



CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

THURSDAY, 8 SEPTEMBER 2022 at 10.00 AM
in the 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	Declarations of Interest	
3	Minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 July 2022	3 - 8
4	Announcements by the Chairman, Executive Councillors and Chief Officers	
5	Children in Care Performance Measures Quarter 1 2022/23 (April to June 2022) <i>(To receive a report by Janice Spencer, Assistant Director – Children’s Services, which enables the Panel to consider and comment on the key performance information for Quarter 1 2022/23)</i>	9 - 32

- | | | |
|-----------|--|---------------|
| 6 | Adoption Annual Report 2021-22
<i>(To receive a report by Anne Johnson, Team Manager – Adoption, which informs the Panel about the work of the Adoption Service)</i> | 33 - 98 |
| 7 | Fostering Annual Report 2021 - 2022
<i>(To consider a report by Nicola Brangam, Fostering Team Manager, and Rebecca Dolman, Fostering Team Manager, which invites the Panel to consider the Fostering Service Annual Report for 2021-22)</i> | 99 - 152 |
| 8 | Fostering Quarterly Performance Report Q1
<i>(To receive a report by Nicola Brangam, Fostering Team Manager, and Rebecca Dolman, Fostering Team Manager, which provides an overview of activity within the fostering service over quarter one)</i> | 153 - 170 |
| 9 | Corporate Parenting, Children in Care and Care Leaver Strategy Priorities Action Plan Update
<i>(To receive a verbal update by Andrew Morris, Corporate Parenting Manager, which provides an update on the Corporate Parenting, Children in Care Leaver Strategy Priorities Action Plan)</i> | Verbal Report |
| 10 | Corporate Parenting Panel Work Programme
<i>(To receive a report by Kiara Chatziioannou, Scrutiny Officer, which invites the Panel to consider its work programme to ensure scrutiny activity is focussed where it can be of greatest benefit)</i> | 171 - 174 |

Distributed on Wednesday, 31 August 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, 8th September, 2022, 10.00 am \(moderngov.co.uk\)](https://www.moderngov.co.uk/Agenda-for-Corporate-Parenting-Panel-on-Thursday-8th-September-2022-10.00-am)

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



CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL 7 JULY 2022

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S P ROE (CHAIRMAN)

Lincolnshire County Council: Councillors A G Hagues and C Matthews

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

Officers in attendance:-

Lisa Adams (Service Manager, Barnardos), Kieran Barnes (Virtual School Head Teacher), Kiara Chatziioannou (Scrutiny Officer), , Rachel Freeman (Interim Head of Service, Children's (Safeguarding)), Ben Lilley (Team Manager, Quality and Standards), Andrew Morris (Corporate Parenting Manager), Janice Spencer OBE (Assistant Director - Children's Safeguarding) and Emily Wilcox (Democratic Services Officer)

Officers in attendance via Microsoft Teams:-

Sarah Cragg (Lawyer, Legal Services) and Jodie Ogden (Senior Lawyer, Legal Services)

1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED:

That Councillor S P Roe be elected as the Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel for 2022-23.

2 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED:

That Councillor C L Perraton-Williams be elected as the Vice-Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel for 2022-23.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M A Whittington and K Cooke.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

2
CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL
7 JULY 2022

5 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 12 MAY 2022

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 May 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND CHIEF OFFICERS

As requested by the Panel, the Corporate Parenting Manager had compiled a list of proposed benefits to be added to the core offer for looked after children. Briefings had been arranged between the Chief Executives and the Executive Councillors at District Councils to liaise with them about possible benefits that could be added to the core to align the offer across all districts. It was hoped free access to travel for all care leavers could be obtained in future.

8 CHILDREN IN CARE PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 4

Consideration was given to a report by the Assistant Director – Children’s which invited the Panel to consider key performance information for Quarter 4 of 2021/22 that was relevant to the work of the Panel.

Of the 18 measures reported, 10 had not met their target and two were ahead of the target set by the services. Performance continued to be impacted by the effects of the pandemic.

Details of those measures that had not met their target were provided and were detailed within the report.

The Panel noted the difficulties in recruiting foster carers following the pandemic due to lifestyle changes.

Despite not meeting the targets, the number of children with up-to-date health checks, immunisations and dental checks was improving.

The impact of the pandemic on Children in Care had seen a disruption to learning, impacting on targets. It was hoped that performance in this area would begin to improve.

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

- The covid-19 pandemic and lockdown had increased the challenges presented by young people, however there was also seen to be a trend in the increase in challenges presented generally, which had begun to be addressed. Reassurance was provided that the Council were supporting young people who could not be safely

placed in foster care placements. A disability respite facility with a residential home and therapeutic care was available for children posing more difficult behaviours. Residential staff were being supported to stabilise and regulate the emotions of the children with the hope of placing them back into a family environment.

- The Council were in the process of increasing their residential estate to eliminate the need to place children in out of county care provision.
- The Panel recorded their total support to staff working under extremely difficult times. The dedication and passion of foster carers and residential staff was commended.
- It was questioned why numbers had of children in learning had not increased despite the Virtual Schools participated in the National Department for Education (DfE) Post 16 pilot which was completed at the end of March 2022. The Panel were reassured that despite the figures, the project had been extremely impactful, and it was hoped further funding could be provided to continue the work.
- It was recognised all young people had individual challenges and it was important that their needs were met in a holistic and individual way, which only saw small increases in numbers within targets. It was also noted that as the cohort of children fluctuated regularly, data was difficult to report on.
- It was requested that the Panel receive further details of the impactful work of the DFE project at a future meeting.
- Reassurance was provided, that children in care had full and timely access to mental health support. The Lincolnshire Care Quality Commission (CAMHS) service had received a score of outstanding at a recent Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection. However, it was acknowledged that mental health issues in children were increasing. Support was being provided to foster carers to help support with mental health issues at an early stage.
- It was explained that due to a lag in the reporting of data through the DfE, the absence rates for children in care detailed within the report were from the period of September 2020-July 2021. During this period of the pandemic, it was expected that looked after children would continue to attend school. However, in such challenges times, education was heavily disrupted and foster carers were making the decisions whether or not to send children to school, given the risks posed, which had impacted on the target for the period. Assurance was provided, that attendance had now improved.
- The Panel were disappointed that 10 out of the 18 measures had not met the target but acknowledged that there were exceptional circumstances.
- Support and recognition were given to all those looking after children and the Panel thanked them for efforts.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be received and endorsed.
2. That satisfaction be recorded on the performance reported and the assurance and reasoning provided on areas where the targets had not been achieved.

8 LINCOLNSHIRE LEAVING CARE SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

Consideration was given to a report by the Service Manager – Barnardos which invited the Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service Annual Report 2021/22.

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

The report highlighted the key work of the leaving care service during 2021-22, which included the supported lodging scheme, help accessing and maintaining appropriate education employment and training opportunities, improving participation and funding opportunities.

A number of new initiatives had also been introduced including the recruitment of a Mental Health Specialist and a well-being worker to work with Lincolnshire Care Leavers who would benefit from additional input to improve their mental health and wellbeing.

Lincolnshire County Council had also agreed to the recruitment an additional 2 posts into the service that will be based in the South of the County to support unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who had been placed within the County.

Several Care Leavers from Lincolnshire were working with the organisation 'My Pocket's' on an animation project that will help children in care transition into the service.

The service was run by a stable management team who continued to work hard and work with local authority to recognise Lincolnshire's young people at heart of what they aimed to deliver.

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

- Leaving Care workers and specialist workers continued to stay in contact and support young adults transitioning out of care to support with employment and training and ways to create opportunities for the young people.
- Assurance was provided that young people would always be offered a range of housing options before becoming choosing to become street homeless. In exceptional circumstances, young people were sometimes placed into Bed and Breakfast accommodation on a short-term basis before housing was made available and this would require sign off from the Corporate Parenting Manager and the Assistant Director – Children's.
- It could be the case that some young people were deemed as being in unsuitable accommodation, despite that accommodation option being their desired choice. The 6% out of the cohort were either missing, in prison, or choosing to stay with family or friends in accommodation not deemed 'suitable' by the standards of reporting.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be received and endorsed.
2. That satisfaction be recorded with the service provision to Care Leavers.

9 LEGAL SERVICES LINCOLNSHIRE END OF YEAR REPORT (APRIL 2021 TO MARCH 2022)

Consideration was given to a presentation by the Senior Lawyer – Children’s Services and the Lawyer – Children’s Services, which invited the Panel to consider the Legal Services Lincolnshire end of year report 2021-22.

The presentation outlined the role and work of the legal services team in relation to provide safeguarding support to children’s services and offer legal advice relating to children in the county, including court liaison. Legal advice for permanence planning for children was also offered.

The importance of developing positive working relationships with other partners was emphasised and efforts were made wherever possible for early intervention to manage risks outside of needing judicial oversight.

Details of the future focus for the team was provided and included information on the transition back to hearings in court buildings, the development of LWG Best Practice Guidance/ Build Back Better DfE Initiative and close liaison with the case managers, TIME Project and the development of the FPL online system.

RESOLVED:

1. That the update be received.
2. That satisfaction be recorded with the efforts of the Legal Team, and that our comments from the discussion as recorded are taken under consideration

10 VOICES FOR CHOICES (V4C) UPDATE REPORT

Consideration was given to the Practice Supervisor – Quality and Standards which provided an update on the activities regarding V4C between February – June 2022 and the actions taken to support future V4C planning and progress.

During the reporting period the delivery of V4C groups had been continuing to focus on holding face-to-face meetings following the easing of Covid restrictions. A summary of the V4C sessions by locality was provided. There were ongoing attempts to raise awareness of V4C to increase attendances.

19 children and young people attended the latest Big Conversation meeting, which was held on Wednesday 1st June in Skegness at the Storehouse Conference Centre. Discussions with

6

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

7 JULY 2022

senior managers and elected members were held with feedback provided by some children and young people.

Two of Lincolnshire Leaving Care's young people had been invited to the Department of Education to meet with the head of Care Review Josh McCallister having contributed to the Care Collaborative. The young people had a tour of the Houses of Parliament and a trip on the London Eye with Lunch. The Panel viewed a clip of a Lincolnshire care leaver participating in an interview for BBC Newsround.

The Chairman had attended the Big Conversation event and commended the involvement of the children at the event which raised some importance points of improvement, which had been taken away for consideration by Officers.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be received, and comments made be recorded;
2. That satisfaction be recorded with the overall activities and meetings undertaken.

11 CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the Scrutiny Officer, which invited the Panel to review its work programme, as set out on pages 53-55 of the agenda.

The Chairman announced that continued to informally attend children's homes across the County and the Sleaford Secure Centre and commended the positive relationships and interaction between staff members and children.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be noted.

The meeting closed at 11.43 am

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

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	09 September 2022
Subject:	Children in Care Performance Measures Quarter 1 2022/23 (April to June 2022)

Summary:

This item enables the Panel to consider and comment on the report and accompanying appendices to this report, that provide key performance information for Quarter 1 2022/23 that is relevant to the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Actions Required:

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

1. Background

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

There are 15 measures in total that relate to CiC that are reported on in Quarter 1. Of these measures 8 did not meet their target and two are ahead of the target set by the services.

1.1 Measures that did not meet their target:

1.1.1 Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family - With the continued delays in cases getting through the court and the gradual recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, Lincolnshire has failed to meet this target this quarter, as all of the children captured in this data will have been delayed in the Covid pandemic. There has been significant delay in getting cases through the courts during Covid, and this will continue to have some impact on the statistics and data for this year and accounts for the increased timescales. This measure is a 'rolling' 3 yearly averages, as we have moved forward the calculation has considered more of the period covered by the pandemic, which has in turn increased the rolling average figure. The most recent published comparator data is from the three-year period before the pandemic (2015-18), however, Lincolnshire remains better than the national figure (486) from that period, although it is now higher than the

statistical neighbours (456.33).

1.1.2 Fostering/adoption of Children in Care aged 10 to <16 years old - This performance remains slightly under target. Most children in care within this age group are placed in foster care settings, however this target was impacted upon by the Covid 19 pandemic and the subsequent recovery. Despite the gradual easing placement options had been reduced initially owing to isolation, carers being offline and reluctant to take placements and latterly despite many households returning to their fostering role the suitability to match new placements with existing children in care has and continues to be a challenge.

Consequently, the numbers of younger children requiring residential placements in the past year has risen. These are often children who have experienced several foster placement moves who struggle to adjust to the expectations of living in a family environment. Residential care has provided a nurturing environment for this group and has enabled them to settle. The continued effort of the transformational work supports our practice in identifying local resources for those children who are deemed to have sufficiently progressed and are assessed as suitable for foster care or alternative in house provision. There continues to be a focus on reunifying children with their birth families where possible alongside the revocation of Care Orders or granting of private law orders e.g., Special Guardianship Orders within the Court where it is safe and in the best interests of the children.

1.1.3 Participation of Children in Care in reviews - This is a cumulative measure that builds throughout the year. Whilst performance appears to have dropped slightly below target for the first quarter of 2022/23, closer inspection of the records of children listed as not participating in their reviews indicates that there are some issues with recording on Mosaic at present that are pulling this figure down. The numbers shown at present therefore do not give an accurate reflection of the current percentage of participation. Work is currently underway to correct these records, following which the performance is expected to improve significantly and it is anticipated that we will meet target tolerance going forward.

1.1.4 Percentage of Children in Care with an up-to-date health check - The Covid Pandemic has had less negative impact on this area of the children's health than dental care and the immunisation programme. However, the number of children in care has increased and there is evidence of more young people (16/17 age range) exercising their right to refuse an assessment. There has been a number of young people in this age range becoming looked after and generally they are not committed to accessing their health assessment.

The Children in Care Teams continue to encourage and promote health assessments with their young people but have to accept their right to refuse.

There has been a lot of activity to improve the timeliness of Initial Health Assessment, however there are still challenges due to the availability of GP appointments across the county. Where there appears to be a particularly long wait for an appointment the nurses are telephoning the carers to undertake a triage to identify to ensure that there are no significant areas of concern/worry that need to be

addressed urgently. However, this does not replace the health assessment which is still completed by the GP.

1.1.5 Percentage of Children in Care with an up-to-date dental check - This measure continues to improve and is now sitting at 71.1% which is a slight decrease from Q4 and remains below the target of 95%. This is due to the ongoing increased difficulties in children being able to register with a National Health Service Dentist which has been the case for several years now. Many Dentists have made the decision to only provide private dentistry thereby impacting on the number of NHS practices available. This, coupled with the impact of the COVID19 Pandemic has impacted significantly on the number of Children in Care with an up-to-date dental check.

Access to NHS dentistry is a national issue and the availability of dentists across the county continues to impact on our ability to ensure that all children in care have regular dental checks. Efforts continue to be made to ensure that all children in care are registered with a dentist and dentists are working to ensure that dental checks are being completed, although it is likely to take some more time to deal with the backlog of appointments.

1.1.6 Percentage of Children in Care with an up-to-date routine immunisation - The number of routine immunisations being completed continues to be impacted by the Covid Pandemic and remains below target. The majority of overdue immunisations continue to be the teenage boosters which are undertaken in school. These were clearly delayed due to schools being closed for extended periods of time.

The health immunisation team projected that it will take approximately 18 months for the programme to be fully back on schedule. However, further pressures have been added to their workload due to the need to catch up on those that have been missed/delayed during the pandemic and also the increase in their workload due to all males now being offered the HPV and all school population being offered the COVID19 and flu immunisations.

1.1.7 16–17-year-old Children in Care who are participating in Learning - The performance for this quarter is below the lower target tolerance for this performance indicator by 4%. All of our 16- and 17-year-olds are supported by the Virtual School through the Personal Education Planning Process. This brings social workers, carers, and providers together to focus on educational need and ensures that our young people are supported appropriately while participating in learning. Some of our young people in care struggle to access learning and the team also works with those young people not participating in learning to ensure that they can access therapeutic support and/or appropriate educational opportunities when they are ready to do so.

1.1.8 Care Leavers in Education, Employment or Training - This measure remains below target but is slowly improving despite fluctuations and is up from 53.1% to 54.3%. The Leaving Care Service continues to monitor every single young person who is not in Education, Employment or Training (EET). The Service continues to report monthly the efforts of the service to re-engage individuals back into EET and the Corporate Parenting Manager tracks this performance. A survey has been carried out with every Care Leaver who are not in EET, and the main barriers reported back are poor mental health (depression and anxiety) lack of qualifications and substance misuse issues. The new Aspirations worker is focusing on supporting young people back into employment and assisting young people to access the Covid-19 recover

initiatives, but issues such as poor mental health and substance use continue to be a barrier. The Leaving Care service is working with the Corporate Parenting Manager to look at the emotional wellness and recovery of young people, alongside the plethora of activity to support young people accessing EET, as mental health/emotional wellbeing is one of the biggest barriers to our young people accessing EET, so much so a wellbeing worker is being recruited. A further piece of work is being undertaken to fully understand the lived experiences of these young people in EET and fully appreciate why they are in EET and develop individual plans. It is anticipated that legacy Covid-19 will continue to impact on emotional wellbeing and EET.

1.2 Measures that are ahead of their target:

1.2.1 Stability of placements of Children in Care: Number of moves - This is a cumulative indicator identifying those children who experience 3 placement moves. The target is challenging and slipped under target last year although our performance is generally better than other East Midland authorities where an average of 8% of children in care experienced 3 placement moves in a year. At this stage performance remains good however this may change at year end. The start of year performance is promising however there remain ongoing challenges in respect of placement resources and suitability of matching some children with the right fostering household/provision. Whilst placement availability has gradually increased post pandemic there continues to be some foster carers/providers who are unable to take additional placements owing to their existing commitments however matching the child/ren to the most appropriate carer remains a priority in promoting placement stability and improving outcomes for all children in care.

1.2.2 Children in Care cases which were reviewed within required timescales - For children in care we consistently aim to hold reviews within timescales, working in collaboration with social care and partners to achieve this. Performance reflects the commitment of Children’s Services to achieve these expectations.

2. Conclusion

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

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

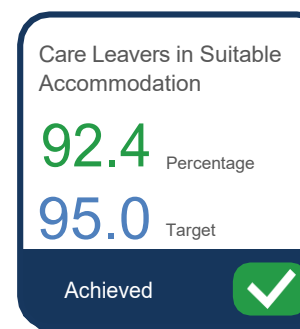
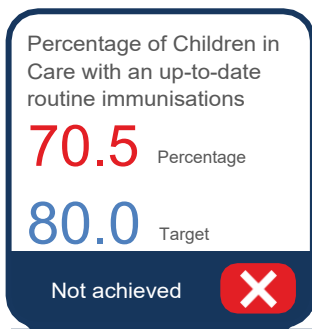
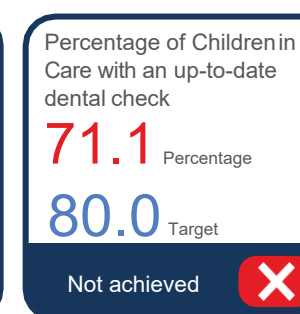
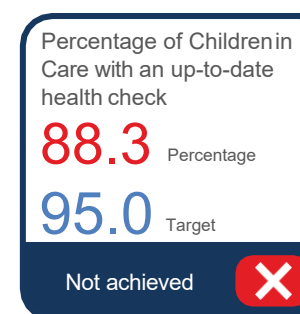
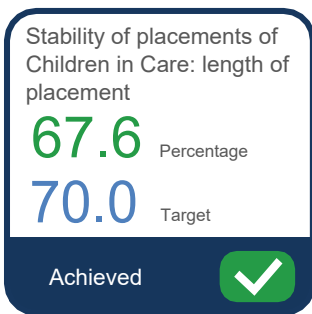
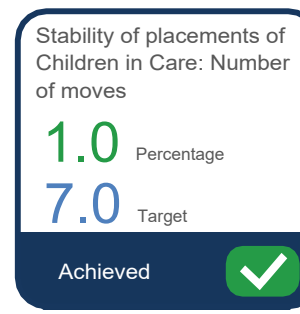
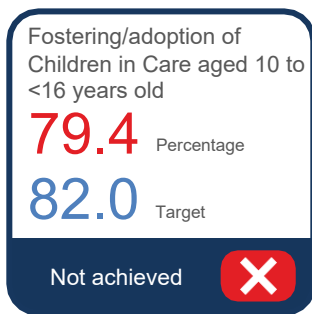
4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Children in Care - Performance Measures – Q1

5. Background Papers

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

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





Healthy and Safe

Children are Healthy and Safe

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

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



Not achieved

513

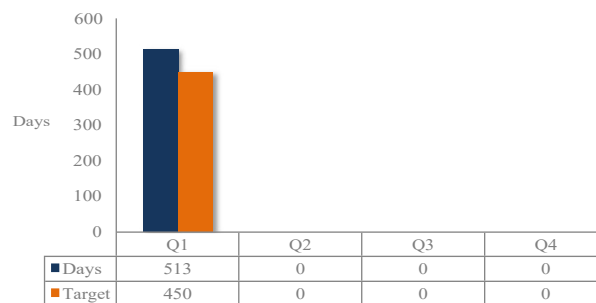
Days
Quarter 1 June 2022



450

Days
Target for June 2022

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



About the latest performance

Performance in 2021/22 - Q1: 397, Q2: 455, Q3: 473, Q4: 484

With the continued delays in cases getting through the court and the gradual recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, Lincolnshire has failed to meet this target this quarter, as all of the children captured in this data will have been delayed in the Covid pandemic. There has been significant delay in getting cases through the courts during Covid, and this will continue to have some impact on the statistics and data for this year and accounts for the increased timescales. This measure is a 'rolling' 3 yearly average, as we have moved forward the calculation has considered more of the period covered by the pandemic, which has in turn increased the rolling average figure. The most recent published comparator data is from the three-year period before the pandemic (2015-18), however, Lincolnshire remains better than the national figure (486) from that period, although it is now higher than the statistical neighbours (456.33).

About the target

There has been delay in court proceedings that will have impact on our average days over the next year. Also we have at least one sibling group that have been hard to place, which will have an impact on our performance for this year.

About the target range

A lower value of 495 - if we were to go above 495 days, we would want to highlight this to Scrutiny members.

About benchmarking

Benchmarking information is available up to 2015-2018, however, this has now been discontinued as a national measure.



Healthy and Safe

Children are Healthy and Safe

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

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

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



Achieved

167

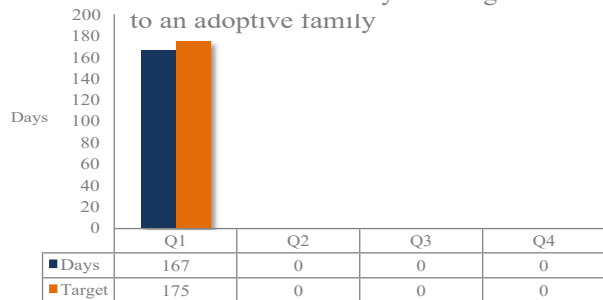
Days
Quarter 1 June 2022



175

Days
Target for June 2022

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



About the latest performance

Performance in 2021/22 - Q1: 156, Q2: 170, Q3: 176, Q4: 164

The performance in quarter 1 has continued to improve and has now been achieved. This is due to continued attention to family finding at the earliest opportunity, so that once children are subject to a Placement Order there is wherever possible a placement already identified so that practice is timely and effective.

About the target

The target has remained the same for this year. There has been delay in court proceedings that will have impact on our average days over the next year. Also we have at least one sibling group that have been hard to place, which will have an impact on our performance for this year.

About the target range

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

About benchmarking

Benchmarking information is available.



Healthy and Safe

Children are Healthy and Safe

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

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



Not achieved

79.4

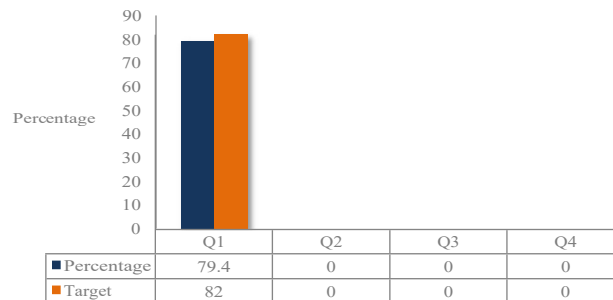
Percentage
Quarter 1 June 2022



82.0

Percentage
Target for June 2022

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



About the latest performance

Performance in 2021/22 - Q1: 76.8%, Q2: 79.3%, Q3: 80%, Q4: 80.4%

This performance remains slightly under target. Most children in care within this age group are placed in foster care settings, however this target was impacted upon by the Covid 19 pandemic and the subsequent recovery. Despite the gradual easing placement options had been reduced initially owing to isolation, carers being offline and reluctant to take placements and latterly despite many households returning to their fostering role the suitability to match new placements with existing children in care has and continues to be a challenge.

Consequently, the numbers of younger children requiring residential placements in the past year has risen. These are often children who have experienced several foster placement moves who struggle to adjust to the expectations of living in a family environment. Residential care has provided a nurturing environment for this group and has enabled them to settle. The continued effort of the transformational work supports our practice in identifying local resources for those children who are deemed to have sufficiently progressed and are assessed as suitable for foster care or alternative in house provision. There continues to be a focus on reunifying children with their birth families where possible alongside the revocation of Care Orders or granting of private law orders e.g. Special Guardianship Orders within the Court where it is safe and in the best interests of the children.

About the target

Target reduced to 82% as performance has remained under target at 80% over the past year. This is indicative of a reduction in the number of foster carers, challenges in foster carer recruitment and children with complex needs.

About the target range

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

Meeting the upper tolerance level would achieve a performance level not reached recently and show a change in the overall trend.

About benchmarking

Benchmarking data no longer available



Healthy and Safe

Children are Healthy and Safe

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

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

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



Achieved

50.1

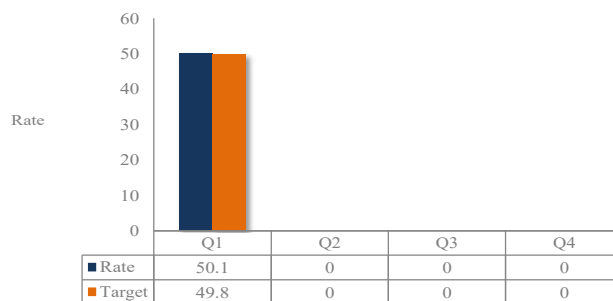
Rate
Quarter 1 June 2022



49.8

Rate
Target for June 2022

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



About the latest performance

Performance in 2021/22 - Q1: 47.2, Q2: 47.5, Q3: 48.8, Q4: 49.9

This measure has achieved target; however, this target has been revised upward in comparison to recent years to take into account the effects of the National Transfer Scheme. As with Quarter 4 2021/22, the number of Children in Care starters over Quarter-1 2022/23 has remained at a relatively high level whilst the number of care leavers has been below this. The increase in new entrants to care has continued to keep the Children in Care per 10,000 figure high over the past quarter. The growth in numbers is attributable to the Council's safeguarding responsibilities and is partly attributable to the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children that have arrived as part of the new temporary mandated National Transfer Scheme. The expectation is that Lincolnshire will take a maximum of 103 children which equates to 0.07% of the general child population and therefore there continues to be a likely impact of growth going forward. Despite the growth this quarter and the potential for future increase there continues to be an emphasis on prevention from children coming into care and exit planning from the care system where it can be achieved. However, despite the increase, the Lincolnshire number of Children in Care per 10,000 remains significantly below the most recent published figures both nationally and by our statistical neighbours (67 per 10,000 and 63.4 per 10,000 respectively as of 31st March 2021).

About the target

The target has increased this year, due to the increases in the National Transfer Scheme. The unsettling situation in the Ukraine may impact and the increasing number of children who are presenting with more complex needs.

About the target range

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

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

About benchmarking

Comparator information is available.



Healthy and Safe

Children are Healthy and Safe

Stability of placements of Children in Care : Number of moves

Percentage of Children in Care with three or more placements



Achieved

1.0

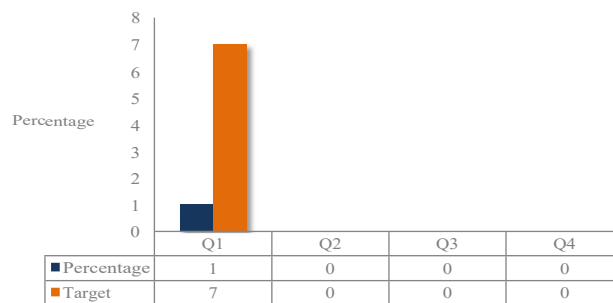
Percentage
Quarter 1 June 2022



7.0

Percentage
Target for June 2022

Stability of placements of Children in Care :
Number of moves



About the latest performance

Performance in 2021/22 - Q1: 0, Q2: 2, Q3: 6, Q4: 9

This is a cumulative indicator identifying those children who experience 3 placement moves. The target is challenging and slipped under target last year although our performance is generally better than other East Midland authorities where an average of 8% of children in care experienced 3 placement moves in a year. At this stage performance remains good however this may change at year end. The start of year performance is promising however there remain ongoing challenges in respect of placement resources and suitability of matching some children with the right fostering household/provision. Whilst placement availability has gradually increased post pandemic there continues to be some foster carers/providers who are unable to take additional placements owing to their existing commitments however matching the child/ren to the most appropriate carer remains a priority in promoting placement stability and improving outcomes for all children in care.

