

LGSCO Key Questions (December 2020)	Children's Services Response
Accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds	
<p>How many 16 and 17 years old are in bed and breakfast accommodation or in unregulated homes?</p>	<p>As at December 2020 Tameside Housing Advice and Children's Services report no 16 and 17 years olds accommodated in B&B provision.</p> <p>As at 12 January 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23 care leavers aged 16 and 17 accommodated in unregulated semi-independent provision as secured via the Supported Accommodation and Independent Living Scheme (SAILS) framework – (a GM wide facility) • 4 care leavers aged 16 and 17 are accommodated in Supported Lodgings provision. • 1 care leaver aged 16 and 17 is accommodated in a Transition Supported Tenancy.
<p>What action is the Council taking to ensure their welfare is promoted and safeguarded?</p>	<p>As at October 2020 all 16 and 17 year old homelessness presentations have been allocated within the Safeguarding teams. Referrals are triaged within the MASH and progressed to Safeguarding Social Workers to undertake joint Homelessness assessment alongside colleagues in Tameside Housing Advice.</p> <p>Unregulated semi-independent provision is spot purchased via SAILS framework and must adhere to the minimum standards. Allocated Social Workers and Personal Advisors continue with statutory visits and where concerns arise for the quality of provision they are escalated to the Placements Service for targeted quality assurance activity.</p> <p>The Supported Lodgings Scheme is coordinated by a Social Worker based in the Leaving Care Service. All hosts are assessed and reviewed regularly. DBS checks, references and home visit assessment is undertaken prior to placement. Monitoring visits are maintained by the Supported Lodgings Coordinator alongside Statutory Visits by the allocated Social Worker with further support available via the allocated Personal Advisor.</p> <p>Transition Supported Tenancies are monitored under Management Agreement that sets out the requirements for ensuring the safety of the property alongside the service level support as provided by the Transition Support Workers. Furthermore, Statutory visit requirements are maintained by the allocated Social Worker with further support available via the allocated Personal Advisor.</p> <p>Local joint agreement between Housing and Children's Services prevents use of B&B for Care Leavers aged over 18 if presenting as homeless, if Tameside Housing Advice (THA) are not able to provide suitable temporary accommodation, Children's Services will undertake a supported accommodation search and the young person will be actively supported and encouraged to accept the supported accommodation offer. THA will continue to deem this accommodation as temporary housing and therefore it should not impact on Housing status and priority need.</p>

The Placing of Children in Care

How many children in care are placed out of area, or at a distance, and are social workers visiting these children in accordance with statutory requirements?

As at 1 January 2021, 42% (306) of Cared for Children were placed outside the local authority area.

As at 1 January 2021, 76.8% of Cared for Children had a recorded Statutory Visit within timescale. This compares to 77.4% of the 306 Cared for Children placed outside the Local Authority area.

Performance for children placed in and out of borough is comparable but we need to focus on improving compliance. We have to acknowledge the impact of COVID-19 in terms of visiting patterns for our social workers (Tameside has been in Tier 3 for some time, then moved into the newly created tier 4 in December, and is now in a full lockdown). The figure is likely to increase for those children who may have had visits over the Christmas period but the recording was not uploaded until January 2021.

At the beginning of the pandemic, Tameside designed a risk assessment tool specifically for COVID-19 to assess the level of risk for cared for children. Plans with regards to statutory visits were devised based on whether a child required face-to-face visits or whether we could move to a more virtual model. In cases when there have been concerns that children may be at risk or is in an unstable placement, they have usually been visited face-to-face by social workers and other professionals throughout the pandemic.

Temporary regulations (easements) allow visits for CfC to be carried out over the telephone, video link or other electronic communication methods (COVID-19: guidance for children's social care services. Updated 7/1/21). As good practice, children and young people should be told why a face-to-face visit is not possible. This easement doesn't provide a blanket cover for all such visits to be held virtually. Wherever possible and safe face-to-face visits should continue. We have risk assessed all children and young people to ensure that virtual visits are only used when appropriate. All uses of this temporary flexibility must be recorded in individual case files.

There has been a greater reliance on remote communication through telephone contact, messaging and video calling. Social workers and managers consider children's and young people's preferences about methods of communication as part of the risk assessment wherever possible. The risk assessments are 'dynamic' documents so they are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure we continue to meet our statutory requirements.

