

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

1 SEPTEMBER 2020

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT

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Author: Paul Startup, Head of Corporate Parenting

Summary

This report provides a briefing to the Health and Wellbeing Board on the role and challenge function of Medway's Corporate Parenting Board, the key focus and achievements over the last 12 months.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 Corporate Parenting continues to be a high priority for government who have regulated the duties of Councils towards the children in its care through legislation and guidance. This has been reinforced through the Children Act 1989, Children Act 2004, the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 and the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 and Care Leavers Regulations 2010 and the Social Work Act 2017.
- 1.2 Improving outcomes for Looked after Children features widely within the 'Council Strategy and Plan'. Within the priority 'Children and young people have the best start in life in Medway', there are a number of key measures of success covering education and employment for care leavers, accommodation for care leavers, progress on adoption and educational outcomes for Looked After Children (LAC).
- 1.3 The Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) does not hold a budget, although it contributes in its scrutiny function towards achieving timely outcomes for children in care, including permanency arrangements, thereby reducing drift, delay and cost in the placements budget.

2. Background

- 2.1 This annual report to the Health and Wellbeing Board provides the opportunity for review and challenge of the performance of CPB in relation to securing good outcomes for LAC.
- 2.2 Medway's CPB is chaired by the Lead Member for Children's Services.

2.3 The current version of the Terms of reference was presented to the CPB and agreed on 2 October 2019.

3. Structure of the Board and how it carries out its work

3.1 The CPB meets bi-monthly with two sub-groups reporting into the Board.

3.2 The two sub-groups are Health of LAC and 16 Plus and Care Leavers which are multi-agency sub-groups chaired by a senior officer. The Chairs of the sub-groups are core members of the Board.

3.3 Representatives from the Medway Children's and Young People's Council (MCYPC) share their news and issues, as well as being supported to offer challenge and contribution to the work of the group. Where children or young people cannot attend in person, their views are represented through the Young Lives Foundation (YLF).

3.4 The Lead Member for Children's Services, Director of Children and Adults, Assistant Director Children's Social Care, Head of Corporate Parenting and Virtual School Head Teacher attend the MCYPC meetings, which are led and chaired by the young person who is chair of the MCYPC.

3.5 The CPB scrutinises a performance dashboard of data at each meeting in addition to the performance reports of each sub-group.

4. Membership

- Lead Member for Children's Services (Chair)
- Representative from MCYPC/YLF
- Young Lives Apprentice
- Director Children and Adults,
- Assistant Director Children's Social Care
- Head of Corporate Parenting
- Elected Members as directed by the Cabinet Advisory Group
- Representatives from Health bodies
- Virtual Head Teacher
- Group Manager – 16+ Care Leavers Service
- Children in Care/Care Leaver representative
- Head of Public Health
- Head of Children's Partnership Commissioning
- Head of Safeguarding & QA
- One foster carer representative.
- One adopter representative.
- Other officers to be required to attend as necessary e.g. housing, further education, children's commissioning.

5. Board Achievements

5.1 The challenge and scrutiny role of the board is predominantly focused on driving the overarching Looked after Children Strategy 2018-2021.

5.2 The LAC Strategy has eight key objectives, which drives the work of the subgroups reporting to the main board.

5.3 **Objective 1 - Provide timely and high-quality intervention to help children remain with or return to their families, as long as it is safe to do so.**

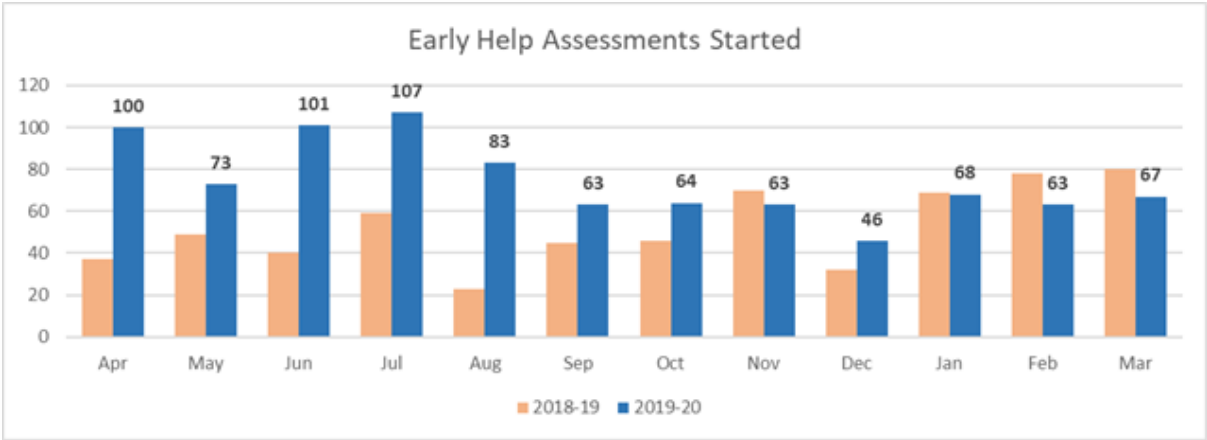
5.4 Children’s needs are best served in their own families where this can be safely supported. Medway has created four children and family hubs, 9 well-being centres and a number of outreach centres to support Early Help deliver effective interventions in the community.

5.5 The Centres have integrated teams supporting families at the earliest point possible and before needs escalate. These have developed over the last 9 months where partnership arrangements have been strengthened.

