

Corporate Parenting Board Draft Annual Report 2019/20

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How does it work?

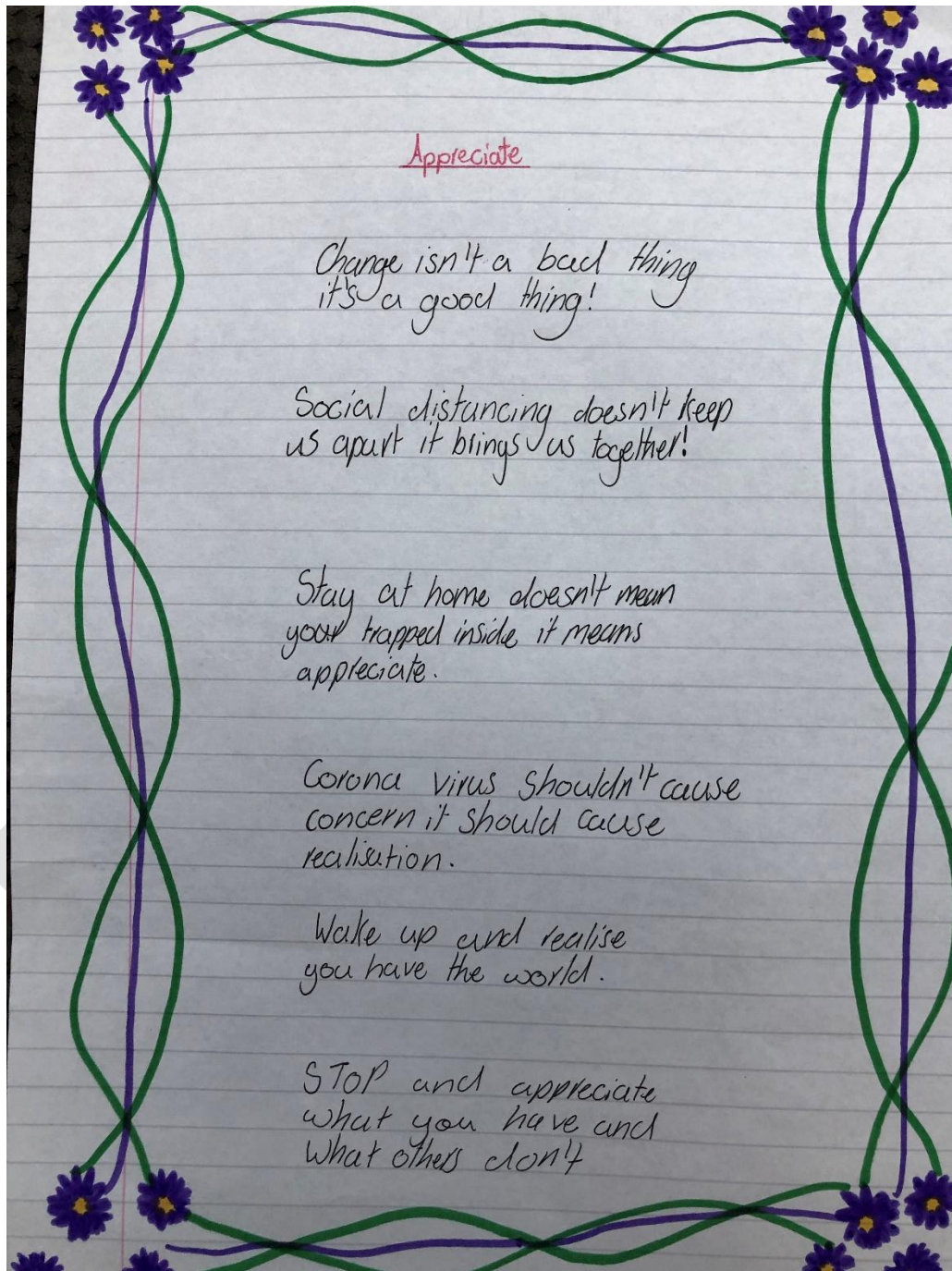
'Our family' strategy

What we have done in 2019/20?

**What impact has this had for children and young people in care,
and care leavers?**

A look ahead to 2020/21

Short foreword by Chair



*Stockton-on-Tees Corporate Parenting Board
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What is Corporate Parenting Board?

Corporate Parenting Board supports children and young people in care and care leavers in Stockton-on-Tees. It brings together a range of agencies and organisations to work together to ensure the best possible support is provided, and that all partners play in corporate parenting.

It pays particular attention to those areas where a number of agencies need to work together, and support and encourages them to do this effectively, to avoid children and young people falling between gaps in service, or being confused about who does what. It tackles the issues which face children and young people, and influences change in the way things are done, responding to the needs and wishes of children and young people.

How does it work?

In summary, Corporate Parenting Board exists to

1. take a multi-agency approach to challenging outcomes and promoting the needs and interests of Stockton-on-Tees looked after children, young people and care leavers.
2. oversee the continuing development and implementation of the Our Family Strategy
3. lead a multi-agency approach to corporate parenting

It does this by:

1. Identifying opportunities for collaboration and partnership.
2. Seeking to improve outcomes through sharing good practice, experience and approaches.
3. Further development of a coherent approach to issues relating to looked after children, young people and care leavers.
4. Making recommendations to the Director of Children's Services, Stockton-on-Tees Health & Well being Board, Children and Young People's Partnership and relevant Partnership Boards as appropriate.
5. Pro-actively celebrating success and achievement of LAC.
6. Forging productive links with other local, regional and national groups with a focus on looked after children.
7. Ensuring that all agencies are enabled to fulfil their corporate parenting role & responsibilities.

It includes representatives from:

- The Children in Care Council (Let's Take Action Group) represented by Children's Rights & Participation Officer.
- North Tees & Hartlepool Foundation Trust
- Hartlepool & Stockton-on-Tees Clinical Commissioning Group (HAST CCG)
- Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust
- Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
 - Elected Members
 - Early Help, Partnership and Planning Service
 - Safeguarding and Looked After Children Service

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- Schools and SEN Service
- Culture, Leisure and Events Service
- Economic Growth and Development Service
- The Voluntary & Community Sector
- Stockton-on-Tees Local Safeguarding Children Board

Strategic Group

The Service Development Group is the operational delivery group of the Corporate Parenting approach, the 'engine room' where new developments and actions are discussed with those working with children and young people in care and care leavers.

'Our Family' Strategy

Our vision

We believe that children and young people for whom we are corporate parents are talented, resourceful, are articulate and have huge potential. Many will lead successful adult lives. However, we also recognise that often as a result of their early life experiences some will be at greater risk of poor outcomes as they grow up.

Our aim is to create a home and community environment that provides every child and young person with a safe, happy, healthy, secure and loving childhood, nurturing their aspirations and enabling them to meet their full potential.

Our priorities.

Outcome priorities. Children and young people looked after will...

- 1. Be involved in their care and treated as individuals***
- 2. Have productive relationships: family, friends and community***
- 3. Have suitable accommodation and support to meet assessed needs***
- 4. Be safe***
- 5. Be healthy***
- 6. Get the best education and skills***
- 7. Be supported in the transition to adulthood and as care leavers***

Delivery priorities.

- 1. Reduce the number of children in care***
- 2. Reduce the costs of care***
- 3. Enable children and young people to achieve permanence***
- 4. Assess the impact of all decisions on looked after children***

What have we done in 2019/20?

