



**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 5 MARCH 2024**

CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an overview of the work of the Children and Family Services Department.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. The Children Act 2004 requires every upper tier local authority to appoint a Director of Children's Services (DCS) and designate a Lead Member for Children's Services (LMCS).
3. The DCS and LMCS are appointed for the purposes of discharging the education and children's social services functions of the local authority. The functions for which they are responsible are set out in section 18(2) of the Children Act 2004. This includes, but is not limited to, responsibility for children and young people receiving education or children's social care services in their area and all children looked after by the local authority or in custody, regardless of where they are placed.
4. Working together to Safeguard Children 2023 sets out the legislative requirements placed on individual services to safeguard children, provides a framework for the three local safeguarding partners (the local authority, clinical commissioning group and the chief officer of police for a police area, any part of which falls within the local authority area) to make arrangements to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children.
5. Whilst it is parents and carers who have primary care for their children, local authorities, working with partner organisations and agencies, have specific duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area. The Children Acts of 1989 and 2004 set out specific duties: section 17 of the Children Act 1989 puts a duty on the local authority to provide services to children in need in their area, regardless of where they are found; section 47 of the same Act requires local authorities to undertake enquiries if they believe a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm.

Department Overview

6. The vision of the Children and Family Services Department is for Leicestershire to be the best place for all children, young people, and their families. This vision is underpinned by the mission statement that children and young people in Leicestershire are safe and living in families where they can achieve their potential, feel nurtured, have a sense of belonging; feel loved and supported to succeed.
7. The Children and Family Services Department Plan 2024-2026, of which a summary can be found in Appendix B, sets out three key ambitions for the Department, to:
 - Help every child to get the best possible start in life and build strong foundations,
 - Children and young people can be safe, both at home and in the community and have a sense of belonging,
 - Children and young people are able to enjoy and achieve via receiving good quality education and access to activities that help them reach their full potential.
8. The Services in the Department, alongside a range of partners, work to deliver these ambitions. The work of each Service is set out in the Annual Service Delivery Plans.

Statutory Framework

The Director of Children and Family Services

9. Section 18 of the Children Act 2004 requires every top tier local authority to appoint a Director of Children's Services (DCS). In Leicestershire, this post is referred to as the Director of Children and Family Services (DCFS). The DCFS has professional responsibility for the leadership, strategy, and effectiveness of local authority children's services. The DCFS is responsible for securing the provision of services which address the needs of all children and young people, including the most disadvantaged and vulnerable, and their families and carers.
10. In discharging these responsibilities, the DCFS needs to work closely with other local partners to improve the outcomes and well-being of children and young people. The DCFS is also responsible for the performance of local authority functions relating to the education and social care of children and young people.

The Lead Member for Children's Services (LMCS)

11. Section 19 of the Children Act 2004 requires every top tier local authority to designate one of its members as Lead Member for Children's Services. The LMCS, as a member of the Cabinet, has political responsibility for the leadership, strategy, and effectiveness of local authority children's services. The LMCS is also democratically accountable to local communities and has a key role in defining the local vision and setting political priorities for children's services within the broader political context of the Council.

12. The Lead Member is responsible for providing strong, strategic leadership and support and challenge to the DCFS and relevant members of their senior team as appropriate.

Roles and Responsibilities of Children's Services

13. Local authorities are bound by almost 300 statutory duties in relation to children's services. A broad summary of the duties is set out below.

Safeguarding

14. Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 requires local authorities and other named statutory partners to make arrangements to ensure that their functions are discharged with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
15. The DCFS has the responsibility within the local authority for improving outcomes for children and young people, children's social care functions and local cooperation arrangements for children's services.
16. The DCFS also has a crucial role in ensuring collaboration and dialogue with the family courts so that high quality local authority assessments and other evidence contribute to effective and timely court processes for children.

