

Safeguarding and Performance
Corporate Parenting Team
Annual Report
1st April 2021 - 31st March 2022



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1. Executive Summary

Welcome to our Corporate Parenting Team annual report, which outlines the work of the Corporate Parenting Team, consisting of our Children's Rights Officers and Participation Officers. This report not only identifies the outstanding work which the team and our services are proud of, but also the way in which our children and young people have been actively involved and how their voice has been championed and influenced their own care plans, but also wider service delivery.

The Safeguarding and Performance Service are incredibly proud of the achievements of our children and young people and continue to recognise and celebrate this with them in many different ways. As Corporate Parents we are proud of all of our children and young people, their achievements and aspirations and feel privileged to work so closely with them and taking every opportunity to champion for them, as their Corporate Parents.

This report provides an overview of the work completed within the Corporate Parenting Team during 2021-2022, identifying our performance throughout the year and our priorities for the forthcoming year.

Our response to COVID19

The Coronavirus pandemic presented a time of severe pressure across all of society, and we know this specifically presented a higher level of risk for some children. Within Leicestershire County Council, we recognised it was especially important that children and young people across Leicestershire continued to receive the services and support that they need and are effectively safeguarded during this pandemic.

In response to the pandemic the Safeguarding and Performance Service rapidly adapted and changed the way we have delivered services to reflect the COVID19 circumstances, which have evolved since 2020. For a prolonged period we were delivering our services virtually in line with government guidance and also the local picture and circumstances. This was closely monitored and services responded accordingly to the circumstances presented.

Our staff have been supported to maintain service delivery to our children with support to implement home and remote working models. Staff have made good use of mobile technology to manage day-to-day communications with children and families and used virtual meetings through Skype/Microsoft Teams for key planning and decision-making meetings. This approach has also enabled staff to remain in close contact with their immediate teams and peers to prevent social isolation.

All workers have shown inventive ways of engaging children such as using what's app and video calls. The Corporate Parenting Team have been creative in ensuring children and young people's participation with many groups and activities taking place virtually, including the continuation of the Children In Care Council, Choir, Corporate Parenting Board as well as other fun activities, quiz and craft events.

We have been excited to be able to progress with our Future Ways of Working model and resume face to face contacts, groups, activities and support at meetings since early 2022, in line with the changing of restrictions. We are now pleased that all our Corporate Parenting groups and activities run face-to-face and children and young people are seen in person by their Children's Rights Officers and Participation Officers.

Corporate support for staff and managers has been strong throughout the pandemic with strong communication and support for staff wellbeing, funds for provision of working from home equipment and implementing safe working arrangements in key buildings where staff have continued to respond to service need.

Staff and leaders in Leicestershire have worked tirelessly in the face of this unprecedented time to support the most vulnerable children during this period and have put arrangements in place to ensure scrutiny of the safety and well-being of children and young people we support and care for.

As a service we are proud of how our workers have adapted to the unprecedented times and the quality of service they have continued to deliver to our children and young people throughout the last few years. We are pleased we are now working within our Future Ways of Working model and resuming face to face meetings and having direct contact with children and young people.

2. Introduction


The Corporate Parenting Team is based within the Safeguarding and Performance Service. The ethos of corporate parenting runs throughout the work of the Safeguarding and Performance Service. In Leicestershire we are ambitious for our children and young people and aspire to provide high quality services that improve children's outcomes.

Our Road to Excellence 2021 – 2023 plan provides a framework for action for all levels of staff, from managers to frontline practitioners. We have worked hard to ensure that our core values and behaviours underpin everything we do for children. We are aspirational for our children, we are curious and we place great value in relationships, which is underpinned by our core values and behaviours:

Continuous Improvement Plan 2021 - 2023
The Road to Excellence

Our Vision

For Leicestershire to be the best place for all children, young people and their families



Our Ambitions for 2021 - 2023

- Help every child to get the best possible start in life

- Help children and their families build strength, resilience, confidence and capacity

- Help children in Leicestershire to live in safe, stable environments and have secure attachments

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

Core Values and Behaviours that underpin everything we do

Aspirational
We value high aspirations for our Children and Families.

Being Curious
We value being curious and paying attention to detail.

Collaboration
We value collaboration based on building strong working relationships.

Behaviours

Listening
Understand trauma and it's effects on children and families we work with as well as on our workforce.

Building Relationships
Signs of Safety (SoS) supports our approach with children and families.

Outcome Focused
Striving to improve the lives of the children and families we work with.

Being Accountable
Everyone is responsible for delivering high quality services.

Our pledge for children

Each member of staff pledges that:

- We will put you (children and young people) at the heart of everything we do and celebrate your uniqueness and diversity
- We will listen and value what you tell us and your voice will inform decision making and help us design services
- We will help you to feel safe and where possible this will be with your family

Our leaders and managers pledge to:

- Challenge and support plans at all levels to achieve the best outcomes for children and young people without delay
- Value and enable good relationships between front line practitioners and families by prioritising a stable workforce
- Create a culture where relationship-based practice can flourish using high quality regular supervision offering high-support and high-challenge
- Understand trauma and it's effects on children and families we work with as well as on our workforce
- Know what is happening in frontline practice through direct observation and conversation with our staff.

How we will do it

Embedding excellent practice

- Intervention informed by robust evidence based decision making
- A joined up approach built on consistent high quality targeted Early Help and Social Care advice within Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans
- Reflective supervision to support effective practice with challenge and robust management oversight
- Clear records to capture the child's journey in language they understand.

Taking the right action at the right time

- A strong whole family approach based on effective relationships between staff, children and families
- Strong multi-agency partnerships across all tiers of intervention
- Preventing delay at all stages especially permanence
- Creating sustainable exit plans and building on family networks keeping families together where this is safe
- Commitment to our preventative work in early support related services (Early Help).

Developing policy and performance

- Practice led recording systems to allow staff to focus on time with children
- Up to date policies, procedures and standards that underpin consistent practice
- Well commissioned services for children in care including alternative education provision
- Strategic approach to support recruitment and retention of staff
- Defining children's services for the future based on staff expertise and innovation.

Being a learning organisation

- Using data and audit to know ourselves well and inform our learning
- Establish a shared value base, owned by our workforce
- Sustain a stable and well supported workforce, celebrating diversity and delivering excellent training and development.
- Being risk sensitive, based on valuing family strengths and using effective safety planning.


What success will look like

- Effective early help and support will reduce the number of children requiring social work intervention or support through an EHC Plan
- Children and families will tell us that we have made a positive difference to their lives

- Performance indicators evidence improving outcomes for children and young people
- Routine audit shows consistent application of thresholds, improved quality and timeliness of assessment and robust care planning driven by strong management oversight

- We will have examples of where children and families have helped us to develop our services
- Staff will tell us that streamlined systems and processes mean that they can spend effective time with children

- We will retain a highly skilled, committed workforce who have shared values
- Where children and young people cannot safely live at home decisions about legal and emotional permanency are robust and timely.



Our Corporate Parenting Strategy 2022-2025 provides the “*foundation and value base for how we will deliver high quality services to our Children in Care and Care Leavers. Furthermore, identifying where we are, where we want to be and how we intend to develop further to achieve our aspirations as corporate parents for our children, whilst championing and supporting them to meet their own ambitions and be successful in what they do now and in the future.*”

We strive for children and young people of Leicestershire to be afforded positive, stable and safe care within their families, where they are well connected to their communities and supported to access support services where needed.

In circumstances where children are unable to live with their family, our priority is to ensure they are provided with safe, stable and secure care and permanence is secured within a timely way. We want children to be afforded with opportunities to ensure they inspire to have high aspirations which are supported, thus having successful childhood experiences, which are the foundations to their adulthood.

In Leicestershire we are committed to our Children in Care and Care Leavers and are determined to ensure that we carry out our duty and responsibilities as a Corporate Parent with genuine passion, ambition, enthusiasm and care. This is underpinned by Our Promise which sets out our commitment to Children in Care and Care Leavers.

We understand that all of our children have individual needs and goals and our care planning and planned support offered to all of our children reflects this. We advocate and champion for diversity and ensure our children and young people are provided with inclusive services which values and respects their individual identity needs.

We are committed to the voice of our children and young people informing all areas of decision making, underpinned by a “You Said, We Did” approach. Participation is central to all services delivered to our children and young people and is championed in effective children and young people led forums including our Children in Care Council, Supporting Young People After Care (SYPAC), our Corporate Parenting Board and many more participation events”. (Corporate Parenting Strategy 2022-2025)

OUR VISION




For Leicestershire to be the best place for all children, young people and their families. This means that we will describe the outcomes we want to achieve for children, young people and their families and identify measures that can tell us how well we are achieving them.

