

# Combined Assurance

## *Status Report Children Services*



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**Contact:** Debbie Barnes, Director of Children's Services

**Details:** Tel: 01522 553200

County Offices, Newland, Lincoln, LN1 1YL

# Introduction

This is the second combined assurance report for the Council.

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

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

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

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

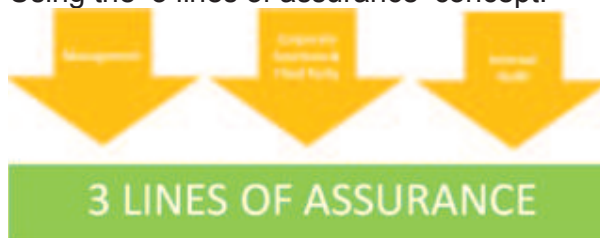
## Scope

We gathered information on our:

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

## Methodology

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



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

We did this by:

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



# Key Messages

We have high aspirations and a clear, shared vision for all of our children and young people. We want all children in every part of the county to achieve their potential and we will deliver services with our partners guided by our strategic principles to achieve this vision. There is strong political and managerial leadership of Children's Services with a stable, highly competent, and visible Directorate Management Team. The DCS has excellent relationships with partners and LCC staff as well as with schools, including academies. Integration best summaries our approach to the commissioning and delivery of high quality, value for money services. We demonstrate true integration and focus on needs not silo working so families access joined up services.

Overall educational attainment of pupils and post 16 students in Lincolnshire is above the national average and similar local authorities at all stages from early years to those at age 19. We are closing the attainment gap between all pupils and those on free school meals in the early years but we need to accelerate closing the gap at key stage 2 and 4. School attendance is in line with national average, but the rate of exclusions of pupils from schools has increased. This has been subject to a scrutiny review and an extensive action plan is being progressed to promote a more inclusive approach.

Our Ofsted annual Children's Services assessment (2010/11) confirmed that Lincolnshire performs excellently (Ofsted no longer do this annual assessment). The large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good and outstanding. Adoption was judged as outstanding in 2012 and Fostering judged outstanding in 2011. Residential and respite homes are good or outstanding. However the new Ofsted framework, changing legislation and demand management places considerable pressure on the services we offer. We expect an Ofsted inspection shortly and demonstrating good performance will be a challenge in light of the changing expectations.

Front line social care performance exceeds national and statistical neighbours on the majority of indicators (e.g. timeliness of initial assessment over 90% against 70.4% for statistical neighbours) and core assessments are 83% compared with 69%. The numbers of looked after children remain low at 41 per 10,000 compared with the England average of 59. The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee are currently undertaking a scrutiny review of front line social care. Adoption performance exceeds the new timeframes – the average time (days) between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family is 584 compared with the England average of 647, which is outstanding and we are leading the way nationally.

Figure 1

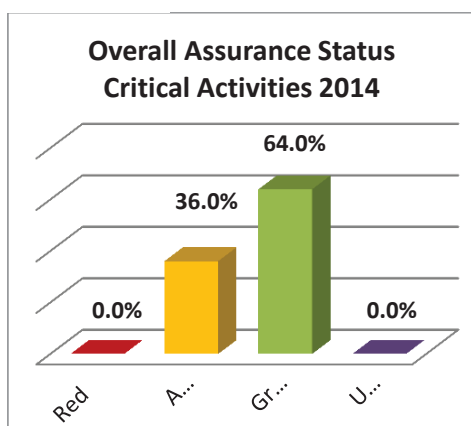
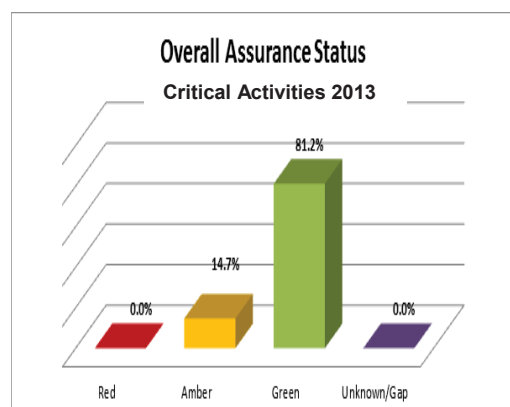
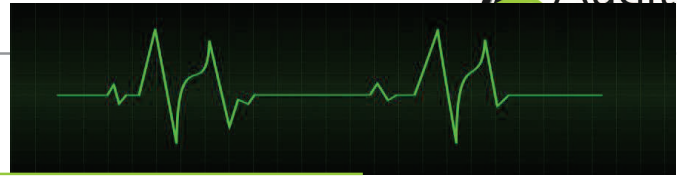