5.6 Success measures in this area include the extent to which Early Help has been mobilised and the volume, scale and quality of intervention undertaken with families. The graph below shows the number of Early Help Assessments (EHAs) carried out. In addition to the Family Support Service, these will also be undertaken by Schools, Health Care Professionals, Voluntary agencies and the wider group of partners.

5.7 Positively there has been an increase in the number of assessments undertaken over the past year in comparison to 2018 – 19. There is naturally a trend in figures, over longer school holidays (August/December) there are a lower number. The lower number of EHAs started over the recent months is likely to have been affected by vacancies across the service.

5.8 There has been a reduction of 3% in how many EHAs’ partners have started (11% in 2018/19 and 8% in 2019/20). The partners completing the most EHAs are Primary School provisions, however feedback from partners in respect of sustaining this role, is a struggle in trying to identify new staff, when others leave, to complete the relevant training to access the children’s recording system to sustain starting/completing EHAs.



5.9 Early Help Audits continue to evidence Early Help and Targeted Services to be judged as a high percentage as ‘good’. Positive comments in the recent OFSTED ‘focused visit’, the ‘joint targeted area inspection (JTAI)’ and the pilot HMIP inspection of YOT have also been received.

5.10 Early Help and Targeted Services have supported a number of children who have been on the 'edge of care'. The service has been responsive to the needs of families and has positively kept children at home. The Board need and want to do more next year in relation to this work and supporting children remain or return home and this is being explored further. This also needs to be within a framework of evaluation and reporting the successes.

5.11 The Youth Offending Team (YOT) have received national recognition for the delivery of child first practice and are cited in the national toolkit for working and supporting young people in the criminal justice system.
<https://www.nacro.org.uk/news/nacro-news/new-toolkit-using-an-identity-lens-constructive-working-with-children-in-the-criminal-justice-system/>

The YOT continues to deliver their trauma informed practice and have recently extended this arrangement with Essex University Partnership Trust to further enhance the psychology model in their practice.

Although disappointed to receive a 'requires improvement' judgement (1 point off good) in their inspection back in February, HMIP noted the significant improvement seeing 70% of the work judged as good or outstanding.

The Chair of the Youth Justice Partnership Board Head of Service are focused on outcomes for children and our looked after children remain a priority and the Head of Service will join the CPB this year.

The Youth Offending Team has also achieved their best first-time entrants and reoffending figures seeing them now below National and South East figures. Their focus this year is on Custody.

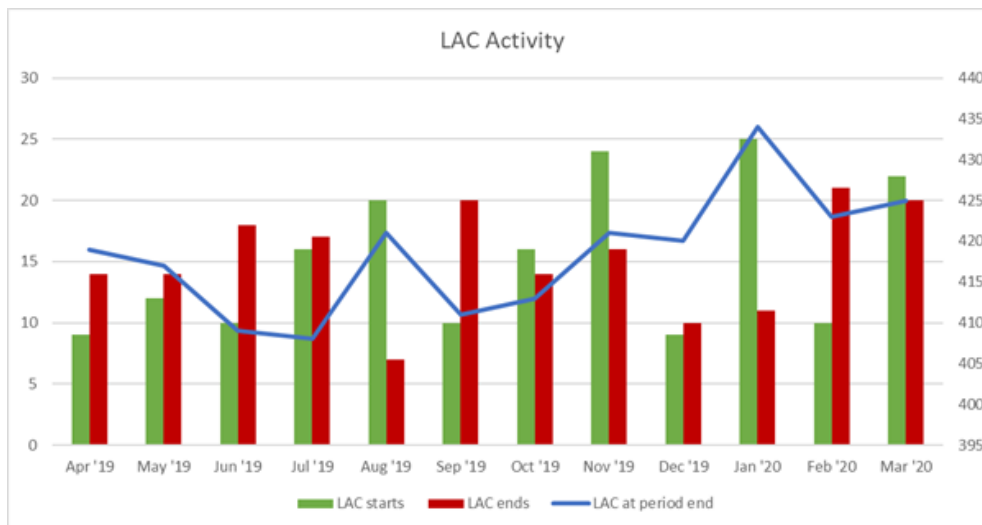
5.12 The YOT continues to deliver their trauma informed practice and have recently extended this arrangement with Essex University Partnership Trust to further enhance the psychology model in their practice. Although disappointed to receive a requires improvement judgement (1 point off good) in their inspection back in February, HMIP noted the significant improvement seeing 70% of the work judged as good or outstanding. The Chair of the Youth Justice Partnership Board and Head of Service are focused on outcomes for children and our looked after children remain a priority and the Head of Service will join the CPB this year.

5.13 Young people access support for a variety of reasons. These include raising self-esteem, improving social interaction, anger management, support going to school, Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), significantly supporting positive changes in behaviour. All these contribute to stabilising and preventing placement breakdown.

