



Leicestershire Adoption Service

Annual Report

2024-25



**Leicestershire
County Council**



Leicestershire

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Executive Summary

The Annual Report for the Adoption Service sets out the performance for the service in 2024/25 and identifies our priorities for the forthcoming year 2025/26.

Key messages within this report are:



Achieving permanence for children



Recruitment of Adopters



Staying in Touch

The Adoption Score card presents the performance data for authorities over a 3-year trend and 1 year trend. The three main key performance indicators are:

- A10 – Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family
- A2 - The average time between a local authority receiving the court judgement and deciding on a match to an adoptive family
- A20 - The Average time between a child entering care and the Local Authority receiving court authority to place a child

Against all three key performance indicators the 3-year trend data remains stable. We do not yet have figures from our statistical neighbours for comparison.

Against all three indicators, the 1-year trend data for 2024/25 (table below) is highlighting an improvement in our performance in comparison to the previous year. Whilst most children have their permanence achieved in a timely manner, there have been a small number of children whose plans have been delayed. Detailed consideration of information regarding individual children is routinely completed by managers and the Service Manager.

Our data collection means that all children are tracked from the point of Pack A request and monthly Improvement Cycle Meetings ensure that any drift and delay is identified, challenged and rectified.

Adoption Score Card	2023-24	2024-25	Commentary
A10 - Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family	878.75 days	682.61 days (decrease of 196.14 days)	Some of this decrease can be attributed to tighter timescales within court processes. Leicestershire endeavours to identify matches quickly and without delay.
A2 - The average time between a local authority receiving the court judgement and deciding on a match to an adoptive family	468.04 days	276.14 days (decrease of 191.9 days)	There is analysis provided within the body of the Annual report relating to this decrease, however it should be noted that this figure includes a small number of children who have waited longer than Leicestershire County Council would have

	hoped. We continue to make high quality matches and are aspirational for our children resulting in a very low disruption rate. This means that our children are living in families that are attuned to their needs and are well supported through bespoke packages of support.
A20 - The Average time between a child entering care and the Local Authority receiving court authority to place a child	426 days 384 days (decrease of 42 days) We have seen an increase in the number of siblings being born to children either already in the Public Law Outline process or have recently concluded. For those younger children whose parental situation remains unchanged, we have been able to mostly place in a timely manner and often within the same placement as their older brother or sister.

Recruitment of Adopters

Leicestershire County Council, in line with our Regional partners and other national adoption agencies has seen a reduction in the number of adopter household applications with on average three times more children with a Placement Order than there are available adopters. Combined with this, we are also experiencing an increase in the number of children who would have traditionally been 'easy to place' waiting longer as adopters are less willing to offer permanency to those children who have uncertainty around their future development progress.

The late announcement in relation to the future of the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund and then the subsequent notification that the Fair Access Limit was reducing will have an impact on future adopter recruitment.

Leicestershire continue to work collaboratively with our partner agencies as part of Family Adoption Links to actively recruit and train adopters. We have a planned programme of monthly information events that are held virtually and in person. We also use social media and run regular campaigns alongside our recruitment team, going out into the community and attending events such as Leicester Pride to increase awareness of Adoption.

Staying in Touch

The national drive on post Adoption Order contact with birth family has had some impact on recruitment and we have seen one family chose to adopt from overseas in order to exclude the possibility of facilitating future contact between their child and the birth family and one adopter household withdraw from an identified match after a Contact Order was attached to the granting of a Placement Order.

However, Leicestershire County Council remain committed to promoting on going contact between children and their birth family when it is safe and appropriate to do so and already have a small number of adopters who actively promote this.

We have developed a Staying in Touch assessment tool that is embedded within Child Permanence Reports and also run sibling activity days. A dedicated Regional Staying Touch workstream has been set up and is led by Northamptonshire Children's trust to ensure best practice and consistency across Family Adoption Links.

1. Introduction

OUR VISION

Leicestershire is the best place for all children, young people, and their families. This means that we will describe the outcomes we want to achieve for children, young people and their families and identify measures that can tell us how well we are achieving against them. We will aim to be the best performing local authority in the country against these measures, and where we are not yet there, we will set stretching targets for annual improvement.

OUR MISSION

Children and young people in Leicestershire are safe and living in families where they can achieve their potential and have their health, wellbeing and life chances improved within thriving communities.

Under the 2011 National Minimum Standards 25.6, all Adoption Agencies are required to provide one six month and one annual report to the Executive regarding the activity and work of the Adoption Agency and Adoption Panel. To meet this standard the Adoption Service submits a quarterly report to the Senior Management Team and an Annual Report to the Children's Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

1.1 Our Service

Leicestershire County Council is responsible for a Local Authority Adoption Agency. It undertakes statutory and regulated responsibilities relating to adoption. The main roles of the Adoption and Permanence Service is to provide high quality adoptive placements, a range of adoption and special guardianship support and other permanency options, including profiling for long term placements for children who are looked after by Leicestershire County Council and are unable to live with their birth families.

Adoption and Permanence Services are provided to:

- Children who are to be adopted
- Birth parents
- Prospective and approved adopters
- Children and adoptive parents who require adoption support services
- Children and Special Guardians who require therapeutic support and advice, where the child lives permanently in Leicestershire
- Adopted adults

The Adoption Service is led by the Head of Service for Fostering, Adoption, Children in Care and managed through a Service Manager who has responsibility for the three teams that make up the adoption service, Assessment and Support, Permanence and Post-Order Support.

Name	Designation
Jane Moore	Director, Children and Families Service

Sharon Cooke	Assistant Director, Targeted Early Help and Childrens Social Care
Nicci Collins	Strategic lead for Transformation, Change and Commissioning
Kelda Claire	Head of Service
Michelle Robinson	Service Manager
Emma Bulgin	Agency Decision Maker
Lisa Deakin	Manager, Post-Order Support Team
Rebecca Gibson/Emma Johnson	Managers, Permanence Team
Caramjit Supra	Manager, Assessment and Support Team
Claire Hurst/Annabelle O'Hagan	Senior Practitioner, Post Adoption and SGO Support
Chloe Flint	Senior Practitioner, Permanence
Lauren Nicholls	Senior Practitioner, Assessment and Support
Katie Charter, Ella Robinson-Gill, Lianne Halford-Graham, Neesha Devri, Sam Blynd, Megan Bramley, Cher Watkins + 1 vacancy	Permanence Team Social Workers
Michelle Smith	Life Story Worker
Grace Springthorpe, Debbie Bevan, Bethany Fox, Leona Hubbard + 1 vacancy	Adoption Assessment and Support Social workers
Scott Barrowcliffe, Stephanie Denham	Assessment Support Workers
Charlotte Fanshawe, Zeena Shepherd, Harriet Pearson Cole, Claire Nichols	Post Adoption and SGO Support Social Workers
Jessie Farrell	Birth Records Counsellor
Sheryl Peberdy, Sarah Short	Special Guardianship Support Workers
Naomi Day	Post Adoption Support Worker
Victoria Williams, Isabelle Coad	Permanence Support Workers
Yashma Koria	Permanence Co-ordinator
Harriet Powell	Panel Advisor

In April 2024 Leicestershire's Children and Family Service was inspected by Ofsted and received a judgement of Outstanding. Inspectors commented positively about the Adoption Service stating

'When a decision has been taken that adoption is the right plan for permanence, planning is highly effective. Leicestershire is part of a regional adoption agency (Family Adoption Links) and liaison between social workers and the regional adoption agency is effective, which helps to ensure that family finding happens quickly. When adoption is agreed, the child and their adopters are extremely well supported through their

adoption journey. A range of support, including specialist therapeutic support, is swiftly put in place to sustain adoptive placements. This means that most children thrive with their new family'

This report should be read alongside the Departmental Plan CFS 2021-25 and CFS Placement Market Position Statement 2024-2027. These are dynamic strategies, geared towards supporting the recruitment of a diverse and confident mix of adoptive families, ensure enduring relationships and high-quality adoption support services. They are integrally linked with other key strategic plans and strategies for the Council:

- Children and Family Departmental Plan 2021-25
- Children & Families Partnership Plan
- Continuous Improvement Plan – Achieving Excellence through purposeful Practice (2024- 2027)
- Adoption Service, Statement of Purpose

1.2 National/local Political Implications

Adoption has been a key part of the Government Agenda since 2012 and has seen significant change, including the publication of various key documents such as the 2013 Statutory Guidance on Adoption, the 2013 Amendments to the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 and Regionalising Adoption in 2015.

