

Children and Family Services

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

September 2024



Achieving Excellence
through purposeful practice

Executive Summary

September 2024

Leicestershire County Council's Children and Family Services (CFS) department is committed to the delivery of high-quality services for children, young people and their families. Our vision is for all children and young people in Leicestershire to be safe, nurtured, loved and supported to succeed in caring and inclusive communities.

Under the Children Act 1989 (section 22g) all local authorities are required to take steps that are reasonably practicable to secure sufficient accommodation for children and young people under their care. This Children's Social Care Placement Market Position and Sufficiency Statement sets out how we will meet this duty and our plans to ensure that we can deliver our local sufficiency needs – that is, that we are able to offer children, young and their families the right support and provision at the right time and in the right place. In the context of this statement, these services include residential homes, fostering, support accommodation (including for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC), and short breaks.

We tend to refer to these services and support as 'placements'. However, we know that locally children and young people have told us they don't like the term and would rather we refer to terms such as 'home'. In this document, therefore, we try to limit use of the term 'placements', instead referring to 'home', 'accommodation', 'care' and 'support' where appropriate.

To write this statement we have used a variety of data sources about current demand and need for accommodation and support services. We have also taken in account feedback from children and young people and their families and carers and from providers that we work with. This has enabled us to understand some of the key issues and concerns facing those that we support and those that provide support and to consider this as part of developing our sufficiency actions for the next three years. This is all presented in the statement.



Several key sufficiency themes have been identified in the statement:

- 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 our internal offer and resulting in greater use of commissioned packages with the external market
- Much of the growth in demand that we are experiencing reflects increased demand for accommodation and support for USAC and for this we are currently reliant on the external market
- The age of children going into their first residential or fostering accommodation and support (particularly residential) is generally reducing
- Although demand for accommodation and support for parents and children (known as Parent and Child placements) continues to fluctuate, there has been a trend in growth of overall number
- 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, we are placing more children and young people in foster homes and supported accommodation services within the County or within 20 miles of the County boundaries. However, where we are using residential providers, a greater number are beyond 20 miles of the County than within 20 miles from the County
- 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
- We are continuing to review our Overnight Residential Short Breaks offer. We need to better understand demand and potential alternative ways of delivering short breaks support in Leicestershire

The statement sets out some high-level actions to address these themes and ensure local sufficiency over the next three years. We will provide updates every 6 months online to show progress against these actions and provide any updates in terms of changing trends in our data or need to take different action to ensure local sufficiency.

Updates will be published at: <https://llrcs-leicestershire.trixonline.co.uk/resources/local-resources?root=21b9b69c-ac37-47dc-bc60-866f963dd13b>

Introduction

Leicestershire County Council's Children and Family Services (CFS) department is committed to the delivery of high-quality services for children, young people and their families. Our vision is for all children and young people in Leicestershire to be safe, nurtured, loved and supported to succeed in caring and inclusive communities.

Leicestershire Children and Family Services Departmental Plan, 2024-26

One Vision



For all children and young people in Leicestershire to be safe, nurtured, loved and supported to succeed in caring and inclusive communities.

Three Ambitions



Build Strong Foundations

Be Safe and Belong

Enjoy and Achieve

www.proceduresonline.com/llr/childcare/leicestershire/user_controlled_lcms_area/uploaded_files/CFS%20Departmental%20Plan%20Diagram%20A3.pdf

We believe that all children and young people in care should have the opportunity to live and thrive in family-based care determined by their needs and wishes. We are committed to providing services that are focused on promoting positive relationships, the best outcomes and permanence. Where children and young people cannot remain within their own families, alternative homes should be within Leicestershire and close enough to their local communities to maintain their schools, friendships and other networks.

One of the ways in which we will deliver this commitment is by having plans in place that ensure that we can deliver our local sufficiency needs – that is, that we are able to offer children, young and their families the right support and provision at the right time and in the right place. Key to achieving this is a robust approach to commissioning that encourages innovation, best value and quality, market engagement and a full understanding of local sufficiency needs and challenges.

This Sufficiency and Market Position Statement aims to provide understanding of sufficiency and is intended for use by both the department, partners and the external market. It covers the period 2024-2027 and will focus primarily on services and support for Children Looked After: residential and fostering provision, services for older young people (such as 16+ Supported Accommodation, including provision for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children [UASC]), and provision of short breaks.

We tend to refer to these services and support as ‘placements’. However, we know that locally children and young people have told us they don’t like the term and would rather we refer to terms such as ‘home’ (see below, ‘Language of Care Survey’). As this is a document used by a range of audiences, it will be necessary to continue to refer to ‘placements’ in some sections for ease of reference, but where possible we will limit use of the term, referring instead to ‘home’, ‘accommodation’, ‘care’ and ‘support’.

Using data and information from a range of sources, this statement will:

- Set out our current sufficiency position for Children’s Social Care,
- Explore current and future demand for accommodation and support,
- Give an overview of explain some of our strategic plans around sufficiency (including information about related initiatives and work which may be of interest to the market),
- Share what children and young people and their families/carers are telling us about their home, accommodation and support
- Give an insight into feedback from providers about their experience of delivering accommodation and support; and,
- Set out our priorities and associated actions to promote our local sufficiency over the next three years

Although this statement covers a three-year period (to 2027), we recognise that our sufficiency needs are ever-changing. So that we can provide regular and useful updates we will publish online every six months a summary of activity to date and a refresh of key data sources. Where the refreshed data indicates we need to amend our priorities and or actions, this will be explained. This should enable this market position and sufficiency statement to remain up-to-date and therefore a useful source of information to a range of stakeholders, including children and young people and their families, partner organisations and providers in the children’s social care market.



Why we need a Sufficiency Statement?

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's 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 our 'sufficiency duty'. This Market Position and Sufficiency Statement is designed to meet that duty.

Strategic Background

Our Market Position and Sufficiency Statement does not exist in isolation – it is informed by a number of other Regional and Local Strategic documents and sources of information, including (unless specified otherwise these documents [and others relevant to the work of the department] can be viewed at: <https://www.proceduresonline.com/llr/childcare/leicestershire/index.html>):

- Leicestershire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) 2022-25 (<https://www.lsr-online.org/jsna>)
- Children and Families Partnership Plan, 2024-26
- Leicestershire Continuous Improvement Plan, 2023-24 – Achieving Excellence Through Purposeful Practice
- Recruitment and Retention Strategy 2024-27
- Leicestershire Corporate Parenting Strategy, 2022-2025
- Leicestershire “Our Promise” to children in care and care leavers
- “Our Promise” – Being Aspirational for children and young people in care and care leavers, Annual Report 2022-23
- Engaging all Young People – NEET Strategy
- Permanence and Adoption Statement of Purpose 2022-23
- Leicestershire Adoption Service Annual Report, 2022-23
- Leicestershire Fostering Service Annual Report, 2022-23
- Adoption and Permanence Statement of Purpose 2022-24
- Leicestershire Supporting Lodgings Scheme Statement of Purpose 2023
- Leicestershire Children and Family Services – Short Breaks Statement, 2024-25
- Leicestershire Children and Family Service Voice and Influence Strategy, 2022-23
- Children in Care and Permanence Annual Report 2021-22
- Joint Leicester City, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) SEND Commissioning Strategy 2021-24

Services and Support - The Leicestershire Offer

In Leicestershire, we currently ensure suitable services and support are available to children, young people and their families and carers in a number of different ways. Some of these are provided directly by the Council and these are often referred to as ‘in-house’ or ‘internal’ services or support. Others are delivered by our partners – such as local Health Services or by the Police or Probation Services.



