

Report From: Sivay Heer HOS

Report To: Schools, Children & Families Overview & Scrutiny

Date: 25th January 2017

Title: East Area Children in Care Report

The journey so far

Data

528 Children in Care in East. 48 children are in adoptive placements, 20 where we are Family Finding. 59 within care proceedings, 71 children s20 and 330 on Care Orders of which 30 of these are PCPs and the others subject to long term fostering, residential or independence.

Work Force

3 years ago, staff morale was, there was a change in structure and caseloads were high and staff instability. There was high sickness, and capability issues. Whilst there is still considerable work to be done, this has improved given the current strong leadership and support we continue to receive. We have recruited a number of newly qualified SW and two agency Team Managers have been converted into permanent staff.

Children

The children we work with are our most vulnerable with complex needs. Meeting this need sometimes raises more questions than answers on how we respond to individual needs of that child and how we risk manage this. Following process and doing what's right has to be balanced. For instance moving a child to an external placement isn't always the answer and questions how we can manage risk which doesn't compromise a child's welfare. This was evidence through the work we did with Corporate Parent Board.

What East Has Done

- Drive on Performance and Quality Assurance, this is supported via Practice and Performance meetings with Team Managers and Head of Service on fortnightly basis in addition to fortnightly team meetings with social workers, which includes group supervision.
- ☐ Worked within the Framework of Right Service Right Time and the New Operating Model and Improvement Plan (see below)
- ☐ East HOS is managing sickness and performance management with HR and chairs a panel to this effect. This service provides high support, high challenge.
- ☐ East has had a focus on staff recruitment and retaining. East CIC service now has a permanent Management Team having successfully converted two agency managers into permanent managers. East is less reliant on agency staff and those

we have tend to be longer term. East is more robust in agency interviews and capability of staff. Ensuring perm staff sickness and capability process are followed to ensure robust response. Most of our students have stayed with us and which has improved our some of our recruitment problems.

- ☐ East HOS has identified team manager and social worker leads within the service to bring about change and focus on key areas to improve upon, setting agendas and following these up. For example, CSE, Direct Work, Missing and Section 20 and PCP, PEPs. This aims to ensure consistency across all East CiC Teams and progress plans for children.
- ☐ Changing the Culture of what is Acceptable Practice and Driving High Standards, which has improved stability of staff teams. (see below)
- ☐ Reduced caseloads given introduction of new team and good throughput
- ☐ Keeping Children at the Forefront of Day to Day Practice (see below)
- ☐ Focus on CSE and Missing through regular champion meetings to discuss how staffs are supported to improve positive and safe outcomes for our young people subject to CSE and Missing. As part of this we have created regular briefing sessions for all staff within East.
- ☐ Improved Partnership with Police, External Agencies, Health, Education, Family Support, Commissioning/Placements, Courts. Monthly meetings with the Police regarding missing and CSE. (see below) The commissioning team are invited monthly to East to speak to staff about difficulties with external providers, this enables us to challenge poor standard placements and advocate for our children.
- ☐ East has also met with councillors via the Corporate Parenting Board and shared examples of cases and had discussions of the complexities faced by social workers in day to day scenarios of when removing and returning children home.
- ☐ Embedded Reflective Practice/Supervision (see below)
- ☐ East Transfers from receiving and sending teams has improved with greater communication across the East Service. This has been achieved through weekly transfer meetings, within the CIC Service for all team managers to attend supported by PSS. This improves communication across the CIC teams about the cases held, and improves knowledge of capacity and capability within the service.
- ☐ Ensured children's files have Case Summaries on their records at least 3 monthly.
- ☐ Although work in progress, we are reducing timescales for Care Proceedings and are focusing on further reductions to bring them in line with PLO expectations. We are therefore working closely with the Case Progression Team who monitor and address delay in respect of court work.
- ☐ We have embedded the new Pathway Plans for care leavers.
- ☐ East have a firm grip of all children who are subject Placements Orders and

therefore we have monitored drift closely both in Adoption Monitoring meetings but also through HOS data tracking system and supervision.