About the target

Target has increased by 1%. Performance at the end of 2021/22 was 9%, the same as the most recently published national figure. There has been an increase in children entering care with complex needs, which has led to an increase in the number of placements.

About the target range

Achieving the upper tolerance level should put LCC's position within the top quartile nationally. Comparative performance within our statistical neighbours was 8%. Anything within the target range should be shown as a significant improvement over last year.

About benchmarking

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



Healthy and Safe

Children are Healthy and Safe

Stability of placements of Children in Care: length of placement

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



Achieved

67.6

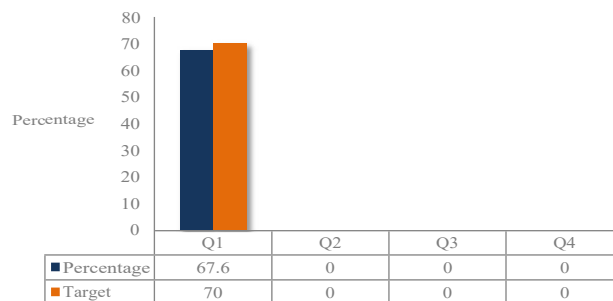
Percentage
Quarter 1 June 2022



70.0

Percentage
Target for June 2022

Stability of placements of Children in Care:
length of placement



About the latest performance

Performance in 2021/22 - Q1: 69.7%, Q2: 73%, Q3: 68.8%, Q4: 65.6%

Current performance has met the targets set.

About the target

Target has been reduced to take into account the current performance.

About the target range

Tolerances for this measure take into account the current performance.

About benchmarking

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



Healthy and Safe

Children are Healthy and Safe

Children in Care cases which were reviewed within required timescales

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



Achieved

99.9

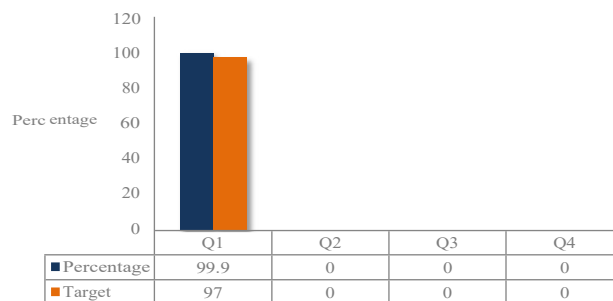
Percentage
Quarter 1 June 2022



97.0

Percentage
Target for June 2022

Children in Care cases which were reviewed within required timescales



About the latest performance

Performance in 2021/22 - Q1: 99.4%, Q2: 99.6%, Q3: 99.9%, Q4: 99.5%

For children in care we consistently aim to hold reviews within timescales, working in collaboration with social care and partners to achieve this. Performance reflects the commitment of Children's Services to achieve these expectations.

About the target

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

About the target range

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

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

About benchmarking

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



Healthy and Safe

Children are Healthy and Safe

Participation of Children in Care in reviews

Percentage of Children in Care who participated in their reviews



Not achieved

94.8

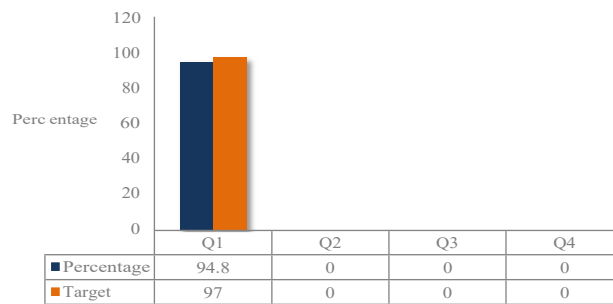
Percentage
Quarter 1 June 2022



97.0

Percentage
Target for June 2022

Participation of Children in Care in reviews



About the latest performance

Performance in 2021/22 - Q1: 96%, Q2: 97.8%, Q3: 96.7%, Q4: 96.6%

This is a cumulative measure that builds throughout the year. Whilst performance appears to have dropped slightly below target for the first quarter of 2022/23, closer inspection of the records of children listed as not participating in their reviews indicates that there are some issues with recording on Mosaic at present that are pulling this figure down. The numbers shown at present therefore do not give an accurate reflection of the current percentage of participation. Work is currently underway to correct these records, following which the performance is expected to improve significantly and it is anticipated that we will meet target tolerance going forward.

About the target

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

About the target range

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

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

About benchmarking

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



Healthy and Safe

Children are Healthy and Safe

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

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



Not achieved

88.3

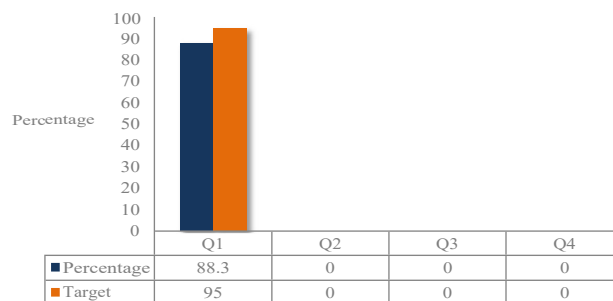
Percentage
Quarter 1 June 2022



95.0

Percentage
Target for June 2022

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



About the latest performance

Performance in 2021/22 - Q1: 93.7%, Q2: 93.3%, Q3: 95.1%, Q4: 91.8%

The Covid Pandemic has had less negative impact on this area of the children's health than dental care and the immunisation programme. However, the number of children in care has increased and there is evidence of more young people (16/17 age range) exercising their right to refuse an assessment. There have been a number young people in this age range becoming looked after and generally they are not committed to accessing their health assessment.

The Children in Care Teams continue to encourage and promote health assessments with their young people but have to accept their right to refuse.

There has been a lot of activity to improve the timeliness of Initial Health Assessment, however there are still challenges due to the availability of GP appointments across the county. Where there appears to be a particularly long wait for an appointment the nurses are telephoning the carers to undertake a triage to identify to ensure that there are no significant areas of concern/worry that need to be addressed urgently. However, this does not replace the health assessment which is still completed by the GP.

About the target

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

About the target range

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

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

About benchmarking

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



Healthy and Safe

Children are Healthy and Safe

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

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



Not achieved

71.1

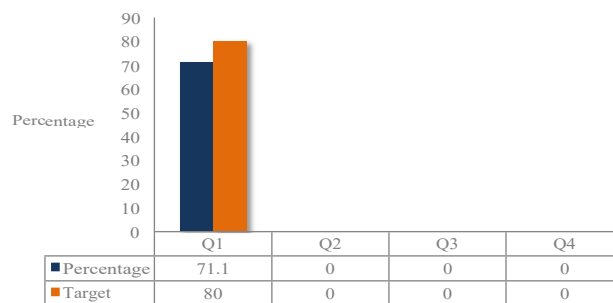
Percentage
Quarter 1 June 2022



80.0

Percentage
Target for June 2022

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



About the latest performance

Performance in 2021/22 - Q1: 59.2%, Q2: 65.1%, Q3: 71.5%, Q4: 73.5%

This measure continues to improve and is now sitting at 71.1% which is a slight decrease from Q4 and remains below the target of 95%. This is due to the ongoing increased difficulties in children being able to register with a National Health Service Dentist which has been the case for several years now. Many Dentists have made the decision to only provide private dentistry thereby impacting on the number of NHS practices available. This, coupled with the impact of the COVID19 Pandemic has impacted significantly on the number of Children in Care with an up to date dental check.

Access to NHS dentistry is a national issue and the availability of dentists across the county continues to impact on our ability to ensure that all children in care have regular dental checks. Efforts continue to be made to ensure that all children in care are registered with a dentist and dentists are working to ensure that dental checks are being completed, although it is likely to take some more time to deal with the backlog of appointments.

About the target

Target has been reduced to 80% to take into account current performance.

About the target range

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

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

About benchmarking

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



Healthy and Safe

Children are Healthy and Safe

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

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



Not achieved

70.5

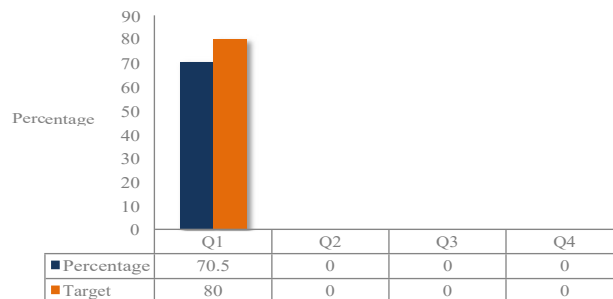
Percentage
Quarter 1 June 2022



80.0

Percentage
Target for June 2022

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



About the latest performance

Performance in 2021/22 - Q1: 78.6%, Q2: 79.3%, Q3: 76.2%, Q4: 76.4%

The number of routine immunisations being completed continues to be impacted by the Covid Pandemic and remains below target. The majority of overdue immunisations continue to be the teenage boosters which are undertaken in school. These were clearly delayed due to schools being closed for extended periods of time.

The health immunisation team projected that it will take approximately 18 months for the programme to be fully back on schedule. However, further pressures have been added to their workload due to the need to catch up on those that have been missed/delayed during the pandemic and also the increase in their workload due to all males now being offered the HPV and all school population being offered the COVID19 and flu immunisations.

About the target

Target has been reduced to 80% to take into account current performance.

About the target range

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

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

About benchmarking

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



Healthy and Safe

Children are Healthy and Safe

Children in Care Living within a Family Environment

Percentage of Children in Care Living within a Family Environment



Achieved

80.4

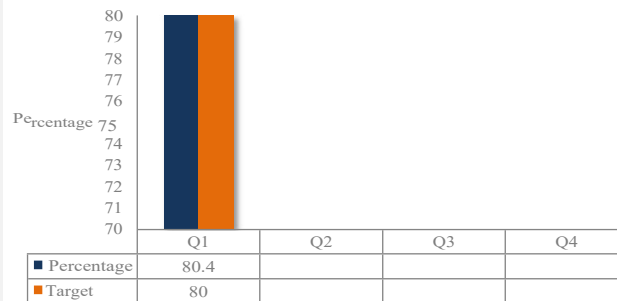
Days
Quarter 1 June 2022



80

Days
Target for June 2022

Children in Care Living within a Family Environment



About the latest performance

Performance in 2021/22 - Q1: 78.5%, Q2: 79.7%, Q3: 80%, Q4: 79.7%

Performance continues to remain above target in this area and is following an above the target range trend. For many children in care, a family placement is deemed the most suitable means of offering care and maintaining children within their family networks. The Council continue to explore enabling children and young people to remain within their family or extended network if they cannot, for whatever reason, live with their parents.

About the target

Target has increased, due to performance remaining above target for the previous year

About the target range

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

About benchmarking

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



Ready for Adult Life

Ready for Adult Life

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

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

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

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

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



Not achieved

81.4

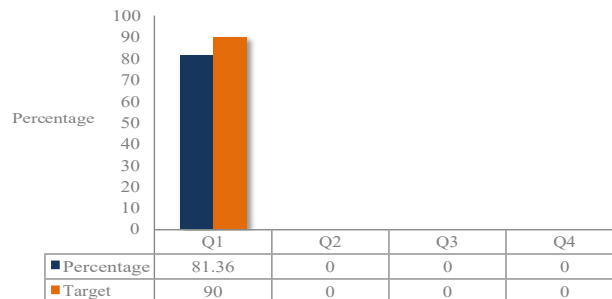
Percentage
Quarter 1 June 2022



90.0

Percentage
Target for June 2022

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



About the latest performance

Performance in 2021/22 - Q1: 86.3%, Q2: 51.3%, Q3: 74.8%, Q4: 81%

The performance for this quarter is below the lower target tolerance for this performance indicator by 4%. All of our 16 and 17 year olds are supported by the Virtual School through the Personal Education Planning Process. This brings social workers, carers and providers together to focus on educational need and ensures that our young people are supported appropriately while participating in learning. Some of our young people in care struggle to access learning and the team also works with those young people not participating in learning to ensure that they can access therapeutic support and/or appropriate educational opportunities when they are ready to do so.

About the target

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

About the target range

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

About benchmarking

Benchmarking information is not available for this cohort



Ready for Adult Life

Ready for Adult Life

Care Leavers in Suitable Accommodation

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

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

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

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



Achieved

92.4

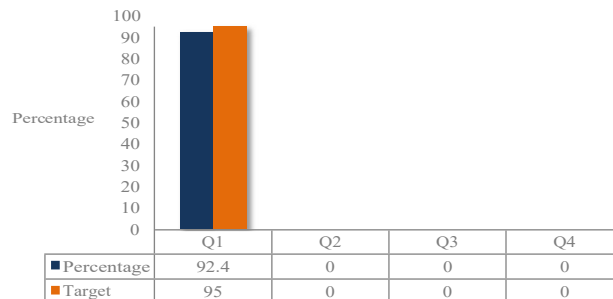
Percentage
Quarter 1 June 2022



95.0

Percentage
Target for June 2022

Care Leavers in Suitable Accommodation



About the latest performance

Performance in 2021/22 - Q1: 95.5%, Q2: 96.5%, Q3: 94.8%, Q4: 93.7%

Ordinarily the proportion of young people in suitable accommodation for 19-, 20- and 21-year-olds runs at between 94% and 95%. The definition of the suitability of accommodation is very strict, and whilst the definition would deem some of the accommodation options unsuitable, the young person might be making an informed choice (as an adult) about where they live and how they live. For example, the monthly tracker identified 5 young people who are choosing to live with friends and sleep on their sofa. This is deemed unsuitable, but the decision to live on a friends sofa is the informed choice of the young person. The numbers of young people in custody affect this figure and this is also considered unsuitable, however this is beyond our control. Lincolnshire currently has 7 young people in custody. Lincolnshire has no homeless young people. Everyone has a form of accommodation of their choosing, and if it is deemed unsuitable, each young person is offered support and options to take should they wish to. The Corporate Parenting Manager monitors unsuitable accommodation on a case by case basis every month. The good performance in relation to accommodation continues to be down to good working relationships with District Councils and their willingness to view care leavers as a priority group. The continued flexibility and resilience of our housing provider, Nacro, during and after the pandemic continues to ensure safe accommodation is on offer. The above combined with persistent and creative work of leaving care staff has ensured that nearly all care leavers are suitably accommodated if they wish. A small number of young people in custody are there for deemed to be unsuitably accommodated, and one care leaver declined the support of housing authorities which does impact on the figure.

About the target

We have performed consistently higher than our previous years target. We have increased it to the upper target range from this last year and adjusted our target range as appropriate.

About the target range

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

About benchmarking

Benchmarking information is available.



Ready for Adult Life

Ready for Adult Life

Care Leavers in Education, Employment or Training

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



Not achieved

54.3

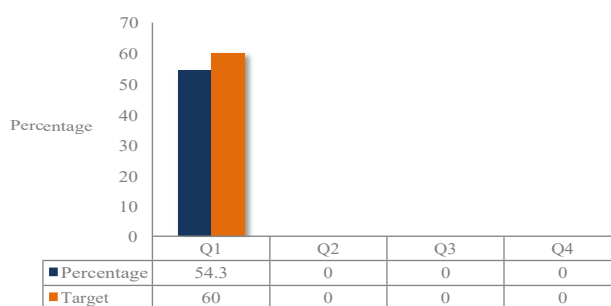
Percentage
Quarter 1 June 2022



60.0

Percentage
Target for June 2022

Care Leavers in Education, Employment or Training



About the latest performance

Performance in 2021/22 - Q1: 53%, Q2: 51%, Q3: 52.3%, Q4: 53.1%

This measure remains below target but is slowly improving despite fluctuations and is up from 53.1% to 54.3%. The Leaving Care Service continues to monitor every single young person who is not in EET. The Service continues to report monthly the efforts of the service to re-engage individuals back into EET and the Corporate Parenting Manager tracks this performance. A survey has been carried out with every Care Leaver who are not in EET and the main barriers reported back are poor mental health (depression and anxiety) lack of qualifications and substance misuse issues. The new Aspirations worker is focusing on supporting young people back into employment and assisting young people to access the Covid-19 recover initiatives, but issues such as poor mental health and substance use continue to be a barrier. The Leaving Care service is working with the Corporate Parenting Manager to look at the emotional wellness and recovery of young people, alongside the plethora of activity to support young people accessing EET, as mental health/emotional wellbeing is one of the biggest barriers to our young people accessing EET, so much so a wellbeing worker is being recruited. A further piece of work is being undertaken to fully understand the lived experiences of these young people in EET and fully appreciate why they are in EET and develop individual plans. It is anticipated that legacy Covid-19 will continue to impact on emotional wellbeing and EET.

About the target

Target reduced to 60% this is based on both recent performance and in comparison with other local authorities nationally.

About the target range

Tolerances for this measure take into account the current performance.

About benchmarking

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

Open Report on behalf of Janice Spencer OBE, Assistant Director - Children's Safeguarding

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	08 September 2022
Subject:	Adoption Annual Report 2021-22

Summary:

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

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

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

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

Actions Required:

Lincolnshire Children's Services operates a discreet Adoption Service, on a countywide basis from three localities. The Annual Report and Statement of Purpose thus present the performance of the service over the previous year 2021-2022 to the Executive Councillor responsible for Children's Services and Elected Members. Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are invited to review and comment on the contents of the Adoption Annual Report for 2021-22.

1. Background

The Annual Report thus present the performance of the service over the previous year 2021-2022 to the Executive Councillor responsible for Children's Services and Elected Members.

2. Conclusion

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

Following consideration of the attached Annual Report the Panel is requested to consider and comment on the contents of this and the work of the Adoption Service.

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Adoption Annual Report 2021 - 2022

5. Background Papers

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

This report was written by Deborah Crawford, who can be contacted on 01522 552781 or deborah.crawford@lincolnshire.gov.uk



Annual Adoption Report

April 2021 - March 2022



Introduction

This report provides information about the Adoption Service and outcomes for children in care with Lincolnshire County Council, from the period April 2021 – March 2022 inclusive.

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

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

Our vision

Is working for a better future by:

- Building on our strengths
- Protecting your lifestyle, and
- Being ambitious for the future

Our purpose

- Investing in infrastructure and the provision of services
- Commissioning for outcomes based on our communities' needs
- Promoting community wellbeing and resilience
- Influencing, coordinating, and supporting other organisations that contribute to the life of Lincolnshire, and
- Making the best use of all our resources.

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 and young people to ensure that their life chances are maximised by their experience of the service. The vision is 'Putting Children First'.

National Adoption Agenda

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

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

stage approval process for adopters, and the development and expansion of support services to adoptive families.

On the 1st May 2015, the Adoption Support Fund (ASF) was rolled out to all Local Authorities. The fund offered a fast, simple service for Local Authorities to apply to, meaning that adoptive families can access the support they need, as and when they need it.

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

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

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

Lincolnshire and Rutland, North Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, Leicester City, and Northamptonshire Children's Trust launched as Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) in October 2020 under the name Family Adoption Links. They continue to work collaboratively to develop the RAA partnership, with an RAA management team, established regional family finding group, and plans in place to co-ordinate the work processes across the region.

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

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

Lincolnshire was actively involved in Rutland's OFSTED inspection in February 2020, by holding a training event with Rutland staff, providing children and adopters' files for evidence, and meeting with the inspector. The comments on adoption services in the Rutland OFSTED inspection report 2020 were positive. The contract for the delivery of adoption services for Rutland has been ongoing through 2021/2022.

At the end of March 2019 the statutory adoption register run by Coram BAAF ceased to operate, and was replaced by the Linkmaker system, which enabled social work staff and

adopters to access information on children nationally and to have Lincolnshire children on the national system. This has been effective as the regional colleagues also use this system so there is a regional area where the family finding for the region is held, but also the option to have children on the system nationally so that approved adopters seeking a child can do so through this system.

In April 2019 Lincolnshire was inspected under the new ILACS system by OFSTED and, along with the rest of Children's Services, was rated 'Outstanding'. This was the third consecutive 'Outstanding' for Lincolnshire Adoption Service.

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

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

At the end of 2022, the adoption support fund announced that they would be continuing for a period of 3 years, as opposed to year by year, which secures the ongoing support for adoptive and Special Guardianship Order (SGO) families in being provided with therapeutic support.

Throughout 2021/22 the RAA has gone from strength to strength and workstreams have worked hard to get the full launch of Family Adoption Links.

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

- Early Intervention and prevention
- Safeguarding
- Aspiration and well-being
- Learning and achievement
- Best use of resources.

In addition to the above principles, four strategic outcomes for children have been agreed by Children's Services.

- Children and young people are healthy and safe

- Develop to their full potential in their early years and are ready for school
- Learn and Achieve
- Children and young people are ready for adult life.

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

Progress on Development Goals identified in 2020/2021 Annual Report

Early Intervention and Prevention

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

There was continued high performance on the adoption scorecard performance against key threshold measures. The service continues to perform well in this area, which means that wherever Lincolnshire children are placed with their adoptive family as quickly as possible, within the government timescales. The timescales for the scorecard were amended to take account of the Covid delay nationally and Lincolnshire's performance continued to be within the target timescales.

There has been a consistent increase in the number of families who we have been able to help through the Adoption Support Fund, and there has been a notable increase in demand for support throughout the period of Covid. The government provided additional funds through the Adoption Support Fund, which we have accessed to provide an on-line therapeutic parenting service for adopters and SGO carers, and an advice line for SGO carers. Both services have been well used by adopters and SGO carers.

Adoption Scorecard

The most relevant indicators refer to the years ending 31st March 2018 and 31st March 2019 which is the most recently published.

There are 3 main indicators pertinent to adoption performance:

- (A10) Average time between entering care and being placed in adoptive family adoption is 290 days. The all-England average is 376 days. Lower is better.
- (A2) Average time between gaining authority to place and achieving a match is 138 days, significantly lower than all England average of 178. Lower is better.

- (A3) The percentage of children who wait less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family is 68% in Lincolnshire, slightly down on last year but still well above all England average.
- Adoptions as a percentage of children leaving care remain strong at 9%.

These remain to be strong figures compared to the national average, and the challenge going forward will be to remain 'on target'. The national targets have been adjusted through Covid to acknowledge the delays in the courts and consequent delays in placement. Lincolnshire children continue to be placed in a timely way wherever possible.

There continues to be a small cohort of children whose timescales will fall out of the target, and this is due to them being difficult to place or applications from parents for leave of the court to appeal Placement Orders which has been a cause for delay.

This year has seen an increased number of children with a plan of adoption, from 49 to 56, in line with the increased numbers of children in care. The trend for high numbers of children placed on Special Guardianship Orders has reversed with a higher number of SGO's granted this year [69]. The number of adoption orders granted this year has gone up again to 31, as compared with 29 last year, still lower than the average but heading in the right direction.

Safeguarding

Over the course of the year 'Signs of Safety' has continued to be incorporated into the adoption process wherever possible as a model for assessing matches, adoptive placements and for risk assessments, and in direct work with children whilst preparing them for placement. Staff members in the team have been actively involved in developing the use of 'words and pictures' in direct work with children assisting them in understanding the reasons they are in care and were not safe in their birth families.

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

Aspiration and Well-being

There has been an increase in the number of families who have been provided with therapeutic support via the Adoption Support Fund to assist families in utilising therapeutic parenting techniques in their family life.

Over the course of 2021/22 there have been 322 applications to the Adoption Support Fund to provide therapeutic input for adopted /SGO children and families. The amount of funding granted from the fund to cover these was £837,143.

The number of referrals and the amount of money granted this year increased by a further 25 per cent as compared to the previous year, so this has placed significant pressure on the team

with most of their focus being on adoption support assessments and arranging the therapeutic packages.

There were cases where individual therapy was delivered by therapeutically trained staff who are external providers. In many of the cases there were individual sessions delivered remotely due to Covid, using Theraplay, Therapeutic Life Story Work, Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP) or Sensory Integration Therapy (SIT).

There were also several cases where there was a detailed assessment of therapeutic needs, followed by an intensive period of therapeutic input and attachment focussed therapy, again delivered remotely by external providers. All the families in receipt of these services have reported them to be positive in helping them to meet the challenge of parenting their adopted children.

Learning and achievement

Maintain strong links with the Virtual School and ensure adopted children in schools receive the full benefit from initiatives including the Pupil Premium. Through the period of the Covid pandemic there has continued to be liaison with the Virtual School, and the service have been able to make sure that where it was important there have been school places provided for children to reduce the stress in the adoptive or foster home.

During 2021/22 most adoption staff have continued to use Theraplay theory and methods, albeit 'online', so that they can support adoptive families with children newly in placement to use therapeutic parenting models to enhance the building of positive attachments in the early stages of placement.

Unfortunately, it was not possible to deliver this face to face through Covid owing to the constraints relating to close contact. There are three clinicians within the Adoption Support Team who are trained in DDP Therapy, Filial Therapy and Family Therapy: thus, creating a flexible and sustainable adoption service.

Staff have learned new skills and were extremely creative in planning and managing introductions using virtual contact as much as possible, particularly where there were foster carers who were 'shielding'. The situation has moved forward given the gradual easing of restrictions and services being able to work more liberally.

The team was able to continue to provide some post-adoption activities for children during school holidays, but these had to be for a reduced number of children and be risk assessed in accordance with social distancing and Covid rules.

There were forest schools for the younger children to promote awareness of nature and give them new skills and two photography workshops for older children which provided new skills and creativity. All these activities enabled adopted children to meet one another and provided an environment in which the children could talk about being adopted as well as increasing self-esteem.

Best use of Resources

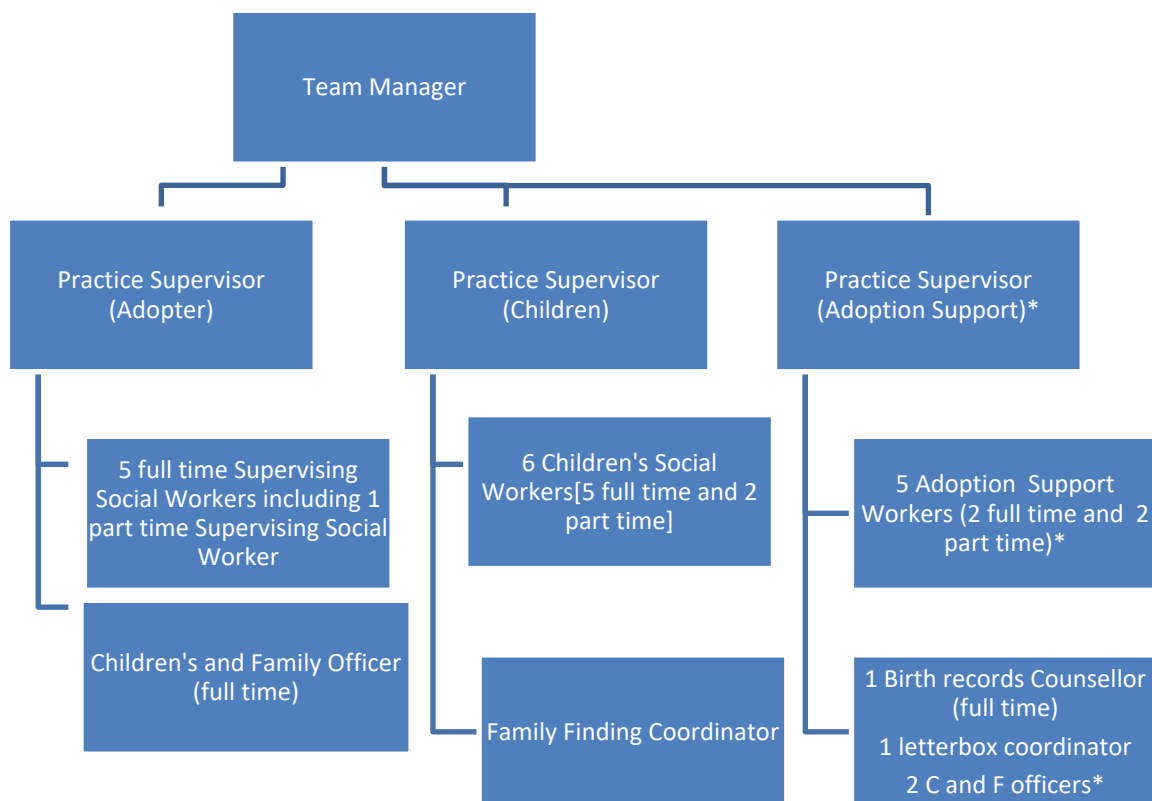
Staff in the post adoption team have been involved in rebuilding the Mosaic system so that it is now a useful and effective recording system which is being used by all team members. The final part of the build was to ensure that the adoption support workflows are correct and effective. This has now been completed so that the system is being used effectively throughout the service.

The post adoption team have begun to develop a range of services for SGO support, to enable them to have access to training, support groups, and advice and guidance. Support proposed will be two-tiered, with the FAST Teams completing the formal reassessment of SGO support plans. The Adoption Support Team has developed an information leaflet and helpline for Special Guardians. Guardians will be granted access to the e-Learning currently available for foster carers and a quarterly newsletter is being developed. Applications to the ASF will be managed through the adoption service. There is an SGO review ongoing and plans for recommendations to be taken to DLT in 2022.

Service Role and Structure

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

The Adoption Team remains a stand-alone countywide service with office bases at Lincoln, Sleaford, and Louth. This year all staff have been working from home, with access to the office within the smarter working policy. All staff continue to be employed by Lincolnshire, but the adopter's team and the adoption support team are now part of the Regional Adoption Agency.



