

**AGENDA ITEM  
REPORT TO CORPORATE  
PARENTING BOARD  
11 FEBRUARY 2022  
REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF  
CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

**PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR OUR PLACE – EDGE OF CARE SERVICE**

**Summary**

Our Place – Edge of Care Service opened 31st January 2018 with the purpose of providing a range of intensive prevention and support strategies aimed at avoiding family breakdown, where without this level of intervention, the child/ren were likely to become a Child/ren in Our Care.

Over time, the service has shifted in its purpose to respond to demand and presenting need. Year on year, the data demonstrates an increase in demand for support to children already in care. Significantly in 2021 this accounted for 38% of the referrals.

In 2021, the services to date have successfully supported 50% or 25 families referred for edge of care support to remain together and avoiding children entering the care system.

There have been opportunities provided to learn about the quality and impact of the service from children, carers and parents and social workers. Those that have provided feedback (though limited in number) have rated the service in the main as excellent. The service has received only 1 complaint, this was responded to and resolved at the early resolution stage.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Corporate Parenting Board is asked to:

1. Note the report;
2. Note the proposal to seek a further independent evaluation;
3. Note the further work to review the statement of purpose;
4. Note the proposals for further development, including the proposal to seek a further property to expand the service.

**Purpose, Aims & Method**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide a high-level overview of the impact the services from Our Place have had on preventing children and young people coming into care.
2. The report considers the impact Our Place has had on maintaining stability for children in placement and the impact of supporting children to move to appropriate placements, where appropriate.
3. To achieve this, a sample of cases from years 2018 and 2019 have been selected and tracked up to 31<sup>st</sup> Aug 21 to understand if the interventions delivered from Our Place have made any sustained positive impact and to identify if those children remained living in stable placements.

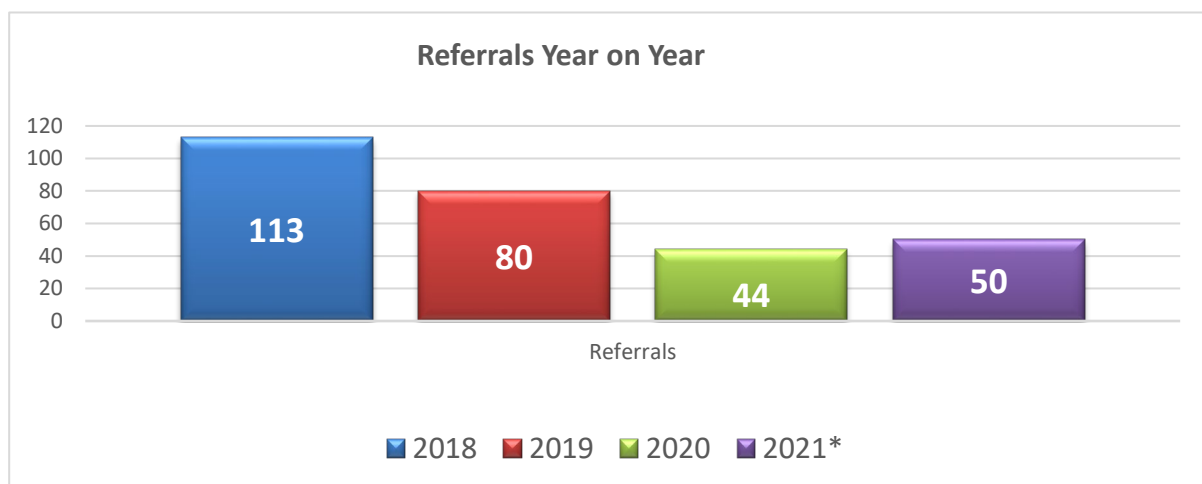
4. Year on year data has been evaluated to understand the flow of referrals to Our Place and identify any impact or barriers to this flow.

### Accessing the service

5. Referral routes to request services from Our Place have been reviewed and changed over time. Referrals are received from social workers into Resource Panel. The decision is made at panel regarding the appropriateness of the referral and if agreed forwarded to the Project Manager of Our Place to consider capacity and match with other children receiving a service at that point in time.
6. There may be times when there is a requirement for emergency referrals, these are considered by the Resource Team on an individual basis, then brought to panel retrospectively.
7. Services offered are:
  - a. Outreach only packages – this is particularly aimed at families or young people where engagement in services has been a challenge.
  - b. Short breaks – ranging from single day care to extended periods of overnights
  - c. Combination – mixed of the above
  - d. Group Activities (Stepping Stones) - Stepping Stones is a youth group run in conjunction with Youth Direction. It provides a safe environment where young people can make friends and socialise and develop new skills alongside skilled intervention workers.