The good things/improvements within East

East CIC teams have leads for all areas of Improvement and target key areas of development and practice. From this East CIC service has:

- ☐ Regular practice and peer evaluations, which has led to reflective discussions, progress of care plans, shared learning and less drift.
- ☐ Children are now having regular health assessments and dentals, the number of children waiting for health assessments have reduced. We meet regularly with our health partners to ensure this.
- ☐ E PePs, we work closely with our virtual school teams to ensure that all children have a E PePs and each CIC team have a virtual schools staff linked to them.
- ☐ Quality assurance has led to an improvement in quality of written work, considering impact on children and is less description and more analysis.
- ☐ The children in care are the right children in care, there has been focus on reducing PCPs, which have reduced by half and section 20 targeted to reduce drift and delay in achieving permanence and promote rehab plans using the Edge of Care Service. We have also reduced number of CIN plans held within CIC.

By keeping the children at forefront of our practice East has achieved:

- ☐ Frequency of visits to young children have improved, these have become purposeful and linked to the children's care plan.
- ☐ East has successfully created a 7th CIC team which enabled reduction of case load to enable workers to provide more in depth and improved service to the children.
- ☐ East now have a good grasp of the CSE cohort for the area and staff has a good awareness of CSE indicators and the pathways which we should consider to target perpetrators, locations and reduce the risk to our young people.
- ☐ The commissioning team are invited monthly to East to speak to staff about difficulties with external providers, this enables us to challenge poor standards and advocate for our children.
- ☐ East undertook a specific CSE Audit via the champion group which highlighted areas we should consider to improve practice. One of East cases was reviewed by the safeguarding board and was commended for the excellent practice which has been used as good example for staff to consider when working with children subject to CSE.
- ☐ East has been involved in challenging the quality of children's homes, including supporting lodgings and the conditions of these. One of our newly qualified reported a poor standards within a placement and young person and all young people were moved on and appropriate steps taken up with provider.
- ☐ Ofsted commended East for the evidence of direct work we are undertaking with children.

Partnership with Colleagues and External Agencies/Sector

- ☐ East has developed relationships with external agencies, such as the Police and the Locate Team; this has provided opportunities for shadowing for staff, sharing of information/process/difficulties and improving communication about service and specific high risk children. 6 weekly meetings are held with the police to improve practice and discuss most vulnerable cases. This joined up approach has

improved outcomes for children who are missing, ensuring safe return home.

- East has increased the number of matched placements through working with Family Finders and commissioning. We now have family finders who spend time with us once a month to discuss cases and improve planning for adoption.
- The Champion meetings and briefings for CSE and Missing has developed staff awareness and enabled a more joined up approach with the police, family support, Banarodos, legal services and across all safeguarding and CIC teams. New staff has found these very beneficial.
- Virtual School attend our performance meetings and we have met with CAT lead to improve the support children who have autism. Although early days, this is encouraging social workers to access appropriate support services for children with autism. Interestingly, stats evidence that it is primarily boys who are diagnosed with autism.

Staff Development/Reflective Practice

- East have started Systemic Supervision Training, which has enabled a more reflective approach to supervision to all staff on all cases Staff receive a minimum of bi-monthly as minimum, staff prepare for supervision which is linked to care plan progression. This compliments work related to care plan progression and workers taking responsibility and ownership of their plans.

What still needs to be done and how we are going to do it

Consistency across the teams through continued sharing of ideas, progress, briefings, knowledge, research and practice information. This will be completed via regular meetings and discussions between the managers and staff team.

Court Work: Improved knowledge and practice in respect of court work to include analysis and assessment skills. This will be focus on briefings with staff, requested input from Principal Social Worker in respect of improving pre proceedings where assessments and all options are explored at earlier stage. Work in respect of transfer discussions to CIC starting at pre proceedings stage when decision to seek ICO is being made. Will continue to use Court Tracker and for HOS to meet with Legal Assistances and Team Managers to identify potential delay.

