



CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

THURSDAY, 11 MAY 2023 at 10.00 AM
in the COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY OFFICES, NEWLAND, LINCOLN LN1 1YL

MEMBERSHIP

<u>Lincolnshire County Council:</u>	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
<u>Added Members (non-voting):</u>	Polly Coombes, Ann Wright, Amy-Louise Butler, Elizabeth Bunney and 1 Vacancy(Children In Care Council Representative)

AGENDA

Item	Title	Pages
1	Apologies for Absence/Replacement Members	
2	Declarations of Interest	
3	Minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 March 2023	3 - 8
4	Announcements by the Chairman, Executive Councillors and Chief Officers	
5	Regulation 44 Independent Visitors Report <i>(To receive a report by Carolyn Knight, Head of Service – Quality and Standards and Principle Social Worker, which invites the Panel to consider a 6 monthly update on the Regulation 44 Independent Visitors Service)</i>	9 - 36

- 6 Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report (1 April 2022 - 31 March 2023)** 37 - 62
(To receive a report by Carolyn Knight, Head of Service, Quality & Standards Team and Principle Social Worker, which invites the Panel to consider the Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report (1 April 2022 - 31 March 2023))
- 7 Children in Care school attendance - addendum to Virtual School Annual Report for the academic year 2021 -22** 63 - 72
(To receive a report by Sarah Lane, Interim Virtual School Headteacher, which provides an overview of the school attendance of children in the care of Lincolnshire for the academic year 2021-22)
- 8 Corporate Parenting Panel Work Programme** 73 - 76
(To receive a report by Kiara Chatziioannou, Scrutiny Officer, which invites the Panel to consider its work programme)

Distributed on Tuesday, 2 May 2023

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, 11th May, 2023, 10.00 am \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#)

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



**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
9 MARCH 2023**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S P ROE (CHAIRMAN)

Lincolnshire County Council: Councillors Clio Perraton-Williams (Vice-Chairman), A G Hagues, C Matthews and M A Whittington

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

Officers in attendance:-

Kiara Chatziioannou (Scrutiny Officer), Andrew Morris (Corporate Parenting Manager), Emily Wilcox (Democratic Services Officer), Emily McAllister (Fostering Team Manager), Laura Bonner (Head of Service (East Lindsey Locality)), Deborah Crawford (Head of Service, Fostering, Adoption and Leaving Care), Jo Kavanagh (Assistant Director of Early Help) and Ben Lilley (Team Manager, Quality and Standards)

44 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence had been received from K H Cooke and Polly Coombes.

45 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were declared.

46 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 19 JANUARY 2023

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 January 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

47 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND CHIEF OFFICERS

The Panel noted apologies for absence from the Assistant Director – Children’s Safeguarding.

48 CHILDREN IN CARE ENGAGEMENT IN EDUCATION - IMPACT OF DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION (DFE) POST 16 PILOT

Consideration was given to a report by the Corporate Parenting Manager, which provided an overview of the impact of the Department for Education (DfE) Post 16 Pupil Premium pilot that ran from October 2021 to March 2022, as set out in appendix A to the report.

The report highlighted the positive impact on the support and provision for young people in care and care leavers at local further education provision and the extension of the pilot was welcomed.

Consideration was given to the report and during the discussion the following points were recorded:

- The Panel welcomed a strong support offer to unaccompanied, who children accounted for 1/3 of children in care in Lincolnshire. The Panel were pleased to hear that each young person was offered access to an English as a second language (ESL) course almost immediately, however it was noted that many of the children could speak English reasonably well.
- The imaginative use of the funding and the support it had provided for young people in care and care leavers was commended.
- The Young People's Learning Provision programmes were ran by Lincolnshire County Council.
- The Panel acknowledged that the circumstances many young people in care and care leavers changed regularly meaning that flexibility in access to places at all points through the year was essential.
- The virtual school cohort often fluctuated slightly in each 12-week period. The benefits of the pilot in being able to offer financial support to allow a more individual focus were highlighted.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be received and endorsed by the Panel;
2. That the work undertaken as part of the pilot be commended;
3. That the extension of the Post 16 Pupil Premium pilot be supported;
4. That comments made be taken under consideration.

49 VOICES FOR CHOICES (V4C) UPDATE REPORT

Consideration was given to a report by the Practice Supervisor – Quality and Standards, which provided an summary and overview of recent activities regarding Voices for Choices (V4C) and the Big Conversation and actions to support future planning an progress, as referenced in the report.

Consideration was given to the report and during the discussion the following points were recorded:

- The FAB! Awards would take place on Saturday 17 June. An invite to all Panel Members was agreed to be circulated.
- A staff vacancy in the Lincoln and West Lindsey had now been filled.
- The Panel commended the big conversation event and the platform it provided for progressive conversations between children, young people and professionals.
- The Panel supported the review of V4C.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be received;
2. That thanks be recorded for the overall efforts of Officers to engage with Lincolnshire's young people and improve the attendance of V4C meeting and events;
3. That the views and feedback of the Panel be shared with Officers and relevant Portfolio holders in support of their efforts.

50 CHILDREN IN CARE PERFORMANCE MEASURES QUARTER 3

Consideration was given to a report by the Assistant Director – Children and Young People, which invited the Panel to consider and comment on the key performance information for Quarter 3 of 2022/23, as detailed in the report.

Consideration was given to the report and during the discussion the following information were recorded:

- The Panel were assured that making dentists available to Children in Care was a priority and treatment would be paid for should an child require it.
- It was recognised that there were national challenges with the availability of NHS dental provision. It was hoped that the recruitment of new dentists in Lincolnshire would alleviate issues and ensure that basic health needs for all children were met.
- The majority of money spent on supporting care leavers mental health needs was for pastoral support. The importance of investing in the emotional wellbeing of young people was essential, in particular given the traumatic experiences many children in care and care leavers had experienced, much of the support provided allowed the children to survive basic needs and support them to reach educational achievement.
- A breakdown of the locality of children in care for Lincolnshire was agreed to be circulated.
- The extension of the leaving care service to 25 was essential, given that many care leavers were not ready to enter employment until later in their trajectory, given the experiences they had endured.
- The reasons for a drop in pass rates would be included within future reports.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be received and accepted as an accurate overview of the service for the Quarter 3 of 2022/23;
2. That satisfaction be given to the assurances provided where targets had not been met;
3. That the comments recorded be taken under consideration by Officers and relevant Portfolio holders.

51 FOSTERING SERVICE QUARTER THREE PERFORMANCE REPORT

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Service – Fostering, Adoption and Leaving Care, which provided an overview of the Fostering Service Performance for Quarter 3 of 2022/23, as detailed in Appendix A to the report.

The Head of Service – Fostering Adoption and Leaving Care were pleased to announce that a 12.43% increase in the allowance for Foster Carers 12.43% had been proposed and was subject to a decision by the Executive Councillor for Children’s Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Engagement between the 20th and 31st March 2023.

Consideration was given to the report and during the discussion the following information was recorded:

- The Panel welcomed the proposed increase in allowances for foster carers and expressed their thanks to foster carers for their hard work.
- The proposed increase in fostering allowances was partly funded by the Government and partly funded by Lincolnshire County Council. The importance of ensuring support was provided to foster carers and that they felt valued was emphasised.
- There were a number of factors that led to the breakdown in foster placements, such as issues with attachment. The Panel were assured that all efforts were made to prevent breakdown in placements.
- The Panel acknowledged the challenges faced by foster carers at the the end of or breakdown of placements given the changes in family dynamic faced. The Foster Carer representative emphasised the importance of support from the Fostering Service and the fostering community at that time.
- The Fostering Service was on schedule to finish the year with 32 new approvals.
- The Conversion rate from website enquiries to becoming foster carers was around 11%, which was higher than the national average of 6%. Assurance was provided that people were not leaving Lincolnshire’s fostering service to foster with other agencies.
- A breakdown of the numbers of children in care and the type of placement had been put into was agreed to be circulated.
- The Panel acknowledged that most children in fostering placements would remain in the placements, and evidence was clear that those children in ‘staying put’ arrangements had a better opportunity for family life and often had more successes.

Many of the children entering care ages 16 and 17 faced significant challenges and often wished to be placed in solo placements and semi-independent living options.

- Officers emphasised that each child's needs and past experiences were carefully considered to ensure all children were placed in the setting most suitable for them as an individual.

RESOLVED:

4. That the report be received and satisfaction be given to the performance achieved by Fostering Service and the assurances provided around areas that require attention and improvement
5. That the comments recorded be taken under consideration by relevant Officers and Portfolio holders
6. That thanks to Lincolnshire's Foster Carers be recorded.

52 CRIMINAL ACTIVITY, OUTCOMES AND PATHWAYS FOR CHILDREN IN CARE

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Service – Future4me and Youth Offending, which provided an overview of the approach to reducing youth crime in Lincolnshire through restorative approaches, as detailed in the report.

Consideration was given to the report and during the discussion the following comments were recorded:

- The Panel commended the report and congratulated the team for the efforts made out to which avoided children getting a criminal record and a young age.
- All data recorded within the report related to Lincolnshire's children.
- It was noted that all children remanded into custody became children in care by virtue of the length of time spent on remand.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be received and endorsed;
2. That satisfaction be given to the range of actions and activities designed and implemented to safeguard children in care and divert them from entering the formal criminal justice system where appropriate, or act in a restorative manner where young people find themselves in that situation;
3. That the comments made be shared with relevant officer in support of their efforts.

53 CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the Scrutiny Officer, which invited the Panel to consider its work programme, as set out at pages 287-290 of the agenda.

6
CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
9 MARCH 2023

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted;
2. That the existing work programme be approved.

The meeting closed at 11.56 am



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

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	11 May 2023
Subject:	Regulation 44 Independent Visitors Report

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 October 22 and March 2023.

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 44 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

The Independent Visitors continue to see positive evidence of high-quality care being provided to the young people. The relationships observed from the carers to the young people has been positive, caring and respectful. Staff have invested in the relationships with the young people in an attempt to ensure positive experiences and outcomes. Currently all the homes are rated by Ofsted as Good or Outstanding. It is recognised that the Beacon did have an inadequate rating, however following a positive action plan, this has been re rated as Good in a short period of time.

It should be celebrated that Strut House has had twelve outstanding inspections in a row. A further celebration (mentioned elsewhere in this report) is that since the last report, three young people have been successfully rehabilitated to their families or into a foster family, from Northolme. 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 and facilitated.

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.

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, which is positive. 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.

Management audits continue to take place regularly within the homes, therefore providing management oversight and guidance. Independent visits continue to dip sample key documents and reports and those that have been viewed have concluded that each of the homes continue to safeguard the young people in their care and promote their wellbeing as defined by Regulation 44.4 (a) & (b).

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	Report For The Independent Visiting Service - October 2022 – March 2023

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, Head of Services – Quality and Standards and Principle Social Worker, who can be contacted on 07879603618 or Carolyn.knight@lincolnshire.gov.uk

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**REPORT FOR THE
INDEPENDENT VISITING
SERVICE**

October 2022 – March 2023

*Written by Regulation 44 visitors; 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 1.10.2022 to 31.03.2023.

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 in how the individual homes are meeting each of the care standards. 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 continues to include a section for the Home's Manager's to add their comments on the findings of the visits. 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 November 2022, Regulation 44 visits have continued to be undertaken by three Independent Visitors: Kim Murray, Fiona Watters and Rachael Powis (Rachael left the team in February 2023 and is being replaced by Amy Beacham). The visiting duties to Lincolnshire County Council's eight residential homes and two supported living provisions are shared between the Independent Visitors. Home inspections are rotated regularly throughout the period and are currently undertaken to: Albion Street, Eastgate, The Beacon, Haven Cottage, Northolme, Robin House, Strut House and Lincolnshire Secure Unit. The semi-independent homes are in Grantham (Denton) and Gainsborough (Rowston) and provide accommodation for young people aged 16 to 18 years old. 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. The team manager for the Independent Visitor periodically attend homes manager meetings to ensure that feedback on the service is shared and fed back.

