

# Combined Assurance

## *Status Report Children Services*



Date: December 2012

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**Contact:** Meredith Teasdale, Assistant Director Children's Services  
**Details:** Tel: 01522 552304  
County Offices, Newland, Lincoln, LN1 1YL

# Introduction

This is the first combined assurance report for the Council.

Working with management we have been able to show what assurances the Council currently has on the areas of the business that matter most – highlighting where there may be potential assurance ‘unknowns or gaps’.

We gathered and analysed assurance information in a control environment that:

- takes what we have been told on trust, and
- encourages accountability with those responsible for managing the service.

Our aim is to give Senior Management and the Audit Committee an insight on assurances across all critical activities and key risks, making recommendations where we believe assurance needs to be stronger.

## Scope

We gathered information on our:

- **critical systems** – those areas identified by senior management as having a significant impact on the successful delivery of our priorities or whose failure could result in significant damage to our reputation, financial loss or impact on people.
- **due diligence activities** – those that support the running of the Council and ensure compliance with policies.
- **key risks** – found on our strategic risk register or associated with major new business strategy / change.
- **key projects** – supporting corporate priorities / activities.

## Methodology

We have developed a combined assurance model which shows assurances across the entire Council, not just those from Internal Audit. We leverage assurance information from your ‘business as usual’ operations. Using the ‘3 lines of assurance’ concept:



Our approach includes a critical review or assessment on the level of confidence the Board can have on its service delivery arrangements, management of risks, operation of controls and performance.

We did this by:

- Speaking to senior and operational managers who have the day to day responsibility for managing and controlling their service activities.
- Working with corporate functions and using other third party inspections to provide information on performance, successful delivery and organisational learning.
- Using the outcome of Internal Audit work to provide independent insight and assurance opinions.
- We used a Red (low), Amber (medium) and Green (high) rating to help us assess the level of assurance confidence in place.
- The overall assurance opinion is based on the assessment and judgement of senior management. Internal audit has helped co-ordinate these and provided some challenge **but** as accountability rests with the Senior Manager we used their overall assurance opinion.



# Key Messages

We have high aspirations and a clear, shared vision for all of our children and young people. We want all children in every part of the county to achieve their potential and we will deliver services with our partners guided by our strategic principles to achieve this vision.

Our Ofsted annual Children’s Services assessment (11/12) confirmed that Lincolnshire performs excellently. The large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good and outstanding. Out of the 16 Children’s Centres inspected, 14 are good or outstanding and in January 2012, Adoption was judged as outstanding. Residential provision is good with all but one Residential Care Home being graded as Outstanding. School performance is strong and The Graduate Teacher Programme operated by CfBT was judged to be ‘outstanding’ by Ofsted.

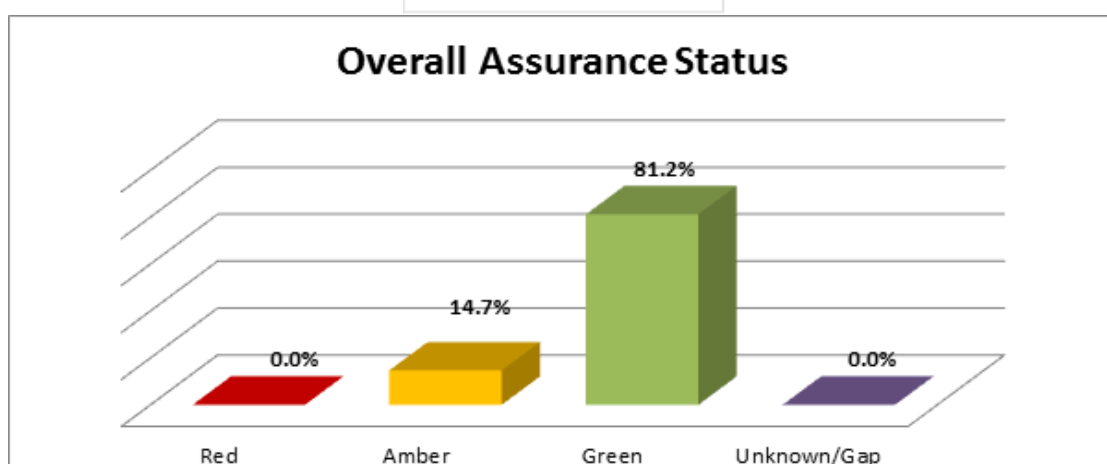
The unannounced inspection of Contact, Referral and Assessment (CRA) arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection, carried out in February 2011, found areas of strength in practice that met requirements. There were no priority actions requiring urgent attention. The Safeguarding and Looked After Children inspection in 2010 judged safeguarding as outstanding with outstanding capacity to improve – outcomes for Looked After Children continue to be good: placement stability is strong due to the quality of our fostering services and statistically numbers are lower than our performing neighbours due to strong preventative services. Performance for child protection remains outstanding. Assessments and reviews are completed efficiently and on time. Numbers of children within the child protection system continue to be low compared to statistical neighbours and we believe this is due to strong protective universal services and effective early intervention through Team Around the Child (TAC) processes.

