

Children in Care and Permanence

| Annual Report 2019-2020



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Executive Summary

This report covers the period 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020. The Department of Health Statutory Guidance on Promoting the Health and Well-being of Looked after Children (DCSF/DH. 2015) requires a report on the delivery of service and the progress achieved for the health and wellbeing of children in care.

This report provides the annual summary of the core activities relating to Looked after Children and Young People (LAC). In Leicestershire, following consultation with young people we agreed to talk about Children in Care (CIC) not LAC, therefore we will use this reference throughout.

The key messages within this report are:

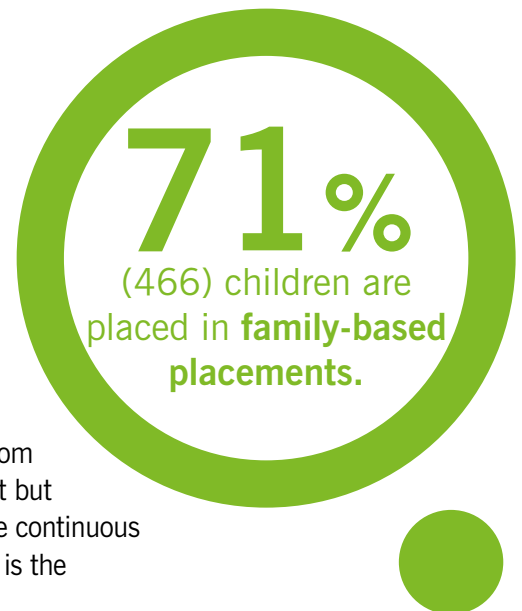
- The number of children in care on 31 March 2020 was 657. The previous end of year count was 582. This is an increase of 12.9%. This is slightly at variance to the lesser upward trend experienced by many Local authorities but does reflect Leicestershire's change of practice relating to the accommodation of 16-17-year-old young people deemed to be homeless and children in need. The current number of children in care equates to 46.9 per 10,000 children in Leicestershire. This compares to an average of 52.8 looked after children per 10,000 children in Statistical Neighbour authorities at 31 March 2019.
- 71% (466) children are placed in family-based placements.
- Of these 45% (298) are placed with in-house carers, connected carers, adoptive families and parents, 28% (188) with independent agency foster carers.
- There is a decreased use of independent foster agency placements compared to last year (188 compared to 198 – 5% decrease)
- 56 children were in residential care on the 31 March 2020, representing 8.5% of the total looked after children number and is below the national average of 9%. On 31 March 2019 there were 52 children in residential care.
- Children who have experienced 3 placements or more in the last year was 8.7%. A little higher than last year's average of 7.7% but still significantly below the statistical neighbour average of 11.9%
- On 31 March 2020 41 children subject to an Interim or Full Care Order were living with their parent/s compared to 17 the previous year. This substantial increase is because of the efforts during care proceedings to help parents change their circumstances to enable the return of their children and efforts to return home children who have been in care some time, where parental circumstance has changed. The Department keeps these findings under review, to ensure that, amongst other things that there is effectiveness of use of the pre -proceedings protocol. This is a particular focus of Leicestershire's continuous improvement plan



The number of children in care on 31 March 2020 was

657

An increase of 12.9%



- Children with long term stability (more than 3 years) decreased slightly, from 65% to 62% and remains below the statistical neighbour average of 66%. This area of performance is a particular focus for improvement activity. An audit will be completed to understand the profile of children affected and to understand the related needs of carers.
- Recorded Statutory visits to children completed in timescale rose from 70% in 2018/19 to 83% for 2019/20. This is still below the target but represents a significant improvement following activity driven by the continuous improvement plan. Managers tell us the visits are completed and it is the recording that is the issue.
- Following the Ofsted Inspection findings in September 2019 children with a completed and signed off care plan in the previous 6 months decreased in the last quarter of 2019/20, as managers took a hard line on quality of assessments, returning them to social workers for improvement. The end of year figure was 60% (target 90%). However, we are now seeing improvement in completion rates and quality of plans.
- The number of children who have had their annual health assessment remains high and represents an increase on last year (2019/20 92%, 2018/19 82%)
- Initial Health Assessments are not consistently referred to the health provider in a timely way (within 48 hours of coming into care), however there has been a good improvement with monthly reports to the Lead Member to oversee this improvement activity.
- Up-to-date immunisation and vaccination of CiC for 2019/20 is 90.4% compared to 82% the previous year, and 87.6% of CiC received a dental check (previously 91.8%)
- 278 Care Leavers were eligible for inclusion in the 2019/2020 return, of whom:
 - The local authority was in touch with 96% (target 90%).
 - 64.2% of Care Leavers who had not returned home for more than six months were in education, employment or training when contacted around their birthday (target 50%)
 - 94.8% were in suitable accommodation (target 80%)
- Leicestershire CiC and Care Leavers are actively encouraged and supported to participate in the shaping of services through consultation events and Children in Care Council and SYPAC (Supporting Young People After Care).

1. Introduction

Our Vision

Leicestershire is the best place for all children, young people and their families

This means that we will describe the outcomes we want to achieve for children, young people and their families and identify measures that can tell us how well we are achieving against them in comparison with other English local authorities. We will aim to be the best performing local authority in the country against these measures, and where we are not yet there we will set stretching targets for annual improvement.

Our Mission

Children and young people in Leicestershire are safe and living in families where they can achieve their potential and have their health, wellbeing and life chances improved within thriving communities.

**“Our Children
Our Future”**

Jane Moore,
Director

Leicestershire’s
commitment to inspire
and support children in
care and care leavers
to be ambitious and
successful

In Leicestershire we want to ensure that all children are given opportunities to be happy, healthy and to achieve their best outcomes. We embody this in our vision statement and the ‘Road to Excellence’.

We want children and young people to enjoy positive experiences in safe and supportive families, well connected to their local communities and when necessary well supported by a wide range of targeted support services -- building strong and resilient family relationships.

When children cannot safely live in their family or wider network our priority is to provide safe secure and caring homes where children are given all the opportunities they need to inspire them to have high aspiration and to support their success through their childhood and into adulthood. We will do this by valuing children for who they are and who they want to be. Our Permanency policy sets out our commitment to do this¹.

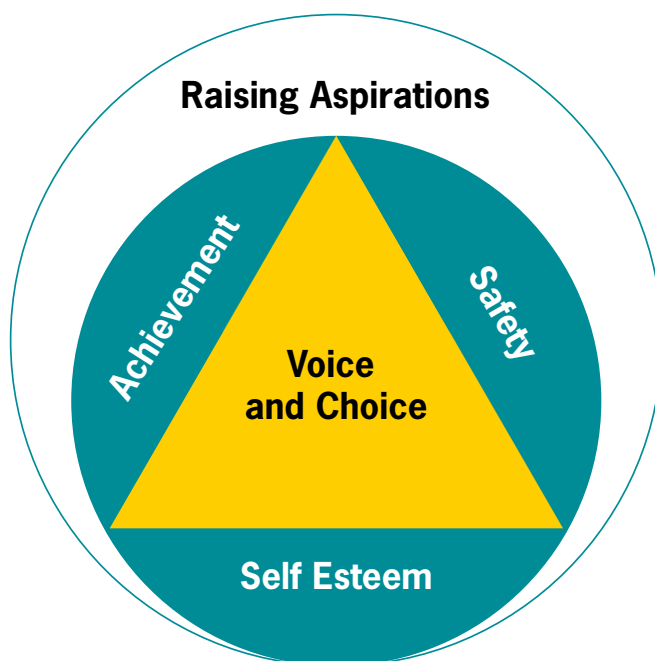
In Leicestershire we are committed to our children in care and care leavers and are determined to ensure that we carry out our duty and responsibilities as a Corporate Parent with genuine passion, ambition, enthusiasm and care.

We understand that all of our children have individual needs and goals and our care planning and planned support offered to all of our children reflects this.

We carefully monitor and support education and learning for our children to enable progress and success and strive to ensure that our children are healthy both physically and emotionally.

We know that we will be successful corporate parents if we really listen to our children and ensure that their views and opinions have meaning in all areas of our decision making, **'You said. We did'**. The impact of this is seen in the enthusiasm, leadership and effectiveness of our children and their participation in our Children in Care Council, Supporting Young People After Care (SYPAC), our Corporate Parenting Board and many more participation events.

The Corporate Parenting Strategy sets out the responsibilities of Leicestershire County Council as corporate parent to children in care. The Strategy outlines the expectations and key principles that provide the framework for a cohesive and effective corporate parenting response for children in care and Care Leavers.



¹ Permanence Policy: https://www.proceduresonline.com/llr/childcare/leicestershire/user_controlled_lcms_area/uploaded_files/Permanence%20Policy%20Update%20May2020.pdf

Our promise to children in care and care leavers was developed in partnership with children in care Council and SYPAC (supporting young people after care) other agencies and culminated in a launch and public commitment in April 2019:



1.1 Achievements since 2019

The Ofsted inspection of children's social care services took place in September 2019. The inspection found the experience of children and care leavers to be good overall. The following was highlighted in the report:

- Most children in care and care leavers make good progress, and their lives are better because of the improved and good services they now receive in Leicestershire. They are settled and live in homes which meet their needs and they thrive because of the good standard of care they receive.
- Many children receive regular visits from social workers at above the statutory minimum level. Social workers are good at ensuring that children's health and education needs are met through regular health and education reviews, and additional resources are sought and commissioned where necessary.
- Social workers have manageable workloads, so they can get to know the children well and deliver
- direct work to help children understand their life experiences and journey into care. Homeless young people eligible to become looked after are informed of their rights and accommodated when it is in their best interests.
- Children return home from care when it is safe to do so, because their parents have been well supported to make the necessary changes and because risks have reduced.
- Children achieve permanence through adoption within the right timescales. The local authority has strengthened the service through structural changes, such as bringing the completion of child permanence reports into the adoption service.
- Most children in care have developed positive and trusting relationships with social workers who they have known for many years and who visit them regularly. These children have benefited from effective relationship-based practice, which has helped them to understand why they came into care, including through life-story work.

1.2 Areas of Development for children in care arising from Ofsted Inspection


- Most children come into care when it is necessary and appropriate to do so. However, for a few children, this is not in a planned or timely manner, making it harder for them to settle when they do come into care.
- A few children have waited too long for their care orders to be revoked after moving back home to live with their parents. This means they have been subject to unnecessary statutory intervention for too long.
- Although most children do not experience instability in their long-term foster placements, because they have not been formally matched to their permanent carers, they do not benefit from having absolute certainty about their living arrangements.
- Although these findings refer to "a few" and not the majority in Leicestershire we are ambitious for all children in care so are working hard to build on improvements and build an outstanding service.

1.3 Progress since the inspection

Leicestershire is a forward-thinking Authority that is ambitious for our children and young people. With a focus on children and building resilience in families, we are proud of the progress we are making via our Road to Excellence – continuous improvement plan; and in providing consistently good services for children, young people and their families.

The Local Authority has invested in children's social care to make our ambitious plans a reality for children, young people and their families, and we are seeing the positive impact of this investment.

Recommendations from the Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers carried out by Ofsted in September 2019 are addressed in the revised Road to Excellence- continuous improvement plan. An update on progress against these individual recommendations is presented on a six-monthly basis to Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) in the form of the Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP). The CIP sits behind Leicestershire's Road to Excellence Plan which sets an ambition to establish a culture of learning, with two key priorities:



High quality
evidence-based
practice



Strong and
effective
management
oversight

We will achieve this through four key behaviours:

- Taking the right action at the right time
- Being a learning organization
- Embedding excellent practice
- Developing policy and performance.

We are proud of our learning culture that is supporting staff to be the best practitioners they can be. Ofsted reported on an environment that has High Expectations, High Challenge and High Support.



What we working on to achieve for our CIC?

There has been focused work on children at risk of entering care, ensuring that were it is safe to do so, decisions are made through the Children's Decision-Making Panel. This has seen an improvement in court timescales, ensuring that, in most instances, assessments of parents and family members start prior to the commencement of proceedings.

Children placed with parents has increased oversight from Independent Reviewing Officers, who use the Quality Assurance challenge process to identify delay and escalate if necessary for a timely response. In addition, the Head of Service for Children in Care completes two audits a year to identify urgent action, particularly identifying issues relating to delay.

Permanence Panel has been monitoring the achievement of permanence for all children who are in care. The following progress has been made in achieving 'absolute certainty about living arrangements' and in ensuring management oversight of permanence:

In January 2020 136 children had permanence agreed, 327 children had no permanence decision recorded on case records, on 144 records there was evidence of management oversight and tracking of permanence. 23 had had permanence considered by panel, but permanence was not agreed.

As at June 2020 the number of children with a permanence decision had risen to 157. The number of children without a permanence decision but with management oversight, evidencing tracking and monitoring, had increased to 182. 29 had had permanence considered by panel, but permanence was not agreed for a range of reasons.

The Local Authority recognises the importance of achieving permanence for children and young people and that to do this, key activities are identified to improve and maintain the work forces understanding permanence. The overall progress against these performance indicators is tracked through the CIP, particularly focusing on reducing drift and delay for children in foster care and management oversight. The actual activity is tracked through a Permanence Action Plan.



2. Children In Care (CiC)

2.1 Corporate Parenting

When a child comes into care, the council becomes the Corporate Parent. Put simply, the term ‘Corporate Parent’ means the collective responsibility of the council, elected members, employees, and partner agencies, for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for the children in their care.

The Corporate Parenting Strategy² sets out the responsibilities of Leicestershire County Council as corporate parent to children in care. The Strategy outlines the expectations and key principles that provide the framework for a cohesive and effective corporate parenting response for children in care and Care Leavers, namely:

- To act in the best interest, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people.
- To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.
- To consider the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people.
- To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners.
- To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people.
- For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships, and education or work.
- To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

The Strategy details that the lead member for children’s services (LMCS) and the Director of Children’s Services (DCS) are required by law to hold direct local accountability for the effectiveness, availability and value for money of the local authority’s children’s services (in 1998, the Secretary of State wrote to councillors reminding them that they are ultimately accountable for the quality of care provided by their local authority and set out their specific responsibility to lead this work and monitor its effectiveness).

This position has been supported through published guides for councillors by the for Education in 2003 and 2013, highlighting that all elected members should be prepared and ready to champion the interests of looked after children and young people in their community. Elected members are in the unique position to promote opportunities for looked after children and care leavers through their political power and influence, through their connections in the community, schools, health services, local businesses and employers.

² Corporate Parenting Strategy: <http://politics.leics.gov.uk/documents/s149178/Appendix%20A%20Corporate%20Parenting%20Strategy.pdf>

2.2 Corporate Parenting Team

Many children and young people find it difficult being a child in care and living away from their families. The Corporate Parenting Team tries to make sure children in care are given opportunities so that they can reach their potential. Support available includes:

Celebrating achievements

Children in care can be nominated by a social worker, youth worker, carers or someone who knows about their achievements, to receive an award. Each CiC receives a personal letter of congratulations from the Corporate Parenting Manager and a gift voucher. They are also invited to an award ceremony, held every 12 months. The Chairman, Lead Member, Director and Assistant Director host the event.

Laptops and computers

Children in care and care leavers can get a computer and printer to use at home to share with other children in the household. If the young person is over 16 years of age and in full time education or training they can apply for a laptop.

Driving lessons

Young people can get financial help when learning to drive. The Corporate Parenting Team will pay for the provisional licence, theory test and practical driving test, and will also pay half the cost of your driving lessons.

Swimming

All children in care can get free access to swimming pools at leisure centres using the Activ8Card if they are under 16 years old.

Funding for individuals

Each CiC can apply for up to £150 each year from the 'Time 2 Spend' fund. The funding can be used for trying a new hobby (such as horse riding or dancing) or getting special equipment for this new activity; getting a musical instrument or helping towards a school or college trip.

Children's Rights Officers

Children's Rights Officers work for this service and offer a range of support like:

- Helping CiC understand their rights and make sure they are being treated fairly
- Giving information, help and advice
- Attending meetings with the CiC and speaking on their behalf
- Help with getting legal advice
- Providing advice on how to make a complaint
- Making sure the CiC is listened to by professionals and their carers.

The Ofsted inspection of Leicestershire's children's services in 2019 found that:

Children's rights officers support children well to express their views during conferences and reviews, including good engagement by these workers with children in the Public Law Outline. Children using this service value the listening ear of advocates.

Independent Reviewing Officers

An Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) is the person who ensures that children looked after by the Local Authority have regular reviews to consider the care plan and placement. In Leicestershire, the IRO plays a key part in quality assurance by ensuring that the child's plan is appropriate, that the social worker takes timely action to meet the child's needs, that there is quality management oversight and that children in care have a voice.

2.3 Voice

Leicestershire County Council is committed to listening, hearing and responding to the voice of children, young people and their families.

The Ofsted Inspection of Leicestershire's children's services in 2019 found that:

Most children in care have developed positive and trusting relationships with social workers who they have known for many years and who visit them regularly. These children have benefited from effective relationship-based practice, which has helped them to understand why they came into care, including through life-story work. The local authority has invested in an innovative electronic system which captures and stores personal information, records and memories for children in care. They feel secure in the knowledge that they have a consistent worker who they can trust.

In addition to this this, the Council believes that children in care and care leavers have an important role to play in shaping services and policies like The Promise and Contact Expectations Statement. We enable this through formal platforms like the Child in Care Council, SYPAC, consultation events and through their involvement in training of foster carers, recruitment of staff.

These are some of our children and young people's views, shared during 2019/20:

"Children in Care Council has not only been an amazing social experience to talk and get to know more people, but it's also been a rewarding experience to know the work that we do is helping improve the lives of other young people in care".

"The Children in Care Council is an excellent way for young people to advocate for themselves and others in a formal but relaxed environment".

"Children in Care Council represents the best possible way to educate yourself on young people's issues and work together to find creative solutions".

"Children in Care Council is really important, as we all have different viewpoints and can contrast and inform what adults think are best for young people".

"As Children in Care Council members, we have and share personal experiences which are really important in helping to improve life for other young people who don't have a voice or are unable to speak out".

"It's crucial that we are listened too, as young people in care can relate to each other's experiences the most and understand what needs to be done".

"The voice of young people is the advice of the future. Without young people there would not be a future".

"If you want your services to be effective, then it needs to have a young person's touch to help and inform decisions at all levels".

"Being involved in recruitment and selection is really important, it means we can have a real say and influence who is appointed to work with and support us".

Leicestershire Children in Care Council

Contact Expectations Statement

- If possible, after coming into care, contact should be arranged to take place at the earliest opportunity
- At contact there should be no surprises e.g. unexpected people or issues that we do not know about or are prepared for
- Young people should have a say in who is involved in contact and the wider family should always be considered
- If any changes are made to our contact arrangements, these will always be explained to us
- Regular contact does not replace the opportunity for other additional family activities also taking place
- Other than for an emergency, contact should never be cancelled with less than 24 hours notice. Any cancellation will always be followed up and new arrangements made quickly
- During contact all mobile phones and devices will be switched off and only used in an emergency
- Whenever possible, we will always have contact for special occasions e.g. family celebrations and birthdays etc
- Our privacy and the location of contact are really important to us
- Future contact dates will always be confirmed at the end of each meeting
- A young person should never feel pressured to have contact
- Staff who accompany us to contact should always be discreet e.g. not wear ID badges when meeting in public areas etc
- Our carers need to be supported, not to feel undermined or threatened by our contact with family members
- Carers should be supported to understand how important contact is to us, but also how it can impact upon us and sometimes our behaviours
- After contact has taken place, our Social Worker will always check how things went and we can discuss any worries or concerns

Jane Moore
Jane Moore,
Director Children & Family Services

Ivan Ould
Cllr Ivan Ould
Lead Member for Children & Family Services

our promise
to children in care and care leavers
by Leicestershire County Council and Partners



2.4 Numbers of CiC

There were 657 children in care at 31st March 2020, an increase of 75 children, 582 children in care on 31st March 2019, representing an increase of 12.9% over the year and continues the upward trend of recent years. 657 is equivalent to 46.8 children per 10,000 population aged 0 to 17 in Leicestershire. This compares to an average of 52.78 children in care children in Statistical Neighbour authorities at 31 March 2019.

Of the 657 children in care at 31st March 2020, 373 (56.8%) were looked after under a Full Care Order, which is an increase of 13.4% from 329 Full Care Orders at 31st March 2019. Interim Care Orders have also increased to 91 from 84, this is an increase of 8.3%. The number of children looked after under Section 20 has also increased to 144 as opposed to 115 at 31st March 2019, an increase of 25.2% (the result of change of practice relating to older children aged 16 and 17 years of age).

Of the 657 children in care at 31st March 2020, 368 (56%) were male and 289 (44%) were female. This represents a small change between male and female in care as at 31st March 2019. (320 (55%) male and 262 (45%) female). Please see chart below for children in care at 31st March 2020 by age group and gender



2.5 Placement Profile

Of the 657 children in care at 31st March 2020, a total of 466 (71%) were placed in foster placements provided by the local authority, other fostering agencies or fostered by a relative or friend. Please see chart below for a summary of children in care by placement type as at 31st March 2020 with a comparison to 31st March 2019.

Of the 657 children in care at 31st March 2020, 312 (47.4%) were placed in settings provided by Leicestershire County Council, with 294 (44.9%) supplied by private providers.

The Council supports unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people through a dedicated team of professionals. There has been a steady increase in new arrivals since 2015, reflected below:

- UASC CIC and Care Leavers November 2015: 55
- UASC CIC and Care Leavers April 2019: 85
- UASC CIC and Care Leavers March 2020: 105

All unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people are placed in external provision (independent fostering agency foster carers or semi-independent provision).

The reporting period has witnessed a continued increase in the number of children with especially complex needs who are corporately parented in Leicestershire. In 2019/20 this has resulted in an increase in the number of children who find living in foster families difficult and as a result the number and average age profile of children placed in residential care has increased, with the youngest child being 8 years of age.

The overview of placement costs is provided below:

Placement Name	Avg Weekly Cost £	Avg Annual Cost £
SGO	180	9,360
Kinship/Connected	344.5	17,914
Mainstream Foster Care	549	28,548
Pathway Fostering Carer (Specialist)	855	44,460
1/1 Fostering Carer (Specialist)	1075	55,900
IFA	800	41,600
High Cost IFA	1100	57,200
Staying Put	275	14,300
Supported Lodgings - Internal	385	20,020
16 + - External	1250	65,000
Residential - External	4100	213,200

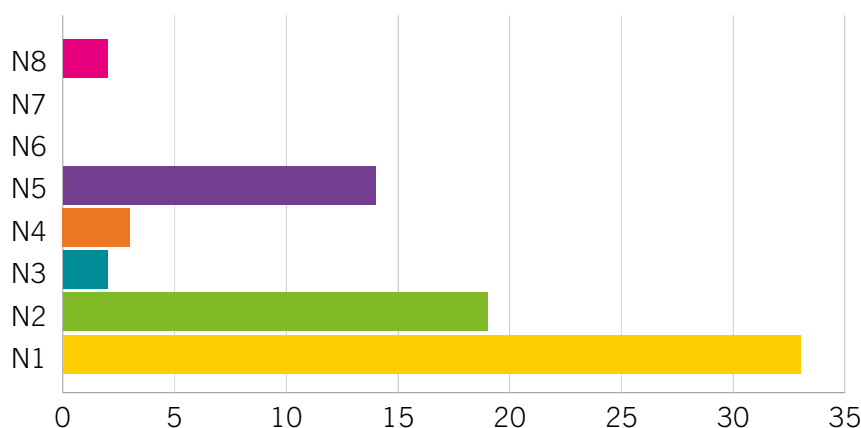
2.6 Children in care/young people profile

Of the 657 children in care at 31st March 2020, 368 (56%) were male and 289 (44%) were female. This represents a small change between male and female in care as at 31st March 2019. (320 (55%) male and 262 (45%) female).

Of the 657 children in care at 31st March 2020, 578 (88.0%) were from White ethnic groups. Other ethnic groups are mostly from the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in care, including Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq, Iran, Vietnam.

The profile of children requiring residential care is set out below, based on the following descriptors:

Profile of children in residential



N1	Abuse or neglect	Child in need as a result of, or at risk of, abuse or neglect
N2	Child's disability	Child and their family whose main need for children's social care services arises out of the child's disabilities, illness or intrinsic condition
N3	Parental illness or disability	Child whose main need for children's social care services arises because the capacity of their parent(s) or carer(s) to care for them is impaired by disability, illness, mental illness, or addictions
N4	Family in acute stress	Child whose needs arise from living in a family going through a temporary crisis such that parenting capacity is diminished and some of the children's needs are not being adequately met
N5	Family dysfunction	Child whose needs arise mainly out of their living with a family where the parenting capacity is chronically inadequate
N6	Socially unacceptable behaviour	Child and family whose need for children's social care services arises primarily out of their behaviour impacting detrimentally on the community
N7	Low income	Child, either living in a family or independently, whose need for children's social care services arises mainly from being dependent on an income below the standard state entitlements
N8	Absent parenting	Child whose need for children's social care services arises mainly from having no parent(s) available to provide for them. A child whose parent(s) decide it is in the best interest for the child to be adopted would be included in this category

3. Permanence

Permanence is the long-term plan for the child's upbringing and provides an underpinning framework for all social work with children and their families from family support through to adoption. It aims to ensure a framework of emotional, physical and legal conditions that will give a child a sense of security, continuity, commitment, identity and belonging.

For the purposes of this report, activities and progress against permanence performance indicators are set out in Section 3.

3.1 Stability

Stability of placement for these children is key to improving education and health outcomes in as 'normal' environments as possible:

- 71% of children are placed in family-based placements.
- Of these 45% are placed with in-house carers, connected carers, adopters and parents, 26% with independent agency foster carers.
- Children who have experienced 3 placements or more in the last year was 8.7%. A little higher than last year's figure of 7.7% but still significantly below the statistical neighbour average of 11.9%. This suggests that Children Looked After in Leicestershire, have a high level of placement stability from the point of coming into care. This is significant in achieving long term positive outcomes.
- Children with long term stability (more than 3 years) decreased slightly, from 65% to 62% and remains below the statistical neighbour average of 66%. The complexity of children requiring placement and reduced placement options have had an impact on the indicator and is likely to remain a challenge. Over recent years there has been considerable focus on supporting foster carers to maintain placements, and perhaps as a consequence, the placement stability figure has shown only a small deterioration. We will continue to place an emphasis on supporting foster carers to promote sustained placement stability.

However, we have seen an increase in the number of children subject to care orders with plans for long term fostering and we continue to experience the occasional unplanned ending of seemingly stable placements. We also know that recruitment of permanent foster carers remains a significant challenge and a larger number have decided to retire early or place fostering 'on hold' because they are concerned about the risk of COVID19. We will need to carefully track these individual children to ensure that all possible family finding activity is undertaken.

- On 31 March 2020 41 children subject to an Interim or Full Care Order were living with their parent/s compared to 17 the previous year. This substantial increase is because of the efforts during care proceedings to help parents change their circumstances to enable the return of their children and efforts to return children who have been in care some time home, where parental circumstance has changed.



In 2016, the Dedicated Placements Support Team (DPST) was established to:

- Provide support and improve stability for young people living in foster care who are experiencing difficulties and who present the most challenging behaviour
- Transition children and young people who are already in care, back into independent living;
- Transition children and young people who are already in care, back into independent living;
- Provide support to specialist foster placements where a more intensive support package is required
- Work with parents where children placed under Placement with Parent regulations, and foster carers to prevent breakdown and support re-unification.

The presenting needs of the children and young people include attachment needs (how young people's life experiences can impact of their behaviour), difficulties in accepting boundaries and routines, mental health and safeguarding (young people not being aware of the dangers and putting themselves in risky situations).

DPST has five support workers, three social workers supporting placements and a dedicated worker for recruiting and supporting Independent Visitors.

Each worker has a different skill set and shares their experiences and knowledge across the team to improve outcomes for children and placement stability. They hold small caseloads to ensure availability when the child or carer needs additional support.

Key markers of success:

- Since the creation of this team placement stability (number of foster placements in the past year) has improved by 7%.
- Recruited and supported 5 specialist carers (Pathway and One2One carers)
- Increased supported lodgings (internal semi-independent provision) to 27 places (23 providers)
- Introduced a Staying Put support offer to carers (there are 35 Young People living in Staying Put arrangements, an increase of 24 since last year)
- Increased the Independent Visitors (IV) provision to 40. We are very proud of the developments in this area over the past two years which includes:
 - Full time IV coordinator appointed and started the role in March 20
 - We currently have 40 independent visitors
 - We have 9 independent visitors awaiting a match
 - We have 23 potential IV's awaiting assessment
 - We have 9 children waiting for allocation of an IV
 - 2 Out of County children matched, 2 out of county needing a match
 - We have established a network event for independent visitors, these will run 3 times a year
 - Clear policy & procedure for the scheme established
 - Promoted the scheme through, Facebook, LCC website and face to face events
 - Provided training through LCC fostering service
 - Updated leaflets
 - Attended regional IV networking events to share good practice

Placement stability has improved by

7%

Recruited and supported 5 specialist carers

In April 2019 the Service received the following commendation from the National Independent Visitors Network about Leicestershire's Independent Visitor's provision: 'Your in-house IV services are doing the best from all the in-house services in England! Congratulations and a huge well done to you all!'

The Fostering Service also offers a mentoring scheme for foster carers. The aim is to improve the confidence and knowledge of carers as rapidly as possible through linking new to more experienced carers, hence contributing to the quality of care provision and a child's sense of security.

Over the year 26 applicants were contacted and in total, 24 applicants responded. 21 of these indicated that they wanted a mentor. 19 matches were made and following agreement meetings, 12 agreed to proceed with mentoring.

Leicestershire's foster carers are central to the progress children in care make in all avenues of their development and emotional wellbeing. Engagement with carers is essential. The services need to know what our carers think and what is important to them to best meet the needs of CiC. We listen to them through Leicestershire Foster Carers Association, Locality Support Groups, the annual survey and carers forum which offers opportunities for discussion.

This is a sample of other events supported by the service to ensure children in care receive the best possible care:

- Targeted recruitment of foster carers to ensure we have the right carers to meet our children's needs
- Annual revised training programme based on the profile of children in care and carers needs, including self-service access to training for a range of courses
- Locality support groups and social activities
- Facebook site for the exchange of information and ideas
- The introduction of a carers reports for children's Review of Arrangements, giving carers a greater voice in these meetings
- Development of Enhanced Carers (level 4) allowing carers the opportunity for professional development and recognising the additional skills some carers demonstrate and require in their fostering role to parent therapeutically
- The introduction of a dedicated permanence social worker for children who are not yet living in their permanent foster homes
- Annual Celebration event
- Mentoring
- Sons and Daughters events.

3.2 Permanence in Foster Care

Permanence Panel has been monitoring the achievement of permanence for all children who are in care. The Panel has a quality assurance function - ensuring that plans are clear and focused and there are timely decisions in securing a permanent care arrangement. Panel aims to improve the life chances of children by ensuring carers and children have access to the appropriate support services to meet the needs of the child now and in the future.

The following progress has been made in achieving 'certainty about living arrangements' and in ensuring management oversight of permanence:

A senior manager at Head of Service level has been appointed as the responsible officer for ensuring that children have what we call permanence decisions. This decision is different to the child's review, chaired by the IRO, confirming that permanence in long term care is the right plan for a child. The decision made by Permanence Panel, chaired by the responsible officer, is that the child's carers are the right carers to meet their needs now and, in the future, and that they have the right support and training in place to do this.

By July 2020 the number of children with a permanence decision had risen to 169, The number of children without a permanence decision but with management oversight, evidencing tracking and monitoring, had increased to 192. 31 had had permanence considered by panel, but permanence was not agreed.

274 have no permanence decision endorsed by Permanence Panel, but of these:

- 71 children are subject to Section 20 of the Children Act and have recently been subject to an audit to identify that appropriate decisions are being made for them and they have legal permanence. Through this audit 3 were identified as requiring further consideration and will be presented to the key decision-making meeting through which legal advice will be obtained.
- 102 are subject to Interim Care Order, so permanence is still be considered via the court process.
- 1 young person is in a Remand setting
- 62 are subject of Full Care order. Legal status is secure and care plan agreed.
- 38 are subject to a Placement Order and adoption is being activity pursued.

The 62 children subject to Full Care Orders will be considered by the Head of Service in the next quarter to ensure appropriate permanence decisions are made.

3.3 Permanence in Adoption:

In relation to adoption, the achievement of permanence has been relatively stable:

- There were 31 children adopted in 2019/2020.
- The average time between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family (Adoption Scorecard indicator A1) was 487 days, a decrease of 56 days from 543 reported for 2018/19. The total 3 year average for this indicator from 2018 to 2020 is 464 days.
- The average time between placement order and match to adoptive family (Adoption Scorecard indicator A2) was 220 days an increase of 6 days from 214 days reported for 2018/19. The total 3 year average for this indicator from 2018 to 2020 is 192 days.
- Of 151 children who had been adopted in the last 3 years or were in the adoption process at the end of March 2020, 74 (49%) had waited/were waiting less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family (Adoption Scorecard indicator A3).

Other adoption successes as of 31 March 2020 include:

- 15 placed for adoption (Placement Order)
- 31 adoption orders granted
- 28 adopters approved
- 31 adopters in assessment
- Sibling group of 4 placed
- Two sibling groups of 3 matched

3.4 Permanence through Kinship Care:

Kinship care is where a child or young person who is 'looked after' lives full-time or most of the time with a relative or family friend because they are not able to live with their birth parents.

There are two primary routes into the 'looked after' system. The first being accommodated under section 20 Children Act 1989 and the second being made the subject of a Care Order under section 31 Children Act 1989. Under section 20, children and young people can be 'accommodated' with the consent of those with parental responsibility. If the young person is 16 or 17 years old, they do not need the consent of those with Parental responsibility in order to be accommodated by the Local Authority.

The Kinship Team manages assessments of prospective kinship carers or those carers who already have a child in placement under Regulation 24. Regulation 24 allows for and regulates the immediate placement of a looked after child with a relative or friend, who has not been previously approved as a foster carer via the usual processes, if it is deemed to be in the child's best interest to do so.

Leicestershire remains at the forefront of using kinship placements, and, at year end, 21% of all looked after children/young people were in such placements. This contrasts with a national rate of 11.5%.

However, the increasing number of kinship placements and the disparity with the national rate, may be linked to the reduced number of Special Guardianship Orders being agreed in care proceedings in Leicestershire.

3.5 Entry, Exit into Care, Including Court Proceedings

There were 245 admissions of children into care during 2019/20 compared to 207 recorded in 2018/19, an increase of 18.4%. 150 (61.2%) of the 245 admissions to care in the year were under Section 20.

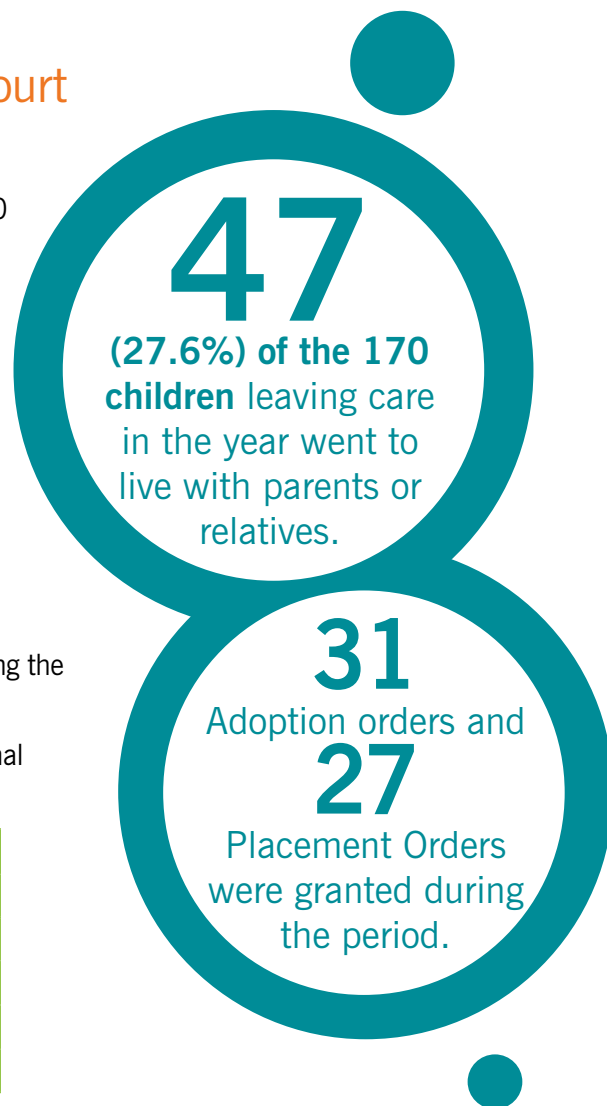
Of the 245 children who were admitted to care in 2019/20, 21 had a previous permanence option such as adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement order (residence order).

There were 170 who ceased to be looked after in 2019/20. 47 (27.6%) of the 170 children leaving care in the year went to live with parents or relatives.

31 Adoption orders and 27 Placement Orders were granted during the period.

Proceedings resulted in the making of the following number of final orders –

Type of Order	2018-19	2019-20
Full Care Order	61	76
Placement Order	31	27
Supervision Order	32	26
Special Guardianship Order	35	17
Child Arrangement Order	18	19

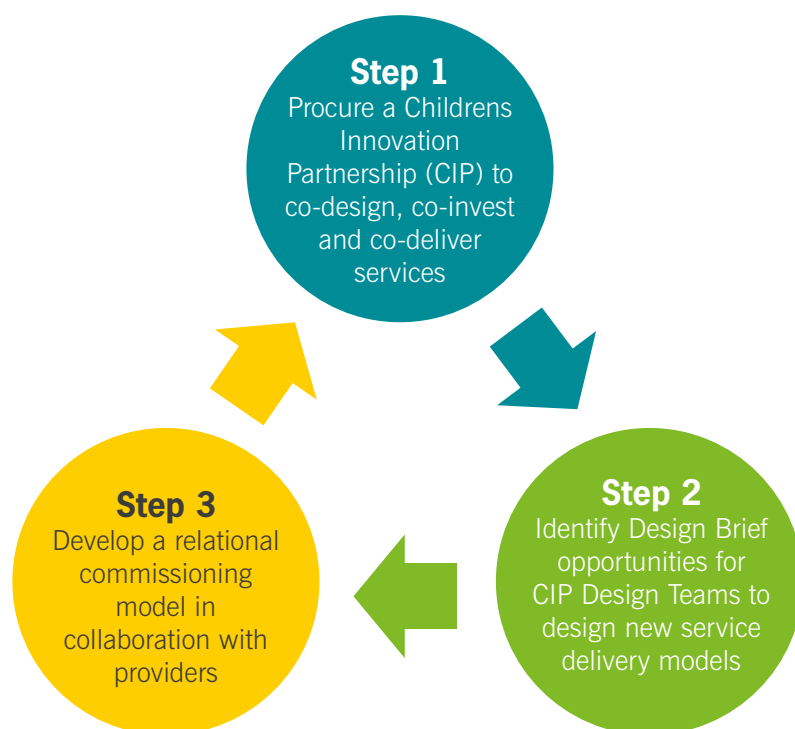


3.6 Next steps:

One of the financial challenges facing the Children and Families Service is a national 'market sufficiency' issue with providing good value-for-money residential placements for looked after children with a multiplicity of complex needs.

In response to this challenge and the wider challenges impacting the department the Care Placement strategy was developed which sets out a whole system approach to managing interactions with children, from early contact through to their leaving care.

To make a whole system change and to design and deliver needs led local services to improve outcomes for local children the CFS Department acknowledged that it would need to take a more innovative commissioning approach as outlined in the three steps below.



In response to placement sufficiency challenges, financial pressures and market inflexibility the council wanted to design and procure a partnership model for an external partner to jointly design and deliver services for young people on the edge of care, in care and leaving care.

The concept of a Children's Innovation Partnership (CIP) was developed with a vision to procure a partnership, rather than a service, and for the partner to be able to co-invest, co-design and co-deliver innovative, flexible, responsive services to support Leicestershire's children and families.

The partner organisation, Barnardos, was selected to bring its expertise, experience, investment and flexibility to the design and delivery of children's services and to work alongside Leicestershire children and family services.

The initial priority was a review of residential care. In January 2019 the Residential Care and a Specialist Design Team was established. The following proposals are being put forward for 2020/21, the details of which are attached as Appendix 2:

Development of a “Hub”, which will accommodate the Assessment and Resource Team (ART).

This will deliver a peripatetic support service comprising a range of social work, medical and psychological professionals known as the **ART** team. This team will undertake child and young person assessment of need and identify appropriate resources required to ensure “right placement first time”. The team will also provide wraparound services to support local residential provision, to share risk as appropriate.

Development of Assessment Beds (AB’S) attached to the Hub

The ART and Hub will work to contain the anxiety and distress that children exhibit at the point of family or placement breakdown. They will help the child to feel safe, emotionally contained through clear, consistent boundaries and predictable nurturing routines. The **Hub** will accommodate 3 specialist beds for assessment of need, delivered by the **ART**.

Development of Multi-Functional Properties (MFPs) to accommodate the flexibility required to meet changing need and demand.

These properties will be unregulated but will be staffed by appropriately qualified professionals to meet the individual needs of the residents. The provision will work to a recognised kite mark of quality to give assurances for an unregulated service.

4 Education and Attainment

The Leicestershire Virtual School celebrates the success of all our children and promotes practice that leads to positive outcomes for children; our maxim is “Success for All”.

The Virtual Head’s Termly Reports were presented to the Education of Children in Care Strategy Group on the 2 March 2020 and 10th July 2020. The following information provides an overview of education and attainment.

4.1 Profile of children and schools

There are currently 64 children in care in Early Years Settings / Nurseries and in Years 12-13 there are a total of 179 young people, 76 of whom are care leavers.

In line with statutory guidance, when seeking a place for looked-after children, schools judged by Ofsted to be ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’ are prioritised. Occasionally a school rated ‘Requiring Improvement’ may be selected on the basis that the VS has identified qualities in the school that will better support the child in question e.g. excellent pastoral support based on proven understanding of attachment and trauma.

When a school is inspected and drops out of Good or Outstanding, the VS considers the benefit or detriment to the child of changing school and advises the social worker accordingly.

As at 19 June 334 (82.27%) of current children in care of statutory school age are being educated in an Outstanding or Good school according to Ofsted and 50 (78.13%) of current early years children in care are being educated in Outstanding or Good settings.

231/416 (55.7%) have an identified Special Educational Need (SEN): 97 (23.4% of the whole cohort) are in receipt of SEN Support in school and 118 (28.4% of the whole cohort) have an EHCP, 16 (3.9% of the whole cohort) are undergoing assessment for an EHCP.

4.2 Quality of Personal Education Plans (PEP)

The PEP is a statutory requirement for children in care from the age of 3 years and if in education provision up to the age of 18. It is part of the child's Care Plan which the local authority has a legal duty to maintain with PEPs being reviewed three times a year (termly); a PEP should go no longer than six months without review.

The continuing increase in numbers of children in care means that there have been more PEP meetings to complete, over 50 more than for the same term in 2019. 402 PEP meetings took place during the 12 weeks of spring term 2019 compared with 407 during the 15 weeks of autumn term 2019. The number of PEPs being held in the spring term has increased 123.3% since 2016 from 180 to 402.

The VS is gradually moving responsibility for chairing and recording of PEPs to schools, who wrote up 28 more PEPs in Spring term 2020 than they did in Spring term 2019 (34.2% of the total number of PEPs compared with 30.7%).

Complex needs of children entering care often requires the involvement at the PEP of a VS education improvement officer (EIO) and when it is not practical to attend a PEP meeting, their specialist support can be delivered into a meeting via Skype. After lockdown commenced, PEP meetings continued on the dates agreed, but were instead held as Skype meetings.

EIOs, designated teachers (DT) and social workers are now all familiar with the process of completing meetings by Skype/phone and this format will remain the norm for the foreseeable future.

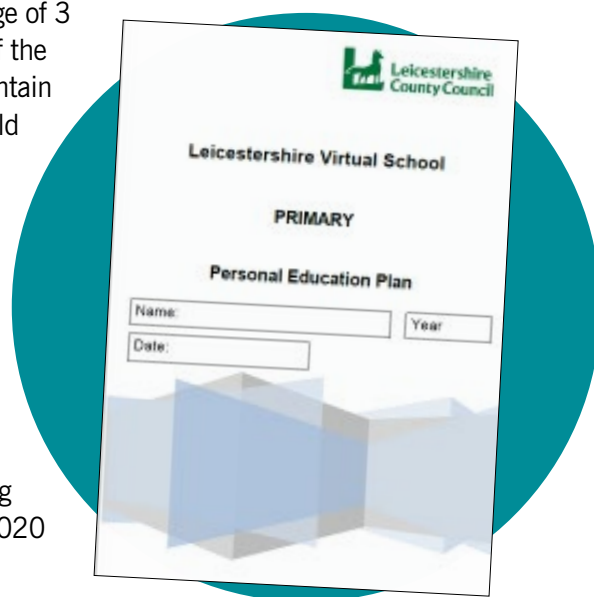
The quality of PEP documents is still a focus for the VS and 30.9% of PEPs written up by schools in the spring term had to have some remedial action to bring them up to standard. The situation has been exacerbated by the increasing quantity of PEPs that have to be completed and quality assured.

More PEP documents are being returned promptly by schools, with the average number of days for a school to return the PEP document to the Virtual School decreasing from 5.3 days in autumn term 2019 to 4.8 days in spring term 2020.

All children are encouraged to contribute to their PEPs, either by attending the meeting or by submitting their written Pupil Views pages, preferably both.

4.3 The use of Pupil Premium Plus

The Virtual School Head has a statutory responsibility to manage Pupil Premium Plus (PPP) funding for looked after children and ensure it is used without delay for the benefit of the looked-after child's educational needs as described in their personal education plan (PEP). DfE has confirmed that the grant for looked after children has increased for 2020-21 to £2,345 per eligible pupil from the previous amount of £2,300.



The VS top-slices £400 from each allocation, to create a pooled source of funding. The remaining £1,945 of each eligible child's PPP will be transferred to schools on a termly basis, on receipt of a plan linked to the child/young person's PEP targets, detailing how the school intends to use it, including the costings and intended outcomes.

The Virtual School monitors the use and impact of all PPP allocations closely, ensuring that schools allocate funding to interventions that support and improve educational outcomes of children. If needs are identified that require more than the initial £1,945 allocation, schools can apply through the child's allocated EIO for top-up from the centrally-held, pooled PPP; this enables funding to be allocated where it is needed most.

4.4 Promoting inclusive behaviour (Trauma, challenging behaviour and restrictive interventions in schools, The Centre for Mental Health Briefing)

This briefing, published in January 2020 focuses on restrictive interventions in schools (such as seclusion, restraint and exclusion), and highlights the way they can exacerbate distress and behavioural problems among children who have experienced trauma.

It examines the links between trauma and challenging behaviour and highlights the way restrictive interventions can create a vicious circle of trauma, challenging behaviour, restriction and psychological harm.

There are a number of alternative approaches to challenging behaviour in schools which are less likely to exacerbate trauma. These include positive behavioural support and creating trauma-informed schools as recommended by the Timpson Exclusion report (2019), statutory guidance 'Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children' (2018), NICE Pathways – 'Attachment difficulties in children and young' (2019).

The Centre for Mental Health Briefing calls on the Government to strengthen its take on trauma-informed approaches in schools and how to manage behaviour, to ensure all children feel valued and understood.

The Leicestershire Virtual School has a successful training programme for schools, social workers and carers, promoting attachment awareness, understanding of the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), trauma-informed practice including emotion coaching and the key adult learning module (KALM).

The February 2020 VS conference further promoted an attachment aware ethos in schools with over forty schools in attendance.

<https://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/trauma-behaviour-restrictive-interventions-schools>



4.5 Promoting confidence and attainment (participation events)

The Virtual School plans, staffs and recruits for aspirational educational trips and events for children in care. Each trip is aimed at an identified age range, either as support for the academic curriculum or to reward or encourage greater engagement in education and career planning. They give children and young people the opportunity to do activities that they might not otherwise experience, and the VS makes every effort to ensure that the activities cater for a wide range of interests and abilities.

The 2019 VS Creative Writing Project was highly successful and continues to generate interest across the country. 145 copies had been sold up to 14th February 2020 and the book was featured in a Bookseller (online trade website) article and was featured by the Fostering Network in one of their publications.

Following on from the success of the 2019 **Virtual School Calendar**, the 2020 calendar was published and sold out within a couple of weeks. There had been over forty entries from our children on the theme of the natural world.

Maths Inspiration is a national programme of interactive maths lecture shows for 14-17 year olds, which gives them the chance to experience the UK's most inspiring maths speakers live in theatres, presenting mathematics in the context of exciting, real-world applications. On 12th November six young people were accompanied to the **Maths Inspiration Show** in Birmingham, followed by a trip to the **Think Tank Science Museum, Birmingham**.

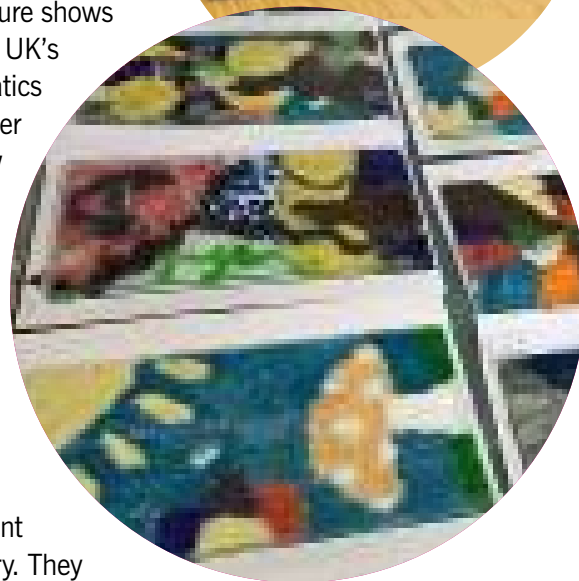
On 22nd November De Montfort University hosted a **Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) Day** attended by virtual school pupils. The day was spent addressing all sorts of engineering challenges, including maneuvering robots around a map full of 'snow', how to break into a vault and inventing their own unique sports energy drink.

On the 7th December the Virtual School held a **glass workshop** event for young people who have a keen interest in art and the art industry. They designed and made their own working glass clocks, discovering new skills and gaining new knowledge.

At the point of Covid19 lockdown, there had been a range of events in planning: Primary University Inspiration Day; Glass workshop to produce a group piece of art; Prepare for Year 7 (including arts and crafts and animal care); First Aid Workshop; Zoo Animal Handling and Educational Workshop. These have had to be put on hold until travel and social distancing rules are eased.

Reports on all VS Participation events can be seen in the Latest News section of the VS website:

<https://resources.leicestershire.gov.uk/leicestershire-virtual-school>



Newsletters

Fostering News (produced by the LCC Fostering team) features a regular contribution from the VS, as do editions of Special Guardianship Orders News (produced by Special Guardianship Support and Permanence Teams), and the Adoption newsletter. The VS submits notices to governors' briefings and Head teachers' briefings (produced by Education Quality and Inclusion service).

The VS and Corporate Parenting have produced a joint newsletter that is sent direct to all our pupils/students and a consultation is being launched by the participation team to find out from children and young people what shape communication with them should take.



Book Clubs and Parcels:

Bookworm, Boomerang and Letterbox book parcels continue to be sent out to Leicestershire children in care of school age, up to year 7. Anecdotal feedback gathered at primary PEPs is positive.

In addition, children aged 0-5 receive monthly book parcels from Dolly Parton's Imagination Library and feedback from Early years PEPs has also been positive.

In order to get the most from the reading packs, carers are encouraged to read with their children and motivate them to engage with reading as an essential, fun and rewarding activity. This message is being reinforced by Caring About Reading who started a pilot programme with eight carers, delivering three sessions to each that encourage them to engage in reading with their children. Strategies are shared that promote understanding of text and deliver advice on how to sustain an interest in reading.

Carer feedback:

"LC loves reading new stories. Her favourite books are Jack and the Beanstalk – "I like the cow in it" - and Gracie Leroo. LC loves receiving her book parcels and looks forward to them arriving. She will read books at any opportunity"

"TM loves getting her parcels and particularly liked the Elves and the shoemakers. She loves playing schools with Grandma and using the books."

"CW loved the Guinness Book of Records and showed a real interest."

4.6 Attendance:

Monitoring of attendance in school is undertaken daily with the support of data provided by Welfare Call. Up to and including 20th March 2020 (the point of lockdown), the overall Virtual School attendance was 93.70% a rise of 1.3% on the same point in the year in 2018/19.

4.7 Key Stage test and examination results 2018-19:

Test and examination results are for children who had been in care for at least 12 months prior to 31st March 2019.

Early Years results for children achieving a 'good level of development' are the same as for 2018 (33%). The 2018-19 cohort features 12 eligible children, each one representing 8.3% of the whole cohort. There is much movement with this cohort, as children enter care and exit care more rapidly.

Key Stage one results in 2019 are based on 18 children, each one representing 5.56%. 4/18 (22.2%) achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and maths compared to 46.15% in 2018. However, 10/18 (55%) of the 2019 cohort had SEN compared with 2018 when there was a total of 13 children of whom 5 (38.5%) had SEN.

KS2 results are pleasing, with 7/19 (36.8%) achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths compared with 31.8% in 2018.

KS4 results showed many individual successes. Of the 40 eligible children, 30 were in state-funded schools (on which national data is based). 4/30 (13.3%) achieved grade 9 – 5, and 10/30 (33.3%) achieved grade 9 – 4 in both English and maths. This compares with 6.7% and 20% respectively in 2018.

5. Health of children in care

5.1. Context

The 'Corporate Parent' is the collective responsibility of the council, elected members, employees, and partner agencies, to provide best possible care and safeguarding for each looked after child/young person.

In accordance with the Statutory Guidance, 'Promoting the Health and Well-being of Looked after Children', designated and named health professionals are appointed in Leicestershire. It is the responsibility of the Designated Doctor for CiC and Designated Nurse for CiC to ensure that every child in care has timely access to their statutory health assessments, and that a care plan is formulated to address all identified health needs.

The health service responsible for the completion of health assessments for the child in care is provided by the health provider for Leicestershire Partnership Trust, who work closely with the children's social care team, including the independent reviewing officers.

Children in care are at greater risk of poor physical and emotional health outcomes than their peers. A health needs assessment (HNA) is published annually and summaries the population-based data on the health of Looked after Children. This rich information enables the identification of key recommendations to improve health outcomes for these children and young people.

5.2 Key health outcomes for children in care

The following table summarises the key health outcomes for children and young people who have been in care for at least 12 months at 31st March which has increased by 11.1% from 415 in 2019 to 459 in 2020.

Please see comparison tables below for headline results on offending, health and dental recording:

Return Year	Total children looked after for at least 12 months	% of children convicted during year	% of children appropriately immunized	% of children their teeth checked by a dentist*	% of children who have had their annual health assessment	% of children identified as having a substance misuse problem	% of children who received an intervention for substance misuse problem	% of children who were offered an intervention for substance misuse problem
2020	459	1.45%	415	402	422	3.27%	1.82%	1.09%
			90.4%	87.6%	91.9%			
2019	413	2.42%	340	379	340	4.35%	2.17%	1.45%
			82.3%	91.8%	82.3%			

*Some children will be under 12 months of age and therefore will not have seen a dentist

There are 68 children who have been CiC for 12 months+ as at 31/3/20 and are aged 0-4 for whom a health surveillance check would be looked for, so our percentage of completion for this measure is 81%.

Analysis of the Initial Health Assessment (IHA) and Review Health Assessment (RHA) data in 2018/19 showed positive changes in access to health services and the uptake of essential services for this CiC population between the time they entered care at the IHA and when their health was reviewed at the RHA. The improvements in health included increased registration with a dentist, improved immunisation status, a higher consumption of fruit and vegetables than their peers and better levels of physical activity than their peer group.

Audits completed by the Leicestershire Partnership Trust for 2019/20 demonstrate high levels of compliance with GP registration, dentist registration, Dental appointments, optician registration and uptake and immunisations.

Review Health Assessments (RHA) are carried out by nurses for all CiC as per the Statutory Guidance (DoH, DfE 2015). Public Health nurses/health visitors carry out the RHA every 6 months after the IAH for CiC aged 0 – 4 and CiC nurses carry out an annual RHA for CiC aged 5 – 18 (every 12 months after the IAH). The RHA annual audit aims to address any variance in the quality of these assessments and address any required improvements. The 2019/20 Quality Review of record keeping and RHAs to determine the quality and improvement activity required. The review demonstrated the follow strengths and developmental areas:

Areas of good practice

- Emotional health assessments are evident in the RHA record. Carers and CiC are directed to resources to support emotional well-being or offered additional LAC nurse visits.
- CiC have their safety needs discussed and appropriate advice given to keep them safe
- Carers and CiC are directed to resources to support healthy relationships and resilience or offered additional CiC nurse visits
- Public health nurses/health visitors use research-based assessment tools to assess development and social skills.
- Recommendations in the health plan are child/ young person focussed, use a quality standard of SMART plans.
- In 2018/19, the date of completion of the RHA depends on referral being timely from the Local Authority.
- In 2018/19 it was identified that the following was needed - a greater focus within the RHA of holistic assessment of the developmental progress and physical health of the child/ young person using appropriate developmental assessment tools as needed. Monthly record keeping audits have been introduced to address this and report to staff immediately.

Areas for improvement

- Groups and relationships recorded on health systems need to be more accurate including parental responsibility.
- The RHA needs to demonstrate that the health history over the last 6 or 12 months has been reviewed, assessed, chronologically recorded and is then reflected in the RHA health care plan and recommended actions; in both cohorts.
- All CiC however young, need oral and dental health advice given to them and their carers at every RHA and information included in the health care plan.
- Where a weight, height or BMI is not possible (some CiC refuse to be measured) an overview of appearance and whether the weight of the young person appears healthy or if weight and growth has been a health issue in the past or the present should be recorded.
- The Leaving Care Health Summaries should be discussed at the RHA with all CiC over the age of 16 years.

The strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) measure emotional well-being and is an indicator of future mental health problems. There is a statutory requirement for the SDQ to be completed annually where a child has been in care for 12 months continuously and is aged 4 – 16 years.

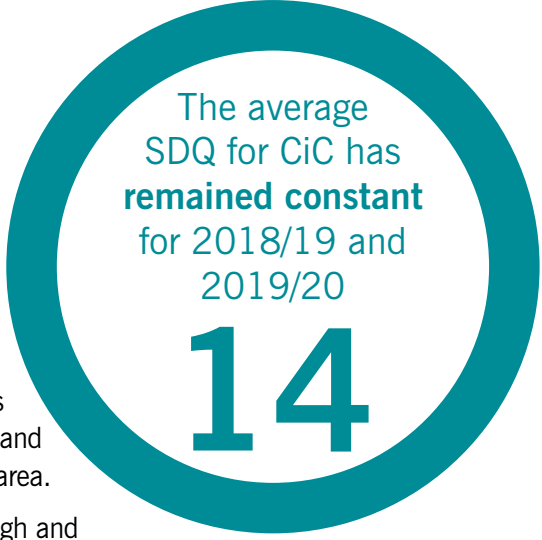
The SDQ examines 25 attributes, divided between 5 scales:

- Emotional problems
- Conduct problems
- Hyperactivity and inattention
- Peer relationship problems
- Prosocial behaviours (Excluded from Total Difficulties score)

A **total difficulties score** is calculated using the SDQ, which ranges from 0-40. Each 1-point increase in the total difficulties score corresponds with an increase in the risk of developing a mental health disorder. Scores are also provided for each of the 5 scales. Looking at the profile of scores is particularly useful in terms of making decisions about the appropriate type and level of support, particularly if a child is scoring significantly higher in one area.

Scores between 0-13 are deemed average, 14-16 slightly raised, 17-19 high and 20-40 deemed very high.

The average SDQ for CiC has remained constant for 2018/19 and 2019/20 – 14.



The average SDQ for CiC has remained constant for 2018/19 and 2019/20

14

Leicestershire eligible (children aged 4 – 16 years) CiC Scoring breakdown:

0-13 Average - 99

14-16 Slightly raised - 13

17-19 High - 8

20-40 Very High - 27

Range of score: 0-31

Whilst the annual SDQ completion rate remains high (83%), the Review demonstrated that the SDQ was usually not available at the RHA.

It is widely recognised that some Children and Young People have additional mental health needs. Leicestershire, Leicester, Rutland (LLR) and the local NHS organisation jointly commission the CAMHS Young People's Team (YPT) to provide enhanced specialist support to vulnerable children and young people with mental health disorders who are:

- Adopted
 - Looked After
 - Young Offenders
 - Homeless
 - Other children and young people placed by other local authorities within LLR
- And
- Their families and staff working with the vulnerable groups.

The YPT will provide additional mental health interventions to CYP in the vulnerable groups outlined above. The aims and objectives of the service are to

- Provide a mental health assessment, formulation and intervention service for CYP in the groups above who are referred to Specialist CAMHS
- Provide specialist input to the corresponding social care systems to support children and families with identified mental health need
- Facilitate the workforce to develop a better understanding of mental health issues in general and specific issues for vulnerable children and young people via advice, consultation and training.
- Engage with families to ensure that mental health problems are identified and treated early.

Achieving these aims increase awareness of mental health and well-being to build confidence and competence of staff in the teams and offer an enhanced service to children and young people who are in contact with these teams.

6. Children at Risk of Missing, Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

Looked after children/young people are particularly vulnerable to safeguarding risks– they are more likely to go missing and are at an increased risk of being trafficked and exploited.

High numbers of children are placed from other areas within Leicestershire residential care homes, although these placements enable movement away from the high-risk environment, the potential for Child Exploitation continues as abusers may follow the young person to their new home. Looked After service providers need to engage with children and young people, developing relationships that enable identification, and appropriate response to such risks of Child including child sexual exploitation (CSE) and child criminal exploitation (CCE).

Leicestershire County Council Social Care staff became co-located with the Police in September 2014. Leicestershire Police had already brought together several safeguarding functions within the force to consolidate its response to CSE and Missing Children. Due to the subsequent growth of the multi-agency team it relocated to South Wigston Police Station, which also houses the Child Abuse Investigation Unit.

Leicestershire County Council Social Care staff are represented within the unit replicating the enhanced response to CSE and Missing for cases of Domestic Abuse. The Out of Hours service is also embedded within the hub. This approach provides an environment that encourages collaborative information sharing and combined risk assessment, resulting in live time activity currently led jointly by Social Care and the Police.

All referrals are triaged from the respective authorities' front doors. A daily partnership risk assessment meeting is convened to identify risk and response to children. A weekly information sharing meeting considers all open cases graded at High MED risk and identifies strategies, trigger plans and cases for escalation.

A monthly partnership strategic meeting is chaired by the DCI to interrogate data, themes and multiple investigations. A team of social workers work in full cooperation with police officers to offer expertise, joint risk management from disclosure of offence, investigation, preparation and familiarisation for judicial process and ongoing recovery support. The team works hand in hand with fieldwork teams and has a particular connection to the Children in Care Service and the listening support service who offer independent return interviews.

The Child Criminal Exploitation Operations Group reports to the Vulnerability Executive Board, a sub group of the Strategic Partnership Board. Members of the Operations Group are at Assistant Director, Head of Service and Strategic levels. Members of the Executive Board are at Director and Deputy Chief Constable Level.

In November 2019 Leicestershire County Council launched our Child Criminal Exploitation Framework 2019-2021. This has now been adopted as the East Midlands Child Criminal Exploitation framework.

A new multi-agency 38 strong team of experts represent the “National County Lines Coordination Centre” supported by the National Crime Agency are working to develop the national intelligence picture of the complexity and scale of the threat. There are more than 1000 lines in operation nationally with links to increasing levels of serious violence. We have seen over 200 people arrested for drug related offences during weeks of intensification under Operation Lionheart. We saw significant convictions for some young adults. This inevitably left gaps within the drugs manufacturing and distribution model; intelligence tells us that younger family members have plugged the gaps in the market. We are aware that we may see an increase in the level of violence as some of the initial instigators are due for release. We continue to monitor this activity collaboratively with neighbourhood police, community safety and our colleagues in YOS.

Our collaborative approach in the Charnwood district to identify those at risk; and those vulnerable to recruitment, locally by organised crime groups. CCE is devastating leaving families isolated, and communities living in fear. The threat of violence including sexual violence is common and the bind of debt bondage coercive and intimidation integral to gain compliance and territorial control. We are committed to learn more about the cohort of children, why they are members of gangs and how to keep them safe.

The Ofsted inspection of children’s social care services took place in September 2019. In relation to exploitation, the inspection found that:

The impressive Vulnerability Hub is effective in safeguarding children and young people who are at risk of harm or who are experiencing harm from sexual exploitation, as well as those who go missing from home and from care. Strong multi-agency collaboration and investment enable teams of specialist social workers, police and other staff to quickly share information, fully consider historical concerns, and to make effective decisions which safeguard and minimise the risks to children and young people. Return interviews are comprehensive, include children’s views and are completed in a timely manner, with information used to inform work with individual children and wider disruption activity.

The multi-agency co-located child sexual exploitation team is suitably evolving into a child criminal exploitation team, with the modern slavery and human trafficking team now appropriately aligned alongside.

6.1 Child Exploitation

In Leicestershire there is an operational multi-agency child exploitation team and missing called the Vulnerability Hub. The agencies meet regularly. These meetings are the forum for discussing, mapping, and analyzing concerns and for identifying solutions for all children/young people who are thought to be at risk of child exploitation, including children in care who may be at risk.

Locally gathered information indicates a stabilization of numbers regarding need, although information for child criminal exploitation is only available for 2020. The following provides an overview of need by year:

CSE Referrals -



Child Criminal Exploitation -



CSE Referrals GENDER -

	2017	2018	2019	2020
Female	243	173	211	184
Male	54	66	102	74
Not recorded	0	8	0	0
Transgender	0	0	1	1

CCE Referrals GENDER -

	2020
Female	13
Male	27
Not recorded	0
Transgender	0

6.2 Children Reported Missing

There are no exact figures for the number of children who go missing or run away but estimates suggest that the figure is in the region of 100,000 per year². Children may run away from a problem, such as abuse or neglect at home, or to somewhere they want to be. They may have been coerced to run away by someone else. Whatever the reason, it is thought that approximately 25 per cent of children and young people that go missing are at risk of serious harm. There are particular concerns about the links between children running away and the risks of sexual exploitation. Looked after children missing from their placements are particularly vulnerable. (Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care, DfE, 2014).

The Ofsted report 'Missing Children' published in February 2013 on local authorities' work in relation to children missing from home and care highlighted a number of concerns. These were that:

- risk management plans for individual looked after children were often not developed or acted on;
- placement instability was a key feature of looked after children who ran away;
- reports about looked after children missing from their care placement were not routinely provided to senior managers in local authorities; and
- there was little evidence that safe and well checks or return interviews were taking place.

The Ofsted inspection of children's social care services took place in September 2019. The inspection found the experience of children and care leavers to be good overall. Specifically, in relation to children missing from care, the report set out that:

There is a more timely and effective response when children first need help and protection, including out of hours and for children at risk of sexual exploitation and for children who go missing.

Locally gathered information evidences continued close monitoring and sharing of information about children who go missing from home or care and that numbers remain relatively stable. The following provides an overview of need by year:

Children who are not in care who go missing -

	2019	2020
Total children missing	510	495
Total number of episodes	743	734

Children who are in care who go missing -

	2019	2020
Total number of Leicestershire children	98	96
Total number of non-Leicestershire children	130	160
Total number of episodes for Leicestershire children	335	264
Total number episodes for non-Leicestershire children	407	370

Missing episodes decreased over the year. The use of a Safeguarding & Missing Coordinator and performance reports are used to scope all missing episodes and contacts and to prompt the allocated social worker to complete a return interview. The coordinator offers advice on technique and responds to any intelligence to build a picture of the rational for the missing episode, the incentive and possible alternatives and resolutions to intercept future episodes. The information gathered from the interviews assists the social worker to develop the care plan and to manage future risk. The completion of return interviews has improved year on year - in quarter 1 of 2019/20 75 were completed; in quarter 1 of 2020/21 161 were completed. Return interviews are mostly completed within 72 hours - in quarter 1 of 2019/20 65 of 75 were completed within 72 hours; in quarter 1 of 2020/21 all were completed within 72 hours.



7. Care Leavers

Our vision is that Leicestershire is the best place for children, young people and their families.

We aim to be the best performing local authority in the country against well-defined ambitions and measures, and where we are not yet there we will set stretching targets for annual improvement.

We believe in being open and inclusive. To this effect, our Care Leavers play a key role in shaping the service and holding the authority to account for our actions. We are ambitious for our children and young people and we strive to ensure the outcomes we achieve are the best.



Local development and implementation of the Care Leaver Offer

Leicestershire County Council is committed to making Leicestershire the best place to live for all its children, specifically recognising the vulnerability of Care Leavers. As such an ambitious improvement journey for 2019-2021 that will build on progress to date and it based on the views of young people in care and key partners gathered during 2018 has been launched.

The Ofsted inspection of children's social care services took place in September 2019. The inspection found the experience of children and care leavers to be good overall. Regarding services to care leavers, Ofsted wrote:

The Children in Care Council (CiCC) and Supporting Young People After Care (SY PAC) group are an impressive assembly of children and young people who feel listened to and valued by the highly visible and effective lead member and other senior leaders. Their participation enhances their negotiation skills and helps develop their confidence and self-esteem. They are proud of the recent contact expectations statement, approved by senior leaders, which will enhance children and young people's family time experiences.

The local authority is aspirational for its children in care and care leavers and holds regular events that celebrate their achievements. Children in care enjoy a range of social, sporting and creative activities that help to boost their self-confidence and are fun. One child said, 'Being in care has given me opportunities I wouldn't have.' Many children have been successful in achieving awards for their talents.

Following visits by the government's national advisor for care leavers in February 2019 and November 2019 to meet with senior leaders and staff to review our work with care leavers, Leicestershire was identified as one of the top 10 performing authorities in terms of progress made against recommendations.

7.2 Corporate Parenting – driving the new promise and ambition for care leavers

The lead Member, Councillor Ivan Ould OBE CC has been instrumental in driving and embedding corporate parenting responsibility. For many years, Councillor Ould has been an advocate for children in care and care leavers. He co-chairs Corporate Parenting Board with a child in care, ensuring that children and young people panel members are supported and effectively contribute to Leicestershire's Corporate Parenting Strategy.

During 2018 Councillor Ould continued his efforts to engender understanding, empathy and ambition for Leicestershire's Care Leavers across the Council. He proactively sought to establish a 5-member panel (Corporate Parenting Scrutiny Board) who now serve to:

- Learn about the needs of all Children in Care and Care Leavers and educate other officers and members
- Challenge officers on the service that is delivered and outcomes for Children in Care and Care Leavers
- Advocate on behalf of Children in Care and Care Leavers.

The Corporate Parenting Scrutiny Board has been presented with the summaries of the mapping undertaken during 2018 that sets out the Children's Social Care and other agencies strengths, developmental areas and the ambitions. They have committed to three events during the year in which they will have direct contact with children in care and Care Leavers to understand their lived experience and to

understand priorities to improve their lives. Members started pushing within their districts to achieve full council tax exemption across all districts and are advocating for housing applications to be accepted at age 17.5 years or younger.



Under the new North West Leicestershire District Council (NWLDC) council tax discount scheme, people leaving care and the households they live in will pay no council tax until they are 25.

Support to Children in Care and Care Leavers is a priority for the Council and the Leader of the Council – Councillor Nick Rushton, Corporate Portfolio Holder at NWLDC, said:

“We understand that the transition out of care for young people can be a stressful and problematic time for many. Without the support of a family or the experience of managing their own finances, care leavers can be more susceptible to debt.

“We are pleased to give financial support to these young people by reducing their council tax bill to zero until the age of 25 and we hope this gives them a bit of a boost while they establish themselves outside of the care system.”

This policy has been implemented with immediate effect.

In September 2019 the District Housing Executive committee accept the proposed changes to the new Housing Protocol:

- Includes Council Tax exemptions
- Includes corporate parenting principles as the guiding principles.
 - Highlights that in 2019 Leicestershire partners came together to make a commitment and promise to children in care and care leavers. These underpin the behaviours expected from all partners making this commitment, which are We will support you
 - We will respect your identify
 - We will listen to you
 - We believe in you
 - We will support you to find a place you can call home
 - We will inform you
 - We will be a lifelong champion
- Sets out that care leavers will automatically have a local connection with all districts within Leicestershire meaning they should be eligible to go on any housing registers.
- Sets out that Care Leavers over the age of 16 can join the Local Housing Authority Housing register, but if under 18 they would not be permitted to bid for properties until they are ready for independent living and there is an agreement in place for a responsible adult or agency to hold the tenancy in trust until they turn 18.

7.3 Care Leavers – outcomes for 2019/20

Accommodation and preparation to live independently

The **commissioning of 16+ provisions** is overseen by the Assistant Director and Head of Service for Children in Care to ensure that suitable accommodation and appropriate care packages are in place, acknowledging that preparing young people during these 2 years (16-18 years) is critical. The Head of Service reviews complex packages of care three times a year to ensure young people are safe and making progress. Outcomes are shared with SMT to ensure learning is in place. The Family Placement Team (the commissioning service) ensures that providers are meeting appropriate standards through regular visits to the properties and where appropriate, through contract management meetings.

For many young people the chance to remain with their foster carers post 18 (called Staying Put) gives them the opportunity to reach their potential without the worries of managing their own tenancy and worrying about finances, alongside having the support of their foster family. Many of the young people who remain in their placement post 18 take the journey to University, knowing that they have their family to come home to during holidays and breaks.

Staying Put numbers have increased since the Ofsted inspection (2016) – this increase was accompanied by a change in delivery of this service with two dedicated social workers overseeing the support, advice and training of Staying Put and Supported Lodgings carers (with a focus on the young person’s needs and what is needed to ensure the carer has the knowledge, skill and support required). We currently have **35** young people staying put in their foster homes:

- These are a mixture of placements some being IFA, Kinship and In-house carers (foster carers and supported lodgings providers)
- 80% of young people remain in their supported lodgings placements until they reach 21, with some then remaining under a private arrangement.

The Leicestershire Virtual School is an accredited ASDAN centre and delivered training to 25 carers and Personal Advisors on how to support young people completing the course. This instruction will promote understanding and confidence in delivering advice and support and ensure a consistent approach across the authority.

Social workers agree with carers at each review which 1 or 2 units from the award will be covered over the following 6 months. These units are then worked through by young people and carers with PA support to complete the “paperwork” from the ASDAN book and to keep the evidence in an organised way e.g. in folders or scrapbooks.

At the end of 18 months the young person will have completed between 3 and 6 modules and the PA will complete the final paperwork with them (the summary of achievement pages); the full folder / scrapbook and completed ASDAN book will then be returned to the Virtual School for accreditation, allowing time for any amendments or additions to be made to the folders within the ASDAN timescale of 2 years from start to completion. It is expected that all post-16 young people will be supported to access this additional qualification.

All PAs have also attended the RiP training and themes are consistently on Team Meeting agenda to promote understanding of need. For example, a theme that is being repeatedly visited to ensure improved practice is the importance of identity.

Welfare Advice reintroduced to the service. We have a part-time welfare rights advisor. He is able to work directly with our young people and help when they have arrears issues or are not able to claim the benefits they need while at college or unable to work.

Ambitious, skilled and well supported foster carers are essential if our children in care and Care Leavers are to fulfil their educational potential and access a rewarding adulthood. The Virtual School delivers education awareness training to carers and social workers, as well as attachment and trauma-informed strategies for them to use. The Virtual School offer extends to attendance at foster carer network meetings and the new Virtual School website keeps carers informed of aspirational participation events to engage their children.

Voice

Supporting Young People After Care (SYPAC) is an active and engaged group of Care Leavers who meet regularly with the support of key staff / officers to have fun together but also ensure that issues important to them are addressed. They represent the wider Care Leavers group at key events e.g. Corporate Parenting Board.

Leicestershire County Council work with young people in care and Care Leavers to hear their voice to influence the service provision and the way forward. The workers through SYPAC ask young people for their views about what's going well, what are you worried about and what needs to happen to make you feel better. In January 2019 young people were asked the above and the following views were shared:

What's working well?

- "PA helps with stress e.g. support around bills"
- "I'm socialising a lot, especially spending Christmas with family and SYPAC"
- "I have a nice flat in a good area – makes me feel motivated to do well"
- "Careers advice service help me so I can find a job for the future"
- "The extension period post 18 for semi-independence is good"

What are we worried about?

- "Gap / slow progress accessing mental health support"
- "Having enough money for bills which can be stressful"
- "Worried I'm alone now I'm 21. Scary not having that support"
- "Breakdown in relationships if it happens (family, friends, girlfriend / boyfriend) – that worry is always there"
- "Don't make young people do things they don't want to e.g. you should see family on your terms"

What needs to happen?

- "Have a PA again now I'm 21"
- "Help develop more confidence in self and people around us"
- "Making sure you get young person's views about family and if you feel safe seeing them"
- "PAs need to make council (housing) aware of the young person's needs. Not everything fits everyone."
- "Making sure that my accommodation is suitable and I don't need to go into shared accommodation"
- "I would like to see her twice a month. Either face to face or over the phone"

These views are then incorporated into the service delivery plans and taken into account when planning services.

The Corporate Parenting Board is attended by key representatives of Children in Care and Care Leavers who meet with key partners to work on / address important issues. The Board is co-chaired by the Lead Member and a young person, and young people help to plan and contribute to the agenda to ensure issues of importance to them are addressed.

There is consistent Care Leaver representation on Corporate Parenting Board and over the last, 2 new CL members have attended (one each). PAs continue to have discussions with Care Leavers, encouraging them to attend.

Themes have been introduced to the Board and in January 2020 the was on Care Leaver Accommodation.

The engagement of the Corporate Policies Team is considered a great success. This has given Care Leavers a voice and influence of the Leicester & Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership strategies. The following information has been contributed to set the scene for future meetings and engagement with businesses.

What are skills issues are impacting negatively on economic growth and productivity within Leicester and Leicestershire?

- Care Leavers are less likely to have accessed appropriate, individualised care advice
- Many Care Leavers are not 'job ready'
- Care Leavers often lack interview skills
- Lower numbers of Care Leavers access HE (Care Leavers are 11% less likely than to enter higher education than those from a similar demographic and with similar grades)
- Care Leavers access HE later than other young people (On average 8 months later due to weaker KS4 attainment)
- Care Leavers are statically much less likely to be EET (Due to other disruptions in their life, Care Leavers are 38% more likely to leave their course and not return. The most common reasons for considering leaving were academic issues, emotional and mental health issues and financial problems)
- Care Leavers often have lots of other stresses going on in their lives which make it harder to cope with employment, without understanding and supportive employers
- Care Leavers often have placement and moves of home over and under 18 which means they often need to change jobs
- Statistically Care Leavers begin post year 11 education at a later date, and employers often struggle to understand why this is.

What can be done to ensure that all Leicester and Leicestershire residents benefit from future economic growth?

- Additional employment support for Care Leavers
- Additional support in accessing traineeships / apprenticeships / HE
- Commitment from business to support Care Leavers – e.g. Care Leavers Covenant <https://mycovenant.org.uk/>
- Wider stakeholder engagement with issue – DWP, LLEP, schools, careers services...

Keeping Care Leavers safe

The Care Leavers team hold a two monthly care leaver multiagency risk management panels chaired by the Service Manager for Children in Care and Care Leavers. This is attended by key agencies and we are able to discuss particularly vulnerable or hard to reach Care Leavers and agree better, more joined up ways of helping them to achieve their potential. Successes include the sharing of information and intelligence that has enabled the service to reach out to Care Leavers, to offer support and build trusting relationships.

Emotional wellbeing and Health Pathways

In 2018 the Leicester, Leicestershire, Rutland Strategic Health meeting for CIC was extended to include issues pertaining to Care Leavers. This saw Care Leavers attend the LLLR health event in November 2018 and in May 2019 with staff and partners to contribute to a mapping of services and needs.

The Promise has been reviewed and revised with key partners. Health partners finalised key activity and actions for 2019 to improve the health outcomes of children in care and Care Leavers. These activities and outcomes are monitored through the Strategic Board, for example, completion rates for health care plans and quality of those plans and the extension of the Health for Teens Website <https://www.healthforteens.co.uk/> to include specific information for care leavers.

In 2018 the Council's therapeutic offer was extended to Care Leavers who have emotional support needs that cannot be met within the community and do not require the services of CAMHS. The Service Manager for Children in Care (including Care Leavers) receives requests for the allocation of a therapeutic budget which can then be spent with the care leaver and carer (if appropriate) to commission an appropriate service.

In 2018 MISTLE (Multi-disciplinary Intervention Support Team Leicestershire) was commissioned from Family Action. MISTLE works in partnership with Leicestershire County Council and the LPT NHS Trust and provides long term, therapeutic support to looked after children and young people, their families and carers - particularly those who present as follows:

- Who have experienced multiple placement breakdowns
- Who have received a mental health intervention (Tier 2)
- Who is a risk to themselves or to others
- Who are at risk of or excluded from school.

Many of our Care Leavers are busy adults who have their own lives. So, to stay in contact we also use WhatsApp when necessary to make sure we can contact each other when needed. Staff have co-written a policy that ensure WhatsApp is used to communicate general messages of encouragement and to advertise events. Personal or sensitive communications received from Care Leavers are responded to immediately and in a way that protects their confidentiality.

On 23rd October 2019, DfE announced programmes totaling £19 million to improve support for care leavers. £3 million was promised “to extend the Pupil Premium Plus to all 16-18-year-old care leavers, supporting their transition into further education. This is to help them be ambitious in their choice of qualifications and to make sure that there is a greater chance that they will complete their chosen course.” It has yet to be determined how this funding will be distributed, or how it should be used.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/vital-new-support-for-young-people-leaving-care>

7.4 Care Leavers - Performance for 2019/20

Apprenticeships

In May 2018 the People Strategy Board agreed to ring-fence LCC apprenticeships for Leicestershire Care Leavers. By May 2019:

- 1 work trial has led to an offer of full-time permanent employment
- 3 work trials have led to apprenticeships
- 1 work trial was successfully completed but the care leaver turned down the offered apprenticeship.

By October 2019:

- 7 apprenticeships
- 2 resignations

By December 2019:

- 9 apprenticeships

By March 2020:

- Apprenticeships will get the national working wage
- The ring-fenced LCC apprenticeships scheme for care leavers continues, however recruitment has been frozen, and the scheme will be re-launched when restrictions ease and learning providers have clarified their offer for the new academic year.

Young People in Higher Education

- 8 young people started at University
- 1 young person has started a Masters Degree
- 1 young person has started a Level 5 course at college (foundation degree)
- 7 young people are in their 2nd or 3rd year at University

Young People in Education, Employment and Training

The Virtual School and Care Leavers Team Manager have worked with Leicester & Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP). The LLEP is a strategic body led by a Board made up of local government and business leaders as well as senior education and third sector representatives. The LLEP's remit is to drive forward regeneration and growth of the local economy. The ambition is to secure LLEP's commitment to the Care Leaver Covenant and seek to raise aspirations and outcomes for care leavers by offering ring-fenced apprenticeships, work experience, mentoring and sponsorship.

Participation events are run by the Virtual School, which include group taster sessions for children in care provided by local universities' Widening Participation Teams and bespoke visits for individual children and young people to university and college faculties when interest in particular areas have been expressed.

Careers advice has entered into local authority control, with information, advice and guidance support integrated into the Care Leavers Service, delivering to the most vulnerable Care Leavers, ensuring staff have the right information and understanding to be ambitious and determined corporate parents.

172 (64.2%) of 268 Care Leavers who had not returned home for more than six months were in education, employment or training when contacted around their birthday

Young people in Suitable Accommodation in 2019/20

94.8% Care Leavers in suitable accommodation.

Young people in contact in 2019/20

278 Care Leavers were eligible for inclusion in the 2019/2020 return, of whom the local authority was in touch with 267 (96%).

8. Advocacy and Complaints

The services you receive from Children's Social Care in Leicestershire is personal to each service user, children and family. We encourage service users, included children in Leicestershire's care, to tell us if we are doing things well or not. This enables each department to act to improve services.

Children or Young People making complaints about social care are given information about advocacy support and assistance in obtaining an advocate if requested. The role of the advocate in the complaint's procedure is to provide independent and confidential information, advice, representation and support.

The complaints procedure is divided into 3 stages. The overview of these stages is attached as appendix 1.

There were 5 complaints made by a Looked after Child, either in own right or via support from Children's Rights. Three of these complaints were made through an advocate and two made by young people directly. The themes of the complaints vary. A summary is provided:

- Age assessment delay
- Management of staff at a supported living provision
- Delay in identifying a foster placement
- Lack of support from the Children in Care Team
- Concern about suitability of accommodation and support

None of the complaints progressed beyond stage one. A summary of findings and resolution is provided:

- No finding, matter resolved through discussion with the young person
- No fault found, learning identified for the provider to improve service
- Fault found, accepted there had been delays, apology offered and action identified to progress.
- Fault found, child spoken to, he was happy that issues had been resolved and now felt supported.
- No fault found, accommodation assessed to be suitable.

Appendix 1 - Complaints stages

The complaints procedure is divided into three stages

Stage 1 Local Resolution

Wherever possible a manager will send you a response within 10 working days. Sometimes a complaint may take longer and be extended to 20 working days

If not resolved – or if there is agreement for investigation

Stage 2 Investigation

The Customer Relations team may arrange an impartial investigation. We will aim to let you have this reply with the outcome of the investigation within 25 working days. Sometimes investigations may take longer than this. If this happens you will be informed and advised of the outcome within 65 working days

If not resolved

Stage 3 Panel

The Stage 3 panel consists of three independent people and will usually meet within 30 working days of the Customer Relations Team accepting your request. After the meeting the panel members will make recommendations to the Director of Children's and Families within 5 working days on whether or not something else needs to be done about your complaint. The Director will write to let you know the final decision within 15 working days

If you are still unhappy with the response you can ask the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) to look at the issue again. The Ombudsman can be contacted at The Local Government Ombudsman, PO Box 4771, Coventry, CV4 0EH

Tel **0300 061 0614**; website: **www.lgo.org.uk**

Appendix 2 - Detailed description of the Residential Strategy

Development of a “Hub”, which will accommodate the Assessment and Resource Team (ART).

This will deliver a peripatetic support service comprising a range of social work, medical and psychological professionals known as the **ART** team. This team will undertake child and young person assessment of need and identify appropriate resources required to ensure “right placement first time”. The team will also provide wraparound services to support local residential provision, to share risk as appropriate.

The **ART** team will ensure, strong staff to child ratios, and the skills to provide the following types of placement according to the presenting needs of the child:

- Crisis Intervention
- Comprehensive Assessment and Care Planning
- Transitional Support Packages
- Family Work to Facilitate a Return Home

Development of Assessment Beds (AB’S) attached to the Hub

The ART and Hub will work to contain the anxiety and distress that children exhibit at the point of family or placement breakdown. They will help the child to feel safe, emotionally contained through clear, consistent boundaries and predictable nurturing routines. The **Hub** will accommodate 3 specialist beds for assessment of need, delivered by the **ART**.

- With emotional and behavioural difficulties
- With complex health and social care needs
- Who are young parents
- Who have unregulated behaviour
- With high needs related to a delayed transfer of care
- Who are particularly at risk from going missing

Development of Multi-Functional Properties (MFPs) to accommodate the flexibility required to meet changing need and demand.

These properties will be unregulated but will be staffed by appropriately qualified professionals to meet the individual needs of the residents. The provision will work to a recognised kite mark of quality to give assurances for an unregulated service.

The development of MFPs is an innovative approach to providing ‘flexible provision’ which is needs-led. Consideration can be given to either the MFP or Assessment Bed unit being located at Welland House, with adaptations.

This provision can accommodate up to three young people who will be aged 16-18 years on admission and of either gender. The three units will be fully self-contained, multi-functional and double occupancy, so that these units can be used flexibly– it would be equally possible to use as a Parent & Child setting, or to support a child with learning difficulties.