OUR MISSION

Children and young people in Leicestershire are safe and living in families where they can achieve their potential and have their health, wellbeing and life chances improved within thriving communities.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 outlined the seven key corporate parenting principles which local authorities should have regard to when exercising their functions in relation to children looked after and care leavers. The 7 principles within the act describe the behaviours and attitudes expected of councils when they are acting as any good parent would do by supporting, encouraging, and guiding their children to lead healthy, rounded and fulfilled lives.

Our role and commitment as Corporate Parents under the 7 principles:

-  We will act in the best interest, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of our children and young people.
-  We will encourage our children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.
-  We will take into account the views, wishes and feelings of our children and young people.

- ✚ We will help our children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the Local Authority and its relevant partners.
- ✚ We will promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for our children and young people.
- ✚ For our children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships, and education or work.
- ✚ We will prepare our children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

Governance

Corporate Parenting is a collective responsibility first laid out in the Children Act 1989. The Act placed a duty on the Local Authority and all partners, including health, education and housing services to assist children's services to fulfil their functions under the Act – providing help, support and services in order to meet their Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

Leicestershire recognise the need to establish close, coordinated working relationships with partners if we are to succeed in improving outcomes for our children – now and in the future. We are committed to working in partnership with wider services, and with children and young people to achieve this. We have a strong and robust governance structure which enables challenge and reflection on how we, the Local Authority and our partners are held account for the application of our Corporate Parenting roles, responsibilities and commitment to our principles.

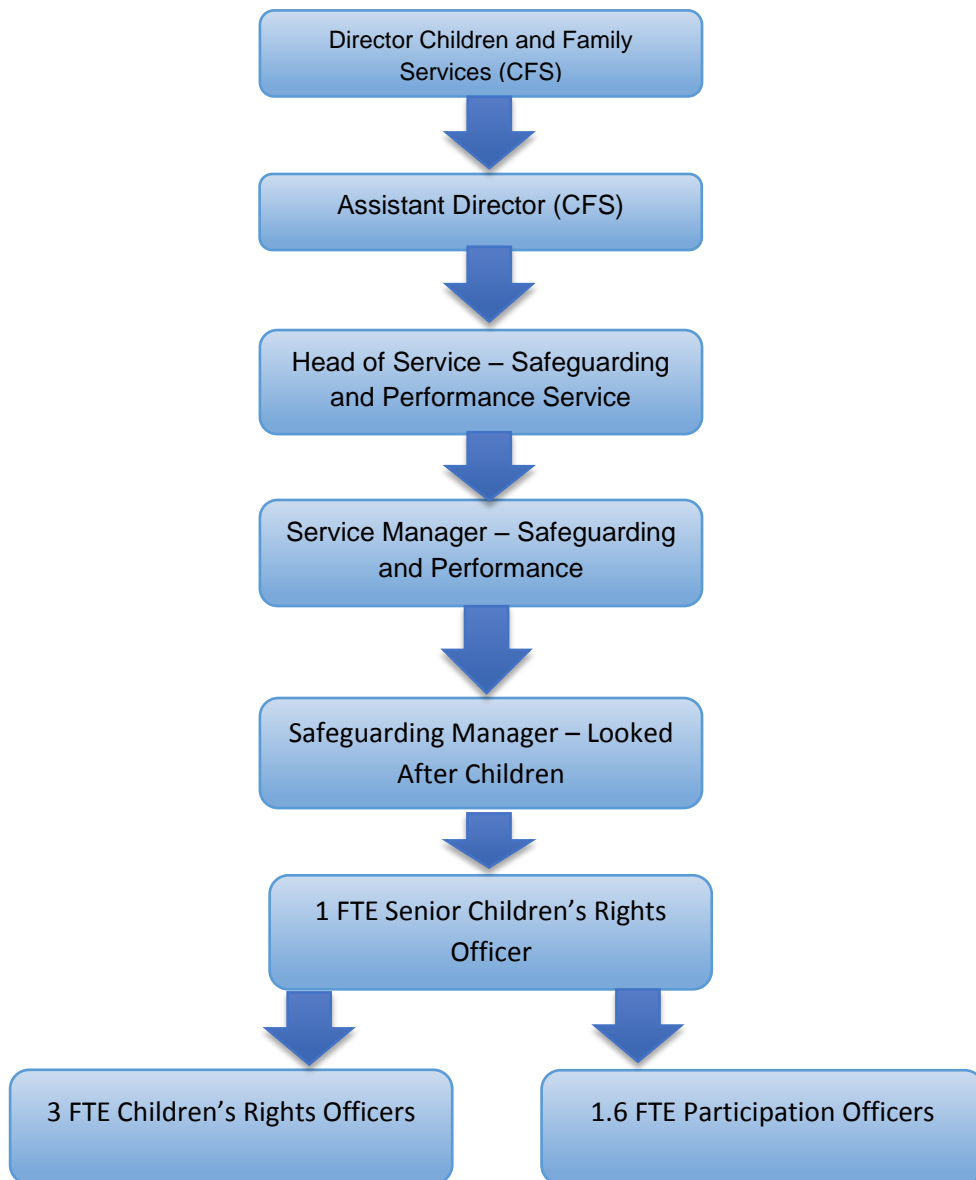
The governance arrangements that underpin our Corporate Parenting approach focus on the importance of the voice of our children and how they experience the support they receive, feel listened to and taken seriously, promoting the participation from our Children In Care and Care Leavers.

Our arrangements include:

- ✚ Corporate Parenting Board
- ✚ Children In Care Council
- ✚ SYPAC (Supporting young people after care)
- ✚ Out In Care
- ✚ Children's Social Care and Children in Care Member panels
- ✚ Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee

3. Profile of the Corporate Parenting Team

The Corporate Parenting Team is based within the Safeguarding and Performance Service. During 2021, the Team underwent a restructure, with the introduction of a Senior Children's Rights Officer who oversees the day-to-day management of the Team and line manages the workers. The Team consists of 1 FTE Senior Children's Rights Officer, 3 FTE Children's Rights Officers – 4 workers, 1.6 FTE Participation Officers – 2 workers.



4. What do we know about the performance and quality of practice within our Corporate Parenting Team?

Children's Rights Officers (CRO) – Child Protection work

Reason for referral – key themes

The main reason for a referral of children and young people subject to a child protection plan is for the child to have their voice heard independently during the child protection process. This includes CRO's attending child protection meetings on the child's behalf and sharing their voice and some children and young people attending child protection meetings with the support of their CRO.

Ages of support

We receive automatic referrals for all children aged 11 years and older who have an Initial Child Protection Conference in the upcoming days or weeks. Prior to the Initial Child Protection Conference, a CRO will contact the child's parent or carer with parental responsibility to offer the child a Children's Rights Officer to ensure they have access to advocacy to help them express their opinions and views and to make sure that the people working with them really listen. The Children's Rights service is voluntary, and a young person can stop having advocacy at any time.

If the parent or carer feels their younger child under 11 years old would also benefit from a Children's Rights Officer, we will also provide them with our service.

We also receive non-automatic referrals from professionals for children of all ages at any point during the child protection process.

From April 2021 until end of March 2022 we had 85 children and young people accept support from a CRO. 53 (62%) young people were 13 years, and older and 32 (38%) young people were under the age of 13 years.

Number of referrals

From 1st April 2021 until 31st March 2022, we received 254 referrals. Of the 254 referrals 240 (94%) were automatic referrals received for children 11-18 years old who had an Initial Child Protection Conference in the upcoming days or weeks. Of the non-automatic referrals (6%) 10 referrals were received from Social Workers for young people to have support to share their views during the child protection process and 4 referrals were automatic referrals due to receiving in conferences for young people moving into our Local Authority area.

Number of meetings supported

Of the 254 referrals received 85 (33%) children and young people have accepted support from a CRO. This support includes attending numerous meetings with the child or on the child's behalf such as Initial Child Protection Conferences, Review Child Protection Conferences, Core group meetings and Child in Need meetings when the case for a child has stepped down from child protection.

Length of time cases remain open

Of the 85 children and young people who have accepted support from a CRO, within this time period of a year 36 (42%) of the cases have been closed and the average length of time the

cases remain open is 18 weeks. It is not unusual that 49 cases are still open to a CRO as often child protection plans last longer than a year and children and young people wish to have support all the way through the process.

Outcome of involvement with children and young people

Children and young people have expressed that they feel that having a CRO during the child protection process has been very beneficial for them. They have felt listened to and that their voices have been heard. They have felt that they have had a better understanding of what is happening in their lives, the decisions that are being made about them and the roles of all the new professionals involved with them. They have a better understanding of what their rights are and why children and family services are involved with their family.

