



CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

THURSDAY, 20 JANUARY 2022 at 10.00 AM
in COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY OFFICES, NEWLAND, LINCOLN LN1 1YL

MEMBERSHIP

Lincolnshire County Council:

Councillors S P Roe (Chairman), Clio Perraton-Williams (Vice-Chairman), K H Cooke, A G Hagues, Mrs J E Killey, C Matthews and M A Whittington

Added Members (non-voting):

Polly Coombes, Ann Wright, Amy-Louise Butler, Elizabeth Bunney and
1 Vacancy(Children In Care Council Representative)

AGENDA

Item	Title	Pages
1	Apologies for absence/Replacement Members	
2	Minutes of the previous meeting	3 - 12
3	Declarations of Members' Interests	
4	Announcements by the Chairman, Executive Councillor and Lead Officers	
5	Commissioning Excellence: Meeting the Sufficiency Duty 2018-2022 annual update and timeline for the development of the new 2023-2027 Strategy <i>(To receive a report by Amy Allcock, Commissioning Manager – Commercial, which annual update to the Action Plan of the Looked After Children Placement Sufficiency Strategy – 'Commissioning Excellence: Meeting the Sufficiency Duty 2018-2022' and an indicative development timeline for the Children in Care Commissioning Strategy 2023-2027)</i>	13 - 54

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| 6 | <i>Lincolnshire County Council Virtual School Annual Report Academic Year 2020-2021</i>
<i>(To receive a report by Kieran Barnes (Headteacher – Virtual Schools), which outlines the work of the Virtual School Headteacher to support the promotion of educational outcomes for Children and Young People in Care for the academic year 1st September 2020 to 31st August 2021)</i> | 55 - 94 |
| 7 | <i>Lincolnshire Leaving Care - 6 Monthly Update Report</i>
<i>(To receive a report by Lisa Adams, Service Manager, Barnardo's Leaving Care Services, which provides a 6 Monthly Update Report Provided by Barnardo's on Behalf of Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service)</i> | 95 - 104 |
| 8 | <i>Fostering Service Quarter Three Performance Report</i>
<i>(To receive a report by Deborah Crawford, Head of Service Fostering, Adoption and Leaving Care, which provides an overview of the Fostering Service Performance for Quarter three)</i> | 105 - 122 |
| 9 | <i>Children in Care Annual Report 2020/21</i>
<i>(To receive a report by Elizabeth Bunney, Lincolnshire Community Healthcare Services and Nicola Wilkinson, Lincolnshire CCG Safeguarding Team, which provides the Children in Care Annual Report for 2020/21)</i> | 123 - 168 |
| 10 | <i>Corporate Parenting Panel Work Programme</i>
<i>(To receive a report by Kiara Chatziioannou, Scrutiny Officer, which provides the Committee with an opportunity 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)</i> | 169 - 172 |

Distributed on Wednesday, 12 January 2022

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, 20th January, 2022, 10.00 am \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Should you have any queries on the arrangements for this meeting, please contact Emily Wilcox via telephone 07557 486687 or alternatively via email at emily.wilcox@lincolnshire.gov.uk



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PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S P ROE (CHAIRMAN)

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

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

Officers in attendance:-

Kieran Barnes (Virtual School Head Teacher), Kiara Chatziioannou (Scrutiny Officer Deborah Crawford (Head of Service, Fostering, Adoption and Leaving Care), Rachel Freeman (Interim Head of Service, Children's (Safeguarding)), Carolyn Knight (Head of Service – Quality and Standards and Principle Social Worker)

Ben Lilley (Team Manager, Quality and Standards), Janice Spencer OBE (Assistant Director of Children's Safeguarding) and Emily Wilcox (Democratic Services Officer)

26 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

27 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

An apology for absence was received from Councillor K Cooke.

28 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 9 SEPTEMBER 2021

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

29 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR AND LEAD OFFICERS

The Chairman announced that he had attended the recent Corporate Parenting training session which had been offered to all Councillors, which had been successful. The Chairman had also attended the Fostering Awards and the Big Conversation 2021, in which he had been given the opportunity to meet with Foster Parents and young adults who had been in the care system. The Chairman had invited the 'Young Inspectors' to a future meeting of the

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Panel or the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to provide the young adults with an opportunity to further engage with the Council.

The Chairman also informed Members that Visiting Members' training was scheduled for 26 November 2021 and 2 December 2021.

The Panel welcomed the proposal from the Assistant Director – Children's (Safeguarding) for Officers to liaise with the Children in Care Council on the most effective way for the Panel to engage with the Children in Care Council (Voices for Choices).

The Assistant Director – Children's (Safeguarding) was pleased to announce that the Beacon Children's home had maintained its 'good' judgement following a recent Ofsted inspection.

Members also welcomed the news that the Department for Education (DfE) had accepted the 2018 Council's proposal to expand its secure unit in Sleaford to a 24 bedroom unit which was an exciting investment opportunity and provided an opportunity to increase the number of welfare beds for young people across the County. Permission had been granted to progress to the initial stages of procurement and planning.

30 INDEPENDENT REVIEWING SERVICE SIX-MONTH REPORT - 1ST APRIL TO 30TH
SEPTEMBER 2021

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Service - Quality and Standards and Principal Social Worker, which provided a six-month update on the Independent Reviewing Service.

The service are working on a number of priorities for 2021/22, which include:

- Adapting to the 'lessons learned' as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, including offering people the choice to hold meetings virtually where appropriate. It was noted that there had been positive feedback by some parents and young people that had taken part in virtual meetings, therefore work had been carried out to ensure that the offer could remain for those who wished to partake virtually.
- Improvements in the way that the service gather and analyse feedback and information received in order to better the individual service provided to young people and families.
- The introduction of a pre-birth protocol which would reduce the need for some parents to be subject to care proceedings once their child was born. It was acknowledged that this would reduce the expectations on the parents at a time when many other checks and procedures were being undertaken.
- The development of a sexual abuse pathway as a result of the low numbers of children on a sexual abuse plan. The pathway would look to use pre-existing work in a more coherent and strategic way and identify gaps in provision which needed to be addressed.

- Investigating ways to further engage partners in child protection conferences and child in care reviews as a result of recent research which had suggested that many cases of severe abuse had been at the hands of fathers.
- The Panel was advised that the independent reviewing service had been subject to a restructure which had resulted in the introduction of a separate team manager which would mean management capacity across the independent service.

Overall, performance had remained consistently high across the service, despite challenges faced with Covid-19 and IT.

The Panel considered the report and during the discussion the following points were noted:

- The Panel were pleased to see that there was still an opportunity for people to attend meetings and training if they wished to and if it was appropriate.
- The Panel welcomed the work that was being undertaken to engage fathers with processes. It was suggested that men could often be excluded by current processes. Officers acknowledged the need for a culture shift and more work needed to be done to engage fathers which could hopefully lead to less instances of abuse.
- It was confirmed that in instances where it was difficult to engage both parents in the process, extended family would be consulted. The Council had a legal duty to explore and place the child within the family. Evidence showed that children do better when they are brought up within their family, including extended family and all family options would be exhausted before a child was placed into long term care or adoption.

RESOLVED:

1. That consideration be given to the report and the comments made be noted; That the priorities for 2020-21, as set out in the report, be endorsed.

31 REGULATION 44 INDEPENDENT VISITING SERVICE REPORT 1ST APRIL- 30TH SEPTEMBER 2021

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Service - Quality and Standards and Principal Social Worker, which introduced the six-monthly report on the inspection of the Local Authority Children's Homes by the Independent Visitors, which was a statutory requirement and served to update the Panel on how the Care Standards are met within these homes in Lincolnshire.

The Panel was advised that it was a statutory requirement to have Independent Visitors whose responsibility it was to visit all of the Council's owned and managed residential homes every month and produce a report against the quality standards which were detailed within the report. It was noted that visits had been in person over the previous quarter, whilst maintaining ensuring precautions were taken against Covid-19.

There had been an increase in the use of technology with young people in the children's homes to ensure they maintained contact with their families and other professionals. Independent advocates were now attending for physical visits to address any issues and

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concerns that may be held by young people within the homes. The Head of Service - Quality and Standards and Principal Social Worker was pleased to report that there had been no escalations during the period.

As detailed in the report, the quality of care across all of the Council's maintained children's homes was rated 'good' and in some cases 'excellent' or 'outstanding'. Members of the Panel were reassured that despite the challenges faced at the Albion Street Children's home, there was a plan in place which was proving to be successful.

Recruitment to the homes continued to be difficult, however, assurance was provided that current vacancies were covered by existing members of staff or consistent agency staff to minimise the impact on the young people within the homes.

The Panel considered the report and during the discussion the following points were noted:

- The Panel were satisfied with the quality of care being offered within children's homes, in particular that which had been rated outstanding.
- The Panel were assured that where possible, there were a number of relief staff members who were well trained to support the children and were being deployed to ease staffing issues. Many of the issues with staffing were due to the natural progression of staff and officers were not overly concerned by the levels at this moment in time.
- Albion Street had faced challenges over the previous years, which were predominantly around staffing and difficulties in the recruitment of a Homes Manager which had created instability within the staffing structure. There had also been children of varying ages with complex needs living together which was creating further issues within the home. The introduction of an experienced Homes Manager and Apprentice Homes Manager had brought stability to the staffing group. Alongside this, some older children, who had previously lived at the home, had been placed in a different setting. It was important that children were placed in the most suitable environment for their needs to be supported and that the young people could flourish and thrive within the home. The unit had recently been described as warm, inviting, and unrecognisable and officers were confident that a 'good' outcome would be achieved at the next inspection.
- Assurance was provided that there had been no children displaced as a result in the changes made to the residency at Albion House. Officers had identified the individual needs of the children and placed them in places which could meet their needs in other residential provisions which had also provided the opportunity to bring some younger children back into care within Lincolnshire.
- It was confirmed that private children's homes were subject to the same regulations as the Council's children's homes, including the Regulation 44 visits and Ofsted reporting. The Council worked with the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership to maintain processes, whereby they receive notification of any application for a children's home to ensure they were located appropriately and also provided an opportunity to raise any concerns that directly involved children and any child placed in a home in Lincolnshire would also have a social worker and could be

attending local schools and localities, which meant that they would have a care plan implemented by the Council. The Panel were assured that the Council would be notified of any concerns raised.

- It was agreed that details of any inspection reports be circulated to the local Councillor for each children's home.

RESOLVED:

That consideration be given to the report and the comments made be noted.

32 VOICES FOR CHOICES (V4C) - UPDATE REPORT

Members of the Committee held a one-minute silence to commemorate Remembrance Day.

Consideration was given to a report by the Practice Supervisor (Quality and Standards), which provided key performance information for Quarter 2 2021/22 that is relevant to the work of the Panel.

The Panel was advised that Voices for Choices (V4C) was the name of the Lincolnshire Children in Care Council which was made up of children across the County who share their views and experiences about their time in care to help develop work and provide feedback about service improvement.

During Quarter 2, the V4C groups had focussed a on a return to face-to-face meetings with the lifting of the Covid-19 restrictions.

The Panel was referred to page 56-59 of the agenda pack, which provided a breakdown of the activities undertaken and topic discussed in each locality.

The Practice Supervisor (Quality and Standards) was pleased to report that in East Lindsey now had a small group established following difficulties obtaining attendees for face-to-face meetings.

A summary of the work conducted with the BBC was provided, including details of the soundLINCS programme, and a monthly virtual V4C quiz.

The Council continued to raise awareness of V4C in the hope that they could increase attendance. Positive feedback had been received regarding the re-introduction of face-to-face meetings.

The Committee was informed that the Council held their first Big Conversation event since March 2020, in which the four V4C groups came together. The event was well tended and had produced some including the development of a buddy system where some children who were currently of V4C who will act as buddies or mentors for children coming into care.

The Panel welcomed the discussion of politics and current affairs issues within the groups.

The Assistant Director – Children’s Services reassured the Panel that Officers carefully considered and where possible addressed any issues which had been raised by the Young People at the Big Conversation.

RESOLVED:

That consideration be given to the report and the comments made be noted.

33 QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR CHILDREN IN CARE

Consideration was given to a report by the Performance Support Officer, which provided key performance information for Quarter 2 2021/22 that is relevant to the work of the Panel.

The report set out the 16 key performance indicators, of which 8 were outside the measures set by the service area, in which further detail was provided and detailed within the report and at Appendix 1 to the report:

- Fostering/adoption of Children in Care aged 10 to 16
- Stability of placements of Children in Care: Number of moves
- Percentage of Children in Care with an up-to-date dental check
- 16–17-year-old Children in Care who are participating in Learning
- Percentage of Children in Care with an up-to-date routine immunisations
- Care Leavers in Suitable Accommodation
- Care Leavers in Education, Employment or Training
- Children in Care Living Within a Family Environment

The Panel considered the report and during the discussion the following points were noted:

- Members of the Panel raised concerns regarding the accessibility to Dentists in Lincolnshire. It was suggested that should a young person within the care of the Council was not able to access dental care, the Council sought treatment from a private practice. The Assistant Director – Children’s Services agreed to investigate that as a possibility.
- A Foster Council Representative detailed personal struggles that she had personally faced with getting dentistry checks for foster children.
- It was difficult to obtain information from Universities and other Higher Education authorities on information on Lincolnshire’s Care Leavers, which was mainly due to GDPR as well as is being resource intensive.
- As Corporate Parents of children who are were receiving dental treatment, it was proposed that the Chairman write to the Elective Official responsible for dentistry within Lincolnshire on behalf of the Panel to express their concerns at the lack of dentistry provision available.
- Concerns were raised over the number of Care Leavers not in employment, education or training. It was requested that a report providing further information on

this issue be reported to a future meeting of the Committee. The Panel were assured that the Council had access to information on the whereabouts of the 16 and 17 year old care leavers and had regular contact with them. Data also reflected a particular point in the year in which data was difficult to collect for a number of reasons. Assurance was provided that young people continued to be supported to find employment and the Council sought to find appropriate educational placements for those throughout their career up to the age of 18, within the virtual school.

RESOLVED:

1. That consideration be given to the report and the comments made be noted;
2. That a letter on behalf of the Chairman to the Elected Representative Responsible for Dentistry expressing the Panel's concerns with the lack of dentistry provision in Lincolnshire be drafted.

34 FOSTERING QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 2

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Fostering and Adoption, which informed the Panel about the work of the broader Children's and Fostering Service in relation to Private Fostering for the period from July to September 2021.

The Head of Fostering and Adoption paid tribute to all those who attended the Foster Carers Annual Conference and those who had received well deserved awards as well as the general acknowledgement of the appreciation the Council had for foster carer households.

This second quarter of the year had continued to be compounded by the aftermath and the ongoing effects of Covid-19. The rollout of the successful Covid-19 booster vaccination had provided increased confidence to fostering households.

The Head of Fostering and Adoption commended the work of the County's Foster Parents throughout the pandemic.

There had been a small increase in the number of children what were placed within the independent sector, who had been accommodated with local carers supporting local children and placement stability figures had remained good with 73% of children remaining in their placements for at least two and half years. The level of support provided and commitment to the service continued to be effective, as had efforts to continue to keep children with their families.

Campaigns to add to our cohort of foster care households remained clear, with that the Council were looking for fostering families to care for and sibling groups too offer permanence, but also to offer and opportunities for parents and children to be assessed together within a foster care placement. The Head of Fostering and Adoption emphasised the importance of placing children in a placement that was suitable.

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Online presence for the recruitment of foster carers had continued and the team remained proactive and visible to people that are interested in wanting to foster children.

There had been three foster carer approvals within the quarter, along with a number of assessments that were ongoing.

The Head of Fostering and Adoption paid tribute to all staff involved in the foster care process as well as the foster carers for ensuring Lincolnshire's children were well cared for.

Members considered the report and during the discussion the following points were noted:

- It was proposed that the Panel write to all of Lincolnshire's Foster Carers thanking them for their hard work, particularly during Covid-19.
- Although the government target for processing new applications for foster care was within 8 months, the Panel were assured that in most instances applications were processed in less than eight months. Officers recognised the wish to process applications as quickly as possible, however, it was also important to note the depth of information analysis which was carried out as part of the application process to ensure children were received the best level of care possible.
- Officers kept a record of the source to which initial enquiries were made. From gathering such information it was clear that an online presence was critical in the recruitment of foster carers.

RESOLVED:

That the consideration be given to the report and that the comments made be noted.

35 PRIVATE FOSTERING ANNUAL REPORT AND STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Consideration be given to a report by the Head of Fostering and Adoption, which informed the Corporate Parenting Panel about the work of the broader Children's and Fostering Service in relation to Private Fostering.

The Panel was advised that as a result of the tragic circumstances surrounding the case of Victoria Climbié, legislation was introduced around private fostering, which sits under section four of the Children Act, 2004.

The Panel was referred the statement of purpose, which underpinned the Council's responsibilities as an organisation and with oversight of privately fostered arrangements. It was important that the Council remained vigilant to those children who become subject to private fostering arrangements in order to ensure that the child is legally right and suitable and most importantly that the carers identified as private foster carers were duly assessed not only by a child social worker but also by a fostering social worker.

The private fostering agreement was authorised by a fostering team manager which would conclude that legally and morally, it was in the child's best interest to be placed with the private fosterer. The Head of Fostering and Adoption emphasised the difference in the definition of a private foster carer and those that were assessed by Lincolnshire County Council to care for other people's children.

As part of the Council's safeguarding partnership, the role of a private fosterer was publicised to raise awareness of what a private fostering arrangement was and ensure that as many people as possible reported such arrangements to the Council. This included discussions with colleagues in schools and health establishments to ensure that those in paternal roles were also aware of the legal requirements.

The Panel was invited to ask questions on the annual report, in which the following points were noted:

- Private fostering agreements were governed by statute and the sign-off of an agreement was carried out by the local authority. There was a specified time period to complete an assessment. Once all statutory checks had been completed by the relevant department and all departments were satisfied that a suitable arrangement was being made then agreements could be finalised. The Council monitored individuals placed in foster agreements until the age of 16, or 18 for those who had a disability, which is when legal arrangements would end.
- Assurance was provided that once the Council were made aware of a possible private fostering arrangement, there was a clear policy to ensure that the child was visible.
- There was no clear link between the arrangements for private fostering and other fostering agreements in which the Council was responsible for.
- It was acknowledged that the term private fostering could be confusing to members of the public, and many people were not aware of the need to report a private fostering arrangement which is why it was important that Officers continued to communicate the message.
- The definition of family used within fostering agreements was taken from UK Law.

The Head of Fostering and Adoption then set out the Private Fostering Statement of Purpose, which the Council remained committed to in terms of safeguarding children and promoting the welfare of children within Lincolnshire's communities.

The council adopted high standards to ensuring that those arrangements were assessed, suitable and that we the Council acted within the powers that were given within statute.

The statement of purpose sets out what was considered good practice and could be used as a reference point for all professionals and anybody who considers themselves to be in a private fostering arrangement. Customers and members of the public within Lincolnshire could access information and through SharePoint and through the Council's website.

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RESOLVED:

1. That the report be accepted as an accurate overview of the Council's function in their discharge of responsibilities in terms of private fostering.
2. That a letter on behalf of the Chairman is sent to Foster Carers, thanking them for their efforts and continuous commitment throughout the pandemic be drafted.

36 CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report by the Scrutiny Officer, which invited the Panel to consider its work programme, as set out on pages 127 to 130 of the agenda pack.

In response to a question, it was clarified that the Council had responsibility for the care of unaccompanied refugee children and would ensure that care was provided through foster care or supported accommodation. As unaccompanied minors, refugees would have the same rights and entitlements of any other young person that was looked after in Lincolnshire. The Council would not have any involvement in the care of refugee children who had arrived with their families, unless a support element or safeguarding concern was raised, to which none had been received at the current time. It was agreed that further information be provided to Councillor C Matthews which set out the criteria for the Council to which they would have a duty of care over a child.

It was also clarified that the Council were offering tax relief to care leavers from the age of 21-25. The Panel welcomed the work that was ongoing to provide care leavers with free access to leisure centres owned by District Councils.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be approved.

The meeting closed at 12.32 pm

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

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	20 January 2022
Subject:	Commissioning Excellence: Meeting the Sufficiency Duty 2018-2022 annual update and timeline for the development of the new 2023-2027 Strategy

Summary:

This report presents the following:

- an annual update to the Action Plan (Appendix A) of the Looked After Children Placement Sufficiency Strategy – '*Commissioning Excellence: Meeting the Sufficiency Duty 2018-2022*'
- indicative development timeline for the *Children in Care Commissioning Strategy 2023-2027*

Actions Required:

1. The Corporate Parenting Panel supports and endorses the updated Action Plan for the Sufficiency Strategy 2018-2022.
2. The Corporate Parenting Panel supports and endorses the indicative timetable for the development of the Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027.

1. Background

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

Sufficiency Strategy 2018-2022

The 2018-2022 Strategy was signed off by the Corporate Parenting Panel in December 2017 with the recommendation to report annually on progress against the Action Plan (Appendix A).

The Action Plan (Appendix A) has been updated to reflect progress against the actions up to and including the end of December 2021.

Each action is evaluated using a Signs of Safety approach showing what has been accomplished, where there are concerns and what needs to happen next. A number of Actions have been marked as 'Completed' with an accompanying explanation.

The final update of the 2018-2022 Strategy will be brought to Corporate Parenting Panel in January 2023, in a review of the preceding 12 months.

Children’s Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027

Children’s Strategic Commissioning will work with internal and appropriate commissioned partners during 2022 to develop a new Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy for the period 2023-2027, which will be aligned to the Children in Care (CiC) and High Needs Transformation Programmes.

This will be reviewed by both DLT and Corporate Parenting Panel before presentation of the final version to Corporate Parenting Panel in January 2023; the indicative timetable for development is shown at Appendix B.

2. Conclusion

The Corporate Parenting Panel is invited to discuss and approve the updated content of the Action Plan (Appendix A) to the *'Commissioning Excellence: Meeting the Sufficiency Duty 2018-2022'*.

The Corporate Parenting Panel is invited to discuss and approve the indicative development timetable (Appendix B) for the new Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027.

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

Risks were identified within the Strategy and elements are included within the Action Plan (Appendix A) as part of the Signs of Safety approach under the heading 'What are we concerned about?', as well as the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic under the heading 'Covid-19 impact/actions & recovery'.

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	COMMISSIONING EXCELLENCE – MEETING THE SUFFICIENCY DUTY 2018-2022: ACTION PLAN UPDATE (20 JANUARY 2022)
Appendix B	CHILDREN IN CARE COMMISSIONING STRATEGY 2023-2027: INDICATIVE DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

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 Bridie Fletcher, Senior Commissioning Officer, who can be contacted on 07748 181381 or by e-mail at bridie.fletcher@lincolnshire.gov.uk.

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**COMMISSIONING EXCELLENCE – MEETING THE SUFFICIENCY DUTY 2018-2022:
ACTION PLAN UPDATE (20 JANUARY 2022)**

No.	What is working well?	What are we concerned about?	What needs to happen	Covid-19 impact/actions & recovery
1.	<p>Deliver the Partners in Practice programme to improve practice in Lincolnshire, transform the quality of Children's Social Care Services and Early Help arrangements, and support reform of the wider system within Children's Services</p> <p align="center">THIS ACTION IS CLOSED FROM DECEMBER 2020 AND FORMS PART OF DAY-TO-DAY DELIVERY IN QUALITY & STANDARDS TEAM</p>			
2.	<p>Review the effectiveness of early intervention services including the development of a performance management programme to understand the quantifiable outcomes delivered by the service and to help reduce the need for statutory intervention</p>			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Early Help Strategy has launched, co-produced with partners and families. Governance is a cross-partnership arrangement and subgroups will directly enable LCC to deliver on this vision. ■ Early Help front door is embedded in practice and integrated with the social care front door to achieve consistency in decision making, allocation and resources. ■ Following the successful pilot, Future4Me has been established as a permanent team working with young people on the edge of care. ■ The Early Childhood Strategy Steering Group launched in November 2021. ■ Through audits, qualitative information suggests that re-referrals to Early Help is very low 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Concern remains about the on-going impact to families in regard to Covid-19. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Firm up the implementation plan for the Early Help Strategy Steering group, with regular reports to LSCP and DLT. ■ The Early Childhood Strategy Steering group will agree a strategic plan with regular report to the Health and Wellbeing board and DLT. ■ Undertake feasibility study for Family Hubs; DLT to make further decisions. ■ Develop an overarching Parenting Strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Transformation Team is in place to support recovery. ■ Clear analysis about the impact of Covid -19 in Lincolnshire on children and families. ■ Support staff health and wellbeing to ensure the recruitment and retention. ■ Support the implementation arrangements of Smarter Working for staff across Early Help. ■ Children's Centres continue to be integral to offering preventative services for Early Years and remained open during the pandemic for critical health appointments. Children's Centres are back to a pre-Covid attendance rate.

No.	What is working well?	What are we concerned about?	What needs to happen	Covid-19 impact/actions & recovery
	<p>and most TACS are closed with needs met.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lincolnshire has been successful in securing 'Build Back Better' funding which will support and enhance early intervention. 			
3.	<p>Undertake a 'Deep Dive' of current and recent CiC cohort to ensure children are transitioning to CiC status within appropriate thresholds and evaluate if more could be done, together with partner organisations, to avoid children becoming CiC</p> <p>THIS ACTION IS NOW CLOSED AND WILL FORM PART OF ACTIONS 4 & 5</p>			
4.	<p>Improve understanding of why more complex young people are coming through the front door in order to determine what can be done to identify them in order intervene earlier and remedy the situation</p> <p>THIS ACTION IS NOW CLOSED WITH ACTIONS BEING FED INTO ACTION 5</p>			
5.	<p>Create a Youth Hub to support adolescents engaging in risky behaviours in order to identify CYP at risk of coming into care and prevent the numbers of CiC increasing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Evaluation of Future4Me conducted by Children's Strategic Commissioning for DfE. ■ Commitment to Future4Me is an integral element of Children Services offer post-March 2021. ■ Positive evaluation undertaken of Lincolnshire Joint Diversionary Panel by University of Lincoln, which was published in September 2021. The evaluation found the panel provided effective and timely support to children and young people, with more than 80% of panel outcomes being restorative and avoided children entering the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The longer-term impact of Covid-19 in relation to children becoming drawn into exploitation/county lines. ■ Consideration of the future working model of the Restoring Family Relationships team within Future4Me. ■ Ensuring awareness and uptake of the integrated complex care model to support children and families. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Development of the action plan following the Future4Me evaluation. ■ Working to implement the findings of the University of Lincoln evaluation. ■ Maintaining work with key partners, including Lincolnshire Police. ■ Mapping work to be completed by LSCP Child Exploitation Analyst to target specific interventions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Effective roll-out of trauma-informed training to significant numbers of staff and partners. ■ Performance around missing return interviews has been maintained. ■ The views of more than 50 young people were sought as part of the evaluation of Future4Me and this demonstrated that 93% of the young people surveyed believed that they had been supported throughout that intervention and that their futures were more positive as a result.

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	<p>formal criminal justice system and facing longer term consequences in later life.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lincolnshire received £2.5m funding allocated by NHS England to support roll-out of Integrated Complex Care. ■ Development of a dedicated LSCP Child Exploitation Analyst role to tackle missing and exploitation. ■ Establishment of the Restoring Family Relationship Team to address family breakdown. ■ Recruitment of key roles within Future4Me health team in collaboration with LPFT. ■ Extensive roll out of training to support development of practice around child exploitation. ■ Multi-agency operations tackling exploitation across the county. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Additionally 90% of those young people would recommend the service to their peers highlighting the impact of the practice undertaken and the commitment to relationship-based practice. ■ There has been a significant reduction in children arrested and held in Police custody. First time entrants into the youth justice system have reduced by 72% since 2017.
6.	Nominate the CiC & care leavers programme board to develop a local model of suitable and appropriate accommodation options that effectively manages the cohort of young people requiring support and accommodation and ensures maximises education, employment and training opportunities			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Children and Young People's Accommodation Pathway endorsed by Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee. ■ All District Councils agreed Lincolnshire care leavers have a local connection to apply for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There continues to be a general shortage of affordable, accessible one-bedroom accommodation across Lincolnshire. ■ Move-on accommodation options can be difficult for young people to find/access. This has been 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Multi-agency Protocol is in place and will always need to be monitored and refreshed as the agenda progresses. ■ Annual review of the new Youth Housing contract with Nacro to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Within the new Youth Housing Service every commissioned bed space has an associated move-on bed space linked with it. This has supported the smooth transition of young people between accommodation and opened

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	<p>housing across the county and recognise them as a priority group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Clear plan of action and commitment from partners to meeting the accommodation needs of CiC and care leavers with a multi-agency Protocol now in place and all seven District Councils signed up. ■ LCC and Barnardo's continue to look at how to grow the Supported Lodgings model. ■ LCC has an agreed process to meet the funding gap between Housing Benefit/earnings and private rent for care leavers less than 21 years of age. ■ In-house semi-independent living houses fully operational in Grantham and Gainsborough with a number of young people having been accommodated. ■ Integrated Supported Accommodation (Youth Housing) service started 1st January 2021 – service is delivered by Nacro and is known as NEST. This service has proven an excellent resource and has supported CiC and care leavers through effective and innovative person-centered practice. 	<p>exacerbated through 2020 due to Covid-19 restrictions, though partners have been adaptable and supported young people were possible.</p>	<p>look at structure and service update.</p>	<p>up capacity within the service to ensure no young person is without suitable housing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The development of a cumulative risk assessment tool has enabled more complex young people to be accommodated in the Youth Housing Service. ■ Multi-agency protocol remains in place prioritising care leavers. ■ District Councils continued to offer top priority to care leavers for the housing register and in cases where young people might have become high risk of homelessness. ■ Weekly 'Keep in Touch' meetings between the Youth Housing Service, Corporate Parenting Manager, commissioning teams and Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service started during pandemic as a means of picking up operational issues have continued, maintaining oversight of capacity and resources. ■ As part of the drive to protect young people and help sustain accommodation during the pandemic, LCC utilised the

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				<p>services of the BOSS (Behaviour Outreach Support Service) to support young people who were experienced difficulties and isolation. The BOSS service supported staff, young people and each accommodation unit to sustain young people in their tenancies and ensure that there was no need to move any young people during the pandemic due to placement breakdown or disruption.</p>
7.	Undertake targeted marketing and recruitment campaigns to support the growth of the in-house Foster Care market to meet the needs of priority groups including Foster-to-Adopt			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Fostering Service has a dedicated recruitment team and takes a whole-team approach for the responsibility of recruitment. ■ The service recruits in accordance with a 3-year recruitment strategy and an annual operations plan using the full range of media. ■ A 3-year permanence plan was launched in 2018 with an annual operations plan. ■ Initial enquiries remain consistent, improved operations in recruitment will increase the foster carer population in Lincolnshire. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The age profile of experienced foster carers continues to be a cause for concern with many within 5 years of retirement. This has resulted in higher levels of de-registrations and resultant loss of expertise. ■ The conversion rate to approvals over the last 3 years has been between 6-7%, around 4% less than the national average for Local Authority providers. ■ Difficulty in recruiting foster carers for specific groups of children including placements for children requiring permanent fostering and parent and child. ■ There continues to be a significant increased presence of Independent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Continued focussed presence on all media with emphasis on targeted recruitment to support the current CiC population and retention. ■ Marketing will consider and use unique selling features, effectively taking a commercial view and actively competing in a crowded pool of providers. ■ Marketing will showcase itself as the local fostering provider of Lincolnshire, bringing the community of Lincolnshire to the heart of its campaigns, actions and adverts whilst advocating and modelling community reasonability and a shared 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Recruitment via virtual open evenings and initial visits replaced face-to-face contact for most of the period. The number of people accessing the virtual events has increased 400%. ■ Covid-19 impacted last year on placement availability; there are currently 7 beds off-line due to continued concern over infection. This is a reduction from last year, balanced by 55 carers returning to fostering. ■ During the pandemic, checks during Stage One have been delayed due to other services capacity and restrictions,

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ KPIs throughout the recruitment process have shown an increase in performance since July 21 which will transfer to a higher conversion rate from initial enquiries to approved households. ■ Retention payment system introduced in 2019 has continued into 2021 and has been well received by foster carers. ■ The Fostering Service have started to improve on-line presence and processes, establishing a digital following. ■ All fostering recruitment processes are now fully active on-line, offering digital engagement and interactions between service and applicants. 	<p>Fostering Agencies within the Lincoln boundaries.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The CiC population has risen over the last year by 2%, though this is a reduction from 10% rise in 2020. 	<p>commitment to Lincolnshire children and Lincolnshire foster carers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Fostering Service will provide a virtual and face-to-face offer, learning from the success and increased participation from applicants using digital means. ■ An on-line recruitment process will create a platform for Smarter Working practices. Alongside regular personal contact and earlier allocation to Supervising Social Workers an ideal combination has been introduced. ■ Conversion rate will increase to 9% for 2021-22 and to 11% for 2022-23. Current initial enquiry rate would convert to 31 households a year. 	<p>slowing down the process of approval.</p>
8.	Improve support to in-house foster carers to increase retention rates and commence a rolling programme of learning from exit interviews			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Retention plan is in place and retention payments have commenced. There have also been additional payments made to foster carers during the current pandemic. ■ Foster carers retention payments are currently in line with the national average expected. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The number of foster carers leaving the service continues to be of challenge, but we know that most foster carers leave the service due to life changes rather than dissatisfaction. ■ Communication between children's Social Workers and foster carers is not consistently good and is cited as a factor that contributes to placement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Continue to embed the Caring2Learn structure and principles into everyday practice and interactions. ■ Work to build better working relationships with other agencies and teams. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Enhanced support to foster carers via virtual contact and placement support worker engagement inc Caring2Learn supports, social media, on-line group supervision and on-line training events. ■ Fostering and Caring2Learn has developed a hugely supportive on-line community, which

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Exit interviews are in place to better understand why foster carers choose to stop fostering. Feedback from exit interviews is fed back to the fostering teams. ■ Foster carer surveys are in place. The latest survey suggests the strongest part of the support offer to foster carers is general support from their Supervising Social Worker and the child's Social Worker, the support they receive from other foster carers and Caring2Learn workshops and training. ■ Fostering and Caring2Learn offer support through the Hub, offering support through virtual support groups, learning and a dedicated Facebook page. Recent introduction of a foster carer magazine has been well received by foster carers and staff. ■ The Fostering Service and Caring2Learn have effectively engaged a large number of foster carers who have derived confidence and skills from the training and support offered. ■ All Placement Support Workers are trained in theraplay and are able to provide therapeutic 	<p>disruptions. A joint working approach with the Fostering Service and the Children's Teams including joint visits and meetings is a continued way of addressing this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A recent survey reports the part of the support offer in most need of improvement is support from their Supervising Social Worker and the child's Social Worker during challenging times, joint working with other agencies, the LSCP training system, efficiency of foster carers expenses and availability of respite placements. ■ Availability of clinical supervision remains a barrier to Placement Support Workers being able to fully use their training to deliver theraplay sessions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consider the implementation of a higher tier of support during challenging times. ■ The Fostering Service will bring training within service and offer a more personal service for training and workshops. ■ A recruitment campaign through foster friendly employers to recruit more foster carers. ■ Develop a system and build upon the current hub model with key learning from the Mockingbird Project. All services will be included, and information will be shared to provide a cross-service understanding and support for carers. ■ The Fostering Service to be proactive in offering interviews with foster carers prior to leaving the service. ■ Foster carers will be invited to participate in feedback forums to help shape support for the wider community. Information collected will use 'You Said We Did' to ensure the community can see how feedback is used and their voice is valued. 	<p>often provide the first contact with carers experiencing placement difficulties. This is very active and considered a key strength and form of communication and support for carers across Lincolnshire.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 4 additional payments made in recognition of the impact of Covid-19 on foster families. ■ Strong placement support has resulted in good long term placement stability.

