



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

Date/Time: **Tuesday, 8 March 2022 at 2.00 pm**

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

Contact: **Damien Buckley (Tel: 0116 3050183)**

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Membership

Mrs. H. J. Fryer CC (Chairman)

Mr. M. Frisby CC Mr. N. Lockyer
Mr. L. Hadji-Nikolaou CC Ms. Betty Newton CC
Mr. R. Hills CC Mr. C. A. Smith CC
Mrs. C. Lewis Mr. G. Welsh CC

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AGENDA

<u>Item</u>	<u>Report by</u>
1. Minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2022.	(Pages 5 - 12)
2. Question Time.	
3. Questions asked by members under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).	
4. To advise of any other items which the Chairman has decided to take as urgent elsewhere on the agenda.	
5. Declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda.	
6. Declarations of the Party Whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.	



7. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 36.
8. Quarter 3 2021/22 Performance Report. Director of Children and Family Services (Pages 13 - 20)
9. Young Carers. Director of Children and Family Services (Pages 21 - 30)
10. Written Statement of Action. Director of Children and Family Services (Pages 31 - 36)
11. Report on the Outcome of the Ofsted Focused Visit January 2022. Director of Children and Family Services (Pages 37 - 40)
12. Date of next meeting.

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled to take place on 7 June 2022.

13. Any other items which the Chairman has decided to take as urgent.

QUESTIONING BY MEMBERS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

The ability to ask good, pertinent questions lies at the heart of successful and effective scrutiny. To support members with this, a range of resources, including guides to questioning, are available via the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny website www.cfgs.org.uk. The following questions have been agreed by Scrutiny members as a good starting point for developing questions:

- Who was consulted and what were they consulted on? What is the process for and quality of the consultation?
- How have the voices of local people and frontline staff been heard?
- What does success look like?
- What is the history of the service and what will be different this time?
- What happens once the money is spent?
- If the service model is changing, has the previous service model been evaluated?
- What evaluation arrangements are in place – will there be an annual review?

Members are reminded that, to ensure questioning during meetings remains appropriately focused that:

- (a) they can use the officer contact details at the bottom of each report to ask questions of clarification or raise any related patch issues which might not be best addressed through the formal meeting;
- (b) they must speak only as a County Councillor and not on behalf of any other local authority when considering matters which also affect district or parish/town councils (see Articles 2.03(b) of the Council's Constitution).

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Minutes of a meeting of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Tuesday, 25 January 2022.

PRESENT

Mrs. H. J. Fryer CC (in the Chair)

Mr. L. Hadji-Nikolaou CC

Ms. B. Newton

Mr. R. Hills CC

Mr. C. A. Smith CC

Mr. R. Martin

Mr. G. Welsh CC

In Attendance.

Mrs. D. Taylor CC –Lead Member for Children and Families

Mrs. B. Seaton CC –Cabinet Support Member

43. Minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2021 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

44. Question Time.

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

45. 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).

46. To advise of any other items which the Chairman has decided to take as urgent elsewhere on the agenda.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

47. Declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda.

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

No declarations were made.

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

There were no declarations of the party whip.

49. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 36.

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

50. Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022/23-2025/26.

The Committee considered a joint report of the Director of Children and Family Services and the Director of Corporate Resources which provided information on the proposed 2022/23 to 2025/26 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) as it related to the Children and Family Services department. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes.

The Chairman welcomed Mrs. D. Taylor CC, Lead Member for Children and Family Services, to the meeting for this item.

Arising from the discussion, the following points were raised:

Service Transformation

- i) Demand for children and family services continued to increase with growth of £25m projected. In response to the pressures, the department had embarked on four main programmes of work – the High Needs Development Programme, Defining Children and Family Services for the Future (DCFSF), the Children's Innovation Partnership and departmental efficiencies. It was acknowledged that further work was still required, but the department now had new ways of working to respond to the ongoing pressures and to continue to create a more efficient service.

Proposed Revenue Budget

- ii) The total gross proposed budget for 2022/23 was £703.1m, which included £482m Dedicated Schools Grant budget. The proposed net budget for 2022/23 totalled £90.5m. The largest cost to the budget was children in care and it was queried whether a breakdown could be given of how this was spent. The Director of Children and Family Services confirmed that the majority related to placement costs with a proportion also relating to staffing. A breakdown was available of how many children were in different placements and the associated costs; the number of children in care, the total costs and the average unit costs were tracked and this would be circulated to members of the Committee.
- iii) A member raised the point that growth over the next four years was not just about demand but also related to meeting the complexity of needs. It was queried whether the demand could be met due to the current high level of strain on services. In response, the Director stated that the department had a number of statutory requirements that needed to be met. The growth projections incorporated the increase in demand for services, particularly relating to children in care. The department was also considering other areas where demand could be reduced.
- i) It was raised that an increase in demand for services could lead to an increase in the demand for social workers. A question was raised around the impact that this would have on the County Council in recruiting appropriate staff. The Director responded that there had been a projection for the need for more social workers. Recruitment and retention of social workers was a national issue and the County Council had undertaken lots of work to consider how it might attract staff and ensure

that they remained with Leicestershire. The department's Recruitment and Retention Strategy set out plans to address this.

Growth

- ii) Growth over the next four years totalled £25.1m. The majority of the growth requirement related to continued increases in demand and the complexity of needs for children's social care services which culminated in increased placement costs and the need for more social workers.
- iii) It was noted that G1 – Social Care Placements – should read £2.265m in 2022/23 rising to £19.25m by 2025/26. The budgeted growth over four years assumed a 5% increase due to the significant work undertaken within the department with the DCFSF programme. These had been projected based on the number of children expected to be in care and the type of placements. Average unit prices for placements had also seen an increase, with a number of factors affecting this. As mitigation, placements and the costs were continuously reviewed within the department. Further investment was being made to build Leicestershire County Council owned residential homes as part of the Children's Innovation Partnership.
- iv) In relation to G2 – Front Line Social Care Staff – Increased Caseloads – investment in additional front-line social care staff capacity was required. The growth was based on the number of social workers and support staff required to support the number of projected contacts and children. It was noted that the use of agency staff would still be needed.
- v) £5.6m had been budgeted to employ more social work staff to support the growth in demand. However, it was queried whether the proposed growth for the social care staff market premia (G3) should be increased in order to retain existing staff and prevent them from moving to a different local authority which may pay a higher salary. The Director commented that the market premia was one of many initiatives being undertaken as part of the Recruitment and Retention strategy. Whilst it was known that a salary which compared well with other regional local authorities was desirable, Leicestershire offered a range of other features to encourage the retention of its staff, for example training and development, good supervision and manageable caseloads.

