



Meeting: Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date/Time: Tuesday, 20 January 2026 at 2.00 pm

Location: Sparkenhoe Committee Room, County Hall, Glenfield

Contact: Damien Buckley (Tel: 0116 305 0183)

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Membership

Mr. M. Bools CC (Chairman)

| | |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Mr. J. Boam CC | Ms. A. Pendlebury CC |
| Mr. M. H. Charlesworth CC | Mr. B. Piper CC |
| Mrs. L. Danks CC | Mr. K. Robinson CC |
| Mrs. K. Knight CC | Mrs B. Seaton CC |
| Mr. J. McDonald CC | Canon. C. Shoyer |
| Adina Murataj | Mr. C. A. Smith CC |
| Mr. D. Page CC | Mrs D. Taylor CC |

AGENDA

| <u>Item</u> | <u>Report by</u> |
|---|------------------|
| 1. Minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2026. | (Pages 3 - 10) |
| 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.

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|-----|---|--|-------------------|
| 7. | Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 35. | | |
| 8. | Medium Term Financial Strategy 2026/27 - 2029/30. | Director of Corporate Resources and Director of Children and Family Services | (Pages 11 - 52) |
| 9. | Draft Children and Family Services Departmental Plan 2026-2029. | Director of Children and Family Services | (Pages 53 - 58) |
| 10. | School Places Strategy 2026-2031. | Director of Children and Family Services | (Pages 59 - 134) |
| 11. | Quarter 2 2025/26 Performance Report. | Chief Executive and Director of Children and Family Services | (Pages 135 - 146) |
| 12. | Date of next meeting. | | |

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled to take place on 3 March 2026 at 14:00.

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



Minutes of a meeting of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Tuesday, 4 November 2025.

PRESENT

Mr. M. Bools CC (in the Chair)

Mr. J. Boam CC
 Mr. S. Bradshaw CC
 Mr. M. H. Charlesworth CC
 Mrs. L. Danks CC
 Mrs. K. Knight CC
 Adina Murataj

Mr. D. Page CC
 Ms. A. Pendlebury CC
 Mr. K. Robinson CC
 Mrs B. Seaton CC
 Mr. C. A. Smith CC

In attendance

Mr. C. Pugsley CC – Lead Member for Children and Families

32. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 September 2025 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

33. Question Time.

The following questions had been received under Standing Order 34 and were put to the Chairman of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Question asked by Mrs Sue Whiting:

“Could the Chair please state how many Children with an EHCP, who are in Year 7, academic year September 2025 to August 2026, have yet to be found a suitable school placement and have all the previous academic year's Year 7 children with an EHCP now been placed?

I asked a question in January 2025 and there were still four children then who had not been placed. I understand that the earliest time I could have submitted a follow up question was in September 2025”.

(The question and response referred to within the above question can be found here: <https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1043&MId=7889&Ver=4>)

Response by the Chairman:

As at 31 October 2025, 13 pupils with EHCPs in Year 7 are awaiting a permanent placement. Of the four pupils with EHCPs (now in Year 8) who were previously identified as awaiting placement in response to a question asked in January 2025, one is currently waiting for an alternative placement to be identified.

The Special Educational Needs Assessment Service are actively working to find suitable placements for all children identified.

Sue Whiting asked the following supplementary question:

"Thank you for the details of the 13 children with EHCPs currently in Year 7 and the outstanding one with an EHCP in Year 8, who has not had a placement since July 2024. But can the Chair give details of how all these children are being provided with education whilst awaiting a suitable placement, please?"

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Director stated that for the Year 8 pupil, the placement had originally broken down. An alternative placement had been identified, and the Service was awaiting a start date. Of the 13 pupils referred to, eight children had interim tutoring arrangements which had been offered or were in place. The remaining five had either recently moved into the area or had not started at their allocated school. Again, interim arrangements were being put in place for those children where it had not already started."

34. Questions asked by members.

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

35. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

36. 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.

Ms Ann Pendlebury CC declared a Not Registerable Interest in Agenda Items 8 and 13 as she was a member of Hinckley Homeless Group. The organisation supported young adults who had left care.

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

There were no declarations of the party whip.

38. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 36.

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

39. Children and Family Services Department.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services which provided an overview of the work of the Children and Family Services Department. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 8', is filed with these minutes.

The Lead Member for Children and Families stated that the breadth and complexity of the services which the Department offered was profound. He placed on record his thanks to

all staff within the Department for their work, despite financial challenges and demand pressures which services were experiencing.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- (i) The Director stated that both corporate and elected member support continued to contribute to the Department's success in delivering good quality services to children and families. The application of corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers at both a corporate and elected member level also helped to ensure that the Department was able to provide the best level of support to those children and young people. The Director agreed to provide members with resources relating to corporate parenting responsibilities, following the meeting, and to present a report outlining the corporate parenting responsibility of the Council, including elected members, at a future meeting.
- (ii) It was noted that the number of young people enrolled onto Prevent training was relatively low. The Prevent Duty sat alongside long-established safeguarding. The aim of the Duty was to tackle the ideological causes of terrorism, intervene early to support people susceptible to radicalisation and enable people who had already engaged in terrorism to disengage and rehabilitate. It was noted that the Youth Justice Service delivered work with young people at risk of radicalisation. The Department was due to advertise a position for a role specially related to Prevent. Staff training on the Prevent Duty would also be offered, and it was expected that training would be available for elected members in 2026.
- (iii) A question was asked relating to the Teen Health service. In 2022, Public Health had commissioned the Department to deliver Teen Health services. The Director stated that the Service sat within Family Help and had established links with all schools within Leicestershire to provide support to young people aged 11 plus relating to emotional wellbeing and health. Whilst there was risk of overlap between the work delivered by the Service and that delivered in schools, a gap in support presented a greater risk.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the overview of the work of the Children and Family Services Department, be noted.
- (b) That the Director of Children and Family Services be requested to present the Committee with a report which would include the corporate parenting responsibility of the Council, including elected members, at a future meeting.
- (c) That the Director of Children and Family Services be requested to provide members with resources relating to corporate parenting responsibilities, following the meeting.

40. Inclusion in Leicestershire Schools.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services which provided an overview of the functions of the Inclusion Service. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 9', is filed with these minutes.

The Lead Member for Children and Families stated that the Inclusion Service was invaluable in ensuring that every child in Leicestershire received an education that

could meet their needs and allowing them to reach their full potential. He highlighted the emphasis on the Council, schools, and parents working together with children to ensure that they were receiving the best level of support, at the right time, in order to achieve the best outcomes.

Arising from the discussion, the following points were raised:

- (i) Concern was raised regarding the growing demand for support for children and young people who were facing barriers to attendance. The Director acknowledged that the number of children not in education was concerning. The number of those children and young people classed as having medical needs, the electively home-educated cohort of children, the number of children missing education, and the number of exclusions continued to increase. This demand pressure also continued to increase costs for the Department. The Director outlined that the issues could be attributed to a clearer understand of barriers to education, an increase in levels of complexity within cohorts of children, and challenges in schools meeting need. It was noted that a White Paper relating to education was anticipated and was expected to include a strategy for supporting children within schools.
- (ii) Concern was also raised regarding the number of primary school children missing education whereby the reason was either unknown or hadn't been recorded. The Director assured members that the Service engaged with families in order to understand the reason why a child was missing education. However, there would always be a point in time whereby the Department was not yet clear around the reason for missing education.
- (iii) With regards to secondary permanent exclusions having increased since 2022-23, the Director outlined that this could be as a result of either more complex children being supported in mainstream schools, school performance and the measures which schools were judged by, and disruptive behaviour. The Director stated that, historically, a low number of permanent exclusions were had been recorded in Leicestershire. The Department worked with schools to prevent exclusions. However, it would sometimes be necessary for schools to exclude children. It was noted that some schools used exclusions more often than others.
- (iv) In response to concern regarding the number of children being electively home educated (EHE), the Director acknowledged the concern and stated that the Department collected data relating to the reason behind the decision to EHE. Although, there were a number of reasons why the decision was made, there was no evidence that EHE decisions had been made due to any reported bias within the curriculum. It was noted that there could be some children who struggled to engage with learning styles and expectations within schools. However, some schools were more creative in adapting learning for children who required it. The Department was developing an Education Belonging Strategy which would focus on how different children could access the curriculum and engage with their classmates. This work would contribute towards improving attendance and supporting children to achieve positive educational outcomes for progression into adulthood.
- (v) It was noted that a webinar was delivered for new home educating parents which encouraged networking and also signposted to events. A webinar was also delivered specifically for Year 11 EHE children, relating to exam arrangements and post-16 education. In addition to this, a termly EHE newsletter would be sent directly to all home educating parents which included signposting to events,

opportunities, and essential services. It was noted that Department worked with other services both within the Authority and within partner organisations, in order to ensure that home educating families received support.

- (vi) At the request of the Chairman, the Director agreed to present a report on the Oakfield Short Stay School, at the meeting on 3 March 2026.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the overview of the functions of the Inclusion Service, be noted.
- (b) That the Director of Children and Family Services be requested to present the Committee with a report on the Oakfield Short Stay School, at the meeting on 3 March 2026.

41. 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 Children Exploitation, Missing, and Modern Slavery Hub. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 10', is filed with these minutes.

In introducing the report, the Director outlined that the report contained information relating to all forms of child exploitation, not just child criminal exploitation.

The Lead Member for Children and Families stated that he was pleased with the positive feedback received from Ofsted relating to the Child Exploitation Service. He emphasised that prevention, early intervention and the continuation of the strong partnership working were key in tackling and combating child exploitation.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- (i) In response to a question asked, the Director emphasised that all risk of exploitation could not be eliminated. However, robust processes were in place in order to mitigate exploitation risks effectively. Multi-agency work undertaken by the Vulnerability Hub in partnership with the Police, Health and other partner agencies had enabled positive outcomes for children and young people at risk of exploitation.
- (ii) Concern was raised regarding the vulnerability of children in residential care. The Director stated that children in care in Leicestershire had either been placed with providers by the Council or by other local authorities, and the Council had a safeguarding responsibility for all children in care within Leicestershire. The Council had a good relationship with residential care providers commissioned by the Council and offered regular training and support to them. It was noted that work had been undertaken with community members and stakeholders in order to promote a collective responsibility for safeguarding children, and to raise awareness of the signs of exploitation.
- (iii) With regards to the development of internal processes, the Director stated that the Service had a strong focus on continuous Improvement and reviewed regularly conducted reviews of practice at an operational level. The Service measured itself against findings from national case reports in order to ensure alignment and to drive improvement. It carried out regular testing and updates based on current research,

including collaboration with universities on topics such as Harm Outside the Home. Multi-agency meetings within the Hub and multi-agency reviews were conducted in order to benchmark performance and develop operational practice.

RESOLVED:

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

42. Leicestershire Adoption Agency Statutory Report 2024-2025.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services which gave an overview of the Annual Report into Leicestershire's Adoption Agency for the period March 2024 – March 2025. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 11', is filed with these minutes.

The Lead Member thanked staff within the Service for their work. He emphasised that the commitment to both permanency and strong post-adoption support were key to ensuring the long-term success of adoption placements.

A question was raised regarding an increasing preference within court judgements for contact to be maintained with birth families and whether this had presented challenges for adoption success. The Director stated that whilst contact could create emotional conflict for prospective adopters, both assessment process and training for prospective adopters introduced the concept early. The approach aimed to be realistic and flexible and often promoted the use of creative methods of contact in order to help children build a safe and accurate understanding of their birth parents.

RESOLVED:

That the annual report of Leicestershire's Adoption Agency for the period March 2024 to March 2025, be noted.

43. Fostering Annual Report 2024-25.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services which outlined the activity of the Fostering Services for the period 2024-2025. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 12', is filed with these minutes.

The Lead Member for Children and Families emphasised that the recruitment of foster carers remained a significant challenge but was pleased with the proactive steps taken to address this.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- (i) A question was asked relating to how the Service had focussed on promoting fostering through the Council as more attractive than fostering through Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs). The Service continued to face challenges with the recruitment of foster carers which had been driven by competition from IFAs and other local authorities who in many cases paid higher rates than the Council. The Director stated that the Service had undertaken extensive campaigns which promoted the Council's package of support for foster carers. It was noted that a service review was underway to develop this area further.

- (ii) With regards to the approach to recruitment, the Service engaged with members of the public, had a dedicated chat facility on the Council's website, and held online and in-person information evenings with regards to the fostering process. The Council's fostering webpage contained comprehensive information. Social media was utilised in order to promote fostering and to share the voices of foster carers. Links with school governors and head teachers had been developed for community outreach.
- (iii) The Director stated that the Service offered respite support to foster carers who needed to take time away. The Service also had a provision of independent visitors which could offer support by spending time with children when foster carers required personal time. In addition to this, during foster carer assessments, consideration was given to a prospective foster carer's wider support network. This included relatives who could be DBS checked so that they could provide care whilst foster families were away.

RESOLVED:

That the annual report outlining the activity of the Fostering Service for the period 2024 - 2025, be noted.

44. Annual Report of the Virtual School 2024-2025.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services which provided an overview of the work and data of the Virtual School (VS) for the academic year 2024-2025. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item13, is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- (i) Concern was raised that the Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) cohort had significantly increased from the previous year. The Director acknowledged this concern and stated that whilst government funding was available, it did not fully cover the costs of provision, particularly for education and Virtual School services. It was suggested by a member of the Committee that the Lead Member for Children and Families could raise the issue of UASC funding with the Government.
- (ii) A question was asked regarding the Council's responsibility for UASC. The Director stated that the local authority had a statutory duty to provide care and support to UASC under the same legislation as other looked-after children. Where UASC remained in care for more than 13 weeks, before their 16th birthday, they would become eligible for care leaver status at 18, with the same entitlements as other care leavers. Additional financial pressures would arise because many UASC could not work or claim benefits until their asylum claims had been resolved. This required the Council to continue funding accommodation and support during this time. Delays in the asylum decision process further exacerbate these challenges.
- (iii) In response to a question asked, it was noted that there were three routes through which UASC could arrive in the County. Spontaneous Arrivals were UASC who arrived at a port of safety (such as a service station) and declared themselves as UASC. The local authority and police would respond immediately to assess and provide support. This route had been in place for many years. They could arrive

through the National Transfer Scheme (NTS), a mandatory Home Office scheme which was designed to distribute UASC across the country. The East Midlands operated regionally, with Leicestershire sharing the responsibility alongside other local authorities. It was noted that most current UASC arrived through this route. Numbers were often not equally distributed across the country, with some counties supporting a greater number due to geographical reasons. Finally, they could be placed in adult asylum hotels. This had been done in Leicestershire and had resulted in individuals identifying as children upon arrival. These cases were treated as spontaneous arrivals and required age assessments. Approximately 80 children had been identified through this route. This route has now largely reduced following the closure of adult hotels in the County.

RESOLVED:

That the overview of the work of, and data relating to, the Virtual School (VS) for the academic year 2024-2025, be noted.

45. Date of future meetings.

RESOLVED:

That meetings of the Committee in 2026 would take place at 14:00 on the following days:

20 January 2026

3 March 2026

2 June 2026

1 September 2026

3 November 2026

2.00 - 4.09 pm
04 November 2025

CHAIRMAN



CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: **20 JANUARY 2026**

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

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2026/27–2029/30

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to:

- Provide information on the proposed 2026/27 to 2029/30 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 2025. The draft MTFS for 2026/27–2029/30 was considered by the Cabinet on 16 December 2025.
3. The Children's 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 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;
 - Children and Family Services –2024-2026 Placement Sufficiency Statement and Market Position Statement
 - Children and Family Services – Quality Assurance and Improvement Framework (QAIF)
 - Children Wellbeing and Schools Bill
 - National Framework for social work practice
 - Kinship Strategy
 - Reunification Strategy 2026-2029
 - Recruitment and Retention strategy 2024-2026
 - Children and Families Services Workforce Development plan 2025 -2028

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 draft MTFS is set out in the report to Cabinet on 16 December 2025, 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 3rd February 2026. The County Council meets on 18 February 2026 to consider the final MTFS.
16. The revised MTFS for 2026-30 projects a funding gap of £23m in the first year that (subject to changes from later information such as the Local Government Finance Settlement) will need to be balanced by the use of earmarked reserves. There is then a gap of £49m in year two rising to £106m in year four, based on a 2.99% Council Tax increase, although no decision has yet been made on the level of increase to be approved.

Strategic Change Programme

17. Demand for Children and Family Services continues to increase with growth of £61.55m projected over the period of the MTFS, as the requirement to meet CFS needs before intervention, arising from largely demographic growth and an increased need for costly social care provision types, increases. The continuing impacts of the pandemic and 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.
18. 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 programme (DCFSF) and a similar programme for Transforming SEND and Inclusion in Leicestershire (TSIL). Both are now embedded into business as usual, with a continued focus on continuous improvement across children and family services – ensuring positive outcomes for children and young people and their parents and carers, making delivery of support sustainable for the future, and responding to financial pressures through the MTFS.
19. Other savings are being delivered through partnerships such as the Children's Innovation Partnership (CIP) with Barnardo's and through service re-design.

20. Organisationally, despite delivery of extensive savings already, a significant gap remains, emphasising the need to accelerate and expand the Council's ambitions and explore new, innovative options. A step-change in approach is therefore required and will also need to consider the impact of current social care reform work which will need to be fully reflected in future planning, as changes to service models, workforce requirements, and funding arrangements will significantly influence local priorities and resource allocation. Incorporating these reforms into strategic and financial planning is essential to ensure readiness for implementation and sustainability. This is considered further in the Efficiency Review section later in the report.

Proposed Revenue Budget

21. The table below summarises the proposed 2026/27 revenue budget and provisional budgets for the next four years. The proposed 2026/27 revenue budget is shown in detail in Appendix A.

| | 2026/27 £000 | 2027/28 £000 | 2028/29 £000 | 2029/30 £000 |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Original prior year budget | 141,778 | 164,452 | 169,172 | 175,272 |
| Budget Transfers and Adjustments | -826 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Add proposed growth (Appendix B) | 30,230 | 9,720 | 10,500 | 11,100 |
| Less proposed savings (Appendix C) | -6,730 | -5,000 | -4,400 | -4,175 |
| Total Net Provisional CFS Budget | 164,452 | 169,172 | 175,272 | 182,197 |

22. Detailed service budgets have been compiled based on no pay or price inflation; a central contingency will be held which will be allocated to services as necessary.

Other Changes and Transfers

23. Net budget transfers and adjustments – largely related to pay and reduced employer pension contributions – equates to decreases totalling £0.826m which have been reflected for the purpose of 26/27 budget planning and beyond.

24. 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.

25. 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

26. Growth over the next four years in the Children and Family Services budget totals £61.55m. This is mainly due to pressures on the Social Care placements budget arising from increased numbers of children requiring very costly residential provision, and continued increasing demand of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, which results in increased funding pressure when such cohorts transition to care leavers. Growth assumptions will continue to be reviewed at regular intervals, and where necessary any changes be reflected as part of the final MTFS report to Cabinet in February.

27. The budget increases are outlined below with details for each growth item and summarised in the table below and in Appendix B:

GROWTH

| References | | 2026/27 | 2027/28 | 2028/29 | 2029/30 |
|--|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | | £000 | £000 | £000 | £000 |
| <u>CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES</u> | | | | | |
| ** G1 | Demographic growth & increasing cost of Social Care Placement mix | 24,500 | 32,700 | 41,500 | 51,000 |
| ** G2 | Front-line social care staff - increased caseloads | 700 | 700 | 900 | 900 |
| ** G3 | Post Transforming SEND & Inclusion In Leicestershire(TSIL) sustainability | 1,850 | 1,850 | 1,850 | 1,850 |
| ** G4 | Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) - increased demand/cost | 800 | 2,000 | 3,200 | 4,450 |
| G5 | Disabled Children Service | 1,380 | 1,700 | 2,000 | 2,350 |
| G6 | Oakfield Expansion - Increased Transport need/demand | 1,000 | 1,000 | 1,000 | 1,000 |
| TOTAL | | 30,230 | 39,950 | 50,450 | 61,550 |

* items unchanged from previous Medium Term Financial Strategy

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

**** G1 - Social Care Placements £24.5m 2026/27 rising to £51m by 2029/30**

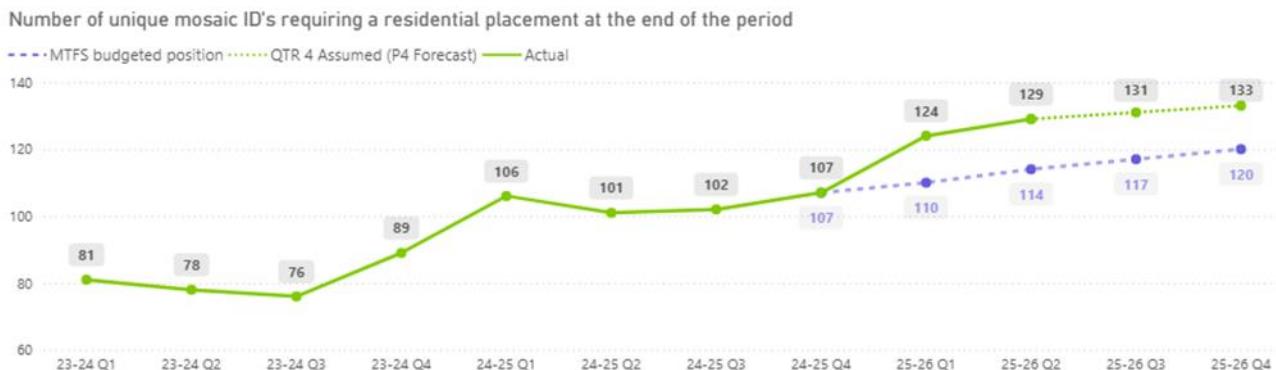
28. The children's social care placements budget comprises of a variety of settings to look after children as part of a statutory duty to safeguard children who may be at risk of harm.

29. This significant growth pressure relates largely to the increasing cost of children's social care placement mix, largely due to change in demand / numbers in relation to children in residential provision.

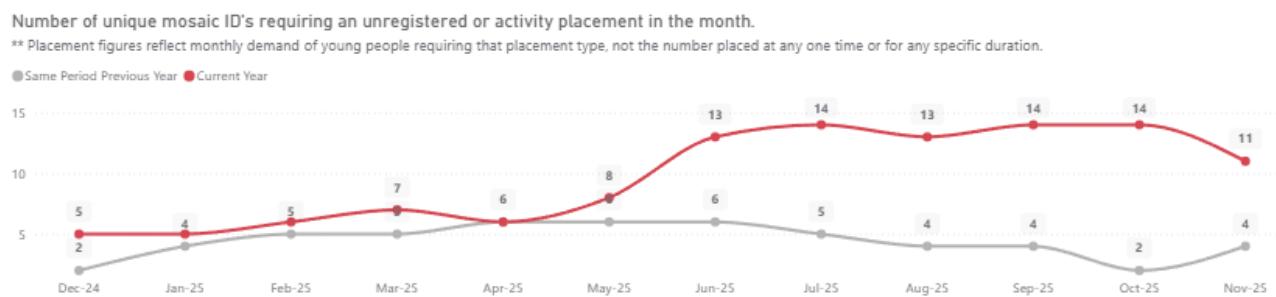
30. The MTFS for this financial year assumes budgeted residential numbers by March 2026 to be at 120 children (includes parent and child placements). Trend and demand analysis at the time of budget setting, and then subsequently until the end of quarter 4 of the financial year 2024/25, showed demand remaining relatively stable.

31. However, as illustrated in the graph below, numbers to date during the financial year 2025/26 have risen sharply. Current projections for the financial year show that this

number could rise to 133 by year end (11% increase vs budgeted mitigated position in terms of overall volume).



32. Of this overall increase in numbers, a small but financially significant increase in the number of unregistered and activity placements can be seen from May 2025 (See graph below). Unregistered placements are used when no other option is available and are more costly than registered residential placements, with the average weekly cost of such provision ranging from between £13k to £17k over the last 12 months. The current placement budget for 2025/26 allows funding for up to 5 children in this provision type over the financial year.



33. Over the past four years the numbers of children who have started in unregistered and activity provisions has been relatively low. This financial year children needing to be supported in such provision types represents a circa 100% increase versus the average of the last 4 years. Often such provision types are the only options available to the Council for some children with often the most complex needs who come into care or require an emergency placement. Due to a national and local placement sufficiency pressure, the Council is often left with no choice in the placements it brokers for children. They are often the most expensive due to them taking children with complex mental health, absconding and criminal exploitation risks and the emergency nature in which the child is placed. Despite a decrease from prior months, as at end of November 2025, there were 11 children in unregistered/ activity placements, which continues to add a significant financial strain to the current challenging budget situation.

34. There is clear evidence that the children in these placements have experienced high levels of trauma and /or have complex disabilities and special educational needs that result in a break down in family relationships or, for those already in care, a request to move the child, often in emergency circumstances. Despite extensive packages of support to keep them within their family (unless they have suffered abuse in the family) the home situation, their foster home or registered home becomes untenable. For some,

the activity/ unregistered placement is for a set period until the Council can find registered homes or rehabilitate them at home. Unfortunately, for some they experience several breakdowns of placements and subsequent moves. For these children the market and placement sufficiency are even more challenging and placements more costly, adding an increased financial burden to the budget.

35. For all children in activity / unregistered placements, searches are regularly undertaken to source a registered provision. However, there is currently a gap in the market to support these children, and work needs to be undertaken with providers with a view to how they can support within the remit of their Ofsted registration. Often providers are unable to care/ continue to care for children due to complex mental health and associated levels of need and self-harming behaviour. Knife crime and links to risk of criminal exploitation is also a factor for some children.
36. All children in unregistered placements have oversight from senior managers in the Department and their circumstances and progress of placement searches are discussed in a weekly meeting chaired by the Assistant Director. For most, the period in unregulated or unregistered provision is short term, but for children with the most complex needs it is more challenging to secure a registered home and if successful to maintain them there. In the last 12 months 9 of the children who were placed in either an activity placement or an unregistered placement for a period have now moved into a registered home at a lower weekly cost. For these 9 children who have moved from activity to registered residential placement, the average reduction in cost per child is £3,522 or on average, 37% cheaper than unregistered provision for these children.
37. Also, of note and of financial significance, due to a set of very unique challenges and issues (Sufficiency and need), three children are currently in secure provision, two of which at a significantly higher than average weekly cost of £37k and £33.5k (historically the upper limit of costs of such provision type has been no more than £15k per week), which contributes to the overall projected in year overspend position. Given the complexity of their situation, it is likely they will remain in secure welfare provision for a minimum of 6 months.
38. Under Section 25, The children Act 1989, detaining a child in secure is rare and only happens, with agreement of the Court in the riskiest of situations. Children in welfare secure are placed if there is an history of absconding and /or they are placing themselves or the public at significant risk of harm or danger. Secure panel meetings are chaired by the Assistant Director and final sign off given by the Director. For future financial planning, there is an assumed need for such provision type over the MTFS period of between 1-2 children annually needing to be supported in secure provision. However, this position will be reviewed regularly and any subsequent deviations from current projected assumptions to be fed into future MTFS planning work.
39. The weighted average weekly cost of residential provision is very costly at an average of circa £7k per week but can vary considerably depending on needs. The three key contributing factors impacting the cost of provision are:
 - a. *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.

- b. *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 13.2 years in 2021 to 8 years currently (decrease of 39%). The age range of children and young people in residential settings is now 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).
- c. *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 some 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.

