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Early Help and Children's Social Care
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Children's Permanence Team

Children's Permanence Team - Quarter 3 Update Report 2020-21

Purpose

- 1.1 The Exit from Care Team was developed in 2013 in response to meeting our sufficiency requirements and ensuring children and young people are cared for in their local communities, with family where possible. From April 2017 to the present day, we have seen an increase in numbers of children exiting long term care and increased cost savings to the Local Authority as a result.
- 1.2 The Exit from Care team is now part of the Children's Permanence Team, alongside the Children's Adoption element of the team. Work undertaken by the team has had a significant impact on reducing numbers of children in care and in rehabilitating children home. This report provides a routine quarterly update on the Children's Permanence Team's progress and strategy for the 3rd quarter of 2020-21.
- 1.3 **Children and Young Persons Summary**
The Exit from Care side of the team, work with children and families/carers to see whether children and young people still need to be in care or if they can safely move to family and friends or live permanently with their foster carers. The adoption side of the team work to help children live with adopters who will become their legal parents/guardians for the rest of that child's life. This report will show some of the work done by the team and help us decide how we do things in the future.

Recommendations

- 2.1 To ensure the Corporate Parenting Committee are aware of the ongoing performance of the Children's Permanence Team in the following areas:
 - How many young people exited care per quarter and the forecast for 2021/22.
 - The arrangements young people are exited from care.
 - The additional work is being completed in the team.
 - Identification of service strengths and areas for development.

Reasons

- 3.1 To ensure the Corporate Parenting Committee have a clear line of sight into the work of the Children's Permanence Team.