Vulnerable children and young people

17. The CFS Department is responsible for working with partners to promote prevention and early intervention and offer early help so that emerging problems are dealt with before they become more serious. More specifically, the DCFS and LMCS in their respective roles:
 - have a shared responsibility with all officers and members of the local authority to act as effective and caring corporate parents for looked after children, with key roles in improving their educational attainment, providing stable and high quality placements and proper planning for when they leave care.
 - must ensure that disabled children and those with special educational needs (SEN) can access high quality provision that meets their needs and fund provision for children with an Education, Health, and Care Plan.
 - must ensure arrangements are in place for alternative provision for children outside mainstream education or missing education (for example due to permanent exclusion or illness) to receive suitable full-time education.
 - should ensure there is coherent planning between all agencies providing services for children involved in the youth justice system, secure the provision of education for young people in custody and ensure that safeguarding responsibilities are effectively carried out.
 - should understand local need and secure provision of services, taking account of the benefits of prevention and early intervention and the importance of co- operating with other agencies to offer early help to children, young people, and families.

Fair access to services

18. The Department is responsible for promoting the interests of children, young people, parents, and families, as well as working with local communities to stimulate and support a diversity of school, early years and 16-19 provision that meets local needs. The DCFS and LMCS in their respective roles:

- must ensure fair access to all schools for every child in accordance with the statutory School Admissions and School Admissions Appeal Codes and ensure appropriate information is provided to parents,
- must ensure provision for suitable home to school transport arrangements,
- should actively promote a diverse supply of strong schools, including by encouraging good schools to expand and, where there is a need for a new school, seeking proposals for an Academy or Free School,
- should promote high quality early years provision, including helping to develop the market, securing free early education for all three and four year olds and for all disadvantaged two year olds, providing information, advice and assistance to parents and prospective parents, and ensuring sufficient childcare for working parents,
- should promote children's and young people's participation in public decision-making so they can influence local commissioners,
- should promote participation in education or training of young people, including by securing provision for young people aged 16-19 (or 25 for those with learning difficulties/disabilities).

Educational Excellence

19. Working with headteachers, school governors and Multi Academy Trusts and Academies, the CFS Department is responsible for promoting educational excellence for all children and young people and being ambitious in tackling underperformance. The DCFS and LMCS should in their respective roles:

- take rapid and decisive action in relation to poorly performing schools, including using their intervention powers with regard to maintained schools and considering alternative structural and operational solutions,
- develop robust school improvement strategies, including choosing whether to offer such services in a competitive and open school improvement market, working beyond local authority boundaries,
- promote high standards in education by supporting effective school to school collaboration and providing local leadership for tackling issues needing attention which cut across more than one school, such as poor performance in a particular subject area across a cluster of schools,
- support maintained schools in delivering an appropriate National Curriculum and early years providers in meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (as outlined in the EYFS Statutory Framework),
- establish a schools' forum for their area, maintain a scheme for financing maintained schools and provide financial information,

- undertake specified responsibilities in relation to staffing and governance of maintained schools.

Children and Family Services Staff Numbers

20. There are 1400 (1218 FTE) staff who work in the Children and Family Services Department, across 30 Services. The Department is organised into two operational sections lead by two Assistant Directors; Targeted Early Help and Social Care, and Education and SEND. Commissioning and Planning and Business Services are managed centrally via the Director of Children and Family Services. A detailed structure of the Service can be found in Appendix A.

Services

21. The Children and Family Services Department delivers its statutory functions, roles, and responsibilities through its Services. Each Service is led by a Service Manager who reports into a Head of Service who is responsible for the leadership and management of an area of the Department's business.

