



## CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

THURSDAY, 9 NOVEMBER 2023 at 10.00 AM

In the COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY OFFICES, NEWLAND, LINCOLN LN1 1YL

### MEMBERSHIP

<b><u>Lincolnshire County Council:</u></b>	Councillors S P Roe (Chairman), A G Hagues (Vice-Chairman), Mrs N F Clarke, Mrs J E Killey, C Matthews, N Sear and M A Whittington
<b><u>Added Members (non-voting):</u></b>	Polly Coombes, Ann Wright, Elizabeth Bunney, Caroline Sanders 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 7 September 2023	3 - 12
4	Announcements by the Chairman and Chief Officers	
5	<b>Independent Reviewing Service Six Monthly Update Report (1 April 2023 - 30 September 2023)</b> <i>(To receive a report by Richard Stone, Team Manager – Quality and Standards (Lead for Children in Care), which provides a six-monthly update on the Independent Reviewing Service)</i>	13 - 32
6	<b>Regulation 44 Independent Visitors Report</b> <i>(To receive a report from Richard Stone, Team Manager – Quality and Standards (Lead for Children in Care), which provides a six-monthly update on the Regulation 44 Independent Visiting Service)</i>	33 - 62

- |           |   |           |
|-----------|---|-----------|
| <b>7</b>  | <b>Fostering Quarterly Performance Report - Quarters 1 and 2</b><br><i>(To receive a report from Emily McAllister, Team Manager – Quality and Standards, which provides an overview of the Fostering Service Performance from April to September 2023)</i>  | 63 - 86   |
| <b>8</b>  | <b>Private Fostering Annual Report 2022-2023</b><br><i>(To receive a report from Nicola Brangam, Fostering Team Manager - South, which invites the Panel to review the Private Fostering Annual Report 2022-23)</i>   | 87 - 102  |
| <b>9</b>  | <b>Annual Report of the Regional Adoption Agency</b><br><i>(To receive a report from John Harris, Head of Regional Adoption Agency, which invites the Panel to review the Annual Report of the Regional Adoption Agency)</i>  | 103 - 130 |
| <b>10</b> | <b>Lincolnshire Children in Care Council - Voices for Choices (V4C) Update Report</b><br><i>(To receive a report from Ben Lilley, Practice Supervisor (Quality and Standards), which provides an overview of the activities and actions carried out to support Voices for Choices and the Big Conversation between April – August 2023)</i> | 131 - 144 |
| <b>11</b> | <b>Corporate Parenting Panel Work Programme</b><br><i>(To receive a report by Tracy Johnson, Senior Scrutiny Officer, which invites the Panel to consider its work programme)</i>   | 145 - 150 |
| <b>12</b> | <b>INFORMATION ONLY ITEMS</b>   |           |
| <b>13</b> | <b>Private Fostering Statement of Purpose 2022-2023</b><br><i>(The Panel are asked to note the Fostering Statement of Purpose 2022-23)</i>  | 151 - 166 |

Distributed on Wednesday, 1 November 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, 9th November, 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](mailto:emily.wilcox@lincolnshire.gov.uk)



## CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL 7 SEPTEMBER 2023

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

**Lincolnshire County Council:** Councillors A G Hagues (Vice-Chairman), C Matthews, N Sear and M A Whittington.

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

Officers in attendance:-

Andrew Morris (Head of Service - Leaving Care, Semi-Independent Living and Unaccompanied Children), Amy Allcock (Commissioning Manager – Commercial), Nicola Brangam (Fostering Team Manager South), Katrina Cope (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Deborah Crawford (Head of Service - Fostering and Adoption), Bridie Fletcher (Senior Commissioning Officer – Children’s Strategic Commissioning), Charlotte Gray (Head of Service – Children’s Strategic Commissioning), Tracy Johnson (Senior Scrutiny Officer), Carolyn Knight (Head of Service - Quality and Standards and Principal Social Worker), Sarah Lane (Virtual School Team Manager), Emily McAllister (Fostering Team Manager), Lynda Whitton (Senior Commissioning Officer – Children’s Commissioning) and Sharon Clarke (Interim Team Manager, Adoption).

### 12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mrs J E Killey.

Apologies for absence were also received from Councillor Mrs P A Bradwell OBE, Executive Councillor for Children’s Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration and Tara Jones, Assistant Director – Children’s Safeguarding.

### 13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations of Members’ Interest were received.

### 14 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 6 JULY 2023

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Panel meeting held on 6 July 2023 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL  
7 SEPTEMBER 2023**

15 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND CHIEF OFFICERS

The Chairman advised the Committee that he and Andrew Morris, Head of Service for Leaving Care, Supported Living and Unaccompanied Children had conducted a Corporate Parenting training event for North Kesteven District Council via Teams, which had proven to be very successful. The Chairman extended his thanks to the Head of Service for Leaving Care, Supported Living and Unaccompanied Children for his help in this regard.

No Senior Officer announcements were received.

16 THE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS AND SUPPORT AVAILABLE FOR CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS IN LINCOLNSHIRE

Consideration was given to a report from Charlotte Gray, Head of Service – Children’s Strategic Commissioning and Lynda Whitton, Senior Commissioning Officer – Children’s Commissioning, which outlined the various universal and targeted mental health support available for Children in Care and Care Leavers in Lincolnshire.

Reference was made to: the local authority’s responsibilities; the Children and Young People Mental Health Services in Lincolnshire and specific enhancements for Children in Care and Care Leavers including faster access to services; the Complex Needs Service; Children in Care Link Workers and Residential Care Home Support; Barnardo’s Leaving Care Mental Health Practitioner; and future developments around Mental Health Support for Children in Care and Care Leavers.

During discussion thereon, the following comments were noted:

- The Panel was advised that there had been a significant increase in the number of referrals to children’s mental health services since the pandemic and there had also been quite a high turnover of staff. This capacity issue had resulted in longer waiting times to services and the four-week target for Children in Care not being achieved. However, reassurance was given that Children in Care were still being prioritized. It was however highlighted that Lincolnshire Partnership Foundation NHS Trust (LPFT) as a health service had to ensure that those that mostly urgently needed help received it as a priority. It was highlighted that NHS Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board had invested an additional £1.2 million recurrently into CAMHS to support increased demand. The Panel noted that by the end of March 2024 the service should be back on target according to current trajectory;
- The Panel was advised that the two residential children’s homes that were in the process of being brought into service were located in Louth and Lincoln;
- It was reported that Mental Health Support Teams in Lincoln, Gainsborough, Boston and South Holland were now established and that further waves would be coming online, Skegness and Boston from September 2025; Spalding from 2023; Grantham

and Sleaford from January 2024; and Lincoln South and North Kesteven from January 2025; and

- The Panel was advised that although there had been an increase in the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children in Lincolnshire, this had not impacted the service. It was however highlighted that this matter was being looked at as part of the Transformation Programme. Confirmation was also given that LPFT did use the translation service and that where possible they tried to have a workforce that was representative.

The Chairman on behalf of the Panel extended his thanks to the presenters.

#### RESOLVED

That following review of the report presented, assurance be received of the universal and targeted mental health support available for Children in Care and Care Leavers in Lincolnshire.

#### 17 CHILDREN IN CARE PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 1

Consideration was given to a report from Carolyn Knight, Head of Service – Quality and Standards and Principal Social Worker, which invited the Panel to consider and comment on the key performance information for Quarter 1 2023/24 which was relevant to the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

It was reported that of the 15 measures relating to Children in Care reported on in Quarter 1, four of the measures had not met their target, and one measure was ahead of the target set by the service. Appendix A to the report provided details of all the Children in Care performance measures for Quarter 1 for the Panel to consider.

During discussion thereon, the following points were raised:

- The Panel noted that there were percentage figures available relating to the number of unaccompanied young people seeking asylum that had refused health checks. It was highlighted that these figures were not available at the meeting, however, officers agreed to circulate some information to members of the Panel after the meeting. The Committee noted that in terms of Children in Care, the number of unaccompanied young people coming into the service, 88% of them were aged between 16 and 17 years old, as age assessed.
- The Panel noted that it was a right of a young person to refuse a health check;
- Thanks were extended from a member of the Panel to the team for their quick response to a family breakdown incident within their division;
- Confirmation was given that currently the authority had 79 unaccompanied young asylum seekers in care currently (against 747 Children in Care). There was recognition that the number had increased by 50 % in the last year. The Panel noted that there was also an element of homelessness presentation in the 16/17-year-olds cohort, which the authority also had a duty to offer accommodation to;

- Some concern was expressed regarding the number of 16–17-year-old Children in Care participating in Learning, as the target for Quarter 1 had not been met, and whether this was likely to cause any anti-social issues in the future. Further concern was expressed that the increase in the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people aged 16-17 was having an impact on the performance figures. The Panel noted that the issue of non-participation in EET for all children in care and care leavers was not just a Lincolnshire issue, it was a national challenge as well. The Panel was advised that a lot of the 16-year-old unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people had been placed in Peterborough, but unfortunately schools admissions did not always allow for admissions in the summer term, so because of GCSE, A-level exams and study leave school admissions actually closed in Peterborough for any school places for those of statutory schools age. So, for those young people the pupil premium had been used to secure some English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision. It was noted that most of those young people had now secured places in post 16 qualifications and courses at colleges. It was highlighted that the number of courses were limited, and where courses were running at full capacity, the pupil premium was being used to put alternatives in place, which would not give evidence that the young person was accessing education as they were not on the roll of a school or college. Reassurance was given that the non-participation was as a result of when the young person had come into care and what capacity was available at that time, rather than the young person not being willing to learn. It was noted that some analysis had highlighted that the thirst for education for unaccompanied young people had outweighed some of Lincolnshire's other young people in care;
- Some clarification was provided as to the age assessment process;
- The Panel noted that young people coming into the country were on the national transfer scheme which was imposed by the Home Office. It was noted further that the authority was funded £148 a day from the Home Office to meet their needs, and that was why the authority was able to support them;
- It was reported that the number of Children in Care cohort of unaccompanied young people did not remain static, it was therefore felt that the 16–17-year-old Children in Care who were participating in the learning target would remain a challenge until the national transfer scheme response changed;
- The role of the virtual school was a coordinating role, not to provide education;
- Reassurance was provided that commissioned online provision was providing learning for young people, and that providers had provided a summer programme for Children in Care. The Virtual school ensured that learning was tailored to meet the young people's needs, and that work was done with carers through their personal education plan to look at what was appropriate for them; and
- That officers would provide further performance information concerning the 16–17-year-old Children in Care who were participating in learning performance indicator, in relation to details pertaining to unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people and Lincolnshire Children in Care.

The Chairman on behalf of the Panel extended his thanks to the presenter.

## RESOLVED

1. That the Children in Care Performance Report for Quarter 1 as presented be received and that the comments/actions raised by the Panel be taken into consideration by the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration.
2. That further information be received concerning the 16–17-year-old Children in Care who are participating in learning performance indicator, in relation to details pertaining to unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people and Lincolnshire Children in Care.

18 OFSTED INSPECTION OF LINCOLNSHIRE CHILDREN'S SERVICES - OUTCOME REPORT

A report was received from Carolyn Knight, Head of Service – Quality and Standards and Principal Social Worker, which invited the Panel to review the findings and judgements from the Ofsted Inspection of Lincolnshire Children's Service in April 2023.

Appendix A to the report provided a copy of the Ofsted report. It was reported that the judgement had concluded that Lincolnshire continued to provide outstanding services for vulnerable children and their families. The report also highlighted that there was more work to do regarding the care leavers offer to bring them to the same consistently high standards as children in other service areas received. The two areas for improvement were:

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

During consideration of this item, the following points were noted:

- Thanks were extended to all staff in Children's Services for the overall judgement of 'Outstanding';
- Confirmation was given that an update report on the Ofsted Inspection outcomes including an Improvement Plan would be considered by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee at its March 2024 meeting;
- That lots of planning and scoping was being undertaken to identify what a new service for 2025 might look like; and
- Reassurance was given that the authority was looking to re-commission the care leavers service by way of a tender process and that Barnardo's would have the opportunity to bid for the service along with other interested parties.

The Chairman extended his thanks to the presenter for the report.

## RESOLVED

That the Ofsted Inspection outcomes presented be received and that congratulations be extended to staff in Children's Services for the overall judgement of 'Outstanding'.

19 CHILDREN IN CARE SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY 2023-2027

Consideration was given to a report from Bridie Fletcher, Senior Commissioning Officer – Children’s Commissioning and Amy Allcock, Commissioning Manager – Commercial, which invited the Panel to consider and endorse the Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027, a copy of which was attached at Appendix A to the report presented.

During consideration of this item, the following comments were noted:

- Thanks were extended to officers for an excellent report;
- The Panel was advised that the service would always try to match any children that required accommodation within inhouse provision first, but where there was need to look at a placing in the independent market, the service always tried to ensure that the placing was as close to Lincolnshire as possible, so that the young person was able to access Lincolnshire services. It was highlighted that independent provision was used in the most complex cases of need. It was highlighted that as part of the Children in Care Transformation Programme it was hoped that many of the children out of county would be brought back into Lincolnshire when the time was right for them. The Panel noted that by working closely with providers in the independent sector, the Authority was aiming to provide high quality placements for Lincolnshire young people that were closer to home and their communities. It was noted further that time was being taken by commissioning to look at trends of young people coming into care to identify what the needs were locally, to then build up those needs in Lincolnshire, to prevent the young people having to be place out of county; and
- The Panel was advised that two children would be moving into the Lincoln children’s home shortly, and that it was hoped that the Louth children’s home would be ready for January 2024;

The Chairman on behalf of the Panel extended thanks to the presenters.

RESOLVED

1. That the Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027 and Appendices A1 (Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy Action Plan) and A2 (Market Position Statement 2023-2024) be endorsed.
2. That the online publication of the Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027 and Appendices A 1 and A2 be endorsed.
3. That an annual presentation of the update of the Children in Care Action Plan (Appendix A1) be agreed, prior to publication online, with the first update in May 2024.

20 ADOPTION ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023



Consideration was given to a report from Sharon Clarke, Interim Team Manager – Adoption, which invited the Panel to consider the annual report which set out relevant performance information and identified key developments within the service during the previous twelve-month period.

*Note: Councillor M A Whittington left the meeting at 11:40am.*

A copy of the Adoption Annual Report for 2022 –2023 was provided in Appendix A to the report.

The Committee noted the following: that more older children had been placed; that through creative marketing, the service had managed to recruit adopters, however, it was noted that there was a national decrease in the number of people applying to adopt; there had been an increase in the number of referrals to the service; the number of special guardianship orders had increased; the challenges around timescales for children in care as a result care proceedings taking longer; and the challenges for the service going forward.

During discussion, the following points were noted:

- The Panel was advised that information was gathered from adoptees on a regular basis as to what they liked or did not like about the adoption process. Reference was also made to a group of adoptees ‘Collaborate’ who also provided feedback which would help shape the service going forward;
- It was also reported that feedback was also received via the Adopter Hub, and that this feedback helped to shape further training needs for adopters;
- The process taken should a foster carer decide to become an adopter;
- The Panel noted that generally conversion rates had been good, however, there had been a slight dip locally and nationally. It was thought the dip could be because of the burden of the financial crisis. It was reported that strategies were in place to help the situation; and
- Confirmation was provided that the appeals received by the service were from natural parents.

The Chairman extended his thanks to the presenter.

RESOLVED

That the Adoption Annual Report for 2022 – 2023 be received and endorsed.

## 21 FOSTERING ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

Consideration was given to a report from Emily McAllister, Fostering Team Manager and Nicola Brangam, Fostering Team Manager-South, which invited the Panel to consider the Fostering Annual report for 2022-2023, a copy of which was provided in Appendix A to the report.

The Panel noted the following: that of the 723 children and young people in care, 488 of those children and young people had been placed in foster care; that 24% of the young people had been placed within their own kinship network; at the end of the financial year 288 foster care households had been approved and registered; that fostering retention was a priority as thirty one fostering households had been lost by the service during the year; of thirty five registrations of interest received, thirty had been converted into being fostering households; the role of advertising and social media in the recruitment campaign for foster carers; eleven fostering households had been approved for permanence; forty five care leavers aged 18 and above were in Staying Put arrangements, of which thirty eight were within Lincolnshire, and of the forty five, six were attending university, twenty four were in full or part-time education, five were in employment, two were on an apprenticeship, and two were on the Care Leavers Apprenticeship Scheme.

Thanks were extended to all foster carers and foster carer champions for their continued positive influence and impact in all areas of fostering practice.

During discussion and consideration of the item, the following points were noted:

- That 89 unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people had come into the service via the national transfer scheme and that most were age disputed or considered to be over the age of 16 years of age;
- The Council's lawful duty to unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people. The Panel was advised that the council would look to use accommodation that was the most suitable, particularly where their age was disputed, because if there was any doubt there would be a number of rigorous checks for them to be able to live in a fostering household. The council therefore had to balance between doing the right thing lawfully and morally for the young person who had arrived in the United Kingdom, but they also had to manage the needs, safeguarding, and the welfare of other Children in Care. The Panel noted that not more than 10 unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people were in foster care currently;
- Some concern was raised about the potential impact the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people could have on the outstanding service. The Panel was advised that anybody who was age disputed was entitled to an age assessment, which was a detailed assessment conducted by two qualified social workers over a period of a couple of days to try and establish age. Then, depending on the age, needs, and background, the young person would be placed accordingly. It was noted that some young people came through the national transfer scheme, whilst others arrived more spontaneously i.e., found in lorries at the side of the roads. In conclusion, it was highlighted the council had a legal responsibility to children and young people and that responsibility would always be administered; and
- Confirmation was given that a Kinship foster carer would go through the same process as a foster carer.

Thanks were extended by the Chairman to the presenters.

RESOLVED

That the Fostering Annual Report 2022-2023 be received and endorsed.

22 CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report from Tracy Johnson, Senior Scrutiny Officer, which invited the Panel to consider its work programme as detailed on pages 169 to 174 of the report pack.

The Senior Scrutiny Officer advised that from earlier discussion, liaison would be undertaken with the Head of Service for Leaving Care, Supported Living and Unaccompanied Children and the Head of Service – Quality and Standards and Principal Social Worker regarding further information being received relating to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children to be included in a future performance report/separate report.

It was reported that as the Fostering Quarterly Performance reporting had got slightly out of sync, it was proposed for the November meeting the Panel would receive both Quarters 1 and 2 Fostering Quarterly Performance reports.

RESOLVED

1. That the work programme as presented on pages 169 to 174 be received and approved subject to the inclusion of the suggestion mentioned above.

23 ADOPTION STATEMENT OF PURPOSE 2022-2023

RESOLVED

That the Adoption Statement of Purpose 2022-2023 be noted.

24 FOSTERING STATEMENT OF PURPOSE 2022-2023

RESOLVED

That the Fostering Statement of Purpose 2022-2023 be noted.

The meeting closed at 12.20 pm

This page is intentionally left blank



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

Report to:	<b>Corporate Parenting Panel</b>
Date:	<b>09 November 2023</b>
Subject:	<b>Independent Reviewing Service Six Monthly Update Report (1 April 2023 - 30 September 2023)</b>

**Summary:**

This report is the six-monthly update on the Independent Reviewing Service. It serves to update members of the Corporate Parenting Panel of the work undertaken between 1 April 2023 and 30 September 2023.

**Actions Required:**

Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are requested to review the six-monthly update report on the Independent Reviewing Service and seek assurance that Independent Reviewing Officers are fulfilling their duties and obligations in line with statutory guidance set out in the IRO handbook (2010), working within the Quality and Standards Service framework to support the Local Authority to deliver good quality services, develop practice and promote good outcomes for Children in Care.

**1. Background**

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

The Independent Chairs have a dual role as Independent Reviewing Officers and Independent Child Protection Conference Chairs. This report focuses on the work of the Independent Reviewing Officers in relation to children in care. Activity relating to their Child Protection Conference Chair role is detailed in a separate report which is presented to the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership.

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

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

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

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

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

## **2. Conclusion**

The Independent Reviewing Officers continue to work at full capacity. Due to the court system still being in the pre-pandemic recovery period, the Judiciary and the Local Authority are jointly focused on returning to completing proceedings within the 26-week track to reduce delays for children. This has an ongoing impact as timetabling is very often tight leading to IRO's frequently having to rearrange meetings in order to ratify plans prior to the Quality Assurance Advisory Group (QAAG) and filing dates to promote timely outcomes for children. This continues to impact on time and capacity. As identified in the attached report, in the past six months there have been 451 reviews rearranged, many due to court timetabling but capacity within locality Social Work teams has also impacted. It must also be noted that the Independent Reviewing Officers also chair Child Protection Conferences where there are similar challenges and tensions around readiness for conferences. This also has an impact on their capacity and ability to work.

However, despite some of the challenges, it is pleasing to note that during the last six months only one child's review was held out of timescales and the team prides itself on this achievement which means that children's care plans are being reviewed in a timely manner.

Additional capacity has been created through the retention of two agency members of staff to fill vacancies in the team as outlined within the attached report. However, it is also positive, as outlined within this report, that agency staff support will be reduced significantly over the coming weeks due to recent successful recruitment. The Team will soon be fully established with permanent staff which will bring further stability and continuity to children. It should be noted that the Chairs are at the upper limit in terms of children allocated as set out in the IRO Handbook, which provides guidance around case capacity in order to carry out their duties effectively. As the Child in Care and Child Protection population continues to grow, the established numbers of Chairs will need to be constantly reviewed to ensure that this key area of Quality Assurance is sufficiently staffed.

Supplementary to this, the number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children is increasing which is having a further impact on the IRO’s capacity. The Local Authority commission specialist provisions which are predominantly situated in the Peterborough and Nottinghamshire area which, due to the demographics, means their cultural needs are better met.

However, despite the challenges over the past six months, Independent Reviewing Officers are rising to the challenges, remaining flexible in their approach and continue to build stronger relationships with locality team colleagues to promote more collaborative working. With regard to advocating for the best outcomes for children, there have been fewer formal escalations occurring and this is balanced against a backdrop of more positive challenges being made with colleagues in a timely manner to deal with any issues as they arise, keeping children’s care plans on track to ensure their needs are always fully considered and worked towards.

The team is embracing the new Quality Audit schedule through peer observations and collaborative case audits in order to continuously review and reflect on practice. The Quality and Standards Team Managers and Head of Service are now meeting quarterly to review this work in order to highlight positive practice and to identify learning themes and develop stronger practice within the team and across the Local Authority.

**3. Consultation**

**a) Risks and Impact Analysis**

N/A

**4. Appendices**

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Independent Reviewing Service Six Month Report 1 April 2023 – 30 September 2023

**5. Background Papers**

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

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

This page is intentionally left blank



**Lincolnshire County Council – Children’s Services  
Independent Reviewing Service 6-month Report  
1st April 2023 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

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

The Independent Chairs have a dual role as Independent Reviewing Officers and Independent Child Protection Conference Chairs. This report focuses on the work of the Independent Reviewing Officers in relation to children in care. Activity relating to their Child Protection Chair role is detailed in a separate report which is presented to the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership.

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

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

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

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

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

### **Update on priorities 2021-2023 – Taken from the Quality & Standards Team Action Plan 2021-2023**

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

### **Action: Ongoing**

There is still some way to go before all conference facilities around the County have hybrid working equipment available. This is an ongoing project within the context of smarter working development across the wider Council.

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

**Action: Ongoing within LSCP. Now business as usual for the IRO's**

The strategic work driven by the LSCP is ongoing. Practitioner surveys in respect of the success of working with absent fathers along with some of the challenges concluded in September 2023. This together with the outcome of the parental surveys is being brought together to identify themes of already good practice together with organizational learning.

A Separated Parents Policy & Procedure has been finalised and this is in the process of being added to the LSCP policy manual to guide all partner agencies in this area.

The recommendations from the Children's Services audits are being taken forward and now that the themes and learning from the LSCP work has concluded, the working group will take these forward.

