

## **Appendix 1**

# **Cambridgeshire County Council**

## **Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee**

### **Annual Report**

### **2021-22**

## **Foreword by Councillor Bradnam, Chair of the Cambridgeshire Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee**

Hello and welcome

This year has been busy for the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee. The report reviews the achievements of the sub-committee over the last 12 months, demonstrating its value and impact given its unique function within the Council. In the past the sub-committee has had Council members who were care experienced. This is not the case at present, but the sub-committee would welcome representation from young people in care.

This year has seen an easing of the COVID restrictions and a return to more normal working arrangements for the sub-committee. This has meant face to face meetings have returned between the sub-committee young people and Council officers.

On reflecting on those achievements, I am mindful of the sub-committee's uniqueness in relation to its structure and format. The Sub Committee listens to the feedback directly from young people and children who attend the Sub Committee during informal sessions from the Children in Care Council and provides an opportunity for Members to listen directly from young people about the things that are important to them. Similarly, young people are able to speak to members and raise any points. We are planning in the coming months to work towards co-chairing the Sub Committee with children and young people and look forward to the rich opportunity this will provide. Over the year I have had the wonderful opportunity to see young people grow in confidence but also feedback to us on a range of topics that are meaningful to them.

We also have Foster Carers for Cambridgeshire who attend and represent the Cambridgeshire Fostering Association. This provides an opportunity for members to hear directly from foster carers about their experiences of Fostering for the Local Authority as well as enabling foster carers to speak directly to members about to raise the things that are important to them, to inform service developments and to celebrate the great achievements of our Fostering Community who care for our children and young people every day. The sub-committee has routine attendance from Council officers.

The three-dimensional approach of having direct feedback from those that use the service in a variety of ways makes this sub-committee, in my view, unique and dynamic. The value of the sub-committee comes from this through promoting accountability from that direct and sometimes challenging lived experiences of those using the services.

Over the last year the sub-committee has had presentations from partners such as Education and Health on key areas of interest. These have demonstrated a wider collaborative approach across services to improve outcomes for children.

The sub-committee offers a 'golden thread' through being aligned with the internal processes of the Council. The sub-committee is supported by the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board whose function is to ensure partners are collectively

delivering on the objectives from the sub-committee and the objectives of their respective areas.

## **Introduction**

The Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee for Cambridgeshire has been in existence since 2017. It is a well-established Sub-Committee and is regularly attended by Council Members, Council Officers, representatives from the Foster Carer Association, Children in Care and Care Leavers. In that time, it has developed and changed into its current formulation of a thematic approach to key areas of activity. These are placements and care planning, health, and education of children in care and those that have had a care experience.

## **The Purpose of the Report**

The purpose of the report is to provide the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel with an overview of the work carried out by the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee 2021-2022.

The report addresses the terms of reference of the Sub-Committee over the last 12 months and the impact the Sub-Committee has had in delivering on its objectives.

## **Background**

The meeting format changed in 2021 to thematic and has worked well in enabling Council Members to focus on key areas of Council and partnership activity in more depth, offering scrutiny and challenge to Council Officers. The Sub-Committee is ambitious in its aspirations for Children in Care and Care Leavers and supports the needs and aspirations through a more in-depth review of three key themes. These are Education, Health and Placements.

## **Reporting Mechanism and Work Programme**

The Sub-Committee has three informal and three formal meetings per year. The purpose of which is to enable Children and Young People to attend the informal meetings without the intrusion of this being a public meeting. The three informal meetings enable children who are in care and those that have left care to the meeting alongside the Sub-Committee Chair. In doing so the Sub-Committee has a robust understanding of how those who have experience of being in care and those who have left care, their views of the service and how best to improve it. The formal meetings include the voice of Foster Carers who are recruited by Cambridgeshire Fostering Service. Their voice and views have enabled the Sub-Committee to understand more fully their aspirations for Children and Young People along with feedback on the service.

At each meeting, monthly performance data called the Scorecard (attached as Appendix) is reviewed by Council Members. This enables Council Members to

scrutinise in more depth any issues related to the performance of the Council in its responsibilities to promote and be aspirational in its outcomes for Children in Care and Care Leavers.

The Chair remains as Councillor Anna Bradnam and the Vice Chair is Councillor Philippa Slatter.

