



**CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE: 4 JUNE 2024**

QUARTER 4 2023/24 PERFORMANCE REPORT

**JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND DIRECTOR OF
CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES**

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to present the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update on the Children and Family Services Department's performance for the period January to March 2024 (quarter 4).

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. The Children and Family Services Department's performance is reported to the Committee in accordance with the Council's corporate performance management arrangements.

Background and Overview

3. The following report and accompanying data aim to report on the priority areas identified by the Children and Family Services Departmental Plan 2020-2023. The plan identifies ambitions and measures to monitor progress. The current performance data is appended to this report and has been refreshed to concentrate on indicators where updated data is available for quarter 4.
4. Quartile positions are included where comparative national data is available. Comparative data is not available for all indicators.
5. From 11 measures reported that have a national benchmark, one is in the top quartile, four are in the second quartile, four are in the third quartile and two are in the bottom quartile.

Children's Social Care Performance Spotlight

6. The Department continues to embed the new structure for Family Help and Family Safeguarding, launched on 5 February 2024, with teams now becoming established and new peer relationships being built. Cases have transferred into the new structure and performance reports realigned. Early feedback is positive with staff becoming well integrated across the former Children and Family Welling Service and Children's Social Care in Family help.

7. On 28 March, the senior management team agreed a proposal to implement a pilot of a new role to support tracking of Public Law Outline (PLO) activity. This builds on the application made to be part of a project to work with Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (CAFCASS) early in the PLO process and will be evaluated in August 2024. The Department will continue to focus on timeliness of pre-proceedings and care proceedings, and the new Family Safeguarding structure is providing a strong foundation for this work. An established interim Service Manager is fulfilling this role currently working closely with the Head of Service, Family Safeguarding and Disabled Children to measure impact and inform future recruitment.
8. The Department has been successful in a bid to be part of the Department of Education's Pre-Case Management pilot. This will further strengthen PLO work.
9. In March 2024, 14 members of the 'Children in Care Council' and 'Beacon Choir' attended a residential event at Beaumanor Hall. A combination of activities and work on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) led by the corporate parenting team meant lots of fun, but also several pledges completed by the Children in Care Council members, as part of the focus on EDI overseen by the Corporate Parenting Board. More plans to build on this as part of the annual summer play scheme are already being developed with ideas to focus on EDI in the context of the 2024 Olympics as the theme.
10. On 4 March 2024, a new system was implemented in the First Response Children's Duty screening process. Building on work started in Autumn 2023, this aims to implement updated roles and responsibilities for staff as part of a wider transformation process. By the end of the month, the Service was witnessing a real positive impact in terms of roles becoming established and strong working across business support and social work teams. Staff support and training offered by the Practice Excellence team added further enhancement to the programme of change. Whilst some impact on demand has been experienced causing pressures on throughput this has started to stabilise by the end of the month. Additional social work and Team Manager capacity has been agreed to support this period of change, with a plan to review demand and allocation processes into April and May once new ways of working have become further embedded. This forms part of the wider ambition and vision for the Service Delivery Plan.
11. Another Family hub was launched in March with strong progress being made, this takes the number of Family Hubs open across Leicestershire to 36 with 16 of these being in local libraries. More information about the programme is set out on the Family Hubs website: <https://www.familyhubsleicestershire.org.uk/>
12. A Short Break Pilot for less complex children, which enabled families to apply in a simpler way, is progressing well. The Short Break Pilot is the result of a review carried out into the way short breaks for disabled children are delivered in Leicestershire. Working in co-production with the SEND Hub (Parent and Carer Forum), the pilot has introduced a parent self-assessment option which allows a parent to apply for one of two levels of short break package for a period of twelve months. Parents felt that there should be a lighter touch option for families with lower level needs which did not involve a worker needing to visit the family home and complete a lengthier process. The Service felt that they would benefit from moving away from a one-size-fits-all approach, which could be labour intensive and more time consuming.

13. In the pilot, parents and carers can either answer some basic questions to identify eligibility for the lowest level award (equivalent to five sessions of support) or go on to answer a more detailed series of questions about their child's needs and impact on family for additional hours. All families are given the choice of self-assessment or a worker assessment. To date, more than 55 families have been offered the self-assessment pilot. The Service is also working with the SEND Hub to evaluate the pilot.
14. On April 5, officers in Youth and Justice met for the Youth Justice Board oversight meeting. This was positive and the Service is judged to be strongly at the top of Quadrant 2 for all performance measures. It is hoped that the changes to the recording system Core Plus will support stronger reporting mechanism that will see us move into the top quadrant.

