

## TRUST BOARD COVER SHEET

<b>Meeting and Date of meeting</b>	<i>Trust Board</i> <i>30 January 2025</i>	
<b>Title of paper</b>	<i>Corporate Parenting report</i>	
<b>Accountable Director</b>	<b>Name</b>	<i>Colm McCafferty</i>
	<b>Position</b>	<i>Director of CYPS and Executive Director of Social work</i>
<b>Report Author</b>	<b>Name</b>	<i>Marita Magennis</i>
	<b>Email</b>	<i>Marita.magennis@southerntrust.hscni.net</i>
<b>This paper sits within the Trust Board role of:</b>	Accountability	
<b>This paper is presented for:</b>	Assurance	
<b>Links to Trust Corporate Objectives</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unscheduled Care Transformation and Reform
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Improved Access to Services
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Focus on developing services provided in the Community
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ensure Safe Services while delivering financial recovery
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strengthen Financial and Governance Systems
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Digital Readiness
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sustainability of Our Estate
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Embedding Our Co-production Approach
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Delivery of Year 3 of Our People Framework



*The report author will complete this report cover sheet fully. The Accountable Director must satisfy themselves that the cover sheet is accurate and fully reflects the report. The expectation is that the Accountable Director has read and agreed the content (cover sheet and report).*

*Its purpose is to provide the Trust Board/Committee with a clear summary of the report/paper being presented, how it impacts on the people we serve and the key matters for attention and the ask of the Trust Board/Committee*

## **1. Reason for Presentation of Paper / Report**

Under Circular CC3/02 the Trust is required to provide a 6 month report to HSCB 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:**

This report provides a statistical update on the Trust's performance in relation to Statutory Functions in respect of Children's Services. Whilst the Corporate Parenting report evidences a high level of service delivery in relation to statutory functions, this is increasingly impacted upon by staffing challenges across children's services. Workforce challenges in Children's Services 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:**

- During this reporting period all child protection cases had an allocated social worker and all children referred for child protection reasons were seen and spoken to (as appropriate) within 24 hours of receipt of referral.
- All Children in Care had a concurrent Care Plan in place by the time of their 3 month statutory Children in Care Review.
- Foster Care recruitment campaigns within the SHSCT have been relatively successful in achieving enquiries to foster (the Regional trend is a reduction in enquiries). Foster carers are actively involved in co-production approaches to recruitment and delivery of services and are keen to continue to offer ongoing support to any new recruitment initiatives. Campaigns for carers for specific children /young people have proved successful in attracting new carers and applicants are now being approved from a child specific campaign within the last reporting period, which will hopefully provide several placements for those young people requiring permanent options.
- The number of Children in Care in Kinship/ Family & Friends Placements continues to increase (255 at the end of the reporting period). The kinship care arrangement seeks to maintain children/young people within their home network and an environment which is familiar to them.
- The Bail fostering scheme has successfully facilitated and concluded two placements, and positive experiences have been reported by the carers, young people and professionals involved in this initiative. Post evaluation review has taken place, which evidenced the success of the scheme and the Trust's ability to facilitate a placement when assessed to be appropriate.
- All Children in Care who had been 'Freed for Adoption' were placed with their prospective adopters 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; Enhancing Skills Mix. A workforce communication plan is in place and plans to develop a service user reference group are underway.

- The Young Peoples Partnership (YPP) Service has established a social work led skills mix team for adolescents in need of support, including those on the edge of care.
- The Early Intervention Domestic Abuse Service is a significant and positive development in providing early support to victims of domestic abuse, including children and young people, through support and engagement to reduce risk and prevent escalation. The service provides direct intervention with those who perpetrate domestic abuse where appropriate and safe to do so.

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

- There continue to be significant social work vacancies within Children's Services which impacts on capacity in delivering Statutory Functions. Whilst all services have mitigations in place to manage risk and respond to the 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.
- Unallocated Family Support Cases are reported within Family Intervention Services and Gateway (86 families at end of reporting period). An increasing number of unallocated family support cases are within Children with Disabilities Teams (167 cases at the end of the reporting period).
- There were 34 Children in Care (CiC) who did not have an allocated and named 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, that is without a Social Worker. Given the current staffing difficulties, this allows the service to focus social work time on complex intensive support cases. All unallocated cases have support from a Social Work Assistant within the Children in Care 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.
- Within the reporting period, 100 Children in Care, out of 677 total population (15%) did not receive a statutory monthly visit by their allocated and named social worker. Statutory visits may not have taken place due to lack of availability of allocated or alternative social worker/lack of availability of carer or child.
- A total of 514 CiC reviews occurred within this reporting period, of which 36 (7%) 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 being required urgently at Court. Staffing pressures also add to delay. Those children whose cases are deallocated are not being reviewed within timescales. These children and families are being reallocated in as short a time frame as possible. When reallocated the CiC review will take place.
- Given the numbers of Children in Care (677 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 needed 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.

- Placements for asylum seeking young people is an ongoing need and pressure for the Trust given the increased referrals. Given the age range of these young people is mainly 16/17 years, many have been placed within supported accommodation.
- The CWD service experiences challenges in consistently maintaining adequate numbers of short breaks placements to meet demand. This includes requiring carers who can manage children with complex needs or behaviours that challenge; children with ASD and/ or mental health presentation (also needing long term placements) and shared-care placements.
- The CWD Service is experiencing increasing demand for overnight residential provision (19 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. The situation is exacerbated when facilities reduce capacity to care for children/young people with very specific and complex needs and behaviours. This decreases the number of children/ young people who can avail of the service overall. Recent ministerial announcement of new investments will assist in addressing this unmet need and the Trust is at an advanced state of upscaling services and supports.

**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	<b>Yes, there are Quality, Safety or Experience Impacts</b>

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

**7. Other Business Intelligence/data (If appropriate)**

**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.**

**Corporate Risk Register**

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>	Access to services.