Case Studies

Ensuring Child's voice is heard at Initial Child Protection Conference		
Young person: A, aged 12, subject to a Receiving in Conference		
Case Summary: A had been subject to a Child Protection Plan in another local authority since December 2020. In that time, she had had 5 different Social Workers and her Mum was not allowing her to speak with Social Worker's alone.		
<i>The worries</i>	<i>What worked well</i>	<i>Outcome for young person</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Social Worker (Leics) was not permitted to speak to A alone and gain her views for the Receiving-in conference. This meant that A's direct views would not be heard in the conference. A was being home-schooled and living in an isolated area so there were no other professionals involved who were able to gain her views. Mum reported A to be extremely shy and often unwilling to engage with professionals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CRO was able to persuade mum of the benefits and independence of advocacy for A via a phone call. The CRO suggested an initial joint meeting in face to face and repeatedly reassured mum that it was voluntary, and no pressure would be placed on A. Mum was concerned that A had had too many workers in a short period of time. The CRO was able to reassure her that the Children's Rights Service aims to keep worker changes to a minimum. The CRO was able to attend the home address and speak with mum and A to introduce herself, the service and the benefits of having advocacy. A agreed to speak to the CRO alone and Mum was 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A's voice was clearly heard in the Receiving in conference (& subsequent conferences). A has remained involved in the Child Protection process via the CRO despite not wanting to attend meetings in person. A subsequently was willing (& permitted by mum) to speak to the Social Worker alone. A is aware of the worries of professionals and what the perceived risks are. <p><i>Increased Young Person's Voice</i></p> <p><i>Increased safety for Young Person</i></p>

	<p>happy with this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CRO was able to promote the Social Worker to both A and Mum as a very fair and competent Social Worker. 	
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Ensuring Child's voice is heard at Child Protection Conferences and Core Group meetings

Young person: MLT, 14, subject to a Child Protection Plan

Case Summary: MLT and her two siblings became subject to a child protection plan following mum taking indecent images of MLT and herself and selling these online. The children ended up in the care of dad, however he and MLT frequently argued, and dad would often call MLT evil. On one occasion it got so bad that MLT threatened dad with a knife leading children and family services to move MLT to live with her maternal grandma. MLT does not wish to live with dad and has maintained this view throughout the child protection process and feels professionals are not listening to her as they want her to live with her dad. MLT has said she would rather go into care than live with her dad and has asked on several occasions to be placed in care.

<i>The worries</i>	<i>What worked well</i>	<i>Outcome for young person</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MLT feels very negative towards her dad and has said that they argue a lot, that dad will swear at her and called her names. MLT feels that dad has been emotionally abusive, and she is worried for her brother and sister when they grow because she feels that dad has not changed since he started working with the professionals. MLT feels dad is showing one side to professionals that makes it look like he's changed, but she sees the same old side to him when no one else is there. MLT was worried she was going to have to do the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MLT engaged well with the CRO and was able to express herself and attend meetings with the CRO. The CRO was able to organise a meeting between the Team Manager and MLT where MLT will be able to express her worries about living at home, wanting to come into care and be able to discuss what her options are with Team Manager. The CRO was able to represent MLT views at core group meetings regarding MLT not wanting an ART assessment as it was causing her distress. This resulted in ART assessment being cancelled. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MLT has become more confident to speak up over time CRO has been working with her because she felt supported to express her views MLT will be heard by Team Manager which will go towards alleviating some of her worries and make her feel heard and that her concerns are being taken seriously.

<p>ART assessment and work with dad because she felt that professionals were doing this to get her to move back to dad's.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MLT does not want to live at home and has said she would rather go into care than live with her dad • MLT feels that the other professionals see her as difficult and horrible to dad and they don't see how everything has affected her and how unhappy she is at home. • MLT feels that her Social Worker isn't listening to her and has requested to meet with the Team Manager to talk through her worries about living at home again and to find out what her options are. 		
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Children's Rights Officers (CRO) – Children in care and Care Leavers work

Number of referrals

From 1st April 2021 until 31st March 2022, we received 88 referrals for children in care and children who have left care. 5 of these referrals did not meet the remit of our service and support for the young person was needed by another professional.

Of the 83 referrals accepted by our service:

- 16 (19%) were for Care Leavers
- 21 (25%) were for children in care under s20 voluntary accommodation
- 4 (5%) were for children in care under s30 interim care orders
- 39 (47%) were for children in care under s31 full care orders
- 2 (3%) for were for children under s25 secure order
- 1 (1%) for a child under a s21 placement order

6 referrals were not progressed as the young people had changed their mind and no longer wanted a CRO or they would not respond to the CRO when they tried to make contact, therefore 77 young people were supported by a CRO during this period.

Reason for referral – key themes

Young people can refer themselves for advocacy support or they can be referred by any professional, parent or carer involved with them. The Children's Rights Service for Children in care and Care Leavers is an opt-in service and they can access advocacy support any time up to the age of 25.

Each young person who comes into care over the age of 4 years old is contacted by a member of the Cooperate Parenting team to inform them of the services and activities the team run and to offer them a CRO. For young people below the age of 16 years they are often contacted via their carer. Young people over the age of 16 are often contacted directly by a member of the Cooperate Parenting team.

CRO's also contact all young people or their carers living in residential homes at 6 monthly intervals to check on their wellbeing and offer them a CRO.

Of the 83 referrals accepted by our service, the reason for the referral was for:

- 3 (4%) - Meetings support
- 4 (5%) - Informal complaint
- 7 (8%) - Formal complaint
- 10 (12%) - Explain rights / entitlements
- 1 (1%) - Access independent legal advice
- 3 (4%) Court support
- 2 (3%) Secure accommodation 2
- 1 (1%) - Access to records
- 1 (1%) - child requesting a new social worker
- 1 (1%) Education support
- 6 (7%) - Support regarding own child involved with children and family services.
- 6 (7%) - Contact issues
- 14 (17%) - Placement issues
- 5 (6%) - Housing issues (18+ years) 5
- 19 (23%) – Other (inc; data breach, returning home, transitions advice, body piercing, term time holiday, asylum support).

We have identified 5 main themes during this year period that young people are having issues with and wanting CRO support for.

1. Council tax

As a Leicestershire care leaver, you do not have to pay council tax if you still live in the county up until your 25th birthday. This does not apply if you live in a different area e.g., Leicester city, Nottinghamshire. Many young people that were placed out of the local authority area whilst in care mainly due to the lack of foster carers in the county are wishing to remain out of area post 18 years old. This is because they have made connections in that area and have grown up there. Therefore, these young people do not benefit from the council tax discount of zero and have to pay council tax from 18 years old. This is extremely unfair for young people just wishing to stay in the area they have been raised in whilst in care and close to the connections they have made which is vital for their future wellbeing. It is not the fault of the young people of where they were placed. In the interest of equality all Leicestershire care leavers should not have to pay council tax regardless of where they are living and therefore an immediate change to Leicestershire County Council's Local offer is needed.

2. Intentional homelessness

The demand for housing especially council housing massively outweighs the supply. Our care leavers at the age of 18 are faced with long waiting lists for housing and not always given high priority on council lists. When young people turn 18 the local authority will stop funding the supported accommodation they are living in even if the young person does not have a home (independent tenancy) of their own yet due to reasons such as long waiting lists for housing which is out of the young person's control.

This means that the young person is being made intentionally homeless and has to present themselves to the council as homeless. This results in our care leavers having to live in hostels, bedsits and B&B's sometimes for many months before appropriate housing is sort. These hostels, bedsits and B&B's are not deemed as suitable accommodation for our young people who can end up living with offenders, gangs and vulnerable adults. These hostels, bedsits and B&B's often don't have kitchen facilities which leaves our care leavers unable to prepare food and have to often rely of takeaways or snacks for food which is of course unhealthy and costly. Our young people are asking that the Local Authority continue to fund their supported accommodation until appropriate housing is sort for them and for them to be a high priority on council housing lists. We must as corporate parents treat our care leavers as we would our own children, we would not allow our own children to live in a hostels, bedsits or B&B.

3. Savings

Young people are having difficulty accessing their savings which they have been accumulated whilst being in care. They have found that their savings have not properly been managed, accounted for, kept track of and some placements have not made any savings for them. Young people are requesting that there is a better system for their savings whereby they are properly monitored throughout their time in care especially when they have had various placements and that these savings are easily accessed when they turn 18.

4. Unsuitable accommodation and support in supported accommodation

We have received a number of complaints during this period from young people about the supported accommodation they are living in such as the poor living conditions and lack of support from staff. Some of these accommodations are unregulated. Often our young people have requested to be move to alternative accommodation.

5. Poor relationship with Social Worker

We have found that young people are often complaining about their negative relationship with their social worker due to a lack of communication, not spending much time with them and the number of times their social worker keeps changing. Young people are asking for better

communication, more time together and for Social Workers to remain as their Social Worker for longer.