Savings

- vi) Proposed savings for the local authority budget totalled £3.77m in 2022/23 and £14.5m over the next four years in total. Additionally, the High Needs Development Plan aimed to ensure sustainable services for children and young people with Special Educational Needs within the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant. In order to achieve this, cost reductions of £25.8m were required over the period of the MTFS.
- vii) The DCFSF Programme (CF1) was expected to realise total annualised benefits in excess of £13m. Positive early indications had been seen in the current financial year resulting in an underspend of approximately £2m against the budget.
- viii) The financial benefits from the Children's Innovation Partnership (CF4) were expected to be seen from reduced placement costs and social worker resource. A comment was made that it had previously been necessary to place children out of

county in very expensive settings, and it was asked whether the profile had changed so that children were now placed in more local settings. The Director stated that a change in the type of placements was being seen and fewer children were placed a long way away. Primarily, where children were placed out of Leicestershire, it was because the placement met their needs. It was noted that there was a national challenge in securing placements along with an increased cost of placements for children.

- ix) There were currently 57 young people in residential care, with the majority having more complex needs. Key pieces of work were in place to consider the appropriateness of residential care, particularly as there had been a significant cost increase. Assurance was given that the department had clear ownership of its children in residential care and understood their needs to ensure that no child remained in residential care where it was not appropriate. Clear trajectory plans were in place to take children out of care when possible and it was also stated that there had been an increase in younger children in residential care due to their complex needs. The Lead Member for Children and Families commented that there had been a shift in the department's work undertaken with partners to better support children and avoid residential placements where possible.
- x) A member questioned whether there had been an increase in foster caring, and it was reported that part of the work of the DCFSF programme had been to increase the utilisation of in-house foster care provision and this was now being seen. Bespoke campaigns had been undertaken to increase the number of foster carers who would take teenagers due to an increase in the number of 15/16 year olds entering care. Consideration was also being given to a greater use of kinship care and the benefits of looking beyond foster care were beginning to be seen.
- xi) To date, around £1m departmental efficiency savings (CF5) had been identified. Further savings were currently being identified. As the DCFSF programme new ways of working were embedded, further analysis would be undertaken to identify potential new opportunities to take forward in a number of areas.

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)/Schools Block

- xii) The DSG remained calculated in four separate blocks – the Schools Block, Central Schools Services Block, High Needs Block and Early Years. The estimated DSG for 2022/23 totalled £605.3m. The 2022/23 MTF5 continued to set the overall Schools Budget as a net nil budget at local authority level. However, there was a funding gap of £9.1m on the High Needs Block which would be carried forward as an overspend against the grant.
- xiii) In relation to the Schools Block, the DfE had further stated its intention to move to a 'hard' National Funding Formula (NFF), whereby budget allocations for all schools was calculated by the DfE. For 2022/23, funding remained a 'soft' school funding formula whilst the outcome of consultation was awaited.

School Funding Formula

- xiv) Despite an overall increase in the minimum amount of funding per pupil, a number of Leicestershire schools remained on the funding floor and could experience a real term decrease in income. Schools with a decrease in pupil numbers would see an overall decrease in budget allocation. It was possible for local authorities to transfer

up to 0.5% of the Schools Block DSG to High Needs following consultation with schools and with the approval of the Schools Forum. Consultation had been carried out with schools on two options for a transfer, with the majority disagreeing. A request to the Secretary of State for approval of the transfer had also not been approved.

High Needs

- xv) The High Needs DSG was £94.7m, which was an increase of 14%. The forecast position was highlighted although the financial plan would be subject to change following the findings of diagnostic work currently being completed by Newton Europe. These findings would be reported to the Committee.
- xvi) The provisional Early Years Block settlement was £36.1m; the final allocation would not be confirmed until June 2023. Although there had been an increase in the hourly rate, Leicestershire remained on the funding floor and received the lowest rate of funding.

Capital Programme

- xvii) The proposed Children and Family Services capital programme totalled £94.1m, the majority (£89.1m) for which external funding was expected. The programme continued to focus on the delivery of additional school places and additional places to support the High Needs Development Plan.
- xviii) A capital investment budget envelope of £2.5m had previously been included in the MTFS to develop and assessment hub and multi-functional properties to create in-house capacity to provide placements at a lower cost. This was progressing well and the next phase in the Residential Design Brief was to source a further four properties to create additional residential capacity up to a total of £1.9m.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the report and information now provided be noted;
- b) That the comments now made be forwarded to the Scrutiny Commission for consideration at its meeting on 31 January 2022.

51. Development of Family Hubs in Leicestershire.

The Committee received a presentation of the Director of Children and Family Services on the Development of Family Hubs. A copy of the presentation marked 'Agenda Item 9' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from the discussion, the following points were made:

- i) In response to a query around the difference between Family Hubs and existing Wellbeing Centres, it was noted that Family Hubs would offer universal access to services for all families across Leicestershire who had children aged between 0-19 (or 25 where the child had SEND) through single point of access. The service would be delivered through a mixture of physical and virtual spaces to support and signpost families, some of whom might have mental or physical health needs,

towards the appropriate service. Existing Wellbeing Centres offered services to targeted families where a child with vulnerability had been identified.

- ii) Data sharing and cross working between services and agencies would be vital in delivering the best possible services to families and to support early identification of vulnerability, targeting of resources, and more seamless support for families.
- iii) Initial and continuous engagement with families and communities would be central in the development and delivery of the service. Resource had been made available from the Build Back Better Fund to begin the engagement work during the early stages of developing the Family Hubs.

The Lead Member for Children and Families agreed that the Family Hubs would be important in helping all families and preventing them from requiring statutory services. A report was due to be presented to the Cabinet on 11 February 2022 seeking approval to develop a Family Hubs model in Leicestershire and to undertake engagement with communities and families on the proposed model.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

52. Inclusion in Leicestershire Schools.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services which provided an overview of the functions of the Inclusion Service and of the new strategic duty to promote the education of all children known to a social worker. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 10' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from the discussion, the following points were made:

- i. The Inclusion Service would discuss with families, at the earliest opportunity, any decision to electively home educate to ensure that the best decision was being made for the child, and that clear messaging had taken place in terms of roles and responsibilities for the child's education. Once the decision had been taken, the duties of the service would be limited. However, checks would be conducted to ensure the correct processes were in place. Any safeguarding concerns or other issues raised by other agencies or within the community would be investigated by the service. It was noted that there was increased evidence that home education could be the last resort where relations had broken down with schools; this could include issues around unmet SEND needs.
- ii. The Inclusion Service would support children either outside of, or alongside, an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and work would be undertaken to ensure that children's needs with SEND were met at the best possible level.
- iii. In response to a query around the number of children on roll in Leicestershire Schools who did not attend their catchment school, it was stated that the authority would try to ensure that children of primary age could access their closest school or would be supported to access the next closest school. However, it was not uncommon for children to attend a school out of their catchment area due to parental choice.