The Practice Advisors have delivered the PL sessions around engaging absent fathers and all IRO's have attended this to inform and shape their practice. Engaging absent fathers has moved to business as usual within the IRO team.

There is a clear focus within the team to ensure that absent fathers and paternal networks are included as standard wherever possible. Given the wider focus on the reunification of children and young people back to their families, wherever it is safe and, in a child, best interest to do, the inclusion of the paternal network is of high importance.

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

**Action: Ongoing**

The Valuing Care Toolkit continues to develop. It has become a mandatory addition to the care planning step and is included in each child's care review from the second review onwards, sometimes sooner. There is an expectation that IRO's will use this information to consider an individual child's needs and to support the development of their care plans. Valuing Care is business as usual within the IRO team.

A Team Manager from the Quality & Standards Service continues to sit on the Valuing Care Governance Board to ensure that the service is always at the heart of any developments and how this impacts on the children and young people that the service oversees.

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

**Action: Now business as usual**

The Team Managers have worked with the Service Manager of CAFCASS to develop a joint working program. IRO's have strong links with Childrens Guardians on a day-to-day basis and it's crucial that they understand each other's roles.

The first joint development day took place on 4.10.23. The day involved IRO's, CAFCASS Officers and some Social Workers from Locality FAST, CIC and CWD Teams who are all involved in care proceedings. The day which included a presentation on Deprivation of Liberty (DOLS) by Talents solicitors and group exercises looking at child case studies was met with great success. Those attending took opportunities to further understand each other's roles and develop future learning. A further planning meeting is arranged for February 2024 to start planning the next seminar which will be an annual event.

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

**Action: Ongoing**

The new Chairs monitoring forms are now fully embedded within the MOSAIC workflows. This further expands opportunities for the Quality & Standards Service to explore how the service and Locality teams are performing against key measures such as working with and preparing children and parents / carers for meetings, the quality of reports and participation of child / parents, including absent parents, engagement of children and advocacy, the use of the Valuing Care tool and the overall impact of how the Local Authority performs.

The monitoring forms are currently being mapped by the performance team to enable a quarterly locality / county wide accessible monitoring report to be developed that Chairs can share with teams to highlight positive performance and to guide future development. These reports will also be shared with each locality Head of Service. The outcomes will feed onto the overall Childrens Services Quality Assurance functions.

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

**Action: Ongoing**

Each locality team now has a dedicated Chair link worker. Regular meetings have commenced and are allowing opportunities for the IRO's to further build relationships and focus on developing practice and relationships.

At each team meeting the Chairs give feedback from these meetings and gain feedback from their colleagues to take to their link meetings.

The overall view is that these links are having an impact, and this is likely to be further increased once the formal performance monitoring reports are available as outlined in the action above.

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

**Action: Ongoing**

The service continues to develop a range of good practice guidance. These are freely available and promoted to the IRO's. This is having a positive impact as it highlights what good practice looks like when it has a positive impact on children and their families. This guidance will bring consistency of practice across the team and ensure that all new starters have further access to materials that will support and enhance their development pathway.

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

**Action: Now business as usual**

The Audit report completed was accepted by DLT and the Team Manager with the lead for Children in Care is taking forward the recommendations and is the lead in completing an annual audit and report in this area.

Guidance has been completed and published for the IRO's to support better practice and understanding in this area.

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

**Action: Now business as usual**

This is now completed and all new IRO's joining the service benefit from a comprehensive induction period that includes the allocation of a workplace mentor, a period of work shadowing and learning, access to learning and development materials linked to the role and ongoing support.

New starters have commented positively on how this organised approach has supported them in their new, provided them with the time and space to learn and familiarise themselves in the role and brought them confidence in approaching it.

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

**Action: Ongoing**

This work is ongoing. The range of engagement materials has been brought together and the Team Manager with the lead for Children in Care with two IRO's are attending the Voices 4 Choices meeting on 25.10.23 to meet with young people to consult with them

around the proposed changes but most importantly to listen to their views to support the service development. There are also plans to engage with the Foster Carer network to seek their engagement in relation to the carers consultation documents.

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

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

The Independent Chairs Team is made up primarily of two distinct roles: Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) and Child Protection Chairs. In some Local Authorities these roles are separate roles, often located in separate teams, however this is not the case in Lincolnshire. The service continues to secure further funding for an additional IRO post in relation to the rising UASC numbers.

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

Sickness absence continues to be a challenge over the last six months; however, this appears to have lessened. Within the last 6 months successful recruitment has meant that the team now has a full establishment of permanent workers. Agency workers have been utilized to support the transition arrangements and it is anticipated by the end of the financial year the team should not need any agency workers.

### **Staffing**

#### **Management Team**

There remain four Team Managers within the Service. The Chairs are predominantly managed by Debbie Johnson and Richard Stone. Debbie Johnson has the service lead for Child Protection and Richard Stone has the service lead for Children in Care. Paul Fisher has responsibility for the LADO's and Reg 44 Officers and Philippa Gallop has responsibility for Quality Assurance, Learning and Development, Participation and Liaise. Paul Fisher has recently secured the secondment position of Corporate Parenting Manager and leaves the service in November 2023. Kim Murray, who is currently employed as a LADO was successful in her application to backfill Paul's post and she starts as a Team Manager on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

#### **Independent Chairs**

Within the past 6 months the 4 new recruits as outlined in the last report have all started, completed their inductions and are positive additions to the team.

3 further vacancies have arisen due to one member of staff leaving the Local Authority, one securing a Practice Supervisor post within a locality FAST team and one securing the Team Manager secondment as outlined above. It is positive that despite these changes, 2 out of the 3 have stayed within the organisation.

All 3 positions have been recruited too. The team is preparing to welcome 2 new external candidates in December/ January 2023 /24 and one new starter who has been redeployed into the team is already in the post and going through an induction period.

The team now only has 2 agency workers who will leave the service when the 2 new starters commence their employment.

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

Short breaks are part of a continuum of services which support children in need and their families. A large number of short breaks occur that do not require oversight by the IRO due to not meeting the statutory requirements. Where children and young people receive a higher number of STB's an IRO is allocated to oversee their care plans.

The role of the IRO for children looked after in a series of short breaks is more limited than for longer term Children in Care. It is important that IROs are sensitive to the close and active involvement of parents. Given this sensitivity, parents as well as children and young people can highly value their contribution and independent perspective, especially in helping to resolve any difficulties with the placement. IROs have a responsibility to alert the local authority if the placement is not meeting the child's needs.

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

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
April	8	5	4	4	4	5
May	12	3	4	6	10	4
June	8	11	6	7	4	5
July	8	5	7	6	7	3
August	1	0	2	1	0	1
September	7	8	4	7	3	6
October	4	6	4	4	8	
November	9	6	9	9	6	
December	8	4	2	6	4	
January	6	6	4	3	7	
February	4	4	3	5	0	
March	5	4	5	4	7	
Totals	80	62	54	62	60	24

### **Children in Care population and the IRO service**

Despite the inclining trend during the past 12 months the figures for young people in care appear to be overall more stable yet still slowly rising. As of 30th September 2023, there were 749 children in care, compared to 730 on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

In the 6 months from 1st April 2023 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023 the IROs have conducted 891 reviews. In the same period 1st April 2022– 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022 there were 862 reviews. The workload has been increasing year on year.

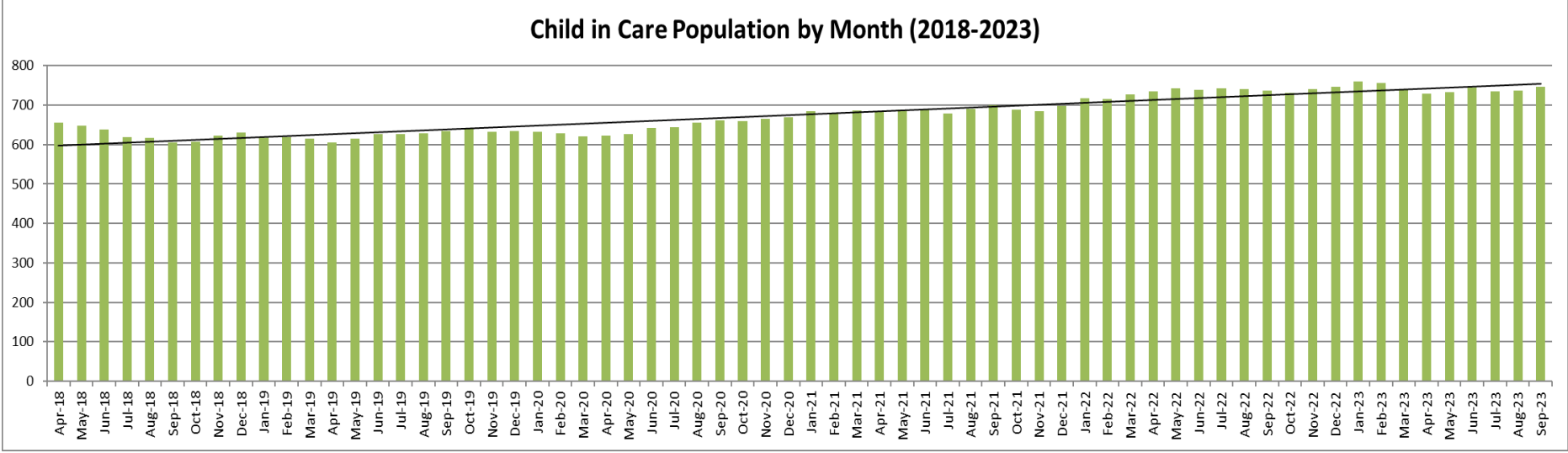
Due to the court system still being in the pre pandemic recovery period , the Judiciary and the Local Authority are jointly focused on returning to completing proceedings within the 26-week track to reduce delays for children. This together with impact of a number of foster care changes for some children has meant that reviews are sometimes rescheduled to accommodate this. As an example, between April 1st, 2023 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023, 451 reviews were re arranged which has had a further impact on workload. This is an increase on the previous year's figures which were 433 from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

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

In the 6 months from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023, 2 children have been subject to Secure Accommodation under Section 25 of the Children Act 1989. Any Secure Criteria Reviews are chaired by the Independent Chairs Team Managers.

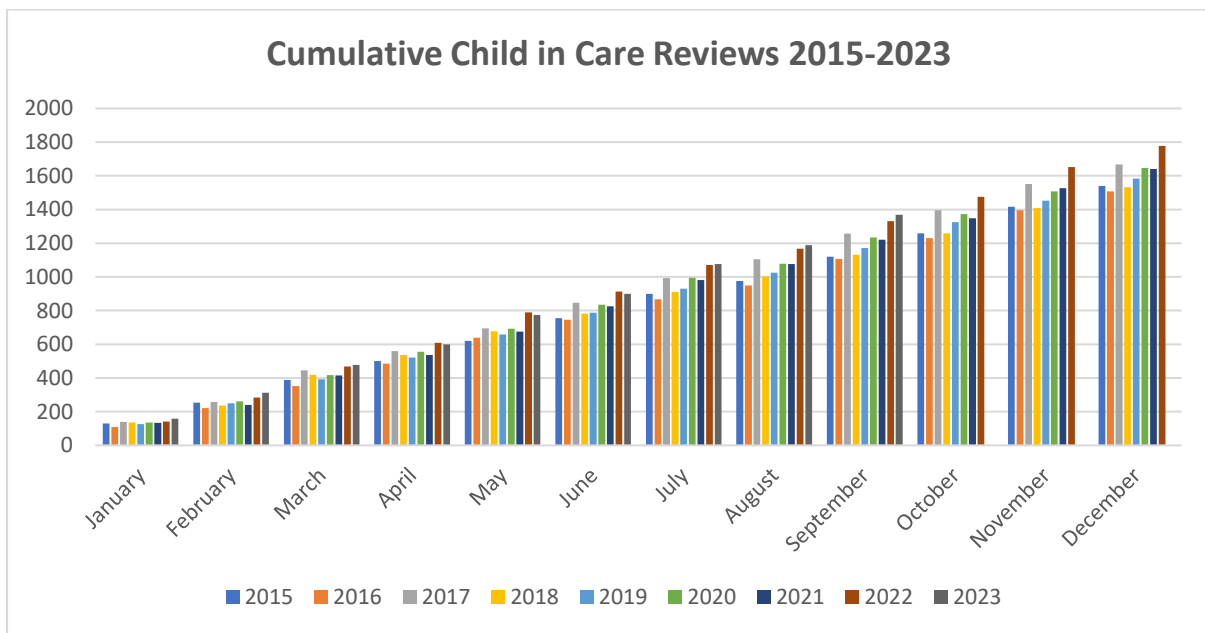
In the 6 months from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023 there have been 27 Unaccompanied Asylum- Seeking Children (UASC) placed in the care of Lincolnshire Children's Services under the National Transfer Scheme. Whilst these children are the responsibility of Lincolnshire, their placements are mainly located in Peterborough, Derby and Nottingham areas with 5 children also being placed in London. Given the frequent referrals for UASC's there are predominantly 3 IRO's who oversee these. This allows them some constancy while the geographical locations of their placements mean that multiple reviews can often be held in one day by one IRO. It also allows the IRO's to focus mainly on these children and build their specialism in this area with this vulnerable group of children. The number of UASC's under 16 years old appears to be increasing.

**Child in Care Population**

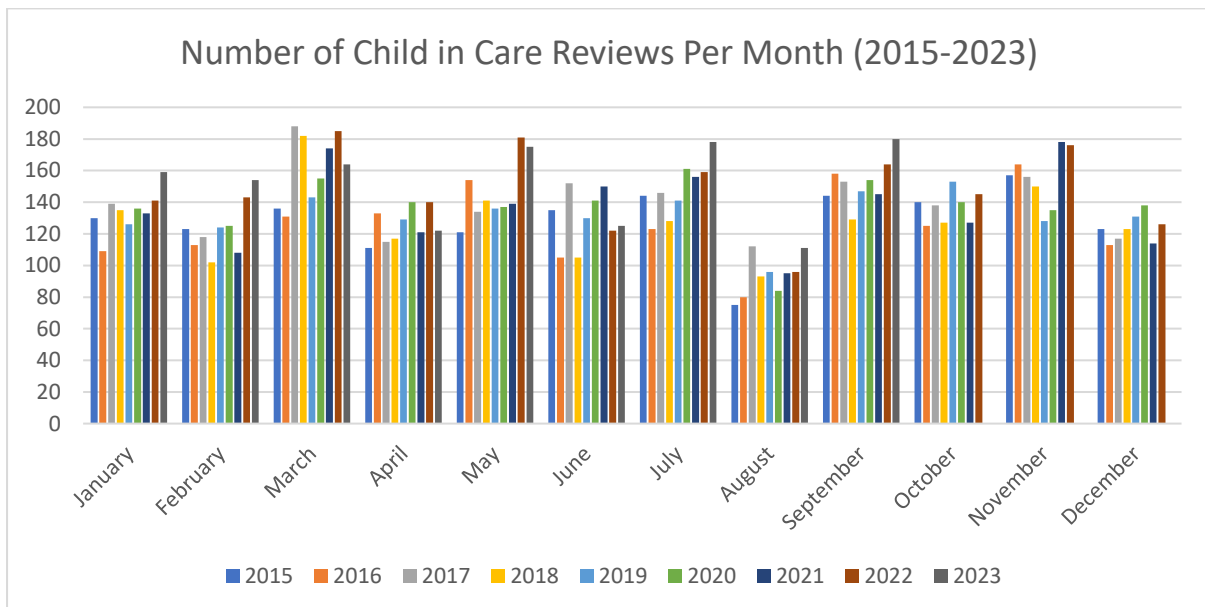




Cumulative Child in Care Reviews 2015- 2023									
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
January	130	109	139	135	126	136	133	141	159
February	253	222	257	237	250	261	241	284	313
March	389	353	445	419	393	416	415	469	477
April	500	486	560	536	522	556	536	609	599
May	621	640	694	677	658	693	675	790	774
June	756	745	846	782	788	834	825	912	899
July	900	868	992	910	929	995	981	1071	1077
August	975	948	1104	1003	1025	1079	1076	1167	1188
September	1119	1106	1257	1132	1172	1233	1221	1331	1368
October	1259	1231	1395	1259	1325	1373	1348	1476	
November	1416	1395	1551	1409	1453	1508	1526	1652	
December	1539	1508	1668	1532	1584	1646	1640	1778	



Number of Child in Care Reviews Per Month (2015-2023)									
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
January	130	109	139	135	126	136	133	141	159
February	123	113	118	102	124	125	108	143	154
March	136	131	188	182	143	155	174	185	164
April	111	133	115	117	129	140	121	140	122
May	121	154	134	141	136	137	139	181	175
June	135	105	152	105	130	141	150	122	125
July	144	123	146	128	141	161	156	159	178
August	75	80	112	93	96	84	95	96	111
September	144	158	153	129	147	154	145	164	180
October	140	125	138	127	153	140	127	145	
November	157	164	156	150	128	135	178	176	
December	123	113	117	123	131	138	114	126	



## Re-arranged CIC Reviews

Number Re-arranged Child In Care Reviews Per Month (2015-2023)									
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
January	50	46	59	64	65	64	52	79	80
February	30	63	71	58	41	62	66	78	80
March	39	61	74	80	42	52	70	80	79
April	51	57	52	60	44	64	46	49	70
May	53	43	68	55	54	51	58	73	62
June	47	26	52	53	65	53	74	95	104
July	40	47	62	48	64	46	58	69	90
August	29	59	51	30	58	45	46	62	58
September	40	52	50	39	77	74	63	85	67
October	51	64	53	46	75	90	77	73	
November	37	64	58	58	60	64	65	90	
December	48	47	37	42	42	58	51	54	
Yearly Total	515	629	687	633	687	723	726	887	690

## Advocacy/Independent Visitor

Advocacy/Independent Visitor provision in Lincolnshire continues to be provided by Voiceability as part of a commissioned service.

IRO's routinely check that children and young people know about advocacy and how it can support them in having a real say in decisions affecting their lives. Children in Care are opted in to Voiceability who are invited to Children in Care Reviews for children aged 8 and over after the child's Social Worker has referred them. The Local Authority has a duty to appoint a person to be an Independent Visitor when it appears to be in the child's interests to do so. The appointment of an Independent Visitor should be considered as part of developing the Care Plan for the child and at the Child in Care Review. Any decision not to appoint an Independent Visitor should be kept under review. The child's wishes and feelings should be obtained, and they must agree to the appointment of the Independent Visitor.

There continues to be some challenges around provision, with some young people not being able to secure an advocate if required in a timely manner. Ongoing work is being completed to evaluate the actual provision against the service level agreements to identify any complicated factors that may be affecting the availability of provision.

## Timeliness of reviews

Between 1st April 2023 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023 a total of 891 individual review meetings were held. It should be noted that sometimes children within the same family or same placement may have their reviews held together. This means that the number of children who had their care plans reviews is likely to be noticeably higher than 891.

Within the same time period a total of 1 child had their review held out of timescales which

means 99.9% were held in timescales.

The 1 review that was held out of timescales was a human error. A former IRO had commenced a Series of Short meetings to hold the review meeting in parts to meet the child needs. The date for the next review was calculated from the final meeting date, rather than from when the series of meetings commenced. This led to the review being held 10 calendar days late. The child in question has lived in the same kinship foster home for almost 8 years with a family member, is settled and there was no impact on the child's care plan progressing.

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

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

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

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

IRO's routinely visit their children and young people in person prior to and in between their reviews. However, given that the landscape has changed, many young people are now requesting that they speak with their IRO over the phone, through video calls or text messages. Whilst in-person experience would be the preferred model, IRO's are clearly listening to their children and young people and really taking their preferences into account when communicating with them.

IRO's are always mindful that not all children are old enough to verbally express their views, for some children English is not their first language and for other disabilities or additional needs means they communicate in a different way. Some children simply do not wish to talk or do not feel ready. IRO's are creative with how they approach participation, trying to understand what a child's world looks and feels like, how they interact with those around them and what their behaviors may be telling us. IRO's also ensure those adults around the child are able help them share their views and feelings too. By taking this approach, as a service we try to ensure that any plans made are in the best interest of the child.

Participation performance was 99.8% up to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023. The figures to 30<sup>th</sup> September are not yet available at the time of completing this report.

## Plans for Children in Care

The Chairs continue to focus on ensuring the availability of high-quality plans for every child in care. The Chairs raise professional escalations if care plans are not completed or are not of sufficient quality.

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

IRO's write plans 'to the child', making sure that they use child friendly language.

There continues to be some fluctuations around the quality of initial care plans presented for IRO's to review. This is in part due to the ongoing pressures that the locality teams have experienced, particularly in relation to turn over of social workers. IRO's have been sympathetic to this where they can and restorative in their challenges to support the current pressures but always with any potential impact on a child and their family in their focus. This situation appears to be settling and IRO's report that there is much more stability within some teams leading to better quality care planning.

## Progress-chasing Activities between Looked After Reviews

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

## Identifying good practice, problem resolution and escalation

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

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

The team continues to focus on improving consistency in terms of escalations made and to ensure better monitoring and reducing drift and delay. Systems are in place to support managerial oversight as well as helping the IRO's in their duty of tracking escalations to improve care planning and outcomes for young people.

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

All Independent Reviewing Officers are required by the regulations to have access to legal advice. Clearly, given the independent nature of the Service, it would not be appropriate for

any such advice to be provided by the Children's Services Legal Department. No Legal advice has been sought within the past 6 months.

**Number of formal escalations per month**

	2016 /17	2017 /18	2018 /19	2019 /20	2020 /21	2021 /22	2022 /23	2023 /24
April	9	2	4	8	3	2	0	1
May	4	5	4	3	0	4	0	0
June	0	7	4	1	3	0	1	2
July	3	5	5	0	4	8	0	5
August	1	1	2	0	5	1	2	0
September	3	9	4	8	5	1	1	1
October	4	4	1	1	0	4	6	
November	3	5	1	2	3	1	3	
December	6	5	0	0	3	3	1	
January	2	8	3	2	5	7	1	
February	5	4	2	7	1	1	2	
March	8	7	2	1	1	1	0	
Totals	48	62	32	33	33	33	17	9

Themes of Child in Care Formal Escalations (for the period April 2023 - September 2023)

Theme	Number of escalations raised
Plan/Reports – Quality	4
Safeguarding Concerns	3
Practice Issues (Multiple Concerns)	1
Provision of Service	1
Total	9

**Management oversight**

The Guidance states that operational social work Team Managers must consider the IRO's decisions and recommendations from the Review before the plan and record of meeting is authorised. This is due in part to the need to ensure that any resource implications have been addressed. Once the decisions and recommendations are completed by the IRO, the Locality Team Manager has 5 days to raise any queries or objections. Managers rarely ask for any amendments to be made and this process appears to work well.

**Leaving Care – Director's Decision**

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
April	1	0	0	0	0	0
May	3	1	0	1	1	0
June	2	0	0	0	1	2
July	1	1	0	0	0	1
August	2	2	0	0	0	0

September	0	0	0	0	1	0
October	1	0	0	1	0	
November	1	0	0	0	1	
December	0	2	1	0	0	
January	0	0	0	0	0	
February	0	0	0	0	0	
March	0	0	0	0	0	
Totals	11	6	1	2	4	3

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

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

#### Auditing and observations undertaken by the IRO Team Managers

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

The new Quality Audit schedule is actively being followed and during the last 6 months all IRO's have observed a colleague and have completed a case Quality Audit. Team Managers have all observed each member of their staff and conducted a quality audit in the same way.

The management team along with the Head of Service are meeting quarterly to review the outcomes of this ongoing work and to use the findings to reflect on practice and identify developmental themes. The results will be used to further shape the service and develop the Quality & Standards Team Action Plan.

#### Supervision and training

IRO's have scheduled monthly supervision (pro rata) and informal supervision as and when required. All IRO's have a Personal Development Plan (PDP) and are encouraged to attend training through Lincolnshire Children's Learning and Development Team, Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) and the Regional IRO Workshops. Each IRO undertakes annual mandatory training and follows the 5-year Children's Services development training plan.

