



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

Date/Time: **Tuesday, 5 September 2023 at 2.00 pm**

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

Contact: **Damien Buckley (Tel: 0116 305 0183)**

Email: **damien.buckley@leics.gov.uk**

Membership

Mrs. H. J. Fryer CC (Chairman)

Mr. M. Frisby CC Mr. Max Hunt CC
Mr. K. Ghattoraya CC Mrs. C. Lewis
Mr. L. Hadji-Nikolaou CC Mr. R. Martin
Mr. R. Hills 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.leicestershire.gov.uk>

AGENDA

<u>Item</u>	<u>Report by</u>
Webcast. A webcast of the meeting can be viewed here .	
1. Minutes of the meeting held on 6 June 2023.	(Pages 5 - 14)
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. Recruitment and Retention. Director of Children and Family Services (Pages 15 - 22)
9. Leicestershire School Buildings. Director of Children and Family Services (Pages 23 - 28)
10. Quarter 1 2023/24 Performance Report. Chief Executive and Director of Children and Family Services (Pages 29 - 36)
11. Children's Social Care Statutory Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2022/23. Director of Children and Family Services (Pages 37 - 82)
12. Leicestershire and Rutland Local Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2022/23. Director of Children and Family Services (Pages 83 - 116)
13. Date of next meeting.

The next meeting of the Commission is scheduled to take place on 7 November 2023.
14. 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, 6 June 2023.

PRESENT

Mr. M. Frisby CC
Mrs. H. J. Fryer CC
Mr. R. Hills CC
Mr. Max Hunt CC

Mr. K. Merrie MBE CC
Mr. C. A. Smith CC
Mr. G. Welsh CC

1. Appointment of Chairman.

It was moved by Mr. R. Hills CC and seconded by Mr. C. Smith CC that Mrs. H. Fryer CC be elected Chairman of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the period ending with the date of the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2024.

RESOLVED:

That Mrs. H. Fryer CC be appointed Chairman for the period ending with the date of the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2024.

Mrs. H. Fryer CC – in the Chair

2. Election of Deputy Chairman.

Nominations for the position of Deputy Chairman were sought. Mr. R. Hills CC was nominated by Mrs. H. Fryer CC and seconded by Mr. M. Frisby CC.

RESOLVED:

That Mr. R. Hills CC be elected Deputy Chairman for the period ending with the date of the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2024.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2023.

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2023 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

4. Question Time.

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

5. Questions asked by members.

The following questions were received under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5) and was put to the Chairman of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Question asked by Mr. P. King:

“Parent and carers in the Market Harborough West and Foxton division have informed me that they are increasingly concerned about the provision of respite care for parents of children with special needs in the Market Harborough area. Recently, both Melton and Glenfield respite centres run by Praxis Care were closed overnight by Ofsted on the 1st of December 2022 due to safeguarding issues.

Parents carers are concerned that despite repeated attempts to secure alternative provision nothing has been put in place as yet, to enable regular respite for parents/carers from their often highly complex, stressful and demanding carer roles.

Residents have asked me to ask what policies and procedures Leicestershire County Council has in place for when services like this are closed through emergency measures?

And what are children’s services doing to help affected parents/carers, and especially those in the Market Harborough West and Foxton locality?”

Reply by the Chairman:

When Ofsted places a Children’s provision into special measures, as Praxis has been, then the Local Authority has processes and procedures in place to ensure quality assurance of provision and appropriate action is taken in respect of any children living at or accessing the service. These process and procedures were activated as soon as Praxis Care was put into special measures.

Since the closure of PRAXIS, the children’s social care team have been working with children and families to review their packages of short break support. Where possible the Department has commissioned alternative packages, including where suitable, overnight care in the family home to support the child and their family. The Department is continuing to seek alternative provision that will support the children and their families in the local area, whilst longer term solutions are put in place.

Question asked by Mrs. A. Hack:

“In a recent survey, 22,000 school buildings were assessed from which a report that was published in May 2021. In this report 260* school buildings in Leicestershire and Rutland* were identified as grade C (poor) and more worryingly 77 were classified as category D condition which is described in the report as Life expired or at serious risk of imminent failure.

*the report includes 22 schools in Rutland.

1. As the authority responsible for allocating students to school, what oversight does the County Council have over the condition of Leicestershire Schools?

There was a recent round of funding announced by the Government, 32 schools in Leicestershire have been allocated funding for 38 different improvement projects. Works included a recently transferred academy school Ravenhurst Primary in my division for ‘Life Expired Condition Roof. Of the remaining projects the word ‘urgent’ appears 21 times. This funding was in addition to the 5 schools selected for rebuilds. Which seems to offer repairs to a fraction of the schools identified in the 2021 report.

2. Does the authority have a clear view to the condition of the remaining schools that are maintained as well as those managed by the Multi Academy Trusts. This includes the safety of children and the workforce at the sites that have been identified as having category C and D defects?
3. What liaison does Leicestershire County Council have with the Head Teachers about the condition of Leicestershire Schools?
4. If the information is available, can Councillors receive an update on the condition of the schools highlighted with category C/D defects within their divisions?
5. Of the school estate that has been transferred from locally maintained (including Ravenhurst in my division), was there a clear maintenance plan agreed ahead of any transfer and how is the condition of the schools managed where there have been Category C and D defects in the buildings?
6. For the remaining maintained school, what is the inspection regime for managing the school estate and how does this change when schools are transferred to Academies?"

Reply by the Chairman:

1. Leicestershire county Council is responsible for assessing the condition of maintained Leicestershire Schools. Maintained Schools are inspected every 5 years, as recommended by Department for Education (DfE). The inspection information is then used to plan the maintenance required on the buildings.
2. The authority has a record of the condition of the Maintained schools, including sites that have been identified as having category C and D defects. LCC have a record of the condition of those Academy schools, where the Multi-Academy Trust's (MAT) commissions the Council for a professional fee to carry out a survey.
3. The authority has good relationships with maintained school head teachers and those MAT's that buy into the Council's property scheme
4. The Department can share with Councillors the information for maintained schools in their area.
5. In the process of academy transfer the maintenance of buildings becomes the responsibility of the Trust. As part of the transfer process the Trust undertakes due diligence on school building condition and negotiates depending on the situation. There is an offer of continuing with the Council's buyback scheme. If after academisation there is a need to repair / replace the MAT can apply for funding to do so.
6. The frequency of inspection of Maintained Schools is every five years, as recommended by DfE. Once a school transfers to Academy, the Property is removed from the inspection list. Property Ops are available to carry out a Condition survey for the Academy, for a Professional Fee.

Supplementary questions asked by Mrs. A. Hack

Mrs Hack asked the following supplementary questions:

- A. "Supplementary to the response to question 1, what is the current position with regards to MAT's; do we as the statutory authority responsible for the allocating of youngsters at school and for providing enough places, have assurance that schools are well looked after?"
- B. Supplementary to the response to question 2, where does a councillor find out the information on MAT school building quality?
- C. Supplementary to the response to question 3, the question I was trying to understand is the openness within the head teachers' group about the school buildings and if they were confident that the programme of works needed to keep their schools free of Category C/D defects were in place.
- D. Supplementary to the response to question 4, as a Councillor without any maintained schools and in fact over four primary schools that provide places for children in my division, there are four different MATs, where do we get assurance that the buildings are safe? Particularly in light of the list of 38 school buildings that are receiving patch up funding from DfE, ten of these are for roof works and 14 contain the words 'safe'...does these mean the buildings are currently unsafe?
- E. Supplementary to the response to question 6, What is the requirement for MAT's?, Who provides assurance and whilst we had assurance when the estate was transferred from ourselves, the longer these buildings are being managed by many bodies the risk of standard quality gets greater. How do we seek assurance as Councillors and where from?"

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Director of Children and Family Services indicated that this information would be provided to Mrs. A. Hack after the meeting.

[Subsequent to the meeting a response was provided to Mrs Hack as follows:

- A. *Article 1.20 in the Academy Trust Handbook 2021 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academy-trust-handbook/part-1-roles-and-responsibilities>) confirms that, "The DfE expects academy trusts to manage their school estate strategically and maintain their estate in a safe working condition." The DfE, through the ESFA, is responsible for the maintenance of academy buildings. The LA does not have a role in statutory assessment of the condition of academy buildings although in practice concerns would be raised by headteachers and impact capacity assessments. The OFSTED inspection process would also highlight health and safety concerns or the impact of the estate condition on the effectiveness of teaching.*
- B. *This would be a matter to discuss with the MAT.*
- C. *Question 1 explains the responsibility for assessing and planning maintenance for maintained school buildings. If a maintained school is identified as having a category D defect this is addressed as a matter of reactive urgency. Where category C issues are judged as minor (such as floor finishes or internal decoration) these are recorded and scheduled for remedy: category C can be used to draw attention to non-critical defects. Where the category C defect relates to a major structural element repair is prioritised.*

It is the MAT's responsibility to identify category C/D defects and to address these (including seeking funding from the EFSA). There is no evidence to suggest that head teachers and trust leaders are not being open about this.

- D. *Assurance of school building safety sits with the MAT. Councillors would need to contact the MAT to seek this assurance.*

Further information about the condition grading process is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/good-estate-management-for-schools/understanding-land-and-buildings#assessing-the-condition-of-your-estate> which includes a definition of grades A-D and a priority categorisation from 1-4. A grade D defect may not necessarily also be priority 1 – urgent. It is also worth noting that a bid for condition funding is more likely to be successful where the urgency of necessary remediation is highlighted.

This does not imply that buildings are currently unsafe: MATs have a fundamental duty to ensure the safety of their pupils and staff. The process being discussed is designed to prevent buildings becoming unsafe.

- E. *As outlined, it is the responsibility of the MAT to maintain their estate and the DfE recommendation of five-yearly condition surveys applies. Any MAT receiving a new school will undertake a programme of due diligence including an assessment of the condition of the property and ensuing liabilities. Councillors would need to approach MATs to ascertain details.]*

6. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

7. 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.

No declarations were made.

8. Declarations of the Party Whip.

There were no declarations of the party whip.

9. Presentation of Petitions.

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

10. 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 an overview of the 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.

In presenting the report, the Director advised of an error in paragraph one which referred to a 'temporary strategic duty' but should read 'permanent strategic duty'.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. Members noted that the report arising from the Timpson Review of School Exclusion had been published at the same time as the Service had been reviewing its own strategy around exclusions. The findings of the report and recommendations were considered by the Department and incorporated into its strategy for supporting excluded children, their parents and working with their school.
- ii. In response to questions raised, the Director explained that parents were choosing to home educate children at an increasing rate for a number of reasons such as the legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic and children having not felt comfortable in their school. Members were assured that the Department would continue to analyse data to understand the reasons behind this and would continue to provide guidance and support to those children and their families when considering whether to home educate.
- iii. In response to a question regarding the number of children missing education (CME), the Director advised that the numbers had been particularly high during the COVID-19 pandemic and had unexpectedly continued to increase. The Department expected that the ongoing increase was due to sustained anxiety around attending school. Members noted that a robust review of the data would take place to better understand and address the issue.
- iv. In response to concern regarding the high number of CME who were in the 'not known' category, the Director acknowledged that the figure was concerning, particularly when a child was not on roll with a school. Members were reassured that the Department continued to work with partner agencies, other local authorities and with schools to locate children and to address any concerns for their wellbeing.

RESOLVED:

That the overview of the functions of the Inclusion Service and the strategic duty to promote the education of all children known to a social worker be noted.

11. Leicestershire Family Hubs.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services which provided an update on work to implement Family Hubs in Leicestershire and received a presentation on the development of the programme. Copies of the report and presentation marked 'Agenda Item 11' are filed with these minutes.

Arising from the discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. Members were pleased to hear that the first two Family Hubs had been opened successfully, and that there would be at least one hub in every district area within twelve months. The Department aimed for a network of hubs across Leicestershire within two to five years. Members were keen to receive updates as the programme

progressed and the Director agreed to present the Committee with progress reports at six and twelve months into the development.

- ii. In response to a concern regarding funding, the Director assured members that the £1m allocated through Government funding would be used to support the initial implementation of the model including a communication strategy, as well as the training and development of staff. Following this, the service would be delivered within the existing departmental budget. Members noted that the aim of the Family Hubs model was to transform access to help and support through the network, building on already established integrated services, including the Children and Family Wellbeing service. The Hubs would support families and communities with advice and help to access existing services offered by the Department.
- iii. Members noted that existing Council spaces would be used to create 'one-stop shops', for parents, carers, and families across Leicestershire to help access support and advice when needed. The Department had an agreement with the Council's library service to implement the Hubs within its libraries but had also been contacted by community libraries who were interested in the developing the Family Hubs model within their premises.
- iv. Engagement with families and communities would be central in the development and delivery of the programme. Members noted that parents and communities had been consulted on the language used in promotional material to ensure that it was appropriate for service users. It was suggested by a member that feedback forms would be a good way to understand satisfaction amongst service users. The Director explained that although the funding period was relatively short, evaluators would be asked to track the progress of the programme over the short-term and long-term to ensure that delivery was meeting the needs of service users.
- v. In terms of the digital offer, members noted that a website space would be created whereby young people and parents could access specific information and resources. The Department was considering whether laptops could be available within the Hubs so that service users had the opportunity to access digital resources there.
- vi. The Cabinet Lead Member for Children and Families highlighted that the Family Hubs model would aim to create spaces where families and communities could access information and guidance relating to all services delivered by the Department and make it easier for them to access the right services at the best time.

RESOLVED:

That:

- a) the update on work to implement Family Hubs in Leicestershire be noted;
- b) the Director agreed to present progress reports at six and twelve months into the development of the Family Hubs model.

12. 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 delivers services to these children and young people. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 12' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. Members noted that the average cost incurred by the Council in supporting and caring for one UASC care leaver being higher than East Midlands average could be due to older data being available to finance colleagues when data was published. It was expected that the East Midlands average would have risen by the time newly available data was published.
- ii. In response to concern regarding the £7k funding gap per child per annum, the Director acknowledged that government funding should cover the full costs of supporting UASC. However, there was shortfall and to date the Department had already used its full annual allocation of funding. Members noted that local authorities nationally were experiencing the same issues with demand and funding. The Department would continue to raise the issue of funding with Government in order to reduce the funding gap.
- iii. Members noted that the Department worked closely with the Home Office to support individuals to continue support individuals to continue living in the UK as they reach adulthood, and to access legal advice on making asylum claims, although it was noted that the process and right to appeal could often be lengthy.
- iv. In response to concern regarding UASC having been placed alone in hotels with licensed premises, alongside a large number of adult asylum seekers, the Director acknowledged that this was a safeguarding concern. Members noted that the Home Office had transported children to Leicestershire as adults and placed them within hotels. Members were assured that as soon as individuals within hotels had been identified as children, the Council became responsible for their care, and they had been moved to a more appropriate setting.
- v. The Lead Member for Children and Families acknowledged members concerns regarding UASC and assured members that she would continue to raise concerns regarding funding, safeguarding and accommodation with Government. Members were also reassured that the Department would continue to deliver a robust level of safeguarding despite funding and demand pressures.

RESOLVED:

That the overview of the Council's duties and responsibilities to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) and the context in which the County Council delivers services to these children and young people be noted.

13. Quarter 4 2022/23 Performance Report.

The Committee considered a joint report of the Chief Executive and the Director of Children and Family Services which presented an update on the Children and Family Services Department's performance for the period January to March 2023 (quarter 4). A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 13' is filed with these minutes.

Members noted that the target for re-referrals to Children's Social Care within 12 months was 22%.

RESOLVED:

That the update on the Children and Family Services Department's performance for the period January to March 2023 (quarter 4) be noted.

14. Holiday Activities and Food Programme - Annual Report 2022-23.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services which provided members with an overview of the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme annual report 2022. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 14' is filed with these minutes.

The Lead Member for Children and Families highlighted that the programme had a positive impact on children by enabling them to spend quality time with peers and to prepare healthy food.

RESOLVED:

That the overview of the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme annual report 2022 be noted.

15. Date of future meetings.

RESOLVED:

It was noted that the next meetings of the Committee would take place at 14:00 on 5 September 2023 and 7 November 2023. Meetings of the Committee in 2024 would be held at 14:00pm on the following dates:

23 January

5 March

4 June

3 September

5 November

2.00 - 3.36 pm
06 June 2023

CHAIRMAN

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**CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE - 5 SEPTEMBER 2023**

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

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

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an overview of the Department's recruitment and retention activity and current position and future objective for the service.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. The Department's recruitment and retention activity is captured in a number of key policies and procedures including Road to Excellence 21/23, Workforce development plan 2022, Induction Procedure 2022, We Care Race Equality Strategy 21/24, Wellbeing Concern Process 2022, Critical response service 2022, Career Framework and Progression Handbook 2022, Apprenticeship Programme 2022, Internal transfer Procedure 2022; Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) handbook August 2022, and Making Leicestershire County Council the Best Place to Work.
3. Nationally, the Government's Children's Social Care reform strategy 'Stable homes Built on Love (2022)' sets out its overarching plans to reset children's social care in what it describes as a 'once in a generation reform'. A report on the strategy was presented to the Committee on 7 March 2023. This strategy includes specific recommendation in response to an acknowledged crisis in recruitment and retention of social workers and provides a national perspective on proposed workforce changes including amendments to the current agency market which is likely to have significant impact on social work recruitment in the future. The full details of final recommendations are not yet known.

Background – The national Picture

4. Recruitment and retention within social work has been increasingly challenging in recent years with the greater prevalence of agency opportunities alongside the existing complexity of child protection work which can be affected by negative public and media perceptions and low morale in the sector. In February 2023, the Government published its annual overview of the children's social work workforce – in place since 2017. This report based on the year 1 October 2021 to 30 September 2022 produced the following headlines:

- 31,600 Children and family social workers in post (FTE) – down 2.7% (900) from 2021 though remains higher than in 2019.
 - 7,900 Vacancies (FTE) – up 21% from 2021 and the highest recorded – with 1,400 additional vacancies recorded when compared with 2021. This accounts for 1 in every 5 Social work posts being vacant.
 - 6,800 Agency workers (FTE) up from 2021 and the highest recorded. Agency workers accounted for 18% of the workforce the highest recorded. 80% of agency workers were covering full time vacancies.
 - There were 4,800 new starts (including starts across LAs) and 5,400 leavers during the period. For the first time numbers of leavers was higher than new starts with new starts down 13% since 2021 and lowest recorded.
 - A third (33%) of leavers in 2022 had been in service for less than 2 years. 37% of leavers had been in service for 2 years or more but less than 5 years an increase of 7% since 2017.
 - 16.6 caseload average per worker (FTE) which was up from 16.3 in 2021 but down from 16.9 in 2019.
 - A Social Work England State of the Nation 2023 survey published in March 2023 noted that 24.1% of the 5335 social workers who left the professional register in the year up to 30 November 2022 had been continuously registered for less than a year – demonstrating that newly qualified social workers were not committing to a long-term career in the profession.
5. Stable Homes Built on love (2022) sets out a ‘Pillar’ of work focused on the challenges facing Local Authorities in the recruitment and retention of social workers as a national issue. Its ambition is for there to be a valued, supported and highly skilled social worker for every child who needs one. Whilst this appears a simple unarguable ambition, the ability to create a stable children’s workforce is challenging and must be addressed proactively. The proposals set out that social workers need the time and tools to do their job well. The report recognises the pressure on the social work workforce with high vacancy rates, increased use of agency provision and lack of experienced social workers with further impact on the experiences of children and families receiving services.
6. The report points out the need for stronger training for social workers and continuous support during their career. It identifies their wellbeing to be a priority for service leaders and the Government. To achieve this, there are specific actions identified over the next two years which include the need to prioritise high-quality career development for social workers with the establishment of an Early Career Framework (ECF). The ECF is proposed to be five years which compares with the current Assessed year in practice which is for 12 months post qualification. To improve retention Local Government will be supported to improve working conditions and reduce caseload pressures, though details of this support is not yet clear. Key to this are proposals to reduce the cost and reliance on agency social workers but also suggested workforce remodelling to increase the profile of alternatively qualified staff within the children’s workforce as part of a shift to a ‘Family Help’ model. This creates stronger connections between Children’s Social Care and Early Help.

7. There has been increased visibility of interim social work posts, made more attractive based on both enhanced pay rates, sometimes preferential tax benefits and the ability to have more flexibility across authorities. This has become a much stronger feature of the current job market and has been identified in 'Stable Homes Built on Love' as a specific issue affecting the recruitment and retention of children's social workers.
8. A separate consultation on the Child and Family Social Worker Workforce was published in February 2023. This set out proposed national rules on agency usage, including potential price caps, minimum qualification rules for agency staff expecting five years post qualification experience and specific recruitment and commissioning expectations. Alongside this is an aim to boost social worker recruitment – with up to 500 additional child and family social worker apprentices developed nationally. Timescales for implementation of this aspect of the proposals are still not clear, though the changes to the agency market are welcomed across Local Authority employers, given if fully implemented are likely to significantly reduce the draw of agency positions by equalising pay and preventing moves into the agency sector within the first five years of practice.

Local challenges

9. Locally, the Department has face increased competition with local and regional Authorities for qualified social workers – both those at the start of their career and particularly those with experience. This is from the perspective of attracting external candidates to join the workforce in the competitive jobs market but also to retain our existing staff across grades, who may be attracted to offers from both permanent and agency offers externally. This has become more challenging in the context of more flexible working options post COVID-19, which has allowed social workers to look more widely for jobs.
10. The Department's vision is to make Leicestershire a First Choice Employer for Social workers and managers. Since 2020, the service has strategically focused on:
 - attracting developing and retaining the best staff,
 - ensuring our overall offer is competitive and attractive, and
 - effectively marketing our offer internally and externally,

Progress to Date

Recruitment

11. A range of activities have been implemented to strengthen recruitment with a centralised programme of advertisements and panels for all posts across all grades of Social Worker, Senior Practitioner and Team Manager. This includes regular assessment centres targeting social work students finishing their training and builds on strong well-established relationships with local universities. Officers have also attended national recruitment fayres and extended job adverts to social media, Indeed and LinkedIn.

12. This recruitment work sits alongside a 'grow your own' approach with annual cohorts of eight frontline students, through fast track social work training, as well as four social work apprenticeships annually. In September 2022, the first four apprentices completed their training and joined the workforce. Annually, these two programmes account for approximately twelve ASYE starters and in January 2024 the first cohort of three 'return to social work' candidates will enter the workforce.
13. Most significantly, during 2023 the service developed a strategic partnership with two recruitment agencies to produce a coordinated programme of recruitment of qualified social workers from abroad. A systematic approach to manage applications, interviews, and appointment of candidates with experience internationally means a cohort of approximately 13 workers will join the work force in Autumn 2023. A robust support and induction programme is being developed to ensure that these candidates are welcomed to local teams, provided with good support to transfer skills and knowledge into the local ways of working and settle into local communities with the families they support. The aim is for these staff to develop a strong commitment to build a career with the Council over the longer term. In addition to this specific cohort, general recruitment activity appears to be having some success with reaching candidates from abroad who have been sponsored to move to take up posts.

