



**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL**

**THURSDAY, 10 NOVEMBER 2022 at 10.00 AM**  
**in the COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY OFFICES, NEWLAND, LINCOLN LN1 1YL**

**MEMBERSHIP**

<b><u>Lincolnshire County Council:</u></b>	Councillors S P Roe (Chairman), Clio Perraton-Williams (Vice-Chairman), K H Cooke, A G Hagues, Mrs J E Killey, C Matthews and M A Whittington
<b><u>Added Members (non-voting):</u></b>	Polly Coombes, Ann Wright, Amy-Louise Butler, Elizabeth Bunney and 1 Vacancy(Children In Care Council Representative)

**AGENDA**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Pages</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Apologies for Absence/Replacement Members</b>	
<b>2</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>	
<b>3</b>	<b>Minutes of the previous meeting held on 8 September 2022</b>	3 - 10
<b>4</b>	<b>Announcements by the Chairman, Executive Councillors and Chief Officers</b>	
<b>5</b>	<b>Independent Reviewing Service Yearly Report 1st April 2022 - 30th September 2022</b> <i>(To receive a report by Carolyn Knight, Quality and Standards Manager, which introduces the Annual Report on the Independent Reviewing Service)</i>	11 - 48

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|-----------|--|-----------|
| <b>6</b>  | <b>Regulation 44 Independent Visitors Report</b><br><i>(To receive a report by Caroline Knight, Quality and Standards Manager, which provides an update on the work undertaken by the Regulation 44 Independent Visitors service between April 2022 and September 2022)</i>                  | 49 - 68   |
| <b>7</b>  | <b>Fostering Quarterly Performance Report Q2</b><br><i>(To receive a report by Deborah Crawford, Head of Service – Fostering, Adoption and Leaving Care, which provides an overview of activity within the Fostering Service during Quarter 2)</i>   | 69 - 88   |
| <b>8</b>  | <b>Private Fostering Annual Report and Statement of Purpose</b><br><i>(To receive a report by Deborah Crawford, Head of Service – Fostering, Adoption and Leaving Care, which informs the Panel about the work of the Children’s and Fostering Service in relation to private fostering)</i> | 89 - 124  |
| <b>9</b>  | <b>Annual Report of the Regional Adoption Agency</b><br><i>(To receive a report by John Harris, Head of Regional Adoption Agency, which introduces the Annual Report of the Regional Adoption Agency)</i>  | 125 - 148 |
| <b>10</b> | <b>Corporate Parenting Panel Work Programme</b><br><i>(To receive a report by Kiara Chatziioannou, Scrutiny Officer, which invites the Panel to consider its work programme)</i>   | 149 - 152 |

Distributed on Wednesday, 2 November 2022

Please note: This meeting will be broadcast live on the internet and access can be sought by accessing [Agenda for Corporate Parenting Panel on Thursday, 10th November, 2022, 10.00 am \(moderngov.co.uk\)](https://www.moderngov.co.uk/Agenda-for-Corporate-Parenting-Panel-on-Thursday-10th-November-2022-10.00-am)

Should you have any queries on the arrangements for this meeting, please contact Emily Wilcox via telephone 07557 486687 or alternatively via email at [emily.wilcox@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:emily.wilcox@lincolnshire.gov.uk)



## CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL 8 SEPTEMBER 2022

**PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S P ROE (CHAIRMAN)**

**Lincolnshire County Council:** Councillors K H Cooke, A G Hagues and C Matthews

**Added Members:** Polly Coombes (Foster Carer), Ann Wright (Foster Carer) and Elizabeth Bunney (Lincolnshire Community Health Services)

R D Butroid attended the meeting as observers

Officers in attendance:-

Kieran Barnes (Virtual School Head Teacher), Nicola Brangam (Children's Services Agency Advisor, Fostering and Adoption), Kiara Chatziioannou (Scrutiny Officer), Rebecca Dolman (Team Manager - Fostering North), Rachel Freeman (Interim Head of Service, Children's (Safeguarding)), Anne Johnson (Adoption Team Manager), Andrew Morris (Corporate Parenting Manager) and Rachel Wilson (Democratic Services Officer)

### 12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs J E Killey, C L Perraton-Williams and M A Whittington.

An apology for absence was also received from Janice Spencer, Assistant Director – Children's Safeguarding.

### 13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest at this point in the meeting.

### 14 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 7 JULY 2022

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 July 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### 15 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND CHIEF OFFICERS

There were no announcements by the Chairman, Executive Councillors or Chief Officers.

**16**      CHILDREN IN CARE PERFORMANCE MEASURES QUARTER 1 2022/23 (APRIL TO JUNE 2022)

Consideration was given to a report which enabled the Panel to consider and comment on the key performance information for Quarter 1 2022/23 which was relevant to the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

A full and detailed report covering the measures relevant to Children in Care (CiC) used by Children's Services was contained in Appendix A to the report. It was noted that there were 15 measures in total that related to CiC which were reported in Quarter 1, and of these 8 did not meet their target and two were ahead of the target set by the services.

Members were guided through the explanations for the targets not being met during this quarter and were provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the report and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

- It was queried whether the Council was paying for private dental treatment, and if so, was there a group account. It was confirmed that the Council had paid for private treatment where a child had been unable to access NHS treatment. It was noted that NHS treatment was still able to be accessed, but it was a challenge to do this within the time frames that enabled the Council to meet the target. It was emphasised that all children received dental help when it was needed.
- Fostering/adoption of children in care agenda 10 – 16 years old was slightly below target, and it was queried whether it was easier for younger children to be fostered. It was noted that this measure mainly related to foster placements, and those that were in residential care needed to be in that setting.
- In relation to 16 – 17 year olds not engaging in learning, it was noted that performance was at 81%, and that young people were struggling to access learning, it was queried whether the responsibility for accessing learning was the council's responsibility or the young person's. Officers highlighted that it would be more accurate to say that these young people were struggling to access education on a full-time basis, as many have not had consistent education before they came into care. Whilst there was fantastic wraparound care provided, sometimes this was not enough
- In relation to Care leavers not in education, employment or training, it was queried what the Council could do differently, and officers advised that care leavers would continue to be supported and opportunities provided. It was noted that it was important to remember that there were also other achievements that the young people would make which would be celebrated.
- It was important to note that the impacts of their life experiences did not always affect young people in the same way. Some would come into care with a history of non-attendance at school.
- It was queried whether there were any geographical areas of the county where it was particularly difficult for young people to access education, employment



or training, for example was availability of transport an issue? Officers advised that they tried to find things which would engage the young person, such as work experience, and it was noted that additional resources would be provided where possible for those young people over 16 years of age. Officers commented that would like see care leavers that did not achieve GCSE's to be able to access apprenticeships.

- It was commented that often children and young people in care could not learn to their full potential until they felt safe in their learning environment.
- It was highlighted that there were some remarkable children in care, and that it they were survivors, and due to the trauma some had experienced, just living was a daily challenge for them, and that over 50% were attending school was outstanding. It was highlighted that children in care became ready for education at a later point in life, which was why leaving care support was extended until the age of 25.
- It was noted that there was no feedback in relation to young people in custody, and members were advised that the Youth Offending Board would be presenting a report to the Panel in the future. However, it was also noted that often these were children who were not known to the local authority.
- Clarification was sought regarding the measure for the "*Average time between the Local Authority receiving court authority to place a child and the Local Authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family*", and it was noted that this time was from the time the child came into care to the date they were adopted.
- It was noted that it had not been possible to move some children due to Covid-19, and then once moves were possible again, there needed to be an assessment to determine if it was safe to move the child as there were foster carers who were shielding. It was noted that this would still have an effect on the following years figures as well.

(NOTE: Councillor K Cooke joined the meeting at 10.40am)

RESOLVED

That the performance information presented be noted.

## 17 ADOPTION ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22

Consideration was given to a report which informed the Corporate Parenting Panel about the work of the Adoption Service in Accordance with the requirements of the Care Standards National Minimum Standards 2003, 2011, 2014 and the Adoption and Children's Act 2002. The National Minimum Standards, together with the Adoption Regulations, formed the basis of the regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000 for the conduct of Adoption Agencies and Adoption Support Agencies. The Annual Report set out the relevant performance information and identified the key developments with the service of the last twelve months.

Members of the Panel were guided through the report, and the following was highlighted:

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- There had been 322 applications to the Adoption Support Fund for therapeutic input.
- 31 adoption orders had been granted in 2021-22, this was two more than the previous year.
- 69 Special Guardianship Orders had been granted.
- All the children adopted last year were under six years old.
- Six sibling groups had also been adopted last year. It was noted there were a lot of sibling groups coming up for this year as well.
- 27 adoptive families were approved in 2021-22, this was two more than the previous year, and there were more adopters waiting.

The Corporate Parenting Panel was provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained in the report and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

- In terms of Family Adoption Links, it was queried how the success of the partnership was quantified, and where was this scrutinised. The Panel was advised that its work was overseen by a Board, and the Council's representative was Janice Spencer. In terms of success, there was a Marketing Officer, and a website. The authority was able to see who had been the better placement providers.
- It was noted that it was a very positive Partnership, and there had been a requirement from government to set one up, there had not been a choice. The Partnership was about pooling resources, experience and skills to ensure that children were placed as effectively as possible.

**RESOLVED**

That the Corporate Parenting Panel note the contents of the Adoption Annual Report for 2021-22.

**18      FOSTERING ANNUAL REPORT 2021 - 2022**

Consideration was given to the Fostering Annual Report 2021 – 2022 as part of the monitoring of the Fostering Service required under the Fostering Service Regulations 2011 and the Fostering Minimum Standards 2011.

Members of the Panel were guided through the report, and the following was highlighted:

- There were 735 children in care which was a concern. Officers were very proud that 499 had been placed in foster care as it was still a difficult period of time for fostering.
- Officers thanked all the foster carers that had continued to support the authority.
- The online community of foster carers remained very positive.
- At the end of March 2022, there were 289 foster carer households registered.
- In comparison with other local authorities, Lincolnshire was performing well.

The Corporate Parenting Panel was provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the report, and some of the points raised included the following:

- In terms of recruitment, officers advised that there was a new Practice Supervisor, who had examined the marketing strategy to identify where the most interest from, and so had been able to identify which areas to target. The authority had invested heavily in the local community and visited local businesses etc. At the start there were 5,000 hits per month on social media, this had now increased to 27,000 hits per month.
- Fostering was a competitive market, and there had been a need to improve recruitment. A portal had been developed so people could track where they were in the process, as well as being allocated to a foster carer advocate at stage one of their approval, so they had a contact for any questions/advice during the process.
- There were currently 291 approved households, with 30 pending approval.
- In terms of challenges from the cost of living crisis, the Initial Expressions of Interest (IEI) were being monitored, and an increase in approvals was expected.
- It was confirmed that a fosterer could only be approved with one agency at any one time.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the foster carers present, and the following was noted:

- It was queried how foster children were integrated into the family, and one foster carer responded that they had not started to foster until their own children were in their teenage years. They also advised that most of the children they had fostered had been teenagers, and did acknowledge that it had been a challenge at times. However, it was important to ensure that both children were included and had time where the focus was on them.
- It was noted that foster carers would be providing support on issues that they had not experienced themselves, and it was queried how a foster carer would start those conversations where there wasn't a shared experience. Members were advised that it was about being able to listen, encouraging honesty and openness, and a willingness to hear what the young person wanted to say, and being able to provide support without judgement.

RESOLVED

That the Fostering Annual Report be approved.

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Consideration was given to a report which provided an overview of activity within the fostering service over Quarter 1.

The Corporate Panel was guided through the report and attention was drawn to a number of particular areas.

Officers advised that an audit of foster carers who had not stayed with the service long had been undertaken and one of the main reasons given for not continuing with fostering was the impact on their birth children. It was noted that training for birth children had been introduced, as it was about preparing fostering households, rather than just foster parents.

Other areas highlighted to the Panel included:

- The family finding campaign.
- There was a belief that every child was able to be in foster placement
- The importance of identifying children's needs and the foster carers skills and knowledge.
- The importance of being proactive in terms of placement support. It was noted that the service had invested in placement support workers.
- Recruitment activity was progressing well.

RESOLVED

That the Quarterly Performance Report for Fostering (Q1) be noted as an accurate review of the Fostering Service.

20 CORPORATE PARENTING, CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE LEAVER STRATEGY  
PRIORITIES ACTION PLAN UPDATE

The Corporate Parenting Panel received a verbal update from the Corporate Parenting Manager which updated members on the Children in Care and Care Leaver Strategy Priorities Action Plan. It was commented that all members of the Panel had had an opportunity to feed into the Strategy. It would be considered by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee and Corporate Leadership Team to get organisational buy-in.

It was highlighted that the Strategy had been well received by members and officers, and it would be presented to the Executive on 1 November 2022 for approval.

The Panel was advised that the Strategy would be launched in November with an event, and all members would be invited, as the aim was for a whole council approach.

RESOLVED

That the update be noted.

21 CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report which enabled the Panel to consider and comment on the content of its work programme for the coming year to ensure that scrutiny was focused where it could be of greatest benefit.

It was suggested that the following items be scheduled for inclusion at future meetings:

- A report outlining the work of the Youth Offending Board
- Performance measures
- Regional Adoption Area

RESOLVED

- That the work programme as presented be approved
- That the items listed above be scheduled for inclusion at future meetings.

The meeting closed at 12.13 pm

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**Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy, Executive Director - Children's Services**

Report to:	<b>Corporate Parenting Panel</b>
Date:	<b>10 November 2022</b>
Subject:	<b>Independent Reviewing Service Yearly Report (1st April 2022 – 30th September 2022)</b>

**Summary:**

This report introduces the Annual Report on the Independent Chair's Service. This is a statutory requirement and serves to update the Corporate Parenting Panel on the services to Looked After Children in Lincolnshire.

**Recommendation(s):**

Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are requested to consider the Annual Report on the Independent Chair's Service and endorse the ongoing priorities for 2022 - 2023.

**1. Background**

The government's range of Covid 19 restrictions that had previously posed some challenges on how the Quality & Standards Service has continued to deliver crucial services over the past 2.5 years are no longer in place. Meetings and visits have now fully resumed as the Local Authority embraces new ways of working which are outlined within the body of this report.

This report sets out the updates in relation to the Local Authority's Children in Care. Given the Independent Chairs have a dual role and also chair Child Protection conferences, a separate Appendix A is attached to this report as supplementary reading.

The Contribution of Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) to Quality Assuring and Improving Services for Children in Care

This IRO report provides evidence relating to the IRO Services in Lincolnshire as required by statutory guidance. Due to the core business of the team also including child

protection, short-term breaks, and Reg. 44 visits, where appropriate, this report contains information relating to those areas.

The IRO report must be presented to: Corporate Parenting Board and the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership.

### **Purpose of service and legal context**

The IRO Service is set within the framework of the IRO Handbook which provides the statutory guidance for independent reviewing officers and local authorities on their functions in relation to case management and review for children looked after (known as Child in Care).

The guidance is issued as part of a suite of statutory guidance which sets out how local authorities should carry out the full range of responsibilities in relation to care planning, placement and review for looked after children. The aim is to provide looked after children with the most appropriate placement to meet their needs and improve their outcomes.

## **2. Conclusion**

The main service priorities for 2022 - 2023 are outlined below together with a full explanation and update on progress.

### **Priorities 2022-2023 – Taken from the Quality & Standards Team Action Plan 2021-2023**

- **Recording of escalations on Mosaic is amended to enable the recording of the narrative where there is genuine resolution dialogue to avoid taking to the next level.**

This is a piece of ongoing work. At the current time positive challenges are fully recorded within the Chair/ IRO activity step which evidences the way in which issues are narrowed down, often avoiding formal escalations. The formal escalation step needs to be revised to allow the dialogue between individuals to be fully recorded to demonstrate how escalations are managed prior to progressing to the next management level if they remain unresolved.

- **The service will be undertaking a review of Conference and CiC physical participation by families and professionals with a road map for attendance.**

All Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC) are now held in person with the minimum of the Social Worker, Chair, parents/ carers, Health and Early Help colleagues and other key individuals that work closely with the family. This is intended to form those initial supportive relationships around building a safe and robust plan for the child/ren and to engage with parents / children. Once this has taken place, the platform for subsequent meetings is agreed, taking into account the family's level of engagement, learning needs and other variables such issues of



domestic abuse where it benefits victims, to be able to express their views away from a perpetrator in a safe setting.

Children in Care meetings follow a similar pathway, however, for those children and young people old enough and who are able to express their views independently, the platform for the meeting always takes into account their preferences. The service very much holds a 'it's my CiC meeting, it's my choice' ethos, ensuring that children and young people are always listened to.

- **Analysis and development of procedures and IT support required for post covid Child Protection and CiC hybrid meetings. Hybrid meetings being those attended by invitees in person and via electronic means.**

There is still some way to go before all conference facilities around the County have hybrid working equipment available, similar to those already installed and working such as County Offices. All chairs now have individual Logitech conference cam units. These are portable and allow hybrid meetings to take place more effectively, where there is enhanced quality of sound and vision to support more effective meetings. This was procured after a successful business case was presented and is already having a positive impact. This model is particularly benefiting CiC as the equipment can be used in a range of locations such as schools and foster carers homes which again allows more of our children and young people to have choices in relation to their meetings, who attends in person and who attends remotely.

- **Integration of current feedback from CP and CiC utilising "Engagement HQ" (centralised feedback development and recording system) when this comes online.**

The Local Authority are just moving onto the generic feedback platform through the Let's Talk system. This generic platform allows all feedback to be gathered in a central location in order for it to be evaluated. However, given the specific nature of the role, some evaluation is currently being undertaken to understand whether the new platform would provide the right level of feedback required to continue to fully understand the needs and views of our children and parents/ carers or whether this needs to be service specific.

- **Based on Engagement HQ, review of feedback forms and analysis of lessons learnt to effect service delivery.**

As above this is currently ongoing, however whichever platform the services elect to use, we continue to monitor the impact of the services we deliver and how these can continuously be improved to meet the needs of those we seek to support.

- **Initial trial and review of progress of the new Pre-Birth Protocol, implementation of any subsequent amendments from the review.**

This piece of work is now completed and fully embedded into practice. Since its initial stages the Pre-Birth Protocol has evolved into a confirmed model of practice and there is clear guidance around this. On occasions, Child Protection (CP) Chairs still chair some of these meetings, but it has become more embedded into front line social work practice and Practice Supervisors often chair their own Pre-Birth Strategy Meetings. The Safeguarding & Review team still coordinate the administration for this important piece of work. This has resulted in many more unborn babies avoiding CP plans with an alternative Child in Need / Pre Proceedings pathway being implemented which has resulted in a less oppressive and stressful experience for the expectant mother and father. There are of course those unborn babies, where despite this positive way of supporting families, the risks elevate. In these cases, further consideration of an ICPC and potential CP plan is always considered to manage any risks.

- **Promotion of the role of the Independent Chair service through the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) and individual partners to ensure clarity and accountability.**

This is an ongoing piece of work. One of the Team Managers who takes a lead for CP is in regular attendance at LSCP meetings and events, and promotion of the role together with gathering important feedback is always present to enhance and promote the role.

- **Exploration and assessment of the categories of harm by the Independent Chairs within conference, ensuring that sexual harm is captured effectively.**

This is a piece of ongoing work. The introduction of the Sexual Harm Pathway which has been a significant piece of work together with the current delivery of updated Sexual Abuse training delivered by the Practice Advisors is enhancing understanding, knowledge, and practice in this area to ensure that for those children experiencing sexual harm, this is fully acknowledged as a key category.

- **Challenge and focus by the Independent Chair on ensuring active participation and engagement with any "absent" parent within the child protection framework. With particular emphasis on Fathers.**

This is an ongoing piece of work within the service. Managers frequently consider this in case supervision to ensure the issues remains live. Chairs are now fully back completing peer audits and there is an expectation that this area is fully considered and reflected upon. Chairs, where necessary are discussing absent parents with locality social work teams to ensure that where there is an absent parent, every attempt is made to include them. Further to this a Team Manager in the Quality & Standards Team is involved in a discrete piece of work between the LSCP and Children Services to look at the current ways of working, practice development and training to ensure that this very important group of individuals is always fully considered.

- **A review, analysis, and any appropriate change to the 12 Month Conference Review process.**

The 12-month meeting has now been changed to an 18-month meeting. Family Assessment and Safeguarding Team (FAST) Team Managers are expected to attend all CP conferences at the 9-month point, and as such have a broader understanding of any issues relating to CP plans not progressing. The 18-month point felt more appropriate to review those children still subject to CP plans. This is now fully embedded with a revised agenda that seeks to review progress and any challenges within the S.O.S framework. A CP chair, independent of the child's CP chair, facilitates the meeting to ensure independence and objective oversight and seeks to support colleagues to analyse a child's circumstances and their plan to highlight any changes required to move plans forward.

- **Working collaboratively with FAST Teams to improve preparation for Initial Child Protection Conferences in a re-design of ICPC requests**

This is an ongoing piece of work. There are some significant challenges within some of the FAST teams at the current time in terms of staffing movement which continues to impact on the quality of preparation in some instances. Chairs are using a restorative approach to support colleagues to navigate these issues to minimise impact on children and their families.

- **Develop Practice Champions within the Chairs Service to support continuing professional development and assist with implementation of the various practice stream updates. Valuing Care, Graded Care -Neglect; Child Sexual Abuse (CSA); Family Finding; Restorative Practice; Signs of Safety; Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child (UASC).**

This is an ongoing piece of work. Individual chairs are involved in these pieces of work which are used as a platform to enhance practice within the team and the wider social care teams and partners. Practice Champions are expected to share good practice examples, guide and coach staff in these areas and act as a mentor for those less experienced. As an example, the team has 2 IRO's who predominantly deal with UASC children, who are experienced in this area and often coach and support colleagues to enhance practice.

- **Implementing recommendations from the IRO dip Sample Audit in relation to the upholding of children's participation in their care plans and reviews**

This is a piece of ongoing work. There is a service expectation that IRO's fully engage with their children and families prior to review. To further quality assure this, IRO's are now completing peer audits to provide independent overview of practice, and this also remains a live subject in regular case supervision.

- **The development of the Valuing Care Toolkit and how this impacts on the information that is provided to reviews and how care plans are constructed is an ongoing workstream and IRO service needs to be actively engaged in the implementation and review of Valuing Care Toolkit.**

The Valuing Care Toolkit (VCT) continues to develop. This has recently had further developments in its use and the guidance provided for all staff. It has become a frequent addition to the CiC care planning steps and is included in each child’s care review. There is an expectation that IRO’s use this information to consider an individual child’s needs and use it to promote conversations within and outside of reviews to ensure that children’s plans always reflect their needs as these change over time. A Team Manager from the Quality & Standards Service sits on the Valuing Care Governance Board to ensure that the service is always at the heart of any developments and how these impact on the children and young people that the service oversees.

### **3. Consultation**

#### **a) Risks and Impact Analysis**

N/A

### **4. Appendices**

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Independent Reviewing Service yearly report 1st April 2022 – 30th September 2022
Appendix B	Child Protection Report 1 April 2022 – 30 September 2022

### **5. Background Papers**

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Carolyn Knight Quality and Standards Manager, who can be contacted on 01522 553732 or [Carolyn.knight@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Carolyn.knight@lincolnshire.gov.uk).

**Lincolnshire County Council – Children’s Services  
Independent Reviewing Service yearly report  
1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022**

*The governments range of Covid 19 restrictions that had previously posed some challenges on how the Quality & Standards Service has continued to deliver crucial services over the past 2.5 years are no longer in place. Meetings and visits have now fully resumed as the Local Authority embraces new ways of working which are outlined within the body of this report.*

*This report sets out the updates in relation to the Local Authorities Children in Care. Given the Independent Chairs have a dual role and also chair Child Protection conferences, a separate Appendix A is attached to this report as supplementary reading.*

*The Contribution of Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) to Quality Assuring and Improving Services for Children in Care*

This IRO report provides evidence relating to the IRO Services in Lincolnshire as required by statutory guidance. Due to the core business of the team also including child protection, short-term breaks, and Reg 44 visits, where appropriate this report contains information relating to those areas.

The IRO report must be presented to: Corporate Parenting Board and the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership.

### **Purpose of service and legal context**

The IRO Service is set within the framework of the IRO Handbook which provides the statutory guidance for independent reviewing officers and local authorities on their functions in relation to case management and review for children looked after (known as Child in Care).

The guidance is issued as part of a suite of statutory guidance which sets out how local authorities should carry out the full range of responsibilities in relation to care planning, placement and review for looked after children. The aim is to provide looked after children with the most appropriate placement to meet their needs and improve their outcomes.

The CP Chairs role is described within Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 which is a guide to interagency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Following section 47 enquiries, an initial child protection conference (ICPC) brings together family members (and the child where appropriate), with the supporters, advocates, and practitioners most involved with the child and family.

The purpose of the Child Protection Conference is to analyse all relevant information and plan how best to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child with the family and their network taking the lead. It is the responsibility of the conference to make recommendations on how organisations and agencies work together to safeguard the child going forward.