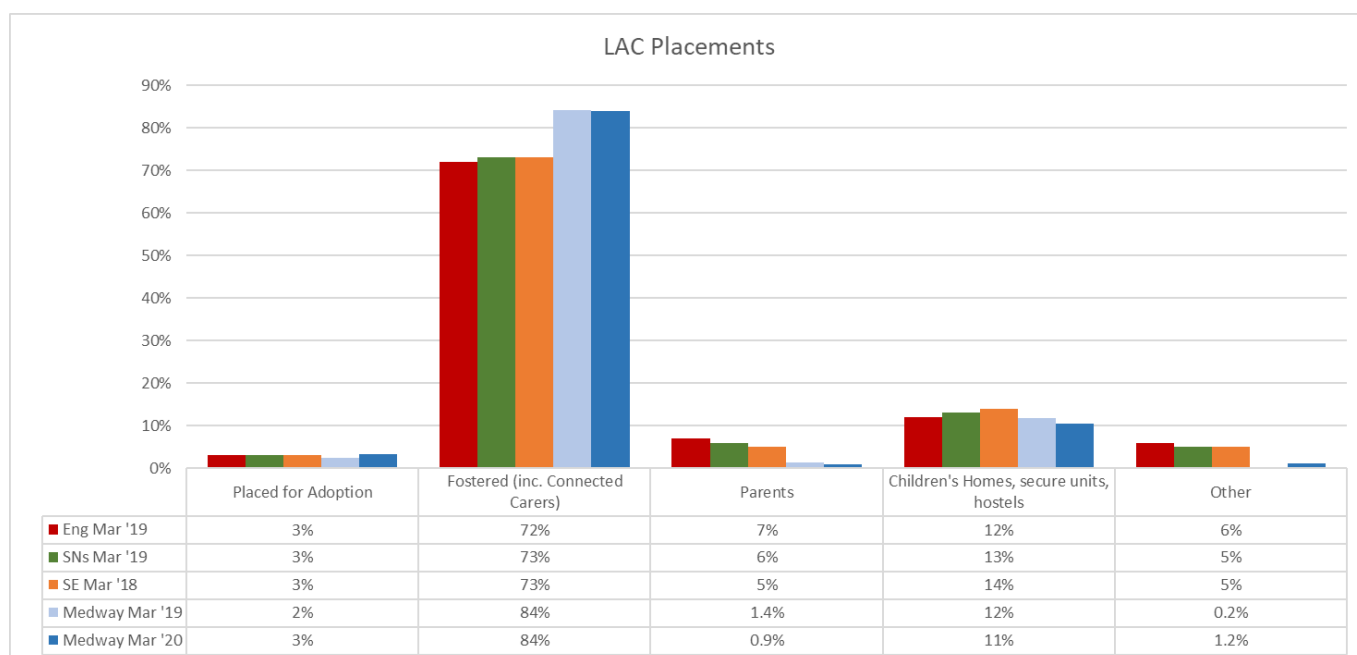
5.14 Objective 2 - Provide and commission the right mix of placements

5.15 The CPB needs to assure itself that Medway has the right range of placements to meet the assessed needs of our LAC as outlined in our LAC Strategy and Sufficiency Strategy. The table below outlines the number of children coming into the care of Medway (starts) and the number leaving the care of Medway (ends). It is noted that the months of August, November and January had

significant spikes in children coming into care in Medway. In these months there was an increase in the use of Police powers of Protection. 50% of the 'starts' into care, had returned home within two weeks.



- 5.16 The Children's Commissioning team has been monitoring the arrangements through the joint framework for commissioning external fostering placements from Independent Fostering Agencies. The contract is shared with Kent County Council and is based on providers delivering against outcomes for children. Additional work has been done to deliver a Regional Framework across the Local Authorities of the South East for external children's homes places also an outcome-based contract. Lastly, a more local Framework for Supported and Semi-Independent accommodation including Floating Support is in the final stages of being awarded and also an outcome-based contract. Work has started to prepare for recommissioning arrangements.
- 5.17 Commissioning will be focused on doing things earlier and preventing children coming into care. Children's Commissioning has recently supported the development of an edge of care service, an adolescent service and increased early help offer including the service wide evidenced based training for the workforce (signs of safety). In 2020/2021, Children's Partnership Commissioning will also develop new arrangements for a young person's commissioner developed through MCYPC.
- 5.18 More of Medway's young people (an increase of over 4%) are placed with connected carers and these placements are valued as a way of supporting young people to stay within their families and communities. Nationally, 17,250 children and young people have been made the subject of Special Guardianship Orders over the last five years.
- 5.19 While placements of children within their own families and communities bring benefits for the child, they can also provide additional challenges, which adopters and foster carers do not face, including issues around contact with parents and also lack of preparation to parent children who have suffered trauma. The Connected Carers Team plan to increase the preparation and support to these placements so that they can provide care through to adulthood, which meets the needs of the child.



5.20 The graph/table above outlines where children/young people are placed. As would be expected nearly three quarters of our placements are with Foster Carers.

5.21 The table below offers further information as to the picture of our children in care in Medway. The table outlines an increase in placements outside of Medway. Attracting local people to become foster carers remains a key priority. After a slow start to the year with regard to foster carer recruitment, this is now looking much more positive. The work undertaken by a newly appointed Senior Social Worker for recruitment and a Recruitment Officer has seen a recent increase in households in assessment and expressing an interest in fostering. There has also been an increase in carers with Independent Fostering Agencies inquiring about transferring into Medway and no carers have been lost to IFA's.

LAC at 31 March by placement location	Eng. Mar '19	SNs Mar '19	SE Mar '19	Medway Mar '18	Medway Mar '19	Medway Mar '20
Under 20 miles and inside LA boundary	51%	52%	50%	49.8%	54.7%	44.8%
Under 20 miles and outside LA boundary	22%	22%	14%	26.6%	24.5%	28.6%
Over 20 miles and inside LA boundary	4%	3%	6%	0.2%	-	0.5%
Over 20 miles and outside LA boundary	15%	15%	19%	17.1%	15.6%	20.7%
Distance not known or not recorded	4%	8%	6%	6.3%	5.2%	5.4%

5.22 The table below denotes the provider of the placement. Medway remains slightly above the national average for in-house placements and on par with our statistical neighbours.