Retention

14. The Service has developed a strong connection to its staff, hearing their voices using both national and local surveys. When staff do decide to leave, a robust exit interview process is in place which provides insight into reasons for leaving. A three-monthly analysis of messages is presented to senior managers to allow themes to be identified and actions for to be agreed. In response to some of these messages the service has also more recently developed a welfare alert system providing more early and immediate pathways to identify and resolve emerging welfare issue which may lead to staff exits if not resolved.
15. It is recognised that workers make the decision to stay or leave by considering range of factors. This is reinforced from the feedback we have received from our staff surveys, annual conferences, exit interviews and staff welfare processes. Therefore, in addition to the actions already outlined above, the service has maintained the effort to address those more systematic issues associated with support and welfare including caseload management, high quality supervision, pathways to progression and building varied experiences so that staff can build a career with us. Several initiatives have been created to enhance the experience of the workforce as a means to encourage staff to remain.:
 - Established a strong shared value base set out in the Road to Excellence plan 21-23.
 - Introduced the workforce development plan (2022) setting out our commitment to staff leadership – enhancing the skills and abilities of first line and middle leaders and a strong career framework for social workers and managers.
 - Launched an updated induction booklet and procedure from June 2022.
 - Worked to enhance oversight to casework, caseloads, and personal supervision with analysis of performance presented to senior managers.
 - Launched the 'We Care' Race Equality strategy 21-24 with each service working to address barriers to promote equality inclusion and diversity in the workforce.

- Established Workforce Community Principles in August 2022 which set out a strong foundation for supporting staff.
- Introduced a targeted ad hoc welfare offer from the wellbeing service in 2022 to respond to stress in the workplace and delivered workshops to identify and prevent burn out based on learning from this initiative.
- Introduced enhanced payrates for Senior Practitioners and additional skills payments for experienced social worker in September 2022 to build experience in the workforce.
- Launched an internal transfer policy for staff on same job description to transfer between teams (2022).
- Updated the ASYE handbook with a clear offer of support and education for newly qualified staff's first year in practice in August 2022
- Launched a 'Working with us' brochure (2023) to support recruitment including the offer to encourage agency staff to move into permanent posts.
- Officered a face to face new manager group.

Impact

Measure (FtE)	2017 (benchmark)	2018	2019	2020	2021	England av. 2022	2022
Turnover rate	18.8%	13.7%	11.2%	8.5%	11.2%	17.1%	18.1%
Vacancy rate	19.6%	14%	8.2%	11.2%	11%	20%	18.1%
Agency rate	18.7%	17.5%	17.2%	16.7%	16.4%	17.6%	17.5%

16. The Table above shows the baseline for comparison from 2017. This shows that up to and including 2021 both turnover rates and vacancy rates were improving against our baseline but also in comparison with England averages most recently in 2022.
17. As of 2022, the latest figures showed that although both turnover and vacancy rates have increased from 2021, they remain better than the established benchmark in 2017 and remained under the England average. Whilst agency rates had also reduced from 2017 these are now very similar to England average.

Current pressures

18. Despite some success in recruitment, the Service continues to face challenges in its efforts to build a strong experienced and stable workforce. This means that the service continues to operate with a relatively high number of agency staff and vacancies across teams. 75 agency staff are currently in posts, with most covering vacancies, but some covering for maternity leave and sickness. Others bring resilience and experience to some teams where inexperience may otherwise leave gaps in services. As of 4 August, there were vacancies for 44 Social workers, 14 Senior Practitioners and two team managers.
19. Positively, a number of candidates have been interviewed and matched to some of these vacancies. Approximately 40 social workers, mainly either newly qualified or

from abroad, have planned start dates during September and one senior practitioner matched with an agreed start date. If all candidates take up the posts offered, this will result in the Department holding the least social work vacancies for a number of years.

20. It will be necessary to continue to focus on recruitment with particular emphasis on experienced staff for Senior Practitioner vacancies, and manager posts. Internal transfers may have a knock-on effect of success with internal progression into these posts.
21. Statutory responsibilities mean that many staff hold caseloads of complex family situations with children in care and subject to child protection plans. It is therefore likely that in the short-term agency workers will continue to feature in the workforce to support the gaps in experience as many of those recruited are typically at the beginning of their social work careers. However, the long term aim is we aim to reduce numbers over time.
22. In this context, the full financial impact of Recruitment and Retention work may not be seen in the short term. However, the Department will be closer to achieving the stability required to ensure children experience the consistency of relationship with their social worker as set out in 'Stable lives built on love' and its own ambition for children.

What next?

23. There have been some small successes in recruitment and retention work. Staff have been listened to and the service has focused on understanding that they value having a good manager, being part of a supportive team, feeling validated, and having a good work life balance.
24. The Department is in a position to pull together all recruitment and retention activity to inform an updated Recruitment and Retention strategy and associated plan complimented by the opportunities provided by the government led proposals within Stable Homes Built on Love. In addition to filling vacancies, there will continue to be a need for providing high levels of support, competitive pay and manageable caseloads for staff, and high quality supervision from managers as part of this updated strategy.
25. This will allow services to respond to workforce reforms but also the impact of local remodelling of our workforce in the new Family Help service which is anticipated to launch in late 2023.
26. The Family Help service will give greater scope for the use of alternative qualified staff in the workforce for children in need of support. The model is based on strong social work oversight of interventions delivered by members of the children's workforce, matching skills to children's needs. This is targeted at children who may be at risk of coming into care or escalating to child protection thresholds. This may for example mean allocation of a parenting worker to deliver an evidenced based parenting programme to parents in the home. Making good use of the range of skills and experiences within the workforce maximises the impact on families whilst retaining social work skills in assessment and planning.
27. Positively, the national workforce reforms are reflected in the existing recruitment and retention strategy, with regular reviews of pay and conditions in place, recent

enhancements to some pay grades and close scrutiny of caseloads on a monthly basis.

28. Whilst the use of agency social workers continues to be essential to support gaps in services, the Department aims to reduce this to a minimum and will particularly welcome changes to the agency market which will enhance its position as a permanent employer. We aim to achieve this by considering a programme of over recruitment, for example employing an increased number of permanent staff over established post numbers to provide capacity for sickness and maternity cover.

Background Papers

Stable Homes Built on Love: Implementation Strategy and Consultation Children's Social Care Reforms 2023:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1133537/Children_s_social_care_stable_homes_consultation_February_2023.pdf
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1133537/Children_s_social_care_stable_homes_consultation_February_2023.pdf

The Independent Review of Children's Social Care (May 2022):

<https://childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk/final-report/>

Child and Family Social Worker Workforce Government consultation (February 2023):

https://consult.education.gov.uk/social-work-reform-unit/child-and-family-social-worker-workforce/supporting_documents/Child%20and%20Family%20Social%20Worker%20Workforce%20consultation%20document.pdf

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

29. None

Equalities Implications

30. Strategy and planning processes take account of existing barriers to recruitment and retention based on protected characteristics. The Department has a strong 'We Care race equality strategy' 2021-24 which includes the vision as an employer. Recruitment of international candidates has accounted for the challenges this group of staff may face and have adapted our support and relocation policies to account for the specific individual needs for these recruits.

Human Rights Implications

31. There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

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CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

5 SEPTEMBER 2023

LEICESTERSHIRE SCHOOL BUILDINGS

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an overview of Leicestershire School Buildings, including the roles and responsibilities of the Local Authority and Academy Trusts.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. This report is on the agenda following a request of Mrs A J Hack CC to the Chief Executive, in the light of the questions she asked at the meeting of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 6 June 2023. Her further request was that the Committee has an opportunity to consider the assurances available to members regarding the safety of school buildings within their divisions and to understand the process for raising safety concerns.
3. The Academy Trust Handbook 2021 sets out the expectation of academy trusts to manage their school estate. Academy trusts must comply with this handbook as a condition of their funding agreement with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

Background

4. As of August 2023, there are 282 schools in Leicestershire (46 secondary, 228 primary and 8 special schools). Of this number, 204 (72%) are academies and 78 (28%) are local authority maintained schools.
5. The Council's responsibility for School Buildings is dependent on whether a school is part of an academy trust or maintained by the authority.
6. Local Authority Maintained Schools: Leicestershire County Council is responsible for assessing the condition of maintained Leicestershire Schools. Maintained Schools are inspected every five years, as recommended by Department for Education (DfE), and the inspection information is then used to plan the maintenance required on the buildings.

7. Academy Trusts: Academies are publicly funded schools which operate outside of local authority control. The land of academies which were previously maintained schools is usually held by the relevant academy trust on a long-term lease model, typically over 125 years, from the Council. Academy trusts are responsible for managing their school estate strategically and maintaining their estate in a safe working condition. The DfE, through the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), is responsible for the maintenance of academy buildings. The Council does not have a role in statutory assessment of the condition of academy buildings. The Ofsted inspection process could also highlight health and safety concerns or the impact of the estate condition on the effectiveness of teaching.

Estate Management

8. Condition relates to the physical condition of buildings in the school estate. This is determined by undertaking condition surveys. Condition surveys are normally non-intrusive surveys, carried out by suitably qualified professionals and cover five-year planning periods for the purpose of strategic estate management. Condition surveys identify what work is needed to maintain the estate, consider how much works might cost, prioritise work within available funds and understand if the nature of the buildings change. This information is then used to prepare a maintenance programme, which reflects potential future capital investment.
9. The condition survey identifies specific building condition issues, deficiencies and maintenance requirements, including, but not limited to structural, roofs, building fabric, windows and doors, mechanical and electrical, utilities, sewage and drainage, and security and site layout. Additional surveys are carried out to manage other building compliance risks such as asbestos, fire safety and legionella, in line with statutory requirements.
10. Condition is generally categorised as:
- A - good, performing as intended and operating efficiently
 - B - satisfactory, performing as intended but exhibiting minor deterioration
 - C - poor, exhibiting major defects and/or not operating as intended
 - D - bad, life expired and/or serious risk of failure
11. Priority is generally categorised as:
- 1 - urgent, immediate or one year remedial action required - work that will prevent immediate closure of premises and/or address an immediate high risk to the health and safety of the occupants and/or remedy a serious breach of legislation.
 - 2 - essential, one to two year remedial action required - work that will prevent serious deterioration of the building fabric or services and/or address a medium risk to the health and safety of the occupants and/or remedy a less serious breach of legislation.

- 3 - desirable, three to five year remedial action required - work that will prevent deterioration of the building fabric or services and/or address a low risk to the health and safety of the occupants and/or remedy a minor breach of legislation.
- 4 - long term, outside of a five-year planning period - work that will prevent deterioration of the building fabric or services.

Maintained Schools Building Maintenance

12. Leicestershire County Council has a record of the condition of Maintained Schools, including sites that have been identified as having building elements within categories C and D.
13. Over the last two years, £6.6m of grant funding has been invested in projects including new roofs, boilers and windows and this year, another £3.7m will be spent on a similar programme of improvements. Continual improvements to fire safety, legionella risk and asbestos remediation are also part of the Council's annual maintenance programme.
14. The scheduled summer works programme for 2023 covers the following 54 projects across Maintained Schools:
 - Five roofing works
 - One roof glazing
 - One pitched roofing
 - Twelve lighting upgrades
 - Ten boiler replacements
 - One heating pipe renewal
 - One window alteration
 - 23 other building works
 - Planned annual gutter cleaning to all schools
15. In addition to this, there is £600k of compliance improvement works planned this year. This includes asbestos removal work, improvements to fire compartmentation and legionella control projects in "Maintained Schools".

Academy Trust School Building Maintenance

16. Academy Trusts are responsible for the maintenance of their own school estate. Queries around the condition of Academy school buildings should be raised with the appropriate trust. Capital is allocated to academy trusts from the DfE via the Condition Improvement Fund and the School Priority Rebuilding Programme. Trusts themselves are responsible for addressing the defects; the Local Authority does not have a role in this.
17. Leicestershire County Council also offers facilities management and property maintenance support to academies through a traded subscription service. As of August 2023, 39 academies subscribe to the Leicestershire County Council Managed Service Scheme. The scheme enables academies to access expertise from the Operational Property Service Team, access to the 24-hour

property helpdesk and support with arranging statutory, planned, and reactive maintenance services via vetted contractor frameworks.

18. The information below provides an overview of Leicestershire Schools benefitting from DfE capital via the Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) and the School Priority Rebuilding Programme.

Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) 2023/24

19. Larger Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) of 3,000 pupils or more will have a formulaic allocation for capital funding and do not have to bid to CIF. Therefore, the MATs will be prioritising how their allocations are distributed within their Trust.
20. Nationally, 3,061 projects were submitted and 1,033 were successful totalling funding of £455 Million. In the East Midlands, 291 projects were submitted and 101 were successful totalling funding of £41 Million.
21. In Leicestershire, 38 projects were agreed across 31 academies. All projects are connected with building replacements, fire safety and structural repairs and will be delivered by contractors appointed by the individual Trusts involved.

School Priority Rebuilding Scheme

22. The school rebuilding programme (SRP) carries out major rebuilding and refurbishment projects at school and sixth-form college buildings across England, with buildings prioritised according to their condition. There are currently 400 projects in the programme, announced in 2021 and 2022. The table shows the Academy Trusts that were successful in their application for the School Re-building Programme for sites in Leicestershire. The DfE is working directly with the Trusts to deliver the schemes. The schemes are a mixture of total replacement of buildings and refurbishment to deliver schools that are fit for purpose.

School Name	Phase	Responsible Body
Brocks Hill Primary School	Primary	Lionheart Educational Trust
De Lisle College Loughborough Leicestershire	Secondary	St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi Academy Trust
Rawlins Academy	Secondary	Rawlins Academy
The Martin High School Anstey	Secondary	Lionheart Educational Trust
The Castle Rock School	Secondary	Lionheart Educational Trust

Background Papers

Good estate management for schools, Department for Education:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/good-estate-management-for-schools/understanding-land-and-buildings#assessing-the-condition-of-your-estate>

How we are keeping school buildings safe, Department for Education:

<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2023/06/28/how-we-are-keeping-school-buildings-safe/>

The Academy Trust Handbook 2021, Department for Education:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academy-trust-handbook/part-1-roles-and-responsibilities>

Policy paper - About the school rebuilding programme:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-rebuilding-programme/school-rebuilding-programme#:~:text=The%20school%20rebuilding%20programme%20\(%20SRP,prioritised%20according%20to%20their%20condition.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-rebuilding-programme/school-rebuilding-programme#:~:text=The%20school%20rebuilding%20programme%20(%20SRP,prioritised%20according%20to%20their%20condition.)

Equalities Implications

23. There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

Human Rights Implications

24. There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

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

5 SEPTEMBER 2023

QUARTER 1 2023/24 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 June 2023 (quarter 1).

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 and Overview

3. The following report and accompanying data aim to report on the priority areas identified by the Children and Family Services Departmental Plan 2020-2023. The plan identifies ambitions and measures to monitor progress. The current performance data is appended and has been refreshed to concentrate on indicators where updated data is available for quarter 1.
4. Quartile positions are added where comparative national data is available. Comparative data is not available for all indicators.
5. From 15 measures reported that have a national benchmark, three are in the top quartile, six are in the second quartile, four are in the third quartile and two are in the bottom quartile.

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

6. Local Authority comparisons used are most recent figures published by the government for end of year benchmarking.

7. As a result of improvements made to the Mosaic case management system in December 2022, the number of social care performance indicators available is temporarily reduced while reporting systems continue to be updated.
8. The percentage of children becoming subject to a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time remained similar at 22.8% at the end of quarter 1 compared to 23.0% at the end of quarter 4. In this period 28 children began a second or subsequent child protection plan, similar to 29 reported in the preceding quarter. Leicestershire is now placed in the second quartile of local authorities compared to most recent national results published for 2021/22. This continues to be 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.
9. The percentage of re-referrals to Children's Social Care within 12 months was 23.2% at the end of quarter 1 compared to 23.5% at the end of the previous quarter, with 317 children 're-referred' within quarter 1. Leicestershire continues to be placed in the fourth quartile of local authorities.
10. The percentage of assessments completed within 45 days during quarter 1 was 84.4%, an increase from quarter 4 (80.9%). Within quarter 1, 755 of 895 assessments were completed within timescale. Leicestershire continues to be placed in the third quartile of local authorities, although close to the threshold of the second quartile, using most recent comparisons.
11. Thirteen Child Protection plans lasting two years or more were open at the end of quarter 1, representing 2.8% of cases. This is a small increase compared with the end of quarter 4 (7 children, 1.4%), and now places Leicestershire in the third quartile of local authorities.
12. The percentage of Care Leavers in Suitable Accommodation was 92.0% at the end of quarter 1 (69 out of 75 young people). This is a small decrease from the end of quarter 4 (95.8%), although remains within target and places Leicestershire in the second quartile of local authorities using available comparisons.
13. The percentage of Care Leavers in Education, Employment or Training was 56.0% at the end of quarter 1 (42 out of 75 young people). This is a decrease from the end of quarter 4, 64.1%, although remains within target and places Leicestershire in the second quartile by comparison with other local authorities. The service continues to provide careful oversight to the care leaver indicators and is driven by a corporate commitment for creating mentoring and apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers.
14. The percentage of Child Protection cases reviewed within timescales was last reported at the end of quarter 4 at 75.7%, with 293 of 387 children having all reviews on time within the last 12 months. Leicestershire continues to be placed in the fourth quartile of all local authorities by published benchmarks.

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

15. Due to ongoing system changes, specifically relating to Capita/ Synergy, it is not possible to report a total CFWS worked with figure for Q4 at this time. During quarter 3 2022/23 (the last available reporting period), the Children and Family Wellbeing Service (CFWS) worked with 3,489 individuals and 1,435 families across Leicestershire.
16. 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.
17. The number of children in mainstream schools in Leicestershire with an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) was 2,483 in the Summer 2023 School Census. This is 91 more than the Spring 2023 School Census (2,392). The Summer term 2023 School Census EHCP numbers are the highest for a Summer term since 2017, when the phasing in of the 2014 SEN Code of Practice changes were completed.
18. The number of children in mainstream schools in Leicestershire without an EHCP but in receipt of SEN Support was 12,801 in the Summer 2023 School Census. This is 409 higher than the Spring 2023 census (12,392). The Summer term 2023 School Census SEN support numbers are the highest for a summer 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

19. Local Youth Justice statistics are regularly reported to the Youth and Justice Management Board. The latest report was presented at the March 2023 board. However, due to ongoing system changes, only national indicators could be reported.

Help every child to get the best possible start in life

Early years

20. In the Summer Term 2023, 74.6% of eligible two-year-olds took up their Funded Early Education Entitlement (FEEE). This is a decrease from the Spring Term (90.1%). For three-year-olds, the figure was 101.2%, an increase over the previous term (91.9). Overall, 97.2% of eligible two- and three-year-olds took up their FEEE in high-quality provision, an increase on the Spring Term (96.3%).

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

21. The percentage of primary schools rated Good or Outstanding was 91.6% at the end of quarter 1. This represents no change from quarter 4. This figure is within the second quartile of local authorities, and 1.8% higher than the England average.
22. The percentage of secondary schools rated Good or Outstanding was 73.3% at the end of quarter 4. This represents no change from quarter 4. This figure is within the third quartile of local authorities (bottom 26th percentile). This is 8.1% lower than the average for England, and 9.5% lower than the average for Statistical Neighbours. The size of the negative gap to the average for England has never been wider since the regular publication by Ofsted of each school's latest inspection outcome as a statistical dataset (started in 2011).
23. The percentage of pupils educated in Good or Outstanding schools was 85.3% at the end of quarter 1. This is 0.4% higher than quarter 4 (84.9%). This figure is within the third quartile of local authorities (bottom 35th percentile), and 2.8% lower than the average for England, and 3.4% lower than the average for Statistical Neighbours.
24. The percentage of applicants obtaining their first preference for first time admission to Primary school in 2023 was 94.3%. This is 1.3% higher than in 2022 (93%). This figure is within the second quartile of local authorities.
25. The percentage of applicants obtaining their first preference for Secondary school transfer in 2023 was 90.7%. This is 5.9% higher than in 2022 (84.8%). This figure is within the first quartile of local authorities.
26. The number of children Electively Home Educated (EHE) was 1,128 at the end of Q1 2023/24. This is an increase of 215 students (23.5%) compared to the end of Q1 2022/23 (913 students).
27. The trend has been driven by two factors: firstly, having experienced a period of enforced home schooling during the pandemic, 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.
28. At the end of Quarter 1 (June 2023) 1% of young people (16-17) in Leicestershire were not in education, employment or training (NEET). This is a decrease over the end of the Quarter 1 2022/23 (1.4%, June 2022).
29. The number of permanent exclusions as a percentage of School population in the 2021/22 academic year was 0.02. This is 0.01 higher than the last academic year (0.01). This figure is within the first quartile of local authorities. The annual number of permanent exclusions is similar to the annual numbers occurring before 2020/21.
30. The number of children receiving at least one fixed term suspension as a percentage of School population in the 2021/22 academic year was 2.47. This is 0.85, or just over 50% higher than the last academic year (1.62), and represents the highest number of children, and highest rate as a percentage of School

population, receiving at least one fixed term suspension since 2006/07. This figure is within the first quartile of local authorities.

Conclusion

31. The report provides a summary of performance at the end of quarter 1 2023/24, covering the period April to June 2023.
32. Details of all metrics (reflecting any changes in indicators for 2023/24) will continue to be monitored on a regular basis throughout the year and any subsequent changes will be notified in future reports.

Background Papers

None.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

None.