In 2018 the Adoption Leadership Board became the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board (ASGLB), with a remit to cover previously looked after children subject to adoption or special guardianship orders. This reflects a recognition of the increasing numbers of children leaving care on Special Guardianship Orders, and the need for these children to be able to access support akin to that of their peers who are adopted. Leicestershire County Council's Post-Order Support Team already contains provision for the support of families with children on SGOs, with dedicated support workers located in the team. There is a lifelong offer of support to Special Guardians which mirrors our offer to adopters. We are already delivering many components of The National Kinship Care Strategy – Championing Kinship Care and we continue to develop our service to ensure that our Special Guardians receive the right support at the right time.

In line with the Department for Education (DfE) decision that all local authorities should form Regional Adoption Agencies by 2020 Leicestershire remains a committed partner of Family Adoption Links, alongside North Lincolnshire, Lincolnshire, Leicester City, Rutland and Northamptonshire Children's Trust.

1.3 Progress against last year

Recommendation from previous annual report	Progress
Continue working and developing alongside our colleagues in the Regional Adoption Agency, with specific and effective action plans agreed by operational leads and overseen by the Board.	A new Head of Service was appointed in January 2025. A clear plan for a Peer Review has been established and is due to roll out in September 2025. A staff conference has been arranged for September 2025 and will have adopters, adopted adults and a birth parent attending as keynote speakers. Work streams continue to drive practice and consistency

	across the partner agencies in all areas. Consideration will be given to increasing pan regional working during 2025/26
Focus on the key performance indicators related to the assessment and recruitment of adopters, identify barriers to improvement and learn from areas of good practice. We will measure stage one and stage 2 timeliness with an aim of achieving assessments to be completed within 6 months. This will be achieved by ensuring that recruitment is transparent and that we are clear at the beginning of the process about suitability of applicants to adopt. Robust management oversight will ensure that delay is picked up quickly and addressed	Our timeline figures continue to improve due to increased oversight and robust decision making. Relationships between assessors and applicants are good. We track performance through monthly Improvement Cycle Meetings and delay is understood and where applicable responded to. Once approved adopters are generally matched quickly and chose to remain within Leicestershire.
Focus on timeliness for children by developing our understanding of children's journey through care to point of Best Interest Decision; developing early linking and matching processes; increasing our use of Fostering for Adoption where appropriate to meet children's needs. We will utilise FAL activity days for are children who wait longer and ensure that these children are profiled on our FAL website. We are also driving forward the quality of our Link Maker profiles with support from the marketing officer.	Our collection of data is continually evolving and is used daily to monitor performance and timeliness . Permanence team managers continue to have monthly meetings set up with safeguarding managers to track and review children's journeys and where new children who may be in need of a Best Interest Decision can be identified. One FAL activity day was held in October 2024 – this resulted in interest being expressed in 2 children. Linkmaker profiles are reviewed both internally and through FAL and are consistently of a high standard containing 8 photographs and a video that are regularly updated. 2 Discovery events are held a year where adopters receive secure videos of children 'waiting' which they can privately view for 3 days. We will continue to review the use of National Exchange days to ensure they provide appropriate opportunities for children to find permanence
Develop our panel, ensuring that the central list meets the needs of the service and panels continue to provide robust scrutiny of the agency.	We have a consistent central list and panel members are enthusiastic and committed. Panel will return to being held 'in person' from April 2025. This is after a period of consultation between panel members, social workers and adopters. A training day was held in November 2024, focusing on Staying in Touch, support planning, life story work and Attachment Style Interviews. The central list remains stable with

	a variety of skill sets. Quarterly panel business meetings take place between the service and panel chairs. The service manager also attends panel quarterly to give service updates to panel members.
Develop processes to strengthen feedback and how this influences change and development	This is an area that we continue to develop. We liaise with LAFs (a local support group for adopters and foster carers across Leicester City and Leicestershire) and attend their meetings. FAL is provided feedback from Adopter Hub. FAL also has Collabor8 which is young person's group. The aim of both groups is to work in collaboration to develop services and hear the voice of those directly impacted by our services. We embrace the Lundy Model and strive to ensure that we hear the views of both adopters, adopted children and adults and birth parents and that those views are carefully considered and where appropriate incorporated within our approach. Feedback is sought after all events held and 6 monthly meetings are held with foster carers to gather their thoughts and experiences which are then used to inform practice.
Reinvigorate the service offered to birth parents/first family members	We have independent counsellors who offer up to 6 sessions of support to families. The service is currently invested in Adoption England's Modernising Adoption agenda which includes a focus on maintaining relationships between adopted children and their first families. This includes siblings and during 2024 Leicestershire hosted it's own bespoke 'Sibling Event' We remain committed to promote direct and meaningful contact between first families and their children when this is safe and appropriate to do so. 7 children have been supported to have contact with their siblings and a further 3 children have been able to have direct contact with their first family as a result of our involvement. This will remain high on our agenda for 2025/26.

2. Family Adoption Links (FAL)

2.1 The Partnership

The interagency agreement creating the partnership commenced on 14th October 2020 and describes how FAL manages the provision of all core adoption functions on behalf of the local authority. Agency decision making for adults and children are maintained within the local authority in line with corporate parenting responsibilities.

Through working in partnership, we are starting to benefit from the regional sharing of best practice, pooling of resources and developing a strategic approach to the development of a

range of services from the marketing of adoption across the region through to the commissioning of post adoption support services.

2.2 Family Adoption Links Vision

The vision of the RAA is that:

- Children have the widest range of adopters trained to meet the needs of children placed with them
- Matching delivers the best quality outcomes for all children
- Adopters receive consistent, high quality and professional service at all stages of the process
- The same high standard of adoption support for all adoptive families across the region
- Family Adoption Links, local authorities and VAAs work together to promote and maximize choice for children and adopters

2.3 Governance and Management

The RAA is accountable to the Family Adoption Links (FAL) Management Board which is aligned to the agreed vision and will enable partners to have a continuing demonstrable focus on achieving permanence through adoption for Looked After Children. The FAL Management Board is accountable for delivery of services within scope and will continue to provide strategic leadership as the service develops. The Board includes representatives of each partner and takes decision by consensus. The Board is chaired by a Director of Children's Services (on behalf of the respective Local Authorities) and includes Assistant Directors responsible for permanency. The FAL Management Board will ensure there are clear strategic plans in place to manage future demand, develop quality services, deliver value for money, and achieve appropriate efficiencies and cost savings. The board has appointed a temporary Head of Service for the Regional Adoption Agency who oversees the work of the adoption service in each local authority. The Head of Service reports to the board and is responsible for the delivery of adoption services within each LA. Each partner LA retains its own adoption service manager who is the Registered Manager. The FAL Management Board will keep members fully informed regarding the progress and performance of the RAA.