The Adoption Service is staffed by a Team Manager, three Practice Supervisors, six Children's Adoption Social Workers and six Supervising Social Workers.

The Adoption Support Team has one Birth Records Social Worker, two full-time and two-part-time Adoption Support Social Workers, a Children and Families Officer who manages the 'letterbox' and an adoption support worker who supports adoptive families in the community.

At the end of the 2020 a new Early Help Worker was appointed to focus on the needs of SGO carers and provide them with support and assessments. A qualified Social Worker in the Adoption Support Team carries out the agency's statutory duties of birth record counselling for adopted adults.

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

The Supervising Social Workers recruit and assess prospective adopters, as well as completing step - parent adoption assessments. Supervising Social Workers also deliver preparation training courses for adopters, matching of adopters with children and support to adoptive placements and joint applications for the adoption orders.

Lincolnshire does not provide intermediary services but does provide limited assistance in tracing where it is able. The Adoption Support Social Workers complete work directly with families who have adopted and who are struggling to manage issues specifically linked to their adoption.

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

Adoption Performance

Adoption Orders granted April 2021– March 2022

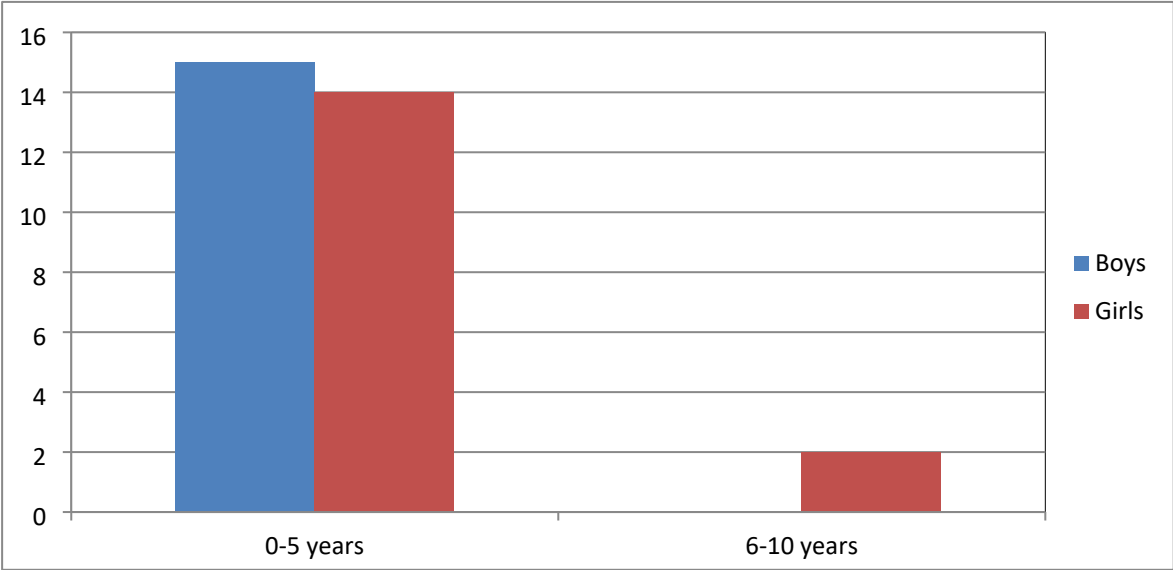
- In the year to March 2022, 31 adoption orders were granted
- In addition, 69 Special Guardianship Orders were granted

This year has seen an increase in the number of adoptions in Lincolnshire with 31 adoptions this year. This is still below average as through Covid there have continued to be delays in the court process. In 'contested' adoption cases it has been difficult as these have had to be hybrid hearings to allow for birth parents to attend court in person.

The number of children being placed on SGOs has increased again to 69 as compared to only 41 in 2020/21. Performance against the Adoption Scorecard has already been discussed in detail above with performance against all threshold measure continuing to show good performance which is consistently better or in line with the statistical neighbours, and the England average.

Adoption Activity for 2021/2022

Profile of children adopted 2021/2022



Lincolnshire County Council achieved 31 adoption orders during 2021/2022, an increase of 2 from the previous year but still below the average number for Lincolnshire. The demographics were different with 16 girls as compared to 12 last year.

This year there has been delay in the courts owing to the impacts of Covid. This has been due in part to the need to have 'hybrid' hearings for contested adoptions, so that the birth parents were able to attend court and be heard, and due to the increased pressure on the courts owing to an unprecedented increase in care proceedings during this time.

Despite this Lincolnshire has continued to achieve high performance levels for the timely placement of children. There are fewer children waiting and many of the children are pre-matched prior to the court granting the Placement Order. In addition to this ,69 Special Guardianship Orders were granted, and these are counted by the DFE as part of the adoption performance measure.

In the cohort of children adopted there were 27 singleton placements and there were only 2 sibling groups of two this year and no sibling groups of 3. In terms of a profile of ethnicity, there were only 2 children of Eastern European heritage. All other children were recorded as White British.

Profile of children with a best interest plan of adoption 2021/2022

During April 2021 to March 2022 57 children had an agency decision of adoption, of which 46 went onto being subject to a Placement Order. This was eight more than the previous year's figures. In addition, there were 3 Rutland children.

Of the 57 children there were the following groups of siblings:

- 1 group of 3 children
- 5 groups of 2 children
- 44 single children.

This is a similar number of sibling groups as compared to last year, but also an increased number of single placements. There continued to be use of kinship placements and Special Guardianship Orders throughout the 2020/21 performance year, and the numbers increased to 69.

Age ranges of children with a best interest plan of adoption 2021/2022

- 0 - 5 years = 57 [40]
- 6 -10 years = 0 [2]
- 10 plus = 0 [0]

Previous year's performance in brackets.

The predominant ethnicity of the children with a best interest plan remains White British although there were 2 children of Eastern European heritage.

All the children this year were under 6 years old but there were 6 children who were 5 years old. These children sometimes come as part of a sibling group with older children and therefore the target of the service's recruitment strategy continues to be targeting adopters willing to consider sibling groups and older children.

Profile of children placed for adoption

In respect of placements made this year 36 children were placed, seven more than in the previous year. Of these, 32 were singleton placements, and 4 children were placed in 2 sibling groups. All the children placed were under five with 28 of them being placed before they were 2 years, with eight children placed between the age of 2 and 5 years. There were 18 boys placed and 18 girls, so a change from last year when there were more boys than girls.

Overall, there was a change in that most of the children were singletons and were younger than in previous years, and with no children in the 6-10 or over 10 age ranges. There has been a significant increase in the number of cases which are delayed in court awaiting placement orders and were not placed within NMS 17.7 as they waited several months to be made subject to a placement order.

Children Awaiting Placement at the close of 2021/2022

At the end of March 2022, there were 10 children whose plans were not agreed by the court and who did not yet have a Placement Order. This is a reduction on last year and nearer to the average number. There were 3 children whose plans were changed by the courts and who either returned home or were placed with relatives on an SGO.

There were then 28 children with Placement Orders and no placement, and one relinquished child. Of these there were 10 children in the process of being adopted by their foster carers. There were 8 children with links identified and progressing to matching panel.

There were 6 children all with recent Placement Orders [Jan -March 2022], who the service is family finding for. There was one child whose plan had changed to long term foster care, 2 children delayed by court appeals / applications to revoke the orders, and one child who will be placed with family members who came forward after the Placement Order was made.

Adopters approved as suitable to adopt during 2021/2022

A total of 27 adoptive parents were approved to adopt during 2021/2022, with no adopters approved for inter-country adoption. 6 of these were also approved for Foster to Adopt. This is a small increase with 2 more adopters than last year's figures.

The service ended the year with adopters awaiting placements so were able to meet the needs of children with adoption plans coming through the system. The focus of the work during this year was to match the children waiting and place them into adoptive families at the earliest opportunity whilst ensuring that the service remained Covid secure.

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

At 31st March 2022 there were 10 adopters approved and waiting; two of which were being considered for links. In addition, there were two adopters fostering children with a view to adoption.

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

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

	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2016/17	2015/16
White British	26	22	25	40	21	29
Asian/Asian British – Indian	1	1	0	1	1	2
Other white background	0	2	1	1	0	1
Mixed White/Black Caribbean	0	0	0	1		

In order to reflect the government's aspiration to encourage foster carers who then go on to adopt the Council supported six fostering families with children in placement to apply directly to the courts for an Adoption Order. There have been a much higher number of these applications over the Covid period reflecting the amount of time that children are remaining in a task centred foster placement, because of court delays.

It is noted that there has been a reduction in the numbers of adoptive families wanting to provide families for sibling groups, and this may be due to the uncertainties which are Covid related. We will continue to maximise our capacity to recruit for larger sibling groups, through

a mixture of targeted recruitment and the flexible use of support packages for families seeking to adopt three or more children

Marketing and Branding

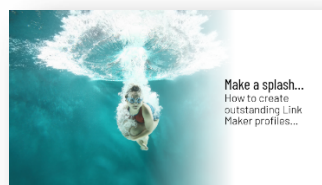
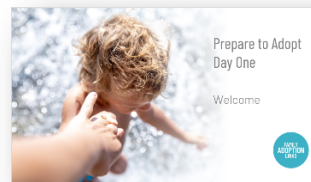
Alex McGuire is the Marketing Officer for Family Adoption Links.

Re-brand

The partnership has been successfully re-branded with a stunning new logo, a suite of corporate colours and fonts, imagery that reflects the children we are family finding for and easy to use corporate guidelines to help all members of the partnership produce visually stunning and appealing work.

Each adoption service has been re-named as Family Adoption Links **Location** creating consistency across the partnership and the fresh new logos ensure instant brand recognition.

Many guides/presentations have been created in the new style, here are a few examples...

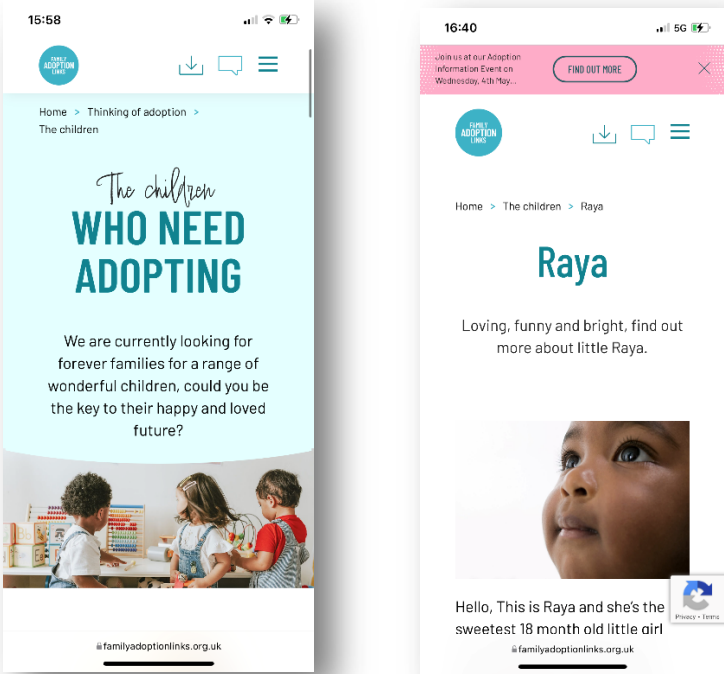


Website

A new website has been created to maximise the recruitment and support activities for the partnership. Reflecting the dynamic and innovative new branding, the new site is designed to be engaging and user-friendly empowering potential adopters and adopters at every stage of their journey.

By including the You Can Adopt Information guides, a You Can Adopt Information video and the ability to book onto our You Can Adoption Information events at any time, the service is able to deliver better quality enquiries, maximise event attendance and reduce administration time.

Featuring full editorial control, the website is ‘alive’ with information and uses storytelling and testimonials to give potential adopters confidence. The most popular page is the ‘The children who need adopting’ section receiving 11.58% of the total website traffic over the last 5 months.



The website will also serve as platform for delivering the professional, consistent, and outstanding adoption support services we seek to provide as a partnership and become a single point of contact for those seeking post adoption support and training.

Website KPIs - 8th December 2021 – 19th April 2022

- 1.89k new users
- Average session duration 4.53 min (2-3 minutes is considered good)
- Bounce rate 35.23% (Less than 40% is considered excellent)
- Pages visited per session 4.55 (4.4% is considered good)
- Number of sessions per user 1.93 (Top 10% of websites report 1.9% sessions per user)
- You Can Adopt Information video watched 120 times

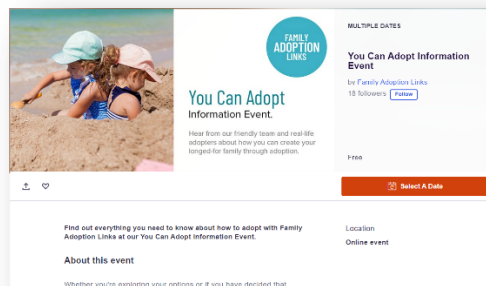
Social Media

Content and posts from the Family Adoption Links Facebook page was seen by 29,910 people in the last 12 months (1/4/21-1/4/22). The partner accounts of Northamptonshire, Leicestershire and Leicester were re-named to reflect their new identities and work is

ongoing to move these accounts and their followers to the central account as soon as possible.

Adoption Information Events

By creating centralised Adoption Information Events hosted on Eventbrite, the partnership has enjoyed incredible economies of scale both in terms of time and money. The corporate presentation delivered on a rotational basis receives positive feedback from both staff and potential adopters at each event and since the events began in November 2021, the region has welcomed 139 potential adopters online.



Here is some of the feedback Family Adoption Links have received...

“The online event was really good, very informative and good having 2 adopters on to chat as well. Denise really seemed very passionate about her role and the team and RAA as a whole.”

“We found it very informative, and I must say the topics covered were all relevant and exactly what is needed at this stage thank you.”

“It was great with all the information we needed, thank you again.”

Marketing and Workstreams

Marketing is fully involved in each of the partnership’s workstreams from producing stunning new presentations for the Assessment and Training group to creating enticing videos for priority children in the Family Finding workstream. The Marketing Officer is committed to digitalising wherever possible to ensure the user journey is as seamless as possible.

Highlights of this include...

The Family Adoption Links Lincolnshire’s Adoption Support event.

Now the event is

- Publicised on ‘Thrive’ the adoption support newsletter
- Advertised on the support section of the website

- Linked to Eventbrite where you can choose your date and book in with all the required information
- Guests then receive automatic email reminders to reduce no shows and ensure they have relevant information for the event
- After the event, guests receive an email with a link to a feedback form on Microsoft teams for instant feedback

‘Thrive’ the post adoption support newsletter

- Created and distributed via Mailchimp
- Great feedback “Thoroughly enjoying the new email newsletters from Family Adoption Links. Great read and great articles.”
- Excellent performance statistics:
 - Lincolnshire 62.2% open rate, 18.6% click rate
 - Leicestershire 43.9% open rate, 11.7%click rate
 - Leicester 47.7% open rate, 10.1% click rate

Recruitment

During this period, the recruitment of adopters was assisted by the recruitment staff.

Their role was to take calls from prospective adopters and make the initial response to enquiries via the website, giving information about adopting, coordinating the provision of further information, completing initial enquiries, and passing the information onto the adoption team.

The Adoption Service continued to undertake its own initial visits to determine the suitability of prospective adopters up to the approval stage.

Recruitment Statistics

From 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022:

- 119 Initial Expression of Interest forms (IEIs) were received through the recruitment desk
- There was a notable reduction in the number of enquiries this year as compared with the previous year, but the service has still had adopters awaiting placement throughout the year, so sufficiency has not been an issue.

Financial Year	Number of IEs received
2021/ 2022	119
2020 / 2021	208
2019 / 2020	186
2018 / 2019	198

Adoption Panel Activity for 1st April 2021 – 31st March 2022

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

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

Children’s Plans for Adoption

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

The Quality Assurance meeting is available each week and cases are booked in consultation with Legal Services and the Adoption Team in advance to ensure the timescales in relation to care proceedings are met. This process allows for a rigorous cross-agency check to ensure that the work is of a high enough standard and that the child’s wishes and views are recorded.

When compiling these reports the current foster carers provide a profile for the child, which is circulated. The views of parents and birth family are detailed within these reports. If there are no views, then the Advisor will request that the facts and reasons why there are no views from the parents are recorded.

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

The Quality Assurance meeting will collectively scrutinise each report to ensure that the Welfare Checklist , Children Act 1989 has been addressed and that, if any expert reports have been requested in Care Proceedings, these are available. This is particularly important to ensure there is a balanced approach and that key points raised have been considered fully within the Child’s Permanence Report.

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

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

The Agency Decision Maker considers the Welfare Checklist in particular

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

Analysis

Child Permanence Reports detail the child's history well. They are written in a style which is easy to read, and consideration is made to how the views of children who are nonverbal can still be included in the reports.

The wishes and views of birth parents can be difficult for the workers to report on due to the family disengaging with the workers. It would be beneficial to see further evidence of how workers have utilised restorative/relationship-based practice tools to engage with the birth family and how this can be evidenced more fully at the point of a link panel. This may have a bearing on several outcomes for both the parents and how many contested cases are addressed.

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

The reports consider fully the lifelong impact of adoption and are mindful in addressing matters around family time (previously contact) post adoption both with birth parents but all those who are important to the child including siblings whose plans may not be that of adoption.

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

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

Between April 2021 and March 2022, the following children have had a decision to support a plan for Adoption made by the Agency Decision Maker compared to the previous year.

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

Between April 2021 and March 2022, the following children have been placed for Adoption.

National Minimum Standard 17.7

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

	2021/22	2020/2021	2019/20	2018/19	2016/17	2015/14
Total Children	37	49	44	51	55	23
Linked with adopters in timescale NMS 17.7	20	11	18	19	23	17

Linked with adopters outside timescale NMS 17.7	6	0	10	11	3	1
Awaiting link	10	38	6	21	29	1
Awaiting link – no placement order	10		6			
Returned to family	1	0	1	0	0	4
Change of care plan	2	0	2			
Adopted via Direct Application			1			
% meeting the National Minimum Standard 17.7	78%	100%	78%	78.5%	94.5%	95%

Suitability of Prospective Adopters

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

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

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

	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2016/17	2015/16
White British	26	22	25	40	21	29
Asian/Asian British – Indian	1	1	0	1	1	2
Other white background	0	2	1	1	0	1
Mixed White/Black Caribbean	0	0	0	1		

% reports meeting the National Minimum Standard 10.6 timescale 88%

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

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

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

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

On occasion the Advisor and Chair have required additional work to be completed prior to formal consideration by Panel however this is rare.

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

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

Analysis

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

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

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

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

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

The Panel Advisor will request any update of reports, medicals and support plans be prepared ahead of Panel to be circulated to Panel Members ahead of the deadline

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

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

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

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

Adoption Support

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

Most of the support is now provided through the Adoption Support Fund, but the therapists within the team still provide packages and there is a commissioned service through independent providers, funded by the Adoption Support Fund. The service is provided on a tiered basis dependent on assessed need.

Tier 1	Wide universal support to adopters includes Family Time co-ordination, helpline advice, information via the Lincolnshire adoption website, birth records counselling for adults. Also included in this tier is counselling for birth relatives whose children have been adopted and some general training for adopters and SGO carers.
---------------	--

Tier 2	All of tier 1 and in addition adoption support groups/activities for adopters and for children affected by adoption. These include a programme of activities which bring adoptive children together to share experiences of adoption as part of leisure activities. This tier also includes additional training for adopters/SGO carers.
Tier 3	Previous tier support plus specific adoption support includes assessment of need, individual adoption support packages, Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy, Theraplay, Eye Movement Desensitization Reprogramming, Non-Violent Resistance, and Extended Life Story Work. This tier also includes access to primary mental health services and CAMHS. Since the spring of 2015 with the introduction of the Adoption Support Fund, government funding has been made available to provide for therapeutic input to adoptive children and their families in recognition of their lifelong needs.

Tier 1

The Adoption website remains the first point of support for adopters and adopted children and all written and web materials have been revised in line with the Family Adoption Links RAA. The site advertises adoption activities and groups and enables the Adoption Service to consult users about planned future services. In addition to the website service users can contact the Adoption Helpline for advice and guidance. Adopters and SGO carers can also access a range of e-learning modules.

Adopters/SGO carers can sign up to receiving a regular electronic newsletter which provides information on forth-coming activities, useful short articles offering advice, and encourages contributions from both adoptive parents and children.

In 2021/2022 the service received 48 requests for adoption records for adult adoptees, which is slightly up on last year. 31 people were provided with counselling services and there were 17 requests from out of county where the file information was summarised and provided to the other authority. (Callers enquiring about tracing adopted relatives are signposted to other agencies as Lincolnshire does not provide intermediary or tracing services).

The birth families service is still provided by PAC UK who took the contract from After Adoption and provides counselling to birth relatives who have lost their children to adoption. The contract is at capacity and provided counselling to 40 birth parents /relatives during this year. Although with the reduction in numbers of birth parents in care proceedings the nature of the referrals has changed with more of the work now being focussed on birth relatives at a later stage in the process.

Contact

Indirect Letterbox contact activity

April 2021 – March 2022

As of 31st March 2022, there were 651 children on the letterbox.

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

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

Direct Family Time

- 11 children have direct family time with one or both birth parents
- 9 have direct family time with siblings in foster care or not adopted
- 4 have direct family time with grandparents.

Tier 2

At the core of provision in this Tier is the offer of adoption support groups across the county co-ordinated by adopters supported by the service. Attendance by adopters at these groups continues to vary but those who attend report they are appreciated. In addition, there have been courses delivered online this year through a membership to a therapeutic parenting organisation using ASF monies, as it was not possible to provide therapeutic training remotely.

Adopters and children have continued to meet and network, when it has been possible to do so, within the government guidance, and have also made use of remote contact using Zoom. We have provided funding to these Localised Adoption Support Groups.

Again, due to Covid, the need for social distancing and risk assessments, the number of children's activities were reduced in part of this year, but the service was able to offer the following: -

Activity days

Woodland Adventure Days for primary age children – action and adventure in a beautiful woodland location, children take part in activities such as den building, fire craft and knot making. There was a three-day event in July for children aged 5-8 which 8 children attended, and a one-day event in August for the 8–11-year-olds which 9 children attended.

Drama workshops – where children create their own play, create scenery, and then perform the finished production for their parents on the afternoon of day 3. There were 2 three-day events for primary aged children, one in June 2021 which 5 children attended and one in February 2022 which 12 children attended.

“Create Your Own Music” Workshops for secondary age children – 5 one-day events held throughout the year which the same group of children can attend. Between 3 and 10 children attended each date.

Photography workshop – also run by Soundlinks for secondary age children – there was an event on 20th August 2021 which 9 children attended.

Water activity days for secondary age children - an exciting opportunity for children to enjoy mini-inflatables, kayaks and see if they can master the stand-up paddle boards. There were two events on 5th and 27th August 2021 and 12 children attended each day.

There was also a Restorative day in Lincoln for adoptive parents – 8 adults attended - details below:

“Spend the day at central wellness with Grace who is a senior Yoga alliance teacher. She is also a Yoga-for-Stress and Burn-Out specialist teacher and Positive Psychology Practitioner for professional development and personal wellbeing. If we do not care about ourselves, how will we find the energy needed to care for others. This day is about reconnecting back to you - a day to explore different practices to support and replenish yourself, to be kind to yourself, particularly if you are feeling like you are running on empty.”

Tier 3

This Tier provides specialised therapeutic support to those families who require direct adoption support with tailored plans of support intervention. The Adoption Support Team now complete all adoption support referrals. Safeguarding Referrals continue to be assessed by the Family Support . Assessment Teams.

Over 200 adoption/SGO support assessments have been completed and the majority indicated some form of therapeutic intervention was required. Cases can be allocated to Post Adoption Support workers who are trained to provide specialist therapeutic input across a range of therapeutic models including Dyadic Therapy, Theraplay, Psychotherapy, Eye movement desensitization reprogramming and Non-Violent Resistance, but the vast majority are commissioned using the adoption support fund grants.

In addition to the above services, the service provided direct financial support through allowances for over 100 adoptive families through the period 2021-2022. This totals £750,000 over the year, and the demand for adoption/SGO allowances has increased significantly throughout the pandemic.

During 2021/2022 the support service received 322[262 in the previous year] new referrals that became support cases under Tier 3. The requests for support covered the following areas, but there was a general increase in requests for adoption/SGO support in relation to the Covid situation with carers struggling to manage children, particularly those who were unable to attend school:

- Attachment difficulties
- Behaviour management /special needs
- Life Story work
- Contact issues
- Requests for funding for support
- Requests for respite care.

- Request for therapeutic or Theraplay input
- Mediation for adoptive families to maintain the adoptive placement.
- Child on parent violence.

The service continues to manage some extremely complex cases with children who have significant difficulties. There has been delay in the system during Covid, with many of the therapeutic providers being at capacity, and having waiting lists for intervention. The significant support from the Adoption Support Fund has made a positive difference to the range of services which can be offered to adopters/sgo carers but has not always been able to provide this in a timely way owing to the high demand. 322 applications were made to the fund, and all were successful. A total of £837,143 was claimed from the fund in 2021/2022.

The Local Authority continues to invest in the on-going training of Adoption Support staff ensuring that clinical supervision is available to therapists within the team and that staff participate in on-going therapeutic training to ensure that the needs of families can be met.

National Changes for 2021/22

Family Adoption Links launched in October 2020. This is a 'partnership' with Leicester, Leicestershire, Rutland, North Lincolnshire, and Northampton children's trust.

It is essential that going forward the agency has a clear focus on how best to deliver services in a way that maximises the impact of limited resources and that will include looking at efficiencies which can be delivered through the regionalisation agenda .There has been considerable work completed this year with regard to the integration and implementation of shared preparation training for adopters , a post adoption training calendar, the establishment of regional family finding , and an activity day where a number of potential links were identified . In addition to this there has been significant work competed on the regional plan for post adoption support.

Service planning

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

The service will aim to learn from changes in practice and plan to move forward using more virtual meetings and continuing to be creative in developing new ways of working where appropriate.

Children and young people are healthy and safe.

To continue to develop the 'Signs of Safety' model, and restorative practice in the adoption process, and as the framework for preparing children for placement. Plans are in place for the children's social worker to undertake 'restorative' work wherever possible in their work with birth parents, as this has a positive impact on the court process and reduces the number of contested cases.

Maintain and consolidate progress on improving adoption scorecard performance against key threshold measures to minimise delay for children requiring adoption placements across the region.

Ensure that placements are timely either through placing children as soon as they are subject to a Placement Order or through an extended early placement scheme, to promote positive attachment and making best use of in-house, regional, and national family finding.

To maintain focus on children's health checks and ensure that we follow the new guidance for medical advisors in adoption work in line with the Somerset judgement.

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

To plan and implement regional training for 'family and friends' of adopters and enable them to support families in their role as adopters.

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

- Extending the Adoption Support Service to include intensive support at the early stage in placements for sibling groups, to promote therapeutic parenting, and attachment work early in the placement, so that children are 'ready for school'.
- Making use of the Caring 2 Learn approach with adopters.
- Support and develop 'play and stay' adoptive family groups to promote social learning
- Making good use of nursery provision for adopted children.

Learn and achieve

- Maximise the benefits to adoptive and SGO families in Lincolnshire arising from the Adoption Support Fund
- Continue to make best use of the pupil premium to support adopted children in school
- To be creative and innovative in terms of developing children's activities to include a 'Talk about Adoption' workshop.

Children and young people are ready for adult life

- Increase the link with the 'leaving care service' to ensure smooth transitions for adopted/sgo young people into independent living

- To continue to provide activities for adopted children which build their skills, recognise their achievements, and build their confidence.
- Support adopted young people who are in full time further education.

Best use of Resources

- Explore options to broaden Adoption Support Model to other permanence options starting with Special Guardianship Orders.
- Through the regional lead, to continue to participate and support the emerging regionalisation agenda, positioning Lincolnshire at the forefront of any development.
- To work towards further development of adoption support/SGO support services by developing and implementing a regional 'core offer'.

Summary

The challenge for 2021/2022 was to maintain services in line with the Covid pandemic to ensure that children were still placed in adoptive placements in a timely way and at the earliest possible opportunity, whilst minimising risk and maintaining high levels of performance against government targets.

There have been issues relating to the court process, again due to Covid, which has created delay for some children, and made the government timescales more challenging to achieve. Also, as more birth parents are contesting adoption orders, this increases the period that the cases remain open. In general, the service has been very successful in attaining these goals and continues to show good levels of performance and excellent outcomes for children.

The caseloads for the adoption social workers have remained high as the courts have been trying to process the backlog of work. There were high numbers of foster carers who wish to adopt children in their care, so all have worked hard to manage this.

Throughout the year there have been approved adopters waiting for placement, so there has been placement choice for many children. The year started with a residual group of children who were difficult to place due to their age and special needs. All these children who were waiting were placed or matched by the end of 2021/22, which was positive.

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

Again, there has been significant increased demand and activity in post adoption/sgo services, and it has been difficult for the team to manage the increased workload. The team has made significant progress in the management of the Adoption Support Fund to enable Lincolnshire families to benefit from a range of therapeutic services, but the need to complete assessments for the fund has had an impact on the ability to deliver some of the other services which are needed.