Appendix

Children and Family Services Department Performance Dashboard for Quarter 1, 2022/23

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Topic	Theme	Indicator	Polarity	Reporting Frequency	Previous Period	Previous Value	Latest Period	Latest Value	Trend	Target	Status RAG	National benchmark (quartile 1 = top)	Most recent Statistical Neighbour average
Help children and their families build strength, resilience, confidence and capacity	SEND	Children in mainstream schools with EHCP	N/A	Term	Spring 2023	2392	Summer 2023	2483	Increase	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	SEND	Children in mainstream schools in receipt of SEN Support (without EHCP)	N/A	Term	Spring 2023	12392	Summer 2023	12801	Increase	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	High = Good	Quarter	Q2 2022/23	77.60%	Q4 2022/23	75.71%	Decrease	>97.2%	Red	4	88.9%
	Social Care	Children becoming subject to a CPP for second or subsequent time	Low = Good	Quarter	Q4 2022/23	23.00%	Q1 2023/24	22.76%	No Change	<20.8%	Amber	2	22.3%
	Social Care	Re-referrals to CSC within 12 mths	Low = Good	Quarter	Q4 2022/23	23.50%	Q1 2023/24	23.19%	No Change	<18.7%	Red	4	20.2%
	Social Care	Assessments completed within 45 days	High = Good	Quarter	Q4 2022/23	80.92%	Q1 2023/24	84.36%	Increase	>90.3%	Amber	3	85.6%
	Social Care	CPP lasting 2 yrs or more open at the end of the quarter	Low = Good	Quarter	Q4 2022/23	1.36%	Q1 2023/24	2.76%	Increase	<3.0%	Amber	3	1.3%
	Social Care	Care leavers in suitable accommodation	High = Good	Quarter	Q4 2022/23	95.80%	Q1 2023/24	92.00%	Decrease	>92.0%	Green	2	87.8%
Help every child to get the best possible start in life	Social Care	Care leavers EET	High = Good	Quarter	Q4 2022/23	64.10%	Q1 2023/24	56.00%	Decrease	>54.0%	Green	2	54.0%
	Early Years	Eligible 2 year olds taking up their FEEE	High = Good	Term	Spring 2023	90.1	Summer 2023	74.6	Decrease	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Early Years	Eligible 3 year olds taking up their FEEE	High = Good	Term	Spring 2023	91.9	Summer 2023	101.2	Increase	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Help every child to have access to good quality education to ensure they achieve their maximum potential	Early Years	Eligible 2 and 3-year olds taking up their FEEE in a high-quality provision	High = Good	Term	Spring 2023	96.3	Summer 2023	97.2	Increase	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Education	Primary schools rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding'	High = Good	Quarter	Q4 2022/23	91.6%	Q1 2023/24	91.6%	No Change	N/A	Amber	2	90.2%
	Education	Secondary schools rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding'	High = Good	Quarter	Q4 2022/23	73.3%	Q1 2023/24	73.3%	No Change	N/A	Amber	3	82.8%
	Education	Pupils in Good or Outstanding schools	High = Good	Quarter	Q4 2022/23	84.9%	Q1 2023/24	85.3%	Increase	N/A	Amber	3	88.7%
	Education	Applicants obtaining their first preferences for first time admission to Primary school	High = Good	Annual	2022	93.0%	2023	94.3%	Increase	93.7%	Amber	2	92.9%
	Education	Secondary pupils achieving their first preference for Secondary transfer	High = Good	Annual	2022	84.8%	2023	90.7%	Increase	92.2%	Amber	1	88.8%
	Education	Children Electively Educated at Home	N/A	Quarter	Q1 2022/23	913	Q1 2023/24	1128	Increase	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Education	NEET young people aged 16-17	Low = Good	Last Mth of Qtr	Jun-22	1.4	Jun-23	1.0	Decrease	<2.1%	Amber	2	3.5%
	Education	Permanent exclusions as a % of School population	Low = Good	Annual	2020/21	0.01	2021/22	0.02	Increase	N/A	Green	1	0.08
Education	Children receiving at least one fixed term suspension as a % of School population	Low = Good	Annual	2020/21	1.62	2021/22	2.47	Increase	N/A	Green	1	2.84	

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CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
05 SEPTEMBER 2023

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE STATUTORY COMPLAINTS AND
COMPLIMENTS ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with a summary of the Children's Social Care Statutory Complaints and Compliments Annual Report for 2022/23.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 sets out the policy framework against which children's social care complaints should be considered.
3. Local authorities must, each financial year, publish an Annual Report (Regulation 13(3)).

Background

4. The Complaints Team, which sits within the Corporate Resources Department of the County Council, manage and co-ordinate complaints relating to three separate complaints systems:
 - a) Adult Social Care - a statutory process
 - b) Children's Social Care – a statutory process
 - c) Corporate Complaints – a non-statutory process, which considers complaints relating to other services provided by the Council and where there is no other form of redress.
5. The Children and Family Services Department is contacted daily by service users, carers and other parties with concerns or requests for information. These queries are dealt with at a local level within care teams or through the Director's office without recourse to the formal complaints process. The complaints team do, on occasion, also receive queries and concerns that suggest a child or young person may require immediate support or which raise safeguarding concerns. Such reports are best handled outside of the formal complaints procedure and are referred into our First Response team or allocated workers for urgent consideration as appropriate

6. The Annual Report for Children's Social Care is attached as Appendix A to the report and provides a summary of the statistical information and headline issues emerging from the analysis of complaints activity for 2022/23.
7. At the request of the Scrutiny Commission at the meeting 12 June 2023, also appended is the Corporate Complaints Annual Report for 2022/23 and analysis is included of complaints about Children and Family Services. This is to allow the Committee to scrutinise and further explore all the departmental areas highlighted in both reports.

Childrens Social Care Statutory Complaints received and outcomes

8. The number of complaints in 2022/23 were as follows:
 - 86 complaints considered at Stage 1, compared to 65 in 2021/22
 - 10 complaints considered at Stage 2, compared to 3 in 2021/22
 - 5 complaints considered at Stage 3, compared to 2 in 2021/22
9. Using the figures on numbers of referrals made to Childrens Social Care, 1.3% of those using childrens services needed to make a complaint. This is identical to the previous year.
10. The number of requests accepted at Stage 1 increased this year by 32%.
11. It is important to note that some complaints regarding Childrens Social Care are not considered through the statutory procedure. The Council follows guidance from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman in determining such cases. This can be either because the complainant is not eligible or the subject matter falls outside of the scope of the statutory procedure.
12. 57 complaints were considered under the corporate procedure a reduction of 31% from previous year (82)
13. Taking this all into consideration, the overall number of complaints saw a very small decrease as shown below.

Financial Year	Statutory Complaints	Corporate Complaints	Total
2021-22	65	82	147
2022-23	86	57	143

14. The number of complaints escalating to stages 2 and 3 both increased this year with ten complaints (12%) requesting independent investigation. Five requested escalation to Stage 3 after completing Stage 2.
15. Analysis of the complaints received show the main areas complained about were staff conduct / customer care and poor communication. These were very often interlinked.
16. During the year, ten complaints were received directly from children or young people with six represented by Children's Rights Officers or other advocates. This is an increase from 2021-22 and represents 12% of the overall volume.

17. The Complaints Manager continues to have good links with Children's Rights Officers. This is to ensure and validate that young people are not blocked in any way from accessing the formal complaints procedure.
18. 31 of the complaints at Stage 1 (36%) were responded to within the statutory maximum of 20 working days. This is significantly down from 2021-22 (33 or 51%).
19. There are often good reasons why complaints can exceed 20 working days to resolve, for example meetings being arranged. Whilst personal contact is positive and should be encouraged, statutory guidance makes clear this does not "stop the clock" in terms of the 20-working day deadline.
20. Timescales for Stage 2 complaints also continued to be a challenge during the year with none of these completed within the statutory timescales of 65 working days.
21. During the year the Council has changed the way it manages Stage 2 investigations with the appointment of an in house "arms-length" investigator. This did see some positive improvements and is now the preferred model. It is anticipated this will generate a much improved position during 2023-24.
22. Three of the four Stage 3 review panels held were convened and responded to within statutory timescales (75%). The remaining case was complicated by the complainant's availability to attend a panel hearing.
23. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman investigated ten complaints relating to Children's Social Care during 2022-23 and found fault in three instances. This shows that the majority of complaints are being resolved appropriately at a local level.
24. Financial payments totalling £2,500 were requested by the Ombudsman this year along with recommendations to review policies and procedures, strengthen complaint handling and take steps to improve record keeping and documenting key conversations with partner organisations.
25. Eleven compliments were received and forwarded to the Complaints Manager during 2022-23. This is a decrease on last year (33). The Complaints team continue to remind managers of the importance of recognising and sharing positive feedback, which bring balance to the annual report.
26. There is evidence of greater learning from complaints at a local level with 24 of the 39 upheld complaints having clearly articulated actions to improve wider performance. This is a good increase on previous years and may help explain the reduction in adverse decisions made by the Ombudsman

Resource Implications

27. The annual report outlines that the costs incurred through the statutory complaints procedure were £44,150 an increase of £22,000 from 2021/22. This is driven largely by the increased costs of externally commissioned investigations.

28. Both to mitigate costs and improve the quality and consistency of investigations, Children and Family Services are funding a full time complaints investigator during the year 2023-24
29. Other improvement activity will be carried out within existing resources and therefore there are no resource implications. The Director of Corporate Resources has been consulted on this report.

Corporate Complaints

30. Outside of the statutory procedure, and reported through the Corporate Complaints Annual Report, there were two services generating significant complaint volumes during the year.

School Admissions

31. This service saw 237 formal complaints during the year which represented 30% of the overall total of corporate complaints.
32. The complaints have almost exclusively been about delays in responding to and processing midterm requests for school transfers.
33. There have been a number of factors affecting service performance this year including loss of long-term experience within the team, recruitment and retention issues, unprecedented demand for school places and the introduction of a new software system
34. The Service has been supported at various points through the year by the Transformation Unit to look at ways of delivering the service differently and better respond to the increasing demand for places. In parts of the County there is now far more demand for places than local schools can offer. Inevitably this leads to increased numbers of complaints and appeals.

Special Education Needs Assessment

35. It has again been a very challenging year for this service with a further sustained increase in complaints. 193 formal complaints were received during the year.
36. Whilst a significant amount of these complaints are about delay, there are often inter-related and more complex issues that also require investigation. It follows that these can be some of the most resource intensive complaints to investigate
37. To assist with this, a dedicated complaints investigator post was created and commenced in July 2022. Whilst this is a positive and is enabling Team Managers in the service to focus more time on case oversight and direction, the volume of complaints is currently exceeding the amount of resource available to respond. This is leading to significant volumes of complaints exceeding our policy timescales and escalating to the Ombudsman
38. The key to reducing this lies in being able to manage the increased demand. There is a comprehensive transformation programme in place and the Council has also

implemented an Accelerated Progress Plan which focuses on ensuring greater compliance with the statutory timescales for completion of work at all stages.

39. The number of Case Managers has been increased and additional EP capacity generated. This is starting to impact positively on complaints but volumes will very likely remain high through 2023-24.

Circulation under the Local Alert Issues Procedure

40. None.

Equality Implications

41. The Children and Family Services Department supports vulnerable children and young people from across all communities in Leicestershire. Complaints and compliments are a way of ensuring that service responses are fair and equitable to all. This report does not highlight any specific equal opportunities implications.

Human Rights Implications

42. There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Childrens Social Care Statutory Complaints and Compliments: Annual Report 2022-23

Appendix B – Corporate Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2022-23

Background Papers

Report to Scrutiny Commission: 12 June 2023 – Annual Corporate Complaints and Compliments Report 2022/23:

<https://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=137&MId=7101&Ver=4>

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Children's Social Care



Statutory Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2022/2023

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1. Purpose and Summary of Report

- 1.1. To report to Members and Officers on Leicestershire County Council's (LCC) Children's Social Care complaints activity from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.
- 1.2. To meet the requirements of Regulation 18(2) of Statutory Instrument 2006 No. 1681 Local Authority Social Services Complaints (England) Regulations 2006 and Regulation 13(3) of Statutory Instrument 2006 No. 1738 The Children Act (1989) Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.
- 1.3. For the current year the following Statutory guidance remains relevant:
 - Getting the best from Complaints 2006
 - the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) [Practitioner Guidance](#) which should be referenced alongside the existing statutory guidance
- 1.4. This annual report provides analysis and commentary for Children and Family Services on all complaints managed under the statutory process. Those complainants who do not qualify to use the statutory process are considered under the County Council's Corporate Complaint procedure and reported in the Corporate Annual Report presented to the Scrutiny Commission.
- 1.5. The Complaints Manager role is responsible for ensuring that complaints are handled appropriately and providing support to the department in resolving complex cases. In addition, the Complaints Manager will highlight key trends that emerge each year and any recommendations that would improve how we work. The Children and Family Services department retain responsibility for actioning any such improvements.

2. Complaints and compliments received 2022-23

2.1. Foreword

This report only considers complaints identified as statutory complaints as defined by the Statutory Guidance outlined within “Getting the Best from complaints”

There are two key tests applied in making the above assessment.

- 1) Is the complainant eligible?
- 2) Is the subject matter within scope of the procedure?

Concerns that fall outside of the scope of the statutory complaints’ procedure are responded to by the Complaints and Information team and are then handled in line with the relevant alternative route which typically includes

- Consideration as a corporate complaint
- Referral to the Leicestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership Board (LSCB) appeals procedure
- Explanation that the matter cannot be considered as the subject matter has / will be adjudicated in Court

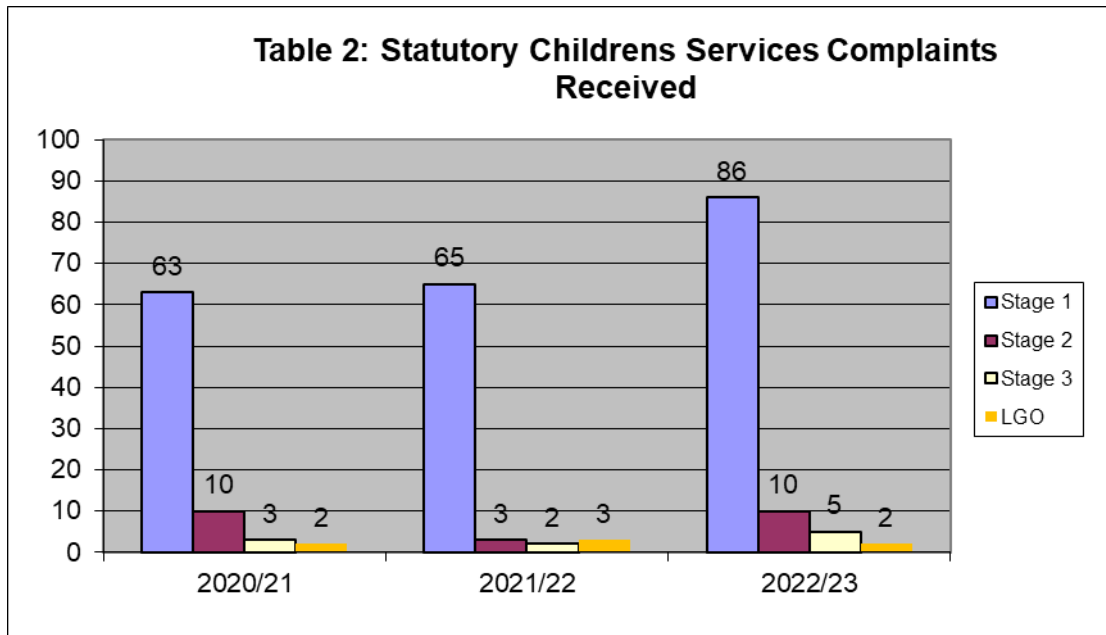
2.2. Complaint Volumes

Volumes of complaints are considered in the light of the number of cases which the Children’s Social Care dealt with during the year. Table 1 shows the key referral categories and the increased demand on services.

Table 1 – Social Care demand	2021/22	2022/23	% Change
Referrals to Children’s Social Care	4934	5435	+10.2%
Single Assessments	3993	4083	+2.6%
Children in Care at 31 March	694	680	-2.0%
Child Protection Plans at 31 March	572	513	-10.3%

The above shows a mixed picture but with a significant increase in the number of referrals. Each of these will trigger some action from Childrens Social Care and therefore could form the basis of a complaint.

To provide further context to complaint volumes, the number of referrals to Children’s Social Care in Table 1 has been used and this shows that 1.3% go on to make a formal statutory complaint. This has remained unchanged for the last 2 reporting years.



As illustrated above (Table 2), 86 complaints were accepted under the statutory procedure. This represented a 32% increase on the previous year.

Of those 86, 10 requested escalation to Stage 2 and required an Independent Investigation be carried out (12%)

It is encouraging that despite the volume increase, 88% of statutory complaints were resolved at the 1st stage.

There are also a number of complaints regarding Childrens Social Care matters that are responded to under the Corporate Complaints procedure so to give the full picture of complaints, table 3 sets out all social care complaints for the last 2 years.

This shows that, overall, there has been a very small 3% reduction in the total number of complaints about Childrens Social Care.

Table 3: All Complaints about Childrens Social Care

Financial Year	Statutory Complaints	Corporate Complaints	Total
2021-22	65	82	147
2022-23	86	57	143

2.3. Complaints accepted at stages 2 & 3

The number of requests considered at Stage 2 of the process increased by 7 compared with the previous year. As a percentage of Stage 1 complaints this represents 12%, very slightly reduced from 2021/22 (14%).

Five Stage 3 panels were convened during the year. Stage 3 Panels cannot re-investigate complaints and as such can only look at the quality and comprehensiveness of the Independent report at Stage 2.

The LGSCO take a rigid approach on consideration of early referrals. The implications are that it is more important than ever to be clear at the outset which complaints procedure should be used. Once the statutory procedure has been initiated, the LGSCO expects all stages to be completed.

This has implications for the department and highlights the need to ensure every effort is made to resolve complaints at Stage 1 of the process.

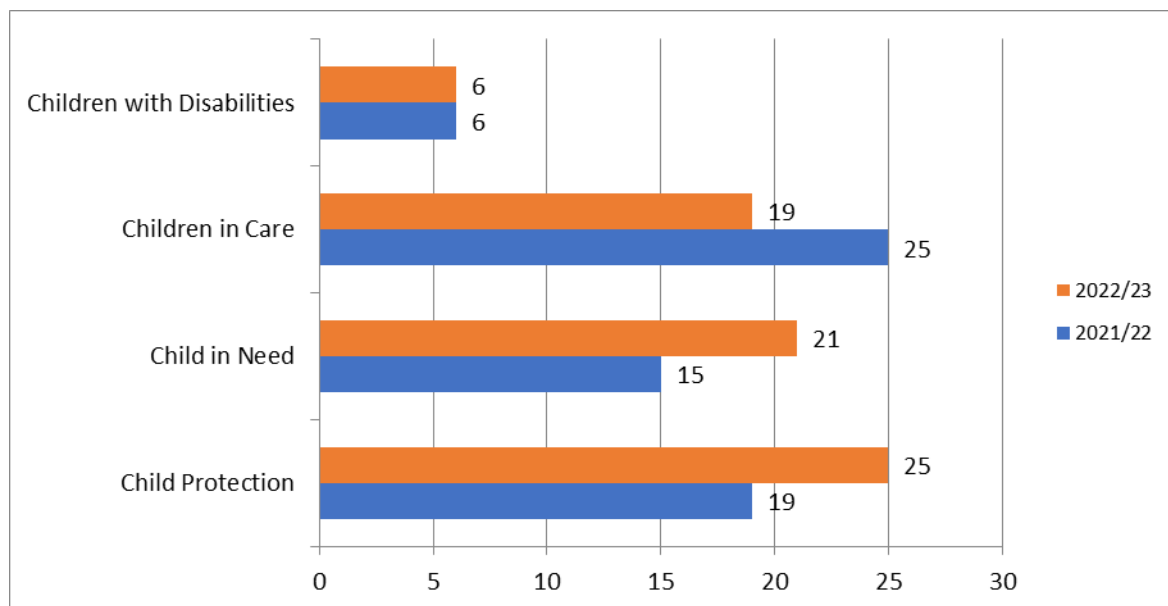
The Ombudsman considered 2 complaints during the year which had exhausted all stages of the statutory complaints procedure.

2.4. Statutory complaints by Service area

The Complaints Manager records all statutory complaints at a service level and table 4 below shows the results for 2022-23 overlaid against the previous year.

There are no significant changes this year with complaints fairly balanced across the different areas.

Table 4: Complaints received by Service Area



2.5 Compliments received

During 2022-23 there were 18 compliments recorded regarding Children's Social Care officers. This is almost identical to last year (16).

The positive comments received appears in Appendix A and provide an important balance when reviewing the performance of the department.

3. Service Performance 2022-23

The key performance indicators for speed of response, outcomes, causes and identified learning are linked to complaints that have been *resolved* within any given reporting period rather than received.

This is important as it ensures that full data sets can be presented, both to departments on a quarterly basis, and at year end. It also avoids the scenario whereby Ombudsman findings of maladministration might not appear in annual reports (where outcomes are not known at the time of production).

It follows from the above that the figures presented below will not match the data presented in section two of this report which focused on complaints *received*.

3.1. Responsiveness to complaints

Table 5: Children's Services Performance at stage 1

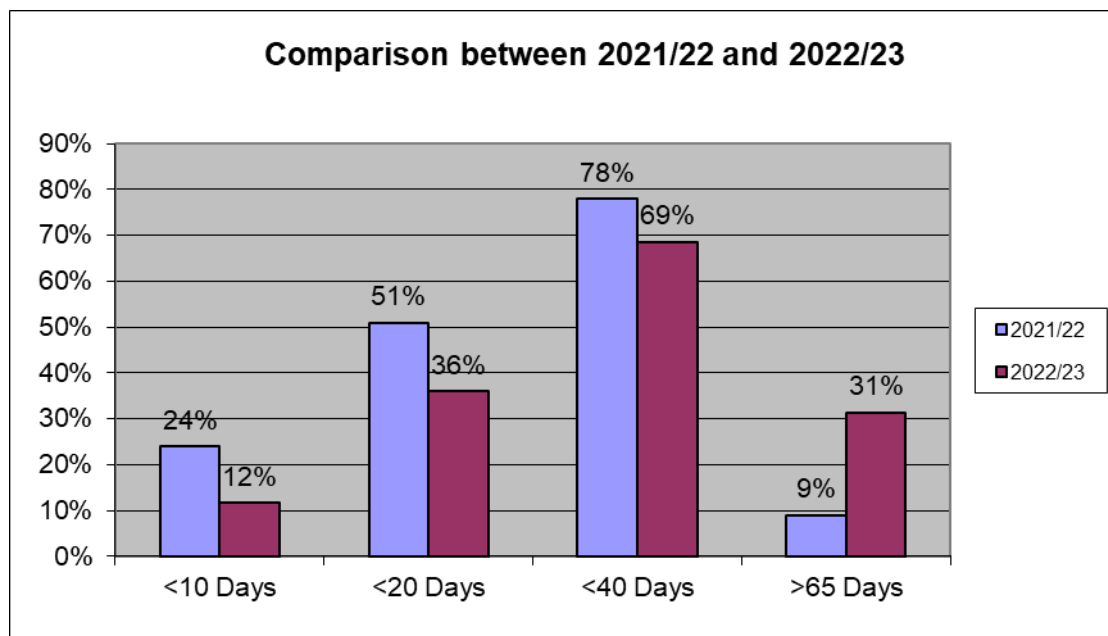


Table 5 above details the time taken to respond to complaints at Stage 1 and provides a comparison between last year and the current reporting year.

It is clear from the above that there have been significant pressures on response times during the year. Most notably there has been a 22% increase in the number of complaints responded to in excess of 65 working days.

Statutory guidance sets out an expectation that “the majority” of complaints should be resolved within 10 working days with 20 working days considered reasonable for “complex cases”. Whilst the nature of social care complaints often has complexity, more work needs to be done to raise the number of complaints responded to within the statutory timescales.