LAC at 31 March by placement provider	Eng. Mar '19	SNs Mar '19	SE Mar '19	Medway Mar '18	Medway Mar '19	Medway Mar '20
Own provision (by the Local Authority)	50%	53%	53%	58.9%	58.3%	53.3%
Other Local Authority provision	1%	2%	1%	1.0%	1.4%	0.9%
Other public provision (e.g. by a PCT etc.)	1%	1%	x	1.0%	0.2%	0.7%
Private provision	35%	39%	36%	31.4%	32.5%	39.7%
Voluntary/third sector provision	6%	5%	5%	6.8%	6.1%	4.5%
Parents or other person with parental responsibility	7%	6%	5%	1.0%	1.4%	0.9%
Placement Provider not Reported	1%	0%	-	-	-	-

- 5.23 The last year has seen some movement in the number of foster carers resigning. While there are a cohort of carers naturally reaching retirement stage, there has and is an additional cohort being investigated under standards of care. Medway fostering are working to upskill foster carers to manage and support more complex placements. It is anticipated this will continue in 2020, as the service is improving the standard and quality of care for Medway children. There were 7 new carers approved in the last financial year and although Covid 19 lockdown has affected recruitment, there are 2 new families ready to undertake "Skills to Foster" and a further 5 families being assessed.
- 5.24 A key priority for this last year was to increase the number of in-house Parent and Child placements. It is pleasing to report that the number of these placements in-house has increased from 3 to 13 with 5 further families being trained ready to take these placements. It is anticipated that one of these new approvals will be able to take two parents and child, which will provide an additional resource. Such placements are very hard to source nationally.
- 5.25 Placement stability and improved quality of therapeutic parenting in placement has been a focus of the Fostering Team in the last year. There is an expectation that supervising social workers will challenge carers to parent therapeutically, understanding the child's behaviour as their way of communicating their distress and anger as a result of previous trauma. This work is supplemented by the Family Support Worker who particularly supports placements at risk of breakdown. The service is working with NSPCC to deliver a reflective fostering group work programme. 38 carers to date have been trained by the NSPCC. The aim of the programme is to help carers understand children's behaviours and support the emotional wellbeing of children placed in their care. Feedback to date has been positive and further courses are planned once lockdown is eased.
- 5.26 The Fostering Team is planning training on the working of the teenage brain to support carers with teenagers. In addition, the Team plan training to help

carers avoid secondary trauma for themselves and also emotional well-being and regulation for both carers and children.

5.27 A new framework for Independent Fostering Agencies has been commissioned. As well as enabling the Council to deliver efficiencies, the framework will improve sufficiency and quality of placements for our Looked After Children. The Council will be working with fewer providers in order to focus on service improvement.

5.28 The table below outlines the stability of placements. These figures have remained steady and consistent and compare well with other Local Authorities.

	2018-19 Q4	2019-20 Q1	2019-20 Q2	2019-20 Q3	2019-20 Q4	Latest
% of LAC <16 in care >2.5 years in the same placement for >2 years	69%	70%	71%	73%	70%	67%
% of LAC with 3+ placements in the last 12 months	8.5%	6.6%	6.3%	7.1%	8.7%	8.5%

5.29 Our figures for children with a permanent plan for Long-term fostering has improved greatly over the last year. This was an Ofsted priority area. The table below illustrates this.

	2018-19 Q4	2019-20 Q1	2019-20 Q2	2019-20 Q3	2019-20 Q4	Latest
% of children with long term fostering as a plan, where the child, carer and service have agreed for the placement to last until the child is ready to leave care.	37%	39%	43%	47%	48%	63%

5.30 **Objective 3 - Promote timely permanence planning for all children to ensure they have the opportunity of a stable, permanent home and long-term relationships in a placement appropriate to their needs.**

5.31 Increased scrutiny is in place to ensure permanence planning is considered when any child is accommodated and through proceedings. Weekly tracking meetings are led by the Group Manager (Children in Care) and supported by the Adoption and Fostering Group Manager and review all children in Pre-Proceedings, in Court Proceedings, and those who are s20 so that the plan for each child is considered until the child returns home or an order is made. Post order, permanence is monitored through LAC reviews and supervision to ensure plans are progressed in a timely way.

- 5.32 The rate of children leaving care to adoption or special guardianship is comparable to the national average. In 2019/20, 14% of those children who left care were adopted (8 children) compared to a national figure of 12%. 10% left care to Special Guardians (6 children) and this figure compares to the national figure of 13%.
- 5.33 The national picture for adoption is challenging with about twice as many children needing placement as there are available adopters. Most of our young and relatively straightforward children are placed quickly with Medway's own adopters. Older children, those who are part of sibling groups and those with complex developmental needs are waiting longer and a number of these children who we would have previously been able to place for adoption are remaining in long-term foster care.
- 5.34 In October 2016, the Cabinet agreed in principle, to enter into formal dialogue with a view to the establishment of the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) with the local authority partners, London Borough of Bexley and Kent County Council subject to formal agreement from the Cabinet on the findings (decision no. 124/2016 refers).
- 5.35 In February 2018, the DfE confirmed that the Minister had agreed to provide set up funds for the RAA project. The DfE commented that successful progression of RAA projects have been where agencies have worked closely together previously.
- 5.36 The current position is that Kent County Council have agreed to host the new Regionalised Adoption Agency on behalf of Medway and Bexley. A Head of RAA has been successfully appointed. Currently, detailed work is being undertaken to finalise the Partnership Agreement following work streams on practice, HR, IT, Business Support and Legal. RAA implementation to go live in October 2020.
- 5.37 The RAA will be responsible for delivering the core adoption functions - recruitment, matching and support, underpinned with a pooled budget, with a clear single line of accountability to enable prompt decision-making.
- 5.38 Based on a three-year average of placement orders granted across all three local authorities, it is estimated that approximately 135-150 children annually will be placed by the RAA.
- 5.39 Medway approved 17 adoptive households between April 2019 and March 2020. All but 2 of these families have been matched to a child. In addition, 2 of these families were former foster carers who adopted the child in their care, one of whom has significant learning disabilities. This is an increase in approvals from the previous year, which is positive given the national challenge in recruiting adopters. It is pleasing to report that there are currently 4 families in Stage 2 assessment and a further 7 families in Stage 1.
- 5.40 The service remains highly ambitious to continue to address overall timescales for adoption and performance and is now in line with local authorities in the South East. The average time between a child entering care and moving in with their prospective adoptive family has decreased to 419 days; and the average time between the Court giving authority to place and