Lincolnshire has significantly narrowed the gap by 3.5% at Foundation stage and we are pleased that Lincolnshire, for the past two years has performed higher than the national average. We are now in the top 10% of LA’s for performance against national indicator N72 (a good level of development) and the top 15% of LA’s for N172 (narrowing the gap).

However, we are not complacent. We want to continue with the trajectory of improving outcomes but recognise that with the unprecedented cuts within the public sector this will be challenging, especially with an expected increase in demand for specialist services.

We recognise that we must manage these challenges by providing more effective support at an earlier stage. Efforts should focus on identifying those who most need our services and ensuring we intervene in a timely and effective way to those at greatest risk.

Figure 1



# Critical Systems



Our Vision is for;

**‘Every Child, in every part of the County to achieve their potential’.**

Our principles, which underpin how we will commission and deliver services to achieve our vision are:

- **Early Help:** Strong protective universal services accessible to all with a range of early help available so children have the best start in life and families have extra help when they need it;
- **Safeguarding:** A shared responsibility to ensure children are safe at home, school and in their community;
- **Aspiration:** Children able to thrive and cope with life challenges;
- **Learning and Achievement:** All children being the best they can be with targeted interventions

## Local Priorities

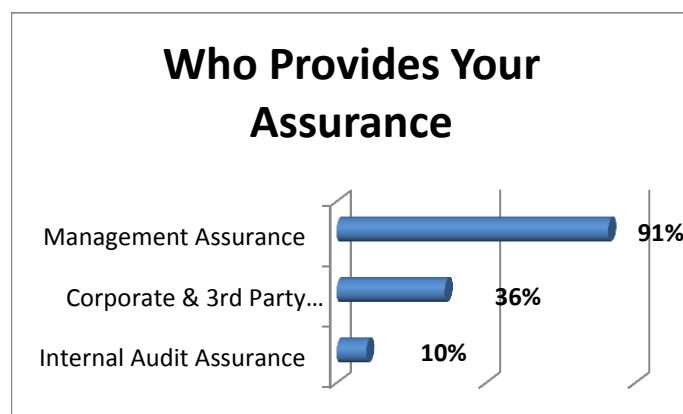
The top priorities emerging from national policy change; the Joint Needs analysis; Children’s Services peer reviews plus internal performance assurance reports are:

- **Learning and Skills Reform**
- **Safeguarding**
- **Early Help**

Overall, a high level of positive assurance exists around Children’s Services’ critical activities and systems. Assurance arrangements are working effectively. Most assurance comes from managers – supported by a good level of corporate and third party assurance. Many activities within the Service are externally inspected by Ofsted.

