

**REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE AND SCHOOLS**

**1. Decisions -**

**School Admissions Policies for 2025/26 – in progress.**

**Residential Short Break Provision for Children with Disabilities - Robins Provision-** Recruitment to the service is ongoing to scale up to maximum service delivery of 8 beds. Currently running at 4.

**Fostering Allowance Uplift 23/24 and 24/25 –** Finance colleagues are currently reviewing a technical matter that impacts the automated changes to rates depending on age. A number of options are therefore being discussed to ensure that foster families who are affected are not disadvantaged.

**2. Meetings**

Date	Meeting with	Outcomes
09/01/2024	Improvement	Please refer to point 4
06/02/2024	Partnership Board	
09/04/2024		

**3. Service Issues and Forthcoming Activities -**

**Corporate Parenting Developments**

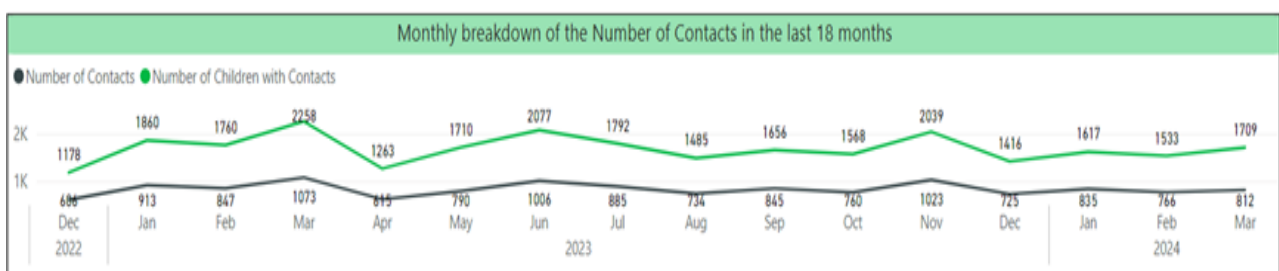
Mark Riddell the National advisor on Care Leavers will be undertaking his 3<sup>rd</sup> visit to Devon on 27<sup>th</sup> June to check our progress in relation to our partnership work with Care Experienced Young People.

**Family Hubs**

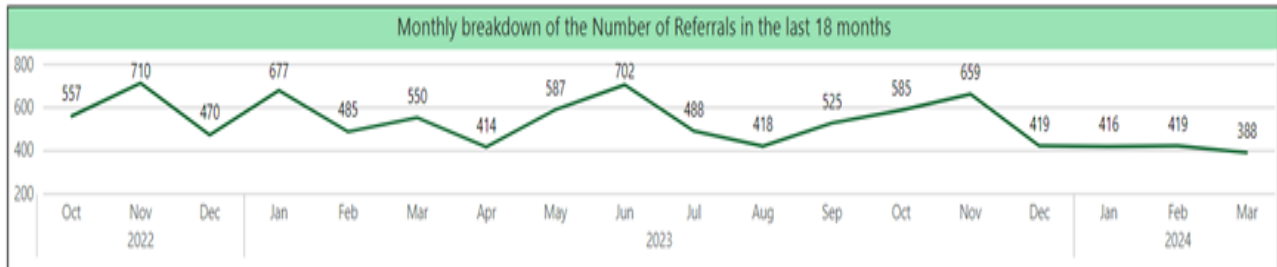
Statutory consultation is taking place between 6 May 2024 - 1 July 2024 regarding proposed changes to Children’s Centre provision to support the development of family hubs.

**4. Performance and Partnerships -**

**Contact/Referrals to the Front Door**



Contacts to the front door increased slightly Jan - March '24, (1617 – 1709) but the number of referrals fell slightly (388 - 416). The rate of contacts per 10,000 children remains lower than comparators. This evidences the impact of the work undertaken in the front door and demonstrates a better understanding of levels of need, i.e., a reduction in the rate of referrals and lower numbers of assessments completed (579 in January, 467 in March).

