



## TRUST BOARD / SLT COVER SHEET

	<p>The cover sheet purpose is to provide the Trust Board/Committee with a clear summary of the paper being presented, how it impacts on the people we serve, key matters for attention and the ask of the Trust Board/Committee</p> <p>The Accountable Director must satisfy themselves that the cover sheet is accurate and fully reflects the paper. The expectation is that the Accountable Director has read and agreed the content of both the cover sheet and paper.</p>	
<b>Meeting and Date of meeting</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Trust Board</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>29 January 2026</i></p>	
<b>Title of paper</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Corporate Parenting Report</i></p>	
<b>Accountable Director</b>	<b>Name</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Colm McCafferty</i></p>
	<b>Position</b>	<p style="text-align: center;">Director of CYP&amp;WS and Executive Director of Social Work</p>
<b>Report Author</b>	<b>Name</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Marita Magennis</i></p>
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<b>This paper sits within the Trust Board role of:</b>	<p style="text-align: center;">Accountability</p>	
<b>This paper is presented for:</b>	<p style="text-align: center;">Assurance</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Notes on completion at end of document)</i></p>	
<b>Links to Trust Strategic Priorities</b>  	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Collaborative Working</p>
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Learning Organisation</p>
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Safety, Quality &amp; Experience</p>
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Community First</p>
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Whole-Life Approach</p>

## 1. Reason for Presentation of Paper / Report

Under Circular CC3/02 the Trust is required to provide a 6-monthly report to the Strategic Performance and Planning Group (SPPG) to provide assurance on compliance and to ensure the Trust Board is fully briefed on its Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

## 2. Detailed summary of paper contents:

The report provides a statistical overview of the Trust's performance in relation to Statutory Functions in respect of Children's Services from 1 April 2025 – 30 September 2025. This Corporate Parenting report evidences a high level of compliance in respect of service delivery pertaining to statutory functions. Workforce challenges in Children's social work Services continue to impact on the service's ability to meet all statutory requirements in relation to allocation of cases within required timeframes and has resulted in unallocated cases across services. Robust governance arrangements remain in place to manage the associated risk, including escalation processes and a plan to allocate these cases as soon as possible.

## 3. Areas of improvement/achievement:

- Kinship care arrangements seek to maintain children/young people within their extended family network and an environment which is familiar to them. The number of Children in Care in Kinship/ Family & Friends placements continues to increase - 303 at 30 September 2025 (approximately 45% of the LAC population) compared with 255 at 30 September 2024.
- The CYPS Improvement Forum continues to progress work in relation to the following areas: Workforce wellbeing and retention, Family Support and Early Intervention and enhancing skills mix. A workforce communication plan is in place and development of a service user reference group is underway.
- Children in Care and 14 Plus Services commenced a band 5 Senior Support Officer pilot project in July 2025 in order to provide a response to the following two key objectives: timely case transfers from Family Intervention teams to Children in Care/14 Plus services and reduction/elimination of deallocated CiC cases.
- The Children with Disabilities Short Breaks Team continues to work to increase the number of short breaks carers for CWD and attracted interest from a significant number of potential carers (expressions of interest) during the reporting period following a new recruitment initiative spanning social media, outdoor events and radio advertising.
- Within Early Years Services registered provider inspection levels remain high at 96% compliance. Numbers for this period have decreased by 4% primarily due to the service being down the equivalent of two WTE Early Years Social Workers due to sick leave and maternity leave.
- The Trust continues to promote and prioritise education, training and housing needs of our care experienced young people as they transition towards independence.

#### 4. Areas of concern/risk/challenge:

- There continues to be significant vacancies within children's social work services impacting on capacity to deliver Statutory Functions. Whilst all services have mitigations in place to manage risk and respond to challenges, the inability to recruit new staff will remain a challenge for the foreseeable future. This manifests in unallocated children's social work cases and pressures on remaining staff in social work teams across the Directorate. The average vacancy/absence rate of Band 6/7 social work staff during the reporting period was 44% (Gateway), 21% (Family Intervention) and 21% (Children in Care).
- There were 41 Children in Care (CiC) who did not have an allocated social worker at the end of this reporting period. Unallocated cases are identified on the basis that there is placement stability and low levels of assessed risk which allows them to be supported in a different way, in the absence of an allocated Social Worker. All unallocated CiC cases have support from a social work assistant and any emerging issues will be responded to within the team by an appropriate member of staff. The current pilot of the Senior Support Officer within the Children in Care service has facilitated a 50% reduction in unallocated cases within the CiC service. Robust governance arrangements are in place to manage the associated risk, ensure escalation as required and plan to re-allocate as soon as possible.

The Children in Care Service is committed to returning to a position of zero unallocated Children in Care cases through the introduction of skills mix, application of Quality Improvement methodology, collaboration with the Voluntary and Community Sector and intense managerial input.