Targeted Early Help and Children's Social Care

Community Safety

22. Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, County Councils are designated as 'Responsible Authorities' of Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), which places a duty on them to work in partnership to reduce crime and disorder. The Community Safety Team (CST) attend all CSP meetings and support with priority setting for three-yearly partnership plans and annual delivery plans.
23. Under S29 of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015, specified authorities must have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. The CST supports agencies across Leicestershire with their Prevent Duty, delivering training and sharing good practice as well as ensuring the Council is discharging its duty.
24. The CST provides a leadership role across LLR in relation to community safety priorities and developing joint approaches on issues including Anti-Social Behaviour, domestic abuse, serious violence and hate work. The team also co-ordinates the response to Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) in the County.
25. The Team is currently leading the discharge of the authority's new statutory duty under the Domestic Abuse Bill and is co-ordinating the plan around the £1.1million spend to support the duty, the discharge of the forthcoming Serious Violence Duty and the work on Trauma Informed Working with CFS colleagues.

Head of Service: Safeguarding, Improvement, Quality Assurance and Performance

First Response –Screening and Assessment

26. First Response provides the immediate response to all new contacts from members of the public and professionals in relation to children and young people. These range from information sharing, requests for Early Help support, and social work support.
27. The screening process applies the Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland (LLR) threshold for intervention to provide robust and timely responses applying careful oversight and performance measure to provide assurance. This is coordinated closely with colleagues from the Family Help service (formerly Children and Families Wellbeing Service (CFWS) to avoid drift and delay when support is required.
28. Requests for social worker intervention, both planned and in response to immediate safeguarding concerns, are progressed to a team of social workers who carry out assessments of need and risk in line with statutory responsibilities, with robust management oversight and close liaison with key agencies including local schools, health, and police.

Safeguarding and Performance Service

29. The Safeguarding and Performance Service has a broad range of key service activities undertaken by three specialist teams: The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service, Quality Assurance Team, and Corporate Parenting Team.
30. The Service delivers the statutory responsibility to provide independent oversight and critical challenge plans for children in care and subject to child protection plans in Leicestershire but also leads the Department's Quality Assurance framework to drive improvement, with key responsibilities for both performance management and quality assurance by means of thematic audits, linked to improvement objectives and service specific learning. At the heart of both of these processes is ensuring that the voice and views of children and young people are captured and are central to decision making in assessment and planning processes and in measuring the impact of intervention.
31. The Head of Service is also responsible for the Safeguarding Business Office which supports the key work of the Safeguarding Partnership across Leicestershire and Rutland and key areas across LLR.

Practice Excellence

32. The Practice Excellence team provides leadership and direction to teams, managers, and practitioners to support improvement in the quality of practice with children and families across the Department. The team supports staff to fully embed the departmental practice framework and has well established links to the quality assurance work so that emerging learning is shared systematically via coaching, mentoring, training, virtual workshops and individual support to teams and practitioners.
33. The team leads the implementation of the Signs of Safety practice approach and contribute to the sub-regional and national community. They are also

responsible via the Principle Social worker to lead on the Department's approach to becoming a Trauma Informed organisation.

34. The team applies a range of approaches and coordinates, analyses, and disseminates the findings and conclusions from quality assurance activities, feedback, from children and their families and the workforce to inform the Continuous Improvement Plan- *Achieving Excellence via purposeful practice 2024-2027*.

Homes for Ukraine

35. The Team provides support to Ukrainian guests and their hosts to enable them to settle successfully in the community.

Head of Service: Family Help, Youth and Justice, Exploitation and Families Together.

Family Help

36. The Family Help service was established in February 2024, bringing together staff within the old Children and Family Service and some staff from Children's Social Care with a focus on providing early support to children and families to build strength and resilience and children assessed to be Children in Need, who require social work involvement or oversight. The new service is based on evidence that by social workers and alternatively qualified staff working together to provide the right service, at the right time and right level from the right skill mix of staff there is greater opportunity to build family resilience and strength to achieve positive outcomes and less long term reliance upon statutory services.
37. The wider Family Help service works with families who may encounter a broad spectrum of issues, including those who may be on the cusp of requiring specialist statutory services. The Service provides support or advice to all members of the family (the whole family approach), as appropriate to the circumstances. A number of Family Hubs have been established across the County to bring together partner agencies working in the community to offer advice and assistance to children and families.
38. The Service has a focus on school inclusion and assisting families to receive the most appropriate support for their child's needs to help in building resilience in families. As such, developing pathways and services for children with special educational needs is a priority for the Service.