Ages of support

CRO's support children and young people from ages 0-25 and will provide non-instructive advocacy for young children and those children with communication difficulties and learning needs. For this year period the age range we supported was aged between 7-22 years with a mean age of 16-year-olds.

Being a child in care aged 16 is an important time in their transition into adulthood. At age 16 is when young people are given a Personal Advisor to support them into adulthood and this is also a time where many of our young people are moving into semi-independent/supported accommodation.

Number of meetings supported

Of the 83 young people we have supported during this year period the majority of the support has come through numerous: phone calls with young people and agencies, face to face visits, communicating and liaising with relevant professionals and agencies on young people's behalf via phone calls, letter and emails, supporting young people making complaints, seeking independent legal advice and research.

CRO's have supported young people in 72 professionals meetings during this year period. 16 (22%) of these meetings were attended by CRO on the young person's behalf. 55 (77%) of these meetings were attended by the young person and the CRO and 1 (1%) meeting was attended by the young person and no CRO.

A break down of the 72 meetings supported:

- 29 (40%) Review of Arrangements
- 5 (7%) Placement stability meetings
- 2 (3%) Secure accommodation reviews
- 3 (4%) Legal meetings
- 17 (24%) Child protection/Child in Need/Child in care meetings for their own child
- 1 (1%) Education meeting
- 8 (11%) Professionals Meetings
- 1 (1%) Post placement meeting
- 6 (9%) Other meetings (inc; Care planning meeting, meeting with new Social Worker and Personal Advisor, strategy discussion, best interests meeting, complaint meeting, child permanence meeting).

Length of time cases remain open

77 young people have been supported by a CRO during this year period. 39 (51%) of these cases have been closed with the average length of time the cases have remained open is 15 weeks. Young people wanting support with meetings particularly Review of Arrangements can remain open for a significant length of time and often young people want this support throughout their whole time in care.

Outcome of involvement with children and young people

Young people have expressed they have found having a CRO useful especially with explaining their rights and entitlements and understanding more about their legal status especially young people subject to s20.

Young people who are having support because their own birth child has a Social Worker have found the support really useful in understanding the child protection and care proceedings process. The young people sometimes feel unable to ask certain questions or seek clarity from their child's Social Worker due to fear of how it will be perceived and therefore will ask the CRO for explanations.

Young people have expressed they like that they feel that the CRO is on their side and although the young person may not always get the outcome, they desire they like the feeling that a CRO is listening to them and advocating for what they want.

Case Studies

Support through Child Protection Planning for own child

Young person: Care Leaver, S aged 20

Case Summary: S's unborn child was made subject to a Child Protection Plan in June 2021.

<i>The worries</i>	<i>What worked well</i>	<i>Outcome for young person</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S was extremely anxious about the Child Protection Process. Professionals were very worried about S's ability to be a good enough mother and keep her baby safe. There were concerns around associates, drug use, violent outbursts and non-engagement with professionals. • S wanted to be given a chance to prove herself and be a good enough mother to her baby. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S's Personal Advisor referred her to the Children's Rights Service prior to the Initial Child Protection Conference, so S had support throughout the Child Protection Process • The CRO ensured that S had appropriate independent legal advice. • S was actively supported by a CRO at Conferences and Core Group meetings prior to and after R was born. • S worked extremely hard with all professionals involved and developed good working relationships with everyone. The CRO was only a small part in supporting and encouraging this. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S was supported to attend all the meetings regarding R. She was able to ask the CRO for clarification where necessary and grew in her confidence and ability to speak clearly, respectfully, and honestly with professionals. CRO support played a small part in enabling this to happen. • Ultimately S demonstrated her ability to safely parent R to medical and social care professionals. The Child Protection plan was stepped down to a Child in Need plan less than a month after R was born. The Child in Need plan

		<p>was ended 3 months later.</p> <p>Increased Young Person's Voice</p> <p>Raised confidence in Young Person</p>
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Successful resolution of complaint

Young person: Care Leaver, K aged 18

Case Summary: K's 2 children had been referred to Children's Social Care by K's GP following a telephone consultation where K was seeking support with suspected post-natal depression. K wished to make a complaint as she felt this referral was unwarranted and that false claims had been made about her.

<i>The worries</i>	<i>What worked well</i>	<i>Outcome for young person</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Response had received a Safeguarding referral for K's 2 young children from K's GP alleging that K was 'taking cocaine' • Although First Response had spoken to K and K's Personal Advisor and taken no further action, K was upset about this referral as she stated it was untrue. • K said that the referral had made her less confident to seek help from her GP for mental health issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K asked her Personal Advisor to make a referral for her to the Children's Rights Service as she was aware of the service having previously had a CRO. She knew she was entitled to make a complaint but wanted support with this. • The CRO supported K to make a formal complaint citing the distress this had caused K and the family as well as the potential impact on K speaking openly and honestly with medical professionals in the future. • The complaint was responded to by the GP in question and the surgery kept K informed of any delays. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The GP apologised unreservedly for his error. He explained that he had misheard "I can't cope" as "I'm taking coke" (it was a telephone consultation) and as an inexperienced doctor did not follow the correct procedures in asking K to clarify and explaining why he was making the safeguarding referral. The GP said that he had learned from this experience and would do things differently in the future. • K was really pleased with this response. It reassured her that the error was with the GP and that it should have been handled differently. She accepted the apology, and it has helped her to move on and reduced her worries about

		being honest with mental health struggles in the future.
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Young person: JAC is a 17-year-old young person on a full Care Order living with foster carers. He has an Educational Health Care Plan and he has behavioural, emotional, and social difficulties.

Case Summary: JAC has been in care for 5 years and has lived with his current foster carers for over 2 years. He feels very much part of the family and the carers are supporting him to develop independent living skills, increase his confidence and self-esteem and social skills; he is hoping to remain living with them under a staying put arrangement.

JAC says his carers have been incredibly supportive to him over the last two years which have been very difficult with all the Covid 19 restrictions. JAC and the family have been unable to go on holiday and a family trip to one of his carers' native home of America had to be postponed because of COVID 19 restrictions. The trip was an opportunity for JAC to meet his carers extended family, experience flying in an aeroplane for the first time, travelling to a different country in a different time zone and experience the country and its rich mixture of cultures, food etc. It would be a trip of a lifetime, something that JAC would be unlikely to afford himself in the near future. The trip would be educational, fun, increase JAC's confidence, social skills, and independent living skills. Due to the planned trip's duration being 6 weeks JAC's Social Worker and other professionals were aware that the LA would not agree to this as it was in excess of 28 days, and this was what happened. 28 days is the maximum the LA will agree for a CIC to go on holiday and that is usually only in exceptional circumstances and if the trip is outside of school term time, so it doesn't negatively impact on a young person's education.

JAC's Social Worker shared this information with JAC and enquired if he would like a referral to be made to Children's Rights so JAC could have an independent advocate; JAC consented to this.

The CRO took independent legal advice and considered various legislation to support the case. To share this information and gain JAC views, wishes and feelings and ensure his voice was heard and the process was child led a face-to-face visit to JAC's placement was arranged.

JAC shared his worries, concerns, his hopes, and the impact on him if the trip was refused and how he would feel if senior manager agreed the trip. JAC was very excited when he talked about the different parts of America the trip entailed and all the different members of his foster carer's family, he would have the opportunity to meet face to face. A case supporting the trip was then submitted to senior management and virtual school which was approved.

<i>The worries</i>	<i>What worked well</i>	<i>Outcome for young person</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Local Authority would not agree to a 6-week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JAC was able to express his views to the CRO; explain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JAC feels listened to and his views have been