Performance in 2021/2022 against the key threshold measures in the adoption scorecard has remained high both for the single year and for the three-year rolling average. The number of adoptions completed this year was less than average, but the timescales have consistently improved. The number of children waiting at the year-end has decreased due to the team continuing to be proactive in family finding.

Going forward the service will look to respond positively to the challenges presented through austerity and the regionalisation agenda and, in so doing, maintain its strong focus on delivering excellent outcomes for the children of Lincolnshire who have a plan for adoption.



Deborah Crawford
Head of Service, Fostering, Adoption
and Leaving Care

Anne Johnson
Adoption Team Manager

Open Report on behalf of Janice Spencer OBE, Assistant Director - Children's Safeguarding

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	08 September 2022
Subject:	Adoption Statement of Purpose 2021 - 2022

Summary:

The purpose of this report is to inform the Corporate Parenting Panel about the work of the Adoption Service in accordance with the requirements of the Care Standards National Minimum Standards 2003, 2011, 2014 and the Adoption and Children Act 2022. The National Minimum Standards, together with the Adoption Regulations, form the basis of the regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000 for the conduct of Adoption Agencies and Adoption Support Agencies.

The Statement of Purpose at Appendix A sets out the relevant performance information and identified the key developments with the service of the last twelve months.

To be presented for approval by Lincolnshire County Council Executive in September each year.

Actions Required:

That the Corporate Parenting Panel recommends the approval of the. Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are invited to review and approve the contents of the Adoption Statement of Purpose 2021 – 2022.

1. Background

The aim of this report is to present the Adoption Statement of Purpose 2021-2022 to members of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

2. Conclusion

Following consideration of the attached Statement of Purpose, the Panel is requested to consider and comment on the contents of this report and the work of the Fostering Service.

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Adoption Statement of Purpose 2021 - 2022

5. Background Papers

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

This report was written by Deborah Crawford, who can be contacted on 01522 552781 or deborah.crawford@lincolnshire.gov.uk



Adoption Service Statement of Purpose 2022



Lincolnshire

Lincolnshire
COUNTY COUNCIL

Page 67

Working for a better future

This Statement of Purpose fulfils the requirement of standard 18 of the Adoption National Minimum Standards (Care Standards Act, 2000) and the Local Authority Adoption Services (England) Regulations 2002, amended (2005,) (2011) and (2013) and the Children and Families Act 2014.

CONTENTS

Page

- 5. Aims, Objectives and Principles of the Adoption Service
- 8. Values
- 9. Standards of Care
- 10. Status and Constitution
- 11. Leadership Structure
- 13. The Work of the Adoption Service
- 18. Training
- 20. The Process of Recruiting and Approving Adoptive Carers
- 24. Finance
- 24. Complaints and Allegations
- 25. Number of Complaints and their Outcomes
- 26. Advocacy and Children's Rights
- 27. Equality and Diversity
- 28. Ofsted
- 29. Further Information

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Leadership Structure

Appendix 2 - Adoption Panel

Appendix 3 - Staffing: Number, Relevant Qualifications and Experience.

AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES OF THE ADOPTION SERVICE

Regional Adoption Agency

Lincolnshire County Council is part of the Family Adoption Links (FAL), a regional partnership of Adoption Services. The government's agenda for adoption was set out in a paper, "Regionalising Adoption", published by the Department of Education (DfE) in June 2015 setting out arrangements for the formation of Regional Adoption Agencies (RAAs) by 2020.

This partnership comprises of Lincolnshire County Council (which provide adoption services for Rutland Council), Leicestershire County Council, Leicester City Council, Northampton Children's trust, and North Lincolnshire Council. It has been agreed that Lincolnshire County Council will act as host for the arrangement.

The interagency agreement creating the partnership commenced on 14th October 2020 and describes how FAL manages the provision of all core adoption functions on behalf of the local authority. Agency decision making for adults and children are maintained within the local authority in line with corporate parenting responsibilities.

Through working in partnership, we will benefit from the regional sharing of best practice, pooling of resources and developing a strategic approach to the development of a range of services from the marketing of adoption across the region through to the commissioning of post adoption support services.

The vision of the RAA is that:

- Children have the widest range of adopters trained to meet the needs of children placed with them
- Matching delivers the best quality outcomes for all children
- Adopters receive a consistent, high quality and professional service at all stages of the process
- The same high standard of adoption support for all adoptive families across the region
- Family Adoption Links, Local Authorities and Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAA) work together to promote and maximize choice for children and adopters.

Governance and Management

The RAA is accountable to the Family Adoption Links (FAL) Management Board which is aligned to the agreed vision and will enable partners to have a continuing demonstrable focus on achieving permanence through adoption for children in care.

The FAL Management Board is accountable for delivery of services within scope and will continue to provide strategic leadership as the service develops. The Board includes representatives of each partner and takes decision by consensus.

The Board is chaired by a Director of Children's Services (on behalf of the respective Local Authorities) and includes Assistant Directors responsible for permanency. The FAL

Management Board will ensure there are clear strategic plans in place to manage future demand, develop quality services, deliver value for money, and achieve appropriate efficiencies and cost savings. The board has appointed a Head of Service for the Regional Adoption Agency who oversees the work of the adoption service in each local authority.

The Head of Service reports to the board and is responsible for the delivery of adoption services within each Local Authority. Each partner local authority retains its own adoption service manager who is the Registered Manager.

The FAL Management Board will keep members fully informed regarding the progress and performance of the RAA.

THE MAIN AIMS OF THE LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL ADOPTION SERVICE ARE TO:

Provide a range of quality services which can promote best outcomes for children who need a permanent placement.

Meet and comply with the National Minimum Standards for Adoption Services.

Ensure that all staff are appropriately recruited, supervised, and developed to fulfil their agency functions.

To identify children for whom the plan is adoption and to work with them and their carers to ensure children enjoy outstanding developmental outcomes, with quick progress to successful placements with their adoptive parents.

Adhere to best practice for permanency planning timescales as set out in adoption legislation and the Public Law Outline, to maximise each child's opportunity to experience a stable and secure family life.

Provide appropriate choice of adoption placements for children within Lincolnshire County Council and beyond where appropriate, making full and prompt use of the regional resources, voluntary adoption agencies and the Linkmaker database.

To recruit, prepare, assess, and fully support prospective adopters to meet the assessed needs of the children requiring adoptive families, including those who take a direct/Foster for Adoption placement.

The focus of assessments will be the applicants' ability to meet the assessed needs of children, promote attachment, improve their understanding of the adoption task and their suitability to be an adoptive parent through on-going quality assurance, and sustain a high standard of assessments. Assessments will be completed within the timescales set out within Statutory Adoption Guidance (2014) wherever possible.

Applicants for inter-country adoption are provided with an appropriate service from skilled and experienced workers.

Ensure that children are well prepared both practically and emotionally for a move to a new permanent family.

Provide links for children, for whom adoption is the plan, with families who can meet their ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic needs, whilst recognising that no child should wait indefinitely for the "ideal" match.

Provide a comprehensive support package, including financial support where appropriate to achieve stable and successful placements.

Provide effective and efficient adoption panels to enable adoption plans for relinquished children, prospective adopter assessments and links with children to be progressed without delay.

Ensure that children's plans for adoption are agreed by the Agency Decision Maker and Placement Order applications are made to meet court timescales.

Ensure that issues for contact with the birth family are carefully considered and meet the individual needs of the child.

Ensure that where possible and appropriate, siblings will be placed together and that decisions to separate siblings are made in a timely manner, following a sibling assessment.

In conjunction with other agencies provide a comprehensive range of support services, pre and post order, as detailed in the Adoption Passport, to children, birth parents, relatives, and adoptive parents and those involved in the process of special guardianship applications.

To access funding where appropriate on behalf of adoptive families, via the Adoption Support Fund.

To ensure that accurate and up to date records and management information is kept in relation to individual children, adoptive parents, and services and to maintain confidentiality and security.

Ensure that customers are fully involved and consulted on service delivery and service development.

Treat all customers with respect and without prejudice or discrimination.

Lincolnshire County Council delivers its adoption service through a dedicated Adoption Team managed by a Team Manager.

THE MAIN PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING THE SERVICE ARE:

Lincolnshire County Council and its adoption agency believe that, wherever possible, it is best for children to be brought up within their birth families. Only where this is not possible, and other appropriate options short of adoption have been considered, then adoption should be considered as a positive alternative for children to enable them to grow and reach maturity within a stable and loving family.

The Statement of Purpose links all sections in the document to the relevant Adoption National Minimum Standards 2014 and shares its values with those Standards.

VALUES

Children

- The child's welfare, safety and needs are at the centre of the adoption process.
- Adopted children should have an enjoyable childhood, and benefit from excellent parenting and education, enjoying a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and skills leading to a successful adult life.
- Children are entitled to grow up as part of a loving family that can meet their developmental needs during childhood and beyond.
- Children's wishes and feelings are important and will be actively sought and fully considered at all stages of the adoption process.
- Delays should always be avoided as they can have a severe impact on the health and development of the children waiting to be adopted.
- A sense of identity is important to a child's well-being. To help children develop this; their ethnic origin, cultural background, religion, language, and sexuality need to be properly recognised and positively valued and promoted.
- The needs of disabled children and children with complex needs will be fully recognised and considered.
- Where a child cannot be cared for in a suitable manner in their own country, inter-country adoption may be considered as an alternative means of providing a permanent family.
- Children, birth parents/guardians, families and adoptive parents will be valued and respected.
- A genuine partnership between all those involved in adoption is essential for the National Minimum Standards to deliver the best outcomes for children; this includes

the Government, local government, other statutory agencies, Voluntary Adoption Agencies and Adoption Support Agencies.

ADOPTED ADULTS AND BIRTH RELATIVES

- Adoption is an evolving life-long process for all those involved including adopted adults, and birth and adoptive relatives. The fundamental issues raised by adoption may reverberate and resurface at different times and stages throughout an individual's life.
- Adopted people should have access to information and services to enable them to address adoption related matters throughout their life.
- Agencies have a duty to provide services that consider the welfare of all parties involved and should consider the implications of decisions and actions for everyone involved.
- Agencies should seek to work in partnership with all parties involved, taking account of their views and wishes in decision-making.
- Agencies should acknowledge differences in people's circumstances and establish policies that provide non-discriminatory services.
- Adopted adults have their adoptive identity safeguarded and the right to decide whether to be involved in contact or communication with birth family members.

STANDARDS OF CARE TO BE FOLLOWED BY THE AGENCY

The Adoption Service aims to provide safe, secure, and high-quality care in family settings for children whom a plan for adoption has been agreed. This will be achieved to the standards set out in the Adoption Services Regulations 2002, 2011 and The Adoption Agencies (Panel and Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2012 (referred to as the "Regulations"), the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations (2010), The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013, 2015 & 2021, The Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013, The Adoption Support Services Regulations (2005), The National Minimum Standards for Adoption Services (2014) and The Statutory Guidance amended (2011) and July (2013 and 2014).

Working together with the Adoption Team, the Adoption Panel and the Panel Adviser, the service strive to continuously improve standards of care, informed by inspections, quality audits, service learning days as well as new legislation and guidance to evaluate the effectiveness of service delivery.

STATUS AND CONSTITUTION OF THE AGENCY

Lincolnshire County Council is an approved Adoption Service provider and will be inspected under the Care Standards Act 2000.

The Adoption Service is managed by the Head of Service – Regulated through a Team Manager for Adoption. The Team Manager acts as the Adoption Support Services Advisor. (Standard 15)

The Assistant Director for Children Services is the Agency Decision Maker. (Standard 17)

Lincolnshire Adoption Panel is constituted in accordance with regulations. (Standard 17)

During the period of the pandemic the DfE published 'flexibilities' to allow for the exceptional circumstances so adoption panels have been held virtually since April 2020 and this remains under review.

The adoption panel only considers whether:

- A child who is in care to Lincolnshire /Rutland County Council should be placed for adoption, where a parent relinquishes their child or consents that adoption is the best outcome for their child.
- Prospective adopters are suitable to adopt, and
- Adopters are suitable for a particular child or children.

There are sufficient appointed panel members including an Independent Chair. The Members of the Adoption Panel will be appraised annually against performance objectives.

From 1 April 2011, the Regulations regarding the make-up of panel changed and allowed the adoption agency to draw its members from a list of people known as “the central list”; these members the agency considers having the “ appropriate qualifications and/or experience to consider the cases submitted to the adoption panel for its consideration.” There is no limit to the number of people on the central list and the same people do not have to be appointed to every panel meeting.

The agency can decide how many panel members should sit at each panel meeting, subject to the panel meeting being quorate.

The members of the central list must include (in addition to the Independent Chair): an adoption social worker with at least three years’ relevant post qualifying experience in children’s social work, including direct experience in adoption work. The medical adviser

to the adoption agency is a panel member; also, the agency can appoint other people whom the agency considers suitable. Suitable members could include specialists in education, child and adolescent mental health, race, and culture; and those who have personal experience of adoption.

A Legal Adviser who provides advice in writing to the panel on any legal issue with implications for a child whose plan is being considered by panel. The Legal Adviser also gives advice to the Agency Decision Maker – the Assistant Director of Children's Services.

Lincolnshire Adoption Agency has medical adviser(s) who examines all children being considered for adoption and reports to panel members on the child's health needs. The adviser will also meet with prospective adopters to consider health requirements of individual children.

For the period of the pandemic the DFE agreed 'flexibilities' to allow for virtual /telephone medicals to be conducted where necessary, but practice is now reverting

The Agency Medical Advisers also advise panel members on health issues relating to prospective adoptive parents.

There is a Professional Adviser to the Adoption Panel who advises panel members on procedures, policies, and professional issues.

Government issued guidance and regulation which came into force on the 1st September 2012 which impact significantly on the work of the Adoption Panel.

The primary change made by the Regulations is that Adoption Panels must not be involved in deciding whether a child should be placed for adoption when the Court will be involved in the decision, where care proceedings are on-going or where the child has no parents; the case must be referred directly to the Agency Decision Maker who will make the decision.

Panel will however still consider cases and make recommendations where the child's parents will consent to the child being placed for adoption.

THE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE OF THE ADOPTION SERVICE

The named manager of the Lincolnshire Adoption Service is:

Deborah Crawford– Head of Service, Regulated Services

County Offices
Newland
Lincoln
Lincs
LN1 1YL

Telephone: 01522 552781

Email: Deborah.crawford@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Qualifications:

DipSW

Diploma in Higher Education

BA (Hons) Social and Professional Studies

PQ1 in Social Work

Post Graduate Certificate in Leadership and Management in Social Work.

Experience: 29 years' experience working in the field of social care, specialising in children and families since 1993. Since 2013 has held a Team Manager post with the local authority within the fostering service before progressing to a Head of Service post in early 2021.

The nominated manager to manage the Adoption Service in the absence of the named manager under Regulation 5 of the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003 is Anne Johnson.

The adoption teams are locality based and deliver a comprehensive service. These teams manage the permanency planning and family finding role, the recruitment, assessment, approval, support, and placement processes which enable children in care in Lincolnshire County Council to be placed in a range of appropriate adoptive placements.

Dawn Oldroyd is the dedicated Professional Advisor for both the Adoption and Permanence panels.

The organisational structure of the Service is shown in Appendix 1. The list of current staff is set out in appendix 3. This information in its fullest form is only available to Ofsted.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE SERVICE

The Adoption Service works within the overall Quality Assurance Framework for Children and Families, which sets out a range of general and service specific standards and methods by which these standards are monitored. Children for whom adoption is being considered or who have been placed for adoption are reviewed by Independent Reviewing Officers.

Lincolnshire Adoption Service continually monitors and evaluates its service at every stage of the adoption process to ensure quality and effectiveness. Lincolnshire welcomes feedback from all involved in the adoption process

The activity and performance of the Adoption Service is scrutinised by the Corporate Parenting Panel.

As part of the Regional Adoption Leadership Board and Family Adoption Links, Lincolnshire Adoption Service actively considers and shares good practice and policy development.

The Adoption Service is inspected by Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills), under the single inspection framework for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Children in Care and Care Leavers. All local authorities will be inspected under this framework within a three-year period.

Performance of the service is monitored through the National Adoption Scorecard and a range of performance indicators.

THE WORK OF THE ADOPTION SERVICE

Lincolnshire County Council's vision is

*“Working for a better future by; -
Building our strengths
Protecting your lifestyle
Being ambitious”*

The principles that the Council adheres to are:

- Early Intervention and Prevention
- Safeguarding
- Aspiration and well being
- Learning and achievement
- Best use of Resources.

In addition to the principles, four strategic outcomes for children have been agreed by Children's Services.

- Children and young people are: Healthy & Safe
- Develop to their potential in their early years and are ready for school
- Learn and Achieve
- Children and young people are ready for Adult Life

The Adoption Agency has the expectation all children in its service is encapsulated into these principles and will work with children to champion the importance of these aspirations.

The service will work to develop self-esteem, self-belief and resilience in all children encouraging all children to be the best they can be.

We will use resources to focus on outcomes, life chances and opportunities.

The Adoption Agency strives to match, wherever possible, a child to an appropriate family, including considerations of ethnic origin and religion. However, no child will wait indefinitely for the ideal placement. (Standard 13) the Children and Families Act 2014

supports the adoption reforms set out in "An Action Plan for Adoption: Tackling Delay" by ensuring that a search for a perfect or partial ethnic match does not become a barrier to finding a child an adoptive family.

Unless there are clear and specific reasons why this should not happen our aim is to place siblings together. (Standard 13)

All children approved for adoption will receive a guide, which will give age-appropriate information about adoption. (Standard 18)

The Adoption Agency will provide support from an individual social worker and, when required, other professionals to enhance a child's understanding of and preparedness for placement. (Standard 15)

Life storybooks and other information which will help children understand their family and background will be provided by the Adoption Agency within the prescribed timescales. (Standard 3, 5, 12)

The Adoption Agency will undertake assessment of needs and placement considerations, which inform matching process to focus on outcomes, life chances and opportunities. (Standard 1 &10)

Where we anticipate local resources cannot meet their needs the opportunity to be matched with an adoptive family from the RAA, VAA, and the Linkmaker Database (Standard 13) shall be actively pursued.

Therapeutic support is provided directly, commissioned, or met by referral to other agencies if required as an outcome of assessment. (Standard 15)

For those seeking information, counselling, and advice in adulthood on tracing birth family members and reunion is available and provide individuals with counselling about the circumstances of their adoption. (Standard 16)

The Agency will offer supervision and support throughout the adoption process. (Standard 15)

To operate an adult-to-adult information exchange via the Lincolnshire letterbox system. (Standard 16)

To give an opportunity to talk with other young people who may be separated from members of their birth family. (Standard 16)

The Agency will offer information about how to contact the advocacy service provided by Voiceability Lincolnshire. (Standard 16)

Through collaborative working with other agencies, we will deliver and co-ordinate support for children, especially those with attachment difficulties, to facilitate the transition to new adoptive families). (Standard 1, 3, 10)

ASPIRATION AND WELL-BEING

All prospective adoptive carers are, as part of their assessment and training, required to inform the Agency of the plans that they will make to safeguard and maintain the child's welfare when they are adopted. The Agency will undertake to support carers to locate such services as GP, dentist and education services if required.

Before making the placement, the Agency must give the notifications required by regulation 35.6. These are important in ensuring as smooth a transition as possible in the child's health care and education, and in the safeguarding and support arrangements for the child.

Working collaboratively with adopters, local agencies, and the Statutory Authorities; a plan will be presented to panel outlining the resources that the child needs and how the adopters will be assisted in meeting these needs.

All adoptive families in Lincolnshire are offered therapeutic parenting training to empower them to make a positive and sustained change to their family relationships. Lincolnshire County Council Adoption Agency also offers its adopters therapeutic parenting advice including "Theraplay" which is presented through the initial training course and is designed to assist adopters in identifying areas that may present challenges to them, and were identified as a need, further support is available.

Prior to consideration of the child's plan, a health assessment under regulation 7.1 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 is carried out and a report of this assessment in accordance with those regulations is prepared. Once the agency is considering adoption for the child, it immediately consults its medical adviser to ascertain whether the health information already obtained is sufficient, and sufficiently up to date. This report is needed to fulfil the requirements of the regulations and the need for full information for the child, the adoption panel, and the prospective adopter.

This report is presented to Panel and the needs of the child are fully discussed to ensure that any future placement has both the information about the child and a plan as to how these needs are to be met.

SAFEGUARDING

Lincolnshire's Children's Service including its Adoption Service is part of Lincolnshire's Safeguarding Children's Partnership.

The assessment of adopters includes the taking of full employment and accommodation histories. Checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and local authority checks are completed on everyone aged over 18 years of age living in the household. A range of referees are contacted and visited.

All adopters have a safer caring assessment prior to approval which highlights key aspects of the safer caring process. Safe caring is an important part of the training offered.

This training is mandatory and covers specific areas such as safer caring, the implications of looking after children who may have been harmed and the implications of how a child's attachment may have been affected in their early years.

Allegations that are made against adopters prior to an order being made are investigated using an established procedure whereby all are considered by the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). An independent person chairs the initial strategy meeting and oversees the process to ensure its timeliness. Where allegations are made following the granting of an adoption order these are managed using standard Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures.

ASPIRATION, LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENT

Lincolnshire County Council is committed to maximising a child's potential in both academic attainment and personal achievement and will work collaboratively with prospective adopters, local agencies, and any party it considers as necessary to plan and maintain the child's education.

From 2013, adopted children were given priority school access and in 2014 all adopted children aged 2 years became entitled to free early education. Furthermore, the Pupil Premium was increased and now includes all adopted school children from reception class through to year 11 and includes children who were in care prior to becoming subject to a Special Guardianship Order.

A record of the child's achievements prior to being placed will be available to the prospective carer and information sharing will consider the short medium and long term needs of the child in education. Research has shown that in most of the cases adoption works. Education and health outcomes are as good as for children growing up with their birth parents. To assist, it is essential that information about their birth families is available to adopters and that there is an Information Sharing Meeting before an application is made to the Adoption Panel to match a child with applicants. (Standard 1, 3, 10)

At the Information sharing meeting a well-presented family time (contact) plan for children with birth relatives and siblings will be available. However, Lincolnshire County Council considers that unless there are clear and specific reasons why this should not happen, it is our aim to place siblings together. (Standard 13)

Lincolnshire County Council will provide support from an individual social worker and, if required, other workers to enhance a child's understanding of and preparedness for placement (Standard 15). This is alongside life storybooks and other information which will help children understand their family and background. (Standard 3, 5, 12)

SUPPORTING THE ADOPTION SERVICE

All the work of the Service is delivered through the following relationships and support functions which are described below.

1. Prospective Adopter's Social Worker

The role of the prospective adopter's social worker is to give support to the adopter throughout the assessment process, through placement to order. They also assist and advise with practical difficulties and the provision of equipment. They are a crucial link between the adopter and the child's social worker and the two workers need to work closely to prepare the adopters and share with them information that they need to assist in planning for the placement of a child.

Through the period of the pandemic there were 'flexibilities ' which allowed for visits to be conducted virtually but practice has been updated and have resumed to face to face.

2. Child's Social Worker

The child's social worker is responsible for the overall management of the child's care plan. They have a statutory duty to visit the child in line with the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review regulations (2010), the National Minimum Standards for Adoption Services (2014); however, in some circumstances the visiting pattern will be more frequent particularly in the early stages of a placement or when there are difficulties, up to the time when the adoption order is made.

Through the period of the pandemic there were 'flexibilities ' which allowed for visits to be conducted virtually, by video call albeit face to face visiting has resumed.

3. Adoption Support Social Worker

The role of the adoption support social worker is to provide specialised therapeutic support to those families which require direct adoption support to the family with tailored plans of support. Support is underpinned by an assessment of need which is made in line with the Adoption Support Regulations 2005.

The Adoption Support Services Adviser is the Team Manager for Adoption who will deal with any enquiries regarding the eligibility for support services and the services provided.

The service is provided on a tiered basis dependent on assessed need:

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

	adoptive children together to share experiences of adoption as part of leisure activities.
Tier 3	Previous tier support plus specific adoption support includes assessment of need, individual adoption support packages, Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy and Theraplay clinic sessions to promote attachment. This tier also includes access to primary mental health services and CAMHS. Since the launch of the Adoption Support Fund, therapeutic interventions can be claimed from the central fund to ensure that adoptive families have access to therapeutic support.

4. Adoption Support Groups

There are locally held support groups for adopters to attend; their social worker will assist them to join a local support group and discuss with the adopter's issues such as information sharing within the group. The Adoption Service will provide adopters with access to the Council's website which provides links to useful information relating to all aspects of adoption and signposting to services and resources. In addition, in 2014 the service introduced a quarterly newsletter for adopters, which is sent to all current and past adopters with children under 18.

TRAINING

The Adoption Service ensures that adopters are trained in the skills required to provide high quality care to meet the needs of a child placed in their care.

Training is not an option but a clear expectation of all adopters and is evaluated prior to approval.

The training is delivered by qualified and experienced social workers in partnership with people who have experienced adoption. There is an adoptive carer and an adult who was placed for adoption in the past, and these people's experiences have been positively recognised by those attending the training.

During the pandemic, the preparation courses had been provided remotely using 'teams' however this has reverted to face to face and the groups have been smaller and held once a month to try to ensure that all attendees are able to participate as much as possible.

Each preparation course is run over a two-day period and covers:

Day One

- Introduction
- Short Icebreaker
- Exploration of the changes that becoming an adoptive parent will bring
- Awareness of separation and loss
- Life story work
- Resilience.

Day Two

- Attachment cycle
- Therapeutic Parenting
- Adopted person talking about tracing
- Adopted parent discussing experiences of contact
- Managing behaviour
- Managing contact.

In addition to the two-day experiential learning all prospective adopters are provided with a workbook during stage 1. Each subject in the workbook has an exercise for prospective adopters to complete. During the learning days, the course facilitators refer to the subjects in the workbook and later in the assessment stage the completed exercises are discussed with the assessing supervising social worker.

Each workbook covers:

- The adoption process
- Why children come into care: Background factors
- Child Care Law
- Abuse of children and the possible effects
- Effects of early trauma
- Effects of separation and loss in childhood
- Life story work and family books
- Child development
- Discrimination
- Resilience
- Contact
- Telling children about their adoption
- Task description of an adoptive parent
- Social networking/e.g., safety
- Reading list.

Pre-approval training is complemented by post approval learning and development opportunities, delivered through e-Learning and more traditional training seminars.

THE PROCESS OF RECRUITING AND APPROVING ADOPTERS

The recruitment of adopters is currently managed and effected jointly between the RAA Family Adoption Links and the local Fostering and Adoption recruitment activity. The referrals to the Family Adoption Links website are forwarded to the local offices depending upon geographical location. The Recruitment Co-ordinators aim to contact all enquirers within 24 hours of them registering their interest online.

The Recruitment Co-ordinator's role is to ensure that enquirers have all the information they need and following an initial discussion an initial expression of interest can be completed over the phone and/or a detailed information booklet is made available to all interested applicants about the adoption process which is sent within 5 working days.

The service is focusing on enhancing the overall customer experience and the Recruitment Co-ordinators represent the Local Authority in a professional manner, being respectful to all enquirers and acknowledging their individual journey to embark on this process.

Within 5 working days of applicants completing their initial expression of interest, the enquirers will receive a telephone call from the agency to arrange an individual interview. Initial enquiry forms can also be filled in on our interactive website. Following this visit, applicants will then submit their formal registration of interest to the agency. Adopters are recruited and assessed in line with Lincolnshire guidance based on the National Minimum Standards and Adoption Regulations.

Recruitment involves:

- Utilising social media to reach wide audiences. This is now being led by the regional marketing officer and all RAA marketing information has been rebranded.
- Holding Information events. Information events have been held online through the pandemic and are all being advertised on the Family Adoption Links website, so that they are available to all.
- Newspaper advertisements, using the local press across the region.
- Newspaper articles
- Distribution of posters
- Information distributed through displays and presentations
- Word of mouth through existing carers
- Lincolnshire County Council LCC Connects website/Family Adoption Links website
- Targeted activity within specific communities in county

The Regional Adoption Agency continues to focus on four specific areas for recruitment: recruiting adopters for sibling groups, children aged over 4, children with complex health needs and recruiting Foster to Adopt carers.

Foster to Adopt carers will be approved as both foster carers and adopters, but with the purpose of early placement stability for those children where rehabilitation home is unlikely, and adoption is a very likely outcome. This would mean that the children in these

placements would not have to move from a fostering placement into an adoption placement, thus minimising disruption for the child at a crucial stage in development.

The recruitment strategy has both a community focused approach, to reflect the specific needs of the communities within the region, coupled with digital marketing as it is recognised that we need to maximise our reach to prospective adopters and cannot rely on a single method to achieve this.

The service has continued to advertise through local media channels and parish magazines but also utilised social media and the Lincolnshire County Council/FAL website to advertise events throughout the region.

The recruitment activities arranged continue to facilitate informal information sessions where individuals have the opportunity to hear all about the adoption process. These events have continued virtually through the pandemic.

Staff are involved at the events who can outline the process to them and what this entails. Prospective adopters also can hear from an experienced adopter in these sessions, and the chance to ask questions.

