



**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**  
**COMMITTEE: 6 MARCH 2017**

**FOSTERING AND ADOPTION – DETAILS ON ADOPTION**  
**PLACEMENT BREAKDOWN, PRESSURES IN THE LAC SYSTEM**  
**AND THE FUTURE STRATEGY FOR FOSTERING**

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

**Purpose of report**

1. The purpose of the report is to provide the Committee with an up to date picture of adoption placement breakdown, pressures in the Looked After Child (LAC) system and the future strategy for fostering, and to seek the committee's views on this strategy.

**Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

2. On the 7<sup>th</sup> November 2016, the Committee considered both the Fostering and Adoption Service Statutory Quality Assurance and Performance report for 1 April 2016 – 30 September 2016.
3. The purpose of the reports was to bring the Committee's attention the activity of the Fostering and Adoption Service during that specified period.
4. The Committee asked for additional information to be presented to a future meeting regarding adoption breakdown, pressures in the LAC system and the future strategy for fostering. This report seeks to cover the requested additional information.

**Background**

**Pressures in the LAC System**

5. Leicestershire's permanence strategy is that children and young people be supported to live with their families, if it is safe for them to do so.
6. For those who are unable to live with their families and who need to be in the care of the local authority, the County Council's aim is to secure family based placements. These can either be within their extended family and friend network or with a foster family, or for some through adoption.

7. For a small number of children and young people with complex health and/or emotional-behavioural needs, residential care will be needed.
8. In March 2016, there were 469 children in care. The placements spend for 2015/16 was £22.3 million.
9. In January 2017, there were 510 children in care. The projected placements spend for 2016/17 is £21.830 million (*the Placement Budget Analysis 2016/17 vs 2015/16* is attached as Appendix 1)
10. Overall, there has been an 8% increase in LAC numbers but a 9% reduction in spend.
11. Placement stability has continued to improve over the past year (15% to 10% placement instability), indicating that children are being matched well to type of provision and carers are able to meet their needs.
12. In addition to this, the service has strongly supported the placement of children within their extended families or friend network, either as connected carers (carers approved as foster carers for that child) or under a permanence court order.
13. At the end of March 2016 there were 77 children living with connected foster carers and 92 in January 2017 (a 19% increase); and at the end of March 2016 there were 287 children living with connected carers under a permanency arrangement and 312 in January 2017 (a 8.7% increase).
14. These types of connected care arrangements not only allow the child or young person to be cared for by people they know and to remain within their communities, but represent a significant financial saving (compared to regulated placements).

### **The future strategy for fostering**

15. The departmental activity in respect of careful care planning, management oversight of outcomes for children and young people, quality of assessment, placement tracking and oversight through a panel process, recruitment activity and improved support to foster carers has contributed positively to the Council's ability to provide good quality placements and care for our children and young people within a pressured budget.
16. The challenge now lies in the continued recruitment and support of carers to meet the growing demand. The Council not only need to increase its 'standard' foster care placements over the next year, but need placements for children and young people of particular profiles.
17. Nationally, there is a shortage of carers for specific groups of children, notably sibling groups, older children, unaccompanied asylum seeker children and children with disabilities. The need is similar in Leicestershire.

18. The placement demand, particularly in relation to young people with disabilities, emotional-behavioural needs and sibling groups, requires careful matching considerations, for example, keeping siblings together requires particular planning. Where the Council cannot meet the need from within its own foster carer provision to keep siblings together, it seeks to commission a placement through an external provider.
19. For some children and young people their needs are so complex and risks are so high, they require the structure and levels of care available through residential homes. Where the Council makes the decision that this is the most appropriate decision for the child or young person, 'trajectory' planning is essential. This means that the social worker must think about how long that child or young person needs that level of care and when they will be able to return to a family-based provision, and where appropriate to Leicestershire. It is essential that there is local provision with the skills, training and support to offer the necessary care. The types of provision needed includes:
- Specialist foster carers (called One2One carers and parallel carers)
  - Supported Lodgings provisions
  - Specialist Supported Lodgings provisions, and
  - Supported accommodation
20. In addition to this, there is a growing demand for short-breaks provision to support children, young people and their families. These are usually children and young people with very complex needs or disabilities.
21. Having sufficient carers is only part of the picture. Foster carers provide loving homes to children and young people who have very complex emotional, behavioural, education and health needs. Ensuring that these carers have access to a range of support is essential. Over the past year the Fostering Service has amongst other development activities:
- Lowered supervising social worker caseloads to ensure better levels of support and oversight.
  - Reviewed Hubs where foster carers meet to be more responsive to their needs.
  - Improved the training offer.
  - Introduce fostering community events.
  - Introduced Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) consultation sessions for the social worker and carers.
  - Introduced a Dedicated Placement Support Team to work with children, young people and carers to stabilise placements or help the child or young person return home.
22. The Care Placement Strategy will be translated into a range of initiatives and activities, a number of which have already started and will continue throughout 2017-2020 and others will be new. These include:

- Revise the recruitment process including the introduction of business rules and targets for completion of stage 1 assessments.
- Run the range of core campaigns (in-house, supported lodgings, Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)).
- Introduce new campaigns for sibling placements and launch a pilot foster carer payment scheme.
- Focused campaigns for Independent Fostering Agency carers with Leicestershire children in their care to encourage them to become carers for the Local Authority.
- Ongoing campaigns to recruit more One2One and parallel carers.
- Run a new campaign for Specialist Supported Lodgings carers for young people with learning difficulties or a disability.
- Run a campaign to increase short break care provision.
- Review the Statement of Purpose for Welland House Children's Home regarding age range and working with children who have suffered trauma.
- Align the Welland House Children's Home training plan to the changing profile needs of children requiring residential care
- Launch a framework for 16+ placement and support.
- Further corporate events (already 3 large sponsors have been identified)
- Extend the Dedicated Placement Support Team to include a psychologist and/or a Community Psychiatric Nurse
- Review the CAMHS commissioned provision.
- Continued use of panels to review placement provision.
- Increased the Fostering Service to meet the recruitment, assessment, supervising social worker and support requirements (including connected carers) to encourage potential foster carers to choose Leicestershire County Council as their fostering agency.
- Publish our foster carer and connected carer offer on a dedicated website.

23. Annual performance targets for generating enquiries to each stage are set out below:

	<b>Annual target</b>
<b>Requests for information</b>	600
<b>Invited to info event</b>	60%
<b>initial visits</b>	50% (inflated)
<b>Stage 1 starts</b>	22% (inflated)
<b>Stage 2 starts</b>	15%

<b>Panel approvals</b>	10%
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### **Adoption breakdown (disruption)**

24. Leicestershire County Council is responsible for a Local Authority Fostering Service. It undertakes statutory responsibilities relating to Fostering. This report is from the Leicestershire County Council Fostering Service. Leicestershire County Council is also responsible for a Local Authority Adoption Agency.
25. Adoption Agencies are required to provide one six month and one annual report to the Executive<sup>1</sup> regarding the activity and work of the Adoption Agency and Adoption Panel. On the 7<sup>th</sup> November 2016, the Committee considered the report and asked for further information about the reported adoption disruptions.
26. During this period, there were 2 adoption disruptions. One of these children is now living in semi-independent accommodation by mutual agreement of the young person and his parents. He continues to be supported by the local authority. This young person is happy in placement and feels well supported by his carers. The other young person received support for a brief period from the Council before it was established that his support and care is the responsibility of Leicester City.
27. For many reasons, adopted children, young people and their parents have difficulties and these become more complex over time as the child or young person tries to understand their life experiences, they deal with loss and they build new relationships (amongst many other challenges).
28. Some adopted children struggle because they have an attachment disorder (a broad term used to describe disorders of mood, behaviour and social relationships arising from a failure to form normal attachments to primary carers in their early childhood).
29. Good assessment and matching is undertaken by the Adoption Team and adopted parents report feeling well supported during this period and up until the making of the final order.
30. However, we know that following this period, Leicestershire adoption families (those families to whom we have a responsibility for three years after the making of the final order and those adoption families living in Leicestershire to whom other local authorities no longer have a duty) rely heavily on universal services for support.
31. Good adoption provision should ensure that:

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<sup>1</sup> The Executive in Leicestershire is the Lead Member and Scrutiny Members

- There is a core offer of care post adoption for the first three years.
- Adoption Support plans should consider the longer term needs of the child.
- A training offer e.g. therapeutic parenting offer
- Opportunities for meeting other adopters to offer support
- A therapeutic offer
- A website to promote self-help, signposting to services and networking.