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

Team Meetings are held monthly and include guest speakers and workshops. Team Meetings take place over one full day per month, and these are always held in person to promote staff being together and to enhance practice discussions.

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

The Independent Reviewing Officers continue to work at full capacity. Due to the court system still being in the pre pandemic recovery period, the Judiciary and the Local Authority are jointly focused on returning to completing proceedings within the 26-week track to reduce delays for children. This has an ongoing impact as timetabling is very often tight leading to IRO's frequently having to rearrange meetings in order ratify plans prior to QAAG and filing dates, sometimes with limited time to prepare. This continues to impact on time and capacity. As identified above in this report, in the past 6 months there have been 451 reviews rearranged, many due to court timetabling but capacity within locality Social Work teams also impacts. It must also be noted that the IRO's also chair Child Protection meetings where there are similar challenges and tensions around readiness for conferences. This also has an impact on their capacity and ability to work.

The chairs are under increasing pressure due to the additional admin tasks involved in new ways of working and also taking into account the increased travel time to in-person meetings. Additional capacity has been created through the recruitment of agency members of staff to fill vacancies in the team as outlined within this report. However, it is also noteworthy, as outlined within this report, that agency staff support will be reduced significantly over the coming weeks due to recent positive recruitment. It should be noted that the Chairs are at the upper limit in terms of children allocated as set out in the IRO Handbook, which provides guidance around case capacity in order to carry out their duties effectively. As the Child in Care and Child Protection population continues to grow the established numbers of Chairs will need to be constantly reviewed to ensure that this key area of Quality Assurance is sufficiently staffed.

Supplementary to this the number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children is increasing which is having a further impact on the IRO's capacity. The Local Authority commission specialist provisions which are predominantly situated in the Peterborough and Nottinghamshire area which due to the demographics means their cultural needs are better met.

**Carolyn Knight**  
**(Head of Service Quality and Standards and PSW)**

**Richard Stone, Debbie Johnson & Paul Fisher**  
**(Team Managers Quality and Standards)**





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

Report to:	<b>Corporate Parenting Panel</b>
Date:	<b>09 November 2023</b>
Subject:	<b>Regulation 44 Independent Visitors Report</b>

**Summary:**

This report is the six-monthly report on the Regulation 44 Independent Visiting Service. It serves to update members of the Corporate Parenting Panel on the work undertaken between April and October 2023.

**Actions Required:**

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

## **1. Background**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **2. Conclusion**

There is evidence of ongoing high-quality care being observed by the Independent Visitors. Observations of the relationships between the care staff and the young people is positive across all homes, and the young people will search out staff for support and reassurance. There is very much an open door policy within the homes. The staff are seen to be invested in the relationships with the young people to ensure positive experiences and outcomes.

There are a variety of ratings from Ofsted across the homes. The Outstanding inspection relating to Albion Street should be celebrated and is reflective of continuous hard work and dedication, from all the staff. The Requires Improvement rating for Northolme is being addressed, the management team and care staff have met the challenge head on and are working creatively to address the issues. The Independent Visitor has seen an improvement in the case files and recordings.

In the inspections, the Independent Visitor must specifically confirm whether the two elements are met:

- Regulation 44.4 (a) the independent person's opinion as to whether children are effectively safeguarded.

And

- Regulation 44.4 (b) the independent person's opinion as to whether the conduct of the home promotes Children's wellbeing.

In all homes at all visits the Independent Visitor has confidently stated that both these requirements are being met.

The much awaited opening of Robin House is seen as an exciting opportunity to develop the therapeutic parenting model within the Local Authority, with the aim being to move the young people either back to family or into a foster placement. It is obviously early days

for the home and the young people accessing it, however the enthusiasm of the staff is positive.

There continues to be issues with staffing across many of the homes. Whilst these shortages are being managed by the flexibility and commitment of the management team and the care staff, retention of staff is a major issue that the senior management team are looking to resolve.

There continues to be joint working across the homes with regular peer audits being completed by the management teams. This enables reflection and constructive feedback. It also enables a learning culture as to new ways of working and positive practices across the homes.

Management audits continue to take place regularly within the homes, therefore providing management oversight and guidance.

**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	Regulation 44 Independent Visitors Report – April - October 2023

**5. Background Papers**

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

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

This page is intentionally left blank

**REPORT FOR THE  
INDEPENDENT VISITING  
SERVICE**

**April 2023 – October 2023**

*Written by Regulation 44 visitors; Fiona Watters, with  
contributions from Kim Murray, Amy Beacham and Julie Adams.*

### **Basis of report**

This report is being prepared to provide the Corporate Parenting Panel with an update of the work undertaken by the Independent Visitors. This report covers the period from 25.03.23 to 04.10.24.

### **Introduction**

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

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

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

The Independent Visitor continues to provide a report following each visit. The Regulation 44 report has maintained its format, providing a succinct summary of how the individual homes are meeting each of the care standards. There is also a section of recommendations to ensure there is clarity in prioritising areas for immediate action where these are identified during visits. The report format continues to include a section for the Home's Manager's to add their comments on the findings of the visits. This is to ensure the Independent report is unchanged, whilst giving the Home's Managers the opportunity to provide additional information, context, or details on how any changes are being implemented.

### **The Independent Visitor**

Since March 23, Regulation 44 visits have been undertaken by Independent Visitors: Kim Murray, Fiona Watters, Amy Beacham and from August Julie Adams. The visiting duties to Lincolnshire County Council's eight residential homes and two supported living provisions are shared between the Independent Visitors. Home inspections are rotated regularly throughout the period and are currently undertaken to: Albion Street, Eastgate, The Beacon, Haven Cottage, Northolme, Robin House, Lincolnshire Secure Unit and Strut House. The semi-Independent homes are in Grantham (Denton) and Gainsborough (Rowston) and they provide accommodation for young people aged 16 to 18 years old. Both homes are inspected under the Regulation 44 process every 4 months, this visit is carried out by Ildiko Kiss. This is currently not mandatory however the Local Authority commits to this as part of their quality assurance process.

The Independent Visitors have continued to maintain positive working relationships with residential home managers, staff, and young people. The team manager for the Independent Visitor periodically attends homes manager meetings to ensure that feedback on the service is shared and fed back.

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

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

### **Home Manager Updates**

There have been some changes to the Homes Managers over recent months.

#### **Albion Street**

The Registered Home's Manager (Cheri Blackamore) is moving to a new post and the Assistant Manager (Samantha White) was also successful in her application for the new Homes Manager position of Riverhead in Louth when it opens. We understand that a new homes manager has

been recruited and an RCO3 has been successful in his application to become the Assistant Manager, this will give the children some continuity of management.

### **The Beacon**

There has recently been a significant change in leadership at The Beacon. The Registered Home's Manager (Gemma Hart) left the Local Authority in September 2023 after securing alternative employment outside of the Local Authority. Both Assistant Managers Nicola Chambers and Peter Hesketh have also left the Local Authority. The Interim Assistant Manager who was seconded from the Secure Unit has been managing the home as Interim Home's Manager whilst the positions are recruited to.

Following interviews an RCO3 within the home has been successful in gaining one of the positions of Assistant Manager, alongside an external candidate. Both are yet to commence their new roles. Interviews took place for the position of Registered Home's Manager in September we are awaiting the outcome as to whether the post was appointed to.

### **Eastgate**

The Registered Home's Manager (Katie Sansom) has been successful in gaining an appointment as second Service Lead for Residential Estates, the Registered Home's Manager post is yet to be appointed to, however Katie remains in post to support the home with this transition. The Assistant Manager (Kelsie Tyrrell) remains in post.

### **Haven Cottage**

The Registered Home's Manager (Vicky Cooke) and Assistant Manager (Kelly Hutson) remain unchanged.

### **Lincolnshire Secure Unit**

The Registered Home's Manager (Dave Clarke) and two of the Assistant Managers (James Guthrie and Debbie Norton) remain unchanged. One of the Assistant Managers Jenny Marshall has now retired. There are no current plans to replace Jenny's position.

### **Northolme**

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



### **Strut House**

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

### **Robin House**

The Interim Homes Manager is Helen Wallis. The Interim Assistant Manager is now Amanda Noble.

### **Rowston and Denton**

Dean Johnson is the Manager for both settings. Andy Morris, who is now the Head of Service for Leaving care, Semi-Independent living and Unaccompanied children, continues to have oversight of the homes.

### **The Voice of the Child**

There is evidence across the homes that the young people's voices are captured and listened to.

For example: – Strut continue to use a range of communication aids to gather the voice of the child such as PEC's, social stories and they do very well in capturing the voice of the child in photos which they have displayed on the walls, which they change each month. This gives clear evidence of the children being happy and joining in with the activities that they provide for those young people on short breaks. They have worked with Haven Cottage and an Independent Chair in designing a booklet to help collate young people's views with pictures, widget symbols and photos. This will also be used within Haven Cottage. This booklet was seen and was very child focused and should prove a good resource to help secure feedback from children attending the service.

At Eastgate the home has regular chill and chat session where the young people discuss their thoughts and feelings, it was during these meetings that the young people expressed their wishes about what activities they wanted to participate in over the summer. The chill and chat sessions also discuss any concerns in the home and have recently discussed how they can be respectful to each other and their thoughts around a new young person joining the home.

The young people at Northolme participate in Pow Wow's on a monthly basis where they are able to express their views. They are also seen by their social workers regularly and participate within their reviews. The young people have been observed in their home environment and appear happy with the staff and comfortable in their presence. There has been a change in

young people in the last 6 months and the home are working hard to develop peer relationships that are healthy.

Robin House has only recently opened to young people, the Interim Homes Manager is keen for the young people to decide upon the name of their meetings, how they are held and how often.

Within the Secure Unit the young people can complete an issues form where they challenge situations, they are not happy about, the management team respond to these issues in a timely manner to ensure a resolution is reached for the young people. The unit also completes an exit questionnaire with the young people, to ascertain their views and experiences on their stay within the unit and highlight anything they would like to change.

VoiceAbility continue to visit the homes regularly to meet with the young people and advocate for them where possible. The name of the VoiceAbility worker is displayed within the home, there is evidence of the visits, detailing when they have visited who they have spoken to, and any activities undertaken.

Staff continue to encourage the young people to complete their consultation documents in preparation for their Children in Care reviews. There is evidence seen within the young people's files of staff attending reviews with the young people and supporting them within these to express their views. Often this is the young persons keyworker or another member of staff in line with the young persons wishes.

Some of the homes use display boards that celebrate the young people through 'Voice of the Child', 'You said we did' or creative displays. There is also continued use of photographs to evidence the young people's input and some of the homes are using monthly newsletters and summaries to share information, including any successes the young people may have had. These monthly summaries are sent out to parents/family members, social worker and other relevant professionals including Independent Reviewing Officers.

The homes continue to advocate on behalf of the young people, this has been observed by the Independent Visitors during visits. For example: One child at Albion Street is currently on a 'reduced timetable' which at present amounts to being in education for 1.5 hours per day. He has stated that he is unhappy with this and that he feels that he is missing time with his friends and doing activities with them, such as football. He has told Homes Manager CB, that he is upset that his friends are playing without him. CB meets every Monday with school and has discussed with them that the young person wants to be in school full time. This is something that has

frustrated Homes Manager as she feels that his behaviour is exacerbated by not being in school. School have stated that they will not increase his attendance whilst his behaviour is unsettled. CB has worked with the Virtual School Head and SEND Team manager to try to uphold the young person's right to a full time education.

Each of the homes has a nominated elected member whose role is to visit the homes and meet with the young people and staff. None of the mainstream homes have had a visit for some months in some cases years. This is a shame as the homes welcome these visits as an opportunity to showcase the work being completed with the young people. The LSU, Strut, Beacon and Haven have all had visits this year, the Homes Managers have spoken of these visits as being a positive experience enabling them to build upon the relationships with the elected members, as well as sharing challenges and problems, such as the recruitment and retention of staff.

#### **Quality of care**

Three of the homes have had Ofsted inspections since the last Corporate Parenting report, these being Northolme, Albion Street and Lincolnshire Secure Unit. The children within the homes generally continue to receive a good, and in some homes excellent, quality of care. However, It has been a challenging time for Northolme with the Ofsted Inspection rating the home as, **Requires Improvement to be Good**, *The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.*

Whilst the homes management team and care staff were understandably upset and dejected at the outcome, they have been resolute in their resolve to make the necessary improvements in line with the Ofsted recommendations and implementing an action plan. The Independent Visitor had highlighted within the reports following visits some concerns as to the change of the young people at Northolme and the challenges this was bringing in terms of the impact on the structure of the home and relationships within the home. One of the main focuses of the home is to build relationships between the young people, whilst being realistic that some of the young people are unlikely to remain there as they will move on in line with their age and care plan, this results in some young people having little investment in the home and relationships within it.

Albion street have achieved an Ofsted rating of **Outstanding** this is an achievement worth celebrating and indicative of the work the Independent Visitors have observed during their visits. That is not to say that the home is completely settled as there has been some concerns more recently relating to some of the relationships within the home. However, the staff continue to work through and resolve issues using a therapeutic approach with the young people. The Independent Visitor reported: Albion Street continue to work closely with the Play Therapist Zoe O'Conner who is providing support to staff regarding strategies to support them managing the behaviours that are displayed by a number of young people. They are also working alongside the Therapeutic Crisis Intervention trainers for consultation following difficult incidents.

The Secure Unit inspection was an Interim inspection they continue to be **Good** with no enforcement notices. The Secure unit has recently cared for a young person in their welfare bed for a period of some months. The young person had particular needs that the staff within the unit were not experienced in caring for. The staff stepped up remarkably so, developing new ways of working with the young person, whilst caring for him in extremely difficult circumstances. The young person was noted by health professionals to have made significant progress whilst at the unit. The unit held a team meeting to reflect on and celebrate the achievements and adaptability of the staff in meeting the needs of the young person, who has now moved on to a residential home.

Robin House opened its doors to the first young person on the 21<sup>st</sup> of September, this was a much awaited opening. There had been some issues following the Ofsted visit regarding planning permission, this has now been successfully resolved. Staff seen during the Independent Visitors last visit were enthused and excited regarding the new young people due to arrive. Extensive planning and preparation has taken place, the home is well decorated warm and welcoming. The first young person was able to choose the bedroom he wanted and have it decorated how he would like. The second young person arrived on the 27<sup>th</sup> of September, again, chose his room and décor. It is obviously early days for the young people, the staff had arranged a party for their arrival. Initial observations of the files and plans for the young people show them to be comprehensive up to date and informative. The home is also reaching out to the families of the young people to ensure they are fully aware of the young people's progress. There is also a therapy dog who will visit the home with his carer, he even has his own file and risk assessment in place.

Family time remains an important focus for the homes. All of the settings promote family time, working with families and partner agencies in a variety of ways, be that supporting young people

and their care givers who may be having home visits, transporting and facilitating visits with family and friends, meeting siblings and friends within the community for days out and trips.

Haven Cottage continues to organise and hold community events/activities with a recent 'Barn Dance' taking place towards the end of the school summer holidays. These events are organised by staff at the home with posters advertising the event being placed around the home as well as invitations being sent out to parents and carers. The dance was reported to be a success with staff at the home taking the opportunity to gain feedback from the attendees on ideas for upcoming events etc. The home has already planned the Christmas event which is due to take place on 10 December at a local community centre in Wyberton.

Eastgate, like Albion Street and Northolme have had difficult times with some of the young people, with an increase in incidents over the summer in particular. The Independent Visitors have remarked on the impact to staff morale: Staff have been tired and at times feeling exhausted over the summer when managing incidents and restraints in particular. Management recognises the stresses and have supported staff effectively during this time. It is to be celebrated that they have had one young person move successfully to semi-independence. This followed a transition plan tailored to meet his needs and was completed at the end of his exam time so as not to disrupt him.

Staff at Strut House report that supervision is good, and that management are very supportive. The Handy person has worked hard on creating child friendly spaces outside in the garden and barbeque area, seating, steppingstones for children and sand pit. The young people enjoy tricycles, go karts, and the basketball net. The outside space is functional and used regularly. Staff have been provided with radio alarms for communication with one another as the home has different 'areas' or 'wings' and it is difficult to hear when they are in need of assistance with young people.

Training continues to be a priority for the homes, the homes have a training Matrix to ensure that staff are aware of the mandatory training that must be undertaken. In discussion with Managers, staff are afforded time in the shift rota to allow them time and opportunity to attend training events.

The Secure unit is transitioning to a new restraint intervention technique called MMPR (Minimising and managing physical restraint) this training has been a massive undertaking for the unit as all staff attend the training for a period of two weeks. Staff spoken to who have attended the training speak positively about the changes it will bring. The theory element of the

training is extensive in helping staff to understand trauma and its impact on the young people they support. The restraint review continues to be carried out by a member of the LADO team.

The homes continue to actively engage with schools and their education partners. A positive emphasis is placed on school attendance, as we can see from above with Albions Streets attempts to advocate for their young person to be in full time education.

Robin House has spent sometime with an education provision prior to their first young person arriving at the home. The key worker had been into school to ensure that the school had a clear idea of his needs. Unfortunately, communication within the school appeared to fail, resulting in them being ill prepared for his arrival and leading to a delay in his start. Robin house staff were seen to communicate well with the school to resolve the issues as promptly as possible.

The Independent Visitor attending Northolme noted: There are three children not in education at the home. One who has recently joined the home was not attending his previous school and a school closer to the area is being sought, during the visit he was doing work and the staff have developed his timetable. During handover they talked about how good his artwork is and they are also looking at creating the erupting volcano for science. The staff are clearly trying to make sure all parts of his timetable/education are covered.

Two of the other young people had also refused education on the day of the visit. The staff were able to engage one in completing some wordsearches around wishes and feelings and also printed some sudoku activities off. Her key worker describes how creative she can be and how good she is at customising items which includes most recently a t-shirt, the key worker was surprised that she requested word searches but is pleased because arts and craft can be completed any time and with young people.

The other young person was observed to be engaged in a cookery session weighing ingredients and working through the recipe.

Observations of the staff encouraging informal/indirect education through prompting to ensure personal hygiene is completed, rooms are tidy, cleaning up in kitchen, observing safety plans and staying in contact with the home. The Spring/summer Northolme news also offers opportunities for informal education by learning about online internet safety which includes a test your knowledge quiz and wordsearch amongst other activities and the impact of smoking and vaping on the body.

Whilst the home would wish for these young people to be in formal education, they are ensuring their day is structured and informative.

Across the 6 months of this financial year at the point of inspection across all homes (excluding Strut due to being short breaks only and the Secure Unit due to having education on site) 96% of young people had a formal educational placement in place overall.

Feedback continues to be sought by the independent Visitors the following are some examples:

*During a recent visit to the Beacon Parental feedback was gained from a child's mum who had come to the home to visit her son and take him out in the community. She was happy to talk to share with the Independent Visitor that she couldn't believe he has now been living at the home for over a year and that she is really pleased how settled he is, she feels he is making progress and is developing. She had no concerns or worries regarding the care or treatment that her son is receiving whilst he is living at the Beacon. She enjoys coming to see him and always feels made welcome by the staff. She is provided with regular updates and feels that staff would contact her if there was anything she ever needed to know.*

*From LSU, I spoke to one of the parents for a young person currently in the unit, she was positive about the time he has spent there, whilst she would not wish her son to be in a secure unit she felt he was in "safe hands" and that if he had to stay in secure she would rather he be in LSU, she feels he has settled routines which is important for him. She receives weekly updates along with invites to all of his meetings. She was pleased with his progress in education and that while he is in one place, he has made progress. She stated that when she has visited the unit, it has been clean, and that staff have been welcoming of her. There were no issues of concern for her and her son's care.*

The following is feedback from a YOS worker and SW for a young person in LSU:

*"The excellent quality of relationships with all of the staff at the unit from the front door to the back offices. There is warmth and professionalism, and I am aware that the welfare of the young person I am supporting is held in high regard".*

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

Social pedagogy continues to be embedded across the majority of the homes. It has been noted by the Independent Visitors that the staff at the Beacon continue to be on a journey regarding

implementing Social Pedagogy into their direct work with children. Specialist training has been provided as well as working group being implemented. The Secure Unit applies a Trauma Informed approach as well as using Restorative Justice.

Social Pedagogy assists the young people to engage in direct work/activities and conversations about the important things that have happened within their lives. It supports social and emotional learning, developing resilience, social skills and positive relationships. Young people have direct work files and there is evidence of work being completed with them around current risks and incidents, or concern.

The Independent Visitors have found that when speaking to staff at the Haven Cottage, they have been able share the difference between the different models in Social Pedagogy and how they determine which method to use when writing up observations or direct work that they have undertaken with a young person. A positive that has been noted is when reviewing the majority of the write ups that at the end they provided next steps linking the activity to the young person's targets including what they were achieving by undertaking the task.

When visiting Strut House, the Independent Visitor noted that in relation to Social Pedagogy she observed evidence of the use of this is displayed within the home using models such as; the Diamond Model, The Zone of Proximal Development, Head Heart Hands and the Learning Zone.

Given the needs of the young people this is kept at a level for which they are able to complete direct work however they use communication aids such as PECs and Widgets and use a lot of photographs to evidence work with young people.

The display boards had been updated and highlighted the use of Social Pedagogy; the Common Third had been used with work that had been completed with young people for World Elephant Day, other boards displayed use of Head, Heart, Hand model again demonstrating with photos. There were also picture of young people enjoying a recent trip to the park.

As well as Social Pedagogy, evidence has been seen of the home's embracing Restorative Practice, implementing restorative conversations with the young people following any incidents.

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

The majority of homes have Social Pedagogy champions to ensure that staff are confident in completing work and using a variety of models. One of the champions will attend team meetings at various homes to discuss how Social Pedagogy continues to be implemented within the home



and support with new ideas and approaches. It is recognised that the Social Pedagogy full training takes place over six days, which is a big commitment in relation to staff availability.

All of the young people in the mainstream homes have a direct work trajectory that is stored within their files. Within Eastgate it has been noted that: the direct work trajectory for the young people is updated each month and outlines the aims of the direct work to be completed, this can be cross referenced to their ICSP's/risk assessments. The Independent Visitor has seen examples of Social Pedagogy work within the young people's files including using the learning zone model to build a young person's confidence getting the train. Restorative work is ongoing between the young people and the young people and staff when necessary.

### **Challenges**

The Ofsted inspection of Northolme is a challenge for the management team, they have a clear action plan that they are working with and being supported by the Service leads to evidence progress. The management team and the staff group as a whole are determined to evidence the positive work that they carry out on a daily basis with the young people in the home. They recognise there are changes that they can make and a recent Independent visit found files had improved. It has to be recognised that the home had undergone significant changes in the young people residing at Northolme due to the positive rehabilitation home or to foster care of several young people. It is fair to say that one young person was unhappy and some of his actions had upset the younger children, however with support he has now moved on. It is expected with time and patience that the young people will gel and the home will unite together.

Staff recruitment and retention continues to be an ongoing issue for all of the homes, however, as highlighted in the last report it is recognised that this is not specific to Lincolnshire with their being shortages of care staff nationally. The homes have recommenced promoting the role by visiting local universities and colleges, presenting to students on social care courses about the positions and the progression opportunities available. There has not been any evidence of shortfalls in staffing due to staff members being flexible in their shifts and management continuing to undertake shifts as required. However agency staff are having to be utilised by some homes, which is not ideal for the children. It has been noted that at times due to staff sickness and vacancies, short stay care breaks have been disrupted, on some occasions care having to be cancelled and rearranged. However, it is worth pointing out that the care staff do

attempt to be incredibly creative when faced with these challenges and will offer care in the community as an alternative to support the families.

Robin House is now open with another home Riverhead, in Louth due to open towards the end of this year or early in the new year. There are obvious challenges in staffing all of the homes adequately with appropriately experienced staff.

### **Conclusion**

There is evidence of ongoing high quality care being observed by the Independent Visitors. Observations of the relationships between the care staff and the young people is positive across all homes, the young people will search out staff for support and reassurance. There is very much an open door policy within the homes. The Staff are seen to be invested in the relationships with the young people to ensure positive experiences and outcomes.