Supporting information

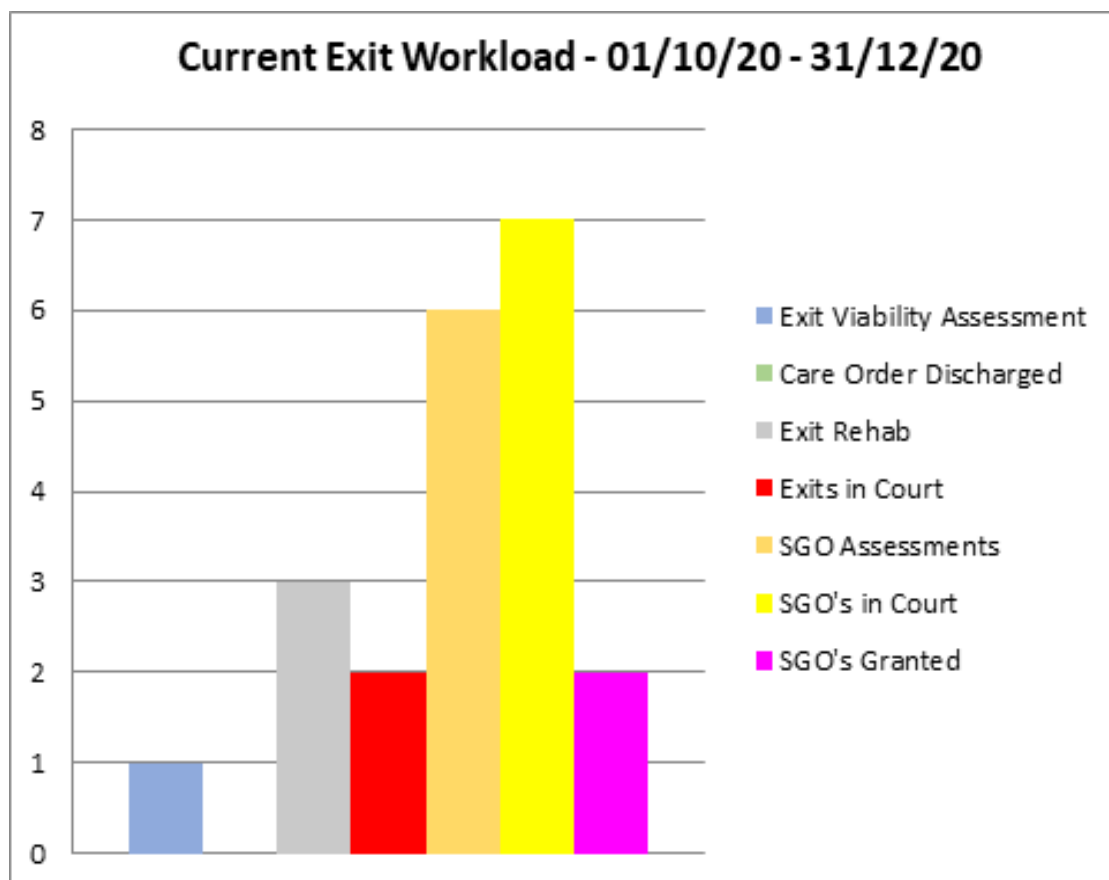
Staffing

4.1 The current team comprises:

- A full-time manager, who manages across the Children's Permanence Team.
- A full-time Senior Practitioner.
- A full-time Social Worker.
- 2 part time Social Workers.
- 1 part time Children's practitioner with a specific role of reviewing Special Guardianship Order and Child Arrangement Order payments.

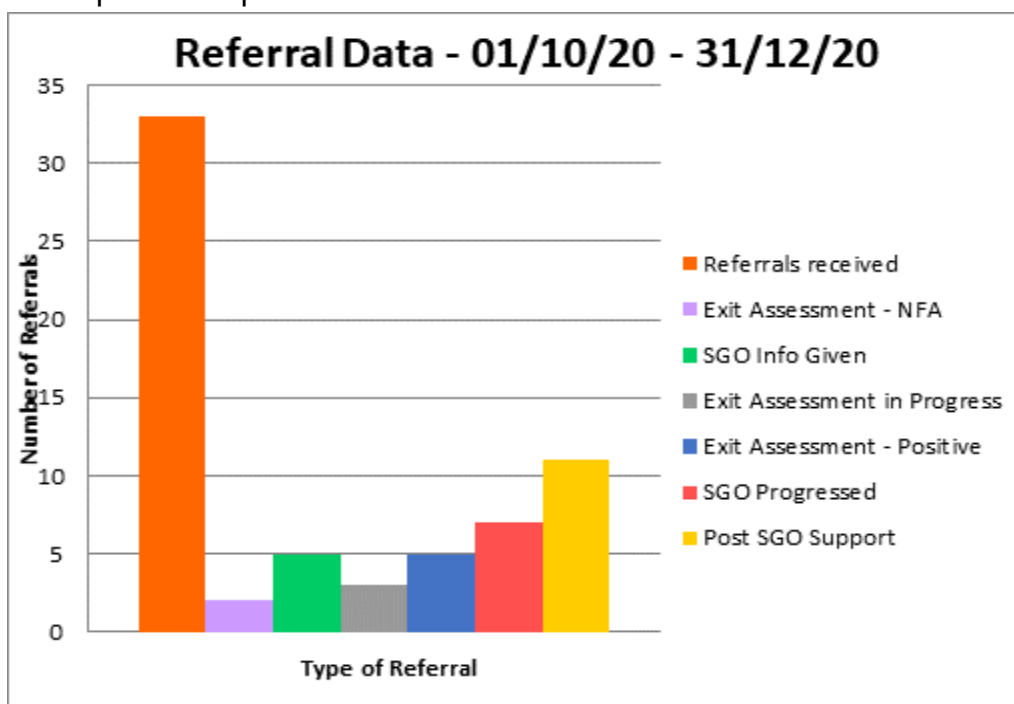
A further full time Social Worker and Children's Practitioner joined the team in December 2020 as part of the overall demand management approach. The Exit team has been fully staffed in quarter 3 with no staff vacancies or sickness.

4. In quarter 3, five children exited care, two with the making of Special Guardianship Orders, one who was placed with a parent and two that returned to extended family members. Another young person was stepped down from external to internal residential care. The graph below shows the workload in the team during Q3, 2020.



Special Guardianship Orders:

- 4.3 Below is a graph outlining the referral and workload data for Q3 2020. This shows the referrals into the team and work that resulted from these referrals. This report will continue to be updated and included at the end of each quarters report.