moving in with their family has reduced to 167 days, which is lower than the national average.

- 5.41 **Objective 4 - Ensure that looked after children and young people achieve their full potential and can access suitable education, employment or training.**
- 5.42 The Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) service has been brought in house and now forms part of Early Help and Targeted Services. They have 3 focused areas:
1. Those in the Youth Offending Team (YOT)
 2. Those with Education, health and Care Plans (EHCP) and
 3. LAC
- 5.43 The programme this year has been very successful seeing only one young person currently Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) (aged 16-17) who is LAC. There is a specific advisor from the IAG team ensuring LAC aged 16-17 have an advisor.
- 5.44 The IAG team have also created a virtual platform through social media to enable young people to access support. This development has been noted by the Department of Education as a 'very exciting piece of work'.
- 5.45 A new skills and employability plan has been developed ensuring LAC is a focused area of work and a working group has been established to ensure there is a corporate response to ensure this is a priority for the Local Authority. This is reported to the officer's board and further onto members.
- 5.46 The Ofsted report of July 2019 noted that Medway needed to improve services to help care leavers access suitable accommodation, education, employment and training and to understand their rights and entitlements. To begin to address this the deputy headteacher of Medway Virtual school worked with key partners to develop monthly meetings with IAG, Leaving Care (now 16+ team) and performance analyst. The meetings identified students who were CME (Y11) or NEET. The data was regularly updated, and target groups established with endeavours to support young people with their return to education, employment or training. The recent loss of the post in performance and intelligence team will impact on the collection and analysis of data moving forward. Due to Covid 19 arrangements any reintegration work was limited from March 2020
- 5.47 There has been a significant reduction in the provision across Kent and Medway to support young people in their preparation for work. Internships in 2019-20 were interrupted as a result of the COVID-19 arrangements and there is likely to be a significant swell in numbers of those requiring internships in 2020-2021.
- 5.48 Medway Virtual School continue to work very closely with colleagues at Mid Kent College to consider transition and induction for current Y11 students. This is a new partnership which has developed over the last 6 months and extends beyond children in care to include a focus on vulnerable students.

Where young people come into care in their teenage years they are often already disengaged with school and where they are placed outside the area of Medway it is very difficult to secure admission to another school whether they have been attending and engaging well or not.

5.49 Education is not yet fully considered at time of placement or change of placement and as such learning has been interrupted. There are times where children and young people are moved and reside too far to continue in their current place of education. Admissions to schools take time and accessing specialist provision can be difficult due to capacity. Funding for interim provision, such as tuition, whilst a pupil is not able to attend the school on which they are on roll is not an identified budget across Medway Council; only if a pupil also has an EHCP is there provision for this.

5.51 A level and GCSE results for 2019-20 will be available to young people on the 13th and 20th August respectively. This year students did not sit exams and their grades will be determined through teacher assessment. It is unclear as to how this will impact on performance, particularly on children in care. No pupil was permanently excluded in the academic year 2019-20. The number of pupils in Y11 who were new to care was up to 14 by June 2020 – this is already higher than the total for the academic year 2018-19.

Snapshot of the distribution of children and young people in care according to school year groups:

MVS	Below N1	N1	N2	YR	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Count
All looked after children - cohort	age 2-3	age 3-4	age 4-5	age 5-6	age 6-7	age 7-8	age 8-9	age 9-10	age 10-11	age 11-12	age 12-13	age 13-14	age 14-15	age 15-16	age 16-17	age 17-18		
SEN support	0	0	0	2	4	4	9	7	10	8	10	7	8	12	11	11	1	104
EHCP	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	4	3	6	11	9	17	11	12	17	2	98
no SEN support	0	1	5	6	12	3	4	6	8	6	13	10	13	14	21	10	2	134
SEN need unknown	64	15	6	3	1	2	0	0	1	2	1	3	4	4	2	6	0	114
Counting cohort for 2019-20*	11	8	7	5	10	4	10	12	16	15	25	21	33	36	27	33	5	278
No pupils leaving (this month)	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	11
No pupils arriving (this month)	8	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	3	1	2	0	19
Total number leaving in year	25	6	4	5	7	2	4	2	1	2	2	1	2	3	5	3	53	127
Total number arriving in year	54	9	5	7	8	5	6	3	2	4	9	6	9	6	14	9	2	158

School profile and distribution September – 1st June 2020

*Over 12 months in care - this figure could reduce within the year should the status of the pupil change within the school year
The counting cohort is defined as a 'looked after child' is a child who has been continuously looked after for at least 12 months up to and including 31 March 2020. This definition is used by the DfE because 12 months is considered an appropriate length of time to gauge the

possible association of being looked after on educational attainment. However, note that a child may not have been in the care of a local authority for the whole of a key stage period.