### Numbers of Referrals

8. Since opening to 31<sup>st</sup> Aug 21, a total of 287 referrals have been received by Our Place.

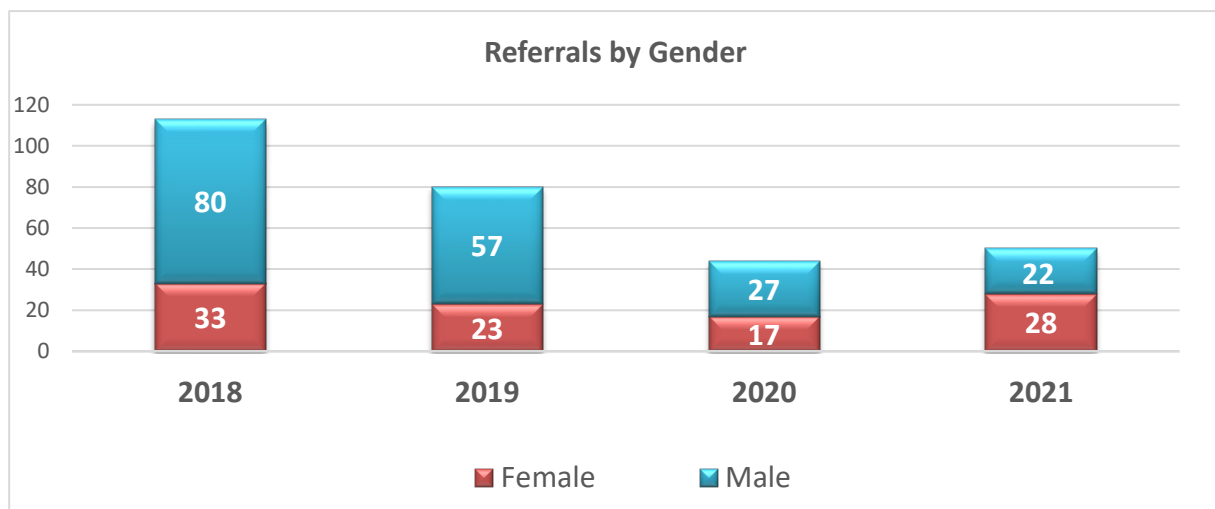


9. Year on year referral rates have dropped as demonstrated above, due to the following:
  - a. The service was interrupted during 2019/2020 due to the relocation from a property in central Stockton on Tees and re-registration to a address in Thornaby. This was part of a wider review and restructure of the Local Authority children's residential services to increase the range and capacity and making use of the available buildings owned by the council and already in place staffing structure.