Care Planning Rational & Assessments: To improve evidence of decision making on a child's file and why a given care plan has been implemented. To achieve this, the rational of all decisions to be reflected by Social Worker and Team manager, as a minimum within Care Plans, case observations, assessments and supervision records

Pathway Planning is in place, but further work required to build relationship with adults transition teams and effective planning for care leavers at earlier stage.

Assessments will be undertaken of CIC Children to determine change of family circumstances and to inform care planning and avoid drift and delay. To start the following cohort of children have been identified:

1. Where there is a change of family circumstances
2. Oldest Care Order
3. Those children who are or could have unsupervised contact

4. S.20 legal status who are 14&15 years old.

Life Story Work and Direct Work:

To ensure all 6 year olds and under have life story book and to ensure all 6-18 have active life story work undertaken or completed.

Direct Work will be better evidenced within recording and erecords. All staff to use appropriate tools for direct work and improve confidence of this. .

Evidence of contact with parents to be reflected in the child's file and show meaningful and purposeful contact sessions.

This will be achieved through briefings and guidance on this work from the staff, attendance on training; it will be managed via supervision, through statutory visits, case audits and practice evaluation.

Voice of the Child:

To ensure that direct work tools used allow children to explore their wishes and feelings.

The children are seen alone during statutory visits and have contact details for their allocated social worker. The use of MOMO will continue to be promoted. The child's voice will be included with care plans and review reports and why a child's wishes/views have not been supported or followed.

Voice of the Parents to be more evident within the overall care planning for children. This will be achieved through evidencing in case recordings their views about assessments, care planning, statutory reviews, visits and contact and how these views have been obtained. We will know this is being completed via supervision, peer audits and practice evaluations.

Pathway Planning to ensure all 15.5 year olds have Pathway Plan Assessments started and Pathway Plan in place by aged 16.

Chronologies: All children will have chronologies on their case record to cover at least the last 2 years if chronology is previously absent. All staff to complete chronologies for the children with open assessments as starting point.

Emotional and Mental Health Support : for children, is an area where partnership work requires further improvement to support and manage risk and improve reliance and healthy relationships and choices.

Improved focus on Disruption Meetings taking place and ensuring the record of this in on child's file. This will be achieved by fortnightly data collection on disruptions, meetings to take place for all disruptions and learnings from these to be considered in future matching. This information will be shared with commissioning during monthly discussions or before on specific cases. Social Workers will become more robust in challenging external placements and improve our children's experiences.

Report From: Narinder Saggu, Head of Service, Children's Commissioning

Report To: Schools, Children & Families Overview & Scrutiny

Date: 25th January 2017

Title: Children in Care Accommodation and Placements

Overview and Journey so far

Commissioning and Placements of Children in Care

As of 9th January 2017, there were 1840 Children in Care, placed as follows

Secure Unit	4
External Children's Home	127
Internal Children's Homes	22
External Block Contract - Priory	20
External Block Contract - Meadows	10
Placed With Parents	89
Connected Persons Placements	53
Other Placements (including Supported Accommodation)	310
External Foster Placements	591
Internal Foster Placements	614
Total	1840

Birmingham City Council's Placement Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for children in care (2016-19) supports an intelligence-led approach to understanding the reasons why children in Birmingham enter care and their care profile. It identifies trends and patterns that inform social work and placements practice and helps to shape the market around particular gaps, for example, the needs of older children/young people coming into care, those with specialist needs and young people that are at risk of CSE, self-harm and risky behaviours.

All children in care are placed in appropriate placements with access to the support services they require in their local authority area, except where this is not consistent with their welfare.

84% of children in care are placed locally within Birmingham or within 20 miles of the boundary.

A good range of provision is available including

- 650 registered foster carers managed by the Internal Fostering Team
- 68 Independent foster care providers who are on the Regional Fostering Framework and provide access to over 11,000 external foster carers. Birmingham leads on the regional

Framework contract on behalf of 13 other LAs.

