved Households 01.04.21 to 30.03.22
White British	39
British Black African/White European	2
White African/White British	3
White European/White British	3
Asian	1
Eastern European	1
American/White British	1

The majority of adoptive applicants were white British heterosexual couples. 6 of the approved adopters were single female; 2 of the approved households was a same sex female couple; 5 of the approved households were same sex male couples.

### **11.0 De-registrations**

Two de-registration case was presented to Panel in the period 01.04.20 to 31.03.22. The adoptive couple had experienced employment changes and had decided that it was not the right time for them to pursue adoption and they withdrew. Panel noted this withdrawal of the couple as approved adopters. One case was a single adopter who had a child placed with her but unfortunately due to the complex needs of the child, the placement had ended. She subsequently moved to Germany and decided to withdraw as an adopter.

### **12.0 Quality of Reports**

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

Panel 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 Service Manager have been working to ensure reports are compliant and of an acceptable level to be heard at panel.

Within the Child Permanence Report ? (CPR) social workers must sign to confirm whether they have met the regulatory requirements for the qualifications of the workers writing reports, and whether the information required in Schedules1, 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.

The Agency Advisor 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.

### **13.0 Prospective Adopter Reports (PAR)**

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 Concurrency and Foster to Adopt have

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 is detailed and specific. 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.

#### **14.0 Child Permanence Reports (CPR)**

The quality of the Child Permanence Reports seen by Panel continues to vary; however, Panel has seen some improvement over the past year with some CPRs being of good quality.

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.

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

The AA will be addressing 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. This should 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.

#### **15.0 Adoption Placement Reports (APR)**

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.
- 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.

## **16.0 Adoption Matches**

	01.04.21 to 31.03.22
Number of children matched	64 children

\* Included in this figure are 8 x sibling group of 2 and 3 x sibling group of 3.

## **17.0 Adoptive Matches at Panel**

<b>Cambridgeshire children matched with adopters -</b>	01.04.21 to 31.03.22
Cambridgeshire County Council Adopters	47
Voluntary Adoption Agency Placements	5
Other Local Authority/RAA Adoption Agency Placements	3

## **18.0 Relinquished baby plans**

	01.04.21 to 31.03.22
Relinquished baby plans	2

## **19.0 Adoption Disruptions (Cambridgeshire children)**

	01.04.21 to 31.03.22
Adoption Disruptions	0 child

There have been no disruptions of adoptive placements between April 2021 and April 2022.

## **20.0 Looking forward**

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 into the RAA Panel. This work is being continued by the AA, Jade Cullum, who has been in post 3 months.

The Panel Advisor 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, the Panel Advisor plans 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.

There are plans for training in July/Aug 2022 but there needs to be consideration about a training plan moving forward with the options of shorter workshop sessions to review practice being explored. We believe there is a strong argument for Social Workers joining some of these training sessions so the learning can be across the RAA.

Panel has been held virtually since April 2020 using the platform of Microsoft Teams and although there have been some technical challenges and it has been necessary for all to adjust to working on a virtual platform, 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. A challenge moving forward is to consider the options for future Panel meetings whether virtual or if a return to a physical space should be considered and where the location might be.

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.

Adjusting to a post-covid way of working while 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 will also be considered, with plans for events being explored currently.

## **21.0 Chairs' Comments**

*Panel has continued to operate well despite the challenges brought about by Covid and the changes in the admin team. We are fortunate to have a new permanent Panel Advisor who is rapidly putting in place measures which will improve quality of reports presented to Panel and ensure regular training and appraisal programmes. Although adopters, social workers and Panel members have embraced virtual working and can see many advantages, it is of concern that the lack of personal contact has an impact on Panel cohesion – the sense of a 'team' – especially as the two formerly separate panels have come together without meeting in person. It is therefore good to know that there are plans for getting together. Lesley Hamilton*

*Panels have continued to run smoothly in the main and this report is an accurate reflection of panel business and activity. We have seen an improvement in the CPRs over the last few months. I would say most are of a good quality. CPR's that can sometimes lack flow tend to be those that have had more than one author or are updated, and the updates are not always clear. I am pleased that panel have had access to training as this had been a little sporadic and it is very good news that panel members now have access to an online portal where they can pick training events that they think will develop their knowledge to bring to panel. Panels have remained remote, and I think panel members have adjusted well to this. We continue to offer a friendly and welcoming environment in order to put applicants and social workers at their ease. The applicants seem to quite like the remote method as they are in their own homes, and it is therefore perhaps less daunting for them. The process has been adapted to fit and although it is never quite the same it is effective and runs smoothly in general. As chairs we always seek to ensure that feedback to the authors of any reports over improvement is done constructively and with care in order that they do not feel less valued and the massive amount of work they have put in remains recognised. There have been changes to those involved in making panels work with a new Agency Advisor and Admin staff. This has of course had an impact on panel members as they adjust but panel remains functional and in my view is run exceptionally well. I have been pleased to see new panel members coming on board and adding diversity and differing knowledge to discussion" Gary Shorter*

*It has been noticeable to me that a very positive feature of the initial development of the new RAA has been the willingness of chairs and members to work together with the agency to build an effective and consistent process. Whilst upholding the independent role of panel in scrutinising and challenging assessments and plans, a keenness to work together has been promoted by both panel and agency in the interests of securing the best possible outcomes. Fernley Coping*