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	support to foster carers, which is well received.			
9.	Undertake targeted work to support the recruitment and retention, and the ongoing development, of in-house Residential Children's Workers leading to the creation of a flexible support service that can meet the needs of all CiC including those with the most complex needs			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A rolling programme of recruitment been established and has proved to be successful at The Beacon Children's Home with staff recruited to vacant posts. ■ A new homes manager for Haven Cottage has been appointed. ■ Home managers are mindful of the need to provide relief staff opportunities to those who may not be successful in securing permanent full-time posts. ■ Established training programme for all residential staff will increase skills and knowledge of workers to deal with more complex children who need service provision. This includes training provided by CAMHS which all staff within residential estates are expected to attend to promote greater understanding of the needs of children who have experienced trauma and how this can be best met. Training programme developed to ensure all staff members are trained to a minimum standard, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Recruiting staff in some geographical areas continues to prove to be challenging at times. ■ Ability to recruit high calibre Home Managers continues to be a challenge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Look to continuously increase the numbers of relief staff to ensure that there is a workforce which is sufficiently flexible to meet service needs. We continue to work hard to increase staffing so that we have sufficient relief staff and that we are able to do so consistently across the authority. ■ A targeted recruitment campaign for a Home Manager for Albion Street Children's Home is underway. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Recruitment of staff continued within the homes and this has included face-to-face interviews which also require the engagement of the children and young people. ■ There have been some challenges in continuing with the training programme during Covid-19, particularly the TCI Training, with the trainer making the decision not to offer this during the first lockdown. It is now being offered at reduced levels where the need to deliver face-to-face training is required and virtual training is also being offered. ■ A review on succession planning and training for homes managers and assistant managers will be completed to develop current staff showing potential and an interest in progression.

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	<p>including social pedagogy training, Signs of Safety and restorative practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Recruitment process amended to seek to add suitable but unsuccessful interviewees to relief teams. ■ Work commissioned through the restorative practice team to support all homes staff to improve relationship building has been completed. 			
10.	Monitor the level of care leavers in suitable accommodation as part of contract management of Leaving Care Service			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Number of care leavers in suitable accommodation is average 95% of all care leavers aged 17-21 years (period April to end September 2020) and exceeds contract KPIs. ■ Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service (LLCS) offer proactive support to care leavers through tenancy preparation, liaison with housing providers etc. ■ Supported Lodgings Providers are well supported by LLCS and are able to offer up to 26 placements (as of mid-November 2020). ■ Negligible use of B&B accommodation which, if used, is a short-term solution whilst 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Despite low numbers in unsuitable accommodation, some care leavers are living at unconfirmed addresses. Reporting from LLCS shows level of work undertaken to maintain contact. ■ Differing approach to care leavers requiring accommodation across District Councils continues to a lesser extent. ■ Care leavers living out of county are disadvantaged due to not always being able to access Council Tax exemptions due to local agreements. ■ Care leavers have found it difficult to access move-on accommodation through 2020 due to low supply of suitable move-on accommodation and restrictions relating to Covid-19. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Work is continuing around development of Supported Lodgings provision, which may be able to link in with regional project to enhance Supported Lodgings access for UASC and former-UASC care leavers. ■ With c.37% of Lincolnshire care leavers living out of county (down from 42% in 2019), it is important to develop strong reciprocal links with other Local Authorities to promote access to an equal care leaver local offer including Council Tax exemptions and housing support. Corporate Parenting Manager (CPM) is working with regional colleagues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Suitable accommodation has remained high for care leavers through 2020 – partners have worked closely together to develop strategies and map available provision to maximise access to provision. ■ INSA placements for care leavers have increased slightly as a response to demand/capacity in other supported accommodation but these have largely been short term with a clear exit strategy. ■ Extensions of stay and rent gap payments have ensured young people have remained in suitable accommodation.

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	<p>housing is made ready or in response to particular need.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ District Councils agreed Council Tax exemptions from April 2019 with a cross-county approach agreed to meeting the needs of care leavers requiring accommodation through development of multi-agency Protocol. ■ New contract for Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service (LLCS), awarded to Barnardo's, started 1st April 2020. ■ Allocation of young people to LLCS at 16 under the new contract supports access to effective accommodation options. ■ Integrated Supported Accommodation (Youth Housing) service started 1st January 2021 – service is delivered by Nacro and is known as NEST. The service has a range of move-on accommodation to support young people longer term as they exit the Youth Housing service, as well as design of the support model focusing on need and cumulative risk to better support complex young people including care leavers. 	<p>This has resulted in an increase in rent gap payments and extensions of stay agreements,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Barnardo's presented the Gap Home project to District partners in December 2020 and is working with the CPM and District Councils to identify available land for use. 	

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11.	Monitor the level of care leavers in education, employment and training as part of contract management of Leaving Care Service, and report on numbers involved in CLAS			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Care leavers accessing education, employment or training (EET) was 62% for the full cohort of all care leavers aged 17-21 years (period April to end September 2020) and is slightly under contract KPI target of 65%. ■ Positive feedback from care leaver engagement over EET aspirations/opportunities which will inform development of EET pathways and proactive vacancy matching for care leavers by Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service (LLCS). ■ Care Leaver Apprenticeship Scheme (CLAS) enrolment remains positive despite Covid-19 changes, with good outcomes for care leavers. ■ Positive engagement with a number of employers regarding the development of apprenticeship and work experience opportunities for care leavers. ■ Controlling Migration Fund (CMF) project to work with former-UASC care leavers to develop access to EET and support young people's 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Inconsistent careers guidance for CiC and care leavers through schools and education provision. ■ ePEP quality is variable at 16-17 year-old transition point and not always recorded clearly on Mosaic. ■ EET has been a challenging KPI since April 2019 due to changes to education/training access and high numbers of losses in hospitality and entry-level jobs due to Covid-19. ■ Work prep courses have been delayed or held virtually due to Covid-19 restrictions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Barriers to EET identified following Care Leaver engagement need to inform wider strategy to develop range of opportunities for care leavers in EET that expand offer beyond administrative positions – recent EET survey identified desire for more vocational opportunities. ■ Continue to develop "step-up" courses with education providers to improve apprenticeship readiness. ■ Focus on development of IT skills as much as Maths and English qualifications. ■ Issues remain around access to apprenticeships as they now require minimum Maths and English before entry. Corporate Parenting Manager (CPM) continues to work with a range of partners to identify alternatives inc LCC guaranteed interviews and work experience options. ■ CPM is continuing to encourage employers to become '<i>Care Leaver Friendly</i>' and offer guaranteed interviews to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ EET has been a challenge for many young people as a result of the impact on successive lockdowns on the gig and hospitality sectors, reduced suitable job vacancies and changes to access for education provision. ■ LLCS has undertaken EET mapping work to look at impact on care leavers to enable effective support. ■ LLCS launched a Care Leaver Mentoring Scheme early in 2020; 5 young people are accessing this with Serco which has continued through lockdown. ■ Laptops have been distributed to care leavers and other vulnerable young people to facilitate access to on-line education and training.

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	<p>engagement led by Virtual School successfully completed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ LLCS contract awarded to Barnardo's started 1st April 2020 with allocation of young people at 16 to build relationships earlier. 		Lincolnshire care leavers if they meet application benchmark.	
12.	Ensure occupancy levels within in-house residential homes are maintained at a high level to reduce unit costs through ongoing staff development, robust planning processes and engagement with SEND review of maintained provision for CWD unit			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The monthly placement management meeting (PMM) continues to be a vehicle for reviewing which children can move to in-house residential provision and thus save on costs. ■ We now have the two internal supported accommodation units which provide for the needs of older children who are looked after to assist them in developing independence skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ High numbers of children and young people in independent Sector Residential Children's Homes despite operating close to capacity in the in-house provision. ■ Current in-house provision does not provide for the needs of some of our most complex and vulnerable children resulting in them being placed in smaller homes (i.e. 3-bedded) out of county. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Continue to monitor occupancy levels across the county's homes. ■ Development of own provision for smaller therapeutic residential children's homes is on-going and is part of the transformation program. ■ We have reviewed occupancy levels in supported accommodation homes alongside the profile of our CiC and we will not seek to increase the supported accommodation provision within the authority at this time, given that the current provision along with the new Youth Housing contract is sufficient to meet need. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Occupancy levels continue to be high. Covid-19 has not adversely impacted on this. ■ There has been greater pressure on the staffing team to meet the needs of the children and young people with them spending more time at home when schools have not been accessible for them.
13.	Evaluate the scope for expanding the Lincolnshire Secure Unit to offer more welfare bed provision as part of any tendering submission to the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) whether for inclusion as part of the contract or re-sale to other Local Authorities			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Mutual Ventures were commissioned to assist with the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The DfE have now started the grant application process and applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Awaiting decision from the DfE as to whether or not they will be 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Demand has outstripped supply for secure

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	<p>creation of a Business Case for a new-build unit and to consider the usage of beds in the future in terms of the welfare-justice split in order to make recommendations as to way forward.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Negotiations with the MoJ regarding the new contract have been successfully concluded with Lincolnshire being awarded a five-year contract with 20% uplift in price. ■ New contract to MoJ for provision of Secure Children's Home service now in place and delivery is ongoing. 	<p>have been submitted for both an 18-bedded and 24-bedded SCH with a 4-bedded step-down home attached.</p>	<p>providing additional funding to increase the number of welfare beds and offering additional funding for this.</p>	<p>accommodation, including welfare beds during Covid-19, though this is reflective of a wider issue unrelated to the current pandemic. MoJ beds have been temporarily allocated to welfare beds dependant on capacity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ LSU introduced Teams calls to ensure young people could maintain contact, providing extra support to families if and when visits have needed to be restricted, Court appearances similarly facilitated via video link. ■ Young people have access to education packs which they can complete during any period of isolation, along with support from education staff and healthcare has continued including the use of an on-line therapy platform and phone assessments.
14.	Explore opportunities to implement the Staying Close initiative to support CiC leaving care from Residential Children's homes to stay close and access support			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Children's Homes staff members are committed to assisting young people to move to independent accommodation. ■ Staff members within the homes have developed on-going 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identifying accessible and affordable properties appropriate to meet the needs of young people who are ready to move to independent living. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensure staff have the right skills to uphold the principles of Staying Close to support young people to move into independent living. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ This is now sitting under the Transformation work which is being undertaken. ■ Staff continue to support young people who move on from their homes, and this has

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	support for children and young people who leave the homes. This is based on need but includes providing outreach support for young people.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following a move on from residential care, staff members continue to offer a level of support which includes visiting and phone contact. The in-house supported accommodation also provides another means of young people retaining high levels of support. Staying Close is not being pursued at this stage given the strategies in place for young people who continue to receive support and priority has been given to establishing two residential homes for children. 	continued throughout the pandemic.
15.	Utilise the feedback from the participation in the Oxford University research project of recruitment and retention of foster carers together with feedback from foster carers surveys and exit interviews to inform future updates of the foster carer recruitment strategy THIS ACTION IS NOW CLOSED WITH ACTIONS BEING FED INTO ACTIONS 7 & 8			
16.	Continue to enhance the skills of Kinship Carers through specific training for connected persons carers and development of Information packs for family and friends THIS ACTION IS NOW CLOSED WITH RELEVANT ACTIONS IN PLACE			
17.	Review the Leaving Care Service in light of impending legislation linked to 'Keep On Caring' policy and implement necessary processes and procedures to meet legislative requirements including Local Offer for care leavers THIS ACTION IS NOW CLOSED WITH RELEVANT PROCESSES IN PLACE FOR MONITORING PURPOSES			
18.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full information on the Core Offer to care leavers is on the main council web site. Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service (LLCS) and partners are aware of the Core Offer and know how to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring that the Core Offer remains up to date and relevant, especially for those care leavers (e.g. UASC) living outside of Lincolnshire. There is a general shortage of affordable, accessible private rented accommodation across Lincolnshire. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Core Offer development needs to be continually revisited and refreshed. Continue to work with Partners to maintain and improve Core Offer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Former-UASC care leavers living out of county have, where required, maintained tenancies with their existing supported accommodation provider rather than moving in-county during the pandemic.

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	<p>use the system to update the offer so it is always current.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Supported Lodgings Providers are well supported through LLCS and are able to offer up to 26 placements as of mid-November 2020. ■ LCC has agreed a process to help meet funding gap between Housing Benefit/earnings and private rent for care leavers less than 21 years of age. ■ All District Councils have agreed Lincolnshire care leavers have a local connection to apply for housing across the county, recognising them as a priority group. ■ Clear plan of action and commitment from partners to meeting the accommodation needs of CiC and care leavers with a multi-agency Protocol now in place and all seven District Councils signed up. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Move-on accommodation options can be difficult for young people to find/access. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Work to secure free leisure access for care leavers has been started with South Kesteven District Council and it is hoped this will encourage other District Councils to do the same. 	<p>LCC covered the rent gap to enable this to happen.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ District Councils continued to offer top priority to care leavers for the housing register and in cases where young people might have become high risk of homelessness. ■ The NEST (Nacro) accommodation offer is proving incredibly effective in accommodating young people with complex needs and those who struggle with keeping themselves safe and are ordinarily unable to share with other young people.
19.	Recommission low level Supported Accommodation services in line with needs analysis to meet the needs of CiC, care leavers and 16-17 year olds at risk of homelessness including ensuring close to education, employment and training opportunities			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Integrated Supported Accommodation (Youth Housing) service started 1st January 2021 – service is delivered by Nacro and is known as NEST. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Whilst voids are well managed to reduce impact on the budget, some capacity is required to be able to respond to referrals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Continue to engage in dialogue with Adult Services on Protocol around transitioning young people from Children's Services to Adult Services supported accommodation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Nacro noted the increased number of complex young people being referred to NEST and it was agreed with LCC to increase number of intense-support solo placements from

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Alongside those 16-and-17-year-olds that present as homeless to the District Council, the service supports and accommodate CiC and care leavers (up to the age of 21) in more planned moves and as a transition into adulthood. Young people are able to transition to Nacro Step Forward properties which sit outside the contract. ■ As a proportion of the cohort accommodated in the current Youth Housing Service, Children in Care and care leavers tend to make up about half that are in residence at any one time. ■ All placements with 3 months or less until their 18th birthday are flagged to locality leads to ensure better transition out of supported accommodation into (semi) independent living or other provision. ■ Av. 92.5% (Q1-Q3) of move-ons recorded as positive. ■ District Councils have signed up to the multi-agency Protocol for transitioning young people from Children's Services into Adult Services and/or independent living. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Complexity of referrals has moved away from general or complex designation and instead focuses on need and cumulative risk. 	<p>3 to 4; reviewed accommodation portfolio and removed 2 beds that have never been utilised to fund additional solo placement. Some additional funds from LCC supported refurbishment of the property, which has resulted in further INSA savings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Young people are well supported around Covid-19 safety and are able to access testing, self-isolation support etc. Cases have remained fairly low amongst both staff and service users.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strong, cohesive joint working arrangements in place between the Supplier and LCC, so that more young people with more complex needs have been supported within the Youth Housing contract. The intense-support solo placements have positive impacting on reducing the INSA spend and have supported come very complex young people (placement breakdowns due to challenging behaviours, transfer from Secure etc). ■ Nacro have received funding from DfE/MHCLG for 2021/22 to support care leavers who are homeless and/or rough sleeping to access suitable accommodation. ■ Case studies, qualitative evidence, compliments, '<i>You Said We Did</i>' etc all highlight that professionals and service users value the service. ■ The Adult Care and Community Wellbeing's tender for Housing Related Support eligibility criteria has been revised to ensure more people can access. 			
<p>Develop a Protocol for Youth Housing, in partnership with Adult Services and District Councils, to support the transition of care leavers and young people into independent living</p>				

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20.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All District Councils have agreed Lincolnshire care leavers have a local connection to apply for housing across the county, recognising them as a priority group. ■ Clear plan of action and commitment from partners to meeting the accommodation needs of CiC and care leavers with a multi-agency Protocol now in place and all seven District Councils signed up. ■ All partners are aware of their statutory obligations to care leavers and have agreed to adopt and abide by the seven Corporate Parenting principles in their interaction with care leavers. ■ Adult Services are working with their suppliers of Housing Related Support to adapt processes to meet the needs of care leavers and young people in transition. ■ All seven District Council have committed to offering Council Tax relief for care leavers. ■ A Protocol has been developed with DWP to support care leavers to request housing element of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There is a general shortage of affordable, accessible one bedroom accommodation across Lincolnshire that makes the transition to independent living more difficult. ■ There is a shortage of move-on accommodation for residents in Adults Housing Related Support that makes the transition of young people and care leavers into such supported accommodation more problematic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Monitor the success of the Protocol to facilitate the smooth and successful transition of care leavers and young people into Adult Services and independent living. ■ Continue to develop more Supported Lodgings opportunities through the Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service (LLCS) to expand the range of accommodation options. ■ Barnardo's presented the Gap Home project to District partners in December 2020 and is working with the Corporate Parenting Manager and District Councils to identify available land for use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Within the new Youth Housing Service every commissioned bed space has an associated 'move on bed space' linked with it. This has supported the smooth transition of young people between accommodation and opening up capacity within the service to ensure no young person is without suitable housing ■ The development of a cumulative risk assessment tool has enabled more complex young people to be accommodated in the youth housing service. The tool enables managers to oversee risk across the whole service and management placements to safeguard young people, manage complex needs and ensure young people maintain housing. ■ Supported Lodging providers have offered arms' length continual support to young people who do not wish to shield with their providers. Relationships, support and IAG were maintained with a number of young people who chose to move out of Supported

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	<p>Universal Credit is paid direct to landlords.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Nacro offer has step forward accommodation associated with every NEST bed space meaning that there is a plethora of step forward options associated with NEST for young people to use as they turn 18. ■ A new homeless preventions service for care leavers means there is a bespoke service available if they get into difficult. A transition panel has been set up between District Council's and LCC and LLCS to focus on the transition for care leavers. 			<p>Lodgings during the pandemic and live with other people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ District Councils continued to offer top priority to care leavers for the housing register and in cases where young people might have become high risk of homelessness. ■ Weekly 'Keep in Touch' meetings between the Youth Housing Service, Corporate Parenting Manager, commissioning teams and LLCS have maintained a close oversight of capacity and resources thus preventing homelessness and ensuring stability of housing.
21.	Create an Open Select List for UASC requiring Supported Accommodation that meets the needs of the cohort and delivers VfM THIS ACTION IS NOW CLOSED SUBSEQUENT TO THE COMPLETION OF THE TENDER PROCESS			
22.	Re-open the Open Select List for Fostering, Residential Children's Homes, Independent Non-Maintained (Special) Schools and Intense Needs Supported Accommodation increasing the number of providers on the List			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Open Select List (OSL) has been in place since the 1st September 2017 and is used in the first instance for all placement searches. ■ 99 suppliers (covering a substantially greater number of establishments/ placement) were accepted on to the original OSL for independent Residential Children's Homes, Independent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ When a placement cannot be found from the OSL, an additional search is required to the wider market. ■ Some of the Independent Non-Maintained (Special) Schools suppliers remain reluctant to join the OSL as they prefer to operate under the National Association of Special Schools contract instead. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Review of the OSL is currently underway to determine commissioning options and any relevant process changes to be recommended to DLT, taking procurement legislation into account. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Referrals have continued to be sent out in accordance with the OSL process throughout 2021. ■ The final OSL re-opening resulted in less applications than in previous re-openings: 2 additional unregulated suppliers (Intense Needs Supported Accommodation) and 3 regulated suppliers (independent Residential

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	<p>Fostering Agencies, Independent Non-Maintained (Special) Schools and Intense Needs Supported Accommodation (INSA) placements. Subsequent re-openings of the OSL added a further 39 suppliers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Placement activity is on a sound legal and contractual footing. No challenges received to the operation of the OSL in any on the annual re-openings. ■ Amendments made to the OSL T&Cs as required inc Independent Fostering Agencies obliged to offer a '<i>Staying Put</i>' option where desired & fee increase request process for Independent Non-Maintained (Special) Schools. ■ All OSL T&Cs updated in line with the implementation of General Data Protection Regulation. ■ Re-opening of the OSL for the final time in the current 5-year cycle concluded in October 2021. ■ SEND OSL for Alternative Provision, Domiciliary Care and CWD Short Breaks was procured over summer 2021 and started 1st September 2021 with 15 suppliers across the 3 new strands. The SEND OSL arrangements will continue till 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Placement numbers have increased significantly since the start of the OSL in 2017 and are for more complex young people. 		<p>Children's Homes, Independent Fostering Agencies, Independent Non-Maintained (Special) Schools) onto the OSL.</p>

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	2026, re-opening annually for new suppliers to apply to join.			
23.	Manage the marketplace to enhance the quality and quantity of supported accommodation and move-on options in Lincolnshire in conjunction with partners			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The new Supported Accommodation (Youth Housing) contract, which started on 1st January 2021, offers greater flexibility to support a range of needs including very complex young people who can access the intensive-support solo placements which in turn has reduced the need for high-cost INSA placements. ■ The Open Select List (OSL) was re-opened in autumn 2019 for new entrants, with 16 new providers joining the OSL. The OSL re-opened for the final time in the current 5-year cycle in September 2021, with contract award by mid-October 2021. ■ Closed Ordered List (COL) offering supported accommodation for 16-17 year old Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) started in October 2018 until September 2022. The COL arrangements are currently under review to determine next steps from October 2022. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There continues to be a general shortage of affordable, accessible one bedroom accommodation across Lincolnshire that makes the transition to independent living more difficult. ■ Move-on accommodation options can be difficult for young people to find/access. ■ There is a shortage of move-on accommodation for residents in Adults Housing Related Support that makes the transition of young people and care leavers into such supported accommodation more problematic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Continue to monitor service provision and move-on from the Council's own in-house Supported Accommodation units in Grantham and Gainsborough. ■ Continue monthly Placement Planning Meetings (PMM) to look at existing support packages and future options for CYP placed out of county. ■ Seek to further enhance the number of Supported Lodgings in terms of volume and geography across the county. ■ Work with District Councils to identify private sector landlords amenable to offering tenancies to young people and care leavers. ■ Valuing Care toolkit included in the new independent placements referral form which is being built on Mosaic – this will link in with case files and improve referral information and will also be used for in-house referrals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Nacro noted the increased number of complex young people being referred to NEST and it was agreed with LCC to Increase number of intense-support solo placements from 3 to 4; reviewed accommodation portfolio and removed 2 beds that have never been utilised to fund additional solo placement. Some additional funds from LCC supported refurbishment of the property, which has resulted in further INSA savings. ■ Effective and proactive relationship development with independent placement suppliers has been instrumental in retaining placements for some very complex young people or extending notice periods to ensure sufficient time to source an alternative. ■ Some use of CQC-registered provision, which is contract managed in the same way as Ofsted-regulated provision,

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="235 209 680 999">■ Linked to a number of actions identified above, LCC is continuing to utilise in-house options (maximising occupancy within Residential Children’s Homes, establishing Staying Close options, maximising use of in-house foster care including for Staying Put arrangements and increasing the availability of Supported Lodgings) to ensure a sound mix of in-house and independent sector provision. The CiC transformation programme has increased oversight of the mix of placements through the monthly Placement Planning Meeting (PMM) which considers alternative placement options to improve outcomes and reduce budget pressures. <li data-bbox="235 1023 680 1342">■ The two in-house units of supported accommodation for 16-and-17-year-olds in Grantham and Gainsborough are now overseen by the Corporate Parenting Manager who has changed residency period up 9 months to provide greater stability. <li data-bbox="235 1366 680 1501">■ A Joint Panel has been created to oversee the transition of 18-year-olds from Youth Housing into Adults provision. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1243 209 1680 456">■ Increased complexities of young people requiring secure placements, parent and child assessment placements etc have caused some challenges in sourcing appropriate placements. 	<p data-bbox="1756 193 2069 360">who have accommodated some very complex young people who require more support than an INSA placement.</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staying Put options now facilitated with Independent Fostering Agencies. ■ The Adult Care and Community Wellbeing's tender for Housing Related Support eligibility criteria has been revised to ensure more people can access. 			
24.	Ensure VfM in independent sector placement provision through robust commissioning and contract management			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All suppliers on the Open Select List (OSL) are requested to provide a Cost Calculator breakdown of their charges and must submit a Fee Increase Toolkit to accompany any desired price increases. ■ A regional evaluation system is in place for all fee increase requests received from Independent Non-Maintained (Special) Schools. ■ Re-opening of the OSL for the final time in the current 5-year cycle concluded in October 2021. ■ Robust contractual terms and conditions are in place for all suppliers on the OSL. ■ Each and every placement is open to mini-competition and evaluated on three distinct criteria to deliver value for money. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Some of the Independent and Non-maintained (Special) Schools suppliers remain reluctant to join the Open Select List as they prefer to operate under the National Association of Special Schools contract instead. ■ There is a national shortage of foster care placements that makes it difficult to identify and secure suitable Independent Fostering Agency placements in and around Lincolnshire for children and young people with complex needs, as well as older/teenage young people. ■ The increasing complexity and late entry to care of many children and young people often makes it difficult to find a suitable independent sector placement in Lincolnshire or neighbouring areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Undertake regular financial analysis of cost calculators and screen fee increase requests to limit Council's exposure. ■ Seek to ensure every independent sector placement is contract managed in accordance with appropriate schedule. ■ Monthly meeting with SEND may be beneficial for Independent Non-Maintained (Special) School placements in order to review levels of support and costs. ■ Regional Placement Group (RPG) is developing a fee uplift request portal to manage the fee increase process. LAs will be able to log onto the portal to view the request and supporting information. The portal will be further developed early 2022 to manage some contract 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Commissioning Officers continue to further strengthen relationships with suppliers which developed through weekly contact during the first lockdown. Alongside the on-going review arrangements, this approach has assisted in the response and management of Covid-19 related placement breakdowns linked to escalating behaviours, with a number of young people supported to remain in placement. ■ Oversight of placement need and referral numbers is supporting the Valuing Care agenda seeks to further improve commissioning arrangements in this area.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Annual contract management meeting is scheduled for all independent sector Residential Children's Homes and Fostering Agencies. ■ Unregulated INSA suppliers have bi-annual contract management meetings. ■ Ceiling prices built into ITT for Closed Ordered List for UASC. ■ The CiC transformation programme has increased oversight of the mix of placements through the monthly Placement Planning Meeting (PMM) which considers alternative placement options to improve outcomes and reduce budget pressures. ■ Involvement in the Valuing Care project has the opportunity to identify cost savings through holistic view of the needs of the child and cost of placement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Annual increase in National Minimum wage and changes to guidance regarding sleep-in costs are being reflected in substantial and regular fee increase requests across the sector. 	<p>assurance information (insurances, safeguarding, inspection reports etc) and allow LAs to share any concerns.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Review of the OSL is currently underway to determine commissioning options and any relevant process changes to be recommended to DLT, taking procurement legislation into account. ■ The UASC COL arrangements for unregulated support accommodation are currently under review to determine next steps from October 2022. 	
25.	<p>Undertake a review of existing CAMHS commissioning arrangements, aligned to the Future In Mind Strategy, to inform future intentions in partnership with other agencies</p> <p>THIS ACTION HAS BEEN COMPLETED AND NO SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TO THE CAMHS SPECIFICATION WERE REQUIRED FOLLOWING THE REVIEW. DUE TO THE PANDEMIC OCCURRING FROM MARCH 2020 IT WAS NOT FEASIBLE TO DEVELOP AND PUT IN PLACE AN UPDATED SPECIFICATION TO INCLUDE ANY SERVICE CHANGES/DEVELOPMENTS.</p> <p>A NEW WIDER REVIEW OF CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IS BEING PLANNED POST-PANDEMIC IN 2022, WHICH WILL FORM THE BASIS FOR A LONGER-TERM TRANSFORMATION PLAN.</p>			
	<p>Develop and monitor delivery of an Emotional Wellbeing Service providing direct intervention to school-aged Lincolnshire children and their families</p>			

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26.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Lincolnshire Here4You Support and Advice Line, jointly in partnership with CAMHS continues to receive positive feedback from stakeholders. ■ Lincolnshire Here4You Lincolnshire Here4You line is now a freephone number. ■ Joint screening of referrals in partnership with CAMHS has enabled referrals to have 'no wrong door'; referrals that come into either service are assessed to determine which service will best meet CYP and family needs. ■ Continued business as usual during Covid-19 with a more virtual offer. ■ On-line resources, videos and workshops developed in partnership with CAMHS and Mental Health Support Teams which received national and regional recognition of examples of good practice. ■ 43% of referrals were for vulnerable groups of CYP with no vulnerable groups rejected by the service in Q1 2021-22. ■ Addition of a front-page referral form to the Early Help Assessment used as a referral route into the service has 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Continued high demand for direct intervention support for CYP. ■ Referrals for behavioural concerns continue to be the second highest reason for referral. ■ Early Help Assessment as a referral route into the Service continues to be a challenge both for the Service and professionals. ■ Demand on the Lincolnshire Here4You line has increased both in the number and length of calls, which the existing phone system is not coping with leading to frustration with the line when calls are not answered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Review of the emotional wellbeing service, alongside other relevant commissioned services currently being undertaken to inform future commissioning of the service. ■ Referral pathways into the Service will be considered as part of the wider mental health review and the Early Help strategy. ■ Due to the volume of calls and inappropriate phone system, a new system with a queue system must be a priority for the Lincolnshire Here4You line. LPFT are working with ULHT to resolve this issue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ More virtual delivery of 1:1 and group interventions have been provided through NHS Digital and NHS England approved web-based platforms such as Q Health and WebEx. This has ensured continuity of provision during Covid-19 and more support for more CYP and more choice for CYP who do not want to engage in the conventional face-to-face support. ■ Reduced wait times for CYP from referral to treatment. ■ On-line resources, workshops and videos developed during Covid-19 mean that there are even more resources available to support CYP and families during Covid-19 pandemic. ■ During April 2020 to March 2021 referrals to the Service reduced by 17% compared to the previous year. However in March 2021 referrals were almost 87% of the referrals received in January and February and had increased by 27% compared to March 2020. ■ Service is following a 'Retain–Revise–Revert' approach to development post-Covid using learning from the pandemic to

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	<p>improved the speed of access as the information aligns to clinical systems and therefore it is easier to identify CYP being referred.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Average wait time from referral to treatment is meeting the benchmark of 6 weeks. ■ Referrals rejected by the Service continue to be low. ■ Case consultation model piloted with a number of schools in Boston/South Holland and learning from the pilot has been used to develop a similar model in other CS quadrants. ■ Contract management ongoing and service rated Good in terms of performance. 			<p>inform what changes that have taken place need to be kept, which need further development and which would be better returning to pre-Covid delivery.</p>
27.	Work in partnership with colleagues in Safer Communities and Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to ensure commissioned services for Domestic Abuse (DA) support meet the needs of children and young people			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ New Domestic Abuse Support Service commenced in August 2018 and includes outreach support for adults, and group and specialist therapeutic sessions for children and young people. ■ Safer Communities and Children's Services have worked with the PCC to address identified gaps in provision relating to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensuring that the Domestic Abuse Support Service is able to continue to respond to the demand for services, specifically the delivery of the therapeutic sessions for children and young people. ■ Developing sustainable perpetrator support services post-March 2023 that builds on the learning from the initial pilot project and lottery funded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ongoing robust contract management of the domestic abuse contract to ensure an appropriate service is being delivered and it can meet demand bot for adults and children. ■ Safer Communities and Children's Services to continue to work with the PCC to ensure that existing and future services are 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Covid-19 has meant that all DA Services have had to move to remote working, meaning that 80% of all victims and children have been receiving support through telephone and video conferencing during the first 10 months of 2020/21. However, during recovery this has moved to a more 60/40 mix with at least 60% of clients being 	

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	<p>perpetrator support services utilising the £1.4m grant awarded by the Home Office to Lincolnshire and Sussex Police. Further funding secured from the Big Lottery to continue the perpetrator programme until 2023.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Safer Communities and Children's Services have worked with the PCC to ensure that future commissioning objectives do not overlap and that there is no duplication of work. ■ The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 has strengthened the partnership response to DA and a DA strategy has been developed which will be published on 5th January 2022. 	<p>extended programme. In addition to integrate this programme into a sustainable Lincolnshire model that can be delivered by local service providers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensuring in line with the DA Act statutory duties that we provide appropriate support for adults and children in safe accommodation. 	<p>protecting and supporting victims of domestic abuse.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ongoing communication to Children's Services staff to inform of and promote the availability of the service as well as promoting collaborative working across this agenda. ■ Ensure that the £1.4 million grant awarded to LCC is used to develop and enhance the offer in relation to safe accommodation for adults and children. 	<p>seen face-to-face. This has also impacted on the perpetrator programme and similarly the programme has been offered on a virtual basis when required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ DA Communications Strategy developed to include Covid-19 focused campaigns targeted at the public, victims, employers and professionals including Children's Services. ■ Covid-19 has impacted on referral levels to all DA services, resulting in an increase from March 2020. Therefore, funding opportunities have been sought throughout this period and new pathways and service delivery options have been developed to support this increase. ■ Extra training, briefings and updates have been developed and provided to all agencies regarding DA and the operating model adopted through Covid-19. ■ All multi-agency DA training has been

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				converted to virtual programmes.
28.	Support CWD who are CiC through effective re-commissioning of Domiciliary Care and Short Breaks services			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ongoing positive relationships with provider. Good feedback from service users and parent/carers. ■ Provider awarded 'Good' rating from Ofsted for domiciliary care provision. ■ New Open Select List process for Domiciliary Care and Short Breaks now live. ■ Provision now offering face-to-face and virtual delivery of Targeted Positive Activities, and Early Support & Learning Provision. ■ Caravans at Butlins and short breaks at the Thomas Centre now fully reopen. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Full number of hours committed to domiciliary care not being met. ■ Staff recruitment to the domiciliary care service is problematic. A number of domiciliary care packages remain unfulfilled as a result. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Continue to support provider to enhance recruitment of domiciliary care support workers. ■ Develop relationships with providers on the 'Open Select List' frameworks to offer additional capacity in key areas of domiciliary care and (overnight) short breaks provision. ■ Undertake full review to inform decision on future of commissioned CWD services at end of extended contract (March 2023). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Domiciliary care packages tailored to meet needs of service users e.g. suspending during lockdown etc. ■ Staff working across all three areas of service delivery to maintain capacity in domiciliary care staffing. ■ Targeted Positive Activities moved to largely a virtual offer, including telephone support. ■ Some targeted provision delivered in community venues in summer and half-terms. This included some 1-2-1 provision to offer respite to families. ■ Early Learning provision moved to a virtual offer, including telephone support. Videos of sessions have been shared with families for future use. ■ Waiting lists eradicated due to virtual offer.
29.	Undertake a review of Adoption Support services and recommission in line with the recommendations of the review			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ After Adoption, the service provider of both Safe Base and Birth Counselling went into 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There remains uncertainty around the adoption regionalisation agenda and impact on future commissioning decisions for support services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Formalise extension to PAC-UK for the Birth Counselling contract. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Birth Counselling visits undertaken virtually; there were no face-to-face appointments for a while.

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	<p>Administration on 31st March 2019.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Regional Adoption Agency (RAA), Family Adoption Links, was launched in October 2020. ■ PAC-UK (Family Action) were contracted via novation agreement to provide the statutory Birth Counselling contract to 31st March 2020. ■ The Safe Base programme was put on hold, and in-house services were delivered. ■ Agreement was reached with PAC-UK to extend their contract to 31st March 2021 to allow time for the review of Adoption Support Services, including updates on the Adoption Support Fund and Regionalisation Agenda with a further extension agreed to 31st March 2022 to allow time to continue to explore options around RAA. ■ Ability to utilise Adoption Support Fund to support delivery of therapeutic parenting programmes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No guaranteed Adoption Support Fund will be available beyond 2021. ■ Uncertainty around the delivery of a 'Safe Base' (or equivalent) programme. ■ Uncertainty around local or regional arrangements. ■ RAA not yet in a position to make a joined-up decision regarding services. ■ Unlike Lincolnshire, the other authorities that make up Family Adoption Links provide their birth counselling services in-house. ■ Under current Contract and Procurement Procedure rules there is no facility to extend the contract further. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Continue to contract manage, monitor and evaluate outcomes. ■ Full review of parenting programme ongoing and will consider the feasibility of incorporating adoption support services into the programmes. ■ Continual review of Adoption Support Services, to include findings from a review undertaken by the Adoption Support team; further updates regarding the Adoption Support Fund and the latest position on the RAA. ■ Proposals on the future commissioning of Adoption Support were submitted to DLT in January 2020 for approval with a view to commissioning as appropriate from 1st October 2020 (this was delayed). ■ Adoption Support services to be determined as part of wider RAA. ■ Working alongside other partners in Family Adoption Links to determine what services are and could be available regionally and how these can be commissioned to enable economies of scale and quality assurance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Birth parents found to be more engaged/ responsive on-line. Going forward it will be up to the service user if they prefer a mixed service incorporating more virtual contact.