2.4 Management Meetings

Since its launch FAL has held monthly management meetings where updates are provided from each of the dedicated workstreams and the planning of continued and improved service delivery is decided. The dedicated workstreams are focussed on the following areas – Assessment and support of prospective adopters and Family finding, post adoption support, training, early Permanence and Keeping in Touch.

2.5 Assessment, Approval and Family Finding

The Family Finding workstream is led by Michelle Robinson, Service Manager from Leicestershire. The ambition of the partnership is to provide a consistent approach to family finding and ensure that the partnership can meet the needs of most children requiring adoption.

A Regional Family Finding meeting is held on a monthly basis, and children are tracked from four weeks before a Placement Order is granted through to either ADM ratifying a match or a change of care plan. The support of Giedre Vilkaite (data analyst) ensures that the children

are appropriately tracked and informs our timeliness figures. Linkmaker profiles are reviewed to ensure that all children have 8 good quality photos and a video.

Examples of good practice are shared and those profiles requiring improvement are identified. Support is available from Alex McGuire (Marketing Officer) and Jemma Corcoran (Business Co-Ordinator) to ensure that profiles are up to the agreed standard. Marketing activities are discussed and implemented for specific children which includes specific social media campaigns, creating bespoke pages for the children on our website and including the children at our activity days and Discovery Events.

Adopters waiting are discussed as part of the monthly family finding meeting to ensure that all options have been considered for our children.

We hold Discovery Events on a bi- annual basis, where approved adopters have access to a secure video link where they can watch bespoke videos from social workers and foster carers about the children who are waiting.

Getting to Know You events are also held where Adopters can meet children waiting in an informal party like atmosphere. Two planned each year however only one was held this fiscal year due to a lack of adopters available.

This, alongside increasing the data we collect about children in the earlier stages of their adoption journey, has supported us to improve our service.

The approach of the family finding meetings continues to be successful in ensuring that children are placed within the region. 55% of our children were placed within Family Adoption Links last year. This is a reduction from 80% the previous year but is reflective of the challenges in recruiting adopters and approved adopters often having a tighter criterion. However, for the children that have been placed within FAL we have confidence that we know our adopters and children well and that there has been some regional financial saving in the cost of using interagency placements.

2.7 Post Adoption Support

Adoption support is another key workstream and is led by Sharon Clarke (Service Lead) from Lincolnshire. It builds on the practice delivered within the aforementioned workstreams. All partners have a different post adoption support offer and that is likely to remain the case. The ambition is for all adopters at the point of initial contact to have information about the support available with the website signposting the local details. The group is developing a core offer which establishes a starting point for both prospective and registered adopters and is informed by shared practice expertise from across the region. As part of this work and in addition, the workgroup has focused on the following areas.

- Post order training with direct access to the training hub offering a range of relevant training courses
- Establishment of the Adopter Hub which has co production at its heart and ensures that FAL engages actively with adopters
- Development of Collabor8 an online community for young people in place to offer, both support and ensure that the child's voice is central to our service direction.
- Provision of Thrive a regular newsletter for Adopters
- Working with Virtual schools across the partnership to develop and deliver the Education Passport

2.8 Early Permanence

The Early Permanence workstream is headed up by Lorraine Tavener from Northampton Children's Trust.

As with adoption support, this is an area of practice that has considerable Government focus and is frequently a key line of enquiry of OFSTED inspections. For a partnership RAA it is complex given the different court jurisdictions and established local practices.

The partnership reflects these differences and there is a variation in how well embedded it's in childcare planning. Apart from some geographically compact areas, national work on Early Permanence has concentrated on establishing good practice models and developing consistent forms, assessments, training and support to carers.

2.9 Keeping in Touch

Considerable research has been undertaken into the positive impacts on identity for adopted children when they are able to maintain some level of ongoing interaction with birth family. Central to the success of this agenda is the role of each agency in modernising practice, supporting development of professional values, providing knowledge and promoting good practice within wider children's services. This will better ensure that adopters are well prepared to support birth family connections, and our children and birth families are well supported to be safe and enjoy those connections.

FAL have established a Keeping in Touch workstream group to consider key themes to develop regionally, and this is led by Louise Caslile. This workstream meets bi-monthly, with clear Terms of Reference and pulls together a group of managers and practitioners who are committed to the modernisation of adoption and working in line with the national Maintaining Relationships agenda.

2.10 Data

Data management is overseen by the Data Analyst and has been invaluable in supporting local and regional information and provision of ASGLB data.

3. Our service – Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Permanence Team

The role of the Permanence Team is to work alongside colleagues in locality teams to progress plans for children where adoption may be required. Permanence team social workers also undertake all family finding activity for children who need permanence via adoption.

Permanence social workers are co-allocated to work with children where a decision has been made to twin- or triple-track their care plan, meaning that multiple options are being considered for the child, usually remaining with their birth parent(s), moving to live with a wider family member, or adoption if neither of the other options is possible. Permanence social workers complete Child Permanence Reports (CPRs) which draw together all the assessments that have been completed and provide a comprehensive assessment of the child's needs. These reports are presented to the Agency Decision Maker where the recommendation is that adoption is in the best interests of the child.

When children have a plan of adoption which is agreed in court by way of a Care Order and Placement Order, permanence team social workers become the allocated worker for the child.

They are responsible for statutory social work visits and reviews as well as all family finding and matching activity for the child or children.

Leicestershire County Council uses Linkmaker, a secure online platform, to create and upload bespoke profiles for children. Permanence team workers collaborate with colleagues using Linkmaker to search for potential adoptive matches, communicate with adopters locally and nationally and share information securely to progress placements for children. Leicestershire County Council uses Linkmaker for all our children, whether they are matched 'in-house', with adopters approved by LCC, 'regionally' with our partners in Family Adoption Links, or in 'interagency' matches with other Regional or Voluntary Adoption Agencies.

Permanence team social workers present identified matches to the Adoption Panel, prepare transition plans and support agreements to help the child move to their adoptive family, and support the placement until the point of Adoption Order.

The team's workforce additionally includes a dedicated Life Story Support Worker and two support workers. Our Life Story Support Worker provides extensive specialist work for children in their transition to adoption; this includes completing direct work with children, drafting Life Story books, and offering 'telling and explaining' sessions to adopters to prepare them for the ongoing life story work they will do with their children. Last fiscal year our Life Story worker completed 25 life story books, increase of 7 from the year before and 36 telling and explaining sessions. The support workers are responsible for a wide range of activities, from ensuring Linkmaker is monitored regularly, completing children's profiles, running activities and events throughout the year to support our adopters, foster carers and children. They host Foster Tots where Foster Carers can attend a monthly stay and play session and access support from professionals and peers as they prepare to move their children on. The support workers hold 'Photo Shoot Days' during school holidays. These days involve a variety of toys, games and props that allow the children to enjoy themselves and photos taken are of relaxed children having fun. This has been positively received by foster carers and attendance is high. Adopters and their younger children are able to attend the Busy Butterflies stay and play group that is run jointly by Leicestershire and Leicester City.