There are a variety of ratings from Ofsted across the homes. The Outstanding inspection relating to Albion Street should be celebrated and is reflective of continuous hard work and dedication, from all the staff. The Requires Improvement rating for Northolme is being addressed, the management team and care staff have met the challenge head on and are working creatively to address the issues. The independent visitor has seen an improvement in the case files and recordings.

In the Inspections, the Independent Visitor must specifically confirm whether the two elements are met;

*Regulation 44.4 (a) the independent person's opinion as to whether children are effectively safeguarded.*

And

*Regulation 44.4 (b) the independent person's opinion as to whether the conduct of the home promotes Children's wellbeing.*

In all homes at all visits the Independent Visitor has confidently stated that both these requirements are being met.

The much awaited opening of Robin house is seen as an exciting opportunity to develop the therapeutic parenting model within the Local Authority, with the aim being to move the young people either back to family or into a foster placement. It is obviously early days for the home and the young people accessing it, however the enthusiasm of the staff is positive.

There continues to be issues with staffing across many of the homes, whilst these shortages are being managed by the flexibility and commitment of the management team and the care staff, retention of staff is a major issue that the senior management team are looking to resolve.

There continues to be joint working across the homes with regular peer audits being completed by the management teams. This enables reflection and constructive feedback, it also enables a learning culture as to new ways of working and positive practices across the homes.

Management audits continue to take place regularly within the homes, therefore providing management oversight and guidance.

## APPENDIX A

### Ofsted inspections

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

### Albion Street

Inspection dates: 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> May 2023

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

*taking into account,*

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **Outstanding**

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

### The Beacon

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 February 2023

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

*Taking into account:*

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **Good**

**Eastgate**

**Inspection dates: 17 and 18 January 2023**

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

*Taking into account:*

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **Outstanding**

**Haven Cottage**

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

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

*Taking into account:*

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **Good**

**Lincolnshire Secure Unit**

**Inspection date: 6 June 2023**

**Date of last inspection: 10 January 2023 Judgement at last inspection: Good**

**Enforcement action since last inspection: None**

**Northolme**

**Last Ofsted inspection dates: 26 and 27 June 2023**

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,** **Requires improvement to be good**

*taking into account,*

How well children and young people are helped and protected	<b>Requires improvement to be good</b>
---	--

The effectiveness of leaders and managers	<b>Requires improvement to be good</b>
---	--

### **Strut House**

**Inspection dates: 24 & 25 January 2023**

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
--	--------------------

*Taking into account:*

How well children and young people are helped and protected	<b>Good</b>
---	-------------

The effectiveness of leaders and managers	<b>Outstanding</b>
---	--------------------

### **Robin House**

**Awaiting Inspection**

## **Children Homes Regulations 2015 (Part 2)**

### **Quality standards for children's homes**

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

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

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

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

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

### **The quality and purpose of care standard**

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

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

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

---

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



### **The children's views, wishes and feelings standard**

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

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

### **The education standard**

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

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

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

### **The enjoyment and achievement standard**

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

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

### **The health and well-being standard**

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

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

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

**The positive relationships standard**

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

- (a) mutual respect and trust;
  - (b) an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and
  - (c) positive responses to other children and adults.
- (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—
- (a) that staff—
    - (i) meet each child’s behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child’s relevant plans;
    - (ii) help each child to develop socially aware behaviour;
    - (iii) encourage each child to take responsibility for the child’s behaviour, in accordance with the child’s age and understanding;
    - (iv) help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone;
    - (v) communicate to each child expectations about the child’s behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child’s age and understanding;
    - (vi) help each child to understand, in a way that is appropriate according to the child’s age and understanding, personal, sexual and social relationships, and how those relationships can be supportive or harmful;
    - (vii) help each child to develop the understanding and skills to recognise or withdraw from a damaging, exploitative or harmful relationship;
      - (viii) strive to gain each child’s respect and trust;
    - (ix) understand how children’s previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children;
    - (x) are provided with supervision and support to enable them to understand and manage their own feelings and responses to the behaviour and emotions of children, and to help children to do the same;
    - (xi) de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children;
      - (xii) understand and communicate to children that bullying is unacceptable; and
      - (xiii) have the skills to recognise incidents or indications of bullying and how to deal with them; and

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

### **The protection of children standard**

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

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

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

### **The leadership and management standard**

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

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

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

### **The care planning standard**

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

## **Children's Homes Regulations 2015 (part 6)**

### **Independent person: visits and reports**

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

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

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

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

(4) The Independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the Independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the Independent person's opinion as to whether—

- (a) children are effectively safeguarded; and
- (b) the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being.

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

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

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

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

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



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

Report to:	<b>Corporate Parenting Panel</b>
Date:	<b>09 November 2023</b>
Subject:	<b>Fostering Quarterly Performance Report - Quarters 1 and 2</b>

**Summary:**

This report provides an overview of the Fostering Service Performance for Quarter One and Two (April – September 2023).

**Actions Required:**

That the Corporate Parenting Panel reviews and comments on the contents of this report, and that the attached report be accepted as an accurate overview of the Fostering Service.

## **1. Background**

The report presents an update on the performance of the Fostering Service in accordance with Standard 25 of the National Minimum Standards 2011.

## **2. Conclusion**

The Panel is invited to review the work and progress within the service and accept the attached report as an accurate reflection and overview of the service delivery during this period.

## **3. Consultation**

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

N/A

#### 4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Fostering Quarterly Performance Report Quarter 1 and 2 2023-2024

#### 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 01522 552781 or [Deborah.crawford@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Deborah.crawford@lincolnshire.gov.uk)





2023-24  
**QUARTERS 1 & 2**  
**REPORT**

APRIL - SEPTEMBER

LINCOLNSHIRE FOSTERING SERVICE

## **Quarter One Fostering Report 2023/2024:**

The Annual Report for 2022- 2023 was presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel in September 2023. The Statement of Purpose was revised and was ratified on the same day.

This is the half yearly report for 2023- 2024 which is being presented as an exceptional report owing to the Corporate Parenting Panel agenda. It is expected that reports will be presented quarterly moving forward.

### **Introduction:**

In 2023/2024, the Fostering Service has an annual budget of ££9,543,967. All fostering allowances have been increased by 12% for this financial year which has ensured that allowances continue to remain above the government recommended minimum rates. Lincolnshire fostering service promptly implemented this increase at the very start of the financial year in an effort to boost allowances to support fostering families to cover the cost of caring for the child/ren. This much needed increase arose following the announcement of the strategy of the reform of children's social care: *Stable Homes, Built on Love*.

The timing of such an increase has never been more critical given the national numbers of carers ceasing to foster, children in care date from the government from latest figures published in March 2022 confirm a 2% increase totalling 82,170 ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)) in the children in care population and reflects the rise in the national cost of living.

Reviewing fostering allowances in the context of a broader support offer has been critical in terms of supporting Lincolnshire fostering in undertaking this valuable and integral role in maintaining local children with local fostering families.

For Lincolnshire to be the carers number one provider of choice it is vital that allowances including the retention element, in the context of a strong supervision, support and development offer are key given the rigorous competition from other fostering agencies within the region.

The fostering budget continues to afford flexibility to provide enhanced allowances to certain categories of carers such as those offering permanence or managing particularly distressed children and those exhibiting challenging behaviours.

Additionally, the authority support fostering families with recognised discount cards that are compatible with what is available to Lincolnshire County Council Social Care staff alongside all other employees. This affords an additional benefit for carers longer term.

Nationally and regionally, it is observed that the fostering marketplace continues to be extremely challenging with competition at a peak level with several independent agencies actively recruiting in the Lincolnshire region. When the Council are unable to source and match internal resources there is a reliance on using commissioned foster placements. We

readily acknowledge that there are occasions when this is unavoidable, but the sourcing of these commissioned placements is becoming more difficult week upon week owing to all providers across the region and country facing the same challenges in terms of carer numbers, choice and availability. Whilst availability is a presenting challenge the overall costs of new placements are at increased rates which is an additional financial burden to the Council.

It is recognised within the whole of the children's service and fostering community that the retention and ongoing recruitment of foster carers continues to be an absolute priority. Whilst remuneration, supervision and support are strong components of the Lincolnshire offer, the growing emergence of the fostering community online is one aspect of the support offer that carers have reported remains an interesting and valuable forum. The online presence invites contributions from all with varied experience and significant knowledge about their volunteer role.

The emphasis on recruitment and retention remains a service priority and at the forefront of the council and this fostering agency. The efforts of last year together with a creative and renewed approach for this year is an effort to maintain and where possible increase the interest and conversions for foster carer's approval.

The Fostering Network, the UK's leading fostering charity has recently published research into fostering recruitment and retention in England. This includes a range of recommendations for fostering services including incorporating lived experience into application processes and building quality relationships, and ensuring good support for foster families, timely, transparent administration of payments to foster carers, and offering exit interviews to all resigning foster carers.

The above is a kindly reminder of the good practice and what serves to influence people's motivations to apply to this authority and continue to foster for Lincolnshire.

The service has seen 5 new fostering households join the fostering community since the start of April 2023 with further fostering assessments progressing and being scheduled on the fostering panel later this year. This is important given the continued number of children in care and the national and local diminishing number of foster carers.

The Fostering Network, the UK's leading fostering charity lead on innovation in the field of recruitment and retention of foster carers and support agencies with research, new approaches and how agencies can improve the conversion rate of people who express an interest in fostering getting through. In May 2023, Fostering Network released new research addressing the vital knowledge gaps into the retention and recruitment of foster carers in England which they presented to the Minister for Children for Children and Families and comes at a crucial point as the Government begins to implement their strategy for children's social care.

The current data from the Fostering Network highlights the national shortage of foster carers. This alongside the think tank Social Market Foundation predicts a shortage of 25,000 carers in England by 2026.

At the end of August 2023 (data is unavailable for September 2023) the number of children in care stood at 747 with 503 of these children being in foster care. This equates to 68% of the children in care population. These figures include a total of 56 children who are in commissioned placements Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) which reflects an increase of 8 children from the end of March 2023.

Over the period from April to end of August 2023, 169 children became children in care for the first time, of these 119 were placed in foster care and Kinship care arrangements. The remaining children were placed in residential care within Lincolnshire's own provision, independent residential establishments, NHS residential establishments and Independent Living within a supported setting.

In relation to the Children in Care stability date that concerns children who have been in care continuously for at least 2.5 years who were living in the same placement for at least 2 years (NI063) this stands at 68 % which is slightly below the target range, but efforts continue to support carers in managing the children they care for and the distressed behaviours seen. Likewise, the service works collaboratively with other parts of the council and partner agencies to support carers and review within support and disruptions meetings whether placement breakdowns could have been prevented.

Likewise, the percentage of children in care with three or more placements during the year stands at 1.7% which at this stage in the year remains good, but this is a cumulative indicator and may change at year end. Despite showing promise this continues to be a difficult year, yet Foster Carers have proven to be very resourceful and committed to the children they care for. However, placement availability has been negatively impacted as some Foster Carers have chosen to concentrate on the children already in their care and declined to take additional placements.

The number of children and young people exiting care stood at 155 children with the highest proportion leaving care by the route of adoption, reunification to family, moving to living independently within supported accommodation and Special Guardianship Orders.

The fostering service continues to be engaged in developmental work with a strong focus on the core offer to foster carers and the ongoing development and practice of the Valuing Care Toolkit which is an integral part of the foster carer's annual reviews, experience and Form F assessments. The Valuing Care Toolkit implementation into all Kinship and Special Guardianship Order (SGO) assessments has been implemented in an effort to ensure that the support and skills set of the carers are suitable matched to the needs of the child given the lifelong arrangements that form part of these assessments.

The Fostering Service eagerly awaited the Government's strategy and response to the Care Review reforms- *Stable Homes, Built on Love* that was published earlier this year and coincided with the increase in the national minimum allowance for fostering households. This implementation of the pillars of reform did address the financial support to fostering households together with investment in national recruitment and retention programmes with a focus on local need in recognition this differs across the country.

It is really positive that Lincolnshire immediately responded to the announcement by Government and increased their allowances from the start of April 2023 to all of our fostering households by 12%. This has been positively received given the economic challenges and serves to reflect that Lincolnshire are a responsive service.

Within the Care Review the Department of Education accepted the recommendation to regionalise placement commissioning through the test and piloting of Regional Care Co-operatives. This principally which would serve to address the insufficiency, excess profits and poor outcomes for children who are placed a distance away or where placement availability results in instability.

Whilst the concept of regional working is not new given the existence of Regional Adoption Agencies some years ago it is yet to be seen and understood how these national restorative actions will be implemented in an effort to deliver best practice for children in care and the valuable resources caring for them within a fostering sector that is on the brink.

### **Recruitment and Retention:**

Lincolnshire acknowledge and understand that recruitment and retention are key elements for any successful fostering provider, and it has never been more important at a time when it is widely acknowledged there is a national shortage of foster carers. Lincolnshire is not immune from these challenges with the fostering shortages deepening nationally and several national reports speculate on the varied reasons for this however, it is universally acknowledged that the Covid pandemic impacted and the numbers of children in care have risen across the country.

Although forward thinking and innovative, the service continues to struggle to meet the demand of placements. Lincolnshire County Council and the Fostering Service are taking every opportunity to raise awareness in the community, delivering messages around the need for foster carers and establishing Lincolnshire fostering service as part of the local community and working to be recognised as the local fostering agency of choice.

Online creative, targeted marketing continues to provide the service with the flexibility and low-cost options of supporting part of the services' recruitment activity. The fostering service uses online options to increase capacity, accessibility, and convenience for foster carers and fostering applicants. This includes online recruitment events and the fostering preparation course.

Those making formal or informal enquiries to foster are encouraged to attend information events. Information events have been advertised through paid adds on social media across greater Lincolnshire. These also direct people towards the fostering service webpage.

The service plans to review the webpage during the next reporting period, ensuring it is user friendly and the landing page gives a good first impression of the service.

The participation in recruitment information events remains higher than face to face events and can be delivered more cost effectively. Online events will continue at this time but will be reviewed on an ongoing basis. The information events will remain under review and will continue to adapt to market research and participation feedback.

The service has held several pop-up stalls in public areas for increased visibility and the intention to build better relationships with local businesses. Members of the fostering team also attended the Lincolnshire Show in June 2023.



During the summer the service have continued to engage with the community to increase visibility and build upon better relationships with businesses. Members of the fostering team also attended the Pride in August 2023 and Saxilby waterfront Festival in September 2023.





Lincolnshire Fostering Service is at Lincoln Pride UK. 19 Aug · 🌐

Thank you to everyone who came to support our fostering recruitment day at #lincolnpride. We welcome applications to foster from across Lincolnshire society. ❤️🧡💛💚💙💜

[lincolnshire.gov.uk/fostering](http://lincolnshire.gov.uk/fostering) ❤️

#lincolnshirecountycouncil  
#lincolnshirefostering #lincolnpride



Boost this post to reach up to 1277 more people if you spend \$30.

Boost post

You, Victoria Jo Popham and 29 others 1 share



Ongoing analysis is being undertaken in relation to the process and performance of becoming a foster carer, motivations, barriers to becoming approved and how we can make improvements continue to inform improvements and developments in our application, assessment, and approval process.

The recruitment team have now started to record at the initial enquiry stage the motivation for applying and the type of fostering they are interested in to help inform recruitment campaigns and the advertising strategy.

Replacing those who leave the fostering community during the year is essential. Every year the service expects to lose carers, some of these are unavoidable as carers come to the end of their fostering careers, retire or people's circumstances change, or they experience ill health. The focus remains on learning from those the service loses that could have been avoided but also understanding more about why people choose to remain.

Retention of Foster Carers remains the most effective means of recruitment which is commonly noted in various research and endorsed by the Fostering Network in May 2023. Providing individual levels of support to carers and specifically those newly approved remains crucial. The Fostering Service needs to continue to grow the population of foster carers given the number of children coming into care has been rising in recent years thus enabling more choice whilst not disputing that the reliance on the independent market in some instances.

The annual survey completed and reported on in January 2023 reported that 69% of foster carers participating in the survey felt the financial package needed to improve. The fostering service increased the fostering allowance by 12% from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 which was warmly received. The service via the payment's handbook have aided carers with guidance on how the allowance has been uplifted for pocket money and clothing allowances in addition to other areas of spend.

The recruitment team have researched the area of marketing and recruitment of foster carers, this has included taking key recommendations from the state of the nation report Fostering Network, 2022, The Care Review (DFE,2022) and the Foster Care retention and recruitment in England, Key research findings and recommendations (May 2023). It has been possible to learn about the trends and benchmarks for performance and data to understand the strengths of our own service and the areas where the service can continue to develop.

The work moving forward will continue to closely monitor quality with a strong emphasis on good customer service and community. The impact of changes in practice and processes can be seen through key performance indicators. Conversion rates from applying and approval saw a significant rise last year, the aim this year is to maintain this high standard of applicant experience.

Over the last 12-months, work has continued 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. This is something that requires more promotion, so it's clearly understood more widely, and foster carers feel confident in accessing and understanding what is available.

The investment in a community approach to support is clearly felt by those engaged with this being reported as a one of the strongest parts of the support offer in the last annual survey.

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. Social groups are an area for development, foster carers have requested more face-to-face groups. Three have taken place since April 2023.

The Placement Support Workers remain a key part of the support offer for the service, offering a high level of intervention to those families and children in difficulty.

In June, the South Team BBQ took place, this was an event welcoming foster carers and their families to join the fostering team for a day of shared activities and food. The annual event is well received and enjoyed by fostering households. Feedback from the community was positive. The North fostering team held a similar event in July 2023 which was a tremendous success.



In August, the Summer Supportive Superstars event took place at Lincolnshire Wildlife Park, this was an event welcoming foster carers birth children to join the fostering team for a day of shared activities. The event provides an opportunity for connection and sharing between birth children around their fostering experiences.

**Marketing:**

During this half year there have been 98 Initial Enquiries of Interest (IEI) were received from the public enquiring about becoming a foster carer.

There have been 5 approved households in this first part of the year and the service hope to secure a total of over 20 in this financial year. The figures are compared with East Midlands colleagues who are facing the exact same challenges that this service is. Despite having a clear and committed retention and recruitment strategy the service continues to review this to maximise our efforts to secure the right people to care for the right children. The service continues to review this strategy to ensure that our marketing resources are suitably matched to attract the local community with the intention of increasing in-house fostering capacity.

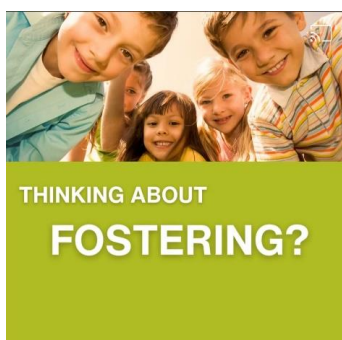
There are 18 ongoing assessments currently being undertaken with 13 scheduled for Fostering Panel later in the financial year.

**Advertising:**

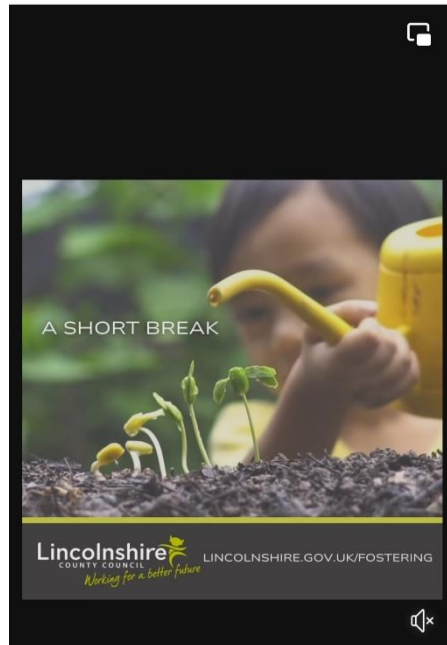
In Lincolnshire, the service continually reviews the marketing strategy and continuously develop the approach as being a local option for carers wanting to care for Lincolnshire children.

During this period special attention has been paid to the consistency of branding with an emphasis on appealing to local communities and engaging with broader advertising within the Council’s literature and beyond.

Service adverts have been reviewed; this has included information events. Performance data indicates that videos were more successful. The recruitment team have created a paid video advertisement for the information events which is shared on Facebook. The targeted audience was reviewed also, in line with recommendations recently set out in the recruitment research completed by the Fostering network (May 2023). The recruitment team have reported an increased reach of 468% and increased engagement of 196%. 157 Facebook users used the advert to visit the service webpage.



Additionally, a paid advert was used, this was a 45 second video advert, the music for this advert also linked with the advert that is played on Lincs FM, bringing consistency and connection. The paid add achieved 1,000 views, 1000 web clicks and thousands of interactions and impressions. The full video was also followed by an array of short positive clips with clear text, enhancing virtual interaction to gain public confidence and trust in the service.



The research sets out and it is widely acknowledged fostering is something families will think about over a long period of time before applying, the service has 2 adverts on Facebook at any one time and users will see these on their newsfeeds, they will act as a regular reminder.

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

#### **April-June 2023**

- As part of the permanence campaign, the service has shared anonymised profiles on social media of children seeking long term homes. This has now extended to paid videos adverts.
- “Myth Busting Monday” on social media has continued, which shares either a 10 second video or a graphic created in house regarding misconceptions about fostering. These posts reach on average 320 people each week.



- The Refer a friend promotion continues with current households on the virtual chat groups and features in the fostering monthly newsletter.
- Lincs FM have 3 adverts that they are playing on Lincs FM and Greatest hits radio. This includes a general fostering adverts, a respite/ short breaks advert and a long-term fostering advert.
- Int Comms within the County Council have shared monthly updates about fostering and the information events to staff.
- During fostering fortnight which ran from 15<sup>th</sup>- 28<sup>th</sup> May 2023 fostering featured as an intranet article and an article featured on the front page of the LCC website.
- Lincolnshire County Council have shared posts about fostering on their social media pages weekly.
- Boston Borough, South Kesteven and East Lindsey District Councils have promoted through their Internal communications information about fostering. This has resulted in some initial enquiries to fostering. They have also shared information about fostering on their social media accounts.
- A countdown to fostering fortnight took place on social media.
- Foster Carers, Schools and Local Authority staff during May 2023 were reminded about all the ways they can support the fostering service in recruiting more foster carers.
- During fostering fortnight adverts were created that featured local images, helping people connect the service with their communities.



### July-September 2023

- As part of the permanence campaign, the service has shared anonymised profiles on social media of children seeking long term homes.
- The Refer a friend promotion continues with current households on the virtual chat groups and features in the fostering monthly newsletter. We have received 2 this quarter.
- Lincs FM have 3 adverts that they are playing on Lincs FM and Greatest hits radio. This includes a general fostering adverts, a respite/ short breaks advert and a long-term fostering advert.
- Int Comms within the County Council have shared monthly updates about fostering and the information events to staff. Weekly articles were also shared throughout September about fostering friendly policies in Lincolnshire.
- Lincolnshire County Council have shared posts about fostering on their social media pages weekly.
- Lincolnshire fostering service attended Lincolnshire Pride and Saxilby Waterfront Festival
- Lincolnshire Fostering Service are now advertised in Marshalls Yard in Gainsborough on the large advertising screen in the main shopping area, displaying a video clip every few minutes.
- One of Lincolnshire's foster carers featured in a Lincolnite article where they raised awareness around the shortage of foster carers and the need for local people to come forward.

- The Services Team Manager was interviewed to raise awareness of the need of more foster carers on BBC Lincolnshire Radio.

**Permanence:**

Attracting long term foster carers remains a priority for the service as the number of children seeking a long-term home increase. Profiles and campaigns are created for children seeking permanent foster homes, this includes anonymised profiles which are shared online.

