

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

**CHILDREN IN CARE QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT 1st MAY – 31st JULY
2012 AND PROGRESS ON THE PRIORITY ACTION PLAN 2012-2013**

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Cabinet with information summarising the performance of Children in Care services against national and local comparators during the period 1st May – 31st July 2012 and progress on the Children in Care Priority Action Plan 2012 - 2013

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Services to Children in Care have a range of performance measures to compare services within North Lincolnshire and other authorities. These include national comparators and with authorities assessed by the government as having a similar demographic picture to North Lincolnshire.
- 2.2 These indicators inform service developments, measure progress and service action planning to ensure the service strives to continuously improve and develop to achieve the best outcomes for children in care.
- 2.3 The service has in place a Children in Care Priority Action Plan 2012 - 2013. This details priorities for improvement, ensures these are shared by partners and is reviewed regularly so there is measurable progress. It sits within the North Lincolnshire Children's Trust six strategic priorities which are reflected in the Children and Young People's plan. The six priorities are:
- Raise Aspirations
 - Children and Young People Feel Safe and are Safe
 - Best Start
 - Close the Gaps
 - Celebrate and Engage Children and Young People
 - One Vision One Workforce
- 2.4 The Priority Action Plan's progress is updated by the named lead against each action and this is monitored via the Children in Care Strategy Group. Updates against the actions are completed quarterly. The latest Strategy Group took place on 31st August 2012.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 The service continues to do well in relation to the performance measures. Whilst maintaining a relatively low number of children in care (17% lower than nationally) we continue to invest in a landscape of accommodation that increases the range of family based care. This is being achieved by:
- Delivery of high quality case management for children in care; all cases are managed by qualified workers with clear management and accountability structures.
 - The investment in adoption and fostering.
 - Increasing the number and range of foster carers there are now 111 carers.
 - Designing a purpose built children campus for children who need residential care, this is currently out for tenders for the construction work and building will commence shortly.
 - Reorganising services to provide a robust post-sixteen accommodation service and increased accommodation options. The service has developed the role of Qualified Social Workers and increased the support available to young people in the community.
- 3.2 The Fostering Service and The Grove children's home have both been inspected by Ofsted during July and August. Outcomes of the inspections were that Fostering was judged to be Outstanding and The Grove good with Outstanding features. Details of these inspections will be included in separate reports.
- 3.3 Outcomes for children in care are generally good and improving. Key areas include:
- The age profile of Children in Care (CiC) continues to demonstrate that early and effective intervention is making a difference with those aged 0-4 increasing by 7% between 2009 to 2012 and a corresponding decrease in those aged over 10 of 8%
 - Of those children who entered care in the 6 months to 31st July 2012, 71% were aged 0-4.
 - The % of children ceasing to be looked after who were adopted is projected to achieve 21.2% by the year end, this has risen from 6.6% in 2007. This compares favourably with the latest statistical neighbor comparator of 15.1%.
 - The proportion of CiC achieving 5 A* - C GCSEs with English and Maths this year this is 15%, which is one child less than the previous year, but those young people achieving 5 A* – C GCSEs generally has actually increased to 31%.
 - Offending by children in care shows a downward trend from 2006 (16.8%) to 2012 (5.6% – compared to an England average of 7.3%). As in the previous quarter, there are currently no children who have been convicted of further offences this year
 - The proportion of children having up-to-date health assessment and dental check has remained over 90% since 2007 and remains on target to achieve this once more.

- The number of children and young people in care who have moved three or more times improved significantly from 2005 (13.2%) to 2011/12 (9.9%), compared with the last available national comparator of 10.7%. This is currently at 4.1% in North Lincolnshire.
- The reduction in the proportion of CiC in a residential placement has continued, from 18.4% in 2005 to 9% in June 2012 and now 8.4%. This is in line with the strategy of placing children in family placements.
- Children placed more than 20 miles from home is currently at 4.2% (one child) compared to the national average of 13.8%.
- During the period, the % of LAC reviews carried out on time has continued to be 100%.