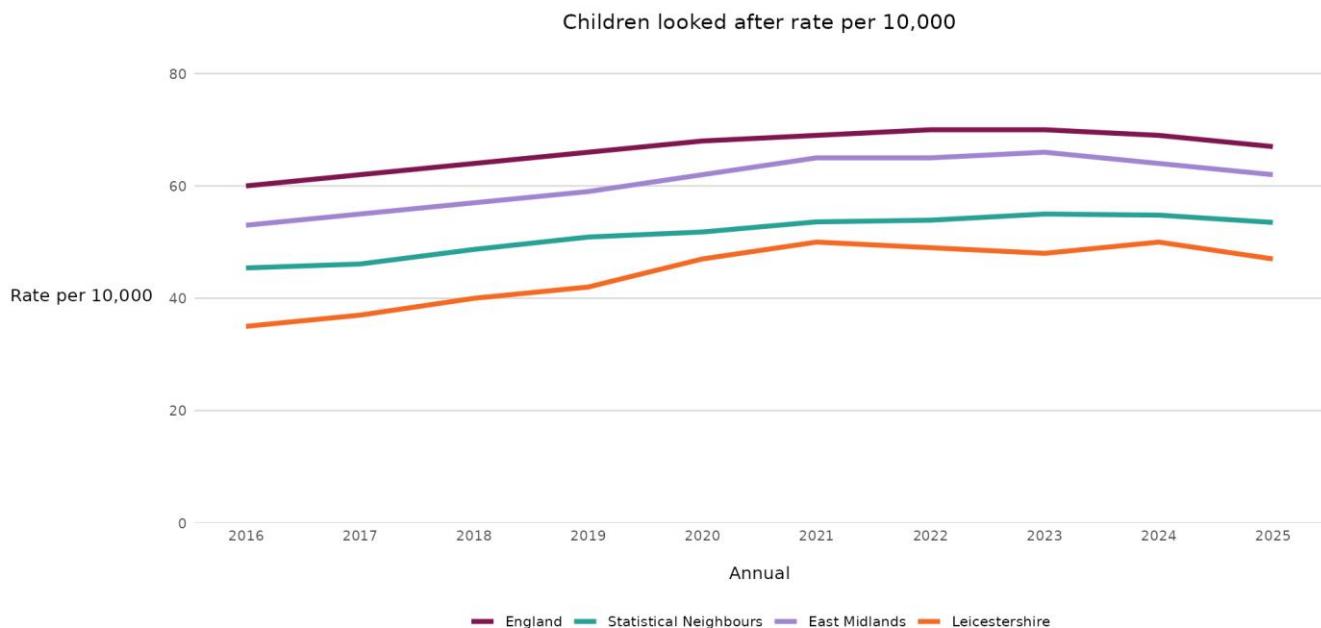
40. In summary, current in-year projections, when extrapolated forward, indicate that future financial growth will be essential to sustain service delivery, meet strategic objectives and statutory obligations. These trends highlight the need for proactive planning and targeted investment to ensure long-term stability, while maintaining efficiency and value for money across all operations.

**** G2 – Front Line Social Care Staff – Increased Demand and Caseload Management**
£0.7m 2026/27 rising to £0.9m by 2028/29

41. 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 current overall rate of Children in Care per 10,000, 0–17-year-old population (47 per 10,000) remains lower than comparator authorities (mean of 60 per 10,000) – see table/graph below.

Children Looked After rate per 10,000

| LA | South Gloucestershire | Wiltshire | Nottinghamshire | West Sussex | Somerset | Warwickshire | Gloucestershire | East Riding of Yorkshire | Hampshire | North Somerset | Leicestershire |
|------|-----------------------|-----------|-----------------|-------------|----------|--------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------|----------------|----------------|
| 2020 | 36 | 44 | 56 | 46 | 48 | 65 | 57 | 55 | 57 | 54 | 47 |
| 2021 | 37 | 40 | 61 | 51 | 47 | 73 | 62 | 56 | 59 | 50 | 50 |
| 2022 | 44 | 41 | 59 | 49 | 50 | 69 | 66 | 53 | 61 | 47 | 49 |
| 2023 | 43 | 44 | 58 | 50 | 51 | 63 | 67 | 57 | 66 | 51 | 48 |
| 2024 | 36 | 46 | 56 | 50 | 52 | 64 | 64 | 56 | 66 | 58 | 50 |
| 2025 | 33 | 46 | 53 | 54 | 55 | 56 | 57 | 58 | 60 | 63 | 47 |



42. The numbers of children looked after continues to steadily increase in Leicestershire. This is due to not only demographic growth but also a combination of socio-economic pressures, increased complexity of needs, and systemic factors such as poverty, mental health challenges, and safeguarding concerns. Currently there are 785 Looked after children in Leicestershire – this represents a 7.5% increase over the last 12 months. Families often present with multiple, interlinked issues requiring coordinated interventions across health, education, and social services. Additionally, safeguarding concerns are becoming more nuanced, with risks linked to online exploitation, substance misuse, and coercive control. These dynamics demand greater professional expertise, multi-agency collaboration, and tailored support plans, making case management significantly more challenging than in previous years.

43. As a result, investment in additional front-line social care staff capacity is required to ensure appropriate caseload levels and to continue to meet statutory duties, sustain safe effective services, and deliver the outcomes expected for children and families. Failure to secure this investment risks service instability, inability to meet statutory and safeguarding responsibilities, increased reliance on high-cost agency staff, and poorer outcomes for vulnerable children.

44. This growth is to provide for increases in demand in relation to largely the Family Safeguarding Service. The service has experienced an increased demand and complexity of cases. The current caseloads are no longer sustainable, and failing to address the capacity need will have several adverse effects, but in particular;

- Failure to meet statutory and safeguarding responsibilities to vulnerable children by not having capacity due to increased workload:** The current staff will continue to have unrealistically high caseloads, leading to an inability to meet statutory and safeguarding responsibilities to children, burnout and decreased job satisfaction. Experience shows that this results in higher turnover rates, further exacerbating the staffing shortage and cost increase of recruiting agency staff.

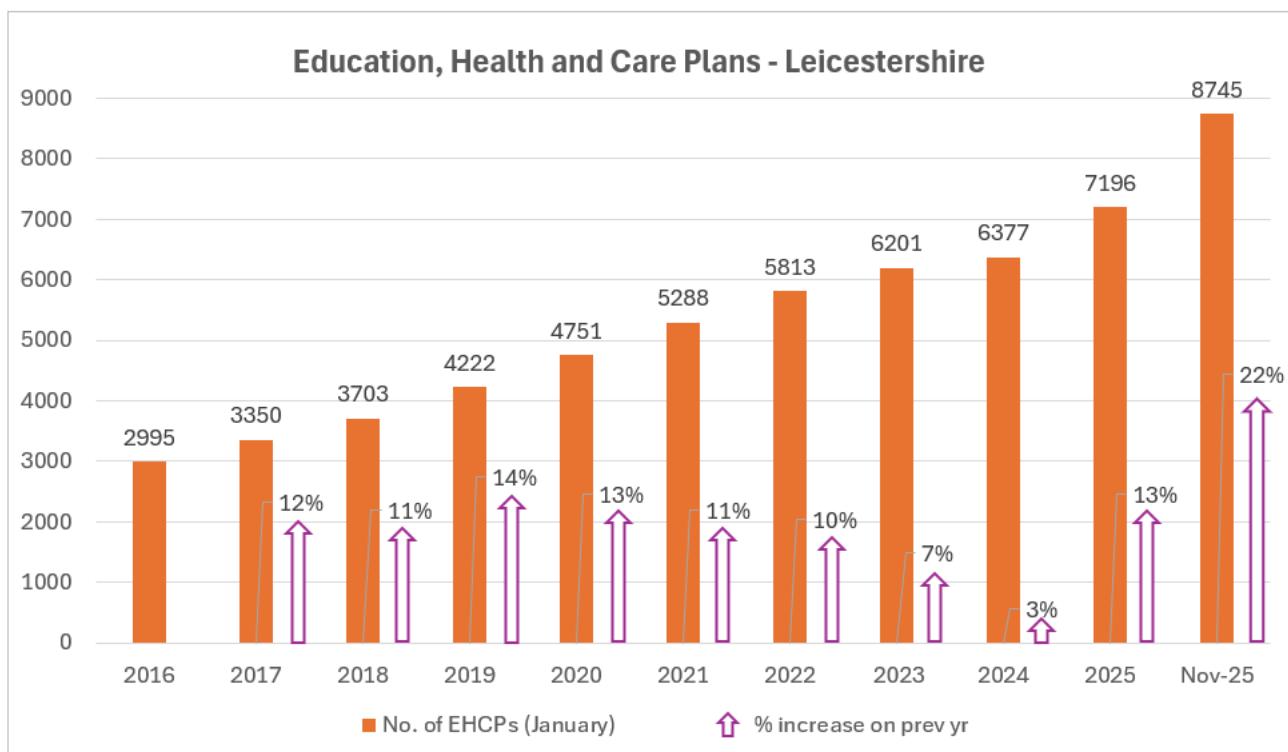
- b. **Reduced Quality of Service:** With the existing staff stretched thinly, the quality of service provided to families will inevitably decline. This can lead to the Local Authority failing to meet its safeguarding responsibilities, key performance indicators not being met, quality of support not being to the standard expected, and ultimately, poorer outcomes for the families of Leicestershire.

45. Recent data and audits reveal higher numbers of child protection plans, looked after children, and court proceedings, indicating a growing workload and complexity in cases. Weighted caseload modelling since November 2024 shows several teams operating above capacity. An audit of incoming referrals has been undertaken and the number of cases being accepted into the service is higher than this time last year - this indicates that the Council is increasingly supporting children with more complex needs and higher levels of vulnerability. Although the overall number of caseloads held is meeting average targets, the complexities of cases are increasing.

****G3 – Post Transforming SEND and Inclusion in Leicestershire (TSIL) sustainability - £1.85m 2026/27 and ongoing**

46. Overall demand through the front door in terms of EHCP demand has continued to rise, which is further illustrated in the chart below and shows active EHCPs over time by calendar year. At the end of November 2025 there were 8,745 EHCPs, a 22% increase since January 2025, and a 192% increase in EHCPs since January 2016. Recent increases in demand are being seen nationally and are likely a result of uncertainty on future SEND reform caused by the anticipated Government Schools White Paper.

Number of children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in Leicestershire



47. The TSIL programme had considered workload and performance within the Special Educational Needs Assessment (SENA) Service. The service is responsible for delivering the local authority's statutory duties 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 Plans (EHCPs) and identify and secure the provision to meet the needs. They are key contributors to meeting the 20-week statutory timeline for assessments but are also dependent upon other advice givers to do so.
48. The review identified that the current model was failing to achieve statutory duties, particularly regarding the timeliness of the assessment process for EHCP requests which has been a considerable challenge for the Council for a number of years - with the authority only finalising 4.3% of assessments within the 20-week statutory timeline in 2024.
49. The work of the TSIL programme has succeeded in slowing growth in demand for Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments (EHCNA) and reduced the overall High Needs deficit position. TSIL changes to ways of working, processes and an inclusive practice ethos have become embedded in business as usual. Ongoing performance and financial monitoring of changes made during the programme will be undertaken using embedded performance frameworks to ensure early visibility of changes in demand and tracking of sustained process improvements. Of note – this includes the current overall improving position for EHCNA assessment process – at the end of November 25, the overall average time to issue is continuing to reduce and is now close to the 20-week target at 22.9 weeks, a significant improvement on the 62 weeks in December 2024.
50. While the TSIL programme has now been concluded, recent unanticipated rises in demand reinforce that the SEND system remains unsustainable, and continued uncertainty around what might be included within the Government's White Paper, proposed for release in early 2026, is expected to continue to fuel demand in the short to medium term.
51. There are still significant opportunities for improvement to be made both to internal service performance and to support inclusive practice across the education system. Building on the work of the TSIL programme and an expected emphasis of the White Paper on mainstream inclusion, the Council will be working to embed 'belonging' in schools and other educational settings.
52. Belonging focuses on children and young people feeling personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in their local education social environment. Children and young people who feel safe, valued and cared for within their educational setting are much more likely to experience academic success, positive social connections and a confident perception of their connection within the community.
53. The authority is developing a *Belonging in Education* strategy, co-produced with system partners, school leaders, parents, carers and young people with SEND. This work commenced in September 2025, with the aim to have a draft of the strategy in the Spring of 2026. The strategy will set out how Leicestershire will deliver the ambition of belonging for every child and young person in all educational settings across Leicestershire and will provide the framework for all areas of the Council's SEND and

Additional Needs improvement work so that children and young people can *live their best life*.

54. Other new areas of improvement are continuing to be developed which will support the achievement of existing and planned savings targets, contributing towards a more sustainable High Needs Block position and support children and young people to feel they belong. These include initiatives such as:

- a. Developing a series of new support offers for mainstream schools and children with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. These offers have been co-produced with schools and will include training, specialist outreach support and clinics for school staff, a directory of support and advice for school staff and for parents and carers of children with SEMH needs, and a pilot of in-school alternative provision leading to a GCSE qualification for young people with SEMH needs struggling to access standard mainstream classroom learning.
- b. The introduction of a banded model for EHCPs, which gained approval from the Cabinet in July 2025 to consult with schools on transitioning from EHCP funding based on Learning Support Assistant hours to a more flexible model of banding based on an assessment of the child's needs.
- c. More efficient processing of requests for assessment and improved communication using additional digital process improvements and an activity-based model allowing as many tasks as possible to be allocated to support staff at lower grades, supporting those at higher grades to focus on specialist tasks and reducing the need for growth in specialist staff to meet the increased demand.
- d. Improvements to the EHCP review process to ensure all children with EHCPs receive an annual review and offer evidence-based support to SENA staff on prioritisation of their caseloads.
- e. Improvements to placement recording processes, changing the way the Council captures placement financial information to enable more efficient processing of contracts and invoices. This will drive tighter management of sufficiency linked to finances that will better control the financial monitoring for the service area.
- f. Extending the Commissioning offer for Education, SEND and Inclusion services to improve the department's ability to broker specialist placements and work more closely with providers to shape the market – rather than relying on spot purchasing.
- g. Improving the overall quality of EHCPs through monthly multiagency audits and ongoing quality sign-off processes.
- h. Working with Primary Schools across the County to develop enhanced educational provision for children with SEND transitioning from Early Years settings into their first year at Primary School. Four new Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) enhanced resource bases were introduced in 2024 and another four are due to accept new pupils during the 2025/26 academic year. Further discussions are underway with a number of schools to develop additional enhanced resource bases for 2026/27 school starters.

- i. A School Place Planning Strategy currently out for consultation sets out the strategy for delivering additional school places for the future, including specialist school places. This will enable the avoidance of high cost placements in Independent Special Schools due to a lack of places within the Council's existing maintained Area Special Schools.
- j. A review of the SENA service considered 'ways of working', in addition to 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.

55. The growth in budget will ensure sufficient budgeted capacity exists across the relevant services to manage this increased demand and subsequent impact on caseload capacity within services but also provide the capacity to support on all the activities and improvement work outlined above. 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.

56. In summary, the increasing demand for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) is placing significant pressure on caseload management within the Special Educational Needs (SEN) service. As more children require tailored support, case complexity and administrative workload are rising, making it harder to maintain timely assessments and interventions. This surge also impacts the wider infrastructure of support services, including Educational Psychology services, given that psychologists play a critical role in statutory assessments and ongoing reviews. The growing volume of requests will therefore require additional capacity and strategic planning within those wider services to ensure compliance with statutory timelines and the delivery of high-quality support for children and families.

57. Under the Schools and Early Years Finance (England) 2025 regulations, the costs of the services such SEN assessment and Educational Psychology fall to the local authority budget. However, the financial benefit is through reduced placement costs which, under the same regulations, are met from High Needs DSG. 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.

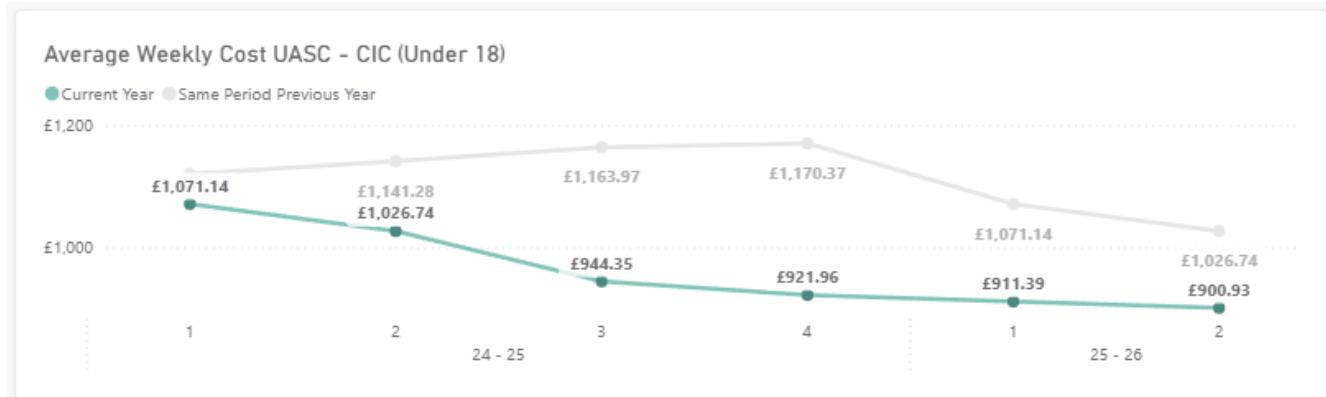
****G4 – Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) – Increased demand and cost £0.8m 2026/27 rising to £4.45m by 2029/30**

58. 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. Based on the latest ONS population estimates, the Council has approximately 147,000 children aged 0–17. Applying the 0.1% threshold means the county is expected to accommodate around 147 UASC under 18.

59. 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. Without additional funding, the Council faces a substantial risk of overspend and reduced capacity to meet statutory duties and safeguard vulnerable young people.

60. The number of UASC care leavers is forecast to rise to over 200 by the end of the current financial year, which will have included a number of in care UASC who will have turned 18 and become eligible UASC care leavers within the next six months. Based on current trend analysis, this cohort could exceed 400 by March 2030. Alongside this growth, the Council is expected to receive additional referrals through the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) as the number of looked-after children is likely to fall below the 0.1% threshold of 147. Collectively, this represents a significant demand and financial challenge. Although weekly unit costs have reduced (see charts below), the sustained increase in demand—particularly for UASC care leavers—will create mounting budget pressures over the refreshed MTFS period, as funding drops to around £270 per week per care leaver compared to approximately £1,000 per week for those still in care.

61. Home Office funding covers £1,000 per week for UASC children in care and £270 per week for UASC care leavers. This funding is for both any direct placement cost plus associated service costs. The sharp decrease in funding when children transition from UASC in care to care leavers presents a significant financial risk. This is amplified by the disproportionate numbers in Leicestershire, where projected care leavers far exceed those currently in care, creating a sustained budget pressure that is not matched by Home Office contributions. However, through cost reduction activities linked to the department's MTFS Smarter Commissioning programme of work, the unit cost of provision has reduced significantly compared to the position 12 months ago. This is illustrated in the charts below.





62. This improvement reflects a stronger strategic approach to market engagement and contract management, delivering better value without compromising quality. As a result, the projected budget growth requirement is now considerably lower than it would have been had unit costs remained at last year's levels. Whilst recognising there is still further potential to reduce costs further, with specific commissioning activity planned for 2026 to reduce costs further, this demonstrates the impact of effective commissioning in mitigating financial pressures and ensuring sustainability within the service.

G5 – New – Disabled Children Service £1.38m 2026/27 rising to £2.35m by 2029/30

63. Demand for services supporting disabled children continues to rise, driven by increasing complexity of needs and a growing expectation for personalised support. This trend, both locally and nationally, places significant pressure on budgets and workforce capacity, as families seek tailored interventions to maintain stability and improve outcomes. One area of notable growth is the provision of direct payment packages, which enable families to arrange care and support flexibly according to individual needs. Current projections indicate a circa 40% increase in direct payment packages over the course of the financial year 2025/26.

64. While direct payment packages represent an increasing cost pressure, they can however be a highly cost-effective intervention when managed correctly. For example, a typical direct payment package might cost £250–£400 per week, compared to £6,500–£7,500 per week for a residential placement. By applying robust eligibility thresholds and maintaining regular reviews, these packages can prevent escalation into more intensive and costly forms of provision, delivering both better value for money and improved outcomes for children and families.

G6 – New – Oakfield Expansion – Increased Transport Need / Demand £1m from 2026/27

65. The expansion of Oakfield is being driven following the ending of the Secondary Education Inclusion Partnership arrangements, which requires a different target operating model to ensure statutory duties continue to be met. The Secondary Education Inclusion Partnerships (SEIPs) were collaborative arrangements designed to support secondary schools in managing pupils at risk of exclusion and promoting inclusive practice. They operated on a model where funding was devolved to schools, enabling them to commission interventions locally. However, schools determined that this model was not sustainable due to increasing demand and financial pressures, collectively deciding to end the arrangements. This decision passed responsibility back

to the Local Authority to design an alternative delivery model that ensures compliance with statutory duties, particularly under Section 19 of the Education Act 1996, which requires suitable full-time education for children unable to attend mainstream school.

66. In response, the Council developed a revised operating model, including the expansion of Oakfield, to maintain inclusive provision and meet legal obligations effectively. Expanding Oakfield enables the Council to provide education for those children who would otherwise not receive it (otherwise known as the Section 19 duty) locally, reducing reliance on unregistered alternative provision and costly out-of-county placements, whilst improving outcomes for pupils.
67. Linked to this, under Section 508B of the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority (LA) is required to provide free transport for eligible children of compulsory school age who cannot reasonably walk to school due to distance, disability, or safety concerns. This duty extends to children placed in Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and specialist provisions such as Oakfield, particularly when:
 - a. The child is placed by the LA under Section 19.
 - b. The child is not on roll at a mainstream school and the PRU or specialist provision is the designated placement.
68. Transport costs for these pupils are not chargeable to the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and are required to be absorbed by the Council's general budget. As Oakfield's intake increases, so too does the pressure on the transport budget, creating a significant ongoing cost that must be factored into financial planning.
69. Under the new target operating model, the necessary expansion of Oakfield and associated inclusion strategies are a key mitigating action aimed at reducing placement spend by keeping more pupils within local provision rather than costly out-of-county settings. While this approach delivers long-term financial benefits, its impact is primarily seen against the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) High Needs Block, helping to reduce the projected deficit. By increasing local capacity and improving commissioning efficiency, the model supports compliance with statutory duties while contributing to a more sustainable financial position for the DSG.

Savings

70. Details of proposed savings for the CFS local authority budget are set out in the table below and Appendix C and total £6.7m in 2026/27 and £20.3m over the next four years.
71. 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 £47.627m are forecast over the period of the MTFS but an annual deficit continues.

| References | | | 2026/27 | 2027/28 | 2028/29 | 2029/30 |
|--|---------|--|---------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| | | | £000 | £000 | £000 | £000 |
| <u>SAVINGS</u> | | | | | | |
| <u>References used in the following tables</u> | | | | | | |
| * 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 | | | | | | |
| <u>CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES</u> | | | | | | |
| ** CF1 | Eff | Innovation Partnership - Creation and investment in Internal Residential provision | -750 | -1,250 | -1,500 | -1,500 |
| * CF2 | Eff | Defining CFS For the Future Programme - Phase 2 - Social Care Workforce Startegy (Recruitment and Retention) | -250 | -650 | -650 | -650 |
| * CF3 | Eff | Reduced Care Costs through growth of internal family based placements | -300 | -600 | -850 | -850 |
| ** CF4 | 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 | -1,000 | -2,250 | -3,700 | -5,470 |
| | | Strand 2 - Review of care packages /cost (Pro-active and Reactive) ensuring value for money and effectiveness | -200 | -400 | -650 | -955 |
| | | Strand 3 - Development of a wide range of other accommodation and support options | -3,600 | -5,950 | -8,150 | -10,250 |
| CF5 | Eff | Departmental Service Efficiency Review | -630 | -630 | -630 | -630 |
| | | TOTAL | -6,730 | -11,730 | -16,130 | -20,305 |

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 2026/27 rising to £1.5m by 2028/29**

72. The overall ambition of the Children's Innovation Partnership (partnership with Barnardo's) was to create 8 homes providing 23 child placements servicing a wide range of different need types. The aims are to reduce over-reliance on the private sector, address overprovisioning (driven by the private market) and profiteering, 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 and their social workers.
73. Seven of the eight homes are open and operational with children living in them and mechanisms in place to monitor utilisation and cost effectiveness based on external market trends. And all of these provisions are subject to financial, quality assurance and contract management checks.
74. The homes that have been open for a full year or more have met the required projected MTFS contribution for financial year 2025/26.
75. The Overnight Short Break (OSB) residential home is the seventh home to open this year, which starts to bridge a significant gap in the market for families who have children with complex needs related to disability. The 8th home is awaiting the Ofsted registration visit prior to coming into operation.
76. To date, the current pipeline and progress with this programme is listed below:
 - a. Three homes for children with emotional, behavioural and development needs – match funded by Department of Education – open.
 - b. One Parent and Child residential home - open.

- c. One Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD) Assessment residential home- match funded by the Department of Education – open.
- d. One Child Sexual Exploitation/Child Criminal Exploitation (CSE/CCE) residential home- match funded by the Department of Education – open.
- e. One Overnight Short Breaks (OSB) residential home - match funded by Department for Education – open.
- f. One complex need home - match funded by Department for Education – awaiting Ofsted registration.

77. Increasing numbers of children with complex needs, requiring residential care indicates that this should be the start of CFS residential redesign journey. Analysis is underway and will be the foundation of an options appraisal for the next phase of residential redesign in 2026.

***CF2 (Eff/SR) Defining CFS for the Future Phase 2 (DCFSF2) – Social Care Workforce Strategy (Recruitment and Retention) £0.25m in 2026/27 increasing to £0.65m by 2027/28**

78. As part of the Defining Children and Family Services for the Future Programme 2 (DCFSF2), a comprehensive review of the social care workforce strategy was undertaken. One of the key outputs from this review is a stronger focus on attracting experienced staff to Leicestershire increasing the number of newly qualified social workers, recruiting suitably experienced international social workers and ensuring that Leicestershire offers a fit-for-purpose and attractive employment package for social workers.

79. This approach is complemented by recent social care reform announcements introducing new rules for agency employment. These reforms aim to reduce the over-reliance on the agency market, which has historically driven higher costs and instability in workforce planning. In line with these changes, the savings plan within the refreshed Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) will target a 50% reduction in the number of agency social workers over the MTFS period. This reduction will help deliver cost efficiencies while supporting a more stable and sustainable workforce model.

***CF3 (Eff) Reducing Care Costs through growth of internal family-based placements - £0.3m in 2026/27 rising to £0.85m by 2028/29**

80. This savings programme is focused on delivering outputs that prevent children's placements from entering more costly provision, particularly within the external market. The key areas of activity include:

- a. Increasing internal fostering placements to strengthen local capacity.
- b. Maximising utilisation of internal foster placements to ensure efficiency.
- c. Expanding the number of Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) to provide long-term stability for children.

81. The Service continues to work towards ambitious targets for the recruitment of foster carers. The underlying principles of this activity are to ensure that children remain within or close to their communities, have access to local resources, and benefit from continuity of care. This approach also reduces expenditure on more costly services provided through Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs), supporting both improved outcomes for children and financial sustainability.

82. In addition, this programme will support sufficiency and seek to avoid any unnecessary escalations to higher-cost provision, ensuring that children receive the right support at the right time without resorting to expensive external placements.

CF4 (Eff) Smarter commissioning, Procurement and Demand Management – Social Care Placements and externally commissioned services
- £4.8m in 2026/27 rising to £16.7m by 2029/30

83. 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.

84. CFS delivers these duties through the CFS Commissioning Service in relation to the children's social care external market. Functions include brokerage (search for, match and procurement of placements on and off framework for children in foster care, residential provision, supported accommodation, domiciliary care and residential 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. ongoing analysis of demand and need, provider events, through mini competitions, block contracts, invitations to tender. (The service is also developing its offer for the Education, Inclusion and Additional Needs directorate within the department through implementation of a dedicated commissioning resource). At a broader level the Commissioning Service is also responsible for ensuring compliant spend throughout the department, achieving value for money and compliance of delivery of all these contracts.

85. 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 including fixed models of delivery and profiteering.

86. To impact and mitigate future growth in the CFS department there is an ongoing need to obtain a clearer focus on how the Council plans and procures placements and exploration of other commissioning models, alongside the development of in-house provision. This also includes the need for continued development of an approach to brokerage/negotiation, quality assurance and contract management.

87. As such, this savings workstream can be broken down into three main different strands:

- a. Strand 1 to deliver £5.47m savings – This is to be achieved through containing and minimise impact of market cost pressures for children placements that are with external providers (residential, IFA and 16+ Supported Accommodation). One of the key activities to achieve is a robust and consistent process for annual fee

reviews, this includes appropriate governance that can interrogate and challenge the appropriateness of any annual provider uplift requests. The interrogation is based on data-driven decision, informed by fair pricing tools and internal analysis of provider costs by provision type.

