



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

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	14 March 2024
Subject:	Children in Care Performance Report Quarter 3

Summary:

This item enables the Panel to consider and comment on the report and accompanying appendices to this report, that provide key performance information for Quarter 3 2023/24 that is relevant to the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Actions Required:

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

1. Background

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

There are 16 measures in total that relate to CiC that are reported on in Quarter 3. Of these measures, two did not meet their target and two are ahead of the target set by the services.

1.1 Measures that did not meet their target:

1.1.1 Care Leavers in Education, Employment or Training

This measure remains below target and fluctuates throughout the year. Performance has varied between quarters, in Quarter 2 we reached 49%, but this has fluctuated down again in Quarter 3. The Leaving Care Service continues to monitor every single young person who is not in Education, Employment or Training (EET), and the Service continues to report monthly on the efforts of the service to re-engage individuals back into EET.

At the point of writing this Quarter 3 commentary, additional data analysis steps have been followed. Of the 326 young people in cohort:

- two young people were in custody.
- 17 were young parents and not currently able to work/access education due to parenting.
- 11 were unable to access employment due to their immigration status.
- four young people were not in contact with the service, so we do not know their EET status.
- 28 were unable to work due to illness/disability.

The young people where we were unable to affect change represents 15% of the cohort. This means the EET situation where change can be affected is 31.9%. Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) tracks this performance regularly and monitors those young people who fall into NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and those that are in secure EET.

New data cleaning steps are being implemented to ensure the recording of EET is improved. In addition, we have invested in a shared post across LCC and leaving care of an Employment and Aspirations Coordinator. The purpose of this role is to work with our young people who do not see education as their next step, but instead we offer support, careers advice and guidance, and direct support to assist young people from the age of 16 up to 19 to access and sustain employment.

Our EET statistics are slightly below our statistical neighbours who run at 55%. However, the “In Touch With Service” statistic for care leavers is way above national average at 98% in comparison to 93% for our statistical neighbours.

1.1.2 Percentage of Children in Care with an up to date Health Check

The number of up-to-date health checks for Children in Care for a year or more has risen from 87.9% last quarter to 88.7% this quarter, and there has been much work in the Service to improve the timeliness of health checks. However, the number of children in care has increased since the start of the 2023/24 business year and some are exercising their right to refuse an assessment. Whilst these include young asylum-seeking children who have come through the National Transfer Scheme, it is not evident that they are particularly at risk of refusing their health assessment compared to the rest of the Children in Care cohort. Work is currently ongoing to identify which categories of children are most at risk of refusing or avoiding their health check. The Children in Care teams continue to encourage and promote health assessments with their young people, however these young people can refuse to accept their health assessments.

1.2 Measures that are ahead of their target:

1.2.1 Stability of Placements of Children in Care: Number of Moves

This indicator identifies those children who experience three placement moves within the year. At this point, the performance is well within the target range at 4.9%, however, as the measure is cumulative, we may expect this to increase by the end of the financial year. The service acknowledges that having a stable placement is a key factor in producing good outcomes for children in care and continues to strive to ensure that children and young people who need to be in care can grow and develop in high quality homes that meet their immediate needs and provide them with permanence at the very earliest.

The service continues to ensure that foster carers are recruited and well inducted to this rewarding voluntary role. All carers are well supported and any potential challenges in placements are identified early to support fostering families in continuing to care for children whose needs are complex and varied. This has been supported using the Valuing Care toolkit and the embedded caring2learn approach which has supported and empowered foster carers to share, find and deliver solutions within a context of a tailored fostering service training and support offer. Nevertheless, the service has continued to see that some stable placements disrupt unexpectedly, and this can have a significant impact upon this indicator. Children's Services has also seen an increase in the entrants of older children (aged 11 years and over) which poses some challenges in terms of identifying longer term accommodation options whilst the younger cohort of children with care plans for long-term fostering presents challenges in achieving placement stability due to the significant local and national shortage of foster carers.

1.2.2 16-17 year old Children in Care who are Participating in Learning

Performance this quarter is above target and an improvement on Quarter 2 2023/24 (85.4%) and Quarter 3 2022/23 (last year) of 75%. At the end of the reporting period, there were 181 young people in care aged 16 and 17 years. Of the 181 young people, 166 met the criteria for engaging in learning and were on roll at local colleges, post 16 providers and school sixth forms. Of the remaining 15 young people, two young people were in full time employment (without training) and 13 young people were not actively engaged in any education, employment or training. Seven of these young people have remained not engaging in employment, education or training since Quarter 2 2023/24, two young people are new into care and four young people have left their education or training provision due to a change in circumstances. Personal Education Plans involving the young people and supporting professionals will continue to explore any potential barriers to progressing into employment, education or training and revisit opportunities and appropriate support on a termly basis. Two additional employment coach roles specifically for children in care have been created which will focus on this small group of young people, developing their confidence and skills to promote their transition into work-based training or employment.

2. Conclusion

This report summarises the Quarter 3 performance for Children in Care and Young People, and Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are invited to review and raise any questions on its content and recommend any actions or changes to the Executive Councillor for Children's Services, Community Safety, Procurement and Migration.

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Children in Care - Performance Measures – Quarter 3

5. Background Papers

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

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