

REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING GROUP

23 MARCH 2016

1. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR GLOUCESTERSHIRE IN RELATION TO SERVICES FOR CHILDREN IN CARE

The Corporate Parenting Group met on 22 February 2016, where the members of the group received an update on the number of children living in care and on current performance targets, (for the period ending 31 January 2016).

The following information was reported at the meeting.

a) Overall direction and numbers of Children in Care

A total of 551 children were reported as being in care at the end of January, a rise of 11.5% from 494 in January 2015. Just under half of children in care (39.0%) were placed with the agreement of their parents (215). Of the other children, 51.7% (285) children were placed through the court process whilst their permanent future was being determined, 7.3% (40) had a placement order granted and 2.0% (11) were placed under police protection, under an emergency protection order or on remand.

Most children were placed in family environments with foster carers (81.1%), while a small proportion (8.3%) were placed in residential schools or homes, 3.3% (18) placed for adoption and (40) 7.3% placed with their parents or in independent living arrangements

b) Children coming into care for a second or subsequent time

Of the 330 children coming into care this year, 64 (19.4%) came into care for a second or subsequent time.

c) Children and Young People placed outside Gloucestershire

68 Children in Care were placed out of county, representing 12.3% of the care population. This was slightly up on October's position, (64 (11.9%).

d) Children and Young People placed in neighbouring councils

Most children and young people (67.6%) were placed in authorities bordering Gloucestershire. This is considered better for the children and young people, as they are nearer to home and are able to access support from children's social care and partner services more easily.

Of those placed in a neighbouring LA, one was in Oxfordshire; one in Swindon; 12 in Herefordshire; six in Monmouthshire; 12 in Wiltshire, and 13 in Worcestershire.

Herefordshire houses a well established residential school which accounts for a number of young people placed with that authority.

e) Children and young people placed at a distance

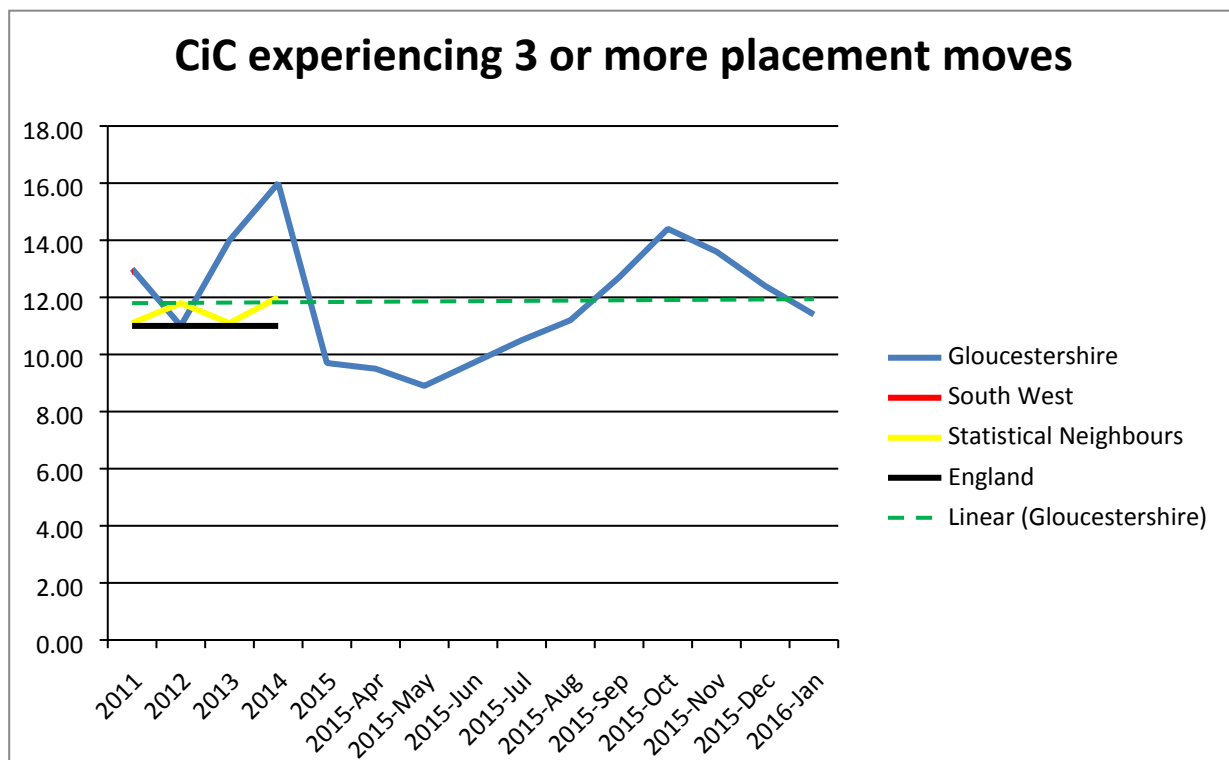
22 children and young people were placed at a further distance

- i. 15 children and young people were are placed in authorities in the South West (8 in South Gloucestershire; 5 in Devon, and; 2 in Somerset)
- ii. 7 children and young people were placed outside of the South West in the Authorities of Middlesex (3); Shropshire (3) and West Berkshire (1)

Most children placed out of county were placed in a family setting (foster or adoptive care), currently 64.7% (44 children). 24 (35.3%) children and young people were placed in residential or other settings.

f) Achieving a stable home for children and young people

In the 12 months to the end of January, 69 children changed placement 3 or more times. This resulted in a performance percentage of 11.4%, stabilising the upward trend of recent months. Some movement of placements can be expected (for example long term adoptive placements), the aim would be to minimise moves of families for children and young people. When compared nationally and with statistical neighbours, Gloucestershire is in-line with statistical neighbours (12.0%) and the national (11.0%) averages published for the 2013/14 financial year.