- iv. In response to a query around the impact of COVID-19, it was noted that the pandemic had had a direct impact on the delivery of SEND provision as well as on children's wellbeing and their ability to engage with schools. The available data was currently somewhat anecdotal as the pandemic was still ongoing and it was agreed that it would be useful to receive a further report in a year to provide an update on the number of children who were being electively home educated and the impact of Covid-19.
- v. The Lead Member for Children and Families reiterated that hidden children were the main concern for the department, and there was a reliance on partners and communities to report any children where it was felt they might be missing education. A campaign around this issue would be undertaken again.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the report be noted;
- b) That a report to update on progress would be provided to a future committee.

53. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services which provided an overview of Leicestershire County Council's duties and responsibilities to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) and the context in which the County Council delivered services to these children and young people. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 11' is filed with these minutes.

In response to a query around the data in paragraph 29 of the report, it was noted that the 5.29 children which Leicestershire could expect to accommodate on average per year was made up of spontaneous arrivals, arrivals through the National Transfer Scheme and via dispersal hotels. These were used by the Home Office to place UASC who it was felt were over the age of 18, but upon further checking it became apparent that they were under 18.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

54. Date of next meeting.

RESOLVED:

It was noted that the next meeting of the Commission would be held on 8 March 2022 at 2.00pm.

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**CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

8 MARCH 2022

QUARTER 3 2021/22 PERFORMANCE REPORT

**JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND DIRECTOR OF
CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES**

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to present the Committee with an update on the Children and Family Services Department's performance for the period to December 2021 (Quarter 3).

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. The Children and Family Services Department's performance is reported to the Committee in accordance with the Council's corporate performance management arrangements.

Background

3. A Strategic Plan 2018-2022 was agreed by the Council setting out priority outcomes for delivery and supporting performance metrics, and this was refreshed in 2020. A new draft Strategic Plan is currently out for consultation and, when agreed, will result in an update to the performance reporting arrangements. The Children and Family Services Department has also produced a Departmental Plan 2020-2023 which identifies ambitions and measures to monitor progress. The following report and accompanying dashboard aim to report on the priority areas identified by both plans and monitor performance of key indicators on a quarterly basis. The current performance dashboard is appended and has been refreshed to concentrate on indicators where new data is available for Quarter 3.
4. Quartile positions are added where comparative national data is available. Comparative data is not available for all indicators.

Overview

5. From 25 measures that have been reported, 12 have improved, one shows no change and six have declined. In addition to this, five indicators provide information only with no polarity, and one cannot be calculated due to missing data from the previous period.

6. From 12 measures that have a national benchmark, three are in the top quartile, six are in the second quartile, two are in the third quartile and one is in the fourth quartile.

Helping children in Leicestershire live in safe, stable environments and have secure attachments

7. Local Authority comparisons used are most recent figures published by the government for end of year benchmarking.
8. The percentage of Child Protection cases reviewed within timescales was 94.2% at the end of Quarter 3 which places Leicestershire in the third quartile of all local authorities by published benchmarks.
9. The percentage of children becoming subject to a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time decreased to 27.5% at the end of Quarter 3. In this period 47 children began a second or subsequent plan, a similar total to 48 reported in the preceding quarter. Leicestershire remains in the fourth quartile of local authorities compared to most recent national results published for 2020/21. This is an area of focus for the service and regular audits are completed, to understand any themes around the circumstances leading to repeat periods of child protection planning.
10. The percentage of re-referrals to Social Care within 12 months was 19.6% at the end of quarter 3 compared to 19.3% in the previous quarter, with 264 children 're-referred' within the quarter. Leicestershire remains in the second quartile of local authorities.
11. The percentage of single assessments completed within 45 days was 91.0% at the end of quarter 3, a slight decrease from quarter 2 (91.6%). This represents 919 assessments completed within timescale in quarter 3 compared to 850 in the preceding quarter. Leicestershire remains in the second quartile of local authorities.
12. Nine Child Protection plans lasting two years or more were open at the end of quarter 3, representing 1.7% of cases. This is a similar number and proportion as the end of quarter 2 (10 children, 2.1%). Leicestershire remains in the second quartile of local authorities.
13. At the end of quarter 3, the percentage of children with three or more placements during the year was 2.5% (17 children). This is very low and continues to place Leicestershire in the top quartile nationally. The percentage of children in the same placement for 2+ years or placed for adoption has increased to 71.2% (188 children). This represents a further improvement compared to 67.2% (174 children) at the end of the previous quarter and now places Leicestershire in the second quartile of local authorities.
14. The percentage of Care Leavers in Suitable Accommodation was 95.8% at the end of quarter 3 (205 young people). This is a small increase from quarter 2 and

places Leicestershire in the top quartile of local authorities using available comparisons.

15. The percentage of Care Leavers in Education, Employment or Training was 62.1% at the end of quarter 3 (133 young people). This is a small decrease from 62.6% at the end of quarter 2, however continues to place Leicestershire in the top quartile by comparison with other local authorities. The service provides careful oversight to the care leaver indicator and is driven by a corporate commitment for creating mentoring and apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers.
16. The percentage of Children in Care who have had a dental check was 44.7% (301 children), an increase from 42.8% (291 children) at the end of the previous quarter. Routine dental treatment has been limited during the period of the Covid-19 lockdown and figures are now beginning to rise.
17. The percentage of 'Children in Care who have had an annual health assessment within the last 12 months was 80.9% (545). This is a decrease of 5.4% compared to the end of the previous quarter.
18. Completion of health assessments continues to be overseen by the Children in Care Head of Service and Service Manager, with specific actions identified to address delays and barriers including systems support, processes and staffing pressures. Both managers attend quarterly operational and strategic meetings with health partners to discuss and address the health needs of children in care and how best to meet these needs.

Helping children and their families build strength, resilience, confidence, and capacity

19. During quarter 3, the Children and Family Wellbeing Service (CFWS) worked with 3,797 individuals and 1,417 families across Leicestershire. This is slightly lower than quarter 2 in both cases when the figures were 4,089 and 1,569 respectively.
20. The Children and Families Services Departmental plan states the intention to ensure that the needs of young people are identified as early as possible so that timely and appropriate support is provided in the right setting, therefore reducing the risk of needs escalating at the same time as ensuring children and young people's best outcomes are achieved.
21. The number of children in mainstream schools in Leicestershire with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) was 2,169 in the Autumn 2021 school census. This is 75 lower than the Summer 2021 census and are the highest recorded for the Autumn term since the completion of the phasing in of the 2014 SEN Code of Practice changes in 2017.
22. The number of children in mainstream schools in Leicestershire without an EHCP but in receipt of SEN Support was 11,324 in the Autumn 2021 school census. This is 47 lower than the Summer 2021 census. The Autumn 2021 school census SEN support numbers are the highest recorded for the Autumn term since the completion of the phasing in of the 2014 SEN Code of Practice changes in 2016.