Vulnerability Hub and Families Together.

39. The vulnerability hub is co-located with the police at Wigston Police Station and provides carefully coordinated responses to the screening of all domestic abuse notifications together with police and Early Help colleagues. This includes daily information sharing with schools in line with Operation Encompass, whereby schools are formally notified of any reported incident of domestic violence at an address at which children are present or normally resident, and representing

children's social care in daily Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) meetings for high-risk domestic abuse victims.

40. The Hub also represents the multiagency response to Child Exploitation, building on the original Child Sexual Exploitation team and taking a broad proactive approach to all forms of exploitation, including responses to missing and multiagency management plans for children where risk is assessed to be high. The team benefits from close working arrangements with the Police, Leicester City and Rutland colleagues and those from health and education. The Hub also provides a base for the Out of Hours service which delivers timely responses to children out of normal office hours.
41. Families Together team was established in November 2023 to be a wraparound immediate response team to support young people at risk of coming into care to remain, when safe to do so, in their network.

Youth and Justice

42. The Youth and Justice Service comprises of two distinct areas of delivery of services to children from ten years old until young adulthood. Youth Justice work is delivered to children who have been in Court or have been diverted from Court following contact with the Police. This work is guided by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and places a statutory responsibility on Local Authorities to deliver Youth justice services. This is done in partnership with the Police, Probation Service, Education and Health Services. Youth work is delivered to children who require a targeted input from a Youth Worker around areas such as emotional wellbeing, safety and vulnerability, engagement with education or substance misuse. The Service also delivers a service to young carers, young adult carers and children have been missing. Interventions are delivered across a variety of different means from group work and one to one sessions. A core component of the Service is the County Youth Council of Leicestershire (CYCLe), which is a forum for children and young people to co-produce with Leicestershire County Council and other agencies across the partnership providing a valuable youth perspective on topical matters.

Teen Health

43. From September 2022 Public Health have commissioned Teen Health from the Children and Family Department. The Teen Health service sits within Family Help and has established links with all schools within Leicestershire to provide advice, group work/ drop-in sessions and individual work with young people aged eleven plus around key emotional wellbeing and health.

Head of Service: Family Safeguarding and Disabled Children's Services

Family Safeguarding

44. Family Safeguarding aims to provide the children and families of Leicestershire with a dynamic and good statutory social work service, utilising relevant assessment processes to enable a continuum of support, care, and protection. This will include the development and implementation of SMART care planning from point of referral through to the end of service and in line with Social Work

Practice Standards. Family Safeguarding Teams across the County support children and families of children who are subject to child protection plans and those who may need protection through use of care proceedings and alternative care arrangements.

45. The work of Family Safeguarding is delivered through skill mixed locality pods, who work with and support children and families until the work is completed, and support is no longer necessary, can be offered by a more appropriate service or until alternative family / care arrangements are in place. This may include using Private Law Processes and the Public Law Outline until long term solutions are identified that will provide stability, safety, and permanence for the child.

Disabled Children's Service

46. The Disabled Children's Service consists of two social work teams. Staff follow social care procedures and support those who are children in need, on a child protection plan, in care and care leavers. All children are seen regularly and benefit from a single assessment and support plan to enable as much independence and to improve outcomes for children across all aspects of their lives.
47. The Service embraces the social model of disability and acknowledges that although a child's disabilities can create difficulties in their lives, many of the problems they and their families face are due to negative attitudes, prejudice, and unequal access to the things necessary for a good quality of life.
48. Staff in the Service are specialists in working with children who experience disabilities and their families. The staff make assessments of need which support safe and creative daily living for disabled children, their families, and carers. Following the Signs of Safety ethos and approach, staff have a range of skills and tools to help ensure that the child's views are heard and acted upon, regardless of level of need.