The support workers regularly receive praise and recognition from adopters, professionals and first families. **'The cultural heritage support plan for N re: E was really good and should be shared with everyone'**. Isabelle had put this together.

Isabelle also starred in an video as part of National Adoption Week and received a lot of praise for her inspirational story.

Ohana is a group for first families where they can meet for mutual support and help with writing letters to their children. Although attendance remains small the support received is valued.

"Vicki has done fantastic work with both parents, they are attending Birth parents counselling and engaged in letterbox which I feel has gone a long way in helping them process everything."

Our aim is to increase attendance so more parents/first family members have a safe place to talk where they can be heard and understood. Our leaflet advertising the group goes out to birth parents at the point of a Best Interest Decision being made and then is resent when reminders about Letterbox contact are sent. We remain passionate about ensuring children and their First Families remain in meaningful contact.

In addition to day-to-day operations, the team continues to be committed to ongoing developmental projects such as the introduction of Sibling Events, Keeping in Touch aimed at promoting contact between children and their First Families after adoption, Family Network Meetings and, further embedding of the Trauma Informed methodology in our practice. Team members have participated in workshops to develop therapeutic practice and offered training to foster carers.



L's transition to her adoptive family was described by S as 'amazing', they felt listened to in the planning process and that their experience and knowledge of L's needs was trusted.



So brilliantly written, balanced and positive on Contact and Progress in Care. Gives a brilliant impression of the FAL Leicestershire as a supportive, honest and professional organisation.



"Wow, thank you so much for such an informative response! I'll most certainly sign up to make finding me easier if, when and should he ever want to contact me directly after turning 18.



I wanted to share that the paperwork for the match was really well put together and through, an example of good practice to share.

3.2 Recruitment, assessment, and preparation of adopters

The Adoption Service works closely with professional colleagues to provide a full recruitment, assessment, and preparation service to adopter applicants in Leicestershire.

People who are interested in adoption can find information on the Family Adoption Links website. Any enquiries about becoming an adopter are handled by the Recruitment and Marketing team initially, which is a shared resource with the Fostering Service. Potential adopters are then able to access adoption information events run by the recruitment team and, following this, request an initial visit before completing a formal Registration of Interest (ROI).

The Assessment and Support Team (AST) support workers complete all Initial Visits to help potential adopters begin their two-stage journey to becoming prospective adopters. Stage One of the process is managed by the AST, with support workers completing statutory checks. At

this point social workers begin delivering preparation training directly to applicants, and this work continues throughout stage 2.

Our face-to-face preparation training is run in partnership with Leicester City and regularly receives positive feedback. When adopters progress to Stage Two, a social worker from AST is allocated to complete the home study and present their recommendations to the adoption panel in a Prospective Adopter Report (PAR). The majority of the social workers are trained in Attachment Style Interviewing which informs future matching activity.

In 2024/25 45 Initial Visits were completed, 29 of which resulted in a Stage 1 start compared to 2023/24 when 44 Initial Visits were completed, 21 of which resulted in a Stage 1 start.

During this period 25 adopter households were presented to the adoption panel for approval, compared to 14 during the previous fiscal year.

After adopters are recommended for approval at panel and formally approved by the Agency Decision Maker, all case responsibility remains allocated to a social worker in the Assessment and Support Team who has assessed them. AST social workers go on to support prospective adopters through matching and placement, continuing to work alongside the family until the point of Adoption Order.

As with our children, Leicestershire County Council uses Linkmaker to support our adopters to identify potential matches. All of our adopters are encouraged to create a profile on Linkmaker. FAL is part of a nationwide group who are looking at improving the quality of Linkmaker in supporting matches between children and adopters.



I just want to say in an email because I wouldn't be able to get the words out in person without being a blubbing wreck!

You have been AMAZING!



It is with great pleasure that I write this reference for Grace, who has been an exceptional social worker and an invaluable support to us throughout our adoption journey. From the very beginning at Stage 2 of the process, Grace has been by our side, offering unwavering guidance, patience, and expertise that have made an otherwise daunting process feel manageable and achievable.

Grace has consistently gone above and beyond to ensure we felt supported every step of the way. She took the time to thoroughly explain each stage, breaking down complex details into clear, understandable terms. Whenever we found ourselves unsure or overwhelmed, Grace never hesitated to go the extra mile, taking time out of her busy schedule to provide clarity and reassurance. Her ability to empathize with our concerns while keeping us focused and informed has been nothing short of extraordinary.





I want to offer some positive feedback to you both on the practice and panel paperwork for this match, which is completed to a high standard and is good balance between factual information and analysis. I got a strong sense of the family and how D has been matched with them and vice versa.

The direct work with H is really really good and shows the relationship that has been developed with him over time and how his preparation has progressed over the adoption journey.



3.3 Adoption Panels

Adoption panels are chaired by an Independent Chair in line with regulatory requirements, supported by a vice-chair, independent members, social work representatives and an agency adviser. Leicestershire has a stand-alone Agency Decision Maker who is responsible for ensuring that they have considered all the information presented to them before making a final decision.

Adoption panels make recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker regarding the suitability of prospective adopter applicants, adoption matching, and adoption plans for children who are relinquished for adoption. All matches for Leicestershire children are considered at this panel.

Leicestershire County Council hold adoption panels once or twice per month in response to service requirements. During the period 1st April 2024 – 31st March 2025, panel met on 21 occasions hearing a total number of 51 cases. This is an increase on the previous year (1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024) when panel met on 18 occasions, hearing 49 cases and looking at the year prior to this it seems there is a continued upward trajectory.

25 applications and 24 matches were presented to panel during this period, as well as one withdrawal and one retrospective approval of a Scottish adopter for the purposes of a match. One application was a negative recommendation which was supported by panel and agreed by ADM as a qualifying determination.

In the previous year there were 14 applications (approvals) and 26 matches ; therefore, the number of applications have increased and matches have decreased (by two) during this period.

Despite the reduction in the number of applications to adopt Leicestershire has increased the numbers of Adopter households this fiscal year.

3.4 Post Order support

Support Offer

Pre and post adoption support is provided in several ways within Leicestershire. An adoption social worker offers support up to three years post adoption order, especially in cases where adoption breakdown or disruption is a threat. This is set out in legislation (Adoption and

Children Act 2002/Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005) as all placing authorities are required to provide support to a child, they have placed for adoption for the first three years.

We have a dedicated support worker who makes first contact with any adopter approved by Leicestershire at the point of 6 weeks post placement. This is the point when research suggests that post placement depression can become evident. During this visit the support worker will spend a significant amount of time discussing any concerns or issues, they will inform the adopters about our post adoption support offer and email a pack of useful contacts and information. During this financial year we have completed 41 Post Adoption Support assessments, submitted 258 applications to ASF (of which 156 were top up applications). We have continued to provide play therapy to 10 children who have received a total of 161 sessions between them. We have also provided Therapeutic Life Story work to 4 children and Parent support sessions for 5 families.



- Hello Sheryl, I hope you are well, it has been a little while since our last communication.

I just wanted to say a big 'Thank You' for your contribution to K's memory book which we received a couple of weeks ago.

Thank you again for everything you did for K, Sand I are extremely grateful.



And again, as always, thank you so much for all you have done for us. Even if we have not had much contact in recent years just knowing you were there made all the difference. We knew we were protected and supported. Thank you



Alongside these sessions, C has been undertaking life story work, which has been delivered in a thoughtful and paced manner to titrate C's exposure to potentially distressing information. This approach has been vital in ensuring that C can engage with her emotions in a safe and manageable way.