<p>holiday.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Local Authority may not agree to a 4-week holiday as most of the time was during term time. • The Local Authority were concerned that JAC would be missing 4 days of college • JAC was worried about having to go into respite for 6 weeks while his FC were away • JAC was worried about missing out on the experiences the rest of the family would be enjoying. • JAC was worried about not being seen as one of the family. • JAC was worried about being separated from his foster family. • JAC was worried about having to travel alone or be chaperoned by someone who he didn't know. • JAC was worried about a change of routine; having to adapt to that change without being with his primary care givers. 	<p>why going on the trip meant so much to him</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JAC was able to voice what he felt the negative impact would be on him if it wasn't agreed that he could go on the trip • The CRO explained to him what an independent solicitor had advised; what the legislation said and what the likely outcome would be if the matter was put before a Judge. • On receipt of legal advice JAC made an informed decision to ask the Local Authority for permission to go to America with his carers for 4 weeks rather than the original 6 weeks which had been planned. • JAC cited a professional who he felt he would be happy chaperoning him to America as his carers would leave 2 weeks before he did. He also agreed if the professional who he cited couldn't accompany him he requested to meet the approved chaperone prior to the trip so they didn't feel like 'a stranger' to him. • The CRO drafted the letter which was to be sent to senior manager and sent it to JAC for both his approval and for him to add or amend any of the contents. • The CRO enabled JAC to 	<p>taken on board and acted upon.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JAC was able to go on holiday for 4 weeks with his foster carers. • JAC felt listened to. • JAC fully participated in the process. <p><i>Positive working relationship with professionals</i></p> <p><i>Improved mental health</i></p> <p><i>Improved behaviour</i></p> <p><i>Raised confidence</i></p> <p><i>Further developed social skills</i></p> <p><i>Experienced a holiday of a lifetime in a safe and supported way</i></p>
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	<p>fully participate in the issue: JAC was given a safe and inclusive space to express his views.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The process was child led. • The CRO actively listened to JAC voice • The CRO and JAC agreed the articles within the UNCRC and the Human Rights Act 1989 which would be cited to support his request. • The CRO was open and honest with JAC of her actions to advocate for JAC informing him that his views would be sent to the most appropriate people; so, he had the right audience • The letter which was sent to senior managers included JAC voice. JAC voice influenced the decision made by senior managers • The impact the decision had on JAC was that the senior managers agreed or him to go on the holiday for 4 weeks <p>(The Lundy Model of participation)</p>	
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Successful resolution of change of Social Worker request

Young person: PM, 12, Child in Care

Case Summary: PM was unhappy with his Social Worker. He felt frustrated and said he hardly ever saw the Social Worker or that they frequently re-arranged or cancelled visits. PM was due to go on a holiday with his foster carers, something that had been booked and rebooked due to covid-19. The holiday was during term time however it was approved by his school during his PEP meeting, and he was waiting for this to also be approved by Local Authority which his Social Worker said they would sort out. PM felt anxious because it was getting closer to the date of the holiday, and he still didn't know whether he could go or not. PM was very frustrated and wanted an urgent answer regarding the holiday request as well as a change of Social Worker.

<i>The worries</i>	<i>What worked well</i>	<i>Outcome for young person</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PM said that he wanted a change of social worker and that he didn't have a good relationship with them. • PM wanted to go on holiday with his foster family but needed a letter of approval from the Local Authority which his Social Worker said they would arrange which they didn't • PM felt frustrated that he hadn't seen his social worker properly for 2 months • PM said that Social Worker doesn't turn up to meetings, such as missed PEP meetings, missed home visits and that the Social Worker doesn't stay longer than 10 minutes when they do visit. • PM felt that he would miss out on doing the things he liked after school as he would wait a long time for Social Worker to arrive and by the time they had visited and left it was too late to do anything. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CRO was able to approach the Team Manager and share PM's voice and worries relating to Social Worker as well as the holiday and the impact this was having on PM. • CRO put in a request to the Team Manager for a change of Social Worker which was acknowledged and acted on promptly. • CRO was able to request the Team Manager to intervene regarding the approval of the holiday. • The Service Manager gave their agreement to the holiday due to the potential impact on everyone if the plans had to be cancelled. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PM felt listened to and that his concerns had been taken seriously. • PM was happy that he got to go on holiday • PM reports that he likes his new Social Worker and that he is getting on well with her

Participation

Beacon Voices – Children in Care Choir

The Beacon Voices choir is held on a Monday evening between 5-7pm at the Attenborough Arts Centre in Leicester. Our young people in care get to sing and have fun every Monday and are lead by a talented Music Director. The young people get to showcase their talents at various events and sing a range of songs from old school classics to modern tunes.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the choir has been unable to meet face to face all of the time due to the changing of restrictions and therefore virtual sessions have been held instead. Singing virtually has been understandably difficult for our young people and they have struggled with this which lead to a reduction in member numbers. The choir lead is trying to increase these numbers and recover from the pandemic now that there is no restrictions.

The period ending in March 2022 the choir had 14 members with an average of 9 members attending weekly. There have been some returning members and some new starters. Ages range from 7-18 years old with two members aged 18 and 21 who act as senior members and role models for all the younger choir members. The average age of a choir member is 14 years old. The choir is made up of approximately 30% boys and 70% girls.

Through working with Sarah Share, from the Music Hub, the choir is looking to encourage more members to attend. With more new choir members the need for recruitment of volunteers to facilitate the Choir is vital to enable the choir to run safely.

The choir will be welcoming a new Music Director very soon as the current Music Director Gregory Smith has will be leaving to support another choir. Gregory Smith has been a great support to the Beacon Voices choir and will be sadly missed.

The choir has been rehearsing for the Celebration of Achievement Awards which was held at the National Space Centre in Leicester in May 2022. At the awards the choir showcased their fantastic talent!

The choir members are instrumental in selecting their own songs which they sing at events, they have input into the arenas that their songs will be heard and which part they want to sing within the choir. Comments that have been received from the choir include:

“I just like the music and singing, I don't like the modern music”.

“I've always liked singing since I was a toddler. Since I was little, I could recite certain songs, the whole of my life I've like them.”

“Sometimes I like to come to choir, sometimes I like to sing.”

“Because my Social Worker said my sister and brother would be here. I like everything.”

When members attend the choir and participate in performances, they benefit from an increase in essential skills such as decision making, attention and listening skills, teamwork, self-confidence and self-esteem. What is equally important is that with the growth in these skills often comes the realisation in the choir members that they enjoy singing and find it rewarding. Choir members may want to follow this up by participating in school performances, singing class or as a profession in the future. One of our senior members wishes to have career in musical theatre.

Out in Care

Out in Care is a support group for our LGBTQ+ children in care and care leavers. The group meets on the last Wednesday of each month between 5-7pm at the LGBT centre on Wellington Street, Leicester. Young people get to meet other young people who identify as LGBTQ+, socialise and learn something new.

Out in Care has a core group of 4 young people who attend the group regularly attend each month. The age range of the group is currently between 14-19 years. At the beginning of 2022 the founder and lead of the group took the decision to move onto new pastures and we have since had support from Independent Reviewing Officer Iony Dewsbury- Martin to help facilitate the group.

The group looks at a variety of issues around sexuality but ultimately the young people make the decisions around what route the discussions will take. The group are very supportive of one another and are empathetic to each other's needs. Support happens inside and outside of the group.

In February the group took part in the "My Books My Story" project run by Stephanie Strange and Macha Barnden, Community Participation Workers from the Communities and Wellbeing Team. The Out in Care group members were able to create a piece of artwork based on their favourite book which was displayed in March 2022 in the Highcross shopping centre in a pop-up art gallery. These works of art will also feature in a book.

Children in Care Council

The Children in Care Council is a group of young people who are all cared for by Leicestershire County Council. The Children in Care Council meet once per month at County Hall in Glenfield from 6.30 - 8pm, where they have the chance to shape and influence the parenting that they receive at every level. The Children in Care Council gives young people the opportunity to have a say about the things that really matter in their lives and to help shape the overall policies and procedures for Leicestershire children and our young people in care.

Despite many Covid-19 challenges and the lengthy impact of restrictions, a great deal has been achieved by our Children in Care Council members during this difficult year period. Throughout the entire period of meeting virtually, young people's engagement remained consistent, with up to 15 members regularly attending monthly meetings. Additional working party meetings were also held regularly and although undoubtedly impacted by Covid-19 restrictions, a limited number of new members have also been successfully recruited.

The current age range of members is 12yrs - 17yrs, with 3 additional Care Leavers also attending meetings towards ongoing development of a Senior Member role.

In considering impact and positive outcomes, the following link comprises statements recently collated from a number of our current members:



Adrian's video.mp4

Highlights include the completion and successful launch of the Young People's Corporate Parenting Video. Devised to not only demonstrate and increase awareness of the Local Authority's Corporate Parenting responsibilities, but also clearly define the attributes and most

important factors our Children in Care Council members prioritised as making a good Corporate Parent.

Children in Care Council members are undoubtedly really proud of the film and the hard work gone into making it. The video was originally launched at Leicestershire's Corporate Parenting Board but has also been showcased at numerous events and shown to many different audiences and across key stakeholders. Always securing fantastic feedback and impact.

The video can be viewed by clicking on the following link <https://youtu.be/M-C7jdPB80s>

Following on from their previous Contact Expectations Policy, representatives from our Children in Care Council also attended a Childcare Managers Meeting to formally launch their Review of Arrangements Expectations Statement to Service Managers and Heads of Service. Again, members are really proud of this piece of work that seeks to ensure consistency and baseline expectations are in place regarding how review meetings for all of Leicestershire's Children in Care are organised, managed, and delivered.

Across the year, Children in Care Council members have effectively contributed to numerous consultations comprising not working alongside different LCC Departments, but also a number of Statutory and Voluntary sector partners. More recently this included members reflecting upon and sharing collective experiences of Life Story Work that has helped to inform and influence the development of new staff guidelines. Key messages including the need for greater consistency in how Life Story Work is completed and should always be led by the individual young person, at their pace and crucially with an increased sense of ownership of the process.