Further services and support are delivered by organisations outside of the Council (known as the ‘external market’ - including charities, not-for-profit and private businesses) and these are often referred to as ‘external provisions/placements’ or ‘commissioned services’. Where the Council works with these organisations it is necessary to procure or buy these services following certain National rules and regulations and it is then the responsibility of the Council to monitor, and quality assure these services.

Our Leicestershire offer for Children Looked After (including Care Leavers and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children – UASC) is broadly as follows:

Fostering and Adoption:

Leicestershire has an internal fostering service and also uses external Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs). The internal Fostering Service works in partnership with children and young people, their families and carers to provide safe, caring homes which value the differences in children and young people and help them to achieve their full potential. It consists of six separate teams:

- Recruitment – fostering and adoption
- Assessments – Fostering
- Team around the Child
- Kinship
- Dedicated Placements Support – Placement Stability, Independent Visitors, Supported Lodgings Scheme, Staying Put, Specialist Foster Carers
- UASC Carers recruitment and Assessment Team

Where the needs of a child or young person requiring foster care cannot be met through our internal Fostering Service we will search for accommodation and support with Independent Foster Agencies (IFA). This will be done using our Gateway2Resources (G2R) Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS - a version of a framework for Children and Young People who are in the care of the Local Authority). If this cannot be sourced from providers who have signed up to our G2R, we will make further searches with providers outside of the G2R (known as 'off-framework providers').

Residential:

Where a child or young person requires a residential accommodation and support, we also have internal and external options.

Through our Children's Innovation Partnership (CIP) with Barnardo's we have started to develop our own internal residential children's homes. We have acquired several properties in Leicestershire and have developed (or are developing) them to cater for the needs of different groups of looked after children and young people. Since May 2023 we have opened children's homes for Contextual Safeguarding, Emotional Health and Wellbeing and a Family Residential Home. We are currently (August 2024) working on opening further homes that will provide EBD Emergency & Assessments, High Need Hospital Step Downs and Overnight Residential Short Breaks. We continue to work through the CIP to identify need for further internal residential children's homes.

Where we cannot offer accommodation, care and support in one of our internal residential children's homes we would search for an alternative with the external market again using the G2R. If the request for support cannot be sourced from providers who have signed up to our G2R, we will make further searches with providers outside of the G2R (known as 'off-framework providers'). Our focus is always to attempt to place with registered and regulated providers.

Children's Innovation Partnership (CIP)

In December 2018, Barnardo's was awarded the Children's Innovation Partnership contract. A Children's Innovation Partnership Board (CIP) was established in December 2018 to provide governance and challenge. The key objectives of the CIP are to co-design services by sharing expertise and knowledge in the delivery of innovative solutions, contributing to transformational change through new and shared service delivery models.



Supported Accommodation:

Leicestershire's Supported Accommodation offer is for young people aged 16 years and over. Our internal offer is known as 'Supported Lodgings' and is run by our Fostering and Adoption Service. Under this scheme, paid 'Hosts' offer Supported Lodgings – a room in their home – to a young person aged over 16 years old. They also offer help and guidance, helping to prepare the young person for adult and independence by developing essential life skills in a safe and supportive environment.

Where a Supported Lodgings option is not available for a young person aged 16 years and over, we would search for a residential placement using the G2R. Our offer for Supported Accommodation through the G2R includes a range of different types of accommodation, such as single occupancy and shared accommodation, and different levels of support, such as 24/7 and floating support (this offer is aligned to the regulatory and quality standards introduced by the Department for Education in 2023). If a Supported Accommodation placement cannot be sourced through providers who have signed up to our G2R, we will make further searches with providers outside of the G2R (known as 'off-framework providers').

Short Breaks:

A range of other services are also commissioned through a variety of separate contracted and frameworks – such as Short Breaks (play and leisure) and Overnight Residential Short Breaks.

Others:

In the context of children looked after there are some other accommodation-related services and support that Leicestershire offers including domiciliary care for disabled children and also services to support children and young people in their home environment (known as Support At Home). These are in addition to our other children's social care offers, more information about which can be found at: <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/social-care-and-supporting-families>

Focus on Children and Young People

We regularly collect feedback from children and young people so that we can understand what is important to them in terms of our offer of support and accommodation and allows them to influence the commissioning decisions we make. Recent feedback collected during our Language of Care Survey and from conversations held during quality assurance visits to residential, fostering and Support Accommodation settings, reveals the following relevant to this Market Position and Sufficiency Statement:

The language we use as operational staff and commissioners has an impact on children and young people:

“I don't like to use the term Placement... This is a place and (where) you live for long time, its a home and not a placement.”

“Foster care, I don't know why but they still use it. Why don't they just say a normal family.”

“The words that adults use around me are sometimes difficult to understand as I am learning English”

Some of the things that matter most to children and young people about their accommodation and support include:



Things that children and young people have told us worry them or are an issue with their accommodation and support include:



The Language of Care

Children and young people have told the Council that the use of language is extremely personal to the individual child or young person and that the language that professionals use can help or hinder relationships with children and their families and carers.

To understand more about this and to learn from children and young people, the Children and Family Services department co-produced an online 'Language of Care Survey'. A targeted range of Children in Care completed over 140 surveys and analysis of the results allowed several key themes to be identified, some of which are relevant to support and accommodation services.

Key messages from the survey included:

- That professionals should avoid using jargon and abbreviations
- Dislike amongst children and young people of the term 'placements' – "I don't really like placement because it is my home where I live now."
- That it is important to ask children and young people how they want to refer to things – not all children and young people like terms such as foster carers, contact time, Looked After Child and will often have an alternative preference – ask them!

As a result of the survey the department has:

- Worked with services across the department to share findings and will be sharing more detailed information with external providers
- Co-produced a toolkit to assist all practitioners to think about language choices – this has been endorsed by the Corporate Parenting Board and was launch in May 2024



Focus on Providers

As part of writing this Market Position and Sufficiency Statement we invited external residential, IFA and 16+ Support Accommodation providers that Leicestershire works with to share comments on what it was like to do business with the department and to give a perspective of what it means to be a provider in the current social care market. 55 individual providers responded to the survey, with a fairly equal split across residential, fostering, support accommodation and short breaks provisions.