As part of the visits, the Independent Visitor seeks feedback from a range of key stakeholders including the young people, parents, social workers, health, education partners and other relevant individuals to gain a holistic view of the homes. Unfortunately, at times feedback is not always forthcoming and therefore the Independent Visitors are currently reviewing how this could be gained differently.

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

Home Manager Updates

Since November 2022 the home management structure has in the main remained stable, with limited movement. These are as follows:

Albion Street

The Registered Home's Manager (Cheri Blackamore) and Assistant Manager (Samantha White) remain unchanged.

The Beacon

The Registered Home's Manager (Gemma Hart) and Assistant Managers (Nicola Chambers and Peter Hesketh) remains the same.

Eastgate

The Registered Home's Manager (Katie Sansom) and Assistant Manager (Kelsie Tyrrell) at Eastgate remains unchanged.

Haven Cottage

The Interim Home's Manager of Haven Cottage remains unchanged (Vicky Cooke) A new Assistant Manager was successfully recruited commencing their employment in January 2023 (Kelly Hutson). The new Assistant Manager joined the team from Strut House. The Interim Home's Manager is not currently registered with Ofsted, however the registration process has commenced and registered manager interview has been booked.

Lincolnshire Secure Unit

The Registered Home's Manager (Dave Clarke) and three Assistant Managers (James Guthrie, Debbie Norton, Jenny Marshall) remain unchanged.

Northolme

The Registered Home's Manager (Gemma Benson) and Assistant Manager (Lauren Batty) have remained unchanged.

Strut House

Strut House's Registered Manager (Maggie Nowland) and Assistant Manager (Heidi Harris) remain unchanged.

Robin House

The Registered Home's Manager (Jeanette Mitchell-Fox) and Assistant Manager (Helen Wallis) remain unchanged.

Rowston and Denton

There have been no changes to the management structure of Rowston or Denton. Dean Johnson remains the Assistant Manager for both homes, with Andy Morris (Corporate Parenting Manager) having overall management responsibility.

The Voice of the Child

Across the homes there is continued evidence of the young people's voices being captured and listened to. During visits, young people are consistently seen to be confident and articulate in expressing their views and opinion regarding the care they are being given. For example, the young people at Albion Street have voiced their displeasure regarding the amount of external visitors to their home and have therefore drawn up a 'Charter' stipulating how they wish visitors to behave and interact with them whilst in their home. This 'Charter' is displayed above the signing in book. This has also been distributed to Managers within the Local Authority in order that it is shared with staff who may wish to visit. In the homes for children with disabilities, there is evidence of staff using different communication methods to gather the young people's views and wishes. Direct observations have been witnessed of staff engaging with young people using a variety of communication tools, including PECs, social stories, body language and facial expressions to help capture the young people's voices and how they are feeling.

Each home is visited by the advocacy service regularly. The Independent 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, also providing their contact details.

Each home has the ability for the young people to provide their voice and feedback, using the comments and compliments process. It is recognised that this process is not utilised by all of the young people, however when discussed with the young people they have been able to tell the independent visitor how the process works and where the forms are located.

Within the homes the majority of 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. When spoken to during visits they have confirmed that they feel able to speak to staff and management. 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.

The mainstream homes continue to hold regular residents' meetings; in some homes these are known as "Chill and Chat" or "Pizza Pow Wow" 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 to 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 this arena the young people have the opportunity to pose questions to the management team, with a response being provided for the next meeting and this then being shared with the young people.

Evidence has been seen of staff supporting young people completing their consultation documents for their Child in Care reviews, this has been viewed within the young people's files. Staff members will regularly complete direct work with young people 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. Independent Visitors gather feedback from the Independent Reviewing Officers as part of their visits.

Within some homes there are display boards that celebrate the young people 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 monthly newsletters and summaries to share information, including any successes the young people may have had. These monthly summaries are sent out to parents/family members, social worker and other relevant professionals including Independent Reviewing Officers.

The homes continue to advocate of the behalf of the young people. Independent Visitors have seen the homes advocating and challenging decision making regarding a number of issues including challenging the delays in providing tutors for young people when they are refusing to attend school, challenging decision-making regarding family time (when the young people have requested that time is extended), as well as advocating the needs for the young people to have more independence and freedom.

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 and Individual Crisis Support plans are regularly updated to reflect current risk, triggers and red flags as well as strategies to deescalate any challenging behaviour being displayed. On the whole the Independent Visitors have noted that in the majority of homes there has been a reduction in incidents involving any physical intervention. 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 a young person catching public transport to and from school, increased free time in the community, support with budgeting and managing their personal allowance, shopping and accessing activities in the community alone.

The dangers of the internet and social media are regularly risk assessed, with the young people being given appropriate age related access, following extensive 'staying safe' direct work being completed. This includes mobile phone agreements being put in place regarding usage and agreement for staff being able to monitor the devices.

Training remains a priority for the homes and staff report that they can access this regularly. All of the home have a training Matrix to ensure that staff are aware of the mandatory training that must be undertaken. In discussion with Managers, staff are afforded time in the shift rota to allow them time and opportunity to attend training events. Specialist training continues to be provided where required, for example Strut House, The Beacon and Haven Cottage all have in depth training on specific health needs of their young people.

The mainstream homes are also being supported via the Practice Advisors to support their understanding and development of key Practice Frameworks utilised by Children's Services.

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 and evidence has been seen of staff attending and contributing to these. 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. As well as the above evidence has been seen of staff attending S47 strategy discussion and relation to Haven Cottage and the Beacon the management team have been attending the Deprivation of Liberty working group.

A recent initiative that has been put in place is the creation of link CAMHS workers who are primarily attached to Robin House, however in a positive move have been utilised across the mainstream homes, whilst Robin House is waiting to come online. Examples have been seen at Northolme of how they have supported the young people and staff with consultations and formulation clinic's which has given staff more of an insight into the needs of the young people and the support that they can offer to them. At Albion evidence was seen of a three way consultation between the assistant home manager, key worker and the CAMHS worker, in relation to one of the young people's sleep routines. Feedback was very positive in terms of giving them tools and advice to support the young person.

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.

It is important to acknowledge the success that Northolme have had in supporting three young people transitioning back to parents/family or into a foster family in the last 6 months. This is a massive achievement not only for the young people involved but also for the staff members that

have supported them whilst they have been living at the home. Contact has been maintained with these young people, therefore allowing the relationship to be continued and subsequently end at an appropriate planned time which is positive.

There continues to be evidence of Albion Street working with two young people and their families, which has now enabled the young people to visit the family homes unsupervised and with one young person now being able to stay over-night. The home remains in contact with the young people during these stays to offer support where required.

At Eastgate, staff have built up a good relationship with one of the young people's mother enabling him to spend unsupervised time at her home. As well as this staff supported the young person's mother managing any challenging behaviour that might be displayed, alongside supporting the mother to attend parent's evening with staff from the home and the young person.

Transition planning for the young people leaving the Secure Unit is a key priority for the staff at the home. Not only are plans put in place regarding supporting the young person with their transition, either to a new placement or back into the community, staff ensure that support is put in place and that contact is attempted to be maintained.

Albion Street have been supporting a young person, who has been living with them for the last six years, with his next steps to transition to independence. There has been some creative positive direct work completed with him to enable him to understand why he is now ready to move to semi-independence. It is also evident that this work has reduced the young person's negative behaviours within the home, which was upsetting for the other young people living there.

Both Strut House and Haven Cottage have excellent family links and all feedback that has been received has been positive.

The opening of the new Strut House is to be celebrated, the home is a beautiful space welcoming and user friendly, with many facilities for the young people to enjoy. The management team and the care staff worked incredibly hard to ensure the transition was successful. Feedback from stake holder's including families is extremely positive.

Social Pedagogy and Direct Work

Social pedagogy continues to be embedded across the homes, apart from the Secure Unit which applies a Trauma Informed approach as well as using Restorative Justice. Social Pedagogy assists the young people to engage in direct work/activities and conversations about the important things that have happened within their lives. It supports social and emotional learning, developing resilience, social skills and positive relationships. Young people have direct work files and there is consistent evidence of work being completed with them around current risks and incidents, or concern.

As well as social pedagogy, evidence has been seen of the home's embracing Restorative Practice, implementing restorative conversations with the young people following an incident.

Various examples of direct work have been seen throughout the homes, with work being completed looking at life skills including positive relationships, consent, control and what friendship looks like.

In relation to the secure unit as mentioned above direct work is completed in line with any orders from the Courts and using the Trauma Informed model, rather than Social Pedagogy.

The homes have Social Pedagogy champions to ensure that staff are confident in completing social pedagogy work and in using a variety of models. One of the champions will attend team meetings at various homes to discuss how Social Pedagogy continues to be implemented within the home and support with new ideas and approaches. It is recognised that the Social Pedagogy full training takes place over six days, which is a big commitment in relation to staff time. In Strat they are looking at the trainer attending the home and presenting a compressed training day.

Challenges

Most significantly, since the last report, the Beacon was inspected by Ofsted in November 2022. Following this inspection, the home was rated inadequate and received a compliance notice. This was reported to be due to Ofsted having concerns around the safeguarding of young people during their visit. A subsequent monitoring inspection in December 22 found improvements had been made, with a full formal inspection later being carried out on 7th and 8th February with a final overall judgement now being good.

Further challenges faced across the home's include staffing, recruitment and retention. It is recognised that this is not specific to Lincolnshire with there being shortages of care staff nationally. The homes have recommenced promoting the role by visiting local universities and colleges, 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.

It has been noted that at times due to staff sickness and vacancies, short stay care breaks have been disrupted, on some occasions care having to be cancelled and then rearranged. However, it is worth pointing out that the care staff do attempt to be incredibly creative when faced with these challenges and will offer care in the community as an alternative to support the families.

Lincolnshire County Council are preparing to open a new 4 bed residential home, Robin House, staff have been recruited for this home for some time. Pending the home opening (May 2023), the identified staff have been able to support across the other homes. This has served to support staffing challenges within the homes. It is recognised that when these staff transition to Robin House it may have an impact on the existing homes. Independent Visitors have already started visiting the home and producing a Regulation 44 report.

It is recognised that the homes face various challenges when working with young people who have suffered significant trauma and adverse childhood experience and those young people who have been placed in the secure unit. Physical intervention is always used as a last resort and staff are all trained appropriate training Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (used by the mainstream homes) and Ethical Care Control and Restraint used by the Secure unit.

Conclusion

The Independent Visitors continue to see positive evidence of high-quality care being provided to the young people. The relationships observed from the carers to the young people has been positive, caring and respectful. Staff have invested in the relationships with the young people in an attempt to ensure positive experiences and outcomes. Currently all the homes are rated by Ofsted as Good or Outstanding. It is recognised that the Beacon did have an inadequate rating, however following a positive action plan, this has been re rated as Good in a short period of time.

It should be celebrated that Strut House has had twelve outstanding inspections in a row.

A further celebration (mentioned elsewhere in this report) is that since the last report, three young people have been successfully rehabilitated to their families or into a foster family, from Northolme. 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 and facilitated.

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 and a robust recruitment strategy and succession programme.

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, which is positive. 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.

Management audits continue to take place regularly within the homes, therefore providing management oversight and guidance. Independent visits continue to dip sample key documents and reports and those that have been viewed have concluded that each of the homes continue to safeguard the young people 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 the 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 Beacon

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 February 2023

Overall experiences and progress of the 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**

Enforcement action since last inspection 8 November 2022:

A compliance notice was set under Regulation 12, The protection of children standard.

This was judged to have been met during a monitoring visit on 22 December 2022.