The prospective adopters can be provided with information booklets about Adoption and Foster to Adopt following events or they can complete a form online that will trigger contact from a Recruitment Co-ordinator who can begin to obtain details with the hope of progressing to an initial home visit.

The process for the assessment and approval of adopters was reformed on the 1st July 2013 and a new two stage approval process was introduced, so that prospective adopters can be approved to adopt a child more quickly. Under the new two-part process, adoption agencies must assess and approve adopters within 6 months. The new process comprises a two-month initial training and preparation stage (Stage One).

Stage One commences when applicants have formally registered their interest and will end with the agency's decision on whether the prospective adopter can proceed to Stage Two. In Stage One, all required checks and references will be completed. This process is now fully embedded.

Stage Two consists of an in-depth assessment and will end with presentation of the prospective adopter report to the adoption panel and the agency decision maker's decision about the suitability of the prospective adopter to adopt a child.

The prospective adopter report is completed by a social worker who is compliant with the restriction on the preparation of adoption reports regulations 2005.

A person is within a prescribed description for the purposes of section 94(1) of the 2005

Act if: —

(a) She/he is a social worker who is employed by a local authority or registered adoption society and who satisfies at least one of the conditions set out in paragraph (2)(a) or (b).

(b) She/he is a person who: —

- is participating in a course approved by a Council under section 63 of the 2000 Act for persons wishing to become social workers
- is employed by, or placed with, a local authority or registered adoption society as part of that course; and
- satisfies the condition set out in paragraph (2)(b); or

(c) She/he is acting on behalf of a local authority or a registered adoption society and is a social worker who satisfies the conditions in paragraph (2) (a) and (b).

The conditions referred to in paragraph (1) are that the person: -

(a) has at least three years' post-qualifying experience in childcare social work, including direct experience of adoption work.

(b) is supervised by a social worker who: -

- is employed by the local authority or registered adoption society in question; and
- has at least three years' post-qualifying experience in childcare social work, including direct experience of adoption work.

The report is presented to the Adoption panel for consideration and a recommendation of their suitability is made. The organisation and composition of this panel is in accordance with Adoption Service Regulations 2011.

The Adoption Panel makes recommendations on the suitability of prospective adopters; this recommendation is passed, along with the prospective adopter report, panel's final minutes and any other supporting documentation, to the Agency Decision Maker. National Minimum Standards 23.17 sets out the qualifications, knowledge and experience the decision-maker must have.

The Agency Decision Maker does not have direct line management responsibility for the adoption panel but has the authority to make decisions on its behalf as to whether the prospective adopters are suitable to adopt a child. (AAR 27)

Prospective Adopters are invited to attend panel and participate in the panel discussions. All panels have been conducted remotely throughout the pandemic, but all applicants have still been invited, and have attended.

Feedback is received from those applicants who have commented on the process and have for the most part been satisfied with the experience of being at panel.

NUMBER OF ADOPTIVE CARERS

A total of 27 adoptive parents were approved to adopt during 2021/2022, with no adopters approved for inter-country adoption. 6 of these were also approved for Foster to Adopt. This is a small increase from last year's figures.

The service ended the year with adopters awaiting placements so were able to meet the needs of children with adoption plans coming through the system. The focus of the work during this year was to match the children waiting and place them into adoptive families at the earliest opportunity whilst ensuring that we remained Covid secure.

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

On 31st March 2022 there were 12 adopters approved and waiting; two of which were being considered for possible links. In addition, there were four adopters fostering children with a view to adoption.

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

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

NUMBER OF CHILDREN PLACED

With regard to placements made this year 36 children were placed: so, 1 more than in the previous year. Of these, 32 were singleton placements, and 4 children were placed in 2 sibling groups of 2. Of these sibling groups, one of the groups had one child over five. All the children placed were under five with 28 of them being placed before they were 2 years, with nine children placed between the age of 2 and five years. There were 18 boys placed and 18 girls, so a change from last year when there were more boys than girls.

Overall, there were fewer sibling groups than in the previous year and the cohort of children were generally younger than in previous years as approximately. There has been a significant increase in the number of cases which are delayed in court awaiting placement orders and were not placed within NMS 17.7 as they waited several months to be made subject to a Placement Order.

FINANCE

Adopters can be assessed for a means tested allowance based on the needs of the children placed. This allowance is discretionary and is reviewed annually in respect of the needs of each placement and the child. Additional support through a one off settling in grant may also be made.

COMPLAINTS AND ALLEGATIONS

Summary of the Complaints Procedure

The Directorate has a statutory complaints service.

The Complaints Policy sets out how complaints will be dealt with ensuring concerns raised are considered and any resulting adjustments made, where required.

- Stage 1 – Local Resolution
- Stage 2 – Independent Investigator is appointed
- Stage 3 - Independent Panel formal review by an Independent Panel of independent members plus the Complaints Manager.

Staff do ensure that all carers know how and to whom to complain.

Complainants have the right to involve a friend or advocate.

The Customer Relations & Complaints Manager is Shagofta Noreen

- Email customerrelationsteam@lincolnshire.gov.uk

- Write to Customer Relations Team, Lincolnshire County Council, County Offices, Newland, Lincoln, LN1 1YL or
- customerrelationsteam@lincolnshire.gov.uk
- Call 01522 843322

The Named Manager monitors all complaints and liaises with the Customer Relations & Complaints Manager and the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) Business Manager. This information is available to authorised persons only. All adopters have access to support and information regarding the complaint's procedures.

Independent Reviewing Mechanism

Prospective adopters are given written information about the role of the independent Reviewing Mechanism (IRM) as part of their preparation process. They are also provided with leaflets about the IRM when information is being prepared for presentation to panel. There have been no representations made to the IRM in 2021/2022.

NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS AND THEIR OUTCOMES

Five complaints were made to the Adoption Service during 2021-2022

Of these complaints, the outcomes were – three were partially substantiated, and two were unsubstantiated.

All the issues raised in complaints were used to make changes to the service where this was appropriate.

ALLEGATIONS

Adopters can sometimes be the subject of allegations in respect of the care of the children or young people they are looking after. If this occurs the allegation will be investigated in line with Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership safeguarding procedures with all allegations managed by the Local Authority Designated Officer. In addition to the role of the supervising social worker, adopters can have access to an independent social worker who can offer practical and emotional support.

All allegations and other matters listed in the Regulations are monitored by the manager who ensures that the appropriate notifications to Ofsted and other agencies are carried out.

In 2021/2022 there were no allegations in respect of adoptive carers.

ADVOCACY AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Lincolnshire County Council commissions its advocacy for children through Voiceability Lincolnshire

Referral and Information Line: 44[0]300 303 1660

Website: www.helpline@voiceability.org

When might you want an advocate?

You can ask to speak with advocate if you:

- Have serious concerns about the care you are getting
- Want to be more involved in decisions being made about you and your future
- Want to fight decisions being made about you
- Want to make a complaint.

Office of the Children's Commissioner



The Children's Commissioner is Dame Rachel de Souza. She has a legal duty to promote and protect the rights of all children in England with a particular focus on children and young people with difficulties or challenges in their lives, and those living away from home, in or leaving care, or receiving social care services.

The Children's Commissioner can be contacted: -

By writing to her at:

The Office of the Children's Commissioner, Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT.

Phoning her on Freephone: 0800 528 0731

Emailing at: help.team@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

Visiting the website www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

The Lincolnshire Adoption Service works to the Lincolnshire County Council's Equality and Diversity Policy which is available on the council's intranet site.

The Adoption Service will treat all service users fairly, openly and with respect throughout their approval process. The adoption agency embraces the Customer Care and Service Standards, endorsed by the DfE, the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS), Adoption UK, and the Consortium for Voluntary Adoption Agencies.

Applicants wishing to be approved as adopters will be considered irrespective of ethnicity, religion, belief, gender, sexual orientation, or disability providing the adoption service considers they can safely meet the needs of children throughout their childhood and into independence. The minimum age for applying to adopt is 21 years old.

Every attempt will be made to find a placement which meets a child or young person's emotional and developmental needs taking into consideration their ethnicity, religion, language, culture, gender, and disability.

However, Lincolnshire's Adoption Service recognises that it is unacceptable for a child to be denied adoptive parents solely on the grounds that the child and prospective adopter do not share the same racial or cultural background. If the prospective adopter can meet most of the child's needs, the service must not delay placing a child because they do not share the child's racial or cultural background.

The Lincolnshire Adoption Service recognises that no child or young person should have to wait indefinitely for the ideal placement.

All policies and procedures concerning the adoption service are subject to Equality Impact Assessment.

OFSTED

Ofsted is the single, independent inspectorate for all social care services in England. It is responsible for monitoring, regulating, and inspecting adoption services under the provisions of the Care Standards Act, 2000.

Questions or complaints

The one point of contact for all questions, queries and complaints is the Ofsted National Business Unit.

The one point of contact for all questions, queries and complaints is Ofsted.

The telephone number is 0300 123 1231. This number manages all general enquiries and will redirect them as necessary; they can also be contacted at enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk or write to:

Ofsted National Business Unit
Piccadilly Gate,
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

FURTHER INFORMATION

The Adoption Statement of Purpose will be reviewed annually.

If you require this document in a different language or an alternative format such as large print, audio tape or Braille, please contact a member of the Adoption Service via telephone on 01522 554114.

The Statement of Purpose, Children's Guides and other information are also available on the Lincolnshire County Council website: www.lincolnshire.gov.uk

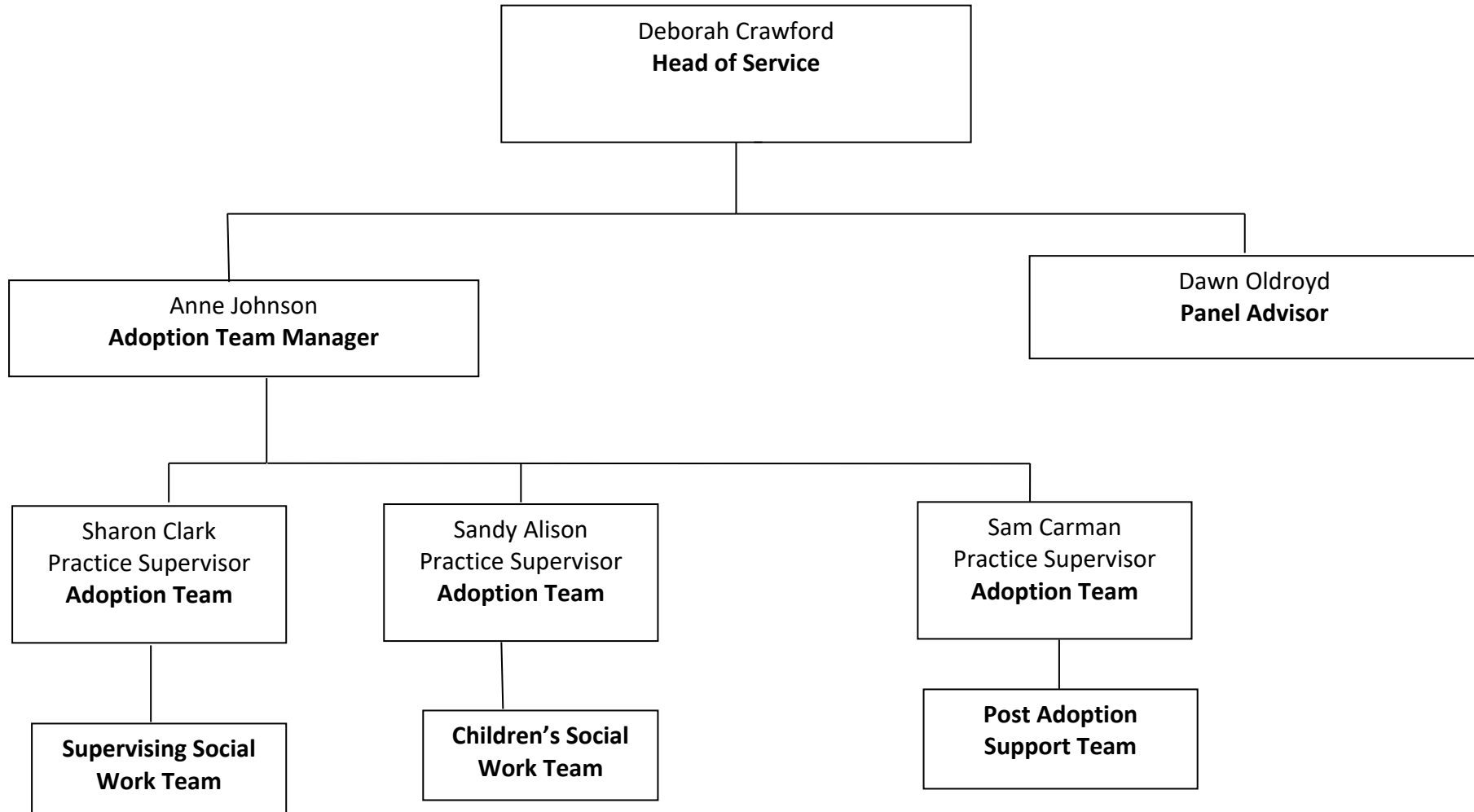
A copy can also be obtained from the registered manager:

Deborah Crawford – Head of Service, Regulated Services
County Offices
Newland
Lincoln
Lincs
LN1 1YL

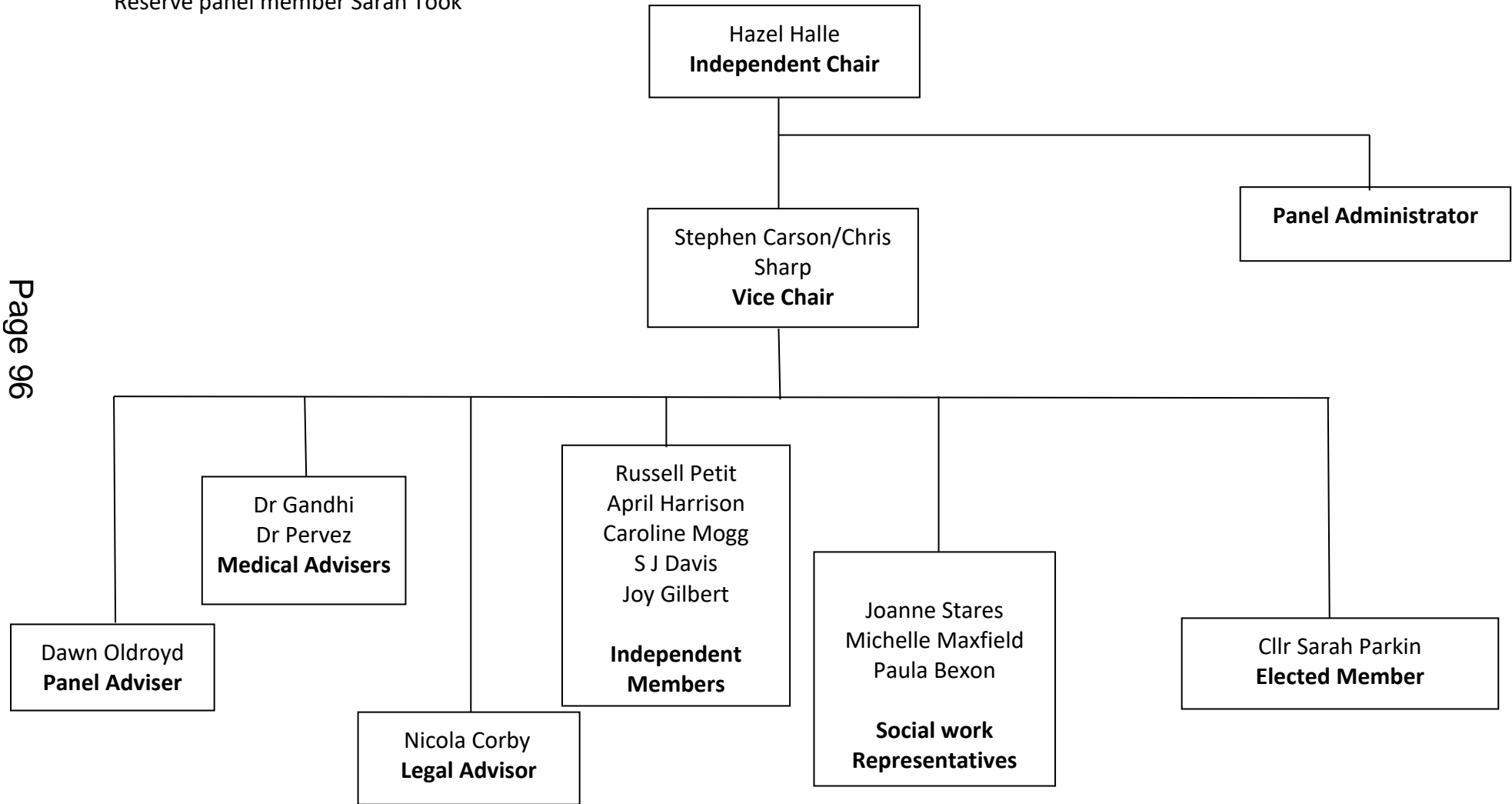
Telephone: 01522 552781

Email: deborah.crawford@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Appendix 1
Leadership structure



Appendix 2
Adoption and Permanence Panel
Reserve panel member Sarah Took



Appendix 3
Adoption Service - Staffing

Position	Qualifications	Length of time in LCC Adoption Services
Head of Service Regulated Services (Deborah Crawford)	DipSW Diploma in Higher Education BA (Hons) Social and Professional Studies PQ1 in Social Work Post Graduate Certificate in Leadership and Management in Social Work	29 years including 10 years in Regulated Services
Team Manager Adoption Services (Anne Johnson)	Certificate in Qualified Social work Certificate of Education Diploma in management PQ6 [Practice Teaching award]	43 years (26 years in Regulated Services)
Practice Supervisor Adoption Services (Sharon Clark)	BTEC ND Social Care BA (Hons) Applied Social Studies DipSW	17 Years
Practice Supervisor (Sandy Allison)	BSc (Hons) Social Work and Social Work Policy DipSW	20 years
Practice Supervisor Sam Carman	CQSW	8 years [3 years in regulated services]
Juliet Collingwood	BA (Hons) Applied Social Studies	4 Years
Supervising Social Worker (Julia Mann)	CQSW BA Combined Studies MA Health Services Studies Post graduate diploma in Social Studies PQ1	18 Years
Supervision SW Lorraine Wallace	BA[Hons] Social work	2 years adoption 6 years reg services
Supervising Social Worker (Debra Green)	BA (Hons) Social Work	11 years
Supervising Social Worker (Hannah Fawn)	BA (Hons) Social Work	7 years
Social Worker (Wendy Jennings)	BA (Hons) Social & Behavioural Studies MA, DIPSW Social Work CACDP Level 1 CACDP Level 2	13 years
Social Worker (Mark Abdul)	BA (Hons) Social Work	8 years

Position	Qualifications	Length of time in LCC Adoption Services
Social Worker (Kristin Daniilidis)	BA (Hons) Social Work	10 Years
Social Worker (Claire Liddan)	BA (Hons) Social Work	7 years
Supervising Social Worker (Kelly Shaw)	BSc (Hons) Social Work	7 years
Social Worker (Laura Tyrrell)	BA (Hons) Social Work	6 years
Social Worker Vittoria Pola	Degree in Social Work	5 years
Adoption Support Worker (Dawn Button)	HNC Business and Finance	23 Years
Early Help worker (Claire Leeson)		1 Year
Post Adoption Support Social Worker (Pat Mills)	BA (Hons) Social Work Higher diploma in therapeutic play MA Integrative psychotherapy/ child psychotherapy Level 1 /2 and advanced EMDR Theraplay 1 and 2 DDP 1 and 2	10 Years
Post Adoption Support Social Worker (Jane Thornton)	BA (Hons) Social Work	8 years
Adoption Support Social Worker (Jo Poole)	BA (Hons) Social Science CQSW Certificate in Counselling Advanced Certificate in Counselling	17 Years
Early Help Worker Sarah Clarke		2 years
Post Adoption Support Social Worker Sian Griffin	BA [Hons] social work	4 years



Open Report on behalf of Janice Spencer OBE, Assistant Director - Children's Safeguarding

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	08 September 2022
Subject:	Fostering Annual Report 2021 - 2022

Summary:

To consider this Annual Report as part of the monitoring of the Fostering Service required under the Fostering Service Regulations 2011 and the Fostering Minimum Standards 2011.

Actions Required:

That the Corporate Parenting Panel reviews and approves the Fostering Annual Report.

1. Background

To present the Fostering Service Annual Report 2021-2022 to members of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

2. Conclusion

Following consideration of the attached Annual Report the Panel is requested to consider and comment on the contents of this and the work of the Fostering Service

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report

Appendix A	Fostering Annual Report 2021 - 2022
------------	-------------------------------------

5. Background Papers

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

This report was written by Deborah Crawford, Head of Service Fostering, Adoption and Leaving Care, who can be contacted on 01522 552781 or deborah.crawford@lincolnshire.gov.uk



Lincolnshire Fostering Service

Annual Report April 2021 - March
2022

Lincolnshire
COUNTY COUNCIL

FosteringLincs
Lincolnshire Fostering Services

Working for a better future

Introduction:

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

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

At the end of March 2022, the number of children in care had risen from 680 to 735 this being an overall increase of 8% which is hugely significant and reflects the national picture. Of those 499 were placed in either foster care or pre-adoptive placements; this comprises of 68% of the population and is a reduction on the previous figure. Given the events of the last two years this continues to be a huge testimony to the existing fostering families and those who have joined the Lincolnshire fostering community during this period.

Of these 499, 44 children were placed in externally commissioned foster placements which is an increase on previous years, which is attributable owing to the reduced number of carer households and the needs of the children being more difficult to match with existing placements. 5 were unaccompanied migrant children aged between 15 and 18. The figures reflect a continually high number of children placed within their own kinship networks, accounting for 26% of all foster placements which mirrors a continued commitment and drive to ensure that children who need to be cared for can feel loved and cared for by people with whom they already have a connection.

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

The lead areas are permanence, duty desk, foster carer recruitment, retention, training, support, and development plus kinship. The ongoing engagement of the Caring2Learn initiative and ethos continues to have a positive impact for the service.

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

Numbers of Foster Carers:

As at the end of March 2022, there were 289 foster carer households currently registered, including 57 Regulation, 24/25 carers and 5 Foster to Adopt carers.

Type	No. of households
Task Centred including Respite	161
Parent and Child/Task Centred	4
CWD Short Break Carers	1
Placement Plus	9
Permanence only	15
Permanence/Task Centred	33
Emergency	2
Remand	2
Family/Friend (Regulation 24/25)	57
Foster to Adopt	5

During the period 1 April 2021 - 31 March 2022, 91 new fostering households were approved, including 63 Approved Kinship and 8 Foster to Adopt. The 20 new mainstream households provided up to 40 new placements as follows:

Approved places	No. of households
1 child	3
2 children	14
3 children	3

During the period 1 April 2021 - 31 March 2022, 27 mainstream households ceased fostering, owing to the following reasons:

Reason	No. of households
Family circumstances changed	4
At carer's request (not health reasons)	8
Health reasons	1
Financial reasons	1
Retired	8
Carers moved out of the area	1
Dissatisfaction with service	1
Carers no longer considered suitable / result of investigation	3

In addition, 55 approved Kinship households were de-registered; 33 of these households had Special Guardianship Orders granted for the children in their care. 5 children turned 18 during the year and transferred to the Staying Put scheme. 7 households were deregistered with the

children returning to the care of their parents. A further 9 Foster to Adopt households were also de-registered following successful adoption links.

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

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

The local picture during this year reflects the larger scale challenges with the gap widening between the children in care number growth and the number of fostering families becoming approved. Despite Lincolnshire experiencing a growth in interest during 2020/2021 the figures have slowed with interest and conversion rates reverting to following the pre-pandemic trend.

Carer availability during the past year has been restricted in part owing to the extraordinary circumstances and despite the Government's temporary flexibilities of the regulations which ended in October 2021 this did not significantly increase carer capacity. However, with the vaccination and booster offer, gradual easing of restrictions, and regained confidence in day to day living the resumption of some foster placements are all positive signs for moving forward. The continued efforts and enthusiasm within the service including the Caring2Learn initiative serves to reinforce the meaning and value of foster carer households.

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

Role of Fostering Service:

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

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

young parents, to develop basic parenting skills. During the pandemic and reflective of the carer demographic, only limited numbers of parent and child placements had been available however there is recent growth in the number of requests this year with some being placed in external fostering provision when necessary.

The profile of children in care remains like that identified last year. The percentage of those under the age of 5 has risen to 29%. At the other end of the age profile, the percentage of young people, aged 16/17, continues to constitute 22% of the Children in Care population. Only 39% of this group are in foster placements; the majority being placed in residential or independent accommodation.

In 2021/2022 the increase in the number of children who have entered care and the reduction in the number of foster placements available has resulted in a significant increase in the number of children being placed in external foster placements. As a result, transformation work continues to identify how this trend can be altered by both growing in house residential provision and further enhance the support offer to in house foster carers.

Activity and Performance 2021-2022



Foster Carer Recruitment:

The service has a dedicated Recruitment and Retention strategy which ensures that the recruitment and retention of foster carers for and within Lincolnshire County Council remains a key priority.

From 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022:

244 Initial Expression of Interest forms (IEIs) were received for fostering

177 home visits/initial calls were undertaken

54 Registration of Interest forms (ROIs) were received

20 households were newly approved to foster

In 2020/2021 the service witnessed a sharp rise in IEI numbers, it is thought that this was largely to do with the additional space and time people had for reflection, considering alternative paths and options for their future. As restrictions lifted and the public started to return to a sense of normality, returning to work and social connections becoming re-established hence the service has seen enquiries return to a pre- pandemic level.

Although numbers of IEI's have reduced this year the number of applicants completing a formal application remains the same. Showing a higher conversion rate than the previous years. The conversion rate to initial visit has risen by 11% over the last 12 months.

Financial Year	Number of fostering IEIs received				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
2021/2022	56	56	66	66	244
2020 / 2021	80	103	74	83	340
2019 / 2020	46	66	55	72	239
2018 / 2019	52	52	53	76	233

A performance audit in July 2021 and internal audit completed in January – March 2022 highlighted the areas of recruitment that would most benefit from development, the progress made in the conversion rate is linked directly to the developments and improvements in customer service and communication.

Virtual Information Events:

There have been 9 information events taken place virtually this year, face to face events were briefly reintroduced although the number of people that were booking and attending was significantly lower. The service has found that on average online recruitment events have between 20-30 people attending in comparison to 3-6 people for face-to-face events.

At this stage and with regular appearances out in the community the service has determined at present that a virtual event is a much better use of resource, therefore using our resources on a more specific and targeted approach to recruitment. This will remain under review.

The Fostering Service have made some changes to the virtual session recognising that engagement and connection must be achieved differently, then when the events are in person. This has worked well, and applicants have found the events more accessible and convenient. Some of our current foster carers also support in the sessions, co-facilitating and answering queries. This really demonstrates our ethos and culture of welcoming foster carers as part of the wider fostering community.

Advertising:

The focus for recruiting new foster carers during the pandemic moved to a more digital model as more people were at home and available online.

Advertising has been targeted towards getting people to attend the information events as well as advertising the type of foster carers we need to recruit.

Google ads was piloted for 3 months, this time did not see any significant rise in the number of those interested or contact. It was a significant larger cost than Facebook advertising, this type of advertising was not continued.

In July 2021 following the introduction of a new Practice Supervisor an audit of recruitment was completed to understand the inner working and performance data of advertising. The audit highlighted that online media, advertising strategies, and resources were areas that needed development. The social media following and online engagement through social media was low with minimal shares and interactions with the public. Facebook advertising and our organic reach very much depends on our social media presence and public engagement. This is a priority for development for 2022/2023 with a new Marketing Officer starting in April 2022.

Commitments regarding the spending of the advertising budget was set very early in the financial year which limited the amount of change and development that could be undertaken until financial year 22/23. The new Marketing Officer and strategy will see the service developing local visibility, establishing community links, and using advertising that is local and represents Lincolnshire and those that live here.

Foster Carers and staff will become more involved in the activity of developing connections and sharing experiences. Allowing the community to feel like they know the fostering service, this will be achieved through social media using Facebook and Instagram.

In 2019 Lincolnshire started the journey and agreed to the terms of becoming a fostering friendly employer. Since then, notices and information has been shared through Lincolnshire County Council digital comms and teams and there has been an increase in the amount of people coming forward from within the council, the plan going forward is to encourage and work with other employers, schools, and businesses to adopt the fostering friendly policies, offering more support to staff to care for children in care.

Permanence Campaign:

There continues to be an increase in the number of children with care plans for long-term fostering and the emphasis on permanence continued this year with included advertising in the form of radio adverts, Facebook posts, and adverts in various forms of local media including online newspapers and magazines.

Internally, anonymised profiles of children were posted onto the Caring2Learn closed Facebook page as well as the main Fostering Recruitment Facebook page and WhatsApp forums. A regular update continues to feature in the e-newsletter which is sent to approved foster carers monthly and profiles can be accessed anytime by fostering households through the foster carer's drive. This is a secure area where foster carers can access information and forms relating to the area of permanence, training, and all administrative matters.

The Rethink Fostering workstream within the Transformation work programme has been fundamental in exploring and creating the core offer and new innovative approaches in fostering, with the creation of the In-House Matching Event, being one of them. This event brings together the opportunity for those that know the children to present a profile of them, which has been developed using the Valuing Care approach.