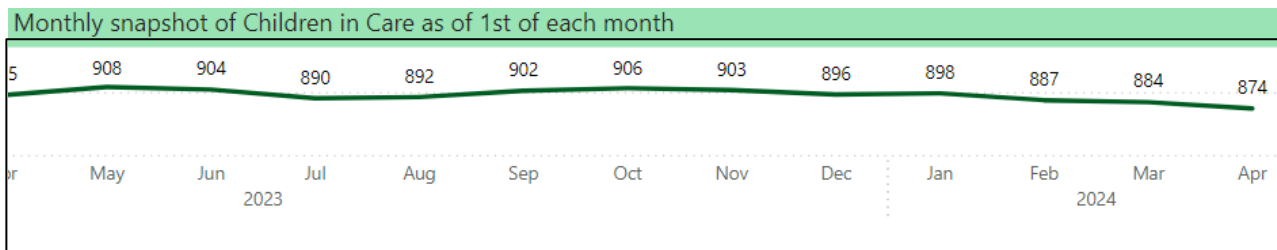


### **Assessments**

The rate of assessments completed (359 per 10,000) has decreased from 459 since January, also lower than the regional average. The rate of S47 child protection enquiries has continued to decrease and is lower than comparators. This lower rate of S47s is attributed to the improvements in the front door teams.

### **Children in Care (CiC)**

Children in Care have reduced from 906 in September to 874 in April 2024.



### **Child Protection Plans (CPP)**

The rates of children in need, children subject to a protection plan and children looked after continues to be lower than comparators.

The number of children subject to a child protection plan has decreased over the course of the last 6 months from 555 in September 2023 to 469 at the end of March 2024.

The rate of Initial Child Protections Conferences has decreased to 41 per 10,000 which is lower than the average so far in 2023/24 and comparators. This is a consequence of the reduction in S47 enquiries.

Five children (1%) of the children subject of a child protection plan have been the subject of a plan for more than two years. This is an increase from November when none of the children had been the subject of a plan for longer than 2 years. This is significantly lower than comparators (around 4%) but will be monitored closely by the child protection conferencing service since this is a measure of the effectiveness of protection plans with children either being protected in their families or by instigating care proceedings.

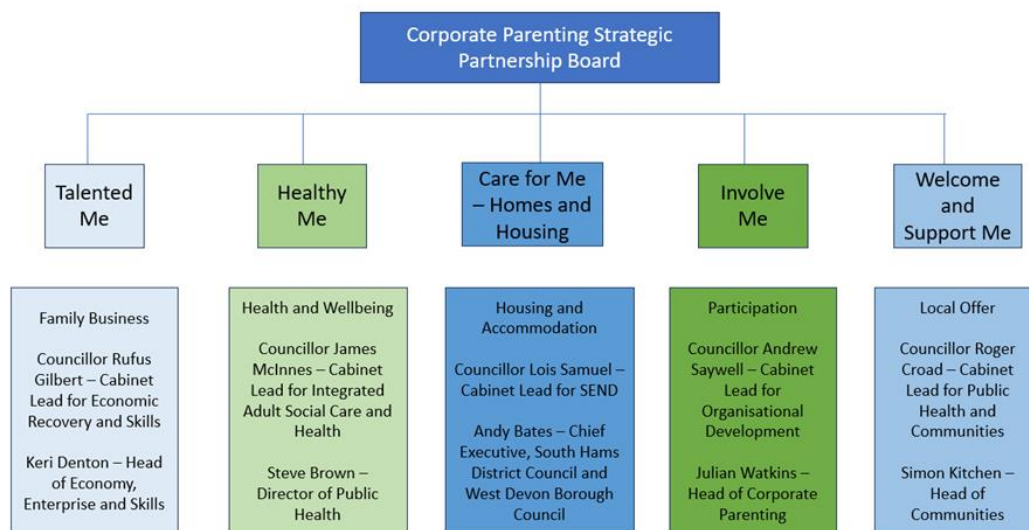
## **Corporate Parenting**

The new-style Corporate Parenting Strategic Board and its 5 subgroups commenced in September 2023. There have now been 3 cycles of the Strategic Board since this point and the new governance structure is now starting to embed.

Mark Riddell, the DfE Advisor on Corporate Parenting, revisited Devon on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2023, and is due to return in June.