People are safe in their daily lives

23. Youth Offending statistics are usually reported one or two quarters in arrears. This is because data must be produced and validated by legal bodies such as the Police and courts before being released to local authorities.
24. The Leicestershire Quarter 2 2021/22 figure (latest available) for 'first time entrants to the criminal justice system aged 10-17' was 17. This is compared to 18 for Quarter 1 2021/22. For Quarter 2, four children were previously known to the Children and Families service. The figures for the first-time entrants remain low compared to regional and national data.
25. The rate of re-offending for the year to Quarter 2 2019/20 (latest available) was 3.2. This is a slight increase when compared to the previous year, to Quarter 2 2018/19 (3.18). However, Leicestershire's performance remains ahead, when compared to that of Regional and National performance, 3.91 and 3.77 respectively.

Help every child to get the best possible start in life

Early years

26. The percentage of eligible two-year and three-year olds taking up the Free Early Education Entitlement (FEEE) is reported termly, and latest figures include the 2021 Autumn term.
27. During the Autumn term, the percentage of eligible 3-year-olds taking up their FEEE place was 95.8% (7,156), an improvement on the previous term (93.5%). The percentage of eligible 2-year-olds was 77.6% (1,266), an improvement on the summer term (68.5%). Eligibility for 2-year-olds is more targeted towards disadvantaged families, hence the smaller number of children.
28. The figures for the past year have been heavily affected by the Covid-19 disruption which has meant that newly eligible children were unable to begin their placement and some parents preferred to keep their children at home. However, recent figures are now approaching pre-pandemic levels.

Help every child to have access to good quality education to ensure they achieve their maximum potential

29. The percentage of primary schools rated Good or Outstanding was 90.6% at the end of quarter 3. This is 0.4% higher than the quarter 2 figure, which was the position at the re-commencement of routine inspections from September 2021. This figure is within the second quartile of local authorities, and 2.4% above statistical neighbours.
30. The percentage of secondary schools rated Good or Outstanding was 75.6% at the end of quarter 3. This is the same as the quarter 2 figure, which was the position at the re-commencement of routine inspections from September 2021.

This figure is within the third quartile of local authorities, and 3% below statistical neighbours.

31. The number of children Electively Home Educated (EHE) was 829 at the end of quarter 3, an increase of 80 since quarter 2. This was also an increase of 65 students (8.5%) in comparison to the end of quarter 3 2020/21.
32. This seems to follow the national trend of an increasing EHE population. The Association of Directors of Children's Services complete an annual survey which includes 124 of the 152 local authorities nationally responding with data on their EHE cohort. In November 2021, the latest findings were published which suggested that the EHE population in the UK had increased by 7% in comparison to October 2020 and an increase of 34% since October 2019.
33. Leicestershire figures appear to closely follow the national trend since 2019 with the cohort at the end of Quarter 3 2021 increasing 35.4% since Quarter 3 2019.¹
34. The trend has been driven by two factors during this period: firstly, having experienced a period of enforced home schooling, some parents have opted for EHE as a lifestyle choice and have chosen to continue this even when schools reopened. The second factor has been ongoing health concerns which could be for the child, vulnerable parents, or general safety concerns. The numbers will continue to be monitored closely.
35. Latest Leicestershire NEET data (young people Not in Education, Employment or Training) for the end of Quarter 3 (December 2021) shows a rate of 1.2%. This is a decrease on the Quarter 2 rate (September 2021) of 1.4%.

Conclusion

36. The report provides a summary of performance at the end of quarter 3 of 2021/22, covering the period December 2021.
37. Details of all metrics will continue to be monitored on a regular basis throughout the year and any subsequent changes will be notified in future reports.

Equalities and Human Rights Implications

38. Addressing equalities issues is supported by this report, with a focus on vulnerable groups within Leicestershire, including children in care. Education data relating to performance for different context groups including children with Special Educational Needs and Free School Meals is reported when data becomes available.

Background Papers

None.

¹ Report available online at:
https://adcs.org.uk/assets/documentation/ADCS_EHE_Survey_2021_Report_FINAL.pdf

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

None.

Officers to Contact

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Appendix

Children and Family Services Department Performance Dashboard for Quarter 3,
2021/22

Topic	Theme	Indicator	Reporting Frequency	Previous Period	Previous Value	Latest Period	Latest Value	Trend	Change	Target	Status RAG	National benchmark (quartile 1 = top)	Most recent Statistical Neighbour average
Help children and their families build strength, resilience, confidence and capacity	CFWS	Individuals worked with by CFWS during period	Quarter	Q2 2021/22	4,089	Q3 2021/22	3,797	Decrease	N/A		N/A	N/A	N/A
	CFWS	Families worked with by CFWS during period	Quarter	Q2 2021/22	1,569	Q3 2021/22	1,417	Decrease	N/A		N/A	N/A	N/A
	SEND	Children in mainstream schools with EHCP	Term	Summer 2021	2,244	Autumn 2021	2,169	Decrease	N/A		N/A	N/A	N/A
	SEND	Children in mainstream schools in receipt of SEN Support (without EHCP)	Term	Summer 2021	11,371	Autumn 2021	11,324	Decrease	N/A		N/A	N/A	N/A
Help children in Leicestershire to live in safe, stable environments and have secure attachments	Social Care	Child protection cases which were reviewed within timescales	Quarter	Q2 2021/22	N/A	Q3 2021/22	94.2%	N/a	N/A	>97.2%	Amber	3	92.3%
	Social Care	Children becoming subject to a CPP for second or subsequent time	Quarter	Q2 2021/22	28.4%	Q3 2021/22	27.5%	Decrease	Positive	<20.8%	Red	4	24.3%
	Social Care	Re-referrals to CSC within 12 mths	Quarter	Q2 2021/22	19.3%	Q3 2021/22	19.6%	Increase	Negative	<18.7%	Amber	2	21.3%
	Social Care	Single Assessments completed within 45 days	Quarter	Q2 2021/22	91.6%	Q3 2021/22	91.0%	Decrease	Negative	>90.3%	Green	2	86.7%
	Social Care	CPP lasting 2 yrs or more open at the end of the quarter	Quarter	Q2 2021/22	2.1%	Q3 2021/22	1.7%	Decrease	Positive	<3.0%	Green	2	2.5%
	Social Care	Children with 3 or more placements during a year	Quarter	Q2 2021/22	2.9%	Q3 2021/22	2.5%	Decrease	Positive	<9.0%	Green	1	10.3%
	Social Care	Children in same placement for 2+ years or placed for adoption	Quarter	Q2 2021/22	67.2%	Q3 2021/22	71.2%	Increase	Positive	>70.0%	Green	2	68.9%
	Social Care	Care leavers in suitable accommodation	Quarter	Q2 2021/22	95.4%	Q3 2021/22	95.8%	Increase	Positive	>92.0%	Green	1	88.7%
	Social Care	Care leavers EET	Quarter	Q2 2021/22	62.6%	Q3 2021/22	62.1%	Decrease	Negative	>54.0%	Green	1	50.6%
	Social Care	Children in care who have had dental checks within last 12 months (at end of period)	Quarter	Q2 2021/22	42.8%	Q3 2021/22	44.7%	Increase	Positive	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Help every child to get the best possible start in life	Social Care	Children in care who have their annual health assessment within last 12 months (at end of period)	Quarter	Q2 2021/22	86.3%	Q3 2021/22	80.9%	Decrease	Negative	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Early Years	Eligible 2 year olds taking up their FEEE	Term	Summer 2021	68.47	Autumn 2021	77.57	Increase	Positive	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Early Years	Eligible 3 year olds taking up their FEEE	Term	Summer 2021	93.48	Autumn 2021	95.75	Increase	Positive	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Early Years	Eligible 2 and 3-year olds taking up their FEEE in a high-quality provision	Quarter	Summer 2021	96.60	Autumn 2021	97.00	Increase	Positive	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Education	Primary schools rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding'	Quarter	Q2 2021/22	90.2%	Q3 2021/22	90.6%	Increase	Positive	N/A	Amber	2	88.2%
	Education	Secondary schools rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding'	Quarter	Q2 2021/22	75.6%	Q3 2021/22	75.6%	No Change	N/A	N/A	Amber	3	78.6%
Help every child to have access to good quality People are safe in their daily lives	Education	Children Electively Educated at Home	Quarter	Q2 2021/22	749.0	Q3 2021/22	829.0	Increase	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Education	NEET young people aged 16-17	Last Mth of Qtr	Sep 2021/22	1.4	Dec 2021/22	1.2	Decrease	Positive	<2.1%	Amber	2	3.5%
	Youth Justice	No. of first time entrants to the criminal justice system aged 10-17 (year to date)	Quarter	Q1 2021/22	18	Q2 2021/22	17	Decrease	Positive	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Youth Justice	Re-offending by young offenders	YTD	Q2 2018/19	3.18	Q2 2019/20	3.20	Increase	Negative	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Youth Justice	Instances of the use of custody for young people	YTD	June 2020	0.07	June 2021	0.13	Increase	Negative	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