This section sets out what the partnership has done in 2019/20, and includes details of how we have implemented the strategy this year. It then sets out details of the issues and topics discussed and considered at meetings, followed by some examples of specific activities which have been taken forward throughout the year.

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Discussion topics

The following issues have been considered at meetings of CPB in 2019/20:

| Date | Topic Discussed |
|------------------------|---|
| 12 April 2019 | Health assessments, for looked after children |
| | Children in Our Care Strategic Group Update |
| | Care Leavers Offer |
| | CAMHS Contract |
| | Forward Plan |
| 7 June 2019 | Data and Analysis and Priorities |
| | Update from Strategic Officer Group |
| | Sufficiency Statement - Action Plan |
| | Corporate Parenting Events - Action Plan |
| | Young Inspectors Refresh |
| | Forward Plan |
| 9 August 2019 | Adoption Tees Valley Update |
| | National Protocol on reducing criminalization of looked after children |
| | Update from Children in Our Care - Strategic Officer Group |
| | Accommodation Update |
| | Forward Plan |
| 11 October 2019 | Virtual School Annual Report 2018/2019 |
| | Children in Our Care Strategic Group (CIOCSG) Update |
| | Forward Plan |
| 6 December 2019 | Health Assessments Review |
| | Children in Our Care Strategic Group Update |
| | EET Update |
| | Forward Plan |
| 7 February 2020 | Adoption Tees Valley Update |
| | Children in Our Care transformation work: Dartington Service Design Labs |
| | Statistical Analysis |
| | Forward Plan |

Specific initiatives and activities

This section outlines some of the key issues and activities during the year, with a specific focus on COVID-19 response.

Residential Children's Care Homes:

All of our children's homes were immediately risk assessed following lockdown. PPE was made available for all staff. We changed the statement of purpose (SOP) of three of our homes to allow for more flexibility in preparation for the potential of an increase in children coming into care. Our Place (a provision to support short breaks and children on the edge of care) was changed to accommodate children on a slightly longer basis. Although it was well used, this change did have an impact on the level of support we could offer children on the edge of care.

Support staff from Our Place worked closely with parents via various remote systems which worked very positively and did prevent a number of children from coming into care. An element of this 'hand holding' approach will be maintained moving forward, particularly around those children who go missing from home. Families often engage more fully with a support worker rather than a social worker.

We worked closely with housing colleagues and identified further supported housing placements in case there were additional demands around older young people.

Foster Care:

We immediately pulled together a data base to show which foster carers needed to shield and isolate i.e. because of age, particular health issues. PPE was made available for all of our foster carers. Vacancies were identified from this data base. We recruited a number of foster carers who had retired and fast tracked these carers through updated assessments and processes. We made use of some of the flexibilities that Local Authorities were offered i.e. the approval of foster carers without a medical and with shortened assessments. Our fostering panel was held remotely.

The majority of CIOC complied with government restrictions although a small cohort did not. These young people were mostly from our residential care homes and residential staff devised rotas and small huddles to ensure if Covid-19 was brought into the homes, it would affect only a small number of staff.

Children in Our Care (CIOC):

All staff have adapted and responded to a new way of working i.e. home working and the use of technology to ensure all CIOC reviews and meetings continued. Children were generally contacted via TEAMS, SKYPE, MOMO, and mobile phone. Some direct visits did take place but were done so safely, either door step or in the garden with social distancing being maintained. All staff had access to PPE.

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We immediately risk assessed all of the CIOC and updated risk assessments for each one based on a number of themes i.e. vulnerabilities, risk, need and complexity of health and disabilities.

Quite a high percentage of CIOC did not initially attend school, although this number has increased with time. Although CIOC were encouraged to attend, we also had to balance this with the particular vulnerabilities and anxieties of some of our foster carers. We have seen improved communication with schools during lockdown which has been a positive across the board, not just in terms of CIOC. Home learning has taken place and both foster carers and our residential staff have been really creative in developing new skills with the children they care for.

We immediately suspended direct contact with birth parents and family at the beginning of lockdown. We expected a lot of negativity from birth parents in response to this but actually had very little. Contact was encouraged and did go ahead, but again this was done remotely. We are in the process of carefully introducing some direct contact for children with their birth family – this has been planned on a priority basis with approximately forty children now enjoying direct 'family time'.

Education, employment and training (EET)

The government has awarded additional financial support for local businesses with further money proposed to invest in apprenticeships. We have two young people involved in apprenticeships who have been furloughed during the lockdown.

One of the challenges we do have is that many CIOC are not ready or mature enough to commit to an apprenticeship and employers expectations can be unrealistic. We also do not have enough training providers in Stockton. This is a challenge which will be picked up moving forward.

The CIOC NEET group have continued to meet virtually throughout the lockdown period and are looking at the opportunities available to meet the individual needs of some CIOC.

Virtual School for Children and Young People in Our Care (CYPIOC)

Throughout the lockdown period the Virtual School has continued to champion the educational needs of CYPIOC. Whilst staff have worked from home, they have continued to support schools and all stakeholders through regular virtual attendance at PEP meetings, Looked after Reviews, SEN panel meetings and CAMHs reviews. In addition to this, regular phone or video calls have been made to pupils who had previously been supported face to face and staff have worked with schools and social care to support attendance at school or carry out Thrive Assessments.

Changes were made to the Personal Education Plans, including a COVID19 page, to capture challenges and successes during this period. In the summer term the termly Designated Teacher Meeting took place through ZOOM and Attachment Training continued where appropriate for schools.

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The VS produced monthly newsletters for carers and Designated Teachers, encompassing current thinking and advice on learning and mental health support during lockdown. The VS also carried out a Carer Review of 'Learning during Lockdown' to support future action and have signed up' in partnership with schools' in a National Literacy Research Project for CYPIOC.

Professional development for staff has been maintained through attendance at national Webinars and regular update from the National Association of VSH (NAVSH) and DFE.

The school has been successful in reorganising the conference, 'Embedding the 4Rs in Stockton on Tees' led by Lisa Cherry. The conference has been organised for 200 staff within children services in line with the LA Strategic Plan. This will now take place on Friday 16th October via ZOOM.

As for all children there are no national results for Early Years, Key Stage 1 and 2. In 2020 provisional results for Key Stage 4 and 5 are favourable compared to 2019.

The VS has been successful in appointing an Educational Psychologist to support the team. This will provide additional and enhanced work currently provided by the EP service to support the needs of CYPIOC.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

Therapeutic work has continued throughout the lockdown period for the most vulnerable CIOC although this has not always been offered face to face. CAMHS identified the most vulnerable children and young people early into lockdown. Initially it was believed that the numbers of referrals would increase with vulnerable children finding it hard to cope with the additional anxieties around COVID19. This has not happened and they have shown a remarkable level of resilience.

New assessments for ADS and ADHD were put on hold but plans are now underway to reintroduce this work.

Some concerns raised around how some CIOC and those most vulnerable will manage a return to school. Communication and support is being offered to schools and carers in order to best manage emotional wellbeing.

Health assessment and intervention

Initial health assessments for CIOC have continued throughout lockdown but have been managed remotely. The feedback from some staff and CIOC is that they have preferred this remote way of working as it can feel less intrusive and children and young people have tended to engage more fully. Moving forward it is planned to offer a hybrid model i.e. the option of either a remote or face to face health assessment. Compliance has been maintained throughout the pandemic period.