- b. Strand 2 to deliver £0.955m savings – This is to be achieved through a regular review of care packages and cost, ensuring value for money, need driven commissioning and effectiveness (impact and outcomes for children). 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 transition from residential care, or review of support based on children and young people needs.
 - c. Strand 3 to deliver £10.25m 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.
- 88. In terms of work being undertaken to date, and the successes achieved, significant progress has been made in reducing the unit cost of supported accommodation placements through a series of targeted actions. These include comprehensive reviews of all 16+ supported accommodation packages and residential placements, proactive negotiations with providers to eliminate over-provisioning, and the introduction of a robust Quality Assurance Framework within commissioning processes. The use of cost benchmarking tools (also known as fair pricing tools) such as Care Cubed has strengthened brokerage and negotiation at the point of placement, ensuring fairer pricing.
- 89. Additionally, commissioning has adopted more agile approaches to market development, including block contracting and mini tenders, to secure better value and sufficiency. As a result of these measures, there has been measurable reduction in overall unit costs, alongside improved alignment of support packages to actual need, avoiding unnecessary escalation to higher-cost provision. For example, 2025 also saw the award and opening of a residential home through Keys Group (providing care for 3 children), and the ambition to open a second home in 2026. This was delivered as a discrete procurement exercise – a mini-competition as part of the overarching Gateway2Resources Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS). This was with the aim to develop more of the Council's own provision and alternatives to existing ways of delivery care, accommodation and support.
- 90. Within the current Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), £4 million of cost reductions are projected to be achieved by the end of the financial year 2025/26. The outputs of current and planned future work have been reflected within the refreshed MTFS up to March 2030. Active work is underway and embedded into business-as-usual processes to ensure that planned activities deliver the expected benefits. In addition, there is an

ongoing review to assess whether any activities can be stretched further to maximise savings and improve efficiency.

CF5 (Eff) Departmental Service Efficiency Review - £0.63m from 2026/27

91. This initiative was introduced as a direct response to the financial pressures experienced across service areas during the current year. The departmental management team has led a comprehensive review of non-statutory services, supported by the implementation of corporate-led financial controls. Through robust vacancy management and targeted actions, the programme has already delivered net one-off in-year efficiencies and budget opportunities totalling circa £0.9 million within the financial year 2025/26. These savings have been achieved by delaying recruitment to some posts where appropriate and maximising the use of grant funding to ensure prescribed outcomes are delivered in the most efficient, effective, and compliant way possible.
92. This work also includes a detailed review of non-staff expenditure against current budget allocations to identify areas where costs can be reduced or controlled. By comparing actual spend with budgeted provision, the department is ensuring that resources are used efficiently, and any variances are addressed promptly to maximise savings opportunities. The outputs of all this work have indicated £0.63m of efficiency savings can be achieved on-going.

Savings Under Development

93. To help bridge the gap several initiatives are being investigated to generate further savings. This work was already underway as part of the Council's strategy to address the MTFS gap and does not include any of the findings from the Efficiency Review, which is discussed in more detail below. Outlines of the proposals have been included as Appendix D, 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 and is expected to be shaped significantly as the Efficiency Review progresses.

Future Financial Sustainability and the Efficiency Review

94. The Efficiency Review was initiated by the new Administration in response to a then-projected £90m budget gap by 2028/29, alongside mounting pressures on capital funding and special educational needs budgets. To address these financial challenges, the Council commissioned a comprehensive, evidence-led review of all services and spending, aiming to explore ways to accelerate existing initiatives and identify new opportunities. The review will identify opportunities to redesign services, optimise resources, and embed a performance-driven culture across the organisation.
95. Key elements of the review include:
 - Reviewing all Council activities for cost reduction, service redesign, and income generation (excluding commercial ventures).
 - Assessing existing MTFS projects and savings ideas to prioritise or redesign them, identify where savings targets could be stretched or accelerated.

- Strengthening governance, data management and resource mobilisation within the current Transformation Strategy.
- Reviewing the County Council's approach to delivering change to ensure it is well placed to support implementation and future Council change initiatives.

96. The review is being undertaken by Newton Impact and commenced in early November, with detailed recommendations due early 2026 to inform future financial planning and Cabinet decisions.

97. The first stage of work was focused on any immediate opportunity to accelerate existing MTFS savings. The first of these, included in the draft MTFS position, is reablement in Adult Social Care. The initial saving included in the MTFS is £1m, building on an existing saving in this area of £1.9m.

98. The further initiatives that will be developed over the next few months are expected to be a combination of i) ideas that had not progressed due to resource availability, ii) existing initiatives that can be expanded due to greater insight, iii) new initiatives to the Council.

99. In the Department, further opportunities under discussion include:

- a. Enabling more children and families to be together and safe outside of care through early intervention and prevention.
- b. Enabling more children and young people to be in a family-based environment through increased internal foster care capacity.
- c. Preventing carer breakdown and enabling more children and young people to be supported in a family-based environment, so reducing reliance on residential provision. Ensuring that residential provision that is used meets need, is cost effective and is used only for those children who require such provision. This will be achieved through the identification of families supporting children and young people in care (through SGO, adoption or as foster carers) who are at risk of a carer breakdown and wrapping the appropriate support around them and having the right capacity in the market to support families with children and young people who might have more complex needs.
- d. Enabling more CYP, where it is safe to do so, to achieve reunification and leave care back to a family environment.
- e. Getting a better value from commissioned market through strategic commissioning.

100. The review is still in its early stages and is progressing as expected. If further initiatives can be developed to a satisfactory level of confidence they will be included in the MTFS report to the Cabinet in February.

101. The County Council is taking decisive action to close the budget gap and build a financially resilient organisation. The Efficiency Review will result in a revised Transformation Programme underpinned by strong governance and innovation to accelerate delivery and embed new ways of working. With significant uncertainty and change linked to Local Government Reorganisation, the coming year will be critical in driving high-impact change, engaging stakeholders, and preparing the organisation for future challenges.

102. There will need to be a renewed focus on these programmes during the next few months to ensure that savings are identified and delivered to support the 2026/27 budget gap.

Given the scale of the financial challenge, focus will be needed to prioritise resources on the change initiatives that will have the greatest impact, and work is already underway to do this.

Dedicated Schools Grant

103. For 2026/27 the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) continues to be calculated in four separate blocks as set out below;

| Funding Block | Areas Funded | Basis for Settlement |
|---|--|---|
| Schools Block Est £583.9m | <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"> the aggregate of pupil led characteristics for each individual school; a block allocation for school led factors. <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> |
| Central School Services Block £4.81m | This funds historic financial commitments related to schools such as premature retirement costs, some | This is distributed through a per pupil allocation basis and is retained by the local authority. |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| | <p>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>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> |
| High Needs Block provisional allocation £124.1m | <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 2026/27 grant is not expected until March/April 2026.</p> | <p>The high needs NFF, used to calculate allocations of the high needs block of the DSG from the 2018 to 2019 financial year to the 2025 to 2026 financial year, is not being used for the calculations of high needs funding allocations for the 2026 to 2027 financial year.</p> <p>Instead of using the NFF, allocations for 2026 to 2027 are based on the 2025 to 2026 DSG allocations. The 2026 to 2027 allocations also include funding equivalent to that of various received grants in the 2025 to 2026 financial year.</p> |
| Early Years Est £128.6m | <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.</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 allocation is based on individual pupil characteristics and converted to a rate per hour of participation.</p> <p>Leicestershire receives the lowest rate of £6.20 per hour for 3- and 4-year-olds. The rate of £7.90 per hour for 2-year-olds and £10.67 per hour for under 2's, whilst is not the lowest rate received, is still significantly lower than most for these cohorts.</p> |

| | | |
|----------------|---|--|
| | <p>For all early years funding streams (except DAF), allocations for these funding streams will be adjusted 3 times for the 2026 to 2027 financial year as termly census numbers become available.</p> <p>The final grant/funding position for 26/27 will not be confirmed until July 2027.</p> | |
| £841.5m | 2026/27 Estimated DSG | |

104. The 2026/27 MTFS continues to set the overall Schools Budget as a net nil budget at local authority level. However, an annual projected funding gap remains on the High Needs Block which will be carried forward as an overspend against the grant.

Schools Block

105. School funding continues to be delivered through the National Funding Formula (NFF), which applies nationally consistent funding rates for all pupils, irrespective of the local authority in which they are educated. Within the NFF, only the basic per-pupil entitlement is universal; all other elements reflect additional needs such as deprivation, low prior attainment (LPA), English as an additional language, and mobility. Nationally in 2026/27, 74.3% of NFF funding is allocated through the basic entitlement, 18.1% through additional needs, and 6.4% through school-led factors.

106. For 2026/27, there are no structural changes to the NFF. However, the DfE has rolled the Schools Budget Support Grant (SBSG) and National Insurance Contributions (NICs) Grant into the NFF. These have been incorporated through uplifts to the basic entitlement, free school meals (FSM), lump sum, Minimum Per-Pupil Levels, and each school's baseline for the funding floor. A further 2.11% increase has been applied to most pupil-led and school-led factors, with the FSM factor increasing by 1.66%. Local authorities are required to move their local funding formulae at least 10% closer to the NFF compared with 2025/26, unless they already fully mirror the national formula. Local authorities must operate a Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) between 0% and 0.5%, in line with the national funding floor, which is set at 0%, ensuring no school receives a reduction in its per-pupil funding compared to 2025/26 once rolled-in grants are accounted for. This has required Leicestershire to seek permission to continue to fund rental costs in some small schools. With these exceptions, assuming approval from the DfE, the Leicestershire funding formula remains fully in accordance with the NFF.

107. In November 2025, the Cabinet decided not to approve a transfer of funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). Instead, it agreed to explore a per-pupil contribution from schools to support pupil outreach support and seek a financial commitment from schools to supporting ongoing mainstream inclusion.

108. The December 2025 allocation is £583.9m based on updated October 2025 census information. This is an increase of 4% from the latest 2025/26 allocation. As in previous years, changes in pupil characteristics (e.g., increased deprivation or additional needs) between census points may impact affordability for local authorities. Adjustments to the MFG and capping/scaling arrangements may therefore be required to ensure affordability within the Schools Block DSG allocation.

109. Whilst the NFF for schools is based upon the 2025 school census, funding for local authorities is based upon the pupil characteristics recorded in the 2024 school census. Any increase in pupils eligible for additional funding, i.e. free school meals, is unfunded and as for 2026/27 may result in it not being possible to meet the cost of fully delivering the NFF from the Schools Block DSG. This impact will be reviewed once data from the 2025 census has been received. The national regulations allow for an adjustment to the MFG 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.

110. Minimum per-pupil levels have increased due to the rolled-in grants and are set at £5,115 for primary and £6,640 for secondary pupils. These levels are mandatory for all local funding formulae. As the funding floor and MFG protection operate at a per-pupil level, schools experiencing reductions in pupil numbers will see corresponding decreases in overall budget allocations.

111. Additionally, the Government has confirmed that free school meal entitlement will expand to all children in households receiving Universal Credit from September 2026. This expansion will be funded through a separate grant, not through the DSG or NFF in 2026/27, and further details will be published by the DfE in due course.

Central Services Block

112. 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. For 2026/27, the central schools block will incorporate the SBSG and NICs grant elements relating to centrally employed staff. The updated Settlement is £4.8m for 2026/27.

113. The annual 20% reduction to historic commitments continues in 2026/27. Reductions will now be applied against the 2025/26 baseline rather than the immediately preceding year. Protections remain in place for pre-2013 termination of employment costs. The DfE expects that, subject to further review, only residual protected elements will remain by 2030.

Early Years Block

114. The entitlement to Early Years Education for 2026/27 is;

- 30 hours for eligible working parents for children aged nine months to two years. (this has been extended from 15 hours from September 2025)
- 15 hours for two years olds for families requiring additional support, this was formally disadvantaged 2-year-olds
- Universal offer of 15 hours for three- and four-year-olds

- d. An additional 15 hours extended entitlement for working parents for three- and four-year-olds

115. The Early Years DSG settlement is estimated to be £128.6m and based on funding rates of £6.20 per hour for the 3 – 4-year-olds, £7.90 for 2-year-olds and £10.67 for under 2's. Local authorities are required to pass through 97% of the settlement to providers, the remaining 3% meeting the cost of the Early Learning and Childcare service.

High Needs

116. The High Needs Block allocation is estimated to be £124.1 million in 2026/27. Confirmation of the 2026/27 grant is not expected until March/April 2026. For financial year 2026/2027 the DFE announced they were temporarily suspending the high needs national funding formula (NFF), which in previous years has been used to calculate local authorities' high needs allocations. Instead, local authorities' allocations will be based on their 2025 to 2026 allocations, with some adjustments - including the annualisation of historic grant funding. Whilst it is challenging to compare the 2026/27 allocation with 2025/26 on an exact like-for-like basis due to the change in funding methodology, the 2026/27 allocation reflects a net real-term increase of 1.2% in funding, compared to an assumed 3% increase which had been assumed for financial planning, which adds an additional financial burden for the following financial year. Following wider reforms to the SEND system, which the government will set out in early 2026, the DFE will review the methodology for allocating high needs funding for future years so that it supports the SEND reforms.

117. On the basis that high needs funding allocations for 2025/26 are significantly below projected spend levels, and with the 2025/26 allocation being used to calculate 2026/27 allocations, it is expected that the current unsustainable financial position will continue into 2026/27, pending any further updates to funding linked to SEND reform announcements anticipated early in 2026.

118. At the end of 2024/25 the accumulated High Needs deficit stood at £64.4m and is now projected to rise to £110.5m at the end of 2025/26. If future demand remained on a similar trajectory to 2025/26, the cumulative DSG deficit could increase to around £460m by March 2030, as shown in the projection below (although projections/supporting mitigations will require refreshing early into 2026 aligned with outputs and impact of any announcement around SEND reforms and projections of current demand – with any feasible updates to be reflected in the final MTFS report to Cabinet in February):

| | 2026/27 £,000 | 2027/28 £,000 | 2028/29 £,000 | 2029/30 £,000 |
|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Annual Funding Gap Pre- Mitigation | 76,996 | 98,935 | 122,865 | 149,575 |
| Total Savings | -4,817 | -15,810 | -30,064 | -47,627 |
| Annual Revenue Funding Gap Post Mitigations | 72,180 | 83,125 | 92,801 | 101,948 |
| 2019/20 High Needs Deficit | 7,062 | | | |
| 2020/21 High Needs Deficit | 10,423 | | | |
| 2021/22 High Needs Deficit | 11,365 | | | |
| 2022/23 High Needs Deficit | 6,683 | | | |

| | | | | |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 2023/24 High Needs Deficit | 5,650 | | | |
| 2024/25 High Needs Deficit | 23,215 | | | |
| 2025/26 High Needs Deficit forecast | 46,040 | | | |
| Cumulative High Needs Funding Gap | 182,618 | 265,743 | 358,544 | 460,492 |

119. Although it is understood from 2028/29 the Government will take over responsibility for SEND costs, it has not specified how this will be achieved and how it will be funded. This may mean that local authorities would not build up further DSG deficits from 2028/29. However, based on current policy, local authorities would then be required to recognise the historic DSG deficits, which are expected to reach £14 billion nationally, on their balance sheets. This would be very likely to result in many local authorities issuing Section 114 Notices – effectively declaring that they are unable to set a balanced budget. The Government has not set out how it will address this issue other than to state that support to deal with SEND deficits will not be unlimited. Plans to support Councils with historic and accruing deficits and conditions for accessing such support is expected later in the settlement process but no date has been given.

120. With the High Needs Block continuing to face significant financial pressures, with allocations falling well below projected demand, to mitigate this, a whole-system approach is being implemented through six key actions: strengthening early intervention and mainstream inclusion, applying robust EHCP gatekeeping and reviews, expanding local specialist provision, reducing early years specialist placements, and improving commissioning and demand management. These measures aim to slow cost growth and improve sustainability, but given the scale of demand, the financial position remains challenging and will require ongoing review alongside national reform developments.

121. Despite current and planned mitigations, the levels of projected growth mean that the financial position is unsustainable, and whilst the transfer of responsibility to government from 2028/29 is welcome, the historic deficit still presents a huge challenge and impacts the Council's General Fund in other ways, such as loss of investment income from cash-flowing the deficit. As such it is essential that the planned measures to contain ongoing growth are successful. Further mitigations and actions are actively being considered to reduce the projected financial burden on the DSG High Needs funding block. This work is currently underway, and its impact will be reflected as part of the wider MTFS planning work over the coming months.

122. In developing additional mitigations, consideration is being given to aligning actions to anticipated changes in the Schools White Paper. Whilst the actual content of this paper is unknown, through the work the authority is undertaking for the DfE as part of the Change Programme Partnership, the Council is aware there will be a key focus on 'mainstream inclusion'. This will include working with all mainstream schools to ensure there is a much stronger emphasis on children and young people with complex and significant needs attending their local mainstream school wherever possible. To deliver this new approach, it will require the full co-operation of school leaders and their close partnership working with the Council and each other.

Capital Programme

123. The proposed Children and Family Services capital programme totals £87.2m, for the majority (£46.5m) of which there is external funding or capital receipts expected, and

£33.7m prior years' external funding held in reserves, resulting in £7.0m 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 E.

124. The programme continues to focus upon the delivery of additional primary and secondary school mainstream places and providing new places and improving existing provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities.

| CFS Capital Programme '£000 | 2026/27 | 2027/28 | 2028/29 | 2029/30 | Total |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| Additional School Places | 28,425 | 16,084 | 4,047 | 540 | 49,096 |
| SEND Programme | 7,158 | 18,900 | 900 | 0 | 26,958 |
| Other Capital | 3,023 | 2,700 | 2,700 | 2,700 | 11,123 |
| Total | 38,606 | 37,684 | 7,647 | 3,240 | 87,178 |

Provision of Additional School Places

125. The investment in additional school places totals £49.1m over four years including £28.4m next year. The programme is funded through the Basic Need grant from the DfE and section 106 developer contributions.

126. The programme is mostly funded by DfE capital grants and section 106 contributions. However, due to a combination of increased inflationary costs, legacy section 106 shortfalls and a change in DfE grant allocation methodology, discretionary funding from the Council of £6.7m is required to fund the additional school places programme. An initial increased allocation was included in the September 2025 refresh of the capital programme, and the report noted that further funding would still be required – expected to be in the region of a further £20m at that point. This has been reduced to £6.7m due to identifying further section 106 contributions that can be used, and some changes to schemes to reduce costs. The additional funding required can be financed from the corporate capital financing reserve and by reducing the allocation in the overall capital programme portfolio risk fund. This is possible because some schemes (across the wider capital programme) for which the risk is held have either progressed close to completion or because other funding has been identified. Use of funding towards this shortfall does mean however that the funding will not be available to reduce the Council's overall £84m capital programme funding gap and that borrowing may be more likely to be required.

SEND Programme

127. The four-year investment in the SEND programme is £26.9m and includes High Needs Capital Grant funding received from the DfE in previous years.

Other Capital

128. There is £11.1m "other capital" included comprising of:

- £8m Strategic Capital Maintenance (£2m assumed per annum subject to funding)
- £1.6m Schools Dedicated Formula (£0.4m assumed per annum subject to funding)

- £1.2m to invest in improvement in schools access and security
- £275k investment in residential properties within the Children's Innovation Partnership (CIP) with more details outlined in the savings section above.

Funding Sources

129. The majority of the capital programme is likely to be funded by external grant and developer section 106 contributions as follows:

| Capital Resources '£000 | 2026/27 | 2027/28 | 2028/29 | 2029/30 | Total |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| Grants | 3,602 | 3,132 | 3,400 | 3,400 | 13,534 |
| External Contributions / S106 | 12,003 | 16,700 | 3,507 | 0 | 32,211 |
| Earmarked capital receipts | 0 | 750 | 0 | 0 | 750 |
| Discretionary Capital Funding | 6,404 | 613 | 0 | 0 | 7,017 |
| Prior Years' grant funding held in reserve | 16,597 | 16,489 | 740 | -160 | 33,667 |
| Total Resources | 38,606 | 37,684 | 7,647 | 3,240 | 87,178 |

130. Basic Need Grant – this funding is provided by the Department of Education (DfE) for the provision of additional mainstream pupil places. The funding is allocated based on the local authority's School Capacity (SCAP) return which is submitted on an annual basis. In March 2025 the DfE announced Basic Need grant allocations for 2026/27 and 2027/28 of £1.154m and £732k respectively. The methodology the DfE have used differs to previous years, and now incorporates funding thresholds for planning areas, below which grant funding will not be provided. This change in methodology has resulted in a significant reduction in the levels of funding LCC have received for 2026/27 and 2027/28. The Council has made representation to the DfE regarding this change in methodology and the impact it will have on enabling the Council to meet its statutory duty of providing sufficient mainstream places. A nominal estimate of £1m has been used for 2028/29 and 2029/30, which will be updated once the allocations are announced.

131. High Needs Provision Capital Grant – in early December 2025 the DfE announced that there will be at least £3bn of funding provided nationally to support children with special educational needs and disabilities in educational settings closer to their homes. However, no indication was given of the LA level allocations, and what conditions may be attached to the funding. Further details are expected in Spring 2026.

132. 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.

133. Section 106 Contributions – it is estimated that a total of £32.2m of section 106 contributions to fund the proposed programme, of which £12m is in 2026/27. Estimates

for the latter years of the MTFS are less certain and are dependent upon the speed of housing developments.

Background Papers

134. Report to the Cabinet 16 December 2025 – Medium Term Financial Strategy 2026/27 to 2029/30:

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=7882&Ver=4>

Circulation under local issues alert procedure

135. None.

Appendices

Appendix A – Revenue Budget 2026/27

Appendix B – Growth 2026/27 to 2029/30

Appendix C – Savings 2026/27 to 2029/30

Appendix D – Savings Under Development 2026/27

Appendix E – Capital Programme 2026/27 – 2029/30

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CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Appendix A

REVENUE BUDGET 2026/27

| Budget 25/26 | | S/D/B * | Employees | Running Expenses | Internal Income | Gross Budget | External Income | Net Total 26/27 |
|--------------------|---|---------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ |
| 1,807,335 | C&FS Directorate | B | 1,776,286 | 94,238 | 0 | 1,870,524 | -30,853 | 1,839,671 |
| 1,807,335 | C&FS Directorate | | 1,776,286 | 94,238 | 0 | 1,870,524 | -30,853 | 1,839,671 |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 2,830,424 | C&FS Safeguarding | S | 3,040,783 | 2,619,600 | -2,375,418 | 3,284,965 | -588,000 | 2,696,965 |
| 150,128 | LSCB | S | 353,990 | 324,297 | -88,819 | 589,468 | -439,340 | 150,128 |
| 2,980,552 | Safeguarding, Improvement & QA | | 3,394,773 | 2,943,897 | -2,464,237 | 3,874,433 | -1,027,340 | 2,847,093 |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 7,510,201 | Asylum Seekers | S | 1,786,620 | 14,529,978 | 0 | 16,316,598 | -8,076,508 | 8,240,090 |
| 6,393,861 | C&FS Fostering & Adoption | S | 5,659,500 | 471,305 | 0 | 6,130,805 | -21,500 | 6,109,305 |
| 65,622,862 | C&FS Operational Placements | S | 65,685 | 85,344,177 | 0 | 85,409,862 | -1,137,000 | 84,272,862 |
| 4,727,888 | Children in Care Service | S | 3,816,527 | 957,628 | 0 | 4,774,155 | -228,509 | 4,545,646 |
| 84,254,811 | Children in Care | | 11,328,333 | 101,303,088 | 0 | 112,631,420 | -9,463,517 | 103,167,903 |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 4,156,869 | Family Safeguarding North | S | 2,644,067 | 1,862,511 | 0 | 4,506,578 | 0 | 4,506,578 |
| 3,142,472 | Family Safeguarding South | S | 2,644,162 | 398,019 | 0 | 3,042,181 | 0 | 3,042,181 |
| 1,052,929 | Childrens Management | S | 1,199,748 | -62,828 | 0 | 1,136,920 | -127,742 | 1,009,178 |
| 4,165,162 | C&FS First Response | S | 3,952,824 | 76,369 | 0 | 4,029,193 | -35,000 | 3,994,193 |
| 2,290,577 | Child Sexual Exploitation Team | B | 2,049,267 | 118,097 | 0 | 2,167,364 | 0 | 2,167,364 |
| 47,000 | Social Care Legal Costs | S | 0 | 47,000 | 0 | 47,000 | 0 | 47,000 |
| 3,876,314 | C&FS Disabled Children | S | 824,890 | 4,389,403 | 0 | 5,214,293 | 0 | 5,214,293 |
| 18,731,323 | Field Social Work | | 13,314,959 | 6,828,571 | 0 | 20,143,530 | -162,742 | 19,980,788 |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 541,428 | Practice Excellence | B | 507,494 | 21,219 | 0 | 528,713 | -10,000 | 518,713 |
| 541,428 | Practice Excellence | | 507,494 | 21,219 | 0 | 528,713 | -10,000 | 518,713 |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 1,788,553 | C&FS Community Safety | B | 301,252 | 1,671,039 | -42,775 | 1,929,516 | -152,702 | 1,776,814 |
| 1,788,553 | Community Safety | | 301,252 | 1,671,039 | -42,775 | 1,929,516 | -152,702 | 1,776,814 |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 4,491,745 | C&FS Children Family Well-being Service East | B | 4,258,057 | 217,350 | 0 | 4,475,407 | -53,650 | 4,421,757 |
| 5,795,065 | C&FS Children Family Well-being Service West | B | 4,941,447 | 296,627 | 0 | 5,238,074 | 0 | 5,238,074 |
| 3,818,773 | C&FS Children Family Well-being Service Youth | B | 4,566,723 | 804,006 | -738,510 | 4,632,219 | -978,374 | 3,653,845 |
| 369,408 | C&FS Children Family Well-being Service Central | B | 30,000 | 359,174 | -19,766 | 369,408 | 0 | 369,408 |
| -2,586,817 | Supporting Leicestershire Families / Teen Health | B | 1,690,203 | 1,194,238 | 0 | 2,884,441 | -5,711,258 | -2,826,817 |
| 3,144,211 | C&FS Family Help | B | 3,231,052 | 198,339 | -532,992 | 2,896,399 | 0 | 2,896,399 |
| 15,032,385 | C&FS Children & Families Wellbeing | | 18,717,482 | 3,069,734 | -1,291,268 | 20,495,948 | -6,743,282 | 13,752,666 |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 1,214,615 | C&FS Education Sufficiency | B | 1,788,063 | 28,620 | -436,345 | 1,380,338 | -180,200 | 1,200,138 |
| 1,214,615 | Education Sufficiency | | 1,788,063 | 28,620 | -436,345 | 1,380,338 | -180,200 | 1,200,138 |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 110,819,388 | C&FS 0-5 Learning | S | 3,279,964 | 126,435,089 | 0 | 129,715,053 | -30,000 | 129,685,053 |
| 695,614 | C&FS 5-19 Learning | B | 1,164,031 | 421,605 | -597,766 | 987,870 | -316,039 | 671,831 |
| 5,605,599 | Inclusion | S | 2,047,752 | 695,966 | -68,278 | 2,675,440 | -791,882 | 1,883,558 |
| 1,849,120 | Oakfield | S | 0 | 5,482,674 | 0 | 5,482,674 | 0 | 5,482,674 |
| 54,743 | Music Services | B | 1,584,802 | 478,641 | 0 | 2,063,443 | -2,063,443 | 0 |
| 480,893 | Education of Children in Care | S | 1,149,331 | 1,566,915 | -476,235 | 2,240,011 | -1,807,686 | 432,325 |
| 119,505,356 | Education Quality & inclusion | | 9,225,880 | 135,080,890 | -1,142,279 | 143,164,491 | -5,009,050 | 138,155,441 |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 121,578,428 | C&FS SEN | S | 3,409,966 | 176,651,031 | -674,791 | 179,386,206 | -1,350 | 179,384,856 |
| 2,445,911 | C&FS Specialist Services to Vulnerable Groups | B | 3,339,654 | 246,454 | 0 | 3,586,108 | -147,203 | 3,438,905 |

| Schools | Early Years | High Needs | Dedicated Schools Grant | LA Block |
|----------------|--------------------|------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| 18,121 | 43,628 | 150,803 | 212,553 | 1,627,118 |
| 18,121 | 43,628 | 150,803 | 212,553 | 1,627,118 |
| | | | | |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,696,965 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 150,128 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,847,093 |
| | | | | |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8,240,090 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6,109,305 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 84,272,862 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4,545,646 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 103,167,903 |
| | | | | |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4,506,578 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,042,181 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,009,178 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,994,193 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,167,364 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 47,000 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5,214,293 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 19,980,788 |
| | | | | |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 518,713 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 518,713 |
| | | | | |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,776,814 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,776,814 |
| | | | | |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4,421,757 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5,238,074 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3,653,845 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 369,408 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | -2,826,817 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,896,399 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13,752,666 |
| | | | | |
| 494,827 | 0 | 0 | 494,827 | 705,311 |
| 494,827 | 0 | 0 | 494,827 | 705,311 |
| | | | | |
| 0 | 128,083,037 | 1,602,016 | 129,685,053 | 0 |
| 406,875 | 0 | 0 | 406,875 | 264,956 |
| 0 | 0 | 553,405 | 553,405 | 1,330,153 |
| 0 | 0 | 4,058,549 | 4,058,549 | 1,424,125 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 432,325 |
| 406,875 | 128,083,037 | 6,213,970 | 134,703,881 | 3,451,559 |
| | | | | |
| 0 | 0 | 175,864,857 | 175,864,857 | 3,519,999 |
| 0 | 0 | 3,438,905 | 3,438,905 | 0 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|---|-----|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1,392,717 | C&FS Psychology Service | B | 2,203,350 | 102,550 | -111,500 | 2,194,400 | -285,000 | 1,909,400 |
| 1,150,759 | HNB Development Programme | D | 193,376 | 2,349,903 | -193,377 | 2,349,902 | 0 | 2,349,902 |
| -15,254,886 | DSG Reserve income | N/A | 0 | 0 | -72,179,647 | -72,179,647 | 0 | -72,179,647 |
| 111,312,929 | SEND & Children with Disabilities | | 9,146,346 | 179,349,938 | -73,159,315 | 115,336,969 | -433,553 | 114,903,416 |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 8,635,205 | CFS Dedicated Operational Delivery Support Services | B | 7,852,315 | 592,867 | -428,791 | 8,016,391 | 0 | 8,016,391 |
| 2,285,220 | Central Charges | B | 0 | 2,285,220 | 0 | 2,285,220 | 0 | 2,285,220 |
| 1,196,467 | C&FS Finance | B | 0 | 1,256,467 | -60,000 | 1,196,467 | 0 | 1,196,467 |
| 1,349,900 | C&FS Human Resources | S | 1,399,900 | 0 | 0 | 1,399,900 | -50,000 | 1,349,900 |
| 1,402,703 | C&FS Commissioning & Planning | B | 1,265,424 | 93,090 | -48,491 | 1,310,023 | 0 | 1,310,023 |
| 2,855,967 | C&FS Sub Transformation | S | 0 | 639,827 | 0 | 639,827 | 0 | 639,827 |
| 505,987 | Education Strategy | S | 937,813 | -1,305 | 0 | 936,508 | 0 | 936,508 |
| 18,231,449 | Business Support & Commissioning | | 11,455,452 | 4,866,166 | -537,282 | 15,784,336 | -50,000 | 15,734,336 |
| | | | | | | | | |
| -73,942 | C&FS Miscellaneous | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| -233,264,360 | C&FS Dedicated Schools Grant | S | 0 | -14,073,797 | 13,915,257 | -158,540 | -257,240,807 | -257,399,347 |
| 560,874,998 | Delegated School Budgets | S | 0 | 600,922,113 | 0 | 600,922,113 | -9,042,214 | 591,879,899 |
| -559,086,544 | Delegated Dedicated Schools Grant | S | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | -583,905,916 | -583,905,916 |
| 0 | Dedicated Schools Grant Recoupment | S | 0 | -492,773,806 | 0 | -492,773,806 | 492,773,806 | 0 |
| -231,549,848 | C&FS Other | | 0 | 94,074,510 | 13,915,257 | 107,989,767 | -357,415,131 | -249,425,364 |
| 143,850,887 | Total | | 80,956,319 | 529,331,909 | -65,158,244 | 545,129,984 | -380,678,370 | 164,451,614 |