It is important to stress that, where complainants have not agreed an extension and there is no good reason for a complaint to exceed 20 working days, the Complaints Manager is duty bound to offer a Stage 2 investigation.

The Complaints Manager has had to exercise this duty on 3 occasions during the year.

Response timescales at Stage 2

Completion of Stage 2 investigations within the statutory guidelines (65 working days) has continued to be a challenge during the year with none of the 10 completed investigations achieving this.

The Ombudsman has however indicated that providing the Local Authority is managing the expectations of a complainant and not unduly delaying resolution, there is unlikely to be criticism of not meeting this timescale. The Complaints Manager is satisfied that in all cases expectations were well managed by Independent Investigators.

Investigations have been undertaken through a mixture of in house and externally commissioned resource. There have been clear improvements seen with those complaints investigated internally and this should be the default model moving forwards. There have however remained challenges with the time taken by the Local Authority in responding to reports which further elongates the response timescales.

Response timescales at Stage 3

There were 5 requests to escalate to Stage 3 during the year with 4 proceeding to panel hearings. In the other case, the Council sought to exercise discretion to early refer to the Ombudsman on the grounds that the complaint had been fully upheld and it could not achieve the outcome sought.

Of the 4 complaints heard by panel, 3 of these were managed within the statutory timescales.

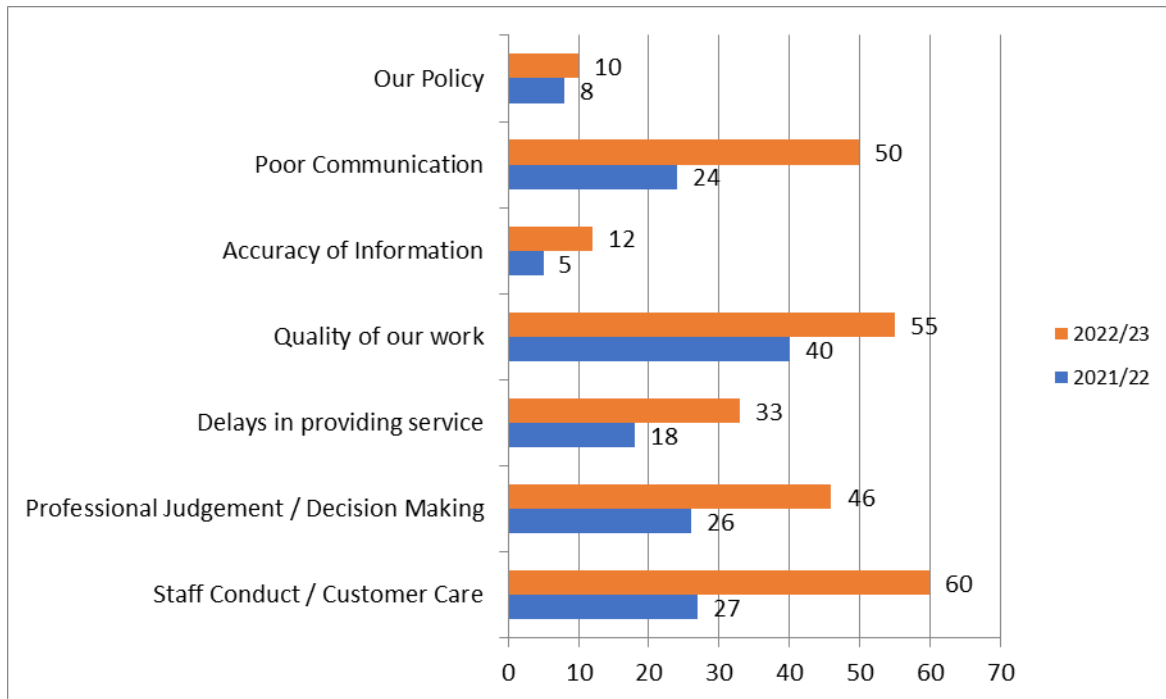
3.2. Complaint Causes

To try to understand the main causes leading to complaints, the complaints team assess the underlying causes for each complaint determined.

Very often there are multiple factors being complained about and to reflect this the Complaints team now record against multiple categories. It follows that the numbers below will not match the overall complaints resolved.

The results for both 2021-22 and 2022-23 are shown below in table 6.

Table 6 – What were complaints about?



The biggest single cause during 2022-23 was around staff conduct / customer care. Inevitably these were often interlinked with poor communication hence the increased volume in this category.

It is clear that complaints often spanned multiple issues and have been increasingly complex during the year.

3.3. Who complains?

In 2022/23, ten complaints were made by children or young people¹. This is an increase on 2021/22 and represents 12% of the overall volume. The remaining complaints were made by parents or others who were deemed to have sufficient interest in the child's well-being.

It is not unusual for numbers of complaints made by young persons to be proportionally low and this mirrors the situation reported by regional colleagues.

It remains a key priority of the Complaints Manager to ensure that everything is being done to improve accessibility of the complaints process to our children and young people and there continue to be good links between the Children's Rights Officers and Complaints. Regular discussions are held to ensure and check that appropriate processes are followed to resolve issues.

¹ 4 of these were represented by advocates

Most complaints continue to be made by parents or family members (where they have sufficient interest in the child or young person’s welfare.²)

3.4. Complaint Outcomes

Table 7: Children’s Services complaints recorded by outcome

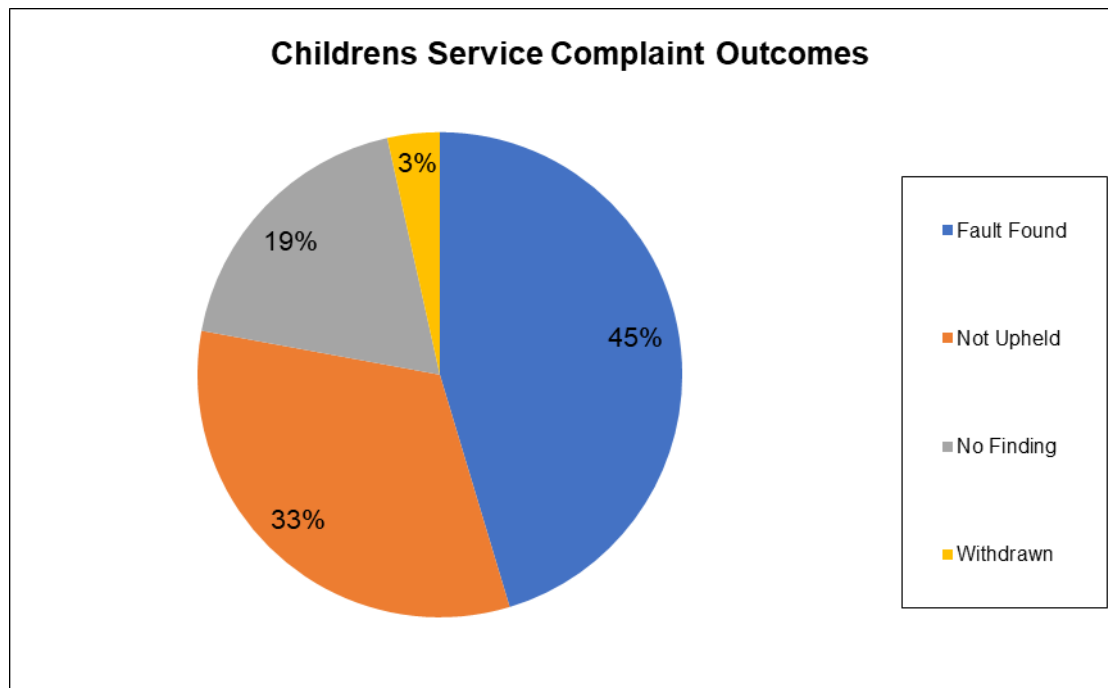


Table 7 above shows that fault was found in 39 (45%) of the statutory complaints considered during the year. This is very similar to 2021-22 (43%)

It is important to note that a finding of fault is not necessarily a bad thing as it can also be a sign of greater maturity within complaints handling. It is always important to listen to what we are being told about our service to put matters right at the earliest opportunity, and to learn and improve. Managers are also encouraged not to handle complaints defensively and this is evidenced in a number of cases whereby we have accepted that there are opportunities to improve.

In some cases, complaints are not able to be determined as there are irreconcilable versions of events. In these situations, rather than record the complaint as “Not Upheld”, the complaints team will instead record them as “No Finding” which more accurately reflects the outcome. This will also include some complaints whereby the Court process is the appropriate forum to make a finding.

² Guidance set out in section 2.6 of Getting the Best from Complaints.

4. Financial Implications

Children’s Service Complaints expenditure

Both Stages 2 and 3 of the statutory complaints’ procedure require independent investigation to take place.

At Stage 2, the authority is required to appoint an Investigative Officer who must not work in the same area as the complaint being investigated and be suitably trained to carry out investigative work. Whilst it is not mandatory that this role is appointed externally, the County Council’s policy has historically been to do so.

As referenced in last year’s annual report, the Council changed the way it commissioned this resource to ensure this was compliant. This has increased the overall costs in this area.

As noted already within this report, to help mitigate this, an in-house “arms length” complaints investigator was recruited and was in post for approximately 6 months of the reporting year before leaving. This post has now been re-filled and in house investigations will again the default position during 2023-24.

In addition to the Investigative Officer, the Regulations also require an Independent Person to be appointed to ensure the investigation is carried out fairly. This is a mandatory requirement, and this person cannot work for the Council.

At Stage 3, the procedure is for a panel hearing to be held to review the Stage 2 investigation. This involves the appointment of 3 external panel members.

Leicestershire County Council can also explore independent mediation as an alternative form of redress through Stages 2 or 3. Mediation has not been used this year for any cases.

Finally, on some occasions, financial redress is offered as part of the Complaints procedure. Usually this is by way of a Local Settlement with the Ombudsman but can also be recommended at either Stage 2 or 3 of the procedure.

Table 8 below details the total costs incurred during the last 3 financial years. All costs are re-charged directly to the department.

Table 8 Costs incurred through complaints procedure³

Spend	Total 2020/21	Total 2021/22	Total 2022/23
Commissioned Investigations	£36,540	£21,100	£41,650
Mediation	£0	£0	£0
Financial Redress	£12,650	£1,050	£2,500
Total	£49,190	£22,150	£44,150

³ Figures are rounded up to nearest £10.

Costs incurred for 2022/23 represent a significant increase on previous year. In part this is because of the higher costs for externally commissioned resources and in part due to volume increase at Stage 2 and 3.

Financial redress payments continue to remain low.

Costs continue to be controlled through several ways including:

- Complaints Team proactively looking for opportunities to resolve via meetings if any prospect of success.
- Ensuring that complainants are eligible to use the statutory complaints procedure
- Imposition of restrictions to the scope of some independent investigations. Typically, around matters that have been determined in the Court arena.

5. Learning from Complaints

Complaints are a valuable source of information which can help to identify recurring or underlying problems and potential improvements. We know that numbers alone do not tell everything about the attitude towards complaints and how they are responded to locally. Arguably of more importance is to understand the impact those complaints have on people and to learn the lessons from complaints to improve the experience for others.

Lessons can usually be learned from complaints that were upheld and, in some instances, where no fault was found and where the Authority identifies that improvements to services can be made.

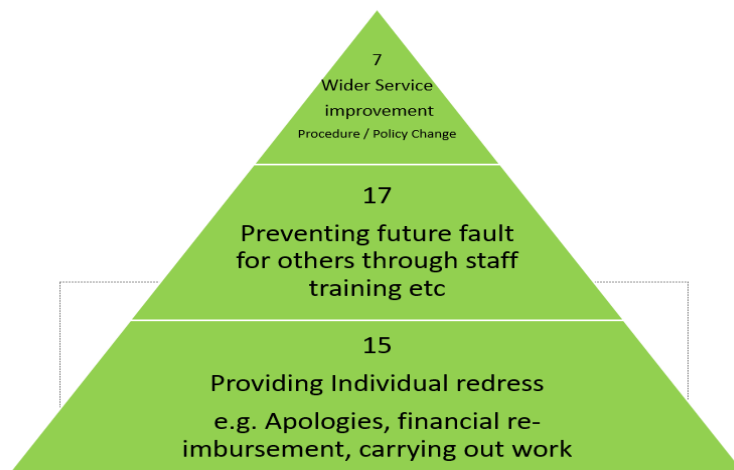
Occasionally during an investigation issues will be identified that need to be addressed over and above the original complaint. The Complaints Team will always try to look at the “bigger picture” to ensure that residents receive the best possible service from the Council.

5.1 Corrective action taken

All the 39 complaints where fault has been found have been reviewed by the Complaints Team to ascertain what action the relevant department has taken, both in remedying the fault, and any wider learning to avoid such issues occurring in the future.

Remedial action typically consists of both individual redress (e.g., apology, carrying out overdue work) and wider actions that may affect many. The diagram below shows the actions taken during 2022-23. 61% of complaints upheld resulted in clear actions that should improve service for other residents. This is a significant increase on the previous year (33%)

Graph 7: Actions taken for upheld complaints 2022-23



The most common action taken was staff training. There are lots of good examples of this taking place both at individual and team level. These included:

- reminding teams of the need to keep accurate records
- refresher training on threshold assessment
- refresher training on tackling racism
- reminder re sharing medical reports with families

The most powerful are whole system changes, where it is identified that a process or policy needs amending. There were 7 such scenarios during the year arising from local investigation. These included:

- Development of improved guidance for kinship carers
- Reviewed processes for linkages between Social Care and Early Help
- Reviewed guidance around maintenance of adoption family books

6. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

The Ombudsman made decisions on ten complaints which related to children's social care during the year, with fault found in three instances (30%).

A summary of the complaints considered, and their respective outcomes appears below.

- 5 Outside of Jurisdiction or where at an assessment stage the Ombudsman felt unlikely it would achieve anything through further investigation.
- 2 Premature for the Ombudsman as the complaint had not fully exhausted the Council's complaints procedure.
- 3 findings of Fault with Injustice.

CASE 1: – a Child Protection complaint that the Council acted in a biased manner towards a parent, and which then led to unwelcome social care involvement.

The Ombudsman found no fault with the social care actions but did find administrative fault around the complaint handling and asked the Council to apologise and make a symbolic payment of £100 in recognition of this.

CASE 2: - also a Child Protection complaint about the Council's decision to initiate child protection enquiries and to implement a Child Protection plan

The Ombudsman found no fault in the Council's decision making but there was some fault around record keeping. Whilst this fault did not cause any injustice, the Council agreed to issue reminders to staff about the importance of appropriately documenting discussions with partner organisations.

CASE 3: - A complaint regarding the Council's failure to provide sufficient living space for a family which included 4 looked after children.

This was a second complaint following earlier consideration by the LGSCO. The Ombudsman found that the Council had made a largely satisfactory offer but that there was delay in concluding this.

The Council accepted the findings and agreed to apologise, make a further payment of £2,400 and defer collection of a contribution towards rental costs which the Council was paying.

7. Monitoring the Process

The Complaints team continues to support Children's Services to manage and learn from complaints. The key services offered to CFS are -

1. Complaints advice and support
2. Commissioning and administrative support for all Independent Investigations
3. Production of Performance Reports
4. Liaison with Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
5. Quality Assurance of complaint responses
6. Complaint handling training for Operational Managers

Assistance continues to be routinely provided to Heads of Service in drafting adjudication responses to Stage 2 investigations. This helps ensure a consistency of response and that clear action plans are created.

The Complaints Manager meets regularly with the Heads of Service and periodically also attends the Children's Social Care Services Senior Management Team to talk through complaints matters.

Complaints training resumed during the year and will continue during 2023-24 to help ensure managers understand their role and are supported in managing complaints effectively.

APPENDIX A – compliments received

- “Thank you, Z, you have played a pinnacle role in my daughters long term safety and neither of us will ever forget what you have done for us”
- “Thank you, C, for all your help and support and being interested in X’s thoughts, feelings and for supporting him, no matter what.”
- “Thank you, R, for everything you have done for me. You are always available whenever I needed to speak or needed any advice”
- “Thank you, C, for all your help and support and for going 'above and beyond' when needed.”
- “Thank you, J it was such a pleasure, to work with you on this case to make sure that these children get the best they can get”
- “Thank you, S, for addressing areas of improvement within my sons school and also for helping my son to be a happy settled child.”
- “Thank you, R., You helped a lot in every decision from the first day to the end of my case. Your work is very professional and child focused”
- “Thank you, J, We really appreciate all that you've done over the many years and can't thank you enough”
- “Thank you, B, for all your help and support with this family”
- “To S and team, thank you for all you have done for me, for being loving, caring and funny and for showing me that I deserve a loving family.”
- “Thank you to the Carers Leavers Team for never giving up on me, when everyone else did. I cannot thank you enough for all that you did.”
- “Thank you to S & the Post SGO service for all you help and support empowering both grandma and her grandkids”
- “Thank you for the amazing support we have received from C, who has worked so hard for us as a family.”
- “Compliment re quality of work and advice from G in First Response.”
- “Thank you, J, for being so AMAZING. Having a social worker who is straight down the line about everything was so refreshing.”
- “Thank you, D, for all you help and support towards my young person and for being caring, friendly and an approachable person.”

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Corporate Complaints & Compliments Annual Report 2022 - 2023

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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1** To report statistical information on Leicestershire County Council's (LCC) corporate complaints and compliment activity from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.
- 1.2** To provide an open resource to anyone who wishes to scrutinize local services
- 1.3** To outline the key developments and planned improvements to the complaints processes operated by the Council.
- 1.4** To demonstrate how some of the learning from complaints and compliments has been used to shape future service delivery and improve the overall customer experience.

2. Complaints and Compliments received in 2022-23

2.1 Introduction

The Complaints Team manages and co-ordinates complaints relating to 3 separate complaints systems –

- i) Adult Social Care statutory process
- ii) Children's Social Care statutory process
- iii) Corporate Complaints process – these are complaints relating to all other services provided by the Council where there is no access to a statutory complaints' procedure.

In addition, the team deals with a wide range of interactions with customers that do not go on to become formal complaints. These include capturing compliments and comments about all Council services. The Complaints and Information team also look for opportunities to “fix and solve” issues through informal resolution as well as signposting to other organisations or alternative routes of redress as required.

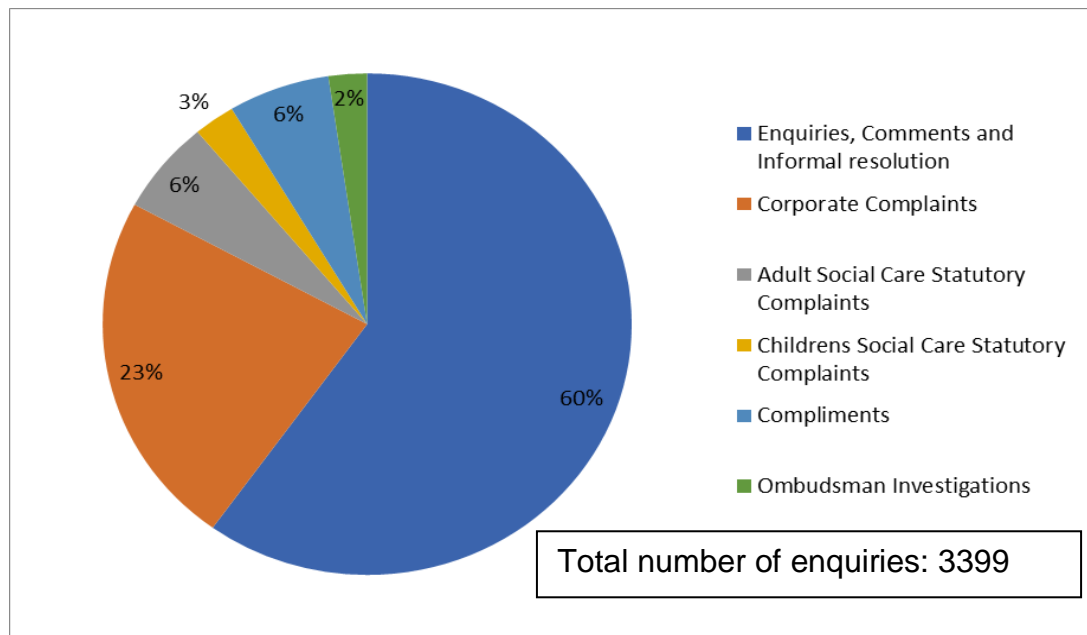
Whilst many of the above queries are quickly resolved, those where exemptions from the complaints procedure apply can often generate significant correspondence and phone calls.

The team also, in liaison with the Director of Law and Governance, manage all complaints that are referred to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). The Complaints and Information Manager acts as the nominated Link Officer and handles all correspondence between the Council and the Ombudsman.

2.2 Summary of all complaints, compliments and enquiries received in 2022-23

In total, the Complaints Team received and processed 3384 separate enquiries during 2022/2023, as depicted below

Table 1: Breakdown of all complaints and enquiries received by the Complaints team



A significant number of enquiries do not need to be formally investigated as complaints but instead the public are assisted by the Complaints and Information team to access the appropriate service or to resolve any difficulties they are having.

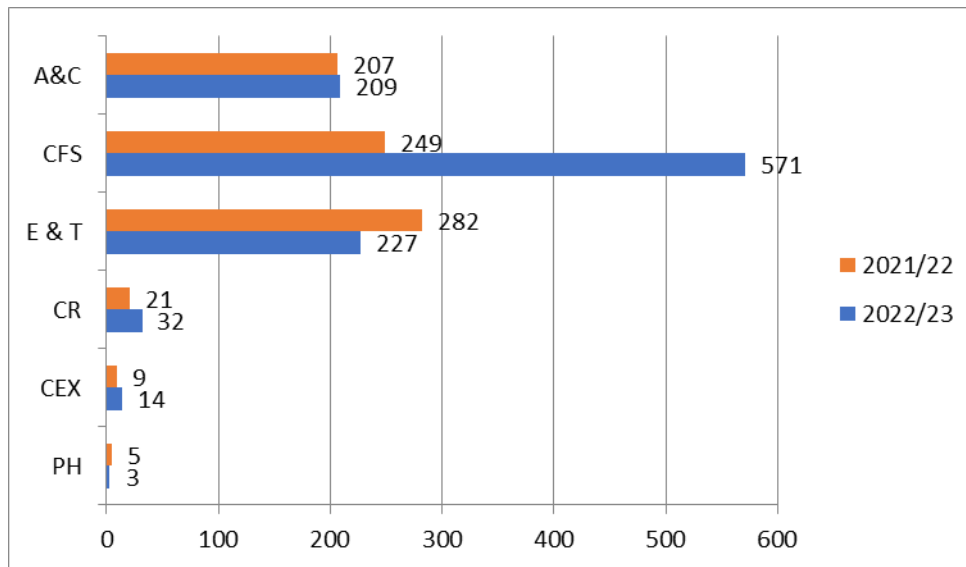
These are collated under Enquiries, Comments, and Informal Resolution. Further detail is provided on this under Section 2.6. At 60% of the overall volume this is a significant and increasing role for the team.