### **Priorities 2022-2023 – Taken from the Quality & Standards Team Action Plan 2021-2023**

- **Recording of escalations on Mosaic is amended to enable the recording of the narrative where there is genuine resolution dialogue to avoid taking to the next level.**

This is a piece of ongoing work. At the current time positive challenges are fully recorded within the Chair/ IRO activity step which evidences the way in which issues are narrowed down, often avoiding formal escalations. The formal escalation step needs to be revised

to allow the dialogue between individuals to be fully recorded to demonstrate how escalations are managed prior to progressing to the next management level if they remain unresolved.

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- **Analysis and development of procedures and IT support required for post covid CP and CiC hybrid meetings. Hybrid meetings being those attended by invitees in person and via electronic means.**

There is still some way to go before all conference facilities around the County have hybrid working equipment available, similar to those already installed and working such as County Offices. All chairs now have individual Logitech conference cam units. These are portable and allow hybrid meetings to take place more effectively, where there is

enhanced quality of sound and vision to support more effective meetings. This was procured after a successful business case was presented and is already having a positive impact. This model is particularly benefiting CiC as the equipment can be used in a range of locations such as schools and foster carers homes which again allows more of our children and young people to have choices in relation to their meetings, who attends in person and who attends remotely.

- **Integration of current feedback from CP and CiC utilising "Engagement HQ" (centralised feedback development and recording system) when this comes online.**

The Local Authority are just moving onto the generic feedback platform through the Let's Talk system. This generic platform allows all feedback to be gathered in a central location in order for it to be evaluated. However, given the specific nature of the role, some evaluation is currently being undertaken to understand whether the new platform would provide the right level of feedback required to continue to fully understand the needs and views of our children and parents/ carers or whether this needs to be service specific.

- **Based on Engagement HQ, review of feedback forms and analysis of lessons learnt to effect service delivery.**

As above this is currently ongoing, however whichever platform the services elect to use, we continue to monitor the impact of the services we deliver and how these can continuously be improved to meet the needs of those we seek to support.

- **Initial trial and review of progress of the new Pre-Birth Protocol, implementation of any subsequent amendments from the review.**

This piece of work is now completed and fully embedded into practice. Since its initial stages the Pre-Birth Protocol has evolved into a confirmed model of practice and there is clear guidance around this. On occasions, CP Chairs still chair some of these meetings but



it has become more embedded into front line social work practice and Practice Supervisors often chair their own Pre-Birth Strategy Meetings. The Safeguarding & Review team still coordinate the administration for this important piece of work. This has resulted in many more unborn babies avoiding CP plans with an alternative Child in need / Pre proceedings pathway being implemented which has resulted in a less oppressive and stressful experience for the expectant mother and father. There are of course those unborn babies, where despite this positive way of supporting families, the risks elevate. In these cases, further consideration of an ICPC and potential CP plan is always considered to manage any risks.

- **Promotion of the role of the Independent Chair service through the LSCP and individual partners to ensure clarity and accountability.**

This is an ongoing piece of work. One of the Team Managers who takes a lead for CP is in regular attendance at LSCP meetings and events, and promotion of the role together with gathering important feedback is always present to enhance and promote the role.

- **Exploration and assessment of the categories of harm by the Independent Chairs within conference, ensuring that sexual harm is captured effectively.**

This is a piece of ongoing work. The introduction of the Sexual Harm Pathway which has been a significant piece of work together with the current delivery of updated Sexual Abuse training delivered by the Practice Advisors is enhancing understanding, knowledge, and practice in this area to ensure that for those children experiencing sexual harm, this is fully acknowledged as a key category.

- **Challenge and focus by the Independent Chair on ensuring active participation and engagement with any "absent" parent within the child protection framework. With particular emphasis on Fathers.**

This is an ongoing piece of work within the service. Managers frequently consider this in case supervision to ensure the issues remains live. Chairs are now fully back completing peer audits and there is an expectation that this area is fully considered and reflected upon. Chairs, where necessary are discussing absent parents with locality social work teams to ensure that where there is an absent parent, every attempt is made to include them. Further to this a Team Manager in the Quality & Standards Team is involved in a discrete piece of work between the LSCP and Children Services to look at the current ways of working, practice development and training to ensure that this very important group of individuals is always fully considered.

- **A review, analysis, and any appropriate change to the 12 Month Conference Review process.**

The 12-month meeting has now been changed to an 18-month meeting. FAST Team Managers are expected to attend all CP conferences at the 9-month point, and as such have a broader understanding of any issues relating to CP plans not progressing. The 18-month point felt more appropriate to review those children still subject to CP plans. This is now fully embedded with a revised agenda that seeks to review progress and any challenges within the S.O.S framework. A CP chair independent of the child's CP chair, facilitates the meeting to ensure independence and objective oversight and seeks to support colleagues to analyse a child's circumstances and their plan to highlight any changes required to move plans forward.

- **Working Collaboratively with FAST TM's to improve preparation for Initial Child Protection Conferences in a re-design of ICPC requests**

This is an ongoing piece of work. There are some significant challenges within some of the FAST teams at the current time in terms of staffing movement which continues to impact on the quality of preparation in some instances. Chairs are using a restorative approach

to support colleagues to navigate these issues to minimise impact on children and their families.

- **Develop Practice Champions within the Chairs Service to support continuing professional development and assist with implementation of the various practice stream updates. Valuing Care, Graded Care -Neglect; CSA; Family Finding; Restorative Practice; Signs of Safety; UASC**

This is an ongoing piece of work. Individual chairs are involved in these pieces of work which are used as a platform to enhance practice within the team and the wider social care teams and partners. Practice champions are expected to share good practice examples, guide and coach staff in these areas and act as a mentor for those less experienced. As an example, the team has 2 IRO's who predominantly deal with UASC children, who are experienced in this area and often coach and support colleagues to enhance practice.

- **Implementing recommendations from the IRO dip Sample Audit in relation to the upholding of children's participation in their care plans and reviews**

This is a piece of ongoing work. There is a service expectation that IRO's fully engage with their children and families prior to review. To further quality assure this, IRO's are now completing peer audits to provide independent overview of practice, and this also remains a live subject in regular case supervision.

- **The development of the Valuing Care Toolkit and how this impacts on the information that is provided to reviews and how care plans are constructed is an ongoing workstream and IRO service needs to be actively engaged in the implementation and review of VCT**

The Valuing Care Toolkit continues to develop. This has recently had further developments in its use and the guidance provided for all staff. It has become a frequent addition to the CiC care planning steps and is included in each child's care review. There is an expectation that IRO's use this information to consider an individual child's needs and use it to promote conversations within and outside of reviews to ensure that children's plans always reflect their needs as these change over time. A Team Manager from the Quality & Standards Service sits on the Valuing Care Governance Board to ensure that the service is always at the heart of any developments and how these impact on the children and young people that the service oversees.

### **Professional Profile of the IRO Service**

The Independent Reviewing Service continues to be embedded within the Quality and Standards Service Area of Lincolnshire County Council.

The Independent Chairs Team is made up primarily of two distinct roles: Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) and Child Protection Chairs. In a number of Local Authorities these roles are separate roles, often located in separate teams, however this is not the case in Lincolnshire. The service has recently secured further funding for an additional IRO post in relation to the rising UASC numbers which has raised the full time equivalent to 19.6 Independent Chairs. Due to some movement within the team, there are currently 4 vacancies advertised with an anticipated closing date on 16.10.22. 4 agency workers are supporting the team whilst these vacant posts are filled.

The team also has responsibility for reviewing Children With Disabilities Short Term Breaks and Regulation 44 Inspections. Both of these roles are also statutory requirements.

In addition, there are 3 FTE Local Authority Designated Officers within the wider team who are line managed by a Team Manager. These roles are filled by qualified Social Workers at the same grade as the IRO's and Chairs and are able to assist with covering work on occasion. The

restructure has resulted in all the Chairs and LADO's being on the same job description, which means there is more resilience across the service.

COVID, sickness absence, secondment and recruitment continue to be challenging over the course of the year; this has necessitated the use of some agency staff as outlined above to ensure that service capacity is not impacted upon, and standards are maintained. One member of staff retired recently and has returned to work on a sessional basis, working 3 days per week to support the team given the current service challenges and pressures.

### **Short Term Breaks (STB's)**

Short breaks are part of a continuum of services which support children in need and their families. They include the provision of day, evening, overnight and weekend activities for the child or young person, and can take place in the child's own home, the home of an approved carer, or in a residential or community setting. In Lincolnshire the users of short breaks are disabled children and their families. The breaks usually have two aims: to enable the child to participate in fun, interesting and safe activities; and to provide a break from caring for the parents.

The role of the IRO for children looked after in a series of short breaks is more limited than for longer term CiC. It is important that IROs are sensitive to the close and active involvement of parents. Given this sensitivity, parents as well as children and young people can highly value their contribution and independent perspective, especially in helping to resolve any difficulties with the placement. IROs have a responsibility to alert the local authority if the placement is not meeting the child's needs. A large number of short breaks occur that do not require oversight by the IRO due to not meeting the statutory requirements. A referral form has been developed with CWD to ensure that information and rationale for IRO involvement is captured effectively.

### **Number of Short-Term Break meetings held**

Apr 18	8	Apr 19	5	Apr 20	4	Apr 21	4	Apr 22	4
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May 18	12	May 19	3	May 20	4	May 21	6	May 22	10
Jun 18	8	Jun 19	11	Jun 20	6	Jun 21	7	Jun 22	4
Jul 18	8	Jul 19	5	Jul 20	7	Jul 21	6	Jul 22	7
Aug 18	1	Aug 19	0	Aug 20	2	Aug 21	1	Aug 22	0
Sep 18	7	Sep 19	8	Sep 20	4	Sep 21	7	Sep 22	3
Oct 18	4	Oct 19	6	Oct 20	4	Oct 21	4		
Nov 18	9	Nov 19	6	Nov 20	9	Nov 21	9		
Dec 18	8	Dec 19	4	Dec 20	2	Dec 21	6		
Jan 19	6	Jan 20	6	Jan 21	4	Jan 22	3		
Feb 19	4	Feb 20	4	Feb 21	3	Feb 22	5		
Mar 19	5	Mar 20	4	Mar 21	5	Mar 22	4		
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>

#### Regulation 44

(For details in terms of the service please see the individual report provided for the corporate parenting board).

The Regulation 44 Officers continue to be based within the wider team. The role is a statutory one to act as an independent person, visit and report on the children's homes. Lincolnshire currently has 7 residential homes with a wide range of specialisms – one Secure unit, two homes accommodating children with disabilities for short breaks, one long term home for children with disabilities and 3 children's homes that offer long term placements for children in care. Lincolnshire is due to shortly open a new task centred home bringing the Local Authorities provision to 8. There are 2 supported living schemes, one in Grantham and the other in Gainsborough providing accommodation for young people aged 16-18 for a period of up to six months. This accommodation is to be inspected under the Regulation 44 process, however this is 'a light touch' exercise every 4 months.

#### **Staffing**

Management Team

There are four Team Managers in the Service. The Chairs are predominantly managed by Debbie Johnson and Richard Stone. Paul Fisher has responsibility for the LADO's and Reg 44 Officers and Philippa Gallop has responsibility for Quality Assurance, Learning and Development, Participation and Liaise.

Independent Chairs

The team has experienced a number of changes over the past 6 months. A further staff member has retired, and one member of staff was seconded to Lincoln FAST for the whole year to support front line practice pressures has now returned to the team. We have one further member of staff seconded to SK FAST to support practice pressures there, and one part time member of staff seconded to the Fostering Service. The 2 staff members who were on long term sick have now returned to work. We currently have 2 other members of staff on long term sick, 1 Independent Chair and 1 Team Manager. We have recruited 1 new member of staff from within Children's Services who started on 19.9.22 and was offered a full induction. We have also secured 1 further Independent Chair Post through funding secured in relation to the rising UASC children. There are currently 4 agency workers supporting the team and there are 4 vacant posts advertised with a closing date on 16.10.22.

<b>Carolyn Knight</b> <b>Head of Service (Quality and Standards Team)</b> <b>07879 603618</b>		
<b>Richard Stone</b> Team Manager 07721 039090 richard.stone@lincolnshire.gov.uk	<b>Debbie Johnson</b> Team Manager 07552 254342 debbie.johnson@lincolnshire.gov.uk	<b>Paul Fisher</b> Team Manager 07825 935359 paul.fisher@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Cheryl Govier	Drasute Kay	Horia Astalos

07786 275265 cheryl.govier@lincolnshire.gov.uk	07900 607894 drasute.kay@lincolnshire.gov.uk	Agency 07385 468338 horia.astalos@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Julie Vincent 07833 236464 julie.vincent@lincolnshire.gov.uk	Tina Pearce 07825 833035 tina.pearce@lincolnshire.gov.uk	Graham Nicholson 07920 182384 graham.nicholson@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Renita Lancaster 07767 212825 renita.lancaster@lincolnshire.gov.uk	Denise Lyon 07388 854634 denise.lyon@lincolnshire.gov.uk	Colin Pennington 07823 753545 colin.pennington@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Helen Jaques 07771 902458 helen.jaques@lincolnshire.gov.uk	Keith Patrick Agency 07900 607917 keith.patrick@lincolnshire.gov.uk	Rachael Powis (LADO) Ext 54668 rachael.powis@lincolnshire.gov.uk
April Bourke 07900 364775 april.bourke@lincolnshire.gov.uk	Tracy Bishop 07500 835454 tracy.bishop@lincolnshire.gov.uk	Ildiko Kiss (LADO) 07917 091141 ildiko.kiss@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Emma Wailen 07825 973555 emma.wailen@lincolnshire.gov.uk	Eska Verleg 07825 973554 eska.verleg@lincolnshire.gov.uk	Kim Murray (LADO) 07900 607798 kim.murray@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Kirsty Reynolds 077663 66380 kirsty.reynolds@lincolnshire.gov.uk	Eddie Bermingham Relief 07920 213481 eddie.bermingham@lincolnshire.gov.uk	Fiona Watters (LADO) 07900 607915 fiona.watters@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Chloe Booth Agency 07920 792082 chloe.booth@lincolnshire.gov.uk	Stephanie Morris 07909 535853 stephanie.morris@lincolnshire.gov.uk	Lyndsay Hewitt (LADO) 07900 607725 lyndsay.hewitt@lincolnshire.gov.uk

### Children in Care population and the IRO service

There continues to be an upward trend in the number of young people being in care, 730 (September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022) as opposed to 688 (September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021).

In the year 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022 the IROs have conducted 1750 reviews. In the same period in 2020-2021 there were 1634 reviews. Workload has been increasing year on year.

Due to the current drift and delay within the court and the impact of a number of foster care changes for some children, reviews are often rescheduled to accommodate this. As an example, between September 30<sup>th</sup> 2021 and September 30<sup>th</sup> 2022, 920 reviews were re arranged which has had a further impact on workload.



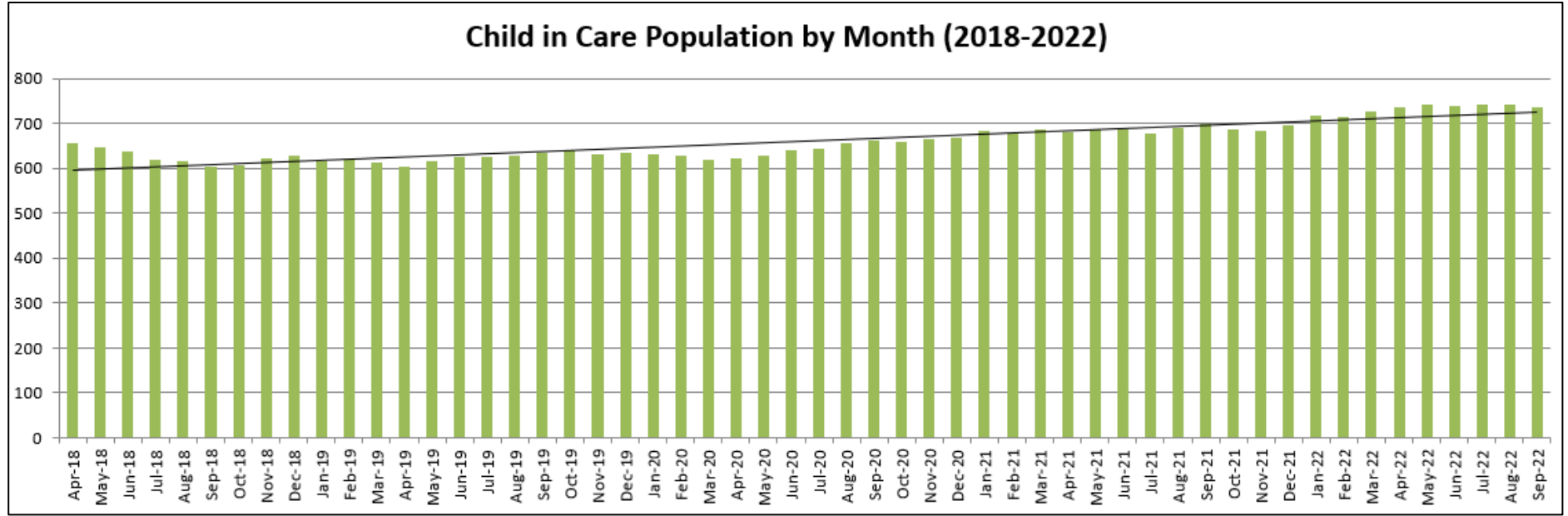
The Children in Care population has seen an upward trend resulting in the highest Children in Care population in the last 3 years.

In the year to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022 4 young people have been subject to Secure Accommodation under Section 25 of the Children Act 1989. The reviews are chaired by the Independent Chairs Team Managers.

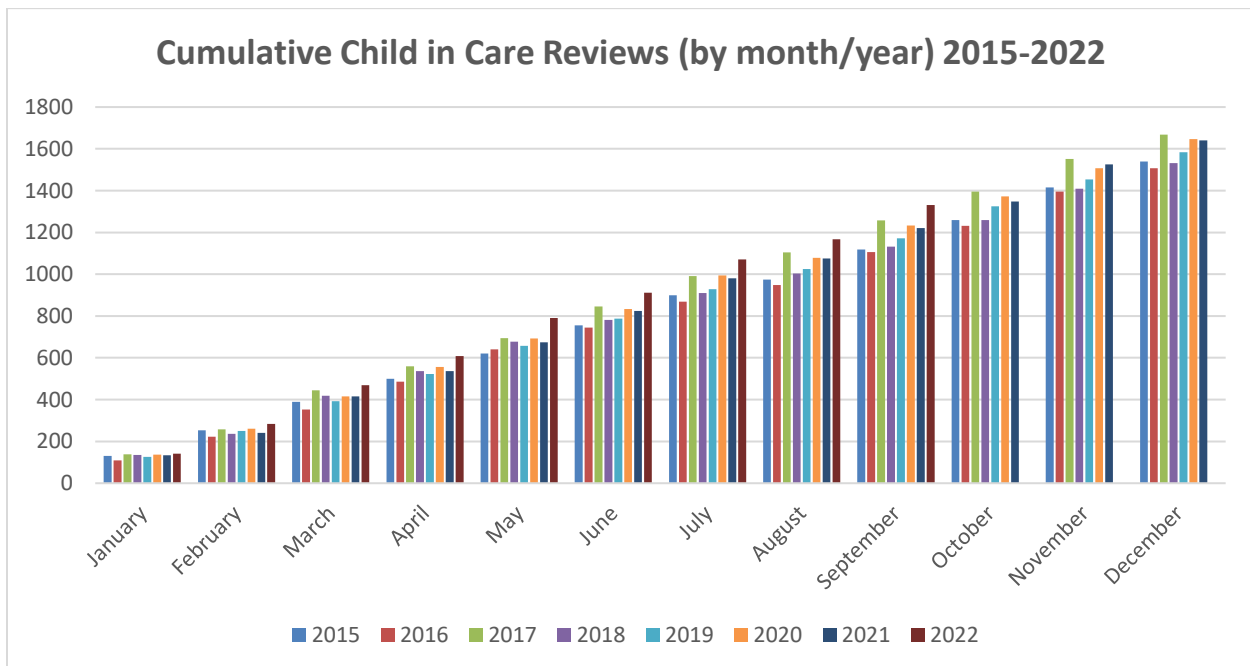
Of the 4 young people subject to secure accommodation, 3 of these are young women with complex trauma histories who require specialist psychological input and therapeutic environments for move on placements, and these have not been available nationally despite extensive searches.

Despite being a small percentage of the CIC population, they represent a significant challenge both in terms of professional time, intervention, and budget.

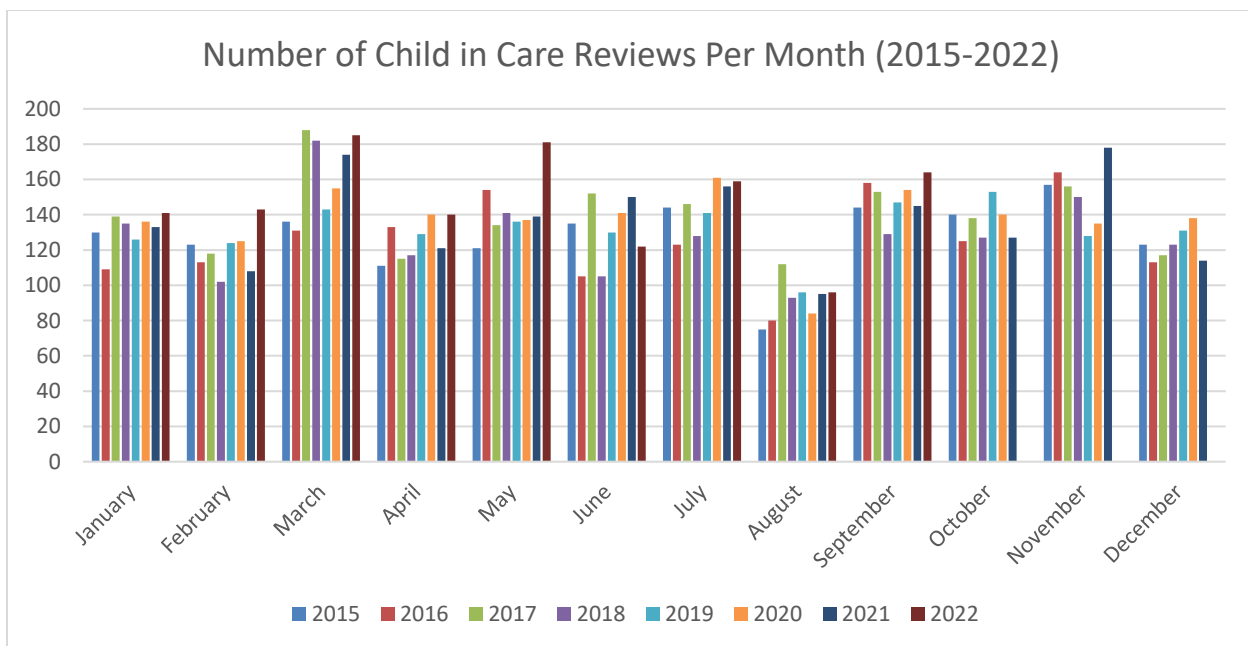
**Child in Care Population**



Cumulative Child in Care Review Figures (2015- 2022)								
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
January	130	109	139	135	126	136	133	141
February	253	222	257	237	250	261	241	284
March	389	353	445	419	393	416	415	469
April	500	486	560	536	522	556	536	609
May	621	640	694	677	658	693	675	790
June	756	745	846	782	788	834	825	912
July	900	868	992	910	929	995	981	1071
August	975	948	1104	1003	1025	1079	1076	1167
September	1119	1106	1257	1132	1172	1233	1221	1331
October	1259	1231	1395	1259	1325	1373	1348	
November	1416	1395	1551	1409	1453	1508	1526	
December	1539	1508	1668	1532	1584	1646	1640	



Number of Child in Care Reviews Per Month (2015-2022)								
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
January	130	109	139	135	126	136	133	141
February	123	113	118	102	124	125	108	143
March	136	131	188	182	143	155	174	185
April	111	133	115	117	129	140	121	140
May	121	154	134	141	136	137	139	181
June	135	105	152	105	130	141	150	122
July	144	123	146	128	141	161	156	159
August	75	80	112	93	96	84	95	96
September	144	158	153	129	147	154	145	164
October	140	125	138	127	153	140	127	
November	157	164	156	150	128	135	178	
December	123	113	117	123	131	138	114	



## Advocacy

Advocacy provision in Lincolnshire is currently provided by Voiceability as part of a commissioned service.

IRO's routinely check that children and young people know about advocacy and how it can support them in having a real say in decisions affecting their lives. Children in Care children are opted in to Voiceability who are also automatically invited to Children in Care Reviews for children aged 8 and over. There appears to be some challenges around provision, with some young people not being able to secure an advocate if required in a timely manner. The Quality and Standards Head Of Service has taken over the contact management for Advocacy and is currently completing a piece of work to evaluate the actual provision against the service level agreements in order to identify any complicating factors that may be affecting the availability of provision.

## Timeliness of reviews

Between 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021 and 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022 a total of 1750 individual review meetings were held. As reported in the last whole year report, as on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 there were 4 reviews held out of timescales. An explanation was provided within this report. As of 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022 there has been 1 review held out timescales since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022.