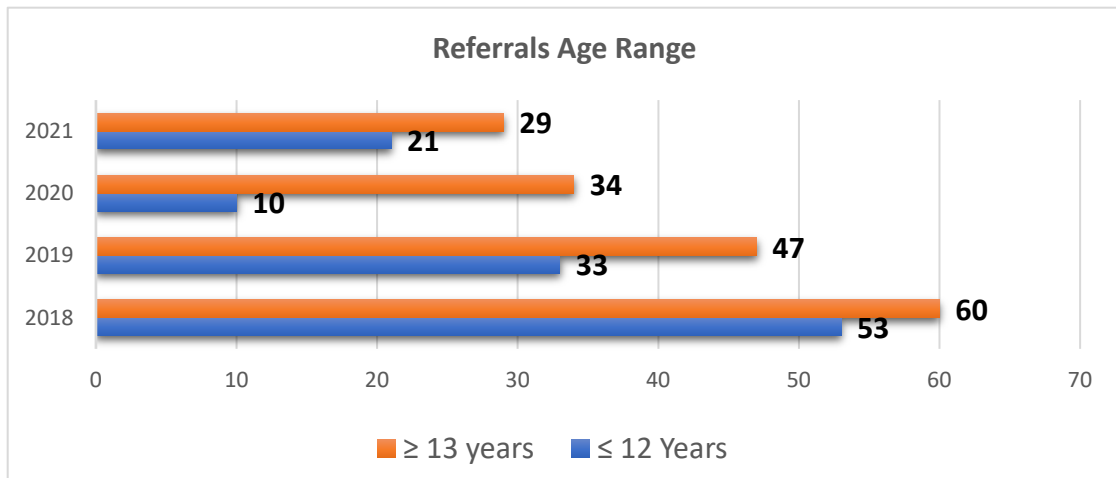
- b. Covid-19 and consequential barriers to services created a block on respite except for high-risk situations.
- c. There has been an increase in children and young people requiring emergency bridging placements or short to medium term care arrangements. To note, some of these emergency placements were for high-risk young people who couldn't be accommodated with anyone else, therefore consuming the staff team and limiting capacity for others to access the service.
- d. Additionally, the lack of availability for 'edge of care' support during the pandemic, will have directly impacted the number of referrals received for looked after care placements and is likely to create a 'snowballing' effect on those families in need of the service to prevent breakdown in the near future.
- e. Data for 2021, demonstrates that referrals are increasing and potentially will reach levels seen in 2018 and end of year trajectory could see +100 referrals. This is likely to be attributed to the opening of communities and lifting of restrictions as we move to a recovery stage following COVID-19.

### Referral Profile

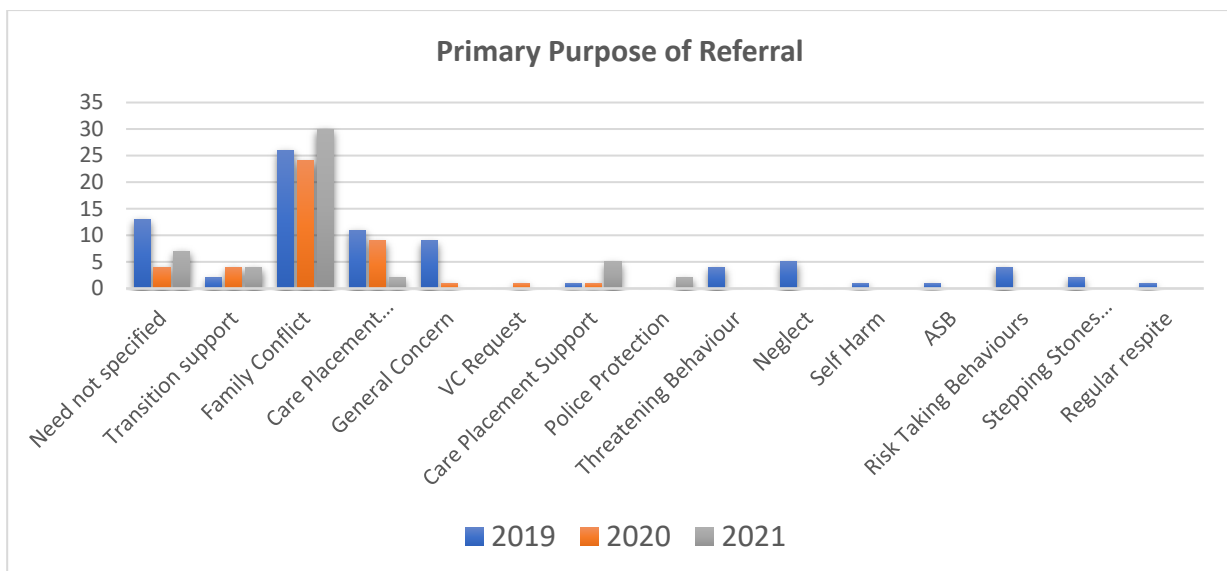
- 10. The following section provides a snapshot of the number, gender, age and needs of children and young people referred to Our Place – Edge of Care, year on year\* since its opening in 2018.
- 11. As evidenced below, 186 (65%) of all referrals received to Our Place have been for males.
- 12. 2021, is the first year in which more females have been referred to the service, 28 of the referrals were for females (56%) and 22 for males (44%), however this does not account for a full year return.



- 13. Throughout the period Our Place has been open, 170 (59%) of provision is for children aged 13 and over.
- 14. The mean age of referrals is 12.75 and the range is 6\* years to 17 years.