These anonymised profiles are shared on the Council’s social media platforms as part of the marketing campaigns to attract new carers, this includes the Caring2Learn closed Facebook group. Profiles are shared with fostering applicants during the assessment period and at the preparation course. A campaign ad is played on Lincs FM and Greatest Hits Radio and there is a dedicated page on the councils.gov webpage.

In addition to attracting new carers, the service recognises that people’s circumstances change, and Supervising Social Workers continue to have conversations about different types of fostering keeping long-term fostering on the agenda. Fostering households are kept up to date on long term events and can attend these to explore their interest and options. Articles about long-term fostering and those children seeking long term homes also feature in the monthly newsletter and the profiles are also readily available in the foster carers google drive.

The profiles on social media create a lot of attention and are the most liked and shared posts. Although each profile is individually designed and attempts to connect with the child’s individual interests and personality helping the community to feel connected the service has developed a clear branding using a child with a backpack, providing consistency for media purposes.



Supporting applicants considering long-term fostering early in the assessment process remains a priority, by engaging them early in family finders’ events, matching and training.

### **Family Finding:**

It has been another exciting and productive time during this first half of the year within Family Finders. The service continues to meet monthly to consider all children with a care plan of long-term fostering who do not already have a long-term placement identified. This includes children within residential settings that have a trajectory to return to a fostering household and those in inhouse fostering placements or with Independent Fostering Agencies. These meetings have several different professionals attending including representatives from the fostering service, children in care team, recruitment and marketing team and placement support workers.

There has been a steady progression over the last two years of children referred to Family Finders. This period alone a further ten additional children have been referred to Family Finders. Eight children have been removed from family Finders after the service has been successful in achieving permanence for them, this was made up of four sibling groups of two children. Of these four sibling groups two sets are remaining with their current carers and the other two sets have moved to their long-term carers.

These introductions have taken place over a significant period of time and Placement Support Workers have been allocated to each of the children to support them throughout the transition and to provide some consistency. It is recognised that the transition period can be challenging for both children and adults and Placement Support Workers are vital throughout this period. Regular support meetings have been introduced to ensure both the carers and the children feel supported and affective communication takes place.

Family Finders figures have dropped slightly this quarter with now twenty-seven children awaiting permanent foster placements, this includes six sibling's groups of two children and fifteen singleton children. Eight of these children reside in residential settings, two with Independent Fostering Agencies and seventeen with in-house foster carers.

Family Finders Review continues to be utilised as an internal mechanism to prevent delay and drift. Meetings take place on a monthly basis with children being referred when they have been placed Family Finders for over three months without any potential permanent options being available. These meetings are routinely chaired by two Heads of Service for Fostering and Children in Care.

The Fostering Service is now preparing for the next permanence event following the last event held in July 2023. The next event is scheduled for December 2023. The children's profiles are all being reviewed to ensure up to date information is shared and the service are considering different options in engaging potential carers with the children that need long term stability and security.

During the OFSTED inspection in April 2023 members of the Family Finding team met with the inspectors to discuss how children in Lincolnshire are supported to achieve permanence. The OFSTED report highlighted: "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."

The permanence campaign is on-going and includes a variety of advertising, With the use of social media platforms including, radio, local publications and the use of the fostering Facebook page and Instagram. The Instagram page is utilized by the service as part of the recruitment drive. The County Council fostering web page continues to provide information on long-term Fostering and the support available to Foster Carers. Approved Foster Carers also have access to the anonymised profiles of the children and Supervising Social Workers discuss these regularly with carers.

### **Training and Development:**

The ongoing personal and professional development of foster carers remains a priority for the service and is crucial in the development of a skilled foster carer community who can meet the needs of children in care. Ensuring that carers have the skills and knowledge required and these can be supported to develop and grow. It is also important to consider how the service better prepares families for fostering.

Lincolnshire believes well prepared households will experience a smoother transition and are less likely to leave fostering early in their fostering journeys. Applicants have access to training and development throughout the assessment period. Recruitment have seen an increased number of applicants accessing the offer and booking mandatory training in advance of approval. This early investment in their journey is having a clear impact on the conversion to approval.

The training offer ensures a range of training at different levels to support this objective.

The fostering training offer will remain under review and alongside the scheduled events the service ensures that carers are updated on events that are offered by partner agencies and organisations such as the National Association of Therapeutic Parents and the Fostering Network. These expand and compliment the available learning opportunities to support personal and professional development, avoids duplication and helps to build relationships across services which was identified by the community as a priority for development.

Group work is included within the training offer and is used as intervention. Development for carers through building knowledge and skills and then supporting this be transferred to practice in a group setting where carers can share experiences and reflect with a Placement Support Worker and other carers. As a group learning session and form of support it encourages networking between households. This has been successful and has already run three times this year.

In this first half year 44 courses were delivered with 573 attendees taking part from fostering households.

**Accredited Training Courses :**

- First Aid/ paediatric training
- Safeguarding
- Safe Care
- Fostering Preparation Course
- Foster Carer Induction
- 3 Day Restorative Practice

**Practice Workshops:**

- Introducing Social Pedagogy
- Introduction to Restorative Practice
- Introduction to mindfulness, Creating Calm
- Introduction to Trauma Awareness
- Supporting sleep, nightmares, and night terrors.
- Supporting grief, loss, and positive endings
- Relational repair
- Fostering Weekly therapeutic parenting Programme (Caring2gether, 6 weeks)
- Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), a carer perspective
- TSD Support (Training, Standards and Development)

**E-Learning:**

Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) eLearning courses are still being accessed and Foster Carers have attended.

- Safeguarding
- Safeguarding refresher
- Hidden harm
- Covid 19
- Think Safe be safe
- Equality and inclusion
- E-safety

**Learning Homes:**

The toolkit for new carers which includes the standards from the Training, Support and Development Standards (TSDs) is now fully embedded within the service.



Currently there are 95 homes and five residential settings that have achieved their Learning Homes Award. Due to all new carers completing the award within twelve months of approval as part of the TSD; the service is seeing the number of awarded homes to continue to rise.

**Celebration Event:**

The Foster Carers Celebration took place in April 2023 at Hemswell Court. The event recognised the contribution and achievements of our fostering community and welcomed all new carers. Foster carers received their long service awards together with a gift as a token of acknowledgement and appreciation. The event was well received by all those that attended, there was a great sense of occasion and all that attended left energized and inspired.



**Kinship:**

Kinship remains a core element of the Fostering Service and continues to be high on the agenda for Lincolnshire County Council.

There are changes afoot as the Government have pledged to deliver a dedicated national kinship care strategy by the end of 2023 which is likely to signal a change nationally to implement step changes to determine key changes for all kinship carers.

This new strategy which has resulted from the Care Review boldly highlights the value and importance of kinship carers and is an attempt to ensure equity across the nation by way of committing that support to this group equals that of what mainstream carers and adoptive families receive.

Lincolnshire continue to understand the benefits of kinship care for children and are well developed in their thinking and practice concerning the use of the family networks. As a children’s service we support kinship carers as we do all other fostering households whilst recognising that the benefits for children of being able to maintain family connections and achieve good outcomes in health and education is well understood.

The family network is fully explored from the beginning to ensure all family members and connected people to the children are considered. This is a key principle for all social workers as a family placement or a placement within the child’s network allows the child to remain with people of whom they have an established relationship with. This principle is fully supported and understood by all children’s social workers and also by the Independent Reviewing Service and the judiciary who seek to have clear evidence detailed of the child’s network and efforts made to identify appropriate connected persons.

The number of proceedings and pre-proceedings within Lincolnshire remains steady and is not decreasing, and therefore kinship care remains a high priority.

The service welcomes any initiatives to support this group of carers and are always reviewing practice and making improvements to internal processes where appropriate. Likewise, and owing to changes within the Family Court and Judiciary the service is respectful of any feedback and ensure that the Council’s adherence to good practice for children and their families continues. This has involved streamlining and modernising the kinship application process and the kinship preparation course is currently under review and further development.

The statistics for quarter 1 and quarter 2 of this financial year are set out below.

Number of Referrals	SGO Only	Reg.24 / SGO	Reg. 24 / Connected Person	Private Fostering Including Ukraine	S38(6) assessments	Statutory Checks/CAO
42	15	7	7	5	2	6

Between the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2023 and 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023 there were fifty-four pieces of kinship work:

Number of Referrals	SGO Only	Reg.24 / SGO	Reg. 24 / Connected Person	Private Fostering	S38(6) assessments	Statutory Checks/CAO
54	15	18	9	1	2	9

In relation to the figures the number of referrals has increased each quarter from the previous financial year, and the first quarter to the second quarter of this year. This is mostly seen in the number of Special Guardianship assessments and statutory checks. The number of regulation 24 assessments has also increased between quarter 1 to quarter 2.

Quarter 2 has seen a big drop in the number of private fostering assessments, with no Homes for Ukraine assessments in quarter 2. In order to support and raise continued awareness to Private Fostering all staff across children's services have been asked to update their training and this supports the work of the safeguarding partnership in keeping this very much part of the community and workforce agenda.

Lincolnshire County Council has recently announced its status as a Path Finder Authority which is an exciting time for children's services. A Practice Supervisor is being recruited to lead on the strategic element of family networks as part of this initiative which will consider the family network as a thread in all work prior to and including the involvement of social care.

This undoubtedly together with any practice shift arising from the Kinship Strategy will in due course have some impact on Lincolnshire's core offer to kinship carers which will have a positive impact on creating and sustaining these placements for Lincolnshire children in care.

**Staying Put:**

During quarter one, the total number of young people in Staying Put arrangements was 41. This figure fluctuated during quarter two with it standing as 37 as the end of the second quarter.

The scheme continues to receive a steady flow of referrals from children in care Social Workers with young people waiting to join the scheme when they reach their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Of the 41 young people on the scheme during Quarter 1, 4 were at university, 25 in further education, 8 were in employment and 1 on an apprenticeship. 3 young people were temporarily not in education, employment, or training (NEET), one of these young people are awaiting their asylum status outcome, therefore are unable to be in education or employment. The remaining two are unwell with a joint approach being taken to support their mental health and engage them in some form of educational activity or employment.

Quarter 2 saw 6 young people at university, 16 in further education, 8 in employment and 2 were on apprenticeships. 5 young people were temporarily not in education, employment or training (NEET), one of these young people is still waiting for their asylum status outcome, 2 remain unwell and continue to have a temporary exemption from being in work or learning. The other 2 are being supported by the Leaving Care service to actively seek employment or learning opportunities.

It remains a core requirement of the scheme that young people are positively engaged in education, employment and training.

During quarter 1 the service has had a higher than usual number of positive moves on from the Staying Put scheme, the total number being 13. This is as follows:

- 4 young people moved into accommodation with either their partner or birth family.
- 3 turned 21 years old and remained with their Staying Put provider on alternate arrangements.
- 2 moved into their own accommodation.
- 1 bought their own house.
- 1 moved into a semi-independent flat.
- 1 successfully completed a degree in Social Work
- 1 ended due to unforeseen circumstances.

Quarter two saw 7 young people move on from their Staying Put arrangement:

- 1 young person turned 21 and moved into their own flat.
- 4 young people had planned moves into alternative accommodation.
- 2 young people turned 21 and remained living with their Staying Put provider on alternative arrangements.

The emphasis on joint working with the Leaving Care Service remains pivotal to support young people post 21 when they commonly transition into independent living. At times when a Staying Put arrangement is at risk, timely interventions continue to be a key to the scheme's success as we work alongside Staying Put Providers, the young person and the Leaving Care Service to achieve resolutions to issues and to stabilise the arrangement.

The number of out of county Staying Put arrangements has seen a slight decrease from 8 in quarter 1 to 7 in quarter 2. This is due to the young person choosing to move back into Lincolnshire. There are currently arrangements in Leeds, Mansfield, Brigg, Peterborough, Ilford and Birmingham.

The scheme allows care leavers to remain living within the household that they feel comfortable, cared for and to retain lifelong links whilst at the same time being supported by a team of people to develop the skills to transition successfully into adulthood. The Council's continued commitment to the scheme displays its success for young people

remaining with their foster carers beyond the age of 18 if both parties agree. However, it is acknowledged that Staying Put is right for many care leavers but not for all.

**Conclusion:**

During this first part of the year there have continued to be pressures on placement availability and despite this most children are placed within the Lincolnshire County Council approved foster carers community. There has and will continue to be a reliance on external resources hence the need for this service to recruit and retain carers to maximise placement choice and sufficiency.

There are many variables that can affect the match of a child with a carer and the strengths-based approach together with the Valuing Care toolkit enables those searches to take place and give the children the best possible chance to achieve positive and child focussed outcomes.

The service continues to prioritise the matching of children with permanent carers where possible and this period has seen a positive and encouraging event in January and July 2023 with plans in place for the winter event in December.

It is important to note the findings of Ofsted who conducted their inspection in April 2023 that the work of the service is outstanding and the efforts to secure children placements minimising delay and create stability and permanence was regarded as quality work. This is something that all carers and staff have had fed back to them which is testament to the calibre of carers and those the council employ.

The service and council work hard to recruit and retain foster carers and after a very successful year last year the ambition and aspiration is to continue in our efforts. The service is aware of the national challenges, the predicted shortfall of carers by 2025, the cost of living crisis yet focuses on securing carers that are able to empathise, love and support the children who have experienced trauma.

The fostering core offer and tiered approach to involve applicants commencing this journey has been warmly received and hopefully delivers a key valuable message from the outset. Despite this the service take nothing for granted yet the action by the council to increase payments, support the discount schemes available and retain the retention payments are a massive bonus.

During this first part of the year supervision and support to carers has been ongoing and invaluable in terms of maintaining best practice standards and improving placement stability. Many fostering households continue to make the difference and have despite the enormous challenges in recent years, demonstrate their commitment to the Lincolnshire children in their care. Carers go above and beyond with their good will warmly acknowledged.

The service continues to be heartened by the interest from the Lincolnshire public in the fostering role and the service hope to secure an increased trend in registrations of interest

and applications going forward. The efforts of foster carers, staff and the community in generating interest and delivering high quality services is a continued achievement.

The continued efforts to maintain and develop the core offer for fostering households will remain under constant review. This is essential given the current challenging climate both locally and nationally regarding placement sufficiency for local authorities and the independent market. Despite the landscape being tough, Lincolnshire are committed to maintain and further enhance an effective and ambitious service that continue to want to grow their caring community to give children the opportunity to live their best lives with Lincolnshire families wherever possible.

Deborah Crawford

**Children's Head of Regulated Services**



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

Report to:	<b>Corporate Parenting Panel</b>
Date:	<b>09 November 2023</b>
Subject:	<b>Private Fostering Annual Report 2022-2023</b>

**Summary:**

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

**Actions Required:**

That the Corporate Parenting Panel reviews and endorses the Private Fostering Annual Report 2022-2023.

## **1. Background**

This report presents the Private Fostering Annual Report for 2022-2023 to members of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

The requirements under The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 to Private Fostering are made under the Children Act 1989.

The Private Fostering National Minimum Standards are issued under Section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 where Local Authorities are expected to comply with such requirements.

The Annual Report attached as Appendix A sets out the relevant performance information and how the Council has discharged its responsibilities in the year 2022-2023.

## **2. Conclusion**

The continued progress of the service is detailed within the attached annual report and is shared as an accurate reflection of how the Council has discharged its responsibilities.

### 3. Consultation

#### a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

### 4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Private Fostering Annual Report 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](mailto:Deborah.crawford@lincolnshire.gov.uk)





# Private Fostering Annual Report

2022 - 2023

## **Introduction**

The Private Fostering Regulations apply when children or young people, aged under 16 years (18 if they have a disability) live with a person who is not a close relative for 28 days or more.

The term 'close relative' has a specific definition within the legislation it includes grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles and aunts (whether of the full or half blood or by marriage) and stepparents. Children living with people who are not close relatives, such as a cousin, great aunt or family friend need to be assessed and reviewed under the Private Fostering Regulations 2005 to ensure the placement is able to safeguard and promote his/her welfare.

This annual report also includes data relating to children and young people arriving under the Homes For Ukraine scheme who are able to live in the UK for up to 3 years and access education, healthcare, benefits, employment (as appropriate under UK law) and other support.

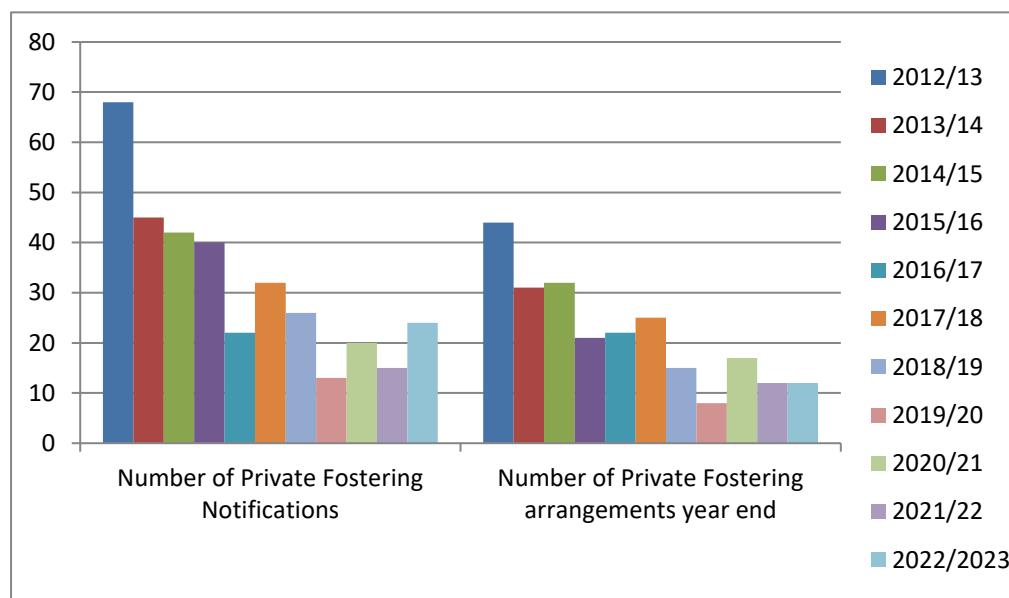
This annual report gives an overview of activities in relation to privately fostered children in Lincolnshire from April 2022 to end of March 2023. The report details how Lincolnshire County Council has complied with its duties and functions in relation to private fostering and includes how the welfare of privately fostered children has been safeguarded and promoted over the past 12 months. The report also outlines the activities which have been undertaken to promote awareness of the notification requirements regarding children who are living in private fostering arrangements.

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

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

This includes undertaking audit activity to review our own performance to identify practice strengths and needs.

## Data regarding Private Fostering arrangements in Lincolnshire



The chart above shows key data regarding private fostering within Lincolnshire over the past decade. From the chart it can be seen that the Council experienced a peak in the level of notifications in 2012/13, but since then there had been an overall reduction in notifications until 2022/23 when the peak in notifications is directly linked to the Homes For Ukraine Scheme.

## Overview of the Demographics of all Children Privately Fostered during the period 2022-2023

Age	N0	Ethnicity	Gender	Nationality
0 - 5	2		Male 11	British 22
6	1	White any other White background	Female 23	Ukrainian 11
7	1	White British	Unknown 1	Thai 1
8	1	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups / White and Black Caribbean		
9	0	Asian/Asian British / Chinese		
10	0	Unspecified 2		
11	3			
12	3			
13	4			

14	3			
15	8			
16	8			
17	1			

Focusing on 2022/2023 the following can be noted:

- There were 24 notifications to the Council spread throughout the County.
- Of the 24 Notifications received, 7 were in relation to young people via the Homes For Ukraine Scheme.
- Of the notifications received, 100% of Private Fostering Arrangement Assessment Records were completed within the 7-day timescale.
- All the Regulation 7 visits were undertaken within the 7-day timescale.
- All the Regulation 8 visits continue to be tracked with reminders sent to individual workers to ensure these are recorded on Mosaic.
- 22 children ceased to be privately fostered during the 2022/2023 period.
- Of the 22 children whose private fostering status ended, 5 returned home to parents, 3 were applicants who withdrew from the Homes For Ukraine Scheme, 1 became a child in care under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning Placement and Review Regulations 2010, 3 siblings were under the responsibility of a different local authority, 6 had turned 16, 2 were deemed not to be private fostering and 1 placement broke down and the young person turned 16 the following week whilst living with friends. One child did not have the substantive reason recorded.

### **Procedures**

Following the Laming Report into the death of Victoria Climbié, published in 2009 (who was privately fostered by her Great Aunt at the time of her death), regulations relating to Private Fostering were amended and strengthened by Section 44 of the Children Act 2004. The following year two further documents were published; the National Minimum Standards 2005 and the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulation 2005, which clearly set out the role of the Local Authority, the Parent and the Private Foster carer and related professionals.

Under Standard 7 of the National Minimum Standards (NMS) for private fostering, local authorities are expected to effectively monitor the way in which it discharges its duties and functions in relation to private fostering, including to provide a written report each year, for consideration by the Director of Children’s Services, which

includes an evaluation of the outcomes of its work in relation to privately fostered children within its area. (Supporting Criteria 7.9 NMS for Private Fostering). Private fostering arrangements continue to be a focus of the OFSTED Local Authority Inspections.

### **Organisational and Structural Aspects**

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

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

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

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

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

### **Background information**

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

This is known as a "Proposed Arrangement". In these circumstances the Customer Service Centre should be contacted, and the referral will be passed on to the relevant locality Family Assessment and Support Team (FAST). However, the more usual presenting situation is one whereby the Customer Service Centre is notified of an arrangement when the child is already with the prospective private foster carer.

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

FAST undertakes the management of the referral of privately fostered children and their timescale for completing the Private Fostering Assessment of Arrangement

(PFAAR) is within 7 working days of referral (notification) and they liaise with Kinship Referrals for the completion of the assessment of the carer's suitability.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Local Authority also have a critical role in the processing of applications under Homes for Ukraine made by children who are not travelling with or joining their parent or legal guardian under the 'eligible minors' expansion of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. The safeguarding role is particularly important for this cohort of children and young people to reduce the risks for those who do not have the protection of being with a parent or legal guardian, although these risks cannot be eliminated entirely. The Local Authority are required to carry out pre- and post-arrival checks and ongoing monitoring of sponsorship arrangements to ensure children are being cared for appropriately.

The eligibility requirements for these children and young people up to the age of 18 who are not travelling with or joining a parent or legal guardian are set out below:

- Must have an immediate family member who is Ukrainian.
- Must have been residents in Ukraine before 1 January 2022 or have been born after that date.
- Can apply from Ukraine or from any other country except the UK.
- This will be assessed by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI).

Eligible children may include those who:

- Intend to be sponsored and hosted by an adult relative other than a parent or legal guardian, who may or may not also travel with the child
- Are accompanied by an adult relative and will both be living with a sponsor or in self-contained accommodation provided by a sponsor who is not related to them. The adult relative may or may not also travel with the child.
- Will not be accompanied by an adult relative and intend to be sponsored and hosted by a sponsor who is not related to them.
- Parental or legal guardian consent
- They must have the required parental or legal guardian consent documents.

The Local Authority offer the following categories of support.

- Enhanced DBS checks
- Accommodation checks
- Supporting post-arrival and ongoing checks including:

within 24 hours of a child's arrival, carrying out an initial visit, which also confirms the suitability of the living arrangements and establishes any immediate welfare needs and providing information in Ukrainian and Russian about how to raise any concerns, and how they have a duty to help them if they believe they are at risk.

Subsequent visits at intervals of not more than 6 weeks for the first year, and at intervals of not more than 12 weeks in subsequent years.

The format of these visits should be in accordance with the Private Fostering guidance.

### **Activity and Performance 2022-2023 in relation to National Minimum Standards**

#### **National Minimum Standard 1**

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

Lincolnshire Council has a statement of purpose on private fostering which will be reviewed in 2023 for the period 2023-2024.

Information about private fostering is available to schools through the Lincolnshire County Council website and awareness training is available to all education providers via the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership.

#### **National Minimum Standard 2**

**The local authority:**

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

#### **Awareness Raising**

The Lincolnshire County Council website is informative and user friendly, and during Private Fostering week the Council has a social media presence to highlight this issue.