Mark was pleased to see that the Council had adopted many of his recommendations and that we had implemented changes to the structure of the Board.

The new structure of the Board and its subgroups are as follows:



Subgroups are Chaired by a Cabinet Member, supported by a lead officer. The subgroups have various focusses that they are working on, with a key driver to support our Children in Care and Care Leavers to have stronger educational, health, and housing outcomes.

- A new talent and aspirations bank having been launched to match care leavers to work experience offers.

- There has been some progression in terms of Care Leaver housing needs, both in terms of reducing numbers of young people in B&Bs and also thinking about how to future proof the system.
- There have been new offers of the ASK Jan app to support some Care Leavers with their emotional health needs, and the recent appointment of two emotional health workers.

The Corporate Parenting Strategy and Vision is now ready for publishing having been agreed at the last Strategic Board,

There is more to do to finalise some areas of the Guarantee for our Care Leavers, which is still not consistent across all of Devon with different districts still having different offers.

We have ratified acceptance of the Southwest Graduating Care Regional Offer that our young people helped to shape, and our own local offer from a Devon County Council perspective is nearing completion and is now a working draft with young people.

## **5. Any Other Headings**

### **Ofsted Monitoring Visit Report 11 April 2024**

The latest monitoring visit in January looked at the Front Door, assessment and early help services. The report is clear that we are improving. Inspectors recognised that permanency of the senior leadership team in Children's Services is stabilising the service and they noted their determination in prioritising making the Front Door service safer.

A key finding was that the Front Door, had left no children at unassessed risk of significant harm. They also recognised improvement in the social work / early help interface and thresholding, reducing the number of families that need to be allocated to social workers. Noting that social workers' caseloads were now more manageable, morale has improved, and front-line staff say they feel increasingly confident in their manager's guidance and direction.

### **A Place Called Home Programme**

The Place Called Home Programme has been reinstated. Overseeing 6 projects running concurrently to tackle sufficiency, reduce the number of children who currently live out of county and improve the choices of stable accommodation available to young people.

The programme will reduce the costs currently generated by existing arrangements that are sometimes unsuitable, or out of county or plainly not ideal.

The overarching aims are that wherever possible, children remain in the family home and where children and young people come into our care, they are supported to swiftly and safely return to their families. For children and young people within our care, where living with their birth family and wider

network is not a viable option, we will provide the right home first time round. Where young people leave care, we will deliver improvements to the support provided so young people leaving care thrive as independent young adults.

Ultimately, the programme will provide stability and sustainability to the care system as a whole, with a focus on providing the right help at the right time in order to prevent risks and needs escalating.

### **Attendance Data – Mandatory Change 18th August 2024**

From 18<sup>th</sup> August 2024 it will become a statutory requirement for state funded schools to provide attendance data to the DfE using a standardised tool. Devon County Council has migrated 95% of schools to the new collection method which will enable them to connect directly with the DfE system. We are working with the remaining 15 schools to complete sign up.

DfE have said that the data will identify national, regional, and local trends and patterns of school attendance, inform policy thinking across the department, monitor and evaluate the delivery of programmes and explore if it is possible to gain additional policy insight by linking it to other data sources within DfE.

