

Date: Friday 16 June 2023 at 10.00 am

Venue: Jim Cooke Conference Suite, Stockton Central Library, Stockton on Tees,
TS18 1TU

Cllr Barbara Inman (Chair)
Cllr Carol Clark (Vice-Chair)

Cllr Mick Moore
Cllr Pauline Beall
Cllr Hilary Vickers

Cllr Sally Ann Watson
Cllr Robert Cook

AGENDA

- 1 Apologies for Absence**
- 2 Declarations of Interest**
- 3 Minutes**

To approve the minutes of the last meeting held on 14 April 2023 (Pages 7 - 8)
- 4 Virtual School Update** (Pages 9 - 18)
- 5 Monitoring arrangements of external registered Children's Homes - Reporting Period 1 April 22 - 31 March 2023** (Pages 19 - 28)
- 6 Cared for children, care experienced young people and corporate parenting - refreshing our approach** (Pages 29 - 40)
- 7 Forward Plan** (Pages 41 - 42)

Members of the Public - Rights to Attend Meeting

With the exception of any item identified above as containing exempt or confidential information under the Local Government Act 1972 Section 100A(4), members of the public are entitled to attend this meeting and/or have access to the agenda papers.

Persons wishing to obtain any further information on this meeting, including the opportunities available for any member of the public to speak at the meeting; or for details of access to the meeting for disabled people, please

Contact: Michael Henderson on email michael.henderson@stockton.gov.uk

KEY - Declarable interests are:-

- Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI's)
- Other Registerable Interests (ORI's)
- Non Registerable Interests (NRI's)

Members – Declaration of Interest Guidance



Table 1 - Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Subject	Description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain
Sponsorship	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the council) made to the councillor during the previous 12-month period for expenses incurred by him/her in carrying out his/her duties as a councillor, or towards his/her election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
Contracts	Any contract made between the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners (or a firm in which such person is a partner, or an incorporated body of which such person is a director* or a body that such person has a beneficial interest in the securities of*) and the council — (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and (b) which has not been fully discharged.
Land and property	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the council. 'Land' excludes an easement, servitude, interest or right in or over land which does not give the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners (alone or jointly with another) a right to occupy or to receive income.
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the council for a month or longer.
Corporate tenancies	Any tenancy where (to the councillor's knowledge)— (a) the landlord is the council; and (b) the tenant is a body that the councillor, or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners is a partner of or a director* of or has a beneficial interest in the securities* of.
Securities	Any beneficial interest in securities* of a body where— (a) that body (to the councillor's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the council; and (b) either— (i) the total nominal value of the securities* exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or (ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the councillor, or his/ her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners have a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

* 'director' includes a member of the committee of management of an industrial and provident society.

* 'securities' means shares, debentures, debenture stock, loan stock, bonds, units of a collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and other securities of any description, other than money deposited with a building society.

Table 2 – Other Registerable Interest

You must register as an Other Registrable Interest:

- a) any unpaid directorships
- b) any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority
- c) any body
 - (i) exercising functions of a public nature
 - (ii) directed to charitable purposes or
 - (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management

This page is intentionally left blank

Corporate Parenting Board

A meeting of Corporate Parenting Board was held on Friday, 14th April, 2023.

Present: Cllr Barbara Inman (Chair), Cllr Pauline Beall, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Bob Cook, Cllr Mick Moore, Cllr Hilary Vickers, Cllr Sally Ann Watson

Officers: Debbie Farrow, Martin Gray, Michael Henderson, Jo Lee, Mandy Rowlands, Gemma Mann

Also in attendance: Cllr Lisa Evans

Apologies:

CPB Declarations of Interest

34/22

There were no declarations of interest.

CPB Minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2023

35/22

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2023 were confirmed as a correct record.

CPB Corporate Parenting Mid-Year 2022/2023 Performance Update

36/22

Members considered a report that provided a mid-year 2022/23 performance update for the Board. It outlined progress against our key Corporate Parenting performance measures and, where possible to do so, with available information, advised how that compared with the previous three years' performance and performance across the region overall.

It was noted that the report would be published on the Council's website.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

CPB Taking forward the Corporate Parenting Strategy

37/22

- a. Engagement and participation approach.**
- b. Emotional health and wellbeing support.**
- c. Care leavers offer (Presentation)**

The Board considered a report that presented a Participation Strategy. This included the co-produced principles for decision making and a pledge to children and young people in our care which outlined what they could expect from the adults in their lives, to support their involvement in decision making.

The Board also considered a report and presentation that provided information about the new CAMHS model for children in our care, including an overview of the previous model, how the new model was developed and was being implemented in the context of iThrive. Members also heard an update on emerging themes and impact from the implementation of the new model including the multi-agency consultation and formulation approach.

Finally, members were provided with a presentation relating to the Care Leavers

Offer.

Discussion:-

- Members agreed that it was important to hear and fully record what children in our care were saying to us and we should act accordingly. If the Council did not act as it said it would then children must have the ability to hold it accountable.
- Member training, which was mandatory, would be important after the elections to ensure all members were immediately aware of their responsibilities as Corporate Parents. It was noted that Corporate Parenting member training would continue throughout the term of the Council and would include different types of delivery with some sessions involving speakers who had first-hand experience of being a child in care.
- Children had been involved in the appointments process for a new Director of Children's Services, which had been very positive and illustrated to the children the value the Council placed on their views. Their involvement in processes such as this needed to continue and expand.
- There would be more engagement between children in our care and this Board. This would be built into the Forward Plan.
- Attempts to encourage more partners to attend Board meetings and have an active role should be considered, particularly those partners providing certain services.
- there was a 28-day waiting time for CAMHS assessments, however, children and their families were usually getting help well before this, via other interventions.
- More information was needed to understand the effectiveness of intervention from CAMHS. Work was ongoing to improve this situation.
- Members welcomed the regional work relating to care leavers.
- It was important that children in care and care leavers had high aspirations and Corporate Parents had a key role in doing this.

RESOLVED that the reports, presentations and discussion be noted

**CPB
38/22**

Forward Plan

The Board noted its Forward Plan.



Stockton Virtual School

Corporate Parenting Board Interim Report, June 2023

Contents

Introduction.....	2
Educational Outcomes for Children in our Care.....	3
Graphs showing Age Related outcomes	3
Numbers of Children in our Care (CIOC)	3
Good Level of Development (Early Years) Outcomes	3
Key Stage 1 (Year 2) Outcomes	4
Key Stage 2 (Year 6) Outcomes	4
Key Stage 4 (Year 11) Outcomes	6
Other Educational Outcomes	7
Virtual School Update	8
What is working well?	8
Implementation of the Virtual School Head Teacher’s Extended Duties	8
Personal Education Plans (PEPs).....	8
Post 16 Senior Participation Advisers	9
Attachment Aware and Trauma Informed (AATI) Practices	9
Early Identification of Need	9
What are we worried about?	10
Concerns	10
Actions to support our concerns	10

Introduction

The Virtual School Head Teacher provides two reports annually to the Corporate Parenting Board. The first report, tabled in December, is the Annual Virtual School Head Teachers report. The second report, tabled in June, is an interim report timed to enable the Virtual School Head Teacher to report to the Board the validated data published on the Local Authority Interactive Tool in March.

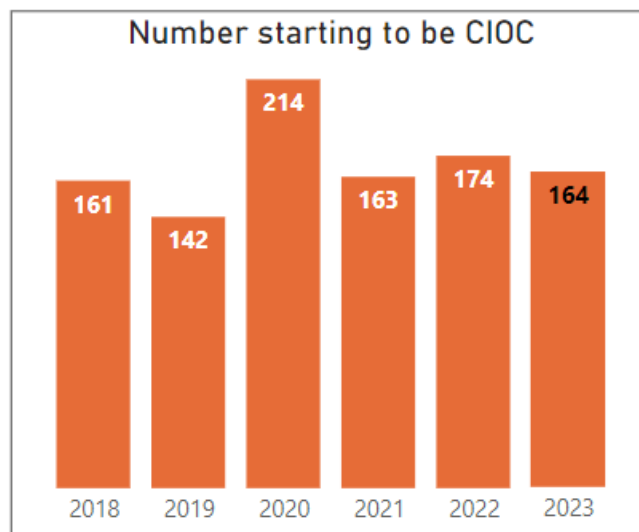
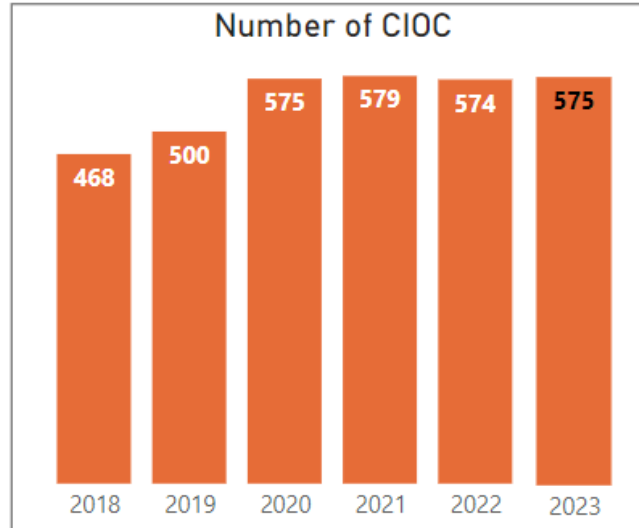
The data presented in this report is the educational data published by the Department of Education in relation to the Children in our Care. Trends for 2018 to the most recently published data in 2021 are shown and where appropriate comparisons are shown for Stockton, North East, Statistical Neighbours and England.

The report will also inform members about the current work of the Virtual School including new initiatives and updates from the Annual Report presented in December 2022.

Educational Outcomes for Children in our Care

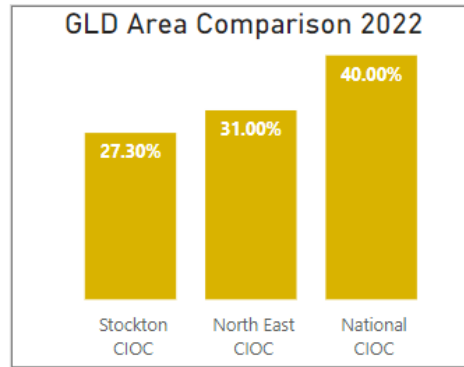
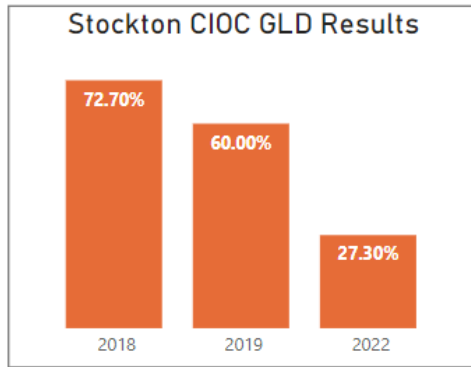
Graphs showing Age Related outcomes

Numbers of Children in our Care (CIOC)



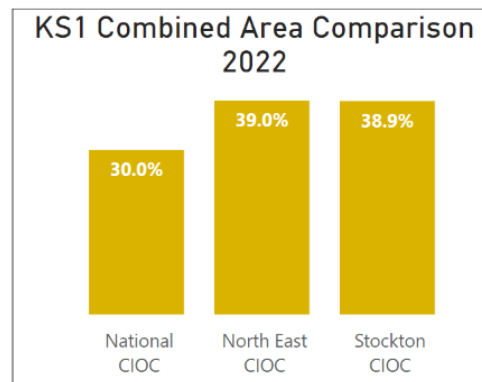
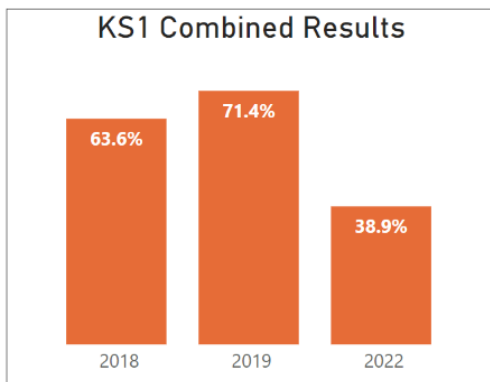
Good Level of Development (Early Years) Outcomes

- The proportion of children achieving a Good Level of Development in 2022 has dropped since 2019 and is lower than the National CIOC figure. However, it is important to note that the cohort for 2022 only contained eleven students so the difference between the Stockton and National figure is equivalent to only 1.4 students.
- We are using some of the School Led Tutoring grant to deliver a literacy intervention to this group of students as they move into Key Stage 1 and to our current Early Years cohort.



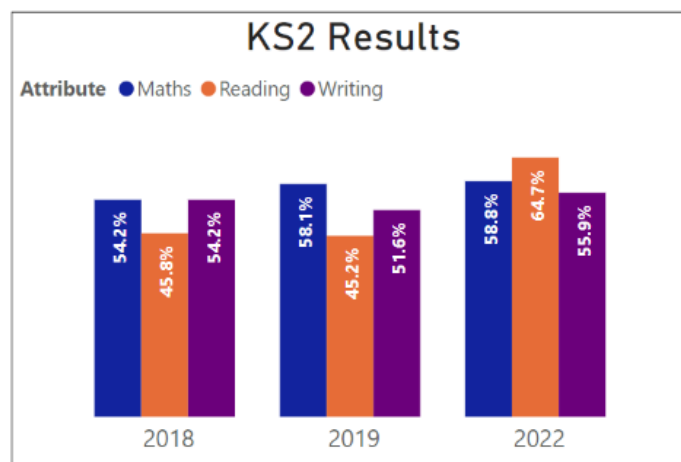
Key Stage 1 (Year 2) Outcomes

- Combined results of Reading, Writing and Maths have dropped when compared to previous years however they are still significantly higher than National CIOC.

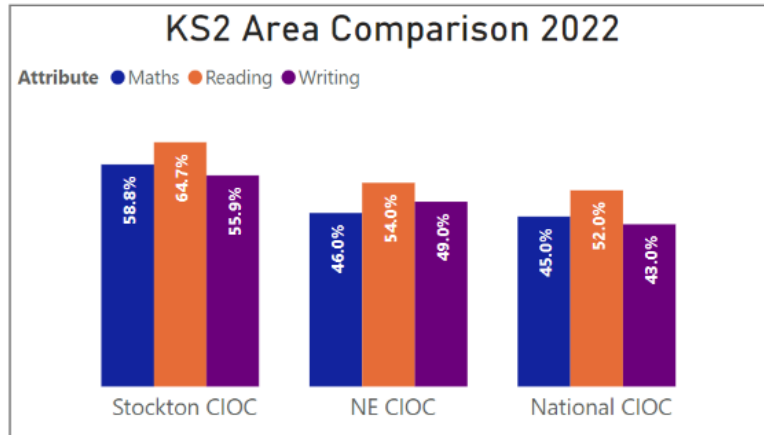


Key Stage 2 (Year 6) Outcomes

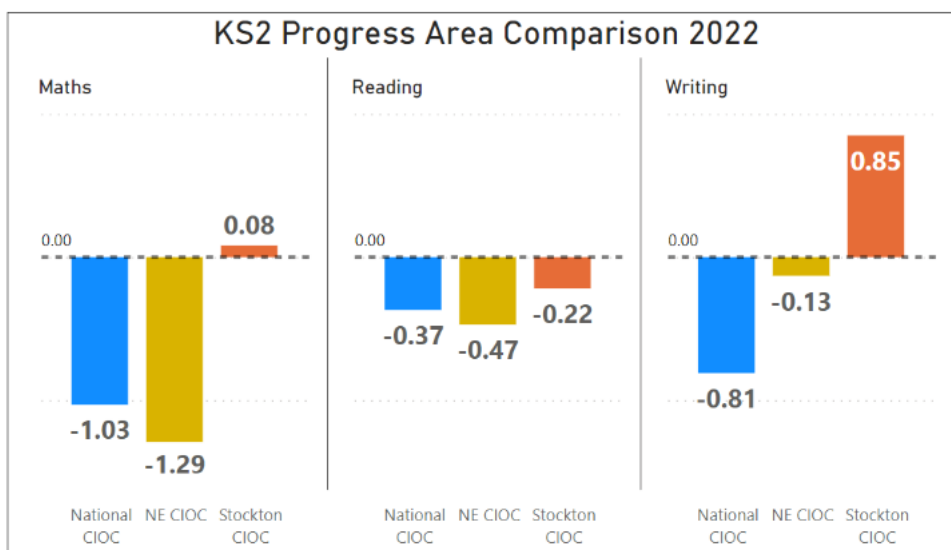
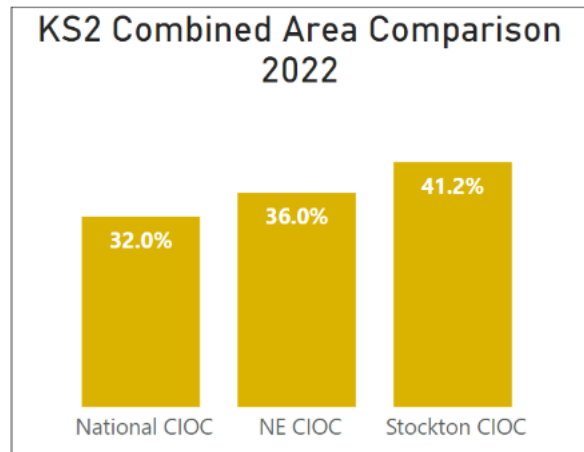
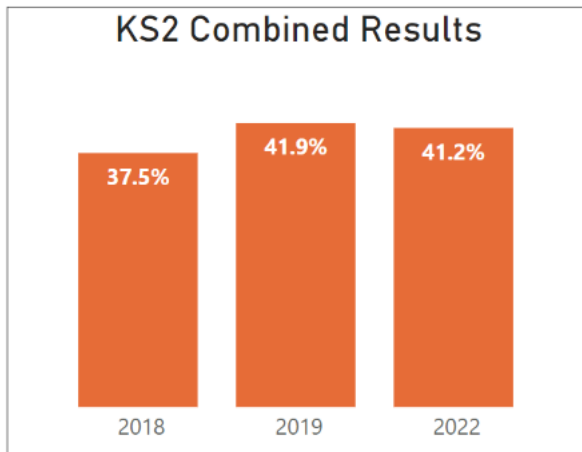
- There were not any Key Stage 2 formal assessments completed during 2020 or 2021 therefore no data is available
- The results for Maths, Reading and Writing have all increased in 2022 compared to the last available results in 2019. There has been a particularly significant improvement in Reading with an increase of 19.5%.



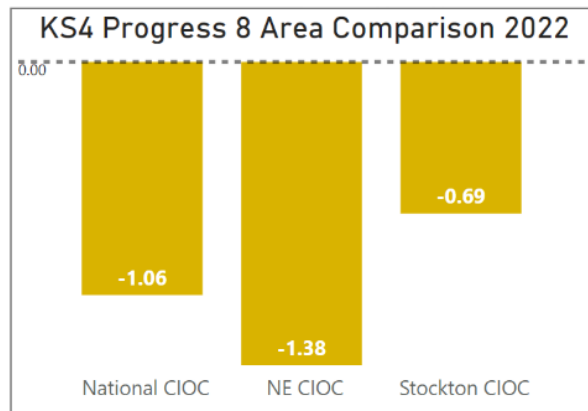
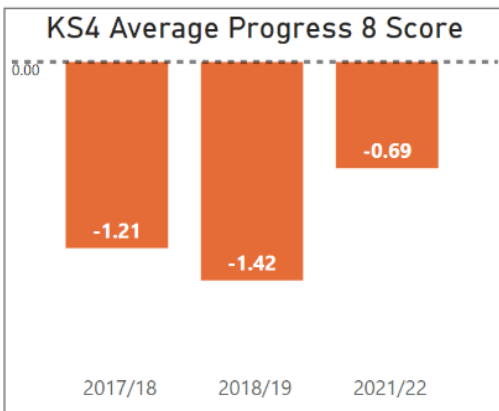
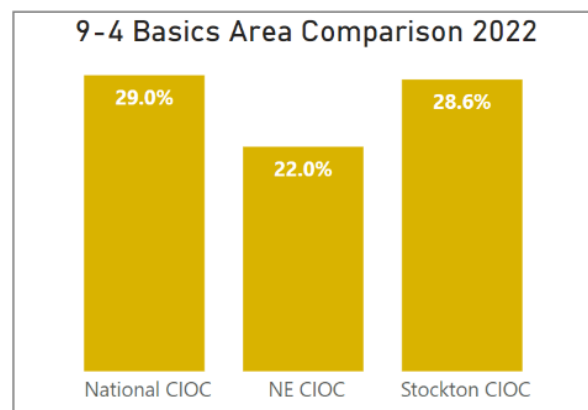
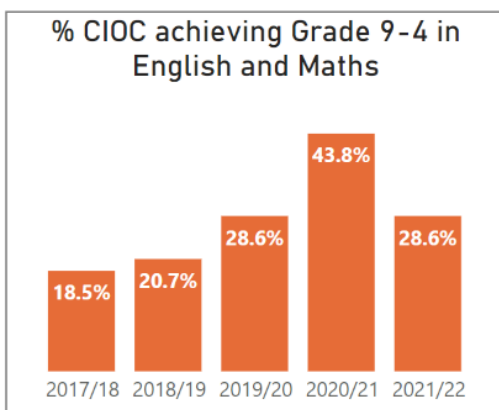
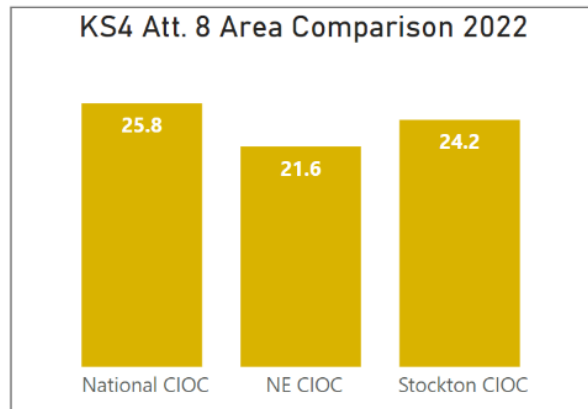
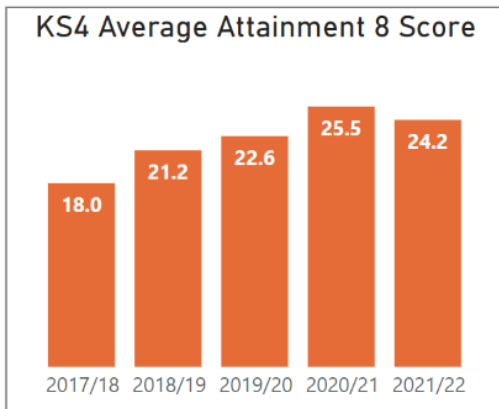
- In 2022 Stockton CIOC performed better in all areas compared with North East and National CIOC figures.



- Combined results for Reading, Writing and Maths shown below show a slight drop in the result from 2019 but Stockton performed significantly better in 2022 than North East and National CIOC.
- The progress that Stockton CIOC made was also significantly better than North East and National CIOC in all three assessed areas

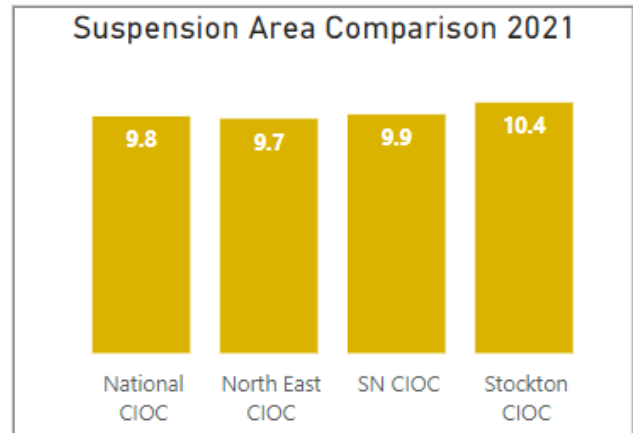
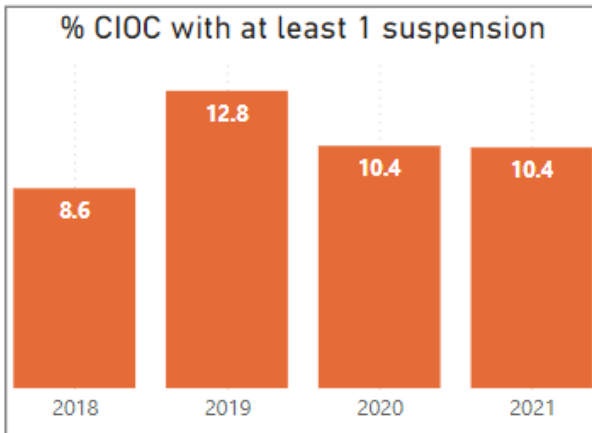


Key Stage 4 (Year 11) Outcomes

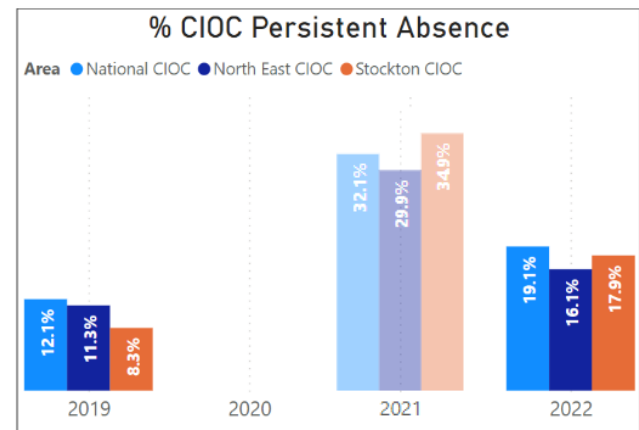
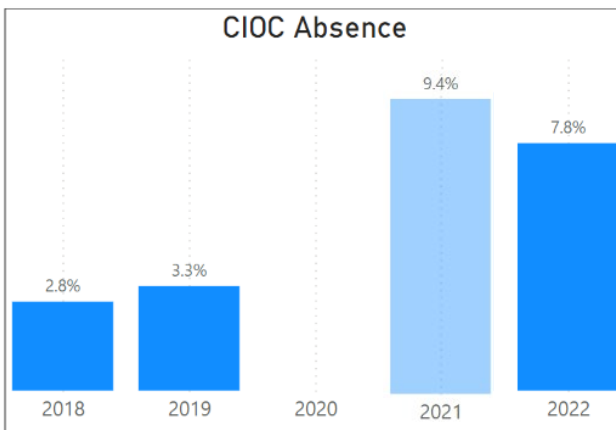


- During 2019/20 and 2020/21 students were awarded Centre Assessed Grades rather than sitting formal exams so a year-on-year comparison should not be made.
- The Progress 8 measure shows Stockton CIOC making much greater progress than both North East and National CIOC