Overall, there has been a further 25% increase in contacts to the Complaints and Information Team, as set out in the table below. This followed a 13% increase last year and has placed considerable demand pressures on the team.

Contact Type	2021/22	2022/23	% Change
Enquiries, Comments, and Informal resolution	1531	2037	+33%
Corporate Complaints	610	781	+28%
Adult Social Care Statutory Complaints	210	204	-3%
Childrens Social Care Statutory Complaints	65	86	+32%
Ombudsman Investigations	50	80	+%
Compliments	226	211	-7%
	2692	3399	+25%

Formal complaints were received across all departments in 2022-23 as represented in the graphic below, contrasted with the figures for 2021-22.

Table 2 – All complaints (statutory and non-statutory) by Department



It should be noted that this report and the following analysis relates solely to the Council's corporate complaints and compliments processes

2.3 Corporate Complaints trend analysis

The total number of corporate complaints received increased by 28% during 2022-23. This follows a 16% rise from the previous year and continues the long-term trend of significant increase.

Table 3: Corporate Complaints recorded during the last 5 years



2.4 Analysis of corporate complaint themes and significant changes from 2021-22

A key part of an effective complaints system is to highlight areas for improvement and to seek improvement of those services year on year.

In the 2021-22 corporate complaints annual report, the 5 services detailed below received the most complaints. Comparative data for 2022-23 has been added to the table below.

Service	2021/22	2022/23
SEN Assessment	129	193
SEN and School Transport	93	79
Waste Management	60	24
Environmental Services	25	19
Parking Provision	22	8

The above shows a mixed picture. Whilst Transport complaint numbers remain high, there has been a slight reduction and clear evidence that some of the improvements implemented are starting to make a difference.

Waste management saw a sharp reduction. This is less about service improvements than the removal during the year of the need for a booking system to manage appointments. Inevitably given the number of bookings made this generated some complaints. Volumes for 2022-23 are in line with previous years.

Although much lower volume, both Highways services that featured also saw healthy reductions. Better communication and responses particularly early explanation for where we would not be able to intervene have been the biggest factor here.

Unfortunately, SEN has continued to see a significant rise in complaints this year. Detailed analysis of the key themes will feature later in this report.

2.5 Analysis of most common corporate complaints in 2022-23

The list below details the 5 most frequent complained about services during 2022-23.¹

Service	2022/23
School Admissions	237
SEN	193
SEN and School Transport	79
Highway Repair and Maintenance	26
Public Transport	24

School Admissions

Representing 30% of the overall volume this is the service that has generated the most complaints during the year.

The complaints have almost exclusively been about delays in responding to and processing midterm requests for school transfers.

There have been a number of factors affecting service performance this year including loss of long-term experience within the team, recruitment and retention issues, unprecedented demand for school places and the introduction of a new software system.

The Service has been supported at various points through the year by the Transformation Unit to look at ways of delivering the service differently and better respond to the increasing demand for places. In parts of the County there is now far more demand for places than local schools can offer. Inevitably this leads to increased numbers of complaints and appeals.

SEN Assessment

It has again been a very challenging year for this service with a further sustained increase in complaints.

Whilst a significant amount of these complaints are about delay, there are often inter-related and more complex issues that also require investigation. It follows that these can be some of the most resource intensive complaints to investigate.

To assist with this, a dedicated complaints investigator post was created and commenced in July 2022. Whilst this is a positive and is enabling Team Managers

¹ This list excludes the 62 complaints about Childrens Social Care and where the complainant lacked access to the statutory complaints procedure. These themes will be explored in the Childrens Social Care Annual Report 2022-23

in the service to focus more time on case oversight and direction, the volume of complaints is currently exceeding the amount of resource available to respond. This is leading to significant volumes of complaints exceeding our policy timescales and escalating to the Ombudsman.

The key to reducing this lies in being able to manage the increased demand. There is a comprehensive transformation programme in place and the Council has also implemented an Accelerated Progress Plan which focuses on ensuring greater compliance with the statutory timescales for completion of work at all stages.

SEN and School Transport

As already noted, although volumes of complaints in this area remain high, they did reduce from the previous year.

There have been significant management changes within the Transport team and a new emphasis on better communication with parents. This is starting to reduce escalation into the formal complaints process.

There remain however challenges with availability and reliability of taxi providers. This year saw a record number of contracts returned and this placed additional pressures on commissioning teams to quickly put in place alternative provision.

The other key challenge remains how the Transport team manage the scenario where SEN students do not have placements finalised until very late in the summer holidays. Work is taking place to improve integrated working between the Transport and Education teams.

Highway Repair and Maintenance

Volumes in this area are not significantly high and therefore not considered to be any urgent improvements needed. The slight increase in complaints appears to link to the financial challenges around repairing roads that would benefit from this but cannot be considered high priority.

Public Transport

This is a new service area to feature and is driven by reductions and in some cases removal of services that are subsidised by the Council. The most significant one during 2022-23 being the Kinch Bus service from Sileby which generated significant correspondence and complaints. It is likely this area will see further complaints in 2023/24 as the Bus Review Strategy is rolled out further.

2.6 Enquiries and Out of Jurisdiction complaints

As well as managing formal complaints, the Complaints Team is also well placed to proactively assist customers where they simply looking for assistance or struggling to contact the service they need.

Many such matters can be quickly and informally put right and where this is the case, the intervention is not formally recorded as a complaint. Our complaints policy specifies a window of opportunity of up to 24 hours to achieve such informal

resolution. In all instances the complaints team will track the case to ensure resolution is made.

Similarly, under our policy a request for service is not a complaint (for example, a request for service could be a request to repair a pothole). A complaint would generally only arise should the request for service not be properly dealt with or there is evidence this has been reported previously.

The Complaints Team regularly handles calls of this nature and takes ownership of the case, liaising with the department to ensure they are responded to promptly.

During 2022-23, the Complaints Team handled 2,037 miscellaneous enquiries including:

- First time requests for service which were passed to the relevant Customer Service Centre or other access point (348)
- Informal resolution within 24 hours. This includes provision of advice and information about Council services and policies (651)
- Providing advice and signposting to the correct organisation e.g., District Councils, Academies, Health (253).
- Providing advice and signposting to alternative procedures for redress, for example internal appeals procedures, subject access requests, HR procedures (105)

Sometimes, these are simple matters for the team to resolve. Others can be extremely difficult cases; especially when managing expectations and where nothing more can be achieved through the complaints process.

Wherever possible, the Complaints Team aims to resolve customer complaints and concerns without the need to escalate into the formal complaints process. This is good complaints handling practice with complaints being resolved as close to the point of origin as possible.

This year there has again been significant acceleration of the use of digital channels for services. Whilst the majority of this has worked well, inevitably there has been some instances where the process has not worked, and customers have turned to the complaints team for assistance. It is important to note that this will continue to drive additional demand to the Complaints team as we roll this out further.

2.7 Compliments received

211 compliments were recorded across all services during 2022-23. This is slightly down from 2021-22.

It is always encouraging to see visibility of the good work that is being delivered by the Council and it will remain a topic for discussion with departments to encourage and promote sending compliments in for central collation

A small selection of the compliments received about corporate services can be found in Appendix A of this document.

3. Service Performance 2022-23

The key performance indicators for speed of response, outcomes and identified learning are linked to complaints that have been *resolved* within any given reporting period rather than received.

This is important as it ensures that full data sets can be presented, both to departments on a quarterly basis, and at year end. It also avoids the scenario whereby Ombudsman findings of maladministration might not appear in annual reports (where outcomes are not known at the time of production).

It follows from all the above that the figures presented below will not match the data presented in section two of this report which focused on complaints *received*.

3.1 Responsiveness to corporate complaints

Table 4: Corporate Complaints Performance – Stage 1

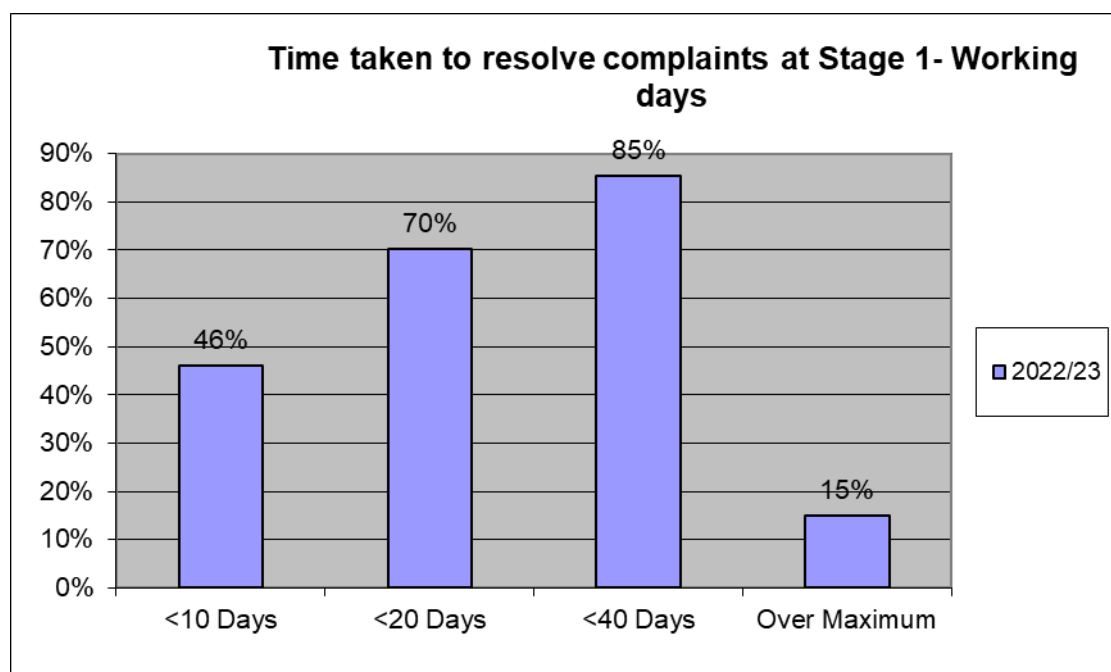


Table 4 shows a summary of time taken to respond to complaints at Stage 1. During the year, following a recommendation from the Ombudsman, the Corporate Complaints procedure was amended to stipulate timescales both at Stage 1 (investigation) and Stage 2 (review).

Previously the Council had an overall timescale of 65 working days for the whole process and the Council did not report separately at each stage.

The revised procedure sets a maximum of 40 working days at Stage 1

Given the above changes there is no comparable reporting to previous year.

As already noted there has been pressure on complaints timescales with some 15% (114) complaints taking in excess of 40 working days to respond to. The vast majority of these were about SEN matters. This clearly requires improvement and additional capacity has been identified to help with this.

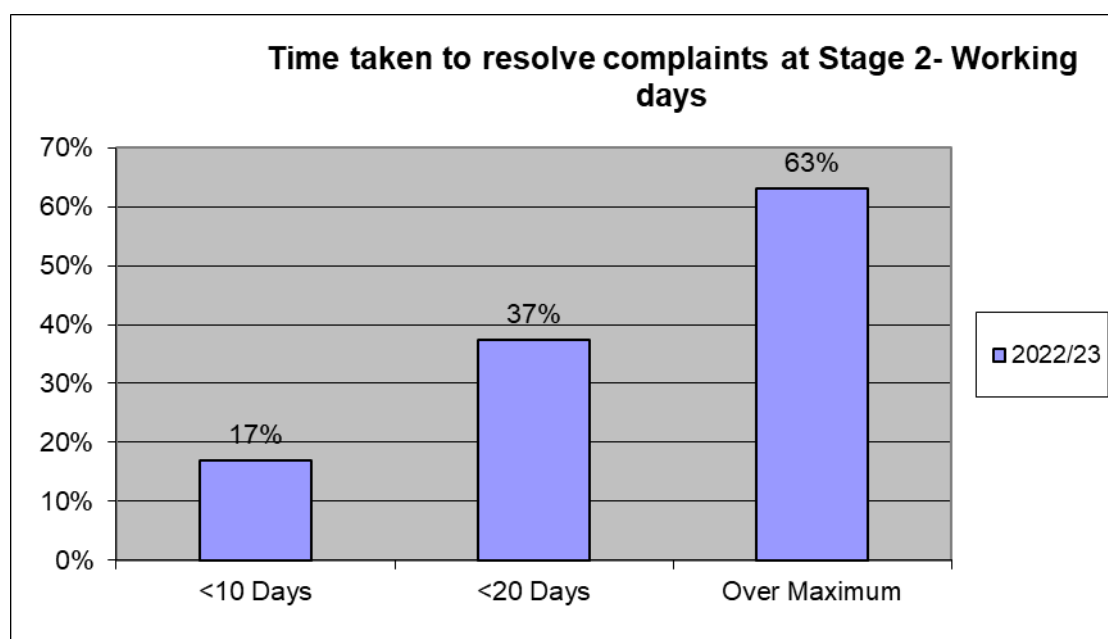
However as many of the complaints are inextricably linked to the completion of assessments or finalising plans, it follows that the complaints team are very reliant on the wider capacity within the SEN service to meet statutory timescales.

The LGSCO issued guidance during the year that it would take a sympathetic view to complaint response timescales but stressed the importance of clear communication with complainants to manage expectations. This is routinely done by the Complaints and Information team.

3.2 Responsiveness to Corporate Complaints – Stage 2

Under the corporate complaints procedure, the Council will generally offer a senior manager review. This is defined as Stage 2. The revised procedure sets out up to 20 working days for this stage of the process.

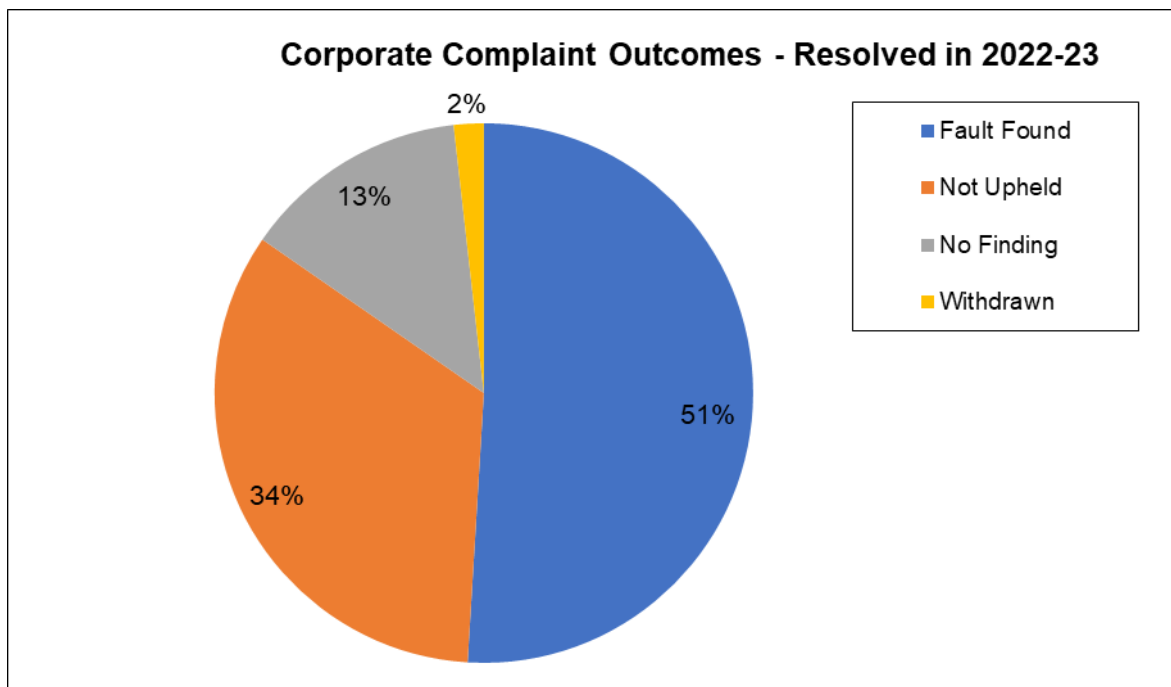
In 2022/23 83 complaints were escalated to Stage 2 and responded to as below.



Again, this data clearly shows difficulties meeting our policy timescales with 63% (52 cases) not achieving this. The Complaints Manager is working closely with departments to drive improvement in this area.

3.3 Corporate Complaint Outcomes & Resolutions

Table 5: Corporate complaints recorded by outcome.



To align with LGSCO data classification and simplify our own reporting, the Council does not differentiate between whether a complaint was partly or fully upheld. Instead, the Complaints team will assess all complaints responded to and classify as either “Fault Found” or “Not Upheld”

Table 5 above shows that 398 (51%) complaints were upheld to some extent following investigation, this is significantly higher than in 2021-22 (39%). This is down to the volume of complaints where delay was the primary factor.

106 complaints were resolved with no finding. This is where there was insufficient evidence to make a finding (e.g., two irreconcilable versions of events).

4. Learning from corporate complaints

Complaints are a valuable source of information which help to identify recurring or underlying problems and potential improvements. We know that numbers alone do not tell everything about the attitude towards complaints and how they are responded to locally. Arguably of more importance is to understand the impact those complaints have on people and to learn the lessons from complaints to improve the experience for others.

Lessons can usually be learned from complaints that were upheld but also in some instances where no fault was found but the Authority recognises that improvements to services can be made.

Occasionally issues will be identified that need to be addressed over and above the original complaint. The Complaints Team will always try to look at the “bigger picture” to ensure that residents receive the best possible service from the Council

4.1 Remedial actions taken from resolved complaints 2022-23

All the 398 complaints where fault has been found have been reviewed to ascertain what action the relevant department has taken, both in remedying the fault, and any wider learning to avoid such issues occurring in the future.

A sample of positive improvements the Council has made is set out below.

You complained that	We Have
You did not consult with the School I wanted my child to attend until too late and there are now no places	Issued reminders to staff about the process of consultation
I was left without a school place and a lack of support to quickly help place my son	Added much clearer advice to parents about the need to always include a catchment school. We also changed our processes for the 2023 National Offer Day to automatically offer next available school.
It is hard to know where in the process you are following request for School Transport	We have developed the application portal which now clearly shows the status of all applications
The waiting time is too long for Educational Psychologist advice to be provided	This is very much a national challenge, but we have acted to increase capacity within this area and other ways to improve timeliness will be considered within our Transforming SEND and Inclusion (TSIL) programme.
Your waste officer did not assist me with unloading waste from my car	Although we are clear that we cannot assist with removing waste from

	vehicles, we have issued reminders to officers that assistance should be considered once waste has left the vehicle. Reminders issued to all teams
You took too long to process the sponsor payment under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme	It was recognised that this scheme was implemented at pace. It was quickly apparent there was insufficient resource, and a more dedicated team and support infrastructure was put in place.
There was an unacceptable mess left after grass cutting	We reminded the crews of need to use the blowers provided to try to clear pathways.
You did not respond to my Blue Badge application quickly enough and could give no advice when I called	The application had not been receipted properly. Further training with administrative staff was undertaken and changes to the procedure made
My School Transfer application was "lost" causing me to re-apply	We identified an issue with how data had been migrated onto the new system. The application and others affected were immediately fast-tracked
You took too long to make payments for my Personal Transport Budget (PTB)	There has been a lot of work this year to simplify the process for paying PTBs. This has seen much faster times for the Autumn term 2022.

5. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman enquiries

Should a complainant remain dissatisfied following internal consideration of their complaint, they can take their complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman to seek independent investigation.

The Ombudsman will usually check with the Authority whether the complaint has exhausted the Local Authority's complaints procedure. Where this has not been done, the Ombudsman will usually refer the complaint back to the Authority, to give us an opportunity to attempt to resolve the complainant's concerns through our internal complaints processes first.

The Ombudsman publishes some headline information on each Council's performance every year. This data is expected late July 2023 and will be reported through the Corporate Governance Committee in November 2023.

It is important therefore to note that the figures below are the details the Council holds for LGO enquiries.

5.1 New enquiries made by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman 2021-22

During the year 2022-23, the LGSCO made enquiries into 80 complaints. This can be further segmented by department and alongside the last 2 year's figures:

Department	22/23	21/22	20/21
Environment and Transport	16	22	13
Children and Family Services	37	14	7
Adults and Communities	24	10	3
Corporate Resources	1	1	1
Chief Executives	2	3	1
Public Health	0	0	0
TOTAL	80	50	25

The significant increase in LGSCO enquiries reflects the significant increase in complaints activity generally. It is also no surprise that the highest departmental volume is Children and Family Services. This is predominantly SEN referrals.

5.2 Decisions made by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman 2022-23

As above, the LGSCO issued Final Decisions on 80 cases during the year. Ombudsman complaints can take several months to conclude so some will relate to complaints received in 2021/22. The outcomes reached were as follows:

- Thirteen identified as outside of the Ombudsman's remit and discontinued on this basis. This is typically where a Tribunal or Court is better placed to consider the complaint.
- Twenty-six were closed after initial enquiries (the Assessment stage) with no further action. Typically, this is where the LGSCO feel they are unlikely to find any fault or are satisfied with the Council's response.

- Four were closed after detailed investigation and with no maladministration found
- Twenty-three cases of maladministration and injustice were found
- Fourteen were considered to be premature and referred back to the Council to complete their complaints procedure.

The numbers of cases where the Ombudsman highlighted maladministration increased this year from 19 in 2021/22

Two Public reports were issued against the Council during the year². The Ombudsman uses Public Reports for several reasons including to highlight topical issues and highlight significant fault and learning.

Benchmarking with statistical comparative neighbours will be undertaken and reported to Corporate Governance Committee following receipt of the Council's Annual Review Letter expected in late July 2023.

Thirteen of the twenty-three maladministration findings related to corporate services with brief details set out below:

Education & SEND – 11 Decisions

Case 1 – SEN

Mrs A complained that the Council failed to provide her son with suitable education when he became too ill to attend school and had not carried out an Annual Review.

The Council accepted it held no evidence of an Annual Review being completed and this would have identified earlier that X was not attending.

In recognition of the faults, the Council agreed to make a payment of £2000 in recognition of missed education and to issue reminders to all teams of the need to ensure annual reviews are completed and that alternative provision is in place when students are not able to attend school.

Case 2 – SEN

Mrs B complained that the Council delayed making a decision on her son's Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) following an Annual Review.

The Council accepted that it had not acted in line with legislation. It agreed to a payment of £300 in recognition of this.

Case 3 – SEN

² One Public Report concerned Adult Social Care – details will be included in the Adult Social Care Complaints Report 2022-23

Mrs C complained that the Council had failed to involve her in the decision making around what advice was needed to help inform the school it would be recommending for her son. She also complained that there was delay in consulting with the Specialist School that she had requested.