- 5.52 The vast majority of pupils 'leaving' in Y13 have turned 18 and as such their legal status changes to care leaver.
- 5.53 Securing improvements in Personal Education Plans (PEPs) remains the highest priority. Training and support is ongoing for social workers, IROs and schools in this area. The format of the document has been refreshed for 2020-21 to enable easier tracking and sharing of information within the academic year; this is of particular significance when there are staff changes in education, social care or in fostering arrangements. The document also provides greater opportunity to evidence in- year improvements and achievements of pupils and students.
- 5.54 A business case was made and agreed for the expansion of Medway Virtual School. 3 additional posts were secured, a senior teacher, virtual school officer and administrative support officer. Whilst the post holders for the 2 school facing roles join the team in September 2020, the administrative support officer (ASO) joined on 1 May 2020. Since that time the ASO has worked primarily on the implementation of the government initiative to deploy digital devices to vulnerable pupils.

5.55 Objective 5 - Improve the health and emotional well-being of looked after children and young people and care leaver

Each child or young person entering the care system requires a statutory initial health assessment to be completed within 20 working days and review health assessments are completed every 6 months for under 5's and annually for 5 to 18-year olds. The Clinical Commissioning Group commissions Medway Community Healthcare to provide the specialist health team to undertake the statutory health work. The team continues working towards sustaining the improvements in performance made over the year. In 2019/20, 142 children have become looked after by Medway Council and required an initial health assessment (excluding periods of care of less than 20 days). 75% of these children had an initial health assessment completed within 28 days of coming into care, with 93% being offered an appointment within 28 days. At the end of quarter 4 the year to date performance was 75% completion of initial health assessments within the statutory timescale. Review health assessments performance, year to date was 85% for under 5-year olds and 92% for those aged 5 to 18.

Of the looked after children at the end of March 2020, 90% have had their latest dental check completed in timescale. 90% of children in care between the ages of 4 and 16 had an up to date strengths and difficulties questionnaire score, which is higher than the national average of 78% and statistical neighbour average of 85%.

- 5.56 The Medway Young People's Wellbeing Service assesses all referrals of looked after children within 5 days. If placed on a treatment pathway, they are regularly reviewed and contacted by NELFT. The service comprises four

clinical pathways: Mood and Anxiety; Behaviour and Conduct; Substance Misuse; and Sexual Trauma/Complex needs. A fifth pathway is available to Medway children and young people – Neurodevelopmental – that is delivered across Kent and Medway. The Medway manager is working with managers in children’s social care to ensure issues and queries are resolved quickly; and Medway are looking at providing additional support to foster carers around supporting children with mental health and/or behavioural issues.

Other services offered include:-

- KOOTH
- Mental Health Support Teams
- New Joint YOT and adolescent health offer
- A bid has been made to NHSE for Neurodevelopment work

5.57 An annual report is written for Governing Body of the CCG by the Associate Director for Looked after Children and SEND and is submitted to the Corporate Parenting Board once it has gone through the CCG

5.58 **Objective 6 - Aim to keep looked after young people and care leavers safe through the provision of trained, supported and motivated staff who understand and are alert to the potential for exploitation and abuse of young people and who take the right action at the right time.**

5.59 Following the inspection, the Council committed £1.5m, which enabled additional staff to be appointed to the assessment service and area social work teams to enable caseloads to be reduced. In addition, the Council has undertaken a root and branch review of the structure and delivery model of Children’s Social Care with a view to develop a long-term sustainable workforce capable of not only meeting demand but sustaining high quality practice and performance.

5.60 This work has resulted in further financial commitment of £2.4m to support the implementation of a realigned operating model. This is in the context of a total investment of £7.6m in Children’s Services in 2020/2021. The aim is to ensure the right capacity at the front door and put in place specialist teams to work proactively with child in need and child protection plans including those who require robust PLO / pre proceedings work.

5.61 There is now a dedicated service focusing on vulnerable adolescents and on children in care, supporting permanency planning and care proceedings. The leaving care service has been expanded to include provision for young people aged 16 plus. This will enhance pathway and transition planning so young people are better and more consistently supported into adulthood.

5.62 A business support review has been undertaken to ensure that social workers and other front-line practitioners can spend as much time as possible working directly with children and families, reducing time involved with administration.

5.63 The Council has welcomed advice and learning from others. Negotiations have taken place with other authorities to provide support under the DfE funded partners in practice. Essex County Council has been working with us to improve our early help offer and assessment service and we now have an

agreement with them to work with us over the coming year, providing advice and guidance in relation to our service for children with disabilities, our fostering service and in due course our newly formed child protection and children in need service (now called children's social work) and our children in care teams. We are also keen that Essex review our current commissioning arrangements.