C has reported finding the life story work and her relationship with Harriett helpful indicating the importance of relational consistency in her therapeutic journey.



The support worker is Theraplay (level 2) trained, if necessary, she can remain involved to support managing behaviour and completing direct work with children. She can also escalate any worries to the allocated social worker, who can then utilise the expertise of the post adoption service to inform their support package.

There are four Post Adoption Support social workers within the team with a variety of expertise, from DDP (level 2) to Person centred therapy. All are trauma and attachment trained and specialist training is provided as part of their continuous development. Once a case is allocated for Post Adoption Support the social worker completes a Post Adoption Assessment of Need, which enables a thorough assessment of support needs and recommendations for therapeutic and non-therapeutic interventions. Therapeutic provisions and specialist assessments are commissioned through the Adoption Support Fund (ASF), providing that eligibility criteria is met.

The Post Order Support Team, which incorporates Post Adoption and Post SGO support have had access to an in-house Play Therapist who works individually with adopted children. She also created a support call model named 'Parent Support 6' as a result of the covid crisis. This was funded through the ASF and was used to support parents in acute stress over the phone. Its success has meant that we are continuing this offer. PS6 has continued to provide valuable short-term intervention, usually whilst ASF funding is awaited for more specific therapy to commence.

A quarterly newsletter from FAL for adopters and internally for SGO carers is distributed and receives a high level of positive feedback from adopters and professionals. The team also runs two activity events per year, in the summer and at Christmas. These are well attended and receive positive feedback.



Well organised and signposted, relaxed atmosphere



Well organised. Some nice activities planned and not too overwhelming for the kids.



Despite only being required by legislation to provide support for the first three years post granting of an Adoption Order, Leicestershire continues to offer lifelong support so after the three-year period, adopters can contact the team directly if they require specific adoption support. For those cases where there is a chance of a child being placed back into care or there is child protection concerns it remains that support is provided via First Response Children's Duty and Family Safeguarding and Family Help services. The post support team will continue to work as part of a team around the family, offering support to the child and parents relating to the therapeutic needs of the adopted child.

Birth Parents are routinely offered support prior to the adoption of their children. This support is offered through a leaflet provided at the point of ADM ratifying a care plan of adoption. Birth parents are offered 6 sessions with an independent counsellor, we currently commission three such counsellors who are based in different areas around the county to support with accessibility. The Authority will continue to review this service to ensure that the offer to Birth Parents is meaningful.

The Post Adoption Support Team liaises with the Virtual School and training is offered to schools particularly around attachment issues for adopted children and how to successfully manage these in the school setting. The training is highly valued by schools who report a change in staff behaviour and interaction with children which in turn impacts on the children's

ability to engage in education. Collaborations with the Peer Adoption Support group LAFS is also valuable and enables a connection with the wider adopter network. A monthly CAMHS consultation is held for any adopted child where a clinical nurse can offer advice, and services provided by CAMHS.

The demand for Post Adoption Support continues to grow in all areas. Leicestershire has a Therapeutic Support Budget that can be accessed to support children emotionally prior to adoption. Each child can have an initial payment of up to £450 with a further £450 being available if required. The Service Manager for Children in Care has a role in monitoring applications and the progress of any therapy commissioned.

Adoption Support Fund

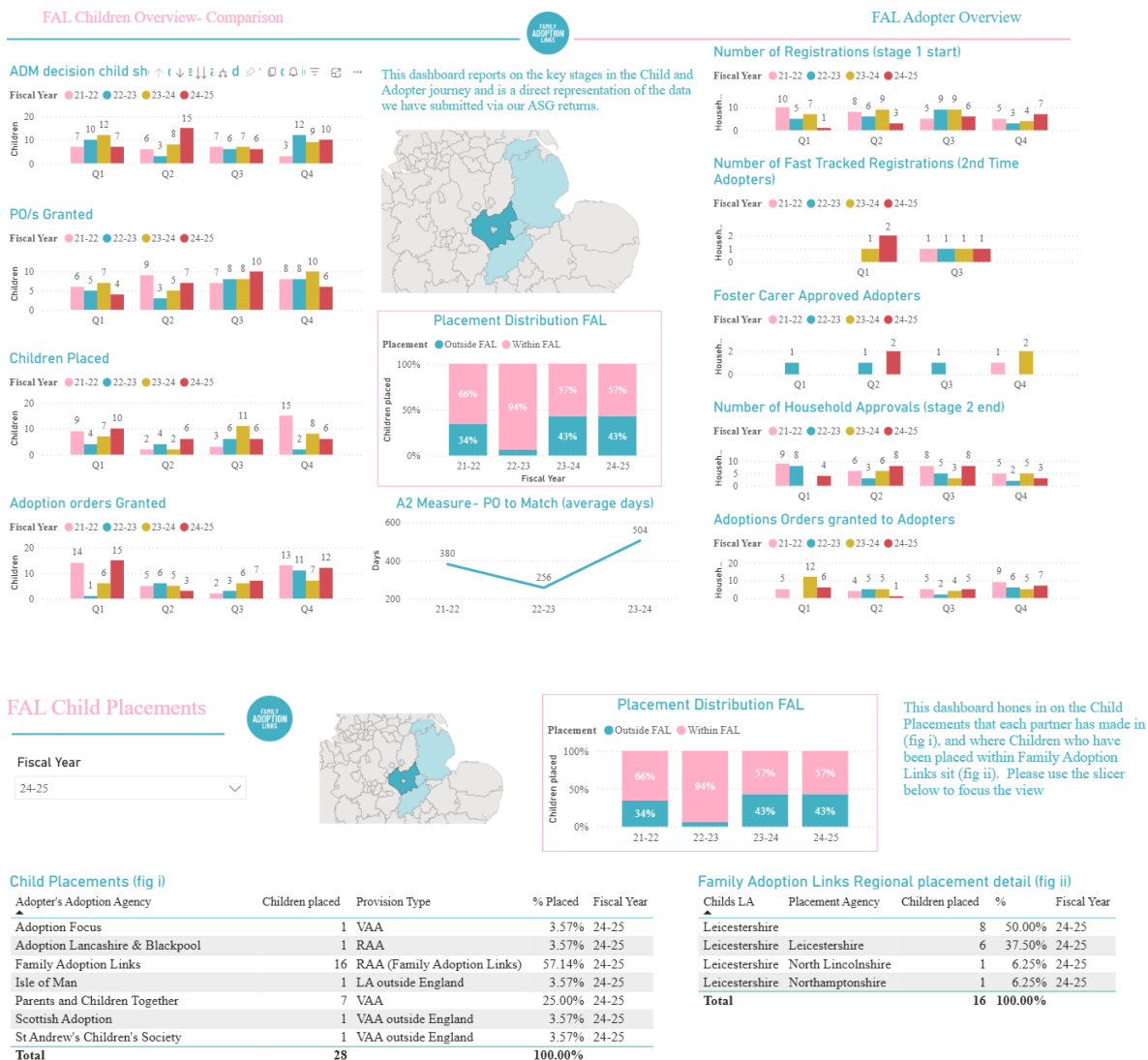
To 31st March 2025, Leicestershire has drawn down £1,622,481.01 from the Adoption, Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF) to pay for direct interventions with adoptees and their families in Leicestershire. This is an increase in the amount that was applied for in the previous financial year (£1,651,340.16) and represents support to 547 families, up from 505 in 2023/24. The total amount of drawn down also includes top up applications where therapy is assessed as being needed to be continued once the initial therapeutic period has ended. Leicestershire has successfully trained workers therapeutically to ensure a better provision of services. Any money accumulated from the ASGSF ensures that workers receive clinical supervision alongside regular supervision to ensure that their therapeutic practice is ethical and appropriate. Some of the most complex cases may be co-worked by the Locality Team with support from the Post Adoption Support Worker. In such cases an assessment will be conducted, and an application may be made for appropriate therapeutic services through the Adoption Support Fund.