### **Links to Participation and Promoting the Views of Children with Care Experience.**

The Sub-Committee listens directly to the views and feedback from Children and Young People relating to their experiences. Children and Young People share their achievements with Council Members along with how they are influencing the delivery of services for Children in Care. This year the Children in Care Council and the Care Leavers Forum have reviewed and updated the 'Our Promise to Children and Young People in Care'. This key pledge was launched in June 2022. The CIC Council has produced their own personal goodbye cards for Social Workers to use. They have produced two You Tube Videos, one for Foster Carers and the other for Social Workers related to the type of skills children feel they need. These were viewed by Council Members and have been shared across Children's Services. They have designed and commissioned welcome packs, age appropriate, for other children who come into care so that they feel welcome and understand more fully what is happening to them. They also commissioned luggage to enable them to move placements with dignity. The Children in Care Council is now beginning a programme of inspection across key areas of the service, providing a report and action plan on their expectations where improvements are required. This will become a feature going forward.

### **Outcomes from Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee**

- Reviewed the Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire used by Health, Education and Children's Social Care to ensure it works seamlessly and promotes appropriate resource allocation for children in care.
- Wrote to NHS England advocating on behalf of children in care about the lack of available dentists in the Peterborough area. This resulted in Health improving their offer to children in care, through clear pathways for foster carers and placements to access.
- Provided scrutiny on placements out of area to lead officers.
- Provided scrutiny and constructive feedback on placement stability.
- Provided scrutiny and monitoring of key areas of performance including statutory visiting.
- Provided scrutiny and monitoring of the fostering service and the support to foster carers overall, including improving the fostering allowances.
- Worked collaboratively with the CIC council and the care leavers forum on promoting 'goodbye cards' when a SW end their involvement with children.
- Worked collaboratively with the CIC council and care leavers forum to produce personalised bags for children when leaving their placement.

- Supported the Young Inspectors' inspection of the supervised contact centres.

## **Foster Carers**

Representatives from the Cambridgeshire Foster Carer Association have been an integral part of the subcommittee this year and their valuable contributions have meant the subcommittee has had a more nuanced understanding of their skills, challenges facing them and the support they need to undertake their role. This year the subcommittee drove the review of the foster carer allowances.

## **The National context**

### **The Independent (Care) Review**

The Independent Care Review was published in June 2022. It is anticipated this will have significant impact in the operational delivery of services for children who are experiencing care and those that have experienced care. The government response to this is expected in the Autumn. The main points for Corporate Parenting are outlined below.

The review proposes the creation of regional care cooperatives, which would have regional sufficiency duty but would ultimately become responsible for all fostering, adoption and residential services within a defined region yet to be determined. The review envisages that key stakeholders such as Health, the youth offending justice system, would align with the regional care co-operatives to offer a rounded service. There would also be a national foster carer recruitment campaign and an expectation that areas adopt an extended foster carer support model. The review proposes closing all secure training centres and create more local secure units to meet the needs of these young people.

For those children who have had experience of the care system the review proposes a refreshed Care Leaver Covenant with statutory protections up to the age of 25. It focuses on offering lifelong links programmes to care leavers, new powers around housing and homelessness and enhancement to the leaving care grant. The review proposes staying put and supported lodgings should be extended to 23 and the virtual school should provide services until 25. There would be the offer of extended apprenticeships, and a renewed focus on the physical and mental health of care leavers.

### **Meeting the Educational Needs of Children in Care**

In the last 12 months the Sub-Committee has had a keen focus on Children in Care's education within the period of restrictions linked to COVID and the subsequent easing of these. Children in Care were given priority status to attend school, and this occurred. Education and Children's Services worked closely together to support children's learning through their Personal Education Plans ensuring this group of vulnerable children did not fall behind academically in this period.

There has been a keen focus on children's emotional well being in this period and the Sub-Committee focused further attention to the strengths and difficulties questionnaire which is used as an assessment tool when a child comes into care to understand their emotional needs. The Sub-Committee has supported the collaboration across the partnership between Health, Education, and Children's Social Care in developing a seamless process of how services work to review the information to improve outcomes for children. This has included supporting the request from Foster Carers to have additional training in this area.