- 49 beds delivered through 2 block contracts – one with Priory Education Services which runs 5 children's homes that were previously managed by BCC (30 beds). The second block contract is run by Meadows Care who are also contracted to run 5 homes for the Council (19 beds).
- 5 disability residential homes which continue to be managed by BCC – these include 3 respite/short breaks homes and 2 homes for long-term placements
- 46 children's homes run by independent providers with placements purchased through a regional residential framework contract or spot purchased
- 83 providers who will deliver Supported Accommodation for 16-17 year olds through the Regional Framework for Supported Accommodation. The tendering for this finished at the end of December 2016 is subject to an award report being agreed. The framework triples the number of providers we can access and ensures there is additional capacity for the growing number of UASCs. There were 29 on the existing "preferred provider list.
- Arrangements with St Basil's to run a youth hub for young people at risk of homelessness including emergency beds and floating support for children in care
- An innovative "step-down fostering scheme" which is funded by the Cabinet Office and provides intensive and therapeutic fostering placements to enable children to move out of residential homes into family-based care.

Spot purchase arrangements may be made with when there is a need for highly complex or specialist placement, specific geographical requirements or where placements are difficult due to compatibility and risk assessments of existing residents.

No placements are made by the Placements Team into Bed and Breakfast accommodation or hostels

As required as part of the Children's Operating Model, the Placements Team continues towards greater use of family based provision before accessing residential care. Currently 66% of children are placed in foster care and 9% are placed in residential homes and 7% are placed in Supported Accommodation.

The majority of young people are placed in good or outstanding placements and there is a process to review placements when ratings fall below requires improvement, so that children continue to reside in a safe environment.

Joint working is also underway between the Council's SEN service and NHS Commissioners to procure and jointly fund the best resources for children with disabilities, conduct disorders and mental health. These placements are recommended following discussions at the Birmingham Complex Care Panel (BCCP) which also determines the level of tri-partite funding for each placement.

During the last 12 months:

- There has been an increased focus on reviewing and streamlining placement processes

and building in accountability for placement decisions.

- There has been an acceleration of work on Quality Assurance of residential providers and in particular Supported Accommodation (which is unregulated).
- Birmingham led on the West Midlands Regional Fostering Framework on behalf of 14 local authorities. Along with increasing capacity, it has also improved quality and led to £1m of savings due to the contractual terms of the framework.
- The contract with Priory Education Services was successfully mobilised and operational responsibility for running 5 BCC Children's Homes was transferred to them on 1st October 2016.
- The contract with Meadows care was also mobilised from 1st May 2016 and to date 3 homes are now operational, a fourth is due to open with work underway on the final home which will provide remand beds.
- The tendering for the Regional Framework for Supported Accommodation (led by Staffordshire Council) has been completed and, subject to the award report being agreed, the contract will go live and provide increased placement capacity.

What we have done

An increased drive to improve quality has led to the development of Quality Assurance tools for residential and supported accommodation services. Regulation 44 visits continue to be undertaken by Commissioning Officers and the promotion of and support provided to and Elected Members to carry out Corporate Parenting residential visits to monitor, support and develop our in house residential children's homes, provision for disabled children and external residential homes.

Close working with other Local Authorities enables monitoring of homes where Birmingham has children placed outside of area. Provider engagement and joint workshops with social work teams, enables sharing of good practice, training and improved relationships between providers, practitioners and commissioners.

The aim is to continue to increase placement capacity by improving the support and training of the internal fostering service and recruiting more foster carers that can meet the needs of teenagers, UASC and young people with complex needs, in particular 10-15 year old boys and those on bail or remand. By striving to secure over 60% of placements with the internal fostering service, we could reduce the reliance on external agencies providing fostering & residential) care.

Capacity and value for money is also being maximised through the West Midlands Regional Fostering Framework which has begun to reduce costs. The externalisation of five residential homes to Priory Education Services and a block contract with Meadows Care will have capacity to deliver 49 beds for Birmingham children at capped rates.