The Service works well with Internal Audit, highlighting areas for review where independent challenge and insight adds value and complements external inspection. Recommended improvements resulting from Internal Audit work are monitored and tracked through the Audit Committee.

Figure 2



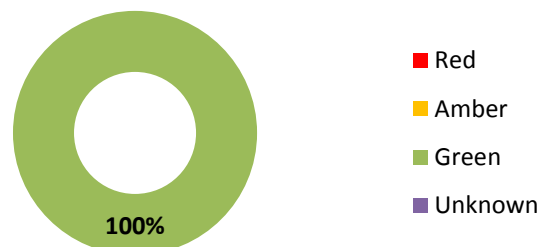
## 11- 19 Service

The following 5 areas have been given good assurance:

- Planning and Allocations
- Provision for Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities
- Post 16 Learning
- Sixth Forms
- Supporting Performance of Comprehensive and Secondary Modern Schools.

Figure 3

### 11-19 Service



It has been possible to maintain an adequate network of learning provision under existing funding regimes despite increasing transition to academy status, particularly in the secondary phase. This activity has been given good assurance as has work in supporting comprehensive and secondary modern schools. Ever increasing floor standards and a significantly modified Ofsted framework place many more schools at risk despite improving performance. This has been managed over the last year.

## Additional Needs

The Additional Needs Service continues to provide services for the local authority to State funded Schools, and children and parents. All 7 areas have good assurance:

- Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- Post 16 Learners with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities
- Pupil Referral Unite (PRU)
- Specialist Teaching and Applied Psychology Services
- Strategy and Finance
- Commissioning of Providers
- Investigations

Figure 4

### Additional Needs



Corporate and internal targets continue to be met and externally evaluated performance indicators confirm that the Additional Needs Service continues to meet its legal time scales with a very high degree of compliance. Customer feedback and feedback from statutory bodies is very positive.

Significant changes to additional needs services are expected due to changing legislation which will introduce new challenges.



## Birth to Five

The following 11 areas have been given good assurance:

- Support and Advice to Early Years Providers
- Training to Early Years Providers
- Quality Assurance Checks
- Early Years Educational Entitlement Funding
- Inclusive Funding
- Data Exchange System
- E-profile System
- Workforce Development
- Profile Scores
- Investigations
- Area SENCO's.

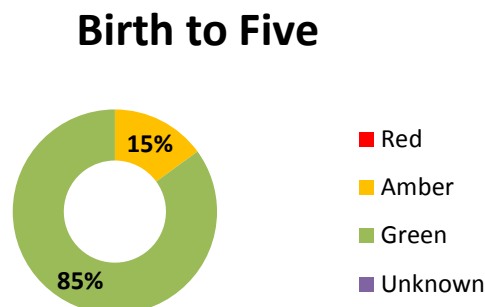
Two areas have amber assurances;

- Supported Childcare Allocations
- Childcare Sufficiency's

Lincolnshire's Birth to Five Service has achieved outstanding ratings in the 2010/11 and 2011/12 annual monitoring visits by the National Strategies, DfE and the Qualification Curriculum Development Agency (Standards & Testing Agency). This was for all elements assessed within the national Quality Standards for Local Authorities in early years. These elements include the leadership and management of early years, outcomes of Ofsted inspections in schools and settings, workforce development including the Graduate Leader programme, the quality of support by Early Years Consultants and progress made by children. In November 2012, the DfE, through Achieving 2 Year Olds(A2YO), RAG rated the 2 Year Old pilot for Free Entitlement as good. Outcomes for children through the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) have risen once again in 2012 and the gap has continued to narrow.

This places the LA in the top 10% of LAs across the country. All outcomes are externally monitored by the DfE and STA. Management Assurance ratings for Supported Childcare and the Childcare Sufficiency duty, graded as amber, will be reviewed against agreed action plans and actions updated early in 2013 as necessary.

Figure 5



## Commissioning

Overall management assurance has given 4 good assurances and 3 amber.

