



**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:**  
**5 NOVEMBER 2024**

**CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE PLACEMENT MARKET POSITION AND**  
**SUFFICIENCY STATEMENT, 2024-27**

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

**Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with a summary of the Children's Social Care Placements Market Position and Sufficiency Statement, 2024-27.

**Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

2. The Children Act 1989 (section 22g) requires all local authorities to take steps that are reasonably practicable to secure sufficient accommodation for children and young people under their care who cannot live at home and whose circumstances indicate that it would be in their best interests to be accommodated within the local authority area (for example, in order to stay at the same school or near to other family where contact can easily take place). This is generally referred to as the sufficiency duty.
3. The Children's Social Care Placements Market Position and Sufficiency Statement, 2024-27 is designed to meet that duty and set out how the Council will attempt to ensure local sufficiency for children looked after in terms of accommodation and support.

**Background**

4. The Children and Family Services department has historically published either a Sufficiency Statement or a Market Position Statement for Social Care Placements. In 2021 it was decided to refresh the latest version of these documents and to combine them so that there would be a single source of information for providers and other interested parties about local sufficiency. The Children's Social Care Placements Market Position and Sufficiency Statement, 2021-24 was published online and contained a series of sufficiency actions and commissioning intentions, many of which were aligned to work being undertaken through the Defining Children and Family Services for the Future (DCFSS) transformation programme.
5. In early 2024, the decision was taken to refresh the Market Position and Sufficiency Statement to cover the period 2024-27. One key difference with this refresh has been the greater use of data relating to demand and need for support and accommodation for children and young people looked after, what has been delivered by the Council

or though commissioning and procuring services with the external market over the last three years (2021-24) and sufficiency forecasts for the next three years. This has allowed the identification of gaps in provision, highlighting challenges the Council faces in finding suitable accommodation and support for Children Looked After and to indicate what steps required to ensure suitable provision is available internally and is required from the external market for the future.

6. The latest Market Position and Sufficiency Statement also includes feedback from children and young people. The feedback was taken from the recent 'Language of Care Survey' and from conversations with children and young people who are in receipt of accommodation and support. This has illustrated how they feel about the services and support offered. A survey was also undertaken with external providers that the Council uses for accommodation and support services. This was undertaken in order to understand what providers and organisations feel about their relationship with the Council and things that the Children and Family Services department and Commissioning Service could do differently to support them and therefore the Council's sufficiency needs better.
7. The Statement will become a key document to guide Children's Social Care commissioning activity in Leicestershire over the next three years. Actions within it will be aligned with the department's procurement pipelines and MTFs objectives. Actions will also be aligned to other areas of work or strategic action plans where there are interdependencies to ensure alignment of work and to reduce risk of duplication across different but connected workstreams. The Statement will also help inform future joint and integrated commissioning activity, providing a baseline for discussions with strategic partners, such as Health, other Council departments and other public sector bodies.
8. The Children's Social Care Placements Market Position and Sufficiency Statement, 2024-27 will be published on the County Council's Procedures Online website which can be accessed by any interested parties. A programme of communications to alert providers, partners and other interested parties to the Statement will also be undertaken. So that the Statement remains a relevant document, regular updates will be published online, alongside the main document, every six months. This will provide interested parties with a report on progress against the Action Plan and to inform providers of any changes to data and /or actions. Where there are specific themes emerging, the Service may invite providers to attend a collaboration event to discuss and consider joint actions. In this way, the Market Position and Sufficiency Statement will remain a live document so that the content and key actions can be updated to suit ongoing sufficiency needs.
9. A copy of the Children's Social Care Placements Market Position and Sufficiency Statement, 2024-27 can be found within the appendix.

### **Key Themes and Next Steps**

10. In the latest version of the Market Position Statement, a number of key sufficiency themes have been identified:
  - There has been a growth in the number of children in care in Leicestershire and a higher number of children returning to care.

- There has been an increase in the number of requests for all types of accommodation and support services (fostering, residential and Supported Accommodation). This is placing increased demand on the internal offer and resulting in greater use of commissioned packages with the external market.
  - Much of the growth in demand that is expected reflects increased demand for accommodation and support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (USAC) and for this the Service is currently very reliant on the external market.
  - The age of children going into their first residential or fostering accommodation and support (particularly residential).
  - Although demand for accommodation and support for parents and children (known as Parent and Child placements) continues fluctuates but there has been a trend in growth of overall number required
  - The number of young people aged 18.5 years and older placed in Supported Accommodation has grown significantly since 2021 – for both non-UASC and USAC. This may reflect limited move-on accommodation locally and timescales associated with processes such as a leave to remain and appeals.
  - Generally, more children and young people are being placed into foster and Supported Accommodation services within the County or within 20 miles of the County boundaries. However, where residential providers are being used, a greater number are beyond 20 miles of the County Boundary.
  - Although the duration of stays with foster carers (internal and external) has stayed static, the length of time in residential and Supported Accommodation has generally increased.
  - The Service is continuing to review its Overnight Residential Short Breaks offer. Better understanding of demand and potential alternative ways of delivering short breaks support in Leicestershire is required.
11. A detailed action plan setting out work to address these themes will be developed by the Department and progress against this will be published online every six months as part of the regular update to the Statement.

### **Background Papers**

12. None

### **Circulation under the Local Alert Issues Procedure**

13. None.

### **List of Appendices**

Children's Social Care Placements Market Position and Sufficiency Statement, 2024-27

### **Equality Implications**

14. The Children and Family Services Department supports vulnerable children and young people from across all communities in Leicestershire. Complaints and compliments are a way of ensuring that service responses are fair and equitable to all. This report does not highlight any specific equal opportunities implications.

### **Human Rights Implications**

15. There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

### **Officers to contact.**

Jane Moore  
Director, Children and Family Services  
Tel: 0116 305 7441  
Email: [jane.moore@leics.gov.uk](mailto:jane.moore@leics.gov.uk)

Sharon Cooke  
Assistant Director, Children and Family Services  
Tel: 0116 305 5479  
Email: [Sharon.cooke@leics.gov.uk](mailto:Sharon.cooke@leics.gov.uk)

Ian Mellor  
Head of Service, Commissioning  
Children and Family Services Department  
Tel: 0116 305 3301  
Email: [ian.mellor@leics.gov.uk](mailto:ian.mellor@leics.gov.uk)