Some challenges in the re-introduction of face to face activity and contact re being encountered

Our key learning from COVID-19

- ***The resilience of our children and young people has been incredible during this pandemic period.***
- ***PPE has been available for staff and carers.***
- ***Partners have all pulled together with a much more collaborative and positive approach being seen, particularly in relation to our schools.***
- ***Communication has improved between agencies and services.***
- ***The introduction of the vulnerable children's data base has improved information sharing and the ability to identify those most in need of support***
- ***Remote/virtual working has been very positive in most areas i.e. a number of children have been much more willing to engage in meetings/sessions and discussions with key professionals.***
- ***Birth parents have adapted incredibly well to the restrictions that have had to be put into place particularly around the removal of direct contact.***
- ***Generally, a hybrid model of working is being considered by the majority of partners and services as part of their recovery plans.***
- ***There will be significant challenges moving forward in relation to the economy and the impact of this, particularly in relation to NEET and training opportunities for many CIOC.***

Care Leavers local offer

In consultation with a group of care leavers we reviewed our local offer to consider if services and support on offer meet the requirements of the Government's Statutory Guidance and the group also developed a digital site for the Local offer to be published which can be found on Stockton Information Directory.

Every care leaver from age 16 year old is given written information and access to the digital link to the local offer

The local offer contains information about the types of support a care leaver can expect from the council.

At 31st March 2020 there were 246 young people receiving a leaving care service and were in receipt of all or a combination of the below. A Leaving Care Personal Advisor (PA is identified for young person when they reach 16 yrs old. The social worker remains involved until formally discharged from care at age 18 yr old. PA is allocated at 16 yr old to aid the transition process and become familiar with the young person) PA role is to befriend advise and assist. Services are available up to the age of 25.

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- Pathway plan developed which looks at all areas such as health education, social relationships, life skills etc
- An independent Reviewing Officer to review the plan
- A Personal Allowance (pre-18)
- 52 Weeks of the Year Funded Accommodation for University
- A Leaving Care Higher Education Bursary
- Book Allowance for university
- Driving Lessons
- Birthday and Christmas Gifts
- Setting up Home Allowance
- EET support
- Accommodation Support
- Council Tax Exemption
- Discretionary Housing Payments
- Tees Active membership
- Access to Grandmentor scheme
- Celebration event
- Supported Lodgings / Staying Put / Transitional Accommodation / Supported Accommodation
- EET Forum - Youth Direction PA for 18 plus / Virtual School involvement for 16/18 yr olds
- Early access to Universal Credit

Children's homes ratings

There are six children's homes in Stockton-on-Tees which are run by the Council. Three of these are rated outstanding, and three are rated good.

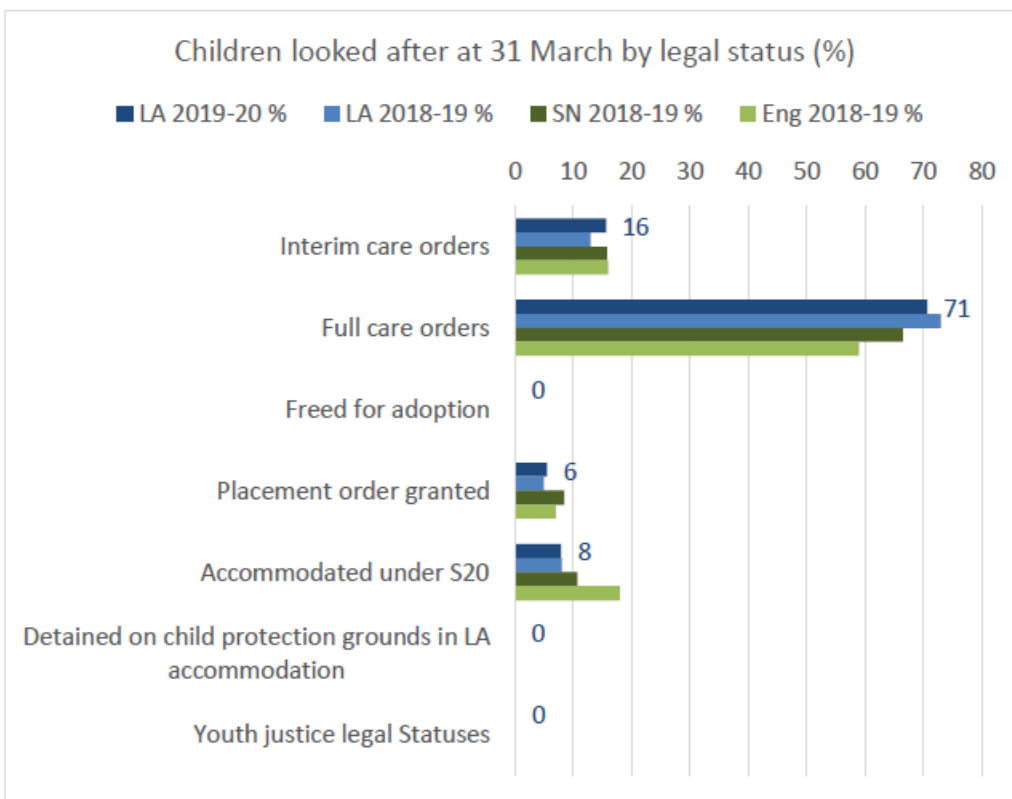
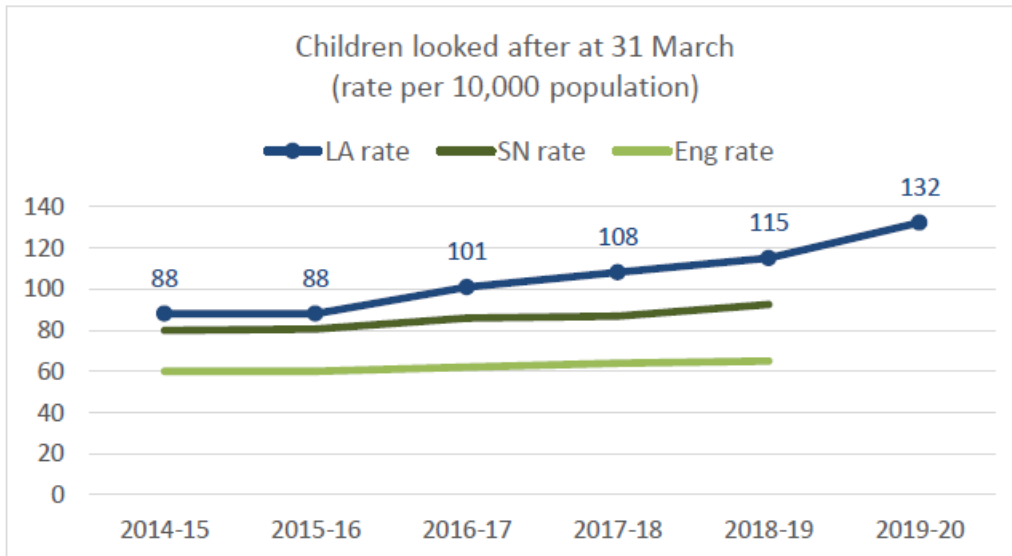
What impact has this had for children and young people in care, and care leavers?

What does data tell us about impact?