Figure 2



# Critical Systems



Our Vision is for:

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

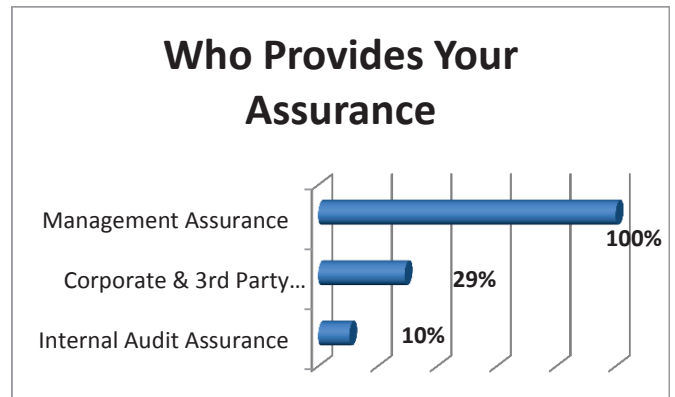
Our principles, which underpin how we will commission and deliver services to achieve our vision are:

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

## Local Priorities

- Safeguarding Children
- Ensuring children and families have access to early help services
- Implementing the reforms for supporting children with a disability and special education needs to achieve their potential
- Helping families living in challenging circumstances to turn their lives around through Families working together
- Responding to the challenges of the sustainable services review
- Ensuring all children can access a good or outstanding school so they achieve expected progress and achieve their potential

Figure 2





## 11- 19 Service

The following 4 areas have been given good assurance:

- Planning and Allocations
- Provision for Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities
- Post 16 Learning
- Ensuring there is a market for independent careers advice for schools

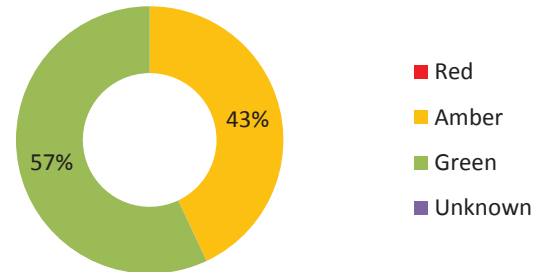
3 areas have Amber assurance:

- Sixth Forms
- Monitoring performance of schools and academies

The network of learning provision for leavers with learning difficulties and disabilities is now well developed and delivering good outcomes for much reduced cost. The post-16 network of providers, particularly schools sixth forms, continue to experience difficulties because of reduced numbers in the 16-19 age group. This places small sixth forms under significant threat, especially as national funding reduces. The tracking of all young people has been prioritised and good progress made but there continue to be difficulties in accessing status reports from other agencies once young people reach age 18. Working with schools, regardless of status, is a priority for the school improvement team. There is a set of protocols for working with Academies. The Scrutiny committee receive reports on the Council's commissioning intentions for post 16.

Figure 3

### 11-19 Service



## Additional Needs

The Additional Needs Service continues to provide services for the local authority to State funded Schools, and children and parents. 5 areas have good assurance

- Post 16 Learners with Learning Difficultie and Disabilities
- Pupil Referral Unite (PRU)
- Specialist Teaching and Applied Psychology Services
- Strategy and Finance
- Commissioning of Providers

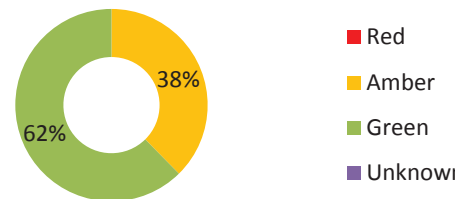
We have assessed 3 areas have Amber assurance:

- Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- Education Out of School (exclusions)
- Transition Planning

The requirements for the future delivery of Special Educational Needs provision is subject to significant review in light of the Support and Aspiration agenda arising from the Children and Families Bill. The service is, along with other partner agencies, parents, carers and young people in the process of developing Lincolnshire's Core Offer and cohesive assessment process for those young people who will require a single Education, Health and Care Plan. The responsibility to ensure appropriate arrangements for those aged 0-25 will also focus on robust transition arrangements.