Key themes noted by providers:

- Generally, the relationship with the Children and Family Services Commissioning Service as ‘very good or fairly good’ across all areas – between 69-78% in the following areas: procurement, brokerage, contact management and quality assurance and provider engagement)
- The Councils financial processes and the timeliness and paperwork associated with some processes (such as brokerage) could be further improved as could contact from social workers
- Providers generally noted an improvement in communication around commissioning processes from the Council
- Providers emphasised the importance of information from the Council – about sufficiency (current and future demand and needs analyses), financial data and processes and commercial opportunities

“We have always had a good relationship with Leicestershire County Council, staff are polite and helpful and processes are not complicated and are able to access/use”

“The financial process is taking longer than expected”

“We think that there has been a big improvement in communication from the commissioning service and links to other teams”

“It would be useful for know what areas of Leicestershire need different sorts of provisions”

“It is important for [the Council] to note that information shared informs Provider’s Strategic planning so changes must be shared timely to save effective mobilisation of resources”

Smarter Commissioning: Transforming the Way We Work

At the heart of our approach to ensuring placement sufficiency is a focus on robust and consistent commissioning activity. 'Commissioning' is sometimes defined as the process by which an organisation decides how they will leverage the total resources available to make the biggest possible impact on outcomes in the most effective, efficient and sustainable way. Put another way, this means making decisions about how to ensure we get the best outcomes for children, young people and families with the money and resources (such as people) that we have available, ensuring that we are thinking current and future demand when planning services and support to achieve those outcomes.

To do this we need clear commissioning strategies, need to plan in advance what services we need and ensure that we have robust processes in place to monitor the quality of those services, ensuring value for money at all times. In Children and Family Services in Leicestershire we will ensure that our commissioning decisions are:

- based on clear evidence for need
- Child and outcomes-focused
- focused on building relationships and working in collaboration with the local market to ensure the delivery of high-quality services and provisions
- compliant with National Public Contract regulations, the Procurement Act 2023 and local procurement and financial spend controls
- appropriately include the voice of children, young people and their families; and
- fully consider equality and diversity (with a particular focus on ensuring that we consider the needs of hard-to-reach groups and those with a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2021).



Leicestershire Setting the Scene

The following data information is intended to provide some high-level demographic information and an overview of current demand for children's social care in Leicestershire. Unless specified, all data is as of 31/03/2024 and is based on information held by the Council and, in some cases, already reported in statutory returns:



Resident population in Leicestershire¹ is

712,366

this is **9.5% increase** since 2011

Resident population in Leicestershire is predicted to

rise by **18%** by **2040** to **845,000**²

Based on ONS Projections, the population of **people resident in Leicestershire and aged 0-24 years** is predicted to

rise by **14.4%** from **200,416** in 2021 to **229,372** in 2040



There were

726 children in care in Leicestershire,



equivalent to **50.8 children per 10,000** population aged 0-17 in Leicestershire (compared to average of 60.5 children in care per 10,000 in statistical neighbour local authorities and 71.0 for England as of 31/03/2023).

Of these 726,



454 (63%) were **Male**



and **37%** **Female**



544 (74.9%) from **white ethnic groups** – an **increase of 18 (3.4%)** since 2023. Has also been an increase in children in care from Asian ethnic groups (increase of 28 (103.7%)) in the same period



Number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) **increased in Leicestershire during 23/24** compared with previous year – **112** (representing 15.4% of overall children in care population in Leicestershire).

Of the 726 children in care:

52%

looked after under a **Full Care Order** (increase of 2% from 2023; includes UASC)

Increase in children **looked after under Section 20** (both for UASC and non-UASC)

60%

placed in **foster placements** (provided by the Local Authority, other foster agencies such as Independent Foster Agencies (IFA) or **fostered by a relative of a friend**)

10%

placed in a **residential home** or **school**

16%

living in **semi-independent accommodation**.

0.8%

in a category known as **'residential other'** – which largely comprises young people placed in Supported Accommodation which is going through the process of registration following move to registration in September 2023. It also includes 4 children or young people in a short-term activity placement (unregistered provision)

9.3%

children have a **permanent home** with an adoption family or have been **placed with parents**

¹ (based on 2021 census)

² (based on Office for National Statistics (ONS)NS Projections)

Leicestershire Sufficiency - What is our data telling us ?

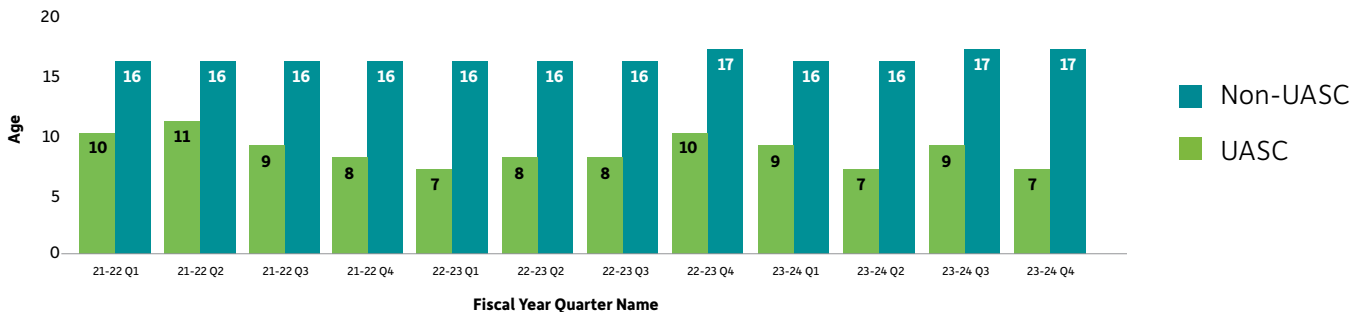
Our understanding of our sufficiency needs is based on understanding both our current demand, recent trends (in terms of demand and meeting need) and future projections (i.e. are recent trends likely to continue or are they likely to change due to known demographic factors and what does that mean for our provision of accommodation and support). For example, we know from demographic data that the number of young people is set to increase over the next three years; that suggests any trends we have recently observed will continue and this allows us to broadly model our sufficiency needs across certain areas.

Children and Young People Coming in to Care

As of 31 March 2024 there were 726 children in care in Leicestershire – this number represents an increase from previous years and is the first annual increase in this cohort since 2021. As Office National Statistics (ONS) data suggest further growth in those aged 0-24 years (14.4% to 2040) further this upward trend may be expected to increase, and this trend will need to be monitored in subsequent years. However, the number of children in care in the County per 10,000 of the population remains lower than that for statistical neighbours and the England average.