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A competitive tender process for Birth Counselling to be initiated to ensure continuation of the statutory counselling service 	
30.	Recommission the on-line counselling service for children and young people in Lincolnshire and monitor usage THIS ACTION IS NOW CLOSED SUBSEQUENT TO THE COMPLETION OF THE TENDER PROCESS			
31.	Undertake a review of the Return Interview service and recommission in line with the recommendation of the review THIS ACTION IS NOW CLOSED AS RETURN INTERVIEW SERVICE IS BEING DELIVERED IN-HOUSE			
32.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Advocacy service reviewed and decision made to extend the TVL contract to 30th June 2020. ■ Service meeting highlighted higher than expected levels of activity for Children's Services and no waiting list in operation. ■ Following a service review and presentations to Committees, it was agreed to recommission the service from July 2020. ■ As a result of the Covid-19 outbreak, procurement was suspended and a 12-month extension agreed to 30th June 2021, allowing time to recommence the procurement with a revised start date of 1st July 2021. ■ Advocacy Service procurement resumed and new contract 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Demand for the service has exceeded the predicted levels of activity. ■ Further impact of Covid-19 on the service. ■ Referrals for Children's advocacy has reduced and is a concerning trend. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Advocates to attend the countywide Children's Homes managers meetings to discuss and promote the service. ■ Further promotion, updates and raising awareness at internal LCC meetings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Continuing to provide support at a distance via phone, email and video conference when face-to-face isn't possible, or when it's the clients' preference. ■ Low levels of referrals – Tony Jones is liaising with Voiceability who are aware and are monitoring referral numbers. Some was a result of Covid-19 as downturn directly corresponded with lockdown; however this isn't the only issue and efforts have been made to advertise the service.

No.	What is working well?	What are we concerned about?	What needs to happen	Covid-19 impact/actions & recovery
	awarded on 1 st July 2021 to Voiceability.			
33.	Undertake a review of family support services to families with children on the edge of care and recommission in line with the recommendations of the review THIS ACTION IS NOW CLOSED SUBSEQUENT TO THE COMPLETION OF THE TENDER PROCESS			
34.	Embed 'Caring to Learn' to improve academic outcomes, wellbeing of and opportunities for all Lincolnshire CiC			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Following the independent evaluation of Caring2Learn by IMPOWER, DLT agreed to fully embedded Caring2Learn within Children's Services. The Caring2Learn Manager sits within the Virtual School and the Practice Supervisor is located in the Fostering Service, with a Strategic Steering Group overseeing the wider team and partnership working. ■ We have established the Triad of Success and the Cornerstones of Good Practice as recognisable concepts and approaches to promote evidence-based practice models to develop good practice for the benefit of our children. ■ We are delivering an effective joint training programme for schools, carers and children's services staff; since April 2020 we have delivered 160 workshop sessions to 3000 attendees to build the skills, knowledge and confidence to support children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Building capacity within the wider teams to continue to maximise the growing interest and engagement from education and carers in Lincolnshire ■ Maintain and grow the engagement in Caring2Learn in schools following the turbulent times during the pandemic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Continue to grow the foster carer and school-based Champions Team who are now offering wide ranging support across the county. ■ Look to widen our offer to include SGO, kinship and adoptive parents in our support network activities. ■ Continue to work together with a range of Children's Services teams to ensure the successes, developments, and innovations of Caring2Learn are embedded and built upon. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Workshops and events continue to be delivered via Zoom and MS Teams. Including celebration events such as the recent Foster Carer Awards which had 98 participants. ■ Some individual and group Caring Schools and Learning Homes Toolkit support meetings with schools and foster carers and fortnightly Early Years groups at Children's Centres are now starting to return to face-to-face meetings within Covid-19 guidelines ■ We have continued to support the community through our on-line and virtual support groups and social activities. ■ The membership of our Facebook group has continued to grow and we now have 750 members from across carers, schools and Children's Services. ■ Our WhatsApp groups including a Listening Group for 	

No.	What is working well?	What are we concerned about?	What needs to happen	Covid-19 impact/actions & recovery
	<p>and young people to achieve their full potential.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ We continue to promote the Caring2Learn Award for Caring Schools and Learning Homes and now have 54 schools and 61 fostering households accredited. ■ Over the last 12 months engagement with the Hub Support Network has almost doubled. Our social media and virtual support groups have been extremely active; we now have 750 members of our Facebook group and 100 members of our various WhatsApp groups which bring everyone together to support each other, offer advice, share good practice, information and problem solve. ■ The Education Champions role has continued to develop; we now have 22 Foster Carer Champions offering peer support to fostering households, supporting new and experienced carers and also supporting recruitment and training activities. ■ Caring2Learn is supporting schools to be able to nurture and promote wellbeing and attachment. In 2021 we have launched a bespoke training 			<p>foster and kinship carers to provide more interactive and immediate support to carers, now has 60 members. Foster Carers2Be group with members currently going through the assessment process and also an Early Years Carers group and an LGBT+ Carers group have been formed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ We have not held a Caring2Learn Award Celebration event since October 2019 due to the pandemic but we do plan to hold an event in 2022.

No.	What is working well?	What are we concerned about?	What needs to happen	Covid-19 impact/actions & recovery
	<p>package with Virtual School for Designated Teachers for Children in Care in schools which will help raise the profile of this crucial role.</p>			
35.	Enhance participation of CiC and care leavers to ensure they are fully involved in the shaping of their care/ pathway plan and wider service delivery			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Voices 4 Choices (V4C) meetings are held in the four quadrants of the county which has enhanced participation. ■ Participation at CiC reviews is very good. ■ IROs endeavour to have contact with children routinely between reviews. ■ Big Conversation events are well supported by CiC teams, care leavers, senior staff and Cllrs with notes shared with workforce to raise awareness of issues. ■ There has been some good practice and attendance for virtual V4C meetings including a programme of virtual music sessions delivered by Soundlincs. ■ A new action plan has been developed to work towards the re-introduction of some physical V4C meetings. This includes consulting with young people and professionals about their 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Participation in V4C events, although improved, still only accounts for a small number of CiC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To build up links with the children who attend the 'fun days' held by the CiC teams. ■ There needs to be stronger links developed with Barnardo's with the aim being to explore how care leavers can work with V4C. ■ Link outcomes expected from Big Conversations into overall Business Plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ V4C meetings have been held virtually since the first lockdown in March 2020, up until June 2021. Some V4C groups having had better engagement than others. It has proved more difficult to undertake participation work virtually but the ability to use remote technology has enabled continued engagement with young people. However, a number of young people have stated they prefer attending virtually to a physical meeting, so the offer of virtual meetings in the future will remain when physical meetings are able to take place again. ■ Big Conversations have not been held since March 2020 due to the pandemic, with the planned reintroduction of a face-to-face meeting in October 2021 half term. ■ There has been a successful virtual V4C Soundlincs project

No.	What is working well?	What are we concerned about?	What needs to happen	Covid-19 impact/actions & recovery
	<p>views; developing participation work for the V4C groups; planning external venues and activities; and communications and awareness-raising including direct mail to young people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical face-to-face meetings has now been reintroduced since June 2021 and planning will be taking place to develop further meetings and activities. 			<p>which has involved the delivery of remote music sessions. These have been successful with good attendance and it is planned for these to continue through. Future V4C strategy is to be that both physical and virtual meetings will be offered to young people so they have choice of how they wish to engage and meet.</p>
36.	<p>Finalise profile templates for foster carers and CiC to enhance matching process and mutual expectations</p> <p>THIS ACTION IS NOW CLOSED FOLLOWING COMPLETION OF PROFILE TEMPLATES</p>			
37.	<p>Work with regulated settings, foster carers and supported accommodation/ lodgings providers to prepare CiC for transition to adulthood through focus on skills for Adult Life and increasing levels of independence</p> <p>THIS ACTION IS NOW CLOSED – 'SKILLS FOR ADULT LIFE' BOOKLET IS COMPLETE AND IN-HOUSE SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION IS IN PLACE OR IN DEVELOPMENT</p>			
38.	<p>Explore use of social media to improve communication channels with CiC and care leavers</p> <p>THIS ACTION IS NOW CLOSED FOLLOWING UPDATE AND ONGOING MAINTENANCE OF ON-LINE INFORMATION</p>			
39.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each child is provided with a document that identifies the importance of the relationship with the Social Worker and the nature and frequency of their contact. The pledge outlines the commitment of the authority and expectations of CiC. An annual 'Tell Us' survey is completed focusing on core aspects of the pledge. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Tell Us' survey has been paused as part of a wider review of feedback mechanisms within Children's Services which is analysing the range of feedback to ensure there is not duplication and also investigating which methods of gaining feedback may be more successful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The rebranded Lincolnshire Caring Promise has been rolled out as part of the Transformation Project and has not been affected by any Covid-19 impact.

No.	What is working well?	What are we concerned about?	What needs to happen	Covid-19 impact/actions & recovery
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="235 209 680 459">■ The Care Pledge has been reviewed over 2020 via V4C groups. They have been involved in reviewing the design and content of the pledge and it's rebranding as the '<i>Lincolnshire Caring Promise</i>'. <li data-bbox="235 480 680 837">■ Communications plan has been completed be linked to the Transformation Project and there was a roll out the new Lincolnshire Caring Promise in early 2021 which included a number of staff training sessions being delivered about it via the Children's Services Quality and Standards Service. 			

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CHILDREN IN CARE SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY 2023-2027: INDICATIVE DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

In order to provide effective comparisons of impact and service developments, it is recommended that the new *Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy* will cover the 4-year period of 2023-2027.

The indicative timeline for developing the Strategy is detailed below:

Action	Date
<i>Identify focus/service areas to include in the Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-27</i>	<i>Dec-21 to Jan-22</i>
Presentation to Corporate Parenting Panel : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2018-22 Strategy Action Plan update (covering 12-months to Dec-21) • Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-27 development plan and timescales plus proposed focus/service areas 	20-Jan-22
<i>Meetings with identified Officers to develop detailed action plan content, identify key issues for Strategy, required data sets etc</i>	<i>Jan-22 to Jun-22</i>
<i>Draft initial content for 2023-2027 Strategy</i>	<i>Jan-22 to Jun-22</i>
DLT to review draft strategy and action plan	07-Jun-22
Presentation to Corporate Parenting Panel : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial draft of the new Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-27 	07-Jul-22
<i>Revisions and further development with identified Officers</i>	<i>Jul-22 to Oct-22</i>
DLT to review and sign-off Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-27	02-Nov-22
Presentation to Corporate Parenting Panel : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2018-22 Strategy Action Plan final update (covering 12-months to Dec-22) • Final version of Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-27 (inc action plan) 	Jan-23
Presentation to Corporate Parenting Panel : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023-2027 Strategy Action Plan first update (covering 12-months to Dec-23) 	Jan-24 <i>(then annually until Jan-28)</i>

Table 1: indicative timetable for development of Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027

The *Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027* will reflect the aims of both the Children in Care and High Needs Transformation Programmes, supporting review of impact of both programmes through the annual action plan report.

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

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	20 January 2022
Subject:	Lincolnshire County Council Virtual School Annual Report Academic Year 2020-2021

Summary:

This Annual Report covers the work of the Virtual School Head to support the promotion of educational outcomes for Children and Young People in Care for the academic year 1st September 2020 to 31st August 2021. It is a statutory requirement and serves to update the Corporate Parenting Panel on the Educational Progress of Children and Young People in Care aged 3-18.

Actions Required:

Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are requested to consider the attached Virtual School Annual Report 2020-2021 and endorse the recommendations for the academic year 2021-2022.

1. Background

The role of the Virtual School is to promote the educational achievement of children in care. Whether educated in Lincolnshire or placed out of the authority, the Virtual School Team works to support our children and young people to fulfil their potential and access opportunities on the same basis as their non care experienced peers. The team supports our children and young people on a case work basis, endeavouring to build strong relationships and to develop the confidence, self-esteem, and resilience of our students. There is a requirement to maintain an up-to-date roll and have robust procedures in place to monitor the attendance and educational progress children in care. Academic progress is monitored through a termly school survey. The Virtual School Head (VSH) must also inform head teachers that they have a child on roll that is looked after by the Local Authority. In addition, the Virtual School should ensure that each child has an up to date, effective and high-quality Personal Education Plan (PEP) that focuses on the improvement of educational outcomes.

The Virtual School Head has primary responsibility for ensuring that there is suitable education in place for all Lincolnshire children in care. This includes oversight of admissions, managed moves, and education moves brought about through changes of care placement. The Virtual School Team also provides advice and information to the parents and schools involved in promoting educational outcomes for Children Previously in Care.

The Virtual School and Virtual School Head have a statutory role in promoting the educational achievement of children in the Local Authority's care. Providing support and challenge that encourages high aspirations and individual achievement, with a minimum of disruption, is central to improving immediate and long-term outcomes for children in our care. In addition, the Virtual School should ensure that social workers, designated teachers and schools, carers, and Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) understand their role and responsibilities for initiating, developing, reviewing, and updating each child's PEP.

The Virtual School is also responsible for the allocation to schools of the looked after children Pupil Premium Grant (PP+) and is required to report regularly to the Corporate Parenting Panel.

This is the statutory annual report of the Virtual School Head and Virtual School for children in the care of Lincolnshire County Council. The report highlights the work of the Virtual School, the Local Authority, and partner agencies to improve outcomes for children and young people in care aged three to eighteen. The report covers progress and attainment at all key stages from Early Years to Key Stage Four. It further covers the quality of provision and engagement for post 16 and, most importantly, how the voice of the child and young person is considered to influence practice.

The purpose of this report is to outline the activity of the Virtual School Head Teacher and the Virtual School, and to report upon the 2021 educational outcomes for our children in care. It reflects on achievements and identifies areas of development to achieve the best outcomes for children in our care.

Data contained in this report, is for children who were in the care of Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) for a year or more as of 31st March 2021.

2. Conclusion

2.1 Key messages within this report are:

- The Lincolnshire Virtual School Team continues to be ambitious for all of our children in care. We understand that promoting better educational outcomes is

everyone's business and we provide: training, challenge, advice and support to schools, children's services colleagues, foster carers, parents and others so that they can better advocate for the learning of children and young people in their care.

- There remains a continued and growing emphasis on the development of "Learning Homes" where our carers become increasingly skilled to support learning and our schools are committed to creating an environment where the specific emotional and educational needs of our children and young people are understood and their potential fulfilled.
- The majority of our children and young people aged 3-18 continue to attend schools graded good or better by Ofsted.
- Pupil Premium is allocated to schools in a timely way and is linked to targets outlined in the Personal Education Plan. Personal Education Plans are reviewed three times per year or more if appropriate for all children and young people aged 3-18. Personal Education plans and support for transition continued throughout Lockdown and recovery and the Virtual School worked with schools and LCC colleagues to commission additional tuition to support Children in Care wherever possible.
- Early intervention is key to promoting outcomes and consequently all children in care or entering care aged 3-13 continue to receive support from our Specialist Teachers so that schools are better informed of strategies to improve communication and language needs if appropriate.
- The Virtual School Team continued to work effectively and in cooperation with carers, parents, schools and Children's Services colleagues to support the education of Children in Care throughout the period of Lockdown and recovery up to August 2021.
- The team works closely with our children and young people with the specific aim of developing strong and effective working relationships. The voice of our children and young people is heard. We celebrate successes and provide opportunities for them and their families to be better understood. We endeavour to stick with them when things don't go so well and put any potential setbacks into context.
- Despite the many challenges that our young people and their carers have faced over the Covid pandemic, lockdown, school closures and uncertainty around exams, our children and young people achieved in line with previous years and in line with historic national and regional comparators with many achieving outstanding results at GCSE in 2021.

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Lincolnshire County Council Virtual School Annual Report Academic Year 2020-2021

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 Kieran Barnes, Head of Virtual School, who can be contacted on 07854877844 or kieran.barnes@lincolnshire.gov.uk.

Lincolnshire County Council Virtual School



Annual Report - Academic Year 2020-2021 (Jan 2022)

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1.0 Introduction: Role of the Virtual School - What do we do?

The role of the Virtual School is to promote the educational achievement of children in care. Whether educated in Lincolnshire or placed out of the authority, the Virtual School Team works to support our children and young people to fulfil their potential and access opportunities on the same basis as their non care experienced peers. The team supports our children and young people on a case work basis, endeavouring to build strong relationships and to develop the confidence, self-esteem, and resilience of our students. There is a requirement to maintain an up-to-date roll and have robust procedures in place to monitor the attendance and educational progress children in care. Academic progress is monitored through a termly school survey. The Virtual School Head (VSH) must also inform head teachers that they have a child on roll that is looked after by the Local Authority. In addition, the Virtual School should ensure that each child has an up to date, effective and high-quality Personal Education Plan (PEP) that focuses on the improvement of educational outcomes.

The Virtual School Head has primary responsibility for ensuring that there is suitable education in place for all Lincolnshire children in care. This includes oversight of admissions, managed moves, and education moves brought about through changes of care placement. The Virtual School Team also provides advice and information to the parents and schools involved in promoting educational outcomes for Children Previously in Care.

The Virtual School and Virtual School Head have a statutory role in promoting the educational achievement of children in the Local Authority's care. Providing support and challenge that encourages high aspirations and individual achievement, with a minimum of disruption, is central to improving immediate and long-term outcomes for children in our care. In addition, the Virtual School should ensure that social workers, designated teachers and schools, carers, and Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) understand their role and responsibilities for initiating, developing, reviewing, and updating each child's PEP.

The Virtual School is also responsible for the allocation to schools of the looked after children Pupil Premium Grant (PP+) and is required to report regularly to the Corporate Parenting Panel.

2.0 What is the purpose of this report?

This is the statutory annual report of the Virtual School Head and Virtual School for children in the care of Lincolnshire County Council. The report highlights the work of the Virtual School, the Local Authority, and partner agencies to improve outcomes for children and young people in care aged three to eighteen. The report covers progress and attainment at all key stages from Early Years to Key Stage Four. It further covers the quality of provision and engagement for post 16 and, most importantly, how the voice of the child and young person is considered to influence practice.

The purpose of this report is to outline the activity of the Virtual School Head Teacher and the Virtual School, and to report upon the 2021 educational outcomes for our children in care. It reflects on achievements and identifies areas of development to achieve the best outcomes for children in our care.

Data contained in this report, is for children who were in the care of Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) for a year or more as of 31st March 2021.

Key messages within this report are:

- The Lincolnshire Virtual School Team continues to be ambitious for all of our children in care. We understand that promoting better educational outcomes is everyone's business and we provide training, challenge, advice and support to schools, Children's Services colleagues, foster carers, parents, and others, so that they can better advocate for the learning of children and young people in their care.
- There remains a continued and growing emphasis on the development of "Learning Homes", where our carers become increasingly skilled to support learning and our schools are committed to creating an environment where the specific emotional and educational needs of our children and young people are understood and their potential fulfilled.
- The majority of our children and young people aged 3-18 continue to attend schools graded good or better by Ofsted.
- Pupil Premium is allocated to schools in a timely way and is linked to targets outlined in the Personal Education Plan. Personal Education Plans are reviewed three times per year or more, if appropriate, for all children and young people aged 3-18. Personal Education plans and support for transition continued throughout lockdown and recovery, and the Virtual School worked with schools and LCC colleagues to commission additional tuition to support children in care wherever possible.
- Early intervention is key to promoting outcomes. Consequently, all children in care or entering care aged 3-13 continue to receive support from our Specialist Teachers, so that schools are better informed of strategies to improve communication and language needs if appropriate.
- The Virtual School Team continued to work effectively and in cooperation with carers, parents, schools, and Children's Services colleagues to support the education of children in care throughout the periods of lockdown and recovery up to August 2021.
- The team works closely with our children and young people with the specific aim of developing strong and effective working relationships. The voice of our children and young people is heard. We celebrate successes and provide opportunities for them and their families to be better understood. We endeavour to stick with them when things don't go so well and put any potential setbacks into context.
- Despite the many challenges that our young people and their carers have faced over the Covid pandemic, lockdown, school closures, and uncertainty around exams, our children and young people achieved in line with previous years and in line with historic

national and regional comparators, with many achieving outstanding results at GCSE in 2021.

3.0 What is our vision to improve outcomes moving forward?

The Virtual School's vision for improvement is aligned to the vision included within the Lincolnshire Looked after Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2018 (*see below*), as well as the Local Authority and partners' aspirations as set out within this strategy.

We believe you can achieve.

We want all Looked after Children and Care Leavers to feel safe, loved, be heard and to realise their potential, through nurturing, resilient parenting and support.

This strategy for Looked after Children and Care Leavers sets out Lincolnshire's ambitions. Whilst we have high expectations for all children and young people in Lincolnshire, the vision, principles, and plans in the document apply to some of the most vulnerable children and young people within our community, namely those for whom we have corporate parenting responsibilities.

Our overarching aim recognises that we want all children and young people to be cared for within their family / local community and we will support families to provide nurturing, resilient parenting, so that children and young people realise their potential within their birth family. Where children / young people do need to be looked after by Lincolnshire, we will support quality family and friend time. We will do everything we can, across our partnership to care for them and nurture their aspirations so that they feel safe, loved and are heard, so that they can realise their potential. This not only applies when children are in care but also where we have a duty to support them as previously looked after children. Working with our partner agencies and communities, we will individually and collectively provide nurturing, resilient parenting and support, as we would for our own children.

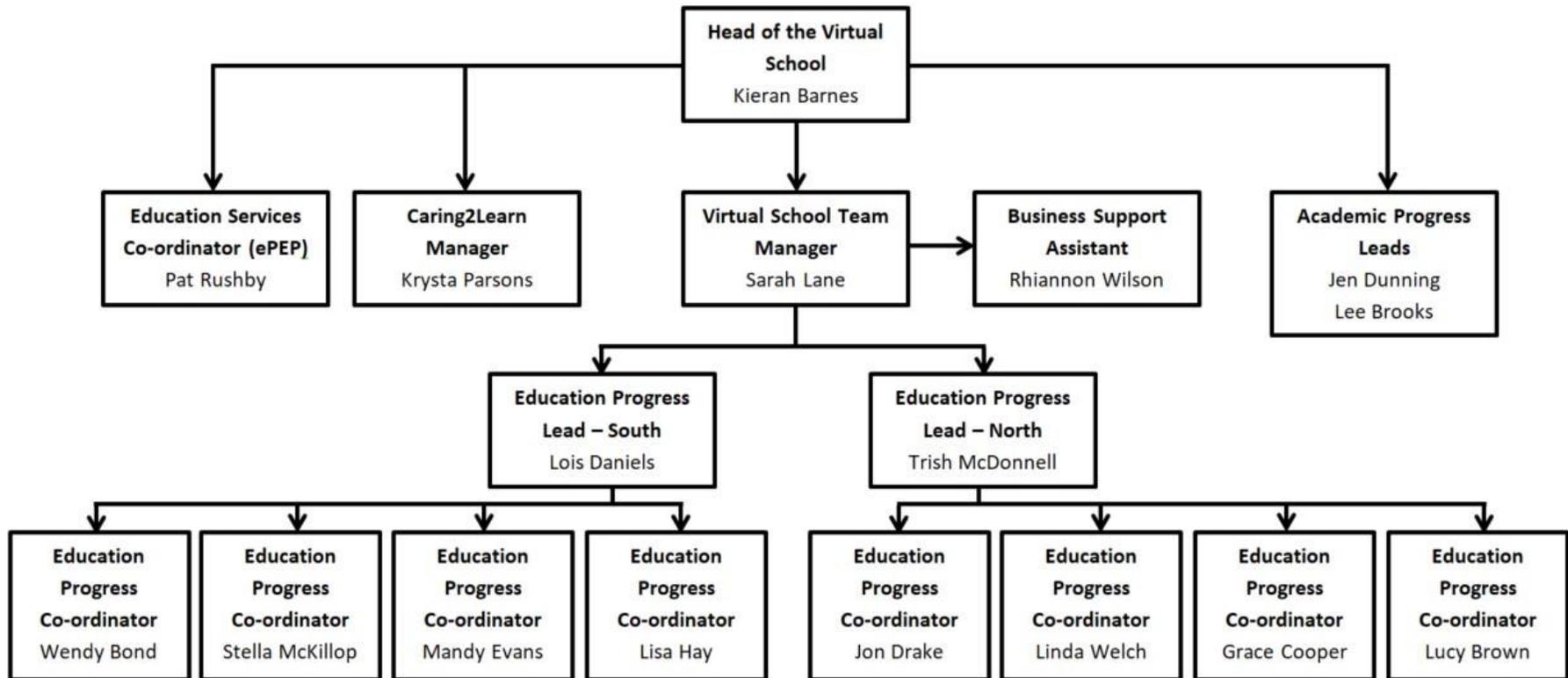
The main areas of focus for the Virtual School are:

Attainment and progress 3-18 to ensure that all Personal Education Plans (PEPs) are high quality and effective with Children's Services staff, carers, children, and schools working effectively and in partnership to promote wellbeing and learning.

Leadership and management to further develop a highly skilled, effective, and innovative workforce across Lincolnshire focused upon improving educational outcomes for children and young people in care and to ensure that we fulfil our statutory duties in our extended role to support previously looked after children. **Developing strong and effective partnerships** so that social workers, IROs, carers, parents and teachers can fulfil their roles as outlined in the updated statutory guidance for Designated Teachers and Virtual School Heads March 2018.

Building an emotional wellbeing pathway to promote self-confidence and support academic progress so that our children and young people fulfil their potential.

4.0 Structure of The Virtual School



5.0 Training and Development – How is the Virtual School Working with others to better support Children and Young People in Care and those Previously in Care?

The Virtual School has a duty to ensure that there are appropriate arrangements in place to meet the training needs of those responsible for promoting the educational achievement of children in care and previously looked after children and young people, including both social workers and school staff. Designated Teachers from all Lincolnshire schools and educational settings have access to a well-established training programme provided by the Virtual School and Caring2Learn to support them in their role in meeting the educational needs of children in care and previously looked after children and young people. Due to the impact of the Covid pandemic and national lockdowns, all aspects of training and support are now delivered remotely with positive feedback from attendees. The Virtual School is integrated within Children's Services and both benefits from and contributes to LCC's excellent training offer. The Virtual School Team provides support and training across our residential, early help, and fostering teams, and our carer community as per below.

5.1 Designated Teachers

Following feedback from Designated Teachers, further training opportunities have been introduced to support those new to role. In addition to the Autumn term locality cluster meetings, two events specifically for new Designated Teachers were hosted virtually and well attended. The 3rd national lockdown had little impact on teachers' commitment to attend and engage in training opportunities and over the year, the termly cluster meetings attracted 225 attendees. An e-learning module on the role of the Designated Teacher was commissioned and log-in details have been requested by 131 school staff. As the Virtual School annual conference could not take place due to the pandemic restrictions, Jaz Ampaw-Farr delivered three webinars on supporting the emotional wellbeing of children and young people in care. Having spent her childhood in care and now being a literacy advisor, Jaz delivered some powerful and inspirational messages to over 200 Designated Teachers and Children's Services colleagues.

5.2 Social Workers

The Virtual School has continued to work closely with our colleagues in Social Care to ensure that all our young people are accessing education. Regular communication played a key role in ensuring our children in care had a successful transition back into their new year groups following the Summer 2020 lockdowns and school closures. When the third national lockdown took place in January 2021, the Virtual School Co-ordinators arranged multi agency discussions to agree support if a young person was beginning to disengage in school or home-based learning. Data reports show that social workers participated in 95.3% of PEPs during 20-21, an increase of 5% from the previous year.

The Virtual School has been represented in the Children in Care Transformation project, supporting social workers and Children's Services colleagues in having high aspirations for our young people and recognising the contribution education plays in supporting placement stability. The Virtual School Co-ordinators support social workers in completing the

educational domains of the Valuing Care toolkit and have had representation on the Rethink Fostering workstream.

5.3 Continuing Professional Development for the Virtual School

In addition to completing mandatory courses in line with the LSCB 6-year training pathway, all Virtual School Co-ordinators have completed the Psychological First Aid e-learning course. Developed by Public Health England and recommended for all professionals working with young people, the course provided advice on practical and emotional support strategies for young people affected by a crisis situation. Colleagues from the Early Years Team and Future4Me have provided inputs at our team meetings and the team regularly attend the Children's Services and Corporate Leadership Team briefings and the SEND Graduated Approach events to ensure they are up to date with key initiatives and projects within the council.

5.4 Extension of VSH Role to Support Children with a Social worker

In June 2021 the DfE announced that from September 2021 the role of the Virtual School Headteacher would be extended to “promote the educational outcomes of the cohort of children with a social worker and those who have previously had a social worker who are aged from 0 up to 18.”

In line with this extension, the DfE has issued non-statutory guidance for Virtual Schools which defines the responsibilities of the role as follows:

- make visible the disadvantages that children with a social worker can experience, enhancing partnerships between education settings and local authorities to help all agencies hold high aspirations for these children.
- promote practice that supports children’s engagement in education, recognising that attending an education setting can be an important factor in helping to keep children safe from harm.
- level up children’s outcomes and narrow the attainment gap so every child can reach their potential. This will include helping to make sure that children with a social worker benefit from support to recover from the impact of Covid-19.

This new role is not about the Virtual School Co-ordinators working with individual children and families but is focussed on working together in close partnership with education settings, so that we are better able to identify the needs of children in this group and share knowledge and training with education settings and Children’s Services teams. This role will also include offering support and advice to key professionals in schools and services, including Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL), Inclusion Leads & SENDCOs, Social Workers in Safeguarding and FAST teams, Early Help teams and Early Help Consultants. In Lincolnshire, we are in an excellent position to meet the requirements of this role extension through Caring2Learn, which already aims to support a range of improved outcomes for children and young people in care, previously looked after and now, children with a social worker. All schools currently

have access to the Caring2Learn learning and development programme, good practice framework and Caring Schools Award and the hub support network. The Caring2Learn Manager will take the lead on developing this further and plans to work closely with Designated Safeguarding Leads in schools through the termly DSL Network Briefings and TAC Forums. They will also offer regular support, guidance and good practice sharing to Social Work, IRO and Early Help teams to raise the profile of education and ensure improved educational outcomes and support remain a priority in assessments and plans for children with a social worker. The current non-statutory guidance and funding arrangements will be reviewed by the DfE with further decisions on this extension expected in 2022.

5.5 Supporting Families and Schools Caring2Learn – Residential Homes Framework

In 2019, as part of Caring2Learn, a Learning Homes Toolkit was piloted for residential children's homes, which was adapted from both the Caring Schools and Learning Homes for Foster Carers good practice frameworks. Three of our maintained residential settings, Eastgate, Haven Cottage, and Denton Avenue have worked through the pilot toolkit and achieved a Learning Homes award. The findings from this pilot were then used to develop an updated Learning Homes Toolkit for our Residential Homes and in 2020, during the Covid 19 pandemic and the first lockdown, we began working with the Northolme Residential Team. We planned and delivered a series of practice workshops and learning and development sessions based on the Cornerstones of Good Practice delivered at the home for whole staff teams.

As a result of this development work with Northolme, Caring2Learn have now introduced a bespoke Residential Training Pathway which is currently being embedded within Eastgate and Albion Street with more homes to follow in 2022. The pathway covers the Cornerstones of Good Practice but also includes bespoke sessions for residential carers, looking at self-care, compassion fatigue, relational trauma, and Kids Skills. It also includes interactive sessions on utilising trauma informed assessment tools to consider individual children's needs and planning for direct work and intervention to support improved outcomes.

In 2021 as part of a collaboration with LiNCHIGHER, the staff and children from Northolme also took part in a 10-week programme called Creating Calm, led by therapist Hayley Graves from Creative Therapies. Recent analysis of data from the home suggests that both the programme of learning and development with Caring2Learn and the bespoke programme focussing on mental health and wellbeing delivered by Hayley have had a very positive impact. In June 2021 staff recorded a 60% reduction from the previous year in serious behaviour incidents or instances where restraint was needed. In fact, during the 10 weeks of the Creating Calm programme no serious behaviour incidents were recorded.

5.6 Learning Homes Education Champions Progress Update Recovery from Covid

Despite Covid 19 and restrictions, the Foster Carer Education Champions team continued to develop, offering support, and sharing best practice with other Lincolnshire foster carers. There are currently 24 champions in place and 2 vacancies. They have received 134 allocations of tasks in the last 12 months. This has included direct support and assistance in supporting placements and improved outcomes for children.

Champions have worked jointly with Children's Services staff to deliver three programmes of a 6-weekly course called Caring2gether. This has been positively received by carers and has supported learning and placement stability. Champions have also continued to co-facilitate the fostering recruitment evenings, prep course, and induction. Following the lifting of Covid restrictions, the Early Years group in Lincoln relaunched in September 2021. This is facilitated by 2 Foster Carer Champions with early years specialisms. Its introduction has been welcomed, with carers, babies, and young children attending fortnightly at St. Giles Children's Centre. The plan for 2022 is to introduce these in other areas.

Some face-to-face Foster Carer Socials have started to be introduced again, although Champions have continued to deliver the strong online/virtual support offer through Facebook, where we now have a very active group of 750 carers, education, and Children's Services staff, and WhatsApp, where we now have six different support chat groups. In early 2020, the combined Learning Homes and Training Standards and Development Toolkit was introduced and became mandatory for all Foster Carers to complete during their first twelve months following approval. Together with experienced carers, 61 Fostering households have now completed this toolkit successfully and achieved the Learning Homes Award.

5.7 Evaluation of Caring2Learn – Transitioning to Business as Usual

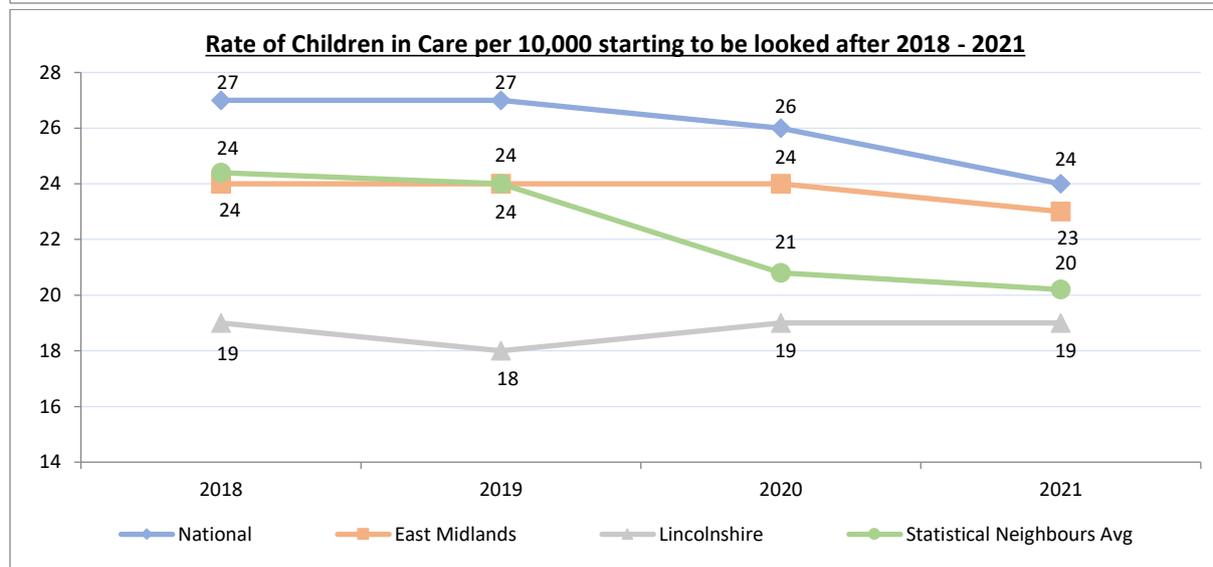
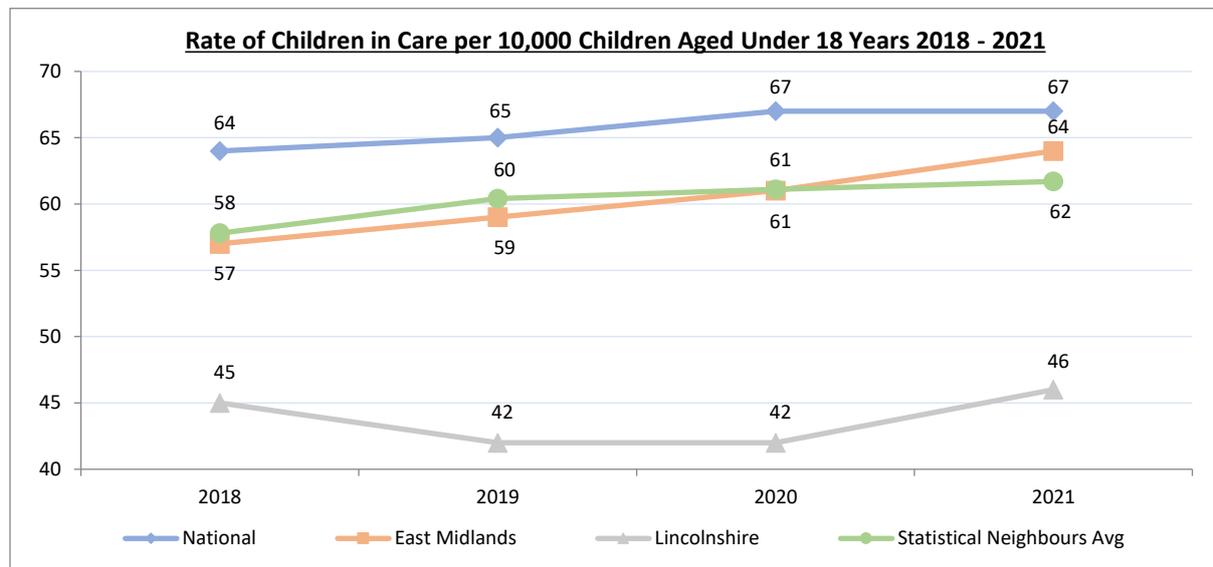
The Caring2Learn project has been in operation since January 2018 and was originally funded through the Partners in Practice programme. The project has been very successful in engaging and supporting schools, education settings, foster carers, children's homes, residential settings, and Children's Services teams to be part of this innovative and sustainable multi-disciplinary approach to improving academic outcomes, progress, life choices, and opportunities for all Lincolnshire children in care, on the edge of care, or previously looked after. Over the last three years the project has developed and implemented a clearly defined strategy that is supporting education settings to be able to nurture and promote wellbeing and ensure looked after children achieve better progress whilst in care. It is also supporting foster carers to promote learning in the home and help children to develop a thirst for learning so that education is valued and encouraged. An Impact and Evaluation Summary report has been compiled which includes the findings from the external evaluations from ECORYS and IMPOWER, as well as our own impact evaluation and case studies from schools, carers, and residential settings.