Figure 4

### Additional Needs



The Service has an excellent track record for fulfilling effectively its statutory functions regarding Special Educational Needs assessment. However, new processes are having to be developed to ensure all schools fulfil their duties with regard to transition planning. For an extended period, permanent exclusions have also continued to rise. Measures put in place in the second half of 2013 have had a demonstrable impact on this trend and we await the outcome of a commissioned review in the spring to establish a long term strategy involving all schools.

The management of exclusions has been moved to the School Administration Service from January 2013 and the capacity of the needs assessment team in Additional Needs has been strengthened to enable to manage existing duties while preparing for major legislative changes that begin to be phased-in from September 2014.

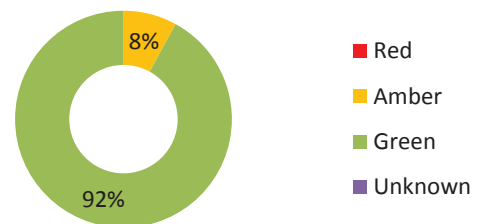
## Birth to Five

Figure 5

The following 11 areas have been given good assurance:

- Support and Advice to Early Years Providers
- Training to Early Years Providers
- Quality Assurance Checks
- Early Years Educational Entitlement Funding (3/4 year olds)
- Inclusion Funding
- Data Exchange System
- E-profile System
- Workforce Development
- Area SENCOs
- Supported Childcare Allocations
- Childcare Sufficiency

### Birth to Five



One area has Amber assurance:

- Early Years Educational Entitlement Funding (2 year olds)

National and Local Authority targets continue to be met and externally evaluated performance indicators confirm that the Birth to Five Service continues to achieve a high degree of compliance. Customer feedback and feedback from statutory bodies is very positive.

There have been significant national changes to the Early Years Foundation Stage assessment process in 2013. Lincolnshire outcomes have continued to place the Local Authority in the top 10% across the country. The DfE, through the Achieving 2 Year Olds (A2YO) monitoring, have rated the 2 Year Old Free Entitlement process as good (Green). The recent LA Audit of the Supported Childcare allocations has been graded as having substantial assurance. All areas of responsibility will be reviewed against agreed action plans and actions updated early in 2014 as necessary.

The Early Years Educational Entitlement Funding (2 year olds) is rated amber as this is a new duty which the Council is required to fulfil and although progress is on track, we need to demonstrate that targets have been achieved

## Commissioning

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

The good ones are:

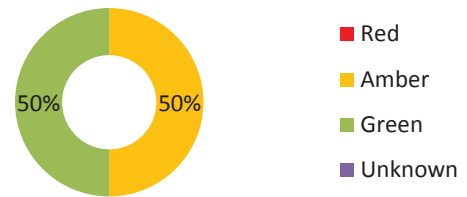
- Procurement
- Management of Grants and
- Decommissioning of Services

Those areas with Amber Assurance are:

- Contract Management
- Child Poverty Strategy and
- Home to school / college transport

Figure 6

### Commissioning



A Transport Review Board is being established to address the issues identified within the service to enable it to meet identified efficiency challenges and to support the budget saving targets set. The Board will include representatives from Commissioning, Transport Services Group, Additional Needs and Finance and will focus on a range of identified priorities including procurement, policy and assessment practice. Scrutiny has received a report on home to school transport

The Child Poverty Strategy now has the agreed governance arrangements in place to monitor and review the progress being made by Partners in achieving their objectives within the Child Poverty Action Plan to support the aims of the Strategy. A Child Poverty sub-group has been established by the Children & Young People’s Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) which will have an overview of the Action Plan and will provide an update to CYPSP on progress against this. During 2014 the Strategy will be reviewed in line with the results of the government’s recent consultation on the priorities affecting Child Poverty in the UK. The Scrutiny Committee supported the strategy and receive regular monitoring reports

Contract Management in the service is robust and the Joint Evaluation Toolkit used during contract management is currently being refreshed to fit with future service needs.



