



**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE -  
4 MARCH 2025**

**CHILDREN'S INNOVATION PARTNERSHIP**

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

**Purpose of report**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update on the Children's Innovation Partnership (CIP), with a particular focus on the residential redesign.

**Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

2. Local authorities are responsible for the most vulnerable children living within its borders. There is a duty of sufficiency that requires local authorities and Children's Trust partners to ensure that, through direct provision or commissioned services, a range of services and placements sufficient to meet the needs of all children in care are available locally or that there is a plan in place to move towards that position. This duty is carried out in accordance with the Children Act 1989.
3. The Children Act 2004 and Children and Social Work Act 2017 allocate duties to local authorities to ensure that children are safeguarded and their welfare is promoted. This legislation underpins the work of the Children and Family services with respect to looked after children, children in need and children in need of protection.
4. The Council also aims to provide the right service at the right time (including placement/care), as set out in the Placement Sufficiency Statement and Market Position Statement 2024-2027 the Continuous Improvement Plan (Achieving Excellence through Purposeful Practice).
5. A report providing information regarding CIP was last present to Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny on 5 March 2024.

**Background**

6. Demand for Children and Family Services continues to increase with growth of £41.3m projected over the period of the MTFs to meet the Department's needs, arising from demographic growth and an increased need for social care. Poor market sufficiency and an inflexible market approach combined with excess demand for beds has led to a seller's market. Nationally it became increasingly difficult for local authorities to influence the market.

7. The other variable that has a big impact on placement weekly costs and the budget are the level of needs of each child and young person. Again, these are not easy to predict accurately but there is a national trend of older children presenting with an increasingly complex range of emotional and behavioural needs resulting in breakdowns of family-based placements and children's homes (such as residential homes) being able to command bespoke fees including additional support and waking night premiums.
8. The average weekly cost per residential placement increased from £4.8k per week (budgeted average cost financial year based on previous trends 2023) to an average of £5.8k per week in February 2024 and now exceeds £6k per week. The increasing cost of new placements compared to those placements ending is further compounding the financial pressures being projected.
9. Although there are a number of private providers operating children's homes in Leicestershire, often children are not prioritised for these homes. Partly because the provider must match children's needs and because providers receive multiple referrals a week and can opt to provide care for children with less complex needs.
10. Without access to local children's home provision, Leicestershire children can be placed a distance from their homes in private, more costly provisions which impact on the children's access to their communities, their families, professionals like their social worker and disruption in other areas like health intervention and education provision.
11. In response to these pressures, the Department embarked on a transformation programme - The Children's Innovation Partnership (CIP) in partnership with Barnardo's. This Partnership was established in December 2018, with considerable focus on redesigning children's (residential) home provision.
12. In the context of the increasing costs of private children's home care, the drive to establish inhouse homes through a partnership with Barnardo's remains relevant and a proportionate response to the increase in complexity of child need and mounting MTFs challenge.

### **Leicestershire Homes**

13. In 2019, Barnardo's supported Children and Family Service to complete a significant analytical project that included commissioning information, the voice of families, children and staff. This led to a decision to initiate CIP Residential Redesign Phase 1, with agreed capital investment for two homes.
14. Following successful bids for Department of Education matching-funding for capital investment, phases two and three were initiated to address continued demand and escalating costs for children's home care.
15. There are now four homes open across Leicestershire. Welland House which is a parent and baby assessment home, opened in January 2024. The aim of the home is to provide a supportive environment for parents with young children where they can focus on the needs of that child or children and learn to be the very best parents they can be. Often these are families on the brink of parent-child separation and the placements are ordered by the court for a period of assessment. Welland House has

three self-contained flats, each comprising of a bedroom, bathroom and kitchen area, staff rooms and communal rooms.

16. The Old Post Office and Marjorie House, both of which support children with Emotional, Behavioural and Developmental needs and Jarvis House an Emergency and Assessment home.
17. There are a further three homes that are awaiting Ofsted Registration, which are on track to be open by April 2025. These are Gwendolyne House, a home for children with Emotional, Behavioural and Developmental needs, Hope's Place – a contextual Safeguarding home and Elmslie House – a home that will provide overnight short breaks. The final home, Ivan House, is a new build and it its final stages of completion. The home will open in July 2025.
18. Demand and profile modelling exercises continue to be undertaken in order to provide a refresh of the needs of Leicestershire children in care. This ensures that the development of the homes and their intended purpose, continues to be a priority. This demand modelling is informed by residential use, costs, types of provision and profile of children's needs.

### **Resource Implications**

19. The total capital investment for the eight homes is £6.180m. £4.188m of which is investment from The Council and £1.991m from the Department for Education.
20. The financial benefit of each home varies, depending on the type of home and its purpose. The forecast benefits from the homes total £2.250m across the MTFs. Once a home is operational, the actual financial benefit is carefully monitored.

### **Conclusions**

21. The report outlines the ongoing demand and children's home market pressures on the financial budget and the Department's ability to provide local care for children.
22. The report outlines action taken by the Department to mitigate these risks through the Children's Innovation Partnership, and the ongoing need for the partnership to focus on children's home provision.

### **Background papers**

23. Children's Innovation Partnership, 5 March 2024:  
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1043&MId=7478&Ver=4>

The Placement Sufficiency Statement and Market Position Statement 2024-2027:  
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s186147/Appendix%20-%20Childrens%20Social%20Care%20Placements%20Market%20Position%20and%20Sufficiency%20Statement%202024-27.pdf>

The Continuous Improvement Plan (Achieving Excellence through Purposeful Practice):  
<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-04/Achieving-Excellence-through-purposeful-practice.pdf>

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

24. None.

### **Equality Implications**

25. This model has been developed with the key driver of improving outcomes for children through finding the right placement first time, reducing placement breakdown, providing in-county provision, consistency of support and flexible provision.
26. This model is anticipated to have a positive result in terms of outcomes for children, so it is not anticipated that there will be a negative impact on any protected characteristics.

### **Human Rights Implications**

27. There are no human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

### **Other Relevant Impact Assessments**

28. Health implications – local children’s home provision will reduce disruption to services, ensuring children and young people who need to be in children’s homes can access and have continuity of clinical care.
29. Education implications – local children’s home provision will ensure children and young people continue, where it is right to do so, to access their local schools and colleges.
30. Environmental implications – local children’s home provision will see a reduction in travelling for a range of professionals who are required to visit the home and see the child as part of their statutory duties; and will reduce the distance families travel to maintain contact and a relationship with their children.

### **Officer(s) to Contact**

Nicci Collins  
Strategic Lead for Commissioning, Transformation and Planning  
Telephone: 0116 3054504  
Email: [Nicci.Collins@leics.gov.uk](mailto:Nicci.Collins@leics.gov.uk)

Sharon Cooke  
Assistant Director, Targeted Early Help and Children’s Social Care  
Telephone: 01163055479  
Email: [Sharon.cooke@leics.gov.uk](mailto:Sharon.cooke@leics.gov.uk)