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**CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

8 MARCH 2022

YOUNG CARERS

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

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to present to the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee the work taking place to identify, assess and support young carers across Leicestershire.

Background

2. As a Local Authority, the Council has statutory responsibilities for young carers that are placed on it across various statutes:
 - i. The Children and Families Act 2014 - Assess whether a young carer needs support and what identify opportunities to navigate support, this includes reviews if circumstances change. This is in all circumstances where it appears that a child is providing caring support.
 - ii. Section 96 (12) Children Act 1989- Take reasonable steps to identify the extent to which there are young carers in its communities.
 - iii. Sections 63-64 of the Care Act 2014 introduced duties to young carers who are transitioning to adulthood. This is in the form of an assessment around their own needs as a young carer and whether they are able or willing to carry the care on after their eighteenth birthday. The young carer should continue to be at the centre of the assessment, and it should focus on their dreams and aspirations.

Definition of a Young Carer

3. When working with children, the following definition is used to help them to identify whether they may be a young carer.
4. "You're a young carer if you're under 18 and help to look after a relative with a disability, illness, mental health condition, or drug or alcohol problem. If you're a young carer, you probably look after one of your parents or care for a brother or sister. You may do extra jobs in and around the home, such as cooking, cleaning, or helping someone get dressed and move around. You may also give a lot of physical help to a brother or sister who's disabled or ill.

Along with doing things to help your brother or sister, you may be giving them and your parents emotional support, too.” (NHS Website, 2021)

Context

5. ‘Still Hidden, Still Ignored’ is a Barnardo’s Report on Young Carers which was published in 2017. The report found that many young carers are providing in excess of 15 hours per week caring for a family member. The Office of National Statistics (ONS), again in 2017, estimated that unpaid adult carers save the economy £60 billion per year and that this far outweighed the amount spent on formal social care. These ONS figures relate to *adult* carers alone and young carers do not feature in the survey in any format. Research and statistical information on young carers are not available and therefore the extent of young caring and the impact that this has on the general population of children is still unknown. Moreover, a large proportion of children do not want to be identified as young carers or may not realise that they would be seen as such and therefore are unaware of their rights. Identification of young carers has always been problematic and is likely to continue to be. For many children they will have been providing care for a significant time and normalise this or accept that this is simply their responsibility within the family.
6. The 2011 Census identified 177,918 young carers in England and Wales. One in eight of those were aged under eight. This is widely believed to be the tip of the iceberg, with some estimates suggesting that as many as one in five schoolchildren are young carers (University of Nottingham 2018), with this number increasing during the COVID-19 pandemic. Publication of the most recent census data will give a greater understanding as to the extent of young carers.
7. Barnardo’s findings in 2017 concluded that young carers were most likely to be girls, and they were most likely to be caring for their mother. Young carers from the black, Asian and Multi - Ethnic (BAME) communities are most likely to be hidden from Service altogether and young carers are most likely to have a disability, long-term illness or SEND-related issues themselves (Census 2011) – mental health and physical disability were the highest reported within this category.

Challenges

8. The pandemic has had a considerable impact on young carers. The Carer’s Trust has undertaken a survey with both young carers and young adult carers with the main headline result being that the pandemic increased caring hours and pressures on young people. The findings from 961 young carers and young adult carers details that:
 - 40% of young carers and 59% of young adults say that their mental health is worse since the pandemic,
 - 67% of young carers and 78% of young adult carers are more worried about their future,
 - 66% of young carers and 78% of young adult carers are feeling more stressed since the pandemic,

- 69% of both sets of carers are feeling less connected with others and more isolated,
 - 58% of young carers who are caring for longer since Coronavirus are spending on average ten hours a week more on their caring responsibilities. Among young adult carers the proportion is even higher at 63.6%,
 - 8% of young carers and 15% of young adult carers who responded to the survey, said that they are now spending over 90 hours a week caring for a family member or friend.
9. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the identification of young carers. This was exacerbated by school closures as schools are the primary referrer for young carers. In terms of the service offered to children, the need to engage virtually has been a necessity but not all children enjoyed this or were able to engage as they remained at home undertaking caring responsibilities, which for many were increased. Caring can have a dramatic detrimental effect on the education and aspirations of young and young adult carers. Young carers are most likely to require support around their mental health and emotional wellbeing due to their responsibilities and the impact that this has on them.
10. As a response to the pandemic, the Service took the opportunity to work with the Communications team to release messages about young carers in safeguarding campaigns. The Youth and Justice Service moved to social media, namely Instagram, to celebrate young carers and to share messages to increase identification. The focus now is on working with schools to better identify and then engage children and parents in providing consent for support. As detailed in paragraphs 5-7 above, the identification of young carers will always remain a considerable challenge that the Service will work hard to overcome.