Eastgate

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 January 2023

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**

Haven Cottage

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 May 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**

Lincolnshire Secure Unit

Date of current Ofsted inspection: 9 January 2023

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

Taking into account:

Children's education and learning **Requires improvements to be good**

Children's health **Good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **Good**

Northholme

Last Ofsted inspection dates: 18 and 19 October 2022

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

Taking into account:

How well children and young people are helped and protected **Requires improvement to be good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **Requires improvement to be good**

Strut House

Inspection dates: 24 & 25 January 2023

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**

Children Homes Regulations 2015 (Part 2)

Quality standards for children's homes

5. The following standards ("the quality standards") are prescribed for the purposes of section 22(1A) of the Care Standards Act 2000 in relation to children's homes—

- (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).

Engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met

6. In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff—

- (a) seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans;
- (b) seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs;
- (c) if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans; and
- (d) seek to develop and maintain effective professional relationships with such persons, bodies or organisations as the registered person considers appropriate having regard to the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the children's home is to provide care and accommodation.

The quality and purpose of care standard

6 .—(1) The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who—

- (a) understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children;
 - (b) use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential.
- (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—
- (a) understand and apply the home's statement of purpose;
 - (b) ensure that staff—
 - (i) understand and apply the home's statement of purpose;
 - (ii) protect and promote each child's welfare;
 - (iii) treat each child with dignity and respect;
 - (iv) provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background;
-

- (v) help each child to understand and manage the impact of any experience of abuse or neglect;
- (vi) help each child to develop resilience and skills that prepare the child to return home, to live in a new placement or to live independently as an adult;
- (vii) provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably;
 - (viii) provide to children personal items that are appropriate for their age and understanding; and
- (ix) make decisions about the day-to-day arrangements for each child, in accordance with the child's relevant plans, which give the child an appropriate degree of freedom and choice;
- (c) ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to—
 - (i) meet the needs of each child; and
 - (ii) enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home; and
- (d) ensure that any care that is arranged or provided for a child that—
 - (i) relates to the child's development (within the meaning of section 17(11) of the Children Act 1989) or health; and
 - (ii) is not arranged or provided as part of the health service continued under section 1(1) of the National Health Service Act 2006(a),
 satisfies the conditions in paragraph (3).
- (3) The conditions are—
 - (a) that the care is approved, and kept under review throughout its duration, by the placing authority;
 - (b) that the care meets the child's needs;
 - (c) that the care is delivered by a person who—
 - (i) has the experience, knowledge and skills to deliver that care; and
 - (ii) is under the supervision of a person who is appropriately skilled and qualified to supervise that care; and
 - (d) that the registered person keeps the child's general medical practitioner informed, as necessary, about the progress of the care throughout its duration.

(a) 2006 c.41. Section 1 of the National Health Service Act 2006 was substituted by section 1 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 (c.7).

The children's views, wishes and feelings standard

7 .—(1) The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who—

- (a) develop positive relationships with them;
 - (b) engage with them; and
 - (c) take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives.
- (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—
- (a) ensure that staff—
 - (i) ascertain and consider each child's views, wishes and feelings, and balance these against what they judge to be in the child's best interests when making decisions about the child's care and welfare;
 - (ii) help each child to express views, wishes and feelings;
 - (iii) help each child to understand how the child's views, wishes and feelings have been taken into account and give the child reasons for decisions in relation to the child;
 - (iv) regularly consult children, and seek their feedback, about the quality of the home's care;
 - (v) help each child to understand how the child's privacy will be respected and the circumstances when it may have to be limited;
 - (vi) help each child to prepare for any review of the child's relevant plans and to make the child's views, wishes and feelings known for the purposes of that review; and
 - (vii) make each child aware of and, if necessary, remind them of each of the matters in sub-paragraph (d)(i) to (iii);
- (b) ensure that each child—
- (i) is enabled to provide feedback to, and raise issues with, a relevant person about the support and services that the child receives;
 - (ii) has access to the home's children's guide, and the home's complaints procedure, when the child's placement in the home is agreed and throughout the child's stay in the home; and
 - (iii) is given appropriate advocacy support;
- (c) keep the children's guide and the home's complaints procedure under review and seek children's comments before revising either document;
- (d) ensure that an explanation is given to each child as soon as reasonably practicable after the child's arrival about—
- (i) the children's guide;
 - (ii) how to make a complaint or representations in relation to the home or the care the child receives and how any such complaint or representations will be dealt with; and
 - (iii) what advocacy support or services are available to the child, how the child may access that support or those services and any entitlement the child may have to independent advocacy provision; and
- (e) ensure that the views of each relevant person are taken into account, so far as reasonably practicable, before making a decision about the care or welfare of a child.

The education standard

8 .—(1) The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so.

- (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—
- (a) that staff—

- (i) help each child to achieve the child's education and training targets, as recorded in the child's relevant plans;
- (ii) support each child's learning and development, including helping the child to develop independent study skills and, where appropriate, helping the child to complete independent study;
- (iii) understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers;
- (iv) help each child to understand the importance and value of education, learning, training and employment;
- (v) promote opportunities for each child to learn informally;
- (vi) maintain regular contact with each child's education and training provider, including engaging with the provider and the placing authority to support the child's education and training and to maximise the child's achievement;
- (vii) raise any need for further assessment or specialist provision in relation to a child with the child's education or training provider and the child's placing authority;
- (viii) help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible;
- (ix) help each child who is above compulsory school age to participate in further education, training or employment and to prepare for future care, education or employment;
- (x) help each child to attend education or training in accordance with the expectations in the child's relevant plans; and
- (b) that each child has access to appropriate equipment, facilities and resources to support the child's learning.

The enjoyment and achievement standard

9 .—(1) The enjoyment and achievement standard is that children take part in and benefit from a variety of activities that meet their needs and develop and reflect their creative, cultural, intellectual, physical and social interests and skills.

- (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—
 - (a) that staff help each child to—
 - (i) develop the child's interests and hobbies;
 - (ii) participate in activities that the child enjoys and which meet and expand the child's interests and preferences; and
 - (iii) make a positive contribution to the home and the wider community; and
 - (b) that each child has access to a range of activities that enable the child to pursue the child's interests and hobbies.

The health and well-being standard

10.—(1) The health and well-being standard is that—

- (a) the health and well-being needs of children are met;
- (b) children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being; and
- (c) children are helped to lead healthy lifestyles.
- (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—
 - (a) that staff help each child to—

- (i) achieve the health and well-being outcomes that are recorded in the child’s relevant plans;
- (ii) understand the child’s health and well-being needs and the options that are available in relation to the child’s health and well-being, in a way that is appropriate to the child’s age and understanding;
- (iii) take part in activities, and attend any appointments, for the purpose of meeting the child’s health and well-being needs; and
 - (iv) understand and develop skills to promote the child’s well-being;
- (b) that each child is registered as a patient with a general medical practitioner and a registered dental practitioner; and
- (c) that each child has access to such dental, medical, nursing, psychiatric and psychological advice, treatment and other services as the child may require.

The positive relationships standard

11 .—(1) The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on—

- (a) mutual respect and trust;
- (b) an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and
- (c) positive responses to other children and adults.

(2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—

- (a) that staff—
 - (i) meet each child’s behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child’s relevant plans;
 - (ii) help each child to develop socially aware behaviour;
- (iii) encourage each child to take responsibility for the child’s behaviour, in accordance with the child’s age and understanding;
- (iv) help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone;
- (v) communicate to each child expectations about the child’s behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child’s age and understanding;
- (vi) help each child to understand, in a way that is appropriate according to the child’s age and understanding, personal, sexual and social relationships, and how those relationships can be supportive or harmful;
- (vii) help each child to develop the understanding and skills to recognise or withdraw from a damaging, exploitative or harmful relationship;
 - (viii) strive to gain each child’s respect and trust;
- (ix) understand how children’s previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children;
- (x) are provided with supervision and support to enable them to understand and manage their own feelings and responses to the behaviour and emotions of children, and to help children to do the same;
- (xi) de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children;
 - (xii) understand and communicate to children that bullying is unacceptable; and
 - (xiii) have the skills to recognise incidents or indications of bullying and how to deal with them; and

- (b) that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others.

The protection of children standard

12 .—(1) The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.

(2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—

- (a) that staff—
 - (i) 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;
 - (ii) help each child to understand how to keep safe;
 - (iii) have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm;
 - (iv) manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other;
 - (v) understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;
 - (vi) take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child’s welfare; and
 - (vii) are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home’s child protection policies;
- (b) that the home’s day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm;
- (c) that the premises used for the purposes of the home are located so that children are effectively safeguarded;
- (d) 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; and
- (e) that the effectiveness of the home’s child protection policies is monitored regularly.

The leadership and management standard

13 .—(1) The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children’s home that—

- (a) helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and
 - (b) promotes their welfare.
- (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—
- (a) lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home’s statement of purpose;
 - (b) ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate;
 - (c) ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;
 - (d) ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child;
 - (e) ensure that the home’s workforce provides continuity of care to each child;
 - (f) understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home;
 - (g) demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on—
 - (i) research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are best met; and
 - (ii) feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and

- (h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.

The care planning standard

- 14.**—(1) The care planning standard is that children—
- (a) receive effectively planned care in or through the children’s home; and
 - (b) have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home.
- (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—
- (a) that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home’s statement of purpose;
 - (b) that arrangements are in place to—
 - (i) ensure the effective induction of each child into the home;
 - (ii) manage and review the placement of each child in the home; and
 - (iii) plan for, and help, each child to prepare to leave the home or to move into adult care in a way that is consistent with arrangements agreed with the child’s placing authority;
 - (c) that each child’s relevant plans are followed;
 - (d) that, subject to regulation 22 (contact and access to communications), contact between each child and the child’s parents, relatives and friends, is promoted in accordance with the child’s relevant plans;
 - (e) that the child’s placing authority is contacted, and a review of that child’s relevant plans is requested, if—
 - (i) the registered person considers that the child is at risk of harm or has concerns that the care provided for the child is inadequate to meet the child’s needs;
 - (ii) the child is, or has been, persistently absent from the home without permission; or
 - (iii) the child requests a review of the child’s relevant plans; and
 - (f) that staff help each child to access and contribute to the records kept by the registered person in relation to the child.

Children's Homes Regulations 2015 (part 6)

Independent person: visits and reports

42.—(1) The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month.

(2) When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person—

- (a) if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires; and
- (b) to inspect the premises of the home and such of the home's records (except for a child's case records, unless the child and the child's placing authority consent) as the independent person requires.

(3) A visit by the independent person to the home may be unannounced.

(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.

(5) The independent person's report may recommend actions that the registered person may take in relation to the home and timescales within which the registered person must consider whether or not to take those actions.

(6) If the independent person becomes aware of a potential conflict of interest (whether under regulation 43(3) or otherwise) after a visit to the home, the independent person must include in the independent person's report—

- (a) details of the conflict of interest; and
- (b) the reasons why the independent person did not notify the registered provider of the conflict of interest before the visit.

(7) The independent person must provide a copy of the independent person's report to—

- (a) HMCI;
- (b) upon request, the local authority for the area in which the home is located;
- (c) the placing authorities of children;
- (d) the registered provider and, if applicable, the registered manager; and
- (e) the responsible individual (if one is nominated).

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

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	11 May 2023
Subject:	Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report (1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023)

Summary:

This report is the annual report for the Independent Reviewing Service for 2022 to 2023. It serves to update members of the Corporate Parenting Panel on the work undertaken between April 22 and March 2023.

This report provides evidence relating to the Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) Service in Lincolnshire as required by statutory guidance and sets out updates on work undertaken over the year.