This was a complicated group of siblings, one of whom was accommodated under Section 20, 2 days prior to Interim care Orders being granted for the whole sibling group. Due to the varying accommodation dates the CIC review for the younger sibling was 2 days out of timescales.

Any recording errors are identified and resolved on a weekly basis to ensure that the performance reports are an accurate representation of "actual" performance.

## Children and young people's preparation and involvement in reviews

When we consider how young people participate in their reviews, we look at their attendance at their meetings, and how they contribute towards the agenda and how 'their review' is run. Our bottom line is that however they choose to contribute, their voice should be at the forefront.

All children and young people are sent a consultation form with their invite. Some have phone calls, emails, and separate visits from their IROs in between reviews or in anticipation of a forthcoming review depending on their age and development. This is to enable the IRO to build a relationship with the child, ensure that they can discuss any issues / talk about the positives in their lives and to determine how they want the next review to be conducted. Attending a review is the child or young person's decision and not mandatory.

Now that there are no Covid restrictions in place, IRO's are routinely visiting their children and young people in person prior to and in between their reviews. However, given that the landscape has changed, many young people are now requesting that they speak with their IRO over the phone, through video calls or text messages. Whilst an in person experience would be the preferred model, IRO's are clearly listening to their children and young people and really taking their preferences into account when communicating with them.

As identified previously we are looking at the impact of this way of working on participation to ascertain whether this encourages young people to attend or proves to be a barrier.

Signs of Safety, Restorative Practice, Social Pedagogy and Valuing Care are being utilised by staff in partnership with Social Work colleagues in their planning for reviews and engagement with children and young people. This remains an important strand of work to ensure we can reach out to young people who do not attend to gain feedback and improve participation.

## Plans for Children in Care

The Chairs continue to focus on ensuring the availability of high-quality plans for every child in care. The Chairs raise professional escalations if care plans are not completed or are not of sufficient quality. Work with the MOSAIC team is ongoing to ensure that recording of escalations is robust and can be reported on effectively.

There is an ongoing workstream involving IRO's, Team Managers, CIC service and MOSAIC to develop how Valuing Care is integrated into the care planning and review workflows and this is outlined further in the updates on service priorities at the start of this report.

Team Managers are continuing to work within the Valuing Care Governance Group to support the rollout and integration of this way of working.

Additional work is continuously ongoing with the Children in Care Teams, IRO's and MOSAIC to support better working between SW's and IRO's to continually improve quality of care planning records.

#### Progress-chasing Activities between Looked After Reviews

All IROs have a duty to monitor the progress of their allocated children and young people between reviews. This is to ensure that the care plan is progressing and allows them to intervene and escalate issues where matters are drifting. All young people are provided with the IROs name and contact details at the initial meeting and routinely at reviews.

#### Identifying good practice, problem resolution and escalation

IRO's identify and share good practice with colleagues but also raise concerns with social care teams via positive challenge and formal escalation.

The majority of concerns are still raised by the IROs through a positive challenge, focussing on a restorative approach with social work colleagues without the need for a formal escalation. These are recorded on MOSAIC.

The team continues to focus on improving consistency in terms of escalations made and to ensure better monitoring and reducing drift and delay. Systems are in place to support managerial oversight as well as helping the IRO's in their duty of tracking escalations. The IROs are sent weekly reminder emails of open formal escalations so that they can follow these up with the respective teams. The drive is to make the escalations more robust and to increase the use of positive challenge, whenever this is warranted to approve care planning and outcomes for young people. We have made amendments to the Chairs Activity record to enable more accurate recording. As the figures below outline, there is a significant drop in the number of formal escalations made. One would assume that this is due to the rising numbers of positive restorative challenges and conversations held to resolve and narrow down issues before they require a formal escalation. Over the next 6 months a piece of work will be completed to further understand this changing picture.

All Independent Reviewing Officers are required by the regulations to have access to legal advice. Clearly, given the independent nature of the Service, it would not be appropriate for any such advice to be provided by the Children's Services Legal Department. To date legal advice has been sought twice. An ongoing area of development is clearer guidance and processes regarding access to independent legal advice.

Number of formal escalations per month



Apr 16	9	Apr 17	2	Apr 18	4	Apr 19	8	Apr 20	3	Apr 21	2	Apr 22	0
May 16	4	May 17	5	May 18	4	May 19	3	May 20	0	May 21	4	May 22	0
Jun 16	0	Jun 17	7	Jun 18	4	Jun 19	1	Jun 20	3	Jun 21	0	Jun 22	1
Jul 16	3	Jul 17	5	Jul 18	5	Jul 19	0	Jul 20	4	Jul 21	8	Jul 22	0
Aug 16	1	Aug 17	1	Aug 18	2	Aug 19	0	Aug 20	5	Aug 21	1	Aug 22	2
Sep 16	3	Sep 17	9	Sep 18	4	Sep 19	8	Sep 20	5	Sep 21	1	Sep 22	1
Oct 16	4	Oct 17	4	Oct 18	1	Oct 19	1	Oct 20	0	Oct 21	4		
Nov 16	3	Nov 17	5	Nov 18	1	Nov 19	2	Nov 20	3	Nov 21	1		
Dec 16	6	Dec 17	5	Dec 18	0	Dec 19	0	Dec 20	3	Dec 21	3		
Jan 17	2	Jan 18	8	Jan 19	3	Jan 20	2	Jan 21	5	Jan 22	7		
Feb 17	5	Feb 18	4	Feb 19	2	Feb 20	7	Feb 21	1	Feb 22	1		
Mar 17	8	Mar 18	7	Mar 19	2	Mar 20	1	Mar 21	1	Mar 22	1		
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>

Themes of Child in Care Formal Escalations (for the period **April - September 2022**)

Theme	Number of Escalations
	Raised
Safeguarding concerns	3
Placement/ Accommodation concerns	1
<b>Total Escalations Raised</b>	<b>4</b>

Management oversight

The Guidance states that operational social work managers must consider the decisions from the Review before they are finalised. This is due in part for the need to ensure that any resource implications have been addressed. Once the decisions are completed, the Manager has 5 days to raise any queries or objections. Managers rarely ask for any amendments to be made and this process appears to work well.

Leaving Care – Director's Decision

Apr 18	1	Apr 19	0	Apr 20	0	Apr 21	0	Apr 22	0
May 18	3	May 19	1	May 20	0	May 21	1	May 22	1
Jun 18	2	Jun 19	0	Jun 20	0	Jun 21	0	Jun 22	1
Jul 18	1	Jul 19	1	Jul 20	0	Jul 21	0	Jul 22	0
Aug 18	2	Aug 19	2	Aug 20	0	Aug 21	0	Aug 22	0
Sep 18	0	Sep 19	0	Sep 20	0	Sep 21	0	Sep 22	1
Oct 18	1	Oct 19	0	Oct 20	0	Oct 21	1		
Nov 18	1	Nov 19	0	Nov 20	0	Nov 21	0		
Dec 18	0	Dec 19	2	Dec 20	1	Dec 21	0		
Jan 19	0	Jan 20	0	Jan 21	0	Jan 22	0		
Feb 19	0	Feb 20	0	Feb 21	0	Feb 22	0		
Mar 19	0	Mar 20	0	Mar 21	0	Mar 22	0		

The procedure with regards to Sec. 20 Accommodated young people leaving care before their 18th birthday is understood by Chairs and is discussed within reviews as part of the Care Planning process and Recommendations. Any young person who has been accommodated for more than 20 days and is aged 16 or 17 and wants to leave care must have this decision considered by the Assistant Director with a lead for safeguarding.

### **Quality Assurance of the IRO Service**

Auditing and observations undertaken by the IRO Manager

Conferences are observed by a number of different professionals, both internal and external staff who want to familiarise themselves with the conference process and learning – this has included colleagues from LCC, LSCP Trainers and SOS Practice Advisers.

### Supervision and training

Chairs have scheduled monthly supervision (pro rata) and informal supervision as and when required. All Chairs have a Personal Development Plan (PDP) and are encouraged to attend training through Lincolnshire Children's Learning and Development Team, Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) and the Regional Workshops. Each Chair undertakes annual mandatory training and follows the 6-year Children's Services development training plan.

All Independent Reviewing Officers are social workers and registered with Social Work England. As part of their continued registration, workers are required to evidence their continuing professional development.

Team Meetings are held monthly and include guest speakers and workshops. Given the impact of Covid 19 over the past 2.5 years, and geographical split of the Independent Chairs, Team Meetings have changed to full days once per month and these are now all held in person to promote staff being together and to enhance practice discussions.

### Any resource issues that are putting at risk the delivery of a quality service

The chairs continue at full capacity under the new ways of working. Due to a large amount of drift and delay in court proceedings and revised timetabling, Chairs are frequently having to rearrange meetings in order ratify plans prior to QAAG and filing dates. This is having a further impact on time and capacity. As identified above in this report, in the past 12 months there has been 920 reviews rearranged.

Chairs are under increasing pressure due to the additional admin tasks involved in new ways of working and also taking into account the increased travel time to in person meetings. Additional capacity has been created through the recruitment of 4 agency members of staff to cover vacancies in the team as outline within this report. It should be noted that the Chairs are at the upper limit in terms of children allocated as set out in the IRO Handbook, which provides guidance around case capacity in order to carry out their duties effectively. We are currently reviewing the best way to increase long term capacity in the service given the year on rising numbers of children subject to CP plans and Children in Care.

Supplementary to this some locality FAST and CIC teams have experienced, and continue to experience staffing challenges and a turnover of some agency social workers. This is making preparation for conferences and CiC meetings a challenge as on occasions reports are not completed in a timely manner nor plans updated. Despite this impacting on the chairs sometimes not having the correct information when they need it, they continue to work in a restorative way with locality teams in order to 'work around' these changes to minimise the impact of children, young people and their families.

### **Service Priorities 2022-2023**

The service priorities are outlined within the initial section of this report and are taken from the Independent Chairs section of the Quality & Standards Service Action plan 2021-2023. An overview of progress against actions are contained within the body of the text.

**Carolyn Knight**

**(Quality and Standards Manager)**

**Debbie Johnson, Paul Fisher & Richard Stone**

**(Independent Chairs Team Managers)**

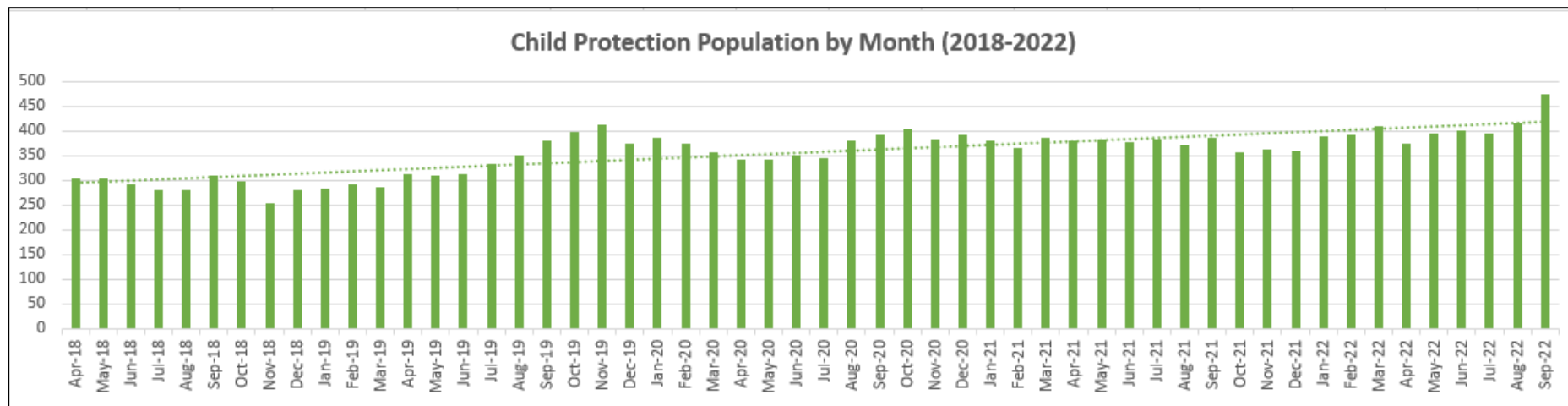
**Child Protection Report**  
**1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022**

**Child Protection**

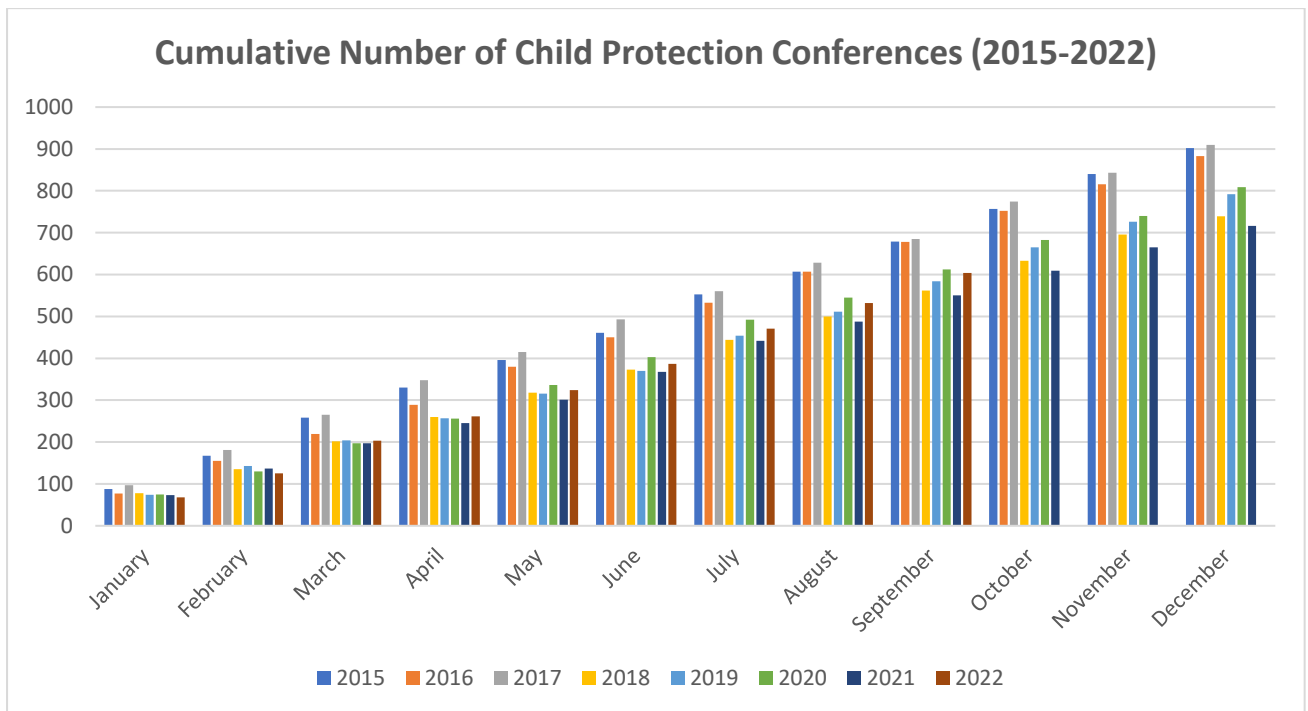
The number of children subject to a CP Plan on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022 was 445 compared to 357 on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021. There is a significant rise in the number children subject to a plan.

However, it should be noted that the number of unborn babies subject to Pre-Proceedings under the new protocol has increased which has had an impact on the CP plan figures, which would have likely increased further without the Pre-Birth Protocol. In the period 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 72 Initial CP Conferences were held for unborn babies and by comparison in the year 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 30<sup>th</sup> 2022, 44 Initial CP conferences were held.

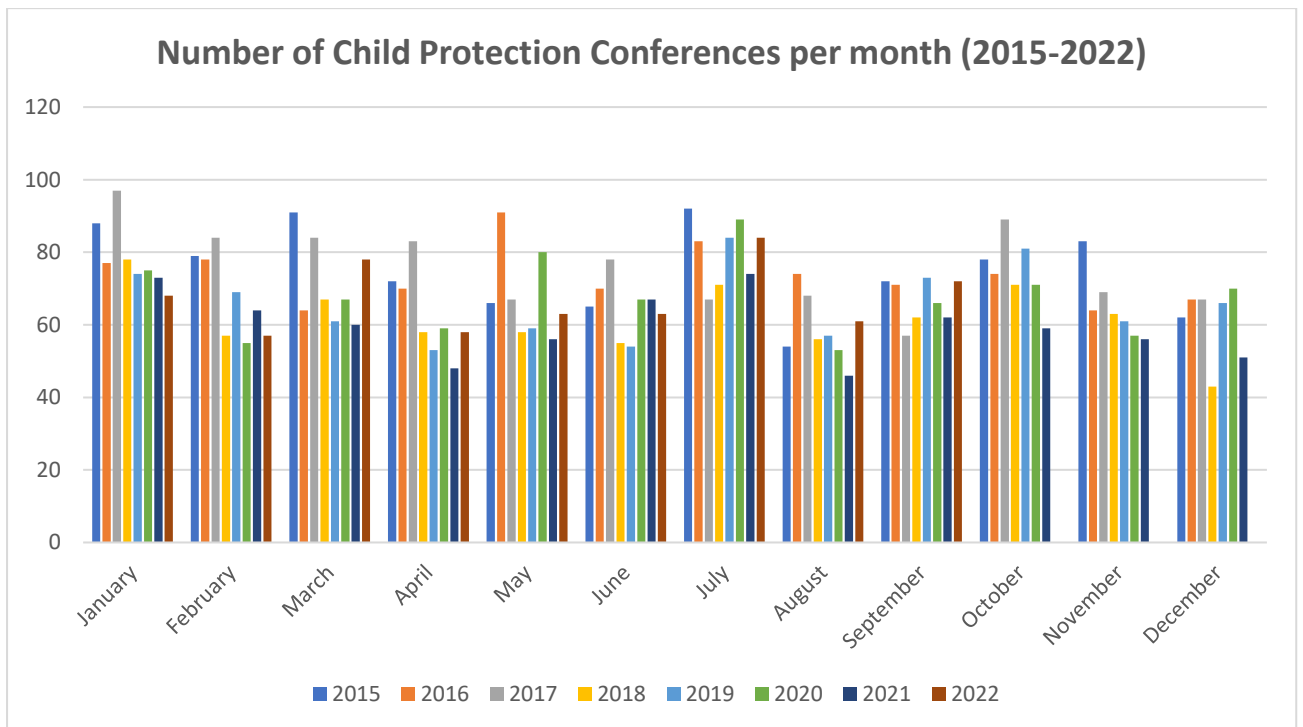
## Child Protection Population



Cumulative Number of CP Conferences 2015-2022								
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
January	88	77	97	78	74	75	73	68
February	167	155	181	135	143	130	137	125
March	258	219	265	202	204	197	197	203
April	330	289	348	260	257	256	245	261
May	396	380	415	318	316	336	301	324
June	461	450	493	373	370	403	368	387
July	553	533	560	444	454	492	442	471
August	607	607	628	500	511	545	488	532
September	679	678	685	562	584	612	550	604
October	757	752	774	633	665	683	609	
November	840	816	843	696	726	740	665	
December	902	883	910	739	792	809	716	



Number of CP Conferences per month (2015-2022)								
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
January	88	77	97	78	74	75	73	68
February	79	78	84	57	69	55	64	57
March	91	64	84	67	61	67	60	78
April	72	70	83	58	53	59	48	58
May	66	91	67	58	59	80	56	63
June	65	70	78	55	54	67	67	63
July	92	83	67	71	84	89	74	84
August	54	74	68	56	57	53	46	61
September	72	71	57	62	73	66	62	72
October	78	74	89	71	81	71	59	
November	83	64	69	63	61	57	56	
December	62	67	67	43	66	70	51	





### Timeliness of reviews

Within the last complete year (Corporate Parenting Report ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022), data showed that 4 conferences took place out of timescale (out of 722 meetings held in total), which equated to 99.45% compliance with 718 taking place within timescales.

Within this 6-month report, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022 there have been 0 conferences held out of timescales. Out of a total of 401 conferences, this equates to compliance rate of 100 %.

### Children and young people's preparation and involvement in conferences

A limited number of young people attend conferences and are supported by advocates if they choose to be. Advocates also attend meetings on behalf of children.

The service has recently updated leaflets for young people and their families to include information around attending conferences / reviews.

A pilot study is currently taking place to identify whether an alternative model of working would promote children and young people's further inclusion in their CP conference. This involves further direct work and preparation prior to a conference to support the children and young people to have the confidence to attend, present their views, become further involved in their safety planning, and have their voices heard. An Independent Chair within the service is leading on this piece of work and it is hoped that within the next 6 months some outcomes and recommendations can be gained.

### Activities between Child Protection Reviews

Chairs undertake a monitoring check at the midway point between Conferences and a check when preparing for reviews. This is to ensure that statutory tasks have been undertaken (such as regular Core Group meetings and child protection visits) and that the plan is progressing

and having a positive impact for the child and family. Where there are concerns the Chair will alert the relevant member of the team such as the Social Worker, Practice Supervisor or Team Manager.

Identifying good practice, problem resolution and escalation

Since September 2019, a quarterly email is now sent to the Senior Liaison Officer's to make them aware of any escalations raised for staff for the areas that they cover.

Child Protection Conference Escalations raised in the period April – September 2022

Organisation	Number of Escalations
GP's	21
Social Workers / Practice Supervisors	7
Education (Nurseries, Schools etc)	6
Other / Misc. Workers	5
We Are With You	2
Health Visitor	1
Probation	1
PPU	1
Housing Officer	1
<b>Total escalations raised in this period</b>	<b>45</b>

Number of Child Protection Conference Escalations raised each month

Apr 18	15	Apr 19	23	Apr 20	7	Apr 21	1	Apr 22	6
May 18	33	May 19	24	May 20	8	May 21	9	May 22	11
Jun 18	27	Jun 19	14	Jun 20	16	Jun 21	17	Jun 22	6
Jul 18	27	Jul 19	33	Jul 20	22	Jul 21	11	Jul 22	5
Aug 18	20	Aug 19	15	Aug 20	10	Aug 21	10	Aug 22	9
Sep 18	26	Sep 19	46	Sep 20	19	Sep 21	10	Sep 22	8
Oct 18	18	Oct 19	35	Oct 20	13	Oct 21	18		
Nov 18	26	Nov 19	30	Nov 20	7	Nov 21	3		
Dec 18	12	Dec 19	14	Dec 20	20	Dec 21	8		
Jan 19	26	Jan 20	32	Jan 21	17	Jan 22	8		
Feb 19	22	Feb 20	30	Feb 21	12	Feb 22	3		
Mar 19	30	Mar 20	27	Mar 21	8	Mar 22	9		
<b>Total</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>

The overwhelming reason for escalations was no report being prepared for the conference and no apologies provided for non-attendance. The preparation of this report has highlighted the increased number of escalations in relation to GP's. Liaison with the designated Doctor for Safeguarding for children, children in care and adults will be a service priority within the next 6 months.

As previously explained, currently this data reflects only the formal escalations made.

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**Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy, Executive Director - Children's Services**

Report to:	<b>Corporate Parenting Panel</b>
Date:	<b>10 November 2022</b>
Subject:	<b>Regulation 44 Independent Visitors Report</b>

**Summary:**

This report is the 6 monthly report on the Regulation 44 Independent Visiting Service. It serves to update members of the Corporate Parenting Panel on the work undertaken between April 22 and September 2022.

**Actions Required:**

Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are requested to consider the 6 monthly report on the Regulation 44 Independent Visiting Service and seek assurance that the Independent Visitors are fulfilling their obligations in visiting the Local Authority homes each month as required and inspecting against the 9 quality standards as outlined in Part 6, regulations 43 of the Children's Home Regulation 2015.

**1. Background**

This report is being prepared in order to provide the Corporate Parenting Panel with an update of the work of the Independent Visitor.

Part six, regulation 43 of the Children's Home Regulation 2015 makes provision for the appointment of an Independent Visitor. There remains an expectation that the appointment of an Independent Visitor will continue to be the responsibility of the Local Authority, with clear guidance being offered as to the criteria which must be met in terms of ensuring the visitor's independence is clearly demonstrable. The visits continue to be required to be made on a monthly basis.

The Independent Visitor continues to be expected to provide a report following each visit. Part six, regulation 44 of the Children's Homes Regulations provides for the reporting of the standards.

The Regulation 44 report maintained its format providing a succinct summary of the homes under the signs of safety headings and there remains the inclusion of the

recommendations section to ensure there is clarity in prioritising areas for immediate action where these are identified during visits.

The Regulation 44 Independent Visiting Officers are with the Quality and Standards Service and are Local Authority Designated Officers. During this period of reporting, the duties have been exercised by three Independent Visitors who have shared the duties across the seven Local Authority homes and two independent schemes.

The attached report therefore details the homes performance against the standards and provides an overview of how the standards are being met. A particular focus is given to the way in which the Local Authority have adapted their practice and safeguarded young people during the on-going COVID-19 pandemic.

