

Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report

2019-20



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1. Background

Purpose of Report

To highlight the work of the Corporate Parenting Board during the academic year September 2019 – August 2020. The report will go on to identify feedback from young people.

Corporate Parenting Strategy 2020-23

Sandwell's Corporate Parenting Strategy (2020-23) identifies the commitment made by the Corporate Parenting Board and key partners to create opportunities that ensure that the children and young people in our care are encouraged to reach their full potential by empowering them and promoting positive outcomes. It sets out how we plan to further improve the services offered within Sandwell for our children in care and care experienced young people.

The strategy introduces the Corporate Parenting Pledge, agreed by the Corporate Parenting Board in November 2019. The Pledge steers the work of the Corporate Parenting Board and was adopted based on the messages delivered by more than 150 care experienced people at the National Care Experienced Conference 2019.

The 10 messages are:

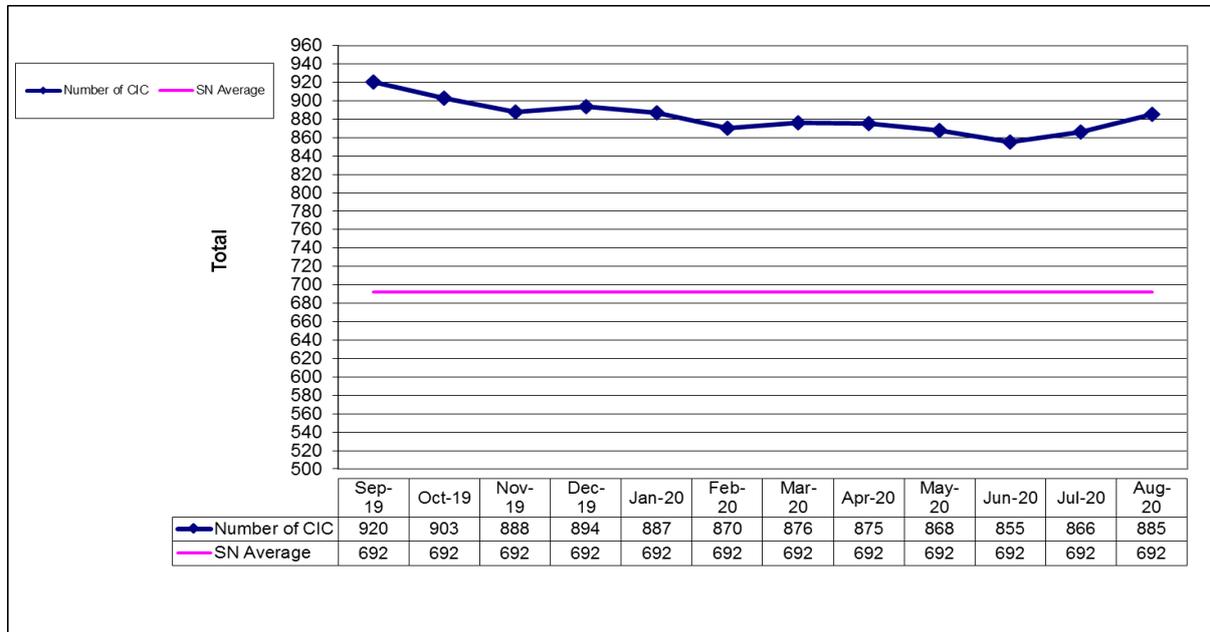
1. We need more love in the system, including displays of positive physical affection
2. We want to be seen as individuals worthy of respect much more than we are
3. Relationships are critically important to us
4. Instability and loss of continuity in our lives is made worse through no fault of ours by pressure in the care system
5. Mental health and wellbeing are our biggest worries and the most important and urgent things that have to improve
6. The impacts of the care experience do not end at 18, or 21, or even 25
7. Our sense of who we are is important, our family heritage and history are uniquely ours and must be protected
8. Having our say is essential
9. We have legal rights and entitlements and we are not always being told what they are
10. Nobody knows more about what it means to be in care than we do.

Members of the Corporate Parenting Board and key partners are encouraged to sign up to the Pledge and to actively consider these messages within all parts of future service planning and delivery. Along with this we have committed to use our position as local system leaders for children to change things for the better, using these messages to drive improvement in our local arrangements and furthermore encouraging all of our children in care and care experienced young people to tell us how well the Pledge is being upheld.