How many placement moves does a child in care have on average?

As at 1 January 2021, the average number of placements within the current period of care for cared for children in Tameside was 2.7

The average number of placements in the last 12 months was 1.4
N.B. the first placement is counted as 1 so this indicator tracks total number of placements not number of changes of placement.

<p>How many children in care are now in permanent placements?</p>	<p>68 children - Placement with foster carers in a long term matched placement. Legal Permanence through a SGO needs to be considered for these children.</p> <p>123 children – Placed with connected carers on a long-term basis. The Local Authority will be progressing these cases where appropriate and possible through to legal permanence through Special Guardianship Order (SGO).</p> <p>19 children placed for adoption but not yet adopted. These children will no longer be cared for once the adoption order has been granted.</p>
<p>Have children in care been placed in a school within 20 days of a placement move if they are unable to attend their previous school?</p>	<p>All school enquiries and applications are made immediately and where possible prior to a placement move in consultation with Virtual School and SEN if there is an EHCP.</p> <p>Whilst unfortunately due to the bureaucracy that can exist between local authorities the 20 day target is not always met, however, all have an education offer via a tutor who is commissioned immediately to bridge any possible time gaps due to consultations with other LA's.</p>
<p>What action is the council taking to ensure sufficient accommodation is available for children in their care within their home area?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The need to ensure there are sufficient foster families is captured as a priority in the corporate plan Our People, Our Place, Our Plan. 2. Tameside's 7 programmes for LAC sustainability include investment in two new children's homes 'Positive Futures' which will operate at the edge of care to reduce the long term need for care and longer term residential. 3. Tameside is signed up to the Greater Manchester Sufficiency Plan developed as a commitment from the GM Children's Plan. 4. Children Leadership Team has in December 20 received a report on the existing Tameside Sufficiency Plan which identified progress and agreed to draft a new plan reflecting our progress and greater ambition in the first half of 2021. 5. Tameside has undertaken a review of its fostering offer and recruitment strategy which will be taken to leadership Q1 2021. 6. In late 2020 Tameside has commissioned a review of its existing residential estate to ensure it's meeting the needs of its LAC population. 7. The Transition Support Service has secured 15 new tenancies for care leavers and further work streams to expand capacity are being explored. 8. New work streams to improve working with local suppliers have been launched to increase the number of children placed close to home. 9. Tameside has joined with other LAs to form a Regional Adoption Agency to increase the sufficiency of adopters.

<p>Do children in care have up to date personal education plans?</p>	<p>Yes. The Virtual School consistently reports termly completing above 97%.</p>
<p>How does the virtual school head manage the school age pupil premium?</p>	<p>Schools are offered up to £600 per term on completion of a PEP document outlining the costs of support above and beyond to ensure any education gaps are narrowed. Additional support can be requested for Educational Psychology and SEN support whilst preparing for an EHCP. All requests for support are considered when a short term intervention is needed to ensure the stability of a school placement likewise additional tutoring where necessary.</p>
<p>Are there delays in the Education, Health and Care plan process?</p>	<p>over the last 12 months – we have conducted 27 assessments and delays were experienced for various reasons (including COVID).</p> <p>New referrals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority in Borough are met within timescales, co-ordination of social care advice can though sometimes be a barrier. • Movement out of area during the statutory process can cause delays • Referrals made by social care for statutory assessment which does not triangulate education, health and care involvement – trying to monitor this with virtual schools to offer advice and support to social care prior to submission <p>EHCP already in place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SEN Team/education are not always involved in planning for young people with an EHCP when it comes to a change of placement – or are not informed when a place has been found • Struggle to determine placement (usually Specialist SEMH) in new areas, even independent – as an interim measure we secure tutors and meeting weekly is supporting less drift • Challenge to co-ordinate ongoing assessment and a lack of understanding why this is required to inform provision in the plan – we often have a view on need but this is not supported with what provision should look like • We are often contacted at point of crisis.
<p>Learning From Complaints</p>	
<p>What concerns have independent reviewing officers raised about children in care and are they satisfied that care planning is appropriate and that</p>	<p>The concerns raised by Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) are detailed in the Annual Report 2019/20.</p> <p>221 disputes were raised by IROs regarding Cared for Children during 2019/ 20. Overall the most common reason for raising a dispute was the absence of pre meeting reports which was identified in 30% of stage one disputes raised. The next most common issue was ‘Referrals not made to progress agreed actions’ – which occurred in 12% of disputes followed by ‘Lack of a clear Permanence Plan from 2nd review onwards’ and ‘Insufficient support provided to carer/placement provider’ both of which were identified in 11% of disputes.</p>