The actual increase of children coming in to care was 26% higher in 2023/2024 than it was in 2022/23. Within this growth, the greatest increase has been in Section 20 admissions for both non-UASC (up by 45%) and UASC (up by 42%):

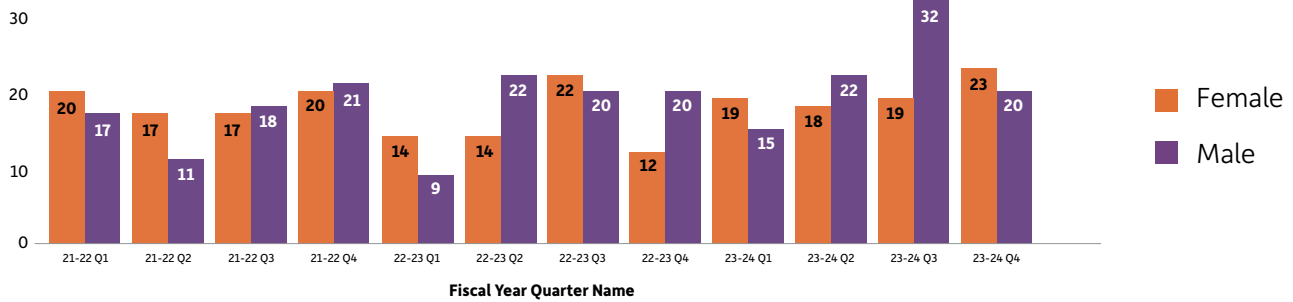
Average Age Coming into Care



Since 2021 the average age of UASC coming in to care has risen from 16 years to 17 years, particularly since late 2023. In contrast, the average of non-UASC children and young people coming in to care as generally decreased over the last 3 years (from 10 years in Quarter 1 2021/22 to 7 years in Q4 2022/23). This means that the cohort of non-UASC in care has got younger and this means increased demand for accommodation, care and support geared towards the needs of younger children.

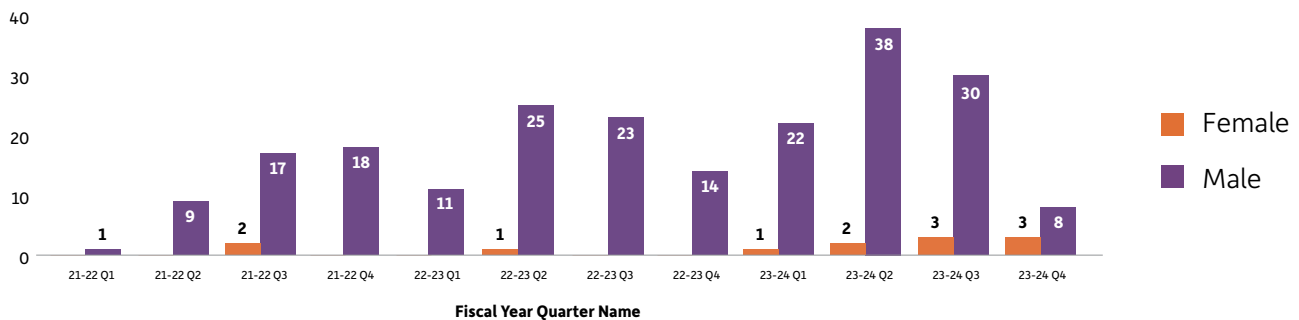
In terms profiling children in care by gender, the split of male and female children and young people who are not UASC has continued to vary across the last two years; despite some peaks in more males than females being admitted into care, generally numbers of males and females has remained roughly equal:

Biological Gender - Non UASC



However, for UASC there has been an increase in the number of females coming in to care in Leicestershire. Whilst numbers of male UASC continue to be highest, over the last twelve months a greater number of females UASC have come in to care and this seems to be a trend that is sustaining. By and by 31/03/24 there were 37.5% females compared to 62.5% males (greatest ration of female to male UASC observed in the last three years). This has implications for UASC accommodation and support and ability of providers to support needs specific to females:

Biological Gender - UASC



In 2023/24 a total of 311 children or young people returned to care; of these 271 were not subject to an SGO, Residence Order or Adoption. This represents a significantly higher number than in previous years and this is contributing to increasing numbers in care and demand for services.

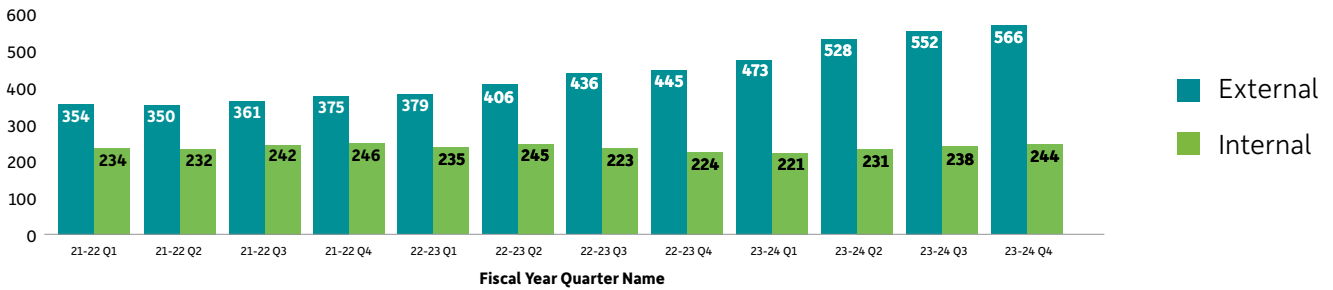
Commissioned Placements

Information and data about existing commissioned packages of accommodation, care and support (often referred to as 'commissioned placements') provides a further insight in to our current and potentially future sufficiency needs with the external market.

Volume: Since 2021, the number of commissioned placements has consistently increased across all types of accommodation, care and support (residential, fostering and Supported Accommodation) – an increase of 216.3%. Much of this growth represents an increase in the provision of accommodation and support for UASC, which has increased by 332% since April 2021, with noticeable growth in numbers since late 2022 (mainly in Supported Accommodation). In comparison, the growth of non-UASC commissioned placements has been slower – only 3.78% increase over the last 3 years.