## **2. Conclusion**

Across the homes the Regulation 44 visitors have seen evidence of excellent care being provided to the children. The relationships between the young people and their carers have been observed to be caring and respectful. All homes are currently Ofsted rated as *Good* or *Outstanding*. While this has not always been the case, it reflects the work that homes have undertaken to ensure that good standards of care, or better, are being afforded to the children residing in Lincolnshire County Council's residential homes. There continues to be issues with staffing across many of the homes, but these shortages are being managed by the flexibility and commitment of staff.

The staff teams have worked tirelessly with the young people and their families to maintain their links and attachments to their family networks, and this has been evidenced in the creative ways that family time has been promoted.

During this period there has been evidence of significant joint working between the homes. The management teams meet regularly and work to create consistency across the homes. Best practice and ideas are shared, and the team offer support to one another. Peer audits are being completed by the managers, providing an opportunity for critical reflection and constructive feedback.

All the regulation 44 visits have concluded that each home continues to safeguard the children in their care and promote their wellbeing as defined by Regulation 44.4 (a) & (b)<sup>1</sup>.

## **3. Consultation**

### **a) Risks and Impact Analysis**

N/A

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<sup>1</sup> 44.4 The independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether—

(a) children are effectively safeguarded; and

(b) the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being.

#### 4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Regulation 44 Independent Visitors Report 6 monthly report 2022

#### 5. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Carolyn Knight, Quality and Standards Manager, who can be contacted on 07879603618 or [Carolyn.knight@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Carolyn.knight@lincolnshire.gov.uk).

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# **REPORT FOR THE INDEPENDENT VISITING SERVICE**

**April 2022 – September  
2022**

*Written by Regulation 44 visitors; Rachael Powis, Fiona Watters  
and Kim Murray*

## **Basis of report**

This report is being prepared to provide the Corporate Parenting Panel with an update of the work undertaken by the Independent Visitors. This report covers the period from 01.04.2022 to 1.10.2022.

## **Introduction**

The Children's Homes Regulations 2015 (Part 6, Regulation 43) makes provision for the appointment of an Independent Visitor. There remains an expectation that the appointment of an Independent Visitor will continue to be the responsibility of the Local Authority, with clear guidance being offered as to the criteria, which must be met in terms of ensuring the visitor's independence. The visits continue to be a monthly requirement.

Within the regulations it is expected the Independent Visitor will report on the quality standards in specified areas. These can be summarised as follows:-

- (a) the quality and purpose of care standard (see regulation 6);
- (b) the children's views, wishes and feelings standard (see regulation 7);
- (c) the education standard (see regulation 8);
- (d) the enjoyment and achievement standard (see regulation 9);
- (e) the health and well-being standard (see regulation 10);
- (f) the positive relationships standard (see regulation 11);
- (g) the protection of children standard (see regulation 12);
- (h) the leadership and management standard (see regulation 13);
- (i) the care planning standard (see regulation 14).

The Independent Visitor continues to provide a report following each visit.

Overall, the Regulation 44 report has maintained its format, providing a succinct summary of the homes under the signs of safety headings, following each care standard being considered. There is also a section of recommendations to ensure there is clarity in prioritising areas for immediate action where these are identified during visits. The report format has been updated to include and reflect the Home's Managers' comments. This is to ensure the independent report is unchanged, but the

Home's Managers can provide additional information, context, or details on how any changes are being implemented.

### **The Independent Visitor**

Since April 2022, Regulation 44 visits have continued to be undertaken by three Independent Visitors: Kim Murray, Rachael Powis and Fiona Watters, who share the visiting duties to Lincolnshire County Council's seven residential homes and two supported living provisions. The semi-independent homes are in Grantham and Gainsborough and provide accommodation for young people aged 16 to 18 years old. These two homes previously accommodated young people for up to nine months however the homes' statements of purpose have been updated for young people to remain at the home for up to two years or until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Both homes are inspected under the Regulation 44 process every 4 months. This is currently not mandatory however the Local Authority commits to this as part of their quality assurance process.

The Independent Visitors have continued to maintain positive working relationships with residential home managers, staff, and young people.

As part of the visits, the Independent Visitor seeks feedback from key stakeholders including the young people, parents, social workers, health and education partners and other relevant individuals to gain a holistic view of the homes.

There has been no need to implement the dispute resolution procedure since the last report was completed.

### **Home Manager Updates**

Since April 2022 there have been several changes to the management of the homes. These are as follows:

#### **Albion Street**

The Home's Manager remains unchanged however the Assistant Manager has moved to The Beacon after being successful in securing a role as the Assistant Manager of this home. An RCO3 from Albion Street has been appointed as the Assistant Manager.

### **The Beacon**

The Home's Manager at The Beacon remains the same. The home has two Assistant Managers; one remains the same and as discussed above, the home has a new Assistant Manager, who was previously the Assistant Manager of Albion Street.

### **Eastgate**

The Home's Manager at Eastgate remains unchanged. The Assistant Manager has been successful in her application for Assistant Manager at Lincolnshire County Council's new residential home, Robin House. An RCO2 at Eastgate has been appointed as Assistant Manager at Eastgate.

### **Haven Cottage**

The Home's Manager has resigned from her post and is due to leave this position in November 2022. The Assistant Manager has been successful in her application for this post. The Assistant Manager post has not been recruited to at present. This post has been advertised.

### **Lincolnshire Secure Unit**

The Home's Manager is unchanged. Lincolnshire Secure Unit has three Assistant Managers. One of the Assistant Managers has now retired, and this position was replaced by two new Assistant Manager posts; two RCO3s from the unit were recruited to these positions.

### **Northolme**

In April 2022 the Assistant Manager of Northolme was acting as the Interim Home Manager; she has now been successful in securing this post. The Assistant Manager post was therefore advertised and an RCO3 has been successful in being appointed to this position.

### **Strut House**

Strut House's Registered Manager and Assistant Manager remain unchanged.

### **Rowston and Denton**

There have been no changes to the management structure of Rowston or Denton.

## The Voice of the Child

Across the homes there is continued evidence of the children's voices being captured. During visits, young people are consistently seen to be confident and articulate in expressing their views. In the homes for children with disabilities, there is evidence of staff using different communication methods to gather the children's views and wishes.

Each home is visited by the advocacy service. There has been evidence of this service being used to undertake specific pieces of work with children where their voice needs to be heard in relation to identified issues. The Regulation 44 visitors have seen evidence of children being encouraged to access this service and speak freely to their advocate. Details of the nominated children's advocate are displayed within the homes.

The homes continue to hold regular residents' meetings; in some homes these are known as "Chill and Chat" meetings. These are held weekly or monthly depending on the preference of the home. Young people are encouraged to participate in these meetings, and in some homes the young people are offered the opportunity to act as the chair of the meeting. The meetings enable the children to be involved in key decision making and have a say on developments/changes within the home. The children share their views on a range of topics including meal planning, activities, routines, boundaries and the impact of one another's behaviour within the home. Within these meetings, young people had identified that they had numerous, unknown visitors to their home. From this, "Pen Pictures" were developed to ensure the young people were aware of the names and roles of visitors to their home. There has been some evidence within homes of the meetings being developed to ensure that issues raised by the children, are responded to with a letter from the management, to discuss the points raised or requests made and how these will be addressed.

Where a child has had a Child in Care review consultation documents are consistently completed. Staff members will regularly complete direct work with children to ensure they are able to participate in their review and share their views. Young people are supported to attend their reviews and will often chose a member of staff they wish to attend with. Regulation 44 visitors gather feedback from the Independent Reviewing Officers as part of their visits.

Within some homes there are display boards that celebrate the children through 'Voice of the child', 'You said we did' or creative displays. There is also continued use of photographs to evidence the young people's input and some of the homes are using newsletters and monthly Junior Journals to share information.

Within the homes the young people have been observed to be confident in raising requests or issues they wish to discuss with the Homes' Managers and care staff. There appears to be an open-door

policy across the homes, where the children feel they can access staff at any time. In addition, there has been evidence of staff advocating for young people and sharing young people's views with management where required.

### Quality of care

The homes continue to deliver a good, and in some cases excellent, quality of care. There has been widespread evidence of staff members showing genuine investment in the individual needs of young people. Staff advocate for the children and ensure they have positive experiences. The homes ensure that children's interests and hobbies are followed, and they facilitate the children accessing community groups and activities. There is also evidence of young people being provided with safe, consistent, predictable care and routine, which is emotionally warm.

The homes demonstrate that they understand the children's individual needs and care plans. Risk assessments are regularly updated to reflect current risk. There have been many examples over the previous six months where the homes have been actively promoting independence in young people to support them in their next steps. This is specific to the child and has included examples such as young people walking to and from school or activities alone, shopping and budgeting, staying safe work, and increased free time in the community appropriate to the individual child's age and development.

Training remains a priority and staff report they can access this regularly. Some homes have training themes, for example, domestic abuse, during which there is a focus on this specific subject area. In addition, the homes have training matrixes to support staff in ensuring mandatory and non-mandatory training is up to date. Specialist training continues to be provided where required, for example, Strut House staff having in depth training on specific health needs of their young people.

All the homes have continued to participate in multi-agency partnership working, with health, police, schools, social care, and other agencies. Monthly risk management meetings continue to be held. The homes have demonstrated their commitment to ensuring the children regularly attend their education provisions and in cases where young people are not, this is proactively being addressed.

One of the most important priorities for young people is maintaining their sense of identity and links with their families and significant people in their lives. The homes continue to work with agencies and families to ensure family time is promoted wherever possible. Homes ensure that family times plans are followed and often take responsibility for facilitating children's time with their families. There is also excellent communication between homes where there are siblings residing in different settings

and responsibility for supervising family time is shared between the homes. There is continued evidence of homes working with children's families and ensuring good communication. Homes show realism in terms of children's plans and their connections with their families, understanding the likelihood of children returning to their family networks as they reach independence. Risk assessments are completed to ensure children have as much family time as possible and to promote the regularity of this wherever safe and appropriate.

### **Social Pedagogy and Direct Work**

Social pedagogy continues to be embedded across the homes and is used to support identified areas of work with young people. Social pedagogy assists the young people to engage in activities and conversations about the important things that have happened within their lives. It aims to make the connections between their 'hands', 'hearts' and 'head', supports social and emotional learning and develop resilience and social skills. Young people have direct work files and there is consistently evidence of work being completed with them around current risks, incidents, or concern.

New staff that join the teams continue to access the training and engage with support through the homes' social pedagogy champions to ensure that staff are confident in completing social pedagogy work and in using a variety of models.

Within some homes there are times (currently following the demanding summer holidays) when there are delays in social pedagogy and direct work being written up. Assurances have been offered that the work is ongoing however the delays are in recording this. In the homes where this is an issue, this is being addressed.

From 01.04.2022 the homes replaced the lengthy placement review documents with a Monthly Summary for each child. This change was across Lincolnshire County Council's residential homes (asides from Lincolnshire Secure Unit). This was to ensure there was unity across the homes. The Monthly Summary form was created between the homes, drawing on best practice, creating more condensed, targeted paperwork. The form identifies key risks and links these to a trajectory of work. The paperwork monitors the progress of the young people and provides a monthly reflection, acknowledging the young people's successes. The key worker reviews this each month and uses this in supervisions and team meetings to ensure the plan remains current and meet the needs of the child.

## **Education/Employment/Training (EET)**

At the last Corporate Parenting Board, board members requested that the Regulation 44 Inspectors seek to capture the numbers of young people in Education, Training or Employment across the residential estate. Inspectors have confirmed at the point they visit what the current educational status is of the young people within the home. Due to the wide variety of young people accessing provision the education provision can vary, for Strut House and Haven Cottage the young people attend on a short-term basis and the primary responsibility for education remains with parents. However, for both these homes, all young people on the days of inspection were in education.

Across the other homes there are instances where young people refuse to access education, either for the occasional day or slightly longer periods of time. In all instances it is clear from the inspections that the homes and involved professionals work tirelessly for and with young people to support them back into their education/training provision or identify and access alternatives where the provision is no longer suitable. This has meant that all but one young person has been accessing education or training over the course of the 6-month period. The one young person who has not been accessing education has been due to significant safeguarding concerns which is being robustly managed by all professional agencies, and in this instance, education has been available, and a new placement identified.

As the inspections for Rowston and Denton are 4 monthly there have been two inspections per home. In May Denton had both young people in EET and 4 out of 5 in ETT in September. For Rowston this was 1 out of 4 in and 1 out of 3 young people. From the inspections the Regulation 44 Officers have been able to see that the homes continue to seek to engage the young people in promoting and finding EET provision as well as working with leaving care and other professionals. This is reflected in the plans recorded for those young people and work done with them. Where young people are not in EET this is not due to lack of effort or ways of working by the homes, rather through lack of engagement, choices and challenges faced by these young people.

## **Challenges**

The most significant challenge across the homes continues to be staffing with this being especially relevant to the recruitment of new staff. It is recognised that this issue is not specific to Lincolnshire, with their being shortages of care staff nationally. Lincolnshire County Council continue to advertise for RCOs across the homes as opposed to advertising for specific positions at the individual setting. The homes have been creative in promoting roles by visiting local universities and presenting to students on social care courses about the positions and the progression opportunities available. There



has not been any evidence of shortfalls in staffing due to staff members being flexible in their shifts and management continuing to undertake shifts as required. Strut House has needed to reduce occupancy and on occasions, cancel care, to ensure that care continues to be safe.

As Lincolnshire County Council are preparing to open a new 4 bed residential home, Robin House, staff have been recruited for this home. Pending the home opening, the newly recruited staff have been able to support across the other homes. This has served to support staffing challenges within the homes but also as part of new staff's induction processes. This enables staff to have experiences across the different Lincolnshire County Council residential homes.

It is recognised that the homes face various challenges when working with children who have suffered significant trauma and adverse childhood experience. The children therefore understandably display challenging behaviours. Staff within homes are working to manage this daily by using a variety of strategies. These strategies are informed by training and multiagency working. While homes are evidencing their abilities to manage these behaviours, and ensure children are safeguarded, it is recognised that this impacts on staff and young people's emotional wellbeing.

### **Conclusion**

Across the homes the Regulation 44 visitors have seen evidence of excellent care being provided to the children. The relationships between the young people and their carers have been observed to be caring and respectful. All homes are currently Ofsted rated as Good or Outstanding. While this has not always been the case, it reflects the work that homes have undertaken to ensure that good standards of care, or better, are being afforded to the children residing in Lincolnshire County Council's residential homes. There continues to be issues with staffing across many of the homes, but these shortages are being managed by the flexibility and commitment of staff.

The staff teams have worked tirelessly with the young people and their families to maintain their links and attachments to their family networks, and this has been evidenced in the creative ways that family time has been promoted.

During this period there has been evidence of significant joint working between the homes. The management teams meet regularly and work to create consistency across the homes. Best practice and ideas are shared, and the team offer support to one another. Peer audits are being completed by the managers, providing an opportunity for critical reflection and constructive feedback.

All the regulation 44 visits have concluded that each home continues to safeguard the children in their care and promote their wellbeing as defined by Regulation 44.4 (a) & (b).

## APPENDIX A

### Ofsted inspections

All the children's homes are subject to Ofsted inspections. Each home has twice yearly inspections, ordinarily there will be a full inspection annually followed by an interim inspection approximately six months later.

#### Albion Street

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 April 2022

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, Good**

*taking into account,*

How well children and young people are helped and protected **Good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **Good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 8 June 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

#### The Beacon

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 September 2021

**Overall experiences and progress of the children and young people, Good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected, **Good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers, **Good**

**Requirements:**

<p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff—</p> <p>assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child’s relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i))</p> <p>In particular, this relates to children’s risk assessments, and ensuring that they contain all known and relevant risk factors and are regularly updated to identify risk management measures.</p>	<p>1 December 2021</p>
<p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—</p> <p>undertake appropriate continuing professional development;</p> <p>receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(b))</p> <p>This relates to staff receiving regular formal supervision.</p>	<p>1 January 2022</p>
<p>The registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes—</p> <p>the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure;</p> <p>within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so (“the authorised person”)—</p> <p>has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and</p> <p>within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure.(Regulation 35 (3)(a)(vii)(b)(i)(ii)(c))</p>	<p>1 December 2021</p>
<p>The registered person must maintain records (“case records”) for each child which—</p> <p>include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; and are kept up to date.(Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b))</p>	<p>1 December 2021</p>

Ofsted Recommendations:

- The registered person should ensure that recruitment processes safeguard children and minimise potential risks to them. Guide to the children’s home’s regulations including the quality standards ”, page 61, paragraph
- The registered person should ensure that Ofsted is notified of any incident relating to the protection, safeguarding and welfare of a child living in the home including any allegation of harm made against staff. Guide to the children s home s regulations including the quality standards ”, page 63, paragraph 14.10)

The above recommendations have been discussed with the Registered Home Manager previously and an action plan has been put forward and agreed by senior managers to address the areas identified by Ofsted during the visit.

### Eastgate

**Current Ofsted rating of the home from the last inspection: Outstanding**

Inspection dates: **22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2022**

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, **Outstanding**

taking into account;

*How well children and young people are helped and protected* **Outstanding**

*The effectiveness of leaders and managers* **Outstanding**

The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standard of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improve outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Enforcement action since last inspection: **None**

### Haven Cottage

**Inspection dates: 9 and 10 May 2022**

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **Good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **Good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **Good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

### Lincolnshire Secure Unit

Current OFSTED Rating of the Home from the last full inspection: Good (16-18 Nov 21)

## Assurance Inspection Visit 28th June 2022

Information about this inspection At these inspections, the inspector(s) evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers. Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'

### Recommendations

- The registered person should develop communal living areas to make them feel more homely as is safely possible. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- Healthcare professionals work closely with staff across the secure setting in caring for children to achieve the best possible health outcomes. In particular leaders and managers should facilitate sufficient accommodation to enable health care professionals to work alongside care staff, in order to assess and meet children's health needs. (Healthcare Standards for Children and Young People in secure settings, June 2019, page 12, paragraph 1.3.2)
- The ethos of the home should support each child to learn. In particular, leaders and managers should ensure that children receive impartial careers guidance to help them to prepare for their next steps in education, employment or training. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.18)
- The ethos of the home should support each child to learn. In particular, leaders and managers should ensure that the starting points and learning support needs of children are identified accurately and in a timely way, when they arrive at the home. Staff should use this information to plan interesting and challenging learning activities. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.18)
- The ethos of the home should support each child to learn. In particular, leaders and managers should recruit staff so that the home can offer a full, balanced curriculum. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.18)

### Full Inspection Visit

Visit dates: 16th -18th November 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, Good

Taking into account

Children's education and learning      Requires improvement to be good

Children's health      Good

How well children and young people are helped and protected      Good

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement      Due date

The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—

helps children aspire to fulfil their potential.

(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(2))

In particular, the registered person should ensure that children's participation in education is promoted and that leaders and managers have effective oversight of this.

10 January 2022

Recommendations

■ Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. In particular, ensure that the quality of records relating to group work and direct work with children is improved. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

■ The registered person should ensure that any placing authority provides complete and current plans for each child, including care plans and personal education plans. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.5)

■ The registered person should ensure that children are encouraged by staff to see the home's records as 'living documents', supporting them to view and contribute to the record in a way that reflects their voice on a regular basis. In particular, ensure that children's views are recorded in their care and support plans. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 58, paragraph 11.19)

■ Healthcare professionals work closely with staff across the secure setting in caring for children to achieve the best possible health outcomes. In particular, leaders and managers should facilitate

sufficient accommodation to enable healthcare professionals to work alongside care staff, in order to effectively meet children’s health needs. (‘Healthcare Standards for Children and Young People in secure settings June2019’,page 12,paragraph 1.3.2)

■ The ethos of the home should support each child to learn. In particular, leaders and managers should ensure that children receive impartial careers guidance to help them to prepare for their next steps in education, employment, or training. This recommendation is repeated from the full inspection November 2020 (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations, including the quality standards’, page 29, paragraph 5.18)

■ The ethos of the home should support each child to learn. In particular, leaders and managers should ensure that the starting points and learning support the needs of children are identified accurately and in a timely way when they arrive at the home. Staff should use this information to plan interesting and challenging learning activities.(‘Guide to the children’s regulations, including the quality standards’, page 29, paragraph 5.18)

■ The ethos of the home should support each child to learn. In particular, leaders and managers should recruit staff so that the home can offer a full, balanced curriculum. (‘Guide to the children’s regulations, including the quality standards’, page 29, paragraph 5.18)

**Northolme**

**Last Ofsted inspection dates:** 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> December 2021.

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people:** **Good**

Taking into account,

How well children and young people are helped and protected: **Good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: **Good**

The children’s home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 11<sup>th</sup> February 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: Good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.	17 January 2022

<p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child’s health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(d))</p> <p>In particular, this relates to the safe storage of potential hazards in the home and ensuring that cigarette lighting materials are removed</p>	
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**Strut House**

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 November 2021

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, Outstanding**

*taking into account,*

How well children and young people are helped and protected **Good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **Outstanding**

The children’s home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children’s home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 6 January 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: **Outstanding**

Requirement	Due date
<p>The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(vii)(b)(i)(ii)) This specifically relates to management oversight of the use of restraint, staff and child debriefs and evaluation of incidents involving the use of restraint.</p>	<p>1 January 2022</p>

Action plan from last Ofsted inspections: **No action plan**





**Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy, Executive Director - Children's Services**

Report to:	<b>Corporate Parenting Panel</b>
Date:	<b>10 November 2022</b>
Subject:	<b>Fostering Quarterly Performance Report Q2</b>

**Summary:**

To provide an overview of activity within the Fostering Service during Quarter 2.

**Actions Required:**

The Corporate Parenting Panel is invited to review and comment on the detailed provided in the report; and that the report be accepted as an accurate overview of the Fostering Service.

## **1. Background**

To present an update on the performance of the Fostering Service in accordance with Standard 25 of the National Minimum Standards 2011.

## **2. Conclusion**

The progress within the service to be recognised and the report attached is an accurate reflection of the service.

## **3. Consultation**

### **a) Risks and Impact Analysis**

N/A

## **4. Appendices**

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report

Appendix A	Fostering Quarterly Performance Report Quarter 2
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## **5. Background Papers**

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Deborah Crawford, who can be contacted via [Deborah.crawford@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Deborah.crawford@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

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Fostering Quarterly Report  
July-September 2022



## **Quarter Two Fostering Report**

The Annual Report for 2021/2022 was presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel in September 2021. The statement of Purpose was revised and was ratified on the same day. This is the second quarterly report for 2022/2023.

### **Introduction**

In 2022/2023, the Fostering Service has an annual budget of £9,102,467. Most foster carer allowances have been increased by 2% for this financial year. This has ensured that allowances continue to remain in advance of the government recommended minimum rates.

This is important aspect of the fostering retention strategy given the foster care marketplace is challenging with competition at a peak level with several independent agencies actively recruiting in the Lincolnshire region.

To retain our competitiveness, allowances are a significant factor alongside the continued annual retention payments within a framework of high-quality supervision and support. The budget continues to afford flexibility to provide enhanced allowances to certain categories of carers such as those offering permanence or managing particularly distressed children and those with challenging behaviours.

There have been recent discussions in the foster carer forums regarding the current cost of living crisis and what it means for people caring for other people's children. This is a lively debate that the service is attuned to. In a continued effort to support carers in the best way possible, the service has supported fostering families to have access to recognised discount cards that are compatible with what is available to Lincolnshire County Council Social Care staff alongside all other employees.

The continued emphasis on recruitment and retention was impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic where the service had seen an increase in numbers of children in care (CIC) and diminishing foster carer availability owing to retirement, health and social factors.

Most carers who took time out during Covid have returned to fostering and continue to offer a variety of placements across the board. The service continues to seek new recruits and prioritise the wellbeing of all existing carers given the national shortfall.

The development of the virtual foster care community during the pandemic, via service and Caring2learn, created a model platform to increase interaction and engagement within and across the fostering community which continues with significant momentum. This has

proven to be a valuable forum for carers who have recently joined Lincolnshire or those that are well versed with fostering and see their role in mentoring and supporting others wherever in their fostering journey.

For the purposes of this report the performance data from July to September 2022 is unavailable until early November 2022. The data will be provided for the quarter three report due to be presented to Corporate Parenting in January 2023.

The fostering service continues to be engaged in various aspects and strands of this work with a strong focus on the core offers to foster carers and the development and practice of the Valuing Care Toolkit being an integral part of the foster carer's annual reviews and Form F assessments. Further work is occurring in relation to embedding the Valuing Care Toolkit so that it is integrated in all Kinship and Special Guardianship Order (SGO) assessments.

### **Recruitment and Retention:**

Fostering continues to work through the challenges of the rising cost of living, recruitment activity is returning to a more stable place that matches previous activity trends pre covid pandemic. Recruitment continues to develop into an area that is viewed as everyone's responsibility with a wider pool of Supervising Social Workers completing half of all initial visits and other Children's Service areas considering how they might support this continued service priority.

Online platforms continue to provide the service with the flexibility and low-cost options of supporting part of the services' recruitment activity. The fostering service will continue to include online options to increase capacity, accessibility, and convenience for Foster Carers and fostering applicants in the future. This includes online recruitment events and the fostering preparation course.

The service has also introduced Recruitment events in the daytime, previously information events took place exclusively at night, fostering staff recognise the important of providing events that suit both working and non-working applicants. Attendance at these events will be monitored to inform the planning of future events.