The family finders' event was first piloted in June 2021, this enabled valuable evaluation and feedback from those foster carers in attendance to help shape up a future one. In January 2022, a further event was held, building on the previous one was well attended and received by foster carers.

This event will now be held on a regular basis and built into business as usual to support all the permanence work with the hope that children are able to secure local carers matched to their holistic needs.

Website:

The fostering website has been updated, to ensure the information is current and up to date, some of the photos have been updated to images that better represent our community and have a local feel. The payment booklet was added as a download on the website, following feedback that those applying wanted to be more informed about the financial support associated with children in care, it was felt that the topic of finances should be more transparent.

Over 80% of our enquires for fostering are still coming via the online platforms. Next year the aim to make the website even more accessible by adding a quick contact option and a QR code to posters and leaflets.

The service has moved towards monitoring Analytics, these will be used to monitor performance and impact during selective marketing strategies and campaigns. Informing our future adds and strategies as we learn which generates the most visits and actions on the page.

Fostering recruitment have also worked jointly to design an online system that intends to support the application and assessment process by monitoring, collecting information and sending alerts/updates to applicants within the two-stage fostering application process. This has gone well and has meant that applicants are more informed and can check progress regularly as well as receiving fortnightly calls from the team to ensure applicants continue to be engaged.


lincolnshire.gov.uk/fostering

LCC Bookmarks

Contents

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

Our offer to foster carers



Ofsted Outstanding Provider

Contact the fostering recruitment team

Telephone: 01522 554114

Email: fostering@lincolnshire.gov.uk

- Like us on Facebook
- Follow us on Instagram

Enquire about fostering

[Enquire online](#)

Foster Carer Retention:

The service has invested heavily over recent years in providing foster carers with additional practical and theoretical support. The innovation of Caring2Learn in conjunction with service developed a new community-based hub model, this hub over the last year has grown and developed to be embedded and come to be known as the 'Fostering Hub'. Over 90% of fostering households actively participate as a member of the hub. The hub model recognizes and acknowledges carer household's skills and knowledge and how these can be used to help support and improve other foster carer's experiences and outcomes for children. The hub offers both formal and informal learning and development opportunities as well as support where connections can be built and maintained.

This year the hub has been introduced to applicants, providing them with a support and development offer through the assessment period, it is hoped that this will improve any applicants withdrawing from the assessment stage but also better prepares applicants/ foster carers and offers a supported transition to becoming a fostering household for them and any children they may have placed already.

In keeping with key themes and feedback from the fostering community it was recognised that some carers continue to recognise and experience the impact of fostering was too much for their own children who are recognised as being a valuable part of this vital role. In response the service strengthened its support to birth children through the Supportive Superstars group, including a children's preparation course, a support offer in times of difficulty and the return of the social and relationship-based events for all birth children.

Facilitating and supporting the Hub model are 22 Foster Carer champions and the service have 2 vacancies for hub development; these individuals offer new carers support from when they

first apply to foster with Lincolnshire by helping to integrate them into the community and make links that will support them and their development in their fostering role.

Building upon the champions' existing skills and providing a high level of development opportunities has equipped this group to be able to complete work in tandem with foster carers as well as supporting and facilitating practice workshops and the induction and preparation courses. Foster Carer champions are actively involved within the recruitment of new carers, making initial calls to potential carers that are considering Lincolnshire as their provider of choice.

Foster Carer Champions on average are completing 20-30 pieces of allocated work per month, this is a decline of around 50% on the previous year although this is due to the changes and easing of Covid restrictions, development of the community and more peer-to-peer support is taking place naturally between carers.

The Caring2learn Practice Supervisor has been integrated and has joined the team as a Fostering Practice Supervisor, with a practice lead on retention, recruitment, support, and development whilst working collaboratively across the service. This post being realigned with fostering has been very positive and has resulted in a joined-up approach across the children's service.

The role of the Placement Support Workers has been further enhanced and is integral to the hub model. The staff group continue to offer a high level of support to carers through therapeutic and trauma informed intervention. Lower-level support and tasks are being supported by the community, allowing the service more capacity for higher levels of need. The core offer for the hub is currently in review with the hope that additional specialist health services will be made available where required for children in foster care.

The WhatsApp listening group which has 95 active members remains a constant hive of activity, with foster carers connecting, reaching out to their community for support or to share their challenges and successes. At the request of the carers additional groups have been developed, these include a LGBT, early years, foster carers to be, early years group and men's group. These are active groups which are used daily by carers.

The closed community Facebook page also continues to offer dynamic and creative support and solutions to foster carers and has over 800 participants.

The Fostering Network the UK's leading fostering charity have reported through their analysis of national data advises that fostering services should expect to lose 10% of its mainstream population per year. Lincolnshire last year lost 10% of its carers and this year lost 9%, although this is slightly lower the loss of any carer household impacts and their experience and knowledge is a cumulative loss.

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 9.39% at year-end which is higher than preferred. This figure suggests that the majority of Children in Care in Lincolnshire experience high level of placement stability from the point of coming into care. Albeit, higher than the Council would prefer this reflects some of the challenges and the intricacies of meeting the needs of children and matching them within our existing resources. The complexity of children requiring placements and reduced placement options has had an impact on the indicator, and this is likely to remain a challenge given 39% of this cohort are aged between 16-18 years old.

Over recent years there has been considerable focus on supporting foster carers to maintain placements. With the launch of the Fostering Hub and an overall improved core offer to foster carers it is the services' continued ambition for foster carers to feel supported in their valuable role. Moving forward the fostering service will have access to support from the complex care team, with clinical supervision being provided to placement support workers to support their offer of Theraplay and a therapeutic support for fostering households.

The NI063 placement stability figure with a year-end figure reported as 66%. The Valuing Care tool has now been embedded within the Fostering service. The tool continues to be used alongside the children in Care Valuing Care tool to support and inform matching with a view to improving placement stability. Identifying carer's strengths in accordance with a child, young person's needs. This enhanced level of integrated support has been effective in creating and sustaining placements. The tool is used in both the foster carer annual review and is also used during foster carer Form F assessment to inform foster carers ongoing learning and development needs. Moving forward the tool is to be used in all Kinship assessments to reflect a whole service approach to embedding this tool in all assessments undertaken.

Family Lincs Care:

The provision of short-term breaks offers children and young people with disabilities experiences away from their primary carer to enhance their personal and social development and provide their families with the vital opportunity to have a valuable break from their caring role.

Short breaks are for any person aged 0 to 18 with a disability, including:

- children and young people with an autistic spectrum disorder
- severe learning disabilities

- complex health needs
- cognitive or sensory impairments
- moving or handling needs
- life-limiting conditions

Providing families with a choice of having the short breaks with a Family Links carer provides children, young people, and their families an alternative option to a residential approach whereby they are offered with a home from-home experience with a specially trained foster carer.

The scheme is now serviced by one fostering household which offers regular breaks to one young person.

The current Family Links Scheme offers 100 units of care per annum with the option to offer additional units dependent on demand and the carers availability, each unit equates to 8 hours of care. The carer is meeting the current demand for this service. However, this is under review as it continues to be an essential part of the fostering provision.

Permanence:

Between 1st April 2021 and the 31st March 2022 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 recovery from the COVID 19 pandemic these meetings have been undertaken using a hybrid model with now more meetings taking place in person.

Over the year, twenty-two children have been considered by Family Finders, of these thirteen children were newly referred from 1st April 2021 onwards. This mirrors the previous year when twenty-two children were considered between April 2020 and March 2021.

Out of the twenty-two children considered, long term foster care in house foster placements were identified for four children, two singles and a sibling group of two children with three of these children remaining in their current placement and one moving to newly identified placement. Of the remaining eighteen children, it was agreed that two would remain with their Independent Fostering Agency carers and a sibling group of three moved to live with a family member under a kinship arrangement.

As of 31st March 2022, there remains thirteen children being considered by Family Finders looking for permanent placements, seven are single children and three are sibling's groups of two.

This year six children have been linked for Permanence at Fostering Panel; however, all of these were with the existing task centred foster carers and the children had not been referred to Family Finders. For several years recruitment of permanent foster carers has been difficult with most permanent matches being made with their carers.

In this year four sets of current carers changed their approval at panel and links were achieved with their existing placements however there were no new carers approved for permanence this year.

On the 27th January 2022 a permanence event took place to consider four of the young people already on Family Finders. The event was virtual and 16 foster carers attended. The event was opened and closed by Assistant Director Janice Spencer, OBE and each social worker had an allotted time to discuss their specific children, sharing photos, profiles including the Valuing Care profile.

A foster carer and the young person she used to foster shared their experiences of permanent fostering and “Ellie’s Story” was shared at the event. This real story exemplifies the importance and benefits to children when they have secured that stable foundation which further allows children to build healthy relationships and attachments resulting in a greater sense of permanency, stability and belonging.

Two sets of carers expressed an interest in offering regular respite for a young people and further information has been shared and this is being progressed. For several years, the recruitment of permanent foster carers has become more difficult with most permanent matches being made with existing task centred foster carers.

The Family Finders Review panel continues to meet when necessary to consider children where no potential placement matches have been identified within a three-month period, enabling senior management to have oversight of actions already taken and discussions around any further options to be considered or explored.

Staying Put:

The ‘Staying Put’ initiative has, since its inception, enabled a total of 212 young people in Lincolnshire to remain with their foster families when they reach aged 18 years old if both parties agree. 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.

Lincolnshire's Staying Put Service has continued to support young people and their carers with a total of 44 young people living in a Staying Put arrangement at the end of March 2022. Of these, 28 were in full time further education an increase of 4 from 2021. 7 attending university an increase of 2 young people. 3 young people are in employment, 2 young people are on Apprenticeship Schemes one with an engineering firm; and 2 young people are on the Care Leavers Apprenticeship Scheme and 2 young people were NEET with one young person deemed medically unfit.

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 what has been extraordinary circumstances.

The Staying Put offer in Lincolnshire positively reflects the current legislation of The Children Act 2014 and best practice from the Fostering Network. Signs of Safety is used and embedded in all the documents relating to Staying Put with Social Pedagogy being used to support the transition and understanding in relation to moving to adulthood.

During the past 12 months connections with carers have remained in place; with Supervising Social Workers keeping in contact with carers by telephone, virtually or face to face. Microsoft Teams has been used to complete virtual meetings and we have now seen a return to face-to-face meetings where we can build relationships and ensure young people and carers fully understand Staying Put and to timely complete the relevant paperwork relating to the arrangement.

Looking forward to the next 12 months Staying Put, there are currently 23 referrals. There may well be additional young people move into this provision (if this is the preferred option for them and their carers) however this scheme continues to be an option for those leaving the care at the point of attaining adulthood.

Information and promotional materials currently available to carers and young people will be reviewed and updated in supporting Staying Put arrangements as this continues to be a chosen route to further support young adults and their next steps into independent living.

Kinship:

The placement of a child within their family and friends network continues to offer a positive alternative for many children enabling them to maintain the links with family and friends and a continued sense of their identity and culture. This can also bring with it practice issues in terms of supporting family members to fully understand their role as Connected Person Carer's and the expectations of this role.

Since 2015 there have been 6 full time Supervising Social Workers dedicated to undertaking Kinship Assessments. There have been changes in terms of workers covering the kinship agenda and interim arrangements put in situ to ensure the smooth running of the service with creative planning and use of resources throughout.

The number of referrals into the Kinship Team has marginally increased this year. This is most noticeable in the increase in the volume of referrals for Regulation 24 assessments moving to Special Guardianship Order assessments. The number of cases presented at Fostering Panel has slightly increased when compared to the previous year. Most of the Regulation 24 assessments have been presented to the fostering panel within 16 weeks of allocation; however, some assessments have been scheduled to be completed within the extended 24-week period owing to exceptional circumstances.

The numbers below for the year records the number of referrals and reflects the ongoing national picture in terms of the area of service increase in terms of assessments.

Year	Referrals	Reg 24	Reg 24/SGO	SGO/ Stat checks	Private Fostering
2020-21	186	38	53	71	24
2021-22	196	24	84	39	19

Of the above figures: 2021-2022

- SGO – 13 applicants withdrew/ did not progress
- SGO – 14 are still in process
- SGO – 7 were negative assessments and the children were not placed
- SGO – 5 progressed but child either remained at home or moved to an alternative placement.

Where children were placed with a plan to progress to SGO

- SGO/Reg 24 – 24 SGO granted
- SGO/Reg 24 – 46 are still in process
- SGO/Reg 24- 3 Not approved at panel / Negative assessment
- SGO/Reg 24 – 5 returned home
- SGO/Reg 24 - 6 withdrew from assessment and child/ren moved to another placement

Where children were placed with a Plan of Reg 24:

- Reg 24 - 14 placements remain on-going
- Reg 24 – 6 Placement breakdowns and children were moved
- Reg 24 – 4 Returned home

The service has continued to offer the specific one-day kinship preparation course for both Regulation 24 carers and Special Guardianship applicants, with 8 having taken place in 2021/2022, this is an increase of 3 courses on last year's figures.

This course has been delivered virtually due to the Covid 19 pandemic however with the easing of restrictions this is now returned to face to face. The course has continued to receive excellent feedback, particularly in terms of the Therapeutic Parenting input by the Placement Support Workers. The course was adapted in September 2019 to ensure specialist therapeutic guidance was being delivered and continues to be reviewed and updated to enable carers to receive the latest training and guidance to support them in their role.

Fostering Panel:

The Fostering Panel is established and acts in accordance with the regulatory framework provided by the Fostering Service Regulations 2011, Family and Friends Care, Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities 2011, and the Standards set out in the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011. The Fostering Panel takes account of the legislation set out in The Children Act 1989, and the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 and Amendments 2015 and Guidance, volume 2, 2010.

The Fostering Panel has the responsibility for making recommendations in relation to:

- The approval of foster carers both short/task centred and long term/permanent foster carers
 - The approval of family members or friends as "connected person" carers for children who are in care with Lincolnshire County Council, and connected to the applicant as a family member or friend
 - The first annual review of all foster carers and connected persons carers
 - Reviews of carers where there have been serious issues such as Child Protection Enquiries
- or
- Reviews of carers where there are concerns regarding their fostering practice and their suitability.

The current membership of the Panel is as follows:

- Sharon King, Independent Chair
- Chris Sharp, Independent Vice Chair
- Stephen Carson, Independent Vice Chair
- Janet Morris, Independent Member
- Russell Petit, Independent Member
- April Harrison, Independent Member
- Laura Dodd, Independent Member
- Sarah Jane Davis, Independent Member
- Joy Tribe, Independent Member
- Caroline Mogg, Independent Member

- Stephen Tyrrell, Independent Member
- Maggie Nisbet, Independent Member
- Paula Bexon, Social Work Representative
- Michelle Maxfield, Social Work Representative
- Paul Fisher, Social Work Representative
- Joanne Hindley, Social Work Representative
- Ruth Roberts, Social Work Representative
- Laura Tyrrell, Social Work Representative
- Dawn Oldroyd, Panel Advisor
- Administrator in attendance at each panel

The Panel Advisor is responsible for the volume and cost of panel business, in particular the capacity to ensure that connected person cases can be heard within 16 weeks of placement. They ensure that the central list is maintained and updated to allow for all panels to be quorate. There continues to be two Fostering Panels each month.

In response to the emergence of Covid 19 in March 2020, the panels have continued to be held remotely via Microsoft Teams. All panel members were trained and supported to engage in a new way of working albeit this is subject to review to enable panel members to engage face to face with applicants. There have been challenges but most panel members are now participating in a 'paperless' panel process through the Councils secure intranet, SharePoint.

The introduction of remote panels via Microsoft Teams has also enabled applicants to attend panel from different areas of the country and even from abroad when timescales have coincided with planned vacations. This mode of meeting has also enabled children to attend panel from the security of their home address. There have also been creative presentations of children's views that have been shared electronically via video to panel members within the meeting (via screen share) and has included footage of teenagers being 'interviewed' for their views.

There has been the successful recruitment of a new Independent Panel Member who is also a current local authority foster carer and a Caring to Learn Champion. There have also been three new social work representatives sitting on panel which expands the knowledge and experience of panel members.

The Panel receives medical advice within the social workers' reports, and this is considered within the assessments with a medical advisor supporting panel too. Legal Services provide advice as required, to assist in the Panel's recommendations.

IFAB (Independent Fostering Advisory Board) has been up and running since February 2022 on a minimum of a monthly basis. The IFAB is attended by the Panel Advisor, and Independent Foster Panel Member and a Practice Supervisor from either Fostering or the Children in Care Team.

IFAB quality assures all foster carer annual reviews at the 4-, 7- and 10-year stage and has been well received by practitioners in offering oversight and feedback to the carer household, fostering service and wider staff regarding good practice and areas for development.

It has also enabled feedback to be shared with locality teams where foster carers have provided constructive feedback about social workers and the Panel Advisor has been able to challenge any practice issues to ensure continued good communication and compliance with fostering regulations.

Positive feedback has been received from IFAB Panel members about the learning they have had from participating in the panel which they are able to take back to their daily practice.

Workload of the Panel:

The Fostering Panel has met on 26 occasions this year, 1 more than the previous year, due to the workload of panel and ability to hold meetings via teams.

Panel recommended for approval the following households:

APPROVAL	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Task Centred/Respite	20	27	19	27	13	20
Reg 24/25 Kinship Care	63	56	43	33	39	39
Permanent Foster Carers	0	0	0	2	1	10
Change of Approval	4	2	6	7	0	5
Permanence Link	6	4	6	10	10	11
Reviews	33	32	23	22	17	35
Total	126	121	97	101	80	120

Review Breakdowns:

REVIEW	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Task Centred/ Respite	22	15	15	12	9	19
Remand	0	0	0	0	0	1
Reg 24/25 Kinship Care	11	11	6	9	3	12
Permanent Fostering	0	0	0	0	4	12

Allegation	7	6	1	1	1	1
------------	---	---	---	---	---	---

Feedback and Quality Assurance

Panel continues to seek feedback from all participants including social workers attending panel. As the panel invitation links are sent via Microsoft Teams by the panel member, feedback forms are also attached to these emails and some applicants have sent feedback either on these forms or within an email. The feedback received has been positive and suggests that applicants do not feel negatively impacted by the remote access to panel.

The reports for Panel continue to be subject to a robust quality assurance process to ensure suitable quality standards are achieved. The Panel Advisor routinely has oversight of all reports presented to panel and can highlight potential complexities in cases to ensure all aspects are appropriately addressed within a restorative approach. The Panel Advisor also offers social workers and their supervisors the opportunity to have early discussions about complex cases to ensure that appropriate support and assessments are in place prior to presentation at panel wherever possible.

Complaints:

In the last year the Fostering Service have received only 1 formal complaint, this complaint was not upheld by the Investigating Manager. Despite the service looking to resolve the complaint at a low level the complaint was progressed to stage 2 of the formal complaints process by the complainant as they were not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint's investigation. The complaint was Investigated at this stage by the complaints team and was not upheld at this stage.

In 2021/2022 there was 1 matter referred to the Independent Review Mechanism after a recommendation of deregistration approved by the Agency Decision Maker. The outcome from the Independent Review Mechanism was to uphold the recommendation of the Fostering service.

Foster Carer Continuous Development:

The Fostering Service in partnership develops an annual learning and development offer to include practical and e-learning opportunities, providing foster carers with a schedule of face-to-face training events and e-learning options which are accessed through the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership (LSCP) website and being service led/Caring2 Learn. A common theme has developed with a carer preference to access the service led/Caring2 Learn events. Feedback indicates this is due to quality, accessibility, and personal booking options. From April 2022 all training has moved to this preferable option.

The offer is reviewed annually to ensure it continues to meet the personal and professional development needs for carers, ensuring they have the skills and knowledge to be able to care for children and work towards positive outcomes according to best practice guidelines set out

within the local authority. In response to the common themes impacting on placement stability several courses will be introduced, these include mental health first aid and therapeutic crisis intervention.

Online sessions and a multi-agency offer have created a dynamic learning community where all carers are provided with theory, principles and practice examples that embed and combine Signs of Safety, Social Pedagogy, Restorative Practice and Trauma Informed Care.

Singletons Training Services and Breaking the Cycle have continued throughout the last year to facilitate the Emergency First Aid, Safeguarding and Safe Care course.

The current training offer supports the Learning Home Toolkit, for new carers this also includes the Training, Standards and Development (TSD) criteria. The feedback received has been positive and ensures that newly approved foster carers meet the standards whilst evidencing their continued development and understanding of our guiding principles and what this means in practice.

Carers have been able to access mandatory training through the learning and development team virtually. Carers have also had access to the E learning modules offered via the LSCP training platform.

The table below reports the number of carers who have undertaken any form of training this year. Despite the challenges with the ongoing pandemic throughout this year, foster carers have continued to access workshops, training events and completed and worked towards Learning Homes Awards. Participation in training and workshops has declined although the number of those attending and completing training remains much higher than previously.

Type of event	Number of carers participating
Virtual Training/workshops	350
Face to face	59
E learning completed	521

The annual Foster Carer's Celebration/Conference took place virtually on 19th October 2021; the event was a success with carers being presented with a lapel badge, certificate, and gift voucher to recognise their long service. Those receiving 15, 20, 25, 30, 35-year awards were also sent flowers from the service as a token of appreciation.

Following the 2020 celebration foster carers had expressed that would like to see the service provide recognition for the outcomes achieved for children in their care and practice, the Virtual School, FAST team, Children in Care Team, Residential and Fostering Service all nominated and presented awards to carers, highlighting within the areas of outcomes for children and good practice. This created a joined-up approach to the way Children Services came together to celebrate and thank foster carers for their contributions and support for its children. The foster carers feedback was very positive.

Forward Plan:

As we emerge from the pandemic our attentions remain focused on the recruitment and retention of Foster Carers. Over the last year the Fostering Service have embedded the use of the Valuing Care toolkit within both the recruitment stage and the annual review of foster carers. Along with the implementation of the Fostering Hub and the expansion of the Core Offer to Foster Carers.

The implementation of the Valuing Care toolkit is an approach which helps us explain, record and track children's needs and outcomes over time. The tool enables us to look at the needs of children across 13 different areas to build up a holistic picture of their needs and strengths. This combined with the fostering toolkit supports the matching activity and strengthens the process of identifying the skillset of the carers alongside the holistic needs of children.

The service has been and will continue to be engaged in the transformation work and the next stages will be focused upon developing the use of the Valuing Care tool in Connected Person assessment and Special Guardianship reports. Current developments include the Special Guardianship Order Core offer along with a revision of the Special Guardianship Reports and Support Plan which are trauma informed and future focused.

The service will endeavour with other teams to improve outcomes for our children in care by providing care locally within Lincolnshire, rather than care at a distance to keep children and young people within their own communities, where they can be close to their networks.

Caring to Learn is fully integrated in the fostering service, thus maximising the Council's ability to improve outcomes for children, minimise placement instability and provide an enhanced support and training offer to existing foster carers and strengthen the recruitment strategy.

All the above serve as a focus to improve the provision of locally sourced foster placements that meet the needs of children in care within an ever increasing challenging and competitive environment.

The Fostering Service have invested in the Placement Support Workers who are integral to providing targeted interventions with Foster Carers and young people to increase placement stability. We will be working in conjunction with the Complex Care Team to provide a holistic therapeutic support package for children and young people which will support them and their carers and ultimately enable more young people to be part of a nurturing family with greater stability afforded to them.

Open Report on behalf of Janice Spencer OBE, Assistant Director - Children's Safeguarding

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	08 September 2022
Subject:	Fostering Statement of Purpose 2021-2022

Summary:

This Statement of Purpose fulfils the requirements of Standard 16 of the Fostering Services Minimum Standards (Care Standards Act, 2000) and Regulation 3 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011.

To be presented for approval by Lincolnshire County Council Executive in September each year.

Actions Required:

That the Corporate Parenting Panel reviews and approves the Fostering Statement of Purpose 2021-2022.

1. Background

To present the Fostering Statement of Purpose 2021-2022 to members of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

2. Conclusion:

Following consideration of the attached Statement of Purpose, the Panel is requested to consider and comment on the contents of this report and the work of the Fostering Service.

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Fostering Statement of Purpose 2021-2022

5. Background Papers

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

This report was written by Deborah Crawford, Head of Service Fostering, Adoption and Leaving Care, who can be contacted on 01522 552781 or deborah.crawford@lincolnshire.gov.uk



Lincolnshire Fostering Service

Statement of Purpose
April 2021 - March 2022



**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE FOR THE LINCOLNSHIRE FOSTERING
SERVICE**

This Statement of Purpose fulfils the requirements of Standard 16 of the Fostering Services Minimum Standards (Care Standards Act, 2000) and Regulation 3 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011. To be presented for approval by Lincolnshire County Council Executive in September each year.

CONTENTS

Page

- 3. Aims, Objectives and Principles of the Fostering Service
- 5. Standards of Care
- 5. Status and Constitution
- 6. Leadership Structure
- 7. The work of the Fostering Service
- 9. Service Ambitions
- 16. Training
- 17. Recruiting and Approving Foster Carers
- 20. Finance
- 20. Monitoring
- 20. Complaints and Allegations
- 21. Advocacy and Children's Rights
- 22. Number of Children Placed
- 23. Equality and Diversity
- 23. Ofsted
- 24. Further Information

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Leadership Structure

Appendix 2 Fostering Panel Structure

AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE:

The main aims of the Lincolnshire County Council Fostering Service are to:

Provide high quality and safe care within a family setting for children and young people who have been assessed as requiring a foster placement.

Provide a range of Foster Carers able to meet the emotional, physical, cultural, religious, and ethnic needs of all the children in care with Lincolnshire County Council.

Lincolnshire County Council delivers its Fostering Service through dedicated Fostering Teams managed by Team Managers covering the north and south of the county within a countywide approach.

The main service objectives are to:

Place children and young people in local foster placements where relationships with family, friends and community are maintained and continuity of education, health and cultural links and activities is ensured. In instances where it is not possible to achieve this within the Council's Foster Placements an appropriate placement outside of the resources of the County Council will be sought.

Maintain enough foster care placements in relation to the location, numbers, needs, age range and characteristics of the children in care population and review this annually through the recruitment and retention strategy.

Recruit Foster Carers who are trained and supported in providing safe care to children who live with them. The service will determine the number and types of foster placements required and produce an annual recruitment and retention plan.

Carry out an assessment of need on every child prior to accommodation. Where possible a safe family member or friend from the family network will be the preferred placement choice.

Provide a safe and nurturing foster placement with every effort made to achieve good outcomes for children in care, within set timescales and to agreed standards. The service aims to ensure that wherever possible, children can meet with their prospective foster carers prior to placement and if this is not possible, receive a foster family profile.

Provide for sibling groups to be placed together when this is in their best interests.

Respect and promote the child's heritage, culture, and identity.

Promote family time between the child and their family where this is consistent with the care plan.

Achieve permanence for all children who are unable to return safely to their families and promote Staying Put for those young people who are secure within their foster placement.

Ensure openness and partnership working between all those involved and concerned with the child's welfare.

Involve young people and foster carers in developing services and building their feedback into service development.

To continue to promote Caring 2 Learn to encourage caring schools and learning homes.

To continue to support and develop foster care champions across the County to ensure that the model is extended as widely as possible.

The Fostering Service has set targets to achieve best practice for the following Children's Performance Assessment Framework and National Indicators:

NI062 – stability of placements of children in care: number of placement moves.

PAF B79 – the percentage of children in foster placements or placed for adoption.

NI063 – stability of placements of children in care: length of placement.

The main principles underpinning the service are:

Foster Carers will be treated with respect and recognition will be given to the valuable role they play in the care of children in care.

Recruitment of new Foster Carers and staff who work within the service, complies with regulations, national standards, and good practice.

Foster Carers are vetted, prepared, and assessed in line with national regulations and requirements.

The Lincolnshire Fostering Panel considers all carer applications and reviews of approval.

All approved Foster Carers are required to sign the Foster Care Agreement and the Foster Carer Charter which outlines expectations of the Fostering Service and commits to caring appropriately for children in care.

Wherever possible all placements are matched to ensure a positive match between the needs of the child and the skills and experience of the foster carer(s).

Every child placed will be subject to the children in care - care planning process.

All Foster Carers are provided with the required documentation and information to support the placement of the child in their care.

Children have their placement and plan reviewed within four weeks of initial placement.

All Foster Carers have a named Supervising Social Worker and children in foster care have a named allocated Social Worker.

STANDARDS OF CARE TO BE FOLLOWED BY THE AGENCY:

The Fostering Service aims to provide safe, secure, and high-quality care in family settings for children who need to be cared for away from home. This will be achieved in accordance with the standards set out in the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 (referred to as the Regulations), the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review regulations (2010) and (Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) Regulations 2015 and 2021, the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (2011) along with the policies and procedures of Lincolnshire County Council.

These standards will apply equally to family and friend's placements also referred to as 'Kinship Care.' The service complies with the requirements of the Training, Support and Development Standards (2012).

There is a countywide management group whose function is to continuously improve standards of care informed by inspections, audits, new legislation, and guidance and evaluate the effectiveness of service delivery.

STATUS AND CONSTITUTION OF THE AGENCY:

Lincolnshire County Council is an approved fostering service provider and will be inspected by OFSTED in accordance with the current inspection framework.

