

Children, Education and Communities Policy 6 October 2021 and Scrutiny Committee

Report of the Assistant Director, Education and Skills and the Assistant Director, Children's Social Care

Profile of Children and Young People in Care, Placement with Parents, Discharge Activity and Unregulated Placements Update

Summary

1. This paper provides the Profile of Children and Young People in Care

Recommendations

2. This report is for discussion and comment, there are no options put forward for consideration. However, support from the Scrutiny committee is requested in the ongoing support of all our children and young people in care.

Reason: To ensure the Committee are kept up to date with progress of our children and young people in care

Background

3. This paper considers a profile of children in care, including legal status, placement type and age and placement stability.
4. The Local Authority is keen to only use Placement with Parent Regulations (PWPRS) for final Orders when it is proportionate to do so and to ensure active permanence planning for children on these final Orders. This report identifies updates on our progress including discharge activity.
5. The number of end Order PWPRS has remained relatively stable from Jan to April 21, an increase of 1, totalling 40.* The number of

PWPRS Orders made each month has slowed evidencing progress in terms of awareness raising and dialogue with Guardians and the Court. There were 14 Care Orders with PWPRS that have been discharged between July 20 and June 21.

6. Section 20 (s20) cases remains static at 19 and 7 adoption orders have been made since April 2021, although the pandemic has impacted on timeliness.
7. The One Adoption and North Humber (OANH) RAA continues to be effective and serves the Region and York well. Early Permanence Action (EPA) meetings are supporting managers' understanding of adoption planning. The number of cases in care proceedings has fallen to 43, highlighting the recalibration of cases in 2019/20 have been dealt with and care proceedings have slowed. This also reflects more robust use of pre-proceedings. The Permanence Policy and Permanence Tracker are becoming more embedded, evidenced by increased discharge activity. Robust arrangements are in place to monitor children's permanence plans.

Profile of Children and Young People in Care as at 15 June 2021:

	December 2020	15th June 2021	Change +/-
Total Population			
Full Care Orders	177	194	+17
Interim Care Orders	73	43	-30
Placement Orders	11	15	+4
			+1
Section 20	18	19	
Other	0	0	-
Total Children in Care	279	271	-8
Total Placement Details			
Placed with Parents	52	47	-4
Residential care/supported accommodation	26	21	-5

IFA's	31	34	+3
York Fostering	70	73	+3
Connected Carers	78	77	-1
Other	14	9	-5
Placement Order	8	10	+2

Total Children in Care	279	271	-7
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Age Ranges			
0-4	70	60	-10
5-10	92	81	-11
11-15	75	88	+13
16+	42	40	-2

Total Children in Care	279	271	-10
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8. From the above table, one can see that the Children and Young People in Care Population (CYPIC) has fallen slightly since December 2020. It has remained fairly static at around 280, but very recently there are signs of it starting to fall. This reflects fewer cases being presented to Legal Gateway Meeting (LGM), fewer care proceedings being initiated and a more robust use of pre-proceedings. Significantly, the number of cases in care proceedings shows a net fall of 30 since December 2020 to 43.
9. In 2019 and 2020 we saw the number of cases in proceedings exceed 100 resulting in significant increases in the CYPIC population. This rise reflected a recalibration in the system with cases where there had been an over optimism of parents ability to change and multiple child protection plans, were issued on. Recent court feedback has highlighted improvements in care planning and evidence.
10. In relation to the ages of children and young people in care, in May 2020, 51.6% of the total care population was aged 5-15, which has steadily risen to 61% at the end of April 2021. Children age 5-9 years have seen the biggest growth since the middle of 2020. Over the same time period, the percentage of children under 5 has reduced from 29% to 24.5%, and 16+ year olds from 19.4% to 14.5%.