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

| | | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,909,400 |
| 0 | 0 | 2,349,902 | 2,349,902 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 | -72,179,647 | -72,179,647 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 | 109,474,017 | 109,474,017 | 5,429,399 |
| | | | | |
| 0 | 296,362 | 144,118 | 440,480 | 7,575,911 |
| 1,434,683 | 210,848 | 639,689 | 2,285,220 | 0 |
| 1,130,915 | 0 | 0 | 1,130,915 | 65,552 |
| 674,900 | 0 | 0 | 674,900 | 675,000 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,310,023 |
| 8,570 | 0 | 0 | 8,570 | 631,257 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 936,508 |
| 3,249,068 | 507,210 | 783,807 | 4,540,085 | 11,194,250 |
| | | | | |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| -4,479,613 | -128,633,875 | -124,285,859 | -257,399,347 | 0 |
| 584,216,637 | 0 | 7,663,262 | 591,879,899 | 0 |
| -583,905,916 | 0 | 0 | -583,905,916 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| -4,168,892 | -128,633,875 | -116,622,597 | -249,425,364 | 0 |
| | | | | |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 164,451,614 |

GROWTH

| References | | 2026/27 £000 | 2027/28 £000 | 2028/29 £000 | 2029/30 £000 |
|--|---|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| <u>CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES</u> | | | | | |
| ** G1 | Demographic growth & increasing cost of Social Care Placement mix | 24,500 | 32,700 | 41,500 | 51,000 |
| ** G2 | Front-line social care staff - increased caseloads | 700 | 700 | 900 | 900 |
| ** G3 | Post Transforming SEND & Inclusion In Leicestershire(TSIL) sustainability | 1,850 | 1,850 | 1,850 | 1,850 |
| ** G4 | Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) - increased demand/cost | 800 | 2,000 | 3,200 | 4,450 |
| G5 | Disabled Children Service | 1,380 | 1,700 | 2,000 | 2,350 |
| G6 | Oakfield Expansion - Increased Transport need/demand | 1,000 | 1,000 | 1,000 | 1,000 |
| TOTAL | | 30,230 | 39,950 | 50,450 | 61,550 |

* 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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SAVINGS

| References | | 2026/27 £000 | 2027/28 £000 | 2028/29 £000 | 2029/30 £000 |
|---|--|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <u>References used in the following tables</u> | | | | | |
| * | 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 | | | | |
| <u>CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES</u> | | | | | |
| * CF1 Eff | Innovation Partnership - Creation and investment in Internal Residential provision | -750 | -1,250 | -1,500 | -1,500 |
| * CF2 Eff | Defining CFS For the Future Programme - Phase 2 - Social Care Workforce Strategy (Recruitment and Retention) | -250 | -650 | -650 | -650 |
| * CF3 Eff | Reduced Care Costs through growth of internal family based placements | -300 | -600 | -850 | -850 |
| ** CF4 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 | -1,000 | -2,250 | -3,700 | -5,470 |
| | Strand 2 - Review of care packages /cost (Pro-active and Reactive) ensuring value for money and effectiveness | -200 | -400 | -650 | -955 |
| | Strand 3 - Development of a wide range of other accommodation and support options | -3,600 | -5,950 | -8,150 | -10,250 |
| CF5 Eff | Departmental Service Efficiency Review | -630 | -630 | -630 | -630 |
| <u>TOTAL</u> | | | | | |
| | | <u>-6,730</u> | <u>-11,730</u> | <u>-16,130</u> | <u>-20,305</u> |

Dedicated Schools Grant - Deficit reduction activity

Integrated programme of six strategic actions to create a whole-system transformation that address the root causes of rising EHCP demand and inefficient placement patterns

| | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| -4,817 | -15,810 | -30,064 | -47,627 |
| <u>-4,817</u> | <u>-15,810</u> | <u>-30,064</u> | <u>-47,627</u> |

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SAVINGS UNDER DEVELOPMENT

| Initiative title | RAG |
|--|-----|
| Children and Family Services | |
| Service Efficiency Rolling Programme. | A |
| Parental Mental Health and Substance Misuse. | A |



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CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES - CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2026-30

| Estimated Completion Date | Gross Cost of Project £000 | | Draft Capital Programme | | | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|---|-------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| | | | 2026/27 £000 | 2027/28 £000 | 2028/29 £000 | 2029/30 £000 | Total £000 |
| Mar-30 | 49,097 | <u>MAIN GRANT FUNDED PROGRAMME</u> | | | | | |
| | | Provision of Additional School Places | 28,425 | 16,085 | 4,047 | 540 | 49,097 |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | Provision and Improvement of SEND Places | 7,158 | 18,900 | 900 | 0 | 26,958 |
| | | Strategic Capital Maintenance | 2,000 | 2,000 | 2,000 | 2,000 | 8,000 |
| | | Schools Devolved Formula Capital | 400 | 400 | 400 | 400 | 1,600 |
| | | Schools Access / Security | 300 | 300 | 300 | 300 | 1,200 |
| | | Music Hub Equipment | 48 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 48 |
| | | Children's SCIP - Residential Home | 275 | | | | 275 |
| | | Other Capital | 3,023 | 2,700 | 2,700 | 2,700 | 11,123 |
| | | Overall Total | 38,606 | 37,685 | 7,647 | 3,240 | 87,178 |

Future Developments - subject to further detail and approved business cases

Additional School Infrastructure arising from Housing Developments

SEN Provision arising from new housing development

Further Residential Opportunities

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CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 20 JANUARY 2026

DRAFT CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES DEPARTMENTAL PLAN 2026 - 2029

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to present to the Committee the draft Leicestershire Children and Family Service Departmental Plan 2026 - 29, which is appended to this report, for comment and consideration.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. The draft plan for 2026-29 has been developed in order to fulfil statutory duties and to provide a basis for the Children and Family Service's vision, planning, commissioning and delivery of services until 2026. The Plan and associated actions provide a vehicle for the Children and Family Service to work together on shared priorities and to maximise resources and expertise.
3. The draft Children and Family Service Departmental Plan 2026 – 29 is aligned to the County Council's Strategic Plan for 2022 - 26 and aims to set out how the Department will contribute to the delivery and achievement of the Council's strategic outcomes.
4. It also aligns to Leicestershire's relevant partnership plans including Leicestershire's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Children and Families Partnership Plan.

Background

5. The Children and Family Services Department has developed a new draft Departmental Plan for 2026 - 29, setting out a refreshed vision, priorities and ambitions for its services. The Department has identified three ambitions and nine associated priorities to contribute towards improving outcomes for the children, young people and families of Leicestershire:
 - a) Support children and young people to 'Build Strong Foundations':
 - Focus on development, readiness for learning and learning as a driver of wellbeing for all children and young people.
 - Work in partnership to offer support and opportunities to children in their own communities, to help them reach their full potential, and transition well into adulthood.

- Work in partnership to identify those children and young people who would benefit from support and provide a shared response to them.
- b) Support children and young people to 'Be Safe and Belong':
 - Work with families to ensure risk is understood and reduced, and targeted support is provided at the right time, in the right place by the right service and agency.
 - Develop and use partnerships to prioritise safety for children and young people and to ensure it is understood that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
 - Create an understanding of belonging across partnerships so that children feel they matter and can maximise positive opportunities and links in their families, early learning and education settings and communities.
 - Empower families to build positive relationships and support systems to create safety for children to live within their family or family network.
- c) Support children and young people to 'Enjoy and Achieve':
 - Ensure children and young people have access within their communities to good quality early learning and education that enables them to achieve their full potential.
 - Develop a shared understanding of the impact of inequalities and trauma across partnerships, and a shared approach to supporting vulnerable children.

Consultation

6. The Children and Family Service Department continually seeks feedback from children, young people and families across Leicestershire, through direct work and group work undertaken with children and families, through specific engagement activity, transformation activity and through children and young people's forums. The draft Plan has been informed by this feedback from children, young people and families on their needs and experiences and input has also been sought from the Children's Youth Council for Leicestershire (CYCLE), SEND CYCLE, Young Carers CYCLE, Children in Care Council and Family Hub parent/carer groups.

Resource Implications

7. The Plan aims to provide the context within which Children and Family Services' budgets are produced, and the Department will continue to ensure it makes the best possible use of its resources.
8. Delivery of the Plan will require the Department to maintain and develop effective working relationships with a range of partners, including but not limited to colleagues across all other County Council departments, District Councils, Health, Police, Leicester City and Rutland Councils and the voluntary and community sector.

Timetable for Decisions

9. The draft Departmental Plan is due to be presented to the Cabinet at its meeting on 3 February 2026. Any comments raised by the Children and Families Overview and

Scrutiny Committee will be taken into consideration. It is intended that the Plan will be officially launched in April 2026.

Conclusions

10. The Committee is asked to consider and comment on the draft Children and Family Service Departmental Plan.

Background papers

11. None

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

12. None

Equality Implications

13. An EIA screening is being undertaken and will be published alongside this report once completed. The refreshed Children and Family Service plan is for all children and young people living in Leicestershire and their families. The plan would not seek to discriminate against any child or young person but rather to ensure that the needs of all children and young people are met, therefore there is the potential for all children, young, their families to experience a positive impact as a result of the plan.

Human Rights Implications

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

Appendices

Children and Families Departmental Plan 2026 -29

Officer(s) to Contact

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Leicestershire Children and Family Services

Departmental Plan 2026 - 2029

This plan sets out our vision, ambitions for children and our high-level priorities for Leicestershire County Council's Children and Family Services Department for the next three years.

The plan is shaped by the voices of children, young people, and families, reflecting their needs and experiences. Their input will continue to guide our priorities, services, and success measures

What Children, Young People and Families have told us

“ Take time to understand me and get to know me before asking me difficult questions

“ Keep me involved in the decisions being made, I am nearly an adult myself and I do understand things.

“ Don't rush from one thing to another, let me have time to think and explain it to me

“ (my worker) was just so understanding and empathetic, and she listened when I needed to rant

“ Because at hard times in life it's sometimes difficult to talk to people, but (my worker) made me feel valued and heard

“ Being trained to be on an interview panel and doing mystery shop feels like I'm being heard and I can make a change. It's helped my confidence

“ The way everything was planned out ... it gave me my own voice

“ Don't talk down to me, make the relationship feel equal

“ The worker that ran our group was really nice and I didn't feel that she judged me at all. This made me talk more openly about my problems I was having about my low mood and my history with domestic abuse. Things got better for me and my children

“ My worker has been fantastic in helping my family and finding a provision for my son to attend, she has not given up in her quest to do this, I feel she has gone above and beyond, not only in finding us support for our son, but also listening to me

“ I've never felt judged and my children always felt really safe and comfortable around the worker

What we will do

One Vision

Leicestershire is a place where all children can build strong foundations, be safe and belong, and enjoy and achieve



Three Ambitions

We want to support all children and young people to:

Build Strong Foundations

Be Safe and Belong

Enjoy and Achieve



Nine priorities

To support children and young people to Build Strong Foundations we will:

Focus on development, readiness for learning and learning as a driver of wellbeing for all children and young people

Work in partnership to offer support and opportunities to children in their own communities, to help them reach their full potential, and transition well into adulthood

Work in partnership to identify those children and young people who would benefit from support and provide a shared response to them

To support children and young people to Be Safe and Belong we will:

Work with families to ensure risk is understood and reduced, and targeted support is provided at the right time, in the right place by the right service and agency

Develop and use partnerships to prioritise safety for children and young people and to ensure it is understood that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility

Create an understanding of “belonging” across partnerships so that children feel they matter and can maximise positive opportunities and links in their families, early learning and education settings and communities

Empower families to build positive relationships and support systems to create safety for children to live within their family or family network

To support children and young people to Enjoy and Achieve we will:

Ensure children and young people have access within their communities to good quality early learning and education that enables them to achieve their full potential

Develop a shared understanding of the impact of inequalities and trauma across partnerships, and a shared approach to supporting vulnerable children

How we will work with children and families

Voice:

- Putting children and young people at the heart of all our activities by involving them, hearing them and ensuring their voice is influencing the planning, design and delivery of our services



Belonging:

- Supporting children and young people to feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in their school, social and wider environment so they can "Live Their Best Life"
- Enabling all children to grow up with a sense of belonging, with at least one adult who provides unconditional care/love



Purposeful Leadership:

- Leading with integrity and purpose and being clear in our expectations
- Leading with empathy, innovation, creativity and with high support, high challenge, high expectations
- Leading by valuing others, being meaningfully inclusive, being an ally to those around you and challenging barriers
- Leading with a clear vision that demonstrates ambition for children, families, the workforce and services
- Leading across the Department, taking accountability for making and being the difference



Developing and retaining an excellent workforce:

- Creating an environment that enables good practice to flourish by equipping our workforce with the skills, knowledge and behaviours needed to best support improved outcomes for children and young people in Leicestershire
- Creating an inclusive culture that nurtures talent and allows every individual to flourish and reach their potential
- Recognising and valuing the differences in each of our members of staff and believing that everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect



Being Responsive:

- Providing a safe, compassionate and inclusive environment that recognises the pervasiveness and potential impact of trauma on our children and families, our staff, our organisation and our communities
- Ensuring that this understanding is incorporated into every aspect of our administration, culture, environment and service delivery and acknowledge that every interaction is an intervention and that relationships are at the core of our work



Robust Commissioning, Planning and Management of Resources

- Having processes, tool and skills in place that ensure innovation, best value and quality, market engagement and support sufficiency needs
- Exploring opportunities for joint commissioning across partners to ensure collaboration and partnership working where it is appropriate
- Using value for money interventions that make a difference
- Having detailed service plans in place that outline how each ambition will be achieved and how progress will be monitored



Data and Performance:

- Informing planning and driving performance by ensuring the right data and business intelligence is available to the right people, at the right time and in an accessible form



Underpinning Values

- Ensuring that Flexibility, Trust and Respect, Openness and Transparency and Positivity underpin our delivery of services for children and their families
- Being Aspirational - achieving the best outcomes for children and families
- Being Curious – by digging for detail using purposeful practice
- Being Collaborative - building relationships built on respect, valuing others and a focus on solutions



How we will measure success

- Children and families tell us we have made a positive difference
- Children and families are involved in service design
- Performance indicators show improving outcomes
- Interventions are timely and avoid delay
- Decision making is evidence-based, supported by robust management oversight
- Early help is effective in reducing the number of children requiring social work intervention
- Audit tells us our interventions are robust and measure impact

Strategies that will underpin delivery of the Plan

- Alternative Provision Strategy
- Business Intelligence Strategy
- Care Placements Strategy
- CFS Placement Sufficiency and Market Position Statement
- Community Safety Strategy
- Corporate Parenting Strategy
- Early Help Strategy
- Education Belonging Strategy
- Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland SEND Joint Commissioning Strategy
- Maternity and Early Years Strategy
- Permanence and Adoption Strategy
- Recruitment and Retention Strategy
- Road to Excellence: Achieving Excellence via Purposeful Practice
- School Places Strategy
- Transforming SEND and Inclusion in Leicestershire
- Voice and Influence Strategy
- We Care Strategy
- Youth Justice Plan



CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:
20 JANUARY 2026

SCHOOL PLACES STRATEGY 2026–2031

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of the draft School Places Strategy 2026–2031, which sets out how the Council will meet its statutory duties to ensure that there are sufficient high quality school places in Leicestershire which are delivered in the right place, at the right time. The views of the Committee are sought as part of the consultation on the draft Strategy.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. Local authorities have a legal obligation to ensure that sufficient, high-quality school places are available for all children and young people in their area. This duty applies to both mainstream education and provision for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
3. Section 14 of the Education Act 1996 requires local authorities to ensure that sufficient school places are available to provide primary and secondary education for children within the area. This includes planning for future demand, commissioning new provisions, and working with maintained schools and academies to ensure capacity and quality. The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and the Education and Inspections Act 2006 further reinforce the requirement to promote high standards, fair access, and parental choice.
4. For children and young people with SEND, the statutory framework is provided by Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014. This legislation requires local authorities to identify, assess, and secure appropriate provision for those aged 0–25 with SEND. The accompanying SEND Code of Practice emphasises the need for strategic planning to ensure sufficiency of specialist places and inclusive mainstream educational provision.
5. Together, these duties require local authorities to act as strategic commissioners, forecasting demand, planning capacity, and working collaboratively with schools, academy trusts, and other partners to ensure that every child and young person can access suitable, high-quality education.

6. The Academies Act of 2010 moved the education provision for children towards a more autonomous and diverse system rather than the traditional structure of schools under the direct control of the local authority.
7. On 19 November 2014, the Cabinet agreed the previous strategy for the organisation of school and other educational places, '*In the Right Place - Strategy for the Provision of School and Other Learning Places in Leicestershire*'.
8. At its meeting on 7 February 2025, the Cabinet considered a report on the Council's Provisional Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), which set out the Capital Programme for 2025-29. A number of schemes to expand existing schools and academies or establish new schools are included within the Capital Programme, along with funding for strategic capital maintenance of maintained schools.
9. The Cabinet agreed the SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2025-2028 at its meeting on 17 June 2025. Section 4 of the Strategy sets out the Leicestershire SEND and Inclusion Partnership's strategy for ensuring sufficient appropriate educational places for children and young people with SEND. These proposals have been further developed within the draft School Places Strategy.
10. At its meeting on 18 November 2025, the Cabinet approved a consultation to be undertaken on the draft School Places Strategy.
11. The draft School Places Strategy is aligned with the ambitions set out in the Children and Family Services Department Plan 2024-26 and the County Council's Strategic Plan 2022-26. The draft Children and Family Services Department Plan 2024-26 is to be presented to the Committee elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting.

Background

A changing educational landscape

12. Since the publication of the previous strategy '*In the Right Place - Strategy for the Provision of School and Other Learning Places in Leicestershire*' in 2014, significant changes to the Leicestershire educational landscape have been experienced which have shaped the draft School Places Strategy for 2026-2031.
13. The increase in the number of schools within the County managed through Academy Trusts or Multi-Academy Trusts, and a subsequent reduction in the number of maintained schools managed by the Council, has changed the Council's primary role from a direct provider of school places to a commissioner. Currently, 77% of schools in Leicestershire are academies.
14. Reductions in birth rates across the County, after a period of significant increase in births and inward migration, has led to an increased need for Secondary School places as a bulge in the number of pupils moves from Primary into Secondary schools. The effect on primary school occupancy has been inconsistent. Some schools in popular areas are oversubscribed, whereas some small primary schools, typically in rural areas, are significantly below capacity. In such schools the continuing effect of a low birth rate and consequently small numbers of children in catchment, means an increasing risk to ongoing sustainability.

15. In order to meet expected population growth, major housing development is proposed in all districts of Leicestershire. This is anticipated to increase the pupil population by over 26,000 across all phases of education by 2036.
16. During recent years, an increasing number of children and young people in Leicestershire with SEND have been supported by Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), with significant numbers attending special school places or enhanced resource bases/SEN units. Sufficiency of places has struggled to keep up with demand, and a proportion of children and young people needing a special school have been placed in Independent Specialist Placements (ISPs). These placements are more expensive than those in Leicestershire's maintained Area Special Schools.

The draft School Places Strategy 2026-2031

17. The Council aims to provide high quality school places for children and young people within their communities, close to where they live and to meet parental preferences as far as possible.
18. The draft School Places Strategy will aim to ensure Leicestershire meets its statutory duties by delivering the right number of school places, in the right place, at the right time, with sufficient funding and resources in place to deliver future growth needs. The Strategy sets out the Council's approach to planning, commissioning, and funding school places across all phases, including mainstream, SEND, and alternative provision. It is informed by robust data analysis incorporating demographic trends and predicted housing growth.
19. The Strategy provides an assessment of current school place provision in Leicestershire and forecasts what will be needed over the current period to 2031. It sets out how these forecasts have been developed and the roles of the Council, stakeholders and partners in planning and delivering sufficient school places for the future.
20. With the scale of changes that have occurred in the educational landscape within Leicestershire since the last Strategy was written, and taking into account current forecasts in pupil numbers and place requirements, the draft Strategy also sets out the Council's approach to the reorganisation of schools where this may be required to ensure ongoing sustainability.

SEND Market Position Sufficiency Statement (MPSS)

21. The Council has developed an MPSS which will build upon the School Places Strategy and consider the role of and opportunities for the external market to support the County Council to meet its SEND sufficiency needs.

Consultation

22. A public consultation on the draft Strategy sought to confirm that the Strategy reflects local needs and will enable stakeholder feedback to be considered before adoption. This was carried out primarily using an online survey, which was also available in accessible print versions on request.

23. A six-week consultation process on the draft School Places Strategy commenced on 20 November 2025 and ran until 4 January 2026. The Cabinet will receive a further report at its meeting on 3 February 2026 summarising consultation feedback.

Resource Implications

24. In order to deliver the school places set out in the Strategy, funding streams including Basic Need and High Needs capital grant funding from the Department for Education (DfE), developer contributions (through Section 106 agreements), and growth funding will be used. Schemes will be included within the Council's Capital Programme.
25. The capital requirements to support the increased need for school places through Basic Need funding are not fully met through existing grant allocations following changes to DfE methodology. Discussions are ongoing with DfE representatives to consider how this can be managed.
26. Developer contributions through Section 106 agreements are a key source of funding to meet growth needs for new school places. Historic agreements may not be sufficient for the actual cost of schemes which have experienced significant cost inflation in recent years and are reliant on the speed of building schemes to trigger funding from developers. The Strategy notes that close partnership working with Leicestershire's district councils, as the Local Planning Authorities, will be needed to ensure continued robustness of negotiations around future developments and consideration given to Deeds of Variation for existing Section 106 funding where this is needed.
27. A refresh of the Planning Obligations Policy will strengthen the need for school places to support new housing developments along with requests for full funding at the application stage to mitigate cost and delivery risks for future schemes.
28. Phased delivery of school builds will support cash flow and certainty of need, making more school places available in the right place at the right time while minimising additional pressure on available capital.
29. The Director of Corporate Resources and Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on this report.

Timetable for Decisions

30. At its meeting on 18 November 2025, the Cabinet approved a consultation to be undertaken on the draft School Places Strategy.
31. As part of the consultation process, the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee are requested to consider and provide feedback on the draft Strategy. The views expressed by the Committee will be included within the final report to Cabinet.
32. It is intended that the Cabinet will receive a further report at its meeting on 3 February 2026 summarising consultation feedback and presenting the final Strategy for approval.

Background papers

33. Report to the Cabinet on 18 November 2025 "School Places Strategy 2026-2031":
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=7881&Ver=4>
34. Report to the Cabinet on 17 June 2025 "Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) And Inclusion Strategy 2025-2028":
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=7877&Ver=4>
35. Report to the Cabinet on 7 February 2025 "Provisional Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 to 2028/29":
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=7873&Ver=4>
36. Report to the County Council on 18 May 2022 "Leicestershire County Council's Strategic Plan 2022-2026":
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=6482&Ver=4>
37. Report to the Cabinet on 19 November 2014 "In the right place – A strategy for the organisation of school and other learning places in Leicestershire 2014 / 2018":
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=3995&Ver=4>

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

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

Equality Implications

39. 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

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

Other Relevant Impact Assessments

41. Health implications: The Strategy supports access to education, which is a key determinant of health and wellbeing.
42. Environmental implications: The Strategy considers the location of new schools and travel arrangements to minimise environmental impact.
43. Partnership working: The Strategy has been developed in partnership with schools, academies, District councils, and other stakeholders.
44. Risk assessment: Risks associated with school place planning, funding, and delivery are identified and mitigated within the Strategy.

Appendices

Appendix A: Draft School Places Strategy 2026–2031
Appendix B: Equality Impact Assessment

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School Places Strategy **2026 - 2031**

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Welcome to the Leicestershire School Places Strategy 2026 to 2031.

In Leicestershire, we believe that children and their education should come first. We want our children and young people to enjoy learning, make good progress, and achieve high standards. This will provide them with a strong foundation to build their lives on. To do this, we want to ensure that Leicestershire offers a good choice and diversity of school places, providing excellent opportunities for all learners at schools within their own communities.

We are proud that children thrive in Leicestershire's schools and academies, and this strategy is about supporting their ongoing success. Our aim is to ensure that schools are the right size for their community, safe, accessible and inclusive, well maintained and provide a high-quality learning environment and facilities.

The School Places Strategy examines the duties placed upon the County Council by the Department for Education and provides an analysis of current school provision across all phases of education that exist across Leicestershire so that stakeholders and partners understand how places are planned and developed. The role of the Council is set within a legal framework of statutory duties to ensure that there are sufficient school places in its area. The Council's primary role is now a commissioner of school places rather than a direct provider.

Our statutory duty remains clear – to ensure that there are sufficient good school places. This strategy is about ensuring that we meet that duty by having the right number of school places in the right place, at the right time and secure sufficient funding and resources to this.

We will achieve this by working closely in partnership with our many stakeholders.

The strategy covers the background, principles and challenges of delivering school places in Leicestershire and how we will work collaboratively to fund and deliver places.

It is hoped that all stakeholders with an interest in the planning of school places will find this document useful, take the time to become familiar with its content, and actively engage and support the delivery of our vision to ensure that Leicestershire is the best place for all children, young people and families.