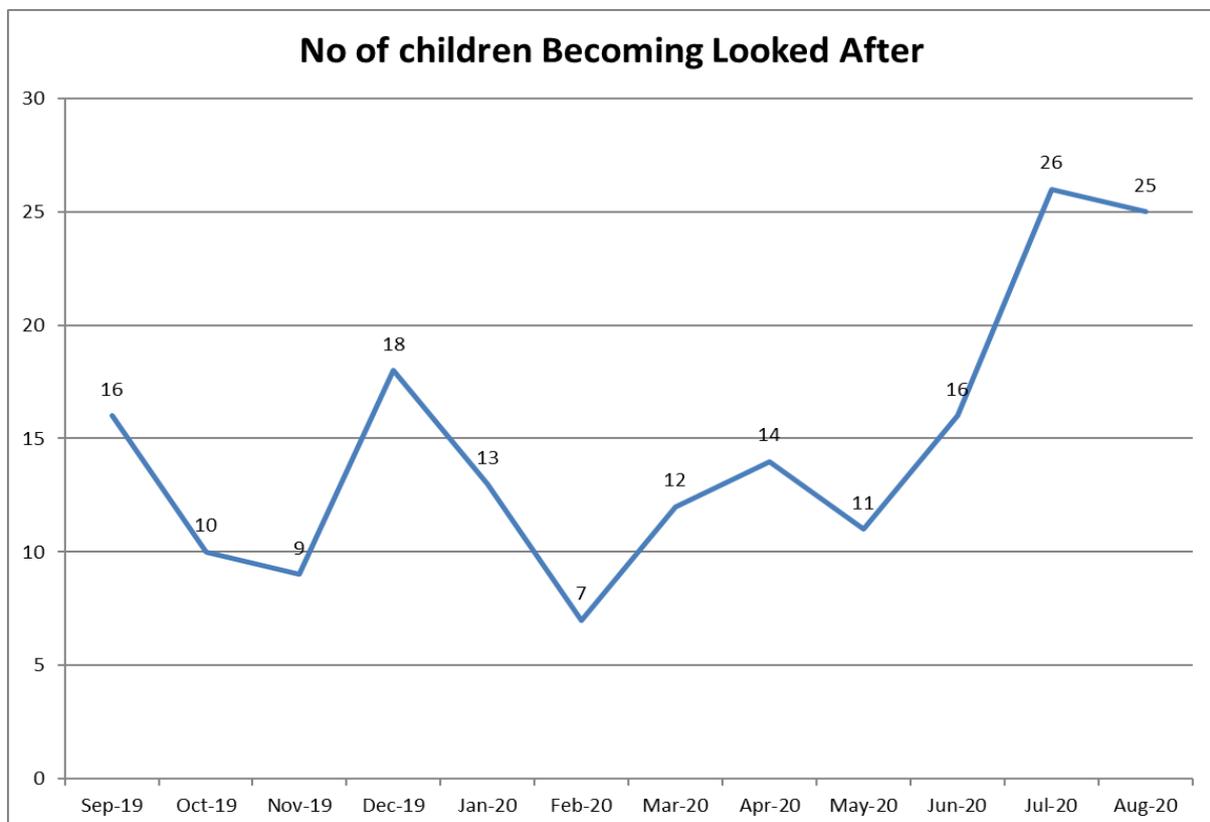


2. Context

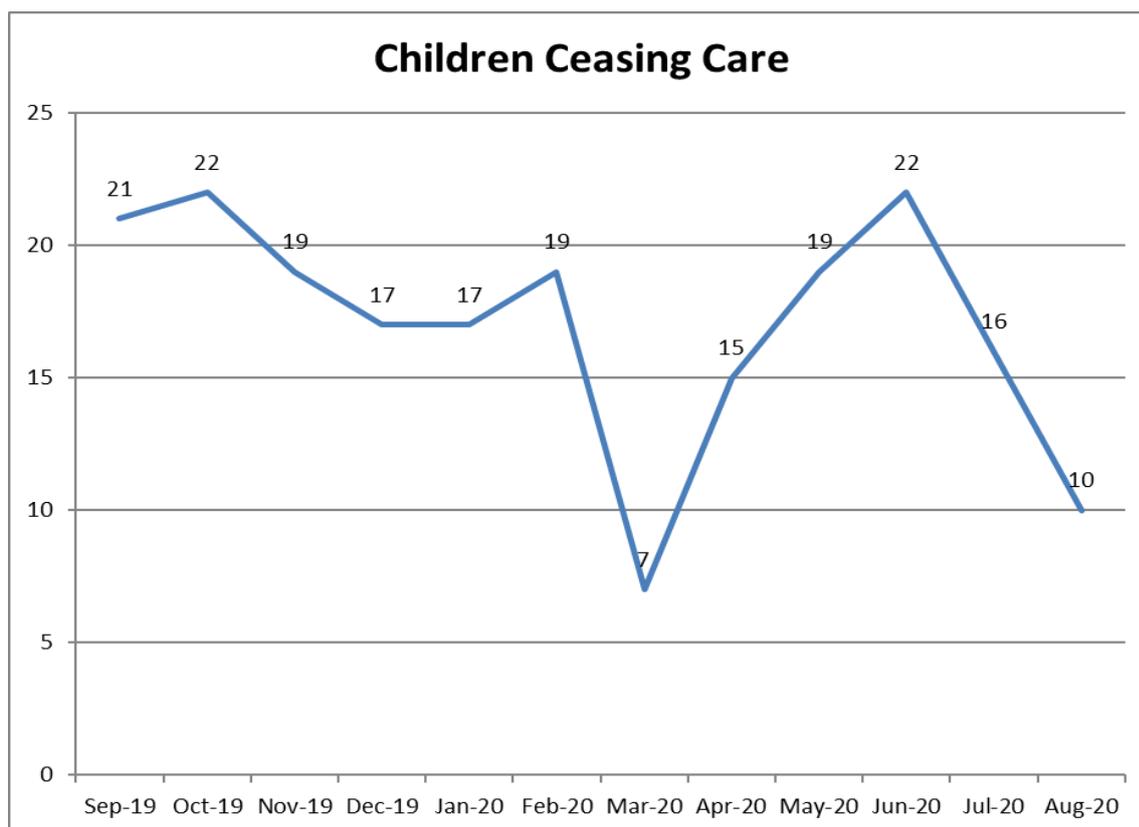
Social Care Activity and Performance Information: Children in Care Between September 2019 – August 2020:



Number of Children Coming into Care:



Number of Children Ceasing Care:

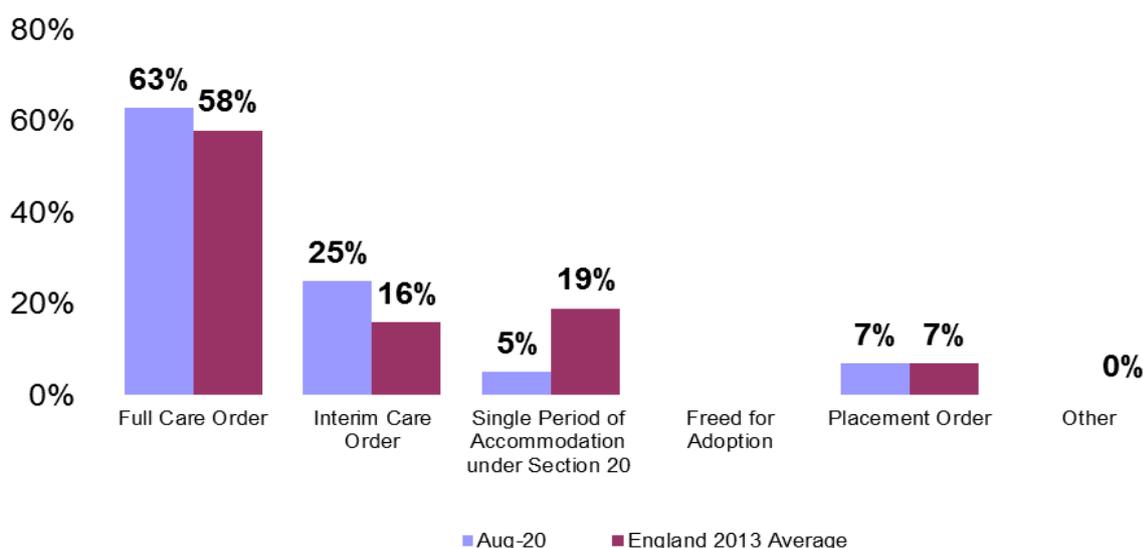


Children Ceasing Care – End Reason:

END Reason Child Ceased LA	Sandwell Sept 19 - Aug 20	Sandwell %	England 2018 Average
Returned Home(C)	16	7%	26%
Adopted - application unopposed (C)	25	11%	7%
Independent Living - Supported (C)	83	38%	13%
Adopted, consent dispensed with (C)	2	5%	6%
Child Arrangement Order Granted	8	4%	4%
Independent Living - Unsupported (C)	2	1%	2%
Special Guardianship Order made to Former Foster Carers (C)	14	6%	6%
Special Guardianship Order made to Carers other than Former Foster Carers (C)	5	2%	5%
Transferred to Other Local Authority (C)	1	0%	2%
Other (C)	9	4%	19%
Sentenced to Custody (C)	1	0%	2%
Transferred to Adult Social Services (C)		0%	2%
Left care to live with parents, relatives, other person with no parental responsibility	27	12%	5%
Accommodation on remand ended	4	2%	-
Supervision Order	23	10%	-
Service User Deceased		0%	-
Total	220	104%	100%

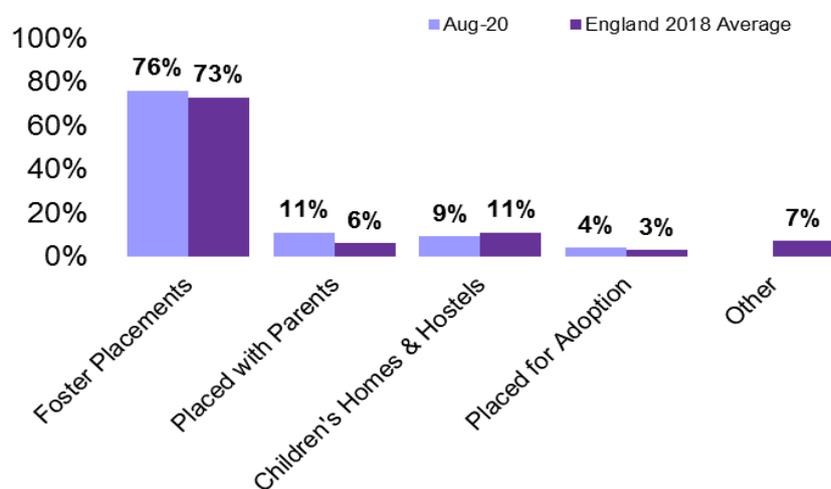


Children Looked After by Legal Status as at August 2020:

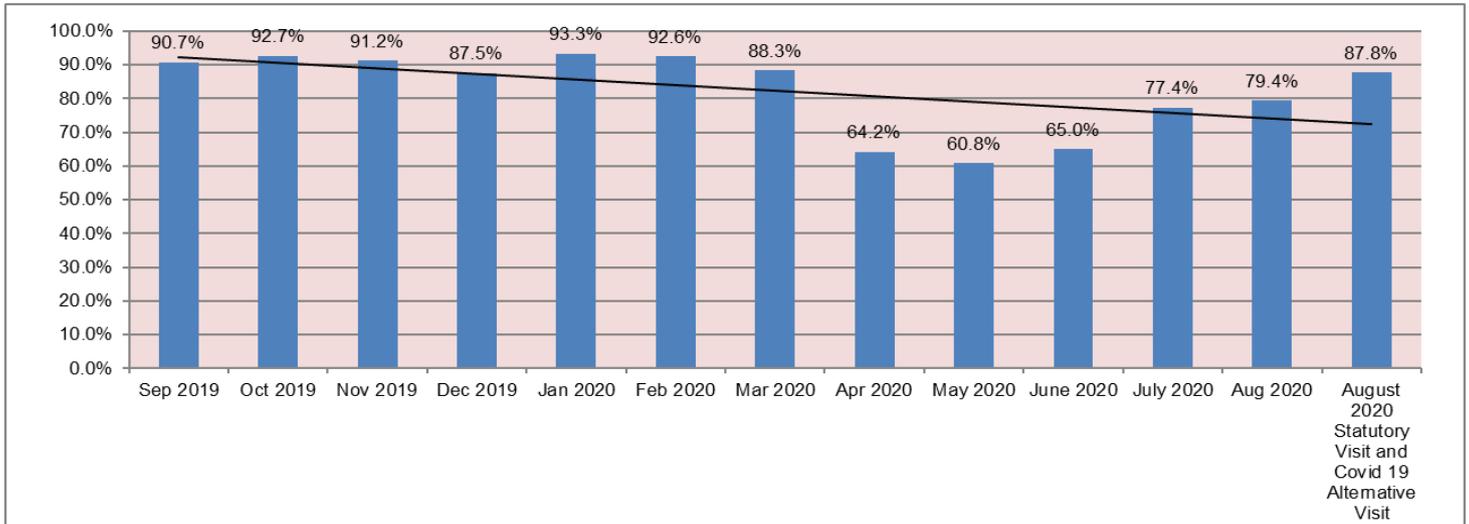


Children Looked After by Placement Type as at August 2020:

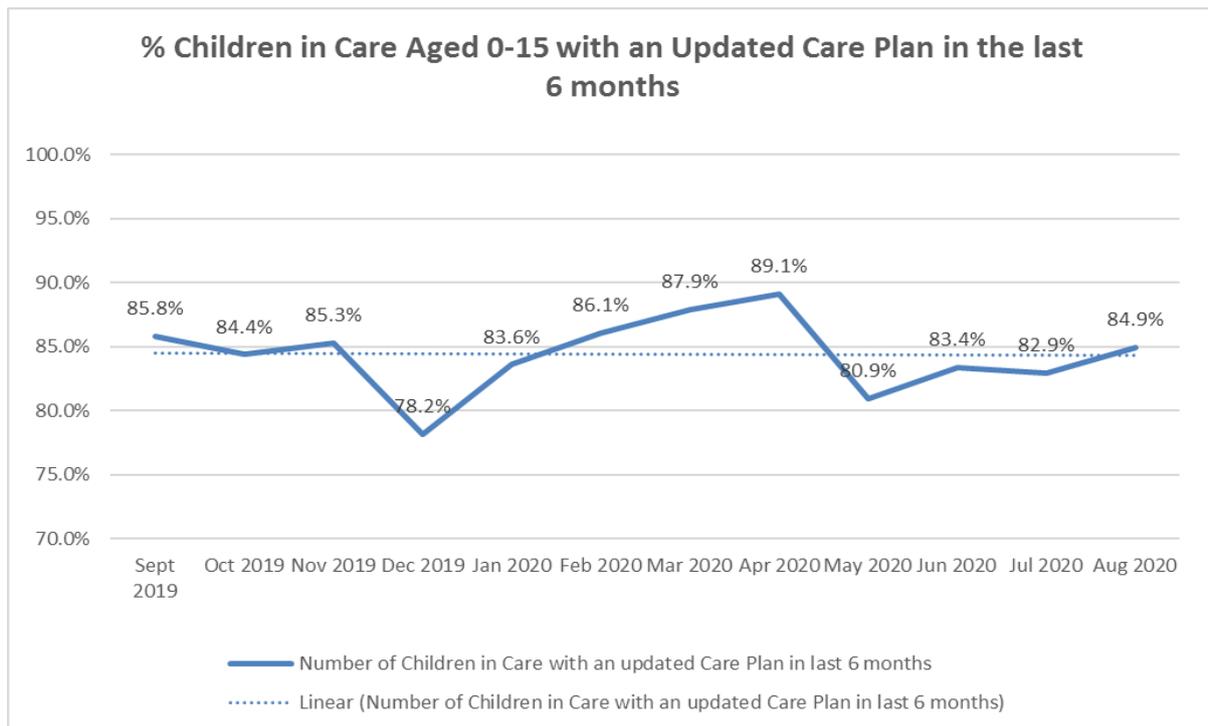
Type of Accommodation	Sandwell Aug 20	Aug 20%
Foster Placement - Internal Foster Carer	161	18%
Foster Placement - Connected Carer	184	21%
Foster Placement - External	328	37%
Placed with Parents	94	11%
Residential Homes - In House Provision	0	0%
Residential Homes - External	51	6%
Secure Accommodation	1	0%
Independent Living	27	3%
Placed For Adoption	35	4%
Family Centre or Mother and Baby unit	2	0%
Other Placements	0	0%
NHS/Health Trust or other Establishment Providing Medical or Nursing Care	2	0%
Not Recorded		0%
Total	885	100%



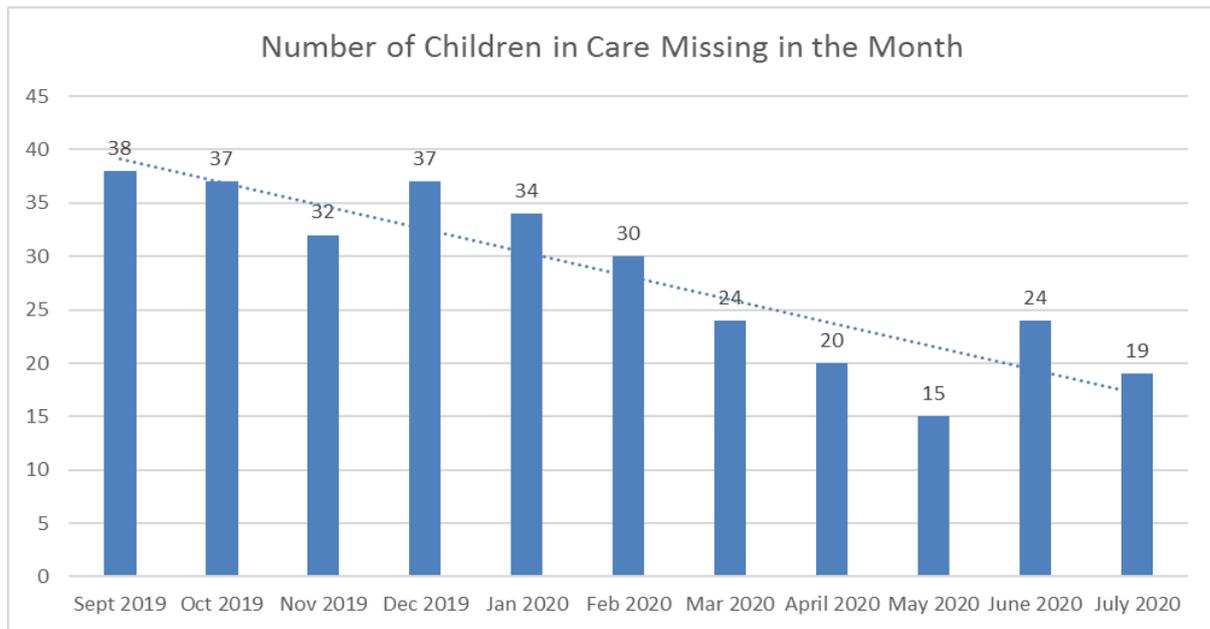
Percentage of Children in Care Visited in Accordance with Statutory Requirements:



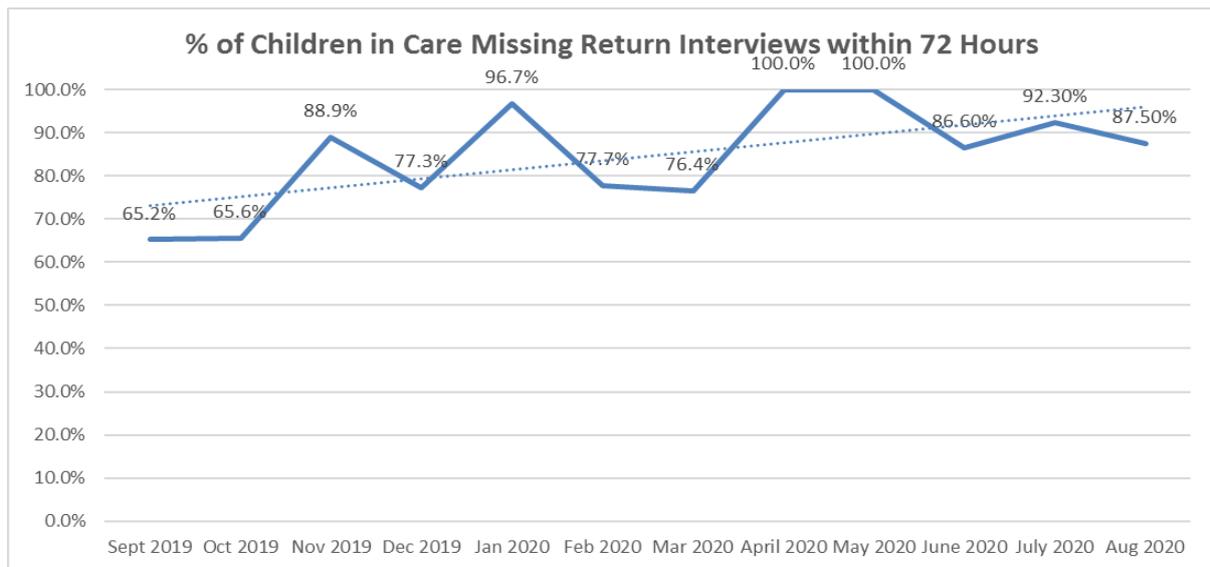
Percentage of Looked After Children Plans Updated Within Six Monthly Intervals:



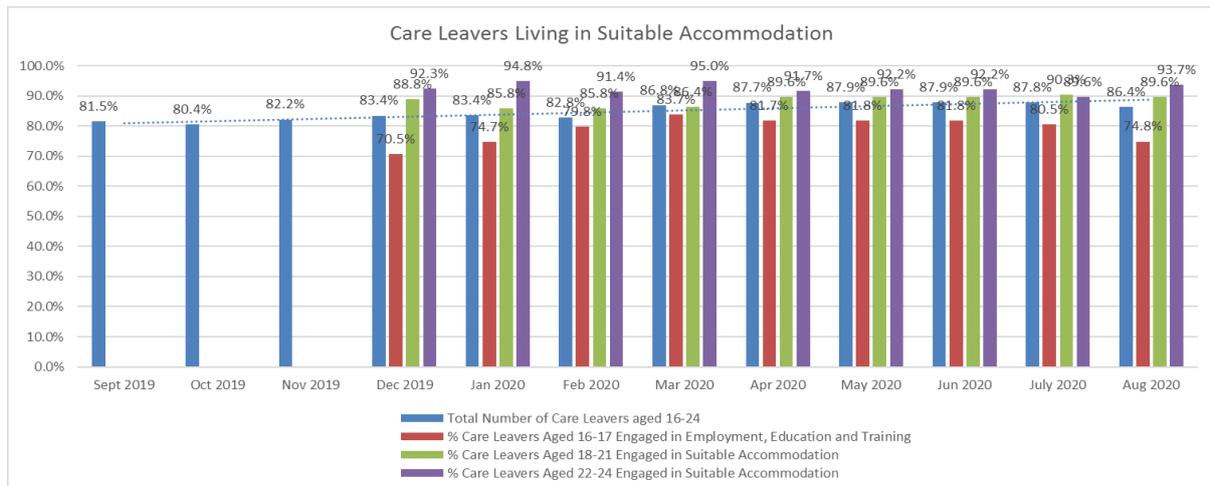
Number of Missing Episodes of Children in Care:



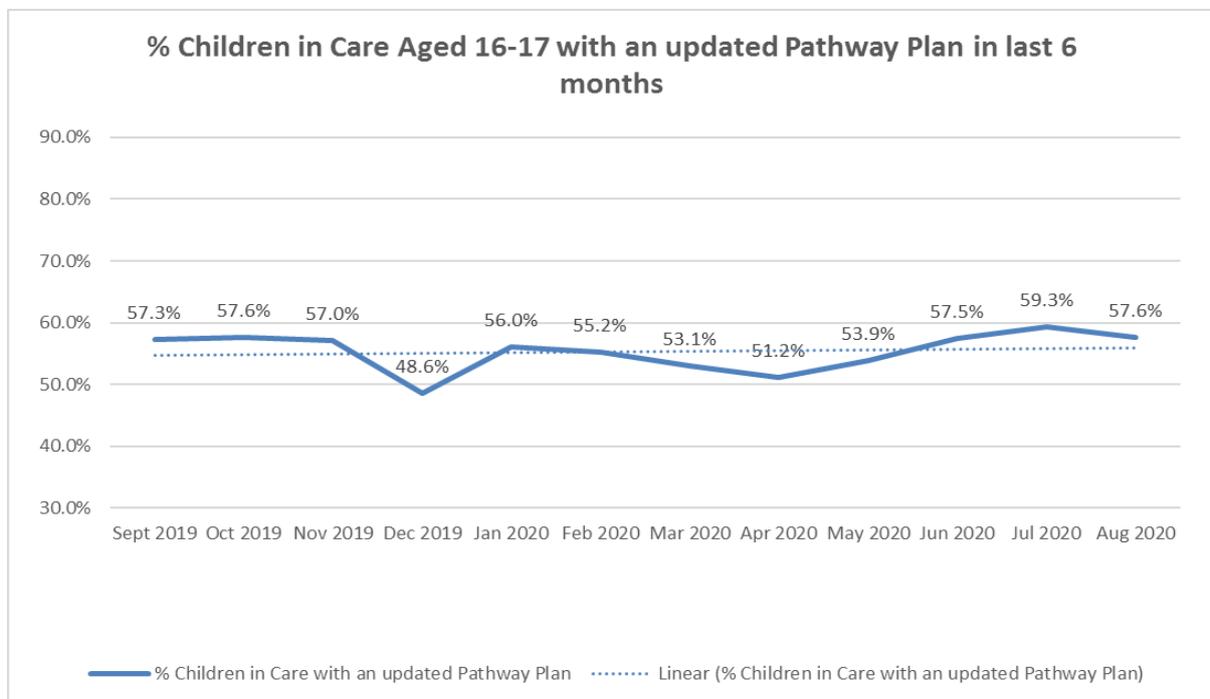
Return Interviews within 72 Hours:



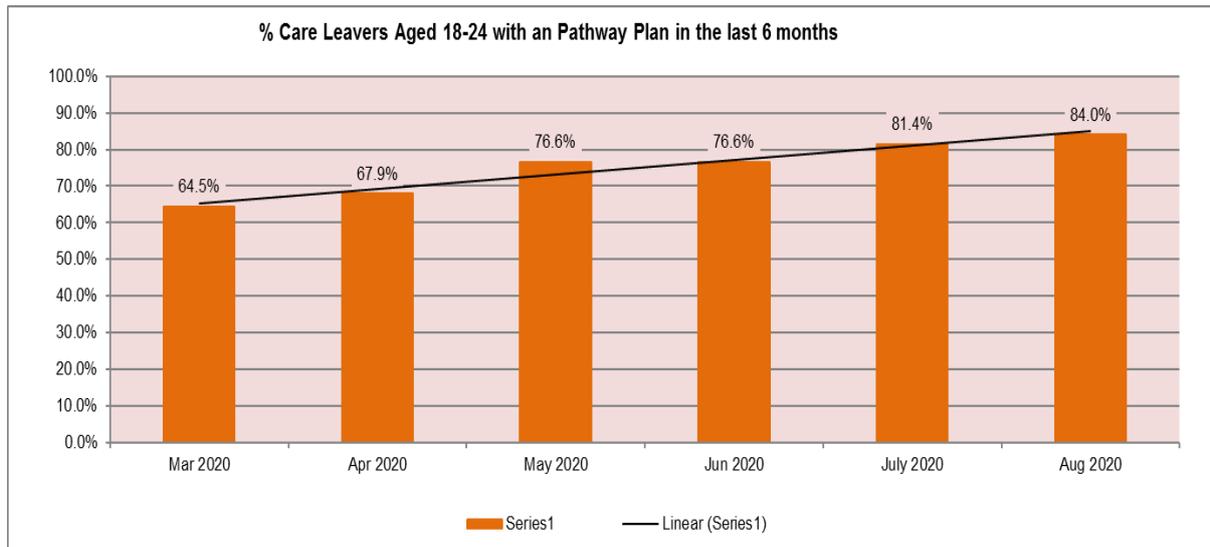
Care Leavers in Suitable Accommodation:



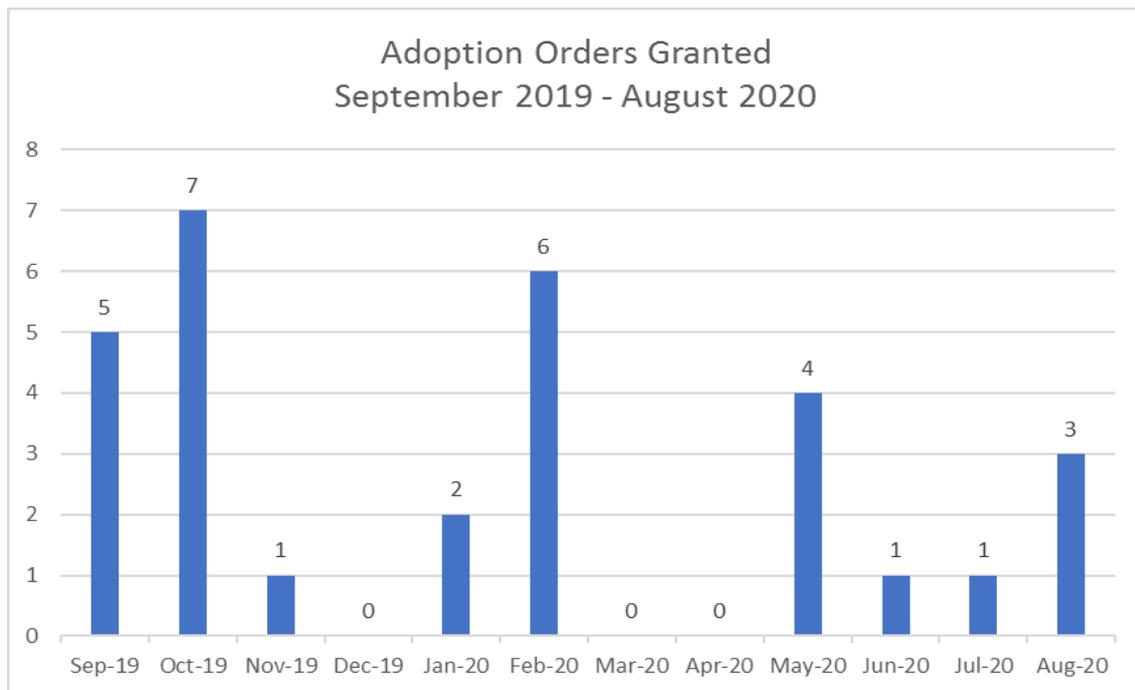
Looked After Children Pathway Plans in Place 15 Years and 9 Months+:



Percentage of Care Leavers Aged 18-24 with a Pathway Plan in the Last 6 months:



Adoption Orders Granted:



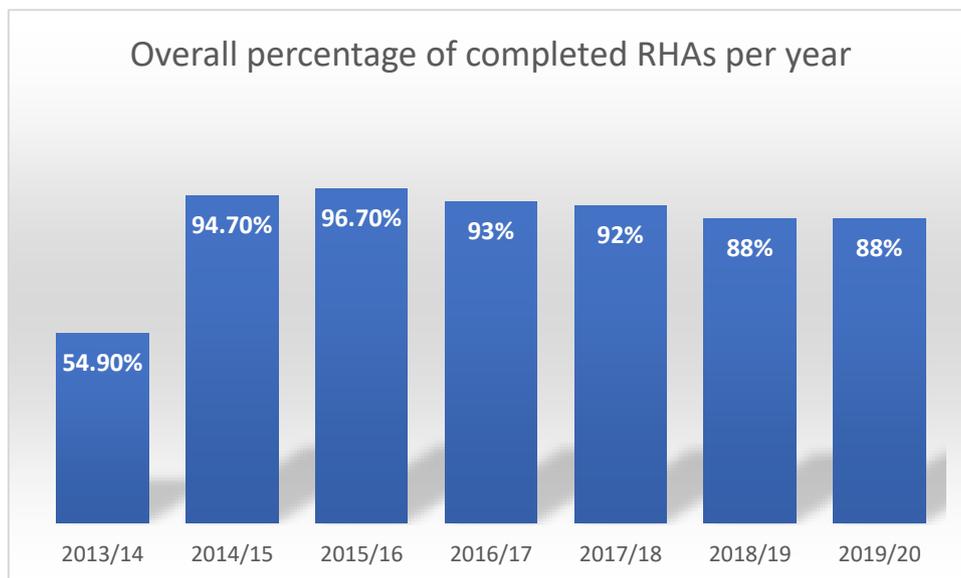
2.2 Health Activity and Performance Information:

Completion of health assessments for Children in Care in Sandwell and West Birmingham is monitored by the Designated Nurse through a range of mechanisms. Quarterly auditing is undertaken with regard to initial and review health assessments to examine timescales of completion, communication and quality compliance. Continuous improvement is achieved through considered feedback and education.

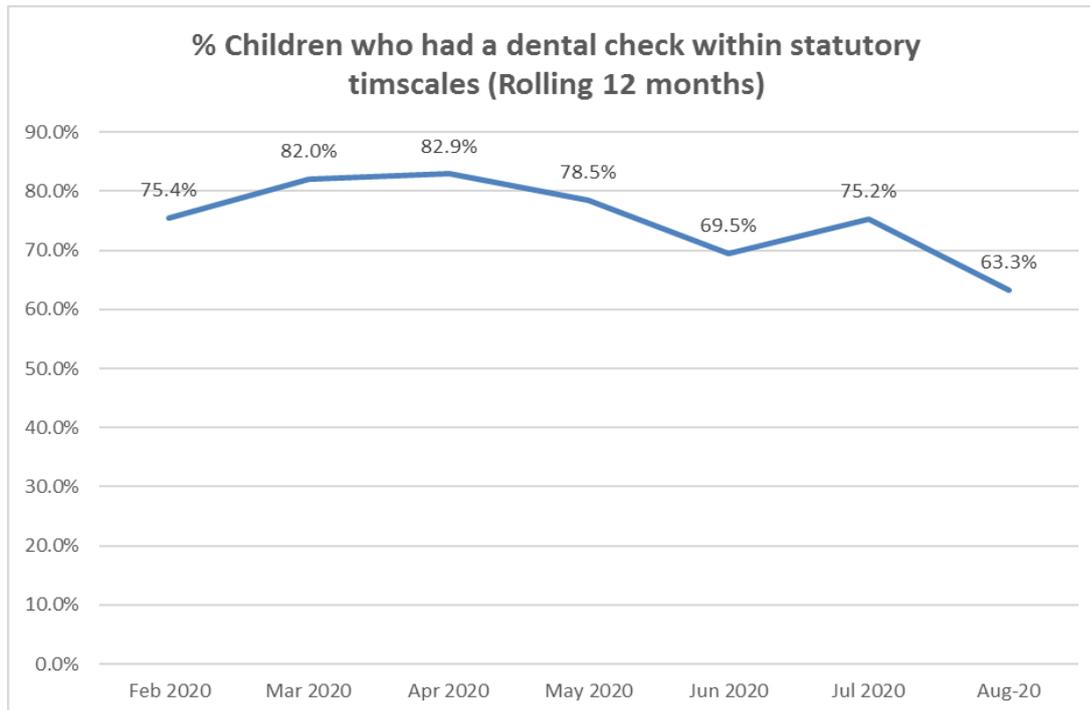
Health Assessments:

During the reporting period 88% of review health assessments have been completed, ensuring that the national target of 85% is surpassed. The overall completion rates for the year demonstrate a positive picture, and sustained advancement.

Initial Health Assessments have also been closely monitored throughout the year. 94% of children entering care were seen within 20 working days; from receipt of notification from the Children's Trust.



Children in Care for over 12 months with a current health assessment and dentals:



Voice of the Child:

Modifications within the health assessment tool now ensure that the child's voice is captured within the completed Review Health Assessments. Practitioners discuss the wishes and feelings of the child during the assessment and they are clearly documented. By capturing the voice of the child within the assessment documentation there will be a coherent 'journey' available for the child. It will evidence those professionals undertaking the assessments are able to analyse attitudes and behaviour in order to make necessary referrals and engage appropriate support for the child. The inclusion of discussions regarding Child Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Health also helps to identify children that may be at risk or are possible victims of CSE.

A questionnaire is given to children entering care to capture their voice and focus on ensuring that they receive the best possible service; capturing how they were received into the clinic and their overall experience of their initial health assessment. Results from the questionnaire showed that 92% of children seen found the clinic welcoming, 77% felt that they were respected, 23% did not answer and 69% felt that there was a calm atmosphere. The Designated Nurse has worked alongside young people to ensure that their views are taken into account when health assessments are completed.

A child friendly version of the annual report will be presented at the Corporate Parenting Board.



Social Media

The Children in Care of Sandwell have a Facebook page, which is closely monitored by the Children's Trust. The CCG regularly contribute to the Children's Trust twitter page to highlight some of the partnership working.

Care Leavers

The Care Leavers Passport App was launched as a pilot on 16th January 2020 and will be reviewed later in the reporting year, there have been some delays due to the current Coronavirus pandemic (from March 2020).

The Care Leavers Mobile App is a user-friendly Health Information store for Care Leavers which enables the user to keep important information about Health, appointments, health history, immunisations, medicine and allergies all in one secure place, making it easily accessible at the click of a button. The App has been created/ designed by young people leaving Care and will give instant access to health information. Security within the App ensures that the information is user entry only and password protected. The App is a useful tool if visiting the Doctor and information is required quickly.

The App has the NHS App embedded within it, and within the NHS App you can check symptoms, book and cancel appointments, order repeat prescriptions, view medical record and secure access to GP medical record. The user can choose how the NHS uses their data – register the user's decision on whether it can be used for research and planning immunisations – all childhood immunisations are in one place and it's a great way to keep track of this information, too.

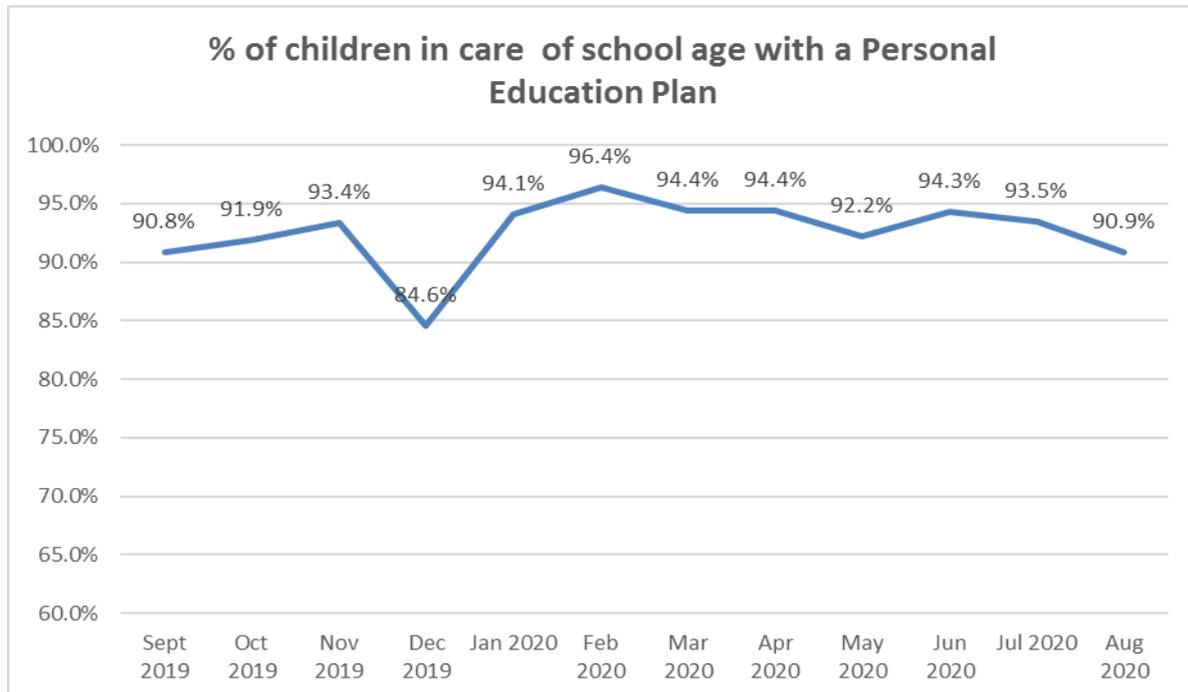
Quality Assurance / Audit

During the reporting period two short audits have been undertaken by the Designated Nurse to assure the quality of initial health assessments; and review health assessments for Children in Care placed out of borough.