Actions Required:

- (1)** Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are invited to consider and comment on the detail contained in this annual report on the Independent Reviewing Service and seek assurance that the Independent Reviewing Officers are fulfilling their obligations in respect of children in care.
- (2)** Members are invited to comment on the proposed service priorities for 2023-2024, which are:
 - i. Development of regular joint working with CAFCASS
 - ii. The Development and embedding of the IRO's MOSAIC Monitoring tools.
 - iii. Embedding a new framework for linking with locality teams
 - iv. The Development of IRO Good Practice Guidance
 - v. Further develop practice around those Children Placed with their Parents under the Care Planning, Placement and Review Regulations (2010)
 - vi. Development of a bespoke IRO Induction package
 - vii. Launch of Children in Care Consultation and engagement materials

1. Background

The attached annual report addresses the contribution of Independent Reviewing Officers to quality assuring and improving services for children in care in Lincolnshire.

The Independent Chairs have a dual role as Independent Reviewing Officers and Independent Chairs who Chair child protection conferences. This report focuses on the work of the Independent Reviewing Officers in relation to children in care. Activity relating to their role as Independent Chair is detailed in a separate report which is presented to the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership. As such any previous and ongoing targets in relation to Child Protection will not be reported on within this report.

This IRO report provides evidence relating to the IRO Service in Lincolnshire which must be presented to the Corporate Parenting Board as required by statutory guidance.

2. Purpose of service and legal context

The IRO Service is set within the framework of the IRO Handbook 2010 which provides the statutory guidance for Independent Reviewing Officers and Local Authorities on their functions in relation to case management and review for children 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.

Throughout this report the term child/children refers to all those under the age of 18. However, it must be acknowledged that some young people in the upper age bracket like to be referred to as Young People.

3. Conclusion

Numbers of children in care have remained higher over the past three years, which when combined with workforce pressures in the social care teams creates additional work for the IROs. It should be noted though, that these are still lower than statistical neighbours. It is of note that key performance indicators remain on target. Due to some delay in court proceedings and revised timetabling, Chairs are frequently having to rearrange meetings in order ratify plans prior to QAAG and filing dates. As identified above in this report, in the past 12 months there have been 889 reviews rearranged. It must also be noted that the IRO's also chair Child Protection meetings where there are similar challenges and tensions around readiness for conferences. This also has an impact on their capacity and ability to work.

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.

As this report outlines, despite the high number of meetings that are rearranged and challenges within the locality Social Work teams, the service feels it is an achievement to

have only 8 Child in Care meetings genuinely out of timescales out of 1786 during the past 12 months.

4. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

5. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report (1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023)

6. 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, Head of Service, Quality & Standards Team and principle social worker who can be contacted on 07879 603618 or at Carolyn.knight@lincolnshire.gov.uk.

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**Lincolnshire County Council – Children’s Services
Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report
1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023**

This is the annual report in relation to the contribution of Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) to quality assuring and improving services for children in care in Lincolnshire.

The Independent Chairs have a dual role as Independent Reviewing Officers and Independent Chairs who chair child protection conferences. This report focuses on the work of the Independent Reviewing Officers in relation to children in care. Activity relating to their role as Independent Chairs is detailed in a separate report which is presented to the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership. As such any previous and ongoing targets in relation to Child Protection will not be reported on within this report.

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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.

Throughout this report the term child/ children refers to all those under the age of 18. However, it must be acknowledged that some young people in the upper age bracket like to be referred to as Young People.

Update on 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 piece of work is now completed.

A new Escalation Step is now live in the MOSAIC workflow. Wherever possible a positive challenge is made in the first instance, and this is recorded within the IRO

Activity step. A positive challenge is where an IRO has identified a practice issue and seeks to resolve this in the first instance in a restorative way. It is unlikely to be a significant or urgent issue. Where an IRO feels a formal escalation is required the Escalation workflow step now allows for a discussion narrative to be progressively added which forms part of the full record. This process allows all those involved, at whatever stage of the formal escalation to view and understand any previous discussions and proposed outcomes. This helps to create a full picture and removes the need to record information in other areas of the child's file. The result is an end-to-end record that tracks an issue through to resolution and provides clarity in one place.

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

This is now completed.

There is a clear expectation that whenever it is required an in-person meeting takes place. The IRO team places a value on children, their families and professionals being able to get together to review the child's plan. 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, their need to feel safe and the way in which they wish to engage. The service strongly holds an 'it's my meeting, it's my choice' ethos, ensuring that children and young people are always listened to. There are times where children elect to hold their meeting virtually and choose who they would like to attend. The Team places a value on this and wherever possible aims to meet children wishes and needs.

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

This is an ongoing action.

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. This is an ongoing project within the context of smarter working development across the wider Council. 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 having a positive impact after being tested out for some time. This model is particularly benefiting Children in Care 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. The IRO's are finding that this model allows more freedom and flexibility to engage with children in line with their preferences.

- **Integration of current feedback from Child Protection and Children in Care utilising "Engagement HQ" (centralised feedback development and recording system) when this comes online.**

This action is completed.

After some in depth discussions, it has been decided that the IRO service feedback will sit outside of the 'Let's Talk Lincolnshire' platform. Whilst this platform is positive in its wider context, the feedback received from Children and their parents/ carers is often subjective and linked to their experiences. By virtue of the nature of the IRO role the team are often faced with very sensitive situations where children are often placed into care against their parents' wishes. To ask a simple scaling question 'how did we do' is likely to evoke a negative response and impact on the overall feedback and effectiveness of the 'Let's talk Lincolnshire' survey. As such the IRO team continue to use their bespoke feedback system which acknowledges these sensitivities and focusses feedback on an individual over all experience and the support they received. This has been amended and now sits within the Microsoft Forms platform which makes the experience of feedback more fluid and accessible. This also helps the service to bring together key themes when considering the impact of the service we deliver, lessons learnt and adapting the way services are delivered.

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

This action is complete. Please see the point above.

- **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 action.

For the purpose of this report the emphasis will be on IRO's engaging with absent parents as the Child Protection Chairs are reported separately to the LSCP under the Child Protection reporting framework. The updated action therefore is:

- **Challenge and focus by the Independent Reviewing Officer on ensuring active participation and engagement with any "absent" parent within Child in Care Reviews, with particular emphasis on Fathers.**

Managers frequently consider this in case supervision to ensure the issues remains live. IRO's are now fully back completing peer audits and there is an expectation that this area is fully considered and reflected upon. IRO's, 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.

There has been some delay in progressing the strategic work around engaging absent fathers. After some initial low take up the LSCP absent father's survey is

due to conclude by the end of April 2023. The findings will be used as a bedrock for the Local Authority to understand the impact on absent fathers before considering service / systems changes. A full internal Childrens services audit has taken place around engaging absent fathers / stepparents and the findings and recommendations were presented to the Operational Management Group (OMG) on 4th April 2023.

Once accepted, the recommendations will be adopted by the working group to drive changes forward by looking at working practices, policies and procedures and staff training. Running concurrently to this work (and incorporating the audit findings) the Practice Advisors are presenting the Practice Lead (PL) 3 sessions on working with absent fathers. This training will also be delivered directly to all front-line teams to support the messages and cultural changes. The IRO's will also attend a PL 3 session together in order to develop in this area and to 'sign up' to their commitments as a team which will be measured against our Team Action Plan and ongoing priorities.

- **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.**

This is an ongoing action:

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 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. Most recently the IRO's were involved in an audit on the use, quality and outcomes of the Valuing Care tool over a 7-week period and fed back on over 200 Childrens Valuing Care assessments. IRO's are now making a recommendation at each 28-day Child in Care review for the VC tool to be completed by the second (3 month) review in order to further drive its use going forward. A complicated area identified was the VC for those children under 5 years of age where their verbal views are not always present due to development reasons, along with some of the areas of needs that may not apply to them. This is being considered as part of the audit findings. IRO's remain actively involved in this area and the quality assurance of its use.

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 continues to secure further funding for an additional IRO post in relation to the rising UASC numbers.

The team also has responsibility for reviewing Children with Disabilities Short Term Breaks. This additional role is also a statutory requirement.

In addition, there are 5 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.

Sickness absence, secondment and recruitment continued to be challenging over the course of the year; this has necessitated the use of some agency staff to ensure that service capacity is not impacted upon, and standards are maintained.

Staffing

Management Team

There remain four Team Managers in the Service. The Chairs are predominantly managed by Debbie Johnson and Richard Stone. Debbie Johnson has the service lead for Child Protection and Richard Stone has the service lead for Children in Care. 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

Within the past 12 months the team have lost 3 contracted members of staff. One left due to personal reasons, one has taken the decision to remain within a locality FAST team as a Practice Supervisor after a period of secondment and one has successfully applied for a Practice Supervisor role within the Child in Care team. Whilst the service was sad to see them move on, it is positive that Lincolnshire Childrens Services has retained 2 of these skilled professionals in other roles. 2 posts have already been filled and after a period of induction both new starters are actively embracing their roles. The team still has 4 vacancies, which after a successful recruitment campaign have all just been filled. Whilst these 4 new appointees are currently going through their pre-employment checks, the team are optimistic that they will join the team within the next 3-4 months. The team still has 4 agency workers. Whilst this is a position places further financial pressures on the Local Authority, the 4 workers are committed and have brought stability and value to the team over the past months.

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 Children in Care. 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
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	Oct 22	8
Nov 18	9	Nov 19	6	Nov 20	9	Nov 21	9	Nov 22	6
Dec 18	8	Dec 19	4	Dec 20	2	Dec 21	6	Dec 22	4
Jan 19	6	Jan 20	6	Jan 21	4	Jan 22	3	Jan 23	7
Feb 19	4	Feb 20	4	Feb 21	3	Feb 22	5	Feb 23	0
Mar 19	5	Mar 20	4	Mar 21	5	Mar 22	4	Mar 23	7
Total	80	Total	62	Total	54	Total	62	Total	60

Children in Care population and the IRO service

Despite the inclining trend during the past 12 months the figures for young people in care, appears to be overall more stable, 735 (1st April 2022) as opposed to 727 (31st March 2023).

In the year 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023 the IROs have conducted 1786 reviews. In the same period 1st April 2021 – 31st March 2022 there were 1694 reviews. Workload has been increasing year on year.

Due to the ongoing 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 April 1st, 2022 – 31st March 2023, 889 reviews were re arranged which has had a further impact on workload. This is a significant increase on the previous year's figures which were 775.

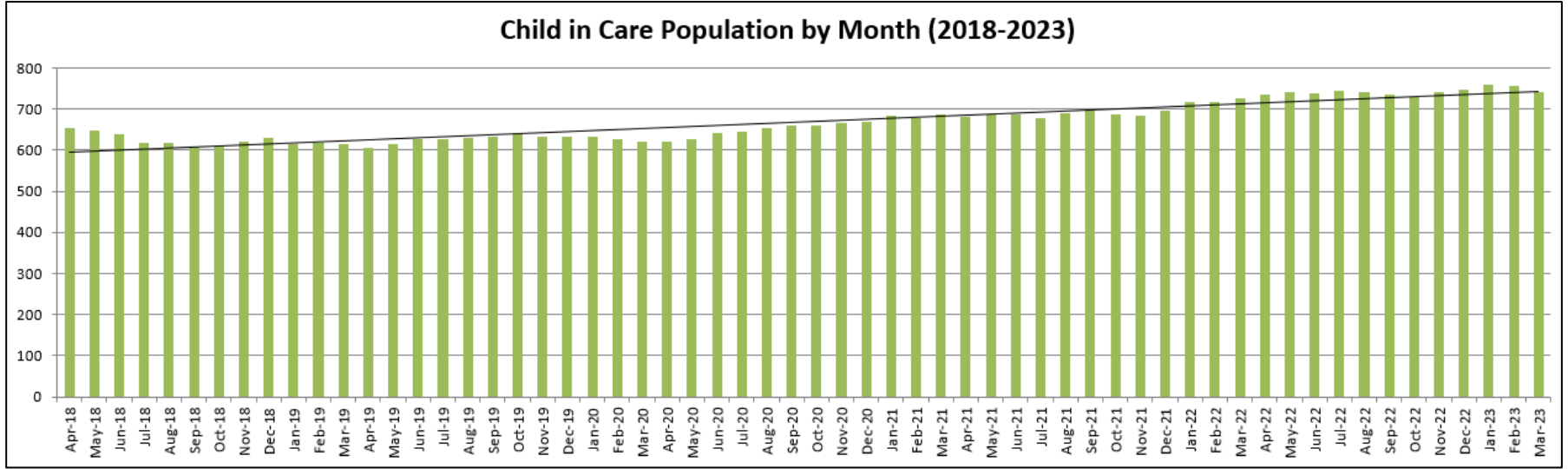
The service expects that the very recent relaunch of the Public Law Outline and a sharper focus on the 26 week track to avoid drift and delay for children will result in more child in care meetings being effective especially at the point of ratifying final care plans, which is a significant factor is having to rearrange meetings in short timescales to meet QAAG and filing dates, when considering final plans for children. It must also be noted that the Social Work pressures within the locality FAST and Children in Care Teams has also had an impact, with meetings having to be postponed last minute and rearranged due to some lack of readiness for meetings.