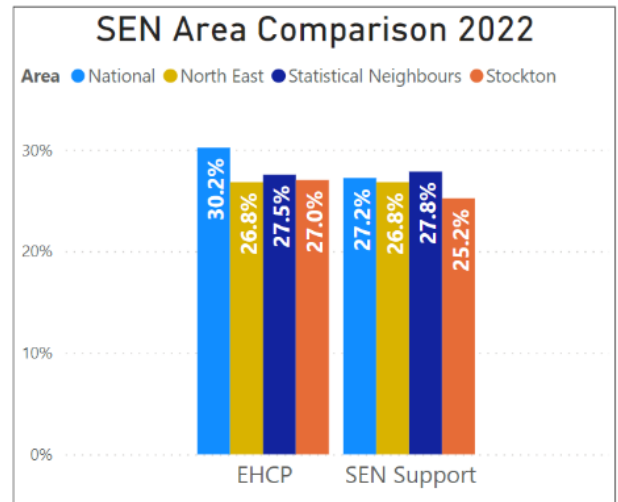
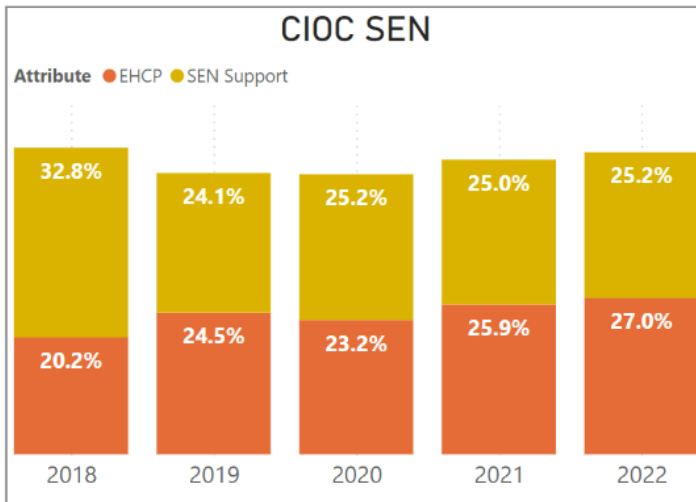
Other Educational Outcomes



- In 2022 we had 3 Permanent Exclusions of CIOC (one male Year 8, one male Year 9, and one male Year 10). Currently in 2022-23 we have successfully challenged one permanent exclusion (Year 10 boy, out of area), had a Year 10 boy out of area PEX upheld and we have just had a Year 6 girl in area permanently excluded following the recent half term break.



- Once again attendance figures should not be compared year on year. In 2020 when the first COVID lockdown happened, and children were not required to attend school. Attendance figures were not published for the academic year 2019-2020
- In the academic year 2020-2021 there were further lockdowns, CIOC were expected to attend and were marked absent if they did not. This has impacted upon attendance figures as many did not attend due to continuing worries about COVID.
- There were no lockdowns in the academic year 2021-2022. Attendance did improve but not to the levels seen prior to COVID. This is a concern and an area we must address.
- Although attendance is not where we would like it to be our improvement from 2021 to 2022 is 17% whereas for national CIOC the improvement was only 13%



Virtual School Update

What is working well?

Implementation of the Virtual School Head Teacher's Extended Duties

- In June 2021, the Department for Education published non-statutory guidance extending the duties of the Virtual School Head Teacher titled, Promoting the Education of Children with a Social Worker (CWSW). Work started while we awaited the appointment of a project lead and Data Officer, this work focused on the strengths and area for development in relation to data and an analysis of the available information for this group of students. It also included a heightened focus on our Attachment Aware and Trauma Informed work and began to highlight and make visible the particular needs and vulnerabilities of this identified group. The Virtual School Head engaged with the DfE identified research partner used to analyse and evidence the impact of this work nationally. The results of which have been published by the DfE in December 2022 in the document 'Phase one evaluation of the virtual school head's extension of duties to children with a social worker and the post-16 pupil premium plus pilot.'
- A newly appointed Data Officer started work in December 2022 and a project lead in April 2023. Rapid progress is now being made. An updated information sharing data base has been build providing data to relevant LA Officers across all of Childrens' Services and to Stockton School Leaders. Currently it includes data on SEN status, attendance, suspensions, allocated social worker and social care status. It flags persistent or severe absence and allows the project lead and key schools staff to look at relationships between attendance and suspensions promoting education, particularly attendance at school, as an important protective factor. There is a comprehensive delivery plan for this project but our immediate next steps are to include Early Help involvements on the database along with other vulnerability indicators, and begin to work with School Leaders and other partners on the coproduction of a Local Authority wide action plan.

Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

- PEP completion and quality is a major focus of the Virtual Schools work, and both of these indicators are improving. In Spring 2023, 79.4% of PEPs were graded Green, 18.6% Amber and 2% Red. This is a significant improvement from Spring 2022 when 69% were Green, 30% Amber and 2% Red. Completion

rates are also high, 93% of PEPs were submitted on time in Spring 2023 an increase of 6% from Spring 2022, when 87% of PEPs were submitted

- We continue to collaborate with designated teachers and social worker to strive for timely, relevant, and high-quality PEPs for all of our CIOC

Post 16 Senior Participation Advisers

- As a result of the Post 16 pupil premium plus pilot we one additional Progression Adviser. Currently we have three dedicated Progression Advisers, all trained to, or working towards, Level 6 in Careers Guidance. This has allowed the team to focus on those CIOC aged 16 – 18 who are not engaged in education, employment, or training (NEETs) and to focus on preventative work pre 16 (particularly in Years 10 and 11). As a result NEETs in this age group have reduced from 23.5% in February 2022 to 18% in February 2023. This was recognised by OFSTED in March 2023 – ‘Children in care achieve well at the end of Key Stage 4 and are well prepared for the next steps of their education or training’. The three progression advisers also work with care leavers when and if appropriate to support them to reengage with education, employment, and training.

Attachment Aware and Trauma Informed (AATI) Practices

- In addition to the work identified in the Virtual School Head Teachers report 2021-22, the virtual school have developed our offer to include:
 - Family Thrive, a 6-week programme, delivered to Foster Carers. We now offer this four times a year increased from twice per year
 - The Virtual School have invested in an Emotion Coaching for Foster Carers training day. This aims to compliment the work many of our schools are doing, and the training provided by the LAC CAMHS Team to ensure the CIOC are given consistent messages and strategies to help them develop their skills
 - We are introducing Virtual Reality Headsets as another medium through which to deliver our message. Representatives from the Virtual School, SEND and Inclusion Team, Social Care, Schools, and LAC CAMHS will be able to deliver training using these Headsets as part of our bespoke training model.
- The experiences of our children prior to coming into care, along with how their life experiences have shaped their physical and emotional development are a major factor influencing the achievement of CIOC and CWSW (children with a social worker). For this reason, the Virtual Schools model (TIPS – Trauma Informed Practice in Stockton) is based on a Neuro-sequential Model of Therapeutics. This works on the basis that children that have experienced adverse childhood experiences have developmental gaps that need addressing. The model recovers and repairs each part of a child’s brain in a specific, phased, and effective order. This strongly supports and aligns with the work our colleagues in CAHMS.

Early Identification of Need

- Our collection and analysis of key performance data allows us to follow a comprehensive monitoring cycle designed to identify those students requiring additional support in an early and timely manner. Since December 2022, the Senior Data Officer has produced a Virtual School Dashboard that allows us to quickly identify individuals, schools, and particular areas of need quickly and efficiently. As a result, we know our children well and can support and challenge schools to ensure the appropriate support is in place. We are also beginning to use this to identify areas for improvement across the system.

What are we worried about?

Concerns

- Attendance of CIOC especially the numbers who are persistently or severely absent
- Suspensions and Exclusions
- Gaps in learning due to poor attendance
- Lost learning due to COVID particularly for our younger cohort
- SEMH Needs and increased levels of anxiety that are often leading to poor attendance or suspensions
- Lack of Educational Psychology provision

Actions to support our concerns

- Work with the LAC CAMHS Team to support their new model. Ensuring schools are aware of; the therapeutic offer across the Local Authority, that schools use a graduated response and know how referrals to services are made.
- Attendance data to be timely, accurate and analysed. Welfare Call has been commissioned to collect the attendance data for our Out of Area CIOC, this will feed into the Vulnerable Children's Database and allow timely analysis of data. The Virtual School will then be able to provide rigorous challenge and support to schools and care teams where children are persistently or severely absent and provide training to all stakeholders. The Virtual School have adopted the ATTEND framework, a framework to support emotionally based school avoidance.
- Work with designated teachers to look at strategies for avoiding suspensions and permanent exclusions. Including promoting the Trauma Informed Practice in Stockton (TIPS) model and using the Virtual Reality Headset training to promote a better understanding of the needs of CIOC and CWSW.
- Continue with our academic interventions including, Boosting Reading, GCSE English Tuition, and using the School Led Tutoring grant to promote reading in the Early Years and Key Stage 1.

In summary, the Virtual School continues to promote a culture of high aspirations for Children in our Care and Care Leavers. We continue to strive to build strong collaborative partnerships with all partners. Thus, ensuring that the needs of Children in our Care are identified, understood, and supported in a timely, positive, and appropriate manner. Facilitating our young people to achieve their best and thrive in their schools. This was duly recognised by OFSTED in March 2023, 'Leaders in the virtual school are ambitious for children in care and the progress that they should make'.