3.4 To ensure this improvement continues, the Priority Action Plans details the key actions, responsibilities and timescales. Progress on the key outcome objectives contained within the action plan include:

- Raise aspirations - Encourage opportunities for young people in and leaving care to be in training and/or in employment
 - One care leaver has been appointed to an apprenticeship within the council. A further 2 are available for care leavers and are in the process of being appointed to. 3 young people are also in posts provided within libraries. The young people's volunteer mentoring scheme is now in place and providing support to young people.
 - In line with their pledges, Corporate Parents are supporting young people in accessing employment, and have offered opportunities to prepare for job applications, training and advice.
- Children feel safe and are safe - Improve stability placement choice and outcomes for older young people. Ensure sufficiency of placements
 - The post 16 service has increased the support available to young people to live successfully in the community through the development of the peripatetic support team.
 - Work with housing providers and landlords has continued to develop accommodation options in the community including emergency provision, shared accommodation and supported placements.
- Best Start - Improve placement stability for children in care
 - The investment in the fostering service has increased the choice and availability of placements, there are now 111 foster placements
 - In line with the Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy and following the service review, the increase in foster care placements available has also meant a corresponding decrease in the use of residential accommodation.
 - Attempts to fill the Adoption Team Manager post have been unsuccessful and the post has now been advertised three times without attracting applicants with the skills to undertake the role.

This is a key post to help achieve targets on permanence in family placements for children. Proposals to resolve this situation will be put forward as part of the Children's Specialist Services management review.

- Best Start - Improve the preparation of young adults, including care leavers, for independent living
 - The peripatetic support team is working with young people to promote their independence, develop skills and prepare them for their own tenancies as they move to live independently.
- Close the gaps - Ensure children in care and care leavers have high levels of support to achieve positive outcomes in their health
 - Further investment in specialist health support for children in care and care leavers is taking place with recent interviews for an additional specialist nurse post to commence shortly.
 - The timescale for completing Initial Health Assessments when children first enter care is improving and the investment in the service will ensure this continues to improve with a target of 100% completed within timescale.
 - In line with their pledge to Children in Care, Corporate Parents have provided opportunities for children and young people to access leisure services through the provision of leisure passes, the access to leisure check book scheme, free swimming lessons and prioritising children in care for leisure schemes in the area they are living.
- Celebrate & engage - Improve the way in which children, young people and their carers can make a difference to services and practice through sharing their views
 - The review of the service has included the development of further roles with the specific focus on the participation and involvement of young people. A post aimed specifically at Care Leavers has also been developed and will provide a link to the Children in Care Council.
- One vision, one workforce - Improve the quality of engagement and effectiveness of intervention with children, families and carers
 - Workforce development includes a focus on engagement and effective intervention.
 - The review of Social Work Services to ensure the child's journey is reflected in structures and ensure a minimal number of points within the process where a social worker is changed has progressed and consultation with workers affected by the review is about to commence.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 The actions in the Priority Action Plan are reviewed by the Children in Care Strategy Group and are updated, added to or amended as needed to ensure that services are responsive to local and national developments, new legislation and requirements.
- 4.2 The Priority Action Plan is a key document in delivering services and sits within the council's wider policy and performance frameworks. The plan will also be amended as needed in line with the council's wider strategic and policy decision making framework.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

- 5.1 The service continues to provide high quality services within its allocated budgets.
- 5.2 As the service review is now almost concluded, and in line with the investment in family placements and the corresponding reduction in children's home provision, there are savings in the cost of delivery of placements to young people whilst also promoting stability and positive outcomes.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY, SECTION 17 – CRIME AND DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER)

- 6.1 Not applicable

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Partners contribute to progress against the Children in Care Priority Action Plan 2012 – 2013. The plan is reviewed regularly and monitored via the Children in Care Strategy Group (a multi agency partnership), so there is measureable progress.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That Cabinet notes the reports and progress against the indicators and supports the continued development of services through the priority action plan.

DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

Children in Care Priority Action Plan 2012/13
Children in Care Performance Report