Head of Service Children in Care, Care Leavers Fostering and Adoption.

Children in Care Service

49. The Children in Care Service comprises of five teams. There are four Children in Care teams who work with those young people who have a long term care plan to be accommodated by the local authority either under Section 20 (Children and Families Act 1989) or a full care order and one team focused on Special Guardianship orders.

Care Leavers and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Service

50. There are three specialist teams working with Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) to ensure that the needs of these young people are assessed in a timely way, including age assessments. The needs of UASC are met through the Looked After Children and Care Leaver procedures, in addition to providing specialist support with their asylum status applications.

51. The two Care leavers Teams works with young people over the age of 16 who are no longer looked after but are entitled to support up to the age of 25. The Service continues to have a duty to children to maintain regular contact, support them in accessing employment, education or training and ensure that they have appropriate, sustainable accommodation.

Fostering and Sufficiency

52. The Service manages, assesses, and supports foster families, to ensure compliance to the Fostering National Minimum Standards. The Service regularly develops the recruitment strategy to ensure that the service is effectively communicating and engaging with potential foster carers. The Service provides diverse training opportunities to carers to meet the needs of the children in their care and provide high quality matching decisions when placing children. The Service provides a wide range of support to carers including supervision, engagement activities, newsletters, and a Facebook group.
53. The Service has developed a wide range of specialist carers to meet the complex needs of some of the children that it works with. There is also an established Supported Lodgings Scheme to meet the sufficiency of young people requiring additional support in their transition to adulthood.
54. In addition to the core element of providing a wide range of carers, the Fostering Service also recruits, assesses, and supports Independent Visitors to become befrienders for looked after children and young people, assesses private fostering arrangements, offers ongoing support, and completes assessments for Step Parent Adoptions.
55. The Council is proud to have become a Fostering Friendly employer. Fostering Friendly is The Fostering Network's programme to encourage employers to support fostering, and in particular, foster carers.

Permanence and Adoption Service

56. The Service will prioritise the early permanence of those children who cannot remain in the care of their birth parents, through either adoption or support to identify long term foster carers. The service regularly develops a recruitment strategy to ensure that it is effectively communicating and engaging prospective adopters. The assessment process includes a well-established training and information sharing offer which supports robust assessment and, if appropriate, approval for persons wishing to adopt. The service supports approved adopters in finding an appropriate match for their family.
57. The Permanence Team focuses on the journey of the child and completes the Child Permanence Reports and Family Find, using robust matching, and supports this process until adoption is achieved. It will provide lifelong post adoption support, with a strong emphasis on supporting those adopters for the first three years after their Adoption Order has been granted.
58. The Service also provides post Special Guardianship Order support for the first three years after the granting of the order. To support maintained connection

with birth families, the Service co-ordinates and facilitates letter box contact between adopted children and their birth family. Support is provided to birth families who have been affected by adoption through the First Family Support Service and also to adults who have been adopted, through the Birth Records Counselling Service.

Agency Decision Maker

59. This function sits with the Assistant Director, one Head of Service, and within a defined role. It is responsible for best interest decisions for children where adoption is the plan, final approval of adoptive and foster carers and the regular reviews of foster carers. It is a key function and statutory responsibility of the Adoption and Fostering agency, in this case the Local Authority.

Education and SEND

Head of Service Education Quality and Inclusion

Inclusion Service

60. The Inclusion Service aims to support all children and young people, with the help of their parents or carers and educational establishments, so that they have access to, and to be included in good, or outstanding educational provision. It also aims to provide opportunities for young people to prepare them for a successful transition into adult life, through employment, training, or education.
61. The Service delivers the local authority's statutory functions for children missing education, children with medical needs, support for children at risk of exclusion including commissioning of Secondary Education Inclusion Partnerships, who co-ordinate the support for secondary children to prevent exclusion. Other services include support for those children who are electively home educated, Post-16 education employment and training and the early identification of SEND support.