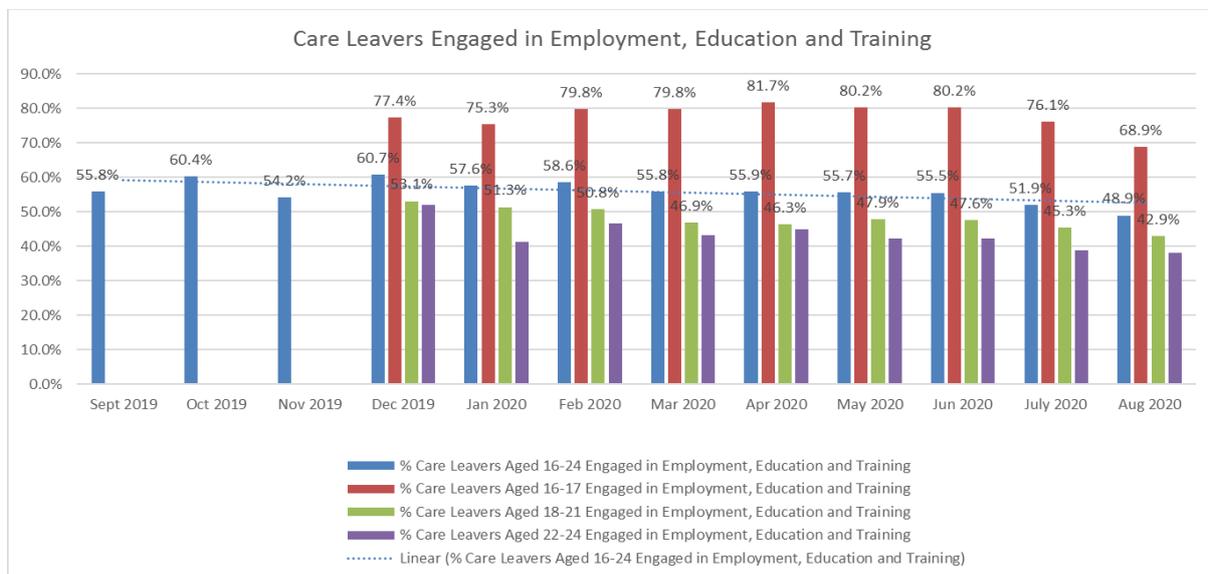
Audits were completed in July 2019 and February 2020. The outcome for both initial and review health assessments was evidence of consistent good quality standard.



2.3 Education Activity and Performance Information: Percentage of Children in Care with a Personal Education Plan:



Care Leavers Aged 16+ Engaged in Employment, Education and Training:



Breakdown of NEET Figures:

- Young person not in education, employment or training due to illness or disability:
- Young person not in education, employment or training due to other circumstances:
- Young person not in education, employment or training due to pregnancy or parenting:



Attainment Outcomes for Children in Care 2020:

We will not hold schools and colleges to account on the basis of exams and assessment data from Summer 2020 and that data will not be used by others, such as Ofsted, Local Authorities, to hold schools and colleges to account. Coronavirus (Covid:19): DfE School and College Accountability 28.09.2020.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-school-and-college-performance-measures/coronavirus-covid-19-school-and-college-accountability>

Key Stage 1:

KS1 Group Performance:

	No. of pupils			% of pupils			Reading			Writing			Maths		
	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020	Expected+			Expected+			Expected+		
							2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020
Sandwell Children in Care	27	27	41	-	-	-	41	44	54	33	39	41	37	52	49
Sandwell All	-	-	-	-	-	-	71	71	70	66	66	66	73	74	72
SEN EHCP	2	0	2	7	0	5	0	0	-	0	0	-	0	0	-
SEN Support	10	9	16	37	33	39	10	22	31	10	11	13	10	56	25
No SEN	15	18	23	56	67	56	67	57	70	53	57	61	60	50	65
In Foster Care	-	27	0	-	100	0	-	44	-	-	41	-	-	52	-
Boys	16	13	22	59	48	54	38	27	50	31	18	36	44	46	45
Girls	11	14	19	41	52	46	46	58	58	36	58	47	37	58	53
Ed. In Borough	17	18	24	63	67	59	35	47	58	29	41	46	35	53	54
Ed. Out of Borough	10	9	17	37	33	41	50	33	47	40	33	35	40	50	41
BME	14	8	20	52	30	49	43	50	60	36	33	45	36	67	55
>1 Placement Moves	19	6	0	70	22	0									

Attainment outcomes for Sandwell Children in Care have risen from outcomes in 2017/18 while national outcomes for all have plateaued, Sandwell Children in Care are closing the gap to all children nationally. The percentage of children achieving the Expected Standard + rising by +13% in reading, +8% in Writing and +22% in Maths (although this fell by 3% from the outcomes of 2019).

Key Stage 2:

Combined RWM standards have risen in the last 3 years but regressed by -14% from 2019/20; this was mainly as a result of the underachievement of children SEN support and children BME. This cohort has suffered the most because of the Covid:19 lockdown and the Virtual School's inability to execute the Sandwell Virtual School Y6Strive intervention programme.



Key Stage 4:

2019/20	4+ English and Maths		
	2018	2019	2020
Children in Care Sandwell	13	16	25
Children in Care National	18	18	-
All Sandwell	51	54	-
All National	64	64	-

The trend in rising attainment outcomes at KS4 continues to close the gap to peers. With the increase in the percentage of children attaining 4+ E&M it can be estimated that there will be an increase in the average point score and a greater uplift in P8 and A8.

Post-16:

NEET				
	Cohort (12 Months +)	Sept (End of Y11)	Year 12	Year 13
2017	42	24%	21%	36%
2018	49	12%	37%	31%
2019	50	14%	12% (2 are awaiting start dates for college and training so the actual figure is 8%)	
2020	63	6% (4 children)		

The Virtual School in partnership with the careers team have co-ordinated and delivered a 'The Sandwell Careers Guarantee' for 4 years. This means that every Sandwell child in care, year 9 (year 8 if they are doing 3-year GCSE's) onwards is guaranteed a careers interview. The arrangement meant co-ordination between the two teams and a careers advisor seconded to the Virtual School. Evidence demonstrates that due to the early interventions and the intervention/perseverance of the year-11 Education Development Officer, the percentage of students not in education, employment or training at the end of year-11 has reduced over the 3-year period from 24% in 2017 to 6% in 2020.

Year 13+:

Young person engaged full-time in higher education (i.e. studies beyond A-Level):

Academic Year 2019-20	
18-year olds	5
19-year olds	2
20-year olds	2
21-year olds	10
22-year olds	5
25-year olds	2
Total	
26	



3. Coronavirus

One of the key considerations of 2020 was of course Covid-19 and the impact that it had on our most vulnerable residents. There were many different elements to our response to Covid-19 to support our children and young people in care and our care experienced young people.

- Identified list of vulnerable children and young people allocated an identified lead worker to monitor attendance
- Maintained MASH support to schools
- Where appropriate the Virtual School, the Social Worker, Carers and School setting have made the joint decision around the attendance of the child at a setting (or partner setting)
- Virtual School have maintained lists of those children in care considered in need of closer monitoring whether attending provision or not
- PEP meetings expected to continue to review the arrangements for all children
- STEPS – one child in care attending, in March they were placed on-role of a school and is being managed there
- Virtual School – Risk Assessment process for children in care to determine best outcomes for all
- Identified disadvantaged young people in need of technology to allow access to education
- Care Experienced young people who are identified as self-isolating have been contacted to ensure that they have food supplies
- Signposting vulnerable families and young people to their local food banks for support
- Supporting families and young people with food and essentials parcels as an urgent priority through the central food hub where they are self-isolating with no other avenue for food and essentials
- Food vouchers to young people and their families who would usually be in receipt of Free School Meals
- Continued forms of Participation
 - WhatsApp and Zoom meetings
 - Interviews
 - Creative competitions
 - Promotion of Mind of my own App
- Weekly newsletters to Foster Carers from Sandwell Children's Trust
- Personal birthday messages to identified young people from the Albion Foundation and West Bromwich Albion Football Club
- Weekly updates for Elected Members from SMBC Children's Services
- Black Country NHS launched a new 24/7 mental health helpline for Sandwell residents

We would also like to share some good news stories collated during lockdown.



This year we celebrate 26 years in fostering.
Can't say it's been all rosy but it's rewarding.
My story I am always proud to tell...

My boy was brought to us at the age of 4 years old.
No boundaries. Didn't know how to play.
He could strip a wire for the copper inside and ask to
'weigh it in' to get money.
But he screamed at a furry toy.