11. There are 86 Children placed in York and 180 children are placed outside of York, with a significant number of these children within a 20 mile radius of York. The majority of children placed outside York are with connected carers.
12. More mainstream foster carers are being assessed and are making their way through fostering panel.
13. We have had good success in stepping young people down from residential provision to either semi-independent living or foster care and includes returning young people to York from out of area. While this may impact on placement stability, it reflects the young person's wishes and feelings and their assessed need.
14. In relation to placement stability, the percentage of children in care who have been continuously looked after for at least 2.5 years and have been in the same home for at least 2 years or are placed for adoption has improved and is currently 73% compared to 66% in 2019/20.
15. The number of children in care with 3 or more moves in the last 12 months, fell to 5.28% (14 young people) at the end of March 2021, which is good performance and is the lowest since 2017/18.

Analysis of Section 20 cases:

16. There are 19 S.20 cases in total, broken down as follows.

Number of children	Age
1	10
1	12
1	13
3	14
4	15
2	16
6	17
Total	
19	

17. From this cohort:
 - a. 6 are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC),

- b. 2 children are placed in specialist provision due to disability and are age 10 and 13.
 - c. 1 child is placed in a secure children's home.
 - d. 4 children have been in care for less than 30 days and the plans for these children are being closely monitored, 2 of whom are UASC.
18. S.20 cases are monitored on a monthly basis via the Group Manager - Achieved Permanence and also the Permanence Oversight Strategic meeting.