Those making formal or informal enquiries to foster are encouraged to attend information events. Virtual events have seen a substantial rise in people attending, recent changes to encourage participation has also made these sessions much more interactive and relational. This is supported in the feedback and improvement of conversion to people going on to stage 1 of the recruitment process.

The Preparation to Foster course offers both face-to-face and virtual events this year, both types of events are well attended. Plans have been made for three face-to-face courses and three virtual courses within this financial year. This way of working will be evaluated to ensure it is a most appropriate use of time and resource.

A Supervising Social Worker facilitates each course together with a Caring2Learn representative, Placement Support Worker and at least one Foster Carer Champion.

A recruitment Council audit and review completed last quarter has informed the strategy along with key findings and best practice guidelines provided through research and external reviews. The recruitment strategy is revised monthly, and performance reported to help understand and inform the actions and trajectory of activity. Key recommendations from the state of the nation report (Fostering Network, 2021) and The Care Review (DFE, 2022) have been taken into consideration in all activity and planning for the service.

The work continuing will closely monitor quality with a strong emphasis on good customer service and community. Initial results from the impact of changes in practice and processes can be seen through key performance indicators. Conversion rates from applying and approval has already seen a rise from 4-6% over the past 5 years to over 11% currently.

The average national conversion rate in the UK for Local Authorities was 11% last year, this set the target for Lincolnshire's own performance. Lincolnshire County Council have successfully raised our conversion rate to meet this national benchmark although in the meantime the national average has fallen to 6%, with this in mind this makes the progress even more significant, superseding national trends and expectations.

Previously the service did find that almost half of those in stage 1 would change their mind about fostering and choose to withdraw although the service has seen a 34% increase in retaining those in stage 1 due to applicant decision. An indication of the strong support offer and customer service that has developed.

Retention of Foster Carers remains the most effective means of recruitment. Providing individual levels of support to our carers and specifically those newly approved remains crucial.

Work continues to develop a community hub approach across the county. The support forums continue to act as a way for Foster Carers to access support from other Foster Carers and children's service's teams. This is providing a more integrated approach to support.

Feedback from the Foster Carers strongly indicates that virtual platforms have helped carers overcome challenges in attending events, such as childcare. Online support plays a huge



part in helping people to connect and support each other away from geographical and office hours challenges

The hub continues to be supported by the Foster Carer champions who have roles that cover responsibilities as 'Hub Links'.

The service now allocates a 'Hub Link' on receipt of their fostering application, Therefore, it is more likely they will access general support and guidance from more experienced carers through established relationships rather than relying on new connections. Hub Links are allocated thoughtfully to promote relationship and connections between carers and their support network. Hub Links have also been allocated to existing carers and Special Guardians where they are experiencing challenges and require additional support.

A Supervising Social Worker is now allocated around day 30 of stage 1, this creates more time for assessment and allows recruitment to make a much more informed decision regarding someone's suitability to foster prior to moving to Stage 2 of the process. Applicants are also much more invested earlier in the process, which is contributing towards the conversion rate positively. Allocating earlier allows the service to complete the recruitment process in shorter timescales.

A tiered support offer has been set out, which includes a stage 1 support package, stage 2 support package and then a support offer to all approved carers. This allows for a smoother transition to fostering for all applicants. Supporting them to be better informed and equipped for the journey, whilst feeling and experiencing a level of support from the service. The intention is to support and boost their level of confidence in Lincolnshire as a fostering provider.

Participation in the different areas of the hub continues to increase. Assessed need is monitored to ensure that the right kind of support is identified and delivered. Carers have welcomed the return of face-to-face support and feedback from carers is positive with regards to their feeling really supported.

A recent survey along with the audit information has formed a picture that general advice and support for Foster Carers is going well; however, carers feel more support and improvement is required during challenging times often relating to the trauma experienced and behaviour exhibited by the children they care for.

A challenging time has shown to be the most likely reason Foster Carers consider leaving the service or spend time offline. This is a key area for attention, planning, action, and ongoing review for 2022/2023. Other key themes for retention include support to carers that are offline, new Foster Carers and staff retention.

### **Marketing:**

During this quarter 61 Initial Enquiries of Interest (IEI) were received from the public enquiring about becoming a Foster Carer.

There have been 7 newly approved households in this second quarter of the financial year. 11 fostering households have been recruited since April 2022.

On 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022 there were 38 open applications in stages 1 or 2, 34 of these have a panel date booked this financial year.

### **Advertising:**

In Lincolnshire, the service continually reviews the marketing strategy and continuously develop the approach as being a local option for carers wanting to care for Lincolnshire children.

During this quarter and for the whole year our objective is to draw upon the strengths of carers joining an Ofsted rated Outstanding authority who work collaboratively to find local placements within a local community for local children.

Our continued energy in advertising is to ensure that the objective is understood that Lincolnshire is further establishing itself as a local option.

The last three months have had a continuous and busy approach to identifying Lincolnshire as a number one choice. Our efforts are detailed below:

#### **July 2022**

- During the month of July, our fostering adverts were shown a total of 37,681 times to over 17,550 people on social media. As July was the first month in the last year with a higher paid advertising campaign, its results will be considered the base and we will need to wait to analyse its performance, comparing it to future months. However, this is already a huge improvement from the average 10,000 views from previous years when a similar budget was allocated.
- Joint working with three district councils through the fostering friendly employer scheme and agreements for their fostering advertising was agreed and confirmed.



- July marked the start to a short breaks (respite) campaign through social media advertising and a new advert on Lincs FM. This campaign will run until 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022.
- Promoted refer a friend with current households on the virtual chat groups and the fostering monthly newsletter.

The majority of the IEI's received during the month have confirmed that they originally sourced their interest from social media.

### **August 2022**

- Joint working with Schools, district councils, local businesses to help us promote fostering within their social media forums.
- Attended Lincoln Pride to promote fostering
- "Myth busting Monday" material was created and shared as short 10 seconds videos. They were published on a weekly basis during July reaching an average of 270 people reached per post
- Targeted paid-for Facebook advert, August had a Facebook page reach of 96,031, an increase of over 310% from the previous month.
- Fostering campaign running on Lincs FM, choose local and short breaks
- Article on Int Comms within the County Council advertising information event
- Promoted refer a friend with current households

### **September 2022**

- Joint working with Schools, district councils, local businesses to help us promote fostering within their social media forums.
- More advertising airtime was agreed with Lincs FM to support the ongoing short breaks campaign and later the Permanence campaign.
- "Myth busting Monday" material shared as short 10 seconds videos.
- A recruitment event welcomed 12 households

- Targeted paid-for Facebook advert, September had a Facebook page reach of 54320, a decrease of 33.3%
- District councils East Lindsey, Boston and South Holland have helped us promote the service by social media as well as with their internal communications and public bulletins.
- Lincolnshire Fostering Service collected food during their service day to donate to a local food bank. A good amount of food has been donated, and the whole service has been thanked publicly within their social media accounts. This supports the establishment of Lincolnshire fostering service as part of the wider community and supporting causes important to its residents.
- Article on Int Comms advertising information event
- Promoted refer a friend with current households

Due to her Majesty the Queen's passing during the month of September, our account was closed for a total of 12 days to reflect our condolences.

Our social media accounts have received less traffic this month.

September had a Facebook page reach of 54,320 a decrease of 33.3% from previous month. However, we still achieved 6 more page likes this month, which are added to our 138 new page likes this financial year.

### **Permanence Campaign:**

Attracting long term foster carers remains a priority for the service. Fostering have developed four areas of activity in attracting new and existing carers to this type of fostering. This includes attracting new carers to permanent fostering, supporting those currently in the assessment period to consider permanent fostering and explore possible matches prior to approval, holding a quarterly family finders' event and supporting and encouraging existing households to consider new permanent links or a change in approval.

Profiles are created for children seeking permanent foster homes, this includes anonymised profiles. These anonymised profiles are shared on the Council's social media platforms as part of our marketing campaigns to attract new carers, this includes the Caring2Learn closed Facebook page which invites staff, social care and health staff and existing carers. The

profiles are also readily available in the foster carers google drive and are shared with fostering applicants during the assessment period.

The campaign page on the Lincs Fm radio cite features, information about permanent fostering along with the Council's webpage which has a page dedicated to this campaign.

### **Family Finding:**

During the second quarter of this year Family Finders has continued to meet monthly to consider all children with a care plan for long-term fostering who do not already have a placement identified. These meetings have all taken place in person.

Family Finding review meetings, are held quarterly, and are chaired by Senior Managers, the role of the review meeting is to consider children where no suitable match has been identified after a three-month period. This is to ensure there is no delay for children. During this quarter, three children were referred to this process.

Family Finders continue to use profiles alongside children's Valuing Care profile to try and identify any permanent placements. The children's anonymised profiles have also been shared on the Foster Carers "G drive" so that carers can access the profiles and arrange further discussions with their Supervising Social Worker. Profiles are also circulated to all Supervising Social Workers to consider any appropriate links with current carers.

A permanence event took place in July 2022, where approved foster carers and those within the assessment process were invited to attend and learn about some of the children that were awaiting permanent homes. Social workers and foster carers spoke about the children and used the Valuing Care Toolkit to identify the strengths and needs of the children.

Family Finding workers have recently attended the Children in Care Service Day in September to highlight the process for Family Finding and to provide an opportunity to discuss any queries or questions, and to further promote joint working arrangements.

The Permanence Campaign is on-going and includes a variety of advertising, With the use of social media platforms including, radio, local publications and the use of the fostering Facebook page and Instagram. The Instagram page is utilized by the service as part of the recruitment drive. The County Council fostering web page continues to provide information on long-term Fostering and the support available to Foster Carers.

Over this second quarter five additional children have been referred to Family Finders and there has been one child removed. There are now twenty-one children currently seeking

long term placements, nine of these are singleton placements and there are six sets of two siblings.

There has been considerable progress this quarter in finding suitable, long-term placements for children. One child has been removed from Family Finders and will be remaining with her current carers and two further sets of siblings have moved to new carers on a task centred basis with a view of permanence, these are likely to be removed from Family Finders shortly.

One of the links was as a direct result of carers attending the permanence event held in July. The carers were in stage 2 of their Fostering assessment. A further link is being progressed due to a carer expressing an interest in a further sibling group. This is currently at the information sharing stage which is promising.

### **Training:**

A virtual and Face to face offer remains in place and has been welcomed by carers, providing flexibility and options that cater to different circumstances and learning styles.

The fostering training offer remains under review, ensuring that the service continue to meet the needs of the fostering community in providing quality and informed care to children with a diverse range of needs and interests. The training offer for 2023/24 is current been created.

Whilst considering how we better prepare people for fostering included in the hub is access for applicants to training and development throughout their assessment period. We have seen an increased number of applicants accessing the offer and booking mandatory training in advance of approval.

Other courses have been planned in response to data and information concerning placement breakdowns and unplanned moves, these include therapeutic crisis intervention and mental health first aid. Feedback from the therapeutic crisis intervention has been positive, PSW have also completed the training, so they are able to advocate this practice and support foster carers to put it into practice in the home.

It is important in training and development to also ensure our more experienced foster carers and those that have attended many of the courses on offer continue to have access to further learning and development. The service has specifically identified the 6-day social pedagogy and 2-day Restorative Practice to address this objective.

19 courses were delivered during this quarter with 172 attendees taking part from fostering households. This is a smaller number compared with 1st quarter although we do not deliver training during the 6-week summer break.

### **Training:**

In this quarter the training schedule has continued to be delivered to assist the training and development of Foster Carers. This is an important factor in improving outcomes of Children in Care and young people. Access to this develops knowledge and skills in areas of interest as well as provides the mandatory courses. It facilitates carers also sharing ideas and experiences where they can share experiences and learn from one another.

### **Various courses have been available including:**

- First Aid/ paediatric training
- Mental Health First Aid
- Safeguarding
- Safe Care
- Fostering Preparation Course
- Therapeutic Crisis Intervention

### **Practice Workshops:**

- Introducing Social Pedagogy
- Introduction to Restorative Practice
- Introduction to mindfulness, Creating Calm
- Introduction to Trauma Awareness
- Supporting sleep, nightmares, and night terrors.
- Supporting grief, loss, and positive endings
- Relational repair
- Fostering Weekly therapeutic parenting Programme (Caring2gether, 6 weeks)

### **E-Learning:**

LSCP courses are still being accessed and Foster Carers have attended.

- Safeguarding
- Safeguarding refresher
- Hidden harm
- Covid 19

- Think Safe be safe
- Equality and inclusion
- E-safety

### **Learning Homes:**

The toolkit for new carers which includes the standards from the Training, Support and Development Standards (TSDs) has been well received. The service is now starting to see these come in for assessment resulting in carers receiving a Learning Homes award with an expectation to resubmit a portfolio every three years to ensure on-going personal and professional development.

Currently there are eighty-two foster homes and five residential settings that have achieved their Learning Homes Award. Due to the number of toolkits collected over recent months and the expectations that all new carers complete the award within twelve months of approval; the service are seeing the number of awarded homes to continue to rise significantly.

### **Celebration Event:**

The Foster Carer Celebration took place over Zoom last year. The event recognises the contribution and achievements of our fostering community. Foster carers will receive their long service awards, a voucher and lapel badge. The voucher and lapel badge are given to carers as a token of gratitude and was positively received.

Last year we formally introduced new foster carers to the community, and this was our opportunity to thank them for choosing Lincolnshire as their provider. Likewise, this will remain a feature at this year's event too which is scheduled for March 2023.

### **Kinship :**

Kinship options are always considered when a child enters care for the first time and throughout their care experience. Joint work has been completed and is ongoing between the Fostering Service and other teams to ensure consistency with viability assessments and the referral process.

Practice Supervisors and Social Workers from within the service work collaboratively with other social care staff to ensure that all family and their networks are engaged in the care planning process where it is deemed to be safe and, in the child/ren's best interests.

Practice Supervisors maintain good working relationships between Fostering and the other teams; this continues to be effective as conversations are held early on and consultations are taking place prior to viabilities being concluded and placements being made.

The Government's manifesto committed to review the children's social care system which was launched in March 2021. As part of this independent review of children's social care, the author Josh MacAllister highlighted the value and significance of Kinship placements the author in May 2022 who cited the following:

*“For some children, care will always be the best option and Chapters Five and Six of this report set out how we can transform the care system. However, many children should and could safely– with the right help – remain within their family network rather than enter care.*

*Growing up within a family network means retaining a strong sense of identity, culture and place, which young people have told the review is often lost or significantly diluted through care. A child living with their grandparents, aunt or uncle is unlikely to have to rely on social workers to recount their life story, nor grow up with carers who have very different family or cultural values.*

*While foster and residential care will come with an end date, with young people often having to set out in the world alone, staying within a family network, usually known as kinship care, is significantly more likely to mean children grow up with love, and retain those loving relationships throughout their whole life.*

*Kinship is deemed appropriate for children and young people to be supported by the Local Authority with every effort made to identify and assess the family networks to ensure that children and young people can be safely cared for by people who they have an existing relationship with and are known to them.”*

In Lincolnshire, the children's teams continue to work proactively in identifying the family networks by completing thorough viability assessments and having early conversations to support the next steps on assessments.

There are sound working relationships established between Fostering and the children's teams, regular discussions and joint supervisions take place and are standard practice. These proactive measures support and improve care planning for children and young people and supports the reduction in placement moves by identifying key supports for both the children and their prospective carers, by identifying the right carer at the right time.

Between the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022 and the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022 the following data reflects the work undertaken during this period:

Number of Referrals	SGO	Reg.24 / SGO	Reg. 24 / Connected Person	Private Fostering Including Ukraine	Statutory Checks/CAO
51	24	17	2	5 (includes 3 YP from Ukraine)	3

The service has seen the same number of referrals as was highlighted in the last quarterly report. These figures continue to demonstrate the Local Authority’s efforts to secure kinship placements for children and reflect the ongoing improvement in practice in exploring and assessing children and young people’s network. Both the children’s teams and the court arena continue to ensure all family networks are explored, and alternative placements are seen as the last resort.

Overall, there has been a rise in the work including the children’s placements under Regulation 24 of The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 and subsequent amendments, which progressed to Special Guardianship Orders (SGO’s). The number of SGO assessments has also seen a rise which suggests that all options have been considered within the Court arena. This reflects a practice of planning for permanence for this cohort of children.

For statutory checks, these are undertaken when the children’s social work teams are completing assessments of family members for private law orders such as Child Arrangement Orders or Special Guardianship Orders. The circumstances in which the assessments are being completed outside of public law proceedings, or when the children are not children in care. The number of these has also remained the same since the last quarter.

**Further expansion of Private Fostering Regulations in relation to Ukraine children and Young People only**

In anticipation of the Government’s response following the invasion of Ukraine the Homes for Ukraine Scheme commenced in July 2022. This has involved processing applications from eligible children under the age of 18 who have already applied through the Homes for Ukraine Scheme to come to the UK without a parent or guardian in carefully defined circumstances.



- Within 24 hours of a child's arrival the council should carry out an initial welfare visit.
- The council will give the child information in Ukrainian and Russian about how to raise any concerns, and how they have a duty to help them if they believe they are at risk.

With regards to Private fostering assessments, they have risen from 3 referrals in the last quarter, to 5 this quarter. This has included the 3 Private Fostering Assessments of Hosts in relation to Ukraine children and young people. Overall, the service is seeing a gradual increase in the number of assessments requested which falls in line with Government processing Ukrainian cases.

### **Staying Put:**

During this second quarter, the number of young people in Staying Put currently stands at 40. Of these 40 young people five are attending university, 26 are in further education, two are in employment, one is on an Apprenticeship and two are on the Care Leavers Apprenticeship Scheme. The remaining four are currently NEET with one of them imminently joining the army and the others looking for full-time work. Several of the young people in further education or at university have part-time jobs. Others are engaged in volunteering opportunities.

During this quarter four young people left the Staying Put scheme. One moved in with their partner and his family, one turned 21 and remained living with his grandparent, one moved into independent accommodation and there was a single placement breakdown. The young person whose placement broke down was supported into his own accommodation by the Leaving Care Service.

Staying Put remains an active element of the fostering service provision and continues to receive a steady flow of referrals from our children in care Social Workers. There are currently 19 young people waiting to join the scheme when they turn 18.

### **In summary**

Staying Put arrangements are put in place in a planned and informed way, the Staying Put Co-ordinator works closely alongside Children's teams and the Leaving Care Service to ensure this happens.

Several of the young people who are in learning also work part-time or volunteer. Those that are not in work or learning are offered additional support by the Leaving Care Service.

We have seen four young people move on from the scheme during Quarter two. The primary reason for this being young people having a positive move on.

If a Staying Put arrangement is at risk, the service continue to work alongside Staying Put Providers, young people, and the Leaving Care Service to resolve issues and put solutions in place to stabilise the arrangement.

This quarter saw a slight reduction of young people in Staying Put compared to last quarter however this remains a valued option for some care leavers and remains a current choice for some young adults as transition to living more independently.

**Conclusion:**

It is reassuring that during this year the service have seen the recovery following the Covid pandemic with services returning to follow a pre pandemic trend. There continues to be a promising start with fostering enquiries and more carers have returned to fully resume their fostering role.

The pressure is slowly beginning to ease on the service which has faced staffing changes and vacancies which continue to reflect the national challenges in social care recruitment.

Despite this maintaining high quality supervision and support has been central by means of maximising and mobilising our placement capacity. Many fostering households continue to make the difference and have despite the enormous challenges in recent years, have demonstrated their commitment to the Lincolnshire children in their care. The impact of the cost-of-living crisis upon carers and their fostering families is fully appreciated and understood

The number of Children in Care remains significantly higher during the same period last year and the increase in this figure and reduced bed capacity results in pressures on the placements available and the matches achieved. The focus on the fostering service and wider colleagues is to continue to monitor and intervene early to prevent a placement breakdown and re-establish stability in the best interests of the child.

The service continues to be heartened by the interest from the public in fostering yet despite this there has also been an increased number of referrals to independent fostering agencies. The number of children placed in children's homes has increased alongside the use of external placements where necessary. Using external resources has a considerable impact on the resources of the Local Authority.

The continued transformation programme will continue to support the service in maintaining and developing the core offer for fostering households. This in tandem with the key decision to embed the Caring2 Learn Practice Supervisor into the service has continued to pay dividends in relation to our hub offer including training and support.

The concept of Caring2Learn remains woven throughout the service and this coupled with the continued work of the foster carer champions and colleagues it remains the ambition of the service to build upon our strengths during this year

Deborah Crawford  
Children's Head of Regulated Services

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**Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy, Executive Director - Children's Services**

Report to:	<b>Corporate Parenting Panel</b>
Date:	<b>10 November 2022</b>
Subject:	<b>Private Fostering Annual Report and Statement of Purpose</b>

**Summary:**

The purpose of the report is to inform Corporate Parenting Panel about the work of the broader Children's and Fostering Service in relation to Private Fostering.

The requirements under The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 to Private Fostering are made under the Children Act 1989. The Private Fostering National Minimum Standards are issued under Section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 where Local Authorities are expected to comply with such requirements.

The Annual Report as Appendix A and Statement of Purpose as Appendix B set out the relevant performance information and set out how the Council have discharged their responsibilities in the last year.

**Actions Required:**

The Corporate Parenting Panel is invited to review the reports relating to Private Fostering including the Annual Report and Statement of Purpose, to comment on their contents and to endorse these as an accurate overview of the Council's function in their discharge of responsibilities in terms of Private Fostering.

**1. Background**

To present an overview of the Private Fostering Annual Report and Statement of Purpose for members of Corporate Parenting Panel.

**2. Conclusion**

The continued progress of the service is detailed within the reports and is shared as an accurate reflection of how the Council have discharged their responsibilities.

### 3. Consultation

#### a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

### 4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Private Fostering Annual Report 2021-2022
Appendix B	Statement of Purpose 2021-2022.

### 5. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Deborah Crawford, Children's Head of Regulated Services who can be contacted via [Deborah.crawford@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Deborah.crawford@lincolnshire.gov.uk).



# Private Fostering Annual Report

2021 - 2022

## **Introduction**

The Private Fostering Regulations apply when children or young people, aged under 16 years (18 if they have a disability) live with a person who is not a close relative for 28 days or more. The term 'close relative' has a specific definition within the legislation it includes grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles, and aunts (whether of the full or half blood or by marriage) and step-parents. Children living with people who are not close relatives, such as a cousin, great aunt or family friend need to be assessed and reviewed under the Private Fostering Regulations to ensure the placement is able to safeguard and promote his/her welfare.

This annual report gives an overview of activities in relation to privately fostered children in Lincolnshire from April 2021 to end of March 2022. The report details how Lincolnshire County Council has complied with its duties and functions in relation to private fostering and includes how the welfare of privately fostered children has been safeguarded and promoted over the past 12 months. The report also outlines the activities which have been undertaken to promote awareness of the notification requirements regarding children who are living in private fostering arrangements.

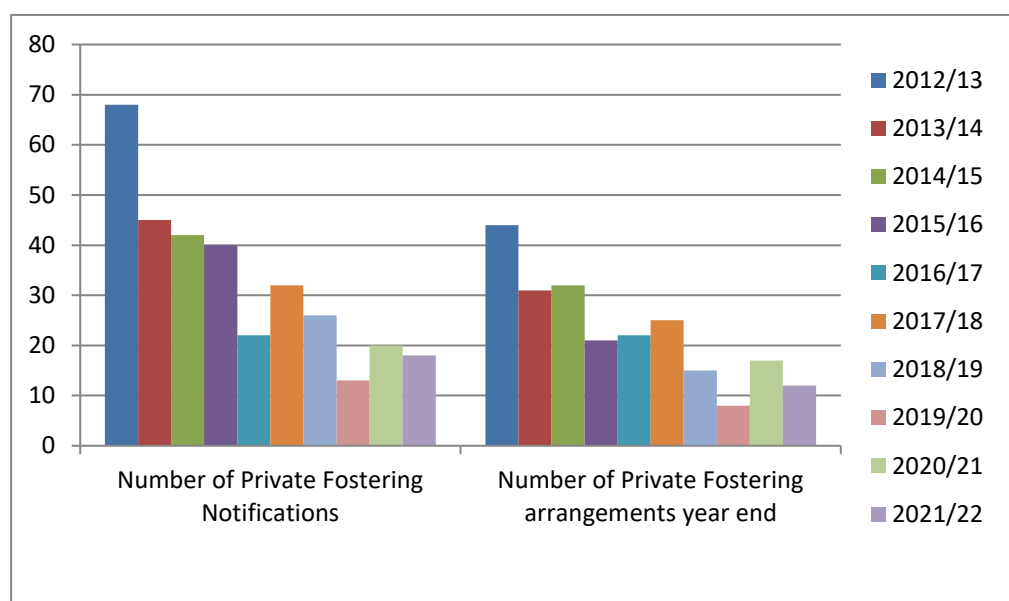
Previous reports have been able to include a summary of the annual statistics provided by all Local Authorities as part of the Private Fostering Return (PF1 Return) concerning numbers of new notifications, arrangements and visiting patterns. This information is no longer centrally collated by the Government, and it is not possible to provide comparative data.

In Lincolnshire over the past year, the Council has continued to promote local understanding and awareness of private fostering and sought to improve how services continue to meet the needs of the children and young people concerned.