### **Resource Implications**

32. There are additional resource requirements in both the Fostering and the Adoption service areas. The staffing need relates to having sufficient staff in key areas to meet the recruitment and support needs of foster carers and adopters. In relation to recruitment, additional staff members are currently employed in the recruitment, assessment and supervising social worker team and additional staff will be required when in-house mainstream fostering provision increases
33. There is a further staffing requirement relating to Ofsted recommendations regarding:
- Adoption and other permanence order support provision
  - Statutory adoption functions regarding therapeutic support to birth families of adopted children
  - Independent support and advice to parents when adoption is identified as a care plan to help parents understand why this plan was chosen and to help them contribute to the plan.

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

34. The Choices Sufficiency Strategy and Market Position Statement identified priorities for recruitment, support and training of foster carers.
35. The Market Position Statement has been refreshed for 2016-17. The Market Position Statement uses demographic and statistical information to identify the most vulnerable and highest needs. Priority action, supply needs and development issues related directly to the analysis of this information.
36. The proposed Children and Young People's Care Placement Strategy which is currently being written sets out the overarching priorities for sufficiency for 2017-2020. The priorities are based on demand patterns and the profile of children for whom we have difficulty identifying placements.
37. Furthermore, a key measure is the placement stability rate. This gives us a good indication of which children have the highest needs and which carers have additional support requirements to enable them to best meet the needs of these children or young people. The Dedicated Placement Support Team receives monthly reports of which children or young people contribute to fluctuations in this indicator, linked to those with missing from care episodes or link to child exploitation.

38. The Dedicated Placement Support Team also work with adopted children whose placements have broken down and need more intensive support to enable their return to parental care.
39. Other teams and service who work with adopted children include:
- Strengthening Families Team – edge of care and children in need
  - Adoption Team, therapeutic support
  - CAMHS (commissioned support for adopted children with mental health needs)
  - CAMHS consultation sessions for practitioners and carers
  - Private therapists (commissioned by the Fostering and Adoption Team should a child's needs indicate this service is needed)
  - Attachment training to schools through the Virtual School.
40. The Adoption Team structure is currently under review to establish where best to place this resource and responsibility, and decisions will be made in the context of the Regionalisation of Adoption.
41. Through this broad range of provision, the Council ensures that children, young people and their families are able to access advice and support when they need it. There is, however, an identified gap in provision in relation to adoption support. For this reason, a new post has been introduced to the team to develop a core offer to adopters. This will include visits to the parents at key points during the first three years after adoption, to help parents understand what their children's needs are likely to be over time and to best prepare for this.

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### **List of Appendices**

Appendix 1: Placement Budget Analysis 2016/17 vs 2015/16

## Appendix 1:

**Placement Budget Analysis 2016/17 vs 2015/16**

<b><u>Type of care</u></b>	<b><u>2016/17 Forecasted Net Spend</u></b>	<b><u>2015/16 Net Spend</u></b>	<b><u>% difference 16/17 vs 15/16</u></b>
External fostering	£4,900,000	£4,400,000	10%
Internal Fostering including kinship	£3,200,000	£3,100,000	3%
External Residential	£8,500,000	£9,200,000	-8%
Internal Residential	£750,000	£1,250,000	-67%
16+ / Supported Accommodation	£1,400,000	£1,700,000	-21%
Secure / Remand	£30,000	£200,000	-567%
Adoption Allowances	£800,000	£750,000	6%
Special Guardianship / Resident Orders	£2,050,000	£1,700,000	17%
Placement Support i.e. CAHMS / Therapeutic packages	£200,000	n/a	
<b>Total Placement spend - LAC &amp; Non LAC</b>	<b>£21,830,000</b>	<b>£22,300,000</b>	<b>-2%</b>
Looked after Children	510	470	8%
Special Guardianship Orders and Resident Orders	312	293	6%
Adoption allowances	117	113	3%
<b>Total Children supported - LAC &amp; Non LAC</b>	<b>939</b>	<b>876</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Annual average unit cost per supported child placed including LAC &amp; Non LAC</b>	<b>£23,248</b>	<b>£25,457</b>	<b>-9%</b>