County Council Delivery Model

11. The County Council entered a formal commissioning arrangement with a third party provider in 2015 up until 31st March 2021 to provide a service for young carers in line with the statutory responsibilities detailed in paragraph 2 of this report. Over several years, the project was match-funded by the provider and in 2021 this funding was no longer available due to internal changes within the organisation and how projects applied for additional funding which had now become more limited. Following extensive scoping work with Leicester City Council and the provider to try to continue the project, there were no financially viable options. The provider was de-commissioned the delivery of the statutory responsibilities reverted to the County Council.
12. On 1 July 2021, the Children and Families Service Young Carers Project commenced. This is managed within the Youth and Justice Service. The Project has two full-time workers (who transferred from the previously commissioned service) who focus solely on the provision of support for young carers. The Project is overseen by a Senior Youth Worker and referrals are taken through the Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF) and through an

internal referral form for those children already open to the department. (The MARF enables referrals to be made by the local authorities in the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland areas via one standard form).

13. Strategically, this work forms part of the Joint Carers Strategy, which is co-ordinated through Leicestershire County Council Adult Social Care and encompasses a shared strategy for carers across Leicester Leicestershire and Rutland. The County Council is collaborating with Leicester City Council and Rutland Council to develop shared initiatives to help and support young carers.

Young Carers Assessments

14. Young Carers Assessments are primarily undertaken by the two workers above following the identification of suitable referrals through central triage processes. The assessment process, whilst focused on the young carer, adopts the principals of “Whole Family” working and will help obtain positive outcomes for wider family members where needs have not been met or missed, such as engaging with mental health support, addressing housing issues or applying for benefits. An illustration of this is provided in the case study appended to this report.
15. To date, the Project has had a total of 28 referrals; nine children have received a targeted intervention of four sessions around their caring responsibilities, five have had onward referrals to youth work or family interventions, one has been signposted to community services, one has been referred to Special Educational Needs services and five are currently being assessed. Seven children declined any support at after attempts to engage with them. This is for reasons such as they already have a support network or do not feel that their caring responsibilities impact upon their life. The Project remains committed to raising the profile of young carers and increasing the numbers identified and worked with.
16. Following the completion of assessments, young carers can be offered up to four focussed sessions to address immediate needs which are identified through the assessment process (young carers offer). This could be work around benefits, adaptations in properties, ensuring schools are supporting young carers for example. Where there are high needs which cannot be addressed within four sessions, an onward referral to other areas within Children and Family Services will be made. The project also offers referrals into groupwork activity and signposting to other services.
17. Where children who are identified as young carers but are already receiving support within the Department and have plans in place, practitioners are encouraged to build specific outcomes for the young carer. The purpose of this is to reduce the need for the child and family to have multiple plans and to keep re-telling their story each time they need to seek help. This work is on-going and forms part of the Council’s plan for young carers.
18. It is not possible to map performance of the new provision against that previously provided as there are significant differences and young carers are

included in other types of plans (such as Child Protection Plans and Early Help Assessments) and the data cannot be correlated with accuracy.

Staff Consultation Clinics

19. Young Carers Youth Workers are offering weekly clinics to staff within Children and Family Services after trialling this approach successfully across the Children and Family Wellbeing Service. This supports staff to identify young carers needs within their assessments and develop intervention to meet these needs within their plans.

Locality Groups – In Person

20. The Youth and Justice Service runs specialist groupwork provision for young carers across Charnwood, North West Leicestershire, Blaby, Oadby and Wigston, and Melton Districts. There are currently 44 young carers who are pro-actively engaged with this provision. Provision in Harborough is run by the Voluntary and Community Sector, and the Council has recently commenced a group in Hinckley and Bosworth to fill a gap in provision where the VCS were no longer able to provide this.
21. The pandemic has been a challenge in relation to groupwork with provision moving from face-to-face to virtual, especially when young carers are often living in households with clinically vulnerable adults. All groups have now returned to in-person delivery and the children are enjoying this opportunity to build friendships, have fun (respite) and partake in informal learning sessions. One of the other challenges in delivering group work is supporting young carers to be able to attend, this often means funding taxis or other transport which is extremely challenging with a small budget and the heightened costs of private hire taxis. There were previously opportunities for young carers and their families to apply for grant funding to support transport costs, but this is no longer available.

County Virtual Group Offer

22. Young Adult Carers – the Council's County young adult carers group for ages 15+ delivers fortnightly sessions online. This group was launched in September 2021. The focus of this group is around transition and preparing for next steps in life; supporting children to balance achieving their own dreams and ambitions and managing the responsibility of being a carer.
23. Young Carers CYCLe - The service is developing the Council's voice, influence and participation offer within CFWS, and all its voice groups are under the name CYCLe. Young Carers CYCLe is a new group in line with this. Not only will this group engage with young carer voice opportunities, but they will also feed into the wider work of CYCLe. The service will be working with this group of children to develop the young carers offer, including re-naming the project.

Young Carers Passport/ ID Card

24. Part of the commissioned contract with the previous provider across the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland area was the administration of a young carers ID card. Working in collaboration with Leicester City Council and Rutland Council, the service is currently re-designing this to align this closer to the adult carer passport as this is more widely recognised across communities and health providers. This will be co-produced with children across the area, and this work commenced on 9 February 2022, and it is intended to launch this in May 2022.

'Unseen Events'

25. School holiday events are delivered by the Young Carers Youth Workers during all the main school holidays (summer, Christmas and Easter). Barnardo's published an article in July 2021 about the problem of young carers being unseen during the summer holidays as their caring responsibilities may in fact increase and they do not benefit from the 'break' that school holidays give. Two events have been delivered so far; a summer virtual magic show which was attended by 12 young people and a virtual Christmas Party attended by 18 young people. Planning is underway for an Easter event.

Loughborough Students Union (LSU) Kids Camp

26. The service is working in partnership with LSU to offer ten young carers the opportunity to attend a five day activity based camp in the Peak District, with student volunteers from Loughborough University in April 2022. Ten young carers are currently signed up to this and a reserve list is currently being held should any of the ten not be able to make the trip. Young carers will meet the LSU student volunteers to start forming relationships during February 2022. Taking a significant period of time away from families and caring responsibilities requires significant planning for some children.
27. The Young Carers Project has carried out safeguarding training with the LSU volunteers and the Council continues to support with the logistics of this project including the bridging of the gap between the University and the families, including ensuring that there is a network of support for when the children go on the trip; an issue that often holds them back from engaging on their own purposeful activities. This will be an ongoing annual event.

Young Carers Action Day – March 16th, 2022

28. Youth and Justice support this national event each year. Staff teams are currently meeting to plan group activities for this week. The plan will then be presented to CYCLE for the views, comments, and final adjustments by children.