This includes using audit to review our own performance and to identify where improvements need to be made.



## Data regarding Private Fostering arrangements in Lincolnshire



The chart above shows key data regarding private fostering within Lincolnshire over the past few years. From the chart it is apparent that Lincolnshire experienced a peak in the level of notifications in 2012/13, but since then there has been an overall reduction in notifications. The number of ongoing private fostering arrangements has reduced further this year.

Focusing on 2021/2022 the following can be noted:

- There were 18 notifications to the Council spread throughout the County. This represents a decrease on the previous year's figure of 20.
- Of the 18 notifications received, 100% of Private Fostering Arrangement Assessment Records were completed within the 7-day timescale.
- All the Regulation 7 visits were undertaken within the 7-day timescale.

- All the Regulation 8 visits continue to be tracked with reminders sent to individual workers to ensure these are recorded on Mosaic.
- 23 children ceased to be privately fostered during the 2021/2022 period.
- Of the 23 children whose private fostering status ended 7 returned home to parents, 1 moved to live with extended family, 2 became children in care under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning Placement and Review Regulations 2010 and 1 became a child in care in a task centered foster placement, 1 child was under the responsibility of an external Local Authority, 4 had turned 16 and 7 achieved permanence via a Child Arrangement Order.

### **Procedures**

Following the Laming Report into the death of Victoria Climbié (who was privately fostered by her Great Aunt at the time of her death), regulations relating to Private Fostering were amended and strengthened by Section 44 of the Children Act 2004. The following year two further documents were published; The National Minimum Standards (NMS) 2005 and The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulation 2005, which clearly set out the role of the Local Authority, the Parent and the Private Foster carer and related professionals.

Under Standard 7 of the National Minimum Standards for private fostering, Local Authorities are expected to effectively monitor the way in which it discharges its duties and functions in relation to private fostering, including to provide a written report each year, for consideration by the Director of Children's Services, which includes an evaluation of the outcomes of its work in relation to privately fostered children within its area. (Supporting Criteria 7.9 NMS for Private Fostering). Private fostering arrangements continue to be a focus of the OFSTED Local Authority Inspections.

## **Organisational and Structural Aspects**

Lincolnshire County Council Children's Services continues to be committed to maintaining high standards in relation to private fostering service provision and ensuring that this service is continually reviewed.

There is a designated post, the Panel Advisor, who has the lead for private fostering and their role is to monitor the compliance with the National Minimum standards on a monthly basis and to ensure that performance in the area remains high.

The monthly reporting figures that are seen by Social Care Team Managers and Practice Supervisors allow them to maintain their overview of how each team is performing in relation to private fostering.

Daily recording of work undertaken in relation to Private Fostering is recorded on Mosaic.

The fostering service dedicated to kinship/connected person assessments continues to have responsibility for undertaking the assessment of the private foster carer's suitability. There continues to be regular communication between the Practice Supervisor in this team and the Panel Advisor to monitor, review and scrutinise the practice standards.

## **Background Information**

Any parent proposing to have their child cared for by someone other than a close relative for more than 28 days, or a carer who is proposing to look after someone else's child who is not a close relative, should notify Children's Services at least 6 weeks before the arrangement is due to begin.

This is known as a "Proposed Arrangement". In these circumstances the Customer Service Centre should be contacted, and the referral will be passed on to the relevant

locality Family Assessment and Support Team (FAST). However, the more usual presenting situation is one whereby the Customer Service Centre is notified of an arrangement when the child is already with the prospective private foster carer.

According to current agreed private fostering processes, the Customer Service Centre sends the received notifications directly to The Family Assessment and Support Team within one working day to avoid any unnecessary delay and this type of notification bypasses the usual screening process aligned to other social care requests.

FAST undertakes the management of the referral of privately fostered children and their timescale for completing the Private Fostering Assessment of Arrangement (PFAAR) is within 7 working days of referral (notification) and they liaise with Kinship team for the completion of the assessment of the carer's suitability.

Within each FAST team, there are a small number of Social Workers that tend to be allocated any new private fostering cases and they receive support and advice from their Practice Supervisor.

At this point the Social Worker is required to visit and see the child, the carer and the parents or those with Parental Responsibility.

Visits to see and speak with privately fostered children/young people are carried out in accordance with statutory timescales and recorded on Mosaic. The visits should include seeing the child, their bedroom and speaking with them alone. This is to ensure that the child's voice is heard and if any actions are needed to promote their welfare.

The assessment of the arrangement (PFAAR) is authorised by the Team Manager of the child's social worker. The decision about the overall suitability of the arrangement is completed by the Team Manager of the social worker to the child, in consultation with the Team Manager of the Fostering Service.

It is the responsibility of the Team Manager of the child's social worker to notify in writing the Parent or others with Parental Responsibility, Private Foster carers and relevant agencies that the child/young person is living in or will live in a Private Fostering Arrangement.

The Practice Supervisors in the Children in Care (CIC) Teams are also notified of the child/young person that is in a private fostering arrangement.

Once the private fostering arrangement has been confirmed, at the point of the second Regulation 8 private fostering visit, the FAST worker will undertake a joint visit with a worker from the CIC teams. On completion of the visit, the overall management will transfer to the CIC Team to provide the child/young person with a consistent response for the duration of the arrangement.

Each private fostering arrangement is annually reviewed by the Team Manager in line with the statutory requirements and as such, the cases are open to scrutiny in respect of care planning and intervention.

The Head of Regulated is the named person within the Local Authority with expertise in private fostering whom social workers and managers can contact for advice.

Decisions regarding requirements, disqualification and prohibition should be referred to the Head of Service for Safeguarding.

## **Activity and Performance 2021-2022 in relation to National Minimum Standards 2005**

### **National Minimum Standard 1**

**The local authority has a written statement or plan, which sets out its duties and functions in relation to private fostering and the ways in which they will be conducted.**

Lincolnshire Council has a statement of purpose on private fostering which will be continually reviewed to ensure this is up to date each year.

Information about private fostering is available in schools and through the Lincolnshire County Council website.

### **National Minimum Standard 2**

#### **The local authority:**

- **promotes awareness of the notification requirements and ensures that those professionals who may encounter privately fostered children understand their role in notification**
- **responds effectively to notifications**
- **and deals with situations where an arrangement comes to their attention, which has not been notified**

### **Awareness Raising**

The national private fostering week took place between 17<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2021.

The website is more informative and user friendly and during Private Fostering week the Council had a social media presence to highlight this issue. Internally awareness was highlighted via a segment in the Internal Communications across the Council.

The Safeguarding Children Partnership must be satisfied that the welfare of privately fostered children in this area is safeguarded and promoted and that agencies are co-operating. The multi-agency Education sub-group has the private foster care agenda as a standing item and continues to look at promoting private fostering with partner agencies.

To continue to raise the awareness of private fostering and the understanding of roles and responsibilities in relation to private fostering.

- Information about private fostering has been provided through the training program, with all staff dealing with private fostering having appropriate online training. Private fostering training also forms part of the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment training provided to social workers.
- The service has a communication plan which is reviewed on a regular basis to ensure its effectiveness and wide distribution to members of the public and partner agencies.
- Posters have been placed in local public buildings, including the following, hospitals, GP surgeries, dentists, libraries, Leisure Centre's, Places of Worship and Children's Centre's advising on the requirements of reporting private fostering situations. It is appreciated that throughout the Covid Pandemic less people were accessing these establishments however, they remain important community hubs that members of the public are using more frequently once again.
- Information on the Lincolnshire County Council website and the NHS staff Intranet
- The school admissions forms have a section dedicated to private fostering to assist school staff in identifying private fostering arrangements

Lincolnshire is committed to continually evaluate the effectiveness of its activities to ensure that they contribute to a positive change of behaviour in relation to private fostering.

## **Response to Notifications**

In Lincolnshire, most notifications are received once the placement has been made and following a referral by the carer to Customer Service Centre. The current arrangements ensure there is an assured and timely response to all notifications/referrals.

## **National Minimum Standard 3**

### **Safeguarding and Promoting Welfare**

**The local authority effectively determines the suitability of all aspects of the private fostering arrangement in accordance with the regulations.**

The safeguarding of children who are privately fostered is a responsibility which impacts upon all parts of the Local Authority, health authority, district councils and the voluntary and private sectors, and as such the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership (LSCP) are proactive in monitoring the multi-agency approach in relation to private fostering. Private fostering is a standing item on the LSCP agenda; this is a positive step in ensuring that professionals and organisations working with children and families are made aware about private fostering and the need to ensure that Children's Services know about such arrangements to promote the welfare of the child.

Children's Services continue to ensure that privately fostered children/young people's welfare is satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted by qualified social work staff undertaking the assessments and support of the arrangement and private foster carers.

The Agency Advisor undertakes monthly monitoring of the work of the social workers and their supervisors; this monitoring identifies any areas where there may be a need for further discussions for example concerns regarding Parental Responsibility and the



clear exercise of it, matters pertaining to permanency planning particularly for younger children. If required action will be, taken on individual cases to ensure compliance with agreed policy and procedure. The Agency Advisor is supported in their role by a dedicated Business Support Worker who collates the relevant data relating to private fostering and sends out reminders regarding the timescales for visits.

When completing the Private Fostering Arrangement Assessment Record (PFAAR) the child is seen alone as part of the assessment and their wishes and feelings ascertained and considered together with the child's needs.

Also, as part of the assessment the FAST social worker contacts the parents wherever possible to seek their view with regards to the arrangement and to explain how Parental Responsibility will need to be exercised.

In Lincolnshire, all private foster carers are DBS checked and are assessed in accordance with the National Minimum Standards 2005. The PFAAR and the carers assessment form the completed suitability of the arrangement.

Children's Services have the power to prohibit a person from privately fostering where that person is considered not suitable, where the accommodation is not suitable, where the child's welfare would be harmed, where someone has been convicted for offences against children or where the care of the child is unsatisfactory. There have been no incidents of prohibition or disqualification during the last year, therefore no legal action was taken.

Each private fostering arrangement is annually reviewed by the Agency Advisor in line with the statutory requirements and as such, the cases are open to scrutiny in respect of care planning and intervention.

#### **National Minimum Standard 4**

**The local authority provides such advice and support to private foster carers and prospective private foster carers as appear to the authority to be needed.**

The fostering service are responsible for the carers assessment, to ensure that private foster carers have access to the similar support as local authority foster carers. Carers are also encouraged to attend training events or to access the E-Learning programme available.

The website and information pack includes local services that the carer may access including children's centres. As part of the regular visits to the children the social workers will discuss the current situation with those carers who are looking after the children to ensure that any questions or concerns that they have are addressed.

#### **National Minimum Standard 5**

**The local authority provides such advice and information to the parents of children who are privately fostered within their area as appears to the authority to be needed.**

The children's social worker provides parents with information regarding the legal and regulatory functions of the local authority during their work with those parents to ensure that they are aware of these and what they may expect from the local authority. This information relates to the name address and contact details of the child's social worker and information on the complaints.

Lincolnshire County Council through the monitoring of the case work for children who are in private fostering arrangements, ensures that plans for rehabilitation to birth families is considered, along with ongoing monitoring of the suitability of those private fostering arrangements

## **National Minimum Standard 6**

**Children who are privately fostered can access information and support when required so that their welfare is safeguarded and promoted. Privately fostered children are enabled to participate in decisions about their lives.**

All children who are privately fostered in Lincolnshire have an allocated qualified social worker who provides advice and support to the child, private foster carer, and their parent(s) and/or any other person with Parental Responsibility. The level of contact that each private foster carer is determined through the Private Foster Carers Assessment and the Regulation 8 visits.

At the initial and subsequent visits, an information leaflet about private fostering along with a complaints leaflet and information about Total Voice advocacy service are provided to the child/ young person, their carers and family.

There is a requirement for a visit to be made to the carer and child within seven working days when the notification is received, and subsequent visits are to take place every six weeks in the first year and every three months thereafter.

Lincolnshire acknowledge the importance of completing the visits in required timescales, to ensure that the children are well cared for in a safe environment, also to identify the help and support available that may assist the private foster carer.

Regular audits are carried out on a range of casework within the authority, and these have identified evidence within the assessment and Regulation 8 visits, that children are seen alone; that they receive good social work support on an individual basis and are consulted about their views.

To ensure that our performance is maintained or improved where possible, the service proactively manages the schedule of visits with advance notice of scheduled dates for

visits being forwarded to the allocated Social Worker and their Team Manager. The importance of private fostering continues to be highlighted to all FAST and CIC teams. This will be achieved through varying formats and to consist of:

- One minute briefing to be sent to all staff as part of National Private Fostering Week
- Liaison with Team Managers when a practice issue is raised and provide clear advice regarding the task that needs to be completed.

All children privately fostered in Lincolnshire were encouraged to maintain contact with their birth family and, where possible, their parents. Their religious and cultural requirements were met within the placement and through contact with the family.

#### **National Minimum Standard 7**

**The local authority has in place and effectively implements a system for monitoring the way in which it discharges its duties and functions in relation to private fostering. It improves practice where this is indicated as necessary by the monitoring system.**

Issues regarding private fostering recording and completion of private fostering assessments and timescales are regularly discussed in Team Managers' meetings.

The activities of the Private Fostering Service are reported to Director of Children's Services and lead member for Children's Services.

The annual report relating to private fostering is shared with LSCP and this is also an agenda item to ensure that partner agencies are mindful of their own responsibilities in relation to private fostering.

Lincolnshire continues to review and develop a comprehensive service for privately fostered children and all those involved in private fostering, to ensure that the

authority complies with relevant legislation and meets the National Minimum Standards 2005 in relation to private fostering.

### **Complaints and Representations**

There have been no complaints or representations during this period; however, Lincolnshire County Council ensures that robust reviews of the services for children in privately fostered arrangements are safe and secure

### **Developments for the next twelve months for private fostering in Lincolnshire include:**

- Public awareness will continue to be raised through on-going publicity campaign.
- Work with LSCP and partner agencies to ensure that private fostering remains an agenda item for professionals. This will include the promotion of e-learning and participation in the education subgroup.
- Further distribution of the One Minute Practice Briefing to ensure that all staff including all new appointments are familiar and aware of the practice standards and legal mandate.

**Overview of the Demographics of Children Privately Fostered 2021-2022**

Age	N0	Ethnicity		Gender	
0 - 5	0			Male	9
6	1	White any other White background	0	Female	9
7	1	White British	16		
8	0	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups/ White and Black Caribbean	1		
9	1	Asian/Asian British/Chinese	1		
10	3				
11	1				
12	1				
13	0				
14	6				
15	4				
16	0				
17	0				

Lincolnshire County Council remain committed and are pro-active in ensuring that children and young people are provided with permanency and accordingly ensure that the legal status of children remains appropriate to meet their long-term needs.

**Dawn Oldroyd**  
**Agency Advisor Fostering and Adoption**

**Deborah Crawford**  
**Head of Regulated Services**



# Private Fostering Statement of Purpose

2021 - 2022

## Private Fostering Statement of Purpose

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## **1. Introduction**

This document is a description of private fostering arrangements within Lincolnshire County Council. This statement of purpose is designed to meet the requirements of the National Minimum Standards 2005 for Private Fostering, Standard 1, and to provide a guide of the service for professionals, the public, council members and external organisations.

This document describes the local authority's duties and functions in relation to private fostering and the ways in which they will be carried out.

## **2. Regulation**

Private fostering services provided by local authorities are regulated by OFSTED. Their contact details are:

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

**Telephone Contact 0300 123 1231**

Email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

Lincolnshire County Council is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children, including those in private fostering arrangements.

Maintaining high standards in relation to private fostering service provision is a priority for Lincolnshire County Council Children's Services and remain committed to reviewing this on a continual basis.

Lincolnshire County Council Children's Services Directorate holds statutory powers and responsibilities as a local authority in relation to private fostering arrangements. These responsibilities are reviewed in partnership with Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership.

Children's Services works to ensure that equal opportunities are incorporated into all aspects of the service delivery and all prospective private foster carers are assessed and supported based on the needs of the individual private foster child/young person regardless of race, religion, class, marital status, sexual orientation, or disability.

### **3. Legal Definition of a privately fostered child**

In the definition provided by The Children Act 1989 a privately fostered child means:

- A child under the age of 16 (under 18 if disabled) who is cared for, or proposed to be cared for, and provided with accommodation by someone other than:
  - A parent of his/hers
  - A person who is not a parent of his/hers but who has Parental Responsibility for him/her

And

- He/she has been cared for and accommodated by that person:
  - For 28 days or more

Or

- The period of actual fostering is less than 28 days, but the private foster carer intends to foster him/her for a period of 28 days or more.

In the case of a child with a disability, the upper age limit for child to be privately fostered is 18 years.

A child is not privately fostered if the person caring for him/her:

- Had done so for a period of less than 28 days
- Does not intend to do so for any longer period.

For the purposes of the Act, parent includes unmarried or putative father. Relative means as above, whether of full blood, half blood or by marriage or civil partnership.

An arrangement is deemed as private fostering if it meets the criteria above whether for reward (monetary or otherwise) or not.

Some examples of private fostering arrangements could include children/young people with families overseas, children/young people with parents working or studying in the UK; trafficked children/young people and asylum seekers and refugees, children/young people living with host families for a variety of reasons, i.e., attending language schools, undergoing medical treatment, etc., children and young people residing with friends.

**Extension of the Private Fostering Regulations to Children from the Ukraine up to the age of 18 years.**

In England, the private fostering framework only applies to children up to 16 (or 18 for children with a disability), and where the child is not being accommodated by a parent or legal guardian (or other person with Parental Responsibility) or a relative (as defined in the Children Act 1989). However, given the additional vulnerability of children and young people from Ukraine, councils

are asked to conduct these assessments for all children entering the UK under this expanded scheme and this includes young people aged up to 18 years. It is likely that later in 2022 there will be further guidance issued to Local Authority's who will respond to this as advised.

#### **4. The local authority's duties and functions under the Children Act 1989**

Local Authorities have a duty to be notified about private fostering arrangements in their area and to satisfy themselves that the welfare of children who are privately fostered in their area is being satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted and to secure that such advice is given to those caring for them as appears to the authority to be needed (The Children Act 1989 Section 67(1)).

Broadly the duties fall into three types of activity:

- Giving and receiving notifications
- Ascertaining the suitability of private foster carers in their households
- Monitoring placements through visits and written records of visits.

#### **5. Duties under the Children Act 2004, the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 and the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005**

The measures in the Children Act 2004 and the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 and the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005 are intended to strengthen and enhance the existing private fostering notification scheme.

Local Authorities are required to raise public awareness in their area of the requirements regarding notification of private fostering arrangements. Notifications must be given to Local Authorities when a child/young person is proposed to be privately fostered or is being privately fostered. This will enable Local Authorities to ensure that the welfare of privately fostered

children/young people is being satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted by ongoing assessments and monitoring of arrangements within statutory timescales.

These measures, along with the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering July 2005, focus all local authorities' attention on private fostering and require them to take a more proactive approach with partner agencies and other professionals in identifying arrangements in their area. They are expected to improve notification rates and compliance with the existing legislative framework for private fostering and, therefore, to address the key problems identified with the former scheme. It is intended that these additional measures will improve the arrangements for safeguarding children/young people in private fostering arrangements.

## **6. Training for relevant staff**

### **Professionals**

Lincolnshire has a commitment to ensure all professionals have a clear and defined understanding of the private fostering regulations and their role and responsibility in relation to private fostering.

Lincolnshire Children's Services will facilitate this by:

1. Publication of the Private Fostering Statement of Purpose
2. Training in relation to private fostering is available for newly qualified social workers in the assessed and supported year in employment (ASYE programme) and all new social workers will be required to undertake the e-learning course in private fostering within the first six months of commencing their employment
3. Providing information via the internal intranet service and on [www.lincolnshire.gov.uk](http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk)

4. Regularly update of information through the e-mail network, and internal and external council publications including the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership
5. Monitoring feedback for further training requirements.

### **Information is available to professionals and organisations**

Groups include:

- Lincolnshire County Council Children's Services
- Schools – Heads, teachers, designated teachers
- Health care – School Nurses, GPs, Health Visitors
- Education Welfare Service
- Child Protection School Liaison Officers
- Any other professionals in Children's Services who come into contact with children.
- Language Schools
- Independent Schools
- District and Borough Councils
- Police
- Department for Works and Pensions
- Citizens Advice Bureaus
- Faith and community groups
- Ethnic Minority Achievement Support Service
- Libraries
- CAFCASS
- Leisure Centres
- Courts and Youth Offending Services.

### **7. Change of behaviour in relation to private fostering**

Lincolnshire continues to review the publicity material, i.e., posters that are sent to all schools and colleges with a covering letter regarding private fostering and the need to refer any children or young people living in such arrangements. The council recognise the need for continued engagement from other agencies and the community to reach out to the majority of privately fostered children alongside the robust safeguarding processes which are in place.

Lincolnshire County Council website can also be used to find out more detailed information. Lincolnshire is committed to continually evaluate its effectiveness of activities that contribute to a positive change of behaviour in relation to private fostering, and to review its communication and training plan accordingly.

#### **8. Assessment of the suitability of private foster carers and their household**

All privately fostered children/young people within Lincolnshire County Council area will be allocated a Social Worker who will complete a Private Fostering Assessment of Arrangement (PFAAR) within 7 days of the notification, in accordance with national guidance on private fostering. In addition, the Fostering Service will complete an Assessment of the Private Foster Carer(s) within 35 days of the end of the Arrangement Assessment.

The Assessment of Private Foster Carers is completed using the Private Fostering Carers Assessment (PFCA) a specific assessment tool which includes statutory checks and references.

The sign-off of decisions about the overall suitability of the arrangement is completed by the Team Manager of the Social Worker to the child, in consultation with the Team Manager of the Fostering Services. The ongoing visits to see children in their private fostering arrangement are completed in adherence to Regulation 8 by a Social Worker from Children's Services who ensures that they speak with the child so that their voice is heard and lived experience is understood.



As a minimum, dependent upon the outcome of the previous Regulation 8 visits, once every 12 months the Team Manager will complete a review of the arrangements and confirm their suitability. The Head of Regulated Services is the named person within the Local Authority with expertise in private fostering whom social workers and managers can contact for advice. This includes decisions regarding requirements, disqualification, and prohibition. A Team Manager has been delegated responsibility for leading and developing this service across the county.

**9. Advice/support and information available to private foster carers, parents/those with parental responsibility and privately fostered children**

An allocated social worker will be responsible for working with and supporting each privately fostered child/young person, the private foster carer and parents and others with Parental Responsibility. They will be the named case holder with contact details provided to all those concerned.

For the duration of Private Foster Carers Assessment, the Fostering Service will provide advice and support either directly to the private foster carer or through the Social Worker. The Fostering Service will notify private foster carers of any relevant training that they may wish to attend. The level of contact that each private foster carer will receive will be determined through the Private Foster Carers Assessment and the Regulation 8 visits.

In addition to statutory visits, other visits when requested by privately fostered children/young people, their parents, or private foster carers, will be undertaken.

Interpreters who are independent of parents and private foster carers will be used where it is the request of the child/young person or where the preferred language is not English.

Private foster carers (including prospective foster carers) will have access to advice on benefit entitlement, parenting strategies techniques, and other appropriate training and support as well be identified. Parents of prospective/current privately fostered children/young people will

also be advised, if in the best interests of the child/young person, of other service provision or other agency help available, which could remove the necessity for the child/young person to be privately fostered.

Coram BAAF guides are provided to parents, privately fostered children, and private foster carers.

#### **10. Ensuring the welfare of privately fostered children is safeguarded and promoted**

Partner agencies, voluntary/community sector, faith groups will all be made aware of the notification requirements and of their responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of privately fostered children/young people.

Children's Services will ensure that privately fostered children/young people's welfare is satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted by staff undertaking the assessments and support of the arrangement and private foster carers.

Customer Service Centre will send the notifications to The Family Assessment and Support Team (FAST) within one working day to avoid any unnecessary delay. Visits to privately fostered children/young people will be carried out in accordance with statutory timescales and recorded on Mosaic. This includes the recording of whether the child was seen and spoken with alone to ensure that the child's voice is heard.

The assessment of the private fostering arrangement is signed off by two Team Managers. One reviews the child's perspective of the arrangement and the other the abilities of the proposed private foster carer and their ability to meet the child's needs.

This dual signing allows for an extra level of safeguarding to be inserted into the process. The Team Manager of the child's social worker will notify in writing the parent or others with Parental Responsibility, private foster carers, and relevant agencies that the child/young person

is living in or will live in a private fostering arrangement and that the Local Authority consents to the arrangement or otherwise.

In line with the Child and Family Assessment and the national guidance, the Private Fostering Assessments will ensure that the child/young person's physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and behavioural development is satisfactory and the needs arising from his/her religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background are being met. In addition, the assessment will include the suitability of the accommodation and an evaluation of the parenting capacity of the prospective/current private foster carer.

Private foster carers will be given advice on the child/young person's individual needs, which may include advice on any medical condition or learning disability, to enhance their ability to care for the child/young person. Support services will be made available to private foster carers, where necessary. They will also encourage the promotion of contact between the child/young person and his/her parents, siblings, extended family, and significant others.