15. As illustrated below, there have been a range of presenting issues or reason for referral to Our Place.



16. Some referrals did not identify any specific purpose, instead referring to numerous issues or risks present. It is unknown whether this was because there were multiple needs, or none specifically identified.

17. However, what we do know is that family conflict has been identified by social workers as the main purpose for referring to Our Place, followed by care placement breakdown and transitional support. This is where it has been identified that support is required to enable a young person to transition from one placement to another and may include reunification to family/carers.

18. It is noted that there has been an increase in requests for emergency short to medium care placements and children needing 'temp short term' placements. Some of these referrals have been as a direct result of emergency decisions to accommodate or due to the 'current' placement of the child giving immediate notice, necessitating in placements being needed at Our Place in an emergency. The impact of this on the service will be discussed later in the report.

## Impact and Progress

Placement Progression							
Legal Status	Point of Referral	Type of Placement		Legal Status	As of 31.08.21	Type of Placement	
CIN	24			Key Working	2		
				EH	2		
				CIN	10		
				CP	5		
				CIOC	5		
						Specialist Placement	1
						Support Accommodation	1
						Residential Care	1
						Foster Care	1
						Turnaround	1
CP	7			CP	6		
				CIOC	1		
CIOC	19	Foster Care	8	CIOC	19	Foster Care	4
		AtoA *	4			Turnaround	2
		Placed with parents	3			Placed with parents	3
		Residential	3			Connected Carer	4
		Picked up by Turnaround	1			Residential	6

\* AtoA – Agreement to Accommodate

19. At the point of referral 24 or 48% of cases received in 2021, were CIN and 7 cases or 14% were in CP. These referrals accounted for 62% of cases where ‘edge of care’ status could be defined. Significantly 19 or 38% were for children already in our care.

20. Following interventions from Our Place, 50% of the children who were identified as edge of care remained out of care following intervention from Our Place.

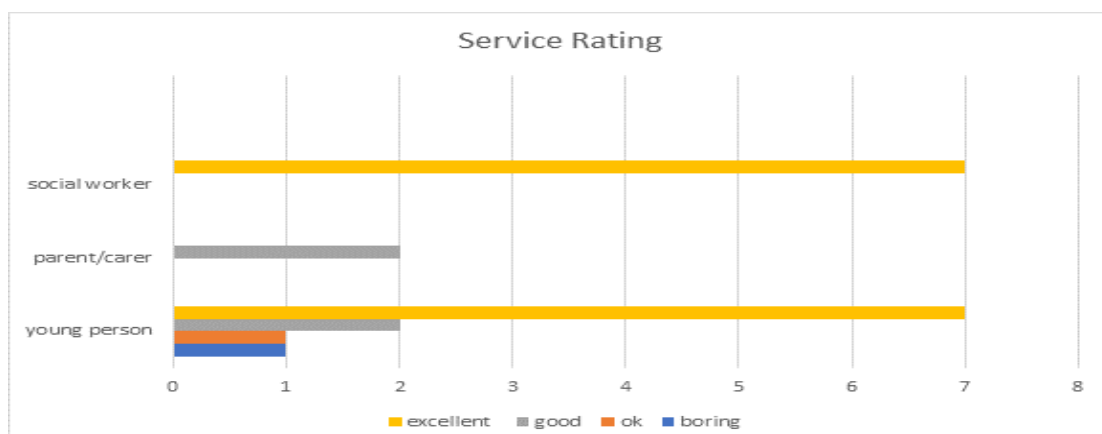
21. In terms of outcomes, we can report that of the 24 CIN cases at the point of referral:

- **79% of CIN Cases remained in their families/carers.**
- 4 Children have ‘stepped down’ - (16%)
- 10 Children maintained CIN status – (42%)
- 5 Children ‘stepped up’ to CP status – (21%) – To note, 4 of these families demonstrated reluctance to engage with the service and refused the offer of short breaks. 1 child’s case remains active.
- 4 Children became CIOC – (21%): 2 referrals were received for 1 child.