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

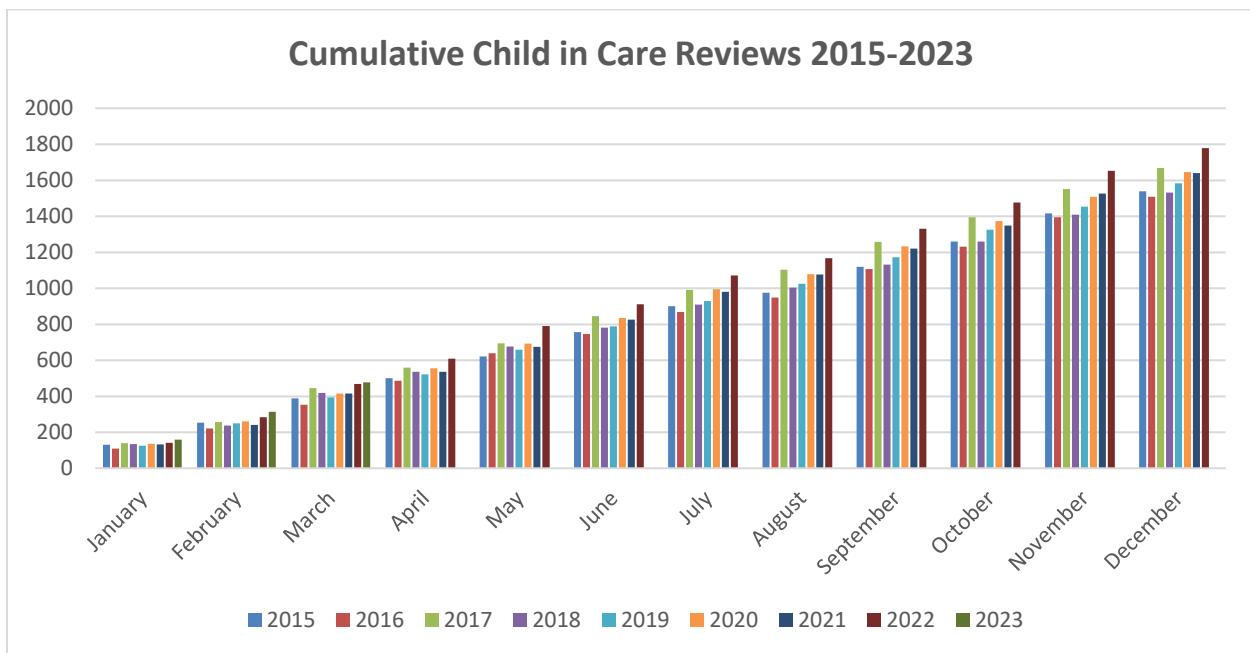
In the year 1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023 one young person has been subject to Secure Accommodation under Section 25 of the Children Act 1989. Any Secure Criteria Reviews are chaired by the Independent Chairs Team Managers.

In the year 1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023 there have been 55 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) placed in the care of Lincolnshire Childrens Services under the National Transfer Scheme. Whilst these children are the responsibility of Lincolnshire, their placements are mainly located in Peterborough, Derby and Nottingham areas with 5 children also being placed in London. Given the frequent referrals for UASC's there are predominantly 3 IRO's who oversee these. This allows them some constancy while the geographical locations of their placements mean that multiple reviews can often be held in one day by one IRO. It also allows the IRO's to focus mainly on these children and build their specialism in this area with this vulnerable group of children. The number of UASC's under 16 years old appears to be increasing and there are some concerns raised by the IRO's that given their age they are unable to agree and sign for their own Section 20 status. This is being discussed with senior managers reflecting the complexity of their situation.

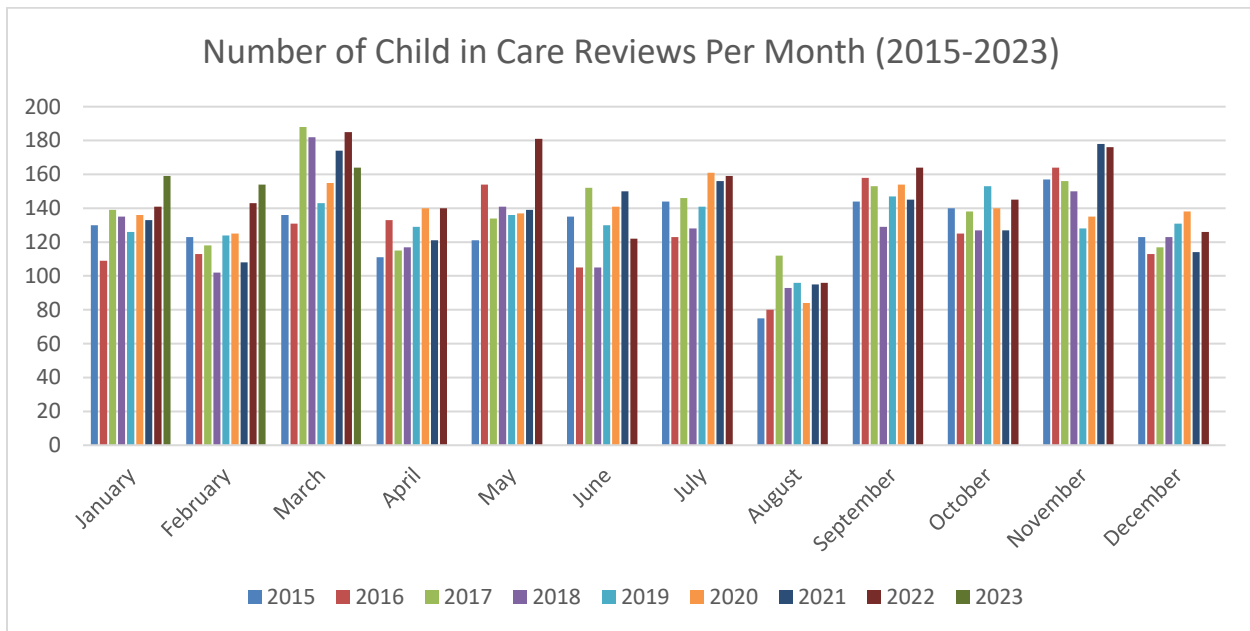
Child in Care Population



Cumulative Child in Care Reviews 2015- 2023									
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
January	130	109	139	135	126	136	133	141	159
February	253	222	257	237	250	261	241	284	313
March	389	353	445	419	393	416	415	469	477
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	1476	
November	1416	1395	1551	1409	1453	1508	1526	1652	
December	1539	1508	1668	1532	1584	1646	1640	1778	



Number of Child In Care Reviews Per Month (2015-2023)									
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
January	130	109	139	135	126	136	133	141	159
February	123	113	118	102	124	125	108	143	154
March	136	131	188	182	143	155	174	185	164
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	145	
November	157	164	156	150	128	135	178	176	
December	123	113	117	123	131	138	114	126	



Number of Child in Care Reviews Per Month (2015-2023)									
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
January	50	46	59	64	65	64	52	79	80
February	30	63	71	58	41	62	66	78	80
March	39	61	74	80	42	52	70	80	79
April	51	57	52	60	44	64	46	49	
May	53	43	68	55	54	51	58	73	
June	47	26	52	53	65	53	74	95	
July	40	47	62	48	64	46	58	69	
August	29	59	51	30	58	45	46	62	
September	40	52	50	39	77	74	63	85	
October	51	64	53	46	75	90	77	73	
November	37	64	58	58	60	64	65	90	
December	48	47	37	42	42	58	51	54	
Calendar Year Total	515	629	687	633	687	723	726	887	239 (so far)

Advocacy/Independent Visitor

Advocacy/Independent Visitor provision in Lincolnshire continues to be 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 are opted in to Voiceability who are invited to Children in Care Reviews for children aged 8 and over after the child's Social Worker has referred them. The Local Authority has a duty to appoint a person to be an Independent Visitor when it appears to be in the child's interests to do so. The appointment of an Independent Visitor should be considered as part of developing the Care Plan for the child and at the Child in Care Review. Any decision not to appoint an Independent Visitor should be kept under review. The child's wishes and feelings should be obtained, and they must agree to the appointment of the Independent Visitor.

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. As outlined within the Quality & Standards Action Plan, The IRO Monitoring Form has been amended to capture the range of advocacy either offered, declined or not provided. This new data will provide the bedrock for understanding how effective the current contract is meeting the needs of children and will provide value within the contract monitoring meetings with Voiceability.

Timeliness of reviews

Between 1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023 a total of 1786 individual review meetings were held. It should be noted that sometimes children within the same family or same placement may have their reviews held together. This means that the number of children who had their care plans reviews is likely to be noticeably higher than 1786.

Within the same time period a total of 8 children had their review held out of timescales which means 98.9% were held in timescales. 4 children had their review held out of timescales due lack of preparation, documents by the Social Worker with the IRO making a decision that it was inappropriate to go ahead due to the lack of clarity. 1 child had her review held late due to a technical complication. She was placed in Local Authority Care under a Police Powers of Protection Order (PPO), with the FAST team gaining an Interim Care Order (ICO) 3 days later. Her siblings were also subject the same ICO and the date of their first review was taken 28 days from the ICO and not her PPO which meant her Initial review meeting was 1 day late. 3 children had their initial reviews held late due to human error.

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, how they contribute towards the agenda and how 'their review' is run. Our bottom line as a service 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. Although IRO's always encourage them to engage and offer to adapt the meeting format to their needs.

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.

IRO's are always mindful that not all children are old enough to verbally express their views, for some children English is not their first language and for other disabilities or additional needs means they communicate in a different way. Some children simply do not wish to talk or do not feel ready. IRO's are creative with how they approach

participation, trying to understand what a child's world looks and feels like, how they interact with those around them and what their behaviours may be telling us. IRO's also ensure those adults around the child are able help them share their views and feelings too. By taking this approach, as a service we try to ensure that any plans made are in the best interest of the child.

Participation performance was 98.4 % on 28th February 2023 which reflects this hard work. The data for 31st March 2023 has not yet been produced.

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.

The Valuing Care assessment and analysis tool is now fully embedded into the child's journey and IRO's oversee this at review meetings, ensuring that there is a clear understanding and analysis of the child's needs to support the development of the care plan.

IRO's do not write plans about a child. They write plans 'to the child', making sure that they use child friendly language.

There have been some fluctuations during the past year around the quality of initial care plans presented for IRO's to review. This is in part due to the pressures that the locality teams have experienced, particularly in relation to turn over of social workers. IRO's have been sympathetic to this where they can and restorative in their challenges to support the current pressures but always with any potential impact on a child and their family in their focus.

Progress-chasing Activities between Looked After Reviews

All IROs have a duty to monitor the progress of their allocated children 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 so that they know how to contact them.

Identifying good practice, problem resolution and escalation

IRO's identify and share good practice with colleagues but also raise concerns with locality 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.

There continues to be a significant drop in number of formal escalations. As a result of this, the number for positive challenges has increased as IRO's seek to resolve challenges in care planning in a restorative way in the first instance.