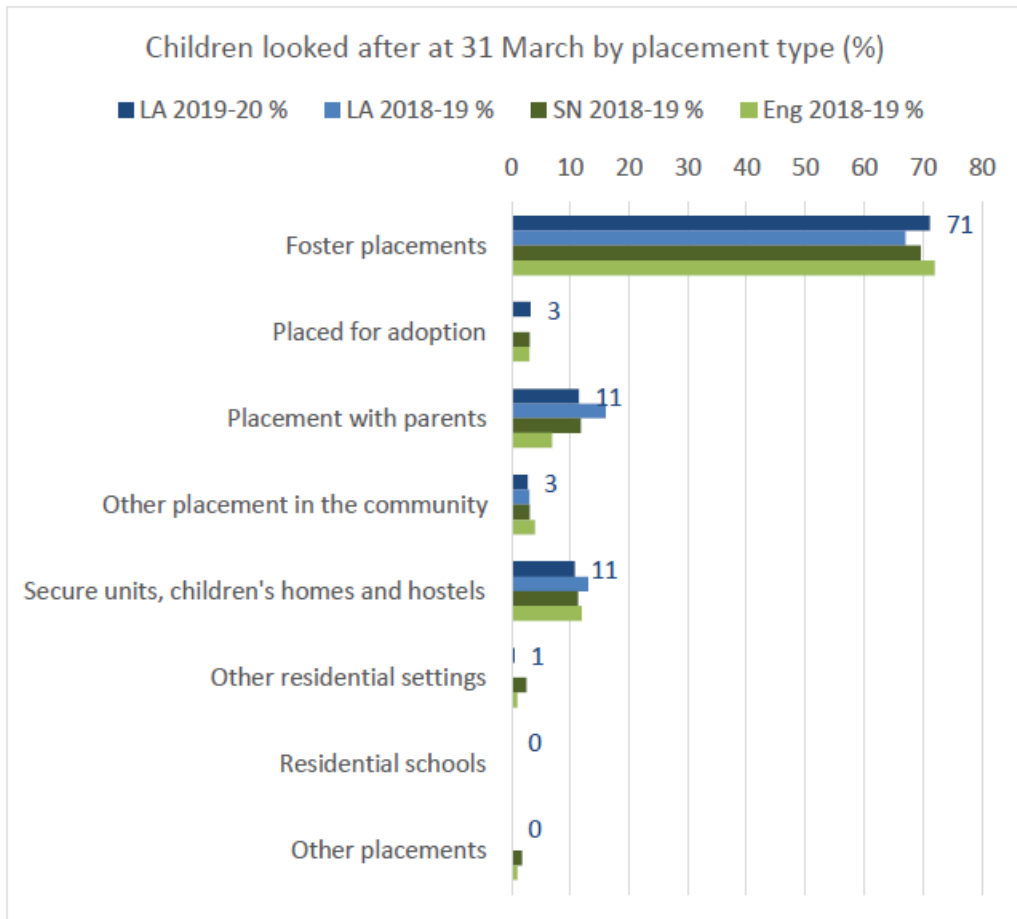
Summary:

1. The number of children in care increased in 2019/20;
2. The number of children with more than 3 placements has risen, though overall stability remains good
3. The rate of children placed out of borough at distance remains lower than national rates
4. The opportunities for children in care around education, employment and training remains an area of focus
5. Health assessments and overall health remains a key focus

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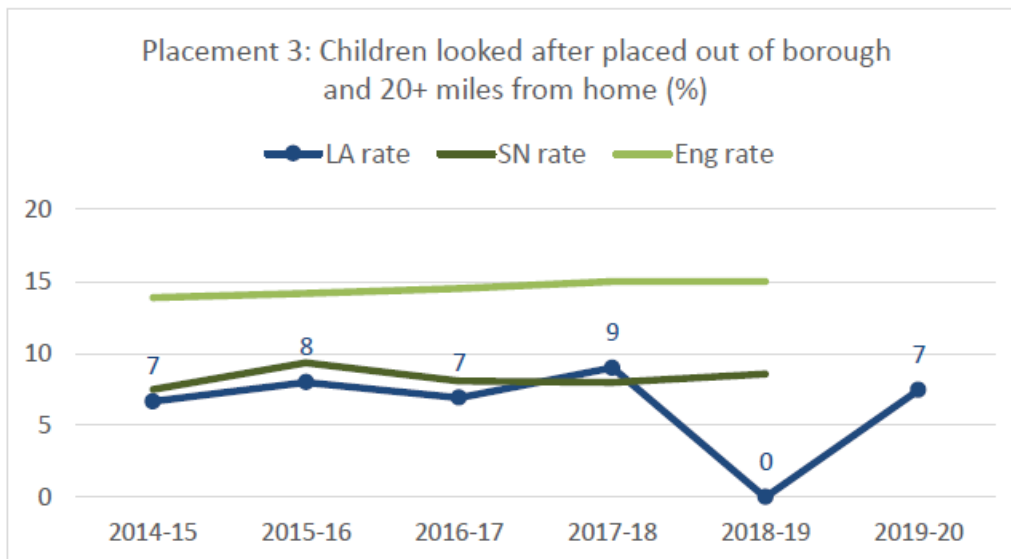
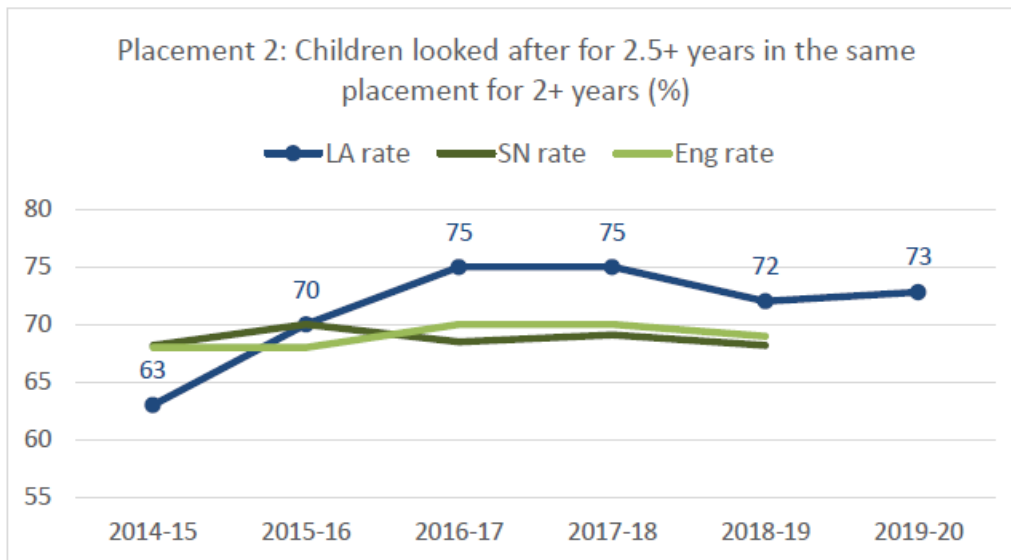
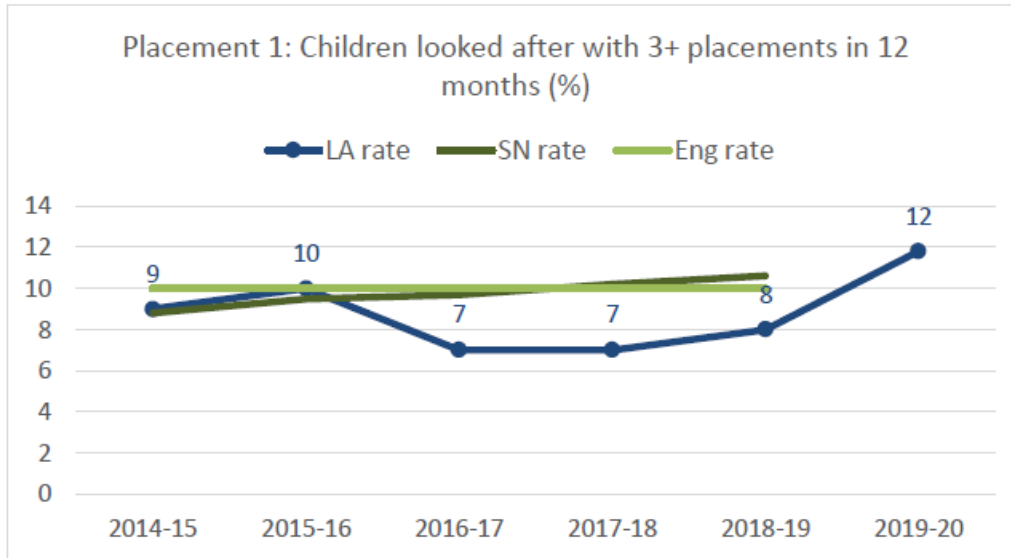