Education Effectiveness Service

62. There are four services that come under the umbrella of Education Effectiveness: The Education Effectiveness Partnership, Safeguarding in Education, Anti Bullying and Governor Support and Development Service.
63. The Education Effectiveness Partnership manages the communication between schools and the local authority, both at an individual level (with an Education Effectiveness Partner with recent school experience linked to each setting) and at a system wide level, channelling regular updates to all schools, and bringing together an understanding of overall educational performance and issues to co-ordinate positive meaningful interventions. The team also exercises statutory functions around primary assessment and moderation and newly qualified teachers.
64. In addition to supporting schools and the local authority with safeguarding children and meeting statutory requirements, the Safeguarding in Education

Team operates a traded service, delivering training to Designated Safeguarding Leads, Managing Allegations, Safer Recruitment, and whole staff safeguarding awareness raising. Almost all Leicestershire (and Rutland) schools subscribe to this offer. They also undertake consultations with pupils and work on behalf of the Safeguarding Children Partnership on an annual safeguarding return and offer an e-safety Award to schools.

65. The Anti-Bullying Team provides advice, support and training to schools and the wider children's workforce. Courses offered include Anti-Bullying Lead Governor, LGBT awareness, Basic Anti-Bullying Awareness, Peer Support, and bespoke sessions. Each year a number of schools are supported to work on the Beyond Bullying Award. The team lead on the Stonewall Children and Young People Champions Award and complete the submission on behalf of Leicestershire County Council and are currently leading on anti-bullying initiatives and projects such as Restorative Approaches, Anti-Racist Audit and developing a Trans inclusive school environment.
66. The Governor Support and Development Service offers a core training programme covering all aspects of maintained and academy strategic and financial governance and performance management of school leaders, including training for maintained schools in accordance with the local authority's duty to provide free training to governors volunteering in maintained schools, a more extensive traded offer (including clerks training), access to a telephone helpline and bespoke packages, including external reviews of governance, for schools as identified. The understanding of school governance and strong links with education effectiveness and inclusion services provides an opportunity to support and influence governance to develop more inclusive and effective schools. The service also maintains and develops a guidance service for GDPR.

The Virtual School

67. The purpose of the Virtual School (VS) is to promote positive outcomes for all children and young people in care in Leicestershire and to support schools/settings/colleges to narrow the achievement gap for these. This aim also extends to early years children, care-leavers and children and young people who have left care as a result of a Child Arrangements Order, a Special Guardianship Order, or an Adoption Order. All local authorities have a statutory duty to have a Virtual School Head, whose duty is to promote the education of looked after and previously looked after children in line with statutory guidance (February 2018).
68. The Virtual School is "virtual" in the sense that it works to support children and young people in care as if they were in a single school, even though they are educated in many different schools and settings across the country. Each child or young person in care has an allocated education officer, one of a dedicated team of professionals who contributes to Personal Education Plan meetings (PEPs), Reviews of Arrangement meetings (ROAs) and other multi-agency meetings as appropriate. Their role in these meetings is to promote higher educational aspirations and a greater accountability from all those involved in their care.

69. The Virtual School gives advice and information about the education of previously looked-after children to schools, parents, and any other agencies the Virtual School Head deems appropriate. The Virtual School supports Leicestershire care leavers to live independently and access Education, Employment and Training opportunities

Head of Service: Education Sufficiency

Admissions Service

70. This Service ensures the statutory co-ordination of first-time admissions to primary schools and infant to junior and secondary school transfers in compliance with the national School Admissions Code. It provides a statutory mid-term transfer service for maintained schools and a traded service for academies who opt in, as the majority of Leicestershire schools do. A key role that follows this is the co-ordination and presentation of admission appeals.
71. With the continued emergence of academies, the Service increasingly provides support, guidance, and oversight of a large number of admission policies for 'own admitting authorities'. The service also takes a lead role in Fair Access Protocols to ensure that vulnerable or hard to place children secure a school place as quickly as possible. The work of the service requires annual returns to the Department for Education (DfE) regarding place allocations.
72. The Service is also responsible the licensing of young people for employment and entertainment, for example paper rounds or shows, and the respective monitoring of this.

