

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

**1<sup>ST</sup> SEPTEMBER 2020**

**CHILDREN IN CARE AND PERMANENCE REPORT**  
**APRIL 2019 TO MARCH 2020**

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

**Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to present the Annual Children in Care and Permanence Annual Report for the period 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020.

**Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

2. The Department of Health, Statutory Guidance on Promoting the Health and Well-being of Looked after Children (DCSF/DH. 2015) requires a report on the delivery of service and the progress achieved for the health and wellbeing of children in care.

**Background**

3. In Leicestershire, following consultation with young people, the department agreed to talk about Children in Care (CIC) not Looked after Children and Young People (LAC).
4. In Leicestershire it is the aim to ensure that all children are given opportunities to be happy, healthy and to achieve their best outcomes. This is embodied in the vision statement and the 'Road to Excellence' Continuous Improvement Plan that drives improvement in Children's Social Care. It is the ambition for children and young people to enjoy positive experiences in safe and supportive families, well connected to their local communities and when necessary well supported by a wide range of targeted support services -- building strong and resilient family relationships.

5. The Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services was carried out by Ofsted in September 2019. The Inspection found 'the experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers to be Good.
6. Ofsted made six key recommendations for Targeted Early Help and Children's Social Care which are addressed in a detailed continuous improvement plan. An update on progress against these individual recommendations is presented on a six-monthly basis to the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### **Children in Care and Permanence Annual Report Summary**

7. The Children in Care and Permanence Annual Report (attached as Appendix A to this report) provides the annual summary of the core activities relating to Children in Care in Leicestershire. The key findings are as follows:
8. The number of children in care on 31 March 2020 was 657. The previous end of year count was 582. This is an increase of 12.9%. This is slightly at variance to the lesser upward trend experienced by many local authorities but does reflect Leicestershire's change of practice relating to the accommodation of 16-17-year-old young people deemed to be homeless and therefore children in need. The current number of children in care equates to 46.9 per 10,000 children in Leicestershire. This compares to an average of 52.8 looked after children per 10,000 children in statistical neighbour authorities at 31 March 2019.
9. 71% (466) children are placed in family-based placements. Of these 45% (298) are placed with in-house carers, connected carers, adoptive families and parents, 28% (188) with independent agency foster carers. There is a decreased use of independent foster agency placements compared to last year (188 compared to 198 – 5% decrease)
10. 56 children were in residential care on 31 March 2020, representing 8.5% of the total looked after children number; this is below the national average of 9%. On 31 March 2019 there were 52 children in residential care.

11. Children who have experienced three placements or more in the last year was 8.7% which was a little higher than last year's average of 7.7% but still significantly below the statistical neighbour average of 11.9%
12. On 31 March 2020 41 children subject to an Interim or Full Care Order were living with their parent/s compared to 17 the previous year. This substantial increase is because of the efforts during care proceedings to help parents change their circumstances to enable the return of their children and efforts to return home children who have been in care for some time where parental circumstance has changed. The Department keeps these findings under review, to ensure that, amongst other things, there is effectiveness of use of the pre-proceedings protocol. This is a particular focus of Leicestershire's continuous improvement plan.
13. Children with long term stability (more than 3 years) decreased slightly, from 65% to 62% and remains below the statistical neighbour average of 66%. This area of performance is a particular focus for improvement activity. An audit will be completed to understand the profile of children affected and to understand the related needs of carers.
14. Recorded statutory visits to children completed in timescale rose from 70% in 2018/19 to 83% for 2019/20. This is still below the target but represents a significant improvement following activity driven by the continuous improvement plan. Managers have reported that the visits are completed, and it is the recording that is the issue.
15. Following the Ofsted Inspection findings in September 2019 children with a completed and signed off care plan in the previous six months decreased in the last quarter of 2019/20, as managers took a hard line on quality of assessments, returning them to social workers for improvement. The end of year figure was 60% (target 90%). However, improvement in completion rates and quality of plans is now being seen.
16. The number of children who have had their annual health assessment remains high and represents an increase on last year (2019/20 92%, 2018/19 82%).

Initial Health Assessments are not consistently referred to the health provider in a timely way (within 48 hours of coming into care), however there has been a good improvement with monthly reports to the Lead Member for Children and Families to oversee this improvement activity.

17. Up to date immunisation and vaccination of CiC for 2019/20 is 90.4% compared to 82% the previous year, and 87.6% of CiC received a dental check (previously 91.8%)

18. 278 Care Leavers were eligible for inclusion in the 2019/2020 return, of whom:

- I. The local authority was in touch with 96% (target 90%).
- II. 64.2% of Care Leavers who had not returned home for more than six months were in education, employment or training when contacted around their birthday (target 50%)
- III. 94.8% were in suitable accommodation (target 80%)

19. Leicestershire CiC and Care Leavers are actively encouraged and supported to participate in the shaping of services through consultation events, Children in Care Council and SYPAC (Supporting Young People After Care).

20. Performance is regularly monitored via monthly reports to Senior Management Team and a monthly performance meeting held with managers. This meeting is chaired by the Assistant Director, Targeted Early Help and Children's Social Care.

### **Consultations**

21. Ongoing consultation takes place with children in care via the Children in Care Council and with Care Leavers, via Support to Young People After Care (SYPAC).

### **Officer to Contact**

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### **List of Appendices**

Appendix A – Children in Care and Permanence Annual Report

### **Equalities and Human Rights Implications**

22. All services provided are done so in a framework of respecting equality and diversity for young people.

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