The current IRO Activity form has been amended to include a radio button to indicate a positive challenge. Along with a range of changes to the MOSAIC forms used by IRO's, it is anticipated that the performance team will be able to map all of these into a report after April 2023. This will mean that the current practice and ways of working can be fully reported on for the purpose of how meaningful their role is and the impact they are having in driving forward good practice.

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. Legal advice has been sought once in the past 12 months. 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	Oct 22	6
Nov 16	3	Nov 17	5	Nov 18	1	Nov 19	2	Nov 20	3	Nov 21	1	Nov 22	3
Dec 16	6	Dec 17	5	Dec 18	0	Dec 19	0	Dec 20	3	Dec 21	3	Dec 22	1
Jan 17	2	Jan 18	8	Jan 19	3	Jan 20	2	Jan 21	5	Jan 22	7	Jan 23	1
Feb 17	5	Feb 18	4	Feb 19	2	Feb 20	7	Feb 21	1	Feb 22	1	Feb 23	2
Mar 17	8	Mar 18	7	Mar 19	2	Mar 20	1	Mar 21	1	Mar 22	1	Mar 23	0

Total	48	Total	62	Total	32	Total	33	Total	33	Total	33	Total	17
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Themes of Child in Care Formal Escalations (for the period April 2022- March 2023)

Theme	Number of Escalations Raised
Missing or late documents	4
Practice Issues (Multiple issues)	3
Safeguarding concerns	5
Placement/ Accommodation concerns	3
Drift and Delay	1
Blank	1
Total Escalations Raised	17

Management oversight

The Guidance states that operational social work Team 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 and recommendations are completed by the IRO, the Locality Team 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	Oct 22	0
Nov 18	1	Nov 19	0	Nov 20	0	Nov 21	0	Nov 22	1
Dec 18	0	Dec 19	2	Dec 20	1	Dec 21	0	Dec 22	0
Jan 19	0	Jan 20	0	Jan 21	0	Jan 22	0	Jan 23	0
Feb 19	0	Feb 20	0	Feb 21	0	Feb 22	0	Feb 23	0
Mar 19	0	Mar 20	0	Mar 21	0	Mar 22	0	Mar 23	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 Team Managers

The service has just revised the way in which Team Managers quality assure the work of the IRO's. Regular supervisions and appraisals take place to ensure that all Team Managers are fully familiar with their staff, have ample opportunities to engage in reflective discussions with them, problem solve around complex issues and support their learning and development. Spot sampling of work for quality often takes place.

From April 2023 a new Quality Audit schedule has been launched. In each 6-month period, a Team Manager will spend a whole day with each of their members of staff. The purpose of this day is learning and reflection. Team Managers will observe their IRO's chairing meetings in person, see them interacting with children and their families, carers and others in their support network. Following this a collaborative audit of the child's case file will take place where the Team Manager and IRO will together scrutinise the quality of the work, recording and impact. This will be inputted directly into a MOSAIC work step to ensure that there is a record of oversight and reflection. Any outcomes will be discussed with the IRO at the time and, should development needs be identified, will be added to the IRO's development plan for the year.

Team Managers meet every quarter to review any completed audits and the outcomes of discussions/ spot sampling to identify themes and patterns for learning and development for the whole service.

Supervision and training

IRO's have scheduled monthly supervision (pro rata) and informal supervision as and when required. All IRO's 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 IRO Workshops. Each IRO undertakes annual mandatory training and follows the 5-year Children's Services development training plan.

All IRO's 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. Team Meetings take place over one full day per month and these are always 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 to 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 have been 889 reviews rearranged. It must also be noted that the IRO's also chair Child Protection meetings where there are similar challenges and tensions around readiness for conferences. This also has an impact on their capacity and ability to work.

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 outlined 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.

Supplementary to this some locality FAST and CIC teams continue to experience staffing challenges and a turnover of some agency social workers. This is making preparation for Child in Care meetings a challenge as on occasions reports are not completed in a timely manner nor plans updated. Despite this impacting on the chairs 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. As this report outlines, despite the high number of meetings that are rearranged and challenges within the locality Social Work teams, the service feels it is an achievement to have only 8 Child in Care meetings out of timescales out of 1786 during the past 12 months.

Service Priorities 2022-2023

The ongoing 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. New actions and priorities identified for the current year are outlined below.

- **Development of regular joint working with CAFCASS**

New Action:

The Team Managers are currently working with the Service Manager of CAFCASS to develop a joint working program. IRO's have strong links with Childrens Guardians on a day-to-day basis and it's crucial that they understand each other's roles. Joint development days will be planned to take place annually with the first being held in October 2023. The aim is to bring together IRO's and Childrens

Guardians in person to discuss relevant topics and hold reflective discussions around practice-based scenarios to further enhance and embed their thinking, how they apply their practice and the impact on children's care plans. In order to fully embrace working together, it is anticipated that some Social Workers from the locality teams will also be present to bring their perspectives on care planning and court work. The overall aim is to promote a joined-up way of thinking/ working that considers each individual's role in a child's care planning and an appreciation of their role. The overall focus will be the impact on children. A likely discussion topic for the first meeting will be the re launch of the Public Law Outline which aims to return to the 26-week track for all proceedings. The Initial planning session for this is due to take place in April 2023.

- **The Development and embedding of the IRO's MOSAIC Monitoring tools.
New Action:**

IRO's are responsible for not just the quality-of-care plans and their progression but a number of significant areas across Children Service performance such as meeting readiness, the quality of reports and care plans, the inclusion of children, their parents and carers, attendance at meetings, advocacy and the overall impact of Childrens Service performance to name but a few.

Since Covid, the Local Authority has embraced a number of new ways of working such as virtual and hybrid meetings, the electronic sharing of reports and plans with children, parents and professionals and the alternative ways of communicating such as messaging and video calls etc.

In order to fully understand and appreciate the impact of these changes the IRO monitoring forms in MOSAIC have been completely overhauled to reflect the new ways of working. IRO's complete a monitoring form after each Child in Care review they chair. These are currently in the process of going live and once completed will be streamlined to performance reports that will be readily available to help the service understand the Local Authorities performance in key areas.

Examples of some of these are reporting on the ways children are consulted and included such as in person, phone, messages and video calls (as is their preference), the timeliness of Social Workers sharing reports and plans and the impact of this of making a meeting effective, reporting on the inclusion of mothers, fathers and those who hold parental responsibility separately (rather than the old combined heading of 'parents') which seeks to strengthen our understanding of including absent parents, the level of advocacy offered to children and the rationale for this (which will strengthen the management of the Voicability contract), the format in which meetings are held to help us understand how effective our new ways of working impact on children and their families and a deeper analysis of the Valuing Care tool and its impact. The overall aim is to not only report on compliance but impact.

- **Embedding in a new framework for linking with locality teams**

New Action:

The service has redesigned the structure and process of linking with locality teams. Each locality team or service area has a dedicated link IRO. These include all FAST, Children in Care, Adoption, Fostering and CWD teams. We have also added specific links for Supported Living providers and UASC.

The link IRO will formally meet with their team/ service area 4 times per year. Individual meetings are scheduled with Team Managers and Practice Supervisors where link IRO's can share the outcome of the new performance reporting as outlined in the section above. This will help to identify key themes, areas of performance and highlight good practice within their specific team/ service area. Management level discussions can take place away from front line workers.

The link IRO will also attend whole team meetings in between meeting with managers to meet with social workers to give and receive feedback, enter into thematic practice development discussions and answer questions with the purpose of building relationships and strengthening practice between service areas.

The IRO Team meeting agenda now includes time each month for IRO's to feedback on any link visits they have completed and to gain feedback from colleagues in preparation for future link visits, ensuring that there is a fluid way of feedback and development.

IRO's are now committed to work from an office location one day per week in between their meetings to further strengthen their presence and build working relationships.

- **The Development of IRO Good Practice Guidance**

New Action:

The Managers within the Service have acknowledged the changes in the IRO team, the challenges in the locality teams staffing and the way in which this can impact on the general understanding of how the Local Authorities policies, procedures and guidance interprets itself into good solid practice.

As a result of this Good Practice Guides are being developed to support understanding and enhanced practice. The Practice guidance aims to be a maximum of 2 pages long and will highlight the context of a practice area, the likely impact on a child and their family and practice expectations (what good looks like when we do things right). The guidance is intended to be easily accessible and makes links to procedures, guidance and the IRO Handbook for further reading. It will be the IRO's 'go to' in key service delivery areas.

So far, guidance has been produced around chairing a Series of Short meetings, Short Term Breaks for Children with Disabilities and Locality team links. Guidance

around UASC, ratifying final Care Plans, Children Placed with their Parents under the Care Planning, Placement and Review regulations (2010) are currently being developed.

It is intended to produce further guidance in key areas with the focus on developing a cohesive understanding and approach within the team of 'how we do things around here when it works well for our children'.

- **Further develop practice around those Children Placed with their Parents under the Care Planning, Placement and Review Regulations (2010)**

New Action:

The Team Managers have recently coordinated a piece of audit activity in this area. All IRO's have engaged in reflective discussions and case file scrutiny during February and March for those children subjected to this over the past 2 years. An Audit report has been written to provide an overview of the local Authorities application of the process and way IRO's are involved in overseeing this practice.

Whilst the formal recommendations have not yet been signed off, it is envisaged that some further guidance and reflective discussions will be provided to IRO's to strengthen their practice and oversight in this area and some recommendations for the locality teams on how this is applied consistently.

It must be noted that overall, the audit found the quality of Placement with Parents assessments completed by Social Workers to be very good and where children were being considered to be placed with their parents under the Care Planning regulations, Social Workers were approaching IRO's for discussions and their views and feedback, ensuring their independent views and feedback helps to consider the trajectory and care planning.

It is anticipated that this will be a yearly audit report. It is hoped that a greater understanding in this area, together with guidance for IRO's will see practice strengthened.

- **Development of a bespoke IRO Induction package**

New / ongoing action:

The Service has recently created a bespoke induction package for IRO's joining the team. This links into the Corporate and Children's Services Induction package for those joining from outside of the Local Authority.

The induction process aims to settle new IRO's into the service gradually and positively. An initial induction meeting with their Team Manager ensures that new IRO's are provided with all of the hardware they need to undertake their role and that this is functional on day one. An induction check list ensures that all access is provided on day one together with the formulation of a bespoke 3-week induction plan that involves mandatory training, shadowing colleagues and enhanced

manager support. Each IRO is assigned an experienced mentor from within the team who will support their day-to-day development and answer any questions as they arise. There is no time limit for mentoring as each new IRO progresses at a different rate dependant on their previous experience.

The Service is in the process of building and developing an Independent Reviewing Officers SharePoint site where a dedicated Induction area will provide a key area of support and give access to further material and links in an easy to access way.

The feedback that the service has received so far is positive with new starters expressing their satisfaction at the organised approach and the level of support offered and available. This is constantly under review and will be developed in line with feedback and the measured experience of new starters.

- **Launch of Children in Care Consultation and engagement materials**

New Action:

All IRO's are expected to meet and introduce themselves to the children they are going to support and oversee their care plans. At the current time IRO's use varied way of doing this from existing leaflets and fact sheets to personal meetings. Prior to a child 's review they receive a consultation document which they are asked to complete to help their IRO understand their views and wishes to be considered at their review. The current paper-based consultation form has been in existence for over 13 years. Some of the feedback we have received from the children is that it needs to be updated.

The service has a vision to update and refresh these and along with an online / electronic interactive form utilising the Microsoft platform. Leaflets and booklets targeting younger and older children are being considered alongside the use of words and pictures, social stories and explanation, dependant on the age of the child.

Overall, the service wishes to provide children with something tangible and accessible that they can keep and refer to, perhaps reading with their carers, that helps them understand the role of their IRO and the care review process.