Birth Records Counselling

Birth Records Counselling is a service provided to adults who have been adopted and wish to access their records and understand their life story prior to being adopted. A social worker reads the records and provides a detailed account to the adoptee alongside therapeutic emotional support that enables the adult to process their journey. This service continues to be highly successful, and adoptees regularly provide positive feedback. 20 referrals were received for this service during 2024/25. This is a decrease from 28 during the previous year. Intermediary services where adult adoptees are supported to find and meet their birth parents is not carried out by Leicestershire. Some initial advice may be given but as with other Local Authorities we signpost adoptees who request this service to third sector agencies.

4. Performance

The overall performance shows an increase in the amount of Best Interest Decisions being made from 36 in 2023-24 to 38 in 2024-25, with the amount of Placement Orders being granted reducing slightly from last year (27 in total) Adoption staff continue to be regularly challenged during proceedings about the possibility of successfully finding adopters and we are seeing an increase in the numbers of birth parents being given leave to apply to have a Placement Order revoked. 28 children were placed with adopters; this remains the same as the previous fiscal year. We have seen a significant rise in the granting of Adoption Orders with 37 being granted in 2024/25 compared to 24 the previous year. 57% of our children have been placed within the Family Adoption Links Region, this figure remains the same as last year and continues to be reflective of the shortage of adopters nationally.



This data demonstrates the equivalent use of FAL placements as the year before. 14 of our children have been placed with Leicestershire adopters and 1 with Northamptonshire and 1 with North Lincolnshire. 1 child has been placed with another RAA, a further child was placed with a Local Authority outside of England with the remaining 10 children being placed with VAAs. During the fiscal year 2023/24 12 external interagency placement were required. This reflects the national position in that there is a shortage of adopters and placements are taking longer to find.

Children waiting

At the end of March 2025, there were a total of 33 children with a Placement Order who have not yet been placed with their adoptive families. This is broken down into 23 male children and 10 females. Within this there are 9 sibling groups of 2. 9 of these children have links with prospective adopters. 4 children have a change of care plan decision, and we are in the process of applying for a revocation of the Placement Order. One child is remaining with his foster carer under the auspices of a Special Guardianship Order, one child is remaining with their foster carer on a long-term basis, the other 2 children will remain on a Care Order but in different fostering placements. This is due to the complexities around their physical and

emotional needs. We currently have 20 children who we are actively family finding for, this includes 10 children are 'harder to place' as a result of their additional needs (health and arising from trauma experiences), which also includes 4 sibling groups of 2 children. All children waiting are discussed at local and regional family finding meetings, are profiled at Discovery and Exchange Events and have also been invited or attended the Regional Activity Day.

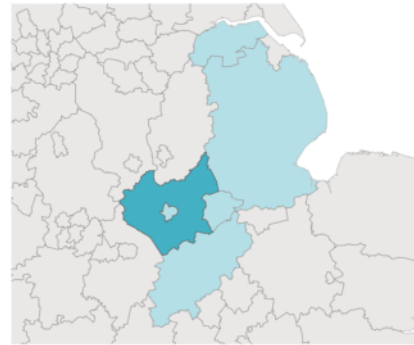
FAL Adopter Distribution

Fiscal Year

24-25

Adopter Placements (fig i)

Child Provision Type	Households linked	%	Fiscal Year
LA (VAA)	1	5.56%	24-25
LA	17	94.44%	24-25
Total	18	100.00%	



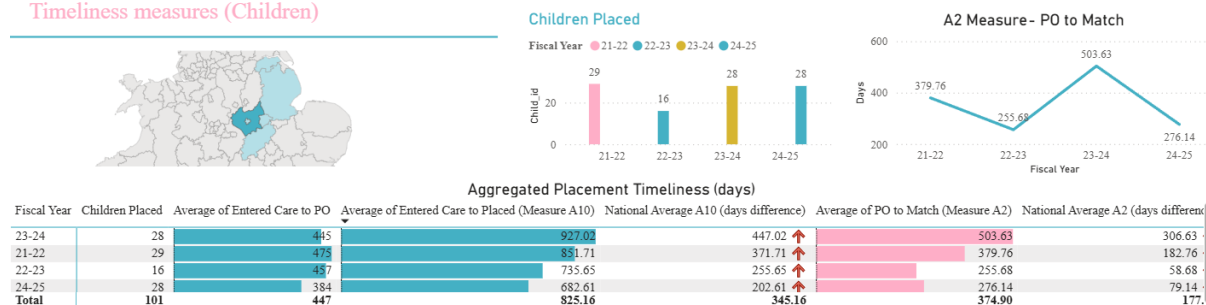
Adoption Placement detail (fig ii)

Adopter LA	Child LA	Provision Type	Household Count	Children Placed	%
Leicestershire	Birmingham	LA (VAA)	1	2	5.56%
Leicestershire	Leicester (FAL)	LA	2	6	11.11%
Leicestershire	Leicestershire (FAL)	LA	11	22	61.11%
Leicestershire	Lincolnshire (FAL)	LA	3	8	16.67%
Leicestershire	Northamptonshire (FAL)	LA	1	2	5.56%
Total			18	40	100.00%

This data gives information relating to Leicestershire Adopters who have had placements of children from both inside and outside of the Local Authority. Leicestershire adopters have provided placements for 11 Leicestershire children and 5 Family Adoption Links children

2024- 2025 Child placement timeliness:

Timeliness measures (Children)

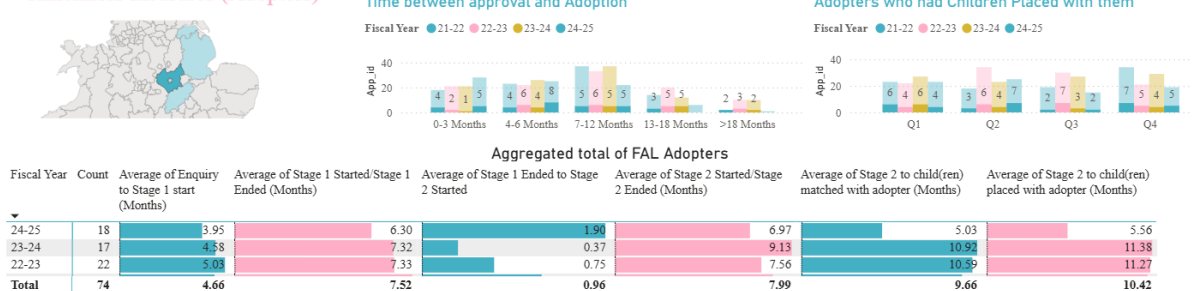


Despite to the challenges that the service faces in family finding, the above chart demonstrates that there has been an improvement in timeliness in all areas, with the significant area of improvement being in the timeliness of the granting of a Placement Order and children being matched, reducing from 503.63 days during 2023/24 to 276.14 days in 2024/25. This demonstrates that for most children we are able to match quickly despite a challenging landscape, but for some children their wait is significantly longer. All children waiting are routinely discussed at least twice monthly, with Service Manager oversight of those children waiting longest.