Our Children in Care Council also continues to make a significant contribution to staff recruitment and selection, with representatives regularly taking part in young people interview panels across all tiers of the department.

Monthly meetings also comprise members continuing to allocate Time to Spend Funding, with up to £150 per application being awarded, that it is intended is spent towards enabling Children in Care to try either a new activity, hobby or interest.

Corporate Parenting Board

Corporate Parenting Board Meetings have continued to provide our young people with an excellent opportunity to meet and work alongside senior leaders representing both the authority and external services and who collectively share Corporate Parenting Responsibility for both our Children in Care and Care Leavers.

A Children in Care Council representative will co-chair all quarterly meetings alongside our Lead Elected Member for Children and Family Services. Crucially Corporate Parenting Board Meetings, provide Children in Care Council members with immediate access to senior leadership representatives in order to not only inform and influence policy, but also seek to hold key decision makers to account.

In utilising a solution focussed approach, this includes Children in Care Council representatives often facilitating thematic based discussions involving the range of professionals who attend. Focussing upon a broad range of priorities as discussed and collectively prioritised by Children in Care Council members, this provides a really important opportunity for our young people to have a voice, share any worries and concerns and to learn from and celebrate the things that are working well.

A working party comprising Children in Care Council representatives also held a series of meetings in order to review and update previous Corporate Parenting Board Terms of Reference. This young people led approach to practice has resulted in a far better younger person friendly document, that Children in Care Council members have ownership of and significantly reinforces expectations and levels of accountability placed upon all Corporate Parenting Board members.

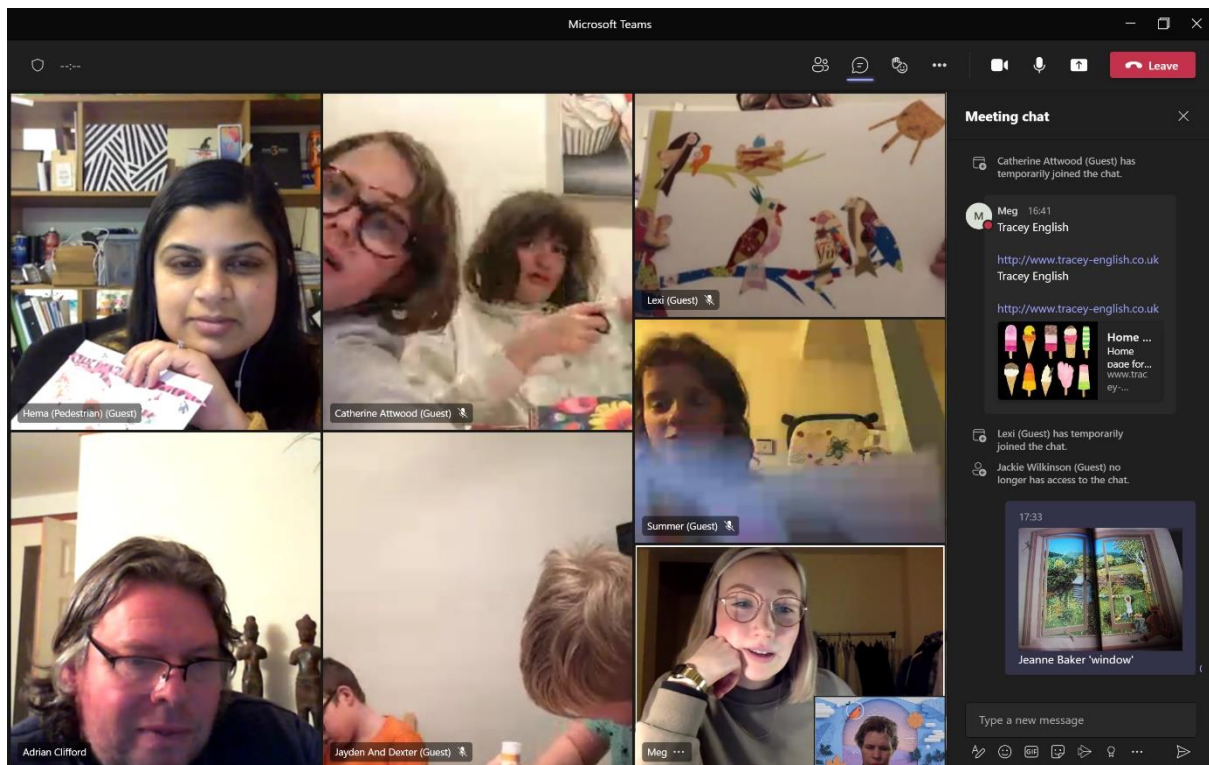
Creative Voices

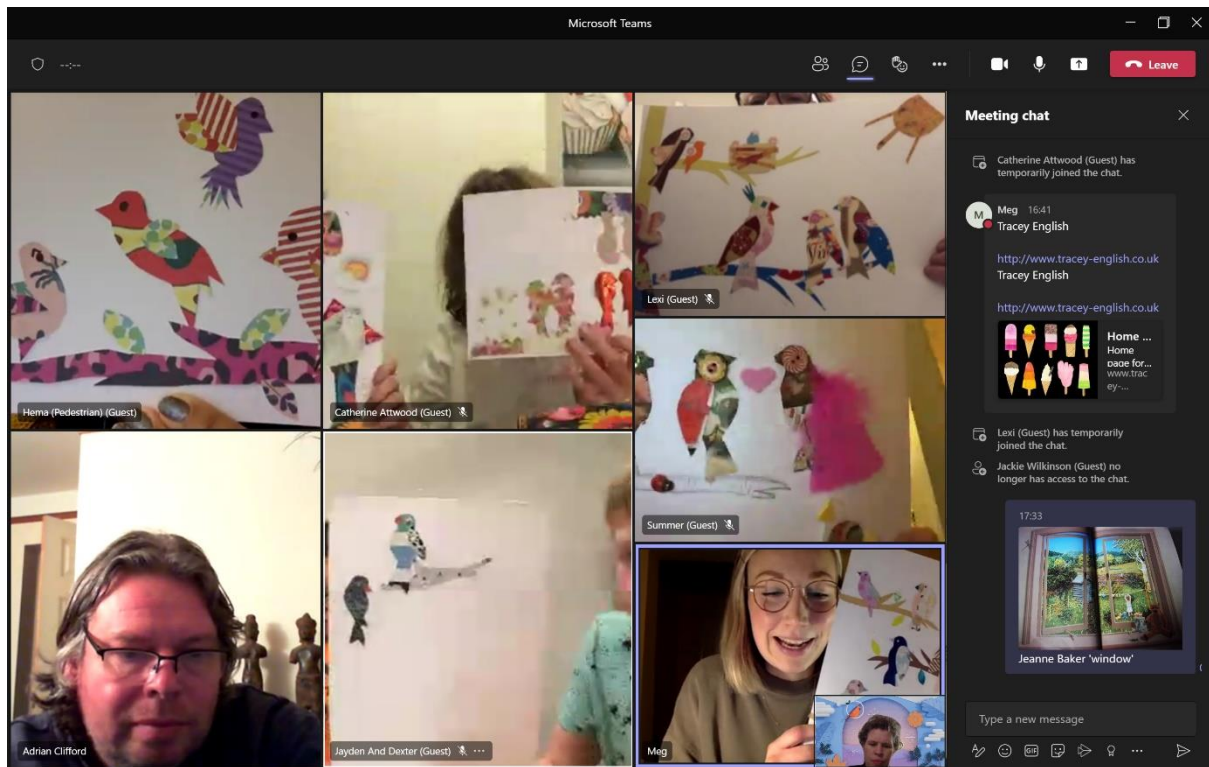
The Creative Voices Project was monthly workshop delivered in partnership with Pedestrian, a Voluntary Sector Community Arts Project. external funding was secured for this project from the KFC Foundation.

Over the course of the project, a consistent group of up to 10 young people between the ages of 6 – 14 years regularly attended a mix of both school holiday and Saturday activity workshops. The project concluded with artwork being exhibited at our most recent Celebration of Achievement Awards in May 2022.

Despite the majority of sessions having to be held virtually due to Covid-19 restrictions, each monthly workshop provided our children and their carers the opportunity to work with a variety of commissioned professional artists and gain skills and experience utilising a broad range of artistic mediums. Individual workshops included paper collage (as pictured below), clay, stencil work, screen printing and the use of both oil and water-based paints.

Positive feedback was gained from all participants, with observation confirming each workshop facilitated really positive and meaningful time being spent between young people and their carers.





Summer Scheme

The annual Corporate Parenting Summer Scheme is held across four days based at Beaumanor Hall with a broad range of activities and workshops including arts, crafts, sports and games for our children in care in August 2021.

