



CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

THURSDAY, 7 SEPTEMBER 2023 at 10.00 AM
in COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY OFFICES, NEWLAND, LINCOLN LN1 1YL

MEMBERSHIP

<u>Lincolnshire County Council:</u>	Councillors S P Roe (Chairman), A G Hagues (Vice-Chairman), Mrs J E Killey, C Matthews, N Sear, M A Whittington and 1 Vacancy
<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 6 July 2023	5 - 10
4	Announcements by the Chairman, Executive Councillors and Chief Officers	
5	The Mental Health Needs and Support Available for Children in Care and Care Leavers in Lincolnshire <i>(To receive a report from Charlotte Gray, Head of Service - Children's Strategic Commissioning and Lynda Whitton, Senior Commissioning Officer – Children's Commissioning, which outlines the various universal and targeted mental health support available for Children in Care and Care and Care Leavers in Lincolnshire)</i>	11 - 18

6	Children in Care Performance Report Quarter 1 <i>(To receive a report from Carolyn Knight, Head of Service - Quality and Standards and Principal Social Worker, which invites the Panel to consider and comment on key performance information for Quarter 1 2023/24 that is relevant to the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel)</i>	19 - 40
7	Ofsted Inspection of Lincolnshire Children's Services - Outcome Report <i>(To receive a report from Carolyn Knight, Head of Service - Quality and Standards and Principal Social Worker, which invites the Panel to review the findings and judgements from the Ofsted Inspection of Lincolnshire Children's Services)</i>	41 - 58
8	Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027 <i>(To receive a report from Bridie Fletcher, Senior Commissioning Officer – Children's Commissioning and Amy Allcock, Commissioning Manager-Commercial, invites the Panel to consider the Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-27)</i>	59 - 108
9	Adoption Annual Report 2022-2023 <i>(To receive a report from Sharon Clarke, Interim Team Manager – Adoption, which invites the Panel to consider the Adoption Annual Report 2022-23)</i>	109 - 140
10	Fostering Annual Report 2022-2023 <i>(To consider a report from Emily McAllister, Fostering Team Manager and Nicola Brangam, Fostering Team Manager – South, which invites the Panel to consider the Fostering Annual Report 2022-23)</i>	141 - 168
11	Corporate Parenting Panel Work Programme <i>(To receive a report by Tracy Johnson, Senior Scrutiny Officer, which invites the Panel to consider its work programme)</i>	169 - 174
 INFORMATION ONLY ITEMS		
12	Adoption Statement of Purpose 2022-2023 <i>(The Panel are asked to note the Adoption Statement of Purpose 2022-2023)</i>	175 - 210
13	Fostering Statement of Purpose 2022-2023 <i>(The Panel are asked to note the Fostering Statement of Purpose 2022-23)</i>	211 - 242

Distributed on Wednesday, 30 August 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, 7th September, 2023, 10.00 am \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Should you have any queries on the arrangements for this meeting, please contact Emily Wilcox via telephone 01522 552334 or alternatively via email at emily.wilcox@lincolnshire.gov.uk

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CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL 6 JULY 2023

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S P ROE (CHAIRMAN)

Lincolnshire County Council: Councillors A G Hagues (Vice-Chairman), K H Cooke, C Matthews and N Sear

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

Officers in attendance:-

Kiara Chatziioannou (Scrutiny Officer), Tara Jones (Head of Service, Children in Care Transformation and Partners in Practice Programme), Andrew Morris (Corporate Parenting Manager), Emily Wilcox (Democratic Services Officer), Lisa Adams (Service Manager, Barnardos), Sarah Lane (Virtual School Team Manager), Kerry Mitchell (Assistant Director Barnardo's (Lincolnshire)), Nicola Wilkinson (NHS Lincolnshire ICB) and Deborah Crawford (Head of Service - Fostering and Adoption)

1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN FOR 2023/24

On the nomination of Councillor A G Hagues, seconded by Councillor K H Cooke and there being no further nominations, it was

RESOLVED:

That Councillor S Roe be elected as the Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel for 2023/24.

2 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR 2023/24

On the nomination of Councillor S Roe, seconded by Councillor K H Cooke and there being no further nominations, it was

RESOLVED:

That Councillor A G Hagues be elected as the Vice-Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel for 2023/24.

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3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M A Whittington and Polly Coombes (Foster Carer Representative).

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were declared.

5 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 11 MAY 2023

Within the attendance details, it was agreed that Nicola Wilkinson's title be amended to show that she is a representative of NHS Lincolnshire ICB.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 May 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the above amendment.

6 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND CHIEF OFFICERS

The Chairman had attended the FAB awards which he commended as a fantastic and fun event.

He had also delivered a training event on Corporate Parenting to South Kesteven District Council which had been well received and there had been interest from the South Kesteven District Councillors to attend a future meeting of the Panel.

The Chairman was pleased to congratulate Lincolnshire County Council's Children's Services Directorate for being rated outstanding by Ofsted. The Chairman thanked the Panel and Officers for their ongoing work.

The Assistant Director – Children's Safeguarding reiterated how fantastic the FAB awards for children in care was and expressed how humbled she was by the achievements in perseverance and education and how great to see so many foster carers and residential staff supporting the young people. The Assistant Director – Children's Safeguarding thanked everyone involved in setting up a brilliant event.

7 CHILDREN IN CARE PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 4

Consideration was given to a report by the Assistant Director – Children's Safeguarding, which invited the Panel to consider the key performance information for Quarter 4 2022/23 that was relevant to the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel, as detailed within the report.

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

- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children were supported financially through the grant funding allocated through the National Transfer Scheme. However, the increase in the number of asylum-seeking children had impacted on placement sufficiency for children in care across the county, which had impacted on almost every performance indicator. Unaccompanied asylum seekers received pupil premium to support with learning, however following an increase in unaccompanied asylum seekers identified as being 16 years of age, there had been challenges in placing children into school or college places. The Panel were assured that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children would have access to some form of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision whilst awaiting a school or college place.
- Some children were engaging with home education and home tuition and receiving the relevant learning, however as they were not attending school or examinations, they were not being recorded within the data. Officers were seeking specialist support from educational psychologists around how to support those young people in returning to school, particularly because analysis showed that those who were not attending school were more likely to have reduced outcomes.
- Assurance was provided that once a young person enters care, a meeting would be held within 10 days to look at the potential barriers to education and access pupil premiums to work with the school to put interventions and the correct measures for the individual to support with learning. Additional funding and recovery premium would be used to put additional interventions in place as well as home tuition if appropriate.
- Late entrants into the care system often had a history of disengagement with education and had missed a significant amount of key learning. Many would not be expected to meet the thresholds set which impacted on data and GCSE results within the target timescales. Many did obtain GCSE's and qualifications, but it often took a longer period of time so was not recorded within the performance measures.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be received and endorsed;
2. That satisfaction be recorded for assurances received;
3. That the comments made be recorded and passed on to the relevant Executive Councillor for and leading officers for consideration.

8 FOSTERING QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 4

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Service – Fostering and Adoption, which invited the Committee to consider the quarter 4 performance report for the Fostering Service, as set out in the report. The Head of Service – Fostering and Adoption.

The Foster Carer Representative was pleased to hear about the success of the family finding event, which she commended as a fantastic process and expressed her thanks for the appreciation of the work of Foster Carers. Despite the challenging role of a foster carer representative, the Foster Carer Representative felt were supported by the Council.

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

- The Panel echoed the comments made and expressed its thanks to Foster Carers.
- There were no specific geographical locations that were struggling with the recruitment of foster carers more than others. A blend of different marketing tools in public and on social media were used in different locations to ensure they were as seen and visible to as many communities as possible. Social media was the largest contact method and foster carers were encouraged to engage with others to encourage others to take up foster caring.
- Research from the Fostering Network and National charities and feedback provided from foster carers would be used to support new marketing and recruitment tools. The marketing team regularly launched ambitious new recruitment campaigns.
- Overall, the number of children in care had decreased which was positive, however it was accepted that this number would fluctuate and due to there still being a high number of children overall, there had to be some reliance on external provision. Despite this, the Panel were reassured that the needs of the child would always be considered as a priority, including considering whether it was possible to place with relatives as an alternative to foster care or residential care.
- There were various reasons for the 83 children exiting care during the period, which included some which had exited through special guardianship orders or adoption. Data was monitored for use within the sufficiency strategy and a breakdown would be provided within the Children in Care Annual report.
- Assurance was provided that all providers of foster care had to work to the same guidance, legislation and timeframes as the Council.
- The recruitment process for foster cares was carried out in two stages: the first stage included checks, references and checking for police probation and the second stage was the undertaking of a formal assessment. The whole was aimed to be completed within 8 months from the point of registration.
- The main reason for people dropping out during the fostering process was due to significant life events. Generally people had thought extensively about their decision to proceed prior to registering and had engaged with the Council on the expectations of the role.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be receive and endorsed;
2. That thanks be recorded for the overall efforts of the Fostering Service; whilst acknowledging continuous pressures on placement availability you have clearly achieved to place most children within the Lincolnshire County Council approved foster carers community who, undeniably put every effort in achieving positive, child focused outcomes;
3. That the views and feedback from the Panel be shared with Officers and relevant Executive Councillors

9 LINCOLNSHIRE LEAVING CARE - ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

Consideration was given to a report by the Programme Manager – Barnardo’s, which invited the Panel to consider the Lincolnshire Leaving Care Annual Report for 2022/23.

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

- Young people placed in health provision were not necessarily children in care or care leavers. It may be the case that there were no children’s services involvement or any statutory involvement from social care but was case dependent.
- The Panel commended the support offered by Tesco and their support to the care leavers.
- The Chairman congratulated Andrew Morris for his promotion to Head of Service – Leaving Care.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be received;
2. That satisfaction be recorded on the progress and achievements of the Lincolnshire Leaving Care Services
3. That the comments from the discussion be recorded by Partners, Officers and relevant Executive Councillors.

10 SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 2023

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Service – Leaving Care, which invited the Panel to consider the Council’s implementation of the Supported Accommodation (England) Regulations detailed in Appendix A to the report.

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

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- In relation to future inspections and reporting, supported accommodation would be inspected by the Council on a three-year cycle, as well as by Ofsted. A report would be scheduled when appropriate to provide an update on the registration process for the provisions and to provide an update on the changes made within the homes and to provide assurance that those homes had been inspected to the same standard as other residential homes.
- There would be no additional performance indicator within the performance measures, but performance would be measured as part of the Regulation 44 report.
- Once registration of the homes had been received, visiting Members could be allocated.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

11 CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the Scrutiny Officer which invited the Panel to consider the Panel's work programme.

The Chairman suggested that an item be added to a future meeting to give time to allow representatives from external organisations to introduce themselves to the Panel and explain their role in relation to the Panel.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted;
2. That the existing work programme, as detailed on pages 73-76 of the agenda pack, be approved.

The meeting closed at 11.50 am



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

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	07 September 2023
Subject:	The Mental Health Needs and Support Available for Children in Care and Care Leavers in Lincolnshire

Summary:

Lincolnshire has a number of services designed to provide support to children and young people (CYP) with emotional wellbeing and mental health concerns, from prevention and early intervention through to crisis, mostly provided by Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (LPFT).

It is widely recognised that care experienced CYP are more likely to have poorer mental health than their peers. Most CYP enter care as a result of abuse and neglect and the trauma they experience can have far reaching effects on all aspects of their lives. Promoting the Health and Wellbeing of Looked After Children (statutory guidance) identified that c.50% of Children in Care (CiC) have a diagnosable mental health disorder.

In Lincolnshire, CiC and care leavers can access a range of CYP mental health services including targeted support such as:

- Fast-track referral for CiC into CAMHS (4 week target from referral to assessment).
- Specialist staff within Children’s services, for example trained Early Help staff to deliver NHS Talking Therapies for Anxiety and Depression.
- A Leaving Care Mental Health Practitioner, employed by LPFT, who is co-located in the Barnardo’s Leaving Care Service (soon to be expanded with another practitioner working with NACRO Supported Accommodation, as part of the Staying Close pilot).
- A Complex Needs Service focused on supporting CiC and care leavers, which also includes CiC Link Workers co-located within the new residential children’s homes in Lincolnshire, to provide a strong therapeutic, trauma informed offer.
- Mental health support for CiC in our existing in-house residential care homes.

This report outlines in more detail the various universal and targeted mental health support available for CiC and care leavers in Lincolnshire.

Actions Required:

The Panel is asked to review the contents of this report and provide feedback.

1. Background

Local Authority Responsibilities

As set out in [Promoting the Health and Well-being of Looked-after Children](#) (statutory guidance for local authorities, integrated care boards (ICBs) and NHS England):

- The corporate parenting responsibilities of local authorities include having a duty under section 22(3)(a) of the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children they look after, including eligible children and those placed for adoption, regardless of whether they are placed in or out of authority or the type of placement. This includes the **promotion of the child’s physical, emotional and mental health and acting on any early signs of health issues.**
- The local authority must arrange for looked after children to have a **health assessment** as required by The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010.
- The local authority must ensure that every child it looks after has an up-to-date **individual health plan**, the development of which should be based on the written report of the health assessment. This plan forms part of the child’s overall care plan.
- When a child starts to be looked after, changes placement or ceases to be looked after, the **responsible local authority should notify**, among others, the ICB and child’s GP or, in the case of a placement out of authority, the originating and receiving ICBs.
- Looked-after children should **never be refused a service, including for mental health, on the grounds of their placement being short-term or unplanned.**
- **ICBs and NHS England have a duty to cooperate with requests from local authorities to undertake health assessments** and help them ensure support and services to looked-after children are provided without undue delay.
- Local authorities, ICBs, NHS England and Public Health England must **cooperate to commission health services for all children in their area.**
- The health needs of looked-after children should be taken into account in developing the local **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.**
- Every local authority should have agreed local mechanisms with ICBs to ensure that they comply with NHS England’s guidance on **establishing the responsible commissioner in relation to secondary health care when making placement decisions** for looked-after children and to resolve any funding issues that arise. If a looked-after child or child leaving care moves out of the ICB area, arrangements should be made through discussion between the “originating ICB”, those currently providing the child’s healthcare and the new providers to ensure continuity of healthcare. ICBs should ensure that any changes in healthcare providers do not disrupt the objective of providing high quality, timely care for the child.
- Local authorities, ICBs and NHS England should ensure that plans are in place to enable **children leaving care to continue to obtain the healthcare they need.**
- Looked-after children should be able to **participate in decisions about their health care.** Arrangements should be in place to promote a culture;
 - where looked-after children are listened to,
 - that takes account of their views according to their age and understanding, in identifying and meeting their physical, emotional and mental health needs, and
 - that helps others, including carers and schools, to understand the importance of listening to and taking account of the child’s wishes and feelings about how to be healthy.

Overview of CYP Mental Health Services in Lincolnshire

Lincolnshire has a number of services designed to provide support to CYP and their families with emotional wellbeing and mental health concerns, from prevention and early intervention through to crisis. Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) Children's Services is the delegated lead commissioner for these services in Lincolnshire, on behalf of Lincolnshire ICB, which enables the prioritisation of mental health support for our most vulnerable CYP, including CiC and care leavers.

Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (LPFT) provides the majority of mental health services for CYP, outlined below, which are rated 'Outstanding' by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and funded through a pooled budget between the ICB and the Council.

- The **Here4You Access Team** provides a single point of access for CYP mental health services (including a self-referral route) through a telephone line offering clinical advice, support and signposting, and screening of referrals (including online referrals).
- **Healthy Minds Lincolnshire (HML)** works in schools and communities to provide early intervention support to prevent emotional wellbeing concerns from escalating.
- **Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs)** are a new nationally prescribed model of emotional wellbeing support in schools and colleges which are part of the national drive to improve access to mental health care for CYP. Lincolnshire has four fully operational teams (Lincoln, Gainsborough, Boston, Skegness) and four more planned/in progress (Spalding, Grantham, Sleaford, North Hykeham area).
- **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)** includes:
 - **Core CAMHS** offers therapeutic interventions by a range of professionals such as mental health nurses, psychiatrists, and psychologists for CYP with moderate to severe concerns including but not limited to depression, anxiety, trauma and self-harm, and a team specifically to support CYP with a learning disability.
 - **Community Eating Disorder Service (EDS)** offers interventions for CYP with Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia, binge eating and atypical eating disorders.
 - **CAMHS Crisis and Enhanced Treatment Team (CCETT)** offers 24/7 crisis response and intensive home treatment to prevent inpatient admissions or support CYP transitioning out of inpatient services.
 - **CYP Keyworking** supports children aged up to 25 who have a learning disability and/or are autistic and at high-risk of being admitted to specialist inpatient services, or already in a specialist inpatient bed.

In addition, the following also support the mental health needs of CYP in Lincolnshire:

- **Online Mental Health Support** (commissioned by LCC and provided by Kooth Digital Health Ltd.) is available for young people aged 11 to 18 (25 SEND/care leaver) living in or attending education in Lincolnshire. This is an anonymous service where CYP can self-register and access online counselling or text messaging support, message boards, forums and advice on a wide range of emotional wellbeing and mental health issues.
- **Grief and Loss Counselling Support** (commissioned by LPFT and provided by Lincolnshire Centre for Grief and Loss) is an advice and counselling service for school-aged CYP who are experiencing grief and loss through death, divorce, separation etc.

Specific CAMHS Enhancements for CiC and Care Leavers

- **CiC in Lincolnshire have a fast-track referral route to CAMHS** (4 week target from referral to assessment (unless urgent)). Since the pandemic, waiting times for CAMHS have increased nationally and in Lincolnshire. In 2022/23, the ICB invested an additional £1.2m to reduce waiting times in CAMHS. Since then there has been a 56% reduction in children waiting more than 12 weeks for an assessment and performance is now in line with the improvement trajectory and it is projected by March 2024 that waiting times from referral to treatment will all be within 12 weeks. All children waiting for services benefit from Family Support Worker contact.
 - In terms of comparison in numbers of referrals for community specialist CAMHS support, during Quarter 1 2023/24 there were 454 referrals, of which 22 were for CiC (4.8%).
 - In Quarter 4 2022/23, the median wait for community specialist assessment for all CYP was 7.9 weeks, improving to 6.7 weeks in Quarter 1 2023/24, with 57% of CYP seen within the 6 week target.
 - For CiC, 40% were assessed within 4 weeks during Quarter 4 2022/23 with a median wait of 7 weeks, which also improved in Quarter 1 2023/24 with 68% of CiC (15 CiC) assessed within 4 weeks and a median wait of 3.95 weeks (almost 3 weeks faster than the wait for all other CYP).
 - The median wait to treatment for all CYP in Quarter 3 2022/23 was 9 weeks with the median wait for CiC being 6 weeks. This improved by Quarter 1 2023/24 to a median wait for all CYP of 6 weeks, with 73% being seen within 12 weeks. This means that the overall referral to treatment waits for CiC are approximately 20% faster than for other CYP.
- CiC accessing CYP Mental Health Services on average **receive much longer periods of support compared to other CYP** (45.1 weeks for CiC in Quarter 3 2022/23, compared to 29.5 weeks for other CYP).
- **Transition planning for CiC commences at 16** between CAMHS and Adult Mental Health Services.

Mental Health Support for CiC and Care Leavers within Children's Services

- The Council's Children's Services has **trained Early Help staff to deliver an Improving Access to Psychological Therapies programme** and LPFT provide their clinical supervision. The caseloads of these workers is targeted to support CYP with emotional wellbeing concerns and supports the prevention of children entering care. As at June 2023 there were seven of these trained staff in post, which has reduced naturally over time due to staff turnover from almost 20, therefore a new cohort of 10 staff has been recruited to commence training from September 2023 to once again increase the workers able to deliver this enhanced offer.
- Lincolnshire also utilises the central government's Adoption Support Fund (ASF) to **access therapeutic help for adopted CYP and their adoptive family**. In 2022/23, Lincolnshire 447 children received this support. An example of feedback includes: *"[The ASF Provider] has brought our gorgeous and courageous little boy back to us and for that we will be forever grateful. We have spent time having fun with M looked at*

different techniques and also managed to get some sleep. Overall life is calmer and more settled, there are challenging days but then many children have those. We have learnt as parents a great deal along the way, and this has made our family even more cemented with love. M remains the centre of our world exactly where he should be not only because of his shocking journey to us but every child deserves to be the centre of their parent/s world/s”.

Complex Needs Service

In 2019, the Council’s Children’s Services piloted the locally designed Future4Me (F4M) service, using Department for Education (DfE) Partners in Practice funding. F4M works with CYP with complex needs using a restorative trauma recovery model. LPFT mental health staff and Speech and Language Therapists work as an integrated team with Children’s Services staff and provide direct intervention to CYP and consultation to other professionals working in the service.



Figure 1: Complex Needs Service support model

In 2020/21, Lincolnshire successfully bid to NHS England (NHSE) Health and Justice to mainstream and expand the health offer element of F4M, and is now the regional vanguard for delivering the Framework for Integrated Care (Community).

The Complex Needs Service now supports a wider range of CYP with complex needs and trauma, including those open to or at risk of entering the youth justice system, CiC, care leavers, adopted children, and in time hopes to expand to those with complex health needs and children living in vulnerable households e.g. socio-economic disadvantage, parents with mental health problems etc. The team won the CYP Now Mental Health and Wellbeing Award in 2021.

The team uses a multi-disciplinary approach to support CYP, mainly providing training, consultation, formulation and in some cases direct intervention, delivering the model shown in Figure 1. The team comprises primarily of Psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists, Harmful Behaviour Specialists, Positive Futures Workers and CiC Link workers.

Since it began, the Complex Needs Service has accepted 914 referrals, and has:

- Produced more than 327 formulation-based care plans
- Provided direct intensive assessment/intervention to 38 CYP and 10 parents/carers
- Supported at least 119 onward referrals to appropriate support
- Offered consultation and advice to over 918 professionals involved in the care of CYP
- Delivered training in attachment trauma, neurodiversity, self-care, speech language and communication needs (SLCN), and Wellness Recovery Action Planning (WRAP).

Children in Care Link Workers and Residential Care Home Support

Within the Complex Needs Service, there are three CiC Link Workers (two full time, one part time), with another post planned to be recruited. These workers will work with the Council's residential children's homes in Lincolnshire. The majority of their work will be with the care staff and there is potential for this offer to be developed further in future.

In 2021, the Council's Children's Services was awarded DfE capital funding towards two new residential care homes in Lincolnshire. These homes will provide a strong therapeutic offer; with specially trained staff, links to CAMHS Psychologists and the CiC Links Workers delivering an enhanced trauma informed model.

The CiC Link Workers have cases allocated between them and will be involved in completing the chronologies, attending the formulations and supporting the analysis of behaviour through attending the professionals meetings around the CiC and liaising with their respective Social Workers and current placements.

Visits by the CiC Link workers to all children's homes is now ongoing and include risk management meetings, professionals' meetings, debrief sessions, and formulation meetings. In Quarter 3 2022/23, CiC Link Workers made 29 visits to the established residential homes (Northolme, Eastgate, The Beacon, Albion Street) and undertook 13 consultations with staff, increasing in Quarter 1 2023/24 to 44 visits and 19 consultations.

Whilst Robin House is not yet open, training has been given with staff on reflective practice and these sessions are now taking place with the staff, as well as case discussions, behaviour analysis work, chronologies, formulation, and provision of therapeutic recommendations.

In addition, the CiC Link Workers are:

- Undertaking direct work with parents/carers and CYP where appropriate (e.g. where a young person's plan is to increase contact with the parent and eventually return).
- Working with staff in the Council's residential care homes to;
 - develop individual crisis plans for children,
 - offer reflective practice sessions alongside a CAMHS Psychologist,

- provide advice in developing therapeutic/calm spaces, and
- deliver clinical supervision sessions and regular consultation clinics.
- Developing links with fostering support.

Feedback from staff working in residential homes has been very positive.

In addition to this work in the Council’s residential care homes, careful consideration is also given to the **emotional wellbeing and mental health needs of any CiC that are placed in independent residential or foster care**. This is a key part of searching for an appropriate placement and the Council and the NHS fund additional support as needed, particularly if a child lives outside of the county and does not meet the criteria for specialist mental health support in other areas. This is why it is so important that CiC can stay living in Lincolnshire where they can access our ‘Outstanding’ rated CYP mental health services.

Barnardo’s Leaving Care Mental Health Practitioner

A Mental Health Practitioner (MHP) was recruited in 2021 to work across the Complex Needs Service and Barnardo’s Leaving Care Service to provide a consultation-based model to Barnardo’s Leaving Care Workers (LCWs) to improve mental health support for young people who have been “looked after” or are care experienced. This collaborative trauma informed practice approach has been seen to increase stabilisation of these care leavers.

The role of the Leaving Care MHP includes:

- Working with LCWs to identify mental health difficulties and signposting/referrals to appropriate services.
- Building skills and knowledge of LCWs including training on relevant topics e.g. self-harm, suicidality.
- A small caseload for some direct assessment/intervention.
- Development of group work packages for some young people.

In Quarter 3 2022/23, 49 care leavers and their LCWs were supported, and in Quarter 1 2023/24 this was slightly less at 44, however there was an increase in consultations for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).

Future Developments around Mental Support for CiC and Care Leavers

- There is currently a **CYP Mental Health Transformation Programme** underway. The Council and LPFT are jointly undertaking a wholesale review of children’s mental health support in Lincolnshire in order that “together with CYP in Lincolnshire, we will understand how we can best support their emotional wellbeing and mental health and transform and improve services, enabling CYP to live independent safe, well and fulfilled lives in their local communities”. This will be delivered across five workstreams:
 - Prevention and community assets – ensuring CYP stay healthy through mental health promotion and prevention by creating mental health communities.
 - Early intervention – ensuring CYP access timely and effective support at the right level in their community or at school.

- Mental health support for learning disabled or autistic CYP – ensuring CYP receive specialist care in the community, tailored to meet their specific needs.
- Community specialist mental health – ensuring CYP who need it are able to access specialist assessment and evidence-based treatment.
- Urgent and emergency mental health – ensuring CYP have access to 24/7 assessment and support at times of mental health crisis.

Across all of these areas, CiC and care leavers are a key group being considered in terms of their unique experiences and emotional wellbeing and mental health needs.

- There are plans to continue and **expand support for care leavers following Lincolnshire’s successful ‘Staying Close and Connected’ bid** to the DfE. Two LPFT MHPs will be co-located; the existing Barnardo’s Leaving Care Service MHP and an additional MHP within the supported accommodation service – Nacro Education, Support and Transition (NEST). They will upskill staff to better support young people’s mental health and wellbeing, providing additional trauma-informed resources to help stabilise challenging behaviours and support to remain connected as they move on.
- The **key priorities for the Complex Needs Service for the next year** are to further build up the support to the Council’s residential care homes and increase the support it offers to Lincolnshire’s care leavers. Other priorities include embedding the Positive Futures offer within the Complex Needs Service, recruiting to a ‘Lived Experience’ post and expanding co-production of support, expanding the team’s training offer and evaluating the various elements of the service.

2. Conclusion

Lincolnshire has a good range of support on offer for all CYP and families, as well as a range of targeted support and joint working with other professionals to better support the mental health needs of our CiC and care leavers. We are always looking at new ways and maximising potential funding to increase the support available for all CYP, but also for specific groups such as CiC and care leavers.

As well as the ongoing planned developments in mental health support for CiC and care leavers noted in this report, we will continue to identify ways to improve this support through the CYP Mental Health Transformation Programme and alongside strategic developments around accommodation and crisis/respite provision for CiC, improving joined-up community planning/support and the ‘Staying Close and Connected’ work.

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. 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 Kevin Johnson, who can be contacted on 07729 546202 or kevin.johnson@lincolnshire.gov.uk.



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

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	07 September 2023
Subject:	Children in Care Performance Report Quarter 1

Summary:

This item enables the Panel to consider and comment on the report and accompanying appendices to this report, that provide key performance information for Quarter 1 2023/24 that is relevant to the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Actions Required:

Members of the Panel are invited to consider and comment on the performance information contained in the appendices of this report and recommend any actions or changes to the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration.

1. Background

Appendix A provides a full and detailed report that covers the measures that are relevant to Children in Care (CiC) used by Children’s Services. This is available for questions.

There are 15 measures in total that relate to CiC that are reported on in Quarter 1. Of these measures four did not meet their target and one is ahead of the target set by the services.

1.1 Measures that did not meet their target:

1.1.1 Percentage of Children in Care with an up to date health check

The number of children in care has increased and there is evidence of more young people aged 16/17 entering care and exercising their right to refuse an assessment. These include young asylum seeking children who have come through the national transfer scheme. This age group of children are often not committed to accessing their health assessment, although they continue to access healthcare when required. The Children in Care Teams continue to encourage and promote health assessments with their young people but have to accept their right to refuse.

There has been a lot of activity to improve the timeliness of Initial Health Assessment and this measure has improved.

1.1.2 16-17 year old Children in Care who are participating in Learning

The Virtual School co-ordinates Personal Education Plans for all our 16 and 17 year old children in care, ensuring that every young person has a plan which is reviewed termly. These bring young people, their social workers, carers and providers together to focus on educational need, any potential barriers to participation in learning and ensures that our young people are supported appropriately. As some of our young people in care struggle to access or sustain engagement in learning, access to therapeutic support and/or alternative routes into educational opportunities are explored through the Personal Education Plan and may be supported by Post 16 Pupil Premium funding. Challenges in securing mid-year school places and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision for the increased number of recently arrived unaccompanied asylum seeking young people aged 16-17 has impacted on this quarter's performance. Interim tuition provision is commissioned by the Virtual School to ensure young people have access to learning whilst awaiting a place at an educational setting.

1.1.3 Care Leavers in Education, Employment or Training (EET)

This measure remains below target but is moving in a positive direction and has improved. The Leaving Care Service continues to monitor every single young person who is not in EET. The Service continues to report monthly on the efforts of the service to re-engage individuals back into EET. Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) tracks this performance regularly and monitors those young people who fall into NEET (not in education, employment or training) and those that re-secure EET.

The Leaving Care Service is working with the Corporate Parenting Manager to look at the emotional wellness and the recovery of young people as this is the biggest barrier to engaging in EET, alongside the plethora of activity to support young people accessing EET. As mental health/emotional wellbeing is one of the biggest barriers to our young people accessing EET, the wellbeing worker and Mental Health professionals remain in post to offer additional support to those young people with poor mental health and those who are unable access to work. Individual wellbeing and recovery are central to improving the EET in the long term. The impact of these posts within the service was praised during the recent Ofsted inspection as an effective method of listening to what young people need, addressing their needs, and effectively reintroducing support and services to young people and overcoming barriers to remaining EET.

1.1.4 Children in Care Living Within A Family Environment

The current target for 2023-24 is 80%. At 76.3% this is performing just below the target range (77% - 82%). This measure has previously been within the target tolerance, but as the children in care cohort changes constantly, the figure does vary between quarters, and it is yet to be seen as to whether this is a temporary dip or part of a longer-term trend.

To illustrate how the figure can vary over quite short periods of time, at the start of June the figure stood at 77.4%, within the target range, whereas by the end of the month the figure had dropped to 76.3%, slightly below. Family placements are a continued focus for the Council as for many children in care, a family placement is deemed the most suitable means of offering care and maintaining children within their family networks. The Council continues to explore enabling children and young people to remain within their family or extended network if they cannot, for whatever reason, live with their parents. We are aware of the increased number of age assessments of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) which result in a non-family placement which will be affecting this measure. This is likely to continue to increase.

1.2 Measures that are ahead of their target:

1.2.1 Participation of Children in Care in reviews

There has been ongoing work to ensure reporting on Mosaic improved and this has now come to fruition. It is a cumulative measure and there will always be some young people who chose not to participate in reviews despite our best endeavours so the fact that we have exceeded the target is a testimony to the hard work in engaging young people in their care plans.

2. Conclusion

This report summarises the Quarter 1 performance for Children in Care and Young People, and Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are invited to review and raise any questions on its content and recommend any actions or changes to the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration.

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. Appendices

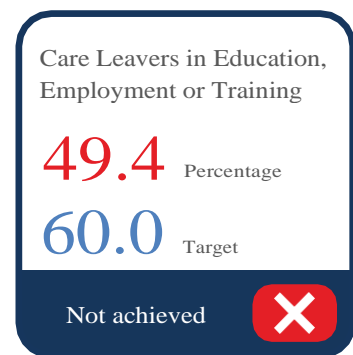
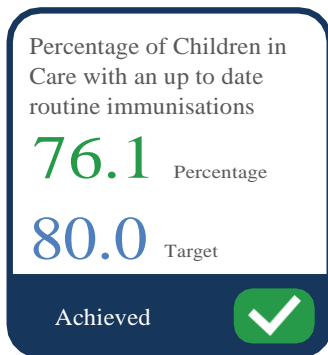
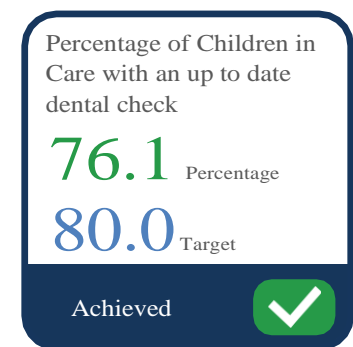
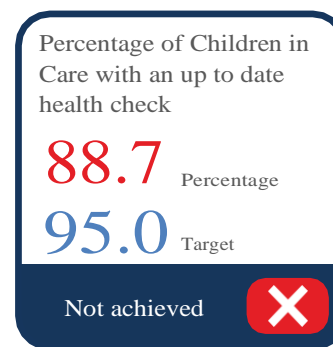
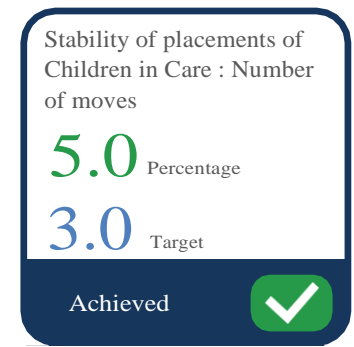
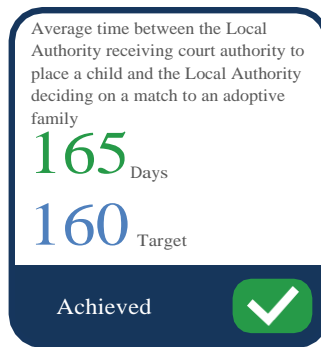
These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Children in Care - Performance Measures – Quarter 1

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 Simon Hardcastle, Performance Support Officer – Corporate Transformation, Programmes & Performance, who can be contacted by e-mail at Simon.hardcastle@lincolnshire.gov.uk.

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Corporate Parenting Panel

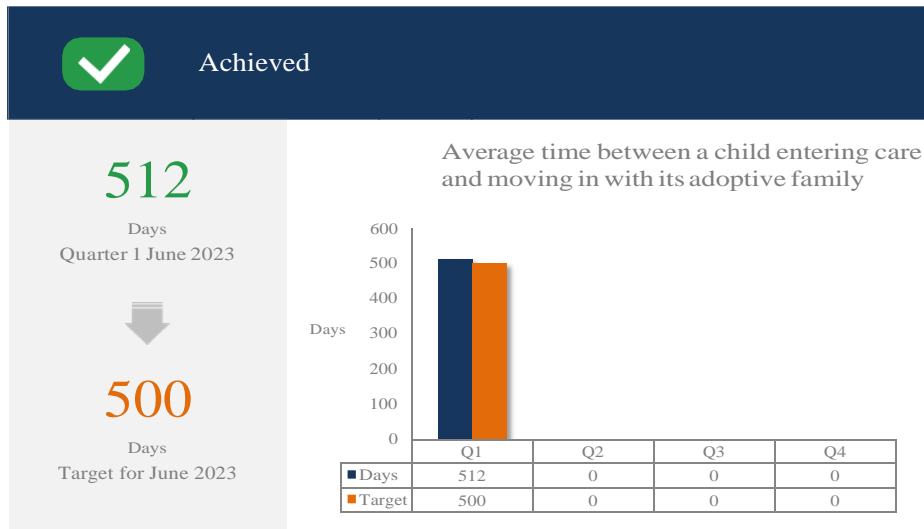


Children Are Healthy and Safe

Children are Healthy and Safe

Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family

Average number of days between the child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family. A lower number of days taken to move a child from care into an adoptive family indicates a better performance.



About the latest performance

Performance in 2022/23 - Q1: 513 , Q2: 497, Q3: 517, Q4: 505

There has been continued significant delay in the length of time care proceedings are taking this will continue to have some impact on the statistics and data for this year and accounts for the increased timescales. This measure is a 'rolling' 3 yearly average, as we have moved forward the calculation has considered more of the period covered by the pandemic, which has in turn increased the rolling average figure. It is important to note that the figure presented includes some rare anomalies which have also adversely affected the overall timescales, such as one case which lasted for over 2000 days due to an unusual amount of disruption as well as an increase in the number of children deemed harder to place in general.

There are also some children later adopted by their foster carers, but this measure does not properly take in to account the time they began living with those families, producing a longer timescale than there was in reality.

About the target

There has been delay in court proceedings that will have impact on our average days over the next year.

About the target range

If we were to go above 550 day we would want to highlight this to Scrutiny members.

About benchmarking

No benchmarking information is available.



Children Are Healthy and Safe

Children are Healthy and Safe

Average time between the Local Authority receiving court authority to place a child and the Local Authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family

Average number of days between the local authority receiving the court order to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family.

A lower number of days taken to match a child to an adoptive family indicates a better performance.



Achieved

165

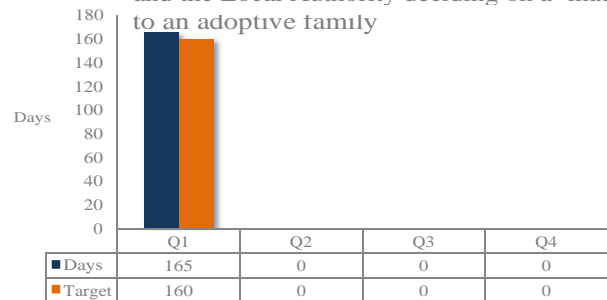
Days
Quarter 1 June 2023



160

Days
Target for June 2023

Average time between the Local Authority receiving court authority to place a child and the Local Authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family



About the latest performance

Performance in 2022/23 - Q1: 167, Q2: 160, Q3: 161, Q4: 165

There are signs that the timescale is continuing to decline, this has, however been impacted in an increase in the number of birth parents who are appealing the decision to make a Placement order which impacts on the timescales for matching.

About the target

There are signs that this timescale is going down, and this has been helped by the family finding processes in the region as well as in house

About the target range

Both upper and lower tolerances have been set at 10 days (average

About benchmarking

No benchmarking information is available.



Children Are Healthy and Safe

Children are Healthy and Safe

Fostering/adoption of Children in Care aged 10 to <16 years old

Percentage of Children in Care aged 10 to under 16 who have been fostered or placed for adoption



Achieved

81.0

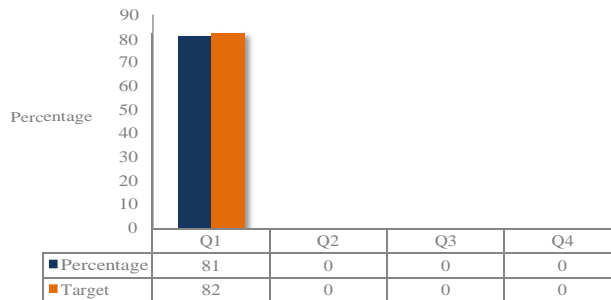
Percentage
Quarter 4 March 2023



82.0

Percentage
Target for June 2023

Fostering/adoption of Children in Care aged 10 to <16 years old



About the latest performance

Performance in 2022/23 - Q1: 79.4%, Q2: 80%, Q3: 80.7%, Q4: 80%

Current performance has met the targets set.

About the target

Target to remain the same as previous year at 82% performance has improved over the last year and has remained above 80%. This is indicative of a reduction in the number of foster carers, challenges in foster carer recruitment and children with complex needs.

About the target range

A 3% variance is set for the upper value and 2% for the lower value.

About benchmarking

benchmarking data no longer available.



Children Are Healthy and Safe

Children are Healthy and Safe

Number of Children in Care per 10,000 under 18s

Children in Care per 10,000 population aged under 18. There are a number of reasons why a child may be 'looked after' by the local authority. Most often it is because the child's parents or the people who have parental responsibilities and rights to look after the child are unable to care for the child, have been neglecting the child or the child has committed an offence. The local authority has specific responsibilities and duties towards a child who is being looked after or who has been looked after. This measure is reported taking a snapshot in time. So for example Q2 is performance as at 30th September.

A lower rate of children looked after by the Local Authority indicates a better performance.



Achieved

50.1

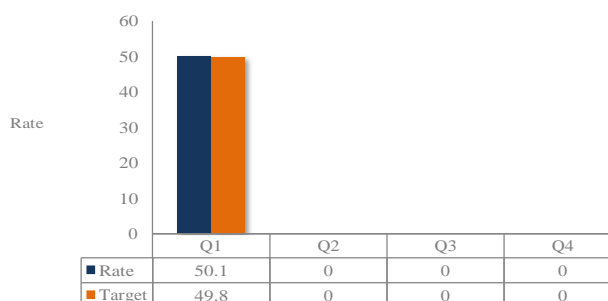
Rate
Quarter 1 June 2023



49.8

Rate
Target for June 2023

Number of Children in Care per 10,000 under 18s



About the latest performance

Performance in 2022/23 - Q1: 50.1, Q2: 50, Q3: 51.3, Q4: 49.1

This measure is just over the target (49.8%) but is within tolerance and has therefore achieved this quarter. This target has been revised upward in comparison to recent years to take into account the effects of the National Transfer Scheme and the number of children in care per 10,000 remains at a relatively high level compared to recent years. The recent growth in numbers is attributable to the Council's safeguarding responsibilities and is partly attributable to the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children that have arrived as part of the new temporary mandated National Transfer Scheme. The expectation is that Lincolnshire will take a maximum of 144 children which equates to 0.1% of the general child population and therefore there continues to be a likely impact of growth going forward.

Despite the recent growth and the potential for future increase there continues to be an emphasis on prevention from children coming into care and exit planning from the care system where it can be achieved. However, even with the increase, the Lincolnshire number of Children in Care (CiC) per 10,000 remains significantly below the most recent published figures both nationally and by our statistical neighbours (70 per 10,000 and 65 per 10,000 respectively as of 31st March 2022).

About the target

The target remains the same as last year due to sustained consistency. The unsettling situation in the Ukraine may impact and the increasing number of children who are presenting with more complex needs.

About the target range

The target varies per quarter to take into account variances in the projected Children in Care cohort throughout the year. The tolerance allows for the number of Children in Care to vary by approximately -35 children and +70 children either side of the target each quarter.

Anything above or below this number would be flagged, indicating a significant variance from the current position.

About benchmarking

We can compare ourselves both nationally and with similar authorities on an annual basis



Children Are Healthy and Safe

Children are Healthy and Safe

Stability of placements of Children in Care : Number of moves

Percentage of Children in Care with three or more placements



Achieved

5.0

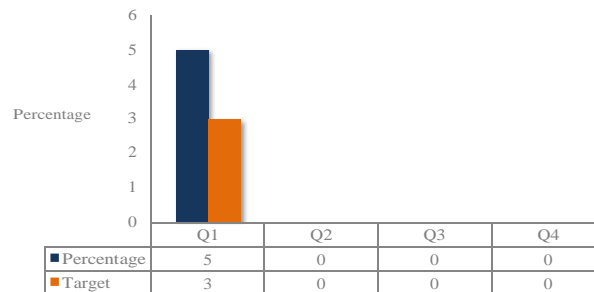
Percentage
Quarter 1 June 2023



3.0

Percentage
Target for June 2023

Stability of placements of Children in Care :
Number of moves



About the latest performance

Performance in 2022/23 - Q1: 1%, Q2: 5%, Q3: 6%, Q4: 9%

Current performance has met the targets set.

About the target

Target is set at 9% current performance at qtr 3 is showing 7%, however we know that the data cleaning for the 903 will increase this figure to 9% which was similar to last years position.

About the target range

We have applied a tolerance for each quarter to allow for the cumulative performance throughout the year. Our stat neighbours for last year were performing at 9% which matches our target for this year.

About benchmarking

We can compare ourselves both nationally and with similar authorities on an annual basis

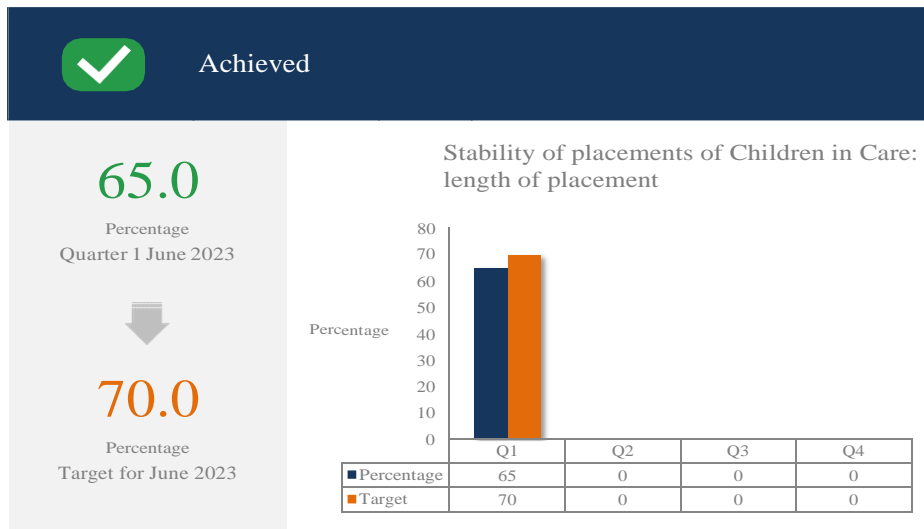


Children Are Healthy and Safe

Children are Healthy and Safe

Stability of placements of Children in Care: length of placement

Percentage of Children in Care in the same placement for at least two years



About the latest performance

Performance in 2022/23 - Q1: 67.6%, Q2: 70.3%, Q3: 69.9%, Q4: 64.2%

Current performance has met the targets set.

About the target

Target to remain the same as the previous year. Performance over this year has remained consistent at around 69%.

About the target range

Tolerances for this measure take into account the current performance.

About benchmarking

We can compare ourselves both nationally and with similar authorities on an annual basis



Children Are Healthy and Safe

Children are Healthy and Safe

Children in Care cases which were reviewed within required timescales

Percentage of Children in Care cases that have been reviewed within timescales



Achieved

99.5

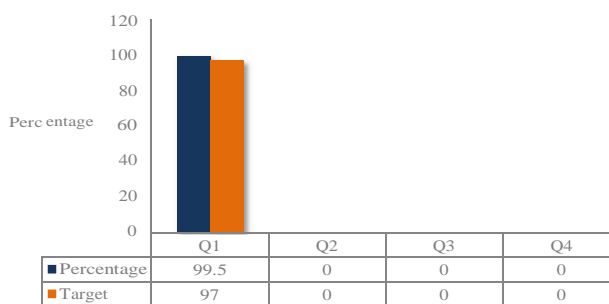
Percentage
Quarter 1 June 2023



97.0

Percentage
Target for June 2023

Children in Care cases which were reviewed within required timescales



About the latest performance

Performance in 2022/23 - Q1: 99.9%, Q2: 99.5%, Q3: 99.1%, Q4: 98.8%

Current performance has met the targets set.