An initial consultation has taken place with the Quality & Standard Participation Officer who oversees the Young Inspectors with a view of arranging a consultation event to bring together children, IRO's and Managers to hold group discussions and activities in order to move this forward from the children's perspective.

Once some initial draft proposals for new materials are created the group will be re consulted. It is also hoped that the Regulation 44 Officers can seek feedback through their visits, links with the Children with Disabilities Team can support format versions for children with additional needs. A recent conversation with the Practice Supervisor from the Fostering service has also raised the possibility of

using the Foster Carers network to support refreshed carers consultation documents.

Carolyn Knight
(Quality and Standards Manager)

Debbie Johnson, Paul Fisher & Richard Stone
(Independent Chairs Team Managers)



Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy, Executive Director – Children’s Services

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	11 May 2023
Subject:	Children in Care school attendance – addendum to Virtual School Annual Report for the academic year 2021 -22

Summary:

This report provides an overview of the school attendance of children in the care of Lincolnshire for the academic year 2021-22. The information in this report was not included in the Virtual School Annual Report presented in January 2023 as national and regional comparative data was not available at that time.

Actions Required:

Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are invited to:

- (1)** Consider and comment on the information contained in the report (Appendix A);
and
- (2)** Review and endorse the report.

1. Background

A key focus of the Virtual School is to have robust procedures in place to monitor the attendance and educational progress of our children in care. The Virtual School works in partnership with Children’s Services colleagues, education settings, parents, carers and other local authorities to avoid drift and delay in our young people accessing suitable educational provision. Termly Personal Education Plans (PEP) provide the basis for multiagency discussions on interventions or support that may be needed to remove barriers to expected levels of school attendance.

2. Conclusion

Regular school attendance enables pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances. For our children in care, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and enables needs to be

identified and support provided. Lincolnshire Virtual School regularly reviews the robust procedures in place to monitor the attendance of our children in care and is committed to working with schools, Children’s Services’ colleagues, parents and carers to continue to aspire to high standards of attendance for all our pupils.

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	Lincolnshire Virtual School – School attendance for the academic year 2021-22

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 Sarah Lane, Interim Virtual School Headteacher, who can be contacted by e-mail at sarah.lane@lincolnshire.gov.uk.

Lincolnshire Virtual School

School attendance during
the academic year 2021-
2022

April 2023

Table of contents

Purpose of this report 3

Inclusion – how regularly do our children attend? 3

Persistent absence 5

Factors that may affect school attendance 6

Improving school attendance..... 6

Purpose of this report

In January 2023, the interim Virtual School Head presented the statutory annual report on the role of the Virtual School and outcomes for our children in care. The report did not include school attendance as national and regional comparative data had not been published at that time.

This report provides an overview of the school attendance during the academic year 2021-22 of children who were in the care of Lincolnshire for one year or more as of 31st March 2022.

Inclusion – How regularly do our children attend?

Due to covid restrictions in early 2020 we do not have any nationally published attendance data for the whole year for 2020. Autumn term 2020 data is included as a comparison though absence is usually higher in autumn term compared to a whole year of data. The 2021 data shows a significant increase in absence rates for children in care. This is due to Spring term 2021 when only the workers of critical workers and vulnerable pupils could attend school during the period of lockdown from 4th January 2021 to 8th March 2021 when restrictions were lifted for all other pupils. Other pupils who were not eligible to attend school, during restrictions, were recorded as 'not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus'. This means that the absence rates for pupils who were prioritised to continue attending school will be higher than for those who were not eligible to attend.

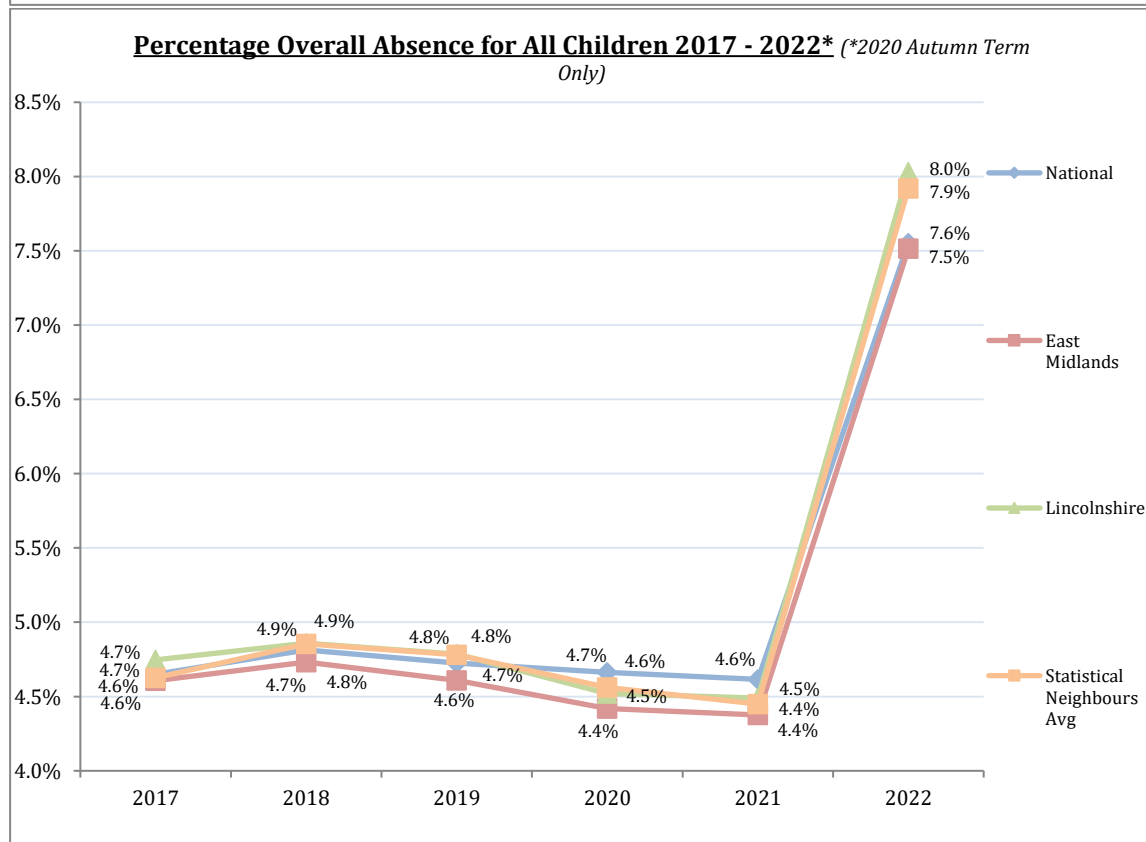
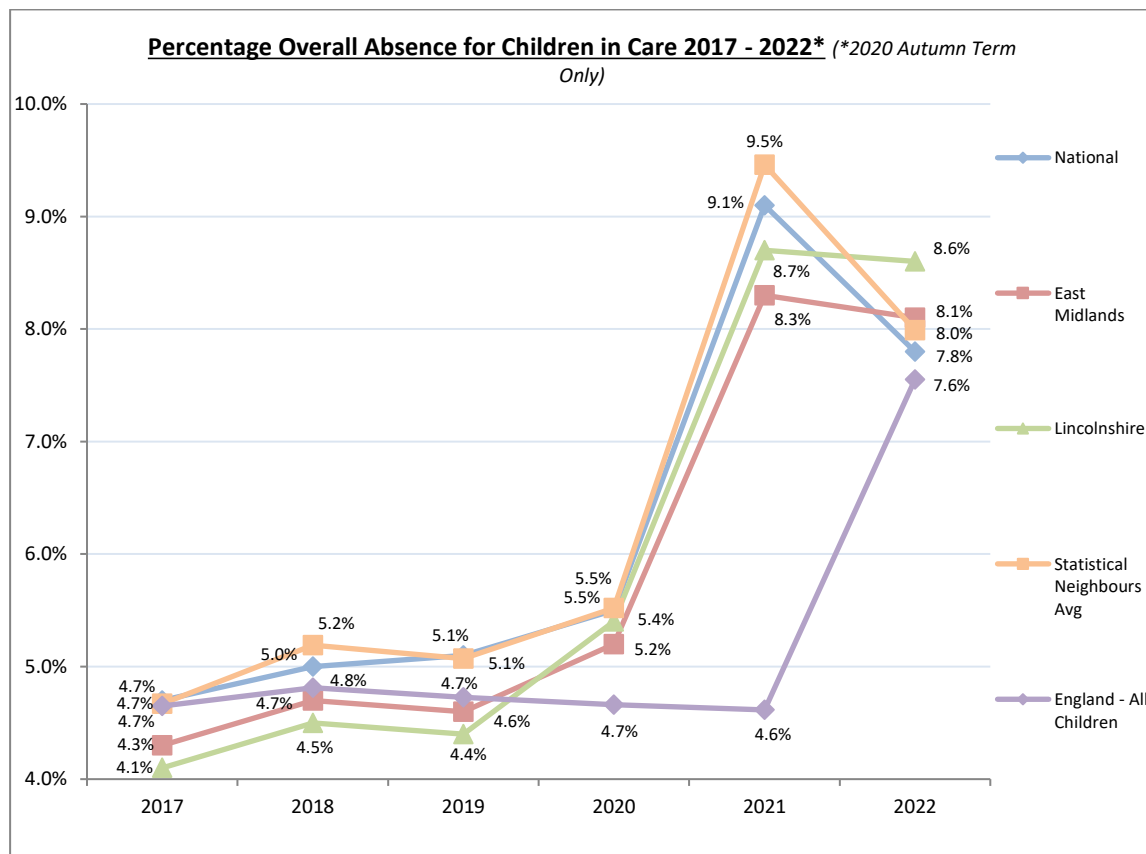
The last 3 years of complete data prior to Covid show that Lincolnshire children in care attend more regularly than their looked after peers nationally and regionally. This maintains a long trend of being in line or better than our national, east midlands and statistical neighbour average comparators.

The autumn term 2020 and whole year 2021 and 2022 data shows Lincolnshire children in care trending towards attending less regularly than our national and statistical neighbour average comparators. This has culminated in Lincolnshire children in care attending less regularly (absence rate of 8.6%) than our comparators (East Midlands 8.1%, Stat Neighbours 8.0% and National 7.8%) in the most recent year of data.

It should be noted that significant increases in absence have been seen across the board across all comparators in 2022. The increases have been larger in Lincolnshire and has impacted all pupils. Lincolnshire's overall absence rates for all children have also increased and Lincolnshire now has higher absence rates (absence rate of 8.0%) than our comparators (East Midlands 7.5%, Stat Neighbours 7.9% and National 7.6%).

The main reason for the large increases across all comparators appears to be absence for illness. Nationally absence for illness averaged around 2.5-2.6% pre-pandemic and increased to 4.4% in the most recent academic years (2021-22) data, representing an increase of around 1.8% on average for illness nationally. Lincolnshire saw a larger increase in illness in the 2021-22 academic year of 2.3%. Absence for illness averaged around 2.8% pre-pandemic

and increased to 5.1%; this is 0.8% above national and 0.7% above the regional east midlands average.