In April 2021 the decision was made to continue to fund these activities permanently and embed Caring2Learn into business as usual as part of the Virtual School and Fostering teams. A Strategic Steering Group, which will meet three times a year, has been set up to ensure that the principle of multi-agency and cross-team collaboration is maintained whilst furthering the individual focus of both these teams. Over the last year we have continued joint working with the Future4Me/Complex Care Service trauma working group to support the development of a trauma informed framework, as well as development of the Trauma Recovery Model and joint working with the Children in Care Transformation programme as part of the Practising Excellence and Re-think Fostering Workstreams.

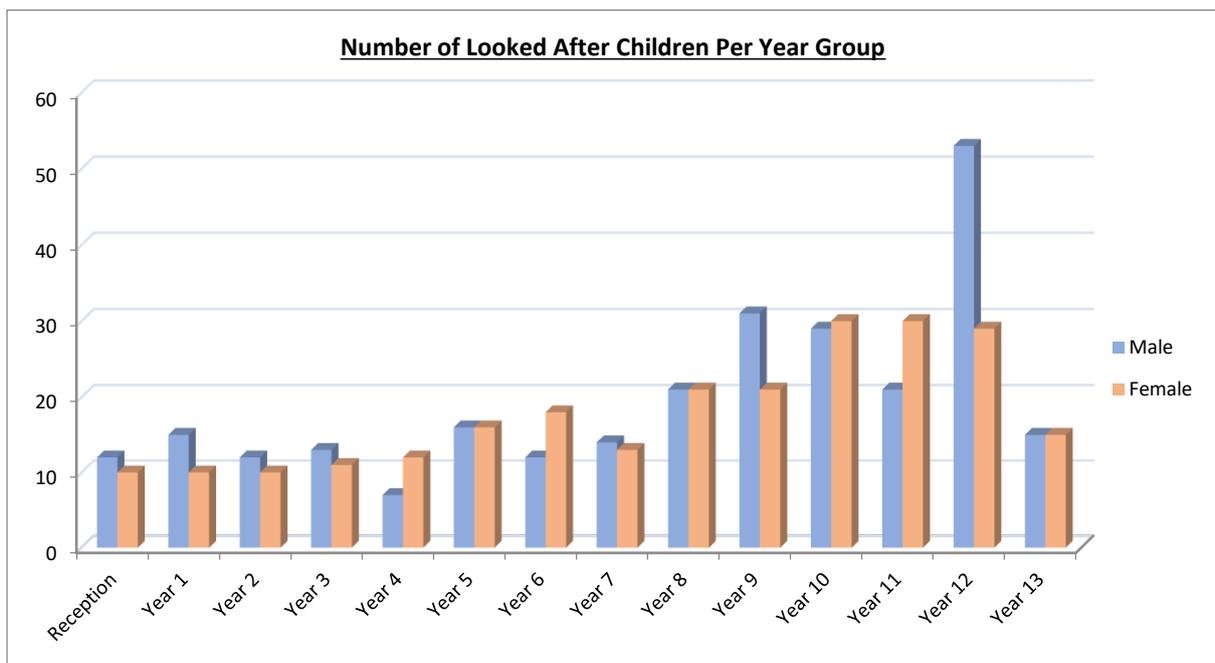
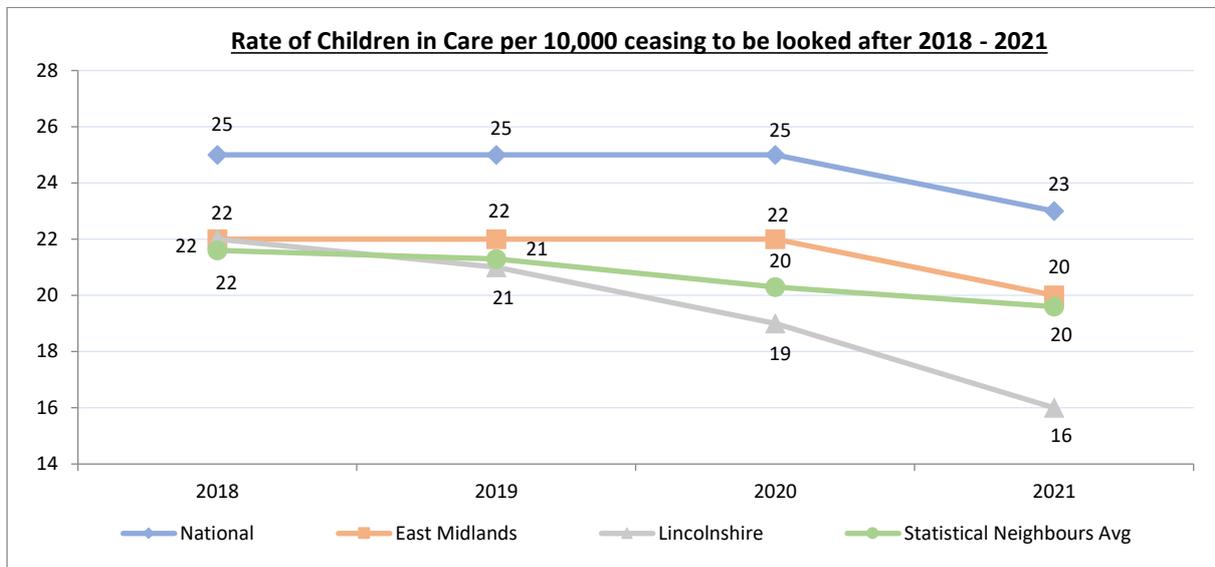
We have continued to deliver our virtual learning and development programme covering all aspects of our 'Cornerstones of Good Practice' which has proved extremely popular. Since April 2020 we have delivered over 150 sessions to over 3500 attendees from foster carers, school staff and Children's Services staff. Feedback from these sessions continues to be very positive from all three sectors. We have also delivered in-person and virtual, whole school staff twilight sessions, and INSET days on Restorative Practice and Trauma Informed Practice in three schools, with a further three scheduled for next term. School and Foster Carer Champions have also supported the delivery of the Designated Teachers Locality Network meetings across the localities each term.

6.0 Cohort Characteristics – Who is on roll of the Virtual School?

The rate of children in care in Lincolnshire increased in 2021 after a two year low in 2019 and 2020, following a steady decrease since 2017. This is contrary to the trend seen nationally where the rate remained the same. Increases in rates were seen regionally and amongst our statistical neighbours.



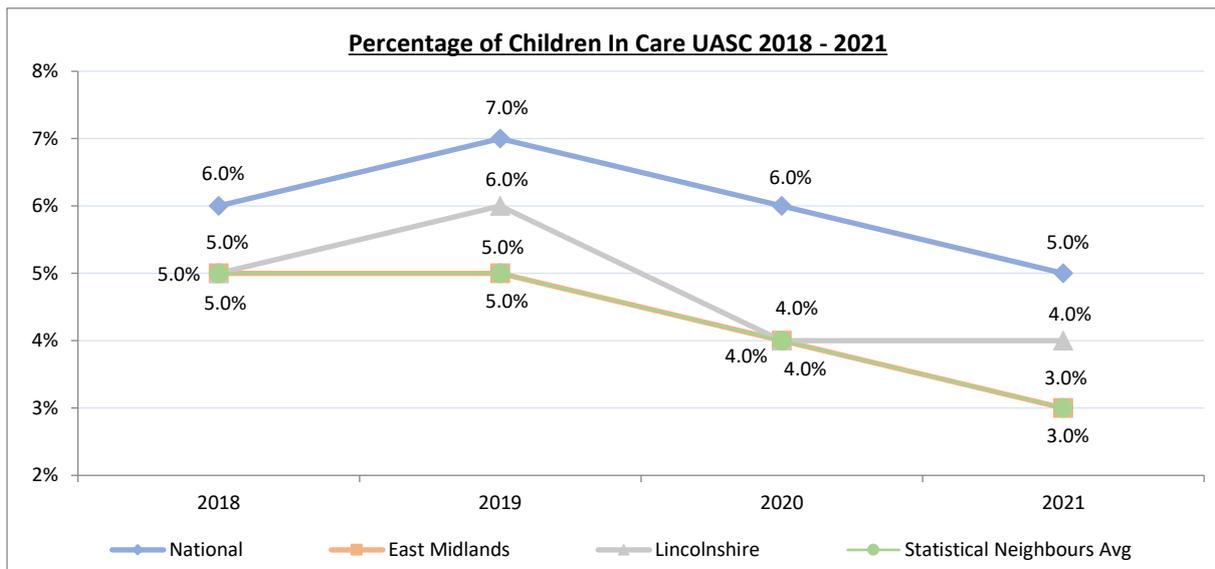
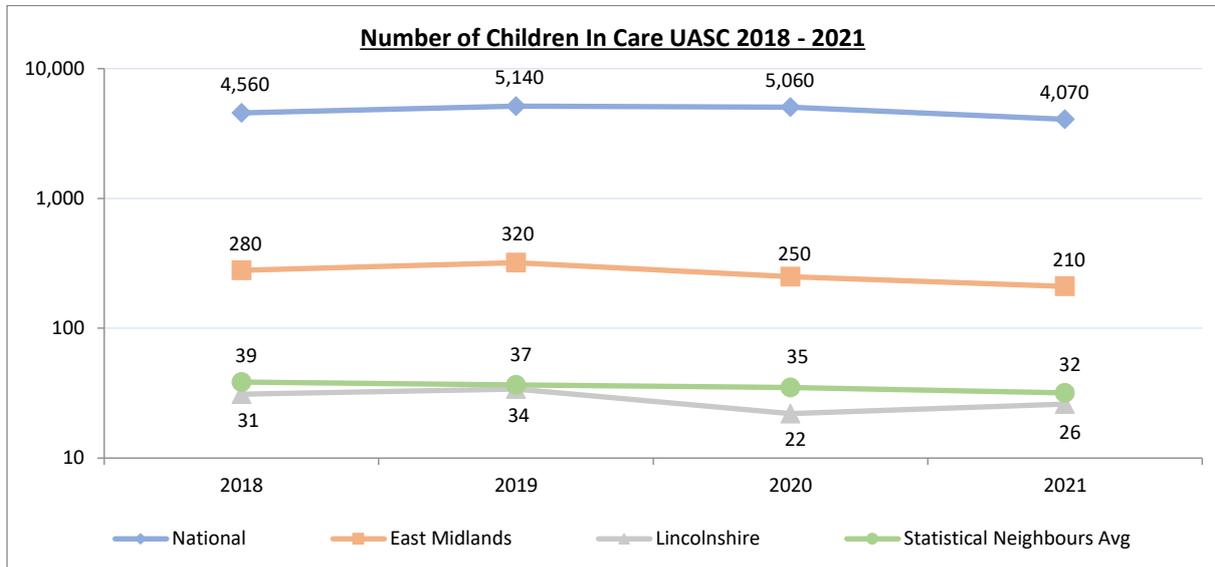
The increase in rate for Lincolnshire was driven by a decreasing rate of children ceasing to be in care (19 per 10,000 in 2020 and 16 per 10,000 in 2021) whilst the rate of children coming into care remained the same (19 per 10,000).



6.1 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)

The numbers of young people entering care in Lincolnshire as Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) increased in 2021 compared to 2020 but was still lower than levels seen prior to 2020. This increase in 2021 is contrary to the trend seen across all of our comparators where a decrease was seen across the board. The percentage of children in care in Lincolnshire that are UASC (4%) is below national (5%) but higher than the regional East Midlands (3%) and our statistical neighbours average (3%).

The Virtual School team hold regular PEP surgeries involving college staff and wider Children's Services teams to provide advice and support for this cohort whether placed in Lincolnshire or out of county.



6.2 Special Educational Needs (SEN)

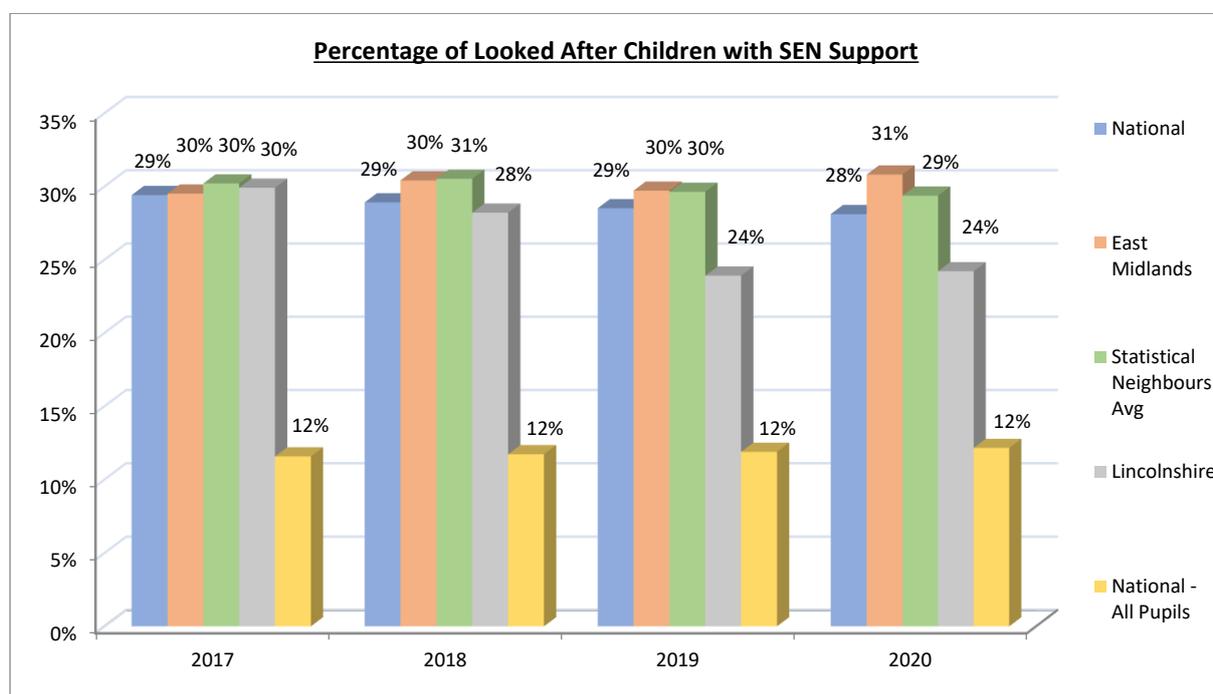
Nationally, 3.3% of the total pupil population have a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP).

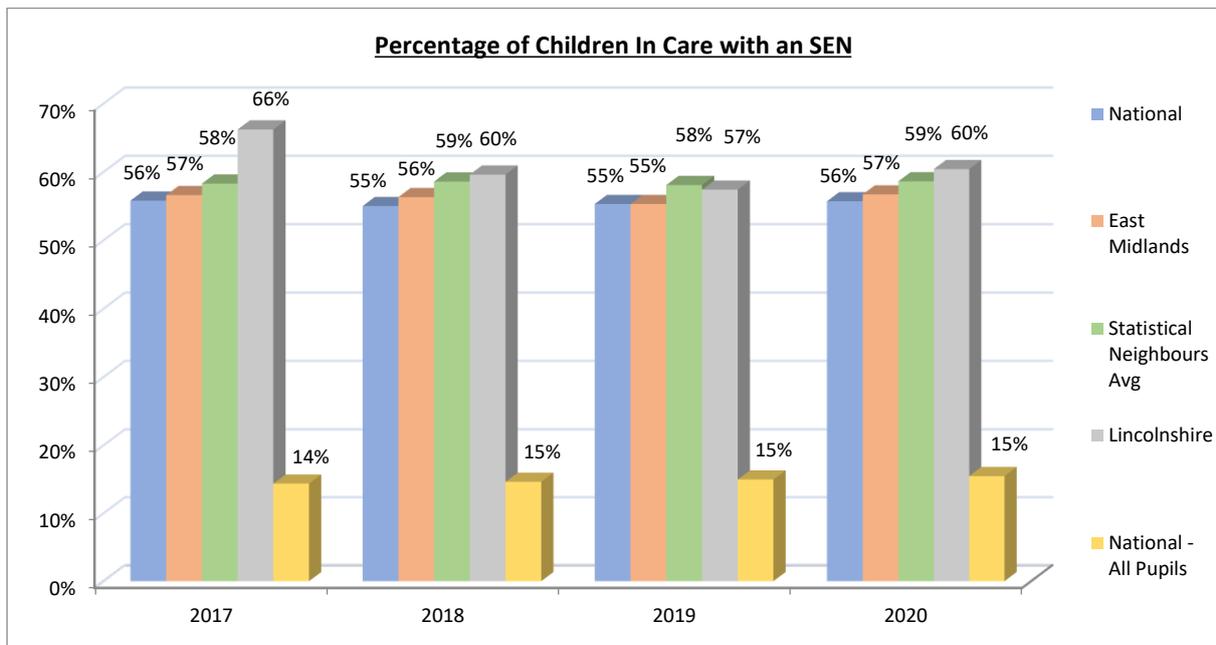
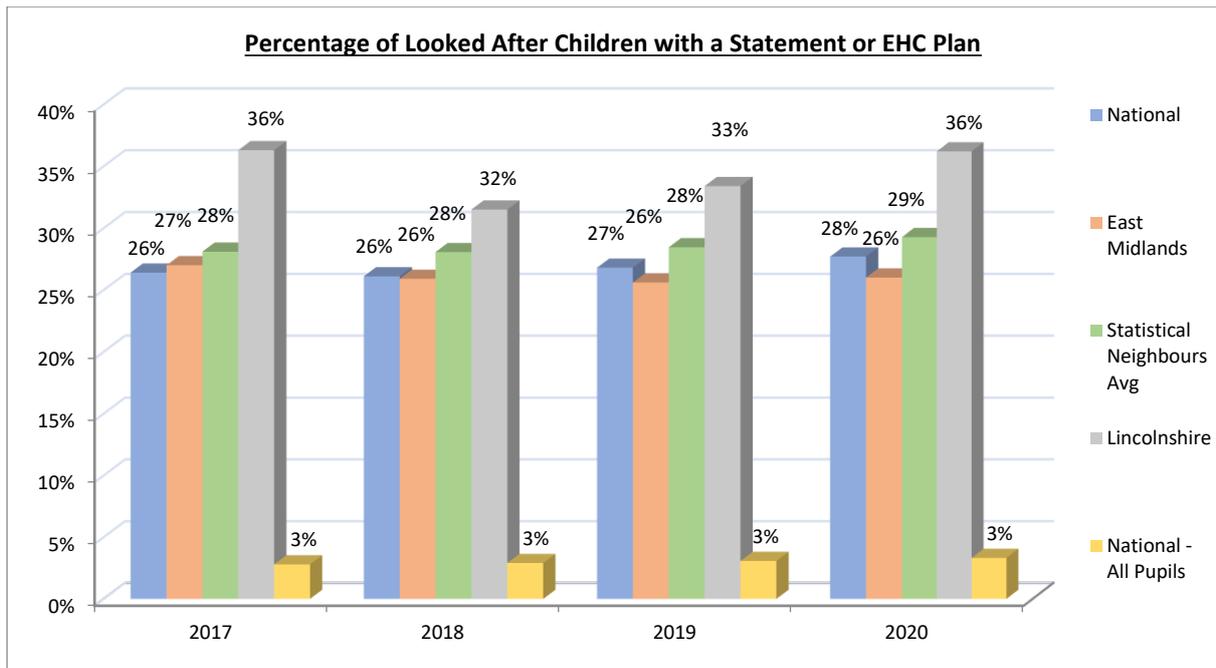
National statistics indicate that children in care are nearly four times more likely to have special educational needs when compared with all children nationally. They are also more than eight times more likely to have a statement of special educational needs or an education health care plan.

Nationally, this equates to 11,220 children in care (27.7%). In 2020, 56% of children in care had an identified special educational need, compared to 15% of all children. When reviewing

primary need type; Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) was the most frequently identified area of additional support for children in care.

In England, the percentage of children in care with a SEN is 55.7%; of which 28.1% are without a statement or EHC plan and 27.7% are with a statement or EHC plan. The regional East Midlands figures are above national, with 56.7% of children in care having a SEN, with 30.8% identified as SEN without a statement or EHC plan and 26.0% having a statement or EHC plan. Lincolnshire has a higher percentage of SEN when compared to national, regional and our statistical neighbour averages. The percentage of Lincolnshire children with SEN is 60.4% and comprises of 24.2% without a statement or EHC plan and 36.2% with a statement or EHC plan. The majority of the difference between Lincolnshire and its comparators comes for the much higher proportion of pupils with a Statement or EHC plan.





6.3 Virtual School Intervention and Additional Support

Many of our children and young people enter care with a variety individual learning needs that are often unmet or unidentified. In order to address this, the Lincolnshire Virtual School works to provide a baseline for their educational progress as near to their time of entry as possible, utilising the skills of specialist intervention teams (Early Years Foundation Stage – Key Stage 3), using the Early Years Specialist Teachers and the Specialist Teaching Team. This provides the opportunity for early and effective school-based interventions with progress monitored through the Personal Education Plan (PEP) process.

Further support included additional tuition through the LCC SEND Home Tuition Team. This is commissioned by the Virtual School utilising Pupil Premium to help develop key learning skills with targeted subject support in years 5 and 6, 9 to 11. This was again extended and offered over the summer to more children and young people who wanted further support and stability with their learning to help maintain academic progress; 15 children and young people chose to have this additional support.

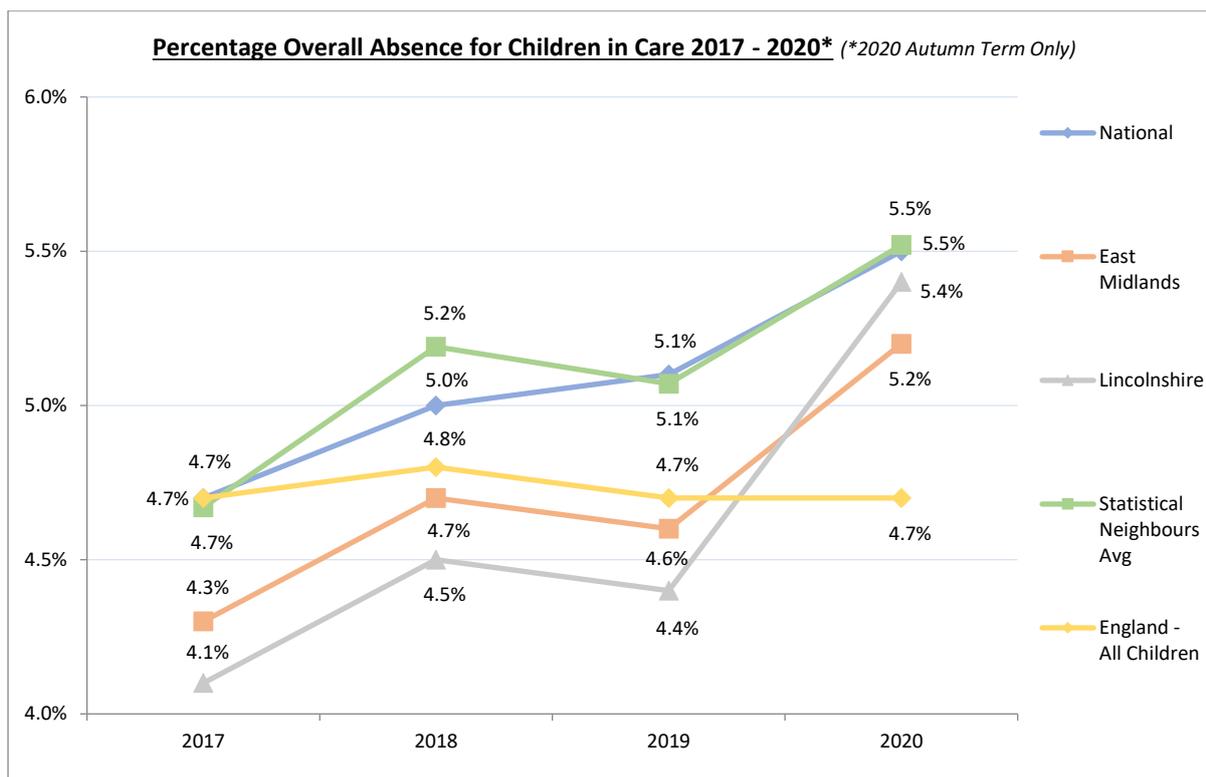
Provision of whole school training in language and communication support to schools has seen a large number of school staff and foster carers gain a better understanding of how the journey through the care system can impact upon language and communication in children and how this can be effectively addressed and overcome.

7.0 Inclusion - How regularly do our Children Attend?

Due to Covid restrictions in early 2020 we do not have any nationally published attendance data for the whole year for 2020. Autumn term 2020 data has been used as a comparison though absence is usually higher in autumn term compared to a whole year of data.

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

The autumn term 2020 data shows Lincolnshire children in care still attend more regularly than our national and statistical neighbour average comparators. The autumn term 2020 data does indicate that there has been an increase in absence with Lincolnshire children in care attending less regularly than our regional East Midlands comparators.



7.1 Attendance during Covid-19 Lockdown

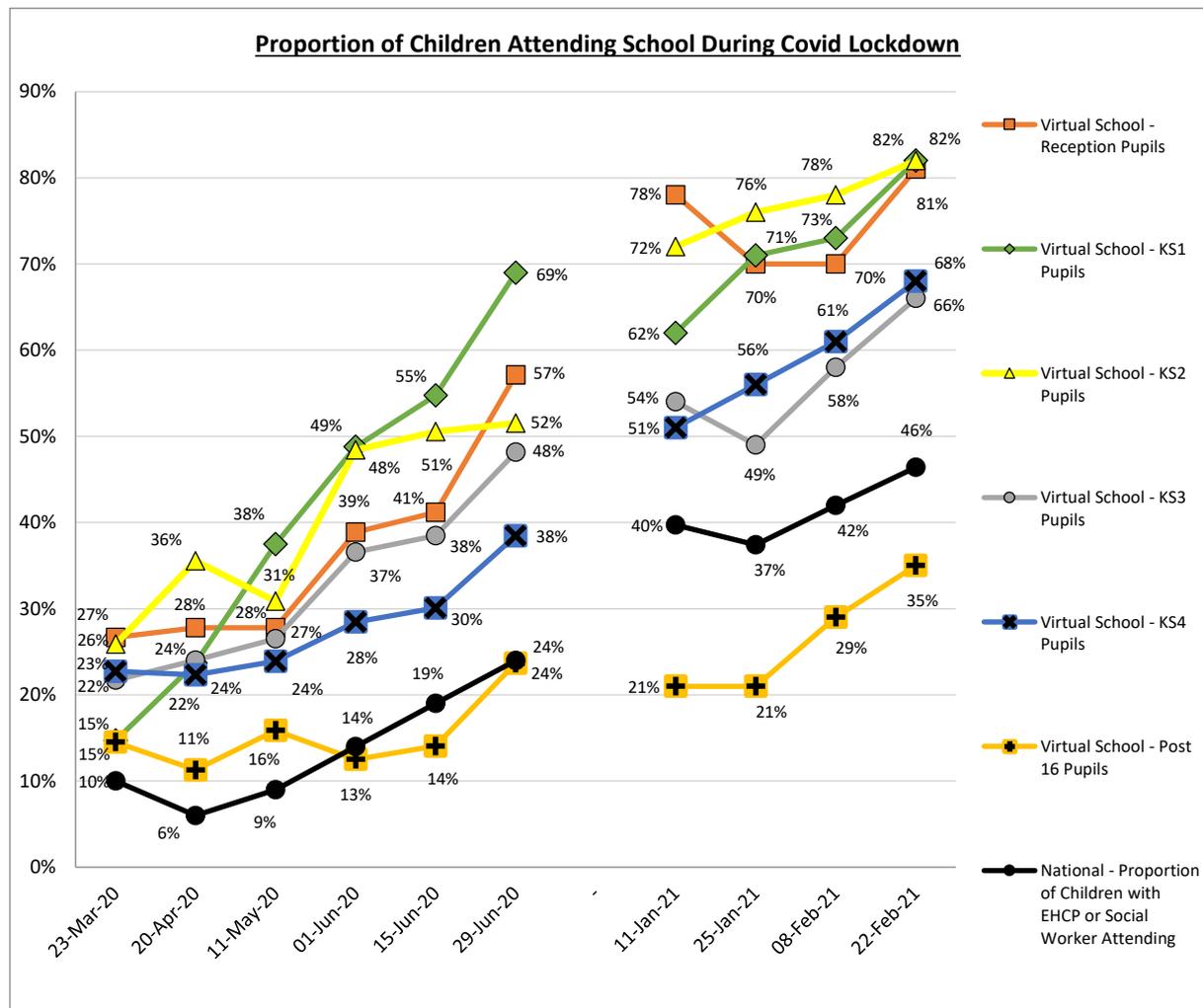
Lincolnshire children in care attended more regularly during the covid lockdown than a proxy national comparator for vulnerable children (children with EHCP or social worker March 2020 to June 2020; children with social worker January and February 2021).

During the first lockdown Lincolnshire children in care started with a proportion attending of 23% at the end of March 2020 rising to nearly 50% by the end of June 2020; the national proportion of vulnerable children attending started off with a proportion attending of 10% at the end of March 2020 rising to nearly 25% by the end of June 2020.

Lincolnshire children in care generally attended more regularly by age with primary children attending more often - achieving 52% to 69% attendance by the end of June 2020, compared to secondary children achieving 38% to 48% attendance by the end of June 2020. Our Post-16 pupils attendance was similar to the National average for vulnerable children.

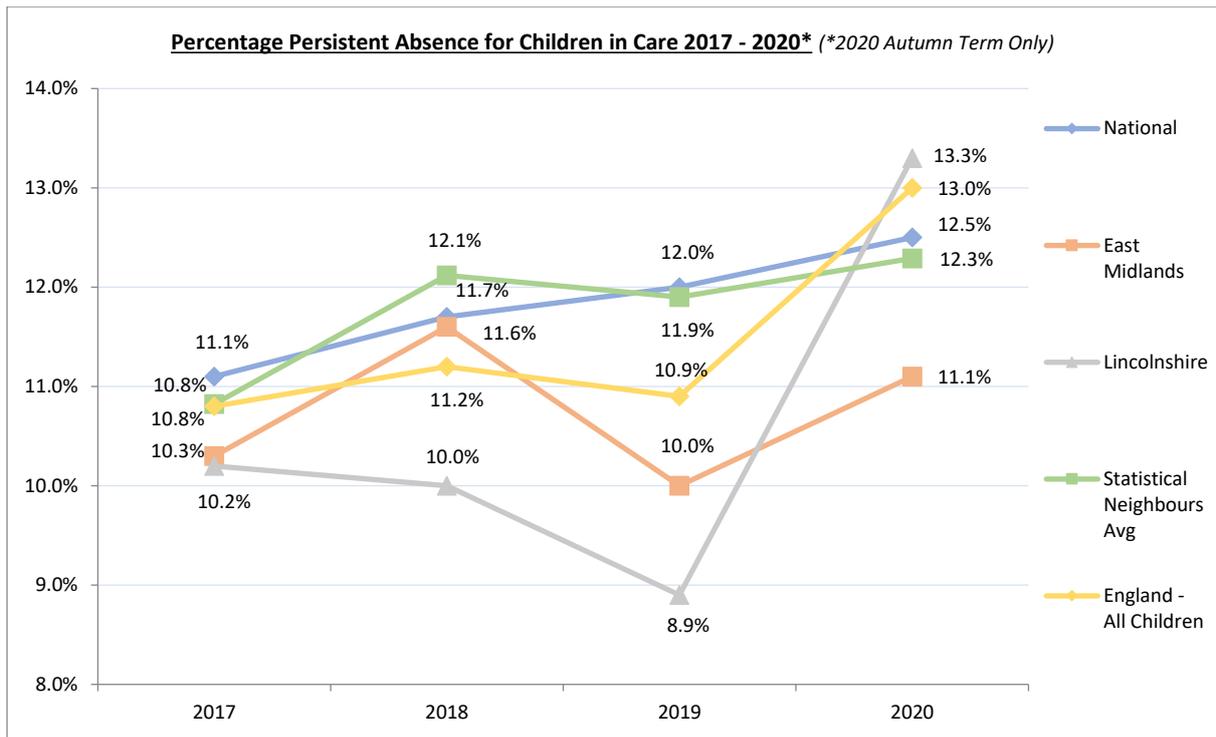
During the second lockdown Lincolnshire children in care started with a proportion attending of 60% at the start of January 2021 rising to 73% by the end of February 2021; the National proportion of children with a social worker attending started off with a proportion attending of 40% at the start of January 2021 rising to 46% by the end of February 2021.

Lincolnshire children in care generally attended more regularly by age with primary children attending more often - achieving over 80% attendance by the end of February 2021, compared to secondary children achieving 66% to 68% attendance by the end of February 2021. Our Post-16 pupils attending was below the national average for children with a social worker but was higher than the first lockdown and was showing a good upwards trend compared to the national average.



7.2 Persistent Absence

Our children and young people have performed well in the area of persistent absence, with the last 3 years of complete data showing fewer persistently absent pupils compared to national, regional and statistical neighbour averages. This maintains a long trend of being in line or better than our national, east midlands and statistical neighbour average comparators. The autumn term 2020 data does indicate that there has been a substantial increase in persistent absence with Lincolnshire children in care. This has left Lincolnshire children in care with a higher rate of persistent absence in autumn term 2020 when compared to national, regional, and statistical neighbour averages.

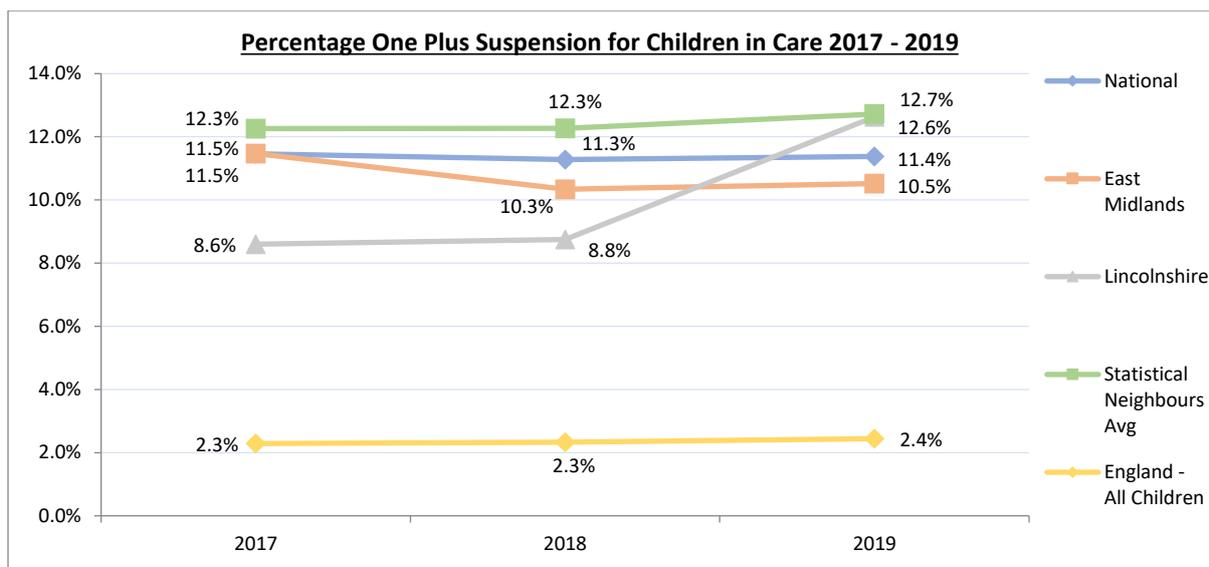


7.3 Inclusion - How likely are our children in care to be excluded?

7.3.1 Suspensions

Nationally (2017 - 2019), looked after children have been 5 to 5.5 times more likely to be suspended from school for a fixed-term than the national average for all pupils. Lincolnshire children in care were around 4 times more likely to be suspended from school than the national average for all pupils between 2016 and 2018. This was well below national, regional, and statistical neighbour averages.