About the target

Target remains at 97% to take into account current performance.

About the target range

As the target is 95%, an upper value of 4.5% has been set.

A lower value of 95% has been set to highlight any performance lower than 95%

About benchmarking

We can compare ourselves both nationally and with similar authorities on an annual basis



Children Are Healthy and Safe

Children are Healthy and Safe

Participation of Children in Care in reviews

Percentage of Children in Care who participated in their reviews



Achieved

99.6

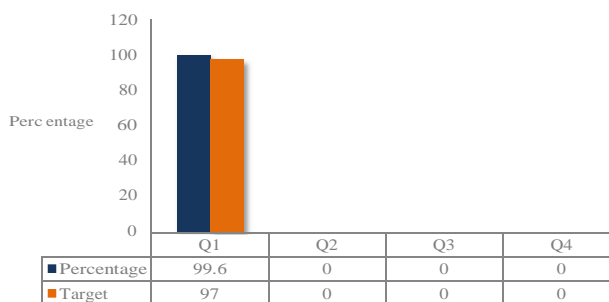
Percentage
Quarter 1 June 2023



97.0

Percentage
Target for June 2023

Participation of Children in Care in reviews



About the latest performance

Performance in 2022/23 - Q1: 94.8%, Q2: 94.6%, Q3: 98.6%, Q4: 98.6

There has been ongoing work to ensure reporting on Mosaic improved and this has now come to fruition. It is a cumulative measure and there will always be some young people who chose not to participate in reviews despite our best endeavours so the fact that we have exceeded the target is a testimony to the hard work in engaging young people in their care plans.

About the target

Target remains at 97% to take into account current performance.

About the target range

As the target is 95%, an upper value of 4.5% has been set.

A lower value of 95% has been set to highlight any performance lower than 95%

About benchmarking

We can compare ourselves both nationally and with similar authorities on an annual basis

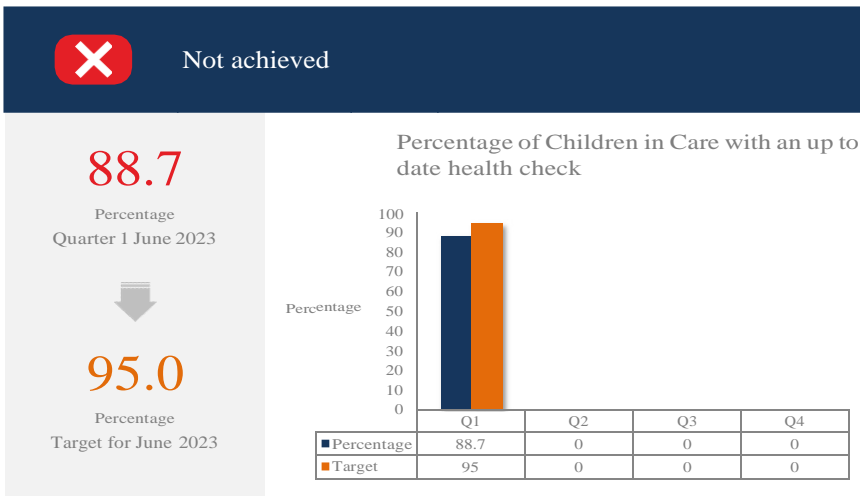


Children Are Healthy and Safe

Children are Healthy and Safe

Percentage of Children in Care with an up to date health check

Percentage of Children in Care with an up to date health check record



About the latest performance

Performance in 2022/23 - Q1: 88.3%, Q2: 90.1%, Q3: 89.6%, Q4: 90.9%

The number of children in care has increased and there is evidence of more young people aged 16/17 entering care and exercising their right to refuse an assessment. These include young asylum seeking children who have come through the national transfer scheme. This age group of children are often not committed to accessing their health assessment, although they continue to access healthcare when required. The Children in Care Teams continue to encourage and promote health assessments with their young people but have to accept their right to refuse.

There has been a lot of activity to improve the timeliness of Initial Health Assessment and this measure has improved.

About the target

Target remains as previous year, tolerance allows performance to be in line with this year's performance.

About the target range

An upper tolerance of 4.5% has been set. This would mean that if all checks were done within timescale we would have achieved an excellent outcome, which would be shown as better than target.

A lower tolerance of 2% has been set to allow for under performance. Data from the last two years shows achieving 93% is very achievable and performance has not often fallen below this marker.

About benchmarking

We can compare ourselves both nationally and with similar authorities on an annual basis



Children Are Healthy and Safe

Children are Healthy and Safe

Percentage of Children in Care with an up to date dental check

Percentage of Children in Care with an up to date dental check



Achieved

76.1

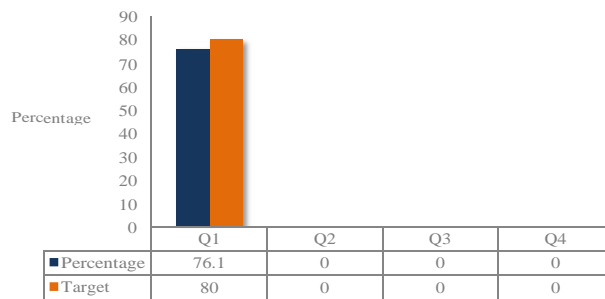
Percentage
Quarter 1 June 2023



80.0

Percentage
Target for June 2023

Percentage of Children in Care with an up to date dental check



About the latest performance

Performance in 2022/23 - Q1: 71.1%, Q2: 72.5%, Q3: 72.9%, Q4: 77.5%

Current performance has met the targets set.

About the target

Target remains as last year due to sustained consistency.

About the target range

An upper tolerance of 5% has been set. This would mean that if all checks were done within timescale we would have achieved an excellent outcome, which would be shown as better than target.

A lower tolerance of 5% has been set to allow for under performance.

About benchmarking

We can compare ourselves both nationally and with similar authorities on an annual basis



Children Are Healthy and Safe

Children are Healthy and Safe

Percentage of Children in Care with an up to date routine immunisations

Percentage of Children in Care with an up to date routine immunisations recorded



Achieved

76.1

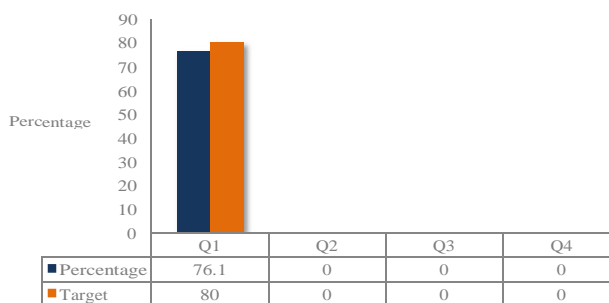
Percentage
Quarter 1 June 2023



80.0

Percentage
Target for June 2023

Percentage of Children in Care with an up to date routine immunisations



About the latest performance

Performance in 2022/23 - Q1: 70.5%, Q2: 69%, Q3: 70.6%, Q4: 75.5%

Current performance has met the targets set.

About the target

Target remains as last year due to sustained consistency.

About the target range

An upper tolerance of 5% has been set. This would mean that if all checks were done within timescale we would have achieved an excellent outcome, which would be shown as better than target.

A lower tolerance of 5% has been set to allow for under performance.

About benchmarking

We can compare ourselves both nationally and with similar authorities on an annual basis



Children Are Healthy and Safe

Children are Healthy and Safe

Children in Care Living within a Family Environment

Percentage of Children in Care Living within a Family Environment



Not achieved

76.3

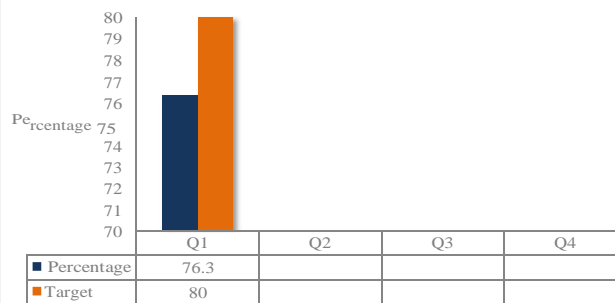
Days
Quarter 1 June 2023



80

Days
Target for June 2023

Children in Care Living within a Family Environment



About the latest performance

Performance in 2022/23 - Q1: 80.4%, Q2: 79.2% , Q3: 79%, Q4: 77.3%

The current target for 2023-24 is 80%. At 76.3% this is performing just below the target range (77% - 82%). This measure has previously been within the target tolerance, but as the children in care cohort changes constantly, the figure does vary between quarters, and it is yet to be seen as to whether this is a temporary dip or part of a longer-term trend. To illustrate how the figure can vary over quite short periods of time, at the start of June the figure stood at 77.4%, within the target range, whereas by the end of the month the figure had dropped to 76.3%, slightly below. Family placements are a continued focus for the Council as for many children in care, a family placement is deemed the most suitable means of offering care and maintaining children within their family networks. The Council continue to explore enabling children and young people to remain within their family or extended network if they cannot, for whatever reason, live with their parents. We are aware of the increased number of age assessments of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) which result in a non-family placement which will be affecting this measure. This is likely to continue to increase.

About the target

Target remains as last year due to sustained consistency.

About the target range

We aim to have the majority of our children in care placed within a family environment where appropriate. Anything above 82% is worthy of celebration and anything below 77% needs to be addressed with actions.

About benchmarking

Benchmarking data is not available due to the measure being a local measure



Readiness for Adult Life

Readiness for Adult Life

16-17 year old Children in Care who are participating in Learning

This measures young people recorded as being Children in Care participating in learning at the end of the reporting period and will not take into consideration the length of time that they have been in local authority care.

Numerator: Number of Children in Care participating in learning at the end of the reporting period.

Denominator: Number of Children in Care at the end of the reporting period.

The percentage is calculated as follows: Numerator divided by the denominator multiplied by 100. The parameters of this measure were previously defined as recording 16-18 year old Children in Care participating in learning. As of Q1 2017/18 onwards, the Department for Education no longer require monitoring of children aged 18, and so the measure has been amended accordingly, restricting data provision to 16-17 year old Children in Care only. A higher percentage of Children in Care participating in learning indicates a better performance.



Not achieved

79.8

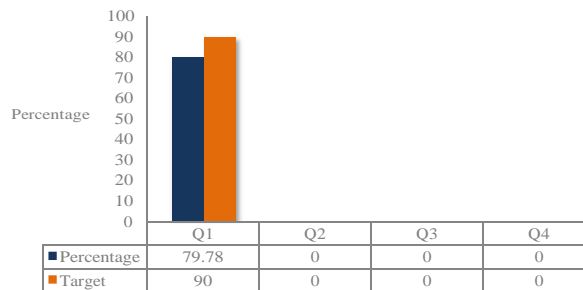
Percentage
Quarter 1 June 2023



90.0

Percentage
Target for June 2023

16-17 year old Children in Care who are participating in Learning



About the latest performance

Performance in 2022/23 - Q1: 81.4%, Q2:73.3% , Q3: 75%, Q4: 83.2%

The Virtual School co-ordinates Personal Education Plans for all our 16 and 17 year old children in care, ensuring that every young person has a plan which is reviewed termly. These bring young people, their social workers, carers and providers together to focus on educational need, any potential barriers to participation in learning and ensures that our young people are supported appropriately. As some of our young people in care struggle to access or sustain engagement in learning, access to therapeutic support and/or alternative routes into educational opportunities are explored through the Personal Education Plan and may be supported by Post 16 Pupil Premium funding. Challenges in securing mid year school places and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision for the increased number of recently arrived unaccompanied asylum seeking young people aged 16-17 has impacted on this quarter's performance. Interim tuition provision is commissioned by the Virtual School to ensure young people have access to learning whilst awaiting a place at an educational setting.

About the target

Target remains the same as the previous year. Q2 & Q3 targets lower to allow for the expected dip at this time of year due to September being the start of the tracking process

About the target range

The target range is set at a level to allow for 2 percentage points above the target and 5 percentage points below the target.

About benchmarking

Benchmarking information is not available for this cohort



Readiness for Adult Life

Readiness for Adult Life

Care Leavers in Suitable Accommodation

A care leaver is a young person who reaches the age of 18 who had been in local authority care.

Numerator: Number of care leavers turning 19 years of age in the year who are living in accommodation deemed as "suitable".

Denominator: Number of care leavers turning 19 years of age in the year.

The percentage is calculated as follows: Numerator divided by the denominator multiplied by 100. A higher percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation indicates a better performance.



Achieved

91.9

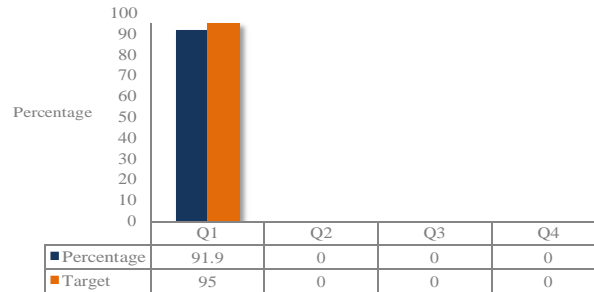
Percentage
Quarter 1 June 2023



95.0

Percentage
Target for June 2023

Care Leavers in Suitable Accommodation



About the latest performance

Performance in 2022/23 - Q1: 92.4%, Q2: 93.5%, Q3: 92%, Q4: 91.7%

Ordinarily the proportion of young people in suitable accommodation for 19-, 20- and 21-year-olds runs at between 94% and 95%. The most recent Child level data analysis reported a percentage of 94% in suitable accommodation.

The definition of the suitability of accommodation is very strict, and whilst the definition would deem some of the accommodation options unsuitable, the young person might be making an informed choice (as an adult) about where they live and how they live. For example, the monthly tracker continues to identify a small number of young people who are choosing to live with friends and sleep on their sofa. This is deemed unsuitable, but the decision to live on a friend's sofa is the informed choice of the young person. We also know of one young person who still chooses to live in a caravan on their ex foster carers driveway and another young person who has turned down accommodation to live on their mothers driveway in a car. Both these young people have had multiple offers of supported living but choose to live where they are. This is still deemed as unsuitable by the criteria. There is also a small number of young people in temporary accommodation, provided by the District Council, whilst the housing authority is addressing homelessness and finding a long-term solution with the leaving care service.

In addition to the above, custody is also always deemed unsuitable. There has however been a small increase in the numbers of young people in custody. Ironically, being in custody qualifies as being in education training and employment but is deemed as unsuitable accommodation.

The Head of Service continues to monitor unsuitable accommodation on a case by case basis every month.

About the target

Target has remained the same. Performance in the low nineties and if we achieve this or higher this reflects good performance overall.

About the target range

The lower target has been set at the 25% quartile. Meaning if we fall below this we will not be in the top 25% of authorities. The upper target has been set 5% above this.

About benchmarking

Benchmarking information is available.



Readiness for Adult Life

Readiness for Adult Life

Care Leavers in Education, Employment or Training

The number of care leavers turning 19 years of age in the year who are in either Education, Employment or Training



Not achieved

49.4

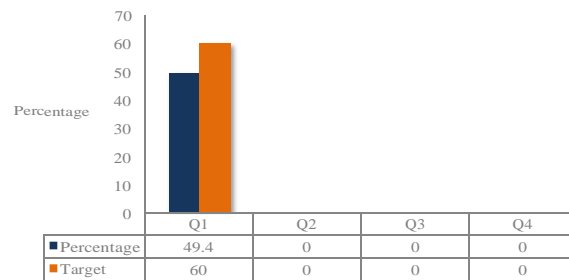
Percentage
Quarter 1 June 2023



60.0

Percentage
Target for June 2023

Care Leavers in Education, Employment or Training



About the latest performance

Performance in 2022/23 - Q1: 54.3%, Q2: 50.7%, Q3: 47.3%, Q4: 47.1%

This measure remains below target is moving in a positive direction and has improved. The Leaving Care Service continues to monitor every single young person who is not in EET. The Service continues to report monthly on the efforts of the service to re-engage individuals back into EET. LCC tracks this performance regularly and monitors those young people who fall into NEET and those that re secure EET.

The Leaving Care service is working with the Corporate Parenting Manager to look at the emotional wellness and the recovery of young people as this is the biggest barrier to engaging in EET, alongside the plethora of activity to support young people accessing EET. As mental health/emotional wellbeing is one of the biggest barriers to our young people accessing EET, the wellbeing worker and Mental Health professionals remain in post to offer additional support to those young people with poor mental health and those who are unable access to work. Individual wellbeing and recovery are central to improving the EET in the long term. The impact of these posts within the service was praised during the recent Ofsted inspection as an effective method of listening to what young people need, addressing their needs, and effectively reintroducing support and services to young people and overcoming barriers to remaining EET.

About the target

Target to remain the same as this is based on both recent performance and in comparison with other local authorities nationally.

About the target range

Tolerances for this measure take into account the current performance

About benchmarking

We can compare ourselves both nationally and with similar authorities on an annual basis



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

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	07 September 2023
Subject:	Ofsted Inspection of Lincolnshire Children's Services - Outcome Report

Summary:

This report provides the Corporate Parenting Panel with the judgment outcome and findings from the recent Ofsted 'Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services' (ILACS) Short Inspection of Children's Services in Lincolnshire, undertaken by Ofsted in April 2023.

Actions Required:

The Corporate Parenting Panel is invited to review the findings and the judgements from the inspection report and agree the next steps in respect of the areas for improvement contained within the inspection report.

1. Background

The 'Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services' (ILACS) Framework is based on a 'Whole-System Approach'. Under this system, Ofsted use the intelligence and information they have collated from the Annual Self Evaluation of social work practice, the Annual Conversation, Focused Visits, and Standard and Short Inspections, where judgements are made using a four-point scale to inform decisions about how best to inspect each authority.

Local authorities judged to be good or outstanding at their most recent inspection will usually receive a Short Inspection. The Short Inspection will usually take place about three years after the previous inspection. A Standard Inspection of Children's Services in Lincolnshire was undertaken in April 2019.

On Monday 17 April 2023, Lincolnshire was given notice by Ofsted of the intention to undertake a Short Inspection of Children's Services. As planned, the fieldwork element of the inspection commenced on 24 to 28 April 2023 and eight inspectors consisting of five Social Care Inspectors, and three Social Care Regulatory/Education Inspectors were on site for this week undertaking a wide range of activity to validate and evidence their judgements.

In addition to the onsite visit, the Inspection includes the submission of Additional Requested Evidence, Child Level Data Lists, information about Audits, and specific information about Children's Cases. The field work during the week consists of speaking with social workers' direct practice with families, discussions with strategic leads and young people, parents, and carers, which demonstrates a robust and intensive examination of all aspects of both strategic governance and operational practice.

The initial feedback on the inspection was provided to the Executive Director of Children's Services on 28 April 2023, grading the Overall Effectiveness in Lincolnshire as 'Outstanding'. The final inspection report was published on the Ofsted website along with a press release on 15 June 2023 and is provided as an appendix to this report.

The overall judgement by Ofsted was reached by grading against four Individual Judgement Areas. Lincolnshire was judged as follows:

- The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families - '**Outstanding**'
- The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection - '**Outstanding**'
- The experiences and progress of children in care - '**Outstanding**'
- The experiences and progress of care leavers (**a new judgement area**) – '**Good**'

2. Conclusion

The judgement report concluded that Lincolnshire continues to provide outstanding services for vulnerable children and their families.

- Children and families continue to have access to local services that help to keep them safe and support them to make good progress.
- Outstanding social work practice ensures that risks to children are well managed within their families and communities.
- Council staff, schools and other adults involved in the children's lives worked to ensure that help was provided quickly when needed, before issues had a chance to escalate.
- Leaders have successfully focused on areas of development since the last full inspection (April 2019).

The report highlighted that Leaders recognise there is more work still to do with the care leaver offer to bring them to the same consistently high standard as children in other service areas receive. The report sets out two areas for improvement which are as follows:

- The quality and consistency of planning and case records for care leavers.
- The offer to care-experienced young people aged 21 and over.

Next steps and Actions:

- Immediate actions are underway in order to improve the quality of case work, with training planned and audit activity in place.
- A Service Review is being undertaken in preparation for the current contract coming to an end in 2024 to ensure the correct level of service is in place.

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

No Risks and Impact Analysis identified.

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Ofsted Inspection of Lincolnshire Local Authority Children's Services Report - June 2023

5. Background Papers

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

This report was written by Janet Armstrong, who can be contacted on janet.armstrong@lincolnshire.gov.uk.

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Inspection of Lincolnshire local authority children's services

Inspection dates: 24 to 28 April 2023

Lead inspector: Margaret Burke, His Majesty's Inspector

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Outstanding
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Outstanding
The experiences and progress of children in care	Outstanding
The experiences and progress of care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding

Lincolnshire continues to provide outstanding services for vulnerable children and their families. Children and families have benefited from leaders prioritising and investing in services, strengthening the range and offer of support. Leaders have enhanced services in areas identified for improvement at the last inspection in 2019 and further developed support to children who need help and protection. Children and families have access to effective locally based early support services. Outstanding social work practice ensures that risks to children are well managed within their families and communities. Children also benefit from strong partnership working, allowing them to access additional support from universal services.

Children in care are well cared for and make excellent progress. Most care-experienced young people receive good support to help them to be successful as they move on to independence. This support is provided by committed relationship-focused workers. There is more to do to improve the service offer to care leavers, particularly older care leavers, to ensure that they can access the outstanding level of support that children in other service areas receive.

What needs to improve?

- The quality and consistency of planning and case records for care leavers.
- The offer to care-experienced young people aged 21 and over.

The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection: outstanding

1. Children and families in need of help and support have access to appropriate and timely responses from a comprehensive range of support services. The early help system, together with consultants and practitioners, provides helpful advice and support to professionals, alongside direct support to children and families. Strong multi-agency partnership enables children and families' needs to be recognised early and effective support provided to them by people in their communities, including their schools, who most often know them best and are already positively involved in their lives.
2. Children benefit from comprehensive early help assessments completed by a range of multi-agency professionals. These assessments consider the important things for the child and include their family's history and wider needs. Early help practitioners work hard to build good relationships with children, whose voices are heard and recorded in their plans and interventions.
3. When children's needs increase, effective arrangements enable step up to social care for social work intervention. Early help practitioners remain involved, providing continuity of relationships for children and their families for as long as necessary.
4. Requests for services or for professional advice sent through the integrated 'front door' are processed effectively and responded to quickly, the vast majority within 24 hours. Referrers are routinely informed of the outcome of their contact. If the outcome is to take no further action, outcome letters explain the reasons why and provide advice and guidance about alternative support services for families.
5. Parental consent is considered by practitioners and most partners seek consent before requesting help and support for children. However, when a request for help and support is below the threshold for a social care assessment, and parental consent has not been obtained, this is not consistently followed up or sought by officers when screening the contact. A small number of contacts are therefore received and subsequently closed without ensuring that parents and children are directed to appropriate sources of support or being aware that information about them has been sent to the integrated front door.
6. When children are at risk of significant harm or require a social work assessment and support, they are promptly transferred to the family

assessment and support team (FAST). Parental consent is appropriately obtained or managed for these children within the FAST service.

7. Children in need of help outside office hours receive a prompt response. This is supported by good information-sharing between the emergency duty team and day services. Partnership working is effective, with joint visits and strategy meetings taking place where this is necessary. Out-of-hours work is supplemented by early help and Futures4me workers, who also provide responsive out-of-hours support to children and families.
8. The vast majority of decisions to transfer children to FAST for an assessment are appropriate and timely. Once children are allocated to a social worker, they are visited in a timely way by social workers and other support practitioners who quickly build sensitive and trusting relationships. This is reflected in case records and through the direct work tools routinely completed with children, firmly maintaining their voice at the centre of the work with them and their family.
9. Strategy meetings are held promptly, the majority attended by professionals who are able to share information about risks to the child and inform decision-making. Strategy meeting minutes are appropriately detailed, but actions lack timescales to help provide clarity about when actions need to be taken. Despite this, visits to children take place quickly. Child protection investigations are timely and thorough, and include the views of parents and children where appropriate. Analysis of risks and needs is detailed and results in sound recommendations regarding the next steps. Positively, referrals for services are not delayed because of the investigation, ensuring that families receive timely support.
10. Social workers understand the pre-birth protocol and complete timely assessments to identify current and future risks to unborn babies. The quality of pre-birth and child and family assessments is consistently strong. History is fully explored. Family networks and partner agencies' views are included, as are children's views, to inform the analysis of risk and planning moving forward. Family network meetings are considered and convened early on in the assessment process to explore family and friends' assistance to support safety and planning.
11. When children are subject to a child in need or child protection plan, review meetings are held regularly and are well attended by partners who know the child. There is a shared understanding by professionals and families of the authority's strength-based model of practice. Scaling is used well at each meeting to help professionals and families to monitor the progress of plans, to understand whether interventions are making a difference for children or whether escalation is appropriate. The quality of written child protection plans is mostly good, with clear and relevant actions to help improve children's lives. Child in need plans are more variable in quality. Not all have clear timescales

for actions to be carried out so that all members of the team around the family know exactly who is doing what and by when.

12. The vast majority of children enter pre-proceedings when it is appropriate to do so. Public Law Outline processes are strong and effective in supporting high numbers of families to exit this process safely and successfully. Where progress is not made, there is timely access into proceedings. However, across the service, for a small number of children experiencing neglect the response was less timely. The vast majority of these children are now receiving the right intervention, and current social workers have a grip on what needs to change.
13. The majority of children who live in private fostering arrangements experience a quick and appropriate response to assess their circumstances and ensure that their needs are met.
14. Interventions by the children with disabilities team to support disabled children are highly effective. Social workers demonstrate excellent practice, having significant knowledge and understanding of children's needs. Assessments are comprehensive, and they also suitably consider the needs of parents and brothers and sisters. Transition planning appropriately starts when children reach the age of 16, with allocation to adult services at 17.
15. The vast majority of children who are reported as missing from home receive a timely and effective service. Return home interviews are completed with the child by the professional considered best placed to do this. For some children not known to social care, this is done by the child's school and offers the child the opportunity to share their experiences with someone they know and trust.
16. There is a strong coordinated partnership approach to children who are at risk of child criminal exploitation, which is effective in identifying and responding to children's changing needs and risks. When children aged 16 or 17 present to the local authority as homeless, they are appropriately assessed to ensure that they secure suitable support and accommodation. Children are made aware of their rights and entitlements. These areas have seen significant improvement for vulnerable children since the last judgement inspection.
17. When concerns are raised about professionals who work with children, these are taken seriously. The vast majority of responses are swift, evidence-based and considered at the right threshold.
18. The local authority has streamlined the system for reporting children who are missing from education. They follow up any concerns raised quickly and check on the child's whereabouts to make sure that they are safe. Strategies to address the increase in the number of children who are not in receipt of full-time education are having a positive impact. Frequent reviews of the education provision for children on part-time programmes help these children return to full-time education. Some children, including unaccompanied asylum-seeking

children, engage with home tuition for a short period while an alternative placement is identified.

19. There is clear guidance in place for when children become electively home educated. Checks are completed with parents to ensure that their 'intention to educate' is being realised and that children are appropriately safeguarded. If the education provided by parents to their children is not suitable, the local authority helps parents secure an appropriate educational provision.

The experiences and progress of children in care: outstanding

20. Children in care receive an outstanding service that results in their life experiences significantly improving. The local authority is committed to supporting children to remain with their families if it is safe to do so. A range of edge of care services, including Futures4Me, support children and families to make positive changes in their lives, resulting in some children being able to remain with their parents happily and safely.
21. When children come into care, this is because it is in their best interests to do so. Most admissions to care are planned. The family court and Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) report positively on the preparation and quality of evidence produced at the start of care proceedings.
22. Leaders, managers and staff understand the importance of children achieving permanence without delay. Permanence is considered early. For some children, this is before they enter care. Once in care, leaders closely track children's plans for permanence. Permanence plans progress at a suitable pace, in line with children's needs. Delays are either purposeful or unavoidable. Social workers consider all permanence options for children and, through concurrent planning, identify the best option for them.
23. When children come into care, social workers are committed to supporting children to live with family or friends. Family network meetings help identify family and friend options early. As a result of this, and after thorough assessments of family or friend carers, a high number of children achieve permanence through connected carer placements and/or special guardianship orders (SGOs). This outstanding work has enabled many children to successfully remain within their family and friends network.
24. If children are unable to remain within their family network, and SGO or adoption is not a viable option, social workers make strenuous efforts to secure permanent foster placements for children, within Lincolnshire when possible. The matching of children with the right carers is very carefully thought out. Regular matching events for foster carers have enabled some children to be successfully matched with permanent foster carers. Beautifully presented profiles, in which children's strengths and needs shine through, are shared with foster carers at these events. Prospective carers are provided with information

about the skills they will need and the support that will be provided to help the child to thrive.

25. Many children achieve stability and security via long-term fostering. Children's views inform local authority decisions about permanence in this form. Ratifying such permanent placements via a panel helps give children the certainty they need and deserve. One child, who celebrated the panel decision with his carer and social worker, told his social worker that this had been the best day of his life.
26. Social workers support children with adoption plans extremely well. As a result of well-matched placements and careful transitioning, children successfully settle with their new adoptive family. One adopter spoken to said that she had an amazing experience from start to finish. She felt well informed and prepared from the outset. She is absolutely thrilled that she and her son are now contributing to the training of new adopters.
27. Some women have testified about benefiting from intensive 'life-changing' support from the Time team, helping them to break the cycle of repeat removals of children from their care. This work has also positively supported birth mothers to engage with the adoption process and to meet adopters, and enabled adopters to represent them positively to their child.
28. Plans for children in care to return home to their birth parents are considered and actioned when assessments suggest this is safe and the best option for them. As a result of effective work by edge of care services, a number of children have successfully and safely returned home to their families.
29. When children are placed with their parents under placement with parent regulations, this plan and legal status are regularly reviewed to assess whether they remain appropriate. Social workers carry out updated parenting assessments to establish whether children's needs are being adequately met. If they are, and this has been maintained for a suitable period, then applications to discharge care orders are appropriately progressed. As a result, children are not remaining in care longer than is necessary, and they can continue their lives without unnecessary statutory intervention.
30. Social workers know their children very well and talk about them with pride, love and affection. Stable relationships with consistent social workers provide children with someone that they know and trust to share their worries and aspirations with. Social workers visit children at a frequency determined by children's needs.
31. Social workers spend time with children to ensure that their views and wishes help to inform their care plans. Social workers understand the risks to children when there are concerns for their emotional well-being and the impact that being in care has on their identity and self-esteem. Children's identity and culture are promoted and well considered in their care plans.

32. Inspectors saw some beautiful life-story work and words and pictures work undertaken with children who are adopted or living in long-term foster care. This high-quality work enhances children's sense of identity and understanding of their journey into care.
33. Before every review, social workers update the child's assessment using the 'valuing care' tool. This assessment, undertaken jointly with and written to children, enables an analysis of children's changing needs. Assessments are of a high quality and feed into meetings to review children's progress and planning for children's day-to-day and longer-term needs. Written plans are clear, with clarity about who is doing what and by when to help ensure that children's needs continue to be met to a high standard.
34. Meetings to review children's progress are timely and involve relevant people, including children if they wish to attend. Independent reviewing officers routinely visit children between and before reviews to ascertain their views. Sensitively written review minutes, written directly to children, celebrate progress and help children understand the outcome of their review and the help and support they will receive moving forward.
35. Family time is promoted and considered a priority for children. Children spend time with brothers and sisters and extended family members, to help maintain their family networks. Some family time is supervised, and workers have oversight of how well this is working. Social workers listen to children when they would like arrangements to be different.
36. Social workers and leaving care workers support unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and care-experienced young people to do well. They live in homes and accommodation with support that meets their needs, in culturally diverse communities. They are fully supported legally to secure their status.
37. Children's physical and emotional health needs are well considered and addressed by social workers, carers and health professionals. Carers for children complete strengths and difficulties questionnaires to help identify children's emotional health and well-being needs, and this meaningfully feeds into children's valuing care tool assessments and care plans. Children in care have prompt access to child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) and this support does not immediately end when children become adults.
38. Children in care receive good educational support. The virtual school team is committed to achieving the best outcomes for children in care. The team collaborates very effectively with schools and professionals in other services to ensure that these children attend school regularly and are successful. The Care2Learn programme is helping schools understand and support children in care. Children in care benefit from a range of enrichment activities to broaden their experiences, including music lessons, sports clubs and residential trips

abroad. For the majority of children, their personal education plans (PEPs) help them track their progress and celebrate their achievements. In a small number of PEPs, the targets lack clarity and are unhelpful.

39. Most children live in high-quality foster placements within Lincolnshire, where they are happy and settled and participating in a range of enjoyable activities to help develop their skills, confidence and self-esteem. Foster carers receive excellent support, which promotes the stability and consistency of care for children.
40. Sufficiency challenges do exist, particularly for children with the most complex needs. In response, the authority has ambitious plans which are well under way to address this gap in suitable placements. In the interim, a very small number of children under 16 have been placed in unregistered placements over the last six months. The welfare of these children is closely monitored while they are living in these unregistered children's homes. In response to learning from these placements, leaders have further strengthened and formalised review arrangements pending moves to more suitable placements. The authority currently has no children living in unregistered children's homes.
41. Lincolnshire's children in care council, Voices4Choices, continues to influence service development through conversations with elected members, through their role as young inspectors, by being part of staff interview panels and through participation in 'Big Conversations'. Children's achievements are celebrated through the annual Fantastic Amazing Brilliant (FAB) events, in recognition of the excellent progress they make.

The experiences and progress of care leavers: good

42. Most care-experienced young people in Lincolnshire are well supported by their leaving care workers, who make positive efforts to build trusting relationships with them. For some young people, this has translated into daily contact at times when they have needed extra support. Contact with young people takes place through many different channels, including home visits or more social activities, for example going for a coffee or a meal out with their leaving care worker. One young person said to an inspector, 'Everyone I have encountered is loving and easy to talk to.'
43. For a small number of young people in custody, contact is not as responsive in meeting their needs. Workers say that access to young people in prison is difficult due to staffing issues in the prisons. Records of efforts to arrange visits and keep in touch with these young people did not match with the higher number of attempts described by workers. If those young people later review their records, they will not see the numbers of unsuccessful attempts made to keep in touch with them.
44. Young people are invited to a range of participation events, which provide them with opportunities to be involved in positive activities and share their

views, wishes and lived experiences. Popular activities include sports get-togethers for care-experienced unaccompanied asylum seekers. There are photos in the 'family album' of some events but leaving care workers acknowledge that the take-up of some group events is low.

45. Care-experienced young people are encouraged by their leaving care workers to maintain relationships with people who are important to them. Life Links services are on offer to help young people reconnect with people they have lost contact with, and a small number have also benefited from relationship guidance and strategies provided by the leaving care services' mental health worker.
46. Young people's routine health needs are revisited regularly through the pathway planning cycle. While not all care-experienced young people have been made aware of how to obtain their health histories, the vast majority are registered with GP services. Some young people have struggled to access dental care, either due to the lack of availability of NHS dentists or due to them not having the resources to pay for the treatment needed. Leaders say that this can be paid for by the local authority, but this offer is not widely known by frontline workers.
47. There is a full range of specialist advice and support services in Lincolnshire to assist young people with their emotional and mental health needs. The needs of most young people are supported effectively. Services include advice and support to care-experienced young people to help them to address challenges with substance misuse. CAMHS input continues beyond young people's 18th birthday. Counselling support is also available through children's centres, 'Steps2Change' and through a specialist worker in the Barnardo's team. Two young people spoke in glowing terms about the support they received from the specialist mental health worker. They described her work with them, done at their pace, as making an 'amazing' difference to their lives, which has enabled them to engage in employment, maintain accommodation and develop friendships.
48. The care leavers' offer is available on the council's website. While some of the offer still varies between districts, leaders are progressing incrementally in ensuring a consistent offer for all care-experienced young people across Lincolnshire. The offer explains to young people how to access their rights and entitlements at the time they need it. This includes support with accessing identity documents, for example their driving licence and National Insurance number, and setting up home grants and support with education, employment and training. Young people who spoke to inspectors provided examples of what they are personally receiving as part of the care leavers' core offer, although they did not use this term to describe it.
49. The pathway planning process has been reviewed and changed, in consultation with young people. Young people are invited to complete these documents together with their leaving care workers. Assessments and plans are written in

the young person's voice, and this helps capture their words and views. While young people do not necessarily value the document itself, they told inspectors that they appreciate the opportunity to meet with the leaving care worker to discuss what is going well and if they need support. Young people who choose not to be involved in completing the form are given a choice to comment on it once completed. Pathway plans are updated regularly but not always when young people's circumstances change. The quality of recording is variable. Some plans reflected positive feedback to young people on their progress, with workers recording that they are 'impressed and proud' of young people. Some records provide detail on the presentation of young people, what they have said, their worries and what is working well. However, not all plans contained aspirations for young people's futures. Many plans lacked specificity about how young people were going to achieve their goals, the support on offer or timescales.

50. Care leavers say they value the support they get to help them plan appropriate next steps for work or education. Young people in higher education say they are supported well by the virtual school to be successful following this educational route. Those who choose alternative paths are also supported by the service with what they need to achieve, for example payment for a Construction Skills Certification Scheme card to secure training for employment or help to buy equipment. There are opportunities across the authority for apprenticeships, which young people value. The proportion of care leavers in education, employment or training is steadily increasing. One care leaver reported positively, saying that the staff who support him 'are amazing and have changed my life'.
51. Some young people over the age of 21 are in receipt of support. However, many who reach the age of 21 and are not in education, employment or training are informed that they will be closed or 'stepped down', and contact with the service can be made by ringing the urgent care line. Inspectors were told that this decision took place in discussion with young people and was considered in the light of their presenting needs. However, this is not clearly reflected in their case records. It was not evident that all young people are given a choice about the level of involvement they would like to sustain or what is suitable. Too often, keeping in touch takes the form of just an annual letter. This is insufficient encouragement to young people to get back in touch with the service if they need further support.
52. Workers demonstrate a sound awareness of the risk of potential and actual exploitation for young people, and specialist advisers work with vulnerable young people. All young people have a risk assessment carried out and most include all vulnerabilities and known risks. Safety plans are realistic and written with the young person. However, it was not clear how widely these assessments are shared with other professionals in the young person's life. Leaving care workers say these are very helpful when they are covering duty, to inform their responses when helping a young person they do not know.

53. Transition planning from being a child in care to a care leaver is too variable. Some leaving care workers develop relationships with young people from the point of allocation. Other leaving care workers, even when allocated early, do not begin to build relationships with the young person until just before their 18th birthday, by attending their last review. This does not provide enough time for the development of secure relationships at a potentially challenging time for young people.
54. A wide range of placement options have been commissioned and most young people live in housing that meets their needs. All the young people spoken with were content with their accommodation. The supported placement offer, in conjunction with housing and private providers, is positive overall and most young people are making good progress in developing their independence skills. However, bed and breakfast accommodation is also used, offered as an emergency response to a small number of young people. Some young people stay put with foster carers or their special guardians and are well supported with this choice.

The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families: outstanding

55. Elected members and senior leaders across the council work successfully together to support the needs of children and their families. The lead member is a strong advocate for children's services and has provided continuity in the role since 2005. The chief executive officer also brings a wealth of experience to the service, having previously been director of children's services in Lincolnshire. There is confidence across the council in the leadership of children's services. The council's senior leadership team integrated approach ensures a shared clear vision across the local authority and a strong focus on delivering high-quality children's services.
56. Leaders demonstrate that they have an accurate assessment of the strengths and key challenges for children's services. Elected members have unlocked significant financial resources to ensure that Lincolnshire continues to provide outstanding services for children and their families. This is most evident in the ongoing commitment to the development of early help services. Lincolnshire has maintained a high number of its locally based children's centres (48), which are effective in providing accessible multi-agency services for children and their families. Lincolnshire has embraced new initiatives and adopted different service responses to support children in their families, including the Futures4Me services, which work alongside other professionals providing innovative ways of working with adolescents and their families. These services have contributed to the positive reduction in the number of adolescents entering and leaving care in Lincolnshire.
57. Leaders have successfully responded to the challenges many authorities have faced resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, including finding suitable homes

for children in care. They have responded to these pressures by contributing to placement sufficiency financially and strategically, with cross-council support. The council has supported the development of three children's homes in Lincolnshire. They have further successfully invested in their fostering services and have a competitive offer to carers, both financially and in terms of carer support. A targeted recruitment strategy has led to an increase in permanent social workers. Additional funding has been made available to support the children's services workforce, increasing the numbers of apprentices, introducing market supplements and providing team assistants, who provide dedicated business support for social workers. This is helping the authority to stabilise its workforce and to manage workloads more consistently.

58. Lincolnshire continues to play an influential national role in sector-led improvements, providing extensive and effective support, advice and guidance to other local authorities, working alongside the Department for Education. Lincolnshire is also a participant in the development of the new Family Hub Programme.
59. Partnership working is one of Lincolnshire's strengths, which has stimulated creative and innovative practices to support the work with vulnerable children and their families. Strong partnerships at the strategic senior level are mirrored by strong and effective operational multi-agency working. Workers at every level demonstrate constructive working and problem-solving approaches which support children to thrive. Universal services are well supported by early help workers, who go the extra mile in supporting families. The support provided to schools is particularly impressive, enabling them to positively embrace the council's relationship working model and provide effective early support to children and their families.
60. Leaders are well supported by a strong corporate performance team, whose members have provided them with a comprehensive array of sophisticated performance reports and information to help them maintain their focus on continuous service development. Quality assurance processes are firmly embedded, running through the service and continuously developing. Numerous approaches are used to determine quality and improve and strengthen practice and learning, to enable leaders to better understand and improve services' responses to the community they serve.
61. The council is a dynamic host of the Regional Adoption Agency (Family Adoption Links). Although relatively new, this partnership is thriving. Key elements of innovative leadership, shared values and collaborative working have created a modern adoption service which is valued by existing adoptive families and appealing to potential adopters.
62. There is a wide-ranging strategic approach to participation, with a clear strategy in place and the use of different methods to gather feedback. These range from formal groups such as V4C (Voices for Children in Care), the focused work of young inspectors, and regular meetings between elected

members and young people (Big Conversations) to the use of online platforms and surveys. This approach ensures that children and young people's views are heard and understood by the authority at every level and that children and young people are actively involved in the development of services in Lincolnshire.

63. Leaders have successfully focused on the areas for development since the last inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS) inspection in 2019. This has led to strengthening of practice with vulnerable adolescents at risk of exploitation and going missing and the response to homeless 16- and 17-year-olds. They recognise there is more work still to do with their care leaver services to bring them to the same consistently high standard as other service areas.
64. The local authority has an effective learning and development programme that addresses learning needs at all levels of the organisation. This, and the focus on growing their own workers and managers, provides opportunities for workers to be developed and make progress in their careers.
65. Leaders at all levels of children's services are viewed by staff as being both visible and approachable, despite the size of the local authority. Changes that are taking place are positively communicated to all staff. Workloads are carefully monitored by managers at all levels of the organisation. Flexible working allows staff to better balance work with other commitments. The local authority is both sensitive and supportive to workers experiencing their own personal difficulties. This has led to leaders creating an environment in which workers are well supported to develop positive working relationships with children and their families and achieve positive outcomes with them.

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

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	07 September 2023
Subject:	Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027

Summary:

This report presents the Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027 for the Panel's endorsement prior to online publication. The Sufficiency Strategy also includes the Children in Care Action Plan (Appendix A1) and the Children's Services Independent Placements Market Position Statement 2023-24 (Appendix A2).

Actions Required:

The Corporate Parenting Panel is invited to:-

1. support and endorse the Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027 and Appendices A1 and A2.
2. support and endorse the online publication of the Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027 and Appendices A1 and A2.
3. agree to the annual presentation of the update of the Children in Care Action Plan (Appendix A1) prior to publication online.

1. Background

[Section 22G](#) of the [Children Act 1989](#), and the [Statutory Guidance on Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children \(2010\)](#), is explicit in placing a duty on Local Authorities to act strategically to address gaps in provision by ensuring that they include, in relevant commissioning strategies, their plans for meeting the sufficiency duty.

The 2018-2022 Sufficiency Strategy was previously signed off by the Corporate Parenting Panel with the recommendation to report annually on progress against the Action Plan (Appendix A1 to the Sufficiency Strategy). The last Action Plan update came to the Corporate Parenting Panel in January 2022, where it was also agreed that an updated Sufficiency Strategy would be developed and realigned with the reporting/financial year.

Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027

Children's Strategic Commissioning has worked with internal Officers and appropriate commissioned stakeholders to finalise the Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy for the period 2023-2027, and has aligned the Strategy to the Children in Care (CiC) and High Needs Transformation Programmes as well as the national picture of placement sufficiency highlighted in the 2022 [Children's Social Care Market Study](#) by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) and more recently in the Government's implementation and strategy document for social care reform [Stable Homes, Built on Love](#).

The Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027, attached at Appendix A, gives the position on 31 March 2023; progress after this will be aligned to the financial/reporting year and reported through the annually updated Children in Care Action Plan, returning annually to the Corporate Parenting Panel in Quarter 1 of each year, with the first annual update due in May 2024.

Children's Strategic Commissioning will also develop an annual Market Position Statement which will support the market development work to be undertaken with the independent placement sector to support placement capacity in Lincolnshire and ensure Children in Care are able to be accommodated in high quality placements as close to home as possible.

The Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027 and its appendices, including the annually updated Children in Care Action Plan (Appendix A1) and the Market Position Statement (Appendix A2) will be published online to support market development and engagement with the independent placement sector.

2. Conclusion

The Corporate Parenting Panel is invited to discuss and endorse the Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027; and endorse the publication of the Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027 online with Appendices A1 and A2, the annual update of the Children in Care Action Plan and the annually updated Market Position Statement.

The Corporate Parenting Panel is also invited to request Children's Strategic Commissioning provide an annual update of the Children in Care Action Plan (Appendix A1 to the Sufficiency Strategy).

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

Risks were identified within the Strategy and elements are included within the Action Plan (Appendix A1) which will identify key actions for reporting and review.