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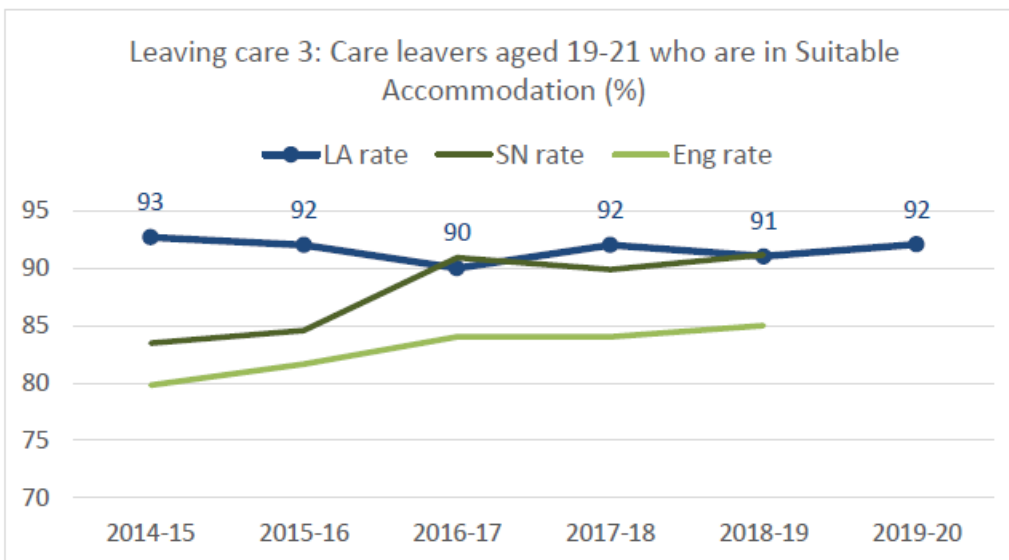
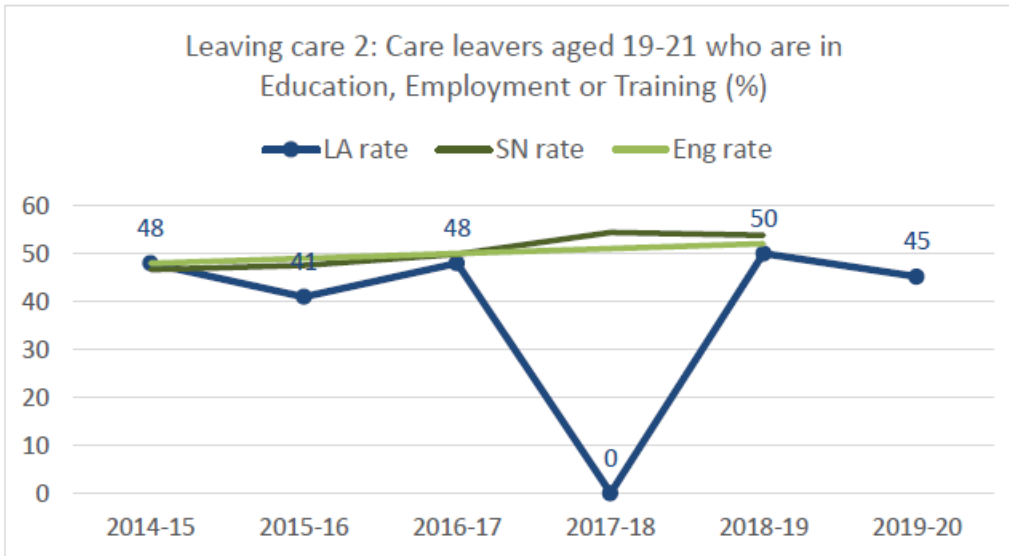