Line Level Detail of the 24-25 Children waiting over 6 months:

Gender	Age	Date of Placement Order	Notes
Male	7 years	03.03.22	Experienced an adoption disruption – revocation of Placement Order being applied for.
Male	6 years	08.12.23	Older child – remaining with foster carer under a SGO – Placement Order to be revoked
Male	4 years	18.05.22	Health uncertainties and part of a sibling group - revocation of Placement Order being applied for – remaining with current foster carer
Male	3 years	18.05.22	Health uncertainties and part of a sibling group - revocation of Placement Order being applied for – new placement required
Male	2 years	13.10.23	Health uncertainties
Male	4 years	08.12.23	Health complexities
Female	2 years	28.02.24	Father requesting re-assessment
Male	4 years	08.03.24	BAME Sibling group
Female	2 years	08.03.24	BAME Sibling group
Female	4 years	27.09.23	Health uncertainties and part of a sibling group
Male	2 years	27.09.23	Health uncertainties and part of a sibling group

Timeliness measures (Adopters)



This data demonstrates timeliness of our Adopter Journey. There continues to be an improvement in most areas, with a slight increase in the length of stage 1. This is due to some delay in receiving required external information for some applicants. A further slight increase in the period between Stage 1 ending and Stage 2 starting is down to one adopter taking a break for personal reasons before starting Stage 2. The majority of prospective adopters experience a positive assessment experience that is timely and successful.

The 1-year trend data highlights an improvement across all three key performance indicators, although some of our children are waiting longer on average to achieve permanence. It must be noted that the cohort of children who need adoption is small, and the average easily distorted by outlying data; a few children who wait significantly longer mean that the average is increased even whilst most children are achieving permanency in a timely way. Cases where the children have waited longer for permanency have been explored individually and we are satisfied that the delays for these children have been unavoidable. It can take longer to identify the right adoptive matches for children who have complex needs and who are in sibling groups; Leicestershire County Council nevertheless continues to pursue adoption for these children whilst it remains in their best interests.

The adoption service is keen to reduce further the time taken to achieve permanence for children and all children who have not had a placement identified within FAL after 12 weeks of the granting of a Placement Order are brought to the attention of the Service Manager and considered for an Interagency national search. We are creative with family finding and our Linkmaker profiles are consistently of a high standard. Our response rate to expressions of interest from adopters within 7 days is regularly at 100% and each child has a monthly update included in their files that details all family finding activity that has taken place that month. We use specific social media campaigns to generate interest in our children and have our regional activity days and Discovery events. Children's profiles are also taken to national and regional exchange events although these are proving to be an increasingly challenging form of family finding as there are often very few adopter households who attend with a large number of children being presented. One event in London saw over 100 children's profiles with only 10 adopter households attending throughout the day. We continue to review our family finding activity and are part of the Adoption England National Family Finding Workstream.

4.1 Adoption Plans

Where the Local Authority proposes a plan of adoption for a child, this plan must be presented to the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) for a decision that adoption is in their best interests. In this period 38 children were subject to Best Interest Decisions. 13 of those children are waiting

for final court hearings where Placement Orders (PO) may be made to allow their placement with adoptive families.

There has been a significant decrease in the average days from BID to PO which reflects the assessments completed during pre-proceedings and an increased focus on keeping proceedings within timescale. The decrease is 64.8 days standing at 110.68 days compared to 175.54 days the previous year. Children who have a BID, but no placement order are tracked by managers to understand delays. Such delays are most commonly attributable to court processes and to additional assessments being completed where family members come forward to be considered to care for the child/ren at a late stage in proceedings.

National minimum standards require Local Authorities to track the time between children coming into care and receiving a Best Interest Decision. National minimum standards also require tracking from the time the Local Authority proposes a plan of adoption to the point of a BID. Children continue to wait longer than average in Leicestershire County Council from the point of coming into care to the point of BID and further work is needed to understand the reasons for this. However, BIDs are made in a timely way once the Local Authority has confirmed a plan of adoption.

Children are referred to the permanence team, as above, where a twin- or triple-tracking decision is made as part of childcare proceedings. Permanence Team managers meet regularly with colleagues in locality teams to track the progress of children who are in proceedings or who may shortly enter proceedings. The Children's Decision-Making panel continues to be chaired by the Head of Service for Fieldwork and is the forum where decisions for pre-proceedings and issuing of care proceedings is made. This provides senior management oversight of cases that may progress to a permanence decision of adoption. These processes help the adoption service plan for children's expected needs and assist decision-making regarding the recruitment of adopters.

When children are relinquished for adoption by their birth parents, these plans must be presented to the Adoption Panel. There have been no relinquished children during this fiscal year

At the 31st March 2025 there were 46 children with a best interest decision of adoption, of which 33 had Placement Orders granted by the court. This is an increase from the year before when 33 children had a best interest decision and 27 had Placement Orders. Eight children have an ethnicity other than White British. 17 children are female and 29 are male. 24 are part of sibling groups who require adoption (12 sibling groups of 2) this does not include children who have siblings with different care plans.

Prior to the making of a Placement Order, Permanence Team social workers ensure they are familiar with the needs of the child or children and complete early scoping to identify any potential adoptive links for the child. Formal family finding work is then initiated at the point of Placement Order but can be paused if there are additional court proceedings required.

Early identification of potential links and matches is carried out in internal family finding meetings. Children may also have anonymous profiles created to facilitate early linking with Leicestershire adopters as well as adopters across the Regional Adoption Agency. Leicestershire County Council seek to place children with our own approved adopters initially, then consider adopters within our region before looking to other interagency placements including Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs). Children's profiles are uploaded to Linkmaker and shared securely with professionals and prospective adopters to allow potential links to be explored. Regional family finding activity is in process, with regular matching meetings taking

place. This continues to be successful in identifying matches for 16 Leicestershire children; the family finding work will continue to grow in the year ahead.

Leicestershire County Council has continued to attend exchange events during the year and has also used other creative online marketing campaigns to support recruitment of specific adopters for some 'harder to place' children, categorised by the DfE as children in sibling groups, with disabilities or aged 5 and over.

5 children were placed under Fostering for Adoption protocols during this period, although this continues to be tracked through attendance at Children's Decision-Making meeting (CDM) and is considered upon the referral being received. The purpose of the CDM is for discussions to be held about concerns of safety and legal advice is received about court thresholds.

4.3 Children Placed and Adopted

28 children have been placed with their adoptive families during the year, a increase of 6 against the previous year, we have a small cohort of children who have been delayed in their formal matching as identified previously in this report. Leicestershire children, on average, wait longer than the national average between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family. This is partly due to the shortage of adopters available but also that Leicestershire strives to make the 'best possible match' for our children.

37 Adoption Orders were finalised in the year 2024/25, an increase from the previous year when 24 orders were made.

4.4 Adoption Approvals

In 2024/25, 41 Initial Visits were completed, 29 of which resulted in a Stage 1 start. This is a decrease of 3 Initial visits, but an increase of 8 Stage 1 starts from the previous year

25 adopter households were approved in this period, compared to 14 the previous year.