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-27, including Children in Care Action Plan (Appendix A1) and Children's Services Independent Placements Market Position Statement 2023-24 (Appendix A2)

5. Background Papers

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

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Children in Care

Sufficiency Strategy

2023-2027

Ensuring Lincolnshire's Children in Care and care leavers are supported to thrive and reach their potential in high quality accommodation placements and have access to effective support services

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1. Lincolnshire Sufficiency Statement

The vision for Children’s Services in Lincolnshire is *‘Putting Children First – working together for all children, young people and families to be happy, healthy, safe and the best they can be.’*



Lincolnshire County Council Children’s Services aims to secure sufficient accommodation to support Children in Care (CiC) and care leavers to achieve the highest possible outcomes. Such accommodation should be:

- safe and suitable
- meets young people’s social and emotional needs
- supportive and caring
- enables an effective transition to independence and adulthood.

We will work with internal and external stakeholders, including commissioned services and partner agencies to develop and maintain effective support for our CiC and care leavers, to enable them to thrive and succeed.

We will continuously evaluate our progress, holding ourselves and our partners to account, whilst challenging practice and the way we do things to ensure the needs of our children are prioritised through innovative practice, and always listening to our children’s voices.

Lincolnshire County Council’s Sufficiency Strategy aims to ensure we have the right placement, of the right quality, in the right place, at the right time and for the right price.

1.1. Key challenges

1.1.1. Lincolnshire County Council's Children's Services is rated **Outstanding** and provides a range of support services for our most vulnerable children and young people.

1.1.2. Children's Services work with partners and commission services to deliver support based on need, encouraging and empowering children and young people to achieve positive outcomes.

1.1.3. Nevertheless, Lincolnshire, like other areas, is facing significant challenges:

- The need to increase capacity in foster households both in-house and within the independent market is a national concern and focus for development. We want children to experience growing up in positive family environments wherever possible.
- Capacity within residential children's homes is similarly an issue, with many homes at capacity or experiencing difficulties with needs matching and recruiting and retaining high quality staff.
- Placing children who have very complex needs and challenging behaviours is demanding. Demand for placements nationally means suppliers are more inclined to accept placements for often younger and less challenging children. This is a national issue and can result in authorities paying incredibly high costs or having to fund whole settings to secure a single placement, which is reducing capacity further.
- Projected increases in CiC numbers is likely to impact on services including social care, Virtual School, and health services and may then impact on support to care leavers as numbers also increase.
- Market and relationship development of independent suppliers is critical to sourcing and supporting effective and value for money placements. There are children placed in Lincolnshire from other areas and Lincolnshire children that are placed outside of the county. Greater partnership working is needed with the independent market to ensure local sufficiency that can meet local needs.
- There is an increase in CiC needing mental health support as part of their placement offer and a noted growth in the number of education placements needed for children with Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) needs. Mental Health services across the county are under pressure, particularly since the pandemic, with higher demand for services impacting waiting times. Local services are highly regarded, rated **Outstanding** by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), and work closely with Children's Services but it is harder to secure the right support when a child is placed out of area. There is also a need for increased supply of education settings that can support children with SEMH needs.
- Providing placements for CiC with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) may be increasingly challenging over the next four years, especially if there is an education need that cannot be met within mainstream provision.
- Workforce recruitment and retention is a challenge across the placement sector, including in-house and independent provision, this sometimes impacts on market capacity with beds closed because of unsafe staffing ratios.
- The impact of OFSTED regulation and inspection on supported accommodation suppliers may mean some suppliers will exit the market if registration is incompatible with their business model.

- There is an increase in referrals through the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).
- There are rising placement costs as a result of the increase in the cost of living, with costs passed back to the Council.

1.1.4. The ability to accurately forecast placement demand impacts on the way Local Authorities (LAs) can shape and develop their local independent placement market, offering further challenge to being able to procure the right placements for children and young people that meet their needs.

1.1.5. Demand for children’s independent placements as of March 2021 increased by 25% since 2010.

1.2. Sufficiency Duty

1.2.1. **Section 22G** of the **Children Act 1989**, and the **Statutory Guidance on Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children (2010)** places a clear duty on LAs to act strategically to address gaps in provision by ensuring that they include, in relevant commissioning strategies, their plans for meeting the Sufficiency Duty.

1.2.2. The Sufficiency Duty requires each LA providing children's services to take steps that secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within its area to meet the needs of children that it is looking after and children whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation in the LA area.

1.2.3. The Duty not only applies to CiC but equally applies to children and young people who are on the edge of care, acknowledging the importance of taking earlier, preventive action to support children and families so that fewer young people enter care.

1.2.4. The **Children and Young Persons Act 2008** defines Sufficiency as *‘a whole system approach which delivers early intervention and preventative work to help support children and their families where possible, as well as providing better services for children if they do become looked after. For those who are looked after, Local Authorities and their Children’s Trust partners should seek to secure a number of providers and a range of services, with the aim of meeting the wide-ranging needs of looked after children and young people within their local area.’*

1.3. Strategic priorities and strategies

1.3.1. Lincolnshire Children’s Services is rated as **Outstanding** by OFSTED, who noted that *‘Children and families have benefited from leaders prioritising and investing in services, strengthening the range and offer of support’*.

1.3.2. Lincolnshire Children's Services principles, which underpin how we will commission and deliver services to achieve our vision, are:

- **Early Help:** Strong protective universal services accessible to all with a range of early help available so children have the best start in life and families have extra help when they need it.

- **Safeguarding:** A shared responsibility to ensure children are safe at home, school and in their community.
- **Aspiration:** Children are able to thrive and cope with life challenges.
- **Learning and achievement:** All children being the best they can be with targeted interventions to close the gap so vulnerable children achieve as well as their peers.
- **Best use of resources:** Integrated commissioning with a focus on best value, improved outcomes and community engagement.

1.3.3. Lincolnshire’s main principles are further supported by and are embedded in conjunction with:

- Children in Care and Care Leaver Strategy (see 1.4.1.)
- **Care Leaver's Charter**
- Early Help Strategy (see 3.8.1.2.)
- **Early Childhood Strategy**
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) (see 1.5.)
- **Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy**
- **Lincolnshire High Needs Strategy**
- **Lincolnshire SEMH Strategy**
- Participation Strategy (see 1.6.4.)
- **Lincolnshire Local Transformation Plan for Children and Young People's Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health**
- **SEND High Needs Strategy.**

1.4. Children in Care and Care Leaver Strategy 2022-2025

1.4.1. The **Children in Care and Care Leaver Strategy 2022-2025** focuses on 6 key priority areas:

1. **Support to remain with family** - *We support families to improve their relationships and avoid preventable difficulties by providing them with the right support in their community, from the right person at the right time. We only bring children into care when it cannot be made safe for them to stay in their home, family network or community.*
2. **Stability and permanence** - *When children and young people need long term care outside of the family network, they will have stability and be safe from harm. All placements for children and young people will be targeted to support their needs, whether this is foster care or residential provision.*
3. **Build not break relationships** - *All children, young people and care leavers can build enduring relationships with consistent people and they have a trusted, stable relationship with an adult who is important to them.*
4. **Learning and aspirations** - *We want our children, young people and care leavers to succeed in their educational setting and continue with lifelong learning so that they can realise their aspirations.*
5. **Healthy and resilient** - *We promote good long term physical and emotional health and want to enable our children, young people and care leavers to have contented and healthy lives and be helped to evolve from what has happened in the past.*
6. **Safe and suitable accommodation** - *We support our children, young people and care leavers to access and sustain suitable accommodation which meets their needs, helps them feel safe and supports their growth to independence.*

- 1.4.2. Key priorities that the Sufficiency Strategy actively will support to achieve are (2) **stability and permanence**, and (6) **safe and suitable accommodation**.

1.5. Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)

- 1.5.1. The JSNA process aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of current and future local needs across a range of issues, utilising a wide range of quantitative and qualitative data, including user, patient, and community views. The requirement to produce a JSNA has been a statutory duty on LAs and local NHS since 2007. This duty has been further enhanced by the 2022 update to the **Health and Social Care Act 2012**.
- 1.5.2. Children and young people's Health and Wellbeing is one of the core themes of the JSNA, with a key priority being to improve health and reduce health inequalities for children and young people.
- 1.5.3. Lincolnshire's **JSNA** is on the **Lincolnshire Health Intelligence Hub**, along with a range of population and demographic data.

1.6. Listening to our children and young people

- 1.6.1. Lincolnshire County Council takes a child's rights approach to help ensure that children and young people's views are heard and acted on. The foundation of our work is Article 12 of the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**.
- 1.6.2. Our priorities are working with the Lincolnshire Youth Cabinet, Voices for Choices (V4C), Young Inspectors, and Lincolnshire's Children in Care Council. Further information about these is at www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/young-people.
- 1.6.3. V4C events have been held in four quadrants of the county during half terms, with a mixture of virtual and face-to-face meetings. In addition, Big Conversation events are supported by Children in Care teams, care leavers, senior staff including Councillors. Notes, issues, concerns and proposed solutions are shared widely across the Council.
- 1.6.4. The **Participation Strategy 2023-26** for Children's Services provides a framework for the participation of children and young people in Lincolnshire and ensures that the voice of the child can be clearly heard and evidenced. Listening to and acting on the views of children is essential for the development and improvement of relevant and effective services. This applies to services provided uniquely to children and young people and those provided to the wider community.
- 1.6.5. Lincolnshire children and young people have co-produced a number of resources, including the **Skills for Adult Life booklet**, the Caring Promise, guidance for social workers and the Family Services Directory (FSD) and SEND Local Offer (*see 3.8.1.14.*), and have contributed to service design of both in-house and commissioned services.

1.7. Transformation programmes

- 1.7.1. Lincolnshire County Council continues to develop and enhance services, undertaking reviews with key stakeholders to consider how services and working and how they may be improved, especially as cohort needs and demand change over time.
- 1.7.2. The **Children in Care (CiC) transformation programme** seeks to develop and improve information and tracking of CiC to better understand their strengths and challenges, with the aim of stepping them down from residential placements to foster family environments and bringing them back into Lincolnshire wherever possible to better provide wraparound support by other services as a holistic outcomes-focused improvement approach.
- 1.7.3. The **Building Communities of Specialist Provision programme** is looking to transform Lincolnshire's special school landscape, through creating an integrated system where pupils attend the nearest school with investment in facilities, building a new school, expanding several others and increasing special school places.
- 1.7.4. The **SEND transformation programme** is similarly looking to transform the SEN support landscape, with a focus on supporting mainstreams schools to deliver robust early intervention through a meaningful graduated approach.
- 1.7.5. The **Children and Young People's Mental Health transformation programme** vision is that, together with children and young people in Lincolnshire, we will understand how we can best support their emotional wellbeing and mental health and transform and improve services enabling CYP to live independent, safe, well and fulfilled lives in their local communities.

2. National and local context

2.1. National and regional context

National context

2.1.1. Between 2016 and 2022 the number of CiC rose 16.7% in England¹ and the annual cost of children's social care in England is currently around £5.7 billion per annum.

2.1.2. In March 2022, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) published its final report into the children's social care market. Taken directly from the report², the CMA found that:

- *a lack of placements of the right kind, in the right places, means that children are not consistently getting access to care and accommodation that meets their needs*
- *the largest private providers of placements are making materially higher profits, and charging materially higher prices, than we would expect if this market were functioning effectively*
- *some of the largest private providers are carrying very high levels of debt, creating a risk that disorderly failure of highly leveraged firms could disrupt the placements of children in care.*

2.1.3. The CMA also recognised that children and young people had increasing complex needs, highlighting the gap between the number of children and young people requiring placements and the number of placements available.

2.1.4. Further concerns highlighted in the report included the number of children and young people placed far from their home Local Authority and/or existing support networks, difficulties in accessing wraparound and support services, sector recruitment and retention (including foster carers and residential children's home staff) and regulation and inspection requirements.

2.1.5. Following the CMA report, in February 2023 the Government published their implementation and strategy document, **Stable Homes, Built on Love**, which sets out six key pillars that aim to reform children's social care:

Pillar 1: Family Help provides the right support at the right time so that children can thrive with their families

Pillar 2: A decisive multi-agency child protection system

Pillar 3: Unlocking the potential of family networks

Pillar 4: Putting love, relationships and a stable home at the heart of being a child in care

Pillar 5: A valued, supported and highly-skilled social worker for every child who needs one

Pillar 6: A system that continuously learns and improves and makes better use of evidence and data.

¹ Source: [Local Authority Interactive Tool \(LAIT\)](#), Number of Looked After Children

² Source: [Children's social care market study](#), Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), March 2022

- 2.1.6. **Pillar 4** in particular will impact on placement sufficiency and quality, with a focus on foster care recruitment, leadership and management improvements in the children’s homes sector, increased financial oversight of placements as well as two pathfinder Regional Care Co-Operatives (RCCs) to plan, commission and deliver care places.
- 2.1.7. In addition, **Pillar 4** focuses on: prioritising loving relationships; strengthening and widening the corporate parenting role; creating increased education, employment and training opportunities for CiC and care leavers; universal wraparound support and accommodation for care leavers; decrease mental health and physical health disparities and increase life expectancy for CiC and care leavers.

East Midlands context

- 2.1.8. The East Midlands region has similarly seen a rise in CiC numbers, increasing by 25.15% from 2016 to 2022³, which is greater than both the rise across England (see 2.2.4.) and the 6.5% rise in Lincolnshire CiC numbers in the same period.
- 2.1.9. Placement capacity has been stretched across the region; whilst Lincolnshire, like many LAs, is a fostering first authority. Lincolnshire has a preference to place children and young people in-county, so they can be close to their important networks and receive outstanding support; as of 31st March 2023 22% of CiC were placed outside the county boundary.

2.2. Local context

- 2.2.1. Lincolnshire is the fourth largest county in England with diverse communities dispersed across a large and diverse landscape. The county is predominantly rural and home to approximately 761,224 residents (**Office of National Statistics (ONS) mid-2020 population estimates**).
- 2.2.2. Approximately 21.5% of the total population is aged 0-19 years (163,550), of which 76% (124,565) is aged 5 to 19 years.
- 2.2.3. Based on the **Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019**, 6.7% of Lincolnshire's population (approximately 50,000 people) live within the 10% most deprived areas of England. This is highest within Lincoln (16.9%) and East Lindsey (16.8%). There are 29 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) within the 10% most deprived nationally.
- 2.2.4. In Lincolnshire at end of March 2023⁴, there were 728 CiC, 391 children and young people with a 'Child Protection' (CP) plan, and 3,135 Children in Need (CiN) with an open episode of need. 6,968 children and young people had an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), and there were 63 UASC who made up 9% of all CiC. Lincolnshire CiC numbers have increased by 10.5% since 2018⁵, versus c.16% increase nationally.

³ Source: **Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT)**, LA Level Data, Number of Looked After Children

⁴ Source: Lincolnshire County Council Children’s Services Analysis Tool (ChAT) March 2023

⁵ 659 Lincolnshire CiC on 31st March 2018 (Source: Lincolnshire County Council Children’s Services Analysis Tool (ChAT) March 2018)

2.2.5. As a snapshot rate, Lincolnshire CiC numbers represent 49 per 10,000 young people, versus 70 per 10,000 in England⁶

2.3. Impact of Covid-19

2.3.1. The Covid-19 pandemic which started in March 2020 has had a significant impact on social care teams across the country, and Lincolnshire was no exception.

2.3.2. Presenting behaviours and needs of young people were often exacerbated by not having the structure of education settings, parents and carers faced numerous difficulties, and the Council's Children's Services teams continue to see the effects of this with a rise of late entrants into care and an increase in young people accessing some of our support services, notably those around mental health (*see 3.8.1.5.*).

2.3.3. We worked closely with our in-house and independent placement suppliers to avoid placement breakdown and successfully maintained the majority of those placements.

⁶ Source: Lincolnshire County Council Children's Services Analysis Tool (ChAT) March 2023

3. Lincolnshire's position

- The population of Children in Care (CiC) has increased in Lincolnshire by 10.5% over the last 5 years.
- 728 children were in care on 31st March 2023 – 42% of them were female while 15% were of mixed, Asian, Black or other ethnic origin.
- 78% of CiC were placed within Lincolnshire on 31st March 2023.
- 67% of children were placed in foster households while 5% were in residential settings.
- The CiC numbers are predicted to remain fairly stable over the coming few years at around 720-740.



3.1. Challenges in providing placements and related services

- 3.1.1. Despite CiC numbers predicted to remain fairly stable, the Council want to ensure high-quality placements are available for those young people that need them, and it is critical to develop effective cross-functional mechanisms to support information sharing and process development.
- 3.1.2. Children's Services and relevant commissioned services work closely together to share intelligence and ensure young people are well supported. However, challenges in providing support can arise due to the scale and complexity of Children in Need (CiN), children and families open to Early Help, CiC and care leavers.
- 3.1.3. Social care teams have found positions difficult to recruit to, and some commissioned services have experience additional difficulties in staff retention, particularly as a result of the cost of living crisis which has driven people into higher paid employment. This is also reflected in children's placements, with in-house foster carer recruitment and retention being impacted and independent placements being similarly affected.
- 3.1.4. Similarly, the continued recruitment of **in-house foster carers** seeks to maintain, and ultimately increase, numbers of foster care households within Lincolnshire who are able to offer a variety of placement types including respite and short-term therapeutic placements, in addition to shorter-term and longer-term opportunities. There remains an ongoing need to source long-term and more permanent homes for CiC who are unable to return to their birth families.

- 3.1.5. The CiC Transformation Programme continues to review existing placements, both in-house and in the independent sector, through the monthly Placement Management Meetings in order to provide assurance of impact and value for money. The Valuing Care (VC) toolkit has been developed and is embedded into the Mosaic social care reporting platform as a means of highlighting children and young people's strengths and challenges.
- 3.1.6. One of the key aims of the transformation work is to place Lincolnshire CiC within county or as close as possible, as this will help the Council provide its range of effective support services to both young people and their carers.

3.2. Needs of Children in Care

- 3.2.1. Social care teams are working closely with Children's Strategic Commissioning and commissioned partners to consider the needs of young people, and where capacity is available or may be developed based on need, availability and cost.
- 3.2.2. Social care teams have seen an increase in complexity of need, alongside the rise of late entrants into care which became more evident around the start of the pandemic and has continued.
- 3.2.3. 4.6% of school age children in Lincolnshire had an EHC Plan or SEN Statement⁷ which is higher than the 3.4% seen across the East Midlands; of this, 41.2% of Lincolnshire school age children with an EHCP were Children in Care (CiC)⁸. 4% of children and young people in **Independent Non-Maintained Special Schools (INMS) placements** on 31st March 2023 were looked after⁹, and social care and SEND teams are seeing an increase in young people with SEMH difficulties requiring specialist education placements.
- 3.2.4. The level of complex and high challenging behaviours is evident across **residential children's homes**, and Lincolnshire social care want to place CiC with carers skilled in effective therapeutic care and de-escalation techniques that minimise physical interventions and support placement stability, whilst supporting the transition of some young people into foster families or on to independence.
- 3.2.5. The National Transfer Scheme (NTS) for **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)** has impacted both capacity of placements and capacity of health and social care. Many UASC have additional support needs, having experienced trauma, separation and violence on their journey; many experience poor mental health and require significant support to access education and the wider community offer.

⁷ Source: [Local Authority Interactive Tool \(LAIT\)](#), LA Level Data, Children with SEN, % of Pupils with Statement (of SEN) or EHC Plans (all schools), 31st March 2021

⁸ Source: [Local Authority Interactive Tool \(LAIT\)](#), LA Level Data, Looked After Children, % of LAC with a SEN Statement/EHCP

⁹ Source: Lincolnshire County Council Children's Strategic Commissioning - LCCPlacements INM workbook 2022-23

3.3. Supply of placements

- 3.3.1. Many LAs are experiencing challenges in securing placements for their CiC, as in-house provision is increasingly insufficient to cope with the numbers of children and young people that require our support.
- 3.3.2. The CiC Transformation Programme aims to develop and support in-house placement capacity through ongoing recruitment of staff and carers. Lincolnshire is increasing its' number of **in-house residential children's homes** to increase the number of spaces available – these will be smaller homes that aim to transition children and young people into a foster family environment where the majority of young people are best able to thrive.
- 3.3.3. Despite having a good level of in-house foster carer numbers compared to many other LAs, Lincolnshire has seen an increased reliance on **Independent Foster Agencies (IFAs)**, use of which has increased by 182% over the past 5 years. As of 31st March 2023, 65% of placements with IFAs were in Lincolnshire, and we have seen a significant decrease in the number of IFAs offering placements for older children and those with complex behaviours.
- 3.3.4. **Supported accommodation** placements for 16 and 17 year olds are well supported through the Council's commissioned Youth Housing service (known as NEST¹⁰) which is contracted to Nacro until 31st December 2025 and delivers 72 bed spaces for CiC, care leavers and young people at risk of homelessness in Lincoln, Boston and Grantham as well as a small number of intense support houses for the most complex young people. Lincolnshire also has two in-house supported accommodation homes for CiC, supported lodgings via the Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service (see 3.7.) and a range of more specialist commissioned placements for UASC. Long-term use of Supported Accommodation has decreased, with such placements more typically being short-term transitional placements to manage complex behaviours or low-need placements outside of Lincolnshire where a young person has established networks and/or education. OFSTED are due to commence registration of supported accommodation in 2023 in line with new regulatory requirements, which may impact on the number of suppliers offering placements.
- 3.3.5. Children's Strategic Commissioning and the LCCPlacements Team manage the sourcing of independent placements, procuring them via the Open Select List¹¹ and UASC Closed Ordered List¹² and undertaking ongoing contract management and quality assurance. Commissioning Officers seek to develop mutually beneficial relationships with suppliers to maximise outcomes for Lincolnshire children and young people.

3.4. Location of placements

- 3.4.1. Lincolnshire County Council works closely with colleagues from across the East Midlands region on a range of initiatives, action groups and projects to increase access to services across the

¹⁰ Nacro Education, Support and Transition

¹¹ The Open Select List (OSL) is a procurement mechanism that manages referrals to suppliers for independent placements. Suppliers apply to join the OSL annually and are given first opportunity to respond to referrals.

¹² The UASC Closed Ordered List (UASC COL) is a procurement mechanism that manages placements for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children aged 16-17 on arrival, who are referral via the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) or are spontaneous arrivals in Lincolnshire.

region, given many CiC, where not placed within their home Local Authority (LA), are placed in bordering LAs¹³.

- 3.4.2. Lincolnshire places the majority of children and young people close to 'home' – as of 31st March 2023, 60% of independent foster placements (inc UASC), 86% of Independent Non-Maintained (Special) School (INMS) placements and 38% of independent supported accommodation placements for 16-17 year olds were in Lincolnshire or adjacent counties¹⁴. 53% of independent residential care placements were not in Lincolnshire or adjacent counties and this needs to be a real area of focus for market development.
- 3.4.3. Regional Directors of Children's Services (DCSs) meet weekly and there are various strategic groups that meet monthly to share best practice and explore solutions to emerging issues and improve intelligence about placement capacity and development. The region has worked together on a number of bids including *DfE Staying Closer Staying Connected* and the *UASC Foster Care Project*, both of which sought to develop service and support capacity for CiC and care leavers across the region.

3.5. Cost of placements

- 3.5.1. The nine East Midlands LAs have developed a regional approach to agreeing independent placement fee increase requests via the online portal which launched in 2022. The process supports LAs in reviewing placement fees, offering challenge to suppliers and sharing intelligence around contract and service quality, including any concerns.
- 3.5.2. Placement costs have steadily increased over the past 5 years; in 2017-18 the average residential cost for an independent residential children's home placement for a Lincolnshire young person was £4,038 per week and in 2022-23 this has risen to an average of £5,504 per week.
- 3.5.3. In the same period total costs for independent residential children's homes placements increased by almost 80% from £5,928,000 in 2017-18 to £8,701,219 in 2022-23; this is related to an increase in total placement numbers, which have increased over the same period (*see 3.6.4.*).
- 3.5.4. Suppliers have been additionally impacted due to the rising cost of utilities and other inflationary pressures, staff wages impacting on recruitment and retention and increasing complexities of behaviour and need of young people, all of which have driven up the placement cost.

3.6. Placement trends and projections

- 3.6.1. Lincolnshire is not alone in seeing a rise in late entrants into care, an increase in complex and challenging behaviours and high numbers of children and young people requiring specialist education provision.

¹³ 22% of Lincolnshire CiC placed out of county on 31st March 2023 (Source: Lincolnshire County Council Children's Services Analysis Tool (ChAT))

¹⁴ Source: Lincolnshire County Council Children's Strategic Commissioning - LCCPlacements INM workbook 2021-22

- 3.6.2. The 2022 Commissioning and Markets Authority (CMA) report¹⁵ stated:
- The Institute for Government¹⁶ projected in its 2021 Performance Tracker that demand for children's social care would grow by around 5% between 2019-20 and 2024-25, driven by increasing demand for foster and residential placements. The Social Market Foundation¹⁷ projected that, in England, 'based on the growth seen in the last five years, we could expect that close to 77,000 children will be in foster care by 2030; an increase of more than 30% from now.'*
- 3.6.3. Certainly over the past five years, Lincolnshire has seen a rise in numbers of CiC from 659 on 31st March 2018 to 728 on 31st March 2023, along with a rise in placement moves/breakdown¹⁸.
- 3.6.4. Children's Strategic Commissioning have seen a rise in independent placements in place on 31st March 2018 to those in place on 31st March 2023:
- 126% increase in independent residential children's home placements (15 to 34)
 - 182% increase in independent foster care placements inc UASC (33 to 60)
 - 560% increase in Independent Non-Maintained (Special) School placements (63 to 353).
- 3.6.5. As a result of investment in successive commissioned Youth Housing contracts (see 4.1.1.8.) and Lincolnshire's two in-house supported accommodation sites, there has been a reduction in numbers of children and young people in Intense Needs Supported Accommodation (INSA), which has seen a decrease of 38% from those in place on 31st March 2018 to 31st March 2023 (13 to 8).
- 3.6.6. The NTS was mandated nationally in October 2021 in response to exceptionally high numbers of UASC being accommodated by Kent and LAs on the south coast. Since then, Lincolnshire has accommodated 66 referrals to 31st March 2023, 83% of whom have been accommodated via the UASC Closed Ordered List (the remaining 17% were aged under 16 years old at point of referral and were placed with foster carers). In comparison, pre-NTS spontaneous arrival numbers averaged 20 young people per year. NTS referrals are unlikely to slow in the short-term as the Home Office continues to try to move children and young people from temporary asylum hotels as quickly as possible to Local Authority care, and small-boat arrivals continue to be a factor.

3.7. Care leavers

- 3.7.1. Lincolnshire County Council has commissioned Barnardo's to deliver the statutory **Leaving Care Service** for a number of years, with the most recent 5 year contract starting in 2020. There were 418 Lincolnshire care leavers on 31st March 2023 that were supported by the Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service (LLCS).
- 3.7.2. LLCS work closely with social care and other partners to ensure effective transition, with allocations just after 16 years old ensuring young people get to know their Leaving Care Worker early and are supported to independence.

¹⁵ Source: [Children's social care market study](#), Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), March 2022

¹⁶ Source: Institute for Government, [Performance Tracker 2021](#)

¹⁷ Source: [Fostering the Future](#), Social Market Foundation, June 2021

¹⁸ 5% of CiC experienced 3 or more placement moves in 2017-18 versus 9% of CiC in 2022-23 (Source: Lincolnshire County Council Children's Services Analysis Tool (ChAT))

- 3.7.3. As of 31st March 2023, 93% of care leavers aged 19-21 were in safe and suitable accommodation, with clear understanding of the reasons for those living in unsuitable accommodation. LLCS has a clear focus on this measure, which includes support to former-UASC care leavers requiring accommodation during their asylum process, young parents, and supported lodgings suppliers. LLCS administer the New Homes Grant on behalf of the Council, adding value to young people through care packages and practical tenancy and benefit support.
- 3.7.4. As of 31st March 2023, 50% of care leavers aged 19-21¹⁹ were in Education, Employment and Training (EET). The service supports are leavers to access EET and also supports the Care Leaver Apprenticeship Service (CLAS).

3.8. Support services

- 3.8.1. The previous Sufficiency Strategy 2018-22 identified a range of support services that were central to integrated support to CiC and care leavers, ensuring Lincolnshire children, their carers and involved professionals are able to access appropriate and high quality services:

3.8.1.1. Whilst some other Councils have reduced their **Children's Centres**, Lincolnshire recognises the importance and value of this key part of early years support to all families and has retained all 48 **Children's Centres**, which continue to be integral to offering preventative services for early years and deliver wide range of services and support to families across the county. They are open to anyone who has or cares for a child under the age of 5 years old. Lincolnshire has also been selected as one of 75 LAs to benefit from the Government's **Family Hubs and Start for Life** programme; the programme stems from clear evidence that identifying risks early and preventing problems from escalating means better long-term outcomes for children and their families. Family Hubs provide high-quality, joined-up, whole-family support services from conception, through a child's early years until they reach the age of 19 (or 25 for young people with SEND).

3.8.1.2. Through the Council's **Early Help Strategy**, the early help front door is embedded into social care practice, resulting in consistency in decision making, allocations and use of resources. Children and young people and their families are offered targeted clear support as early as possible, successfully preventing the need for statutory interventions and diverting many young people away from entering the care system, as well as providing the support they and their families need to thrive. On 31st March 2023, there were 4821 cases open to Early Help which is an increase of almost 300% (1615) from March 2022. There were also 704 incoming requests²⁰ in the same month; trend data highlights that requests for support increase during the longer school holidays in December, April and August.

3.8.1.3. The Council has commissioned **Behaviour Outreach Support Service (BOSS)** and the **Autism Learning Difficulties Service** (*known as the **Working Together Team***) on behalf

¹⁹ Based on a cohort of 210 care leavers

²⁰ Source: LCC March 2023 Summary Performance Report, Early Help Request Data, MOSAIC

of Lincolnshire schools and academies since 2016 as part of the Inclusive Lincolnshire Strategy. A commissioning review of both services commenced in February 2020 prior to the previous agreements for the services coming to an end in August 2022. The new re-commissioned services offer robust training and workshops primarily to Lincolnshire mainstream schools and academies, and parents/carers. Both services also have a strong focus on early intervention and prevention, building resilience across Lincolnshire mainstream schools and academies, increasing inclusion and promoting a collective responsibility to improving Lincolnshire pupils' social, emotional wellbeing and mental health concerns.

- 3.8.1.4. **Safe Families for Children** have been commissioned to provide support to families whose children are on the edge of care, utilising approved volunteers to help stabilise the family dynamic through befriending, mentoring and positive role-modelling, aiming to lower the risk of abuse and neglect and reduce the number of children and young people taken into care.
- 3.8.1.5. Following a successful pilot, **Future 4 Me (F4Me)** was established as a permanent service in 2018. The F4Me service supports adolescents on the edge of care through a recognised profile of need linked to support around emotional wellbeing, missing and exploitation, substance misuse, and criminal behaviour. A strong focus on early intervention and timely support to avoid children entering the criminal justice system is provided by the **Joint Diversionary Panel (JDP)**²¹. F4Me includes social workers, police and probation officers, and education mentors. In addition, a dedicated complex needs health team is embedded in the service and is funded through NHS England (Health and Justice) to develop individualised support packages and provide psychology-based trauma-informed consultation to the wider staff team. F4Me work with partners from the Police, Probation, Courts, District Councils, and Health to support young people more holistically. The **Restoring Family Relationships Team** focus on working with families in times of conflict or family breakdown to ensure, where possible, relationships are restored, and young people remain within their families where it is safe and appropriate to do so. In April 2023, an inspection of Future4Me by the youth justice Inspectorate His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) rated the service as **Outstanding**.
- 3.8.1.6. Children and young people who are experiencing difficulties or concerns with their **mental health and wellbeing**, their families and the professionals working with them are able to access information about the support available from a variety of universally available local services via the online **Emotional Health and Wellbeing Pathway**. Lincolnshire commissions Children and Young People's Mental Health (CYPMH) services that span the spectrum of emotional wellbeing and mental health needs from prevention and early intervention to specialist and crisis mental health services. To ensure that young people and their families get the right support at the right time, by the right team, all routine referrals are triaged and/or screened by practitioners in the

²¹ First time entrants in Lincolnshire for the period January 2022 to December 2022 were 107 per 100,000 10-17 year olds; this compares to 171 per 100,000 in the East Midlands and 149 in England in the same period.

Children and Young People Access Team. The [Here4You Line](#) provides the opportunity to speak directly to a mental health practitioner who can discuss how a young person is feeling or presenting and explore which services are best suited to help. Young people and parents can also self-refer via the Here4You Line. [Healthy Minds Lincolnshire](#) provides emotional wellbeing support to children and young people up to 19 years old (25 if special educational needs/disability or care leavers). [Mental Health Support Teams](#) are being rolled out across the most deprived areas of the county to work in education settings, and [CAMHS \(Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service\)](#) supports those young people with moderate to severe mental health needs. There is also a community crisis service with on call support available 24/7. Lincolnshire Children's Services, health services and key partner agencies have a trauma-informed approach to working with young people.

- 3.8.1.7. Lincolnshire's commissioned **Domestic Abuse Support Service** delivers outreach support for adults who have experienced domestic abuse, therapeutic sessions for children and young people who have experienced or witnessed domestic abuse, professional resources and refuge support. The new [Lincolnshire Domestic Abuse website](#) launched in January 2023 with a range of resources and information for adults, children and young people who are either being abused or are using abusive behaviour, to offer support and advice, and signpost them to services locally and nationally.
- 3.8.1.8. Work is ongoing with the Lincolnshire's Regional Adoption Agency (RAA), Family Adoption Links, which was launched in October 2020 with regional partners to determine which services could be jointly developed or commissioned to offer pre- and post-adoption support to birth and adoptive parents. Lincolnshire now delivers post-adoption support to adoptive parents in-house and has commissioned [Pac-UK](#) to deliver statutory **Birth Counselling** services to birth parents and families whose children have been placed for adoption.
- 3.8.1.9. It is important that we listen to the views of children and young people but recognise sometimes they may benefit from an independent advocate who can help them to articulate what they want and how they may feel about things. Following a service review, [Voiceability](#) were commissioned to deliver a range of **advocacy services** including for CiC and child protection advocacy.
- 3.8.1.10. **Caring2Learn (C2L)** has been embedded into Children's Services delivery and sits within the Fostering Service and the Virtual School. [Caring2Learn](#) continues to develop effective networks with schools and foster carers, delivering evidence-based good practice models and a highly valued training programme for schools, carers and Children's Services staff. The Fostering Service and the Virtual School continue to promote the Caring2Learn Award for Caring Schools and Learning Homes and is further developing the Foster Care Champions network which provides peer support to fostering households. The Virtual School has developed a bespoke training package to support schools and designated teachers to nurture and promote wellbeing and attachment and improve educational outcomes for CiC.

- 3.8.1.11. CiC and care leavers are more likely to have lower educational attainment than other young people and, whilst Lincolnshire young people have performed comparably well, there are indications that the impact of the pandemic and disruption to almost two years of school has had an adverse effect over the entire school age cohort. The **Virtual School** and **SEND** colleagues work closely with the Education team to enhance provision and develop strong relationships with individual school settings to overcome some of these attainment barriers and increase educational resilience and aspiration.
- 3.8.1.12. The commissioned **We Are With You** service for young people under 18 years old who are worried about their or someone else's drug or alcohol use offers a free online chat and telephone service, with a comprehensive website offering a range of advice and information. The We Are With You service has a strong **social media presence** to deliver their safety messages and attend a variety of outreach events. In the 2022-23 academic year they delivered to approximately 19,500 students in Lincolnshire secondary schools and alternative education provisions, as well as 'What's In The Box?' sessions on substance misuse to 3688 children in Year 6 at primary school. Online learning modules are available on request for students not attending school, including those who are home-schooled. Substance misuse services for adults (18 year old and over) are located in Lincoln, Boston, Grantham, Spalding and Skegness, as well as at HMP Lincoln.
- 3.8.1.13. **Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership (LSCP)** is a statutory multi-agency partnership that has identified a number of strategic priorities for 2022-2025 which cover a range of safeguarding and welfare issues that face children and young people in Lincolnshire. They include exploitation, neglect, emotional wellbeing, healthy relationships, and sexual and physical harm. Through the work of the sub-groups, partners collaborate on multi-agency audits, design campaigns and develop and review training, policies and procedures to support practitioners in their work. **LSCP's** comprehensive 6-year training pathway is available for all statutory and non-statutory partners, including Children's Services staff. On a three year cycle, the LSCP seeks assurance from all partners, and any services they commission, on their compliance with section 11 of the Children's Act 2004.
- 3.8.1.14. **Workforce development** for social care and SEND staff development and progression is highly valued in Lincolnshire, with clear training and learning pathways to develop good practice, explore new thinking and build confidence. Supplier development is similarly critical; through strong relational commissioning, the Children's Strategic Commissioning Team is proactive in supporting suppliers to develop their skills and knowledge as a way of promoting the Council's aspirations and priority outcomes for CiC and care leavers.
- 3.8.1.15. Information on available services and general advice and support for Lincolnshire families and young people have been enhanced through the on-line **Family Services Directory (FSD)**, which incorporates the **Care Leaver Local Offer** and an extensive section on Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health (see 3.8.1.15.). In addition the **SEND Local Offer** has a wide range of information to support families with children with disabilities and SEND.

3.8.1.16. The previously commissioned **Return Interview Service** was brought in-house from 1st April 2018. Subsequent review of protocols and processes with all stakeholders have seen an increase in return interviews following a missing episode, with an average of 98% of young people accepting the offer of a return interview throughout 2022-23. Young people, their families or placement suppliers are subsequently offered appropriate advice, including referrals to support services.

4. Lincolnshire priorities for 2023-27

4.1. Operational improvements identified in the previous Sufficiency Strategy 2018-22

4.1.1. The previous Sufficiency Strategy 2018-22 identified a number of improvements to delivery and practice that would positively impact on wider social care support for Lincolnshire children and young people, including the commissioning of key support services:

4.1.1.1. The DfE **Partners in Practice (PiP)** programme was an initiative that aimed to develop effective partnerships between local and central governments. Lincolnshire's PiP work resulted in 5 main projects: embedding the Signs of Safety model including Restorative Practice; review and redesign of Early Help support; sector-led improvement; the development of the Future 4 Me (F4Me) and Caring2Learn (C2L) service; and the development of the children's social care workforce. The 2020 evaluation²² of the programme found '*largely encouraging findings and areas of added value*'; much of the work of PiP has now been embedded into day-to-day delivery and practice, overseen by the Quality and Standards Team, and has further led into the CiC Transformation programme (see 1.7.). The DfE Sector-Led Improvement Partnership (SLIP) is continuing, with Lincolnshire a key partner in providing high-intensity support to other LAs.

4.1.1.2. The value and role of **Kinship Carers** is recognised and these carers receive the same level of supervision, support and training as all other approved foster carers. Exploring and capitalising on the family network can be hugely beneficial for children whose carers are supported to understand the challenges these children face, with a range of financial, practical and emotional support available to manage the difficult feelings and relationships that are unique to kinship care. Support from social care teams continues to be vital in unlocking the potential of family networks, including Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) which continue to be a significant permanence option for CiC.

4.1.1.3. Due to increasing local and national demand, existing arrangements regarding the **Lincolnshire Secure Unit (LSU)** were reviewed with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). The review resulted in the recommissioning of a 5-year contract in 2019. Work is ongoing with the DfE on a new purpose-built 24-bed secure children's home, with an additional 4-bed step-down bed spaces. Funding has been approved to take this project through to planning which is due in mid-July 2023 with a view to work starting on site in early 2024. The home is expected to open in early 2026.

4.1.1.4. A full service review of the statutory **Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service** was carried out in 2018-19; extensive service user and stakeholder engagement resulted in a service redesign which included earlier allocation at 16, twin tracking with social care and enhancement of specific service elements. Barnardo's were awarded 5-year contract in 2020 to deliver the service, and have continued to add significant value, including accommodation and Education, Employment and Training (EET) workers, specialist

²² [Lincolnshire Partners in Practice Programme Evaluation](#), March 2020

support to former-UASC care leavers, an embedded Mental Health Worker post through LPFT, emotional wellbeing workers and management of Supported Lodgings suppliers. The service will again be reviewed in 2023 to consider the model from April 2025.

- 4.1.1.5. Children’s Strategic Commissioning successfully implemented the **Open Select List (OSL)** procurement process in 2017, which facilitates the compliant procurement of placements for CYP in independent residential care, independent foster care, supported accommodation and Independent Non-Maintained (Special) Schools²³. The OSL re-opens annually to allow new suppliers to join and has been effective in the management of placement referrals to the independent market. Subsequent OSLs were created in 2020 for Domiciliary Care, Alternative Provision (to support Interim Home Tuition) and CWD Short Breaks and were incorporated into the new 5-year OSL cycle which opened in 2022 with updated service specifications and Terms and Conditions for each of the seven strands.
- 4.1.1.6. Ongoing placement and contract management is one of the key priorities of the Children in Care (CiC) Transformation Programme (*see 1.7.*) and has resulted in the Valuing Care (VC) toolkit for mapping strengths and needs of Lincolnshire CiC to better support placement matching, along with the Placements Management Meeting (PMM) and strengthened protocols with the in-house Foster Duty Desk.
- 4.1.1.7. The **Closed Ordered List for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC COL)** was commissioned in 2018 to facilitate the timely accommodation of spontaneous arrivals of unaccompanied 16-17 year olds. Suppliers have close working relationships with both social care and Leaving Care teams, and young people are well supported to access health and community services, education and legal representation. The UASC COL was reviewed in 2021-22 and a new 5-year contract was recommissioned in 2022 with updated service specification and Terms and Conditions. Additional capacity created through the new contract is essential to manage the increase in UASC referred to Lincolnshire through the National Transfer Scheme (NTS).
- 4.1.1.8. Lincolnshire’s commissioned **Youth Housing service** was redesigned in 2019 and a 5-year contract was awarded to Nacro. The start of the contract was delayed to 1st January 2021 due to the impact of Covid on accommodation readiness, government guidance that young people should not needlessly move placement, and recruitment difficulties. The service has continued to evolve and now incorporates the Care Leaver Homelessness Prevention Project, via grant funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).
- 4.1.1.9. The Corporate Parenting Manager (CPM) has worked with key partners including District Councils and Adult accommodation suppliers to develop effective pathways, including a county-wide housing protocol and agreement to local connection for Lincolnshire care

²³ When it opened in 2017, the OSL included 4 strands: independent residential children’s homes, independent foster care (IFAs), Independent Non-Maintained (Special) Schools (INMS) and Intense Needs Supported Accommodation (INSA, now Supported Accommodation).

leavers in any part of the Local Authority (LA) area. The CPM has also developed onward housing options for former-UASC care leavers leaving supported accommodation.

4.2. Strategic priorities for 2023-27

- 4.2.1. Lincolnshire children and young people that may need support, be they CiC, care leavers, young people at risk of homelessness or young people on the edge of care, deserve strong, outcomes-focused and enabling services that offer appropriate challenge and nurture to support our young people to develop the skills and resilience for adult life and independence.
- 4.2.2. These aims are reflected nationally in the emerging children's social care reforms detailed in the **Stable Homes, Built on Love** implementation strategy and consultation report, and within Lincolnshire's Children's Services transformation programmes (see 2.1.5.)
- 4.2.3. Following the review of the 2018-22 Sufficiency Strategy, including where services and support have been embedded into current delivery (see 3.8.) and where identified aims have been completed (see 4.1.), the Council have identified **five key priority areas** for the 2023-27 Sufficiency Strategy:
 - **In-house regulated placements**
 - **Independent regulated placements**
 - **Supported accommodation**
 - **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)**
 - **Care leavers**
- 4.2.4. Each of the priorities has a number of current issues and targeted actions which are detailed in the **Children in Care Sufficiency Action Plan** (see *Appendix A1*); these will be reported on annually and will inform the review and update of the Council's **Market Position Statement** (see *Appendix A2*).

Appendix A

A1 Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy Action Plan

Progress against the identified **Strategic Priorities for 2023-27** will be reported annually to the Council’s Corporate Parenting Panel in July of each year from 2024 and will inform the development of the annual **Market Position Statement** (see *Appendix A2*) which will be published on the Council website.