Decision making and arrangements for the management of the service including the appointment of the Fostering Registered Manager (Regulation 6) and approval of Foster Carer registrations (Regulation 27) are delegated to the Assistant Director, Children's Services.

A Fostering Panel has been established in accordance with Regulation 23. The Panel is chaired by an independent person with considerable experience of working within Social Care.

Where Lincolnshire County Council need to secure the provision of external Foster Care placements they will do so via the Placements Team, within the Strategic Commissioning Team and a market search will then be undertaken, in accordance with the Council's Contract and Procurement Procedure Rules (CPPR).

THE LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE:

The Fostering Service is managed by the Head of Service for Regulated Services; through two Team Managers who manage dedicated fostering teams from bases in Lincoln, Louth, and Sleaford. The service employs five practice supervisors who have lead responsibility for specific areas of delivery.

The registered manager appointed to manage the Fostering Service under Regulation 10 of the Fostering Services Regulations is:

Deborah Crawford, Head of Service – Regulated Services
County Offices
Newland
Lincoln
LN1 1YL

Telephone: 01522 552781

Email: deborah.crawford@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Qualifications: Diploma in Social Work, BA (Hons) Social and Professional Studies and Post Graduate Certificate in Leadership and Management in Social Work.

Experience: more than twenty years of experience of working in social care, specialising in children and families, and latterly fostering. The registered manager comes with various childcare experience and has held previous leadership posts within Children's Services.

The nominated manager to lead the Fostering Service in the absence of the registered manager is Rachel Freeman – Head of Service for Children in Care and Residential Estates.

The Fostering Teams are locality based and deliver a comprehensive fostering service. These teams manage the recruitment, assessment, approval, support, and placement

processes which enable children in care in Lincolnshire County Council to be placed in a range of fostering settings.

Dawn Oldroyd is the dedicated Professional Agency Advisor for both the Fostering and Permanence Panels.

The organisational structure of the Fostering Service is shown in Appendix 1. The list of Fostering Panel members is set out in Appendix 2. This information in its fullest form is only available to Ofsted.

Two Team Managers manage the Teams responsible for the service on a geographic basis. Rebecca Dolman is the Team Manager North and has over 10 years' experience in Children's Services. Nicola Brangam manages the South Team. She has 20 years' experience of social work and has worked in a range of services across children and families including regulated services.

The teams comprise Practice Supervisors who are responsible for the supervision and development of staff; including Supervising Social Workers who are all qualified and experienced in a range of childcare social work and several unqualified staff who work within recruitment, placement support and placement duty. In addition, the service employs a dedicated marketing officer and assistant who contribute to the delivery of the annual recruitment and retention strategy.

THE WORK OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE:

One of the Council's four key ambitions is to enable everyone to enjoy life to the full, with a specific objective to *'intervene effectively to keep vulnerable people safe, making sure children in care and care leavers get the best opportunities'*.

In Lincolnshire *Putting Children First* is at the heart of our work; *Working Together with Families to Enhance Children's Present and Future Lives*.

The outcomes that the Council commits to are:

- Young People are healthy and safe
- Children and Young People develop to their potential in their early years and are ready for school
- Children and Young People learn and achieve
- Children and Young People are ready for adult life.

The expectations for all Children in Care are enshrined within these outcomes.

- We will champion the importance of aspiration
- We will promote self-esteem, self-belief, and resilience in all children
- We will encourage all children to be the best they can be
- We will use resources to focus on outcomes, life chances and opportunities
- We will work jointly with foster carers to help promote these objectives.

Lincolnshire aims to provide sufficient local placements to enable placement choice and enable children to remain, where appropriate, close to their communities.

Lincolnshire delivers Staying Put opportunities to enable young people to remain in their foster placements post 18.

The training, induction and development of new Foster Carers is in line with the requirements of Standard 20 (NMS) and carers are expected to meet the Training, Support and Development standards (TSDs) within 12 months of approval.

The TSDs are incorporated and combined with the Caring to Learn Home Toolkit which encourages all carers to complete their training and develop skills, develop their knowledge, and gain support in their fostering journey.

This combined approach supports foster carers to assess how they work with children and young people to enable them to feel safe, belong in their home and school to provide them with a solid foundation to have the confidence to go on to learn, be aspirational and achieve their full potential.

SERVICE AMBITIONS:

Young People are Healthy and Safe:

All children are registered with GPs and dentists, and this is kept under review by the team managers. There are designated GPs and a named Doctor and small team of nurses responsible for this group of children. Children and young people placed in foster care have an initial health assessment carried out by a designated GP and are encouraged to have an annual review by the same GP or designated nurse. During the Covid 19 pandemic contingencies were made to ensure that all initial health assessments were completed and were undertaken by nurses within the designated children in care team and this worked well with the quality, onward referrals and advice to children, young people and carers being evidenced. Following the easing of Covid 19 restrictions services have resumed and access to this provision continues yet in some instances this involves travel outside of the area.

Medical forms recommended by British Association for Fostering and Adoption (BAAF) are used to record both the initial and annual review and maintain a health profile for each child in care. Lincolnshire has a strategy to tackle teenage pregnancy, promote the holistic wellbeing of all children and young people. All carers are given a copy of the guidance on sex and relationship education within their handbooks. Carers and young people can access further information from the young person's pages on the Council's website and updates on service provision are available via the Fostering Service monthly newsletter.

A multi agency commissioning group is in place to understand and improve the health needs of children in care. Health needs of children and young people are regularly monitored through the children in care review process. The Local Authority has a contract with CAMHS and services for children in care are prioritised. CAMHS work to a target of seeing all referred children for an initial assessment within 28 days. A forensic psychology assessment service is available to children in care who have emotional, behavioural, interaction or mental health issues that are manifesting themselves in the form of offending behaviour.

Foster Carers complete a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQs) for children between the ages of four and sixteen years of age. This is to ensure that services for children who require additional support are accessed swiftly to improve emotional wellbeing. The results of all the SDQs are monitored by a multi-agency group comprising Social Care, CAMHS and Psychology who identify intervention strategies for those whose scores are of concern. Foster carers have access to the CAMHS professional advice line to support in the management of concerning behaviours.

Part of the training programme for Foster Carers focuses on promoting a healthy lifestyle, good diet, and exercise. All mainstream Foster Carers must undertake first aid training as part of their mandatory post approval training. Foster Carers have training sessions on promoting the health of children in care. This core programme is supplemented through special interest seminars including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism and teenage pregnancy.

Foster Carers can access specialist services for those with substance and alcohol misuse problems through the young ' We are with you' service. (Previously Addaction)

As part of the assessment process of prospective Foster Carers, a health assessment is undertaken by the carers' GP which the Agency Medical Advisor for the Fostering Panel considers. If there are on-going medical issues, a full medical assessment is undertaken. Full medicals are also completed for all carers seeking approval for permanence. All carers are required to update their health assessment every 3 years. Foster Carers who offer respite care to disabled children are offered specialist training to meet the needs of individual children. Foster Carers are trained in the administration of specific medication.

The assessment of carers includes the taking of full employment and accommodation histories. Checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and local authority checks are completed on everyone aged over 18 years of age living in the household. A range of referees are contacted and visited including previous partners who have parented together and birth children.

All Foster Carers attend mandatory training regarding safer caring and the implications of looking after children who may have been harmed.

Each fostering household have a safer caring assessment prior to approval which highlights key aspects of the safer caring process, and this is reviewed in the light of each placement made. Every effort is taken when placing children to ensure that the assessed needs of the child are carefully matched to the skills and capabilities of the carers.

This has been reinforced and further developed within the Children in Care Transformation Agenda where the Valuing Care approach aids us understand the needs and support requirements of children in our care. There are two analysis tools in use, one that is designed to support decision-making about the level of support needed by our children and young people. The other is a Fostering Tool that considers the skills, knowledge, and experience of foster carers in relation to support the needs of the young people being placed in their care.

All children placed are subject to a safety plan that identifies any risks that carers will be asked to manage.

All Foster Carers receive bi-monthly formal supervision, in addition to regular visits, to review and support their practice. During the pandemic carers fostering families continued to be visited in person and virtually to maintain strong support to such families. Given the gradual easing all visits are in person with a continued vigilance to reduce any risks where possible. An unannounced visit to the foster home is made at least once each year. Workers in the team are also aware of the vulnerability of disabled children.

Allegations against Foster Carers are investigated using an established procedure whereby all are considered by the Local Authority Designated Officer. An independent person chairs the initial strategy meeting and oversees the process. Independent support is offered to carers during the allegation's procedure by Foster Talk. In addition, the Fostering Service funds each fostering household's membership of the Fostering Network which brings the benefit of legal protection insurance and access to support and advice from their staff, including free legal advice and the counselling service.

Children's plans are regularly reviewed through the Children in Care's statutory review process, and procedures are in place for reporting significant incidents through the OFSTED notification requirements. All children are given information about how to report abuse and carers are prepared in how to manage disclosure and prevent allegations arising in the placement. In addition, children and young people have access to an independent advocacy service. All children are provided with a Living in Care guide

All children and young people are expected to agree with their carer when they go out, where they are going and a time to return. If a young person fails to return at the agreed time, attempts are made to locate them by telephoning friends, family, and relatives. Carers can obtain advice about the operation of the Missing from Care protocol from the Emergency Duty Team and are issued with a copy of it within the Foster Carer Handbook.

The process for conducting risk assessments on missing young people and making reports to the police is detailed in the Foster Carer Handbook.

Lincolnshire's Fostering Service Policy is that there is sufficient space within the foster carer's home for a child to have their own room. In certain circumstances, a child/young person may share a bedroom. Full risk assessments for each child/young person sharing must be undertaken before these arrangements are agreed. A matching policy is in place to ensure that effective matching of children to placements is undertaken to improve placement stability and good outcomes for children and young people.

READINESS FOR SCHOOL

All pre-school children who come into care will be placed in a foster placement equipped to meet their individual needs.

All Foster Carers are encouraged to register with their local Children's' Centre and take up the services available as part of the county's Early Help offer available to all children.

All children in care can access the 15 hours early entitlement at the age of 2 and have access to suitable nursery school provision to support their learning outcomes. Children aged 3 and 4 can access their 15 hours entitlement from the term after their 3rd birthday, and those in foster care can access an additional 15 hours (to provide 30 hours offer) if the foster carers are in employment outside of their foster carer responsibilities.

Foster Carers are required and supported to engage children in their care in specific activities to develop their self-esteem and social and emotional development.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE LEARN AND ACHIEVE

Lincolnshire County Council is committed to maximising a child's potential in both academic attainment and personal achievement. All young people are expected to attend school and efforts are made to maintain children in their existing schools. Foster Carers who transport children to out of catchment schools have their transport expenses reimbursed.

Foster Carers are aware that it is not acceptable or agreed practice to take children and young people out of school for family holidays. A protocol has been agreed on this matter and has been issued to all carers.

The Fostering Service promotes the educational attainment of children placed with foster carers. Each child in foster care has a Personal Education Plan (PEP) and, where appropriate, a Leaving Care Pathway Plan. Foster Carers are expected to involve themselves in assisting children in placement to achieve satisfactory attendance, assist with homework and participate in parent/teacher events.

Lincolnshire Virtual School participated in the DfE Post 16 Pupil Premium Pilot from September 2021 to March 2022 which enabled funding to be allocated to promote education, employment, and training for Lincolnshire children in care aged 16-18.

All early years and statutory school aged children in care have an entitlement to the Pupil Premium. Over the past year, additional Recovery Premium and School Led

tutoring grants have also been allocated as part of the DfE Covid recovery programme. This is further enhanced by the Council and the utilisation of the provision is monitored within the PEP process.

It is a statutory requirement for all schools to have a Designated Teacher with responsibilities for liaison, educational monitoring, and pastoral care for children in care. Lincolnshire Virtual School Co-ordinators' role is to ensure effective liaison with schools, early years setting and post 16 providers and to promote educational attainment and attendance of children in care. This includes children who live with Foster Carers outside of Lincolnshire.

The Lincolnshire Virtual School Team, managed by the Virtual School Head, is fully engaged with the fostering service and carers to promote the improvement of educational outcomes for children and young people in care. The team is well resourced and provides training and support to social care teams, foster carers, and schools. Personal Education Plan meetings are held three times per year or more if required with high levels of engagement from children, social workers, schools, and carers.

Caring2Learn is the Children's Services approach developed to support improved outcomes for children in care, previously looked-after children, and children with a social worker. This approach promotes joint working between schools, carers and social care teams and is focused on growing the understanding, knowledge, confidence, and support for all adults who work with or care for most vulnerable children.

The Caring2Learn approach is now fully embedded into the Fostering Service as part of the Fostering Hub and core support offer for Foster Carers. This includes the Learning Homes accreditation which also forms part of the statutory fostering training, Training and Development (TSD) standards, the training offer to foster and kinship carers and the wide-ranging peer and professional support offer from the whole team including Foster Carer Champions, Placement Support Workers, and Supervising Social Workers.

There is an Educational Psychology service which provides input to vulnerable children including children in care. The service broadens the support and intervention knowledge and skills of carers and schools and actively identifies children in need of psychological involvement within the SDQ process.

The opportunity for children and young people to succeed in hobbies or sports is seen as an important element of the fostering task and is supported through fostering allowance payments. Annual Foster Carer Reviews consider the level of social opportunities young people in placement are supported in attending. Children and young people are encouraged to participate in a range of activities and interests. Children and Young Peoples' achievements are recognised each year in an annual award ceremony held under the banner of FAB! Following the FAB Awards being postponed due to covid restrictions and concerns over the past 2 years the Council are pleased to

be able to plan for the FAB Awards to return in June 2023. A working group of key stakeholders has been established and will hold its first planning meeting in September 2022 to develop the event. This will include key contributions from partners including SoundLincs and the University of Lincoln.

V4C is Lincolnshire's Children in Care Council with the aim being to share experiences of being in care in Lincolnshire and to inform teams who support Children in Care what does and does not work for them. V4C meetings are held within the 4 Children's Services locality quadrants and are delivered by Senior Youth and Community Development Workers and supported by Children's Services Participation Officers.

Over the past 18 months the children and young people attending V4C have been giving their views and feedback about their experiences and have also completed specific projects including: Reviewing and updating the Coming into Care Kit (now renamed the Living in Care Guide); redesigning the Care Pledge (now renamed the Lincolnshire Caring Promise) and providing views regarding the use of specific terms and language which has led to service developments.

Big Conversation events, which bring together the groups with senior managers and elected members to discuss issues have been successfully held in 2021 and 2022.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ARE READY FOR ADULT LIFE

Lincolnshire County Council's Foster Carers are recruited and supported to meet the needs of children placed with them and provide the stability that they require to achieve and ready themselves for adult lives. The authority therefore makes sure that there are no barriers, financial or otherwise, to prevent Foster Carers becoming permanent carers be they adopters, Child Arrangement Order holders or special guardians; where an assessment determines that this is the best outcome for the child. The Council has fully committed to the Staying Put requirement with 44 young people remaining in their present foster placements. Young people are issued with a Skills for Adult Life booklet which identifies and develops the core skills for independent living which is a focus for the young person, foster carers, and all involved agencies.

The training plan for Foster Carers contains special interest seminars, which assist carers in helping children progress to independence. On an individual basis, placement support workers will also have a role in helping young people acquire skills for independence and have developed a range of work preparation and apprenticeship opportunities. Children in Care are encouraged to follow courses of higher education and appropriate support is made available to them.

In 2019 the tender for Lincolnshire's Leaving Care service was awarded again to Barnardo's with effect from April 2020. All young people leaving care have a named worker and a clear plan for support in their transition post 16 years.

SUPPORTING THE FOSTERING SERVICE

The work of the Fostering Service is delivered through several key relationships and support functions which are described below.

1. Supervising Social Worker

The role of the Supervising Social Worker is to provide support and supervision to the Foster Carer household. They also assist with practical difficulties and the provision of equipment. They are a crucial link between the carer and the child's Social Worker. There is a supervision policy for Foster Carers. Supervision takes place bi-monthly and more regularly if required and includes a focus on personal development including training.

Although most support visits will be pre-arranged however the Supervising Social Worker has a duty to undertake at least one unannounced visit per year. They are also responsible for undertaking the annual review of approval, which incorporates the carers' views and those of any birth children and fostered children. The review also includes reports from Social Workers and the Supervising Social Worker who will identify strengths and future learning needs. The Valuing Care Toolkit is incorporated into the annual review, so it remains updated and live to the carer's strengths and areas for development. Following completion of the review the foster carer is issued with a statement of re-approval.

2. Child's Social Worker

The child's Social Worker is responsible for the overall management of the child's care plan. They have a statutory duty to visit the child within one week of placement and thereafter at a minimum of six weekly intervals until a child is confirmed as being in their permanent placement when a three-monthly visiting pattern may be appropriate. However, in most circumstances the visiting pattern will be more frequent and determined by an individual child's needs.

3. Foster Carer Support

The service delivers quarterly focus groups with foster carers across the County. These provide opportunities for engagement with the service, support and training opportunities including greater networking. The service has developed a group of foster carer mentors who are linked with foster carers during the assessment stage and provide an essential support and point of contact to support the persons transition to becoming a foster carer and enhance the confidence and skills of newly approved foster carers. The Caring2Learn programme has recruited foster carer champions to provide

training and guidance about the development of a learning environment within the foster home.

All Foster Carers receive a handbook which details local policy, information about fostering terms and conditions and guidance about requirements concerning the care and control of children and other procedures. The handbook is frequently updated and amended versions are distributed to Foster Carers. The service continues to provide an electronic newsletter which remains the preferred generic communication method between the fostering service and foster carers. This allows for information updates to be disseminated, including training events and dates, social events, good news stories and best practice information to most of our foster carers. Those without email or who chose not to receive emails are provided with a copy of the newsletter via their Supervising Social Worker.

Fostering households have access to secure sites such as Facebook and Whatsapp to share general information and offer support to one another. Zoom is also used to facilitate foster carer social activities to encourage the community spirit.

All foster carers are provided with individual membership of the Fostering Network and carers are being supported with accessing exclusive discounts which offer fantastic savings across a range of services and brands on the high street.

4. Out of Hours Service - Emergency Duty Team (EDT)

This service provides a team of social workers who are available outside of office hours to offer emergency support to service users and the public. The EDT can offer telephone advice and has access to placement information and emergency placements with Foster Carers. Early Help Workers and Future4 me staff are available to provide practical assistance out of hours in certain circumstances.

5. Placement Support Workers

The service employs a dedicated group of Placement Support Workers whose role is to support and assist Foster Carers and children in care. They offer support and assistance to carers to develop, understand and implement a therapeutic style of care. This is undertaken via group work, one to one direct work, and support to the fostering community.

Placement Support Workers work collaboratively with the other professionals and network around the child (ren) and attend the Child in Care Review meetings to plan and review outcomes for children. Placement Support Workers are committed to continuous professional development informed by latest research within a trauma informed approach.

TRAINING

The Fostering Service ensures that Foster Carers are trained in the skills required to provide high quality care to meet the needs of each child placed in their care.

Training of Foster Carers is a significant aspect of the service and is provided both pre and post approval and is included within the Fostering Service's Annual Training Plan.

Training is not an option but a clear expectation of all carers and is evaluated in supervision sessions and annual reviews. Personal and professional development is supported through the Learning Homes Toolkit and regular practice workshops, supporting carers to transfer theory into practice. A three-year cycle of required training in first aid, Safeguarding and Safe Care regarding safer caring and the implications of looking after children who may have been harmed. In addition, mandatory courses on Diversity and Trauma Awareness are held and should be completed on a 3 yearly basis.

Part of the training programme for Foster Carers focuses on promoting a healthy lifestyle, good diet, and exercise. All mainstream Foster Carers must undertake first aid training as part of their mandatory post approval training. Foster Carers have training sessions on promoting the health of children in care. This core programme is supplemented through special interest seminars including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism and teenage pregnancy.

Following feedback from carers the TSD (Training, Standards and Development) and Learning Home Toolkit were combined, the feedback from both staff and carers has been overwhelmingly positive. This ensures that all new carers meet the standards but can also progress and develop their practice and homes to ensure children can heal and meet their full potential.

The toolkit encourages training and development in line with Lincolnshire Children's Service's priorities and national research. The toolkit encourages the development of relationships between Foster Carers, schools and other professionals and their participation within a community.

Pre-approval training is over three days and is provided in-house with a Caring2Learn representative, a Foster Carer Champion, and Supervising Social Worker. The course has evolved over the years to reflect changing practice, local experience, and the national fostering agenda. All foster carers are provided with online access via Fostering or the LSCP (Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership) suite of training post approval.

An Annual Foster Carer Celebration Conference is held and offers both training, information and recognises the work that foster carers undertake via a range of long service awards. This event took place remotely during the pandemic in 2020 and it is

hoped in the future this will revert to a face-to-face event to celebrate the efforts and commitment from so many.

PROCESS OF RECRUITING AND APPROVING FOSTER CARERS

Foster Carers are recruited and assessed in line with Lincolnshire guidance based on the Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011, Fostering Regulations 2011 and the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services and Amendments 2013.

Dedicated staff are in place to ensure a prompt response to all first-time enquirers. The Practice Supervisor is responsible for the implementation of the Recruitment and Retention strategy and managing all aspects of the recruitment process.

Recruitment involves:

- Co-ordinating evening events whereby foster carers and young people in care attend and give their real-life experiences
- Utilising social media to reach wide audiences
- Holding drop-in sessions at Community establishments
- Newspaper advertisements
- Newspaper articles
- Distribution of posters
- Information distributed through displays and presentations
- Word of mouth through existing carers
- The recommend a friend scheme/Employer Fostering Friendly approach
- Lincolnshire County Council website
- Targeted activity within specific communities in county.
- Participation in a range of county wide events.

All initial enquiries relating to fostering are completed online through the Lincolnshire County Council website and are then passed to the Recruitment Co-ordinators or the Recruitment Co-ordinators are telephoned directly.

The Recruitment Co-ordinators aim to contact all enquirers within 24 hours of them registering their interest online. Their role is to ensure that enquirers have all the information they need, and following an initial discussion, an initial expression of interest can be completed over the phone and/or a detailed information booklet is made available to all interested applicants about the fostering process which is sent within five working days.

Once an initial expression of interest is received and allocated to a recruitment team worker; they aim to make contact within 24 hours to arrange a mutually agreeable date and time for the initial home visit. Foster carer champions within this process has been on request contact those considering fostering to provide applicants a helping hand in realising the realities and benefits of becoming a carer for Lincolnshire.

The fostering service is focusing on enhancing the overall customer experience and the Recruitment Co-ordinators represent the Local Authority in a professional manner being respectful to all enquirers.

As part of the Stage One process statutory checks are undertaken and prospective carers attend a three-day preparation group. If all aspects of Stage One are completed, then the prospective carers are invited to begin the Stage Two assessment process. The service aims to have all stage 2 applications approved within 6 months. The assessments are completed by qualified social workers and follow the format of the Coram BAAF Form F.

Foster Carer approvals (including family and friend's carers) are considered by the Fostering Panel. Applications to become permanent Foster Carers are considered by the Permanence Panel. The composition and organisation of the Panels is in accordance with Regulation 23 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011.

The service provider Agency Decision Maker is the Assistant Director, Children's Services.

Every Foster Carer is required to sign a Foster Carer Agreement (Regulation 27 (5) – (5b) prior to the placement of a child. A Supervising Social Worker is allocated to the family; this is usually the person who has undertaken the Form F. Foster Carers are provided with a copy of the Foster Carer Charter.

Foster Carers are supervised and supported by a named locally based Supervising Social Worker and the child has their own named Social Worker. Independent Reviewing Officers undertake all Children in Care reviews.

The Fostering Panel always considers first reviews; however subsequent reviews are normally completed under locality management arrangements, unless there is a disagreement regarding the terms of approval which necessitates referral back to Panel.

During the covid pandemic the panel has been held virtually to ensure all business is maintained in timescales. The service has implemented IFAB (Independent Fostering Advisory Board) which offers an independent quality assurance system for fostering annual reviews and appraise reviews based on year 4, year 7 and year 10 following

initial approval. This process supports the ethos of a learning organisation by highlighting best practice and subsequent learning from reviews of carers.

Serious complaints or allegations will also be put before Panel to consider whether there should be any alterations to the terms of approval. Since April 2009 Foster Carers have the right to challenge decisions through an Independent Mechanism Review or the Councils Corporate complaints section.

FINANCE

Most Foster Carers receive weekly allowances according to the age of the child. Despite the financial difficulties faced by Local Authorities, in 2021 most fostering allowances were increased by 2%.

A specialist fostering scheme remains in place targeted on harder to place children. Placement+ Carers are paid higher fees. Carers able to make permanent commitment to children, receive an increased rate of allowance as do those able to take the more complex adolescents. The service also offers parent and child placements and placements for young people within the criminal justice process.

MONITORING THE QUALITY OF THE SERVICE

Foster Carers have at least one unannounced visit per year. A Supervising Social Worker undertakes this. They also receive regular supervision from an allocated Supervising Social Worker. This is held bi-monthly. Each Foster Carer is subject to an annual review and contributions are sought from IROs, Social Workers and children placed.

The Regulated Manager monitors a range of matters identified in the National Minimum Standards 2011 (Regulation 35 (1)) to ensure that standards are adhered to and that the service is developing to meet the needs of a range of children. Reports are submitted on a quarterly basis to the executive to monitor service development.

Regular quality audits are completed by staff from the Fostering Service at key stages in a Foster Carer's career. These are to ensure compliance with procedures and policy and evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention of the Supervising Social Worker.

COMPLAINTS AND ALLEGATIONS

Summary of the Complaints Procedure

Lincolnshire County Council wants to make sure customers including Foster Carers are satisfied with our services. People may wish to tell when they are satisfied with the services they have received, make suggestions on how we could improve or tell us when

things have gone wrong. We believe dealing effectively with all such feedback is essential to providing good services.

The Complaints Policy sets out how complaints will be dealt with ensuring concerns raised are considered and any resulting adjustments made, where required.

- Stage 1 – Local Resolution
- Stage 2 – Independent Investigator is appointed
- Stage 3 - Independent Panel formal review by an Independent Panel of independent members plus the Complaints Manager.

Staff do ensure that all carers know how and to whom to complain.

Complainants have the right to involve a friend or advocate.

The Named Manager monitors all complaints and liaises with the Complaints Officer and the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) Business Manager. This information is available to authorised persons only.

All Foster Carers have access to support and information regarding the complaint's procedures and at the point of any investigation, support can also be accessed through membership of Fostering Network; the cost for which will be met by the agency. Complaints are collated and reported to the Corporate Parenting Sub- Group and themes are shared within the service. Details of complaints relating to the service are considered within the annual fostering report.

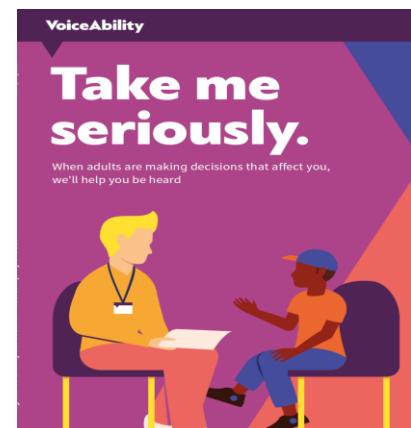
ALLEGATIONS

Foster Carers can sometimes be the subject of allegations in respect of the care of the children or young people they are looking after. If this occurs the allegation will be investigated in line with the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership child protection procedures with all allegations managed by the Local Authority Designated Officer. In addition to the role of the Supervising Social Worker, Foster Carers have access to an Independent Social Worker via Foster Talk who can offer practical and emotional support.

All allegations and other matters are monitored by the manager who ensures that these are retained for agencies to view as appropriate.

ADVOCACY AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Lincolnshire County Council commissions its advocacy for children



through VoiceAbility:

When might you want an advocate?

You can ask to speak with advocate if you:

- Have serious concerns about the care you are getting.
- Want to be more involved in decisions being made about you and your future.
- Want to fight decisions being made about you.
- Want to make a complaint.

Office of the Children's Commissioner



The Children's Commissioner is Dame Rachel de Souza. She has a legal duty to promote and protect the rights of all children in England with a particular focus on children and young people with difficulties or challenges in their lives, and those living away from home, in or leaving care, or receiving social care services.

The Children's Commissioner can be contacted: -

By writing to her at:

The Office of the Children's Commissioner, Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT.

Phoning her on Freephone: 0800 528 0731

Emailing at: help.team@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

Visiting the website www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

NUMBERS OF CHILDREN PLACED

On 31st March 2022 there were 735 children in care to Lincolnshire County Council.

Of this number 472 were placed with Foster Carers (including kinship carers), including 44 placed in independent foster placements and 5 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

The Lincolnshire Fostering Service works to the Lincolnshire County Council's Equality and Diversity Policy which is available on the council's website.

The Lincolnshire Fostering Service will treat all service users fairly, openly and with respect throughout the fostering approval process. Applicants wishing to be approved as Foster Carers will be considered irrespective of ethnicity, religion, belief, gender, sexual orientation, or disability providing the Fostering Service considers they can safely meet the needs of children throughout their childhood and into independence.

Every attempt will be made to find a placement which meets a child or young person's emotional and developmental needs taking into consideration their ethnicity, religion, language, culture, gender, and disability.