The Council had already accepted that it was at fault in how it consulted with schools and apologised for this. It accepted the Ombudsman's finding that it had not clearly explained its position with regard to why it did not consider a further OT assessment was required.

The Council agreed to make a compensatory payment of £500 in recognition of the identified faults and to issue practice reminders to all staff.

Case 4 – SEN:

Mrs D complained that the Council did not offer enough help in securing her son a school placement.

In the Council's initial response, it was fully accepted that there were delays in referral to the Inclusion Services team and a payment of £1,300 had been offered in recognition of this. An apology was provided along with re-assurance of actions that had been taken to improve our procedures.

The Ombudsman accepted that this was an appropriate offer and did not issue any additional recommendations

Case 5 – SEN

Mrs E complained that the Council delayed in issuing a final EHCP and was in excess of statutory timescales

The Council had accepted this delay and apologised. The Ombudsman recommended the Council make a compensatory payment of £400 in recognition of the delay and distress arising. This was agreed to.

Case 6 – SEN

Mrs F complained that the Council delayed in issuing a decision following her daughter's annual review.

The Council accepted fault, apologised and agreed to a payment of £150 in recognition of this.

Case 7 – SEN

Mr G complained about the way the Council handled the process of amending his daughter's EHCP in preparation for transfer to secondary school.

The Council accepted there were multiple gaps in communication and missed opportunities to explain what it was doing. Although Y did not miss out on any educational provision, the family were put to a lot of time and trouble in having to contact and chase the Council.

The Council had already offered a compensatory payment of £300 in recognition of the fault but agreed with the Ombudsman to increase this to £500.

Case 8 – SEN

Mrs H complained that the Council failed to ensure alternative education was provided to her son when he was unable to attend education due to anxiety.

When responding to this complaint, the Council had acknowledged that it had lacked sufficient oversight which led to a significant delay in putting in place an EOTAS (Education other than at School) package. It had offered a remedy payment of £5,100 in recognition of missed education and time and trouble.

The Ombudsman welcomed this but felt that this had not adequately remedied the fault and asked the Council to increase this to £6,875. The Council agreed to this.

The Ombudsman also asked the Council to carry out a review of all complaints over a 12-month window that may not have been appropriately remedied.

Case 9 – SEN

Mrs I complained that the Council failed to ensure alternative education in place for her son when he could not attend school for health reasons.

The Council accepted fault and agreed to make a remedy payment of £450 in recognition of distress and time and trouble.

There had also been 29 OT and 27 SALT sessions which were agreed but not provisioned and the Council was asked to look at arranging catch up sessions for these. This was subsequently agreed with the parents that it was not practical and a payment in lieu was made.

Case 10 – SEN

Mrs J complained that the Council failed to ensure alternative education in place for her son when he could not attend school for health reasons over a significant period of time

This was another instance where the Council had accepted fault within its local response to the complaint and offered a remedy payment of £13,375.

The Ombudsman commended the Council's proactive approach to resolving this complaint and was satisfied that it had taken adequate steps to redress the period of missed education. The Ombudsman asked the Council to add a further payment of £600 in recognition of the impact on the family. The Council agreed to this along with issuing various practice reminders to staff.

Case 11 – SEN

Mrs K complained about excessive delay in making amendments to her son's EHCP following an annual review. She also complained that it took too long to set up a resulting EOTAS package and provision SALT therapy.

The Council had already offered a remedy payment of £2750 recognising missed education and had agreed to backdate funding for SALT.

The Ombudsman asked the Council to increase the overall amount to £3,825 which the Council agreed to. The Ombudsman was satisfied with the actions being taken by the Council (through the TSIL work) and did not recommend any additional actions.

Environment and Transport

Case 12 – SEN Transport (Public Report)

Mrs L complained that the Council delayed considering her application for school transport to enable her son to attend a post 16 educational placement. This delayed her right to appeal the decision to refuse traditional transport and led to costs incurred whilst she pursued (and won) her appeal.

The Ombudsman exercised his discretion to issue this decision as a Public Report. It found a number of faults with how the Council had processed the initial application and the Council's policy with regard to reimbursement of costs incurred whilst waiting for appeal decisions. It found this to be inherently unfair.

The Council agreed to a number of recommendations including

- Re-imbusement of costs incurred arranging private transport until the point the Council commissioned this.
- A payment of £500 in recognition of the fault.
- A review of how the Council gives advice and handles appeals.
- To meet costs reasonably incurred by parents after they have won a successful appeal
- To devise a system to ensure appeals are heard in time to allow transport to be arranged for the start of the academic year.

Chief Executives

Case 13: Trading Standards

Mrs M complained that the Council's Trading Standards team misled her into believing it would take court action on her behalf against a builder.

The Ombudsman's enquiries found no evidence the Council intentionally misled her but there was a lack of clear records kept which led to uncertainty around the initial advice given.

The Council agreed to make a remedy payment of £200 in recognition of this raised uncertainty and also to carry out a review of its procedures.

Overall compensation payments recommended by the Ombudsman this year amounted to **£40,750**

6. Oversight and support provided by Complaint's service

The Complaints Team continues to support departments to both manage and learn from complaints. The key services offered by the team are:

1. Complaint's advice and support
2. Production of Performance Reports
3. Liaison with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
4. Quality Assurance of complaint responses
5. Complaint handling training for managers
6. Acting as a critical friend to challenge service practice
7. Support with persistent and unreasonable complainants

The Complaints Manager offers regular assistance in several complex cases and acts as a single point of contact within the Authority. This helps manage protracted disputes and ensures consistent responses are issued.

In-house training focused on the core techniques of investigation and responding to complaints has resumed this year with 3 sessions being delivered. There is a rolling programme for this training each quarter

Assistance continues to be routinely provided to managers in drafting comprehensive responses to complaint investigations. This helps ensure a consistency of response and that due process is followed.

Quarterly complaints reports are produced and presented to Departmental Management Teams or Senior Leadership Teams as appropriate.

To help manage demand pressures, capacity within the Complaints team has been increased over the last year with the following growth posts

- 1 additional Complaints Officer – helping manage new complaints and assign out to relevant departments
- 2 dedicated Complaints Investigators – 1 post is focused on SEN and the other Childrens social care. During 2023-24, these posts will become interchangeable to provide greater resilience and flexibility across these two services.

7. Concluding Comments

This has been a very challenging year across many areas of the organisation, including the Complaints team. This report shows unprecedented demand pressures most notably across services delivered by Children and Family Services.

Perhaps inevitably, these volume rises are impacting on responsiveness to complaints and there is work to do to ensure improvement in this area. There are particularly challenges within the SEN area here. This report shows two very clear and repeated themes around adherence to statutory timescales and ensuring alternative education provision is in place when children are unable to attend their named placement.

Although the volume of complaints around School Admissions is a source of concern (having been very stable for a number of years) it is encouraging that these are being quickly and effectively resolved with none escalating to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

APPENDIX A – Sample of compliments received

- Compliment re repairs to stiles along public right of way River Soar – **Public Rights of Way Team**
- Thank you, T and team, for all your efforts to repair the road, you have made a lot of people very happy – **Highways**
- Compliment re Loughborough Waste staff helping find keys – **Waste Management**
- Thank you, L and the Leicestershire highways management team, for your compassion and humanity it is really appreciated– **Highways**
- Thank you, K, for bringing this grant (Warm Homes) to my attention, I now have double glazed windows fitted throughout the house – **Warm Homes team**
- Compliment to Registrars team for their customer care. It was a fantastic ceremony – **Registrars**
- Thank you, E and team, for all of your swift action I could not have asked for a better team to respond to my enquiry. – **Drainage Team**
- Thank you Shepshed library, the Space Centre event was a great session that my son really enjoyed, thank you. – **Libraries**
- Compliment for School Admissions re advice and helpfulness when contacted re a move– **Customer Services**
- I just wanted to say thank you to B and L for all your help sorting out the EHCP & suitable Taxi to and from school. – **SEN Transport**
- Thank you, F, for putting in the bus cage. We hope this will make the road a little safer for pedestrian's and drivers – **Traffic and Signals Team**
- Thank you for organising the Country Park Runs and we appreciate the hard work that the Ranger team put in to make it so special. - **Country Parks**
- Thank you to P & A, for your intervention in regard to the Ratby Lane overnight closures and repairs. – **Network Management**
- Thank you to A and D, your service was excellent - I was dealt with exactly as I would expect. – **Corporate Finance Team**
- Thank you, N, for being extremely helpful and provided lots of useful information. – **First Contact**

**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –
5 SEPTEMBER 2022**

**LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND LOCAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN
PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23**

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the views of the Committee on the draft Annual Report of the Leicestershire and Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership for 2022/23.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. The Children Acts of 1989 and 2004 set out specific duties for local authorities, working with partner organisations and agencies, to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area. Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 puts a duty on the local authority to provide services to children in need in their area; section 47 of the same Act requires local authorities to undertake enquiries if they believe a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm.
3. These duties can only realistically be discharged with the full co-operation of other partners, many of whom have individual duties when carrying out their functions under section 11 of the Children Act 2004.
4. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 and Working Together 2018 (statutory guidance on inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children) give responsibility for this join-up locally with the safeguarding partners, the Police, Integrated Care Board (ICB) and the local authority, which have a shared and equal duty to agree and make arrangements to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in a local area.
5. The multi-agency safeguarding arrangements locally are managed through the Leicestershire and Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership that covers the counties of Leicestershire and Rutland.
6. It is a statutory requirement, as set out in Working Together 2018, that the Safeguarding Partners publish a report at least once every twelve months on the arrangements and their effectiveness.

Background

7. The multi-agency safeguarding arrangements for Leicestershire and Rutland were presented to this Committee on 5 March 2019, prior to being published on 28 June

2019. These were updated in October 2022 and are published on the Leicestershire and Rutland Safeguarding Board's website.

8. The Safeguarding Children Partnership shares some operational arrangements with the Leicestershire and Rutland Safeguarding Adults Board (LRSAB) and some partnership structures with the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership Board (LSCP/B).

Annual Report

9. The key purpose of the Annual Report is to assess the impact of the work undertaken in 2022/23 on safeguarding outcomes for children in Leicestershire and Rutland. Specifically it evaluates performance against the priorities that were set out in the LRSCP Business Plan 2022/23.
10. The Draft Annual Report 2022/23 is appended to this report. This is the content of the report which has been to design but can be updated as necessary before being published.
11. The report outlines the learning, assurance, training, and improvement activity of the LRSCP and its partners, and the impact this has had on safeguarding children. Key messages from the SCP specifically in relation to Leicestershire are:
 - a) Partner organisations, workers and managers have worked well together to safeguard children and to identify needs and areas for improvement to safeguard children in the midst of ongoing challenge and change relating to the post-pandemic era and other societal pressures such as the cost-of-living crisis.
 - b) The partnership has continued its work to respond to emerging risks, such as safeguarding babies. For example, early in 2022/23, ICON was launched across the local Safeguarding Children Partnerships. ICON is an evidenced-based programme focused on reducing abusive head trauma (AHT) triggered by crying. The mnemonic ICON outlines the key messages of the programme: **I**nfant crying is normal, **C**omforting methods can help, **I**t's **O**K to walk away, and **n**ever, ever shake a baby.
 - c) We continued with work established in 2021 around Child Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing.
 - d) We completed lots of work seeking assurance on Keeping Adolescents Safe / Supporting Safe Adolescents after establishing a Task & Finish group.
 - e) Work has continued to understand how well the partnership works to safeguard children from diverse backgrounds.
 - f) The partnership has worked to improve engagement with schools from all sectors and improve learning processes with its priority of Effective Safeguarding in independent and out of school settings. This included setting up an independent schools' forum during 2022/23. The forum allows independent schools to consider topics specific to them such as safeguarding across borders, the independent inquiry into child sexual abuse on residential schools, and guardian arrangements.
 - g) The partnership will continue to work together, consider, and respond to national developments relating to safeguarding, foster a reliable, trusting culture in organisations and across our area and challenge and drive improvement in multi-agency safeguarding of children.

Proposals/Options

12. The Committee is asked to consider the Annual Report and make any comments or proposed additions or amendments to the report that will be addressed prior to the final version being published.

Consultation

13. The Annual Report includes a summary of the consultation and engagement work the SCP has carried out with children and young people. There are several quotes.
14. All members of the SCP have had opportunities to contribute to and comment on earlier drafts of the Annual Report.

Resource Implications

15. Safeguarding partners have, along with Safeguarding Adults Board statutory partners set a single agreement of principles to share the operating costs of the Safeguarding Children Partnerships and Safeguarding Adults Boards for Leicestershire and Rutland.
16. As part of this agreement Leicestershire County Council contributed £119,266 to the SAB and SCP in 2022/23. This is 33% of the total funding for the Leicestershire and Rutland SAB and SCP (£364,633). This compares with £102,496 in the previous year which was 31% of the total budget for the Leicestershire and Rutland SCP and SAB of £327,126 in 2021/22.
17. Expenditure overall was broadly in line with the previous year. Expenditure on support services has significantly decreased with only legal advice for the partnership now funded from this budget. The increase in expenditure on operating costs is linked to the development of new training resources, including video assets. Vacancies in the support office team and underspend on case reviews reduced expenditure. The Safeguarding Partnership's reserve funds, as of 1 April 2022 stand at £168,895. Plans for further use of these reserve funds will be drawn up in the coming year.
18. Leicestershire County Council also hosts the Safeguarding Boards' Business Office that supports the SCP and SAB.

Timetable for Decisions

19. The Annual Report of the Safeguarding Children Partnership will be presented to the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5 September 2023 and the Cabinet on 15 September 2023. The Annual Report will be published by the end of September 2023. Any comments will be considered and addressed prior to the final report being published.

Background Papers

Leicestershire and Rutland Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements:

<https://rsb.org.uk/uploads/leicestershire-rutland-multi-agency-safeguarding-arrangements-october-2022.pdf?v=1668441670>

Circulation under Local Issues Alert Procedure

20. None.

Relevant Impact Assessments:

Equalities Implications

21. Safeguarding children, young people and adults' concerns individuals who are likely to be disadvantaged in a number of ways. Information on differing needs of and impacts on different groups of individuals with regard to safeguarding is considered as part of the process to develop the Board's Business Plan. The Partnership had a specific priority in 2021/22 exploring safeguarding of children from diverse backgrounds. The work on this has continued into 2022/23.

Human Rights Implications

22. There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

Crime and Disorder Implications

23. There is a close connection between the work of the LRSCP and that of community safety partnerships in Leicestershire. For example, the LRSCP works closely with community safety partnerships to scrutinise and challenge performance in community safety issues that affect the safeguarding and well-being of individuals and groups, for example domestic abuse and Prevent. The LRSCP also supports community safety partnerships in carrying out Domestic Homicide Reviews and acting on their recommendations.

Partnership Working and associated issues

24. Safeguarding is dependent on the effective work of the partnership as set out in national regulation, Working Together 2018, published by the Department for Education.

List of Appendices

Appendix A - Annual Report of the Leicestershire and Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership 2022/23.

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Safeguarding
Children Partnership
LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND



Leicestershire & Rutland
Safeguarding Children Partnership
Annual Report - 2022-23

Foreword

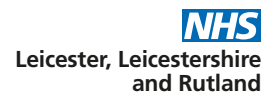
We are pleased to present this report of the Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership that covers the period from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023.

Over the year, as the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the everyday work of organisations decreased, the partnership was able to return to more pre-pandemic practices. For example, we have increased the number of face-to-face training events offered. We also recognise that a more blended and flexible approach to learning is now more suitable and effective for a multi-agency workforce that continues to face significant capacity issues.

Our approach is system-led but child-focused. In responding to national reviews and local learning, we have increased our quality assurance work, with a view to further increasing the correlation with service improvement. As we enter the next year, we will continue to map how the outcomes of our procedural and audit activity directly benefits frontline practice and, in turn, directly impacts the lives of children and their families.

We want to thank all the dedicated workers and managers, whether frontline or in support roles, in organisations across Leicestershire & Rutland that are working to support the welfare and safety of children.

The Safeguarding Partners for Leicestershire & Rutland



“The Social Worker needs a medal! She has done so well and she gives our child chances and listens to him. She thinks about what our child needs. She gives him trust and he responds to that. The Social Worker has saved him.”

Leicestershire Parent/Carer

“The worker has been an absolute diamond. She has always been on the end of the phone. I have not felt like it’s been intrusive at all. She is just lovely”

Rutland Parent/Carer

The Partnership

The Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership (SCP) brings together organisations across the counties of Leicestershire and Rutland with the vision:

“For children and young people in Leicestershire and Rutland to be safe, well and achieve their full potential”

The members of the partnership include the statutory safeguarding partners: Police, Local Authorities, and Integrated Care Board. For the beginning of the period this report covers, the Clinical Commissioning Groups for the area were statutory safeguarding partners, but these were replaced by Integrated Care Boards from July 2022.

The membership also includes other relevant agencies including schools, health agencies, probation and other organisations working with children. The full membership of the partnership can be found on the SCP website <https://lrsb.org.uk/scp-membership-list>.

The Partnership:

- Sets how organisations should work together to safeguard children
- Provides multi-agency training and development resources to support good safeguarding
- Tests how well organisations are working together and the difference this is making
- Reviews serious safeguarding incidents to identify improvements needed
- Uses learning and feedback to improve and develop how agencies work together to safeguard children.

During 2022-23, independent scrutiny was led by an Independent Advisor. The Independent Advisor for Leicestershire and Rutland was jointly appointed with the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership Board. The Independent Advisor scrutinised the work and effectiveness of the partnership and provided an independent view into decisions regarding Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews. For 2023-24, the Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership (SCP) and Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership Board (SCPB) will appoint an Independent Chair.

This is the statutory report of the SCP outlining the work it has carried out from April 2022 to the end of March 2023.

For more information on how the SCP works please visit <https://lrsb.org.uk/lrscp>.



The work of the Partnership

The Priorities of the Partnership

The SCP worked with the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership Board to identify shared priorities for 2022/23. Three of these priorities – Safeguarding Babies, Child Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing and Safeguarding Children from Diverse Backgrounds – were continued from 2021/22. This was due to the continued national and local prevalence of these themes and the breadth of the work requiring completion to achieve an appropriate level of assurance.

The work on these priorities was embedded within the assurance, training, procedure and review work of the partnership outlined further in the following sections of this report.

Safeguarding Babies:

Improving how we work together with families before and after births to safeguard babies and seek assurance that multi-agency working with families to safeguard babies is effective.

Rationale (established 2021-22):

- Recent local and national case reviews as well as assurance work of the partnerships have highlighted safeguarding risks to babies
- National increase in number and proportion of serious safeguarding incidents that relate to baby deaths and harm to babies.
- Two national reviews, three local reviews, and three further rapid reviews regarding baby deaths, exploring shaken babies; contact and working with
- fathers/males; substance misuse; pre and post-birth planning; safer sleeping.
- Covid-19 response has affected services for expectant and new mothers and has been seen to cause additional stress in family environments, which can increase risk factors.

What we did:

Early in 2022/23 [ICON](#) was launched across the local Safeguarding Children Partnerships. ICON is an evidenced-based programme focused on reducing abusive head trauma (AHT) triggered by crying. The mnemonic ICON outlines the key messages of the programme: **I**nfant crying is normal, **C**omforting methods can help, **I**t's **O**K to walk away, and **N**ever, ever shake a baby.

National ICON Week took place from 26th-30th September 2022 and was supported by the local Safeguarding Children Partnerships which included:

- Engaging fathers and male carers in [ICON](#) messages through promoting two [videos aimed at young fathers](#)
- Launching and publicising the Safeguarding Children Partnerships' [ICON web pages](#) which offer national and local resources to help parents cope with infants crying
- A radio campaign delivered by EAVA community radio using ICON messages aimed at members of our diverse community voiced in Somalian, Gujarati, Hindi

- Local midwives, health visitors and our named safeguarding GP being filmed giving out the timely touch point ICON messages in a short video which can be used to teach parents and multi-agency staff the importance of not shaking babies. This is unique to LLR and we aim to share this nationally on the ICON national website and with other ICB areas
- Social media communications about ICON week sent out across our partnership organisations
- Multi-agency training demonstrating the roll out of ICON across LLR and the targeting of more vulnerable parents with low birthweight and premature babies and when parents had substance misuse or parenting issues.

During ICON week, the ICON Resources webpage on the Leicestershire & Rutland website was accessed 144 times.

A request has been made for our [local ICON launch](#), led by the Integrated Care Board, to be promoted nationally.

Impact:

Measuring the impact of ICON is a key deliverable for our 2023-25 business plan.

We have received positive feedback from one of the families affected by Abusive Head Trauma who have been pivotal in supporting the design and roll out of ICON nationally.

Feedback has also been received from the ICON Founder and Chief Programme Advisor Dr Smith highly praising Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland's approach:

“I am absolutely blown away by this! You have all done such an amazing job...There is so much to applaud here...The examples of good practice are so innovative and already embedded.”

ICON Founder and Chief Programme Advisor

“I cried for all that you are doing. That the ICON message is reaching all the touch points, and that it is in the red book. You have really nailed it and you have created all that I could have hoped for in Leicestershire and beyond.”

Parent representative for ICON



Child Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing:

Seek assurance that partnership working supports good mental health for children and that mental health and safeguarding are effectively addressed together.

Rationale (established 2021-22):

- Previous case reviews, assurance work and work with young people have identified the following which require further work and assurance
- Gap in joint working when children in need of safeguarding have been referred to mental health services
- Young people report mental health support needs not always well understood by schools (being addressed by Welfare Education Return training)
- Follow up to 2021 assurance work regarding safeguarding and CAMHS waiting lists
- Young people tell us that effective mental health support remains a high priority for them.
- Surveys and cases suggest ongoing Covid restrictions are having an impact on mental health of children and young people.
- There is ongoing work regarding design of services and pathways for child mental health that will link with safeguarding.

What we did:

Assurance was sought by the SCPs and, at the August 2022 meeting of the Planning and Delivery Group (PDG), a presentation was received regarding Children and Young People (CYP) Mental Health and Neuro Diverse (ND) Transformation from Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust (LPT). It was agreed that a forum for discussions to take place about child mental health, emotional wellbeing, and safeguarding, in a more in-depth manner would be useful.

Impact:

Meetings have since taken place between the PDG Chair and the Chairs of the new Children and Young People (CYP) Mental Health Integrated Collaborative Delivery Group to build links between the collaborative and the Safeguarding Children Partnerships. The collaborative has been established to empower local partners to work collectively towards the betterment of Children and Young People Mental Health pathways within the region.

Our 2023-25 business plan will continue to seek assurance that children subject to safeguarding arrangements and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are effectively safeguarded through effective multi-agency working.

Keeping Adolescents Safe / Supporting Safe Adolescents: Seek assurance that there is a clear governance and approach for safeguarding children from harm outside the home and that it is effective.