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Prepared by Angela Askins, Jonathan Fawcett Accommodation & Placement
Support Team

MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS OF EXTERNAL REGISTERED CHILDREN'S HOMES – REPORTING PERIOD 1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report is intended to provide the Corporate Parenting Board with a summary overview of the monitoring process in regard to external residential children's homes, where children in our care live. It is also intended to provide information in regard to the quality of the care provided from these homes. This report provides an update on the previous report 2021-2022.
- 1.2 When there is a need to place a child in residential care, the Local Authority consider its internal residential placements in the first instance. There are, however, times when these placements are not appropriate or not available. In such situations, we turn to our joint venture partners, Spark of Genius and only when this option has also been exhausted, we would seek to purchase a placement from other providers, preferably and when appropriate, within the local area.
- 1.3 The importance of placing children in our care in suitable and safe accommodation continues to be a key area of focus. The Accommodation and Placement Support Team alongside colleagues in Quality Assurance and Compliance Team as well as wider Regional Commissioning teams are committed to ensuring all care provided for our children is of a high standard. To that end, we work together to monitor placements and provide advice and support to providers to help them to attain the standards expected.
- 1.4 The Accommodation & Placement Support Team here in Stockton-on-Tees have responsibility for sourcing placements and subsequently monitoring those placements. All Monitoring Visits are completed in person.
- 1.5 This report combines summative data from Ofsted inspection judgements and in house monitoring visits, thus providing information on the quality of

placements where our young people are placed. Additionally, the report captures collective themes and concerns from visits, provides information in regards how these concerns have been addressed, as well as referencing any feedback from providers on their experiences of working with the Local Authority.

- 1.6 There is also an overview of numbers of children placed in external provision and reasons for these placements, as well as ongoing work that is planned for the future to help improve our own capacity and ability to meet demand for residential services.

2. SUMMARY REGARDING THE USE OF EXTERNAL PLACEMENTS

- 2.1 The increasing demand for placements continues to impact on capacity in house making it necessary for placements to be sourced externally. However a recent report produced by the charity BECOME identified that Stockton on Tees were the top performing authority in England in terms of placing children and young people within 20 miles of their homes when placing outside of the Local authority boundary .(information taken from statutory returns)

- 2.2 Those responsible for securing residential placements for children who need them continue to be proactive in cultivating and forming positive relationships with external providers both locally and outside of the local boundaries.

- 2.3 Regionally, the NE602 residential framework is available in an effort to source placements near to the local area, alongside our partnership with Spark of Genius, which operate 3 residential homes within Stockton locality.

- 2.4 Demand for residential placements continues to be high and, despite efforts to keep children close to Stockton on Tees, lack of provision to meet demand and/or the complex needs of young people, often means that children placed externally are placed outside of Stockton on Tees and Tees Valley area.

- 2.5 Further to this, it is recognised that reduction in capacity within Fostering services has impacted on demand for residential placements. Our recent Ofsted inspection identified that: **There has also been a lack of targeted recruitment of foster carers which mean that there is to few foster carers to meet demand, which has impacted and increased the need for residential. Senior leaders are aware of the national challenges for children's social care and have secured funding for in-house residential provision.**

- 2.6 Stockton, like every authority across the country, also has a duty to place unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people as part of the National transfer scheme.

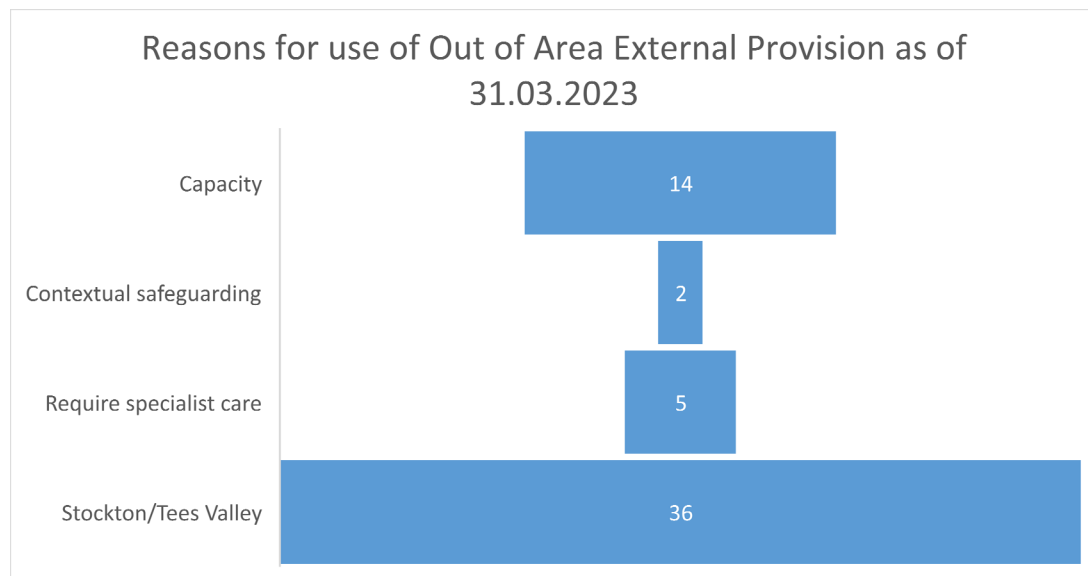
- 2.7 Due to increased demand for placements, there are instances when there is no alternative but to use unregulated placements for children and young people. This is always a last resort and, where in use, monitoring of these placements

is completed. During the inspection, Ofsted commented that: **There is not a sufficient wide range and choice of placement to meet the individual needs of all the children in care. A small number of children are living in unregistered homes for short periods of time due to lack of suitable registered homes that meet specific need. Senior leaders are aware of the nature of these placements and seek to avoid these placements where possible. Where unregistered placement is used social workers and managers and senior leaders have close oversight of the care children receive during this period until they can move to suitable regulated care.**

- 2.8 Our approach to unregulated placements and the monitoring, even short term, is the same as our approach to regulated external provision.

DATA RELATING TO USE OF EXTERNAL PLACEMENTS

The Chart below shows the reasons for external placements:



- 2.5 A snap shot of data relating to children placed in external residential homes showed that on the 31.03.23 a total of 57 children were placed in external residential placements. This is an increase of 8 when compared to the figures of this time last year.
- 2.6 36 of the 57 children were placed within Stockton on Tees and the Tees Valley area (Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar) in external placements. This is an increase of 4% compared to the previous year, evidencing efforts made to try and keep children close to their homes.

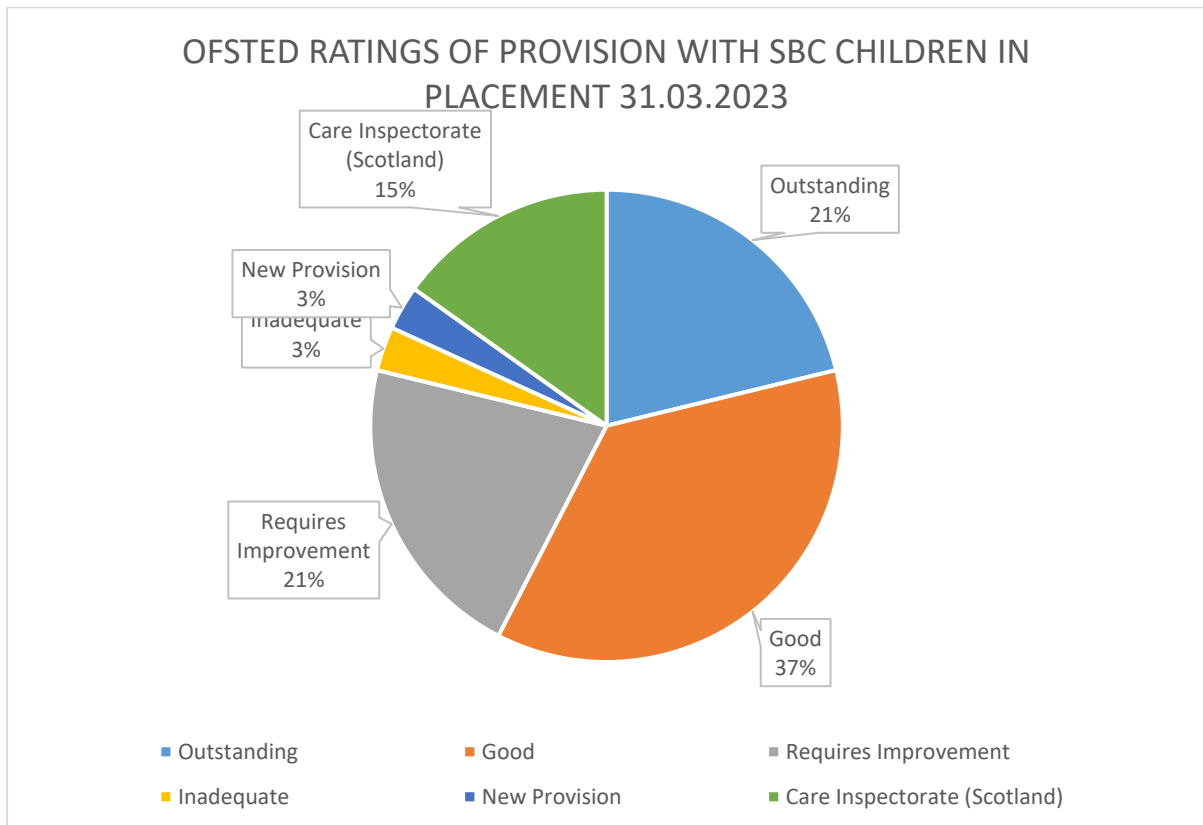
- 2.7 Of the remaining 21, 4 children were suitably placed outside of the local and regional area in order to meet needs and/or required specialised provision (i.e., Learning difficulties, Sexualised Harmful Behaviour)
- 2.8 2 Children were placed outside of the local and regional area due to Contextual Safeguarding concerns.
- 2.9 The remaining 14 children were placed out of area due to capacity issues and could have safely been cared for locally had there been provision available.
- 2.10 Returning children placed out of the area back to Stockton remains a priority for Stockton. During this period, 3 children have returned from external provision outside of the Tees Valley area into placements closer to home. To this end, Stockton is actively undertaking work to increase our own in-house capacity and help more of our children reside in the local area.
- 2.11 There has been one instance of use of a Secure Residential Home by Stockton during this period of time.