<p>recommendations, made at their statutory review meetings, are being implemented promptly?</p>	<p>Anecdotally, in the current year (2020/21) there is continued concern from IROs about some decision made in Reviews not being implemented and this can lead to drift and delay. There also sometimes seems to be a lack of ambition in supporting some of our more complex children and young people to achieve the best possible outcomes and there is some evidence of drift in care planning. In part, this is due to significant staff turnover in the Cared for Children service area. However, IROs have been reassured by the approach taken by the newly appointed HoS and Service Unit Manager for Cared for Children.</p>
<p>Is there a robust dispute resolution process to ensure cases are appropriately escalated to senior managers by independent reviewing officers?</p>	<p>There is a written Dispute Resolution Process (DRP) in place that is used by both the Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) and the Child Protection Conference Chairs (CPCs). This process was updated in 2018. In keeping with the Policy most concerns are resolved informally by IROs and CPCs working collaboratively with Social Workers and Team Managers. There is a clear escalation process in place which is followed and has led to greater challenge by IROs and CPCs on case files. The DRP will be reviewed this year led by the Head of Service and Service Lead for IROs.</p>
<p>Are the council's leaflets or website information about how to make complaints clear to children and young people? Are they easily available?</p>	<p>Electronic copies of leaflets have been sent to the Denton Centre to display in the reception area. The complaints pages on the website have also been recently updated and include this information and can be viewed here Make a Children's Social Care Complaint (tameside.gov.uk). Information is also provided directly to a child/young person by their Social Worker.</p>
<p>Are children and young people told about their entitlement to ask for an advocate?</p>	<p>We would always inform the Young Person of their right to access an advocate and give the contact details and complaint leaflet, most complaints we receive from young people are through the advocacy service.</p>
<p>How many complaints has a council received from children in care (either from them or on their behalf)? What has been the outcome and the learning from them?</p>	<p>Since April 2020: 9 complaints received from or on behalf of children in care, of these 1 was made by a young person directly and 5 were through the advocacy service. The remaining 3 were from parents/carers on behalf of the children. The themes of the complaints from young people include feeling the SW is not listening to their wishes, not happy with the constant change of SWs, lack of support from SWs and poor communication.</p> <p>Of the 9 complaints received from or on behalf of young people 2 were not upheld, 6 were partially upheld and 1 is still under investigation</p>

Children in Secure Accommodation

<p>How many children in care are deprived of their liberty either in youth offending units, secure children's homes or in a child or adolescent psychiatric unit? Are they still receiving services as a child in care?</p>	<p>1 in a YOI - In terms of those in YOI's or detained on criminal grounds, then they continue to have reviews in line with expectation, though this is restricted at present and needs to be done remotely as the secure estate is not accepting any visitors.</p> <p>2 in secure welfare</p> <p>2 in Tier 4 Psychiatric units</p>
<p>Is there sufficient planning and support for these children when released or discharged from these secure settings?</p>	<p>In terms of YOIs, then CSC staff are involved throughout the custodial part of the sentence and as such are working towards the resettlement plan and release date from the point of sentence. It is written into the terms of reference for Resource Panel that young people have to be considered there to ensure that an address is available in sufficient time for the final planning meeting. In short, yes there is sufficient planning in place for children who are detained on criminal grounds and in the juvenile estate</p> <p>Those in Welfare Secure remain subject to all the usual Cared for Childrens reviewing processes and as part of a secure application an exit strategy in relation to next placement option is required to be submitted. This is also kept under review in addition to the Statutory Review process that applies to all cared for children, by a secure review panel (with an independent member) and by the Courts.</p> <p>In relation to those in psychiatric facilities whilst agencies do meet to plan aftercare arrangements prior to a child being discharged, this is not part of a formally agreed policy/pathway. Further work is planned in terms of formally structuring this process.</p>
<p>Has the council agreed with its health partners an aftercare policy for children in care, who have been detained under the Mental Health Act then discharged into the community?</p>	<p>Section 117 of the Mental Health Act 1983 requires clinical commissioning groups (CCG's) and local authorities, in co-operation with health and social care providers and voluntary agencies, to provide or arrange for the provision of aftercare to particular patients detained in hospital for treatment who then cease to be detained. This includes patients granted leave of absence under section 17 and patients going on to community treatment orders (CTOs). It applies to people of all ages including children and young people. A young person who has been admitted to hospital for assessment and/or treatment may be a child in need and assessments and services should be provided as appropriate. Whilst agencies do meet to plan aftercare arrangements prior to a child in care being discharged, this is not part of a formally agreed policy/pathway. Further work is planned in terms of formally structuring this process.</p>