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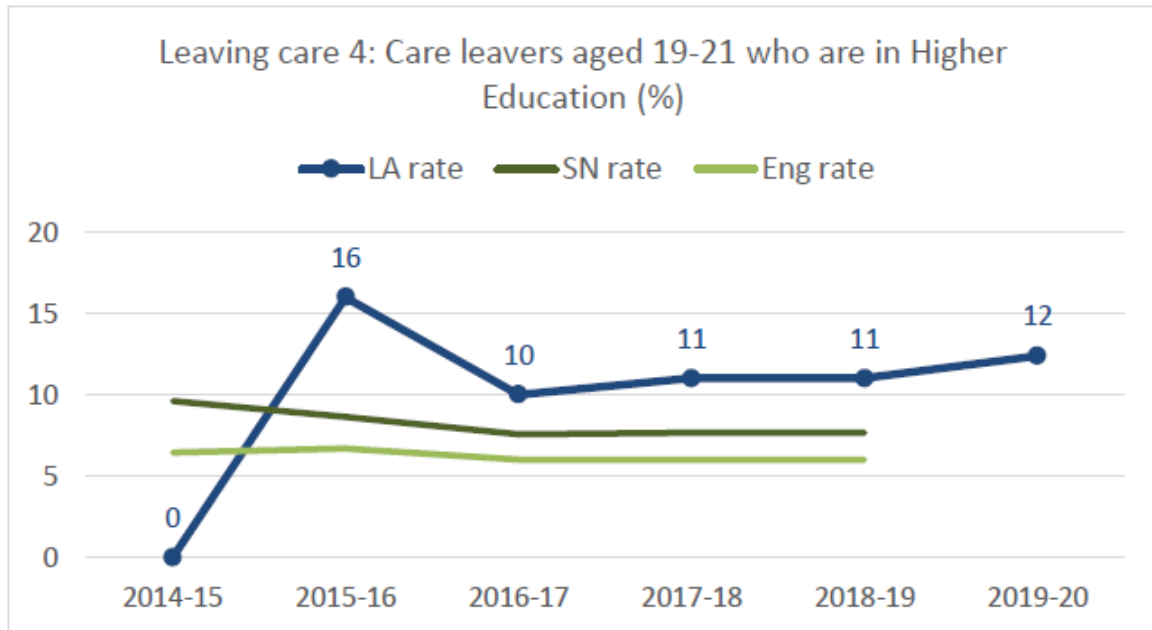
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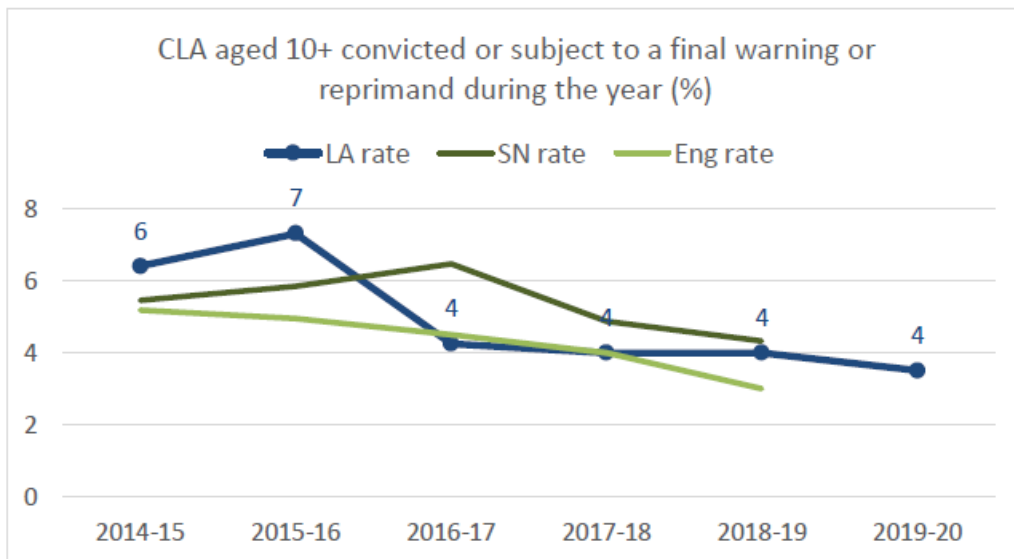
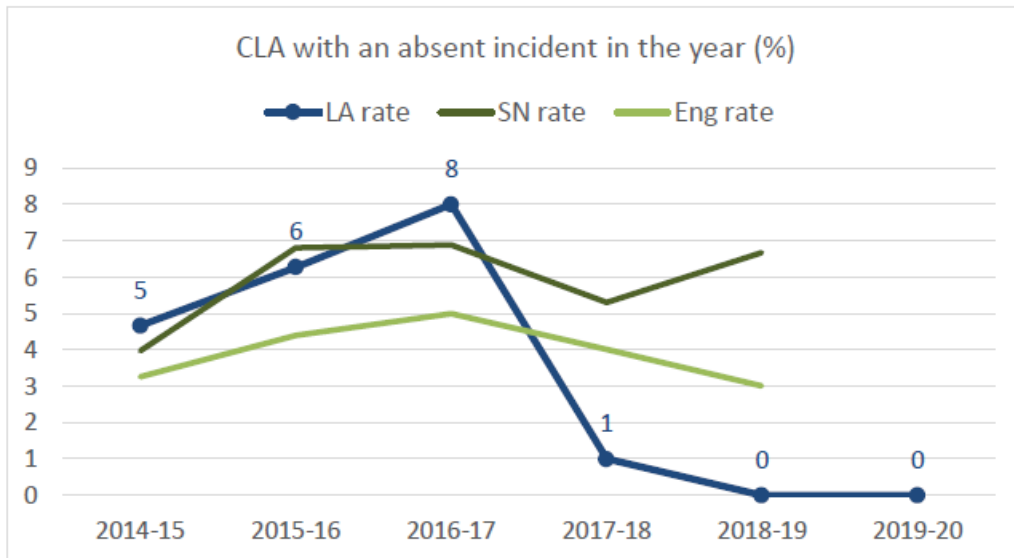
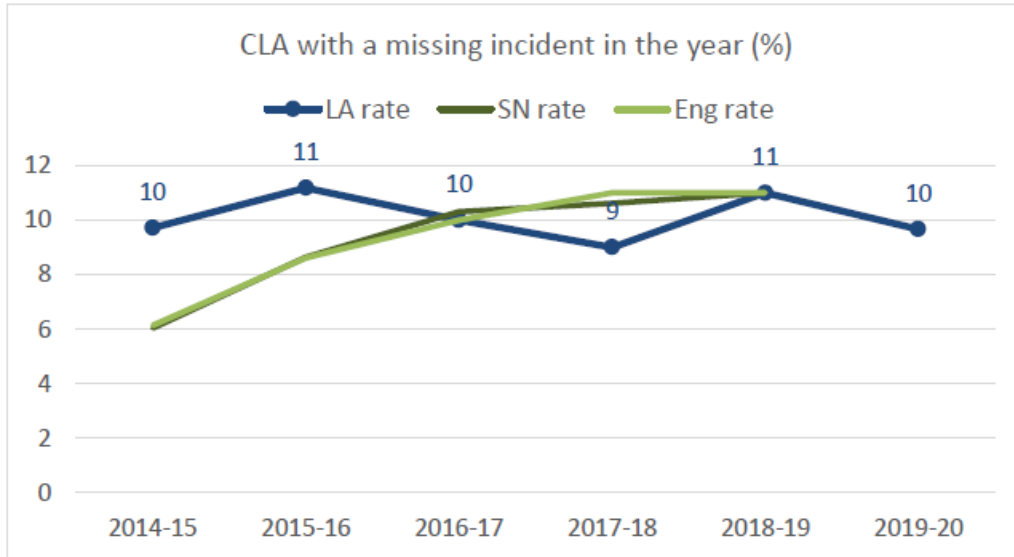