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	Category/service	Priorities	What needs to happen	Progress	
1	In-house regulated placements	i	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the number of foster families to meet demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of foster care support and benefits to support retention Programme of foster carer recruitment including succession planning as older foster carers retire Foster carer training package including digital offer and Caring2Learn (C2L) Recruitment of carers for particular groups of young people e.g. UASC, parent and child, teenagers with challenging behaviour Consistent, high quality support to foster carers by social workers 	<i>To be reported annually</i>
		ii	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information sharing across teams to support placement planning is effective and reflects the needs of children and young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop information sharing protocols between service areas Information shared at Placement Management Meeting (PMM) to support placement decisions Continue to support information sharing with in-house Foster Duty Desk and LCCPlacements 	<i>To be reported annually</i>
		iii	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity and occupancy of in-house residential homes is effective and meets CYP needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of CYP placed in-house to consider if a move to foster placements would be suitable (in-house or independent) Review of in-house residential children’s homes to ensure they meet the needs of our CiC cohort Opening of two new residential children’s homes in 2023 Recruitment of high-quality staff including bank and relief staff to ensure workforce is flexible and has sufficient capacity Monitor occupancy levels to ensure in-house placements are utilised effectively to maximise outcomes 	<i>To be reported annually</i>

		iv	Capacity within the secure estate is sufficient to meet CYP needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and renegotiate the Lincolnshire Secure Unit (LSU) contract with Ministry of Justice (MoJ) in 2026 Commence building the new 24-bed secure children's home Lincolnshire CYP are able to access in-county secure accommodation when needed CYP in secure estate are supported effectively to return to 'mainstream' placements CYP with Deprivation of Liberty orders (DoLS) are accommodated in safe and suitable placements 	<i>To be reported annually</i>
2	Independent regulated placements	i	Independent regulated placements are effective and meet CYP needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual re-opening of the Open Select List to increase numbers of pre-approved suppliers LCCPlacements team are well-resourced to support service areas with referrals and contract arrangements Develop relationships with suppliers to negotiate block contracts and block commissioning arrangements, and enhance knowledge of vacancies and new local provision Children's Services placement management oversight (in-house and independent) to seek to bring most Lincolnshire CYP back into Lincolnshire-based placements 	<i>To be reported annually</i>
		ii	Independent regulated placements offer Value for Money (VfM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable fee increases are agreed with suppliers through the regional panel Full-cohort oversight of placements in line with the aims of the Children in Care (CiC) transformation programme Review INMS placements with SEND team to ensure suitability and management of referrals, and look to develop a placements overview forum to consider placement demand, capacity and needs trends Appropriate challenge to placement packages including support and cost reduction, and effective step-down or transition 	<i>To be reported annually</i>
		iii	Placements for late entrants into care with complex behaviours deliver high outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing development of placement referral form to ensure young people are represented clearly and positively Suppliers are upskilled in a range of de-escalation techniques and management of complex behaviours 	<i>To be reported annually</i>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop effective step-down referral route into in-house supported accommodation and commissioned Youth Housing service 	
		iv	Children with Disabilities (CWD) are supported to access appropriate SEND services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of supplier relationships to increase access to high-quality and effective SEND services Commissioning of CWD Support Services including Early Support and Learning Provision, Targeted Positive Activities, and Domiciliary Care Commissioning of Alternative Provision, Domiciliary Care and CWD Short Breaks through the Open Select List provides VfM Open Select List for SEND services re-opens annually to develop supplier numbers 	<i>To be reported annually</i>
3	Supported accommodation	i	Numbers of young people in Supported Accommodation are low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioned Youth Housing contract continues to deliver VfM and high outcomes through their intensive support placements Young people are accommodated in-house where appropriate 	<i>To be reported annually</i>
		ii	Care leavers and young people aged 16-17 at risk of homelessness are supported to access suitable accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective contract management and appropriate challenge to supported accommodation suppliers to are effective in reducing placement packages Deliver a well-resourced Youth Housing service Review existing commissioned Youth Housing service to determine delivery from January 2026 Young people are supported to access education, employment or training (EET) to increase future opportunities and independence Joined-up access to move-on options e.g. adult accommodation, Intense Housing Management (IHM) accommodation, specialist accommodation Maintain and develop links with District Councils and other housing suppliers 	<i>To be reported annually</i>
		iii	Supported accommodation suppliers are registered with OFSTED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supported accommodation suppliers register with OFSTED in good time to ensure placements are made in line with regulations In-house supported accommodation is registered with OFSTED Supported accommodation contract is reviewed to ensure new regulations are reflected in our service specification and Terms and Conditions 	<i>To be reported annually</i>
4	Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)	i	UASC are placed in high quality, culturally appropriate placements that meet their specific support needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UASC Closed Ordered List and the Open Select List continue to deliver capacity and timely response to UASC arrivals Other suppliers are upskilled to be able to offer support to UASC UASC are supported to access EET soon after they become CiC 	<i>To be reported annually</i>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted use of Home Office Annex A grant to support service capacity Ongoing development of in-house, commissioned and community support to the UASC cohort 	
		ii	Former-UASC care leavers are supported effectively and are accommodated in high quality suitable accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective links with the Home Office and legal representatives result in timely asylum decisions Former-UASC care leavers are supported to remain in EET whilst they await their asylum claim outcome Maintain and develop suitable accommodation options for former-UASC care leavers awaiting a decision on their asylum claim Establish clear and affordable move-on options for the cohort 	<i>To be reported annually</i>
5	Care leavers	i	Deliver an effective and appropriately resourced Leaving Care Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing commissioned Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service to determine delivery from April 2025 Consistently high numbers of care leavers in suitable and safe accommodation Care leavers are supported to access education, employment or training (EET) to increase future opportunities and independence Work with local and regional partners to embed care leaver local connection entitlement Supported Lodgings are developed and supported Targeted use of Rent Gap agreements to support care leavers experiencing short-term financial difficulties District Councils offering priority for housing for care leavers including Council Tax relief Ongoing development of the Care Leaver Local Offer and social media communications/platforms 	<i>To be reported annually</i>
		ii	Care leavers are well equipped for independence by the age of 21 as they step down from full service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care leavers have the resources and skills to manage their own accommodation needs, have good mental health, have supportive networks and relationships and are financially secure Develop mechanisms to enable care leavers to remain close to, or in contact with, networks and areas of their choosing Links with other LAs re: Local Connection and reciprocal support for care leavers 	<i>To be reported annually</i>

A2 Market Position Statement 2023-24

The Market Position Statement 2023-24 can be considered a starting point for the Sufficiency Strategy 2023-27, providing a baseline for future updates.

The Market Position Statement 2023-24 is available on the [Lincolnshire County Council website](#) and will be refreshed annually following the annual review of progress against the Key Priorities (*see section 4*) using the Action Plan template (*Appendix A1*).

Appendix B

B1 Glossary of Acronyms

C2L	Caring to Learn / Caring2Learn
CAMHS	Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Group – <i>now Integrated Commissioning Board</i>
ChAT	Children’s Services Analysis Tool
CiC	Children in Care - <i>formerly referred to as Looked After Children (LAC)</i>
CiN	Child(ren) in Need
CLAS	Care Leaver Apprenticeship Scheme
CMA	Competition and Markets Authority
COL	Closed Ordered List
CPM	Corporate Parenting Manager
CQC	Care Quality Commission
CWD	Child(ren) with a Disability
CYP	Children and Young People
DCS	Director(s) of Children’s Services
DfE	Department for Education
DLUHC	Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
DOLs	Deprivation of Liberty Order(s)
EET	Education, Employment or Training
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan
F4Me	Future4Me
FSD	Family Services Directory
HMIP	His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation
HML	Healthy Minds Lincolnshire
ICB	Integrated Care Board
IFA(s)	Independent Fostering Agency(ies)
IHM	Intense Housing Management
INMS	Independent Non-Maintained (Special) Schools
INSA	Intense Needs Supported Accommodation
JDP	Joint Diversionary Panel
JSNA	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
LA(s)	Local Authority(ies)

LAC	Looked After Child(ren) – <i>now referred to as Children in Care (CiC)</i>
LAIT	Local Authority Interactive Tool
LCC	Lincolnshire County Council
LLCS	Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service
LPFT	Lincolnshire Partnership Foundation Trust (NHS)
LSCP	Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership
LSU	Lincolnshire Secure Unit
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
NEST	Nacro Education Support and Transition (commissioned Youth Housing contact)
NTS	National Transfer Scheme for UASC
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
OSL	Open Select List
PiP	Partners in Practice
PMM	Placement Management Meeting
RAA	Regional Adoption Agency
RCC	Regional Care Co-Operative(s)
SEMH	Social, Emotional and Mental Health
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
SGO	Special Guardianship Order
SLIP	Sector-Led Improvement Partnership
UASC	Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child(ren)
UASC COL	UASC Closed Ordered List
V4C	Voices for Choices
VC	Valuing Care
VfM	Value for Money

Children's Strategic Commissioning

Children's Services Independent Placements

Market Position Statement 2023-24

Executive Summary

Lincolnshire County Council's Market Position Statement 2023-24 accompanies the Council's Sufficiency Strategy 2023-27 and will be updated annually to highlight changes in placement demand for Lincolnshire Children in Care (CiC) and children and young people requiring independent (special) school placements.

The Council hopes the Market Position Statement will serve as a tool for independent providers, detailing the placements and services we need for our children and young people.

The Council wants to work in partnership with independent placement providers, especially those in Lincolnshire or in directly adjacent counties, and wants to increase supply across all our independent placement strands.

One of the things we wish to explore during 2023-24 is the block commissioning of placements, and we would like to start a dialogue with providers who are interested in working more closely with us and provide high quality placements for Lincolnshire young people that are as close to home and existing communities as possible.

By working closely with providers in the independent sector, Lincolnshire County Council aims to unlock capacity and develop effective relationships that will be transformational for our children and young people, and we would very much like to hear from you if you would like to be part of the conversation.

Lincolnshire County Council Children’s Services is keen to build relationships with independent providers of accommodation and education for children in care, care leavers and children and young people with Education Health and Care Plans.

Through this Market Position Statement we will set out the needs of our children and young people, our vision for the support we would like them to receive and how we plan to work in partnership with the independent market through the effective and appropriate use of independent placements.

In Lincolnshire, the Council’s Children’s Commissioning Team supports Children’s social care and Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) teams to broker placements in independent accommodation for Lincolnshire Children in Care (CiC) and independent education for children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).

Placements are made when in-house provision cannot meet the specific needs of a child including where there may not be capacity.

Lincolnshire services

Lincolnshire County Council’s Children’s Services directorate is highly regarded and prides itself on being an innovative service with integrated health services that means we can wrap multi-disciplinary support around children and young people to meet their needs.

The Council has continued to invest in preventative and early intervention services and so there is a rich offer of early help.

The Council is also the lead commissioner of mental health services in Lincolnshire, on behalf of the local Integrated Care Board, and this enables us to wrap local mental health expertise into both in-house and commissioned provider services.

Lincolnshire children and young people at the end of March 2023:

391 children and young people with a 'Child Protection' (CP) plan

728 Children in Care (CiC)

6968 children and young people with an EHCP

418 care leavers

Lincolnshire County Council Children’s Services
is rated **Outstanding** by OFSTED.

We take great pride in our innovative and highly skilled workforce who deliver excellent services to Lincolnshire children, young people and families.

Lincolnshire demographics

Lincolnshire is the fourth largest county in England with diverse communities dispersed across a large and diverse, predominantly rural landscape. Approximately 21.5% of the total population is aged 0-19 years (163,550), of which 16.4% (124,565) are school aged.

Area	Total Population	0-19 Population	5-19 Population	0-19 % Population	5-19 % Population
East Lindsey	141727	26496	20308	18.7%	14.3%
Boston	70173	16199	11949	23.1%	17.0%
South Holland	95019	20223	15091	21.3%	15.9%
Boston and South Holland	165192	36422	27040	22.0%	16.4%
Lincoln	99299	23596	18085	23.8%	18.2%
West Lindsey	95667	20194	15489	21.1%	16.2%
Lincoln and West Lindsey	194966	43790	33574	22.5%	17.2%
North Kesteven	116915	24907	19032	21.3%	16.3%
South Kesteven	142424	31935	24611	22.4%	17.3%
North and South Kesteven	259339	56842	43643	21.9%	16.8%
Total Lincolnshire	761224	163550	124565	21.5%	16.4%

Source:
Office of National
Statistics (ONS)
mid-2020
population
estimates

Based on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019, 6.7% of Lincolnshire's population live in the 10% most deprived areas of England.

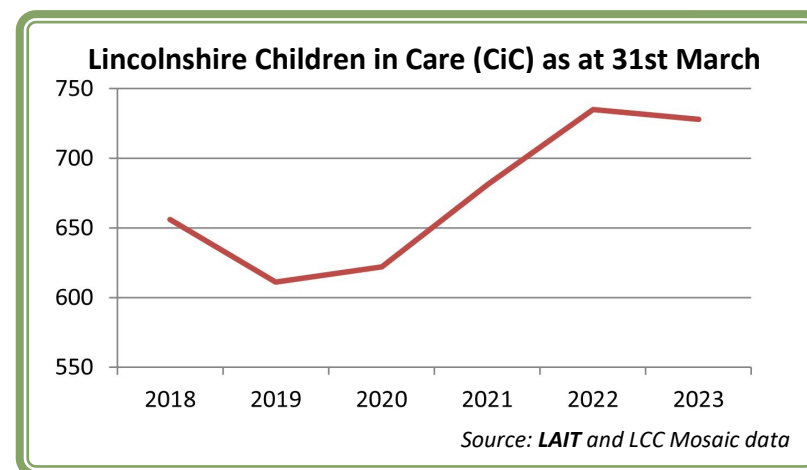
Lincolnshire Children in Care (CiC) numbers

As is the case nationally, the number of CiC has increased over the past 3-4 years and the support these children and young people require is more complex and intense.

The Council is seeing an increasing need for a strong and effective therapeutic approach in both our in-house and independent placements to support these children and young people in the best way possible.

We are seeing children entering care at an older age. We would like placements that can offer step down options which may include a return back home, move to a foster family or independence.

We are keen to grow capacity in Lincolnshire or as close to the county as possible because this means we can work together with providers to wrap other support services around children and young people. We can also look at building strong partnerships and benefit from sharing our resources such as joint matching, joint training and providing enhanced staffing if a young person is struggling.





Placement planning

Lincolnshire County Council's in-house provision for CiC includes residential children's homes, foster carers and unregulated supported accommodation for 16+ year olds.

We also commission our Youth Housing Service and our Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service (who manage supported lodgings providers).

Lincolnshire County Council always tries to explore in-house options first as we want children to live in Lincolnshire as close to home and their support networks as possible. We also recognise that we need high quality independent providers to work with us to meet both demand and the needs of the child or young person.

Valuing Care

Lincolnshire County Council Children's Services has embarked upon an ambitious CiC Transformation Programme.

Our key goals are to:

- reduce the need for statutory intervention in families lives, by providing the right help to the right children at the right time and for the right duration;
- support families to build on their existing support networks in order to implement their own solutions;
- improve outcomes for Lincolnshire children and young people, by providing care locally within the county rather than care at a distance, to keep them within their own communities where they can be close to their networks.

The Council wants to work more proactively in partnership with independent providers and we would like to continue to build and strengthen relationships with local providers and carers in Lincolnshire.

The Council appreciates there may be times where a placement outside of Lincolnshire is still the best match for a child, especially if it means they can live in a family.

Valuing Care has a number of live workstreams, all focused on different aspects of improving placements for CiC.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) transformation programme

Lincolnshire County Council's **SEND High Needs Strategy 2021-2023** sets out our aims and strategic direction to ensure that children and young people with SEND in Lincolnshire are supported to achieve the best possible outcomes in school and in life.

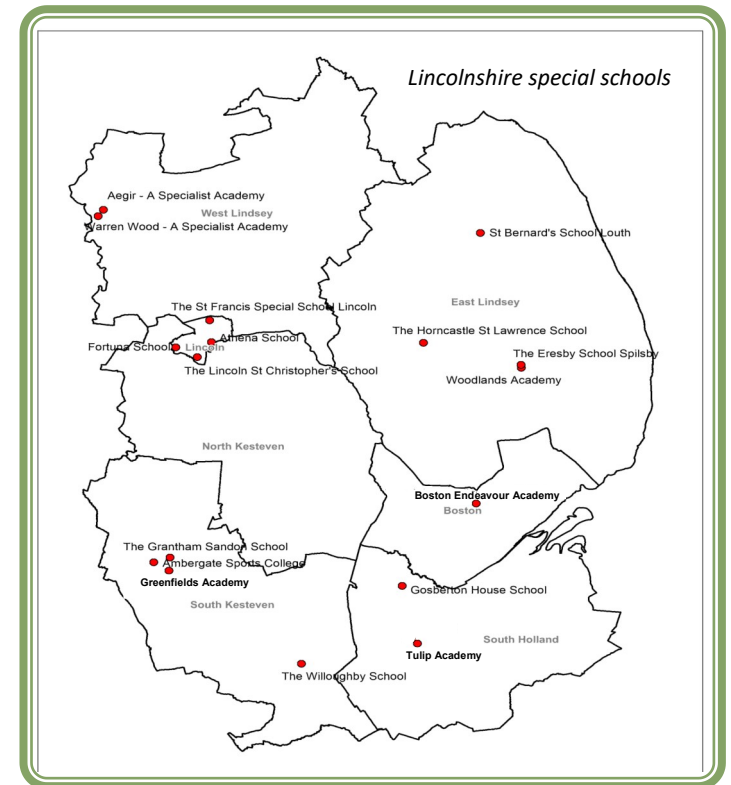
Partners in education, social care and health are committed to working together to establish an integrated school system where children and young people get the right health, care and education, in the right place, at the right time and are able to transition to adulthood and independence when they are ready to do so.

This includes embedding the graduated approach/Inclusion Toolkit and understanding of the support available in Lincolnshire; schools work with families to ensure the home environment reflects the support in school; services will wrap round a child in an inclusive way, reducing school exclusions in recognition that behaviour is a communication of need; and we will have high aspirations for our children and young people with additional needs (higher academic achievement, increased personal resilience, increased socialisation and more resilient adults after education).

Lincolnshire is also strengthening Lincolnshire's **SEND Local Offer**, investing in workforce development, strengthening key times of transitions and facilitating appropriate transitions from special to mainstream schools when access to specialist provision is no longer needed.

Lincolnshire special schools are being redesigned to be all-needs schools, with new special schools for Boston, Lincoln and Spalding. The changes will increase school numbers by 500 places, and should be complete by September 2023.

Nevertheless, there will continue to be a need for independent special school placements due to capacity or the particular needs of the child or young person.



Valuing SEND

The Valuing SEND tool is being utilised to map children and young people's educational strengths and needs in the five key domains of: communication and interaction; cognition and learning; social, emotional and mental health; sensory and physical; and independence.

The tool has been designed for use for any child/ young person with additional needs, from birth through to age 25. Consistent use of this tool will allow a clear picture of how needs change over time, both for the individual child or young person, and for the setting as a whole.

Independent Foster Care Placements

Lincolnshire's aims

The Council want an increased choice of foster care placements based within Lincolnshire to be able to support children with complex needs, reducing the number of out-of-county placements made through necessity rather than choice.

The Council wants to plan foster care placements, identifying children we feel would thrive in a family environment and support both them and their carers with a well-planned transition, and work with Independent Foster Agencies (IFAs) to support resilient and effective placements that meet the needs of our children.



In-house provision and capacity

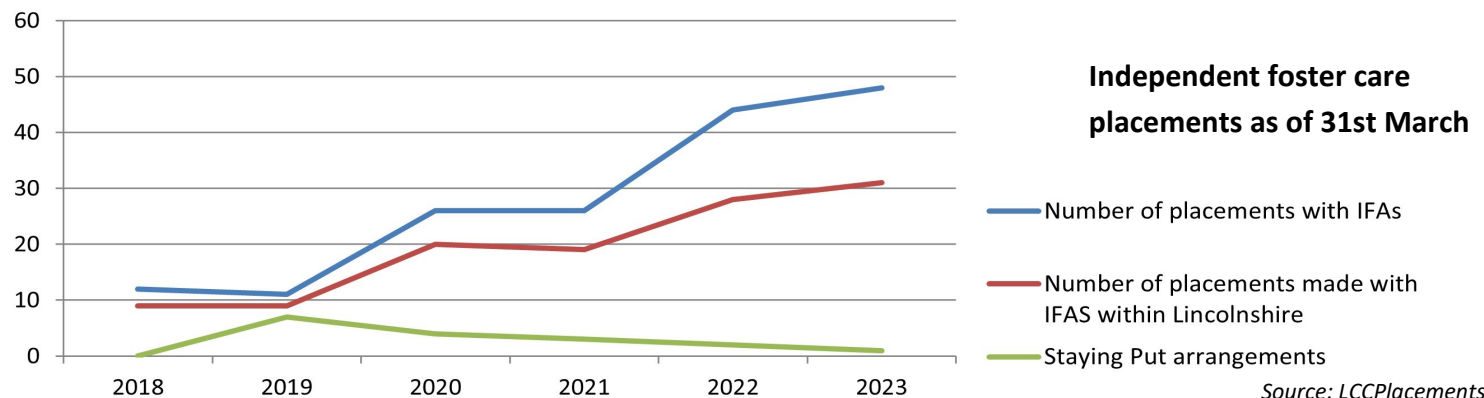
In comparison to other Local Authorities, Lincolnshire County Council have a very high proportion of in-house foster carers. They are highly trained, well supported and very well used.

The increase in both CiC numbers and children and young people coming into care with more complex needs has reduced our in-house foster care capacity, resulting in more children and young people being placed with IFAs.

Current issues

Due to the rise in older children coming into care, Lincolnshire, along with many other Local Authorities, have seen a decrease in foster carers willing or with the experience to take older children or those with more complex needs.

Some IFAs new to Lincolnshire may be developing their networks within our area and may be building the number of foster carers that they have available.



Source: LCCPlacements data

Independent Foster Care Placements *cont.*

Building relationships

Lincolnshire County Council wants to build strong relationships with IFAs who are proactive and creative in working with us, finding solutions to maintain placement stability, including the development of programmes and care plans that, if appropriate, will support the individual child to achieve permanence.

The Council wants to work closely with IFA's that provide appropriate support to their foster carers, including a wide range of training and support, a peer network of other carers and access to respite when required.

The Council wants to develop our awareness of Lincolnshire foster carers as, by placing more young people in-county, we can offer wraparound services and targeted support to the whole family and support placement stability.

Parent and Child

The Council has occasional need for independent foster carers able to offer a Parent and Child assessment placement for up to 12 weeks.

These foster carers need to provide a homely environment, effective support and guide the parent to independently care for themselves and their child and provide assurance of safe parenting post-placement.

Staying Put

Lincolnshire County Council wants to offer our children and young people the opportunity to remain with their foster carers under **Staying Put** arrangements. As such, we want to place our children and young people with foster carers who are willing to support the child placed with them, as they would their own, beyond 18.

What we need...

Lincolnshire County Council believes children and young people thrive best in a family environment; sadly older or children with more complex needs are often harder to place in foster care.

Lincolnshire children and young people need independent foster carers who are resilient when faced with challenging behaviour issues and who are skilled in de-escalation techniques.

The Council want to place with independent foster carers who are trained to understand childhood trauma, risks of absconding, risk of CSE, criminal exploitation, challenging behaviours and learning disability and autism.

The Council wants our children and young people to maintain contact with family and friends wherever possible, including reunification with families when safe and appropriate, so whilst Lincolnshire believe long-term, planned placements are best and most effective for the majority of our children and young people, for others foster care is just one part of their care journey.

Lincolnshire County Council therefore also values independent foster carers who are able to offer short-term, respite or emergency placements, as well as those that can take sibling groups and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children under 16 years old.

Lincolnshire County Council needs independent foster carers that have the flexibility and understanding to be able to support children who have reduced school timetables/attendance and who may be excluded from school.

Residential Children's Homes

In-house provision and capacity

Lincolnshire has four in-house residential children's homes spread across the county, supporting a total of twenty-nine children and young people aged 5 to 18 years, plus two residential respite homes for children with disabilities. Two new homes will open in 2023 and 2024 for a further ten young people.

Most are for children with a mix of ages and abilities, apart from The Beacon in Grantham which specialises in supporting children and young people with disabilities. Lincolnshire are currently developing two new children's homes which are due to open in 2023 and early 2024.

Lincolnshire seeks to broker independent residential placements where in-house provision cannot meet the specific needs of a child including where there may not be capacity.

Secure placements

Lincolnshire Secure Unit (LSU) has one welfare bed which, subject to Court approval, can be used for very complex young people exhibiting high risk behaviours, though secure placements can be made across the UK where there are vacancies. The DfE has approved funding for a new purpose-built 28-bed secure children's home and planning is now underway.

Placement costs

Lincolnshire County Council needs to work with providers whose costs are fair, with sustainable profit margins, whereby we only pay for the support that is required and delivered and which is reduced as the child or young person becomes more stable and grows in independence.

Some children and young people in independent residential placements have complex needs; Lincolnshire want to work with providers who understand these young people and who will work with us to help them transition into a less intense support package that reflects their changing needs.

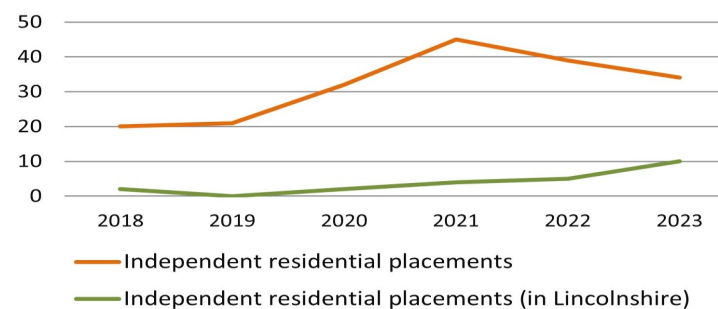
Lincolnshire's aims

We want to build strong relationships with independent residential providers who are able to offer positive outcomes for our children and young people who require complex care packages at the highest end of the continuum of need.

Working together, we strive to achieve the outcomes for our children and young people to enable them to return home or transition to either foster families or to independence.

We want to develop our links to Lincolnshire independent residential children's homes as, by placing more young people in-county and reducing the recent increase in out-of-county placements, we can offer wraparound services and targeted support to enhance placement stability.

Lincolnshire independent residential children's home placements by year to end 31st March



Residential Children's Homes cont.

Regulation & inspection

In line with our high aspirations for our children and young people, Lincolnshire County Council seeks to place with residential providers who are rated good or outstanding by Ofsted and who are registered in line with **Care Standards Act 2000** and operates in accordance with the **Children's Home (England) Regulations 2015** and the nine **Quality Standards**.

Lincolnshire does not use unregulated independent placements for children and young people under the age of 16 years old.



Older children in care

Lincolnshire County Council, in line with the national trend, is seeing a rise in older young people entering care i.e. 13+ years.

This older cohort presents some challenges in terms of behaviours and as a result may experience more placement instability and breakdown than younger children.

We want appropriate and innovative support solutions for these young people, given their time in a residential setting may be short before they move into the next stage of their time in care or on to independence.

What we need...

Lincolnshire children and young people need resilient providers and carers with experience of working with childhood trauma, are resilient when faced with challenging behaviour issues and who are skilled in de-escalation techniques. Lincolnshire wants to build effective working relationships with providers, working together to overcome any challenges in placement to avoid breakdown.

Lincolnshire children and young people need carers who are skilled in de-escalation techniques that minimise physical interventions, as well as carers who are able to provide children and young people with clinical therapy, mental health and behavioural support as determined within their care plan.

Ideally, we feel our children will thrive better in smaller homes that can provide a realistic homely environment, with the excellent intensive support programme the children and young people require, and we are increasingly focused on placing our young people within, or as close to, Lincolnshire as possible so they can access Lincolnshire social care and Leaving Care support as well as other Lincolnshire services such as CAMHS and Virtual School.

Above all, Lincolnshire County Council wants to work with independent residential providers that are able to care for our children for the longer term, and who are able to work with our social care and Leaving Care teams to make a real difference in terms of behaviours, outcomes and stability, as well as work with us to step young people down into less intensive accommodation and support.

Lincolnshire Special Schools

Lincolnshire has seventeen maintained/academy Special Schools spread throughout the county supporting children and young people with a range of complex SEND.

However, due to either a child or young person's specific need and/or lack of available appropriate school placements within our own maintained/academy (special) school settings, Lincolnshire County Council does place with the independent sector for day and residential (special) school places.

Use of Independent (Special) School placements

All placements that Lincolnshire County Council commissions are expected to meet the outcomes and needs as outlined in the child and young person's EHC Plan.

These placements seek to meet and exceed identified needs through innovative care and a robust curriculum, demonstrating a commitment to continuous improvement through the school's, and where applicable the home's, internal quality assurance procedures.

The delivery of the service will be consistent with the school's function, as approved by the Regulatory Body.

All providers will need to comply, where appropriate, with the **SEND Code of Practice, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015** including the Quality Standards 2015 and the **Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014**.

Current Independent Placements

As of 31st March 2023, Lincolnshire County Council has 353 children and young people with an EHC Plan placed in Independent day and residential (Special) Schools throughout the UK:

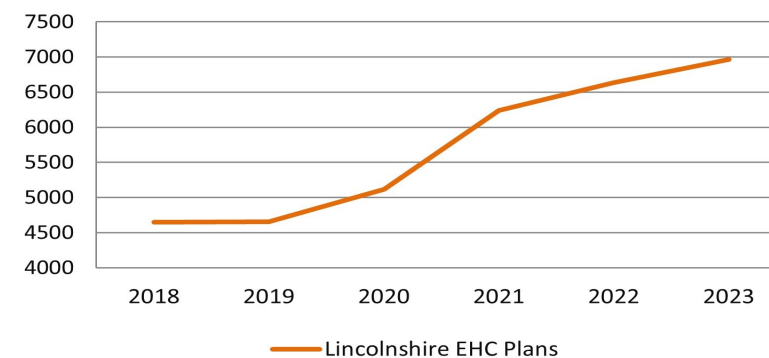
Placement type			
52 weeks <i>Education & Residential</i>	38 week 'weekly' <i>Education & Residential</i>	38 week 'termly' <i>Education & Residential</i>	Day placement <i>Education only</i>
12	17	9	315

Source: LCCPlacements data

Lincolnshire's SEN data

Similar to the regional and national picture, the number of children and young people for whom Lincolnshire maintains an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan under the **Children and Families Act 2014** has been rising, with an increase of 2408 EHC plans between 2018 and 2023.

As of 31st March 2023, there were 6968 EHC plans, an increase of 334 in 12 months.



Source: Children's Services performance data

Lincolnshire Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans

Lincolnshire children and young people with an EHCP, by age group and % of cohort:

SEN2 Return Year	2020		2021		2022		2023	
	Total	% of population	Total	% of population	Total	% of population	Total	% of population
Under age 5	228	4%	217	3%	191	3%	187	3%
Aged 5 to 10	1652	32%	2250	36%	2318	35%	2440	35%
Aged 11 to 15	1821	36%	2195	35%	2430	37%	2712	39%
Aged 16 to 19	1170	23%	1261	20%	1394	21%	1380	20%
Aged 20 to 25	248	5%	305	5%	301	5%	249	4%
Total	5119		6228		6634		6968	

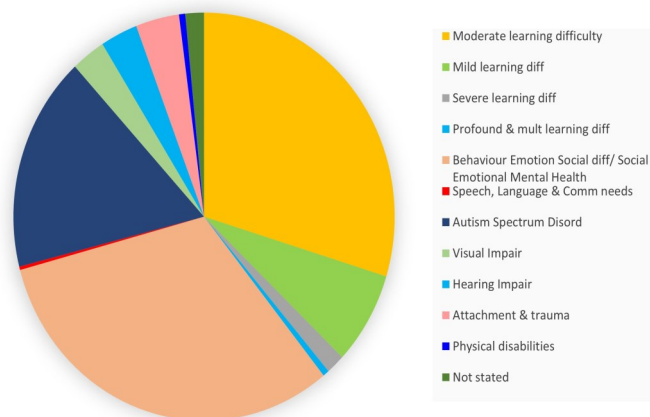
Source:
LCC SEN2 SFR
data

Lincolnshire children and young people with an EHC Plan, by age group and locality at end March 2023:

SEND Locality Team	Under Age 5	Aged 5 to 10	Aged 11 to 15	Aged 16 to 19	Aged 20 to 25	Total
Boston/South Holland	52	575	622	296	49	1594
East Lindsey	26	407	544	288	51	1316
Lincoln/West Lindsey	54	681	737	369	56	1897
North/South Kesteven	55	777	809	427	93	2161
Total	187	2440	2712	1380	249	6968

Source:
LCC Mosaic
data

Lincolnshire independent (special) school placements by primary need at 31st March 2023



Source: LCC Placements data

What we need...

Lincolnshire County Council wants to ensure we have access to effective and holistic specialist provision that supports the diverse needs of our children and young people with SEND aged from 5 to 25 years.

We have seen an increase in placements for Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH), Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD) and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) over the past few years, though the cohort is ever changing.

Lincolnshire's SEND team continue to work with mainstream schools in Lincolnshire to support our children and young people to remain in (or return to) mainstream schools wherever possible, but we recognise that this is not always practical or the best environment, so we want to develop strong relationships with Lincolnshire providers that offer value for money.

Post-16 education placements

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) provide core funding (Element 1) and additional needs funding (Element 2) for High Needs learners aged 16 years and above with special educational needs and/or a disability (SEND) who are attending a Further Education establishment, more commonly referred to internally as Post-16.

Lincolnshire County Council provides additional 'top up' funding to learners (known as Element 3) where the costs to support the learner's needs are higher than the amount provided by the ESFA. The choice of Further Education establishment is determined by the learner.

Open Select List for SEND support services

Lincolnshire County Council commissions the following SEND support services:

- **Domiciliary Care:** supporting children and young people with disabilities, most usually in their own homes, with personal and intimate care, leisure and community activities, life skills, transition support, social and communication skills, and low-level nursing not requiring a qualification.

Providers of Domiciliary Care must be **CQC-registered**. Independent domiciliary care services will be sought through the OSL when there is insufficient capacity through the block commissioned contract to deliver domiciliary care to 0-18 year olds living in Lincolnshire with profound and significant learning and/or physical disabilities or life-threatening illnesses.

- **Short Breaks:** offering children and young people with disabilities an enjoyable experience away from their primary carers to enhance their personal and social development, whilst parents and families are provided either with a valuable break from their caring responsibilities or with help accessing the community with the young person.

Short breaks can occur at different times – during the day or evening, overnight or on weekends, and can span a few hours or a number of days.

- **Alternative Provision:** supporting pupils in schools years Reception to Year 13 (or up to age 25 years where applicable) who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

The aim is to engage pupils who may be disengaged from education through a broad and flexible curriculum offer.

The OSL for SEND services re-opens annually to allow new suppliers to apply.

In-house provision

Lincolnshire County Council has two in-house accommodation projects based in Grantham and Gainsborough, jointly accommodating up to 10 16-17 year old CiC or care leavers who are usually in transition from residential and foster care placements.

Young people can stay in these projects for up to 9 months to develop their independent living skills.

Commissioned services

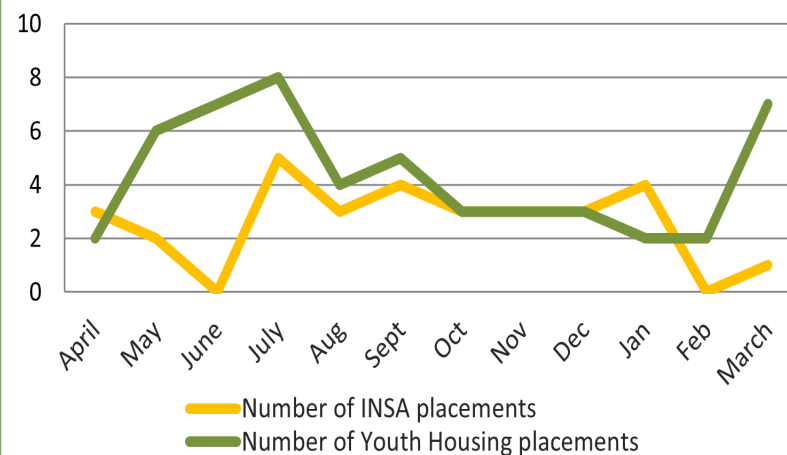
Lincolnshire County Council currently commissions seventy-two bed spaces in Lincoln, Boston and Grantham as part of the Youth Housing Service designed to accommodate 16-17 year olds (including CiC) and Care Leavers up to 21 years old who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

This contract is in place for up to five years to the end of 2026. Young people are supported to live independently or to return home to family wherever it is safe and possible to do so.

There are also around 18 Supported Lodgings providers offering nearly 30 family-based placements for 18+ year olds care leavers; these are managed by Barnardo's who deliver our commissioned Leaving Care Service which is contracted for up to five years to March 2025.

Lincolnshire also commissions placements for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) aged 16-17 years old through our Closed Ordered List arrangements which are designed to respond quickly to spontaneous arrivals. The current UASC Closed Ordered List is in place to October 2027.

Number of new supported accommodation placements made from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023



The chart demonstrates that demand for supported accommodation is sporadic but the Youth Housing Service receives the majority of referrals.



Additional Supported Accommodation

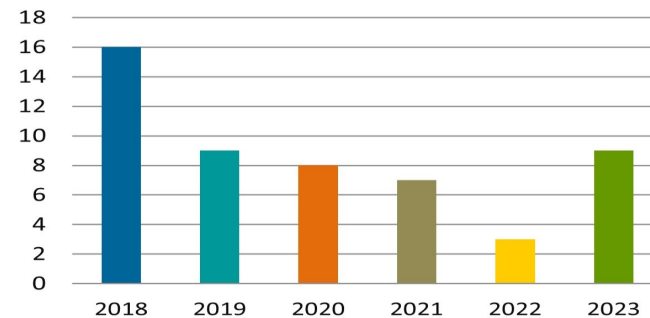
Lincolnshire County Council does have occasional need to place young people aged 16-17 years old in Supported Accommodation (SA) when suitable placements in Youth Housing are unavailable.

This may be as a result of short-term capacity challenges or due to the need to undertake some specialist work with young people before they can move into other accommodation.

SA placements are usually individual units of accommodation with high level support packages due to the nature of the cohort, including young people with significant emotional, social or behavioural needs.

Demand for SA fluctuates and is often unpredictable or is on an emergency basis; requirements have steadily declined over the past five years in line with the introduction of the Youth Housing commissioned service and in-house supported accommodation options, alongside a focus on working with young people to either support them to remain at or return home.

Number of young people in supported accommodation placements as at 31st March



Source: LCCPlacements data

Regulatory changes

OFSTED have confirmed that supported and semi-independent accommodation will be regulated i.e. inspected and meet minimum standards. More detail can be found at www.gov.uk. Suppliers are able to submit applications from April 2023, and will be inspected from April 2024 onwards.

What we need...

Lincolnshire County Council needs access to affordable accommodation offering flexible support hours on occasions where Youth Housing is unavailable. Young people need tailored support to suit them, and not 24-hour surveillance which limits a young person's ability to become independent.

Most young people in supported accommodation are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), so accommodation needs to be available in areas which offer good transports links with opportunities for education, employment and training.

Supported accommodation should aid young people to step forward to more independent living. Lastly, it is important that all young people within supported accommodation have a clear exit plan in place to either transition into our in-house or commissioned contracts, or to move to an independent tenancy.

Placement Commissioning

Lincolnshire County Council Children's Strategic Commissioning Team operate an Open Select List (OSL) procurement process to broker placements with independent providers.

New OSL arrangements started in September 2022 and new suppliers can join the list annually.

Providers are asked to submit business-level information such as accounts and/or evidence of financial standing along with a self-declaration application form. Subject to approval, the provider joins the relevant strand of the OSL; there are regulated (independent fostering agencies, independent residential children's homes and independent (Special) Schools as well as Supported Accommodation (soon to be subject to regulation) and SEND Services (domiciliary care, alternative provision and CWD short breaks) strands.

Providers on the OSL are notified of a suitable referral before other providers not on the OSL, and have the opportunity to make an offer regarding the placement.

The LCCPlacements team who administer the OSL process, issue contracts and Individual Placement Agreements (IPAs) and oversee payments.

Commissioning Officers then monitor contract performance and undertake meetings/visits to providers periodically.

If there are any concerns, Commissioning Officers liaise with social care and SEND, in regard to either placement stability or the support package being delivered, and work with placement providers to develop strong relationships that are mutually beneficial.

All placements will operate, where applicable, within the [Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership](#) Child Protection Guidelines including compliance with [Section 11 of the Children Act 2004](#).

Contact us:

Children's Strategic Commissioning Placements

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

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	07 September 2023
Subject:	Adoption Annual Report 2022–2023

Summary:

The purpose of this report is to inform the Corporate Parenting Panel about the work of the Adoption Service in accordance with the requirements of the Care Standards National Minimum Standards 2003, 2011, 2014, and the Adoption and Children Act 2002. The National Minimum Standards, together with the Adoption Regulations, form the basis of the regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000 for the conduct of Adoption Agencies and Adoption Support Agencies.

Under the requirements of the National Standards, Members, in their role as Corporate Parents, should be informed on a regular basis about the activity of the Adoption Service.

The National Minimum Standards for the Adoption Service are broken down into 31 standards. Standard 17 deals with the "monitoring and controlling" and requires the Executive Councillor to satisfy itself that the Adoption Agency is effective and achieves good outcomes for children (Section 17.3). Standard 18 deals with the Statement of Purpose and requires the Executive Councillor to satisfy itself that the Adoption Agency and Adoption Support Agency meet the aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose.

The Annual Report sets out the relevant performance information and identifies the key developments with the service of the last twelve months.

Actions Required:

The Corporate Parenting Panel is invited to review and endorse the Adoption Annual Report for 2022-2023.

1. Background

Lincolnshire Children's Services operates a discreet Adoption Service, on a countywide basis from three localities. The Annual Report presents the performance of the service over the previous year 2022-2023 to the Executive Councillor responsible for Children's Services and Elected Members.

2. Conclusion

The Annual Report attached as Appendix A contains a range of information about the Adoption Agency in relation to performance indicators and measuring good outcomes; the work of the Adoption Panel; and various regulations relating to the Act and Adoption Support.

Following consideration of the attached Annual Report, the Panel is requested to review and comment on the contents of the report and the work of the Adoption Service.

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Adoption Annual Report 2022-2023

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 Deborah Crawford, who can be contacted on 07786 190414 or deborah.crawford@lincolnshire.gov.uk.

Annual Adoption Report

April 2022 - March 2023



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Introduction:

This report provides information about the Adoption Service and outcomes for children in care with Lincolnshire County Council, from the period 1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023 inclusive.

The purpose of the Annual Report is to inform the public, elected members, partners and staff of the progress and developments of the Adoption Service during this period. The Adoption Service is part of a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) – Family Adoption Links.

The County Council's Business Plan outlines the organisational values that reflect the Council's vision and purpose, providing a set of consistent, simple values that guides attitudes and behaviours. These values define how we do things and are the principles by which we work together and with our customers and partners and are underpinned by the following statement:

Lincolnshire County Council's vision is:

- supporting high aspirations
- enabling everyone to enjoy life to the full
- creating thriving environments
- provide good value council services.

This approach by the Council underpins a one Council approach which ensures that services are working towards shared goals and will help different areas of the Council to work more effectively and alongside our strategic partners.

The Family Adoption Links Partnership has a strategic vision:

- It is a dynamic regional partnership aimed at delivering excellence in every aspect of adoption
- Family Adoption Links strive to ensure the best possible match for children and adoptive parents and develop a comprehensive range of support services to ensure a positive adoption journey
- The regional approach seeks to develop the widest pool of professionals who engage in innovative and groundbreaking new adoption practices

National Adoption Agenda:

The Government continues to maintain a clear focus on minimising delay for children with a plan for adoption and maximising the potential pool of adopters.

On the 13th March 2014, the Children and Families Bill received royal assent and became the Children and Families Act 2014 on 22nd April 2014. To reflect the changes; regulations, National Minimum Standards and the statutory guidance for adoption were amended and came into force in July 2014. The changes inherent in the Act have continued to be implemented in Lincolnshire, with the establishment of Foster to Adopt placements a two-stage approval process for adopters, and the development and expansion of support services to adoptive families.

On the 1st May 2015, the Adoption Support Fund (ASF) was rolled out to all Local Authorities. The fund offers a fast, simple service for Local Authorities to apply to, meaning that adoptive families can access the support they need, as and when they need it. The funds extend to Local Authorities and RAA's and funding is in place for eligible adoptive families and special guardianship orders (SGO's) until March 2025.

To access the fund, adoptive families/SGO arrangement need to have an assessment of adoption support needs completed by the Local Authority. Where the assessment identifies that therapeutic services would be beneficial to a family, the Local Authority can apply to the ASF on the family's behalf, who will then release the funding to the Local Authority.

In June 2015, the government published its proposal for the regionalisation of adoption services. The rationale behind this proposal was outlined as:

"By the end of this Parliament, we want to see all local authorities being part of regional agencies. We want to accelerate the pace of change to ensure those children for whom adoption is the right path, are given the best chance of finding a loving, forever family as quickly as possible. This year, we want to provide up to £4.5M of start-up funding to support early adopters to take forward their proposals."

Lincolnshire and Rutland, North Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, Leicester City, and Northamptonshire Children's Trust launched as a (RAA) in October 2020 under the name Family Adoption Links. The RAA works collaboratively to develop and maintain the partnership, with an RAA management team, established regional family finding group, and have taken strides as a partnership to ensure that excellent practice and better resources for children and adoptive parents are shared within the region.

Developing the workforce to ensure all social workers have the skills and knowledge to make swift and robust decisions about the best placements for children to meet their long-term needs is seen as a priority, and in Lincolnshire the adoption staff apply the Signs of Safety framework to support their work. In addition, all the Supervising social Workers have completed their Adult Attachment Interview training to improve the quality of the adopter assessments, and to assist in the process of matching children to adopters.

In April 2019 Rutland commissioned Lincolnshire to deliver adoption services on their behalf, so a contract was developed with them, which continues to date. There have been regular meetings with Rutland staff to ensure that the work is completed in a timely way and to track cases.

Lincolnshire was actively involved in Rutland's OFSTED inspection in February 2020, by holding a training event with Rutland staff, providing children and adopters' files for evidence, and meeting with the inspector. The comments on adoption services in the Rutland OFSTED inspection report 2020 were positive. The contract for the delivery of adoption services for Rutland has been ongoing through 2022/2023.

At the end of March 2019, the statutory adoption register run by Coram BAAF ceased to operate, and was replaced by the Link Maker system, which enables social work staff and adopters to access information on children nationally and to have Lincolnshire children on the national system. This is effective for the regional colleagues to identify and source placements as well as the option to have children on the system nationally so that approved adopters seeking a child can do so through this system.

In January 2020, Lincolnshire became involved in a pilot project for Coram/BAAF which focussed on the 'Together or Apart' assessment model which had been constructed and developed by Shelagh Beckett to assist social workers with the task of making lifelong decisions regarding the placing of sibling groups. The Together or Apart assessment model is now used across the country.

In December 2021 there was the 'Somerset judgement' whereby an adoption case in Somerset was seen to have failed to follow regulations regarding adoption medicals for children with a plan for adoption. In response to this Lincolnshire adoption service reviewed and audited all cases in the preceding three years which had had an adoption decision by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM), and it was reassuring to find that the practice in Lincolnshire remains robust and in line with the regulations. Following the judgement Lincolnshire have implemented the new forms for medical advisors, to ensure that decisions are recorded where required, and that adoption medicals are always considered by the ADM.

At the end of 2022, the adoption support fund announced that they would be continuing until March 2025, which secures the ongoing support for adoptive and Special Guardianship Order (SGO) families in being provided with therapeutic support.

Throughout 2022/23 the RAA has gone from strength to strength and workstreams continue to work hard and forge improved practices and produce optimum chances for children with a care plan for adoption.

There remains a clear alignment of the local, regional, and national agenda which is encapsulated in Lincolnshire County Council's vision "*that every child in every part of the county should achieve their potential.*" To achieve this, the work of the Adoption Service is delivered according to the principles that the council adheres to, specifically:

- Early help: Strong protective universal services accessible to all with a range of early help available so children have the best start in life and families have extra help when they need it.
- Safeguarding: A shared responsibility to ensure children are safe at home, school and in their community.
- Aspiration: Children are able to thrive and cope with life challenges.
- Learning and achievement: All children being the best they can be with targeted interventions to close the gap so vulnerable children achieve as well as their peers.
- Best use of resources: Integrated commissioning with a focus on best value, improved outcomes and community engagement

The report details how the activity of the Adoption Service fits within the framework of the above principles.

Progress on Development Goals identified in 2021/2022 Annual Report:

Early Help:

The use of the Signs of Safety model has continued to be embedded into practice, with all the staff having completed training. The Supervising Social Workers are using mapping as an effective tool in the initial assessment of prospective adopters. The children's workers have developed their skills in using words and pictures to enhance children's understanding of their situation and the plan for adoption.

There was continued good performance on the adoption scorecard performance against key threshold measures. The service continues to perform well in this area, despite the ongoing challenges of some delayed timescales within court proceedings. This means that wherever Lincolnshire children and those within the Family Adoption Links region are placed with their adoptive family as quickly as possible.

There has been a consistent increase in the number of families who we have been able to help through the Adoption Support Fund, with Lincolnshire being a high user of the fund, ensuring that adopted children within Lincolnshire have access to the specialist support and therapy that they need.

Adoption Scorecard:

The scorecards allow local authorities and regional adoption agencies to monitor and compare their performance in adoption. The government introduced scorecards as part of a new approach to address delays in the adoption system in 2012.