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

15. Local Authority comparisons used are most recent figures published by the government for end of year benchmarking of performance in 2022/23.
16. The percentage of Child Protection cases reviewed within timescales was 87.4% at the end of quarter 4, with 291 of 333 children having all reviews on time within the last twelve months. This is an improvement on the quarter 3 figure of 82.6% (266 of 322), and now places Leicestershire in the third quartile of all local authorities by published benchmarks.
17. The percentage of children becoming subject to a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time in the year to date decreased to 26.8% at the end of quarter 4 compared to 28.7% at the end of quarter 3. In this quarter 26 children began a second or subsequent child protection plan, a decrease from 50 reported in the preceding quarter. Leicestershire continues to be placed in the fourth quartile of local authorities compared to most recent national results published for 2022/23.
18. This continues to be an area of focus for the Service and regular audits are completed to understand any themes around the circumstances leading to repeat periods of child protection planning. In March this was 3 families. The Service carried out an audit of repeat plans to inform further development work aiming to achieve more consistent performance. Positively in March only 4% of repeat plans were within two years of a previous plan ending which is reassuring.
19. The percentage of re-referrals to Children's Social Care within twelve months was 24.1% (1,494 of 6,212 referrals). Leicestershire continues to be placed in the fourth quartile of local authorities.
20. The percentage of assessments completed within 45 days to the end of quarter 4 was 88.6%, similar to performance at the end quarter 3 (88.9%). Within quarter 4, 1,117 of 1,269 assessments were completed within timescale. Leicestershire continues to be placed in the second quartile of local authorities using most recent comparisons.

21. Ten Child Protection plans lasting two years, or more were open at the end of quarter 4, representing 2.3% of cases. This is an increase compared with the end of quarter 3 (5 children, 1.1%), and now places Leicestershire in the second quartile of local authorities.
22. The percentage of Care Leavers aged up to 21 in Suitable Accommodation was 95.1% at the end of quarter 4 (408 out of 429 young people). This is a slight decrease from the end of quarter 3 (95.8%) although continues to place Leicestershire in the top quartile of local authorities using available comparisons.
23. The percentage of Care Leavers aged up to 21 in Education, Employment or Training was 60.6% at the end of quarter 4 (260 out of 429 young people). This is a slight decrease from the end of quarter 3, 61.6%, and now places Leicestershire in the second quartile by comparison with other local authorities. The Service continues to provide careful oversight to the care leaver indicators and is driven by a corporate commitment for creating mentoring and apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers.
24. The percentage of Children in Care at the end of quarter 4 who had a dental check in the preceding twelve months was 76.6% (557 children), an increase from 65.4% reported for the previous quarter.
25. The percentage of Children in Care at the end of quarter 4 who had an annual health assessment within the preceding twelve months was 76.3% (555 children). This is an increase from 62.1% reported for the previous quarter.

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

26. Due to the impact of system changes, specifically relating to Capita/Synergy, it is not possible to report a total of children and families worked with by Targeted Family Help (formally Children and Family Wellbeing) for quarter 3 2023/24 at this time. During quarter 3 2022/23 (the last available reporting period), the Targeted Family Help service worked with 3,489 individuals and 1,435 families across Leicestershire.
27. The Children and Family Services Departmental Plan states the intention to ensure that the needs of children and young people are identified as early as possible so that timely and appropriate support is provided in the right setting, therefore reducing the risk of needs escalating at the same time as ensuring children and young people's best outcomes are achieved.
28. The number of children in mainstream schools in Leicestershire with an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) was 2,522 at the Spring term 2024 school census. This is 76 children higher than at the Autumn term 2023 school census (2,446). The Spring term 2024 school census EHCP numbers are the highest recorded for this school census term since the phasing in of the 2014 SEN Code of Practice changes was completed. From the same period in the last academic year, this represents an increase of 130 children.
29. The number of children in mainstream schools in Leicestershire without an EHCP but in receipt of SEN Support was 12,968 at the Spring term 2024 school census. This is 389 higher than the Autumn term 2023 school census (12,579).