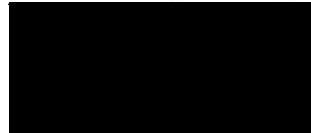
*Over the last year, we formed Cambridge and Peterborough RAA. We spent the first few months ensuring all panels had similar structures in terms of how they were chaired and a cross-fertilisation of panel members across the counties - which has proved to be a success. The quality of the CPRs and PARs are improving, and I look forward to the year ahead. Jackie Fernandez*





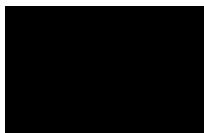
Lesley Hamilton

Panel Chair



Jackie Fernandez

Panel Chair



Gary Shorter

Panel Chair



Fernley Copping

Panel Vice Chair



Jade Cullum

Regional Adoption Agency Advisor

Date. 30/5/2022

Written by Agency Advisor Jade Cullum in consultation with all Chairs.

## Appendix E: Service Plan 2022-2023

<b>Key Performance Indicators – 2022-2023</b>	
<b>Recruitment &amp; Assessment Of Adopters (CC)</b>	
Number of Enquiries	300
Number of Registration of Interest Received	50
Number of Adopters Approved	45
Timeliness of stage 1	18% completed in 4 months
Timeliness of stage 2	50% completed in 4 months

<b>Children (TM)</b>	
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 Average - 182 CCC - 206 PCC - 126
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 Average – 445 CCC - 450 PCC - 404

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

*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*

*Kat Heath (KH) – Senior Practitioner*

*Tony Darnell (TD) – Marketing and Communication Manager*

*Lottie Ettling (LE) – Recruitment Officer*

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.	Social media presence to expand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Regular social media posts</li><li>Dedicated Instagram Page and Twitter Handle.</li><li>Link to case studies of adopters</li></ul>	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
	Improve the useability of the website.	TD			December 2022
	Early Permanence Video for external and internal marketing	TD, KH			September 2022
Ensure Adopters views central.	Month long campaigns to promote adoption	TD, CC			March 2023
	Attend community events	CC			March 2023
	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			March 2023
	Quarterly Newsletters				May 2022 onwards
	Adopters to attend Information sessions.				November 2022
Assessment of Adopters (CC)					

<b>Recruiting Adopters – creating a stronger resource in line with the children’s needs.</b>	<p>Recruitment Officer to take a lead on responding to enquiries and ensure the service focuses on what they can offer children. They will remain the consistent link for adopters throughout the enquiry process.</p> <p>Information sessions to be held virtually and in person and bring in the adopter voice into this.</p>	LE	Increase the number of adopters in assessment and in the number of those open to adopt harder to place children.	<p>Increase number of enquiries.</p> <p>Higher conversion rates</p>	
<b>Consistency in practice</b>	<p>Review of processes to identify strengths and areas for potential improvements.</p> <p>Feedback from adopters at different stages of the process</p> <p>Handbook of processes – internal for the RAA as well as clear outline for adopters</p> <p>Handbook for Adoption Panel to prepare adopters for panel.</p> <p>Timeframe for assessments – system to be embedded to monitor timeframes and highlight concerns.</p>	<p>CC</p> <p>CC, JC</p> <p>CC</p> <p>JC</p> <p>CC</p>	<p>Consistent experiences for adopters.</p> <p>Regional Dashboard to aid performance monitoring</p>	<p>Complaints</p> <p>Timeliness of approval</p>	<p>March 2023</p> <p>September 2023</p>

<b>Comprehensive Training programme for adopters</b>	Review the training content	CC, KH,	Brochure of training on offer		August 2022
	Increase the involvement of adopters in the training	CC, KH	All training courses to involve adopters attending to present sections		March 2023
	Expand therapeutic training input – explore running Foundations For Attachment with the Adoption Support Team	CC, KJ	Support families to access training early in placement to strengthen relationships	Disruptions & Fragile Placement numbers remain very low	March 2023.
<b>Early Permanence (CC, TH, KH)</b>					
<b>Increase the number of placements.</b>	Monthly linking meetings between Family Finding & Recruitment & Assessment	CC, TH	Identify early links.	Number of EP placements.	Review every quarter
	Close working between children's Safeguarding	CC, TH, KH,	Joint meetings to review potential links – PPM's and Unborn Baby Panels.		May 2022 onwards
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend Permanence Planning Meetings and Unborn baby Panels</li> <li>offering workshops and sessions on Early Permanence</li> </ul>	TH			January 2023
	All UBB's to be monitored by Family Finding from referral.	KH			May 2022
	Family Finding to have a dedicated EP Lead.	JB, CC			May 2022  November 2022

	Develop links with CAFCASS to promote Early Permanence				
<b>Improve practice in line with Early Permanence Quality Mark</b>	<p>Review of practice and process in line with Coram's guidance and Early Permanence Quality Mark.</p> <p>Work towards applying for the Early Permanence Quality Mark.</p>			<p>Number of EP placements.</p>	<p>June 2022</p> <p>March 2023</p>
<b>Linking &amp; Matching (TH)</b>					
<b>Consistency in practice</b>	<p>Review of processes for linking &amp; matching to identify strengths and areas for potential improvements.</p> <p>Create process guide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transitions plans for children</li> <li>• External linking</li> <li>• Play days</li> </ul> <p>Support Plans – review and ensure they are clear and child focused.</p> <p>Family Finding to play a QA role with Safeguarding and CiC around plans for children.</p>	<p>CC</p> <p>CC, JC</p> <p>CC</p> <p>JC</p>	Consistent experiences for adopters, foster carers and children's social workers		<p>March 2023</p> <p>March 2023</p>