Jane Moore

Director

Children and Family Services

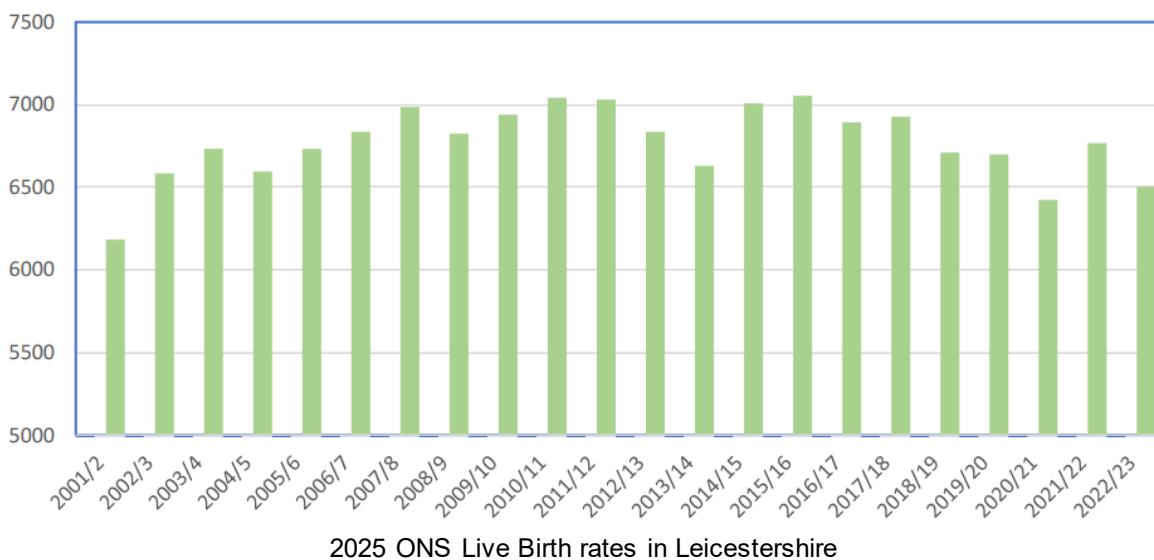
Councillor Charles Pugsley

Cabinet Lead Member

Children and Family Services

Pupil Forecasting

Leicestershire County Council has a strong record of actively planning school places to meet its statutory duty using forecast data to analyse need and inform solutions.



From 2007 to 2018 the birth rate peaked several times to around 7,000 per year and has since fallen in line with a fall in birth rate seen across the UK, despite population growth in some parts of Leicestershire. The larger cohorts, which have also increased because of inward migration, are now progressing through secondary schools and Post 16.

Trend-based pupil projections for individual schools across both primary and secondary phases are produced annually. The County Council provides detailed pupil forecasts for every school and academy. Leicestershire is experiencing high levels of new housing growth from the seven district councils. Housing gains from developments that have received planning permission are included in our forecasts. Health data is used to track the numbers of births and location of pre-school age children. In addition to this, like all County Councils, we complete a statutory annual return for the Department for Education of the net capacity of each school and academy in the county. Schools must inform the Council of any physical change to the buildings that might change building layout and capacity. This information is then reported through the annual statutory data collection which captures school capacities, pupil forecasts and details of future school places delivery.

The quality of data available for mainstream forecasting means the County Council can accurately predict need. The forecasting of SEND place

requirements is less predictable. Recently, detailed analysis of current and forecast will enable us to better understand and plan for SEND needs so that we can strategically plan the delivery of places.

Planning School Places

The County Council has a good record of actively planning school places so that parents are given the best possible chance of securing one of their preferences. Admissions and School Organisation services work closely together to achieve a high proportion of parents gaining one of their preferences at First Time Admissions (FTA) and Secondary Transfer. Where necessary they work with secondary schools to provide additional capacity in bulge years ahead of permanent provision.

Each autumn, the School Organisation Service analyses forecast data to decide what actions are needed to provide more school places for future years.

Key projects are added to the Capital Programme, and officers work with schools and academies to consider options for creating extra pupil places, undertaking site visits and feasibility studies to scope projects. Once a scheme is developed and briefed approval is sought from the Children and Family Services Capital Programme Board (CPB). Plans are developed in consultation with stakeholders and progressed in accordance with the timescales required, usually the start of academic year.

A review of admission applications is undertaken to identify the need for any unplanned need for expansions.

Statutory process must be followed when a school or academy is enlarged. For maintained schools a Statutory Notice must be published and for Academy Trusts a Significant Enlargement application must be submitted to the Regional Directorate of the Department for Education. Permanent increases in SEND provision at a maintained school or Academy also require a statutory process to be followed.

Places required because of housing developments are usually funded by developer contributions. The County Council works closely with all seven district councils, the Local Planning Authorities (LPA), in relation to Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions, sought on an individual development basis to meet CIL tests. Where it is forecast that local schools cannot meet increased demand education infrastructure contributions are based on the pupil yield from the housing development multiplied by the cost multiplier in the County Council's Planning Obligations Policy (LPOP).

Primary School Places

In response to housing growth and population increase over the past 10 years Leicestershire has delivered several new primary schools and expanded others. As the birth rate has now fallen some primary schools are experiencing falling rolls, especially in rural locations where no significant housing growth is planned.

In 2025/26 academic year there was a capacity of 61,064 places with a number on roll of 56,213 pupils resulting in a primary surplus of 4,831 places which equals 7.91% of the available capacity across Leicestershire.

- Some rural primary schools have a significant number of surplus places due to their location away from urban areas and housing development.
- There are pockets of localised pressure on primary places in the large urban centres throughout Leicestershire.
- The demand for additional places in high birth rate years has now moved into the secondary with the 2025/6 Year 6 cohort being the final year of the increased birth rate passing through.

The latest forecast suggests that further expansion of primary schools in areas with housing growth is needed. In addition, a number of new primary schools on housing developments are named on Section 106 agreements and Local Plan developments imply additional schools will be needed. The County Council is working with developers to secure contributions for school places at new and existing primary and secondary schools.

Increasing numbers of mid-term applications continue to prove difficult to address, especially at secondary schools. In 2024/25 22,624 mid-term applications were received with 18,646 children being allocated a place. This equates to 82% of all in-year applications that year. 49.4% of all applications are for primary school places and 50.6% for secondary school places. The County Council's statutory duty only applies to First Time Admissions (FTA), infant to junior and Year 7 for secondary transfer.

The 2022 Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (HEN) for Leicestershire indicated that 52,160 homes will be required for Leicestershire by 2036. If Local Plans deliver this the pupil capacity needed in Leicestershire schools could see an increase from 110,485 school places to 136,963 school places. This is an increase of 26,478 (23.9%) school places across all phases and types of education. Whilst smaller pockets of development could be accommodated at existing schools through expansion, new primary schools and secondary schools will be needed.

Housing development in the towns of Oadby, Hinckley, Loughborough, Melton Mowbray, Coalville, Ashby and Market Harborough will increase the need for local primary places. Proposed developments of more than 4,000 homes in North West Leicestershire and Hinckley will require several new schools with multiple new forms of entry for primary.

Secondary school forecasts show an increasing number of places required from 2027 to manage growth caused by the historic higher birth rate and housing development. The 2025/26 capacity of 48,276 will be exceeded in 2027/28. Secondary school expansions are planned in the main urban centres to manage the demand for places. There will be pressure on places resulting from rising numbers in specific localities and in some areas current supply levels will not be sufficient. In-year applications across secondary schools are particularly difficult to manage in some areas and do result in some children having to travel outside their community to be educated. This pressure will ease as additional places come on board.

Secondary School Places

The County Council continues to explore options to increase capacity in the secondary sector, working closely with secondary schools (now all academies). Academy Trusts have been willing to take on bulge years to help manage demand until permanent places can be created. Expansion has helped grow some schools to a sustainable size, including former 11 – 14 high schools.

Several secondary schools have been or will be expanded to meet expected demand. Some former high schools have also needed significant investment to address shortfalls in infrastructure, such as sporting and dining facilities, to ensure they are fit for purpose and able to manage public examinations for large cohorts. If all of proposed housing development is delivered a range of 6FE to 9FE secondary schools in Blaby, Harborough, Hinckley and North-West Leicestershire will be needed.

Post 16 Places

Post 16 places are predominantly within local academy sixth forms or Further Education (FE) college provision. The number of Post 16 places being taken up has been low for several years but with the recent increased birth rate now passing through secondary schools and predicted housing growth, the numbers are rising again. Demand for Post 16 SEND places is also rising.

The demand for SEND provision continues to grow through increases in EHCPs and demand for specialist school places, which continues to rise faster than capacity. The number of children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) has grown annually at a national and local level since the

introduction of the SEN Code of Practice changes in 2014. Based on the latest SEN2 published data, the number of EHCPs in England rose 149% between 2016 and 2025; Leicestershire saw a 140% increase from 2,995 to 7,196 EHCPs over the same time period.

SEND Places

Leicestershire has 9 state funded special schools and academies offering 1,856 places as of September 2025. There are also 786 places in SEND Units and Enhanced Resource Bases attached to mainstream schools. Demand for Special School places is exceeding capacity despite additional places being created.

Work to develop SEND provisions across the county is ongoing, including converting surplus primary capacity to Enhanced Resource Bases (ERB). Bowman Academy, a new SEMH provision opened in September 2024. In March 2023 Leicestershire was successful in a DfE bid for a new Communication and interaction school in Quorn., which is currently in development. Feasibility work is also in progress for an area special school in Market Harborough.

Reorganisation of School Places

Reorganisation of school places to ensure all schools are sustainable will need to be a key strategic focus for the County Council. Consistent secondary transfer age, the removal of a two-tier secondary phase and some infant and junior amalgamations have historically been achieved. A number of small schools are not able to balance their budgets and have low pupil numbers projected. This strategy discusses Leicestershire's approach to the reorganisation of schools in greater detail and how it will be achieved.

Risks associated with the delivery of school places have increased since the Covid-19 pandemic. The County Council has experienced significant cost increases due to inflation, global events and shortage of construction workers. Legacy Section 106 agreements, based on lower pupil yield rates and construction costs at the time have led to a significant shortfall in funding to deliver school places. Changes in DfE Basic Need funding methodology has reduced funding to address this. To avoid this the County Council now makes a full monetary ask from the developer at the time of consultation which is reviewed immediately prior to construction of a development. Leicestershire's primary school designs have been carefully value engineered to reduce costs whilst ensuring there is no negative impact on the learning environment and pupil outcomes.

In summary, over the next five years the County Council expects to see a slow increase in primary places needed, predominantly in urban areas, whilst demand

for primary school places will fall where there is no planned housing. There will be a continuing rise in secondary places needed and the Local Authority will continue to monitor pupil forecasts each year and increase availability of places at existing or new schools.

1 - Our Statutory Duty

Local Authorities have a legal obligation under section 14 of the Education Act 1996 to ensure that sufficient school places are available to provide primary and secondary education for children within the area. Effective school place planning is a fundamental element of the Local Authority's role as strategic commissioner of good school places across all phases and types of statutory education.

A core ambition is for all children and young people living in Leicestershire is that they have access to the highest quality education so that they can fulfil their potential. Through the commissioning of school places we will ensure we have the right supply of high-quality school places, in buildings that are fit for purpose and allow children to achieve the best outcomes possible. This strategy is about ensuring that we meet that duty by having the right number of school places in the right locations, at the time they are needed, and having sufficient capital and revenue funding in place to achieve this.

The Academies Act of 2010 moved the education provision for children towards a more autonomous and diverse system rather than the traditional structure of schools under the direct control of the Local Authority. In terms of educational provision, the Local Authority has embraced this change and has supported schools converting to academies, setting up of Multi Academy Trusts and seeking age range changes. Most Leicestershire children, across all phases and types of provision, are now taught within an academy.

This has meant that the Local Authority's role has moved significantly from provider to commissioner. We now work in a very different way by working with a diverse range of providers and models of delivery. The range of Leicestershire education providers offers parents choices when applying for school places. Providing for children with additional needs is at the forefront of national policy and a key driver in ensuring that Leicestershire children can be educated, thrive and belong within their own community.

In terms of schools, regardless of being Local Authority maintained or an academy, we have responsibility to:

- Help develop and promote a sustainable system of education.
- Ensure that all schools offer good choice for children and young people of all abilities, safe and secure environments, delivered through local solutions wherever possible.

- Ensure in respect of the above that we have effective admission arrangements, and fair access protocols in place.
- Ensuring the school estate is fit for purpose.

Under Section 14 of the 1996 Education Act, when planning for school places, we must, as the Local Authority, take into consideration a range of factors, including:

- Forecast pupil numbers.
- School capacity.
- Impact of housing growth.
- The need to promote diversity and increase parental choice.

The schools available within a Local Authority Planning area shall not be regarded as sufficient for the purposes of meeting need unless they are sufficient in number, character and equipment to provide for all pupils the opportunity of appropriate education that leads to positive outcomes for young people.

To meet our statutory duty, the Local Authority will consider:

- Expanding existing schools.
- Building new schools.
- Working with maintained schools and academy trusts to ensure sufficient places.
- Reducing capacity though a reduction in published admission numbers or closure
- Reorganising existing schools.
- Considering alternative solutions such as transporting children outside of their community.

As a Local Authority we will continue to adopt a flexible and innovative approach to delivering our statutory responsibilities and are confident that we can meet the challenges that lie ahead.

2 - Government Policy and Direction

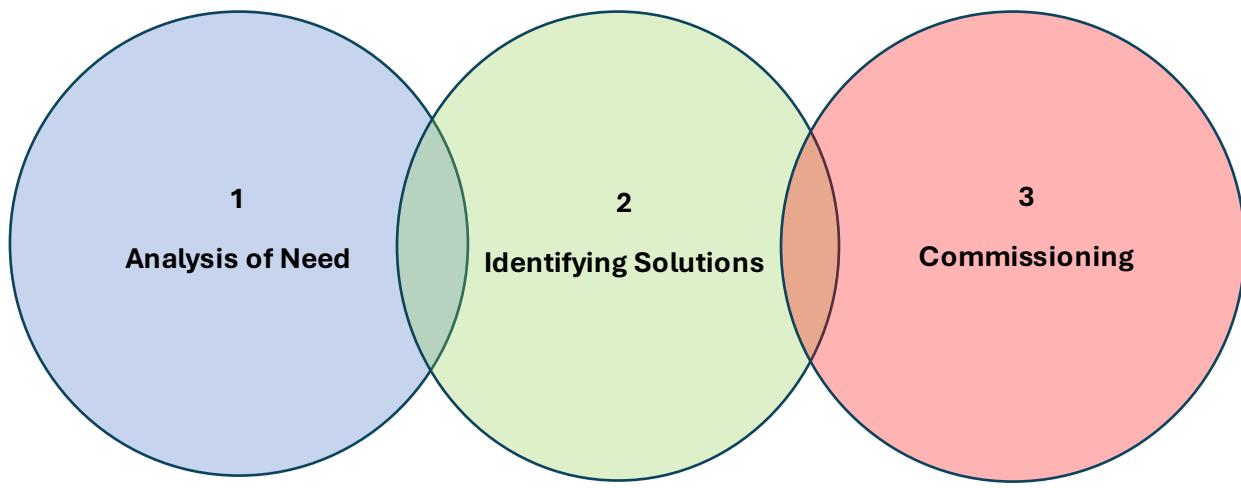
The Government has introduced the Schools' Bill and although it has not come into law yet and is working through due process. At this stage the implications for School Place Planning are unknown.

3 - Our Commissioning Role

To deliver school places we follow a three-step process that effectively and efficiently delivers places and allows the Local Authority to meet need. Our key commissioning activities involve:

- Analysis of the need for places using various sources of data identifying the number of places required and where they will be provided. Working with internal and external partners and stakeholders to negotiate the best possible solution to provide high quality places that support high quality education; Commissioning new providers and existing maintained schools and Academy Trusts to deliver additional school places through CFS's Capital Programme.

The diagram below captures the process behind the County Council's statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient good school places. Although the process appears to be quite simple the work involved is often complex and relies on the knowledge and expertise of officers to ensure the final solution is successfully achieved. There can be significant overlap between each stage of the process, and no two projects are the same.



Leicestershire's Statutory Process

The School Organisation Service delivers school places by following a three-step process to deliver places where needed:

- Analysis of the need for school places using a range of information to identify the number and location of places required.
- Working with internal and external stakeholders to develop the best possible solution to provide high quality school places.
- Commissioning providers to deliver additional school places.

4 - Stakeholder Engagement

The Local Authority works collaboratively to ensure that its statutory responsibilities are met. The information below shows who the County Council's partners are and their involvement in delivering school places:

Schools and Academies: The School Organisation Service meets on a regular basis with Local Authority Maintained Schools, Single Academy Trusts (SATs) and Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) to discuss sufficiency to create opportunities for the commissioning of pupil places. The Local Authority works positively in partnership with all providers to ensure there are sufficient high-quality places for children across the county. Regular sufficiency meetings are held to consider the current position and strategy for growth and reorganisation.

County Council Partners: The County Council's structure of its departments has evolved to continue to meet the needs of the people of Leicestershire. Changes in government legislation and the need for additional pupil places due to an increased birth rate and a significant increase in housing development has meant that work with colleagues has become broader, more complex and detailed. Strategy delivery is reliant on positive relationships with departments across the Council at the strategic planning and delivery stage. Key departments are:

- **Elected Members:** Regular briefings are provided to elected members regarding developments in the provision of school places across Leicestershire and within their own ward.
- **Property Services:** Support the work of the service through every stage of our process. They provide information to support analysis and input into the Section 106 process when requesting land for new schools. Property Services also support with providing technical advice prior to commissioning. Their main input into school places comes through the actual construction of additional places and the

maintenance of schools. Our work with them also includes framework contractors who we work closely with as part of the delivery of places.

- **School Admissions Service:** Both Admissions and School Organisation services rely on each other to be effective in their own service delivery. The provision and delivery of additional places, coupled with required changes in admission arrangements and school catchments, ensures that the County Councils' statutory responsibility is met.
- **Legal Services:** Work with Legal Services has increased due to the increase and complexity of Section 106 agreements. Since the academies agenda started there has also been a new area of legal work involving the passporting of capital funding to Trusts requiring a legal agreement.
- **Planning Obligations Team:** Education developer contributions are complex. The role of the team is to ensure that all requests for developer contributions are in line with the County Council's Planning Obligations Policy which ensures we meet planning legislation.
- **Business Intelligence Team:** The Business Intelligence Team are responsible with providing pupil forecast information to support the planning of pupil places and Section 106 contribution requests.
- **CFS Finance:** The service's work with this team involves the monitoring of income and expenditure for the Capital Programme and support for schools where Growth Funding may be required to supplement revenue budgets when additional pupil places are needed.
- **Planning and Highways:** Early discussions take place with planning and highway colleagues to ensure that the delivery of places is acceptable in planning terms and highways challenges with sites are understood. This is of particular importance when housing developers are offering new school sites and thorough due diligence takes place to ensure the site is suitable.

The School Organisation Service's work with partners, including colleagues in LCC teams, has become more complex, especially with district councils and Housing Developers. The School Organisation Service collaborates on Local Plans across all districts to ensure additional school places are provided where needed. Changes to planning legislation over the past ten years have made the work more detailed and challenging but has increased capital funding from Section 106 agreements, leading to the provision of several new schools built by housing developers.

- **District Councils:** The increase in housing developments has made the School Organisation Service's work with second tier councils more complex. They rely on the School Organisation Service's education provision knowledge when developing their Local Plans and responding to developer contribution requests.
- **Church of England and Catholic Dioceses:** The School Organisation Service meets regularly with the Dioceses regarding the provision of places at their schools and academy Trusts.
- **Department for Education:** The School Organisation Service meets regularly with the DfE Regional Director's Office on matters regarding pupil places, academy conversions, and the implementation of government education legislation.
- **Housing Developers:** The School Organisation Service's work with housing developers has increased dramatically and often involves the provision of new schools, requiring innovative solutions.
- **Education Building Development Officers Group (EBDOG):** This group, made up of School Place Planning officers from across the UK, provides useful benchmarking information that the School Organisation Service contributes to and uses for various purposes.
- **Neighbouring Local Authorities:** The School Organisation Service works with neighbouring local authorities on schools and education providers near the county border that receive pupils from more than one local authority.

5 - Population and Demographics

Leicestershire County Council covers an area of 202,880 hectares and contains a diverse range of communities living within several large urban settlements in the main market towns, or around the periphery of Leicester, and interspersed by many rural villages. The County of Leicestershire is currently a two-tier council. Within the County boundary there are seven District Council areas. Each district has its own unique demography and geography. Leicester City is in the centre of the County and is its own authority. The city is the largest settlement with a population of approximately half a million.



Leicestershire – Leicester City and District Councils

The 2021 Census records 712,300 people living within the County Council area, of which an estimated 143,063 are children and young people aged up to 19 years (including 36,154 0 to 5 year olds). There were 296,400 households within the county.

It indicates the usual resident population figure for Leicestershire increased by 9.5% since 2011. A further 10.2% growth is projected by 2031.

The table below shows expected growth in each of the second-tier councils based on the Office of National Statistics data.

| District | 2022 Population | 2032 Projection | Population Change since 2022 | Percentage Population Change since 2022 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------------|---|
| North-West | 107,666 | 124,628 | 16,982 | 15.8 |
| Harborough | 100,550 | 115,044 | 14,494 | 14.4 |
| Charnwood | 185,266 | 204,246 | 18,980 | 10.2 |
| Melton | 52,404 | 55,116 | 2,712 | 5.2 |
| Blaby | 104,732 | 113,732 | 9,000 | 9.1 |
| Oadby & Wigston | 58,456 | 62,348 | 3,892 | 6.7 |
| Hinckley & Bosworth | 114,315 | 122,350 | 8,035 | 7.0 |
| Total: | 723,389 | 797,484 | 74,095 | 10.2 |

ONS Expected growth by District Across Leicestershire

An increase in the birth rate in Leicestershire led to an increase in the intake into primary schools over recent years and that birthrate is now passing through into our secondary schools. The changing dynamics of Leicestershire's population, influenced by changes in birth rate births, immigration, housing developments and economic migration, mean that the pattern of provision of school places must also change in order to keep pace with demand, whether through provision of additional places or through the reorganisation of existing places within the county.

6 - Local Authority Structure

The Government has made it clear it wants to move away from two-tier local government. The County Council is having constructive discussions with the City Council and there is joint agreement that the best option for Leicester and Leicestershire is a two unitary model, one City, one County, that both authorities must be financially sustainable with the capacity to enable strategic land use planning across City and County, providing the optimum structure for devolution of powers, responsibilities and funding.

Although proposals for local government reorganisation are being considered, at this stage, they do not impact on the County Council's School Places Strategy.

7 - Leicestershire's Education History

Prior to 2010, when the Academies Act was passed, Leicestershire was a three-tier education system with primary/infant/junior schools covering 4-11 years old, high schools covering 11-14 years old and upper schools covering 11-16/11-19 years old. Over the subsequent ten years high schools and upper schools converted to academy status and changed their age range, and Leicestershire established a consistent model of primary/infant/junior and secondary schools.

In addition to this some primary schools were 10+ where pupils left at the end of year 5 and then went up to high school. This was changed from 2008 as pupils who transferred to secondary a year early often had a detrimental impact on Key Stage 2 SAT outcomes. 8 high schools then changed their age range from 4 – 11 years old in a move to regularise secondary transfer across Leicestershire and improve Key Stage 2 outcomes for children.

8: Our Schools and Education Performance

There are 285 state-funded schools in Leicestershire, including:

- 231 primary schools
- 44 secondary schools
- 1 Post 16 school
- 9 special schools

The Local Authority has actively supported many schools to convert to academy status. There are 133 academies (44 secondary, 1 Post 16 school, 83 primary and 3 special schools) and further schools planning to convert.

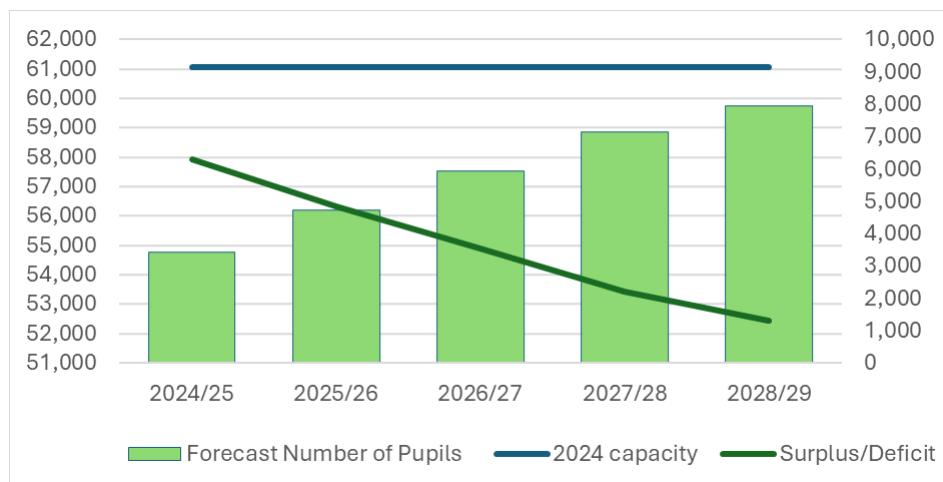
The details of the provision in Leicestershire schools can be found at www.leics.gov.uk/yourguides.htm

In total the 285 schools in Leicestershire have a collective capacity for 110,485 children and young people, comprising 61,064 in primary schools, 47,131 in secondary schools and 2,290 in special schools, units or Enhanced Resource Bases

In addition, there are approximately 27,759 young people in post-16 education.

Leicestershire schools vary in size, from primary schools with little more than 25 pupils on roll to secondary schools with large numbers on roll, the largest being 2,454 pupils.

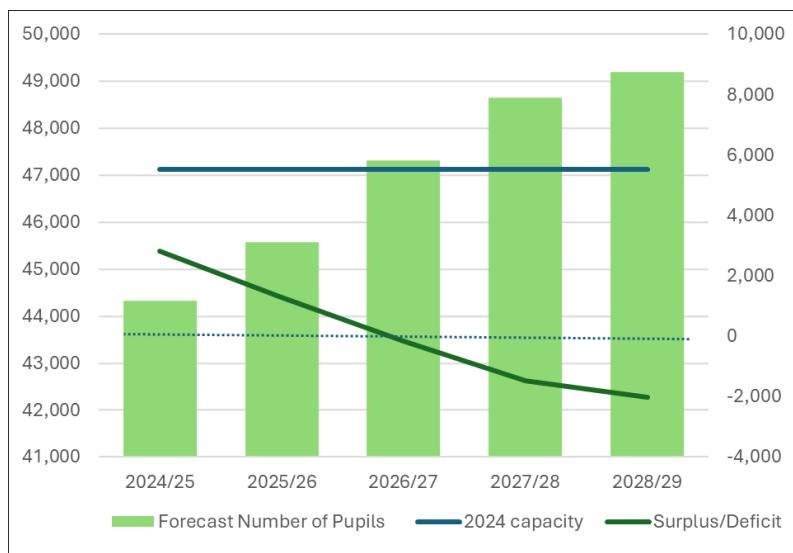
Primary Schools: Leicestershire's birthrate in 2024 had fallen to 1.41 children born per woman which was equal to the national average at the same time in England and Wales, which is the UK's lowest rate ever recorded. The usual replacement birth rate in the UK is 2.1 children per woman to sustain the population. The recent bulge in birth rate has almost worked its way through primary schools with the current Year 6 pupils being the final year of the bulge. The table below is the 2025 Primary DfE SCAP in full Forecast position which shows a rise in numbers over the coming years across all primary schools.



2025 Primary DfE SCAP Forecast (Leicestershire)

The effect on primary school occupancy is inconsistent. Some schools in popular areas are oversubscribed, whereas some small primary schools, typically in rural areas, are significantly below capacity. Some LA maintained schools and academies have consulted to reduce their Pupil Admission Numbers (PAN) and/or reorganised classes to reduce staffing costs. In such schools the continuing effect of a low birth rate and consequently small numbers of children in catchment, means the risk of not remaining sustainable is increasing.