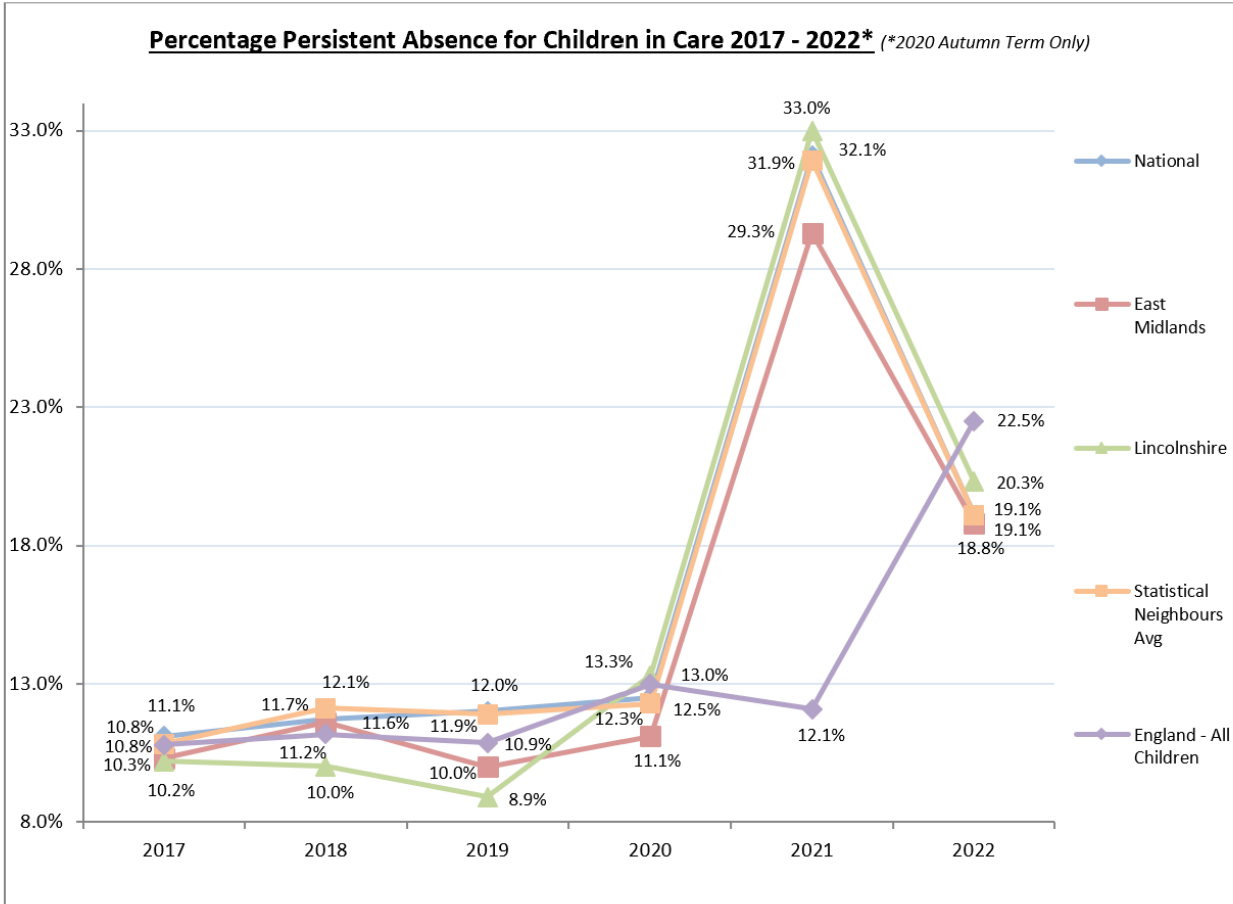


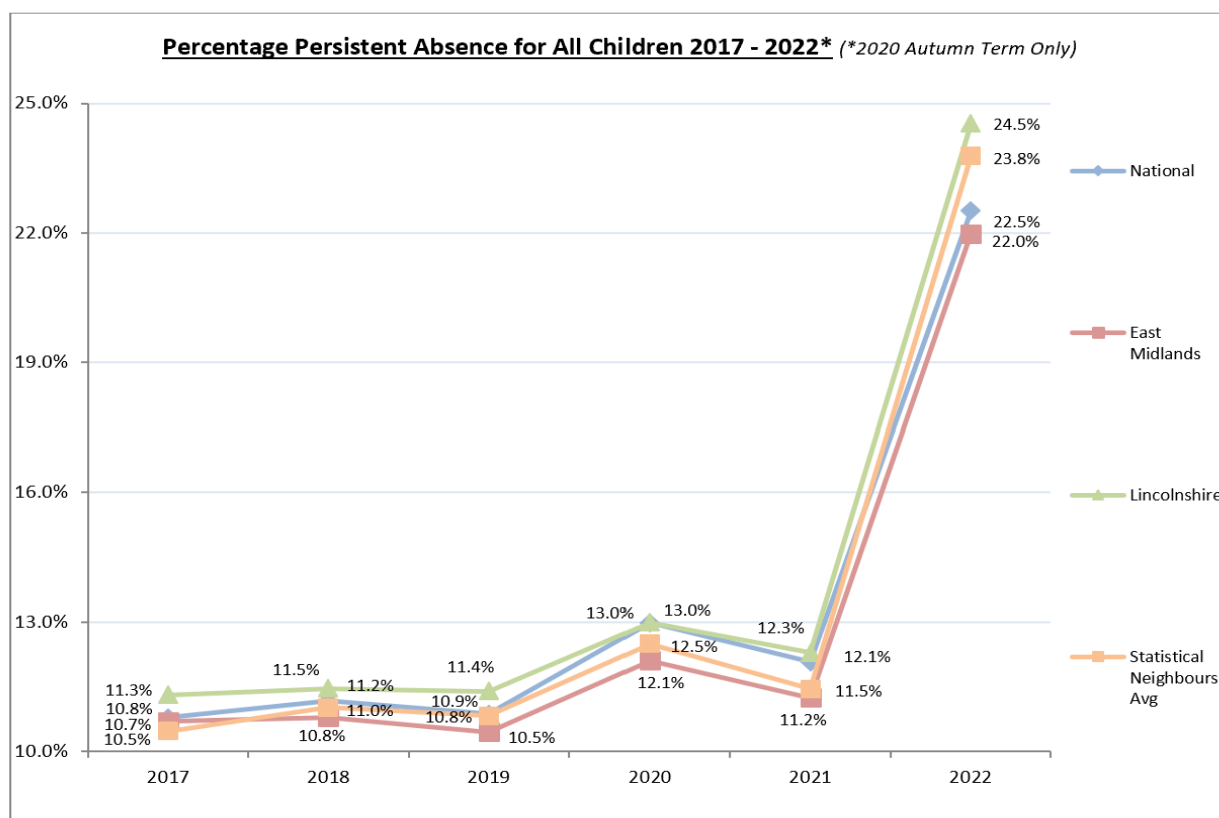
Persistent Absence

Our children and young people have performed well historically for persistent absence, with the last 3 years of complete data prior to Covid showing fewer persistently absent pupils compared to national, regional, and statistical neighbour averages. This maintains a long trend of being in line or better than our national, east midlands and statistical neighbour average comparators.

The autumn term 2020 and whole year 2021 and 2022 data indicates that Lincolnshire children in care are trending towards higher persistent absence rates when compared to our national, regional, and statistical neighbour averages. This has left Lincolnshire children in care with a higher persistent absence rate (20.3%) than all our comparators (East Midlands 18.8%, Stat Neighbours 19.1% and National 19.1%) in the most recent year of data.

As with overall absence there have been large increases in persistent absence across the board across all pupils and all comparators in 2022. The peak in persistent absence for children in care in 2021 was an anomaly compared to all pupils and was due to pupils of critical workers and vulnerable pupils attending during lockdown as described earlier. Lincolnshire’s persistent absence rates for all children has increased significantly from 12.3% to 24.5% and is now above the persistent absence rate for Lincolnshire Children in Care (20.3%) and our comparators figures for all pupils (East Midlands 22.0%, Stat Neighbours 23.8% and National 22.5%).





Factors that may affect school attendance

The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex and are often specific to individual pupils and families. For our children in care, these may include:

- Placement changes which may involve a mid-year application to a new school
- A young person's well-being manifesting in emotionally based school avoidance
- A temporary part-time timetable to meet a pupil's individual needs
- Suspensions

Improving school attendance

In April 2022, the Department for Education published guidance on 'Working together to improve school attendance.' The document recognises that 'Improving school attendance cannot solely be the preserve of a single person or individual organisation, it must be a concerted effort across all staff in schools, the trust or governing body, the local authority and other local partners'. In line with the guidance and to facilitate early identification of patterns of attendance, the local authority will be organising termly Targeting Support Meetings with each school in Lincolnshire to identify, discuss and agree joint targeted actions for all pupils who are persistently or severely absent and those at risk of becoming so.

A ladder of support has been developed in Lincolnshire for the growing number of pupils presenting with emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA). The ladder focuses on facilitating a ‘step-change’ in how professionals and families support children and young people with their mental health and well-being when that drives school avoidance.

For our children in care, termly Personal Education Plans (PEPs) co-ordinated by the Virtual School record the child’s attendance, acknowledging if this is a strength or exploring the barriers and the agreed interventions/support to improve attendance if it is less than 95%. From April, in addition to recording the attendance percentage, termly PEPs of statutory school aged children will include the following boundaries and descriptions to strengthen aspirations.

Boundary	Description
95-100%	As expected
91-94%	At risk of persistent absence
80-90%	Persistent absence
51-79%	At risk of severe absence
<=50%	Severe absence

In addition to the individual monitoring of attendance through PEPs, the Virtual School is developing half termly attendance monitoring meetings. Cohort attendance data will be rigorously scrutinised to promote early identification of patterns of poor attendance and ensure that all professionals supporting individual children can work together to remove any barriers to improved attendance.

Whilst we aspire to all our children accessing a full education, in exceptional cases a temporary part time timetable may be appropriate to support a young person’s individual circumstances. Virtual School co-ordinators ensure the school sends work home for any child who is not attending due to an agreed temporary part-time timetable or if they have been suspended. When there may be a longer period of absence due to a school move, the Virtual School commissions home tuition to ensure the young person continues to access education until a new school place has been identified. The Virtual School continues to work in partnership with schools to avoid any suspensions of our children in care.

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

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	11 May 2023
Subject:	Corporate Parenting Panel Work Programme

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

11 May 2023		
	Item	Contributor
1.	Regulation 44 Independent Visiting Service – Annual Report 2022/23	Carolyn Knight, Quality and Standards Manager
2.	Independent Reviewing Service Annual Report 2022/23	Carolyn Knight, Quality and Standards Manager
3.	Attendance in Education – Overview Report	Sarah Lane, Head of Virtual School

6 July 2023		
	Item	Contributor
1.	Children in Care Performance Measures Q 4	Tara Jones, Assistant Director – Children’s Services
2.	Fostering Quarterly Performance Report - Q 4	Deborah Crawford, Head of Service Fostering, Adoption and Leaving Care
3.	Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service Annual Report 2022/23	Lisa Adams, Service Manager - Barnardo’s Leaving Care Services

7 September 2023		
	Item	Contributor
1.	Children in Care Performance Measures Q 1	Tara Jones, Assistant Director – Children’s Services
2.	Fostering Quarterly Performance Report Q 1	Deborah Crawford, Head of Service Fostering, Adoption and Leaving Care
3.	Adoption Annual Report 2022-23	Sharon Clarke, Interim Team Manager, Adoption
4.	Fostering Annual Report 2022-23	Deborah Crawford, Head of Service Fostering, Adoption and Leaving Care Nicola Brangam, Fostering Team Manager

9 November 2023		
	Item	Contributor
1.	Independent Reviewing Service Yearly Report 1st April 2023 - 30th September 2023	Carolyn Knight, Quality and Standards Manager

9 November 2023	
Item	Contributor
2. Regulation 44 Independent Visitors Report	Carolyn Knight, Quality and Standards Manager
3. Private Fostering Annual Report and Statement of Purpose	Deborah Crawford, Head of Fostering, Adoption and Leaving Care
4. Annual Report of the Regional Adoption Agency	John Harris, Head of Regional Adoption Agency

3. Items to be programmed

Report Title	Est Date
Prevalence of emotional health and our response	TBC, 2023
Children in Care Performance Measures Q 2	January 2024
Fostering Quarterly Performance Report - Q 2	January 2024
Children in Care Annual Health Report 2022/23	January 2024
Lincolnshire Leaving Care - 6 Monthly Update Report by Barnardo's	January 2024
Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027 (Annual Update)	March/April 2024
LCC Virtual School Report Academic Year 2022-23	March/April 2024

4. 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.

5. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

6. 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.

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