<b>Clear Family Finding Role</b>	<p>Review the role of the Family Finding Social Worker</p> <p>Consider role post placements – EP, internal and external placements.</p> <p>Better communication between Safeguarding – particularly for expectations during court process. TH to raise at PPM's.</p>	TH	Clarity to CiC and Safeguarding on the role of the Family Finding SW and ensure FF can be proactive in informing the child's care plan.	<p>Number of Adoption Order Granted</p> <p>Number of children with a plan for Adoption</p>	September 2022
<b>Cross RAA working</b>	<p>Meet with TM for neighbouring RAA for potential Interagency linking – this to include sharing adopter and child profiles and consider profile events as necessary.</p> <p>Also share profiles of children coming through for adoption to inform recruitment strategies.</p>		<p>Speed up matching for children with local adopters</p> <p>Potential cost savings with mutual interagency placements</p> <p>Inform future plans for recruiting adopters.</p>	Timescales for children waiting for adoption.	June 2022
<b>Adoption Panel (JC)</b>					

<b>Ensure effectiveness of panel.</b>	Panel training Programme to be developed for 2022-2023	JC	Ensure panel members practice and knowledge if kept up to date.  Any feedback that improvements needed - respond to and jointly as a management group.  JC to share ideas with panel chairs and create implementation plan.		September 2022
	Ensure appraisals take place on a yearly basis and practice concerns are raised.	JC			March 2023
	Review Process for panel to identify strengths and areas for potential improvements. Meetings between JC, CC, TH to allow a continuous review. JC to meet with the Panel Chairs on quarterly basis.	JC			June 2022
	Feedback from adopters on their experiences via feedback from sent out.	JC			May 2022
	Meet with other panel advisors to inform development of panel.	JC			June 2022
<b>Panel Membership</b>	Continuous recruitment of panel members to ensure we have sufficient and robust panel members.	JC	Sufficient panel members to ensure panel can take place. Panel recommendations & ADM decision to align.  More diverse panel members.		March 2023
	Increase diversity of panel members. JC to link with traveller community for panel membership.	JC			March 2023
<b>Child's Voice</b>	Exploration of ways to bring the child's voice into panel. JC to discuss with CC, TH, and panel chairs.	JC	Minutes from panel include child's voice		January 2023



Adoption Support (KJ)					
Consistency in practice	Review of services and processes to identify strengths and areas for potential improvements.	CC	Consistent experiences for adopters.	Waiting time for an assessment.	March 2023
	Practice guidance to be completed including timelines for assessments	CC, JC		Timeliness of assessment s	March 2023
	Lead workers for:	CC	Clear process for each area. Earlier support for SG's.		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-order Adoption support</li> <li>• Special Guardianship Support</li> <li>• Early support and advice</li> <li>• Postbox</li> <li>• BRC &amp; Intermediary</li> </ul>	JC	Clear package of support for universal services. Clarity on number of post box exchanges. Decline in the number outstanding		September 2022 December 2022

<b>Increase Therapeutic offer</b>	A SP to embed Trauma informed practice into the team and RAA via workshops	KJ, LB	Assessments use the Trauma Informed Practice in their analysis.	Case file audits	March 2023
	Therapeutic parenting to be baseline to practice – all workers to be DDP Level 1 Trained	KJ	All workers are trained.		December 2022
	Offer Foundation For Attachment training for adopters and special guardians. A SP to take a lead.	KJ	Course dates are booked in.		March 2023
	Explore additional resource to team to enable team to offer therapeutic packages of support to families	JB	Business Case completed and reviewed.		September 2022
<b>Early Advice</b>	A SP to form link with locality teams and early help.	KJ	Meeting dates are booked to meet with locality managers.		March 2023
	Website to have links for advice and resources. Families at enquiry stage are offered a pack of resources whilst waiting.	KJ	Website has the links and the pack is available for all families enquiring.		December 2022

<b>ASF Framework</b>	JB to work with procurement team to complete the preparation for the framework.	JB	Procurement framework to be launched		March 2023  June 2022
<b>Regular Support Groups to be accessible</b>	<p>Monthly support groups to be available in variety of locations and with different focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stay and play with younger children.,</li> <li>• Parents only</li> <li>• Family groups</li> <li>• New placements</li> <li>• Special Guardians</li> </ul> <p>Brochure of the available support groups to share with adopters &amp; special guardians</p> <p>Children &amp; young people groups- link with the participation service for support</p>	<p>KJ</p> <p>KJ, CC</p> <p>KJ</p>	<p>Families have stronger local support networks</p> <p>More families accessing support groups</p> <p>Children &amp; Young people have a social network</p>	<p>Referrals for the A&amp;SG S Team.</p>	<p>September 2022</p> <p>November 2022</p> <p>January 2023</p>
<b>Quality Assurance (JC)</b>					

