



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

*Date/Time:* **Tuesday, 21 January 2025 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. K. Ghattoraya CC    Mrs. S. Jordan CC  
Mr. L. Hadji-Nikolaou CC    Mrs. C. Lewis  
Mr. R. Hills CC    Mr. B. Lovegrove CC  
Mr. M. Hunt CC    Mr. R. Martin

**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> |
|---|------------------|
| 1. Minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2024.  | (Pages 5 - 12)   |
| 2. Question Time.   |                  |
| 3. Questions asked by members under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).   |                  |
| 4. To advise of any other items which the Chairman has decided to take as urgent elsewhere on the agenda. |                  |
| 5. Declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda.  |                  |
| 6. Declarations of the Party Whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule                 |                  |



16.

7. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 36.

- |  |  |                   |
|--|--|-------------------|
| 8. Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 - 28/29. | Director of Children and Family Services and Director of Corporate Resources | (Pages 13 - 50)   |
| 9. SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2024-27.            | Director of Children and Family Services                                     | (Pages 51 - 104)  |
| 10. Quarter 2 2024/25 Performance Report.          | Director of Children and Family Services and Chief Executive                 | (Pages 105 - 116) |

11. Date of next meeting.

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled to take place on 4 March 2025.

12. 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](http://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, 5 November 2024.

PRESENT

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

Mr. M. Frisby CC

Mr. M. Hunt CC

Mr. K. Ghattoraya CC

Mrs. S. Jordan CC

Mr. R. Hills CC

In attendance:

Mrs. D. Taylor CC – Lead Member for Children and Family Services

Mr. C. Smith CC – Cabinet Support Member

28. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 September 2024 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

29. Question Time.

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

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

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

Questions asked by Mr. M. Hunt CC:

“There is growing anxiety amongst parents and professionals of the use of smart phones in school premises on which the previous Government’s Guidance for Schools (Feb 2024) reported created a risk of “unnecessary distraction and disruption”.

The guidance suggested that a third of secondary school pupils report smart phones being used in lessons without permission. Children’s phone ownership from the age of 12 has reached 90%. The practice within schools is mixed with published statistics showing 60% of secondary schools pupils allowed to bring phones to school, but do not permit their use; while only 6% ban them from site and 3% lock them away. Meanwhile, 13 % of pupils were allowed to use phones in lessons with permission and 9% allow their use at break and lunch.

The author of the Independent Review on Children’s Social Care, Josh MacAlister, a Teach First alumnus who founded the social care training scheme Frontline, believes evidence is mounting that children “doomscroll” for several hours a day causing widespread harm and that regulation needs to be enforced uniformly by all secondary schools.

The authority owes it to children to keep them safe at school yet one in five pupils have experienced cyber bullying which threatens the ideal that a school should be protected from such risks and dangers. According to the latest statistics, there are a record number of children awaiting mental health support.

With these worrying statistics in mind:

1. What are our obligations concerning the protection of mental health in children within the authority and how is this monitored?
2. Has the authority addressed the matter of smart phones in schools or with the Leicestershire Schools Forum specifically?
3. How does the Local Authority respond to parental concerns on the matter?"

Reply by the Chairman:

1. The Children's Safeguarding Partnership has responsibility, as set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, to ensure robust safeguarding arrangements in the local area. Education and Health partners have a responsibility for universal services for children and young people including for the wellbeing of all children they work with. In addition, Health partners provide both universal and targeted services that support children and young people's emotional wellbeing, and where there is an assessed mental health condition, support to those children.

Children's Social Care works closely with partner agencies within the structure of the Children's Safeguarding Partnership to promote the wellbeing and safeguarding of children and young people across the county. Leicestershire County Council is the lead agency with responsibility to investigate allegations of child protection and to assess and coordinate safety planning if a child is assessed to be at risk of harm. The Local Authority receives referrals from other professionals or members of the public, and if the child/ young person meets a threshold for investigation (Section 47, The Children Act 1989) and or assessment (Section 17, The Children Act 1989), will complete an assessment of need which includes the child's health and emotional wellbeing. If appropriate services can then be provided as a child in need or in need of protection. This includes both providing a timely response to referrals from education settings when children are identified to have additional needs but also more generally to promote emotional wellbeing. Requests are also made for Targeted Family help services and following an Early Help assessment a range of services can be offered.

Within the Local Authority, the Public Health department has responsibilities to commission preventive public health services. They commission, from Children and Family services, the Teen Health service. In the last 12 months, the Teen Health service and Education Effectiveness have provided support to schools identifying and responding to the emotional needs of children, more specifically in relation to self harm and suicide.

The Teen Health service works with young people aged 11-18 in education. It has developed onsite resources across local secondary schools to provide services to

raise awareness of children's emotional needs and to promote their wellbeing – delivering groups and support on a one to one basis.

2. The Department has not addressed the matter of smart phone in schools, directly with schools or via the Schools Forum. Schools are responsible for the policy on smart phones in schools and already have the power to ban the use of phones in school.
3. The Department responds to any parental concerns that are received directly, and to those sent via Ofsted. However, it would always encourage parents to engage with their child's school to resolve any issues relating to this matter.

31. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

32. 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.

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

There were no declarations of the party whip.

34. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 36.

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

35. Leicestershire's Response to Tackling Child Criminal Exploitation.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services which provided an overview of the work and progress of the Child Exploitation, Missing and Modern Slavery Hub. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 8', is filed with these minutes.

In response to concern in respect of the percentage of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) referrals which related to males, and the percentage of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) referrals which related to females, the Director acknowledged that this was a concern but assured members that this was similar to national data and that robust partnership working was in place to respond to all referrals.

The Committee thanked the Service and partner agencies for the combined commitment and response to young people who were victims of any form of Child Criminal Exploitation.

RESOLVED:

That the overview of the work and progress of the Child Exploitation, Missing and Modern Slavery Hub, be noted.

36. Social Care Placements Market Position and Sufficiency Statement 2024-27.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services which provided a summary of the Children's Social Care Placements Market Position and Sufficiency Statement, 2024-27. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 9', is filed with these minutes.

Members noted that the Market Position and Sufficiency Statement would exist alongside National Procurement Contract Regulations, the Procurement Act 2023 and local procurement and financial spend controls. Changes in procurement legislation would place greater emphasis on wider market engagement, increase the focus on robust and consistent commissioning activity, and require the Council to publish public notices relating to procurement sooner.

RESOLVED:

That the summary of the Children's Social Care Placements Market Position and Sufficiency Statement, 2024- 27, be noted.

37. Proposed Transfer of Funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services which set out a proposal to seek a transfer of funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant and the funding to be used for the establishment of a Special Educational Needs (SEN) Investment Fund to deliver targeted actions in order to reduce the increase in the number of Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCPs) and reduce the annual overspend. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 10' is filed with these minutes.

In introducing the report, the Director reported that:

The Leicestershire Schools' had met on 4 November 2024 where it voted to refuse the transfer of funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant and the funding to be used for the establishment of a SEN Investment Fund. This decision reflected continued opposition to the proposal since it first received a report on the matter in June 2024. Consultation feedback on the proposed SEND Investment Fund were largely focused on disagreement to the transfer of funds. The Schools' Forum had been clear that it opposed the transfer as it would represent a decrease in funding for schools. It would support funding going to schools to support SEND inclusion but not by utilising the Schools Block Transfer in order to create a fund for this.

The Director advised members that it was intended to submit a report to the Cabinet regarding pursuing the transfer with the Secretary of State as the High Needs deficit facing the Authority was not sustainable.

Arising from Discussion, the following points were raised:



- (i) In response to questions, the Director explained that the funding transfer would not be used simply to offset the High Needs deficit but to enable measures to reduce the number of EHCPs being issued and support SEND inclusion in schools (as had been done by other local authorities), and it was proposed that the Investment Fund would be governed by schools. Details of the planned Investment Fund remained to be confirmed, as it had not been progressed further in light of opposition to the transfer.
- (ii) Members noted that a previous request for a funding transfer had been refused as no evidence of reinvestment in mainstream schools had been provided. The Council continued to work with schools to develop inclusive SEND provision and should the Secretary of State approve a funding transfer then further consultation would be held with schools on development of an Investment Fund. The Council would have waited for the new Government's approach to tackling issues within the SEND system to be clarified but in order to comply with statutory processes and deadlines for the 2025/26 capital programme it was necessary apply to the Secretary of State at the earliest opportunity.
- (iii) The Cabinet Lead Member for Children and Families agreed with the Director that the situation was difficult and complex, and that more Government funding was required to support children with SEND. The Council's financial position had left it little alternative but to seek a funding transfer to help address the High Needs deficit.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the proposal to seek a transfer of funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant and the funding to be used for the establishment of a Special Educational Needs (SEN) Investment Fund to deliver targeted actions in order to reduce the increase in the number of Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCPs) and reduce the annual overspend, be noted.
- (b) That the Cabinet be advised of the comments made by the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the proposal to seek a transfer of funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant.

38. Leicestershire Fostering Agency Statutory Report.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services which provided an overview of activity of the Fostering Service for the period March 2023 to March 2024.

Members noted that there continued to be a national shortage of foster carers and a growing population of children in care. The Department for Education regularly reported on this issue. Leicestershire County Council continued to perform well against neighbouring authorities in terms of recruiting foster carers and attracting carers who were transferring from other agencies.

The Committee thanked officers within the Service for the work undertaken to support children and families and highlighted the responsibility of elected members, as Corporate Parents, to promote opportunities relating to fostering.

RESOLVED:

That the overview of activity of the Fostering Service for the period March 2023 to March 2024.

39. Leicestershire Adoption Agency Statutory Report.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Families which provided an overview of activity of Leicestershire County Council's Adoption Agency, from March 2023 to March 2024. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 12', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- (i) In response to a question, the Director stated that Special Guardianship Order related to a family court order which placed a child or young person in long-term care with someone other than their parents. The arrangement was an alternative arrangement to adoption or fostering.
- (ii) Members noted that initial visits presented the opportunity for social workers and potential adopters to discuss the adoption process as well as initial questions relating to the family and home. Some of those who received an initial visit may have decided not to continue with the process or staff may have raised a concern which could prevent them from doing so. Staff often signposted individuals to alternative services such as fostering.
- (iii) Members thanked officers within the Service for the work undertaken to ensure that children and families were matched successfully.

RESOLVED:

That the overview of activity of Leicestershire County Council's Adoption Agency, from March 2023 until March 2024, be noted.

40. Annual Report of the Leicestershire Virtual School.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services which provided an overview of work and data of the Virtual School (VS). A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 13', is filed with these minutes.

The Lead Member for Children and Families thanked officers within the Service for the work undertaken to support looked after children and previously looked after children.

RESOLVED:

That the overview of work and data of the Virtual School for the academic year 2023-2024, be noted.

41. Date of next meeting.

RESOLVED:

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 21 January 2025 at 14:00.

2.00 - 3.29 pm  
05 November 2024

CHAIRMAN

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**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –  
21 JANUARY 2025**

**JOINT REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY  
SERVICES AND THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE RESOURCES**

**MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2025/26–2028/29**

**Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to:
  - Provide information on the proposed 2025/26 to 2028/29 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) as it relates to the Children and Family Services (CFS) Department;
  - Request members of the Committee to consider any issues as part of the consultation process and make any recommendations to the Scrutiny Commission and the Cabinet accordingly.

**Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

2. The MTFS is the financial plan that is updated annually to set out the resource intentions of each department and the Council overall. The current MTFS was approved by the County Council in February 2024. The draft MTFS for 2025/26–2028/29 was considered by the Cabinet on 17 December 2024.
3. The Children Act 2004 and Children and Social Work Act 2017 allocate duties to Local Authorities to ensure that children are safeguarded, and their welfare is promoted. This legislation underpins the work of the Children and Family Services Department with respect to looked after children, children in need and children in need of protection.
4. The Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014 place a duty upon Local Authorities to commission education, health and social care services jointly with other key public services like the police and NHS in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area.
5. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 guidance provides a framework for all the relevant legislation and sets out the importance of early identification and response to issues of concern, particularly for vulnerable groups. The 2023 revision focuses on whole-family approaches, and embedding strong, effective and consistent multi-agency child protection practice.

6. The School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2023 set the legislative framework for the Schools Budget and defines the education functions to be met from the Local Authority Budget.
7. Other relevant policies include:
  - Leicestershire County Council's Strategic Plan 2022-2026;
  - Children and Family Services Departmental Plan 2024-2026
  - Achieving Excellence through purposeful practice 2024-2027 Continuous Improvement Plan
  - Voice and Influence Strategy 2024- 2027
  - Placement Sufficiency Statement and Market Position Statement - 2024-26
  - Children and Family Services – Quality Assurance and Improvement Framework (QAIF)
  - Keeping children safe- helping families thrive
  - Children Wellbeing and Schools Bill Dec 2024
  - National Framework for social work practice
  - Kinship Strategy

### **Equality Implications**

8. Under the Equality Act 2010 local authorities are required to have due regard to the need to:
  - a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
  - b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not; and,
  - c) Foster good relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not.
9. Given the nature of services provided, many aspects of the County Council's MTFs will affect service users who have a protected characteristic under equalities legislation. An assessment of the impact of the proposals on the protected groups must be undertaken at a formative stage prior to any final decisions being made. Such assessments will be undertaken in light of the potential impact of proposals and the timing of any proposed changes. Those detailed assessments will be revised as the proposals are developed to ensure decision-makers have information to understand the effect of any service change, policy or practice on people who have a protected characteristic.
10. There are several areas of the budget where there are opportunities for positive benefits for people with protected characteristics both from the additional investment the Council is making into specialist services and to changes to existing services which offer improved outcomes for users whilst also delivering financial savings.
11. If, as a result of undertaking an assessment, potential negative impacts are identified, these will be subject to further assessment.
12. Any savings arising out of a reduction in posts will be subject to the County Council's Organisational Change Policy which requires an Equality Impact Assessment to be undertaken as part of the Action Plan.

### **Human Rights Implications**

13. Where there are potential Human Rights implications arising from the changes proposed, these will be subject to further assessment including consultation with the Council's Legal Services.

### **Background**

14. The MTFs is set out in the report to Cabinet on 17 December 2024, a copy of which has been circulated to all members of the County Council. This report highlights the implications for the Children and Family Services Department.
15. Reports such as this one are being presented to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The Cabinet will then consider the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny bodies and responses from the wider consultation process at its meeting on 7 February 2025. The County Council meets on 19 February 2025 to consider the final MTFs.

### **Strategic Change**

16. Demand for Children and Family Services continues to increase. Growth of £57m is projected over the period of the MTFs, as the requirement to meet CFS needs before intervention. This arises largely from demographic growth and an increased need for costly social care provision types. Residual impacts from the pandemic and the cost of living crisis provide additional challenges which are likely to be far-reaching as the effects have a cumulative impact on families, increasing the likelihood of family breakdown and the need for care services.
17. In response to these pressures, the department has in recent years embarked on several fundamental transformation programmes starting with the Defining Children and Family Services for the Future programmes (DCFSF) which is now embedded and has been expanded into the next phase (DCFSF2), and a similar programme for Transforming SEND and Inclusion in Leicestershire (TSIL). These transformation programmes are focused on continuous improvement across children and family services – ensuring positive outcomes for children and young people and their parents and carers, making the delivery of support sustainable for the future, and responding to financial pressures through the MTFs.
18. Other savings are being delivered through partnerships such as the Children's Innovation Partnership (CIP) with Barnardo's and through service re-design.
19. Several substantial cross-cutting, corporate-led change programmes have emerged to enhance the efficiency of the authority. The Prevention Review programme involves a systemic examination of prevention activities undertaken across the authority, including its partners, aiming to reduce unnecessary expenditures and alleviate demand on higher-cost services. The Customer programme focuses on streamlining and modernizing customer contact through automation and technology. The Sustainable Support Services Programme will ensure the optimal allocation of internal support resources and processes to enhance compliance and reduce costs. The Council is also fully embedding the Ways of Working programme, striking the right balance between home, office, and remote working. This initiative will maximise the utilisation of council

property and technology to drive improvements in productivity and efficiency and cost. All of these programmes will act as key enablers to support the department's service activities in the most cost-effective and efficient manner.

### **Children's Social Care Reform**

20. On November 18 2024, the government published 'Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive'. This policy statement set out the government's approach to rebalancing the children's social care system toward earlier intervention through Family Help and strengthened multi-agency child protection - alongside other efforts to support children to live with kinship carers or in fostering families and fix the broken care market.
21. A summary of the headlines:
  - i. **Wherever possible children should remain with their families and be safely prevented from entering care in the first place**, there is lots of learning to draw from here e.g. youth justice teams, SureStart, Supporting Families, Families First for Children;
  - ii. **Support children to live with kinship or foster carers rather than residential care** via the use of family-based decision making, rolling out kinship reforms and recruiting more foster carers;
  - iii. **Fix the broken care market** via a range of measures to improve competition, regulation and commissioning, as well as shining a light on the levels of profit being made;
  - iv. **A focus on key enablers** including better data and information sharing, spreading evidence-based programmes and the workforce.
22. The Policy Statement sets out a number of legislative changes for Childrens services. Full guidance will be published in the spring that will set out the expectations of local authorities to deliver the key components of the policy paper. Leicestershire's Children and Family Services department is currently working though the Policy Statement and guidance in order to develop its response and delivery of the new requirements. This work will allow the financial implications of such changes to be better understood.

### **Financial Control Measures**

23. Given the increasingly challenging financial outlook, in addition to the plans set out in the MTFS, there is a need to ensure that financial controls are tightly operated, and additional measures introduced 12 months ago to restrict expenditure continue to remain in place.
24. In particular the areas of focus are on:
  - a. Recruitment;
  - b. Use of Agency staff;
  - c. Overtime;
  - d. Mobile phones;
  - e. Establishment of a Corporate Procurement Board;
  - f. Grant funding;
  - g. A range of other non-essential spend including use of consultants, advertising and promotions, conferences, travel/subsistence and levels of stock holdings.



25. Reviews will be continually undertaken within these areas to identify where spend can be reduced and stopped. Also enhanced approvals around areas such as recruitment and procurement will continue to require sign off by Departmental Directors and/or approved by corporate oversight boards.
26. These controls will be kept under review and consideration will be given to stepping them up or down as required, subject to the Council's financial position and expected reliance on reserves.

### **Proposed Revenue Budget**

27. The table below summarises the proposed 2025/26 revenue budget and provisional budgets for the next four years. The proposed 2025/26 revenue budget is shown in detail in Appendix A.

|   | <b>2025/26</b><br><b>£000</b> | <b>2026/27</b><br><b>£000</b> | <b>2027/28</b><br><b>£000</b> | <b>2028/29</b><br><b>£000</b> |
|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Original prior year budget              | 120,902                       | 136,746                       | 143,166                       | 150,716                       |
| Budget Transfers and Adjustments        | 1,144                         | 0                             | 0                             | 0                             |
| Add proposed growth (Appendix B)        | 20,300                        | 10,390                        | 11,470                        | 14,700                        |
| Less proposed savings (Appendix B)      | -5,600                        | -3,970                        | -3,920                        | -3,450                        |
| <b>Total Net Provisional CFS Budget</b> | <b>136,746</b>                | <b>143,166</b>                | <b>150,716</b>                | <b>161,966</b>                |

28. Detailed service budgets have been compiled on the basis of no pay or price inflation. A central contingency will be held which will be allocated to services as necessary. Budget transfers to cover the additional costs associated with the 2024/25 pay award are still to be finalised but will be reflected in the final MTFS to be reported to Cabinet.

### **Other Changes and Transfers**

29. Net budget transfers increases totalling £1.1m were made during the 2024/25 financial year and are now adjusted for in the updated original budget. The majority of this relates to the outputs of the impact and uplift of CFS internal family-based carers in line with governments minimum recommended allowances, and provision provided for from the central inflation contingency.

30. Growth and savings have been categorised in the appendices under the following classification:

- \* item unchanged from previous MTFS;
- \*\* item included in the previous MTFS, but amendments have been made:
- No stars new item.

This star rating is included in the descriptions set out for growth and savings below.

31. Savings have also been classified as Transformation or Departmental and highlighted as "Eff" or "SR" dependent on whether the saving is seen as an efficiency or a service

reduction or a mixture of both. "Inc" denotes those savings that are funding related or to generate more income.

## Growth

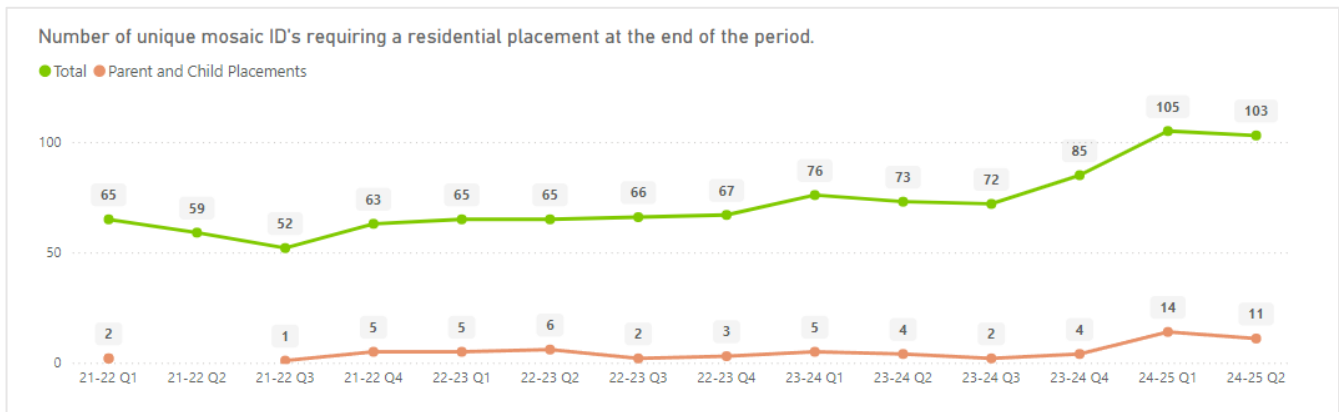
32. Growth over the next four years in the Children and Family Services budget totals £56.86m. This is mainly due to pressures on the Social Care placements budget arising from increased numbers of children requiring very costly residential provision as well as continued increasing demand of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, which results in increased funding pressure when such cohorts transition to care leavers.
33. The budget increases are outlined below with details for each growth item and summarised in the table below and in Appendix B:

| References | <b><u>GROWTH</u></b>  | 2025/26       | 2026/27       | 2027/28       | 2028/29       |
|------------|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
|            |   | £000          | £000          | £000          | £000          |
|            | <b><u>CHILDREN &amp; FAMILY SERVICES</u></b>                              |               |               |               |               |
| ** G1      | Demographic growth & increasing cost of Social Care Placement mix         | 15,000        | 23,300        | 33,000        | 44,500        |
| ** G2      | Front-line social care staff - increased caseloads                        | 500           | 500           | 750           | 750           |
| ** G3      | Post Transforming SEND & Inclusion In Leicestershire(TSIL) sustainability | 900           | 900           | 900           | 900           |
| ** G4      | Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) - increased demand/cost      | 3,250         | 5,500         | 8,000         | 11,200        |
| * G5       | Demand management   | -100          | -260          | -1,240        | -1,240        |
| G6         | Children In Need Financial Support - Section 17/23                        | 750           | 750           | 750           | 750           |
|            | <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>20,300</b> | <b>30,690</b> | <b>42,160</b> | <b>56,860</b> |

### **\*\* G1 - Social Care Placements £15.0m 2025/26 rising to £44.5m by 2028/29**

34. The children's social care placements budget comprises of a variety of settings to look after children as part of a statutory duty to safeguard children who may be at risk of harm.
35. This significant growth pressure relates largely to the increasing cost of children's social care placement mix, in particular due to the change in demand / numbers in relation to children in residential provision.
36. The MTFS for this financial year assumes budgeted residential numbers by March 2025 to be at 86 children (this includes parent and child placements). Trend and demand analysis used for setting the current in year budgets were based on analysis between April 2021 to January 2024, and indicated that the budgeted assumption of net demand of residential numbers growing to 86 by March 2025 to be reasonable and reflective of data-driven demand analysis. However, between the period of January 2024 and current position, residential numbers increased rapidly to over 100 children.
37. Latest projections, based on current trajectory plans of children, suggest children in residential provision could reach 108 by end of March 2025 (26% increase vs budgeted MTFS 24/25 projection). Parent and child placements are also an increasing demand pressure compared to previous financial years. These are court ordered placements that require the local authority to keep babies with their parent pending assessments in court proceeding. The financial impact overall on this budget due to the change in demand is very significant when projected forward over the refreshed MTFS period. The graph

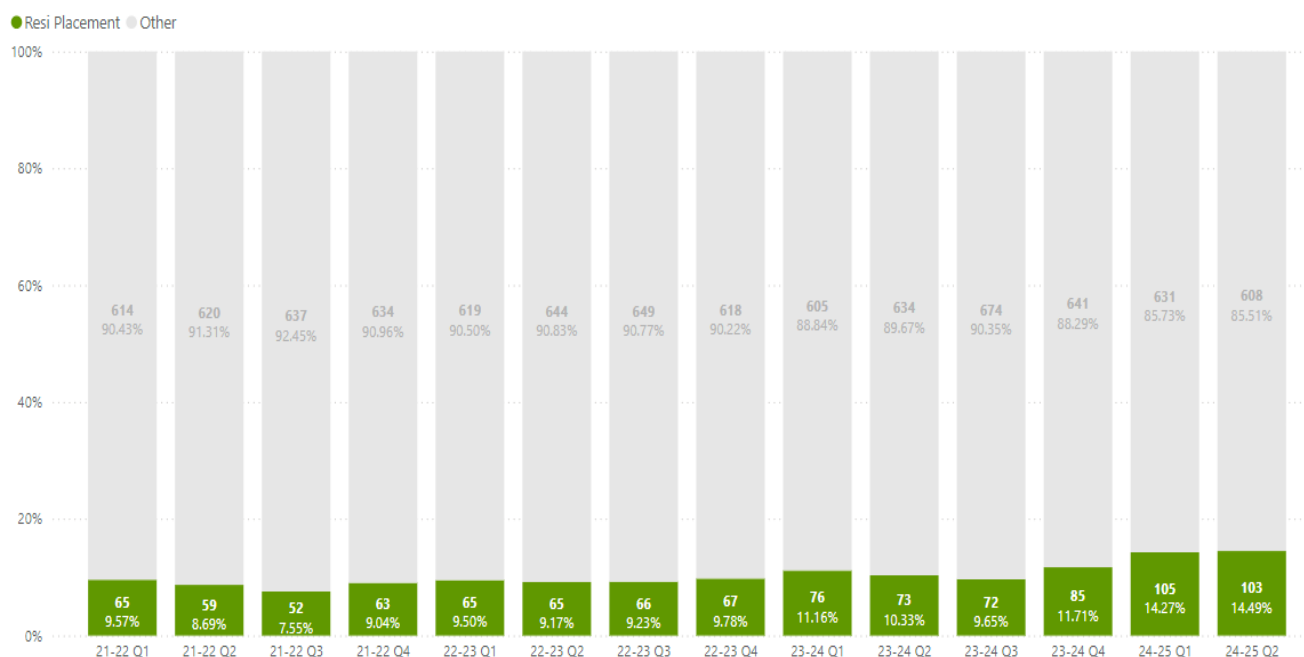
below illustrates the changing demand/numbers over time between Quarter 1 2021/22 and Quarter 2 2024/25.



38. The weekly cost of such provision is very costly at an average of circa £6k per week but can vary a lot depending on needs. The three key contributing factors impacting the cost of provision are:
- Cohort of children (those with the most appropriate fit for residential care): The department is seeing an increase in the complexity of young people taken into care and requiring a residential placement. This includes young people with complex mental health difficulties, violence and aggression as result of experiencing trauma, criminal exploitation, risk of harm to self and others, controlling behaviour, repeat missing episodes and court ordered deprivation of liberty.
  - Age of children entering residential provision: The rolling average age of those children entering residential provision as their first placement type has also decreased from an average 14 years in early 2021 to 10 years now. The age range of children and young people in residential settings is therefore widening, and in some cases children and young people may be in a residential setting for longer (having started to access it at a younger age).
  - Market pressures and sufficiency: A lack of provider capacity and volatility in the market, has significantly increased the cost of new placements compared to those placements ending. This is particularly challenging when searching for placements for children with a range of complex needs 'unattractive' to the market (needs) and results in the use of high cost (£12k+/ per week per child) interim provisions until behaviour stabilises or another placement can be found. Lack of step-down options from residential provision is also an issue. There are currently around nine children who have been waiting long periods to 'step down' to family-based placements that cannot be found. This is compounded by the low recruitment pipeline for mainstream carers, locally and nationally, which particularly impacts on availability of placements for older children and those with more complex needs.
39. There is a national trend of increasing numbers of children and young people in care. Leicestershire's looked after children (LAC) numbers have followed a similar trajectory and expected to see a stable to steady increase over the refreshed MTFS period. However, the placement mix of those LAC is resulting in significantly increased costs. The graph below shows how residential numbers (Inclusive of Parent and Child) as a

percentage of LAC in Leicestershire has increased over time to currently 14.49%. In comparison, the cost of this cohort equates to circa 60% of the total children's social care placement budget.

Percentage of Residential Placements Against LAC at Period End



40. The Department has been continually focused on preventing (where is it right for the child to do so), children coming into care and reducing the time that children and young people are in care. The overall rate of Children in Care per 10k 0–17-year-old population (50 per 10,000) remains lower than comparator authorities (mean of 60 per 10,000) – see table below.

|         | Gloucestershire | Warwickshire | Central Bedfordshire | Worcestershire | Hampshire | Essex | North Somerset | Staffordshire | Cheshire East | Leicestershire | Mean |
|---------|-----------------|--------------|----------------------|----------------|-----------|-------|----------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|------|
| 2019/20 | 57              | 65           | 51                   | 70             | 57        | 35    | 54             | 73            | 70            | 47             | 55   |
| 2020/21 | 62              | 73           | 51                   | 73             | 59        | 35    | 50             | 74            | 67            | 50             | 57   |
| 2021/22 | 66              | 69           | 51                   | 76             | 61        | 36    | 47             | 77            | 67            | 49             | 58   |
| 2022/23 | 67              | 64           | 58                   | 84             | 66        | 37    | 51             | 81            | 72            | 48             | 60   |
| 2023/24 | 65              | 64           | 54                   | 87             | 67        | 36    | 58             | 76            | 66            | 50             | 60   |

41. As mitigation, placements and their costs are continuously reviewed within the department and further investment is being made to build LCC owned residential homes with care provided in partnership with Barnardo's as part of the Children's Innovation Partnership (CIP).

**\*\* G2 – Front Line Social Care Staff – Increased Demand and Caseload Management  
£0.5m 2025/26 rising to £0.75m by 2027/28**

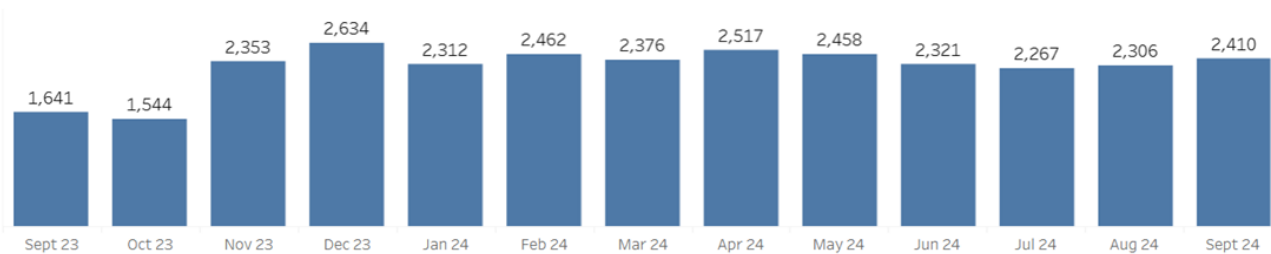
42. Investment in additional front-line social care staff capacity is required to ensure appropriate caseload levels and to continue to meet statutory duties. Assumptions around caseloads and the resources required in each team were reviewed as part of the Defining Children and Family Services for the Future programme and the social care pathway continues to be reviewed to ensure the most appropriate resources are engaged at the right time.
43. This growth is to provide for increases in demand in relation to the First Response Central Duty service. The Service has experienced an increased demand in terms of contacts and an associated increase in referrals since November 2023. Due to timing, this pressure and subsequent actions have not been built into the MTFs for Financial year 2024/25 so is currently being reflected in year as an unfunded budget pressure as part of in year budget monitoring.



### Completed Contacts

Data updated to end of 24/10/2024

Contacts per month, progressed to request



44. A substantial amount of screening time is now spent capturing and responding to partner requests for information – this is an important foundation for multi-agency safeguarding and will continue to be a significant part of the role of the front door.
45. At the same time increases in joint working in response to harm outside the home as set out in Working Together 2023 have seen increased joint responses, when historically single agency police action may have been expected. The service has also applied strong and clear responses to neglect and is careful not to use consent as a barrier to take decisive action. Concern about poor home conditions or neglect including anonymous referrals, are processed quickly for assessment so that the child can be seen. Further work to strengthen application of consent alongside review of strategy discussion threshold, and to reduce re-referrals has formed part of the ongoing strengthening work.
46. The most significant impact of this work has been the increase in contacts being processed in Screening. Each contact requires uploading into the service's line of business system - Mosaic, oversight by a social work manager and any further screening activity to test against the statutory threshold. Once this activity is completed it requires further oversight by a manager to confirm outcomes including those that lead to No Further Action.
47. This is a complicated process that requires different roles to work in sync across Business Support, support staff, social workers, senior practitioners and managers. It is

a process that has benefited from substantial changes over the course of the year with work refocused into Mosaic and roles and responsibilities of workers now better aligned.

48. The aim is to provide timely responses to partner agencies, and to identify those children that require interventions and direct them to the correct pathway. For children exposed to safeguarding risk this means urgent responses to escalate to a strategy discussion, and timely completion of a social work assessment.
49. The increase in contacts has shown further impact more generally on number of referrals and assessment being completed in the system. Both manager and social work capacity is required to respond at each stage of the process.
50. The Department continues to have the highest number of referrals recorded when comparing average monthly figures from 2019 together with increased percentages of those referrals converting into Assessments.

| <b><u>Year</u></b> | <b><u>Average monthly referrals</u></b> | <b><u>% conversion to Assessment</u></b> |
|--------------------|---|--|
| 2019               | 434                                     | 86%                                      |
| 2020               | 464                                     | 91%                                      |
| 2021               | 436                                     | 89%                                      |
| 2022               | 411                                     | 89%                                      |
| 2023               | 452                                     | 81%                                      |
| 2024               | 515                                     | 88%                                      |

51. It is essential to meet such statutory responsibilities that the Service has sufficient capacity through budgeted growth to respond to demand – and that this is used effectively, and timely responses are in place to prevent delay in responses impacting on the safety of children.

**\*\*G3 – Post Transforming SEND and Inclusion in Leicestershire (TSIL) sustainability - £0.9m 2025/26**

52. The TSIL programme is now well into its ‘implementation phase’, with the majority of the designed changes having been implemented across the target areas – ranging from specific teams in LCC to the entirety of the SEND system in Leicestershire. This will deliver significant improvements and savings. The programme predominantly aims to deliver solutions to this for new entrants into the SEND system, and not to inappropriately change provision for a child.
53. The TSIL programme has considered workload and performance within the Special Educational Needs Assessment (SENA) Service. The service is responsible for

delivering the local authorities statutory duty under the SEND Code of Practice to carry out statutory assessment and review of children and young people who have an EHCP from age 0 – 25, write Education Health and Care (EHCP's) plans and identify and secure the provision to meet the needs and are key contributors to meeting the 20 week statutory timeline for assessments but are dependent upon other advice givers to do so.

54. The review identified that the current model was failing to achieve statutory duties;
- i. 1% of new EHCP's were delivered on time
  - ii. 10% of EHCP amendments were completed in the required 12 week
  - iii. 33% of annual reviews were completed
  - iv. 12% of phase transfers were completed on time
55. A review of the SENA service considered 'ways of working' as well as capacity. A new operating model has created three specialist teams focusing on assessments, reviews and placements. This will improve productivity by creating expert teams in each of these areas and is estimated to improve productivity by c30%. The review also considered capacity from a performance perspective but also the current position of agency staff.
56. Approved growth in financial year 2024/25 enabled the service to improve KPI performance to successfully deliver cost reductions and processes continue to be reviewed and are now more robust with an ongoing focus on continuous improvement. This additional growth for financial year 2025/26 onwards will stabilise new processes and ensure sufficient permanently budgeted capacity exists across the service to manage projected demand, as well as sustain and improve current KPI performance. Workflow tracking will allow the effective management of staffing levels to respond to peaks and troughs in service demand as well as changing trends with a clear link between staffing needs and service volume.
57. Under the Schools and Early Years Finance (England) regulations the costs of the SEN assessment service falls to the local authority budget. However, the financial benefit is through reduced placement costs which, under the same regulations, fall to be met from High Needs Designated Schools Grant (HNDSG). Whilst local authorities cannot directly contribute to DSG without the permission of the Secretary State, this position clearly sets out the contradictory nature of the SEN funding system.
58. The achievement of some TSIL benefits is also dependent upon the delivery of the above but also sufficient capacity to engage proactively with parents and schools, managing performance through case tracking and understanding specialist provision particularly the capacity they have and the children they can best support. To respond to this position and mitigate its impact on both the delivery of statutory duties and programme savings this growth is considered necessary to ensure budgeted capacity aligns with current service need within the MTFs, with such service infrastructure being one of the key enablers in achieving the £52.1m of total cost reductions over the next four years built into the MTFs against projected high needs spend.

**\*\*G4 – Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) – Increased demand and cost £3.25m 2025/26 rising to £11.2m 2028/29**

59. The projected financial pressure in relation to the Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) budget is largely due to the continued increase in UASC in care and care leavers, which has required a greater resource requirement to meet their needs.

The impact of the development of dispersal hotels and the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) protocol development has resulted in an increase in the number of children who are UASC being accommodated by Leicestershire. Local authorities are mandated to receive UASC through the NTS if they are below their 0.1% threshold, which is calculated from the number of UASC funding claims (for under-18s) made by that local authority, and the latest ONS estimate of that local authority's total child population at that time. In Leicestershire's case, the 0.1% threshold currently equates to 140 Looked After Children UASC aged under 18. No consideration is given to the number of UASC care leavers aged 18+, which means the Council continues to have more demand for care leaver services and the current funding for care leavers decreases, but the demand grows. The Council is working with the East Midlands Council's Strategic Migration Partnership which continues to challenge the situation with the Home Office.

60. The number of UASC care leavers is projected to grow to over 200 by the end of the financial year, which includes a number of UASC Looked After Children who will have turned 18 in the next six months. In addition to the UASC care leaver numbers growing, the Council will also receive more referrals from the NTS as it is likely to fall below the 0.1% threshold level of 140 Looked after Children numbers. Overall, this is a significant demand and financial pressure. The table below shows despite a reduction in the weekly unit cost, the increase in demand over time, which is more pertinent for the UASC care leaver cohort when funding drops to circa £270 per week per child supported (circa £1k p/w when UASC in care), and therefore an increasing budget pressure over the period of the refreshed MTFS.

|        | UASC<br>In Care<br>(Under<br>18's) | Weekly Unit<br>Cost of<br>Comissioned<br>Placement<br>where needed | %<br>Annual<br>Change<br>(Service<br>Users) | %<br>Annual<br>Change<br>(Unit<br>Cost) | UASC –<br>Care<br>Leaver<br>(Over<br>18's) | Weekly Unit<br>Cost of<br>Comissioned<br>Placement<br>where<br>needed | %<br>Annual<br>Change<br>(Service<br>Users) | %<br>Annual<br>Change<br>(Unit<br>Cost) |
|--------|------------------------------------|--|---|---|--|---|---|---|
| Mar-22 | 60                                 | £860   |   |   | 69   | £790  |   |   |
| Mar-23 | 97                                 | £1,060   | 62%   | 23%                                     | 112  | £920  | 62%   | 16%                                     |
| Mar-24 | 132                                | £1,130   | 36%   | 7%                                      | 163  | £1,070  | 46%   | 16%                                     |
| Sep-24 | 95                                 | £1,000   | -28%  | -12%                                    | 198  | £800  | 21%   | -25%                                    |

**\*G5 – Demand Management- £0.1m 2025/26 rising to -£1.24m by 2028/29**

61. A growth reduction target to further mitigate the risk of demand-led growth. It is anticipated that through a combination of existing change programmes, and business as usual activities, with a strong focus and alignment of the national rollout of family help – a whole-family preventative service, that risk factors can be pro-actively managed as a means to mitigate demand.

**G6 –Children In Need Financial Support (Section 17/23) £0.75m from 2025/26**

62. Under the Children Act 1989, under section 17 and 23, financial support may be provided to children in need, when assessed threshold levels have been met fulfilling the local authority's duty to 'safeguard and promote welfare of children who have been assessed as in need'. Without such support it is very likely this could escalate needs of



the children, and subsequently greater risk of the children entering the care system at greater costs. Updated practice standards are now fully embedded across all services which acts as the internal framework which sets out eligibility criteria, and the approval and governance process which needs to be followed. MTFS growth will allow current and projected spend to align more closely with budget, which to date is currently significantly overspent.

## Savings

63. Details of proposed savings for the local authority budget are set out in the table below and Appendix C and total £5.6m in 2025/26 and £16.94m over the next four years.
64. Additionally, the MTFS aims to ensure sustainable services for children and young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN) within the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Cost reductions of £52.083m are forecast over the period of the MTFS but an annual deficit continues.

| References                                   |     |         |  | 2025/26       | 2026/27       | 2027/28        | 2028/29        |
|--|-----|---------|--|---------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
|  |     |         |  | £000          | £000          | £000           | £000           |
| <b><u>SAVINGS</u></b>                        |     |         |  |               |               |                |                |
| <b><u>CHILDREN &amp; FAMILY SERVICES</u></b> |     |         |  |               |               |                |                |
| **   | CF1 | Eff     | Innovation Partnership - Creation and investment in Internal Residential provision                                     | -750          | -1,250        | -1,750         | -2,000         |
| **   | CF2 | Eff     | Departmental establishment modelling / Re-design   | -390          | -390          | -390           | -390           |
| **   | CF3 | Eff/SR  | Defining CFS For the Future Programme - Phase 2 - Social Care Workforce Strategy (Recruitment and Retention)           | -250          | -500          | -900           | -900           |
| **   | CF4 | Eff     | Reduced Care Costs through growth of internal family based placements  | -150          | -450          | -750           | -1,000         |
| **   | CF5 | Eff/Inc | Smarter commissioning, Procurement and Demand Management - Social Care Placements and externally commissioned services |               |               |                |                |
|  |     |         | Strand 1 - Contain & Minimise impact of market cost pressures for children placements - external providers             | -910          | -2,180        | -3,900         | -6,300         |
|  |     |         | Strand 2 - Review of care packages /cost (Pro-active and Reactive) ensuring value for money and effectiveness          | -1,400        | -2,050        | -2,450         | -2,850         |
|  |     |         | Strand 3 - Development of a wide range of other accommodation and support options.                                     | -1,000        | -1,250        | -1,500         | -1,500         |
|  |     |         | Strand 4 - Increased Partner Income  | -750          | -1,500        | -1,850         | -2,000         |
|  |     |         | <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>-5,600</b> | <b>-9,570</b> | <b>-13,490</b> | <b>-16,940</b> |

The following paragraphs provide the detail of each savings item;

### **\*\* CF1 (Eff) Children's Innovation Partnership - Residential re-design – Creation and investment in internal Residential provision - £0.75m in 2025/26 rising to £2.0m by 2028/29**

65. This programme is designed to improve the outcomes of children and young people in care in Leicestershire and enable the Department to ensure effective provision to the most vulnerable children and at an agreed cost. This will allow for children to be placed in the right placements first time and receive the most appropriate support tailored to their needs and improve placement stability as well as delivering efficiency savings.
66. With an increasing shortage of residential placements for children and young people, market pressures driving costs and an increasingly profit driven market, the appetite is for local authorities to invest in their own residential capacity. The Department for Education (DFE) are encouraging this with match funding capital investments.

67. The overall ambition is to create eight homes providing provision for 23 child placements servicing a wide range of different need types. This reduces the over-reliance on the private sector and providing support to children and young people in a holistic way, keeping the number of children and young people requiring residential care within Leicestershire, close to their families and services like school, CAMHS, their social workers. It is anticipated by end of the financial year 2025/26 all homes be open and operational with children placed in them
68. The profile of homes will specifically focus provision type aligned to emotional and behavioural disorders, parent and child assessments and other complex needs.
69. Investment of £5.96m has been included in the capital programme over the life of this programme of which there is £2m approved grant funding from the DFE. Based on the market prices of external placements – the current profiled savings profile is viewed as realistic and achievable based on increased internal sufficiency.
70. To date, the current pipeline and progress with this programme is listed below
- a. Three Emotional and behavioural disorder (EBD) homes – match funded by Department of Education. First two homes opened May 2023 and November 2024, with the third expected to open January 2025;
  - b. One Parent and Child residential home- opened January 2024;
  - c. One EBD Assessment residential home- match funded by the Department of Education opened December 2024;
  - d. One Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)/ Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) residential home- match funded by the Department of Education due to open January 2025 (*currently awaiting final OFSTED visit date*);
  - e. One Overnight short breaks (OSB) residential home - match funded by Department for Education is currently being renovated and expected to open late March 2025;
  - f. One complex need home - match funded by Department for Education, to open by the end July 2025.

**\*\*CF2 (Eff) Departmental Establishment Modelling/ Redesign - £0.39m from 2025/26**

71. In response to national and local challenges recruiting and retaining social workers and increasing numbers of Children In Need, this programme has been set up to review roles and responsibilities across the care pathway rebalancing workloads as well as thresholds for support so that support is provided for families with the most appropriate resources, resulting in a greater use of non-social work qualified staff to support families deemed to be children in need. The outputs will contribute to the above saving target by up to £200k from April 25.
72. The remainder of the savings will arise from other service re-designs which have taken place this financial year with the full year impact in terms of savings being realised from April 25. Such re-design and reviews include structure changes to safeguarding and practice excellence service areas seeking to deliver current functions and activities effectively, but as efficiently as possible.

**\*\*CF3 (Eff/SR) Defining CFS for the Future Phase 2 (DCFSF2) – Social Care Workforce Strategy (Recruitment and Retention) £0.25m in 2025/26 increasing to £0.9m by 2027/28**

73. As part Defining Children and Family Services for the Future programme 2 (DCFSF2) was the need for a review of the social care workforce strategy. In doing so, one of the key outputs was stronger focus on recruiting international social workers, increasing the number of newly qualified social workers and ensuring a fit for purpose and attractive offer exists for social workers wanting to be take up employment in Leicestershire. Together with recent social care reform announcements around new agency employment rules which will further aim to reduce the over-reliance on the agency market, this savings plan will therefore target a 50% reduction of the number of social worker agency staff over the refreshed MTFS period.

**\*\*CF4 (Eff) Reducing Care Costs through growth of internal family-based placements - £0.15m in 2025/26 rising to £1m by 2028/29**

74. This saving programme is focused on outputs which will avoid placements entering more costly provision, primarily in the external market;
- Increase of internal fostering placements;
  - Utilisation of internal foster placements;
  - Increase of Special Guardianship Orders (SGO).
75. For example, the Service works to achieve targets for recruitment of foster carers, specialist foster carers and other types of carers such as special guardians. The principles of this activity include ensuring that children are living within or close to their communities, have access to their local resources and reduced spend on more costly services through Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA).

**CF5 (Eff) Smarter commissioning, Procurement and Demand Management – Social Care Placements and externally commissioned services - £4.1m in 2025/26 rising to £12.65m by 2028/29**

76. The sufficiency duty (section 22G of the Children Act 1989) requires local authorities to do more than simply ensure that accommodation be 'sufficient' in terms of the number of beds provided. They must have regard to the benefits of securing a range of accommodation through several providers. The accommodation must also meet the needs of children. In addition to this, there is a duty to delivery statutory services either through internal provision or through commissioned services.
77. CFS delivers these duties through the CFS Commissioning Service. Functions include brokerage (search for, match and procurement of placements on and off framework for children in foster care, residential provision, supported accommodation and independent special schools), quality assurance of these provision, stimulating the market through an annually produced Market Position and Sufficiency statement and related activity to secure beds and other services e.g. through mini competitions, block contracts, invitations to tender. The Service is also responsible for ensuring compliant spend throughout the department, achieving value for money and compliance of delivery of all these contracts.
78. The most significant area of growth in children's services is in the cost of residential placements. This issue is reflected nationally because of the spiralling costs of placements for children in residential provision. This issue is in part linked to the increased complexity of children for whom the department needs to find placements, but in the main is linked to market pressures.

79. To impact and mitigate future growth in the CFS department there is greater need to have a clear focus on how the Department commissions placements and exploration of other commissioning models, alongside the development of in-house provision. This also includes the need for greater focus on brokerage/negotiation, quality assurance and contract management.
80. This savings workstream can be broken down into four different strands:
- a. Strand 1 to deliver £6.3m savings – This is to be achieved through containing and minimise impact of market cost pressures for children placements that are with external providers. One of the key activities to achieve this will be by having a robust and consistent process, with the appropriate governance that can review and challenge the appropriateness of any annual provider uplift requests based on new changing market cost pressures.
  - b. Strand 2 to deliver £2.85m savings – This is to be achieved through a regular review of care packages and cost, ensuring value for money and effectiveness. This will include both a pro-active and reactive review of all residential and supported accommodation child placements, to identify opportunities to reduce placement cost, facilitate appropriate step-downs, or review of support based on children and young people needs.
  - c. Strand 3 to deliver £1.5m savings – This is to be achieved through development of a wide range of other accommodation and support options. For example, work to ensure that accommodation and support models meet current and forecast demand and need. This includes considering if there are alternative (and potentially more cost-effective) models that could be commissioned, continuing to refine internal commissioning processes (and to reflect any changes to ways of working with the market) and ensuring that sufficiency needs are reflected in priority procurement planning and activity.
  - d. Strand 4 to deliver £2m savings – This is to be achieved through increased partner income through work to ensure that where appropriate, funding contributions from partners is agreed and contributions received to better reflect the role and responsibilities of partner agencies in supporting the needs of children as appropriate and required.

### **Savings Under Development**

81. The financial climate for the Council, along with other Local Authorities remains challenging and to bridge the significant funding shortfall projected in future years; each department is required to identify additional savings. Outlines of the proposals have been included as Appendix E, Savings under Development. Once business cases have been completed and appropriate consultation and assessment processes undertaken, savings will be confirmed and included in a future MTFs. This is not a definitive list of all potential savings over the next four-years, just the current ideas.
82. Considering the ongoing and increasing scale of the challenge faced by the Council to balance the MTFs, existing financial control measures are continuing to be reinforced to ensure a tight focus on eliminating non-essential spend. Inevitably further savings

beyond those identified in this report will be needed and where possible included in the final MTFS.

### Dedicated Schools Grant

83. For 2025/26 the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) continues calculated in four separate blocks as set out below;

| Funding Block  | Areas Funded  | Basis for Settlement  |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Schools Block<br/>Est £564.021m<br/>consisting of;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School formula funding £561.885m</li> <li>• School Growth which of £2.136m</li> </ul> | <p>Individual budgets for maintained schools and academies.</p> <p>Growth funding for the revenue costs of delivering additional mainstream school places and to meet the local authority's duty to ensure a sufficient number of school places. This funding meets pre opening costs and the cost of the revenue budget for the first 7 months of opening, at that point funding is within school formula funding</p> <p>DSG is notionally allocated to Leicestershire for all maintained schools and academies. A locally agreed funding formula is applied to this to determine school budgets Leicestershire fully replicates the NFF. For maintained schools budgets are allocated directly by the local authority, for academies the funding is recouped from the DSG settlement by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) who then directly funds academies.</p> | <p>The NFF continues to attribute units of funding to pupil characteristics. The grant settlement is based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the aggregate of pupil led characteristics for each individual school:</li> <li>• a block allocation for school led factors.</li> </ul> <p>These allocations are required to be fully delegated to schools, the only exception being any elements of de-delegated funding for maintained school agreed by the schools Forum following consultation with schools.</p> <p>The NFF means that all local authorities receive the same amount of funding for a number of pupil related characteristics. Differences in funding levels relate to the incidence and proportion of pupil characteristics within schools rather than differing funding levels.</p> <p>The allocation of funding to support new school growth will be retained to meet the future costs of new and expanding schools.</p> <p>In respect of school formula funding this represents a cash increase of 8.1%</p> |

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Central School Services Block<br/>£4.361m</p>                  | <p>This funds historic financial commitments related to schools such as premature retirement costs, some budgets related to schools that are centrally retained e.g. admissions, servicing the schools Forum and school copyright licences. This block now includes funding from the retained duties element of the former Education Services Grant for the responsibilities that local authorities have for all pupils such as school place planning and asset management.</p> | <p>This is distributed through a per pupil allocation basis and is retained by the local authority.</p> <p>The funding allocation for some historic financial commitments is being reduced by 20% annually as the DfE have an expectation that these financial commitments will naturally expire. Local authorities will continue to receive sufficient funding to meet school historic premature retirement costs.</p>   |
| <p>High Needs Block provisional allocation<br/><br/>£116.636m</p> | <p>Funds special schools and other specialist providers for high needs pupils and students, the pupil referral unit and support services for high needs pupils including high needs students in further education provision.</p> <p>As with the Schools Block this includes funding for special academies and post 16 providers which is recouped by the ESFA who then directly fund academies.</p> <p>Confirmation of the 2025/26 grant is not expected until March 2025.</p>  | <p>The formula is based upon population of 0–19-year-olds, rather than the 0-25-year-old population it supports, and proxy indicators for additional educational need including deprivation, ill health, disability and low attainment. Also included is an element based on historic spend. The formula also includes a funding floor to ensure that local authorities do not receive a funding reduction as a result of the introduction of the formula. Leicestershire receives £2.8m (2%) through this element.</p> |
| <p>Early Years Est<br/>£109.191m</p>                              | <p>Funds the Free Entitlement to Early Education (FEEE) for 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds and an element of the early learning and childcare service. The entitlement to FEEE expands to 30 hours for eligible working parents of children 9 months – 2 years old from September 2025.</p>   | <p>The allocation is based on individual pupil characteristics and converted to a rate per hour of participation. Leicestershire receives the lowest rate of £5.71 per hour for 3- and 4-year-olds and the 2nd lowest rate of £7.53 per hour for 2-year-olds and</p>  |

|                  |   |                                |
|------------------|---|--------------------------------|
|                  | <p>The grant is based on the universal hourly base rate plus additional needs measured with reference to free school meals, disability living allowance and English as an additional language.</p> <p>The initial settlement is based on the January 2024 census. The grant will be updated in July 2025 for the 2025 January census and again in June 2026 for the January 2026 census. The final grant will not be confirmed until June 2025.</p> | £10.18 per hour for under 2's. |
| <b>£794.209m</b> | <b>2025/26 Estimated DSG</b>  |                                |

84. The 2025/26 MTFs continues to set the overall Schools Budget as a net nil budget at local authority level. However, an annual funding gap remains of £15.32m on the High Needs Block which will be carried forward as an overspend against the grant. Cumulatively the deficit on the High Needs Block is forecast at £79.4m for 2025/26, rising to £116.2m in 2028/29.
85. An overall deficit in DSG of £67.5m in 2025/26 rising to £108.8m in 2028/29 is forecast as a result of a surplus in the school block arising from funding to meet the revenue costs of new and expanding schools growth set aside for use in future years.

### **Schools Block**

86. School funding remains delivered by the National Funding Formula (NFF) which funds all pupils at the same rate irrespective of the authority in which they are educated. The NFF uses pupil characteristics each with a nationally set funding rate to generate school level funding to local authorities, as such all local authorities are funded equally. However, within the NFF only the per pupil entitlement is universal to all pupils with other factors reflecting the incidence of additional pupil needs such as deprivation and low prior attainment. Whilst all authorities are funded equally funding levels between local authorities and individual schools within those local authorities vary purely as a result of the proportion of pupils with additional needs. Nationally basic per pupil funding accounts for 74.6%, additional needs 17.8% and school led and premises funding 7.6% of the NFF.
87. The 2025/26 Schools Block DSG settlement is £561.885, an overall cash increase of 8.4%.
88. Whilst the NFF for schools is based upon the 2024 School Census, funding for local authorities is based upon the pupil characteristics recorded in the 2023 school census. Any increase in pupils eligible for additional funding, i.e. free school meals is unfunded

and as for 2024/25 may result in it not being possible to meet the cost of fully delivering the NFF from the Schools Block DSG. Initial modelling identifies a funding gap created by an increase in the number of pupil eligible for Free School meals and pupils with English as an Additional Language. The national regulations allow for an adjustment to the Minimum Funding Guarantee which can be used in conjunction with capping and scaling within the school funding formula to ensure the budgets for schools are affordable within the Schools Block DSG. This was required for 2024/25 and will be required to 2025/26 will be additional to the capping and scaling required to enact the funding transfer from the school block to the high needs block.

89. Additionally, within the Schools Block, but separate to funding for individual schools, local authorities receive funding for the initial revenue costs of commissioning additional primary and secondary school places which is confirmed at £2.1m. This funding meets the costs of school growth currently within the system that is not fully completed, largely new schools not yet with their full contingent of year groups, and school expansions undertaken from September 2025. Once new places for September 2025 have been confirmed this will be combined with revised expectations on when new schools arising from housing growth will open to assess the full call on the grant.

### **School Funding Formula**

90. Nationally schools will receive a minimum per pupil increase for 2025/26 of +2.23% per pupil and includes provision for the full year cost of the 2024 Teacher pay award. The settlement identifies the increase for Leicestershire schools is +1.88% for primary and +3.36% per secondary pupil and will be reduced further should the transfer of funding from the schools to high needs block be approved. Final school budgets will differ to the school level data published by the DfE in November as allocations are updated to reflect the 2024 census data, premises funding outside the NFF are added and any capping and scaling is applied.
91. The DfE has taken further steps towards the full implementation of the NFF in 2025/26 by requiring local authorities to be within + /- 2.5% of the nationally set NFF levels and only use these factors within their local funding formula. This has required Leicestershire to seek permission to continue to fund rental costs in some small schools and maintain the approach to funding schools undertaking and affected by age range changes by adjusting pupil numbers which has been in place since 2013. With these exceptions, assuming approval from the DfE, the Leicestershire funding formula remains fully in accordance with the NFF.
92. Primary schools will receive a minimum of £4,955 per pupil and Secondary schools £6,465, the minimum per pupil funding level is mandatory and a schools block transfer cannot reduce funding below this level. 37 primary schools and nine secondary school are expected to be funded at the funding floor (2024/25 34 primary and one secondary) respectively leaving them vulnerable to changes in future levels of DfE protection. As the funding guarantee is at a per pupil level, schools with decreases in pupil numbers will see an overall decrease in budget allocation. Reducing numbers in primary schools are being seen as a result of an decreasing birth rate and is resulting in financial vulnerability that cannot be addressed purely by changes to internal staffing structures.
93. The uplift in the NFF values includes funding to meet the full year costs of the 2024 Teachers' pay award. There is no indication of whether there will be additional funding



for any 2025 pay increase and the cost of meeting the local government pay settlement falls to be met within NFF allocations.

### **Schools Block Transfer**

94. Schools were consulted on a transfer of 0.5% funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block of the DSG for 2025/26 and then annually with funding allocated to a SEND Investment Fund to deliver focused and targeted actions to increase capacity in mainstream schools to support and meet needs of pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs which is significant driver in the continued increase in EHCP's.
95. Schools Forum did not approve the proposed transfer and the establishment of SEND Investment Fund at their meeting on 4 November 2024. On 22 November 2024 Cabinet gave authorisation to the Director of Children and Family Services to seek a decision from the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State has subsequently approved the proposals as set out in consultation.
96. To enact the transfer, it is necessary to cap the gains in funding to individual schools between 2024/25 and 2025/26 but ensure that schools receive the national mandatory minimum per pupil funding levels. Given the timing of the Secretary of State decision, the receipt of the data from the DfE required to build school budgets, the complexity of the task particularly given the affordability gap and the timescales set by the DfE for the completion of school budgets it has not been possible to determine the full impact on individual schools at the time of writing this report.
97. Local authorities are required to submit their funding formula to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) by 22 January 2025 in order that the proposals can be validated as compliant with financial regulations which is required in order to release school budgets for maintained schools in February and inform the budgets issued by the ESFA to academies in March.

### **High Needs**

98. The structure of the High Needs NFF is unchanged from 2024/25. The provisional settlement at £116.6m and is a 7% increase per head of population. However, it should be noted that the population factor accounts for just £43.8m (38%) of the settlement figure meaning that 62% of the formula, and funding for special schools, is subject to no uplift unlike the schools NFF where all funding factors have been increased for 2025/26.
99. Leicestershire remains at the funding floor i.e. the application of the high needs NFF would generate a lower settlement without this protection. The NFF remains unresponsive to changes in the overall SEN population and does not take into account the number of children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP):
  - £10.1m (9%) of the NFF is driven by the number pupils in special school and independent school places;
  - £30.1m (26%) of the formula relates to historic spend from 2017/18;
  - £2.8m (2%) of the formula is from the funding floor.

100. Future government policy in respect of SEND has yet to be confirmed. However, the Policy Note that presents the 2025/26 funding arrangements sets out that the DfE are working on a range of reforms which will establish a mainstream school and college environment that is more inclusive for children and young people who require specialist SEND support. There is no indication of whether the high needs NFF will be reviewed.

101. Cost reduction savings totalling £52.1m are built into the MTFS and fall into three areas:

|  | 2025/26<br>£,000 | 2026/27<br>£,000 | 2027/28<br>£,000 | 2028/29<br>£,000 |
|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| <b>TSIL Programme</b>  |                  |                  |                  |                  |
| Reduction in the number of EHCP Needs Assessment Requests    | -714             | -1,285           | -1,832           | -2,271           |
| Reduced Mainstream EHCP Cost                                 | -974             | -1,660           | -2,340           | -2,737           |
| Reduction in the number of Early Years Specialist Starts     | -1,312           | -1,945           | -2,584           | -3,230           |
| Reduction in the number of Non Early Years Specialist Starts | -3,912           | -6,792           | -9,850           | -12,219          |
| Reduction in Non Early Years Specialist Cost                 | -3,912           | -6,792           | -9,850           | -12,219          |
| Health Contributions   | -1,560           | -1,560           | -1,560           | -1,560           |
| <b>Sub Total - TSIL Programme</b>                            | <b>-12,384</b>   | <b>-20,034</b>   | <b>-28,018</b>   | <b>-34,237</b>   |
|  |                  |                  |                  |                  |
| Development of additional Specialist Places                  | -389             | -4,252           | -11,193          | -14,486          |
| Return on Investment - SEND Investment Fund                  | 0                | -2,600           | -2,970           | -3,360           |
|  |                  |                  |                  |                  |
| <b>Total Savings / Cost Reduction</b>                        | <b>-12,773</b>   | <b>-26,886</b>   | <b>-42,180</b>   | <b>-52,083</b>   |

**Transforming SEND and Inclusion in Leicestershire** – Through reducing the number of starts in specialist provision, improved decision making and consistency in allocation of resources, the TSIL programme is forecast to reduce cost by £12.4m in 2025/26 rising to £34.2m in 2028/29. The programme is a seven-year programme with total of £36.5m of cost savings achieved in the seven years to 2028/29.

**Additional Local Specialist Places** - Overall, over the MTFS period a total of 254 additional places are scheduled to be delivered, which will be achieved through the completion of the Bowman Free School in Shepshed, the Farley Way Special Free School in Quorn and expansion of current provision in both special schools and resource bases. This is estimated to result in a cost reduction of £0.4m in 2025/26 rising to £14.5m in 2028/29 by meeting pupil needs in local provision without the need for a higher cost independent school.

**SEN Investment Fund** – 2025/26 will see the priority activities of the investment fund and its governance arrangements established which will be fully co-produced with schools. No return in investment is expected in 2025/26 with the activities delivered increasing inclusion in schools and reducing the number of EHCP's from 2026/27.

102. The forecast position on the High Needs element of the DSG over the MTFS period is shown financial forecast continues to assume from the approval for the transfer of funding from the schools block to high needs, the establishment of the SEND Investment Fund and a future return on investment from it on an annual basis as set out within the school consultation in the autumn:

|  | 2025/26 | 2026/27 | 2027/28 | 2028/29 |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|

|  | £,000          | £,000          | £,000          | £,000          |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Grant Income   | -117,413       | -120,912       | -124,516       | -128,228       |
| Placement Costs  | 133,176        | 147,214        | 163,382        | 181,901        |
| Other HNB Cost   | 12,265         | 12,865         | 12,865         | 12,865         |
| Pre Opening Costs - New Places                             | 0              | 264            | 236            | 0              |
| Schools Block Transfer                                     | -2,600         | -2,600         | -2,600         | -2,600         |
| SEND Investment Fund                                       | 2,600          | 2,600          | 2,600          | 2,600          |
| <b>Total Expenditure</b>                                   | <b>145,441</b> | <b>160,343</b> | <b>176,483</b> | <b>194,766</b> |
| <b>Funding Gap Pre Savings</b>                             | <b>28,028</b>  | <b>39,431</b>  | <b>51,966</b>  | <b>66,537</b>  |
| TSIL Programme Defined Opportunities                       | -12,384        | -20,034        | -28,018        | -34,237        |
| Increase in Local Specialist Places                        | -389           | -4,252         | -11,193        | -14,486        |
| SEND Investment Fund - Return on Investment                | 0              | -2,600         | -2,970         | -3,360         |
| <b>Total Savings</b>                                       | <b>-12,773</b> | <b>-26,886</b> | <b>-42,180</b> | <b>-52,083</b> |
| <b>Annual Revenue Funding Gap</b>                          | <b>15,255</b>  | <b>12,545</b>  | <b>9,786</b>   | <b>14,454</b>  |
| <b>2019/20 Deficit Brought Forward</b>                     | <b>7,062</b>   |                |                |                |
| <b>2020/21 High Needs Deficit Brought Forward</b>          | <b>10,423</b>  |                |                |                |
| <b>2021/22 High Needs Deficit Brought Forward</b>          | <b>11,365</b>  |                |                |                |
| <b>2022/23 High Needs Deficit Brought Forward</b>          | <b>6,683</b>   |                |                |                |
| <b>2023/24 High Needs Deficit Brought Forward</b>          | <b>5,650</b>   |                |                |                |
| <b>2024/25 Forecast High Needs Deficit Brought Forward</b> | <b>22,930</b>  |                |                |                |
| <b>Cumulative High Needs Funding Gap</b>                   | <b>79,368</b>  | <b>91,913</b>  | <b>101,699</b> | <b>116,153</b> |
| Surplus (-ve) / Deficit Other DSG Blocks                   | -11,834        | -10,834        | -9,334         | -7,334         |
| <b>Dedicated Schools Grant Surplus (-ve) / Deficit</b>     | <b>67,534</b>  | <b>81,079</b>  | <b>92,365</b>  | <b>108,819</b> |
| <b>High Needs Spend as % of High Needs DSG</b>             | <b>125%</b>    | <b>133%</b>    | <b>143%</b>    | <b>153%</b>    |
| <b>Surplus / Deficit as % of Total DSG</b>                 | <b>10%</b>     | <b>11%</b>     | <b>13%</b>     | <b>15%</b>     |

103. Local authorities are required to carry forward DSG as an unusable reserve through the continued use of a Statutory Accounts override and may only now contribute to DSG with the approval of the Secretary of State. The accounts override legislation is confirmed to March 2026 when it is expected to end. Unless further legislation changes this, from this point local authorities will be required to make financial provision for the deficit.

104. It is nationally recognised that additional funding alone will not address the financial difficulties many of which are created by a system where school and parental expectations have a greater influence than a local authority assessment of needs, appropriate provision and affordability. It is clear that policy changes are needed. Whilst the DfE's Change programme may deliver some of that change in the long term there

are no short- or medium-term solutions to address the financial challenges. At the continued levels of expected growth, the position is completely unsustainable and puts the Council's finances in a very difficult position. As such it is essential that the planned measures to contain ongoing growth, are successful, but additional measures put in place to reduce both demand and costs.

### **Central Services Block**

105. The central services block funds a number of school-related expenditure items such as existing school-based premature retirement costs, copyright licences under a national DfE contract for all schools and other historic costs. The settlement is £4.4m for 2025/26.
106. The provisional settlement continues an annual reduction of 20% for the Historic Costs element of the settlement but a guarantee remains in place to ensure that funding does not decrease below the financial commitment to meet former teacher pension costs.

### **Early Years Block**

107. The provisional Early Years Block is £109.2m and funds both the entitlement to Early Years Education for 2025/26 as set out below and the costs of early years' service. The entitlement for 2025/26 is;
- 15 hours for eligible working parents for children aged 9 months to 2 years. This will extend to 30 hours in September 2025.
  - 15 hours for 2 years olds requiring additional support, this was formally disadvantaged 2 year olds
  - Universal offer of 15 hours for 3 and 4 year olds
  - 15 hours entitlement for work parents for 3 and 4 year olds
108. Leicestershire will receive £5.71 per hour for the 3 – 4-year-olds, £7.53 for 2-year-olds and £10.18 for under 2's. Local authorities are required to pass through a minimum of 96% of the settlement to providers, the remaining 4% meeting the cost of the Early Learning and Childcare service. There is also the continuing need to recoup the early years deficit recorded in 2022/23. The Early Years DSG deficit as at 31 March 2024 was £3.1m. The plan is to clear this deficit over 4 years which would be by March 2027. Taking the above into consideration, work is underway within the Service to enable the local authority to calculate and notify providers of their funding rates no later than 28 February 2025.

### **Capital Programme**

109. The proposed Children and Family Services capital programme totals £83.1m, for which the majority (£62.3m) there is external funding or capital receipts expected, and £20.6m prior years' external funding held in reserves, resulting in £225k call on LCC capital funding over the four year life of the proposed MTFs as per the summary table below and further details in Appendix D.
110. The programme continues to focus upon the delivery of additional primary and secondary school places and additional places to be delivered to support the

Transforming SEND and Inclusion in Leicestershire (TSIL) programme. £50.1m is proposed to be invested in the provision of additional placements; £20.4m for SEN and £12.6m for investment in other capital requirements including completing the investment in residential homes, strategic capital maintenance and improved schools access and security.

| <b>CFS Capital Programme '£000</b> | <b>2025/26</b> | <b>2026/27</b> | <b>2027/28</b> | <b>2028/29</b> | <b>Total</b>  |
|------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| Additional School Places           | 34,752         | 10,614         | 4,052          | 700            | <b>50,118</b> |
| SEND Programme                     | 2,000          | 8,458          | 10,000         | 0              | <b>20,458</b> |
| Other Capital                      | 4,115          | 2,848          | 2,800          | 2,800          | <b>12,563</b> |
| <b>Total</b>                       | <b>40,867</b>  | <b>21,921</b>  | <b>16,852</b>  | <b>3,500</b>   | <b>83,140</b> |

### **Provision of Additional School Places**

111. The investment in additional school places totals £50.1m over four years including £34.8m next year. The programme is funded through the Basic Need grant from the DfE and S106 developer contributions.

### **SEND Programme**

112. The four-year investment in the SEND programme is £20.4m and includes High Needs Capital Grant funding received from the DfE in previous years.

### **Other Capital**

113. There is £12.6m “other capital” included comprising of:

- £8m Strategic Capital Maintenance (£2m assumed per annum subject to funding)
- £2m Schools Dedicated Formula (£0.5m assumed per annum subject to funding)
- £1.2m to invest in improvement in schools access and security
- £225k investment in residential properties within the Children’s Innovation Partnership (CIP) with more details outlined in the savings section above.

### **Funding Sources**

114. The majority of the capital programme is likely to be funded by external grant and developer S106 contributions as follows:

| <b>Capital Resources '£000</b> | <b>2025/26</b> | <b>2026/27</b> | <b>2027/28</b> | <b>2028/29</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|--------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Grants                         | 20,367         | 3,548          | 3,500          | 3,500          | 30,915       |
| External Contributions / S106  | 17,603         | 8,569          | 3,507          | 0              | 29,679       |
| Earmarked capital receipts     | 0              | 1,672          | 0              | 0              | 1,672        |
| Discretionary Capital Funding  | 225            | 0              | 0              | 0              | 225          |

|  |               |               |               |              |               |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| Prior Years' grant funding held in reserve | 2,672         | 8,132         | 9,845         | 0            | 20,649        |
| <b>Total Resources</b>                     | <b>40,867</b> | <b>21,921</b> | <b>16,852</b> | <b>3,500</b> | <b>83,140</b> |

115. Basic Need Grant - is received from the DfE based upon the need to create additional school places. Grant of £17.1m has been confirmed for 2025/26 and included in the programme. The DfE has delayed the announcement of future years grant allocations until at least Spring 2025. The grant reflects the overall place need across the County and for both maintained schools and academies. The grant meets the infrastructure costs of creating new places in primary and secondary schools. Eligible revenue costs fall to be met from the local authority's growth fund, funded from DSG for primary and secondary schools.
116. High Needs Provision Capital Grant – in early December 2024 the DfE announced that there will be an allocation of High Needs Capital Grant for 2025/26 to support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or who require alternative provision. However no indication was given of the LA level allocations, and what conditions may be attached to the funding.
117. Strategic Maintenance Grant – is received from the DfE for the maintenance of maintained schools only. This grant is based on a formula that considers pupil numbers and the overall condition of the school estate. The grant reduces as schools convert to academies. Local authority allocations are yet to be confirmed. An assumption of £2m per annum has been included in the MTFs.
118. S106 Contributions – it is estimated that a total of £29.7m of S106 contributions fund the proposed programme, of which £17.6m is in 2024/25. Estimates for the latter years of the MTFs are less certain and are dependent upon the speed of housing developments.

### **Background Papers**

Report to Cabinet 17 December 2024 – Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 to 2028/29  
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=7512&Ver=4>

### **Circulation under local issues alert procedure**

None.

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### **Appendices**

Appendix A – Revenue Budget 2025/26

Appendix B – Growth 2025/26 to 2028/29

Appendix C – Savings 2025/26 to 2028/29

Appendix D – Capital Programme 2025/26 to 2028/29

Appendix E – Savings Under Development 2025/26

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CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES DEPARTMENT- REVENUE BUDGET 2025/26

APPENDIX A

| Budget 24/25        | S/D/B *   | Employees | Running Expenses  | Internal Income    | Gross Budget       | External Income    | Net Total 25/26     |                     |
|---------------------|---|-----------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| £                   |   | £         | £                 | £                  | £                  | £                  | £                   |                     |
| 1,498,928           | C&FS Directorate                                      | B         | 1,476,525         | 94,238             | 0                  | 1,570,763          | 0                   | 1,570,763           |
| <b>1,498,928</b>    | <b>C&amp;FS Directorate</b>                           |           | <b>1,476,525</b>  | <b>94,238</b>      | <b>0</b>           | <b>1,570,763</b>   | <b>0</b>            | <b>1,570,763</b>    |
| 2,740,015           | C&FS Safeguarding                                     | S         | 3,471,300         | 4,243,481          | -3,471,250         | 4,243,531          | -1,149,000          | 3,094,531           |
| 123,117             | LSCB  | S         | 330,846           | 308,843            | -77,232            | 562,457            | -439,340            | 123,117             |
| <b>2,863,132</b>    | <b>Safeguarding, Improvement &amp; QA</b>             |           | <b>3,802,146</b>  | <b>4,552,324</b>   | <b>-3,548,482</b>  | <b>4,805,988</b>   | <b>-1,588,340</b>   | <b>3,217,648</b>    |
| 4,971,668           | Asylum Seekers  | S         | 1,523,838         | 13,924,338         | 0                  | 15,448,176         | -8,076,508          | 7,371,668           |
| 5,800,686           | C&FS Fostering & Adoption                             | S         | 5,350,888         | 471,297            | 0                  | 5,822,185          | -21,500             | 5,800,685           |
| 55,761,295          | C&FS Operational Placements                           | S         | 0                 | 67,678,295         | 0                  | 67,678,295         | -1,127,000          | 66,551,295          |
| 4,201,056           | Children in Care Service                              | S         | 3,671,937         | 957,628            | 0                  | 4,629,565          | -228,509            | 4,401,056           |
| <b>70,724,705</b>   | <b>Children in Care</b>                               |           | <b>10,546,664</b> | <b>83,031,558</b>  | <b>0</b>           | <b>93,578,222</b>  | <b>-9,453,517</b>   | <b>84,124,705</b>   |
| 4,236,569           | CPS North   | S         | 2,463,343         | 1,708,226          | 0                  | 4,171,569          | 0                   | 4,171,569           |
| 2,682,859           | CPS South   | S         | 2,469,840         | 398,019            | 0                  | 2,867,859          | 0                   | 2,867,859           |
| 740,317             | Childrens Management                                  | S         | 1,239,587         | 730                | 0                  | 1,240,317          | 0                   | 1,240,317           |
| 3,372,873           | C&FS First Response                                   | S         | 3,361,125         | 76,748             | 0                  | 3,437,873          | -35,000             | 3,402,873           |
| 2,060,457           | Child Sexual Exploitation Team                        | B         | 1,892,427         | 118,030            | 0                  | 2,110,457          | 0                   | 2,110,457           |
| 44,000              | Social Care Legal Costs                               | S         | 0                 | 44,000             | 0                  | 44,000             | 0                   | 44,000              |
| 3,795,539           | C&FS Disabled Children                                | S         | 786,390           | 3,009,149          | 0                  | 3,795,539          | 0                   | 3,795,539           |
| <b>16,932,613</b>   | <b>Field Social Work</b>                              |           | <b>12,312,711</b> | <b>5,354,902</b>   | <b>0</b>           | <b>17,667,613</b>  | <b>-35,000</b>      | <b>17,632,613</b>   |
| 574,516             | Practice Excellence                                   | B         | 0                 | 0                  | 0                  | 0                  | 0                   | 0                   |
| <b>574,516</b>      | <b>Practice Excellence</b>                            |           | <b>0</b>          | <b>0</b>           | <b>0</b>           | <b>0</b>           | <b>0</b>            | <b>0</b>            |
| 299,324             | C&FS Community Safety                                 | B         | 288,288           | 1,408,869          | 0                  | 1,697,157          | -1,397,833          | 299,324             |
| <b>299,324</b>      | <b>Community Safety</b>                               |           | <b>288,288</b>    | <b>1,408,869</b>   | <b>0</b>           | <b>1,697,157</b>   | <b>-1,397,833</b>   | <b>299,324</b>      |
| 3,688,844           | C&FS CFWS East  | B         | 3,328,573         | 360,271            | 0                  | 3,688,844          | 0                   | 3,688,844           |
| 4,976,038           | C&FS CFWS West  | B         | 4,535,575         | 440,738            | 0                  | 4,976,313          | -275                | 4,976,038           |
| 3,562,148           | C&FS CFWS Youth                                       | B         | 4,513,724         | 799,571            | -629,824           | 4,683,471          | -1,121,323          | 3,562,148           |
| 414,408             | C&FS CFWS Central                                     | B         | 75,000            | 339,408            | 0                  | 414,408            | 0                   | 414,408             |
| -2,286,950          | C&FS Supporting Leicestershire Families / Teen Health | B         | 1,207,585         | 15,762             | -750,000           | 473,347            | -2,760,297          | -2,286,950          |
| 3,662,242           | C&FS Family Help                                      | B         | 3,393,903         | 198,339            | 0                  | 3,592,242          | 0                   | 3,592,242           |
| <b>14,016,731</b>   | <b>C&amp;FS Children &amp; Families Wellbeing</b>     |           | <b>17,054,361</b> | <b>2,154,089</b>   | <b>-1,379,824</b>  | <b>17,828,626</b>  | <b>-3,881,895</b>   | <b>13,946,731</b>   |
| 1,181,061           | C&FS Education Sufficiency                            | B         | 1,441,699         | 29,800             | -180,000           | 1,291,499          | -210,200            | 1,081,299           |
| <b>1,181,061</b>    | <b>Education Sufficiency</b>                          |           | <b>1,441,699</b>  | <b>29,800</b>      | <b>-180,000</b>    | <b>1,291,499</b>   | <b>-210,200</b>     | <b>1,081,299</b>    |
| 64,500,387          | C&FS 0-5 Learning                                     | S         | 2,790,239         | 109,013,859        | -46,200            | 111,757,898        | -1,015,783          | 110,742,115         |
| 596,030             | C&FS 5-19 Learning                                    | B         | 969,660           | 454,639            | -496,479           | 927,820            | -331,790            | 596,030             |
| 5,041,175           | Inclusion   | S         | 1,894,617         | 4,703,504          | -192,684           | 6,405,437          | -953,077            | 5,452,360           |
| 1,833,395           | Oakfield  | S         | 0                 | 1,833,395          | 0                  | 1,833,395          | 0                   | 1,833,395           |
| 0                   | Music Services  | B         | 1,582,087         | 612,898            | 0                  | 2,194,973          | -2,194,973          | 0                   |
| 443,000             | Education of Children in Care                         | S         | 1,068,530         | 1,627,156          | -445,000           | 2,250,686          | -1,807,686          | 443,000             |
| <b>72,413,987</b>   | <b>Education Quality &amp; Inclusion</b>              |           | <b>8,305,133</b>  | <b>118,245,439</b> | <b>-1,180,363</b>  | <b>125,370,209</b> | <b>-6,303,309</b>   | <b>119,066,900</b>  |
| 114,969,560         | C&FS SEN  | S         | 2,346,053         | 119,679,217        | -1,215,030         | 120,810,240        | 0                   | 120,810,240         |
| 2,423,669           | C&FS Specialist Services to Vulnerable Groups         | B         | 2,978,930         | 246,540            | -653,854           | 2,571,616          | -147,946            | 2,423,670           |
| 1,323,241           | C&FS Psychology Service                               | B         | 1,729,075         | 3,393              | -140,227           | 1,592,241          | -269,000            | 1,323,241           |
| 1,245,972           | HNB Development Programme                             | D         | 158,529           | 998,083            | -11,247            | 1,145,365          | 0                   | 1,145,365           |
| -17,026,938         | DSG Reserve Income                                    | N/A       | 0                 | 0                  | -15,254,886        | -15,254,886        | 0                   | -15,254,886         |
| <b>102,935,504</b>  | <b>SEND &amp; Children with Disabilities</b>          |           | <b>7,212,587</b>  | <b>120,927,233</b> | <b>-17,275,244</b> | <b>110,864,576</b> | <b>-416,946</b>     | <b>110,447,630</b>  |
| 7,163,025           | C&FS Business Support                                 | B         | 8,174,647         | 702,245            | -1,049,688         | 7,827,204          | 0                   | 7,827,204           |
| 2,285,220           | Central Charges                                       | B         | 0                 | 2,285,220          | 0                  | 2,285,220          | 0                   | 2,285,220           |
| 303,409             | C&FS Finance  | B         | 0                 | 735,127            | -443,898           | 291,228            | 0                   | 291,228             |
| 1,349,900           | C&FS Human Resources                                  | S         | 1,399,900         | 0                  | 0                  | 1,399,900          | -50,000             | 1,349,900           |
| 873,935             | C&FS Commissioning & Planning                         | B         | 880,703           | 21,600             | -28,368            | 873,935            | 0                   | 873,935             |
| 576,139             | C&FS Transformation                                   | S         | 0                 | 1,006,956          | 0                  | 1,006,956          | 0                   | 1,006,956           |
| <b>12,551,629</b>   | <b>Business Support &amp; Commissioning</b>           |           | <b>10,455,251</b> | <b>4,751,148</b>   | <b>-1,521,954</b>  | <b>13,684,444</b>  | <b>-50,000</b>      | <b>13,634,444</b>   |
| 0                   | C&FS Miscellaneous                                    |           | 0                 | 0                  | 0                  | 0                  | 0                   | 0                   |
| -175,744,283        | C&FS Dedicated Schools Grant                          | S         | 0                 | 259,810            | -400,555           | -140,745           | -229,923,465        | -230,064,210        |
| 523,143,568         | Delegated School Budgets                              | S         | 0                 | 575,729,172        | 0                  | 575,729,172        | -12,055,427         | 563,673,745         |
| -521,355,114        | Delegated Dedicated Schools Grant                     | S         | 0                 | 0                  | 0                  | 0                  | -561,885,291        | -561,885,291        |
| 0                   | Dedicated Schools Grant Recoupment                    | S         | 0                 | -453,508,913       | 0                  | -453,508,913       | 453,508,913         | 0                   |
| <b>-173,955,829</b> | <b>C&amp;FS Other</b>                                 |           | <b>0</b>          | <b>122,480,069</b> | <b>-400,555</b>    | <b>122,079,514</b> | <b>-350,355,270</b> | <b>-228,275,756</b> |
| <b>122,046,300</b>  | <b>Total</b>  |           | <b>72,895,364</b> | <b>463,029,668</b> | <b>-25,486,422</b> | <b>510,438,610</b> | <b>-373,692,310</b> | <b>136,746,300</b>  |

\* S/D/B : indicates that the service is Statutory, Discretionary or a combination of both

| Schools           | Early Years         | High Needs          | Dedicated Schools Grant | LA Block           |
|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| £                 | £                   | £                   | £                       | £                  |
| 18,121            | 43,628              | 150,803             | 212,553                 | 1,358,211          |
| <b>18,121</b>     | <b>43,628</b>       | <b>150,803</b>      | <b>212,553</b>          | <b>1,358,211</b>   |
| 0                 | 0                   | 0                   | 0                       | 3,094,531          |
| 0                 | 0                   | 0                   | 0                       | 123,117            |
| <b>0</b>          | <b>0</b>            | <b>0</b>            | <b>0</b>                | <b>3,217,648</b>   |
| 0                 | 0                   | 0                   | 0                       | 7,371,668          |
| 0                 | 0                   | 0                   | 0                       | 5,800,685          |
| 0                 | 0                   | 0                   | 0                       | 66,551,295         |
| 0                 | 0                   | 0                   | 0                       | 4,401,056          |
| <b>0</b>          | <b>0</b>            | <b>0</b>            | <b>0</b>                | <b>84,124,705</b>  |
| 0                 | 0                   | 0                   | 0                       | 4,171,569          |
| 0                 | 0                   | 0                   | 0                       | 2,867,859          |
| 0                 | 0                   | 0                   | 0                       | 1,240,317          |
| 0                 | 0                   | 0                   | 0                       | 3,402,873          |
| 0                 | 0                   | 0                   | 0                       | 2,110,457          |
| 0                 | 0                   | 0                   | 0                       | 44,000             |
| 0                 | 0                   | 0                   | 0                       | 3,795,539          |
| <b>0</b>          | <b>0</b>            | <b>0</b>            | <b>0</b>                | <b>17,632,613</b>  |
| 0                 | 0                   | 0                   | 0                       | 0                  |
| <b>0</b>          | <b>0</b>            | <b>0</b>            | <b>0</b>                | <b>0</b>           |
| 299,324           | 0                   | 0                   | 0                       | 299,324            |
| <b>299,324</b>    | <b>0</b>            | <b>0</b>            | <b>0</b>                | <b>299,324</b>     |
| 0                 | 0                   | 0                   | 0                       | 3,688,844          |
| 0                 | 0                   | 0                   | 0                       | 4,976,038          |
| 0                 | 0                   | 0                   | 0                       | 3,562,148          |
| 0                 | 0                   | 0                   | 0                       | 414,408            |
| 0                 | 0                   | 0                   | 0                       | -2,286,950         |
| 0                 | 0                   | 0                   | 0                       | 3,592,242          |
| <b>0</b>          | <b>0</b>            | <b>0</b>            | <b>0</b>                | <b>13,946,731</b>  |
| 427,240           | 0                   | 0                   | 427,240                 | 654,059            |
| <b>427,240</b>    | <b>0</b>            | <b>0</b>            | <b>427,240</b>          | <b>654,059</b>     |
| 0                 | 108,631,510         | 1,741,248           | 110,372,758             | 369,357            |
| 481,414           | 0                   | 0                   | 481,414                 | 114,616            |
| 0                 | 0                   | 4,190,564           | 4,190,564               | 1,261,795          |
| 0                 | 0                   | 1,424,995           | 1,424,995               | 408,400            |
| 0                 | 0                   | 0                   | 0                       | 0                  |
| 0                 | 0                   | 0                   | 0                       | 443,000            |
| <b>481,414</b>    | <b>108,631,510</b>  | <b>7,356,807</b>    | <b>116,469,732</b>      | <b>2,597,168</b>   |
| 0                 | 0                   | 118,610,020         | 118,610,020             | 2,200,220          |
| 0                 | 0                   | 2,423,670           | 2,423,670               | 0                  |
| 0                 | 0                   | 0                   | 0                       | 1,323,241          |
| 0                 | 0                   | 1,145,365           | 1,145,365               | 0                  |
| 0                 | 0                   | -15,254,886         | -15,254,886             | 0                  |
| <b>0</b>          | <b>0</b>            | <b>106,924,169</b>  | <b>106,924,169</b>      | <b>3,523,461</b>   |
| 8,570             | 305,190             | 220,876             | 534,636                 | 7,292,569          |
| 1,434,683         | 210,848             | 639,689             | 2,285,220               | 0                  |
| 747,307           | 0                   | 0                   | 747,307                 | -456,079           |
| 674,900           | 0                   | 0                   | 674,900                 | 675,000            |
| 0                 | 0                   | 0                   | 0                       | 873,935            |
| 0                 | 0                   | 0                   | 0                       | 1,006,956          |
| <b>2,865,460</b>  | <b>516,038</b>      | <b>860,565</b>      | <b>4,242,063</b>        | <b>9,392,381</b>   |
| 0                 | 0                   | 0                   | 0                       | 0                  |
| 0                 | 0                   | 0                   | 0                       | 0                  |
| -4,096,005        | -109,191,176        | -116,777,029        | -230,064,210            | 0                  |
| 562,189,060       | 0                   | 1,484,685           | 563,673,745             | 0                  |
| -561,885,291      | 0                   | 0                   | -561,885,291            | 0                  |
| 0                 | 0                   | 0                   | 0                       | 0                  |
| <b>-3,792,236</b> | <b>-109,191,176</b> | <b>-115,292,344</b> | <b>-228,275,756</b>     | <b>0</b>           |
| <b>0</b>          | <b>0</b>            | <b>0</b>            | <b>0</b>                | <b>136,746,300</b> |

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| References | <b><u>GROWTH</u></b>  | 2025/26<br>£000 | 2026/27<br>£000 | 2027/28<br>£000 | 2028/29<br>£000 |
|------------|---|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|            | <b><u>CHILDREN &amp; FAMILY SERVICES</u></b>                              |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| ** G1      | Demographic growth & increasing cost of Social Care Placement mix         | 15,000          | 23,300          | 33,000          | 44,500          |
| ** G2      | Front-line social care staff - increased caseloads                        | 500             | 500             | 750             | 750             |
| ** G3      | Post Transforming SEND & Inclusion In Leicestershire(TSIL) sustainability | 900             | 900             | 900             | 900             |
| ** G4      | Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) - increased demand/cost      | 3,250           | 5,500           | 8,000           | 11,200          |
| * G5       | Demand management   | -100            | -260            | -1,240          | -1,240          |
| G6         | Children In Need Financial Support - Section 17/23                        | 750             | 750             | 750             | 750             |
|            | <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>20,300</b>   | <b>30,690</b>   | <b>42,160</b>   | <b>56,860</b>   |

\* items unchanged from previous Medium Term Financial Strategy

\*\* items included in the previous Medium Term Financial Strategy which have been amended

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## References

| 2025/26 | 2026/27 | 2027/28 | 2028/29 |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| £000    | £000    | £000    | £000    |

**SAVINGS****References used in the following tables**

\* items unchanged from previous Medium Term Financial Strategy

\*\* items included in the previous Medium Term Financial Strategy which have been amended

Eff - Efficiency saving

SR - Service reduction

Inc - Income

**CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES**

|    |     |         |  |               |               |                |                |
|----|-----|---------|--|---------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| ** | CF1 | Eff     | Innovation Partnership - Creation and investment in Internal Residential provision                                     | -750          | -1,250        | -1,750         | -2,000         |
| ** | CF2 | Eff     | Departmental establishment modelling / Re-design   | -390          | -390          | -390           | -390           |
| ** | CF3 | Eff/SR  | Defining CFS For the Future Programme - Phase 2 - Social Care Workforce Strategy (Recruitment and Retention)           | -250          | -500          | -900           | -900           |
| ** | CF4 | Eff     | Reduced Care Costs through growth of internal family based placements  | -150          | -450          | -750           | -1,000         |
| ** | CF5 | Eff/Inc | Smarter commissioning, Procurement and Demand Management - Social Care Placements and externally commissioned services |               |               |                |                |
|    |     |         | Strand 1 - Contain & Minimise impact of market cost pressures for children placements - external providers             | -910          | -2,180        | -3,900         | -6,300         |
|    |     |         | Strand 2 - Review of care packages /cost (Pro-active and Reactive) ensuring value for money and effectiveness          | -1,400        | -2,050        | -2,450         | -2,850         |
|    |     |         | Strand 3 - Development of a wide range of other accommodation and support options.                                     | -1,000        | -1,250        | -1,500         | -1,500         |
|    |     |         | Strand 4 - Increased Partner Income  | -750          | -1,500        | -1,850         | -2,000         |
|    |     |         | <b>TOTAL CFS LA BLOCK</b>  | <b>-5,600</b> | <b>-9,570</b> | <b>-13,490</b> | <b>-16,940</b> |

**Dedicated Schools Grant - Deficit reduction activity**

Transforming SEND &amp; Inclusion in Leicestershire (TSIL) Programme

defined opportunities

Increase in Local Specialist Places

SEND Investment Fund - return on investment

|                |                |                |                |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| -12,384        | -20,034        | -28,018        | -34,237        |
| -389           | -4,252         | -11,193        | -14,486        |
| 0              | -2,600         | -2,970         | -3,360         |
| <b>-12,773</b> | <b>-26,886</b> | <b>-42,181</b> | <b>-52,083</b> |
| <b>-18,373</b> | <b>-36,456</b> | <b>-55,671</b> | <b>-69,023</b> |

**TOTAL CFS SAVINGS REQUIRED - INCLUDING DSG**

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**CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES - CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2025-29**

| Estimated Completion Date | Gross Cost of Project £000 |   | 2025/26 £000  | 2026/27 £000  | 2027/28 £000  | 2028/29 £000 | Total £000    |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|
|                           |                            | <b><u>MAIN GRANT FUNDED PROGRAMME</u></b>       |               |               |               |              |               |
| Mar-29                    | 50,118                     | <b>Provision of Additional School Places</b>    | <b>34,752</b> | <b>10,614</b> | <b>4,052</b>  | <b>700</b>   | <b>50,118</b> |
| Mar-28                    | 20,458                     | <b>Provision and Improvement of SEND Places</b> | <b>2,000</b>  | <b>8,458</b>  | <b>10,000</b> | <b>0</b>     | <b>20,458</b> |
| Mar-29                    | 8,000                      | Strategic Capital Maintenance                   | 2,000         | 2,000         | 2,000         | 2,000        | 8,000         |
| Mar-29                    | 2,000                      | Schools Devolved Formula Capital                | 500           | 500           | 500           | 500          | 2,000         |
| Mar-29                    | 1,200                      | Schools Access / Security                       | 300           | 300           | 300           | 300          | 1,200         |
| Mar-26                    | 225                        | Children's Residential Homes                    | 225           |               |               |              | 225           |
| Mar-26                    | 800                        | Childcare Expansion Programme                   | 800           | 0             | 0             | 0            | 800           |
| Mar-27                    | 338                        | Music Hub Equipment                             | 290           | 48            | 0             |              | 338           |
|                           |                            | <b>Other Capital</b>                            | <b>4,115</b>  | <b>2,848</b>  | <b>2,800</b>  | <b>2,800</b> | <b>12,563</b> |
|                           |                            | <b>Overall Total</b>                            | <b>40,867</b> | <b>21,921</b> | <b>16,852</b> | <b>3,500</b> | <b>83,140</b> |

|  |  |   |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|---|--|--|--|--|--|
|  |  | <b><u>Future Developments - subject to further detail and approved business cases</u></b> |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | Additional School Infrastructure arising from Housing Developments                        |  |  |  |  |  |

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**SAVINGS UNDER DEVELOPMENT**

| Initiative title                            | RAG |
|---|-----|
| <b><u>Children and Family Services</u></b>  |     |
| Service Efficiency Rolling Programme        | A   |
| Parental Mental Health and Substance Misuse | A   |
|   |     |

|       |
|-------|
| Green |
| Amber |
| Red   |

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**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE -  
21 JANUARY 2025**

**SEND AND INCLUSION STRATEGY 2024-2027**

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

**Purpose of report**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with the refreshed SEND and Inclusion Strategy, which is a key partnership strategy to support the education, health and care needs of children and young people in Leicestershire with special educational needs and disabilities. The views of the Committee are sought as part of the consultation process.

**Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

2. The primary legislation regarding children and young people with SEND is the Children and Families Act 2014. This sets out the duties that local authorities and Integrated Commissioning Boards must fulfil. Leicestershire's SEND arrangements were inspected by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission in 2020 and reinspected in 2022, resulting in a Written Statement of Action and an Accelerated Progress Plan. A revised SEND Local Area Inspection framework was introduced in April 2024 and Leicestershire is awaiting an inspection under the new framework. The draft SEND and Inclusion Strategy outlines local priorities and sets out how the County Council and its partners will improve services and outcomes over the next three years. The Local Area SEND and Inclusion Development Plan in Section 5 of the Strategy identifies five priority areas of activity, incorporating ongoing improvements to deliver the required outcomes from the Accelerated Progress Plan.
3. The 2024-27 Strategy is a refresh of the previous SEND and Inclusion Strategy that was taken to the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 1 September 2020 and agreed by the Cabinet on 18 September 2020. This is the third SEND and Inclusion Strategy and delivers on the ambitions of the Children and Family Services Department Plan 2024-26 and supports the aims of the County Council's Strategic Plan 2022-26, which was approved by the County Council in March 2022.
4. High Needs Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is provided to local authorities for funding pupils with SEND where needs cannot be met in mainstream schools and for other SEN support services such as Specialist Teaching Services and support for pupils at risk or those excluded from schools. The Cabinet, at its meeting on 13 September 2024 considered a report on the Council's Medium Term Financial

Strategy (MTFS) and Budget Monitoring and noted the significant financial challenges facing the Authority. The report highlighted that without new interventions, a deficit in the High Needs Block of the DSG was expected to increase over the next MTFS period, creating a significant and unresolved financial risk for the Authority.

5. The Cabinet, in November 2024 authorised the Director of Children and Family Services to seek permission from the Secretary of State to allow a proposed funding transfer of 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and the creation of a Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Investment Fund. The Secretary of State has subsequently approved the proposals.

### **Background**

6. The draft SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2024 to 2027 (attached at Appendix A to this report) sets out the vision and priorities for partners delivering education, health and social care services to children and young people aged 0-25 in Leicestershire with SEND.
7. It will provide the overarching framework for service development in SEND and Inclusion Services across Leicestershire. The draft SEND and Inclusion Strategy has been developed in consultation with local area partners and parents and carers. It sets out the aspirations of the SEND and Inclusion Partnership Board for the period 2024 to 2027.
8. The strategy provides the strategic steer for the SEND and Inclusion Partnership Board. The actions will be resourced through existing staffing or may be delivered as part of a programme of work. For instance, Leicestershire's involvement in the Department for Education sponsored Change Partnership Programme has enabled additional resources to trial new ways of working which are being coordinated through Transforming SEND and Inclusion in Leicestershire.
9. Over the period of the previous strategy, the local area SEND and Inclusion Partnership have considered what works well and current barriers to achieving its vision for children and young people with SEND in Leicestershire. The Partnership has used performance and outcome data and feedback from children and young people and their parents and carers to co-produce priority areas for further development. These include:
  - The child and family are at the heart of all service delivery;
  - The Department will have an accurate understanding of the needs and lived experiences of children and young people with SEND;
  - Children and young people with SEND are prepared for successful transition throughout their life;
  - Leaders across the SEND partnership will work together to plan, deliver and quality assure Leicestershire's offer;
  - The Department will provide timely and effective support to enable children and young people with SEND to thrive and belong in their communities.
10. Implementation of the refreshed SEND and Inclusion Strategy would, as with the existing Strategy, be monitored by the SEND and Inclusion Partnership Board,

reporting to the Children and Families Partnership. The latter comprises the Cabinet Lead Member for Children and Family Services and representatives from the Council's Children and Family Services, Adults and Communities, and Public Health Departments, the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Integrated Commissioning Board, the Leicestershire Partnership Trust, Special, Primary and Secondary Schools, Further Education and the Leicestershire Parent Carer Forum.

11. The draft Strategy is underpinned by a detailed work plan outlining the workstreams that will deliver the priorities, and which are accountable to the SEND and Inclusion Board. There will be regular reviews of progress against the action plan reported to the SEND and Inclusion Partnership Board, and each workstream will include reporting the progress made against outcomes and performance measures. Subsequent reports will be made to the Children and Families Partnership.
12. Progress in implementing the strategy will be communicated to key partners via their representatives on the SEND and Inclusion Partnership Board and will be published on the Local Offer [website](#). Feedback from parents/carers and children/young people will be sought on an on-going basis.
13. In November 2024, the draft SEND and Inclusion Strategy was presented to the SEND and Inclusion Board. The Leicestershire Parent Carer Forum are active members of the SEND and Inclusion Board and has approved the draft Strategy. The strategy is being presented to the Cabinet for approval in February 2024. Any comments made by the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be reported to the Cabinet.
14. An Easy Read version of the strategy will be coproduced with children and young people and their parents and carers once the strategy has received final sign-off by the Cabinet.
15. It should also be noted that this strategy is distinct from but aligned to the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Joint Commissioning Strategy 2021-24 for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. Work has commenced to refresh this LLR Strategy ready for April 2025 and this refresh will take regard of the content of the Leicestershire SEND and Inclusion Strategy to ensure continued alignment.

### **Consultation**

16. The draft SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2027 is a refresh of the current SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2020-23 which in itself was based on a number of consultations carried out for use within the SEND Strategy 2017 - 2020 and the development of SEND resource provision across Leicestershire. The Parent Carer Forum surveyed parents and carers during the SEND inspection in February 2020 and the reinspection in 2022, providing an update on issues faced by them.
17. A workshop was held with the SEND and Inclusion Partnership Board members in November 2023 to examine existing Strategy and identify areas that needed to go forward into the refreshed version. It also proposed new areas such as the need for a strategy around the use of Alternative Provision and additional support to manage Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs, an emerging area of priority where performance and outcome data and feedback from children and young people with SEND and their families suggested barriers to achieving the vision that all children,

including those with SEND, thrive, fulfil their potential, belong, and live their best lives within their communities.

18. The SEND and Inclusion Partnership Board subsequently co-produced five overarching SEND principles which have been used to shape the refreshed SEND and Inclusion Strategy for 2024-2027. These are included in paragraph 9.
19. Feedback from parents and carers of children and young people with SEND gathered during 2023 and 2024 has been crucial to shaping the SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2027, and Section 3 of the Strategy sets out key themes from engagement and consultation which highlights the areas we need to improve. In addition to feedback captured and shared by the Parent and Carer Forum, feedback has been captured directly from parents and carers of children and young people with SEND using a variety of surveys and engagement events during 2023 and 2024 including our regular Local Offer Roadshows. In addition to the voice of children and young people featuring in their Education, Health and Care Plans, views have been captured through work with the Young Researchers Young Voices project and through a separately commissioned Student Voices Project in January and February 2024.
20. A public consultation on the draft Strategy will seek to confirm that the priorities identified within the Strategy are the right focus for improvement activity to be overseen by the Leicestershire SEND and Inclusion Partnership Board over the next 3 years.
21. It is proposed to hold an 8-week consultation exercise on the draft SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2027. This will be carried out primarily using an online survey which also be available in accessible print versions on request. Subject to the Cabinet's approval this will commence on 10 February and run until 6 April 2025.

### **Resource Implications**

22. The Strategy is set at a time of unprecedented and growing demand for High Needs support across the SEND system. The financial position of the High Needs DSG is a significant risk to the Local Authority where a financial deficit of £102m in 2027/28 is forecast. This is clearly an unsustainable position.
23. The draft SEND and Inclusion Strategy sets out a shared commitment from the SEND and Inclusion Partnership for partners to work together to tackle the challenges facing the SEND system, including a specific focus on improving inclusion within mainstream educational settings. The County Council faces an increasing level of demand for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and the Strategy will enable the Leicestershire SEND and Inclusion Partnership to work on the key priorities to reduce the risk of unnecessary demand for EHCPs, working with parent/carers and children and young people to identify efficient processes and the early identification of SEND to support their needs. This in turn will support the County Council in meeting its Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) commitments. The draft refresh of the Council's MTFS is being presented to Children and Families Scrutiny at the 21 January 2025 meeting and to Cabinet at the 7 February 2025 meeting.
24. The Strategy will be implemented using existing budgets, supplemented where available using any additional grant funding aligned to delivering the priorities within

the Strategy such as through the Department for Education sponsored Change Partnership Programme or the Schools Block Transfer noted in paragraph 5.

25. The Director of Law and Governance and the Director of Corporate Resources have been consulted on this report.

### **Timetable for Decisions**

26. Permission to consult publicly on the Strategy will be sought from Cabinet on 7 February 2025. The views expressed by Scrutiny will be included in the report to Cabinet.
27. The Cabinet will receive a further report at its meeting on 17 June 2025 regarding feedback from the consultation exercise and presenting the final Strategy for approval.

### **Background papers**

Report to the Cabinet on 22 November 2024

[Proposed Transfer of Funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant](#)

Report to the County Council on 18 May 2022

[Leicestershire County Council's Strategic Plan 2022 - 2026](#)

Report to the Cabinet on 18 September 2020

[Special Educational Needs and Disability \(SEND\) And Inclusion Strategy 2020 to 2023](#)

Report to the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 1 September 2020

[SEND and Inclusion Strategy for 2020-2023](#)

Report to the Cabinet on 10 April 2018

[Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy 2017 to 2020](#)

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

28. This report has been circulated to all Members of the County Council.

### **Equality Implications**

29. The development of the Strategy will have a positive impact on equality, diversity, and inclusion for people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 and more widely. Improvements to partner services will support all children and young people with identified SEND aged 0-25 in Leicestershire. This strategy aims to deliver our vision for all children, including those with SEND to thrive, fulfil their potential, belong, and live their best lives within their communities. Improvements to service provision should also benefit the parents, carers and families of children and young people with SEND.
30. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed on the draft Strategy and consultation approach which can be found at Appendix B. It concluded that the

Strategy should have a positive impact for all protected groups and other communities which are of special interest to the Council. The EIA will be revised following the consultation and submitted to the Cabinet.

### **Human Rights Implications**

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

### **Other Relevant Impact Assessments**

32. The partnership implications of the draft Strategy are set out in paragraphs 7-12 of this report.

### **Appendices**

Appendix A – Draft SEND & Inclusion Strategy 2024 to 2027

Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment

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

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# SEND and Inclusion Strategy

▶ 2024 - 2027



# Foreword

We are incredibly proud that we have taken the opportunity to work together to redesign how Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) in Leicestershire will be, as this is a subject that is truly close to our hearts.

Children are our future, and they deserve the very best that we can give them. We know that we have to get it right so that all children can flourish, thrive and live their best lives. We are committed to working with all our partners to improve outcomes; children, young people and their families, those across education, health, social care, the voluntary sector and our local employers.

We are all here because we care. We are all here because we are determined to make positive change happen.

We will all work with transparency, honesty, and openness and we will hold each other to account. We will all deliver the changes that need to be made to improve the lived experiences of our children, young people and their families.

We are committed to developing and evolving detailed plans for each of the six priorities identified through co-production. This will be done together and will focus on the positive impact we have on children and young people's lives.

We want to personally thank everyone who has been part of developing this strategy and for your ongoing commitment to supporting our journey of improvement.

We look forward to working with you all in "Shaping the Future" for SEND in Leicestershire.

**Jane Moore,**

Director of Children & Family Services, Leicestershire County Council

**Caroline Trevithick,**

Chief Executive, Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Integrated Care Board

# Contents

1. Introduction
2. Our Leicestershire local context
3. What our families tell us?
4. Our Local Area SEND Development Plan
5. Our strategy for ensuring sufficient appropriate educational places for children and young people with SEND
6. How will we know we are making a difference?
7. Who will monitor our progress?

# 1. Introduction

In Leicestershire, SEND is everyone's responsibility. Children and young people achieve better outcomes when we have a clear focus on working together. Whilst there is significant pressure and challenge, our vision is for all children, including those with SEND to thrive, fulfil their potential, belong, and live their best lives within their communities.

This Strategy is set at a time of unprecedented and growing demand for support across the SEND system which exceeds funded capacity across all local area partners. This is clearly an unsustainable position. The draft SEND and Inclusion Strategy sets out a shared commitment from the SEND and Inclusion Partnership for partners to work together to tackle the challenges facing the SEND system, including a specific focus on improving inclusion within mainstream educational settings.

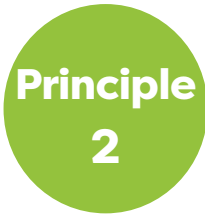
The purpose of this strategy is to set out the vision and priorities in Leicestershire for developing support and provision for children and young people aged 0-25 with SEND. Our strategy will be delivered through our five overarching SEND principles which have been co-produced by the Leicestershire SEND and Inclusion Partnership following an evaluation of what is working well and current barriers to achieving our vision for children and young people with SEND in Leicestershire.



Building trust and strong relationships with parents and carers and children and young people with SEND will run as a theme through everything we do



**The child and family are at the heart of what we all do**



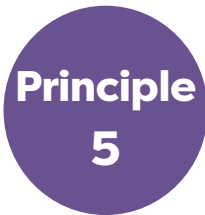
**We will have an accurate understanding of the needs and lived experiences of children and young people with SEND**



**Children and young people with SEND are prepared for successful transition throughout their life**



**Leaders across the SEND partnership will work together to plan, deliver and quality assure Leicestershire's offer**



**We will provide timely and effective support to enable children and young people with SEND to thrive and belong in their communities**

We are committed to making positive change happen. We know there is history where children and families have felt let down and feel that promises have not been fulfilled. We are determined to change this. We also know that this will take time, but we will work diligently, co-produce quickly and effectively to make positive change happen.

Our SEND strategy demonstrates the collective commitment and responsibility between our parents, community, Local Authority (LA) education and social care support services and settings, including health services across the spectrum of health provision. Parents and the voluntary sector have a shared commitment to the strategy and are partners in ensuring that it meets the needs of our children and young people.

Co-production and partnership working with families is at the core of SEND service development and delivery across education, social care and health.

This strategy sets out our ambitious vision, aims and priorities to ensure that we effectively identify and meet the needs of the children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) age 0 to 25.



**Children and young people achieve better outcomes when we have a clear focus on working together.**

This strategy for 2024-2027 sets out our commitment to delivering consistently better outcomes for children and young people with SEND. We will ensure children with SEND across Leicestershire have access to the right support at the right time enabling them to thrive and succeed.



## 2. Leicestershire context

The following sections provide a high-level summary of the numbers of children and young people with SEND in Leicestershire, support provided from partners across the County and the impact this is having. More information is available through the Leicestershire Local Area Inclusion Plan.

### Children and Young People in Leicestershire

Leicestershire is a large urban/rural County located within the East Midlands region of England which surrounds the city of Leicester. Leicestershire's population was 712,336 at the latest census in 2021, a 9.5% increase to the county's population over the last 10 years. This makes Leicestershire one of the fastest growing areas in the country in terms of population (national average 6.6%). Understandably, this has placed added pressures on services for Children and Young People in the County. The County has approx. 201,250 children and young people aged under 26 years (29% of the total population). This is expected to grow to 234,329 by 2033.

| Population of Leicestershire   | 2023 estimate | 2033 estimate |
|--|---------------|---------------|
| Total population for Leicestershire  | 722,155       | 806,906       |
| Total number of children and young people aged under 26 years                      | 210,255       | 234,329       |
| Percentage of children and young people aged below 26 against the total population | 29.1%         | 29%           |
| <b>Split across SEN2 age bandings:</b>   |               |               |
| 0 to 4   | 36,160        | 39,982        |
| 5 to 10  | 48,762        | 51,466        |
| 11 to 15   | 41,981        | 44,661        |
| 16 to 18   | 24,470        | 29,340        |
| 19 to 25   | 58,882        | 68,880        |

There are 107,413 children and young people educated in Leicestershire schools (aged 3-18). Children and Young People from minority ethnic groups account for 23.6% of all children living in Leicestershire, compared with 37% in the country as a whole. The largest minority ethnic groups are Asian or Asian British and Mixed. Many children and young people with EHCPs are educated in mainstream schools or special schools. It is the Local Area's ambition that the majority of children with EHCPs can be included and educated in mainstream schools, or resourced provisions within a mainstream context, where they can learn in their local communities and with their peers.

## From our School Census in January 2024, we know that:



Total number of pupils in Leicestershire schools **107,413**

Percentage of Black Asian and other ethnic communities of the total school population (excluding unclassified) **23.6%**



### Total number and percentage of EHCP's for Black, Asian and Ethnic groups

Asian/Asian British **3%**

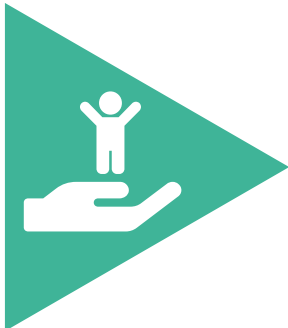
Black/African/  
Caribbean/  
Black British  
**0.8%**

Mixed/Multiple  
ethnic groups  
**4.7%**

Other ethnic  
groups  
**0.5%**



Percentage of pupils that have English as an additional language **8.6%**



Total number of looked after children (March 2023 903 return) **681**

Total number of looked after children as a percentage of the total population aged 0 to 17 years **0.48%**



All pupils eligible for free school meals **15.5%**

SEN support pupils eligible for free school meals **12.9%**

EHCP pupils eligible for free school meals **32.5%**

As at August 2024, Leicestershire has 317 schools across the County, which include 252 mainstream Primary, 80 mainstream Secondary and 8 Special Schools. The County also has 32 SEN Units or Resource Bases, most of which are attached to mainstream schools.

In terms of Early Years provision, Leicestershire has 4 specialist EY settings within the County.

There are 7 mainstream and 1 specialist Post 16 education providers supporting young people with EHCPs in Leicestershire.



## Children and Young People in Leicestershire with Special Educational Needs

The latest School Census, which includes all pupils on roll at a school within Leicestershire (aged 4 to 16 years), reports that there are now 13,983 pupils on a SEN Support plan and 6,377 with an Education, Health and Care Plan. SEND pupils account for 17.2% of the Leicestershire school population.

During the last few years Leicestershire has faced significant challenges in responding to the increasing demand for Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments (EHCNAs) like many Local Authorities nationally. We know that within Leicestershire there is an increasing trend for requests for Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments (EHCNAs) resulting in Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) which increased 18% between 2022 and 2023, however growth in EHCPs issued, while still significant, has slowed somewhat in comparison to national and regional trends since 2020 after a period of considerable growth between 2016 and 2020. As a result of increased demand, capacity of services, and national shortages of Educational Psychologists, Leicestershire has been unable to keep within statutory timeframes of 20 weeks. As a result this has impacted on children, young people and families who have had to wait longer for an EHCP, and subsequently any additional support required or a specialist school placement where this is needed.

|                       | Number of EHCP's  |         |         |         |         |          |
|-----------------------|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------|
|                       | 2020  | 2021    | 2022    | 2023    | 2024    | Aug 2024 |
| <b>England</b>        | 390,109   | 430,697 | 473,255 | 517,049 | 575,963 |          |
|                       | <b>47.6% increase between 2020 – 2024</b>   |         |         |         |         |          |
| <b>East Midlands</b>  | 27,104  | 30,500  | 33,402  | 36,950  | 41,806  |          |
|                       | <b>54.2% increase between 2020 – 2024</b>   |         |         |         |         |          |
| <b>Leicestershire</b> | 4,751   | 5,288   | 5,813   | 6,201   | 6,377   | 6,887    |
|                       | <b>34% increase between 2020 – 2024 and<br/>45% increase between 2020 and August 2024</b> |         |         |         |         |          |



The age differences for intervention to support pupils amongst health, social care and education appears to create some barriers which need addressing within EHC Plans and when ensuring effective earlier SEND support  
**School Leader 2024**



It is difficult to hear the same message around national issues when this has been known for some time  
**School Leader 2024**

## Education

Education attainment and progress for children and young people with an EHCP is generally good and is just under or around the national average across most key stages but is above the national average for KS4 (GCSE). For those pupils on SEN support, attainment and progress are below the national average except at KS4. A high proportion of children and young people with SEN go on to higher and further education. The Local Area recognises the need to make improvements across all reported attainment years.

Longer term outcomes for adults with SEND in Leicestershire are good, with the proportion of those living in the own home or with family significantly higher in Leicestershire than the national average. They are also significantly more likely to be in paid employment, at nearly double the national average rate.

School attendance rates for children and young people with SEN in Leicestershire are generally good, with data from the Autumn term for 23/24 better than national average for Primary and Special Schools and the Oakfield Pupil Referral Unit across all attendance indicators. Attendance at Special schools and Oakfield are particularly good as compared to the national attendance picture for similar settings. Secondary attendance rates are slightly above the national average.

Permanent exclusions for children and young people with SEN in Leicestershire are significantly lower than national average and fixed term exclusions are also below national average, especially for those with EHCPs, which demonstrate the Local Area's commitment to inclusive education for all children and young people. This work with schools continues to be a key focus for the Local Area, with a focus on building capacity in schools, additional support, advice and guidance from the Local Authority to further strengthen early identification and offer excellent SEN Support through the provision of new tools such as the recently developed Inclusive Practice Toolkit and training for staff in school settings. This is continually being improved based on feedback from schools.

Children at risk of exclusion receive support through Leicestershire's Secondary Education and Inclusion Partnerships (SEIPs) which provide multi-agency inclusion forums and also provide support and reassurance around transition to secondary settings, or from Oakfield Short Stay School which provides support for primary school age children prior to starting at a new school. The Specialist Teaching Service works closely with



The inclusive practice toolkit has been really helpful in supporting teachers  
**SENCo 2024**

Health, Social Care and other services such as CAMHS. The Autism Outreach team also offer all schools a support package as well as pupil-specific support. The attendance team works with individual schools and pupils to prevent suspensions and permanent exclusions and support children and young people back to regular school attendance.

Setting specific planning from the Inclusion team ensures support for schools is targeted to those in greatest need.

Support for early intervention and efficacy of SEND provision by Early Years settings, mainstream schools and colleges is generally good. Additional support is in place to improve consistency of inclusive practice in ordinarily available Early Years settings.

The proportion of Electively Home Educated (EHE) children with EHCPs is slowly increasing, in contrast to the national position, although numbers are still small. Support for EHE children is in place from the Inclusion service of the Local Authority. Partners do not have consistent knowledge of children who do not access education at all or who access on a part time basis. We need to work together better, to address the underlying reasons behind this and build inclusive communities that can support their reintegration holistically.

Despite the number of children and young people with SEN accessing transport to educational settings increasing 87% since 2015/16, the local authority does not have any specific challenges with sufficiency. However, 55% of pupils in transport use taxis and there are some localised difficulties commissioning private transport services.

## Health

Most children and young people benefit from early and effective identification of additional needs. Health visitors consistently deliver mandated checks through the Healthy Child programme which provides a universal support offer for 0-19 year olds. Health services to meet children's physical and mental health needs are provided through a range of targeted and specialist services. Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust health services work in close partnership with Early Years settings, schools and local authority specialist services to jointly assess and meet identified needs. The timeliness of health advice going into EHCPs is good and is consistently meeting the 6-week target.

Consistent with the national picture across England, some children and young people are waiting too long for specialist health assessments against national guidelines, leading to delay in appropriately assessing and supporting needs. This is particularly for those waiting on the neurodevelopmental pathway, child and adolescent mental health services, speech and language therapy and occupational therapy which all have demand exceeding funded capacity and considerable waiting lists.

Children, young people and families in Leicestershire can expect to wait more than 2 years for an assessment as part of the neurodevelopmental pathway. Whilst waiting for an assessment, families are directed to a range of digital, charitable sector and system support, including LPT's Health for Kids and Health for Teens websites, Autism Space, ChatAutism, the National Autistic Society and ADHD Solutions. Pre and post diagnosis, children and young people are referred to any other relevant health service to support and meet needs such as Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Community Paediatrics, Mental Health Support Teams and CAMHS for assessment and intervention.

Demand for health advice and support for children and young people with SEND continues to increase. In April 2024, 2,954 children and young people were registered with the Special Educational Needs & Disabilities Unit with an active plan. The breakdown by age is shown in the table below. The children that are supported have a variety of often complex physical and mental health needs.

| Age group                     | 0 - 5 | 6 - 11 | 12 - 16 | 17-20 | 21-25 | Total |
|-------------------------------|-------|--------|---------|-------|-------|-------|
| Number of children registered | 296   | 1042   | 962     | 564   | 90    | 2954  |

Care navigators help in coordinating a child's health care and provide information around local support networks available in the area. Requests for care navigation in Leicestershire increased substantially in 2022/23 to 2,036, up 37% on the previous year.

## Social care

There were 726 children and young people looked after by Leicestershire County Council as at 31st March 2024. This represents 0.5% of the overall Leicestershire population under the age of 18.

In Leicestershire, 27.5% of looked after children in 2022/23 (the latest published figures) were on SEN support, compared to 27.3% nationally. 33.2% of looked after children in Leicestershire have an EHC Plan, compared to 30.8% nationally. Nationally, 21.8% of Children in Need are on SEN support and 28.2% have an EHC plan. In Leicestershire, 23.7% of children in need are on SEN support and 23.8% of children in need have an EHC plan.

The proportion of children in need with a disability recorded has fallen over the last 6 years in Leicestershire and is now below both regional and national averages. In 2023/24, 8.8% of children in need also had a recorded disability.

A dedicated team for children who are disabled provides specialist intervention for children with complex needs relating to their disability, undertakes assessments and provides support to families to develop a plan that will assist the child or young person. The team also work with children with disabilities where there are safeguarding concerns or where they are in the care of the local authority. Children's social care works closely with the young adult's disability team to consider transitions and ensures young people moving into adult services have the right support at the right time.

**27.5%**  
looked after  
children in 2022/23  
in Leicestershire  
were on SEN  
support


**33.2%**  
looked after  
children in 2022/23  
in Leicestershire  
have an EHC plan

Social workers provide support to parents and carers about how to support emerging needs. Social Care is working hard to improve the advice and support provided for children and young people with SEND through 2 recently appointed Dedicated Social Care Officers (DSCOs). The DSCO role is focused on improving the quality of Social Care advice for EHCPs and providing training for Social Care staff to improve the consistency of support offered.

Due to capacity, there are sometimes long waiting times and limited access to overnight short breaks. Work is underway to develop a number of creative opportunities to grow short breaks provision in coproduction with parents, carers and children. This includes piloting a short breaks scheme which aims to give parents more choice and independence and give opportunity for families to acquire a payment to purchase local offer services themselves for short breaks. Further exploration of other opportunities to jointly commission overnight breaks with Health for children with complex health care needs. For residential provision, we will be utilising our partnership with Barnados and have been successful in a funding bid for the DFE to open a residential home for complex care.

## Our Local Offer

Awareness and engagement with the Leicestershire Local Offer is good, and increasing over time. There is excellent engagement through the Local Offer Facebook page which in July 2024 had 4.3k followers. The Local Offer webpage regularly features in the top 5 search items and most visited pages on the Local Authority's website. The Local Offer is constantly being improved through coproduction with the SEND Hub and incorporating survey findings. We are using feedback from those attending to continuously improve our Local Offer, improving navigation and ensuring it meets the needs of children and young people and their families. Regular Local Offer Roadshows are well attended and receive good feedback from attendees. Children and young people's voices have also contributed to the review of the local offer.



**4.3k  
followers**  
on the Local Offer  
Facebook page in  
July 2024

## Local Area SEND Inspection

Leicestershire's Education, Health and Social Care services are jointly inspected by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to see how well they meet their responsibilities towards children and young people with SEN and disabilities. In February 2020 following the most recent Local Area SEND Inspection, Leicestershire received a Written Statement of Action. We are currently working with the Department for Education (DfE) to monitor improvement progress through an Accelerated Progress Plan.

**The Leicestershire local area was subject to a SEND re-inspection in November 2022 to consider the progress made by the local area SEND on the two areas included within Leicestershire’s Written Statement of Action:**

- ▶ Lack of a joint commissioning strategy
- ▶ Quality of EHC plans

A joint commissioning strategy is now in place, and the report highlighted the significant progress we have made and recognised improvements that have been made since the initial inspection in 2020. However, local partners accept findings that identified that whilst EHCP quality has improved and includes the views of parents and carers, improvements still need to be made, including the implementation of quality assurance of EHCPs which is now in place through a multiagency audit panel.

This is something that we are working on – inspectors acknowledged we have made a focused plan to bring about the necessary improvements to EHCPs. We aim to make the improvements as quickly as possible and have developed a recovery plan which targets the timeliness of EHCNAs and EHCP reviews, and improvements in the quality of EHCPs through targeted multiagency quality audits and training. The most recent update on our progress can be found here [www.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/special-educational-needs-and-disability/send-service-developments/local-area-send-inspection](http://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/special-educational-needs-and-disability/send-service-developments/local-area-send-inspection).

## Improving local services for children and young people with SEND in Leicestershire

This strategy has been developed when there is a lot of change happening both locally and nationally. The Leicestershire SEND and Inclusion Partnership is committed to improving services for children and young people with SEND in Leicestershire and a number of change initiatives are in progress along with our Accelerated Progress Plan and recovery plan set out above.

Changes in demand, for example, increasing numbers of children with anxiety related non-attendance, emotionally based school absence (EBSA); increasing numbers of children with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs across our services, as well as an increase in need for much younger children, have led to increasing numbers of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP’s) and underperformance against our statutory timeframes. In response to this increased demand, Leicestershire has invested significantly



in a change programme, Transforming SEND and Inclusion in Leicestershire (TSIL) which has been pivotal to change across the system.

The TSIL Programme was established with partners across the SEND system in recognition of the rising demand for SEND support through Education, Health and Care plans and specialist provision; with the aim of ensuring we have a sustainable system for the future. The diagnostic evidence gathering and work with partners identified four key areas where positive improvements can be made: Inclusive practice, Service transformation, Accurate data and information and Communication and engagement. The Transforming SEND and Inclusion in Leicestershire programme has reshaped the SEND services within the Local Authority and introduced improvements to processes, support inclusive practice and ensure more joined up working across the system.

The TSIL programme has now moved into a Continuous Improvement phase, supporting embedding of the changes made during the programme and continuing to work with system partners to improve the experience for children and young people with SEND and their parents and carers. In order to support continuous improvement of SEND services, Leicestershire County Council have introduced a new Education Quality & Performance team who will monitor the sustained improvements in performance and drive through new areas of improvement, the DSCO role within Social Care, and a Children and Young Person SEND and Personalisation team has been introduced through the ICB.

The Specialist Provision in Leicestershire (SPIL) document co-produced with the Leicestershire SEND hub through the TSIL programme sets out available education provisions for children and young people with SEND, supporting parents to make informed choices on suitable placements.

Leicestershire is part of the Leicester City, Leicestershire and Rutland local area partnership who are collectively taking part in the national Change Programme Partnership for SEND and Alternative Provision reforms. The Change Programme Partnership was launched by the Department for Education (DfE) in September 2023 to test and deliver reforms to SEND and Alternative Provision with a small group of local area partnerships (add appropriate link for more information)

Leicestershire is also an early adopter for the Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) program (now also part of CPP) and has commenced engagement with a selection of local primary schools to test models of support to enable neurodivergent children and young people to remain in mainstream education.

The Early Language and Support for Every Child programme (ELSEC) also being managed through the CPP is focusing on early identification and support for children and young people with Speech, Language and Communication needs, with the aim of reducing the rate of referrals, increasing workforce capacity and improving the join up between Health and Education



In addition, Leicestershire is also part of “Delivering Better Value in SEND programme” aiming to support local authorities to improve the delivery of SEND services for children and young people while ensuring services are sustainable. [www.dbvinsend.com/participating-local-authorities](http://www.dbvinsend.com/participating-local-authorities)

Through our innovative work within localities, we have been listening to children, young people, families and our partners across Education, Health, and Social Care through co-production events, to find out exactly what needs to change. The Shaping SEND futures project (#ShapingSEnDFutures) is piloting this approach across two areas of Leicestershire – Hinckley & Bosworth and North West Leicestershire. The project is working to bring the SEND strategy to life, building on the voice of children and young people and their families to pilot improvements across system partners.



# 3. What our children, young people and families tell us

## Our Parent Carer Forum – Leicestershire SEND Hub

The SEND Hub is well established and provides on-going feedback from families on their experiences of having a child or young person with Special Educational Needs and/or a Disability into local partners through their role on the Leicestershire SEND and Inclusion Board. This role is formalised through a partnership agreement. The Leicestershire SEND Hub Youth Forum is developing, partnering with Children’s Social Care and Family Hubs.

Partners work closely with the SEND Hub to co-produce changes to processes and service offers, for example through the Transforming SEND and Inclusion programme, Shaping SEND Futures project and PINS programme. SEND Hub representatives are valued members of working groups on a wide range of change and improvement initiatives, such as ongoing work on development of needs descriptors and CPP workstreams focused on EHCP moderation and quality assurance. Regular survey and feedback work with parents, carers and children and young people is coordinated through the SEND Hub.

## Feedback is helping us to improve our services

Improving the capture and use of the voice of children and young people is an ambition for the partnership, particularly ensuring this is consistently included in EHCPs and annual reviews.

Key themes from engagement and consultation with children and young people and their families highlights the areas we need to improve:



## Joint working across Education, Health and Social Care to develop an easier to navigate system

Partners understand that many parents and carers feel powerless and feel they do not have a voice in a complex and hard to navigate system. We do not offer joined up solutions and approaches across the Local Area Partnership resulting in age becoming a barrier to accessing services, and processes and systems are not clear enough. We acknowledge that while we actively seek feedback, we could do more to capture views about experiences of the system as a whole, and to use the feedback we are receiving to improve our services and the journey of children and young people with SEND through the system.



Since changing to the new ways of working for SENA it has made everything much harder we don't have a person to call we did before

**Carer 2024**

## Delays in assessing and supporting children and young people's needs

Parents and carers note that waiting times for assessments and specialist services are an area of dissatisfaction and frustration, including a lack of communication around progress. The waiting times for EHC needs assessments and for allocation of a caseworker are a concern; there are also often very long waits once a referral has been made to an initial appointment, and between appointments for specialist support services. Parents and carers also report that it takes a long time to be able to receive a diagnosis and that more information needs to be made available whilst waiting for an assessment and services to support whilst awaiting diagnosis. As noted earlier this is an area of focus for partners through the recovery plan associated with the Accelerated Progress Plan. We know when we get these right partners are able to provide the right support at an early stage for children and young people and their families. We note the ongoing pressures on the SEND system and long waiting times for some specialist services makes this challenging. Parents and carers report there are barriers with the capacity and criteria for access for these services meaning some children and young people do not qualify as their needs are too high or not high enough.



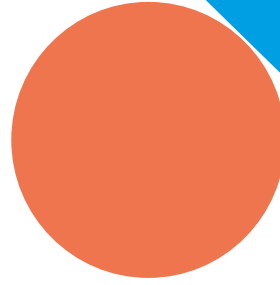
We have had to wait over 3 years to be seen by CAMHs how is this fair?

**Parent 2024**



The school really helped me to understand my son's needs following his diagnosis. They talked me through each process and I felt really supported –

**Parent 2024**



## EHCP review timeliness and plan updates

Parents and carers report they are concerned that annual reviews of their child or young person's EHCP are not always being reflected in an updated plan, with plans becoming increasingly out of date where reviews have not been processed and concerns around unmet needs leading to children out of school. This is a clear priority for parents and carers, particularly for those whose children are due to transition to a new key stage or setting to ensure that needs are appropriately understood and documented. We know there is a significant task to recover timeliness and performance around annual reviews due to the number of EHCPs but are committed to making significant improvements in both areas. This area is also being addressed through the recovery plan associated with the Accelerated Progress Plan.



A lot of reviews are out of date and on old formats, some are 4 years out of date

**SEND Hub 2024**

## Transitions between educational settings

Feedback from children and young people and their families suggests that transitions between settings and services could be made smoother with additional support required to manage and reduce the impact of change. During the design phase of the TSIL programme, partners engaged with parent/carers and young people around their experience of transitions and how these may differ at different transition points. What was consistent was the concerns around managing change and how we can reduce the impact of the change on the children and young people. This was felt by parents/carers and CYP at all key stage changes. The parents and carers were able to draw out examples of where school experiences had worked particularly well. This included examples of good provision in mainstream schools and where their child's needs were being met, especially in the primary phase. What was apparent was how some schools/provisions approach transition differently, and how this can drastically affect the experience and engagement in transition. TSIL has worked to improve the consistency of transitions for those children moving from early years settings into Primary Schools. Ongoing work is planned through the Shaping SEND futures project to identify and consider how to overcome transition barriers that exist at other key stage transition points. Support for Transitions is a key priority for the partnership

## Support for inclusion of children and young people with SEND in mainstream schools

Feedback from children and young people and their families suggests that there is not a shared understanding of inclusion across all partners and more focus required to ensure all mainstream schools in Leicestershire are able to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND where this is a suitable educational setting. Significant support for inclusion has been developed, but a shared understanding is crucial to further improvements. Feedback suggests that early support is not effective for all children and young people and there is more support we can offer to support children and young people back into school.



My teachers really struggled to help and understand me  
pupil Y9 2024

## Availability of school places for children and young people with SEND

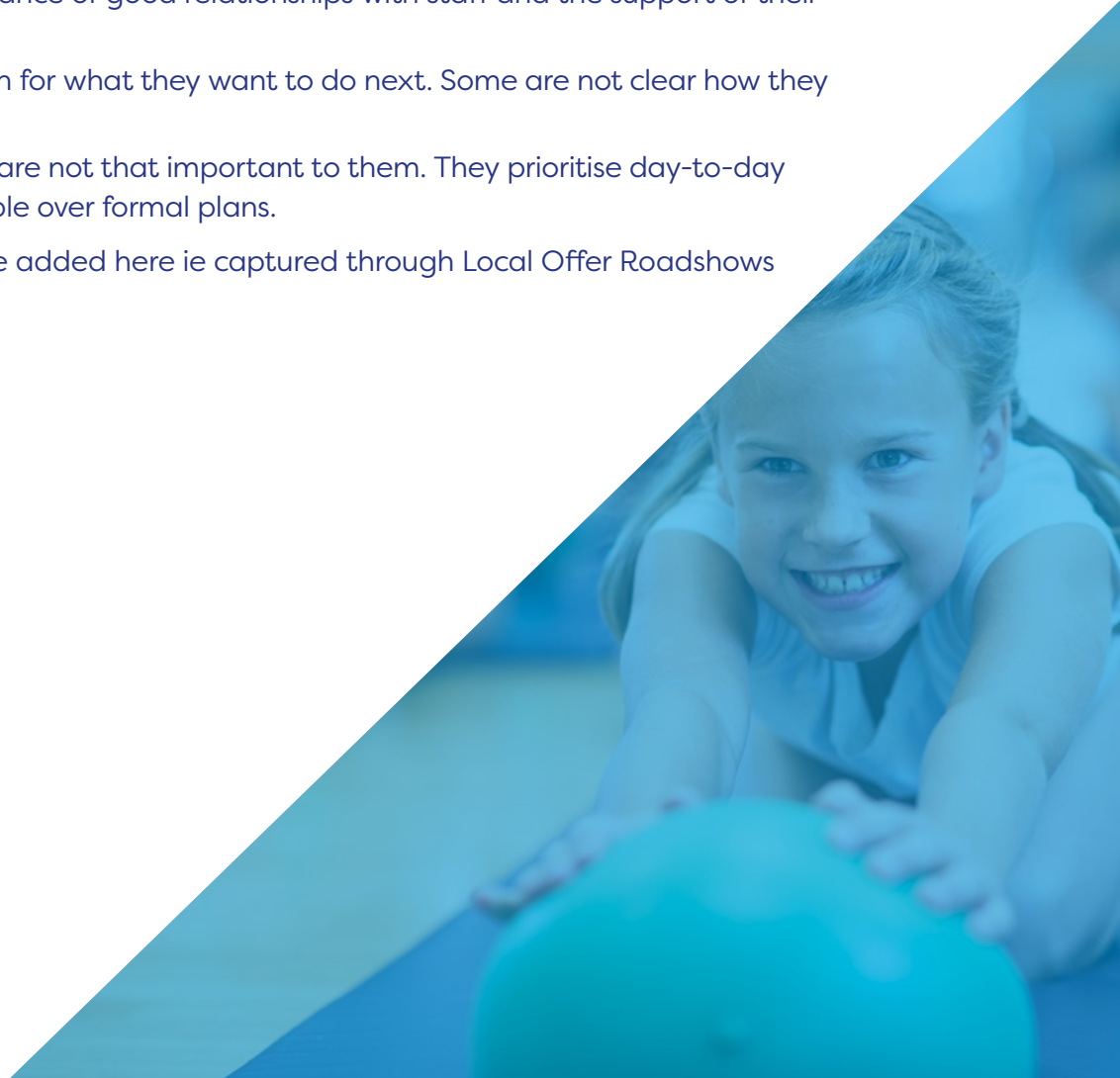
We know that there are insufficient special school places available within communities, and this results in our children and young people being transported across the county or outside, sometimes being placed in an expensive independent educational provision or offered Education Other Than at School (EOTAS). We hear from parents and carers that this can cause stress for children and young people who spend considerable time travelling and can mean they are not ready/fit to learn on arrival at school. These families would like their child to be able to attend an educational setting closer to their home. Access to specialist educational provisions that meet complex needs can be challenging due to a lack of places and securing an appropriate place can feel daunting.

## Young Researchers Young Voices

We are supporting the Young Researchers Young Voices Project, an innovative three-year project that investigates the views and experiences of children and young people with SEND across the East Midlands [www.derby.ac.uk/research/centres-groups/educational-research-and-innovation/inclusion-and-special-educational-needs-research-cluster/action-research-and-lesson-study-for-isend/](http://www.derby.ac.uk/research/centres-groups/educational-research-and-innovation/inclusion-and-special-educational-needs-research-cluster/action-research-and-lesson-study-for-isend/). The project team have recently published their year 2 findings which we will use to help shape practice improvements across the local area partnership:

- ▶ Children and young people find their SEND support suitable and beneficial.
- ▶ Their SEND support meets their needs and fosters important learning and development.
- ▶ They feel their opinions are valued and listened to.
- ▶ Many of them are consulted or involved in decisions about their support.
- ▶ Some were hesitant to ask for changes to their support in case the support is removed or the changes they ask for had a detrimental effect on their support.
- ▶ They want the support to be given only if they need it, recognising the importance of independence.
- ▶ They place value in the community around them and strive to support others to achieve their goals.
- ▶ They stress the importance of good relationships with staff and the support of their families.
- ▶ They often have a plan for what they want to do next. Some are not clear how they will get there.
- ▶ In many cases, EHCPs are not that important to them. They prioritise day-to-day support from key people over formal plans.

Recent voice work can be added here ie captured through Local Offer Roadshows



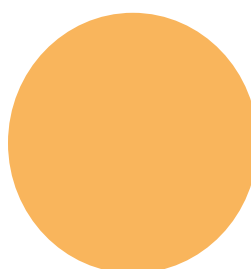
# 4. Our strategy for ensuring sufficient appropriate educational places for children and young people with SEND

## Current position

The demand for SEND educational provision continues to grow through increases in EHCPs and demand for specialist school places, which continues to rise faster than capacity. Leicestershire has 5 maintained special schools and 3 specialist academies within the County offering 1,768 places in September 2024. There are also 304 primary places and 224 secondary places in SEN units or resourced provisions attached to mainstream schools. In addition, 48 primary and 219 secondary aged children and young people were in a placement at an Independent Special School (ISP) in November 2023.

The local area is currently unable to meet the demand for Special School places despite a significant increase in places during the last academic year. A capital programme overseen by Leicestershire County Council is working to develop provision across the local area.

In 2023/24, 217 specialist places have been created as well as additional support for mainstream schools. In addition, informal provision has been developed for at least 28 pupils in four primary schools where children who might otherwise have taken a specialist place have been supported in a mainstream setting. A new SEMH provision (Bowman Academy) opened in September 2024. The DfE has also agreed a free school with a further 80 places.



We know that there is a deficit of around 430 specialist placements at November 2023, based on pupils placed in independent special schools, those without a placement and those with EHCP issues who were awaiting a placement. In addition, we anticipate an additional 470 places will be required by 2028 based on projected population growth and housing needs assessments. There is a clear growing demand for specialist places in Leicestershire overall, and many children who do have a specialist place attend a specialist provision that is not local to them.

## Sufficiency planning principles

In planning to meet the needs of children with SEND we are committed to the following principles:

- ▶ We aim to meet all children and young people's needs through an inclusive approach, embracing, supporting and treating all children and young people equally and ensuring all children and young people have equality of opportunity.
- ▶ We aim to meet the significant majority (almost all) of children and young people's needs within their locality
- ▶ We will ensure schools and settings are fully supported and resourced to meet the needs of children with additional, challenging needs
- ▶ We will utilise data insights to inform sufficiency planning and organise provision based on evidence, educational principles and a strategic understanding of demand.
- ▶ Proactively set up a diverse range of provisions at all key stages to maximise children and young people's chances of positive educational and social development
- ▶ Understand and promote the offer from state funded provisions and proactively collaborate with them to develop and adapt their offer to close identified gaps and meet needs.
- ▶ We recognise that each child or young person is different and will benefit from unique interventions. We will work with each to find the most suitable level of support for them
- ▶ We recognise and plan provision around the four areas of SEND (Communication and Interaction; Cognition and Learning; Social, Emotional and Mental Health difficulties; Physical and/or Sensory Needs) mindful of the co-concurrence and complexity of need.
- ▶ We will aim to ensure a sufficient and sustainable childcare (0-14) and market is operating with a high-quality workforce enabling all children to have access to an inclusive provision



## Future priorities for school place development

Future priorities set out in the SEND capital programme include expansion of existing special schools (especially at Secondary level where there are less places but high demand across the County); new accommodation for the Oakfield South Short Stay School; phase 1 of an area special school in the Harborough district where there are very few specialist places to meet demand from local children and young people; development of informal specialist provision in mainstream schools and an unallocated capital sum to respond to new and emerging needs.

Additional places will not address the issue of sufficiency in isolation; there is insufficient resource to create enough places to meet the rising demand and there is finite capacity within the Local Authority to deliver additional projects quickly. A partnership approach focusing on improving early assessment and support for children and young people with SEND along with our ongoing work with schools and families to improve inclusive practice in mainstream educational settings and support for attendance will also be important as part of an overall plan for ensuring sufficiency.

The proposed priorities for school place development set out below targets resources to local areas and provision types where there is highest demand and highest likelihood of meeting a wide range of needs.



## **Expanding Special Schools**

A number of schemes to increase the capacity of existing special schools have already been progressed. Due to constrained sites there are limited opportunities to expand these schools further. Further scoping work around special school satellite provision is underway.

### **Oakfield Short Stay School (South)**

Oakfield (South) is currently operating from a temporary base at Newlands in Earl Shilton but a longer-term location with opportunity to expand provision is required. Negotiations are taking place in regard to a site and alternative options.

### **Phase 1 of a new Area Special School in Harborough district**

There is insufficient capital currently available to deliver a full area special school, however it is proposed to deliver the first phase of what will later become a larger area special school in the Harborough area. This will initially focus on secondary aged (with potentially some upper Key Stage 2 provision), ambulant children with communication and interaction and/or cognition and learning primary needs. Phase 1 will work to accommodate around 100 children and young people without complex physical needs, which will be the focus of future phases of school development. A potential site has been identified and negotiations with property services are underway. Once this is confirmed, feasibility and then design work can take place and the school can be established under the free school presumption process, which means that the LA will recommend a MAT sponsor to the DfE.

### **Identification of and support for informal specialist support in primary schools including informal specialist bases and SEN inclusion adaptations**

Special Schools are already beyond capacity, meaning limited ability to offer additional places for early years children with SEND starting school. We are working closely with schools to enable informal (not designated as specialist) provision to be established at some primary schools. From a capital perspective this involves minor adaptation and refurbishment to existing accommodation. We are working to identify a number of schools where this can be achieved with limited wider capacity impact for future basic need cohorts. This allocation can also be used for improvement of SEN and nurture provision with the ambition of keeping children in mainstream provision longer where budgets allow.

### **Responding to opportunities that arise**

The SEND capital programme will ensure on an annual basis that an unallocated amount of capital is held back to respond to needs and opportunities as they arise. This may include taking advantage of opportunities such as vacant property, unused primary classrooms, bids etc, particularly where this would allow a new school to open early. We will also pursue any opportunities for additional capital allocations or grants that are made by central government which would enable faster capacity development.

# 5. Our Local Area SEND and Inclusion Development Plan

In Leicestershire, inclusion means that all children and young people are welcomed and accepted in their local communities, schools and other services that support them. True inclusivity is where differences are seen as a benefit, and where perspectives and differences are shared, leading to better decisions, services and life experiences for children and young people with Special Education Needs and Disabilities and their families. At the heart of inclusion is being and feeling included, ensuring everyone is treated with equity and dignity and has fair access to resources and opportunities.

Work on our improvement journey has already begun. We know we need to make changes that will have lasting effects, and we are committed to working in partnership to provide high quality services that achieve positive outcomes and improve the lives of our children and young people with SEND and their families. We have set out how we intend to achieve the improvement priorities within the strategy below. A detailed plan setting out responsibilities and timelines for delivery will support us to plan and implement changes over the life of the strategy.



| Improvement Theme   | Actions   |
|---|---|
| <b>Principle</b>  |   |
| <b>We will provide timely and effective support to enable children and young people with SEND to thrive and belong in their communities</b> |   |
| Identification and assessment of needs  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Improve the timeliness of EHCNA assessments and EHCP reviews in line with statutory requirements. This is a key focus for the partnership and subject to a recovery plan focusing on clearing backlogs and ensuring sustainable processes and staffing arrangements to meet the need from a high and increasing number of EHCNAs and EHCPs.</li> <li>▶ Improve the quality of EHC plan writing through robust moderation and quality assurance of EHCPs to ensure consistent good quality</li> <li>▶ Reducing waiting times for services across the partnership so that early interventions and universal support are enablers not barriers for outcomes</li> </ul>  |
| Attendance and Inclusion  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Co-produce and implement an Alternative Provision strategy with transparent decision-making, funding, planning, purchasing and monitoring of provision. The Strategy will ensure that needs are met for young people in Alternative Provision and support reintegration into mainstream schools where possible.</li> <li>▶ Consider additional support that can be offered to manage social, emotional and mental health and neurodevelopmental needs across the partnership, particularly for children and young people waiting for services and focusing on inclusion in mainstream educational settings.</li> <li>▶ Trial new ways of working to better identify and support children with speech, language and communication needs in early years and primary schools.</li> <li>▶ Develop a shared understanding of inclusion across all partners and share good practice of inclusion through ordinarily available provision across settings within Leicestershire so that all children and young people can thrive and achieve in their community.</li> <li>▶ Work with provisions to reduce the number of suspensions and permanent exclusions for pupils with SEND.</li> </ul> |
| Commissioned services   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ A school place Sufficiency Strategy set out within this document will identify current and future needs for school placements and ensure more access to appropriate provisions are available.</li> <li>▶ More work is being undertaken around commissioning of sufficient short break provision to meet service demand.</li> <li>▶ Making best use of joint commissioning arrangements across the partnership.</li> </ul>  |



| Improvement Theme  | Actions  |
|--|--|
| <b>Principle</b>   |  |
| <b>We will have an accurate understanding of the needs and lived experiences of children and young people with SEND</b>  |  |
| Engagement, coproduction, feedback and voice   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Continue to improve our Local Offer to ensure it is easy to use, accessible for all and meets the needs and wants of local communities. This will ensure that young people and their families can access clear information about services and support available, including post-16 education options along with building independence, housing, good health, developing friends and family relationships and participating in society.</li> <li>▶ Co-produce multi-disciplinary training across the partnership to ensure quality and consistency for children and families so that services know the child, and their voice is represented in EHCPs.</li> <li>▶ Consider how to capture feedback from a wider group of children and young people, and their parents and carers, particularly around their experiences and journey across the system and how we can best support transitions and preparation for adulthood.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Principle</b>   |  |
| <b>The child and family are at the heart of what we all do<br/>Leaders across the SEND partnership will work together to plan, deliver and quality assure Leicestershire's offer</b> |  |
| Strategic Leadership and Improvement   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Ensure all local partners have an accurate and shared understanding of SEND. Ongoing activity through TSIL CI and CPP to develop needs descriptors will ensure more consistent understanding and application.</li> <li>▶ Continue to develop banding and funding aligned to needs descriptors in order to ensure funding is used efficiently in a needs-led way with a transparent process for allocation.</li> <li>▶ Develop a new SEND data dashboard to share performance information across the system, enabling system leaders to support and challenge, and to monitor the impact of improvement activity to ensure it is making a difference</li> <li>▶ Review, develop and refine processes together openly and honestly, to make sure local services are consistent and the offer to children and young people and their families is more cohesive and easier to navigate</li> <li>▶ Ensure there is capacity within services and provisions, which are jointly planned, and deliver high quality provision, so children and young people can stay within their local communities wherever possible.</li> <li>▶ Identify, invest, and provide a rolling program of evidence-based training for everyone, including practitioners, families and carers, so that children and young people with SEND receive the right support, in the right place and at the right time within their community.</li> <li>▶ Improve the coordination of support for children and young people who have had traumatic experiences.</li> </ul> |

| Improvement Theme   | Actions   |
|---|---|
| <b>Principle</b>  |   |
| <b>Children and young people with SEND are prepared for successful transition throughout their life</b> |   |
| Transitions   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Support successful well-planned transitions from the earliest stages through to transitioning to adult services, working collaboratively to provide joined up support across partners</li> <li>▶ Developing robust processes and support for transitions across the local partnership through the Shaping SEND Futures project so that children and families know what to expect and the support they can receive</li> </ul>   |
| Outcomes for children and young people with SEND  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Ensure all partners have a rolling programme of evidence-based training to secure a shared understanding of what is needed for young people as they prepare for adulthood.</li> <li>▶ Ensure that Preparation for Adulthood pathways are clear and accessible and that planning for this starts from Y9.</li> <li>▶ Support young people to successfully prepare for employment by developing and delivering Supported Internships, Traineeships and improving accessibility of Apprenticeships.</li> <li>▶ Develop Preparation for Adulthood (PFA) and the Supported Internship (SI) project</li> </ul> |



gettyimages  
Credit: SolStock

## 6. How will we know we are making a difference?

- ▶ Parents and carers will report high levels of satisfaction throughout the process. This will include timeliness for statutory assessment, a reduction in waiting times across services and children feel safe and heard. Families know what services are available and how to access them - the right services are in place at the right time and this reduces frustration within the system.
- ▶ Our families will feel empowered to meet their children's needs independently and in their local community wherever possible.
- ▶ Children and young people will have a clear pathway to achieving their goals and who will help them on this journey. They feel safe, valued and equal to their peers and belong and are educated within their communities.
- ▶ Children and young people will have the right support, will not be disadvantaged by age or locality and will have an active voice in their education, health and care.
- ▶ A shared system that stores information in one place will be available across the partnership that informs the commissioning of provision and services.
- ▶ Our workforce across education, health, and care is committed to local area partnership "team around the family" approach, with the right skillset to deliver services to our children and young people at the right stage of their development.
- ▶ The % of CYP whose needs are met locally (for both EHCP and SEN Support)
- ▶ The % of CYP views are recorded effectively in the EHCP Plan
- ▶ Learning is taken from complaints and these are reduced across the partnership
- ▶ The average time children and young people wait to access health care services across CAMHS, Therapies, Diagnostic Pathways eg ASD/ADHD is below 12 months
- ▶ Overall absence levels and absence for pupils with SEND remains below national levels including fixed and permanent exclusions
- ▶ The gap between pupils with SEND and those without working at the expected level in reading, writing and maths at the end of Key Stage 2 is reduced, more pupils achieve expected outcomes
- ▶ There will be an increase in % of pupils with SEND attaining a standard pass at the end of Key Stage 4 and those attaining a strong pass (Attainment 8) and an increase in % of pupils with SEND making expected progress at the end of Key Stage 4 (Progress 8)
- ▶ An increase in successful post 16 transitions into Further Education and a reduction in NEET (not in employment education or training) for children and young people with SEND
- ▶ Through our innovative approaches "Shaping the Future" programme there will be established local SEND communities of practice and local strategic plans in place to implement local SEND priorities.

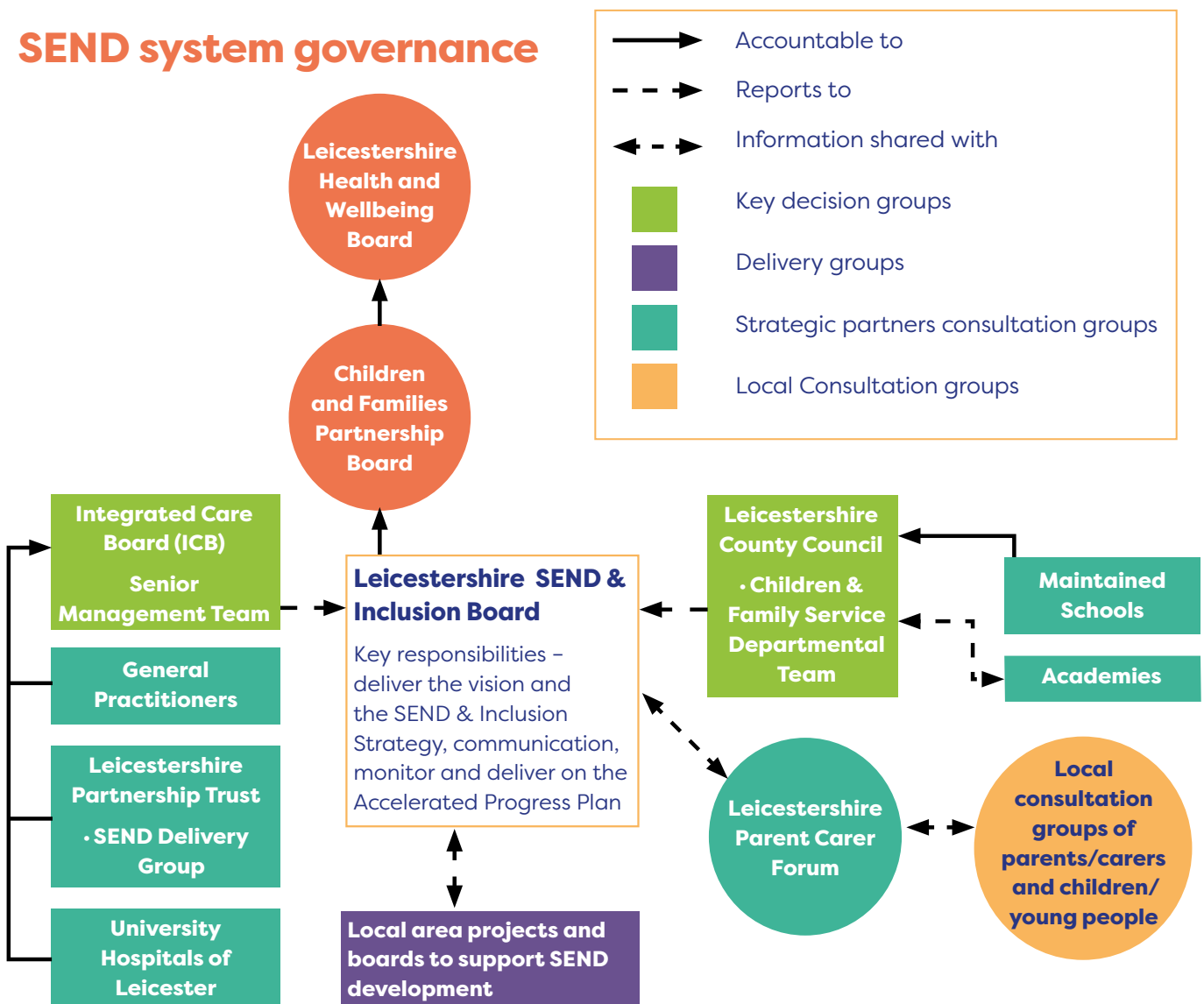
# 7. Who will monitor our progress?

The SEND and Inclusion Strategy will be monitored by the Leicestershire SEND and Inclusion and Health and Well-Being Boards. This will ensure accountability across the Local Area Partnerships and drive improvements.

Updates around our progress will be provided twice a year on our Local Offer page so that everyone can be kept up to date with our progress.

This strategy will be formally reviewed in 18 months from publication to ensure that our priorities are on track, progress is being made and is having a positive impact on children and young people with SEND across Leicestershire.

## SEND system governance







# Equality Impact Assessment Form

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>1- Policy details</b>   |   |
| <b>Name of policy</b>  | Leicestershire Local Area SEND and Inclusion Strategy                                 |
| <b>Department and service</b>  | Children and Family Services, Education Quality & Performance                         |
| <b>Who has been involved in completing the Equality Impact Assessment?</b> | Renata Chantrill, Head of Service Education Quality, Performance and Business Support |
| <b>Contact numbers</b>   | 01163050356   |
| <b>Date of completion</b>  | 6 <sup>th</sup> December 2024   |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>2- Objectives and background of policy or practice change</b>   |  |
| <p>Use this section to describe the policy or practice change<br/>         What is the purpose, expected outcomes and rationale?<br/>         Include the background information and context</p> |  |
| <b>What is the proposal?</b>   | A refreshed partnership strategy for SEND and Inclusion across the Leicestershire local area for 2024-27 which replaces the previous SEND and Inclusion strategy 2020-23. The purpose of this strategy is to set out the vision and priorities in Leicestershire for developing support and provision for children and young people aged 0-25 with SEND. |
| <b>What change and impact is intended by the proposal?</b>   |  |

Our strategy will be delivered through our five overarching SEND principles which have been co-produced by the Leicestershire SEND and Inclusion Partnership following an evaluation of what is working well and current barriers to achieving our vision for children and young people with SEND in Leicestershire.

- **The child and family are at the heart of what we all do**
- **We will have an accurate understanding of the needs and lived experiences of children and young people with SEND**
- **Children and young people with SEND are prepared for successful transition throughout their life**
- **Leaders across the SEND partnership will work together to plan, deliver and quality assure Leicestershire’s offer**
- **We will provide timely and effective support to enable children and young people with SEND to thrive and belong in their communities**

We are committed to making positive change happen. We know there is history where children and families have felt let down and feel that promises have not been fulfilled. We are determined to change this. We also know that this will take time, but we will work diligently, co-produce quickly and effectively to make positive change happen.

This strategy sets out our ambitious vision, aims and priorities to ensure that we effectively identify and meet the needs of the children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) age 0 to 25. It also demonstrates our commitment to delivering consistently better outcomes for children and young people with SEND. We will ensure children with SEND across Leicestershire have access to the right support at the right time enabling them to thrive and succeed.

**What is the rationale for this proposal?**

Our SEND strategy demonstrates the collective commitment and responsibility between our parents, community, Local Authority (LA) education and social care support services and settings, including health services across the spectrum of health provision. Parents and the voluntary sector have a shared commitment to the strategy and are partners in ensuring that it meets the needs of our children and young people.

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>Children and young people achieve better outcomes when we have a clear focus on working together. Whilst there is significant pressure and challenge, our vision is for all children, including those with SEND to thrive, fulfil their potential, belong, and live their best lives within their communities.</p> <p>The strategy builds on data and evidence from across Leicestershire partners captured within our Local Area Inclusion Plan (LAIP) about what is working well and what could be improved to ensure children and young people with SEND are supported to thrive and succeed. The areas identified for improvement within the LAIP are cross-referenced against the key principles within the strategy and incorporated development plan.</p> <p>Leicestershire has been subject to an Accelerated Progress Plan following the last Local Area SEND inspection in 2020 and revisit in 2022. The learning from this inspection and ongoing support from the DfE has also been included both within the LAIP and as areas for improvement where not yet achieved within the strategy.</p> |
|--|---|

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>3- Evidence gathered on equality implications - Data and engagement</b></p> <p>What evidence about potential equality impacts is already available?<br/>This could come from research, service analysis, questionnaires, and engagement with protected characteristics groups</p> |   |
| <p><b>What equalities information or data has been gathered so far?</b></p>   | <p>The SEND and Inclusion Strategy itself contains a summary of the key equalities information around children and young people in Leicestershire, particularly those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. Key points from the strategy are included below. Additional information has been taken from the LAIP.</p>  |
| <p><b>What does it show?</b></p>  | <p>Leicestershire’s population was 712,336 at the latest census in 2021, a 9.5% increase to the county’s population over the last 10 years. This makes Leicestershire one of the fastest growing areas in the country in terms of population (national average 6.6%). Understandably, this has placed added pressures on services for Children and Young People in the County. The County has approx. 201,250 children and young people aged under 26 years (29% of the total population). This is expected to grow to 234,329 by 2033.</p> |

| Population of Leicestershire   | 2023 estimate | 2033 estimate |
|--|---------------|---------------|
| Total population for Leicestershire  | 722,155       | 806,906       |
| Total number of children and young people aged under 26 years                      | 210,255       | 234,329       |
| Percentage of children and young people aged below 26 against the total population | 29.1%         | 29%           |
| Split across SEN2 age bandings:  |               |               |
| 0 to 4   | 36,160        | 39,982        |
| 5 to 10  | 48,762        | 51,466        |
| 11 to 15   | 41,981        | 44,661        |
| 16 to 18   | 24,470        | 29,340        |
| 19 to 25   | 58,882        | 68,880        |

There are 107,413 children and young people educated in Leicestershire schools (aged 3-18). Children and Young People from minority ethnic groups account for 23.6% of all children living in Leicestershire, compared with 37% in the country as a whole. The largest minority ethnic groups are Asian or Asian British and Mixed.

| From our School Census in January 2024, we know that   |         |            |
|--|---------|------------|
| Total number of pupils in Leicestershire schools   | 107,413 |            |
| Percentage of Black Asian and other ethnic communities of the total school population (excluding unclassified) | 23.6%   |            |
| Total number and percentage of EHCP's for Black, Asian and Ethnic groups                                       | Number  | Percentage |

|  |       |      |
|--|-------|------|
| Asian/Asian British  | 19    | 3%   |
| Black/African/Caribbean/Black British  | 5     | 0.8% |
| Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups   | 30    | 4.7% |
| Other ethnic groups  | 3     | 0.5% |
| Percentage of pupils that have English as an additional language                                 | 8.6%  |      |
| Total number of looked after children (March 2023 903 return)                                    | 681   |      |
| Total number of looked after children as a percentage of the total population aged 0 to 17 years | 0.48% |      |
| All pupils eligible for free school meals  | 15.5% |      |
| SEN support pupils eligible for free school meals  | 12.9% |      |
| EHCP pupils eligible for free school meals   | 32.5% |      |

The latest School Census, which includes all pupils on roll at a school within Leicestershire (aged 4 to 16 years), reports that there are now 13,983 pupils on a SEN Support plan and 6,377 with an Education, Health and Care Plan. SEND pupils account for 17.2% of the Leicestershire school population. Leicestershire has a proportion of children and young people with SEND (identified through EHCPs and SEN support) broadly in line with the English average.

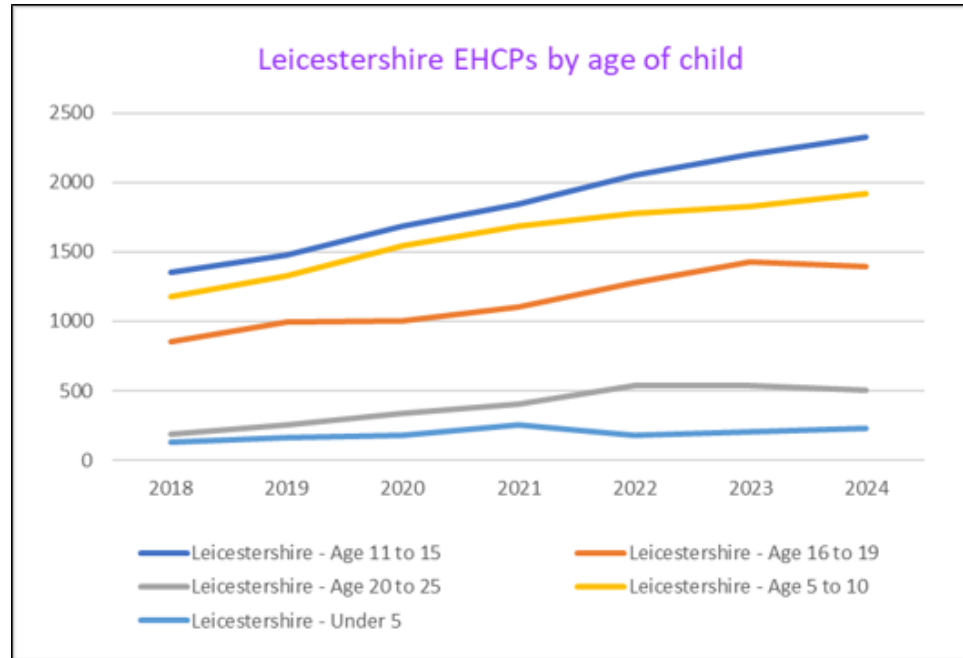
In 2024, the annual school census (Spring term) reported that 12.9% of children and young people were identified at SEN Support level in the County, just below the England average. Previous longer-term trends had indicated a lower-than-average level in Leicestershire, but this gap has now largely closed.

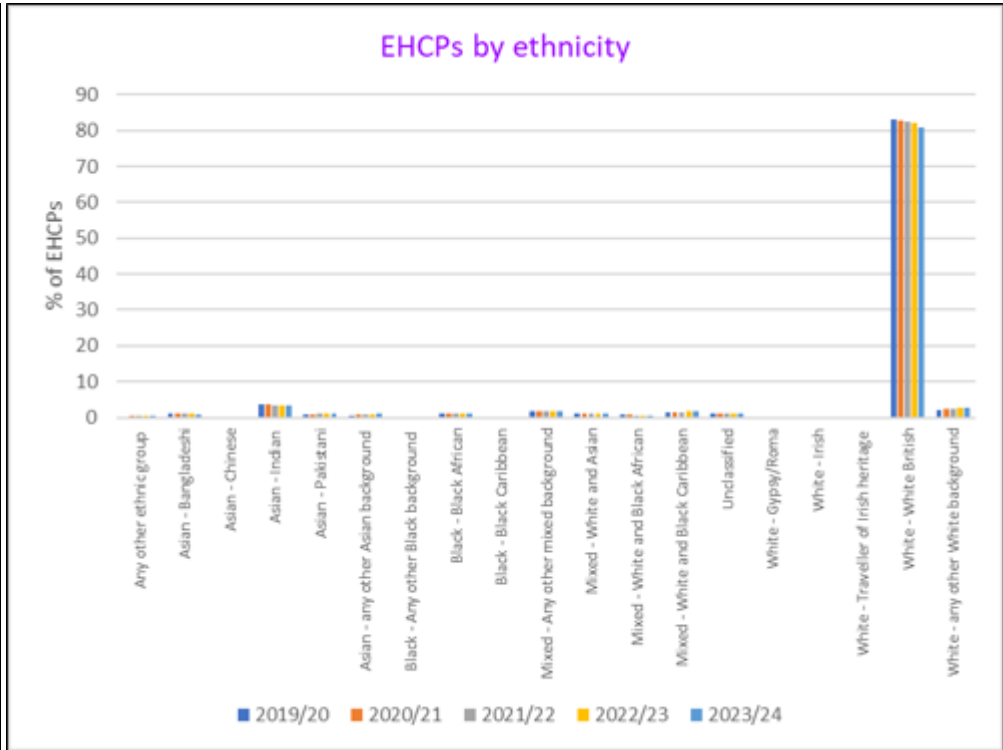
Within SEN Support assessment, most schools identify Moderate Learning Difficulties (28%) and Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (21%). These exceed the regional and national averages, with a lower number of children and young people identified with Speech, Language and Communication needs than average regional and national trends, particularly at Primary school.

It is notable that the identification of Speech, Language and Communication needs is rising for SEN support and aligning more closely to national trends, reflecting work across the County to appropriately identify. The Code of Practice SEND 2015 identifies Cognition & Learning as a category rather than MLD - Moderate Learning Difficulty, which is identified most at Key Stages 2/3/4 in Leicestershire.

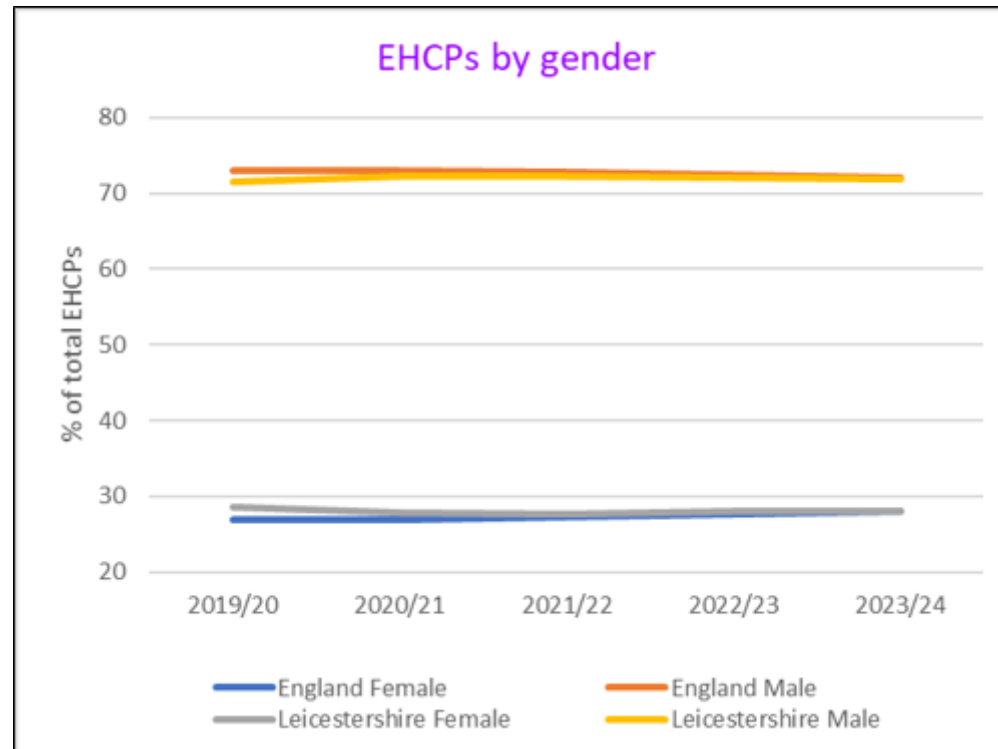
Primary needs (most prominent presenting need of the child or young person) within EHCPs in Leicestershire in 2023 were 23.5% of children/young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder; 18.4% with Speech, Communication and Language needs. At EHCP level, there is little change from the five-year trend of Autism Spectrum Disorder being the most likely source of assessments resulting in an EHCP which aligns with the national picture.

The following charts set out the cohort of Leicestershire children and young people with EHCPs and how this has changed over time by age, ethnicity and gender.









Over a third of children with EHCPs with a primary need identified as Moderate Learning Difficulty, Social Emotional and Mental Health, Severe Learning Difficulty and Specific Learning Disability were also eligible for free school meals compared to 15.7% of those without SEND. These figures reduced for SEN support where just under a third of Social Emotional and Mental Health needs were made up of children eligible for free school meals.

In terms of gender, more male children were identified with a predominant need in every type of SEND need category aside from Hearing Impairment where males make up 44% of EHCP and 47.1% of SEN support. We

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p>know that Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulty needs are up significantly for male children across both EHCPs and SEN support, and males now make up 100% of children with this as a primary need identified for SEN support. Male children made up more than 70% of EHCPs for needs identified as Autism Spectrum Disorder, Severe Learning Difficulty, Social Emotional and Mental Health, and Speech Language and Communication needs.</p> <p>By ethnicity, more than three quarters of children identified with SEND/LDD needs across all categories were White British. Of particular note, a higher proportion of White British children had a predominant need of Moderate Learning Difficulty, Physical Disability, Social Emotional and Mental Health, Specific Learning Difficulty and Speech Language and Communication needs across EHCPs, and over 90% of children with SEN support for Multi-sensory impairment and Specific Learning Difficulty were White British.</p> <p>As with the previous strategy, the Leicestershire Local Area SEND and Inclusion Strategy will be applied across all children and young people aged 0-25 with SEND in Leicestershire.</p> |
| <p><b>What engagement has been undertaken so far?</b></p> <p><b>What does it show?</b></p> | <p>The strategy has been co-produced with the Leicestershire SEND and Inclusion Partnership Board, which includes representatives from Health, Social Care, Education, Schools and Parent/Carers for children and young people with SEND in Leicestershire. The key principles and actions driving the plan have been agreed by the Board and the strategy builds on the data we have collected around the experience of services for children and young people with SEND, both in terms of outcomes, and satisfaction with services including hearing directly from children and young people and their families around what needs to be improved.</p> <p>The strategy incorporates the voice of those experiences of services and the impact when we get it right as well as understanding how we can do more. We have used this feedback to help us to shape the strategy and to set out improvement actions within the strategy.</p>   |
|  |  |

#### 4- Benefits, concerns and mitigating action

Please specify if any individuals or community groups who identify with any of the '[protected characteristics](#)' may *potentially* be affected by the policy and describe any benefits and concerns including any barriers. Use this section to demonstrate how risks would be mitigated for each affected group. If a group will not be affected by the proposal please state so.

| Group             | What are the benefits of the proposal for those from the following groups?   | What are the concerns identified and how will these affect those from the following groups?   | How will the known concerns be mitigated?   |
|-------------------|--|---|---|
| <b>Age</b>        | Improvements to partner services will support all children and young people aged 0-25 with identified SEND in Leicestershire.  | The strategy does not consider services for people aged over 25 with identified SEND in Leicestershire although does seek to improve outcomes for children and young people under 25 with SEND including the pathway to adulthood.  | Adults with SEND in Leicestershire can seek support where eligible from Adult Social Care.  |
| <b>Disability</b> | <p>Improvements to partner services will support all children and young people with identified SEND in Leicestershire. .</p> <p>This strategy aims to deliver our vision for all children, including those with SEND to thrive, fulfil their potential, belong, and live their best lives within their communities. Improvements to service provision should also benefit the parents,</p> | The strategy seeks to improve services for children and young people with SEND in Leicestershire. Current challenges of funding against demand for assessment and support across partner services mean some improvements will need to be prioritised where the biggest improvements can be made for | Partners acknowledge that resource challenges mean a bespoke improvement offer on an individual child basis is not possible however the actions proposed will deliver measurable benefits in the areas prioritised within the strategy. Alternative approaches to existing offers as well as new service offers will be |

|             |   |  |   |
|-------------|---|--|---|
|             | <p>carers and families of children and young people with SEND.</p>  | <p>the greatest number of children and young people. Consequently the strategy proposes how partners will prioritise improvement activity. It should be noted that improvements are being planned on a cohort basis which will result in improvements being felt by individuals in different ways depending on their needs (ie improvement of the neurodevelopmental pathway will directly impact those children and young people with neurodevelopmental needs).</p> <p>The strategy is a comprehensive document that may be difficult for some people with SEND to access.</p> | <p>trialled which could prove more effective at addressing existing challenges and barriers experienced by children and young people with SEND and their families. A public consultation on the new strategy will seek to agree that the priorities identified are the right focus for improvement activity over the next 3 years.</p> <p>An easy read version of the strategy will be produced to ensure it is accessible for more people with SEND. Visual ways of explaining the proposals will also be developed.</p> |
| <b>Race</b> | <p>No direct impact identified, improvements to partner services will support all children and young people with SEND.</p> <p>A higher proportion of children and young people with SEND in Leicestershire are White British compared to other ethnicities (aligned with national trends)</p> | <p>None identified.</p>  | <p>Not required.</p>  |

|                                       |   |                  |               |
|---------------------------------------|---|------------------|---------------|
|                                       | who are likely to experience a higher positive impact of the strategy as a result.  |                  |               |
| <b>Sex</b>                            | <p>No direct impact identified, improvements to partner services will support all children and young people with SEND.</p> <p>A higher proportion of boys than girls are identified with SEND in Leicestershire (aligned with national trends) who are likely to experience a higher positive impact of the strategy as a result.</p> | None identified. | Not required. |
| <b>Gender Reassignment</b>            | No direct impact identified, improvements to partner services will support all children and young people with SEND.   | None identified. | Not required. |
| <b>Marriage and Civil Partnership</b> | No direct impact identified, improvements to partner services will support all children and young people with SEND.   | None identified. | Not required. |
| <b>Sexual Orientation</b>             | No direct impact identified, improvements to partner services will support all children and young people with SEND.   | None identified. | Not required. |

|  |  |                  |               |
|--|--|------------------|---------------|
| <b>Pregnancy and Maternity</b>   | No direct impact identified, improvements to partner services will support all children and young people with SEND.  | None identified. | Not required. |
| <b>Religion or Belief</b>  | No direct impact identified, improvements to partner services will support all children and young people with SEND.  | None identified. | Not required. |
| <b>Armed Forces (including veterans)</b>   | No direct impact identified, improvements to partner services will support all children and young people with SEND.  | None identified. | Not required. |
| <b>People with lived care experience</b>   | The strategy proposes to improve the coordination of support for children and young people who have had traumatic experiences and is therefore likely to have a direct benefit for children and young people with lived care experience where this is a concern. | None identified. | Not required. |
| <b>Other groups: e.g., rural isolation, deprivation, health inequality, carers, asylum</b> | No direct impact identified, improvements to partner services will support all children and young people with SEND.  | None identified. | Not required. |

|  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <p><b>seeker and refugee communities, looked after children, deprived or disadvantaged communities</b></p> | <p>Children and young people with SEND who are eligible for free school meals have a higher likelihood of having an EHCP and associated support for SEND and are likely to experience a higher positive impact of the strategy as a result.</p> |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|

| <p><b>5- Action Plan</b></p>   |  |   |   |
|--|--|---|---|
| <p>Produce a framework to outline how identified risks/concerns identified in section 4 will be mitigated.</p> |  |   |   |
| <p><b>What action is planned?</b></p>  | <p><b>Who is responsible for the action?</b></p>   | <p><b>Timescale</b></p>   | <p><b>Expected outcome</b></p>  |
| <p>Seek approval to consult on the SEND and Inclusion Strategy</p>   | <p>Education Quality &amp; Performance Service</p> | <p>C&amp;FS Scrutiny Committee – 21/1/25<br/>Cabinet – January 25</p> | <p>Ensuring priorities for partnership improvement activity are agreed with elected members prior to wider consultation.</p>  |
| <p>Public consultation on the SEND and Inclusion Strategy following approval to consult by Cabinet</p>         | <p>Education Quality &amp; Performance Service</p> | <p>Jan-Mar 2025</p>   | <p>Feedback on proposed strategy to ensure priorities and direction of partnership improvement activity for children and young people with SEND is understood and agreed.</p> |

|   |                     |              |  |
|---|---------------------|--------------|--|
| Produce easy-read version of the SEND and Inclusion strategy and consider visual ways of explaining the proposals | Communications team | Jan-Feb 2025 | Ensure strategy can be more accessible to a wider group of people including those with SEND. |
|---|---------------------|--------------|--|

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>6- Approval Process</b>   |  |
| <b>Departmental Equalities Group</b>                               | Agreed electronically by Chair of C&FS DEG on 27/12/25 noting the EIA indicates a positive overall impact. |
| <b>Corporate Policy Team</b>                                       | Please set out comments from the Corporate Policy Team   |
| <b>Sign off by the Senior Responsible Officer for the Project.</b> |  |





**CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE - 21 JANUARY 2025**

**QUARTER 2 2024/25 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 July to September 2024 (Quarter 2).

**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 2.
4. Quartile positions are added where comparative national data is available. Comparative data is not available for all indicators.
5. From 21 measures reported that have a national benchmark, one is in the top quartile, seven are in the second quartile, eight are in the third quartile and five are in the bottom quartile.

**National and Local Performance updates in respect of Targeted Family Help and Children's Social care**

**Key national issues**

6. In November 2025, the Government published its paper Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive. The document sets out the new government approach and vision for the safeguarding system. It has significant relevance for local

authorities as references intended legislative change to support new ways of working. A summary of key headlines from the report have been set out below.

- **Wherever possible children should remain with their families and be safely prevented from entering care in the first place**, there is lots of learning to draw from here e.g. youth justice teams, SureStart, Supporting Families, Families First for Children,
- **Support children to live with kinship or foster carers rather than residential care** via the use of family-based decision making, rolling out kinship reforms and recruiting more foster carers,
- **Fix the broken care market** via a range of measures to improve competition, regulation and commissioning, as well as shining a light on the levels of profit being made,
- **A focus on key enablers** including better data and information sharing, spreading evidence-based programmes and the workforce.

#### Legislating to keep families together and children safe, and to remove barriers to opportunity

- Mandating the use of family-based decision making before care proceedings can be initiated,
- Legislating for a single unique child identifier (to be introduced in the future),
- Extension of corporate parenting duties to more departments and agencies,
- Making “Staying Close” a national entitlement, with government to work with local authorities on barriers to delivery over the next three years,
- Placing the expansion of Virtual School Head (VSH) role to kinship arrangements on a statutory footing and a new LA duty to promote the achievement of all cohorts represented by VSH,
- Consideration will be given to the role of the VSH for children leaving custody,
- Schools as the fourth partner in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) and education to be well represented here both operationally and strategically,
- Creation of new legal duty for local authorities to establish multi-agency child protection teams and requirement on other named agencies to be part of this provisions,
- New register for CME and government will allow Local Authorities to take into account the home and other learning environments in assessments of suitability,
- If a child is subject to a Section 47 enquiry or on a child protection plan, local authority consent will be required to home educate.

#### Legislating to make the care system child centred and to tackle profiteering

- Reforms to the planning and registration process for new children’s homes, including work with Ofsted on a fast-track route for selected new homes and location to play a larger role in applications,

- Work with Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to reform planning regulations to make it easier to open homes when and where they are needed,
  - Government to support Local Authorities to address capacity concerns with new capital investment and other measures,
  - The Department is currently evaluating the paper locally to consider impact and how it will respond. It is unclear what if any specific funding might be linked to this work.
7. New government rules as part its aim to support workforce development in social care came into force on 31 October:  
<https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2024/10/31/agency-social-work-rules-come-into-force/#:~:text=Councils%20should%20not%20engage%20social,all%20contracts%20for%20agency%20assignments>
8. The new rules, some of which came into force fully from October 2024 (for agency staff in existing contracts) are already starting to have impact on the agency market, with specific reference to the new requirement from 31 October 2024 for all new agency candidates to have three years direct employment in a CSC department in England. It is essential that all local authorities apply this rule consistently as early evidence shows that some agency staff do not have this experience, even if employed as agency staff for some years. To date, regional agreements have been implemented to agree price caps for wages, but also to prevent permanent staff becoming agency in the regional within six months of ending employment. The Service is actively reviewing the CVs of all agency staff and are finding that many fail to meet the three years direct employment rule, even when they may have worked as agency workers for some months or years. The Department is taking the opportunity to approach agency staff to encourage applications for posts having shared forms and is setting up interviews promptly in order to prevent delay.
9. A full report on the Policy Statement and its implementation in Leicestershire will be brought to the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee later in 2025.

### **Departmental performance activities**

10. Progress has been made against the residential redesign element of the Children's Innovation Partnership. In partnership with Barnardo's, four homes have opened and are registered by Ofsted. The remaining four homes will open by July 2025. The homes will include Short Breaks Overnight provision, Complex Need (step down from hospital) home, a home specialising in contextual safeguarding (harm outside the home) and an emotional and behavioural home.
11. An annual Pride in Practice event took place at the King Power Stadium on 12 November 2024. The focus of learning was on fathers and how they can be better represented in case work. Around 400 staff across the Service attended. A

number of awards were given out to celebrate practice excellence in a number of categories with young people making the final decisions. It was an opportunity to celebrate the Outstanding Ofsted judgement, bringing the whole service together.

12. In November 2024, senior managers took part in practice observations as part of the bi-annual practice focus week. This provided a chance to meet practitioners and children and their families receiving Targeted Family Help and Child in Need social work support. It was positive for all involved to see so many of the groups being delivered, and the support they provide to children in need and those subject of a child protection plans, showcased and to hear the positive feedback from families.
13. Targeted Family Help has successfully been awarded funding from Public Health to support the commitment to reduce poor mental health outcomes within children and young people across Leicester and Leicestershire. Over the next three years, the Service will be inviting practitioners from Health, Education, Early Years, Social Care, and the Voluntary sector who work with families to attend a training session to learn about the model and see how they can embed Five to Thrive into their day-to-day practice.
14. Family Help has organised its yearly 'Expression of Freedom' Exhibition in conjunction with Living without Abuse which has received positive media and public interest and was on display in Highcross Shopping Centre from 25<sup>th</sup> November to 10<sup>th</sup> December. The Exhibition featured several powerful artwork pieces created by survivors of Domestic Abuse and children impacted by this to raise awareness of the impact Domestic Abuse has on families and society.
15. His Majesty's Inspection of Probation (HMIP) have set out the new Youth Justice Framework for all future inspections and the Service is now focusing on Quality and Assurance work to ensure preparedness ahead of the next HMIP Inspection. This includes a new victims domain which the service will be inspected against and a greater focus on Child First work, and the trauma informed approach which the Service has been embedding for some time.

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

16. Local Authority comparisons used in this section are most recent figures published by the government for end of year benchmarking of performance in 2023/24.
17. The percentage of Child Protection cases reviewed within timescales was 92.7% at the end of Quarter 2, with 291 of 314 children having all reviews on time within the last 12 months. This is an improvement on the Quarter 1 figure of 92.2% (270 of 293), and now places Leicestershire in the third quartile of all local authorities by published benchmarks.
18. The percentage of children becoming subject to a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time in the year to date decreased to 23.0% at the end of Quarter 2 compared to 25.2% at the end of Quarter 1. In this quarter 28 children began a second or subsequent child protection plan, a decrease from 33

reported in the preceding quarter. Leicestershire is now placed in the second quartile of local authorities compared to most recent national results published for 2023/24. 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.

19. The percentage of re-referrals to Children's Social Care within 12 months was 26.3% at the end of Quarter 2 which is an increase from 24.9% at the end of the previous quarter; 443 children were 're-referred' within Quarter 2. Leicestershire continues to be placed in the fourth quartile of local authorities.
20. The percentage of assessments completed within 45 days to the end of Quarter 2 was 86.0%, an increase compared to performance at the end Quarter 1 (83.1%). Within Quarter 2, 1,706 assessments were completed, with 1,467 within timescale. Leicestershire is now placed in the second quartile of local authorities using most recent comparisons.
21. The percentage of Care Leavers aged up to 21 in Suitable Accommodation was 92.4% at the end of Quarter 2 (218 out of 236 young people). This is a slight decrease from the end of Quarter 1 (93.5%) and now places Leicestershire in the second quartile of local authorities using available comparisons.
22. The percentage of Care Leavers aged up to 21 in Education, Employment or Training improved to 49.3% at the end of Quarter 2 (99 out of 201 young people). This is an increase from the end of Quarter 1, 47.3%, and while Leicestershire remain within the lowest quartile at the end of Quarter 2, performance for this indicator has since further improved to 54.4%. 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.
23. The percentage of Children in Care at the end of Quarter 2 who had a dental check in the preceding 12 months was 78.9% (562 children), an increase from 73.0% reported for the previous quarter.
24. The percentage of Children in Care at the end of Quarter 2 who had an annual health assessment within the preceding 12 months was 84.4% (601 children). This is an increase from 80.6% reported for the previous quarter.

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

25. Due to ongoing work following system changes, specifically relating to Capita/ Synergy, it is not possible to report the total numbers worked with by Targeted Family Help.
26. 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.

### **People are safe in their daily lives**

27. Local Youth Justice statistics are regularly reported to the Youth and Justice Management Board. The latest report was presented at the December 2024 board. Local data is currently unavailable for Use of Custody and Re-offending, although Ministry of Justice figures are available in the report.
28. In the year to end Quarter 2 2024/25, there were a total of 34 First Time Entrants in the Criminal Justice System (aged 10-17). This is an increase of 14 from the year to end Quarter 1 figure (20).

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

29. The percentage of primary schools rated Good or Outstanding for leadership and management was 91.6% (208 out of 227 inspected schools) at the end of Quarter 2. This represents a 0.4% increase from Quarter 1 2024/25. This figure is within the fourth quartile of local authorities and is 1.3% below the England average, which is at its highest ever level (92.9%), and 1.7% lower than the average for Statistical Neighbours (93.3%), which is close to their highest ever level.
30. The percentage of secondary schools rated Good or Outstanding for leadership and management was 84.1% (37 out of 44 inspected schools) at the end of Quarter 2. This represents an increase of 1.9% from Quarter 1 2024/25. This performance is within the third quartile of local authorities nationally. Leicestershire's performance is 3.8% lower than the average for England, which at 87.9% is a new highest ever level of national performance, and 4.9% lower than the average for Statistical Neighbours (89%), which is the highest ever performance figure for this group.
31. The percentage of pupils educated in Good or Outstanding schools for leadership and management was 88.5% at the end of Quarter 2 (approx. 88.9k out of 100.5k pupils). This is an increase of 0.4% from Quarter 1 2024/25 (88.1%). This figure is within the fourth quartile of local authorities nationally. Leicestershire's performance is 3.6% lower than the average for England (92.1%), and 4.2% lower than the average for Statistical Neighbours (92.7%).
32. The England and Statistical neighbour performance continues to be at either record levels of performance, or near the record level.
33. The DfE has released the final assessment outcomes for the Primary school phase of education and provisional assessment outcomes for the Secondary school phase of education in 2024.
34. The percentage of children in 2024 with a good level of development at the end of the early year's foundation stage (EYFS – 5-year-olds) was 69.6% (of 7,501 children), an increase from 69.1% in 2023, which was the second year of formal assessments under the current assessment framework. This performance is

within the second quartile of local authorities nationally, and is 1.9% above the England average, and 0.1% below the average for Statistical Neighbours.

35. The percentage of children eligible for Free School Meals with a good level of development was 44.3% (of 837 children) in 2024, a decrease of 1.4% (45.7%) from 2023. This performance was within the fourth quartile of local authorities nationally, and 7.2% lower than the England average, and it is 2.7% below the average for Statistical Neighbours.
36. The percentage of children with an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) and assessed with a good level of development was 3.7% (of 191 children) in 2024, an increase of 1.2% (2.5%) from 2023. This performance was within the second quartile of local authorities nationally, and 0.1% lower than the England average, and it is 0.4% below the average for Statistical Neighbours.
37. At Key Stage 2 (11-year-olds) the percentage of pupils achieving the expected standard or higher in Reading, Writing and Mathematics was 61.4% (of 8,037 pupils). This is 0.7% lower than in 2023 and places Leicestershire in the second quartile nationally. Leicestershire's performance is 0.7% higher than the national performance, and 1.8% higher than the average for Statistical Neighbours.
38. The 2024 performance for Leicestershire is the lowest performance since 2016, and almost 6% lower than the performance achieved in 2019. Nationally the 2024 performance is also the lowest since 2016, and 4.2% below that achieved in 2019.
39. The percentage of Free School Meal (FSM) eligible pupils achieving the expected standard or higher in Reading, Writing and Mathematics was 42.1% (of 1,515 pupils). This is 1.1% lower than in 2023 and places Leicestershire in the third quartile nationally. Leicestershire's 2024 performance is the local authorities second highest ever performance for FSM pupils under the current assessment framework, 2023 was the highest, and still 0.8% higher than in 2022. At 45.4% the National performance remains lower than in 2018 and 2019, but 5.2% higher than in 2022.
40. The percentage of SEN support pupils achieving the expected standard or higher in Reading, Writing and Mathematics was 23.1% (of 1,345 pupils), third quartile nationally, and for Education and Health Care Plan pupils (EHCP) it was 7.6% (of 383 pupils), third quartile nationally, a drop from the second quartile in 2022 and 2023. The SEN support cohort's performance was 0.1% higher than in 2023, whilst the EHCP cohort's performance was 3% lower than the previous year. Leicestershire's SEN support pupils' performance was 2.6% below the National average, but it does represent the joint highest performance level in history under the current assessment framework. The latest national performance in comparison represents a new highest level. Leicestershire's EHCP pupil performance was below the national average by 1.2% but still represents performance higher than any year prior to 2022, whereas the National performance remains below 2019 levels.
41. At Key Stage 4 (16-year-olds) the provisional average Progress 8 score for all pupils (7,678 pupils) was -0.10. This performance is within the third quartile of

Local Authorities nationally, this continues to represent the lowest National percentile ranking since 2017. For Free School Meal eligible pupils (1,256 pupils) the average Progress 8 score was  $-0.76$ , this performance is within the third quartile nationally. Leicestershire's 2024 National percentile performance for Free School Meal eligible pupils remains above all years previously, except 2019 and 2022.

42. The Progress 8 score for SEN support was  $-0.51$  (992 pupils), and Education and Health Care Plan pupils (EHCP),  $-0.94$  (336 pupils). In comparison to the performance of other local authorities nationally the SEN support performance is within the third quartile, a drop from the second quartile last year. The EHCP performance has improved to the second quartile from the third quartile in 2023.
43. The number of children Electively Home Educated (EHE) was 1,119 at the end of Q2 2024/25. This is an increase of 120 students (10.7%) compared to the end of Q2 2023/24 (999 students).
44. 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.
45. The percentage of young people (16-17) in Leicestershire not in education, employment, or training (NEET) at the end of Q2 2024/25 was 0.8% (127 students). This rate was a slight increase on the end of Q1 2024/25 (0.9%), but well below the target of less than 2.1%.

### **Conclusion**

46. The report provides a summary of performance at the end of Quarter 2 2024/25, covering the period July to September 2024.
47. Details of all metrics will continue to be monitored on a regular basis throughout the year and any subsequent changes will be notified in future reports.

### **Background Papers**

Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67375fe5ed0fc07b53499a42/Keeping\\_Children\\_Safe\\_Helping\\_Families\\_Thrive\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67375fe5ed0fc07b53499a42/Keeping_Children_Safe_Helping_Families_Thrive_.pdf)

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

None.

### **Appendix**

Children and Family Services Department Performance Dashboard Quarter 2, 2024/25



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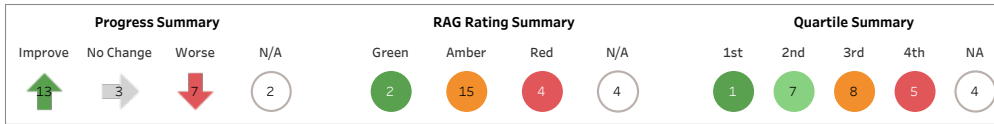
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CFS Overview & Scrutiny Dashboard



| Strategic Plan Outcome |   | Area        |            | Search Indicator |              |        |     |           |
|------------------------|---|-------------|------------|------------------|--------------|--------|-----|-----------|
| All                    |   | All         |            | All              |              |        |     |           |
| Area                   | Indicator   | Latest Data | Period     | Previous Data    | Perform. DOT | Target | RAG | Quartiles |
| Education              | Children Electively Educated at Home  | 1119        | Q2 2024/25 | 999              | ○            | NA     | N/A | NA        |
|                        | KS2 - Expected level in Reading, Writing and Maths - EHCP                             | 7.6%        | 2023/24    | 10.6%            | ↓            | NA     | A   | 3rd       |
|                        | KS2 - Expected level in Reading, Writing and Maths - pupils eligible for FSM          | 41.0%       | 2023/24    | 42.1%            | ↓            | NA     | A   | 3rd       |
|                        | KS2 - Expected level in Reading, Writing and Maths - SEN Support                      | 23.1%       | 2023/24    | 23.0%            | →            | NA     | A   | 3rd       |
|                        | KS2 - pupils achieving expected standard in Reading, Writing and Mathematics          | 61.4%       | 2023/24    | 62.1%            | ↓            | NA     | A   | 2nd       |
|                        | KS4 - Progress 8  | -0.1        | 2023/24    | -0.09            | →            | NA     | A   | 3rd       |
|                        | KS4 - Progress 8 (EHCP)   | -0.94       | 2023/24    | -1.11            | ↑            | NA     | A   | 2nd       |
|                        | KS4 - Progress 8 (FSM)  | -0.76       | 2023/24    | -0.76            | →            | NA     | A   | 3rd       |
|                        | KS4 - Progress 8 (SEN Support)  | -0.51       | 2023/24    | -0.38            | ↓            | NA     | A   | 3rd       |
|                        | NEET young people aged 16-17  | 0.8%        | Q2 2024/25 | 0.9%             | ↑            | <2.1%  | G   | 1st       |
|                        | Primary schools rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' for leadership and managem..            | 91.6%       | Q2 2024/25 | 91.2%            | ↑            | NA     | R   | 4th       |
|                        | Pupils in Good or Outstanding schools for leadership and management                   | 88.5%       | Q2 2024/25 | 88.1%            | ↑            | NA     | R   | 4th       |
|                        | Reception pupils reaching a 'Good level of development'                               | 69.6%       | 2023/24    | 69.1%            | ↑            | NA     | A   | 2nd       |
|                        | Reception pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans achieving 'Good Level of De..  | 3.7%        | 2023/24    | 2.5%             | ↑            | NA     | A   | 2nd       |
|                        | Reception pupils with Free School Meals (FSM) status achieving 'Good level of devel.. | 44.3%       | 2023/24    | 45.7%            | ↓            | NA     | R   | 4th       |
|                        | Secondary schools rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' for leadership and managem..          | 84.1%       | Q2 2024/25 | 82.2%            | ↑            | NA     | A   | 3rd       |
| Social Care            | Assessments completed within 45 days  | 86.0%       | Q2 2024/25 | 83.1%            | ↑            | >90.3% | A   | 2nd       |
|                        | Care leavers EET  | 49.3%       | Q2 2024/25 | 47.3%            | ↑            | >54.0% | A   | 4th       |
|                        | Care leavers in suitable accommodation  | 92.4%       | Q2 2024/25 | 93.5%            | ↓            | >92.0% | G   | 2nd       |
|                        | Child protection cases which were reviewed within timescales                          | 92.7%       | Q2 2024/25 | 92.2%            | ↑            | >97.2% | A   | 3rd       |
|                        | Children becoming subject to a CPP for second or subsequent time                      | 23.0%       | Q2 2024/25 | 25.2%            | ↑            | <20.8% | A   | 2nd       |
|                        | Children in care who have had dental checks within last 12 months (at end of period)  | 78.9%       | Q2 2024/25 | 73.0%            | ↑            | NA     | N/A | NA        |
|                        | Children in care who have their annual health assessment within last 12 months (..    | 84.4%       | Q2 2024/25 | 80.6%            | ↑            | NA     | N/A | NA        |
|                        | Re-referrals to CSC within 12 mths  | 26.3%       | Q2 2024/25 | 24.9%            | ↓            | <18.7% | R   | 4th       |
| Youth Justice          | No. of first time entrants to the criminal justice system aged 10-17 (year to date)   | 34          | Q2 2024/25 | 20               | ○            | NA     | N/A | NA        |

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