25 applications have been presented to Adoption Panel for approval. All adopter households who attended panel and were approved, 1 adopter household was presented with a negative recommendation which was upheld by the Agency Decision Maker. 8 single adopter households were assessed and approved. 6 adopters identified as LGBTQ+, 7 adopters were BAME and 1 adopter had a disability.

We continue to see improvement in the timeliness of completing adopter assessments. On average Stage one is now taking 6.3 months (down from 7.3 months last year) and Stage 2 taking on average 6.97 months compared to 9.13 months during 2023/24. The average between ending Stage 1 and starting stage 2 has increased from 0.37 to 1.9 months. This is due to one adopter household taking a break between the stages due to personal reasons. Key performance measures and monthly performance meetings continue to monitor this and explore reason for delay. In the majority of cases the delay has been caused in receiving information from outside agencies.

Clear matching expectations and planning for adoptive families from the point of their approval to the point of their match also improves the service we offer to families and, ultimately, to the children they can offer a home to. We continue to collate further data to better understand the adopter journey from approval to match, with consideration of any adaptations we may need to make for adopters who have protected characteristics. We are continuing to align our practice in this area with our regional partners.

4.5 Adoption Disruptions

There has been one disruption for a sibling group of two this fiscal year. A further adoptive placement broke down during introductions so is not officially a disruption. The children are currently in Local Authority care and receiving therapeutic support whilst we continue to family find. Leicestershire routinely holds Disruption Meetings in any placement breakdown. These are chaired by an independent person and any learning is incorporated in future planning. In both cases the independent chair concluded that the breakdowns were not foreseeable, and matching practices had been robust. Recommendations were made in potentially increasing the period of introductions for older children and considering unconscious bias when assessing potential adopters from a professional background.

5. Developments

5.1 Regional service delivery

The Regional Adoption Agency, Family Adoption Links, was newly formed as a partnership agreement during the year 2020/21. Operational managers across the region have developed and revised a Service Delivery Plan with clearly defined workstreams in order to promote regional collaboration and create workable cross-authority protocols.

Staff who work for Family Adoption Links are continuing to build relationships with their counterparts across the region and information sharing events for the whole staff group are run throughout the year.

5.2 First family support

The Local Authority has a duty to provide support for birth parents whose children are adopted. Previously Leicestershire adoption service ran a peer-support group as well as offering individual counselling sessions. This peer support group is in the process of being re-established.

Parents continue to be offered individual sessions which have been commissioned through three independent counsellors. The counsellors are placed around the county to support easier access. Each offers a series of six counselling sessions to birth parents.

Birth family members and wider family members are currently offered an information sharing meeting with our life story support worker, which allows them to share positive and significant information about themselves for their children in later life. Informal feedback from this is extremely positive, with birth families' members explaining that they were grateful to have the opportunity to share memories and keepsakes and thanking the worker for kindness at a difficult point in their lives.

5.3 Staying in Touch

The national drive on post Adoption Order contact with birth family is welcomed by Leicestershire County Council and is seen to be an intrinsic part of children growing up with a positive sense of identity and self-esteem.

We remain committed to promoting on going contact between children and their birth family when it is safe and appropriate to do so and already have a small number of adopters who actively promote this.

We have developed a Staying in Touch assessment tool that is embedded within Child Permanence Reports and also run sibling activity days. We are currently supporting 7 children through sibling contact and a further 3 with direct birth family contact.

5.4 Feedback

The adoption service gathers feedback from various people, including adult adoptees, adopters, foster carers, birth family members and other professionals. We continue to develop our work to ensure that:

- Children's voices are included in the feedback
- Feedback is sought routinely and sensitively at appropriate points in the process
- Feedback is used to develop and co-produce service improvement.

Surveys have gone out to Adopters to gain their voice in relation to the assessment process and to Special Guardians to understand the complexities of their situation. We also consult with Collabor8 who are a group of adopted children and young people and the Adopter Hub about policies and services. Feedback is routinely gained after assessment, matching and panel.

6. Complaints

Three complaints have been received during the year. Complaints are initially directed to the relevant team manager for a response and can be escalated where the individual remains unsatisfied. Adopters who receive negative decision about their suitability to adopt (a 'qualifying determination') are also able to appeal this decision by referral to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM). In this year, no adopters have accessed the IRM to appeal a negative decision.

It is understandable that adopters are more likely to complain in situations where the Local Authority must make negative recommendations or requires time to complete additional assessments. When adopter applicants, prospective adopters and approved adopters raise issues with the service, both through formal complaints and informal discussion, these issues are always overseen by managers.

We are committed to being a learning organisation and ensure that we respond to queries as fully as possible. As a service we strive to be transparent and open with adopters and will always respond initially to any complaints by convening a meeting to try and address any concerns as quickly as possible. Any learning is discussed reflectively within the team and if appropriate changes are made to processes. The 5 complaints in relation the assessment process were in relation to delay. We now have an extra worker to complete initial visits and management oversight if those adopters in both stages of the assessment process is now much more robust.

7. Achievements

Leicestershire Adoption Agency continues to strive to deliver excellent services to our children. This was recognised by Inspectors during the Ofsted Inspection in April 2024 when

Leicestershire were rated as Outstanding. The permanence team complete all Child Permanence Reports for Leicestershire children. Reports are of a consistently high quality and social workers collaborate well with colleagues across the children's service to progress plans for children.

The recruitment and assessment of adopters who can meet the needs of our children continues to be an area for development, but this reflects a national picture of the challenges in identifying adopters for children with complex needs. Nevertheless, the service is committed to improving the adopter journey and continues to work closely in partnership with Family Adoption Links to improve recruitment figures.

The Post-Order team has developed its specialist work with a view to ensuring as many families as possible are able to access the help and resources they need. The team provide direct help and advice as well as facilitating access to therapeutic services via the Adoption Support Fund.

Social workers in the adoption service have access to specialist training and are supported to develop their skills. We are ambitious for our service, for our children and for our staff.

8. Recommendations for 2025/2026

Action	Person Responsible	By When
Continue working and developing alongside our colleagues in the Regional Adoption Agency, with specific and effective action plans agreed by operational leads and overseen by the Board. This will include being involved in the Peer review and also focussing on improving our Early Permanence offer and developing our Staying in Touch practices further	Service Manager	March 2026
Continued focus on the key performance indicators related to the assessment and recruitment of adopters, identify barriers to recruitment and learn from areas of good practice.	Service Manager and Assessment Team Manager	March 2026
Focus on timeliness for children by further developing our understanding of children's journey through care to the	Service Manager and Permanence Team Managers	March 2026

point of Best Interest Decision and increasing awareness of Early Permanence within our Safeguarding Teams		
To continue to develop our panel, ensuring that that panel members are appropriately trained to continue to meet the needs of the service provide robust scrutiny of the agency	Service Manager, Panel Advisor and Panel Chairs	March 2026
Continue to invest in developing processes to strengthen feedback and how this influences change and development	Service Manager and FAL Marketing Officer	March 2026
To continue to develop the service offered to birth parents/first family members, including continued contact, if appropriate, after adoption through the Keeping in Touch agenda.	Service Manager and Permanence Team Managers	March 2026
To provide bespoke training and support opportunities to our Special Guardians and the children that they care for.	Service Manager and Post Order Team Manager	March 2026
To continue to drive the promotion of direct contact for children after adoption. This will include ensuring that all prospective adopters understand the importance of continued relationships with their first family and that appropriate support is given during the initial stages of setting this up.	Service Manager and Permanence Team Managers	March 2026



Michelle Robinson

September 2025

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