- Within the reporting period 155 Children in Care (22%), from a total CiC population of 696, did not receive a statutory monthly visit by their allocated social worker. In the majority of circumstances statutory visits have been completed by another social worker. Reasons statutory visits did not take place include unallocated cases as described above and lack of availability of carer or child. The introduction of Band 5 Senior Support Officers aims to improve compliance in respect of unallocated cases and statutory visits. The Trust have received guidance from OSS that the Band 5 Senior Support Officer may undertake visits to looked after children in foster placements as a contingency measure to support social workers and following robust risk assessment.
- A total of 516 CiC reviews occurred within this reporting period, of which 68 (13%) were outside timeframes. Reasons for reviews not occurring within timescales include family requests for a different date, availability of key personnel, delays in expert assessments to inform decision making and Team Leaders/Social Workers dealing with emergencies, and unallocated cases as described above.
- Due to the numbers of Children in Care (696 at the end of this reporting period) and level of complexity of need, the Family Placement service continues to experience significant demand for placements, with limited availability for matching within the existing cohort of carers. Placements are continuously required for planned, unplanned and emergency

placement requests. There are particular challenges in recruiting carers for children with highly complex needs, teenagers presenting with risk taking behaviours, those with/undergoing assessment for ASD and sibling groups. Despite continued regional and local recruitment campaigns, there are challenges in maintaining sufficient numbers of foster carers to meet need, despite the SHSCT performing well in this regard.

- The CWD Service is experiencing increasing demand for overnight residential provision (18 children waiting on a residential short break place at the end of the reporting period). This high level of support for families is to ensure a longer-term placement is not required.
- CWD residential care continues to provide a therapeutic long term out of home placement for up to 5 young children (currently 4 young people resident). This service area remains a very challenging care environment due to the complexity of the needs of the young people.
- Within 14 Plus Services 315 young people have the support of a personal advisor (PA), there are 14 young people awaiting allocation of a personal advisor. Personal Advisor caseloads are capped regionally at 25 young people per 1WTE staff. The number of young people eligible for personal advisor is greater than funded posts caseload capacity, therefore a waiting list is in operation. The role of the PA is fulfilled by the Social Worker for the 14 young people who do not have an allocated PA. There is regional work ongoing in relation to the resource requirement to ensure all young people have a Personal Advisor given the requirements under the Adoption and Children Act for extended support for Care Leavers up to (and beyond) 25 years. Trusts continue to raise this with commissioning leads.
- At the end of the reporting period 50 foster carers had annual reviews outstanding. This is a result of long term staff sick leave, maternity leave that were unfilled and vacant posts during the reporting period. The service has worked hard to address this, utilising capacity across the service and working closely with Occupational Health and Human Resources to support staff to return to work. As of the 16.01.26 the number of outstanding Annual Reviews has reduced to 17 and these will be completed by 31.03.2026.

**5. Impact on Statutory Duties: Provide details on the impact of the following and how.**

<i>Financial Impact</i>	<i>Safety and Quality Impact</i>
Yes, there are Financial Impacts	Yes, there are Quality, Safety or Experience Impacts

**6. Risk Assessment (Risk level and state if a risk assessment be completed)**

N/A	
<b>7. Other Business Intelligence/data (If appropriate)</b>	
<b>8. Impact: Provide details on the impact of the following and how. If this is N/A you should explain why this is an appropriate response.</b>	
<b>Corporate Risk Register</b>	The following risk is currently on the Corporate Risk Register. Risk of potential harm to children due to Social Work vacancies impacting on the delivery of core Social Work Assessment and Services for children and families. Impact on unallocated cases for Looked After Children as a result of workforce pressures within Corporate Parenting.
<b>Board Assurance Framework</b>	Yes. Statutory Functions and associated challenges as previously reported.
<b>Equality and Human Rights</b>	Yes. Access to services.

### Trust Board Role Fulfilment

<b>Strategy</b>	<i>Papers in this category should address forward-looking priorities, long-term objectives, or service transformation. These are typically focused on shaping the future of the organisation and will often involve decisions on direction, investment, or innovation.</i>
<b>Culture</b>	<i>These papers aim to influence or reflect the values, behaviours, and staff or patient experiences within HSC. They may relate to leadership development, equality, diversity and inclusion, staff engagement, or initiatives intended to reinforce our organisational ethos.</i>
<b>Accountability</b>	<i>Papers falling into this area relate to governance, assurance, performance monitoring, compliance, and risk. They provide evidence that responsibilities are being fulfilled, standards are being met, and corrective actions are being taken where necessary.</i>

### Reasons for Paper Presentation

<b>Approval</b>	<i>Used when an item requires a formal agreement or endorsement by the meeting / committee members. Examples are approving minutes, budgets, proposals or policies.</i>
<b>Assurance</b>	<i>Used when an item can be measured against a certain criteria / standard. Examples are a project is on course with delivery or financial targets are being met.</i>
<b>Information</b>	<i>Used when an item is presented for the purpose of updating or informing the attendees without requiring a decision or action, such as reports, updates, or announcements.</i>
<b>Discussion</b>	<i>Used when an item is listed primarily for open discussion, brainstorming or gathering input from the members without requiring an immediate decision.</i>