The Lincolnshire Fostering Service recognises that no child or young person should have to wait indefinitely for the ideal placement.

OFSTED

Ofsted is the single, independent inspectorate for all social care services in England. It is responsible for monitoring, regulating, and inspecting fostering services under the provisions of the Care Standards Act, 2000.

Questions or complaints

The one point of contact for all questions, queries and complaints is Ofsted.

The telephone number is 0300 123 1231. This number manages all general enquiries and will redirect them as necessary; they can also be contacted at enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk or write to:

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

FURTHER INFORMATION

The Fostering Statement of Purpose will be reviewed annually.

If you require this document in a different language or an alternative format such as large print, audio tape or Braille, please contact a member of the Fostering Service via telephone on 01522 554114.

The Statement of Purpose, Children’s Guides and other information are also available on the Lincolnshire County Council website: www.lincolnshire.gov.uk

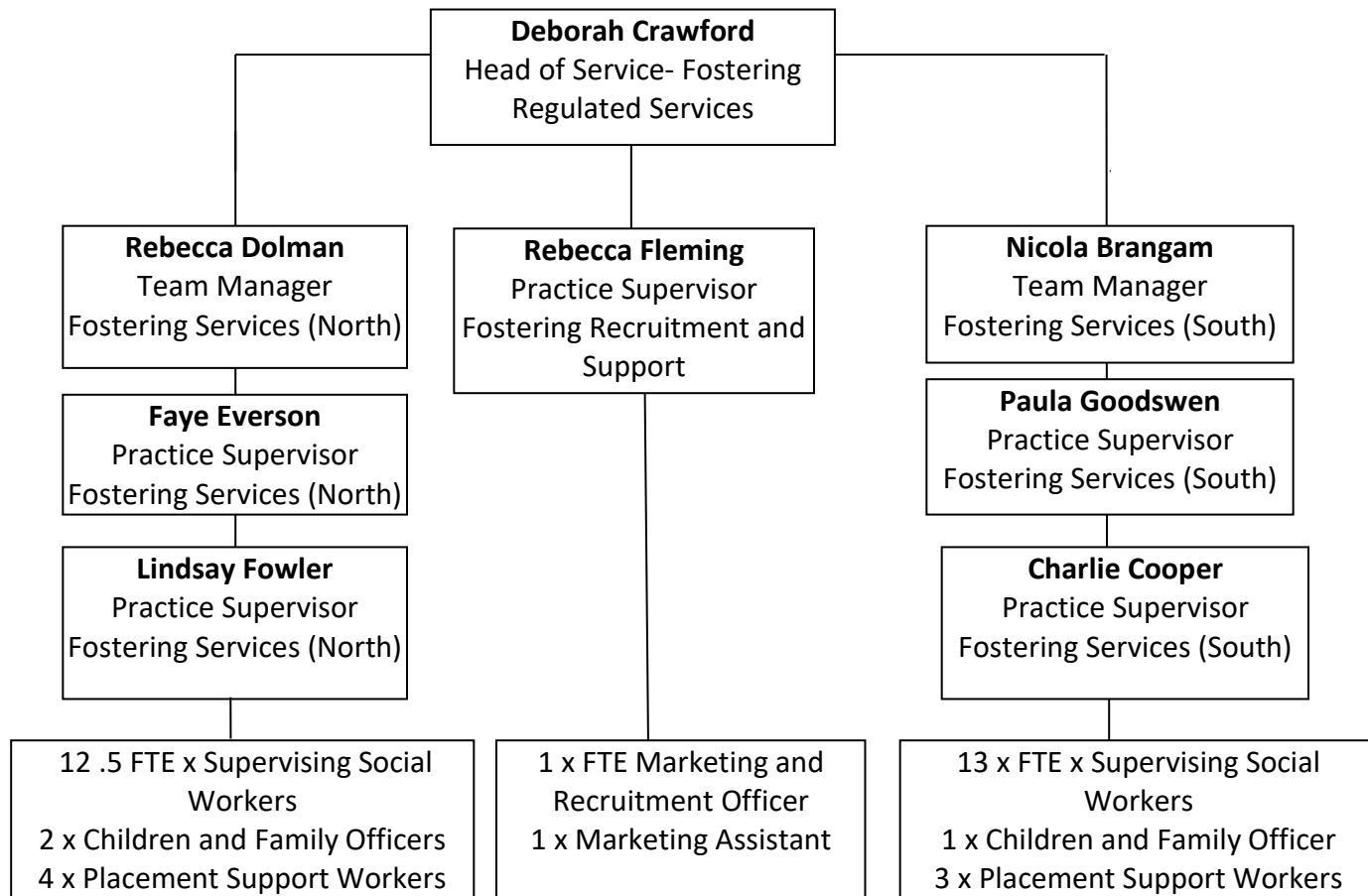
A copy can also be obtained from the registered manager:

Deborah Crawford Head of Service– Regulated Services
Lincolnshire County Council
County Offices
Newland
Lincoln
LN1 1YL
01522 552781

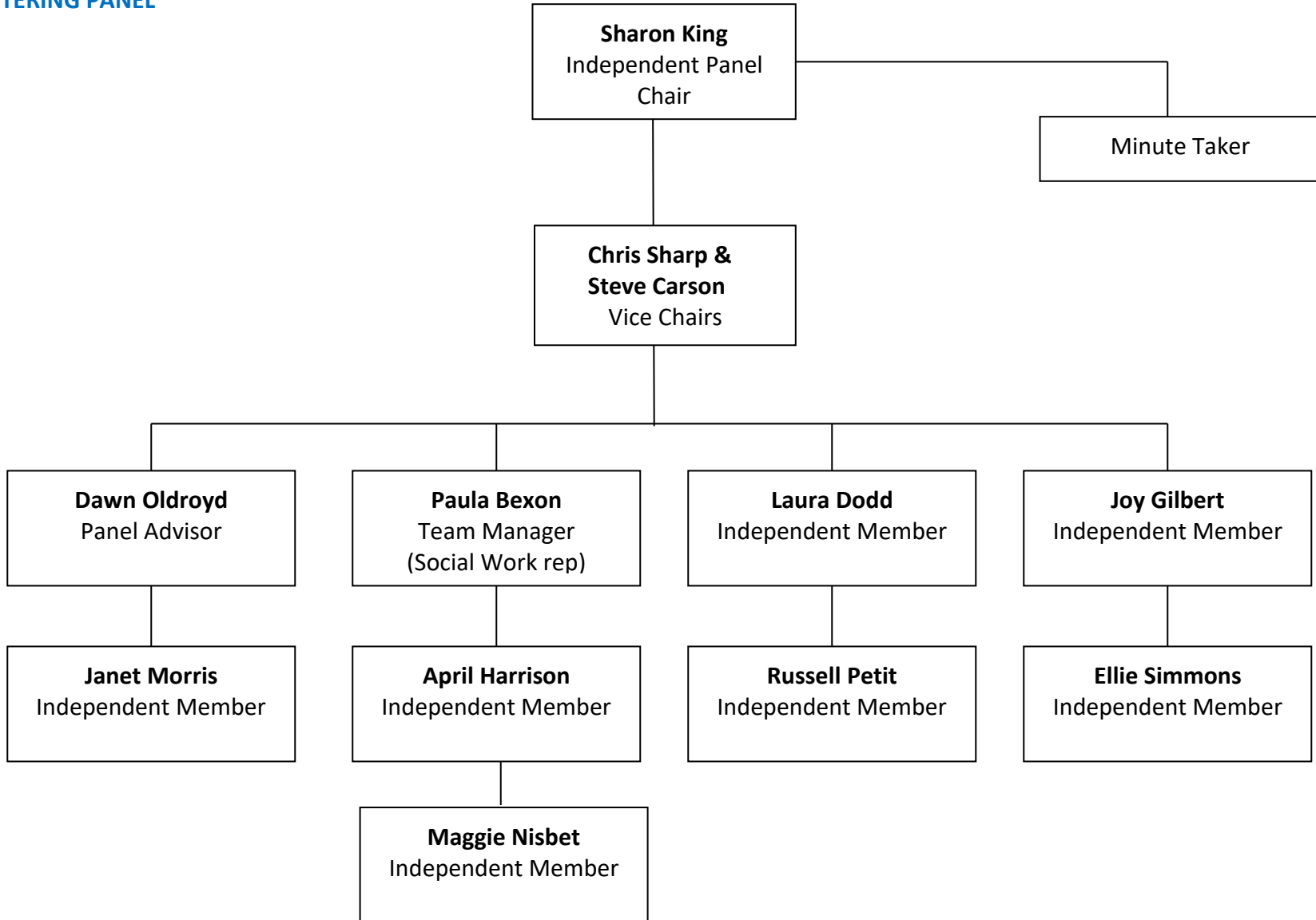
APPENDIX 1

FOSTERING SERVICE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE -- LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

There are two Team Managers for the Fostering Service who line manage the two teams of Fostering Supervising Social Workers, Children and Family Officers and Placement Support Workers.



APPENDIX 2
FOSTERING PANEL





Open Report on behalf of Janice Spencer OBE, Assistant Director - Children's Safeguarding

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	08 September 2022
Subject:	Fostering Quarterly Performance Report Q1

Summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of activity within the fostering service over Quarter 1.

Actions Required:

Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are invited to review and comment on the contents of the Quarterly Performance Report for Fostering (Q1) and to note this report as an accurate overview of the Fostering Service.

1. Background

To present an update on the performance of the fostering service in accordance with Standard 25 of the National Minimum Standards 2000.

2. Conclusion

The progress within the Service 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 Quarterly Performance Report Q1

5. Background Papers

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

This report was written by Deborah Crawford, who can be contacted on 01522 552781 or deborah.crawford@lincolnshire.gov.uk



Lincolnshire Fostering Service

Quarterly Report
April - June 2022

Quarter One Fostering Report–2022/2023

The Annual Report for 2021/2022 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 first quarterly report for 2022/2023.

Introduction

In 2022/2023, the Fostering Service has an annual budget of £9,102,467. Most 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 aspect of the fostering retention strategy given the foster care marketplace is challenging with competition at a peak level with several independent agencies actively recruiting in the Lincolnshire region.

To retain our competitiveness, allowances are a significant factor alongside the continued annual retention payments within a framework of high quality supervision and support. The budget continues to afford flexibility to provide enhanced allowances to certain categories of carers such as those offering permanence or managing particularly distressed children and those with challenging behaviours

The continued emphasis on recruitment and retention has been impacted upon by the Covid 19 pandemic where the service has seen an increase in numbers of children in care (CIC) and diminishing foster carer availability owing to retirement, health and social factors.

During the last financial year 2021-2022 the continuing Covid 19 recovery required the service to continue to be flexible in its response to foster carers and the children in their care. Most, if not all visits, are now being completed face to face.

The development of the virtual foster care community during the pandemic, via service and Caring2learn, created a model platform to increase interaction and engagement within and across the fostering community which continues with significant momentum.

The impact of the pandemic remains and there has been a decline in placement stability figures which stands at 66% and the effects upon this indicator are significant. This is largely attributable to some longer term placements ceasing at the carers request given their change in circumstances or because of placement breakdown. Likewise, the increased demand on placements has made the choice of the right placement upon admission into care more difficult both in house and across the external market.

The activity within fostering recruitment has started well this quarter with a steady level of interest which is indicative of pre-pandemic levels. This will continue to be monitored in accordance with the recruitment campaigns that are scheduled to occur for the remainder of this year.

At the end of the last year, the number of children in care had continued to rise to 735. Those placed with Independent Fostering agencies were 44, 5 of whom were unaccompanied migrant children. The percentage of children in foster placements has declined to 68% which reflects a decline on the previous year's figure.

During this quarter, the number of children coming into care has increased by 84 with 48 of these being placed within foster care

Given the continued increase in the children in care numbers, the rise in the number of children placed in Independent Non-Maintained provision (Independent Fostering 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 work with a strong focus on the core offers to foster carers and the development and practice of the Valuing Care Toolkit being an integral part of the foster carer's annual reviews and Form F assessments. As the service move forward the emphasis is to ensure that the Valuing Care Toolkit forms part of all Kinship and Special Guardianship Order (SGO) assessments.

Recruitment and Retention:

Fostering recruitment continues to work through the challenges presented by the recovery of the pandemic and the rising cost of living 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 all initial visits.

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 course offers both face to face and virtual events this year with the expectation that both types of events will be well attended. Plans have been made for three face to face courses and three virtual courses within this 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.

A recruitment Council audit and review has been completed in this quarter 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 to making a formal application following initial visits has already seen a rise of 11%. Previously the service did find that almost half of those in stage 1 would change their mind about fostering and choose to withdraw although the service has seen a 34% increase in retaining those in stage 1 due to applicant decision. An indication of the strong support offer and customer service that has developed.

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 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 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 and children's service's teams. 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 in 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 all 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. 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 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 65 Initial Enquiries of Interest (IEI) were received from the public enquiring about becoming a Foster Carer.

There have been 4 newly approved households in this first quarter of the financial year.

On 30th June 2022 there were 42 open applications in stages 1 or 2, 29 of these have a panel date booked this financial year.

Foster Care Fortnight:

Lincolnshire Fostering Service took part in the Fostering Network's annual Foster Care Fortnight campaign which was held between 9th and 22nd May 2022 with a theme of a day in the life of a foster carer.

In Lincolnshire, we continually review our marketing strategy and develop our approach as being a local option for carers wanting to care for Lincolnshire children.

During this quarter and year our objective is to draw upon the strengths of carers joining an Ofsted rated Outstanding authority who work collaboratively to find local placements within a local community for local children.

Our continued energy in advertising is to ensure that the objective is understood that Lincolnshire is further establishing itself as a local option.

To achieve this our priorities are:

- Ongoing strategy to build a sense of community responsibility in the role.
- Information events more often and online.
- Ongoing strategy to engage with local businesses and communities.
- Strong online presence.
- Establishing a local feel, with real images, real stories. Resulting in an increased number of followers, higher visibility, higher engagement, higher page reach).
- Advertisement budget used towards online strategies, such as social media adds
- Advertisement through social media (demographic target: women +25) and other online sources.
- Advertisement at public venues, schools, children's centres and LCC buildings.
- Engagement with other communities and businesses within Lincolnshire.
- Developing and marketing fostering friendly employers to support recruitment of working households

Advertising

April 2022

- Foster Carers' Viewpoint focusing on tackling the myths
- 20,000 audience targeted ads across Stamford, Grantham, Spalding, Bourne and Newark websites belonging to the Iliffe Media Group
- Social Media advertising
- Promoted refer a friend with current households

May 2022

- Information Event
- Fostering campaign running on Lincs FM, 'a day in the life a foster carer'
- Half page advert in Lincolnshire Life magazine
- Targeted paid-for Facebook advert
- Article on Int Comms advertising information event
- Promoted refer a friend with current households
- Shared with staff, teams, and foster carers ways they could support fostering recruitment.

June 2022

- 2 days promoting fostering at Lincolnshire Show
- Full page spread in Lincolnshire Life
- Fostering campaign running on Lincs FM, choose local
- Targeted paid-for Facebook advert
- Article on Int Comms advertising information event
- Promoted refer a friend with current households

Permanence Campaign:

Attracting long term foster carers remains a priority for the service. Fostering have developed 4 areas of activity in attracting new and existing carers to this type of fostering. This includes attracting new carers to permanent fostering, supporting those currently in the assessment period to consider permanent fostering and explore possible matches prior to approval, holding a quarterly family finders' event and supporting and encouraging existing households to consider new permanent links or a change in approval.

Profiles are created for children seeking permanent foster homes, this includes anonymised profiles. These anonymised profiles are shared on the Council's social media platforms as part of our marketing campaigns to attract new carers, this includes the Caring2Learn closed Facebook page which invites staff, social care and health staff and existing carers. The

profiles are also readily available in the foster carers google drive and are shared with fostering applicants during the assessment stage.

Our campaign page on the Lincs Fm radio site features information about permanent fostering along with the Council's webpage which has a page dedicated to this campaign.

Family Finding:

During the first quarter of this year Family Finders has continued to meet monthly to consider all children with a care plan for long-term fostering who do not already have a placement identified. These meetings have all taken place in person.

Over this first quarter four additional children have been referred to Family Finders. There are now seventeen children currently seeking long term placements, seven of these are singleton placements and there are five sets of two siblings.

Unfortunately, and despite concerted effort in this quarter, we have not been able to find any long-term placements for the children on Family Finders. However, one couple has shown interest in one of the sibling groups and it is hoped once their own shorter term placement moves on that the matching process and information sharing can progress further.

Family Finders continues to use profiles for the children alongside their Valuing Care profile to try and identify any permanent placements. The children's anonymised profiles have also been shared on the Foster Carers "G drive" where they can access the information and have further discussions with their Supervising Social Worker. These profiles are also circulated to all Supervising Social Workers to consider any appropriate carers.

The Permanence Campaign is on-going and includes a variety of advertising on social media, radio, and local publications. The fostering service has a dedicated Instagram page which the service is utilising as part of the recruitment drive. The Council were also represented at the Lincolnshire Show in June. The County Council fostering web page continues to provide information on long-term fostering and the support available to Foster Carers.

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 quarter ten children were referred to this process (six singletons and two sibling groups).

A further permanence event is scheduled for July 2022 where children's information will be presented to foster carers by their social workers with a hope that potential placements will be found. It is also hoped that for some of the children currently in residential placements it may be possible to find them a monthly respite opportunity to give the young person the opportunity to experience family life and build up connections and relationships.

It has also been agreed that potential foster carers in stage 2 of their fostering application would also be invited to the event for them to understand the need of the children and

begin considering permanence. Fostering currently have one set of carers being assessed for permanence with a panel date of August 2022.

Training:

A virtual and Face to face offer is now in place and has been welcomed by carers, providing flexibility and options that cater to different circumstances and learning styles.

The fostering training offer remains under review, ensuring that the service continue to meet the needs of the fostering community in providing quality and informed care to children with a diverse range of needs and interests.

Following a review, this year courses have been developed to support preparing birth children for fostering, in response to a retention theme around carers worries about the impact of fostering on their children. This includes a twice-yearly preparation course for birth children aged 5-16 years.

Whilst considering how we better prepare people for fostering included in the hub is access for applicants to training and development throughout their assessment period.

Other courses have been planned in response to data and information concerning placement breakdowns and unplanned moves, these include therapeutic crisis intervention and mental health first aid.

It is important in training and development to also ensure our more experienced foster carers and those that have attended many of the courses on offer continue to have access to further learning and development. The service has specifically identified the 6-day social pedagogy and 2-day Restorative Practice to address this objective.

27 courses were delivered during this quarter with 250 attendees taking part from fostering households.

Training:

In this quarter the training schedule has continued to be delivered to assist the training and development of Foster Carers. This is an important factor in improving outcomes of Children in Care and young people. Access to this develops knowledge and skills in areas of interest as well as provides the mandatory courses. It facilitates carers also sharing ideas and experiences where they can share experiences and learn from one another.

Various courses have been available including:

- First Aid/ paediatric training
- Restorative Practice
- Kid Skills
- Mental Health First Aid
- Safeguarding

- Safe Care
- Fostering Preparation Course
- Therapeutic Crisis Intervention

Practice Workshops:

- Introducing Social Pedagogy
- Introduction to Restorative Practice
- Introduction to mindfulness, Creating Calm
- Introduction to Trauma Awareness
- Supporting sleep, nightmares, and night terrors.
- Time2talk
- Supporting grief, loss, and positive endings
- Relational repair
- Fostering Weekly therapeutic parenting 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 eighty foster homes and five 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 over Zoom last year. The event recognises the contribution and achievements of our fostering community. Foster carers will receive their

long service awards, a voucher and lapel badge. The voucher and lapel badge are given to carers as a token of gratitude and was positively received.

Last year we formally introduced new foster carers to the community, and this was our opportunity to thank them for choosing Lincolnshire as their provider. Likewise, this will remain a feature at this year's event too which is in the planning stages.

Kinship :

Kinship options are always considered when a child enters care for the first time and throughout their care experience. Joint work has been completed and is ongoing between the Fostering Service and other teams to ensure consistency with viability assessments and the referral process.

Practice Supervisors and Social Workers from within the service work collaboratively with other social care staff to ensure that all family and their networks are engaged in the care planning process where it is deemed to be safe and in the child/ren's best interests. Practice Supervisors maintain good working relationships between Fostering and the other teams; this continues to be effective as conversations are held early on and consultations are taking place prior to viabilities being concluded and placements being made.

The Government's manifesto committed to review the children's social care system which was launched in March 2021. As part of this review the value and significance of Kinship placements was highlighted by Josh MacAlister in May 2022 who cited the following:

"For some children, care will always be the best option and Chapters Five and Six of this report set out how we can transform the care system. However, many children should and could safely– with the right help – remain within their family network rather than enter care.

Growing up within a family network means retaining a strong sense of identity, culture and place, which young people have told the review is often lost or significantly diluted through care. A child living with their grandparents, aunt or uncle is unlikely to have to rely on social workers to recount their life story, nor grow up with carers who have very different family or cultural values.

While foster and residential care will come with an end date, with young people often having to set out in the world alone, staying within a family network, usually known as kinship care, is significantly more likely to mean children grow up with love, and retain those loving relationships throughout their whole life.

Kinship is deemed appropriate for children and young people to be supported by the Local Authority with every effort made to identify and assess the family networks to ensure that children and young people can be safely cared for by people who they have an existing relationship with and are known to them."

In Lincolnshire, the children’s teams continue to work proactively in identifying the family networks by completing thorough viability assessments and having early conversations to support the next steps on assessments.

There are sound working relationships established between Fostering and the children’s teams, regular discussions and joint supervisions take place and are standard practice. These proactive measures support and improve care planning for children and young people and supports the reduction in placement moves by identifying key supports for both the children and their prospective carers, by identifying the right carer at the right time.

Between the 1st April 2022 and the 30th June 2022 the following data reflects the work undertaken during this period:

Number of Referrals	SGO	Reg.24 / SGO	Reg. 24 / Connected Person	Private Fostering	Statutory Checks/CAO/38(6)	Private Law SGO
51	13	16	7	4	10	1

The service has seen an increase in the number of referrals this was highlighted in the last quarterly report. These figures demonstrate the Local Authority’s efforts to secure kinship placements for children and reflect the ongoing improvement in practice in exploring and assessing children and young people’s network. Both the children’s teams and in the court, arena continue to ensure all family networks are explored, and alternative placements are seen as the last resort.

Within the Kinship arena there has been a rise in the overall work including the children’s placements under Regulation 24 of The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 and subsequent amendments, which progressed to Special Guardianship Orders. The number of SGO assessments has also seen a rise which suggests that all options have been considered within the Court arena. This reflects a practice of planning for permanence for this cohort of children.

For statutory checks, these are undertaken when the children’s social work teams are completing assessments of family members for private law orders such as Child Arrangement Orders or Special Guardianship Orders. The circumstances in which the assessments are being completed outside of public law proceedings, or when the children are not children in care. The number of these has also increased from what was a stable area of work since the last quarter.

With regards to Private fostering assessments, they have risen from 3 referrals in the last quarter, to 7 this quarter.

Further expansion of Private Fostering Regulations in relation to Ukraine children and Young People only

In anticipation of the Government's response following the invasion of Ukraine the Homes for Ukraine Scheme will commence in July 2022. This will involve processing applications from eligible children under the age of 18 who have already applied through the Homes for Ukraine Scheme to come to the UK without a parent or guardian in carefully defined circumstances.

- Within 24 hours of a child's arrival the council should carry out an initial welfare visit.
- The council will give the child information in Ukrainian and Russian about how to raise any concerns, and how they have a duty to help them if they believe they are at risk.

Staying Put:

During this first quarter, the number of young people in Staying Put currently stands at 44.

Of the 44 young people on Staying Put 7 are attending university, 30 are in full time further education, 1 is in employment, 2 are on Apprenticeships and 2 are on the Care Leavers Apprenticeship Scheme. The remaining 2 are currently NEET with both looking for employment. Several of the young people in full time further education also have part-time jobs.

During the first quarter four young people left the Staying Put scheme. Of these 1 moved into a Shared Lives arrangement with their provider, 1 turned 21 and went to live with birth family, 1 moved into a residential hospital placement and 1 gained a further employment opportunity. There were no placement breakdowns in this quarter.

Staying Put remains an active element of the fostering service provision and continues to receive a steady flow of referrals from the Children in Care Social Workers. There are currently 18 young people waiting to join the scheme when they turn 18. Staying Put arrangement continues to be an option discussed at the first CIC 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 subsequent review.

Carers with children as young as thirteen contact the Staying Put Co-ordinator to find out more and discuss the provision as a future option for the child/children they have in placement.

In summary:

- Staying Put arrangements are put in place in a planned and informed way with fostering and the Staying Put Co-Ordinator working closely alongside Children's teams and to ensure this happens.

- Positive working relationships and ongoing communication flows between the Leaving Care Service and Staying Put. Information is passed between services in a timely manner with joint working taking place to identify and address issues arising within Staying Put.
 - Virtually all young people (except for two) on Staying Put are either in work or education
- and
- There have been no placement breakdowns this quarter.

Conclusion:

It is reassuring that the start of this year has seen the recovery following the Covid pandemic with services returning to follow a pre pandemic trend. There has been a promising start with fostering enquiries and more carers have returned to fully resume their fostering role.

The pressure has remained on the service which has faced unprecedented staffing changes and vacancies which reportedly reflect the national challenges in social care recruitment.

Despite this the services have pulled together to ensure that all fostering households have continued to receive quality services within the regulatory context. Maintaining high quality supervision and support is central to this in the context of maximising and mobilising our placement capacity. Many fostering households continue to make the difference and have despite the enormous challenges in recent years, have demonstrated their commitment to the Lincolnshire children in their care.

The number of Children in Care remains significantly higher during the same period last year and the increase in this figure and reduced bed capacity results in pressures on the placements available and the matches achieved. Placement stability in this quarter has also been marginally impacted with a variety of factors impacting upon this. The focus on the fostering service and wider colleagues is to continue to monitor and intervene early to prevent a placement breakdown and re-establish stability in the best interests of the child.

The service continues to be heartened by the interest from the public in fostering yet despite this there has also been an increased number of referrals to independent fostering agencies. The number of children placed in children's homes has increased alongside the use of external placements where necessary. Using external resources has a considerable impact on the resources of the Local Authority.

The continued transformation programme will continue to support the service in maintaining and developing the core offer for fostering households. This in tandem with the key decision to embed the Caring2 Learn Practice Supervisor into the service has continued to pay dividends in relation to our hub offer including training and support.

The concept of Caring2Learn remains woven throughout the service and this coupled with the continued work of the foster carer champions and colleagues it remains the ambition of the service to build upon our strengths during this year

Deborah Crawford
Children's Head of Regulated Services

This page is intentionally left blank

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

Report to:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Date:	08 September 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:

Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are invited to:

- (1) Review and approve the work programme; and,
- (2) Highlight any additional activity which could be included for consideration in the work programme.

1. Background

Overview and Scrutiny should be positive, constructive, independent, fair, and open. The scrutiny process should be challenging, as its aim is to identify areas for improvement.

Scrutiny activity should be targeted, focused and timely and include issues of corporate and local importance, where scrutiny activity can influence and add value.

Members are encouraged to highlight items that could be included for consideration in the work programme.

2. Work Programme

8 September 2022		
	Item	Contributor
1.	Children in Care Performance Measures Quarter 1 2022/23 (April to June 2022)	Janice Spencer, Assistant Director - Children's Safeguarding
2.	Adoption Service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Report 2021-22 • Statement of Purpose 	Deborah Crawford, Head of Service Fostering, Adoption and Leaving Care
3.	Fostering Service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Report • Statement of Purpose 	Deborah Crawford, Head of Service Fostering, Adoption and Leaving Care
4.	Fostering Quarterly Performance Report Quarter 1	Deborah Crawford, Head of Service Fostering, Adoption and Leaving Care
5.	Corporate Parenting, Children in Care and Care Leaver Strategy Priorities Action Plan Update – Verbal Update	Andrew Morris, Corporate Parenting Manager

10 November 2022		
	Item	Contributor
1.	Children in Care Performance Measures Quarter 2 2021/22 (July to September 2022)	Janice Spencer, Assistant Director Children's Services
2.	Children in Care Annual Report 2021/22	John Harris, Children's Services Manager: Regulated (North and Fostering)
3.	Independent Reviewing Service – 6 Month Report (April to September 2022)	Carolyn Knight, Quality and Standards Manager
4.	Regulation 44 Independent Visiting Service – Six Month Report (April to September 2022)	Carolyn Knight, Quality and Standards Manager
5.	Fostering Quarterly Performance Report Q2	John Harris, Children's Services Manager: Regulated (North and Fostering)
6.	Private Fostering Annual Report and Statement of Purpose	Deborah Crawford, Head of Service Fostering, Adoption and Leaving Care

3. Items to be programmed

- Issues caused at facilities for young persons (16-17yo) with complex support needs and the engagement in education - beyond good practice.
- Impact of Department for Education (DfE) Post 16 pilot
- Corporate Parenting, Children in Care and Care Leaver Strategy Priorities Action Plan Update

4. Conclusion

Members of the Panel are invited to review and comment on the work programme and highlight any additional activity which could be included for consideration in the work programme.

5. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

6. Background Papers

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

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

This page is intentionally left blank