There was an increase in suspensions in Lincolnshire in 2019. This saw the suspension rate in Lincolnshire to be in line with the National rate and above our regional and statistical neighbour averages.



7.3.2 Permanent Exclusion

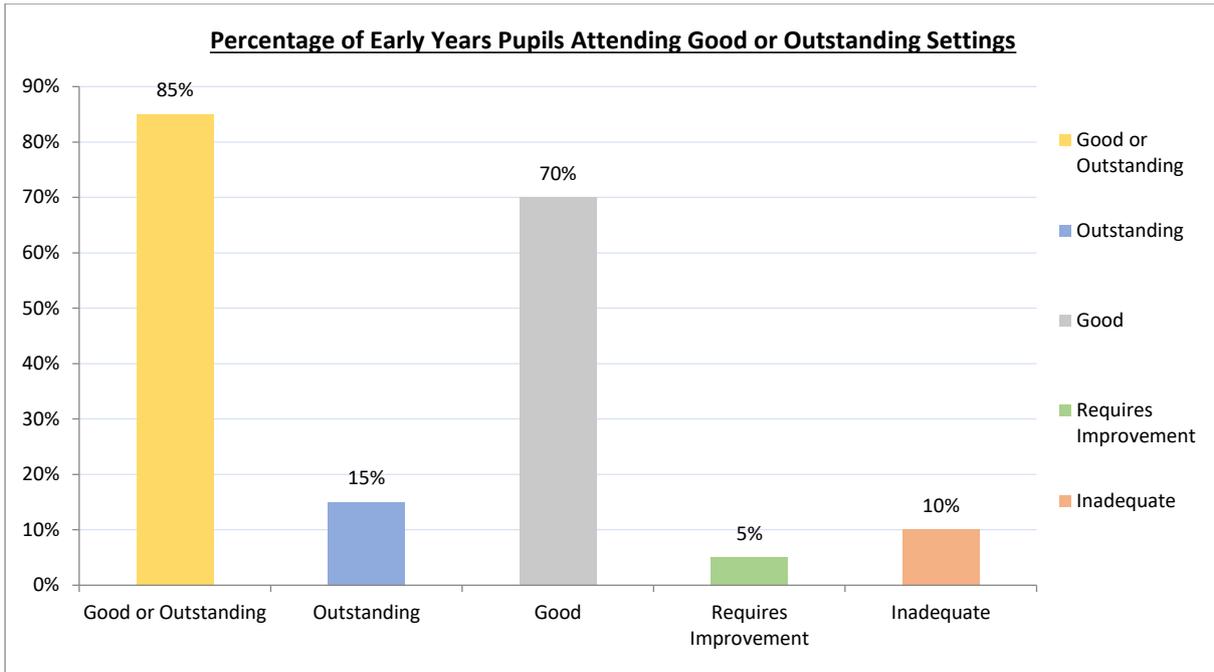
The DfE does not publish data relating to the permanent exclusion of children in care. Locally sourced data indicates that in the 2020-21 academic year, no children in care received a permanent exclusion.

8.0 Quality of Provision - What proportion of our children and young people aged 3-18 attend schools graded good or better by Ofsted?

Between November 2017 and January 2018, the DfE consulted on changes to official statistics in reporting Ofsted outcomes. As a result of this consultation there has been a change in the way the latest inspection data is reported for all providers. The grades from the predecessor schools will now be included for schools that have not yet been inspected in their current form, in order to provide a more comprehensive view of the sector.

8.1 Early Years (Reception)

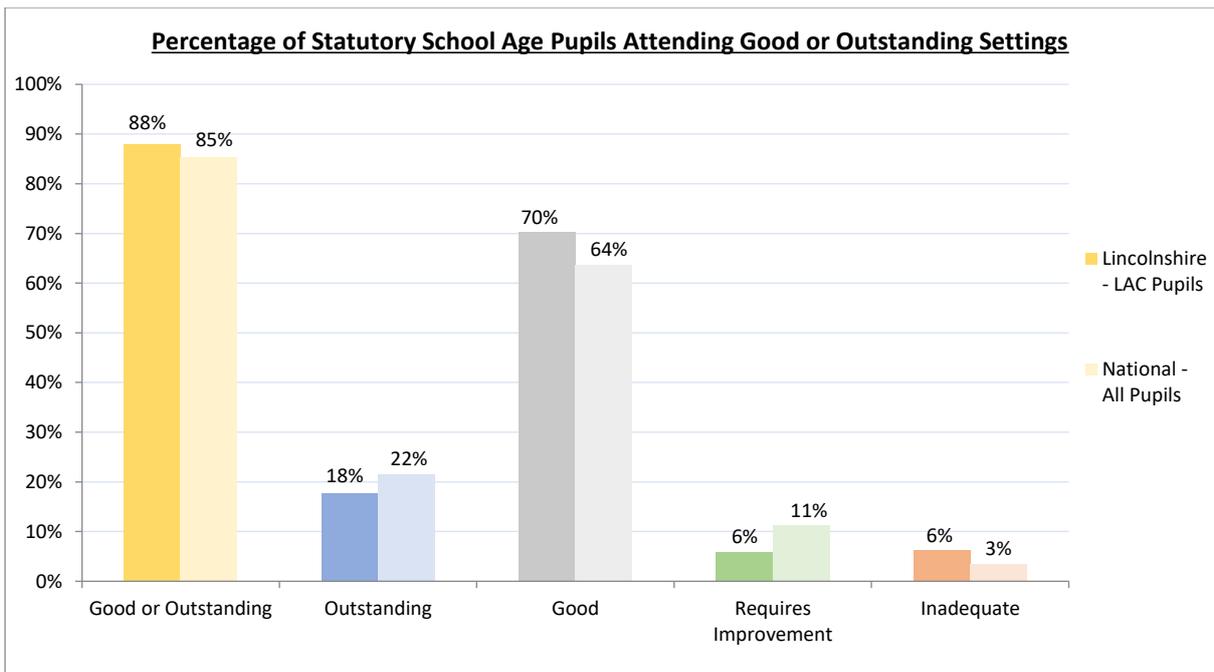
In accordance with data correct as of 26 November 2021, 85% of our children in care placed both in and out of county who are aged four or five were attending good or outstanding settings as graded by Ofsted. This is an improvement of 1% compared with last year.



8.2 Statutory School Age

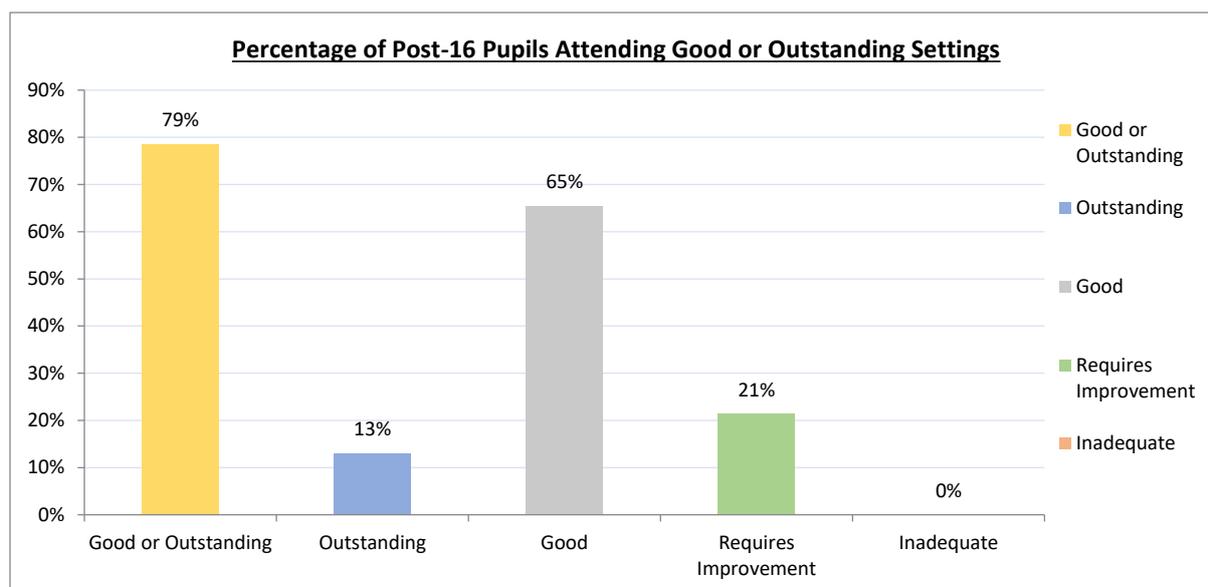
The percentage of children who are of statutory school age attending Good or Outstanding schools both in and out of county is 4% up compared to last year (88% compared to 84% last year).

The percentage of Lincolnshire children in care attending Good or Outstanding schools is above the proportion of all children nationally (85%) attending a Good or Outstanding school; where appropriate additional support is provided for any children attending schools that are graded less than good.



8.3 Quality of Provision Post -16

Currently 79% of our post-16 students are attending a Good or Outstanding setting with 21% requires improvement and 0% inadequate. This is a decrease of 1% compared to last year when 80% was reported. Our post-16 students are supported (as per case example below) through the PEP process and, as is the case with our statutory school age students, we work with our wider Children's Services colleagues and others to provide additional support for students attending settings judged less than good.



Post 16 Case Study

E came into care during Year 11. He was struggling and so attended full time, divided between a local secondary school and alternative provision. It was felt that he was capable but not fully achieving his potential. His ambition was to work in the building trade, particularly bricklaying, and he applied for a place at Lincoln College having achieved GCSE grade 4 in English Language and 3 in Mathematics and English Literature. E commenced a Level 1 course in Construction at the start of the Autumn term 2020 with plans to re-sit his Maths GCSE. He engaged in his termly PEP meetings where his progress and attendance were discussed, and professionals could listen to E's views and agree support where needed. His Year 11 Pupil Premium had been used to purchase the equipment he needed for the practical lessons and as some of the learning was being delivered remotely, the Virtual School Co-ordinator sourced him a laptop. His Spring Term PEP recorded his attendance as 94% and he continued to access lessons remotely during the 3rd national lockdown, with his tutors recognizing the progress he was making. Although engaging in his Maths GCSE, his PEP indicated that he was working below his target Grade 4 and so additional support was identified by the college. E was delighted to achieve a Grade 5 in his Maths GCSE and completed his Bricklaying course alongside a part-time job. E was successful in his application for an apprenticeship with a local construction company which is still going well.

9.0 Electronic Personal Education Plans (ePEPs)

9.1 Compliance - Have we met our target?

PEP compliance for those of statutory school age for the academic year 2020-2021 has consistently exceeded target (94%). The PEP process in Lincolnshire requires for three face to face termly meetings usually held within the education setting. During the COVID lockdown period and school closures, the Virtual School Education Co-ordinators have ensured PEP meetings were held and all partners had the opportunity to contribute either remotely or face to face where possible.

PEP Compliance	Autumn Term 2020	Spring Term 2021	Summer Term 2021
Statutory Age	100%	99%	99%
Early Years	100%	100%	100%
Post 16	100%	99%	98%

9.2 Personal Education Plan Quality Assurance - how has this helped to support Children in Care and improve participation?

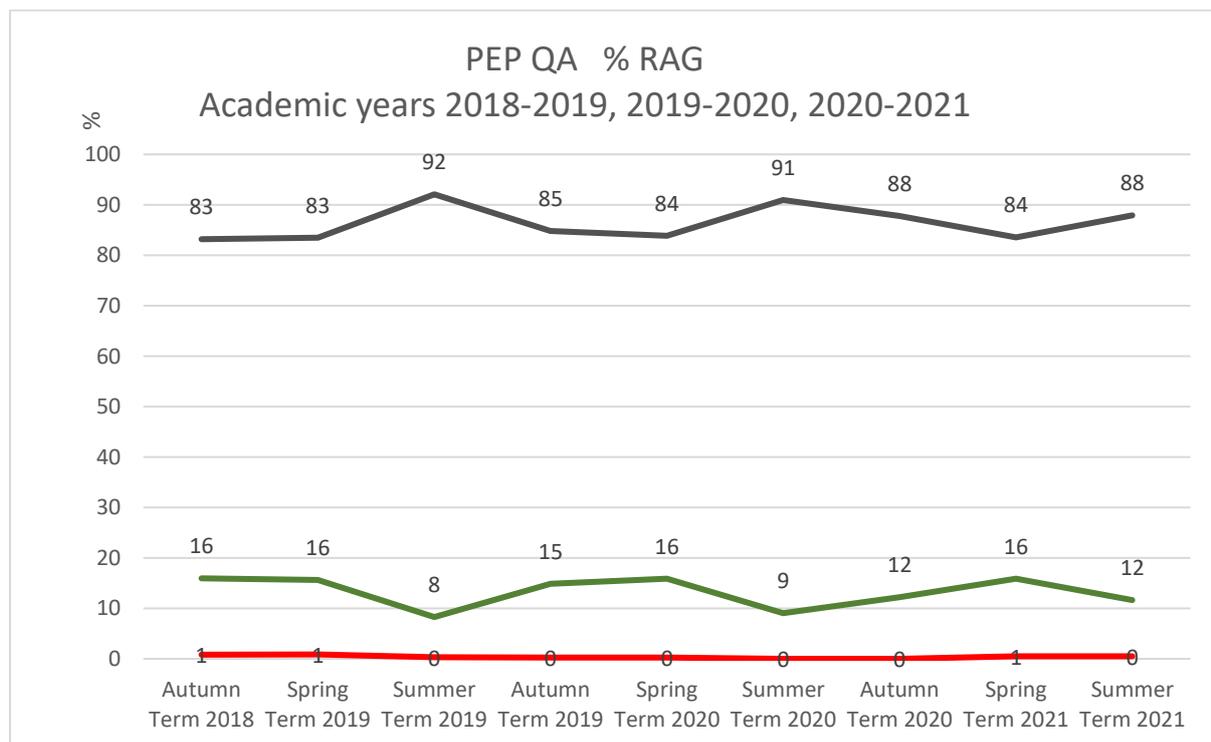
Our on-going development of the Personal Education Plan (PEP) process seeks to improve the quality of educational support being provided to our children and young people and ensure that all of those involved are working together effectively and are empowered to play their part in supporting our children in care to succeed. Key to this is to ensure that the voice of the child or young person is heard. Recent developments to the system have allowed LCC Virtual School to customise the ePEP to fit our individual requirements to support schools across the following key areas:

- **Pupil Premium tracking** – The system supports schools to monitor and track pupil premium expenditure against SMART targets, schools can request funding directly using the ePEP system.
- **Attainment** – The Virtual School captures attainment/assessment data five times within the academic year; the attainment section has been developed to enable teachers to use their own school measures to RAG rate and track live termly progress in core subjects.
- **Health and Emotional Wellbeing** – The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) section has been developed to capture SDQ scores from teachers, and carers. This gives a wider insight on the child's level of health and emotional wellbeing and helps identify any causes for concerns.

- **PEP Meeting Discussion** – Recent system developments ensure the PEP meeting page give a clear picture of the support and provision in place for our Children/Young people. The meeting discussion section gives focus on ‘What’s working well’, ‘What are we worried about’, and ‘What needs to happen’ before the next PEP meeting.

9.2.1 Quality Assurance and Monitoring

Our QA processes support schools, carers and other professional to work more effectively together in order to improve the quality of education plans. Monitoring is focused upon the content of the PEP - participation and engagement, what elements are supporting progress, any information that is missing or could be developed further and whether the PEP meets the "highly quality and effective" standard included within statutory guidance. This is fed back to carers, schools and others to ensure continuous improvement and informs our on-going training offer to all stakeholders. The graph and table below show an upward trend in both the quality of PEPs and participation over the last three years, also a solid performance through the period of the first lockdown.



Stakeholder Participation			
Stakeholders	Academic Year 2018-2019	Academic Year 2019-20	Academic Year 2020-2021
Young Person	81.9%	79.0%	86.3%
Parent/Foster Carer	76.2%	83.3%	98.6%
School	92.8%	92.5%	94.3%
Social Worker	85.6%	90.2%	95.3%

9.3 Pupil Premium Plus Grant – How has the Virtual School allocated the Pupil Premium+ Grant?

The PP+ grant allocation per Child in Care is £2345 as outlined in the DfE Pupil Premium 2020 to 2021 Conditions of Grant.

Responsibility for the allocation of the Pupil Premium Plus Grant (PP+) of £2345 rests with the Virtual School Head. The information below relates to the financial period April 2020-March 2021.

The revised allocation from the DfE for 2020-2021 was £1,055,250. This total is based upon 450 statutory school age children in care as documented in the Final DfE children in care (SSDA903 collection data report) 2020-2021.

A total of £719,295 went directly to schools through the allocation of an initial £500 to £1000 depending on year group; combined to additional requests from schools based upon academic targets outlined in the PEP. £164,643 was used to allocate 1:1 additional tuition support. A further £63,279 was utilised to commission interventions and a proportion of the grant, totalling £108,033 was utilised centrally for additional support of students including resources and the training of staff.

Pupil Premium Plus Grant 2020-2021 Allocation of PP+ funds	
£720,662 went directly to schools through the allocation of an initial £1000 for each eligible child in care combined with additional requests from schools based upon academic targets and additional support outlined in the PEP.	£719,295
Tuition and additional 1-1 support as requested by school	£164,643

Language Intervention Project – WellComm /Core Assessments/ECLIPS	£36,408
Literacy Intervention Project – Letterbox	£26,871
Additional support of students including resources and training of staff	£108,033
Total	£1,055,250

10.0 Early Years PP+ funding

The Virtual School also allocated £21,144 PP+ Grant to our early years settings. The funding is requested via the PEP process and linked to intervention to improve outcomes. All the funding was allocated to early years settings to support children's progress, attainment, and transition into school.

11.0 How well have our Children and Young People Achieved?

11.1 Early Years

11.1.1 Early Years Case study

Early Years

A did not attend his early years setting during Summer 2020 due to his carer's health vulnerabilities. As he attended the on-site nursery, he had some awareness of the reception class he was due to join in September but had not participated in any taster visits or induction days. A's transition into school was discussed during the Summer Term PEP and the teacher explained to his carers that she would be uploading videos and information over the summer that they could share with A to help familiarise him with his new staff and classroom. At his Autumn Term PEP, his teacher explained that A had made a great start to 'big school'. He was responding to visual timers to help him understand how long he had to sit on the carpet and his counting was progressing.

Actions were agreed to support his Communication and Language, Personal, Social and Emotional Development, and Literacy, as he had been assessed as not making expected progress in line with national expectations or his baseline. A did not attend school during the 3rd national lockdown, although his carers supported him in completing a home-schooling routine. His Language and Communication skills were assessed termly by the Specialist Teaching Team (STT), commissioned by the Virtual School.

Further actions were agreed for both home and school to promote his receptive and expressive vocabulary. His Summer Term PEP documented A's successful transition back into school and that he is now making expected progress in line with his baseline. His phonic knowledge has developed well and he has progressed from mark making to writing letters. His summer term Specialist Teaching Team (STT) assessment confirmed that his expressive

and receptive language is now at age-appropriate levels and his carers continue to provide daily reading opportunities and communicate regularly with school to share strategies and support.

11.1.2 Early Years – Cohort Characteristics

There were 10 pupils in the cohort completing Foundation Stage Reception in 2021. 7 pupils (70%) had an identified Special Educational Need (3 pupils (30%) required SEN Support and 4 pupils (40%) had an EHC Plan). Our cohort completing Foundation Stage comprised of: 6 boys (60%), 4 girls (40%), 2 pupils (20%) eligible for Free School Meals in the past 6 years (FSM6) and no pupils (0%) with English as an Additional Language (EAL). Out of 10 pupils, 9 (90%) were educated within Lincolnshire and 1 pupil was educated Out of County.

The average SDQ score for the cohort was 18.7. This is considered to be high. In total 4 pupils (57%) in Lincolnshire had an SDQ score of High (29%) or Very High (29%).

SDQ Overview

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is a brief emotional and behavioural screening questionnaire for children and young people. The tool can capture the perspective of children and young people, their parents, and teachers.

There are currently three versions of the SDQ: a short form, a longer form with an impact supplement (which assesses the impact of difficulties on the child's life), and a follow-up form. The 25 items in the SDQ comprise 5 scales of 5 items each. The scales include:

1. Emotional Symptoms subscale
2. Conduct Problems subscale
3. Hyperactivity/inattention subscale
4. Peer relationships problem subscale
5. Prosocial behaviour subscale

The SDQ can be used for various purposes, including clinical assessment, evaluation of outcomes, research and screening.

11.1.3 Early Years – Good Level of Development

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic this year, no Early Years assessments were completed or submitted to the Department for Education. This means we have no Early Years assessment data and no national or regional comparator data for benchmarking our performance. Local pupil tracking data for our pupils completing Reception in 2021 indicated 20% of our children in care would have achieved a "Good Level of Development".

11.2 Key Stage 1

11.2.1 Case Example Key Stage 1

Key Stage 1

B came into care aged 3 months and, following the breakdown of a prospective adoption placement, he returned briefly to foster carers before moving to his potential new adoptive family in January 2021. Although B is on roll at a school outside of Lincolnshire, his Virtual School Co-ordinator has built a very effective working relationship with the school who are very appreciative of the support she provides. Due to the working from home restrictions, virtual PEPs took place every term. Prior to this, the Virtual School Co-ordinator ensured she attended all face-to-face meetings to monitor B's progress and the support provided by school. At the end of Year 1, B was assessed as working at the expected standard in reading and Mathematics, although was working below his target in Writing. B continued to attend school during the lockdowns and his prospective adopters are keen to support his learning at home.

The PEP meetings provided opportunity for his adopters to seek advice on how to best support home learning and it was agreed that Pupil Premium would be used to purchase some kinetic letters to support B's writing at home and a laptop provided for B to access educational support programmes. By the end of the Spring Term, B had made progress in all areas and was now working at the expected standard in Writing. It was agreed that Pupil Premium would contribute to the cost of out of school activities to develop B's friendship group and build on his interests. Pupil Premium was also used to purchase some books to build on B's love of reading at home and school. B achieved his age-related expectations at the end of the year and has learnt to play a whole song as a result of his guitar lessons funded by Pupil Premium. He was very proud to be chosen to show a new boy around school and he wants to be either a policeman, a footballer, or an archaeologist when he grows up.

11.2.2 Key Stage 1 – Cohort Characteristics

17 pupils in the cohort completed Key Stage 1 in 2021. There were 8 pupils (47%) with an identified Special Educational Need, 4 pupils (24%) with SEN Support and 4 pupils (24%) with an EHC Plan. Our cohort completing KS1 comprised of: 10 boys (59%), 7 girls (41%), 6 pupils (35%) eligible for Free School Meals in the past 6 years (FSM6) and 1 pupil (6%) with English as an Additional Language (EAL). In total, 14 pupils (82%) were educated within Lincolnshire with 3 pupils (18%) educated Out of County.

The average SDQ for the cohort is: 14.1 and this is considered slightly raised. In total 56% of Lincolnshire pupils had an SDQ score of High (25%) or Very High (31%).

11.2.3 Key Stage 1 – Attainment

Due to the covid-19 pandemic, this year no Key Stage 1 assessments were completed or submitted to the Department for Education. This means we have no Key Stage 1 assessment data and no comparators data for benchmarking our performance.

Local pupil tracking data for our pupils completing Key Stage 1 in 2021, indicated that approximately 29% would have achieved the expected standard or above in Reading, Writing and Maths (35% in Reading, 29% in Writing & 41% in Maths).

11.3 Key Stage 2

11.3.1 Key Stage 2 Case Study

Prior to coming into care in May 2019, M had been out of education from October 2018 and previous to this she was home educated for a period of time. M settled well into school and made good progress which continued when she had to move school following her foster carer's house move. M had some gaps in learning due to her missing school prior to coming into care and the Virtual School provided additional Maths tuition to support her progress and promote her self- confidence.

Despite a change of foster care placement, M has continued to make excellent progress and her PEPs record 100% attendance. Supported by the additional Maths tuition, M was assessed as working at the expected standard at the end of Key Stage 2. The Designated Teacher from her new secondary school attended her PEP in the summer term, enabling M to ask questions about what clubs are available and which languages she would be able to study. An overview of the school's transition days was provided and the Designated Teacher offered to arrange a further visit for M and her foster carer if needed. M has made amazing progress and has aspirations to be a lawyer or a teacher.

11.3.2 Key Stage 2 – Cohort Characteristics

There were 24 pupils in the children in care cohort completing Key Stage 2 in 2021. 14 pupils (58%) had an identified Special Educational Need, 7 pupils (29%) required SEN Support and 7 pupils (29%) with an EHC Plan. The cohort completing Key Stage 2 comprised of: 9 boys (38%), 15 girls (63%), 20 pupils (83%) eligible for Free School Meals in the past 6 years (FSM6) and 1 pupil (4%) had English as an Additional Language (EAL). 23 pupils (96%) were educated within Lincolnshire and 1 pupil (4%) was educated Out of County.

The average SDQ for the cohort is: 17.3 and which is considered to be high. In total 64% of Lincolnshire pupils had an SDQ score of High (18%) or Very High (45%).

11.3.3 Key Stage 2 – Attainment

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this year no Key Stage 2 assessments were completed or submitted to the Department for Education. This means we have no Key Stage 2 assessment data and no regional or national comparator data for benchmarking our performance.

Localised tracking data for our pupils completing Key Stage 2 in 2021, indicated that approximately 25% would have achieved the expected standard or above in Reading, Writing and Maths (33% in Reading, 29% in Writing & 38% in Maths).

11.4 Key Stage 4

11.4.1 Key Stage 4 Case Study

Key Stage 4

During Year 10, whilst police investigated a serious incident that L was involved in, his bail conditions prevented him from attending his school. His Virtual School Co-ordinator developed a home learning package that included remote tuition each day. L had been predicted GCSE grades 1-2 as he was not engaging in his learning at school. The home learning programme provided him with time and individual support to learn without distractions and with the support of his carers, he was fully committed to the tuition and worked hard to achieve. At his Autumn Term PEP, his carers asked if there was any possibility he could return to a school environment and be allowed to socialise like his peers. Communicating regularly with his social worker, L's Virtual School Co-ordinator explored all possible options taking into account the bail conditions and potential contact with other young people involved in the initial incident. An exceptional place at the Lincolnshire Springwell Academy was identified and L started in January. His Spring term PEP recorded 100% attendance which continued through the remainder of the academic year. L gained a part time summer job and used his wages to pay for his moped insurance and petrol and to build up some savings. Everyone was delighted when L achieved Grade 4s in his English and Maths GCSEs, enabling him to start at his preferred Plumbing Level 2 course.

11.4.2 Key Stage 4 – Cohort Characteristics

There were 41 pupils in the children in care cohort completing Key Stage 4 Assessments in 2021. Within this cohort young people accessed their education in a variety of settings:

- **Mainstream Schools** **71% (29)**
- **Special Schools** **5% (2)**
- **Independent Schools** **15% (6)**
- **Alternative Provision** **7% (3)**
- **Pupil Referral Unit** **2% (1)**

Of the 41 pupils, 27 (66%) had an identified Special Educational Need (16 pupils (39%) received SEN Support and 11 pupils (27%) had an EHC Plan). There were 15 boys (37%) and 26 girls (63%), 19 pupils (46%) eligible for Free School Meals in the past 6 years (FSM6) and 2 pupils (5%) had English as an Additional Language (EAL). Out of the 41 pupils, 26 pupils (63%) were educated within Lincolnshire and 15 pupils (37%) were educated Out of County.

The average SDQ for the cohort is: 14.1 and this is considered to be slightly raised. In total 34% of Lincolnshire pupils had an SDQ score of High (2%) or Very High (32%).

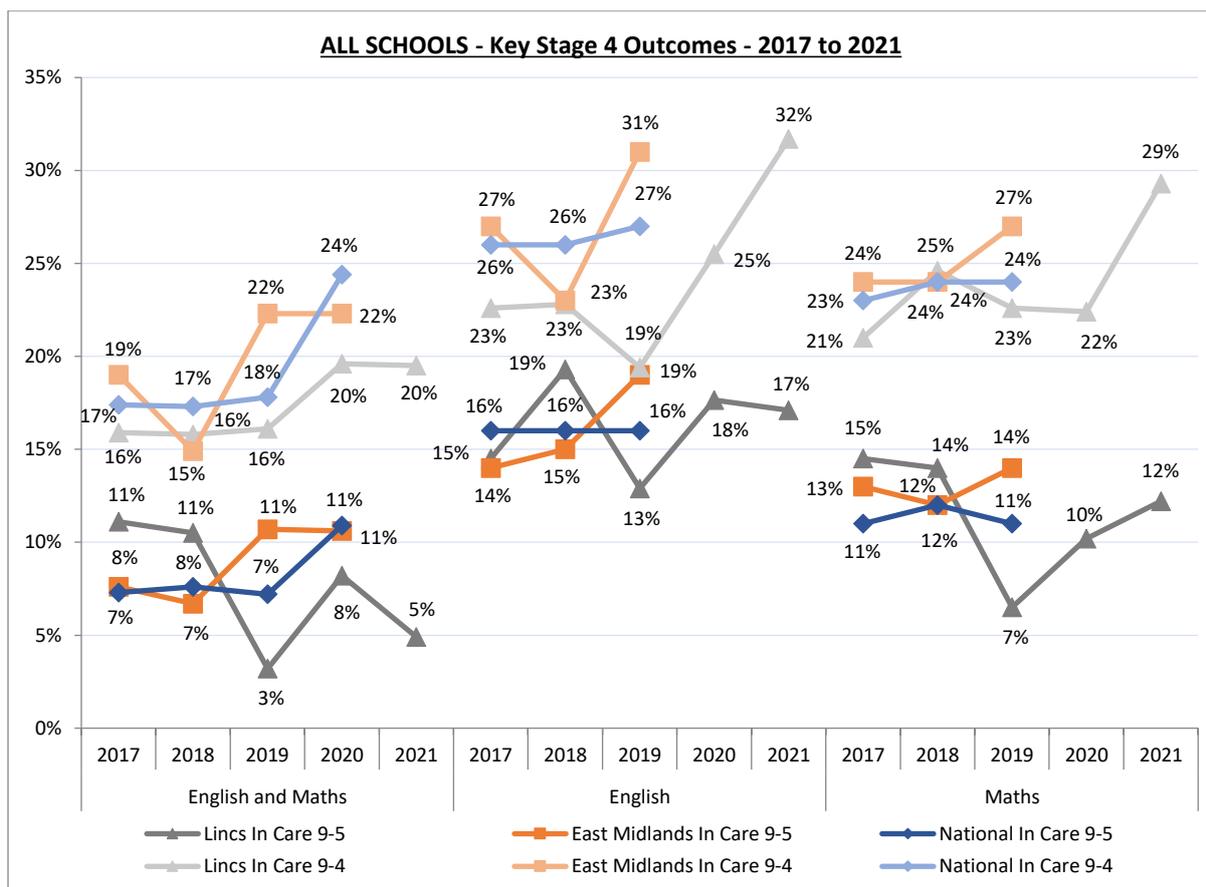
11.4.3 Key Stage 4 – Attainment

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic this year we have a greatly reduced dataset for analysis after exams were cancelled in favour of centre assessed grading. The use of centre assessed grade makes any comparison to previous years' exams data difficult.

71% of the cohort attended a mainstream secondary school in 2021. This is an increase on last year where 59% of our cohort attended a mainstream school (previously 37% in 2019 and 67% in 2018).

The outcomes of grade 5 or above in English and Maths have shown a decrease of 3% to 5%, compared to last year (8%). This is likely to be below the national and regional averages when compared to the previous 4 years data (no national or regional data in 2021). Despite the decrease in the combined measure the performance in the individual subjects was similar to last year with a 1% drop in English grade 5+ (17% in 2021, 18% in 2020) and a 2% increase in Maths grade 5+ (12% in 2021 and 10% in 2020).

The outcomes of grade 4 or above in English and Maths remained at 20%, the same as last year. There were big increases in the individual subjects at grade 4+ compared to last year. English grade 4+ saw a 7% increase in 2021 (32%) compared to 2020 (25%). Maths grade 4+ also saw a 7% increase in 2021 (29%) compared to 2020 (22%).



12.0 Individual Achievements of Young People

Despite the many challenges that our young people and their carers have faced over the Covid pandemic, lockdown, school closures, and uncertainty around exams, we are delighted to share some of their significant achievements:

Student A achieved outstanding results with grade 7 in English Language and grade 6 in Maths. Also achieving grade 8 in Drama, grade 7 in English Literature and German, and grade 6 in Geography, Biology, Chemistry and Physics.

Student B achieved outstanding results with grade 8 in English Language and grade 4 in Maths. Also achieving grade 8 in English Literature, grade 7 in History and Religious Studies, grade 6-5 in Combined Science, starred distinction in BTEC Performing Arts and distinction in Health and Social Care.

Student C achieved excellent results with grade 6 in English Language and grade 5 in Maths. Also achieving grade 6 in English Literature and History, grade 5-5 in Combined Science, grade 4 in Religious Studies and an A* in CACHE Level 2 Technical Award in Child Development and Care.

Student D achieved excellent results with grade 6 in Maths and grade 4 in English Language. Also achieving grade 7-7 in Combined Science, grade 5 in French and Geography and Grade 4 in Religious Studies.

Student E achieved an excellent grade 8 in English Language and grade 3 in Maths. Also achieving Grade 7 in English Literature, History and Art & Design, grade 6 in Religious Studies and grade 4 in Media Studies and German.

Student F achieved grade 5 in English Language and grade 4 in Maths. Also achieving grade 5 in Art & Design, grade 4-4 in Combined Science, grade 4 in English Literature, History and Religious Studies and a Merit in Creative Media.

Student G achieved grade 5 in Maths and a grade 4 in English Language.

Student H achieved grade 4 in English Language and grade 4 in Maths. Also achieving grade 5 in Geography, grade 5-4 in Combined Science, grade 4 in English Literature, Computer Science and RE. He also achieved a Distinction in Construction – Built Environment and Construction – Safety and Security.

Student I achieved grade 4 in English Language and grade 4 in Maths.

Student J achieved grade 5 in Maths and grade 3 in English Language and English Literature. Also achieving a Merit in Health and Social Care, grade 4 in Design & Technology/Food and grade 4-3 in Combined Science.

Student K achieved grade 5 in English Literature, grade 4 in English Language and grade 3 in Maths.

Student L achieved grade 5 in English Literature and grade 4 in English Language.

Student M achieved grade 5 in English Language and grade 3 in Maths. Also achieving grade 6 in Sociology, grade 5 in English Literature and a Distinction in Child Development.

Student N achieved grade 4 in English Language and grade 4 in Maths. Also achieving grade 5 in Geography, grade 4 in English Literature, Distinction in Art and Design and Merit in Health and Social Care.

Student O was very proud to be nominated Head Boy at the start of the academic year and wrote an inspirational article for our Foster Carers' magazine 'Our World' on his experience of being a young person in care.

Students P, Q and R all achieved the necessary A level results to enable them to accept places at their preferred universities.

Following successfully passing his English GCSE resit, **Student X** passed his A levels enabling him to progress studying an HND in Engineering.

Finally following her successful A Level results, **Student Y** now plans to complete a Level 3 Public Services Course at College before joining the police force. Alongside her studies, she has applied to be a Special Police Constable.

13.0 How does the Virtual School ensure the voice of children and young people influences practice?

As noted above, one of the most important aspects of the role of our Virtual School Officers and Co-ordinators is to build strong working relationships with our children and young people over time so that any problems that emerge can be overcome and successes celebrated on an individual basis (86% of CiC chose to actively engage with the PEP process). To ensure that those who are not in a position to engage have the opportunity to be heard, the team also maintains regular contact with our children and young people to ensure that they are on track and feel, confident, safe and supported in school and any specific worries or concerns are addressed. This applies to those placed both in and out of county and has continued throughout periods of lockdown wherever possible.