The good ones are:

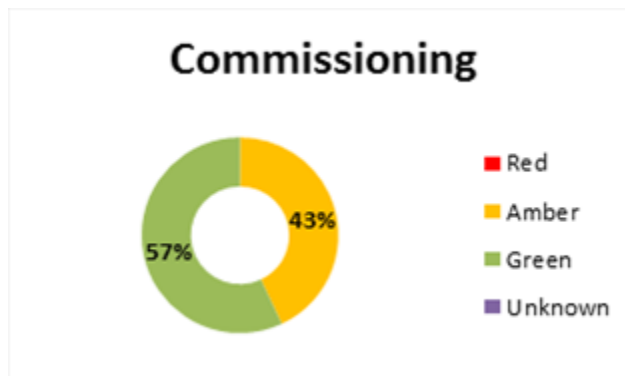
- Procurement
- Contract Management
- Management of Grants and
- Decommissioning of Services

There are robust governance arrangements, processes and procedures in place to support these functions. Leadership is demonstrated at all levels and effective risk assessment and management arrangements are in place. Services overall provide good value for money and Outstanding Outcomes are achieved. Feedback from the recent Peer Review also reported commissioning arrangements were strong.

Strategy areas of Child Poverty and Early Intervention are currently assessed as Amber. In relation to Child Poverty this is linked to national targets of eliminating child poverty by 2020 but in the context of a very challenging economic climate. A Lincolnshire Strategy has been agreed by Executive and an action plan is now going through the approval process. Feedback from regional networking is that Lincolnshire is ahead of most other authorities in the region. The Early Intervention Strategy is assessed as Amber as the strategy is still in production and when complete is subject to approval.

Home to School Transport is also assessed as Amber. The service has only recently transferred to Commissioning. Whilst no concerns have been identified in relation to service performance there is work in progress to strengthen the budget projection processes in place. This will include Transport Services Group who procure Home to School Transport, having a more involved role in the budget projection process and increased integrated working between Children’s Services and Transport Services.

Figure 6





## Performance Assurance

Figure 7

Performance Assurance comprises:

- Audit & Learning
- Independent Chairs
- Looked After Children’s Education Service and Performance
- Information & Data.

6 areas were given good assurance:

- LAC Education Service
- LAC Local Authorities Statutory Responsibilities
- Child Protection Conference/Plans
- Family Group Conferencing
- Anti-Bullying
- Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and Independent Review Officers.

Services are providing good assurance.

### Performance Assurance

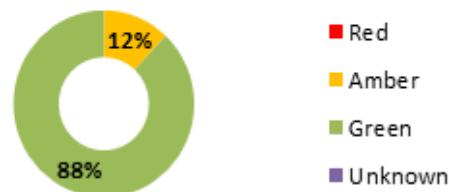


## Locality Teams

Figure 8

Locality Teams are well placed to deliver high quality preventative, targeted and specialist support to children and families. Internal and 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Assurance shows a high level of confidence in Locality Teams performance and processes. The area for development is a new area of provision and the Families Working Together programme, which has yet to be fully implemented.

### Locality Teams



The good assurance was given for:

- Emergency Duty Teams (EDT)
- Children In Need Breakdown Prevention
- Family Support Workers
- Section 47
- Support Panels
- Children’s Centres
- Team Around the Child (TAC).

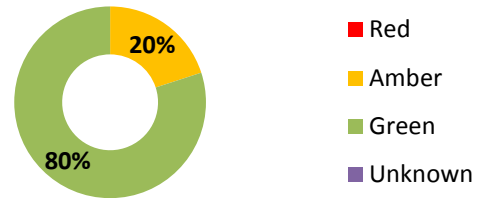
Locality Teams are also managing the project of Youth and Community Development.

## Property & Technology

The Property and Technology Management team includes the management of School organisational planning and development, the Children’s Services Capital programme, and the development of provision in respect of new schools. The team also play a fundamental role in managing any legal changes to schools and submitting applications to source grant funding where appropriate.

