

<b>Questioner:</b>	Ms Hannah Currie
<b>Scrutiny Meeting:</b>	November 2023
<b>Supplementary Question:</b>	
<p>"Life-story work is different from Lifelong Links which involves people other than the birth family.</p> <p>You have not definitively answered:</p> <p>“... how many [care-leavers] benefited from Lifelong Links?”</p> <p>However, I gather that none of 105 children and young people who left care in 2022-23 benefited from Lifelong Links.</p> <p>Webpage:</p> <p><a href="https://www.leeds.gov.uk/one-minute-guides/lifelong-links">https://www.leeds.gov.uk/one-minute-guides/lifelong-links</a></p> <p>stresses the importance of Lifelong Links and includes:</p> <p>‘The Children Act (1989) states (Schedule 2, paragraph 15) “The Local Authority has a duty to promote contact between a child and their parents, plus any important people in their lives”.</p> <p>Lifelong Links helps Children Looked After to connect with their extended network, not just blood relatives, promoting these relationships and building a stronger sense of identity.’</p> <p>With the support of the improvement-partner (Leeds Council) and commissioning the Family Rights Group, when will children in care and care-leavers benefit from Lifelong Links?”</p>	
<b>Response:</b>	
<p><b>Councillor Powell gave a verbal response, but suggested an additional written response would be required and provided.</b></p>	

**[Councillor Powell's verbal response during the meeting, for reference]**

*"Thanks to Ms Currie for the supplementary question. There will be a written response.*

*Ms Currie's view is that we haven't definitively answered the first leg of the question, which was the how many care leavers. I think we've actually answered that, but I will go back and directly clarify that with her. The answer was 105.*

*The second leg of the question, which is why we need to provide a written response, is to do with the fact that currently the Lifelong Links is not commissioned by Herefordshire and therefore is not available to families locally. So obviously we need to have a discussion to be able to provide that written response."*

NB in the meeting Cllr Harvey asked from Cllr Powell if the response could be wider than just focussing on Lifelong Links and should include what we are doing in respect of broader relationships and not just immediate family.

**Response (provided 24/11/23):**

We do not currently commission Lifelong Links and this is not available to our children and young people; there are currently no plans to commission Lifelong Links for the foreseeable future.

We recognise that it is important for our children in care to understand, build and maintain networks of people who are important to them. This might include family, extended family, friends or other significant individuals; these extended networks will be distinct to each young person.

Our recently revised Corporate Parenting Strategy has relationships, identity and belonging as one of the priority outcomes for our young people. What this looks like in practice will be tailored for each of our young person but could include:

- that we undertake direct work;
- that we ensure Family Time is promoted;
- that we undertake Life Story work with the young person;
- that we celebrate achievements, events and key milestones;
- that we support young people to build and maintain good relationships with birth, extended families and other significant people who are important to the young person as appropriate;
- that we ensure young people have access to support whether this is through their allocated Social Worker, through other professionals or through Independent Visitors where applicable.
- Additionally for children whose care plan is one of adoption, both the child(ren) and family receive support from our Regional Adoption Agency.

<b>Questioner:</b>	Ms Reid, Hereford
<b>Scrutiny Meeting:</b>	November 2023
<b>Supplementary Question:</b>	
<p>The response states:</p> <p>“our current approach and the recently relaunch of our Permanency Strategy is having an impact”</p> <p><b>Please provide the number of Special Guardianship Orders issued for Quarter 2 of 2023-24 compared to Quarter 1 of 2023-24?</b></p> <p>As the rate of children in care in Herefordshire was about twice the Statistical Neighbours’ average rate and Ofsted want more Special Guardianship Orders to reduce the number, I hope the number of SGOs will increase.</p> <p>I would be interested in reading the Permanency Strategy and knowing its webpage.</p> <p>Finally, the latest Improvement Plan (7/6/2023) that was presented to the Committee (18/7/2023) is still <u>not</u> linked to the webpage:</p> <p><a href="https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/social-care-support/childrens-services-improvements">https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/social-care-support/childrens-services-improvements</a></p> <p>but an earlier version (12/12/2022). This is despite I recall a response to a previous public question that the current version would be soon linked.</p>	
<b>Response:</b>	
<p><b>Councillor Powell gave a verbal response, but suggested an additional written response would be required and provided.</b></p>	

**[Councillor Powell's verbal response during the meeting, for reference]**

*"Thank you for the supplementary question,*

*There are a number of legs to the question, so I will provide a written response to it. It is important to say that you've identified some housekeeping issues - so a commitment to things being published on websites in a timely fashion. So as well as providing a written response to those legs, I will also take an action away to have a discussion about making sure that we do, as a system, provide in a timely fashion to those commitments."*

**Response (provided 24/11/23):**

During Q1 2023/24, 1 Special Guardianship Order (SGO) was granted by the Courts this is in respect of 1 child. During Q2 2023/24, 2 SGOs were granted by the Courts (in respect of 3 children).

A copy of our Permanency Strategy can be found at Appendix 1 - Permanence Strategy:



Permanence  
Strategy.pdf

The [Herefordshire Children's Services Improvement Plan](#) was published on the council's [website](#) following endorsement by Cabinet in December 2022. Progress updates to the Improvement Plan are not routinely published. Where the Improvement Plan is a substantive item on the agenda of council Committee meetings, updates are provided and published as part of the respective Committee papers; most recently an update was provided to [Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2023](#).