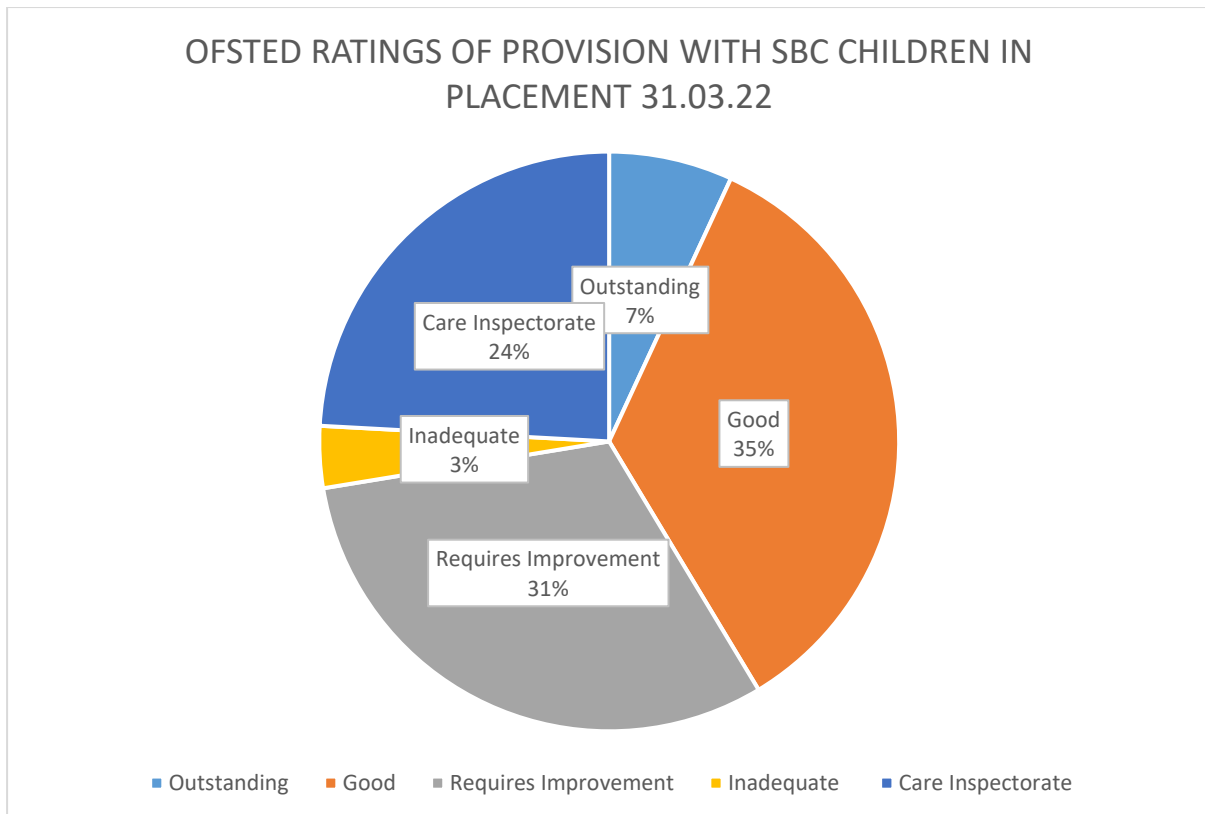
3.0 APPROACH TO THE MONITORING AND AUDITING OF EXTERNAL PROVISION

- 3.2 The Local Authority has in place arrangements for the of monitoring external placements which is outlined in the relevant policy. Monitoring visits are conducted at least annually by a suitably experienced officer within the Childrens Care and Complex Needs Service area. Social workers visit children in residential care regularly, even when the child is placed at a distance.
- 3.4 Where difficulties or a safeguarding concern is evident in a placement that is of a substantial worry, or there is a significant decline in an Ofsted rating, this would prompt an early or additional monitoring visit. Concerns are shared with other placing Local Authorities and, where appropriate, the officer from the Accommodation and Placement Support Team works together with other Local Authorities with the provider and commissioner to address concerns and improve the care provided.
- 3.5 During the monitoring visit the child is seen and spoken to alone. Staff are spoken to, records are examined in the home and feedback is obtained about the quality of care from the child's social worker, family, IRO, and other placing authorities as felt appropriate.
- 3.6 At the end of the monitoring visit, the visiting person will produce a report for the home and child's social worker, summarising their findings with any recommendations. These are followed up with further visits or communication as felt necessary to provide the assurances required to demonstrate the expected quality of care.

4.0 DATA SUMMARY RE QUALITY OF PROVISION

- 4.1 Placements are aimed to be made only in a home judged to be Good or Outstanding by Ofsted.
- 4.2 As of 31.03.23, the 57 children in external provision are placed across 33 different registered home in England and Scotland. Many homes have several Stockton children in placement.
- 4.3 The chart below gives the percentages of the grades for each of the homes' most recent Ofsted inspection where our children were placed. For the purposes of this report, the data in the chart below includes provision in Scotland which is overseen by the Care Inspectorate.





4.4 A breakdown of this information shows us that of the home's children are placed in, they are:

- 7 Ofsted graded Outstanding
- 12 Ofsted graded Good
- 7 Ofsted graded Requires Improvement
- 1 Ofsted graded Inadequate – going home
- 5 Scottish Placement which are inspected by Care Inspectorate. The Care Inspectorate does not provide overall ratings for their homes.
- 1 newly registered provision, which has not yet been inspected by Ofsted

4.5 The information shows a change in overall rating for Children's Homes where Stockton Children and Young people are placed in comparison with the previous reporting period, with more providers now rated as Good or Outstanding and less graded Requires Improvement.

4.6 58% of providers used are rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted, a rise on previous year, with an increase of 14% of providers rated as Outstanding. In addition, the number of providers that Require Improvement to be good, has reduced by 10% compared to previous years.

4.6 Whilst one provider is graded Inadequate, plans are in place for the CYP within this provision to move to alternative arrangements. SBC has worked closely with the provider to ensure the best possible outcome for the CYP in

this provision. However, of note when the child was placed the Ofsted rating was good.

- 4.7 During this time, SBC was using one Children's Home that had not been inspected by Ofsted, as it was newly registered. Prior to placement, all relevant discussions and documents were obtained to offer assurances of suitability of placement.
- 4.8 Due to highly competitive market conditions, it is not always possible to place children in homes which are rated good. If a child is placed into a home rated as Requires Improvement, the Accommodation and Placement Support Team, will seek assurances from the home that required steps are being taken to address any actions identified in said inspection, as well as discussions with the home manager to understand the reason for this judgement and consider any action plans in place. This info is also shared with social worker, IRO and Virtual School to help inform if placement will be suitable.
- 4.9 29 of the external children's homes caring for Stockton children have received a Monitoring Visit as of 31.03.23. Four homes are yet to receive a monitoring visit are scheduled to be conducted in line with our relevant policy and timescales

5.0 THEMES

- 5.1 The team has dealt with safeguarding concerns over the past year relating to external placements. These have been in relation to young people interacting with organised crime gangs, criminal and sexual exploitation, suicide ideation and extreme self-harm. These are areas in which providers report that they struggle to manage need and safeguard against.
- 5.3 Tees Valley Local Authority raised concerns regarding an external children's home operating within Stockton. As the host authority, the Accommodation and Placement Support Team worked and continue to work in partnership with the home and will continue to offer advice. It is clear to see that they are taking the advice and guidance on board which hopefully will be acknowledged by Ofsted at their next inspection.
- 5.4 This partnership work continues to develop alongside regional colleagues and internal services to help provide assurances of placement suitability as well as establishing partnership working with a range of LAs across the country. Stockton is currently working alongside Childrens Cross Regional Arrangements Group (CCRAG) and our internal colleagues in Service Improvement and Quality and Compliance to further develop our monitoring processes going forward.