There were lots of plans for him.
One was, not to get his name on the blackboard every
day.

I could feel his confusion and the bruises on each side of
his head explained a lot.
I looked after my boy until he was 16 years old. He left us
and entered the Army.
I worried day and night that he wouldn't make it because
he was academically weak.
But he got through it.

By this time, I was MOM who he proudly invited to his
passing out parade.
I was just so thankful he had got through initial training.
Two years later my boy tells me he is promoted to a
Lance Corporal in the Queens Fusiliers.
I'm so glad I fell in love with that 4 years old and helped
him along the way.

Now he owns his own house and has a beautiful girl and
they have their first baby on the way.
To me that is success.
I look at my boy and feel satisfied and proud of my life as
a Foster Carer.
It is a challenging role to take on, but the rewards are so
much more. When I make a child smile my heart lifts.

I love to make them happy.

Barbara Hale MBE

The lockdown has been a very different experience for all of us.

However, as both my wife and myself are still furloughed, our two grandchildren who are now with us have really benefitted from the security and input that the lockdown has afforded us.

The difference in their behaviour is really noticeable, the attachment issues are fading, and their manners are becoming impeccable.

No doubt there will be tantrums along the way, but the love and happiness in the home now is just a joy to watch.

We have done lots of other things like gardening, decorating and cooking along with some education during the lockdown.

This is our story.

Peter

Myself and my Foster child, have been staying with my mom.

My mom has dementia, so myself and my sister are helping with caring for mom, also I am one of the leaders at West Bromwich Food Bank, which is running 5 days a week, 12-1:30pm, Monday to Friday.

Also, I have been baking for the council which has been helping for meals for some homes. Not forgetting home schooling, which is not too bad, as I have taught for 3 years, years ago in Senegal.

I am enjoying this time to reset, and realise, what is really important.

Pauline Downs

During lockdown I carried out a successful adoption placement of a toddler, which was unlike my previous adoption procedure.

Introductions were preceded by video calls to the parents, and I did this for about 5 minutes every day for 2 weeks.

I found this was very beneficial to the child who very quickly began to recognise their voices. It was also comical as the child would toddle off around the house completely unaware of my lack of 'camera' skills as I tried to keep up with her. It was a good ice-breaker though and because of this, I felt that the actual introductions were much easier.

As a techno dinosaur, conference telephone calls were a new experience to me, so that was a new way for me of holding a meeting. Anyway, the actual placement day went very smoothly, so a successful adoption came out of a logistical nightmare.

I think the phrase "where there's a will, there's a way" sums this up perfectly.

Barbara Wells

BS

Moved in to a training flat following a very high cost placement due to his level of needs prior to moving to the care leavers team. He has taken on board all the support offered to him and during the lockdown period made a request for equipment to complete a garden make over – he has engaged with his neighbour who has no garden to share this and allow her dog to have a run around.

MM

Whilst not being at college studying sport and fitness, MM has taken to keeping his foster family fit and healthy by running football sessions for the children and fitness sessions to keep them active and cover their PE lessons.

BH

Following a number of rejections BH has never let go of his dream of joining the police force. This year he applied and has been rewarded with being one of the first to attend the graduate apprenticeship.

JJ

Gained a 2:1 double degree in Anthology and Social Science at Oxford Brookes University and has been moving forward with employment. He has deferred his masters until he is financially secure.

MK

Passed his Masters in BMng Aerospace Engineering FSK in the Dept of Mechanical, Aerospace and Civil Engineering at Brunel University. He is currently applying for positions.

CC

Completed and gained distinctions in Humanities. She has begun studying for her degree in History, studying at Cambridge.

JJ

Progressed to pass her A Levels and gained a place to study Law at Aston University.

EB

Following a mixed year of education and changes in his accommodation, EB has gained an Apprenticeship at the Harvester pub as a Chef.

JL

Has been attending university following his move to London. During this time, he has gained a part-time job in Costa to support himself. At the same time with his best friend they have set up their own company – Naked Chips. He was furloughed from Costa, continued with his studies but also signed up to support the NHS delivering medication and food. Prior to the voluntary work with the NHS, he was shopping for elderly and formerly unknown neighbours. Using his trade card, he purchased food and supplies from warehouses and also completing his university work online.

AP

Following being furloughed from his lifeguarding work, AP signed up to support the NHS with delivering supplies. Following the work that has taken place, he has now signed up and is completing a paramedic course with a view to attending university next year to complete this full degree.

JP

Following time away from his apprenticeship due to Covid:19 JP has followed his brother to sign up to deliver NHS supplies until he returns.

VT

Following a mixed time at university due to her low mood and depression, VT excelled and has left university after a 4-year degree (including work placement year) with a 1st Class Degree with Honours in Property Management and Real Estate gaining 90% on her dissertation. She has gone on to secure a graduate position as a surveyor full time and will be working from home three days a week. She also runs an online business dealing with hair and beauty.

MB

Gained a 2:1 BSc Health Studies. MB is also a single parent to a very active little boy.

FH

FH has successfully completed his ESOL one and two.

EL

Had a mixed time of studying leading up to lockdown and was pleased to pass her A Level's with a B in Fashion, C in Philosophy and D in Physics. She is now at Newman University completing a 4-year teaching degree.

NB

Despite struggling with her mental health and receiving support from services, NB has passed her A Levels with B, C, D and has been accepted to Dundee University to study Medicine.

4. Corporate Parenting Board

The Corporate Parenting Board is accountable to Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council and is strategically placed to ensure that the Council effectively discharges its role as Corporate Parent for all the children and young people in its care and those aged 18-25 who were previously in the Council's care. The Board is co-chaired by the Council's Lead Member for Children's Services (the Cabinet Member for Best Start in Life) and the Chair of the Care Leavers' Forum.

The Board is made up of:

- Chair and Co-Chair of the Looked After Young People's Board
- Chair and Co-Chair of the Care Leavers' Forum
- Six elected Members of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, including the Lead Member for Children's Services
- Official Observer – Leader of the Council
- Participant Observer – Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny Board
- Participant Observer – Vice Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny Board
- Advisors to the Board – Sandwell Council Officers, Sandwell Children's Trust Officers, Relevant Partner Agencies.

The role of the Corporate Parenting Board is to ensure the delivery of the seven Corporate Parenting Principles (2018). The principles are underpinned by the following Workstreams within the Corporate Parenting Board structure:

- Access to Services
- Child's Voice
- Health and Wellbeing
- Educational Achievement and Attainment
Safeguarding and Stability
- Preparation for Adulthood

The Corporate Parenting Board meets on a bi-monthly basis with a combination of Business and Engagement sessions. In November 2019, the decision was made to adapt the format of Corporate Parenting Board so that alternate sessions would be Engagement sessions facilitated by our young people with the support of the Participation team at Sandwell Children's Trust. The change was made to be more inclusive and ensure our young people have the opportunity to have conversations with their Corporate Parents about the things that matter to them. Our young people told us that the sessions take place after a long day at school and so we worked to reduce the meeting duration to ensure we stay below 1.5 hours wherever possible, we now also ensure we have food at every Corporate Parenting Board session. We save 15 minutes at the beginning of every agenda for our young people and their Corporate Parents to settle in, get some food and have some conversations that aren't structured by the agenda.

In January 2020 we held an Engagement session facilitated by our young people where we collectively considered each of these workstreams to identify the top priorities of our young people with 'Access to Services' as a theme to consider. Our



young people led workshop style groups of a number of their corporate parents and discussed what the priority currently looks like and what a development under this priority might look like.

The Corporate Parenting Board made a commitment after this session to prioritise these actions and to revisit them for a progress update in January 2021. These top priorities are as follows:

Health and Wellbeing

- Faster appointments with Doctors
- Monthly reward activities
- Life skills support in our own homes

Preparation for Adulthood

- Well paid training and employment
- Corporate Parents to take on mentoring roles
- More work opportunities within the Council
- Household maintenance in all accommodation, not just supported accommodation or training flats
- A social space for young people

Educational Achievement and Attainment

- Laptops
- Work Experience in the Council – this needs to be well advertised
- Mentors available

Child's Voice

- Mentors who work for Sandwell
- Life skills training
- Do what you promise and tell us about it

Safeguarding and Stability

- No age discrimination, all children should have a chance
- Balance between privacy and safeguarding
- Point of contact after 10pm



5. Achievements

Access to Services	Corporate Parenting Pledge – Top 10 Messages. Corporate Parenting Strategy 2020-23 and Action Plan 2020-21 developed. Newsletters have been developed by SMBC for Councillors and Council Officers to provide updates on Corporate Parenting and encourage a more active role Go Play Sandwell Facebook Page has been shared with SCT, this advertises activities across the Borough along with activities to do at home during the pandemic. All children are able to access free holiday play provision across the Borough on request, however due to Covid:19, frontline delivery has not been possible. 1,059 play packs have been distributed to children, 26 of those in foster care referrals coming via schools and partner organisations. Contact details for Go Play have been shared and foster carers have access to Drop Box shared activity platform for ideas to support whilst at home shared via the Corporate Parenting Co-ordinator. Youth Services have continued to provide socially distanced face-to-face contact and over the phone support to Care Leavers in the training flats ensuring they have ongoing support and access to food, gas and electricity. Physical youth work offer was suspended from 20 th March due to Covid:19. Youth Services have continued to provide detached youth work in parks and open spaces. We have also adapted to delivering an online offer through Facebook, which has been shared with SCT Participation Team and on their page for Children in Care called 'Sandy Wells' on Facebook.
Child's Voice	Sandwell Council Officers and Cllrs contributed to ensure every Care Leaver received a Christmas present. Sandwell Children's Trust worked hard to distribute these to Care Leavers over the Christmas period. Children in Care and Care Leavers received Easter Eggs Children in Care Dictionary work initiated considering the language used by professionals and consulting with young people on changes to this language and its use. Supported achievement events for children and young people: <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Care Leavers Event○ Christmas Music Concert○ Children in Care Christmas Party○ Care Leavers Christmas Meal Care Leavers Web Portal is being developed. Consultation with young people and partners is ongoing.