There are 2 main timeliness indicators captured within the scorecard pertinent to adoption performance:

In 2022/2023 -

- (A10) Average time between entering care and being placed in their adoptive family is 505 days. This is lower than the national average for the year of 555. A lower score in this area is better.
- (A2) Average time between gaining authority to place and deciding on a match is 159 days, significantly lower than all England average of 271. A lower score in this area is better.

A10 performance can be impacted by court proceedings that are extended, and also by having children in the cohort who are deemed more difficult to place .

A2 performance can be impacted on having children who are deemed difficult to place where the search for the right adoptive family can take some time.

Lincolnshire has performed well against the national average in this year and continues to strive for timely outcomes for every child.

There continues to be a small cohort of children within Lincolnshire whose timescales will fall out of the target, and this is due to them being difficult to place or applications from parents for leave of the court to appeal Placement Orders which the authority has no control over.

This year has seen an increased number of children with a plan of adoption, from 56 to 60, in line with the increased numbers of children in care. The trend for high numbers of children placed on Special Guardianship Orders has continued with higher number of SGOs granted this year 95 compared to 69 last year where is that data from? The number of adoption orders granted this year has gone up again to 46 from as compared with 31 last year, showing an improvement in performance.

Safeguarding:

Signs of Safety is a strengths based and safety orientated approach that continues to be incorporated into the adoption process as a model for assessing matches, creating adoptive placements, assessing risks or worries of applicants and in direct work with children whilst preparing them for placement. Staff members in the team continue to utilise the use of words and pictures in direct work with children assisting them in understanding the reasons they are in care and were not safe in their birth families.

The Supervising Social Workers in the team have all completed their adult attachment style training and are using this alongside 'mapping' as a way of analysing their initial assessments of adopters, to ensure that the service is assessing and approving adopters who will be able to manage the needs of the children who require adoptive placements. The team are also trained in restorative practice.

Aspiration and Well-being:

There has been an increase in the number of families who have been provided with therapeutic support via the Adoption Support Fund. Local authorities and RAA's can apply for therapeutic funding for eligible adoptive and Special Guardianship Families. This is a much

needed resource that continues to help families to meet the needs of children who have experienced trauma and adverse childhood experiences.

Over the course of 2022/23 there have been 412 applications for 272 children to the Adoption Support Fund to provide therapeutic input for adopted children and those who have Special Guardianship Orders. This is a significant increase from the 322 applications the year previously. The Adoption Support Fund applications in this year have amounted to £1,153,986.63.

Learning and achievement:

The Post Adoption Support team and the Children's team maintain strong links with the Virtual School and ensures that adopted children in schools receive the full benefit from initiatives including the Pupil Premium. The value and importance of children achieving and attaining threads throughout the children in care community and is an important aspect covered in the assessment and placement of children in their new families.

Best use of Resources:

The Post Adoption Support team has been involved in the development of a range of services for Special Guardian support, to enable them to have access post order assessment, therapies and therapeutic parenting support. Kinship Compass an independent online information, advice and support hub for kinship carers are providing webinars and support groups. Special Guardians are granted access to the e-Learning currently available for foster carers. Applications to the Adoption Support Fund are managed through the adoption service.

Membership with the Family Adoption Links partnership has brought about some efficiencies in terms of sharing the adoption training, resulting in less spent on venues and staff time delivering the training with more focus on other practice matters.

Having a wider pool of adopters for Lincolnshire children means that there is more placement choice for children and for adoptive parents. The aim is that children should have reduced waiting times to be adopted with increased families to choose from. The region has experienced successes in matching children deemed harder to place when they have attended a small and friendly "getting to know you event"

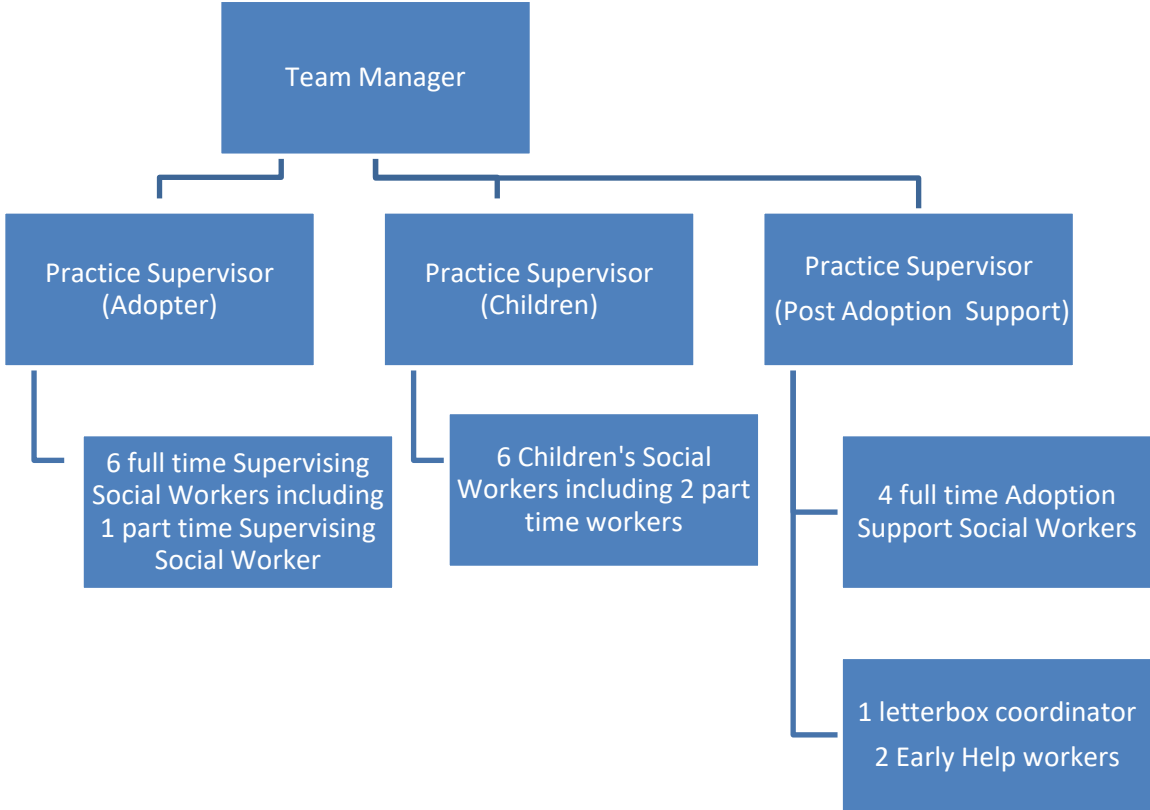
Sharing knowledge and expertise in sharing training courses for adopters ensures there is a consistent high quality. The staff also are able network and share best practice which only enhances the adopter's journey.

Service Role and Structure:

The core duties of the Adoption Service remain broadly unchanged. The Adoption Service continues to provide services to children, adopters and birth family members as required by the National Adoption Minimum Standards 2014 as issued by the Secretary of State under Sections 23 and 49 of the [Care Standards Act 2000](#), Adoption and Children Act 2002, the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013, the Adoption Support Services Regulations (2005) and the Adoption Statutory Guidance July 2014, the Children Act 1989 and 2004 and the Children and Families Act 2014.

The Adoption Team remains a stand-alone countywide service with office bases at Lincoln, Sleaford, and Louth. This year all staff have been working on a hybrid model with access to the office within the smarter working policy which is anticipated to become business as usual in due course. All staff continue to be employed by Lincolnshire, but the adopter’s team and the adoption support team are now also part of the FAL Regional partnership.

TEAM STRUCTURE CHART:



The adoption service is staffed by a team manager, three practice supervisors, six children’s adoption Social Workers and six supervising Social Workers.

The Post Adoption Support Team has four full-time social workers two Early help workers and a Children and Families Officer who manages the letterbox scheme.

The letterbox scheme ensures that there is a link between an adopted children and other members of their birth family as the child grows with the birth family, adoptive parents and the child all being able to take part in a letterbox exchange, usually twice a year.

The Post Adoption Support team are responsible for the support of children and their families after an Adoption order or Special Guardianship order has been made. Their role involves the assessment and support for these families as well as managing the applications to the ASF, as well as providing therapy directly to families.

The Adoption Support Social Workers complete work directly with families who have adopted and who are struggling to manage issues specifically linked to their adoption. When families come to adoption support this is often due to issues such as issues with early trauma, educational issues, presentations with emotional difficulties often associated with attachment difficulties.

In addition, the adoption support team organise groups and activities to support adopters and adopted children. The children and family officer co-ordinates the indirect family time arrangements for adopted children and birth relatives together with the completion of life story work for the preparation of children placed for adoption.

The Children’s Adoption Social Workers progress children’s plans for adoption, by completing child permanence reports, family finding for children, matching and the planning and supervision of introductions, and supporting children in placements until their adoption order is granted. They also complete court reports for the placement order and the final adoption order.

The Supervising Social Workers recruit and assess prospective adopters, as well as completing step - parent adoption assessments. Supervising Social Workers also deliver 6 prepare to adopt training courses for prospective adopters. The workers are also responsible for running 4 courses about talking about adoption and 4 face to face friends and family training days throughout the year. Their role also involves the matching of adopters with children and supporting adoptive placements through to an adoption order being made.

Adoption Performance:

During April 2022 to March 2023 60 children had an agency decision of adoption, of which 46 went onto being subject to a Placement Order. For the children where a Placement Order was not made, the court determined a different plan, which comprised of reunification with parents or the making of an alternative order such as a Special Guardianship Order.

Of the 60 children there were the following groups of siblings:

- 2 groups of 3 children
- 11 groups of 2 children
- 32 single children.

This is a higher number of sibling groups as compared to last year, but also an increased number of single placements. There continued to be an increase in kinship placements and Special Guardianship Orders throughout the 2022/23 performance year, and the numbers of SGO orders made increased to 95, a significant increase of 26 from the previous year.

Age ranges of children with an Agency decision of adoption 2022/2023:

- 0 - 5 years = 59 [60]
- 6 -10 years = 1 [0]
- 10 plus = 0 [0]

(Previous year's performance in brackets)

The predominant ethnicity of the children with a best interest plan remains white British although there were 7 children of other white heritage, an increase of 5 on the previous year. There were also 4 children of mixed or multiple ethnic groups.

All the children this year were aged 6 and under. There was only one child aged 6. This child was part of a sibling group with a younger sibling. Therefore, the target of the service's recruitment strategy continues to be targeting adopters willing to consider sibling groups and older children.

Profile of children placed for adoption:

With regard to placements made this year, 41 were placed (which is a different performance measure to the number of children adopted in the year). This is 5 more than in the previous year. Of these, 25 were singleton placements, a decrease of 7 children. 16 children were placed in 8 sibling groups of 2, which is double from the year before.

23 of the children were placed before they were 2 years old, with 15 children placed between the age of 2 and five years and 3 children aged over 5. There were no children aged over 5 placed for adoption last year, so this is an increase.

There were 25 boys placed and 16 girls, continuing a trend of having more boys than girls with a plan of adoption.

Overall, there were double the number of sibling groups placed together than in the previous year and the cohort of children were slightly older than in previous years.

Children Awaiting Placement at the close of 2022/2023:

Despite best practice and great effort there are a small number of children each year that despite best efforts, a plan of adoption cannot be achieved within reasonable timescales. During the year there were 11 children where the plan changed away from one of adoption.

In these cases, an application is made to revoke the Placement Order. Not being able to achieve adoption is usually due to the complex needs of the child and no regional or nationwide match with adopters. Older children and sibling groups tend to wait longer for a placement. Children with complex health and developmental needs may also not achieve a plan of adoption. The decision to revoke a placement order is a serious one and involves all professionals and the court process.

There were then 13 children with Placement Orders and no placement, a decrease from 28 from the last year.

In addition, there were 3 children in the process of being adopted by their foster carers, a decrease of 7 from the previous year.

There were two relinquished children, an increase of one from the previous year.

The rest of the cohort are either awaiting a Placement Order being made or in active family finding for those in the harder to place categories.

From this cohort there were 6 children whose plans were delayed due to complex care proceedings and subsequent delay.

Adopters approved as suitable to adopt during 2022/2023:

A total of 30 adoptive parents were approved to adopt during 2022/2023, an increase of 3 from the previous year. 8 of these were also dual approved for Foster to Adopt; a slight increase of 2 from the previous year. No adopters were approved for inter-country adoption.

The trend continues to be that there are more adoptive parents than children waiting for a placement within the county. As there have been delays in children's court proceedings which are beginning to reduce, the service has always had approved adopters waiting to ensure choice when making matches.

On the 31st March 2023 there were 9 adopters approved and waiting; two of which were being considered for possible links. In addition, there were 2 foster to adopt families fostering children with a view to adoption.

	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2016/17	2015/16
Total Adopters approved	30	27	25	28	43	22	32
Of which Foster-to-Adopt	8	6	8	7	15	14	12
Foster-to-Adopt New Applications	6	5	8	6	10	5	12
Foster-to-Adopt Subsequent Applications	2	1	0	1	4	9	5

	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2016/17	2015/16
Approved for one child	23	16	19	18	37	13	20
Approved for two children	7	11	6	10	6	9	11
Approved for three children	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2016/17	2015/16
White	25	26	22	25	40	21	29
Asian/Asian British	0	1	1	0	1	1	2
Other white background	2	0	2	1	1	0	1
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	2	0	0	0	1		

Other ethnic group	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
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Adoption Orders made 2022/2023:

There were 38 adoptive Lincolnshire approved adopters who successfully adopted children in this year. An additional 4 families approved by other agencies adopted Lincolnshire children. In total 46 children were adopted in this year.

From this cohort there were 28 adoptive families who identified as heterosexual, 6 adoptions by male same sex couples and 4 female same sex couples.

34 of the families were in a marriage or partnership and there were 4 single applicants in this year.

In order to reflect the government's aspiration to encourage foster carers who then go on to adopt, the Council supported five fostering families with children in placement to apply directly to the courts for an Adoption Order.

It is noted that there has been a reduction in the numbers of adoptive families wanting to provide families for sibling groups, and this may be due to the uncertainties following Covid. The service will continue to maximise our capacity to recruit for larger sibling groups, through a mixture of targeted recruitment and the flexible use of support packages for families seeking to adopt three or more children.

Marketing and Branding:

The RAA partnership has its own marketing officer who coordinates and leads on all marketing activity. Marketing highlights for 2022/2023 are as follows:

High performing website:

The Family Adoption Links website empowers potential adopters to self-serve with information on the children we are family finding for, the ability to book on to an information event, watch the You Can Adopt video, download a You Can Adopt information guide or speak to a member of staff.

In addition, the site is a key pillar in our post adoption support offer. Adopters can book training, watch online videos, access the Adopter Resource Hub (a collaborative piece of work between FAL and the Adopter Consultation Hub) and ask questions/queries and seek advice.

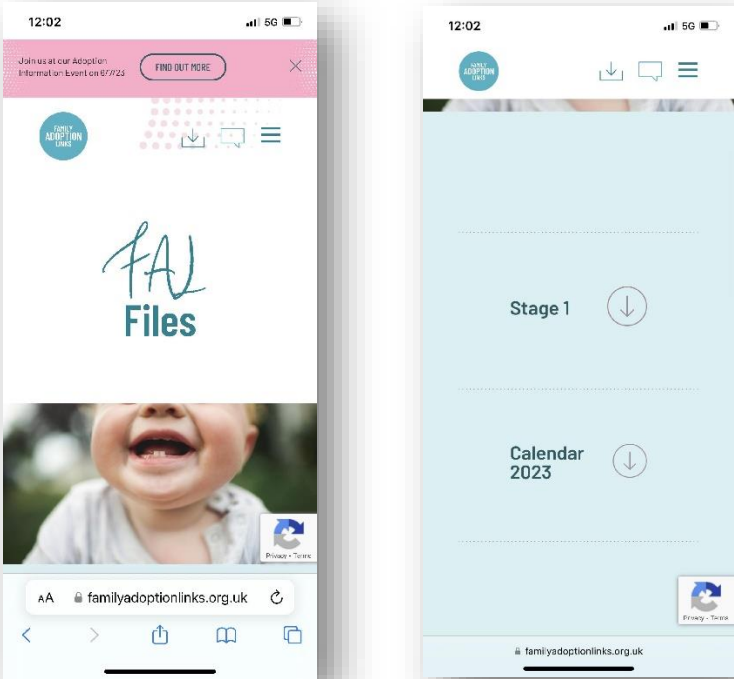
The highest performing area of the site continues to be 'The children we are family finding for' with over 18,000 page views in the last 12 months.

New development - Staff Intranet:

The partnership has been working hard to align the practices and paperwork of Stage 1 of the application process. The new documents are now available via the new staff Intranet - FAL

Files. This enables all paperwork to be branded, centrally approved, consistent and if necessary, changed without delay. The intranet also hosts the Family Adoption Links calendar, an interactive pdf where you can not only see all of our events but also book on to them.

The group now are working hard to re-brand and align the Stage 2 resources.



Training:

The training offer continues to be an integral part of what the adoption service regionally offer. Investing in and hosting training by using the Eventbrite platform has encouraged. 621 training places being booked since its conception in July 2022.

From feedback gained from the You Can Adopt training, 100% of guests found it easy to both find and book on to these events and there have been many comments about what a seamless, branded and professional experience it offers.

Internally, this platform has saved Social Worker time freeing the practitioners to concentrate on the delivery of the courses.

The service has also benefitted from reduced no-shows thanks to the automatic reminders that are in place and feedback from each course has been gained centrally enabling us to refine and improve each course through our training workgroup.

Family Finding Events:

The 'Getting to know you' event.

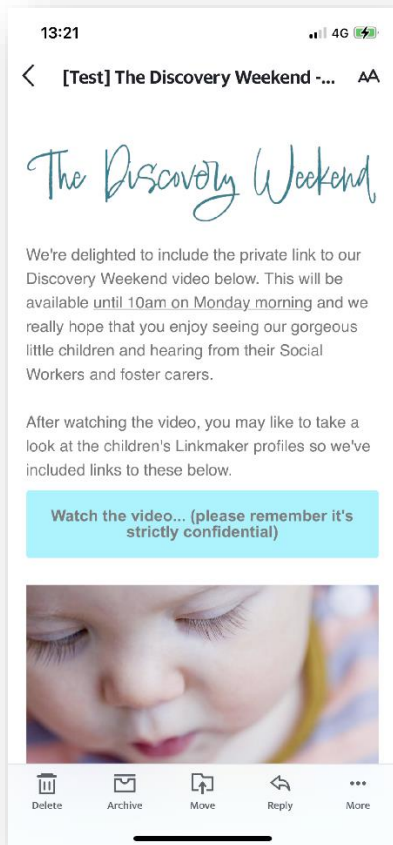
The partnership hosted 2 'Getting to know you' events to enable waiting children and adopters to meet each other in a relaxed and party like environment. The objectives of the events were to stretch adopter thinking by giving them the opportunity to get to know children that they may otherwise have not considered.

The events were attended by 26 adopter households and 18 sets of children resulting in 5 adoptions and 4 sets of children having a link pursued. The cost per child was £89 vs a cost per child of £600 per child for a Coram BAAF event. All of the children who attended were deemed to be in the harder to place category and had waited a significant time for a match. Adopters who attended the event were able to widen their matching criteria and spend time with children, resulting in matches that would otherwise not have happened.



The Discovery Event:

For those adopters who were unable to attend the 'Getting to know you' event we created the innovative 'Discovery Event' – a confidential video profiling event. This was sent using a private link and available for 48 hours only, the video attracted 141 views and saw enquiries increase 400% on Link Maker during the weekend of the event.



Thrive Adoption Support Newsletter:

The quarterly Adoption Support newsletter 'Thrive' is sent to over 1,000 adopters offering them an invaluable source of information, advice and support. Content is discussed and created by representatives from across the partnership and performance rates are closely monitored to ensure that we are delivering articles that adopters want to read.

Thrive

Adoption Support Newsletter



Happy New Year from everyone at Family Adoption Links,

We're feeling inspired for 2023 and are looking forward to providing you

Recruitment Statistics:

From 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023:

- 119 Initial Expression of Interest forms (IEIs) were received through the recruitment desk.
- There is a similar number to last year’s figures, but the service has still had adopters awaiting placement throughout the year, so sufficiency has not been an issue. Lincolnshire has continued to have a steady rate of enquiries whereas our regional partners have struggled to retain their numbers.

Financial Year	Number of IEIs received
2022 - 2023	119
2021 - 2023	115
2020 - 2021	208
2019 - 2020	186
2018 - 2019	198

Adoption Panel Activity for 1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023:

The Adoption National Minimum Standards 2014 standard 17.2 provides a requirement for:

“Adoption Panels to provide quality assurance feedback to the agency every six months on the quality of reports being presented to the Panel. This includes whether the requirements of the Restrictions on the Preparation of Adoption Reports Regulations 2005 have been met, and whether there is a thorough, rigorous, consistent, and fair approach across the service in the assessment of whether a child should be placed for adoption, the suitability of prospective adopters and the proposed placement.”

There is excellent communication between the panel chair, the panel advisor and the adoption team, and they have regular meetings where feedback is given, and any practice issues raised. This helps to maintain standards of practice and development of the service.

Children’s Plans for Adoption:

As part of the Quality Assurance process for children to be considered for Adoption, these reports have been scrutinized in advance by the Panel Advisor along with Team Managers from Fostering, Adoption, FAST, Children in Care and the Independent Reviewing Service.

The Quality Assurance meeting is held each week and cases are booked in consultation with Legal Services and the Adoption Team in advance to ensure the timescales in relation to care proceedings are met. Bookings are reviewed on a monthly basis within the legal permanence meeting which allows for a rigorous cross-agency check to ensure that legal timescales are met, and the work is of a high enough standard and that the child’s wishes and views are recorded.

When compiling these reports the current foster carers provide a profile for the child, which is circulated. The views of parents and birth family are detailed within these reports. If there

are no views, then the advisor will request that the facts and reasons why there are no views from the parents are recorded.

Written legal advice is provided independent of the case holder and ensures that any matters concerning Re B-S case law (Children) 2013 are well evidenced for the Agency Decision Maker and that the plans are robust and there are no legal issues which may prevent the plans from being considered.

The Quality Assurance meeting collectively scrutinises each report to ensure that the Welfare Checklist, Children Act 1989 has been addressed and that, if any expert reports have been requested in care proceedings, these are available. This is particularly important to ensure there is a balanced approach and that key points raised have been considered fully within the child's permanence report.

A summary of the assessments is included in the child permanence report and copies of those expert reports are available to the Agency Decision Maker in good time to be read.

The Panel Advisor liaises with the agency to provide any actions and feedback from this forum; this may be addressed with the Adoption Service, FAST Teams, Independent Reviewing Service and Legal Services.

The Agency Decision Maker considers the following in making every decision.

“the relationship which the child has with relatives and with any other person in relation to whom the court or agency considers the relationship to be relevant, including:

- (i) the likelihood of any such relationship continuing and the value to the child of its doing so, (ii) the ability and willingness of any of the child's relatives, or of any such person, to provide the child with a secure environment in which the child can develop, and otherwise to meet the child's need and
- (ii) (iii) the wishes and feelings of any of the child's relatives, or of any such person, regarding the child, to ensure that any recommendations made have taken account of these relationships.”

Analysis:

Child permanence reports detail the child's history well and are written in a style which is easy to read and make sense of their life to date. There is evidence that consideration is given to how the views of children who are nonverbal can still be represented in the reports.

The wishes and views of birth parents can be difficult for the workers to report on due to the family disengaging with the workers or disagreeing with the recommendations. Workers continue to build upon and strengthen restorative/relationship-based practice to engage with birth family to elicit their views and contributions where possible.

The reports addressing a child's plan of adoption are written to a high standard and they utilise the Signs of Safety tools in their analysis. The reports detail the child's history well and are easily read and understood. The report details the challenges that a child may have faced in their early life including matters which detail the harm which was attributed to the care given to them by their birth family. The reports provide a clear rationale for decision making.

The reports consider fully the lifelong impact of adoption and are mindful in addressing matters around family time post adoption both with birth parents but all those who are important to the child including siblings whose plans may not be that of adoption. There is evidence of consideration of ongoing direct sibling relationships where appropriate.

The reports also provide significant insight into the functioning and experiences of the birth family and extended family members; this allows for a fuller understanding of who was considered and an explanation as to why they could not offer care to a particular child.

This is key important information for prospective adopters and in due course the child themselves who may come to view these reports at a later stage.

Between April 2022 and March 2023, there have been 60 children who have had a decision to support a plan for Adoption made by the Agency Decision Maker. This is an increase of 6 from the previous year and is broken down as follows:

	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15
Boys approved for adoption	34	32	24	29	24	35	17	12
Girls approved for adoption	26	22	26	15	27	20	6	8
Total children approved for adoption	60	54	49	44	51	55	23	20
Single children approved	32	33	37	31	38	41	15	16
Children in sibling groups of two	22 (11)	2 [4]	6 [12]	5 [10]	5 [10]	4 [8]	2 [4]	2 [4]
Children in sibling groups of three	6 (2)	2 [6]	0	1 [3]	1 [3]	2 [6]	0	0
Children in sibling groups of four	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 [4]	0
White British children	50	46	48	42	45	52	22	19
Other white background (European)	5	3	0	1	2	1	1	1
Other	5	5	1	2	4	2	0	0
Age Range 0 - 2	44	40	40	36	39	32	15	11
Age Range 3 - 5	13	16	8	8	8	15	6	8
Age Range 6 - 8	3	0	1	0	3	6	2	1
Age Range 9 -11	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Age Range 11+	0	0	0	0	1			
% Meeting the National Minimum Standard 17.6	100%	96%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Between April 2022 and March 2023, the following children have been placed for Adoption.

National Minimum Standard 17.7

The Adoption Panel makes a considered recommendation on the proposed placement of a child with adopters within 6 months of the Adoption Agency Decision Maker deciding the child be placed for adoption.

The children who were placed outside of the 6 month timescale are likely to fall into the harder to place category, such as older children, sibling groups and children with complex health and developmental needs. There will also be a number of children who were delayed by appeals being made by parents wishing to oppose the making of the Placement Order.

	2022/23	2021/22	2020/2021	2019/20	2018/19	2016/17	2015/14
Total Children	41	37	49	44	51	55	23
Linked with adopters in timescale NMS 17.7	22	20	11	18	19	23	17
Linked with adopters outside timescale NMS 17.7	19	6	0	10	11	3	1
Awaiting link	13	10	38	6	21	29	1
Awaiting link – no placement order		10		6			
Returned to family		1	0	1	0	0	4
Change of care plan	3	2	0	2			
Adopted via Direct Application	3			1			
% meeting the National Minimum Standard 17.7	53.6%	78%	100%	78%	78.5%	94.5%	95%

Suitability of Prospective Adopters:

There have been twenty-two Adoption/Permanence Panels in this period. In that time the following applicants have been approved.

	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15
Total Adopters approved	30	27	25	28	43	22	32	24
Of which Foster-to-Adopt	8	6	8	7	15	14	12	0
Foster-to-Adopt New Applications	6	5	8	6	10	5	12	6
Foster-to-Adopt Subsequent Applications	2	1	0	1	4	9	5	0

	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15
Approved for one child	23	16	19	18	37	13	20	14
Approved for two children	7	11	6	10	6	9	11	9
Approved for three children	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1

	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2016/17	2015/16
White	25	26	22	25	40	21	29
Asian/Asian British	0	1	1	0	1	1	2
Other white background	2	0	2	1	1	0	1
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	2	0	0	0	1		
Other ethnic group	1	0	0	0	0	0	0

% reports meeting the National Minimum Standard 10.6 timescale 88%:

These reports have all been prepared by social workers who meet the requirements of the Restrictions on the Preparation of Adoption Reports Regulations 2005.

Panel Administration requests the papers are available fourteen days ahead of the Panel date to allow the quality assurance process to take place. Reports are passed to the panel advisor who checks that the applicant's statutory checks have been completed and that health checks as well as health and safety checklists have been completed. Alongside this the advisor will ensure that the assessment is completed and that it covers aspects of the couple's or individual's strengths as adopters and their ability to provide safe care to a child.

The report must ensure that the couple's or individual's childcare experience, background history and life story, including education, is detailed as well as their support network and what attitude they have regarding contact arrangements for the future. The couple's or individual's financial details should be contained in the report.

The panel advisor reports that the quality of Prospective Adopters Reports (PAR) is very good and Adult Style Attachment interviews are being used as well as evidence from referees to appropriately explore skills and strengths.

On occasion the Panel Advisor has had consultation with the Adoption Team in respect of specific cases prior to formal consideration by Panel however this is rare. There has been one occasion whereby a brief prospective adopter's report under Adoption Agencies Regulation (AAR) 30(4) was presented to Panel for consideration of their suitability to adopt.

If there is any third-party information or clarification of issues sought by panel the workers will be asked to join Panel ahead of the applicants.

A further quality assurance check has been agreed when Lincolnshire are considering a link with out of county adopters. These PARs will be checked by both the Practice Supervisor in Lincolnshire and the Panel Advisor to ensure they comply with the standards in Lincolnshire.

Analysis:

There is evidence within the minutes of Panel that detail the panel's key consideration of applicants. The current central list provides the Council with panel members who have the experience and understanding of the adoption process to be able to consider the assessment.

There has been further development in using the referees as a positive source of evidence for the assessment with workers using the referee interview to confirm the views of the workers or in some cases to appropriately challenge the prospective adopter's views.

The Prospective Adopter Reports (PAR) continue to be of a high standard with only single numbers where further information has been needed to achieve the standard.

These reports have all been prepared or been supervised by Social Workers who meet the requirements of the restrictions on the preparation of Adoption Reports Regulations 2005.

Panel administration requests the papers are available fourteen days ahead of the Panel date to allow the quality assurance process to take place. Reports are passed to the Advisor who checks that the applicant's statutory checks are up-to-date and that health checks as well as health and safety checklists have been completed and that a comprehensive and detailed family time plan is included within the reports.

The panel advisor will request any update of reports, medicals and support plans be prepared ahead of panel to be circulated to panel members ahead of the deadline.

Following the Somerset ruling, a full audit of all cases was held which confirmed that an appropriate adoption medical was completed for all children with a care plan of adoption.

The advisor quality assures all the reports to ensure that a full assessment is provided with a clear analysis as to why this family has been suggested as the best match for the child and how they will best meet the child's needs.

Further work continues to be supported by staff on developing a more thorough narrative by adopters on why they wish to adopt a particular child. This further identifies any potential support needs between the child and the potential adopters. The Panel Members will also consider the relative strengths of each match and any areas where they may require further clarity.

The quality of these reports has been good with positive matches for sibling groups and single children. Reports have detailed the needs of children and how the prospective adopters will meet these needs.

Panel minutes show the various matches of children to couples and single carers and confirm that questioning has been relevant and focussed upon the specific task i.e., the match with the adopters to ensure that the needs of a child can be met in the suggested placement.

The positive impact of the Regional Adoption Agency can be seen in panel with the placement of children with approved adopters in the region and the Panel Advisor’s attendance at regional forums.

Post Adoption Support:

The period covered by this report has seen further increases in the range of adoption support services which are provided within the framework set out within the Adoption Agency Regulations 2005, in line with a further increase in requests for adoption support.

Most of the support is now provided through the Adoption Support Fund, the service is provided on a tiered basis dependent on assessed need.

During 2022/2023 adoption staff have continued to use Theraplay theory and methods, so that they can support adoptive families with children newly in placement to use therapeutic parenting models to enhance the building of positive attachments in the early stages of placement.

There are six workers within the Post Adoption Support Team who are trained in Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP), which assists their work with adoptive families, and they have a range of other therapies they are able to deliver including Theraplay, therapeutic Life Story work, Psychotherapy and yoga therapy thus, creating a flexible and sustainable adoption service.

The current Post Adoption offer:

Tier 1	Support to adopters includes family time (contact) co-ordination, helpline advice, information via the Lincolnshire adoption website. Birth records counselling for adults. Also included in this tier is counselling for birth relatives whose children have been adopted as well as seminars for grandparents of adopters.
Tier 2	All of tier 1 and in addition adoption support groups/activities for adopters and for children affected by adoption. These include a programme of activities which bring adoptive children together to share experiences of adoption as part of leisure activities. Access to training events and newsletters to share resources

Tier 3	Previous tier support plus specific adoption support includes assessment of need, individual adoption support packages, that include a range of diverse therapeutic approaches provided by our in-house therapist or our network of private providers. Since the launch of the Adoption Support Fund, therapeutic interventions can be claimed from the central fund to ensure that adoptive families have access to therapeutic support. Support is provided to children until the age of 21, or 25 if that child has an Education Health Care Plan
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Letterbox activity

As of 31st March 2023, there were 642 children registered for letterbox.

For the twelve-month period there were 43 new children added and 52 children removed as they turned 18.

There are 12 letterbox arrangements for families who hold Special Guardianship Orders and 2 where children are not adopted but letterbox was felt appropriate.

Direct Family Time:

- 15 children have some form of direct family time with one or both birth parents. This is an increase of four from last year.
- 14 children have some form of direct contact with siblings in foster care or not adopted, an increase of 5.
- 8 have some form of direct contact with grandparents, which is double the number for last year.

This is a positive change evidencing that more adoptive parents are open to ongoing direct contact with family members.

Adoption Support Groups:

There are locally held evening support groups for adopters to attend. These are run by adopters and funded by the adoption service. Groups meet in the Lincoln, Louth and Bourne areas. There is also a flourishing stay and play group in the Lincoln area, for children to play and for adopters to meet and offer support to each other. The groups also organise fun Family days out for all adoptive families throughout the year. Their social worker will assist them to join a local support group and discuss with the adopter's issues such as information sharing within the group. The adoption service will provide adopters with access to the Family Adoption Links website which provides links to useful information relating to all aspects of adoption and signposting to services and resources. In addition, in 2014 the service introduced a quarterly newsletter for adopters, which is sent to all current and past adopters with children under 21.

In addition to the support groups, we have an adopter hub and a children's hub called Collabor8. Both groups meet bi-monthly to ensure that their views are gathered and that they contribute to service delivery and shaping services going forward.

Activity days:

During the year the adoption support team have funded and supported a number of activities for adopted children and young people. These activities allow children who share similar backgrounds and experience to come together to learn new skills and to make new friendships as well as providing a break to adoptive parents during school holidays.

Activities have included:

Splash day: a fun day on the water where children have time to play and work together as a team

Create your own music workshop: group to explore acoustic and digital music with other adopted children.

Children's Woodland Adventure: a range of activities to learn new skills and work in a team all set in the woodland environment.

Podcast pro: exploring how to produce a podcast.

Service planning:

The development goals for the coming 12-month period continue to be aligned to the five County Council principles set out at the beginning of the report and the objectives for children which are set out below.

Children and young people are healthy and safe:

Over the last year and moving forward the adoption service are committed to develop the Signs of Safety model to all aspects of our work. There has been increased use of restorative practice in the adoption process. This is used as the framework for preparing children for placement, and also in the work that they do with birth parents and extended family members and also in our work with the adoptive families. The past year has evidenced the positive impact of this approach, and we manage to have good working relationships with birth parents under what can be difficult circumstances.

Over the next year the service wish to continue to make progress on improving adoption scorecard performance against key threshold measures to minimise delay for children requiring adoption placements across the region. To do this the service will ensure that placements are timely either through placing children as soon as they are subject to a Placement Order or through placement for Foster to Adopt where possible, making best use of in-house, regional, and national family finding.

To continue to review and improve the range of training available to adopters; to provide them with therapeutic parenting skills and a range of post adoption training accessed through the regional hub.

Children develop full potential in early years and are ready for school:

- Over the last year we have extended the Adoption Support Service to include intensive support at the early stage in placements for sibling groups, to promote therapeutic parenting, and attachment work early in the placement, so that children are 'ready for school. We wish to continue building on this service and strengthen links with nurseries and schools to share this approach.
- Continue to make use of the Caring 2 Learn approach with adopters.
- To build on the excellent year that our support groups have had, especially the stay and play and adoption activities we offer to children and their families.
- To continue making good use of nursery provision for adopted children, ensuring that every child accesses the funded provision to which they are entitled.

Learn and achieve:

- To continue to maximise the benefits to adoptive and Special Guardian families in Lincolnshire arising from the Adoption Support Fund, and to be fully involved in shaping services going forward.
- To continue to make best use of the pupil premium to support adopted children in school.
- To continue and build our creative and innovative approach in terms of developing children's activities to ensure that adopted children have the opportunity to spend time with other children who share the same background and experiences.

Children and young people are ready for adult life:

- To continue to work on building links with the leaving care service to ensure smooth transitions for adopted young people and those cared for under Special Guardianship arrangements into independent living.
- To continue to provide activities for adopted children which build their skills, recognise their achievements, and build their confidence.

- To increase our learning from the experiences of children through the Collabor8e young person's group, helping to shape our support as children get older and prepare for independence.
- Support adopted young people who are in full time further education.

Best use of Resources:

- Continue our work in exploring options to broaden Adoption Support Model to other permanence options such as Special Guardianship Orders. To shape services nationally though being part of the pathfinder programme.
- Through the regional lead, to continue our important role with the Family Adoption Links region to improve choice and outcomes for children and adoptive families.

National Changes:

There are exciting national changes to the service in the near future with the implementation of the Independent Children's Social Care review, whose seven key themes are Support, Strengthening families, Safety, Care, Delivery, Sustainability and Accountability. The key areas of the review expected to impact on the Adoption team will be around Kinship and Foster to Adopt.

The current in-house review of the Special Guardianship offer is well underway, and Lincolnshire is also part of development in this area in the East Midlands region.

It has recently been announced that Lincolnshire has been chosen by the Department of Education as one of the three national Families First for Children Pathfinders where it is expected that Kinship and Special Guardianship will have a large focus. Further resources for the team have been agreed for the team under the Pathfinders project, and this is an exciting opportunity for the Local Authority and for the adoption team.

There will also be ongoing Family Adoption Links development work that will impact on the team as we continue to align practice and policies across the region in the areas of family finding, matching, recruitment activity, foster to adopt and Post Adoption support.

Summary:

Lincolnshire are a high performing and positive adoption service who have close working relationships with our colleagues across the Family Adoption Links region, and wider regional and national organisations.

The challenge for 2022/2023 was to maintain services post covid to ensure that children were still placed in adoptive placements in a timely way and at the earliest possible opportunity, whilst minimising risk and maintaining high levels of performance against government targets.

There have been issues relating to the length of court process, which has created delay for some children, and has made the government timescales more challenging to achieve. In general, despite these challenges, the service has been successful in attaining these goals and continues to show good levels of performance and excellent outcomes for children.

Throughout the year there have been approved adopters waiting for placement within Lincolnshire and the Family Adoption Links region, so there has been placement choice for many children. There has continued to be a small group of children who were difficult to place due to their age and complex health and developmental needs. The majority of these children have now been placed.

The regional work for all the teams has been significant and all the adoption leadership group have been engaged in the regional workstreams as the service work to develop an integrated regional service. This has focussed on developing the procedures which will be followed in family finding, agreeing a standardised model for recruitment and training, developing the adoption support offer and the processes required for the increased use of the adoption support fund. The regional partnership continues to be a main focus of the work of the team as regional working is developed, extended and reviewed.

Again, there has been significant increased demand and activity in Post Adoption and Special Guardianship services, and it has been challenging at times to meet this increase. The service has made significant progress in the management of the Adoption Support Fund to enable Lincolnshire families to benefit from a range of therapeutic services, but the need to complete assessments for the fund has also had an impact on the ability to deliver some of the other services which are needed.

Performance in 2022/2023 against the key threshold measures in the adoption scorecard has remained good both for the single year and for the three-year rolling average, despite the challenges the service has faced. The number of adoptions completed this year was higher than average, and timescales have been maintained. Some children with overly complex needs have taken longer to be adopted which does impact on the rolling average, however this is a positive outcome for the child.

Going forward the service will look to respond positively to the challenges presented through the cost-of-living crisis and the regionalisation agenda and the forthcoming national changes. It will strive to maintain its strong focus on delivering excellent outcomes for the children of Lincolnshire who have a plan for adoption.



Deborah Crawford
Head of Service, Fostering & Adoption

Sharon Clarke
Acting Team Manager Adoption



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

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	07 September 2023
Subject:	Fostering Annual Report 2022-2023

<p>Summary:</p> <p>This report presents the Fostering Annual Report for 2022-2023 as part of the monitoring of the Fostering Service required under the Fostering Service Regulations 2011 and the Fostering Minimum Standards 2011.</p>

<p>Actions Required:</p> <p>The Corporate Parenting Panel is invited to review and endorse the Fostering Annual Report for 2022-2023.</p>
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1. Background

Lincolnshire Fostering Service is a regulated service and subject to inspection under the Care Standards Act 2000. This report presents the Fostering Service Annual Report 2022-2023 to members of the Corporate Parenting Panel. The Annual Report sets out the activity and performance of the Fostering Service over the previous year 2022-2023.

2. Conclusion

Following consideration of the attached Annual Report, the Panel is requested to review and comment on the contents of the report and the work of the Fostering Service.

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Fostering Annual Report 2022-2023

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 Deborah Crawford, who can be contacted on Tel 01522 552781 or Deborah.crawford@lincolnshire.gov.uk.



Lincolnshire Fostering Service

Annual Report April 2022 - March
2023

Introduction:

Lincolnshire Fostering Service is a regulated service and subject to inspection under the Care Standards Act 2000. Fostering Services continue to be a much needed and increasingly complex service provision in relation to children and young people who need to be cared for by Lincolnshire County Council (Local Authority). It requires a diverse range of foster carers who are skilled and resourceful to provide stability, security, and a positive experience of family life. The service provides quarterly reports to the Directorate Leadership Team and the Executive.

During the last couple of years with the gradual recovery from the Covid 19 pandemic all areas of Children's Services have necessitated a creative approach to ensure that families and foster carers have been actively supported. This is from the point of Early Help which identifies the need for help for children and families as soon as difficulties start to emerge or are likely to emerge in the future, a strong multi- agency approach to those in need and in need of protection and for those within the care of Lincolnshire who are unable to live within their families.

At the end of March 2023, the number of children in care stood at a total of 723 this being a slight decrease from March 2022 figures which were reported at 735. The number of children in care following the pandemic remains high with the highest national figures recorded of 82,170 children (Children and Young People Now, published 17th November 2022). This figure is higher than any year since current reporting began in 1994, with numbers steadily increasing year on year since 2008.

Of our total 488 were placed in foster care; this comprises of 68% of the children in care population. Of these 45 are placed with independent fostering agencies. Given the events of the last two years this continues to be a huge testimony to the existing and new fostering families who open their homes to Lincolnshire children and do their best to provide local placements wherever possible.

Over the last three years the numbers of children in care have increased nationally and creative approaches to ensure that children can remain within their wider family or social network is an established practice. The figures reflect a continually high number of children placed within their own kinship networks, accounting for 24% (at the end of March 2023) of all foster placements which mirrors a continued commitment and drive to ensure that children who need to be cared for can feel loved and cared for by people with whom they already have a connection.

Supporting family and friends' carers alongside all other foster carers in the same way is a recognition of how Lincolnshire value and appreciates those carers that step forward and provide stability to the children. In anticipation of a forthcoming changes in relation to Kinship following the findings of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care published in May 2022, Lincolnshire have maintained their sharp focus on securing foster placements or longer term care arrangements with those best placed to care for children who can offer them stability, security and love.

Each and every decision for a child in care is subject to decision making by the Local Authority and sometimes the Court to ensure that the ratification of plans have the child's best interest's paramount and at the centre of the decision making process.

This year has seen a continued use of externally commissioned foster placements which at the end of the year has ended marginally lower than the previous year. This remains attributable owing to an overall number of carer households and the needs of the children being more difficult to match with existing carers and other children's placements.

The Fostering service is managed by the Head of Regulated Services, through two Team Managers who manage dedicated fostering teams from bases in the north (Lincoln and Louth) and the south (Sleaford). The service has 5 Practice Supervisors who manage day to day practice, and each has lead responsibility for an area of service development.

The lead areas are permanence, duty desk, foster carer recruitment, retention, training, support, and development plus kinship. The Caring2Learn initiative and ethos is business as usual and continues to have a positive impact for the service and carer community.

The development of the online community during the pandemic has continued and grown from strength to strength with continued high levels of interaction and support, higher levels of engagement in training and development and foster carer champions and others positively influencing all areas of fostering practice.

Numbers of Foster Carers:

As at the end of March 2023, there were 288 foster carer households currently registered, including 58 Connected Person households and 4 Foster to Adopt households.

Type	No. of households
Task Centred including Respite	141
Parent and Child/Task Centred	6
CWD Short Break Carers	1
Placement Plus	8
Permanence only	14
Permanence/Task Centred	52
Emergency	2
Remand	2
Family/Friend (Connected Person)	58
Foster to Adopt	4

During the period 1 April 2022 - 31 March 2023, 87 new fostering households were approved, including 50 connected persons and 7 Foster to Adopt. The 30 new mainstream households provided up to 52 new placements as follows:

Approved places	No. of households
1 child	12
2 children	13
3 children	5

During the period 1 April 2022 - 31 March 2023, 31 mainstream households ceased fostering, owing to the following reasons:

Reason	No. of households
Family circumstances changed	7
At carer's request (not health reasons)	12
Health reasons	1
Retired	6
Carers moved out of the area	1
Dissatisfaction with service	1
Carers no longer considered suitable	1
Child has residence /adoption order agreed	1
Transferred to IFA	1

In addition, 53 Connected Person households were de-registered. Of these, 35 had Special Guardianship Orders granted for the children in their care. Five had children turning 18 during the year (and of these four transferred to the Staying Put scheme).

Six households were deregistered following the children returning to the care of their parents, three following the children moving to mainstream foster care, and two following the children moving to independent living. In one case a Special Guardianship Order for the child was granted to another family member, and in another case the child was moved to an adoptive placement.

Six Foster to Adopt households were also de-registered following successful adoption links.

The recruitment of foster carers continues to be both a local and a national challenge. The Fostering Network, the UK's largest Fostering charity details within the State of the Nation report December 2021 that almost three quarters of the nation's children in care community reside with approximately 45,370 foster families across the country. (House of Commons Debate April 2022).

It is widely anticipated that owing to the pressures and demands within the fostering sector that further attention will be given to this national challenge in light of the sector seeing an increase in children coming into care and an anticipated decline in carer and placement availability going forward.

There continues to be an emphasis to secure more good foster carers that can be the difference in the life of a child/young person. Currently the national shortage stands an estimated 9,365 homes according to the latest available data. (State of Nation Report December 2021).

The local picture during this year reflects the larger scale challenges with the gap widening between the children in care number growth and the number of fostering families becoming approved. Despite Lincolnshire experiencing a growth in interest during 2020/2021 the figures this year have slowed with interest, but conversation rates have reflected growth.

During the year the service have witnessed a continued commitment from carers to provide new placements and offer short term breaks(respite) and buddy up to ensure that carers and their families receive that much needed break.