14.0 Summary

This annual report covers the activity of the Lincolnshire Virtual School in the academic year 2020-2021 and describes how we have fulfilled our statutory duty to promote improved educational outcomes for our Children and Young People in care. The report outlines the specific and ever-changing characteristics of our cohorts of children in each year group and provides a context against which their outcomes are better understood.

It highlights the challenges faced and how they were overcome in this past academic year in promoting better outcomes and also shows that we are prepared to overcome these challenges through investment in the professional development of the wider workforce and by endeavouring to make the educational progress of children in care everybody's business, whilst also looking to provide innovative ways to better support our children.

It also highlights through the use of case examples, the positive impact that the work of the Virtual School has had on individual children and young people. The Virtual School team understands the need for patience, resilience, innovation and the importance of building effective relationships to ensure that we can create the environments in which our children and young people can thrive.

In this report we demonstrate:

- A commitment to promoting continuous professional development within the Virtual School team. Also, a determination towards training and support work with designated teachers, social care teams, foster carers, IROs, and others.
- The Virtual School team and our SEND, Commissioning, and Social Care colleagues work effectively to ensure that our children and young people are placed in provision Ofsted graded Good or better and regularly review the placement of those in less than good schools regularly.

- That Pupil Premium is allocated to schools in an efficient and timely manner with the impact of interventions recorded on the ePEP, which is reviewed at least three times per year or more often if necessary. Pupil Premium is utilised strategically to fund early intervention strategies.
- That we value the need to build strong relationships with our children and young people over time so that trust can be developed and advocacy can be effective and based on the views of the child. We take the time to celebrate individual success and also see the importance of celebrating success more widely as appropriate.
- That we have high aspirations for our children and young people and recognise that understanding their needs, building their emotional resilience and self-esteem goes hand in hand with promoting their academic progress.

15.0 Recommendations

The Virtual School to continue to promote improving educational outcomes for children and young people, as outlined in our Lincolnshire Looked after Children and Care Leavers Strategy.

1. The Virtual School continues to ensure that all Personal Education Plans (PEPs) are high quality and effective with Children's Services staff, carers, children, and schools working effectively and in partnership to promote wellbeing and learning. That the work of the Virtual School team focuses on supporting our children and young people to access effective support as we return to business as usual following the recent pandemic.
2. Children's Services to continue to develop a highly skilled, effective and innovative workforce across Lincolnshire focused upon improving educational outcomes for children and young people in care, and to ensure that we build on the opportunities presented in the recent crisis in our work to fulfil our statutory duties in our extended role to support the improvement of educational outcomes of children with a Social Worker.
3. That we engage with other Children's Services teams to ensure improving educational outcomes is central to the development of our Lincolnshire Children and Care Leavers Strategy from 2022 and beyond.



Open Report on Behalf of Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	20 January 22
Subject:	Lincolnshire Leaving Care – 6 Monthly Update Report

Summary:

This is a 6 Monthly Update Report Provided by Barnardo's on Behalf of Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service (April 21 – September 21).

Actions Required:

The Panel is invited to comment on the contents of this Report and to endorse this 6 Monthly Update.

1. 1. Background

This is the 6 Monthly Update Report to Lincolnshire County Council's Corporate Parenting Panel to demonstrate the performance of Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service regarding care leavers. Areas covered within this report include:

- A. Barnardo's Response to Covid.
- B. Accessing and maintaining suitable, safe accommodation.
- C. Accessing and maintaining appropriate Education Employment and Training opportunities.
- D. New Initiatives
- E. Compliments, Complaints and Success Stories

Lincolnshire County Council's (LCC) Leaving Care Service is currently delivered by Barnardo's. The contract specification (since the 1 April 2020) is to deliver a Statutory Leaving Care Service for young people aged 18-25 and to start working with the Local Authority Children in Care / Family Assessment and Support Teams (FAST) working with Looked after Children aged 16-18. The contract is closely monitored via monthly contract monitoring meetings which are attended by the Contract Monitoring Officer, the

Corporate Parenting Manager and the Head of Regulated Services (with lead responsibility for Looked after Children and Care Leavers).

Data contained within this report demonstrates performance from 1st April 2021 – 30th September 2021

A - Barnardo’s Response to Covid

Within the last annual Corporate Parenting Report (presented in July 2021) information was provided that demonstrated how the service has continued to operate following Covid restrictions and Government guidance. We continue to have staff working both virtually and office based and adapt working risk assessments dependent on the current Government advice and guidance. Since the initial lockdown in March 2020, we have continued to provide advice, support and guidance on a more frequent basis than the 8 weekly visits we are committed to deliver as part of the current contract. We have prioritized the young people we feel are more at risk and have increased social isolation due to the pandemic.

Lincolnshire Care Leavers have also benefitted from funding streams that Barnardo’s have been able to access (on behalf of Lincolnshire Care Leavers) these have included the following grants / schemes:

- Barnardo’s Covid Appeal (£3,000)
- Land Aid Charity Grant (£10,000)
- Ikea (Gifts for all Care Leavers who had Children & household starter packs)
- Donations from Vodaphone of pay as you go handsets & data.

The monies above have been used to purchase:

- Food / Utilities
- Data Bundles
- IT equipment

B - Accessing and Maintaining Suitable, Safe Accommodation

Accessing and maintaining suitable, safe accommodation

Open Allocated Cases – Target 90%

Apr 21	May 21	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sept 21
2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021
276	275	280	283	284	283
95%	95%	96%	97%	98%	97%

Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service offered advice, support, and assistance in relation to accommodation options for young people aged 16-25 (Children in Care, 16- and 17-year-

old homeless and Care Leavers). As a service we aim to share information in relation to housing options available both within County but also where the young person is currently residing. Within service we have a specialist post holder who specializes in housing provision for Care Leavers, and we also have the Leaving Care Workers and Team Managers who have knowledge on services available to young people.

Within Barnardo's we continue to work with the Corporate Parenting Manager who has lead responsibility for the Council in relation to housing options for Care Leavers. The transition guidance for 16–18-year-olds enables Leaving Care Workers to start to work alongside Social Workers based within the Local Authority to ensure all Children in Care have the appropriate paperwork in place prior to their 18th Birthday to enable them to claim housing and benefit entitlements.

We have developed some good links with District Council Housing Teams and the Corporate Parenting Manager continues to offer the District Councils advice, support, and assistance in relation to developing the housing offer for Care Leavers.

Barnardo's Supported Lodgings Scheme

The Corporate Parenting Manager sees this type of accommodation as another housing option for Looked after Children and Care Leavers across Lincolnshire.

This scheme gives young people the opportunity to develop independence skills whilst living in a home environment. Advice and guidance are offered in relation to cooking, undertaking household tasks, and maintaining education / employment. We have had some excellent outcomes for several young people who have accessed this scheme.

Young people live with providers as lodgers – paying rent and a contribution towards utilities and food. Children's Services pay a support fee dependent upon the level of support required; housing benefit /universal credit is also claimed (where appropriate).

The scheme caters for Care Leavers - Looked after Children over 16- and 16/17-year-olds who are homeless and require an 'assessment bed' for the purpose of a Social Care Assessment. 'Assessment beds' are infrequently used by the local authority, but they are used as part of the wider resources open to LCC.

Within Lincolnshire (in December 21) we are currently working with 16 providers who are supporting 15 young people in placement. The team provide vacancy information over to the Local Authority on a monthly basis but have officers available to deal with referral enquiries 5 days / week. Based on the figures above we can offer an additional 9 beds for 16–21-year-olds.

Barnardo's have continued to run its supported lodgings panel throughout 2020 / 21 and have representatives both from the Local Authority and Barnardo's. This panel not only reviews current providers but also considers new applications.

Supported Lodgings Providers have continued to work closely with Barnardo’s staff throughout the pandemic. Some have had to shield following Government advice and others have continued to offer a full range of placements. As a service we have been mindful about not making placement moves unless absolutely necessary but have also continued to work with the Local Authority to prioritise urgent placement requests.

C - Accessing and Maintaining Appropriate Education Employment and Training Opportunities

Open Allocated Cases – Target 65%

Open Allocated Young People – Education, Training and Employment

April	May	June	July	August	September
2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021
253	246	251	261	263	278
65%	63%	64%	65%	65%	68%

Within Lincolnshire Leaving Care all Leaving Care Workers have the opportunity to discuss education, training and employment opportunities with all Care Leavers (and the Children in Care that the service works with aged 16-18).

We also have 3 full-time equivalent (FTE) specialist workers (County Wide) who don’t carry a case load but work across county and have some specialist knowledge in relation to the opportunities available for Care Leavers.

The last financial year has been particularly challenging not only for Care Leavers but for the Country as a whole. The initial lockdown saw several Care Leavers lose temporary employment and stop attending college / training.

We have kept a careful watch over our young people who are following the Care Leavers Apprenticeship Scheme and whilst a number were furloughed during the initial lockdown, we saw all return to their jobs over the summer of 2020 and 2021.

We have recently undertaken a piece of work across service where we have tried to understand the reason why Care Leavers are not taking up employment, education or training opportunities. We reviewed 52 young people (who we believed could be in education). 27 of the Care Leavers didn’t have a phone or failed to respond to numerous phone calls. Noting the other 25 Care Leavers some information was incorrect on the IT recording system and a further 10% were in the wrong employment category.

Noting the other 15 Care Leavers the reason’s that they gave for not seeking employment or training opportunities are noted below:

- Struggling to get a bank account due to previous fraudulent activity
- Criminal activity – involvement with police and probation
- Alcohol related issues

- No passport or national insurance number
- Applied for over 250 jobs – not got anything
- Depressed/ no motivation
- Substance misuse
- Doesn't like people
- Mental health issues
- Can't afford to work because of accommodation support costs
- Anxiety and depression
- Having gap year before Uni to prioritise mental health
- Rurality
- In police protection

Using this data, we have thought about the type of worker we could develop that may assist to work with this co-hort. There appear to be some 'wellbeing' issues that are stopping Care Leavers accessing opportunities and we are looking to advertise for a well-being worker to sit alongside the employment and training specialists to target the group above and try and encourage engagement and attendance.

I would urge members of the Corporate Parenting Panel to consider the support that is offered in a family environment to ensure young people attend school, college, or work. This can often involve motivation and constant calling in a morning, transporting to college / work, supplementing wages, and not charging board / rent. This is not something we can fully replicate for Children in Care or Care Leavers.

At the beginning of 2020 we started negotiations with Serco who provide a number of job opportunities across the region and in partnership with the County Council. We have developed and launched a 'Care Leavers Mentoring Scheme'. We have now moved onto the third set of Care Leavers who have benefitted from a worker based within Serco to offer career and work advice.

Barnardo's have a common mission of ***'Increasing Aspiration and Outcomes for Looked after Children and Care leavers.*** Employment and Training continues to be a challenging concept not only in Lincolnshire but nationally. We have developed some excellent partnerships with DWP and Job Centres to help target our Care Leavers. We are working with DWP on some of the delayed new initiatives such as a the 'Kick Start' programme, the Kickstart Scheme provides funding to employers to create job placements for 16- to 24-year-olds on Universal Credit. This program was delayed during 2020 due to Covid.

The Corporate Parenting Manager continues to be an advocate within Lincolnshire County Council in relation to the 'Care Leavers Covenant'. The Covenant is a promise made by private, public or voluntary organisations to provide support for care leavers aged 16-25 to help them to live independently. Central Government feel it's important that Local Authorities work together to secure meaningful offers of employment and support which meet local need. Government believes the only way we can achieve this is through a whole council approach which allows all departments to look at not only what they are able to offer internally but also how they can facilitate and enable support externally from local business.

D - New Initiatives

Specialist Employment, Education and Training Posts

As part of the last annual report, we were able to describe how Lincolnshire County Council have worked with Barnardo's to develop two new temporary posts to help promote education, employment and training opportunities for Lincolnshire Care Leavers.

One of the posts has been appointed to and the worker sits with the employment and training specialists in the service and has been working with several colleges across County to help identify and prioritise engagement with Care Leavers.

The second post is going to be advertised as the 'wellbeing' worker and prioritise working with the 15 young people currently in service who have identified boundaries and issues stopping them seeking employment and training opportunities.

GAP Homes

Gap housing is a model of accommodation whereby Barnardo's provide capital funding and support to build bespoke modern prefabricated modular housing for use by young people and Care Leavers.

The envisaged model for Lincolnshire is to develop one cluster of 4 houses for young people and 1 house on site with 24/7 staffing. Further to this the cluster will be associated with 4 further units of dispersed Gap houses nearby where more independent young people can be stepped forward.

- 4x Intensive cluster Gap housing beds with onsite staffing
- 4x Dispersed Gap housing beds with staff just off site

The Local Authority and Barnardo's have started to build on the proposals noted above and have identified potential areas of land to build the homes.

Specialist Mental Health Worker

As part of the new contract to expand services to Looked after Children and Care Leavers Barnardo's suggested the development of a specialist Mental Health Worker who would work solely with the service and provide some 1:1 work with Care Leavers, some mentoring and training opportunities for staff and enable better access to CAMHS and adult mental health pathways.

The new post holder started work in September 21 and is be based within the Children and Young People's Complex Need Service and receives supervision from within Barnardo's and also receive clinical supervision from a qualified health practitioner.

E – Compliments, Complaints and Success Stories

Number and % of complaints received and resolved within agreed timescale of 14 days.

Month	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept
	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021
Number	0	0	0	0	0	0
% Resolved	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Running Total	0	0	0	0	0	0

Success Stories

April 2021

One of the young people working on the Care Leavers Apprentice Scheme was working for Lovelle Estate Agents. Based on some mystery shopping that took place at the assessment stage the company were awarded the British Property Awards Gold Certificate. The Manager let the service now how very proud she was of the contribution that S made to the team.

May 2021

Feedback form one of Lincolnshire Care Leavers in relation to Sandy and Bob Cockland (Supported Lodgings Providers for Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service):

"I was living with Sandy and Bob for just over 2 years.

Living with Sandy and Bob was different, they treated me like I was part of their family. And treated me no different. They took me away on holidays with them and their family which I never got growing up with my birth family them and their family don't leave you out and they include you in all family events.

I get asked this all the time, "what was the best and worst bits about living with Sandy and Bob?" There are no bad bits. There like my grandparents. We have the odd bicker over leaving dirty pots and lights on etc but that's just normal family stuff.

It's a nice loving and caring environment they are there through everything and they don't judge. I would 100% recommend SLP to any young person leaving foster care.

To be honest I don't know where I would be now if I didn't live with Sandy and Bob. My life was chaotic in and out of hospitals and custody and moving from place to place. I felt settled there.

While I was living with Sandy and Bob I started drinking again and became unwell and even me being in hospital they still attend all my meetings and appointments and came to visit me.

While I was not under the care of Sandy and Bob they still continued visits and allowed me to still come and stay with them for weekends and day visits. They would even pick me up and take me out.

Over 2 years on I still have regular contact with them and their family and visit them often and they are there whenever I need them.

They are amazing and I don't know what I would do without them. They keep me going everyday."

June 2021

Three of Lincolnshire Care Leavers provided some national feedback to the National Care Journey Collaborative. One of them spent time with Barnardo's chief Executive and representatives from the House of Lords.

September 2021

One of the hairdressers in Louth met with the Louth Team Manager and offered:

- 2 x men's haircuts at £13 each.
- 3 x women's cut and blow dry at £26 each.

Offer greatly accepted by Care Leavers living in the region.

2. Conclusion

This report reflects the progress and achievements during a 6-month period for Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service.

The staffing establishment agreed as part of the current Leaving Care Contract from April 2020 is noted below:

- 1 Service Manager
- 4.2 FTE Team Managers
- 1 Business Manager
- 6.1 FTE Administrators
- 1 Project Worker 3 – Specialising in Signs of Safety / Participation and Quality Assurance
- 1 Specialist Accommodation Worker
- 2 Supported Lodgings Workers
- 2 Education, Employment and Training Specialist Workers
- 24 FTE Leaving Care Workers

Over the past 6 months we continued to recruit the service and have had to adapt to providing on-live / virtual inductions. As Covid restrictions have lifted we have ensured staff are now able to visit offices and receive support, advice and guidance when required. We do have several new Team members and induction packages and coaching for new recruits as been essential in making them feel part of the team and the service

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

Not Applicable

4. Background Papers

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

This report was written by Lisa Adams, Service Manager, who can be contacted on 01522 575 955 or by e-mail at lisa.adams@barnardos.org.uk.

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

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	20 January 2022
Subject:	Fostering Service Quarter Three Performance Report

Summary:

To provide an overview of the Fostering Service Performance for Quarter Three October – December 2021.

Actions Required:

The Panel is asked to consider and comment on the report; and that the report be accepted as an accurate overview of the Fostering Service Quarter Three performance.

1. Background

To present an overview of the Fostering Service Quarterly Performance Report to members of Corporate Parenting Panel.

2. Conclusion

The progress within the service area to be recognised and the report attached is an accurate reflection of the service.

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Fostering Service Quarter Three Performance Report

5. Background Papers

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

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Lincolnshire Fostering Service

QUARTERLY REPORT
OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2021

Quarter Three Fostering Report–2021/2022

The Annual Report for 2020/2021 was presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel in September 2021. The Statement of Purpose was revised and was ratified on the same day. This is the third quarterly report for 2021/2022.

Introduction

In 2021/22, the Fostering Service has an annual budget of £9,100,233. All Foster Carer allowances have been increased by 2% for this financial year. This has ensured that allowances continue to remain in advance of the government recommended minimum rates. This is important as the foster care sector is more competitive with several independent agencies actively recruiting in the area and to retain our competitiveness, allowances are a significant factor.

Foster Carer availability has been compounded by the on-going effects of the Covid 19 pandemic which has resulted in an increase in numbers of children in care and diminishing Foster Carer availability owing to health and other social factors. The budget also continues to afford flexibility to provide enhanced allowances to certain categories of carers such as those offering permanence or managing children with distressed behaviours that otherwise would be hard to place.

During this third quarter of this year, the service has continued to respond to the continuing effects of the pandemic by continuing to offer support in a variety of ways. Alongside face-to-face supervision and support, the virtual foster care community continues to grow from strength to strength providing a wraparound support service to all fostering families. This is critical in securing their wellbeing in the invaluable role they undertake in caring for children and promoting placement stability.

With the ongoing challenges of the pandemic the service has experienced peaks and troughs in sufficiency as a direct consequence of health vulnerabilities, social and lifestyle factors. During this period the number of additional fostering beds returning has slightly increased with a total of 90 still being unavailable for service to use.

During quarter three the number of children in care had continued to rise to 696 (sourced by monthly reporting at the end of November 2021). At the same time those placed with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) decreased to 35. There are 7 who were unaccompanied migrant children living in accommodation which is provided independently of an IFA.

During this period 54 children became children in care for the first time in this quarter, of these were twenty placed in foster care and nineteen placed in Kinship placements hence resulting in a large percentage of the children being cared for locally. The percentage of children in foster placements has slightly reduced to 70% however this remains within the target tolerance.

The effects of the pandemic continue, and the placement stability figures (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) stands at 70.2% which is a decrease in this quarter but remains above target.

Likewise, the percentage of children in care with three or more placements during the year stands at 3% 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.

For all placements, the service continues to ensure that Foster Carers are well supported and that potential problems/issues are identified early. This has been further reinforced by the continued success of the service approach which has embedded Caring2Learn and this continues to encourage fostering families to share and find solutions to problems and develop a whole range of tailored training and community support.

All Foster Carers have had priority access for the Covid 19 booster vaccine programme, and this has reflected the value placed on them by the Council. The service engages in providing data for public health regarding the take up by carers which to date reflects a promising interest akin to that of the primary and secondary courses.

Within this period recruitment activity continues to show promise which will be closely monitored, given the need to ensure there are enough skilled and knowledgeable Foster Carers for the children in care population. This will need to be carefully monitored and reviewed to ensure that any surge in interest is capitalised upon given the pressing need to recruit more local high-quality carers who can meet the needs of Lincolnshire children. The service continues to find innovative ways to reach out to potential Foster Carers by continuing to make the most of online and social media platforms.

During this period and owing to the continued increase in the children in care numbers, the rise in the number of children placed in Independent Non-Maintained provision (Independent Fostering/Residential Providers) and the resultant increase in costs in the past few years the Council commissioned transformation work relating to children in care.

The fostering service continues to be engaged in various aspects and strands of this transformational work with a strong focus on the core offers to Foster Carers and implementation of the Valuing Care Toolkit as a further measure to match Foster Carers skillset and children's needs.

Recruitment and Retention:

Fostering recruitment continue to work through the challenges presented by the pandemic and recruitment activity is returning to a more stable place that matches previous activity trends. Recruitment has developed into an area that is seen as everyone's responsibility with a wider pool of Supervising Social Workers completing half of initial visits. As restrictions have eased the service has adopted a smarter way of working using both face to face and online interactions and this will continue to be reviewed.

Online activities have brought many benefits and so the fostering service will continue to include online options to increase capacity, accessibility, and convenience for Foster Carers in the future. This has included online recruitment events and the fostering preparation course.

The Preparation to Foster courses has been delivered online over the last year, plans have been made to offer both face-to-face and virtual events in 2022/2023. Plans have been made for three face-to-face courses and three virtual courses within the next financial year. This way of working will be evaluated to ensure it is a most appropriate use of time and resource.

Each course is facilitated by a Supervising Social Worker, Caring2Learn representative and at least one Foster Carer Champion.

Fostering Information events take place on bi-monthly basis and over the last year have been held virtually. Those making formal or informal enquiries to foster are encouraged to attend these events. Virtual events have seen a substantial rise in people attending, recent changes to encourage participation has also made these sessions much more interactive and relational. This is supported in the feedback and improvement of conversion to people going on to stage 1 of the recruitment process. The current conversion of those going into stage 1 following attending a recruitment event is 69%.

A recruitment audit and review has been completed to look at each of the different stages to establish what is working well, what we are worried about and what needs to happen to maximise production and improve the conversion rate of initial enquiry to approval. The work continuing will closely monitor quality with a strong emphasis on good customer service and community. Initial results from the impact of changes in practice and processes can be seen through key performance indicators. Conversion rates following initial visits has already seen a rise of 6%.

The online recruitment system is now active, and the service have started to use this with all most recent applicants. Initial feedback is positive and business support staff appreciate the time it saves them in some of their administration duties.

Retention of Foster Carers remains the most effective means of recruitment. Providing individual levels of support to our carers and specifically those newly approved remains crucial.

Caring2Learn and its application of key principles and models of support and learning for Foster Carers and the wider service have proven the impact these have on Foster Carer retention and outcomes for children. Caring2Learn has been further embedded within the Fostering service from project to business-as-usual model. Applying these principles within Foster Carer recruitment has already started to impact on performance in this area.

The Caring2 Learn Practice Supervisor is now fully integrated into the fostering team and takes a lead on all fostering matters including recruitment, retention, training, development, and support.

The links with the virtual school continue to support the fidelity of this global approach in shaping the work to support 'Learning Homes and Caring Schools' to support and drive forward the good practice for all children in care in Lincolnshire.

Work continues to develop a community hub approach across the county. The support forums continue to act as a way for Foster Carers to access support from other Foster Carers, children's service's teams, and schools. This is providing a more integrated approach to

support. In a recent survey fostering households identified peer and community support and hub platforms as one of the strongest parts of their support offer.

Feedback from the Foster Carers strongly indicates that virtual platforms have helped carers overcome challenges to attending events, such as childcare. Online support plays a huge part in helping people to connect and support each other away from geographical and office hours challenges.

The hub largely continues to be supported by the Foster Carer champions who have roles that cover responsibilities as 'Hub Links'. This replaced the fostering 'buddy' system and feedback has been positive from both carers and staff.

All newly approved carers have previously been allocated a 'Hub Link' within the first month of their fostering journey, however, the service have now moved to allocating these during the assessment stage to support applicants being able to establish a network within the community. Therefore, it is more likely they will access general support and guidance from more experienced carers through established relationships rather than relying on new connections. It is hoped that soon the service will be able to allocate applicants a Supervising Social Worker earlier in the assessment process.

A tiered support offer has been set out, which includes a stage 1 support package, stage 2 support package and then a support offer to all approved carers. This allows for a smoother transition to fostering for applicants. Supporting them to be better informed and equipped for the journey, whilst feeling and experiencing a level of support from the service. The intention is to support and boost their level of confidence in Lincolnshire as a fostering provider.

Hub Links are allocated thoughtfully to promote relationship and connections between carers and their support network. Hub Links have also been allocated to existing carers and Special Guardians where they are experiencing challenges and require additional support. Participation in the different areas of the hub continues to increase; all platforms despite the current restrictions remain in place. Assessed need is monitored to ensure that the right kind of support is identified and delivered. Carers have welcomed the return of face-to-face support and feedback from carers is very positive with regards to their feeling really supported.

A retention audit has been completed, this has involved an analysis of the carers circumstances that led to a resignation or long periods offline. We have identified key themes and trends which will inform the retention plans and next steps regarding retention.

A recent survey along with the audit information has formed a picture that general advice and support for Foster Carers is going well; however, carers feel more support and improvement is required during challenging times often relating to the trauma experienced and behaviour exhibited by the children they care for. A challenging time has shown to be the most likely reason Foster Carers consider leaving the service or spend time offline. This is a key area for attention, planning, action, and ongoing review for 2022/2023. Other key themes for retention include support to carers that are offline, new Foster Carers and staff retention.

Marketing:

During this quarter 91 Initial Enquiries of Interest (IEI) were received from the public enquiring about becoming a Foster Carer.

There have been 3 newly approved households, 10 in total for the year 2021/2022 so far.

On 13 December 2021 there were 41 open applications in stages 1 or 2, with 8 of these having a panel date booked before the end of March 2022.

Advertising

October

- E-newsletter campaign to those who have signed up to the front door newsletter on the website but haven't made an enquiry / filled out an IEI yet with the aim of gaining conversions
- Foster Carers' Viewpoint focusing on caring for siblings
- 20,000 audience targeted ads across Stamford, Grantham, Spalding, Bourne and Newark websites belonging to the Iliffe Media Group

November

- Information Event on Thursday 18 November 2021 at 6:30pm
- Fostering advert running on Lincs FM
- Online advert on Lincolnshire Today website
- Half page advert in Lincolnshire Life magazine and online skyscraper
- Advert in Lincs and Wolds Scene magazines
- Advert in Simply Boston and Spalding magazines
- Targeted paid-for Facebook advert
- Advert in Gainsborough Life magazine
- E-newsletter campaign to those who have signed up to the front door newsletter on the website but haven't made an enquiry / filled out an IEI yet with the aim of gaining conversions
- Article on Int Comms advertising information event
- Foster Carers' Viewpoint from a single Foster Carer who looks after teenage girls
- 20,000 audience targeted ads, HPTO (Grantham Journal and Bourne Local websites) and NPTO (Stamford Mercury, Spalding Today and Newark advertiser websites).

December

- E-newsletter campaign to those who have signed up to the front door newsletter on the website but haven't made an enquiry / filled out an IEI yet with the aim of gaining conversions.
- Foster Carers' Viewpoint focusing on caring babies and children with additional needs
- 20,000 audience targeted ads across Stamford, Grantham, Spalding, Bourne and Newark websites belonging to the Iliffe Media Group.

Permanence campaign

The permanence campaign continued with a range of advertising as follows:

October

- Online advert on Lincolnshire Today website
- Targeted paid-for Facebook adverts

November

- Radio advert specifically for permanence running on Lincs FM

December

- Online advert on Lincolnshire Today website
- Half page advert in Lincolnshire Life magazine and online skyscraper
- Advert in Lincs and Wolds Scene magazines
- Targeted paid-for Facebook adverts
- Article on Int Comms about the need for more long-term carers

Parent and Child Campaign

Stage 2 of the campaign, which targets new Parent and Child Carer households externally, began in Q3. Activities included:

- Updating information on Information Events to reflect changes in training and support
- Article on Int Comms advertising the need for more Parent and Child Carers and the skills needed.
- Article in Children's Bulletin advertising the need for more Parent and Child Carers and the skills needed.
- Targeted LinkedIn advert throughout October
- Ongoing organic Instagram and Facebook posts
- Engagement with schools, churches, district councils etc. to ask them to put messages / adverts on their websites, social media channels & newsletters.
- Filming and editing of Parent and Child Carer talking about the role to use on social media platforms in the New Year.

Social Media

In addition to the paid-for adverts which target people to attend events / for specific roles i.e., Parent and Child Carer, organic posts are also scheduled to our social media channels. Quarter three has seen the Facebook and Instagram pages continue to develop the community feel we want to portray to the public with posts including (but not restricted to):

- Foster Carers' Viewpoints
- Thanks to our Foster Carers from various staff members, and from LCFC and Lincoln Theatre Royal

- Individual congratulations / posts to some Foster Carers receiving long-service awards
- Local charity / good causes e.g., Lincs FCs Cash4Kids and the Book Trust's Christmas Appeal
- Health and wellbeing tips and advice
- Foster Carer videos explaining FASD

Throughout November it was National Men's Health Awareness Month and so various posts went out about men looking after their mental and physical health and referring to useful national websites for more help and information.

By far the biggest engagement that we see is from posts which feature Foster Carers experiences, stories etc. which suggests that this is what people want to see more of.

Men's Listening Group

In conjunction with Men's Health Awareness Month, several male Foster Carers were consulted about what we could do to assist with their health and wellbeing, and it was suggested a Men's Listening Group be set up. This has been completed and is due to start in January and will be run entirely by male carers with a Champion leading on this.

Handbook

The Foster Carers' Handbook was updated during this quarter and is now available to all foster families on Google Drive rather than it being printed and posted out to them. The idea being that these documents are live and will always be the most up-to-date information for Foster Carers to access.

Online Registration of Interest (ROI):

During quarter 3 work was undertaken with the Digital Engagement Team to move the Registration of Interest (ROI) Form online to give applicants a better customer experience as they receive email notifications at each stage and when different elements of their checks and references are back. This went live at the beginning of December 2021.

Family Finding:

During the third quarter of this year Family Finders has continued to meet on a monthly basis to consider all children with a care plan for long-term fostering who do not already have a placement identified. Considering the on-going restrictions in place surrounding Covid 19 some of these meetings have taken virtually or a hybrid model adopted.

Over this quarter eight children have been considered a sibling group of two and six singletons some of whom are currently placed in residential settings.

During this period two out of the eight children has been removed from Family Finders. The sibling group of two have returned to live with their previous Foster Carers following a placement breakdown with an independent fostering agency provider. This will remain their long-term placement and as such they have been removed from Family Finders.

The Permanence Campaign is on-going and includes a variety of advertising on social media, radio, and local publications. In the third quarter this has included, Lincs FM, Lincs Today, Lincolnshire Life, Gainsborough Life, E-newsletter, Facebook, Int Comms, County News, Lincs Scene, Wolds Scene and Primary Times. The fostering service now has a dedicated Instagram page which we are utilising as part of our recruitment drive.

The County Council fostering web page continues to provide information on long-term fostering and the support available to Foster Carers.

The permanence event is currently in the planning stage through due to take place on the 27 January 2022. The six children currently on Family Finders will have their profiles circulated within the event and their social workers will attend to discuss them individually with the Foster Carers who attend. The service aim to try to secure permanent placements for the children or long-term respite opportunities where they get to experience family life and build long lasting connections with a foster family.

Family Finding review meetings, chaired by senior managers, are also taking place to consider children where no suitable match has been identified after a three-month period to ensure there is no delay for children. During this third quarter it has not been necessary to refer any children to the Family Finder review process.

During this quarter there have been very few children referred to Family Finders. Unfortunately, it continues to remain a challenge to identify long term placements with carers approved for permanence with many children remaining with their task-centred carers on a long-term basis. We currently do not have any approved permanent carers with vacancies to consider a placement, however, the service is aware that two sets of potential carers have expressed an interest in permanence, however, they are currently in stage 1 of the approval process.

Training:

In this quarter virtual training continues to be delivered. It is anticipated that some face-to-face events will return in March 2022. Considering this virtual training has been offered to support carer's introduction to fostering and their continued development.

The fostering training offer is currently under review and a revised offer will go out to all foster households in February 2022. Their current offer is dated up until April 2022.

34 courses were delivered during this quarter with 270 attendees taking part from fostering households.

Courses delivered via Zoom or Teams – 32.

Training:

- First Aid training
- Restorative Practice
- Kid Skills

- Safeguarding
- Safe Care

Practice Workshops:

- Introducing Social Pedagogy
- Introduction to Restorative Practice
- Introduction to mindfulness, Creating Calm
- Kid skills
- Introduction to Trauma Awareness
- Supporting sleep, nightmares, and night terrors.
- Supporting autism, A carers perspective
- Supporting ADHD and FASD, A carers perspective
- Time2talk
- Fostering Weekly Programme (Caring2gether, 6 weeks)

E-Learning:

LSCP 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) has been well received. The service is now starting to see these come in for assessment resulting in carers receiving a Learning Homes award with an expectation to resubmit a portfolio every three years to ensure on-going personal and professional development.

Currently there are seventy-five foster homes and four residential settings that have achieved their Learning Homes Award. Due to the number of toolkits collected over recent months and the expectations that all new carers complete the award within twelve months of approval; the service are seeing the number of awarded homes to continue to rise significantly.

Celebration Event:

The Foster Carer Celebration took place on 19 October 2021. The event celebrated the contribution and achievements of our fostering community. Foster Carers received their long service awards, a voucher, flower arrangements, lapel badge and personalised certificate. The voucher and lapel badge are given to carers as a token of gratitude and was positively received at the event.

This event was supported by a wide range of personnel from Lincolnshire County Council and associated partnerships. All of whom who are committed to achieving the best outcomes for our children and young people in Lincolnshire.

This event sought to celebrate, show, and share amongst the community the wide and varied ways in which Foster Carers support children, young people, and their families across their journey. Following feedback practice awards were introduced this year in the following areas.

- Virtual School Award for outstanding contributions to children’s learning
- FAST Award for outstanding practice towards outcomes for children
- Children in Care Award for outstanding practice towards outcomes for children
- Support to the Fostering Service for going above and beyond in service
- Community Award for dedication and contributions to the fostering community

New Foster Carers were also formally welcomed to the community, providing the opportunity to thank them for choosing Lincolnshire as their provider.

Kinship:

Placing children and young people with family and friends remains the first consideration when they first enter care. This continues to be looked at throughout their care journey experience. Kinship continues to work with the area locality teams in refining this process and regular discussions and joint supervisions with the children’s social workers and practice supervisors are key to this.

Between the 1 October 2021 and the 15 December 2021 the following data reflects the work undertaken during this period:

Number of Referrals	SGO	Reg.24 and SGO	Reg. 24 / Connected Person	Private Fostering	Statutory Checks/CAO/38(6)	Private Law SGO
47	10	7	16	3	10	1

In comparison to quarter two the service does not yet have the final data for December 2021 however, there are further referrals expected as indicated via court orders and memos.

At this time the fostering Kinship service have received the same number of referrals as in the second quarter two however, the expectation is that this quarter will exceed the previous one. Such figures support and highlight the growth in Kinship referrals and specifically with Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) and Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2013 connected person referrals accounting for 70% of all referrals.

The number of SGO only assessments has almost halved since the last quarter but the number of regulation 24 placements (with or without an SGO) has increased only slightly. This suggests the number of regulation 24 placements remains relatively stable albeit a slight increase.

In terms of the number of SGO assessments having reduced this is most likely to be as a direct consequence of court proceedings taking longer owing to the impact of the ongoing pandemic. The service continues to work within the court directed timescales but invariably mean that the involvement of the fostering service is longer than ordinary.

As the service enhance and further detail reporting of Kinship activities, the service is now including those requests for statutory checks due to the increase in the numbers. This provides a more accurate representation of the work being undertaken and the continued pressure on the fostering service. Statutory checks are undertaken when locality teams are completing assessments for the court such as Special Guardianship or Child Arrangement Orders where the Local Authority is not the corporate parent (private law) or the children remain with their birth parents.

In terms of private law special guardianship assessments there has been a drop in these, and private fostering assessments have remained the same as the last quarter.

In all aspects of the work there remains a strong focus on joint working between fostering and children's social workers. Early discussions with the locality team continue to take place to identify referrals and any issues early on in terms of care planning for children. This allows for the sharing of information relating to the referral to be completed at an early stage resulting in coordinated approach aimed at improving the lives and outcomes for children and young people.

What's working well?

The use of virtual platforms such as Microsoft Teams mean early discussions can take place and decisions expedited.

More joint supervisions are taking place because of the above.