All private foster carers will be subject to an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Services check (DBS).

All privately fostered children/young people will have an allocated social worker. Along with their contact details they will be provided with information materials relevant to their age and understanding on what private fostering means. The Coram BAAF publication guide for private fostering is currently provided to each child privately fostered. Information about the advocacy service Total Voice and how to access this is also provided to all children/young people who are privately fostered.

Those children/young people who have been deemed as 'children/young people in need' or 'disabled' under the Children Act 1989 and are privately fostered will at the age of 16/18 years have access to an after-care service.

The Directorate undertakes file audits on a regular basis, and has a policy for the use of requirements, prohibitions, disqualifications, and appeals' decisions. Decisions regarding the latter powers will be made whilst bearing in mind the best interests of the individual child/young person.

The Local authority will carry out its other duties under the Children Act 1989 wherever there are safeguarding concerns.

When a child leaves the private fostering arrangement the social worker to the child will, wherever possible, visit the child at the new address to determine if other duties under the Children Act 1989 are required before closing the case. If the child moves to another Local Authority the social worker will, wherever possible visit the child and shall notify the Local Authority where the child is living of the child's past circumstances and new address.

**11. The role of other agencies in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of privately fostered children, including encouraging notification**

Lincolnshire County Council Children's Services will continue working to ensure that partner agencies are given information on their responsibilities regarding notification under the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005. This includes discussion at relevant meetings such as the Lincolnshire Children's Safeguarding Partnership Operational Delivery Group.

Information materials will continue to be distributed to all relevant agencies.

The Fostering Service will notify private foster carers of any training events that are relevant to caring for children on behalf of parents.

**12. How relevant staff will understand the Directorate's duties and functions in relation to private fostering**

Children's Services own staff will have access to this Statement of Purpose, information materials and training on private fostering including the associated procedures. Other directorates within Lincolnshire County Council and outside agencies will also have these documents, printed information, and relevant training as part of corporate multi-agency training. The Team Manager who is the lead officer for leading and developing the service, will in conjunction with the Head of Service Regulated Services, continue to inform other Directorates within Lincolnshire County Council and partnership agencies of any new guidance, safeguards, and standards.

**13. How the Directorate will ensure that its duties and functions regarding private fostering are included in an induction and other training programmes, and these are reviewed and evaluated annually in line with changes in legislation and guidance**

Children's Services will ensure that its duties and functions in relation to private fostering are included in the annual training plan and will be reviewed considering any changes in legislation, guidance, and best practice developments.

Evaluation via feedback from workers and private foster carers will be collated to see if the training meets the needs of participants of the local authority's duties and functions regarding private fostering. In addition to this, individual workers' training needs in relation to private fostering will be assessed as part of their continuing professional development.

The content of training will be reviewed and evaluated following any comments made by privately fostered children, their parents, or private foster carers.

**14. Monitoring the discharge of functions and compliance with part 9 of the Children Act 1989**

Under Regulation 12, the lead officer for private fostering, currently the Head of Regulated Services, will monitor the way the Directorate complies with and discharges its statutory duties

and functions in relation to private fostering. This officer will monitor compliance with the following duties and functions:

- The promotion of awareness regarding notification requirements
- How the Directorate responds to notifications received, and if these are within timescales
- How the Directorate manages disqualifications, prohibitions, requirements and appeals against these, and refusals to consent to disqualified persons being private foster carers
- How the Directorate exercises its functions under Section 67(5), Children Act 1989
- How the Directorate processes decisions regarding offences committed, bearing in mind the best interests of the child/young person
- How the Directorate assesses the parenting capacity of prospective or actual private foster carers, members of their households and the suitability of their accommodation
- That statutory visits are within timescales and decisions about the suitability of arrangements are also within timescales and approved at managerial level
- That additional visits are made when requested by the child/young person, private foster carer, parents, or those with Parental Responsibility
- That written reports are made in accordance with the Regulations, i.e., conclusions drawn on the arrangement, the child/young person seen alone, wishes and feelings of child/young person, any concerns raised etc.
- That advice and support is provided to private foster carers, parents, those with Parental Responsibility or any person concerned with the child/young person and recorded.
- That information and support is provided to privately fostered children/young people
- That independent interpreters are used as appropriate
- That a sample of individual child/young person and private foster carer records are regularly reviewed to check that compliance is being fulfilled
- That any concerns raised by privately fostered children/young people are investigated
- That a system for recording the number and nature of enquiries received in relation to private fostering, the responses given, and action taken, is effective.

The monitoring reports of private fostering activity notifications, arrangement assessments and visits under Regulation 8 are completed monthly; the reports are presented to the performance information group and are sent to the Director of Children's Services.

Lincolnshire will aim to create open channels for communication and participation to allow privately foster children, their parents, carers, the front-line professionals, and partners to give feed-back on the service and raise any concerns. All recommendations and opinions will be given due consideration and changes of the service will be implemented to ensure continuous improvement.

The Head of Regulated Services provides the Director of Children's Services with an annual report detailing overall performance and related plans for improvement and monitoring.

#### **15. Reviewing the policy statement**

This policy statement will be reviewed annually in line with any changes in legislation or guidance and will be regularly evaluated by the senior management of Children's Services to ensure that the Council's duties and functions in relation to private fostering are effectively discharged.

#### **Advice on private fostering**

Advice on private fostering can be obtained from the lead officer.

Deborah Crawford

Head of Regulated Services

Email [Deborah.crawford@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Deborah.crawford@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

Telephone 01522 552781

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**Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy, Executive Director - Children's Services**

Report to:	<b>Corporate Parenting Panel</b>
Date:	<b>10 November 2022</b>
Subject:	<b>Annual Report of the Regional Adoption Agency</b>

**Summary:**

This is the first full year annual report (21/22) of Family Adoption Links.

**Actions Required:**

Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are invited to review and comment on the report and contents and endorse this as an accurate record of activity across the Family Adoption Links partnership operating as a Regional Adoption Agency.

**1. Background**

To present an overview of the Annual Report of the Regional Adoption Agency for members of Corporate Parenting Panel.

**2. Conclusion**

The Annual Report of the Regional Adoption Agency is set out at Appendix A for consideration.

**3. Consultation**

**a) Risks and Impact Analysis**

N/A

**4. Appendices**

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report

Appendix A	Family Adoption Links Annual Report 2021-22
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## **5. Background Papers**

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by John Harris, Head of Regional Adoption Agency, who can be contacted on 07920274866 or [john.harris@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:john.harris@lincolnshire.gov.uk).



# Family Adoption Links Annual Report 2021-22

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- Post Adoption Support
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- Regional progress
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- Child(ren) journey

# Background

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The regional adoption partnership, Family Adoption Links, was launched in October 2020. This is a report relating to its first full year of operation, April 2021 – end March 2022. This report fulfils the statutory requirement that an annual report be produced and will form part of each partner's Annual Adoption Report.

The government's Education and Adoption Act (2016) set out expectations for adoption services through the establishment of regional adoption agencies (RAA). By the end of 2020 every local authority was expected to become part of a RAA.

Following discussions with East Midlands authorities, Lincolnshire, Rutland, Leicestershire and Leicester City agreed on an aligned partnership model and this was further strengthened by the formal inclusion of North Lincolnshire Council in early 2020 and Northamptonshire Children's Trust in January 2022.

It was agreed that Lincolnshire County Council would become lead authority for the RAA and the partnership was launched in October 2020 under the banner of "Family Adoption Links".

The RAA oversees a number of key areas of adoption provision including the recruitment of adopters, assessment and training, matching and placement of children along with development and co-ordination of post-adoption support services. The delivery of services to children and adopters remains integrated into broader Children's services within each Authority.

The strategic direction and development of the partnership is invested in the Board which comprises:

- Jane Moore, Director of Children's Services, Leicestershire County Council
- Janice Spencer, Assistant Director, Lincolnshire County Council
- Sharon Cooke, Assistant Director, Leicestershire County Council
- Caroline Tote, Assistant Director, Leicester City Council
- Paul Cowling, Service Lead, North Lincolnshire Council
- Lydia Bennett, Head of Service, Rutland Council
- Cornelia Andreucut, Director, Northamptonshire Children's Trust

# Background

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The partnership has a strategic vision:

“We’re a dynamic regional partnership  
aimed at delivering excellence in every aspect of adoption.

We strive to ensure the best possible match for children and adoptive parents and develop a comprehensive range of support services to ensure a positive adoption journey. We seek to develop the widest pool of professionals who engage in innovative and ground-breaking new adoption practices”

A pooled budget was created within the RAA to fund central hub staffing costs including the RAA Head of Service post, marketing officer, data analyst and business support officer. All of these were in post by April 2021. The provision of the posts was funded by equal contributions from all partnership Authorities. This has augmented the central Government grant allocation and provided firm staffing foundations for the first 3 years of operation. The intention is that the partnership will deliver a range of financial benefits, including better value for money through economies of scale and a decrease in the number of children requiring specialist, intensive and costly placements/services.

The HOS post governs the management and decision-making of those Local Authority budgets in conjunction with the Adoption Managers that hold responsibility for the budgets locally. This ensures consistency in decision-making and assists with regional improvements and identifies areas where practice needs to be aligned and future efficiencies could be identified.

# Progress

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The partnership has developed the “Family Adoption Links” regional brand. This regional brand reflects the vision, mission, values and strategic outcomes of the Partnership.

The Partnership appointed an interim Regional Head of Service, responsible for the delivery of the RAA. Unfortunately, the post holder left the role and since May 2021, a temporary Head of Service has been in post on a part-time basis. The Regional Head of Service has a single line of accountability to the Management Board and undertakes a range of key functions in conjunction with Service leads across the partnership.

The operational focus for the first full year of operation has been to develop 5 core pillars as the foundations for effective partnership working. The emphasis on these has been successful in developing collaboration in both strategy and operational delivery.

# Marketing and Recruitment

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Alex McGuire is the Marketing Officer for Family Adoption Links.

## Re-brand

The partnership has been successfully re-branded with a stunning new logo, a suite of corporate colours and fonts, imagery that reflects the children we are family finding for and easy to use corporate guidelines to help all members of the partnership produce visually stunning and appealing work.

Each adoption service has been re-named as Family Adoption Links Location creating consistency across the partnership and the fresh new logos ensure instant brand recognition.

Many guides/presentations have been created in the new style, here are a few examples...

# Marketing and Recruitment

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**Make a splash...**  
How to create  
outstanding Link  
Maker profiles...



## Prepare to Adopt Training

Welcome to Day 1





# Marketing and Recruitment

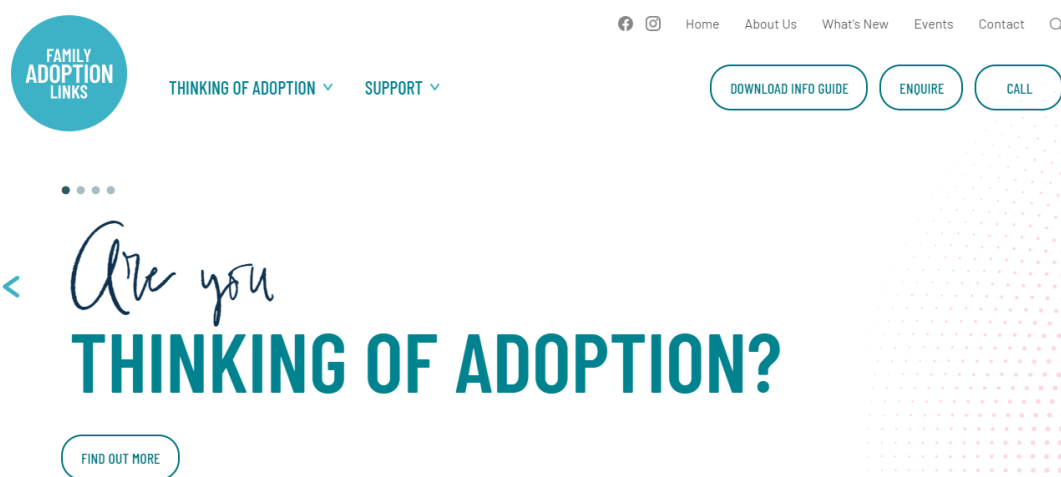
## Website

A new website has been created to maximise the recruitment and support activities for the partnership. Reflecting the dynamic and innovative new branding, the new site is designed to be engaging and user-friendly empowering potential adopters and adopters at every stage of their journey.

By including the You Can Adopt Information guides, a You Can Adopt Information video and the ability to book onto our You Can Adoption Information events at any time, we are able to deliver better qualified enquiries, maximise event attendance and reduce administration time.

Featuring full editorial control, the website is 'alive' with information and uses storytelling and testimonials to give potential adopters confidence. The most popular page is the 'The children who need adopting' section receiving 11.58% of the total website traffic over the last 5 months.

The website will also serve as platform for delivering the professional, consistent and outstanding adoption support services we seek to provide as a partnership and become, ultimately, a single point of contact for those seeking post adoption support and training.



# Marketing and Recruitment

## Social Media

Content and posts from the Family Adoption Links Facebook page was seen by 29,910 people in the last 12 months (1/4/21-1/4/22).

The partner accounts of Northamptonshire, Leicestershire and Leicester were re-named to reflect their new identities and work is ongoing to move these accounts and their followers to the central account as soon as possible.

## Adoption Information Events

By creating centralised Adoption Information Events hosted on Eventbrite, the partnership has enjoyed incredible economies of scale both in terms of time and money.

The corporate presentation delivered on a rotational basis receives positive feedback from both staff and potential adopters at each event and since the events began in November, we have welcomed 139 potential adopters online.

Here's some of the feedback we have received...

*"The online event was really good, very informative and good having 2 adopters on to chat as well. Denise really seemed very passionate about her role and the team and RAA as a whole."*  
*"We found it very informative and I must say the topics covered were all relevant and exactly what is needed at this stage thank you."*

*"It was great with all the information we needed, thank you again."*



# Marketing and Recruitment

## Marketing and Workstreams

Marketing is fully involved in each of the partnership's workstreams from producing stunning new presentations for the Assessment and Training group to creating enticing videos for priority children in the Family Finding workstream. We are committed to digitalising wherever possible to ensure the user journey is as seamless as possible.

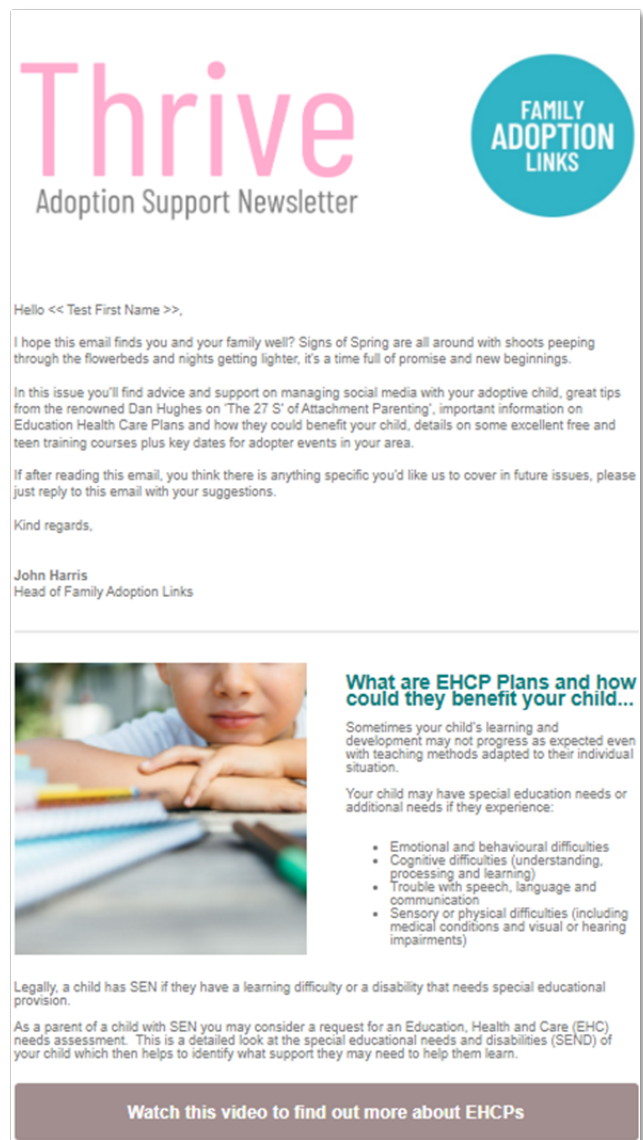
Highlights of this include...

The Family Adoption Links Lincolnshire's Adoption Support event. Now the event is:

- Publicised on 'Thrive' the adoption support newsletter
- Advertised on the support section of the website
- Linked to Eventbrite where you can choose your date and book in with all of the required information
- Guests then receive automatic email reminders to reduce no shows and ensure they have relevant information for the event
- After the event, guests receive an email with a link to a feedback form on Microsoft teams for instant feedback

'Thrive' the post adoption support newsletter:

- Created and distributed via Mailchimp
- Great feedback "Thoroughly enjoying the new email newsletters from Family Adoption Links. Great read and great articles."
- Excellent performance statistics



**Thrive**  
Adoption Support Newsletter

FAMILY ADOPTION LINKS

Hello << Test First Name >>.

I hope this email finds you and your family well? Signs of Spring are all around with shoots peeping through the flowerbeds and nights getting lighter, it's a time full of promise and new beginnings.

In this issue you'll find advice and support on managing social media with your adoptive child, great tips from the renowned Dan Hughes on 'The 27 S' of Attachment Parenting', important information on Education Health Care Plans and how they could benefit your child, details on some excellent free and teen training courses plus key dates for adopter events in your area.

If after reading this email, you think there is anything specific you'd like us to cover in future issues, please just reply to this email with your suggestions.

Kind regards,

John Harris  
Head of Family Adoption Links

**What are EHCP Plans and how could they benefit your child...**

Sometimes your child's learning and development may not progress as expected even with teaching methods adapted to their individual situation.

Your child may have special education needs or additional needs if they experience:

- Emotional and behavioural difficulties
- Cognitive difficulties (understanding, processing and learning)
- Trouble with speech, language and communication
- Sensory or physical difficulties (including medical conditions and visual or hearing impairments)

Legally, a child has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or a disability that needs special educational provision.

As a parent of a child with SEN you may consider a request for an Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessment. This is a detailed look at the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) of your child which then helps to identify what support they may need to help them learn.

[Watch this video to find out more about EHCPs](#)

# Data

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The Data analyst for the region is Benjamin Richardson.

He has worked collaboratively with partnership representatives to deliver an agreed submission to the Adoption and Special Guardianship Board on a quarterly basis. Work is taking place to deliver a regional data set that will support recruitment and family finding activity.



Microsoft Power BI will provide accurate adoption reporting facilities for both individual Local Authorities and the region and provides visuals that will support the presentation of adoption data for any OFSTED inspection. Work is currently taking place to facilitate the sharing of this to all partner authorities.

Data is seen as key to service delivery within the partnership and Benjamin contributes to the development of all work streams. By forging productive working relationship Benjamin has moved the partnership to the point where it is able to deliver the required adopter lead data in a timely fashion for the quarterly ASGLB return.

Coupled with the development of the local data set, the partnership is moving towards a more consistent and timely delivery of key information which supports all adoption activity.

## Performance in the first 12 months

Against the backdrop of the Covid 19 pandemic, the recruitment and approval of adoptive parents has continued. Panels have operated virtually and matches have in many ways been enhanced by the advent of Teams!

The court processes have sadly been subject to some delay and as a result, the plans for some children have been delayed. Nevertheless, activity across all partners has remained strong as indicated in some core data in [Appendix I](#).

# Workstreams

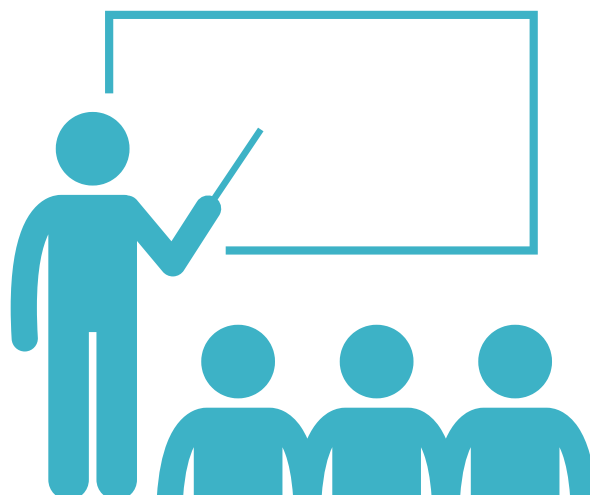
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The Partnership has brought together regional operational managers responsible for Adoption from each partner. This group demonstrates a shared purpose to deliver services for families that are locally determined but at the same time have clear links to wider local, regional and national priorities. The group meets monthly and a service lead is allocated to core functions essential to develop a regional approach. The workstreams are Assessment and Training, Family Finding and Post adoption support.

## Assessment and Training

The Assessment and Training workstream is led by Georgina Oreffo from Leicester City. An agreed modular approach to both pre and post approval training is in place. The content of the preparation courses has been agreed with the view of joint delivery across the partnership to commence in 2022.

In addition the group has develop an integrated and seamless training plan to support adopters post approval.



The mode of delivery will be enhanced by the development of the website which will act as a hub for on line and face to face training modules. The ambition is for courses to be available to adopters across the partnership which should enable more rapid access and provide staff flexibilities.

## Family Finding

The Family Finding workstream is led jointly by Anne Johnson from Lincolnshire and Michelle Robinson from Leicestershire. The ambition of the partnership is to provide a consistent approach to family finding and ensuring that the partnership can meet the needs of most children requiring adoption.

The adoption of a single approach requires practice to change for some partners and proposals for achieving a whole partnership approach will be made to the Family Adoption Links Board.

# Workstreams

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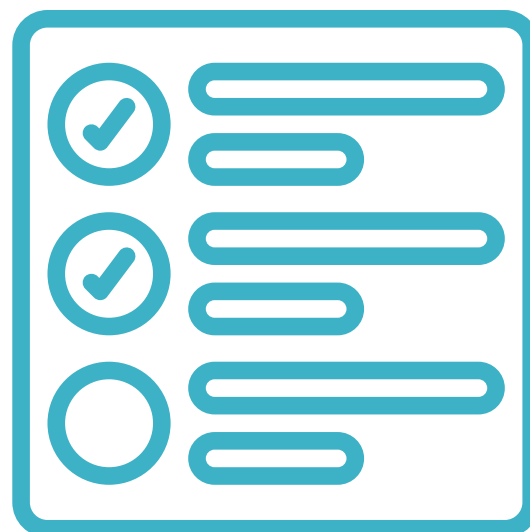
The workstream has effectively developed an agreed process for the partnership and the refreshed approach to family finding will be in place in 2022. This will bring together information of all adopters children matched within partner authorities and identify those who would benefit from a broader range of adoptive homes and importantly offer an integrated and creative opportunity to identify families for children who have additional needs and developmental complexities.

In support of the family finding model Linkmaker have been asked to set up and FAL area on their system, so that there is a 'shared area' where all the FAL children's profiles will appear and all the approved adopters are able to register, search and express interest in the children.

Each of the LA's in the partnership has a representative who will attend the monthly family finding meetings, bringing with them the up to date position of children and adopters in their LA. The meetings will be chaired by Michelle Robinson until the format of the meetings has been well established and reviewed.

In order to make sure the meetings are focused on the children who have been the more difficult to place, and those who have been waiting the longest, Benjamin Richardson has produced a data system which will track all of the children, and which has links to the profiles on Linkmaker which will support the process and ensure that the meetings are effective. T

he meetings started in April 22 and there will be ongoing monitoring of the process and the outcomes.



# Workstreams

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## Adoption Support

Adoption support is the final key workstream and is led by Karen Everatt from North 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;

1. Post Adoption Support Directory
2. Therapeutic Suppliers List
3. Adoption Support Fund
4. Quarterly Adopters Newsletter – second edition available
5. Post Placement and Post Order training offer across FAL which includes virtual / face to face training modules and E Learning modules.
6. Training Calendar goes live April 2022

The concentration on a core offer has enabled FAL to create some economies of scale in both the provision of information and training for adopters and developing a partnership directory of therapeutic providers which may support more effective commissioning for all partners.

The provision of the Adoption support fund will continue for the next 3 years and our challenge will be to ensure quality and value for money post adoption provision, balancing what each Authority delivers with what is down from the Government fund.





# Workstreams

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Areas to develop next in the core offer;

Considering the Core offer has enabled us to identify strengths but consider together with adopters areas that we could develop more consistently for the region. In 22/23 in response to the work commissioned from Adopter Voice , we will consider how we enhance the offer in respect of both education and peer buddying.

# Engagement

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Family Adoption Links Head of service is continuing to engage key stakeholders within and beyond the council to align services and to identify broader opportunities for transformation and development. This includes representing the region to the Department of Education (DfE), at the National RAA Leaders Group and the Regional Adoption & Special Guardianship Leadership Board. The service has engaged with Adopter voice on a 12 month contract to ensure that the views of adopters is reflected within service delivery. Adopters actively support the delivery of information events and preparatory training. In addition following a meeting of stakeholders involved in the "childs journey" FAL will convene meetings for ADMs and Panel advisors as an opportunity to share good practice, work towards achieving consistency and consider training needs.