When comparing the split between children and young people placed with internal (in-house) and external services although both cohorts have increased over the past three years the greatest growth has been in external commissioned placements (internal has increased by 4.2% since 2021, external by 59.8%). This largely reflects a growing UASC population and reliance on external market to meet the accommodation and support needs:

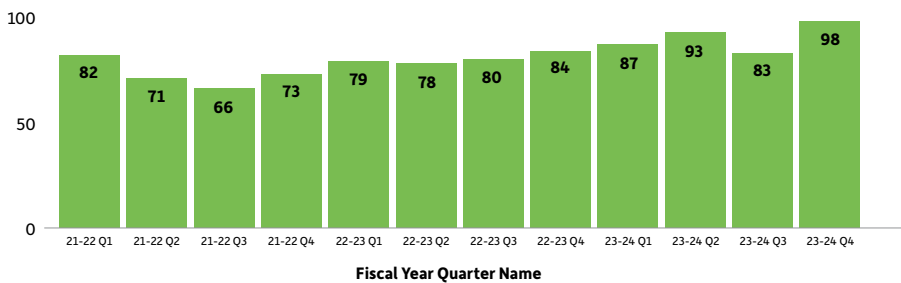
All Placements



Requests for commissioned placements (leading to searches with internal services and external providers) have also increased across the last 3 years – reflecting increased demand and resulting more commissioned placements being made. However, scrutiny of the data shows some more nuanced trends.

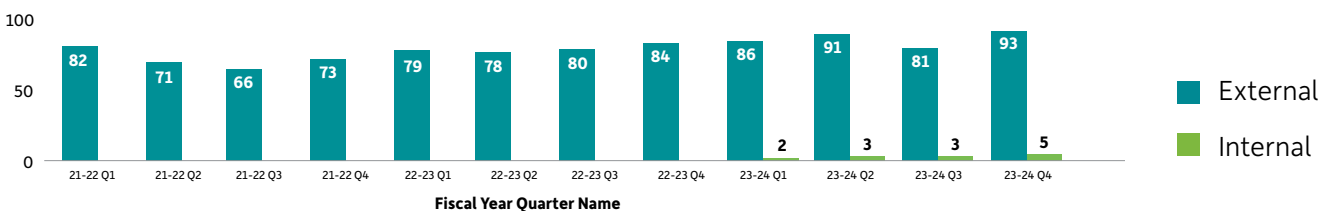
Requests for residential accommodation, care and support had begun to decrease in late 2022 but since then have steadily risen, resulting in a 19.5% increase in requests since 2021:

Number of Residential Placements Requested/Searches Undertaken



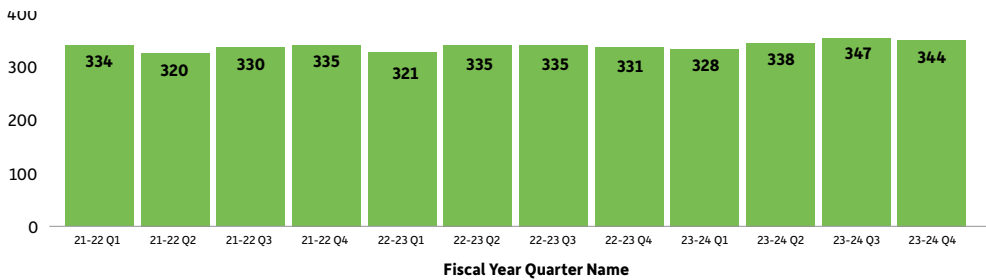
All requests have resulted in a child being placed in residential provision and whilst the Council is heavily reliant on the external market for this accommodation, care and support, the introduction of our own internal residential homes from 2023 is beginning to support some of these requests:

Residential



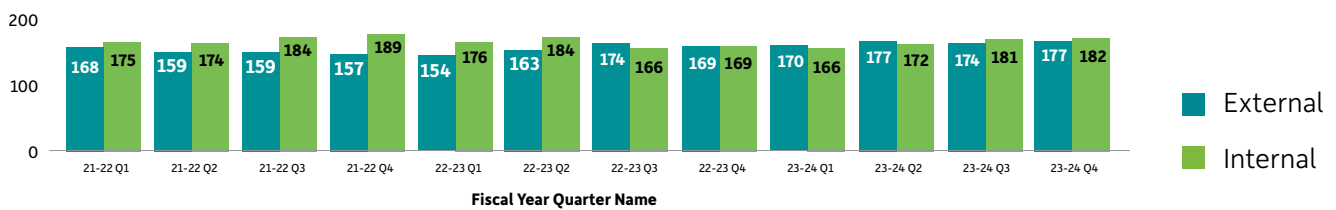
Requests for foster care has increased more slowly than other types of accommodation and support with a maximum variation of 27 across the 3 years since 2021 –this represents overall growth of 3%:

Number of Foster Placements Requested/Searches Undertaken



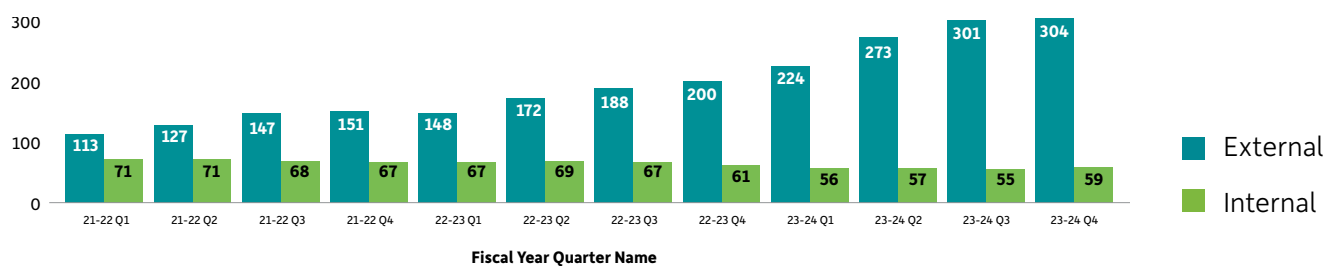
When split by final placement, in Leicestershire there is a tendency to place more children and young people in an internal placement; however, in the last 18 months this has levelled out and at times (i.e. late 2022 and mid-2023) numbers in external provision exceed those placed with an internal foster carer:

Fostering



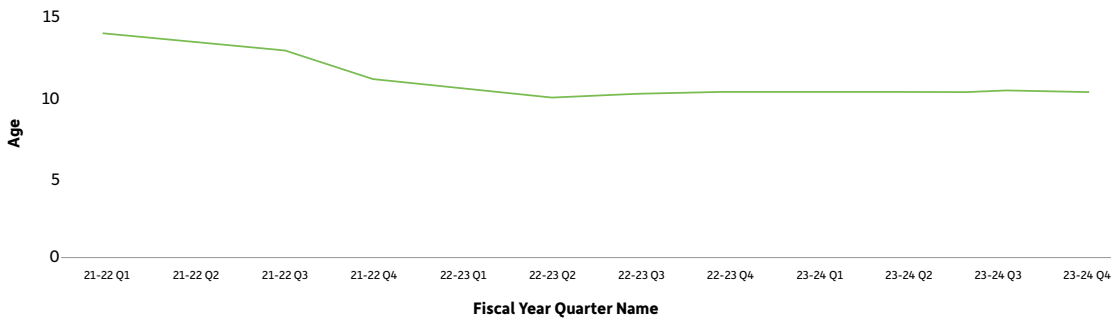
In terms of placements with Supported Accommodation, again there is a reliance on external provision and much of this is driven by accommodation and support for UASC:

16+



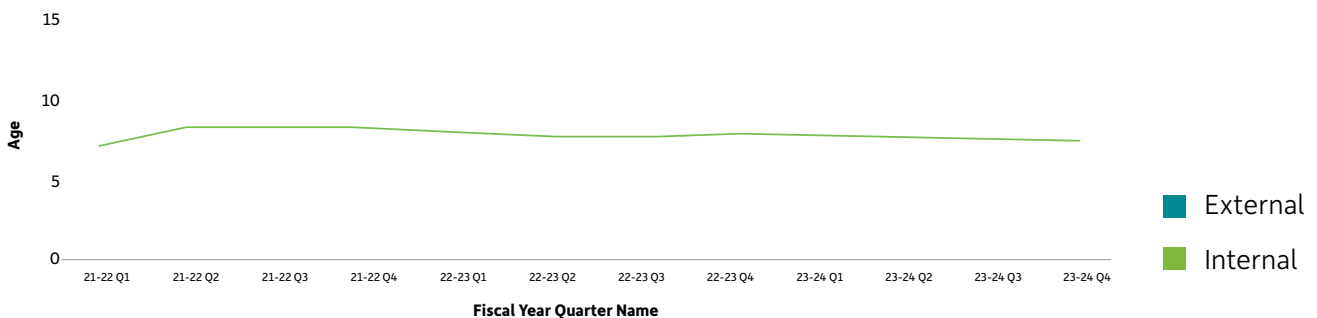
Age in first placement: Data shows that the average age of children and young people accessing a commissioned placement for foster and residential accommodation, care and support has generally decreased since 2021. For foster placements:

Rolling Age First Placement Residential



For those first entering a residential placement, the rolling average age of those entering a placement for the first time has generally decreased from 14 years in early 2021 to 10.38 years in early 2024 (a % decrease of 25.8%). This is of interest as, broadly speaking, this may mean that some existing settings may not be set up to support younger children, the age range of children and young people in residential settings may be widening, and in some cases children and young people may be in a residential setting for longer (having started to access it at a younger age). There may also be a correlation between the decrease in the average age going in to first residential setting and a greater number of children coming in care at a younger age (see above), but this requires some further analysis to confirm:

Rolling Age First Placement Fostering

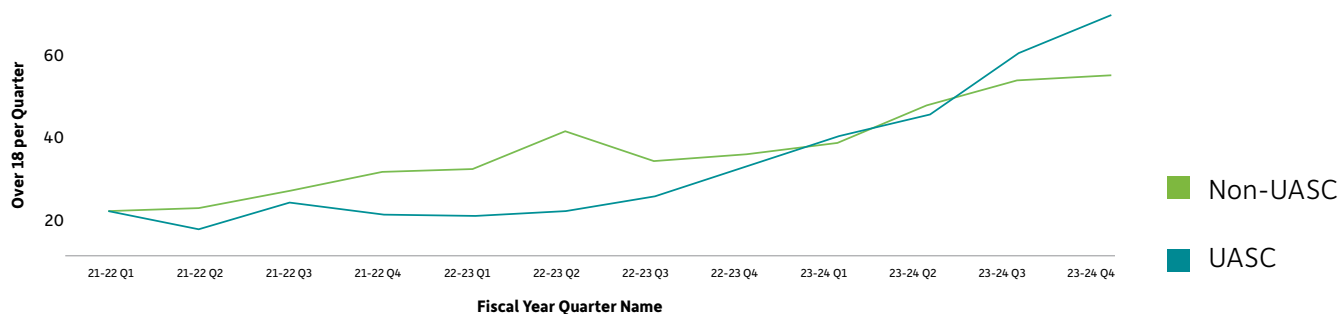


In contrast, the rolling average first age of children and young people in to a foster setting has remained more static, varying from 7.24 years in early 2021 to 7.44 years in March 2024 (a percentage increase of 2.76%). It is noticeable that the average age of those entering foster for the first time did increase in the middle of 2021, peaking at 8.40 years but has then since steadily decreased.

Age and Supported Accommodation

In the last 12-18 months we have seen an increase in the number of young people aged 18 years and above in our Supported Accommodation, for both UASC and non-UASC. The numbers of those aged 18.5 years and classed as non-UASC above has increased from 22 to 55 individual's since 2021 (150% increase), with growth accelerating after late 2023. For UASC, the numbers have increased from 22 to 70 (218% increase), with growth accelerating from mid-2023:

Over 18.5+ Per Quarter Name and Team Grouping



The reasons for this are varied but generally reflect an absence of suitable move-on accommodation and (for UASC) the length of time that leave to remain applications (and appeals) is taking but during which time the Council remains a responsibility for these individuals. Added to this, we know that the support requirements for those aged 18.5 years and above is generally less than for those other younger individuals in Supported Accommodation, but our current offer doesn't necessarily offer a graduated approach – this can mean over-provisioning of support for some of those aged 18.5 years and above in Supported Accommodation.

Parent and Child Placements

The trend for the use of parent and child placements has continued to vary across the last 3 years:

Number of Unique IDs by Team

Placement Category	Fiscal Year Quarter Name												Total
	21-22 Q1	21-22 Q2	21-22 Q3	21-22 Q4	22-23 Q1	22-23 Q2	22-23 Q3	22-23 Q4	23-24 Q1	23-24 Q2	23-24 Q3	23-24 Q4	
Foster	4	4	4	4	5	8	7	9	5	2	3	4	23
Residential	6	2	1	6	9	9	8	6	9	9	5	8	41
Total	10	5	5	10	14	15	15	13	14	11	8	12	59

Although this data shows that the use of parent and child provision has peaked and troughed there has been a general increase since 2021 – the average number of placements in 2021/22 being 7.5 and in 2023/24 being 11.25. However, there was a significant peak in 2022/23 when the average number of parent and child placements was 14.25.

Whilst assessing trends in overall usage is more difficult, data about where our Parent and Child placements are shows an increasing reliance in Leicestershire on residential settings for this cohort.