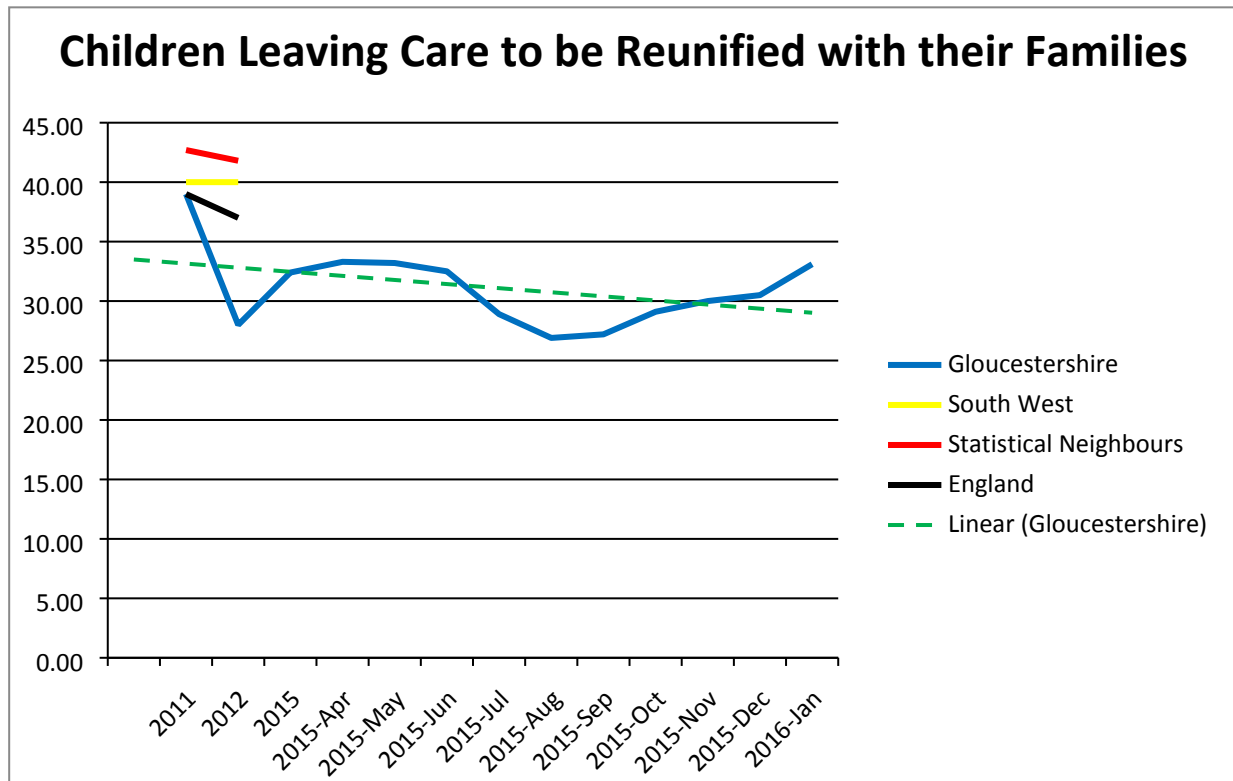


CiC Experiencing 3 or more placement moves

Of the children in care for at least 2.5 years, (139 children), 63.3% (88) have been in the same placement for at least two years.

g) Children and young people leaving care to return to their families

Of the 239 children leaving care in the rolling year to the end of January 2016, 33.1% (79) were reunified with their families, slightly up on 30.5% (72) as reported at the end of December 2015.



Where possible, the aim would be to return children and young people to their families as quickly as possible. There is a balance to be struck between returning children to their parents, (as detailed above), and the situation deteriorating with children returning to care for a second time. Currently Gloucestershire appears to be returning fewer children to their families than comparative, national and South West councils.

2. CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL MEETS CORPORATE PARENT GROUP

Following on from the success of the first 'Children in Care Council meets Corporate Parenting Group' event held in October 2015, a second event was held at the University of Gloucestershire's Oxstalls Campus on Friday 19 February 2016.

Ten young people aged 12 to 19 hosted the event, focussing on key topics selected by the young people themselves, including 'how to live independently', 'settling into a flat' and 'managing a weekly budget'. The event was considered a huge success, with young people and representatives from the Corporate Parenting Group working together to produce several positive outcomes.

As reported in the Spring Edition of the 'Voice Magazine for Children in Care and Care Leavers in Gloucestershire', the event was "great fun with lots of lively debate".

When asked what was considered the most positive aspect, one young person said, “Everyone listening and taking our thoughts and opinions seriously, also hearing Corporate Parents points of view”. Another young person said, “I love going to these events and being part of it all”. The session was well represented with one Corporate Parent stating, “It was really enjoyable and thought provoking, the young people were articulate and organised, Fab!”

It is hoped another event will be held in the Autumn.

3. VOICE MAGAZINE

PDF versions of the ‘Voice Magazine for Children in Care and Care Leavers in Gloucestershire’ have been circulated to members by email in advance of the meeting.