<b>Clear awareness of the quality of the written work of the RAA.</b>	Create an Audit Tool for the RAA.	JC	Clear awareness of the quantity and quality of the recording of the service.		June 2022
	Monthly audits completed by the RAA Management team initially on their own and then with the workers from January 2023	JB, KJ, CC, TH, JC			August 2022 January 2023
	Panel Chairs & Panel Advisor (JC) to feedback on themes on QA of paperwork from panel and feedback to relevant teams.	JC	Themes can feed into service action plan.		September 2022 March 2023
	Self-Assessment to be completed	JC & JB	Clear action plan for areas of concern of practice.		November 2022

## Children in Care/ Care Leavers in Education, Employment and Training (EET) Promotion Action Plan Update

To: Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee

Meeting Date: 16 November 2022

From: Mark Cowdell, Countywide NEET Manager and Corporate Parenting Service.

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: No

Outcome: To provide the Sub-Committee with an update on progress toward increasing the number of young people in education, employment and training (EET).

Recommendation: The Sub-Committee is asked to note and comment on the report.

### Officer contact:

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### Member contact:

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Role: Chair/Vice Chair  
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Tel: 01223 706398 (office)

## 1. Background

- 1.1 The numbers of young people in education, employment and training (EET) is a key positive outcome measure for children in care and care leavers so measurement of those in EET and those not in education, employment and training (NEET) is carefully monitored.
- 1.2 In 2018, an overall Cambridgeshire NEET reduction strategy was developed which had action plans for different vulnerable groups sitting under it. An action plan was developed for Children in Care and Care Leavers. This action plan was provided at this sub-committee meeting in November 2021.
- 1.3 In 2020, it was decided that officers would be given the task of pulling together a NEET strategy across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and ensure that all the different services supporting this work are working together to help improve performance across our vulnerable group.
- 1.4 This report is to provide an update since that time.

## 2. Main Issues

- 2.1 The current DfE (Department for Education) EET figure for care leavers aged 19 to 21 for Cambridgeshire is 49.0%. This was for 2021 and unfortunately the 2022 figure has not been published yet. This is in comparison to an EET figure 52.0% for East of England Average and an EET figure of 54.3% for Cambridgeshire Statistical neighbours.

Care Leavers	% in EET (DfE Annual Published Data)			
	2018	2019	2020	2021
EAST OF ENGLAND	51.0%	52.0%	53.0%	52.0%
Cambridgeshire	47.0%	47.0%	44.0%	49.0%
Cambridgeshire SN	51.8%	53.9%	54.1%	54.3%

- 2.2 The above table shows that although Cambridgeshire is still behind our local and statistical neighbours, the gap between Cambridgeshire and these neighbours has been narrowed and excellent improvement of 5.0% made from 2020 to 2021. This is reflective of the work that is being done to highlight the importance of increasing our vulnerable young people into education, employment or training.
- 2.3 We have provisional data for 2022 and although it has not been published and therefore cannot compare with local and statistical neighbours, the provisional figure for 2022 is 197 young people being in EET out of 364 which is 54.1%. This shows another increase by 5.1% from 2021 result which is equivalent to about 18-19 young people. It will be interesting to see how the result compares with local and statistical neighbours when the results are published later this year by DfE. This provisional result is again reflective of the work that is happening to raise the profile of vulnerable young people and their need to be in education, employment and training.

- 2.4 To support with the collation of accurate monthly data, a form has been devised and embedded into the case management system and will be reviewed monthly to gather what each young person is doing in EET and if they are not in EET, what are the barriers.
- 2.5 As a wider NEET picture for Cambridgeshire, there has been a lot of work completed recently through the NEET strategy by shining a light on this work. Cambridgeshire consistently achieves an average result of 3.0% for NEET and Not Knowns, for 16-18 year olds. This result means we are within the first Quintile and score well in comparison to local and statistical neighbours.
- 2.6 By developing a quarterly reporting document called “NEET on a Page”, this has helped us to highlight the results for Cambridgeshire including splitting down the vulnerable groups such as Care Leavers, young people known to Youth Offending Service, young people who have an EHCP (Education Health and Care Plans) for SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) needs and teenage mothers. By improving reporting, we can see more clearly where we are performing well but also the areas we can further improve, and we are able to then focus resources to make improvements.

### Children in Care/Virtual School activities to promote Education, Employment and Training (EET)

- 2.7 Promoting EET is high on our agenda and one of the key areas that has been looked at to help address EET promotion and thus increase attendance and engagement within education, employment and or training has been reviewing and analysing key themes for our younger cohort of care experienced young people. Below are a few examples of how we are working to help promote EET.
- 2.8 Early identification and analysis of PEP data – currently this is focusing on year 11s, however the future aim is to begin this starting from year 9 onwards, working closely with colleges and training providers to capture where there is a potential risk of NEET and considering alternative options to promote EET.
- 2.9 Linking with out of county support services for our young people placed outside of Cambridgeshire.
- 2.10 Inclusion work – tracking post 16 attendance, providing early interventions with regards to attendance and disciplinaries.
- 2.11 Refer to Form the Future (careers and guidance support) and working closely with the Aspirations Officer to promote positive activities.
- 2.12 Individual careers guidance sessions offered for years 9-14 – timely advice, accessible to both young people placed within and outside of Cambridgeshire. Sessions include ‘feeling stuck,’ career maps, applications and apprenticeships.
- 2.13 Offering bespoke training courses to our care experienced young people age 14+, which includes first aid course, Barista training with food hygiene and youthwork workshop.
- 2.14 Summer activities – this project enables young people to keep fit, improve their wellbeing, and keep their English skills up to date. Funding has now been secured from the Cambridge

Community Foundation to continue this work for our UASC young people, to provide football and a 'taster session' art, careers and sports offer in Cambridge and Peterborough. This will also include cooking sessions.

- 2.15 Partnerships via MyCambridge – we have several offers from partner groups which currently include sound engineering courses, hospitality work trials and bursary places for filmmakers (Junction), music taster experiences (Cambs Music), development of curatorial and retail volunteering, design mentoring (Cambs Libraries), access to Year 10 work experience (Form the Future), access to gaming and e-sports festival educational activities.

### Activity to support Care Leavers

- 2.16 We have refreshed our work with the DWP (Department of Work and Pensions) through local Job Centre Plus. Our protocol has been updated to facilitate more frequent joint work between personal advisers and work coaches. Universal credit training has been provided for personal advisers with the overall aim to reduce benefit issues and encourage more care leavers into work. We have promoted Kickstart within our services supporting care leavers.
- 2.17 We are in close contact with the work of the NNECL (National Network for the Education of Care Leavers), a network of higher and further education providers which supports us and young people with access to up-to-date information and materials. We have collaborated with the Network for East Anglian Collaborative Outreach (NEACO), which delivers targeted and regional outreach activities across East Anglia as part of the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP). NEACO aims to support the most disadvantaged young people in England to progress into higher education and we have jointly produced booklets and increased the number of university open days with the overall aim to increase opportunities and numbers of young people in Higher Education.
- 2.18 Partnerships have been established with Form the Future (Regions of Learning) for 1:1 career guidance for young people at risk of being NEET aged 16-19 and to Ignite for those aspiring to self-employment. We have taken part in consultations with these organisations to ensure that they are aware of the specific needs of our young people and to break down barriers caused by perception and prejudice. We work with the three main further education colleges (Peterborough College; Cambridge Regional College; College of West Anglia) and together have enhanced the career guidance offer for care leavers, e.g., priority for guidance appointments. We have developed a Job-Hunting Pack (with a version for our unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people). This pack accompanies the "Stepping Out" preparation for adulthood work which staff and carers use as a tool to support our work with rising 18-year-olds.
- 2.19 A nine-month project was completed this year in partnership with the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum and the Care Leavers Covenant which focused on establishing long term relationships with the construction industry, supported by the Esme Fairburn Foundation. Using this as a model, we intend to focus on another industry in 2023. Part of this work has led to a workshop attended locally by Keir and Persimmon Homes to raise the profile of our young people to establish the connections to provide opportunities.
- 2.20 Funding has been allocated to implement an externally provided mentoring service for care leavers. The service will recruit mentors with the primary aim of supporting our young



people into work and education. Adverts for expressions of interest are due to be published during November 2022.

### 3. Alignment with corporate priorities

#### 3.1 Environment and Sustainability

There are no significant implications for this priority.

#### 3.2 Health and Care

There are no significant implications for this priority

#### 3.3 Places and Communities

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

- Working collaboratively with the communities to support with local need and supporting our vulnerable young people into suitable EET.

#### 3.4 Children and Young People

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

- Working across the partnership with different agencies including community partners to help to overcome barriers to EET for our vulnerable young people.
- Supporting our young people in care and care leavers to achieve positive outcomes to enable them to make transition into adulthood successfully.

#### 3.5 Transport

There are no significant implications for this priority.

### 4. Source documents guidance

#### 4.1 None

### 5. Accessibility

#### 5.1 An accessible version of the information contained in the table in this report can be obtained from [mark.cowdell@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:mark.cowdell@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)



## Performance Scorecard

To: Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee

Meeting Date: 16 November 2022

From: Jenny Goodes, Assistant Director, Early Help and Social Care

Electoral division(s): All

Forward Plan ref: n/a

Key decision: No

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

Recommendation: The Sub-Committee is recommended to:

- a) Note the content of the report.
- b) Raise any questions with the lead officer.

### Officer contact:

Name: Myra O'Farrell  
Post: Head of Service Corporate Parenting  
Email: [myra.o'farrell@peterborough.gov.uk](mailto:myra.o'farrell@peterborough.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01733 864391

### Member contacts:

Names: Councillors Anna Bradnam and Lucy Nethsingha  
Post: Chair/ Vice Chair Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee  
Email: [anna.bradnam@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:anna.bradnam@cambridgeshire.gov.uk) [lucy.nethsingha@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:lucy.nethsingha@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01223 706398 (office)

## 1. Summary

- 1.1 This report is presented to each formal and informal Corporate Parenting Sub Committee to allow members to be updated on the numbers of children in care, care leavers and the placements in which they are placed. Some of the headings have been amended following suggestions from the children in care council members.

## 2. Background

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Corporate Parenting Sub Committee in respect of the numbers of children and young people being cared for by the Council as of 31 August 2022 by providing a breakdown of the types of homes in which they are living. The scorecard provides additional information related such as education and health data.

## 3. Main Issues

- 3.1 As of 31 August there were 642 children in care they were in the following homes:

- 214 children were placed with in house foster carers providing placements for the Local Authority.
- 218 children were in foster care and placed with independent fostering agencies (IFAs). The agencies work with the Local Authority on a contractual basis to provide foster placements.
- 78 post 16 year olds were living on their own, with support (independent living) but still classed as Children in Care with an allocated social worker.
- 11 children have a court order (Placement Order) that allows them to live with their prospective adoptive parents whilst they are awaiting a final adoption order.
- 44 children were placed with family or friends' carers (connected person). These carers are formally assessed in the same way that our other in-house carers are assessed and are presented to the Fostering Panel for approval in the same way. They are paid the same level of allowances as other in house foster carers.
- 10 children were living with their parents but considered as looked after children because they are subject to a full care orders, so the local authority still shares parental responsibility with the birth parent. Placements with parents are often made pending a plan for reunification with the parent and in some cases will result in an application for care orders to be discharged.
- 56 children and young people were placed in residential care which provides intensive support in a residential setting. These placements are most usually made when it is clear that foster care is not able to meet the child or young person's needs. Residential care is nearly always accessed by adolescents and only very rarely used for younger children.

## 4. Alignment with corporate priorities

### 4.1 Environment and sustainability

There are no significant implications for this priority.

### 4.2 Health and care

There are no significant implications for this priority.

### 4.3 Places and community

There are no significant implications for this priority.

### 4.4 Children and young people

Section 3.1 above refers.

### 4.5 Transport

There are no significant implications for this priority.

## 5. Significant Implications

### 5.1 None.

## 6. Source documents

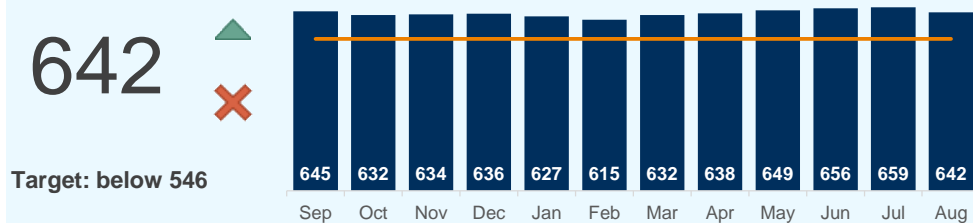
### 6.1 None






# CCC Corporate Parenting Scorecard

## HEADLINE FIGURES

Number of children in care (CiC) on the last day of the month

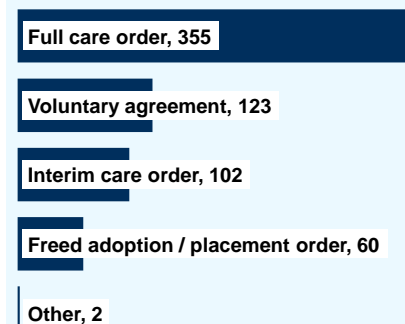


## Staffing

	Staff	Average Caseload	Change*	Performance
Children in Care Qualified social workers	28	21		-
Leaving Care Personal Advisors	20	16		-
Independent Reviewing Officers	10.6	57		-

\*Change in average caseload is from December 2021 to March 2022







## Legal status of children in care



## Length of time children have been in care

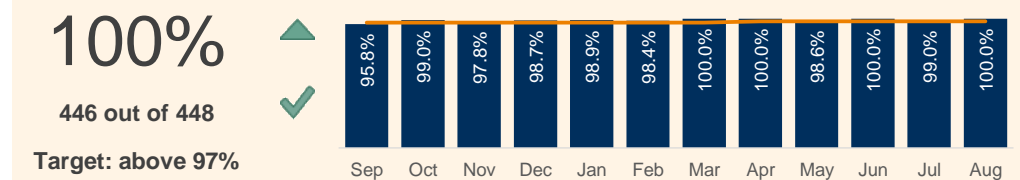


**Key**

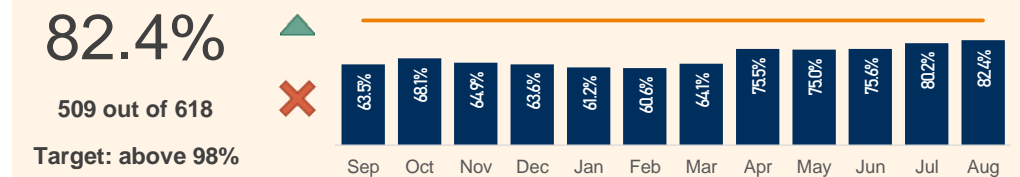
Change since previous month	 Improved	 Stayed the same	 Deteriorated
Performance against target	 Strong	 Acceptable	 Poor

## SERVICE STANDARDS

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

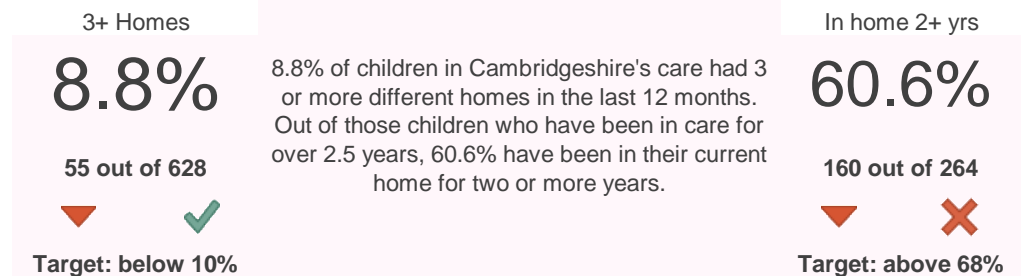


% of CiC statutory visits which were carried out on time (year to date, and during each month)

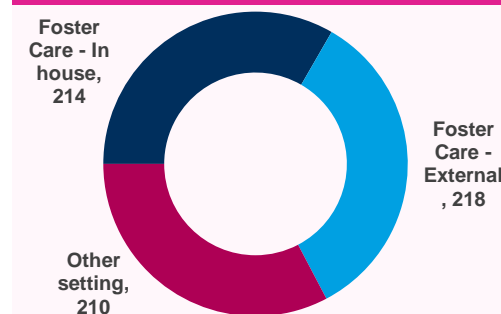


## HOMES

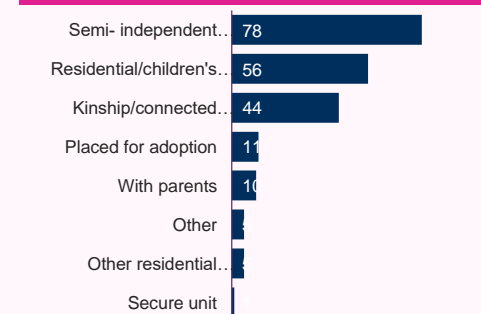
### Home Stability



### Type of home of children in care



### Other settings: breakdown





## EDUCATION

### Children in care by age group

16+; 151

10 to 15; 279

5 to 9; 92

1 to 4; 82

Under 1; 28

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

99.3%

407 out of 410

A Personal Education Plan (PEP) was in place for 407 children in Y1 - Y11, who were in the care of CCC and on the role of the virtual school at the end of the Summer Term 2022.

### % of school-aged children in care in good or outstanding schools

66.6%

269 out of 404

As of June 2022

66.6% of Cambridgeshire's children in care are taught in good or outstanding schools, as at the end of June 2022.

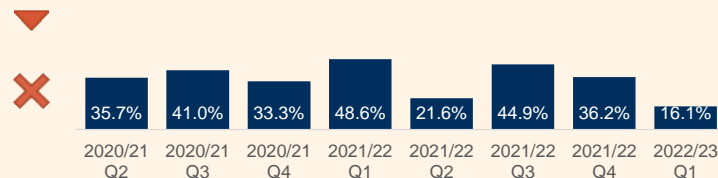
## HEALTH - SERVICE STANDARDS

### Children in care whose initial health assessment was completed on time (Year to date and by quarter)

32.5%

79 out of 243

Target: above 95%

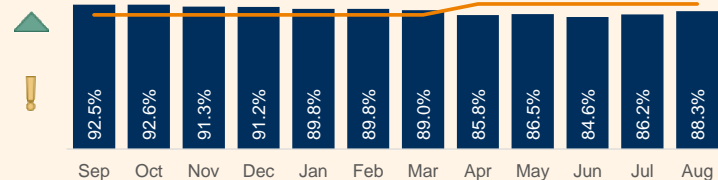


### Children in care whose annual health assessment was completed on time

88.3%

394 out of 446

Target: above 86%



### Children in care whose annual dental examination was completed on time

52.9%

236 out of 446

Target: above 82%



## MISSING

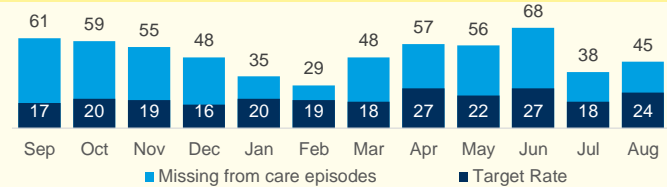
### Children in care who go missing (with number of episodes)

24

45

Children

Episodes



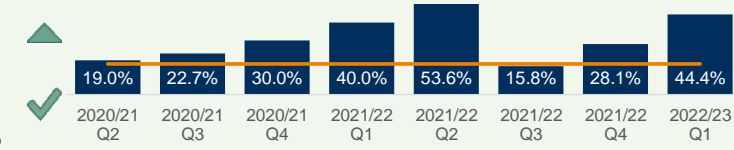
## ADOPTION

### % of children leaving care who are adopted (Year to date and by quarter)

34.6%

54 out of 156

Target: above 17%



### Timeliness of adoption process

Time to placement

422

Target: below 430

For children adopted during the past 12 months, an average of 422 days passed between the child entering care and them moving into their adoptive home. An average of 270.7 days passed between their placement order being granted and approval of a match with their adopters.