Due to Covid-19 measures a revised model for Summer Scheme was held at Beaumanor Hall for 20 of our children in care aged between 7 - 11 years. Alongside the usual sport and games activities, the scheme provided a broad range of outdoor learning experiences, all delivered in partnership with specialist Beaumanor Hall Outdoor Education Staff. Activities included pond dipping, high-ropes and zip wire, whilst also incorporating team building activities such as survival (den building) and nightline (woodland obstacle course). As with previous Summer Schemes, it was truly wonderful to observe our children growing in confidence each day, whilst also establishing new friendships and collectively enjoying shared experiences together.

Upon conclusion of the scheme, the following messages and feedback statements clearly evidence the positive impact and qualitative outcomes achieved.

“Dear Adrian, I just wanted to take this opportunity to tell you how much our 2 girls enjoyed the Summer Scheme and would like to thank everyone involved for making it so much fun.” - Children’s Carer

“The best bit was the zip wire. I didn’t think I would have the confidence to do it, but I did and feel really proud of myself.” - Young Person

“Adrian, I just wanted to let you know that I received really positive feedback from both P and S and their carers about the Summer Scheme. They absolutely loved it! Thank you for the experience for them. 😊” - Children’s Social Worker

“Hi Adrian, I am writing to thank you and the whole team for this year’s Summer Scheme at Beaumanor Hall. It was our first experience, and I am so impressed. I found the staff

very professional and understanding of F's needs. I felt confident in leaving him in safe hands. F enjoyed the activities and looked forward to being with new friends and staff. This is a lifeline for both child and carer. Thank you." - Child's Carer

"All the activities were amazing! I was a bit nervous at the start, but met other Children in Care and felt part of the group" - Young Person

Please see photos from Summer Scheme 2021 below:



Green Champions

As collective Green Champions, our Children in Care Council members have welcomed the opportunity to focus their discussions upon both the green agenda and environmental related issues.

In seeking to develop this work, exciting partnership work has been established with the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust, both in terms of members regularly contributing to ongoing consultation work, but moving forwards, towards delivery of a number of environmental actions days that our Children in Care Council members are keen to support. This will include members having the opportunity to support the work of the Wildlife Trust regarding a number of proposed tree planting schemes, wildlife audits, habitat creation projects and campaign work scheduled to take place across the County.

Developmental links have also been established with LCC colleagues with responsibility for implementing Leicestershire's Net Zero Strategy and evolving Action Plan, seeking to not only raise young people's awareness, but actively involve Children in Care Council members in all aspects of forward planning.

Defining Children and Family Service for the Future Programme

Upon meeting with external consultants from Newton Europe and working alongside LCC Transformation Unit colleagues, our Corporate Parenting Participation Officer devised and led development of a Young People's Design and Consultation Team. The project rationale, being to ensure our care experienced young people had direct influence and impact upon the design phase of the DCFSF Programme.

Over several months, this peer research led approach to practice involved 5 Children in Care Council members working alongside 3 of our Care Leavers, to not only work collectively to support design of a range of young people orientated consultation methods, but also receive training in order to directly complete targeted research seeking the views and personal reflections of their care experienced peers.

Following prioritised lines of inquiry, consultation methodology included members of the Design and Consultation Team not only facilitating focus group discussion, but also completing one-to-one interviews with a number of their care experienced peers. Accordingly, both research methods enabled participants opportunity to share and provide real insight based upon their own reflections and day-to-day experiences of being in care.

This rich feedback resulted in young people not only identifying the most important and influential factors that should be prioritised and protected in the development and design of evolving services, but also other areas and challenges requiring further careful consideration.

At the time of writing the project and young people's work has been shortlisted for an award and truly represents an exemplar of good practice in empowering and securing the meaningful participation and voice of our children in care.

In considering and evidencing impact, the following feedback has been provided:

"The programme team worked with the Corporate Parenting Team Participation Officer to provide children and young people with a voice to shape services for better outcomes, that recognised their experience and recognised them as leaders. The voice part of the programme was also designed and delivered by young people. All views gathered were then collated and shared with workstreams leads who had to demonstrate how the children and young people's views were taken into account. It was a truly collaborative and innovative approach to voice work and could not have been achieved without the children and young people and the support of the Corporate Parenting Team" - Nicci Collins, Strategic Lead for Transformation and Change

5. What is the impact for our children and families?

Feedback from children

As illustrated above there has been lots of positive feedback in relation to Corporate Parenting events, especially the Summer Scheme which was seen as a real success in 2021, despite the covid restrictions limiting a number of the usual interactive sessions a full calendar of events was arranged. The feedback from carers on behalf of the children was really impressive, with comments talking about things such as; how much fun it was, how much the children liked meeting new friends, activities help building confidence and generally talking about how much everyone enjoyed it. The summer scheme planned for 2022 is going to be even bigger than last year and it's great to see how many people have volunteered to support this event including our Director of Children's services. Summer scheme is generally seen as brilliant way to get to get to know some of our amazing young people, have some fun and get an insight into what they think.

Traditionally Summer Scheme is also a good introduction for children and young people to learn about the Corporate Parenting Team and find out about other things they can get involved in such as Children in Care Council.

One of the key messages from the young people in the CICC recently has been about the importance of any work they do being meaningful. The CICC has a clear focus on getting young people's views on the level of service that that local authority provides and what could we do to make improvements. This has been seen as very important to young people in the council, who have made statements such as 'I want to make a difference' and 'I want to make things better for other children that come into care'.

The young people take this responsibility seriously as was highlighted in a recent panel discussion between young people and members of the Senior Management Team (SMT) to look at the local authorities Promise to young people and to assess its impact. To support this process the young people met with a Participation Officer in advance to look at some suggested questions that had been pre-prepared, however the young people were clear that they wanted to ask their own questions and ask things they believed other young people would want to know the answer to. To the young people's credit some of the questions were more challenging to SMT than the preprepared questions which lead to a far more interesting discussion. The panel debate was recorded by our Communications department and has now been incorporated into the LCC Promise Annual Report.

Feedback from professionals

Feedback from professionals on the work of the Corporate Parenting Team has again been very positive this year. In particularly the IRO's very much value the work of the Children's Rights Officers. A strength of the CRO's is how they have prioritised seeing children face to face even during the most restrictive of Covid 19 restrictions, as long as it had been assessed as safe to do so and in line with government guidelines. Although at times it was necessary to be creative in the use of technology experience has shown that often face to face meetings with young people has been the most effective way to build relationships and enable them to fully express themselves and feel their voice is important. One example of this was with a young person A whereby they were supported to attend their Review of Arrangements by a CRO, at the time

due to covid restrictions it was agreed that most people would access the meeting virtually however the CRO went to meet A. face to face and sat with her throughout her meeting. After the meeting the IRO reflected on what a vital role the CRO had played in the meeting and shared with the Assistant Service Manager that without the presence of the CRO A. would undoubtedly have left the meeting early, they would not have had the opportunity to hear what professionals had to say or share her views on these. Although positive quality assurance alerts are normally reserved for good practice for those in Social Care the IRO was clear that the level of support A was given fully justified a positive QA for the CRO.

6. What can we do better?

There has been some excellent work undertaken by the Corporate Parenting Team during this year, with a lot to be very proud of. Last year one of the challenges we set ourselves was to consider how we can best engage young people who are living out of county. A priority area for us has been to ensure that we are regularly in contact with relevant children's homes to ensure that each young person is aware of the Corporate Parenting Team, what we do and how they can make contact with us if they need to. Previously we had CRO's with link responsibilities with allocated children's homes to keep in contact, however this did not allow for any children that moved into accommodation with new providers, therefore we set up a system to get information from the Commissioning Team each month to ensure we know where all our children and young people are placed and aim to make contact with them at least once every six months.

It was also positive that our Children in Care Celebration of Achievements Awards event at the National Space Centre was well attended including by many young people who live out of county, however we still believe that in relation to participation activities there is more to do to further engage with our children and young people living outside of Leicestershire. During the height of the pandemic it was necessary for all participation events to be online, therefore it has been with great pleasure we have been able to arrange so many face to face participation events more recently and we will continue to do so but now we also need to look at how we can be more creative to enable those based a considerable distance from Leicestershire to engage in participation events virtually.

Another area where we believe we can do better is in supporting more young people to be part of interview panels. The Corporate Parenting Team have for a long time enable children to hold young people's panels when interviewing key members of staff in Children and Family Services including Service Managers and Heads of Service, in the coming year we would like to extend this by getting more young people involved to facilitate young people's panels across a wider cross section of job grades, with young people taking more of a lead role in this process including supporting young people to contact the successful candidate to offer them the post.