Internally awareness is highlighted via a segment in Internal Comms which is sent to all Council staff members.

The Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) has to be satisfied that the welfare of privately fostered children in this area is safeguarded and promoted and that agencies are co-operating. The multi-agency Education sub-group has the private foster care agenda as a standing item and continues to look at promoting private fostering with partner agencies. The Local Authority have worked in partnership with the Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership to update the private fostering training to also include information about the Home For Ukraine Scheme.

In order to continue to raise the awareness of private fostering and the understanding of roles and responsibilities in relation to private fostering;

- Information about private fostering has been provided through the training program, with all staff dealing with private fostering having appropriate online training. In the previous year over 500 staff have completed Private fostering training and this course also forms part of the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment training provided to social workers.
- The service has a communication plan which is reviewed on a regular basis to ensure its effectiveness and wide distribution to members of the public and partner agencies.
- Posters have been placed in local public buildings, including the following, hospitals, GP surgeries, dentists, libraries, Leisure Centre's, Places of Worship and Children's Centre's advising on the requirements of reporting private fostering situations.
- Information on the Lincolnshire County Council website and the NHS staff Intranet
- The school admissions forms have a section dedicated to private fostering to assist school staff in identifying private fostering arrangements

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

### **Response to Notifications**

In Lincolnshire, most notifications are received once the placement has been made and following a referral by the carer to Customer Service Centre. The current arrangements ensure there is an assured and timely response to all notifications/referrals. At the end of March 2023, the Council had received 24 notifications for the year; of these, 100% had their initial visit completed within the 7 day timescale.

### **National Minimum Standard 3**

#### **Safeguarding and Promoting Welfare**

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

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

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

The Panel Advisor undertakes monthly monitoring of the work of the social workers and their supervisors; this monitoring identifies any areas where there may be a need for further discussions for example concerns regarding Parental Responsibility and the clear exercise of it and matters pertaining to permanency planning particularly for younger children. If required action will be taken on individual cases to ensure compliance with agreed policy and procedure. The Panel Advisor is supported in their role by Business Support who collate the relevant data relating to private fostering and also sends out reminders regarding the timescales for visits.

When completing the PFAAR the child is seen alone as part of the assessment and their wishes and feelings ascertained and considered together with the child's needs.

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

In Lincolnshire all private foster carers are Disclosure and Barred List checked and are assessed in accordance with the National Minimum Standards. The PFAAR and the carer's assessment form the completed suitability of the arrangement.

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

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

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

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

The dedicated Fostering team who are responsible for the carer's assessment, has ensured that private foster carers have access to the similar support as local authority foster carers. Carers are also encouraged to attend training events or to access the E-Learning programme available. Private foster carers can be supported to access relevant training provided by the LSCP.

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

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

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

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

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

#### **National Minimum Standard 6**

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

All children who are privately fostered in Lincolnshire have an allocated qualified social worker who provides advice and support to the child, private foster carer, and their parent(s) and/or any other person with parental responsibility. The level of contact

that each private foster carer is determined through the Private Foster Carers Assessment and the Regulation 8 visits.

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

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

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

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

In order to ensure that our performance is maintained or improved where possible, the service proactively manages the schedule of visits with advance notice of scheduled dates for visits being forwarded to the allocated Social Worker and their Team Manager. The importance of private fostering continues to be highlighted to all FAST and Children in Care teams. This will be achieved through varying formats and to consist of:

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

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

### **National Minimum Standard 7**

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

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

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

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

Lincolnshire continues to review and develop a comprehensive service for privately fostered children and all those involved in private fostering, to ensure that the authority complies with relevant legislation and meets the National Minimum Standards in relation to private fostering.

### **Complaints and Representations**

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

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

- Public awareness will continue to be raised through on-going publicity campaign to include Homes for Ukraine scheme.
- Work with LSCP and partner agencies to ensure that private fostering remains an agenda item for professionals. This will include the promotion of e-learning and participation in the education subgroup.
- Audit of private fostering.

Lincolnshire County Council remain committed and are pro-active in ensuring that children and young people are provided with permanency and accordingly ensure that the legal status of children remains appropriate to meet their long-term needs. The impact of Homes For Ukraine has been professionally managed and National Minimum Standards have been consistently adhered to across the whole cohort of privately fostered children and young people.

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

**Deborah Crawford**  
**Head of Regulated Service**

This page is intentionally left blank



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

Report to:	<b>Corporate Parenting Panel</b>
Date:	<b>09 November 2023</b>
Subject:	<b>Annual Report of the Regional Adoption Agency</b>

**Summary:**

The purpose of this report is to inform the Corporate Parenting Panel about the work of the Regional Adoption Agency (Family Adoption Links) through the Annual Report 2022/23.

**Actions Required:**

That the Corporate Parenting Panel reviews the report and endorses the Family Adoption Links Annual Report 2022/23 as an accurate record of activity across the Family Adoption Links partnership operating as a Regional Adoption Agency.

## **1. Background**

This report presents the Annual Report of the Regional Adoption Agency (Family Adoption Links) for 2022/23 to members of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

The regional adoption partnership, Family Adoption Links, was launched in October 2020. The attached report sets out the developments within the year April 2022 - March 2023 and fulfils the statutory requirement that an annual report be produced and will form part of each partners' Annual Adoption Report.

## **2. Conclusion**

The Annual Report of the Regional Adoption Agency (Family Adoption Links) is set out at Appendix A for review and endorsement by the Corporate Parenting Panel.

## **3. Consultation**

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

N/A

#### 4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Family Adoption Links Annual Report 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 John Harris, who can be contacted on 07920274866 or [john.harris@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:john.harris@lincolnshire.gov.uk).





# Family Adoption Links Annual Report 2022-23



# Table of contents

---

01

Background

02

Progress

- Marketing and Recruitment
- Data
- Assessment and Approval
- Family Finding
- Post Adoption Support
- Early Permanence

03

Stakeholder engagement

04

Conclusion

05

Plans for 2023/24

06

Appendix I

# Background

---

The regional adoption partnership, Family Adoption Links, was launched in October 2020. This is a report relating to the developments within the year April 2022 – end of March 2023. This report fulfils the statutory requirement that an annual report be produced and will form part of each partners' Annual Adoption Report.

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

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

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

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

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

- Cornelia Andrecut, Director, Northamptonshire Children's Trust (Board Chair)
- Tara Jones, Assistant Director, Lincolnshire County Council
- Sharon Cooke, Assistant Director, Leicestershire County Council
- Caroline Tote, Assistant Director, Leicester City Council
- Paul Cowling, Assistant Director, North Lincolnshire Council
- Emma Sweeney, Head of Service, Rutland Council
- Olivia Ives, Assistant Director, Northamptonshire Children's Trust

# Background

---

The partnership has a strategic vision:

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

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

A pooled budget was created within the RAA to fund central hub staffing costs including the RAA Head of Service post, Marketing Officer, Data Analyst and Business Coordinator. All of these were in post by April 2021 and budget agreed until the end March 2024.

The provision of the posts was funded by equal contributions from all partnership Authorities excluding Rutland. The cost of the hub staffing, and centralised services has remained the same in 22/23 despite an agreed increase.

The centralised structure is focused on the delivery of core components of the adoption services including initial contact, information sharing, pre and post approval training, data analysis and administrative support and has delivered financial efficiencies by avoiding duplication and retaining virtual delivery where appropriate to do so. In addition, the centralised approach to family finding has seen a significant shift from spending on external placements to a greater use of in partnership placements. This has resulted in a £300k saving across the region in 22/23.

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

# Progress

---

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

The operational focus continues to be the development and maintenance of key pillars of activity. Each of these pillars or workstreams are led by Service leads from partner agencies supported by central resources. Each are based on effective partnership working and have standardised and shared processes and practice across the region. We will look at each in turn and reflect upon their evolution and development over the past year.

# Marketing and Recruitment

---

The partnership has its own Marketing Officer who coordinates and leads all Marketing activity. She also acts collaboratively with the Workstream leads and marketing information is contained within these sections too. Marketing highlights for 22/23 are as follows:

## A high performing website

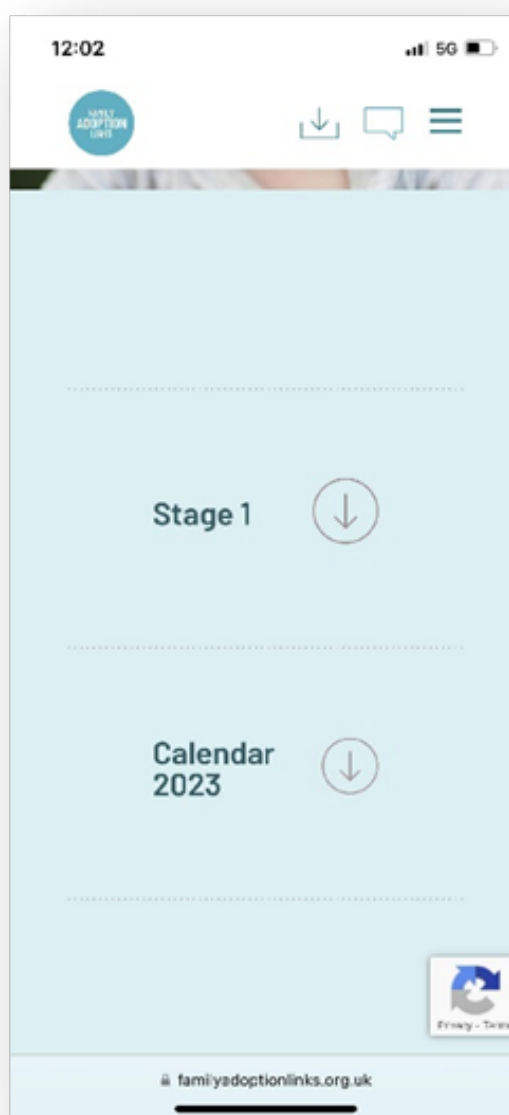
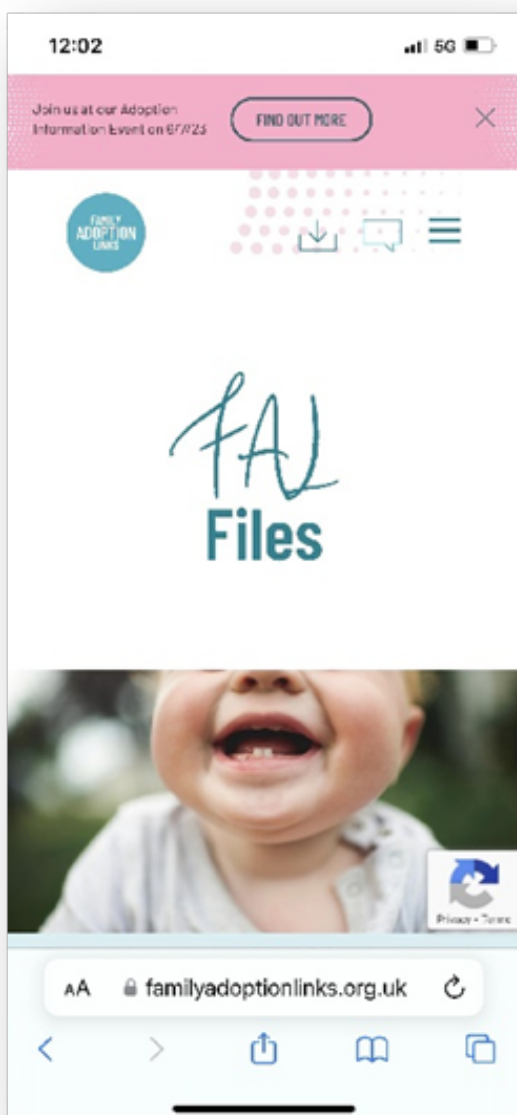
The Family Adoption Links website empowers potential adopters to self-serve with information on the children we are family finding for, and gives them the ability to book on to an information event (451 places booked this year), watch the You Can Adopt video, download a You Can Adopt information guide 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. Users of the website have increased by 358% to 7,400 this year.

# Marketing and Recruitment

## A new development - Staff Intranet

The partnership has been working hard to align the practices and paperwork of Stage 1 of the adoption process. The new documents are now available via the staff Intranet. 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 view and book onto all of our events. Stage 2 materials are now being uploaded to enable staff to share valuable resources.



# Marketing and Recruitment

---

## The Eventbrite platform that delivers multiple efficiencies

Training places for both prospective and approved adopters are booked and administered using the Eventbrite platform. Internally, this platform has saved hundreds of hours of Social Worker time freeing the practitioners to concentrate on the delivery of the courses.

## National Collaborations

### Sharing best practice

FAL contributes to and participates in all National campaigns, recently Marketing Officer, Alex McGuire, presented at the regional meeting of the Midlands Together Collaboration. She briefed over 40 Family Finders on the results of and how to run a 'Getting to know you' event successfully. Feedback from the meeting included the following...



---

*"Thank you so much for coming along to support the event. I think you will have sensed how impressed people were with the developments at FAL that you have implemented, and we all now want to clone you!"*



### Acting on a pan regional basis

In line with government best practice and in the interests of our children, we have invited adopters from other RAAs to our 'Getting to know you' event. This worked so well that we were then asked if we were interested in co-producing another event. As a result, we will receive £2,000 central funding for the event in October 2023.

### Participating in national steering groups

Marketing Officer, Alex McGuire is an active member of the NARSG Ambition 4 Working Group which aims to improve the adopter experience.

# Data

---

The Data Analyst for the region is Benjamin Richardson. Data is used to inform all workstreams and meet the national and local requirements of RAAs. The data analyst has developed significant relationships with Data Leads within each partner agency to effect accurate, national and local data outputs. The service benefits from a monthly summary of core performance data offering a dashboard crucial to practitioners and managers (see Appendix 1).



Due to the unique nature of each local authority's data strategies:

- We tailor our approach to each partner
- We are creating a data strategy that is sympathetic to each Local Authority's ambition and appetite to use data to inform decision-making
- We actively embed our regional reports across the partnership to get us closer to our data
- We promote how heightened data capabilities can benefit the service
- We also look outwards and meet with other RAAs to promote sharing best practice including:
  - Discussing broader topics that affect RAAs, such as the different approaches to Family Finding
  - Talking about how they use data to inform decision-making
  - Understanding what challenges both mature RAAs and those in their infancy face
- We work with Coram to test a new reporting dashboard
- We work with the RAA leaders' group (Digital solutions) to develop a suite of relevant comparative data

## Monthly Data meetings

- Monthly data meetings with each partner has led to a much greater insight into the way that we can use data to enhance our decision-making
- Has removed duplication and improved our data-orientated processes
- FAL's embedded position in each Agency's data landscape has allowed us to understand more about how workers use data in their roles so that;
- We can help reduce the time workers have to spend trawling through data
- Grant workers more time to add value
- Automate any menial, manual task that could be automated



# Workstreams

---

Workstreams are dynamically led by Service Leads from each of the partner agencies. Each is supported by a practitioner group who have worked collaboratively to develop a shared vision and implementation plan for a regionalised approach to service delivery. These groups are at the heart of the success of FAL and evidence practitioners willingness to support, develop and deliver best practice to improve the outcomes for children with a plan for adoption. The workstreams are Assessment and Approval, Family Finding, Post Adoption Support and Early Permanence.

## Assessment and Approval

---

The Assessment and Approval workstream is led by Georgina Oreffo from Leicester City. This workstream's aims are for all those who approach and are assessed by the RAA to receive a consistent baseline experience with regards to their initial enquiry, assessment and training; and following approval there is a core offer of post approval training to ensure consistency of approach and preparation across the RAA. An agreed modular approach to both pre and post approval training is in place. The content, slides, notes and supporting materials of the Information Evenings and preparation courses have been agreed, with stylish and professional rebranding, and joint delivery across the partnership.



Prepare to Adopt  
Training

Welcome to Day 1



# Assessment and Approval

---

The group has developed an integrated and seamless training plan to support adopters post approval. The mode of delivery has been enhanced by the development of the website which acts as a hub for online and face-to-face training modules. The booking system for the courses is managed efficiently through the electronic booking system saving significant staff time and for courses to be available to adopters across the partnership providing more rapid access and providing staff flexibilities. A separate training sub group now oversees quality assurance and course development, to maintain a continuously improving offer for our adopters, to improve resilience, strengthening placements and contribute to strong families.

We have changed the workstream name, as we move along the trajectory from Adopter Assessment and Pre and Post Approval Training to the Assessment and Approval Development workstream. We now have a Stage 1 fully branded assessment pack for our workers with updated safeguarding information from the Cumbria Child Safeguarding Practice Review and we have also completed Stage 2. We continue to aim for high quality, creative ways of working, and sharing best practice with colleagues.

# Family Finding

---

The Family Finding workstream is led jointly by Sharon Clarke from Lincolnshire and Michelle Robinson from Leicestershire. Tracey Morton from Northamptonshire Children's Trust has more recently become more involved as a twin approach to the Early Permanence Workstream. The ambition of the partnership is to provide a consistent approach to family finding and ensure that the partnership can meet the needs of most children requiring adoption.

The workstream has continued to be creative in family finding for our children who have traditionally 'waited longer.' There have been two activity days where 9 children have been successfully linked and subsequently placed with their adoptive families. We also hold Discovery Events on a quarterly basis, where approved adopters have access to a secure video link where they can watch bespoke videos from social workers and foster carers about the children who are waiting.

# Family Finding

---

This approach uses videos that are not on Link Maker and is aimed to bring the children 'to life' in a refreshing and creative way. The link is available for a 3 day period so adopters are able to go back in and view the videos more than once. We also have 'Matching Monday' where profiles of children waiting are sent to designated leads across each partner authority who then shares the profiles with family finding staff. This approach highlights the children who are waiting and as new adopters are approved they can be approached for expressions of interest.

Regional monthly family finding meetings are in place and all children without an identified link are discussed and tracked through to either a match being ratified by the Agency Decision Maker or the care plan being changed from one of adoption. This meeting is supported by Benjamin Richardson (Data Analyst) and Alex McGuire (Marketing Lead). The support of both is crucial in ensuring that data is up to date and validated and that children have good quality photos and videos on Linkmaker. Alex also organises specific social media campaigns, ensures that children have anonymised profiles on our website and is also manages the activity days and Discovery Events.

The approach of the family finding meetings has been hugely successful in ensuring that more children are placed within the region. 77% of our children were placed within Family Adoption Links last year. This means that we know our adopters and children well and that there has been a regional financial saving in the cost of using interagency placements. Further consideration will be given to the continued use of a no fee approach across the partnership during 2023/24.

The next year will see an increased focus on adopters across the region. We aim to increase regional matches by ensuring a more thorough visibility of those applicants coming through the assessment process and approved adopters. Pre and post approval training has been reviewed to ensure that regionally we are able to support adopters to consider children who wait longer.

Adopters waiting will also be discussed as part of the monthly family finding meeting to ensure that all options have been considered for our children. This, alongside starting to increase the data we collect about children in the earlier stages of their adoption journey, will increase our understanding in relation to sufficiency needs.

# Family Finding

---

## 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.



### The Discovery Event

For those adopters who were unable or felt attending the 'Getting to know you' event may be uncomfortable, we created the innovative 'Discovery Event' – a confidential video profiling event. Sent using a private link and available for 48 hours only, the video attracted 141 views and saw enquiries increase 400% on Linkmaker during the weekend of the event.

This was a £0 cost event and details of how to organise such an event were also presented to the Midlands Together Collaboration as an example of excellent practice.

### Making a Difference for Children

"Lincolnshire had looked for a long time for the right adopters an older sibling group. We took the children to a FAL activity day, and there was lots of interest, but one couple shone through and we have been able to successfully place the children. The adopters have supported sibling contact meaning that the children can retain positive links to their younger brothers and sister".

# Adoption Support

---

Adoption support is the final key workstream and is led by Karen Everatt from North Lincolnshire. It builds on the practice delivered within the aforementioned workstreams. All partners have a different post adoption support offer and that is likely to remain the case. The ambition is for all adopters at the point of initial contact to have information about the support available with the website signposting the local details. The group is developing a core offer which establishes a starting point for both prospective and registered adopters and is informed by shared practice expertise from across the region. As part of this work and in addition, the workgroup has focused on the following areas;

- Post order training with direct access to the training hub offering a range of relevant training courses
- Establishment of the Adopter Hub which has co production at its heart and ensures that FAL engages actively with adopters
- Development of Collabor8 an on line community for young people in place to offer, both support and ensure that the child's voice is central to our service direction.
- Provision of Thrive a regular newsletter for Adopters
- Working with Virtual schools across the partnership to develop and deliver the Education Passport

The concentration on a core offer has enabled FAL to create some economies of scale in both the provision of information and training for adopters and developing a partnership directory of therapeutic providers which may support more effective commissioning for all partners. The provision of the Adoption Support Fund will continue for the next 3 years and our challenge will be to ensure quality and value for money of our post adoption provision, balancing the ratio of what each Authority delivers with what is drawn down from the Government fund.

## Making a Difference for Children

The development of the Collabor8 group for children ensures that the children's voice is at the heart all developments within FAL. Although very much in its infancy, it brings together children from across the region, either face to face or virtually and enables them to share their experiences of adoption. The initial focus was upon the experience of school and education and their focus on transition, not having to tell their story too many times and the need for private space was taken directly into the work of the Virtual Heads in developing and introducing an Education Passport. This model of "You said, we did" will support the further work of the group.

# Adoption Support

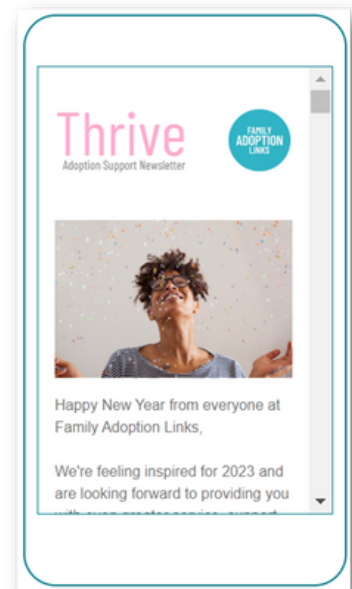
---

## 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.

The newsletters achieve industry-leading KPIs with an average open rate of 55.43% and click rate of 9.53%.



# Early Permanence

---

As with adoption support, this is an area of practice that has considerable Government focus and is frequently a key line of enquiry of OFSTED inspections. For a partnership RAA it is complex given the different court jurisdictions and established local practices.

The partnership reflects these differences and there is a variation in how well embedded it is in child care planning. Apart from some geographically compact areas, national work on Early Permanence has concentrated on establishing good practice models and developing consistent forms, assessments, training and support to carers.

That approach sits well within the structure of FAL and reflects what has been achieved within other workstreams. For FAL, this is our most recent area of focus.

The workstream has established the following objectives and will develop practice in 23/24 in line with learning from the National commissioned work that is underway:

# Early Permanence

---

- Develop EP best practice pack based on the approach of each partner. Identify referral pathway and best practice guidance
- Workshop for practitioners to be developed to raise awareness of EP and promote a consistent practice approach across FAL partner agencies – plan for workshops to be delivered to staff across adoption, fostering child care teams and IRO services
- Workshop for ADMs (with AEM)
- Exploration of engagement with Cafcass and judiciary
- Review applicant training materials to develop a single training offer across the region
- Develop support groups for EP carers and staff

# Stakeholder Engagement

---

Family Adoption Links is continuing to engage key stakeholders within and beyond the council to align services and to identify broader opportunities for transformation and development. The adoption agenda is moving from one that is purely regional to one based on pan regional and national service improvement and delivery.

This includes representing the region to the Department of Education (DfE), at the National RAA Leaders Group Leaders Partnership group and the Regional Adoption & Special Guardianship Leadership Board. Hub staff are engaged in national workstreams ensuring that the structures in place for FAL are shared and influence national delivery.

The partnership has been further cemented by the regional commissioning of New Family Social and Link Maker memberships. Since its inception, FAL has concentrated on developing a regional approach to core aspects of the adoption service. At the same time, we have begun to collaborate with other RAAs either by way of attending joint training or extending invites to activity day events.