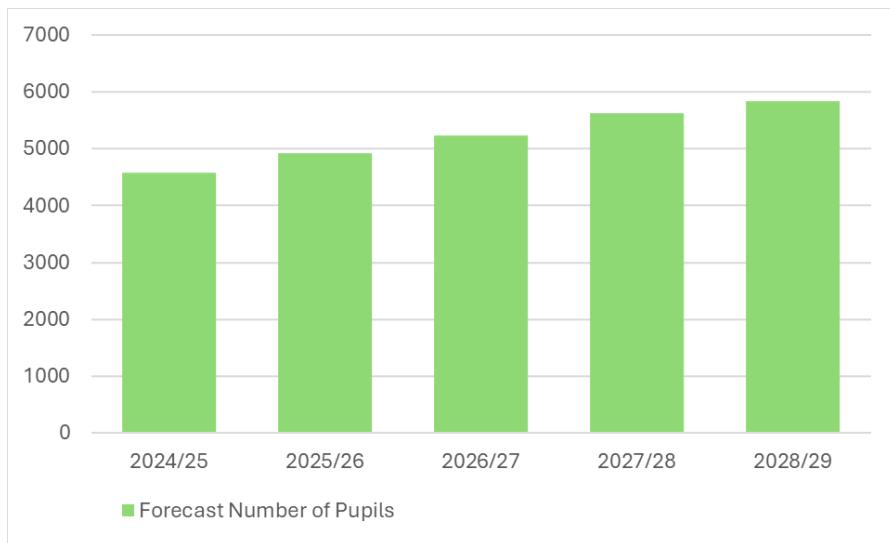
Secondary Schools: The County Council has seen the bulge in birth rate passing through into primary. Most of our expansion projects in secondary schools are connected to birth rate and housing growth. The table below is the 2025 Secondary DfE SCAP Forecast position which shows a rise in numbers over the coming years across all secondary schools.



2025 Secondary DfE SCAP Forecast (Leicestershire)

Although there are currently enough places within the County, the distribution of those places can make it difficult for mid-term applications throughout the year in some areas. Some schools have introduced operational capacities in some secondary year groups to help them manage pupil numbers within the resources they have to ensure they can meet the needs of their pupils.

Post 16: numbers are increasing due to the higher birth rate cohort moving from secondary into Post 16 and inward migration. All Leicestershire school-based Post 16 providers are showing an increase in forecast numbers, sometimes as a result of housing gains. We are expecting an increase in Post 16 places from 4,859 in 2025 to 5,891 in 2030, an increase of 28.4%. Post 16 provision and future requirements is underway. At Post 16 students are more likely to attend provision outside of their local community, including FE colleges outside Leicestershire.



2025 Forecast Pupils in School Sixth Forms and Sixth Form Colleges (Leicestershire)

SEND: The 2025 School Census, which includes all pupils on roll at a school within Leicestershire (aged 4 to 16 years), records 13,983 pupils at SEN Support and 7,196 with an Education, Health and Care Plan. SEND pupils account for 17.2% of the Leicestershire school population.

During recent 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 and a further 12% between 2023 and 2024. Growth in EHCPs issued slowed somewhat in comparison to national and regional trends over the last 5 years, however the number of EHCPs in January 2025 increased 13% on the previous year, with a further increase of 15% to the end of September 2025.

| Area | Number of EHCPs as at January | | | | | | Percentage Increase Over Past Five Years |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|--|
| | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | Sept 2025 | |
| England | 430,697 | 473,255 | 517,049 | 575,693 | 638,745 | | 48% |
| East Midlands | 30,500 | 33,402 | 36,950 | 41,806 | 47,444 | | 56% |
| Leicestershire | 5,288 | 5,813 | 6,201 | 6,377 | 7,196 | 8,311 | 36% |

2025 EHCP Comparison

Alternative Provision: Leicestershire County Council has a duty to ensure that any child permanently excluded from school has access to full-time education through alternative provision.

In Leicestershire we have Oakfield, a Short Stay School, to meet this duty. Places are commissioned to meet the needs of excluded children and those at risk of exclusion alongside, in exceptional circumstances, for those whom no other maintained school provision can be secured.

Current data shows us that we *currently need 50 places at Primary and 400 places in secondary. The provisions operate over 7 satellites* consisting of 2 Primary and 5 Secondary, which ensures that pupils remain in their local area, but operates as one school and ensures pupils fulfil our statutory duties, to deliver an education that offers breadth and depth and at the quality that pupils would receive compared to their peers.

Education Performance: There are many strengths that should be recognised through the performance of Leicestershire schools, the quality of the people working within them and the relationship between schools, academies and the local authority. 90% of Leicestershire's schools are rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding', this comprises 63 maintained schools and 193 academies.

9 - Encouraging Diversity

Leicestershire County Council is dedicated to equal, high-quality education for all children and young people, regardless of need. It values local community diversity and supports school management models that best serve local needs, including specialisation or federated/trust governance. The Council aims to maintain and expand diverse educational provision wherever possible.

10 - Responsible Bodies

Diocesan Schools: The current pattern of school provision across Leicestershire includes many schools with a religious foundation or background. The Catholic and Church of England Diocesan authorities work closely with the County Council in the planning of school places to provide opportunities for parents to express a preference for denominational education.

Independent Schools: In July 2024 there were 12 independent schools located in Leicestershire; two of these schools designated as primary, three as secondary schools and the remaining seven as all through (4-18). In total, the 12 schools had a registered capacity of 7,005 places, with 5,945 pupils registered on roll. The Local Authority does not hold records of independent school placements and the children attending may or may not live within Leicestershire. Children resident in Leicestershire may attend independent provision in other areas.

Academy Trusts: Academy Trusts are their own responsible body. For Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) they are the responsible body for all the schools within their Trust.

11 - Academisation

Since the introduction of the 2010 Academies Act Leicestershire has seen the majority of its schools converted to academy status as either a Single Academy Trust (SAT) or as part of a Multi Academy Trust (MAT). There are 216 academies in Leicestershire: 165 primary, all 44 11-16 or 11-19 secondary schools, 1 Post 16 and 6 Special schools.

There are currently 29 MATs operating within Leicestershire of which 20 are Leicestershire based. In 2024 5 schools joined a Multi Academy Trust (MAT). In 2025, 4 schools are progressing with conversion into a MAT.

Currently 77% of schools in Leicestershire are academies. A summary of the 284 schools and academies can be seen below:

| | <i>Primary</i> | <i>Secondary</i> | <i>Post 16</i> | <i>Special</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Local Authority Maintained | 65 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 68 |
| Academy Schools | 166 | 44 | 1 | 6 | 217 |
| | 231 | 44 | 1 | 9 | 285 |

2025 Leicestershire Schools and Academies

12 - Housing Growth

To meet expected growth, major housing development is proposed in all of the districts with Local Plans being developed to deliver the required number of

houses. The 2020 Housing and Economic Needs Assessment carried out on behalf of the County and Leicestershire's District Councils stated that 52,160 homes were required by 2036. This would see pupil population increase by 26,278 pupils across all phases of education using current pupil yield rates per 100 dwellings.

| | Primary | Secondary | Post 16 | Primary Special | Secondary Special | Total |
|---------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| Pupil Yield | 30.0 | 16.7 | 3.3 | 0.363 | 0.4 | |
| Pupil Places | 15,648 | 8,711 | 1,721 | 189 | 209 | 26,478 |

Leicestershire Projected Pupil Yield Due To Housing Growth

Patterns of population change will also affect Leicestershire's local communities. In some areas inward migration is a major factor, particularly where new development is planned, while in all areas there are some uncertainties about future birth rates.

Factors such as population shifts, age distribution and housing growth are all challenging to predict accurately.

The Department for Education's Rural School statistics shows Leicestershire has 38 schools designated as rural. New housing development in these areas may be less extensive than before, so population and pupil numbers are unlikely to increase significantly. This ongoing trend will continue to impact the viability of some schools.

13 - Place Planning Areas

Effective pupil place planning is a fundamental element of the County Council's role as strategic commissioner of good school places. It is underpinned by the use of local area knowledge and data to identify any early warning signs of insufficient numbers of school places in specific parts of the authority. Place Planning Areas are a group of schools within the Local Authority which is used for the purpose of assessing current and future pupil demand for school places.

Leicestershire has 99 Planning Areas, 74 primary and 25 secondary. The Place Planning Area structure was agreed with the DfE in 2012, in line with the prevailing guidance. Since then, Planning Areas have been adjusted to reflect changes to age range and from a 3-tier to 2-tier education structure as agreed in 2018/19.

As a largely rural county, Leicestershire has a significant number of small, relatively isolated, village schools with no other school within a 'reasonable' travel distance and as such operates 22 single school planning areas.

Section E of this strategy contains SCAP forecast data and narrative about each of our Planning Areas.

It is recognised that pupils benefit from high quality learning environments and equipment. Capital investment priorities are based on requirements to:

- Provide sufficient places to meet the needs of local communities.
- Provide healthy and safe environments.
- Meet curriculum and class organisational needs.
- Enhance physical access to buildings.
- Replace temporary accommodation with permanent buildings where possible
- Implement key strategic initiatives.

Leicestershire County Council uses condition surveys alongside net capacity assessments to determine investment priorities for the schools it remains responsible for. Capital resources are, however, becoming increasingly stretched. Building maintenance in academies is no longer the responsibility of the Local Authority and these schools receive capital funding direct from central government.

There are several sources of funding available to Local Authorities to support the delivery of school places and help them fulfil their statutory duty to ensure there are enough school places for children.

1 - DfE Funding

DfE Basic Need: The Basic Need allocations are based principally on data collected from Local Authorities in the School Capacity Survey (SCAP). This survey collects information on the capacities of schools in each planning area of each local authority, and local authorities' forecasts of pupil numbers for several years ahead.

DfE High Needs Funding: Is intended to support Local Authorities in their duty to provide suitable school placements for children and young people with SEND, or who require alternative provision (AP). The grant funding is intended for children and young people with complex needs, who have Education, Health and Care plans (EHCPs), pupils with SEND without an EHCP and who require AP.

2 - Developer Contributions

Where additional school places are needed because of new housing development, as far as possible the costs should fall on the landowners and developers by way of developer contributions in line with the County Council's Planning Obligations Policy. Leicestershire's policy has an agreed methodology for calculating the infrastructure needs arising from new development, a robust

mechanism for requesting contributions from developers and how such funding is used for the delivery of places arising from housing development.

Developer contributions for education are secured by means of conditions attached to a planning obligation under Section 106 of The Town and Country Planning Act 1990, or the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), and is part of planning permission being granted for a development. When a planning application for new housing development comes forward analysis takes place to determine the number of pupils that may be yielded from the development. If there is not enough space in existing schools the developer will be expected to make a financial contribution to the provision of the additional places required.

On occasions, a developer may choose to build a new school themselves rather than making a financial contribution towards the Local Authority delivering the places. In this situation the developer will work with the local authority to ensure the school meets the requirements of Build Bulletin 103, and Leicestershire's school land and building specifications. Once a site is proposed for a new school the Local Authority will conduct due diligence to ensure it meets the requirements for delivering a school and any subsequent conditions such as Highways and services access.

3 - Strategic Capital Maintenance

The Department for Education (DfE) allocates funding each year to help maintain and improve the condition of school buildings and grounds.

School condition funding includes capital allocations for:

- Local Authorities and local-authority-maintained schools, including maintained nursery schools.
- Local voluntary-aided bodies and voluntary-aided schools.
- academies and large multi-academy trusts (MATs).
- Sixth-form colleges.
- Non-maintained special schools.
- Special post-16 institutions with eligible students.

Eligible schools and colleges can access funding through either:

- School Condition Allocations (SCA), with funds paid to eligible responsible bodies for maintaining school buildings. These include the local authority for maintained schools, Multi Academy Trusts for their academies and the Diocese for Voluntary Aided Schools.

- Single and smaller Multi Academy Trusts can apply to the Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) on an annual basis. If successful, funding is paid directly to the Trust to carry out the maintenance works.

In addition, Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) is allocated for individual schools and other eligible institutions to spend on capital projects.

4 - Growth Funding

Leicestershire Schools Forum has the responsibility to agree a policy for significant pupil growth to support the Local Authority's duty for delivering additional school places. This includes pre-opening and diseconomy of scale costs and agreeing the criteria for Local Authority maintained schools and academies to access this fund.

There are restrictions on what a Growth Fund can be used for. The regulations specify that a growth fund, subject to the locally adopted growth policy, can only be used to:

- Support growth in pre-16 pupil numbers to meet basic need.
- Support additional classes needed to meet the infant class size regulation.
- Meet the revenue costs of new schools.

Growth funding cannot be used to support:

- Schools in financial difficulty. No such contingency is held for Leicestershire Local Authority maintained schools.
- General growth due to increasing pupil numbers. This is managed through lagged funding. Growth Funding is currently applied to opening schools until they have reached their full capacity and it may also be considered for permanent expansions where appropriate.

5 - Other Funding Sources

Other sources of funding towards the delivery of additional school places are limited but may include:

- One-off grants from third party organisations such as Government, national bodies and charities.
- Personal donations from individual benefactors.
- Funding from Leicestershire County Council's own financial reserves.

Forecasting future demand for school places can never be absolutely accurate given the broad assumptions which have to be made about movements in and out of any given locality, the pace of individual housing developments, patterns of occupation and not least the parental preference for places at individual schools. This will be a function of geography, school reputation, past and present achievement levels and the availability of alternative provision, hence the need to review on an annual basis.

The analysis of need for school places in Leicestershire is identified through robust data analysis with pupil forecasting at the core of understanding where future provision is needed. The analysis of the data sources described below determines the need prior to identifying solutions.

Local Authorities can use different methods to forecast pupil numbers and take different factors into account. The Department for Education, for their annual School Capacity Survey (SCAP), require local authorities to provide a statement to accompany the forecast pupil numbers explaining the method by which the forecast is made. The forecasts produced cover both mainstream and SEND.

6 - Forecasting

Various data sources are used to produce our mainstream pupil forecasts and include:

Office of National Statistics (ONS) Local Authority Live Births by Postcode:

Birth data is usually provided by the ONS for us to identify children coming through the system. If birth data is not available at the time of completing the forecasting work, they are estimated based on an average of previous years and/or recent trends.

DfE GP Registration Data: This is captured in May each year and is based on the number of GP registrations that are captured on the first day of each month.

School Number on Roll (NoR) Data: Derived from the January School Census.

Admissions Data: First Time Admissions (FTA) and Secondary School transfer data captured in June for the following academic year.

Housing Data: Information on new housing developments from planning application data and, where available, Local Planning Authority housing trajectory information. Housing developments 'Under construction' progress is monitored twice a year in March and December to determine current levels of occupancy.

SEND Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) Data: In addition to the above data for SEND forecasting the latest SEND EHCP pupil level data is also used. In recent years the quality of data has improved greatly. Data dashboards have

been developed to show the type of SEND need by year group along with geographical location. This allows for greater strategic planning of places rather than reactive planning on a year-by-year basis.

7 - Data Processing

Our forecasts for the primary phase of education comprise of the following elements:

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Forecast: This is forecast by looking at the previous EYFS numbers compared to the births for each cohort. The reception numbers are analysed for each school in one of three ways:

- As an average percentage of the births cohort for that year group.
- Looking at the differences between births and EYFS cohorts if the school has very low birth rates.
- For schools that do not have a formal Local Authority catchment area, EYFS numbers are analysed in terms of the average intake at the school in recent years.

Forecasts for each school are usually averages or weighted averages based on 4 years' data. This can sometimes vary if there are good reasons to use a different calculation, such as a three-year average for example. If this is used assumptions are then taken regarding take-up figures to forecast intakes for the next five years.

Admissions allocations regarding intake for year of entry at the start of the academic year, including allocated places for pupils from neighbouring local authorities, is incorporated into the forecast and generally form the basis of year 1 figures. Generally, intake is not limited by the Admission Number (AN) listed for the school as the intention is to show the true pressure of demand for places.

Non-Intake Year Groups: Cohort numbers are rolled forward from the preceding academic year. An appropriate average percentage retention rate is applied to each non entry year group transition as appropriate.

Junior Schools: The forecast for intake at Year 3 is based on the percentage average from the feeder Infant schools. The percentage rate may be increased if the Junior school also makes small gains from other schools at this transfer point.

Secondary Schools: Each Secondary school has an allocated list of feeder Primary schools for 11+ transfer. These enable the local authority to calculate the size of potential intakes over the next ten years based on the seven years actual Primary school NOR data and three years Primary school forecast intake.

Secondary school intakes are calculated based on the 4-year average, or some close variant, of previous intakes relative to the potential feeder cohort sizes.

Non-intake groups are forecast in an equivalent way to primary schools with the average percentage retention rate applied to each non entry year group transition as appropriate.

Migration and Housing Developments: Potential gains from new housing are included for all sites either currently under construction or expected to start having been granted full planning permission. In addition, gains from other sites that currently have outline planning permission only have also been included if available information from district councils' housing trajectories has not indicated that construction is not expected to commence within the forecast period.

| <i>Education Phase</i> | <i>Pupil Yield Per Dwelling</i> | <i>Pupil Yield Per Flat</i> |
|-------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| Primary | 0.3 | 0.043 |
| Infant | 0.129 | 0.018 |
| Junior | 0.171 | 0.025 |
| Secondary | 0.167 | 0.02667 |
| Post 16 | 0.033 | 0.00533 |

2025 Leicestershire Pupil Yield Rates

8 - In/Out Catchment Analysis

Parent preference causes movement between schools in neighbouring authorities and catchment schools. After every school census day, the movement for each school is monitored. Most schools gain or lose to and from other local schools. Depending on the numbers they gain minus the number they lose, they will be known as a net gainer or loser of pupils. This data factors into identifying future need for places, especially where housing development falls into a catchment of an existing school. Additional school places may not be needed if pupils over time can be pushed back to their original catchment as children in catchment, through the school's admissions policy, would gain a place over those from out of catchment.

9 - Forecast Accuracy

Pupil forecasts are checked annually against the autumn term School Census NOR. The checks are made against intake and total NOR as of October and variances above applied thresholds are investigated. However, where the above threshold variance against October NOR is identified, the subsequent January NOR figure is checked to determine whether the variance still applies, and potential adjustment justified.

The thresholds for variance investigation are:

Primary: Forecast intake of more than 2 pupils
 Forecast NOR 10 or more pupils (or >5% for small schools)

Secondary: Forecast intake of more than 10 pupils
 Forecast NOR 20 or more pupils

Investigation seeks to determine the reason for the variance and ascertain if there was a more accurate intake or retention rate option that could have been applied based on system generated averages or the latest year. This will then be considered during the next round of forecasting. Investigation of variance covers both forecasts with and without housing gains to determine the current impact of pupil yield from housing development under construction.

Intake variance is usually due to inaccuracy in First Time Admissions (FTA) and/or Secondary transfer data from the Schools Admissions Team. Where a pattern of variance emerges, the decision could be taken to increase or reduce Admissions Team data for certain schools to increase the accuracy of future forecasts.

Our comparable accuracy rates are calculated on Year 1 forecast compared to the previous years to monitor ongoing performance. The latest NOR is checked against previous years' forecasts relating to the current academic year to determine the ongoing accuracy of forecasts covering forecast years 2 to 5 for primary schools and forecast years 2 to 10 for secondary schools.

10 - Local Plans

The School Organisation Service works closely with housing developers and district councils to ensure that Infrastructure Delivery Plans (IDP) presented for examination during the Local Plan assessment will deliver the additional school places needed due to housing growth. Once potential sites are confirmed by the district council the local authority can propose educational solutions to accommodate the additional pupil yield. At this point the proposed pupil yield from Local Plan allocated sites can be factored into the strategic planning of additional school places alongside the forecast data.

Identifying solutions is the most complex part of the process for delivering school places. DfE guidance gives a strong emphasis towards the expansion of successful and popular schools where possible. Leicestershire County Council is committed to supporting ways of increasing parental choice in school admissions and ensuring places are located where parents want them, ideally serving the local community where children live.

As Leicestershire is a rural county, it can sometimes be difficult to provide diversity, when there is only one school serving a local community. However, as the population continues to grow the council will seek to meet the increasing demand wherever school places can be expanded or provided new in local communities. Working with a range of internal and external stakeholders effectively will ensure that this aim will be met with additional school places being delivered that allow children to achieve good outcomes throughout their time at school.

In this section we will look at the considerations behind identifying solutions, working with stakeholders and the various possible solutions that are available for delivery.

11 School Accommodation Analysis

This is the foundation for the development of a project brief. Once the number of school places is known, a detailed analysis of the DfE's Building Bulletin 103 is undertaken to determine the accommodation that will be needed.

This analysis may be for a whole new school, expansion of an existing school or the remodelling of an existing space. The analysis will identify the accommodation needed to support good teaching and learning outcomes.

12 - Working with Responsible Bodies

If the delivery of places involves an existing school, the School Organisation Service will seek early engagement to gain a full understanding of the school, its vision and values and the community it serves. This will ensure that the school places provided meet the needs of the school, support good outcomes for children and are in line with national and local education policies.

If a new school is needed, engagement will happen with the housing developers at the development master planning stage to ensure that any site coming forward for a new school is suitable, prior to a Section 106 agreement being agreed or planning permission being granted. The County Council's Highways and Property Services departments will support with due diligence to ensure the site is fit for purpose.

When a new school build is ready to be submitted to planning the Local Authority will work with the DfE, through the presumption process, to identify a Multi Academy Trust for the school. The Trust appointed can then be involved in the final stages of detailed design of the school ahead of construction.

13 - Solution Principles

The delivery of additional school places within Leicestershire County Council is focused on ensuring that they do not cause detriment to other schools and supports long term sustainability. Before the solution for school places is identified, the County Council will plan to provide school places in schools that are of a viable size and promote:

- Sufficient curriculum coverage and, where appropriate, adequate curriculum choice.
- Viable and sustainable schools which do not require disproportionate financial support and may attract DfE capital funding.
- Viable class organisation structures.
- Adequate non-contact time for staff.
- Supporting the needs of the local community.

Once it is established that solution principles can be met, the provision of school places can be delivered by using one or more of the following approaches:

- Remodelling existing space.
- Expansion of the school premises.
- Relocation of a school to an alternative site.
- Amalgamation with another school
- Off-site expansion by creating a satellite of the existing school.
- Delivery of a new school.

14 - School Sizes

Whilst the County Council does define optimum sizes for schools it recognises that there will be some schools falling outside this range which still provide an excellent education and deliver good outcomes for children. Factors that can affect the size of a school include the local population, site constraints, availability of funding and deployment of revenue resources. Our preferred school sizes for new and expanding schools are:

Primary School: The preferred size for new primary schools is within the range of 420 places to 630 places (2FE to 3FE) and Leicestershire County Council will

only seek to open new primary schools of full forms of entry in line with our standardised primary school designs which allow for phased delivery of places to support the availability of funding needed and to prevent the destabilisation of existing places in the area.

Where a new primary phase school is required, this will be built as an all through primary school, rather than separate infant or junior schools. The County Council will continue to seek opportunities to amalgamate separate infant and junior schools where the combined numbers are less than 420 and the sites lend themselves to a single becoming a single school.

Secondary Schools: The minimum size for an 11 to 16 secondary school is 900 (6FE) to 1,200 (9FE) pupils. However, Leicestershire County Council recognises that provision in some communities may fall outside the ideal size of secondary school and demand for additional places could be met either by expanding existing schools, if there is sufficient capacity on the site, or by new provision of a new school located within a substantial new housing development. The expansion of an existing secondary school to the optimum size is preferable to support sustainability and ensure children are receiving an education within an established setting.

Special Schools: These need to be of sufficient size to provide appropriate facilities and opportunities to meet the needs of the range of pupils they admit and to act as resource and to support SEND pupils at settings within maintained schools and academies. Their size will depend on the age range of pupils, locality and the type of SEND that they cater for. Work is currently ongoing to review SEND provision across Leicestershire to ensure future demand can be provided in one of the following ways:

- New SEND schools.
- Expansion of SEND Schools on site or at a satellite location.
- Enhanced Resource Bases and Units within mainstream schools and academies.

15 - Location of New Schools

Leicestershire County Council aims to provide school places within their communities, close to where children live and to meet parental preferences as far as possible.

Leicestershire's approach is that new primary schools should be provided, wherever possible, within major new housing developments where the pupil yield is sufficient to open a 2FE school. The site should ideally be within a 2-mile walking distance of most of the development. The School Organisation Service

works with the Highways Department through the development's master planning process to develop safe routes to school for pedestrians and cyclists. Sites should be of a suitable size to allow future expansion of the school if further housing development happens.

Where a new secondary school is planned, a site will be sought that provides safe pedestrian and cycling routes and good access for those pupils arriving by public and school transport from further afield. To discourage the use of private cars, schools are expected to prepare and maintain a School Travel Plan. Like new primary school sites, additional land may be sought to futureproof any future expansion of the housing development and additional pupil yield. On occasions, additional land may be required from a single developer to address the need for school places from cumulative developments in the area. Where this is required, and in line with the DfE's Securing Developer Contributions guidance, a land equalisation mechanism will be put in place between the developers to ensure the cost of land for providing the secondary school is shared on a fair and equitable basis between all developments feeding into the school.

16 - Home to School Travel

Leicestershire County Council recognises the importance of considering distance of travel from home to school when planning new developments to reduce dependence on subsidised bus travel and encourage safe walking and cycling to school.

Leicestershire County Council has a statutory responsibility to ensure that children aged 4-16 can access compulsory school age education. Transport assistance for all students aged over 16 is a discretionary provision. Different arrangements are in place for children with SEND, where the nearest suitable school is stated in their Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP).

To meet this requirement Leicestershire County Council will encourage the use of walking and cycling to school. Where this is not an option Leicestershire County Council's Mainstream Home to School Transport policy will provide transport to children who are attending their nearest maintained school or academy. Stakeholders should be aware there is no Council provision for school transport where children are not attending their nearest school.

The key challenges that Leicestershire County Council has in terms of providing access to compulsory education are summarised as follows:

- Providing flexible choices for young people is a challenge for the Council.
- Managing down the costs of school transport within the context of a growing population and increasing fuel costs.

- Ensuring new housing growth areas are well connected by walking and cycling routes to minimise demand on school services provided under statutory regulation.
- Encouraging young people to take up active modes where convenient as a substitute for car journeys through alternative methods of travel such as walking and cycling that will help foster positive lifetime travel habits.

17 - Project Brief

Leicestershire's School Organisation Service will write a detailed brief to enable project delivery, including details of:

- Main project requirements summarising the work to be delivered.
- Project background including evidence of need.
- Accommodation required based on analysis against the DfE's Building Bulletin 103.
- Site requirements including social space, sport provision and infrastructure such as car parking.
- Building specification requirements such as mechanical and electrical needs delivered to current building regulations.
- Room specification requirements to support delivery of teaching and learning.
- Stakeholder involvement required and project communication to ensure the project runs smoothly.
- Phasing of works required to ensure, particularly on existing school sites, that the education of children is not hindered during project delivery.

Where applicable for schools that are being expanded, the brief will be signed off by the school and Trust prior to release for Capital Programme Board approval and the commissioning of a suitable delivery method.

18 - Leicestershire's Approach

All school places' provision falls under the County Council's Capital Programme as part of its Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). This is reviewed throughout the year on a regular basis to make sure that adequate resources are provided for the County Council's place planning statutory duty to be discharged.

Leicestershire County Council has successfully used various commissioning methods for the delivery of school places. Prior to commissioning additional school places, the project must be approved by the Children and Family Services Capital Programme Board (CPB) to agree to the need, approve the funding required and provide an appropriate commissioning method. The School Organisation Service prepares Place Planning Papers (PPP) that summarise these three areas for members of the board to consider as part of their decision making.

19 - Market Position Sufficiency Statement (MPSS)

It is recognised that commissioning school places is not restricted to providing school places by funding them through capital investment alone. For SEND places where there is inadequate capital funding to provide the places needed to meet the growing demand alternative provision also needs to be considered. To meet this demand Leicestershire County Council has developed an Education, Inclusion and Additional Needs Placement Market Position Sufficiency Statement (MPSS). The purpose of the MPSS will be to consider current placement sufficiency across the SEND system in Leicestershire and indicate how the department will ensure sufficiency for SEND school places in the future outside of those places being provided directly by the County Council. The MPSS will therefore build upon this School Places Strategy and consider the role of and opportunities for the external market to support the County Council's SEND sufficiency needs.

20 - Commissioning Routes

The commissioning of school places must meet Procurement Regulations and the County Council's Procurement Team ensure compliance. Capital funded school places at existing schools and academies, or the delivery of a new school is usually delivered by one of the following routes:

Leicestershire County Council Property Services Department: This is the most traditional route of commissioning places. The procurement route to be

followed is dependent on the value of the work. Frameworks are used to deliver both minor and major projects. Projects are overseen by the department's team of building and quantity surveyors.

Responsible Bodies: Where an academy Trust has the capacity to manage the delivery of school places to Leicestershire County Council's building specifications, the passporting of funding may be agreed. A legal agreement will be drawn up to ensure that places will be delivered and where Section 106 funding is involved, the legal obligations of the Section 106 agreement will be passported to the academy Trust to also meet. The academy trust is then responsible for meeting procurement regulations and appointing an appropriately qualified contractor to deliver the places.