## Performance Assurance

Five areas have good assurance:

- Independent Chairs
- Family Group Conferencing
- Performance
- Learning & Development
- Parent Partnerships

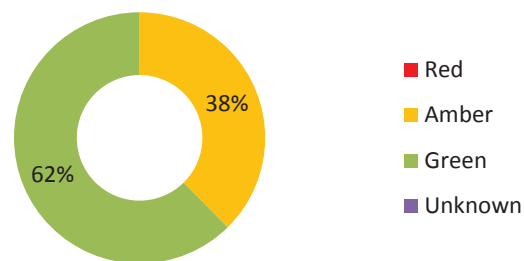
The areas with Amber assurance are:

- Looked After Children’s Education Service
- Family Information Services
- Auditing

Performance Assurance is a portfolio of 14 services and a wide range of thematic leads across all of Children's Services; Health & Safety & Risk, Equality and Diversity, Workforce Development, The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, Quality Assurance, Sector Led Improvement etc. Our highest risk areas are in relation to the Independent Chairs/ IRO's and the Looked After Children's Education Service. The movement, retention and recruitment of staff are a critical factor in relation to known risks and managing impact.

Figure 7

### Performance Assurance



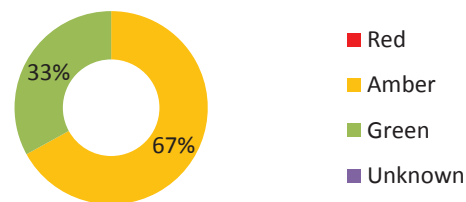
## Locality Teams

A number of services that were rated as good last year have now been rated as amber. This is due to the challenges that the new Ofsted framework is bringing, both to Inspections of Children's Centres and to social care services, increased demand for services and some instability of management in key locality areas. The mechanisms put in place to continue to develop services, include the appointment of the Principal Social Worker who is working on ensuring consistently good practice across all social care services, the implementation of signs of safety, investment in a national recruitment campaign and in experienced temporary managers, continued partnership working to improve practice in areas of joint working such as section 47s and wider Early Help developments implemented that aim to increase the effectiveness of TAC arrangements.

Policies, procedures and staff training requirements are continually updated in line with lessons learnt following Serious Case Reviews. The Council published a Serious Case Review within this year and all recommendations have been implemented.

Figure 8

### Locality Teams



The good assurance was given for:

- Emergency Duty Team (EDT)
- Care Proceedings and Support Panels

Services rated with Amber assurance are:

- Children in Need
- Family Support Workers
- Section 47
- Children’s Centres
- Team Around the Child
- Families Working Together

## Property & Technology

The service’s activities have been given Amber assurance. These include:

- Capital Projects
- School Organisation
- Planning for new schools
- Legal Changes to schools
- Bidding for grants

Figure 9

### Property & Technology



The Property and Technology Management team includes the management of School organisational planning and development, and the delivery of new schools through the Children’s Services Capital programme. The team also play a fundamental role in managing any legal processes due to changes to the status of schools also submitting applications to source grant funding where appropriate. There has been a reduction in the legal activity required to ensure smooth conversion of schools to academy status however the conversions do pose a medium risk to the LA as academies may not novate existing contracts leaving LCC with liabilities. This is managed through careful planning.

There is a medium risk to other key elements of the service area i.e. ensuring sufficiency of school places, mainly due to national policy from Department for Education with regard to free schools. This is partially managed through effective internal processes i.e. programme management, data analysis to inform place planning along with strong communication with partners and the building of positive relationships across the Local Authority to ensure expertise is continually shared and developed. However not all of these risks are not able to be mitigated due to national policy.

## Financial Support

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

Changes to the funding formula in 2013/14 have made calculation of budget shares simpler. The new census date in October and availability of data from the DfE reduces the time pressure on budget calculation.

Good assurance has been confirmed through LCC audit and through internal evidence of robust systems of financial management.