At the same time, we have delivered joint events with Adoption East Midlands developing a support forum for Agency Decision Makers.

# Conclusion

---

The region has experienced 4 OFSTED inspections in 22/23, all of whom have recognised the progress made and the enhanced services offered to both prospective adopters and adopters alike. The sharing of good practice and joint work has cemented the key pillars that we have put in place. We continue to develop workstreams incrementally and seek to incorporate the national priorities and direction. The forthcoming framework for inspection of RAAs may well influence future priorities and structures required for their delivery and FAL is positioning itself to respond to any new challenges that arise.

## Plans for 2023/24

---



### Website

Further development of the staff intranet for access to standardised forms and paperwork.



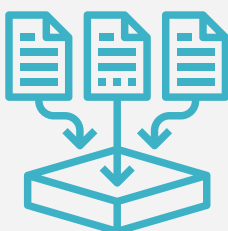
### Co-production

The Adopter Consultation Hub will continue to inform our workstreams. Collabor8 will be enhanced with improved recognition of young people's attendance and contribution.



### Education Passport

The Education Passport will be implemented for use within schools across the region.



### Data

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



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

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

 07920 274866

# Family Adoption Links Annual Report

## Appendix I

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

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



### The Partnership Board

Name	Job Title	Email Link
Caroline Tote	Assistant Director, Leicester City Council	<a href="#">✉</a>
Sharon Cooke	Assistant Director, Leicestershire County Council	<a href="#">✉</a>
Tara Jones	Assistant Director, Lincolnshire County Council	<a href="#">✉</a>
Cornelia Andrecut	Director, Northamptonshire Children's Trust	<a href="#">✉</a>
Emma Sweeny	Head of Service, Rutland Council	<a href="#">✉</a>
Olivia Ives	Northamptonshire Children's Trust	<a href="#">✉</a>
Paul Cowling	Service Lead, North Lincolnshire Council	<a href="#">✉</a>

### Partnership Service Managers

Name	Role	Email Link	LA Name
Georgina Oreffo	Service Manager	<a href="#">✉</a>	Leicester
Karen Everatt	Service Manager	<a href="#">✉</a>	North Lincolnshire
Michelle Robinson	Service Manager	<a href="#">✉</a>	Leicestershire
Sharon Clarke	Service Manager	<a href="#">✉</a>	Lincolnshire
Tracy Morton	Service Manager	<a href="#">✉</a>	Northamptonshire

The Family Adoption Links report is produced monthly and is designed to be a comprehensive overview of Family Adoption Links (FAL), sitting alongside the more granular breakdowns that our workstreams use to inform decision making.

### Central Team

Name	Job Title	Email Link
Alex McGuire	Marketing Officer	<a href="#">✉</a>
Benjamin Richardson	Data Analyst	<a href="#">✉</a>
Jemma Corcoran	Business Support Officer	<a href="#">✉</a>
John Harris	Partnership Manager	<a href="#">✉</a>

Monday, 5 June 2023

Last Refreshed (Local)

# Family Adoption Links Overview

The below shows the key measures in both the child and adopter journey, comparing 21-22 with 22-23.

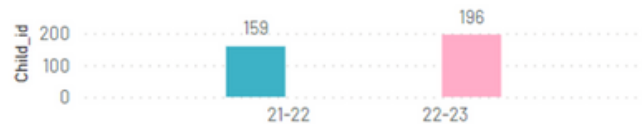
## FAL Children Overview



## FAL Adopter Overview

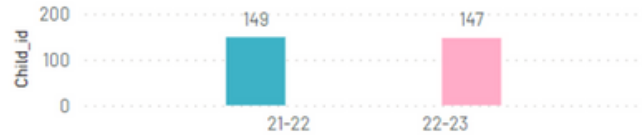
### ADM decision child should be placed for adoption

Fiscal Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23



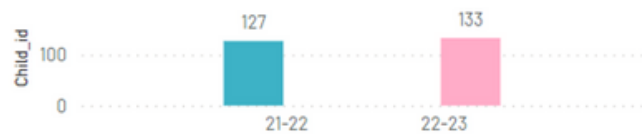
### PO/s Granted

Fiscal Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23



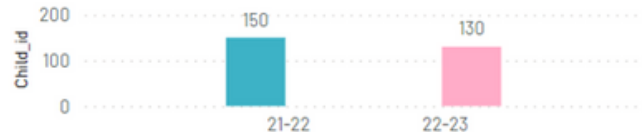
### Children Placed

Fiscal Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23



### Adoption orders Granted

Fiscal Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23



This dashboard reports on the key stages in the Child and Adopter journey and is a direct representation of the data we have submitted via our ASGLB returns.

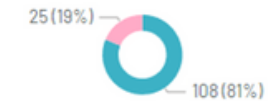


### Placement Distribution 21-22



Placement ● Within FAL ● Outside FAL

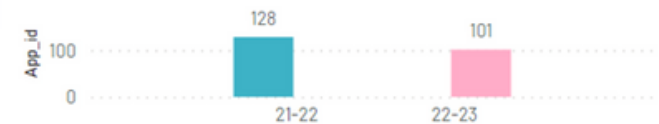
### Placement Distribution: 22-23



Placement ● Within FAL ● Outside FAL

### Number of Registrations

Fiscal Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23



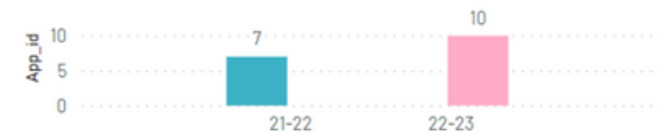
### Number of Fast Tracked Registrations (2nd Time Adopters)

Fiscal Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23



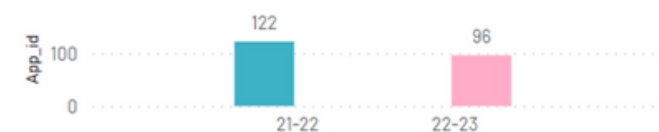
### Foster Carer Approved Adopters

Fiscal Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23



### Number of Household Approvals

Fiscal Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23



# Family Adoption Links Internal Child Placements

We have placed 16 more children within FAL in 22-23 than in 21-22. We placed **81%** (108) of our children within FAL in 22-23 and **72%** (92) in 21-22, whilst demonstrating a greater spread of adopter usage across the partnership, as demonstrated by the view below:

## FAL Internal Child Placements Comparison

### Fiscal Year 2021-22

#### Child Placements 21-22 Provision Type (fig i)

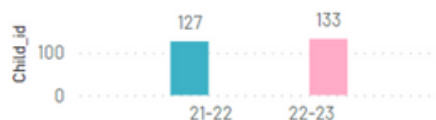
Provision Type	Children placed	% Placed	Fiscal Year
LA	4	3.15%	21-22
RAA	9	7.09%	21-22
RAA (Family Adoption Links)	92	72.44%	21-22
VAA	25	19.69%	21-22
<b>Total</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	

#### Family Adoption Links Regional placement detail 21-22 (fig ii)

Childs LA	Placement Agency	Children placed	%	Fiscal Year
Leicester	Leicester	18	19.57%	21-22
Lincolnshire	Leicester	1	1.09%	21-22
Leicestershire	Leicestershire	18	19.57%	21-22
Lincolnshire	Lincolnshire	30	32.61%	21-22
Leicestershire	North Lincolnshire	1	1.09%	21-22
North Lincolnshire	North Lincolnshire	5	5.43%	21-22
Northamptonshire	Northamptonshire	19	20.65%	21-22
<b>Total</b>		<b>92</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	

### Children Placed

Fiscal Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23



This dashboard hones in on the Child Placements that our region has made (fig i), and where Children who have been placed within Family Adoption Links sit (fig ii). On the right hand side we have the view from Fiscal Year 2022-23, and on the left hand side we show the view from Fiscal Year 2021-22



#### Placements made by LA

All

#### Placements made to LA

All

### Fiscal Year 2022-23

#### Child Placements 22-23 Provision Type (fig i)

Provision Type	Children placed	% Placed	Fiscal Year
RAA	5	3.76%	22-23
RAA (Family Adoption Links)	108	81.20%	22-23
VAA	20	15.04%	22-23
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	

#### Family Adoption Links Regional placement detail 22-23 (fig ii)

Childs LA	Placement Agency	Children placed	%	Fiscal Year
Leicester	Leicester	11	10.19%	22-23
Lincolnshire	Leicester	2	1.85%	22-23
Leicester	Leicestershire	4	3.70%	22-23
Leicestershire	Leicestershire	10	9.26%	22-23
Lincolnshire	Leicestershire	1	0.93%	22-23
North Lincolnshire	Leicestershire	1	0.93%	22-23
Northamptonshire	Leicestershire	5	4.63%	22-23
Lincolnshire	Lincolnshire	28	25.93%	22-23
Leicester	North Lincolnshire	1	0.93%	22-23
Leicestershire	North Lincolnshire	4	3.70%	22-23
Lincolnshire	North Lincolnshire	3	2.78%	22-23
North Lincolnshire	North Lincolnshire	9	8.33%	22-23
Rutland	North Lincolnshire	3	2.78%	22-23
Leicester	Northamptonshire	2	1.85%	22-23
Leicestershire	Northamptonshire	1	0.93%	22-23
Northamptonshire	Northamptonshire	23	21.30%	22-23
<b>Total</b>		<b>108</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	



# Family Adoption Links External Child Placements Comparison

We have placed **14** less children externally to FAL in 22-23 in comparison to 21-22. Our external placements have dropped from **38** to **24** even though we have placed more children in 22-23 (**133**) than in 21-22 (**127**).

## FAL External Child Placements Comparison

### Fiscal Year 2021-22

#### Child Placements 21-22 Provision Type (fig i)

Provision Type	Children placed	% Placed	Fiscal Year
LA	4	10.53%	21-22
RAA	9	23.68%	21-22
VAA	25	65.79%	21-22
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	



This dashboard hones in on the Child Placements that our region has made (fig i), and where Children who have been placed externally to Family Adoption Links sit (fig ii). On the right hand side we have the view from Fiscal Year 2022-23, and on the left hand side we show the view from Fiscal Year 2021-22

### Fiscal Year 2022-23

#### Child Placements 22-23 Provision Type (fig i)

Provision Type	Children placed	% Placed	Fiscal Year
RAA	5	20.00%	22-23
VAA	20	80.00%	22-23
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	

#### Family Adoption Links Regional placement detail 21-22 (fig ii)

Adopter's Adoption Agency	Provision Type	Children placed	%
Action for Children Midlands	VAA	2	5%
Adopt East	RAA	1	3%
Adopt Together	VAA	3	8%
Adopters for Adoption	VAA	3	8%
Adoption Central England	RAA	3	8%
Adoption Focus	VAA	3	8%
Adoption Partnership South East	RAA	1	3%
Adoption West	RAA	1	3%
Barnardo's Adoption Midlands and South West	VAA	1	3%
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Adoption	RAA	1	3%
Families for Children	VAA	2	5%
Northamptonshire	LA	4	11%
One Adoption South Yorkshire	RAA	1	3%
Parents and Children Together	VAA	5	13%
Scottish Adoption	VAA	2	5%
SSAFA	VAA	2	5%
St Francis Children's Society	VAA	1	3%
Thomas Coram Foundation for Children	VAA	1	3%
Together4Children	RAA	1	3%
<b>Total</b>		<b>38</b>	<b>100%</b>



#### Family Adoption Links Regional placement detail 22-23 (fig ii)

Adopter's Adoption Agency	Provision Type	Children placed	%
Adopters for Adoption	VAA	3	12%
Adoption Focus	VAA	6	24%
Adoption South East	RAA	1	4%
Adoption West	RAA	1	4%
Barnardo's South West	VAA	2	8%
Jigsaw Adoption	VAA	2	8%
One Adoption North and Humber	RAA	2	8%
One Adoption South Yorkshire	RAA	1	4%
Parents and Children Together	VAA	3	12%
Scottish Adoption	VAA	1	4%
St Francis Children's Society	VAA	3	12%
<b>Total</b>		<b>25</b>	<b>100%</b>

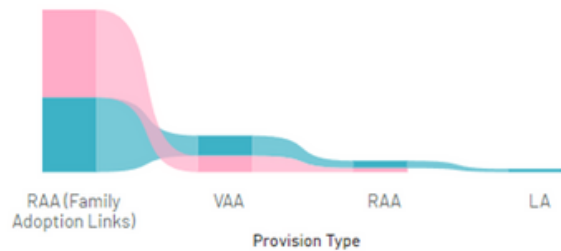
# Family Adoption Links Child Placements

The key demographics and timescales of the children that we have placed can be seen below:

## FAL Child Placement Detail

### Child Placements by Provision Type

Fiscal Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23



### Child Placements by Provision Type

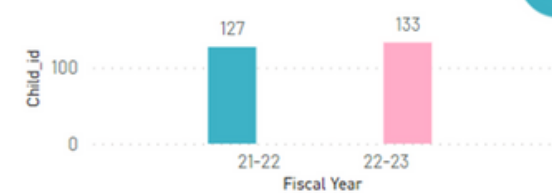
Provision Type

All



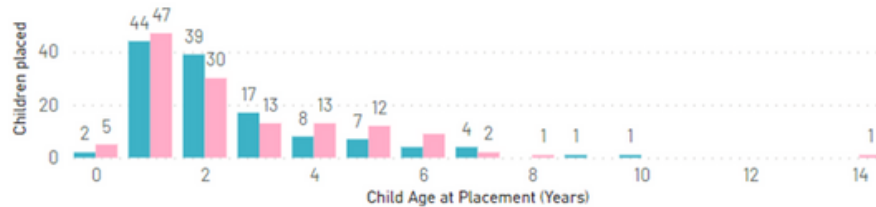
### Children Placed

Fiscal Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23



### Child Placements by Age

Fiscal Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23



### Aggregated Placement Timeliness (days)

Fiscal Year	Count	Average of Entered Care to Placed	Average of PO to Match	Average of PO to Placed
21-22	127	659.20	234.97	252.55
22-23	133	622.17	192.42	204.92

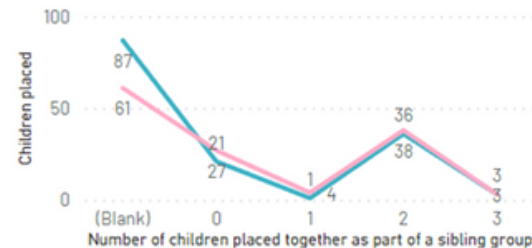
### Child Placements by Ethnicity

Fiscal Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23



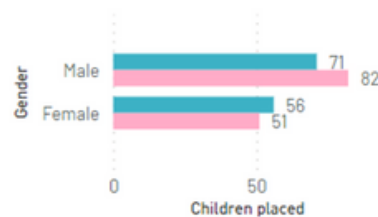
### Child Placements by Sibling Group

Fiscal Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23



### Child Placements by Gender

Fiscal ... ● 21-22 ● 22-23



# Family Adoption Links Family Finding Overview

## FAL Family Finding Overview



This dashboard provides an overview of our Regional Family Finding cohort (Fig i) and shows an overview of the Children we have placed



# A2

Average time (in days)

Aggregated total (All ages)  
22-23

# 218

between Family Adoption Links receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family, for children who have been adopted

## Family Finding Child Overview (Fig i)

Link Status	Children	%
Awaiting P/O	1	1%
Care plan changed from Adoption	1	1%
Exploring Link with F/C	6	6%
Family Finding on-going	24	22%
Family finding on-hold	4	4%
FC being considered for adoption	1	1%
FFA	2	2%
Link being explored	12	11%
Link Being progressed	7	7%
LTF- no longer FF	2	2%
Matched- Awaiting Placement	9	8%
Panel booked	8	7%
Placed	29	27%
Placed under Reg 24	1	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Children we have placed 22-23

In 22-23 **99** Children have been considered within our Regional Family Adoption Meeting (Fig i).

Of these Children **27** have been placed, **8** have a Matching Panel Booked, **5** have been Matched formally and are awaiting Placement and we are exploring a link for **12** Children and are currently progressing a link for **4** Children.

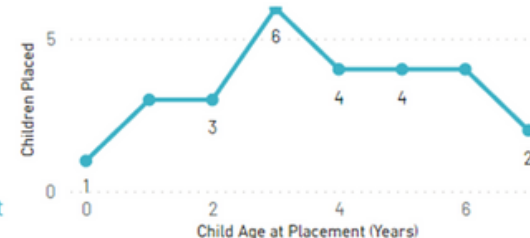
Out of the **27** Children that we have placed, **11 (40%)** were not part of Sibling Group and **16 (60%)** were part of a sibling group with a distribution of **70%** being Male and **24%** being Female.

The Age Range of the Children placed is shown in Fig ii.

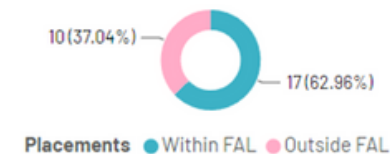
Out of these **27** Placements, **62%** were placed within Family Adoption Links (Fig iii).

We are currently Regionally Family Finding for **27** Children

## Child age profile (Year/s) (Fig ii)



## Placement Detail (Fig iii)

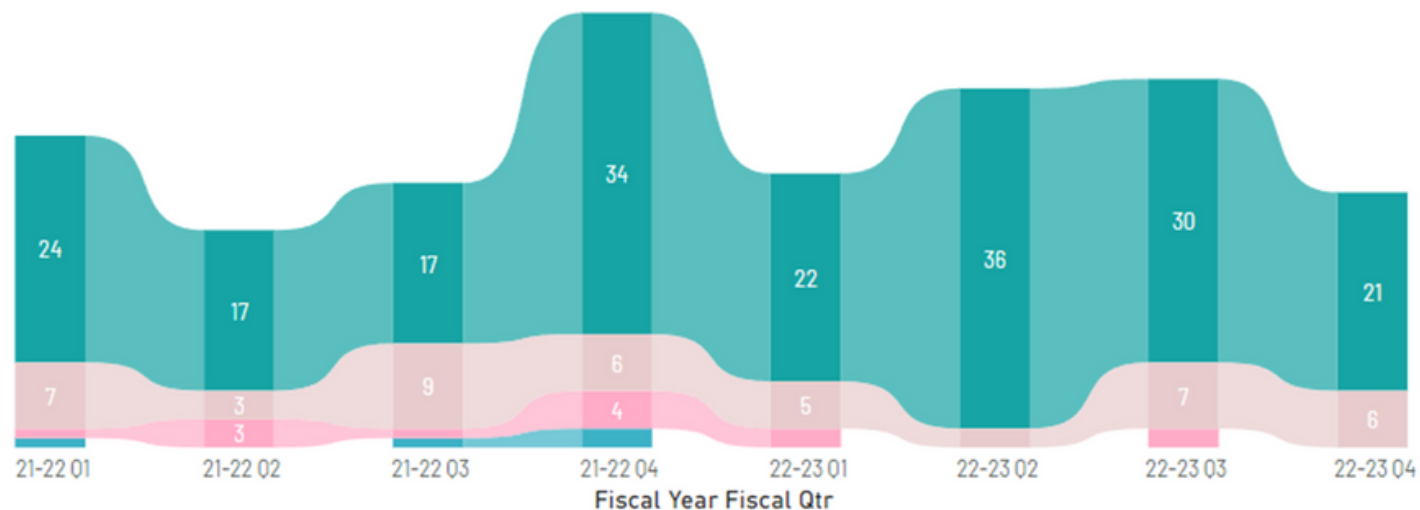


# Family Adoption Links Family Finding Overview

Broadly speaking, the data contained in the report indicates that regionalisation has led to us placing more children within FAL and we are using fewer external agencies. The graph below helps to illustrate this. It shows how our placements have been distributed and as we can see, the use of external placements with LAs, other RAAs and VAAs has decreased, whilst our placements with our FAL partners have increased.

Child Placements by Provision Type

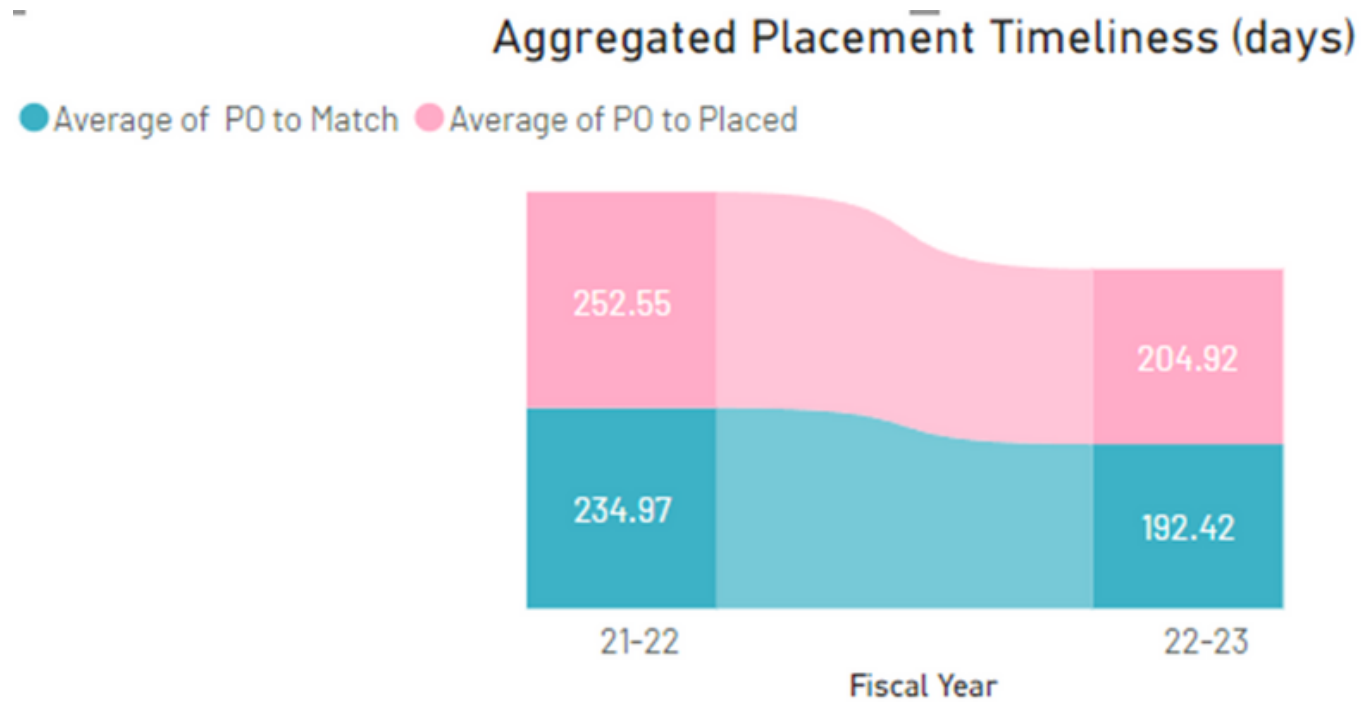
Provision Type ● LA ● RAA ● RAA(Family Adoption Links) ● VAA





# Family Adoption Links Family Finding Overview

The timeliness of the children's journey from Placement Order to ADM Match and Placement has also decreased.



This page is intentionally left blank



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

Report to:	<b>Corporate Parenting Panel</b>
Date:	<b>09 November 2023</b>
Subject:	<b>Lincolnshire Children in Care Council - Voices for Choices (V4C) Update Report</b>

**Summary:**

This report gives a summary and overview of:

- Activities regarding V4C and the Big Conversation between the end of April - end August 2023
- Actions to support future V4C planning and progress

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. Alongside V4C meetings, there are also Big Conversation events which bring children and young people in care together with senior leaders to hear their views and feedback to help inform service development.

**Actions Required:**

The Corporate Parenting Panel is invited to provide comment and steer regarding:

1. V4C activities and meetings undertaken within the reporting period.
2. Future planning and delivery of V4C meetings and activities.