The "step down foster care" project delivered in partnership with Core Assets and Bridges Ventures is providing opportunities for children to move out of residential care and benefit from systemic therapeutic fostering and achieve better outcomes

Commissioning clinics are held with area-based social work teams Improved relationships with

area teams and support is also provided to the external funding panels run in the areas, in order to monitor and reduce external placement costs.

The good things/improvements

Innovative practice

Step Down Fostering Social Impact Bond

This innovative project is a partnership between BCC, Core Assets and Bridges Venture. It is supported by £200k of Innovation Funding from the Cabinet Office and Big Lottery. The project concentrates on delivering a difference to young people's lives by helping them to transition from residential care into systemic therapeutic foster care. A Payment by Results mechanism rewards placement stability of 52 weeks and secures longer term outcomes relating to educational achievement and social and emotional well-being. Underpinned by a step-down model of support and Core Asset's experience of transitional fostering, the project offers a highly structured and tailored package for both the young person and their foster carers. A Project Manager is co-located within BCC and works closely with social work staff, local services and commissioners. Peer Mentors, who have themselves been in care provide relationship support and coaching to young people and ensure their voices are central to the shape and delivery of the placement. The project is externally evaluated by the University of Oxford's Rees Centre. Their review of the programme's first year stated that "the approach shows very promising results, particularly for vulnerable and demanding young people. The combination of planning, matching, preparation, transition and the Team Parenting approach demonstrate very good examples of excellent practice from the involved professionals." BCC showcased the project at the Cabinet Office's launch of the Life Chances Fund and Government Outcomes Lab on 4th July 2016 at the Blavatnik School of Government in Oxford, receiving positive feedback from other local authorities and NHS partners.

Step Down Fostering Disabled Children

The Commissioning Team successfully submitted an Expression of Interest application to the Government's Life Chances Fund to run a step-down fostering programme for disabled children. As a result, development funding has been secured enabling Commissioners to undertake preliminary work such as service design, stakeholder engagement and financial modelling in order to submit a full application to the Cabinet Office. If successful, the programme would start in July 2018 and provide disabled children who are currently in expensive residential placements or in placements outside of Birmingham to step down into intensive and therapeutic fostering placements.

Pause Programme

The Commissioning Team is developing new approaches, such as exploring the Pause Programme. The Council is working with Pause National who first developed the scheme in Hackney. The programme works with women who repeatedly get pregnant and have their children taken into care. The Pause programme offers a systemic keyworker model to provide intensive and direct support to the women to resolve underlying trauma and other issues when they are not pregnant or have children in their care. The women must take LARC in order to be on the programme as this gives them the space to work on their issues and turn their lives around.

There are around 7 programmes already running across the country. Birmingham is currently in the process of tendering to run an 18 month pilot.

What still needs to be done and how we are going to do it

There is much work still to be done in relation to how placement decisions are made, the information supplied in accommodation request forms, streamlining the placement search and matching process and reducing spend on expensive placements. This work is to be undertaken by Placement Review Panels with support from Commissioning and Placement officers. There is also closer working between the Fostering service and the Placements Team ensuring internal fostering is the placement of first choice for children in care.

There is also work to be done on market development to address current gaps in provision, particularly around fostering placements for teenagers, PACE and remand beds and specialist provision for children at risk of CSE or presenting with complex and challenging behaviours. The Placement Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy has been shared with Providers and signals these gaps. A series of provider events is being planned in 2017 to progress this and will include challenge to providers about developing creative solutions and wrap around support for young people who are the hardest to place and ways to reduce costs/ secure value for money.

There have been some significant quality issues with Supported Accommodation – while a schedule of QA visits is underway, this will take time to work through and for providers to embed the changes and recommendations from the monitoring visits and generally drive up quality. The Regional Framework provides a good start as only we will only place with those providers that have been through due diligence and successfully tendered to be on the Framework.

The Commissioning Team are working closely with the Safeguarding Team & other agencies including the Police to support providers in safeguarding young people whom regularly go missing or are at risk of child sexual exploitation