The fostering community have stepped forward at times of great difficulty to create capacity and have served to support one another in the good and the more challenging of times. This reflects a positive community and the continued efforts and enthusiasm within the service including the Caring2Learn initiative serves to reinforce the meaning and value of foster carer households.

The loss of existing carers continues to be of concern and reflects the demographics of the foster carer population. There is further evidence from foster carer feedback that the support from the fostering service and community the retention "offer" and the embedded ethos involving the Caring2Learn approach are key factors in households remaining caring for local children in Lincolnshire.

Role of Fostering Service:

Lincolnshire County Council's Fostering service provides a range of short term and permanent placements with foster carers who have a diverse range of knowledge, skills, and experience. Foster carers provide family-based services ranging from weekend short breaks/ respite to supporting birth parents and carers, preparing a child for a transition to adoption, or providing a longer-term placement that will see a child through to independence. There continues to be a high number of family members or friends who come forward for assessment prior to or during care proceedings.

The service continues to offer a small, trained group of foster carers to provide assessment placements to parents and children, usually babies. Our recruitment campaign includes strengthening this cohort. These placements focus on a parent's capacity to meet the needs and safeguard the infant, and the foster carers are vital in assisting and supporting, often young parents, to develop basic parenting skills.

Within the last couple of years, the service has seen a number of Court requested parent and child assessments and where possible these are sourced in house and local to the parent, their child and wider support network. In instances where matches are not forthcoming or limited availability then these are commissioned for a period of 12 weeks as directed within the live care proceedings.

Activity and Performance 2022-2023:



Foster Carer Recruitment:

Recruitment and retention remain a key priority for the fostering service, national trends and benchmarks for performance and data have helped the service understand its own strengths and plan for development through a joined-up approach and service strategy for growth.

Initial Expression of Interest (IEI)

Financial Year	Number of fostering IEIs received				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
2022/2023	65	61	52	49	227
2021/2022	87	75	78	82	322
2020 / 2021	80	103	74	83	340
2019 / 2020	46	66	55	72	239
2018 / 2019	52	52	53	76	233

- 102 home visits/initial calls were undertaken.
- 35 Registration of Interest forms (ROIs) were received.
- 30 households were newly approved to foster.

The sharp rise in enquiries seen the previous year and during the pandemic have now settled and the fostering service has now seen the number of enquiries return and remain at a pre pandemic level. A great amount of effort and resource has been invested by the dedicated recruitment team with ongoing support and commitment from the wider fostering service which it has felt has contributed towards the continued performance .

Other Local authorities and independent agencies have seen a significant decline in their pre pandemic enquiry rates according to the fostering networks published data (2022). The previous sharp rise in enquiries did not bring a rise in approvals of foster carers. This was a national trend.

The number of visits completed this year has fallen, although the conversion from initial enquiry to visit has increased by 5%. A continued improvement following the 11% progression the previous year. Most fostering service experiences their biggest rate of drop out at this stage. A key recommendation in the 2022 independent audit commissioned by the National Association of Fostering Providers was to request feedback from applicants that withdraw. This has been embedded into the process.

Unfortunately, the amount of people completing this has been very low and so recently the recruitment team have started to collect feedback to also learn from those that go on to apply, learning more about why people choose to go on to choose Lincolnshire as their fostering provider. The fostering Service will continue to look at ways to improve this area of recruitment through research and ongoing development.

The support to applicants during the assessment stage has been developed further, providing them access to the fostering support hub. This has encouraged those in the application stage to engage with the training offer earlier and start to build and establish a network within the community. Supporting the transition to fostering. Since implementing this a rise in the conversion to approval has been significant.

Virtual Information Events:

There have been 7 information events taken place virtually this year, these have taken place mostly in the evening time, day sessions were tried as an alternative although they were poorly attended in comparison. Most people that attend an event have already completed an IEL, all those applying are encouraged to attend an event as an initial introduction.

With regular appearances out in the community the service has determined at present that the virtual events continue to be a better use of resource, using the services marketing budget on a more specific and targeted approach to recruitment. This will remain under review.

The Fostering Service have made some changes to sessions using feedback and best practice recommendations. A member of the recruitment team leads the event with a Supervising Social Worker. Foster carers also support in the sessions, co-facilitating and answering queries. This really demonstrates the ethos and culture of welcoming foster carers as part of the wider fostering community.

Advertising:

Lincolnshire fostering service competes in a competitive market with both other local authorities and the independent fostering sector, their unique selling point remains their link and connections to local people. Communities feel a sense of local responsibility and Lincolnshire Fostering service is establishing itself and growing a brand as a member of that

community. Supporting local causes and getting involved in the things that local people care about.

Lincolnshire Business have also adopted a similar theme of making a commitment to its local community, the service has connected with over 50 companies that have agreed to support the fostering service, this has included offering discounts to the fostering community or helping to spread the word by sharing advertising posts.

Schools are a main part of the community and Lincolnshire Children's Services has been praised and commended for its strong relationships with education settings. The Fostering service has worked with the Virtual School to share resources and schools have helped share messages about fostering and shared information about short break/ respite fostering with their staff. The recruitment team have also attended school community events and the Virtual school events to help raise awareness around the events and activities that schools can do to support the service in the recruitment of foster carers.

Lincolnshire County Council use their social media pages to share adverts and posts about fostering, regular updates are also included on internal communications.

District councils East Lindsay, Boston Borough and South Holland agreed to be part of Lincolnshire County Councils, Fostering Friendly Employer Scheme at the beginning of the financial year, and initial connections were made. The recruitment team have established a strong connection with the digital team for all three district councils, which has allowed the service to use their resources:

- Internal communications among their employees.
- Internal articles for their intranets
- Blogs and articles on their main websites
- Use of bin lorries/sweepers to advertise the service. (Boston)
- Recurrent posts on their social media accounts

As well as schools and district councils, NHS buildings/staff, Libraries, Children's Centres, some LCC Buildings have been contacted and have agreed to display posters in their public areas. Moving forward the efforts with strategic partners are being facilitated by the safeguarding partnership in an effort to further engage agencies to engage in the broader corporate parenting agenda.

Lincs FM hosted one of the biggest marketing campaigns of the year. Three different adverts (based on general fostering, short breaks/respite and permanence) had been broadcasted up 12 times a week at their most popular airtime slots. This was also combined with interviews with a foster carer during Fostering Fortnight 2022, and Facebook paid advertisement throughout the year.

The service recognises and research strongly recommends that services use marketing material to dispel some of the myths around fostering, the Recruitment Officer ran a campaign throughout the year. "Myth busting Monday". A strategy to break common

misconceptions with graphics and videos that were posted every Monday, they reached on average of 250 people per post, these were posted on the service's social media accounts.

The service has committed to attended local events, staff took part in the Lincolnshire show, Lincoln Pride and ran in the Lincoln Santa Run. The service staff has also regularly made donations to the Lincolnshire foodbank along with various local causes that are shared and promoted by the service.

Lincolnshire Fostering service continues to use online options for adverts and marketing as an effective tool for reaching the public and has been the first organic result shown on the 2 main online searching platforms, Google, and Bing for the whole financial year. Some other agencies may appear on top, under the paid category.

Facebook remains a cost-effective tool for marketing and significant progress has been made in performance this year. The service started the financial year with 1221 Facebook followers and 79 Instagram followers. At the end of March 2023, the page had 1462 Facebook followers and 124 Instagram followers. An increase of 241 and 45 respectively. Although number of followers has increased, the pages reach has been significantly increased during the last financial year. The organic social media (Facebook) posts have been seen a total of 299,008 times throughout the year. While paid posts have been seen 298,548 times by over 263,346 people across the county.

This is an increase of the organic reach of 75.1% (since previous year) and an increase of the paid advertisement of 87.7% (since previous year). There has been no increase in spending during this time on this type of advertising, but all posts were analysed monthly to reach to inform reach and engagement depending on the post, day of the week or even time of publishing.

Permanence Campaign:

Despite children sometimes remaining with task centred foster carers permanently there continues to be a demand for the recruitment of new permanent foster carers. The permanence campaign ran for an extended period this year, with a dedicated advert being played on Lincs FM daily between November 22-March 23. Additional airtime was purchased during this time and an increase in enquiries since this advert went live for permanence has been recorded.

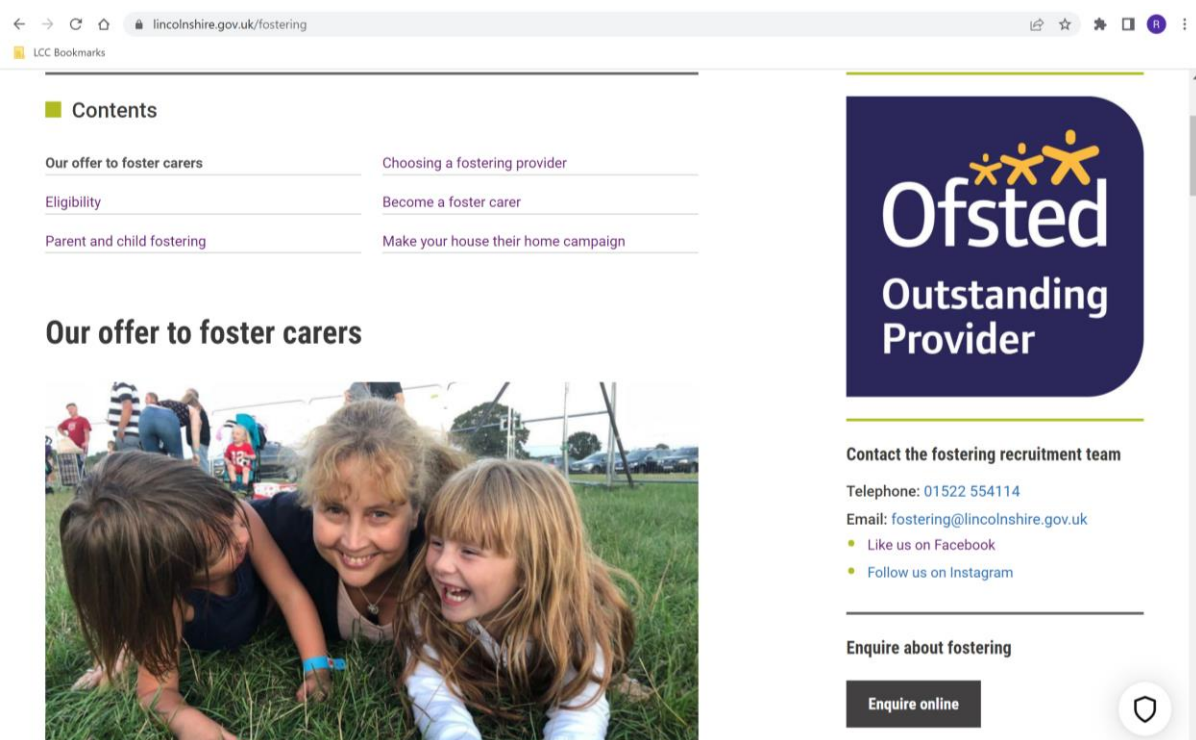
As part of the child centred recruitment strategy, anonymised profiles for children have been posted and shared from the Caring2Learn Facebook page, the main Fostering Facebook page and online hub forums. Profiles can be accessed anytime by fostering households through the foster carer's drive. This is a secure area where foster carers can access information and forms relating to the area of permanence, training, and all administrative matters. The profiles are also shared with those carers that are interested in offering this type of care, this also includes those that are in the application stage and have an allocated Social Worker.

Website:

The fostering website has been updated regularly, to ensure the information is current and up to date, the service continues to use images that will connect with local people.

Over 82% of enquires for fostering are still coming via the online platforms and all enquiries and application forms are now submitted electronically. QR codes were added this year to posters and flyers that are visible in public spaces and handed out at community events, this code directs people to the webpage.

Choosing a fostering provider has been developed to support carers with understanding the differences between the Local authority fostering and independent fostering agencies and things to consider when selecting a provider. Supporting local people to make informed decisions about their choice of foster provider is critical for the children and accountability of the public purse. Lincolnshire Fostering service encourage those applying to foster to research our service, research fostering materials, attend the information event and take up the opportunity to speak to one of our foster carers so they see and hear the full experience.



The screenshot shows the website lincolnshire.gov.uk/fostering. The page features a navigation menu with the following links:

- Our offer to foster carers
- Eligibility
- Parent and child fostering
- Choosing a fostering provider
- Become a foster carer
- Make your house their home campaign

The main content area is titled "Our offer to foster carers" and includes a photograph of a woman smiling with two children in a grassy field. To the right, there is a blue box with the Ofsted logo and the text "Ofsted Outstanding Provider". Below this, contact information for the fostering recruitment team is provided:

- Telephone: 01522 554114
- Email: fostering@lincolnshire.gov.uk
- Like us on Facebook
- Follow us on Instagram

At the bottom right, there is a button labeled "Enquire online" and a shield icon.

Foster Carer Retention:

The fostering Service lost 31 fostering households this year and it is why retention remains a priority. Maintaining those foster homes ensures the growth of the community and ability to meet the need of an increasing number of children but also provides us with the options for better matching between foster carer families and children's needs.

Finance remains a high priority for the service in terms of investment in fostering going forward and is something that remains at the core of the service strategy and review. The high rates of pay and recent increases or financial incentives to join independent fostering providers is creating a challenging marketplace for local authorities to compete within. The financial pressures nationally have also been felt locally.

The annual survey completed in December 2022 reported that 69% of foster carers participating in the survey felt the financial package needed to improve. The fostering service hope to increase allowances in April 2023 in an effort to respond to any increased national minimum allowances proposed by the government as a result of the findings from the Care Review. Additionally, given the economic challenges carers have noted the pressures on their own families and are seeking increased financial support from the service. Any response and implementation of increased allowances would go some way to carers feeling more supported in meeting the rising cost of living.

The fostering community hub across the county is an ever-developing model, adapting to meet the changing demands of the fostering community and the children it supports. The support forums continue to act as a way for foster carers to access support from other foster carers and children's service's teams. This is providing a more integrated approach to support.

This year 4 additional staff were trained in Thera play level 1 and clinical supervision is in place, ensuring, this development in the Placement Support Worker group has meant the service can now extend its therapeutic offer to more fostering households and the supervision assures safe practice.

The annual fostering survey indicated although there are some key areas of development in the support offer, foster carers are feeling increasingly supported and areas of support have improved and have been built on.

The hub continues to be supported by the foster carer champions who have roles that cover responsibilities as 'Hub Links'. They also hold social groups and support with workshop delivery.

Participation in the different areas of the hub continues to increase. Assessed need is monitored to ensure that the right kind of support is identified and delivered.

The WhatsApp listening group which has 140 active members remains a constant hive of activity, with foster carers connecting, reaching out to their community for support or to share their challenges and successes. At the request of the carers additional groups have been developed, these include a LGBT, early years, foster carers to be, early years group and men's group. These are active groups which are used daily by carers.

The closed community Facebook page also continues to offer dynamic and creative support and solutions to foster carers and has over 800 participants.

It will be important to continue to consult with the fostering community to understand better the challenges, strengths, progress made throughout the year and include them in shaping services and practice for informed change over the next 12 months.

Placement Stability: DC

Placement stability continues to be a critical factor in offering an effective fostering service and is crucial to ensuring that the local authority delivers good outcomes for each child in care. The service has been developed and structured to promote stability and support to foster carers. Stability is measured by 2 national indicators, NI062 relating to children who experience 3 placement moves within 12 months, and NI063 which relates to children who have been in care for 2½ years who have been in the same placement for 2 years.

The national indicator NI062 reported 9.3% at year-end which is higher than preferred. This figure suggests that the majority of children in care in Lincolnshire experience high level of placement stability from the point of coming into care. Albeit, higher than the service and council would prefer this reflects some of the challenges and the intricacies of meeting the needs of children and matching them within our existing resources. The complexity of children requiring placements and reduced placement options has had an impact on the indicator. Likewise, when children have exited care by means of returning home, being placed for adoption or made subject to a private law order this equally impacts on the performance indicator despite being a move that is considered to be in their best interests.

Over recent years there has been considerable focus on supporting foster carers to maintain placements. The importance of support meetings, with the launch of the fostering hub and an overall improved core offer to foster carers it remains a necessary and priority task to ensure that foster carers and their families feel supported in their valuable role.

The efforts of other agencies also contribute to the overall experience of the foster carers and the children they care for including access to support and therapy for children whose experiences may vary yet their response to their trauma has common themes.

The NI063 placement stability figure with a year-end figure reported as 64%. The Valuing Care tool is embedded within the Fostering service. The tool continues to be used alongside the children in Care Valuing Care tool to support and inform matching with a view to improving placement stability. The use of this within the Regulation 24 (kinship) assessments and Special Guardianship assessments for court are being embedded which will reflect a whole service approach.

There remains an importance of identifying carer's strengths in accordance with a child/ young person's needs. This enhanced level of integrated support has been effective in creating and sustaining placements. The tool is used in both the foster carer annual review and is also used during foster carer Form F assessment to inform foster carers ongoing learning and development needs.

Family Lincs Care:

Short breaks are a continuum of services which support children in need and their families. The provision of short-term breaks offers children and young people with disabilities and their families the vital opportunity to have a valuable break from their caring role.

Short breaks are for any person aged 0 to 18 with a disability, including:

- children and young people with an autistic spectrum disorder
- severe learning disabilities
- complex health needs
- cognitive or sensory impairments
- moving or handling needs
- life-limiting conditions

Short breaks are provided under Section 17(6) of the Children Act 1989 , which allows local authorities the ability to provide accommodation as part of a range of services in order to discharge their general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need.

Section 20(4) of the 1989 Children Act also allows local authorities to provide accommodation ‘for any child within their area (even though a person who has Parental Responsibility for him is able to provide him with accommodation) if they consider that to do so would safeguard or promote the child’s welfare’.

Short breaks that are provided under arrangements by the local authority whether this is frequent, intensive or overnight stays are regulated under the 2006 Act, whether or not it takes place in the child’s own home or a carers home.

This opportunity for families to use the Family Lincs Scheme allows children, young people and their families a chance to take advantage of a home from home experience with a specially trained foster carer rather than the traditional residential approach.

The scheme is serviced by one fostering household which offers regular breaks to one young person and despite a strong and focussed campaign to recruit this has not created any interest. Over the years there has been an overall reduction in demand owing to parents and carers choosing to use direct payments or personal budgets which offer greater flexibility and is their personal choice.

The current Family Lincs Scheme offers 100 units of care per annum with the option to offer additional units dependent on demand and the carers availability, each unit equates to 8 hours of care.

The carer is meeting the current demand for this service as it continues to be a vital part of the fostering provision and is regularly reviewed with the Children with Disabilities Team to ensure adequate provision is available.

Permanence:

Creating long term stability for children in care remains a priority for the Fostering Service. Family Finders have continued to meet monthly between 1st April 2022 and the 31st March 2023 to consider children with a care plan of permanence who need a long-term foster placement.

These meetings are predominantly in person though have the scope to use Microsoft Teams when needed to maximise attendance. Attendees at these meetings include Supervising Social Workers for the North and the South of the county, marketing and recruitment leads, a placement support worker representative and most recently a representative from the children in care team.

Over the year, twenty-nine children have been considered by family finders, of these sixteen children were newly referred from 1st April 2022 onwards. This is an increase in the previous year when twenty-two children were considered between April 2021 and March 2022.

Of the twenty-nine children considered this year, long term foster placements were identified for four children, two singletons and a sibling group of two children, with the singleton children remaining in their current placement and the sibling group moving to a newly identified placement. The sibling group were found a permanent placement as a direct result of one of the permanence events held this year. Of the remaining twenty-five children, eight of these remain in residential settings, one is with an Independent Fostering Agency and the remaining sixteen are with in-house foster carers.

Two permanence events have taken place this year, in July 2022 and January 2023. The aim of these events is to showcase some of the children who are seeking permanent placements. Approved foster carers and those in the second part of the assessment stage, are invited to attend to hear information about the children from those that know them well such as the child's social worker, placement support worker, residential keyworker and foster carer.

The Valuing Care tools are utilised to give a better understanding of the child's presenting needs and what they need from a fostering family. The presentations that the professionals give considers the children's likes and dislikes, anecdotal information about what they are like and what strategies their carers use to support them. This is complimented by information from the school who share knowledge of the child and helps to provide a more comprehensive overview.

A set of permanent foster carers also attended the event to share their positive experiences of offering a long-term home to a child who was previously living in a residential setting and highlighting both the support they received and the rewards they experienced. Profiles for all the children currently on family finders are all shared on the day for all foster carers to request further information. Further permanent events have been planned for the next year.

As of 31st March 2023, there remains twenty children being considered by family finders looking for permanent placements. This is a significant increase from last year where only thirteen children were seeking permanent families as of March 2022.

This year seven fostering families have been linked for Permanence at Fostering Panel creating permanency for eleven children in total; however, all of these were with the existing task centred foster carers and the children had not been referred to family finders.

Eleven fostering households have been successful in being approved as permanent carers this year, compared to last year where there were no permanent approvals made. This includes six newly approved fostering families and five changes of approvals from approved foster carers. Whilst the six sets of carers have not yet been linked with children on family finders it is hoped in the next few months this will take place. The majority have attended the permanence event and appropriate matching is taking place.

Within family finders this year the service has also focused on the level of support offered to young people during the transition period. Placement support workers are being allocated earlier to ensure the young people and carers receive the most appropriate support and that families can continue to work with a placement support worker before, during and after their transition to a permanent carer.

For several years recruitment of permanent foster carers has been difficult with most permanent matches being made with their existing carers and this year demonstrated that continued trend.

The family finders review panel continues to meet when necessary to consider children where no potential placement matches have been identified within a three-month period, enabling senior management to have oversight of actions already taken and discussions around any further options to be considered or explored.

During this year thirteen children have been reviewed by this process, one of whom has been removed from family finders as permanence has been achieved.

Staying Put:

Staying Put arrangements provide the opportunity for our young people to remain living with their foster carer when they reach eighteen years old, providing this is what the carer and young person wants. It offers the young person stability and continuity at this key stage of their life as they transition into adulthood. As long as a foster carer can continue to suitably accommodate and support their young person they can be approved as a Staying Put provider. Carers who become Staying Put providers receive ongoing support from the fostering service, and the young people residing with them are supported by their own designated Personal Adviser from Barnardo's Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service.

At the end of March 2023 forty-five care leavers aged 18+ were in Staying Put arrangements. Thirty-eight arrangements were within Lincolnshire and seven outside of the county.

Of the forty-five young people in Staying Put, six were attending university, twenty-four were in full or part-time further education, five were in employment, two were on an apprenticeship and two were on the Care Leavers Apprenticeship Scheme. There were six young people who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) owing to health and wellbeing matters. These six young people are being supported to access education and / or

employment through the Leaving Care Service, the Fostering Service and their Staying Put providers. For all six young people there is a plan in place which is reviewed regularly.

Partnership working between Staying Put and other services has been a key component of the service as it is vital that young adults are fully supported by a range of services to enable them to engage positively with education, employment, or training as this is a core requirement of the Staying Put scheme. Encouragingly, several young people who are engaged in further education or at university also had part-time jobs or were engaged in volunteering opportunities.

For those young people who attended university and lived away, providers received a retainer in recognition of the on-going support they provide, and to enable the young person a home to return to during holidays and continue life within their family setting. A time-limited retainer is also offered when young people join the Armed Forces or move on into alternative arrangements where professionals and the provider had shared concerns regarding the stability/longitude of the arrangement moving onto.

Staying Put has provided this group of young adults to remain living with their former carer, enabling them to maintain those lifelong relationships whilst having stability and support as they move into adulthood.

The Staying Put offer in Lincolnshire positively reflects the current legislation of the Children Act 2014 and best practice from the Fostering Network. Signs of Safety is used and embedded in all the documents relating to Staying Put with Social Pedagogy being used to support the transition and understanding in relation to moving to adulthood.

Over the the next 12 months Staying Put continues to receive a steady flow of referrals from children in care Social Workers. There are currently nineteen young people waiting to join the scheme when they turn 18 years of age. This figure is expected to increase as discussions are being held regularly with young people in care, and with their foster carers, preparing them for this provision and new referrals and enquiries are received regularly.

Kinship:

Kinship remains a priority consideration when exploring alternative means of care for children who cannot remain in the care of their birth parents or primary carers. This starts with the children's teams early on as part of children's care planning, trajectory, and contingency planning. Family group conference and family network meetings are held to identify potential alternative carers, and the children's team undertake viability assessments. This identifies connected person carers and potential placements for children and young people. A referral is then made to the fostering service when these placements and carers become the care plan for the children and young people.

Kinship work consists of a variety of Regulation 24 assessments, Special Guardianship Order (SGO) assessments, Private Fostering assessments and any other connected person assessments such as a 38(6) assessment and statutory checks. When placements are made under a Regulation 24 arrangement the Supervising Social Worker will support the carers in

understanding their role as a foster carer, support them in meeting the National Minimum Standards 2011 and Fostering Regulations 2011 as well as completing their assessment and supporting them to meet the needs of the child(ren) placed. This is not completed in isolation but through a joined-up approach with the children’s team and any other professionals working with the family.

It is recognised the impact on children in care and this was discussed in the Independent Review of Social care report, 2022. This report highlighted the importance and value of connected person placements for children in achieving positive outcomes, allowing them to remain within their family network, which supports their identity, relationships, and culture.

The numbers below show the number of referrals and assessments regarding kinship assessments for the previous two years, and then a further table to show the numbers for 2022-23. The SGO and Stat check column has been separated to show further detail and understanding of this data. Statutory checks (stat checks) are undertaken within 38(6) assessments and private law assessments when children are not in care.

Year	Referrals	Reg 24	Reg 24/SGO	SGO/ Stat checks	Private Fostering
2020-21	186	38	53	71	24
2021-22	196	24	84	39	19

Year	Referrals	Reg 24	Reg 24 / SGO	SGO	Stat checks	Private Fostering
2022-23	195	28	67	62	17	21

The number of referrals for kinship assessments remains steady from the previous year, as has the number of reg 24 assessments. Although the number of private fostering assessments also remains steady, the number for this year also includes the expansion of Private Fostering Regulations in relation to Ukraine children and young people. The overall number of reg 24 placements (with and without SGO) has reduced from 108 to 95.

Of the above figures for 2022-23:

- 53 kinship households were approved at Fostering panel.
- 62 Special Guardianship Orders were granted in respect of 95 children.
- 7 of the Private Fostering assessments were in relation to children and young people from Ukraine.

The Kinship Preparation Course continues to be delivered and has been updated to ensure it is current and relevant. Kinship carers are encouraged to access a wide variety of training and supported to meet requirements as a foster carer. Kinship carers are invited to partake in local fostering events along with mainstream carers and have equal opportunity and access to the fostering support and community.

Fostering Panel:

The Fostering Panel is established and acts in accordance with the regulatory framework provided by the Fostering Service Regulations 2011, Family and Friends Care, Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities 2011, and the Standards set out in the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011.

The Fostering Panel takes account of the legislation set out in the Children Act 1989, and the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 and Amendments 2015 & 2021 and Guidance, volume 2, 2010.

The Fostering Panel has the responsibility for making recommendations in relation to:

- The approval of foster carers both short/task centred and long term/permanent foster carers
 - The approval of family members or friends as "connected person" carers for children who are in care with Lincolnshire County Council, and connected to the applicant as a family member or friend
 - The first annual review of all foster carers and connected persons carers
 - Reviews of carers where there have been serious issues such as Child Protection Enquiries/Allegations
- or
- Reviews of carers where there are concerns regarding their fostering practice and their suitability.

The current membership of the Panel is as follows:

- Sharon King, Independent Chair
- Chris Sharp, Independent Vice Chair
- Janet Morris, Independent Member
- Russell Petit, Independent Member
- April Harrison, Independent Member
- Laura Dodd, Independent Member
- Sarah Jane Davis, Independent Member
- Joy Tribe, Independent Member
- Caroline Mogg, Independent Member
- Stephen Tyrrell, Independent Member
- Maggie Nisbet, Independent Member
- Paula Bexon, Social Work Representative
- Michelle Maxfield, Social Work Representative

- Paul Fisher, Social Work Representative
- Joanne Hindley, Social Work Representative
- Ruth Roberts, Social Work Representative
- Laura Tyrrell, Social Work Representative
- Dawn Oldroyd, Panel Advisor
- Administrator in attendance at each panel

The Panel Advisor is responsible for the volume and financial management of panel business, in particular the capacity to ensure that connected person cases can be heard within 16 weeks of placement. They ensure that the central list is maintained and updated to allow for all panels to be quorate. There continues to be two fostering panels each month and there would always be consideration to additional panels where necessary.

In response to the emergence of Covid 19 in March 2020, the panels have continued to be held remotely via Microsoft Teams. All panel members were trained and supported to engage in a new way of working albeit this is subject to review to enable panel members to engage face to face with applicants. There have been challenges but most panel members are now participating in a 'paperless' panel process through the Councils secure intranet, SharePoint.

The introduction of remote panels via Microsoft Teams has also enabled applicants to attend panel from different areas of the country and even from abroad when timescales have coincided with planned vacations. This mode of meeting has also enabled children to attend panel from the security of their home address. There have also been creative presentations of children's views that have been shared electronically via video to panel members within the meeting (via screen share) and has included footage of teenagers being 'interviewed' for their views.

The panel have been keen to seek feedback regarding participation and those attending panel have commented on how effective this medium of communication is and it is their preference to attend virtually.

There has been the successful recruitment of a new independent panel member who is also a current local authority foster carer and a Caring to Learn Champion. There have also been three new social work representatives sitting on panel which expands the knowledge and experience of panel members.

The Panel receives medical advice within the social workers' reports, and this is considered within the assessments with a medical advisor supporting panel too. Legal services provide advice as required, to assist in the panel's recommendations.

IFAB (Independent Fostering Advisory Board) has been up and running since February 2022 on a minimum of a monthly basis. The IFAB is attended by the Panel Advisor, and Independent Foster Panel Member and a Practice Supervisor from either fostering or the children in care team.

IFAB quality assures all foster carer annual reviews at the 4-, 7- and 10-year stage and has been well received by practitioners in offering oversight and feedback to the carer household, fostering service and wider staff regarding good practice and areas for development.

It has also enabled feedback to be shared with locality teams where foster carers have provided constructive feedback about social workers and the panel advisor has been able to challenge any practice issues to ensure continued good communication and compliance with fostering regulations.

Positive feedback has been received from IFAB Panel members about the learning they have had from participating in the panel which they are able to take back to their daily practice.

Workload of the Panel:

The fostering panel has met on 26 occasions this year, 1 more than the previous year, due to the workload of panel and ability to hold meetings via teams.

Panel recommended for approval the following households:

APPROVAL	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Task Centred/Respite	20	27	19	27	13	20
Reg 24/25 Kinship Care	63	56	43	33	39	39
Permanent Foster Carers	0	0	0	2	1	10
Change of Approval	4	2	6	7	0	5
Permanence Link	6	4	6	10	10	11
Reviews	33	32	23	22	17	35
Total	126	121	97	101	80	120

Reviews:

REVIEW	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Task Centred/ Respite	22	15	15	12	9	19
Remand	0	0	0	0	0	1
Reg 24/25 Kinship Care	11	11	6	9	3	12

Permanent Fostering	0	0	0	0	4	12
Allegations	7	6	1	1	1	1

Feedback and Quality Assurance

Panel continues to seek feedback from all participants including social workers attending panel. As the panel invitation links are sent via Microsoft Teams by the panel member, feedback forms are also attached to these emails and some applicants have sent feedback either on these forms or within an email. The feedback received has been positive and suggests that applicants do not feel negatively impacted by the remote access to panel.

The reports for Panel continue to be subject to a robust quality assurance process to ensure suitable quality standards are achieved. The panel advisor routinely has oversight of all reports presented to panel and can highlight potential complexities in cases to ensure all aspects are appropriately addressed within a restorative approach. The panel advisor also offers social workers and their supervisors the opportunity to have early discussions about complex cases to ensure that appropriate support and assessments are in place prior to presentation at panel wherever possible.

Complaints:

In the last year the Fostering Service have received only 1 formal complaint, this complaint was not upheld by the Investigating Manager. Despite the service looking to resolve the complaint at a low level the complaint was progressed to stage 2 of the formal complaints process by the complainant as they were not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint's investigation. The complaint was Investigated at this stage by the complaints team and was not upheld at this stage.

In 2022/2023 there have been no matters referred to the Independent Review Mechanism.

Foster Carer Continuous Development:

The Fostering Service recognises the importance of supporting our carers to develop their understanding, skills, and knowledge in an accessible and engaging manner. We are invested in our 'Caring2Learn' model; ensuring the training offer to foster carers is one which communicates our understanding of the challenges they may face whilst equipping them with the resources they need to provide our children with nurturing, supportive and loving homes.

We recognise that no two homes are the same and carers come to fostering with differing levels of existing knowledge. Consequently, our learning and development offer provides a multitude of learning opportunities to new and experienced carers alike.

Our training consists of online and face-to-face training events which are complimented by e-learning modules. This ensures we are responsive to all preferences and learning styles. More

of our training is delivered online as this aligns with the demand from carers. In April 2022, we moved to a service led booking model which allows foster carers to book onto training via email, phone or through their supervising social workers. Foster Carers can also still access training via the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership (LSCP) website however the majority choice to use the caring to learn booking route.

We recognise the importance of providing a responsive training service, so we continually monitor the uptake of training across the year, and formally review our training offer on an annual basis ensuring we take account of carer requests and service needs. Although we deliver many training courses ourselves, we recognise the importance of drawing upon knowledge and expertise held outside of the authority and of incorporating lived experiences. As such we work closely with our Foster Carer champions who support in the delivering of special interest workshops around matters that commonly affect children who have experienced trauma.

The service has also developed strong working relationship with training providers 'Crisp & Crane' who deliver Therapeutic Crisis Intervention, 'Singletons' who deliver First Aid and Paediatric First Aid and 'Breaking the Cycle' who deliver Safer Care and Safeguarding through a combination of online and in person options. It is important to also recognise the huge number of courses and workshops that are available and delivered by partner agencies and organisations. Fostering have ensured carers are informed of learning opportunities they can access through health Services, the Fostering Network, and the National Association of Therapeutic Parenting. These expand the amount of learning opportunities to support personal and professional development without the use of additional service resource and finance. Our approach to training appears to be appreciated by foster carers as evidenced by 100% of carers who completed the annual foster carers survey indicating they wished for the combination of in-person and virtual training to continue.

All foster carers are required to complete the Training, Support and Development standards (TSDs) with predefined timescales (18 months for connected carers and 12 months for mainstream carers) to demonstrate they fully understand the requirements of the role. To support our carers in this endeavour and ensure they are familiar with the guiding principles and policies of Lincolnshire County Council it was agreed that the TSDs and Learning Home Toolkit would be combined.

The service sees these come in for assessment resulting in carers receiving a "Learning Homes Award". There is an expectation on approved carers to resubmit a portfolio every three years to ensure on-going personal and professional development. Currently there are 85 foster homes that have achieved their Learning Homes Award. The service is seeing the number of awarded homes continue to rise, which is testament to the commitment of our foster carers and staff alike.

In response to the common themes impacting on placement stability and in considering service needs several courses will be introduced over the coming year, these include training courses on extremism, Child Sexual Exploitation, Child Criminal Exploitation, County Lines and Drugs.

The training we deliver ourselves ensures carers are provided with theory, principles and practice examples that embed and combine Signs of Safety, Social Pedagogy, Restorative Practice and Trauma Informed Care. These approaches underpin everything we do within the service and are also used within the carers supervision and support visits by Supervising Social Workers and further embedded by Placement Support Workers which ensures a consistent and joined up approach across the service. The 6-week Therapeutic Parenting Workshop has been highly successful as demonstrated by take up and feedback, consequently we are now running this course more frequently and moving forward will be offering twilight sessions in response to carers requests.

The table below reports the number of carers who have undertaken training this year. As can be seen foster carers have continued to access workshops and training events. This is generally consistent with the previous year.

Type of event	Number of carers participating
Virtual Training/workshops	706
Face to face	356
E learning completed	224 for part year

Forward Plan:

During this year, the fostering community and their support networks have continued to support the children they care and made sterling efforts to support one another along their journey. Their commitment, resilience and tenacious approach to this voluntary role continues to ensure that a high proportion of children in care are in fostering families and affords them a continued opportunity to live in a local family setting.

Despite the existing fostering families Lincolnshire have there is a continued to need to retain these people and recruit new households who can join this strong and resourceful community to offer local placements for Lincolnshire children.

The national challenges relating to fostering are known, understood and felt across the sector which is reinforced by the data revealing that over the last few years more carers have left fostering than joined and the children in care figures continue to rise. The impact of the National Transfer Scheme (for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children) tells part of the children in care figure rising but not all of it.

Lincolnshire continue to work tirelessly with the local community, partners and via other enterprises to reach out to communities to help and support to care for vulnerable children. Carers who are deemed suitable are thoroughly assessed, approved, prepared and supported on their journey into fostering and beyond within the auspices of the regulations and National Minimum Standards 2011.

The Christmas 2022 advert by John Lewis PLC reinforced the value and importance of how making one simple lifestyle choice can engage people into thinking about fostering and this advert served to ensure that the agenda for children and young people is never far away from

people's thoughts and hearts. Lincolnshire were appreciative to this retailer for grasping the issue and doing their best to raise the profile of children in care and care leavers.

The service continues to review their practices and in doing so work well with the Valuing Care toolkit and strive to match children with the right carers at the right time. This tool is used within assessments, reviews of carers and is almost embedded within the Kinship and Court directed assessments. This together with the ongoing development of the hub and the hopeful increase in fostering allowances in the new financial year means that Lincolnshire are at the forefront of good practice.

Fostering in conjunction with the Adoption service have revised the Special Guardianship Reports and Support Plan which are trauma informed and future focused to support children leaving care and living within a family setting without the need for statutory intervention. This is a critical part of the work that the service does in supporting children with their exit from foster care where it is assessed and endorsed as a child centred decision that considers the voice of the child and those important to the plan.

This work is vital and is likely to be further reconsidered by the recommendations from the Independent Review in Social Care published in 2022 which serves to capitalise and reform the Kinship agenda and review implement regional care co-operatives whose focus would be on creating a better marker for placements whilst ensuring that exorbitant costs and profits for private providers is addressed. This is a good news story in principle; however, it is yet to be seen whether a regionalised approach to care placements fixes these existing and profound challenges being faced day by day.

Despite the challenges the service has and continues to look forward and proudly support our children and continually strive collaboratively with other teams to improve outcomes for our children in care by providing care locally within Lincolnshire where possible. As outlined there continues to be a dependence on commissioned placements for some children and each and every decision is individually considered.

The next year is going to be a testing time but with a positive fostering workforce, the continued investment of fostering families and our genuine commitment our efforts to give children and young people safe, supportive and nurturing environments where they can thrive and be happy remains our absolute priority.

Our thanks are extended to all foster carers and their supporters for their efforts and care they afford each and every child.

Deborah Crawford

Head of Service, Fostering & Adoption

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

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	07 September 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

7 September 2023		
	Item	Contributor
1.	The Mental Health Needs and Support Available for Children in Care and Care Leavers in Lincolnshire	Charlotte Gray, Head of Service - Children's Strategic Commissioning Lynda Whitton, Senior Commissioning Officer – Children's Commissioning
2.	Children in Care Performance Report Quarter 1	Carolyn Knight, Head of Service - Quality and Standards and Principal Social Worker
3.	Ofsted Inspection of Lincolnshire Children's Services - Outcome Report	Carolyn Knight, Head of Service - Quality and Standards and Principal Social Worker
4.	Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027	Bridie Fletcher, Senior Commissioning Officer – Children's Commissioning Amy Allcock, Commissioning Manager-Commercial
5.	Adoption Annual Report 2022-2023	Sharon Clarke, Interim Team Manager, Adoption
6.	Fostering Annual Report 2022-2023	Emily McAllister, Fostering Team Manager Nicola Brangam, Fostering Team Manager South
INFORMATION ONLY ITEMS		
7.	Adoption Statement of Purpose 2022-2023	Sharon Clarke, Interim Team Manager, Adoption
8.	Fostering Statement of Purpose 2022-2023	Emily McAllister, Fostering Team Manager Nicola Brangam, Fostering Team Manager South

9 November 2023		
	Item	Contributor
1.	Independent Reviewing Service Update Report 1 April 2023 - 30 September 2023	Carolyn Knight, Head of Service - Quality and Standards and Principal Social Worker
2.	Regulation 44 Independent Visitors Report	Carolyn Knight, Head of Service - Quality and Standards and Principal Social Worker
3.	Fostering Quarterly Performance Report Quarter 1	Deborah Crawford, Head of Service - Fostering and Adoption
4.	Private Fostering Annual Report and Statement of Purpose	Deborah Crawford, Head of Service - Fostering and Adoption

9 November 2023		
	Item	Contributor
5.	Annual Report of the Regional Adoption Agency	John Harris, Head of Regional Adoption Agency
6.	Voices for Choices (V4C) Update Report	Ben Lilley, Practice Supervisor - Children's Services (Quality and Standards)

18 JANUARY 2024		
	Item	Contributor
1.	Children in Care Performance Measures Quarter 2	Tara Jones, Assistant Director – Children's Safeguarding
2.	Fostering Quarterly Performance Report - Quarter 2	Deborah Crawford, Head of Service - Fostering and Adoption
3.	Children in Care Annual Health Report 2022/23	Tara Jones, Assistant Director – Children's Safeguarding
4.	Lincolnshire Leaving Care - 6 Monthly Update Report by Barnardo's	Lisa Adams, Service Manager, Barnardo's

14 MARCH 2024		
	Item	Contributor
1.	LCC Virtual School Report Academic Year 2022-23	Sarah Lane, Virtual School Head
2.	Children in Care Performance Measures Quarter 3	Tara Jones, Assistant Director – Children's Safeguarding
3.	Fostering Quarterly Performance Report – Quarter 3	Deborah Crawford, Head of Service - Fostering and Adoption

09 MAY 2024		
	Item	Contributor
1.	Voices for Choices (V4C) Update Report	Ben Lilley, Practice Supervisor - Children's Services (Quality and Standards)
2.	Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027 - Annual Update on Action Plan	Bridie Fletcher, Senior Commissioning Officer – Children's Commissioning Amy Allcock, Commissioning Manager- Commercial

25 JULY 2024		
Item		Contributor
1.	Election of the Chairman	Democratic Services Officer
2.	Election of the Vice Chairman	Democratic Services Officer
3.	Children in Care Performance Measures Quarter 4	Tara Jones, Assistant Director – Children’s Safeguarding
4.	Fostering Quarterly Performance Report - Quarter 4	Deborah Crawford, Head of Service - Fostering and Adoption
5.	Lincolnshire Leaving Care - 6 Monthly Update Report by Barnardo’s	Lisa Adams, Service Manager, Barnardo’s
6.	Independent Reviewing Service Yearly Report	Carolyn Knight, Head of Service - Quality and Standards and Principal Social Worker
7.	Regulation 44 Independent Visitors Report	Carolyn Knight, Head of Service - Quality and Standards and Principal Social Worker

12 SEPTEMBER 2024		
Item		Contributor
1.	Children in Care Performance Measures Quarter 1	Tara Jones, Assistant Director – Children’s Safeguarding
2.	Adoption Annual Report 2023-2024	Sharon Clarke, Interim Team Manager, Adoption
3.	Adoption Statement of Purpose 2023-2024	Sharon Clarke, Interim Team Manager, Adoption
4.	Fostering Annual Report 2023-2024	Emily McAllister, Fostering Team Manager Nicola Brangam, Fostering Team Manager South
5.	Fostering Statement of Purpose 2023-2024	Emily McAllister, Fostering Team Manager Nicola Brangam, Fostering Team Manager South

14 NOVEMBER 2024		
Item		Contributor
1.	Independent Reviewing Service Update Report 1 April 2024 - 30 September 2024	Carolyn Knight, Head of Service - Quality and Standards and Principal Social Worker

14 NOVEMBER 2024	
Item	Contributor
2. Regulation 44 Independent Visitors Report	Carolyn Knight, Head of Service - Quality and Standards and Principal Social Worker
3. Fostering Quarterly Performance Report Quarter 1	Deborah Crawford, Head of Service - Fostering and Adoption
4. Private Fostering Annual Report and Statement of Purpose	Deborah Crawford, Head of Service - Fostering and Adoption
5. Annual Report of the Regional Adoption Agency	John Harris, Head of Regional Adoption Agency
6. Voices for Choices (V4C) Update Report	Ben Lilley, Practice Supervisor - Children's Services (Quality and Standards)

3. Items to be programmed

Report Title	Est Date
School attendance	TBC, 2023
Prevalence of emotional health and our response	TBC, 2023
CAMHS Report (Amy-Louise Butler LPFT) Annual Report	Jan/Mar 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 Tracey Johnson, Senior Scrutiny Officer, who can be contacted on 07552 253814 or by e-mail at Tracy.Johnson@lincolnshire.gov.uk.

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

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	07 September 2023
Subject:	Adoption Statement of Purpose 2022-2023

Summary:

The purpose of this report is to inform the Corporate Parenting Panel about the work of the Adoption Service in accordance with the requirements of the Care Standards National Minimum Standards 2003, 2011, 2014 and the Adoption and Children Act 2002. The National Minimum Standards, together with the Adoption Regulations, form the basis of the regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000 for the conduct of Adoption Agencies and Adoption Support Agencies.

The Statement of Purpose at Appendix A sets out the relevant performance information and identifies the key developments with the service of the last twelve months.

Actions Required:

That the Corporate Parenting Panel notes the Adoption Statement of Purpose 2022-2023.

1. Background

This report informs the Corporate Parenting Panel of the Adoption Statement of Purpose for 2022-2023.

2. Conclusion

The Panel is requested to note the contents of the Adoption Statement of Purpose for 2022-2023 and the work of the Adoption Service.

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Adoption Statement of Purpose 2022-2023

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 Deborah Crawford, who can be contacted on Tel 01522 552781 or Deborah.crawford@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Adoption Service

Statement of Purpose 2022-2023



STATEMENT OF PURPOSE FOR THE LINCOLNSHIRE ADOPTION SERVICE

This Statement of Purpose fulfils the requirement of standard 18 of the Adoption National Minimum Standards (Care Standards Act, 2000) and the Local Authority Adoption Services (England) Regulations 2002, amended (2005,) (2011) and (2013) and the Children and Families Act 2014.

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Appendix 1 – Leadership Structure

Appendix 2 - Adoption Panel

Appendix 3 - Staffing: Number, Relevant Qualifications and Experience.

AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES OF THE ADOPTION SERVICE

Regional Adoption Agency:

Lincolnshire County Council is part of Family Adoption Links (FAL), a regional partnership of Adoption Services. The government's agenda for adoption was set out in a paper, "Regionalising Adoption", published by the Department of Education (DfE) in June 2015 setting out arrangements for the formation of Regional Adoption Agencies (RAAs) by 2020.