**1. Background**

During this reporting period, the most recent meeting between children and young people within the Children in Care Council, senior managers and elected members took place is summarised, along with other Children in Care Council work and also the FAB Awards ceremony and activities in June 2023, which is a key aspect of Children in Care Council focus.

## **The Big Conversation**

The most recent Big Conversation event was held during the Easter holidays.

Date of Meeting	Venue	Number of young people attended
April 2023	The Showroom, Lincoln	17

During the event there were positive discussions between children, young people and professionals concerning the effective support they were receiving and the range of social activities that were available to them.

The FAB Awards for June 2023 was also discussed. This is an award ceremony for children in care and care leavers and we received feedback about the types of activities to be planned as part of the day and also the actual awards that will be given out. The feedback was incorporated into planning for the event and will also be included in plans for the 2024 FAB Awards.

There was also further discussion around children and young people having a consistent Social Worker and how it can be frustrating for them when their Social Worker changes, and also some feedback to them to help them understand why a change in Social Worker sometimes takes place.

A discussion about V4C itself was also held to receive views and feedback from the children and young people concerning what potential changes could increase numbers of attendance. The children and young people made a range of points including:

- Meetings to take place during day times within school holidays
- Merging smaller groups together
- Wider awareness raising and publicity

This feedback was included as part of a wider project to review V4C and consider alternative models of delivery in 2023, including focusing on attracting new children, young people and staff to attend to learn about V4C and to give feedback on how they would like V4C to operate.

## **The FAB Awards – 17 June 2023**

Children and young people were consulted with in advance to inform the planning of the 2023 FAB Awards. The event celebrates the achievements of the children and young people, and this year was the first event held since the lifting of Covid restrictions, and was held at Lincoln University, with the charity SoundLincs commissioned to support the planning and delivery on the day.

The day included a range of activities in the morning, a lunch and the awards ceremony in the afternoon, with awards presented from senior managers and elected members from

the Council, and representatives from Barnardo's Leaving Care Service and Lincoln University.

In total approximately 250 children and young people attended to receive their awards with an overall audience including carers and professionals of approximately 500.

An evaluation of the event has been completed with overwhelming positive feedback, including a sample below:

*'I've had a brilliant day'*

*'So fabulous to have so many activities available for all age ranges, both inside and outside. As an adult I've even enjoyed having a go'*

*'This means so much for the children here'*

*'It is really wonderful to see so many smiling faces'*

*'Such a brilliant atmosphere'*

*'It was a truly remarkable event and I was so proud of all the work that has gone into it.'*

*'Wow'*

Initial planning has also commenced to begin considering the 2024 FAB Awards and this has included consulting with children and young people regarding the theme for next time.

### **Children in Care Council Meetings**

Attendance and engagement of children and young people have remained challenging since the disruption of working arrangements throughout Covid restrictions and the relaxing of these in 2022. As a result, a consultation was held with children, young people, carers and professionals to gain feedback on what could encourage increased participation and what barriers existed to attendance.

Feedback was received that evening meetings held in school term time was a barrier to attending due to time constraints, and also that the format of several meetings across the county meant that groups were too small.

As a result, it was agreed that a shift to centralised meetings within the daytime would be trialled with a view that this could increase attendance and engagement. Consequently, the Children in Care Council meeting would become a full day and this would allow:

- Less barriers regarding travel and time, with transport provided/funded where needed.
- More time for the Children in Care Council meeting to take place and have discussions.
- A lunch to be provided.
- A social/fun activity to be offered in the afternoon.
- Meetings to mirror the arrangements of Big Conversations which have seen increased attendance.

- Care Leavers to attend and speak with children in care about their experiences in a single setting.

An initial programme of dates and activities has been developed and widely shared with frontline teams in Children’s Services and carers:

Date	Venue / activity
School summer holiday – 1 September	Hartsholme Country Park – orienteering activity provided by Park Ranger
Autumn half term – 25 October	Lincoln Escape Rooms
Christmas – 9 December	Meeting at county offices followed by pantomime at Theatre Royal, Lincoln

Future meetings will take place across the county in line with planning and feedback from children and young people.

The September meeting was a successful day in terms of attendance and outcomes from the day:

Date of meeting	Venue	Number of young people attended
1 September 2023	Hartsholme Country Park, Lincoln	13

The meeting focused on Lincolnshire Children’s Services **Caring Promise** (see Appendix A) as it was agreed that it is the promises within it should be kept to ensure all children and young people in care are supported to help them in their lives.

The following provides a summary of discussions within the meeting and the views of children and young people:

- The young people attending the meeting generally knew about their Independent Reviewing Officers and what their role involved.
- Not all of the young people had seen or were aware of the Caring Promise, with only four of the 13 attending stating they had seen the information previously.
- The group talked about being involved in decision making and agreed that by being involved in the recruitment and interviewing process of Social Workers would be a good way to do this.

**Education:** The Caring Promise outlines the importance of children in care being supported with regard to their education and this generated feedback about

experiences in schools and how children in care are labelled as 'in care' and that other students hear about this which can lead to bullying. Some members of the group talked about feeling targeted as a result of being called out of class lessons for review meetings. This has been fed back to Independent Chairs Team Managers to ensure meetings are held at appropriate times for young people. The group talked about the option of making a training video for staff to help raise awareness of this issue and the importance of confidentiality.

**Leisure:** The group discussed their experiences of holidays and some felt that they have not sometimes been included in family holidays and went on respite instead.

**Positive experiences of being in care:**

There was enthusiastic discussion about some of the positive experiences that have come from their care experience, and it was fed back that this included:

- Opportunities provided that would not have access to including Air Cadets, horse riding and memberships of sports clubs.
- Additional support given at school and with educational opportunities generally.
- Overall better chances in life.
- More people around who want to try to help and support.
- Feeling listened to in school and life.

**Ideas to develop and grow V4C:**

- Visiting care homes to talk to others about becoming members.
- Making a video / leaflet to help raise awareness to encourage others to join.
- Developing branded V4C items such as hoodies.
- Speaking to schools and colleges as a way to meet other children in care.

## **2. Conclusion**

Ongoing work will continue to publicise V4C and review meeting options, with an aim to gain children and young people's views to encourage attendance and engagement.

The Children in Care Council remains a valuable mechanism to capture the views and feelings from children and young people in care and to share with senior managers and elected members. The key to success remains in frontline teams supporting this by referring children and young people to the opportunity to become involved and supporting them to attend.

Ongoing joined up work will continue with Barnardo's Leaving Care Service to support Care Leavers being involved in the Children in Care Council as they provide a valuable insight and points of discussions.

### 3. Consultation

#### a) Risks and Impact Analysis

Risk assessments are completed and collated by Children's Services Participation Officers.

### 4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Caring Promise Leaflet 2021

### 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 Ben Lilley, Practice Supervisor (Quality and Standards), who can be contacted on 07876 212470 or at [ben.lilley@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:ben.lilley@lincolnshire.gov.uk)



# Caring Promise

Our Promise to Children in Care

## About the Caring Promise

The Caring Promise is a list of promises Lincolnshire County Council has made to Children in Care.

We looked at the promises councils in other parts of the country have made to help us make a list. Then we shared it with Children in Care to make this final list. It's split into 6 sections:

1. Involve you
2. Work with you
3. Support your daily life
4. Help you to be healthy and stay safe
5. Support your education, employment and training
6. Explain your rights and where to go for help

Children in Care and Care Leavers also helped with the design.



## Involve you

We will do this by:

- \* helping you share your wishes and feelings in a way that suits you
- \* listening to your wishes and feelings and taking them into account when making decisions about your life.
- \* telling you if we can't do what you want, and explaining why
- \* making sure you understand decisions and plans
- \* meeting your individual needs, taking into consideration your age, interests, abilities, race, culture, religion and sexuality
- \* understanding that your needs and wishes may change over time
- \* offering different ways for you to be involved in your reviews
- \* providing reports from any meetings you attend in language you can understand so you have a record of what was said



## *Work with you*

We will do this by:

- \* making sure you know how to contact your Social Worker
- \* providing the opportunity for you to speak with your Social Worker alone every time they visit
- \* doing our best to keep you with the same Social Worker. If you have a change of Social Worker, we will make sure that they say goodbye and tell you who your new Social Worker is
- \* making sure you know how to contact your Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)
- \* giving you the opportunity to meet with your IRO before your review
- \* giving you answers to your questions within 2 weeks
- \* only sharing information about you with people who need it, and only when they need it



## *Support your daily life*

We will do this by:

- \* using the language you choose to describe where you live and who you live with
- \* doing our best to make sure you are happy in your home and local area
- \* doing our best to keep you in the same home and school to minimise having to start over
- \* not moving you from where you live unless there is a very good reason. If we have to move you we will explain why
- \* if you are moving, giving you information about your new home and carers before you move
- \* working with you on your Life Story to help you to understand your past and why you are in care
- \* helping you to keep in contact with your family if this is a safe thing to do
- \* helping you to keep photographs and memorable items from your childhood and help you to add to this as you grow
- \* helping you grow in confidence, be proud of yourself and make positive decisions

- \* giving you information about local activities and events and supporting you to get involved if you want to
- \* supporting you to take part in activities and holidays with your carers
- \* helping you to concentrate on things that you want to achieve.
- \* celebrating your achievements, birthdays and religious festivals



*Help you to be healthy  
and stay safe*

We will do this by:

- \* supporting you to have a healthy mind and a healthy body
- \* doing what we can to keep you safe. We expect you to do what you can to keep yourself safe
- \* helping you with anything that is bothering you if you tell us about it
- \* having a nurse that you can contact if you have any questions about your health
- \* making sure you are registered with a doctor and dentist and have regular health and dental check-ups
- \* providing you with access to all the information you need on health issues



## *Support your education, employment and training*

We will do this by:

- \* helping you to do your best at school and college. We have a team of people who can help you. This includes your Designated Teacher and a Virtual School Co-ordinator if you need one
- \* supporting you with your Personal Education Plan
- \* making sure you get help to think about your future career
- \* doing our best to make sure you don't miss any school because of things happening in your life, and helping you get back on track if you fall behind
- \* expecting your carers to take an active interest in your education, including attending parents' evenings and school events
- \* celebrating your achievements



## *Explain your rights and where to go for help*

We will do this by:

- \* making sure you know what your rights are
- \* telling you about the different help you can get. If you can't find what you need, we expect you to tell us or someone else so that help can be found for you from someone you trust
- \* making sure you know how to complain if something has gone wrong
- \* providing someone to help you called an 'advocate' if you feel you are not being listened to, or need help with sharing your wishes or feelings
- \* giving you the opportunity to join Voices 4 Choices (V4C), Lincolnshire's Children in Care Council where you can meet new people, share your views and get involved in activities

## Contact information

If you feel this Caring Promise is not being kept, or if you want more information, contact:

**participation@lincolnshire.gov.uk**

### Support

Need help? Call the **Social Care Team**:

01522 782155 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm)

01522 782333 (emergency out of hours)

### Advocacy

If you feel you're not be listened to or need support in a meeting you can ask **Total Voice Lincolnshire** for an advocate:

01529 400479 or text 07860 018887

tv@voiceability.org

www.totalvoicelincolnshire.org

### Complaints

If you're not happy speak to **Customer Services**:

01522 843322

www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/comments-feedback

customerrelations@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Customer Relations Team  
Lincolnshire County Council  
County Offices  
Newland  
Lincoln  
LN1 1YL

## Get Involved

### Voices 4 Choices

V4C is Lincolnshire's Council for Children in Care and Care Leavers. We work with adults in Lincolnshire County Council to help improve services. We also have fun doing some great, free activities. Join us and share your ideas. Help us make life better and have some fun too!

V4C will check that we are keeping the Caring Promise and will let us know if we aren't doing what we say we will. V4C will also make changes to the Caring Promise if they think they're needed.

### Big Conversation

This is an opportunity for Children in Care and Care Leavers to meet with senior staff and county councillors. You can share issues and talk about ways to improve services.

Find out more:

participation@lincolnshire.gov.uk

www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/young-people



This page is intentionally left blank





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

Report to:	<b>Corporate Parenting Panel</b>
Date:	<b>09 November 2023</b>
Subject:	<b>Corporate Parenting Panel Work Programme</b>

**Summary:**

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

**Actions Required:**

Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are invited to:

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

## **1. Background**

Overview and Scrutiny should be positive, constructive, independent, fair, and open. The scrutiny process should be challenging, as its aim is to identify areas for improvement. Scrutiny activity should be targeted, focused and timely and include issues of corporate and local importance, where scrutiny activity can influence and add value.

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

## 2. Work Programme

<b>9 November 2023</b>		
	<b>Item</b>	<b>Contributor</b>
1.	<b>Independent Reviewing Service Six Monthly Update Report (1 April 2023 - 30 September 2023)</b>	Richard Stone, Team Manager - Quality and Standards - Lead for Children in Care
2.	<b>Regulation 44 Independent Visitors Report</b>	Carolyn Knight, Head of Service - Quality and Standards and Principal Social Worker
3.	<b>Fostering Quarterly Performance Report - Quarters 1 and 2</b>	Emily McAllister, Fostering Team Manager
4.	<b>Private Fostering Annual Report 2022 - 2023</b>	Nicola Brangham, Fostering Team Manager
5.	<b>Annual Report of the Regional Adoption Agency</b>	Tara Jones, Assistant Director – Children’s Safeguarding
6.	<b>Lincolnshire Children in Care Council - Voices for Choices (V4C) Update Report</b>	Ben Lilley, Practice Supervisor - Children’s Services (Quality and Standards)
<b>INFORMATION ONLY ITEMS</b>		
7.	<b>Private Fostering Statement of Purpose 2022 - 2023</b>	Nicola Brangham, Fostering Team Manager

<b>18 JANUARY 2024</b>		
	<b>Item</b>	<b>Contributor</b>
1.	<b>Children in Care Performance Measures Quarter 2</b>	Tara Jones, Assistant Director – Children’s Safeguarding
2.	<b>Children in Care Annual Health Report 2022/23</b>	Tara Jones, Assistant Director – Children’s Safeguarding
3.	<b>Lincolnshire Leaving Care - 6 Monthly Update Report by Barnardo’s</b>	Lisa Adams, Service Manager, Barnardo’s

<b>14 MARCH 2024</b>		
	<b>Item</b>	<b>Contributor</b>
1.	<b>LCC Virtual School Report Academic Year 2022-23</b>	Sarah Lane, Virtual School Head
2.	<b>Children in Care Performance Measures Quarter 3</b>	Tara Jones, Assistant Director – Children’s Safeguarding

<b>14 MARCH 2024</b>	
<b>Item</b>	<b>Contributor</b>
<b>3. Fostering Quarterly Performance Report – Quarter 3</b>	Deborah Crawford, Head of Service - Fostering and Adoption

<b>09 MAY 2024</b>	
<b>Item</b>	<b>Contributor</b>
<b>1. Voices for Choices (V4C) Update Report</b>	Ben Lilley, Practice Supervisor - Children's Services (Quality and Standards)
<b>2. Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027 - Annual Update on Action Plan</b>	Bridie Fletcher, Senior Commissioning Officer – Children's Commissioning Amy Allcock, Commissioning Manager- Commercial

<b>25 JULY 2024</b>	
<b>Item</b>	<b>Contributor</b>
<b>1. Election of the Chairman</b>	Democratic Services Officer
<b>2. Election of the Vice Chairman</b>	Democratic Services Officer
<b>3. Children in Care Performance Measures Quarter 4</b>	Tara Jones, Assistant Director – Children's Safeguarding
<b>4. Fostering Quarterly Performance Report - Quarter 4</b>	Deborah Crawford, Head of Service - Fostering and Adoption
<b>5. Lincolnshire Leaving Care - 6 Monthly Update Report by Barnardo's</b>	Lisa Adams, Service Manager, Barnardo's
<b>6. Independent Reviewing Service Yearly Report</b>	Carolyn Knight, Head of Service - Quality and Standards and Principal Social Worker
<b>7. Regulation 44 Independent Visitors Report</b>	Carolyn Knight, Head of Service - Quality and Standards and Principal Social Worker

<b>12 SEPTEMBER 2024</b>	
<b>Item</b>	<b>Contributor</b>
<b>1. Children in Care Performance Measures Quarter 1</b>	Tara Jones, Assistant Director – Children's Safeguarding
<b>2. Fostering Quarterly Performance Report Quarter 1</b>	Deborah Crawford, Head of Service - Fostering and Adoption
<b>3. Adoption Annual Report 2023-2024</b>	Sharon Clarke, Interim Team Manager, Adoption

12 SEPTEMBER 2024		
	Item	Contributor
4.	Adoption Statement of Purpose 2023-2024	Sharon Clarke, Interim Team Manager, Adoption
5.	Fostering Annual Report 2023-2024	Emily McAllister, Fostering Team Manager Nicola Brangam, Fostering Team Manager South
6.	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
2.	Regulation 44 Independent Visitors Report	Carolyn Knight, Head of Service - Quality and Standards and Principal Social Worker
3.	Fostering Quarterly Performance Report Quarter 2	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 Annual Report (Caroline Sanders LPFT)	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 Tracy Johnson, Senior Scrutiny Officer, who can be contacted on 07552 253814 or by e-mail at [Tracy.Johnson@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Tracy.Johnson@lincolnshire.gov.uk).

This page is intentionally left blank



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

Report to:	<b>Corporate Parenting Panel</b>
Date:	<b>09 November 2023</b>
Subject:	<b>Private Fostering Statement of Purpose 2022-2023</b>

**Summary:**

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

**Actions Required:**

That the Corporate Parenting Panel notes the Private Fostering Statement of Purpose 2022-2023.

## **1. Background**

The report informs the Corporate Parenting Panel of the Private Fostering Statement of Purpose for 2022 - 2023.

The requirements under The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 to Private Fostering are made under the Children Act 1989.

The Private Fostering National Minimum Standards are issued under Section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 where Local Authorities are expected to comply with such requirements.

The Statement of Purpose attached as Appendix A sets out the relevant performance information and how the Council has discharged its responsibilities in the year 2022-2023.

## **2. Conclusion**

The continued progress of the service is detailed within the attached Statement of Purpose and is shared as an accurate reflection of how the Council has discharged its responsibilities.

### 3. Consultation

#### a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

### 4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Private Fostering 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 07786 190414 or [Deborah.crawford@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Deborah.crawford@lincolnshire.gov.uk)





# Private Fostering Statement of Purpose

2022 - 2023

## Private Fostering Statement of Purpose

CONTENTS	Page
1. Introduction	1
2. Regulation	1
3. Legal definition of a privately fostered child	2
4. The Local Authority's duties and functions under the Children Act 1989	3
5. Local Authority duties under the Children Act 2004, the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005, the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005	3
6. Training for relevant staff	4
7. Change of behaviour in relation to private fostering	5
8. Assessment of the suitability of private foster carers and their household	5
9. Advice/support and information available to private foster carers, parents/those with parental responsibility and privately fostered children	6
10. Ensuring the welfare of privately fostered children is safeguarded and promoted	7
11. The role of other agencies in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of privately fostered children, including encouraging notification	9
12. How relevant staff will understand the Directorate's duties and functions in relation to private fostering	9
13. How the Directorate will ensure that its duties and functions regarding private fostering are included in an induction and other training programmes, and these are reviewed and evaluated annually in line with changes in legislation and guidance	9
14. Monitoring the discharge of functions and compliance with Part 9 of the Children Act 1989	10
15. Reviewing the policy statement and available advice on private fostering	11

## 1. Introduction

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

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

## 2. Regulation

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

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

**Telephone Contact 0300 123 1231**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And

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

Or

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

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

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

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

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

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

Some examples of private fostering arrangements include children/young people with families overseas, children/young people with parents working or studying in the UK; trafficked children/young people, children/young people living with host families for a variety of reasons, i.e., relationship breakdowns with parents or immediate family, attending

language schools, undergoing medical treatment, etc., children and young people residing with friends.

#### **4. The Local Authority's duties and functions under the Children Act 1989**

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

Broadly the duties fall into three types of activity:

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

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

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

Local authorities are required to raise public awareness in their area of the requirements regarding notification of private fostering arrangements. Notifications must be given to local authorities when a child/young person is proposed to be privately fostered or is being privately fostered. This will enable local authorities to ensure that the welfare of privately fostered children/young people is being satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted by ongoing assessments and monitoring of arrangements within statutory timescales.

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

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

### **Professionals**

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

Lincolnshire Children's Services will facilitate this by:

1. Publication of the Private Fostering Statement of Purpose
2. Training in relation to private fostering is available for newly qualified social workers in the assessed and supported year in employment (ASYE programme) and all new social workers will be required to undertake the e-learning course in private fostering within the first six months of starting
3. Providing information via the internal intranet service and on [www.lincolnshire.gov.uk](http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk)
4. Regular update of information through the e-mail network, and internal and external council publications
5. Monitoring feedback for further training requirements.

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

Groups include:

- Lincolnshire County Council Children's Services
- Schools – Heads, teachers, designated teachers
- Health care – School Nurses, GPs, Health Visitors/Hospitals
- Child Protection School Liaison Officers
- Any other professionals in Children's Services who come into contact with children.
- Language Schools
- Independent Schools
- Ethnic Minority and Traveller Education Service (EMTET)
- Charities supporting children, young people and families
- District Councils
- Police
- Probation

- Department for Works and Pensions
- Citizens Advice Bureau's /Community Library
- Faith and community groups
- CAFCASS
- Leisure Centres

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

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

The Lincolnshire County Council website can also be used to find out more detailed information.

Lincolnshire is committed to continually evaluate its effectiveness of activities that contribute to a positive change of behaviour in relation to private fostering, and to review its communication and training plan accordingly.

Lincolnshire is represented on the Safeguarding Partnership's Policy, Procedure, Education and Training subgroup (PPET) and contribute to reviewing the content of training material delivered and also develop publicity material for the Private Fostering Awareness campaign.

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

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

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

The sign-off of decisions about the overall suitability of the arrangement is completed by the Team Manager of the Social Worker to the child, in consultation with the Team Manager of the Fostering Service.

The ongoing visits to see children in their private fostering arrangement are completed in adherence to Regulation 8 by a Social Worker from Children's Services who ensures that they speak with the child so that their voice is heard. The Regulation 8 visits for all privately fostered children are monitored and tracked on a weekly basis. There is a robust quality assurance process in place to ensure that all children are seen within the required timeframes and reminders are sent out to allocated social workers to track compliance and recording.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Private foster carers (including prospective foster carers) will have access to advice on benefit entitlement, parenting strategies techniques, and other appropriate training and support as well be identified.

Parents of prospective/current privately fostered children/young people will also be advised, if in the best interests of the child/young person, of other service provision or other agency



help available, which could remove the necessity for the child/young person to be privately fostered.

Lincolnshire have created guides that are provided to parents, privately fostered children and private foster carers. Lincolnshire have a range of leaflets for children appropriate to their age and understanding which are shared and compatible with the Coram Baaf published guide which is also distributed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

All privately fostered children/young people will have an allocated social worker. Along with their contact details they will be provided with information materials relevant to their age and understanding on what private fostering means.

Information must be provided to all children/young people who are privately fostered about how they can gain access to a suitably skilled Independent Advocate. In Lincolnshire we currently commission an integrated service providing all advocacy provision under one contract. The Independent Lincolnshire Advocacy Service is delivered by Voiceability.

From 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023, the national advocacy helpline service will be provided by the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Under Regulation 12, the lead officer for private fostering, currently the Head of Regulated Services, will monitor the way the Directorate complies with and discharges its statutory duties and functions in relation to private fostering. This officer will monitor compliance with the following duties and functions:

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

- That a sample of individual child/young person and private foster carer records are regularly reviewed to check that compliance is being fulfilled
- That any concerns raised by privately fostered children/young people are investigated
- That a system for recording the number and nature of enquiries received in relation to private fostering, the responses given, and action taken, is effective.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Deborah Crawford  
Head of Regulated Services  
Email [deborah.crawford@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:deborah.crawford@lincolnshire.gov.uk)  
Telephone 01522 552781

This page is intentionally left blank