Developer Delivered: For new schools and major expansion within large housing developments, the Section 106 agreement provides the option for the developer to construct and deliver the additional school places. Again, they must be delivered to Leicestershire County Council's specification and officers from the County Council will work in partnership with the developer and academy trust to ensure that the project reaches a successful conclusion.

DfE Free School Delivery: The County Council has been successful in bidding for DfE Free Schools to meet our need for new SEND places. Bowman Academy opened in 2024, and Achieve Academy is in development. This delivery model is dependent on the DfE releasing funding to bid for new schools. Leicestershire County Council will continue to bid for this type of funding as and when the government releases any further funding waves.

1 - Need to Reorganise Schools

Leicestershire County Council recognises that reorganisation may be needed for more than one reason. Where these reasons impact on rural schools, we acknowledge the government's presumption against the closure of rural schools and will only bring forward proposals to close any school where it can be demonstrated through a robust business case that one or more of the following criteria can be met:

- There is only very limited demand for places at the school from children living within the immediate catchment area or wider planning area of the school.
- Surplus places at the school exceed 25%.
- Education standards are low and there is little confidence in the likelihood of improvement.
- The school is not financially viable and is in or has a long-term forecast budget deficit that cannot be recovered.
- Necessary improvements to the school accommodation are either not possible or not cost effective.

For all schools with fewer than 105 pupils on roll the County Council will actively encourage the governors of maintained schools and Trustees of academies to consider further collaboration with the amalgamation with one or more neighbouring schools or by joining a Multi Academy Trust to achieve sustainability.

2 - Types of Reorganisation

In addition to the above, the County Council may have to reorganise schools in the following situations:

- Where an age range change may be required, for example so schools can use existing space to set up an Early Years provision.
- A change in a school's PAN to allow for a reduction or increase in the number of pupils being admitted.
- The redesignation of an existing school to meet another educational need such as additional SEND places.
- Conversion of maintained schools into Multi Academy Trusts (MAT), the transfer of a Stand-Alone Trust (SAT) into a MAT and a MAT merging with another MAT.

Whilst the County Council does define optimum sizes for schools it recognises that there will be many schools falling outside this range which provide excellent

Section D – Approach to the Reorganisation of Schools *Need for Reorganisation*

education. Factors that can affect the size of a school include local population, site constraints, availability of funding and deployment of revenue resources.

Leicestershire County Council will plan to provide school places in schools of sizes which:

- Can offer a curriculum that allows pupils to achieve good outcomes.
- Are viable and sustainable schools which do not require disproportionate financial support and attract DFE capital funding.
- Have a viable staff structure that supports efficient class structures.
- Can offer a suitable amount of non-contact time for teaching and support staff.
- Are at the heart of their community.

To achieve this, Leicestershire County Council will initially consider opportunities to expand existing schools where possible. Where significant housing developments warrant new schools within their community our preference is to open schools of the following size:

- **Primary:** A range of 420 to 630 places (2FE to 3FE). New schools may be phased to open to whole forms of entry. The County Council will continue to seek opportunities to amalgamate separate infant and junior schools where the combined numbers are less than 420 and their sites allows them to exist as a single institution.
- **Secondary:** For an 11 to 16 secondary school the preferred range is 900 to 1,200 places (6FE to 9FE). However, the County Council recognises that some communities may not fit within our preferred range for a secondary school. Additional places may be met by expansion of existing schools if there is sufficient site capacity or by new provision located within a development for an existing school such as Sixth form provision.

3 - Consultation

Leicestershire County Council will always consider all possible options prior to proposing the reorganisation or closure of schools. A full business case will always be provided to relevant stakeholders which sets out the case and details the background, reasons, timeframe and benefits. This will be the basis for transparent decision making and allow stakeholders to comment through the process of meaningful consultation.

The change process for reorganisation will be detailed in the next section. It is the responsibility of the County Council and other responsible bodies to ensure that reorganisation is appropriately supported to ensure that change can be delivered to benefit children and the community where their family lives.

4 - Types of Change Process

The County Council have a statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient schools for primary and secondary education in their areas. There is an expectation from the Department for Education that Local Authorities manage their school estate efficiently and to reduce or find alternative uses for surplus capacity to avoid a negative impact on a school offering to its children, their families and the community it serves.

There are different change processes depending on the nature of the change and whether the school is maintained or an academy.

5 - Academy Conversion

There is a strong Multi Academy trust (MAT) sector in Leicestershire which works productively with the Local Authority in planning school places. The pace of conversion has slowed but the Local Authority continues to support schools wishing to convert. Leicestershire's School Organisation Service coordinates the process of academy conversion by liaising with the converting school, receiving Trust, teams across the authority and legal advisors to ensure a smooth process takes place. This ensures that we continue to maintain positive relationships with academies and MATs.

6 - School Expansion and Age Range Change

Change in age range or expansion of a school is covered by the statutory notice process for Local Authority maintained schools and the Department for Education's Significant Change Process for academies.

Statutory Proposal: For Local Authority maintained schools this must contain sufficient information and be accessible for all interested parties to decide on whether to support or challenge the proposed change.

Significant Change: For academies, they must follow the required significant change process in advance of the change being made. Failure to do so will constitute a breach of the academy trust's funding agreement.

7 - Local Authority Maintained School and Academy Closure Considerations

For school closures the following Department for Education guidance is followed:

- Maintained Schools: Opening and Closing Maintained Schools
- Academies: Closure of an Academy by Mutual Agreement

For maintained schools, the local authority can propose the closure of a community, foundation, voluntary, community special, foundation special or maintained nursery school; and the governing body of a voluntary, foundation or foundation special school may publish proposals to close its own school.

For academies it is important that the trust engages early with the relevant Regional Director and local authorities and involves them in planning and decision-making right from the outset.

Regardless of whether it is a maintained school or an academy where discussions are being held about possible closure, it is important to Leicestershire County Council that the process is delivered in a transparent and clear manner to ensure Leicestershire children, and their families are fully informed about the need for change.

8 – Presumption Against Closure

The County Council recognises the Government's Presumption Against the Closure of Rural Schools and will only bring forward proposals to close such a school where it can be demonstrated that the school is no longer sustainable:

Although the guidance for maintained schools and academies is different, Leicestershire County Council believe the same closure process should be followed regardless of school type.

To achieve the closure of any type of school, all parties involved must work in a collaborative manner, following the appropriate guidance, in a pragmatic, respectful and sensitive manner. This will involve the County Council's Schools' Sustainability Board (SSB) working closely with schools, responsible bodies,

academy trusts and the Department for Education. Alternative options to closure that could be considered are:

- Academisation by joining a MAT.
- Federation or amalgamation with another school.
- Relocating the school to a site on a new housing development where additional school places are needed.
- Extended school provision that provides viability such as a pre-school or wrap around care.
- SEND provision being provided by the school.
- Sharing school facilities with community groups.

All these options need to be thoroughly investigated with an appropriate level of due diligence being undertaken to ensure the long-term sustainability of the school.

9 – Maintained Schools and Academy Closure Process

The table below outlines the timeframe to be followed:

| Item | Process Stage | Work Required |
|------|--|--|
| 1 | Prioritisation of schools for reorganisation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of pupil forecast data. • School financial viability analysis. • Reorganisation modelling of school places. • Risk analysis and resources required. • Discussions with responsible bodies and leaders of affected schools. |
| 2 | Business Case | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production of business case including detailed proposal for reorganisation. • Approval to proceed to consultation by responsible body ensuring their own decision-making process is adhered to. • Draft proposal. |
| 3 | Pre-Publication Consultation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time frame to be determined by the proposer having regard to the proposer's own consultation guidance. Consultation must happen during term time. • Proposal to follow approved business case. • Arrange consultation meetings and write necessary communications for relevant stakeholders. |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up website for consultation, feedback forms and consultation FAQ. |
| 4 | Statutory Notice Publication and Representation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The updated proposal made available clearly identifying changes to the proposal consulted upon. Proposal sent to relevant bodies. Proposal requests sent out within 1 week of requests being made. Arrange consultation meetings and write necessary communications for relevant stakeholders. Compile representations to be provided to the decision maker and shared on the consultation website. |
| 5 | Decision | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decision and reasons to be published within one week of the decision being made. Relevant stakeholders informed. May be requests within 1 week to refer to the Schools Adjudicator. |
| 6 | Implementation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publication of detailed Implementation Plan. Communications and meetings coordinated to progress closure. Implementation of plan to redesignate vacated school site for schools and academies. |

10 - Prioritisation of Schools for Reorganisation

A School Sustainability Board including officers from education, finance, HR, admissions, legal and property services will consider any school reorganisations and manage the process. Every reorganisation will be different due to the diversity of schools and communities involved. The following analysis will be undertaken:

- Pupil forecast data for the schools within the Planning Area.
- Cohort survival rate looking at progress from year of entry to leaving year.
- Financial viability looking at recent actuals and budget forecasting.
- Staff Headcount and possible HR reorganisation costs.
- Impact of future housing development and Local Plans.
- Designation of schools in the area include relation to third parties and rural designation.
- Condition and suitability of school sites and buildings.
- Stakeholders impacted by reorganisation.
- Potential alternatives to schools that may be considered for closure.

- Potential time frame and audit trail for reorganisation including statutory procedures and County Council governance.
- Potential risks entered captured on a risk register and RAG rated.
- Appointment of officers to deal with the reorganisation with roles and responsibilities clearly identified.

Once the analysis is complete, a recommendation will be made by the SSB to seek approval to proceed with informal discussions with the appropriate responsible bodies and leaders of schools affected.

11 - Reorganisation Business Case

Following careful consideration of alternative options to closure, and prior to any consultation being approved by proposers, a detailed business case will be produced that sets out the following for every school impacted by a proposal. The business case will be shared with all relevant stakeholders, including schools and academies, that may be impacted by the potential reorganisation:

- Narrative explaining the reason for change.
- Affected stakeholders including people, schools and third parties.
- Pupil forecast data including places available at other schools for future parental preference.
- Financial projections and costs associated with reorganisation.
- Staffing implications including restructuring costs.
- Community considerations.
- How the change will impact all schools within the planning area, including their numbers of children, families, staff and community stakeholders.
- Future admission arrangements.
- Current and future transport and vehicular movements.
- Impact on curriculum knowledge, Ofsted ratings and resource availability.
- Considerations for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
- Possible rebranding of schools impacted by the reorganisation.
- Statement about future use of the site.
- Time frame for closure with clear milestones for decision making.
- Details of other statutory processes required to deliver the closure.
- Draft Statutory Notices and Significant Change documentation.

Once the business case is written it will be presented to the relevant board for a decision to be made regarding progressing to Pre-Publication Consultation.

12 - Pre-Publication Consultation

This is the stage at which the potential reorganisation will be published. Therefore, every consideration and detail of the reorganisation must be understood and prepared by the Schools Sustainability Board. This will include the impact of staff and children leaving the school prior to formal decisions being made. Communication will be key to the success of the reorganisation, and the following will be needed for the consultation:

- Appointed member of LCC Media team who has ownership of comms plan and communications.
- Consultation proposal to be published.
- Public meeting to formally launch consultation.
- Website for consultation information, responses and FAQ.
- A range of formats for consultation responses to be made by.
- Consideration of other resources that may be required to manage aspects such as public protests.
- The consultation report is to be written once closed, including key points raised, matters to be considered further and next steps.

13 - Statutory Notice Publication and Representation

Once a consultation report is written and considered, a formal decision needs to be made to progress Statutory Notice Publication by Cabinet within 12 months of the consultation being completed. For academies, this decision will be proposed by the academy Trustees to the Secretary of State for a decision. Representations that are made must be passed on to the decision makers for consideration. The publication of the notice must be for a minimum of four weeks during term time and include details of:

- Where copies of the proposal can be obtained, including the consultation website.
- How representations can be made to decision makers.
- Clear timeframe for representations to be made.

14 – Decision

For maintained schools the final decision is made by Cabinet as the decision makers. They must decide within two months of the end of the representation period and the outcome of the decision must confirm the decision made and the reasons for doing so. The decision can be referred to the Schools Adjudicator and must be referred within 1 week of the decision being made. For academies the decision is made by the Secretary of State for Education.

15 - Reorganisation Implementation

Once the final decision is made the process of implementing a reorganisation must happen within three years of the decision being made and a detailed plan for the implementation must be followed. Where the reorganisation of schools involves school closure, the date of closure must be considered carefully and be at least one academic year after the decision is taken. This will set out the major milestones for completing the reorganisation including how vacated sites and buildings will be used, ensuring any land trust issues as stipulated in the 1841 School Sites Act are addressed.

The implementation of the reorganisation will be reported to the Schools' Sustainability Board with copies being shared with relevant responsible bodies. Where the reorganisation is being implemented by another responsible body, relevant officers from the County Council will work with them to support the reorganisation and ensure a smooth transition for Leicestershire children and families affected by the reorganisation.

There are 74 Primary School Planning Areas with Leicestershire. Please click on the relevant Planning Area below which will take you to the County Council's School Organisation Service website where the data is stored:

- Schools within the Planning Area.
- Planning Area map.
- Admission Number (AN).
- Capacity.
- Five-year pupil forecast.
- Current Overview.
- Future actions.

The SCAP Data will be updated on an annual basis once the SCAP return is signed off with the Department for Education.

| Number | Name | District | Schools Included |
|---------------|---|-----------------|--|
| 855019 | Braunstone LFE Primary | Blaby | Fossebrook Primary School Lubbesthorpe Primary School Kingsway Primary School Millfield L.E.A.D. Academy Ravenhurst Primary School Stafford Leys Community Primary School |
| 8550160 | Narborough Enderby Croft Thurlaston Primary | Blaby | Croft Church of England Primary School Enderby Danemill Primary School Greystoke Primary School Huncote Primary School Red Hill Field Primary School The Pastures Primary School Thurlaston Church of England Primary School |
| 8550206 | Glenfield Primary | Blaby | Glenfield Primary School The Hall School |
| 8550235 | Countesthorpe Arnesby Kilby Primary | Blaby | Arnesby Church of England Primary School Greenfield Primary School |

Section E – Leicestershire Data

Primary Schools

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|---------|------------------------------------|-----------|---|
| | | | Kilby St Mary's Church of England Primary School |
| 8550321 | Stoney Sapcote Sharnford Primary | Blaby | All Saints Church of England Primary School Manorfield Church of England Primary School Sharnford Church of England Primary School |
| 8550335 | Blaby Whetstone Cosby Primary | Blaby | Badgerbrook Primary School Blaby Stokes Church of England Primary School Blaby Thistly Meadow Primary School Cosby Primary School St Peter's Church of England Primary School |
| 8550004 | Thurmaston Primary | Charnwood | Bishop Ellis Catholic Primary School Church Hill Church of England Junior School Church Hill Infant School Eastfield Primary School |
| 8550005 | Burton Wymeswold Primary | Charnwood | Burton-on-the-Wolds Primary School Wymeswold Church of England Primary School |
| 8550006 | Anstey Primary | Charnwood | The Latimer Primary School Woolden Hill Primary School |
| 8550009 | Loughborough North Primary | Charnwood | Hathern Church of England Primary School Robert Bakewell Primary School Stonebow Primary School Loughborough Thorpe Acre Infant School Thorpe Acre Junior School |
| 8550204 | Barkby Syston Queniborough Primary | Charnwood | St Peter and St Paul Church of England Academy Queniborough Church of England Primary School The Merton Primary School The Pochin School |
| 8550205 | Cossington Sileby Primary | Charnwood | Cossington Church of England Primary School Sileby Highgate Community Primary School Sileby Redlands Community Primary School |
| 8550208 | Shepshed Belton Primary | Charnwood | Belton Church of England Primary School Newcroft Primary Academy Oxley Primary School Shepshed Saint Winefride's Catholic Voluntary Academy |

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|---------|---|-----------------------|---|
| | | | St Botolph's Church of England Primary School |
| 8550209 | Loughborough South Primary | Charnwood | Beacon Academy Booth Wood Primary School Cobden Primary School & Community Centre Holywell Primary School Loughborough Church of England Primary School Mountfields Lodge School Outwoods Edge Primary School Rendell Primary School Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy Saint Mary's Catholic Primary School |
| 8550304 | Rearsby East Goscote Primary | Charnwood | Broomfield Community Primary School St Michael & All Angels Church of England Primary School |
| 8550305 | Quorn Barrow Mountsorrel Seagrave Primary | Charnwood | Barrow Hall Orchard Church of England Primary School Christ Church & Saint Peter's CofE Primary School Seagrave Village Primary School St Bartholomew's Church of England Primary School |
| 8550306 | Birstall Primary | Charnwood | Hallam Fields Birstall Highcliffe Primary School and Community Centre Riverside Community Primary School |
| 8550405 | Swithland Woodhouse Primary | Charnwood | Swithland St Leonard's Church of England Primary School Woodhouse Eaves St Paul's CofE Primary School |
| 8550406 | Rothley Thurcaston Primary | Charnwood | Richard Hill Church of England Primary School Rothley Church of England Primary School |
| 8550704 | Thrushington Primary | Charnwood | Thrushington Primary |
| 8550021 | Hinckley & Burbage Primary | Hinckley and Bosworth | Battling Brook Primary School Burbage Church of England Infant School Burbage Junior School Hinckley Parks Primary School Richmond Primary School Saint Peter's Catholic Primary School A Voluntary Academy Sketchley Hill Primary School Burbage St Mary's Church of England Primary School Hinckley Hollycroft Primary School |

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|---------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| | | | Westfield Infant School Westfield Junior School |
| 8550200 | Desford Primary | Hinckley and Bosworth | Desford Community Primary School |
| 8550220 | Barlestone Verdon Primary | Hinckley and Bosworth | Barlestone Church of England Primary School Newbold Verdon Primary School |
| 8550221 | Barwell & Earl Shilton Primary | Hinckley and Bosworth | Barwell Church of England Academy Barwell Infant School Newlands Community Primary School Saint Peters Catholic Voluntary Academy Townlands Church of England Primary School St Simon and St Jude CofE Primary School |
| 8550230 | Congerstone Primary | Hinckley and Bosworth | Congerstone Primary School |
| 8550240 | Sheepy Primary | Hinckley and Bosworth | Sheepy Magna Church of England Primary School |
| 8550250 | Linford Groby Kirby Ratby Primary | Hinckley and Bosworth | Elizabeth Woodville Primary School Kirby Muxloe Primary School Lady Jane Grey Primary School Martinshaw Primary School Newtown Linford Primary School Ratby Primary School |
| 8550260 | Markfield Stanton Thornton Primary | Hinckley and Bosworth | Mercenfeld Primary School Stanton Under Bardon Community Primary School Thornton Primary School |
| 8550270 | Market Bosworth Primary | Hinckley and Bosworth | St Peter's Church of England Primary Academy |
| 8550280 | Witherley Primary | Hinckley and Bosworth | Witherley Church of England Primary School |
| 8550421 | Higham Stoke Golding Primar | Hinckley and Bosworth | Higham-on-the-Hill Church of England Primary School St Margaret's Church of England Primary School |
| 8550015 | Market Harborough Primary | Market Harborough | Farndon Fields Primary School Foxton Primary School |

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|---------|---|-------------------|---|
| | | | Wellington Place Primary School Great Bowden Academy A CofE Primary School Little Bowden School Lubenham All Saints Church of England Primary School Market Harborough Church of England Academy Meadowdale Primary School Ridgeway Primary Academy St Joseph's Catholic Voluntary Academy |
| 8550135 | Broughton Astley Dunton Bassett Primary | Market Harborough | Dunton Bassett Primary School Hallbrook Primary School Old Mill Primary School Orchard Church of England Primary School |
| 8550165 | Lutterworth & South Harborough Primary | Market Harborough | Claybrooke Primary School Gilmorton Chandler Church of England Primary School Husbands Bosworth Church of England Primary School John Wycliffe Primary School Sherrier Church of England Primary School South Kilworth Church of England Primary School St Andrew's Church of England Primary School St Mary's Church of England Primary School Swinford Church of England Primary School Ullesthorpe Church of England Primary School |
| 8550214 | Thurnby Primary | Market Harborough | Fernvale Primary School Thurnby St Luke's Church of England Primary School |
| 8550215 | Fleckney Kibworth Primary | Market Harborough | Fleckney Church of England Primary School Kibworth Church of England Primary School |
| 8550314 | Houghton Primary | Market Harborough | Houghton-on-the-Hill Church of England Primary School |
| 8550315 | Billesdon Primary | Market Harborough | Billesdon Church of England Primary School |
| 8550415 | Bringhurst Primary | Market Harborough | Bringhurst Primary School |
| 8550515 | Church Langton Primary | Market Harborough | Church Langton Church of England Primary School |
| 8550615 | Great Glen Primary | Market Harborough | Great Glen St Cuthbert's Church of England Primary School |

Section E – Leicestershire Data

Primary Schools

| | | | |
|---------|--|-------------------|---|
| 8550715 | Hallaton Primary | Market Harborough | Hallaton Church of England Primary School |
| 8550815 | Tugby Primary | Market Harborough | Tugby Church of England Primary School |
| 8550007 | Melton Town Primary | Melton | Brownlow Primary School Saint Francis Catholic Primary School Sherard Primary School St Mary's Church of England Primary School Swallowdale Primary School and Community Centre The Grove Primary School |
| 8550070 | Asfordby Frisby Primary | Melton | Asfordby Hill Primary School Captains Close Primary School Frisby Church of England Primary School |
| 8550075 | Bottesford Redmile Primary | Melton | Bottesford Church of England Primary School Redmile Church of England Primary School |
| 8550275 | Clawson Hose Harby Stathern Primary | Melton | Harby Church of England Primary School Hose Church of England Primary School Long Clawson Church of England Primary School Stathern Primary School |
| 8550370 | Ab Kettleby Primary | Melton | Ab Kettleby School |
| 8550375 | Croxton Waltham Primary | Melton | Croxton Kerrial Church of England Primary School Waltham on the Wolds Church of England Primary School |
| 8550404 | Gaddesby Primary | Melton | Gaddesby Primary School |
| 8550470 | Buckminster Primary | Melton | Buckminster Primary School |
| 8550570 | Great Dalby Primary | Melton | Great Dalby School |
| 8550670 | Old Dalby Primary | Melton | Old Dalby Church of England Primary School |
| 8550770 | Scalford Primary | Melton | Scalford Church of England Primary School |
| 8550870 | Somerby Primary | Melton | Somerby Primary School |
| 8550970 | Wymondham Primary | Melton | St Peter's Church of England Primary School |
| 8550008 | Kegworth Donington Diseworth Whatton Primary | North-West | Diseworth Church of England Primary School Hemington Primary School Kegworth Primary School Long Whatton Church of England Primary School Foxbridge Primary School Orchard Community Primary School |

Section E – Leicestershire Data

Primary Schools

| | | | |
|---------|---|------------|--|
| | | | St Edward's Church of England Primary School |
| 8550022 | Coalville Hugglescote Woodstone Primary | North-West | All Saints Church of England Primary School Greenstone Primary School Woodstone Community Primary School Belvoirdale Community Primary School Broom Leys School Hugglescote Community Primary School Saint Clare's Primary School Voluntary Academy Warren Hills Community Primary School |
| 8550023 | Ashby Coleorton Packington Primary | North-West | Ashby Hill Top Primary School Ashby Willesley Primary School Ashby-de-la-Zouch Church of England Primary School Packington Church of England Primary School Viscount Beaumont's Church of England Primary School Hastings Primary School Woodcote Primary School |
| 8550024 | Ibstock Heather Ellistown Nailstone Primary | North-West | Dove Bank Primary School Ellistown Community Primary School Heather Primary School Ibstock Junior School St Denys Church of England Infant School Ibstock |
| 8550222 | Whitwick Thringstone Swannington Primary | North-West | Holy Cross School A Catholic Voluntary Academy New Swannington Primary School Swannington Church of England Primary School Thringstone Primary School Whitwick St John The Baptist Church of England Primary School |
| 8550223 | Albert Village Primary | North-West | Albert Village Primary School |
| 8550224 | Measham Snarestone Primary | North-West | Measham Church of England Primary School St Charles Catholic Primary Voluntary Academy Snarestone Church of England Primary School |
| 8550308 | Breedon Primary | North-West | St Hardulph's Church of England Primary School |
| 8550324 | Newton Burgoland Primary | North-West | Newton Burgoland Primary School |
| 8550423 | Donisthorpe Oakthorpe Primary | North-West | Donisthorpe Primary School Oakthorpe Primary School |

Section E – Leicestershire Data

Primary Schools

| | | | |
|---------|--|-------------------|---|
| 8550424 | Appleby Magna Primary | North-West | Sir John Moore Church of England Primary School |
| 8550523 | Griffydam Primary | North-West | Griffydam Primary School |
| 8550323 | Blackfordby Moira Primary | North-West | Moira Primary School Blackfordby St Margaret's Church of England Primary School |
| 8550723 | Newbold Church of England Primary School | North-West | Newbold Church of England Primary School |
| 8550923 | Worthington Primary | North-West | Worthington School |
| 8550013 | Wigston Primary | Oadby and Wigston | All Saints Church of England Primary School Glenmere Community Primary School Little Hill Primary Saint John Fisher Catholic Voluntary Academy Wigston Leicestershire The Meadow Community Primary School Thythorn Field Community Primary School Water Leys Primary School |
| 8550014 | <u>Oadby Primary</u> | Oadby and Wigston | Brocks Hill Primary School Brookside Primary School Langmoor Primary School Oadby Launde Primary School Woodland Grange Primary School |
| 8550136 | Glen Parva South Wigston Primary | Oadby and Wigston | Fairfield Community Primary School Glen Hills Primary School Parkland Primary School South Wigston |

There are 25 Secondary School Planning Areas with Leicestershire. Please click on the relevant Planning Area below which will take you to the County Council's School Organisation Service website where the data is stored:

- Schools within the Planning Area.
- Planning Area map.
- Admission Number (AN).
- Capacity.
- Five-year pupil forecast.
- Current Overview.
- Future actions.