Figure 10

### Financial Support



## Regulated Services

Nine areas have good assurance:

- Adoption
- Fostering
- Looked After Children
- Children’s Homes
- Lincolnshire Secure Unit
- Leaving Care Service
- Adoption/Residence/Special Guardianship Allowances
- Out of County Provision
- Private Fostering

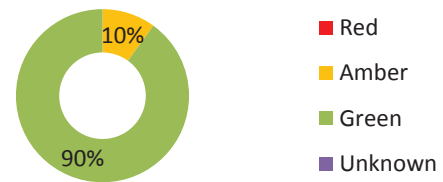
Children’s Adolescent Mental Health Services have Amber Assurance.

The majority of Regulated Services is subject to third party inspection through Ofsted and these inspections confirm good assurance in those services areas.

CAMHS is not subject to Ofsted inspection. Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) has had the delegated lead commissioning function for the CAMHS service since May 2013. Both LCC and the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) agree that the new local centralised commissioning of CAMHS provides an opportunity to review current service provision holistically and to re-shape services where required. LCC has recently completed Stage 1, existing service review, consultation and needs assessment of the review. The contract with LPFT is robustly monitored through the contract board, using the Joint Evaluation Toolkit.

Figure 11

### Regulated Services



## School Administration Service

The activities in this service area which include School Admissions and Non Attendance at School have been given Amber assurance.

All school admission policies and procedures are compliant with the admissions code and have been ratified by the Council. There have been no external adjudicator referrals for non-compliance. Over 92% of parents still continue to receive their first preference of a school for their child. The Council continues to administer a non-statutory mid-year admissions scheme for approximately 85% of families.

Significant changes have been made to those policies that relate to school attendance; particularly for those groups of children that are missing education, educated at home by their parents or poorly attending school.

### Schools

Provision to schools has good assurance through School Improvement Service which is undertaken by our strategic partner CfBT.

This contract is managed through monthly meetings, using JET (Joint Evaluation Toolkit) methodology, which ensures its good assurance.

CfBT are working on a comprehensive resource plan. This element is amber.

Monitoring of academies – a protocol has recently been put in place by CfBT to monitor the performance of academies so that each academy has at least an annual review of performance and appropriate follow up as and when necessary.

Figure 12

### School Administration Service

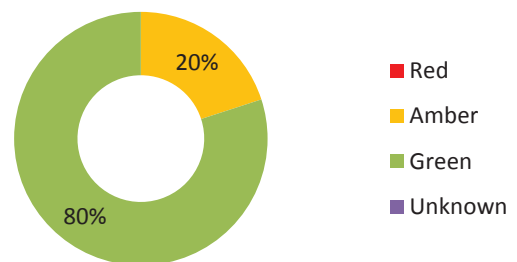


2014 will see the expansion of this work to look at those children that are on roll of a school but not receiving their entitlement of 25 hours education per week.

This service area includes traded services for schools. Service uptake by schools and academies is positive but it is too early to robustly evaluate the success of traded services.

Figure 13

### Schools



## Children with Disabilities

Five areas were given a good assurance:

- CWD
- The Beacon
- ESCO
- Short Break Homes

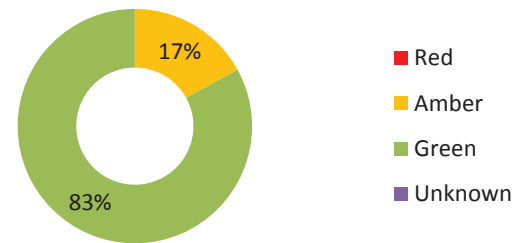
The Sensory Education Support Service was given Amber assurance.

There are good systems, processes and audit arrangements across Children with Disability services. Some school based provision for sensory impairment will be required this year and any transition of arrangements in light of changing legislation in this area will be effectively planned.

The Children's Homes for children with disability are subject to third party assurance through Ofsted.

Figure 14

### Children with Disabilities



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

- To continue to monitor and provide good quality services that improves outcomes for children and young people.
- To work with the Clinical Commissioning Groups to implement the recommendations of the Sustainable Services Review
- To respond to external inspections , findings from local and national Serious Case Reviews and from Scrutiny reviews
- Delivery of Planned Internal Audit work for 2012/13 in the following areas:
  - Child Poverty Strategy
  - Families Working Together
  - 14 – 19 Service
  - Domestic Abuse
- Work with our Internal Auditors to develop the 2014/15 Internal Audit Plan. Identifying where more independent assurance is required based on significance and risk of the activity, and where we can leverage assurance from other sources.