# Conclusion

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The partnership development has taken place against a backdrop of a pandemic and staff changes. Development of the partnership is centred on core areas which when completed will provide the partnership with genuine momentum and provide opportunities to modify adoption practice and create some staffing efficiencies. Progress is very much in line with the expectations of the Revised Government strategy for adoption "Achieving Excellence Everywhere" issued in July 2021.



# Plans for 2022

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Northamptonshire

## Northamptonshire Children's Trust

Northamptonshire Children's Trust will be formally welcomed into the partnership.



## Website

The website will be promoted and the training and development offer for adopters will be delivered from this central hub.



## Marketing

Create the You Can Adopt Information video to reduce the need to have to wait for an information event.

Produce innovative videos focussed on adopters who have created families with harder to place children.

Deliver bespoke events focussed on harder to place children to reduce their waiting time.



## Linkmaker

A partnership-based approach in conjunction with Linkmaker will go live. A standardised approach to child profiles will be agreed.

# Plans for 2022

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## Adopter Voice

Adopter Voice will continue to inform our workstreams and an options paper on our post adoption offer will be presented to the Board to determine how it is delivered.



## Virtual Heads

The post adoption offer will be better informed and developed by engaging with Virtual Head teachers.



## Key stakeholders

Work will be undertaken with all key stakeholders within the adopter approval process to consider whether efficiencies could be achieved by developing more consistent practice surrounding the operations of the Adoption Panels.



## Data

We will further develop the partnership approach to data collection and use, ensuring that all partners have access to accurate data that supports their adoption delivery and that ASGLB returns can be administered through a central point.

This report was written by John Harris, Family Adoption Links Head of Service.

[john.harris@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:john.harris@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

07920 274866

# Appendix I

Please see below for the regional overview of the partnership . This view is available on our centralised reporting hub and access for this will be granted soon.

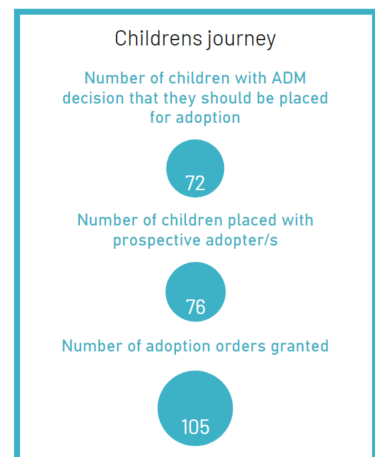
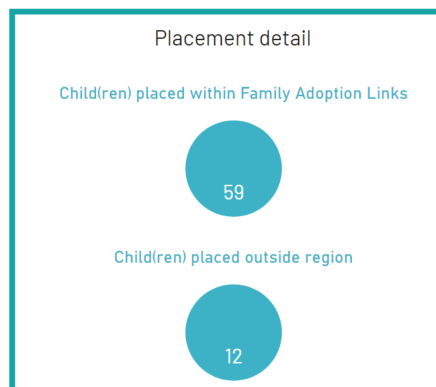
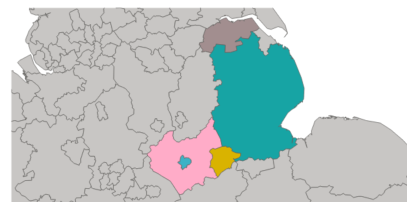
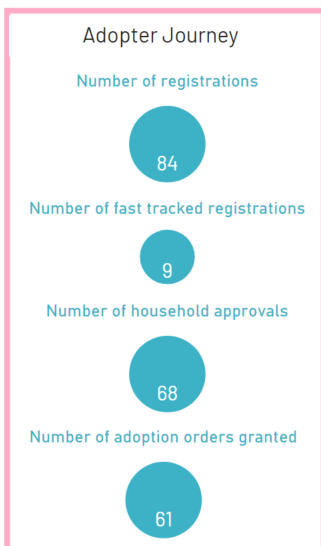
## Regional overview

Date range queried

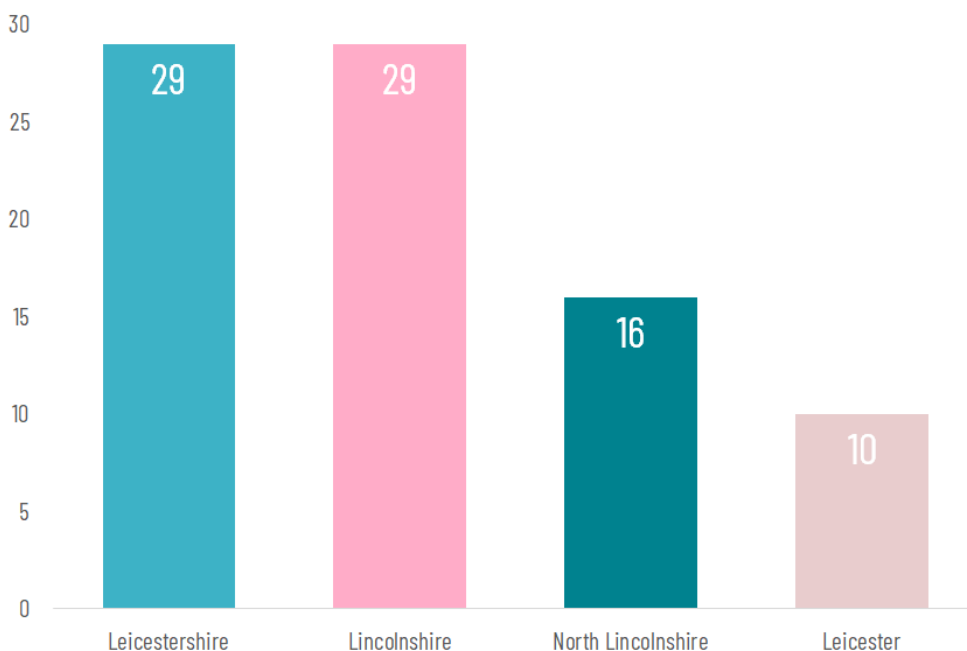
18/10/2020

30/09/2021

-Family Adoption Links-  
Progress since the partnership commenced



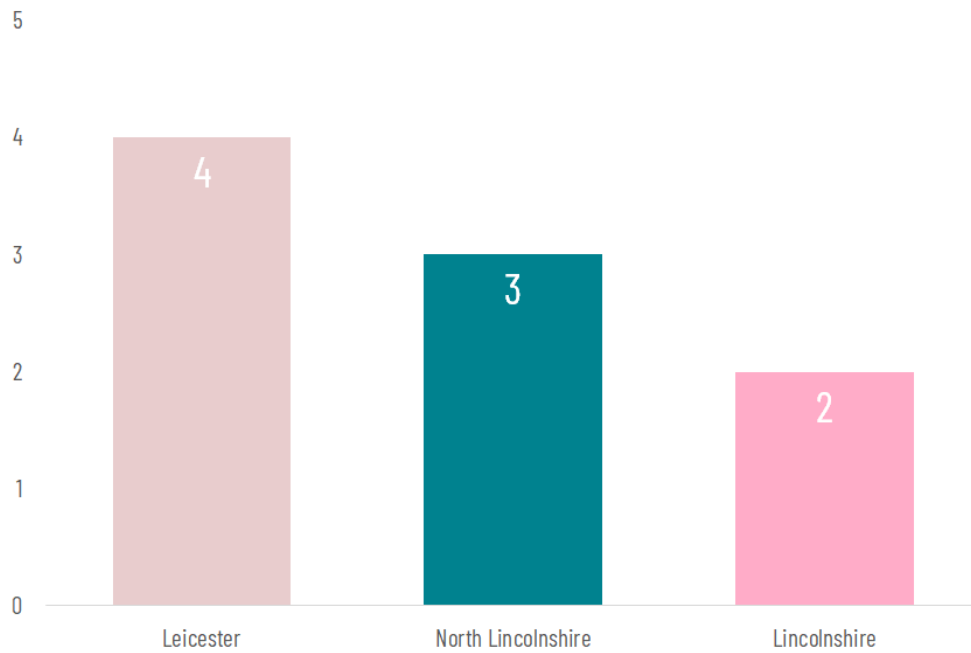
## Adopter journey - Number of registrations



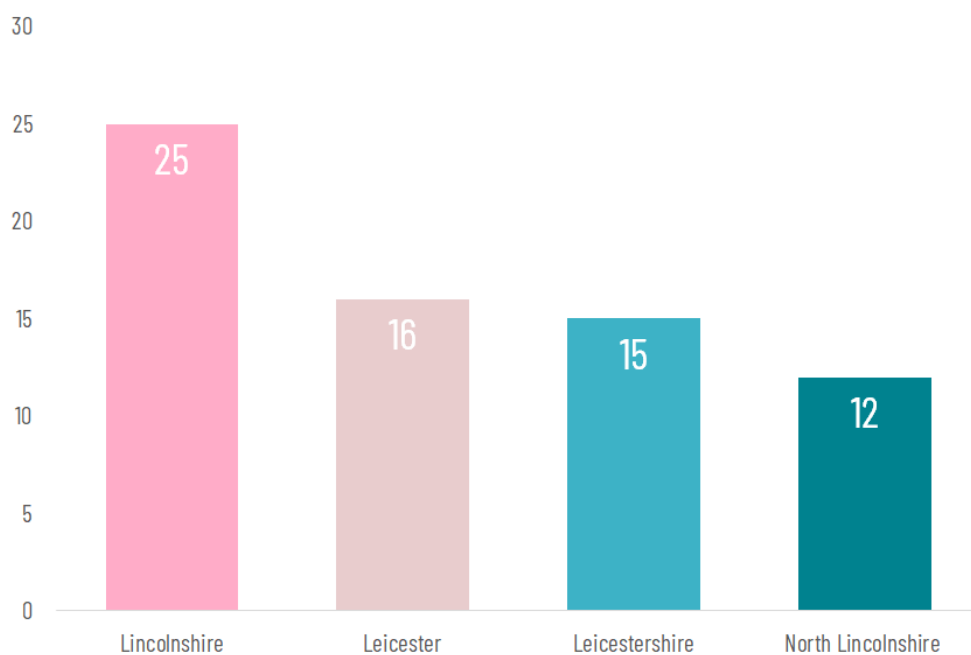
# Appendix I

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## Adopter journey - Number of fast tracked registrations



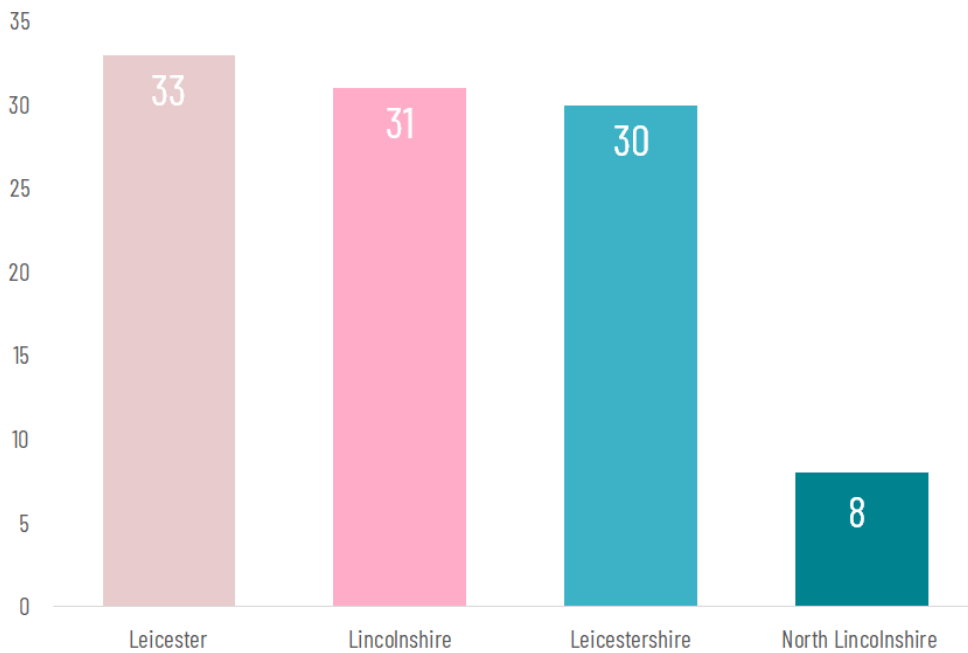
## Adopter journey - Number of adopter approvals



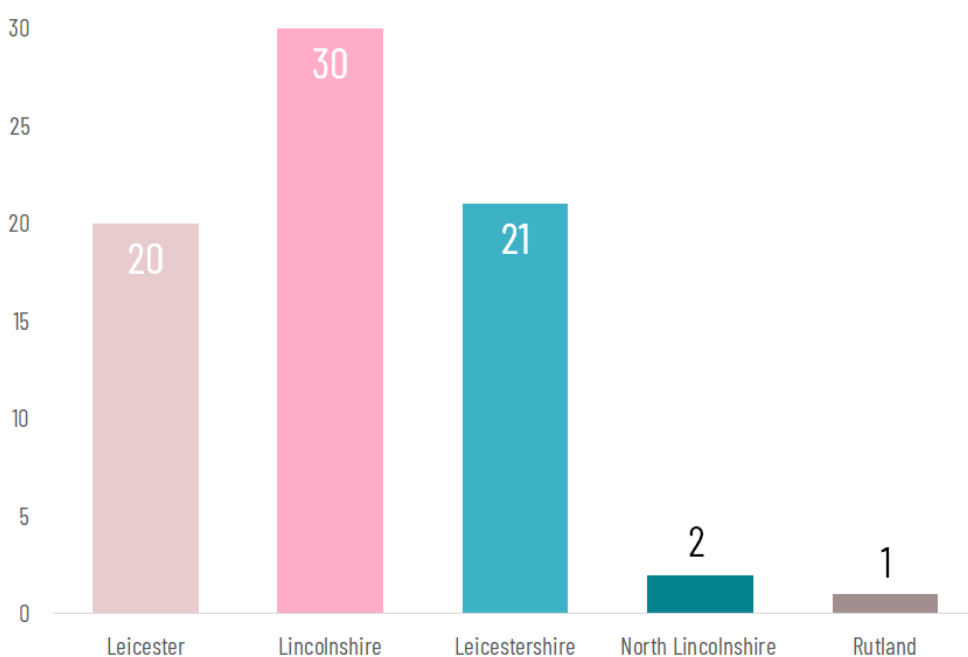
# Appendix I

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Adopter journey - Number of adoption orders granted



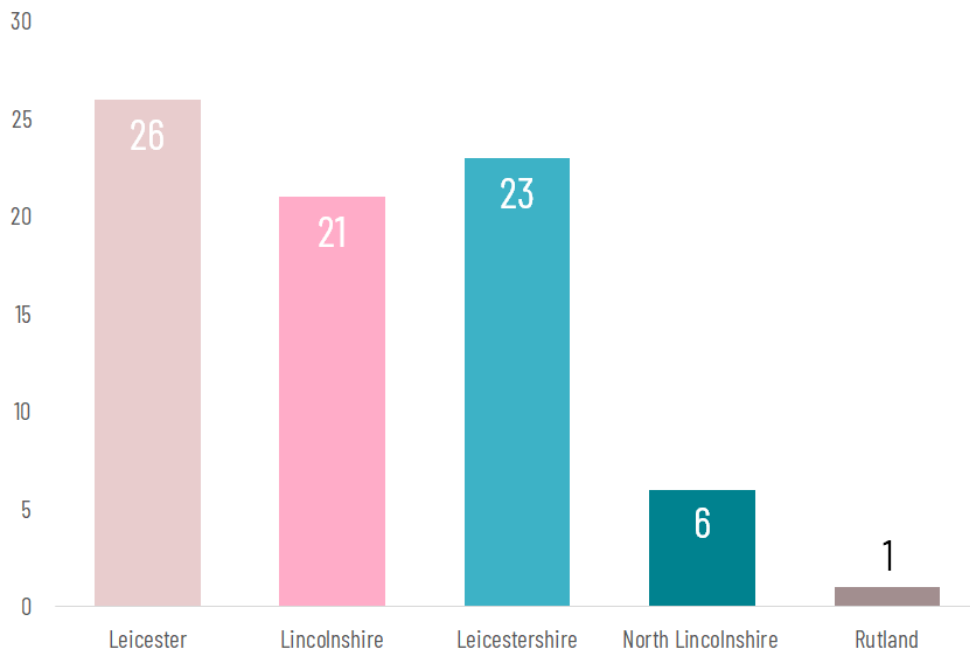
Child(ren) journey - Number of children with ADM decision to be placed for adoption



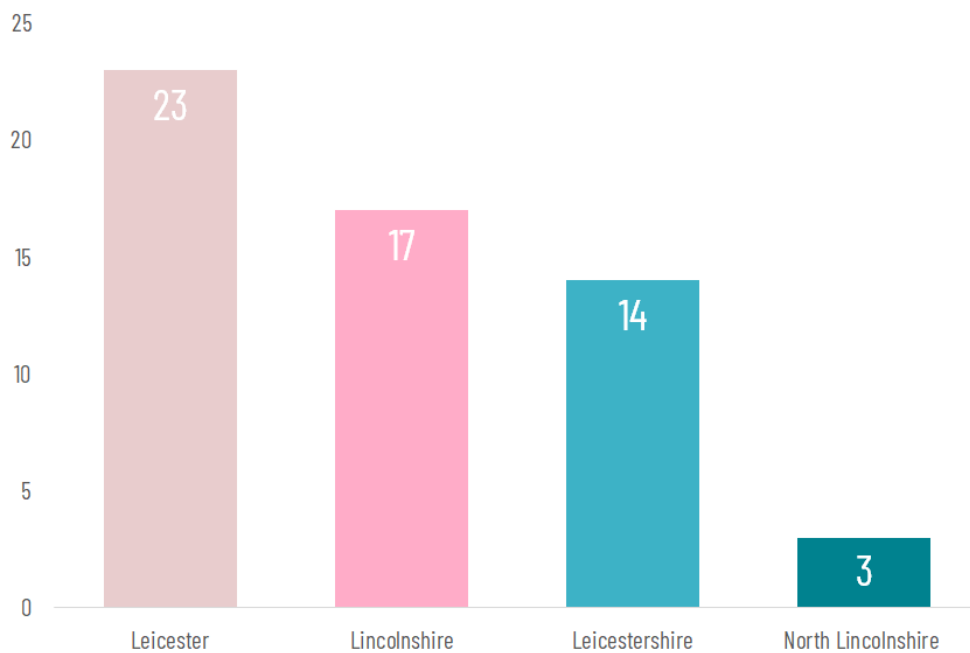
# Appendix I

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## Child(ren) journey - Number of children matched



## Child(ren) journey - Number of children not in sibling group placed

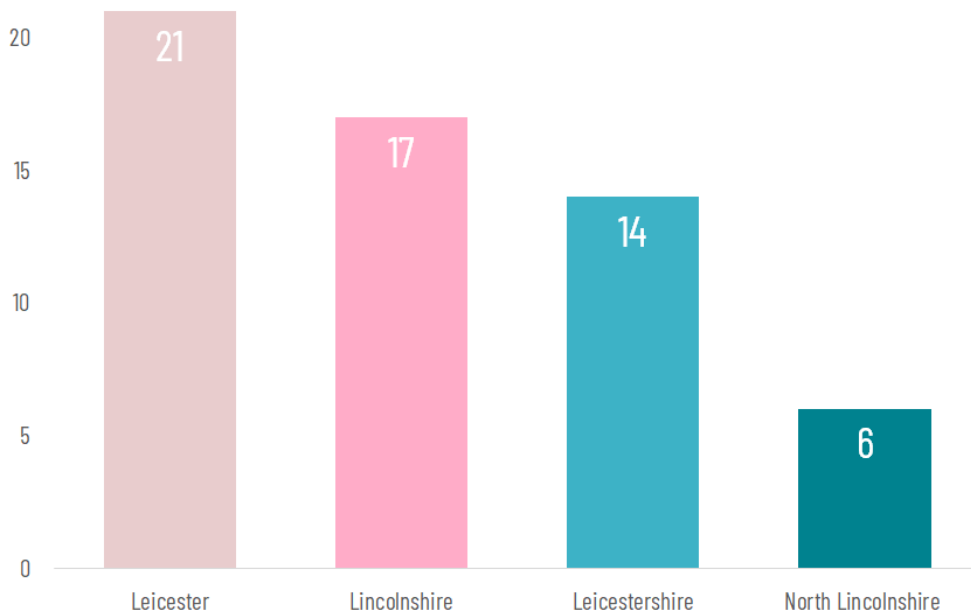


As an RAA we have placed 17 children in a sibling group of 2 and 1 child in a sibling group of 3.

# Appendix I

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Child(ren) journey - Number of children placed within FAL



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**Open Report on behalf of Andrew Crookham, Executive Director – Resources**

Report to:	<b>Corporate Parenting Panel</b>
Date:	<b>10 November 2022</b>
Subject:	<b>Corporate Parenting Panel Work Programme</b>

**Summary:**

This item enables the Panel to consider and comment on the content of its work programme for the coming year to ensure that scrutiny activity is focused where it can be of greatest benefit. The work programme will be reviewed at each meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel to ensure that its contents are still relevant and will add value to the work of the Council and partners.

**Actions Required:**

Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are invited to:

- (1) Review and approve the work programme; and,
- (2) Highlight any additional activity which could be included for consideration in the work programme.

**1. Background**

Overview and Scrutiny should be positive, constructive, independent, fair, and open. The scrutiny process should be challenging, as its aim is to identify areas for improvement.

Scrutiny activity should be targeted, focused and timely and include issues of corporate and local importance, where scrutiny activity can influence and add value.

Members are encouraged to highlight items that could be included for consideration in the work programme.

## 2. Work Programme

<b>10 November 2022</b>	
<b>Item</b>	<b>Contributor</b>
1. <b>Independent Reviewing Service – 6 Month Report (April to September 2022)</b>	Carolyn Knight, Quality and Standards Manager
2. <b>Regulation 44 Independent Visiting Service – Six Month Report (April to September 2022)</b>	Carolyn Knight, Quality and Standards Manager
3. <b>Fostering Quarterly Performance Report Q2</b>	Deborah Crawford, Children's Head of Regulated Services
4. <b>Private Fostering Annual Report and Statement of Purpose</b>	Deborah Crawford, Children's Head of Regulated Services
5. <b>Family Adoption Links Annual Report</b>	Tara Jones, Interim Assistant Director for Children's Safeguarding on behalf of John Harris, FAL Manager

<b>19 January 2023</b>	
<b>Item</b>	<b>Contributor</b>
1. <b>Criminal Activity, Outcomes and Pathways for Children in Care</b>	Andy Cook, Head of Service – Future4Me and Youth Offending
2. <b>Commissioning Excellence: Meeting the Sufficiency Duty 2018-2022 Annual Update</b>	Amy Allcock, Commissioning Manager - Commercial
3. <b>Lincolnshire Virtual School Annual Report 2021-2022</b>	Kieran Barnes, Virtual School Headteacher
4. <b>Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service - Six Monthly Update Report</b>	Lisa Adams, Service Manager, Barnardo's Leaving Care Services
5. <b>Fostering Quarterly Performance Report Q3</b>	Deborah Crawford, Children's Head of Regulated Services
6. <b>Children in Care Performance Measures Quarter 1 2022/23 (July to September 2022)</b>	Tara Jones, Interim Assistant Director for Children's Safeguarding on behalf of John Harris, FAL Manager
7. <b>Children in Care Annual Report 2021/22</b>	Tara Jones, Interim Assistant Director for Children's Safeguarding on behalf of John Harris, FAL Manager

9 March 2023	
Item	Contributor
1. Children in Care engagement in education- Impact of Department for Education (DfE) Post 16 pilot	Kieran Barnes, Virtual School Head Teacher
2. Voices for Choices (V4C) Update Report	Ben Lilley, Practice Supervisor (Quality and Standards)
3. Children in Care Performance Measures - Q3 2022/23 (October to December 2021)	Tara Jones, Interim Assistant Director for Children's Safeguarding on behalf of John Harris, FAL Manager

11 May 2023	
Item	Contributor
1. Legal Services Lincolnshire end of year report 2021/22	Nicola Corby, Acting Principal Lawyer
2. Regulation 44 Independent Visiting Service – Annual Report 2022/23	Carolyn Knight, Quality and Standards Manager
3. Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report 2022/23	Carolyn Knight, Quality and Standards Manager
4. Children in Care Performance Measures Q 4 2022/23	Tara Jones, Interim Assistant Director for Children's Safeguarding on behalf of John Harris, FAL Manager
5. Fostering Quarterly Performance Report - Q 4 2022/23	Deborah Crawford, Head of Service Fostering, Adoption and Leaving Care

### 3. Conclusion

Members of the Panel are invited to review and comment on the work programme and highlight any additional activity which could be included for consideration in the work programme.

### 4. Consultation

#### a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

### 5. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Kiara Chatziioannou, Scrutiny Officer, who can be contacted on 07500 571868 or by e-mail at [kiara.chatziioannou@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:kiara.chatziioannou@lincolnshire.gov.uk).

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