30. The Spring term 2024 school census SEN support numbers are the highest recorded for this school census term since the phasing in of the 2014 SEN Code of Practice changes was completed. From the same period last academic year this represents an increase of 576 children.

People are safe in their daily lives

31. Local Youth Justice statistics are regularly reported to the Youth and Justice Management Board. The latest report was presented at the December 2023 board. However, due to the impact of system changes, only national indicators could be reported.

Help every child to get the best possible start in life

Early Years

32. In the Spring term 2024, 71.2% of eligible two-year-olds took up their Funded Early Education Entitlement (FEEE). This is a decrease from the Autumn term 2023 (79.4%). For three-year-olds, the figure was 89.8%, also a decrease over the Autumn term 2023 (93.6%). Overall, 97.3% of eligible two- and three-year-olds took up their FEEE in high-quality provision in the Spring term 2024, a slight increase from the previous term (97.1%).
33. Between Q2 2023/24 and Q3, the underlying denominator used to calculate FEEE percentages was changed from ONS (Office for National Statistics) mid-year population estimates to GP registrations. This was due to the time-lag in the release of ONS estimates, compared with GP registration data. As such, figures recorded may not correspond with figures reported in previous periods.

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

34. The percentage of primary schools rated Good or Outstanding was 90.3% (204 out of 226 inspected schools) at the end of quarter 4. This represents no change from quarter 3. This figure is within the third quartile of local authorities and is 0.7% below the England average, which is at its joint highest level ever (91%), and 0.7% lower than the average for Statistical Neighbours (91%).
35. The percentage of secondary schools rated Good or Outstanding was 77.8% (35 out of 45 inspected schools) at the end of quarter 4. This represents no change from quarter 3. This performance is within the third quartile of local authorities nationally. Leicestershire's performance is 5.1% lower than the average for England, which at 82.9% is a new highest ever national level of performance, and 7.2% lower than the average for Statistical Neighbours (85%).
36. The percentage of pupils educated in Good or Outstanding schools was 85.9% at the end of quarter 4 (approx. 86k out of 100k pupils). This is an increase of 0.2% from quarter 3 (85.7%). This figure is within the third quartile of local authorities nationally. Leicestershire's performance is 3.7% lower than the average for England, and 3.9% lower than the average for Statistical Neighbours (89.8%). The England average which is currently at 89.6% continues to represent the highest ever national performance.

37. The number of children Electively Home Educated (EHE) was 1,176 at the end of Q4 2023/24. This is an increase of 158 students (13.4%) compared to the end of Q4 2022/23 (1,018 students).
38. The trend has been driven by two factors: firstly, having experienced a period of enforced home schooling during the pandemic, some parents have opted for EHE as a lifestyle choice and have chosen to continue this even when schools reopened. The second factor has been ongoing health concerns which could be for the child, vulnerable parents, or general safety concerns. The Department will continue to closely monitor this.
39. The percentage of young people (16-17) in Leicestershire not in education, employment, or training (NEET) at the end of Q4 2023/24 was 0.8% (118 students). This rate was a slight increase on the end of Q3 2023/24 (0.7%).
40. The number of permanent exclusions from Leicestershire schools as a percentage of the school population in the 2022/23 academic year was 0.07%. This is 0.05% higher than the last academic year (0.02%). The number of permanent exclusions was 179% higher than the previous year, 67 in 2022/23 compared to 24 in 2021/22. This is the highest number of permanent exclusions from Leicestershire schools since 2008/09. National and Statistical neighbour comparisons are not available yet.
41. The number of children receiving at least one fixed term suspension from Leicestershire schools as a percentage of school population in the 2022/23 academic year was 3.13%. This rate is 25% higher than in the last academic year (2.47%). 3,161 children had at least one fixed term suspension in 2023 compared to 2,482 in 2021/22. This represents both the highest number of children and highest rate as a percentage of school population, receiving at least one fixed term suspension since collection of this data was started by the Department of Education (DfE) in 2005/06. National and Statistical neighbour comparisons are not available yet.

Conclusion

42. The report provides a summary of performance at the end of quarter 4 2023/24, covering the period January to March 2024.
43. Details of all metrics (reflecting any changes in indicators for 2024/25) will continue to be monitored on a regular basis throughout the year and any subsequent changes will be notified in future reports.

Background Papers

44. None.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

45. None.

Appendix

46. Children and Family Services Department Performance data quarter 4, 2023/24

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