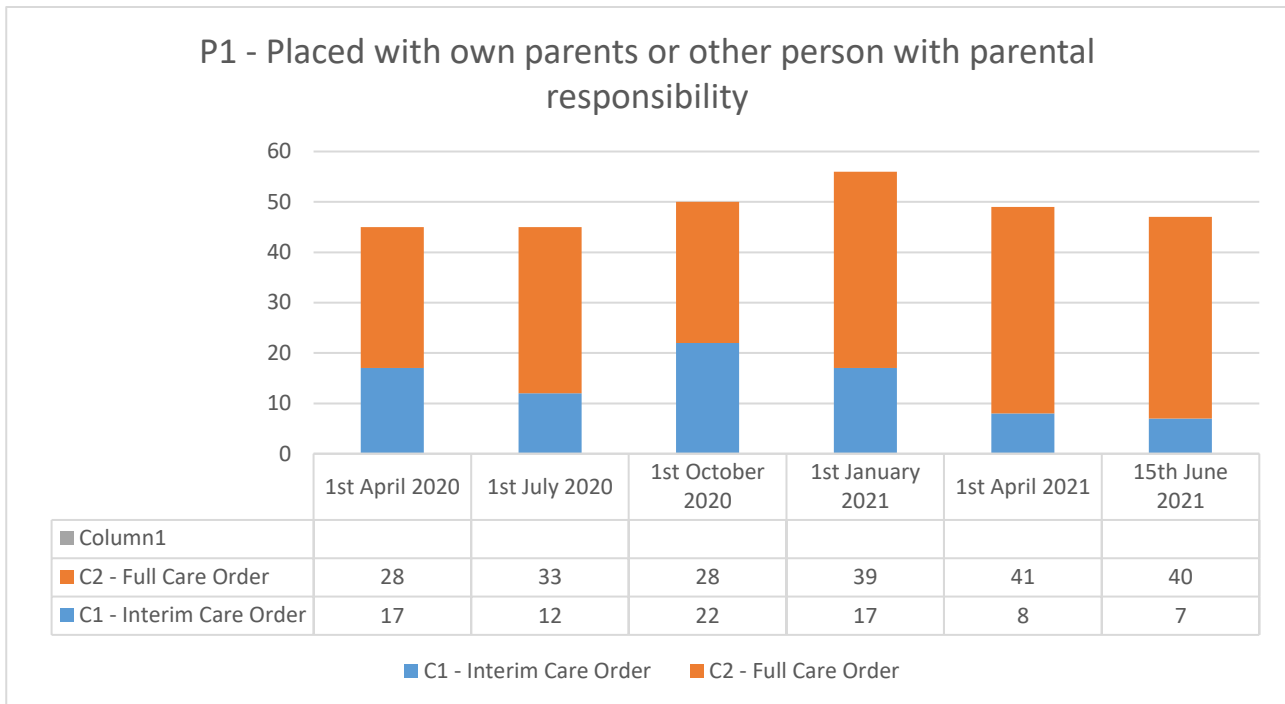
Placement with Parents update

19. The Local Authority is keen to only use PWPRS for final Orders when it is proportionate to do so and to ensure active permanence planning for children on these final Orders. This report identifies updates on our progress.
- a. The number of end Order PWPRS has remained relatively stable from January 2021 to 15th June 21, an increase of 1, totalling 40 (See chart below)
 - b. However the number of Orders made each month has slowed evidencing progress in terms of awareness raising amongst staff and care planning and also dialogue with Guardians and the Court
 - c. 14 Care Orders with PWPRS have been discharged July 20 to June 21.
20. The number of end Order PWPRS during 20/21 has been higher than usual for City of York, numbering 40 at 15th June 2021. The previous paper highlighted a combination of reasons for this including the impact of the recalibration of the safeguarding service and a reluctance within the wider system for children to remain at home without the Local Authority having parental responsibility.
21. This context is not York specific, there has been relevant national research and guidance. The Family Justice Board Final report March 2021 identifies a significant geographical variance in terms of the Court use of PWPRS. It clarifies that the 'making of a care order should not be used as a vehicle to achieve the provision of support and services after the conclusion of proceedings' and it provides a welcome reminder to all practitioners both social worker

and legal that 'the making of a final care order must be a necessary and proportionate interference in the life of the family. A care order has a very intrusive effect of state intervention, with ongoing mandatory statutory interference not only in the lives of the parents, but in the life of the child, who will have the status in law as a looked-after child and all that goes with this. It can only be justified if it is necessary and proportionate to the risk of harm to the child. In an appropriate case, consideration should be given to the making of a supervision order.'

22. The Nuffield Family Justice report – Supervision Orders in Care proceedings April 21- discusses the reasonable alternative to PWPRs, a Supervision Order. Whilst threshold is the same, a Supervision Order does not confer parental responsibility onto the Local Authority and so the child is not looked after.
23. It found that the majority of respondents were in favour of retaining this Order, but current practice does not always satisfy the Court that the support is clear nor that it provides more robust support to the child than a Child Protection plan. This arguably is why there is an increased in many locations of the use of PWPRS. Proposals to improve the effectiveness include considering a review process, SMART plans and a clear line of accountability and specific funding.
24. The Local Authority is considering these proposal, alongside the Family Justice Board proposal to ensure practice is robust.

Placed With Parent Current Position



25. There has been a significant reduction in the number of interim Order PWPRs from Jan 2021 to 15th June 21 and a slight increase in end Orders (PWPRs). The numbers made each month has steadily declined evidencing more robust early work in cases at Letter Before Proceedings (LBP) and more effective assessment within proceedings has led to reassure the Court that parental responsibility is not warranted.

26. Significant work has been achieved in finalising and sharing guidance for discharge of Care Orders, in particular in terms of PWPRS, and in writing and sharing a specific social work evidence template for discharge of these Orders. As a development opportunity colleagues across the Service are becoming involved in specific pieces of discharge work.

27. Work continues in strengthening relationships between the Local Authority and CAFCASS to ensure confidence in the Local Authority decision making. CAFCASS are supportive of the local Authority view that parental responsibility should only be shared when it is the most proportionate response to risk.

28. PWPRS are now reviewed through the Permanence Strategic Oversight meetings to ensure they remain the correct plan for the

child and also ensure no drift and delay in discharging orders.

Discharge Activity

29. The City of York Permanence Policy has been in place since autumn 2020 and a key component of the Policy is a Permanence tracker. We continue to see the tracker becoming more embedded with managers and having a more positive impact, which includes more cases identified for Special Guardianship Orders (SGO), or discharge of Care Orders.
30. There have been 3 children that have left care since December 2020 via an SGO. Four active SGO assessments covering 5 children are underway. There are two further referrals (4 children) awaiting resolution of financial issues and if these can be progressed/resolved this will be a net reduction of 9 children. There are a further 4 cases where the primary issues are around contact and confidence and work is underway to support these carers to feel able to take on an SGO. The SGO support offer has been written and is currently in the process of being reviewed to consider developments in the region whereby some authorities are offering a 'no detriment' offer in order to attract more Connected Carers to consider an SGO. The implications of such an offer in York is being considered by Corporate Parenting Panel
31. The discharge process including a bespoke court statement for Placement with Parents have recently been introduced and rolled out. 14 children have been discharged from a Care Order since July 2020. There are currently 19 children identified with a plan for discharge and endorsed by the IRO. 3 cases were agreed in January 2021 for discharge and are currently before the court. 9 cases were agreed for discharge at LGM in May 2021 and are being tracked.