Voice of Young Carers

29. The following feedback has been received from young carers regarding support that they receive from the project:

- a. "I feel that everything is going okay especially because the problems with school have been sorted out" (young carer aged 12),
- b. "I am feeling happier, now school know the teachers are being more kind and asking me if I need help" (young carer aged 12),
- c. "We have been supported in the best ways; it has taken weight and pressure off both me and my daughter and we have really benefitted from the support" (parent of young carer),
- d. "I'm really enjoying being back at group, I feel this is like a family where I can come and relax away from all our family problems." (Young carer aged 17).

Next Steps

30. The priority areas over the next year are:

- Strategic alignment of young carers within the Joint Carers Strategy with partners across Leicestershire, Leicester City and Rutland.
- Positive communications with partners and through campaigns to promote the identification of young carers and promotion of support,
- Capturing the voice of young carers to shape, influence, and co-produce across partnerships,
- Focus on ensuring that plans across the Department to identify young carers and provide a response within Departmental plans that identifies specific outcomes for the child,
- Ensuring the young carers offer meets the needs of the children engaged with the interventions,
- Overcoming transport issues to enable young carers to engage in face-to-face groupwork,
- Understanding whether the countywide virtual element of the groupwork offer can be delivered differently. Young adult carers have indicated that this offer does not work for them. The impact regarding this is the financial implications of staffing groups, transporting children and premises to run the sessions. These groups in particular are delivered virtually due to the geographical spread of the children across localities.
- Understanding the ability to innovate within the project and engage with wider partners with the limited capacity in relation to staffing.

31. Progress against the next steps will be monitored through Lead Members and Departmental meetings.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

32. None.

Equalities and Human Rights Implications

33. The re-integration of the Young Carers Project to Leicestershire County Council offers great opportunities around equalities and equal rights as it enables us the flexibility to target our communications and offer to distinct cohorts of young carers across Leicestershire. Currently the Project are

considering research and insight into how best to engage with black, Asian and multi-ethnic communities and this work will be undertaken with young carers with protected characteristics or where the Project are seeing themes and trends.

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Appendix

Case Study – completed by Myah, Young Carers Project Worker in February 2022.

Background Papers

Young Carers Report for Overview and Scrutiny 2017
<https://politics.leics.gov.uk/documents/s129028/Young%20Carers.pdf>

Joint Carers Strategy 2018 – 2021 (currently being updated)

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/field/pdf/2018/2/27/LLR-Carers-Strategy-2018-21-v13.pdf>

Appendix: Case Study

Completed by Young Carers Project Worker – Myah

Why were they referred? (Worries and Desired Targets)

- Child (17) was referred to the Project due to parent having life changing injuries and child undertaking high level caring responsibilities. They were living in accommodation which was now unsuitable.
- Child's caring responsibilities started with general and domestic tasks and support with mobility. However, over time the child started to stay at home for longer to assist, also providing emotional support. The child missed out on the opportunity to create and maintain friendships because of his caring responsibilities and the parent was worried about this.

What did we do? (outcomes)

- Carry out the young carer's assessment with child and parent to capture both of their voices.
- Offer up to 4 sessions of one to one support focused on child and his physical health, social networks, explore community groups available to improve friendships, consider referrals to Young Adult Carers Group/ Young Carers CYCLe & CYCLe. Explore potentially unmet SEND needs.
- Work was undertaken on improving the housing situation which the local Council were already aware of, but no progress was being made. Additional support was provided around claiming appropriate benefits.
- Support to contact a local disability charity for family for support around an SEND diagnosis.
- Referral to mental health support for parent.

J's Voice during the intervention

- "Discussing the housing application was very helpful as we have been able to meet in the middle and discuss how both parties have been within the process. I also feel that it went well because we have understood how important getting my [parent] sorted is and what Myah has done to help our situation and fast track it for the benefits of both my [parent] and I by allowing [parent] more freedom and removing some of the pressure off my back".
- "The support from Myah has been very helpful, each session helped as we tackled a different issue each time."

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**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

8 MARCH 2022

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ACTION

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

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update on the progress being made against the Written Statement of Action and to report on the findings of the Leicestershire local area SEND Peer Challenge.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. The primary legislation regarding children and young people with SEND is the Children and Families Act 2014. The 0-25 SEND Code of Practice (2015) is the statutory guidance that sets out how local authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups must work together to support children and young people with special educational needs.
3. On 5 November 2019, a report was considered by the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee summarising the national and local context relating to SEND along with an overview of the plans to continuously develop and improve services to support children and families who are experiencing SEND.
4. On 21 January 2020, the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a report that provided an overview of the Ofsted and Care and Quality Commission (CQC) SEND Inspection Framework. An update was provided on 1 September 2020 following the local area SEND inspection that took place in Leicestershire in February 2020, resulting in a Written Statement of Action.

SEND local area inspection

5. Ofsted and the CQC conducted a joint inspection of the local area of Leicestershire between 3 and 7 February 2020, to judge the effectiveness of

the area in implementing the special educational needs and disability reforms as out in the Children and Families Act 2014.

6. On 15 May 2020, the inspection report for Leicestershire was published and as a result of the findings, and in accordance with the Children Act 2004 (Joint Area Reviews) Regulations 2015, Her Majesty's Chief inspector (HMCI) had determined that a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) was required because of two areas of significant weakness in the local area's practice. The local authority and the area's clinical commissioning group are jointly responsible for ensuring actions are progressed.
7. The areas of weakness outlined in the report are:
 - The absence of a clearly defined joint commissioning strategy for 0-25 SEND provision,
 - Systemic weakness in the quality of Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans including the drawing up of these plans; the inaccuracy with which the plans reflect children and young people's needs; the absence of good quality outcomes in EHC plans; the inconsistency with which plans include contributions from education and particularly health and care professionals; and the lack of any formal quality assurance framework to improve new and existing plans.
8. In preparation for the submission of the WSOA to Ofsted by the agreed revised deadline of 7 October 2020, a number of meetings and formal discussions were held involving stakeholders including parents, carers, children and young people. Additionally, parents, carers, children and young people also provided feedback through surveys and questionnaires to supplement the meetings.
9. At the time of the development of the WSoA, the Leicestershire Parent Carer Forum (PCF) were the main conduit for co-production with the wider parent body. A local SEND Alliance group were also represented to enable their views and suggestions to be considered. Since the publication of the WSoA, there has been a transition period between the recognised Parent Carer strategic partnership. Some members of the SEND Alliance Group have now formed a new Parent Carer Forum for Leicestershire, known as the Leicestershire SEND Hub. It is this group that are the recognised Parent Carer Forum.

