

**CABINET – 3 FEBRUARY 2026****CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES DEPARTMENTAL PLAN 2026 -
2029****REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY
SERVICES****PART A****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the Children and Family Services Departmental Plan for 2026 to 2029 which is appended to this report. The Plan sets out the high-level priorities for the Department for the next three years.

Recommendation

2. The Cabinet is recommended to approve the Children and Family Services Departmental Plan 2026 to 2029.

Reason for Recommendation

3. The Plan has been developed to fulfil statutory duties and provide a basis for the Children and Family Services' vision, planning, commissioning and delivery of services until 2029. The Plan and associated actions provide a vehicle for Children and Family Services to work together on shared priorities, maximise resources and expertise, and avoid duplication. Service delivery plans will be developed for each service area and progress will be monitored and reported to the Department Management Team on a quarterly basis.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

4. The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the draft Plan on 20 January 2026 and its comments are set out at paragraph 14 below.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

5. The Cabinet at its meeting on 9 February 2024 approved the Children and Family Services Departmental Plan 2024-2026.

6. The Children and Family Service Departmental Plan 2026-2029 is aligned to the County Council's Strategic Plan and aims to set out how the Department will contribute to the delivery and achievement of the Council's Safe and Well and Improved Opportunities strategic outcomes.
7. The Plan also aligns to partnership plans including Leicestershire's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Best Start In Life commitments and the priorities of Leicestershire's Children and Families Partnership plan, including Best Start in Life (Early Years), Safe from Harm, Early Help, Coordinated Support for Vulnerable Children and Emotional and Mental Health.

Resource Implications

8. There are no resource implications arising from the recommendation in this report. The Plan will provide the context within which Children and Family Services budgets are produced and will continue to ensure that the County Council makes best possible use of its resources. Delivery of the Plan will require the Department to maintain effective working relationships with a range of partners, including but not limited to colleagues across all other County Council departments, District Councils, Health, Police, Leicester City and Rutland Councils and the voluntary and community sector.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

9. None.

Officers to Contact

Sharon Cooke
Interim Director of Children and Family Services
Tel: 0116 305 2649
Email: sharon.cooke@leics.gov.uk

PART B

Background

10. The Children and Family Service Departmental Plan 2026 to 2029 is for all the children and young people living in Leicestershire and their families and sets out high-level priorities for the County Council's Children and Family Services Department for the next three years. The Plan builds on the work undertaken under the previous Departmental Plan 2024 to 2026 rather than being a material change to the existing Plan, and has been informed by feedback from children, young people and families on their needs and experiences. It is intended to formally launch the new Plan in April 2026.
11. Progress against the Plan will be monitored closely by the Children and Family Services Departmental Management Team which will continue to formally review through monitoring of actions set out in Service Delivery Plans on a quarterly basis and report to the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee to ensure it remains relevant, dynamic, and aligned with local and national priorities.

The Plan

12. The Department has identified three ambitions, continued from the current plan, and nine updated associated priorities, which will drive improved outcomes for the children, young people and families of Leicestershire, supporting them to -

Build Strong Foundations

- Focus on development, readiness for learning and learning as a driver of wellbeing for all children and young people.
- Work in partnership to offer support and opportunities to children in their own communities, to help them reach their full potential, and transition well into adulthood.
- Work in partnership to identify those children and young people who would benefit from support and provide a shared response to them.

Be Safe and Belong:

- Work with families to ensure risk is understood and reduced, and targeted support is provided at the right time, in the right place by the right service and agency.
- Develop and use partnerships to prioritise safety for children and young people and to ensure it is understood that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- Create an understanding of "belonging" across partnerships so that children feel they matter and can maximise positive opportunities and links in their families, early learning and education settings and communities.
- Empower families to build positive relationships and support systems to create safety for children to live within their family or family network.

Enjoy and Achieve:

- Ensure children and young people have access within their communities to good quality early learning and education that enables them to achieve their full potential.
- Develop a shared understanding of the impact of inequalities and trauma across partnerships, and a shared approach to supporting vulnerable children.

Consultation

13. Formal consultation has not been undertaken specifically on the Departmental Plan as the Children and Family Service actively and continually seeks feedback from children, young people and families across Leicestershire as part of any direct work and group work undertaken with children and families, through specific engagement activity, through transformation activity and through children's forums. The new Plan has been informed by this feedback and input has also been sought from the Children's Youth Council for Leicestershire (CYCLe), SEND CYCLe, Young Carers CYCLe, Children in Care Council, and Family Hub parent/carer groups.

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee

14. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the draft Plan at its meeting on 20 January 2026. Members were pleased to see the voice of children and families evident throughout the document and supported the Plan.

Equality Implications

15. There are no equality implications arising from the recommendations in this report. An equality screening assessment was undertaken and it was confirmed that a full equality impact assessment was not needed.

Human Rights Implications

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

Appendix

Children and Family Services Departmental Plan 2026 to 2029

Background Papers

Report to the Cabinet on 9 February 2024 "Children and Family Services Departmental Plan for 2024 to 2026" -

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=7503>

Minutes of the meeting of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee held 20 January 2026

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1043&MId=8410>