Face to face visits to applicants and carers are continuing to take place.

Joint visits are being undertaken to applicants / carers and children by the Supervising Social Worker and the Children's Social Worker.

There is open communication between the Fostering Panel booking team and Kinship to ensure a smoother and more effective panel booking system, and to support panels run as best as they can.

What are we worried about?

All parts of the children's service are keen to ensure that the quality of the viability assessments is received timely and are of sufficient quality to aid assessments and determine placement options for children.

The service has seen in the year to date an increase in multiple viability assessments for the same child or children. This is placing pressure on the service and is being addressed by ensuring that family network meetings are being utilised at the point of entry to care.

There are concerns regarding the court timetabling for SGO assessments is at times insufficient to do quality assessments including statutory checks. There has been reduced timescales to as little as four weeks from referral to court filing.

What needs to happen?

Joint supervisions to continue to be booked for each Kinship referral at the point of allocation. The need to offer advice and guidance is a part of the fostering role and will continue to form part of the fostering quality assurance process.

Staying Put:

Staying Put is discussed at the first review following the young person's 16th birthday with the decision being recorded on their pathway plan, which is then followed up at each review. Discussions around expectations and finances are undertaken with the young person and Foster Carers with a license agreement being completed prior to them turning 18. This ensures the transition to Staying Put is smooth with young people remaining informed about the process having support and stability to transition into adulthood. The service continues to work with Shared Lives to ensure that all placements consider the requirements of the Fostering Service (England) Regulations 2011.

Staying Put continues to be an active part of the fostering service and we continue to receive a steady flow of referrals. There are currently 29 young people waiting to join the scheme when they reach their 18th birthday. Each Staying Put arrangement is discussed at the first children in care review following the young person's 16th birthday. The decision regarding Staying Put is recorded within the young person's Pathway Plan and is reviewed at each children in care review thereafter.

During this third quarter of 2021-2022 the number of young adults in Staying Put arrangements stands at 40, which is identical to quarter two.

Of the 40 young people ten adults are attending university, twenty-four are in full time further education, two are in employment and two are on the Care Leavers Apprenticeship Scheme. The remaining two are currently NEET with one being a new mum and the other having been made an offer of employment.

During the third quarter three young people left the Staying Put scheme. One had a positive move on into their own property, one left to return to their country of birth and one was the result of a placement breakdown. One young person returned to their Staying Put arrangement following on from a brief, unsuccessful period of living independently with their partner.

During Covid restrictions the service adapted with support and guidance available to existing and potential Staying Put providers given via email, telephone, and IT platforms (e.g., Zoom or Teams). With the easing of Covid restrictions, Staying Put has returned to completing license agreements and other information gathering and sharing activities with face-to-face meetings.

What's working well:

- Children's teams continue to joint work with fostering and the Staying Put Co-Ordinator to ensure Staying Put arrangements are put in in a planned and informed way. Despite Covid, teams have continued to work jointly, attending meetings together, joint visits with regular communication
- Good communication flow between Barnardo's Leaving Care Service and Staying Put. Information is being passed between services in a timely manner and joint working takes place to address and issues arising within Staying Put arrangements
- Staying Put providers are responding positively to meeting returning to being face to face though some are still preferring meeting to be held over Zoom or Teams.

What needs to happen:

- Reasons behind referral number remaining static needs further analysis. Staying Put is one option for young people leaving care and not the only option. It is important that within the care planning early discussions continue to take place as part of the care planning process to plan accordingly should staying put be the preferred option for the young person and their carers.

Conclusion:

During the last year and to date the impact of Covid 19 continues. Despite the vaccination and booster programme and gradual easing the availability of foster placements to the service is still reduced and is an ongoing challenge that sits within a local and national context.

During this quarter placement stability has continued to be strong but placement availability across the board is still reduced. The number of placement requests and the care plans for permanent fostering represents a significant challenge for the Directorate overall whilst the recruitment of permanent Foster Carers remains worryingly low.

The service continues to use creative and innovative approaches to reach out to potential Foster Carers, including making the most of online and social media platforms yet it is envisaged that face to face events will safely resume to aid our efforts and overall strategy.

The Covid context is still to be fully understood in terms of longer-term effects however, as a service our best efforts and motivation is to remind all households of their continued value to the authority and the children they care for. Maintaining high quality supervision and support is central to this in the context of maximising and mobilising our capacity. Equally, for many households they have and continue to make the difference and have despite the enormous challenges have demonstrated their commitment to the children in their care.

Foster Carer's engagement within the virtual fostering community has continued to be a real strength and results in many carers sharing experiences, supporting others, and drawing upon their experience in mass. It is a community that is going from strength to strength and for many is a further layer of support to the support and supervision from the service which is a statutory responsibility.

The continued efforts in the areas of recruitment, retention and the broad ranging support offered to fostering families is at the heart of what is delivered in Lincolnshire. This alongside fostering's engagement in the transformation work is where the ongoing support to carers will also evolve and will help shape the service going forward.

Deborah Crawford

Head of Service - Fostering, Adoption and Leaving Care

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

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	20 January 2022
Subject:	Children in Care Annual Report 2020-2021

Summary:

The Children in Care Annual Report 2020-2021 covers the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021.

Actions Required:

That the Corporate Parenting Panel supports and endorses the key messages and recommendations of the Children in Care Annual Report 2020-2021.

1. Background

This report covers the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021. The Department of Health Statutory Guidance on Promoting the Health and Well-being of Looked after Children (DCSF/DH, 2015) requires a report on the delivery of service and the progress achieved for the health and wellbeing of children in care. In addition, the Local Authority (LA) requires an annual report to provide a summary of the core activities relating to Children in Care.

The NHS has a major role to play in supporting the LA as Corporate Parent in ensuring the timely and effective delivery of health services to Children in Care. As directed by the Children Act 1989, Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and NHS England have a duty to comply with the requests from the LA to help them to provide support and services to these children. The NHS is also statutorily obligated to support Children in Care who have been placed by an external LA within the County of Lincolnshire when they have been notified of the placement.

This Annual Report is intended to inform Children in Care, the public, elected members, stakeholder partners and staff of the progress and developments of the services to date. It has been jointly produced by Lincolnshire Community Health Services (LCHS) Looked After Children/ Young Persons (LAC/YP) team, the Children in Care teams from Lincolnshire Local Authority (LLA).

In 2019, following local and national work undertaken by children and young people, regarding professional language and jargon, the decision was made to use the term "children in care" within day-to-day practice.

The key messages within this report are:

- The number of children in the care of Lincolnshire County Council was 680 at year end, an increase of 9.3% over the year. The number of children and young people placed into Lincolnshire by external authorities also continues to rise.
- The 16/17-year-old age group now makes up almost 22% of the looked after population.
- The placement of children within kinship placements remains the preferred outcome for most children who enter care.
- There was an increase in the number of initial health assessments completed within the statutory time frame of 20 working day when Nurses were able to complete these during the pandemic.
- The rate of completion of review health assessments remains amongst the highest in the country, regarding completion within the statutory time frame. Nurse led provision has provided continuity and supported more children to engage in the process.
- Up-to-date immunisation and vaccination of the children in care has been impacted by the COVID19 pandemic.
- The health data used in this report is only a small proportion of the amount of reporting against health issues which has continued to be developed over the last year.

2. Conclusion

Recommendations for 2021-2022

1. LLA, Lincolnshire CCGs and LCHS to continue to work together to improve the number of Initial Health Assessments completed within the statutory timeframe.
2. LCHS to continue to recruit GPs to complete Initial Health Assessments (IHA) and to work with United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust (ULHT) to agree an arrangement whereby Community Paediatricians complete IHAs as part of their job role.
3. The annual report to be shared with the IRO service to promote improvement in constructive challenge.
4. A revised multi agency approach to the management of and support provided to children with above average Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) scores.
5. The pilot of "care skills" to be expanded and jointly delivered with the Leaving care service.
6. Official launch of the Children's promise and refresh of the children in care and care leaver's strategy.
7. Roll out of the valuing care toolkit and expansion of our residential estates as part of our transformation programme in response to the shortage of local placements for children in care

3. Consultation

Noted in section 8 of the report.

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 Annual Report 2020-21

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 Rachel Freeman, Head of Service Children in Care and Residential Estates, who can be contacted on 07919564803 or by e-mail at rachel.freeman@lincolnshire.gov.uk.

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CHILDREN IN CARE ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21



Lincolnshire Community
Health Services
NHS Trust



*Lincolnshire
Clinical Commissioning Group*



Working for a better future



Lincolnshire Partnership
NHS Foundation Trust

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report covers the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021. The Department of Health Statutory Guidance on Promoting the Health and Well-being of Looked after Children (DCSF/DH. 2015) requires a report on the delivery of service and the progress achieved for the health and wellbeing of children in care. In addition, the Local Authority (LA) requires an annual report to provide a summary of the core activities relating to Children in Care.

The NHS has a major role to play in supporting the LA as Corporate Parent in ensuring the timely and effective delivery of health services to Children in Care. As directed by the Children Act 1989, Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and NHS England have a duty to comply with the requests from the LA to help them to provide support and services to these children. The NHS is also statutorily obligated to support Children in Care who have been placed by an external LA within the County of Lincolnshire when they have been notified of the placement.

This Annual Report is intended to inform Children in Care, the public, elected members, stakeholder partners and staff of the progress and developments of the services to date. It has been jointly produced by Lincolnshire Community Health Services (LCHS) LAC/YP team, the Children in Care teams from Lincolnshire Local Authority (LLA).

In 2019, following local and national work undertaken by children and young people, regarding professional language and jargon, the decision was made to use the term "children in care" within day-to-day practice

The key messages within this report are:

- The number of children in the care of Lincolnshire County Council was 680 at year end, an increase of 9.3% over the year. The number of children and young people placed into Lincolnshire by external authorities also continues to rise.
- The 16/17-year-old age group now makes up almost 22% of the looked after population.
- The placement of children within kinship placements remains the preferred outcome for most children who enter care.
- There was an increase in the number of initial health assessments completed within the statutory time frame of 20 working day when Nurses were able to complete these during the pandemic.
- The rate of completion of review health assessments remains amongst the highest in the country, regarding completion within the statutory time frame. Nurse led provision has provided continuity and supported more children to engage in the process.
- Up-to-date immunisation and vaccination of the children in care has been impacted by the COVID19 pandemic.
- The health data used in this report is only a small proportion of the amount of reporting

against health issues which has continued to be developed over the last year.

1. Introduction

Our vision

"Putting Children First"

Working Together with Families to Enhance Children's Present and Future Lives

Our purpose

Children and families will be

- Helped to make changes for themselves
- Seen as a positive solution to the challenges they face
- Able to get the right service at the right time
- Understood as a whole family

Supported by a workforce which

- Uses evidence informed practice
- Understands and applies Relationship Based Practice
- Is Restorative in approach
- Is well trained and supported

Enabled and equipped by

- Clear governance that puts children and families at the heart of how we plan and deliver support for them
- Using a system called Signs of Safety that builds on family's strengths

Our purpose within Regulated Services is to ensure that every child in every part of the county achieves their potential, responding appropriately to the assessed needs of all Children in Care to ensure that their life chances are maximized by their experience of the service.

This Annual Report details the services and expected health outcomes for Children in Care who reside either in Lincolnshire or in out-of-county placements and is aligned to the Children and Young People's Commissioning Plan.

This report relates to children and young people who, within the reporting period of April 2020 – March 2021 are:

1. Corporately parented by Lincolnshire County Council / Local Authority, with strategic oversight through the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Or

2. Are placed by an external LA who maintains corporate parent status, and local strategic oversight and quality assurance is maintained via the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) and is incorporated in the LSCP business plan.

The evidence tells us that Children in Care are disadvantaged when compared to their peers in the general population, in all the wider determinants of health. Accordingly, they require proactive commitment from the professionals working with them.

The level of commitment is made explicit within the 'Children's Promise'. This replaced the "Children's Pledge" having been co-produced with a group of young people in care in 2019. The Promise was scheduled to be launched in 2020, however has been delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Central to this commitment is the aspiration for health needs to be accurately identified with care and support provided that maximizes the health and well-being of Children in Care. The services around the child must ensure that this care complies with all relevant legislation and the statutory guidance surrounding these children.

This report incorporates specific health data which offers a full year profile of the health of all Children in Care residing within the county. It identifies issues that impact upon the health and well-being of all Children in Care and will support future service commissioning and delivery. Such data is crucial to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) which is now amended on a quarterly basis to incorporate emerging policy developments.

The population incorporates corporately parented children by Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) and those placed in Lincolnshire by external authorities. The status of the children is identified within the population data included in this report.

Achievements in 2020/21

The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown up many challenges over the past year; however, we have continued to strive for the best outcomes for children in care.

Children in care reviews continued virtually throughout the lockdown period. Some young people attended their reviews for the first-time during lockdown as they found engaging by phone or through Zoom/Teams more accessible and inclusive than attending in person.

Going forward, young people will be offered the choice of how they would like to participate in their reviews. Performance has remained consistently high with 100% in timescale. The participation team reported that 86% of young people were happy with the way reviews are managed, although some young people were unclear about the review process and the role of the IRO. These findings have been fed into the IRO action plan to ensure these issues are addressed.

In November 2020 the Department for Education and Department for Health and Social Care launched the Wellbeing for Education Return programme, which is a package of training and resources developed by the Anna Freud Centre at Leeds Beckett University focused on a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing, staff wellbeing and targeted support for children and families. We worked closely with Healthy Minds Lincolnshire and several other Lincolnshire education partners to co-deliver this training package to all schools and education settings. Overall, 46 Wellbeing for Education Return training sessions (Webinars 1 and 2) delivered to approximately 95% of Lincolnshire schools and academies, with an average of 513 education setting staff attending both webinars. 95.3% said the training had helped them to understand how to further support children's emotional wellbeing and 97.8% rated the training as good or better.

2. Background and Context

2.1. Definition of "children in care"

Most children enter care as a result of abuse or neglect.

'In care' refers to children and young people under 18 years of age, who have been provided with care and accommodation by Children's Services, as defined in law under the Children Act 1989 (CA 1989).

Children in Care fall into five main groups:

- Children who are accommodated under voluntary agreement with their parents Section 20 (S20)
- Children who are subject to a care order Section 31 (S31) or interim care orders Section 38 (S38)
- Children who are the subject of emergency orders for their protection Section 44(S44) and Section 46 (S46)

And;

- Children who are compulsorily accommodated, including children remanded to the local authority or subject to a criminal justice supervision order with a residence requirement Section 21 (S21).

- 16/17-year-olds who are homeless and require accommodation under section 20 (S20)
- A child entering care will be disrupted from his/her familiar relationships and home environment. The Local Authority Children's Services strive to do all that is possible to minimize disruption to the child's education. Lincolnshire County Council is committed to ensuring continuity of educational placements unless a care plan determines that a change in school would be beneficial, such as when a child moves to a permanent placement.

Children in Care share the same health and social issues, risks, and problems, experienced by their peers, but often to a greater degree. They will often enter care in a poorer state of health, due to the impact of:

- Abuse and neglect
- Poverty
- Poor parenting
- Chaotic lifestyles
- Alcohol and substance misuse

Their experience can be further compounded by being over-exposed to significant challenges, such as:

- Conflict within their own families
- Frequent changes of home or school
- Lack of access to support and consistent advice from trusted adults

National statistics demonstrate that the longer-term outcomes for Children in Care remain worse than their peers in general. As adults, they are more likely to experience:

- Psychological problems / mental illness,
- Homelessness,
- Imprisonment,
- Unemployment,
- Poorer health outcomes and life limiting conditions and/or
- Poor educational attainment levels.

The NHS and LA officers responsible for Children in Care services are required to:

- Recognize and give due regard to the greater physical, mental and emotional health needs of children in care in their planning and practice.
- Give equal importance (parity of esteem) to the mental health of Children

in Care and follow the principles in the national document, 'Mental Health Crisis Care Concordat, *Improving Outcomes for People Experiencing Mental Health Crisis*' and the work commissioned from SCIE "Improving mental health support for our children and young people".

- Agree multi-agency action to meet the health needs in their area.
- Ensure that sufficient resources are allocated to meet the identified health needs of the Children in Care population, including those placed in the area by other local authorities, based on the range of data available about their health characteristics.
- Consider the views of children, their parents, and carers, in order to inform, influence and shape service provision, including through Children in Care Councils and local Healthwatch; and
- Arrange the provision of accessible and comprehensive information to children in care and their carers.

Reducing the acknowledged disadvantage for these children is the responsibility of a designated team of elected members, and health and social care practitioners, including the following:

2.2. Corporate Parent

The '*Corporate Parent*' is the collective responsibility of the council, elected members, employees, and partner agencies, to provide the best possible care and safeguarding for each child in care. Every member and employee of the council and partner agencies has a statutory responsibility to act for the child in the same way that a good parent would act for their own child. This includes the children that LCC place outside of the county. Additionally, LCC ensures that all elected members undertake training in their role as a Corporate Parent.

The placing authority maintains the Corporate Parenting responsibility for their children residing in Lincolnshire. However, they may be placed a long distance away from the child and their communities. Each child has an allocated social worker responsible for the management of their care plan. Services and aspirations for children in care are enshrined in the '*Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy*'.

2.3. Designated and Named Health Professionals

In accordance with the Statutory Guidance, '*Promoting the Health and Well-being of Looked after Children*', designated and named health professionals are appointed in Lincolnshire. It is the responsibility of the designated doctor and nurses to ensure that every child has timely access to their statutory health assessments, and that a care plan is formulated to address all identified health needs.

The health team provides statutory health services for the children in care population, irrespective of the LA corporate parent status. The role of the designated doctor for children in care is to provide strategic leadership and quality assurance of the statutory initial health assessments.

The health service responsible for the completion of health assessments for children in care is provided within Lincolnshire Community Health Services (LCHS), who work closely with the children's social care teams, including the independent reviewing officers.

2.4. Independent Reviewing Officers

Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) are employed locally, in addition to the child's social workers to provide services to Children in Care. IRO's undertake statutory reviews as per the statutory guidance for all children in care to ensure that their needs are being met on a multi-agency basis.

For children who are "in the care" of other Local Authorities but who reside in Lincolnshire, it is the responsibility of the placing authority to ensure that an IRO is accessible to ensure that these children, who are placed far from their support mechanisms, have access to local services according to their needs.

The Children's Commissioner in Lincolnshire is a joint post between Health and the Local Authority and is situated within Children's Services Directorate Leadership team.

3. Profile of Children in Care

3.1. Numbers of Children in Care

At the end of March 2021 680 children were corporately parented by LCC. This represents an increase of 9.3% over the year.

Over the same period the number of children/young people who entered care increased slightly to 287. Within this figure, the greatest numbers are in the age bands 0 – 4 and 16 +. Over recent years there has been a marked increase in 16 / 17-year-olds in care and they now comprise 22% of all children in care. We have continued to see an increase in children aged between 8 and 12 who have care plans for permanent fostering and as a result, there continues to be several children waiting for a suitable placement. In 2020/21 there has been continued emphasis on achieving permanent outcomes for them.

3.2. Placement Profile

Stability of placement for these children is key to improving health outcomes through providing as normal a family arrangement as possible. At year end the composition of the children in care cohort was:

1. 54.5% accommodated with foster carers /parents.
2. 17.5% placed in kinship arrangements.
3. 5.7% subject to care orders and are placed at home with parents.
4. 11.6% in residential homes; and
5. 2.4% in other accommodation, including residential schools, custody etc.
6. 8.2% in Independent accommodation

This shows that there is a continuing trend in the greater use of residential care for children and a growing number of young people aged 16+ placed in independent accommodation.

Lincolnshire has recently embarked on an ambitious transformation programme which includes the rollout of the Valuing Care toolkit and expansion of our residential estate. This will enable us to place more children requiring residential care within Lincolnshire, maintaining family links and identity, and enabling them to continue to access local services.

Lincolnshire remains at the forefront of using kinship placements, and, at year end, 17.5% of all children in care were in such placements.

The reporting period has witnessed a continued increase in the number of children with especially complex needs who are corporately parented in Lincolnshire. In 2020/2021 this has resulted in an increase in the number of children who find living in foster families difficult and as a result the average age profile of children placed in in-house residential care has reduced. This has in turn, resulted in a further increase in the number placed in external residential placements. In addition, this year there have been several large sibling groups who have been subject to care proceedings. The lack of suitable in-house foster placements to maintain them together has resulted in them being placed in independent fostering placements. At year end there were:

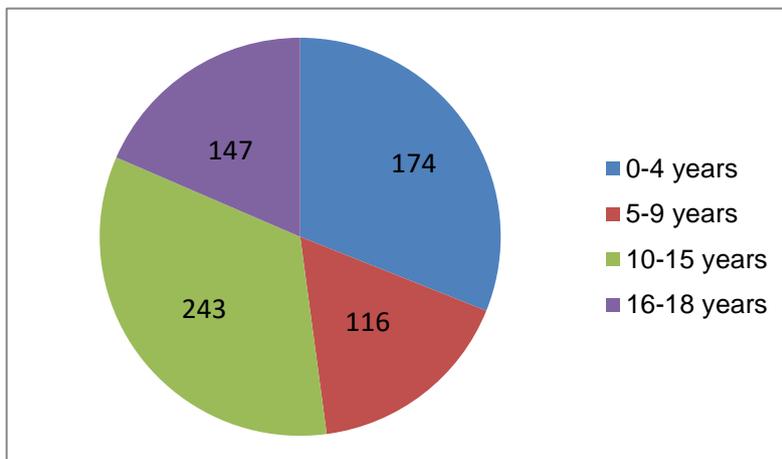
- 27 children (5 of whom were unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people) were placed in externally commissioned foster placements, and
- 54 children were placed in external residential homes, which is a decrease on the previous year-end figure.

Despite this increase in the use of independent sector placements the ratio of in house to external placements remains significantly lower when compared to other local authorities. Lincolnshire continues to have one of the lowest per head costs for a looked after child, being £787.00 in contrast to the average of £989.00 (CIPFA 2020).

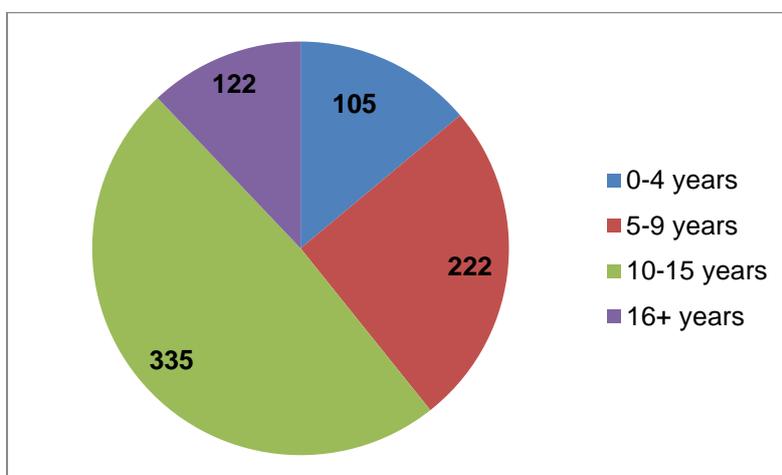
3.3. Composition of children in care

More boys than girls are represented in the total children in care population, and for those corporately parented by Lincolnshire County Council there are 367 (54%) males and 313 (46%).

Lincolnshire LA Children in Care

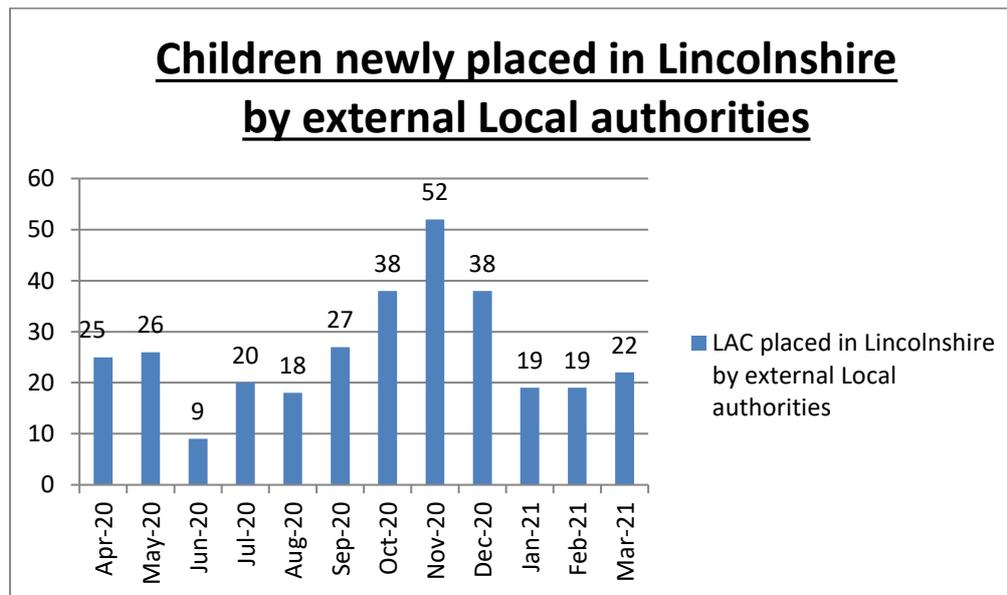


Children placed into Lincolnshire by external Local Authorities 2020-2021



Lincolnshire has consistently had a significant number of children in care placed within the County by external LA's. At year end they numbered 784 which is a further year on year increase (See page 18 to see increase in workload for LCHS LAC team)

The graph below shows the monthly numbers of children newly placed in Lincolnshire by external LA's this annual report year (2020/21).



The high numbers of children in care placed by other Local Authorities within Lincolnshire are predominantly residing within residential care homes and with foster carers who work for Independent Fostering Agencies. The placements are often intended to remove children away from on-going, high risk environments within the LA area responsible for their care. As a result of this some can present with challenging behaviours such as going missing, self-harm, substance misuse and the risk of child exploitation (CE). It needs to be recognised that often the risks may continue despite the move out of their LA area as there is often potential for abusers to follow the young person to their new address. The vulnerabilities and needs of these young people also impact on the workload of Lincolnshire Integrated Sexual Health Services, CAMHS, Education and The Police.

Summary:

- The largest numbers of children entering care are aged less than one year.
- The greatest number of children in care overall are in the 10-15 years age group.
- Almost 47% of the children admitted into care during 2020/21 were aged 4 or under.
- 13% of all children admitted to care were aged 16+.

- 79% of all children are subject of a statutory interim care order or a care order.

Most children will be subject to care proceedings and will have care plans for permanence.

3.4. Ethnicity

The vast majority (90%) of children corporately parented by Lincolnshire County Council are of White-British origin, but the demographics are gradually changing, with over 10% of children in care of a non-white British ethnic background. This reflects an increase in the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children/young people who become looked after upon arrival in the county.

The table below shows the ethnic background of children who are corporately parented by Lincolnshire County Council during the period April 2019 to March 2020.

Ethnicity of Children in Care Cohort 2019/20 (derived from MOSAIC)

Ethnic Origin LCC Corporate Parent	Total
White-British	611
Mixed Race	34
Asian / Asian British	4
Black-African	2
Any Other Ethnic Group	29
Total	680

4. Lincolnshire County Council: Court Proceedings Initiated

2020/2021 - LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL: COURT PROCEEDINGS INITIATED

Within the reporting period, we have seen an increase in the number Care Proceedings issued from last 2019/2020 period.

In 2018/2019 applications were issued in respect of 184 children.

In 2019/2020 applications were issued in respect of 157 children.

In 2020/2021 applications were issued in respect of 197 children.

In respect of the 197 children, the applications comprised of 171 applications for Care Orders and 26 applications for Supervision Orders.

Care Proceedings were concluded in respect of 78 children. The decrease in conclusion of proceedings will be linked to the delays caused by Covid 19 enabling cases to be heard in a fair manner.

In 2019/2020, the number of children placed under Special Guardianship decreased.

In 2017/2018 30 Special Guardianship Orders were granted.

In 2018/2019 41 Special Guardianship Orders were granted.

In 2019/2020 18 Special Guardianship Orders were granted.

In 2020/2021 14 Special Guardianship Orders were granted

The use of Placement Orders in 2020/21 has decreased:

In 2018/2019 27 Placement Orders were granted.

In 2019/2020 22 Placement Orders were granted.

In 2020/2021 12 Placement Orders were granted.

In 2018/2019 24% of children involved in care proceedings were made the subjects of care orders; this figure is 22% for 2019/2020. Similarly, in 2018/2019 17% of children were made subject to care and placement orders. The figure is 18% for 2019/2020; in 2020/2021 – 12 children were made subject to Care and Placement Orders (14%) and 31 children were made subject to Care Orders. The percentages therefore have remained relatively consistent.

There has been a rise in the making of supervision orders with 16% of final outcomes in 2018/2019 rising to 36% cases involving a final supervision order on 2019/2020. This rise is likely to be accounted for by the fact that several cases in 2019/2020 concluded with children being placed with one of their parents where on-going support from the Local Authority was required. Of the 43 children for whom supervision orders were made in 2019/2020, 31 were placed back with their parent/s. This has now reduced significantly for the period 2020/2021 with 10 Supervision Orders being made at the conclusion of proceedings: with 8 of those cases involving children remaining at home with their parents.

The table below shows the orders obtained for the 78 children in proceedings that were concluded.

<u>Order</u>	<u>Number of Orders 2020/21</u>	<u>Number of Orders 2019/20</u>
Care Order	31	27
Care Order & Placement Order	12	22

<u>Order</u>	<u>Number of Orders 2020/21</u>	<u>Number of Orders 2019/20</u>
Supervision Order	7	22
No Order	3	6
Child Arrangements Order	2	1
Child Arrangements Order & Supervision Order	2	16
Special Guardianship Order	20	18
Special Guardianship Order & Supervision Order	1	6
Family Assistance Order	0	1

In 2019 /20 the number of care proceedings has been comprised of many new-born babies often to parents who have had other children removed from their care and an increase in the number of larger sibling groups who span a broad age range. This has continued into 2020/21 with a large rise in new-born babies and those being born where proceedings are recurrent; the increase in large sibling groups has also continued.

5. Health of Children in Care

5.1. National Context

Most children/young people enter care because of abuse and neglect - past experiences such as this increases vulnerability to disadvantage, including mental health issues, lower educational achievement, and social exclusion. The childhood trauma of children in care is also associated with poorer health outcomes which have life-long consequences.

Nationally, key issues for consideration for the health of children in care include:

- Poorer health outcomes when compared to peers,
- Difficulty in accessing universal and specialist services,
- Failure of annual health assessments to meet their health needs,
- High prevalence of mental health problems,
- Poorer educational achievement,
- Increased likelihood of teenage pregnancy
- Increased risk of offending behaviour and substance misuse.

In view of such increased disadvantage, measurement of the child's health on first coming

into care is crucial – Initial Health Assessments are a key element to achieving this.

5.2. Children Reported Missing and Child Exploitation

Children and young people in care are particularly vulnerable to safeguarding risks– they are more likely to go missing and are at an increased risk of being trafficked, exploited or of experiencing domestic abuse.

High numbers of children are placed from other areas within Lincolnshire residential care homes, although these placements enable movement away from the high-risk environment, the potential for CE continues as abusers may follow the young person to their new home. Service providers need to engage with children and young people, developing relationships that enable identification, and appropriate response, to such risks, including child sexual exploitation (CSE) and child criminal exploitation (CCE).

In Lincolnshire, there is a dedicated Missing/CE Co-Ordinator resource within the Future4me team that co-ordinates a response towards missing children in conjunction with Lincolnshire Police and reports on the missing episodes of children in the County. There is also weekly oversight of any outstanding missing return interviews shared amongst senior managers to provide assurance around this key area. Through the LSCP Lincolnshire has an operational multi-agency child exploitation forum who meet on a weekly basis to consider those children deemed at risk of exploitation and to provide support, interventions, disruption, and enforcement. These meetings are a dedicated forum for discussing, mapping, and analysing concerns and for identifying solutions for all children/young people who are thought to be at risk of CE, including those in care.

2020/21 Missing Incidents

Lincolnshire Children in Care Missing Incidents	271
No of Children in care Reported Missing	62
Lincolnshire children Placed in Other Authority Missing Incidents	65
No of children in care Reported Missing	20
Return interviews offered	99.3%
Return interviews completed	97.5%

This data shows that there were 271 incidents of children being missing reported to Police for Lincolnshire Children in Care, placed within Lincolnshire between April 2020 and March 2021. These incidents involved 62 individual children, demonstrating that some children have been missing much more than once.

A return interview has been offered in 99.3 % of incidents when a young person has gone missing. In Lincolnshire, if a young person is missing again before the return interview can be completed, this request is 'withdrawn' and a new return interview requested when the young person is found, ensuring the return interview captures both missing incidents. 97.5% of return interviews were completed for Children in Care, some of which will have encompassed more than one missing episode.

5.3 Care Leavers

- Barnardo's is commissioned by the LA to deliver the leaving care service in Lincolnshire. The contract was renewed in 2020 and will enable more timely transitional planning for those aged 16 +.
- Arrangements for Review Health Assessments for 16–18-year-olds, as part of transition, are undertaken by the Community Nurses within the Children in Care/Young People team.
- There is a process in place for the compilation of a health history summary for Lincolnshire children in which is completed, discussed with and given to the young person when they leave care.
- The number of completed children in care health history summaries is reported quarterly.

5.4 Meeting the Health Needs.

Performance indicators for the Children in Care service are:

Health Assessments:

- i) The number of Initial Health Assessments (IHA) completed within 20 working days of the child/young person coming into care.
- ii) The number of Review Health Assessments (RHAs) completed every 6 months for children below 5 years of age.
- iii) The number of Review Health Assessments completed on an annual basis for all children/young people 5 year's up to 18 years of age

1. Registration with a GP
2. Registration with a dentist
3. Immunisations up to date in line with local and national programmes; and
4. Emotional wellbeing: Completion of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire for 4- to 17-year-olds.

5.4.1 Health Assessments

Statutory Initial Health Assessments are completed on all children in the care of the LA followed by six-monthly or annual reviews, depending upon the age of the child. The LAC/YP health assessment questionnaire includes the following categories:

- Children in Care/YP health assessment
- Access to services
- Growth
- Development and disability
- Medical conditions/hospital admissions/emotional and behavioural issues
- Lifestyle indicators
- Education and development
- Onward referrals identified in health plan

Health Assessments

295(240) **IHA's** were completed – An increase of 55 compared to 2019-2020

This comprised of 226 (188) who were in the care of Lincolnshire County Council and 69 (52) from other Local Authorities

874(946) Review Health Assessments were completed – A decrease of 72 compared to 2019-2020

Of these, 539 (647) were children in the care of Lincolnshire and 335(299) were from other Local Authorities (a decrease of 108 for Lincolnshire children and an increase of 36 for external authorities).

Health Assessments Total = 1169 (1186) – a decrease of 17 compared to 2019-2020

5.4.1.1 Initial Health Assessments (IHA)

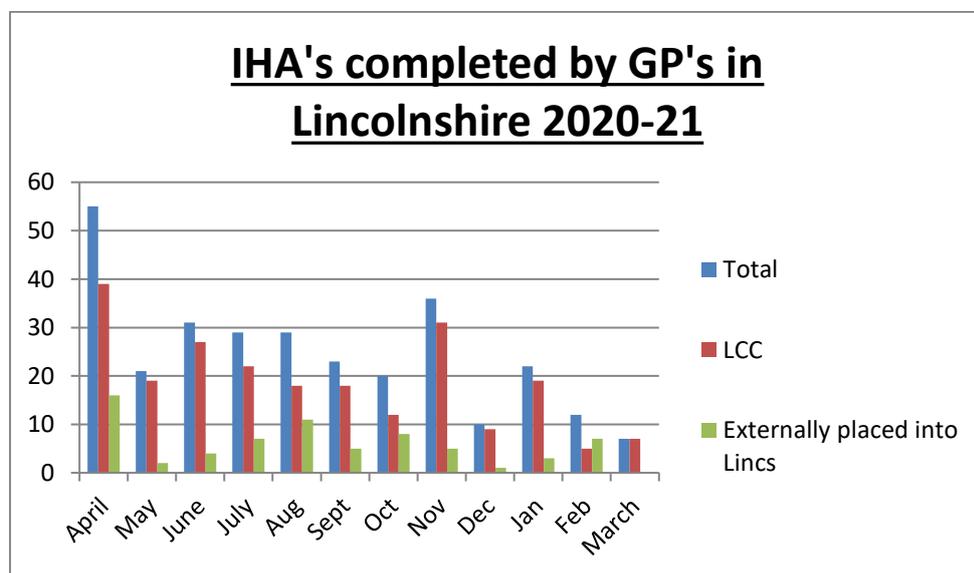
Each child entering care has a statutory IHA and health care plan completed. The IHA is undertaken by a registered medical practitioner and should take place within 20 working days (4 weeks) of a child entering the care system. A health plan is formulated from this which is copied to the child's social worker who ensures that the plan is implemented, and then reviewed at least every six months in a meeting chaired by the independent reviewing officer (IRO).