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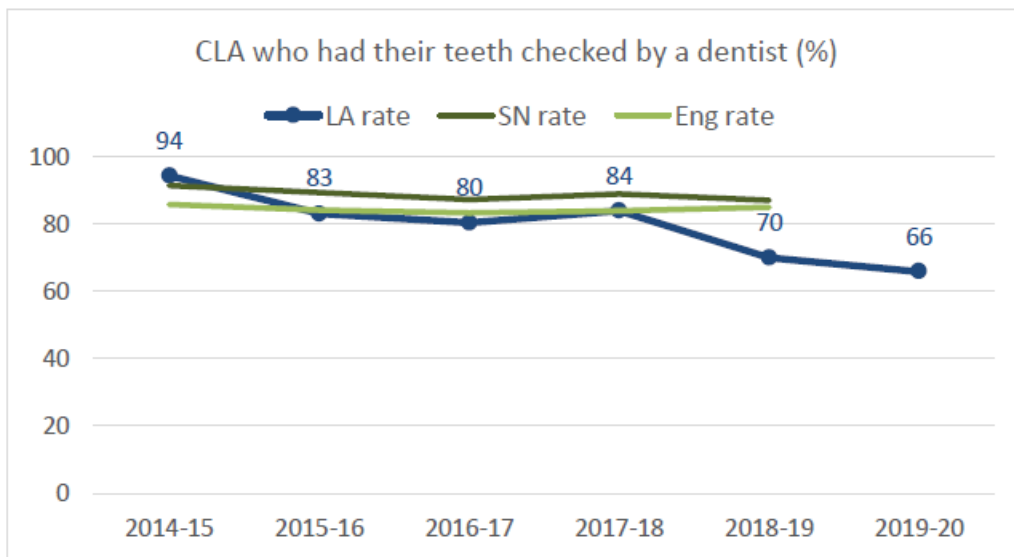
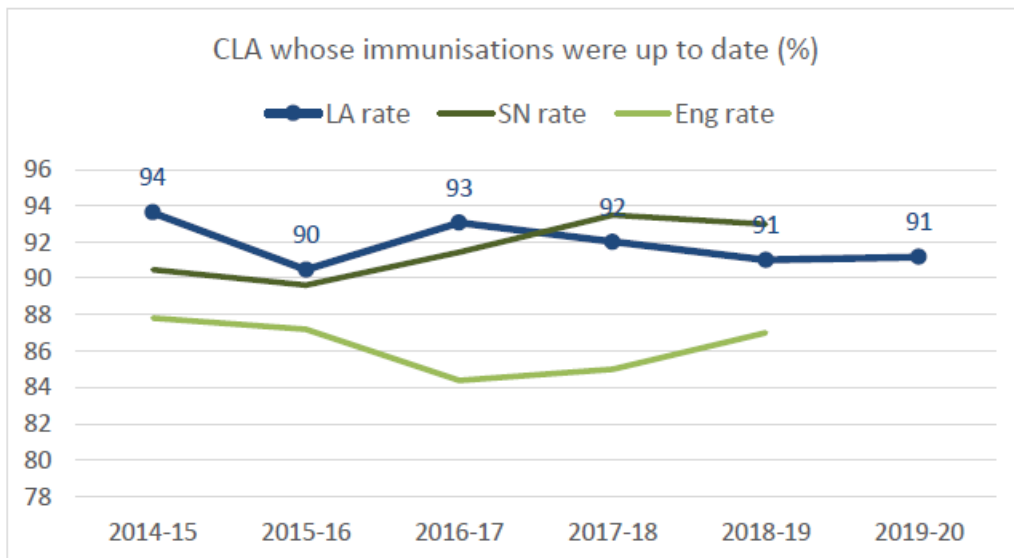
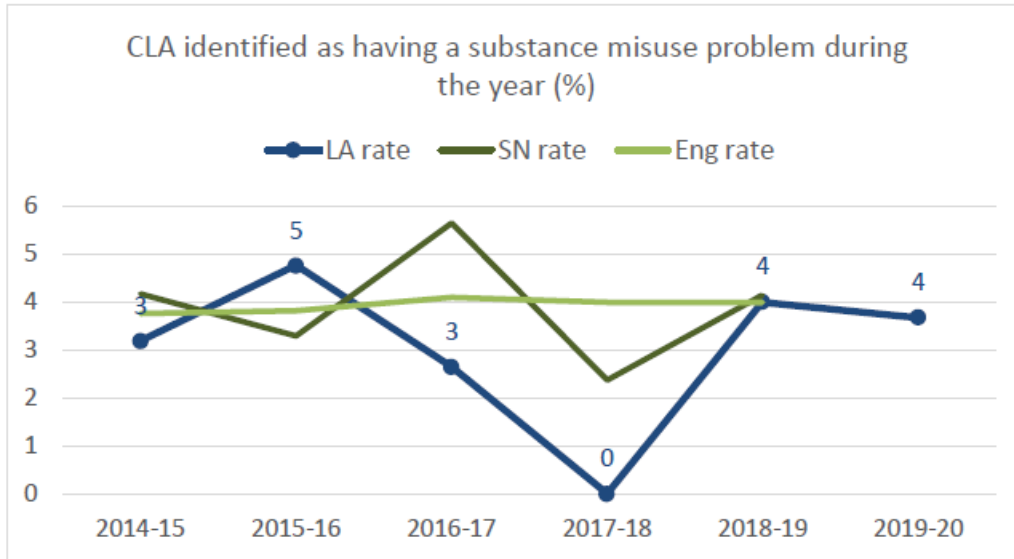


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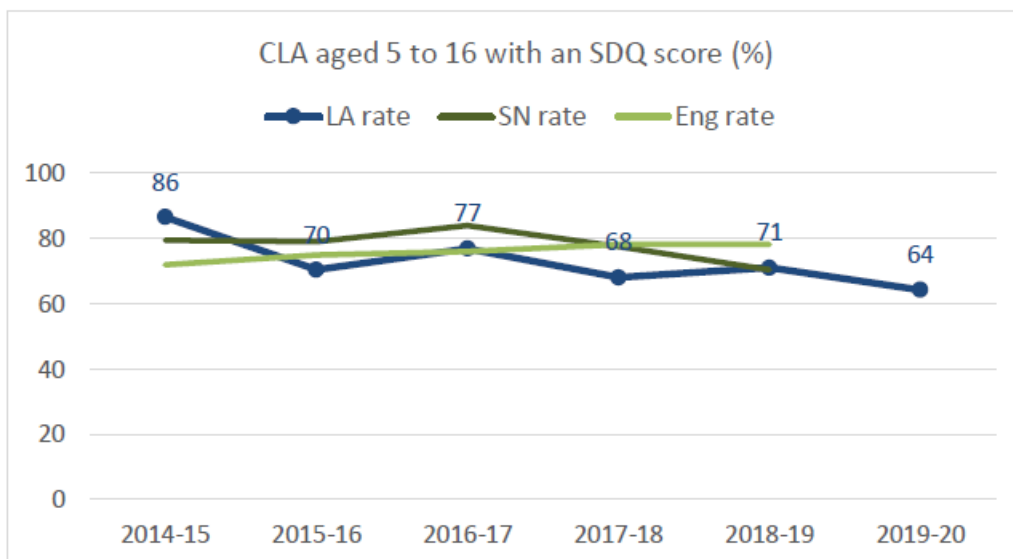
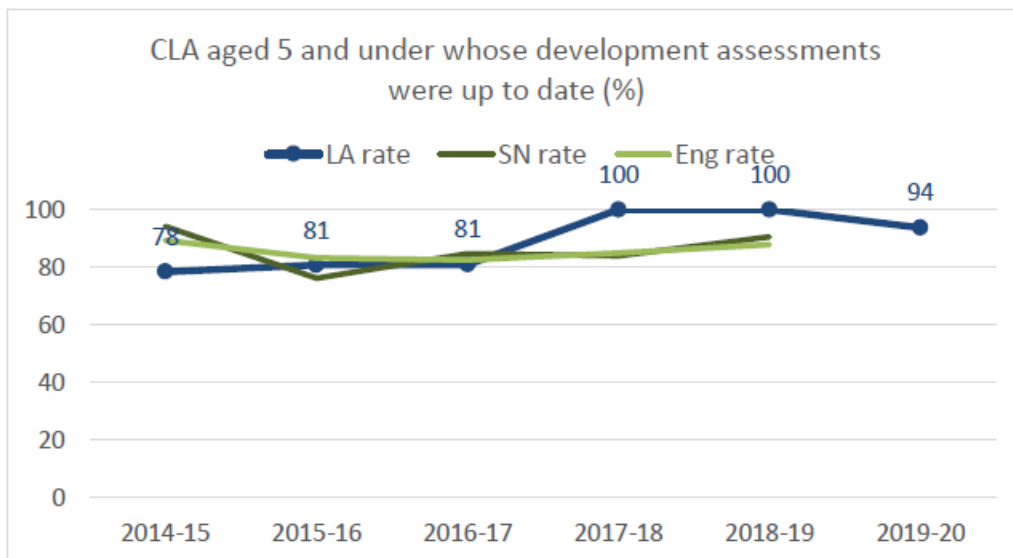
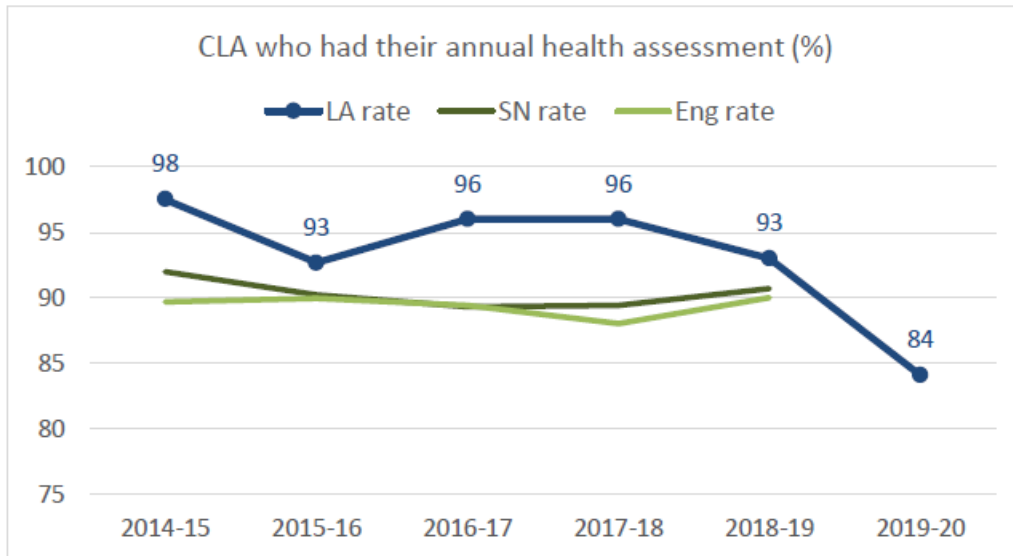
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The views of children and young people in care