Children Leaving Care

How many care leavers are being provided with services and are the arrangements satisfactory?

As at 12 January 2021 there are 155 Eligible Care leavers aged 16 and 17. (Those still subject to Cared For Status)

16	72
17	83

And 278 Relevant, Former Relevant and Qualifying Care Leavers aged 17-24 (Those who are no longer Cared For)

17	2
18	62
19	62
20	73
21	44
22	21
23	10
24	4
Grand Total	278

Each care leaver is allocated a Personal Advisor to support, befriend and assist. An individual Pathway Plan is agreed with the Care Leaver.

With the Covid 19 outbreak the majority of Social Landlords stopped activity in from April 2020. Nationally the Government agreed a stay on evictions that currently runs until 15.01.2021. As we now enter lock down number 3 it is thought this stay of evictions will be extended but for no fault evictions only. The impact of this has been a significant reduction in the availability of move on lets for Care Leavers and ultimately delaying the transition out of Children's funded placements. Social Landlords have had a significant reduction in turnover, although this is anecdotal with no specific figures known.

	<p>Care Leavers have continued to sign up to all registered providers and are able to bid on properties with continued priority status, however even with priority, waiting lists are significantly long, leading to a number of 18/19 year old care leavers who are “tenancy ready” remaining in high cost supported accommodation.</p> <p>Homelessness presentations to the rough sleeper service also increasing dramatically over the past 12 months, with more homeless applications this has significantly increased demand on housing stock and specifically for one bed tenancies, creating significant demand on limited supplies in the district.</p> <p>Transition Support Service (TSS) agreed expansion now stands at 15 supported tenancies with efforts ongoing to secure the final 2 tenancies to take us to the agreed limit of 17.</p> <p>There is adequate provision for multi-occupancy semi-independent provision as commissioned locally under the SAILS framework for those care leavers that need higher levels of support. However, we have experienced challenges in identifying timely supported tenancies locally, this again links to high local demand for one bed properties coming on to the market. This also impacts on cost passed on to the Local Authority with providers identifying having to pay above the market rents in seeking to secure provision.</p> <p>Care Leavers Multi-Agency Accommodation Panel (CLMAAP) will be reviewing all 18+ Funded Children’s provision in January 2021 supporting further understanding of the impact of Covid over the last 12 months.</p> <p>Corporate wide review has identified Care Leaver accommodation and move on provision as a key area for recommendations. Additionally, the Leaving Care Service Unit Manager is providing supporting information for the internal commissioning and sufficiency review and towards the broader GM Strategy for Care Leavers.</p> <p>Working partnerships with Tameside Housing Advice have been strengthened with support from the Community Safety and Homelessness team and there is now a broad commitment to support ‘No Intentional Homeless’ status for all Care Leavers. Whilst support is in place to address issues with any individual care leaver at risk of homelessness, policy documents need to be updated to reflect the position of the Council and to ensure this agreement is sustained.</p>
<p>Does the council have a Local Offer on its website which explains what care leavers are entitled to?</p>	<p>The Leaving Care Service recently co-produced an updated Care Leavers website.</p> <p>A Care Leaver undertaking a ring fenced apprenticeship within Policy and Communications fully supported the design and creation of the website found at: Care Leavers (tameside.gov.uk)</p> <p>Tameside’s published Local Offer to Care Leaver was approved by Cabinet in February 2019 and can be found at: LocalOfferForCareLeaversStrategy2019.pdf (tameside.gov.uk)</p>