School Organisation Service

73. The fundamental role of the Service is to meet the statutory duty placed on the local authority to ensure that a school place is available for every child that requires one (for children of all ages and abilities). To meet this duty the Service manages pupil forecasting, capacity assessments for schools, and annual statutory returns to the DfE which in turn drives the allocation of basic need capital grants. The Service will also plan, prepare, and deliver an annual capital programme for new basic and high needs (specialist) school places.
74. The Service has a key role in liaising/negotiating with housing developers, landowners, local planning authorities and respective agents to secure Section 106 funding for school expansions and new schools and taking a key role in all legal matters relating to this.
75. The core business functions of the Service also include the co-ordination of all academy conversions (including oversight of related property and legal matters), managing statutory change in schools 'prescribed alterations,' age range changes, statutory vestings and land transfers, and managing the allocation of capital funds for safeguarding and health and safety matters.

Early Years, Childcare, and Inclusion Service

76. This Service carries out the local authority duty to secure sufficient and high-quality childcare provision (including out of schools and holiday provision) which supports parents back into work or study. The Service delivers and commissions support to those providers that are judged to be less than good by Ofsted and provides advice and guidance to all providers.
77. The Service has a responsibility to administer and monitor the take up of the Free Early Education Entitlement (FEEE) for eligible 2 year olds, universally for 3 and 4 year olds and for the early years' pupil premium. The service is managing the responsibility to increase the availability of FEEE to wider groups and the wraparound childcare expansion. The service uses a target operating model and a key feature of this is to promote sustainability via effective peer to peer support and collaboration mechanisms through strategic partnerships.
78. The Service provides educational advice as part of a statutory assessment which may lead to an Education, Health and Care plan being produced. A multi-agency approach enables staff to liaise closely with other professionals involved with the child/ family and support referrals to other agencies.
79. Training, support, advice, and guidance is provided to Early Years settings by Area SENCOS in order for them to deliver their statutory requirements regarding the SEND code of practice and to promote the inclusion of all children in Early Years settings.

Head of Service: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Special Educational Needs Assessment Service

80. This Service is responsible for responding to requests for Education Health and Care (EHC) in a timely manner, to annual reviews of EHC Plans (EHCP) received from schools and colleges and amending/ceasing EHCPs as required. The Service is responsible for carrying out Annual Reviews for those with an EHCP who are home educated. The Service is also responsible for responding to Special Educational Needs tribunal appeals on behalf of the local authority.
81. The Service is responsible for managing placements for children with an EHCP into special schools, specialist nurseries and specialist resource bases and commissioning Independent Specialist Placements, ensuring efficient use of resources.

Specialist Teaching Service

82. The Specialist Teaching Service (STS) consists of four teams of specialist staff, working together as one service, in partnership with other professionals from education and health and social care where appropriate, to provide coordinated and effective support and advice for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in Leicestershire Education Settings and for children with hearing or visual impairment from birth.

83. The Service includes the Vision Support Team, the Autism and Learning Support Team, the Hearing Support team, and the Assistive Technology for Education Support Team (ATfEST).
84. The STS provides valuable support, advice, and challenge to ensure that schools make reasonable adjustments and use best endeavours to support children.