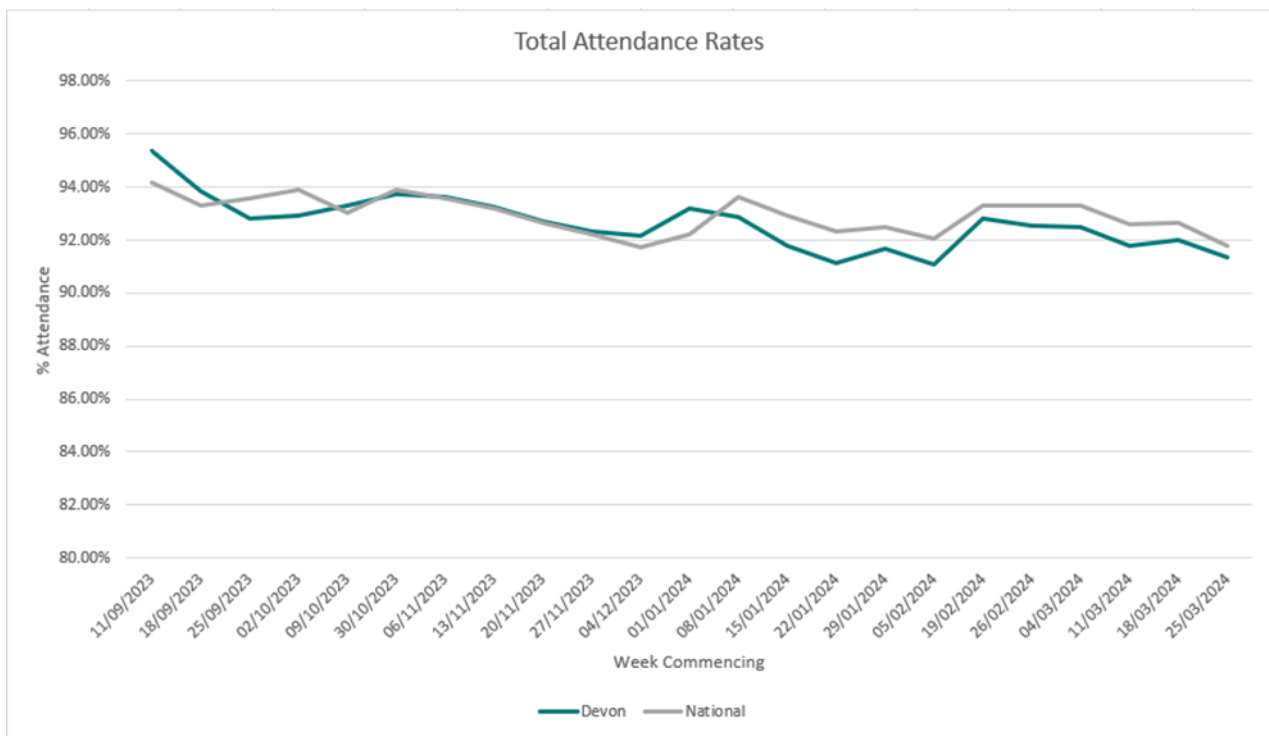
I will report back later in the year on how this has impacted on our schools.

Since last September the attendance in our primary schools has improved so they are now in line with national trends (96% attendance) although there continues to be variance between schools. In secondary schools we are 2% below the national trend. We have noted an increase in both national and local absence in the past few weeks. We have put plans in place for the Attendance Improvement Officer team to do more to help support schools in driving up attendance. Schools have known about the government's intention to publish results for some time.

Further information is available on the below link.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6617fadc6b4cf65594d1ead0/Guidance\\_for\\_sharing\\_daily\\_pupil\\_attendance\\_data\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6617fadc6b4cf65594d1ead0/Guidance_for_sharing_daily_pupil_attendance_data_.pdf)

The current position for Devon absence against national for 2023/24 academic year is displayed below:



**Celebrating Youth Voice Awards 2024**

On 19 April 2024, we held our annual Youth Voice Awards at the Positive Lights Project in Exeter. I was delighted that, our Chief Executive, Donna Manson, the Leader Cllr John Hart and Cllr Lois Samuels, the Cabinet Member for Special Educational Needs and Disability; were also in attendance to meet our young people and hear about their achievements.

This event is an opportunity for us to bring together many of our young people and to celebrate their impact across the year. Those young people recognised at the event have all been at the forefront of driving changes in the way that we support children, young people and their families across Devon.

In total we celebrated 60 winners chosen because of their contribution to youth voice. I am incredibly proud of their achievements. Some of the highlights include securing protected characteristics, council tax exemption for care leavers in Devon, the roll out of Total Respect Training, raising awareness and improving mental health provision through our Youth Voice Saturday Events and working with local organisations across Devon to help them to improve accessibility to venues. Thank you to everyone involved in delivering the event, especially our young people and their families.

The next Children in Care celebration event is on 5 July 2024.

**Councillor Andrew Leadbetter**

## **Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care and Schools**