### **Meeting the Health Needs of Children in Care**

The overall health of children in care has been a focus for the Sub-Committee with a special focus on initial health assessments and the lack of access to routine dental treatment during COVID. The Sub-committee supported the review of the process between Health and Children's Social Care through its scrutiny of the data. The impact has seen an improvement in this area. A significant concern for the Sub-Committee has been the lack of access for Children and Young People receiving timely and responsive dental treatment. Through the Designated Nurses attendance at Sub Committee, Members continue to keep a watchful eye on this particular issue and hold Officers and Health colleagues to account in meeting the dental health needs of Cambridgeshire children and young people. The Sub-Committee was not satisfied with the alternative arrangements in place and collectively wrote to NHS England expressing their concern and calling for action in finding a more child centred solution to the problem. This approach and the subsequent accountability approach of the Sub-Committee has supported a significantly improved offer for Children in Care placed within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough in accessing appropriate dental care.

### **Meeting the Needs of Children in Care and their Placements**

The stability of placements has been a focus for Council Members within the context of COVID and post this period. Council Members routinely scrutinise performance data asking and requesting information about how Council Officers are supporting children to remain in their placements. Over the last year the Sub-Committee has acknowledged the requests made by Foster Carers to make further adjustments to further improve the offer the Council makes to them and the Children and Young People they care for.

The last twelve months has seen a significant shift in the external placement market. This has been within a context of COVID whereby placement choice reduced. This has had an impact on the ability for placements and children to be a good match, with the continued challenge of placements being outside of Cambridgeshire. Work is ongoing with partners such as Commissioning and Education to ensure the wider needs of children and particularly those with Education, Health and Care Plans are considered when matching a child to a placement.

## **Children in Care Population**

Power BI is now the standard reporting tool across Children's Services, and it is possible to monitor all current activity very effectively. The development of a static report (Dashboard) is now in place and a specific Corporate Parenting report developed.

## **Numbers of Children in Care**

The number of children in care at the end of March was 632 and this was a reduction of just under 30 children from the previous year. The sub-committee has monitored this regularly throughout the year. The reason for the reduction is linked to the introduction of the family safeguarding model. The reunification team has also enabled children to return home safely and sustainably in the last year.

## **Statutory visits**

These have been monitored throughout the year. Internal audit, dip sampling of case files has shown children are being seen within their placements routinely but that there has been a training issue within the service related to recording. Therefore, the performance data is showing a lower record of stat visits having occurred currently. This is an improving picture from the end of March at 72.5% to 78.6%.

## **Placement stability**

At the end of March children who had had 3+ placement moves in 12 months was 11.8%. This data includes positive, planned and unplanned moves for children in this period. When compared with statistical neighbours Cambridgeshire is only 0.8% lower. However, the national picture is 9%.

For children who have been in their placement 2.5 years or more this was 64.5% at the end of March. However, when compared with statistical neighbours (67%) the region (70%) and the national picture (70%) we are showing as an outlier at this time.

## **Placement Sufficiency**

This remains a challenge in 2021-2022, with demand outstripping supply nationally, regionally and locally. The work to stabilise placements to prevent placement breakdowns has been critical in managing the market. However, there has been an increase in children entering residential provisions in the last year, some of which traditionally would have a foster placement offer but within the current climate there isn't this option.

Children entering the care system are entering with more complex issues particularly those that are older teenagers. As a result, placement packages have increased significantly.

In an authority like Cambridgeshire, that has worked hard to maintain children and young people at home wherever this is in their best interests and that has a low number of children in care as a result, it follows that a higher proportion of those children and young people will have more challenging and complex care needs. This has created challenges for our Fostering Service in terms of trying to meet the needs of these children and has led to more placements out of area and at higher tariffs.

The Sufficiency Strategy 2021-2024 is supporting the investment in locally based placements. This is routinely monitored and scrutinised by the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee.



## Appendix

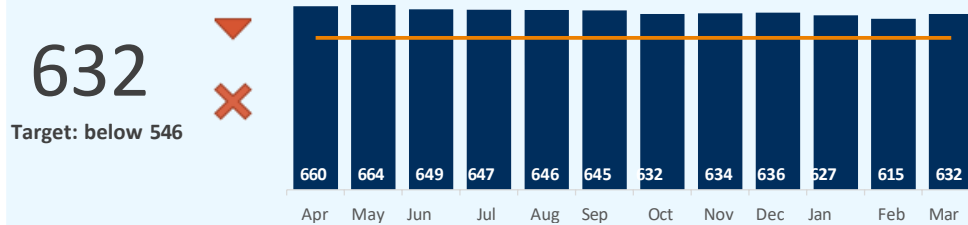
Last Updated: March 2022



# CCC Corporate Parenting Scorecard

### HEADLINE FIGURES

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

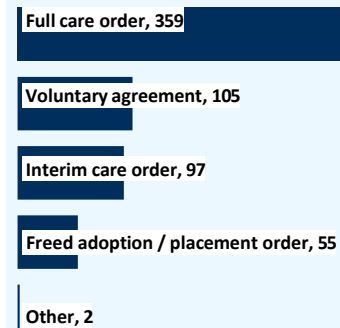


### Staffing

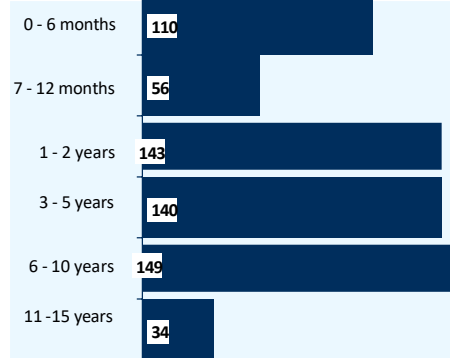
	Establishment	Average Caseload	Change*	Perform
Children in Care Qualified social workers	28	21	<span style="color: green;">▲</span>	-
Leaving Care Personal Advisors	20	16	<span style="color: orange;">▬</span>	-
Independent Reviewing Officers	10.6	57	<span style="color: red;">▼</span>	-

\*Change in average caseload is from March 2022 cc

### Legal status of children in care



### Length of time children have been in care



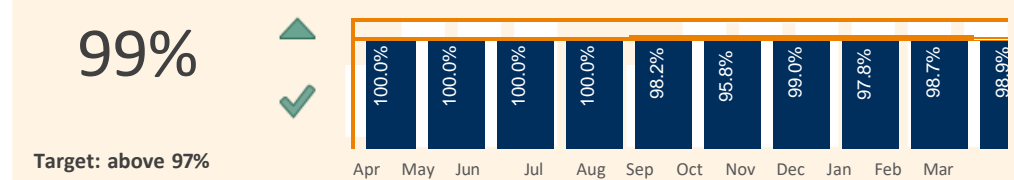
**Key**

Change since previous month ▲ Improved ▬ Stayed the same ▼ Deteriorated

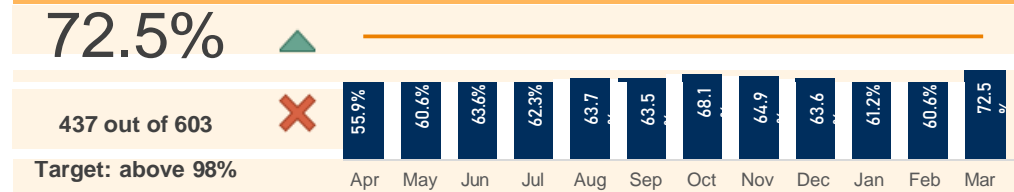
Performance against target ✓ Strong ! Acceptable ✗ Poor

### SERVICE STANDARDS

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

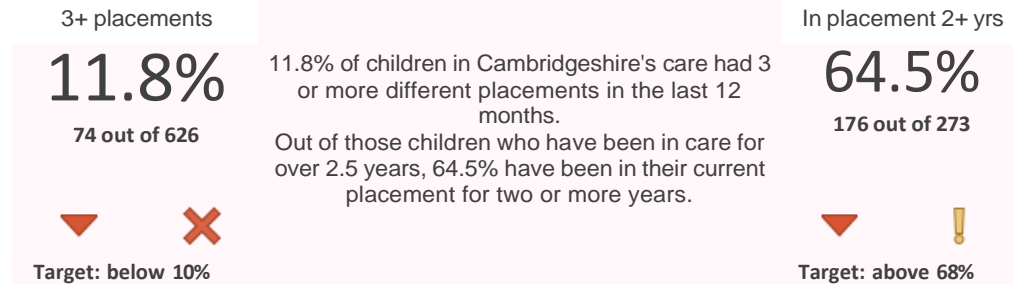


% of CiC statutory visits which were carried out on time (year to date, and during each month)

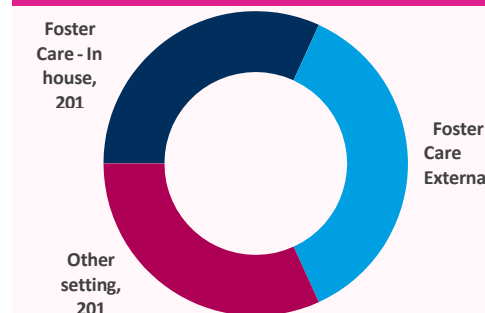


### PLACEMENTS

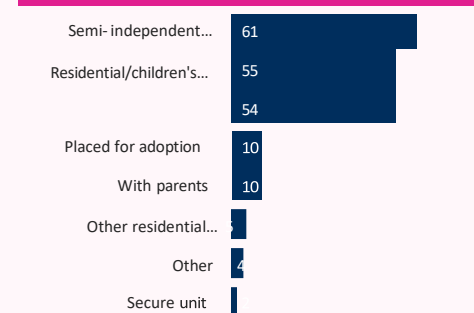
#### Placement stability



#### Type of placement of children in care



#### Other settings: breakdown



## EDUCATION

## Children in care by age group

16+; 174

10 to 15; 270

5 to 9; 100

1 to 4; 78

Under 1; 27

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

98.0%

386 out of 394

A Personal Education Plan (PEP) was in place for 386 children in Y1

- Y11, who were in the care of CCC and on the role of the virtual school at the end of the Spring Term 2022.

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

70.8%

269 out of 380

As of March 2022

70.8% of Cambridgeshire's children in care are taught in good or outstanding schools, as at the end of March 2022.

## HEALTH - SERVICE STANDARDS

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

39.0%

48 out of 123

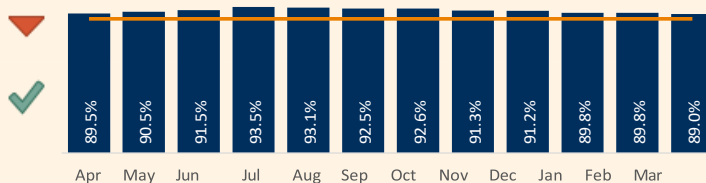
Target: above 95%



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

89.0%

Target: above 86%



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

53.0%

245 out of 462  
Target: above 82%

## MISSING

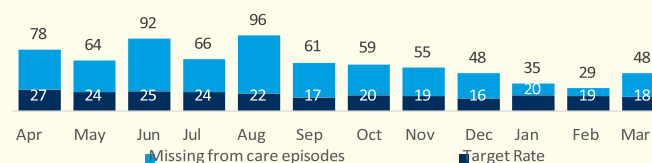
## Children in care who go missing (with number of episodes)

18

Children

48

Episodes



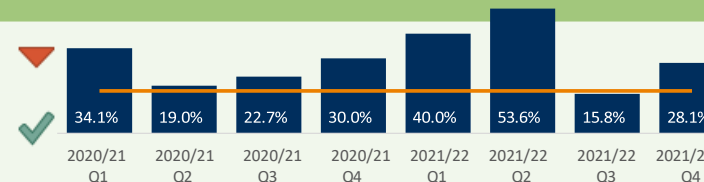
## ADOPTION

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

33.3%

46 out of 138

Target: above 17%



## Timeliness of adoption process

Time to placement

437

Target: below 430

For children adopted during the past 12 months, an average of 437 days passed between the child entering care and them moving into their adoptive placement. An average of 232.9 days passed between their placement order being granted and approval of a match with their adopters.

Time to match

233

Target: below 185

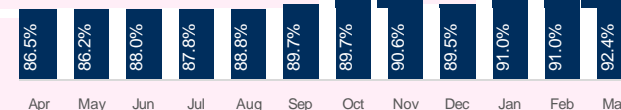
## CARE LEAVERS

## Care Leavers who have a pathway plan in place

92.4%

475 out of 514

Target: above 95%



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

106 out of 269

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

29 out of 269