	<p>SCT developing Icons which is the official consultancy programme for young people to be paid as sessional workers to undertake interviews, training, young proofing etc.</p> <p>We have connected the views of children and young people from providers of emotional wellbeing and mental health services across Sandwell. This has enabled visibility of children and young people's emerging needs where services have developed/ adapted material in response. Children and young people were asked how they prefer to access services provision, this has resulted in updates/ amendments to ensure that partner information connects to children and young people's access routes.</p> <p>Covid:19 Government provision of laptops has been implemented.</p> <p>Young people continue to support inductions for new staff and Total Respect Training for new foster carers.</p> <p>Digital Corporate Parenting Board sessions successfully held throughout the pandemic.</p>
Health and Wellbeing	<p>January 2020 Health Passport App has been launched. NHS are consistently working to keep the profile of the App raised at every opportunity.</p> <p>School Nurses complete the Review Health Assessment for Children in Care (age 6+).</p> <p>Implementation of mid-year Health Assessments is being discussed at the Children in Care Health Board with support from partners.</p>
Educational Achievement and Attainment	<p>Rising 3-year trend across all Key Stages as Sandwell children in care close the gap to all children nationally.</p> <p>The 2 programmes of intervention at Early Years, Key Stage 2 and Post-16 have had a big impact.</p> <p>The ePEP has now been developed over a 7-month period to include historical attainment data, streamlined the sections for the Social Worker, mandatory fields for attendance, setting of more focused SMART targets.</p> <p>SIPS Music Services offer has been extended from year 4 – year 6, with approximately 90 children (Sandwell and other LA Children in Care attending Sandwell Schools). Included in this is 2 concerts and a cultural trip to see a live performance.</p> <p>Raising Early Achievement in Literacy and Raising Early Attainment in Numeracy, Foster Carers Training X2 on Attachment completed so far this academic year.</p> <p>Collaboration with Art Link has offered opportunities in: Street Dance Workshops, Face Painting, Theatre Experience, Drama and Puppetry Workshop, Writing Competition.</p>



	<p>53 young people in years 11 and 12 received a letter on behalf of the Corporate Parenting Board Members celebrating their outstanding success in this year's GCSE exams. In recognition of their success they were offered a financial gift.</p>
Safeguarding and Stability	<p>SMBC is a fostering friendly organisation offering flexible working arrangements which respond to the needs of foster carers. A policy is now in place which entitles foster carers to paid time-off for various meetings, reviews and training and also to flexible working arrangements to assist with balancing their work and caring responsibilities.</p> <p>Mind of My Own App has been renewed for this year and working with them to push to workers.</p> <p>SCT have developed iSay to encourage young people to utilise the online forms at SCT Website.</p>
Preparation for Adulthood	<p>100% Council Tax paid for care experienced young people extended up to the age of 25.</p> <p>Volunteering Scheme encouraging SMBC Employees to mentor Children in Care and Care Leavers is being developed. Consultation with young people and employees has been completed. Training offer and online portal is currently being established.</p> <p>Independence Programme for 17-18- year olds prior to being offered a training flat and also for young people currently in the training flats. 6-8-weeks accredited course considering the steps to take on your own tenancy. Currently in the planning stages. Cover areas such as budgeting, cooking, cleaning routines, DIY using community resources, etc. Sessions to take place in the crash pad and the chance for young people to spend a few nights in the crash pad will also be incorporated into the course to develop skills further. The programme will be on the system so that young people, foster carers and accommodation providers can also use it as a tool develop independence skills.</p> <p>Specialist employment support is provided to Care Experienced Young People with SEND to support with finding and sustaining paid employment and apprenticeships. This includes: tailored intensive support, vocational profiling, benefit calculations, employability training, employer engagement and in work mentoring. Regular NEET meetings with Connexions, Social Workers and PA's.</p> <p>Employer engagement and reverse marketing for Care Experienced Young People with SEND.</p>



6. Participation

Below are some examples of the work completed by our young people throughout the year:

- We hosted the regional conference for children in care and corporate parents in October which was attended by 12 local authorities. There were workshops which were delivered by Kaleidoscope around Health and Wellbeing, Know Your Rights and Floetry by the Participation Team. The conference received lots of positive feedback and was well attended.
- We participated in National Youth Takeover week, facilitating sessions with Directors to discuss some of the current issues faced by children and young people in care and care experienced young people.
- We have delivered Total Respect Training sessions to Foster Carers around independence. The sessions focused on spending on a budget, support when leaving care and the importance around teaching independence at an early age.
- We helped to host the launch event for the Health Passport App with Jane O'Reilly.
- We hosted the Children's Commissioner at Sandwell Children's Trust. Completed various activities, informing them of what Sandwell does and writing letters to Prime Minister Boris Johnson discussing some of the current issues that they would like to be addressed. Some of the themes included:
 - The need for jargon to change
 - The importance of seeing siblings often
 - Better advertising for foster carer recruitment – including featuring children with disabilities
 - Better matching between carers and children
 - Problems with how schools are spending pupil premium (and the need for laptops for children in care)
 - [Older group] Savings, placement moves, support for transitions, council tax exemption, 25 year old universal credit rate for care leavers, apprenticeship wages, medical/ dental exemption for care leavers, and designated nurse equivalents for care leavers transitioning from CAMHS.
- We managed to keep in touch with the Participation Team in small groups through video calls and through the WhatsApp group. We also liked that the Corporate Parenting Board sent us a message on a postcard.
- A number of us received food parcels from the council's food hub which we were grateful for.
- We have taken part in competitions during lockdown such as the Easter creative arts showcase, the Coram voice poetry competitions and we have submitted our Floems to Arts Connect West Midlands. We received a box of chocolates for taking part and waiting for our t-shirts from Arts Link West Midlands.
- We met up with the Virtual School to discuss our concerns around some of us not being at school and some members who were attending.



- We spoke to the Brook specialist about how life was for us during lockdown and to discuss the use of social media and where we can go to access support if we feel down.
- We met with Kooth who did a presentation about what support they can offer. It was good to know that we can talk to the online counsellors and youth workers about anything.
- We were all concerned about what happened to George Floyd and the police brutality. We had a long discussion about how it affects us and what we can do to support each other and make a stance.
- We took part in a consultation to set up the new independence programme which is called H.O.M.E. (Housing Options Made Easy). This programme will support young people in the training flats which have been identified.
- We have been involved in a lot of interviews as part of the young people's panel for social workers and managers. During lockdown we must have undertaken over 20 interviews for new staff. We are also asking candidates their commitment to Sandwell so they don't just come and then leave.
- We have continued to be part of conference calls to deliver induction sessions to new started as we have done previously.
- We have had several discussions regarding the University and housing offers in the local offer.
- It was agreed as a Forum to host a fortnightly quiz for all Care Leavers to take part in engagement activities to tackle isolation and boredom during lockdown. Prizes being a box of chocolates for the host and winner.
- REES Foundation attended one of our Forum meetings to say they are still around for support if required and gave examples of the support that was offered to some of our members.

7. Feedback

“There is a developing relationship between care leavers and the Corporate Parenting Board. Young people feel listened to and have influenced service delivery. Care leavers’ engagement with the Corporate Parenting Board has a positive impact. For example, care leavers are now prioritised as band one for housing” – Ofsted Care Leavers Monitoring Visit February 2020.



8. Glossary of Abbreviations

BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
CIC	Children in Care
CPB	Corporate Parenting Board
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation
DfE	Department for Education
EET	Education, Employment or Training
EHCP	Education Health and Care Plan
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
GLD	Good Level of Development
IHA	Initial Health Assessment
IRO	Independent Reviewing Officer
KS1	Key Stage 1
KS2	Key Stage 2
KS4	Key Stage 4
LAC	Looked After Children
LAYPB	Looked After Young People's Board
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
PEP	Personal Education Plan
RHA	Review Health Assessment
RWM	Reading, Writing, Maths
SCT	Sandwell Children's Trust
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SSCB	Sandwell Safeguarding Children Board
VOS	Voices of Sandwell
YP	Young People