Figure 9

### Property & Technology



There is a high risk to key elements of the work; however this can be managed through effective programme management, data analysis to inform place planning along with strong communication with partners and the building of positive relationships within the Local Authority to ensure expertise is continually shared and developed.

There is currently a risk around delivery of sufficient school places to meet the growing demographic demand and the increase in legal activity required to ensure smooth conversion of schools to academy status. Further work is also taking place to ensure clear procurement processes in a time of change.

Good assurance was given in 4 areas:

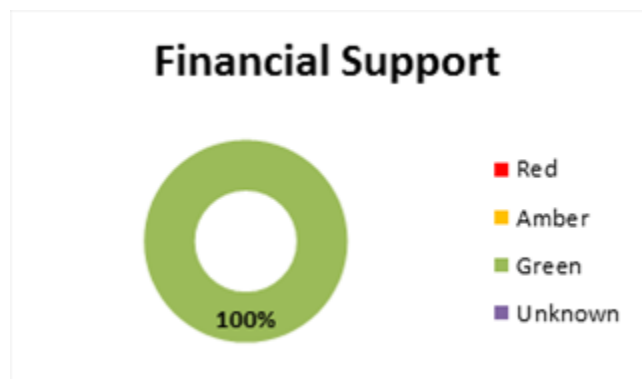
- School Organisation Issues
- Planning for New Schools
- Bidding for Grants
- Capital Projects

Legal Changes to Schools is amber.

## Financial Support

There is good assurance for financial support in Budget Share Calculations and School Budget Monitoring.

Figure 10



## Regulated Services

Lincolnshire Regulated Services achieved Outstanding Ofsted rating in 2011 for its Fostering Services, and 2012 for the Adoption Service. The Looked After Children’s service achieved a Good rating with outstanding capacity to improve, in the Ofsted inspection 2010.

Figure 11

### Regulated Services



In 2011/12, all residential children homes were judged to be either Outstanding or Good. All outcomes for Looked After Children are externally monitored by Ofsted and by the Department for Education. More recently in 2012 peer reviews are also used to assess our performance against the outcomes of LAC in Lincolnshire.

In 2012, the government published the new Balance Scorecards for Adoption. The adoption service is currently exceeding the target thresholds for the next 2 years achieving joint best performance amongst our statistical neighbours for the percentage of children placed within 21 months of entering care. In terms of the timescale from placement order to match, we are exceeding our current year target and the next year target for the next 3 years, placing us in the top 20% of all local authorities. The challenge moving forward is to sustain our current performance against the new Balance Scorecards. Plans are currently being actioned to re-design and streamline processes for the approval of prospective adopters and foster carers and maintain recruitment performance for key groups of children.

Lincolnshire Secure Unit is currently rated as Good by Ofsted but has also exceeded performance indicators at the Youth Justice Board when reviewing their contract with the unit.

The secure unit contributes to the national agenda through membership of the secure accommodation network.

The Fostering Services provides placements for over 90% of Looked After Children, and delivers additional services for parent and child assessments, respite for children with disabilities and placements for young people remanded through the courts. The service commissions only a small number of external foster placements which sets it apart from most other Local Authorities. Young people benefit from relatively stable placements and experience fewer placement moves and Lincolnshire is established as an authority that performs well in these areas.

The leaving care service is commissioned by Barnardos. It provides a service to all care leavers up to the age of 25. It works closely with the looked after social work teams in order to best manage the transition for looked after children into adulthood. Nearly 50% of care leavers live outside the county boundaries and are supported in the same way. The service is subject to monthly contractual overview and has recently been evaluated by the internal audit process. All 10 areas were given good assurance:

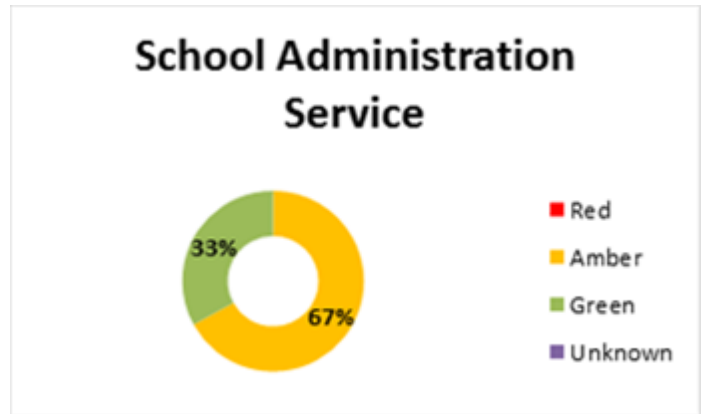
- Adoption
- Fostering,
- Looked After Children (LAC)
- Children’s Homes
- Secure Unit
- Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMH’s)
- Leaving Care Service
- Allowances
- Out of County Provision
- Private Fostering

## School Administration Service

There is good assurance for school admission work, further assurance is required for those in education other than at school and non-attendance at school. This is a key area for development in 2013/14.

Both Education other than at School and non-attendance in schools has been impacted by the conversion of schools to academies. Robust processes have been put in place to mitigate issues.

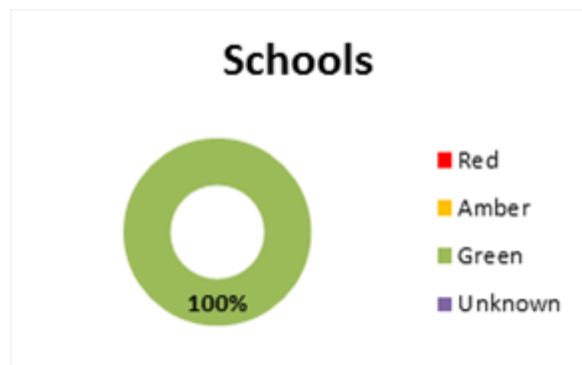
Figure 12



## Schools

Provision to schools has good assurance through School Improvement Service which is undertaken by our strategic partner CfBT. This contract is managed through monthly meetings which ensures its good assurance. Further work is being undertaken in 2013/14.

Figure 13



## Children with Disabilities

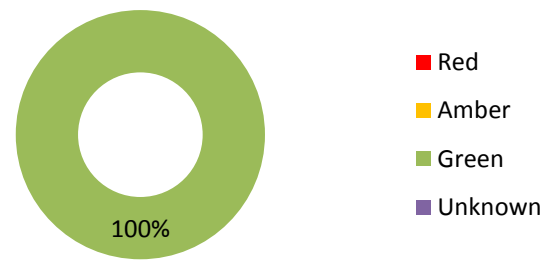
The Service is well placed to deliver early intervention to children and families through the Early Support Co-ordination team. Targeted and specialist support is delivered through the Social Work team, Occupational Therapy, Sensory Education Support Service and the long-term and Short Breaks homes. Internal and 3rd Party Assurance shows a high level of confidence in the Service.

All 6 areas were given a good assurance:

- CWD
- The Beacon
- Sensory Education Support Service
- ESCO
- CWD Social Care Team
- Short Break Homes.

Figure 14

### Children with Disabilities



#### Suggested next steps.....

- To continue to monitor and provide good quality services that improves outcomes for children and young people.
- Delivery of Planned Internal Audit work in the following areas:
  - Out of County Provision
  - Early Intervention
  - Child Protection Plans
  - Adoption
- Work with our Internal Auditors to develop the 2013/14 Internal Audit Plan. Identifying where more independent assurance is required based on significance and risk of the activity, and where we can leverage assurance from other sources.

## Strategic Risks



A key strategic risk for Children's Services continues to be any potential failure to safeguard children. Work is ongoing to ensure that these risks are mitigated and children in Lincolnshire continue to have an outstanding safeguarding and early help service.