## Strategic Risks



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

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

**Safeguarding**

Examples of mitigating actions include:

- Audit of Section 11 (being conducted by People Management - Induction, Recruitment, Contract)
- Audit & Performance information to DMT for scrutiny
- Safeguarding Assurance days
- Independent Chairs - and Independent Reviewing Officers who quality assure the care plans of looked after children and children subject to child protection plans
- Team Manager Audits
- Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Board Serious Case Reviews and Significant Incident Reviews
- Practitioner Supervision & Appraisal



Strategic Risks - Assurance Map as at 31st October 2013	OWNER	RISK APPETITE	CURRENT RISK SCORE	TARGET RISK SCORE	DIRECTION OF TRAVEL	Management Assurance Status (Full, Substantial, Limited, No)	Corporate Functions & Third Party	Internal Audit	OVERALL ASSURANCE STATUS	COMMENTS
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Promoting Community Wellbeing &amp; Resilience</b></p>										
Safeguard children	Debbie Barnes	<p><b>Cautious</b></p> <p><b>(Regulatory standing &amp; legal compliance</b> - recognised may need to change the ways things are done but will be tightly controlled)</p>			<p>Static</p>	G	Unknown	A	G	<p>Owner confident of a 'Substantial' status due to proactive &amp; reactive actions in place.</p> <p>Sources of information - Internal audit of Child protection plans</p>



# Key Projects in Children Services

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## **Families Working Together – Amber**

"Families Working Together"(FWT) Service is Lincolnshire's response to the Government's "Troubled Families" Programme. The team consists of 40 Key Workers who work holistically, intensively and long-term with families. The Project continues to make good progress both in terms of the numbers of families identified and the numbers of families being worked with by FWT or partner organisations. Both exceed the progress measures set to achieve Government targets by 2015. The key concern continues to revolve around the target to 'turn around' 1370 troubled families in Lincolnshire by March 2015. Lincolnshire expects to have achieved around 40% of this number by January 2014. A combination of; staff being fully trained, the team reaching full capacity by January 2014 and an improved performance management system, will contribute significantly towards an increase in subsequent DCLG results claims. Whilst the service is providing much needed support for change for families, the service development is also about transformational change and embedding a whole new approach to working with families in Lincolnshire in the longer term.

## **Youth & Community Development – Green**

There has been significant progress in the Delivery of Youth Centre provision through local communities. A summary of the position is provided in the table below.

Of the original 40 centres:

- 10 have been awarded grants and are delivering activities
- 7 have buildings leased or let and are delivering positive activities
- 8 have buildings to be leased and positive activities delivered
- 13 centres, and the activities to be delivered, are under negotiation with interested parties
- 2 buildings are to be retained; positive activities to be delivered by community

Of particular significance is the new and emerging work that the Youth and Community Development Workers are engaged in with 17 new locations being explored for the delivery of positive activities.

## **Raising the Participation Age – Green**

The first phase of Raising the Participation Age which places a duty on young people to participate in education or training until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17, commenced on 28 June 2013. They were not however required to participate until the traditional start of the new academic year in September 2013.

Data for October 2013 shows that 1.3% of 16 year olds and 2.7% of 17 year olds are not in education, employment or training but are available to participate. These figures are an improvement on previous years before the duty was implemented. Work continues to ensure young people are aware of the duty and to ensure sufficient appropriate provision is available to enable them to exercise the duty, including preparation for the next phase from September 2014, when the duty to participate is extended to the age of 18.

## **Support & Aspiration - Amber**

The programme is intended to deliver the reforms to SEN support set out in the Children and Families Bill by 1<sup>st</sup> September 2014. A SEN local offer and new approaches to SEN assessment and provision are being co-produced with parents and young people. We intend to invite Department of Education representatives to review our progress to seek local assurance on our progress.

# Looking Ahead

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## People

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

## Money

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

## Resilience

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

## Localism

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