		Fiscal Year Quarter Name								
Placement Category		21-22	21-22	21-22	21-22	22-23	22-23	22-23	22-23	23-24
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1
IFA (P&C)	Count	3	3	2	2	3	4	5	5	3
	%	30%	60%	40%	20%	21.43%	26.67%	33.33%	38.46%	21.43%
Internal - P&C Foster	Count	1	1	2	2	2	4	2	4	2
	%	10%	20%	40%	20%	14.29%	26.67%	13.33%	30.77%	14.29%
Internal - Resi (P&C)										
Resi (P&C)	Count	6	2	1	6	9	9	8	6	9
	%	60%	40%	20%	60%	64.29%	60%	53.33%	46.15%	64.29%
Total	Count	10	5	5	10	14	15	15	13	14
	%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Location

Across all types of accommodation (residential, fostering and Support Accommodation) the Council has generally been able to consistently place more than 90% of children and young people within the County boundaries or within 20 miles of the County boundaries (since 2021 the variance in this figure has remained between 91-94%). However, when looked at in terms of specific types of placements a more varied picture emerges:

- The number children and young people in residential accommodation, care and support who live within the County boundaries or within 20 miles is lower than for other placement types. In contrast, the highest number of placements within the County boundaries or within 20 miles are for Supported Accommodation (since 2021 it has stayed consistently above 94.57 placed locally). As noted above, mostly both types of placements are with the external providers and this therefore indicates greater access to Supported Accommodation that can meet the needs of our children and young people within or close to Leicestershire than is the case with local residential support
- The low number of local residential placements (within the County boundary or within 20 miles) is mirrored by an increase in the use of residential accommodation, care and support that is further than 20 miles from the County boundary. Since late 2022 there has been an increase in the use provisions for residential accommodation, care and support – from 18.18 in late 2022 rising to 37.0% in early 2024
- In contrast the use of foster carers has remained focused locally (within the County boundary or within 20 miles) – a slight increase in the use of carers more than 20 miles from the County has been observed since 2021 but this is slight (from 7.19% to 8.66%)

Work is on-going to provide more data and information about the location of provisions and how this compares with the home address of children and young people when they come in to care. This will allow us to identify 'cold spots' in the County in terms of provision local to a child or young person's home, school and local communities and undertake further analysis of the implications of this in terms of available provision.

Duration

There has generally been an increase in the duration of all types of accommodation, care and support services (that is, children and young people are spending longer in their placements), apart from in residential provision where duration has decreased since 2022 from an average of 429 days to 415 days (and was at its lowest in early 2023 when the average duration was 398 days). Given that more younger children are entering residential (see above) this suggests that age is not affecting duration adversely (that is, there is not a correlation between children being in a residential setting for longer on the basis of starting in the provision at a younger age).

The duration of stays in foster care has remained fairly static, from an average of 322 days in 2022 to 324 days in early 2024. In contrast, the duration of Supported Accommodation has increased from 372 to 385 days in the last two years. This is mainly due to a significant increase in the duration of UASC Independent Accommodation with floating support which has increased from an average of 86 days in 2022 to 244 days in 2024. There has been a slight increase across most other types of Supported Accommodation but nothing significant. The increase in duration of UASC related support may again reflect an absence of suitable move-on accommodation and (for UASC) the length of time that leave to remain applications (and appeals) is taking.

The duration of accommodation, care and support is of considerable interest not least because it affects financial forecasts for support and care in the future (that is, it often follows that the length of time spent in a provision directly relates to greater costs and therefore we need to be careful not to be over-provisioning at any time).

Short Breaks (Overnight Residential and Play and Leisure)

We are continuing to review our commissioned offer for Overnight Residential Short Breaks in Leicestershire due to inability to commission a service. Currently, our offer is being delivered through personal budgets and other forms of short break/respite. Data shows that there are currently 59 children or young people who have been assessed as needing some sort of overnight residential short break commissioned by the Council. Of these:

- 16 have complex health and disability needs who require an adapted environment. The average annual bed nights for this cohort and who are primary school aged is 24 nights per annum; for secondary aged children, it is 32 nights per annum
- 43 have a recognised disability, learning disability or acute mental health need who do not require adaptations to their physical environment. The average bed nights required by this cohort is: 27 per annum for those who are primary aged; 25 per annum for secondary

Leicestershire continues to operate a framework for short breaks (play and leisure) and this framework also contains a separate lot for domiciliary care. Currently there 385 children or young people receiving support through this framework. Of these: 311 are in receipt of Short Breaks (Play and Leisure – Lot 1) and 70 are in receipt of a domiciliary care package (lot 2) (please note, 4 individuals are in receipt of support through Lot 1 and 2). This compares with 250 children in receipt of equivalent support 12 months ago (215 through Lot 1 and 35 on Lot 2) – an increase of 44.65% for Lot 1 and 100% for Lot 2. This increase is thought to relate mainly to the absence of a comprehensive local Overnight Residential Short Breaks Offer, putting greater reliance on this form of short break and domiciliary care support.

Costs

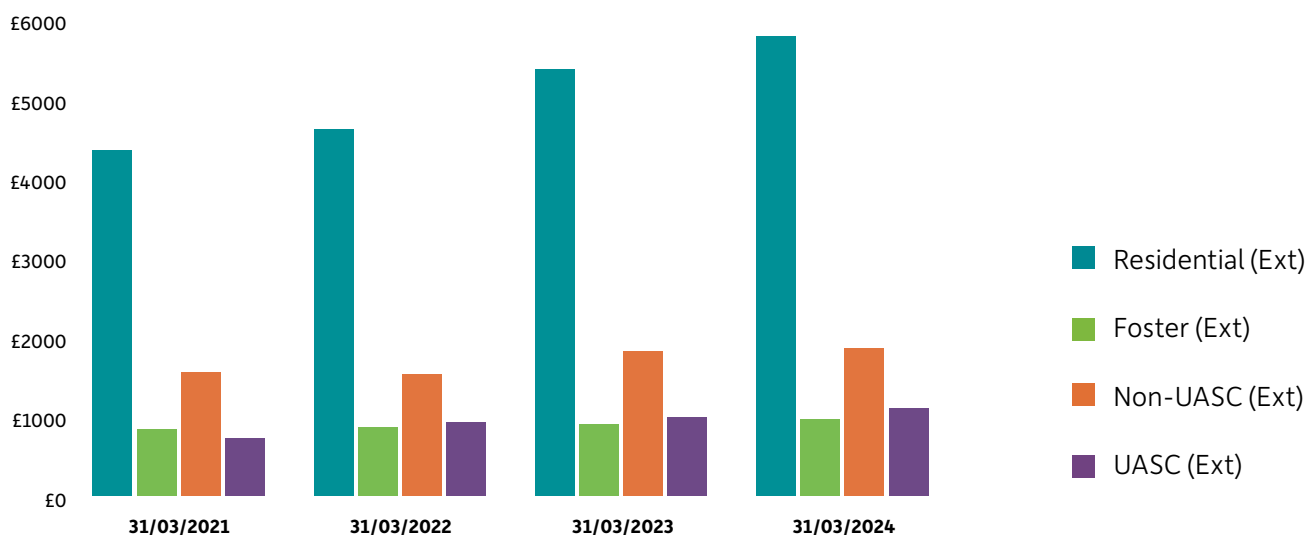
An important factor in our current and future sufficiency planning is the cost of provision. The cost of accommodation, care and support should be intrinsically linked to the quality of support and outcomes for children and young people. This is particularly important when we know that in the current financial situation prices are rising and that demand for services is increasing (numbers of children and young people requiring accommodation, care and support; complexities of cases and length of time in provision generally increasing).