- 5.64 Bracknell Forest is working with the strategic leadership team, including elected members, to develop more informed scrutiny and constructive challenge and to enhance a broader understanding of children's services and its relationship to the rest of the Council both in driving improvement and in securing a more sustainable 'business as usual' position.
- 5.65 An improvement board has been established, independently chaired by Lucy Butler, DCS Oxfordshire from November to February. Lucy took up a new post in April and a new chair, Rory Patterson, took up this role in March 2020. He recently retired from the role of DCS in Thurrock. The board's role is driving, challenging and supporting the implementation of the improvement plan.
- 5.66 The Medway Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB) previously managed a network of CSE champions across Medway with representation throughout Children's Safeguarding Services. In March 2019, the MSCB relaunched their champion network under the revised title of Exploitation Champions. The management of the Exploitation Champions has now been taken on by the Medway Safeguarding Children Partnership (MSCP) which was established in September 2019. Due to the crossover of vulnerabilities of children to exploitation, these champions focus on CSE as well as gangs, criminal exploitation, online safeguarding, youth violence and missing children. Their role entails regular attendance at meetings where examples of good practice and local learning is shared. The champions support the dissemination of learning and take part in learning activities. Champions ensure that Exploitation awareness enables workers in children's services to recognise the risk indicators of different forms of harm to children and young people "including sexual, physical and emotional abuse and neglect". Their role is to motivate services to be alert and responsive to risk.
- 5.67 The MSCP runs regular multi-agency CSE training; it ensures that the champions' training needs are prioritised to ensure Reflective Supervision and case direction. Further training will be developed to support the champions as need is identified.
- 5.68 **Objective 7 - Prepare young people for a successful transition to adulthood**
- 5.69 The 16 Plus and Care leavers Subgroup have developed a multi-agency action plan to address the needs of Medway's Care leavers.
- 5.70 Work streams of the sub group have included: - the development and publishing of the Care Leavers Offer, which involved consultation with young people and partners and was launched in October 2018, ongoing work with Commissioning around supported accommodation and the needs of care leavers: provision of accommodation and the second conference. A review of the Care Leaver Offer is upcoming as there have been changes in the service

structure, offers available to care experienced young people and the Pandemic has meant some additional changes which should be published in one place for easy access.

- 5.71 In October 2019, the Leaving Care Hub was launched as a safe, friendly and warm environment for care experienced young people to come and see their worker, spend time doing activities and getting on the spot support. Following the pandemic restrictions some activities have been put on hold but the intention to hold Education, Training and Employment sessions with partners remains a priority, as well as other partners such as Health and Accommodation.
- 5.72 Ensuring care leavers have access to opportunities for employment and education remains challenging and whilst Medway was below the national average in 17/18, figures have increased so far this year to date.

	National 2018-19	SNS 2018-19	SE 2018- 19	Medway 2017-18	Medway 2018-19	Medway 2019-20
% of former relevant young people aged 19-21 who were in education, employment or training	52%	52%	54%	45%	49%	48%

- 5.73 Following the recommissioning of the LAC Health service the Leaving Care Nurse position is no longer available up to the age of 21. There is a transitions pathway that works specifically with young people leaving care up to the age of nineteen and makes sure they can readily access their health history and support them with ongoing health needs. The new contract moves from one nurse for all care leavers to six nurses to support all children past 18 years.
- 5.74 Health remains a focus for the service and there is positive partnership working between the 16+ Service and Health partners, with a Draft Proposal of the Health Offer for Care Leavers in development, and regular meetings to look at the needs of young people and how best to meet them.
- 5.75 Leaving Care continue to work closely with Jobcentre Plus to track and support young care leavers seeking work and those who are currently unable to seek work due to health-related matters. There is a Jobs Fair being planned for October 2020, this has been delayed due to the Pandemic. There will be heightened issues with accessing job opportunities nationally, so we need to ensure we have the right information to be helpful for care experienced young people who sadly have additional barriers.
- 5.76 In respect of Care Leavers accessing suitable accommodation, Medway continues to maintain performance significantly above the national average.

Care Leavers in suitable accommodation on	National 16/17	National 17/18	Medway 16/17	Medway 17/18	Medway 18/19	Medway 19/20 (YTD)
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19th, 20th or 21st birthday	84%	84%	88%	93%	92%	94%
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- 5.77 A Leaving Care Housing Protocol has been developed jointly between the 16+ Service and the Housing Department setting out the entitlements for care experienced young people and the processes in place to support with finding suitable accommodation when it is the right time for the young person to do so independently.
- 5.78 An area that remains a priority focus is the quality of the accommodation available to care experienced young people when they move on to independent living. The joint housing protocol with Medway Council Housing Department will strengthen this area and support young adults in their move on plans, as well as ensure the accommodation is of sound quality.
- 5.79 It is clear there is a link between secure, stable accommodation and Education, Training and Employment opportunities for care experienced young people. One struggles to be maintained without the other. The 16+ Service is better able to monitor the link between the two and support the transition at an earlier stage with clear planning and partnership agreement. From a thematic focus group held in November 2019 care experienced young people told us some of the key issues they face which included lack of sufficient preparation for the reality of independent living, financial pressures, social isolation and loneliness, and mental health difficulties. These are not new issues and are within our remit to support and alleviate.
- 5.80 Following additional funding from the Government as part of the National Rough Sleeping Strategy a specialist Personal Advisor with a lead role on accommodation has been appointed to focus on reducing homelessness and identifying the risk of homelessness earlier. Joint working relationships with the local prisons and probation services, the Accommodations team, Adult Services and other partners means support plans can be formulated. The specialist Personal Advisor has completed tenancy accreditation training and is developing monthly training sessions for young people to support them in developing their knowledge of tenancies and preparation for independent living.
- 5.81 It has been identified there is a need to do some work with local private landlords where private renting is the planned route. Supporting local estate agents and their landlords to understand the needs of care experienced young people and their role is vital. One barrier faced is the number of private landlords who will not accept benefits, this immediately takes away a high number of private rental options which may be in the right area for family and friend links, work or education opportunities, or simply be the desired area for the young person.
- 5.82 In January 2020, Medway Council has started to pay Council Tax for care experienced young people when they have their own tenancy. This will undoubtedly only have a positive impact on young people. There is continued joint working taking place to ensure the process is as easy and stress-free as possible.