**Council's highest rated Strategic Risks for this area of the business**

**Safeguarding**

Examples of mitigating actions include:

- Audit of Section 11 (being conducted by People Management - Induction, Recruitment, Contract)
- Audit & Performance information to DMT for scrutiny
- Safeguarding Assurance days
- Independent Chairs - review care plans & quality - act as eyes & ears for DMT
- Team Manager Audits
- Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Board
- Practitioner Supervision & Appraisal



Strategic Risks - Assurance Map		OWNER	RISK APPETITE	 CURRENT RISK SCORE	 TARGET RISK SCORE	DIRECTION OF TRAVEL	Management Assurance Status (Full, Substantial, Limited, No)	Corporate Functions & Third Party	Internal Audit	OVERALL ASSURANCE STATUS	COMMENTS
RAG Rating for level of assurance Red (R)/Amber (A)/Green (G)											
<b>Promoting Community Wellbeing &amp; Resilience</b>											
Safeguard children	Debbie Barnes	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Cautious</u></p> <p>(Regulatory standing &amp; legal compliance - recognised may need to change the ways things are done but will be tightly controlled)</p>			 Static	A		A	A		



# Key Projects in Children Services

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## **School Support Services - Green**

School support services identified through the School Support Services project are now managed by CfBT and the project is completed.

## **Families Working Together - Amber**

The development of multi-agency working to address the needs of families with multiple problems is a key priority across Lincolnshire

## **Small School Collaboration - Green**

23 collaborations have now been formed and one-off funding has been allocated to these schools to support the collaboration. Monitoring of the project is starting that will report back in 6 months initially.

## **Youth & Community Development - Amber**

The programme of developing youth and community provision continues with great progress being made in the delivery of services by the community from Youth Centres.

### What Managers are doing:

- Maintaining an outstanding safeguarding service
- Robustly performance managing
- Robustly budget managing
- Developing staff

## **Raising the Participation Age - Amber**

This is the legal requirement for young people who reach the end of year 11 in, or after, 2013 to participate in training or education until the end of year 12 initially. From 2015 this will be extended until the young person's 18th birthday with the expectation that the majority will stay in learning until at least the end of year 13.

# Key Projects in Children Services



The progress with projects reported to Corporate Management Board in December 2012 is shown in figure 15.

Figure 15

● On track

Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee			
Programme			
	Nov 2012	Dec 2012	
Raising the Participation Age	●	●	Progress is to plan. Requirements are widely communicated and sufficient provision identified. The statutory guidance for local authorities in relation to their duties regarding RPA have yet to be published, as has the guidance on study programmes for providers. Further delays in publication of the guidance, particularly that for study programmes reduces the time available for planning and preparation of the curriculum for September 2013.
Project			
Small Schools Collaboration	●	●	Schools continue to progress their Small School Collaborative Partnerships. Start up funding has been released to 28 groups (involving 117 small schools) and year 1 funding to 17 of these groups.
Youth & Community Development	●	●	Chief Officer reports for 3 youth centres have been sent to Legal Services and Finance for comments prior to submission to the Director of Resources to request approval of the intention to lease out the buildings at a peppercorn rent. Once this approval has been sought, Legal Services can be instructed to prepare lease agreements.
FWT Troubled Families	●	●	We continue to work to finalise Lincolnshire's approach to the Troubled Families agenda, establishing resource contributions from partners to expand the team and confirm co-location. Work is ongoing to identify families and meet the requirements of the Troubled Families Unit in Whitehall.

# Looking Ahead

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## People

People are key to the work we do. Children's Services are committed to developing staff and ensuring that staff are delivering in an efficient way.

## Money

Children's Services budget continues to be robustly managed in a time of challenge.

## Resilience

Children's Services have sound processes to ensure and maintain resilience, including a clearly communicated Business Continuity Plan.

## Localism

Children's Services continues to work in a local way through area offices and Children's Centres and ensuring the child and family are at the centre of our work.