Rationale:

- Work to develop a life-stage approach to safeguarding children relating to extra-familial threat/harm outside the home.
- Ongoing concerns regarding a clear response to peer-on-peer sexual abuse
- Developing national approach regarding 'serious youth violence'

What we did:

The SCPs received an update from the LLR Child Criminal Exploitation Operations Group. The group continues to oversee the development of a Contextual Framework to provide Adolescent Safeguarding and promote awareness raising to prevent future harm. The group provided assurance that:

- They continue to oversee the development of a Contextual Framework to provide Adolescent Safeguarding and promote awareness raising to prevent future harm.
- This includes the development of a Community Safety Plan, which is overseen independently by our Safeguarding Units. This is a statutory document, which holds as much weight as a Child Protection Plan, which responds to worries and harm outside the home, within the context of where the harm occurs and transitions with the child after eighteen. This intensive targeted support will offer an alternative child protection plan for children at risk of extra familial harm.
- There is engagement with the DfE funded Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme.
- Children's Social Care have worked in collaboration with Leicestershire Police to develop a Protocol for Children in Custody. This will support a child's wellbeing, identify underlying vulnerabilities by information exchange and improve children's lived experience in being received into police custody.
- The group has representation within the Contextual Safeguarding Network for strategic leads.
- There is use of DfE Practice Principles to tackle exploitation and extra-familial harm to support a collaborative partnership response to safeguard adolescents.
- The Child Criminal Exploitation Operations Group has oversight of the progression of our partnership data set. This is supported by the Daily Risk Management Meeting (DRMM) and the Fortnightly Operational Review Meeting (FORM). The partnership is represented at these risk management meetings and need to be satisfied that all resources and opportunities have been utilised to improve safety and a reduction in risk.
- Progression tracking of high-risk cases is debated by the partnership and professional challenge is welcomed.
- There is a planned scoping exercise to map the existing safeguarding response to Extra-Familial Harm provided by the local hub. This will also consider the interlinked agency pathways across the partnership to services that protect and support Adolescent Safeguarding. This will offer a coordinated approach across statutory and support services to implement early intervention and prevention programmes.
- A new quality assurance framework has been developed to not only analyse the data sets and indicators

to understand trends and themes, but to also monitor the quality of partnership risk management meetings. This will provide both reassurance and quality assurance that best practice is demonstrated in both supporting victims and utilising harm reduction approaches to challenge harmful behaviours.

- In response to our Missing children, we continue to offer independent return interviews. This work is quality assured through dip sampling Return Interview documentation. Diagnostic work is being undertaken in relation to the analysis of nil returns and how we respond to the unmet need of those children that for whatever reason do not engage with interviews. We continue to capture their voice and circumstances of the missing episodes, by trusted adults advocating for them.
- Becoming a trauma informed partnership will assist in early identification of our vulnerable children, improve response time and overall outcomes for children.
- A legacy from the Harm outside the Home DfE Project is the www.childexploitationeastmidlands.org.uk website, which the SCP supported in its development. The site aims to provide schools a one stop access point to raise awareness and encourage working together to prevent child exploitation and abuse. A trauma-informed toolkit is available to education to assist in recognising the signs associated with childhood trauma and adverse childhood experience. The site also signposts to local services and multi-agency training.

Impact:

Whilst work has been undertaken locally, there is ongoing work to be done, particularly around putting in place a strategic plan for the local approach to safeguarding children from extra-familial threat. The Safeguarding Children Partnerships will, throughout 2023-25, continue to seek assurance that local safeguarding partners are working together to effectively safeguard children from extra-familial threat. This will include supporting a new regime of multi-agency audit work.



Safeguarding Children from Diverse backgrounds:

Understand and improve how well partners work together with children and families from diverse backgrounds.

Rationale (established 2021-22):

- The SCPs do not have information on whether the ethnic or cultural background of a child or other diversity factors have an impact on how well agencies work together with children and their families to safeguard children.

What we did:

A task and finish group was set up to take this work forward, chaired by an independent expert. The following work was completed:

- A local agreement of the definition of “cultural competence” was confirmed
- A survey of practitioners took place, including voluntary and community sectors
- Practitioner focus groups were held
- Learning from reviews and local data was collated

An overview of workstreams, strategies, initiatives, and resources across the partnerships that relate to safeguarding children from black and minoritised communities was identified

Quantitative data was provided by all three Local Authorities, Police, Integrated Care Board (ICB), and Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse (DSVA) services.

Impact:

Consideration of race and cultural competence is now embedded in all audits and reviews across the Safeguarding Children Partnerships. Training that considers safeguarding children from diverse backgrounds was delivered to 520 delegates across the partnerships through 25 different training sessions, whilst a further 432 people watched relevant training videos. The partnerships recognise that Safeguarding Children from Diverse backgrounds needs to be an ongoing priority and that the task and finish group was just the start. The business plan priority for 2023-25 includes improved understanding of the role of immigration status, culture, faith, and parenting.

Effective Safeguarding in independent and out of school settings:

Work with faith groups, independent schools, community organisations and other settings to support them to play an effective role in safeguarding children.

Rationale:

- SCP consideration of Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) reports and local LADO and national data identify the need and opportunity for further work with religious institutions, alternative education and other out-of-school settings to support robust safeguarding.
- SCP initial conversation with independent schools identified the need to develop specific ongoing engagement approach.

What we did:

An independent schools forum was set up during 2022/23. The forum allows independent schools to consider topics specific to them such as safeguarding across borders, the independent inquiry into child sexual abuse on residential schools, and guardian arrangements.

A multi-agency task and finish group has been set up, chaired by Local Authority Designated Officers (LADOs), to progress the other key deliverables in this objective focusing on out of school settings, small and community organisations. This work will continue into the 2023-25 business plan.

Impact:

The independent schools forum is well attended with around 20 delegates per meeting. One outcome was a request that social care nationally allow more time for referrals to be completed before timing out. This request was raised at the National Safeguarding Children Partnership Manager Network and local areas agreed to consider making the required changes.

Training Delivery numbers realised towards priorities:

Safeguarding Babies: 8 sessions were delivered to 465 attendees

Child Mental Health & Emotional Wellbeing: 15 sessions were delivered to 353 attendees

Keeping Adolescents Safe/Supporting Safe Adolescents: 18 sessions were delivered to 472 attendees

Safeguarding children from diverse backgrounds: 25 sessions were delivered to 520 attendees

Effective Safeguarding in independent and out of school settings: in terms of action taken, a more extensive mailing list has been developed. We have trained practitioners in independent and out of school settings in our business-as-usual safeguarding training as typically expected.

For further information, please see the Training section below.

Combined number of people who attended training or watched a training video against the SCP Business priorities:

Priorities	Trained	Watched a Training Video	Total
Safeguarding Babies	465	1054	1519
Child Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing	340	432	772
Keeping Adolescents Safe / Supporting Safe Adolescents	472	75	547
Safeguarding Children from Diverse Backgrounds	520	432	952
Effective Safeguarding in Independent and Out of School Settings			0
	Total of professionals benefited from SCP training		3790

Quality assurance and service improvement

The SCP has a Quality Assurance Framework shared with the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership Board. This can be found here <https://lrsb.org.uk/lrscp>.

During the year the SCP reviewed comparative data for the safeguarding system against other areas of the country. End of year data had not been considered by the time this report was completed and is not able to be shared. It will be considered early in the next business year.

Self-Assessment

During 2022-23 the safeguarding partners and specific relevant agencies carried out a self-assessment of their safeguarding effectiveness. The Section 11 is designed for agencies to provide assessment of their current performance in several key areas in relation to safeguarding children and to provide a reasonable comparison with results from the previous two years.

Following improvement work in the year almost all partner agencies provided some evidence that they were effective across all areas in the assessment:

- Strategic and Governance Arrangements
- Impact on Safeguarding Considered in Service Change
- Workforce Capacity and Resilience
- Engagement with Children
- Children Affected by Domestic Abuse

Early analysis indicates that the assessment did not directly identify any areas for significant work across partners or on a multi-agency basis. Where agencies judged themselves as not meeting the standard for being 'fully effective' against an area of assessment, additional information was required to indicate how they plan to achieve full effectiveness and by when. All agencies were asked for their plans for how they would improve effectiveness. Returns will be fully analysed and presented to the SCPs at the start of the 2023/24 business year.



Audits

A multi-agency audit focusing on Electively Home Educated (EHE) children was undertaken during 2022/23. This group of children appears to have increased post pandemic and, given learning from national high-profile cases, a Leicestershire Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review and a Leicester Serious Case Review, it was agreed that an audit to consider visibility of children in this cohort would be valuable.

The audit considered how well information is being shared across agencies and whether there are missed opportunities to support children in this cohort. 20 cases each were considered for Leicestershire and Leicester and 10 cases for Rutland. The scope of the audit was one calendar year from 1st January 2021 to 31st December 2021.

Findings suggested a number of areas of development including:

- Gaining an understanding of current information sharing practice within and across agencies across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland linked to Education, Health and Care (EHC)
- Developing improved and systematic information sharing to notify key agencies that a child has become Electively Home Educated, taking account of any information governance issues and current practice, including use of the Information Sharing Agreement (ISA) appropriately
- Reviewing how information is captured in the process of EHE starting, to include potential risk factors increasing a child's future vulnerability when children are referred to Inclusion teams
- Considering any awareness raising work that is required, including training, to support professional understanding of the impact on children of their EHE status
- Engagement work with parents to understand barriers to engagement with Education services including any method to establish links to Early Help offer or improve cooperation
- Considering how EHE children are offered the opportunity of seeing the School Nurse/11+ Teen Health Service routinely as part of a targeted support offer.

A task and finish group will be set up to complete the required work.

A deep-dive multi-agency audit, focusing on Pre-Birth Planning, was due to be completed before the end of 2022-23. This theme was agreed to support the Safeguarding Babies business priority and in light of recent learning from local Rapid Reviews. Whilst the audit itself was completed within the year, the multi-agency Audit Discussion Day, where analysis and key learning is identified, leading to recommendations and an audit report has yet to take place. Timescales have been affected by agency capacity, partly due to the increased programme of audit activity carried out this year (see below). This work will be completed early in the next year.

In addition to in-depth audits, a programme of 3-monthly dip-sample audits was set up to enable the Safeguarding Children Partnerships to frequently provide assurance and evidence current multi-agency working. The first dip-sample audit focused on repeat referrals, and the second is due to consider contacts with children experiencing mental ill health.

As requested by the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel, there was a Local Authority only audit, facilitated by the SCsPs, to provide assurance that referrals are not deemed malicious without a full and thorough multi-agency assessment.

Other assurance work

'Keep in Touch' Assurance Meetings

The SCP holds a monthly 'Keep in Touch' assurance meeting with Leicester SCPB. The purpose of the meetings is to enable senior safeguarding leads to share intelligence and joint oversight of the ability of LLR multi-agency children's safeguarding services to maintain statutory functions in relation to safeguarding children, to share information and data and to provide a timely response to emerging safeguarding issues with partnership support. The meetings consider operational matters affecting safeguarding services, with a particular focus on workforce capacity and wellbeing. During the year the group has discussed the following areas of concern:

- Significant workforce capacity concerns across a number of agencies, regarding recruitment and retention of staff, but also a loss of experience through staff turnover and significant use of agency workers
- Changes in staffing may impact upon agencies trying to contact individual workers for information sharing.

In response to these concerns the SCP has supported open reflection and conversations regarding the impact of workforce gaps on services and how this is impacting safeguarding through the Keep in Touch meeting and at the main Partnership meetings. They have gained assurance that safeguarding continues to be prioritised across all agencies.

The SCP also asked the Independent Advisor to carry out an in-depth analysis of workforce capacity across the partnership. Independent scrutiny questions were sent out to individual agencies and the collated results were disseminated in October 2022. It was found that workforce capacity is affecting levels of support that can be provided, but safeguarding children is being prioritised across services and can be sustained. Lower risk cases may not be receiving as good a service as before and communication between organisations may be suffering. Also, a lack of access to early support appears to be impacting pressure on some acute services. All organisations reported that they are providing management oversight and availability to support staff and ensure appropriate prioritisation. Most organisations have plans in place to address staffing gaps in the short term, including innovative approaches to recruitment and providing ongoing support. All organisations reported they are communicating with partners to aid understanding. There are approaches in place to hear from children in many organisations and agencies are responding to this. Children are reporting room for improvement.

The SCP Planning & Delivery Group will continue to monitor workforce issues, via the Keep in Touch Meeting, with a particular focus on the effect on the lived experience for children and families, longer-term plans for workforce stability and considering innovations and solutions adopted elsewhere in the country.

An Operational Performance Group has been formed. It feeds into the LLR SCP Audit & Assurance Group, with a standing item on the agenda. Whilst the monthly Keep In Touch meetings are more operational to unpick practice issues and are more strategic, the Operational Performance Group meetings evaluate multi-agency working.

Information Sharing Agreement

The local Information Sharing Agreement of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnerships and Safeguarding Adults Boards was updated throughout 2022/23 and [re-published](#) in April 2023.

Internal Quality Assurance Processes

The Audit and Assurance Group (AAG) sought assurance from partner agencies around their internal quality assurance processes. The aim was to provide a picture of activity that agencies have completed over the previous twelve months, giving an overview of what the key successes have been, what are the areas for development and any key actions for the forthcoming year linked to the business plan priorities.

It was positive to note that agencies reported the dissemination of learning from reviews and audits internally through a number of different briefing methods. Additionally, examples were shared of learning workshops to support frontline practitioners to strengthen safeguarding practice.

The group recognised that, given the key role schools play in safeguarding, a stronger connection between the AAG and Education is required. Options are being explored to create links to quality assurance work focused on safeguarding taking place in local schools.

Paediatric Sexual Assault Referral Centre (PSARC)

We have improved engagement with the East Midlands Children and Young People's Sexual Assault Service (EMCYPSAS). It raised concerns with the LLR Safeguarding Children Partnerships to ensure that EMCYPSAS is included in strategy discussions for children and young people who have experienced sexual assault.

Between October 2022-January 2023, EMCYPSAS received 103 Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland invites to strategy discussions which was a significant increase on previous engagement.

The impact of this work is enabling an increased number of children and young people who have experienced sexual assault to access the full range of sexual health screening, counselling and follow up, including psychosocial therapy, and contact with a Child Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (CHISVA).

The requirement to refer children and young people who have experienced sexual assault to the EMCYPSAS has been incorporated into LLR SCP procedures and, together with briefings for staff, this will support maintaining this improved response.



Multi-Agency Safeguarding Procedures

The partnership has ensured procedures are in place for multi-agency safeguarding in line with Working Together 2018 and has specifically revised the following procedures in response to learning from local and national reviews and assurance processes:

- Children and Young People go Missing from Home or Care
- Children and Families Moving Across Local Authority Boundaries
- Bruising, Marks, or Injury of Concern in Pre-Mobile Babies and Non-Independently Mobile Children
- Multi-Agency Management of Medically Unexplained Symptoms, Perplexing Presentations and Fabricated or Induced Illness
- Child Exploitation, CSE and Assessment of Risk Outside the Home (Contextual Safeguarding)
- Bullying
- Children of Parents with Learning Disabilities
- Children of Parents who Misuse Substances
- E-Safety: Children Exposed to Abuse through the Digital Media
- Gang Activity, Youth Violence and Criminal Exploitation Affecting Children
- Harmful Sexual Behaviour
- Safeguarding Children Vulnerable to Violent Extremism (PREVENT)
- Underage Sexual Activity
- Agency Roles and Responsibilities
- Allegations Against Persons who Work with Children
- Child Exploitation, CSE and Assessment of Risk Outside the Home (Contextual Safeguarding)
- Domestic Abuse
- Pre-Birth and Post Birth Planning
- Self-Harm and Suicidal Behaviour

The SCP procedures can be found online: <https://lrsrb.proceduresonline.com/index.htm>

A full list of new chapters and amendments made can be found on the '[Amendments](#)' page of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnerships Procedures Manual.

If you want to sign up for alerts regarding SCP procedure updates, please click [here](#).

Training

The SCP's training co-ordination and delivery function is shared with the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership Board to support consistent and effective partnership working.

We provided training resources and events in support of our priorities as well as other areas identified in a training needs assessment with partners, identifying other key areas including missing children and young carers.

We continued to use a more blended approach to learning, incorporating video resources and resource packs alongside online training sessions. We also returned to more face-to-face training following the pandemic.

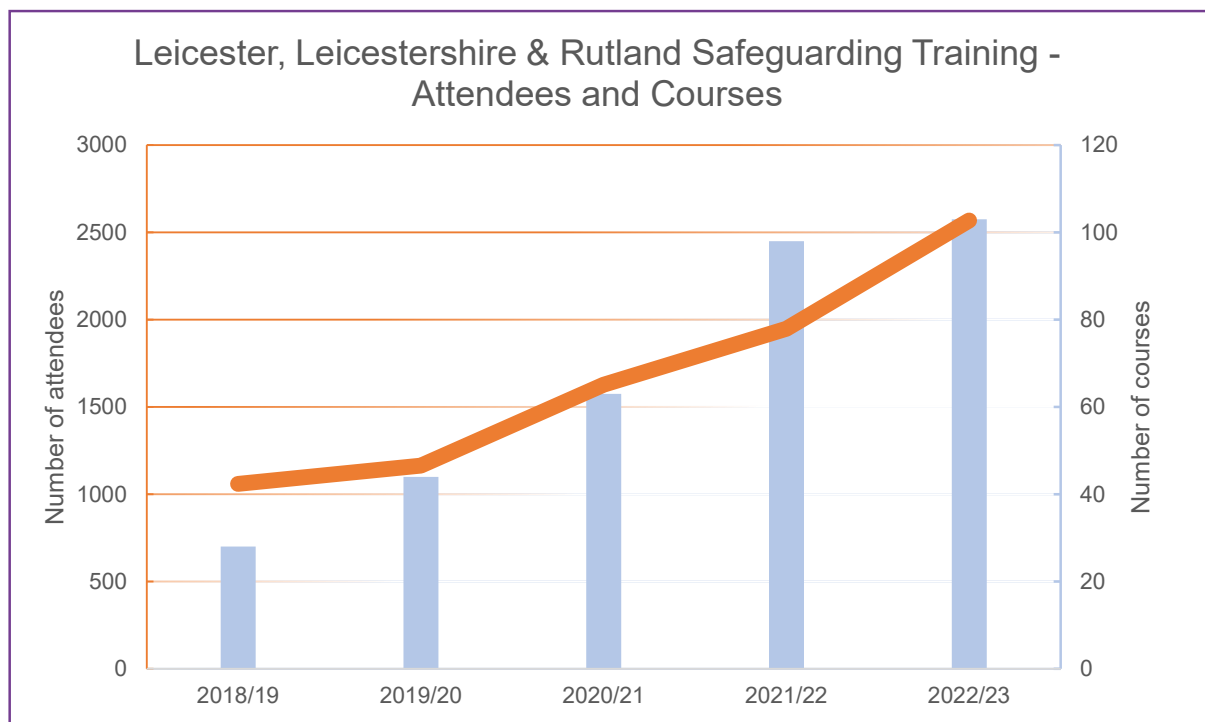
Resources

The [LLR SCPs' YouTube channel](#) continues to develop a bank of safeguarding videos that capture presentations from multi-agency training events and other resources that can be utilised by partners for learning and development – for example, in single agency training and supervision.

A regular Trainers' Network is facilitated, monthly email briefings are disseminated and regular [Safeguarding Matters newsletters](#) are published. As of this year, we have also introduced Safeguarding Matters Live (see below). During 2022-23, 167 additional people signed up to the Safeguarding Matters distribution list.

Training Delivery

Overall training was delivered to 2,569 individuals over 103 training events this year. The chart identifies a continued increase in numbers attending SCP training on previous years.

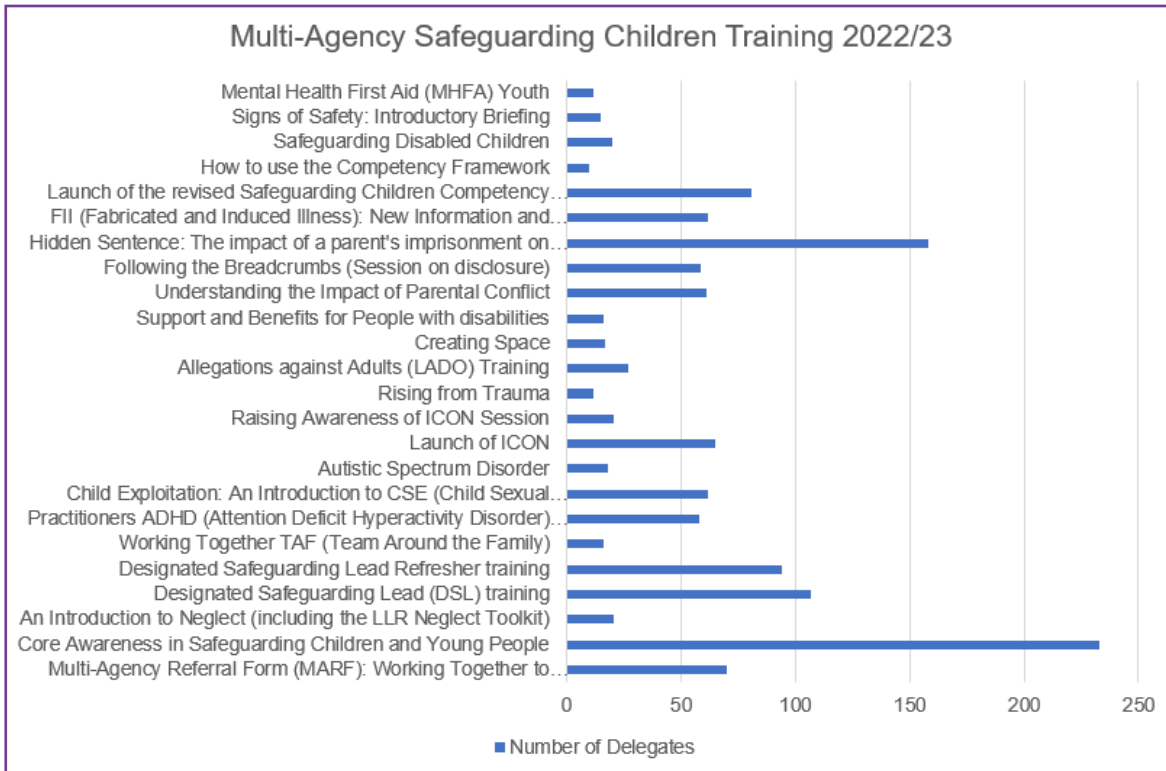


Alongside this increase, some training events did have to be cancelled in January/February 2023 due to low numbers and uptake. Overall, the cancellation rate is lower than in the previous year. Since re-establishing face-to-face training, it has been found that there is a better uptake of this training in comparison to virtual training. It is reported that cancelled places on training are often due to workload.