Time to match

271

Target: below 185

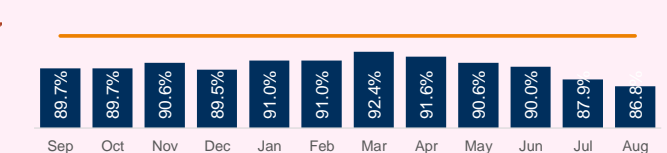
## CARE LEAVERS

### Care Leavers who have a pathway plan in place

86.8%

427 out of 492

Target: above 95%



19 to 21 year old care leavers who are not in employment, education or training (NEET)

43 out of 107

19 to 21 year old care leavers who live in unsuitable accommodation

6 out of 107



## Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee Workshop and Training Plan

Each committee at the County Council has its own training plan to help its members learn more about the business that the Committee covers. Each training session is listed and a record is kept of which members of the committee attend.

Subject	Desired learning outcome	Priority	Date	Responsibility	Format	Audience	Attendance	% of Sub-Committee members attending
Member Induction Programme: Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee	To brief new and returning Members and Substitute Members on the responsibilities of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee	High	Monday 12 July 2021	Nicola Curley/ Myra O'Farrell	Teams meeting	Members and Substitute Members of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee	Cllrs Ambrose Smith Bird Bradnam Bulat Goodliffe M King Slatter van de Ven	60%
Member Induction Programme: Safeguarding	To brief on Members on safeguarding issues.	High	08 October 2021	Charlotte Black/ Lou Williams	Teams meeting	All Members	Cllrs Bulat Goodliffe Bird Bradnam Coutts Cox Condrion Nethsingha van de Ven	40%

Subject	Desired learning outcome	Priority	Date	Responsibility	Format	Audience	Attendance	% of Sub-Committee members attending
Corporate Parenting and Foster Care	To brief Members on their role as corporate parents, with a particular focus on the work of foster carers.	High	22 October 2021	Fiona van den Hout	Teams	All Members	Bulat Goodliffe Hay Slatter Nethsingha van de Ven	40%
Supporting the mental and emotional health needs of children in care/on the edge of care	The aim of this session is to introduce CYP Members and the Corporate Parenting Sub Committee to the clinical framework and how it supports our foster carers and contributes to the emotional wellbeing of children and young people.		7 April 2022  1.30 – 2.30pm	Alison Bennett	Teams meeting	All CYP and CPSC members	Cllrs Atkins, Bradnam, Goodliffe, M King, Hay, Hoy and Slatter	80%

Subject	Desired learning outcome	Priority	Date	Responsibility	Format	Audience	Attendance	% of Sub-Committee members attending
Journeys for children in care including types of placement, placement matching and seeking permanent placements			04 May 2022 12.30 – 2pm	Ricky Cooper	Teams meeting	All Members		
The Role of the Foster Carer	To brief Members of the role of foster carers.	Medium	21 October 2022	Ricky Cooper	Teams meeting	All Members	Cllrs A Bradnam, A Bulat, Cox Condron, Daunton, B Goodliffe, S King, S Taylor, Whelan, Wilson	40%
Contextual Safeguarding	To brief members on the contextual safeguarding approach		13 January 2022	Ricky Cooper Anna Jack	Teams	All Members		



## Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee Agenda Plan

### Notes

The definition of a key decision is set out in the Council's Constitution in Part 2, Article 12.

\* indicates items expected to be recommended for determination by full Council.

+ indicates items expected to be confidential, which would exclude the press and public.

The following are standing agenda items which are considered at every Committee meeting:

- Minutes of previous meeting and Action Log
- Workshop and Training Plan
- Agenda Plan

### Summary

The Agenda Plan shows the dates and times of future meetings and what reports are expected to be considered. Unless otherwise stated, all public meetings will be held in the Red Kite Room, New Shire Hall, Alconbury Weald, Huntingdon PE28 4YE.

## Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee Public Meeting

### Meeting Theme: Education

Date: 16.11.22	Agenda item	Lead officer	Reference if key decision	Deadline for draft reports	Agenda despatch date
	1. Agenda Plan	Ricky Cooper	-	04.11.22	08.11.22
	2. Workshop/Training Plan	Myra O'Farrell	-		
	3. Cambridgeshire Foster Carers' Association report	Fiona van den Hout/ Kevin Arrowsmith			
	4. Participation	Shalina Chandoo			

Date: 16.11.22	Agenda item	Lead officer	Reference if key decision	Deadline for draft reports	Agenda despatch date
	5. Scorecard	Myra O'Farrell			
	6. Virtual School Report	Claire Hiorns	-		
	7. Regional Adoption Agency Annual Report	Jo Banks	-		
	8. Children in Care/ Care Leavers Education, Employment and Training (EET) Promotion Action Plan Update	Mark Cowdell	-		

## Informal Meeting (Not open to the public)

### Meeting Theme: Health

Date: 11.01.23	Agenda item	Lead officer	Reference if key decision	Deadline for draft reports	Agenda despatch date
	1.		-		n/a
	2.		-		

## Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee Public Meeting

### Meeting Theme: Health

Date: 29.03.23	Agenda item	Lead officer	Reference if key decision	Deadline for draft reports	Agenda despatch date
	1. Agenda Plan	Ricky Cooper	-	17.03.23	21.03.23
	2. Workshop/Training Plan	Myra O'Farrell	-		
	3. Cambridgeshire Foster Carers' Association report	Fiona van den Hout/ Kevin Arrowsmith			
	4. Health Report	Catherine York			