- 5.5 Themes from providers continue to be that they feel that they have positive working relationships with Stockton on Tees Borough Council workers and staff. They feel that social workers and other staff respond in a timely manner, have good communication and that they visit children in placement over and above legal requirements.
- 5.6 Providers have expressed continued concerns in regard to the high level of frequency our children experience a change in social workers. Senior Stockton Leaders recognise that this is an issue and continue to explore ways to recruit and retain staff to help combat this.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The LA's Accommodation Placement Support Team members have excellent relationships with providers offering not only guidance but practical support that is available to residential children's homes as demonstrated in response to concerns.
- 6.2 This extends to working relationships with other Children's Services staff, such as Social Workers, Independent reviewing officers and external services.
- 6.3 Monitoring plays a vital part in ensuring our children are receiving the highest level of care. There is a schedule of monitoring visits planned in for the next year and a policy which informs how these are undertaken and how frequent.
- 6.4 Visits have prioritised to those provision where concerns have been shared in order to obtain the assurances that children in our care are in safe and are in stable placements.
- 6.5 Demand for placements continue to be high, with challenges regarding the market, competition for placements, reduced capacity in fostering and additional pressures to place children.
- 6.6 Use of unregulated placements is limited and are used only as a 'last resort' but are monitored effectively to ensure suitability and safety.
- 6.7 More children are placed within the Stockton on Tees or Tees Valley area than previously, ensuring children remain close to their family, education and other links, minimising disruption.
- 6.8 The overall number of children in providers that are rated Good or Outstanding has increased and numbers of children in providers that Require Improvement has reduced.

6.9 Support and assurances are in place to monitor providers that do Require Improvement or are Inadequate.

This page is intentionally left blank

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD 16 June 2023

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

CARED FOR CHILDREN, CARE EXPERIENCED YOUNG PEOPLE AND CORPORATE PARENTING – REFRESHING OUR APPROACH

SUMMARY

This report provides an update on the refreshed approach around supporting children and young people in care, those that are leaving care and the Council's approach to corporate parenting. It updates on activities undertaken to refresh the strategy for cared for and care experienced children and young people, incorporating the specific challenges identified in the ILACS inspection. The refreshed strategy and accompanying action plan will be presented to the next corporate parenting board meeting for agreement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Corporate Parenting Board :

1. Comments on the updates and activity to date.
2. Agrees for a final version of this report to be submitted to Corporate Parenting Board in August 2023.

PURPOSE AND CONTEXT

1. Work to refresh the strategic approach for children in our care and care leavers has been presented to the Corporate Parenting Board to gain a steer and include members in the development of the strategy and action plan.
2. The recent ILACS inspection identified several areas for improvement. These have therefore been included in the overall improvement plan but have also been considered in the development of this refreshed approach, which is much broader in its scope as it also relates to wider plans around corporate parenting.

WHERE WE HAD GOT TO

3. A series of discussions and activities have already taken place to inform the refresh of the strategy, culminating in a presentation to the Corporate Parenting Board in February 2023 which mapped out the basis for a new strategy, and the outcomes of the work undertaken to date.
4. Discussions on key priorities have taken place with children and young people, staff and members were also asked for their key priorities around corporate parenting These have been included in the development of key priorities.
5. Work on the new strategy was deferred during the inspection but it is planned to take an update to Corporate Parenting Board in June 2023 and for full sign off in August. A report will also be presented to Cabinet in September.

6. A visit from the DfE care leaver advisers was planned for June but unfortunately this was cancelled and will need to be rearranged.

WHAT OFSTED SAID

7. Ofsted reported the following key issues:
 - a. There is more work to do to improve the offer for care leavers – progress has been too slow
 - b. More opportunities are needed for children, young people and care leavers to have a voice
 - c. There are challenges on placement sufficiency, and especially on foster care
 - d. Pathway plans lack SMART actions
 - e. There is a lack of consistency in the personal adviser support for young people – partly linked to the change in structure which is leading to some inexperienced staff working with care leavers
 - f. Challenges on appropriate accommodation for care leavers
 - g. The care leavers offer not being well promoted
 - h. A need for greater participation

THE PROPOSED APPROACH IN RESPONSE

8. Following the ILACS inspection, we have taken the time to reflect on the work to date which was in progress, and the requirements of the Ofsted inspection.
9. The following approach is proposed:
 - a. We continue to develop the new corporate parenting strategy for cared for and care experienced children and young people based on the priorities already identified:
 - i. Stability*
 - ii. Resilience*
 - iii. Education, employment and training*
 - iv. Good health*
 - v. Listening*
 - vi. Being a good corporate parent*
 - b. That we will include in the new strategy a further specific priority on our work with and for care experienced young people (care leavers). This strand was be informed by the outcomes of a visit by the DfE Care Leavers adviser in June, though this has not been postponed to September at the earliest.
 - c. An initial set of actions are included under each heading. These will be used to engage in further development of the strategy through engagement with children and young people and care leavers and partners.
 - d. An indicative plan on a page is attached at Annex 1. This is the basis of what the action plan will reflect but at this stage is a draft
10. Two specific elements of the proposed strategy are outlined below in more detail as they are especially important parts of the post ILACS response.

CARE EXPERIENCED YOUNG PEOPLE PRIORITY

11. This priority in the strategy will set out the framework for how we respond to the specific challenges in the Ofsted report which were around:

- a. Visibility and engagement
- b. The offer for care leavers is not well promoted or visible enough
- c. Quality of PA support.

12. Our proposals in response were that we will:

- a. Reshape our approach to personal advisers noting the comments in the Ofsted report that our current structure is not achieving what we hoped it would.
- b. Refresh and restate our ambition and our offer
- c. Establish a Care Leavers Board to drive forward support for care leavers, chaired by the Chief Executive.
- d. Learn from the DfE advisors visit and incorporate his views in the plan going forward.

13. A draft new vision and offer for care experienced young people is included at Annex 2.

BEING A GOOD CORPORATE PARENT PRIORITY

14. Given the specific importance attached to this priority for the Council, the following section outlines this specific priority in more detail.

15. The overall priority is to ensure that the Council:

- a. Meets its statutory duties
- b. And goes beyond them in promoting CIOC and doing all we can to support them to achieve.

16. The basis of this approach is that there will be action in four key areas:

- a. For the Council as a whole
- b. For all services
- c. For members
- d. For all individuals

17. For the Council

- a. Adoption of the new strategy and approach
- b. Commit to, and implement the changes that are agreed by the Regional Care Leavers Board

18. For services...we will be promoting the following:

- a. **Work opportunities** (recruitment, training, work experience, mentoring, 'a place in the 'family business')
- b. Support for **events and activities** (including Comms and organisational support to make them effective, but also turning encouraging attendance where appropriate)
- c. To ensure the **needs of children and young people in care are prioritised in Directorate priorities, business plans and delivery** in a way which is relevant to that Directorate including, for example:
 - i. Legal representation
 - ii. In any capital or physical investment programmes such as children's homes
 - iii. In any HR policy development

- iv. In any cultural activity
 - d. Maximise the provision of **subsidies for children in our care** – e.g. free passes to activities and events, prioritisation of tickets
 - e. Nominate a **champion** to be a point of contact to disseminate / promote and support
 - f. To **encourage staff to participate** in the No Limits scheme.
19. **For Councillors**...we will be simplifying the ask and making it more specific:
- a. Be aware: Understand our statutory and corporate responsibilities (i.e. we will train you)
 - b. Be accountable: Accept the responsibility to be thinking – is this good enough – challenge us, demand more as ‘our children’ – role for all Cllrs but a bigger role for CPB members (so we will give you information)
 - c. Be ambitious – Talk up the achievements of CIOC (i.e. not talk down)
 - d. Be welcoming: Support the move for more children’s home provision locally (i.e. work with us to dispel myths, support planning)
 - e. Be there: Attend events and be visible
 - f. Be involved: Give time / money to the corporate effort via No Limits
20. **For individual staff...** To participate in the No Limits scheme.
21. No Limits is the name given to the programme to support individual contributions to our work with and for children in our care and care leavers. A revised project team has been meeting for 12 months following on from the previous planning work carried out in 2019. The membership is council wide and has representatives from all directorates.
22. Work Completed 2019-2021:
- a. A fund was set up with TV Community Foundation alongside a web page that allowed people to make donations.
 - b. An application process has been developed and tested and approximately £7000 in grants have been awarded to young people so far.
 - c. Review now taking place as part of ongoing work to refine application process with young people.
23. From the start the project has involved consultation and involvement with young people.
24. There are two main elements to the scheme – the opportunity for all staff to contribute either through giving time or giving money (or both).

Giving time

25. This will give people the opportunity to support young people on a voluntary basis through 2 routes:
- a. Spending time with young people one to one
 - b. Offering young people opportunities to come along to anything they already do. This includes social events, leisure activities, sporting and recreational activities.
26. Roles and responsibilities guidance have been developed alongside young people. A training and development plan is written which includes safeguarding. (it is proposed that this will be delivered during work time)

27. Current arrangements for this scheme are:

- a. We have identified 5 SBC staff who will pilot
- b. DBS process has been completed
- c. A 2-day training programme has been delivered to pilot volunteers and mentors
- d. We have several young people-involved and we have matched 2 young people
- e. There is draft handbook written and will be revised following the pilot.
- f. Each Volunteer will have a mentor
- g. Agreed expenses for the pilot (with boundaries)

Giving money

28. Current arrangements for this scheme include:

- a. Digital system has been developed and tested
- b. Systems developed with finance.
- c. Pilot has been tested with 17 volunteers and monthly contributions are paid into the No Limits account.
- d. Working with Cllr Evans to roll out the scheme to members.