During 2022/23 a total of 1,315 delegates attended our regular multi-agency safeguarding children training. The generic safeguarding courses – for example, Core Safeguarding and Designated Safeguarding Lead training – often book up quickly, indicating both interest and need.

The LLR SCP Multi-Agency Learning & Development Group supported the content and delivery of a new project about the ‘Impact of Imprisonment on the Family and Children’. This project had a launch event at City Hall in Leicester and a planned programme of training continues to be delivered. Six sessions have been delivered and there are others planned.

Following the review and relaunch of the Safeguarding Children Competency Framework (LLR), a session ‘How to use the Competency Framework’ has been developed, which had its first session in March 2023.



The delivery and support of two big conferences was not possible this year compared to last year, due to strikes and other sectoral balances. It was possible to support some larger events around policy and guidance change, such as 'Missing: Raising Awareness of the Missing from Home Joint Protocol', and the extension of the use of the Operation Encompass platform in the Autumn of 2022. Also, support was given to the 'Looked after Children (LAC) Health Summit 2022' and 'Young Carers' training as well as Leicester City and Leicestershire & Rutland 'Parental Conflict' Training.

In addition to our regular training, the following larger events and conferences were facilitated, with a further 1,254 delegates attending:

Conferences Facilitated by Multi-Agency Learning & Development Group During 2022/23		
Conferences	Number	Total attendees
Missing from Home Joint Protocol	2	77
Looked After Children Health Summit	1	45
Supporting Families – Reducing the Impact of Parental Imprisonment	1	50
Safeguarding Matters Online Briefing	2	789
Learning from Reviews: Baby's first Home (womb)	1	108
Learning from Reviews: Baby's first Home (womb) (film played as trainer unavailable)	1	95
Young Carer's Awareness Training	2	90
		1,254

This year [Safeguarding Matters Live](#) was launched. These are live online briefings for all staff across the children and adults multi-agency partnerships. They share learning from reviews and audits, procedure and guidance updates, and resources to support practice. The June 2022 briefing was attended by 289 delegates with the December 2022 briefing attendance increasing to over 500 delegates. The slides from the events are made available via our website and sessions are available to watch on the Safeguarding Children Partnerships' YouTube Channel.

The Multi-Agency Learning & Development Group also supported the advertising and booking of the trauma-informed training programme designed and delivered by Barnardo's and funded by the local Violence Reduction Network. In addition, the group supported Disability Allowance Training by the Department of Work and Pensions Team, as well as promoting the 'What is Adult Safeguarding?' sessions run by the local Safeguarding Adults Boards.

Training Impact

"Brilliant session – very informative and good group for interactions and discussions."

"The training was very informative, and I now have more knowledge about Neglect and how the neglect toolkit is used."

Feedback from delegates on Neglect training

737 delegates completed pre- and post-evaluation forms. Professionals are asked to rate their own knowledge, skills and confidence before and after the training sessions and to set themselves three key actions which they will put into practice. These key actions are considered during impact evaluations, which explore how knowledge has been used in day-to-day work. Additionally, 88 delegates filled in an evaluation form for the Learning from Reviews events and 336 evaluations were completed for Safeguarding Matters Live.

We want to improve our understanding of access to and impact of SCP training resources to enable us to focus on providing effective training and learning resources that support changes in practice. To do this we are in the process of commissioning a learning management system that will work with our continued blended approach. The learning management system was due to be implemented during 2022-23; it has been delayed to accommodate further exploration of the business model and effective implementation.

The reach of some of our training videos is set out below:

The number of times the training videos being fully watched by professionals:

Name of Category	Name of Video	Total seen by
ICON		560
	Full Launch Recording	165
	Never Ever Shake a Baby – Morning	127
	Never Ever Shake a Baby – Home from Work	95
	LLR – ICON Touchpoint 1	54
	LLR – ICON Touchpoint 2	119
Safeguarding Matters		559
	Safeguarding matters online recording December 2022	171
	Safeguarding Children Updates	43
	Dr Alun Elias – FII	85
	Fire Safety Hoarding	35
	Nigel's Story	24
	Safer Sleeping for babies	9
	Myth of Invisible Men	42
	Safeguarding matters online recording June 2022	150
Competency Framework	Launch of Revised Safeguarding Children Competency Framework	382

MARF – Thresholds		66
Parents Guide to CE Video / 2022-2023 hits		75
FII		200
	FII New Information and Procedure Change	98
	FII New Information and Procedure Training	17
	Dr Alun Elias – FII (Safeguarding Matters Live)	85
LCC Young Carers	LCC Young Carers	432
Adolescent Neglect 2022-23 Hits		20
Learning From Reviews		62
	Babies' First Home Womb	21
	Babies' First Home Womb Edited	41
	Total Reach:	2356

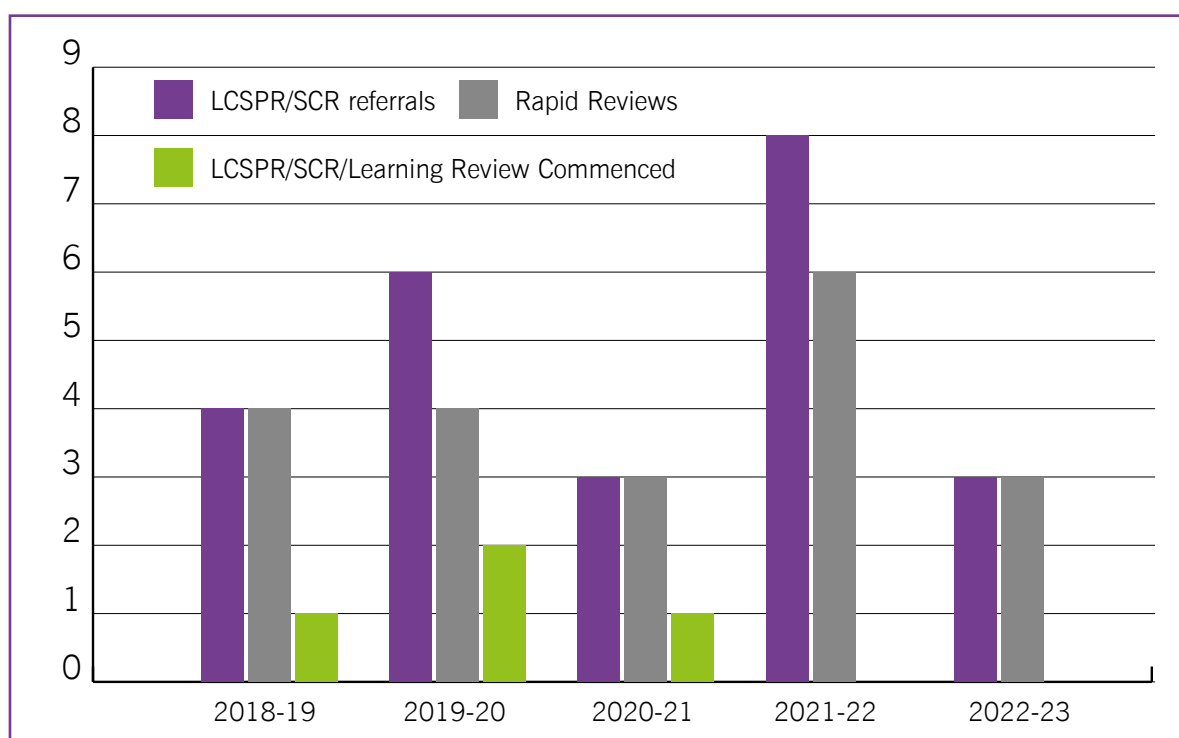


Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

Local Rapid Reviews and Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

The partnership assesses Serious Safeguarding Incidents as defined by Working Together 2018 and decides whether a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (LCSPR), in order to identify how to improve safeguarding responses in future, is required.

The Partnership carried out three rapid reviews following a serious incident notification in the period of this report. One Rapid Review was carried out by a sub-regional SCP. As shown in the chart, this number is down from eight carried out in 2021-22 but more in line with the three completed in 2020-21. The Safeguarding partners will monitor numbers to identify any longer-term trends. The peak in 2020-21 could be linked to the Covid-19 pandemic.



The partnership was able to identify learning to improve safeguarding systems from all of the Rapid Reviews. The partnership identified no further learning was to be gained from further review of any of these cases and therefore no Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews were required. This view was supported by the Independent Advisor to the Partnership and by the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel.

Two Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, commenced in previous years, continued to be worked on in 2022-23. One was published in August 2022. It was published on both the SCP website, where it will remain for one year, and on the NSPCC national review repository. The other Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review is due to be published later in 2023.

These Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews have taken longer than the statutory six months to complete for the following reasons:

- Commencing reviews was delayed by finding availability for meetings across partners, agreeing an approach regarding the reviewer and commissioning a reviewer.
- The reviewer identified the need to speak to professionals who worked directly with the children and their families to fully understand the case and learning, which has been delayed awaiting decisions regarding prosecution.
- Criminal processes have also delayed speaking to families.

Of the five children considered as both subjects of Rapid Reviews and LCSPRs under way during 2022/23:

- Four (80%) were female and one (20%) male.
- Three (60%) were of White British ethnicity and two (40%) of mixed heritage.
- Three (60%) were babies, one (20%) was a child and one (20%) was a teenager.

In line with the national picture, children under 12 months of age continue to account for the majority of notifications, which links to our continued business priority around safeguarding babies.

The partnership has continued to develop approaches to improve quality and timeliness of rapid reviews. Local agencies worked well to continue to contribute to rapid reviews and the ongoing Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews whilst facing continued resource challenges.

In addition, the rapid reviews and Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews have identified good individual and multi-agency working by many organisations to prioritise, see and respond to children at risk of harm.

The reviews also identified the following key areas:

- Recognition and response to the vulnerability of babies, including unborn babies, via the pre-birth process
- Continued work with parents and consistent and persistent messaging around safer sleeping
- Increased professional curiosity around parental mental ill health, alcohol and substance misuse, particularly when the main source of information is self-reporting
- Increased awareness of the complex impact that ethnicity can have for both adults and children and how this is linked to engagement with services
- Improved confidence in recognising and responding to potential Perplexing Presentations and Fabricated and Induced Illness.

In response to this learning from reviews the following action has been undertaken:

- The LLR SCP “Pre-Birth and Post Birth Planning” procedure has been further updated and strengthened.
- LLR Pre-Birth Guidance for Local Authorities is being produced. The multi-agency assessment document development will be influenced by the National Research in Practice work, which all three Local Authorities across LLR are part of. This group will conclude in July 2023. The “Developing pre-birth assessment practice: Change Project 2023” will develop tools and guidance which can be used nationally and across LLR.
- Multi-Agency training sessions on “Baby’s First Home” were delivered.
- 7-Minutes Briefings were published on “Safeguarding un/born babies” and Safer Sleeping.
- An LLR Safer Sleeping Risk Assessment Tool is being produced and is due to be launched in Autumn 2023.
- Joint work was completed with drug and alcohol services to strengthen a key leaflet on reducing the risk to children in households where there is parental substance misuse.
- The LLR SCP “Children of Parents who Misuse Substances” is being reviewed and updated, in consultation with drug and alcohol services.
- Learning from reviews is being fed into ongoing work around the Safeguarding children from diverse backgrounds business priority.
- The significant update to the “Multi-Agency Management of Medically Unexplained Symptoms, Perplexing Presentations and Fabricated or Induced Illness” procedure was promoted via multi-agency training sessions.

Learning is shared with practitioners across organisations through multi-agency training, briefings and learning events, including to communicate updated guidance and changes in procedures. Also, the SCP communicates learning to the partnership workforce through the Safeguarding Partnerships’ [Safeguarding Matters newsletter](#) and live events, the LLR Safeguarding Digest and through ‘[7-Minute Briefings](#)’, which are designed to convey key messages from reviews and encourage managers and workers to reflect on their practice.

Action plans are in place to respond to and monitor areas of learning from reviews.

The partnership continues to develop its approach to rapid reviews and these have become a useful tool to identify learning swiftly and ensure action can be taken more quickly to respond to matters arising from serious safeguarding incidents.

National Reviews

The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's "Child Protection in England: National review into the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson" was published in May 2022. It sets out recommendations and findings for national government and local safeguarding partners to protect children at risk of serious harm.

In September 2002, the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel published two Panel Briefings on "Bruising in non-mobile infants" and "Multi-Agency Safeguarding and Domestic Abuse".

In October 2022, the Phase 1 report of the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's "Safeguarding children with disabilities and complex health needs in residential settings" was published. The Phase 2 report followed in April 2023.

The Safeguarding Partners considered each of these publications in turn and took action and received assurance where required, including:

- Local templates for Rapid Reviews and Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews have been updated to ensure that protected characteristics of each family member, along with details of the whole family are recorded, to ensure that families' diverse needs, experiences and wider family networks are identified and analysed appropriately.
- Independent scrutiny of workforce capacity across the partnership took place.
- Following the reviews into Star Hobson and Arthur Labinjo-Hughes's deaths, one of the identified learnings was that the agencies involved should have been more robust in their response to contacts and concerns raised by family members or anonymous sources. The SCP sought assurance from our Local Authority partners in response to a request issued by the National Panel:

'All Safeguarding Partners should assure themselves that referrals are not deemed malicious without a full and thorough multi-agency assessment, including talking with the referrer, and agreement with the appropriate manager'.

Each Local Authority locally completed an internal audit to assure itself and the SCP. They considered 15 contacts each, which were received via the 'front door' from source Anonymous/Family within the previous six months.

The Local Authorities reported the following:

- Generally, the dip sample evidenced a positive picture with partner agency information considered and appropriate action taken resulting in the right services for children and young people.
- Information and discussions were held with parents to gain further information where required and appropriate and in the majority of these cases children were also spoken to, with information sought from them regarding their day-to-day experiences.
- The audit has highlighted that there is a need to focus on strengthening manager rationale for case closure.

- The local LLR Pre-Mobile baby procedure has been regularly reviewed over the last few years and was last updated in June 2022. The name of the procedure was changed at that point to "Bruising, Marks, or Injury of Concern in Pre-Mobile Babies and Non-Independently Mobile Children", as previously the word "bruising" did not feature. This improves searching for the procedure by practitioners.

- Assurance was provided that Rapid Reviews and Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews in Leicestershire & Rutland do involve local specialist domestic abuse services, where domestic abuse is present (either current or non-recent).
- The local SCP Domestic Abuse procedure was revised and relaunched.
- The Phase 1 report into children with learning disabilities identified two urgent actions which were sent to directors of children's services across the country with an expectation that they respond and bring the actions to SCPs. The first action was around undertaking Quality and Safety Reviews for all children with complex needs and disabilities currently living within placements with the same registrations to ensure they are in safe, quality placements. The second action asked for a review of all information on any LADO referrals, complaints and concerns over the last 3 years relating to the workforce in such establishments.
- The SCP received Leicestershire County Council and Rutland County Council's audits. These reports provided assurance to the partnership that no safeguarding concerns had been identified in respect of the children from Leicestershire and Rutland placed in qualifying dual residential special schools and children's homes or by the Local Authorities hosting the establishments over the past three years. The core learning related to young people in long term residential educational placements was shared with SEND boards in each Local Authority.
- The Dynamic Support Pathway was first launched across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland in December 2021. It is a pathway developed to provide support for individuals (all age) with a learning disability, autism or both who are deteriorating in their health and well-being whilst living in the community. Following the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's publication, NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSEI) published new guidance in November 2022 and this contained additional recommendations and new minimum standards. NHSEI published their final policy in January 2023 with an aim to launch the new pathway by May 2023. As a result of this, a full benchmarking exercise was delivered across LLR to identify areas of improvement/new processes required. A multi-agency Task and Finish Group was established to design new processes and documentation required. People with lived experience and representatives from Parent Carer Forums have been involved in developing this pathway from the start and will continue to be part of the team to monitor and review the processes going forward. LLR are now ready to launch the new pathway.
- Diverting Children and Young People with Learning Disabilities and Autism from the risk of Sexual and Criminal Exploitation

The ICB and Barnardo's launched a new initiative aimed to support early identification of children and young people with learning difficulties and autism who are referred to the Dynamic Support Register (DSR) and who may be at risk of being drawn into child sexual exploitation and child exploitation.

This work has included an Information Sharing Agreement and questions added to the Dynamic Support Register Multi-Agency Assessment Template that identify risk of child exploitation.

If response to the child exploitation questions raise significant concern, a Child Exploitation Risk Assessment is completed and a referral to Children's Social Care, as per the LLR SCP Procedures.

Where answers to the risk of exploitation questions raise concern that the child/young person's interests or social life may potentially expose the child/young person to a risk of exploitation, a Barnardo's Key Worker contacts the Vulnerability Hub and supports opportunities for diverting exposure to potentially harmful situations with the child/young person and parents and carers.

The final report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) was published in October 2022. The national recommendations were discussed by the SCP and actions will be progressed by the Planning & Delivery Group.

How feedback from children and families has informed our work and influenced service provision

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, the SCP has struggled to maintain its Young People's Advisory Group (YPAG). The membership of this group is drawn from other youth groups, such as the Children in Care Council and Youth Council. Therefore, it is challenging to engage with young people who are already giving up their time for other forums.

Children and young people will be invited to sit on a specific interview panel for the role of Independent Chair for the SCPs.

The SCP does want to ensure it is having meaningful engagement with young people that makes a difference to the work of the partnership. Therefore, the focus is on drawing upon existing participation work within organisations across the partnership, to understand what young people are saying about safeguarding and how partners are hearing and responding to the voice and lived experience of children and young people. This will reduce duplication and consultation fatigue, and where the partnership requires specific participation work this will be carried out through working with existing participation groups.

This year it has been agreed that the LLR SCP Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Reference Group will join up with adults' organisations to form a VCS forum. This will broaden the scope of engagement, as many groups cross over between children's and adults' services.

An example of our partners using feedback from children and families to influence service provision is in the establishment of the Teen Health Service. There were consultation processes in 2021 in both Leicestershire and Rutland (as each has their own Teen Health Service). The feedback from these consultations was used to develop the service models, with the services being launched in 2022.

"She has supported us through our toughest challenges; sometimes advising, sometimes listening and sometimes just being present in the moment. She always followed through with what was best for the family and most of all gave us hope that things would eventually get better. She has made a real difference in our lives and today, with her tireless support and dedication, we got the outcome we wanted."

Family feedback about the support offered from a Leicestershire Children & Family Wellbeing Service Worker

"Understanding the impact this has had on all the children has made me more determined to get the help I need. I love them and want them to have a dad they can be proud of"

Feedback from a Father following work with the Leicestershire Domestic Abuse Team

In Rutland, consultations with schools, pupils, and parents highlighted what the priorities are for the people of Rutland and their aim is to tailor support services to reflect the current demands from young people. In Leicestershire, the consultation was shared on the County Council's website, promoted by email to schools, with local communities through social media including Twitter and Facebook. It consisted of a variety of questionnaires and surveys, determined by the demographics of the consultation groups, workshops with professionals, staff and Head teachers and one-to-one interviews with parents. The consultation was also shared with voluntary and community groups through the Council's Communities teams and with Leicestershire Equalities Challenge Group, chair of Leicestershire Parents SEND Hub and Leicestershire Adoption and Fostering Group. Feedback received from parents and carers, professionals working with children and families in Social Care, Education and Youth Justice was positive and contributed to the development of the service model. Service users were surveyed about their experience of the current service model and where improvements could be made. Engagement events were held with partners such as Health (NHS) i.e. Maternity services, University Hospital Leicestershire (UHL) services, Clinical Commissioning Group (now the ICB) and via partnership working groups, such as Perinatal Mental Health and Children's Design Groups, such as Children and Young People's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Group. Additional consultation with schools and children and young people to ensure their views were included ran until 30th September 2021 to better understand how services could be accessed and to identify priorities. Focus groups were also held with County Council staff who had experience of maternity services.

“The worker tries really hard to ensure I get the things I need. The worker helps me think through my decisions and questions me about if I have got things sorted which is good as, without this, I would not have got a lot of things sorted that I have done.”

Feedback from a Leicestershire young person

“I can't thank you enough [...] sometimes words get in the way of what I really want to say and leave me misunderstood but, from the bottom of my heart, for all the times you've been there and guided me through adopting a new life, all I can say is I couldn't have done this without you”.

Feedback from a Rutland young person



Finance

The work of the SCP is supported by the Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Partnership Business Office that also supports the Safeguarding Adults Boards and carries out Domestic Homicide Reviews for Community Safety Partnerships in Leicestershire & Rutland. The SCP is funded by contributions from its partners.

A single funding arrangement for the Safeguarding Children Partnerships and Safeguarding Adults Boards for 2020 onwards has been agreed between the statutory partners for the Safeguarding Adults Boards and the children's Safeguarding Partners for Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland.

The contributions from partners for the Leicestershire & Rutland SCP and SAB as a whole for 2022/23 can be seen below alongside contributions for the previous year:

	2021/22	2022/23
Leicestershire County Council	£102,496	£119,266
Rutland County Council	£45,833	£50,367
Leicestershire Police	£88,725	£97,500
West Leicestershire CCG and East Leicestershire & Rutland CCG*	£88,724	£97,500
National Probation Services	£1,348	N/A
Total income for SCP and SAB	£327,126	£364,633

*Note – the contribution was made before the two Clinical Commissioning Groups became the Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Integrated Care Board (ICB)

Statutory partners agreed to reduce contributions for one year in 2021/22 with the difference to be funded from the SCP and SAB reserves.

Overall expenditure across the SCP and SAB for 2022/23 was £317,689. Expenditure for the SCP was apportioned as follows:

	2021/22	2022/23
Staffing	£105,579	£115,357
Independent Advisor	£7,914	£6,562
Support Services	£12,370	£1,090
Operating Costs	£6,700	£8,055
Training	£48,100	£48,550
Case Reviews	£5,254	£5,800
Total Expenditure	£185,917	£185,414

Expenditure overall was broadly in line with the previous year. Expenditure on support services has significantly decreased with only legal advice for the partnership now funded from this budget. The increase in expenditure on operating costs is linked to the development of new training resources, including video assets.

Priorities for 2023-25

Having reviewed learning from local and national reviews, and from local assurance and engagement work, as well as considering the impact of the 2022-23 priorities, the SCP has determined that its priorities should remain going forward. Therefore, the SCP will share the following forward priorities with the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership Board:

For each of these areas, we have set out our rationale for prioritising the topic, and presented the key deliverables, leads, activities, impact measures and timescales. This will enable us to monitor progress and secure assurance that our actions are making a positive difference to the lived experience of our children and families. The [Joint Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership Business Plan for 2023-25](#) is published on our website.

Safeguarding Babies

**Child Mental Health,
Emotional Wellbeing,
and Safeguarding**

**Keeping Adolescents
Safe / Supporting Safe
Adolescents**

**Safeguarding
Children from Diverse
Backgrounds**

**Effective Safeguarding
in Independent and Out
of School Settings**

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