Despite this being a statutory requirement, it is not being achieved in Lincolnshire. The availability of medical practitioners and challenges in obtaining the relevant paperwork including signed consent from parents has significantly impacted on this target. Close liaison between the Specialist Nurse CiC and FAST team managers has had a varying improvement

in the timescale of notification to the CiC health team of IHA's required. From April 2020 to November 2020 due to COVID19 restrictions the CiC nurses completed IHAs by phone and some face to face. This did result in an improvement in the number IHAs being completed within the statutory timescale. Due to a decision taken by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health from December 2020 the nurses are no longer able to complete IHAs. LCHS has employed one GP to complete IHA's and plans to employ more so that the availability of appointments and quality of assessment is improved.

Graph 2 shows the activity of initial health assessments that has been completed during 2020-2021 by the contracted GP's.

Graph 2



The total number of IHAs undertaken in Lincolnshire during 2020-2021 was 295. This was an increase on the figure for 2019/20.

During this period 36 children in the care of Lincolnshire County Council were placed outside of Lincolnshire and their IHA was completed by the 'host' trust.

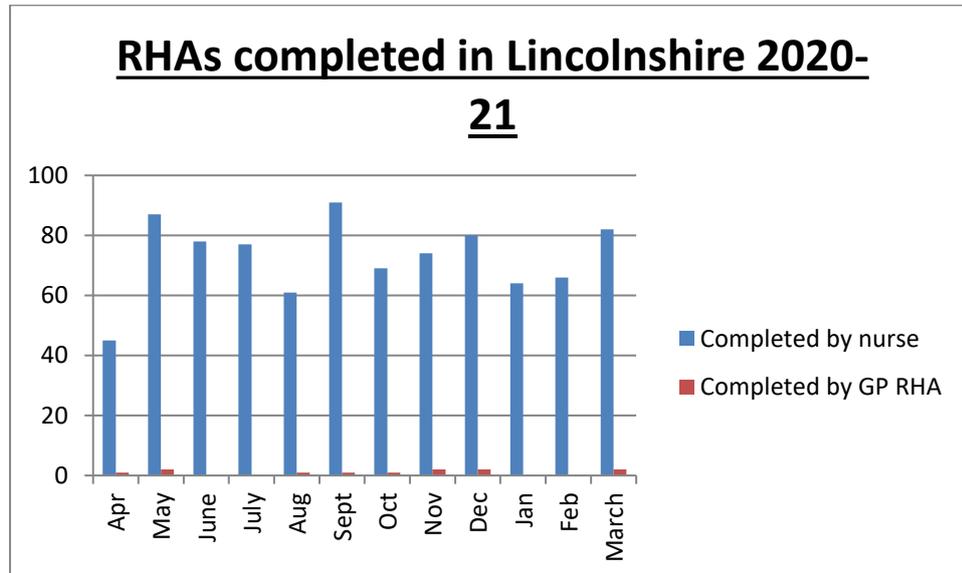
5.4.1.2 Review Health Assessments

Review health assessments may be carried out by an appropriately qualified Registered Nurse/Midwife.

The timeframe for review health assessments is twice yearly for children under 5 years of age, and annually for children 5 years, up until a child is 18 years of age.

Graph 3 shows the number of review health assessments completed in Lincolnshire during 2020-2021. The total number completed by the Community Nurses was 539 for Lincolnshire children and 395 for children placed by other Authorities. This is a decrease of 72 RHAs completed by the nurses from the year 2019-2020.

Graph 3

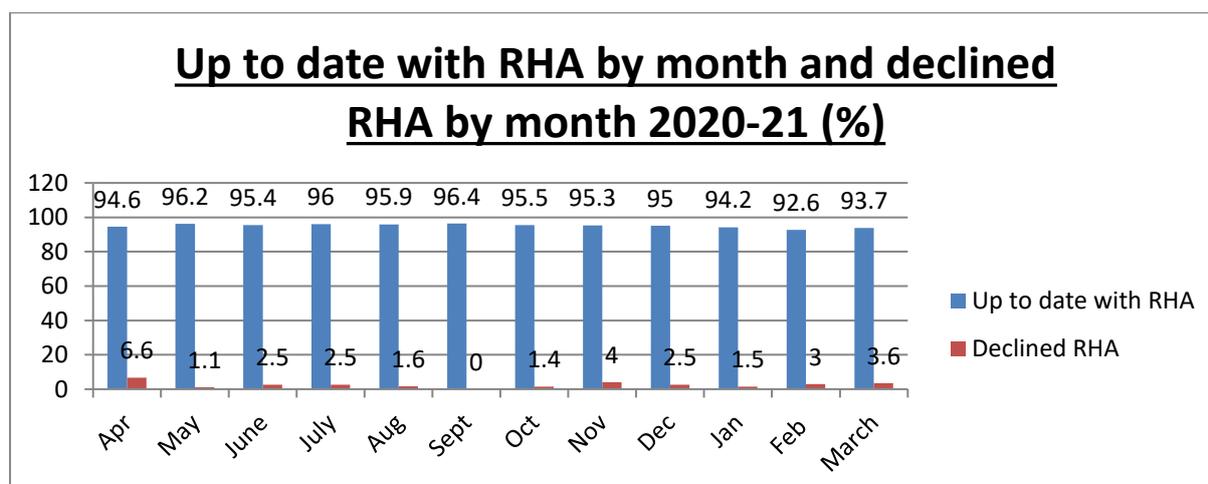


For Lincolnshire LA the percentage of completed RHAs for Lincolnshire children was 93.2% at year-end 2021. COVID 19 has impacted on the practicality of completing assessments within timescale (graph 4).

This is a continued high achievement and demonstrates the robustness of the health assessment process and the commitment and partnership working between health and social care practitioners.

Graph 4 shows the percentage of children with an up-to-date review health assessment and identifies the number who declined a Health Assessment from 01.04.20 to 31.03.21. There is a slight decrease in RHA declined by young people on the previous year.

Graph 4



Young people who decline their RHA are predominantly within the 15 – 18-year age group. They are all offered alternative access by LCHS LAC/YP team which has proved to be very successful.

5.4.2 Registration with a General Practitioner

The 2020-21 health assessment reporting indicates that 98% of Children in Care are permanently registered with a GP.

There were 23 Children in Care not registered with a GP: 20 of whom were Lincolnshire children and 3 were placed in Lincolnshire from external local authorities. Some children will have had their health assessment before being able to register with a GP; 10 had a temporary registration with a GP.

5.4.3 Dental Practice Registration

Children and young people often enter care with poor oral health: usually because of their pre-care experience.

Attendance for annual dental checks is a national performance indicator.

Lincolnshire Local authority reporting on this performance indicator shows that 51.9% of children in care had dental checks as of 31.03.21. This is considerably lower than last year due to the impact of coronavirus.

For children who are not registered with a dentist at their health assessment appointments, carers are encouraged to register a child with a dentist as soon as possible.

There is now specific data available for this cohort of children in care on their oral health from the health assessment questionnaire data. (Appendix 1)

5.4.4 Immunisation's and vaccination

Children who are not immunised are potentially more susceptible to a range of infectious diseases. In sophisticated industrialised societies such as the UK many diseases have been all but eradicated; however, in areas where immunisation up take is poor the potential for infectious diseases to re-emerge is significant.

There are only a small number of reasons why children should not receive a course of immunisations:

- If the immune system is compromised, certain, e.g., live vaccines are not given, (this could be that a parent or immediate family member has a compromised immune system resulting in a delay until it is safe to vaccinate).
- If a child / sibling has previously had a severe reaction to the same vaccine.
- Young people may refuse to have their vaccinations.

For children in care the vaccination history is recorded by the GP on the CORAMBAAF form at their IHA. Any outstanding vaccinations must be identified on the health plan section of the CORAMBAAF form.

The IRO also has a responsibility for performance managing and identifying outstanding vaccinations and agreeing plans for them to be completed.

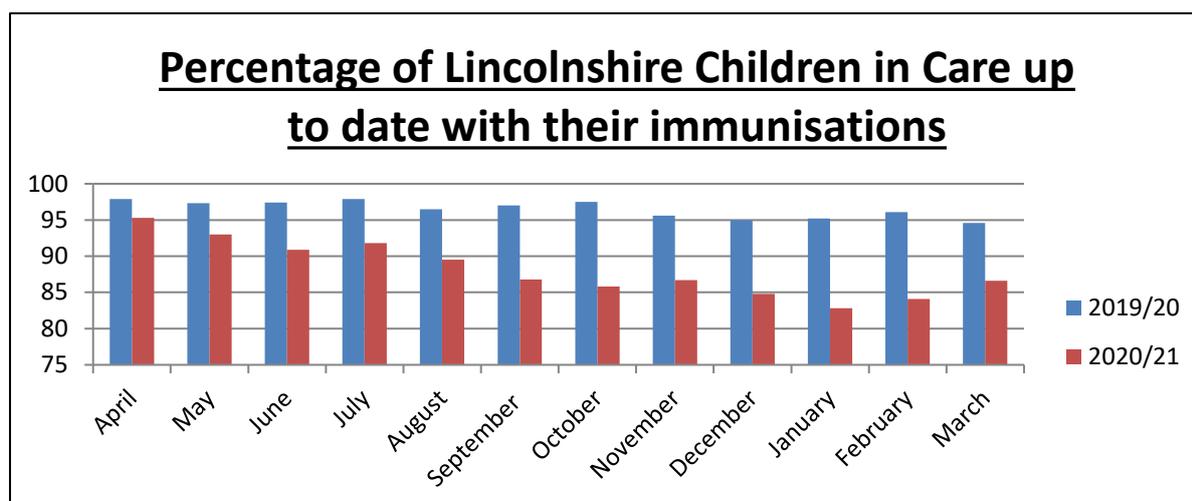
The vaccination and immunisation status submitted by Lincolnshire LA for the final percentage at year end 2020 - 2021 was 79.9%. The immunisation programme, particularly the schools programme, has been impacted by the COVID19 pandemic. There is a catch-up programme in progress which should ensure all children will be up to date within 18 months.

The percentage of children who are up to date with their immunisations is at a higher rate of coverage compared with those of their peers in the general population.

All outstanding immunisations are checked quarterly by the CiC/YP health team.

Graph 5 (next page) shows the monthly percentage of CiC/YP up to date with vaccinations 2020 - 2021 compared to 2019-2021.

Graph 5



5.4.5 Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) play a crucial role in assessing and meeting any needs identified as part of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) screening process.

Clinical Commissioning Groups, Local Authorities and NHS England have the responsibility to commission CAMHS and other services to provide targeted support to Children in Care tailored according to individual needs. The legal status of children who are the subject of a Care Order is not affected by detention either under the Mental Health Act or in custody. It remains the responsibility of the Local Authority to promote the welfare of Children in Care who are so detained, and that includes maintaining and reviewing the child’s health plan as part of his or her overall care plan.

The table illustrates the CAMHS services provided to children in care corporately parented in Lincolnshire. (The data for those placed by external authorities is not available for this reporting period). **Referrals Received**

Gender/Age	Attended one or more contacts (a)	Did not attend any contacts (b)	Total
Female	78	46	124

The table illustrates the CAMHS services provided to children in care corporately parented in Lincolnshire. (The data for those placed by external authorities is not available for this reporting period). **Referrals Received**

Gender/Age	Attended one or more contacts (a)	Did not attend any contacts (b)	Total
Female aged 4-9	7	6	13
Female aged 10 - 14	42	20	62
Female aged 15 -19	29	20	49
Female aged 20 - 22	0	0	0
Male	69	38	107
Male aged 4-9	11	6	17
Male aged 10 - 14	36	20	56
Male aged 15 -19	22	12	34
Male aged 20 - 24	0	0	0
Total	147	84	231

Reason for referral	% out of 208 referrals 2020/21
Behavioural Problems	45%
Anxiety	19%
Self-Harm	13%
Low Mood	9%
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)	5%
Depression	3%

Reason for referral	% out of 208 referrals 2020/21
Suicidal Ideation	2%
Other referral reasons, including attachment difficulties, eating disorders, ADHD and ASD	4%

CAMHS Harmful Behaviour Service

This service provides assessment and intervention to children and young people up to the age of 18 years, who live in Lincolnshire, and who are presenting with sexually concerning behaviours.

Prior to a referral being accepted, any identified safeguarding concerns will have been referred to Children's Services for investigation. A member of Children's Services remains involved, as appropriate, to monitor and address any identified safeguarding concerns, and to work with the specialist therapists from the Harmful Behaviour Service, and AIMS trained CAMHS staff, in offering recommended interventions.

Consultation and advice have also been offered to carers, children's home staff, education staff and other involved professionals, including social workers, Healthy Minds staff and early help workers.

6. Education

6.1. Learning and Achievement – Education for Life

Supporting the Education of Our Children and Young People in Care throughout the Covid - 19 National Emergency 2020.

The Virtual School Team showed great flexibility throughout the pandemic and worked alongside the Caring 2 Learn Team, foster carers, social care teams, children, and school-based colleagues to provide practical support for the educational needs of our children and young people in care throughout the year. The examples below provide a flavour of how the team responded.

- Ensuring that most of our children and young people attended school throughout the pandemic where appropriate
- Delivering laptops to enable children to continue lessons online if required
- Ensuring Out of County placed children, carers and schools were supported through regular weekly contact
- Supporting carers to access **online learning portals** and other resources set up by schools.

- The team continued to complete all Personal Education Plans
- Continued to support Children in Care Reviews as required
- Ensured catch up tuition was provided as required
- The team also distributed resources such as **books** and stationery where appropriate
- Supported our **Residential Homes** with learning resources, school transport issues etc.
- Through partnership working ensured our more vulnerable carers could better support their children's **transitions back into school** when appropriate
- Caring2Learn continued to provide networking opportunities for our carers alongside support and advice from our Carer Champions network.
- Three Virtual School Staff also provided cover to support our residential colleagues throughout the first Lockdown.

The team is currently working to implement non statutory DfE guidance for the extension of the Virtual School Head's role to include the provision of advice and guidance to schools and Social Care Teams in promoting the improvement of educational outcomes for children with a Social Worker up to March 2022.

7. Social Care

7.1 Permanence

Between 1st April 2020 and the 31st of March 2021 Family Finders has continued to meet monthly to consider children with a care plan of permanence and in need of a long-term foster placement. Owing to the COVID19 pandemic these meetings have been undertaken virtually over Microsoft Teams.

Over the year 22 children have been considered, of these 6 children were newly referred from 1st April 2020 onwards. This is a significant decrease on last year's figures of 39 children.

Out of the 22 children considered, long term foster care in house foster placements was identified for five children, all single children, with three of these children moving to newly identified placements and two children remaining in their current placements. Of the remaining 17 children, 7 moved to IFA foster carers, made up of three sibling groups of two and one single child and it was agreed that one further child would remain in her current IFA placement. Three children moved to residential children's homes, a sibling group of two and a single child; and one child was removed from Family Finders due to a change in his care plan.

Six children have been linked for Permanence at Fostering Panel over the year, however all of these were with the existing task centred foster carers and the children had not been referred to Family Finders. Currently five children remain on Family Finders, made up of a sibling group of three and two single children. In respect of the sibling group of three

agreement has been given for an IFA search however this is currently on hold pending the outcome of a re-assessment of a family member.

For years recruitment of permanent foster carers has been difficult with most permanent matches being made with existing task centred foster carers. In 2020 only one new fostering family was approved for permanence.

Although this year there has continued to be a high level of support in place for both prospective and current permanent foster carers; we have clearly had to be more creative in how we deliver this with, until very recently, limited face to face contact. A virtual permanence preparation course and Family Finders event took place in November with 10 children on Family Finders featured and a further event is planned for June 2021.

The Family Finders Review panel continues to meet regularly to consider children where no potential placement matches have been identified within a three-month period, enabling senior management to have oversight of actions already taken and discussions around any further options to be considered or explored. Over the course of the past year a total of 11 children were referred to the Family Finders Review meeting. For those children who have waited too long, this meeting considers referrals to independent fostering providers.

7.2 Placement Stability

Placement stability continues to be a critical factor in offering an effective Fostering Service and is crucial to ensuring that the Local Authority delivers good outcomes for each Child in Care. The service has been developed and structured to promote stability and support to foster carers. Stability is measured by 2 national indicators, NI062 relating to children who experience 3 placement moves within 12 months, and NI063 which relates to children who have been in care for 2½ years who have been in the same placement for 2 years.

The national indicator NI062 reported 8% at year end. This figure suggests that Children in Care in Lincolnshire have a high level of placement stability from the point of coming into care. This is an achievement given the reduction in the number of foster carers and the difficulties in recruitment this year. However, the complexity of children requiring placement and reduced placement options have had an impact on the indicator, and this is likely to remain a challenge. Over recent years there has been considerable focus on supporting foster carers to maintain placements. Placement support workers have been trained to offer therapeutic interventions and caring2learn has developed champions and hub supports to all carers. Together they have supported an improvement in the NI063 placement stability figure with a year-end figure reported as 72% this is good performance compared nationally.

7.3 Transition into Adulthood

The transition into adulthood is rarely an easy path for any young person, but for children in care the path can often be more complex. Many such children have few or no direct family support networks. It is therefore imperative that every opportunity is provided, and all relevant supports are put in place, to enable as smooth a transition as possible. As their Corporate Parent we have a responsibility to support our young people as we would our own family, and on this basis LCC have committed to reducing the age at which care leavers access their Leaving Care worker from 17.5 to 16 years old. This earlier allocation and offer of additional support are assisting young people into adulthood and is ensuring that we have explored every important issue for an individual young person before they are 18 whilst also ensure there is a solid relationship with the Leaving Care service once they reach adulthood.

In planning this transition for care leavers, the Pathway Plan should be prepared for each relevant child prior to them leaving care. In summer 2019, the revised Pathway Plan was launched; this was revised in consultation with young people and uses the 'signs of safety' methodology. The professional preparing the plan on behalf of the Local Authority must engage constructively with the young person to help them define priorities and the focus of the plan. Never wanting to stand still, LCC and its partners are continually revisiting the Pathway planning process and the way we engage our young people in it. The Pathway Plan is now a regular feature of children service auditing and examples of good practice are now routinely shared across the teams

The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations (Vol 3: Planning transition to adulthood for care leavers) identifies that, once a young person leaves care and they are a relevant child, or once they reach legal adulthood at age 18 and are a former relevant child, then the Local Authority will no longer be required to provide them with a social worker to plan and coordinate their care. In Lincolnshire, Barnardo's deliver the Leaving Care Service and appoint personal advisors to support them until the age of 21 and offer the support, guidance, and resources to enable the young person to grow into an indent adult up to the age of 25 if required.

The Corporate Parenting Manager oversees the continual development the services offer to all our care leavers up to the age of 25. New developments have included additional accommodation resources, council tax relief for care leavers across all Lincolnshire, the growth of the Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) services offered to 21–25-year-old care leavers and growing relationships with adult based services to improve transitions across the board. There is a 4-way housing protocol ensuring that every care leaver is afforded local connection to district housing, they are always allocated priority status on housing lists and can have access to suitable, clean, and safe accommodation as a priority

group.

The Leaving Care service has grown once again to now include 2 additional Aspiration champions whose sole focus is to support our young people into education, training, or employment. Following the pandemic Lincolnshire County Council chose to invest in these additional posts to ensure that our young people are given the very best opportunity to secure employment after the pandemic or get back into education and reach their full potential. Further to the two Aspiration Champions, Lincolnshire County Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group are now jointly funding a mental health worker to be seconded to the leaving care service. The aim of the mental health support worker post is to offer direct input and support to care leavers, to assist the team with advocating for young people to access the right services and to navigate complex systems to ensure they get the very best mental health support.

7.4. Staying Put Scheme

The 'Staying Put' scheme in Lincolnshire is in its twelfth year. It has, since its inception, enabled a total of 168 young people to remain with their previous foster carers. Staying Put arrangements provide the young person with stability at a key stage of their life remaining until their 21st birthday. On-going support and training for carers is provided by the Fostering Service, with the young people having their own designated Personal Advisor from Barnardo's Leaving Care Service. To further support young people in their transition to adulthood if they are ready to move on before their 21st birthday, or for those who join the military, each young person is given a three-month window in which they are supported by their carer. For those young people who attend university and live away, carers receive a retainer in recognition of the on-going support they provide, and to enable the young person to return during holidays and continue life within their family setting. During the last 12 months additional support has been provided to those carers who have continued to support young people in the home if they have been unable to return to university and have remained at home to complete their studies. This has provided stability for those young people in a difficult year with them being able to remain with their families and continue to study.

Lincolnshire's Staying Put Service has continued to support young people and their carers with 44 young people living in a Staying Put arrangement at the end of March 2021. Of these, 24 were in full time further education with 5 attending university. The others were in employment, on Work Experience Placements or Apprenticeships; with 5 of these on the Care Leavers Apprenticeship Scheme. There has been a dip in the number of Staying Put arrangements which has been owing to the cohort of young people being of a slightly younger age and therefore have not transitioned to Staying Put.

The Staying Put offer in Lincolnshire positively reflects the current guidelines and best practice from the Government and Fostering Network. Signs of Safety is used and

embedded in all the documents relating to Staying Put with Social Pedagogy being used to support the transition and understanding around moving to adulthood. During the past 12 months connections with carers have remained in place; with Supervising Social Workers keeping in contact with carers by telephone and virtually. Microsoft Teams has been used to complete virtual meetings ensuring young people and carers fully understand Staying Put and to complete the relevant paperwork relating to the arrangement. Microsoft Teams has enabled greater participation in meetings with the support network for the young person being able to meet up in a virtual environment. Looking forward to the next 12 months Staying Put, there are currently 20 referrals, and the scheme will be reviewing documentation and processes following on from the support of the Legal Department and Commissioning in reviewing the License Agreement.

8. Consultation with Children in Care

8.1. Voices 4 Choices (V4C)

V4C is Lincolnshire's Children in Care Council. It shares experiences of being in care, informing Children's Services about what does and does not work for them, and what needs to change. V4C meetings are held every month in each of the 4 localities and are delivered by Senior Youth and Community Development Workers, with support from Participation Officers.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions implemented in March 2020 V4C groups met online using Zoom. The priority and challenge were to maintain engagement with CiC which was achieved through a range of activities. One group leader sent out craft kits which were used during online sessions. Others responded to requests and ran a mix of one-to-one and group 'catch-up' sessions including visiting residential children's homes. Online music sessions were also delivered in partnership with soundLINCS. And the groups cooperated collaboratively in an online quiz called 'Let's Get Quizzical. Covid-19 guidance was monitored closely to see if groups would be able to meet physically. As of July 2021, and in line with Covid guidance, face to face V4C meetings have begun to be introduced alongside virtual meetings. Meetings have been held within LCC buildings at present with future plans to offer more external activities going forward.

8.2. Big Conversation Events

Due to Covid-19 restrictions Big Conversations have not taken place since March 2020. Big Conversation 21 is planned to take place in October 2021.

8.3. Development work

Pieces of work done by V4C in Big Conversation have continued to be developed:

- Language that Cares – implementation across Children's Services

- Caring Promise – launched in May 2021.

9. Advocacy and Complaints

The "Coming into Care kit" is currently being reviewed and redeveloped by the Participation Team with views and input from young people attending V4C. This provides them with information as to how they can express any feelings of dissatisfaction they may have including making formal complaints. There are however several informal dispute resolution options which are available to children and young people who are in the care of the local authority.

These include the following: -

Voiceability: All children and young people coming into care are offered an Independent advocate from our commissioned provider Voiceability who can attend their 28-day review and/or represent their views in a report. Voiceability also provide an issues resolution service which CIC can access as and when required.

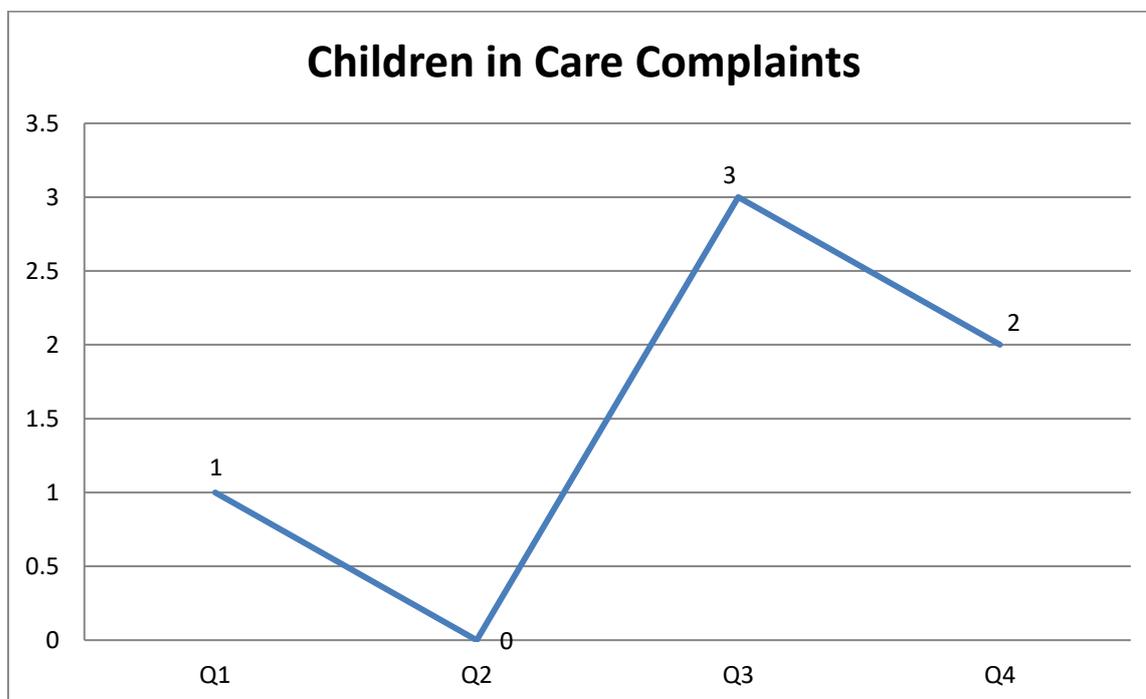
Independent Reviewing Officers: The Independent Reviewing Officer has a duty to engage with children and young people to ascertain their views in respect of their care plans and to advise them of their entitlements including their right to complain. Children are encouraged to attend their reviews in order that they are aware of their plan and can comment on this. Where children's wishes are contrary to the plan, the Independent Reviewing Officer can escalate matters on behalf of the child in order to resolve matters in a timely manner. Where children and young people continue to be dissatisfied, the Independent Reviewing Officer can support young people in making formal complaints.

Regulation 44 Visits: The Regulation 44 Officer is an Independent Visitor who visits all residential homes within the authority monthly. An integral part of the role of the Independent Visitor is to talk to children, young people, and their families about their experiences of the residential home. The Regulation 44 Visitor can engage in discussions with the homes manager to resolve any issues which the child may identify. Where this early attempt at resolution is unsuccessful, the Independent Visitor can support the young person in making a formal complaint.

Social Workers: Social Workers meet with children on a regular basis. A fundamental part of this visiting is ascertaining the wishes and feelings of children and young people. Where children are unhappy with the level of care which they are receiving, their social worker will in the first instance work with the child to see whether changes are able to be made which would comply with the child's wishes. Social Workers can direct children to the advocacy service if they wish to pursue a formal complaint.

9.1. Complaints

This year has seen no complaints made directly by children who are in care. However, 13 contacts were received from parents or carers of children in care. Of these 13 contacts one was resolved informally. This was in relation to an incorrect address being used to send review documents to. The remaining 12 entered the formal complaints process.



Quarter 1

A single complaint was received from a mother who complained that her child's social worker was not sharing information with her and how the authority intended to keep the child safe during the pandemic. This complaint was not upheld and was not escalated to the next stage of the complaints process.

Quarter 2

No complaints in relation to Children in Care were received in this quarter. The national lockdown, because of the Coronavirus Pandemic, remained in place at this time.

Quarter 3

3 complaints were received in the 3rd quarter and were all from parents of children in care.

- Family complained that assessments were taking too long to be sent through. This complaint was not upheld as all relevant documents were sent through in a timely fashion and this was evidenced.
- Parent complained that appropriate safeguarding measures were not taken in the home that their child was resident in and did not believe

their child should remain their– This is directly linked to Covid-19 as the precautions in question were PPE. This complaint was not upheld as the PEE used were in line with central government guidance.

- A final complaint was received from a mother unhappy with the information that had been detailed about her in an assessment. This complaint was not upheld as it was evidenced where the information had been gathered from.

Quarter 4

The 4th quarter saw 2 complaints in regard to children in care and the details of these are as follows:

- A parent complained that she felt the information about her included within a report was misleading and felt discriminated against. This complaint was not upheld as the statements that parent advised were made were not found in any report.
- A Parent complained that she was purposefully being excluded from updates about her son. Parent was unhappy that updates were provided to the SW and not to her and following this the SW was also not keeping parent up to date. This complaint was partially upheld. The parent had specifically stated in a previous correspondence that they wanted no more than a weekly update and SW thought they were acting in line with this. However, parent had also stated specific individuals to assist with contact and this was not actioned.

10. Conclusion

There has been a slight increase in the number of Children in Care in 2020/21. Lincolnshire continues to invest in a range of preventative services and interventions which promote the birth family and their network as the preferred place for children to grow up.

This report incorporates full year health data, which enables a better understanding of the essential characteristics of Children in Care. The partnerships across health and social care within Lincolnshire remain strong, with a determination to continue improving the effectiveness of services to reduce the disadvantages that these children and young people are acknowledged to experience. The associated workforce is committed and skilled in supporting Children in Care.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on the numbers of immunisations and dental checks being completed for children in care. Due to the backlog of appointments, it has been estimated that it will take up to two years to catch up with the scheduled immunisation programme for children. The shortage of Dentists in Lincolnshire continues to pose challenges in accessing dental care for looked after children. During the lockdowns the CIC

Nurses were able to complete the Initial Health Assessments and this greatly improved performance in this area. The annual data during future years will enable comparative information to inform services and commissioning.

11. Recommendations for 2021-2022

1. LLA, Lincolnshire CCGs and LCHS to continue to work together to improve the number of Initial Health Assessments completed within the statutory timeframe.
2. LCHS to continue to recruit GPs to complete IHA's and to work with ULHT to agree an arrangement whereby Community Paediatricians complete IHA's as part of their job role.
3. The annual report to be shared with the IRO service to promote improvement in constructive challenge.
4. A revised multi agency approach to the management of and support provided to children with above average SDQ scores
5. The pilot of "care skills" to be expanded and jointly delivered with the Leaving care service
6. Official launch of the Children's promise and refresh of the children in care and care leaver's strategy.
7. Roll out of the valuing care toolkit and expansion of our residential estates as part of our transformation programme in response to the shortage of local placements for children in care.

APPENDIX 1

2020 - 2021 Data from the Children in Care health assessment questionnaire

Dental

COUNT OF DENTAL PROCEDURES PERFORMED [LAST 12 MONTHS]					
AGE GROUP	0 - 4	5 - 9	10 - 15	16 +	Unrecorded
Brace	0	1	17	10	0
Extraction	4	5	10	4	0
Filling	4	17	28	8	1
Flouride paint	1	11	8	3	0
No treatment	83	82	192	56	2
Other	2	1	24	8	0
TOTAL	94	117	279	89	3

Total Children in Care (children corporately parented by Lincolnshire County Council, and children placed by external Local Authorities)

COUNT OF DENTAL PROCEDURES PERFORMED [LAST 12 MONTHS]					
AGE GROUP	0 - 4	5 - 9	10 - 15	16 +	Unrecorded
Brace	0	1	12	6	0
Extraction	1	4	6	3	0
Filling	2	9	13	4	0
Flouride paint	1	7	6	3	0
No treatment	55	43	116	33	1
Other	0	1	12	6	0
TOTAL	59	65	165	55	1

Total for Lincolnshire Children in Care

COUNT OF DENTAL PROCEDURES PERFORMED [LAS 12 MONTHS]					
AGE GROUP	0 - 4	5 - 9	10 - 15	16 +	Unrecorded
Brace	0	0	5	4	0
Extraction	3	1	4	1	0
Filling	2	8	15	4	0
Flouride paint	0	4	2	0	0
No treatment	28	38	76	23	1
Other	2	0	12	2	0
TOTAL	35	51	114	34	1

Total for External Local Authority Children in Care

Number of Children in care who have been seen by specialists (Lincolnshire LAC and children placed by external Local Authorities)

SEEN BY A			WEAR GLASSES	Referred By Dental/Otho d	AGE RANGE	TOTAL CHILDREN	IMMUNISATION UP TO DATE				GP INFORMED		
OPTOMETRIS T	AUDIOLOGIST	DENTIS T					YES	NO	REFUSED	Blank	YES	NO	Blank
79	160	94	11	4	0 - 4	415	385	25	1	4	22	1	2
121	14	116	55	3	5 - 9	194	184	7	1	2	7	0	0
277	17	273	170	34	10 - 15	417	338	71	5	3	66	3	2
92	3	87	72	13	16 +	169	128	36	3	2	34	2	0
2	0	3	2	0	Unrecorde d	5	2	3	0	0	3	0	0
571	194	573	310	54	TOTAL	1200	1037	142	10	11	132	6	4

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% SEEN BY / % WHO HAVE					AGE RANGE	TOTAL CHILDREN	IMMUNISATION UP TO DATE				GP INFORMED		
OPTOMETRIS T	AUDIOLOGIST	DENTIS T	GLASSES	REFERRED			% YES	% NO	% REFUSED	% Blank	% YES	% NO	% Blank
19%	39%	23%	3%	1%	0 - 4	415	93%	6%	0%	1%	88%	4%	8%
62%	7%	60%	28%	2%	5 - 9	194	95%	4%	1%	1%	100%	0%	0%
66%	4%	65%	41%	8%	10 - 15	417	81%	17%	1%	1%	93%	4%	3%
54%	2%	51%	43%	8%	16 +	169	76%	21%	2%	1%	94%	6%	0%
40%	0%	60%	40%	0%	Unrecorde d	5	40%	60%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%
48%	16%	48%	26%	5%	TOTAL	1200	86%	12%	1%	1%	93%	4%	3%

During the reporting year 2020-2021 LCHS amended the questionnaire used to record data about the health of children in care to include more qualitative data. Unfortunately, due to how the questionnaire had been built, it is not now possible to report on the remaining data accurately. This is being addressed

AUTHORS

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

Report to: **Corporate Parenting Panel**
Date: **20 January 2022**
Subject: **Corporate Parenting Panel Work Programme**

Summary:

This item enables the Panel to consider and comment on the content of its work programme for the coming year to ensure that scrutiny activity is focused where it can be of greatest benefit. The work programme will be reviewed at each meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel to ensure that its contents are still relevant and will add value to the work of the Council and partners.

Actions Required:

The Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to agree the work programme and identify any items for future meetings.

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.

Work Programme

20 JANUARY 2022		
	Item	Contributor
1	Commissioning Excellence: Meeting the Sufficiency Duty 2018-2022 Annual Update	Amy Allcock, Commissioning Manager - Commercial
2	Lincolnshire Virtual School Annual Report 2020-2021	Kieran Barnes, Virtual School Headteacher
3	Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service - Six Monthly Update Report	Lisa Adams, Service Manager, Barnardo's Leaving Care Services
4	Fostering Quarterly Performance Report Quarter 3	Deborah Crawford, Head of Service Fostering, Adoption and Leaving Care
5	Children in Care Annual Report 2020/21	Rachel Freeman, Head of Service Children in Care and Residential Estates

10 MARCH 2022		
	Item	Contributor
1	Voices for Choices (V4C) Update Report	Ben Lilley, Practice Supervisor (Quality and Standards)
2	Children in Care Performance Measures - Quarter 3 2021/22 (October to December 2021)	Janice Spencer, Assistant Director - Children's Safeguarding
3	Fostering Quarterly Performance Report - Quarter 4	Deborah Crawford, Head of Service Fostering, Adoption and Leaving Care

2. Items to be Scheduled:

- National Approach to Council Tax Relief / Exemption for Care Leavers

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

Not Applicable

4. Background Papers

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

This report was written by Kiara Chatziioannou, Scrutiny Officer, who can be contacted on 07500 571868 or by e-mail at kiara.chatziioannou@lincolnshire.gov.uk.

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