Children with a Plan of Special Guardianship Order or Adoption

32. Adoption Orders have been made on 7 Children since the 1st April 2021, compared to only 2 in total for the whole of 2020/21. This is due to the impact of Covid 19 and contested hearings being delayed during the majority of 2020 and early 2021 and has meant

that in some cases evidence has needed to be updated and submitted several times. This is also reflected regionally and nationally, with Adoption Orders down on average by 37%. On average, 8-10 children are adopted each year and we are well on track to exceed this target for 2021/22.

33. The One Adoption North Humber Regional Adoption Agency (OANH RAA) of which York is a member, continues to serve York children well, with 91 % of children in the 5 local authorities placed with adopters approved by the RAA. York is also a net consumer of adopters.
- a. 3 children are placed for adoption.
 - b. 10 children have a Placement Order not yet placed although 3 of whom have a link.
 - c. 2 children have had an ADM decision. 2 children are placed in an Early Permanence Placement.
34. Early Permanence Action (EPA) meetings have been in place since September 2020 and are focusing on children under 8 and unborn children and supporting better understanding of adoption planning/tasks amongst social workers and managers. The meetings also assist in having increased oversight of cases with a potential plan of adoption and overall is leading to improved timeliness.

Adoption Scorecard Performance (3 year average)

35. A1: - The average time (in days) between a child entering care and moving in with the adoptive family (being placed) for children who have been adopted. The A1 national target is 426 days, with the national average being 486 days. York performance is 339 days and is good performance against this indicator and shows good adoption planning.
36. A10: -The average time (in days) between a child entering care and moving in with the adoptive family (being placed) for children who have been adopted but with foster carer adoptions removed. The national average as 412 days and York performance is 297 days. This shows good adoption planning.

37. A2: - Average time (in days) between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child (Placement Order) and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family (matching decision), for children who have been adopted. The target is 121 days and the national performance is 201 days. York performance is 134 days so just outside the target. The One Adoption North Humber Regional Adoption Agency (OANH RAA) of which York is a member performs extremely well against this target and sits 2nd overall nationally.
38. (A3): - The percentage of children who waited less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with adoptive family for children who were adopted or still going through the adoption process (i.e. With an agency decision) during the period - (3 year average). The target is 85% which is very ambitious. The national average is 56% and the York average is 61%. Unfortunately, Covid 19 and the associated delays to adoption cases, including contested hearings being put back, will likely impact on this performance.

Improving Further

39. Timely and proportionate use of Letter Before Proceedings will ensure parenting assessment and viability assessments are in place at the point of issuing which should reduce the likelihood of Court making S 38 (6), (assessment order), if it disagrees with Local Authority threshold for removal.
40. Continued management oversight of permanence and use of the permanence tracker.
41. Focus on Discharging Care Orders where it is safe to do so.
42. Continued focus on children placed for adoption and social workers having close oversight of the progression of Adoption Applications.
43. An adoption flowchart showing each stage of the child's adoption journey is in the process of being introduced and which includes a review of the family finding and matching process and will support

worker understanding of Adoption and timeliness.

44. Consider the 'No Detriment' Special Guardianship Offer.

45. Continued work on reviewing sufficiency arrangements, including developing semi-independent provision for 16 and 17 year olds, to better support transition to adulthood.

Implications

Financial

46. There are no implications

Human Resources (HR)

47. There are no implications

Legal

48. There are no implications.

Crime and Disorder

49. There are no implications.

Information Technology (IT)

50. There are no implications.

Property

51. There are no implications.

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