22. In respect of the CP cases, at the time of writing this report, 6 remained active on CP plans, and one child required a specialist residential placement.
23. Of referrals for children already in our care:
  - a. 8 children were in a foster care placement at the point of referral. Referrals for these children included requests for day care support, placement support, requests for ongoing respite and placement breakdown.
  - b. Following involvement from Our Place, 2 children were placed into Turnaround with a request for further intensive support to enable them to return to foster placements.
  - c. 2 children were placed in inhouse provision following placement breakdown.
  - d. 4 children were sustained in their foster care places.
24. A further 4 children were admitted following an agreement to accommodate being made, bringing the total of children in care accessing the service up to 23. The 4 children new to care, were supported in bridging placements at Our Place whilst alternative placements were sourced.
  - 2 were placed in foster placements.
  - 2 placed in external residential care
- 7.7 3 referrals were received for children who were in our care at the point of referral and were placed with parents. These placements were considered fragile, following interventions all 3 of these children remained in our care and placed with parents. The placements stabilized.
- 7.8 3 children were already placed in residential care at the point of referral to Our Place. Following interventions, 2 of these children successfully moved on to be placed with a connected carer under the fostering regulations. The 3rd child was supported to move to an alternative more suitable external residential placement.

## Feedback

25. Feedback is sought regularly from children using the service in young people's meetings, one to one sessions, comments book and during monthly visits from an independent person as well as through a survey at the end of any intervention plan.
26. Social Workers and parents are asked to give feedback also during monthly visits from an independent person as well as through a survey at the end of any intervention plan.
27. Feedback is taken very seriously and informs how the practice from Our Place develops.
28. Below is how the service was rated, of note the service scored highest in the excellent category from social workers and young people. Although no parent scored the service less than good, none scored it as excellent.



29. Outside of the formal requests for feedback, comments have included

- *'staff have been supportive',*
- *The service has helped young person to feel listened too as this service/support was put in place after listening to his views about what he felt would be helpful to him to help make his move back to his mother's care more successful. He was provided with the opportunity to reflect on his previous experiences/behaviours, and this helped with ongoing life story work. Thank you"*
- *the stay at Our Place was excellent*
- *I have made lots of fun memories"*

### **Conclusion and next steps**

30. The service continues to operate at full capacity and beyond, enabling services to be delivered flexibly and able to provide planned and intermediate solutions to emergency placement breakdowns. Not captured in the data but cannot be ignored is the strain on the staff and manager from Our Place in responding to the need for solo accommodation. This in turn has invariably impacted on the service's capacity to consistently respond to referrals for children on the edge of care.
31. The service is effective in its primary purpose of reducing the need for children to come into care: in 2021, 50% (25) of 'edge of care' referrals remained out of care following interventions from Our Place.
32. However, the ability of these service to focus on its priorities has been hindered by a continuing need to also address referrals for children already in care. This is due to an increase in placement breakdowns and the serving of immediate notices by private sector providers, as well as the need for bridging placements while placement searches were undertaken following an urgent agreement to accommodate alongside the demand to provide respite solutions to maintain foster placements including connected foster carers.
33. While there is a demand/need for edge of care services, it is also clear that there is a need/demand for respite and short-term placements for children already in our care to promote stability.
34. Our Place has become the solution to these presenting issues and filled a gap in service provision. However, the model delivered from Our Place should not be considered the only solution and should be considered as part of a range of delivery models. Recent changes in legislation and research have presented opportunities for innovation, one manager over a number of provisions for example and creative ways to support foster carers.
35. We are about to embark on a journey to implement the 'Mockingbird Model' in our foster care system. This is an innovative foster care delivery model that creates an extended family/community network of support. Enhancing the development of foster care skills and reliance leading to better retention of quality foster families who are better equipped to meet the challenging and complex needs of children and young people. Having skilled workers and strong working relationships between the Fostering Team and Our Place already is advantageous as we move through the elements to develop the 'Mockingbird Model' and our intention is to align the support for foster carers not only with each other but with residential support that can be built on further.
36. Additionally the recent changes in legislation and guidance regarding multiple houses coming under one children's home registration brings possibilities to develop further the provision delivered from across the councils' children's homes. Our Place staff and

manager have experience of operating more than one service from the home and this puts the service in a strong position to take advantage of the legislation.

37. It is therefore proposed to expand capacity of the service through the development of an additional property to work along side the current service as well as invest further in the turnaround provision to reduce the need for Our Place to have to accept referrals for children already in care.
38. We also propose to commission an independent evaluation to further inform next stages.

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