Projected exits from care in Quarter 4, 202-21

- 4.4 The Coronavirus pandemic has had a huge impact on the number of exits through the courts, with only urgent cases being heard during April to September 2020. Court dates for first hearings are now coming through and it is forecast a further eight Special Guardianship Order's will occur by April 2021 and there are a further nine Special Guardianship Order cases planned for the next financial year.
- 4.5 In addition, there are two children with whom we are planning reunification as part of a Child Arrangement Order and three children as part of Placement With Parents Order.
- 4.6 Decision making takes into account views from all relevant parties including full participation with the child or young person, the social workers, team managers and Independent Reviewing Officers.

Additional Work Being Undertaken

- 4.7 The Children's Permanence Team work closely with all relevant teams across Early Help and Children's Social Care, People Services (the Virtual School) and regionally with Adoption East Midlands.

- 4.8 The team provide support services directly to carers as part of post Special Guardianship Orders to reduce and prevent placement breakdown. This can be through family group meetings and mediation, support with children's behaviour management and short-term family support, creation of support groups for carers and in future devising access to a range of training opportunities. They will also broker support in the form of access to universal support or Early Help support should the family require.

Areas for Development

- 4.9 Areas of development include:
- Continue to develop the support offered to post SGO carers, including applications to the Adoption Support Fund, referrals to the kinship carers post SGO support group, and exploring training opportunities available for kinship carers.
 - Work alongside locality teams to establish a clear protocol on support the Local Authority can offer SGO carers post order. This needs to be clear via the Derby City Council website so that we are open and transparent regarding our services offer.
 - Continue to trial the use of Child Arrangement Orders as a way of Exiting children to the care of Kinship carers.
 - Focus on absent fathers over the next 12 months who may not have been considered for many years as potential carers for their children and explore use of Family Group Conferences, which is also a recommendation in the 2020 Family Justice Council paper.

Adoption

- 4.10 The Children Act 1989, the Adoption Agency Regulations (2011), the Adoption and Children Act 2002, the Education and Adoption Act 2016 and the Adoption National Minimum Standards 2014 placed duties and responsibilities on Local Authorities to provide or arrange to provide an Adoption Service.
- 4.11 The responsibility for children with adoption plans remains with Derby City Council and is undertaken by the Adoption element of the Children's Permanence Team. This team consists of a Team Manager (overseeing all elements of the CPT), five adoption Social Workers (an additional Social Worker started in the team in October 2020) and a part time Independent Worker for Birth Families.

Numbers of children in progress and the specific number in each stage of the process:

- 4.12 Best Interest (BI) (Agency Decision Maker) decisions:

A total of 14 BI decisions were made in Q3, and a total of 33 to date so far this year.

4.15 Home finding:

Between October and December, we were actively home finding for 11 children, of which 5 have secured forever homes.

4.16 Children placed:

In Q3, 14 children moved to their adoptive placements. 43 in total were placed between April and December 2020. This has been a significant achievement across all agencies given the restrictions of COVID.

4.17 Adoption orders:

After a slow start in Q1 and Q2 due to court availability affected by COVID-19, good progress has been made in Q3 with 12 orders being made (one of which was an inter-country adoption) Therefore, to date we have had 20 Adoption Orders.

Projected adoptions for Q4, 20/21

- 4.18 From the children that we already have linked and matched, we project to achieve another 12 placements before the end of Q4, making a total of 55 children in the 20-21 financial year. Derby has not had a figure as high as this since 2015, when 56 children were placed. On average, Derby places around 22 children per year.

Public/stakeholder engagement

- 5.1 N/A.

Other options

- 6.1 N/A.

Financial and value for money issues

- 7.1 No additional resource required/other financial issues to note.

Legal implications

- 8.1 No Implications

Climate implications

9.1 None

Other significant implications

10.1 None

This report has been approved by the following people:

Role	Name	Date of sign-off
Legal		
Finance		
Service Director(s)	Andy Smith, Strategic Director Peoples Services	05.02.21
Report sponsor	Suanne Lim, Service Director for Early Help and Children's Social Care	02.02.21
Other(s)		

Background papers:

List of appendices: