



*Meeting:* **Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

*Date/Time:* **Monday, 13 June 2016 at 1.30 pm**

*Location:* **Sparkenhoe Committee Room, County Hall, Glenfield**

*Contact:* **Miss. F. Gall (0116 305 3407)**

*Email:* **francesca.gall@leics.gov.uk**

### Membership

Mr. L. Spence CC (Chairman)

Mr. G. Hirst    Mr. T. J. Pendleton CC  
Mr. J. Kaufman CC    Mr. J. Perry  
Ms. K. J. Knaggs CC    Mrs. C. M. Radford CC  
Mr. L. J. P. O'Shea CC    Mr. E. D. Snartt CC  
Mr. A. E. Pearson CC    Mr. G. Welsh CC

**Please note: this meeting will be filmed for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's web site at <http://www.leics.gov.uk/webcast> – Notices will be on display at the meeting explaining the arrangements.**

### AGENDA

- | <u>Item</u>  | <u>Report by</u> |
|--|------------------|
| 1. Appointment of Chairman.<br><br>To note that Mr. L. Spence CC was nominated as Chairman elect to the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the Annual Meeting of the County Council held on 18 May 2016. |                  |
| 2. Election of Deputy Chairman.  |                  |
| 3. Minutes of the meeting held on 4 April 2016.  | (Pages 5 - 10)   |
| 4. Question Time.  |                  |
| 5. Questions asked by members under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).  |                  |



6. To advise of any other items which the Chairman has decided to take as urgent elsewhere on the agenda.
7. Declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda.
8. Declarations of the Party Whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.
9. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 36.
10. Quarter 4 2015/16 Performance Report. (Pages 11 - 28)
11. Leicestershire and Rutland Adoption Agency Performance Report. (Pages 29 - 38)
12. Leicestershire Fostering Agency Performance Report. (Pages 39 - 48)
13. Regional Adoption Agencies. (Pages 49 - 52)
14. Date of next meeting.  
  
The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled to take place on 5 September 2016, at 1.30pm.
15. Any other items which the Chairman has decided to take as urgent.

### **QUESTIONING BY MEMBERS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

Members serving on Overview and Scrutiny have a key role in providing constructive yet robust challenge to proposals put forward by the Cabinet and Officers. One of the most important skills is the ability to extract information by means of questions so that it can help inform comments and recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny bodies.

Members clearly cannot be expected to be experts in every topic under scrutiny and nor is there an expectation that they so be. Asking questions of 'experts' can be difficult and intimidating but often posing questions from a lay perspective would allow members to obtain a better perspective and understanding of the issue at hand.

Set out below are some key questions members may consider asking when considering reports on particular issues. The list of questions is not intended as a comprehensive list but as a general guide. Depending on the issue under consideration there may be specific questions members may wish to ask.

#### **Key Questions:**

- Why are we doing this?
- Why do we have to offer this service?
- How does this fit in with the Council's priorities?
- Which of our key partners are involved? Do they share the objectives and is the service to be joined up?
- Who is providing this service and why have we chosen this approach? What other options were considered and why were these discarded?
- Who has been consulted and what has the response been? How, if at all, have their views been taken into account in this proposal?

**If it is a new service:**

- Who are the main beneficiaries of the service? (could be a particular group or an area)
- What difference will providing this service make to them – What will be different and how will we know if we have succeeded?
- How much will it cost and how is it to be funded?
- What are the risks to the successful delivery of the service?

**If it is a reduction in an existing service:**

- Which groups are affected? Is the impact greater on any particular group and, if so, which group and what plans do you have to help mitigate the impact?
- When are the proposals to be implemented and do you have any transitional arrangements for those who will no longer receive the service?
- What savings do you expect to generate and what was expected in the budget? Are there any redundancies?
- What are the risks of not delivering as intended? If this happens, what contingency measures have you in place?

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Minutes of a meeting of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Monday, 4 April 2016.

PRESENT

Mr. L. Spence CC (in the Chair)

Mrs. J. A. Dickinson CC  
Mr. G. Hirst  
Mr. J. Kaufman CC  
Mr. A. M. Kershaw CC

Mr. L. J. P. O'Shea CC  
Mr. T. J. Pendleton CC  
Mrs. C. M. Radford CC  
Mr. G. Welsh CC

54. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2016 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

55. Question Time.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 35.

56. Questions asked by members under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

57. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

58. Declarations of interest.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

Mr L. Spence CC indicated that, whilst this did not amount to an interest to be declared at this meeting, he felt it relevant to report that he sometimes worked for an academy within the County.

No further declarations were made.

59. Declarations of the Party Whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.

There were no declarations of the party whip.

60. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 36.

The Chief Executive reported that no petitions had been received under Standing Order 36.

61. Commissioning Intentions.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services on the Commissioning Strategy for Children and Family Services, and the Department's 2016/17 commissioning intentions. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes.

The Committee expressed concerns around the use of terminology within the strategy such as 'delay need' and what this meant for service provision. Assurances were provided that this categorisation would not result in delays to service provision, nor would it leave vulnerable children and young people at risk, but that there were service areas where it was hoped that the use of statutory powers could be prevented or delayed, as alternative services could be provided to meet the needs of the child and the family before intervention became necessary. 'Delay need' also referred to the use of targeted services to prevent the escalation of need. It was suggested that the report be revised to include a narrative that set out the meaning of the four descriptors in particular relation to children's social care services and the use of statutory powers.

A query was raised in relation to what position the Council held on encouraging early academisation of maintained schools. It was reported that the Council intended to support all schools at whatever point they chose to convert, and it was noted that thus far all schools which had converted to academies had chosen to do so, and were supported during the conversion process by the department, and afterwards through local partnerships aimed at ensuring excellence in schools.

RESOLVED:

(a) That the Commissioning Intentions report be noted;

(b) That the comments now made be submitted to the Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on 19 April.

62. Quarter 3 Performance Report.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services concerning the performance of Children and Family Services at the end of quarter 3 2015/16. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 9' is filed with these minutes.

It was noted that whilst the percentage of children becoming subject to a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time had decreased, Leicestershire remained in the fourth quartile of local authorities and the performance indicator was RAG rated as RED. The majority of children subject to a second plan had previous cases closed between a period of 2 – 7 years ago. The Department had undertaken work to understand why many cases had been closed in the past, and it was felt that professional optimism was a factor. It was reported that procedures were now in place to prevent this including robust management oversight, and it was expected that the percentage of second and subsequent child protection plans would continue to decrease.

Members noted Leicestershire's target for 2017/18 of 70% of pupils achieving five or more A\*-C GCSE's (including English and Maths), and queried what actions would need

to be taken in supporting schools to achieve this target, and who would be held accountable should targets not be met. It was reported that in the previous year, three schools had suffered from poor performance which had impacted upon the performance data. These three schools were currently supported to achieve improvements by the work of the Leicestershire Education Excellence Partnership. The local authority had a statutory duty only to monitor educational outcomes, though it was required to inform Ofsted what support was offered to schools with poor performance. Individual schools would be held to account as the providers of education if outcomes were not satisfactory.

It was felt that RAG ratings, whilst helpful in identifying areas of poor performance, read alone did not sufficiently explain the areas of better or worse performance for the Department and provide the required context to wholly understand the data. It was explained that the RAG ratings were based on the judgement of officers but, where Leicestershire County Council performance was in the top quartile, the RAG rating would be GREEN and where the Council was in the bottom quartile, the RAG rating would be RED. Officers were asked that for future performance reports, a narrative around those areas RAG rated as RED be provided alongside the dashboard to assist the Committee in scrutinising the work and performance of the department.

The Director advised that the Carers Charter had been updated in February 2016 and outlined the range of support offered to young carers in Leicestershire. It was agreed that a report on the support offered to young carers in Leicestershire be provided to a future meeting of the Committee.

The percentage of children aged three with one or more decayed, missing or filled teeth was RAG rated RED and performance had worsened since the last quarter. The Committee felt it would be beneficial to have sight of a report on oral health that had previously been submitted to the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to understand child oral health in Leicestershire and associated commissioning and promotion activity. In addition to this it was suggested that a further report submitted to the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 0-19 Healthy Child Programme be circulated to the Committee. It was agreed that both reports be circulated for information.

#### RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Quarter 3 Performance Report be noted;
- (b) That Officer be asked to include a narrative in future performance reports around those areas RAG rated as RED to assist the Committee in understanding the performance of the department and the actions taken in relation to areas of concern or poor performance;
- (c) That a report on the range of support offered by the County Council to young carers be presented to a future meeting of the Committee;
- (d) That links to reports presented to the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 0-19 Healthy Child Programme Review and Re-Procurement on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2016, and on the Oral Health of Five Year Olds on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2015, be circulated to members of the Committee for information.

#### 63. Fostering and Adoption Quarterly Performance Report.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services outlining the performance of the Leicestershire Fostering Agency, and the Leicestershire

and Rutland Adoption Agency for the period 1<sup>st</sup> October – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 10' is filed with these minutes.

The Committee welcomed the activities of and developments within the Fostering and Adoption agencies. The Committee was pleased to note the progress in relation to Level 6 Foster Carers, and requested that the Children in Care Panel be asked to explore the future departmental plans around the provision of support for Level 6 Foster Carers.

A profiling exercise had taken place so that the service understood the young people in its care, and their needs, better. It was noted that whilst the objective was for Leicestershire County Council to recruit its own Foster Carers where possible, market sufficiency had identified that in some cases placements commissioned through Independent Fostering Agencies may be required to meet the specific needs of children and young people.

The Committee considered the implications for adoption agencies and children in care of recent case law which defined adoption as a last resort and encouraged local authorities to explore all other options, including Special Guardianship Orders, first. It was noted that national research was being undertaken by the Government to establish the appropriateness of this policy. The Committee would be updated on the outcome and recommendations of the research following its conclusion.

It was agreed that a report on Regional Adoption Agencies and the implications that this could have for the Leicestershire Adoption Agency, be provided to a future meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Quarterly Performance Reports of the Leicestershire and Rutland Adoption Agency, and the Leicestershire Fostering Agency, be noted;
- (b) That a report on Regional Adoption Agencies be presented to a future meeting of the Committee;
- (c) That the Children in Care Panel be asked to explore departmental plans around the provision of support for Level 6 foster carers.

64. Leicestershire's Response to Child Sexual Exploitation

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services on the County Council's response to Child Sexual Exploitation. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 11' is filed with these minutes.

The Committee welcomed the report and the actions taken by the County Council to address Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in Leicestershire. The Chair and Director encouraged Committee members to sign the CEASE pledge, the multi-agency campaign to tackle Child Sexual Exploitation in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, if they had not already done so. As part of the campaign, the Department was proactively engaging with local media, allowing them to shadow staff teams to understand the work undertaken to address CSE. The team had a robust communications strategy in place to ensure that local communities had confidence in their services and social work more generally, and were confident in spotting and aware of the signs of CSE.



Members acknowledged the difficulties in being confident that CSE was not taking place in Leicestershire. However, the level of transparency and reassurance provided by the Department relating to the current service was welcomed.

RESOLVED:

That the report on Leicestershire's Response to Child Sexual Exploitation be noted.

65. School Funding and the responsibilities of the Local Authority.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services on the position in Leicestershire with regard to school revenue funding, and information on proposed national changes and the potential impact in Leicestershire. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 12' is filed with these minutes.

Due to an overspend on High Needs as a result of the increase in placements required for pupils with Special Educational Needs, schools budgets were set to be reduced by 1% from the necessary movement of the funding from the Schools Block. The Schools Funding Forum was responsible for deciding the distribution of funding across the various blocks and had agreed to use reserves from the Dedicated Schools Grant to meet the cost. It was noted that the required funding for the High Needs Block was £3.2m

The Committee questioned the process for agreeing the establishment of free schools, and how the creation of free schools impacted upon other schools within the area, particularly where the number of school places was already sufficient. It was reported that the applications for free schools were submitted directly to the Regional Schools Commissioner and were assessed by the regional head teacher Board. Decisions were made based on the merits of applications which included evidence of local needs, for example analysis of areas where there was currently a skills shortage. The business case for free schools was also required to include details of consultation that had been carried out as part of the application process. There was no requirement for the County Council to be involved in the process but it was usually kept informed and the Director of Children and Family Services met with the Regional Schools Commissioner on a monthly basis.

It was noted that financial modelling had not formed part of the current stage of the national consultation on changes to school funding. Schools were therefore not yet able to predict and plan for the impact of changes.

RESOLVED:

That the report on School Funding and the responsibilities of the Local Authority, and the proposed national changes to school funding and the potential impact on Leicestershire be noted.

66. Walter McCulloch.

The Chairman reported that Walter McCulloch, Assistant Director for Children's Social Care, would be leaving his post at the end of the month. The Chairman felt sure that the Committee would wish to join him in thanking Walter for his contribution to the work of the Committee over the years and wishing him well for the future.

67. Date of next meeting.

RESOLVED:

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 13 June at 2.00pm.

1.30 – 3.33pm  
04 April 2016

CHAIRMAN

**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**- 13 JUNE 2016**

**REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN**  
**AND FAMILIES**

**QUARTER 4 2015/16 PERFORMANCE REPORT**

**Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to present the Committee with an update of the Children and Families Service performance at the end of quarter 4 of 2015/16.

**Background**

2. The report is based on the set of performance measures aligned with the Council's Corporate Strategy to 2017/18. The overall performance dashboard is attached as Appendix A.

**Report Changes**

3. None.

**Overview**

4. From 24 measures that have new data available: 10 have improved; 9 show no significant change, 4 have declined and 1 has no comparison.
5. From 33 measures that have a national benchmark: 7 are in the top quartile, 10 are in the second quartile, 8 are in the third quartile and 8 are in the fourth quartile.
6. From 38 indicators that have a statistical neighbour benchmark, 18 are better than the statistical neighbour average, 18 are below and 2 are at a similar level.

**Year on year change in Leicestershire between 2014/15 and 2015/16**

7. Appendix D.1 and D.2 compare 2015/16 performance in Leicestershire to quarter 4 of 2014/15.
8. The report also shows the national top quartiles for each indicator where available. Leicestershire is in the top quartile nationally for 8 indicators using the latest benchmarks available.
9. Of the 45 indicators where it was possible to make a year on year comparison:

- 25 showed improved performance from 2014/15
- 11 showed no change or minor change
- 9 showed a decline in performance when compared to 2014/15

### **Children and Young People are Safe**

10. The number of 'Child Protection cases reviewed within timescales' was 99.1%, slightly above the quarter 3 percentage of 98.7% and on the threshold of top quartile by national standards.
11. The percentage of Child Protection plans lasting 2 years or more that were open at the end of quarter 3 was 0.9% (second quartile by comparison). The percentage of plans lasting 2 years or more that closed during the quarter was 2.1%. This is top quartile by national standards.
12. The percentage of 'Children becoming subject to a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time' increased slightly to 30.5%. This places Leicestershire in the fourth quartile of local authorities. This is a key line of enquiry for the Senior Management team. An audit of cases in this category was undertaken in the summer 2015 to understand some of the themes. A staff Practice Summit on child protection was held at the end of 2015 and findings and issues for practice shared with staff. In April, a report on the work undertaken to date was presented to the Local Safeguarding children Board which outlined the work being undertaken and recommended that a multi-agency audit be undertaken. A further audit by the Senior Management team in Children and Families services took place in April and this has resulted in further work in respect of the robustness of key areas including: child in need plans for children stepping down from a child protection plan, core group working and the understanding and approach to the Toxic trio (domestic abuse, parental mental health and parental substance misuse).
13. The 'percentage of children with 3 or more placements during the year' was 13%. This is higher than the quarter 3 figure and would place Leicestershire in the fourth quartile nationally. This has been a key area of focus over the last year as the quarter 1 figure was 15%. On 31 March 2016, there were 466 children in care. Of these 113 children were living in Independent Fostering Agency placements, 216 living with mainstream foster carers (of which 77 are kinship/connected placements) and 60 in residential care. Analysis of these children and young people's profile tells us that placement instability is greater where children are placed with mainstream carers (not connected carers) and young people placed in residential placements. Investigation indicated that a number of processes and issues contribute to placement instability for these two cohorts of children.

For in-house carers, the issue relates primarily to the level of support and type of support we are able to offer foster carers. For young people with complex needs, issues related to match to the appropriate placement, care planning and multiagency joint working to meet these young people's needs.

During 2015, action was taken to improve key processes such as matching of children's needs to carers prior placement, placement monitoring, multiagency

reviewing of care plans of children with complex needs through panel processes. Further work is needed to improve this area, including:

- Increasing supervising social worker capacity to support foster carers;
- Improved focus supporting the foster carers to improve children's outcomes;
- Recruitment of more specialist carers to keep children within Leicestershire and help them return to parental care;
- Consistent health-education-social care joint decision making for children with complex needs.

14. The '% of children in the same placement for 2+ years or placed for adoption' was 67.7% and is in the second quartile by national levels.

15. Care Leavers in Suitable Accommodation was 72.2%, another improvement (quarter 2 was 53.9% and quarter 3 66.7%) but still fourth quartile by comparison. Whilst encouraging, there is still some further improvement required here. Members of the Social Care Panel are undertaking an in-depth review of this area to assisting in developing understanding and supporting improved performance. A local detailed definition of "Suitable Accommodation" is being developed to complement more general national guidance. This will provide an enhanced structure for workers to reference when making their judgements which will assist in improving accuracy. There has also been some under reporting by staff via the computer system which is now being addressed by team managers.

16. Care Leavers Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) was 35.9%, second quartile by comparison.

## **Children and Young People Achieve their Potential**

### **Early Years Foundation Stage**

17. The percentage of Childminders rated as Good or Outstanding rose by 1.3% to 81.3% whilst the percentage of Private Voluntary and Independent (PVI) providers rated as Good or Outstanding also rose – by 1.9% to 94.1%. The rise in the percentage of good childminders follows three consecutive small falls. A rise in both figures contributed to a higher 'All childcare' figure of 85.3% which was higher than quarter 3 (83.7%) but slightly behind the most recent statistical neighbour figure (85.6%).

18. The proportion of eligible families taking up Free Early Education Entitlement remained the same for both 2 year olds and eligible 3 and 4 year olds – 79.2% and 100% respectively.

### **Ofsted outcomes**

19. The percentage of Leicestershire schools rated as Good or Outstanding and the percentage of pupils in Good or Outstanding schools both rose again and remain above national averages. Both are in the second quartile of local authorities. The current figures stand at 86.6% and 83.9% respectively. The percentage of good or outstanding Special Schools remained at 100%.

20. The 1.5% rise in the percentage of pupils in Good or Outstanding schools was influenced by a positive inspection of Shepshed High School, which has approximately 800 pupils and moved from 'requires improvement' to 'good'.

#### Key Stages – Attainment and Progress

21. Data from Summer 2015 indicated performance could be improved for progress between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2; Key Stage 2 attainment for pupils entitled to Free School Meals; and Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 progress for English

22. For progress between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, School Effectiveness officers have visited schools with low progress and these schools are being supported by teaching schools alliances commissioned by the Local Authority.

23. Key Stage 2 attainment for pupils entitled to Free School Meals is a Leicestershire Excellence in Education Partnership (LEEP) project led by National Pupil Premium Champions at Ashmount Teaching School.

24. Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 progress largely sits with Academies, although the two maintained schools in this sector (Hind Leys and Shepshed) have been supported to improve their outcomes.

#### Economy/Employment and Skills

25. Data has been published for attainment of Level 2 qualifications by age 19. Leicestershire is similar to 2014 at 85.4% (a small 0.1% rise) but is below the national average and statistical neighbours by 0.6% and 0.9% respectively. However, Leicestershire is 1.1% above the East Midlands average.

26. The percentage of 19 year olds in Leicestershire who achieve Level 2 including English and Maths rose by 1.9% and is now 69.7%. This above all benchmarks: 1.8% above the England level; 1.2% above statistical neighbours; and 2.6% above the East Midlands average.

27. The percentage of those attaining Level 3 by age 19 in Leicestershire decreased by 1.3% to 56.4%. This is below the national level of 57.4% but 3.2% above the East Midlands average.

28. The latest data from Prospects is for the end of March 2016 and shows a Leicestershire NEET figure of 2.9% (598 young people) for young people aged 16-18. This is similar to the quarter 3 figure of 3.0% and shows a decrease of 25 young people.

29. Prospects have also provided data for participation in education and learning for year 12 aged young people (the first year after leaving school). This is currently 95.9%. The Leicestershire level has been around 96% over the past year. Participation excludes some categories that could be classed as EET such as part time learning and employment without training.

#### **Children and Young People have their Health and Wellbeing and Life Chances Improved**

30. New data has been released for the indicator 'Under 18 conceptions'. A full report for Leicestershire is attached as Appendix B. Headlines from the report include:
31. Leicestershire's rolling annual rate has decreased to 18.5 per 1,000 15-17 aged females, significantly better than the 2013 rate of 20.9.
32. This rate remains below (i.e. better than) the East Midland and England annual rate of 21.6 and 22.8 per 1,000 respectively and Leicestershire is statistically significantly lower than both.
33. The number of under 18 conceptions (defined as females 15-17) has decreased to 213 conceptions in 2014. This is a 10.9% decrease on counts from the previous year (239) and a 47.8% reduction from 1998 (408).
34. The number of conceptions for under 16s (13-15 aged females) was at 43. This represents 3.9 per 1000 females in the age group (the 2013 rate was 3.9).

### **Thriving Communities**

35. Appendix C contains comments from users of the Supporting Leicestershire Families (SLF) service in relation to the indicator 'Feedback from families and evaluation provides evidence of positive impact'.
36. The number of assessments conducted by the new SLF service during quarter 4 was 2016. This is lower than quarter 3 but similar to other quarters in the year.
37. The number of Payment by Results (PBR) claims was 147 during the quarter and gives a total of 244 claims during Phase 2 of the SLF programme.

### **Circulation Under Local Issues Alert Procedures**

None.

### **List of Appendices**

Appendix A - Children and Families Department performance dashboard for quarter 4, 2015/16.

Appendix B – Leicestershire Teenage Conception Statistics 2014.

Appendix C - supports the indicator 'Feedback from families and evaluation provides evidence of positive impact'

Appendix D.1 and D.2 compare 2015/16 quarter 4 figures with 2014/15 quarter 4 figures. The report also shows national benchmarks where available.

### **Officers to Contact**

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### **Equality and Human Rights Implications**

38. Addressing equalities issues is supported by this report. The corporate dashboard highlights a number of elements of performance on equalities issues. The education of pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium is recorded in this report with other pupil groups reported on directly to the relevant Heads of Strategy.



Children and Families Performance FY2015/16 Q4										
Outcome	Supporting Indicator	Latest Updated	Current Performance	Trend Charts	Status RAG	National benchmark (quartile 1 = top)	Statistical Neighbour benchmark	2017/18 target	^Data point may be previous quarter or previous year.	
									Better or worse than previous data point^	
Children and Young People are Safe	% child protection cases which were reviewed within timescales	Y	Q4	99.1%	Similar/Better	A	2	94.5%	100%	
	% children with 3 or more placements during the year	Y	Q4	13.0%	Worse	R	4	11.6%	<9%	
	% children in same placement for 2+ years or placed for adoption	Y	Q4	67.7%	Similar	A	2	66.7%	70%	
	% children who wait less than 20 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family	N	2015	60%	Worse	G	1	52%	65%	
	Care leavers in suitable accommodation	Y	Q4	72.2%	Better	R	4	78.3%	Top quartile	
	Care leavers NOT in education, employment or training	Y	Q4	35.9%	Same	A	2	40.8%	Top quartile	
	Child Protection plans lasting 2 years or more open at end of quarter	Y	Q4	0.9%	Similar	G	2	1.7%	n/a	
	Child Protection plans lasting 2 years or more that cease during quarter	Y	Q4	2.1%	Better	G	1	3.5%	n/a	
	Children becoming subject to a child protection plan for second or subsequent time	Y	Q4	30.5%	Worse	R	4	19.6%	n/a	
Children and Young People Achieve their Potential	% eligible 2 year olds taking up FEEE	Y	Q4	79.20%	Same	A	n/a	n/a	n/a	
	% eligible 3 year olds taking up FEEE	Y	Q4	100%	Better	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	
	% of reception pupils reaching a Good Level of Development	N	2015	63.7%	Better	A	3	63.60%	60%	
	% inequality gap in achievement across all early learning goals	N	2015	30.3%	Better	A	n/a	n/a	Top 20%	
	Childminders rated as Good or Outstanding	Y	Q4	81.3%	Better	A	3	85.6%	n/a	
	PVI rated as Good or Outstanding	Y	Q4	94.1%	Better	G	n/a	84.3%	n/a	
	All childcare	Y	Q3	85.3%	Better	G	2	87.1%	n/a	
	% KS2 pupils achieving L4 in Reading, Writing and Maths	N	2015	80.3%	Better	A	3	79.6%	85%	
	% pupils progressing by 2 levels in Maths between KS1 and KS2	N	2015	87.4%	Worse	R	4	87.7%	Above national average	
	% pupils progressing by 2 levels in Reading between KS1 and KS2	N	2015	89.0%	Worse	R	4	90.4%	Above national average	
	% pupils progressing by 2 levels in Writing between KS1 and KS2	N	2015	92.8%	Better	R	4	93.4%	Above national average	
	% pupils eligible for FSM achieving L4 in Reading, Writing and Maths	N	2015	60.0%	Better	R	4	60.4%	Above national average	
	% pupils achieving 5+ A*-C GCSEs (inc. Eng and Maths)	N	2015	56.8%	Worse	A	3	57.5%	70%	
	% pupils making expected progress from Key Stage 2 to 4 in English	N	2015	68.1%	Worse	R	4	70.7%	Above national average	
	% pupils making expected progress from Key Stage 2 to 4 in Maths	N	2015	70.0%	Better	G	2	68.3	Above national average	
	% pupils eligible for FSM achieving 5+ GCSE A*-C (inc. Eng and Maths)	N	2015	29.0%	Better	A	3	29.62	Above national average	
	Secondary School persistent absence rate	N	2015	5.9%	Better	A	3	5.25%	6.4%	
	A Level - average points per entry	N	2015	208	Worse	A	3	210.1	215	
	17 year old participation	Y	Q4	96.1%	Same	G	1	88.58%	97%	
	NEET 16-18	Y	Mar-16	2.9%	Same	G	1	3.57%	Below 4%	
	% L2 by age 19	Y	2015	85.4%	Same	A	3	86%	88%	
	% Children in Care achieving L4 in Reading, Writing and Maths at KS2	N	2015	55.6%	Same	n/a	n/a	42.6%	-	
	% Children in Care achieving 5+ A*-C GCSE (inc. Eng and Maths)	N	2015	7.7%	Same	n/a	n/a	12.20%	-	
	% Schools assessed as Good or Outstanding	Y	Feb-16	87.0%	Better	G	2	86.5%	>84%	
% Pupils in Good or Outstanding schools	Y	Feb-16	85.4%	Better	G	2	84.5%	-		
% Special schools assessed as Good or Outstanding	Y	Feb-16	100.0%	Same	G	1	89.6%	100%		
% of pupils offered first choice primary school	N	2015	88.7%	Worse	A	n/a	n/a	90%		
% of pupils offered first choice secondary school	Y	2016	95.5%	Worse	A	n/a	n/a	98%		
Children and Young People have their Health and Wellbeing and Life Chances Improved	Under 18 conception data	Y	2014	18.5	Better	G	2	19.26	-	
	% women smoking at time of delivery	N	2014/15	10.30%	Better	G	Better	13.7%*	10.80%	
	Emotional well-being of looked after children	N	2013/14	-	-	-	-	15.2	<15	
	Waiting times for assessment by CAMHS	N	-	n/a	-	-	-	-	Reduce	
	Number of looked after children having health checks	N	2015	86.0%	Better	n/a	n/a	n/a	Increase	
	Number of looked after children having dental checks	N	2015	78.2%	Better	n/a	n/a	n/a	Increase	
	Number of looked after children with up to date immunisations	N	2015	87.9%	Better	n/a	n/a	n/a	Increase	
	% children with excess weight 4-5 year olds	N	2015	20.2%	Better	G	1	21.07%	<20%	
	% children excess weight 10-11 year olds	N	2015	29.9%	Better	G	1	29.47%	Top quartile	
	% children aged 3 with one or more decayed, missing or filled teeth	N	2015	18.6%	-	R	Worse	16%	Reduce	
% mothers breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks	N	Q3	46.6%	Better	A	2	47.14%	Increase		
Thriving Communities	Reduced youth re-offending	N	Year end 2014/15	1.25	Worse	A	n/a	n/a	Top quartile	
	Reduced first time entrants to the youth justice system	N	Q2	168	Better	G	n/a	n/a	Top quartile	
	Minimal use of custodial sentences for young people	N	Q1	2%	-	G	n/a	n/a	<5%	
	Reduce % people reporting they have been a victim of ASB	Y	Q2	4.9%	Better	G	n/a	n/a	Reduce	
	Numbers of families supported through SLF service (no. of assessments). <i>This figure uses new criteria from April 2015.</i>	Y	Q4	2016	Lower	n/a	n/a	n/a	480	
	Number of SLF Payment By Results (PBR) families claimed for (Phase 2)	Y	Q4	244	n/a	G	n/a	n/a	-	
	Feedback from families and evaluation provides evidence of positive impact (average satisfaction across services)	Y	Q4	See Appendix C	-	G	n/a	n/a	-	

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## ONS Conceptions Statistics, England, 2014

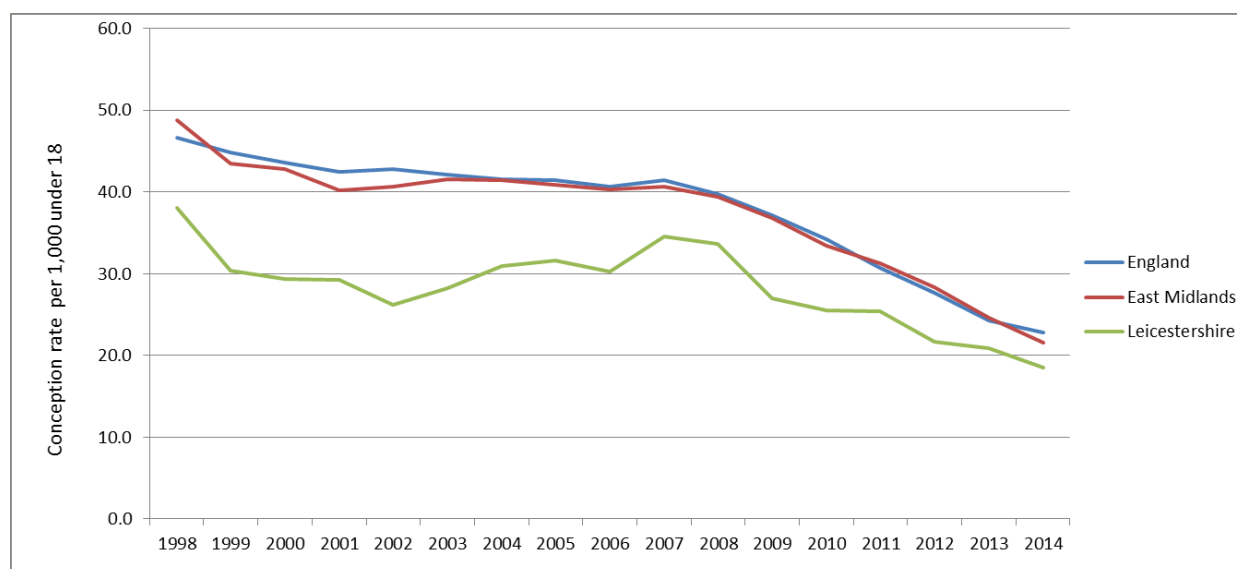
Released: 9<sup>th</sup> March 2016

### Under 18 Conceptions

#### Leicestershire

- Leicestershire's rolling annual rate has decreased to 18.5 per 1,000 15-17 aged females, significantly different to the 2013 rate of 20.9 and represents a 51.3% reduction from the 1998 (the baseline year for the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy).
- This rate remains below the East Midland's and England's annual rate at 21.6 and 22.8 per 1,000 respectively and Leicestershire is statistically significantly lower than both. England has seen a 51% reduction since 1998 and there has been a 55.7% reduction in the East Midlands in the same time period.

Figure 1: Leicestershire conception rate per 1,000 under 18 since 1998



Source: ONS Conception Statistics, England and Wales, 9 March 2015.

- The number of under 18 conceptions has decreased to 213 conceptions in 2014. This is a 10.9% decrease on counts from the previous year (239) and a 47.8% reduction from 1998 (408).
- In Leicestershire the percentage leading to abortions has decreased from 56.1% in 2013 to 53.5% in 2014. This is not statistically different when compared to the England abortion rate of 51.1% for 2014.

## Leicestershire Districts

- Compared to all Leicestershire districts, Hinckley & Bosworth has the highest under 18 conception rate at 24.9 per 1,000 and Oadby & Wigston the lowest rate at 14.0 per 1,000 (u).

Table 1: Leicestershire Districts conception rate per 1,000 women under 18

District Area	Conception rate per 1,000 women Under 18			
	2014	2013	1998	% Reduction since 1998
Blaby	18.8	25.0	35.9	47.6%
Charnwood	14.3	23.3	40.1	64.3%
Harborough	16.0	17.5	23.1	30.7%
Hinckley & Bosworth	24.9	23.2	45.4	45.2%
Melton	23.0	14.7(u)	36.4	36.8%
North West Leicestershire	21.0	20.8	43.0	51.2%
Oadby & Wigston	14.0(u)	14.8(u)	37.6	62.8%

(u) denotes low reliability due to the small number of events.

Source: ONS Conception Statistics, England and Wales, 9 March 2015.

- Three Leicestershire districts have seen increases in the conception rate from 2013 to 2014:
  - Hinckley & Bosworth increased slightly from 23.2 per 1,000 in 2013 to 24.9 per 1,000 in 2014.
  - North West Leicestershire had a small increase from 20.8 per 1,000 in 2013 to 21 per 1,000 in 2014.
  - Melton increased the most from 14.7 (u) per 1,000 in 2013 to 23 per 1,000 in 2014. The actual number of conceptions increased from 14 in 2013 to 21 in 2014, which was not statistically significant.
- The four districts: Blaby, Charnwood, Harborough and Oadby & Wigston all had a decrease in its under 18 conception rates.
  - Charnwood saw the largest improvement since 2013 in its under 18s conceptions rates in comparison to the other districts. The actual number of under 18 conceptions rates declined from 64 in 2013 to 39 in 2014. This is statistically significant and resulted in a decline in Charnwood's rate from 23.3 in 2013 to 14.3 per 1,000 in 2014.
- Details of the numbers of under 18 conceptions by districts can be found in the following table. They closely reflect the rates as outlined above. Out of all the Leicestershire districts, Hinckley & Bosworth has 45, the highest number of conceptions under 18 rate and Oadby & Wigston had 14 which was the lowest during 2014.

Table 2: Leicestershire Districts Number of under 18 conceptions

District Area	Number of Under 18 conceptions			
	2014	2013	1998	% Reduction since 1998
Blaby	32.0	43.0	51.0	37.3%
Charnwood	39.0	64.0	109.0	64.2%
Harborough	26.0	28.0	34.0	23.5%
Hinckley & Bosworth	45.0	41.0	82.0	45.1%
Melton	21.0	14.0	30.0	30.0%
North West Leicestershire	36.0	34.0	67.0	46.3%
Oadby & Wigston	14.0	15.0	35.0	60.0%

Source: ONS Conception Statistics, England and Wales, 9 March 2015.

- There has been a similar downtrend for the annual numbers for East Midlands (51.9% decrease) and England (48.2% decrease) since 1998.

### Under 16 Conceptions

#### Leicestershire

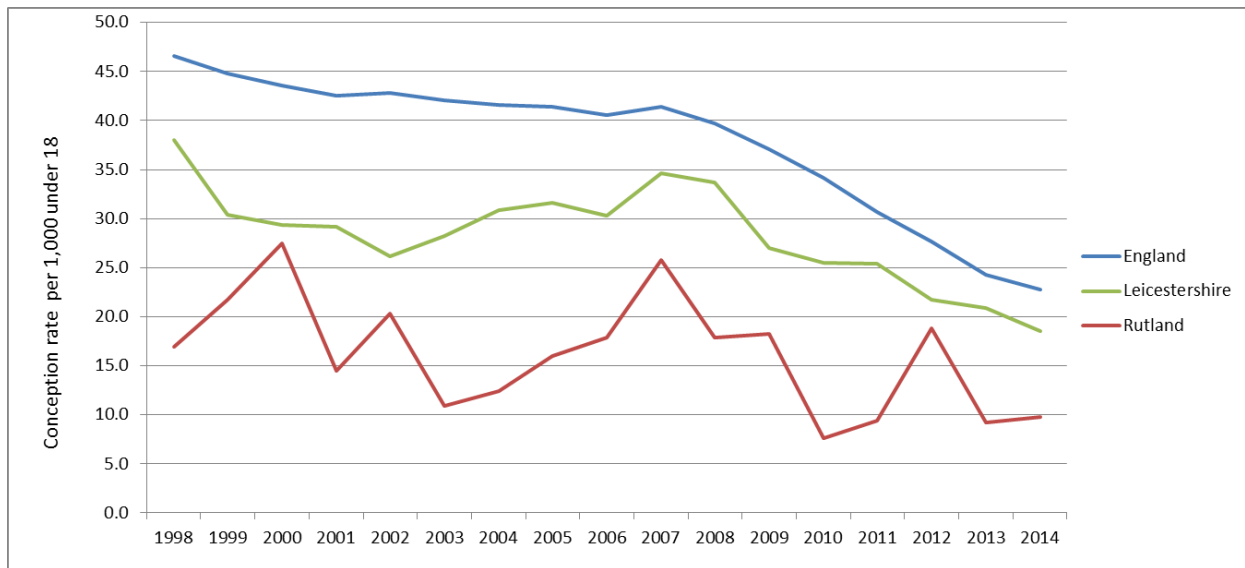
- Leicestershire's rate (13-15 aged females) has remained stable, 3.8 in 2013 to 3.9 per 1,000 in 2014.
- The number of conceptions for under 16s remains at 43 (2013 to 2014).
- The percentage of conceptions leading to abortions has decreased to 62.8% in 2014 from 65.1% in 2013. This compares against an England rate of 63%.

#### Rutland under 18 Conceptions

The small numbers of U18 conceptions (8 in 2014) mean that there is likely to be some fluctuation in rates annually which do not represent statistically significant variation.

- The rate of under 18 conceptions per 1,000 women aged 15-17 in Rutland was 9.8, this is not significantly different to the 2013 rate of 9.2 and represents a 42% reduction from the 1998. England has seen a 51% reduction since 1998 and there has been a 55.7% reduction in the East Midlands in the same time period.
- The 2014 rate of under 18 conceptions in (9.8) Rutland remains significantly better than the East Midland's and England's rate at 21.6 and 22.8 per 1,000 respectively.

Figure 2: Rutland conception rate per 1,000 under 18 since 1998



*Rutland series of data has a low reliability due to the small number of events.*

Source: ONS Conception Statistics, England and Wales, 9 March 2015.

Link to statistics:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/conceptionandfertilityrates/datasets/conceptionstatisticsenglandandwalesreferencetables>

**Appendix C - Feedback from Children and Families about their involvement in SLF****Parent Carer quotes**

“Our worker has given us a greater understanding of autism and strategies to help us manage difficult situations we encounter as a family. We are extremely grateful and I feel this will make a huge difference to us well into the future.”

“Thank you for all your help. I wouldn’t have had the confidence to do this without you” (Previous service user feeding back to an SLF worker because she had just got a job at the local college)

“I couldn’t have asked for any more support than what the worker has given me, at the beginning I was finding everything hard and she was always there for me at the end of the phone or she would come round and talk things through. She helped me get sorted with money and bills and stuff. She helped with school and making sure the kids were settled and had everything they needed and I’m getting better at being organised now.

She offered to help me with stuff in the house, but I told her it’s my house and my kids so I’ll do it all, that was ok with her, she never pushed me to do anything I didn’t want to. I did everything I was asked for the CP Plan and she told me how well I was doing. I know I’ve made things better for the kids.”

**Child Quotes**

“Mum has been a lot better since you have come. I think she will be ok now. “

“Before I would sit in my room all the time, with my headphones on. If I went anywhere I would have anxiety attacks. Since starting the group I have become more confident. I can go out and I have made more friends.”

**Quote from other agencies**

“Thank you for your email, I too have closed the case and would like to thank you for the work you did with the family, it made a difference in their lives. If I can support you in your future cases, please let me know.”





## Year on year change in Leicestershire and the best performing Local Authorities in 2015-16

The accompanying report (Appendix F.1) contains the following information:

- Leicestershire performance at the end of Quarter 4 2015/16 compared to the end of Quarter 4 2014/15 (Please note – the figures are not confirmed ‘year end’ in all cases).
- Some comparisons are not possible as changes to the data may make a year-on-year comparison misleading.
- Changes in performance are indicated by: green = improved performance; amber = no significant change; red = worsened performance.
- ‘Best County value’ is the ‘All English county local authorities’ figure taken from the Local Government Association on-line tool.
- The range of values for top quartile performance is of all LAs for 2015 year end. Information taken from LAIT (Local Authority Interactive Tool). City of London and Isles of Scilly values have been omitted when outliers.
- Not all data is available for all measures in the tools used.

### Overall summary

Colour coding is used to compare with the previous year only and does not indicate the level of performance in comparison with national levels. A case by case judgement is used to determine whether a change is significant.

Of the 45 indicators where it is possible to make a year on year comparison:

**25 are GREEN.** This indicates improved performance from 2014/15. The change may be indicated by a ‘+’ or ‘-’ depending on the polarity of the indicator. For example, more good schools is a ‘+’ whereas lower absence is a good ‘-’.

**11 are AMBER.** This indicates no change or minor change.

**9 are RED.** This indicates a decline in performance since 2014/15. This is also indicated by a ‘+’ or ‘-’ according to the indicator. For example, fewer pupils making progress in English is ‘-’ whereas more children with 3 or more placements is a negative ‘+’.



Indicates Leicestershire is in the top quartile in the ‘Leics to top quartile difference’ column

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Indicator	Leics Q4 2015/16	Leics Q4 2014/15	Change during year	Best County value 2015	Top national quartile 2015 (all LAs)	Leics to top quartile difference
<b>Children and Young people are safe</b>						
% child protection cases which were reviewed within timescales	99.1%	97.9%	1.2%	100%	99.2% - 100%	0.1%
% children with 3 or more placements during the year	13.0%	11.5%	1.5%	5%	5% - 8%	-8.0%
% children in same placement for 2+ years or placed for adoption	67.7%	58.5%	9.2%	73%	71% - 92%	3.3%
% children who wait less than 20 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family	60%	60%	0.0%	73%	58% - 79%	-2.0%
Care leavers in suitable accommodation	72.2%	61.1%	11.1%	93.0%	89% - 100%	16.8%
Care leavers NOT in education, employment or training	35.9%	38.9%	-3.0%	n/a	20% - 34%	-1.9%
Child Protection plans lasting 2 years or more at end of period	0.90%	0.75%	0.15%	1%	0%	-0.9%
Child Protection plans lasting 2 years or more that cease during period	2.1%	0.70%	1.4%	0%	0% - 2.43%	-2.1%
Children becoming subject to a child protection plan for second or subsequent time	30.5%	18.3%	12.2%	12.0%	2.7% - 13.3%	-17.2%
<b>Young people achieve their potential</b>						
% eligible 2 year olds taking up FEEE	79.2%	66.1%	13.1%	n/a	n/a	n/a
% eligible 3 year olds taking up FEEE	100.0%	90.3%	9.7%	n/a	n/a	n/a
% of reception pupils reaching a Good Level of Development	63.7%	58%	5.7%	74%	68.6% - 77.5%	4.9%
% inequality gap in achievement across all early learning goals	30.3%	31.1%	-0.8%	24%	22.7% - 28.75%	-1.6%
Childminders rated as Good or Outstanding	81.3%	84.2%	-2.9%	n/a	86.5% - 93.8%	5.2%
PVI rated as Good or Outstanding	94.1%	88.7%	5.4%	n/a	n/a	n/a
All childcare	85.3%	85.9%	-0.6%	n/a	87.8% - 93.9%	2.5%
% KS2 pupils achieving L4 in Reading, Writing and Maths	80.3%	78.6%	1.7%	83%	83% - 91%	2.7%
% pupils progressing by 2 levels in Maths between KS1 and KS2	87.4%	87.7%	-0.3%	91%	92% - 96%	4.6%
% pupils progressing by 2 levels in Reading between KS1 and KS2	89.0%	89.8%	-0.8%	92%	93% - 97%	4.0%
% pupils progressing by 2 levels in Writing between KS1 and KS2	92.8%	91.5%	1.3%	96%	96% - 98%	3.2%
% pupils eligible for FSM achieving L4 in Reading, Writing and Maths	60.0%	57.6%	2.4%	63%	70% - 87%	10.0%
% pupils achieving 5+ A*-C GCSEs (inc. Eng and Maths)	56.8%	56.0%	0.8%	69%	60.5% - 73.7%	3.7%
% pupils making expected progress from Key Stage 2 to 4 in English	68.1%	68.1%	0.0%	n/a	75% - 84.6%	6.9%
% pupils making expected progress from Key Stage 2 to 4 in Maths	70.0%	65.3%	4.7%	n/a	70.5% - 84.2%	0.5%
% pupils eligible for FSM achieving 5+ GCSE A*-C (inc. Eng and Maths)	29.0%	27.9%	1.1%	n/a	35.9% - 60%	6.9%
Secondary School persistent absence rate	5.9%	5.8%	0.1%	4.50%	3.9% - 4.9%	-1.0%
A Level - average points per entry	208	210.3	-2.3	n/a	215 - 238	7.0
17 year old participation	96.1%	95.9%	0.2%	n/a	92% - 100%	-4.1%
NEET 16-18	2.9%	2.8%	0.1%	1.70%	1.5% - 3.5%	0.6%
% L2 by age 19	85.40%	85%	0.1%	81%	87.2% - 98.8%	1.8%
% Children in Care achieving L4 in Reading, Writing and Maths at KS2	55.6%	58.0%	-2.4%	66%	n/a	n/a
% Children in Care achieving 5+ A*-C GCSE (inc. Eng and Maths)	7.7%	7.7%	0.0%	n/a	n/a	n/a
% Schools assessed as Good or Outstanding	87.0%	84.7%	2.3%	n/a	89.9% - 98%	2.9%
% Pupils in Good or Outstanding schools	85.4%	80.5%	4.9%	n/a	88.31% - 100%	2.9%
% Special schools assessed as Good or Outstanding	100.0%	83.3%	16.7%	n/a	100%	0.0%
% of pupils offered first choice primary school	88.7%	88.7%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
% of pupils offered first choice secondary school	95.5%	96.2%	-0.7%	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>						
Under 18 conception data	18.5	21.7	-3.2	13%	12.3 - 18	-0.5
% women smoking at time of delivery	10.30%	10.70%	-0.4%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Number of looked after children having health checks	86%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Number of looked after children having dental checks	78.2%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Number of looked after children with up to date immunisations	87.9%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
% children with excess weight 4-5 year olds	20.2%	20.8%	-0.6%	17.8%	15% - 20.5%	0.3%
% children excess weight 10-11 year olds	29.9%	30.10%	-0.2%	26.0%	22.3% - 30.8%	0.9%
% mothers breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks	46.6%	46.54%	0.1%	38%	49.4% - 81.5%	2.8%
<b>Thriving Communities</b>						
Reduced youth re-offending	1.25	1.59	-0.34	n/a	n/a	n/a
Reduced first time entrants (per 10,000 young people 10-17)	168	221	-53	140	135 - 320	152
Reduce % people reporting they have been a victim of ASB	4.9%	6.20%	-1%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Numbers of families supported through SLF service	2016	361	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

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**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 13 JUNE 2016**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY  
SERVICES**

**LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND ADOPTION AGENCY  
QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT  
1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL 2015 TO 31<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2016**

**Purpose of report**

1. The purpose of this report is to present the Committee with an update on the activity and performance of the adoption agency.

**Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

2. Leicestershire County Council is responsible for a Local Authority Adoption Agency. It undertakes statutory and regulated responsibilities relating to adoption and has a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Rutland County Council.
3. This report is therefore issued by the Leicestershire & Rutland Adoption Agency.
4. Under the 2011 National Minimum Standards 25.6 all Adoption Agencies are required to provide one six month and one annual report to the Executive regarding the activity and work of the Adoption Agency and Adoption Panel.
5. This report is the annual version to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016.

**Executive Summary:**

6. 52 adoption orders were finalised for children in this period. 44 Leicestershire children; 8 Rutland children.
7. 39 adopters were approved in this period. All are white British.
8. 66 children have been placed with their prospective adopters during this period.
9. 41 children were adopted by Leicestershire County Council approved adopters, 11 via the inter-agency process.
10. 6 sibling groups placed – 3 sets of twins, three sets of triplets.
11. At the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 there were 18 children awaiting an adoption placement.

12. Operating in the adoption arena continues to be challenging. Nationally there is a reduction in placement orders granted by courts. The recent Queen's Speech announcement on adoption will seek to rectify this and other delays which lead to some children not receiving the 'forever family' they deserve.

13. During the last half of 2015, the LCC Post Adoption Support offer has not delivered the quality or level of service we would like. However, on applying a clear, objective based action plan (January 2016) and a cohesive policy using the Adoption Support Fund, the agency has significantly improved service delivery. This continues to be positive work in progress.

## Background – Year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016

### Adoption Plans

14. Nineteen adoption panels were held during this period.

15. In this period 51 children were presented to the Agency Decision Maker for an adoption plan.

16. 39 adopters were approved in this period. All are white British.

17. Of the 51 children considered by the Agency Decision Maker, 90% met the National Minimum Standard timescale of coming to panel within two months of adoption being agreed as the plan. Those out with the timescale are due to deferment for technical reasons acceptable under the regulations. The requirements of the Restrictions on the Preparation of Adoption Reports Regulations 2005 were fully met.

Chart 1 – Ages of children at point of approval for adoption

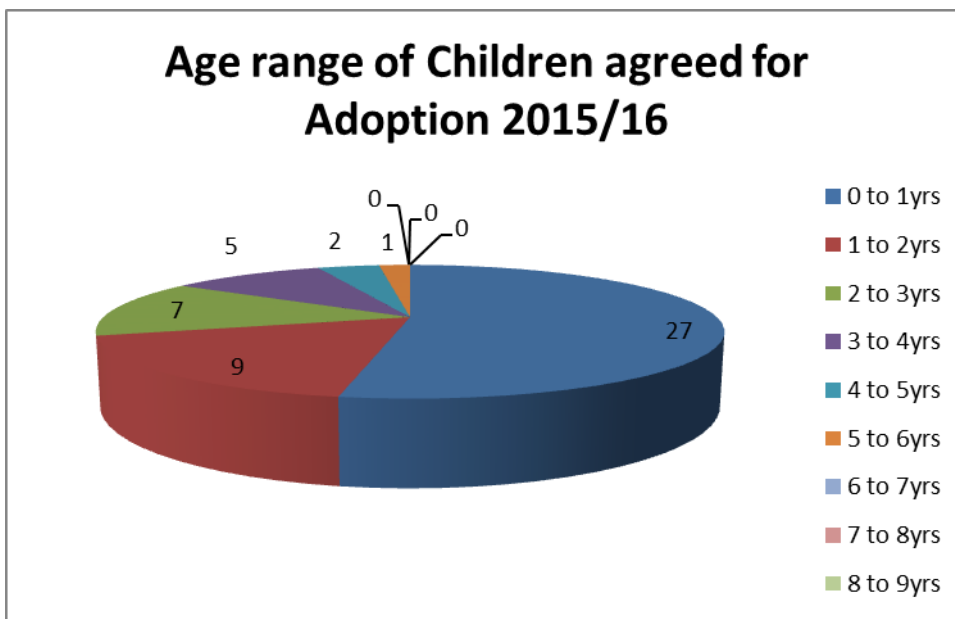
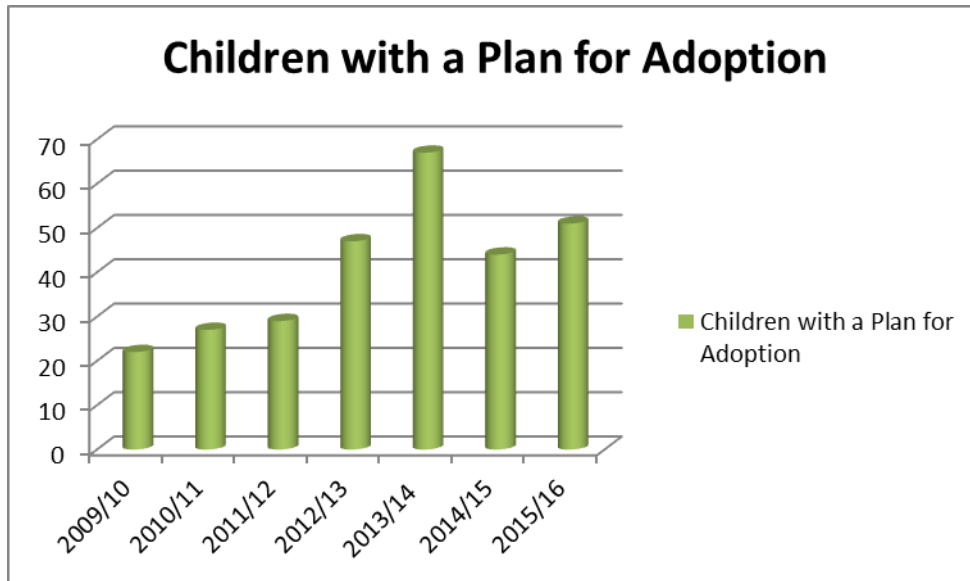


Chart 2 – 7 year comparison of children with plan for adoption



## Performance

### Children Placed and Adopted

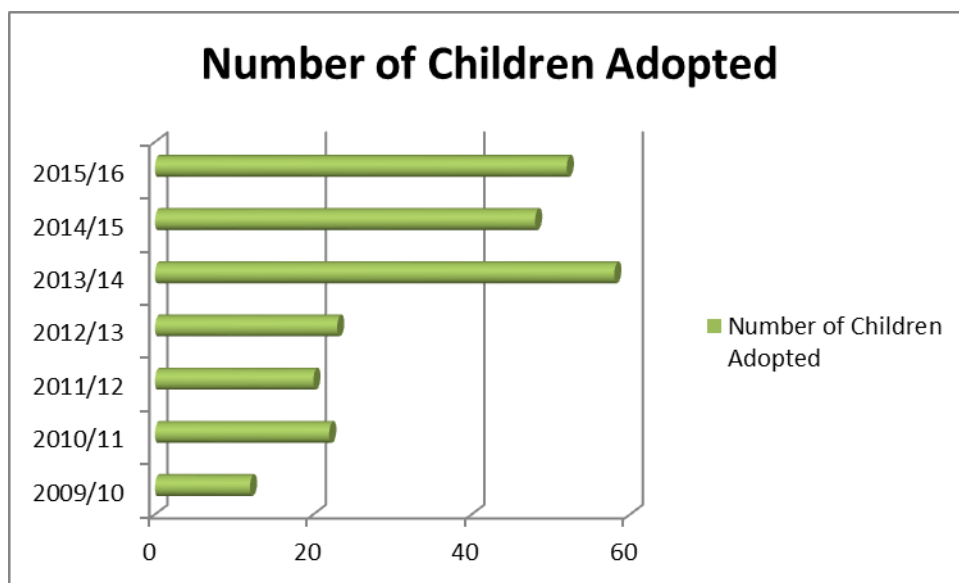
18.66 children have been placed with their prospective adopters during this period; (60 LCC & 6 Rutland Children). 4 were an inter-agency adoption.

19.52 adoption orders were finalised for children in this period. 44 Leicestershire children; 8 Rutland children. This is an 8.3% increase year on year.

20.41 children were adopted by Leicestershire County Council approved adopters, 11 via the inter-agency process.

21.6 sibling groups placed – 3 sets of twins, three sets of triplets.

Chart 3 – 7 year comparison of children adopted



### Adoption Approvals

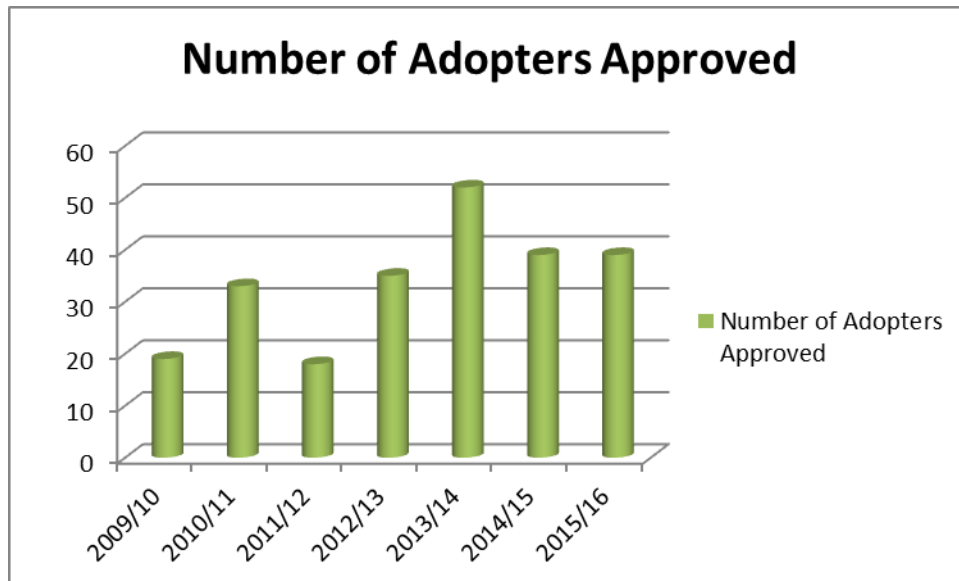
22. During this period 39 adopter households were approved, all completed within the six month timescale.
23. This is in spite of a freeze on recruiting new adopters initiated in April 2015. All of the 39 adopters approved had already entered the approvals process by this date, or were specifically recruited for a specific child. This evidences our ethical recruitment of adopter policy.

The freeze on recruiting adopters is reviewed quarterly. The next review is July 2016.

24. 39 sets of adopters approved in this period are White/British.
25. As of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016, we have 21 adopter households waiting. 15 of these adopters we plan to match to children requiring a forever family in 16/17, the remaining 6 will be advertised nationally for inter-agency adoption.



Chart 4 – 7 year comparison of adopters approved



26. The requirements of the Restrictions on the Preparation of Adoption Reports Regulations 2005 were fully met for all assessments.

### **Adoption Scorecard**

27. Leicestershire's adoption scorecard results for the three year period to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 are:

- i. Indicator 1: The length of time a child spends in care before being placed with his/her adopters is 546 days.
- ii. *This is an improvement of 37 days on the 2014 scorecard figure (Our in year figure to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 is 442 days).*
- iii. Indicator 2: The length of time between court granting a placement order and the Agency Decision Maker agreeing a placement match is 209 days.
- iv. This is an improvement of 4 days on the 2014 scorecard figure (*Our in year figure to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 is 168 days*).

28. The all England average for Indicator 1 is 593 days. The all England average for Indicator 2 is 223 days.

29. Notwithstanding the DfE target for indicator 2 being 121 days this adoption agency remains in the top quartile for performance (England and Wales). The DfE target for Indicator 2 was missed by 88 days.

30. One of the risks of the 121 day target is that it creates a disincentive to local authorities embarking on 'ambitious' adoption plans such as a recent success with a sibling group of three boys. In practice, we will seek to manage such plans closely to ensure children do not miss out on forever families because of L&RCC's requirement to meet governmental targets. This work will be done in localities and the Adoption Team.

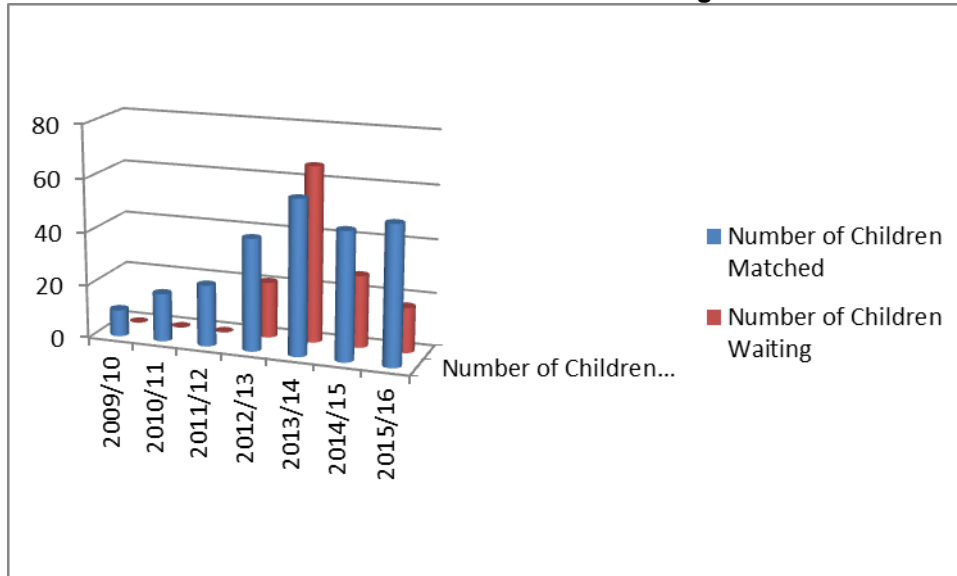
### **Quality of Reports**

31. 46 child permanence reports were considered by the Agency Decision Maker during this period. The quality of the reports was variable as advised by the Agency Decision Maker. Training for all childcare social workers to improve the quality of the reports is available including a team manager's quality assurance tool. A recognisable improvement is being made.
32. 39 Prospective Adopters Reports were presented to the Adoption Panel during this period. Panel felt they were all good and raised only minor issues.

### **Children Waiting for Adoption**

33. At the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 there were 18 children awaiting an adoption placement.
34. Family finding is being actively pursued with placements being sought via the National Adoption Register, the local East Midlands Adoption Consortium and specialist advertising including SEN magazines and children featured in advertising journals (be My Parent) etc. Children have also attended the adoption activity days and the national exchange days.
35. We are also revisiting the list of 90 or so would be adopters who have contacted the agency since we closed recruitment in April 2015.
36. In this period we successfully matched 8 children referred by Rutland County Council.
37. 5 children were placed under Foster For Adoption protocols. Twins in one case, and triplets in another.

Chart 5 below clearly shows that our aim to reduce children waiting well below the level of those matched is bearing fruit. This is due to our conscientious adopter recruitment policy which has at its core the aim to recruit specific families for specific children.

**Chart 5 – Number of children matched vs. those waiting.**

### **Adoption Disruptions**

There have been 2 adoption disruptions during this period. In each case, the children returned to the care of the local authority.

### **Post Adoption Support**

38. Pre and post adoption support is provided in a number of ways within LCC. The adoption social worker offers support up to three years post adoption order, especially in cases where adoption breakdown or disruption is a threat.
39. After this 3 year period, locality led support is available to families at risk of adoption breakdown – this includes active intervention; signposting to support networks and providers; respite; and, accommodation of the child or children in the most extreme cases.
40. During the last half of 2015, the LCC Post Adoption Support offer has not delivered the quality or level of service we would like. However, on applying a clear, objective based action plan and a cohesive policy using the Adoption Support Fund, the agency has significantly improved said service delivery. This continues to be work in progress.
41. In spring 2016 we will launch our ‘whole service’ approach to post adoption support. This proposal is due to begin the governance process on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2016.
42. The Adoption Support Fund, a centralised granting process administered by the DfE, which seeks to pay for therapeutic interventions in order to prevent adoption breakdown, went live on the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2015.
43. To 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016, LCC has drawn down over £400,000 of Adoption Support Fund to pay for direct interventions with adoptees and their families in Leicestershire.

### **Statement by the Agency Decision Maker, Helen Gronhaug**

*The ADM role has now been in place as a stand-alone post since August 2014. The time elapsed has given the opportunity to see how this role functions independently of case management hierarchy. Issues have arisen that would have been otherwise unlikely had the ADM role sat with a more senior manager such as Head of Service or Assistant Director as has previously been the case. Certain challenges have been highlighted in terms of accountability and governance of the ADM decision making. This has been particularly apparent where the ADM is considering children's care plans for adoption. Adoption Guidance 2013 requires the Local Authority to urgently hold an urgent care planning meeting if an adoption plan has not been agreed by the ADM. An ADM can require further work and clarification in order to make such a decision. However there have been occasions where this work has not been completed as requested.*

*An ADM Action Plan has been developed & updated to promote clarity about the status that work required by the ADM when such decisions are being given.*

*The independent position of the ADM allows for a valuable opportunity to gain an over view of children's care planning and outcomes through oversight of adoption and fostering panels; children's adoption plans as well as foster carer reviews. This allows for the identification of practice and policy themes. Work is underway to ensure such themes are harvested and fed into the Continuous Improvement Action Plan so that the learning loop is completed. Thematic learning will be drawn from the 4 gateways of ADM decision making – children's adoption plans; adoption and fostering panels as well as foster carer reviews. A system to escalate and track individual children's cases is being developed where ADM highlights practice/ process issues. The ADM quality assurance function is being further strengthened by greater collaboration with the Safeguarding and Improvement Unit, particularly the IRO challenge meeting with AD. ADM membership on the newly formed permanence panel will further develop the ADM's QA function.*

### **The Regionalisation of Adoption Agencies**

44. The government has indicated the need for regional adoption agencies by the end of the current parliament. Most of the local authorities with membership of the East Midlands Adoption Consortium have agreed to be an 'early adopter' of this proposed legislative intention.
45. A scoping exercise is underway among those involved to understand how a regional agency might work, what it would achieve, and the impact on service users.
46. Furthermore, a series of meetings of the Directorial Governance Board began on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2016 to set out terms of reference for command and control at the highest levels in each authority area.
47. Lead Members in all authorities affected are being fully involved and consulted.

### **Resource Implications**

48. Consideration of the MTFs is incorporated in the annual budget setting exercise whereby the authority's plan to meet its sufficiency duty is financed.

### **Conclusions**

49. The Leicestershire and Rutland Adoption Agency continues to operate well in a challenging environment.

### **Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

None.

### **Officer(s) to Contact:**

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### **Equality and Human Rights Implications**

50. The Leicestershire and Rutland Adoption Agency has been recently commended by Stonewall for its inclusive recruitment stance, particularly with regard to same sex adopters.

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**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 13 JUNE 2016**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY  
SERVICES**

**LEICESTERSHIRE FOSTERING AGENCY  
QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT  
FOR THE PERIOD 1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL 2015 TO 31<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2016**

**Purpose of report**

1. The purpose of this report is to present the Committee with an update on the activity and performance of the Fostering Agency.

**Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

2. Leicestershire County Council is responsible for a Local Authority Fostering Agency. It undertakes statutory responsibilities relating to Fostering. This report is from the Leicestershire County Council Fostering Agency.
3. Under the National Minimum Standards (NMS), (25.7) all Fostering agencies are required to provide one six month and one annual report to the Executive<sup>1</sup> regarding the activity and work of the Fostering Agency and Fostering Panel.
4. This report is the annual version and provides an update on recent developments and challenges within the Fostering Service for the period 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016.

**Executive Summary**

5. As of March 31<sup>st</sup> 2016 there were 466 children in our care. The average care population size during 15/16 was 483 children.
  6. The Fostering Service has 209 mainstream and kinship carers approved (some connected carers are temporarily approved).
  7. In this period there were 146 children placed with in-house mainstream carers, and 80 children placed with kinship carers.
  8. 113 children were placed in Independent Fostering Agency placements (IFA's)
  9. On the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 40 children were living in independent children's homes
-

10. In the year we approved 20 new foster carers at panel. 8 retired, 2 adopted children in placement, and 1 was deregistered by the authority.
11. In the same period, there were 28 new kinship fostering households approved.
12. The Fostering Service has been challenged by commercial factors in recruiting new foster carers to work for the authority.
13. This has resulted in a rate of attrition around 8% further impacted by the ageing population of our current cohort of foster carers.
14. A clear plan to recruit more carers is underway and in continuous development to ensure the authority responds to commercial factors in a timely and appropriate way.
15. Staffing issues during the period of report have occasionally led to foster carers reporting that they feel unsupported. This was addressed in January 2016 via an urgent action plan and early indications are evidencing an improvement in this area.

### **Background/Current Position**

16. As of March 31<sup>st</sup> 2016 there were 466 children in our care. The average care population size during 15/16 was 483 children.
17. This is a year on year decrease of 15 children for the same period 2014/15 (LAC numbers of 481).
18. The Fostering Service has 209 mainstream and kinship carers approved (some connected carers are temporarily approved). *This is a year on year increase of 19 households.*
19. Of these 209 there were 134 mainstream fostering households, and 77 kinship fostering households.
20. In this period there were 146 children placed with in-house mainstream carers, and 80 children placed with kinship carers.
21. 113 children were placed in Independent Fostering Agency placements (IFA's). *This is an increase of 2 on the same period 2014/2015.* In house placements are currently full to capacity; all carers require monthly supervision, whereby each child is discussed in detail by the Fostering Supervising Social Workers to ensure that the foster carer is supported to meet that child's needs. Where a child is placed in an IFA placement, this work is carried out by the IFA's own social workers. Both elements of carer supervision are conducted in collaboration with the Leicestershire CC Child's Social Worker/Team.
22. In this period 5 young people were living in Leicestershire's two residential homes. *Unchanged from 14/15.*
23. In this period 40 children were living in independent children's homes. *Unchanged from 14/15.*



24. In addition to the 45 children and young people in residential care, an additional 12 are certified disabled.
25. In addition to the 12 above, 3 disabled children receive a disabled respite service.
26. In this period 24 young people aged 16+ were living in supported lodgings. *An increase of 2 from 14/15.*
27. In this period 28 children were in adoption placements. *An increase of 5 from 14/15.*
28. In this period 18 young people were placed with parents.
29. In this period 9 young people were placed under Staying Put arrangements.
30. A planned formal restructure of the Fostering Service was implemented in April 2015 and enabled the services to respond more flexibly to recruitment and to targets to meet increase in-house provision to meet the expected increased number of children and young people who need to be in local authority care.
31. The National Minimum Standards for Fostering (2011) give a six month time scale for a fostering assessment to be completed from application to presentation at panel.
32. In the period April 1<sup>st</sup> to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2016, 35 mainstream assessments were started. 18 progressed to stage II and were approved at fostering panel.
33. Of the total LAC population approximately 55% reside with LCC approved family based carers (based on average LAC population of 483). We aim to increase this to 65% in 16/17.

### **Foster Carer and Fostering Profile**

34. In February 2015 a Business Analysts worked with the Fostering Service to bring together a range of information to better understand the profile of placements and foster carers. The key findings from these reports are listed below:
  - i. The majority of foster carers work at skill level 3
  - ii. A third of foster carers are aged 61 and over
  - iii. A third of foster carers are either above the default retirement age or within five years of this, however a third of foster carers are more than 15 years from the default retirement age
  - iv. The majority of LAC placements are male (57%) against female (43%)
  - v. A fifth of LAC are within 2 years of turning 18
  - vi. The majority of LAC placements (85%) are from one ethnicity of "White/British"
  - vii. Almost three quarters of external commission placements are classified as "agency fostering" (73%)
  - viii. The majority placements (70%) are made with a group of eight suppliers and the majority of spend (80%) are made with a group of eighteen suppliers

- ix. Contract management has increased by 255% from 38 placements to 135 placements within four years with a value of £8.7m in 2014
35. Over the summer of 2015 a consultation and development company called iMPower worked with the Fostering Service to better understand the priority commissioning areas. The following is a summary of their findings and 'outputs':
- The analysis identified an imperative and opportunity to arrest the decline in in-house fostering capacity, increase placement share and achieve better use of resources
  - Doing so will require an investment in the service, and a concerted and coordinated effort to deliver focussed changes
  - With the support of the LCC team and foster carers, agreement was been achieved on the priority development areas and detailed plans have been drawn up, including resource inputs
36. The reforms proposed are centred on the needs of carers and those who may become carers. The diagram below provides an overview of the findings:

### Carer engagement – headline findings (see full report for more details)



### **Kinship Carers (Formerly Known as 'Connected Carers')**

37. Family and Friends foster care is a formal arrangement where the child is looked after by the Local Authority and placed with a relative, friend or connected person. 'Relative of Friend' is defined as a: grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of the full blood or by marriage), step-parent, or friend of the child.
38. A 'Connected Person' is anyone who has a pre-existing connection to a child through their extended network. This may be someone who knows the child in a more professional capacity such as a child-minder, a teacher, a youth worker, although these are not exclusive categories (National Minimum Standards and Fostering Regulations 2013).
39. This case law led to an increase in the formality of assessment of a large group of carers in Leicestershire and subsequent directives from the family courts to complete assessments in shrinking timescales has had a significant impact on assessment and supervisory capacity in the Fostering Service.
40. To address this capacity issue, a dedicated 'Connected Persons' unit called the Kinship Team was created and sits within the Fostering Adoption and Placements Service. This team aims to provide a more focused service in a more timely and consistent manner.
41. Issues relating to Leicestershire family court expectations regarding completion of assessments in shrinking timescales will be raised at the Family Justice Board.

### **Emotional Permanence**

42. Special Guardianship was introduced as a new permanence option for children in December 2005. It provides a legally secure foundation for building a permanent relationship between the child and their special guardian, while preserving the legal link between the child and their birth family.
43. 'Choices for children and Young People' is Leicestershire's placement and sufficiency strategy for children and young people in care (2013-2015) and is supplemented/updated by the Market position statement for 2015-16. This strategy sets out Leicestershire County Council's ambition to secure emotional attachment, physical stability and long term commitment for the children and young people that come into our care.
44. Central to this vision is exploring all options to keep children and young people within their family networks through support arrangements and formal care proceedings where order options include Special Guardianship or Residence Orders. We continue to explore this as a possibility in all cases, and can find creative ways to support this move into permanence for our looked after children.
45. However, a financial risk analysis of the growing cohort of special guardians is underway in order to understand the future draw on the authority's limited resources.

### **Development and Training**

46. Staff development and their engagement in the development of fostering services is a key priority and will help to deliver improved outcomes for children. In order to ensure the Fostering Service is working consistently with the Locality Teams the Growing Safety methodology is undertaken in all of the work we do.
47. The Head of Service and Service Manager have scheduled a regular audit of foster carer supervision records to determine the baseline of use of Signs of Safety by the supervising social workers. The outcome of the audit will be to determine what developmental activity/training is needed to ensure Signs of Safety is used meaningfully to inform the support and training needs of foster carers to best meet the outcomes of children and young people in care.
48. In this year, Signs of Safety will be a fully embedded form of practice in the Placements Service.
49. The foster carers, kinship and short breaks Personal Training and Developmental Plan was recently updated and can be found online at: <http://ow.ly/BXpA300Qhjq>
50. The actions arising from this audit and other activity e.g. foster carer feedback will be used to update the Personal Training and Developmental Plan for 2016-17. This work is led by the Fostering Adoption and Placement's Training Coordinator who was introduced to the service as part of the remodelling in April 2015.
51. There continues to be support to the Placement Commissioning unit within FAP from the Commissioning Support Team, with a renewed focus on commissioning planning for cohorts of children e.g. 16+ young people, contract management and use of contract and contract management specialists to inform practice.
52. The Regional Procurement Framework for Commissioned Placements went live in February 2016. Early indications are encouraging. The second stage of the project, a move to using online tendering processes will commence in May 2016.

**Ambition:**

To implement the East Midlands Regional framework and enable Leicestershire County Council to source agency placements within procurement regulations

**Key Proposal Outputs:**

- Agency placements are sourced on the framework
- Where more than one match is identified, child Social Worker to decide within shortlisted match provision
- Direct Awards are only made if no suitable provision is available within the framework
- Matched framework provision cannot be refused as direct awards are only to be used as an exception

**Role & Functions:**

- Placement Commissioning Team to source provision within the Framework based on placement outcomes
- Child's Social Worker to identify preference where more than two shortlisted provisions are available
- Mini Competitions and Direct Awards to be reviewed monthly by Placement Commissioning Team Manager

**Strategic Alignment & Interdependencies:**

- Corporate Commissioning strategy
- Partnership with Regional Framework local authorities

**Strategic Governance:**

*Stakeholders:* Nicci Collins, Andrew Logie, Liz Perfect, Chris Nerini, Sarah Wilson, Maria Hunt  
*Proposal Sponsor:* Walter McCulloch, Neil Hanney

**Proposal Description:**

- The East Midlands Regional Framework has been running for the past four years with five local authorities, Leicestershire County Council joined the framework this year and now is a partner with the eight East Midland local authorities
- All placements that require agency provision will be sourced from the East Midlands Regional Framework, where Leicestershire will follow a process of mini competition to achieve the best match for our children and young people and a cost effective price
- Where placements are identified as matching the outcomes, and where a shortlist of more than one provider is available, the decision on which placement within the shortlist will be with the child's Social Worker
- Where a placement match cannot be identified within the East Midlands Regional Framework, the Family Placement Commissioning Team will identify a match "off frame work" and undertake a direct award on behalf of the child's Social Worker

**Benefits to be achieved are:**

- Compliance with procurement rules and regulations
- Improved outcomes for our looked after children and young people
- Improved matched provision within agency placements
- Improved value for money with agencies
- Improved supplier management
- Improved recording and reporting of agency placements and needs of our looked after children
- Greater market management and greater placement choice in time

**Development of the Service**

53. Priorities for this period have included:

- i. The implementation of the new structure
- ii. Recruitment to vacancies following the restructure
- iii. Management cover during this period
- iv. Improving contract management
- v. Improving and implementing contract negotiation
- vi. Recruitment and assessment
- vii. Preparing for the implementation of the Regional Framework
- viii. A period of consolidation and 'back to basics' in business as usual operations.

54. The 2016/17 mid-year statutory report will provide an overview of the Service Developmental Plan and will highlight new priorities.

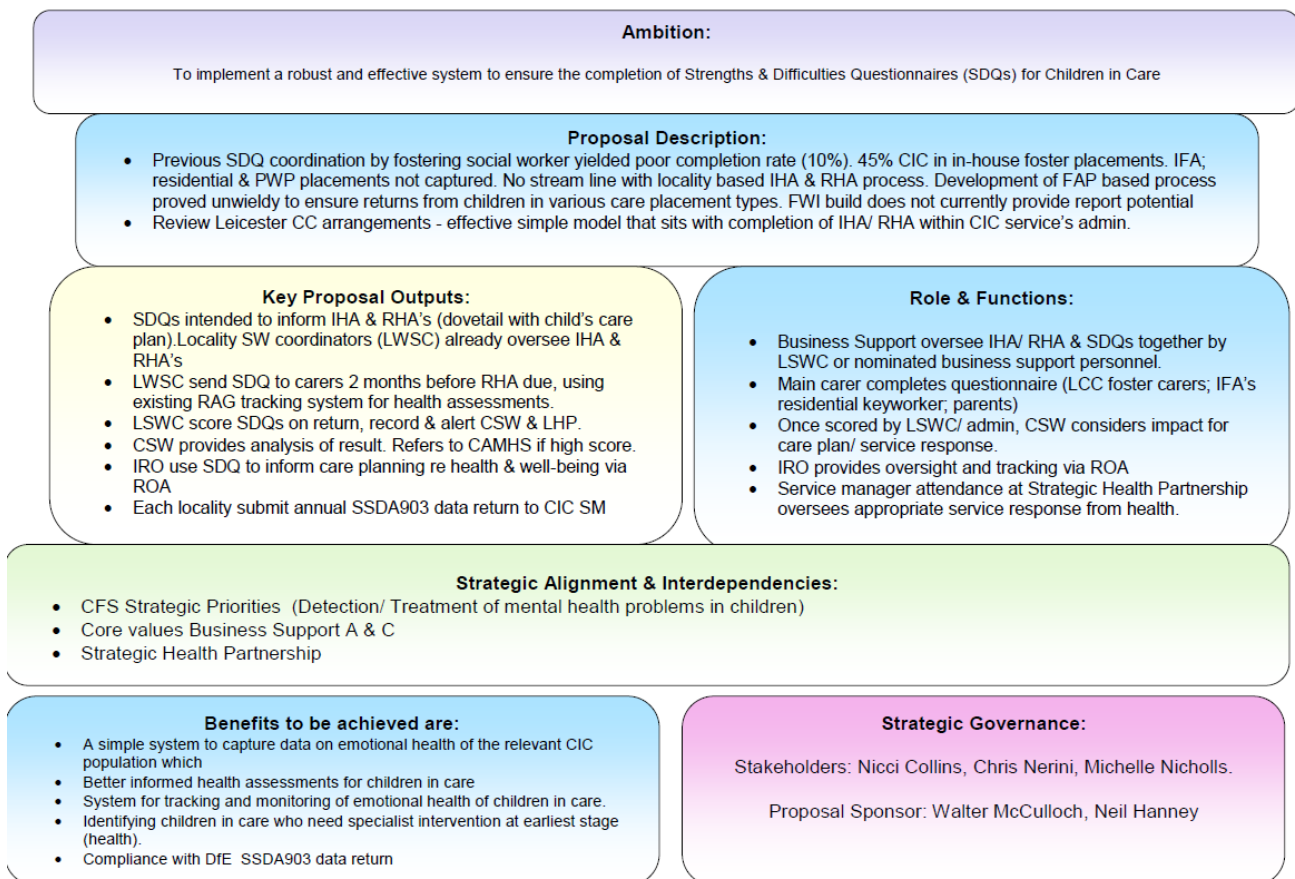
**Agency Decision Maker (ADM)**

55. The Agency Decision Maker is the person within a fostering service and an adoption agency who makes decisions on the basis of recommendations made by the Fostering Panel (in relation to a fostering service) and the Adoption Panel (in relation to an adoption agency).

56. The ADM is a statutory social care function. They are responsible for ensuring that the basis of decision making for children or young people's care plans is sound and that principle of quality assurance to the process of panel and the decision making processes apply.

57. In Leicestershire County Council, the ADM is a dedicated role.

58. During the period of this report the ADM has undertaken this function in relation to individual children's care planning decisions. She has determined that there is some confusion about the role and the authority of the role and to this end has produced an ADM Guidance on a Page:



This overview has been shared with C&FS staff to promote understanding of the role.

## Resource Implications

59. Consideration of the MTFs is incorporated in the annual budget setting exercise whereby the authority's plan to meet its sufficiency duty is financed.

## Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

60. None

**Officer(s) to Contact**

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**Equality and Human Rights Implications**

61. The Leicestershire and Rutland Adoption Agency has been recently commended by Stonewall for its inclusive recruitment stance, particularly with regard to same sex adopters.

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**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE - 13 JUNE 2016**  
**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY  
SERVICES**  
**REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY**

**Purpose of the report**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with information about national changes to local authority adoption arrangements, in particular the introduction of Regional Adoption Agencies, and the implications for Leicestershire's current practice.

**Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

2. In March 2016 the government published the Education and Adoption Act 2016 and a few days later the report: 'Adoption – A Vision for Change'. The Act provides the legislative powers for local authority adoption functions to be 'joint arrangements'.

**Background**

3. In March 2012 the coalition government published 'An Action Plan for Adoption – tackling delay'. This set out an ambition to improve the recruitment of adopters and tackle delay.
4. A single national adoption information service was established in 2013 alongside a new, quicker two-stage process for approving adopters.
5. To ensure a sustained, long term focus on adoption, The Adoption Leadership Board was formed in 2014, chaired by Sir Martin Narey. It's membership consists of local government representatives and the voluntary adoption sector.
6. The Children and Families Act 2014 made it possible to create 'fostering for adoption' placements, and introduced adopter-led matching through National Exchange Days and Adoption Activity Days, where prospective parents and children can meet face to face in a friendly environment.
7. In May 2015, the Adoption Support Fund came into operation. This £19 million of new resource pays for therapeutic interventions that help children to deal with past trauma and provides adoptive families with support when they need it. Local Authorities are required to apply to the Fund.

8. In June 2015, Edward Timpson, Minister for Children and Families, announced the intention to create Regional Adoption Agencies (RAAs). In his letter to local authorities in February 2016, Edward Timpson stated that:

“My expectation is that the RAAs will deliver all adopter recruitment, matching and support functions, unless there is an exceptions reason otherwise. RAAs will have one ‘pool’ of adopters and one ‘pool’ of children... (and) can of course take on wider functions and I am interested in those projects”.

9. In March 2016 the government published the Education and Adoption Act 2016 and a few days later their report: ‘Adoption – A Vision for Change’. The Act provides the legislative powers for local authority adoption functions to be ‘joint arrangements’. The report sets out the intention to establish RAAs by the end of this parliament whereby:

*“All local authorities will be part of an RAA or will have delegated their adoption functions to an RAA”. Furthermore, that: “If some local authorities fail to do so by 2017, we will consider using the powers in the Education and Adoption Act 2016 to require them to make arrangements for their adoption functions to be carried out by a RAA.”*

### **East Midlands’ developments**

10. In anticipation of the legislative changes, the East Midlands directors of children’s services bid for, and were successful in receiving DfE funding to explore RAA options. The funding has been used to appoint a Project Manager, appointed and managed by Lincolnshire County Council, to develop an options appraisal.
11. A Project Governance Board has been established. The Project Governance Board includes elected Member representation through David Mellen, Lead Member for Nottingham City Council. The Project Board is chaired by the newly appointed director of children’s services for Nottinghamshire County Council, Colin Pettigrew. The role of the Project Governance Board is to develop proposals and make recommendations regarding the form and function of the proposed RAA for presentation to and consideration by the 8 individual local authorities (Northamptonshire is not part of this arrangement). It is a requirement of the government that Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs) are part of any arrangement. The VAAs currently working with East Midlands authorities are: Adopt Together, Coram East Midlands, and Family Care.
12. Regionalisation can take many forms and it is important that the East Midlands project considers a wide range of options. The DfE has made it clear that:
- Agencies are *not* required to set up a new legal entity;
  - Solutions may build on *existing relationships and consortia arrangements*;
  - Collaboration should cover *recruitment, matching and support*.

13. It is intended that a report on progress to date, including the viability assessment of a number of options, is presented to the directors of children's services at their meeting in June and a full report to Lead Members at their next regional meeting in September. The recent letter from Edward Timpson makes it clear that: "it is absolutely vital that you take the time to develop an RAA (that) suits your local needs (and that) your project has the appropriate level of senior engagement".
14. The work to date in the East Midlands was reported to the DfE in May and, subject to approval, this will enable the remainder of the project funding to be released. The current Project Plan sets out an intention to make available a final specification by the end of this calendar year with an intention to present to the various local authorities Cabinet's in March 2017.

### **Leicestershire data**

15. Leicestershire's adoption performance is reported on a quarterly basis to the Lead Member and to the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The 2015/16 end of year (Quarter 4) performance data will be presented to the Committee at the same meeting that this report, on national and regional change, is being considered. The data below relates to the last report received by the Committee, regarding Quarter 3.
16. There was a significant increase in the numbers of children adopted in 2013/14 (58) compared to the previous year (22), this had levelled to 45 in 2015/16 at the end of Quarter 3.
17. Also, at the end of Quarter 3, there were 12 children waiting to be adopted. At the same time, there were 36 households waiting for a child. There has been a significant slowing down in the number of placement orders granted by the family court as a result of nationally disputed court judgements.
18. At the end of Quarter 3, Leicestershire had made 25 applications to the Adoption Support Fund referenced at paragraph 7, the largest number of applications made in the East Midlands. This has drawn down in excess of £100,000.

### **Resource Implications**

19. The current budget for the Fostering, Adoptions and Placements team is approximately £2.5m. Work is currently under way to separate the expenditure across these services, albeit that some are inextricably linked. Until the options appraisals for the Regional Adoption Agency are made available it is not possible to fully understand the financial implications of change. Needless to say, any change will need to be managed within the current financial envelope, and, if possible, a reduced budget.

### **Conclusion**

20. Leicestershire's adoption performance is good and any regional arrangement will need to ensure that there is added value in the system and improvements in outcomes for children.
21. It is clear that there is no option but to move to a regional arrangement. Leicestershire officers have been actively involved in some of the development work that will contribute to the options appraisal. It is not yet known what the implications will be for local Adoption Panels.
22. Lead Members will be provided with further information at the next regional meeting and a further report will be made available to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November 2016.

### **Background Papers**

Adoption: a vision for change - <http://ow.ly/2Xnh300QgwJ>

### **Circulation Under Local Issues Alert Procedure**

None.

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### **Equality and Human Rights Implications**

23. Most of the human rights of children relating to adoption are set out in International and European standards and include: the right to a family life; the best interests of the child; the requirement to safeguard; and the fitness to adopt.