7. What are our plans for the next 12 months to maintain or improve practice?

An important part of developing the Corporate Parenting Team is the planned additional Children's Rights Officer (CRO). It has been acknowledged that this role is a vital part of children and young people's voice being heard. It is positive that children in care and those subject to child protections procedures can access this support however due to the level of demand for these services it has been necessary to put an age restriction on those children subject to child protection procedures who are automatically referred to the Children's Rights Service. This currently stands at age 11 for automatic referrals, although social workers and

others can refer younger children if it is felt appropriate or necessary. Once the new CRO is in post this age limit will be reviewed to look at offering the service more widely to younger children.

One exciting development in relation young people's participation is the development of the Care Leavers Council to run alongside our Children in Care Council and SYPAC (Supporting Young People After Care group). This is being developed by the Care Leavers Team but will be supported by Participation Officers from the Corporate Parenting Team. Feedback from young people has told us that they very much like the way the Children in Care Council (CICC) operate in a way that is very much focused on getting young peoples views and feeding these back through the Corporate Parenting Board and other ways to senior managers and for their views to shape the way the local authority provides services for children in care. However, this often meant that once a young person in the CICC became eighteen they were still keen to participate in CICC consultation activities as the SYPAC group is designed to be less formal. In September 2022 it is planned that the Care Leavers Council will have its first meeting, this will be attended by members of the Corporate Parenting Team to support the group and in particularly support the transition of young people from the CICC to the new group.

This is seen as a positive move for the young people who will be transitioning to the new group but also it is an opportunity to get more younger children involved in the CICC to ensure their voices are heard too. An important piece of work both groups will be getting involved in will be the Language of Care discussions, looking at what words, phrases and professional terminology is used with young people and how we can all work together to ensure that we are talking to children and young people using words that they are comfortable with and meaningful to them.

Another excellent development within the Corporate Parenting Team is the participation work being undertaken with the Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC). For some time the Corporate Parenting Team have been aware that there has been very little uptake in participation events among the UASC young people and much thought has gone into looking at how best to engage this group. Although some events have been arranged in the past which have had a positive response our new Participation Officer has arranged a number of sports based activities which have been particularly well attended. The most popular to date being a picnic in the park and cricket fun day, with another example being a stadium trip to Leicester City Football Club King Power Stadium. These are activities that can be enjoyed by young people without having to have skills in the use of the English language although each young person who attends will have access to an interpreter to ensure that can share their voice and are able to take part in any voice work that is part of the day. It is planned that this good work will be built on to look at how the UASC young people can then potentially work together to given their views on the local authorities service developments either through having their own group or via the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Council.

8. Safeguarding and Performance Service Delivery Plan 2022-2023

Action No.	Issue	Dept Plan/ CIP refs*	What's working well?	What are we worried about?	What needs to happen? (Action)	By When	What difference will this make? (Impact)
					<i>Please provide detailed actions and deadlines. Information from these columns will be copied into the quarterly report template for your service</i>		
1 All Services	Mandatory All staff are fully aware of the responsibilities they have, in their day-to-day roles in services and with colleagues at work, for advancing the council's equality and diversity objectives	All	<p>There is good attendance at the Practice Lead sessions by IRO's to further develop their skills and knowledge.</p> <p>Signs of Safety is fully embedded into the IRO service, both in CP and LAC.</p> <p>All IRO's have been on the 5-day Sign of Safety Training. They are confident and competent in using and developing the framework.</p> <p>IRO's have been supported to attend a 3-day specialist IRO training, one cohort on CP and another on LAC.</p> <p>There has been staffing additionality within the IRO service supporting managing the increasing CP and LAC population.</p>	Audit activity has identified the need for improvement in the application of safety networks and testing Safety Planning.	<p>Staff access mandatory and bespoke equality and diversity training</p> <p>Staff are supported to attend training events and opportunities to further enhance their skills, knowledge and experience.</p>	<p>March 2023</p> <p>March 2023</p>	The safeguarding service provides a work environment where all staff can access support, build positive career pathways, thus enabling consistent, effective and meaningful engagement and progress for children and families.

			The Safeguarding Service is very well established with strong retention of staff.				
2 All Services	Mandatory Work towards a stronger, evidence-based approach to understanding and tackling inequalities (including relevant research, data, QA activity and engagement with children, young people and families)	All	The Equality and Diversity Guidance has been launched and shared with all staff for application in practice. EDI remains a standing item on all team meeting and supervision agendas, enabling staff with opportunity to discuss any matters relating to equality, diversity and inclusion.	The EDI action plan is underrepresented with colleagues across the service, and we need to receive greater input into championing the action plan and accountability for actions, with representatives from all four service areas.	Equality and Diversity remains as a standing team mtg agenda item and discussed within supervision. EDI action plan which covers all four services within Safeguarding and Performance. Equality, Diversity and Challenge week to be held in January across CSC services, with the review of the EDI guidance. Implement the new Welfare process.	March 2023 March 2023 January 2023 June 2022	Ensure equality, diversity and inclusion remains high on our agenda, with workers feeling empowered to have a voice and influence future ways of working, in addition to celebrating diversity and individually challenging ourselves as well our processes / structures to ensure they align with our We Care and EDI guidance. Thus, providing a fully inclusive working environment for all staff and an inclusive service for our children and families. Thus, enabling staff to feel safe and supported within the Safeguarding and Performance Service to challenge ADP and advocate on behalf of our children, families and

							colleagues regarding any issues.
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Please tell us about any participation/voice/engagement/consultation activity your service is proposing to carry out with children, young people and families.						
				Space /Voice		Audience/Influence
Lead Officer Who is co-ordinating the activity?	What will you do? Title and brief description	When will you do it? Start and end dates	Why? Reason for the activity	Who with? Target cohort eg LAC	How? Method you will use eg snap survey	Impact How will the feedback be used and shared with participants?
Hayley Binley – Service Manager	Facilitate the implementation of the Parent Consultation Group.	To go live in September 2022	To engage parents in the service design and delivery and learn from their feedback of experiences of LCC services.	Parents across all CSC services.	Group meeting	Parents to feel supported within the group, for their views to be obtained and inform future service delivery and improve outcomes for children and families.
Hayley Binley – Service Manager	Implement the new Corporate Parenting Board Structure.	May 2022	To ensure the young people’s voice is informing the key decisions and focus for the board meeting.	Corporate Parenting Board Members	Corporate Parenting Board Meetings.	Stronger evidence of the young person’s informing the board and young people sharing they feel their voice and proposed changes have had an impact
Hayley Binley – Service Manager and Stuart Jones – Assistant Service Manager	Deliver a successful Celebration of Achievement Awards being held in May.	May 2022	To celebrate the achievements of our children and young people who are in the care of the Local Authority.	Children in Care and Care Leavers Service, Corporate Parenting, Locality Teams and SMT	Celebration Event at the Leicester Space Centre.	Our children and young people feel their achievements are recognised and valued by our Children’s Services as

						well as them having an evening of fun opportunities.
Iona McKenzie – Senior Children’s Rights Officer	Support new children and young people to become involved in the CIC Council meetings, including our harder to reach young people, such as those in placements outside of county, residential and USAC.	June 2022	To ensure our Corporate Parenting Services are inclusive to all our children in care.	Corporate Parenting Team and Children in Care Team.	Driving forward awareness of the services provided through a range of communication methods.	To improve young people’s experiences and participation within Corporate Parenting and ensure our services are inclusive to all our looked after children and young people.
Adrian Clifford – Participation Officer	CIC council to be supported to develop an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion expectations statement.	August 2022	To ensure our practice is reflective of our commitment to championing diversity and being inclusive to all.	Children In Care Council	Meetings	To ensure that our CIC services, care planning and support received is inclusive to all children and young people and their voice is heard and represented.
Adrian Clifford – Participation Officer	Joint IRO/CIC council Task and finish Group to work on the development of more consistency of the application of Signs of Safety within Looked After Children reviews; to enhance the	August 2022	To ensure our children and young people are actively engaged in the facilitation of their ROA meetings.	Children In Care Council	Meetings	To ensure ROA meeting are co-ordinated in a way which is underpinned by the Signs of Safety methodology and supports children and young people chairing their own meetings where they wish to do so.

	inclusion of the voice and participation of the child or young person.					
Iona McKenzie – Senior Children’s Rights Officer	Facilitate and lead on a Corporate Parenting Awareness Week, including a children and young person’s voice conference.	December 2022	To promote the role and responsibilities of being a Corporate Parent to all services within LCC.	Corporate Parenting Team and Children In Care Service.	A range of different activities, including a voice conference, participation activities, publicity and communications.	Ensuring professionals understand their role and responsibilities as Corporate Parents, engaging in different activities and enabling young people to their voice and experiences heard, as well as advocating what Corporate Parenting means to them.

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