Formal reporting on Written Statement of Action to DfE and NHS England / NHS Improvement

10. Since the WSoA was approved by Ofsted, formal reporting to DfE and NHS England/NHS Improvement has taken place quarterly. These meetings provide an external check on the progress that the local area is making on the actions within the WSoA.
11. At each formal meeting, good progress has been recorded by DfE and NHS England/NHS Improvement. The January 2022 meeting was the final formal monitoring meeting prior to a re-inspection that is due in 2022. In preparation for the re-inspection, further work is underway involving senior managers who are reviewing the evidence and impact against the statements that are included

within the WSoA. It was also raised that strategic co-production has been impacted due to the changes in the strategic partner and the pandemic. The local area has put in place plans to work with a wider sphere of parent/carers to capture the lived experience of families.

12. Good progress continues to be made on the WSoA, with 100% of actions now underway, compared to 87.8% at the previous formal meeting in October 2021. There are seven actions which are in progress but have minor delays. This has reduced from October 2021.
13. A significant programme of work, highlighted in the September 2021 report to the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee, is the development of a Neurodevelopmental pathway. Confirmation has been received from CCG colleagues that a programme team are being appointed and timescales for delivery will be confirmed when in post.
14. It is worthy of note that there is limited evidence that progress against the two areas within the Written Statement of Action have been negatively affected by COVID-19. An LLR SEND Joint Commissioning Strategy was developed and approved and is in the second year of implementation. A SEND Quality Assurance and Learning Framework was approved by the SEND and Inclusion Board in March 2020 and a multi-agency EHC plan audit takes place bi-monthly alongside a range of agency-led quality assurance processes to improve the quality of EHC plans.

Findings of the SEND Peer Challenge

15. The East Midlands region has developed a SEND Peer Challenge to compliment Children's Services Peer Reviews. The SEND Peer Challenge process provides an external view of a local area's progress in implementing the 2014 SEND Reforms. The Leicestershire local area received a SEND Peer Challenge in November 2021, led by the SEND Regional Co-ordinator, with the two areas from the Written Statement of Action forming the key lines of enquiry.
16. The process includes a similar methodology to a SEND local area inspection. Documentary evidence was provided prior to the formal meetings. A session was held with Leicestershire Young People led by young people from Nottingham City to gather their views. A range of staff attended focus groups with the Peer Challenge team to discuss the improvements made against the Written Statement of Action. A range of meetings were held with the Leicestershire SEND Hub and the previous Leicestershire Parent Carer Forum to discuss strategic co-production, alongside meetings with parent/carers.
17. Key findings are as follows:
 - an LLR SEND Joint Commissioning Strategy has been approved and is being implemented,
 - Examples were discussed of joint commissioning project work, e.g. Neurodevelopmental pathway and Keyworker programme,

- There is a reliance on the Designated Clinical Officer role. This has been impacted upon due to the resignation of the previous post-holder,
- Co-production has been impacted due to the transition from one Parent Carer Forum to the forming of the Leicestershire SEND Hub,
- Schools and families prefer the layout of the new EHC plan,
- There is an incremental improvement in the quality of EHC plans. Quality assurance mechanisms are being developed and implemented by health services,
- The appointment of the Designated Social Care Officer is supporting the development of a coherent social care response,
- There is a recognition from families and practitioners that the implementation challenges for the SENA service are the right thing to do as quality is the central objective, therefore, widely supported.

Next Steps

18. Monitoring of the actions within the WSOA sits within the governance arrangements for the SEND and Inclusion Board. All of the actions contained within the WSOA are also featured within the SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2020 to 2023. Performance reports relating to delivery of the strategy, including the actions within the WSOA are developed in preparation for the re-inspection.
19. A range of meetings have been arranged with staff from across the local area to discuss each focused action within the WSoA. Documentary evidence and evidence of impact will be the focus for each meeting. This will compliment conversations with senior managers when approving documentary evidence.

Equalities and Human Rights Implications

20. An Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment screening tool has been completed and a decision has been made that a full impact assessment did not need to be completed.

Background Papers

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy 2020 to 2023 – Leicestershire Written Statement of Action:

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/special-educational-needs-and-disability/where-to-start-with-send/send-strategic-developments>

Leicestershire Local Area SEND Peer Challenge report Reports and Inspections:

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/special-educational-needs-and-disability/where-to-start-with-send/send-strategic-developments>

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 7 September 2021:

<https://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1043&MId=6515&Ver=4>

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

21. A copy of this report will be circulated to all members under the Members News in brief service.

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**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

8 MARCH 2022

**REPORT ON THE OUTCOME OF THE OFSTED FOCUSED VISIT
JANUARY 2022**

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

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to present to the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee the outcome of the recent Ofsted Focused Visit.
2. The Ofsted report is expected to be published on 2 March 2022. A copy of the report will be circulated to members of the Committee and published on the County Council's website as soon as it is made available.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

3. The Ofsted Inspection was undertaken in accordance with the framework for the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services.

Background

4. Children's Social Care is subject to regular Ofsted inspections under the framework of Inspections Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS). These inspections focus on the effectiveness of local authority services and arrangements to help and protect children, the experiences and progress of children in care wherever they live, including those children who return home, the arrangements for permanence for children who are looked after, including adoption and the experiences and progress of care leavers.
5. The framework also evaluates the effectiveness of leaders and managers, the impact they have on the lives of children and young people, and the quality of professional practice.

6. Following a full ILACS Inspection, Ofsted make the following graded judgements:
 - overall effectiveness,
 - the experiences and progress of children in need of help and protection,
 - the experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers,
 - the impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families.
7. The framework ordinarily works to a three year cycle. A full inspection results in the service being graded and then followed by annual visits in the two intervening years. Annual visits are based on either a Focused Visit or a Joint Area Targeted Inspection (JTAI). The timetable of inspection has been impacted upon by Ofsted availability during the pandemic, and the recent Focused Visit was the first following the full ILACS inspection in 2019.
8. In 2019, the service was graded as Requiring Improvement to be Good for overall effectiveness, Good for the impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families, Good for the experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers and remained as Requires Improvement to be Good for the experiences and progress of children in need of help and protection.
9. The service has continued to make progress against the continuous improvement plan and have revised the Road to Excellence in 2021, which will now run until 2023.
10. The department received notification from Ofsted on 19 January to give notice of the Focused Visit on Children in Need of Help and Protection, commencing the week beginning 24 January. Two Inspectors visited Leicestershire, undertaking field work for the first two days and then spending two days on site meeting with social workers to discuss children's cases, and with senior leaders.
11. The letter detailing the findings from the inspection will be published on 2 March 2022. The Focused visit inspection does not give a graded judgement, however, detailed feedback from Ofsted on their findings is set out in the published letter. Ofsted will take their findings from the Focused Visit into the next full inspection.

Equality and Human Rights Implications

12. Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessments will be undertaken as appropriate should there be any reviews of Departmental strategies or services.

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