This partnership comprises of Lincolnshire County Council (which provide adoption services for Rutland Council), Leicestershire County Council, Leicester City Council, Northamptonshire Children's trust, and North Lincolnshire Council. It has been agreed that Lincolnshire County Council will act as host for the arrangement.

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

Through working in partnership, we will benefit from the regional sharing of best practice, pooling of resources and developing a strategic approach to the development of a range of services from the marketing of adoption across the region through to the commissioning of post adoption support services.

The vision of the RAA is that:

- Children have the widest range of adopters trained to meet the needs of children placed with them.
- Matching delivers the best quality outcomes for all children.
- Adopters receive a consistent, high quality and professional service at all stages of the process.
- The same high standard of adoption support for all adoptive families across the region
- Family Adoption Links, Local Authorities and Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAA) work together to promote and maximize choice for children and adopters.
- That there will be savings for each authority in the partnership with less reliance on interagency placements.

Governance and Management

The RAA is accountable to the Family Adoption Links (FAL) management board which is aligned to the agreed vision and enables partners to have a continuing demonstrable focus on achieving permanence through adoption for children in care.

The FAL management board is accountable for delivery of services within scope and continues to provide strategic leadership across the services. The board includes representatives of each partner and takes decision by consensus.

The board is chaired by a Director of Children's Services (on behalf of the respective Local Authorities) and includes Assistant Directors responsible for permanency. The FAL management board ensure there are clear strategic plans in place to manage future demand, develop quality services, deliver value for money, and achieve appropriate efficiencies. The Head of Service for the Regional Adoption Agency oversees the work of the adoption service in each local authority.

The Head of Service reports to the board and is responsible for the delivery of adoption services within each local authority. Each partner local authority retains its own adoption service manager who is the Registered Manager.

The FAL management board will keep members fully informed regarding the progress and performance of the RAA.

THE MAIN AIMS OF THE LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL ADOPTION SERVICE ARE TO:

Provide a range of quality services which can promote best outcomes for children who need a permanent placement.

Meet and comply with the National Minimum Standards for Adoption Services.

Ensure that all staff are appropriately recruited, supervised, and developed to fulfil their agency functions.

To identify children for whom the plan is adoption and to work with them and their carers to ensure children enjoy outstanding developmental outcomes, with quick progress to successful placements with their adoptive parents.

Adhere to best practice for permanency planning timescales as set out in adoption legislation and the Public Law Outline, to maximise each child's opportunity to experience a stable and secure family life.

Provide appropriate choice of adoption placements for children within Lincolnshire County Council and beyond where appropriate, making full and prompt use of the regional resources, voluntary adoption agencies and the Link Maker database. Link Maker is a national data base of Children who have a plan of adoption and approved adoptive parents who are looking to be matched with a child or sibling group.

To recruit, prepare, assess, and fully support prospective adopters to meet the assessed needs of the children requiring adoptive families, including those who take a placement via Early Permanence. Early Permanence refers to a situation where children are placed with a family who are approved both as foster carers and Adopters. This means that if the child has a final plan of adoption the child will remain with the family and will not need to experience another placement move.

The focus of assessments will be the applicants' ability to meet the assessed needs of children, promote attachment, improve their understanding of the adoption task and their suitability to be an adoptive parent through on-going quality assurance, and sustain a high

standard of assessments. Assessments will be completed within the timescales set out within Statutory Adoption Guidance (2014) wherever possible.

Applicants for inter-country adoption are provided with an appropriate service from skilled and experienced workers.

Ensure that children are well prepared both practically and emotionally for a move to a new permanent family.

Provide links for children, for whom adoption is the plan, with families who can meet their ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic needs, whilst recognising that no child should wait indefinitely for the "ideal" match.

Provide a comprehensive support package, including financial support where appropriate to achieve stable and successful placements.

Provide effective and efficient adoption panels to enable adoption plans for relinquished children, prospective adopter assessments and links with children to be progressed without delay.

Ensure that children's plans for adoption are agreed by the Agency Decision Maker and Placement Order applications are made to meet court timescales.

Ensure that issues for contact/family time with the birth family are carefully considered and meet the individual needs of the child.

Ensure that where possible and appropriate, siblings will be placed together and that decisions to separate siblings are made in a timely manner, following a sibling assessment.

In conjunction with other agencies provide a comprehensive range of support services, pre and post order, as detailed in the Adoption Passport, to children, birth parents, relatives, and adoptive parents and those who hold a Special Guardianship Order.

To access funding for specialist therapeutic support for adoptive families, via the Adoption Support Fund.

To ensure that accurate and up to date records and management information is kept in relation to individual children, adoptive parents, and services and to maintain confidentiality and security.

Ensure that customers are fully involved and consulted on service delivery and service development.

Treat all customers with respect and without prejudice or discrimination.

Lincolnshire County Council delivers its adoption service through a dedicated Adoption Team managed by a Team Manager.

THE MAIN PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING THE SERVICE ARE:

Lincolnshire County Council and its adoption agency believe that, wherever possible, it is best for children to be brought up within their birth families. Only where this is not possible, and other appropriate options short of adoption have been considered, then adoption should be considered as a positive alternative for children to enable them to grow and reach maturity within a stable and loving family.

The Statement of Purpose links all sections in the document to the relevant Adoption National Minimum Standards 2014 and shares its values with those Standards.

VALUES

Children

- The child's welfare, safety and needs are at the centre of the adoption process.
- Adopted children should have an enjoyable childhood, and benefit from excellent parenting and education, enjoying a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and skills leading to a successful adult life.
- Children are entitled to grow up as part of a loving family that can meet their developmental needs during childhood and beyond.
- Children's wishes and feelings are important and will be actively sought and fully considered at all stages of the adoption process.
- Delays should always be avoided as they can have a severe impact on the health and development of the children waiting to be adopted.
- A sense of identity is important to any child's well-being. To help children develop this; their ethnic origin, cultural background, religion, language, and gender need to be properly recognised and positively valued and promoted. Children who are adopted also need to have a full understanding of their birth history with information about their birth family and history given in a sensitive and age-appropriate way.
- The needs of children with disabilities and children with complex emotional, developmental and attachment needs will be fully recognised and considered.
- Where a child cannot be cared for in a suitable manner in their own country, inter-country adoption may be considered as an alternative means of providing a permanent family.
- Children, birth parents/guardians, families and adoptive parents will be valued and respected.

- A genuine partnership between all those involved in adoption is essential for the National Minimum Standards to deliver the best outcomes for children; this includes the Government, local government, other statutory agencies, other Regional Adoption Agencies, Voluntary Adoption Agencies and Adoption Support Agencies.

ADOPTED ADULTS AND BIRTH RELATIVES

- Adoption is an evolving life-long process for all those involved including adopted adults, and birth and adoptive relatives. The fundamental issues raised by adoption may reverberate and resurface at different times and stages throughout an individual's life.
- Adopted persons should have access to information and services to enable them to address adoption related matters throughout their life.
- Agencies have a duty to provide services that consider the welfare of all parties involved and should consider the implications of decisions and actions for everyone involved.
- Agencies should seek to work in partnership with all parties involved, taking account of their views and wishes in decision-making.
- Agencies should acknowledge differences in people's circumstances and establish policies that provide non-discriminatory services.
- Adopted adults have their adoptive identity safeguarded and the right to decide whether to be involved in contact or communication with birth family members.

STANDARDS OF CARE TO BE FOLLOWED BY THE AGENCY

The Adoption Service aims to provide safe, secure, and high-quality care in family settings for children whom a plan for adoption has been agreed. This will be achieved to the standards set out in the Adoption Services Regulations 2002, 2011 and The Adoption Agencies (Panel and Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2012 (referred to as the "Regulations"), the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations (2010), The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013, 2015 & 2021, The Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013, The Adoption Support Services Regulations (2005), The National Minimum Standards for Adoption Services (2014) and The Statutory Guidance amended (2011) and July (2013 and 2014).

Working together with the Adoption Team, the Adoption Panel and the Panel Adviser, the service strive to continuously improve standards of care, informed by inspections, quality audits, service-learning days as well as new legislation and guidance to evaluate the effectiveness of service delivery.

STATUS AND CONSTITUTION OF THE AGENCY

Lincolnshire County Council is an approved Adoption Service provider. The Adoption National Minimum Standards 2014 together with the Adoption Regulations form the basis of the regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000 for the conduct of Adoption agencies and Adoption Support agencies.

The Adoption Service is managed by the Head of Service – Regulated through a Team Manager for Adoption. The Team Manager acts as the Adoption Support Services Advisor. (Standard 15 of the National Minimum Standards)

The Assistant Director for Children Services is the Agency Decision Maker. (Standard 17 of the National Minimum Standards)

Lincolnshire Adoption Panel is constituted in accordance with regulations. (Standard 17 of the National Minimum Standards)

During the period of the pandemic the DfE published 'flexibilities' to allow for the exceptional circumstances so adoption panels have been held virtually since April 2020 and this remains under constant review.

The adoption panel only considers whether:

- A child who is in care to Lincolnshire County Council should be placed for adoption, where a parent relinquishes their child or consents that adoption is the best outcome for their child.
- Prospective adopters are suitable to adopt, and
- Adopters are suitable for a particular child or children.

There are sufficient appointed panel members including an Independent Chair. The members of the Adoption Panel are appraised annually against performance objectives.

From 1 April 2011, the Regulations regarding the make-up of panel changed and allowed the adoption agency to draw its members from a list of people known as "the central list"; these members the agency considers having the "appropriate qualifications and/or experience to consider the cases submitted to the adoption panel for its consideration." There is no limit to the number of people on the central list and the same people do not have to be appointed to every panel meeting.

The agency can decide how many panel members should sit at each panel meeting, subject to the panel meeting being quorate.

The members of the central list must include (in addition to the Independent Chair): an adoption social worker with at least three years' relevant post qualifying experience in children's social work, including direct experience in adoption work. The medical adviser to the adoption agency is a panel member; also, the agency can appoint other people

whom the agency considers suitable. Suitable members could include specialists in education, child and adolescent mental health, race, and culture; and those who have personal experience of adoption.

A Legal Adviser who provides advice in writing to the panel on any legal issue with implications for a child whose plan is being considered by panel. The Legal Adviser also gives advice to the Agency Decision Maker – the Assistant Director of Children's Services.

Lincolnshire Adoption Agency has a medical adviser(s) who examines all children being considered for adoption and reports to panel members on the child's health needs. The adviser will also meet with prospective adopters to consider health requirements of individual children.

The Agency Medical Advisers also advise panel members on health issues relating to prospective adoptive parents.

There is a professional Panel Adviser to the Adoption Panel who advises panel members on procedures, policies, and professional issues.

Government issued guidance and regulation (Panel and Consequential Amendments 2012) which came into force on the 1st September 2012 which impacts on the work of the Adoption Panel. The primary change made by the Regulations is that Adoption Panels must not be involved in deciding whether a child should be placed for adoption when the Court will be involved in the decision, where care proceedings are on-going or where the child has no parents; the case must be referred directly to the Agency Decision Maker who will make the decision.

Panel will however still consider cases and make recommendations where the child's parents will consent to the child being placed for adoption.

THE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE OF THE ADOPTION SERVICE

The named manager of the Lincolnshire Adoption Service is:

Deborah Crawford– Head of Service, Fostering and Adoption

County Offices
Newland
Lincoln
Lincs
LN1 1YL

Telephone: 01522 552781

Email: Deborah.crawford@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Qualifications:

Diploma in Social Work
Diploma in Higher Education
BA (Hons) Social and Professional Studies
PQ Award Level 1 in Social Work
National Accreditation (NAAS) 2019
Post Graduate Certificate in Leadership and Management in Social Work.

Experience: 29 years' experience working in the field of social care, specialising in children and families since 1993. Since 2013 Deborah held a Team Manager post with the local authority within the fostering service before progressing to a Head of Service post in May 2021.

The acting nominated manager to manage the Adoption Service in the absence of the named manager under Regulation 5 of the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003 is Sharon Clarke.

The adoption teams are locality based and deliver a comprehensive service. These teams manage the permanency planning and family finding role, the recruitment, assessment, approval, support, and placement processes which enable children in care in Lincolnshire County Council to be placed in a range of appropriate adoptive placements.

Dawn Oldroyd is the dedicated Professional Panel Advisor for both the Adoption and Permanence panels.

The organisational structure of the Service is shown in Appendix 1. The list of current staff is set out in appendix 3. This information in its fullest form is only available to Ofsted.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE SERVICE

The Adoption Service works within the overall Quality Assurance Framework for Children and Families, which sets out a range of general and service specific standards and methods by which these standards are monitored. Children for whom adoption is being considered or who have been placed for adoption are reviewed by Independent Reviewing Officers.

Lincolnshire Adoption Service continually monitors and evaluates its service at every stage of the adoption process to ensure quality and effectiveness. Lincolnshire welcomes feedback from all involved in the adoption process.

The activity and performance of the Adoption Service is scrutinised by the Corporate Parenting Panel.

As part of the Regional Adoption Leadership Board and through our work within the Family Adoption Links partnership, the Adoption Service actively considers and shares good practice and policy development.

The Adoption Service is inspected by Ofsted (The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills), under the framework for inspecting local authority children's services (ILACS) for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Children in Care and Care Leavers.

Performance of the service is monitored and reviewed through the National Adoption Scorecard and a range of performance indicators and measures, including the scrutiny of the adoption leadership board.

THE WORK OF THE ADOPTION SERVICE

Lincolnshire County Council's vision is:

- supporting high aspirations
- enabling everyone to enjoy life to the full
- creating thriving environments
- providing good value council services

The Family Adoption Links Partnership has a strategic vision:

- We are a dynamic regional partnership aimed at delivering excellence in every aspect of adoption
- We strive to ensure the best possible match for children and adoptive parents and develop a comprehensive range of support services to ensure a positive adoption journey
- We seek to develop the widest pool of professionals who engage in innovative and ground breaking new adoption practices

The principles that the Council adheres to are:

- **Early help:** Strong protective universal services accessible to all with a range of early help available so children have the best start in life and families have extra help when they need it.
- **Safeguarding:** A shared responsibility to ensure children are safe at home, school and in their community.
- **Aspiration:** Children are able to thrive and cope with life challenges.
- **Learning and achievement:** All children being the best they can be with targeted interventions to close the gap so vulnerable children achieve as well as their peers.
- **Best use of resources:** Integrated commissioning with a focus on best value, improved outcomes and community engagement.

Staff also work closely with partner agencies to ensure children, young people and families are receiving the right support, at the right time and from the right person.

This partnership working is underpinned by the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership (LSCP), a multi-agency partnership board with a vision to safeguard, support and improve the lives of children and young people.

In addition to the principles, four strategic outcomes for children have been agreed by Children's Services.

- Children and young people are: Healthy & Safe
- Develop to their potential in their early years and are ready for school
- Learn and Achieve
- Children and young people are ready for Adult Life

The Adoption Agency has the expectation all children in its service is encapsulated into these principles and will work with children to champion the importance of these aspirations.

The service work to develop self-esteem, self-belief and resilience in all children encouraging all children to be the best they can be.

The service use resources to focus on outcomes, life chances and opportunities.

The Adoption Agency strives to match, wherever possible, a child to an appropriate family, including considerations of ethnic origin and religion. However, no child will wait indefinitely for the ideal placement. (Standard 13) the Children and Families Act 2014 supports the adoption reforms set out in "An Action Plan for Adoption: Tackling Delay" by ensuring that a search for a perfect or partial ethnic match does not become a barrier to finding a child an adoptive family.

Unless there are clear and specific reasons why this should not happen our aim is to place siblings together. (Standard 13)

All children approved for adoption will receive a guide, which will give age-appropriate information about adoption. (Standard 18)

The Adoption Agency will provide support from an individual social worker and, when required, other professionals to enhance a child's understanding of and preparedness for placement. (Standard 15)

Life storybooks and other information which will help children understand their family and background will be provided by the Adoption Agency within the prescribed timescales. (Standard 3, 5, 12)

The Adoption Agency will undertake assessment of needs and placement considerations, which inform matching process to focus on outcomes, life chances and opportunities. (Standard 1 &10)

Where we anticipate local resources cannot meet their needs the opportunity to be matched with an adoptive family from the RAA, VAA, and the Link Maker Database (Standard 13) shall be actively pursued.

Therapeutic support is provided directly, commissioned, or met by referral to other agencies if required as an outcome of assessment. (Standard 15)

For those seeking information, counselling, and advice in adulthood on tracing birth family members and reunion is available and provide individuals with counselling about the circumstances of their adoption. (Standard 16)

The Agency will offer supervision and support throughout the adoption process. (Standard 15)

To operate an adult-to-adult information exchange via the Lincolnshire letterbox system. (Standard 16)

To give an opportunity to talk with other young people who may be separated from members of their birth family. (Standard 16)

The Agency will offer information about how to contact the advocacy service provided by Voiceability Lincolnshire. (Standard 16)

Through collaborative working with other agencies, we will deliver and co-ordinate support for children, especially those with attachment difficulties, to facilitate the transition to new adoptive families. (Standard 1, 3, 10)

ASPIRATION AND WELL-BEING

All prospective adoptive carers are, as part of their assessment and training, required to inform the Agency of the plans that they will make to safeguard and maintain the child's welfare when they are adopted. The Agency will undertake to support carers to locate such services as GP, dentist and education services if required.

Before making the placement, the Agency must give the notifications required by regulation 35.6. These are important in ensuring as smooth a transition as possible in the child's health care and education, and in the safeguarding and support arrangements for the child.

Working collaboratively with adopters, local agencies, and the statutory authorities; a plan will be presented to panel outlining the resources that the child needs and how the adopters will be assisted in meeting these needs.

All adoptive families in Lincolnshire are provided an adoption support plan which will identify any needs at the time of adoption. Should the family require any further support in the future they are able to access advise, information, support groups and training. All post adoption support workers are trained in a range of therapeutic approaches and offer training and support to families. Should they family require any more specialist support they are able to access this through an adoption support assessment.

Prior to consideration of the child's plan, a health assessment under regulation 7.1 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 is carried out and

a report of this assessment in accordance with those regulations is prepared. Once the agency is considering adoption for the child, it immediately consults its medical adviser to ascertain whether the health information already obtained is sufficient and up to date. This report is needed to fulfil the requirements of the regulations and the need for full information for the child, the adoption panel, and the prospective adopter.

This report is presented to Panel and the needs of the child are fully discussed to ensure that any future placement has both the information about the child and a plan as to how these needs are to be met.

SAFEGUARDING

Lincolnshire's Children's Service including its Adoption Service is part of Lincolnshire's Safeguarding Children's Partnership.

The assessment of adopters includes the taking of full employment and accommodation histories. Checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and local authority checks are completed on everyone aged over 18 years of age living in the household. A range of referees are contacted and visited.

All adopters have a safer caring assessment prior to approval which highlights key aspects of the safer caring process. Safe caring is an important part of the training offered.

This training is mandatory and covers specific areas such as safer caring, the implications of looking after children who may have been harmed and the implications of how a child's attachment may have been affected in their early years.

Allegations that are made against adopters prior to an order being made are investigated using an established procedure whereby all are considered by the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). An independent person chairs the initial strategy meeting and oversees the process to ensure its timeliness. Where allegations are made following the granting of an adoption order these are managed using standard Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures.

ASPIRATION, LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENT

Lincolnshire County Council is committed to maximising a child's potential in both academic attainment and personal achievement and will work collaboratively with prospective adopters, local agencies, and any party it considers as necessary to plan and maintain the child's education.

From 2013, adopted children were given priority school access and in 2014 all adopted children aged 2 years became entitled to free early education. Furthermore, the Pupil Premium was increased and now includes all adopted school children from reception class through to year 11 and includes children who were in care prior to becoming subject to a Special Guardianship Order.

A record of the child's achievements prior to being placed will be available to the prospective carer and information sharing will consider the short medium and long term needs of the child in education. Research has shown that in most of the cases adoption works. education and health outcomes are as good as for children growing up with their birth parents.

SUPPORTING THE ADOPTION SERVICE

All the work of the service is delivered through the following relationships and support functions which are described below:

1. Prospective Adopter's Social Worker

The role of the prospective adopter's social worker is to give support to the adopter throughout the assessment process, through the placement of a child up until an order is made. They also assist and advise with practical difficulties, the provision of equipment, and ensure that adopter training is being undertaken. They are a crucial link between the adopter and the child's social worker and the two workers need to work closely to prepare the adopters and share with them information that they need to assist in planning for the placement of a child.

2. Child's Social Worker

The child's social worker is responsible for the overall management of the child's care plan. They have a statutory duty to visit the child in line with the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review regulations (2010), the National Minimum Standards for Adoption Services (2014); however, in some circumstances the visiting pattern will be more frequent particularly in the early stages of a placement or when there are difficulties, up to the time when the adoption order is made.

3. Adoption Support Social Worker

The role of the adoption support social worker is to provide specialised assessment, therapy support and tailored plans of support to adoptive families and those who hold a Special Guardianship Order. Support is underpinned by an assessment of need which is made in line with the Adoption Support Regulations 2005, Special Guardianship Regulations 2005 and amended Special Guardianship Regulations 2016.

The Adoption Support Services Adviser is the Practice Supervisor/Team Manager for Adoption who will deal with any enquiries regarding the eligibility for support services and the services provided.

The service is provided on a tiered basis dependent on assessed need:

Tier 1	Support to adopters includes family time (contact) co-ordination, helpline advice, information via the Lincolnshire adoption website. Birth records counselling for adults. Also included in this tier is counselling for birth relatives whose children have been adopted as well as seminars for grandparents of adopters.
Tier 2	All of tier 1 and in addition adoption support groups/activities for adopters and for children affected by adoption. These include a programme of activities which bring adoptive children together to share experiences of adoption as part of leisure activities. Access to training events and newsletters to share resources.
Tier 3	Previous tier support plus specific adoption support includes assessment of need, individual adoption support packages, that include a range of diverse therapeutic approaches provided by our in-house therapist or our network of private providers. Since the launch of the Adoption Support Fund, therapeutic interventions can be claimed from the central fund to ensure that adoptive families have access to therapeutic support. Support is provided to children until the age of 21, or 25 if that child has an Education Health Care plan.

4. Adoption Support Groups

There are locally held support groups for adopters to attend; their social worker will assist them to join a local support group and discuss with the adopter's issues such as information sharing within the group. The Adoption Service will provide adopters with access to the Family Adoption Links website which provides links to useful information relating to all aspects of adoption and signposting to services and resources. In addition, in 2014 the service introduced a quarterly newsletter for adopters, which is sent to all current and past adopters with children under 21.

In addition to the support groups, we have an adopter hub and a children's hub called Collabor8. Both groups meet bi-monthly to ensure that their views are gathered and that they contribute to service delivery and shaping services going forward.

TRAINING

The Adoption Service ensures that adopters are trained in the skills required to provide high quality care to meet the needs of a child placed in their care.

Training is a clear expectation of all adopters and is evaluated prior to approval.

The Preparing to Adopt Course is mandatory. This is split into two consecutive days with the third day taking place a week later. There are applicants from Lincolnshire and North Lincolnshire areas, and it is delivered by one North Lincolnshire Social Worker and one Lincolnshire Social Worker. Sharing the training means that best practice, knowledge and experiences are shared within the staff group.

The course is designed to provide the opportunity for applicants to meet other prospective adopters and to share common experiences and to benefit from the individual

perspectives which participants bring to the areas of learning. The methods of learning include presentation, group discussions, video clips, small group work and case studies. The course is designed to be starting point from which the prospective adopters to commence their own learning journey regarding adoption and the important subjects that we cover such as grief and loss, attachment, trauma, therapeutic parenting, the PACE model (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy), Theraplay, telling and contact with birth family. The course is designed to enable the prospective adopters to think about whether they have the skills and abilities to parent a child who has experienced trauma, abuse and loss.

The prospective adopters are also able to hear from experienced adopters who share their adoption journey, the highs, lows and challenges of parenting an adopted child. We also aim to have the voices of birth family's present in the presentation.

Applicants are encouraged to share with the group to enable everyone to learn. The applicants are also encouraged to participate in the group work and to make their own support group from their training cohort.

The training covers:

Day One

- Introduction and Adoption Process
- Reasons why children may be adopted
- Exploration of the changes that becoming an adoptive parent will bring and the difference between parenting a birth child and an adopted child
- Awareness of separation, grief and helping children deal with loss
- The adoption triangle
- Experienced adopter shares their personal experiences
- Experiential exercises

Day Two

- Attachment theory
- Mental health problems in Children and Young people
- Developmental Trauma
- Therapeutic Parenting and PACE
- Adopted person speaking of their experience.
- The importance of play
- Theraplay
- Compassion fatigue and blocked care

Day Three

- Life story work and identity
- Resilience
- Adopted parent discussing experiences of family time
- Diversity difference and discrimination

- Early permanence
- The adoption panel and what happens next
- Matching and introductions
- Information sharing and confidentiality
- Experienced adopter speak
- Telling a child about being adopted
- Retaining links and relationships
- Post adoption support and the ASF

Pre-approval training is complemented by a regional suite of courses offered to adoptive parents delivered through e-Learning and more traditional face to face training. The courses currently on offer are:

Talking about Adoption Part one
 Talking about Adoption Part two
 Early Permanence
 Therapeutic parenting Part One
 Therapeutic parenting Part two
 Friends and Family Part One
 Friends and Family Part 2
 Foetal Alcohol course
 Non-Violent Resistance Course
 The Childs Sensory World
 The Education Passport
 Adopting Siblings

Further training courses are also in development including adopting when you have birth children, and courses for the adopters of teenage children.

THE PROCESS OF RECRUITING AND APPROVING ADOPTERS

The recruitment of adopters is currently managed and effected jointly between the RAA Family Adoption Links and the local Fostering and Adoption recruitment activity.

Most enquiries come to the service via our interactive website. The referrals to the Family Adoption Links website are forwarded to the local offices depending upon geographical location. The Recruitment Co-ordinators aim to contact all enquirers within 24 hours of them registering their interest online.

The Recruitment Co-ordinator's role is to ensure that enquirers have all the information they need and following an initial discussion an initial expression of interest can be completed over the phone.

The service is focusing on enhancing the overall customer experience and the Recruitment Co-ordinators represent the Local Authority in a professional manner, being respectful to all enquirers and acknowledging their individual journey to embark on this process.

Within 5 working days of applicants completing their initial expression of interest, the enquirers will receive a telephone call from a social worker to start the process and to arrange an individual interview. If eligible to proceed following this visit, applicants will then submit their formal Registration of Interest to the agency.

Adopters are recruited and assessed in line with Family Adoption Links guidance which is based on the National Minimum Standards and Adoption Regulations.

Recruitment involves:

- Utilising social media to reach wide audiences.
- Information events have been held online and are all being advertised on the Family Adoption Links website, so that they are available to all and are well attended.
- Information is distributed through displays and presentations at events like the Lincolnshire show.
- Word of mouth through existing carers.
- Lincolnshire County Council LCC Connects website/Family Adoption Links website
- Targeted activity within specific communities in house if needed.

The Regional Adoption Agency continues to focus on specific areas for recruitment: recruiting adopters for sibling groups, children aged over the age of 4, children with complex health and developmental needs, children of Black and minority Ethnic heritage as well as recruiting carers with the additional skills required for early permanence.

The recruitment strategy has both a community focused approach, to reflect the specific needs of the communities within the region, coupled with digital marketing as it is recognised that we need to maximise our reach to prospective adopters and cannot rely on a single method to achieve this.

The process for the assessment and approval of adopters was reformed on the 1st July 2013 and a new two stage approval process was introduced, so that prospective adopters can be approved to adopt a child more quickly. Under the two-part process, adoption agencies must assess and approve adopters within 6 months. The new process comprises a two-month initial training and preparation stage (Stage One).

Stage One commences when applicants have formally registered their interest and will end with the agency's decision on whether the prospective adopter can proceed to Stage Two. In Stage One, all required checks and references will be completed.

Stage Two consists of an in-depth assessment and will end with presentation of the prospective adopter report to the adoption panel and the agency decision maker's decision about the suitability of the prospective adopter to adopt a child.

The prospective adopter report is completed by a social worker who is compliant with the restriction on the preparation of adoption reports regulations 2005.

A person is within a prescribed description for the purposes of section 94(1) of the 2005

Act if: —

- (a) She/he is a social worker who is employed by a local authority or registered adoption society and who satisfies at least one of the conditions set out in paragraph (2)(a) or (b).
- (b) She/he is a person who: —
 - is participating in a course approved by a Council under section 63 of the 2000 Act for persons wishing to become social workers
 - is employed by, or placed with, a local authority or registered adoption society as part of that course; and
 - satisfies the condition set out in paragraph (2)(b); or
- (c) She/he is acting on behalf of a local authority or a registered adoption society and is a social worker who satisfies the conditions in paragraph (2) (a) and (b).

The conditions referred to in paragraph (1) are that the person: -

- (a) has at least three years' post-qualifying experience in childcare social work, including direct experience of adoption work.
- (b) is supervised by a social worker who: -
 - is employed by the local authority or registered adoption society in question; and
 - has at least three years' post-qualifying experience in childcare social work, including direct experience of adoption work.

The report is presented to the Adoption panel for consideration and a recommendation of their suitability is made. The organisation and composition of this panel is in accordance with Adoption Service Regulations 2011.

The Adoption Panel makes recommendations on the suitability of prospective adopters; this recommendation is passed, along with the prospective adopter report, panel's final minutes and any other supporting documentation, to the Agency Decision Maker.

National Minimum Standards 23.17 sets out the qualifications, knowledge and experience the decision-maker must have.

The Agency Decision Maker does not have direct line management responsibility for the adoption panel but has the authority to make decisions on its behalf as to whether the prospective adopters are suitable to adopt a child. (Adoption Agency Regulation 27)

Prospective Adopters are invited to attend panel and participate in the panel discussions. All panels are currently conducted remotely, and all applicants are invited to attend. Feedback is received from those applicants who have commented on the process and have been satisfied with the experience of being at panel.

NUMBER OF ADOPTIVE CARERS

A total of 30 adoptive parents were approved to adopt during 2022/2023, an increase of 3 from the previous year. 8 of these were also dual approved for Foster to Adopt, an increase of 2 from the previous year. No adopters were approved for inter-country adoption.

The trend continues to be that there are more adoptive parents than children waiting for a placement within the county. As there have been significant delays in children's court proceedings, the service has always had approved adopters waiting to ensure choice when making matches.

On 31st March 2023 there were 9 adopters approved and waiting; two of which were being considered for possible links. In addition, there were two early permanence families fostering children with a view to adoption.

	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15
Total Adopters approved	30	27	25	28	43	22	32	24
Of which Foster-to-Adopt approved	8	6	8	7	15	14	12	0
Foster-to-Adopt New Applications	6	5	8	6	10	5	12	6
Foster-to-Adopt Subsequent Applications	2	1	0	1	4	9	5	0

	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15
Approved for one child	23	16	19	18	37	13	20	14
Approved for two children	7	11	6	10	6	9	11	9
Approved for three children	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1

NUMBER OF CHILDREN PLACED

41 children were placed for adoption in the year 2022 to 2023, an increase of 5 from the previous year. Of these, 25 were singleton placements, a decrease of 7 children. 16 children were placed in 8 sibling groups of 2, which is double from the year before.

23 of the children were placed before they were 2 years, with 15 children placed between the age of 2 and five years and 3 children aged over 5. There were no children aged over 5 placed for adoption last year, so this is an increase.

There were 25 boys placed and 16 girls, continuing a trend of having more boys than girls.

Overall, there were double the number of sibling groups placed together than in the previous year and the cohort of children were slightly older than in previous years.

Generally, there has been a significant increase in the number of cases which are delayed in court awaiting Placement Orders and were not placed within National Minimum Standard 17.7 as they waited several months to be made subject to a Placement Order.

FINANCE

Adopters can request an assessment for a means tested allowance. This allowance is discretionary and is reviewed annually in respect of the needs of each placement and the child. Additional support through a one off settling in grant will also be made with a fee that has been agreed within the FAL region.

COMPLAINTS AND ALLEGATIONS

Summary of the Complaints Procedure

The Directorate has a statutory complaints service.

The Complaints Policy sets out how complaints will be dealt with ensuring concerns raised are considered and any resulting adjustments made, where required.

- Stage 1 – Local Resolution
- Stage 2 – Independent Investigator is appointed
- Stage 3 - Independent Panel formal review by an Independent Panel of independent members plus the Complaints Manager.

Staff do ensure that all carers know how and to whom to complain.

Complainants have the right to involve a friend or advocate.

The Customer Relations & Complaints Manager is Shagofta Noreen

- Email customerrelationsteam@lincolnshire.gov.uk
- Write to Customer Relations Team, Lincolnshire County Council, County Offices, Newland, Lincoln, LN1 1YL or
- customerrelationsteam@lincolnshire.gov.uk
- Call 01522 843322

The Named Manager monitors all complaints and liaises with the Customer Relations & Complaints Manager and the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) Business Manager. This information is available to authorised persons only. All adopters have access to support and information regarding the complaint's procedures.

Independent Reviewing Mechanism

Prospective adopters are given written information about the role of the Independent Reviewing Mechanism (IRM) as part of their preparation process. They are also provided with leaflets about the IRM when information is being prepared for presentation to panel. There have been no representations made to the IRM in 2022-2023.

NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS AND THEIR OUTCOMES

Two complaints were made and resolved to the Adoption Service during 2022-2023. This was a reduction of 3 from the previous year. Both were resolved in stage one of the complaints procedure.

The issues raised in complaints were used to make changes to the service where this was appropriate.

ALLEGATIONS

Adopters can sometimes be the subject of allegations in respect of the care of the children or young people they are looking after. If this occurs the allegation will be investigated in line with Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership safeguarding procedures with all allegations managed by the Local Authority Designated Officer. In addition to the role of the supervising social worker, adopters can have access to an independent social worker who can offer practical and emotional support.

All allegations and other matters listed in the Regulations are monitored by the manager who ensures that the appropriate notifications to Ofsted and other agencies are carried out.

In 2022/2023 there were no allegations made in respect of adoptive carers.

ADVOCACY AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Lincolnshire County Council commissions its advocacy for children through Voiceability Lincolnshire

Referral and Information Line: 0300 303 1660

Website: www.helpline@voiceability.org

When might you want an advocate?

You can ask to speak with advocate if you:

- Have serious concerns about the care you are getting
- Want to be more involved in decisions being made about you and your future
- Want to fight decisions being made about you
- Want to make a complaint.

Office of the Children's Commissioner



The Children's Commissioner is Dame Rachel de Souza. She has a legal duty to promote and protect the rights of all children in England with a particular focus on children and young people with difficulties or challenges in their lives, and those living away from home, in or leaving care, or receiving social care services.

The Children's Commissioner can be contacted: -

By writing to her at:

The Office of the Children's Commissioner, Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT.

Phoning her on Freephone: 0800 528 0731

Emailing at: help.team@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

Visiting the website www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

The Lincolnshire Adoption Service works to the Lincolnshire County Council's Equality and Diversity Policy which is available on the council's website.

The Adoption Service will treat all service users fairly, openly and with respect throughout their approval process. The adoption agency embraces the Customer Care and Service Standards, endorsed by the DfE, the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS), Adoption UK, and the Consortium for Voluntary Adoption Agencies.

Applicants wishing to be approved as adopters will be considered irrespective of ethnicity, religion, belief, gender, sexual orientation, or disability providing the adoption service considers they can safely meet the needs of children throughout their childhood and into independence. The minimum age for applying to adopt is 21 years old.

Every attempt will be made to find a placement which meets a child or young person's emotional and developmental needs taking into consideration their ethnicity, religion, language, culture, gender, and disability.

However, Lincolnshire's Adoption Service recognises that it is unacceptable for a child to be denied adoptive parents solely on the grounds that the child and prospective adopter do not share the same racial or cultural background. If the prospective adopter can meet most of the child's needs, the service must not delay placing a child because they do not share the child's racial or cultural background.

The Lincolnshire Adoption Service recognises that no child or young person should have to wait indefinitely for the ideal placement.

All policies and procedures concerning the adoption service are subject to Equality Impact Assessment.

OFSTED

Ofsted is the single, independent inspectorate for all social care services in England. It is responsible for monitoring, regulating, and inspecting adoption services under the provisions of the Care Standards Act, 2000.

Questions or complaints

The one point of contact for all questions, queries and complaints is the Ofsted National Business Unit.

The one point of contact for all questions, queries and complaints is Ofsted.

The telephone number is 0300 123 1231. This number manages all general enquiries and will redirect them as necessary; they can also be contacted at enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk or write to:

Ofsted National Business Unit
Piccadilly Gate,
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

FURTHER INFORMATION

The Adoption Statement of Purpose will be reviewed annually.

If you require this document in a different language or an alternative format such as large print, audio tape or Braille, please contact a member of the Adoption Service via telephone on 01522 554114.

The Statement of Purpose, Children's Guides and other information are also available on the Lincolnshire County Council website: www.lincolnshire.gov.uk

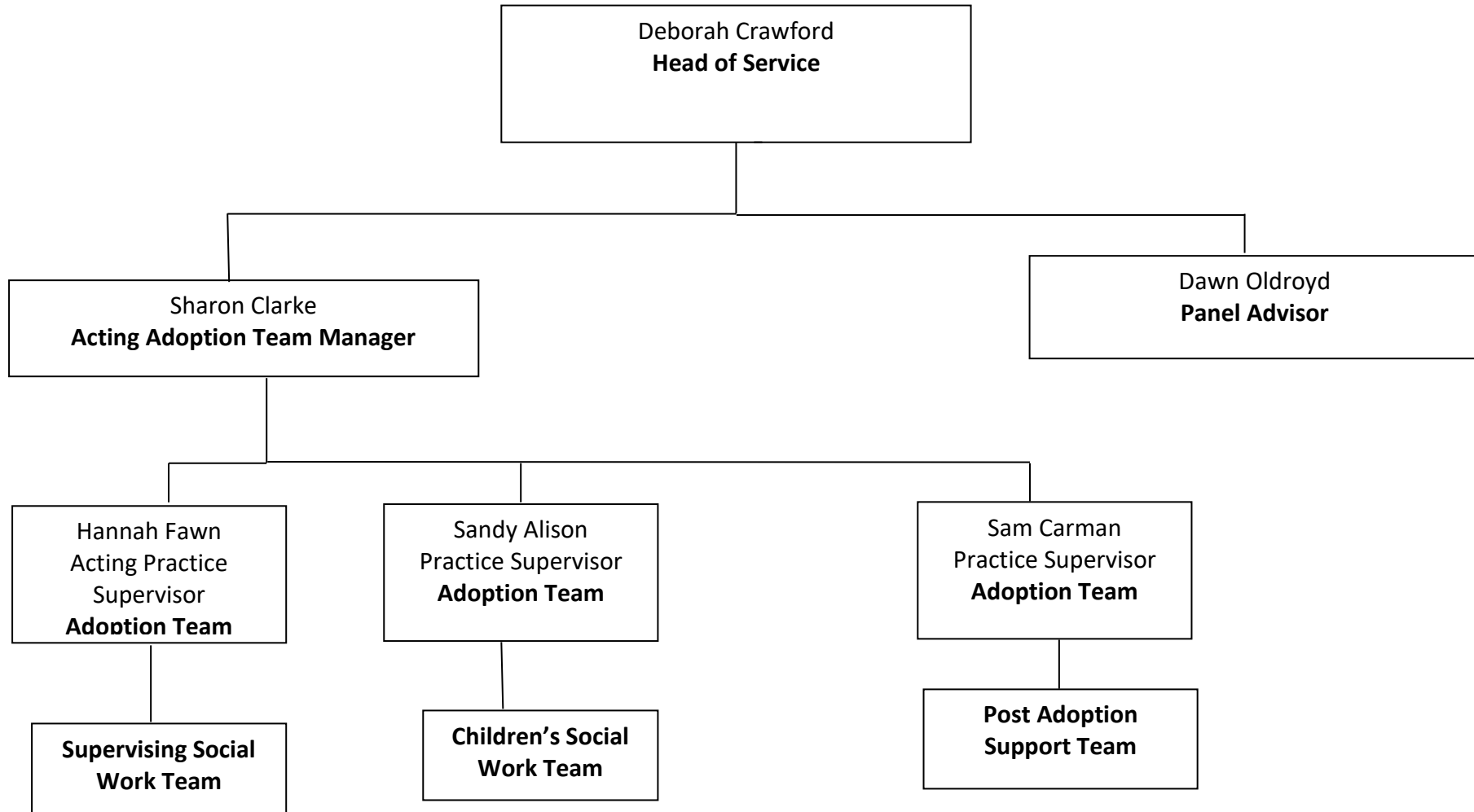
A copy can also be obtained from the registered manager:

Deborah Crawford – Head of Service, Fostering and Adoption
County Offices
Newland
Lincoln
Lincs
LN1 1YL

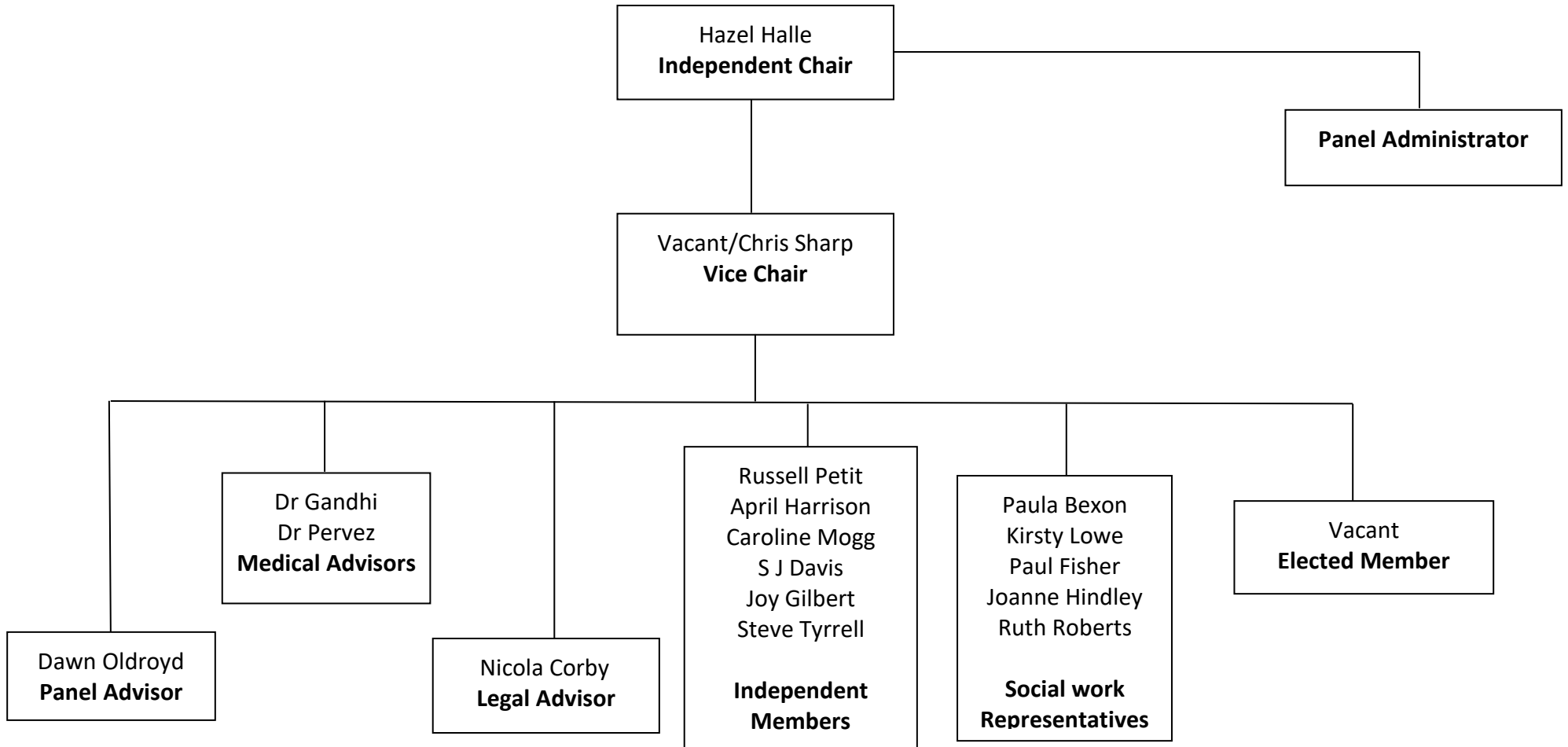
Telephone: 01522 552781

Email: deborah.crawford@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Appendix 1
Leadership structure



Appendix 2
Adoption and Permanence Panel



Appendix 3
Adoption Service - Staffing

Position	Qualifications	Length of time in LCC Adoption Services
Head of Service Regulated Services (Deborah Crawford)	Diploma in Social Work (DipSW) Diploma in Higher Education BA (Hons) Social and Professional Studies PQ1 in Social Work Post Graduate Certificate in Leadership and Management in Social Work	29 years including 10 years in Regulated Services
Acting Team Manager Adoption Services (Sharon Clarke)	BTEC ND Social Care BA (Hons) Applied Social Studies DipSW Level 3 Diploma in Management	20 years
Acting Practice Supervisor Adoption Services (Hannah Fawn)	BA (Hons) Social Work	10 Years
Practice Supervisor (Sandy Allison)	BSc (Hons) Social Work and Social Work Policy DipSW	20 years
Practice Supervisor Sam Carman	CQSW	9 years (4 years in regulated services)
Supervising Social Worker (Juliet Collingwood)	BA in Criminology and an MA in Social Work Practice Educator 1.	5 Years
Supervising Social Worker (Julia Mann)	CQSW BA Combined Studies MA Health Services Studies Post graduate diploma in Social Studies PQ1	19 Years
Supervision Social Worker Lorraine Wallace	BA[Hons] Social work	3 years (7 in Regulated Services)
Supervising Social Worker (Debra Green)	BA (Hons) Social Work	12 years
Social Worker (Wendy Jennings)	BA (Hons) Social & Behavioural Studies MA, DIPSW Social Work CACDP Level 1 CACDP Level 2	14 years
Social Worker (Mark Abdul)	BA (Hons) Social Work	9 years

Position	Qualifications	Length of time in LCC Adoption Services
Vacant Post Recruitment underway		
Social Worker (Claire Liddan)	BA (Hons) Social Work	8 years
Supervising Social Worker (Kelly Shaw)	BSc (Hons) Social Work	8 years
Social Worker (Laura Tyrrell)	BA (Hons) Social Work	7 years
Vacant Post Recruitment underway		
Adoption Support Worker (Dawn Button)	HNC Business and Finance	24 Years
Early Help worker (Claire Leeson)	Foundation Theraplay Qualified Havening Practitioner Diploma in Therapeutic Parenting	1 Year
Post Adoption Support Social Worker (Pat Mills)	BA (Hons) Social Work Higher diploma in therapeutic play MA Integrative psychotherapy/ child psychotherapy Level 1 /2 and advanced EMDR Theraplay level 1 and 2 DDP level 1 and 2 350 hour Yoga Therapy Children & Young People	11 Years
Post Adoption Support Social Worker (Jane Thornton)	BA (Hons) Social Work Diploma in Therapeutic Life story work	9 years
Adoption Support Social Worker (Jo Poole)	BA (Hons) Social Science CQSW Certificate in Counselling Advanced Certificate in Counselling	18 Years
Early Help Worker Sarah Clarke	Level one Theraplay Level one DDP	3 years
Post Adoption Support Social Worker Sian Griffin	BA [Hons] social work	5 years

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

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	07 September 2023
Subject:	Fostering Statement of Purpose 2022 - 2023

Summary:

This Statement of Purpose fulfils the requirements of Standard 16 of the Fostering Services Minimum Standards (Care Standards Act 2000) and Regulation 3 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011.