5.83 There are currently nine young people aged 16-21 who are in custody either on remand or serving sentences of whom two are under eighteen. There is a protocol in place with Kent and Medway Probation whereby all parties work together to support care leavers on leaving custody. Leaving care currently working with local adult prison to develop a protocol to identify and support Medway care leavers in prison.

	National 2018-19	SNS 2018-19	SE 2018- 19	Medway 2017-18	Medway 2018-19	Medway 2019-20
% of former relevant young people aged 19-21 who were in suitable accommodation	85%	83%	81%	93%	92%	94%

5.84 An increasingly high number of young people who are deemed sick/disabled are being offered support tailored to their individual needs via the Job Centre Plus, to work towards EET opportunities.

5.85 **Objective 8 - Ensure that looked after children and care leavers' views and experiences inform current and future service delivery**

5.86 Mind of My Own (MOMO) is an app, which young people can access to share their wishes and feelings. Workers are also able to use the app to evidence the views, wishes and feelings of their young people more easily.

5.87 The experience of using this app gives young people more confidence to speak up, attend meetings and articulate problems. Once they have signed up, they can use it on their own anytime, 24/7. The app helps young people prepare for any upcoming meetings they have, report problems, share good news etc.

Accounts

Currently 134 young people have accounts

There are 331 workers with accounts

One app usage

STATEMENT TYPE	SENT BY YOUNG PEOPLE	SENT BY WORKERS	TOTAL
Totals	330	124	454
Change	23	0	23
Conference	1	1	2
Foster Care Review	15	10	25
My Education	6	0	6
My Life	16	12	28
My Wellbeing	11	6	17
Pathway	0	2	2
Preparation	80	33	113
Problem	53	4	57

STATEMENT TYPE	SENT BY YOUNG PEOPLE	SENT BY WORKERS	TOTAL
Share Good News	84	13	97
Worker Visit	41	43	84

Number of One Statements sent (by workers and young people – 454

Number of Express Statements sent (by workers) – 21

Total of statements sent to Medway Children’s Services (One and Express) - 475

Percentage of Topics chosen in Express Statements

About Me – 33%

My Day – 23%

My Education – 13%

My Health – 10%

My Life – 21%

- 5.88 The information above provides a breakdown of the use of MOMO across Medway.
- 5.89 Each CPB meeting receives an update on the wide range of activities and work undertaken by the Medway Children and Young People’s Council and support from the Young Lives Foundation ensures that the young people contribute actively throughout, including decisions made. Young Lives Foundation and the 16+ Service are working on improved working relationships and how information and resources can be shared and accessed. This is a positive working relationship and allows young people direct access from one to the other.
- 5.90 MCYPC monitor how successful the Pledge is at every CPB and MCYPC meeting, with the Local Authority being responsive to suggestions and actions. In the Reverse Take Over Day in October 2019 it was agreed that Corporate Parents would be educated in the real-life challenges faced by care leavers so that decision making is informed and realistic. A virtual MCYPC is planned for September 2020.
- 5.91 Medway Youth Council (MYC) is part of Medway Youth Service and is currently applying the Hear by Right standards from the National Youth Agency. This is a quality assurance scheme for youth voice aimed at organisations working with young people that aims to ensure that young people are actively involved in decision making at all levels of the organisation.
- 5.92 The Hear by Right (HBR) framework was submitted for inspection on 18 March 2019. The Youth Service has looked at all of the areas where participation currently is included and has identified a number of ways in which it can be improved, developed or introduced as a new way of working. The Youth service has aimed for the Flagship HBR rating; this covers all areas of youth work. MYC is working in partnership with the youth service to support and implement many areas of the framework; additional changes will be introduced at youth centres and projects across Medway. The HBR Framework also looks at management and finance of the youth service and

how it works with other youth forums and groups. In November 2019 the service was awarded Flagship Status for its participation work by the NYA

- 5.93 MYC are involved in decisions about service delivery in two main ways. Firstly, through attendance at various Medway Council and partner events and consultations (including Kent Police and NHS) where they are regularly represented. This is a two-way process as speakers from other departments and partner organisations regularly present at MYC meetings and engage with members to gain their opinions. MYC are also strategically represented at Medway Council's Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, commenting on plans put forward that effect young people and giving a youth perspective on more general plans for the area. MYC representatives seek to represent the views of young people from their schools and youth centres and are encouraged to speak beyond their views, making sure they also consider the views of those they represent. MYC is working with the community safety partnership and MSCP on ways to share and inform young people the findings from the conference.
- 5.94 Each year the Youth Council runs the UK Youth Parliament 'Make Your Mark' campaign, which aims to set local and national agendas informed by the voice of young people. MYC are currently training three young people to be Democracy Ambassadors, where they will share information with their peers and other youth groups to help inform young people about democracy.
- 5.95 The Children's Commissioning team introduced innovative practice this year by actively involving Care Leavers in the evaluation of the tenders submitted for supported and semi-independent accommodation.

6. Risk management

- 6.1 The key issue facing CPB in its oversight and challenge function is the capacity and financial pressures posed by the increase in LAC population on all service areas supporting looked after children, and ensuring that as effective corporate parents, this does not hinder the care, support, aspirations or continued improvement in outcomes for our children in care.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

8. Legal implications

- 8.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to consider and comment on the annual report and the effectiveness of the Corporate Parenting Board.

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Appendices

None

Background Papers

None