The SCAP Data will be updated on an annual basis once the SCAP return is signed off with the Department for Education.

| Number | Name | District | Schools Included |
|---------------|---------------------------|-----------------|--|
| 8551019 | Braunstone Town Secondary | Blaby | The Winstanley School |
| 8551135 | Countesthorpe Secondary | Blaby | Countesthorpe Academy |
| 8551160 | Enderby Secondary | Blaby | Brockington College |
| 8551004 | Syston Secondary | Charnwood | The Roundhill Academy Wreake Valley Academy |
| 8551005 | Barrow & Quorn Secondary | Charnwood | Humphrey Perkins School Rawlins Academy |
| 8551006 | Birstall Secondary | Charnwood | The Cedars Academy |
| 8551009 | Loughborough Secondary | Charnwood | Charnwood College De Lisle College Loughborough Leicestershire Limehurst Academy Woodbrook Vale School |
| 8551025 | Shepshed Secondary | Charnwood | Iveshead School |
| 8551270 | Anstey Secondary | Charnwood | The Martin High School Anstey |

| | | | |
|---------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| 8551021 | Hinckley & Earl Shilton Secondary | Hinckley and Bosworth | Hastings High School Heath Lane Academy The Hinckley School Redmoor Academy Saint Martin's Catholic Voluntary Academy |
| 8551200 | Market Bosworth Secondary | Hinckley and Bosworth | The Market Bosworth School |
| 8551201 | Desford Secondary | Hinckley and Bosworth | Bosworth Academy |
| 8551250 | Groby Secondary | Hinckley and Bosworth | Brookvale Groby Learning Campus |
| 8551260 | Markfield Secondary | Hinckley and Bosworth | South Charnwood High School |
| 8551136 | Broughton Astley Secondary | Market Harborough | Thomas Estley Community College |
| 8551150 | Market Harborough Secondary | Market Harborough | The Robert Smyth Academy Welland Park Academy |
| 8551155 | Kibworth Secondary | Market Harborough | Kibworth Mead Academy |
| 8551165 | Lutterworth Secondary | Market Harborough | Lutterworth College Lutterworth High School |
| 8551070 | Melton Secondary | Melton | John Ferneley College Long Field Spencer Academy |
| 8551075 | Belvoir Secondary | Melton | The Priory Belvoir Academy |
| 8551008 | Castle Donington Secondary | North-West | Castle Donington College |
| 8551022 | Coalville Secondary | North-West | The Castle Rock School The Newbridge School |
| 8551023 | Ashby Secondary | North-West | Ashby School Ivanhoe School |
| 8551024 | Ibstock Secondary | North-West | Ibstock Community College |
| 8551014 | Oadby Secondary | Oadby and Wigston | Gartree High School Manor High School Beauchamp College |

| | | | |
|---------|-------------------|-------------------|--|
| 8551130 | Wigston Secondary | Oadby and Wigston | South Wigston High School Wigston Academy |
|---------|-------------------|-------------------|--|

| Section F – Appendix: Guidance, Legislation, Policies, Reports and Strategy | | | |
|---|------------|------|---|
| Guidance: | | | |
| Basic need Funding | DfE | 2025 | https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67e2ce356e54ea5b2b8ee251/Capital_funding_for_school_places_needed_by_2028_explanatory_note_on_methodology.pdf |
| Building Bulletin 103 | DfE | 2014 | https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5f23ec238fa8f57acac33720/BB103_Area_Guidelines_for_Mainstream_Schools.pdf |
| Closure of an Academy by Mutual Agreement | DfE | 2024 | http://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66fd1134a31f45a9c765efaa/Closure_of_an_academy_by_mutual_agreement_2024.pdf |
| Convert to an academy: guide for schools | DfE | 2025 | https://www.gov.uk/guidance/convert-to-an-academy-information-for-schools |
| Establishing a new academy: the free school presumption route | DfE | 2024 | https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/663dfcab993111924d9d324a/Free_school_presumption_guidance.pdf |
| High Needs Capital Funding | DfE | 2025 | https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67e2d2025698d84e39cfda/HNPCA_2025-26_Grant_Spend_Guidance.pdf |
| Making Significant Changes to an Academy | DfE | 2024 | https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/670f97de3b919067bb48325b/Making_significant_changes_to_an_academy_October_2024.pdf |
| Making Significant Changes to Maintained School | DfE | 2025 | https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67c0397d68a61757838d2026/Making_significant_changes_prescribed_alterations_to_maintained_schools-2025.pdf |
| Opening and Closing Maintained Schools | DfE | 2024 | https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66fd4f0a080bdf716392eccf/Opening_and_closing_maintained_schools_2024.pdf |
| Securing Developer Contributions | DfE | 2023 | https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64d0f70d7a5708001314485f/Securing_Developer_Contributions_for_Education.pdf |
| Strategic Capital Maintenance | DfE | 2025 | https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-capital-funding#overview |
| Legislation: | | | |
| Academies Act 2010 | Government | 2018 | https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/32/contents |
| School Sites Act 1841 | Government | 1841 | https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/4-5/38/introduction |
| Section 14 Education Act 1996 | Government | 2022 | https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/section/14 |
| Policies: | | | |

| | | | |
|--|-------------------------------|------|---|
| Basic Need Growth Funding Policy | LCC | 2023 | https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s179825/05%20-%20School%20Growth%20Policy.pdf |
| Mainstream Home to School Transport Policy | LCC | 2025 | https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-08/Mainstream-home-to-school-transport-policy-2025-26.pdf |
| Planning Obligations Policy | LCC | 2019 | https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/field/pdf/2019/8/16/Planning-Obligations-Policy.pdf |
| SEND Home to School/College Transport Policy | LCC | 2025 | https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-08/SEN-home-to-school-college-transport-policy-2025-26.pdf |
| Reports: | | | |
| Housing Needs Assessment | LCC | 2022 | https://www.llstrategicgrowthplan.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Housing-Distribution-Paper-June-2022.pdf |
| Population Data | Office of National Statistics | 2025 | https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/bulletins/subnationalpopulationprojectionsforengland/2022based |
| Strategy: | | | |
| SEND and Inclusion Strategy | LCC | 2025 | https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-07/SEND-and-Inclusion-Strategy-2025-2028.pdf |

Equality Impact Assessment Form

| 1- Policy details | |
|--|---|
| Name of policy | School Places Strategy |
| Department and service | Children and Family Services, School Organisation |
| Who has been involved in completing the Equality Impact Assessment? | Renata Chantrill, Head of Service - Education Sufficiency |
| Contact numbers | 01163050356 |
| Date of completion | 28 th November 2025 |

| 2- Objectives and background of policy or practice change | |
|--|--|
| What is the proposal? | A new School Places Strategy for Leicestershire covering the period from 2026-2031. |
| What change and impact is intended by the proposal? | The Strategy will aim to ensure Leicestershire meets its statutory duties by delivering the right number of school places, in the right place, at the right time, with sufficient funding and resources in place to deliver future growth needs. The Strategy sets out the Council's approach to planning, commissioning, and funding school places across all phases, including mainstream, SEND, and alternative provision. The Strategy will clearly set out to stakeholders the processes and mechanisms the Council and partners will use to understand and deliver the required school capacity and ensure sustainable schools for the future. |
| What is the rationale for this proposal? | Local authorities have a legal obligation to ensure that sufficient, high-quality school places are available for all children and young people in their area. This duty applies to both mainstream education and provision for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Local authorities are |

required to act as strategic commissioners, forecasting demand, planning capacity, and working collaboratively with schools, academy trusts, and other partners to ensure that every child and young person can access suitable, high-quality education.

Since the publication of the previous strategy, significant changes to the Leicestershire educational landscape have been experienced which have led to the need for a new School Places Strategy for 2026-2031. This includes increasing academisation of schools, changes in birth rates and the impact on school place requirements and school sustainability, housing growth areas, and an increasing need for specialist school places for pupils with additional needs.

3- Evidence gathered on equality implications - Data and engagement

| | |
|--|---|
| What equalities information or data has been gathered so far? | The School Places Strategy itself contains a summary of the key demographic and equalities information around children and young people in Leicestershire. Additional points are set out below; |
| What does it show? | <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. 143,063 children and young people aged up to 19 years (including 36,154 0 to 5 year olds). There were 296,400 households within the county. A further 10.2% growth in population is projected by 2031.</p> <p>There are 101,247 children and young people educated in Leicestershire schools (aged 3-18) during the Autumn term census for 2025/26. This includes 54,454 Primary aged pupils, 44,722 Secondary aged pupils and 1,992 pupils in Special Schools. Children and Young People from minority ethnic groups account for 43.6% of all children living in Leicestershire, compared with 38% in the country as a whole. The largest minority ethnic groups are Asian or Asian British and Mixed.</p> |

| <p>From our School Census in Spring 2025, we know that</p> | |
|---|-------|
| Percentage of Black, Asian and other ethnic communities of the total school population (excluding unclassified) | 24.6% |
| Pupils eligible for free school meals | 17.2% |
| Pupils needing SEN support | 13.4% |
| Pupils with EHCPs | 4.7% |

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 7,196 with an Education, Health and Care Plan. SEND pupils account for 18.1% 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 2025, the annual school census (Spring term) reported that 13.4% 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.

As with the previous strategy, the School Places Strategy will ensure all children and young people in Leicestershire have access to a high-quality education, with places delivered in the right parts of the County at the right time.

| **What engagement has been undertaken so far?** **What does it show?** | The strategy has been developed in conjunction with key stakeholders and responsible bodies. We have used their feedback to help us to shape the strategy, ensuring it reflects shared priorities and processes and is aligned with the current educational landscape. |

| 4- Benefits, concerns and mitigating action | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| 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? |
| Age | Improvements to school place availability will support all children and young people to access high quality education in Leicestershire. | None identified. | Not required. |
| Disability | Improvements to school place availability will support all children and young people to access high quality education in Leicestershire. The strategy sets out additional special school places to be created to meet the growing need within Leicestershire, ensuring that appropriate spaces are available to support those children and young people whose needs are not able to be met in mainstream schools. | None identified. | Not required. |
| Race | Improvements to school place availability will support all children and young people | None identified. | Not required. |

| | | | |
|--|--|------------------|---------------|
| | to access high quality education in Leicestershire. | | |
| Sex | Improvements to school place availability will support all children and young people to access high quality education in Leicestershire. | None identified. | Not required. |
| Gender Reassignment | Improvements to school place availability will support all children and young people to access high quality education in Leicestershire. | None identified. | Not required. |
| Marriage and Civil Partnership | No direct impact identified. | None identified. | Not required. |
| Sexual Orientation | Improvements to school place availability will support all children and young people to access high quality education in Leicestershire. | None identified. | Not required. |
| Pregnancy and Maternity | No direct impact identified. | None identified. | Not required. |
| Religion or Belief | Improvements to school place availability will support all children and young people to access high quality education in Leicestershire. | None identified. | Not required. |
| Armed Forces (including veterans) | No direct impact identified. | None identified. | Not required. |
| People with lived care experience | Improvements to school place availability will support all children and young people | None identified. | Not required. |

| | | | |
|---|---|------------------|---------------|
| | to access high quality education in Leicestershire. | | |
| Other groups: e.g., rural isolation, deprivation, health inequality, carers, asylum seeker and refugee communities, looked after children, deprived or disadvantaged communities | Improvements to school place availability will support all children and young people to access high quality education in Leicestershire. The Strategy sets out how the Council will ensure that schools are sustainable for the future. | None identified. | Not required. |

| 5- Action Plan | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Produce a framework to outline how identified risks/concerns identified in section 4 will be mitigated. | | | |
| What action is planned? | Who is responsible for the action? | Timescale | Expected outcome |
| Seek approval to consult on the School Places Strategy | Education Sufficiency | Cabinet – 18/11/25 | Ensuring the Strategy is agreed with elected members prior to wider consultation. |
| Public consultation on the SEND and Inclusion Strategy following approval to consult by Cabinet | Education Sufficiency | C&FS Scrutiny Committee – 20/1/26 November 2025-January 2026 | Feedback on proposed strategy to ensure feedback is fully considered before Strategy is agreed. |

| 6- Approval Process |
|----------------------------|
|----------------------------|



| | |
|--|--|
| Departmental Equalities Group | |
| Corporate Policy Team | |
| Sign off by the Senior Responsible Officer for the Project. | |

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**CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE: 20 JANUARY 2026**

QUARTER 2 2025/26 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 2025 (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. 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 19 measures reported that have a national benchmark, three are in the top quartile, eight are in the second quartile, seven are in the third quartile and one is in the bottom quartile.

Tableau Dashboard usage

6. Across the Children and Family Services department, in quarter 2 2025/26 there were 614 active Tableau Server users, an increase from quarter 1 (508). Across the Department there were 42,413 views, up from 39,788 views in the previous quarter, at a rate of 69 views per user, down from the previous quarter (78).
7. Across the two main service areas, in quarter 2 2025/26 there were 352 users and 21,929 views in Targeted Early Help and Social Care at a rate of 62 views

per user, and 146 users and 5,468 views in Education and SEND at a rate of 37 views per user.

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

8. Local Authority comparisons used in this section are most recent figures published by the government for end of year benchmarking of performance in 2024/25.
9. The percentage of children becoming subject to a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time in the year to date decreased to 20.2% at the end of Quarter 2 compared to 23.0% at the end of Quarter 1. In this quarter, 38 children began a second or subsequent child protection plan, a small increase from 35 reported in the preceding quarter. Leicestershire is now placed close to the top of second quartile of local authorities compared to most recent national results published for 2024/25. 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.
10. The percentage of re-referrals to Children's Social Care within 12 months was 23.0% at the end of Quarter 2 which is similar to 22.4% at the end of the previous quarter; 423 children were 're-referred' within Quarter 2. Leicestershire continues to be placed in the third quartile of local authorities.
11. The percentage of assessments completed within 45 days to the end of Quarter 2 was 87.9%, an increase compared to performance at the end Quarter 1 (86.8%). Within Quarter 2, 1,619 assessments were completed, with 1,440 within timescale. Leicestershire continues to be placed in the second quartile of local authorities using most recent comparisons.
12. The percentage of Care Leavers aged up to 21 in Suitable Accommodation was 96.3% at the end of Quarter 2 (206 out of 214 young people), similar to the end of the previous Quarter (96.0%). Leicestershire continues to be in the top quartile of local authorities using available comparisons.
13. The percentage of Care Leavers aged up to 21 in Education, Employment or Training improved to 63.6% at the end of Quarter 2 (136 out of 214 young people), similar to the end of the previous Quarter (63.5%). Leicestershire continues to be placed in the first quartile using available comparisons. The Service continues to provide careful oversight to the care leaver indicators and is driven by a corporate commitment for creating mentoring and apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers.
14. The percentage of Children in Care at the end of Quarter 2 who had a dental check in the preceding 12 months was 71.7% (554 children), a decrease from 74.5% reported for the previous quarter.
15. The percentage of Children in Care at the end of Quarter 2 who had an annual health assessment within the preceding 12 months was 81.1% (627 children). This is a small decrease from 81.8% reported for the previous quarter.

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

16. 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.
17. The Children and Families Services Departmental Plan outlines 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.
18. The number of children in mainstream schools in Leicestershire with an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) was 3,687 at the Autumn term 2025 school census. This is 161 children higher than at the Summer term 2025 school census (3,526). The Autumn term 2025 school census EHCP numbers, and the proportion of the pupil population it represents, are the highest recorded for any school census term since the phasing in of the 2014 SEN Code of Practice changes were completed. Of all pupils on roll now in Leicestershire Mainstream Schools, 3.7% have an EHCP.
19. The number of children in mainstream schools in Leicestershire without an EHCP but in receipt of SEN Support was 12,914 at the Autumn term 2025 school census. This is 486 lower than the Summer term 2025 school census (13,400). This mirrors the historical pattern of a drop in numbers between the end of one academic year and the beginning of a new one. Although the Autumn term 2025 school census SEN support numbers represents the first time since 2017 where the numbers recorded have been lower than for the same period of the previous academic year. In Autumn 2024, the number of SEN Support pupils was 13,165.

People are safe in their daily lives

20. Local Youth Justice statistics are regularly reported to the Youth and Justice Partnership Board. The latest report was presented at the December 2025 board.
21. The number of First Time Entrants into the Criminal Justice System in Q2 2025/26 was 17. This is unchanged from the last figure reported to Scrutiny (Q3 2024/25) and an increase of five on the previous quarter (Q1 2025/26). Local data is currently unavailable for Use of Custody and Re-offending, although Ministry of Justice figures are available in the report.

Help every child to get the best possible start in life

Early years

20. In the Summer term 2025, 64.5% of eligible two-year-olds took up their Funded Early Education Entitlement (FEEE). This is a decrease from the Spring term 2025 (66.5%). For three-year-olds, the figure was 94.6%, a slight decrease over the Spring term 2025 (95.6%). Overall, 98.2% of eligible two- and three-year-olds

took up their FEEE in high-quality provision in the Summer term 2025, an increase from the Spring term 2025 (97.2%).

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

22. From the end of the Summer term 2025, routine Ofsted inspections had been paused until November 2025. At which point a new inspection framework was introduced. The data provided in this report reflects the final outcome of the previous Ofsted Inspection framework.
23. The percentage of primary schools rated Good or Outstanding for leadership and management was 93.4% (213 out of 228 inspected schools) at the end of Quarter 2. This represents a 0.4% increase from Quarter 1 2025/26 and is a record level of performance for Leicestershire. This figure is within the third quartile of local authorities and is 0.3% below the England average, which continues to be at a record level (93.7%), and 2.3% higher than the average for Leicestershire's new set of Statistical Neighbours (91.1%).
24. The percentage of secondary schools rated Good or Outstanding for leadership and management was 88.6% (39 out of 44 inspected schools) at the end of Quarter 2. This represents no change in performance from Quarter 1 2025/26. This performance is within the third quartile of local authorities nationally. Leicestershire's performance is 1.5% lower than the average for England, which at 90.1% is a new highest ever level of performance, and 2.1% lower than the average for Leicestershire's new set of Statistical Neighbours, 90.7%, which is also the highest ever performance figure for this group.
25. The percentage of pupils educated in Good or Outstanding schools for leadership and management was 91.9% at the end of Quarter 2 (approx. 92.1k out of 100.2k pupils). This is an increase of 0.4% from Quarter 1 2025/26 (91.5%). This figure is within the third quartile of local authorities nationally. Leicestershire's performance is 1.5% lower than the average for England (93.4%), and 0.7% lower than the average for Leicestershire's new set of Statistical Neighbours (92.6%). Both the national and the average Statistical Neighbour performance are at new record levels.
26. The Department for Education (DfE) has released final and provisional assessment outcomes for Primary and Secondary schools in 2025.
27. The final 2025 Key Stage 2 (11 year olds) outcomes for the percentage of all pupils achieving the expected standard or higher in Reading, Writing and Mathematics was 63.0% (4,976 out of 7,894 pupils). This is an increase on the previous year of 1.6% from 61.4%. Leicestershire performance remains in the second quartile nationally.
28. Leicestershire's performance was 0.7% higher than the national performance, which at 62.3% was a 1.6% increase on the previous year, and 2.3% higher than the average for Leicestershire's new set of Statistical Neighbours, which at 60.7% represented an increase of 1.8% on the previous year.

29. The 2025 performance for Leicestershire is the highest performance since the return of formal assessments in 2022, but still 4.1% lower than the performance achieved in 2019, which was the highest performance under the current assessment framework. Nationally, the provisional 2025 performance has followed the same trend as Leicestershire, and remains 2.6% below that achieved in 2019, which was the highest performance under the current assessment framework.
30. The percentage of Free School Meal (FSM) eligible pupils achieving the expected standard or higher in Reading, Writing and Mathematics was 43.0% (of 1491 pupils). This is 2% higher than in 2024 and places Leicestershire in the third quartile nationally. The 2025 performance of Leicestershire is the highest ever performance for FSM pupils under the current assessment framework. The cohort now represents 18.9% of pupils, the highest pre 2022 cohort proportion size was 9.8% in 2019. At 47.5%, National performance is also the highest performance under the current assessment framework; this is an increase of 2.1% on the previous year. Leicestershire's performance is 4.5% lower than the National performance, whilst compared to the new set of Statistical Neighbours Leicestershire's performance is 2.4% higher. This groups performance at 40.6% was an increase of 3.2% on 2024, but still 1.2% below the highest pre 2022 performance of 41.8%.
31. The percentage of SEN support pupils achieving the expected standard or higher in Reading, Writing and Mathematics was 25.6% (of 1304 pupils). This performance is placed within the third quartile nationally. For Education and Health Care Plan pupils (EHCP) it was 11.8% (of 373 pupils), this performance is placed within the first quartile nationally, a change from the third quartile last year. Both performance measures are at the highest levels under the current assessment framework, which is also the case for the National performance.
32. Leicestershire's SEN support pupils' performance was 3.1% below the National average in 2025. 16.5% of Leicestershire pupils are represented by this cohort, a rise from 14.4% in 2019, which was the highest proportion under the current assessment framework prior to the return of assessments in 2022. Leicestershire's EHCP pupil performance was above the national average by 2.5% in 2025. The cohort represents 4.7% of pupils, this compares to 2.9% in 2019, which was the highest proportion under the current assessment framework prior to the return of assessments in 2022. Leicestershire's comparisons to their new set of statistical neighbours shows SEN Support performance to be 0.7% higher, and EHCP performance to be 3.5% higher.
33. The percentage of children in 2025 with a good level of development at the end of the early year's foundation stage (EYFS – 5-year-olds) was 70.4% (of 7,423 children), an increase from 69.6% in 2024. This performance is within the second quartile of local authorities nationally, 2.1% above the England average, and 0.2% above the average for Leicestershire's new Statistical Neighbours. Since formal assessments under the current assessment framework began in 2022 each year has seen improvement in performance at the National, Statistical Neighbour, and Leicestershire level.

34. The percentage of children eligible for Free School Meals with a good level of development was 46.1% (of 789 children) in 2025, an increase of 1.8% (44.3%) from 2024. This performance was within the fourth quartile of local authorities nationally. It stands 5.1% lower than the England average, and 0.3% lower than the average for Leicestershire's new Statistical Neighbours.
35. The percentage of children with an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) and assessed with a good level of development was 3.5% (of 256 children) in 2025, which was similar to the performance in 2024, 3.7%. This performance was within the second quartile of local authorities nationally, 0.5% lower than the England average, and 0.8% below the average for Statistical Neighbours.
36. At Key Stage 4 (16-year-olds), due to the cancellation of formal Key Stage 2 assessments in 2020, Progress 8 scores are not available, the replacement main accountability measure is the Attainment 8 score. Progress 8 is a value-added measure that shows how much progress pupils make from the end of primary school (Key Stage 2) to the end of secondary school (Key Stage 4), compared to pupils nationally with similar starting points. Attainment 8 shows the average academic achievement of pupils across eight qualifications at the end of Key Stage 4 (GCSE level).
37. The provisional average Attainment 8 score for all pupils (7,862 pupils) was 46.2, which was an increase of 0.3 on the previous year. Nationally, the performance has shown no improvement, 45.9. This has resulted in Leicestershire's performance representing only for the second time since the performance measure was introduced in 2016 being higher than the National average. The performance remains within the second quartile of Local Authorities nationally. Leicestershire's performance was 0.2 higher than the average for its new set of Statistical Neighbours.
38. For Free School Meal eligible pupils (1,369 pupils) the average Attainment 8 score was 32.2, this performance is within the third quartile nationally. This performance represents a 0.1 increase on the previous year, and is 2.8 lower than the National average, 35.0, which in contrast increased by 0.4 from the previous year. Leicestershire's performance was the same as the average for its new set of Statistical Neighbours. The cohort now represents 17.4% of pupils in Leicestershire, the highest pre 2022 cohort proportion size was 8.2% in 2019.
39. The Attainment 8 score for SEN support pupils was 33.6 (1,119 pupils), an increase of 1.9 on the previous year. Compared to the National average this performance is now 0.1 lower, nationally a 0.6 improvement was seen to 33.7. Leicestershire's performance was 0.5 higher than the average for its new set of Statistical Neighbours. The Attainment 8 score for Education and Health Care Plan pupils (EHCP) was 16.6 (386 pupils). This represents an increase of 0.9 on the previous year, and is now 1.8 higher than the national average, which increased by 0.6 to 14.8. Leicestershire's performance was 0.7 higher than the average for its new set of Statistical Neighbours. In comparison to the performance of other local authorities nationally both cohort's performances are within the second quartile. This is the first time the SEN Support performance for Leicestershire has been higher than the third quartile since the performance

measure was introduced in 2016, for the EHCP cohort it presents no change in quartile.

40. The number of children Electively Home Educated (EHE) was 1,263 at the end of Q2 2025/26. This is an increase of 144 students (13%) compared to the end of Q2 2024/25 (1,119 students).
41. Trends show an increase since 2023/2024 in the number of young people with who have attendance difficulties due to mental health difficulties, school anxiety and/or relationship breakdowns with their education setting. This, coupled with an increase in the number families citing their existing school is unable to meet need as the reason for EHE there now being increasing group of families who feel their school setting is not the best place for their children. This reflects trends being seen nationally with increasing EHE figures within most Local Authorities.
42. The percentage of young people (16-17) in Leicestershire not in education, employment, or training (NEET) at the end of Q2 2025/26 was 0.8%. This rate was 0.7% lower than at the end of Q1 2025/26 and remains below the target of less than 2.1%.

Conclusion

43. The report provides a summary of performance at the end of Quarter 2 2025/26, covering the period July to September 2025.
44. 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

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

None.

Appendix

Children and Family Services Department Performance Dashboard Quarter 2, 2025/26

Officers to Contact

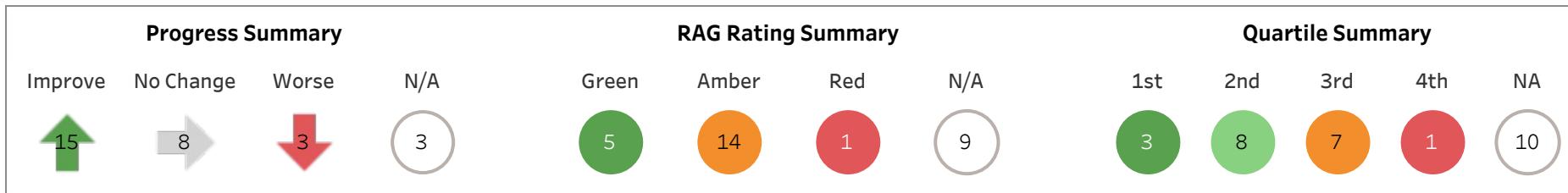
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CFS Overview & Scrutiny Dashboard Q2 2025/26



Strategic Plan Outcome

All

Area

All

Search Indicator

All

| Area | Indicator | Latest Data | Period | Previous Data | Perform. DOT | Target | RAG | Quartiles |
|-------------|--|--------------|------------------|---------------|---|--------|---|-----------|
| Early Years | Eligible 2 and 3-year olds taking up their FEEE in a high-quality provision | 98.2% | Summer Term 2025 | 97.2% |  | NA |  | NA |
| | Eligible 2 year olds taking up their FEEE | 64.5% | Summer Term 2025 | 66.5% |  | NA |  | NA |
| | Eligible 3 year olds taking up their FEEE | 94.6% | Summer Term 2025 | 95.6% |  | NA |  | NA |
| Education | Children Electively Educated at Home | 1263 | Q2 2025/26 | 1119 |  | NA |  | NA |
| | KS2 - Expected level in Reading, Writing and Maths - EHCP | 11.8% | 2024/25 | 7.6% |  | NA |  G | 1st |
| | KS2 - Expected level in Reading, Writing and Maths - pupils eligible for FSM | 43.0% | 2024/25 | 41.0% |  | NA |  A | 3rd |
| | KS2 - Expected level in Reading, Writing and Maths - SEN Support | 25.6% | 2024/25 | 23.1% |  | NA |  A | 3rd |
| | KS2 - pupils achieving expected standard in Reading, Writing and Mathematics | 63.0% | 2024/25 | 61.4% |  | NA |  A | 2nd |

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| | | | | | | | | |
|-------------|--|-------|------------------|-------|---|--------|---|-----|
| | KS4 - Attainment 8 | 46.2 | 2024/25 | 45.9 |  | NA |  | 2nd |
| | KS4 - Attainment 8 (EHCP) | 16.6 | 2024/25 | 15.7 |  | NA |  | 2nd |
| | KS4 - Attainment 8 (FSM) | 32.2 | 2024/25 | 32.1 |  | NA |  | 3rd |
| | KS4 - Attainment 8 (SEN Support) | 33.6 | 2024/25 | 31.7 |  | NA |  | 2nd |
| | NEET young people aged 16-17 | 0.8% | Q2 2025/26 | 1.5% |  | <2.1% |  | NA |
| | Primary schools rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' for leadership and management | 93.4% | Q2 2025/26 | 93.0% |  | NA |  | 3rd |
| | Pupils in Good or Outstanding schools for leadership and management | 91.9% | Q2 2025/26 | 91.5% |  | NA |  | 3rd |
| | Reception pupils reaching a 'Good level of development' | 70.4% | 2024/25 | 69.6% |  | NA |  | 2nd |
| | Reception pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans achieving 'Good Level of Development' | 3.5% | 2024/25 | 3.7% |  | NA |  | 2nd |
| | Reception pupils with Free School Meals (FSM) status achieving 'Good level of development' | 46.1% | 2024/25 | 44.3% |  | NA |  | 4th |
| | Secondary schools rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' for leadership and management | 88.6% | Q2 2025/26 | 88.6% |  | NA |  | 3rd |
| SEND | Children in mainstream schools in receipt of SEN Support (without EHCP) | 12914 | Autumn Term 2025 | 13400 |  | NA |  | NA |
| | Children in mainstream schools with EHCP | 3687 | Autumn Term 2025 | 3526 |  | NA |  | NA |
| Social Care | Assessments completed within 45 days | 87.9% | Q2 2025/26 | 86.8% |  | >90.3% |  | 2nd |

| | | | | | | | | |
|------------------|--|--------------|------------|-------|--|--------|--|-----|
| Youth Justice | Care leavers EET | 63.6% | Q2 2025/26 | 63.5% | | >54.0% | | 1st |
| | Care leavers in suitable accommodation | 96.3% | Q2 2025/26 | 96.0% | | >92.0% | | 1st |
| | Children becoming subject to a CPP for second or subsequent time | 20.2% | Q2 2025/26 | 23.0% | | <20.8% | | 2nd |
| | Children in care who have had dental checks within last 12 months (at end of period) | 71.7% | Q2 2025/26 | 74.5% | | NA | | NA |
| | Children in care who have their annual health assessment within last 12 months (.. | 81.1% | Q2 2025/26 | 81.8% | | NA | | NA |
| | Re-referrals to CSC within 12 mths | 23.0% | Q2 2025/26 | 22.4% | | <18.7% | | 3rd |
| | No. of first time entrants to the criminal justice system aged 10-17 (year to date) | 17 | Q2 2025/26 | 17 | | NA | | NA |

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