Actions Required:

That the Corporate Parenting Panel notes the Fostering Statement of Purpose 2022-2023.

1. Background

This report informs the Corporate Parenting Panel of the Fostering Statement of Purpose for 2022-2023.

2. Conclusion

The Panel is requested to note the contents of the Fostering Statement of Purpose for 2022-2023 and the work of the Fostering Service.

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Fostering Statement of Purpose 2022-23

5. Background Papers

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

This report was written by Deborah Crawford, who can be contacted on Tel 01522 552781 or Deborah.crawford@lincolnshire.gov.uk



Lincolnshire Fostering Service

Statement of Purpose 2022-2023

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE FOR THE LINCOLNSHIRE FOSTERING SERVICE

This Statement of Purpose fulfils the requirements of Standard 16 of the Fostering Services Minimum Standards (Care Standards Act, 2000) and Regulation 3 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011. To be presented for approval by Lincolnshire County Council Executive in September each year.

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- 3. Aims, Objectives and Principles of the Fostering Service
- 5. Standards of Care
- 5. Status and Constitution
- 6. Leadership Structure
- 7. The work of the Fostering Service
- 9. Service Ambitions
- 16. Training
- 17. Recruiting and Approving Foster Carers
- 20. Finance
- 20. Monitoring
- 20. Complaints and Allegations
- 21. Advocacy and Children's Rights
- 22. Number of Children Placed
- 23. Equality and Diversity
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- 24. Further Information

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Leadership Structure

Appendix 2 Fostering Panel Structure

AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE:

The main aims of the Lincolnshire County Council Fostering Service are to:

Provide high quality and safe care within a family setting for children and young people who have been assessed as requiring a foster placement.

Provide a range of Foster Carers able to meet the emotional, physical, cultural, religious, and ethnic needs of all the children in care with Lincolnshire County Council.

Lincolnshire County Council delivers its Fostering Service through dedicated Fostering Teams managed by Team Managers covering the north and south of the county within a countywide approach.

The main service objectives are to:

Place children and young people within Kinship or local foster placements where relationships with family, friends and community are maintained and continuity of education, health and cultural links and activities is ensured. In instances where it is not possible to achieve this within the Council's Foster Placements an appropriate placement outside of the resources of the County Council will be sought.

Maintain sufficient foster care placements in relation to the location, numbers, needs, age range and characteristics of the children in care population and review this annually through the recruitment and retention strategy.

Recruit Foster Carers who are trained and supported in providing safe care to children who live with them. The service will determine the number and types of foster placements required and produce an annual recruitment and retention plan.

Carry out an assessment of need on every child prior to accommodation. Where possible a safe family member or friend from the family network will be the preferred placement choice.

Provide a safe and nurturing foster placement with every effort made to achieve good outcomes for children in care, within set timescales and to agreed standards. The service aims to ensure that wherever possible, children can meet with their prospective foster carers prior to placement and if this is not possible, receive a foster family profile.

Provide for sibling groups to be placed together when this is in their best interests.

Respect and promote the child's heritage, culture, and identity.

Promote family time between the child and their family where this is consistent with the care plan.

Achieve permanence for all children who are unable to return safely to their families and promote Staying Put for those young adults who are secure within their foster placement.

Ensure openness and partnership working between all those involved and concerned with the child's welfare.

Involve young people and foster carers in developing services and building their feedback into service development.

To continue to promote Caring 2 Learn to encourage caring schools and learning homes as part of day to day practice

To continue to support and develop foster care champions across the County to ensure that the model is extended as widely as possible.

The Fostering Service has set targets to achieve best practice for the following Children's Performance Assessment Framework and National Indicators:

NI062 – stability of placements of children in care: number of placement moves.

PAF B79 – the percentage of children in foster placements or placed for adoption.

NI063 – stability of placements of children in care: length of placement.

The main principles underpinning the service are:

Foster Carers will be treated with respect. Recognition will be given to the valuable role they play in the care of children in care.

Recruitment of new Foster Carers and staff who work within the service, complies with regulations, national standards, and good practice.

Foster Carers are vetted, prepared, and assessed in line with national regulations and requirements.

The Lincolnshire Fostering Panel considers all carer applications and reviews of approval.

All approved Foster Carers are required to sign the Foster Care Agreement and the Foster Carer Charter which outlines expectations of the Fostering Service and commits to caring appropriately for children in care.

Wherever possible all placements are matched to ensure a positive match between the needs of the child and the skills and experience of the foster carer(s).

Every child placed will be subject to the children in care - care planning process.

All Foster Carers are provided with the required documentation and information to support the placement of the child in their care.

Children have their placement and plan reviewed within four weeks of initial placement.

All Foster Carers have a named Supervising Social Worker and children in foster care have a named allocated Social Worker.

STANDARDS OF CARE TO BE FOLLOWED BY THE AGENCY:

The Fostering Service aims to provide safe, secure, and high-quality care in family settings for children who need to be cared for away from home. This will be achieved in accordance with the standards set out in the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 (referred to as the Regulations), the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review regulations (2010) and (Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) Regulations 2015 and 2021, the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (2011) along with the policies and procedures of Lincolnshire County Council.

These standards will apply equally to family and friend's placements also referred to as 'Kinship' The service complies with the requirements of the Training, Support and Development Standards (2012).

There is a countywide management group whose function is to continuously improve standards of care informed by inspections, audits, new legislation, and guidance and evaluate the effectiveness of service delivery.

STATUS AND CONSTITUTION OF THE AGENCY:

Lincolnshire County Council is an approved fostering service provider and will be inspected by OFSTED in accordance with the current inspection framework.

Decision making and arrangements for the management of the service including the appointment of the Fostering Registered Manager (Regulation 6) and approval of Foster Carer registrations (Regulation 27) are delegated to the Assistant Director, Children's Services.

A Fostering Panel is established in accordance with Regulation 23. The Panel is chaired by an independent person with considerable experience of working with Social Care.

Where Lincolnshire County Council need to secure the provision of external Foster Care placements they will do so via the Placements Team, within the Strategic Commissioning Team and a market search will then be undertaken, in accordance with the Council's Contract and Procurement Procedure Rules (CPPR).

THE LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE:

The Fostering Service is managed by the Head of Service for Regulated Services; through two Team Managers who manage dedicated fostering teams from bases in Lincoln, Louth, and Sleaford. The service employs five practice supervisors who have lead responsibility for specific areas of delivery.

The registered manager appointed to manage the Fostering Service under Regulation 10 of the Fostering Services Regulations is:

Deborah Crawford, Head of Service – Regulated Services
County Offices
Newland
Lincoln
LN1 1YL

Telephone: 01522 552781

Email: deborah.crawford@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Qualifications: Diploma in Social Work, BA (Hons) Social and Professional Studies and Post Graduate Certificate in Leadership and Management in Social Work.

Experience: more than twenty five years of experience of working in social care, specialising in children and families, and latterly fostering. The registered manager comes with various childcare experience and has held previous leadership posts within Children's Services.

The nominated manager to lead the Fostering Service in the absence of the registered manager is Rachel Freeman – Head of Service for Children in Care and Residential Estates.

The Fostering Teams are locality based and deliver a comprehensive fostering service. These teams manage the recruitment, assessment, approval, support, and placement processes which enable children in care in Lincolnshire County Council to be placed in a range of fostering settings.

Dawn Oldroyd is the dedicated Professional Agency Advisor for both the Fostering and Permanence Panels.

The organisational structure of the Fostering Service is shown in Appendix 1. The list of Fostering Panel members is set out in Appendix 2. This information in its fullest form is only available to Ofsted.

Two Team Managers manage the teams responsible for the service on a geographic basis. Emily McAllister is the Team Manager North and has 18 years' experience in social work working across the fields of fostering and adoption. Nicola Brangam manages the South Team. She has 23 years' experience of social work and has worked in a range of services across children and families including regulated services.

The teams comprise Practice Supervisors who are responsible for the supervision and development of staff; including Supervising Social Workers who are all qualified and experienced in a range of childcare social work and several unqualified staff who work within recruitment, placement support and placement duty. In addition, the service employs a dedicated marketing officer and assistant who contribute to the delivery of the annual recruitment and retention strategy.

THE WORK OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE:

The Council's vision of 'Working for a better future' is firmly embedded within the Council's Corporate Plan which underpins the 'One Council' approach which ensures that all services are working towards shared goals and will help different parts of the council work together more effectively.

The council have identified key priorities for Lincolnshire communities, and these include:

- High aspirations
- The opportunity to enjoy life to the full
- Thriving environments
- Good value council services

Within the pledge, the council want Lincolnshire to be a place where everyone has the opportunity to live their lives to the full, with independence and access to the right support at the right time.

Within this the council will lead with others to enable everyone to enjoy life to the full and will *'intervene effectively to keep vulnerable people safe, making sure children in care and care leavers get the best opportunities'*.

Children's Services delivers a vast range of services to children, young people and families in Lincolnshire to ensure that they are safe, well and supported. This support ranges from universal services through to child protection and beyond including children in care.

Staff continuously strive to achieve the Children's Services vision, Putting Children First – everyone working together for all children, young people and families to be happy, healthy, safe and best they can be.

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

- **Early Help:** Strong protective universal services accessible to all with a range of early help available so children have the best start in life and families have extra help when they need it
- **Safeguarding:** A shared responsibility to ensure children are safe at home, school and in their community
- **Aspiration:** Children are able to thrive and cope with life challenges
- **Learning and Achievement:** All children being the best they can be with targeted interventions to close the gap so vulnerable children achieve as well as their peers
- **Best Use of Resources:** Integrated commissioning with a focus on best value, improved outcomes and community engagement.

Children's Services staff also work closely with partner agencies to ensure children and young people and families are receiving the right support, at the right time and from the right person. The partnership working is underpinned by the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership (LSCP), a multi-agency partnership board with a vision to safeguard, support and improve the lives of children and young people.

The outcomes that the Council commits to are:

- Young People are healthy and safe
- Children and Young People develop to their potential in their early years and are ready for school
- Children and Young People learn and achieve
- Children and Young People are ready for adult life.

The expectations for all Children in Care are enshrined within these outcomes.

- We will champion the importance of aspiration

- We will promote self-esteem, self-belief, and resilience in all children
- We will encourage all children to be the best they can be
- We will use resources to focus on outcomes, life chances and opportunities
- We will work jointly with foster carers to help promote these objectives.

Lincolnshire aims to provide sufficient local placements to enable placement choice and enable children to remain, where appropriate, close to their communities.

Lincolnshire delivers Staying Put opportunities to enable young people to remain in their foster placements post 18.

The training, induction and development of new Foster Carers is in line with the requirements of Standard 20 (NMS) and carers are expected to meet the Training, Support and Development standards (TSDs) within 12 months of approval/18 months of approval for Kinship carers.

The TSDs are incorporated and combined with the Caring to Learn Home Toolkit which encourages all carers to complete their training and develop skills, develop their knowledge, and gain support in their fostering journey.

This combined approach supports foster carers to assess how they work with children and young people to enable them to feel safe, belong in their home and school to provide them with a solid foundation to have the confidence to go on to learn, be aspirational and achieve their full potential.

SERVICE AMBITIONS:

Young People are Healthy and Safe:

All children are registered with GPs and dentists, and this is kept under review by the team managers. There are designated GPs and a named Doctor and small team of nurses responsible for this group of children. Children and young people placed in foster care have an initial health assessment carried out by a designated GP and are encouraged to have an annual review by the same GP or designated nurse.

The efforts to ensure that all medical and dental checks are completed is a priority for the service and engaging with carers to support this is held routinely and via the fostering newsletter.

Medical forms recommended by CoramBaaf, (the leading organisation for professionals working with children and young people in care) are used to record both the initial and annual health review and maintain a health profile for each child in care.

The Integrated Care Board is committed to supporting and prioritising the physical health and emotional well-being of children and young people in care and care leavers. Carers and young people can access further information from the young person's pages on the Council's website, including the updated Children in Care & Care Leavers Strategy 2022 - 2025 and updates on service provision are available via the Fostering Service monthly newsletter.

A multi-agency commissioning group is in place to understand and improve the health needs of children in care. As Corporate parents, the Fostering Service take collective responsibility alongside of the broader Council, its elected members, all employees, and its partner agencies to be ambitious and provide the best possible services for the children in our care.

In terms of priorities the service promotes good long term physical and emotional health and want to enable our children, young people and care leavers to have contented and healthy lives and be helped to evolve from what has happened in the past.

In order to achieve this our emphasis and focus is on:

- Developing the workforce to increase understanding of the widespread impact of trauma and potential paths to promote healing and recovery.
- Fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices.
- Ensure there are robust, holistic chronologies of events leading up to a child requiring care.
- Promoting the importance of emotional, physical and mental wellbeing e.g., working with Child, Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
- Enabling priority access to healthcare and wellbeing services.
- Ensuring services are sensitive to past harm and trauma.
- Keeping young people safe and helping young people to navigate the world in a way that promotes their safety when we are not around.
- Supporting interpersonal skills development..

Foster Carers complete a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQs) for children between the ages of four and sixteen years of age. This score is then added to the Valuing Care tool, so it is clearly recorded and noted for moving forward. This is to ensure that services for children who require additional support are accessed swiftly to improve emotional wellbeing.

Foster Carer training and development focuses on promoting a healthy lifestyle, good diet, and exercise. All Foster Carers must undertake first aid training as part of their mandatory post approval training. Foster Carers have training sessions on promoting the health of children in care. This core programme is supplemented through special interest seminars including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism, teenage pregnancy, developmental delay, the effects of Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) etc.

Foster Carers can access specialist services for those with substance and alcohol misuse problems through the young 'We are with you' service. (Previously Addaction)

As part of the assessment process of prospective Foster Carers, a health assessment is undertaken by the carers' GP which the Agency Medical Advisor for the fostering panel considers. If there are on-going medical issues, a full medical assessment is undertaken. Full medicals are also completed for all carers seeking approval for permanence. All carers are required to update their health assessment every 3 years.

Foster Carers who offer respite/short breaks care to disabled children are offered specialist training to meet the needs of individual children. Foster Carers are trained in the administration of specific medication and are supported in accessing the latest guidance from the NHS.

The assessment of carers includes the taking of full employment and accommodation histories. Checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and local authority checks are completed on everyone aged over 18 years of age living in the household. A range of referees are contacted and visited including previous partners who have parented together and birth children.

All Foster Carers attend mandatory training regarding safer caring and the implications of caring for children who may have been harmed and experienced trauma.

Each fostering household have a safer caring assessment prior to approval which highlights key aspects of the safer caring process, and this is reviewed in the light of each placement made. Every effort is taken when placing children to ensure that the assessed needs of the child are carefully matched to the skills and capabilities of the carers.

In the last few years this has been reinforced and further developed within the Children in Care Transformation Agenda where the Valuing Care approach aids us understand the needs and support requirements of children in our care. There are two analysis tools in use, one that is designed to support decision-making about the level of support needed by our children and young people. The other is a Fostering Tool that considers the skills, knowledge, and experience of foster carers in relation to support the needs of the young people being placed in their care.

All children placed are subject to a safety plan that identifies any risks that carers will be asked to manage.

All Foster Carers receive bi-monthly formal supervision, in addition to regular visits, to review and support their practice. This is more frequent where identified. All supervision visits are in person with support being in person, by telephone and tailored to the needs of the fostering family and the respective children placed. A minimum of one unannounced visit to the foster home is made annually.

For all children and young people in foster care whether cared for within or outside of the family network, they will have stability and be safe from harm. All placements for children and young people will be targeted to support their needs with the ambition to create and maintain the stability of placements through co-produced and child centred care plans.

Allegations against Foster Carers are investigated using an established procedure whereby all are considered by the Local Authority Designated Officer. An independent person chairs the initial strategy meeting and oversees the process. Independent support is offered to carers during the allegation's procedure by Foster Talk. In addition, the Fostering Service funds each fostering household's membership of the Fostering Network which brings the benefit of legal protection insurance and access to support and advice from their staff, including free legal advice and the counselling service.

Children's plans are regularly reviewed through the Children in Care's statutory review process, and procedures are in place for reporting significant incidents through the OFSTED notification requirements. All children are given information about how to report abuse and carers are prepared in how to manage disclosure and prevent allegations arising in the placement. In addition, children and young people have access to an independent advocacy service.

All children and young people are expected to agree with their carer when they go out, where they are going and a time to return. If a young person fails to return at the agreed time, attempts are made to locate them by telephoning friends, family, and relatives. Carers can obtain advice about the operation of the Missing from Care protocol from the Emergency Duty Team and are issued with a copy of it within the Foster Carer Handbook.

The process for conducting risk assessments on missing young people and making reports to the police is detailed in the Foster Carer Handbook.

Lincolnshire's Fostering Service Policy is that there is sufficient space within the foster carer's home for a child to have their own room. In certain circumstances, a child/young person may share a bedroom. Full risk assessments for each child/young person sharing must be undertaken before these arrangements are agreed. A matching policy is in place to ensure that effective matching of children to placements is undertaken to improve placement stability and good outcomes for children and young people.

READINESS FOR SCHOOL:

Education for children is a priority and forms part of every child's plan when in foster care. When children are below school age, education is promoted through the care provided by their foster carers. Carers are positively encouraged to register with their local children's centre, community initiatives and engage in the Early Help, Early Years and Family Hubs programme.

All children in care can access the 15 hours early entitlement at the age of 2 and have access to suitable nursery school provision to support their learning outcomes. From September 2018 the Government extended 30 hours free childcare for 3 and 4 year olds giving them the same access to support as other working families.

The introduction of this flagship childcare policy increased the potential for children in care to have access to the same support and opportunities which continues to positively impact on vulnerable children by promoting their best interests educationally, socially and emotionally.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE LEARN AND ACHIEVE:

Lincolnshire County Council is committed to maximising a child's potential in both academic attainment and personal achievement. All young people are expected to attend school and efforts are made to maintain children in their existing schools. Foster Carers who transport children to out of catchment schools have their transport expenses reimbursed.

Foster Carers are aware that it is not acceptable or agreed practice to take children and young people out of school for family holidays. A protocol remains in place in an effort to ensure that children are not taken out of school during term time.

The Fostering Service promotes the educational attainment of children placed with foster carers. Each child in foster care has a Personal Education Plan (PEP) and, where appropriate, a Leaving Care Pathway Plan. PEP meetings are held each term or more if

required with high levels of engagement from children, social workers, schools, and carers.

Foster Carers are expected to involve themselves in assisting children in care to achieve satisfactory attendance, support and encourage them with homework and participate in carer/ parent/teacher events.

Lincolnshire Virtual School supports the education of children in care and works in co-operation with all children and young people in care aged 3-18 years wherever they are educated, carers and professionals linked to those children and young people and the virtual schools within other local authorities.

All early years and statutory school aged children in care have an entitlement to the Pupil Premium. This funding is available as soon as children enter carer in an effort to raise the attainment of children in care of all abilities and close the gap between them and their peers.

It is a statutory requirement for all schools to have a Designated Teacher with responsibilities for liaison, educational monitoring, and pastoral care for children in care. Lincolnshire Virtual School Co-ordinators' role is to ensure effective liaison with schools, early years setting and post 16 providers and to promote educational attainment and attendance of children in care. This includes children who live with Foster Carers outside of Lincolnshire.

The Lincolnshire Virtual School Team, managed by the Virtual School Head, is fully engaged with the fostering service and carers to promote the improvement of educational outcomes for children and young people in care. The team is well resourced and provides training and support to social care teams, foster carers, and schools.

Caring2Learn is the Children's Services approach developed to support improved outcomes for children in care, previously looked-after children, and children with a social worker. This approach promotes joint working between schools, carers and social care teams and is focused on growing the understanding, knowledge, confidence, and support for all adults who work with or care for most vulnerable children.

The Caring2Learn approach is fully embedded into the Fostering Service as part of the Fostering Hub and core support offer for Foster Carers. This includes the Learning Homes accreditation which also forms part of the statutory fostering training, Training and Development (TSD) standards, the training offer to foster and kinship carers and the wide-ranging peer and professional support offer from the whole team including Foster Carer Champions, Placement Support Workers, and Supervising Social Workers.

The opportunity for children and young people to engage in hobbies or sports is seen as an important element of their development, the fostering support and is financed through fostering allowance payments. Annual Foster Carer Reviews consider the level of

social opportunities young people in placement are supported in attending. Children and young people are encouraged to participate in a range of activities and interests.

Children and Young Peoples' achievements are recognised each year in an annual award ceremony held under the banner of FAB! Following the FAB Awards being postponed due to covid restrictions and concerns over the past 2 years the Council are in the planning for the event scheduled for June 2023. A working group of key stakeholders has been established to develop the plans and implement the event which for a number of years has been a resounding success and something that our children and carers enjoy. The June 2023 event will include key contributions from partners including soundLincs and the University of Lincoln.

V4C is Lincolnshire's Children in Care Council with the aim being to share experiences of being in care in Lincolnshire and to inform teams who support Children in Care what does and does not work for them. V4C meetings are held within the four Children's Services locality quadrants and include care leavers as members and are supported by the participation team.

The continued agenda of V4C talks about issues that matter to children, young people and care leavers in an effort to make friends, develop confidence, learn new things and organise events, trips and have fun. This and the participation agenda via the Big Conversation ensure the Council undertake their pledge to the children in care community by maintaining their Caring Promise.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ARE READY FOR ADULT LIFE:

Lincolnshire County Council's Foster Carers are recruited and supported to meet the needs of children placed with them and provide the stability that they require to achieve and ready themselves for adult lives. The authority therefore makes sure that there are no barriers, financial or otherwise, to prevent Foster Carers becoming permanent carers be they adopters, Child Arrangement Order holders or special guardians; where an assessment determines that this is the best outcome for the child. The Council has fully committed to the Staying Put requirement with 45 young people remaining in their present foster placements. Young people are issued with a Skills for Adult Life booklet which identifies and develops the core skills for independent living which is a focus for the young person, foster carers, and all involved agencies.

The training plan for Foster Carers contains special interest seminars, which assist carers in helping children progress to independence. On an individual basis, placement support workers will also have a role in helping young people acquire skills for independence and have developed a range of work preparation and apprenticeship opportunities. Children in Care are encouraged to follow courses of higher education and appropriate support is made available to them.

All young people leaving care have a named worker and a clear plan for support in their transition post 16 years. The Leaving Care services continues to be delivered by Barnardo's who work with young people leaving care aged 16 to 25. All young people who are eligible for a service are entitled to support up to the age of 25 regardless of their circumstances.

THE FOSTERING SERVICE:

The work of the Fostering Service is delivered through several key relationships and support functions which are described below.

1. Supervising Social Worker:

The role of the Supervising Social Worker is to develop and provide support to foster carers in their task of caring for children in care. This is achieved in a variety of ways including through the provision of supervision and support visits to the approved household in accordance with the National Minimum Standards 2011.

Supervising Social workers will pre-arrange visits with carers, using the supervision policy for Foster Carers as a guide, however they also have a duty to undertake at least one unannounced visit per year. Supervision takes place bi-monthly and more regularly as required and includes a focus on their personal development, training and the importance of delivering high quality care in the context of a professional and supportive relationship.

Supervising Social Workers assist with building relationships and act as a crucial link between the caring household, children's Social Worker and Independent Reviewing Officer. Further to this they will support with arranging respite/short break support and provision of equipment. Supervising Social Workers will undertake Initial expression of interest visits with new prospective applicants, Form F assessments for those who progress to stage 2 of the recruitment process and Kinship assessments as required meaning that all staff are able to deliver the whole fostering agenda.

They are also responsible for undertaking the annual review of approval, which incorporates the carers' views and those of any birth children and the children in care. The review also includes reports from Social Workers and Independent Reviewing Officers and the Supervising Social Worker who will identify strengths and future learning needs.

The Valuing Care Toolkit is incorporated into the annual review, so it remains updated and live to the carer's strengths and areas for development. Following completion of the review the foster carer is issued with a statement of re-approval once satisfied the carers continue to be suitable to continue fostering.

The Valuing Care Toolkit is incorporated into the annual review, so it remains updated and live to the carer's strengths and areas for development. Following completion of the review the foster carer is issued with a statement of re-approval.

2. Child's Social Worker:

The child's Social Worker is responsible for the overall management of the child's care plan. They have a statutory duty to visit the child with guiding principles that inform visits and ensure that children and young people are seen at timescales in accordance with statutory guidance and Lincolnshire's procedures.

The emphasis of such visits is to ensure that the visits are focussed, with a dialogue where there is an opportunity to hear and record the child/young person's views (dependent on their age and level of understanding) with observations being noted. Part of the visit is to understand the children's experiences, ensure the standard of care offered is meeting the needs of the children as part of the overall support and safeguarding responsibilities as a corporate parent.

The statutory visits are to ensure that the welfare of the child/young persons is being promoted and therefore the expectation is that wherever possible the child/young person must be seen alone (unless is not of sufficient age and maturity) or observations made of them and their private space such as their bedroom to be reassured regarding safety and wellbeing.

3. Foster Carer Support:

The service has developed a group of foster carer Champions who are linked with foster carers during the assessment stage and provide an essential support and point of contact to support the persons transition to becoming a foster carer and enhance the confidence and skills of newly approved foster carers. They also support the fostering community by creating opportunities for connection, building, and maintaining of relationships between foster carers. Zoom is also used to facilitate foster carer social activities to encourage the community spirit.

All Foster Carers have access to an online forum which makes available local policy, information about fostering terms and conditions and guidance about requirements concerning the care and control of children and other procedures. The information is frequently updated and amended. The service continues to provide an electronic newsletter which remains the preferred generic communication method between the fostering service and foster carers. This allows for information updates to be disseminated, including training events and dates, social events, good news stories and best practice information to most of our foster carers. Information is also distributed across the various online hub forums such as the Caring2learn Facebook group and the fostering WhatsApp groups.

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

Fostering households also use Facebook and WhatsApp to share general information and offer support to one another. Online support plays a huge part in helping people to connect and support each other away in addition to the service core offer.

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

All foster carers are provided with individual membership of the Fostering Network and carers are being supported with accessing exclusive discounts which offer fantastic savings across a range of services and brands on the high street using Lincolnshire County Council foster carer discount cards, Blue Light discounts and LCC employment membership benefits.

An Annual Foster Carer Celebration is held recognising the difference foster carers make to children and the dedication they have shown through time.

4. Out of Hours Service - Emergency Duty Team (EDT):

This service provides a team of social workers who are available outside of office hours to offer emergency support to service users and the public. The EDT can offer telephone advice and has access to placement information and emergency placements with Foster Carers. Early Help Workers and Future4 me staff are available to provide practical assistance out of hours in certain circumstances.

5. Placement Support Workers:

The service employs a dedicated group of Placement Support Workers whose role is to support and assist Foster Carers and children in care. They offer support and assistance to carers to develop, understand and implement a therapeutic style of care. This is undertaken via group work, one to one direct work, and support to the fostering community.

Placement Support Workers work collaboratively with the other professionals and network around the child (ren) and attend the Children in Care Review meetings to plan and review outcomes for children. Placement Support Workers are committed to

continuous professional development informed by latest research within a trauma informed approach.

TRAINING:

The Fostering Service ensures that Foster Carers are trained in the skills required to provide high quality care to meet the needs of each child placed in their care.

Training of foster carers is a significant role and responsibility of the service and is provided both pre and post approval and is included within the Fostering service's annual training plan.

Training is not optional, and a clear expectation is placed on all carers and is evaluated in supervision sessions and annual reviews. Personal and professional development is supported through the TSDs and Learning Homes Toolkit and regular practice workshops, supporting carers to transfer theory into practice. A three-year cycle of required training in first aid, Safeguarding and Safe Care regarding safer caring and the implications of looking after children who may have been harmed. In addition, mandatory courses on Diversity and Trauma Awareness are held and should be completed on a 3 yearly basis.

All mainstream Foster Carers must undertake first aid training as part of their mandatory post approval training. Foster Carers have training sessions on promoting the health and wellbeing of children in care. This core programme is supplemented through special interest seminars as detailed above.

The Learning Home toolkit encourages training and development in line with Lincolnshire Children's Service's priorities and national research. The toolkit encourages the development of relationships between Foster Carers, schools and other professionals and their participation within a community.

Pre-approval training is over three days and is provided in-house with a fostering representative, a Foster Carer Champion, and Supervising Social Worker. The course has evolved over the years to reflect changing practice, local experience, and the national fostering agenda. All foster carers are provided with online access via Fostering or the LSCP suite of post approval training and materials/articles of interest.

The fostering national charities also share materials with carers to aid their development and guide them through their roles and responsibilities.

PROCESS OF RECRUITING AND APPROVING FOSTER CARERS

Foster Carers are recruited and assessed in line with Lincolnshire guidance based on the Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011, Fostering Regulations 2011 and the

Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services and Amendments 2013.

Dedicated staff are in place to ensure a prompt response to all first-time enquirers. The Practice Supervisor is responsible for the implementation of the Recruitment and Retention strategy and managing all aspects of the recruitment process.

Recruitment involves:

- Co-ordinating evening events whereby foster carers and young people in care attend and give their real-life experiences
- Utilising social media to reach wide audiences
- Holding drop-in sessions at Community establishments
- Newspaper advertisements
- Newspaper articles
- Distribution of posters
- Information distributed through displays and presentations.
- Word of mouth through existing carers
- The recommend a friend scheme/Employer Fostering Friendly approach.
- Lincolnshire County Council website
- Targeted activity within specific communities in county.
- Participation in a range of county wide events.

All initial enquiries relating to fostering are completed online through the Lincolnshire County Council website and are then passed to the Recruitment Co-ordinators or the Recruitment Co-ordinators are telephoned directly.

The Recruitment Co-ordinators aim to contact all enquirers within 24 hours of them registering their interest online. Their role is to ensure that enquirers have all the information they need, and following an initial discussion, an initial expression of interest can be completed over the phone and/or a detailed information booklet is made available to all interested applicants about the fostering process which is sent within five working days.

Once an initial expression of interest is received and allocated to a recruitment team worker; they aim to make contact within 24 hours to arrange a mutually agreeable date and time for the initial home visit. Foster carer champions within this process has been on request contact those considering fostering to provide applicants a helping hand in realising the realities and benefits of becoming a carer for Lincolnshire.

The fostering service is focusing on enhancing the overall customer experience and the Recruitment Co-ordinators represent the Local Authority in a professional manner being respectful to all enquirers.

As part of the Stage One process statutory checks are undertaken and prospective carers attend a three-day preparation group. If all aspects of Stage One are completed, then the prospective carers are invited to begin the Stage Two assessment process. The service aims to have all stage 2 applications approved within 6 months. The assessments are completed by qualified social workers and follow the format of the Coram BAAF Form F.

Foster Carer approvals (including family and friend's carers) are considered by the Fostering Panel. Applications to become permanent Foster Carers are considered by the Permanence Panel. The composition and organisation of the Panels is in accordance with Regulation 23 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011.

The service provider Agency Decision Maker is the Assistant Director, Children's Services.

Every Foster Carer is required to sign a Foster Carer Agreement (Regulation 27 (5) – (5b) prior to the placement of a child. A Supervising Social Worker is allocated to the family; this is usually the person who has undertaken the Form F. Foster Carers are provided with a copy of the Foster Carer Charter.

Foster Carers are supervised and supported by a named locally based Supervising Social Worker and the child has their own named Social Worker. Independent Reviewing Officers undertake all Children in Care reviews.

The Fostering Panel always considers first reviews; however subsequent reviews are normally completed under locality management arrangements, unless there is a disagreement regarding the terms of approval which necessitates referral back to Panel.

Since March 2020 the panel has been held virtually in an effort to ensure all business was maintained in timescales. The service has implemented IFAB (Independent Fostering Advisory Board) which offers an independent quality assurance system for fostering annual reviews and appraise reviews based on year 4, year 7 and year 10 following initial approval. This process supports the ethos of a learning organisation by highlighting best practice and subsequent learning from reviews of carers.

Serious complaints or allegations will also be put before Panel to consider whether there should be any alterations to the terms of approval. Since April 2009 Foster Carers have the right to challenge decisions through an Independent Mechanism Review or the Councils Corporate complaints section.

FINANCE:

Foster Carers receive weekly allowances according to the age of the child. Despite the financial difficulties faced by Local Authorities, in 2022/2023 most fostering allowances were increased by 2% but the announcement by government following the Care Review the anticipation is that the next financial year will see a significant rise.

Carers who are able to make permanent commitment to children, receive an increased rate of allowance as do those able to take the more complex adolescents. The service also offers parent and child placements and placements for young people within the criminal justice process.

MONITORING THE QUALITY OF THE SERVICE:

Foster Carers have at least one unannounced visit per year. A Supervising Social Worker undertakes this. They also receive regular supervision from an allocated Supervising Social Worker. This is held bi-monthly or more frequently as required. Each Foster Carer is subject to an annual review and contributions are sought from various professional disciplines to ensure a rounded assessment.

The Regulated Manager monitors a range of matters identified in the National Minimum Standards 2011 (Regulation 35 (1)) to ensure that standards are adhered to and that the service is developing to meet the needs of a range of children. Reports are submitted on a quarterly basis to the executive to monitor service development.

Regular quality audits are completed by staff from the Fostering Service at key stages in a Foster Carer's career. These are to ensure compliance with procedures and policy and evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention of the Supervising Social Worker.

COMPLAINTS AND ALLEGATIONS

Summary of the Complaints Procedure

Lincolnshire County Council wants to make sure customers including Foster Carers are satisfied with our services. People may wish to tell when they are satisfied with the services they have received, make suggestions on how we could improve or tell us when things have gone wrong. We believe dealing effectively with all such feedback is essential to providing good services.

The Complaints Policy sets out how complaints will be dealt with ensuring concerns raised are considered and any resulting adjustments made, where required.

- Stage 1 – Local Resolution
- Stage 2 – Independent Investigator is appointed
- Stage 3 - Independent Panel formal review by an Independent Panel of independent members plus the Complaints Manager.

Staff do ensure that all carers know how and to whom to complain.

Complainants have the right to involve a friend or advocate.

The Named Manager monitors all complaints and liaises with the Complaints Officer and the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) Business Manager. This information is available to authorised persons only.

All Foster Carers have access to support and information regarding the complaint's procedures and at the point of any investigation, support can also be accessed through membership of Fostering Network and Foster Talk; the support cost for which will be met by the agency. Details of complaints relating to the service are considered within the annual fostering report.

ALLEGATIONS

Foster Carers can sometimes be the subject of allegations in respect of the care of the children or young people they are looking after. If this occurs the allegation will be investigated in line with the LSCP child protection procedures with all allegations managed by the Local Authority Designated Officer. In addition to the role of the Supervising Social Worker, Foster Carers have access to an Independent Social Worker via Foster Talk who can offer practical and emotional support.

All allegations and other matters are monitored by the manager who ensures that these are retained for agencies to view as appropriate.

ADVOCACY AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Lincolnshire County Council commissions its advocacy for children through VoiceAbility:

When might you want an advocate?

You can ask to speak with advocate if you:

- Have serious concerns about the care you are getting.
- Want to be more involved in decisions being made about you and your future.
- Want to fight decisions being made about you.
- Want to make a complaint.

Office of the Children's Commissioner



The Children's Commissioner is Dame Rachel de Souza. The Commissioner has a legal duty to promote and protect the rights of all children in England with a particular focus on children and young people with difficulties or challenges in their lives, and those living away from home, in or leaving care, or receiving social care services.

The Children's Commissioner can be contacted: -

By writing to her at:

The Office of the Children's Commissioner, Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT.

Phoning her on Freephone: 0800 528 0731

Emailing at: help.team@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

Visiting the website www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

NUMBERS OF CHILDREN PLACED:

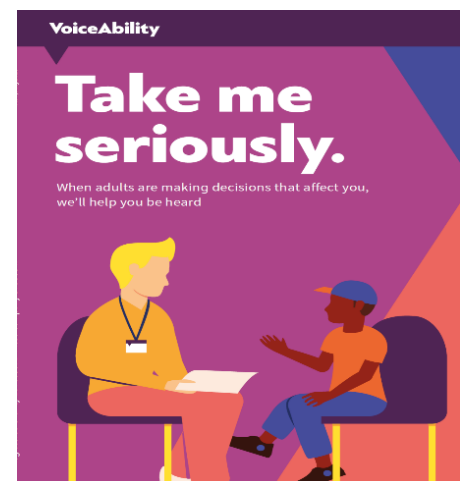
On 31st March 2023 there were 723 children in care to Lincolnshire County Council.

Of this number 488 were placed with Foster Carers (including kinship carers), including 45 placed in independent foster placements.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

The Lincolnshire Fostering Service works to the Lincolnshire County Council's Equality and Diversity and Inclusion Policy which is available on the council's website.

The Lincolnshire Fostering Service will treat everyone fairly, openly and with respect throughout the fostering approval process. Applicants wishing to be approved as Foster Carers will be considered irrespective of ethnicity, religion, belief, gender, sexual orientation, or disability providing the Fostering Service considers they can safely meet the needs of children throughout their childhood and into independence.



Every attempt will be made to find a placement which meets a child or young person's emotional and developmental needs taking into consideration their ethnicity, religion, language, culture, gender, and disability.

The Lincolnshire Fostering Service recognises that no child or young person should have to wait indefinitely for the ideal placement.

OFSTED

Ofsted is the single, independent inspectorate for all social care services in England. It is responsible for monitoring, regulating, and inspecting fostering services under the provisions of the Care Standards Act, 2000.

Questions or complaints

The one point of contact for all questions, queries and complaints is Ofsted.

The telephone number is 0300 123 1231. This number manages all general enquiries and will redirect them as necessary; they can also be contacted at enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk or write to:

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD
Tel 0300 123 1231

FURTHER INFORMATION

The Fostering Statement of Purpose will be reviewed annually.

If you require this document in a different language or an alternative format such as large print, audio tape or Braille, please contact a member of the Fostering Service via telephone on 01522 554114.

The Statement of Purpose, Children's Guides and other information are also available on the Lincolnshire County Council website: www.lincolnshire.gov.uk

A copy can also be obtained from the registered manager:

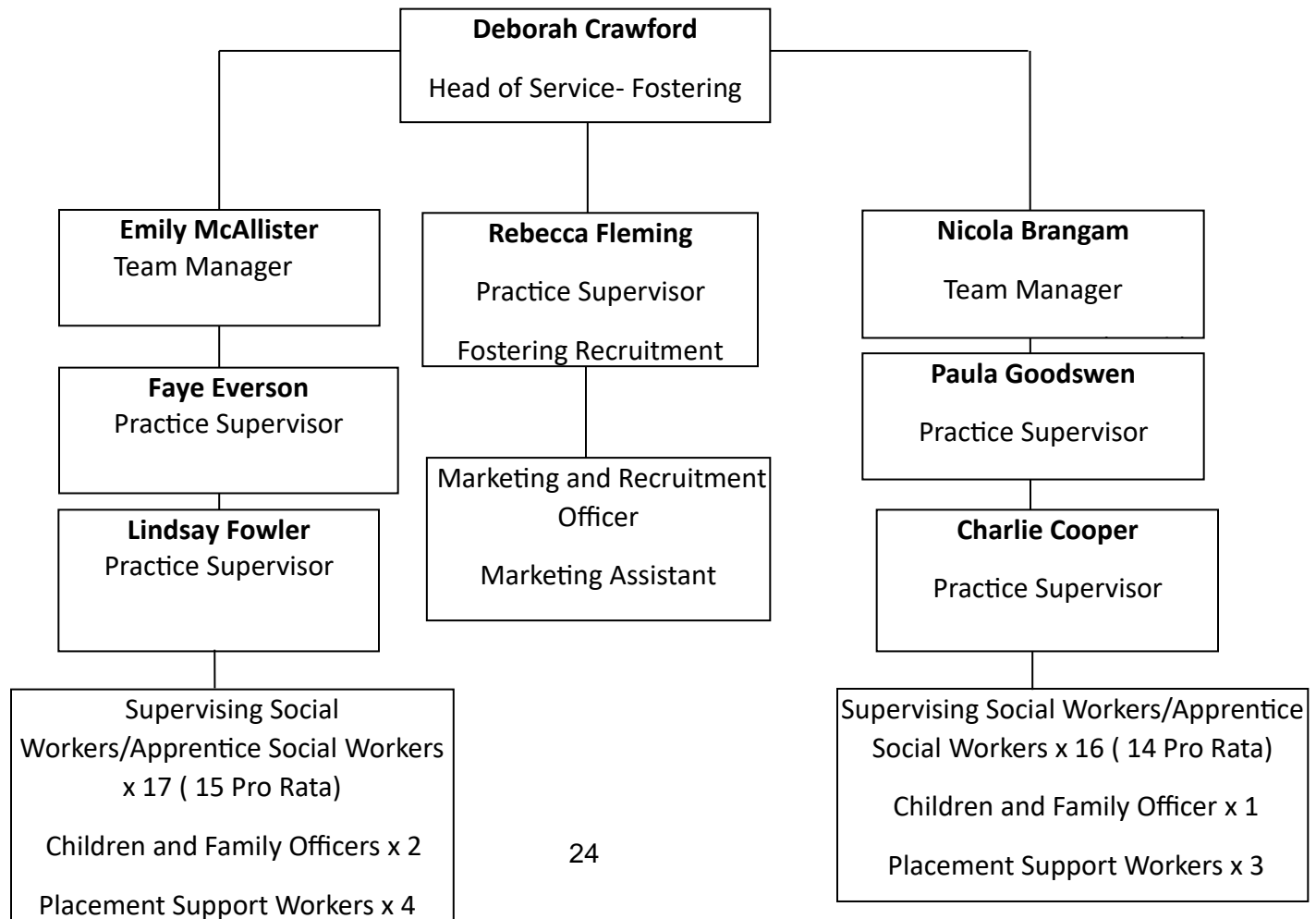
Deborah Crawford Head of Service– Regulated Services
Lincolnshire County Council
County Offices

Newland
Lincoln
LN1 1YL
01522 552781

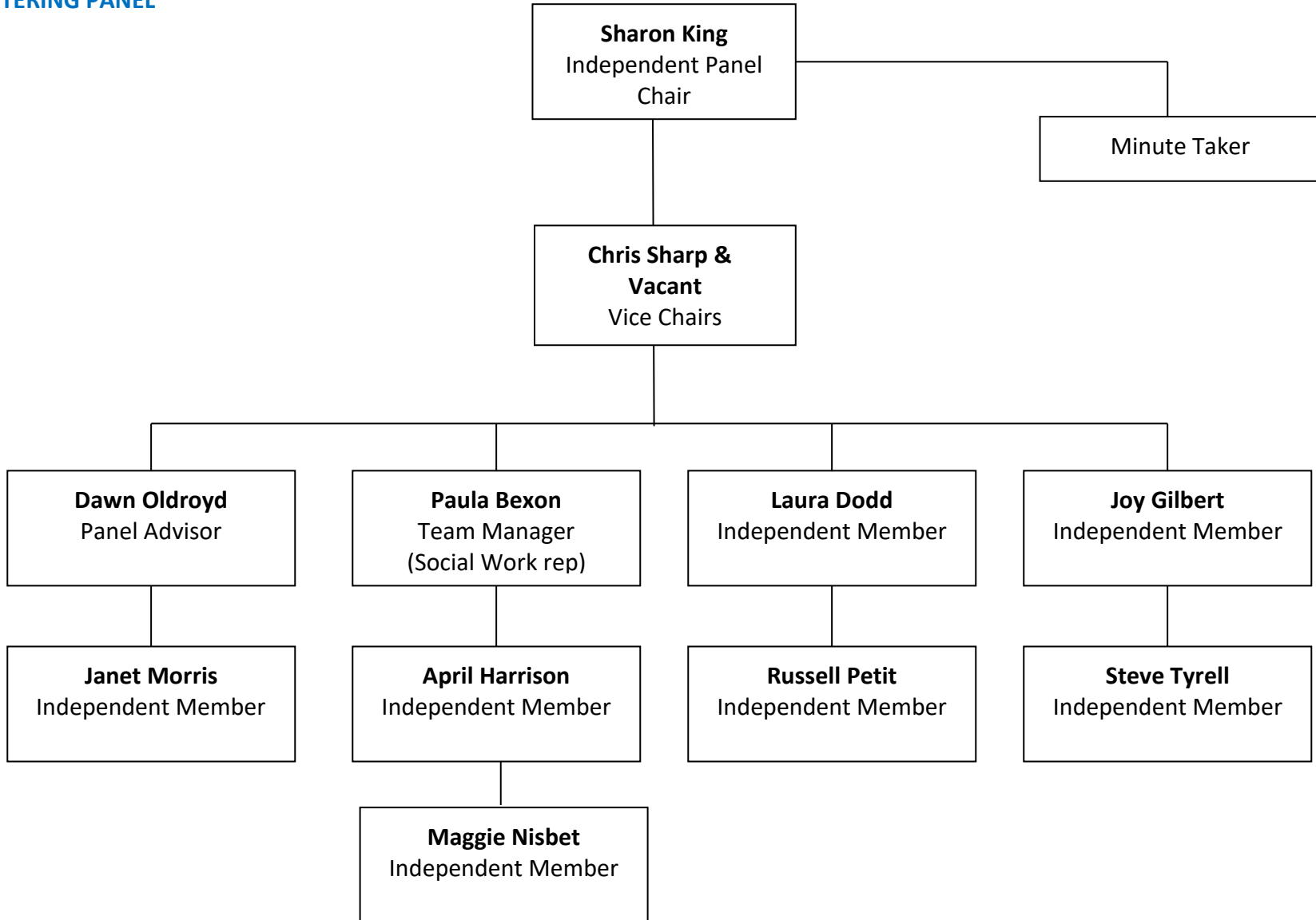
APPENDIX 1

FOSTERING SERVICE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE – LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

There are two Team Managers for the Fostering Service who line manage the two teams of Fostering Supervising Social Workers, Children and Family Officers and Placement Support Workers.



APPENDIX 2
FOSTERING PANEL



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