Gift of Giving

29. We will continue to run our annual Gift of Giving Campaign at Christmas which invites staff to contribute a nominal donation towards a book or voucher for a cared for and care experienced children and young people.

30. Further campaigns are being developed such as, staff or members can contribute to 'starter packs' that support a young person during significant periods in their life, such as setting up home, moving to university or having a baby.

External Projects

31. Continue to support the More stuff like this please! Work focused in supporting cared for children and young people into creative activities in conjunction with ARC and Blue Cabin

SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

32. This report sets out a revised set of actions and asks to support corporate parenting in the Borough.

33. It sets out further details of the proposed strategy and approach

34. It outlines the basis of a new offer for care leavers

35. It sets out a way of working for the Council as a whole, and through Directorates, to support corporate parenting priorities, as well as the opportunity for individuals to contribute.

36. Next steps are:

- a. To refine these proposals following feedback;
- b. communicate the proposals and develop the best means of documenting and telling the story
- c. To refine the approach further

- d. To launch No Limits – July 2023
- e. To sign off the new corporate parenting strategy in September
- f. To host the DfE adviser for care leavers in 2023
- g. To report on progress to CMT and the Corporate Parenting Board on a 6 monthly basis.

Name of Contact Officer: Martin Gray

Post Title: Director of Children's Services

Telephone No: 01642 527043

Email Address: martin.gray@stockton.gov.uk

Annex 1 - Corporate Parenting Strategy – indicative plan on a page

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

STABILITY – enough safe stable homes, where children are wanted, cared for	RESILIENCE – Social networks, lifeskills, opportunities to experience	EET – opportunities and support to progress	HEALTH – physical and mental health and wellbeing	LISTENING – Ensuring we listen, action and feedback	CARE EXPERIENCED –	CORPORATE PARENTING
---	--	--	--	--	---------------------------	----------------------------

ACTIONS – WHAT WILL WE DO

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sufficiency strategy 2. New homes 3. Foster carers capacity increased 4. Safe homes 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participation 2. Friendships 3. Lifelong Links programme 4. Cultural experiences (MSTLP!) 5. Advocates, mentors, buddy volunteers and independent visiting 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Targeted work – PAs 2. Clinic 3. Guaranteed work experience / placements 4. SBC based opportunities 5. Raised aspirations 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Health assessments – initial and review 2. Development of health passports 3. SDQs usage and reporting 4. Mental health support 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. LTA groups 2. Ongoing feedback mechanisms 3. CPB engagement 4. Senior leaders events 5. Recruitment and appraisal feedback and engagement 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ambition and vision 2. Care Experienced Board 3. Refreshed CL offer 4. Here whenever you need us approach 5. Accommodation options 6. Mental health support and priority opportunities 7. employment opportunities 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strategic engagement – refocused CPB 2. Officer leadership group 3. Members asks and training 4. Directorates – service asks 5. No Limits – the opportunity for all staff and members to be involved
---	---	--	---	--	---	---

WHAT IMPACT WILL WE HAVE? Supported by suitable measures, some of which address the key national data sets

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placement choice • Stability improves • Increasing proportion placed in borough 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-reported wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing EET figures • Contacts and engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self reported health • SDQ scores improving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levels of engagement increasing • Surveys showing young people feel listened to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact rates • EET • Accommodation • Self-reported health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CYP feedback • Member feedback
---	---	---	--	--	---	---

Annex 2

Care Experienced Vision¹

Designed by you, for you

- Coproduced from start to finish

Whatever it takes...for how long it takes – you are all relevant / important to us

- Anyone who has even been in care will get support (i.e. above stat duties, won't cover all allowances, but we will continue to work with you)

One Stop Shop – making it easy to get help, connect, and just be...

- A place (real and virtual) to share and engage. Your choice: face to face, phone, app, website
- A way of working – we will bring help to you, not refer you on

Personal to you – listening to you for as long as you need us

- Highly skilled, committed advisers
- Team around you

The extended family and the family business

- SBC care and support – we will support you however we can, and you have the chance to tell us what else we can do to help you

All the help and advice you need – our offer

- Health and wellbeing
- Employment
- Education and learning
- Relationships and people important to you
- Money
- Your home
- Your voice, participation, community

¹ Examples only....needs co-production

Health and wellbeing

- Support you to register with a doctor, dentist, and optician.
- Attend appointments with you if you need.
- Give you information on healthy living, access to healthy eating advice and guidance in one to one sessions or group work. *Dedicated PH nurse?*
- Give you information on getting help to pay for prescriptions (NHS low-income scheme).
- Support you to move from CAMHS to adult mental health services. *Specially commissioned support?*
- access to a dedicated psychological well-being practitioner or counsellor?
- Give you help with transport costs when attending health appointments.
- Provide you with a card to access leisure centres. *SBC or Tees Valley?*
- Special support for you as a parent – *specific programme with midwives?*
- Childcare (and pay for it?)
- We will support you to attend important appointments about your child.
- We will give you information about health drop-in sessions.
- Health passport
- C-Cards / sexual health priority
- We will give you the details of helplines, apps and websites that are free to access.
- Food / dinners

Employment

- Job club / EThub access? Advice; CVs; applications / interviews; clothing; job fairs
- We will support you to travel to an interview.
- SBC guaranteed interview for their apprenticeships and jobs if you fit the essential criteria / *guaranteed 6 month trial*
- Rights and entitlements when employed.
- Offer work experience in the Council
- Dedicated DWP support.
- We will provide advice about budgeting money you receive from employment.
- Dedicated work coach for care leavers?
- A reference for employment applications.

Participation

- Train as a peer mentor.
- Attend the leaving care forum each month.
- Recruitment, takeover, service development
- Corporate Parenting Board attendance
- Being a participation lead for 12 months in our team
- Plan and attend events
- Voting
- Volunteering support via specific Catalyst scheme?
- Training / telling people / education
- Managing the No Limits programme

Relationships and people close to you

- We promote family time. In some circumstances will financially support you to travel to contact immediate family members. *Lifelong links?*

- Provide support and advice to help you regain or maintain contact with friends, family or previous carers.
- Advice and support about positive, healthy relationships.
- Having an advocate.
- Be a peer mentor
- Get a mentor
- If living away, transport back e.g. University?

Where you live

- we will help you to find a home
- We will promote staying put in your foster care placement if you want to remain living there after you turn 18.
- Access to Supported Lodgings Provision.
- An opportunity to have a taste of independent living (*managed taster flats*)
- Supported accommodation
- YMCA / other?
- Help to bid for properties and priority
- Exemption from Council tax wherever you live
- Home allowance
- Independent living skills workshops and groups
- We will provide you with a reference to support any housing applications.

Education and learning

- You will receive support, advice and guidance from your Personal Advisor regarding your education and training needs.
- You will have access to a job club.
- We will offer you support to attend open days with colleges and training providers
- You can access bursary payments from your college or training provider.
- University? Support through looking at options; attending open days; forms; bursaries; accommodation; equipment
- SEN adviser / support

Money

- A weekly living allowance for some? Paying rent etc
- Council tax exemption
- Benefit claims / job search
- Access and support to spend your setting up home allowance to furnish a tenancy of your own.
- Bank account support (credit union??) / individual savings account
- Budget planning
- Winter fuel

- Bursary support via providers or via No Limits
- University costs – accommodation and fees / equipment
- Mobile phone / laptop /tablet??
- Bus / transport passes

This page is intentionally left blank

Corporate Parenting Board

Forward Plan

<u>Date</u>	<u>Item</u>
Friday, 16 June 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of Corporate Parenting Strategy (Adele Moore) • Virtual School Update (Janet Wilson) • Monitoring arrangements of external registered children's homes (Debbie Farrow)
Friday 11 August 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Parenting Strategy (Adele Moore) • Adoption Tees Valley Update (Vicky Davidson-Boyd) • Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2022/2023 (Martin Gray) • Annual Report of the Fostering Panel and Fostering Service Report 2022 – 2023 (Debbie Farrow) • Inhouse residential provision (Debbie Farrow) • Corporate Parenting Performance Update (Johanne Parker)
Friday 13 October 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post 16 and Care Leavers support and accommodation report (Debbie Farrow) • Corporate Parenting Strategy Action Plan - Update (Adele Moore)
Friday 8 December 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual School Update (Janet Wilson) • Corporate Parenting Strategy Action Plan - Update (Adele Moore)
Friday 9 February 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Parenting Strategy Action Plan - Update (Adele Moore) • Corporate Parenting Performance Update (Johanne Parker)

To be scheduled

Mockingbird Update.

Standing Items:

- Adoption – 6 monthly Update (**Vicky Davidson-Boyd**) (Usually February and August each Year)
- Corporate Parenting Performance Update (**Johanne Parker**) (Usually February and August each Year)
- Virtual School Update (**Janet Wilson**) (Usually June and December each year)
- Corporate Parenting Strategy Action Plan - Update (**Adele Moore**) (from October, usually each meeting)