Educational Psychology Service

85. The Educational Psychology Service (EPS) works to support children and families, primarily through work with schools and early years providers, drawing from expertise in psychology and child development. The Service works with schools to support them to offer high quality early support and to build confidence in inclusive practice through information, resources and leaflets, advice and guidance via a helpline, support with critical incidents, information and signposting and phone consultation with groups of schools. The Service also undertakes targeted casework and provides supervision to staff in schools who deliver Emotional Literacy Support Assistance (ELSA).
86. The Service is responsible for undertaking EHC Needs Assessments, Tribunal work, complex casework at the request of SENA and Priority Annual Reviews (via phone and/or video).
87. Schools can subscribe into the Leicestershire EPS annual Service Level Agreements, including Educational Psychology consultation with staff and parent(s)/ carer(s) and bespoke training on staff resilience and wellbeing.
88. Schools and education settings can also buy into Social Emotional and Mental Health training packages, for example on Supporting Anxious Children and Coping with Bereavement and Loss, as well as ELSA Training.

Strategic Lead Transformation, Commissioning and Planning

Transformation

89. Half of this post reports to the Assistant Director, Targeted Early Help and Children's Social Care and leads on the Defining Children's services for the future programme and the Innovation partnership with Barnardo's.

Service Manager Transformation and Change

89. In 2021, CFS initiated another major change programmes, Defining Children and Family Services for the Future 1 (DCSF), which with the support of a business management consultant firm and LCCs Transformation Unit, saw the redesign of a number of services to ensure children receive the right services at the right time.
90. One of the integral assertions of DCFS is that the new operating models will also bring about more efficient and effective practice, resulting in more independent families who require less costly interventions over time from the local authority.

91. DCSF2 was initiated in 2023 and continues to be supported by the Transformation Unit. A number of projects are in implementation phase and this second phase was expanded in 2024 to include the review of how services from the external market are commissioned. The work is underpinned by diagnostic work completed by the business management consultant firm.
92. The Change Team was established in 2023 and operates across the CFS Commissioning Service, Children's Social Care and Targeted Early Help to ensure that benefits achieved from the DCSF are sustained.

Head of Service: Commissioning and Planning

Commissioning Service

93. The Commissioning Service is a support service that sits across the Department, offering support and advice regarding all aspects of the commissioning activity, including the planning and procurement of services from the external market, market shaping, the brokerage of placements (education and social care) and short breaks, and the quality assurance and contract monitoring of provision with external providers. The service works closely with the Corporate Commissioning Support Unit (CSU), Finance Business Partner, Business Intelligence Service and Legal teams to ensure that it is able to give appropriate commercial advice and support.

Business Services

Head of Service: Business Services

94. Business Support Services provide high quality support across the Department, ensuring good quality data inputting, appropriate administration processes, HR, Finance within individual service areas are in place to meet the needs of the various teams. The approach is to work with teams, chairs of meetings and panels to make sure the business support offer is commensurate with their needs, including supporting all senior managers, staff in the Department, and having key relationships with other departments, district councils, partners, community and voluntary organisations, members of the public within the county, and professional and technical services such as Information Management, Business Continuity, Emergency Planning, Transport, Property, Health and Safety, Human Resources and ICT around the support required, whilst developing software systems to support those service needs.
95. The Service ensures the development of digital benefits which are fit for the future and to meet service demands, whilst ensuring SMART processes are implemented in a way that makes the best possible use of available resources. It supports all logistics across the Department and embeds new ways of working into business as usual, when possible, at all 25 locality offices, supporting all service areas. The service has robust processes for managing the Department's Freedom of Information requests, Breaches, and Subject Access Requests (which includes regular audits of recommendations) and managing trend information to enable better management of data, information, and security.

Background Papers

Statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/271429/directors_of_child_services_-_stat_guidance.pdf

Children's Act 2004:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/contents>

Working Together to safeguard children 2018:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65803fe31c0c2a000d18cf40/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_2023_-_statutory_guidance.pdf

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

96. None.

Appendices

Appendix A: Children and Family Services Department Structure

Appendix B: Children and Family Services Department Plan 2023-2026 Summary

Officer to Contact

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