Childs voice in looked after reviews

A group of young people in care met with Independent Review Officers and explored what makes a good review, what has been a bad review and why and developed a child led agenda and feedback questionnaire that they could use to input into their reviews.

Mind of My Own

Mind of My Own is a digital app that children can use to support them to communicate their views and participate in their reviews or any other kind of engagement with the staff involved with them. The app is accessible to all children in our care.

In the year 2019/20 we received 123 statements from young people through the app of these;

- 1 was used to contribute to a foster carers annual review
- 3 were completed to express how a young person was feeling about their own wellbeing
- 17 were used to contribute to and prepare for a looked after review a social workers visit or another meeting that the young person a involved with
- 17 were used to share a problem with the social worker
- 85 were used for the young person to share good news
- 0 children used the app to say they felt unsafe

Quotes (redacted to preserve identity)

I feel good because I am going to watch cats with (the foster carer) and I also went to the seaside with my brothers and I haven't stopped playing with my new bike

I am happy with where I live and I have good things and nothing can hurt me, my teachers are kind and very friendly and I like to go swimming

I have some good things in my life , I have good friends, someone I can trust, someone always on my side, someone who loves me, nice clothes and gaming friends

I feel good about myself because I am goo looking and I am funny and I am a nice person and people like me and I like myself

I want some help with my attitude – I cant keep my anger inside

My problem is that I am not allowed a phone so I cant share my good news with my friends.

Whilst it is pleasing to see that a significant number of the statements submitted by children are related to sharing good news the number of statements submitted does need improving and a plan to reinforce the merits of the app is in place with the aim of increasing usage to inform service development and delivery.

More Stuff Like This Please

More Stuff like this please was a 2 year programme funded by Culture Bridge North east and Stockton council and delivered in partnership with the ARC, Stockton and Blue Cabin

The programme is focused on giving creative opportunities to children in our care alongside the adults in the lives. The aim of this was to try and help children to develop their confidence and self-esteem and widen their interest and engagement with the arts and creative activities. A variety of activities were on offer ranging from Early Years music making groups, Sculpture, Storybook making ,Painting, photography and Jewellery making classes to Dance and Drama and Craft classes. The children engaged with artists and learnt a range of new skills and had fun whilst doing it. The plan is to extend the programme for a further 3 years. Below is a section of the feedback comments from them.

I felt confident when taking the photos

I felt confident when I could talk to other people

I felt confident when I had ideas

I overcame a challenge when sharing my personal objects

I overcame a challenge when I played the Ukelele

I overcame a challenge when I came

Something I am proud of is learning a song

Something I am proud of is my hard work

Something I am proud of is drawing and socialising

A look ahead to 2020/21

The strategy has identified a number of key priorities for 2020/21, which we intend to take forward and report through the Partnership:

- 1. Sufficiency strategy:**
 - a. Residential children's homes**
 - b. Fostering**
- 2. Health assessments and improving health of children in care**
- 3. EET issues are being considered through a Scrutiny review in 2020/21 and will be reported to CPB**

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Annex 1:

Terms of Reference for Corporate Parenting Board (CPB)

Vision

The Corporate Parenting Board will continually drive to secure better outcomes for children in, and leaving our care.

Operating Principles

The Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) is a Committee of the Council and is accountable to the Council.

The CPB will provide the strategic direction and overarching strategic priorities for improving health and wellbeing for the population of the Borough.

It will develop the appropriate substructures that enable CPB to discharge its responsibilities in improving and protecting the Borough's health and reducing health inequalities. Specifically, the Board will be supported by Children in Our Care Strategic Group which will ensure the implementation of the priorities identified by the CPB.

The arrangements will operate in a spirit of open and honest dialogue and collective responsibility for taking decisions.

Strategic Context

The Local Authority (Council) has a strategic responsibility for children in care as documented in legislation and national and local guidance. The Children Act 1989 placed a duty on Health, Housing, Education and Social Care as a minimum, to work together to improve outcomes for Looked After Children. The Children Act 2004 placed a statutory duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 established seven corporate parenting principles which the Council must have regard to.

Building on the good partnership arrangements that are in place in Stockton-on-Tees, the Corporate Parenting Board brings together representatives of relevant agencies in order to develop a common understanding of agencies' shared responsibilities and to ensure strategic planning across partner organisations takes account of the needs of children and young people who are in our care.

Aim:

1. To take a multi-agency approach to challenging outcomes and promoting the needs and interests of children and young people in care and care leavers in Stockton-on-Tees
2. To oversee the continuing development and implementation of the strategy for children in, and leaving, our care
3. To lead a multi-agency approach to corporate parenting

Objectives

1. Seeking to improve outcomes through sharing good practice, experience and approaches.
2. Identifying opportunities for collaboration and partnership.

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3. Further development of a coherent approach to issues relating to children in our care and care leavers.
4. Making recommendations to the Director of Children's Services, Stockton-on-Stockton-on-Tees Health & Wellbeing Board, Children and Young People's Partnership and relevant Partnership Boards as appropriate.
5. Pro-actively celebrating success and achievement of LAC.
6. Forging productive links with other local, regional and national groups with a focus on looked after children.
7. To ensure that all agencies are enabled to fulfil their corporate parenting role & responsibilities.
8. Oversee the development, review and implementation of the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy

Implementation and development

The Children in Our Care Strategic Group will be the operational group, tasked with the role of implementing the strategy, and any additional priorities of the CPB and will be accountable to CPB.

Children and Young Peoples Voice

The CPB actively seeks the involvement of children and young people.

The views of children and young people in care will be routinely provided through the children's rights function.

Twice a year, the CPB will jointly meet with children and young people to discuss priorities and issues.

Annex 2

1. Service Development group terms of Reference

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