Data about the average costs of placements since 2021 reveals that average placement costs for residential, fostering and Supported Accommodation with the external market has generally increased year on year.

	31/03/2021	31/03/2022	31/03/2023	31/03/2024	% Difference (2021-24)
Residential (Ext)	£4,355.88	£4,620.30	£5,373.20	£5,789.06	32.9%
Foster (Ext)	£841.90	£861.14	£905.75	£964.69	14.6%
Non-UASC (Ext)	£1,554.62	£1,537.02	£1,816.70	£1,858.59	19.6%
UASC (Ext)	£722.43	£927.00	£984.24	£1,100.44	52.3%

The greatest difference has occurred for Supported Accommodation for UASC, the average placement cost having increased by which has increased by 52.3%, followed by residential (32.9%) and smaller increases for IFA and non-UASC Supported Accommodation. Except for Supported Accommodation for UASC, the most significant growth in average costs occurred between 2022-23:

Average Placement Costs



As we know (see above) that demand for services is generally increasing as is the length of time in provision, these rising costs are a concern for the Council, and this is placing increased pressure on our social care budgets. It is imperative therefore that the department is proactive about exploring ways to better understand rising costs and the breakdown of fees and that we can ensure that fees are proportionate to the quality of provision and outcomes for children and young people.

Leicestershire Sufficiency – Key Themes and Actions

Based on the data and information set out elsewhere in this document, we have identified the following key themes or areas for our initial focus over the next three years:

- There has been a growth in the number of children in care in Leicestershire for the first time since 2021. We are also experiencing 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 our internal offer and resulting in greater use of commissioned packages with the external market. This increase is partly attributable to significant growth in demand for accommodation and support for UASC and for this we are currently very reliant on the external market
- The age of children going in to their first fostering or residential accommodation and support is reducing – over the last 5 years we have seen the age range decrease by c. 5 years
- 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 no-UASC and UASC. This seems to reflect limited move-on accommodation and timescales associated with processes such as a leave to remain and appeals
- Generally, we are placing more children and young people in foster and Supported Accommodation services within the County or within 20 miles of the County boundaries. However, where we are using residential providers, a greater number are beyond 20 miles of the County than more than 20 miles from the County. Since 2022 this reliance on accommodation and support further away has begun to decline slightly
- We need to better understand the location of provisions against where children and young people are resident before coming in to care so we can better plan the location of new services
- Although the duration of stays with foster carers (internal and external) has stayed static, the length of time in residential and Supported Accommodation s has generally increased
- We are continuing to review our Overnight Residential Short Breaks offer and we are aware that as this work continues there may be an increased demand on other short breaks offers. We need to better understand demand and potential alternative ways of delivering short breaks support in Leicestershire.



Our Plan...

To address the themes and concerns listed we are committing to the following actions over the next 3 years to ensure local sufficiency and an effective market to meet demand and need:

- Explore opportunities to manage growing numbers of children and young children coming in to and returning to care – this will include activities such as:
 - Review of the impact of the Leicestershire Family Together Family Help model
 - Extending our G2R offer to include support at home services (to help children and young people to be better supported in home environment)
- Continue to develop our internal provision – fostering and residential. Activities to include:
 - Recruitment of new foster carers – including specialist carers who can support young children and those with more complex needs
 - Exploring what support is required to help foster carers support young children and those with more complex needs
 - Develop further internal children’s residential homes through the Children’s Innovation Partnership
 - Increase number of external providers on the G2R through targeted advertising
 - Explore opportunities for mini-competitions through the G2R to procure specific residential and IFA provision with the market – such as more availability of provision for young children
 - Consider developing other forms of internal provision that could be developed to address sufficiency issues – such as more Supported Accommodation style-provision
- Ensure availability of Supported Accommodation and range of support offers to support rising number of UASC:
 - Mini- competitions through the G2R and external providers to expand available local provision (availability of accommodation and graduated levels of support). This will focus on all young people eligible for 16 + Supported Accommodation but there will be a particular focus on meeting needs of those aged 18.5 years and above who remain in Supported Accommodation
 - Review of existing cases to ensure value for money and reduce over-provisioning
 - Explore ways to ensure greater availability of move-on accommodation locally and the Council’s role in influencing this with strategic partners (i.e. Borough and District Councils)
 - Consider developing other forms of internal provision that could be developed to address sufficiency issues – such as more Supported Accommodation style-provision

- Continue work to review and recommission an effective Overnight Residential Short Breaks offer through the Children's Innovation Partnership
- Continue work to recommission and consider future models of delivery for Short Breaks (Play & Leisure) and domiciliary care in the County
- Further work to better understand demand for parent and child placements in Leicestershire. This may lead to procurement exercises (such as mini competitions through the G2R) to procure more flexible models of accommodation and support for this cohort.
- Further work to better understand the geographical location of provisions in relation to the geographical demand (i.e. resident address of children and young people requiring support. This will help us, for example, identify areas in the County where there is a lack of provision
- Further work to ensure that our commissioned services are priced fairly and that as a Council we are open and transparent with providers about our financial processes with a focus on value for money. This will include reviews of existing packages of accommodation and support to ensure value for money, so that we are managing spend more closely against need and outcomes. We will also review of our fee uplift processes and improvements where required, with a focus on transparency and timeliness
- Work to ensure that the department is prepared for and working compliantly under the new Procurement Act 2023





A detailed plan for internal use will be developed to support the delivery and monitoring of these actions. Reporting against this action plan will take place in several different ways:

- Where appropriate, review of actions and progress against targets as part of monthly internal Improvement Cycle Meetings (ICMs) within the Commissioning and other social care services
- Incorporation of key commissioning actions into the Children and Family Services Commissioning Service Delivery Plan – reviewed quarterly by the Departmental Management Team (DMT)
- Quarterly summary reports to the Targeted Early Help and Children’s Social Care Senior Management Team (SMT) to provide an update on progress against each priority and identify any risks or barriers to achieving the actions and targets set out in this statement
- Annual summary report to the Children and Family Services Departmental Management Team (DMT)
- Regular updates every 6 months available online providing the market with a report on progress against the action plan and to inform providers of any changes to our data and /or actions
- Updates to providers on progress against the Sufficiency and Market Position Statement through existing collaboration and provider events

And finally... we are keen to hear the views of providers and suppliers about our Market Position and Sufficiency Statement...

Are there other bits of data that would be of interest to you?

Are there areas of provision you want to know more?

If so, please contact us at: CFScommissioningsupport@leics.gov.uk

We won’t reply to individual responses but as themes emerge we will provide updates to you in the six-monthly updates that will accompany this document.

